

When I Think Of Christ I Think Of Provincetown

When I think of Christ, I think of
Provincetown
On Sunday mornings in early March
When the clear light angles up across
the streets
And we can be seen, briefly, as what
we are.

Waking from the Uxmals of our
dreams
We wash and walk to breakfast in a
state of grace
Transparent, fragile and inutterably
sure
That here,
Between that which we have done
and that
which we must do
We are holy, pure.

What can this tell us of God?
Does Divinity alter from place to place?

Could Quetzlcoatl preen his feathers
here
In this tentative pale sun
Amidst the crocus buds
Scratching his belly track
in the patchy melting snow?

Would Buddha drop philosophy
Like fat ripe figs
On the steps of the Kreiser Museum?

Clearly
No.

The gospel here is singular and plain.

We are to leave such mysteries
Behind the doors of last night's
rented rooms
Or drown them
Beneath the clean flat surface of this
Sunday's sea.

In Christ's name, we are admonished
to let go.

If you meet me in Provincetown some
Sunday next March
I shall tell you all
(or nearly all)
Of what I know.

E. Cheitman

Newsgirl

Every morning, except Sunday, whether it was bitter cold, drizzling wet, or fierce with snow flurries, the alarm clock in her room went off at 3 A.M. The merciless buzz was always frightening. But she learned quickly to wake up just before it screamed into life. If the weather outside was reasonable, waking up was the only bad part of delivering newspapers.

The town, busy by daylight, slept on undisturbed by my familiar footsteps. Its houses, in winter, were tucked into bed with blankets of snow pushed up under their chins. Many times I felt like Santa Claus leaving presents for little children.

The man at the restaurant wanted his anchored with a rock. The grandmother in the upstairs apartment wanted hers between the railings. The Harlen family hung out a special basket for theirs. And those who had no special place for theirs, received a dry copy between their doors.

At times she felt like a city kid, weaving in and out of back yards and short-cutting down alleys. She knew the places to hide if any danger threatened from the streets. She knew which steps were slippery. Every dog recognized her, even though not all of them liked her. She was never bitten. If the milk truck passed her she knew she was running a little late. He always waved.

Most of the time she felt removed from the troubling thoughts of daytime. She became part, was part, of the silent, natural nighttime. The hush of night nestled against the town and held her gently. It whispered to her from the river to hurry but go in safety.

Sometimes the bitter cold kissed her cheeks, leaving a healthy, rosy glow. Wisps of hair became threads of white crystals. Puffs of her breath trailed in the air like balloons. The cold nipped at her heels. She was prompt with the papers.

Always sounds were as crisp as the early mornings. Snow creaked under her feet. The trees groaned. She heard icicles shatter on a concrete doorstep. Chunks of ice fell from roof-tops. Snowdrifts whispered in the wind. On snowy mornings the soft whooshing of snowflakes muffled all other sounds. The air was a sea shell pressed to her ear.

She learned to judge the smells, sounds, and tastes of those hours; to predict the weather from them. She could tell if a storm was coming and whether it would be snow or rain. She knew whether it would be a big storm or blown over by the next morning. In the spring she learned to tell how warm the day would be.

The wonder of the quiet town held her in its magic. The carefully placed newspapers were like long seconds that measured her way toward dawn.

Holly Bayer

April 1979

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KENNEBEC

University of Maine at Augusta

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China
Richard Aldridge,
Sebasco Estates
Holly Bayer,
North Vassalboro
William Carpenter,
Bar Harbor
E. Cheitman,
Kents Hill
Gordon Clark,
Head Tide
Leo Connelan,
Clinton, Conn.
Christopher Fahy,
Tenants Harbor
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Jo Marian Going,
Little Compton, R. I.
David Gordon,
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Burton Hatlen,
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Spruce Head
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Port Clyde
Terry Plunkett,
Hallowell
Douglas Rawlings,
Mt. Vernon
Guy Scarpino,
Port Clyde
Jon Schlenker,
Augusta
Lee Sharkey,
Skowhegan
Deborah Ward,
Portland



Jim McLean

Blaze Orange

They are good to me here. I don't mind the bars, the locked doors. I have a room to myself. A narrow cot with a white iron frame, and a small oak stand with drawers. In the corner, there is a washstand with an iron frame, like the bed, and a metal bowl that they fill with fresh water a dozen times a day. There is soap, too, now that they know I won't try to eat it, and a towel. The washcloth, like the towel, is thick and coarse. I rub it hard on my face and I can feel the hard fibers claw at my skin. Sometimes, if I rub hard enough, I think I have got them all off...

It was a good plan. I thought of it that summer while I was stretched out on a bed of cool, green ferns in my secret glen. I had stumbled on the glen by accident, chasing a foolish springer spaniel pup I was trying to train. I had turned him loose to run on an old woods road at the foot of the mountain, and then followed reluctantly when he turned off, sniffing his way eagerly along an almost indiscernible trail through a thick forest of tall, dark pines.

They were old, the trees in that forest, the trunks close together like old men crowded into a subway train. And like greedy old men, they clawed upward with brittle, scabrous branches for a hundred feet or more to push their green-thatched crowns into the sun. No sunlight penetrated through to the carpet of dead pine sprills under my feet. The only life there was an occasional hooded toadstool with fever-mottled skin, or a clump of ghostly Indian pipes. Evil seemed to hang in the gloomy stillness, and the spindly lower limbs of the pines snatched my clothes and jabbed at my eyes as I pushed deeper into the forest. I snapped them off impatiently as I called after the dog.

I was about ready to let the pup run off his foolishness and find his own way home when, suddenly, as I climbed over a little rise, I stopped short in amazement. What had appeared to be a continuation of the forest floor dropped off abruptly. There before me was a sunny, fern-filled valley, a startling oasis of sunlight in the forest gloom. Lush with small shrubs and low branches hanging ripe with berries, it flourished in the sunlight that slanted down through a brief opening in the trees.

The dog plunged down the steep bank ahead of me, and as I hesitated at the edge of the glen, a doe sprang up from its bed in the ferns, then another, and another! Altogether, three does and two yearling fawns leaped up the opposite bank and went bounding off through the forest gloom that continued on the other side of the glen.

I went there often after that, for quiet meditation, and to observe the deer. In hunting season, it would have been child's play to lie hidden in the ferns and pick off the deer as they approached from the trail they followed to the glen each morning at dawn. I was an avid hunter, but the deer had grown to be personal friends and often I lay concealed, observing their habits and chuckling silently at their playfulness. I would never harm them. And I told no one. Not even Dora, though there was little else of my life and innermost thoughts that I kept from her. One of those desires, that I should claim her for my own, I kept from admitting even to myself until long after

she had guessed it. "There is no hope," she whispered when the thought finally fruited and hung there, ripe and tempting, like the proverbial forbidden apple. "No hope that I will ever be free from George."

George — how I hated the name! — was her husband. A sinewy, earthy man, who seemed to have been put on this earth as a mockery to smaller, weaker men like myself. As though God meant to flaunt him in front of our myopic, bespectacled eyes and roar "See! See! This is what I intended man to be!"

But for all George's muscular perfection and indomitable good health, it was me that Dora loved. Secretly, I marveled at this knowledge, for Dora herself, was a physical counterpart to her husband. She was nearly his height, and sturdily built, but there was a roundness and softness of the limbs and features that was unmistakably feminine. I gloried in the thought that she preferred me, for all my frailties, and refused to accept her protestations that our cause was hopeless.

True, I was no match for George in a physical contest, and although I was an excellent marksman, with a good reputation as a hunter, I had no doubt that he could outshoot me as well. Yet I was not immodestly proud of my intellect, and felt secure that I could outwit him. Lying there in the absolute tranquility of the glen, it came to me one day how I would do it.

It was almost time for the start of the hunting season. As was the custom, George, and most of the male population of the small community, including myself, would take to the woods on the opening day, accenting the grayness of a November dawn with the blaze orange of our hunting jackets as we melted into the woods. At dusk, the bright pinpoints would spew out again, converging at the roadside as headlights were turned on and the ritual procession moved homeward. Later that evening, after the silence and sanctity of the forest, the hunters would welcome the raucous laughter, loud music, and pulsating life of the local bar. It was here that the exploits of the day would be aired, the victors lauded, the missed shots mourned, and hopes for the coming day revived.

Sometimes, of an evening, the barroom talk would be hushed as the men hunched low over their drinks to contemplate the sacrifice of an acquaintance to the glorious cause. Hunting accidents were common. The victim shot by a companion who, flushed and jittery, whirls and fires at a twig snap in the brush. Or the hapless hunter downed by a bullet ricocheting off a rock, even sometimes, shot and killed, through carelessness, by his own gun. Each time, shock and sadness erupted like the splash of a rock tossed in a woodland pool. The ripples swelled, then spread out in concentric rings, gradually calmed and flattened, and the woodland scene was as before.

There was hardly ever more than a routine investigation of such accidents. My plan depended on that. I confided it to Dora one hot, moonless night, watching her face waver from shocked abhorrence of the idea to calculating complicity.

Sometime, just before the opening day of hunting, I would contrive to get

George into a conversation alone at the bar. After a few drinks I would feign the maudlin sentimentality of drinking companions who progress soddently to uninhibited confidences. And I would tell him about my secret glen.

It was a risk, but I knew from the greediness that glinted in his eyes when I described the deer in the glen that he would keep the secret, wanting the kill for himself. Now all I had to do was precede him into the forest, feeling my way along the now familiar trail in the darkness, and position myself to wait. Even if there were someone else in the vicinity who heard the shot, a rifle crack in the woods on the first day of hunting season would cause no alarm. And me? I would be just one of the countless orange specks in the woods, and far from that vicinity when I emerged at dusk. No one would question my carrying a rifle. Or that it had been fired. I speculated that George's body, hidden away in the secret glen, might never be found. But if it was, it would be so obviously a hunting accident. Another brief splash and ripple in the bottomless pool.

The plan was that I would wait a day or two after George was declared missing. Even join in the search. Making sure, of course, to lead the searching party in a direction away from the glen. Then I would leave town, letting it be known that an unexpected promotion made it necessary for me to transfer to another branch of the company I worked for. I had, in fact, pre-arranged a transfer, and was prepared to leave at a minute's notice.

Everything went perfectly, as planned. One shot, carefully placed as the orange-clad figure emerged at the rim of the glen. A soft-nosed hunting bullet. No question that it was fatal. I heard the body, making surprisingly little noise for such a big man, rolling and bumping to the bottom of the glen. Before it stopped, I had risen from my hiding place and hurried away in the forest gloom.

I thought it was strange, next morning, that it was not on the local news. About George being missing. Perhaps Dora had decided to wait a day or two to give me more time. I dared not call her. That was part of the plan. We were to have no contact with each other until she joined me later, after the ripples of George's tragic fate had died down. It might take weeks, even months, before the estate could be settled and she would be free to leave without questions being asked. That was the hardest part. The waiting. My days were tinged with anxious longing. The nights were a torment. All that sustained me was the memory of Dora, and the sweet certainty that our life together would be a succession of the ecstasies those memories recalled.

For six months I waited. A hundred times I relived that moment when I had caught the first glimpse of a blaze orange cap coming into view over a slight rise as the forest trail entered the glen. The head, slightly bent, concealed the face under the cap's bright peak, but in just an instant, the top part of the torso appeared and I took careful aim at the left side of the chest. I couldn't have missed. The body, rolling and thumping to the bottom of the glen still echoed in my mind. What then, was keeping Dora? Was it possible that legal complications were delaying settlement of the estate because the body had not been found?

After much anxious consideration, I decided to go back. There could be little danger now. I had friends there. No one would question my returning to see to accounts I still maintained at the local bank, and to visit old acquaintances. I could even visit Dora. Might even be expected to, to offer my condolences! But first, I would reconnoiter, trying to learn the details of the "accident", which would surely still be a topic of conversation at the bar.

The bar was the first place I visited after checking into a motel on the outskirts of town. The winter snow was melting from the woods and talk in the

From Dead River Sequence

I go over to a party on the other side of Southwest Harbor, by the C.G. station, young host does two or three magic tricks on me, puts a twenty dollar bill (mine!) into his hand. It disappears. Appears again out of the air. I tell him I knew his house when it was dark and stank. Jack Roche lived there, Jack Roche, town drunk, sinister reputation. I was collecting pictures for a show, "Island Photographs" and heard there was a real professional somewhere in Southwest Harbor. I found him — a drunken man in this fine house perched on the shore. He smelled and the house smelled of alcohol, and something decaying or almost dead. He looked like a rotting man. His hands shook. I asked him would he be in our show. He gave me caviar in a small can. I turned to go. "Wait," he said — pulled open drawers, all filled with beautiful photographs, delicious 4x5 transparencies, 11x14 prints — perfect. And books. He showed me the books he had done

— Japanese Flower Arrangements & Flowers Indoors. I took a dozen of the prints. Later I went back to get him for the Opening. He had sewn badges on his suit coat — Second Prize, Chicago Photographic Festival 1953; First Prize, Floral Photography Show, New York 1951. He talked about Edward Steichen whose assistant he'd been in the 1950's. He gave me a small tin of caviar. He was a proud man smelling of cologne and hair oil with badges all over him & standing all night beside his pictures.

I took him home and he pressed another tin of caviar into my hand. The next week someone went to his house to collect money & found him dead. That was the spring of 1973.

They made his house into a bright cottage with a deck over the water and it sure is sunnier inside and better smelling than when Jack Roche lived there.

William Carpenter

bar was of trout flies, the smelt run, and the upcoming baseball season. I swung onto a stool at the bar, joining into the conversation and being accepted, almost without comment, as though it had been only yesterday that I had last quaffed a beer in their company. But it had been longer than that, and the consciousness of that fact seeped slowly along the bar, eroding the natural course of their thoughts. Inexorably, those thoughts turned back to the time that I had left.

Someone inquired about my new job. I countered easily with a brief resume of my activities, then, deliberately, I brought up the event of my sudden departure, the "unexpected" transfer. I pushed my mug back to the bartender for a refill, recalling ruefully, "The company wouldn't even wait until I got my deer!"

A damned shame! Wouldn't you know! Guffaws meant to express sympathy, but reflecting a shade of gloating from hunters recalling their own triumphs. The recollection progressed, as I had hoped, until at last the subject I desperately wanted to trigger in their memories spilled out on the polished counter like a pair of tumbling dice. Feverish with suspense, I shoved by flushed face into a foam of beer and waited to see which way they would fall.

Too bad about George. You knew about George, didn't you? Or did that happen after you left?

I feigned a low level of curiosity. "Don't tell me he missed his shot?" I laughed with the transparent scorn of jealousy.

Missed it? Hell! I guess he didn't miss it. Or, it didn't miss him, you might say. Right between the eyes. Found his body a few days later. Never did find out who did it. A trigger-happy hunter, most likely, who didn't dare own up to it. Maybe never even knew he done it! A damned shame, that was. George was a good man. A great hunter! Always liked him, I did.

I mumbled something appropriate about George's virtues and expressed the proper amount of surprise. Surprise that was only partly assumed, as my mind tumbled their words for a closer viewing. Right between the eyes? I'd figured it for a chest shot. In my excitement, could I have been shooting high? I shook my head in disbelief.

The gesture, and my genuine shocked surprise were accepted stoically by my companions as evidence that George's death was a personal loss. I decided recklessly to pursue it further.

"Damn!" I said, shaking my head again. "What a terrible thing! If I had only known... George was my friend. God! And I didn't even know!"

The group fell silent, respecting grief. I stared into my beer mug, brooding. Then, slowly, as though talking to myself, "Nothing I can do now, I suppose. Poor fellow! But Dora, his widow! Damned hard! I suppose the least I can do is call and offer her my condolences. Suppose she still lives in the same place, that white house out on Elm?" I looked up, questioning, but the men were shuffling, heads drooped, and showing more uneasiness than they had when forced to review the painful subject of George's death. I waited.

Funny how things happen sometimes. Someone volunteered finally. Never figured Dora to do anything like that. Run off like that. Some say she had a sweetie, and run off with him. And there's others that say she and George weren't getting along, and she'd just had enough of it and took off. Too bad she hadn't waited, though. Fellow come screaming into town, yelling he'd found George lying dead in the middle of a woods road, and when the sheriff went to notify his wife, she was gone.

Never did find her, another man offered. Don't know who collected the insurance. Double indemnity, too, what with it being an accident, like that. He chortled maliciously. If she'd waited, she and that sweetie of hers would've been set for life!

My head reeled. Dora gone? Run off — but who could have known about us? And why hadn't she stuck to our plan? Why hadn't she come to me? Was there another man — a "sweetie" — and Dora just using me to help her get rid of George? My head jangled with questions, and I felt control of my emotions slipping away. The men were looking at me, and with great difficulty, like a man moving underwater, I nodded a farewell, fumbled some bills from my pocket, and paid for my drinks.

At last I was outside, locked in my car, safe from curious stares. But I could not escape my own confusion. There were so many things I did not understand. Why was George shot between the eyes? And what was this about finding George lying dead on a woods road? How did he get there, when I had heard his body tumble down the slope of the glen? Could he have lived long enough to drag himself to the road? With a bullet between the eyes? Impossible! And what about Dora? Where could she have gone?

The strain and anxiety of six months of waiting, and the shock of what I had heard was too much for me. I hurried back to the motel, shook a double dose of sleeping pills into a trembling hand, and soon slipped from the chaos and confusion of my troubled mind into a deep, peaceful sleep.

The next morning the questions were still there, but now I could sort them out, and came finally to the conclusion that I would have to seek more answers. I showered quickly and dressed.

There was a coffee shop in the motel, and I hoisted myself onto a stool at the counter. I had slept late and there was no one else about. Only a sharp-faced middle-aged woman behind the counter. I had never seen her before, and she showed no sign of recognition as she looked up expectantly to take my order. In due course, she brought my breakfast and began chatting sociably while she wiped and polished the chrome fixtures behind the counter.

We discussed, at length, the weather, the origin and quality of my breakfast eggs, and my trip north. I told her a little about the city where I now lived, not mentioning that I had previously been a member of the community, and then began casually discussing local points of interest.

"Have much hunting up here?" I inquired.

"Oh, yes! There's good hunting up here, all right," she answered, with a trace of scorn.

"You don't care much about hunting!" I laughed.

"Too many accidents," she said. "Every year, it seems like, someone gets killed."

"Oh?" I interjected a rising note of interest to encourage her to continue.

"Yes. At least one accident every year," she calculated. "Someone either killed or wounded."

I looked up at her, but continued eating.

"Last year was the worst," she said. "Man got killed and cuckolded the same day," she spat out in disgust. The fried egg turned to glue in my mouth while I waited.

"Seems as though," she went on, with the fine sense of detail I had noticed in our previous conversation, "that this

fellow, this George, I believe his name was, met a fellow in a bar just before hunting season." (I chewed methodically while my body went tense with anticipation.) "They was drinking, and this fellow told him about a secret hunting spot he knew. George got all excited, telling about it, and about the two big bucks the fellow said he knew was there." (I chuckled, remembering the last-minute embellishments I had added when I told George about my secret glen.)

"George hadn't told anyone where the spot was," she emphasized, pointing her peaked eyebrows at me, "but he had this plan worked out to get both those deer. He would send his wife on in first, to this secret place. She was to hide herself in the bushes there, you see, and then he was to come along the trail that the fellow told him the deer had made to the place, and drive them towards her. That way, don't you see, she would get the first shot at the deer, and he would get the other. He wanted both of them bucks for himself."

The glue in my mouth turned to bile. Dora! My god! Was it Dora who came over the ridge when I lay hidden in the ferns, sighting along the barrel of my rifle, waiting? Dora? It couldn't be!

The woman was still talking, and I heard it like a record playing itself out from a distance. "Guess he had it all figured out," she said, and sniggered. "He run down the night before hunting season opened and bought his wife a hunting license. Bought her a hunting coat and a cap, just like his, and a gun. She'd never hunted before, you know, but he figured that if she missed, he could shoot both of the deer and have her tag one. Nobody'd ever know. People 'round here do it all the time! What he didn't figure on, I guess, was that his wife had her eye on bigger game. Folks say she went into the woods with him all right, but they say she had this boyfriend she had been sneaking around with. Must've been waiting for her with a car, and instead of sitting down and doing like he told her, she circled back around and run off with this fellow. Poor George, though, he never knew it! Hadn't got halfway into the woods, walking down this woods road to drive the deer in to her, when some hunter mistook him for a deer and shot him." The woman began wiping and polishing furiously. "Like I was a telling you. Them hunters are half-crazy, some of them. Will shoot at anything in the woods that moves. Some folks tried to say 'twas her that shot him, but the fellow what sold her the gun remembered what caliber it was, and the bullet that killed her husband didn't match. Like I say..."

"Hey, mister! Mister! Where are you going? You didn't finish your egg..."

I ran out of the place and the woman ran after me, screaming maniacally that I hadn't paid for my breakfast. The car started with a roar and I backed it around viciously in a half-turn, almost hitting her, slammed the gears into high and lurched out of the driveway. The tires squealed with an agonized scream that repeated itself again and again inside my head. Dora! My sweet, beautiful Dora! Startled motorists skidded out of my way and cursed me as I screeched down the road to the mountain, but they were only a blur to my glazed eyes. I was seeing Dora. The perfect oval of her face framed in soft, brown curls, seemed to hang in the air before me. The smooth red lips so straight and prim in repose, that quirked upwards merrily when she smiled. The small straight nose, and extraordinarily

Long Time Gone

(Lu Yu
Lu Chu 121)

*A waif town
where meek lane
broods mute autumn,*

*a pleasing girl
halts the shuttle;
night air sighs,*

*trees unpruned,
dew wets
the acid plum's thorned limbs;*

*on the weed clogged trail
the moon glazes
fox tracks.*

*She brings to mind her man,
yore days, then
big with child*

*who scampers now,
a buff calf
his dad doesn't know.*

*The purple sibyl's
soothsay,
you can't believe!*

*'Or trust
in cracked tile
to token his home-come day*

*Marriage came
unplumbed,
ere she stepped from her door,*

*"On dream-feet
how will
I know the route to Chiu-chuan?"*

*With powder and floss,
I scrub the mirror
I can't face —*

*a girl's flowers
won't last
even ten years."*

David Gordon

large brown eyes that seemed perpetually widened in wonder under thick straight brows. My knuckles were white on the wheel, but my fingers were remembering the softness of her skin, the deep, voluptuous cleave between the white perfection of her breasts. Tormented by my thoughts, I overshot the entrance to the woods road, then slammed the car in reverse, jolting it backwards.

I leaped from the car, leaving the door hanging open, and ran crazily up the woods road to the trail through the woods. My head screamed, Dora! Dora! Or was it my voice screaming? Running, panting, screaming, I tore down the trail to the glen. Dead branches raked my face and I flailed at them with my arms as I crashed through them. At last I burst from the gloom of the pine forest into the sunlight and stopped, gasping, for breath. Here! Here on the spot where the trail ended at the top of the glen was where I had glimpsed the orange cap. Where I had carefully drawn my sights to the left side of the blaze orange jacket as it appeared. The blast of the gun, the body pitching forward, tumbling, rolling. It all came back to me. I looked down. Somewhere down there, amidst the ferns at the bottom of the glen, was the answer I had to find. I knew now that it was not George I had shot — but it couldn't have been Dora! My mind reeled back from the thought. Some other hunter, perhaps? Of course! Of course! I seized at the thought. A nameless, faceless hunter who had stumbled upon the glen by accident — just as I had! It had to be that. It had to! Almost joyously, now that I had the answer, I began slipping and sliding down the steep bank of the glen, crushing the ferns as my feet slid sideways, my arm outflung against the bank to steady myself. The thorns of a berry bush slashed the corner of my mouth, but in my new joy, the blood was nectar on my tongue.

Near the bottom, my legs shot out from under me, and I fell. I picked myself up, half turning, and it was then that I saw the blaze orange cloth. Half-hidden under the ferns, the body, or what was left of it, lay sprawled face downward, the orange cap, knocked awry, still covering the back of the head. My chest swelled with the madness of my beating heart, and I laughed out loud in the ecstasy of anticipation. Now! Now I would see that it was not Dora! Not Dora at all, but a nameless, worthless hunter, so unimportant to the world that no one had even declared him missing!

I grasped at the back of the orange jacket with my two hands and flipped the body over. It rolled, grudgingly, and one arm, flopping, fell across my foot. I leaped back, kicking it away from me, and as I did, I looked down in horror at the sight before me. The coat, torn from the blast of the bullet and rotted from the dampness, had pulled away in my hands and the upper torso lay exposed. I gasped. The chest, a ghastly, putrified whiteness, writhed with maggots, bloodless white like the flesh they tunneled in. The body had flattened and bleached as it lay on the ground, but a smear of the dank, black earth was wedged in the deep cleft between the breasts, leaving no question as to their roundness.

I felt my own chest plunged suddenly into an icy vat of terror as I forced my eyes upwards to brown curls that spilled out of the cap. Maggots crawled everywhere on the face. They whipped and squirmed in nostrils, slithered and writhed over bared teeth where they had eaten away the soft flesh of the lips, and boiled in a squirming mass in the sockets of each eye. The eyes! I knew the shape of them, even with their ghastly tenants, and above them, the wide, straight brows gave them an expression of sepulchral accusation. On one of the eyebrows, a single mag-

got raised itself at one end, blindly weaving.

I fainted, grateful for the blackness that surged over me like a shroud, blocking out that terrible whiteness. When I regained consciousness, I lay like a lover across the body, my face cheek to cheek with the squirming horror underneath me. Maggots crawled on my face, in my nose, my eyes, and I felt them tunneling into my ears. I flung myself backwards, screaming, and began clawing at them with my nails, then grabbed up fistfuls of dirt and rubbed at my face, trying to dislodge their clinging bodies. My screams brought the police. When they saw my face, smeared with blood and dirt, they forgot all about making me pay for the eggs.

The nurses here don't care how many times a day I have to scrub the maggots off. Sometimes I think I have got them all, and then I stagger back to my cot, exhausted. But always, while I sleep, they come crawling, crawling back, and I wake up screaming. The little blond nurse who comes on duty after midnight hears me scream. She runs to the side of my bed and hands me the washcloth, without asking.

A. T. Larkin

After Longley

Whenever I went into the State House in Augusta during the final three months of Jim Longley's reign as Your Governor (as he called himself), I skirted the second floor where Longley was holed up behind his locked doors.

I was afraid.

I knew that somewhere behind those doors Longley was lurking, perhaps pecking out occasionally to see who was passing. And so the doors were ominous to me, like the dark doors in Houses of Horror through which might pop a skeleton, a gorilla or Bela Lugosi. I had this notion that if a skeleton, gorilla or Bela Lugosi didn't pop out at me from one of the governor's doors, Longley or one of his helpers might, and he would sound some sort of alarm and the State Police would come and arrest me.

This was after my book, *The Year of the Longley*, had come out. Longley's commissioner of Finance and Administration had tried to stop the book from being sold in the State House cafeteria. Longley had telephoned former governor Kenneth Curtis in Paris in the middle of the night to try to get him to fly home from a business trip and denounce the book. "For the sake of your good name, Ken," Longley said.

The Associated Press found out about the book ban, and soon Longley's commissioner of Finance and Administration was back apologizing to the book stall clerk and denying he had tried to ban anything.

Curtis, who had been kicking himself for four years for unknowingly abetting Longley's political ambition (it was Curtis who had put Longley on the government cost study that catapulted him into the Blaine House), suspected his "good name" really wasn't in jeopardy. He turned Longley down.

Your Governor finally had wound up issuing a "memo" — as opposed to a "statement" — saying he hadn't read the book, wasn't going to read it, and would have nothing to say about it except that it was all a pack of lies.

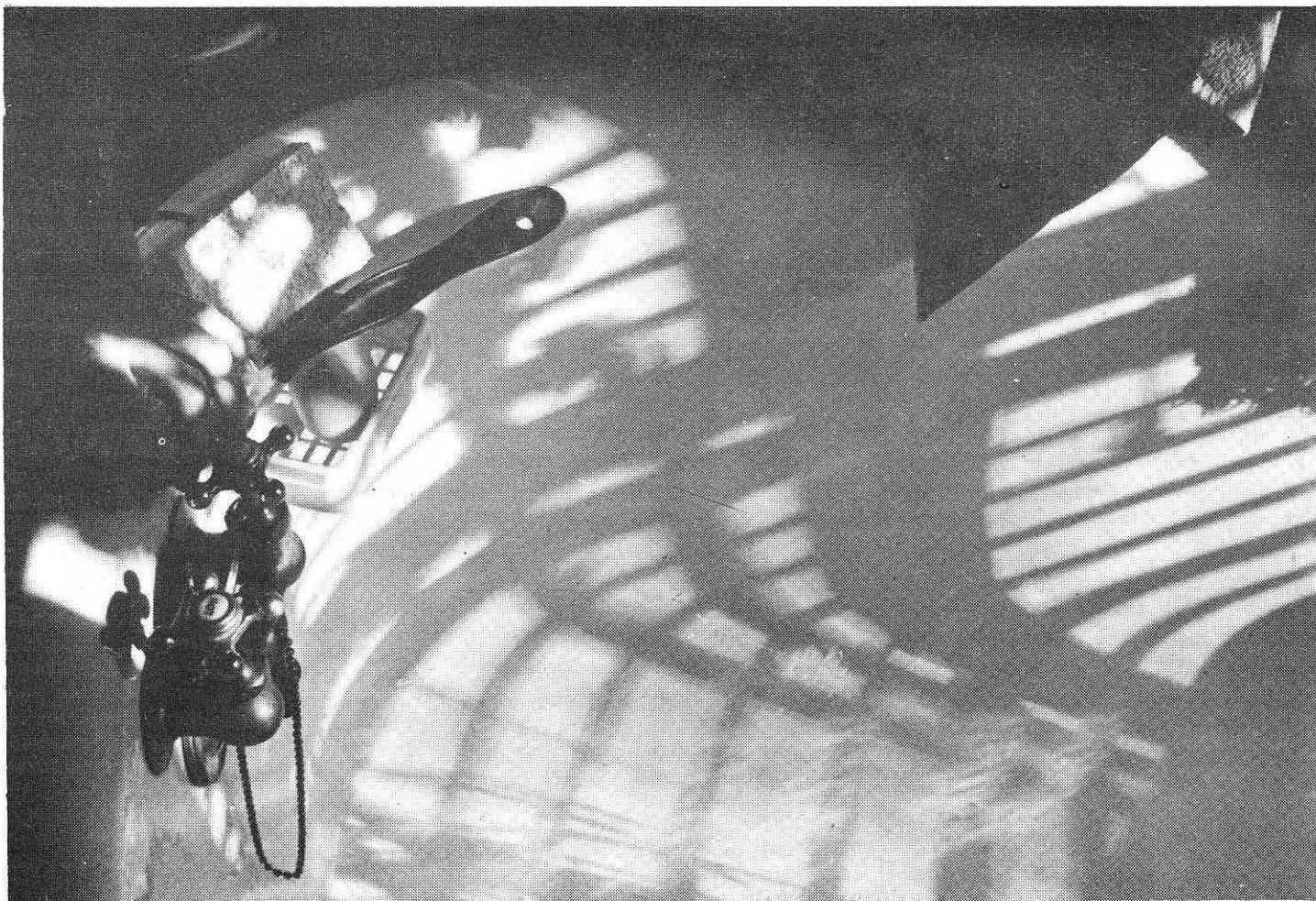
I had an uneasy feeling that the book — Longley took to calling it "that book," when he had to call it anything at all — might have earned me a place on Longley's enemies list. On this list were many people who over the years had stopped short of saying Longley was a wonderful governor. I wasn't sure what that meant, to be on Longley's enemies list, but it made me feel nervous about going into the State House.

But in January Joe Brennan became Maine's new governor and I wasn't afraid any more. So one day I went up to the second floor, passed through the Hall of Flags, and approached the governor's suite to see what it was like without Jim Longley.

The first thing I saw was that the Dutch door was gone.

This was the door Longley had had specially installed so people couldn't get into his office. Although he often had said his was the most open administration in history, he seemed to like doing things in secret. And so he kept his doors locked for four years, and you couldn't get in.

Except for one door, the Dutch door. The bottom half of it was closed but the top half was open and if you had some business with someone inside, you had to stand out in the corridor and announce your business over the bottom half to an unsmiling, non-nonsense receptionist some distance away in the outer office.



Phil Paratore

You could not see Longley's inner office from the door and, for that matter, you could not see any more of the outer office, either, because Longley had erected a partition beside the receptionist's desk. This blocked your view, I understand from inside sources, of three clerks typing memos and statements and filing papers in gray metal filing cabinets.

Now there was a very nice looking blonde sitting at the receptionist's desk, and smiling, and since a whole door had been hung in place of the Dutch door and this entire door was open, you could walk right in and state your business, if you had any, and look at the clerks typing and filing papers.

In the 1978 election campaign, polls taken by various candidates showed Longley, who wasn't running, to be highly popular among people who liked his "stirring things up" in Augusta. This "stirring up" consisted primarily of calling people names who disagreed with him, impugning their motives and family devotion and carrying on other relentless battles against Them (the shadowy enemy of Us).

Presumably because of these polls, Joe Brennan, the former liberal Democrat, started sounding more and more like Longley, who used to describe himself as a "fiscally-conservative-albeit-extremely-liberal humanitarian." Brennan, however, did not sound so much like Longley as did the Republican candidate, Linwood Palmer, who at one point resorted to decrying Longley's favorite bogeymen, the "professional politicians," or as did Buddy Frankland, the falsetto-voiced Baptist minister who vowed to follow Longley's precepts for salvation in government. ("Children as well as adults not only *need* discipline, but they *want* discipline," Longley once preached in Frankland's church in Bangor.)

The election campaign was over and Longley was gone; but Brennan seemed to sense his presence, like a strong scent lingering in the air. He didn't seem to want to make any drastic changes or to antagonize Longley and his followers. He submitted a modest budget and reappointed several of Longley's commissioners. Some of them began testifying about roads, police cars and buildings that had been allowed to deteriorate in order to allow Longley to say that he was saving taxpayers' money. But Brennan continued to speak softly about his predecessor. And although he unlocked the doors, most of them remained closed.

Yet fundamental changes were evident. I went to a news conference and listened to a confident Joe Brennan answer questions quickly, simply, directly.

When he didn't know an answer, he would say so.

Longley rarely said he didn't know. When he didn't know, his method was to respond with as many words as possible. The questioner, usually confused, seldom asked again.

Prior to the news conference, I ran into Connie LaPointe, who had managed Brennan's campaign and now was one of his top aides.

Wasn't she afraid, I said as a joke, that a horde of professional politicians might swoop through the unlocked doors?

"I hope so," she said. "We need all the help we can get."

But had not Longley taught us that professional politicians and other public servants were enemies of the people? Without bolted doors and Jim Longley's vigilance, were we not all in danger of being made impoverished or immoral or otherwise unAmerican?

Brennan had been governor for *weeks* and yet he had remained silent about such dangers. Not once had he warned us about professional politicians who placed the party above the people, sinecure-seeking bureaucrats, state employees on coffee breaks, special interests with pork barrels, union leaders who didn't speak for their memberships or liberal newspaper writers who attacked a person and his family.

Had these villains suddenly gone away? Or had they possibly reformed? Or . . . could the silence mean that our government was no longer there?

"Oh, it's here," Larry Spiegel, Brennan's press aide, assured me. "It's just that it's government without hysterics."

For the moment, Longley's holy war was over. Headline writers, editorialists, political analysts were going to miss him. Not because politically he was astute or naive, wise or foolish, good or bad, a precursor or a freak; but because, if he was nothing else, he was fun to write about, to tell stories about.

If anything is portended by my dream, however, he'll be back. I have had this dream. I am in an amusement park, bump-

ing along through a tunnel in a little red car on a track.

Ahead of me in the darkness I can make out a door. As the car approaches it, the door slowly opens and a stiff dark figure, the figure of a man, emerges.

I anticipate — I am trying not to be frightened — that the figure will be wearing a black cape and will say with a diabolical Transylvanian accent:

"Welcome to my castle."

But as I am drawn closer, I see the figure is clothed in a dark blue business suit and that it is wearing a gold watch, a Bowdoin College class ring and a lapel pin which appears to bear the emblem of some life insurance organization.

The figure glares at me with intense blue eyes. It opens its mouth to speak, and I am filled with dread.

"Willis," it says in a Maine accent even more diabolical than Transylvanian, "that was a real cheap shot."

Willis Johnson

I built a false grandfather

*with grounded out hulls of brigs
from the late 1880's.
Adding along the way ships bells,
bait shed smells, child-hood graveyard
wanderings,
mooncussers' rantings, a flask of
brandy, dead crow,
clam flats, game of crib, rain on a
tin roof, and a
few low tides at 6:35 a.m.*

*With a topsail for clothing
skiffs for his shoes,
barnacles took the place of whiskers,
pot warp 'stead o' hair.
With the countenance of a can
buoy, #3,
— he looked very cute —
Almost real.*

Charles Oakes

Coming of Age in America: An Immodest Proposal

The facts are startling. Today, one out of ten Americans is sixty-five or older. In the next fifty years, one out of six of us will be over sixty-five. Today, women outlive men by eight years. For those women over sixty-five, there are only sixty-nine males for every one hundred females. Obviously, we can look forward to more widowed, older women living alone than ever before.

My work as an anthropologist and sociologist leads me to propose that the elderly create communal living arrangements for themselves. Several elderly people could set up housekeeping in a single residence. Social losses would be remedied in this way, and the adult roles to which the elderly are accustomed (homemaker, handyman, partner, provider) could be continued. Finances are friendship — these could be shared.

I also propose that, as a society, we consider polygyny as an alternative to marriage for the elderly. Remember those sixty-nine males among one-hundred females? In this scheme, one man would be permitted to marry more than one woman. Today, to retain pension benefits available to single

people, many of the elderly cohabit, out-of-wedlock, so at least part of the idea is not new. Communal arrangements would, of course, increase cohabitation. But with polygyny, the legal problems could be avoided and the elderly would live together with society's approval. Thus, the guilt and stigma that may accompany communal arrangements would be eradicated by legalizing polygyny.

Today, a woman may expect to spend as much as fifteen to twenty years in widowhood. And chances of remarrying are slim. Most elderly men are married and most elderly women are widowed. In fact, widows outnumber widowers by better than four to one among those over sixty-five. Polygyny could make sense as a solution to this problem.

Psychologically, widowhood constitutes a major "exit role." One feels lonely, alone. Of course, for some, widowhood means more independence, the chance to reunite with friends. But for many others, widowhood means the loss of identity that the accomplishments and positions of the

Insomnia I

*I have nothing on my mind
except an inconsistent song
about circles, great bleak spaces
on the flipside of my brain*

*so all my dreams won't come again
in their sparse ceremonial gowns
and not one will graduate
unto tomorrow.*

*The hell with them and their random
men,
their friends
poured out from childhood —
simple frog-faces
on line to the water-fountain.
I need some order in my sleep,
the light of a purer fuhrer —
a militia on the side of each earlobe,
an overall tuning fork
waving a lullabye banner
and timing my breaths with an
hourglass.*

*There's a pigeon in the chimney
of this old house
and his cooing echoes off
the ocean in my hair.
He hums a never-never noise
into my raging halo
and his beautiful profile hovers close
as if he were a dove.*

*I imagine the abstracted eyes
and ride out on his feathered mattress
of gray-green ruffles.*

Deborah Ward

spouse provided. She may have to make decisions by herself. Intimate companionship is more difficult to find; sexual needs often go unfulfilled. Consequently, the loss of her spouse may result in the widow becoming isolated, lonely, and dependent on others.

If polygyny or communal living are too radical as immediate solutions, alternatives are available. Foster grandparents, for example, have been used in state hospitals to bring elderly people and children together (usually once or twice a week) to provide social and emotional gratification for both. This idea could also be extended to include private households where foster homes are established on a more permanent basis. Elderly people could be "adopted" by younger families, and actually function as grandparents in that family — again satisfying the psychological and social needs of all involved.

Our society must provide strategies to deal with these crises the elderly experience. Increasingly, more of our citizens can be expected to face the trauma resulting from the "role voids" created by age and a spouse's death. We must recognize trends now, and plan creatively for all of us "coming of age in America."

Jon A. Schlenker

An Interview with Stephen King

Why live in Maine? I/we (Tabby and I) have both lived in Maine most of our lives, and I think you are where you live even more than you are what you eat. We usually go away for a couple of weeks in the dead heart of winter, usually to some jolly sub-tropical place where young men with hair processes and nosejobs play guitar beside the pool. And we usually have a pretty cruddy time. Maine people are all grim masochists at heart, I think, and they find it hard to feel at peace unless they have freezing slush in their boots and oil bills to rave over.

About a year ago (while in England), Tabby and I seriously discussed the idea of moving to New Hampshire to beat the state income tax, which gets us to the tune of about \$20,000 a year. The idea was that we could buy a really nice house and pay for it out of the taxes we weren't paying (if you see what I mean) over a period of years. But we couldn't quite do it. Part of it was the thought of living in a state currently governed* by a man who is apparently a lunatic, part of it was New Hampshire's deep and essential weirdness (best epitomized, I think, by such peculiar attractions as Santa's Village and Six-Gun City), but most of it was the simply fact that we couldn't leave. I guess we'll always be here.

What first got you interested in writing? I can't remember. When I was a little kid I was sick a lot and used to copy stories out of such children's books as *Bomba the Jungle Boy* and *Tom Swift*. Maybe that was it. Anyway, I've wanted to write for as long as

*Since defeated for re-election

I can remember, except for a brief period when I wanted to be the guy who went around in the old pick-up truck chanting, "Rags! Bring out your rags!" Just as well. They phased that one out anyway.

Were you interested in writing or becoming a WRITER? It wasn't a case of wanting to be a writer or a WRITER. I just liked making things up, especially exciting stuff. Having fantasy adventures. Telling myself stories.

Any special writers you'd recommend to young writers? If it's fiction writers you're referring to, I think they should read James M. Cain, who knew how to cut his prose to the bone and make it sing at the same time. Thomas Williams for the peculiar tone and weight he can give to physical things, and for serious prose that never postures. Ross MacDonald for heart and honesty, Raymond Chandler for pace, K. R. R. Tolkien for story and feeling and that curious ability the best fiction has to create a *trompe d'oeil* that makes fiction somehow more real than truth. Also Mickey Spillane, Sidney Sheldon, Jacqueline Susann, and a thousand others for what not to do.

What's the best motivation a writer can have? The best motivation a writer can have is hunger and the desire to make huge amounts of money. But without integrity and the honest intent to do as well as possible, both hunger and the desire to make money will destroy him as an artist. But that would be no loss, since people without integrity and the honest intent to do well aren't worth a shit anyway.

But I suppose there are other things, a desire to entertain, to explore character, perhaps even make a serious comment on the human condition? Yes, those things motivate me, along with the need to make things up and create a fantasy for myself (if you try writing for anyone else, it's no good). I also write out of the fear that, if I stop, I'll never be able to start again.

But fewer people pay any attention to writers today. They seem to have become far less important in our society. Is literature itself becoming a neglected form? Yes. I think that all forms of literature are now endangered. It's no accident that each year more and more New York publishers fall into the hands of the entertainment conglomerates. Poetry as a popular literary form has ceased to exist, except in the form of doggerel. There has not been a best-selling collection of short stories since John Fowles' *The Ebony Tower*, four years ago. Since then, the only book of short stories to attract even a modicum of critical support and/or a popular audience is Barry Dorgan's *Airships*. The serious novel is not so badly off, but most publishers now realize that the black ink lies more in the direction of what have been called "Made-for-TV-movies of the mind" — books like the John Jakes Bicentennial Series (or Kent Family Chronicles, if you prefer). Post-literacy has not occurred and probably will not for years, if ever; but there has been a steady degeneration in literacy and in reader imagination. I would guess that fully 60% of my reader mail mentions movie versions of my books in some way or other — usually with trepidation, I'm glad to append.

Many writers have complained that their formal education interfered with their becoming writers. Any reaction? I don't think anything happened at UMO that hindered me, and I may have been helped, most notably by Ted Holmes, who taught creative writing at that time, and by Burt Hatlen, who teaches there now and who insisted that there was an American idiom that could be pursued fruitfully in the popular novel. But I think that most of the writers who are "made" by college are assholes like John Updike; most of the really good ones (say, Faulkner) take little or no imprint from any sort of organized education into their writing.

Were your first novels calculated to appease the American interest in the supernatural and occult? Naturally I am interested in Americans' interest in the supernatural and the occult (CURSE OF TUT STRIKES AGAIN, blares the front page of this week's *Enquirer*; next week it may be UFO ATE MY BABY, SWEARS HYSTERICAL MOTHER), but really, an interest in the supernatural is hardly an American phenomenon. No one has been more surprised than I at the current "boom" in horror novels here. Our great supernatural/horror writers have died broke (Poe, Lovecraft) or largely unknown (Clark Ashton Smith, Donald Wandrei). That's because what Americans have seemed to want most of all until recently is railroads and tits; the true American dream up until the last fifteen years or so might well have been long railroad tracks lined with tits (see the last page of this month's OUI magazine). I have always written about the supernatural and the occult because I like stories where ordinary people are put into extraordinary situations...what Hemingway called "the breaking strain." To that I'd

Steve King's *The Stand*

All of Steve King's novels to date are about disasters, and about the survivors of disasters. "I only am escaped alone to tell these." These words from *Job* serve as the epigraph to the last chapter of *Moby Dick*: the chapter in which Ishmael tells how he survived the destruction of the Pequod and returned to tell us of Ahab's mad quest for annihilation. The same words might serve as an epigraph to virtually any of Steve King's novels. In *Carrie*, Carrie White and the high school classmates that torment her are locked together in a destructive symbiosis, which climaxes in the nearly total destruction of the town of Chamberlain, Maine. The survivor here is Sue Snell, whose well-intentioned actions trigger the final catastrophe, and who is permanently scarred by this guilt. In *Salems Lot* the lives of the people of the town of 'Salems Lot are poisoned by greed, and by a fundamental refusal to care for one another. The absence of any real community in 'Salems Lot permits an external demonic force to invade, conquer, and destroy the town. The only survivors are Ben Mears, the novelist who escapes to tell us of these events, and Mark Petrie, who is still partially catatonic at the end of the novel. In *The Shining* we watch a similar process in microcosm, as a family hurtles toward destruction. Once again the process of destruction is unleashed by failures of love and understanding, which allow demonic powers to invade and destroy the Torrance family. The survivor here is the only son of the Torrances, who is rescued from the climactic holocaust by a black redeemer. But Danny Torrance, like Steve King's other survivors, is so deeply scarred by his experiences that we are left wondering whether his later life can be anything more than an obsessive re-living of the catastrophe itself.

The Stand, Steve King's new novel, is in all respects — length, scope, imaginative power — his biggest treatment to date of

this disaster-and-survival theme. The disaster here is far vaster than anything Steve King has ever imagined before. As the book begins, we learn that the American military has developed a flu virus which mutates as soon as the human body begins to develop antigens to it. An accident permits the virus to escape from the underground laboratory in which it was developed, and the virus quickly kills about 99% of the population of the earth. Everyone who contracts the disease dies; the only survivors are a few people who are mysteriously immune. But if the disaster in *The Stand* is bigger than the disasters in Steve King's earlier novels, it is also (paradoxically) less important. The earlier novels climaxed in disasters; this one begins with a disaster. In the earlier novels the disaster issued in some way from the actions of the central characters; but in *The Stand*, while all of humanity is collectively responsible (in that we must all share responsibility for our government's mad search for new ways of destroying life), the principal characters are no more responsible than anyone else. The emphasis thus shifts away from the causes of disaster to the ways people cope with it. There are far more survivors in *The Stand* than in any of the previous books; they are also, for the most part, far more attractive people than any of the characters in the previous books, so that we are glad they have survived; and the principal emphasis falls, not on the ways in which they have botched up the world, but rather on their fumbling attempts to put the world back together after the disaster. In all of these respects *The Stand* is, despite the magnitude of the disaster it describes, a much more positive book than any of its predecessors. It is primarily about, not human destructiveness (although some of the characters are viciously destructive), but human creativity. And the dominant mood is, not despair, but hope.

The primary subject of *The Stand* is the

nature of human society itself. As we watch the survivors of the "superflu" attempt to put the world back together, the essential dynamics of human society become apparent to us. One of the strengths of Steve King's writing is his awareness of the fact that every human group gains its cohesiveness and preserves its self-esteem by defining other groups or individuals as inferior. *Carrie*, for example, is about the terrible revenge that one such pariah takes on those who have categorized her as dowdy and stupid. In *The Stand* too we meet some characters who have been told that they are inherently unworthy of love, and who feel toward the ordinary, bumbling people around them a blistering hatred. The most interesting such character in *The Stand* is Harold Lauder, a fat, precocious, high school boy. Harold's family and the people of his home town (Ogunquit, Maine) look upon him sometimes with pity, but usually with contempt. And he has therefore decided to become a writer, with the half-conscious intention of using his pen to avenge himself upon her persecutors. Before the book is over, Harold's injured ego will lead him to a monstrous act of revenge upon people who have mistreated him in no way whatsoever. But while we detest Harold, we also feel that his malignity is not motiveless, that his behavior is in some way the inevitable consequence of a fatal flaw in society itself. One of Harold's fellow survivors, Glen Bateman, a former sociology professor, succinctly sums up this view of human society as follows:

Show me a man or woman alone and I'll show you a saint. Give me two and they'll fall in love. Give me three and they'll invent that charming thing we call "society." Give me four and they'll build a pyramid. Give me five and they'll make one an outcast. Give me six and they'll re-invent prejudice. Give me seven and in seven years they'll re-invent warfare. Man may have been made in the image of God, but human society was made in the

image of His opposite number, and is always trying to get back home.

Glen Bateman's view of human society is bleak indeed; but as we watch the story of Harold Lauder unfold, we cannot escape the conclusion that Bateman is at least half-right.

While *The Stand* reveals to us the fatal flaw in society, however, the book also consistently suggests that a willingness to live within society is essential to a full realization of our humanity. The book is full of positive images of human community, which counter-balance Glen Bateman's cynicism and Harold Lauder's conviction that everyone is out to "get" him. For Harold, as Sartre says, "Hell is other people." But for most of the survivors, only other people — specifically, only the memory of the human capacity for love and trust — makes survival either possible or desirable. Larry Underwood, another major character who was before the flu struck an egoistic rock singer, builds his new life on the memory of the loyalty which his mother and the members of his rock group had preserved toward him, despite behavior on his part that was destructive to himself and to others. These memories impel Larry to transform himself into a man capable of loyalty and self-sacrifice. Fran, the principal female character, loved her father and was loved by him, and this prior experience of love makes it possible for her to build a family in the post-flu world. Her husband, Stu Redman, is the most fully developed male character in the book. He takes the lead in the re-establishment of human society after the disaster, and he does so because he cannot forget the joys of ordinary human existence:

The thoughts that came wanted to be wholly good. Going hunting at dawn, bundled up in quilted jackets and Day-Glo orange vests. Poker games at Ralph Hodges' house and Willy Craddock always complaining about how he was four dollars

add that I'm always curious to see what happens when people have to face the unnatural and the irrational. And that, at least, is becoming a valid part of the American experience. Or maybe it was always there and we're only just beginning to come to grips with it.

How about science fiction — or is that a dead end, a genre best left to the weirdos? Sure, science fiction has got all kinds of future; there will always be those people around who feel outcast enough and alien enough to need it, as well as those people who enjoy vectoring possible futures. I don't read very much of it anymore myself, because I think it's grown quite cold in the last ten years or so. Harlan Ellison is still doing it with some sense of wit and moral commitment, but too much of the other stuff seems to be negative coefficients, the logarithms of warp-speed technology, and alien sociology. The last really good things I read in the field were John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* and Harry Harrison's *Make Room! Make Room!* Both of them overpopulation stories.

How about poetry — do you read very much of it? Yes, I read quite a lot of poetry — mostly the stuff my wife, Tabby, brings home. So I get a selection of mostly women poets (it was Tabby who showed me an utterly hilarious long poem called "Fast-Speaking Woman," but I can't remember the author's name), with something new and strange thrown in occasionally. I confess a liking for Richard Wilbur, T. S. Eliot, and Sylvia Plath (particularly a poem called, I think, *Daddy*, which is one of the most chilling things I've ever read). Wallace Stevens makes me uneasy but I like him too, particularly a funny poem called *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*. I read poetry because the best of it is gorgeous and

potent and most of all, high-powered. Spoken language is like driving a Volkswagen; prose is like your standard mid-sized car — you got your Fords, like Agatha Christie, your Buick Regals like that asshole Updike who does do something decent every once in awhile, then you got your Cadillacs like Thomas Williams. But a good poem is like some big mean Camaro with a 442 engine and an air-spoiler on the front, it goes fast and it can scare the shit out of you, but it's also fun. That's why I read poetry, when I do. Mostly for cheap thrills.

In terms of your own writing habits — do you follow any particular procedure? My writing pattern never varies more than a hair from day to day. I enter my study with a glass of water. I dump my ashtray. I smoke four cigarettes. I do fifteen hundred words or so, and then I leave. Fifteen hundred words doesn't sound like all that much, but since I usually only take about twenty days off in the course of a year, I average about 500,000 words a year. That's not counting letters and silly stuff.

Do you think Maine offers any stimulation to writers? I have no idea if Maine would offer good stimulation for most writers, but it's worked well for an awful lot of them — Longfellow, E. A. Robinson, Kenneth Roberts, etc., etc. Anyhow, I think most writers will do their thing eventually no matter where they are.

But there is such a thing as the "Maine writer." Yes, I think there is such an animal as a Maine writer; Longfellow, Kenneth Roberts, and most certainly Robinson. And I think of myself as a Maine writer, even though not everything I've done has been set here.

in the game, even if he was twenty ahead . . . They had been goddam good times. Not what your sophisticates with their nightclubs and their fancy restaurants and their museums would think of as good times, maybe, but good times just the same. He thought about those things, went over them and over them, the way an old recluse will lay out hand after hand of solitaire. Mostly he wanted to hear other human voices, get to know someone, be able to turn to someone and say, Did you see that? when something happened like the meteor shower he had watched the other night.

The simple satisfaction of being with other people — this, to Stu Redman, is what life is all about. And as we read *The Stand*, we feel more and more strongly that Glen Bateman is at best only half-right — that the glue of human society is not only our impulse to feel superior to the outcasts, but also our elemental need for one another.

The power of *The Stand* inheres (for me at least) primarily in its carefully maintained dual perspective on the nature of society. In virtually every episode, we can see both the creative and destructive tendencies in society at work. A case in point is the story of Nick Andros, in my judgment the most interesting of the central characters. Nick is a deaf-mute; he is also a homeless orphan; and when we first meet him he is being assaulted by four savage young men, who very nearly beat him to death. Nick clearly has at least as much reason to hate the world as does Harold Lauder. Yet again and again in the course of his life Nick has met people who, freely and with no expectation of thanks, have offered him kindness and love. Abandoned at age 11 in a church orphanage, rigid with fear and hate, virtually autistic, he one day found himself confronted by a man named Rudy, who broke through his hostility and taught him to read and write. After he is beaten by the four young men, he wakes up in the

county jail — and over the next few days the sheriff and his wife adopt Nick as their surrogate son. So it goes — the world is full of senseless hate, but it is also full of gratuitous love. To which of these, to love or to hate, will we give our lives? Nick, battered by the world, remains capable of love, Harold Lauder, psychologically lacerated by his own pride but physically unscarred, surrenders himself to hate. Clearly, it is not "fate" that decides. Rather Nick and Harold choose love and hate respectively; and it is such choices which determine whether the creative or the destructive potentials within society will prevail.

As the superflu destroys the institutional structures that give order to our lives, the destructive and the creative potentialities of society become polarized around two figures: Randall Flagg, the incarnation of hate; and Mother Abigail, who draws to herself all those who hunger for the community of love. These two great archetypal figures manifest themselves, appropriately, within the dreams of the survivors; and these dreams guide the survivors toward Boulder, Colorado, and toward Las Vegas, Nevada, the capitals respectively of Mother Abigail's Community of Love and Randall Flagg's Community of Hate. Virtually all the survivors seem to feel some pull toward both places; but each survivor must (and does) ultimately opt for one or another. Once the battle lines are drawn, a struggle ensues between the two communities — on the cosmic level, between good and evil. In this struggle, good is love, order, and life itself. The defenders of the good are not heroic figures; they are ordinary human beings who, like God on the last day of creation, have looked at the world and seen that it is good. Conversely, the enemy they must confront — an enemy that dwells not only in Las Vegas but in the heart of each good character, even Mother Abigail herself — is despair, the will to nothingness which gnaws on itself until it creates the void that it hungers for. In the last half of *The Stand*, the forces of creation and renewal come together and prepare for the

Would you care to name some of your favorite contemporary writers? Favorite contemporary authors: Tom Williams, Peter Straub, Bob Dylan, Robert Stone, John Farris, Bruce Springsteen, Ross MacDonald, Beryl Bainbridge, Evan Hunter, Joan Didion.

Of all your novels — which are you most satisfied with? My own favorite is this new one, *The Stand*. It's probably too big, but it seems to hang together, at least to me. Maybe I only like it because it finally got done. I also think there will always be a warm spot in my heart for *Salem's Lot*, which has always seemed to me to be the most loving.

What particular aspect of the craft of writing gives you the most trouble? I think that pace and point of view are the most difficult areas of writing for me, and the areas where I still have the most to learn. It may be that every author has to relearn these things with each new book, adding a tiny increment with each one until he begins to degenerate as a writer. Also, I have never been much of a stylist, but I have always felt that style is a terribly overrated ingredient of fiction — it is certainly the one most young writers stumble over the hardest.

Any advice for beginning writers? My advice to beginning writers is simply to write a lot and read everything, even matchbook covers. To read good stuff, of course, but not to be afraid of reading crap and writing it. The principle is not much different than that of toilet training: you can't learn how to do it until you've pissed your drawers for awhile. Doing it wrong is all the more incentive for getting it right the next time . . . but most of all, don't just stand there;

write something. If you feel you don't have anything to write about, write about how it feels not to have anything to write about.

Many writers complain about the lack of opportunities. They say there should be more government grants. Some even pay to have their work published. Any comment? Government grants for writers irritate the hell out of me, but I guess they're okay. If you're a creep. Most little magazines are a license to practice unbridled self-indulgence; the fact that they produce the good work they occasionally do is a never-ending source of amazement to me, since most of them arise from the non-writer's need to participate in the bizarre rite of pseudo-literary circle-jerk and with absolutely no regard for any poor reader out there who hoped to read something he could understand and enjoy. People who resort to vanity publishers are mostly ill-informed marks who have succumbed to a snake-oil salesman's pitch to sell him the Brooklyn Bridge in book form.

Which of the preceding questions irritated you the most? None of these questions irritated me. It was nice to answer a series of questions one of which was not "Where do you get your ideas" or "When do you plan to write a serious novel?"

As a successful writer, how do you feel about "creative writing"? How do I feel about creative writing as a writer? That would take another four pages. Suffice it to say at this point that my thoughts on the subject are complex, contradictory, and terribly confused.

G. C.

great struggle with evil. That good should triumph is inevitable; for if evil is a will to nothingness then it will sooner or later destroy itself. Nevertheless, good must also, by its very nature, struggle against evil, and become less good in the process. Steve King's description of this cosmic struggle is, therefore, not without suspense.

The vast fable that Steve King has here created draws on at least three literary traditions. The first of these is the tradition of apocalyptic science fiction. George Stewart's classic *Earth Abides* and Philip Dick's and Roger Zelazny's recent *Deus Irae* are some examples of science fiction works which ask the same question that *The Stand* asks: What will we do on the day after the world (that is, the world as we know it) ends? A second major influence on *The Stand* is the tradition of "alternative world" fiction, especially Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Like Tolkien, King offers an epic struggle between good and evil. Like Tolkien too, he conceives of good and evil in metaphysical terms: good is Being itself, this ordinary world in all its squalor and glory, while evil is Nothingness, the black hole that Frodo sees when he looks into Sauron's eye. But King also draws upon a third literary tradition: the tradition of realistic fiction. This type of fiction seeks to describe for us, through an accumulation of specific details, the lives of ordinary people. The people that Steve King here offers us are such ordinary people, and he describes their lives in enough detail so that we can smell the diaper soaking in the toilet bowl and taste the re-heated coffee in the styrofoam cup. The characters in *The Stand* are heroic men and women summoned (by God? by fate?) to put the world back together after the apocalypse; and they also find themselves, willingly or not, participants in a struggle between good and evil. But at the same time they remain ordinary people, not so different from the woman whom you meet at the laundromat or the man who washes your windshields at the corner gas-station. They are mixed creatures: they get angry at their boy-

friends and they do stupid and cruel things to one another. And they are heroic not despite but because of their ordinariness.

The Stand is clearly an enormously ambitious novel. Apocalyptic novels and alternative world novels and realistic novels are all common enough. However, a novel that aspires to be all three simultaneously is unique. But does Steve King pull it off? Does he successfully combine these disparate literary modes? My answer is an unqualified yes. As we read this book, we perceive in Stuart Redman an ordinary man summoned to a heroic destiny; and both his ordinariness and his heroism are real to us. Tolkien's Frodo is one of the great characters of modern fiction; but a Frodo who plays poker down at the gas-station with his gang of good ol' boys and who loves and fights with a sometimes kind and sometimes bitchy woman is a more complex and to me a more interesting character. The same is true of the "bad guys" in Tolkien's work and in *The Stand*. Sauron and even Saruman are characters that we love to hate; we don't waste a moment's sympathy on them. But we can feel empathy, even sympathy for characters like Harold Lauder, even while we detest them. *The Stand* demands a complex response from us; and it deserves such a response, for it has something important to say to us about human society and about our own society in particular. My only complaint is that I wish the book (which is already 823 pages long) were two hundred pages longer. I would like to know more about some of the good characters. And I would also like to know more about how Randall Flagg puts together his Community of Hate in Las Vegas. (But evil is hard to write about — Tolkien tells us virtually nothing about life in Mordor.) This minor complaint aside, however, *The Stand* seems to me a magnificent book — undoubtedly Steve King's best book to date, and a book that deserves to be not only read but re-read.

Burton Hatlen

The Scare of the Black Hundreds

Down the snow-filled path we go, Kate and I, along the hedge, under the ancient apple tree, its bark clinging to it like lava, into the shed of the Lepman's old farmhouse. We balance our house gifts in mittened hands, stamping our feet and calling.

The Lepmans have heard us. The back door flies open and out they come, exclaiming, warm, enveloping. Bearhugs and kisses all round.

"For you," Kate gives Emily the loaves of bread she'd baked this morning. "You like the oatmeal and I tried a pumpkin, too."

"For you," I press a jar of chutney into Mike's big, strong hands. Sculptor's hands but why idle? We had noticed the studio shut tight, ghostly shrouds over the sculpture stands, when we came through the icy garden.

"Ah, see, Emily!" says Mike. "How they spoil us. Come in! Come in!"

Emily bustles Kate up the steps and through the door. "The North wind doth blow! More snow promised."

"And what shall poor Robin do?" asks Kate, down the hall.

Mike stays behind to get a tote-bag of fire wood from the prudent stack along the wall. My offer to help is bluntly refused. Sensitivity of eighty years speaking? Or pride of accomplishment? I cut it; I split it; I shall carry it.

"I thought we'd find you in your studio. Too cold?"

"Huh! It used to be 27° below in Lithuania. I have a good stove. Lots of wood." He glances at me and then evasively out the windows. When he continues it is carefully, as though on

unfamiliar ground. "No, it's that it seems too far away — that studio. Oh, not in distance. I like a tramp to the village, even. But it's too isolated. Too unprotected, out there in winter.

Again he looks at me, this time for understanding. "When you get older you live more in your past."

"In Lithuania, in Zidikai? But the stories you've told me made it sound great. A veritable idyll."

Mike picks up his bag, laughing ironically. "Those were summer memories. Winter ones are not so good."

We go into the heat of the old, converted iron cookstove and drinks in front of the living room fireplace. The air is fragrant with the odor of roasting turkey, which Emily says was supposed to be a goose, but where can one get a goose in Maine?

"Over by Richmond, that's where. I see them in the dooryards when I go to visit the blacksmith." Mike laughs. "The little Russians. They have 'em."

"Come, now. You wouldn't have your wife go amongst the enemy to get something for an old Lithuanian like you?" I say teasing.

"When I was a kid, back in Lithuania, in Zidikai, we used geese for everything. My mother used to partition off part of the verandah and put eight geese in this pen to fatten them up for eating. Roast goose with fruit, cherries, or plums. My God! How good!"

He hands us our drinks, continuing. "Everything we needed — geese, fruit, vegetables. We grew everything, all right there in our garden behind the house."

"Intensive farming. The latest, way back then."

"You bet! We had to scratch to get along. No Jews could own property except in the village, you know. The surrounding farmland was strictly for the Lithuanian peasants, by Russian law. We were Jews, they were Catholics, but we got along. Mostly."

Emily, reappearing from the kitchen where she'd been ministering to the turkey, pointed to the large window facing the bay. Big soft flakes swirled through the orchard branches and against the pane.

"Someone heard you," she says. "You may not have a goose, but you're getting the feathers."

We all look at each other in the happy intimacy of old friends, no words needed.

"Cheers," I say, and we drink

As I watched Mike's square back, now at the window, as I saw the fire reflected on the bottles and glasses on the coffee-table, I felt a little of Mike's family house of eighty years ago envelop us. Here we were, in a comfortable nest, safe against the predator. Drawbridge up, portcullis down.

I felt a little of the warm snugness of that yesterday kitchen in Lithuania, Mike had described to me. The huge oven had a hollow wall that stretched up to the roof, its flue warming the rooms, and along it were benches and shelves, good to snuggle up to in the six months of below-zero winter. A good place for young Micah to take one of the comforters and make up a bed. There, with his black and white cat, Lili, in his arms, it was a good place to sleep. But not to dream.

Better not to dream in Zidikai. For alarm bells toll and hoof-beats sound for Jew and Catholic alike, in winter dreams.

When I look at Mike as he is now, burly, sturdy, enduring; when his brown eyes

smile warmly as he hands me my drink; I think of the horror hidden behind his eyes; I think of the nightmares of Micah and am awe-struck. To have been through Armageddon and to reappear with such grace and charm, such goodness, makes me ashamed of my easy life touched only by the usual bites of time and stabs of fate, wrong choices rather well-balanced by lucky ones. While right there, just the thickness of a thought away, lies such a reservoir of memory — deep, dark, slippery. One unconscious step and you may plunge to the bottom.

This time, Mike notices my boots, rather fancy ones Kate gave me for Christmas. "Ah," he says. "Reindeer hide. A rich man."

"Look at those red laces," Emily laughs. "It's the Russian Ballet."

"Petrushka?" asks Kate

"No, no. This is Lapland." Mike throws a log of applewood on the fire and stands before it, soaking up heat before he sits down in the big green wing chair.

"My grandfather was a fur dealer, Jacob Gurewitz, my mother's father. He used to go to Lapland and buy furs. Then he'd leave the Lapps and come back to us and sell the pelts to a wholesaler. A rich man."

"When he'd return from one of his trips, he looked very imposing. Not too tall, but big, with a full, gray beard. Big fur mittens, Persian lamb hat and boots like yours."

"Like Father Christmas."

"Or St. Nicholas?"

"How about the old Poland Springs gin bottle?"

Mike acknowledged our flippancy, but an old memory was stirring and, like a prophet possessed, he was forced to speak. To cleanse himself? So that he might return to the studio?

Our memories are all computers. A wheel turns, gears grind, and out comes an answer. What has been fed in must come out, no matter how painful. But why does telling only lessen the pain until the next time? Only until the wheel turns again?

"We had a synagogue in Zidikai (it was right behind our house), but Lithuania is largely Roman Catholic so, of course, we had a big church for all the peasants. It was at the end of the one street in the village, beyond the cemetery. This church had two bells, a small one to ring daily to call people to mass, and a big bell called the Gevald bell that was rung only for something important like Christmas, or Easter, or in time of danger. Except for holidays, this bell only rang three times while I was living in Zidikai."

"I remember the first time I heard the Gevald bell was about this season of the year, just after Christmas. Oh, it was cold! Sometimes 27° below for days. I had stayed out skating with Edvardos and the other boys and it was dark as I turned in at our gate. The icy road was empty and out of all the houses along it shone yellow lamp-light. At the end of the road, behind the black trees in the cemetery, a red sunset shone sullenly. It looked so familiar, so safe."

"Then I walked into our kitchen."



Nancy McGuire

"At the table sat Grandpa Jacob, his frozen beard dripping into a basin my mother had set out for him. His pack was on the floor and his bearskin mittens were tossed on top of it. He still wore his fur cap, but had opened his overcoat. My sisters, Ada and Debbie, were crying and my mother, Sara, was standing with one hand on the back of Grandpa's chair. Her face was white and her other hand was held to her lips. No one spoke to me. I felt my knees begin to tremble."

"Mama. What is it? I asked."

"She ran to me and hugged me to her, not speaking."

"One of my sisters cried out something about the Black Hundreds and I knew what this scene in the kitchen meant."

"Mama said, 'Micah, you must not be afraid!'"

"Not be afraid! And the Black Hundreds were on their way! Grandpa Jacob, on his way to our house, had passed through a village not thirty miles distance where they'd been just the night before. Blood on the snow. Some houses in smoking ruins. The villagers dazed and despairing. Some had been beaten. One old man had been slashed by a saber. Men, women, children; no one was safe."

Mike's voice became a little softer

"We all know the Black Hundreds. What it would mean if they visited. They were the Czar's Cossacks that patrolled the borders. Unquestioned. Answerable to no one. They would sweep in on horseback and a village would be at their mercy. The country people, the peasants, feared and hated them, too, but there was more to be gained in looting a village. More chance at money, you understand? Easier to operate with houses closer together. Up one side and down the other! So they didn't bother with farms very often. But village or country, Jew or peasant, none of us were allowed to have a gun by Russian law so, if it was necessary to kill us to get what they wanted, it was easy. And no questions asked by the Russian authorities."

Mike spoke lightly now, as we do sometimes when we don't trust ourselves with a heavy emotion.

"Don't be afraid! My worst nightmare — worse than being turned in by a neighbor — worse than being beaten for nothing at school — was just on the other side of the forest. And I'm not to worry. My God! I still do." Mike raised his glass. "Well, a belated Merry Christmas!"

"Tis the season," said Emily, saluting us.

"No, Mike. Tell us the rest." Kate watched him intently.

"Yes, what happened? Hit us with it." I knew he wasn't through.

Mike smiled grimly and shrugged. "Everything. Nothing. But I will never forget it."

"We got through the rest of the evening somehow. Mama liked good Chinese mandarin tea, which was strictly contraband, and Grandpa Jacob had not forgotten to smuggle some across the border for her. She had a tea-caddy with a false bottom and kept the Chinese tea hidden with the ordinary tea we were allowed. No one ever ques-

tioned us, but we always knew they could. Always this was a part of our life. That no one *did* but could. Mama never made mandarin tea for an outsider in our house. There were neighbors who would like to turn a Jew in to the authorities. It was something we learned to live with. For the most part, everything fine. Good people mostly. But in a quarrel, tempers high, say a disagreement over a fee. Then suddenly you're a Jew again, not a neighbor."

"One woman, was like that. Named Rita Jurkunas, lived across the street. We never trusted her. Her husband died and she turned queer. Almost as though she blamed us for still being together and happy. As though she hated Mama for having a husband. It didn't stop her from dropping in for a mug of tea, you bet. And always a bad mouth and always snooping about. Mama lived in dread of Rita ever getting hold of the tea caddy."

"We all had a mug of the good stuff though, that night of the Black Hundreds. Then Papa came home and made up the fire in the stove and we all went to bed in our clothes, with outside clothes laid ready. He and Grandpa hid the bundle of furs under the hay out in the stable and then they came in and sat up by the fire waiting. I tried to stay awake, too, but I finally dozed off under my comforter on the stove."

"In the middle of the night, I was dreaming of hoof-beats on the frozen snow when the Gevald bell rang, solemn, deep, heavy. Someone had run to the church and was ringing the great bell."

"When we rushed out into the icy air, Zidikai looked like Fair Day. The Inn had thrown open its doors, lamplight streamed out in the night. Everywhere people were stumbling along through the snow with bundles, shouting, weeping, praying. Grandpa carried the Tora wrapped in his woolen *talith* but Papa gave the rest of us no time to take anything. We hurried between the peasant carts toward the church — our Jewish friends, our Catholic neighbors, all abandoning Zidikai in terror. All pushing toward the end of the village and what we hoped would be the sanctuary of the church."

Inference

*two flat tires on the way to work,
a '62 Fairlane with no springs.*

*cold coffee, and now you've smashed
your elbow,
blam!, on the tailgate of Heinie
Mueller's truck.*

*do ya say, bunky, your silver lining
looks close up like greasy tin foil?*

*by the way, Maggie the barmaid called,
says she needs to talk about
last Saturday.*

David Adams

"Some felt the Cossacks would only laugh at the concept of sanctuary, and ran to hide in the cemetery, behind the headstones, and crosses, and shrubbery in the snow. One of these was Rita Jurkunas, with her three little children, which she'd snatched up and wrapped in a big sheet. Somehow she'd fled with them to the cemetery. We passed her struggling along the frozen road but she must have changed her mind, for soon after we reached the church, there she was pushing through the door."

"Suddenly, Rita began to scream hysterically. One of her children, the youngest one, was missing. She had dropped it in the cemetery when she had tried to hide there. Like a second birth, it was. Papa snatched up a lantern we had brought with us and, giving the two other children to Mama to tend, he and Rita started back to the dark cemetery."

"It was snowing harder now and Rita's footprints in the cemetery were almost obliterated. In her distress, she had no clear idea of where she'd been and they searched frantically among the graves. At last they heard a thin wailing behind a clump of bushes and almost at the same time, from the other end of the village came the sound of horses' hoof-beats, hollow on the frozen ground. There was no chance to get out of the cemetery and back to the church without appearing in black silhouette on the abandoned street."

"Rita scooped up her baby, who was so insulated by his wrappings that he was unhurt and, snatching off her *baschlik* she wrapped him in this, too. Mercifully, he stopped crying, and she and Papa, after he blew out his lantern, crouched in the dark behind a headstone."

"The Gevald bell had stopped ringing and they could hear the faint sound of chanting from the church. Father Zigmandas was leading his flock in the Rosary."

"The sound of the Cossacks came closer and Papa said they rode by like a black cloud. He could hear their voices and the jingle of the harnesses."

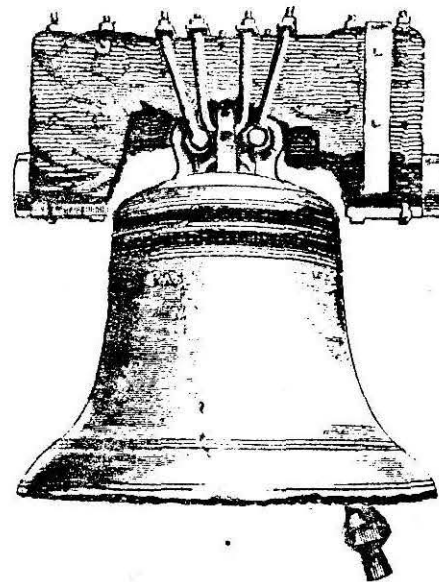
Mike spread his hands and frowned at us.

"And that was all. The prayers in the Church turned to a hymn of Thanksgiving. The Black Hundreds rode in one end of the village and out the other. We were spared. No one ever knew why."

Mike looked out the window across the white fields at the Maine pine and oak, spruce and maple so similar to the Lithuanian landscape of his childhood. His face seemed withdrawn, his eyes puzzled. I knew he could never forget the dark days in Zidikai.

He turned, smiling, and said to us. "Come, let's eat our turkey. Better to leave the Russian geese in Richmond."

Robert McGuire



At the Dairy Bar on Route 1 During a Late June Thunderstorm

*We're waiting for quick service,
someone's hand reaching across
the tiny window with a basket
of fast food to go.*

*Inside, the electric fan
is circling against humidity.*

*Skies crack; the lingering sizzle
of grease on my fingertips.
The blue evening heat
is like pain.*

*Above us, insects
are surrendering to the heat,
the cage wires snapping
like tongues of lizards
curling flame.*

*Nothing survives. It traps
small things whole, and
spits back what it can't digest,
satin wings
and six thin legs.*

*The dust on the county road
is settling into rain.*

Kathleen Lignell

Renovation

Married four years and very successful, Richard (law) and Sally (women's fashions) were ready for renovation. So when they spotted the sign "Glotz, Common Laborer," they pulled into the drive.

"We seek to achieve a home that is truly ours, that reflects our personalities yet preserves, extends and enhances the architectural heritage of our civilization," Sally explained to Glotz who resembled a giant toad. "But we," said Richard, "know history. We know that attempts to improve and rebuild must often be preceded by an epoch of disorder. All societies contain destructive forces: often these forces must be unleashed before true change can occur. You, Glotz, would appear to be such a force. So what do you charge? A buck and a half an hour? Well fair enough, I think we can come to terms."

Glotz nodded, dull ripples of mottled flesh bulging under his chin, and Richard said: "We're expanding the kitchen area, relocating the dining area and enlarging the family area though we have no family. The extended family scarcely exists in this country nowadays, you may not know that being a common laborer, it's not your fault that I'm a professional and you're a toad, I mean laborer, I'm sure it's a quirk of the social system. Your own home here is standardized, a horror really, but no matter, all we need you for is wrecking. Pepsi Lane number 235, lots of ripping and bashing. So what do you say?"

Glotz sneered and wiped his nose on the back of his arm. Then, nostrils flared, he sucked, he spit on the floor.

Sally gagged, her spoon clattering into her fruit. "A... a ride," she said.

"On the floor. He spit right on the floor," Sally said as they rode.

Richard shrugged. "He meant nothing by it, it's just his way. And it all comes up with the dust."

Sally shuddered. "I'm glad he came today. I want to get this over with. This tearing part is so... unstructured."

"I hate it too," said Richard. "Order is preserved by law. Neat clean trim polished pressed."

"He had diagrams," Sally said with a worried frown. "A sheaf of plans. You don't suppose —"

"He wouldn't dare. No, even destruction requires method, sequence, step by step, that's all it is."

"No sense of wonder," Sally said, "no sense of style. Just circuses and bread — and beer," and she shuddered again.

The house had a very open feeling when they got back. "I say there, it is chill!" Richard said as the sun spun past its zenith, started down. Sally had gone upstairs and was under quilts, teeth clicking, body quivering. "Your kind doesn't feel the cold so much I guess but my wife has neurons. Fortified with drink? That how you keep warm?" Glotz farted and burped and kept on working.

Glotz blinked his heavy-lidded eyes and flexed his warty fingers. "You're on," he croaked through thick wide lips.

That very Saturday Glotz bashed and ripped.

"Promptness," Richard said. "Good sign. It shows concern, a felling for the rights and hopes of others though by looking at the guy you'd never guess it possible. It's hard to get labor to come on time these days, hard to get it to do your unquestioned bidding as in days past, grandparental extended family days full of Irish, Italians, Blacks, Chinese. I like this Glotz."

"We need a strong laboring class," Sally said, "to regain our greatness as a nation, and Glotz may be a ray of hope, he certainly seems to love it." But the noise was grating on her nerves. "It's my college-educated neural structure," she explained. "This disharmony doesn't mesh with my inner arrangements. So what do you say we clear out of this mess and go for a little ride?"

They went for a spin through the affluent hills, ate fatted flesh and caught a flick. "I guess he's bashed the breakfast nook," said Richard driving home. "Maybe even the dining nook."

"Nooks are things of the past," Sally said, "I'll be happy to see them go. I hope he's bashed the family nook."

"I doubt if he had the time," Richard said. "They quit on the dot of five, their kind."

"Lumpy person this Glotz," Sally said.

"You've let flies in, man. Not that it's hurt things, how could it hurt anything in all this mess, it's just that — well, I guess you need a certain sensitivity to understand, an *aesthetic* sense. After all, it is Sunday, and — don't you find their buzzing tedious? I take it you don't."

Glotz stopped for a second, turned; a shocking fat lump of tongue protruded from his lips then disappeared. He set to work again.

"Did you stick your tongue — ?" Richard spluttered. "Did you actually stick — ?"

Glotz turned again, abruptly this time, glaring, and Richard swallowed. "Get on with your business," he said with a wave of his hand. "And... take care of these flies!"

Glotz pounded after dark. Richard, dressed for restaurant, shouted, "You're certainly well suited for your job. Did you take an aptitude test? Read the works of Ghengis Khan? Atilla? Well we wanted to bring the outdoors indoors and you've certainly pulled it off, but it may be a bit extreme. My god it's cold! And will it... express our personalities?"

Glotz stopped his ripping, wrecking bar held high. "What about my personality?" he asked with narrowed eyes.

"I've been thinking about that myself," said Richard, "and you really ought to see somebody. I mean why go through life unhappy and unfulfilled? Well look, we're eating out, so call it quits. And while this neighborhood is safe, as such things go, we don't want to tempt

"He gives me bumps, makes me feel like a dirty princess. Those toady eyes, that slimy tongue."

"Have his looks been shaped by unremitting toil?" Richard mused. "If he'd specialized in orthodontia would his eyes bulge less?"

"It's neural quality and structure," Sally said. "His thick dense scaly neurons falling into the T-formation. Unlike mine which are crystal snowflakes and yours which are leather and chrome. The hope lies with the children."

"Yes. But scaly neurons give us ticket takers, ushers, busboys, carhops," Richard said. "The Glotz-like men are valuable, they have their nook. You can see right away that he's only fit for tearing, nothing skilled, the subtleties escape him. Soon his day will pass and we'll summon the men of vision."

"Of higher neural structure."

"Wasn't it trusting and liberal of us to leave him a key and tell him to lock the place up when he's through?"

The lights were still on when they drove up the drive. "That's the trouble," Richard said, "you have to tell them everything like children, turn out the lights and he's left his truck!"

Shockingly the door was unlocked and they soon saw why! Glotz was still at work, at 10:49 PM. He looked fresh as a mint and his eyes gleamed hard. And wow had he ripped, all nooks were gone and two partitions, too.

the fates if you know what I mean and it's freezing, so wrap the place in plastic or something, will you?"

Glotz snorted, threw his wrecking bar and hammer on the floor and disappeared across the wide black lawn.

"For a toad he's such a prima donna," Sally said.

Richard, coat on, drinking coffee, roamed the patio. Glotz's noise had woken him at five. Sally had left for work early, but he'd hung around.

Sipping thoughtfully he said, "You might like to know why I'm not at my office yet, Glotz." Inside, sheetrock went crashing to the floor. "It's because I set my own hours. Yes, you do too, but look at the hours you set! Here are mine: 10-12, 2-4. Okay, lunch consultations, evening meetings, days in court, phone calls and weekend crises you can't really count the hours but you get the idea. My god, man, are you numb all over? Just an undershirt in cold like this?" Glotz polished off the wall with a mighty swipe; his gnarled biceps bulged.

"I have powerful toes, Glotz," Richard said, "extremely powerful. I was known for my powerful toes in my toe wrestling college days. I was born with mighty toes, but lord those massive thumbs of yours! Heredity or environment, man, do you have any baby photos at home that might give us a clue?" He shook his head. "Evolution sure is strange. The general march is forward but every so often a reversal occurs. Piano is out of the question with fingers like those no matter how good the instruction. And any form of intellec-

"Well super, Glotz," Richard said, "but you better call it a day. Thanks a lot, where's the key? we'll see you Monday."

Glotz steamed and snorted and fished up the key. He flipped it to Richard, BASH socked a hole in the ceiling, and left.

Glotz was there in the morning at six a.m. RIP BASH. Richard in his robe said, "Sunday, Glotz, who let you in? Oh I see... we have no kitchen window, no wonder it's cool. Well it's this way, man, we try to have a leisurely breakfast Sundays, more or less a brunch, we feel we're entitled to it after slaving all week. Studies show that mental work is far more demanding than physical work though you may not agree, you're entitled to your opinion no matter how low your IQ. Overtime? Is that your game?" Glotz scowled and grunted and smashed away. His eyes: large dark and sparkling wet, moving quickly below low lids.

"I don't know what your kind appreciates," Richard said when the sun was up and the powder room was gone, "but we like to sit around on Sundays, read the fat paper and eat chilled fruit like this we're eating now with plaster dust. But this is too chilled, Glotz, you've got to close some of these holes, it's October. Construction is not your trade, I realize that, but any sort of shoddy makeshift think until the neural men — Just look at this fruit, it has frost on it, look." He ran and held the plate beneath unblinking toady eyes. "Want a taste? You can eat off our dishes, it's okay with us, we're broadminded."

tual work like law. What do you know about law anyway — about adverse possession for instance?" Glotz snickered. "I'm serious, man. Perhaps you know it by its common name — squatter's rights."

Glotz's eyes lit up. He burst with laughter. "Squatter's rights!"

Richard scowled. "Oh how can one have a dialogue when you act so shallow? All right, I have to leave, but one more thing — does it hurt? You get cut now and then, you smash yourself, does it hurt? You fascinate me in a way," and as Glotz reached up to rip a beam, Richard struck a match and held it against the dark thick callused elbow. "Hungh!" Glotz roared.

"You do feel," Richard said. "The neuronal network, the spinal referents. It isn't like responding to a symphony, god knows, but it does show *something*."

When Richard came home that afternoon Glotz was gone and so was the whole south wall. There was a hole in the floor about ten feet square with a red wooden fence around it. Richard looked up Glotz in the yellow pages, called and the telephone rang and rang and rang then quit with a flat dull buzz. But Richard did not quit.

"Glotz you've misunderstood," he screamed at the mouthpiece, "there's building taking place! We hired you for destruction only, the only sort of thing your class or caste shall we say is capable of! The construction we wish to leave in the hands of skilled professionals like myself — an architect with years of schooling in the liberal

arts as well as his chosen field, a builder with English tools. It's raining, Glotz, some plastic is in order! Suppose we had a family in this family room, can you see what a fix we'd be in? Hello? Okay, don't answer, but — "

Glotz sprang from the fenced-off hole with a grin. Richard hung up the phone. "Do you understand what I'm getting at?" Glotz hopped around grabbing tools in his warty hands. He ripped and banged, pried a floorboard up. Richard's voice was drowned in the sound of the huge red reciprocal saw but he shouted, "Glotz! We're prime consumers, keep that in mind! We make the world go 'round no matter what your ilk might think. 'Ilk,' ha, let's see you define that word! I have thirty pairs of shoes, a hundred suits!"

Glotz showed no sign of having heard. "You're important too?" Richard said, "is that what you're thinking? Because you consume colossal amounts of beer? What is that to the whole economy? Think about it man — and know your place!"

Glotz buzzed with his saw, Richard chewed on his lip. "I have to review my portfolio now, I'll get back to you later. My portfolio, Glotz! Do you know what that is?" Glotz grinned once more. His teeth were ragged, sparkled in the light.

Sally came home, drank a fizz designed to free trapped stomach gas, ran up to the study and said: "The dining room is contiguous with the lawn area! It's hard to tell where one leaves off and the other begins! There's a pond in both that wasn't in our plans!"

Richard backed up slightly. "Well, it's impressive," he said, "I'll grant you that. I mean this tree, how ever did you do it, get it planted here? Walnut, huh?" and he ran his hand across it. "Could we peel away this bark and oil the grain?"

Glotz grabbed his reciprocal saw and pulled the trigger; the gleaming eight inch blade screamed with humming-

"Our society provides us with the means of halting this," said Richard, swiveling and standing up, "as I well know, being one of the vital cogs in those very clockworks."

"Thank god for our society!" said Sally, "and the nets of words it throws around brute strength!" She went into the bedroom, dived under the quilts.

"On the other hand you can't treat labor harshly," Richard mused going down the wobbly stairs. And approaching Glotz who still sawed away he yelled, "Your crudeness and your lack of speech are assets in your line of work, but in other lines like mine or let's say psychotherapy or undertaking, what a liability!" Glotz spit maliciously. His fly was open, hair sprouted from holes in his undershirt.

"Could you appear in court like that? I mean for an adoption case or a divorce? You don't analyze, man, you don't see. I hate to be critical, but — the role of preschool education in a hectic world, have you considered it? If not, you're that much less of a person."

Glotz growled. A swipe of saw, a grind of wood, a creaking groaning noise. A shriek from up above and Sally, in her bed, showed through the ceiling.

"This is it, Glotz!" Richard screamed. "This chaos, cold and dirt and now this sag with Sally! Halt! We expected an inconvenience, but — Do you hear me? Desist! If you think for one minute we're going to pay — "

bird speed. "And now," he cried, "to finish!"

It was always their house and nobody else's, nobody ever mistook it for anyone else's house, it swirled it soared it grew it groaned it shaped the timbre of their lives, natty nine-fingered Richard and sensitive limping Sally.

Christopher Fahy

Glotz shut off his saw and glared. "Get out!" he roared.

"Get out?" said Richard.

"Go! Get out!" Glotz said, eyes fire

"Well all right Glotz, we'll go," Richard said with upraised hands, "but when I return I expect to see *order*, man. 'Broom clean' is the term, I believe. All this crap carted off and the place swept up and cloaked in protective wrap. And get rid of that fence and junk — and the pools! If you don't comply I'll involve you in litigation, I mean it, I don't fool around!"

Glotz bared his teeth.

"All right, we're going, we're going, we'll hit the Virgin Islands for a bit, no sweat to get time off in my profession. I don't suppose your line of work provides such options but you probably go on benders which amounts to roughly the same thing. You want me to pick up some rum for you while I'm there?"

Three days on St. John, rum fun, warm skin, suntan, sleep late, brown drums. Whoosh back landing cab and home, the bright red white blue truck with GLOTZ WE DESTROY ANYTHING NO JOB TOO SMALL still parked in the drive.

"Can he destroy institutions?" Richard chuckled. "Demolish injustice? Shatter civilizations? My god, not finished yet? He started off with such a rush. Well that's the way it is with creatures of his type, they never learn to pace themselves. Where the hell's the front door?"

What's this moat for? We'll have mosquitoes!"

A tower built of scrap brown bottle glass and rusty cans, a turret more or less with globes 40 feet in the air and many-colored pennants flying from masts. The moat meandering into the hole where the door had been, forming ponds with lily pads below wet mud-caked walls. Moss-covered boulders submerged in the scum. The furniture cut up and reassembled in a most bizarre and random way, the washer sliced in half and welded to the range. Pipes wires in crisscross spiderweb through the line of sight. In the center of it all, a giant walnut tree.

Richard shook his head. "It isn't us!" he said to the lumpy Glotz who climbed green-skinned down a rope from the turret's top. "A man's home is his castle? Is that the level of your sensibility? You've made a grave mistake, this lichen on the ceiling, it's excess," and Glotz stood there with folds of skin in his eyes. "Alienation, Glotz? Is that it? Well sure, we're all alienated, I'm alienated, Sally's alienated but it doesn't excuse this incredible lapse of taste. It's a case of not knowing your limitations, we all have limitations and I'd think at your age — I mean you're not a *kid*. Oh your abysmal lack of ability to communicate! Is this the thanks we get for trusting you with our key? This wooden dragon or whatever, really! I'm afraid you were innately ill-equipped to undertake — "

"My masterpiece!" Glotz roared with wide red eyes.

Caught in the Fact

(Bowdoin College)

the library locked up I should have known
it's summertime and Saturday
but even so there's something strange
the campus trees too still no-one around
oh yes the Navy show the famed precision
flying team Blue Angels Day that's where

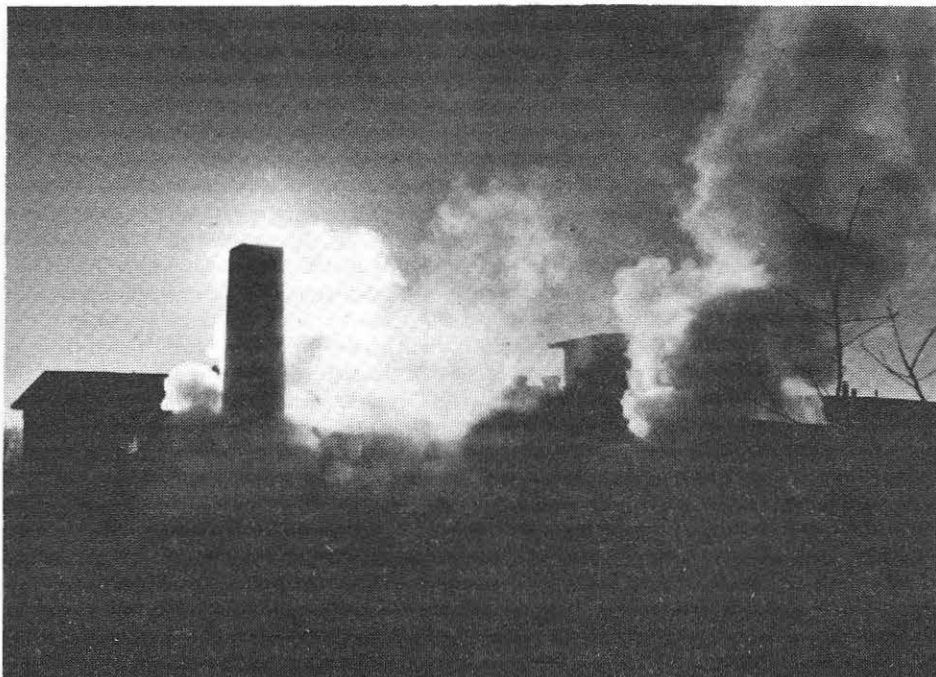
BAROOM

a wedge of jets right overhead
so low the leaves turn tail in waves
the buildings shimmy could collapse
myself as though just having caught
a wicked hook out on my feet
but overall
a sense of seeing the gauntlet thrown!

I stand between a half a million books
the best thought of three thousand years
and jets already far enough away
to look like jacks tossed on the blue
their sound a drone their pace a crawl

the pen is mightier than the sword?
whoever means to play that bet
will take on odds which call for him
to ante up his life for stakes and lose

Richard Aldridge



Phil Paratore

Leo Connellan's *Death In Lobster Land* (a review)

Eudora Welty, in her examination of *place* in the craft of writing, observes — “... one condition we may hazard about writing: of all the arts, it is the one least likely to cut the cord that binds it to its sources.” And it is this sense of *place* that is the strength of Leo Connellan's latest book; it is the unifying element of these poems; it is at the heart of these passionate statements. For *Death In Lobster Land* is poetry about sources — about people, about the land, about the Maine the poet loves. These poems are threaded with compassion, touched by lost passions, often laced with anger; they are poems of love and lust; they are poignant statements of that sense of loss that makes up our personal equations — Leo Connellan's equation. The immediacy of *place*, the places of Maine, the places of the heart, inform these poems with a harsh but lyric sensitivity.

... the
flippers of sea waves
slapping inches off the shore.
Scent of deer moss and fern
soured, all the silence shattered
by the abrupt dog bark of gun blast
rapping the knuckles of water
that let a stranger's boat lie bobbing
and the foreigner lobstering!

Take my virgin daughter if
I don't kick your teeth out,
take my worn out woman,
skinny on my provision,
but threaten our living, thief
in my salt flowing refrigerator —
I'll take your life.

Through his sense of place Connellan has given focus to his feelings about Maine, its people, his own coming-of-age here, that is rare in poetry about Maine. This sense of place sharpens his awareness, directs his vision, gives an order and clarity to his poetry, that makes it memorable. And if one may digress, this is the flaw in most of the contemporary poetry about Maine — its lack of a sense of place. Though the contemporary poets use the words of place, their poems are of no place.

Maine emerges as disembodied fragments of nostalgia, myth, and stereotype. Their poems too often are imagistic/impressionistic renderings of a Maine that never existed. At their worst they are pathetic poetic bleedings as the writers herd their empty phrases east from the western pasturelands of Gary Snyder. Perhaps an exaggerated observation, but I wish to emphasize the difference between Connellan's response to Maine with the hackneyed clichés which too often pass for Maine poetry.

Leo Connellan has lived out of the state the greater part of his life, though growing up in Rockland. His mother was from Hallowell, his father from Portland. In a letter he writes — “I... yearn to be known as existing by Maine citizens.” For though he is recognized nation-wide among poets, has published eight volumes of poetry, returned this winter from a reading tour in Holland, France and England — Connellan still admits to a need to be recognized by his native state. It is his place. It is the strength in all his poetry.

Hayden Carruth, writing in *The Nation*, sees Connellan's poetry as “... the total opposite of the tourist's Deer Isle or Boothbay.” Richard Lord, writing in the *Boston Ledger* assesses Connellan as “... one of the finest neglected poets now writing in the United States.” Though I might observe in passing that all poets are neglected, that this is their natural condition, and that God knows what would happen to them if they

received just recognition. Still, Maine's neglect of one of its finest writers can only be seen as a commentary on a state whose legislature's efforts at recognition of native sons seems to extend no further than extolling some clown who invented ear muffs.

Some critics have compared Connellan's work with Robinson Jeffer's. I can't agree. True, as with Jeffers, Connellan's poems are always a metaphor, possessing that resonance which every successful poem must have. But Jeffer's vision is more remote, his intensity stemming from philosophical convictions not tied to California. Connellan's intensity seems to derive directly from his sense of place, his sense of Maine.

*In the blood night of chaotic poverty
Otto took me to get the Kaylor sisters
in Union, to drive some place full
of pine and balsam smell in mosquito
heat and plunge into.*

It is a truism that writers write best about what they know. Some accomplish this by staying where they are. Leo Connellan went

“Risk”

(... a fascinating game of strategy in which a player can conquer the world!)

In the beginning

*I deployed my armies casually along the equator
to throw my son off guard*

“You're spreading yourself too thin,” he warned.

“I like warm weather.”

My armies held the American south, Central America and Brazil, North Africa, the Mediterranean lands, India and the roads to Mandalay.

Except for Australia, he concentrated his forces in the north — Asia, Europe and Alaska. We studied the board.

He looked up, eyes cold blue and gray — a twelve-year-old Alexander.

“Dad, it's a good thing for us you weren't a general in World War Two!”

“I've got my strategy,” I cautioned.

We rolled our dice.

He came like Attila out of Asia, dividing my lands rimming the warm seas.

I spread myself too thin in a feint toward Alaska, lost heavily along the Andes.

Then a pincer movement out of Australia and Asia was his. I counter-attacked desperately into Canada.

“That's a dumb thing to do!”

“Familiar terrain,” I bluffed. “Better be careful.”

He swept west, circling the Mediterranean, lost in Africa as I struck from Brazil. He moved massively into Greenland from Europe. I was decimated trying a thrust into the Orient.

“I don't think, dad,” he said gently, “that Alexander the Great was very careful.”

The end came abruptly. His hordes swept pitilessly over my scattered armies until only two remained, holding desperately in the Eastern United States.

He prepared for the kill.

“I surrender.”

“What do you mean, surrender!” He rattlesnaked his dice, eyes cold.

“You can't just quit like that. Make a fight for it!”

“Sorry, son. I surrender — and live to fight another day.”

“But that means I haven't conquered the world!”

“Neither did Alexander the Great. It's the risk one takes.”

It is autumn now in my country. From time to time word of his conquests and defeats reach me from beyond the borders of my stark, seasonal world — terse communiques from far countries in response to my observations. He again reminds me that my strategies are mine. He has his. But at least our communication lines remain open. It is the risk one takes.

on to other places — *The Gunman and Other Poems, Another Poet In New York, Crossing America*. Yes, there have been other places in the poet's life. But Connellan's ability to handle sensory detail, to transmit the feel and smell and taste and touch and sound of reality, wherever encountered, evolves from the underlying sense he has of his place — Maine. The urgency, the harsh immediacy of Maine life, a bitterness imposed by the salt water beginnings of his own life, are the deep roots of his poetry. His bitterness is the bitterness imposed by reality; a bitterness controlled by his literary skill and made eloquent by his love for Maine.

Death In Lobsterland is a journey into the heart of Maine, into the “Passion Pit” nights and girls, into love, into compassion. Leo Connellan has probed the intricacies of being human — of hating and loving and understanding and not understanding. He has written about MAINE.

Gordon Clark

*Eudora Welty: *The Eye Of The Story*

The Plight of the Maine Artist

Threatened by extinction, subjected to unprecedented poaching and loss of habitat, *Artistus Americanus Veritas* is rapidly vanishing. Members of this endangered species can be recognized by their one essential belief: creating is a way of thinking and feeling, consistent with one's spiritual, intellectual and sensual center. But this very belief renders the artist's survival in modern America practically impossible.

The habitat that needs to be protected is creative space, the internal and external areas around and in which ideas and impressions received by the artist freely mingle. The young are especially threatened by this shrinking habitat, for it is here the species is the most vulnerable to poaching. Poachers are those who consider art another commodity, the artist an expendable item. They come from entrepreneurs who have created a self-sustaining art superstructure that feeds on itself, ignores the purity of the creative thrust. More subtly and devastatingly, they come from within, from that mutated sub-species of artists who live off of and in agreement with this superstructure.

The artist has always faced the conflict between the long-term need to tend creative space and the short-term need to merely survive. However, modern economics have driven a wedge deep into the root of this dilemma, forcing a choice, either result of which foreshadows the death of the species. Funding does exist for the arts, but grant-getting is usually reduced to the “who you know” syndrome, or the “you can't be granted until you've already been granted” insanity. The same holds true for galleries, who are programmed to accept what has already been accepted. Most young artists can no longer secure positions instructing college art, an area of intense competition and paper qualification. Secondary and grammar schools simply do not allow instruction of art veritas. Those who look for subsistence here find their creative space shrinking successively into oblivion. Part-time survival jobs are limited, and in rural areas, non-existent. Self-subsistence is a romantic idea, but is a full-time commitment which encroaches upon creative space as pressingly as any other occupation. More often than not, *Artistus Americanus Veritas* begins to suffer from the anemia of factoryism, in which the fragile sense of growing self pales in due proportion with the speed of the assembly line. The stomach aches, the price of art supplies prohibits purchase. And the confusion caused by trying to survive in an economically bred culture when one's motives, one's being, are basically non-economic, results in near psychosis. Survival chances become minimal.

The hungry reality of this impossible situation is exacerbated for young artists living in Maine. Here reigns an essential paradox: the state offers unparalleled geographic beauty, and therefore provides a constant stimulus for creative energy and a perpetual rebirth of inspiration; the state has no opportunities for young artists, and as it is already economically depressed, very few subsistence jobs are available. Maine is the perfect place for the well established, older artist, who has one or two shows a year secured in New York City for support. But for the unknown artist, especially one not given to the lobster-trap-and-buoy-on-a-foggy-beach school of art, survival means long, hungry months of begging for jobs that aren't there, in order to purchase art, supplies too expensive to buy, to try to

Gordon Clark

express a vision continually depressed by hostile economic circumstances. This is especially true in rural areas, where the artist is considered a strange sort of being, and therefore has not only no economic support, but also negligible human support.

A desperate situation, but not a hopeless one. There is something that can be done, and it has to do with evolving a cultural adaptation long neglected by artists — the voice. As verbal acuity is not necessarily a part of visual creative expression, the voice should be raised to ask only a very simple question: *Why cannot employment be created for artists as it is for other members of the labor force?*

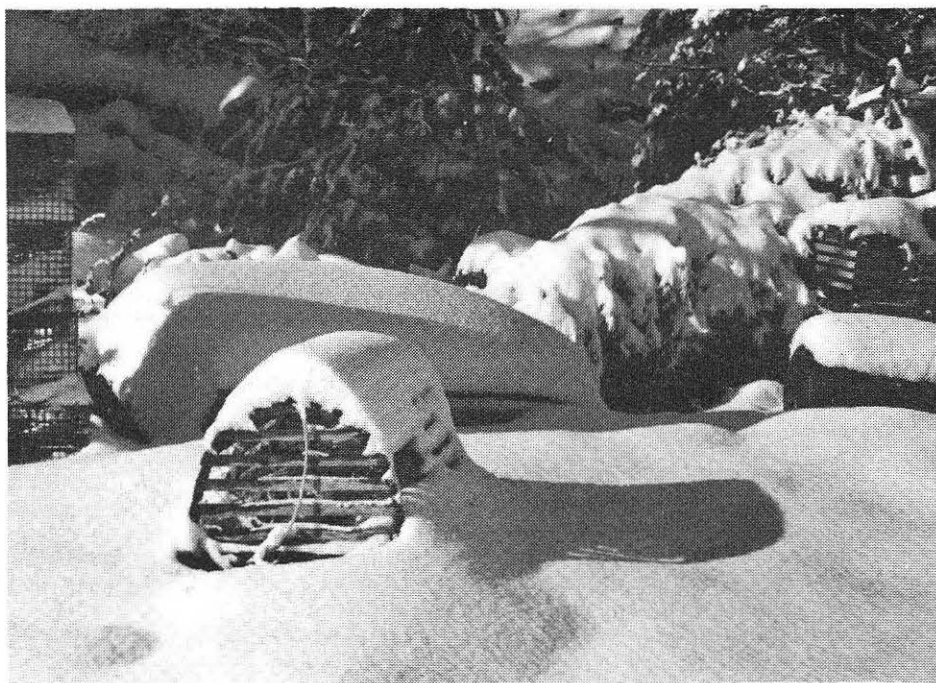
Surely this is an old whisper, but it is time to turn up the volume. For too long artists have accepted their grim starved youth as an integral part of creative development; but the attitude that suffering builds character, in this case artistic sense, is as medieval a concept as flagellation. If artists received employment to insure some minimal level of subsistence consistent with one's work, survival and growth of the species would be assured. Young artists are fledglings who usually need a long apprenticeship to grow into mature artists with realized expressions. If during this time they had what is basic to all human beings, the right to earn a minimal wage, to put food on the table in a manner satisfying to one's being, habitat would be secured. The species would flourish.

A nice idea. But the American culture, for all its wealth and education, still does not recognize art as fulfilling a necessary function. It is dismissed as some peripheral oddity. How does one convince people that an artist-in-residence is at least as valuable, and much less expensive, than that bit of interstate highway or new sewers on Main St.? The idea of a political lobby or union of artists is not only claustrophobic, but also antithetical to the artist's nature. Artists should never have to mute the edges of their individual voices to blend with some collective whole. The art unions that are sprouting up in various towns are without the means and influence to act effectively, and usually tend toward self-aggrandizement.

There are, however, structures already in existence that could serve as megaphones for the voice: the local state councils for the arts. However the state councils to date are not serving the needs of the majority of the artists for whom they are intended. But they are relatively new organizations, there is room for growth, and positive action still could be generated and used effectively by and for young artists. The councils can provide funding, in part or full, and offer centralized organization and a sort of cloak of "respectability" for presenting creative ideas to non-aesthetic parties. So if each and every artist extended personal responsibility to include the raising of the voice, the asking of the question, and the bringing of that question to the state council, the idea of public employment of the artist would begin to generate its own existence. For Maine artists, getting the Commission of the Arts to listen, whose director publicly stated that he is really not all that interested in the plight of the individual artist, is a Herculean task, but not an impossible one.

If it is true that the administering of art and the creating of art are mutually opposed realities, the state council could become the one organization where these divergent tangents could, if not meet, at least come together in a workable friendship benefiting everyone, artists and non-artists alike.

It can happen. Last year, the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts received a \$250,000 matching grant from the commerce department to fund public employment of artists for one year. As the idea was



Linda Hoar

Going To Haul — Winter's Day

Oh fuck — 5 o'clock. Turn off the goddam alarm — look out the window. Blowing? Yeah, but not enough — we go. Downstairs, 4 cups of coffee pack of cigarettes feed the cat and out. Skiff on the shore. Motherfuck, that seat is cold — and wet! Aboard the boat. Check her vitals, light her off drop the mooring, head her out.

Exhaust steaming, can't see shit — open the window. Sweet Jesus — ain't she cold! Round the light. Harbor astern. Tuck it to her run for the bell. Take it easy, light up. Good day, clear, wind east. Big rollers by Hart's Island. Outside Gunning Rocks. She lifts gently on the first sea. Old girl likes it. Nice day, nice day. Bring her around, make for the whistler. She shudders, comes alive, pitches into the seas. A long slow roller coaster ride. On the whistler. Check the marks, first pair — gaff — buoy — block — hauler' — coil the warp — pitch it — coil the warp — pitch it. 45 fathoms. Main trap on washboard — clean it, bait it, 3 in the barrel, 2 overboard, slide it, haul 'er, tail 'er, on the washboard, clean it bait it 2 in barrel 4 overboard — check the marks, pitch, tailer, 12 fathoms, pitch the main, next pair — gaffbuoyblockhaul'ercoilpitch — look up — Monhegan . . . beautiful — main trap, tail'erclean and pitchnextpairhaulandpitchhaulandpitch, two hours, tide's runnin', buoy's under. Hard findin' 'em.

Outside Old Cilley, breezin' up, swinging to the south'ard — goddam old Novi Slab side to all the time, fuckin' whore keep your head up! Roll your guts out, shit flyin'. By Burnt Island. Last pair — haul and pitch, look up. Black outside Monhegan — fuck! Oh well, one more string. Come about, strike for the bell. Drive her!

Pitch dive jump friggin' spray wet cold twist turn roll hold on! Bow's under, slack her off — goddam bitch, you may be old but you still got it. Comin' up on the bell sonofabitch of a hard place — Old Cilley.

First pair gaff buoy block haul 'er (big green one) washboard under hand for the trap hand for me — tail 'er clean and pitch next pair — look up. Feather white! Fuck, man, let's get out of here! No, hell with it, finish string — haulandpitchhaulandpitch washboard's under, last pair, pitch and go, head her home, stick it to her, seas off the quarter — bounce twist white water. Goddam asshole, someday that one more trap bullshit is going to kill you — come on you old whore, get us home.

Inside Gunning Rocks. Round the light. Things smooth out. Runnin' good. In the harbor. Head for the buyer (finest kind) wharf's clear no waiting. Afternoon, Blaine, yeah, mite sloppy outside, seen worse though, then again seen better. Bait? Four herring, 18 gas, buck seventy five today — Oh well, day's pay. Head her home.

Pick up mooring, pump her out, shut her down, check her over. Skiff — row ashore, climb the bank, in the house, hi to the cat, kitchen, coffee, take it easy, relax, warm up, feed cat, feed me, living room, chair, book, read, enjoy, 9 o'clock, bed . . . Oh fuck — 5 o'clock!

Guy Scarpino

new, there was much confusion — inability to match funds, political encumbrances, energy-wasting answerability to insensitive parties. But 160 artists did secure full or part time employment, no small triumph. Some of the projects funded were: artists residencies; American Dance Festival instruction; the building of a graphic equalizer that separates and rearranges the elements of a single sound; sculpture gardens; murals; dramas; urban redesign; film; oral ethnic histories. The public employment of artists protected that endangered species, and helped to bring beauty and creative spirit to an American culture starved for meaning and experiential relationships.

Earning a living and being an artist need not be mutually exclusive. Although presently the employment of fine artists as artists is a blatant exception, it is the responsibility of every artist to help make it the norm. Habitat can be protected and growth of the species secured, for *Artistus Americanus Veritas*, distinctly human, has what the great blue whale, the mountain gorilla, and the snow leopard do not — a voice. Use it.

Jo Marian Going

The Whole Extent

The whole extent of earthly things is matter, we move with starry heavens in us

breathing troubadadors, wandering minstrels, shopkeepers, welders, occupational therapists, occupying bodies, reaching for castles, airfilled dreams, mattresses of water.

We need something to be crazy over. Our songs are filled with gunmen, empty caches. Our bodies case our minds — flat faces standing in their clocks until the parts wear out.

We run like gingerbread men, chased by the woman who has baked us, rolling pin to flatten our cookie.

Gold, we discovered, heavy blocks for hiding; passion green as money, its currency

stays until our golden skin falls in flails, we run around as children with bald heads, double chins, pretending lust, pretending pretense.

Like ponds reflecting weight we long for their reflections — the green arms and lines of trunks as images we bear in pain and sorrow.

Tomorrow, unlike trees, we know we will be bare forever, futile matter spun to stellar dust.

Patricia Merfield

A Visit To Lenny

I got off the bus at Arlington Road. It was hot outside, the searing, mid-summer Alabama heat that makes the sweat pop out on your skull and dries it like caked mud. By the time I'd crossed the street the headband of my fishing hat was soaked. I had the sticky feeling you get when you've been crying.

There was a gas station at the corner. A woman inside stared at a small TV.

"What do you want?" she said when I came in.

"I'm looking for Oldfield Street."

"I've heard the name but I can't tell you where that son-of-a-bitch is. The maps is over there."

"Don't you have a map of Birmingham?"

"I got Georgia and Alabama. Ain't that enough?"

I thought of giving up then and going back to town. I'd lived in Birmingham five years before moving north last summer. This was my first trip back. There were still plenty of friends I hadn't seen; most of them lived in places cooler and cleaner and easier-to-get-to than Oldfield Street. It was the last day of my vacation. I wondered if it was worth the trouble to find a ten-year-old named Lenny.

There was a housing project on Arlington Road, a ranch-style development that looked as homey as Alcatraz. The dirt patches out front must have been lawns, ten or twenty years ago before the stray shoes took over. A lot of children ran barefoot in the dust. Lenny wasn't one of them. None of the streets crossing the project were called Oldfield. My hair dried in wrinkles of sweat across my forehead. I swept it back under the hat and started walking.

I'd planned my last day in Birmingham all wrong, expecting to rent a car, call Lenny at nine, drive out and buy him a hamburger, talk for a while, and be back in town by noon or twelve-thirty. I hoped to eat lunch downtown with a secretary I used to date.

The plan hadn't worked. The car rental agency wouldn't take a cash deposit. I called Lenny's number, but the phone was disconnected. I wasted an hour plodding around downtown, and took the wrong bus. Oldfield Street crossed Arlington Road well to the north. I'd have to walk fast to get there in an hour.

I passed plenty of abandoned gas stations on Arlington Road, junk car lots, empty fields. Even a liquor store or two. A night club in a dusty parking lot. No hamburger joints or ice cream shops or bowling alleys, no place to take a ten-year-old boy. I wondered what I was going to do when I found Lenny.

I tried to remember the times I'd written Oldfield Street on an envelope, and the times I should have but didn't. I'd been surprised when I got Lenny's first letter a year ago, and wrote back the next day. After that it took longer. He sent me his picture at Christmas. It took me two weeks to thank him. For a while he sent me a letter every month. I used to believe I did my best to write back. But my life was crowded with job and friends. After a while his letters stopped.

The sidewalk ended. I struggled through the weeds. What would I say to Lenny's mother? I'd only met her once, the day she brought her sons to school. She still had bruises where her husband had hit her a week earlier, just before he took a fatal bullet from a police revolver.

"This is Lenny," she said, and put a hand on the older boy's head. "He's in fourth grade. Him and his little brother's got to go to this school, now that we've moved. I don't know how he'll do around colored kids. I'm pretty sure he knows how to act. If he don't, whack him one."

I ate lunch alone with Lenny the first day. After that he asked me every day to sit with him. Once in a while I agreed. We talked at a little table in a corner of the cafeteria. He never asked about dinosaurs or quarterbacks or fighter planes. "What do you do if your mother gangs up with your big sister?" he'd want to know. "What if you can't walk across the living room without getting hollered at? What if it's raining and you're hiding behind the couch and there's nothing to do?" Nothing we could settle over a plate of ravioli.

"A white teacher eating with a white child? I wouldn't do it," the second grade teacher said. "It doesn't look right. He's the only one you've got. Black kids notice things like that."

Lenny punched a second grader at recess one day. I grabbed his arm.

"What do you think you're doing?"

"I got a right to stick up for my family!"

Nymph into tree

*What if
the pearls of your home went slack...
separated, lost their clasp —
surrounded you with neat teeth?*

*Stonehenge... your dilemmas
granite for your dreamy eyes...*

*And the lake you chose for summer
lapsed inward, puddle-dried,
with alders choked its waters...*

*Would your heartbark flap through
your pulse,
scatter rings, rhythms unaccustomed
and cellulose?*

*Would your sap open with soft syrups,
spurt
like an axe bit,
and tourniquets of leaves
slim out your wrists to twigs?*

*How many of your ankles
could suffer this rooted weight?*

*And your laughter —
Would it end?
... extinct as wind?
... extinct as llamas in some jungle
future?*

Deborah Ward

"What do you mean?"

"That rotten kid beat up my brother."

We talked to the second grade teacher.

"My students don't fight," she told Lenny.

"How come Joey's all full of bruises?"

"Joey's my only white child. I can't help it if the other children pick on him some. What can I do?"

"Black children know the difference between right and wrong," I said. "If they don't, you'd better tell them. Lenny, Mrs. Kavanaugh is responsible for Joey. She'll take good care of him from now on. If he has any more trouble, we'll go and see the principal."

It was almost noon. Traffic picked up. Air-conditioned cars always seem to speed when you're walking in the heat. The drivers looked plump and sleek. They wore sunglasses and dark suits, and kept the windows rolled up.

"What do you do if you don't have a pencil?" Lenny asked in class, the day after the fight. "What if you crumple your paper? What if you don't want to listen to directions? What if it's a dumb assignment and you don't want to do it?" He tipped his chair back, and smirked at the class. "You can't even think of an answer!"

"So you're tough," I told him after school. "You want to be a big shot. You'd better stop. I've had a hard year. I don't want trouble. Bes des, thought we were friends."

"Why should I do what you say?" Lenny shrugged. "I'm not scared of you."

"What happens," he asked boldly a few days later, "if you're so bad, and nasty, and mean that no one in the whole world can make you mind?" Someone giggled. Lenny rubbed his hands and stood up. A boy guffawed. A desk tipped over with a crash.

"The teacher keeps you after school and gives you extra work," I replied.

Lenny put his hands on his hips. "What if you don't feel like staying after school?" More giggles. A fist thudded on a desk-top.

"The teacher calls your mother, and she comes down to school and gives you a thrashing."

Lenny crouched in his seat, chin propped in his palm. "What if the teacher is dumb, and your mother is dumb, and they tell lies about you and you get so mad you're meaner and badder than before?"

The giggles began again, and the guffaws, and the pounding fists. Lenny blew on his knuckles, rubbed them against his chest, and bowed with a grin. Some of the children stamped their feet. A paper airplane sailed across the room.

"What's the matter?" said Lenny. "Aren't you going to answer my question?"

"You may leave now, Lenny."

The giggles stopped suddenly.

"I may what?"

"You may pick up your books and paper and pencils and you may take your baseball glove and get out."

Silence. Mouths opened, but no sounds came out.

"And never come back?"

"Why come back? I'm in charge of this class, and everybody knows it but you. If you don't like it here, go to the principal and tell him you want to go to a different school. That should solve the problem for good."

"You know what?" said Lenny quietly. "I think I will." He stamped across the room. "You want me to get out," he screamed in front of my desk, "and that's what I'm going to do!" I reached for him, but he bolted into the hallway. I ran after him. He headed for the front door. I chased him around the building, past the playground equipment, and out across the baseball diamond. I tackled him in center field. He lay sobbing in the hot sun.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. I don't want you to leave. I want you to stay in my class."

"That's not true! You hate me. You want to get rid of me. You wish you never knew who I was."

I led him back inside. I took him in the bathroom and stood with him while he whimpered. When he was quiet I washed his face and took him back to class. The paper airplane had been picked up. The children were writing out their math. Lenny put his head on his desk and wouldn't look up the rest of the afternoon. I asked him to stay after school.

"I'm sorry, Lenny. We'll do better from now on. We'll start over tomorrow."

"You act like you hate me."

"I don't hate you. I like you. Didn't I straighten out the problem with Joey? Don't I make time to sit with you at lunch?" Lenny didn't answer.

"You made me angry. You were rude to me. But I should never have told you to leave. Grownups make mistakes just like children. Usually worse ones."

Lenny looked up. He nodded and bit his lip. He picked up his baseball glove and walked over to the door.

"I wish I could go back and change it, but I can't."

To War Dead

*Boys who walk through coffin
blossoms
I do not know why you die,
leaving our young women
like penguins with great open flippers
because you have slipped forever
out of their arms.*

*Leaves of you young flowers fall
like shook Horse-Chestnut trees.
You drop at my feet like field mice
caught in meadow fire.*

*Boys, your cries screech my dreams.
We advance to live on the moon,
slaughtering our world behind us;
leaving no trace that we were ever
brothers.*

Leo Connellan

I sat in a diner that afternoon, and brooded over a cup of coffee. I had to be harsh that year. Gentle words didn't always work. Toughness was a kind of caring. But I never grabbed children by the neck, slapped them, made them sit in trash barrels, the way some teachers did. I never dreamed I'd hurt anyone.

Lenny never challenged me after that. We were friends the next day.

"Where do you live?" he asked at lunch. "What do you do after school? I bet you've seen the circus lots of times. I bet you go to ball games. Have you got a girl?"

He laid his fork down, waiting for an answer. He watched me as if he had a claim on me, as if he was thinking of that tackle in center field. I hated to think I'd let him down.

"I'll take you to the circus if it comes to town," I promised.

But school got rougher. Instead of teaching, I broke up fights and settled arguments. My hands began to tremble when I drank my coffee. The circus came to town, but I was too exhausted to take Lenny to see it. The children fought in the lunch room. I didn't eat with Lenny any more.

By 12:30 I still hadn't reached a residential neighborhood, not even the run-down kind Lenny's mother, with her welfare check and social security, might be able to afford. I was ready to give up. The air-conditioned cars swooped by. Two old men stared from a parked car. I felt ridiculous. Teachers don't go on hikes a thousands miles from home, looking for kids they once had in class. You don't catch them with dusty shoes and soaked-through fishing hats when everyone else wears a suit and tie. What would my visit prove? Would it make up for telling Lenny to leave, or the bruises on his brother's cheeks, or the police bullet? Would it make up for never taking him to the circus?

The cars came in a rush now. The drivers looked cooler and more arrogant than ever. I propped the hat back on top of my head and tried to fan myself. I dreamed of the flight back up north. I could see the hands of the clock edging up to take-off time that night. The captain's voice rumbled; jet engines whined. Steam drifted off the ceiling. Air-conditioners hummed faintly. I smelled the acrid vinyl seats, the whiff of perfume as the stewardess swept by, the odor of scotch I'd take to relax.

I stopped at the top of a hill. It was almost one o'clock. The sun glared. It seemed no use going further. I looked for a bus stop. Half-way down the hill there was a sign hidden in a clump of bushes — Oldfield Street. I started to run.

There were no gas stations on Oldfield Street, no run-down shops or liquor stores or housing projects. Only small homes, neat lawns, and picket fences. The buildings were older at the other end of the street. The yards were smaller. Fences, shrubs, and trees disappeared. Cheap fans clanked in open windows. I was gasping by the time I reached Lenny's house.

The door stood open. I climbed two broken stone steps and stepped carefully onto the porch. Empty boxes. An old broom. No screen in the doorway. I knocked on the woodwork. Silence.

I knocked again. Sweat ran into my shirt collar. There was no breeze on the

porch, no shade, no relief from the sun. I knocked again, and listened a long time. Finally a screen door slammed somewhere behind me.

"Ain't no use banging on the door like that," called a woman from across the street. "Don't nobody live there. They moved out last month."

"I'm looking for Lenny," I said. "A boy named Lenny."

"They had two boys, but they're gone. They moved out of state. They ain't coming back here."

I wiped my face with a handkerchief, and looked away quickly. Suddenly the secretary didn't matter any more, or the cool buildings downtown, or the plane home. I propped my head against the doorjamb and stared into the empty house.

What had I expected to find? What had been the odds that Lenny would be there? I'd arrived unannounced. I hadn't phoned or written. That empty doorway seemed as predictable as my excuses about the circus, the unwritten letters. I squinted out at the rows of houses and yards. My lips began to tremble.

I walked back to Arlington Road. There was a convenience food store a few blocks north, with a bus stop in front. I bought a newspaper and a coke, and waited outside in the sun. A bus came. I sat under the air conditioner. I opened the newspaper and tried to forget about Lenny. But I couldn't escape the bullet, the bruises, the empty doorway. The memory of what I wanted to do for Lenny waited for me everywhere that night: behind the sports page, at the bottom of the glass of scotch, behind the captain's rumble and the stewardesses's smiles. My failure still follows me, among the restaurants and jet planes and air-conditioned cars, and all the rest of the soft, comfortable, privileged parts of life.

Charles Howell

Short Season

*Plants teach planters
to be quick about their dreams,
to strike for life between extremes,
to stand on one sock and then another.*

*Roots pick at the mineral earthlock,
feel tumblers turn, and power
of green grope up between rocks,
then squirt into splurging flower.*

*One stands where he can, in the
in-between,
slightly dazed, nose twitching,
a dreamer
watched by his dream, fumbling at
dawn,
hopping around in creation's outback.*

Terry Plunkett

Legend of the Hermit



When Boris Dillman read that the hermit of Manana Island, Maine, had passed away, he decided to apply for the position himself. A resume addressed to the selectmen of Monhegan Isle won him an interview, where he easily convinced the year-round population of its need to fill the old hermit's post. The old hermit, Ray, living for years on the tiny island a hundred yards off Monhegan, had been something of a tourist attraction.

"I am the second hermit of Manana Isle," he intoned at the special town meeting, and in a month the Laura B. delivered his few possessions — a suitcase, a typewriter, a box of household items — to the driftwood shack that would be his.

His last day among humans Boris spent on Monhegan. He wanted to see the hermit as others saw him, to stare thoughtfully at the barren hump of sheep-cropped rock. In the library he read a children's book about the hermit, studied photographs of his predecessor's bearded, wind-scarred face, pumped the librarian for lore.

In the evening he wandered up to the lighthouse like most of the other tourists, for sunset, talk, and wine. He wanted a feel of how the old hermit had been perceived.

"I hear there used to be a hermit there," he said to no one in particular.

"Yes, a man said. 'I've been coming here for 23 summers and Manana's always been occupied. After you watched the sun go down you saw, sure as sunset, Ray's kerosene lamp flare up. People waited for it.'"

"It's not six months since he died," said another. "I heard he left a whole fortune behind in New York for the peace of that island."

"I heard he was unhappy in love."

"There are plenty of stories," a woman said, "Everybody has a story, everybody that didn't know him."

"I hear there's another one coming," Boris said. "I wonder what'd bring a man to that life?"

"Something deep, but you can't say. You can't fathom a man's secrets."

"Would you be a hermit?" Boris asked.

"I don't think so," said the woman. "The loneliness. The wind. How about you?"

"I haven't given it a thought."

The next morning a native rowed him across to Manana in a dory. He unloaded his few possessions. The dory returned. He made his way up to the

small dwelling without a backward look.

In truth he hadn't really thought about it. The whole business had been visionary, dream-like. There had been no need for thought. For the first two months this hardly mattered. He was too busy training himself for the tasks at hand. For the sheep left him by his predecessor. It took time not only to learn how to shepherd them, doctor them, dip them, fleece them, and deliver them, but also to get used to having them around the cottage, bumping into things, breathing for the comfort of conversation that the past hermit used to provide.

Still, this keeping busy was also avoidance, as the portable typewriter he'd brought along constantly reminded him. He'd come to write his Life. The reams of blank paper reprimanded him.

For if he hadn't needed a reason to come to Manana, he did need reasons, ideas, to write about. He knew the first words: "I am the second hermit of Manana Isle. I came here in 1975 from the Mainland. I came to stay."

But why? He knew there had to be reasons, figured they were bound to emerge. In a way, the tourists on Monhegan spelled it out for him. Ordinary men do not undertake extraordinary deeds. He must, indeed, have a story to tell, a secret to reveal on his deathbed, a persuasive reason to be a hermit. He reflected on his life.

He had not been crossed in love. In fact, in his dentist days in Cleveland he had surprised himself with how easily he could manage a happy family and an occasional, not too serious, date with his technician. He had murdered no one, nor contemplated it. No serious injury on the dental chair could be attributed to him. He hadn't stolen anything since childhood. He continued to respect the memory of his mother. He felt no darkness in his past. He could not even say he'd been dissatisfied with life in Cleveland, not with his home, his social life, his position. And when he looked into his inner life for a source of dissatisfaction, he found the same rosy content, nothing troublesome, no particular guilt, nothing unfulfilled.

Just that, one day, an angel invited him to be a hermit, encouraged him to become a legend, or at least the stuff of legend, for the legend had yet to be written. For weeks he sat by the sea, his eyes unfocused on the horizon, searching for a reason for his unexpected destiny, searching for a preface for his book, while the tourists across the way kept him within the range of their binoculars and marvelled and gossiped about the hermit's contemplative ways.

(continued)

One day it occurred to him that he was going about the task backwards. Of course he couldn't find a reason why he'd so impulsively moved here. Nothing is so simple as to be explained by a reason. His life itself must be the reason, and instead of waiting for a reason to begin his *Life*, he must set to work on the *LIFE* and find in that the reason for his exile. The book would be the means of discovery.

He set to work. "I am the second hermit of Manana Isle," he wrote. "This is the third month of my hermitage. It is likely that I will remain here forever, untouched by human contact, under contract with Monhegan Island and out of the doggedness of my own soul.

"It may seem that for a man of solitude the task of self-knowledge is an easy one, but it is no less easy than for a man of the world. Perhaps harder. One might expect, for instance, that one would have clear reasons for choosing such solitude, yet I confess I have spent the last month searching my memory and my soul for these reasons, and I have found none.

"I can only look to my life itself, and hope that an effort to retrace the course of my life will provide the illumination I so fervently desire. May these memoirs open the doors to wisdom and understanding, and forge the legend of the second hermit of Manana Isle."

He copied these words over on rag paper, and marked the top of the page — *Preface*. On a fresh page, he wrote —

Dedication: to myself

He paced the room for a moment, then tore up the paper. On a new sheet he wrote —

Dedication: to my solitude

For the first time in a month he slept soundly and didn't waken before dawn.

Yet no legend emerged. There were no secrets, despite months of searching. Halfway into his *LIFE*, Boris began to perceive just how it would turn out — flat, dull, a story not worth the telling. His life on the mainland, predictable in every way, had not really lead to Manana. He sorted out dozens of incidents, hoping they would add up. But nothing. There was no driving force behind his life.

Who was he, then, to claim this island as a hermitage? Who was he to romanticize a way of life that, after all, was as dull as any other, with the daily chores of cooking, washing, tending the sheep, the odd jobs, walks around the island, quiet gazing out to sea or over at the long busy street of Monhegan and the people, gathered at the lighthouse, waiting for him to light his lamp.

If they thought this was romance, it was their mistake. Of this he was convinced. Anything they expected of a hermit's life they must fill in for themselves. His was empty. It might be easy for them to imagine a fine existence for him — they didn't have to live the boredom, the dullness of it, the disappointing lack of heroics. All they saw was a guy all alone on an island, the sun setting, his lamp lit. Sometimes they heard the sheep, the awful bleating like a choke, like a man drowning. And out of this they made a legend — he had heard them before he came, at the lighthouse, each with a version of what made the hermit.

Perhaps he should find out from them. They seemed to have come up with more than enough hypotheses about a hermit's way of life and the terrible unknown thing that had driven him to it. His only failure was in imagination, for surely he was a good hermit, more diligent than the last, conscientious and strict with himself. He lacked only imagination, the imagination of people

who didn't have to live his life but only watched and thought and speculated. The legend of the hermit lay in them, not in himself, and if he wanted to understand it, he must learn from them, the watchers who made the hermit's solitary life glow. He knew then what he must do.

It would be simple enough to go among them unrecognized. Few had ever seen him close up. He could cut his beard and blacken his face again when he got back, until the beard grew in. The only problem would be getting there, for he could not risk having his dory discovered on Monhegan. He would just have to swim — no great distance after all, especially if the tides were low.

He chose a moonless night in August. He made sure the tourists had a good look at him, yawning and stretching conspicuously. He ambled back to his shelter and lit the lamp. Then, waiting until well past midnight, he made his way silently down to the shore. The sky was a blaze of stars, the lights of Monhegan dim among them.

The water was colder and deeper than he'd thought, and the waterproof sack which held the clothes and shoes made the swimming awkward. He swam head first into a jagged, barnacled rock, but kept on, and did not feel until some moments later the blood oozing from his forehead. He panicked and lost direction. His arms began to tire. The cords of his sack pulled at his neck. He struggled and flapped his arms, but did not cry out, persisting in the silence to which he was accustomed.

He was found on the Monhegan shore in the morning, his pack still on. No one quite knew why he was swimming,

why he hadn't taken his boat, or what reasons he might have had to leave Manana. They knew as little of his drowning as they had of his coming to the island, yet it was the stuff of legend, this mysterious drowning, and the summer nights were full of talk about the lonely, troubled swimmer from Manana, drowned on a star-lit night, in secret flight from some ghost or devil, a man apart from other men, whose evening lamp had given them comfort, who had left a half-burned manuscript too charred for them ever to tell what it meant. A man of secrets and of anguish, that second hermit of Manana Isle.

Jeff Fischer

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Night Drive

*You haven't lived until you've run
over a cat.
The last thing you see are the eyes.
The last thing you hear is the thud
in the neighborhood of the universal
joint.
There's no point ever in going back
unless you've got a gun
in case it should still be twitching —
and if you haven't,
who wants to be clawed by a dying
frenzy,
or has the guts to finish it off with a
tire jack?*

*Treasure the vision,
fur and dent,
the blur and freeze before the light,
pursue at ease this innocent connection
with the night air.*

*Remember — It could have been
a horse.
Remember — It could have been
Billy Graham or Martha Graham.
Remember — It might have been a
perfect day.
Remember — It had a mouse in
its mouth.
Remember — It was "Patroclus"
whom we truly and dearly loved.*