

KENNEBEC

APRIL 1977



alter·cheitman
clairmont·clark
coursen·cox·deblois
fallon·gilley·hall·larkin
lignell·mcguire·mcken
miller·mott·neeson·neir
park·plunkett·rawlings
schumacher·scribner
sharkey·tagliabue
walker·wicks

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE
AT AUGUSTA

KENNEBEC APRIL 1977

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It seems to us that University publications such as Orono's Maine Review and Portland-Gorham's Presumpscot Journal - and now Augusta's Kennebec - provide a unique way for the University system to serve all Maine people. These publications, by opening their pages, not only to students, but to all, provide one of the few outlets Maine offers to serious writers. The editors hope that it can serve the public as well as have Orono and Portland-Gorham.

Kennebec is published annually in April under the editorial direction of faculty and students of U.M.A., with assistance and support from citizens of the Kennebec community and Adult Education Community Services. Submissions of non-fiction, fiction, poetry and graphics, as well as offers of editorial assistance, are welcome. With non-fiction and graphics, please query first.

in common a remarkable resemblance to the more garish chemical toilets - and with the same life expectancy. Neon lights blazed and screamed all over town - over the franchised eateries, discount houses, gas stations, used car lots and sterile motels. Today, one block from our state capitol, vulgarity presses in. The chicken-processing plant just upstream adds its own ribbon of decor to the Kennebec below a crumbling business district.

Our sad conviction is that Augusta is beyond recovery as a suitable location for the capitol of Maine. But wishing to be constructive, we propose a solution. Let there be selected somewhere in our unpopulated western hills (thus perhaps inducing legislative vision) an enclave of say, some five square miles. Let this be Maine's new "Brasilia"! We propose that all the many buildings in Augusta still unravished and suitable for preservation be dismantled and re-erected at this site. Besides the capitol building, we recommend all the old stone federal, county and state buildings, e.g., the county jail complex, the P.O., the fine old granite buildings that made up part of the old State Mental Hospital across the river. Replicas of demolished buildings and homes could be undertaken. And finally we suggest a rebuilding of the old Augusta House at our 'Brasilia', as it was at its best, with suitable landscaping. It will have a front porch where we can relax with a drink. Somewhere in the background, on an upright piano, an elderly waitress will be playing "It's a Long Long Way From Tipperary."

April, 1977

G.B.C.

dedication

The staff of Kennebec dedicate this first issue to our late President, Lloyd J. Jewett, whose support made possible an annual publication. Kennebec's pages will be an open forum for commentary and creative work. Manuscripts and queries are invited. The deadline date is December 31, 1977.

KENNEBEC commentary

This first issue of Kennebec comes at a time when very few connected with our University system seem to possess a clear idea of where, academically, 'things are at.' Like the "Argo Merchant" we appear to have captains and crews whose training leaves much to be desired; our compasses fluctuate with the proclamation of each new statement of University and campus goals; and the major concern of our citizens receiving the cargo - educated men and women and services - is that the price is right. (For right read cheap.) We hear that the financial support given the University by Maine citizens, depending on the category, ranks between 45th and 50th in the nation. The administrative and legislative use of the term "dedicated" in relation to highways, hunting and fishing, provides its own ironic commentary. Somehow we have failed to understand that higher education, with its deep humanistic traditions that underly Western civilization, is the only insurance we can buy that gives some hope for the endurance of democratic aspirations and forms. It seems to us that a society that perceives education as purely job-training, the acquisition of rudimentary literacy skills, that insists on "cheap" education, is doomed to always be last - or maybe, like the "Argo Merchant" . . .

* * * * *

Over ten years ago in August we came to Augusta for the first time. A certain drowsy ambience still possessed the town, a genteel decay downtown and tree-lined Western Avenue still reaching lovely up and to the west. We sat on the porch of the Augusta House above the river and were served drinks by an elderly waitress who obviously disapproved of drinking. As we observed through latticework the passage of traffic about the circle, she went inside and regaled us with musical selections from another time. Her handling of "Over There" struck us as particularly good.

Since then there have been changes. In fact, regardless of our questionable educational standing, we can see little in the way of a claim to ranking Maine as number one in possessing the nation's ugliest capitol city - no easy achievement, given the lovely physical setting of hills and river, the classically handsome capitol building, the elegance of the governor's mansion and the graceful sweep of capitol land down to the Kennebec. There were the fine old homes of Western Avenue, the still-charming waterfront business district, the outlying fields shelving into woods. Yet, unobserved from the front porch of the Augusta house, the work had begun.

It was the sixties that saw the first concerted effort by certain dedicated Augusta citizens to transform our capitol city into what it is today. Working from the basic assumption that any controls or zoning were part of a Communist conspiracy, the old buildings were raped or razed. Trees fell. Shopping centers jammed the Avenue. Business edifices were erected which possessed

We're half-way through winter, they tell me,
but forty above on February eighth
feels like spring in Maine.
The sun out, eaves
dripping icicles,
we do our spring-cleaning, vacuum and broom,
dusting and mopping.
It's funny cleaning house with Joe Martin:
I remember the orange-and-white kerchief
you'd wear,
I suppose, to keep dust off your hair,
a practical reason,
but to me it would make you Mother of Rooms,
babushka'd, wide-hipped,
teeming.
There's a spare, sturdy leanness
when two bachelors keep house,
spring-cleaning in the middle of winter.
The back-yard pine bends to the wind,
stretching southward. The floor tilts,
locked doors spring open,
windows rattle in their frames,
the lake-ice cracks and booms,
no room has a center.
The cat on the kitchen chair
watches us sweep up cat-hair and dust.
We want an ample roundness to our work:
a hillside pond, a rusty-orange moon.
Dry, I reach for a beer.
We're only half-way through this winter.

Raymond L. Neinstein

Keeping House for Ruth

An Onerous Offering

It is hard to tell who is who anymore. My heart bleeds less, my flesh grows heavier, my eyes seem to itch and I am easily satisfied. In this prison of coarsening manners, I sometimes wish that I had been born a Victorian.

There stands Mr. Sherlock Holmes, looking down into the London morning. Baker Street awash with people, each clearly identifiable.

"By the way he walks, the scuff marks on his shoes," says Sherlock Holmes, his fingers dancing, "that man is a medical doctor, a Freemason, a philandering husband."

Watson gapes as Holmes does prove it; Watson slobbers with admiration. Stolid is as stolid does: Watson jots it all down in his book of marvels, bound as it is for the Yellow Press. History then, as it comes down to us in its menus and its millinery, was a rigid choreography; actors then were forbidden to improvise.

The center feels the scorn of undiagrammed frenzy. Deduction is an art of a moral society. Where is he going? He's going to Calvary. Calvary is a bar on the south side of the city.

In a cafeteria full of hung-over casualties sits a man who doesn't wash: come psoriasis, come acne. This man whose feet swell in a pair of brown workboots is the heir to a fortune in Congolese uranium. In an oak-panneled bar, on the other side of town, another man holds a long drink between well-manicured fingers. He wears an elegant suit; he holds the major credit cards; he speaks gently to the waiter in a Mid-Atlantic accent. He's the son of a waitress, the son of a salesman, in all ways a gentleman who defies geneology. For Calabria and County Mayo have united to produce the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

"From a walking stick or the smell of a cigar," Mr. Sherlock Holmes can be condescending. "You can reconstruct a man without ever laying eyes on him."

Watson doubts. He is always doubting. As a result he can make what is flatly self-evident take on the allure of a miracle play. Holmes watches Watson turn purple with expectation, sputter and protest in sweet disharmony.

"There is no difference between the face of a man and the shape of his walking stick," Watson fumbles for understanding.

"When I come to the scene of a crime," Sherlock Holmes explains it blandly, "I am looking for what is not in order. Something is amiss when things are in disorder. To return to our man and his walking stick, it is when these do not match that I am suspicious."

Poor Sherlock Holmes, what would he make of us? I can see him standing on a crowded downtown street. The people pushing by him would deprive him of his language. Blinded, deafened, muted, he might see the inconceivable; he might think he had gone mad; he might decide he was at the theater. Soon, I think, he would flee deep into the countryside searching for the remnants of his understanding.

In the country, if he searched long and patiently, he might find people who still wore the garments of continuity. They might reassure him by not dressing outside their station, or moving a piece of furniture from its age-old emplacement.

As the wounds he had suffered at 50th and Broadway healed and receded, he might start to practice his art again. He will be timid at first. His landlady will encourage him. She will speak glowingly to her friends of the progress he is making. He will relapse on occasion into the belly of that memory, but people will be solicitous and only later express their pity.

They will come to his bedside, tempt him with small commissions: perhaps a puzzle long-solved, at most a petty theft.

Watson would be faithful, he would revel in the doctoring. The opportunity to be of service would delight him more than anything. He would wait on Holmes diligently, he would prescribe to excess. Most nights Watson would read medical journals under the soft light in Holmes' bedroom. It is easy for him to look up from his chair and listen for signs of irregular breathing.

Once in a while, if Holmes is sleeping soundly, Watson will slip out to a quiet bar on Main Street. Everyone knows him as an easy touch for a drink in exchange for a little conversation. This talk revolves around two topics only: the state of Holmes' health (Watson sees improvement) and the exploits of Holmes ("before his misadventure").

It is clear that Watson does not understand the scope of the disaster that has maimed his friend. The doctor himself saw no more on Broadway than he had from Baker Street or on one of Holmes' cases. Faced with chaos, he remains in character. What Holmes cannot point out to him, he does not see. Instead, Dr. Watson blames cocaine or a "genetic neurasthenia" for the condition of his friend.

In the middle of the night Mr. Sherlock Holmes wakes up screaming. "I'm on the scent!" His vision is blurred from tears and sweating; he sees the Broadway traffic honking up his bed. He rolls and groans as if pushed by the multitude. He cowers under the bed covers. A subway pitches forward.

In the voice of an infant, he chides himself: "No, I must have no imagination."

Dr. Watson hears the crickets chirping, birds taking flight, wild dogs barking.

Rachel Butler Deblois

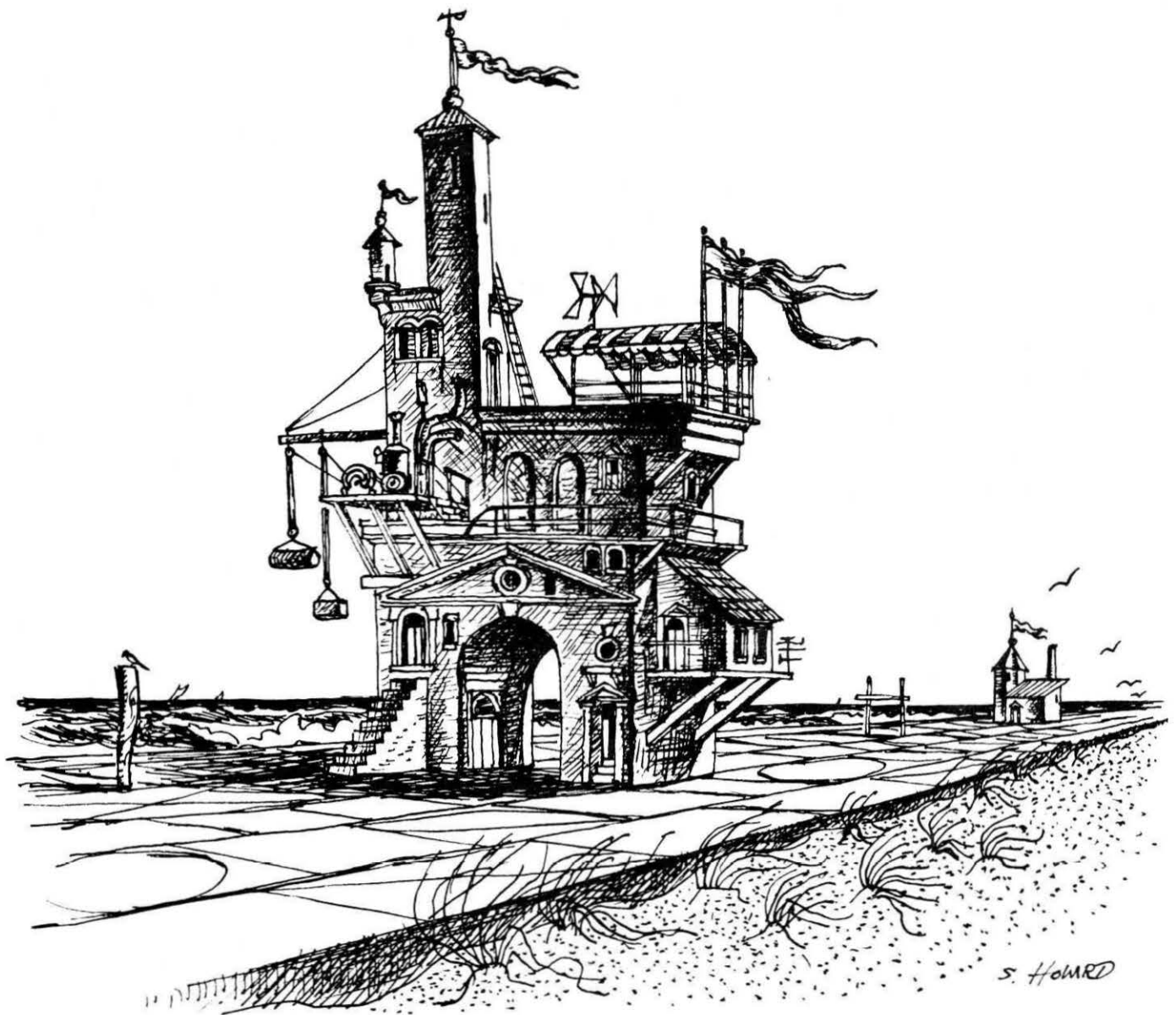


Illustration by Stephen Howard

Seraph

*Time again to camp by the sea,
to burn driftwood and breathe salt smoke.
Time again to sleep among cool ferns
on a ledge over the breath of ocean water
where the moon-flower slips like love into bright flesh
and smoky sleep sifts behind the mind.*

*When morning's nerve crackles in the skin, like sunburn,
the rise up
and dip a dream
from the thunderhole you dreamt on -
seek a boatwright to frame ship,
heft an axe to trim a pine mast,
and find a needle-man to sew some sail.*

*Oh ship-builder, ship-builder, peeler of keels,
shave a keel that savors a wave,
plane a prow to awaken the wind,
carve a girl with a gale in her hair.
 Oh ship-builder, dream-seeder, heaver of beams,
 hew a hull with invisible seams
 and plant it with ribs of a god, for dreams -
white meerschauum hatches, aging gold in the sun,
polished cleats of twisted root-briar,
pink alabaster decks, and wakes of porphyry clouds.*

*Stock rum in the galley, black beans in the pot,
christen her with barley juice that's strong -
 Chanteyman! Chanteyman! Launch her with song,
 then watch for a funneling, fundying tide,
 long winds distend the bladder of sail
 and blow you beyond the far island's call.
When the sun falls, a pink stone into the sea,
then loll in evening's azure lull,
your flute in the bow
blow Ravel through boards
until porpoises pum time on the hull.*

*Lost seraphic in the beat of history,
ride time's quick twitch,
and float you slow and float you steady
to the dorsal pounding on your beautied heart.*

Terry Plunkett

Self-Indulgence

*Yes - I can wait
through the long slow dawn
until color has burst
like a ripe tangerine
on a porcelain plate . . .
I can peel away
the skin of the day;
nibble through the pulp
of a brilliant noon;
sip the juice from a stream
of afternoon light
while the blue elongated shadows blend.
I can even wait
to discard the pips of a drawn-out day
in the soft black sack
of a yawning night -
if I know that a good dream
lies at the end!*

Priscilla Farrington Schumacher

"And it comes out here..."

*Victrolas wait
to flower forth their old sounds.
Ancient O-Gauge Lionels
idle on shelves, yearning
to swing through paper maché
tunnels, pause at lowered arms
of intersections, slow through
model metal villages, tremble
on the merest touch of track
around the bright banking of
the curves. I reach down to
straighten a locomotive,
cowcatcher webbed in the work
of spiders. Some transformer
times me back to the lost year
of Jimmy Dorsey's 78,
"Autumn Serenade: Foxtrot
With Vocal," still on one
of the rounded turntables,
winding down these silent
stations of the dust.*

Herb Coursen

MODES and GENES

(for Frances)

*One of your grandmothers
they called Ottomani:
to say, "the Turk's daughter".*

*Some swarthy Celt, I'd hazard,
also swived his way
inside your family tree*

*(Italians are like that--
a lively salad, mingling
conqueror with conquered).*

*Your Levantine nose
and four-square peasant body--
bowlegged, you tell me,*

*as a child--with your skin
both pallor of marble
and glint of the olive....*

*Naked, you could be
a Titian or Veronese
spacious brunette Venus;*

*or in khaki, a no-nonsense
Israeli drill sergeant
striding through a newsreel--
your suddenly harsh beauty
a middle eastern crisis
to at least one viewer's*

uninnocent eye.

David Walker

FICTIONAL

JOURNALISM

The popular novel has become imitation journalism. Journalism has become imitation fiction. The epitome of this trend is, of course The Final Days, in which Woodward and Bernstein rely on novelistic techniques to recreate the last days of the Nixon Administration. For many journalists, they went too far when they purported to represent the thoughts of people whose thoughts could only have been surmised. Stepping over that line from certifiable fact to well-informed conjecture, is a common danger of the new journalism.

The bestseller, The Godfather, was most effective when it was primarily journalism. The description of the growth of the Mafia in the New York slums was fascinating. But when the author turned to romantic melodrama, only inveterate soap-opera fans could keep from becoming bored.

Great novelists have always made their stories more interesting by utilizing factual material. Daniel Defoe, first a journalist, was a brilliant user of factual material. Why else has Robinson Crusoe endured? Ian Fleming's James Bond thrillers usually contain accurate descriptions of such exotic worlds as say, the diamond trade. Pure information can often carry an otherwise poorly-done fiction.

Many of the current popular novels are really embellished journalism. Utilizing fictional techniques, the authors order the confrontations on cue - but always the action is backed by fact, and the purpose (heroes win or lose depending on the audience sought) is journalistic. The fiction is meant to expose, to reform. These novels are in fact a form of advocacy journalism.

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What are those techniques? The primary one is selective description. Until recently, pure description was taboo in journalism. Judgmental adjectives were unhesitatingly rejected. Now the new journalists use judgmental adjectives. We are told someone was angry, spoke more rapidly than normal, thus suggesting excitement or nervousness. The new journalist utilizes background for motivation to explain why two persons might attack one another.

Fictional techniques used judiciously in journalism are unobtrusive. The journalist doesn't impose his ideas anymore than the fiction writer using a limited point-of-view. The journalist doesn't preach; he doesn't indicate approval or disapproval; he reports.

But, of course, the reporter sets up the reader. As a good writer he knows he can make the reader believe what he is writing. And therein lies the potential for abuse.

The watchdog who must make sure the reporting is reporting, not preaching, is the managing editor. Thus it is easy to see why so many managing editors oppose the new journalistic freedom. Their jobs as editors become that much more difficult.

The most common problem presented to the editor by the newly-released journalist is the insertion of irrelevant and ambiguous detail. Suddenly people are always chain-smoking, have scuffed shoes, or perspire heavily. Details such as these are irrelevant, can be misleading, and in most cases can be excised with the stroke of a pen.

A more difficult problem is presented by the journalist who takes liberty with tone and/or sequence. Suppose two comments which juxtapose beautifully were actually made several hours apart. But to say so would weaken the tone, the tension. So the reporter leaves out that little detail. The editor must maintain that the rules of good journalism have been violated; the journalist does not have the freedom to juxtapose for journalistic impact or slant. The journalist must attempt to recreate a situation exactly as it happened. For the real journalist, accurate writing is good writing.

Most traditional journalists will tell you that impact on the reader is not a valid concern. Only advocacy journalists, they say, care about impact. But this is not so. What else is modern print journalism all about? The days of reporting an event for its own sake are rapidly passing. Television has taken over the "instant history" function newspapers once had.

In Maine the wire services used to report, in detail, every highway fatality. For all I know, they still do. But apparently few newspapers report fatalities in detail and they shouldn't, because individually the accidents are journalistically irrelevant. Cumulatively important because they reflect on highway safety or illustrate an issue such as poor road construction or drunken driving, they then become journalistically important. But always, with issues, the editor must make a judgment about why he is running the story.

Yet much modern journalism still concerns itself with particulars because it has always been done and because it is obvious people like to read about

disasters and gory murders. But that's the low side of American journalism. Dishonest writing without meaningful purpose aside from impact is bad journalism.

Thoughtless adherence to tradition has always been more common than thoughtful innovation. That's why today, for instance, the really important investigative reporting of Woodward and Bernstein about Watergate has been transformed by imitators into little more than gossip about the powerful. We are given stories relating private conversations between public officials which are of no importance, revealing only that public officials are no better than the rest of us. Perhaps a few years ago that was purpose enough. Not today.

But still, the lazy journalists will always be with us. Traditional news coverage has always been easy coverage. If someone called a news conference a reporter went. The journalist was safe because nothing could be missed. Also the reporter got nothing more than anyone else.

Real investigative journalism, on the other hand, is obviously difficult. That's why so little exists. By definition investigative journalism means digging out information no one wants to give you. It almost always deals with issues, not happenings.

Another important brand of the new journalism is that where the reporter simply spends time with a person. Instead of just asking questions the reporter witnesses incidents which may more clearly reveal a person's position than would any rehearsed statement.

Naturally, spending time with a story creates more problems, because generally the more a reporter learns, the more complicated the issue becomes. The reporter accumulates too much material, perhaps all interesting, which must be sorted out, and some information rejected, because it doesn't come within the focus of the particular story.

Thus the problems of the good journalist are manifold: the journalist must write well, with style; stories must be so constructed as to be accurate and make a point; the reader, having finished the story, must clearly understand not just the particulars involved but how these reflect an issue. The good journalist cannot be a lazy journalist.

Such demands, of course, invite poor as well as good journalism. Journalists suddenly try to write O'Henry endings, establish moods, imply motivations; they cross over the line between utilization of fictional techniques into the writing of fiction itself. In the end what must limit the good journalist, no matter what is said or how, is the truth of his story.

Because editors remain safer, breathe more easily, if journalistic innovation is not allowed, most will continue to oppose a loosening of the restrictions. But good reporters and good editors, working together, can fulfill journalism's promise to positively affect society - if they aren't afraid of taking chances. As indeed they must.

Peter W. Cox

**God
Watches
Susanna
Cooking
Dinner
and
is
Pleased**

*Susanna has planned lasagne for dinner
With salad
And hot bread
Which Luis will bring home
Fresh from the bakery
After work.*

*Three years ago
Her mother went mad
And Susanna left home;
Her father cried.*

*Preparing dinner,
She listens to the water boil,
The sound the knife makes
Slicing tomatoes.
Her hearing is sharp today.*

*Susanna believes that God
Is symmetrical somehow,
The way tomatoes are
And cabbages
When she cuts them in half.*

*Observing her,
God is pleased
To be thought of in this way.
One of his hobbies is symmetry
And he is fond of tomatoes as well.*

*Susanna is a Taurus;
Some people consider her unimaginative.
This does not disturb her.*

*She is pleased with the sauce for the lasagne
(She thinks of it as hers);
The ricotta is unusually white.
Textures please her
Always.*

*God notes that Susanna
Will be pregnant soon.
She and Luis will marry
And live long dull lives together.*

*While God notes all this
With some regret,
Susanna,
Cooking dinner,
Doesn't know it yet.*

*She is happy
And God is pleased with her
For that.*

*While she slices red onions for the salad,
He considers Divine Intervention
In her situation.*

*Susanna is thinking of symmetry again
And theology
In her own way.*

God is not fond of onions.

*He wonders:
Is Susanna unimaginative
After all?*

*He decides to let things go
As planned
Except that he causes Luis
To bring flowers home
And a bottle of wine
To have with
Susanna.*

E. Cheitman

TWO POEMS

*I always knew I was
related to birds in migration*

*it's how come we're here all of us
and sometimes we sing and sometimes we fly*

*I always knew I was
related to fish smell*

*it's even better than the Encyclopedia Britannica
for getting procreation recreation*

*kippers you say
keep it I say
hold it I pray
swallow I say*

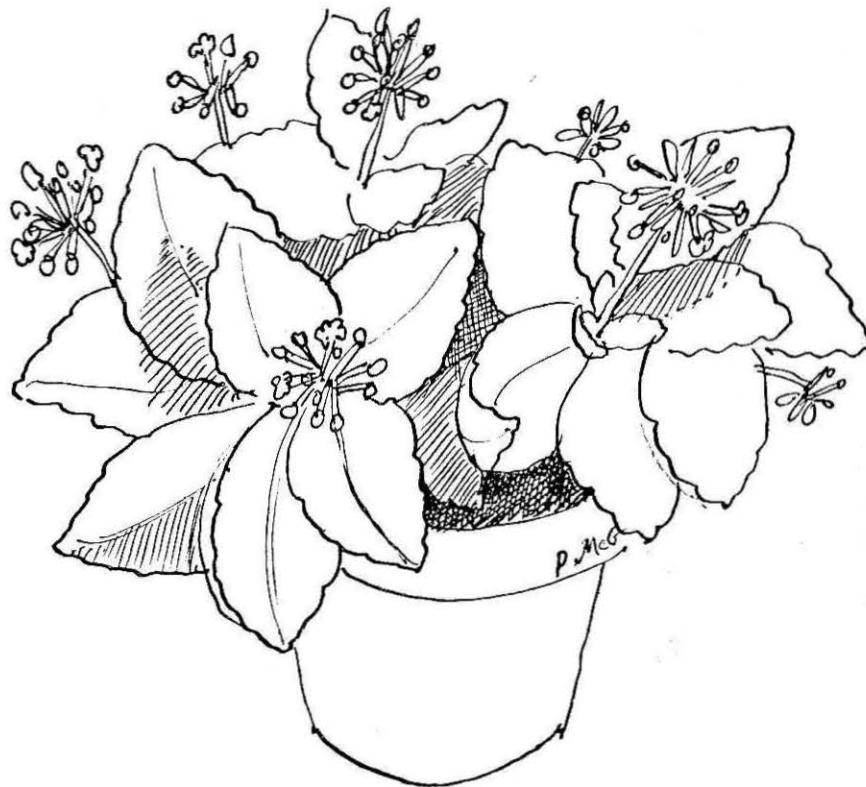
*the sea has many fish dreams
I always knew we were seals plunging
into the water pursuing each other*

*slippery quick pleased with our selves
and each other pursuing each other*

*We say heroic and the birds are beginning to return,
almost April*

*To arrange the plants by the window is epical enough
to begin with
to watch them grow with their wide leaves and heart shaped songs
and ever continuing expansive vines
is lyrical enough all along
to be shaded by them is richness worthy of vibrations,
celebrations in changing light
will exchange our names; the anonymous reader is married
to light and **dark**;
it is a dramatic affair worthy of the Plays of Shakespeare.*

John Tagliabue



Bright Summer Day

Melissa sat on the ramshackle front stoop, cooing little velvet mother sounds as she huddled over the blanket-wrapped bundle in her arms. The sun seared down on the delicate neck, already beginning to show pink where straggly pigtails were pulled back to expose it, but Melissa was oblivious to the rays that burned with the passion of early summer. Her heart was full of tenderness and love.

"Bye-lo baby, bye-lo," she sang in her thin child's voice, like a dew-strung spider web. "La la, la la la la." Melissa improvised forgotten words and clutched the precious bundle tightly to her chest as she skipped across the porch to a battered doll carriage that teetered on splayed wheels. She hummed contentedly as she bent over the carriage, the small hands tenderly smoothing and patting.

"Go to sleep now, darlin'. Mama will be right back."

Melissa ran into the house, the screen door slapping shut behind her. She stopped short inside the door of her mother's bedroom calmed by the sudden catapult into darkness. At the end of the room, small rays of sunlight spiked insistently through the torn shade of the single window. By its light, Melissa could make out the bureau; a drawer sagged open, a straight chair trailing dresses, and the knobbed iron frame of the double bed. On the bed, Melissa's mother was an inert mound, a conundrum of hills and hollows under a stained blanket that had been yanked out at the foot and drawn up into a cowl over her head.

"Mama! Mama!" Melissa patted her mother's cheek with a butterfly touch. Not a muscle responded in the slack face. She touched the cheek again, then began tugging at the blanket.

"Mama! Get up!" The blanket mound rolled and billowed ominously and a wing of it lashed out in her direction. The sour smell of whiskey enveloped her.

"Whatta you want?" The blanket fell away from her mother's bare arm as Melissa shrank out of range.

"I'm hungry, Mama. I want my breakfast." The arm disappeared under the blanket again, stretching it up around the sullen face.

"Go get it then. Leave me alone. I've got a hangover."

The mound subsided. Melissa edged closer, studying her mother's closed eyes. Then with a soft smile she tiptoed backwards out of the room and shut the door.

In the kitchen, the green enamel Atlantic range was cold now that the days were warm. Its black top, layered with protective newspaper, was a clutter of bags and boxes. Melissa searched through a cut-down cardboard carton, tight-packed with groceries, and pried loose a box of cornflakes. Her struggles disturbed a gray tiger cat asleep in the woodbox behind the stove.

Uncurling, the cat jumped to the floor, the thrust of its hind legs dislodging a gray-birch log that rolled to the bottom with a dull clump.

"Ssshh!" Melissa sealed her lips with a warning finger. "Don't make noise. Snow White is sleeping." The cat disdainfully checked its dish under the stove, then sauntered to the door and threaded its sleek body through a loose flap of screen.

"A beautiful prince will come wake her up," Melissa continued dreamily as she pulled out a bottom drawer of the kitchen cabinet and stood on its edge to reach a bowl. The sink was full of unwashed dishes, the counter top littered with empty beer bottles and smeared glasses. A cardboard carton of milk, its lip pulled out, was half full but its contents rolled sluggishly and Melissa, sniffing it, curled her nose.

There was no milk in the refrigerator. Melissa abandoned her bowl of cereal and sat huddled on a kitchen chair, her bare feet drawn up, knees stretching her dress into a smooth, straight hill. She stared disconsolately at a fly that diligently canvassed the littered table for crumbs. The fly skittered over a tacky wedge of cold pizza in a smeared cardboard plate, then lifting two of its pencil-stroke legs, began rubbing them together. Testing and rejecting the pizza, it scurried along to the remains of a pink-frosted cake, still standing on its rectangle of white cardboard, the plastic wrapper torn back, the cake's cut edges stale and hard. Melissa jumped up suddenly, bright with purpose.

"I know!" she said out loud. "I'll have a birthday party, and cel-e-brate!"

Melissa knew about birthdays. Just a few day's before, her mother's friends had brought a frosted cake and presents for a surprise celebration. It had been a good party. Melissa's mother was very gay, and allowed Melissa to stay up late to have a piece of birthday cake. They had all pushed their faces together to help blow out the candles, everyone laughed a lot, and for a long time after Melissa went to bed she could still hear them dancing, stumbling and bumping into things in the crowded kitchen. The next morning there had been more than the usual number of empty bottles on the counter. Melissa, foraging amongst the leftover party-fare, salvaged a piece of pink satin ribbon from the wadded-up bright wrappings.

Now, she wished she had saved the candles, but on the back of the stove she found a box of wooden matches. Guessing at the number, she pushed them close together into the pink frosting on the cake. Then, teetering on the edge of the drawer, she drained the bottles until she had half-filled a water-glass and carried it back to the table for her "celebration."

It was not a happy celebration. The "candles" flared up in leaping yellow flames that hissed from one to the other when she lit them, frightening her. The amber dregs were harsh and fiery in her throat, not at all what she expected. She spit it out. When the matches had burned down to charred black skeletons with bowed heads, Melissa threw them in the sink and sat eating the stale cake, dipping her spoon into the pink frosting, pretending it was ice cream.

Afterwards, she again dared one foot inside her mother's bedroom.

"Mama?" Melissa's thin voice barely penetrated the enduring shadows. "Are you awake yet?"

"Get the hell out of here!" The blanket mound curled tighter and Melissa scampered away, the slat of the screen door muffling the curse that followed her.

Out in the bright sunshine again, Melissa quickly responded to its brilliance.

"Come let me tie your bow, darlin'. Mama will take you for a nice walk." Backing the carriage and turning carefully, she pushed it across the uneven boards and tic-tacked bumpily down the steps.

The small ramshackle house sat near the end of a long country lane, with the nearest neighbor a mile away. Years of farm traffic had beaten the unpaved road into a hard-packed surface that was cool under Melissa's bare feet. On either side, daisies and buttercups swarmed through the tall grass, jostling each other for a chance to dance in swaying clumps beside the road. Overhead, the sky was exultantly blue. High-piled white clouds drifted in picture-postcard poses, and somewhere an unseen bird sang lustily. Melissa's heart sang with him. She drew her thin shoulders straight and tall, and hummed as she pushed the carriage along with a prim, mincing walk.

Several times, Melissa paused to stoop over the carriage and rearrange the blanket, soothing with sweet endearing phrases. Thus she did not see the two women as they topped the crest of a small knoll just ahead.

One of the women was tall and spare, the other all softness and round flesh. The exquisiteness of the day had prompted them, too, to take a walk, and a half-mile back, at the main highway, a long sedan sheltered in the shade of an ancient, broadspreading maple. As they strolled along, chattering and admiring the countryside, the taller woman held a few stems of daisies loosely in her hands. She smiled indulgently as her younger companion, interrupted their conversation occasionally to dart after the bright butterflies hovering among the flowers.

Melissa saw them at the precise moment her straightening figure caught their eye. She drooped her head in shy defensiveness as they inexorably approached her. The two women, maternal memories stirring in their bosoms, found this modest gesture appealing. They quickened their step, eager to pursue and capture this fresh, new treasure to add to their tokens of the day.

"What a sweet child!"

"What is your name, little girl?"

Melissa did not answer, but the women, swept up in the tide of their own sentiment, barely noticed.

"My, what a pretty face!"

"Where did you get those big blue eyes?"

"Are you taking your dolly for a ride?"

"Tell me, dear, what is your dolly's name?"

Melissa, without meeting their eyes, could only nod her head in an inherent desire to be polite, but she felt her chest go hollow with increasing terror. Shifting to one foot, she scraped the top of the other foot up and down against her heel. Her nose began to run and she rubbed at it with her open palm.

"Oh, please let us see your dolly!" the younger woman crowed, while the other added graciously, "Please do!" Melissa clutched at the handle of the carriage and leaned over it, crouching to conceal its contents. The plump one surged at her and bent over to peer beneath the hood. Her tall friend, still beaming, inclined slightly at the waist to look into the carriage. Suddenly, their faces went slack. They backed hurriedly away, murmuring in polite confusion.

"Lovely baby."

"Very nice."

"How sweet!"

They withdrew hastily to retrace their steps and were soon almost out of sight beyond the hill. Melissa stood transfixed with agony, still clutching the handle of the carriage with white-knuckled hands. The sun beat down harshly on her head, and her skin flamed with its own warmth. Unwilled tears welled into her eyes and hung on the rims, scalding them with hot salt. Suddenly a cloud passed over the sun and a bar of cold shadow swept across the road. Its coolness revived Melissa and she flung herself in blind fury at the carriage.

In a frenzy of hate, she wrenched the tightly wrapped bundle from the carriage and hurled it into the ditch. Gasping now from rage and tears, she dumped the carriage headfirst after it. It rocked wildly in a downward plunge, flipped, and settled upside down, one wheel still spinning with a high-pitched whine.

The blanket-wrapped bundle rolled lazily down the slope, unwrapping as it rolled. Near the bottom, a jagged stone caught at the blanket and a stout gray-barked stick, with its soiled pink-ribbon bow, spilled out, exposed and ugly.

Melissa glared at the empty knoll where the two women had now disappeared from view. Her chin hardened and she thrust it out defiantly.

"Mother-fuckin' bastards!" she screeched after them.

She turned and ran towards home, her bare feet making small empty sounds on the hard-packed dirt.

Alice True Larkin

VIEW OF TOLEDO

(El Greco)

*When did he face--head on--that river,
that upland,
that crushing mountain fortress,
the great dark storm--and its foreboding?
When did the light faint utterly--
blanch out for him
the pain-filled faces, the agony of man?*

*When did he make the leap beyond the blinding anguish--
beyond the world's despair
beyond Toledo
--to tragic ascendance--
to live the whole heart,
the high courage, the heart's core, the perfect love?
The irresistible Orphic love
that even trees will follow
--and the gnawing rats--
the singing a woman will walk out of Hell to hear
and will, in Hell, remember*

*Was it when he saw a face again--
the faces--
longing--flesh and bone driven upward on a flame,
was that the moment
when the terrifying passion of the storm did burst?
Was that the moment when his impassioned heart
tore loose
out of the universal doom--
and, though maimed forever,
was filled--to be filled forever--with perfect love?
When the storm did burst,
did it reveal
the shining apple of despair--
the golden heart's core of El Greco
above, below, beyond Toledo?*

Frances Miller



so the doves

*So the doves
were only pigeons after all.
Winter came
and we saw their white feathers
exploding from the shot
in a midnight squall
and wondered at the way we felt
and at the beauty of the snow.
Having put up our guns,
the killing made no sense,
and it was frightening
that those memories
still gave us pleasant thoughts.*

Douglas Scribner

THREE IMMORTALS

Lester Young

*A black man.
They say he liked soft
Things. Shoes,
Once given as a gift,
Lay in the wastebasket.
The shoes were hard-soled.*

Bud Powell

*There
he had drawn piano
keys on the wall and
banging his fingers against
the drawing asked his visitor
listen what do you think
of these
chords.*

Charlie Parker

*Bird flies higher
Than a kite
With Coke.
Bird lives.*

T. Fallon

MAINE'S LITERARY CLIMATE:

Romantic Myth and Economic Reality

For generations Maine's coastal and woodland beauty have made the State a mecca for painters. Less well known by non-Mainers is that many major writers - Longfellow, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Lowell, Stowe, Jewett, Robinson, Caldwell, Roberts, and others - also have Maine associations. The number of writers is remarkable in view of our sparse population and geographical isolation. Mainers take great pride in their cultural legacy and are taking active steps to celebrate and preserve it. Readings, exhibits, collections and college courses concerning "Maine Artists" and "Maine Writers" abound.

But Professor Ronald Banks of UMO rightly cautions us, in his History of Maine, about the dangers of regional jingoism - "In reality, it is fallacious to speak of Maine writers or Maine artists, for the truly creative mind belongs to his country and perhaps the world. Maine may contribute to the inspiration of a work of art but it is the merest kind of parochialism to claim any more."

Indeed, an objective assessment of Maine's literary heritage reveals other drawbacks to creating a myth of Maine's literary pre-eminence. Many of Maine's finest artists have, for various reasons, chosen to leave the State. Others have been only temporary residents. Yet questions remain - What has caused writers to flourish in Maine? To what extent can the State justifiably boast of that heritage? Avoiding the blinders of jingoism and sentimentalism, we will find that Maine's literary climate has a direct historical relationship to her economic climate.

Although Maine produced some intriguing historical documents during the Provincial period, no first-rate literature emerged until well into the 19th century. And it is more than coincidence that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Nathaniel Hawthorne are associated with that 19th Century cultural dawn.

Longfellow, born in Portland in 1807 and Hawthorne, brought by his widowed mother to live with relatives in Raymond in 1818, knew future-President Franklin Pierce at Bowdoin College and graduated in the justly famous Class of 1825.

Longfellow's family had helped found Bowdoin. For many Mainers the new college was to be the Harvard of the North, tangible proof that Maine, pushing for Statehood, was academically and culturally respectable and independent from Massachusetts. This feeling came with the population explosion which pushed Maine's population from 50,000 in 1785 to 300,000

in 1820, the year of Statehood. From 1830 to 1860 Maine's optimism was more than fulfilled by an economic boom that historians refer to as Maine's "Golden Age." Professor Banks tells us that during this period Maine's resources - lumber, ice, quarries and textiles - were "economically relevant to national and international needs." Flushed with economic growth, by 1850 Mainers were planning for Portland to intercept the European trade of Boston and New York, thus making Maine the commercial and industrial center of North America.

Of course this did not happen. The last half of the 19th century witnessed Maine's economic demise. In an age of steel, refrigeration, new building materials, the Southern textile competition, Maine lost its competitive advantage. Portland stagnated. The Westward movement had, by 1900, devastated Maine's population.

Meanwhile, what of Maine's literary scene? Hawthorne, although his weak novel Fanshawe (based on Bowdoin life) launched his career, fulfilled his talent in Massachusetts. Longfellow, after teaching six years at Bowdoin, was lured away by Harvard. And both Hawthorne's and Longfellow's later nostalgia for Maine was a nostalgia for a Maine that had vanished, a Maine that could no longer provide the cultural environment that would stimulate and support literary talent. Portland's inspiration of Longfellow's haunting "My Lost Youth" - "A boy's will is the wind's will, And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts." - not only expressed the poet's personal sense of aging and loss, but tragically paralleled the fortunes of his native city.

Another example of the relationship between economic decline and cultural loss is that of Calvin and Harriet Beecher Stowe. In 1849 Calvin Stowe was named Professor of Natural and Revealed Religion at Bowdoin. The Stowes were delighted to leave the disease and ~~squalor of Cincinnati.~~

Harriet found Brunswick "a delightful residence." She loved the Maine coast and admired the farmers and fishermen - The Pearl of Orr's Island. Uncle Tom's Cabin was written in Maine. But after only two and a half years the Stowes left Maine. Calvin Stowe left for the more stimulating atmosphere, and higher salary, of Andover Theological.

It might be argued that this economic emphasis as a cultural deterrent ignores the greatest inspiration for artists - Maine's unmatched natural beauty. True, painters still found Maine a place to live and work in the late 19th century, when the economy was faltering - for example Winslow Homer. And Emerson, Lowell and Thoreau came to lecture or explore the Maine wilderness.

However, Maine's appeal to artists and writers should not be exaggerated. Though Henry Thoreau travelled here four times and prized the unspoiled wilderness and admired the Maine backwoodsman, he was disgusted by the abuse of Maine's resources - the slaughter of moose and wanton destruction of the forests, the squalor of Maine villages. As a shrewd Yankee he asked why Mainer's did not properly cultivate their abundant apple trees - " . . . good speculation, as well as a favor conferred on the settlers," he wrote in The Maine Woods, "for a Massachusetts boy to go down there with a trunk full of choice scions, and his grafting apparatus, in the spring." Though a lover of nature, Thoreau found it "a relief" to get back to Massachusetts. "For a permanent residence . . . there could be no comparison between

this and the wilderness, necessary as the latter is for a resource . . . the raw material of all our civilization." Maine haunted Thoreau's imagination all his life, but Maine could not draw him, except for short trips, from a more stimulating and cultured Concord.

In short, Maine has not been able to hold onto her great writers, artists, talented and constructive people in all fields. This was recognized as early as the 1860's by Gov. Joshua Chamberlain - "We have been too long content with the doubtful compliment that Maine is a good state to go from. She must be a good state to come to, and stay in."

There are exceptions, of course. Sarah Orne Jewett spent most of her life (1849-1909) in South Berwick. Her short stories dealing with Maine character often transcend regionalism to become great art. But even her stories are marked by a nostalgia for a way of life already passing. Her eccentric Captain Littlepage laments Maine's decline in seafaring. Miss Jewett didn't leave Maine but intellectually she turned away, refusing to confront the contemporary social and economic problems - problems that still face 20th-century Maine.

As Maine entered the 20th century she continued to produce great talent. But decades of economic decline had isolated her from the cultural centers of America, both intellectually and geographically.

Born in Head Tide in 1869, Edwin Arlington Robinson grew up in the still-prosperous commercial town of Gardiner. But Gardiner offered no intellectual stimulation, only crabbed and provincial money-mindedness. It was Harvard and Boston that intellectually awakened him. In 1896 Robinson, in essence, left Maine for good. New York's bohemian Greenwich Village beckoned. Aside from his portraits of shattered, alienated small-town and rural people - and a small group of poems dealing with his younger "golden years" - his poetic themes derived from intellectual concerns not rooted in his Maine youth. And even with his later literary successes of the 1920's, Robinson did not, except for a few brief and necessary visits, ever return to Maine. It was New Hampshire's MacDowell Colony that was to be his life-long source of intellectual stimulation.

Edna St. Vincent Millay's emotional attachment to Maine was stronger. She was born in Rockland. The "three long islands and a wood" of her lovely early poem, reveal the feelings for Maine that haunted many of her later poems, a feeling she never relinquished. In spite of Vassar and Greenwich Village, the demands of her career and her husband, she always felt a homesickness for the Maine coast. Yet aside from short visits she never returned. Her intellectual world - New York, Europe, and finally the Berkshire town of Austerlitz, New York. Her isolation from Maine no less tormenting for being self-imposed.

Having turned suddenly and left the shore
that I had loved beyond all words . . .

However, a more favorable literary climate emerged in the 1920's and 30's. Improved communication meant one could live in Maine and still have necessary contacts with publishers, markets, intellectual stimuli, to sustain a career. Booth Tarkington found inspiration on the Maine coast. Kenneth Roberts, though having to establish himself as a newspaperman and writer outside of Maine, did return to his native Kennebunkport from where he

worked in his career as an historical novelist. The great essayist E. B. White came to Maine in 1937 and it has been his main residence ever since. The poet May Sarton makes her home in York. And there are many others.

In the beginning, despite having touched the lives of so many writers, Maine failed to keep her talent for several reasons - geographical isolation, intellectual stagnation due to economic collapse, the lure of urban centers of cultural activity. But today Maine faces choices which may determine whether the State again drifts culturally backward or encourages an environment that provides the necessary intellectual stimuli for all artists.

Professor William B. Whiteside of Bowdoin, the the Thomas Business Review's bicentennial history of the Maine economy, suggests that, in long run, Maine's failure to fulfill her 19th-century economic dreams may have been a blessing in disguise:

The full realization of the more extravagant hopes (such as making Maine the industrial midlands of America) would have transformed the state in such a manner as to foreclose options for the future - options which depend for their realization upon relatively unspoiled coastal and inland attractions, clean air and water, and an intangible but nevertheless significant feeling that the special quality of Maine has been preserved even during a time when other areas grew more impressively according to the conceptions of the period, but at a high cost.

My point has been that there is a correlation between a region's economic health and its creative growth. But that is not to define economic health as mere industrial growth. Indeed, Maine's chief attraction today is that she offers an alternative to those 19th-century growth patterns that have made many areas inhospitable to living, culturally barren, incapable of adapting creatively to contemporary pressures and demands.

Richard Barringer, in his provocative A Maine Manifest, presents an imaginative and practical outline for a new synthesis of economic growth and environmental protection. Through proper use of Maine's chief resource - land - Barringer argues that Maine can retain its unique qualities within a sound economy. He admits this will not be easy. But if it can be achieved, Maine's will surely be a climate for creativity in all fields, including the arts.

Meanwhile, Maine has a right to be proud of its literary heritage. It can do this and also avoid the cultural jingoism against which Professor Banks warns. And we may still question the extent of a genuine Down-East contribution to contemporary American literature. Too often our writers are mere tenants who have won reputations elsewhere or who have come to Maine for merely physical renewal, a dose of nostalgia, or inexpensive housing. Such writers have no real sense of the cultural possibilities of what has often been referred to as a post-industrial community. The traditional split between the dilettante visitor and those who have a vision of what Maine can be will not vanish.

Yet as we debate our future, versatile writers are appearing for whom Maine is not a retreat or escape but an arena for creative work for alternative lifestyles. James Wiggins and John N. Cole, city-bred newspapermen, have created in The Ellsworth American and Maine Times, distinctively Maine publications which attract national audiences and acclaim. John Cole is always controversial; but he is significant as a writer. His varied interests and talents are representative of those artists celebrating not only Maine's beauty but her potential for supporting a viable economic and cultural community, thus better enabling Maine artists to set deep roots.

If Maine responds to current challenges with imagination, if she can formulate and sustain controlled growth, then Maine will not have to be content to serve the "summer" artists, the wealthy, the tourists. Maine has an unparalleled opportunity to fulfill the humanist's dream - a fusion of prosperity, nature, and culture creating an environment that will lead to a release of creative energy that will enable us to put aside our romantically exaggerated image of Maine's artistic and literary past.

Wesley T. Mott

Exterior

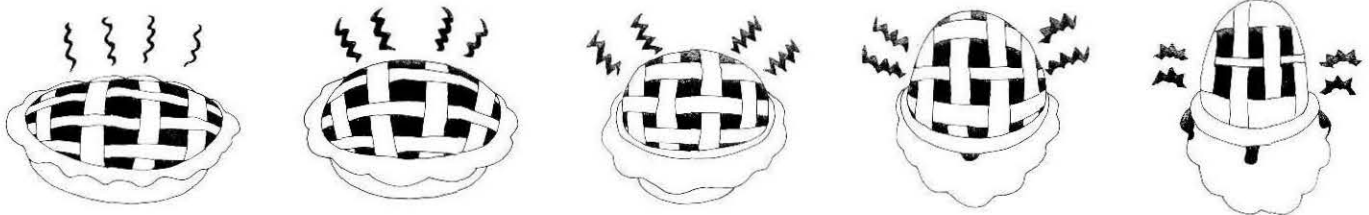
*your argument is exterior
to the question the scholar said
to the peasant who hammered the table
with his horny hard fist
yet together they hoisted flagons
and quaffed in fellowship
recalling the gathering of the grape
and the pressing years ago (ah
time!) of essence into existence
now mellowed and drawn and poured
copiously relentlessly down the throat
they remembered the harvest the leaves
and the scholar repeated exterior
because the word had a winy texture
and the peasant smashed a fist
because he had no word in response*

Leonard Gilley

THE TRUE COSTUME OF THE AMERICAN

*I am sitting in the white muslin peasant blouse
My sister sewed and white pants
Feeling perfectly content
In northern Midwest
Wondering what else the true costume
Of the American could be
Since I cannot be
No Emily Dickinson nun and perfectly untouchable
At the same time I can't sit singing
I'm one of God's sunbeans*

*It is a joy to sit in the sun in a blouse without buttons
And think of other centuries earlier
Centuries of wood and woven fibers like flax
And stone
I am not one who thinks everything's gone to shit
Since the iron revolution
But plastic scares me with its*



Eternal life
 And doubleknit material hangs
 Lifeless as uncured neck skins of heavy birds
 There's something about the heft of plywood
 A kind of insubstance worse
 Than nothing
 A willful vulnerability that makes a life
 Less dense
 I think about the life I think
 I'd feel underfoot on a wooden
 Sailing ship
 Quick contained and boundless
 The luster and giddiness all the way through hairpin
 Corridors of marble
 Granite and quartz

This is the afternoon of shadow
 Plodding like thick blood on velvet on the sauna
 I finished yesterday the shadows move
 As if nothing was ever different
 The sauna feels like my spoon handle-ring
 Smooth and thinner over 9 years
 And the pod
 My jackknife has made in my pocket
 To say it rests under box elders

On the ruined garage foundation
 I know mushrooms make
 Their own space
 Remove leaves alter
 Perspectives
 Leave
 Nothing
 As it always has been
 Before

Steingass



D.C

THE BOY WHO SET FIRE TO THE SYNAGOGUE



PM-G

As far as I can see, there are two Mikes. One is my friend, a big, hearty man over eighty, a sculptor living with his wife in retirement on a fringe of land jutting out in the Kennebec near the ocean. The other is Micah, the boy, living with his family in Lithuania at the turn of the century and carried about inside the grown man, a kernel of meat in the walnut. We all have this youthful stranger within us whom we know so well, having been him, and who never knew us, for we are what he is to become. We Americans, we native-born Americans, look within, turn our time-machine backwards and find, perhaps, much basically the same in our childhood as in the childhood of our children. This, despite the fantastic changes of our century. We are, at least, and always were, children of the Machine Age. But add a few decades and transplant us back to the Lithuania of the 1890's. To find an American cultural counterpart, we would have to plunge back through time to a point somewhere before the Civil War in this country. Little wonder then that my flesh and blood Mike views his shadowy Micah with proud affection, while I view him as an anomaly.

We talk, Mike Lepman and I, on the glassed-in porch at the back of his old, white farmhouse overlooking the lawns and orchard dropping down to the bay, while our wives prepare lunch. Sometimes Mike roars into the kitchen and makes blintze, dirtying many bowls and pouring us red wine in orange juice glasses; but more often he talks with me about the young Micah until I feel as though I know him better than the young boy inside me.

Figuratively, I could dress him from the skin out. Literally, his mother, Sara, has already attended to most of this, laboriously and lovingly knitting his underwear and long, black stockings; cutting his shirts from cloth woven from her own flax; quilting him a vest. There were two tailors on the frozen main street of Zidikai, one of whom made him a suit in the European style. This went on over the vest, followed by the heavy overcoat, tied with a sash which surely was more traditional than fashionable. Cap young Micah with sealskin ("They're fads now in this country," says old Mike, "Ambassador hats. Yuh!") and interlined gloves to match, and he's almost ready to run out in the icy street with the skates he made himself ("Out of a hunk of old wood and some rope."). But not quite; we've left him in his stocking feet. Wrap each foot in a linen triangle and put on the boots the other shoemaker made for Micah (two cobblers, two tailors, two blacksmiths, two holy men, and two religions in Zidikai).

"From a wooden pattern of your foot the cobbler carved himself. No need to go more than once. He had your last. Rows of them, hanging next to the bird cages on his wall. All the feet in the village right there behind him - Jews and peasants. He cured his own leather from the tannery in town and those boots would wear. No cracks! Fine, high boots, ten years they'd last. If the bottoms wore out, he'd just put a new bottom on the tops."

Quick now, Micah! Tie on the felt bashlik over your cap. Your friends are waiting outside in a 27 below Lithuanian winter's day. You look as round, in your handmade wrappings, as old Mike does today in his L. L. Bean's hunting shirt and Irish cardigan.

"My son, the history teacher," says old Mike, "insists it was like this here in America one hundred and fifty years ago. My God! Though I feel it in

my knees sometimes, I'm not one hundred and fifty years old yet. So it must be that Lithuania at the beginning of this century was a backward country.

"I know it was, by God! What a backward country! In log houses we lived; in mud we waded; and beyond the currant bushes was the privy.

"On market day in Zidikai, it was an education just to go down the path to your own privy. You'd open the door and there they'd be. The peasants! Pants down, shirts up, locked together like animals. You could step on them in the fields. They'd go at it right in the village, even, under the market carts. Oh, yes! But why not? We were no prudes in Zidikai."

Of the Brueghel-like pastoral of life in Zidikai, Mike was more an observer than a participant. First, because he was a child; more significantly, because he was a Jew. The two cobblers and the two tailors, the tradesmen and professionals of Zidikai were Jews who owned their shops and houses, but by Russian law were prohibited from owning the woods and fields surrounding the village. These were reserved for the Lithuanian peasantry which was predominantly Catholic. Behind the Lepman's house was the synagogue; at the other end of Zidikai was the Catholic church. The rabbi and the priest and their parishioners lived in harmony bound by isolation and shared aversion to the Russian overlords.

"We used to go to the Easter service in the Roman Catholic church and they'd come to the Synagogue sometimes. Like celebrating Passover twice," Mike chuckles, then continues.

"There is a sacred light in a Jewish synagogue that's always kept lit. In our little village, it was just a kerosene lamp under the care of the shammas. Mr. Myers was his name and he was terribly near-sighted. We boys used to think it was smart to sneak into the synagogue when he was there, filling the lamps and cleaning the room, and hide and watch him. There was a big table on the habima where Mr. Myers would set out his equipment, but in order to tell if a lamp was filled, he had to put his finger in it. We would watch him as he kept testing with his finger to see how far he'd gotten until finally, most of the time, a lamp would overflow and the kerosene would run freely over the table.

"This is what we hoped would happen. Then after Mr. Myers would carry the lamps off the habima and place them in the proper spots in the synagogue, he would leave, sighing and shuffling in the semi-darkness. This is what we kids waited for. We'd come out of hiding then and sneak up on the habima and take out the matches we'd brought with us and light the kerosene at one end of the table and blow it out before it got to the other end. And then light another part and blow it out, too, and just fool around. Our own little Hanukah.

"Until with me.... One day, I lit the oil and it was a little close to the partition that separates the habima from the rest of the synagogue. I think maybe it's like the rood-screen in your churches. This one, anyway, was all filagree fruitwood. Very old and dry. The flames ran right up to it and climbed it like a ladder. We were too scared to speak.

"Edvardas, and Joe and I took off our coats and tried to beat out the flames. No good! It just got worse until we panicked and ran out in the street yelling 'Fire!'.

"First came the rabbi, who must have been on his way to the synagogue anyway. The words hit his ears and knocked his hat off. He was in the building in a moment and ripped off his caftan and began beating at the flames with it. Still no good!

"Then all at once, the synagogue was full of people, Jews and Gentiles, beating at the flames until they were out. They beat out the fire, true, but the grill-work that went up to the ceiling remained black and charred.

"My father, who had been making shingles in our garden.... Yes, that was one of his winter jobs. Making railroad ties was another. And beating flax. He was not idle. My father, hearing all the ruckus, dropped his draw-knife and came running to the synagogue. You can imagine he was soon told I was the one who had lit the match. I could see him above the crowd, a tall man, sorting them out with his eyes 'til he found me, the Boy Who Had Set Fire to the Synagogue, cowering by the habima.

"Abraham Lepman; my father Abraham. Always young, strong, wise. A beautiful man. Safe in my mind, never to change the way all else did. A perfect father.

"He called me out and took me down the road between the synagogue and our house to the stable. I helped him hitch the horse and wagon and we were on our way out of Zidikai almost with no word spoken.

'Where are you taking me, Papa?'

'Micah, I think it's time to visit Uncle Saul.'

"My uncle, Saul Weinberg, lived in Seda about ten miles from Zidikai and there was not much communication between the villages going that way. Seda was much smaller; Zidikai was the home of big landowners. They came to us. Uncle Saul's. A good place to hide-out until things blew over.

"Not far from Zidikai, however, under a big oak tree where the short-cut goes across the fields, stood this traveling preacher. He had on his black caftan, but a regular little cap with a visor, and carried a black bag. He had a full red beard and thick glasses. A rabbi without a congregation; with no synagogue. They were not unusual in Lithuania then. They'd travel from one town to another preaching and making up a collection. On a good day, they would preach in two synagogues. Then stay overnight and on to another one.

"My father pulled up short, of course, and asked him to join us in the wagon and we'd give him a ride to the next village. I crawled in back and sat on the floor and he got in by Papa, holding his bag tight on his lap. No sooner were we jolting along again than he began to lambaste the younger generation.

"What a bunch of bums they were! No respect for their elders! No love of old ways! No religion! Would you believe, in the village where he'd just been a boy had tried to burn down the synagogue?

"My father and I just listened to him and, boy! We didn't say a word. He wasn't nearly through. As he went on, wondering what the father of such a wild kid must be like, asking God to deal with such a boy, predicting a horrible end for him, I scrunched down further in the wagon and began to

feel more and more what it was to be a refugee - an outcast - for the first time."

Mike smiled at me ironically and I laughed uncertainly, knowing how six years later he did become a refugee, but never an outcast surely. That he was not to go back to Zidikai for twenty years, and a war had been fought, and it was too late to see Abraham.

He began again and I realized amid many dark stories, this one was to be handled lightly.

"After I was twenty years in America, and married, and established, I went back to my hometown to see my mother. In September, just before Yom Kippur. We were quite a wonder, my wife and I. Micah Lepman, the one who went to America, back in Zidikai. Such talking and eating! But when Saturday came, there were long faces. The rabbi, not the old one I had known, but a younger man, very serious, was upset because he couldn't conduct services in the main synagogue. They had to use the annex. A disgrace on Zidikai. All the way from America and this is how he's treated!

"My old friend, Joe, took me aside to say, 'You know why we can't use the main synagogue? Because they are just repairing the damage you did with the fire twenty years ago. All this time we've saved, but somehow something always happened. Now you come back just as the job is being done. It's Providence.'"

'Joe, how much is it going to cost,' I asked him, 'to do a good job and put it back just as it was?'

"Joe didn't have to think. Everyone on the main street knew that answer. 'Two hundred and fifty lits, Micah.'

"I couldn't believe it. I'd forgotten how it was in Lithuania. Twenty-five dollars in American money and twenty years they'd saved for it. I put my hand in my pocket but then I stopped. I didn't want Zidikai to think I was the big American blow-hard back to impress the town.

'Joe,' I said, 'I would like to make a donation for the job. Would it be alright, I wonder? Not misunderstood?'

"Joe shook my hand. He spoke with emotion. 'Micah, my friend. You are good. The rabbi will bless you.' He nodded his head. 'You are good, Micah, but it is only just. After all, you were the boy who nearly burned the synagogue.'"

Mike smiles broadly at me and raises a burley finger, imitating Joe.

"After all those years, that's still who I was: The Boy Who Set Fire to the Synagogue. Joe still has to shake a finger."

In the next room, the table is being set for lunch. Inside the sliding door one of his bronzes is silhouetted against the Maine sky and the Kennebec.

"But twenty years." He shook his head. "My God. That's a long time."

Robert McGuire

A Morning Poem for Myron

*Up in the dark, the mechanical morning
tasks, while you talk softly about
the things you know, the table grows
with your conversation, oh father*

*I ask will your breath let me hear
the bare beginnings of the world*

*if my eyes seem to leap around you
try on each phrase with the
rising sun, my father laboring
with your hands, broken cars*

*with grown men playing in them
this mechanic, you know how to fix*

*each part, my heart beats down
your hard oiled hands, working class
stock, yet being wise, come to witness
at the accustomed hour, these cars--*

*the cool garage, those tools so clever,
this wrench that tightens your life.*

Kathleen Lignell

The Provisions of Doctor Gordius

*We are in active pursuit of Doctor Gordius
in the various casts of his vessel:
anthill, lilac, righteous pretender...*

*Manuel the gardener
has stumbled across him often
in the symmetric formation of stone,
in the intelligence of woodland clearing.*

*There was no disputing it.
A perfectly equilateral pyramid
was demonstrated to exist
beneath the surface of a beach.
Although it was of modest proportions,
lobstermen shook their heads in unison.*

*The egg from Goose Cove
was full of tiny salamanders,
so we lit a fire on the lawn.
A cloak was prepared in waiting.*

Only one of the Gordius needles is said to be extant.

*Conversations in the garden have got louder,
and moths beat percussion on the sash.
Yesterday there were sirens in the cove,
two of them a hundred years old,
with barnacles in orchestration.*

*Even for all of that,
Gordius might still have slain his brother*

R. Clairmont

legislative document

They did not lobby us
with whispered briefs in our
marble, too grinning halls
but spoke so softly to the
committee, we could not relax.
Of the damp rooms and
halls where tenants without
money slowly glance
by one another
in seepy shallows of
flickering paint and
empty cans and
then looking at each legislator
they know I run my father's store
and we live in three rooms above storage
said:

Do we too simplify our lot
to say that you are landlords and we are not?

What can I say, Marge?
Repeat the pleasures
of the law's close measure?
Its harmony in litany?
And no, I haven't yet written
a statute that speaks only
to love.

James A. McKenney

Lakes in Ketchum

Once there was a painter, an American painter whose name you would not know. He lived and he died, as people do, and he probably went to Paris once or twice, and the South of Spain to look at the red dust, and went, I know for a fact, to Padua once, and Venice.

In Venice he looked around some, and doubtless made some sketches of the Grand Canal from the Gritti, but I don't really know that. He did a lot of sketches, though, and later, back in Scranton, he took one of them out of his cracked folio and painted a 16 x 20 in oil.

I have no doubt that he did others. You must have seen them, or ones like them, great post-impressionist splashing murals, and portraits of gray-lipped fruit venders wearing brown felt hats or red bandanas, paintings that may hang in town libraries for all I know, or in Italian restaurants that serve bad food. It's really all the same to me, but this one I saw just last month in the shadowed corner of a stuffy, 'Thirties-style bar, dark and tunnel-like.

I see the painting and, picking up my drink, go on over to it. Call it curiosity; call it boredom, if you like.

Shown is the sky, and a covered bridge made of stone, over a canal--the sun glinting, bright yellow and red and indigo flecks of color, the gleam of white, tawny brown--and dark gray canal waters, a thin steel sea. It is called "The Bridge of Sighs."

It's not a bad painting, but with such a title, it should be much better.

I almost see Ernesto standing there, Mr. Papa himself--the handsomest goddamned bear in the world--standing, staring down at those ugly waters, thinking--without knowing it--about Ketchum.

He folds his arms and leans against the cold stone rail that arches, cat-like, above the canal. Soon, he turns and hulks away on the balls of his feet, fighter-style, the gun-smell and Ketchum in his head.

Some things are dreams, and some are not. Everyone knows this; but nightmares are neither. Ernest was one who knew that.

I have a friend who thinks he's Scott Fitzgerald. Tell me, is that a dream or a nightmare? I can't say that I know, and when I ask him he says, "I'm really a little upset--please leave me alone, chap, would you?"

I leave him alone.

At times I have a dream about a lake, at times when I lie half-sleep in the mornings and know that I'm dreaming. I wake up and decide I am not awake, and try to go back to it, to the sky-mirrored waters, but I never can. This sort of thing happens to a lot of people, or so I hear.

It comes and goes. There are periods when I will see the lake every few mornings, and then it goes, and stays away a long time.

It seems as though I remember that Abe Lincoln, before he was killed, used to see himself in dreams, laid out in his casket, marble-featured, all set for that last, long train ride, but I'm not sure. I am sure, though, that it was before he was killed that this may have taken place. Not after. That sort of thing you can be sure about.

Funny things happened to me last week, strange things. Wednesday, a little kid gave me a flower. I carried it around in front of me like a talisman, but it wilted, and I threw it away. I was mad all afternoon.

Walking down the street on Friday, I passed a garbage-filled alley, dark and writhing with children. "Hey, mister!" they call, and I try to hurry away, but their laughter holds me, their shrieks, and they chant after me:

You should never laugh when a hearse goes by,
For you may be the next to die.
They wrap you up in a bloody sheet,
In a hole you go that's six feet deep.
The worms crawl in, the worms crawl out,
The worms play pinochle on your snout.
Your stomach turns to a slimy green,
And pus comes out like shaving cream.
You spread the pus upon some bread,
And that's what you eat when you are dead!

I begin to think I may go to Europe: France, Italy, Spain, the usual.
Not Pamplona, though. I don't want to see the bulls; forgive me, Ernesto,
but I don't. The hill country, yes, certainly, and there must be good streams
left even now--even now, laughing streams and fine Spanish trout. The French
would not hate me any more than they hate themselves--why should they?
Yes, and I would dearly love to see the Bridge of Sighs.

LOOK . . . LOOK OUT AT THE LAKE.

I don't know, though, all the same. There is always Ketchum, Idaho.
It seems like there should be lakes in Ketchum. At least one.

. . . HE HEARS THE LOONS NOW: FLUTED SOUNDS RIPPLING, WHIRLING AWAY
THE DULCET DUST OF SLEEP. FULLY AWAKE, AWARE, TAUT, CHILL, HE WALKS THE
WET PATHWAY THROUGH THE BRAMBLE AND THE FERN, THE GENTLE GRASS LONG AND
WET ON THE TROUSERS, DOWN TO WHERE THE WATER LIES SMOOTH, GRAY, SKY-MIRRORED.

IN THE CANOE, THE THIN AND SILENT CRAFT, HE GLIDES, WATER-BOUNDED,
MIST AROUND HIM . . . SWIRLING, EDDYING LIKE THOUGHTS IN A DREAM, MIDNIGHT
WONDER; AND THERE ARE TREES ON THE SHORE. HE KNOWS THAT THERE, THERE IN
THOSE WOODS, ARE DEER--BROWN-EYED, QUICK-EARED--CROPPING THE CEDAR.

FROM BEHIND THE DARK MOUNTAINS THE SUN IS SLOWLY RISING.

Brent Hall

CUT PRICE

let us be frank
shall we?
you look like a tramp
he said to me
(you look like a fop
i'd been thinking)
by way of complimenting
my personality
comparing me
to the women
of baltimore

shall we be frank?
the female skaters
in the olympics were
lovely young ladies
but the men's looks
never discussed
(for a split
second i took
tramp
to mean slut
before i knew you meant
hobo)

what i mean is
myths
are dying in
skowhegan
and if i'd countered
telling you
what i thought of
your looks
instead of pivoting
peacocking the needlepoint
back of my dungaree
jacket
what then?

lee sharkey

big bsa 650

*chuck rides home
on his big bsa 650
with a terrified wife
clinging to his back
hinging a desparate shout
into his ear
cutting off the thrust
from bursting up and out
through his pistons and legs
into the soft sweet street
stretched seductively
below him*

*he holds back
and back
and soon
springs a leak
in his life
leaving him
with a job
a tie and the
big bsa 650
fading into
the back section
of his wallet
lumpy
in a backass pocket*

Doug Rawlings

The Good Gray God

*That God that's coming through the smog
Is machine-made in Detroit.
His parts are interchangeable;
He has a twelve-month guarantee.
We will be less able to support him than formerly;
He will give less honest satisfaction than yesterday's model,
And will cost more to run.
However, he won't make specious promises.
He'll demand total abnegation but we can count on him.
He'll promise us the moon,
But never heaven.*

*He'll be gray, this God,
Of indeterminate sex; incontrovertibly logical.
But then, so will we,
Since we've ordered him in our image.
Instead of lightning and floods,
His surprises will be blown gaskets and flat tires.
He will not speak to us in rocks and rills,
Nor twilight oceans, nor spring gardens.
Those things will cost too much to manufacture.
Besides, they'll all be patented by then,
And who can afford royalty?*

Robert McGuire

SCAPEGOAT

Dr. Myra Baker stands looking anxiously down at the large, still handsome woman slumped in a parlor chair of the Ladies' House of the Tonju Mission compound in remote North China.

"Rose, my dear, you're feverish. You have pushed yourself too hard again. You know what they said in Boston about getting your rest. You'll just have to relax and take hold of yourself - or they will have to send you away."

"Oh, Myra, I'm dying! This time the Lord Jesus knows I'm going to die. Hold me. Please hold me, Myra. Hold me close in your arms. I'm so frightened!" Her voice is strained and high pitched and her eyes start to roll crazily upward. "Rock me. Rock me ... bye-lo baby ... bye-lo ba-a-by. Hold me, please, the way you did before..."

Dr. Myra Baker sighs and leans over the chair toward Rose. Rose's dark brown hair is pulled into a loose knot at her neck. She has surprisingly few grey hairs for a woman in her mid-forties. She starts to rock the small walnut rocker back and forth at an alarming rate.

"Rose, dear, you are safe with me now. Ask the Lord to help you find your way back to health. You know what they'll do, Rose, if you keep on like this. But now you must come with me." Myra speaks coaxingly. "Lean on me and we will go up to bed where you can rest and get better."

A small but sturdy woman, she braces her foot against the rocker and with a burst of strength which she ascribes unconsciously to the almighty in Heaven, pulls the taller woman upright.

"Myra, it's a punishment. They all think I have sinned against the Lord. I know it. He won't help me now, will he, Myra? This time must I die?"

"Come, lean on me, Rose. Here we go up to your soft warm bed. You'll see, you will be better soon." The little doctor inches the stricken woman up the stairs one step at a time. Her strength comes to her from somewhere. She can't take the time, even, to pray for it. Why? Why? she asks the empty air, did the Mission Board let her return to China. They said there was little likelihood of a recurrence of what had happened at Fenchow and they had pronounced her ready for another seven years. But Myra was never sure the Board had been told the whole story. Perhaps I should have contacted them myself but, of course, I only had the word of the people of Fenchow. The vision of Rose running through the mission compound stark naked was never one she could fix in her mind for very long.

Myra feels the weight of the woman suddenly go limp in her arms and she grabs the pineapple knob of the newell post just in time to prevent them both from falling back down the bare varnished stairs. As it is she is forced to lay the great, dead weight of her friend onto the green figured carpet of the upstairs hallway. Myra sees that she has fainted and feels her fluttering pulse with growing alarm. Her own heart is pounding as she runs down the hallway for the extra medical kit she keeps locked in her closet. Back with her stethoscope, she kneels over the sprawled form of the other woman.

Fear makes her own heart beat like a drum in the stillness of the morning. Rose's heart, beating shallowly and in uneven bursts, plays a counterpoint to her own, joined in the stethoscope. Fibrillation, Myra tells herself, is not uncommon in cases of severe mental stress.

The Ladies' House of the Tongju Mission compound, of the North China Mission of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, is even quieter than usual. The houseboy and the "sewing woman" creep about their duties silently. The smell of furniture polish rises through the still, dead air. Doors are not allowed to whine on their hinges, nor the front door to slam, though it has just now opened and shut. A whispered conversation does not dispel the closeness of the atmosphere but rather accentuates it.

"How is she now?"

"She still hasn't regained consciousness."

"Myra, what do you predict will happen to her?"

"We've done all that can be done for her here. As her friend and her physician I can only say she is in God's hands."

"Of course you have done everything you could do," Letty interjected. "We are all, of course, praying for her recovery. But in the meantime I feel that we must take steps to notify the Mission Staff. We must ask James Bailey to make the arrangements - to book her passage - And which of us will have to go? I will write this afternoon." She seems oblivious to the hot anger rising in Myra.

"That, my good Letty, is for me to suggest and the Board to decide." Even though Myra speaks quietly, she sees that her words have offended Letty and is secretly glad. Even if Letty is now the local Secretary, the Compound's politics don't interest her; never did in the best of times. She draws her breath in sharply and places her hand on Letty's arm in a way she hopes will soothe her neighbor's pique. After all, she probably meant well.

"Letty, you can help me most right now by organizing an around-the-clock vigil so that there will be someone with Rose at all times - day and night - to watch for signs of any change. That will free me to go to the hospital to instruct Dr. Dwon in the steps to take for various emergencies that might arise. Then, perhaps, I can even get a night's sleep."

Letty draws herself up to her full five feet ten inches. "Myra, you surely know that is exactly what I have come here for this morning! Bertha will come this afternoon, Ruth will stay through the night, then tomorrow we will rotate so we will all be able to maintain our strength for God's call. The men are in agreement."

"Letty," Myra retorts almost sharply, "I should have known you were way ahead of me on this."

She is tired to the marrow of her bones. She has never been able to put her finger on why her neighbor in the large brick house next door gets on her nerves so - beyond any of the others in the compound of three families

and the two or three residents of the Ladies' House. But the irritation is a fact. She looks up at Letty's pinched, earnest face and says, "Let's go upstairs now and I will tell you what to watch for in Rose. And I must emphasize that you must send Gwandung for me immediately if there is the slightest change at all." Myra watches to see what effect her words are having on Letty and decided, despite the stiffening of her shoulders and pursed lips, to go on.

"I've put her up here on the third floor so that the servants will not take fright and leave. I am not concerned about Chiwon. He will put the hot and cold water pitchers outside the door at the foot of the stairs and empty the slops as needed. You will have to carry them down to the second floor hallway. He will light the lamps as well, if they are carried down to him. You can explain to Ruth. I have given him orders on no account to come up here to Rose's room. This is for his own protection with the other servants."

Letty's face is red with suppressed anger but Myra's conciliatory mood has left her. She drags over a chair for Letty and motions her to sit where Rose's white, empty face is clearly visible. Letty ignores the gesture. "Aren't you afraid that Chiwon will refuse to handle the material from the sick room?" Letty's voice grates harshly on Myra's taut, over-stretched nerves but she replies with careful civility.

"I don't have to worry about Chiwon. Rose is the sun and the moon to him. When his little boy nearly died of the measles, from playing with Adolph, I might add, Rose stayed with the child until he was out of danger - day and night. No, I'm not worried about Chiwon leaving us." Myra starts for the door and is half-way to it when Letty turns toward her with a strange, tight look on her face.

"I hope you won't misunderstand me, Myra, but I feel that Rose ... well, there was always ... what I mean is ... She could never avoid that touch of the carnal. The children felt it and flocked around her and she encouraged it - in an unhealthy way. Did you sense that too, Myra? I mean ... we all loved her but I ... well ... I just don't know - the ways of the Lord are sometimes difficult..."

Letty's words hit her like bullets. Myra feels her face burning and heat diffuses through her body until she feels she will burst. She clenches her fists at her side and struggles for control to keep from striking out at this sanctimonious, this prudish - she can't even think of words strong enough to damn her with. As the little doctor struggles to choke back her anger, she feels something unfamiliar and uncomfortable welling up inside her, pushing out the words in spite of herself.

"To care - to care for so many people so deeply..." Myra's voice is strained and there is an edge to it. "To care so deeply ... for them ... for us ... lost on this far corner of the earth among the Godless. That is her sin - a sin that has stretched her spirit to the breaking point ... Oh Lord! Is it a sin to love another person as Rose ... only Rose ... knew how to do?"

Myra, oblivious now - to Letty - to everything but her own sorrow and loss, puts her short-cropped head against the stair rail and retches, grateful for the grey enamel basin which Letty snatches up and hands her.

Virginia M. Wickes

Every Fall the Cat

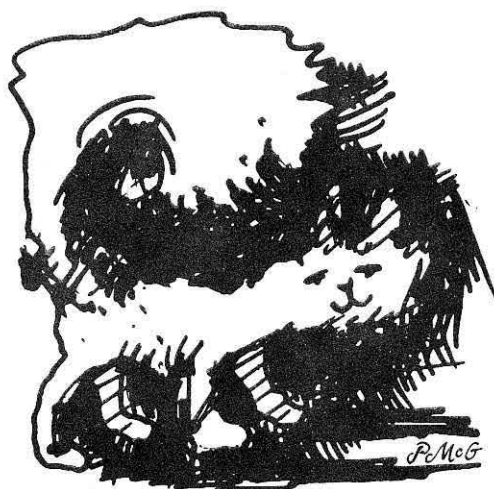
*Every fall
the cat slips out
into the plumb-dark night,*

*mixing her body
with the amber wind,
licking blood and venison*

*from her whiskers.
The cat is a handmaid
to Artemis:*

*she hunts the moon
with lonely songs, telling
of no lovers, no transgressions.*

Margaret Park



DEATH IN MAINE

The voice of the vet's assistant over the phone had just the right note of sympathy and regret.

"The Doctor did everything he could," she said, "but Gretel died about an hour ago."

It took a moment for the news to make sense, even though Michael had been nervously expecting it. Gretel hadn't been herself since the birth of the pups three months ago. He blamed himself for breeding her in the first place. It had been a large litter . . . ten big and strong Great Dane puppies. But their birth had delivered the final blow to Gretel's health. She had rapidly become weaker; some sort of poisoning had developed; the veterinarian had decided to operate, and evidently she had died under the anesthetic. Well, that was that. Michael felt sick at heart. Gretel was, no had been, only a dog but she had also been his constant companion and his very good friend.

The vet's assistant, a pretty girl with red hair, Michael remembered, went on with her discussion of the medical causes of Gretel's death. As though it mattered! He was sure the doctor had done his best.

"There's another thing we were wondering about," said the girl. "We wondered. . . the Doctor said to ask you; Mr. Adams, have you," her voice sank lower, "have you chosen a place for your dog?"

"A place?" asked Michael blankly

"Yes, in the graveyard," said the girl. "The Dogs' and Cats' Last Rest is only a few miles from us. . .and we can see about a coffin for you if you like."

Michael felt a sudden sense of shock. In a way it was the most helpful thing she could have said to him. It brought him back to himself with a jerk, and he could almost have laughed. A graveyard for dogs and cats! Planted with dogwood and catnip. Imitation bone markers! How ridiculous that seemed. He'd heard of such things, of course, that Evelyn Waugh book for instance, and yes, he must have passed the Dogs' and Cats' Last Rest on his way into Manhattan. The very idea of such a cemetery struck him as not only ludicrous, but almost wrong, against the right and proper procedure of society. That was his Maine blood he supposed. He knew from experience that death was looked at differently in Maine, not only in dogs but in humans. What had Jane Wickcliffe written in her last letter?

"Sorry to tell you, Mike, that Mattie James died last week. We was all quite surprised seeing that we'd thought her backaches was all in her head. She just passed away in her sleep, and Levi and me got up early and picked flowers from the garden for the funeral. It was a lovely funeral. About everyone from town was there and Mattie looked beautiful layed out. In fact some people thought she looked better than she ever had in her life before and they was right. Of course she had her glasses on and that helped a lot."

Now there was a way to look at death. The Wickcliffes would miss Mattie, who had lived across the road from them for over forty years. She had been their age, the age of Michael's father, and the Wickcliffe and James houses stood as sentinels at the head of the dirt road that led down to the Adams' place. That meant that Michael would miss her too. . .and yet, he saw the point of Jane's remarks, was amused and touched by them, and understood all her words implied. It had nothing to do about how you felt about a person. Nothing could change the Maine way of looking at things, not even such a common and sad thing as death. People from Maine were individual, trenchant, slightly caustic and often scaringly frank no matter what happened. And death came to the town of Rock Cove only once or twice a year, nicely matching the new arrivals either by birth or marriage. Thus the population, except for the summer influx, remained the same, with everyone knowing everything about everyone else. And commenting on it, right up to and after the funeral!

Michael felt a sudden vivid longing for Maine. By God, he thought, I'll go up early this summer. What's the advantage of being a senior partner in a law firm if you can't beg off a little extra time? He wouldn't tell anyone what had brought about his decision, of course. . .the dog lovers would carry on at too great a length, and the dog haters would think he was becoming senile. He'd just say that he wasn't feeling up to par and would take off. He'd load the three puppies that hadn't been sold into the old station wagon and head for Rock Cove. He could be there in a day. In his boyhood days when his father and mother had taken him to Maine for the summer, it had been a good three days' drive but the new super highways had cut it down to one.

And yet how boring they were, he thought, as two days later he took the by-pass around Boston. He often wondered whether the added speed and convenience were worth it. His father had made a point each summer of lining up a new

hotel or inn for them to spend the night in, and he and his mother had enjoyed wondering what it would be like. On the other hand, it was true that often they had not been able to go to Maine a summer because his father, also a lawyer, had a big case that kept him in New York, or his mother wanted to visit relatives in Ohio or make a cultural journey to Europe. It took too much time to get to Maine and back, they had said. Such summers had stretched barrenly before Michael. His heart was in Maine, in the old summer cottage by the ocean, which his Maine-born grandfather had built, family-style and sturdy, not too long after the Civil War. Michael had even considered staying in Maine and practicing law there once he was through college. But then that had seemed too foolish with his father's firm offering him such a good job in New York, and too selfish with his recently widowed mother living alone in the large apartment on Long Island. And there were certain aspects of city living that appealed to him strongly, competing with his love for the rocky coast, the resisting trees, the calling sea of Maine.

And he had his month each summer. And this year he would have his two months. Maybe next year he'd take two months again. At fifty, perhaps he should begin to take it a little easier, and after all, unmarried and childless, he really didn't need the money. Look at the Wickcliffes. Levi was as spry at eighty as the average New Yorker was at forty. People lived a long time in Maine; maybe that was another reason for the general acceptance of death as a not especially unpleasant fact of life. Except for the rare dramatic death of a child, or the drowning of a fisherman, it was the old who died in Rock Cove. By the time they died, the event, as it were, had sometimes even been anticipated. He recalled Gert Karhula, a stout Maine woman of the old Anglo-Saxon stock who had married the son of the more recently-arrived Finnish farmers. She was rather pretty, in an unpretentious way, and Michael had been amused last summer to see her with lipstick and eye make-up on. He was sure he'd never seen her wearing cosmetics before and he'd remarked on it to Levi.

"Mrs. Karhula looks so much younger and prettier these days," he said idly one day, seeing her drive past the post office where they were standing.

"Yep," said Levi. "Her John's not so good though. Been ailin' all winter. Course he's a piece older than her. He'll be going on one of these day, leavin' her behind." He paused a moment. "Shouldn't be surprised if that wasn't why Gert's taken to fixin' herself up," he added, suggesting, if not actually giving, a wink. "Kinda anticipatory, you might say."

Michael had laughed, but he had been quite willing to believe that Gert had thought of that aspect of the matter. And why not? he asked himself, feeling somehow happier as each mile brought him closer to Maine.

In the back of the car, the puppies played and squabbled, knocking each other against the side of the station wagon, and now and then complaining loudly. They were house-broken, more or less, but Michael had omitted their usual big breakfast that morning, as a precaution, and they were hungry. He'd have to decide soon which puppy to keep, either one of the fawn females, or the brindle male. He really couldn't cope with all three. Perhaps the Wickcliffes would like one, or some one else in Rock Cove. But there might be a problem, both as to limited space and as to probably cost of feeding such a large dog. There had always been comment in town on the size of the dish of food he'd made up each evening for Gretel.

The thought of Gretel made him feel a little upset and lonely again. She had always loved the trips to Maine, seemingly knowing their destination as well as he did. And now Gretel was where? Nowhere. He had settled with the vet to have her cremated. It had seemed simpler, cleaner and more decent, and what's more, he thought with a wry chuckle, it was a good deal cheaper. Now there was a Maine thought. The economic consideration, never far from the thought of any true Maine resident, wasn't displaced by the advent of death. Take the matter of the bridge for instance.

The bridge was a narrow affair that led from the mainland to the island of which Rock Cove was a part. It was very old and delapidated and successive town meetings had discussed for years the problem of having it repaired. On one occasion, two men "down to their camp" to celebrate a wet weekend had driven off the edge of the road, just at the start of the bridge. Their car, stuck in the sand and rock on the bank of the inlet, had had to be pulled and tugged back onto the road. Neighbors and residents from both mainland and island had gathered to watch. It was rough weather so even the lobstermen were there, standing with their wives and children beside the summer cottagers, the guests from the inn, the retired householders.

"I just wish they'd do something about that old bridge," Mrs. Mary Connor, a summer cottager, had remarked.

Everyone had agreed with her.

"Some day some car's goin' to go off the end of that bridge and right into the water," said old Don Enderby. "The folks in it'll be drowned."

Everyone agreed with him too. It was quite possible. At high tide, especially the high tide of the full moon, the water came roaring under the bridge with considerable force and power.

But it was left to Jake Boles, who gathered sea moss for a living, to sum up the situation to its fullest, and for the third time, everyone was in complete agreement.

"Yep," he said, "they'll be drowned, sure enough. And it'll cost the town a hell of a lot of money to pull their car and bodies out!"

This was serious, and Michael, who had never so far been in Maine for the March town meeting, had heard that the last one had dealt quite exhaustively with the problem of the bridge. It seemed that if the town raised so much, then the county and the state would go ahead and build a new bridge. But the town and its people were, traditionally, slow at raising any money and the debate had been long and heated. Finally \$15 had been voted as a stop-gap, giving the residents another year to think things over, but providing something of an anchor to the horrible windward pointed out by Jake Boles. The \$15 had gone for a sign which read "DANGEROUS. Bridge Unsafe. Cross at Own Risk." This was placed at the mainland end, for strangers and first arrivals presumably; those coming the other way already knew the worst.

If they ever do get to repair the bridge, Michael had often reflected, I hope they widen it. Now it was only one car wide, and any car in front which stopped necessarily held up all traffic behind it, as well as that coming towards it.

And cars did stop, for occupants to look at the view, or check the tide, or ask the fishermen hanging over the railing how it was going, and it wasn't considered polite in Maine to honk and hurry them on. One time Michael had been driving in a car with its top down with a young woman from Connecticut and they'd been held up by an old truck halted mid-way on the bridge. The driver had climbed down from his seat, gone around to the back, and pulled out a large burlap bag. Then he had stepped over to the bridge railing and tossed the bag into the water below.

As he turned around, he'd spotted Michael and his friend.

"Hi, Mike," he said with a broad and friendly smile. He waved his hand toward the bag, now swirling toward the ocean followed by three curious gulls, and offered a polite explanation for his stop.

"Cats!" he said cheerily.

The gulls had croaked eerily as he drove jauntily off in his truck, followed much more slowly by the surprised Michael and his shocked and shaken friend.

But here was the last turnpike pay point. After this there was just the much slower but far more interesting coastal road to Rock Cove. The seventy miles would take two hours, maybe more, but Michael feasted his eyes as he drove along on the lovely towns, the wide rivers, the shipyards and marinas, the flats where clammers and blood-worm diggers were hard at work. He made the sharp turn off the highway onto the road which led to Rock Cove. Before him were glimpses of blue water and the air blew fresh and clean.

The first house in Rock Cove belonged to Mariam Langden, who was a widow of two years' standing. When her husband, Alton, had been sick, Michael had asked the jeweler in the nearest large town to Rock Cove to send a present to the hospital, a cigarette lighter with his name on it, Michael had suggested. He'd sent a check along to cover the cost. Months later he'd received a credit slip from the jeweler, and after much writing to and fro had discovered why. It seemed that the jeweler had heard Alton was very likely to die and had figured that Michael wouldn't want "to waste the money" by sending a useless gift, especially an engraved one, to a person that was practically dead. And although he had felt slightly ashamed of his fastidiousness, Michael hadn't wanted to take back the money. He'd written Mariam and suggested that she might make use of the credit. And she had, buying some "lovely glassware" she wrote him, and asking him to stop by and have "something from them" next time he was in Rock Cove.

Mariam was nothing if not practical, even in her sentiment. According to Jane Wickcliffe, she would never get a permanent for her hair despite her husband's urging. She said it cost too much, no matter what Alton felt about it. But the year after his death, on the anniversary of his funeral, Mariam had remembered him in her own way. She had gone and got herself a permanent. That was last June, and yes, there she was out working in her garden, and yes, by gum, her hair did look freshly curled and set, probably the result of this year's memorial. Oh Maine, I love you, thought Michael. Oh death, where is thy sting?

As he drove by, Mariam waved to him; and so did Don Enderby, also working in his garden, and so did young Mrs. Lily Felton, fifty yards on, practicing her archery against the workshop wall, so she could hunt deer early next season. She was fairly good at it too, noticed Michael, and as pretty as a picture. Several curtains swung back as he made his way slowly past the village houses. It was just past supper time and people were settin' awhile. It was a good time to call, but not tonight for Michael. He would go straight down to the cottage, only stopping briefly at the Wickcliffes for his house key, which they guarded carefully for him all winter.

They welcomed him warmly.

"Nice to see you so early this year," said Jane. "We've been weedin' and an't eat yet. Why don't you have a bite with us?"

"I'm so anxious to get down to the point," explained Michael.

"Things is lookin' pretty good down there," said Levi. "I was down to the shore yesterday evenin' to get some shells for the chickens. See you got some puppies with you."

Michael explained, not only about the puppies but about Gretel. The Wickcliffes took his news with regret, but matter-of-factly. Dogs died. It was too bad, but they did; no point in carryin' on about it.

"One thing, though," said Levi. "Better check on the door to the spring house. It's got sorta jammed open. Hunters most likely, gettin' a drink. They musta left it open and now it won't close. Seems like the hinges is sprung."

"Oh thanks," said Michael, "I'll take care of it."

"I'd get right on it," urged Levi, who had advised and bossed Michael since he was born and who wasn't too certain about the amount of good sense possessed by any summer resident. "First thing you know somethin'll get into there and get drowned. A squirrel. Or one of them pups."

"I will, I will," promised Michael, feeling touched by Levi's solicitude but also feeling just a little, was it disappointed? at this evidence of tender susceptibility. The pups meant a lot to him, Michael, because of themselves and because they were Gretel's, but it didn't seem right somehow, or fitting, to have the Wickcliffes worry about them.

Jane, however, fixed things up at once by performing one of the main functions of a good wife: to elucidate and to underline what her husband has just said.

"If one of them pups was to drown in that spring," she said reasonably, "It'd ruin your drinkin' water."

Michael felt suddenly happy as he and the pups headed down the bumpy road to his home by the sea.

Margaret Graham Neeson

The Bad Land Blues

*In my narrow apartment
I take off blue jeans & pith helmet
and I slide through the mesh.*

*My wife
lives in the tipi next door & raises
sheep - stalwart think-skulled ram, frantic ewes.
She dreams in circles.*

*I look at slices of life.
Blue Hawaii on the stereo.*

*Which horizon are we
heading through, light on each other's feet?
I keep on the move so ivy won't grow
around my waist & work in a shoe factory.*

*My wife
is a topless housewife, all alone on the prairie.
(An ambush a day keeps boredom away!)*

*She sighs.
There isn't even a cloud of dust.
Her sigh escapes into a canyon where
Elvis is washing his blue jeans.*

*I squeeze
behind my bongos & play the badland blues
over and over again
narrowly.*

John Alter

An Offering to the God Priapus for a Lucky Catch

(From the Greek of Maecius Quintus)

*On your coast-haunted little island
where the wave-chewed hog's back juts up,
the kind you like, Priap', a steep sea-crag;
me, Paris, the old fisherman
gives you a bony hard-shelled lobster
caught by my fishing rod's luck and whose
roasted flesh sweetened my half-rotted teeth,
but still I'm giving you the shell,
not asking you to fill my fish-net full,
but just enough to tame this growlin' gut.*

David M. Gordon

contributors...

John Alter is a young Portland poet, probably.

Edith Cheitman, poet, philosopher, mystic and peripatetic ichthyologist, was once refused employment by the American Optical Company because of "mediocre" writing ability.

R. Clairmont, Northeast Harbor, does not understand his own poetry. Currently directing the Alaska Repertory Theatre at Anchorage.

Gordon Clark attempts to teach at U.M.A. His fiction, poetry and criticism have met with little acclaim.

Herb Coursen's recent book on Shakespeare still leaves this Bowdoin professor with his many fine books of poetry.

Peter W. Cox is managing editor of the Maine Times and edits the articles which appear in it - and, after all, he is only human.

Rachel Butler Deblois, a student at U.M.A., needs to be locked in her Hallowell closet and made to write more.

T. Fallon, of Rumford, is a member of the Maine Writers' and Publishers' Alliance - a sort of literary "buddy" system.

Leonard Gilley's perverse and crazy world has delighted many readers country-wide. Surely his English classes at U.M.F. can't be all bad.

Brent Hall is probably one of the few students at U.M.O. who has been allowed to probe beyond The Old Man and the Sea.

Alice Larkin has a book out about this crazy crow, "Charlie", in Boothbay Harbor. Her story is not autobiographical.

Kathleen Lignell and her artist husband move to Lubec from El Cerrito, California, this spring. No explanation has been offered. She may continue to publish.

Robert McGuire, of U.M.A., is going quietly mad but claims that as an art and antique specialist, hardly anyone notices.

James A. McKenna lives in Augusta. Well, someone has to.

Frances Miller's recently published A Palestine Journey should, we feel (having recently visited her home town), be followed by Escape From Lewiston.

Wesley T. Mott, as Director of the Liberal Arts Division at Thomas College, is undoubtedly trapped in the "publish-or-perish" syndrome. We help where we can.

Margaret Graham Neeson, long-time columnist for "The Skipper", historian, and essayist, winters in Pittsburgh and does not yet know her Spruce Head home will probably be given back to the Indians.

Raymond L. Neinstein lives in Maine but we've lost his address.

Margaret Park studies under Coursen, we guess, at Bowdoin.

Terry Plunkett, on sabbatical from U.M.A., is currently in Ireland attempting to institute Swift's modest proposal as his solution to the Hibernian crisis.

Doug Rawlings evidently rides a motorcycle around Bath.

Priscilla Farrington Schumacher resides in Waterville.

Douglas Scribner, former U.M.A. student, by ignoring the advice of his former instructors, has turned into a promising professional writer.

Lee Sharkey has published widely and done fine work in design and graphics. Unfortunately, she lives in Skowhegan.

John Tagliabue is a nationally known poet, teaches at Bates, and according to latest guesstimates, has written at least ten million poems.

David Walker's Moving Out is a prize-winning poetry collection from the University of Virginia Press. He is currently living in Freedom if that is possible.

Virginia M. Wickes resides in Oakland, a suburb of Waterville.

ONE DOLLAR