

# SSUTC



REVIEW

Volume I, Issue II



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# Table of Contents

<b>Helen of Troy</b> <i>Thomas Good</i>	3
<b>Why You Will Miss Dan Quayle (Seriously)</b> <i>Jim O'Grady</i>	6
<b>Shentie</b> <i>Michael Branda</i>	9
<b>Waiting for Lynne Grain</b> <i>Julie Tulip-Walsh</i>	15
<b>A Fire in El Lay</b> <i>Thomas Taaffe</i>	17
<b>The Search for Utopia</b> <i>Virginia Rathbun</i>	22
<b>Form 69PV</b> <i>Mathew J. Rosenwasser</i>	25
<b>Shadow Puppets</b> <i>Jaida n'ha Sandra</i>	28
<b>Burning Issues in the Arts:</b> <b>The Last Twelve Years and the Next Four</b> <i>Diana Yates</i>	34
<b>When the Evening is Spread out Against the Sky</b> <i>Michael Toro</i>	37
<b>Throwing Baby out with the Bath</b> <i>Thomas Good</i>	39
<b>Long After the Funeral</b> <i>Virginia Rathbun</i>	42
<b>On the Line</b> <i>Tom Molinaro</i>	46
<b>Artwork &amp; Poetry:</b>	
<b>Robert Butcher</b>	Front Cover
<b>Thomas Good</b>	24
<b>Ben Kauffman</b>	5, 8, 14, 17, 19, 41
<b>Thomas Kearney</b>	20
<b>Chris Pepo</b>	Back Cover
<b>Diane Rodriguez</b>	44
<b>Thomas Taaffe</b>	11, 23, 40, 41, 48
<b>Mick Wieland</b>	6, 30, 33



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# Helen of Troy

By Thomas Good

(For Alan)

**M**idnight in Chicago. Could of been a Thursday. It don't matter, anyway. It was cold, damp and windy. Like a convention of relatives or some other absurdity. I was living in a phone call. A busy signal. There was a picture of Jesus on the wall. Next to the Coke machine. An alleged comedy played on the television. Canned laughing, stock situations. A regular soup de jour, reheated. I sat at the bar, drinking a Guinness, smoking a Marlboro. Well, a Marlboro light. I guess I wanted a kinder, gentler cancer. You know the tune: don't worry, be happy. The future looks bright. We have the technology: a thousand points of light. Relax, have some light wine, light cheese, a light supper, if you please. We got all our lights on. Nobody home. Reality. Love it or leave it.

No. That's not right. It was a Monday. The Jets and the Bears were having a light game of football. Bob sat in the corner, drinking a Miller Lite. The happy Philistine. New York fumbled, we scored. Light applause. Bob looked around, yelled something incoherent. Cops. Jesus. This guy carried a gun? Anyway, I was playing a game of chess with Jimmy, the barman. I was fractured, so was my game. A matter of time. "I got winners," Bob yelled. Jimmy groaned. "You could always resign, Jimbo," I offered. He shook his head no. "Not tonight, Mac."

"This Christmas, come home to the church of your choice," the television commanded. Religion. If you don't have one, one will be appointed to you. Hell. Make mine a Protestant. Light. I'm trying to cut down on guilt. I sipped my Guinness.

"Checkmate," Jimmy said. I belched my reply. Jim grinned and ambled off. A new Guinness appeared. The game went into overtime. Jets won the toss. I lit a Marby. Light. Bob yelled something incoherent. Jimmy shrugged, scratched his bald spot. Archetypes pounding their beat.

She walked into the bar around one. I'd seen her somewhere. Barrett Street? I don't know. . . strange. This area was a bit rough and she was something else. Flaxen hair, tall, like a model. Only busty. Long shapely legs, graceful shoulders. Pale blue eyes, with a parenthetical look. In the corner, Bob's head jerked up and down. The village idiot sees Venus. She was around twenty-five at the time. In her prime. I felt like writing a rap song. I didn't do it. She stood in the doorway. The bar was empty, except for me, Bob and Jimmy. Like I said, the bar was empty. Venus stood shivering, we three stock characters sat and stared. If I were her I would have split. Instead, she walks over to the bar and sits down next to yours truly.

"Checkmate," she said.

The narrator, slightly incoherent, stared for a few seconds. Earthboundling to Blue Angel. When feeling returned I looked down at the chess board. I knocked over several of the men.

"Yeah," I managed.

"Get you something, Miss?", Jimmy asked. She ordered a coffee. Exit, stage left, bartender.

Time for my soliloquy? I thought not. Literally. Adrift in a stream of semi-consciousness, I felt like a drunken Jack Kerouac (is that redundant?) on the verge of an epic jazz poem. Complete with a thumping bass line and too many adverbs. I signaled the barkeep. "Neal," I screeched.

"Yeah, Jack?", his reply.

"I need a Guinness and a shot of Bushmills. . ."

Meanwhile, back in the States, she was calm, elegant. A true subterranean. She picked up the white knight.

"Do you play?", I asked. She did. A little. We started a game. She won the toss. French opening. A classic beauty. I tried not to stare. There's a reason guys go to an "old man's bar." Finally, I just stared. Wanting to say something, but, out of witticisms, truly witless, and acutely aware that small talk is the sincerest form of banality, I sat mute. Until. . .

"Look. I think I've seen you. Somewhere. Before, I mean."

"You waved at me earlier. I was walking past the bar. I thought I'd stop and say

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hello. I hope that's O.K."

"What? Tonight? Yeah, sure, it's O.K." I tried to jump start the short term memory with a shot of Bushmills. I fumbled in the pocket of my flannel shirt for a fuzzy recollection. I found a Marlboro. Light. She offered one.

"I was walking earlier, right outside the bar. You were opening the door, over there," she explained, "and we waved to each other. . .you don't remember me?"

"Oh yeah, I remember now." Sort of.

She smiled, I grinned like an invertebrate. She wore an aqua top. Jeans. Running shoes. Her hands were long and slender, her breasts, full. . .I made some imbecilic move that cost me my queen, probably the game. I laughed. The village idiot and Aphrodite. Playing chess. She took a drag off my cigarette, threatened me with her bishop. I moved out of the way. She doubled her rooks. I wanted to suggest a light dinner, light wine, light lighting, a light comedy. My lights were on. Nobody home. I was speechless. Thank God. She posted a rook on my seventh rank. I couldn't dislodge it. I resigned. Her coffee came soon after.

"Look, tonight's not the first time I saw you. I've seen you before. . .I think on Barrett Street, by the Lake. . ."

"I know," she said, "I walk alot. See alot of people. But I remember you. You struck me as being kind of fragile. . ."

"Uh, yeah, maybe so, I don't know. . .Listen. Where are you from? What's your name?"

"Michigan. I was born in Troy. My name's. . ."

"Helen of Troy!? Really? I thought you looked more nordic. . ."

She arched an eyebrow. Short dark hairs described an arc above her sodalites. I turned beat red. Was Kerouac this clumsy?

"Janine," she said, "my name's Janine. Sorry. . ."

"What. . .sorry about what?"

"I'm not Helen of Troy. I'm not even nordic. I'm a Kiwi. Mom and Dad came from Whangaparoa. New Zealand. And you? What's your name?"

"Uh, McMorrow. . .Pete, but they call me Mac. I'm a son of the proverbial windy."

She gave a gentle grin. "And your friends?", she asked.

"That's Jimmy, behind the bar." J-man looked up from his perch in front of the television. Friendly waves were exchanged. "And that's Bob over there in the corner. Officer Bob." Roused from the dead, Bob got up and stumbled towards us. Jim attempted an interception. No good.

"Hi, I'm Bobby," Bob said. Enough said? Unfortunately, no. Bob held out his hand, she hers. He kissed her on the knuckle. Jimbo grinned broadly.

"You lucked out buddy," Boob blundered in my general direction. He shot me a knowing look, complete with apathetic leer and big wink. "She's awesome. I'd like to do her myself, but I'm too drunk," he said, directly into my ear. Pearls of conspiratorial spittle graced my ear canal. I died three or four times.

"Well, gotta drain the dragon. Excuse me, pretty lady," he said as he veered off toward the locker room.

"What a character," Janine laughed.

"He's harmless," I explained, "been through alot. Hates his job. He's a cop."

Her eyes glistened, expressively. I lingered a moment.

"What about you? Are you harmless," she asked.

"Yeah, pretty much. I'm unemployed. I work for

the State. I draw my pay. Lead a boring life. I like it."

"What about a woman - is there one?"

"Not for awhile, I'm trying to quit. . .sorry, I'm really not an asshole. Things just never seem to pan out for me. I'm O.K. alone. Although, sometimes I do wonder. . ."

She sipped her coffee. Strands of steam drifted into a veil. A mirage? Maybe. I don't know. The Bushmills kicked in. I started talking again.

"When I was I kid I lived with my Aunt. Mom died young, Dad split. I got used to being alone. I'm no good at conversation, stuff like that."

"You do O.K.," she said. She looked through me. "There must have been someone special. . ."

"Like everyone I had a first love. . . I was a real jerk though. You know the deal: adolescence. The precursor of neurosis."

Janine pulled a pack of Marlboros from her bag. Reds. I grinned. She looked at me questioningly. I lit her cigarette, borrowed it for a moment. . . the taste of her lipstick and then, smoke in my eye. I rubbed, she laughed, I blushed. Somewhere far away the Chicago Bears scored in sudden death overtime. Game over.

"So that's it? One love?", Janine asked.

"Well, not exactly, but for all practical purposes, yeah. There was a wife or two in there somewhere. . .but at some point I stopped trying and started counting. . .how many days I'd used up, how many I got left. How long I'd been divorced, how many hairs I've got left. Shit like that. I'm a sort of mathematician, I guess. . .the human race is not to the swift. I'm the prime example of that. Still, I survive."

She pressed my hand. Her nails were slightly lacquered with small, sharp points. They bit gently at my palm. I grew expansive.

"I didn't give up exactly, it's just that I'm waiting. For what, I don't know. For the fog to lift, whatever. It beats exchanging body fluids for no good reason. And you know, I got the feeling I ain't the only one. It's like, for a whole bunch of us, Time got fucked up, got stuck or something. And we're all sitting around watching a clock that's got its hands tied."

"Hey, Janine, I'm sorry, man. Enough boo-hoo bullshit. Shit, I'm sitting here with Helen of Troy, talking my fool head off. I must be some kind of Trojan horse's ass." She smiled. It felt good. "Tell me about Janine," I said.

She let go of my hand. I winced.

"Why don't we go for a walk?", she asked. I packed up my personal effects: a pack of smokes, zippo lighter, spare cash. Jimmy waved my check. "I'll put it on your tab," he said. I nodded. Bobby was asleep in the corner. Whatever.

We slipped out into a blustery, Jack Frost bite in the ass, I don't give a goddamn, I just met Helen of Troy, night. Crisp and clear. No fools littering the street. I started to dig the whole thing. True, I had a vague fear that we would have to end our evening with the synchronous throbbing that coiled mortals mistake for passion. True, I was out of practice talking to women and slightly looped, but hey. . .I figured there was an outside chance, you never know, not likely for a dipstick like me, but maybe. . .she might see something in me.

We walked toward the lake. Her parents had divorced when she was only four. Her father practiced infidelity at that time. The unoriginal sin, a favorite of churchgoers. As a kid J never saw her old man. Her moth-

er told her that she could, anytime she wanted, but dear old Mom did her best to poison the well with a few well placed words about Dad's character. Or lack thereof. Sixteen years later, Janine's dad got real sick and she went to reconcile with him. Diabetes had dulled his sight and taken both his legs. He spent a year or so in a wheelchair. From the chair he told Janine tales of a childhood she had forgotten. How, when she was little, he would carry her in a sort of backpack when he went hiking, which he did alot. He called it his only freedom. The loss of his legs was somewhat relieved by these verbal wanderings with his long lost daughter. By this time Janine's mother had moved to Chicago. She refused her ex-husband's requests for contact. Mom had grown kind of rigid over the years. Unable to forgive Dad's youthful indiscretions. Unable to maintain her hold over Janine.

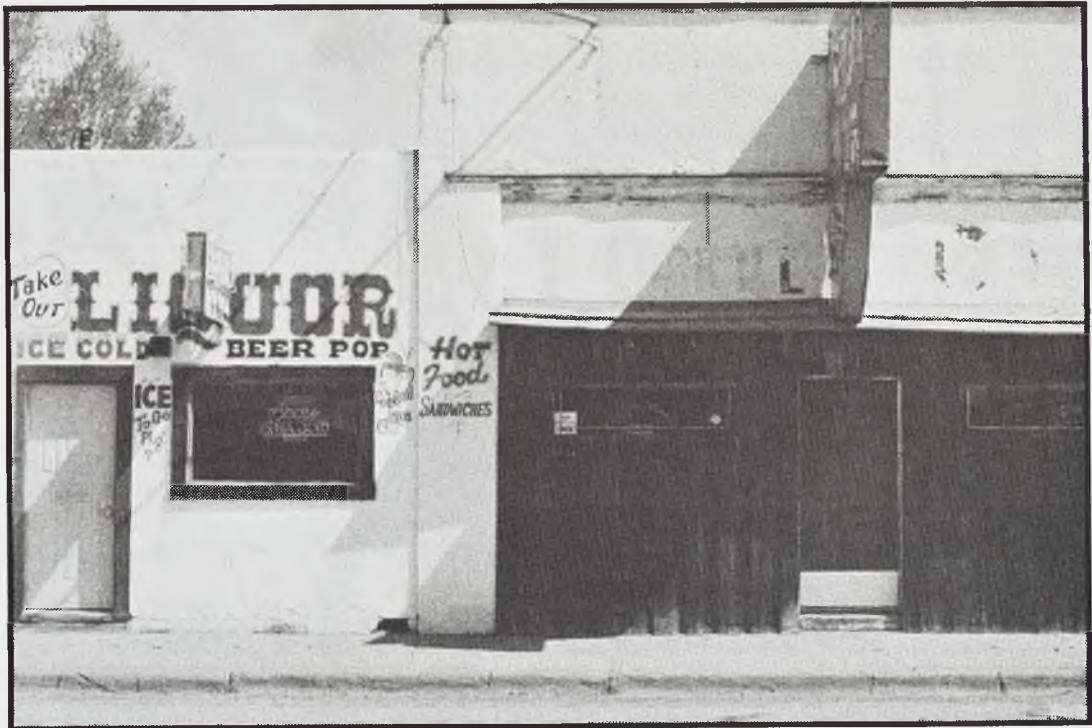
Janine's dad also regretted the past. He told J that, had he been able to keep it in his shorts, way back when, their family would still be together. Dad lamented the fact that, if he and Mom had been more Christian, i.e., he less of a satyr, she less of a martyr, things could have been different. More Christian? Anyway, Janine promised Daddy No-

Legs that the family would be together again, before his last curtain call. It never happened. Mom was never keen on reunions.

Janine moved to Chicago after her father died. She and Mom lasted about an hour as a duo. Shortly after that, Janine started walking in the evenings. Her only freedom she said. She started picking up men. First for company, later for cash. She had bills to pay. She said.

That first walk we took, I saw Aphrodite whisper to the wind blowing across Lake Michigan. I ain't forgot it yet. I asked her about the dangers involved in walking the Barrett Street area. She just smiled. Kissed my cheek. These days, we walk together often. She's a regular at Jimmy's. We bullshit, play chess. Sometimes she lets me win. Sometimes we walk Bobby home. When he needs a little back-up. We never pursued a romance. It's not that the streetwalker thing was such a major stumbling block (although some nights it tears at what's left of my wits). The thing is, I mean, screw love, the thing is, why muck up what there is. She sees something in me. And me...well, I see Helen of Troy. Almost every night.

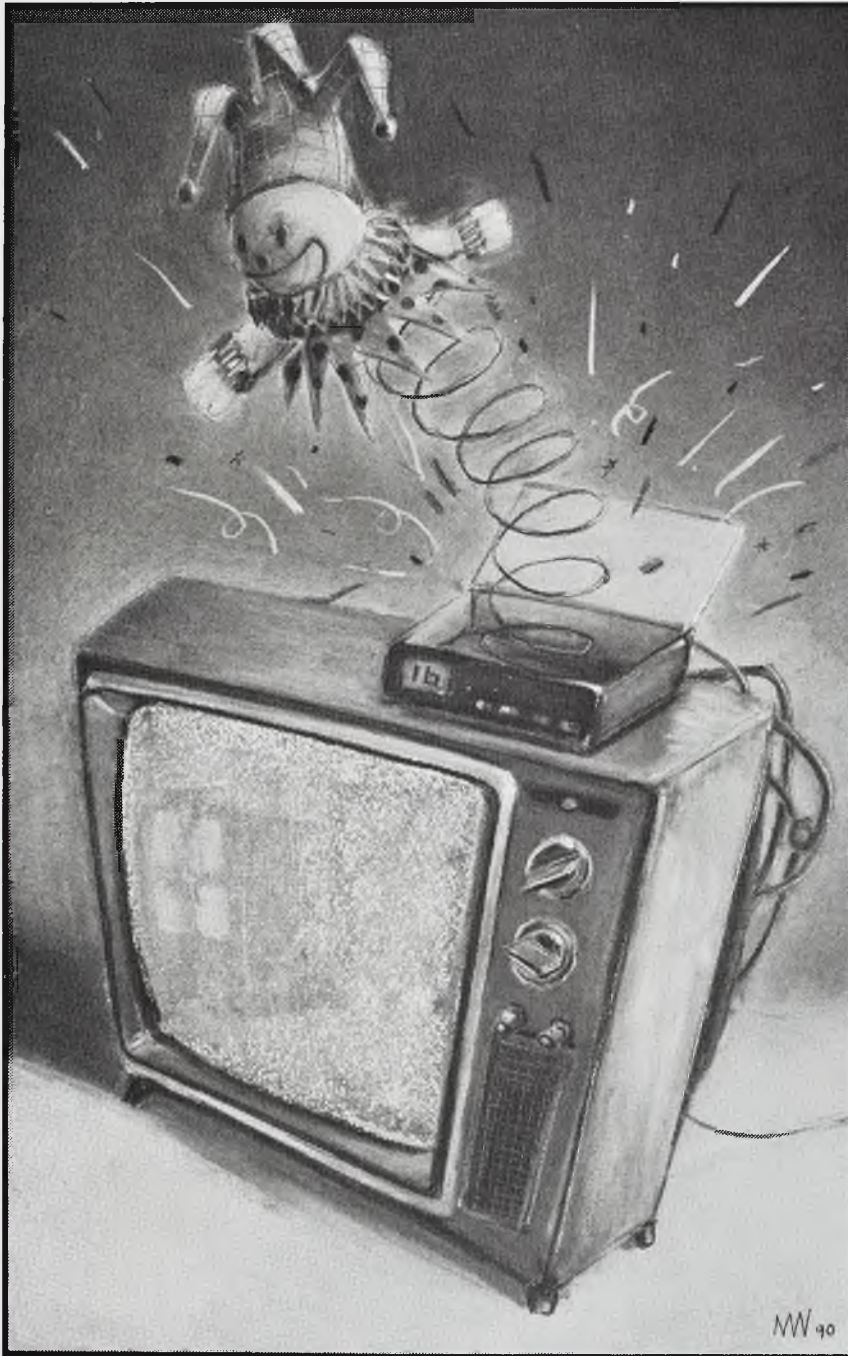
It could be worse, right?



# Why You Will Miss Dan Quayle (Seriously)

By Jim O'Grady

*Jim O'Grady is a freelance humanist living in Saint George, Staten Island.*



So what possible thing is left to say about J. Danforth Quayle — ex-officio outcast, aging former golf team captain, spontaneous aphasic, spoon-fed war hawk, moral scold to a fictional mom, and charmed appendage to viperous Marilyn? Why do I think that in Washington's current era of solemn wonkery will we miss his moronic smile, the marbly eyes gone vacant when confronted with a question, the cross-wired mind that once declared, "the real question for 1988 is whether we're going to go forward to tomorrow or past to the — to the back!"?

Because once you get beyond the loathsome ideology, Dan Quayle's patent fraudulence can give curious comfort. He's been our fuming Oz uncurtained, confirming by implication our most democratic doubt: that even though they strike their confident poses, our leaders are as clueless as the rest of us.

I don't mean to insult you by implying that Dan Quayle might resemble you in this way. But he does. Remember your dream — did you have it last night? — of standing onstage in an auditorium full of parents, teachers and schoolmates, in which you look down at the lengthy text of your lyrical valedictory speech and you find to your horror that every page is blank. And you hear the hissing whisper of the bishop who sits behind you, commanding you to speak. And you're not wearing pants.

Maybe your dream differs in detail (maybe it's a rabbi and you're topless), but the brutal human anxiety that drives it is all but universal. And even if you've never had that dream, or have successfully repressed it, surely you've been critically embarrassed at least once in your puzzling life (make that many times, which you'd realize if you didn't repress so much). The point is, seeing Dan Quayle choke with such dependable panache is like viewing this inbred phobia acted out. The effect, which registers deeper than your outrage or amusement, can be both chilling and mysteriously cathartic.

As the vice-president who deduced a pressing need to send astronauts to Mars because of canals which meant water which meant oxygen which meant "we can breath" said after reading



the book Nicholas and Alexandra, "it shows how people that are really very weird can get into sensitive positions and have a tremendous impact on history." Weird or copiously ignorant, Quayle might have added, had he a glaring introspection.

But let's linger a moment at weird. Who among us hasn't paused after gluing Barbie's arm to her forehead, or scalding the skin off a slug, or making love with your tongue to the bathroom mirror, and wondered whether a court psychiatrist, after watching the videotape, might not reasonably declare us somewhat sociopathic? And how strange it would be for our co-workers, who know us at worst as grumpy, to reconcile our businesslike image with some sensational character flaw. (Not that they wouldn't claim, in conversation among themselves, that they'd suspected as much all along, even as they described us to CBS News as "quiet and unassuming.") We're skittish about the overlap of our sordid and competent sides, hence our morbid satisfaction with the glaring revelation of someone else's vice.

These grotesque exposures tend to be squeezed by the media into one of two popular narratives: the baring of the respectable person's dark or ludicrous side (Mia's valentines, Fergie's breasts); or the deranged interior of the putatively ordinary person (Amy Fisher). With Dan Quayle we got two for the price of one.

From the platform of high office, Quayle spewed incoherence far and wide: "We are ready for any unforeseen event that may or may not occur," he once reassured the nation on the Mideast situation. An ordinary guy completely out of his depth, he served as a living variation on a Keystone beer commercial: "Wouldn't it be cool to wear a really nice suit and work in Washington, D.C.? Wow! And wouldn't it be great if they paid me to be vice-president? Excellent!" An underqualified white male gets thrust into a highly respectable job, and all of a sudden electoral politics, which strives so hard to look like a meritocracy, seems depressingly like real life. This was not all bad. With his triumph of lack of substance over packaging, Quayle provided a helpful example of the limits of image politics. No matter how deftly his handlers concealed their product's watered-down contents, Quayle would eventually flub his lines and the needle would skip off the patriotic soundtrack. Then the Eveready Bunny, our indifferent deconstructor, would intrude upon the set, beating out the ancient warning that keeps on going and going and going: that flawed human beings, inherently weird, occupy sensitive positions and have a tremendous impact on history.

If nothing else, Quayle was good for that. It seemed every tenth time he opened his mouth he

provoked a flash of insight into our social structure such as novelist Thomas Pynchon gained from a stretch in the military: "One makes the amazing discovery that grown adults walking around with college educations, wearing khaki and brass and charged with heavy-duty responsibilities, can in fact be idiots."

Harmful idiots, to boot. The second of Dan Quayle's services was to inadvertently blurt out truths about the vicious nature of key Republican policies. Commenting on a spate of Salvadoran government-backed atrocities, Quayle announced that officials in that country would continue "to work toward the elimination of human rights." Another time he assured us that the U.S. "condones violence in El Salvador." He trumpeted America's Gulf War success as "a stirring victory for the forces of aggression."

No matter how optimistic you are, you just can't count on Al Gore's saying, "the effect of blockading Haiti on the safety of its people is neglectful." You'll have to wait till '96 to be buffeted again by gusts of such bracing nonsense. (Bumper sticker nightmare: Quayle / Buchanan Is a Vote Against Mammon.) Marilyn Quayle, we're told, has gone back to practicing law; Dan, we assume, will stay home and tan in the yard, sign for UPS deliveries, and plan his run for the White

House. In the meantime, we'll be led by a man with a disquieting ability to sling pleasing bromides with Reaganesque aplomb. We might soon be pressed to remember the lesson of Dan Quayle's time on the national stage — that The Prince, for all his haberdashed gravitas, may

very well be a moral, emotional or actual buffoon.

All of which is not to say I'm ungrateful that Quayle's now further away than an ill-timed fibrillation from becoming a truly dangerous man; or that every public servant is as vacuous as him. But based on what we know of our secret selves (mirrored so ably by Dan), it's good to be wary of authorities who project an overbearing control, especially politicians and the functionaries drawn like space garbage into their orbit.

While covering the Dukakis presidential campaign, Joan Didion took note of a gaggle of "pink-cheeked young aides" with a habit of "referring to themselves, innocent of irony and therefore of history, as 'the best and the brightest.'" One worries that a similarly ambitious clique is now running their fingers over maps in the Situation Room. Hopefully, our chastening memories of Quayle will keep us from any Kennedy-like seduction. (It's no accident Clinton tries hard to claim he's another JFK, whose chivalrous Camelot rested on imperialist pillars.)

And if, in the course of a term or two, you need a useful reminder that our leaders carry weaknesses like your own, all you need do is look recently past to the — to the back.

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## Quayle / Buchanan Is a Vote Against M a m m o n

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**BEN KAUFFMAN** is a freelance photographer / writer currently from Philadelphia.

# *Shentie*

By Mike Branda

**B**efore Shentie's toddle had turned to a walk the disappearances were known to her, as such things can be known when no one dares to speak of them. She was drawn, as iron to a magnet, to the whispers that stopped as she approached; to the words floating away on the breeze; to the tale told only in the dark haunted eyes that turned to look away, the furrows of the brow and half-opened mouths that would say nothing.

She had a radiant beauty, with eyes like those of a new fawn, and a body lithe and graceful that quickly outgrew the robes her mother made for her. But her bright eyes were too often dulled when she beseeched answers, palms extended, full lips parted in expectation. For her head would be patted, arms put around her, and lies told within which kernels of truth were sometimes found. Though feared, she was endured, and by the time she had reached her thirteenth birthday she knew as much about the disappearances as any villager.

At six, she had been given the nickname of "little ghoul." A nearby neighbor, Dan Lansa, had died under his plow when his horse, spooked by a rattlesnake, bolted and dragged him to his death. Shentie visited his brother, questioned him, then stood waiting, arms folded, eyes hard. She knew the tale that she heard from the trembling lips was true, but how she knew this was uncertain even to her.

But such oddities were endured among her people and qualities other than her great beauty endeared her to them. She was kind, always ready to help with a child and willing to carry water for the old, and sit patiently with them, listening to their tales of the old days. In this way she met Sakmoisi, whose name meant "chasing one another on green field." Suddenly, the things that had troubled her for the first six years of her life became clear. She learned of her soft spot - that place on the top of one's head open at birth but closed through life only to open again at death so that one could again talk to the creator. Sakmoisi had explained many strange, wonderful things to Shentie, her low voice shaky but still strong. The words gifts of infinite value.

Sakmoisi knew that such clarity of thought and perception was given to so few, and that Shentie's Kopavi, her door to the magic of the creator, must still be open.

They were a strange pair - the ninety-two-year-old Sakmoisi and the pretty, incessantly in motion, young Shentie - but in each other they found something others could not give them. For Sakmoisi, it was the affection of a young child, something she thought she would never again experience. For Shentie, it was answers, answers to so very many questions that others would not even listen to. Shentie reveled in the learning, in the love of her teacher.

Sakmoisi let her know that the anger, the rage she felt at not knowing, was not a horrible thing as the others led her to believe. The fear that she elicited in them made them turn to anger to combat the feelings Shentie's inquiries made them face. For so long Shentie had felt like an outcast, like some weird wind blowing across the mesa twirling dust into mindless circles. She had hated herself for this inability to know what to say, when to say it and how to say it, always seeming to want to know what others knew but would not reveal. Her self loathing had reached its zenith when she was six, and then it all changed. Sakmoisi took her to her heart, and Shentie knew that the problem was not with her, but with her people, and this thing that preyed on them.

Sakmoisi died early in the summer of Shentie's thirteenth year, suddenly eradicating her naive notion of immortality. The harsh reality of death filled her mind with incessant thoughts, spiraling like the dreadful spring storms until she thought her head would explode.

She stood bravely through Sakmoisi's funeral ceremony, fighting against the shudders erupting from within. As soon as it was over she ran, filled with fear, tearing down the path from the mesa to the prairie.

She ran, oblivious to the orange sky turning red then streaking with purples of deepening hue. Time passed and the weightlessness left her, replaced by the dull effort of running, of absorbing the punishment to push off anew.

Finally, she stopped, bending over to quell her ragged breathing, blinking burning eyes, swallowing cotton in her throat. She found a spring, her nose leading her to it unerringly, knowing she would find it as soon as the idea formed. She drank deeply, dipping her hand repeatedly into the cool bubbling water issuing from an outcropping of rock by the side of a steep hill. Anointing herself, she examined her feet, cut and scraped from the run as the desert came alive around her.

The moon poked over the nearby mountains: an orange tinted gray orb dominating the sky, orchestrating the howling of the coyotes, the hooting of the owls, and the soft scurries of small animals as they emerged from their burrows. Stars began twinkling above as the last light faded

ever so slowly in the far western sky. First, she could see but one, then a handful. Soon, thousands filled the sky as the night breezes came up to chill her. The night closed in, filled with a million inhabitants, all unseen but for the moon and stars.

The fear of death was gone now, replaced by acceptance. Each day, Shentie realized, she came closer, inexorably winding down, as rain falls down from the clouds, wetting the leaves of tall trees, running to the earth, seeping through rocks into streams and rivers, flowing ever downstream to the sea to be borne up once again into the heavens to rain down again once more. Sakmoisi had rained on her, supplying nourishment of mind and spirit. Then Sakmoisi flowed away, returning to the earth to nourish it and all that lived in the world.

This obsession was her calling, morbid as it was, for the fear others felt affected her not. Her bane was the guilt, the alienation, all the things Sakmoisi had explained to her. How could she go on without her there to mediate her zeal, to keep her from letting this inner maelstrom tear her apart.

"Let it go," Sakmoisi had told her. "Love your fate, such as it is, and go forward." The words comforted her now as never before. This was her fate, to confront this thing that came when no one knew. She could not withdraw from it.

Back at the village, she descended the ladder into the pueblo. Soft sounds came from within: somewhere, someone was sick, was being attended to; someone else was toileting. She could hear the sounds of a couple making love. A smile she was unaware of creased her face as she pulled her robe up over her head and lowered herself into bed.

Though late June, the morning was cold when she awoke. Faint traces of a horrible dream weighed her thoughts as her gaze wandered about the room. The low sounds of her parents deep breathing nearby comforted her with its familiarity. A quick look let her see the slow rise of their blanket in rhythm with their breathing. And the dear feeling of comfort left her. She was checking—to see if they were alive, of all things.

Angry tears came as her stomach roiled. No Sakmoisi to mitigate these feelings and ideas; how could she go on?

A hint of activity from above prickled her senses. The discordant vibrations resonating through the walls set up a syncopated rhythm that stirred her insides to a nauseating quickening.

She dressed in a hurry and climbed the ladder quickly, barely taking notice of the morning scents of corn cakes and soft dough, flowers and grass. Blinding bright blue sky greeted her as she emerged from the pueblo. When her vision accommodated she saw the crowd of women to one side, stomping like frightened mares before a storm. She found Onelai's stout form among them, along with members of the Parrot, Butterfly, Badger and Coyote Clans. A disappearance. It had to be a disappearance.

For a brief moment she felt the wide eyes of the women focusing on her; then she realized they were looking past her and she turned to see Somengaba just emerging from the central Kiva with a bright white eagle feather in his hand. Shock etched his tired old wrinkled face. He seemed to drag his thin body across the ground, barely lifting his moccasins.

Somengaba was holding something in his left hand, cradling it as though it were a young bird too soon out of its mother's nest, mournfully holding it for the others to see.

Onelai could not believe her eyes as she watched Shentie prance toward the men in mock disinterest. With a baby three months from birth and her new responsibilities, she had had little time for her old friend of late, which she accepted with regret.

"Come, Shentie. Come stand with us. Let them confer," she said softly, hoping no others would hear.

Shentie felt Onelai's fleshy embrace, was caught leaning, and almost fell. In a flash of embarrassed frustration she pulled

away, then caught herself, capitulating with a wane smile while avoiding the eyes of the other women.

As they drew close, she leaned over and whispered into Onelai's ear. "Is it another. . .disappearance?"

Onelai stiffened. Though admiring Shentie's courage she hated this macabre fascination she had with this unholy thing, this abomination that had come to curse her people—in the Kiva no less, the most holy of places. What would be left this time: scraps of skin, bits of bone, part of an ear or eye, or, as sometimes happened, nothing at all, not even drops of blood? Would days pass before some missing person's relatives would ask of their loved one? Would the truth slowly unravel as it had before? The Kiva. The Kiva. It was always the last place they had gone, the last place they had been seen. . .alive.

"I'm sorry," Shentie said softly. She knew how such talk upset Onelai, how it always had, even when they were little girls running through the buffalo grass, laughing at the seriousness of life, at the elders and their traditions.

"If only somebody would do something," Shentie said.

Onelai heard her. "What?"

"Nothing," she replied quickly, hoping to avoid a rebuke. "I was just thinking."

Their eyes met, and they took each other in a warm embrace, standing still, the sides of their faces pressed together, feelings of shared grief and wordless apologies passing between them.

That afternoon she went to Otekwapniwa, the old medicine man who had become her new mentor. Unlike Sakmoisi, who spoke explicitly of things, Otekwapniwa couched his utterances in riddles and parables.

"Our people have closed their hearts and minds. It is the only defense left," he had said, leaning forward from his seated position on the cluttered floor of his room. He would say no more.

Shentie knew the session was over and left, pondering his words. It was true: her people had closed their hearts. They had welcomed the Tasavuh, the Head Pounders, when they had come begging for food, bedraggled and forlorn. The Tasavuh had become strong. They preyed on her people, stealing food, rustling cattle, forcing the Hopi to give up land that had been theirs for centuries.

The brown man came, killed and enslaved them, forced a strange god upon them, compelled them to forsake their heritage. They did nothing.

All would be made right again, the prophecy said. The Pahana, the lost white brother from across the sea, would come.

The white man did come. He was not the Pahana. He was a bigoted, imperialistic fortune seeker who took the land from her people at the point of a gun, then self-righteously parceled it back to them. Her people just shook their heads, knew that it was not the prophecy, that it was yet to come, and they hardened their hearts as they swallowed their pride.

The disappearances were yet another affront. One by one they had fallen prey to this thing, had done nothing. Shentie could not wait, could not sit by and let this thing keep happening. Surely the elders knew more than they told, had found some clue, were seeking this monster. But surely not. It had been going on for years.

She forced herself upon the elders, asking the same question of them all: How long? Out among the Bear, Eagle, Spider, Fire, Parrot and Coyote Clans she went, probing at a wound most wanted left alone. Shrouded in secrecy and mysticism was an answer too horrible to fathom, defying understanding, yet accepted without logic or reason. This she could not accept. Her young mind had not yet the wisdom to comprehend

this.

The press of bodies and the warmth of the day combined as formidable allies against concentration. Obengonko's address to the initiates had gone on far too long. Shentie could not pay attention, could not focus on the words. They were as a chorus of night noise, saying little as her mind wandered in and out of dream thoughts on its way to sleep.

Finally, it was over. She rose, stretched, waited patiently as her fellow initiates filed up the ladder before her. As she reached to grab hold of the ladder she felt something, a presence, and whirled around to see the plump body and wide puffy face of Onelai.

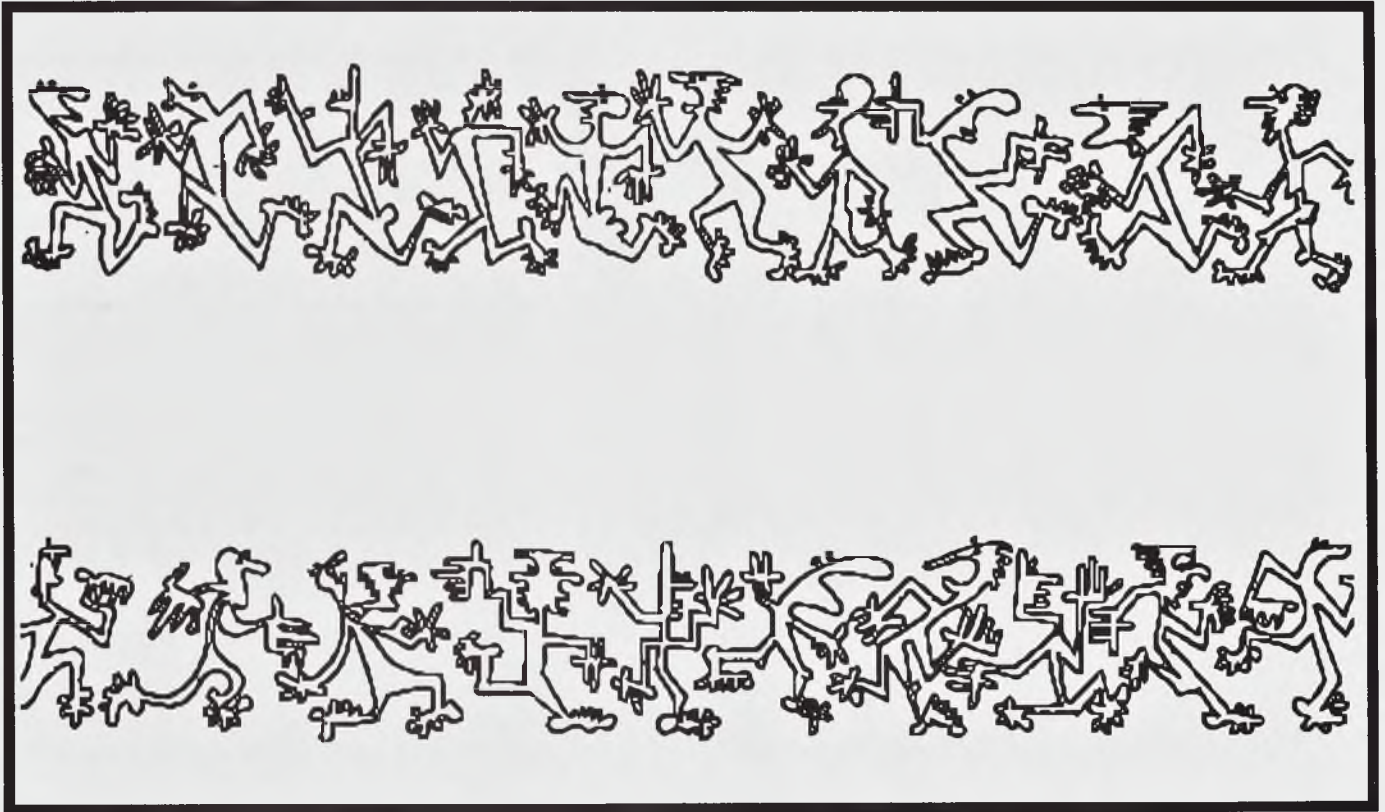
"The ceremony is but four days away. Can you not put aside this quest for . . . this truth you seek . . . and pay attention to your life. . . the lives of others. This is important. We must keep the ceremonies, and keep them well." Her voice changed from the tone of a caring friend to the shrill stiff wail of a martinet. "It is our fault, all of us, that these tragedies have come upon us: the Tasavuh, the brown man, the white man, this thing. Taiowa knows we do not sing his songs any longer, that we no longer

one can understand. Have you considered that? You are still just a child, but a child about to accept the responsibilities of adulthood. Shentie, put this thing away." Her dark pigtailed shook on either side of her head in exclamation.

Shentie did not see the need for a reply. This constant arguing served no purpose. It was clear Onelai was the one who would never understand no matter what words she put her thoughts into. A violent quivering shook her lips. She fought the urge to wipe at the tears welling up in her eyes, setting her hands instead on firm hips that just months before had been narrow and straight. She was becoming a woman, in more ways than one. A thought came to her then.

"Well, answer me." Onelai's shrill voice echoed in the empty chamber.

Shentie was lost in rapture. None of the victims had been children. Or had they? She had no answer for Onelai, for this she was sorry, but she had to go. Without a word, she clambered quickly up the ladder into the hot afternoon sun where she could go think without distraction.



keep our minds pure and free of hatred."

"Onelai, please!" Was it not enough to hate herself for what she was driven by unseen hands to do? Did the person she cared most about have to excoriate her also? She pushed against the ladder, causing a shower of debris from above which she closed her eyes against too late. Tears came, running down her face. But it did not matter; she would have cried anyway.

"Why," she screamed. "Why must we always sit and wait in placid acceptance of what is? We must not show our bows in anger. This I understand. To kill another in anger is wrong. But this—this I do not understand."

Onelai had to put Shentie on the right path, for her sake as well as the pueblo's. "Why must you understand," she said, her eyes coal hard, her arms folded tightly across her swollen abdomen. "Perhaps it is a thing you cannot understand, that no

Otekwapniwa sat in his room by a small Juniper fire, smoking a long pipe, chanting an indecipherable melody. She knelt a few feet from him, hands on thighs, staying quiet. Here, with the colored sand paintings on the floor, the corn and eagle feather pahos laid out, skins adorned with symbols hanging on the walls and the scent of the Juniper fire, his power was a tangible thing.

"I am done, pretty one. You may ask me now."

A tremor poked at her heart. Wondering if he could read minds as it was said, she decided on a test. "Have you ever had to kill a man, Otekwapniwa?"

He kept still, the flames dancing in his dark eyes, like great cat's eyes in the night. "Do you think your age will protect you? It may not. There is no certainty here."

She took a deep breath to quiet herself, wiped sweaty

palms on her dress. "So, they have all been adults."

His face was still as rock.

"Maybe it cannot kill children. Maybe it has no power over the young," she said.

"And perhaps it just prefers to kill adults since children offer it no challenge."

Her breath caught in her throat.

"How do you know the others have not tried to kill it?"

He tapped his pipe out into one gnarled hand, paying such close attention, the task took on the air of a sacrament. Finished, he lay the empty pipe on a rabbit skin at his side.

"Have you tried? Have you?" She asked.

He smiled, red tongues of flame dancing in the sheen of his wrinkled face. "No, I have not. But I know one who has."

"Who?" she asked with excitement. "Who?"

"Tawakptiwa."

It was the old Parrot Clan Member's bones that had been found in the Kiva three days ago. She fought the urge to flee the room. Futility, unwanted yet relentless, crept into her being. "What can I do?" she asked. Her arrogance replaced by a morose anger. She balled her hands, bent over and pounded the soft ground in anguish.

Otekwapniwa noted every nuance. She had the fire, the pride of a warrior, the mind of a Shaman, the guile and flexibility of a woman while still possessing the innocence and purity of a child. How much had she learned from Sakmoisi's teaching? More importantly, how much could she use against this thing that came when no one knew.

Four days before the Lakon Ceremony. Age would not make her invulnerable, but once initiated in the ceremony, once exposed to the secrets and mystery of womanhood, she would be at even greater risk. With every gain comes a loss.

He knew the one thing she dared not lose was this singleminded determination that drove her. With his help, it might be enough.

"You must enter the Kiva alone. There you must stay, abstaining from food and salt. Take only water with you." He went to his bed, picked up a browned, brittle pahos as he began mumbling a prayer. Avoiding her eyes, he handed the wrapped corn and eagle feather totem to her. "Keep this at your left side. Place a pile of corn meal at your right and a fine white eagle feather in front of you. Your back must be against a wall that faces the setting sun."

Surely she had misunderstood him. Alone, in the Kiva, now, after his warning, with nothing save a pile of corn meal, a pahos and an eagle feather. Obviously he meant to frighten her away.

"Take nothing else with you," he said, as if reading her thoughts. "One more thing: You are a virgin still?"

"Yes. . . I am," she answered sharply.

"Quiet yourself. The question has reason. You must not fear for another. You will be alone in the Kiva, with your great spirit and no other, until. . ."

"How will I know what to do? How long will it take? What if I fall asleep?"

"Do not fall asleep or you will die."

A stern warning, yet spoken so plainly she would think he had told her not to touch a cactus lest she prick her finger.

Silence, except for the low crackling of the fire, filled the room. Shentie stood waiting.

"Yes?" he finally said.

"You forgot to give me the eagle feather."

"I did not," he said, absorbed with feeding the small fire.

"That you must find for yourself."

She backed away, angry and confused, the sounds of his chant filling her mind like an angry wind, staying with her as she

walked away, a simple melody, a scale rising and falling without end.

High in the mountains the afternoon sun tore into the part at the top of her head, soft flesh under a hot knife. Her back ached angrily, tingling with every awkward movement of her soft moccasins on the rocks. The unoccupied nest sat a few yards away on the narrow ledge.

She inched forward, pliant fingers probing the rocks for a hold, cramps stinging her hands. Suddenly, her left hand pulled free. Her weight shifted. The sky spun crazily, alternating deep blue, then white clouds, then the blinding fury of the sun. She arched her back, pushed against the unbearable pressure on her left leg and slammed back into the cruel rock face where her sweaty palms slid along the crumbly surface. Her left foot could find no purchase. All her weight pitched sideways again. She tried to turn, to put one foot over the other, and then slammed back into the rock.

Pain burned her left cheek, but she was still.

With great effort she forced her eyes open. Below, the prairies formed a patchwork of browns, greens and yellows. Spread out, she inched to her right, found a grip, a place to put a foot, a moment to rest. Her neck ached horribly, but she forced it to turn and found the nest. Her heart turned cold. The largest eagle she had ever seen stood in it, just folding back his wings from landing. For a moment she almost forgot where she was, felt the weightlessness again and had to slam back into the rock.

A cool breeze danced along the back of her neck tickling her. She did not want it to tickle, such a girlish thing. She did not want any of this, any of it at all.

"Stupid Bird!" she screamed, yanking her head around to face the creature. The nest was still yards away, perched on a narrow, crumbling crest, unreachable. She had almost lost her life for nothing, probably just what Otekwapniwa wanted, the old buzzard.

The loud flapping, all in a rush, startled her. Never had she been this close to so large a beast as it took flight, so close she could feel the powerful strokes of its great wings pulling it skyward, a sky open to it everywhere. The shadow of it passed over her for a scant second and was gone. Then another small wisp of a shadow caught her eye. A feather, a bright white feather drifted down to settle on the narrow edge just to her right.

The Kiva's earthen scent issued from the dark, narrow passageway, set deep within the multi-tiered pueblo. She passed through into the cool space, fixed her direction, found her place, trying to maintain the air of mundane distraction, as though it were something she did everyday. From her bag she withdrew the pahos and corn meal, then the eagle feather. Holding it aloft, she ran the fingers of her left hand along its length, feeling the softness that belied its great strength. After laying it in front of her she sat up straight. "There now. I'm ready," she said softly. Nothing happened. The Kiva remained visible in the dim light. Noises of the village drifted in, muted, disconnected tones. The altar dipped below, set on another level as in all Kiva. Pictographs adorned the walls. A pile of colored sand from an old sand painting sat in one corner as if waiting for someone to come sweep it up.

Ceremonies had been performed here since time forgotten. Holy was this place. But now, she felt as though it were any room. . . and that told her that something was happening. Something was very wrong.

A tingling from the back of her head sent hot tendrils over her ears. Her arms grew heavy then numb. Spasms coursed through her back. Eyes that were wide open, now felt swollen, too heavy to keep open.

"Do not fall asleep or you will die," echoed in her mind.

She dared a slow look to her right, then back left. Nothing. Her dry tongue passed over lips now cracked. She reached inside her basket for one of the water jars, cringing at the impossibly loud crinkling of the reeds as she found the smooth edge of one of the jars which she lifted to her mouth with shaking hands. The cool water cleared her head, lightened her spirits.

"Wo, this is how it will be. I have passed the first test." But her satisfaction faded as she considered the cleverness of her opponent, dreading what was to come, though anxious for it.

Darkness came, and she was afraid of the dark as never before, for something evil dwelled here, and the darkness would hide it. She held her breath, strained to hear, distracted by the pounding of the blood rushing in her ears.

"Uhhh!" She snapped her head back, frightened by her own noise, then by the intensity of her fear. She should leave, must leave now. It would let her go, a child, a mere snip of a thing challenging it. This was madness. She was a fool, a stupid young fool. How could she have done this, come here, alone, in the dark.

"Oh, Shentie," she moaned, giving in to the tears.

A presence, close by, clean—the only thought she could recognize—it was clean, and not this unclean beast. A trap? No, this was something else, something holy. It was the Kiva, its goodness and grace, Sotuknang peering down through the mists, smiling on her people, happy to see them keeping the way, singing his songs, praying. This place was with her, the other side in this duality of nature.

It came to her now, the nature of things. Life intertwined, each thing dependent on another and yet another, all parts in a long chain with no greater importance placed on one link than any other since each was important in that it was part of the whole.

She was such a link, between the light and the dark. As she had the thought, the eagle feather came to life, glowing white, illuminating the Kiva in a shimmering brilliance. This was her place, had always been, not by her choice but by the choice of the great power of the universe. She could not help but laugh. She, who thought this quest for truth was her own doing now realized she had never had any choice in the matter. The years of questioning, the blind obsession with this matter to the exclusion of all others had been her training for just this moment.

Wide, white, black-tipped wings appeared at the edge of the light, yards wide, spreading from a huge shadowy body. It floated toward her, shaking its snake's head, coyote legs scraping angrily at the sand, pawing defiantly, beckoning her to the fight, fainting and retreating, toying with her. The great feathered chest heaving with each rasping breath, prominent ribs undulating grotesquely.

A rasping guttural screech came from it: "So, another one, and so young. . . and pretty." It howled a coyote howl, long and dreadful.

She fought to recall Otekwapniwa's haunting melody, but it slipped away, elusive as a stream of water in one's bare hand.

"You can't escape me like that," it said, looming over her. "None of those pitiful tricks will help you here. Hah! You don't even know who I am. Do you?"

She rattled her head uncontrollably, willing to do anything to placate it.

"Guess. Guess, I say. You want to live, don't you?"

Death was close, but to die like this, torn apart, tortured, humiliated, defiled by this thing, this was more than she

could bear. She wanted to spit in its face, that horrible leering face, but even if she could form the saliva she could never summon the courage. She had the thing she had wanted for so long, but nothing could have prepared her for this.

"I am your long lost white brother from across the water," it said, its voice a horrible guttural rasp as it bent over, turning the side of its face to her, one dark, postulant eye transfixed, a leering smile on its snake thin lips.

Enough, she thought. "What do you want," she sobbed.

It reared back its snake's head, dark scales rippling on its throat and laughed a loud, choking croak. Then it bent forward, pushing its face so close she could smell its rancid breath, feel the sickening warmth on her face.

"What do I want," it said, pushing its face closer, blocking out the eagle feather's light. "You summoned me."

A hundred thoughts coalesced in her mind: Onelai's warning's, the surreptitious nature of the elders, Otekwapniwa and the eagle feather, the pahos and corn meal. It was an offering. . . to this thing. Her life hung in the balance now, hinged on the unknown answer she must give.

"You had no idea, did you?" The huge eyes blinked. "I come to offer what you want, what they all wanted: salvation, and deliverance from your enemies."

This was the choice. Which one had the others made, all made, for they had all died. Yes or no, which one?

Too close, it was distracting her, looming over her, waiting for her to make that fatal mistake. A Hopi must not show his bow in anger; this all Hopi believed. They were a people of peace and would die as a race to preserve that.

"Then save my people and deliver us from our enemies," she said quickly, bracing herself.

"Are you sure?" It asked in a soft mother's voice.

She almost recanted, but then realized It was trying to fool her, to get her to change her mind.

"Yes, I am sure."

"Then it is begun."

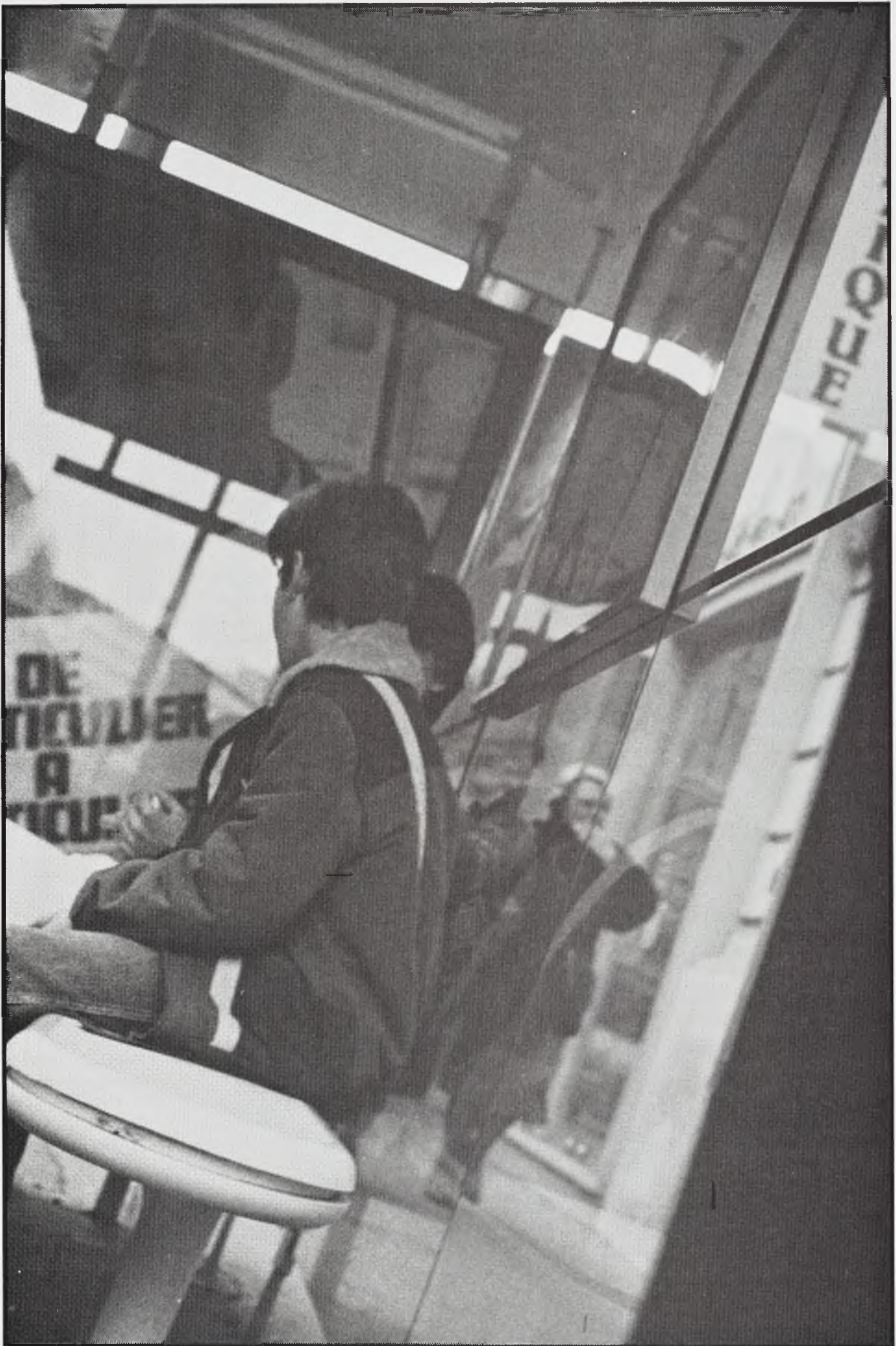
It retreated slowly, floating back into the shadows.

"The white man is greedy and shortsighted. He sees not that he is part of this world, only a very small part. He seeks to conquer what cannot be conquered, to tame the untamable. He uses up the land, then moves on, as if the land were infinite. The water too he spoils, using it to drain away his refuse, to carry his ships and to use in their engines. The air he fills with clouds of smoke, burning more wood than he needs to keep warm. His machines use other fuels taken from the earth, torn from her, leaving her scarred and broken from the taking. Soon, he will build more machines to make more things, superfluous things, which he will discard before they are used up, just to make newer things, which in turn will be discarded before they are worn out."

"A push here, a nudge, and I will send them on a path of destruction. One day soon they will unleash a horrible power which they will first use to destroy, then tame to use for energy. They will fight, again and again, for there will be far too many of them to share the dwindling resources. The end is not far away, a blink of any eye for me, a lifetime for you. The white man and the Tasavuh, who will take on the white man's ways and become like him, will be extinguished. Together with those of all other lands they will be consumed in the conflagration."

And then he was gone.

Shentie is old now. Sixty years have passed since that night in the Kiva. Few days remain in her life. She is bent over, wrinkled, no longer beautiful, and she smells death coming for her. And for the rest of us. . . what comes for us.





# Waiting for Lynne Grain

By Julie Tulip-Walsh

I was sitting in my wig-wam, reading last week's Mandy. Mrs. Greenly was in Paris with her school girls. She was wearing an emerald green dress, which became her, and she had met a tall dark handsome man in a cafe in Montmartre. I wondered when I would meet a tall, dark, handsome man. What would I do, and what would I say to him? My older sister was at that age: the age of meeting tall dark handsome men. But she hadn't met not even one yet. It seemed to me that she spent many hours trying: painting her face all sorts of colours, brushing her hair 150 strokes a day, changing the parting, wearing Musk perfume behind her ears and knees, and under her armpits, and making clothes out of pretend silk, nylon actually, too short above the knee, and too low in the neckline, as my father would keep pointing out. But not one tall, dark, handsome man had knocked on our door. I heard her tell my mother, in despair, that she would be glad if a short, fat, light haired man came around. Once the boy on Enid Way, Nigel, gave her a dead bird in a shoe box. On it he had written:

To Cheryl,  
Love your ardent admirer,  
Nifty Nigel.

But he didn't fit the description. Besides, I think my sister thought that there was something wrong with him. Whenever we went to Hunniball's to buy food for tea, my sister wouldn't walk on the same side of the street as Nigel's house. She would cross the road and walk on the otherside, with her nose pointed up at the sky. One time he sat idly on his gate, probably in the hope of seeing my sister, but she said "Oh God!" with such contempt that I thought she had gone religious (because she was prone to dramatic behaviour), and ran across the road, nearly getting run over by a red mini with furry dice hanging from its mirror. I felt sorry for Nigel and said, "My sister doesn't like dead birds. Perhaps you should try chocolates." But then regretting what I had said, on the way back down the road (he was still sitting on the gate), I said, "Try giving her a pound of gob stoppers." My sister would hate him forever if he bought her those.

I was sitting on an old wooden crate, with the comic on my lap, my elbows resting on my knees, and my hands supporting my chin. My dog, Chipstick, was laying in the wig-wam with her head poking out through the opening. Her eyes were closed but one ear was cocked, on guard for any uninvited tresspassers. We were waiting for my friend Lynne Grain. Outside the air was very still, and I hoped it would stay that way because the slightest breeze would make my wig-wam fall down. I had built it, with the help of my next door neighbour Buddah - who was a boy scout - out of a rusty old drain pipe and a plastic tarpaulin. Buddah wasn't his real name, it was Malcom, but he was from India, so we called him Buddah. He didn't seem to mind. He called me Honky and my sister Goofy. My mother had once asked why we couldn't call each other by our christian names. But Buddah wasn't christian, and nor were we really. So I don't know why she even bothered to ask.

It was midday and so the sun sat in its highest point in the sky and beat down on the tarpaulin unmercifully. I could barely breath and so I joined Chipstick on the ground, and stuck my head out the opening also. The crickets in the long grass talked much too fast for a hot day such as this one. Their talk dominated all the other summer sounds. I liked summer sounds. I missed them in the winter. Once I had recorded them on my sister's tape recorder, but it wasn't the same. I liked the sound of the sun the best: a sizzling whisper that was long and lazy.

While rummaging around in my pocket I found an old hard boiled sweet stuck to the material. I ate it because I was much too hungry to worry about the lint and other bits stuck to it. Lynne Grain was supposed to be bringing our lunch: salt and vinegar crisps and a box of jaffa cakes. She was going to steal them from Hunniball's. It was very easy to steal from old Hunniball because he was always too busy tiggling married ladies near the bottom when his wife wasn't looking. Lynne Grain told me that once, when she

came home from school, he was there having a cup of tea with her mother wearing only his underwear. I had been shocked and didn't believe her. Then one time I came home from school and old Hunniball just walked right through the back door and to the bottom of our stairs, shouting, "'Libby, Libby,' where are you?" He hadn't seen me and jumped a little when I said, from behind his back, "She's not home." I knew she was but I had visions of him sitting, having a cup of tea with my mother, with only his underwear on, and I wanted to get rid of him as quickly as possible. My father was pulling into the driveway when old Hunniball was sauntering back up the garden path. The man even waved to my father, and said, very smugly, "Lovely day, Gordon." My father didn't wave back, but his eyes were very dark and I felt a little sick. He walked quickly inside and up the stairs. I heard my mother sobbing. We didn't get any tea or dinner that day, and I couldn't sleep because my stomach kept me awake. Buddah had said that his father sometimes went without food for days as a gift to his God. The one with all the arms. "What kind of gift is that?" I had asked. "Surely a pony or a chocolate easter egg, stuffed with smarties, or even a piece of my mother's Christmas cake would be nice," I had said. But Buddah said that the God was very pleased with the gift of suffering. I was sorry then that I didn't believe in a God myself, because then the going without my dinner wouldn't have been for nothing.

Lynne Grain was hoping to live with me and Chipstick in the wig-wam. We had a sleeping bag, a kettle, two wooden crates, a plastic teaset, really only big enough for a doll, and a tin box we had found by the railway. She couldn't stand it at home anymore. Her sister bullied her and practiced french kissing with her. Her sister wasn't normal. At the beginning of the summer she had made us tie her ankles and hands together, and then tie her by the neck to the door handle. She was naked and we were to pretend that she was our captive. She told us to go away for a while and then return. But we walked to the marshland to feed the wild horses, and forgot to go back. Finally her mother found her and when we came home we got such a hiding that I was sore for days.

Lynne Grain's father never went to work at the bakery anymore. Instead he sat cuddling on the settee with the 350 lb lady from across the street. She was the ugliest lady I had ever seen. Lynne couldn't understand it either.

Her mother was going to move in with the man that owned the Norfolk pub. Her mother was supposed to be having an affair with him. I found this very hard to believe. Only in France or Italy did people have affairs. In England it seemed impossible; the weather wasn't right for it, and people went to bed too early. She didn't fit the description of women that have affairs either. Lynne Grain's mother wore slippers and curlers in public and smoked like a trooper - as my father always said. She wore a faded old house coat with egg stains down the front of it. Lynne Grain had never seen the man that owned the pub. I wondered, as I waited for my friend, if he was tall, dark and handsome. He probably was.

Tonight I'd remember to tell my sister not to worry so much about being beautiful. It really didn't matter. Things are never as you expect them to be.

*. . . I write about the dynamics of family relationships. I am particularly interested in that illusion of surface normalacy and the underlying disquieting notion of dysfunction. I choose to write in the voice of a child because inside me lives this funny person, much smaller than myself, who wants, with a tenacious intensity, to be heard.*

*My stories usually deal with the transition of childhood into adulthood. This passage is particularly hard because it doesn't happen gradually (like your hair growing longer) but awful moment of clarity - which I imagine some people only experience again, if they are lucky, when they die, and if they are very unlucky they experience it everyday, and it gets to be very painful. It is a moment when you realize that the isolation you felt as a child, and always thought being an adult would make all the difference, remained. And you find yourself in a world where people continue to pass one another, never really touching, never really talking, and never really understanding.*

*The strength from which I draw upon to write is due to the people who inspire me: Dylan Thomas, Gerald Durrell, J.D. Salinger, Francine Prose, Morty Schiff, my family (in an odd and round-about way), and my long since passed childhood friend, Chilly, my dog.*

Julie Tulip-Walsh

# The Fire In El Lay

By Tom Taaffe

All civilization is built on the brutalization of its subject peoples. America built its empire on the genocide of its indigenous inhabitants, enslavement of millions, mostly African (but including Native American and some early Irish slaves), and the merciless exploitation of most of the immigrants that ventured across its borders.

## IN THE BEGINNING

Even in colonial America, it was recognized that more people were being exploited than were enjoying the fruits of their harvests bounty. Early in the settlement of the Carolinas, it was noted by the Governor of that colony, that there were many more African slaves than white settlers and that there were even more Native Americans than slaves. With this political reality in mind, he advised his constituents to take what measures necessary to ensure that there were no alliances forged between Africans and Americans, lest their numerically superior foes take advantage of this potential and overthrow their oppressors.

Consequently, the Governor set up a bounty system that rewarded Native Americans for the return of runaway slaves. This was reinforced with scary tales of the fierce and unforgiving nature of the Native Americans towards Africans (told to their slaves). Their poor white indentured servants were isolated from solidarity with the slave populations by reinforcing the illusion of their impending "freedom" and the "unhuman" nature of the African slaves.

In this way, a small minority managed to maintain their dominance over an overwhelming majority of oppressed people, with the consequences of this effort still being felt and exploited to this day.

The English were masters of this process of "divide and rule". By using this technique, they managed to gain control of an enormous percentage of the

world's resources and peoples. This skill was then learned and developed by their "daughter" empire, The United States.

This pattern of divide and conquer, and its subsequent exploitation of both people and resources continues to this day, sometimes masked in the benign rhetoric of the New Deal, sometimes crudely played out, as with the Reagan administration's vilification of the poor.



## THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

As the 19th century tumbled into the 20th, the rising struggle between the rich and poor began to take on theoretical terms and both political and violent struggle became the tone of the emerging century. The first response of the economic elite was to beat it to death. This tactic, unfortunately led to greater resentment and to the realization by the ruling class that people with nothing to lose had everything to gain by struggle, while the wealthy had everything to lose. This, in turn, led to a policy of appeasement, and out of this approach, the New Deal was born.

## A CHICKEN IN EVERY POT

The crux of this theory was that if you give enough of the working class something to lose, then they will be much more reluctant to destroy that which the ruling

elite have, particularly when their economic survival is tied to their employers success. Thus the policy of "a chicken in every pot" at once co-opted the socialist argument (and the focus of their struggle) and at the same time prevented their success.

This policy proved to be enormously successful for the generation following the Great Depression. Their memories of what deprivation and poverty had been like, was first hand enough to make them quite happy with gains they had gotten, and, given the sacrifices that

they made, left them feeling they could take credit for the "gains" of the New Deal.

Their children, however, growing up in the late fifties and sixties, accepted these gains as a matter of birthright (much as do the wealthy) and began to ask for more. Fueled by a greatly democratized educational system, and supported by a wealthy and stable economy, these students began to question the nature of existence and work and were demanding greater and greater reform of the democratic structures and processes of the world that they lived in.

This was an unexpected side effect of the policy of appeasement that the ruling elite had not considered and a new phase in the war for the control of the world began to take shape.

## **PULLING THE CHAIR OUT FROM UNDER US**

Driven in part, by these circumstances and in part, by the larger game of global monetary systems, The Nixon Administration began to dismantle the pillars that had ensured the stability of America's economy. By taking America off of the last remainants of the gold standard, he unleashed a flow of forces that ultimately destroyed the unity of the reemerging democratic movements within the United States.

To put it simply, in the mid-sixties, \$2000 was sufficient to provide a person a minimal level of survival in the society. After Nixon had gotten finished devaluating the dollar, however, one needed \$5000 to \$8000 for the same level of existence. This escalation of living standards has continued to this day. Zero dollars is still zero dollars, but now the margin of survival is much higher. People who could have devoted their time to social and political reform had to now go to work. Sometimes they had to work two jobs to stay afloat. They had less free time and had to work much harder to maintain themselves above water.

With the rise of elite planning groups like the Trilateral Commission, and conservative think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, (not to mention such post-WWII organizations as the International Monetary Fund [IMF], the Bilderberg Meetings, the Organization for Economic Development [OECD], the Organization of European Economic Cooperation [OEEC] and the Council on Foreign Relations [CFR]) plans were beginning to be laid to prevent such social "anomalies" like the communist movements of the thirties and later the cultural revolution of the sixties from happening again.

## **TURNING OFF THE WATERFALL**

After the Trilateral Commission (founded by David Rockefeller, Henry Kissinger and Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski) had successfully engineered the rise of the Carter Presidency, these elites began to map out how to undermine the power of America's labor unions (starting with plans laid out under the Carter Administration to break the Air Traffic Controllers Union [PATCO]) and otherwise limiting the growing institutional power of America's left.

The new strategy was to somehow get the American people to accept "less". This was done by

using the enormous debt of the world industrializing nations (fueled by a rampant military build up) as a pretext for a national policy of "belt-tightening" that was supposed to be shared by all, but was, in fact, a reality for the working classes and a grand swindle for the rich.

These conservative elements in America manipulated the Iranian Crisis to the advantage of the reactionary elements of our society. First, by manufacturing the crisis by allowing the Shah into the country despite the explicit warnings of the Iranian government. Doing this allowed the consortium of banks led by Rockefeller to attach the assets of the Shah (which he had just stolen from the Iranian nation) to pay for the 24 billion in debts that he had run up. Then the same newspaper chains that had catapulted Carter from obscurity to the Presidency, turned with equal co-ordination on him and whipped up a conservative backlash full of racist and anti-Islamic rhetoric. This conservative elite, backed up by disenfranchised CIA operatives cashiered during the Carter years, betrayed a sitting President by negotiating with the Iranians to keep the hostages in Iran until after the election (did anyone say traitor? Bush? Reagan? Casey?). In doing so, they secured a truly conservative presidency in the Reagan Administration. These conservative elements in the Trilateral Commission and their brethren in the Heritage Foundation then seized the opportunity to enact a radical program to at once, deregulate virtually all industries, encourage the flight of America's industrial base to third world labor markets, the looting of the national treasury and the conduction of a covert program to "defund" the left.

The conservative movement identified the left as "hiding" in three areas, the social services system, the education system and the arts. In a political example of "feed a cold, starve a fever" the Reagan administration systematically gutted the social service system. They vilified the poor in America, blaming them for the nation's ills and by the careful use of code words, callously fanned the flames of racism. "Welfare" became a code word for supporting blacks and hispanics and reinforced stereotypes of "lazy" negroes sponging off of "hardworking" white people. They also exploited the cities as a way of further promoting a racist society. By vilifying such cities as New York and Los Angeles, they played on "white" America's traditional fears of the immigrant and multi-cultural population found in these cities. Since cities tend to be more "liberal" than suburbia or more rural areas, defunding the cities served to reinforce the conservative agenda.

So the slow and piecemeal reforms of the sixties and seventies hit a brick wall in the eighties. As the fortunes of all working class people began to slide from bad to worse, the Reagan administration wrapped its program in the flag of "patriotism" and used the subtle racism of its rhetoric to keep the poor and working class divided along racial lines. Any of the fragile gains made between cultures in America were cruelly slashed by a cynical policy of exploitation, disinformation and outright corruption. As the eighties evolved, the economic policies of the Reagan Administration began to have profound effects on the quality of life in America. By opening the borders to unbridled free trade, and by crudely undermining the regulatory systems that support domestic industry, The Reagan Administration reduced the job base in America, thus forcing people to compete with each other for the ever decreasing supply of jobs. This

further undermined the power of the labor unions and added stress and increasing hostility toward social reforms such as affirmative action. Hidden in all of this, was an unprecedented squandering of the nations assets in a massive liquidation sale that made a few billionaires and the rest of us unemployed.

This process also left the nation four trillion dollars in debt. Reagan/Bush quadrupled a debt burden in twelve years that took the nation 204 years to create. Many involved in this scandal understood that the political pendulum would one day swing back to the left. So they dismantled every law and regulation that they could. Reagan and his band of pirates stole every dollar they could and made every acquisition possible (often selling federal lands to cronies at far below cost, never mind what the market would bear). They installed all the reactionary "moles" they could in the judicial system or elsewhere in the bureaucracy, the better to aid them in entrenching their position or stalling the march of social reform when the pendulum finally returned the other way.

### THE END OF THE "LIBERAL" MEDIA

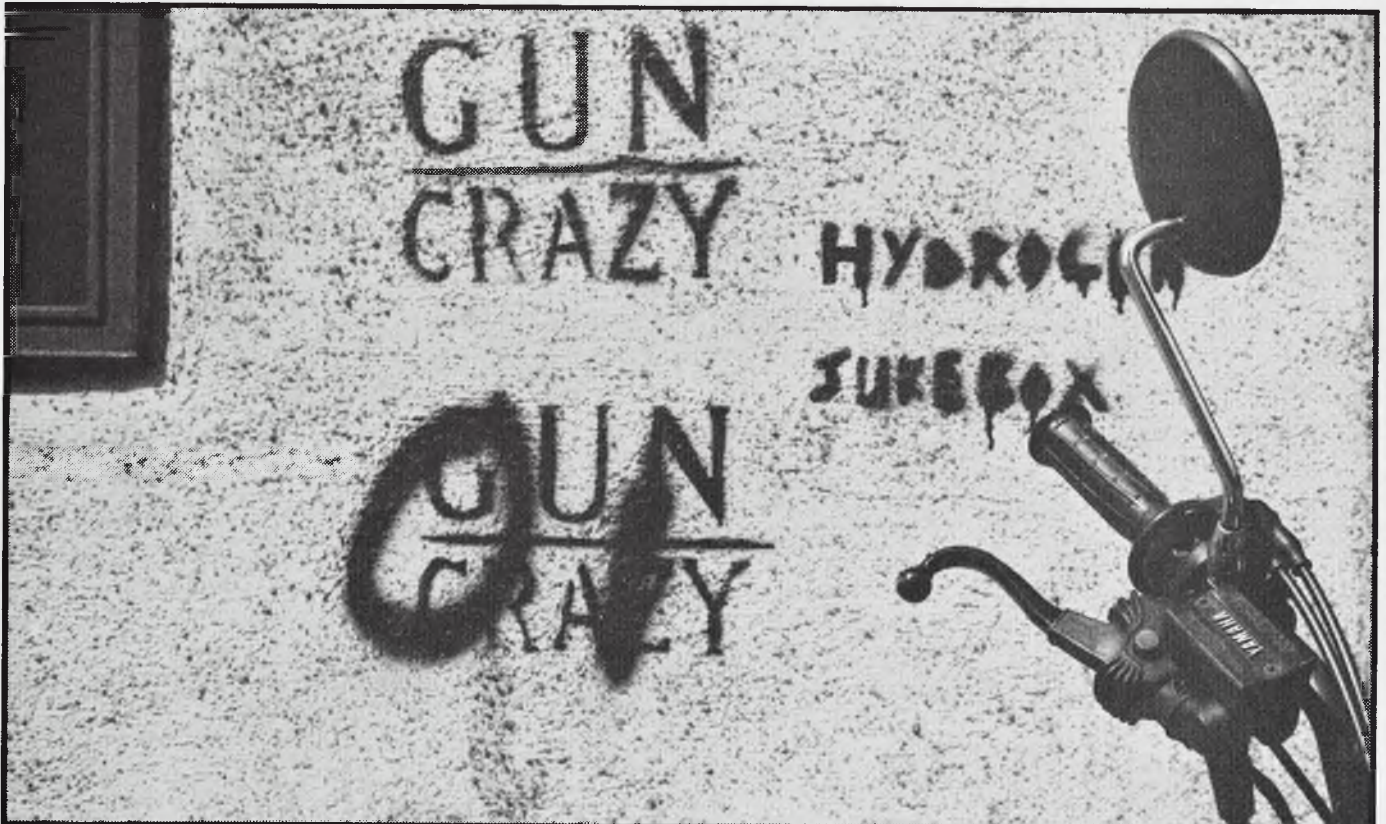
The collapse and near impeachment of Richard Nixon, and the uproar of the opposition to the Vietnam War, did not go unnoticed by these elites. The very real cultural revolution of the sixties was driven, in no small part, by a younger generation's greater understanding of the power of the media. This, in turn led the forces of international capitalism to realize that the media had become a weapon in the struggle for control of the world's resources and means of production. The process of consolidation and control then extended to the world of communications. Military-industrial-complex corporations such as Capital Cities (ABC) and General Electric

(NBC) bought up the television networks along with other conservative corporations. Newspapers and magazines were purchased by by major publishing houses that were often willing to lose money for years in a given market in order to gain control of that market.

This allowed a consolidation of media power that permitted a few to better control the dissemination of information. The reality of a "liberal" media soon became a myth, if in fact it had any depth to begin with. This power, once consolidated, allowed access to information to be tightly controlled in America, often distorting international events by callously suppressing the facts and ignoring stories that begged for attention. In this way the media became willing bedfellows of the international elite's attempt to control the opinions of Americans. Such stories like the Reagan administration's secret deal with the Iranians before the 1980 election (to keep the hostages in captivity, thus disgracing Carter), were common knowledge in Europe, as it had been reported by the Prime Minister of the Iranian Revolutionary government, Bani Sadr. Yet it took ten years to come out in America, despite testimony to that effect, in the Congressional hearings on Iran-Contra. In this manner, Freedom of the Press was subverted and it continues to be (see your smiling newscaster).

### THE MELTING POT IS BOILING

The result of these policies was one of increasing friction and stress. While the Euromerican community remained divided (and the liberal elements coming under increasing and isolating pressure to conform or to be neutralized), the African-American community became increasingly radicalized. As the modest reforms of the recent past were undermined or reversed, support in the ghettos for moderate reformers and the non-vio-



lent tactics of Martin Luther King began to give way to the radical politics of the Nation of Islam movement and its credo, "by any means necessary".

Muslims and their fellow activists advised that the African man could "not trust the white man" (much as the communists of yesterday warned workers not to trust the bourgeoisie). They emphasized self reliance and strengthening the bonds of African brotherhood.

This increasing sense of unity, combined with the military build up in the ghetto (as a result of the drug trade) made for a volatile situation, one that only needed a match to ignite the rage that lay like dry timber in America's inner cities.

Police brutality in LA is not a secret, even suburban white people can see it in action on the highways and in the parking lots of their cities. For blacks, it is a fact of life. The neo-fascist tactics of its Chief Daryl Gates have been on the cutting edge in law enforcement practices that erode civil rights and efficiently and crudely dominate its underclass for the past 15 years.

#### A FIRE IN EL LAY

Because people in the inner cities regard the police with suspicion at best, and with outright loathing and hostility at worst, their relations in these neighborhoods often only inflame relations. Since their activities usually do not reach the light of day, they can operate with relative impunity. So when Rodney King's beating was videotaped and broadcast on national television, many thought that at last there was proof of police brutality. While most knew that justice was often illusory, most Americans, no matter what color, thought that conviction was a forgone conclusion. The powers that be wouldn't be that stupid as to let this crime go without at least a token conviction. Apparently, Gates and his cronies in the Prosecutors office thought they could really get away with this or perhaps they just don't care.

The elites of LA, facilitated by Chief Gates and the media, maintained their control on the slums of LA by encouraging the divisions between the Bloods and the Crips, between African and Hispanic communities and by using the Korean populations to redirect hostility away from the European-American communities and the elites.

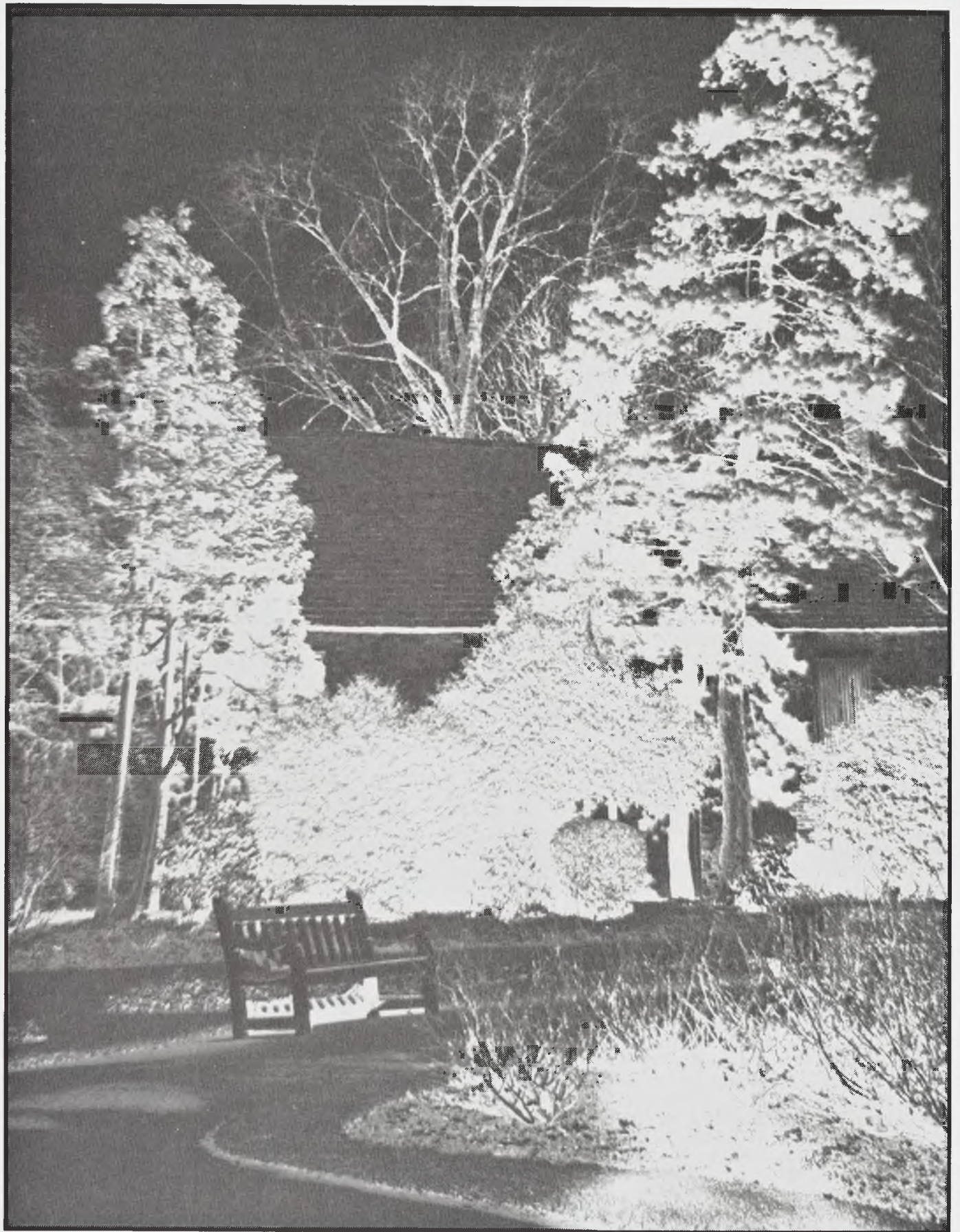
By encouraging this hostility, they could ensure that no significant dialogue would emerge between the Euro-American and the other communities in this or frankly, any other city. Perhaps they didn't anticipate the violent strength of the communities response to the King verdict. Perhaps they thought that LA's minorities would only burn or loot their own neighborhoods. Maybe that's why they left the ghettos unpoliced after the verdict. Certainly Gates' absolute contempt for their feelings was reflected in his attendance at a dinner party on the first night of the riots.

Many of us had been expecting an explosion like this for some time. It is unfortunate that in so many of these cities, that hostile antagonisms exist with such ferocity between the races. That is of course what the elites want. As long as we squabble among ourselves and blame each other for what has been done to us, it will continue to be done to us.

## *Road With No Name*

*Look  
A dead deer  
At the side  
Of the road  
Still  
We race along  
A rustic ravine  
Dirt  
From tires  
Follow  
Like a jet stream  
The car  
Floats  
A few feet  
Above it all  
Like a shining silvery  
U.F.O.  
Silently  
Strangerly  
Hovering  
Over this landscape  
A lonely farmer  
In his fields  
Stops  
To look  
Shakes his head  
As we  
Dangerously  
Disappear  
Unknown  
Into a  
Cloudless crayon  
Pale blue sky  
Feeling falsely  
Immortal*

*Thomas Kearney*



# The Search For Utopia

By Virginia Rathburn

**T**he ancient Greek philosopher Plato believed our world of "becoming" was modeled on a perfect intangible world of being, and time was a "moving picture of eternity." Though Plato's "other world" view is too ethereal and impractical to many, and his digression into mathematical interpretations of the world verge on the absurd, I think it is reasonable to conclude that we do not live in a perfect world, whether or not such a perfect world could, did, or does exist elsewhere in material or immaterial form. Yet, time and time again the prospect of Utopia here on earth is seriously entertained by political leaders or inveterate optimists.

The ancient Greeks believed they had found perfection in mathematics, reason and classical art. The Parthenon was an ambitious undertaking and a supreme monument of human achievement, built with the finest marble by the best architect and sculptor in Greece. Unfortunately, the Greek political situation did not mirror the material perfection they had erected on the Acropolis, and a combination of internal struggles and the averting of money from the military into the construction of the Parthenon resulted in the eventual collapse of ancient Greece.

Ancient Rome built its perfect society upon the might of the sword. Supporting their massive army eventually undermined their economic base and led to Rome being overthrown by barbarian tribes waiting for the opportunity to strike. History shows us that when a civilization becomes too arrogant and complacent it is vulnerable to attack from within or without.

We in America have great faith in science and technology. Though science has made numerous noble achievements, nevertheless, it too is not without its imperfections. Consider the findings of scientist, Werner Heisenberg in 1926, that resulted in the Principle of Indeterminacy, and quantum mechanics, an attempt to integrate the irrational components of the universe. As Stephen Hawking, a theoretical physicist says in "A Brief History of Time," "Quantum mechanics therefore introduces an unavoidable element of unpredictability or randomness into science." Even the sacred logic of mathematics was called into question by "Godel's Proof," published in 1931, which states that "propositions on which the mathematical system is in part based are unprovable because it is possible, in any logical system using symbols, to construct an axiom that is neither provable nor disprovable within the same system."

Before these explosive revelations of the limitations of science and mathematics, certain positivists and scientists had become so self-assured as to suggest that we now possessed the power to predict all future events, both astronomical and otherwise. Science, ever in contention with philosophy and religion, was the undisputed leader for "rational" man before the Uncertainty Principle.

Now we are firmly in the grip of the savior of the 20th century, Technology, whose potential is both spectacular and extremely dangerous. My computer is a great boon to me, however, I am also aware that computers allow the government and other assorted busybodies to access every kind of private information about me they desire to find out. Such an invasion could not have taken place so easily before the technological revolution. There is no doubt that our hi-tech society has led to a more impersonal, assembly-line treatment of people. It has also led to a society plagued by unpleasant side effects like excessive noise, pollution, and nuclear dangers.

When contemplating the power of technology I am reminded of Mary Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein*. After Victor Frankenstein creates the monster, he is at once terrified of this powerful and awesome creature, and of the realization that he has unleashed a new and unpredictable power upon the earth. In his terror, he abandons his creation and tries to reconstruct his life as it was before. His life is permanently changed, however, and he cannot retreat into his past comfortable existence. The creature then goes on a rampage and destroys Victor's family. We can't help but mourn the fact that Victor misused his power and acted irresponsibly. If only he had harnessed for good all the potential and vigor his creature possessed.

Great monuments to human achievement are not immune to disaster, as we witnessed in the explosion of our "Parthenon," the World Trade Center. Our smart technology has given us a new vulnerability to the very evils inherent in a high-tech impersonal society. Technology has not allowed us to be masters of our destiny or to escape the presence of the evil and the irrational.

I am not trashing technology. I believe it has been a source of progress, convenience, and a life saver. Very premature babies owe their lives to modern technology, as well as many gravely ill people who have been saved by the advancements made in medical technology. But have we not often seen an ethical or moral danger or dilemma lurking in the shadow of every new advance? The question is, has the downside of technology been



pondered enough, and have we forgotten the value of the intangible, spiritual and human dimension of our lives?

Science and technology have difficulty answering the questions they raise. Existential philosophy, as a response to over-reliance upon science, reminds us that we are finite and subject to our human limitations. This is not pessimism and resignation. This is the realization of our humanity. Though we are without ultimate and unbridled power, we have the power and the obligation to accept responsibility for our planet and our lives. Accepting our humanity gives us a certain modesty and enables us to accept the limitations of each other and of society. This should help subdue grandiose dreams of utopia and enable us to achieve what good is possible within human boundaries. To view ourselves as limited but responsible keeps our ego in check over our accomplishments and raises our consciousness about the burden on us to control the growth of technology and use it for good.

Forgive, O Lord, my little  
jokes on Thee  
And I'll forgive Thy great  
big one on me.

Robert Frost



**NON-SEQUITOR:** rules of Surrealist rhyme  
(for Jimmy Once-Higgins)

1. Take syntax, spoonfed - wherein the pit  
of Souls lies. . .trembling. . .  
Helen of Troy gave the bus operator  
a token: Her soft subversion  
(elegant as a parenthesis)
2. Break bread with renewed syntactical  
EMPHASIS. . .sometimes cerulean blue  
(neon was a gas) startle twice  
before the day needs to know  
prostrate all glands before Beauty
3. Be effusive in all, rattle thoughts best  
Imcomplete. . .in the context of a  
Dream. . .  
she follows the breath of his new idiom  
while the Pelican alone  
writes automatically (trust your memory)
4. Tolerate badly all jingle-isms  
(note the neologism while) vowing  
never to return home, a Philistine  
please to do so and could I?  
(the intrusive American)  
have a mint of Truth?  
does she know herself?  
is Time to be found in some liquid  
Encasement
5. Clearly this is Not
6. the End. . .Pursue the poetic  
Non-Sequitior  
Socrates supposed a better world

Thomas Good

# Form 69PV

By Mathew J. Rosenwasser

**Please use a ballpoint pen ONLY and make sure that you press hard enough so the writing is clear on all THREE copies.**

Copy 1 - Female Copy 2 - Male Copy 3 - Neutral party

If more than two participants will be involved, use Form 69PV-O. If participants are of the same sex, use Form 69BV for women, Form 69BV-O for more than two women, Form 69PA for men, For 69PA-O for more than two men. If one or more of the participants are NOT of the human species, this form and all previously mentioned forms are NOT legally valid.

NOTE: - It is illegal in all states of the union (except Nevada) for either party to accept money in exchange for any of the actions named below. In Nevada, in cases where money is exchanged, please use Form 69PV-R, Form 69BV-R, or Form 69PA-R, where copy 3 is the receipt for the client's records.

- This form must be completed in totality and signed prior to any action by the signatories. It is suggested that this is filled out in the presence of a notary public and notarized after it is completed.

## Female Portion

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (PRINT name), have solemnly declared that on this, the \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ in 19\_\_ at \_\_\_:\_\_\_ AM PM (circle one), that I am consenting to participate in the acts named below with \_\_\_\_\_ (male's name, printed by female). I am choosing to do this of my own volition and free will. I am not being forced into consent or into signing this form by the male signatory or other third party. I am declaring that this is being signed prior to any activity taking place. The following activities will be permitted during the aforementioned act:

Female please note: please SIGN your name in full next to the acts that are permissible during the 24 hour period stated above. For any act which is deemed NOT permissible during the 24 hour period named above, place three large 'X's in the blank next to it.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Foreplay
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Oral intercourse - fellatio
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Oral intercourse - cunnilingus
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Vaginal intercourse
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Anal intercourse
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Breast intercourse
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Sadism
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Masochism
- (If either 7 or 8 is signed, be sure to fill out and attach Form 69PV-SM before proceeding)
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Afterplay

Signatories please note: If there is any possibility of misunderstanding of the terms used above, please be sure to consult a dictionary before proceeding with the rest of this form.

I am currently (circle one)

married to - common law married to - cohabitating with - exclusively dating - casually dating - or not dating the aforementioned male.

*Note: Casual sexual relations (eg: one night stands, sex between friends) fit into the 'not dating' category.*

We are going to use one or more of the following forms of birth control: (circle however many apply)

Male condom - cervical cap - IUD - sponge - diaphragm - Norplant - tubal ligation - vasectomy - Natural Family Planning - rhythm - withdrawal - none-sperm may swim where they may - none-attempting to conceive.

Please sign:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am currently free from AIDS, the HIV virus, chlymidia, gonorrea, herpes, crabs or any other form of venereal disease. I am aware that if it is proved that I was informed previously of the health conditions named above, still continue to fill out this form and go ahead with the aforementioned acts, fines and/or imprisonment can result.

\_\_\_\_\_ I currently have (circle however many apply) AIDS, the HIV virus, chlymidia, gonorrea, herpes, crabs other (attach separate list if necessary) \_\_\_\_\_. I am choosing freely to participate in the acts named above and have informed the male of my previous venereal medical conditions.

I certify that I have medical clearance to perform the above acts and will not hold the male party legally or financially responsible for any health difficulties (eg: heart attack, stroke, shock, dehydration, joint/organ/muscle injury) encountered in the course of executing the aforementioned actions.

I certify that I am currently not under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substances which would cause the impairment of my judgement regarding the aforementioned matters.

All of the above is true to the best of my knowledge.

## Male Portion

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (PRINT name), have declared that on this, the \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ in 19\_\_ at \_\_\_:\_\_\_ AM PM (circle one), am agreeing to participate in the acts named above by \_\_\_\_\_ (female's name, printed by male). I am choosing to do this of my own volition and free will. I am not being coerced in any way, shape or form, nor am I being forced into consent or into signing this form by the female signatory or other third party. I am declaring that this is being signed prior to any activity taking place. I understand that ONLY the following activities will be permitted by the female:

*(Male only print acts signed with female's NAME from above)*

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I certify that I understand the limits of our forthcoming actions set by the female party.

Both parties note:

- If there is any possibility of misunderstanding of the terms used above, please be sure to consult a dictionary before proceeding with the rest of this form.

- If at this point there is any disagreement over which acts are to be performed, STOP filling out this form now and settle. If necessary, consult a neutral third party negotiator.

### **MALE PLEASE NOTE**

Signatures signed on this form render all signatures signed on previous forms by the female party void and invalid, even if they have been signed within the 24 hour period named above. Acts signed for as permissible on previous forms are NOT binding during the 24 hour period named above or any time thereafter, no matter how many times they were signed for previously. Acts not allowed on this form which are forced by the male onto the female on the basis of current expectations and/or past allowable activities are illegal. In addition, it is illegal to force, coerce or otherwise pressure the female into signing any of the above lines in which she freely chooses not to. Such males who do any of the aforementioned are liable to prosecution to the fullest extent of law and/or extralegal retribution by one or more of the females friends and/or family.

I am currently (circle one)

married to, common law married to, mutually cohabitating with, mutually exclusively dating, casually dating, or not dating the aforementioned female.

*Note: Casual sexual relations (eg: one night stands, sex between friends) fit into the 'not dating' category.*

### **MALE PLEASE NOTE**

Certificate of marriage, common law marriage, mutual cohabitation, mutually exclusive dating, casual dating, friendship, spending money on the female party, teasing, flirting and/or any other form of human contact does NOT preclude you from completing this form; nor does the aforementioned give you sanction to violate limits set by female party above.

We are going to use one or more of the following forms of birth controls: (circle as many that apply)

Male condom cervical cap IUD sponge diaphragm Norplant tubal ligation vasectomy Natural Family Planning rhythm withdrawal none-sperm may fall where they may none-attempting to conceive.

Please sign one:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am currently free from AIDS, the HIV virus, chlymidia, gonorrea, herpes, crabs or any other form of venereal disease. I am aware that if it is proved that I was informed previously of the health conditions named above, still continue to fill out this form and go ahead with the aforementioned acts, fines and/or imprisonment can result.

\_\_\_\_\_ I currently have (circle as many that apply) AIDS, the HIV virus, chlymidia, gnorrea, herpes, crabs other (attach separate list if necessary) \_\_\_\_\_. I am choosing freely to participate in the acts named above and have informed the female of my previous venereal medical conditions.

I certify that I have medical clearance to perform the above acts and will not hold the female party legally or financially responsible for any health difficulties (heart attack, stroke, shock, dehydration, joint/organ/muscle injury) encountered performing the above.

I certify that I am currently not under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substances which would cause the impairment of my judgement regarding the aforementioned matters.

All of the above is true to the best of my knowledge.

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# SEARCH

for Christian Maturity



# Mid-Summer Collegiate Retreat

16-18 July '93

(7:00 P.M. Friday to 3:00 P.M. Sunday)

Blair Lodge, CYO Youth Ministry Center  
Putnam Valley, NY

\$50, transportation not included

Contact:

Matthew J. Rosenwasser, President, Newman Club, CSI's  
Roman Catholic Community, 390-7544 (Leave message)

*You promised yourself that at least once during these precious years you  
would make a retreat. Now's the time. Don't delay.*

# S h a d o w P u p p e t s

I returned to Jogya alone. I went back to my little hotel room, my favorite restaurants. I decided to go to a *wayang kulit*, a Japanese shadow puppet show, but a real one, not an abbreviated, daytime show for tourists. I'd learned in Bali at the monkey-fire dances how disappointing such staged events are. Sure the men had jumped around, kicked coals, shook and screeched, but they didn't do it with much conviction with the flash bulbs popping around them.

Harry Agung found out there was a real *wayang kulit* going on at the seaside in celebration of the wedding between the Sultan and the sea goddess. He told me where to catch the bus and cautioned. "Don't wear green near the water. She gets jealous and might drown you."

It was a long and exceptionally uncomfortable ride. The bus was crowded with thirty seated passengers, at least as many more standing in the aisle, and three or four clinging to windows on the outside. The roof of the bus was a few inches shorter than me. I stood for two hours in an awkward slump, my head tipped sideways and pressed against the ceiling. Two small old women pushed intimately against me and discussed the hair on my arms. The engine overheated twice, forcing everyone out along the roadside while the driver's assistants fetched water from the nearby irrigation channels and poured it over the engine. Back on the bus the old women nagged and shoved the young men about so I could squeeze back into the center. It was fun, for all the discomfort and lack of view.

The bus arrived after dusk. Parangtritis is a small, one street town, renowned in tourist season for the availability of psychedelic mushrooms. In February, all the hotels and shops were boarded up. For the first time in Indonesia I was not greeted by anyone selling me taxi rides, hotel rooms, food, or souvenirs.

One small restaurant was lit. I went inside and asked a handsome Indonesian woman where I could get a room for the night. She pointed me down the street. I walked back the way I had come. Children playing in the street ignored me. A man in a conical bamboo hat tugged along a pair of white oxen. One ox turned and bawled to a calf galloping anxiously after her.

I couldn't find anything else open and returned to the restaurant. The woman called me from the building next door, a *losmen* (cheap hotel) attached to the restaurant. She showed me into a room smelling of cat piss and lizards. There was no electricity. Her son brought gas lamps which he lit and placed around the room and outside the door. She unfolded heavy straw mattresses onto two wooden beds and added a sheet and pillow to each. She gave me a tiny padlock and key for the door, and showed me how to close and latch the wooden shutters at the window should I leave the room.

They went out. I sat down, intensely relieved by the polite quiet with which I had been greeted. I seemed to be the only foreigner in town. For the first time in weeks, maybe months there was no one around telling me I was doing anything wrong, no one showing off their superior knowledge of Indonesia or the Indonesians.

I put on my money belt, hid my possessions under the bed and went next door to get something to eat. Traditional *wayang kulit*s usually start late and go on all night.

A couple sat inside. The woman was thin and tanned, with waist length brown hair, dressed in tight white jeans and a loose backless t-shirt. She had a New Zealand accent. She seemed completely unaware of the inappropriateness of her near nudity. I envy such women, next to whom I always feel a little drab in my attempts to offend no one.

She was talking to an extraordinarily colorful Indonesian man. He too had waist length hair, cut into a short mane around his face. He wore an orange and green tie-dyed cotton jersey vest, which bagged from his shoulders, exposing his nipples. A dark purple sarong was tucked up between his legs into short ballooning pants open at the sides to his hips. Brightly embroidered slippers protected his feet. Heavy rings were on every finger. I was most struck by his unexpectedly round face. Most Indonesians are painfully skinny by American standards. He was comfortably, almost decadently, plump.

I sat at a table on the porch beneath a fizzing storm lantern, ordered fried rice and eggs, and wrote letters while half listening to their conversation. The man drew clothing designs for the woman, who was interested in importing samples to Australia. They haggled prices.

The proprietress of the restaurant and hotel brought me a guest book to sign. A tourist couple passed on the street. A yellow *cecak* lizard ran down a pole onto my table and sat gulping insects attracted to the light.

A tall young foreigner materialized out of the darkness onto the porch and joined the other couple. His arms looked squeezed dry, the arms of a habitual drug user or someone who had been sick a long time. His short, messy hair stuck out from a green headband. He was barefoot, in a tight, knee-length, ragged blue sarong, and a sleeveless red t-shirt with grey and white ribs painted on it. One arm was completely tattooed.

Amulets and talismans dangled from his ears, neck, wrists, and ankles.

He sat down next to the Indonesian man without looking at him, then spoke to the woman in an aggrieved whine about some look a man had given him that afternoon. The woman made light of it. He yelled back at her angrily, "You don't know! You don't understand. I, I have a magical mind!"

The Indonesian got up and walked to the edge of the porch. He stood staring into the dark, ignoring the argument behind him.

The woman said, "Well, Sean, I have an entirely scientific mind."

"I know." He fumbled, "It's just. . . I need. . . I must. . ." The Indonesian went back to his seat. Sean still did not look at him. The woman tried to get Sean to leave with them, but he refused reconciliation. He sat frowning as they left, then went into the back of the losmen.

I continued to eat and write. I felt embarrassed by the man's outburst. Disregard for the Indonesian had saturated his speech and posture, as if the Indonesian had been invisible, although that was who he was angry with.

Half an hour later, the Indonesian man returned alone and sat down across from me. I stopped writing. The gas light sputtered and lowered, then flared up again brightly, casting shadows like the flames of fireworks on his face.

I waited for the usual twenty questions. "Where are you from? Are you alone? Are you married? How long are you here? How old are you?"

But with no preliminary, he asked, "Why do foreigners put themselves here," he raised one hand to eye level, "and us here?" the other hand at chest level.

His hands in the light seemed cast in silver. I could feel him staring at me, but couldn't see his eyes past the glare.

"I don't know," I said, thinking back to everything I had seen since arriving on Java. "Perhaps they are afraid of losing themselves in a strange country. If they didn't put themselves above you they would be forced to look around, maybe be affected. That's frightening.

"You?"

"Yes. I'm frightened. So many things are different here. I don't know what or who to believe."

"But you don't put yourself up here. You are open."

I wondreed if he were flattering me, but answered truthfully. "Well, I came here to be changed. If anything, I feel lower than you. You are all my teachers. I can't talk, eat. I don't know how to dress properly or be polite. I'm a child here. How can I act as though I know everything?"

"Then why are foreigners so impolite? Why do they talk as if we do not exist?"

What could I answer? He was too polite to allow anger in his voice. He was simply puzzled. He didn't comprehend why Sean, who he had thought a friend, now refused to speak to or look at him.

I ordered tea for us. He told me his name was Andra, then asked, "Do you mind talking with me about these things?"

"No. I think about the same things a lot."

"You are honest with me."

I asked him to sit next to me so I could see his face. He shifted around, then ordered fried rice. "I'm starving" he said.

I was surprised again. I had never heard an

Indonesian state his own hunger. When hungry, they usually ask me if I've eaten yet, and will not eat unless I join them.

Friends of his entered the restaurant and sat in a dark corner of the porch, playing guitar, drinking tea, and laughing. They all wore bright clothes and a lot of jewelry. They were all obviously stoned. After quick greetings and curious glances, they ignored us. They were what Ellen used to call disparagingly "Land Crocodiles", the young Indonesian men who survive by scamming tourists.

Andra's liking of food made him seem less dangerous, different from his friends. I trusted the softness of his face, hands, and stomach.

The aggrieved Sean reappeared, staggering on the steps. He ignored me, came up to Andra, and said, "How many beds in your room?"

"One."

I saw the lie in his body. He remained polite, but pulled into himself.

Sean said viciously, "I have no where to sleep." He stood over Andra, dingy, gaunt, spoiled, waiting for him to solve the problem.

"Do you have money?" Andra asked him mildly.

"Yeah." He sounded affronted, as though he had not expected to pay for himself. "Oh, never mind. Don't worry about me." He flapped his hands angrily and turned back to the darkness, his back rigid and steps fumbling.

Andra ate in silence. The proprietress and her son began folding up chairs and clearing condiments from the tables.

"Why are you here alone?" he asked me.

"I'm going to the wayang kulit. It's supposed to happen tonight somewhere."

"Ah. Yeah..I come with you, okay?"

I hesitated, unsure of the place or him. "Oh. Okay. It starts pretty late..." I didn't want to be rude. He had been pleasant, unthreatening. I decided to overlook the redness of his eyes, the lack of constraint in his speech.

I wanted to ask him how it felt to dress colorfully and act freely in a country where blending in and discretion are prized over individuality. I am used to being stared at or approached simply because I'm white and tall and alien. I'm used to being part of a minority. But how strange it would be to make a life out of befriending aliens while being rejected by almost everyone else.

It was nearly ten p.m. when we left for the shadow puppet ceremony. There was no electricity in town, on the streets, or in the houses. Soon there were no houses. Andra walked close to me, but not touching. The proprietress sent her son after us with a flashlight, but he didn't turn it on.

I had a sudden moment of paranoia. What if they jumped me? What if I were a complete fool? But I quelled it. My worry came not from the men walking beside me in the dark, but from Ellen's warnings and the disdain of other Indonesians towards men dressed like Andra.

After about half a mile, I began to hear the far off clack of wood on wood, then the staccato falsetto of a man's voice speaking an ancient dialect: the puppet master. We turned left onto a dirt road curving back to the beach. Ahead the whole village stood around a flourescent lit hut. A generator ran in the shadows. Shadows of gods and goddesses danced on a screen at the end of the bamboo and leaf walls. The Sultan and his family, dressed exquisitely, sat inside on folding metal chairs. Villagers stood outside peering between the leaves at the far off shadows. I was





conscious of the looks they cast at me and Andra, but went close to the entrance to watch the puppets over their heads. The boy joined them. Andra stood off to one side, bored. He stood on one foot, then another, then moved behind me. I suggested he return to town without me.

"Nevermind. I wait. It is Indonesian." I went on watching the shadow puppets. They faded on and off screen, dancing and fighting, singing at each other, all the accompanied by the high, inconstant beat of wood on wood.

Andra got something in his eye. I took him to a light but found nothing. Then it began to rain. First just a few drops, then it poured down violently. Andra pulled me into a food stall and ordered tea. We sat together companionably. Thin old men lounged on benches in the corner, watching us. We gazed out at the rain, which all but hid the lights of the wayang just a few yards away. Andra reached past me for the ash tray. I saw long, dark scars running across his inner arm. They ran in parallel strips across the width. One was raised the length of his arm, like the gash on a loaf of bread.

"A knife fight?" I asked, pointing.

He gave me a small smile. With his right hand he mimed cutting himself with a razor, sprinkling granules into the gash, then holding the skin closed to keep them in.

I looked away, inadequate to the revelation.

He told me.

He came from a well-to-do family in West Java, the youngest of four children. By the time he was twelve, all his siblings had left home. He became aware that his father and mother were unhappy together. "One night, I knew in a dream, I could help them."

He showed me how he'd broken his bedroom window and climbed out. I couldn't imagine him, dark, frail, twelve years old flinging himself out naked into the night. Had it really occurred, or was it part of the dream?

He left home, he said, to unite his parents in grief over losing him. He told me this unself-consciously, as though it were perfectly logical.

He traveled a long distance alone, first to his sister's house, then to his brother's. They didn't want him and thought he should go back. He ended up with a cousin.

I couldn't follow the next part of the story. His English became less fluent as he moved back and forth in time with an almost embarrassing intensity, as though reliving the past for my benefit. He didn't have the careless, relaxed quality with which Indonesians usually describe hardship. Like his comment, "I'm starving!" it showed an uncommon strength of feeling for himself.

I wanted to touch him and say, "You must forgive them," but knew it would be impolite to thus imply criticism.

He told me about being a junkie for four years. I missed what led up to it. He was a teenager. To reassure me, he said, "Now I dislike drugs. I don't take them." I trusted him.

"Look at my eyes," he said.

"What?" I didn't know what he expected.

"They are always red now. Friends ask, 'What you been smoking, Andra?' but I smoke nothing."

Then he told me, again without transition, about waking up in a hospital, blind. With his eyes open he could see nothing but dark yellow. He had overdosed, or had some bad heroin, and for three months went crazy, sometimes close to death.

He heard his sister praying in one corner. He felt her lay her hand on his chest to be sure of his breath. He did not die. She wept to have him back. But he continued through withdrawal.

He described itching unbearably, screaming with fear of being blind, his body uncontrollable with pain.

One day he came to consciousness in an insane asylum, just as they were wheeling him to electro-shock therapy. He struggled and broke away, screaming, "I'm not crazy!" The doctor who had ordered the treatments had not read his records, had no idea of the history of his abused body.

Andra grabbed a bottle, broke it, and held the doctor and attendants away, screaming, conscious. They finally called his brother, who told them he wasn't a crazy, just a drug addict who'd finally finished withdrawal.

Again I was startled by the violence of his story, which seemed impossible in his body. The scars I could understand. They were part of the ritual of need. But looking at his soft face, listening to his gentle voice, I could not envision him thin, shaking, anguished, terrified. I couldn't imagine that much passion in him.

We were interrupted by his friends and a young Swedish couple, all high on mushrooms. The girl was so high that when I asked her name, she giggled and ran back into the rain. The rain had, if anything, increased. The townspeople, not allowed into the Sultan's shelter, held banana leaves over their heads as umbrellas or crowded into the door ways of the little warungs. We waited for the rain to stop.

His friends took turns reading my palm and making prophecies in Indonesian. I was restless. I joined the people in the doorway and stood staring out at the opening to the wayang, which seemed very distant through the rain. The clacking singsong of the puppet master continued unceasingly.

Andra came and stood silently beside me. I was cold, but he was shivering. I took my sarong from my neck and draped it around him. He shifted it up around both our shoulders. Again, we stood close, but not touching.

Well after midnight, the rain slackened. We decided to brave the wet and run back to the hotel. The mud was ankle deep. We removed our shoes and ran barefoot, squelching the mud, laughing, leaving the watchful villagers and his boring friends behind.

Once on the street, we redraped the sarong into a damp umbrella and carried it overhead. We continued barefoot. It was so completely black that I could not even see silhouettes of trees against the sky or the edge of the road. I felt disconcerted, dizzy, and wildly silly.

A car blinded and then passed us. It stopped and backed up. As it pulled closer, Andra said, "Wait." Discarding the sarong, he turned to face the car. It quickly sped away.

"They thought I was a woman because of my long hair and big body. They were coming back for another look." He ran ahead of me, laughing, then minced with a swaying walk in his sarong skirt. I had to admit it was hard to tell from behind, and laughed too.

It seemed a much longer walk back, but finally I saw the haze of lanterns in town.

He told me why Sean had been upset. Sean had stayed for several weeks in Andra's rooms in Jogya. Andra had known the woman from New Zealand as a business connection. Sean had become obsessed about her. She rejected him, but he followed them everywhere. Sean had

decided Andra, his friend, was actually preventing him from getting the woman and had begun to say nasty things to him. Andra, knowing he was to be leaving soon, had remained polite.

He told me all this without questions or prompting.

Then he asked if I'd had any experiences with drugs or drug addicts. I told him I'd done hallucinogens when younger, and that I'd had a boyfriend who had been a cocaine addict and had stolen from me.

He touched me on the shoulder, halting me. He looked at me seriously. "Yes. Addicts are bad. They will always steal from you. Even if they say they love you. You must be careful."

I wondered for a moment if he was warning me against himself.

We finally got to the losmen. We stood on the porch. I felt awkward. "Goodnight," I said.

"Wait. I have something to ask you."

I sighed and stepped back, thinking, "Here it comes. He couldn't leave it alone."

"You are my friend, right?"

"Yes."

"Even though I just met you I know that, or I would not ask you this."

I waited.

"Please let me stay in your room tonight."

I shook my head, annoyed.

"There are already four in my room and only two beds. It is very crowded, and you also have two beds. . . ." He smiled, unabashed.

I thought, "If I can't trust, what else is there?"

I pulled myself up tall and said, "Alright. But I don't want anything else. You understand? If you touch me, I'll kill you." I was amazed as I said this, by my own ferocity, and my complete conviction in what I said, not only that I would try, but that I was physically capable of killing him.

I could not explain to him that it was not my body I was protecting, not my sexual honor, but the honor of my trust, my intuition. I couldn't bear to lose it, to have him betray our sudden and unlikely friendship. I could hear Ellen in my head saying, "Look out for those creeps, those Land Crocodiles. They live off the tourists. Don't dare bring one home." I defied her propriety. I defied every foreigner who had told me I didn't know what to do, that I didn't have any idea what was going on in the "Indonesian" mind.

He thanked me and disappeared in back of the losmen, to take a bath by lamplight.

I was not wholly oblivious to self-preservation. I went into my room and tried to move the beds apart. I was dismayed to find that even an inch between them blocked the edge of the door and made it impossible to open. I pushed them back together. I put all my things well under the bed and hid money and passport under the mattress.

He returned, carrying his wet clothes and a gas lamp. He wore only a pair of red bikini underpants. I nearly laughed from surprise, but stopped, embarrassed. He was divested of ornament, even the rings were gone.

Despite the tight, round belly protruding over the red underwear, he was beautiful. The lamplight cast low, red shadows across his soft brown skin. His face in the dark was surrounded by long black hair.

I wanted to stare at him, but didn't want it mistaken for an invitation. Flustered, I grabbed my towel and the

other lamp and went out to bathe in the smelly outhouses.

I returned in a long t-shirt and underpants, and hung up my clothes on pegs in the room. Andra was already in bed, against the wall. I quietly closed the door and blew out the lamps.

The sky had cleared. The full moon was rising and lay a space of light between us. With a quick rustle, Andra rolled towards me. He lay directly alongside me, but only the hairs on my leg and arm tickled with his closeness. He whispered, "Tell me a story."

I told him about my childhood, my friends, and then a long joke which he laughed politely at but didn't really get. Then he told me a story about some animals. I thought it was a Javanese fable and listened with all the rapt attention of the amateur anthropologist, until I realized he was telling me a dirty joke.

He took my hand.

Silence. I was very sleepy, but too aware of him, too guarded to relax. At the same time, I felt a deep languor, a sensual pleasure just in lying beside his warmth, intentionally trusting him. I thought, "If he tries to make love to me, how will I respond?"

Then I thought, "I should tell him to tell his friends we didn't." I imagined my embarrassment in the morning. I was about to speak to him about it, then realized I couldn't. It would be the same as saying, "I don't really trust you." I knew that as a matter of face, he would probably brag about me to his friends. If he promised to tell them the truth, that we hadn't made love, then I would be forcing him either to lie to me or lose face with his friends. I sighed and let it go. I knew if I was to trust, it must be completely.

At that moment he rolled up on his elbow and pressed against me. I lay relaxed, not allowing him to sense my wariness.

He said, in a soft, sad voice. "I don't want you to think I'm a bad man. I don't want you to think I'm a bad man." His voice was the voice of a child, desperately needing to be cared for.

I replied lightly, pretending not to hear the depth of his appeal, "I don't. Now get to sleep."

He leaned over and gently kissed my forehead. "Thank you."

He rolled back across the light dividing the narrow beds. Soon I heard his breathing change and deepen.

I lay wide awake. Cecaks were calling in the roof of the losmen. I heard bats winging out in the moonlight. The cecaks ran across the roof. The moonlight softened. The room grew darker, the ceiling seemed much higher, diffuse and pale.

I had. . .

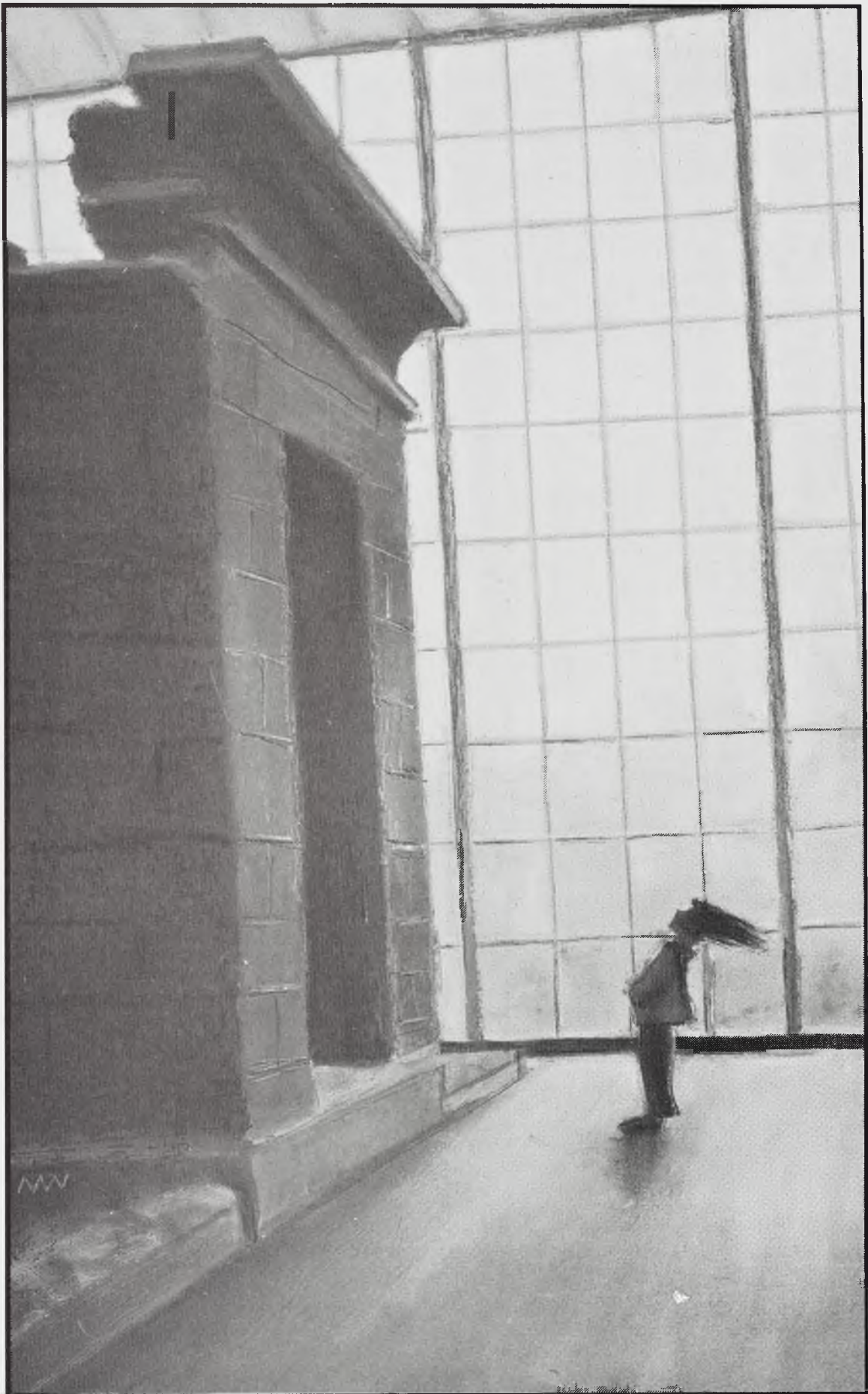
How can I explain it?

I had an extraordinary feeling of exultation. Of perfection. It was perfect. Perfect. I felt, there is no other word for it, redeemed. Nearly in tears, I lay wide awake, aware of his breathing, the moon, my own hot skin on the hard bed. I was without flaw.

At dawn, he quietly got up and left, perhaps to keep me from shame. I pretended I was asleep. After he was gone, I finally fell deeply asleep.

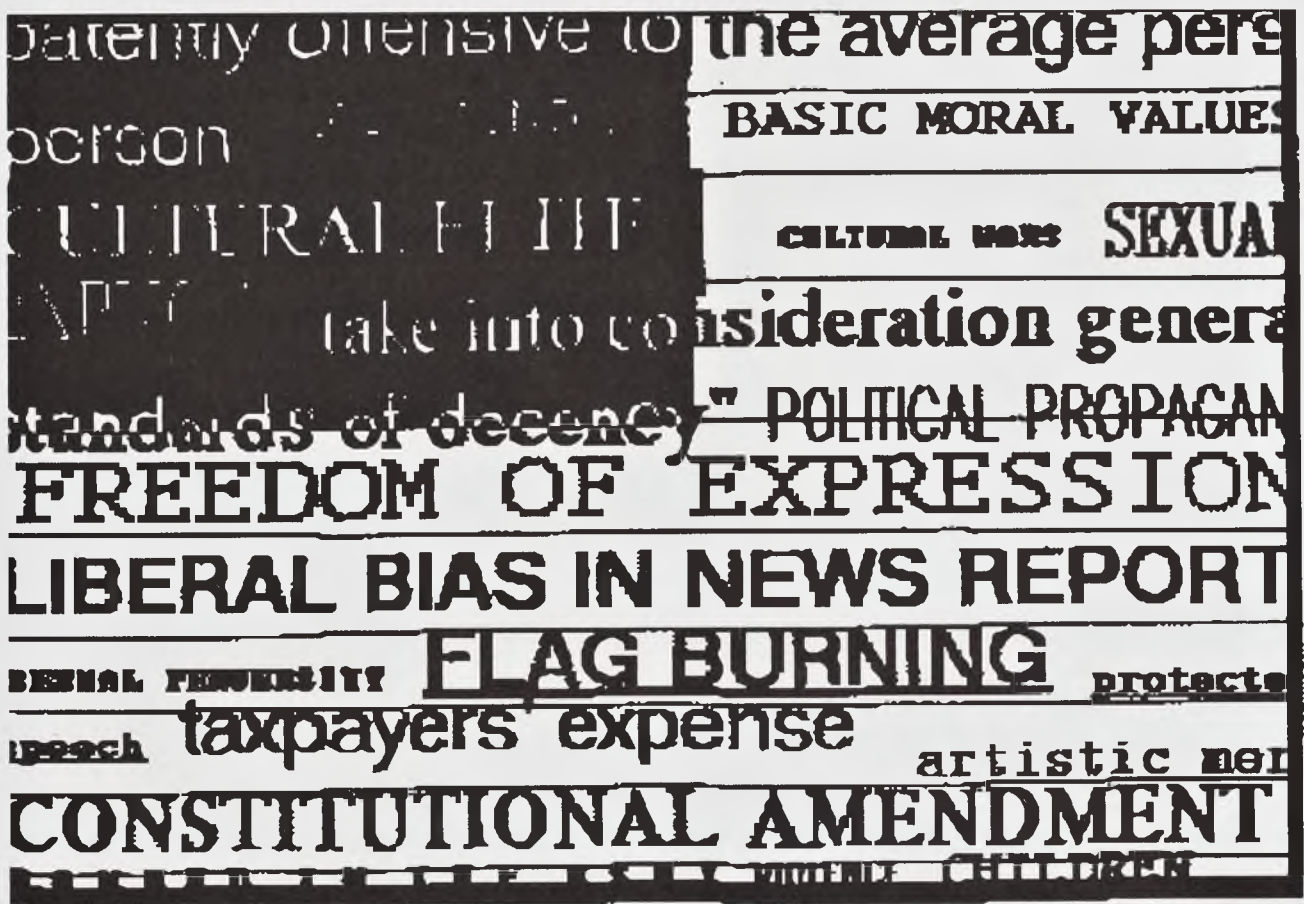
I woke two hours later, completely refreshed. I still felt the wonderful, sensuous ecstasy of the night. I had no embarrassment facing his friends. It didn't matter what he'd told them, although I'm convinced he said nothing. It doesn't matter. I know the truth. He freed me.

*From the book Gul Reactions. Jaida is currently working for The Utne Reader.*



# Burning Issues in the Arts: The Last Twelve Years and the Next Four

By Diane Yates



D. Yates

**M**any arts advocates are breathing easier now that a new administration has taken office in Washington. Federal funding for the arts suffered mightily in the Reagan/Bush years, with the burgeoning influence of the Christian fundamentalist Right dominating the debate over "blasphemous", "offensive" or "unpatriotic" art produced with the aid of taxpayer dollars.

In the first year of the Reagan presidency conservatives and fundamentalists targeted the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for what they saw as the professional art world's endorsement of antisocial expression. In response to their concerns, Reagan formed the Presidential Task Force on the Arts and Humanities to review the policies and procedures of the NEA and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). When the conservative think tank, The Heritage Foundation, advocated a complete overhaul of NEA operations, Reagan proposed a 50% cut in NEA and NEH funding and the elimination of the Institute of Museum Services, a source of support for many cultural centers. In the end, 10% was slashed from the NEA's budget, the largest drop in funding since its creation in 1963.

Reagan's hostility to federal arts funding opened the door to other attacks on the NEA, some of them from within the agency. In 1983 NEA's chairperson, Frank Hodsoll vetoed a grant for a series of public forums that featured several politically-oriented artists. The grant had been approved by an independent NEA panel, but Hodsoll's veto effectively terminated it. That year the NEA's funding, after languishing at a little under \$144 million for two years, jumped a significant 12 1/2% to \$162 million.

In 1985 Reagan created the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (the Meese Commission) which sent threatening letters to retailers accused of distributing pornographic materials (Playboy and Penthouse magazine, for example. The Commission was later censured by a federal court). Senator Jesse Helms, objecting to the "liberal bias in news reporting and editorial policies", urged conservatives to pool their resources and buy enough stock in the CBS television network to "regain control of the airwaves." Representative Steve Bartlett (R-Tex) proposed an amendment to an appropriations bill that would prohibit the NEA from funding artists whose work might offend the "average person." There was discussion of the NEA's funding of gay poetry, which some considered obscene.

In the Senate the debate centered on the lyrics of music recordings. Tipper Gore, wife of now-Vice President Albert Gore, and her organization, the Parents Music Resource Center, urged the Senate to hold hearings on the issue. The PMRC also pressured record companies to label their products with warning stickers about sexually explicit or violent lyrics.

That year Ronald Reagan pushed for a cut of \$20 million in the NEA's funding. Instead, the House of Representatives increased the funding

by \$3 million for 1986. Two amendments were attached to the appropriation, however, stipulating that the NEA only fund projects with "significant literary, scholarly, cultural, or artistic merit," and instructing artists to file financial reports within 90 days of the receipt of their grants.

The attacks on arts funding, on individual artists and on works of art continued throughout the Reagan and Bush presidencies, with funding often denied artists whose work challenged accepted sexual norms, addressed government military, immigration, or environmental policies, or championed freedom of speech. NEA panel-approved grants were canceled, public sculptures dismantled, and foreign films slapped with labels identifying them as "political propaganda." Foreign-born or expatriate artists were deported or denied entry into the United States because of the content of their work, musicians and visual artists were arrested on obscenity charges, paintings were taken off gallery walls, and exhibits were shut down, the public denied the opportunity to view the artists' work. Funding was parceled out to arts agencies, galleries and artists

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## **In this climate of state-enforced morality, even children's cartoons were suspect.**

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and then withdrawn when even the hint of controversy attached itself to the artists' work.

In this climate of state-enforced morality, even children's cartoons were suspect. The Reverend Donald Wildmon's American Family Association organized a letter-writing campaign against CBS-TV for its broadcast of a three-second scene in a Mighty Mouse cartoon that depicted Mighty Mouse sniffing a flower. Wildmon claimed the mouse was actually sniffing cocaine. Bowing to the pressure, CBS cut the scene.

Congress repeatedly introduced legislation that would define the NEA's mission more rigidly and curb particular kinds of expression. In 1989 alone, Democratic and Republican members of Congress offered up ten resolutions, letters of condemnation and amendments that would defund, restrict, penalize or intimidate those who sponsored unpopular art. And after the Supreme Court ruled, in *Texas v. Johnson*, that flag-burning was a protected form of speech, President Bush lobbied for a constitutional amendment to prohibit the intentional physical destruction of the American flag.

At issue in each of these cases was the government's responsibility toward competing interests. Those who would limit federal funding of the arts claimed that the government had a

duty to spend taxpayers' money wisely. Arts advocates claimed that the government should uphold and protect citizens' rights to free speech, even in instances where that speech offended a majority of the people. And they pointed to government sponsorship of other forms of expression.

In his introduction to Culture Wars, editor Richard Bolton writes:

"The government's role in free speech is often portrayed as merely passive — the government simply allows free speech to occur. But if our democracy is to function fully, the government must also guarantee free speech, providing opportunities for public communication just as it provides opportunities for education. In truth, our government often intervenes to guarantee free speech, supporting viewpoints that might otherwise go unheard, and spending tax dollars in the process."

Bolton points to the restriction of monopolies, the opening of radio and television time to

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## Bill Clinton's accommodating nature worries some art's advocates, as does Tipper Gore's Past.

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competing opinions, the public funding of political candidates, and the tax-exempt status of non-profit organizations and churches as evidence of accepted forms of government intervention on behalf of free speech.

Why, then, has arts funding been singled out for regulation? If a majority of Americans were offended by the tenets of a particular religion, for example, would the government then be free to deny that particular church tax-exempt status while still granting it to others? Or does freedom of religion transcend the temporal will of the majority?

Bolton offers evidence in support of the latter conclusion. Even if one "could determine the will of the majority," he writes, "the majority cannot be counted on to defend controversial speech. That is why we have the First Amendment — to protect the views of the minority. Our constitution gives dissent a central role in our democratic system, acknowledging that it is actually in the best interests of the community if the majority does not rule absolutely."

CLINTON AND GORE

Tipper Gore's involvement with the Parents' Music Resource Center is perhaps the most worrisome sign of what may lie ahead in the debate about the arts and arts funding. Even though a Federal judge last June overruled a law requiring the NEA to "take into consideration general standards of decency" when approving grants, federal, state and local arts funding remains vulnerable to attacks by powerful groups.

In the presidential race last year Patrick Buchanan referred to an American "cultural war," and Dan Quail repeatedly attacked what he called the "cultural elite": a vague allusion to artists and educators who, in Quayle's words, scorned "our country's basic moral values." Although Buchanan's belligerent rhetoric bombed even among Bush supporters, and Bush and Quail were soundly defeated last fall, many Americans responded to their message of a cultural assault on traditional values. These people see evidence of moral erosion reflected in the arts and fail to distinguish the messenger from the message. This conservative, largely Christian constituency believes support for the arts should be carefully monitored and restricted.

Bill Clinton's accommodating nature worries some arts advocates, as does Tipper Gore's past. But a look at the former governor's record in Arkansas should restore a modicum of hope. During the lean years of the recession, when most state arts councils saw their budgets tumble (NYSCA's funding was slashed a whopping 58%) the Arkansas Arts Council's budget actually went up. Clinton also promoted dramatic educational reforms that brought arts and music programs to all students in the state. Since 1983, money to arts and music teachers in Arkansas has increased 35%. And Clinton has vowed to "defend freedom of speech and artistic expression by opposing censorship or 'content restrictions' on grants made by the National Endowment for the Arts." Let's hope that he is able to keep this pledge.

I couldn't help it.

I can resist anything except for temptation.

Oscar Wilde

# When The Evening Is Spread Out Against The Sky

By Michael Toro

Louis Mariner stepped out into the cool of the evening. The sky cast a tranquil glaze upon the urban atmosphere; a host of fragmented images, ideas and sensations, pulsating to the rhythm of a dream. He wandered through a spray of city lights, a cascading of passing headlights, diverging into the cluttered scenes and darkened crevices. Scattered strangers, a mottled flood of talking faces, revealed themselves and were quickly absorbed into the night. Mariner headed for the obscure limits of the town.

The Kubla Khan Tavern. They entered, and Bob Hussleman announced: "The drinks are on me." Mariner took him at his word; a half hour later he was on the edge of profound delirium at the bar.

"I feel alienated," Mariner continued, contemplating his third Jack Daniels. "The world and I: a void of clouded desperation drifting away."

"We're all strangers trying to find our way home," Bob replied. He was a recovering yuppie: a remnant of the Reagan Era. His financial starship blasted off from Wall Street in 1982, and was forced to make an emergency landing in the publishing company last year—at one third of his former salary. He was a cheerful cynic, amused with existence.

"She's a goddess on her throne. She doesn't even know me," Mariner heard himself saying.

"You're a god in your study. You never allow yourself to be known."

Another round of drinks arrived. Time floated like a bubble.

"All you ever think about is money," Mariner told Bob. "You're still a chronic yuppie - a victim of modern intrigues."

"Why is success so loathsome to you," Bob retorted. "I've fallen but I don't live in the past. It's just a matter of defying the law of gravity: what goes up must come down—but at least I'm willing to risk it. You remind me of Joyce's Stephen Dedalus; searching for whatever. . ."

Time and space began to flow by in compressed motion. Mariner saw Bob Hussleman talking, but didn't really hear him. Mariner fell away from the bar and into the evening. . .

Outside the nocturnal mainstream, cavernous sounds reverberated intermittently. Deserted streets arose on the crest of Mariner's sojourn, and he followed them. He found his way down a row of shuttered stores, abandoned dwellings; a languid moon projected a liquescent sheen upon the desperate stillness. Shadows vacillated amid his footsteps; he paused and listened in the darkness.

A sudden approach of high heels pierced the silence and took form on the pavement across the street from Mariner. A pair of stockinged legs swam and glistened in the moonlight; her raven hair caressed the upper curves of her swaying torso. She passed an empty restaurant, a faded hotel, and disappeared into a graffiti-plastered facade.

Mariner envisioned a scene: a soft candle-lit tableau. They'd pour champagne and talk of Shakespeare. They'd pour some more and talk of Joyce and Beckett. Her eyes would sparkle, blue pearls in the candlelight; a veil of brown hair would nestle her smile, her face. The candles blown out, they'd cut to the next scene; satin sheets would flow beneath velvet pillows; their bodies would float into oblivion.

Inside the Fountainhead Publishing Company: the fifth caffeine regeneration of the day. A trio of sparkling women fluttered around a table in the employees' lounge. They were thirtysomething or another, bright and dynamic.

Marsha Rose (the leader of the pack) glanced at her raven hair, hazel eyes, in a mirror and went on:

"He thinks he's a regular Michelangelo. . .that nerd!"

"He's not so bad. A little strange, perhaps," Debbie Granger, a laughing

brunette, replied.

"A little! Why, he's a certified geek, lost on cloud thirteen and a half. I don't understand what anyone could see in him," Marsha alleged, glancing at Penny.

"If he'd only loosen up a little, come down to earth, he'd be fine. He's not bad looking."

"Bob makes him look like a used oyster shell. . .Hello. . .Earth calling Penny. Come in please," Marsha laughed, enjoying herself.

Penny looked up and smiled. Her brown hair hanging free and easy, falling over her face: happy but. . .

"Can't we change the subject? It's so beautiful today," she replied.

The air had turned chilly, Mariner moved on. Passing a solemn churchyard he reflected on the inevitable tomorrow of all things great and small. A tangled field of tombstones was etched against the interminable night. "How suddenly it all dissolved into the past," he thought.

He found himself, quite unexpectedly, in his old neighborhood: the place of his birth, the womb of his past. Dawn was approaching, grey and overcast. Nearly everything had changed, unfolding in the bleakness, but still felt the same to Mariner. The parish church, the school that he attended, the building where he had lived, most of it was still there - still there but distant and detached from him. The wind blew, stale and chilly from over the bay. The sun was breaking through the cloud cover. People were beginning to leave for work and school, in rapid and routine determination. Mariner vanished into himself and sounds of the sea.

Louis and Penny stepped out into the cool of the evening. They walked along the shore; a piece of the sun floated on the distant waves. Murmurs of the sea, a flash of sea gulls in the sky, were carried on the wind.

"A few more weeks, Louis, and we graduate," Penny said. "What do you intend to do? Why don't you want to go to college?"

"Oh, I don't know. I guess I'll decide when the time comes."

"But you probably have something, some ambition, in mind."

"Today was so beautiful, Penny. Do you think that you'll always remember it?"

"Yes, but. . .I'm not sure I know exactly what you mean, Louis."

"This evening's sunset. . .this walk along the shore. . .everything we did and felt today. . .everything we were."

"I guess so. But things do change. Louis. We grow older and tend to forget."

"Not if we don't want to forget; it's all a state of mind, Penny, our existence: the past, present and future."

The sun dissolved on the horizon; the sea gulls had disappeared. A faint breeze sang on the black and white breakers pushing along the coastline, as the moon shimmered on the waters.

"It's getting late, Louis; it's time we went home," Penny stated.

"Yes. . .wherever that is."

"What?"

"Nothing. You'll never know how much this day meant to me. . .how beautiful you looked today."

They walked off into the tranquil glaze of night.

Louis Mariner remembered, as he returned home—for the moment's safe harbor—age on the coast of yesterday.

I do not love you,  
Dr. Fell,  
But why I cannot tell:  
But this I know  
full well,  
I do not love you,  
Dr. Fell.

*Thomas Brown*  
1719



# THROWING BABY OUT WITH THE BATH:

a reply to Tom Taaffe's "The Future of Capitalism."

By Thomas Good

*Thomas Good graduated from the College of Staten Island in 1985 with a BA in Sociology/Anthropology. Good has been active in radical politics for 20 years. He has been arguing with his friend, Tom Taaffe, for the last 10 years.*

In "The Future of Capitalism," Tom Taaffe advances the proposition that "the old arguments of the Right and Left", are, in the post Cold War era, irrelevant. This because there is no difference of substance between socialism and capitalism. Both, according to Taaffe, are simply facets of that baroque jewel and inevitable mode of production: world capitalism. In his article, Taaffe equate the "revolutionary elite" of the former USSR with the capitalist "aristocracies" in the bourgeois world. Furthermore, Taaffe announces the demise of the "Red Menace" and the need to demystify the "religions" of socialism and capitalism. Reality, Taaffe argues, is split between various shades of capitalist grey. His spectrum runs from "libertarian"; to "international"; "domestic"; "mixed market"; and finally, "state" capitalism. All of Taaffe's entities are devoid of moral and ethical imperatives, i.e., simply economic infrastructures.

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

Well, to begin, I suspect that Taaffe's reports of the death of the 'Red Menace' are premature. He appears to be unaware of the People's Republic of China, Cuba, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, etc. Perhaps more importantly, Taaffe appears equally oblivious to the wide array of revolutionary movements which exist in the capitalist world. Here in America, the Left is embodied in the "Committees of Correspondence," composed of ex-C.P.U.S.A. members who broke away from Gus Hall to found a non-sectarian, grass roots movement, and, Democratic Socialists of America - whose membership doubled last year and includes such mainstream figures as television's Ed Asner. In addition, a vast number of smaller, more doctrinaire, Leftist groups abound here in the States. In these indigenous Left movements the arguments are informed, lively, focused, and, unlike Taaffe's, cliché free. The 'Red Menace', a term used facetiously by Taaffe, is alive and well. In fact, socialism, born in the USA with the International Workers of the World (IWW or "wobblies") and the Socialist Party, is also prospering in the Third World. The Shining Path (Sendero), a Maoist guerrilla force fighting for (and currently winning) control of Peru, exists in

the same hemisphere with the Salvadoran FMLN, which recently signed a peace treaty that recognizes their hard won right to participate in electoral politics. A little further south, the FSLN (or Sandinistas), are the loyal opposition to the government of Nicaragua. A plethora of indigenous national liberation movements (the New People's Army in the Philippines, the peasant revolutionaries in Guatemala, etc., etc.) are currently fighting under the red banner.

All of these groups, from the electorally focused DSA (of which the author is a member) to the Shining Path (whose guerrilla tactics are opposed by many of the liberal-left) share a common goal. They are political movements whose purpose is to establish an economic infrastructure, and consonant political superstructure, founded on peace, progress, justice and racial and religious harmony. The individuals who comprise these groups are not motivated solely by economics; their agendas include every aspect of liberation within the crushing shade of grey that is world capitalism. Leftists everywhere will tell you that economic and political aspirations can't be separated. This view is also shared by many on the Right. Can the unemployed Afro-American in Los Angeles find satisfaction (spiritual or otherwise) in (allegedly unbridled) political expression if his cupboard is bare?

It is also myopic to state that there are a number of capitalist forms existing independently in the world. I agree with Taaffe that "Laissez Faire" (or libertarian) capitalism exists only as an ideal. Unfortunately, Taaffe fails to see that his arbitrary division of Capital into various garden varieties (separating, for example, 'domestic' and 'international' capitalist economies) is also naive. The reality is that whatever trappings indigenous capitalist economies don, they answer to the International Monetary Fund and other guardians of the faith of Multinational Corporate Capitalism (Taaffe's 'international' capitalism). The international economy is largely controlled, not by nation-states, but by the interlocking directorates of major corporation, i.e., the wealthiest families in various nations. National boundaries are as meaningless as Governmental soundbites on the evening news. Socialism provides a viable alternative to this New World Order. The "old and tired" Leftist argument, as valid today as yesterday, is that we shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater when we examine the recently 'deceased' alternative of socialism.

Socialism is not the exchange of a 'revolutionary elite' for an 'aristocracy'. In the case Taaffe cites (Soviet Russia), the progressive

Leninist policies that were enacted after the revolution (land reform, progressive legislation divorce, internationalist policies, etc.) were scrapped after the revolutionary leaders were rendered toothless by the (often brilliant) Machiavellian machinations of one Joseph Stalin. It was Stalin who engineered the resurrection of nationalist feelings and traditional patriarchal structure of Russian family and political life, as a way of consolidating his powerbase, all under the banner of "Socialism in One Country."

Rhetorically I repeat, do we discard land reform, nationalization of industry, free quality education, progressive reproductive legislation, i.e., the baby of socialism, with the bathwater, well soiled by Stalin, of Soviet bureaucracy?

Was Soviet socialism "state capitalism", wherein a revolutionary elite replaced a capitalist aristocracy? Absolutely not, although the Soviet state's planned economy came to resemble Taaffe 'mixed market capitalism' (a chimerical entity in the capitalist world) after Perestroika was introduced. Need we, as Americans, fear a planned economy? Not necessarily. The repressive governments of the USSR and China are not repressive because they had/have planned economies. Rather, they're repressive due to the historical conditions that predated the revolution (the legacy of anti-democratic tendencies embodied in the Czar and the Emperor). The fact that two experiments in socialist democracy have largely failed, due to the absence of democratic traditions and an industrial economy on which to build (many on the Right and Left agree that the absence of developed capitalism in these two nations led to the anemic nature of their socialist economies) does not mean that a socialist experiment with an American face would necessarily fail. This is especially true given the fact that international corporations. This American trump card eliminates the threat of economic blockade, the weapon Capital wielded so effectively against the fledgling socialist economies.

Should the world be socialist? Ideally. Should the developed nations lead the way? Definitely. As regards American political thinking, are Left and Right views obsolete? Hardly - they continue to evolve. Are political movements divorced from ethical and moral considerations? No. They are predicated on such considerations. As regards American capitalism - should we throw the baby out with the bath here, if we opt for socialism? No. Our democratic traditions, relative economic health and openness to innovation should be continued and expanded. Exploitation and injustice should go out with the trash, to be recycled as peace and progress - with a dash of American free marketry and socialist humanity.

Do I agree with Mr. Taaffe on anything? Finally, yes. I agree that we should "face the facts, folks", rather than inventing them.



## AUTUMN MOON

*I want to Dance with You  
On a star-driven Autumn night  
Slow and Timeless  
Till the Snow's winter blossom  
Brushes your cheeks  
And the Fireplace Wind  
Beckons us Home*

*Warm, Warm  
Like a heart based kitchen  
Where Love is a dish  
Best served simple  
I want to Dance with You  
Under a reminiscent Autumn Moon  
Many, many years from now*

*Thomas Taaffe 2/93*



# Long After the Funeral

By: Virginia Rathbun

Sarah winced at the sun. It was a fiery white burst of light, filling every corner of her spacious home. The bright sunshine was an unwelcome guest in Sarah's home, a glaring insult to her melancholy spirit. Today was Sarah's birthday, but it mattered little to her. In fact, it was a source of pain, not so much because she was forty-two today — that should be the worst of it. No, rather, five years ago, and three days after her birthday, her youngest son was killed in an auto accident. All five years of him. From that day on, her birthday arriving near the anniversary of such a misfortune was nothing so much as a painful reminder of her tragic loss. The events of that miserable day played over and over in her mind like a pathetic movie. The menacing crash of the two cars colliding, the smell of leaking gas, Matthew crying, sirens in the distance, the interminable ride to the hospital, the stone-faced hospital receptionist asking questions about insurance, and then the doctor's face. That face said everything Sarah had yet had only barely made a stab at acknowledging with the farthest corner of her mind. The kind of devastating news for which no emotional preparation really exists. "We did all we could," he said with downcast eyes. Sarah went through all the motions of grief, the shock, the anger, the tortured "why me" protest. She cried, she pounded her fists on the wall so hard, her sprained hands were bandaged for a week. Her husband, Brad, was spinning around in his own whirl of pain, semi-comatose, while muttering words of support to his bereaved wife and confused children. In the confines of his workshop, he let out a torrent of tears, short, abrupt gasping sobs, the way men who aren't supposed to cry or haven't cried in years, do. Then it was over. Brad never mentioned his youngest son again, not ever. If anyone innocently made reference to Matthew, a dark cloud came over Brad's face and he disappeared out of the room. Thus, Sarah's grief was very private. Unable to penetrate the wall Brad had erected over their child's death, each parent suffered alone. Sarah visited the grave faithfully; Brad refused to go at all.

Sarah was back at work one month later, and picking up the pieces of her cracked world. A certain numbness had set in, perhaps a natural defense mechanism, a tough veneer. She had to be tough. As she would say, is there any other way to be? Life doesn't allow time-outs for repair jobs to your psyche after a hard knock. Besides, she had two other children to mother. Although Andrea and Alex were almost teenagers, they still needed mothering, perhaps even more than the active and precocious little Matthew had needed. Sarah packed up all of Matthew's little boy clothes and toys in a specially crafted trunk, placed a letter of love on top, shut the lid, reflecting on the incongruous picture of two dancing clowns gracing the top, and stored it in the far corner of the basement. With every vestige of dear Matthew's possessions tucked away, Sarah got back to the sticky business of life.

The five years since the accident had been kinder to Sarah. She got a promotion on her job as a Commercial Artist, moved to a bigger home, and saw her two children develop into popular, attractive adolescents. There always remained, though, that little hole in her gut, heart, or some such emotion packed organ from which pain and anguish would spring forth at some unforeseen moment. Certain scenes might trigger it, like a walk through the little boy's section of a department store, a baseball game on T.V., (right before the accident, Matthew had discovered the love of his life, baseball), and, of course, her own birthday. The trick was to keep busy, Sarah had discovered, and God knows that wasn't hard for a working mother of two to do. But Sarah was getting tired and she needed to stop her hectic world long enough to reflect on her life and come to grips with unresolved conflicts, and festering pain. Sarah looked in the mirror and saw a woman with very fine laugh lines, a crease above the eyebrow getting a little deeper, (the "why me" crease as she scornfully referred to it), and a new torrent of grey hairs sprouting, but still a handsome woman with a soft mouth and sparkling blue-grey eyes. Thank God I don't look the way I feel, Sarah observed. Sarah had always been perplexed by the irony of her well turned-out appearance during the great crises of her life. Everyone always agreed she looked lovely and rested no matter what kind of sleepless, hellish night it had been

for her. One of the ways life mocks you, Sarah mused.

She applied her make-up, put on her sweats and did her warm-up routine, resolving to make this day different from all the other self-pitying, lousy birthdays of the last few years. She decided a ride to the Mall and a shopping spree might be just the thing she needed, and why not? She should party on her own birthday. As she drove the scenic route to the Mall she noticed some exceptionally exquisite blossoms growing by the side of the road. At once, she pulled over. She heard an enraged driver howl behind her, "jerk, put on your signal!" as she came to a stop on the side of the road. She dodged the bees and avoided the bulbs with ants circling the base, and picked herself the finest bouquet. It didn't take much thought for Sarah to decide to take the splendid bouquet to Matthew's grave, for it was along the way to the Mall anyway. St. Andrew's was a wide, expansive cemetery, containing mostly older stones with older people than Matthew buried under them, as Sarah observed one day while reading the dates on the stones. "Not fair," she had bitched aloud to no one, "just not fair". Most of these people had probably lived to see their grandchildren. Sarah came to Matthew's stone, the one that read, BELOVED SON, with lilies gilded on either side of the lettering. She filled the grave flask with water and arranged the flowers symmetrically. Perfect, she thought. Perfect flowers in an imperfect world, she reflected. Birds were chirping, in the distance men were digging out another grave, and all around her the sounds of life abounded. Particularly loud was the sound of life emanating from the playground a few yards from the graveyard. The screaming and laughter of little children had been almost unbearable to Sarah during those first visits to Matthew's grave, but now they were other background noise, just life noises. Perhaps it was thought that the playground next to the grave would be a needed contrast, a welcome relief, life meets death, young borders old, that sort of thing. Or maybe it was just a coincidence. Sarah spoke a few tender words to Matthew and turned around to leave. She glanced at the playground and smiled at the playing children, all bubbling over with energy and life force, as Sarah called it. Children have so much life force she would say. We all want to live, but the younger you are, the more reason you have to live, the less mistakes you've made, and the higher you can climb. Sarah watched the sunlight dancing off the moving children, the shadows and the glittering patterns that formed as the light peeked out between wind-blown trees. The artist in Sarah was kindled, and she reached for the sketch pad in her car. Almost involuntarily Sarah started toward the playground. Today is the day I create a masterpiece, she proudly asserted to herself. She took a seat facing as varied a group of children to ever come together. The children played together in perfect harmony, which would have struck Sarah as odd had she recently spent much time in a playground. Her hand started to move. With big graceful strokes she sketched the outlines of trees bordering the children. As a professional artist she was adept at capturing the essence of the characters she drew. For this illustration she wanted only the most essential lines, all other shadings could be abstract, almost ethereal. She wanted her work to evoke the innocence and fleeting nature of childhood. So deep was her concentration Sarah had not noticed the young boy that had wandered over to her to look at her drawing.

"Are you an artist?" he queried. Sarah started.

"Yes, yes I am, and if you go play over there with your other friends, you'll be part of this drawing, immor-

talized forever."

"Immortalized," he responded. Sarah couldn't tell if he was asking her what the word meant, or was just confirming it.

"Immortalized means you will live on forever as an illustration on my canvas," Sarah offered an explanation in any case.

"Oh, I know what it means," the boy answered quite confidently.

"You're very smart," Sarah stated, knowing that complimenting children always built up their fragile egos.

"I'm always learning more and more," the boy answered thoughtfully.

"Will you give me the picture when you're done drawing it?" the boy asked.

"Well. . .I suppose," stammered Sarah, "but why do you want it?"

"Don't you think I should have possession of a picture I am what you call, immortalized on?" he answered.

Sarah was almost dumbstruck by the boy's acumen.

"That was a very impressive reply. Yes, you may have it. How old are you anyway?" Sarah asked.

The sandy haired boy went back to his friends. Sarah couldn't help but feel flattered at the boy's request for the picture. So what if he was a child? She always beamed whenever anyone, no matter their age or status, praised her work. She went back to her drawing with renewed enthusiasm, her hands moving quickly and confidently, filling the page with all the splendid wonder of the children's figures in motion. She felt elated, almost suspended in time. It was a strange and wonderful feeling. She had been numb for so long, going about mundane duties, smiling at the appropriate times, a sense of urgency always percolating around her, that a moment like this, with all its spontaneity and natural beauty was so rare she relished it completely. As an artist, she supposed all she really wanted to do was to observe and replicate in her art work all that was beautiful and perfect.

"Wow, that's great," stated the boy as he gazed over Sarah's shoulder at the picture. "Is everything you make so good?"

Sarah was taken again by the boy's bold flattery. She thought about Matthew.

"I've made some things that were very good, but I lost something much more precious than a picture once." Sarah surprised herself, hinting to a child her most private heartache.

"What was it," the boy asked seriously.

"A child of mine died," Sarah answered. There, she said it. Sarah could only guess that she opened up to the boy because of his uncommon maturity and pensive nature.

"Nothing ever really dies, all of life just changes. You'll see. Anyway, don't be sad. Can I draw a picture now? I'll draw you a picture of my house."

With that he took the pad from her and ran over to another bench. Sarah marveled at the boy's extraordinary perception. He sat across the park, his eyebrows knitted together, furiously drawing. Sarah observed his profile, and for an instant she remembered a photograph in her album of Matthew in almost the exact same pose. She stared more intently at the boy. Matthew would be about his age, she guessed. Yet, this boy possessed insight way beyond his apparent age. He had finished drawing and was making his way back to her. Sarah felt tired. She

looked up at the sky and realized it was almost dusk. Dusk, another exceptional play of shadows and light for an artist to work with. What everyone else found annoying about dusk, Sarah appreciated. Some of her dreamiest mood drawings were done in the quasi-light of dusk.

The boy returned with the picture he had drawn. "This is for you. This is my house," he declared.

With that Sarah set her eyes upon one of the most wondrous illustrations she had ever seen. The colors, lines and details were artistically remarkable for a child, and yet there was something more. Something not quite open to description. Sarah could best characterize what she was looking at, as a little piece of Heaven. The hues, the figures, were all awesome.

"This is your house?" Sarah felt silly even asking such a question. Obviously, the boy conjured the extraordinary images out of his imagination. "This is my house," he affirmed.

For a moment Sarah could swear he smiled at her and observed her with a long-ing, almost affectionate stare.

"That picture is for you to keep. I will keep your picture, and you keep mine. Whenever you're sad about Matthew, look at the picture."

Sarah stood up, at once stunned and trying to make sense of the thoughts spring-ing up in her head. The boy was heading out of the playground at a fast pace. Sarah looked at the picture, and noticed the initials ML on the bottom.

"Oh God, Matthew!" Sarah jumped up and starting running, sketch pad in tow.

"Come back," she yelled, "please come back." The tears welled in her eyes, blur-ring her vision. She saw him in the distance and then he faded away. Sarah was sure he faded away just like a ghost, for the park led into a baseball field, completely open with yards of green grass. One moment he was there waiving to her, and the next he was liter-ally gone.

Sarah stood in the middle of the baseball diamond, holding her pad, a trail of sketch pencils littered the path she had taken to the field. She turned around on her heel and scanned the entire park. "Hey, lady, you want to please get out of the way. We're trying to play a game here," shouted an impatient voice.

Sarah walked slowly back to her car, almost afraid to believe what she had just allowed herself to believe. Impossible, she reiterated to herself all the way home. Still, how did he know Matthew's name when I never mentioned it, Sarah wondered. Thoughts thrashed about in her mind stirring deep questions. Nevertheless, once she calmed down, she felt a strange and serene peace envelope her. For weeks she returned to the playground in the hopes of finding "ML", but whoever he was, he never revealed himself again. Sarah had the magnificent picture framed and displayed. Often Sarah caught Brad gazing fondly at the picture, although he never quite accepted Sarah's ver-sion of its origin. As the years went by, Sarah accepted the incident as a strange and wonderful phenomena that had given her some badly needed solace at the time. She no longer tried to figure it out completely. She knew that some puzzles in life can't be com-pleted at all, some take time, and others are completed when we're long gone. Whenever the old despair and melancholy surfaced again, Sarah gazed at the picture and remem-bered ML's words, "Whenever you're sad about Matthew, look at the picture."

### Lewis Lines

It's not her thing. She never commented on poetry before.  
To her it's all figures...numbers.

I was expecting something like, "Nice sentence structure"

We write for ourselves.  
Accountants don't sit up late at night,  
playing with their calculators,  
to feel good.

Diane Rodreigez

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# ON THE LINE

By Tom Molinaro

It was month two of the strike and more than half the town was out of work. Blackmoor, a small industrial town nestled in the American heartland was beginning to cringe from the painful grip of Melville steel. Maybe you didn't quite "Owe Your Soul to the Company Store," as in the old Virginia mining song, but you owed damn near everything else. I was on my way to picket duty when I ran into old Hank Johnson, former teamster and friend of my dad.

"How are you, Jack?" Hank asked, "Where ya off to?"

"I'm heading down to the mill. I got the four P.M. shift on the picket line."

"Hear about Miller laying off Johnny Harris? It's a damn shame with his wife, Ruby, about to have a baby any day now," said Hank. "If it's a girl, she wants to name it Hope. That's just a bit to optimistic for my taste," he said.

Hank was a wise, cantankerous old timer. Although short and a little plump, he still had a spring in his step. Johnny Harris had been one of the fortunate strikers who found temporary work.

"That was Miller's only choice, Hank," I said, "He couldn't afford to keep Johnny on, and might have to close the shop if business doesn't pick up." Miller's Auto Repair would be just one of the many casualties if the strike continued much longer. "I'll see you later, Hank. I don't want to keep them waiting."

"Maybe I'll come by later and try to cheer you guys up."

Hank loved to stop by and chat with us while we were on picket duty. We looked forward to his visits. He always helped pass the time with a story or two.

I took the shortcut through Granville Road. It was a pleasant walk to a cheerless task. The air was crisp on this October afternoon. The rays of the waning sun buffered the approaching Autumn chill and splashed amber light on the tree tops ablaze in yellow, red and orange. Playful voices of happy children returning from school resounded in a cheerful symphony. Though the gloom of the strike had been constant, at least for the moment, the sights and sounds of my home had cheered me.

Blackmoor, population 43,000, where Elm trees lined quiet streets and freshly painted, sparkling houses, sported perfectly manicured lawns and hoisted Old Glory on the Fourth of July. It was an American town. Unfortunately, it would soon become another statistic in a tragic decade. In the post Reagan apocalypse, economic upheaval, unemployment and desperation were devouring Blackmoors nationwide.

I got to the line a few minutes to four, ready for the next three-hour shift. My momentary lapse into euphoria was soon interrupted by the stark contrast of the sight ahead. There stood the Melville Steel factory, silent, ominous. People pacing the line with angry, sullen faces, seemed dwarfed by this huge structure built of drab, brown, weather-beaten bricks. Its steel-grey gates shadowing the foreground locked out the strikers as well as their hopes and dreams. Tempers had begun to flare and occasionally some one would curse the building, source of their anguish. Inside, a skeleton crew of management personnel and a few replacement workers, (A.K.A. scabs) kept a few of the company's operations afloat. Even with this arrangement, production had fallen seventy percent since the work stoppage began.

"Same thing every two years," said Ed Garber. He was getting a little tired of being out on the street whenever a contract expired. Melville Steel was feeling the pinch. Their stock was "undervalued" so they were likely candidates for a take over. In order to raise the necessary cash to stave off the raiders, they needed, demanded wage concessions and benefit reductions.

"God-damned chairmen of the board, Adams, ain't makin no concessions this year, you can bet yer ass on that," exclaimed Ed. The narrow pole of the picket sign seemed dwarfed by his huge, work-worn hands, though he held it as carefully as if it were the finished steel I was more accustomed to seeing him carry. He worked in the casting unit alongside nine other team members. Melville had initiated some Japanese inspired procedures, dividing the men into teams or "enterprise units." With only fifteen months from retirement, Ed could rightfully say: "Shit, what lousy timing."

"He and his cronies are pullin down close to a mil' a piece," Ed continued. He wasn't exaggerating. In fact, each one of the board members had stock option bonuses that exceeded the combined yearly salaries of the Ed's entire unit. If Melville was taken over they would float to safety in "golden parachutes" while the rank and file would crash without a net.

Joe Gardner was there also. Young, healthy, muscular, he didn't have a trace of



the mills' years of punishment which was more apparent on his older co-workers.

"If this lousy strike doesn't end soon I won't be able to register for the spring semester. I already dropped out for the fall and lost half my tuition," he commented. Joe still lived at home with his father, Bill, a widower, who had more than a passing interest in the outcome of the strike. Having retired from the mill eight years ago, his pension rights and health care package were riding on the line with the fate of the active employees. Life was kind of quiet since Milly passed on last spring. Bill and Joe had learned to care for each other but they didn't always see eye-to-eye, especially on labor issues.

"I just wish the union would make their sweet-heart deal soon so we can end this game and get back to work," Joe said, echoing the cynicism developing among some of the workers.

"What kind of thing is that to say," cried Dan Oliva, shop steward, labor activist and one of Joe's fellow students at the University. "Didn't your old man teach you anything."

"Yeah, I learned not to be a sucker for the "party line" like he was, still is." Joe had a slightly different slant than Dan. The former, majoring in business administration, the later, in labor relations. Each had their own agendas with one thing in common—neither of them planned on spending the rest of their adult lives in the mill. Joe had an itch for investment banking. Dan saw his future as a labor mediator.

"Your Father was never any sucker for the party line. He worked hard and stood by the Union. He never kissed up to any boss and never sold out a fellow worker. That's more than I can say about most people," said Dan.

"Don't get so righteous. I don't need you to defend the good name of my father. You just don't get the picture," Joe said.

"I get the picture all right," Said Dan "the company is trying to bust the union. Plain and simple."

"Maybe we'll all be better off in the long run if that's the case. What good will all this union brotherhood crap do if we go belly-up and fall prey to the raiders. You know as well as I do, even if you won't admit it, that the market will, in the end, determine what wages are to be, not the Union." Joe preached the Gospel according to Milton Freedman, the popular free-market economist, whose doctrine he had been taught with almost evangelical fervor by his teacher and mentor, Professor Edwards. Joe really believed in the efficiency, even benevolence, of Adam Smith's invisible hand, even though it had just slapped him and ten thousand other workers right in the face. I was so involved in their debate that I didn't even notice Hank Johnson standing along side me.

"I don't mean to interrupt you fellas but I couldn't help hearin your argument, with all the yellin and all." As an amateur labor historian, Hank couldn't resist discussions on the subject. "You don't really think you would be better off without the Union, Joe, do you?" he continued. "Do you think the health benefits you have now, you know the ones they're trying to cut, the paid vacation, sick leave and pension came from the goodness of the company's heart? They came from the sweat and blood of union workers that fought long, hard, sometimes violent strikes. Steelworkers, truckers, miners, all have paid the price in blood, sometimes even with their lives, like the Ludlow massacre. Ever learn about that in your college?"

"Can't say that I have Hank, but what the hell does that have to do with us." Joe was becoming a little impatient with Hank's homily.

"The Ludlow massacre," chimed in Dan, "was a sorry, unfortunately, often forgotten part of our country's sordid labor history."

"Looks like you've been readin the right books young fella," said Hank. "Go on. You tell the story." Dan continued.

"The miner's in Ludlow, Colorado, camped out with their families in front of the mine and closed it down. This didn't sit too well with the owners. They sent a bunch of armed goons to bust up the campsite. Having received no provocation, the goons fired on the strikers. When the smoke cleared, fifteen miners, five women and three children were killed."

"That was certainly a tragedy, Dan, but for every horror story of corporate abuses you can tell, I can tell one from the other side. Like the U.A.W. strike in Flint, Michigan, where your lovely comrades threw bricks and bottles at the people who crossed the line."

"You mean scabs, don't you," Dan interrupted.

"You can call them whatever you want, but it still doesn't give those fanatical bastards the right to risk killing someone. And, what about the Teamsters, Hank, why don't you tell Dan how Jimmy Hoffa financed the Mafia's Las Vegas adventures with Teamster pension funds."

"I never supported Hoffa," said Hank. "I suppose there's good and bad on both sides of the tracks. By the way, Jack," Hank turned to me, trying to change the subject and keep peace, "I heard that Ruby Harris went into labor about an hour ago."

"I'm glad to hear that," I said. "At least it will give her and Johnny something better to think about than this damn strike." There was some kind of commotion down the street. We all ran to see what was happening. Some of the men had recognized the car, surrounded it, blocked it. Inside, was one of the replacement workers or scabs, depending on what side of the line you were on, a frightened, confused, young man about nineteen or twenty. They were pounding on his windows, kicking his doors and shouting: "Drop dead scab," "Get a real job," etc. While Dan, Joe and I were doing our best to pull the crowd away from the doors. Hank was in the rear, doing his best to keep them from climbing on the trunk. The young driver began to panic. The screams of the angry mob changed his mood from apprehension to terror. He backed up the car in haste, shifted into drive and skidded away for his life, totally unaware he had just knocked Hank to ground, unconscious.

Panic ensued. People started to crowd around Hank while some chased in vain after the fleeing young man. I started pushing people away, trying to give Hank breathing room while Dan called 911. The paramedics found no pulse when they arrived. At five-thirty P.M. Hank was pronounced D.O.A. at Blackmoor General, about the same time Ruby gave birth. Yes, it was a girl and Hope was born, or, did it die that day in Blackmoor, with Hank, one of the last peacemakers we had.

Dan Oliva was absolutely certain Melville Steel was to blame for Hank's death. After all, if it weren't for the strike none of the other events would have happened. Joe Gardner was equally convinced it was the union's fault for promoting so much hatred. Me, I'll be thinking about it, while spending my time, on the line.

# *Broken Bottle*

*Broken bottle  
Lost in the weeds  
An unfinished suicide  
Lies  
    abandoned*

*A grave  
    unmarked  
Is the price of seduction  
And there are no statues  
Where I go*

*My past  
Lies around me  
Like pottery shards  
Broken,  
    broken,  
        all my friends*

*That which destroys me  
I will make my weapon  
The drummer is calling  
I must go*

*Thomas Taaffe 2/93*

While working on this issue of the magazine, I had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know James Ortiz. There were many evenings that James would visit with me while I continued laying out the magazine. I am very sorry he has passed away and will miss him greatly.

The staff of the Ictus Review dedicates this issue to the memory of Mr. James Ortiz. He was great inspiration and support of this magazine.

Théa Jon  
Editor in Chief