Lives of great men all remind us
   We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
   Footprints on the sands of time.

(from a Psalm of Life, 1839)
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)
Longfellow lived a full and fairly placid 75 years, exactly one-third of them in Maine. Born in Portland to what passed for gentry (grandfathers judges and generals), at a precocious 16 he traveled up the muddy road to Brunswick to attend the new college opened there, Bowdoin. His father, a lawyer and briefly U.S. congressman, was a trustee. Longfellow, always decorous, even a bit of a dandy, did not make waves—he learned his languages, dabbled in verse, and because he felt constrained by the Congregational clergy of the college, founded the first Unitarian society (which signified his life-long cheerful and optimistic view of human nature).

The class of 1825 turned out to be a bumper one, including President Franklin Pierce and up-from-Salem Nathaniel Hawthorne. Although Hawthorne later gave Longfellow the idea for *Evangeline*, saying it did not suit his own talents, and the poet did write a moving elegy to the novelist, the two were never fast friends. A classmate wrote, "Longfellow was one of the literary club, while Hawthorne was one of the drinking club." It figures. After graduation, the brooding Hawthorne sequestered himself, staving at his soul, for twelve years in a Salem garret, then went on to write some of our darkest masterpieces.

And sunny Longfellow? He went on to become "popular." First, however, Bowdoin offers their green graduate a post as professor of modern languages, a new field—and he is a ripe nineteen! Longfellow accepts, and in a move unthinkable today or unless your father is a trustee, dispatches himself to Europe for three years of pleasure and traveling "to prepare himself." He puts off as long as possible working as an academic, or working at all, by the fall of 1829 he does settle in to his duties at Brunswick. (He held his later professorship at Harvard only 18 years, and retired himself at 47.) In 1831, a Portland debutante, Mary Storer Porter, becomes his wife. He translates texts from French, Spanish and Italian (literally renditions), but is not thrilled by rural Bowdoin, and within five years is back in Europe for two more years of touring. Here, in Rotterdam, his young wife dies of a miscarriage, the first of the very few dark clouds that were to scud across his life. He returns in 1836 to take up his Harvard position, and except for the infrequent visit, his ties to Maine are severed.

The residue of Maine left in the imagination is not substantial—a trace (no more) of the Indian, a passing reference to tomalue, a fascination with forests, an elegy to a Bowdoin professor, "Parker Cleaveland" (written 40 years later, printed here), and the one true Maine poem, the achingly beautiful hymn to Portland, "My Lost Youth" (printed here). Lots of wood gets burned in fireplaces, and lots of maps swag in generic harbors, but both ideas fades could be drawn from his fifty years in Boston. Basically, our bookish. Mostly, he wrote about what he read about, and in the accepted "poetic" manner freeze-dried and vacuum-sealed by the English neo-classicals and Romantics of a century earlier. Like most romantics, he did (or said he did) a lot of longing for the past, but again like most, he preferred to keep the longing generalized. Thus, apart from two references to Deering's Woods, the "city by the sea" in "My Lost Youth" could be any port town. We're not talking "realism" here, even though American Realism had pretty well established itself by the time of his death in 1882.

I spent the entire summer reading every poem he ever wrote. Let's face it, he's awful. After you fight through the thickets of archaic pronouns (thou-s, thy-s, thine-s) used long after Americans stopped using them, the quaint verb forms (doest-s), and the ubiquitous invocations ("O, Life," etc.), you still sink into the syntax of the longer pieces like The Courtship of Miles Standish, or Tales of a Wayside Inn, until you think you have drowned in goop. Longfellow was a long fellow. The modern reader needs oxygen. The overwhelming impressions left after total immersion are bewildement at his former popularity, and irritation at his dishonesty. He's smug, corny, prudish and phoney. To put it bluntly, I don't believe he feels what he says he's feeling. Worse, I sense that he does not believe what he says he's believing. (On the other hand, I half-hope he's feeling and believing these things. Oscar Wilde once said to a fellow, "My dear sir, you are so unutterably sincere that I cannot believe a word you say." Like that.)

Longfellow is "on automatic." Once he gets crank up, no one is better at creating the glossy surface of a poem. His rhythms (his "rolling numbers," he called them) are relentless; his insipid rhymes are predictable and emerge as if from a cornucopia; his tattered imagery would embarrass lesser men. It's like putting pedals on an old player piano—you exercise a bit and all the music just comes out. You don't have to know how to play, and the music sounds the same every time.

But let's be fair. Or at least polite. In his longer pieces, Longfellow spoke of his "legend style." One critic describes it as an "atmosphere of dreamy distance." Now for polite. An excellent critic, Edward Hinch, circumscribes in this way:

Like much 19th c. poetry, Longfellow's seems in retrospect leisurely, even too relaxed. The slow development of ideas, the elaboration of details, the multiplication of parallels, the explicature of the already-evident...destroy some of his poems and in varying combinations and degrees characterise most of them.

Hinch goes on, his academic manner as distant from his meaning as Longfellow's language was from his emotions: "The language, too, bears the stamp of its time in its tendency to expansive statement, its often predictable vocabulary and phraseology, its fondness for literary diction...and the addiction to poetically picturesque subject matter." Enough polite. With Longfellow, the graceful quickly becomes glib. Such plush just doesn't cut it with people who really like to read (rather than be read to) and actually live language. Better people began to heed Ezra Pound's call to "make it new," and after 1912, the Great Divide of Modernism, when Harriet Monroe began to publish the "new" in her Chicago Poetry, the taste for Longfellow and his unwearied optimism soured. Modernists spent a lot of time denigrating him and others in the 19th c. canon. He fell. John Greenleaf Whittier fell. William Cullen Bryant. James Whitcomb Riley. But others stand, and the fuller for being contemporaneous with those just mentioned. Poe's poetry, some of Thoreau's, some of Melville's verse, Stephen Crane's poetry, some of Whitman's (despite the wind bellows), and of course, almost all of Dickinson's, America's finest. When I think of these tormented American grappling with their tortures, Longfellow's i'ck just itches.

However, in an odd way, Longfellow is ours. Why that should be is a puzzle, because he was not in any sense a "man of the people." Hardly earthy, certainly decorous, prim, a bit abloom, academic, a formal distance in his life and tone would never allow us to speak of "old Hank" as we easily say "Walt" or wryly, "Miss Emily." One reason may be that he has sunk so deeply into the national consciousness, that he got to so many of us so young at our wooden school desks with the inkwells, that as we read along we are surprised when we bump into a phrase so American that it is so familiar as our own hand: "Thy fate is the common fate of all," we read, "Into each life some rain must fall." Did he say that? Or: "Oh reader, stoop down and write/With thy finger in the dust:" Or: "Under the spreading chestnut-tree/The village smithy stands." Or: "Hardy a man is now alive,Who remembers that famous day." ("Paul Revere's Ride"). See what I mean? Try this quintain: "Lives of great men all remind us/We can make our lives sublime./And, departing, leave behind us/Footprints on the sands of time." That one will always get you; the "sands of time" may not mean much when you're ten years old, but what's important now is that you've dreamt it since you were ten years old. There's a guilt in all of this, especially if you're literary. Here's the grand old man, the sweet-singer of our youths—not like the creaky National Monument Robert Frost, or Carl Sandburg who needed a haircut, but Longfellow. You're supposed to revere his work, even if you can no longer read it. I feel guilty even as I type. He's ours.

He can be silly and not know it, and write something like "Poet's Calendar," in which every month speaks in its own "I." He's ours. He can string out his clichés: winds do a lot of moaning in the eaves, for example; rivers flowing remind him of—surprise! —Time; everywhere there is the sentimental claptrap of human qualities attributed to the inanimate. There's the breathless hyping of"babbles" and cataracts, that as we are read along we are surprised when we bump into a phrase so American that it is so familiar as our own hand: "Thy fate is the common fate of all," we read, "Into each life some rain must fall." Did he say that? Or: "Oh reader, stoop down and write/With thy finger in the dust:" Or: "Under the spreading chestnut-tree/The village smithy stands." Or: "Hardy a man is now alive,Who remembers that famous day." ("Paul Revere's Ride"). See what I mean? Try this quintain: "Lives of great men all remind us/We can make our lives sublime./And, departing, leave behind us/Footprints on the sands of time." That one will always get you; the "sands of time" may not mean much when you're ten years old, but what's important now is that you've dreamt it since you were ten years old. There's a guilt in all of this, especially if you're literary. Here's the grand old man, the sweet-singer of our youths—not like the creaky National Monument Robert Frost, or Carl Sandburg who needed a haircut, but Longfellow. You're supposed to revere his work, even if you can no longer read it. I feel guilty even as I type. He's ours.
and "perilous night" and you wait respectfully for "bombs bursting in air" because it is all engraved too deeply, too long ago, to erase. All rhetoric, of course. Not good, but still ours. True, when you get the hero of Longfellow laid in front of you—all excerpted from the famous pieces—he's even pretty damned good. But basically, the rest is 19th c. kitsch. It's Rud McKean.

I like to place him in the tradition of "popular poets," every one of them more popular than "poet." Hawthorne sold 10,000 copies on its first day out in London alone; over a lifetime, Longfellow was more popular than Tennyson—both there and here. But riot royalty hailed him in and did to him whatever retrospective thing it is that royalty does to heroes. Massachusetts children presented him with an armchair made of wood from the original "spreading chestnut tree."

Although he is a diet better than the following, he illustrates the writer-reader love affair they managed. Martin Tupper (1810-1889), an Englishman, made a handsome living singing the glories of the Anglo-Saxon race and composing verses (lots of achrymation) and never once departed from a certain "poetic." He's afraid. He's afraid. He's afraid.

That would never happen to Longfellow. Unlike Eliot or Yeats or Frost, Longfellow was not a poet who got much better over the years. He became institutionalized, "our national poet," certainly safer than Whitman (and he rhymed). Most commentators agree that canonization was just fine with Longfellow. Many, like me, think that Longfellow—from the first free of financial pressure—spent a lifetime hiding out. What better place to hide than in a poetry of Generalized Emotion and mainstream morality? And then later, in Enshrinement?

He writes of a man who would "wail himself round with a fort."

Elsewhere, writing about visiting a little church among its graves, he sounds the familiar escapist chord:

Here would I stay, and let the world
With its dismal thunders roar and roll;
Storms do not rend the sail that is furl'd;
Nor like a dead leaf, tossed and shrivell'd
In an eddy of wind, is the anchored soul.

He kept the sail furl'd, and avoided striking the individual note which might give away the person. With three exceptions, the "storms did not rend the sail," and when they did we hear little about it. One critic who wrote an introduction to his works says it right out: "Longfellow was afraid ... He's remained nameless, inexpressible ... He made a small but strong fort of verse." As a crowned bard, "he was hiding in the crowd." His letters, fairly dull, and his diaries, do tell us of insomnia, severe headaches, lethargy, and more than your usual amount of melancholy. Something was in there. But he cannot name it. His complaints are symptoms, not causes. He was afraid. But of what?

Terry Plunkett

Hallowell

teaches at SMU

1807 Born Portland
1821 Entered Bowdoin
1825 Graduated Bowdoin, agreed to become professor of modern languages there
1826-29 Traveled in Europe to "prepare himself"
1829 Began teaching at Bowdoin
1831 Married Mary Sleeper Potter
1834-36 Again toured Europe; wife's death there
1836 Began professorship at Harvard
1839 "The Psalm of Life" (in Voices of the Night)
1842 The Village Blacksmith
1843 Married Fanny Appleton & settled in Craigie House in Cambridge
1847 Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie
1854 Retired from Harvard
1855 The Song of Hiawatha
1858 The Courtship of Miles Standish
1861 Fanny's death
1863 "Paul Revere's Ride," in Tales of a Wayside Inn
1882 Died at Craigie House

(Ed. Note: Each year KENNEBEC reviews a Maine writer from an earlier generation. Previous subjects include Robert P. Tristram Coffin, Willard Straight, and E.A. Robinson.)
My Lost Youth

Often I think of the beautiful town
That is seated by the sea;
Often in thought go up and down
The pleasant streets of that dear old town.
And my youth comes back to me,
And a verse of a Lapland song
Is haunting my memory still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I can see the shadowy lines of its trees,
And catch, in sudden gleams,
The sheen of the far-surrounding seas,
And islands that were the Hesperides
Of all my boyish dreams.
And the burden of that old song,
It murmurs and whispers still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the black wharves and the slips,
And the sea-tides tossing free;
And the Spanish sailors with bearded lips,
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,
And the magic of the sea.
And the voice of that wayward song,
Is singing and saying still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the balustrads by the shore,
And the fort upon the hill;
The sunrise gun, with its hollow roar,
The drum-beat repeated o'er and o'er,
And the bugle wild and shrill.
And the music of that old song
Throbs in my memory still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the sea-fight far away!
How it thundered o'er the tide!
And the dead captains, as they lay
In their graves, o'erlooking the tranquil bay,
Where they in battle died.
And the sound of that mournful song
Goes through me with a thrill:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I can see the breezy dome of groves,
The shadows of Deering's Woods;
And the friendships old and the early loves
Come back with a Sabbath sound,
as of doves
In quiet neighbourhoods.
And the verse of that sweet old song,
It flutters and murmurs still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the gleams and glooms that dart
Across the schoolboy's brain;
The song and the silence in the heart,
That in part are prophecies, and in part
Are longings wild and vain.
And the voice of that fitful song
Sings on, and is never still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

There are things of which I may not speak;
There are dreams that cannot die;
There are thoughts that make the strong heart weak,
And bring a pallor into the cheek,
And a mist before the eye.
And the words to that fatal song
Come over me like a chill:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

Strange to me now are the forms I meet
When I visit the dear old town;
But the native air is pure and sweet,
And the trees that o'ershadow each well-known street,
As they balance up and down,
Are singing the beautiful song,
Are sighing and whispering still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

And Deering's Woods are fresh and fair,
And with joy that is almost pain
My heart goes back to wander there,
and among the dreams of the days that were,
I find my lost youth again.
And the strange and beautiful song,
The groves are repeating it still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

H. W. L.

*This was the engagement between the Enterprise and Boxer, off the harbour of Portland, in which both captains were slain. They were buried side by side, in the cemetery on Mountjoy. H. W. L.
Inhaling Longfellow

Growing up in a small Maine town during the 30’s gave most of us who underwent the experience a last glimpse of the 19th century. Many of the families who lived in the village kept a cow or two and a flock of hens. Life was simple but rarely easy. Three or four generations often lived under the same roof. By Thanksgiving, cellars were lined with barrels, hessian bags, and jars—all filled to the brim with fruit and vegetables from the gardens. Meat and fish were hanging smoked or laid away in brine. From then until spring, open in gusts of Thanksgiving, cellars were lined with barrels, the long cold evenings; it was a time for popcorn and apples, stories, games, the activities did little to curb her appetite because she worked on all of us from time to time, urging one of us to write a single verse, or another to memorize the opening stanza of Evangeline. Over her years, there were ninety-six of them, I believe that only my Uncle Clarence and I came anywhere near meeting her expectations, mainly as listeners, although both of us could recite from memory the first two or three verses from a half dozen or so well-known works.

The standard fare was Longfellow, Whitman, and Lowell—probably in that order, at least in respect to the amount of attention given to them. My grandfather, who ordinarily managed to disappear during poetry sessions, usually hung around when The Village Blacksmith was on the program. The lines, “his brow is wet with honest sweat, he earns whate’er he can, and looks the whole world in the face, for he owes not any man,” were so in tune with his own work ethic that he would linger in the doorway to the next room until the passage was over. My younger brother would rarely listen for very long—he would linger in the doorway to the next room until the passage was over. My younger brother would rarely listen for very long—”he hears the parson pray and preach, he hears his daughter’s voice, singing in the village choir, and it makes his heart rejoice. It sounds to him like her mother’s voice, singing in Paradise! He needs must think of her once more, how in the grave she lies; and with his hand, rough hand he wipes a tear out of his eyes.

Toiling,—sorrowing,—sorrowing, onward through life he goes; each morning sees some task begin, each evening sees it close; something attempted, something done, has earned a night’s repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend, for the lessons thou hast taught! Thus at the flaming forge of life our fortunes must be wrought: thus on its sounding anvil shaped each burning deed and thought.

H.W.L.

The Village Blacksmith

Under a spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,
His brow is like the sun;
He wears a sateen cap, and long
And looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man.

Week in, week out, from mom till night,
You can hear his bellows blow;
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,
With measured beat and slow,
Like a secon ringing the village bell;
When the evening sun is low.

And children coming home from school
Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church,
And sit among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach,
He hears his daughter’s voice,
Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother’s voice,
Singing in Paradise!
He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;
And with his hand, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.

Charles Danforth
Augusta
Is Academic Dean at UMA
& grow up in Castine

The Song of Hiawatha

Eac he morning sees some task begin,
Eac h evening sees it close;
He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;
And with his hand, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling,—sorrowing,—sorrowing, onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night’s repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lessons thou hast taught! Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped Each burning deed and thought!

H.W.L.
Hiawatha: Did Longfellow Know Indians?

Should you ask me, whence these stories!
Whence these legends and traditions,
With the odors of the forest,
With the dew and damp of meadows,
With the curling smoke of wigwams,
With the rushing of great rivers,
With their frequent repetitions,
And their wild reverberations,
As of thunder in the mountains?
I should answer, I should tell you,
"From the forests and the prairies,
From the great lakes of the Northland,
From the land of the Ojibways,
From the mountains, moors, and fen-lands,
Where the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
Feeds among the reeds and rushes.
I repeat them as I heard them
From the lips of Nawadaha,
The musician, the sweet-singer."

from the opening of Hiawatha

Although Longfellow-bashing can be fun, I consider his influence as an ideologue too serious for mockery. Hiawatha offers us a revealing look at the cultural values of 19th c. white society. As a romantic portrait of the "noble savage," it influenced popular thinking about American Indians. This creative exploitation of tribal legends not only distorts the native heritage for fancy, but confuses authentic indigenous traditions.

He wrote Hiawatha at the height of the "Great Transformation": steamboats, railways, hundreds of factories, waves of immigrants washing up—all brought about a national market economy. The incessant demand for new land and cheap natural resources led to campaigns to force the aboriginal inhabitants from their ancestral territories. The following view, expressed in an 1838 literary journal, is typical: "The moment the New World was discovered, the doom of the Savage Races who inhabited it was sealed; they must either conform to the institutions of the Europeans, or disappear from the face of the earth. . . . The Savage tribes who held this continent by an uncertain occupancy, roaming over vast regions as hunters, or in deadly warfare with each other, had no right, in the nature of things, to shut this half of the world against the introduction of civilized life."

In contrast to the western frontier, where natives struggled to defend their homeland against invading white aggressors, New England's Indians had been subdued by force of arms during the preceding centuries. Impoverished, linguaging on minuscule reservations, the small remnant tribes suffering their miserable existence were considered harmless. Whites generally believed in the "inevitable and speedy extinction" of Indians. Indeed, it became popular to write about "the last of the Mohicans," and soon. In a rather gloomy account of Maine's Indians, a regional historian penned this melodramatic musing in 1833: "Now since the deeds of the savage no longer make us qual, the feelings of humanity may predominate, and we may . . . indulge the tear that steals impassioned o'er the nation's doom; To us twa from Adam's stock is dear, and tears of sorrow deck an Indian's tomb."

Infatuated by Europe's romantic movement, however, and reflecting their own dissatisfaction with modernization, some American artists perceived their growing alienation by creative escapism. Longfellow was one of these. Romantics, celebrating "otherness," they idealized the exotic, glorified the past, and worshipped nature. In the USA, a "country without a past," they turned to nature as "untamed wilderness" and imagined Indians as "living fossils from a primordial period."

A burgeoning nationalism also was responsible for this sudden interest in Indian traditions. Rather than tapping into Europe's history, some artists employed Native American culture to legitimate the new nation's ideological roots. This "romantic" developed as a reaction against the influx of poor European immigrants, especially Irish Catholics, which among some WASPS resulted in a virtual xenophobia. As a result, Indians were "in."

Not surprisingly, these trends affected Longfellow. One of his classmates at Bowdoin published a poem about a local 17th c. Abenaki sagegrove, titled "The Fall of Worrumbro." In 1835, Longfellow followed suit with "The Indian Hunter." Especially influential was cultural anthropologist Henry Schoolcraft. Arguing that it was important "to rescue from oblivion the annals of a noble-minded, but unfortunate and persecuted race," Schoolcraft was one of the first American scholars interested in "Indian history." Serving as Indian Agent for the U.S. Government at the Ojibway reservation of Sault Ste Marie from 1822 to 1841, Schoolcraft was married to the daughter of a local Ojibway woman and white fur trader. He knew tribal lore and spoke the language. From the early 1830s onwards, he published accounts of Indian legends, which Longfellow read. In 1837, Schoolcraft observed: "The early history of the aboriginals is taking a deeper hold on literary attention in America." In 1839, he wrote: Algic Researches [Algonquian], followed by Onöota, or Characteristics of the Red Race of America (1847), and a monumental six-volume study, Historical and Statistical Information Respecting . . . the Indian Tribes of the United States (1851-1857).

In 1855, although famous, retired from teaching, and snug in his Craigie House in Cambridge with his wife Fanny, Longfellow nonetheless heard the sneers of foreign cavilers, and the complaints of domestic critics, "that the poetry of America is not essentially American." He decided to "do for our old Indian legends what the unknown Finnish poets had done for theirs . . . Inspired by the Finnish epic Kalevala and the Scandinavian Eda, he sat down to create an authentic 'national' poem."

Longfellow also probably read an 1846 article by Ephraim Squier, "Manabozho and the Great Serpent; an Algonquian Tradition." Squier learned this legend about Manitou Lake from Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh, an Ojibway (Chippewa) tribesman also known as George Cowper, who recited the tradition of [M]I-Nanabozho, their mythic hero who brought his people great gifts such as tobacco, hunting, and agriculture. Too, the poet used personal experiences. According to his brother's biography, Longfellow saw "a few of the struggling remainder of the Algonquiens [Wabanski] in Maine," and in 1837, as a professor at Harvard, he "witnessed the display of [Chief] Black Hawk and his Sons and Foxes on Boston Common, and a few years before he made the acquaintance of the fine-tempered Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh [alias George Cowper], the Ojibway chief, and entertained him at his house, trusting not unlikely that he might derive . . . some helpful suggestions."

Thus, almost a quarter century after the new consciousness began, and with some (white) academic knowledge and some personal experience, and being neurilly, this poet-of-the-north in 1855 gave us Hiaawatha.

There is no doubt that Longfellow grafted his poem on the Ojibway legend of the culture hero Nanabozho. Curious, however, that he used the name of a legendary Mohawk chief Hiawatha ("Seeker after Wampum"), founder of the Iroquois Confederacy. Indeed, in a letter to his German translator, Longfellow acknowledged that: "Hiawatha is Iroquois. I chose it instead of Manabozho [sic] (Ojibway) for the sake of euphony. It means 'the wise seer, or prophet'—Hiawatha the Wise."

Of this deliberate confusion, a critic later wrote: "if a Chinese traveler, during the middle ages, inquiring into the history and religion of the western nations, had confounded King Alfred with King Arthur, and both with Odin, he could not have made a more preposterous confusion of names and characters." I agree.

In conclusion: Fifty years later, the Ojibway staged a "Passion Play," based (ironically) on their traditions as described in Hiawatha. Not surprisingly, Nanabozho's traditional position as culture hero was usurped by the "prophet" Hiawatha: "To them, it has always been a matter of great pride that the poet . . . immortalized their leader as the central figure . . . With the utmost egotism they welcomed the idea of a national play based on his version." To the Ojibway, Hiawatha had acquired all the sacredness of honored tradition. To me, inserting this imaginary lore into their authentic culture, these Native Americans created a paradox which causes me to think twice about bashing Longfellow: fiction has become fact, making it tough to ridicule the Harvard bard for his poetic license without also undercutting the victims of his epic excess.

Harold E.L. Prins
Hallowell

In a Lecture in Anthropology at Bowdoin
By the Shores

I.

By the shores of the Platte
the name Hiawatha leaped out at me
as I rummaged in the phone book.
And I thought, my mother knew
and put upon her infant the charge of nobility.
I closed the book to the random name
and went to the library for the chosen one
and came home to my silence
by the long past and near past
and sat on the shores of living places.
I saw the Kennebec again.

By the time I was born Longfellow's
better part of town had turned worse.
But from the start, over me a seven-foot wingspan
pushed the warmth of upper air
down to where I stood, contemplating a pin
from the Five and Ten for beauty
to prime the hard-wearing cloth of my dress,
taking home every worn book in the library,
a harvest for the cargo pockets of my mind.
Zen asks, What's dream, what's walking?
I was the land where lavender blooms in green moss.
The flower and the stone were the same to me.
Dream and wakening met in a higher wakening:
Reason, verse, fragrance—all one.
My parents were proud of my featherweight achievements
in the grades. They fine-tuned me to
metronome markings in the knowledge of good and evil.
I was never kissed or hugged.

II.

And the seasons moved on.
Things got better for us.
I took piano lessons.
The lowering sky of Maine held off snow all day
to give us the surprise of a blazing sunset
and the burnished floor of the porch
continuing the gold leaf of autumn,
a few chairs subdued of summer talk,
the woven broken in places.

By the shores of the Kennebec
cold winter light conditioned my muscles
in the fortress of my upstairs bedroom.
At the chipped white table,
work was done, practice put off,
books of my own increased in momentum and pages.

Would you believe I wrote about men and women
when anatomy beyond my own
was girl paper dolls modest in underwear?
My friends and I dressed them, speculating
on what "loving too much" meant
in the stories our mothers hid from us.
We never dreamed the clue was in our brothers.

III.

Memory isn't something you lose, like your way.
It's never out of mind, leading more and more
into becoming more and more
the future as it passes through the heart.
I heard myself reciting in class,
stumbling over Gitche Gumee
because my eyes wouldn't pull back,
maybe I should say the corners
pulled to my best friend Imogene
making funny faces.
I threaded Minnehaha to come
because practicing it at home
we doubled over laughing.
What if I had married the boy whose initials
carved with mine in a heart stood for years
on a tree cut down to make room
for a bigger Cony High?
By the shores of the Charles I walked
dark streets after evening classes to save
a nickel (the whole ride home cost a dime).
By the shores of the Thames, Martin.
The man I married.

IV.

As unto the bow the cord is,
So unto the man is woman.
Though she bounds him, she obeys him.
Though the treats him, yet she follows.
Useless each without the other!
We taught, we worked, we moved about.
Love is sunshine, hate is shadow.
Life is checkered shade and sunshine,
Rude by love, O Hiawatha!
Rock fields to cross, frightening winds
that distorted well-intentioned words.
Half is mine, although I follow;
Rude by patience, Laughing Water!
We lived our brotherhood,
I and thou, and the I not thou, the thou not I,
in humped and broken lines, half lights
and agitations. In warmth and comfort
and excitement beyond the human size we made together
touching on something that changes everything
itself unchanged— all the familiar
extraordinary of an ordinary pair of lives.
Infinity in a small frame.
First a speck, and then a culture,
till the air is dark with pinions...
First a shadow, then a sorrow,
Till the air is dark with anguish.

V.

By the shores of the Platte
no sweet smelling cedars,
by any other name no roses.
Face to face we speak together,
But we cannot speak when absent,
Cannot send our voices from us.
The howling, The howling.
I'll come and sit beside you.
In the mystery of my passion!
All that was unspoken!
Do not let such heavy burdens
In the groves of those you hury...
For the spirits faint beneath them.
Only give them food to carry,
Only give them fire to light them.
And quietly the quiet came,
the slow beautiful contact of presence
extending itself into flawed self, frayed,
without clues to its luminosity,
only luminous.

VI.

Morning after morning the senses
catch in the pinches of distinct detail
till the time when for the first time
what's not there becomes a human condition
apart from action.
Waves of memory rise and fall.
A wave in fact is time and motion;
truth is crest; tower
lightning-racked, lightning-lit
exposing a tunnel of amethysts inside,
the very rich hours of pinacles.
I lock fingers with the water
slipping through my fingers
by the shores of Gitche Gumee.
Nostalgia is empty, memory approaches
imagination's high ground.
Remembering the future by it,
creating it every day before me, learning
every human heart is like my own,
moment to moment I approach wholeness.
Heard the lapping of the waters,
Sounds of music, words of wonder;
"Mudway-aushka!" said the pine trees,
"Mudway-aushka!" said the water.

Ida Fasel
Denver, CO

was 1926 valedictorian at Cony H.S. & is Professor Emerita of English at U. Colorado.
All quotations from Song of Hiawatha.
Ever an Evangeline?

Eight years ago, I hurled myself along icy roads to remote outposts, such as the South Solon Meetinghouse, with four poems on a grant called "Spirit of Place: 200 Years of Maine Poetry." The readings would often begin with the opening lines of Evangeline being bellowed from the belfry or back choir loft and the people, huddled in thick overcoats, would turn to better hear the sad, familiar, tale set among "the murmuring pines and the hemlocks."

Many of us know Acadie through Longfellow's imagery: a peaceful, pristine peasant land nestled in a fruitful valley near age-old woods and the Atlantic, where "the richest was poor and the poorest lived in abundance." Unfortunately, the poet never visited the land he made famous and thus the evocative poetry remains an unsullied tabula rasa through constancy and faith.

Longfellow to Hawthorne, 1847: "This success I owe entirely to you, for being willing to forego the pleasure of writing a prose tale, which many people would have taken for poetry, that I might write a poem, which many people take for prose."

From EVANGELINE

This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks, Beard ed with moss, and, in garments green, indistinct in the twilight, Stand like Druids of old, with voices sad and prophetic; Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms. Lead from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean. Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the call of the forest.

This is the forest primeval; but where are the hearts that beneath it Leaped like the roe, when he hears in the woodland the voice of the huntsman. Where is the thatch-roofed village, the home of Acadian farmers,— Men whose lives glowed on like rivers that water the woodlands. Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of heaven? Waste are those pleasant farms, and the farmers forever departed! Scattered like dust and leaves, when the mighty blasts of October Seize them, and whirl them aloft, and sprinkle them far o'er the ocean. Naught but tradition remains of the beautiful village of Grand Pré.

Ye who believe in affection that hope, and endures, and is patient, Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of woman's decision, List to the mournful tradition, still sung by the echoes of the forest; List to a Tale of Love in Acadie, home of the happy.

H.W.L.
suggesting a comparison between the Acadians and the wandering tribes. Like Evangeline, many Acadians found their way to Louisiana while others settled in the great cities along the Atlantic, such as Philadelphia, where the now-aged maiden finds the plague-ridden body of Gabriel and, through his death, release from her life-long quest. Again, like Evangeline, many Acadians moved many times. Unlike her, however, their "restlessness" was not the result of chasing after the chimera of a "perfect love," but was forced upon them through the unkind acts of Protestant Americans who did not want to have to deal with these French-speaking, Roman Catholic, refugees. Longfellow is singularly silent on the issue of bigotry, even though it could have provided his legend-suffering saintly heroine with some character-building adversity.

Longfellow's epic presents a flawed history. In vain we look for motivation, whether political, social or psychological. Instead, we are provided with acts of Fate propelling a simple-minded empty slate over the continental USA. Neither sublime Evangeline, nor her elusive Gabriel, achieve human proportions. Which is why Evangeline works perfectly on the level of myth: no real character traits obstruct the identification of Evangeline with Faith, Constancy, Simplicity, or whatever other moral value one wishes to imbue her with.

It is on the level of myth that Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie has entered the collective memory. It does no longer matter that she was not a true historical character, nor that Longfellow took poetic license with both Acadian scenery and past. Her legend has taken on a life of its own.

In the Maritime Provinces a newspaper carries her name, while in Louisiana a state park carries the same. Her influence on the Acadian identity has been so strong that one French-Canadian historian called her "the incarnation of Acadie." Unfortunately, acceptance of Evangeline implies an acceptance of an idealized, sanitized, pre-dispersal past and a cruel fall from grace perpetrated, for no apparent reason, by another "race."

Poets indeed make dangerous historians for the poet's imaginary past may become a legend whose influence will last.

Clara Schröder
Hallowell
is a graduate of UMA, USM,
& a graduate student at UMO

Still stands the forest primeval; but under the shade of its branches
Dwells another race, with other customs and language.
Only along the shore of the mournful and misty Atlantic
Linger a few Acadian peasants, whose fathers from exile
Wandered back to their native land to die in its bosom.

Parker Cleaveland
Written on Revisiting Brunswick
in the summer of 1875

Among the many lives that I
have known,
None I remember more serene
and sweet,
More rounded in itself and more
complete,
Than his, who lies beneath this
funeral stone.
These pines, that murmur in low
monotone,
These walks frequented by
scholastic feet,
Were all his world; but in this
calm retreat
For him the Teacher's chair
became a throne.
With fond affection memory loves
to dwell
On the old days, when his
example made
A pastime of the toil of tongue
and pen;
And now amid the groves, he
loved so well
That naught could lure him
from the grateful shade,
He sleeps, but wakes elsewhere,
for God hath said, Amen!

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H.W.L.
A Tale In Six Photographs

Come along into the yard, Audie. It's much too fine a day to stay inside. I'll bring my picture album and we'll look over the photographs I have of the twins ... That's right, I have six of them, my most cherished possessions. I don't often show them to others, but I spend hours studying them by myself. Excuse me ... No, it isn't a habit again. You stay. I've had these little breakdows every so often since the tragedy, but I'll be all right now. I insist that you see the pictures. You were Jay's roommate and best friend that year—aside from Julie, of course—often since the tragedy, but I'll be all right now. I insist that you see the pictures. You were Jay's roommate and best friend that year—aside from Julie, of course—often since the tragedy, but I'll be all right now. I insist that you see the pictures.

Jude and Julie romped through their days ... You were Jude's roommate and best friend that year—aside from Julie, of course—often since the tragedy, but I'll be all right now. I insist that you see the pictures. Once I'd found this haven to build it up and then hold onto it, to hew what needed to be hewn, to make a sanctuary here for my family. In this

me nagged with concern over what was left to hay beneath those trees. This is my Jane, their mother. In the following years that radiance would turn to

We watched Julie and Jay grow into rounded and capable teens. An interest taken up by one would soon attract the attention of the other. Music, literature, science; they plunged into many areas and their involvement in a field usually led to mastery. We knew, Jane and I, that we had something special and we began to plan for their college educations.

Only John, their older brother, a worldly and disdainful boy, brought any form of discord into our lives. He kept at the twins to "split up," to find different friends and interests that would separate them. He thought their closeness didn't "look right" and seemed "weird," and since someday they would have to go on their own paths, becoming too close would make their futures difficult. So he said. His mother and I were irritated by his interference; we thought him spiteful, perhaps jealous of their bond ... No, the twins laughed at him, gently of course, and John would walk away in a huff, fearing they would melt his cold scorn and draw him to them with their charm.

Let me confide in you, Audie. Since I'm unraveling the bitter tale of our family to you—after all, you too were once attracted to Jane—doesn't it seem right that I should reveal the whole truth as I have perceived it? ... You don't impose, so have more lemonade and swing around so the sun's not in your eyes. I'm an ancient mariner; it purges me to talk, I remember. Our problem, if a real problem in truth existed, began to show itself during those "wonderful" high school years. To anyone outside the family those must have appeared sublime days for us. We prospered then; the dairy supplied two counties. Jude and Jane lighted our lives, their exuberance infusing all but John with laughter and good will.

It was John's cynicism alone, you see, his acid persistence, that upset us. How absurd it was to dream of anything, uh, unseemly in their conduct. We go through life yearning for such pure bonds as theirs appeared. John though, who had graduated from high school and was working a year with me on the farm, would not ease up on the twins. He couldn't tolerate the idea that someone somewhere might be critical of a brother and sister who were thoroughly, perhaps too seriously, in love. To this day I can't figure John's motives, whether from envy or from honest, misconceived intentions; he was relentless in his verbal abuse and finally withdrew from Julie and Jude completely—and at last from his mother and me. In spite of the horror that would follow, the gulf between John and us over the twins remains as wide today as ever. It was Jude's departure to Yale. Not yet a pensive gloomer, mind you, for John's contrary way faintly countered the gaiety of the twins. Valiantly they tried to win their brother back with outrageous jokes and pranks. They would ignore his insults and shaded innuendoes, which only enraged him further. But damn his soul, the agony he caused his mother!

I show you the first photograph again, the family gathering. See her there, my June, beautiful and happy. In the following years that radiance would turn to solemnity; she would become dismayed by John's harping at the twins, his Cassandra-ravings against what he called "their nauseous, sacrilegious, just-plain-queer love" ... Where is Jane now? Ask. Well, she's says she's away for awhile—no telling when she'll return.

This picture is of her and the twins before the kids departed for college, he to Yale, as you well know, she to Radcliffe ... Yes, again they stand together. Wouldn't it have been more natural for their mother to be in the center? ... Very good color, yes—see how clearly it shows the sadness in their eyes, the grief of separation. They couldn't really understand it, the need for parting. In some ways they were terribly innocent and naive. Recipients of large scholarships, yet clenching to childhood, to the togetherness they had imagined would never end. I gave it little thought at the time, for I felt it was a stage they would outgrow. They had known an—"idyllic" did we say?—youth that I prayed would make them strong and poised against the barbs of life.

Jane's perplexity, though, worried me. The empathy reflected in her gaze is not so much despair at the twins' leaving, I think, as a stark vision planted in her
mind by that devil John. He'd become so persistent in his baiting by early that summer that I sent him away, banished him if you will, in order that he be kept from destroying our peace entirely. He roamed around the country for a few months and later joined the army. Finally he went to Bowdoin, worked his way through—that much I can say to his credit—and then went on to law school.

Jane had become so morose by the time Jay and Julie went off in the fall that I made her see a psychiatrist in Boston. I don't recall the technical terms, but she was suffering from a fear of calamity, of impending doom, that could not be clearly defined and which had no evident tangible origin. But I knew it was the specter in her mind formed from John's picking at the twins' relationship.

When Jay left for school, a few days earlier than Julie, our world crumbled at last. Jane wouldn't speak; she confined herself to her room to dwell alone with her phantoms. Julie spent her last days home waiting on her mother from dawn to bedtime. It all seemed silly to me, and you can believe it was very unpleasant. Then Julie left too, but only after ardent persuasion by me, and I buried myself in work and in an effort to bring Jane around. Gradually, after the kids had left, she began to come out of it. At least she emerged from her room, but there was little spark to be found in her manner.

Shortly before Christmas we received a card from Julie asking that we make up the guest room for the holidays. She wanted to bring home a young man she had met at school. Where had the years gone? Our princess had become involved in a serious romance—he was a senior there at Harvard, name of Peter Tracy.

See, Julie and Peter taken Christmas Eve. She was full of boll that night; you can see the way she's teasing him, her face with that puckish look that tears me apart whenever I see the picture ... I liked Peter very much, yes. Jane did too; it showed in the way she regained some of her old vitality, though she never said much to let on—I think for fear of implying a comparison between Julie-and-Peter and Julie-and-Jay, if you see what I mean ...

Something happened, you see, that Christmas, something strange and eerie. In ecstasy we were in the midst of despair, and I could only sense the fact without being able to articulate it. Julie had grown and Jay had lagged behind, retarded in his emotional maturity. She was in love with Peter. Her enthusiasm and her zest were directed toward him. It was Peter who received those little signs of endearment once reserved for Jay alone. Not that she had in any real sense cooled toward her brother. His presence remained part of her happiness, I'm sure, but he couldn't understand the need for sharing her affection. He thought himself an outcast, for he was no longer the wellspring of her joy. His presence remained part of her happiness, I'm sure, but he couldn't understand the need for sharing her affection. He thought himself an outcast, for he was no longer the wellspring of her joy.

On the surface the three kids seemed to mingle in harmony. However, a faintly perceptible hysteria in Jay's laughter chilled me. There was a manic intensity in his manner over that Christmas holiday. He didn't mope. He spoke to no one of any distress, yet I sensed his world had been shattered by the coming of the intruder. An unsuspecting boy had driven himself like a wedge through the bond uniting Jay and his sister ...

Julie? No, to her the world was a great playground, and as long as Jay appeared happy no subtle sign of uneasiness on his part would get through to her. They all sang and joked, laughing late into the night around the fire; that Jay's laughter bordered on the psychotic in his anguish was the furthest thing from her mind. She was not callous, Lord knows, and she was far from stupid, but she'd become so accustomed to being the center of happy scenes that she could never imagine
laughter not from the heart.

I watched them anxiously from a distance. What to do? I couldn't take Jay aside and say, "Look, it's all right. She's just in love with him; she still loves you alone. Be patient and things will revert to normal." At the time I was not all that certain of my judgement of Jay's behavior. Besides, to have suggested the intimacy of their old ties would return would have been false and he would have seen right through me. I couldn't intervene; I sat back and waited for things to work out, basking with Jane in the glow exuded by Julie and Peter. . .

Yes, of course it was painful for me, but I must forge on to the end. If I begin telling and retelling our story, perhaps I myself will gain understanding and see what sins I committed against my family. Now you were Jay's friend, but you only knew she had some "problem" at home and that he was very close to his sister. You must have been aware of his depth, Audie, of his goodness and sensitivity. You wrote in May of that year that since Christmas you had noticed a change in him that disturbed you, and for the first time I responded with some details of his background. You know how appreciative I was—and am—of your loyalty and concern . . .

Here is a picture of Jay with his new motorcycle. I bought it for him at the end of that year, a delayed high school graduation gift. It's not the Jay of the other photographs, is it? The eyes peer through narrow slits and the facial skin has grown tight and hard. That summer he was supposed to work on the farm. Whenever I could keep him from tearing around the countryside with that damned bike. He had no interest in helping me, for she had gone on.

While she was experiencing what must have been for her an unrestrained joy of life, Jay turned to brooding, jacking out in useless, futile efforts to fill a void.

He became cruel and vicious toward his mother, without shame, tormenting her by drinking and hanging around in town with any slut he could get on his arm. He became embroiled in a three-way shouting match. To think of it now makes me positively ill. When he told his mother to go to hell for about the fifth time, I flew into a rage and grabbed him by the shirt, driven to the physical force against one of my children for the first time ever. I had not raised a hand even against John, though Lord knows he had often enough deserved it.

One day in exasperation, hearing him yelling at her from way out in the field, I came in and became embroiled in a three-way shouting match. To think of it now makes me positively ill. When he told his mother to go to hell for about the fifth time, I flew into a rage and grabbed him by the shirt, driven to the physical force against one of my children for the first time ever. I had not raised a hand even against John, though Lord knows he had often enough deserved it.

I was blind that day in the kitchen, the culmination of all my fears and doubts built up, and I shook Jay in fury. "Wake up, son!" I shouted, my hands trembling and threatening. "Use your head, will you? You're driving us crazy with all your damned foolishness. So Julie's gone, and she's in love with Peter—and it's not your affair, Jay! Stop dwelling on her. You're only jeopardizing her chance for happiness. Is that what you want, to ruin her life? God, Jay, I finished, "this just isn't normal!"

I guess I went too far, but words don't always come gracefully when you're backed against a wall. He stared at me with a look that stilled me—and shamed me, for deep down I was well aware of the anguish he was going through. I knew nothing I could say would repair the damage, and I felt myself sag and grow small before his hateful glare. "You bastard!" he cried, shoving me away and rushing out the door. Was he appalled and humiliated? Had I understood the root of his concern? I do not know.

Jane took to her bed again, betrayed by another son, her darling. Disoriented, she lost interest; I had to hire a woman to come days and look after her. With little hope or spirit I worked long hours in the fields. At night before trudging to my room I'd pause at Jane's door and watch her for a minute as she twisted in her sleep, the coldness of our relationship now frozen in the air. Jay never came back. From the woman who cared for Jane I picked up bits and pieces about him, how he had done this or that awful thing: a couple of nights in jail for disorderly conduct, fights with town thugs, harassing motorists by weaving in and out of traffic on his motorcycle. I'd sigh and shake my head and then go off to the fields.

One last picture... All right, we'll walk down by the brook... No, no thank you; I will finish. Hear me out and don't offer solace. Come, Audie, let's sit on the bank, the same spot where the picture of their fourteenth birthday party was taken... On a day like today, look, you can see nearly to the end of the meadow. Two years ago a hundred head of mules grazed there.

The last one—Julie and Peter on their return from the Rockies. They had just announced their engagement. Julie and I had a long talk beforehand. I told her of Jay's actions, of his strange disengagement. I mentioned what I thought to be the cause of his misery, his love for her, for incredibly she had never fully recognized the strength of his attachment, or else it had become a thing she took for granted. At any rate, bless the girl, in tears she offered to break off with Peter if it would save her brother! I dissuaded her—she had to live her own life, and Jay had to face reality. I felt that if Julie left home it might revive her mother, knowing Julie was happy and at peace. I gave her my glad consent and took this picture that afternoon. Their engagement was announced in the papers.

The next morning, having learned of Julie's final separation from him, Jay roared out here on his motorcycle, his heart filled with violence. First he tried to find Peter, who fortunately was in town; then he ran out into the field where Julie had joined me for lunch. He was stark mad. Julie and I could only gape at each other in horror as he approached, his arms flailing senselessly. He stumbled across the furrows toward us. Julie stood up and awaited him, her body rigid and set. I felt he'd seckle her, so I placed myself between them, distraught at the bizarre confrontation between my beautiful children.

He halted a few paces from us, panting like a rabid dog. "Julie!" he cried, his voice edged with question and disbelief. I stepped back, unable to speak, as they gazed at each other. In that moment I sensed the end of our world. I could only feel the need for saving what I could, of at least keeping her from being savaged by the animal who was my son.

She took the matter upon herself in her helplessness. Clasping her brother, hugging him to her, she murmured hurried, consoling words. "Why?" he pleaded. "Why can't we be like we were? Don't do this, Julie! You can't love him!"

"I do love him, Jay," she said, dropping onto her knees in the dirt and pulling him down beside her. "I love him with all my heart and we're going to be married. My love for him has nothing to do with my love for you, which is strong as ever. But we're grown up now, Jay, and life has changed. We spent our childhoods here, loving each other, unaware of other kinds of love. Don't you see? Jay, accept it—I'm going to marry him. Love me as I love you and wait for the time when you'll find the woman who will be your wife."

She kissed him; I was speechless. Her maturity, her wisdom, her delicate treatment of him!

But poor Jay, my troubled boy, only snorted in his scorn for her plea. He jumped up, glaring down at her in wild-eyed distraction, his head shaking lightly to deny her words, then turned and ran toward the house. Julie noise and came to me. Our hands joined in a kind of solemn ritual. We watched Jay career down the road on his motorcycle.

As though struck with a psychic revelation, Julie pulled away from me, a look of terror in her eyes. "Wait...!

I've got to go after him!" she cried, already running.

I guess she knew she had not heard, would not accept what she had begged of him, and she was certain of his madness.

She had not run fifty yards when we heard the explosion, the surge of flames and smoke above the trees.

I hurried as fast as I was able, my whole being crying out against the world as I ran, but she had beaten me to the spot by several minutes. Beside the inferno lying around and devouring a tree, his body lay in a disjointed heap.

She stood spellbound by the flames as I came up, gazing into the fire as though waiting for it to die. With all my might I screamed at her. She turned like a robot and looked at me, finally staggering over and falling into my arms. Together we kept a vigil over his body until people came. I don't know how long it was; they placed myself between them, distraught at the bizarre confrontation between my beautiful children.

She stood spellbound by the flames as I came up, gazing into the fire as though ready to make a leap. With all my might I screamed at her. She turned like a robot and looked at me, finally staggering over and falling into my arms. Together we kept a vigil over his body until people came. I don't know how long it was; they placed myself between them, distraught at the bizarre confrontation between my beautiful children.

These photographs are all that remain to remind me of the progress of our fall.

We should nurse the days of joy and not look ahead... After a long postponement they were married. She lives in dull contentment; to those who don't know her she must seem a typical housewife engaged in all sorts of humanization projects.

At the moment I sensed the end of our world. I could only feel the need for saving what I could, of at least keeping her from being savaged by the animal who was my son.

She took the matter upon herself in her helplessness. Clasping her brother, hugging him to her, she murmured hurried, consoling words. I guess she knew she had not heard, would not accept what she had begged of him, and she was certain of his madness.

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Humpbacks At Jeffrey's Ledge

Summer in Kennebunkport, the time
for litter over Goose Rocks Beach, traffic
knotted through Dock Square, the time
to leave behind the tourist-crowded town.

Twenty-six miles off Maine, out
on the uninhabited waters
over Jeffrey's Ledge, that's where
I knew I was
where I should be. There,
among phalaropes, drifting,
our boat of eager ocean-goers happened upon
two huge smooth whales. Lulled
to sleep by tide,
white flippers motionless and brilliant
as treasure, they lay
letting the sea bring me
close enough.

A breath!
A cool, wet breath steaming
from a blow-hole
towards a cloud, and drizzling
down through the sticky air, moistening
my bare skin.

We had awakened them, or the sun
was too sweet for sleep; two large eyes
opened up for white light, or green sea
or me.

The breath again!
And a dive, their knobby snouts slipping
to darker fathoms.
Then a breach, both giants
twisting in mid-air, flippers
skipping the water like laughter.
Breath and dive, breach and dive, until
their flukes rose so high, then
slipped beneath the surface
down to where
I could not see.

I don't know
what made them rise again,
breath the water
just below my outstretched arms
I don't know
what made them dive again—
a deep, deep dive—
as if there were
some perfect depth.

Allison Childs
Ithica, NY
graduated from UMA, UMF

The Facts of Catching

My father ice fishing at night
after his father forbade it
comes up with a pickerel
of record length
and runs
only to fall through
where it's thin,
nealing glittering moonlight
ten feet away
till knees and elbows
pull him to shore.

His father, seeming
to be wakened so late,
admires the long body
still breathing,
shaping the cardboard
on which, by tradition,
the largest fish alone
are outlined,
sketched in, the facts
of their catching
noted underneath:
how, bair, fisherman.

And I, son and grandson,
pampered to the story's
telling and retelling,
should be listed
as witness, except
I've got it all wrong:
grandfather was that boy
poorly dressed
for a midwinter's vigil
out on forbidden ice.

What's the difference?
I answer back,
to myself:
as long as it's understood
how magnificent fish
get caught, drawn,
handled down;
and how honor
may sometimes follow
a broken word
between son and father,
a shattered pond
freezing over in the background.

Carl Little
Somesville
is a freelance writer & editor

Keillor comes on
with perfect fiddlin' and fun;
Winter's wild Wolf Eyes
teaching us our own howl.
Right here in town!

Two stars for home
past lattice-laced backshore estates,
by Buckport's bridged bay,
inland to our ledges,
our own moonmad den.

Patricia Smith Ranzoni
Bucksport
is an educational consultant
Night River

When the tide’s out there’s a lot of mud to get through to reach the water. Thick mud, black and cold. When the bluefish are running it’s different. Sharp those blues, their fins, teeth. I remember one day that summer when I was twelve: we were out in the boat and nine-year-old Lizzy peed over the side. I needed to but didn’t, so my stomach hurt for the last part of the trip. Out there with the men in the boat, he wasn’t the same as on some nights, those nights, under water.

The water was green. Smooth bottle green, like the song, “Nine Green Bottles Hanging on the Wall.” My sister and I used to sing that song other summers driving in the rain, small country roads in England where picnics were always rained out; roses lay crumpled on the ground, sodden, and the smell was of lavender and smoke.

But that’s not the river, smooth as milk; in the evening after supper when fireworks came out we’d go there. High with the idea of it, the older kids, Lizzy, Jake, Anne, and me. I was the oldest—besides him, and that was the best part knowing he’d be there too. My old babysitter, Jan, whose kids I now looked after, wouldn’t come. She’d stay back with the little kids, hers and his, put them to bed or wash the dishes. Sometimes I wished she’d come with us too.

To the river. It was hot those nights, none of the five of us wearing clothes and Annie just beginning to show hair under her arms and on her pubes. I already had some, remember it turning, beginning to change from light to dark, a whole froth of hair. They noticed too.

In the river, we slipped in so easily, night and the fireworks; I didn’t like touching the mud on the bottom, kept my feet up; the tide was high then, we only swam when the tide was high. Like fish we’d butt up against each other, but fish don’t squeal, giggle, shriek. When he picked me up under water, screaming and writhing like the rest, his legs moved funny places. Extra parts seemed to brush up on me, my body felt limp as a weed or a grass on the muddy banks. I didn’t want to touch my feet to the squelchy mud bottom; somehow clutching on to him was better and worse.

Over on the other side away from the marshes birds slept. And the ocean. A roar. Plum Island. Once I picked beach plums there and made beach plum jelly and rose hip jam, but that was later. This was now and wet—hair, skin, lips, all of me submerged in green that was black and thick and slow. Everything was honey. It was being touched along one leg. Or sitting in the livingroom with the TV on and knowing somehow I was being watched. I would look out of the side of my eye too. We both liked blueberries and cream water, screaming and writhing like the rest, his legs moved funny places. Extra parts seemed to brush up on me, my body felt limp as a weed or a grass on the muddy banks. I didn’t want to touch my feet to the squelchy mud bottom; somehow clutching on to him was better and worse.

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Late Morning on the Kennebec

The river here drawn down so low
around the sandy flats, as if by
wounds far off and mortal
whose progress tempts these deer
to leave the murky grass and forest
of the eastern banks. Two does,
a clumsy fawn, and then so still
they look just like the air between them
until a gear of care will sip each tongue
in turn to tip the old side’s
long connections. Nature so didactic
frets with meanings for the
moment they have not heard something
in a willow’s song, the quick last glance
that carves a ripple left to
dive into and the widening sun
to drink the morning leaf by leaf.
What the sky does to the river lingers
for the eye that like a hand stretched out
has thought its touch explains.

David Adams
Mecklenberg, NY
Bought in Maine for years

Sheepscot
from Repasis
(Book II of a Long Poem)

Through renewes song
from the ravine, dark,
here where
the Abenaki tonguez lives
in river-names,
Sheepscot, (’Su’dkat’? “Stream deeps”?
or “cry of grass”?)
thrush tongue unfurls old nine-tune: arpeggio,
jagged,
strings, distinct,
plucked;

“aboriginal language”
of these streams, swales,
Father Rasles jotted down
a word list,
from a branch of the Algonquin tribe;
as a clavichord
hlyly strummed, or Dream’s lute
(known infected, voices sound
as in Tuscany,
local tribes, “Passamaquoddy, Penobscot,”
as in Greek: two planes,
and it, its diphthongs)

If... beauty of... their language... known
in Europe, seminaries... would... teach it

David Gordon
Sheepscot

Leon

It rained and rained and rained. It came down in huge crystalline drops that plopped on the tops of automobiles, sidewalks and people. The torrent splattered mud on everything to within three feet above the ground in some places. The intensity of the rain was bad enough, winding along in sheets that moved and undulated like a liquid, earthbound northern lights. But it was the unusual size of the drops that held everybody in awe. Frank Simmons over on the East Lake road swore he saw one of his buckets fill up in less than an hour.

The rain had been coming down now for almost three weeks, not stopping for long even when it managed to. Virtually all the towns along the rivers were under water, and any road that wasn’t paved was in danger of becoming a greasy quagmire. Tractors were mired in fields, trucks and wood skidders were hopelessly stuck in the woods, and many jobs and activities were coming to a standstill.

It was on the third Friday of this deluge that Leon screwed the cap down on his thermos bottle and stared at the rain through the window of his pick-up truck. “Three weeks of this,” he said. “I don’t believe it.”

On the passenger side of the truck Jack rolled the window down an inch and blew cigarette smoke out into the rain. Leon hated cigarette smoke and thought he could feel a headache coming on. “Yup,” Jack said, “we’re not going to be working much longer if this keeps up.”

The woods were shiny and wet. At this moment the pine boughs were swaying from the force of the downpour. As Leon stared through the windshield there came a lull in the rain, diminishing the pounding on the cab of the truck. He impatiently started to pour another cup of coffee from his thermos when Jack motioned towards the shanty that served as an office for the Sanderson mill. Emil Sanderson, his wet yellow slicker glistening, was holding the door open. Leaning out into the rain he motioned the two men inside.

“I think this is it,” Jack said as he thrust open the door of the pick-up. Leon muttered, “Yeah, you’re probably right,” and bailed out of his side of the truck. They landed with a splash on the muddy forest floor. The footings was tricky as the two men sloshed their way through muddy wheel ruts towards the shelter. They walked past the large sawblade and carriage that the logs were sawn on. The mill, which was powered by a diesel engine, was covered by a roof only, the sides being open. The diesel engine was covered by a blue tarp. The offices was at the far end.

As Leon entered through the door he looked directly at Emil. Normally he would have looked at the calendar on the far wall; a picture of an athletic, nearly nude woman standing in a green clearing with a chainsaw beside her on the ground, and she smiling as if all you needed was the chainsaw to make you the man she always wanted. CORLISS CHAINSAWS and MACPHERSON POWER PRODUCTS read the bold print on the calendar. Leon was a man of fantasy, but he ignored the calendar this time; he watched the foreman’s face as the door was closed against the weather.

Emil was straight to the point. “I don’t imagine it’ll come as any surprise to you that things have come to a screeching halt around here.” Leon looked around the room. Lonnie and Rafe were standing against the wall looking uncomfortable. Leon knew that Emil would keep them on hand since they had been with him from the beginning, but if the weather didn’t dry up soon even they would have a vacation. “We have plenty of orders to fill,” Emil continued, “but we’ve cut all of our own logs and until this shit stops coming down and the woods get workable again, there won’t be a whole lot to do. Rafe and Lonnie can do what maintenance needs to be taken care of around here.”

He shrugged his shoulders. “Sorry. I’ll let you know when things change. This can’t last forever.”

Leon dropped off Jack at the house he lived in with his mother and started for home. He watched the faded yellow line on the road, the wet pavement and the surrounding green of the woods. Along this road the trees seemed to close in, to be trying to overgrow the shoulder as if they wanted to reclaim the area taken over by civilization. That’s why Leon liked this road. It gave him the feeling that nature was still in charge here; that he was here only by way of her permission. The whack-whack of the wiper blades had become so much a part of his being that he didn’t hear them anymore. He muttered to himself as he drove. “Oh man... just when I was getting caught up... I should be used to it... I should be used to it.” He turned up the country music on the radio.
Leon drove past the entrance to the side road he lived on, continued down the main road about a half mile and then turned right onto an ancient side road which disappeared tunnel-like into the trees. There were no houses on the road, it being hardly more than a widened path. It had been paved at some distant in the past and had a good bed of stone as well as broken chunks of thin asphalt. He slowly bumped his way along until he came to a huge, old maple tree on the right. He turned off the road and parked under the maple. Now he was facing the river.

It was close to a hundred feet wide here and was running very high. It was as high as Leon could remember it ever being. At other places along the river it had overrun its banks flooding fields and parking lots alike. The banks were high along here, but to Leon the brown foaming water rushing by with trees and other debris in its hold seemed to be waiting for the right time to spread out over these banks also. When the river was like this it seemed almost alive to Leon. He had no choice but to be awed by the power of tons of water rushing by with all its sound. But Leon was a little fearful also. He imagined it must be something like being on a big game safari on the African plains, when you come upon two large rhinoceros and don’t know whether to run from the fear of it or stay for the fascination of it and watch the show.

Leon shut his engine off and listened to the rain slamming on the roof of his truck and the roaring of the river. Opening a can of beer, he decided to stay and watch the show.

It was later that afternoon when Leon burst through the door of his cabin. He had removed his shirt and shoes in the rain and was wearing nothing but his Levi’s. He stepped into the first of two rooms that made up the small dwelling. Leon lived alone, in exactly the manner he preferred, and the cabin was frequently an undesirable place for all but Leon. It was a storage house dwelling. Leon lived alone, in his cabin he thought he could hear the river, could feel it. He looked at the ancient floor lamp that was his only source of light other than the two ceiling bulbs. He raved. He kicked the chair and magazines. He looked at the stovepipe flying out of its hold and watch the show.

 Leon stopped, exhausted. He looked around, at the place he lived in, then shook his head. He didn’t want to see that yet. He had won, blown the living shit out of it. Leon and his new friend had done it. Together they could stand up to it, would keep it away. They were the guys in white hats, on patrol.

The cabin was a shambles, a disaster. Leon wasn’t fazed. He could repair the damage a little at a time. He was handy when he wanted to be. It was worth it.

First things first, however. Leon picked his way through the debris to a shelf by the door. From there he brought down a metal chopping block in the middle of the floor. That was probably the only piece of furniture left whole in the place, he thought with a chuckle. He opened the truck and the roaring of the river. Opening a can of beer, he decided to stay and watch the show.

Swinging it like a club he sent the stovepipe flying across the room, flinging soot and chunks of creosote over the contents of the cabin.

The river in the distance seemed louder to Leon. It must be close to overflowing its banks now. “Friggin’ rain,” he said as he staggered drunkenly into his home. He kicked over what passed for a coffee table, scattering old newspapers, empty beer bottles and tuna fish cans onto the floor. From where he stood in his cabin he thought he could hear the river, could feel it. He looked at the woodstove in the middle of the room, its only source of heat in the winter. It was dormant at this time of year, used only occasionally to drive out the dampness. At this moment however, Leon only saw the stovepipe, with its center of black residue, the result of trying to get heat out of wood that was much too green. He saw his rifle in the corner and picked it up by the barrel. Swinging it like a club he sent the stovepipe flying across the room, flinging sot and chunks of creosote over the contents of the cabin.

For a moment he just sighted down the barrel and swung the rifle around the room. His gaze came to rest on the sink. The sink was piled high with dirty dishes, tools and other clutter that had been there so long he didn’t even know what they were or how they had gotten there. Leon sighted a cup on the top of the pile. He calmly and deliberately let the breath expel from his body, felt his muscles relax and pulled the trigger.

The sound inside the little building was incredible. Leon’s ears were ringing as he dropped the rifle and put his hands over them. He yelled and fell to his knees, closing his eyes. The smell of gunpowder was overwhelming. After a minute or two he opened his eyes and stood up. The cup at the sink had been obliterated. There was a large hole in the wall where the bullet had passed through. Leon smiled and picked up the rifle. He aimed it at the plate that was now on top of the pile and pulled the trigger. The incredible sound, the smell of gunpowder and the explosion of plates, plastic and glass once more surrounded him. This time Leon stayed on his feet but still closed his eyes. When he opened them he saw that half the pile of dishes was gone. He thought for a moment, then walked over to the pile of newspapers that until recently had been on his coffee table. Tearing off two strips of newspaper he stuffed them into his ears. He turned back towards the sink, held the rifle against his hip and pulled the trigger. He had been aiming at the remaining dishes. Instead he heard a loud clang and saw that the bullet had struck the sink pipe where it emerged from the floor. Leon raised the rifle a bit and fired again. There was another loud clang as the bullet dented the sink and mangled the faucet, and then went out the wall. Moving the barrel to the left this time he fired twice. A shower of plastic, glass and wood once more burst from the counter. Leon yelled in delight as he jumped up and down, waving the rifle in the air. Then he stopped and, still smiling, began to randomly blow everything apart in the little building. Firing from left to right and up and down, mostly from the hip, he fired into wood, fabric, glass, plastic and metal. He had to stop to reload twice. His ears didn’t bother him anymore; after a point he was almost deaf anyway.

The smell, the sound, the violence seemed combined into an almost tangible entity that Leon could see and deal with. It was there and he controlled it. He could raise and lower the intensity as he wished, quell it to silence for a moment, and just as it seemed as if calmness might be restored, begin firing again, even more furiously and rapidly than before. Leon fired as quickly as he could, trying to follow round upon round in an attempt to create an almost continuous sound, a solid wall of chaos and intimidation. Frustration distinguished itself before his eyes. He murdered it; he conquered it.

Leon finally stopped, exhausted. He looked around, at the place he lived in, then shook his head. He didn’t want to see that yet. He had won, blown the living shit out of it. Leon and his new friend had done it. Together they could stand up to it, would keep it away. They were the guys in white hats, on patrol.

Robert C. Lewis
North Edgecomb
is a musician & laborer

autumnal kayak

Ellen Bowman
Readfield
is a child therapist

our boats separate,
off, through the highest
marsh grass,
my son glides
to seek another passage.
his yellow blade windmills
in constant visual pattern,
avove his head, then at his side.
His growing stroke is sure.
Mama Is Dying Very Well

It hurts to watch her labored breathing, so I focus on the fine hairs, still not completely gray at eighty, twisted into a pig at the nape of her neck.

"I am like a cat that wants to crawl under something and be left alone...you know what I mean?" she asks, leaning forward over her bed-table. She rests her head on bruised arms trailing plastic tubes.

"Do," I say, remembering kittens who, overnight, it seemed, turned stiff and bleary-eyed with age. Remembering the agony of deciding when they should die...their final inhalations when the shot took hold. I feel stifled and long to throw open the windows in this stale room.

"Let me brush your hair," I say. She perks on the commode. I slide out hairpins and work gingerly on snarls, afraid of causing one more pain.

"That feels good," she says, closing her eyes. "You know, that's Damien's brush. He loved to be brushed."

Damien...a mammoth blue-eyed dog who had filled her tiny kitchen for thirteen years. I noted silently that she would never have bought herself a brush of such good quality. For animals nothing was spared. Up all night with the eye-dropper of milk or medicine. Weeping inconsolably when they died.

Vowing never to have another pet but unable to resist the next inevitable, pregnant stray.

She even brushed Damien's teeth...which made him smile, she said. Her hair hangs all around her face now, soft and smooth. "Here. Let me do it myself," she says, reaching for the brush. She closes her eyes and wears a sad smile.

Stepping back, I study her profile. No one has a mother as beautiful as my mother, the objective observer.

Mama talks like she plays chess. "My sister scribbles in her teashop at twilight against a moon to reflect. August is a lovely month to be born." Born? Why not? I see my turn to die. We are quiet with her while this weight settles into her bed-table.

"You're like a beached mermaid," my sister tells her. Mama laughs and inches up to higher ground to wait. (Will I be whole enough to laugh on my deathbed?) Across the open water she calls to us in a new voice.

"I am in the valley of the shadow of death," she says. "This is it. This is really it. When you take it all in it is a heavy load to bear. It's my turn. It is my turn to die." We are quiet with her while this weight settles into us.

"We are mirrors of God's love. We reflect His love." And then, as though politely dismissing all of us she says, "Now I go the Teahouse of the August Moon to reflect. August is a lovely month to be born." Born! Why not? I see her contemplating, silhouetted...elegant in a softly draped robe in her teashop at twilight against a Maxfield Parrish moon. I consider joining her for tea.

Then she says, "I love you all, all, all...ALL of you." To leave no doubt she adds emphatically, "We have discussed it thoroughly and we have decided that we love each and every one of you. Every single one!" (And will I have the grace to remember my loves as I die?)

My sister scribbles in her upside-down left-hand way, tears streaming down her face. We want every note of this mermaid's last song.

Mama is dying very well.

I nod. Not exactly the same, sweethearth, but cancer anyway. The vet had said he could buy a small amount of time with surgery. Damien had wagged his tail.

"But I said, no. It wasn't worth it to put him through all that. Better put him to sleep, I said," she waits. "You made the right decision, Mama." I brace myself for what comes next. Mama talks like she plays chess.

"Yes, I did," she says, "and I wish someone would do that for me right now." Check.

I avert my eyes. This is my mother talking. I want to say, "You're right. Makes sense. Someone should do that for you." But who? Hey! Don't look at me. Let everybody who loves her gather around this bed. Spread out the guilt. Let's sing a lullaby while the lethal dose drips innocent as gravity...a sleek serpent seeking its target. Cleopatra and the asp. She's courageous...ready to go. I'm a coward...not ready to let her.

It will be a month before she gets her morphine drip. And through those days I become ready too. But her doctors and nurses do not. Our side wars with the whitecoats. They say her disease can respond well to procedures. They poke and prod. She simply continues to die. They say—"Irene is not cooperating." (Mama is a bad girl.)"

"We can give her up to six years." (Of what?)

"She must get up and walk." (Like Lazarus?)

She says, "If I try to walk I'll have a heart attack." They walk her anyway. She has a heart attack. Moment of truth for the whitecoats. They miss it and redouble their rescue efforts.

Bound and gagged in intensive care, one hand untied, she telegraphs from her bunker. My mother, the objective observer reports:


Can you all understand that my mother is still there? In a house of cards. Prop up one system and another collapses. Stabilize the heart and the kidneys fail. Can you hear what she is asking? Only to be comforted.

The whitecoats capitulate. A truce. She ascends from the purgatory of intensive care to the limbo of a ward for the terminally ill. She will be comforted. And so will we.

Husband, son and daughters...twelve strong, lovely grandchildren stand vigil. We bring our bewildered, weeping, curious selves to see how this thing is done. And she shows us with style. We know she will be a tough act to follow.

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My sister scribbles in her upside-down left-hand way, tears streaming down her face. We want every note of this mermaid's last song. Mama says to herself (though she has always hated the song), "Good night, Irene. I love you dear." (Will I speak as tenderly to myself?)

Then as the sea comes up to meet her, she writes her last review.

"Indeed. Mama is dying very well."

Indeed you did, Mama. (Will I?) Dorothy Sheldon 
Spruce Head
In Director of Substance Abuse 
Treatment at Thomaston State Prison

Graphic by Kim L. Gilg
She had a midnight job in the middle of the night, his family asleep. The gossipers gossiped, Blue Blue, Louie, and Kevin Grady met at the railroad tracks south of town to twelve times in two days. It was eleven-thirty by then, and although Blue Blue really was his best friend, Louie felt sick and scared and tired to see him coming, and for a moment he shut his eyes.

Blue Blue had spaghetti fingers and sausage thumbs, and blue eyes and black hair that grew wild over the last two years; and when he flipped it off his face Louie saw the rips, bruised eye.

"I'll kick your ass," Blue Blue said, and shoved Louie twice in his chest. He never threatened friends, or fought them ever. "You're a chicken shit fucker."

He never swore at them.

Louie stood still. Telephone cables sagged over his head. The only call being made tonight was one house down from the Hill's. Their neighbor, Mr. Jonathan Kleig, dialed 911 because of a pain exploding inside his chest. It was only heartburn, and bad dreams and bad nerves, but he was panicking. He fumbled the phone, dialed 811, then 611. He whispered into the line.

"Let's go for a ride," Blue Blue said, looking down at Mr. Kleig's house.

"It's too late. We'll get in trouble." Louie felt stupid saying it, after the chances they'd taken over the last year, the things he himself had done to Blue Blue's father.

"Now," Blue Blue ordered.

"It's late," Louie said, staring at a yellow Chevy that heaved by on a rusted frame.

"You go to hell," Blue Blue's lips peeled back on sharp teeth.

Louie saw the light flick on in Mr. Kleig's kitchen, then he looked back at his own house. It was dark, and his parents were asleep. He thought about when he was younger, how Hermann Martin drove Blue Blue to school, and picked him up at the end of the day. Hermann's Harley Davidson was new then, and had a side car that Mr. Kleig put on at his garage downtown; a shiny black cap that Blue Blue slipped into when his mother rode along. Everyone wanted to be Blue Blue those days. "No," Louie said, turning around and facing Blue Blue again.

"You go to hell."

Then Blue Blue stepped forward and rammed a fist into Louie's mouth, and started to choke him to death.

Blue Blue's father disappeared two years ago on the fourth of July, the summer before Louie and Blue Blue graduated into Miss Bretch's sixth grade class. The wind drowned the night he left, and for weeks after Louie dreamed about Hermann Martin, grinning as he rolled the Harley away from his home, a cigarette dangling from his mouth. He was eighteen, her best friend, Louie felt sick and scared and tired to see him coming, and for a moment he closed his eyes.

The bike was fire-engine red, with the front seat slung low, and the rear jacked up on a passenger's thighs wrapped around Hermann's ears. Chrome pipes shone; the front forks stretched out into the front tire. Its handlebars rose straight up, the hand grips so high that Hermann drove with his arms straight over his head, like he was being robbed. They were called ape-hangers and were illegal, he told them, because there was no control.

Alice Martin said her husband left on a construction job for just five weeks. She didn't know where. "Out west. He's moving around," she told Blue Blue twelve times in two days. "He didn't want to wake you, so just shut up about it."

But they couldn't. They needed to be with him out in the cities, the country. Blue Blue, Louie, and Kevin Grady met at the railroad tracks south of town to place Hermann in the world. On the hottest days Blue Blue always guessed California:

"On the beach."

"The mountains," Kevin Grady said. He was fat, with greasy hair and zits, and he wanted to explore all the highest places in the world, where grace and strength and beauty were real and guaranteed. "There's mountains in every bit of California," he said.

"Mullins," Blue Blue laughed, thinking of his father in the sand.

"He's in the mountains," Kevin said. "Doesn't he fish, doesn't he hunt?"

"He never kills anything," Blue Blue said, running a hand over his near hair.

"He's a vegetarian. He's in perfect health."

Kevin thought about that, scooping out a whitehead with his pinky. "Exactly," he said. "He's in the mountains."

They got a United States map and a calendar, plus a photograph of Hermann Martin tacked in a treehouse that Blue Blue and Louie found at the start of summer, the planks dishwater gray and shrunken like old bones. Kevin Grady was too heavy for the rolled wood, so he sat against the trunk of the dying pine while they held meetings in the afternoons, yelling down to get his swing vote and announce every decision.

Blue Blue was the only one allowed to stick colored pins into the map, although they took turns crossing out the calendar days that led up to five weeks, and looping kite string between the pins. After California Blue Blue swung the trail southeast, plotting his father, Louie suspected, to the Gulf of Mexico.

Louie thought more and more about Hermann Martin, but as the days passed he started to fade away in pieces. Louie remembered his short hair and mustache, but did he have a beard? He was thin, but skinny? Were his eyes blue or grey or green?

Louie and Blue Blue rode bicycles to the interstate, sat under the pea-green bridge that arced over the railroad tracks and listened to the ragged wind trickle through the steel girders and dissolve, and to the trucks rattling over their heads. They laughed and made dirty jokes about Miss Bretch's fat ass, while Louie imagined Hermann Martin and the Harley, its chrome glinting on a stretch of road without hills or corners, the heat drifting off the pavement in waves, his thin arms straight over his head, hanging from the handlebars that grew up over him, melting into the night. No length to his hair, no weight to his body, no color to his eyes.

And even when a bike crossed the bridge, its engine throbbing low as the Harley's, Louie never believed it was Hermann coming back. He was always out there, beyond the town, riding further away. Louie prayed for that; he had his father, his father. Louie suspected, to the Gulf of Mexico.

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anyone would spend so much time in Santa Fe.

Alice Martin sold her car and borrowed cash from Jonathan Kleig (the only man in town she trusted), to make late house payments; she hitchhiked to work at Howard Johnsons, and bumbled rides home late at night. On the eighth of October a trucker from Philadelphia offered a lift, and in the dark of his rig he held her hand. Alice was sleepy and a little drunk when she touched three gnarled warps on the pads of his fingers, and felt their roots twisting through his arm and down into the chamber of his heart, and she believed he was a good man. He squeezed his fingers tight. They tried to sneak into the house, but the man crashed in a heap on the kitchen floor. He tripped over Blue Blue, who sat and moaned on the bare linoleum, and who vomited whisky on the man's hands. The trucker jumped up and kicked Blue Blue in the guts, then wiped his hands on Blue Blue's face and beak, and left.

The next Tuesday Blue Blue showed Louie how to play Russian Roulette, and they played every Tuesday. He took his six shooter cap gun and they went to the treehouse and slid one bullet inside the chamber, then passed it back and forth, adding bullets all afternoon. The first time Blue Blue aimed the gun between his eyes and jolted the trigger, it clicked.

"Here," he said and held it out to Louie, who sat cross-legged on the warped floor.

"What?"

Blue Blue set the gun in Louie's hand, and guided it up so it pointed between his eyes. "Shoot," Blue Blue told him, and the cap popped in the dull afternoon. "You're dead," Blue Blue whispered.


"You're dead," Blue Blue said.

Then Hermann came home. It was Halloween, and Louie stood alone, leaning against the school gym. He felt the drone of music through the cement wall, and believed that tonight he'd ask Christine Cousins to dance. He'd hold her hand in the dark, tell her she was the sweetest old girl in the world. Christine was a perfect witch, with green hair and black teeth and glitter on her fingernails, and Louie only had a white sheet hung over his head. He felt dumb, so he leaned against the gym as other kids growled and fanged and limped inside, building his courage, losing it, when Hermann and Blue Blue rode up on the Harley, the headlight sick and yellow. The bike had faded to pink, with the chrome pipes dented on one side and bent on the other.

"How's it hanging, Louie?" Hermann Martin asked, while the wind gust and Louie shivered, and the Harley's engine knocked like a combustion heart.

"Pretty good, sir."

Hermann nodded and swung off the bike as Blue Blue had room to climb down from the back seat. He was skinny. His hair strung halfway down his neck, the mustache curled around the corners of his mouth. He looked like an outlaw: tired, happy and miserable all at once. Louie wanted to touch him. "I saw Evel Knievel," Hermann said.

Louie stepped closer, where the bike gurgled, and the engine sucked and burped heat. "Yeah?" Louie whispered.

Hermann nodded back onto the bike. He had holes in the seat of his pants, and no underwear. "Here. He drew a picture from his wallet and held it out. "In Boise," Louie clutched the photo in two hands. "Idaho," Hermann said. "He bought me a beer. He has a Sky Cycle, to jump the Snake River."

In the picture, Hermann leaned against the wooden rail of a bar with a mug of beer in his hand. Beside him, Evel looked heavier, and maybe older, and he had sandy blond hair and a cockeyed smile, with a brown leather jacket in one hand, and no underwear. Beside him, Evel looked heavier, and maybe older, and he had sandy blond hair and a cockeyed smile, with a brown leather jacket in one hand, and no underwear. Beside him, Evel looked heavier, and maybe older, and he had sandy blond hair and a cockeyed smile, with a brown leather jacket in one hand, and no underwear.

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Island, barely saved from drowning.

"Jesus Christ," Louie's mother said. "Another idiot."

When Blue Blue worked on the plan, Louie helped, but he was scared, especially when he showed a rag in his mouth and made an anonymous call:

"Mr. Martin?"

"Yes."

"We'll shed your balls."

They never had recess on the playground that fall. Curtains of cold rain washed the days away, and they stayed in the gym, while the teachers walked outside under plastic umbrellas to have their smokers. Louie spread the rumors around, but not enough made it out of the gym to keep Blue Blue satisfied. Louie finally quit on the eighteenth of January, after Blue Blue made him sneak over and spill a bucket of water on their walkway. Hermann fell so badly on ice that formed by the morning that Alice drove him to the emergency room. Doctors shaved the side of his head and sewed thirteen stitches. Blue Blue said no one ever believed him. 

"About what?"

"I told him he'd die this time." Blue Blue peeled his tank-top. His skin was creamy, like Louie could take a scoop out of it with a spoon. "He said he'd come back no matter what." There was automatic rhythm to his words, as if he had them all memorized. Blue Blue wiped sweat and blood from his bruised eye.

"Did he do that?"

Blue Blue shook his head. "Mom," he whispered. "I woke her up and said he was gone for good this time. I finally drove him off."

Louie wanted something to stop this now, something with pus and oil and mud and shit leaking out of its eyes and running off its fangs to crawl down the street, or just a cop to drive along and haul Blue Blue home. Something. "Did we?" he asked.

"I hope so," Blue Blue said.

A train whistled from the tracks across town. It was hooked up and would pull out soon.

"What are you going to do?"

Blue Blue wiped his face and eyes again. He tied his tank-top back to the handlebars of his bike, with those long front forks out in front like a lost dog sniffing its way around, but not enough made it out of the gym to keep Blue Blue satisfied.

"What are you doing?" she asked him, then pulled him back from the wall, and slammed him again. "Don't," she said, her lips brushing his, her eyes dark and ugly. "Don't."

Hermann himself begged off the long punishment. He took Blue Blue and Louie to see The Sting, Blue Blue sprinkled garlic on his popcorn.

Nothing worked. Hermann stayed and stayed, and June was restless over it. It was a rotten spring.

* * *

Old Wool

My brother's old robe lies heavy on me like something precious but it's purple and plaid and scratchy, like a coarse army blanket. The belt falls to the floor, a purple snake heading out the bathroom. I feel like a fur trader in this old wool, living by what I skin off other animals, off the trap line, living very close to an undefined edge: something elemental, blood (still) on the flesh, scent hanging, unweighted, in the air. Like old wool.

"He's gone," Blue Blue said, and stretched his arms over his head, then flicked his wrists. "Vroom vroom."

Louie stared across the lawns, at the beat of the ambulance's light. The rest of the street was dark; it was quiet, "When?" he asked.


"About what?"

"I told him he'd die this time." Blue Blue peeled his tank-top. His skin was creamy, like Louie could take a scoop out of it with a spoon. "He said he'd come back no matter what." There was automatic rhythm to his words, as if he had them all memorized. Blue Blue wiped sweat and blood from his bruised eye.

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* * *

Greg Palmer

Hampden

graduated Iowa Writer's Workshop

& teaches at UMO

Looking Over the Application

---

Have you ever cut fish?

Once I showed my son how to clean a smallmouth bass.

Do you have experience as a fry cook?

We cooked over an open fire in an old black skillet.

Did you ever work as a dishwasher?

After supper we washed the skillet with sand and water.

List next of kin in case of emergency.

I haven't heard from him in eight years.

I don't even know where he's living now.

Would you be willing to work part-time?

I took three work days off so we could go fishing together.

Looking over the application.

I came here to answer all your questions yes—except, I haven't heard from him for eight years.

I think he's in Florida working construction.

Pat Murphy

Portland

runs Out-of-Print Books

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Deborah Styles

Orono

teaches at UMO

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Over

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Cowboy Tough

If asked to sing only of alabaster skin and graceful features there would be no song for me.

My love is hard determined lines on a face unyielding. Rough edges of will—cowboy tough and hard to hold.

This is my true song. I can love no other way but flat out in the face of adversity. A nagged reaching through space and time. It is not lovely to look at but it belongs to me. Cowboy tough and hard to hold.

Laura Bass
Bangor
is a transplanted Texan & UMO grad student

Coloring Reality

A slap on the face from me knocked your nose, perfect blood dripped external, landed in my bellybutton, marking a contorted pool crimson, as you sat on my legs barebottomed.

You meered in incomplete guilt, an aspect I shared for lying railed with you, and then reasoning I still had the right to say No, to see, after all.

Now you feel justified in minimizing the act, saying you loved me too much, for self control, without seeing my spirit crushed, because of you, the man it was so easy to trust. I sometimes dream of flawless blood raging red from my navel, forcing its way back into your nose.

Laura Bass
Bangor
is a transplanted Texan & UMO grad student

In the Free World

You think I look like a million bucks.
What commerce is this?
You’re in the market for a new wife.
What an eye for acquisition.
Who first attempted to negotiate a wilderness?
Survey—divide, and auction off.
To name the ungovernable Property, to buy and sell what cannot be owned.

Wendy Kindred
Ft. Kent
teaches at UMFK

Inheritance

He turns on her computer and finds in its memory lines she wrote before she died. He hadn’t known, how could he, how much he missed of her that another memory held.

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Independence

Martha Varney's independence is going to be the end of her. It has always been one of her greatest assets. But these days at age 71 as a widow, living alone in the family farmhouse on 50 acres of land just inside the boundaries of the central Maine town of Universe, her feisty, scrappy, do-it-yourself nature ultimately is working against the very independence that she holds so dear. Her few remaining friends fear that if she doesn't agree soon to compromise that independence by such actions as opening a checking account, moving into a smaller place with less upkeep or even learning to drive a car, she will never place herself in the position of becoming totally dependent on them, and they are no spring chickens either.

"Hate to see her come to this, Hattie," says Grace Beecher one day after she and Hattie Brooks have driven Martha to the bank in Pittfield and the grocery store over in Bangor.

"I know, I know, Grace, but it'll probably happen to us someday too."

"Oh, no, it won't," contends Grace, gripping the steering wheel tightly and squinting her eyes to block the setting sun as she guns her old Buick over Universe's rolling, autumn-gold hills and turns onto the dirt of Red Bog Road where Hattie and her husband Stanley have lived for 40 years.

"And why won't it?" Hattie demands, drawing back her head of gray curls to look at her determined friend.

"Because, I won't let it," she replies testily as if Hattie must be crazy to believe anything else.

"I don't understand you, Grace Beecher, or maybe I do too well, but are you telling me that this is all Martha's fault?"

Grace is concentrating on avoiding a dead porcupine in the road and does not answer for a few seconds, then reaching the long gravel driveway that leads to Hattie's house which perches on a rise of land looking down on the local pond; she carefully edges her way toward the once barn, now garage, in the fast-fading light, brings the Buick to a stop, turns to Hattie dead serious and says, "That's right dear, that is, I mean most of it is her fault. She can do something about it, but she won't because she's so damn stubborn. You can be independent and you can be stubborn, look at me. When the last time you ever heard of anyone wanting to have anything to do with a male? A male is stubborn, not independent, besides you have to depend on someone, have to trust them, a little anyway." Hattie regards her old friend and begins to chuckle. As she does, Grace nervously pulls her short, dyed, red hair that badly needs a rinse, takes a deep breath, begins to laugh too and advises, "Look, you know what I mean. If she has to have everything the way over there again? Can't convince her it's cheaper in Maine than in Massachusetts. She's so damn stubborn."

"Well, that's why Sidney was. Used to go all the way into Waterville to pay the electric bill because he didn't trust banks and wouldn't have a checking account and wouldn't pay it up at the drugstore in Deerfield since he was afraid Jack would know his business and tell everyone in the country."

"I know, can you imagine anyone caring about Sid Varney's electric bill?"

"He thought everyone in town wanted to know everything he did."

"Martha's not like that, really, you know, it's just so much of Sid rubbed off on her."

"You think she's better off without him?" asks Hattie, almost holding her breath and afraid of her own words.

"Sure do. I'm better off since Charles died."

"Grace!" Hattie sighs shock, knowing all along, as does everyone else in Universe, that it's true.

"Look, Hattie, Charles and I had some good times and a nice life, but he was miserable and in pain, and money was being spent on a losing cause."

The two women sit in silence for a few seconds, each considering her own mortality. Then Hattie says, "I'd better get in before Stanley comes out to get me."

But what are we going to do about Martha?"

Grace stares absently out the car windshield toward Hattie's Cape Cod-styled, red-sặngled house as a light goes on in its living room. Then she turns quickly to her friend, "I'm supposed to take her over to Bangor to shear next week."

"All the way over there again? Can't convince her it's cheaper in Waterville?"

"No, she's sure Bangor's better and cheaper, don't confuse her with the facts."

"Went some more company then?"

"Well, I just made it 50 acres of her, Hattie."

"Oh, you can't do that, Grace. I mean she does get cranky, we all do, she's just set in her ways."

But Grace hasn't heard a word and is sitting behind the wheel of her car grinning and pleased with herself, yawning on her hair and laughing.

"Gracie, what in the world is wrong with you, are you okay? I'm going in now."

"No, wait," and she grabs Hattie by the wrist, "wait, dear, wait, let me tell you my plan about Martha."

"What plan?"

"This. And you don't have to do it if you don't want. But . . ." "Well, what?"

"Martha's going to get her driver's license."

"What?"

"And we are going to teach her how to drive and tell her if she won't do it, we may not be able to take her all those places she's been wanting to go."

"She won't do it."

"It's worth a try, listen she always has said she wished Sid had taught her."

"Sid was such an old stick, he was afraid Martha would leave him behind if she could drive a car."

"Look, she's always talking about doing for herself this is perfect."

"But she gave her car to her cousin after Sid died."

"I know, and she can get it back, after all, she's leaving him her house and land."

"I don't know, Grace."

"Will you help me, Hattie?" Grace pushes, ignoring her friend's misgivings, "she'll probably end up being the terror of the roads."

"Oh, all right, Grace, all right," and with that, Hattie gets out of the car and walks slowly across her leaf-strewn lawn toward the house where her husband poens from the window as she waits for her. And Grace, delighted with her own cleverness, screeches out of the driveway and rumbles back down the dirt road anxious to get home and pursue her plan more carefully.

Meanwhile Martha Varney realizes that she has forgotten about the oilman's delivery the next day. This discovery means that she did not draw enough money from the bank to pay the oil bill and will probably be short by the week's end. So she will either have to return to the bank or make sure she doesn't need any money until the next Monday. If she goes back to the bank then she'll have to ask Grace Beecher to take her, or Hattie or her cousin or one of the Stowes from down the road, and then she'll feel like she's been begging. She can only ask for so much help and now she's figuring on how to make sure Bradford's boy will take the leaves left by the weekend's northeaster, give her lawn a final mow before cold weather sets in and rim down the peonies. He's back in school, and she's certain he's tired of taking care of her yard; she's hoping Brad will think to remind him soon. She knows deep down that she should open a checking account; it is the most practical thing to do, but she has been so adamantly against such an action for so long that she is embarrassed to change her mind, fearing such a reversal would indicate weakness and dependence. Yet, at the same time, she is intelligent enough to realize that by condemning checking accounts, she may be condemning herself to a virtual dependence on others. Nevertheless, Martha is afraid of writing checks, scared of putting them in the mail, even though she can write money orders from the bank and lately has been sending them through the mail. And she insists on obtaining the money orders from the bank and not, more conveniently, from the Universe post office because she doesn't want the postmaster to know her business.

Martha's family goes back about five generations in the Universe area, an outgrowth of rolling hills, both wooded and cleared for growing dairies with ponds and bog, that form a ridge between the Kennebec and Penobscot River Valleys. In fact, the town's name originated when the region's early settlers, who had migrated from Massachusetts, took a look at the undulating terrain from a point atop the ridge where the White Mountains over in New Hampshire could be seen and immediately decided that, indeed, this country must be the "backbone of the universe." Martha's parents lost most everything during the depression, and she's sure Bangor's better and cheaper, don't confuse her with the facts."

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Meanwhile Martha Varney realizes that she has forgotten about the oilman's delivery the next day. This discovery means that she did not draw enough money from the bank to pay the oil bill and will probably be short by the week's end. So she will either have to return to the bank or make sure she doesn't need any money until the next Monday. If she goes back to the bank then she'll have to ask Grace Beecher to take her, or Hattie or her cousin or one of the Stowes from down the road, and then she'll feel like she's been begging. She can only ask for so much help and now she's figuring on how to make sure Bradford's boy will take the leaves left by the weekend's northeaster, give her lawn a final mow before cold weather sets in and rim down the peonies. He's back in school, and she's certain he's tired of taking care of her yard; she's hoping Brad will think to remind him soon. She knows deep down that she should open a checking account; it is the most practical thing to do, but she has been so adamantly against such an action for so long that she is embarrassed to change her mind, fearing such a reversal would indicate weakness and dependence. Yet, at the same time, she is intelligent enough to realize that by condemning checking accounts, she may be condemning herself to a virtual dependence on others. Nevertheless, Martha is afraid of writing checks, scared of putting them in the mail, even though she can write money orders from the bank and lately has been sending them through the mail. And she insists on obtaining the money orders from the bank and not, more conveniently, from the Universe post office because she doesn't want the postmaster to know her business.

Martha's family goes back about five generations in the Universe area, an outgrowth of rolling hills, both wooded and cleared for growing dairies with ponds and bog, that form a ridge between the Kennebec and Penobscot River Valleys. In fact, the town's name originated when the region's early settlers, who had migrated from Massachusetts, took a look at the undulating terrain from a point atop the ridge where the White Mountains over in New Hampshire could be seen and immediately decided that, indeed, this country must be the "backbone of the universe." Martha's parents lost most everything during the depression, and she's sure Bangor's better and cheaper, don't confuse her with the facts."

By the weekend's northeaster, give her lawn a final mow before cold weather sets in and rim down the peonies. He's back in school, and she's certain he's tired of taking care of her yard; she's hoping Brad will think to remind him soon. She knows deep down that she should open a checking account; it is the most practical thing to do, but she has been so adamantly against such an action for so long that she is embarrassed to change her mind, fearing such a reversal would indicate weakness and dependence. Yet, at the same time, she is intelligent enough to realize that by condemning checking accounts, she may be condemning herself to a virtual dependence on others. Nevertheless, Martha is afraid of writing checks, scared of putting them in the mail, even though she can write money orders from the bank and lately has been sending them through the mail. And she insists on obtaining the money orders from the bank and not, more conveniently, from the Universe post office because she doesn't want the postmaster to know her business.
Anyway, when the olman comes the next day, she finds that due to the warmer than usual fall, her oil is not down as much as she'd thought, and she can pay the bill easily. Then on Thursday her cousin, who lives near Waterville, is in the area and stops by to see if she'd like to ride with him to Pittsfield and have lunch. As they drive over, she mentions if it would be convenient to stop by her bank. Even though the oil bill was not as much as she'd thought, she's still low enough on cash to feel insecure. It is an easy request, and she doesn't have to bother Grace or Hattie. Something always works out, she tells herself later at home that evening, trying not to imagine when luck may not play her way.

As for what she might do when he wasn't around to do one way, the next minute another. And finally she realizes, if she can go either her cousin Carl will give the car back, although taking it back will be embarrassing.

"Oh, Martha," the gentle Hattie glides into the conversation, "don't be mean to Grace. I think she's got a good idea. Just look how convenient it would be for you."

"And am I going to drive, the lawnmower?" Grace has pulled the car into Shaw's parking lot, cut off the engine, turns toward Martha, who is sitting in the front seat, glares at her for about 30 seconds and says, "We're trying to help you Martha. You're our friend, and we love you and we know how much your independence means to you. I will carry you around in this car until the earth blows up if you want, but the more I do it, the unhappier and snappier you're going to be. Make things easy for yourself. Martha. There's nothing wrong with letting friends help. If you let us drive you around, why not let us teach you how to drive yourself? What's the difference?"

"You still haven't told me what I'm supposed to drive."

"Oh, Martha," and now Hattie is exasperated, "you know Carl will give you the car back; he doesn't need it, and if you threaten not to leave him the land he'll do anything you want."

"I'm too old to learn. I'd feel foolish."

"Wendell Coffin's mother learned when she was 65," counters Grace. "That's different."

"How?" demands Grace.

"Well, she's younger, I'm 71, and she does those kind of things better."

"Well, Martha," teases Grace, "I never thought I'd see the day you'd let Mildred Coffin do one better than you."

"That's not what I meant."

"Oh, come on, Martha," pleads Grace now. "Do you really think I could learn?" Martha asks cautiously.

"If I can," laughs Hattie, "there's no reason you can't."

"Well," and Martha gathers herself up to open the car door and juts out her chin a little, "let me think about it."

"Okay, dear, you think good," soothes Hattie, who winces at Grace and hopes that the more outspoken woman will tone down, "now let's get inside before everyone in the parking lot thinks those three old women in the beat-up Buick have gone crazy yelling at each other."

That evening Martha wrestles with the proposition of learning how to drive. There had been a time, about 25 years ago, when she almost had taught herself all the fundamentals of operating a car, mainly by driving the tractor. She'd obtained information from the state, all the rules about traffic, what she'd needed to know for the tests, both written and driving, and had even practiced in the car of her old friend Ethel Mills, who'd been dead now for 20 years. But Sid simply had not allowed it, had said he wouldn't have his wife driving a car and making a fool of herself. As for what she might do when he wasn't around to do the driving anymore well, he'd never said anything, like he was going to live forever. But he had humiliated her, and she'd never mentioned it again— to anyone.

And now Martha's main concern is another humiliation, failure to pass the test. She knows that what Grace and Hattie want is for her not to have to ask, not to have to beg. In the long run, it will be a reaffirmation of her cherished independence; it will make life easier. She knows all that. She even knows that her cousin Carl will give her the car back, although taking it back will be embarrassing. Still, if she is able to drive herself around, maybe there will be less talk of her need to enter a senior citizen's home. Martha is just not sure. One minute she leans one way, the next minute another. And finally she realizes, if she can go either way so easily, there is probably no harm in trying something different and her mind is not as set as she once had thought. Lordy, she tells herself, as she picks up the phone to call Grace and tell her that she's game to try, I don't even know what I want anymore.

But Grace doesn't answer the phone. Her daughter, Sally, who lives in nearby Deerfield, does.

"That you, Sally, where's Grace," bursts out Martha, eager now to surprise her friend about her decision.

"Who is this? Oh, Martha, is it you, Martha? I was going to call you in the morning. Oh, Martha, Mom isn't here, she's had a stroke. She's in the hospital over in Waterville. It's not a real bad one; she called the ambulance herself. We've just come back from over there; I've got to pack some things for her."

"Sally, I was with her today, she was fine; in fact, she was downright pig-headed. Me and Hattie were with her all afternoon. What happened?"

"I guess she was really lucky. Martha. It was around supper time, her right arm and then the back of her neck started going numb on her, couldn't move her arm. Some kind of thing that first happened to Dad, so she knew."

"Well, I won't keep you dear, can I see her, maybe tomorrow?"

"I think not for a day or two. Martha. I'll call you. The doctors have to make tests and want her to get some rest."

"Of course, well you tell her that I'm thinking of her and I love her and I'm going to be waiting for her to be giving me those driving lessons; she can't get out of it now."

"Oh, okay, Martha, I'll tell her. You take care now."

"I will dear, you do the same and let me know if I can help. Bye, bye."

Now wouldn't you know, Martha thinks, as she sits quietly in her kitchen by the phone watching her hands shake and doing nothing about the tears that are streaming down her face. Wouldn't you know. That's so. Much time spent worrying about something that wasn't meant to happen in the first place. That's what I get for being so taken with myself, thinking I'm going to cruise around those roads in my own car. But I guess I really wanted to, else why am I so upset? It's not all for Grace; she sounds like she'll be all right and maybe she'll still be able to... no, she won't, that's too much to ask.

Just then, the phone rings and it is Hattie. They discuss Grace for a few minutes and find comfort in each other's voices, feeling their own mortality immensely and wondering to themselves, but afraid to speak out loud, of Grace, perhaps, being the first to go.

Finally Martha says, "Let's see if we can see her tomorrow. Sally isn't sure, but she's always been overly protective anyway."

"Okay, dear, I'll pick you up around eleven, and then you can drive the rest of the way and show me if it is really like running a tractor."

"Stop being silly, Hattie."

"I'm not being silly, it's just that Grace made me promise when she got the driving idea that if something happened to her, I had to teach you myself."

"Hattie, did she know? How? I mean did she, I mean, I don't . . .

"Well, you know her great-great-grandfather, the one from Roxana, he was a fortune teller."

"Hattie!"

"Well, he was!"

C. Walker Mattson
Troy
is a free-lance writer
Translations:
Five from Maine Try Baudelaire

Editor's Note: Robert Frost once said “Poetry is what is lost in translation.” He meant quirks of idiom, slang, sandtraps of syntax: in short, tone. On the other hand, poetry is sometimes found in translation too, hear Robert Lowell, who sought “alive English” and tried to get what Baudelaire would do “if he were writing poems now and in America.” An earlier academy of alchemists, passport forgers, loved the literal—prosaic renderings, strict prosody, “the facts, Ma’m, just the facts.” Lowell called them “translators, not poets.” But they did make possible for later mediums the flights of fancy, the reader’s sense that, as jackem Mathews says, “poetry is being translated into poetry.” Not all translators are for all poets and not all of a poet’s poems are suited to his translator, says Mathews: “sensibilities vibrate together only within limits.” On this page, KENNEBEC tries to show a range of linguistic reaction. We found two translations of “The Enemy,” the standard by Edna St. Vincent Millay, and another by Lowell, begun as exercises in couplets and quatrains at a time when “I was unable to do anything of my own.” Like Baudelaire himself, he wanted it to “ring tight for me,” and apparently it did—free, the clapper unheeding, knocking around loosely in the bell. We also asked three living Maine poets to have a go at the poem. The five contrast starkly, telling of the tough trek from idiomantic (even formal) French to ideologic English. Some have tried the rhymes, some not. One changed the title. Many struggled with meter. Only one abandoned the sonnet’s 4—4—3—3 stanzaic pattern. Two “took only a few liberties with the literal.” And what would Baudelaire himself say? Although he was a superb writer, he was snobbish, insecure about being read, and a puzzle rhenere (witness the three ranting prefaces to The Flowers of Evil). He feared publishing, feared “facing the sun of stupidity.” He may as well relax: no stupidity here. As he wrote in the second Preface, “French poetry possesses a mysterious and unrecognized prosody, like the Latin and English languages.” Our five Maine translators recognize it, and render it.

T.P.

L’ennemi
(from Les Fleurs du Mal, 1857)

Ma jeunesse ne fut qu’un ténébreux orage,
Trouvé par la pluie et le soleil brillants : 
Qu’il reste en mon jardin bien peu de fruits vermeils.

Voilà que j’ai touché l’automne des idées,
Et qu’il faut employer la pelle et les râteaux
Pour rassembler à neuf les terres inondées,
Où l’eau creuse des trous grands comme des tombeaux.

—O douleur! ô douleur! Le Temps mange la vie,
Et l’âme ennemie qui tue le cœur.
Du sang que nous perdons croît si fortifiée!

Charles Baudelaire
1821-1867

I think of my gene youth as of a stormy sky
Infrequently transfigured by a benignant sun;
Tempete et hail have done their work; and what have I—
How many fruits in my torn garden?—scarcely one.

And now that I approach the autumn of my mind,
And must reclaim once more the inundated earth—
Washed into stormy trenches deep as graves—I find
I wield the rake and hoe, asking, "What is it worth?"

Who can assure me, these new flowers for which I toil
Will find in the disturbed and reconstructed soil
That mystic aliment on which alone they thrive?
Oh, anguish, anguish! Time eats up all things alive;
And that unseen, dark Enemy, upon the spilled
Bright blood we could not spare, batters, and is fulfilled

Edna St. Vincent Millay
Rockland
(1892 - 1950)

My childhood was only a menacing shower,
cut now and then by hearts of brilliant heat.
All the top soil was killed by rain and sleet,
my garden hardly bore a standing flower.

From now on, my mind’s autumn! I must take
the field and dress my beds with spade and rake
and restore order to my flooded grounds.
There the rain raised mountains like burial mounds.

I throw fresh seeds out. Who knows what survives?
What elements will give us life and food?
This soil is irrigated by the tides.

Time and nature shake away our lives.
A virus eats the heart out of our sides,
digs in and multiplies on our lost blood.

Robert Lowell
Damariscotta Mills, Castine
(1917 - 1978)
titled "The Ruined Garden" from Imitations, Noonday/Farrar Straus, 1961
My youth was but a gloomy thunderstorm
Crossed here and there by brilliant suns;
The thunder and the rain wreaked havoc so
Remains in my garden few ruby fruits.

There I’ve touched the autumn of ideas,
And must employ the shovel and the rakes
To assemble anew the flooded lands,
Where the water seeps from holes big as graves.

And who knows if the new flowers I dream
Will find in this ground washed like a beach
The mystical fruit which makes their vigour!

Oh sorrow! oh sorrow! Time eats up life,
And the dim Enemy who gnaws our heart
Of the blood we lose grows and fortifies!

Duff Plunkett
Washington, D.C.
ex-French major, UMO

My youth was simply a dark storm,
Pierced here and there by brilliant suns;
The thunder and the rain did such damage
That few ripe fruits survived in my garden.

So now, my ideas have reached their autumn
And I have to wield a shovel and rakes
To reclaim the flooded fields
Where the rain has eroded holes as great as graves.

And who knows if these new sorts of flowers
I have dreamed up
Will find in this beach-like, infertile soil
The mystical nutrients to make them flourish.

Oh, sorrow! sorrow! The seasons consume our lives
And the dark enemy who eats at our hearts
For the blood we are losing grows and becomes strong.

Denis Ledoux
Lisbon Falls
is a market gardener
The Team that Loved Softball

Mc Peevey stood there on the mound, stooped forward, brown sweat stains spreading out from the armpits of his T-shirt. He was a big man, a behemoth, downright obscene. But oh could he pitch a softball. It was fluid. That's what it was.

"Ooh, geez," (that's what he always called his teammates), "I'm gonna put this one in nice and low, so get ready to scoop it." And he wound up like a flywheel, firmed his jaw, groaned, and sent that ball in on a straight line, watching it close in on home plate as he balanced on one toe of his ridiculously tiny feet, his other leg hooked up in the air.

Thump! The better connected, and it was a grounder, just as Mc Mel had promised. It was much easier than he thought it would be. They hit it hard. They could really hit it.

"Okay, gents," called Art Pleas ("Digger"), who accepted it at first before stomping that bag with authority.

The fifty or so fans in the bleachers jumped to their feet and cheered. With that win the old guys would move on to the championship.

After the game, Mc Mel and the rest of the team went over to Dave the second baseman's house. They pulled out a few beers and sat out in the lawn chairs to talk about the team. These guys were all in their thirties and forties, but such good players that they had been allowed to join the college intramural league with all those kids in their teens and twenties. University of Maine. These old timers were a little thick around the middle, sure, and yeah, they liked their beer. But they had decent jobs—maybe he took a sick day here and there to dip a fishing line in the Penobscot. Most of them were married and pretty fair husbands and fathers (except for Scott Weston, who drank more than a little and admitted he was a generally rotten family man). But when it came to softball—they loved that game. To a man—they loved that game. And none of them could get out of there when Eduardo Trumila, their Filipino catcher, had said one day. He said, "Go, I love softball more than being in the sack."

The college kids always laughed at them when they came out on the field. But hey, the team loved it. They even had their own special sky-blue T-shirts with their team name on the front—the "Beaches"—because they all wore sunglasses and looked as if they'd just come in off the beach. But then they'd settle down to business and play their hearts out. Because, once again, they loved that game.

Mc Peevey had pitching down to a science. "Pitchology," he called it. Dave Hodgkin was a real estate, an incorruptible Bobby Richardson fan since childhood. Scott Weston was shotstop. He said that was the only position that could keep his mind off his problems. Otis Burt, who had only one lung but still smoked like a chimney, played third, with Lester Annis in left field and his brother Buzz in right. Center field was Flit Trotz. He called them "Flit" because he was real fast, and quiet, too. Dropped only one ball in his life. Last but not least there was Digger Phelps, the lawyer, with little Eddiebo below the plate.

The team in general was feeling great about their semifinal win. Their opponents in the championship game was a team of English majors who called themselves the "Oxymorons." "Great name," said Dave. "Because they don't see all that bright."

During that week of preparation for the big game a lot of other things were happening in the Beaches' lives as well. Scott Weston's wife had locked him out of the house for betting on another game, and he was living with Lester and Buzz Annis in their trailer for the duration. Eduardo's wife had given birth to their first kid, but Eduardo still said he loved softball more than being in the sack. Digger Phelps had launched his bid for state senator, but put his campaign on hold so he could play out the season. And Otis—poor Otis—they were talking about taking out his other lung, or so he said. So he finally gave up cigarettes and was chewing nicotine gum now. The Annis brothers were rolling merrily along all right, but they almost got fired from Bangor Hydro-Electric when they stopped off at softball practice on their way to an emergency call. Flit Trotz was in top shape, although he had discovered a varicose vein behind his left knee and decided to wear an elastic brace to hide it. Mel was getting heavier, but he was still fluid. And Dave, well, Dave thought it would go on forever, and on the day of the big game he showed up an hour early and just went out to second base, put his glove behind his head, and lay down in the grass, listening to his heart beat and listening up at the blue sky. Next thing he knew, all the guys were standing in a circle, looking down at him and laughing, because he had fallen asleep.

Mel put his big arms out and gathered all the Beaches together into a huddle for a pep talk. He said they were going to have a perfect game—no errors, no nothing. He knew exactly what to say and the guys knew exactly what to do. And so things went on, and the team loved it. They even had their own special sky-blue T-shirts with "Flit Trotz" printed under it. They were huge—real weight-lifting types. Lester Annis turned to his brother Buzz and said, "You sure these guys are English majors?" Scott Weston, for his part, noticed that the Oxymorons did a lot of whispering to one another. "I don't like it," he said.

Mel was signing them up as well. "I don't see much speed there," he said soberly. But those muscles look like they could rip the ball into the trees.

The fans were all over the place by now, sitting impatiently in the bleachers and on blankets in the lawn chairs, squinting the fly dope on because of the black flies. Then a fatline filet could barely leg it over to the Beaches. They brightened when they recognized Meyer Trumbull, a retired chemistry professor who, at eighty-two, was their oldest and most persistent supporter. Meyer stood before them, pressing his spectacles to the bench like a schoolmaster. "Boys," he said, "I would dearly love to be your manager for this one night."

The Beaches clapped and cheered Meyer on. The old man continued with a pep talk. "Remember," he said, "it's not that you're getting older per se; it's that the glue starts to go. So take it easy out there.

The boys responded somewhat less enthusiastically to this encouragement and Meyer took his place on the bench. Mel and the opposing team captain strode over to home plate for the coin toss, and the crowd went wild. The maintenance guys from the university had gotten a kazoo band together and there were even cheerleaders from the high school. They were cheering for the Beaches. "GIMME AN S!!"

The captain of the Oxymorons was a perplexed-looking guy of a name called Rocco, who grunted, "Call it!" And Mel said, "Heads." Rocco flipped a quarter and let it fall into the grass, where it got lost, so both teams ran over and took to their knees. They screwed around in the grass while the kazoo band played "Yankee Doodle." Eventually Mel and Rocco came head-to-head over the quarter, so both of them could see that it was heads, and the Beaches took the field as the crowd stomped its approval.

Mel stood there on the mound, kicking and scraping like a bull, minding a cloud of orange dust around his bare, skinny legs, which looked like toothpicks. But above his waist he was huge. He looked behind himself, deep into his outfield, until all his boys were in place. Then he adjusted his cap and began to get that ball good and sweated up in his flyshy hand while Eduardo pounded leather behind the plate.

The opposing team captain himself was the first one up. Rocco stood there at the plate, rock solid, mum to go, running his hand over his blonde crewcut and ripping his biceps for effect. The crowd sent up a cheer and Mel went into the plate, rock solid, rarin' to go, running his hand over his blonde crewcut and making a lot of noise. And the crowd went wild. The opposing team captain himself was the first one up. Rocco stood there at the plate, rock solid, mum to go, running his hand over his blonde crewcut and ripping his biceps for effect. The crowd sent up a cheer and Mel went into the plate, rock solid, rarin' to go, running his hand over his blonde crewcut and making a lot of noise. And the crowd went wild.

A split second later there was a gut-wrenching thud and that ball went rocketing skyward. For a moment the crowd gasped, and the opposing team captain strode over to home plate for the coin toss, and the crowd went wild. But that ball was all his, and when it descended from orbit it plunged nearly into his glove before Rocco had exchanged his glove.

It was madness in the stands. Mel was happy for Flit's catch, but he was otherwise concerned. Flit was their only real runner, and if these desperate guys could really get a man out in the lanes, things were going to get ugly. Otis—poor Otis; he said, "I would dearly love to be your manager for this one night."

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The second batter looked like Rocco's twin brother, only his crewcut was black. "C'mon," he shouted to Mel as he shifted his weight from foot to foot and chopped at the heavy air with the bat. "C'mon!"

Mel knew that this batter's anxiety for the pitch was the best reason to deny it to him. So Mel slipped off his glove and pretended to examine his index finger. The crowd cheered and laughed, but the Oxymorons were closing ranks and screaming for the pitch. The batter turned and started to lead them in chorus. So Mel, without so much as a windup, and without replacing his glove, suddenly flung that ball home.

"STRIKE!" called the umpire, and the crowd rose to its feet in affirmation.

"Dixie" and the cheerleaders jackknifed and called for a chorus.

The second pitch was high on the outside, but the batter wanted it so badly that he stretched for it, tipped it, and watched heartbroken as it dribbled a few feet out from home plate. Before he even decided to run, Eduardo had snatched it and lobbed it to Digger Phelps at first, who played the throw as if his life depended on it.

"TWO!" announced Mel as he jibed the sky with a victory sign.

The crowd echoed him passionately as the kazoo band struck up "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and the cheerleaders jackknifed and called for a chorus. The crowd nearly doubled over at the sight of it. Even Digger was smiling, although he realized he would have to hate Dave once this was all over.

When the Beaches retired their side the storm clouds were really boiling overhead. As Eduardo, Dave and Mel approached the bench, Meyer Trumbull took them aside. "Now look," he said. "It's going to rain but good. So let an old chemist help you boys out before the game is called." And having said this, that venerable old man, standing straight as a rail despite his years, took another haversack and passed it to Eduardo. "Tell your first baseman to hit the first pitch go. Then throw this ball back to the pitcher. This is the ball you want to hit. And you've got to do it before it rains."

"Got my runner?" he asked Eduardo between two hacking coughs.

Dave Hodgkin took his place beside Otis. He crouched low, pointed down the first base line. The pitcher for the Oxymorons went into his windup. Dave looked sidelong at Otis and said, "Remember to let the first one go!"

Otis nodded without taking his intent gaze from the pitcher, who was winding up with a vengeance. And then, suddenly, just when it looked like he was going to rocket the ball home, he slipped into slow motion and released a high, slowly tumbling pitch. "Damn!" said Dave. "A fully floater! Let it go, Otis! Let it go!"

Otis was bug-eyed. "He's-tempting-me," he said. But Dave said, getting ready to run just in case. "Meyer said not to swing."

The ball was describing a smooth, high arc. It was moving so slowly that you could count every stitch in it. Halfway to home plate, at the top of its arc, it seemed frozen in space and time. It was the pitch of Otis's dreams, and before he knew it, he was committed. Fortunately, Eduardo sensed this, too. In the meantime, the first raindrops were beginning to fall. Eduardo peered on his toes, leaned forward a bit, and just before the ball was in hitting range, cried, "SWING!"

And Otis, always eager for any advice which would improve his game, complied.
"STRIKE!" roared the umpire. And the crowd sighed, brokenhearted.

The Oxymorons passed their hands over their faces while Eduardo secreted Meyer's special ball from under his shirt. He tossed it out to the pitcher. Dave looked back at Otis. "This is the one, Otis," he said. "C'mon.

Otis nodded and took a few practice swings. The pitcher went into his windup and let go with a perfect low arc, headed straight for the strike zone. "Hit it, hit it, hit it..." said Dave, like a refrain.

Otis hauled off and put all his weight into his swing. He connected solidly—and then let out a scream of alarm when the ball bore into flames and rocketed out high over the field, trailing a fiery tail that made it look like Halley's Comet.

The crowd was cheering hysterically, but Otis just stood there dumbfounded, still with the bat in his hands, staring at the smoky trail of the fireball he had hit. The Oxymorons weren't even going after it. In fact, they were scattering to get out of its way. That made Otis feel good. Accomplished. Strong.

In the meantime, Dave was rounding the bases at leisure, waving hisball cap at the cheering fans. When Otis had his head up and let go with a perfect low arc, he headed straight for the strike zone. The ball squooshes from the ash and wobbles, trailing a fiery tail that made it look like Halley's Comet. The crowd was cheering hysterically, but Dave, like a balloon, raises his face to the east, where the tiny gray and ragged object passes in the light, breathing its hold along the gold levelling its from Jersey. Smoke varifies into green and gold atoms that scatter across light gliding down the Watergap.

Then they realized that what they had that night was a genuine forfeit. And that was oh so sweet. That was also the last time they were all together.

The wives spent a few more minutes screeching at their husbands and then went home disgusted, while the Beaches lined up for batting practice, ten swings, Eric.

The Oxymorons began to break up, pulling their shirts over their heads. The Sons of Beaches called out to them to keep playing; but Rocco was the first one off the field, high-tailing it home with the others. The crowd was dispersing as well, followed by the kazoo band and the cheerleaders. Pretty soon it was just the Beaches in that soggy head? But you already know what he said.

Still with the bat in his hand, staring at the smoky trail of the fireball he had hit, Eduardo just shook his head. Dave said, "Eduardo, why are you shaking your head?" But you already know what he said.

The wives spent a few more minutes screeching at their husbands and then went home disgusted, while the Beaches lined up for batting practice, ten swings per man. It was raining so hard that you could barely see the ball. And then Mel started to laugh, and one-by-one all the Sons of Beaches joined in, until they could hardly stand up. But they played right through, until every man had his ten swings. Then they realized that what they had that night was a genuine forfeit. And that was oh so sweet. That was also the last time they were all together.

Robert Klose
Bangor
Teaches Biology at University College

A Republican Repast

Remember honey last
Time we were hungry
Trying to eat ballads
Though
The poetry ran out the holes
Our forks
Made in the paper
Better to smoke
Than swallow
Tissue of lies no food
For thought
Stare's the souls
Laid back to back
Prisoners like Bobby Sands
Cordwood pulp
Cold suck

Cider Pressing

Think of smooth brown seed
Split into green underground. Parentage
Can not be ascertained. bees
Being what they are. Remember
Blossoms, white, pink, rusting
With age as apple flesh
Browns in air. Remember
Branches bent, baskets of fruit
Wontfallen, ground bruised, transfused
With stubble and mutt. Wrap them
In filtering shirts. Feel
The great screw come down,
Relentless rack in reverse.
See blood of seed flow, pale, sweet.

David Snow
Portland
Emigrated from Detroit

Instant Replay:
16 October, 1912

"Snodgrass muff in 10th sparks Boston rally,
Visitors win in eight games,
second game having been called because of darkness."

The factory behind the fence is shifting
to the early step of the night watchman.
Smoke varifies into green and gold atoms
That scatter across light gliding down the Watergap.

The ball squooshes from the ash and wobbles
Out high over the field, trailing a fiery tail that made it look like Halley's Comet. The crowd was cheering hystERICALLY, but Dave, like a balloon, raises his face to the east, where the tiny gray and ragged object passes in the light, breathing its hold along the gold levelling its from Jersey. Smoke varifies into green and gold atoms that scatter across light gliding down the Watergap.

Snodgrass fans across the sod, graceful on darkened spires of turf, its sinuous signalling any rut or alteration in the placement of his spikes.

The slightest shrug of dirt will angle glove
And ball from the intention of legs and eyes
And the inspiration of silence in the stands,
Thrust suspended, like the tiny white cup
curling in the sun and spiraling to the destiny
Of a final out. This is the design of the game,
the perfection of a diamond picking up final facets
Of the day. SmokeJoe and the Boston Nine take
Into the loom rising over the East River.

Matz holds on to win in ten.

Indian Summer reddens into blackness
Across the Shenandoah, exploring the derelict wests of the Polo Grounds. The farmer looks up into Ohio, and turns his team to the crunch and creak
Of the barn. His wife washes rocks in lanterns
And poars again into the savory burn of the stone.
The sun sends silver shivers across the wide Missouri.

In California, the ocean crumples unavored and emerald in its stretch along unperturbed sands. The shaggy hull thwacks into the skins leather above the palm. Snodgrass smiles and holds it sp.

Klem raises his arm. Closest to the clubhouse,
Snodgrass turns and rote to the steps,
Giving a final glance to the oval now spilling
With people. A last nimbus of smoke or cloud
Burns against a withdrawn fingertips of light.

H.R. COURSE

Braneswicke
Teaches at Bowdoin

Robert Chute
Poland Spring
Teaches biology at Bates
Hunger for a Stillness to Call Home

What is there to enter anymore? Oblivion stopped working. I want to crawl inside his blind eye, make it right, give him peripheral vision, center vision, strength to see. It was just another day, fishing in New Hampshire, just an easy day floating on a pond, his fishline deep in the water, deep into a tree trunk, deep into the eye, piercing the retina. If it'd hit his temple he'd be dead, they speculated; I'd rather it'd hit a magpie knocking fly. Instead, my brother's now half-blind.

In Islington, a blind voice teacher taught me how to roar. We pretended to be picking at the earth, our bodies rising and falling. In this act of oil, she had no release. Her chants fell between floorboards.

Years ago, I let go of the act of eating two dozen chocolate chip cookies to satisfy an impossible hunger. Now, my hunger is for the fox's snarl, his camouflage and waiting. From a train window, I see a fox stop suddenly, stare only at me. I watch him run down the empty road, realizing it's one I'd never press my foot against. I envy his fur that changes color, his tower of observation, his decisiveness. I want his skin over mine, the landscape entering me as beast.

At 18, I wanted to kill myself on the library steps, in the rain, over my first love. I'd hurt him. I couldn't see how to go on. A god of righteousness ruled over me. I'd never go to heaven. I'd go to purgatory. Or maybe even hell. If I ran from the bad girl in me, the one who slapped stickers on a perfect white house on Halloween.

But the bad girl wanted attention. She caught up with me in the corridors of the English department. She flirted with married professors. She wanted several lives at once, foreign cities, many lovers. She wanted to catch the end of the red silk scarf she saw rounding distant corners, to own the body whose perfume spilled into strangers' compartments.

Her appetites were severe. She said goodbye often, never believing forever. When silence at last consumed her, all she wanted was to be informed when each of her ex-lovers died. Line after line, I resuscitated you, she would write. Then she asked. But from what death? Then one day she said, I will save nothing from its own destruction, and she became clear again. The bad girl retreated.

The old, remembered scenes became static as photographs in frames.

My Casio watch had its ticket punched, change crushed, bell rang, pencil snapped, sub tank core melted, apple cored, bank mislaid, headline shamed song sung, chain rusted, spring sprung, drain plugged, chicken fried, toast burned. Pense piñata portrait painted, peachies canned, pool drained, curtain called embers cooled, door slammed, nail hammered, button pushed, dressways shaved leg rolled, table set, meat blazed, lobsters clawed, pipes pumped, captain crunched, slab dunked, condo converted, acid rained, and clock cleaned.

Dan Rothermel
York
Teaches at Frisbee
Middle School in Kittery

Midwife

Renee Gregorio
Taos, NM

Just Yesterday

My Casio watch brought the farm
had its ticket punched
change crushed
bell rang
pencil snapped
sub tank core melted
apple cored
bank mislaid
headline shamed
song sung
chain rusted
spring sprung
drain plugged
chicken fried
toast burned
prune piñata
portrait painted
peachies canned
pool drained
curtain called
embers cooled
door slammed
nail hammered
button pushed
dressways shaved
leg rolled
table set
meat blazed
lobsters clawed
pipes pumped
captain crunched
slab dunked
condo converted
acid rained
and clock cleaned
Earthquake

"Listen, Dave," I said. "I'm not kidding. You heard the dishes rattle. You felt the chair shake." Belching is never a subject I discuss easily. And it's not one people hear easily either. They always think you're joking. Dave was no exception. A little smile played in his eyes even though his mouth remained perfectly serious.

Dave folded his arms across his chest, barricading himself from believing what he had just witnessed with his own two eyes, had experienced right down to the very roots of his crevice. He chewed his lower lip, a sure sign he was thinking. Dave did a lot of thinking about life, in general, and how it worked.

The gears were really turning. He mulled. He considered. He sorted and sifted facts like a Jackson Lab scientist trying to determine which mouse gene-pool was most likely to prove the hypothesis.

I let loose a very large, exasperated sigh, and waited. I'm not a patient woman. But I'd known Dave long enough to know that he never let himself be led to a conclusion until he was ready to arrive at one.

"Nope," he said in the stubbly way I recognized from other debates, "had to have been a truck going by on the Main Road. Must have something to do with the thaw, the ground just the right firmness to resonate the rumble and shake hard enough to rattle the dishes and rock the table. That's one theory. Or it could have been a plane flying lower than normal. The wind's in a funny direction, too. That can make things sound real odd."

I hate to have the evidence of my five senses reduced to the straight lines of logic, so I replied with more than a little ill humor.

"You and your damn logic, Dave. You saw what happened. You saw me open my mouth, you heard me. I belched, Dave, and the whole house shook."

I raked my fingers through a wedge of graying hair falling into my eyes. I always fused with my hair when I got agitated. Mad enough to tear her hair out, my mother always used to say.

All Dave really knew about my family was what I'd told him over the years. I don't know as I'd actually avoided commenting on their foibles. Certainly, that was possible. It wasn't always easy for me to admit to myself that in my family, for every regular person born, two certifiable eccentrics were also born. Most of the time, I liked to think of myself as one of the normal ones. I knew I wasn't, though, because my mother never lost a chance to point out that I was THE most irregular member of the family. She based this opinion on the regrettable fact that I had once been a devoted follower of the Roshni Hadarashna's zen of written communication as a means to purge the mind and body of psychological toxins. But that had been years ago.

Now, I lived a very quiet, uneventful life on a back street in Winterport, Maine. Dave lived in Hampden, just a few miles up the road. We'd met years ago when mutual friends had introduced us.

Our friendship was both casual and close in the sense that we lived separate lives, but relied on one another if the furnace died in the middle of the winter and for company at suppertime whenever we got too tired of eating alone. Both of us had been married and divorced. We weren't interested in surrendering our autonomy again. So what we told one another about our families and their habits tended to be somewhat selective. We had never met one another's families and we didn't really spend too much time talking about them.

Dave shifted in his chair and crossed his legs. He drummed his fingers on the table. He scratched his fork around on the barren surface of his supper plate. He fiddled with his pocket watch like it could tell the time. And finally, he lit the silver in his hair.

"Just wait a minute, Dee, before you get too bent out of shape," he said. "Maine, especially this part of the Penobscot River Valley, sits right on top of an ancient geological fault that runs all the way from the middle of New Brunswick to Mt. Desert Island. It's a scientistic fact that every so often the plates along the fault shift. Causes earthquakes. Mostly little ones. We have them more often than you or anyone else realizes. We don't feel them because the shock is so mild. What happened when you opened your mouth and burped was a one-in-a-million coincidence. Burping doesn't cause tables to shake and dishes to rattle." He replaced the fork beside the plate with deft, precise motions. Dave taught science at Hampden Academy. He'd had a lot of experience living according to the natural laws of the universe and teen-age hyperbole.

Dave's faith in the infallibility of scientific principles seldom yielded to the intuitive and unexplained. But logic and reason always confused me more than it helped make anything clear.

"It was no coincidence, Dave," I said. "Listen, I know you've been trained to think that everything in the universe is explainable. I respect the fact that you wouldn't give Shirley MacLaine the time of day, but believe me, Dave, it happens. The laws of physics, given the right conditions, can be defied. Even the Doppler Effect can be cancelled out, I bet."

Dave looked skeptical, but he didn't contradict me.

Now that I had his attention, I made myself a little more comfortable. I put my feet up in an empty chair and poured myself a little more coffee. I pulled the coffee mug close to my heart, a defensive stance in case he laughed in my face. It was never easy to just the right words to explain what Herrick Stomach Syndrome was and how it worked.

"A fair percentage of my family are big burpers," I said, "so big that the potential for external repercussions is very great. When we burp, nothing is unaffected."

"Everyone in my family, including me," I told him, "are Big Burpers. We burp so big we sometimes cause serious repercussions—like earth tremors. We don't know why. But we do know that the force of our burps is directly proportional to what and how much we eat. Lettuce, for example, produces a series of burps roughly equivalent to the sound and force of a rock dropped off a shed roof. A peanut butter and jelly sandwich with marshmallow fluff dredges up burps comparable to a freight train rolling across bedrock. My Uncle Paul, he's the inventor in the family, figured out that a relationship exists between the magnitude of our burps and the combination of the foods we eat. A salad with radishes and blue cheese dressing, a plate of baked beans, two hot dogs—we're talking burps like twin jet engines revving for a take-off."

"Sure, Dee, Sure," Dave laughed.

"I knew you wouldn't believe me," I said, not surprised.

The only person I'd ever told about my family's digestive peculiarities was the Roshni Hadarashna. He'd said something that always comforted me when I remembered it. He'd said, 'Strong wind blowing out of the body makes room for the spirit to expand.' I said as much. Dave almost rolled on the floor, laughing.

"Come on, admit it, you're exaggerating," Dave said.

"No. I'm not!" I said hotly. I could feel anger forcing me out on a limb. Sometimes my temper got the best of me just when I least expected it to.

"And you know what, Dave," I went on, "I'm going to prove it to you."

I telephoned six of my relatives who lived in and around Winterport. They all agreed to cooperate providing I kept everything under control. I promised I would.

After talking to my aunts and uncles and cousins, I ate a peanut butter sandwich. Then I fixed myself a lettuce salad. I ate a dish of baked beans. I finished up with a giant mustard pickle. I drank a bottle of beer and nibbled on a handful of peanuts. I ate a dish of baked beans. I finished up with a giant mustard pickle.

Dave watched me eat with what I can only describe as scientific detachment. He scribbled things on his notepad. He took a cracker, a bit of cheese, a slice of salami, and put it down. He said, "Mostly this is fun, Dee. It's sort of a laugh, you know?"

I said, not surprised. I was watching the clock, calculating to the last minute how long it would take me to prove to him that Herrick Stomach Syndrome was as real as thermodynamics.

"You'd better brace yourself," I said. "Pressure was building in my stomach; that same force was being duplicated in six other sets of innards."

At precisely seven twenty-two, a belch of monstrous proportions, a long, low rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr---

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Before I went to bed, I swallowed a triple dose of Mylanta II as an antidote for aftershocks.

The next morning the front page headline of the Bangor Daily News read: EARTHQUAKE RAVAGES WINTERPORT. And in smaller typeface: MEASURES 3.2 on Richter Scale. Scientists Puzzled over Eerie Noise Preceding Quake.

Dave called a few days later.

"Can I come over?" he asked. "I've been working on this whole thing. You won't believe what I've figured out—the action of peptides on hydrochloric acid. I'm calling it the Theory of Bio-enzymal Dynamics..."

Ardeena Hanlin
Hampden
is at work on a second novel

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Excerpt from Mars Poetica,
or History Becomes A Kind of Antidote for Shopping-Mall Disease

The inspired youth writes to the award-winning poet:

Your Royal Highness:

I attended your poetry reading last Friday night & was impressed with your life-like imitation of what it's like to be dead. Poetry is indeed a matter of life & death, as I always suspected, & I was particularly moved by the cadences subtle & incomprehensible to the human ear that revealed your greatest monotony in life is so see into the death of things & to reflect through your words the emptiness of the entire universe. The vast desert places between stanzas is nowhere near as vast as the emptiness between our own ears. Your courage in repeatedly speaking of your personal religion without ever mentioning "God" opens up whole wastelands of possibility for me, as I now see how to peer into the depths & pits of my subterraneous homesick mind. My mind, after all, is merely an extension of the real world, which as you point out science points out, is full of empty facts. Your poem about the death of your family cat was a watershed in my life; I feel sure, I shall sublimates my love for poetry to the sound of its own voice.

Sincerely yours,

Anna Mous

The award-winning poet writes back:

Dear Ms. Mous:

Thank you very much for your encouraging letter. I can only say that we must enter into your own cerebral vortex to plumb the depths of your own glaciated & express the immediate intersexuality of global words upon your semi-conciousness, this is what I have done, as is so rightly pointed out. The brevity of language sublimates the drive for intersubjectivity in the same way that homosexuality concerns not only the poet but the trumps; & we must all put our minds in a slant & give ourselves up to the structurality of the natural world, which has no significance for the signifier—no more than the gum of an erasure. My hands are sticky with my newest poem—I shall quote a few lines

My cat, Alsace-Lorraine,
became to me a
flower
rolled round & round
in earth's infernal course

Of course, my cat's death is a healing metaphor for the tragedy of the world war, as is plane from these lines. Please don't write to me any more unless I write to you.

Sincerely,

Cedella Wigmore Fanua, D. Po.

Aphorisms on Poetry, by way of explaining what is going on

1. Williams: "If you change the poetic line you change civilization."

2. When told that 600 poets had been hired in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps, Robert Frost replied, "600 poets? There haven't been 600 poets in all of recorded history."

3. When asked to comment upon the terrible, spirit-breaking work of being a writer, Jorge Luis Borges said, "If I didn't like to write I wouldn't."

4. Stevens: "It is necessary to any originality to have the courage to be an amateur."

5. The best stone-wall makers build about ten feet a day.

6. EP: "Stupidity carried beyond a certain point becomes a public menace."

7. Great poetry could exist in America, if only it was possible to use your culture's energy without becoming a human metaphor for Love Canal.

8. The winner of any postmodern war is the one who dismantles his bureaucracy first.

9. It will generally be believed, hundreds of years from now, that the one great error of the universal age was that we did not take care of our dead.


11. The poetry of an age is the sound of its own voice. The postmodern age is inhabited by minds which do not hear their own voices.

12. The problem with being money is that money doesn't love you back.

13. The supreme note toward the supreme fiction: "It must give pleasure" (Stevens again):

14. The true literature of alienation is literary criticism.

15. Oscar: "There are two ways to dislike art: one is to dislike it; the other is to like it rationally."

16. When the response to poetry is silence, it is because, in Nietzsche's words, there is much to be silent about.

Dana Wilde
Unity
Branches at Unity College
1973: Windows Like Eyes

Thirteen, pretty I thought but never kissed a boy. Once, dancing, almost, but looked too long in his eyes and saw messy bed, clothes, dropped shoes. Shy, my eyes fell.

Late at night, our church youth group returned from New York. Bus dark and cluttered sitting in front. Kids pair off. Matt Levey moves close to me. I am staring

at road-side homes, lighted windows like eyes, families flashing by: a child, men, a laughing woman. I keep to myself.

1975: Goodbye

The night before Matt left
I cut an inch off Mom's old A-line. Then Matt at the bus:

kiss parents, hug sister, bye Grandpops—all the while staring at my legs like a road he'd never seen.

1985: Matt At My Window

Then, I had skinny legs and good buns. I raced basketballs, softballs. Boys came to my games.

Then, I slept in the last room of this long house.

Cars could not call to me.

Then, I was sixteen and books were my lovers. I fell asleep grabbing their thin bodies.

Then, two AM one June, Matt Levey was at my window. He joked on a ladder: "Cops! Hide me!"

Then, Matt was 18, Rivertown's poet. Famous because he had left school to be a customs guard.

Then, that night, Matt knew I was alone. To see his curly hair and grin stiffened my breasts.

Then, wordless, I looked the window. I ran to the front guest room, like a mother for her child.

Now, 26, divorced, I still live at home. Men stare, I slow. I give and get a better view.

Now, I sleep always in the guest room. My little John and Anna sleep across the hall

Now, when not too tired, I date. I have taken one lover. But I read too many books, too young.

Now, this January, I wake frightened. A ladder is hanging. Matthew: coatless, drunk, singing

Now, Matthew is a lawyer alone in one room on Water Street, with poor clients and friends' divorces.
Love Poem

There was a time
When you and I couldn’t have a love poem.
There were no words
For that

Endless fusion
Which catapulted us out to the ozone.
We had to suffice with pedestrian definitions of ecstasy
That kept failing off.

Now
We have our own history, reference points, baseline;
Our own means of judging deviations.
If we could just remember to use them
We wouldn’t have to keep rolling over
To protect each other from the sun.

Anna-della Williams
Augusta
is a PA.

Three Couples

1959

Along the esplanade at Brooklyn Heights, it’s summer, evening. The neighbors sit on benches, watching the liners float out to sea and in to harbor. No lights burn across the water, on the island. The night comes slowly, a faint shadow, a remembrance to the two bright lovers who stroll the cobbles, softly, hand in hand,

and who flicker oddly at the mad woman in rags and dirty hair who stops them with her words: “You’re in love, you shits. Don’t worry. Before you know it, you’ll be sad.”

1974

Off Davis Square, in Somerville, Sunday’s washing day at the laundromat. The heat’s a drag in early May, but the air inside beats it, and friends greet friends in the ‘sixties way, with genderless hugs. The cool ease their warmth conveys over-rides the junky clatter the driers make, as does the soft pitter of that young pair, who mumble as if for form,

no words for folding sheets required, just gestures, rhythm, and maybe the admiring eyes of that old German woman, who says, “Nice work. Been married long? This hanky yours?”

1985

In Gardiner, Maine, we park the Subaru outside the cleaners, settle our two loads in the soap and suds, move to the waiting room and listen to TV, read poetry

I, and a novel, you. Now and then you check the clothes, and when the time’s arrived, we empty the driers, fold up the pants and shirts, the other things. Our work’s in concert, tuned. No one notices. I recall myself as someone else, and bless us for our love that requires no one else’s words to be.

Eric Horsting
Yellow Springs, OH
summers in Machiasport & teaches at Ar
Visiting Hours

An electronic voice bleats from the hall: Visiting hours are over. Clara looks at her husband, who is slumped in the green plastic chair beside her hospital bed. His eyes are closed.

She is going to die soon. She is quite certain of it. All the heart monitors and medications and busy nurses won’t keep her alive. The doctors are talking about open heart surgery, but she won’t live long enough to reach the operating table. Medications and busy nurses won’t keep her alive. The doctors are talking about her heart, but she won’t live long enough to reach the operating table. Medications and busy nurses won’t keep her alive. The doctors are talking about her heart, but she won’t live long enough to reach the operating table.

Neil? She reaches toward her husband through a wedge of sunlight, stops, stares at her hand. Blue veins ride the freckled skin; tiny lines are scattered all across the back of her hand like irrigation ditches gone wild. For a moment she wants to hold the hand between her breasts, rock it there like a baby.

She remembers rocking her own babies, feeling their thin, fluid flesh under her fingers. There is a sinking sensation under her shoulder blades; she lets her hand drop back onto the bed.

“Neil.”

He starts awake, straightens, looks at her, blinking. His eyes are light blue, paler than they used to be. She wonders, do eyes bleach with age?

“What?” he says. “What is it?”

“You have to go now.”

He frowns, shuffled feet on the gray tile floor. “I must have been asleep.”

He stands up. His long shoulders droop under his sweater; his hair stands out over his ears in thin white wires. “You okay? Any more pains?”

She shakes her head. “You go home. Get a good night’s sleep.”

He bends over her, brushes her lips with his mouth. “Don’t you worry about me. You just get better, so I can take you home.”

She tries to smile, but sighs instead, a long, slow breath; the air in the room is too warm and dry, the same as the air in her mouth. “You don’t call Lydia tonight, let her fix you a decent meal?”

He shakes his head, a hard thrust of his round chin. “She still smokes, doesn’t she? She’s still living with that Kemper guy. I’m not going to go毯rrning to her now just because you’re in the hospital for a few days.”

“It’s more than a few days, Neil.” She watches his eyes shift away from her. Does he really believe she’s going to come home? “And Lydia’s not an enemy. She’s our daughter.”

“Not mine. Not any more.” Clara turns away from him. The door to the hall is open; little groups of visitors go past, their heels clicking on the floor. They laugh quietly and talk to each other; some of them peer into her room. She knows they are families, grown children visiting their parents. She wants Neil to talk to Lydia; she wants to know he’ll be looked after when she dies.

“Have you called Joseph?” She knows what the answer will be. He hasn’t called, he won’t call, won’t let her call. Joseph doesn’t know about her chest pains, that she’s been in the hospital for a week, that she’s going to die. Twenty years ago Neil threw him out of the house for smoking marijuana. It had been one problem after another since Joseph turned twelve.

Neil snorts. She doesn’t want to look at him, but she does, reads the disgust in the gray lines around his mouth, the loathing in the hard slant of his head.

“What do you expect he’d do if I did? Come all the way out here from California? Joseph?”

“No.” He’s right, of course. Joseph wouldn’t come. The wall between them is too high; it’s been so long since she’s seen him that she probably wouldn’t recognize him. She still thinks of him as young, a child really, running around with a toy gun.

“I don’t care.”

He looks at her, lets his arms drop to his sides. “What do I mean?”

“You don’t care what I feel.”

Neil frowns, shuffles his feet on the gray tile floor. “What’s that?”

She opens her eyes. “A feeling of utter desolation and despair. It’s like the feel of something in my)—”

He frowns, shuffles his feet on the gray tile floor. “What’s that?”

She shakes her head. “You just get better, so I can take you home.”

She watches him tighten his shoulders, frown. He takes a step toward the door.

“I’m not allowed to smoke in the rooms!” Neil’s voice is a bark. Clara feels her face go cold, the way it always does when he’s angry.

The woman smiles again; her mouth curves toward two deep dimples in the thick cheeks. “Don’t worry, I’m not lighting up. I gave up smoking years ago. I just like the feel of something in my hand.”

She looks at Clara. “What do you mean?”

Clara blinks, startled. Amazingly, she does know what the woman means, knows exactly how satisfying it would feel to have the cigarette clamped between her lips, though Clara has never smoked before, has never even wanted to. She looks at Neil. His whole face is red now.

“Neil, please go.” Her voice is pitiful, a lost child’s voice; it is the only tone he can understand.

“Neil, please go.” Her voice is pitiful, a lost child’s voice; it is the only tone he can understand.

He looks at her, lets his arms drop to his sides. “You sure?”

She smiles, nods. “Thank you for coming, dear.” She watches him go. His left leg is stiff; he limps slightly as he walks, his right shoe scuffing the floor every few steps. He passes the cleaning lady without looking at her, her head jerking forward on his taut neck.

The woman steps into the room, pushing a metal pail mounted on four little black wheels. She shakes her head. "Men aren't alike, aren't they? Always showing off!" She gives a short, raw little laugh, glances at Clara.

"It’s just a Children’s" Clara blinks, startled. Amazingly, she does know what the woman means, knows exactly how satisfying it would feel to have the cigarette clamped between her lips, though Clara has never smoked before, has never even wanted to. She looks at Neil. His whole face is red now.

“Neil, please go.” Her voice is pitiful, a lost child’s voice; it is the only tone he will respond to.

He looks at her, lets his arms drop to his sides. “You sure?”

She smiles, nods. "Thank you for coming, dear." She watches him go. His left leg is stiff; he limps slightly as he walks, his right shoe scuffing the floor every few steps. He passes the cleaning lady without looking at her, her head jerking forward on his taut neck.

The woman steps into the room, pushing a metal pail mounted on four little black wheels. She shakes her head. "Men aren't alike, aren't they? Always showing off!" She gives a short, raw little laugh, glances at Clara. "But he's a teddy bear underneath, though. Right?"

Clara blinks. She’s never thought of Neil as a teddy bear, nor in forty years of marriage.

The woman rests her mop against the wall, pushes the door shut with one thick white string. "They're your grandchildren," she said. "You ought to know that. The boy looks just like Joseph."
"No," says Clara weakly. "I don't watch basketball." She blinks; something jumps into her brain. She used to watch it all the time when Joseph was home, when he played center on the high school team.

The woman pulls the mop out of the pail, wrings it out with her thick right hand, slaps it down onto the floor. She glances at Clara; when she speaks, the cigarette bobs up and down on her lower lip.

"You seen the babies yet?"

"Babies?"

She leans on her mop, tucks it under her arm like a crutch. "Brand new. Twins. Somebody left 'em on the hospital steps this morning. Cute as buttons."

"I hadn't heard," Clara laces her fingers together in her lap.

"Nobody knows who they belong to. Guess they're wards of the state now."

"Will they live?"

"Oh sure." The woman grins, shrugs. "They're upon the maternity ward with the other babies. You ought to go up and see em."

Clara shakes her head. "I can't. I'm very ill. My doctor's ordered complete bed rest."

The woman cocks an eyebrow, goes back to her mopping. A few minutes later, her head comes up. "Dr. Seton?"

Clara rolls her head toward the woman. Her fingers are knotted together very tightly. "Yes. How did you know?"

The woman shrugs, goes on mopping. "He's always ordering bed rest. Takes all the fun out of life, that man. A real tyrant." She looks at Clara again. "You really feel that bad you can't go up to the sixth floor?"

The woman takes three more swipes at the floor, wrings the mop in the pail, comes over and drops heavily into the chair beside the bed. She takes the cigarette out of her mouth, leans toward Clara.

"How about if I grab a wheelchair, take you up there?" Her eyes are bright blue, very clear, like a child's. Clara is startled that she didn't notice them earlier.

"No." She thinks about seeing the babies, what it would be like. They would be on the other side of a wall of glass. She wouldn't be able to touch them. "No, I can't. The strain on my heart . . . ."

"Sure you can." The woman clamps her hand down on Clara's arm. Clara feels the scratch of calluses against her skin; she wants to pull away. "I'll take care of everything. I'd do you good to see those babies."

Clara's heart thumps twice, hard, and, for an instant, she thinks she's going to feel another white pain in her chest. She sags at the air.

"Maternity's the happiest floor in the hospital. Everybody should go up there, get a daily dose." The woman grins at her. "You got kids?"

Clara starts to shake her head. It is an automatic gesture, a way she's trained herself to respond so that she won't have to answer questions, won't have to explain that she doesn't know them, has never seen her grandchildren. Something makes her hesitate. She nods weakly. "Two."

"I got seven."

The woman pushes at the sleeves of her sweater, jamming them toward her round elbows. "Never know what they're up to, so don't ask. Too many to keep track of, I guess. That's what Eileen says. She's my sister."

Clara's lips are dry, almost sore. She wants to run the tip of her tongue over them, but her mouth seems glued shut.

"I like'em when they're little, myself. When you can put'em down and they'll stay put. Can't get lost yet. Know what I mean?"


"That's why I always take a peek at the babies before I go home at night. Brings back a lot of happy feelings. Sort of like a lullaby to myself."

Clara raises her head off the pillow, presses her hands against her stomach. She remembers singing lullabies to her children, rocking them in the dark, long after Neil was in bed. The tunes lie on the back of her tongue even now, as if she'd just finished singing them; she can almost taste them there, syrupy, warm. She looks into the woman's clear eyes.

"I think I want to go," she says. "I'd like to see the babies."

The cleaning woman stands up, slides her cigarette back into the pack in her pocket. She grins down at Clara. "Just give me a couple minutes to get rid of the tunes. I'll be right back."

She grabs the pail, wheels it out the door. Clara watches her go. Something swells and bounces in her chest like a bright yellow balloon.

When the woman comes back with the wheel chair, Clara feels quite strong. Her heartbeat is firm and regular. She sits up and swings her legs over the side of the bed, drops to her feet and slides into her thin, pink slippers. The woman reaches to give her a hand, but Clara waves her away and maneuvers into the chair herself. She touches her hair, smooths her gown, places her hands carefully together in her lap.

The nurse's station is empty. The woman pushes Clara up to the bank of elevators, presses the Up button. The doors roll open. Clara is wheeled into the elevator; the doors close quietly; the elevator hums. The doors open.

The woman pats Clara's shoulder. "Here we are."

Clara's arms feel as if they are strung with wires, like a harp. Her hands tremble. The woman rolls her down the hall, parks her in front of the viewing window. Clara looks into the round faces of two sleeping babies. They lie side by side in transparent, plastic baskets. Their torsos are wrapped tightly in lime green blankets, but their hands are free, curled into tiny fists beside their cheeks.

"Aren't they the sweetest little things?" the woman coos. "Don't you just want to rock'em like your own?"

"Yes," Clara whispers, "yes." And her fingers tingle with desire. She leans forward in her chair, touches the window. She wants to stroke the soft cheeks, cradle the tiny bodies against her old breasts. Her heart beats hard, slaps against the inside of her chest, urgent and swelling, pushing its way out.

Then, somehow, she is standing. Her body is pressed against the thick glass, so that her mouth, her breasts, her hips are flattened, compressed. She is making a soft, moaning sound deep in her throat.

"Hey!" The cleaning woman grabs her arm, but Clara lurches out of her grasp, reaches toward the window, with thin, wiry arms.

"Please!" she wails. "I want my babies! Why are you keeping them from me?"

She slaps the glass, beats at it with her fists. Tears roll down her cheeks. "They're mine! I want them back!"

"Take it easy, lady." The woman clamps her big hands around Clara's waist, pushes her roughly back into the chair. "You're going to get me in trouble." She spins the chair quickly away from the glass wall. Cigarettes tumble from her pocket onto the floor; one falls into Clara's lap. Clara wraps her fingers around it. Her face is wet; she can feel tears dropping off her chin.
He doesn't answer and it dawns on her gradually that he doesn't have

She smiles. "A fool

Joseph?" His

"Yes

You deliberately opposed

me, too."

She doesn't say anything.

"You made a fool of me. He raises his head, looks at her. His voice is weak.

old.

"A fool of you? She frowns. "How did I make a fool of you?"

He doesn't answer and it dawns on her gradually that he doesn't have an

answer, that he doesn't know himself what he means. She watches his shoulders sag against the back of the chair.

"All this time," she whispers. "All these wasted years. So I wouldn't make a fool of you."

He closes his eyes. There is a long silence. Clara thinks of all the times she and Neil have sat together without speaking. All the hours of silence between them. Has it been a kind of protection, a way of not hurting each other, a way of holding hands in the darkness? Or was it a failure of courage? She doesn't know.

"I'm sorry," she says. "I didn't want to hurt you. I just wanted my children back."

He doesn't open his eyes, but his hack curls lower in the chair. After a while, he sighs.

"When he's coming?"

The Emissary of God

WELL, I really don't know where to begin. You'd have to know everything to understand about the unmarked car and why it's here. You know, one of those state police ones that have a regular license plate and the blue lights behind the grill where you can't see them until they're turned on.

First, I suppose it's partly Angie's fault. She was L.J.'s pet lamb when he was eight. Well, he's nearly twenty-four now so Angie was really getting on for a sheep.

Haggis and Charlie have some of the responsibility and of course there's the coyote, too. For the past two weeks Haggis and Charles have been finding ugly bits down in the pasture. And Haggis being a retriever and all, you know, he'd arrive in the dooryard with a workable leg minus the edibles. Mother is sick of this so she yells at Dad, "Haggis has brought up one of Angie's legs. I wish you'd bury the poor thing."

And then there's the Emissary of God or the E.G. as we call them. They always come around on Saturday, "... attempting to work their way into God's good graces by drawing someone into the fold," according to Gram. Dad always said to get rid of them was like trying to shake off a burdock. That's why they're always shunted off to us kids. We usually match them pretty good, question for question, so it isn't long before they'll give us a pamphlet and head for greener pastures.

Well, it all started this morning when they stuck me with the E.G. Ben was waiting for me, or at least I hoped he was, to play ball and here I was, the sacrificial lamb, you might say, being interrogated by the E.G. Apparently it's census Saturday or something and the Emmissaries are totalling potentials versus conversions. Anyway, I was getting the third degree as to immediate family members and all. That's when I did it. I really did it for Mum because I knew she wouldn't approve of me giving out a lot of family business to anybody, let alone the E.G.'s. So I just led her off the track. I says, "You'd better not count my little sister, Angie, 'cause she's not with us anymore." Always alert to the opportunities of family bereavement, the E.G. picked up on that, asking all kinds of questions. I got kind of scared by the depth of interest I'd created so I didn't dare come clean. And not wanting to get in any deeper, I clammed up. The E.G. viewed this with suspicion so I retreated feeling so bad I didn't want to talk about it. As a matter of fact I felt so bad about that, that I wanted to be alone or at least somewhere else!

Well, you've guessed what happened next. Haggis appeared at the pasture bars in triumph, his prize still joined at the knees. From then on things kind of followed the domino theory. Mum screamed at Dad. "That dog has one of Angie's legs! Would you please bury the poor thing once and for all?" Dad replied that they'd just dig her up again, anyway, but I don't think the E.G. got that part as she was almost to the mailbox by then without so much as leaving me a paper!

It wasn't long after that, that the unmarked car I was telling you about, appeared in the dooryard. The two detectives have been talking to Dad for quite awhile. Uh, oh, I think I can hear him calling me. I guess I'd better look for Ben. It might be some time before I get to play ball again!
Waiting for Ulysses

The faithful Penelope ever weaving ever waiting
Did she never tire of loyalty?
Did she never wish to substitute one dish for another husband?
Did she never regret that more than flesh had been wasted?
Did she never wonder if he thought of Calypso's charms while holding her?

Had she called him back to Ithaca or had the stronger ties been Telemachus and Home?

What's left of love after an Epic separation?

Estelle Watson Sanders
Windham
Teaches at Windham H.S.

Laughing Lady Buddha

I remember you, sad friend, back in Boston, standing on a sidewalk in Chinatown. Winter wind blows through your hair. By a bakery window you stand and eat a glazed Buddha-cookie. The red gumdrop has fallen from its ravel and is a dot next to your foot. You eat his head slowly, this Laughing Buddha. Your reflection glows on the window. You nibble the ears and say, "I want only his head. You want the rest?"

I say I want his head too. Your hair lifts, and your eyes grow large. "Then you must get your own Buddha."

You are laughing.

Terry Plunkett
Hallowell
Teaches at UMA

Villanelle: Before Two Letters

I have two letters that I have to write.
One to my sister, one to a close friend. They'll hate me for bringing my love to light.

Sister, you're on the verge of a long night. And passion wins again over reason.
I have two letters that I have to write.

Friend, I can no longer watch you delight in your own destruction. I understand. You'll hate me for bringing my love to light. I hate me then as I hate you for your plight which pains me with visions of your ruin. I have two letters that I have to write.

Sister, we both know that I have no right to decide your fate, but please, please listen and hate me for bringing my love to light.

Young, unschooled, jobless, pregnant, money tight. Old, abusing drugs, risking everything. I have two letters that I have to write. They'll hate me for bringing my love to light.

Douglas Woodsum
Cape Elizabeth
Works at Bread Loaf

Weihnachten DDR

In Berlin, Kurt and Petra scramble westward over the stubble of the wall. In an hour, they return to their gray flat with a small evergreen tree, a string of tiny multi-colored lights and a bag of oranges. Kurt squeezes orange juice and adds vodka. "A toast!" they say. Outside in the solstice night Germans dash about like ants, singing, waving torches, frantically searching for some vital thing lost long ago when the great trees were cut up and burned. "A toast!" they say, and dream of Christmas in a land that finally will not be bought by he with the most guns, or the most money. Still... in the west, millions of plastic toys poised to fly at them. Appliance dealers in Frankfurt toss in their sleep, dreaming of gory fruit in the east that when picked, turns to an oily gold... In the flat, colored lights dance on darkened walls. Petra and Kurt toast the new Yule tall dawn, their fingers crossed.

Lyle Dennett
Rockport
Builds houses
That hot Sunday evening a hundred years ago, when Van Gogh shot himself in the stomach with a revolver, did not bring immediate peace. From the Auvers farmyard where the act took place, he was able to stagger to his 70-cent dacha in the middle of a field in front of a thicket of olive trees and cypresses. He drank hard through the night with Toulouse-Lautrec, the sun, the sun, the birdcalls he'd studied, the olive and cypress. &

In an earlier crisis, his brother once wrote of him: "Hard, drinking, cigar-smoking woman..."

During his thirty-hour deathwatch, smoking his pipe by the window, Vincent's thoughts must also have turned toward certain women, some of whom might have saved him, to the extent that anyone can ever truly be saved by others, though he would not have considered themselves in that light.

There was Ursula Loyer, back when he was twenty and making hesitant drawings along the Thames embankment in London. She was his landlady's daughter, and his affection for her was unrequited. For six years he sought consolation in religion, Bible studies, tutoring children at private schools, preparation for the ministry. His broken heart coincided with his search for self. After austerely months in a Belgian coal-mining district, he wrote: "The clergy call us sinners, and born in sin, holy! what dammed nonsense I think it is. It is a sin to love, to stand in need of love, to be unable to exist without love! I think that life without love is a sinful and immoral condition. If I am repentant about anything, it is that at one time, through mystical and theological abstruseness, I committed the error of retreating too much into my shell." Vincent had finally surfaced from his heartache for Ursula.

At the age of 27 he went back to Etten, Holland, to live with his parents. He was now firmly dedicated to his drawing. A fascinating new arrival in the Van Gogh household was Van's cousin, Kee Vor. The daughter of an Amsterdam preacher, she was young and recently widowed, with a four-year-old son. Vincent took both into his heart, over long walks in the countryside and pleasant discussions of flowers and birds. He expressed his affection. She was shocked and outraged; she told him she could never marry again. To his brother he wrote that he would win her somehow someway: "For love is something so positive, so strong, so real that it is as impossible for one who loves to take back that feeling as it is to take his own life." Kee thought he was crazy, and she fled to her parents in Amsterdam. He followed. Kee heard his knock, and departed by the back door. Vincent confronted her father, the preacher Jan Stricker, in the family room. The young artist, wild-eyed and desperately in love, put his hand into the open flame of an oil lamp. He explained that he wanted to speak with Kee for only as long as he could endure the pain. But she was gone forever, and Vincent soon fainted in his agony.

Within hours, bandaged and defeated, he took solace with the streetwalker Sien. He eventually confessed this development in a letter to Theo, adding: "I need a woman, I cannot, I will not, live without love. I am a man and a man with passions. I must go to a woman, otherwise I shall freeze or turn to stone." Sien was her street name. Sometimes he called her Sorrow. She was born Classina Maria Hoomik; she was 30 years old, vulgar, brazen, consumed by gonorrhea, a prostitute for nearly half her life already. She had an 11-year-old daughter, and was pregnant when they met. She was a hard-drinking, cigar-smoking woman with a smallpox-pitted face, and for the next year and a half she provided him with the closest thing he would ever know of domesticity in his adult life. When their relationship finally came to an end, he gave her a parting gift of painter's canvas, so she could make clothing for her child.

In the summer of 1887, Vincent began a doomed romance with La Segatori, in Paris. He was 34, thin and toothless, on an early decline caused by lifestyle and malnutrition; she was a fading beauty, named Agostina Segatori, who owned an
Italian restaurant in Paris called Le Tambourin. One evening, Vincent found himself in a fight with a patron of hers—the argument may have been of a jealous nature—the result was that their friendship ended abruptly. He had had many paintings on display at Le Tambourin, pictures he was never able to retrieve and which were eventually sold as waste canvas for a penny a piece.

Rachel. Rachel. His days were running out, but not without long wild scratches at the sky. Vincent’s dreams of domesticity had been radically altered by the time he moved to Aries; he no longer felt wife and children a possibility. "The more ugly, old, vicious, ill, poor I get, the more I want to take my revenge by producing a brilliant color, well-arranged, resplendent." He sought a commune of artists, but this was made impossible by his eccentric disposition, mystical and so nervous. Just before Christmas 1888, after an outbreak of utter sorrow, Vincent amputated his left ear lobe. He had attended bullfights in southern France, and knew the tradition of good kill, the matador’s presentation of the severed ear in a handkerchief to the sweetheart. Both animal and assassin, Vincent put on an oversized beret, wrapped his flesh in newspaper and walked to the nearby brothel. He asked for Rachel. “Here is a remembrance of me,” he said, giving over his sad package.

Rachel took him in, nursed him as best as she could while arranging for his care at the local hospital. He had severed an artery, and there was considerable loss of blood, long-staining the wooden floors at both her place and his. Upon his release from the hospital, Vincent was full of doubt. His house was pelted with stones by children, who taunted him through his windows as he tried to paint once more. On the street, adults and children cursed him as a freak; eighty citizens signed a petition requesting that he be jailed. He feared for his sanity; he thought the condition which caused his mutilation might be chronic, and he went back to Rachel.

She was young and her vision was imprecise. She told him that his bad experience was not out of the ordinary in that part of the country. It’s the wind, she said. It’s the sun, she was sure. She told him he wasn’t crazy. She allowed him to continue.

In his last year and a half, Vincent made 300 paintings and several hundred drawings. He wrote his brother Theo: "I am now trying to recover like a man who meant to commit suicide and, finding the water too cold, tries to regain the bank."

Shortly before his death, Vincent Van Gogh’s first sale was made, for $80 to an unknown Belgian artist named Anna Bock. She must have loved his yellow and emerald green ways. But she was too late for anything more. They never met. The current got swift.

The Watercolor

It hangs there, Imprisoned by glass and wood, Doubly matted, expensive, Ready for the ages, As I am not.

Does it feel what I feel? That we should get together one more time. For one last stroke or gouge To make it more right.

It could be arranged. I could make it happen. But then, It would hang there again, Imprisoned once more.

Might it feel what I might feel? That we should get together one last time.

It could be done. But then?

Charles Danforth
Augusta
in a painter, musician & administrator at UMA
The New Age Comes To Grangely
(From collection, RDF 1, Grangely)

It was the Fourth of July, and the Danforth family was gathered for a picnic at Ezra and Noreen's. The women were talking about soap operas. Beulah plunked the last of her chocolate cake into her mouth and licked the bits of frosting from her plump little fingers.

"They say that soap opera ain't true to life," she said, "but it is. I don't know how many times I've had the same things happen to me that happened to Aurora on 'The Gathering Gloom.' Just a month or so ago, after Derek spent all of Aurora's money and left her, Aurora got real sick. She had this disease that's called Anorexia. She couldn't eat nothing, and she kept losing weight. Well, the same thing happened to me after Broderick left me to join the French Foreign Legion."

Her lower lip trembled a bit when she mentioned Broderick's name. She and Broderick's mother were the only people in Grangely who called him by that name. Everyone else called him Brickhead.

"It was real bad," she continued, "especially right after Broderick left. I lost three pounds in just two weeks. Even my mother noticed it. 'Beulah,' she said to me, 'you've got to eat to keep up your strength. You're coming down with that anorexia just like Aurora.'"

It would be hard to imagine Beulah as an anorexic. She must have weighed 250 pounds. She looked at the last wedge of chocolate cake in the center of the table, hesitated for a moment, and then reached out and lifted the cake from the plate. She brought it to her mouth and took a dainty bite. For such a big girl, she had a dainty way of doing everything.

"Godfrey, Beulah, how did you get over it?" Noreen asked.

"Well, I went to this meeting in Bangor. It was put on by this lady named Heath Laurel. And there's this voice that speaks through her. Heath said we had all lived another life somewhere. The voice told me that I had been an artist's model back in the days of Reubens. The voice said I got my artistic sensitivity during that lifetime.

"I asked the voice about Broderick. It said I would not see Broderick again in this life." Her lip trembled when she said that. "But we'll be reunited in another life, the voice said, because we're soul mates.

"The voice told me to get a crystal because that could harness the rays of the sun, and that's what I needed to cure me. And it really worked. I got my appetite back, and I ain't got anorexia no more."

"Maybe I can use one of them crystals on the arthritis in my elbow," Ezra said, and the men all laughed at that.

"Eben said, 'Maybe the voice can tell me I'll never be reunited with Bathsheba.'"

The cow had eaten some fermented silage the day before, and Eben hadn't been able to find much in the woods around the pasture.

"If you men want proof," Beulah said to them, "you can come and see for yourself. Heath Laurel is coming to Grangely in two weeks. It only costs ten dollars a person."

Eben said, "I'd sooner take a ten dollar bill and burn it because if I burned the bill, I'd only be wasting money. I wouldn't be wasting my time on top of it."

Eben decided to go. Maybe it was because Flora hinted that she would bake a blueberry pie if Eben took her to see Heath Laurel. Eben had a great weakness for blueberry pies.

Two weeks later Eben and Flora were at the Grange Hall in Grangely where Heath Laurel was going to speak. Noreen and Beulah were there, and so were Junior and Elvira. In the entryway a table had been set up with books and healing crystals and herb teas for sale. In the hall itself the shades had been drawn, and colored lights had been set up. A cassette was playing some strange music, the likes of which Eben had never heard before.

When everything was ready, Heath Laurel made her appearance. Heath was in her forties perhaps, a tall woman whose light brown hair was just beginning to go gray. She was wearing a turquoise sweater with purple pants and bright green sneakers. The music continued to play softly in the background as she talked.

"I know that some of you are hearing me for the first time. Some of you no doubt are merely curious or even skeptical. I was skeptical myself until I was in a serious accident. I nearly died. I think for a short time I did pass over into the other world, and there I met the spirit of Eben who led me back into this world and healed me and who spoke through me. This is not superstition. It is a new perception, a new awareness of the spiritual aura each of us has.

"People want to get back in touch with their soul. Physical problems are manifestations of spiritual problems. If you can get in touch with yourself, you can recognize your spiritual needs and use the healing power of the natural world to cure yourself of your ills."

Eben leaned toward Flora and whispered, "That must be true. Whenever Ezra wakes up with a hangover, the physical pain is caused by too much spirits."

"Now you haul, Eben, and pay attention to what the lady is saying."

The music on the tape picked up a little with a light drum beat.

"I am going to summon the spirit of Azoth now. Everyone must be very quiet and help me concentrate."

She pulled a stool forward and, and her hands fell to her sides. Then the voice of Azoth came forth. It was a low, guttural voice.

"Pain is a perception. Pain is not a reality. You need to get in touch with your spirit so you can heal the pain in your body. Is anyone here in pain? Does anyone want to ask me a question?"

Eben stood up and said, "I've got this pain in my left knee that troubles me sometimes."

"Are you in touch with your spirit?"

"Well, I don't rightly know."

"Let me ask you something. Have you suffered a loss recently?"

"Well," Eben said, "I lost Bathsheba a couple of weeks ago. She ate too much fermented silage and wandered off."

Evidently they didn't have silage in ancient Egypt, or maybe Azoth had been a city fellow when he was alive. He didn't seem to know what silage was, and he seemed to assume that Bathsheba was a woman.

"You will be reunited with Bathsheba in another life," the voice of Azoth said. "It might be in another life form. It might even be on another planet or another solar system. I can tell because you have an aura that I can read. You and Bathsheba are soul mates."

Most of the people there knew that Bathsheba was Eben's cow, and although she had been lost a couple of weeks before, she had come home the next day to be milked. Eben expected to be reunited with her, not in another lifetime or on another planet, but in the barn at milking time. There was a little bit of snickering going on, but not too much because Flora and Noreen and some of the others said, "Now you stop that. You just be quiet and listen to what the lady has to say."

About that time a middle aged couple came into the hall. They were talking quietly, but people could hear what they were saying.

"The woman said, "We must be late. It looks like the service has already begun."

"We wouldn't be late if you had got the directions right."

"Well, it's been years since I've been to Hannaford, and a lot of the roads and things have changed."

"I've never heard of a funeral being held in a Grange Hall anyway," the husband said.

"Cousin Henry was so active in the Grange that they wanted to honor him."

All this time Heath Laurel's voice was going on about how modern life was unsatisfying. "Material possessions, technological advances do not bring satisfaction. The ancients understood this in a way that modern people don't."

"The woman who thought she was at her cousin Henry's funeral turned to her husband and said, "This is the strangest funeral I have ever seen."

Her husband whispered back, "Maybe that is all just part of the Grange ceremony, but where's the body?"

Junior Larrabee turned to the couple and whispered to them, "You must of come to the wrong place. This here is in Grangely. You want to be in Hannaford. That's ten miles down the road."

"The voice of Azoth continued, "You have to get in touch with your spirit; you have to let your intuition work for you; you have to trust the unseen world."

Beulah had not been aware of much of what had been going on in the room. She had stayed up late the night before reading Tennyson's 'The TMemr Temptation,' and it was worn in the Grange hall. About the time that Heath Laurel had slumped forward, Beulah had also slumped forward. From time to time dainty little sneezing noises had issued forth from her open mouth. But she swacked with a start when the out-of-towner asked, "Where's the body?"
Beulah looked around the room, startled, uncomprehending. Then as the out-of-town couple left, a burly young man burst into the room calling Beulah’s name.

Beulah looked at the young man and called to him, “Broderick!”

He came to where she was and put his arms around her.

“Oh, Broderick,” she said, “at last we’ve been reunited!”

“Yeah, I never did join the French Foreign Legion. I found out they don’t have it no more,” Broderick said.

“I didn’t realize I had died. This must be my funeral, but where’s my body?”

“Godfrey, Beulah,” Junior said to her, “you ought to be able to find your body. It’s the biggest thing in the place.”

“Instead of joining the French Foreign Legion,” Broderick said, “I joined the circus. I been travelling around the country with them. Then when they got to Manchester, New Hampshire, I decided I had to see you. I missed you a whole lot, Beulah.”

“Well of course you missed her a whole lot,” Junior said. “There’s a whole lot of her to miss.”

By that time everyone was busy listening to Beulah and Broderick and laughing at Junior’s comments. They weren’t paying any attention to the voice of Axorth.

Heather Laurel abruptly came out of her trance. “If you’re going to be silly, if you can’t take these things seriously, I might as well leave,” she said, and she stomped out of the room.

It took nearly an hour to convince Beulah that she had just fallen asleep and had not died and come back in another life.

The next day Ezra went over to see his brother. Eben was sitting in the back yard holding a piece of field quartz against his knee.

“Quite a to-do over to the Grange Hall yesterday, I hear,” Ezra said.

“Ayuh.”

“Cost you twenty dollars for you and Flora.”

“Ayuh, but I saved money in the long run. After yesterday Flora ain’t likely to go back to no more them New Age things. Besides it was worth twenty dollars anyway, I ain’t had so much fun since that time the bull chased Tommy White up a tree.”

“Ayuh. What’s that you’re holding on your knee?”

“Piece of field quartz. Supposed to capture the sun rays and help the arthritis in my knee.”

“Do any good?”

“Well, it can’t do no harm. Nothing Doc Burns ever gave me for the arthritis never done no good.” He paused then and seemed to be thinking something over. “You know,” he said, “I believe it is beginning to feel a little better.”

“Ayuh. Let me try it for a spell, why don’t you. Maybe it will help the arthritis in my elbow.”

Carl R. Perrin
Portland
Teaches at Casco Bay College

January 1st, Rangeley

The quiet of a single chainsaw,
a silent skidder,
a slick snow road,
paved over swamp—
an aching silence;
until the crunch of my feet
echoes hollow
in the frozen clumps of snow.

Suzanne E. Hunger
Eureka, IL
grew up in Maine mountains
& teaches at Eureka College

The smell of cut spruce and fir
pungent in the frozen
hairs of my nose;
and above me the grey garbies,
canadian jays—souls of lumberjacks—
follow the trail
of sawdust and breadcrumbs.

Town Planning Board

Stiffening, she looked askance,
tight-lipped and furrowed.
Under her breath, she said,
"Are they giving me a hard time?"

When she left
he gnashed a lip-splitting gape.
Breathless, he sat back in his chair
clasping his hands behind his head,
having justly administered
a power pole permit.

She appeared before the board
for her husband,
that he might build
a new home
for their son and daughter-in-law.

Being at each other’s disposal,
structures form above erics,
working a place
protecting expansion.

George V. Van Deventer
Washington
In a dairy farmer

The Bet—May One

The bets are in
And centered on May One.
An island of old ice
Like a worn lace table cloth
With edging torn and trailing
Scratches in mid-lake
And cannot reach the shore.

Today long rents appear
On our south side. It is
A pretty day. The daffodils
Are blowing on the lawns.
If that North wind dies
It will still be warm.

They’re launching a big
Speed Boat at the Slip.
The owner loads his Collie,
Leaps aboard.
He sees the motor;
the Collie wags applause.

He’s off—full speed and noisy.
He cuts three circles
Between the beach and ice
And then is gone. His wake
Is there. He clipped around the point
To stir the other side.

The rents have gone to ghosts.
The wake has skipped the tablecloth

The afternoon grows warmer
In Spring sun. Blue holes
Reflect the sky. An hour later
And the ice is down.

If you put your money on May One
Of course you win.

Eulalie Marshall
Wilton
Is an "interested observer"
On Poetic Forms: 
Five Poems with Commentary

Editor's Note: Most poetry being written in Maine is in a verse that is “free,” to a greater or lesser extent (usually greater). To strike a balance, and to stir a revival of “older” forms, perhaps, KENNEBEC asked a real master for five of his poems in different forms. THOMAS CARPER of Cornish, and Professor of English at USM, cheerfully obliged, and added a brief commentary on each. T.P.

A Farmstead with a Hayrick and Weirs Beside a Stream

When he was about forty-six, Rembrandt made several drawings of the same farm.

Perhaps it was the texture of the calm
That brought him back—the straight stakes of the weirs
Combining the stream; light blurring a tree’s crown
Above a thick board wall; nets in the air’s
Warm ruffle; and the hayrick, yellow and high,
Dense as the dwelling’s thatch. Perhaps it was
The sense of an entire prosperity
Not got by owing, but bestowed—because
Here the clear eye could have, the pen could keep,
The terrace with its rail, the browsing cows,
The watery, ready tufts beside the steep
Banks, the ducks, the whole of farm and house
And all beyond, even beyond the brink
Of space beginning at the edge of ink.

(First published by the Phi Beta Kappa Society in the Summer 1987 issue of The American Scholar)

The Rembrandt drawing suggested this sonnet. For a long time poems about works of art have been attractive to writers (as with Keats’s “Grecian Urn”). Why, I’m not sure, except that such works often have about them a sense of permanence and repose so different from what our daily lives tend to give us, and they have those depths and distances that lead the imagination out in significant ways. The longest sequence of poems I’ve ever done is about Camille Corot and his work—a dozen sonnets that become a kind of portrait and biography, with relations, naturally, to my own anxieties and interests. Since some readers might have a problem with poems that talk about unfamiliar paintings, I try to make sure that adequate information can be found either within the poem or in a headnote. And where headnotes are used, they make a little bridge between our world of prose and the poem’s other world.

Casting the Nets

It must be in the evening, for our boat
Rides fragilely on the water; if a wave
Should lap over a gunnel, the remote
Reaches of river would become a grave.

Yet in the calm after the winds of day,
We move out, confident, and do not break
The almost-silence as we row away
From shore, tipping the arrow of our wake.

A hand thrust through the surface feels the force
Of currents that oppose; a dragonfly
Inquires of us, then takes a different course
And disappears into the yellow sky.

When we arrive, the land is lost in mist.
We balance carefully as we prepare
The nets whose spiderly strands seem to resist
Their being flung extravagantly in air.

But, brought to standing height and artfully
Swirled out into the sunset, they begin
To swing and fan as though infinite
Could be encompassed, caught, and gathered in.

This poem was suggested by a photograph of fishermen on an Asian river (possibly the Mekong) at evening, balloon ing out their nets from long, flat boats. One summer evening when I was looking around for something to write about, I found the picture on the cover of a novel by Marguerite Duras which my wife was reading. Having written sonnets for several days, I decided to write with quatrains to have a more leisurely poem. Where couplets tend to be terse, the alternately-chymed lines seem to pace slowly. Quatrains also open up a page, and with them the writer can develop a thought or image at some length, then move gradually to the next thought or image. I’ve found that different forms help one pace material differently.
"Couplets" began as an imitation of a model, Henry King's "The Exequy," a memorial for his wife. I was attracted to the typical-for-the-period metaphors, where "setting sun," for example, stands for "death":

Thou hast bereft me, thy set
This eye of blackness did beget,
Who wert my day, though overcast
Before thou hadst thy rooisoned past .

This way of speaking worked as a distancing device—something to make writing on a painful subject possible. And then, the insistent tetrameter lines suggested finality and inevitability which seemed to suit the content. A pentameter line, such as the line of "Casting the Nets," would have been too leisurely and calmly meditative. Not that four-beat couplets are rigid; as with King's, the lines run over, carrying meaning across the rhyme words. And why capital letters to begin each line? Well, it's hard to see why a line of verse can't begin with a big letter that says, "This is a line of verse." One might claim that couplets aren't modern, but then, why not? A poem is a poem, and even the froest free verse is entirely artificial.

A Short Course in Sonnets

For J.H.
Dear Judy, if a sonnet will evolve,
The writer first must listen for the beat.
The ear, and not a syllable count, will solve
All problems, and create the dancing feet
Whose turns and twirlings of a hundred kinds
Move music far beyond the metronome
Into those swift-slow patterns where the mind's
A motion—venturing, then returning home.
Oh yes, the subject. Look into your heart,
As Sidney says. Don't search for the profound,
But watch for modest entries into art—
Small things perceived when others aren't around.
Then work. Keep going. With the fourteenth line
You're done. Relax. Take Housman out to dine.

One day a friend at USM asked me about books which could help a newcomer learn to write sonnets. I recommended Derek Attridge's truly insightful Rhythms of English Poetry for a general discussion of metrics, and then said that, of course, the best way to learn about sonnets is to imitate those one likes—in the English style, with three quatrains and a couplet, or in the Italian style, with the more-difficult "a-b-a-b-a-b-a-b" rhymes (Elizabeth Barrett Browning is a good model). Imitation and persistent practice will help a writer develop ease, naturalness, and a habit of thinking pleasurably within forms. Then I put together the suggestions above: write by ear, not eye, and follow Sir Philip Sidney's famous advice to do what you want: "Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart, and write."
Poets

Poets were normal in our house. That is, it was normal to have them. They drank with my parents and ate dinner with us and sometimes they liked children and sometimes they didn't. Usually they were more interested in my mother, unless they were women, in which case they were more interested in my father. Once or twice it was the wrong way round—men poets made passes at my father, or he made them at lady poets—and then there was an uncomfortable feeling around the house after they left. We did our best to forget the names of those poets.

But the others we stored up, adding them to the lists of famous poets who had visited our home. My sister is reported to have sat on Robert Frost's lap and recited "Stopping By Woods," but I have never been sure whether Robert Frost could be on my list or whether I was born yet. I used to pretend that I had sat on the lap, but lately I have preferred to think that I must have been a mere babe. No doubt within a few years I shall have been unborn.

Who is the earliest poet I remember? Well, Daddy was a poet, but of course he lived with us. I never thought of him as a poet until it became interesting to tell people he was one. I don't know if he acted like a poet or not. He drank too much in the early times, but then so did my mother and so did their friends in the chemistry and history and economics departments. If they had any friends in the economics department. He sang "A Walk in the Garden" in a high tenor voice, and on Sunday mornings he led us marching around Fick's because. He shouted even louder. Did I hear the crack of a chair's non-stop sharing, while he read. I did not think he was the handsomest man in the world. I'll call him Daddy.

My father, unless they were women, in which case they were normal to have them. That is, it was normal to have them.

There was one poet I did not like at all. I shall call him Silas Fick. He came home with my father after sitting in on his afternoon class, and when he walked in the door he reeked of alcohol. In those days most of my parents' friends smelled of alcohol, or left faint, pretty trails of its odor as they passed, but this person walked in a cloud of it. I was older then—older than ten, but younger than, say fourteen, when the memories I can distinguish from these were things that made my father and his colleagues nervous and uncomfortable, and passed right over the heads of the college boys as much Greek. But they made my mother, for a few days after Dinah left, bold. To this day my mother thinks of her with pleasure. "Ah, yes, Dinah," she'll say, and nod, as if they shared a secret wisdom.

The poets changed as the times changed, or as I grew up—or did I grow up with the times? We had the famous homosexual poet, Billy Ray, and his friend Jimmy, despite my mother's pronouncement that she wouldn't have them in the house. They came, but my mother stayed upstairs. Downstairs there was the usual loud talking, laughter, music; but not the music of earlier times, but sitar, and Jefferson Airplane. I should have wanted to be downstairs; but—truth be told—I was relieved to be watching TV with my mother. Later in the evening there was chanting, and the soft fumes of incense, or another smoke, wafted up the stairs. My mother and I looked at each other. After that evening the house was uncomfortable for a long time.

Poets came thick and fast during those years. There were black men wearing dashikis and medallions, shouting and flashing bright teeth, young women in leather, glaring at me through silver-rimmed spectacles with...
challenging disinterest; emaciated, bearded men who spoke so slowly I squirmed with terror that they'd forget what they'd meant to say. When now and then a respectable person came—a woman with well-groomed hair, wearing a wool cardigan; a middle-aged man in a jacket and tie—I stared at them in some surprise, unsure whether these were poets or, if they were, were they any good?

A final poet came; not the final one for my parents, who entertained poets until Daddy retired, and still invited them to their home—but a final one for me, before I left for college. He was a flamboyant poet (I'll call him Rasmussen) who swooped into our living room wearing a bedspread. He was enthusiasm incarnate, fascinated with anything that was said, enthralled with the house and life in a small midwestern town, charmed by my mother (he seemed not to notice that she drew back from his enthusiasm, and from his bedspread, in some distaste). In the course of the evening he played the banjo, jumped from his chair to demonstrate interpretive dances, and sang Native American songs. After his reading, my boyfriend and I were to drive him the forty miles to the airport. “Show him your poems,” Daddy had urged me. “I’ve told him you write.”

We drove through the blackness of the midwestern night, staring at the bright tunnels lit by the headlights, listening to Rasmussen read his poems, one after another. He made good cocktail conversation, minding the impromptu poem that perhaps you might say: I will write you a poem to match your story. I heard the lark sing songs, I heard the lark sing songs, and I will write you a poem to match your story. “Send me more!” he called over his shoulder. “Send me some for my magazine!” We drove home almost in silence, the headlights illuminating a blackness of the most beautiful kind.

Now that I am grown up I see that poets are no more normal, and no less, than anyone else. I no longer know very many. My husband, an economist, and I live very quietly; we almost never entertain. Still, poets come in handy. They make good cocktail party talk, they are useful when I need credentials. “Ah, yes,” I might say, “I remember when he almost broke his neck in our living room.” People look at me in awe; he’s a better friend of my father’s.” I’ll say, “But a better friend of my mother’s.” And I’ll smile disrespectfully.

Once I heard that a woman I knew—actually, a woman who won a poetry prize—had been confident of winning herself—was having an affair with the handsomest man in the world. “Oh, Alexander West,” I said, with some scorn. “Is he still at it? He’s been doing that sort of thing forever.”

For Emily Dickinson
The Centennial of her Death

To make a cake
 according to her recipe
you have to break
a fresh coconut.
First, though,
you have to
drive a spike
through its eyes.
It isn’t easy.
It has the face
of a baby for seal
and when the spike
pierces the eyes
it weeps,
leaving wet trails
across the dry brown fur.
You must not slip
or lose your nerve—
you need a cupful
of this liquid
for the cake.
To steady your hand,
think of the many times
she must have
filled the cup with tears,
and turned away to bake.


Sylvester Pollet
E. Holden

Fox Watch

They never match, the tracks
in wildlife guidebooks,
and the genuine article,
framed motion in the snow.
The vixen shunned the normal route
to den and back, helixing here and there,
sensing I was on her trail
and misconstruing my intent.
She grew in my imagination to coyote.
(We have too many howling in the night,
making sheep shoulders in their hay-fed pens.)
As if to make her keen, I painted her red
and bestowed a waving plume
with sweep of sable brush,
but tracks and watercolors failed today.
A little after dawn the sun’s rays reddened
the Dixmont hills, purple backdrop
to the chimney tops of smoke.
And there’s the vixen, circling the oak,
nose alert, tail out straight,
coast afire with dawn.

Carolyn Page
Dixmont
is an artist & editor
of Potato Eyes magazine
Oriental Gardens

I am doomed to an old age in those horrible adult diapers. They can give all the fancy names they want, but they will always be diapers to me. I know this fate because of my current bladder problems. Every time my husband and I go out to eat with a bunch of friends...I wish I could call the individuals we go out with "friends," but unfortunately I must modify that to "prisoners." I run to the bathroom upon finishing my drink, and between every course. After the appetizers, the water closet calls to me. Trying to wait is a ridiculous mistake because, in my agony, my left leg starts to twitch uncontrollably and someone asks if I need a cigarette or something. In hopes of avoiding the call too frequently, I gulp down as much of my beer as I can under the false hope that the more I get into my bladder before I empty it, the less return trips I'll be forced to make. Of course, you and I both know these are the fabrications of a helpless but feeble person. I can only liken it to the hopes of a school girl who thinks she can avoid the ultimate bed wetting, an experience I am all too familiar with, by voiding her bladder after she has downs a quart of Kool-aid prior to bedtime.

Anyway, the water flows, more than a normal bladder should be allowed to hold, and I happily return to the main course. Again, however, after a few bites of "Moo goo gai pan," the urge is back. The same routine is followed, down as much beer as possible, head for the little girls' room. This approach seems only to get me dead-ass drunk.

"Small bladder, huh, Kate?" the dirty blond sitting across from me wisecracks. Couldn't she think of something a little more discrete? And her husband taking in every word. What should I wisecrack in return? "My, aren't we observant!"

But why waste my time and my breath on this woman? All she seems to be able to think about, and the only two topics she has breached this evening, pertain to sex or my bladder. "My, don't these funny little mushrooms in the Oriental Beef remind you of teenee, weeney penises? Am I glad that Dicky's isn't the small! Aren't you Dicky!" Appropriately named, Dick ole' boy.

"Back to the diayers. They are even being advertised on television now, and the ads are using once-famous actresses to tell us of their benefits. It makes me wonder if these once-famous actresses have a "bladder control problem." Not that it would make me like them any less. I can't say that I liked them much in the first place, but certainly would not affect my opinion of them. I am doomed to their fate.

I can envision it now. I will walk into the drugstore and hang around the counter until it is devoid of customers. I then rush up and slam down my box of adult diapers with that urgent look in my eyes which says, "Put the goddamn things in a bag please before someone notices them!" And of course, I have selected the only box with no price on it. The little girl with the spiked hair operating the cash register holds the box high, bangs the bell on her counter and screams so that everyone in the store hears, "Mr. Demers, what is the price on these things? I think they are diapers for adults. It's too medium." A crowd gathers and stares at me, wondering if they can see it in my eyes, or will they find a puddle on the floor. Mothers hold back their children and point saying, "She has a bladder control problem." "What's that Mommy?" "She's wet her pants!" "Yuck!"

I will make up a story instead. "These are my husband. He has been bed-bound for the last ten years...years that have seen me transformed from an attractive young woman to a haggard, devoted caregiver. A prisoner in my own home, let out only long enough to buy his medicine. And of course, his adult diapers. But I still love him and will for the rest of my life, what is left of it." That should earn a sympathetic stare.

Such stories seemed to work when I bought prophylactics in my college days. Such stories seemed to work when I bought prophylactics in my college days. So, why would the dirty blond have become the center of attention if that wasn't what we all want in the end anyway? "Well, I don't mean in the end, I'll take mine in the sea. Why would the dirty blond become the center of attention if that wasn't what we all want in the end anyway? "Well, I don't mean in the end, I'll take mine in the sea. Why would..."

Paul is smooth on the phone. "Sure, we would love to go, that restaurant is one of our favorites. Sure, we'll be ready at 7:00, if you're sure you don't mind picking us up. Casual dress did you say? Great, see you then."

"What would we love to go to?"

"The Peavey's. They asked us to go out to The Oriental Gardens with them and a couple of friends. On Saturday night, I figured it would be a good way to meet some more of the people in town. Okay?"

"Who else is going?" My mind is active. I know so few people and every one of them I met did not like me. I always made a fool of myself when I saw them at the party office or the town office or the store. I just can't think of any small talk. "Read any good books lately?" Now really, why would I ask that of a woman I stond beside while we paid our respective taxes? She just looked at me as if I was mad. Should I have mentioned I failed Interpersonal Communications my sophomore year? Why would the Peavey's even ask us out? She was not taken with me. She spent the entire time they were here talking to Paul. But I was used to that. Everyone spent all the time talking to Paul, and avoiding me. It certainly was more palatable than the conversation I would create, I'm sure. People catch on fast. I think they see it in my eyes even before I confirm it when I open my mouth. "Wow! Check out those eyes! She is definitely neurotic. And a bad conversationalist!"

Paul said, "Kate. I don't know who she is going, she didn't say and I didn't ask. We don't know anyone anyway, so what good would it have done? Just relax. This will be great, an opportunity to meet some people. It's nice of them to think of us, don't you think?"

Sure. So everyone will learn that you're a nice guy and I'm a jerk. Can't you just hear them now on their little phones spreading the news. "He's a nice guy. She's a little weird, but I like him a lot. All she does is go to the bathroom. They don't seem to go together."

"What should I wear?"

"She said casual. We've been there before, it's not too dressy. You decide."

"Thanks a hell of a lot. You could at least help me. Can't you see I'm nervous about this! Can't you help me?"

"Come on, Kate. It's not for a week. Don't get all nervous right away. It's just dinner. Don't drink too much and you'll be fine. Go get something to wear if you don't have anything. You always look nice anyway, so don't worry. Okay?"

There he goes, telling me how to act. I drink because I can't think of anything to say, and when I have a few drinks, I calm down a little.

"You know I can't think of anything to say to people I don't know. A few beers
just helps me.”

“Jesus, Kate, I know you get nervous, but you’re just going to have to get over it. It doesn’t do any good to worry about it before the fact. You always get this way. Then when you get home, you swear that everyone hated you. But it’s not so. You sometimes have a few too many, and you tell some raunchy jokes which don’t help, that’s all, let’s not make a big thing out of it.”

There he goes, bringing up my raunchy jokes. I know he held it against me at the last company party. He said it was okay then, and now he brings it up.

“You know I can’t think of anything to say. Come on, Paul, you know I don’t drink too much unless I’m in those situations. Why would you suggest that I drink too much? I suppose you think I’m an alcoholic!”

“There you go. It’s black or white with you. If you criticize your drinking and dirty jokes, you accuse me of calling you an alcoholic. I just don’t think it’s a good idea for you in a situation where you don’t know anyone to drink too much and start telling your Polish women jokes. You always wake up the next morning and groan that you offended someone and no one likes you.”

Why is he so goddamn normal? Always in control! Why doesn’t he get nervous? Can you always think of the right thing to say? Couldn’t he be neurotic about something? “You should be deciding whether you like them, not worrying whether they like you.” He’s said that so often he doesn’t even bother to say it anymore. And I wish I could do that, could think so logically about it.

Funny how well he knows me. Goddamn him if he’s right tonight. My new-found “friends” are now paying their bills. Am I weaving? I don’t think I drank that much. As much as I went to the bathroom you’d think there would be no alcohol left in my body. Everyone else has consumed enough alcohol so they won’t notice any weaving I might be doing.

Ah, we’re outside. I can now bid farewell to the blond and her charming husband. Good bye to those two couples who sat at the other end of the table, whom I hardly spoke to and whose names I could not recall. Good bye to the dirty blond. Good bye.

“No, Katie, honey, I’m riding home with you. Rhoda has asked us if we want to continue our little party at your house, and I just jumped at the chance. I want to see your big, beautiful, new house that sits up there on your big, beautiful hill. It is so pretty from the outside. How many bedrooms did you say you have? I bet you and Paul have made it in every one of them by now, haven’t you honey? You don’t mind a little more partying, now do you?” God, give me strength. It’s wonderful to have been consulted on such details. Thank you, Paul.

We allumble our way to the car. Oh boy, the Peavys sit in the front with Dicky, bless his soul, and the dirty blond gets to sit in the back with Paul and me.

“Let’s put Paul in the middle so that we can both enjoy him, huh, Katie? You don’t mind, a little bit of a huddle, you know?” I hate it when people say my name every time they speak to me. It sounds so fake. Who gave her permission to call me Kate anyway? My name is Mrs. Falton to you, bitch. You sound like those newscasters, trying to sound so familiar with each other. “Bryan.” “Thank you, Jane.” “Jane.” “Thank you, Bryan.” They probably hate each other’s guts. There probably exists a market study which proves everyday yuppies riding their exercise bicycles like this type of fake familiarity, to a positive or negative 3 points.

“Look what good friends they are, they call each other their first name and everything.”

Please.

The ride home is dominated by dirty jokes and lewd innuendos. And Paul is laughing. Her joke about the man giving it to his wife in the supermarket is just as disgusting as my Polish women jokes. Therefore, I begin my repertoire. Paul quickly puts his hand over my open mouth. Why the hell can’t I tell them? Maybe I fear Gloria would not approve. The glare he gives me is of total loathing. He hates me for trying to get into the conversation, for trying to be funny, for trying to be accepted by these people, for taking time away from his precious blond. I should bite his hand, a good hard bite that would evoke a shout of pain. But how embarrassing that would be. “She is not only weird, with strange, neurotic eyes, and a bad conversationalist, but she has his hand in the car on the way home. And he’s such a nice guy.”

I do nothing, sit back, close my eyes. I listen to the tires on the pavement and try to imagine where we are. Five minutes from home? Ten? How am I going to handle these people? How am I going to be a good hostess, take their coats, get them drinks, make small talk? It’s more than should be asked.

An accident! Pray for an accident so this car never makes it home. What a perfect ending to such a glorious evening. It would get me off the hook completely, with a bang. Lady dramatic. I pray to God: Lord Almighty, please grant me this wish. I know I haven’t been in contact with you since Girl Scout camp when I asked you to please let me pass my Intermediate Swimming test. You granted my wish then, so please, find in your heart to grant this tiny, little wish. I know I haven’t been the most faithful of your flock in the past ten or so years. I take back everything I said in Philosophy class about the fact that you did not exist, okay? And please forget my embracing Voodoo as my religion of choice. It was all a big mistake. Therefore, that said, please make us have an accident... a mere slipping off the side of the road would be sufficient. I don’t require anything as impressive as a parting of the black night.”

“Here we are at last, Katie. Are you asleep, honey?”

Shit, you bastard, ignore me for the last time. And you call yourself omnipotent. You can’t even cause an accident.

“No, I’m still awake. Just resting.”

“Well, you can’t rest anymore, Katie. I want you to show me all around your big, beautiful home. I’ve heard so much about it from Rhoda.”

Everyone turns out of the car and into the house. I take coats and throw them into the closet. They all seem to be enjoying the house. The blond wants to know where the master bedroom is, and Paul is taking over as host. He is saying, “I’ll get some beer from the basement. Meanwhile, help yourself to whatever you can find. The liquor is in that cabinet over in the corner, and the mixers are in the refrigerator. Katie, get some ice,” Paul commands as he opens the basement door.

“Get the beer, get the liquor, Katie, get the ice. Yes, Master Host, just as you say!”

Anything else I can do for you, Master Host? Should I mix their drinks? Light their cigarettes? Wipe their bums?

“Kate, where is the bathroom?” This is Dicky. How appropriate.

I point at the door. Then, I stick my head in the freezer. No ice. Shit.

Downstairs in the freer, As I descend the stair, I hear Paul say, “I hope this stuff doesn’t taste like skunk piss, we’ve had it hanging around for the longest time.”

“I doubt if they would notice,” I offer. Paul turns and looks at me. “Oh, it’s you. I thought you were...”

“Blond?”

“No, I mean, I just thought you were someone else.”

“Right, I know. You thought I was the blond bimbo who has been squishing her tits all over you. What’s her name anyway, Boo-boo?”

“No, it’s not Boo-boo, it’s Dee-dee, and she hasn’t been squishing her tits on me. Jesus, what the hell is wrong with you?”

“I don’t like her fascination with you. She obviously hates me, too.”

“Goddamn it, Katie, there you go. She couldn’t hate you, in fact I don’t know how she could even have an opinion of you, you’ve hardly spoken to her. The only thing you’ve said to her was the start of your stupid joke, and thank God I stopped you.”

“You didn’t have to slap me.”

“No. I slapped you, I just put my hand over your mouth before you got yourself into it. Will you stop this? We do have guests upstairs.”

“I’d call them animals. They are so wild, and they drink so much.”

“And when did you get so pure?”

“I don’t know, Paul, I just don’t know what to talk about. And you aren’t helping, you running off with Miss Blondie. Can’t you stay with me and help?”

“That does it. I didn’t run off with Dee-dee, I am just being friendly. Maybe if you were a little more friendly, you’d have more fun. Just lay off me!” He slams the door to the refrigerator, picks up the stapack and heads for the stairs.

“Hey,” I yell after him.

“What? You don’t have to yell.” He stops and glares. Is that a look of love anymore?

“I’m sorry,” I venture. “I just...”

“Just lay off!” he returns over his shoulder as he climbs the stairs. “Beer, everyone. It’s so old it will surely taste like skunk piss. Sorry about that.”

I stand there in the middle of the musty basement with my hands pressed together in front of my chest. Should I cry? Scream? Should I go back and pretend nothing has happened? Or make a scene?

Laughter spills down the stairs, muffled and lurid as it floats over to my ears. I can almost see it assalt me. Loudest of all is the laugh of Dee-dee. Can you imagine naming your child such a thing? I hear her say Paul’s name over and over. I do not want to go up there. But I have got to. Those diapers would sure come in handy right now. I’ll talk to Paul about putting a bathroom in the basement.

Well, here goes. I figure, slowly, noislessly up the stairs, open the door without a sound, run around the corner to my left into the hall, and up the hall stairs to the bathroom on the second floor. Then, just go to bed. The party can go on all night as far as I’m concerned because I won’t have to see any of them.

As I emerge from the basement, Dicky, Rhoda Peavy, Dee-dee and Paul all turn and stare. “Here she is,” says old blondie. “Where you been, Katie, honey?”

“Oh, getting some ice.”

“Great,” says Dicky. “I need some.”

I forget to bring it upstairs.
"Uh," I mumble, "I uh, had to go to the bathroom so bad I forgot. I'll just go and then I'll go back and get it, okay?"

I walk as fast as I can to the bathroom door and grab the handle. Locked. I'm going to piss my pants in front of all these people.

"Adam's in there," Dicky says.

Without thinking I say, "Adam who?"

"You know, Adam Peavey, Rhoda's husband." The blank expression on my face compelled him to continue. "You better have another bathroom because I think he passed out on the john. He always does about this time of night."

Great. I really don't think I can make it. This is just great. Without acknowledging his man's comment, I head through the living room. Dee-dee looks up from her deep and I'm sure intellectual conversation with Paul and says, "Katie, your husband is just TOO nice." No shit.

I glare at Paul. At least at the back of his head. He doesn't even bother to turn around, but continues his conversation with Dee-dee, whose breasts are now being firmly rubbed all over Paul's right arm. At least she gave his left arm a break. He doesn't move it, so he must be enjoying it.

Paul won't care where the hell I go. The rest seem to be taking care of themselves, as long as there is boozed around. My priorities are bathrooms, bed and an empty house in the morning. Screw the ice.

The stairs are weaving. Or is it me? I have surely had too much to drink. That means I'll have to go in the middle of the night. I hope I won't wet my bed again.

I always do when I've had too much to drink.

Bathroom being done, I climb into my beautiful, warm bed with plans of sleeping away my insecurities and despair. Paul will just flirt with Tina until they all decide to go home, then he'll come up, go to sleep, and all will be forgotten in the morning. One thing about Paul, he doesn't blush things over, and certainly does not hold a grudge. If I can keep my mouth shut, all will go smoothly. And I will, I am determined. I am turning over a new leaf. These people won't remember me anymore. Hell, I doubt if they'll remember where my house is.

Great. I can't close my eyes. The room is spinning around and around. Like a carousel, around and around. Actually, more like when I was a kid and would get drunk and ride a carousel. Around and around. Actually, more like when I was a kid and would ride a carousel, around and around. Actually, more like when I was a kid and would ride a carousel, around and around. Actually, more like when I was a kid and would ride a carousel, around and around.

I focus on the door and see the outline of a tall male figure. "Hey, girtly, what the hell are you doing tryin' to sneak away from the party like that?" It's not Paul, I know that's his voice, nor his way of addressing me. In fact, I don't believe I have ever heard him utter the word "girtly."

The figure lunges toward the bed. "Come on there girtly, what are you doing up here all by yourself? Don't you want to party no more?"

It's Dicky, Dee-dee's darling. What the hell does he want?

"No, I'm kind of tired," I offer across the room. I pull the bedclothes up around my chin, concealing my naked body. At least my upper torso is naked, while I do still have my panties on. Something that dates to my upbringing. As my mom used to say, "I don't care what you wear to bed, keep your panties on. There isn't anything worse than a stark-naked woman in bed."

My wandering mind is jolted back to the present as Dicky dear plops his back on the bed. And indeed, more like when I was a kid and would just put his clothes back on, go downstairs, and no one would be the wiser. But what if someone heard me and came rushing up the stairs to find the two of us in bed? What a scene that would be. I can just see Paul's face. What disappointment. I know he likes to flirt, but he would never go to bed with another woman, I'm sure of it. What would he think of me? He would be upset, I would have embarrassed him. He would move out, divorce me, and I would be alone.

And think of our guests' reactions. They don't like me already. Can you imagine my reputation? The phone wires would be blazing. I have reduced poor little Dicky. It's always the woman's fault, after all is said and done. "She lured him upstairs and seduced him. With Dee-dee right downstairs all the time. Can you imagine the nerve of her? I heard she was strange, neurotic they said, and a bad conversationalist, but to think an ashtray and a slate, too. I just don't know what kind of people are moving in town these days. And I heard that her husband was such a nice guy. Well, he'll be better off without her, that's what I say."

While my mind processes all the potential outcomes of a scream, Dicky proceeds to place his knees on either side of my waist, rather clumsily I might add, and press himself onto me. What a hulk! God, how can Dee-dee stand the weight? I wouldn't think she would have any breasts left after too many nights of this.

"So, welcome to town, little lady. It's a pleasure." And with that, Dicky attempts to create a oneness of our bodies, if you know what I mean.

Oh my Jesus H. Christ! (Does anyone know what the "H stands for?"

My bladder! That little organ that so many bathrooms all over the state have come to know and love. It's like a window to me. I failed to mention that I ALWAYS have to go when I am nervous.

"Jesus H. Christ!" Dicky offers. Would it be inappropriate to ask him what the "H stands for?"

"Jesus H. Christ," he repeats, "you pissed on me, you bitch.

"No I didn't mean to." Honestly I didn't. It's just that when I get nervous, or when I drink too much, or when I have to ride in a car, or when I think about it, I have to go. Or when I'm getting raped by some hairy man who weighs too much.

"I'm sorry," Am I actually saying this?" I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to. It's just that I have this bladder control . . ."

"You are some weird lady, you know that?" Dicky quickly pulls his pants on.

There you go, calling me weird. I hope you won't spread it around. Come to think of it, that would be hard to explain to people, the circumstances and all. I guess my secret is safe.

Dicky leaves and descends the stairs without saying goodbye. I get up, change the sheets, put on clean panties and go to sleep. My secret is safe.
The DNA Caper

(sci-fi in the manner of Dashiell Hammett)

I was doing my nails at my desk when the dinosaur walked in.

Of course I didn’t know that about him yet. All I knew was, when I looked up from my right hand there was the ugliest thing I had ever seen.

"My name is Frank," he said. "Is Mr. L’Arancia in?"

He was standing in a funny way, as if his knees were double-jointed. He had bad-looking greenish skin and a bad-looking greenish suit. And his face—well, have you ever seen a Gila monster?

"Frank what?" I asked.

He looked at me with eyes that didn’t make sense. "Just Frank."

"Right," I said, and jabbed the intercom button.

L’Arancia was eating a burger—it was Friday night and we were going out later—so I gave him a minute to put it away. But there were still soda bottles around when we went in. There always are.

"Sir," said L’Arancia. I had already gone to my chair in the corner and opened my notebook. Frank dropped into the client’s chair, where the sun hit his bald head and made it shine like his suit.

"Mr. L’Arancia," he said, "I am on the run."

"Oh!" L’Arancia began to crack his knuckles. That means he can hardly wait for what comes next. "Start talking."

"My name is Frank," and he leaned forward. "I came to you because I heard on the street that you were the smartest man around. That would be Sadie-on-the-corner—not much of a compliment, most of the men she knows boil their brains in steam-music, if not Stereo. The police sue after me, Frank went on.

"I have robbed a bank."

We had heard about the robbery that morning in downtown White Plains; the guy had shoved a gun through the drive-up window with a note. L’Arancia laced his fingers together. "You need a lawyer, not a detective," he said. "I am a detective."

"Mr. L’Arancia," said Frank, "I know that. But—There is more that I cannot tell in the presence of this dumb broad."

I learned ages ago not to react to clients. Besides, I was still trying to figure out what was wrong with his eyes. L’Arancia did not react either, just said, "Meadge stays."

"In your movies, it is dangerous," Frank said. "However—I will be frank with you. No, I said that to the police, that caused trouble. I will tell you the truth. I robbed that bank because I needed money. I am a government agent, and they got to work, and by the time he had the door open Frank was lying flat on the cold tiles. L’Aranda knelt beside him.

"Not from your government," Frank said. "From— He grinned, showing gumless teeth, and pointed down. "We are descendants of the Great Ones," he said, "the Fine-Breathers. You call them Tyrannosaurus Reu. We moved below when it got crowded topside. The climate was deteriorating anyway, and we had lost our protectice scales—in our own language we are the Skinless Ones. Now I have been sent to make the semi-centenary report, but if you don’t help me your police won’t let me finish it."

He was done. I bit the end of my pencil, hard.

L’Arancia rocked back in his chair. "Have a soda," he said.

"A who—Yes, I will try one."

Frank got a couple of bottles from the crate behind him—raunchy orange stuff his mother sends him from Italy, it’s where he got his nickname—opened them, and shoved one at Frank. He doesn’t offer them to me any more, he knows I only drink Pure Land.

"Where did you learn your English?" he asked.

Frank grinned again. "You got it from us," he said. "We sent you all our best computer languages when you were slow figuring out how to talk, and we’ve been updating them ever since."

"Oh," said L’Arancia. "I see. Funny, though, to me you look like just another alien. Where are you from this time, Jupiter, Mars?"

Frank threw his bottle into the trash can. "Mars?" Was that him or the soda fizzing? "Isn’t Venus bad enough? This whole day I have been on the surface I have heard of nothing but those low-life aliens that degrade Earth by their presence! I am ready to tell the Lords that leaving you the surface was a mistake!"

We stared at him. There was a noise from the outer office, but I didn’t pay attention.

"The door, Madge," said L’Arancia at last, out of the corner of his mouth. I hate it when he does that. But I went. Behind me he was saying, "Listen, Mr. Skinless Frank—"

It was the police; two of them. One hung back to look at the spider and web that’s painted on the glass door, but the other, a big burly guy, bustled right in.

"We have a warrant for the arrest of one Frank, surname unknown," he began, "bald, in a—Move it, Dave, there he is!" And then they were in the back office and Frank was against the wall. They began to read him his rights. Frank’s eyes widened—that was it, they opened sideways—and skittered around the room from the door to the window and back. Then he ran.

I didn’t see where he went, I just felt L’Arancia grab my wrist and we were running too. One flight down we crouched behind the balcony railing where we could watch the stairs and the old openwork elevator. It’s an artium-style office building from the thirties, with balconies all around an open centre; we rent there because it would be good for a chase. But of course we never had one. Till now.

"Where’d he go?" I whispered.

"Bathroom," L’Arancia said, out of the corner of his mouth again. "Ladies." He pointed up, to the fourth floor where we’d come from. "Then he’ll wait for us," I said. "The lock’s broken, it sticks shut. And the fan’s on, he’ll—" I looked at L’Arancia.

"We’ll let him cool off a bit," he said, "and then we’ll see if he’s crying crocodile tears or not."

There was a shot. One of the railings shivered. A door opened in the corridor across from us, then shut. Anne Hutchinson, the lawyer, working late. Everyone else would have gone long ago.

"He got away!" L’Arancia shouted. "Down the back stairs!"

"Stop shooting and I’ll show you!" I added. Silence. Then, "All right. Just the girl," and the policemen peeped out around a corner.

I ran over to them, all breathless. Frank probably didn’t even know what a dumb broad was, but I did. "What on earth made you think we were helping him?" I shouted. "He just came bursting into the office—" I was close to tears.

"Well, you must admit your boss isn’t always—" began the smaller policeman, but the big one said, "Shut up, Dave. Lady, are you going to show us where he went or not?"

Folks-dotted silk is good for bouncing in. I bounced, then turned and led them along the hall and down the back way. I left them arguing about which direction to try and head back upstairs.

L’Arancia was gone. I went up the last flight to the fourth floor and found him outside the ladies’ room, sorting through his lock-breaking gear. Angry noises were coming from inside.

"We’ll give him another minute," he said. When the noises calmed down he got to work, and by the time he had the door open Frank was lying flat on the cold tiles.

L’Arancia knelt beside him. "So much for the hot-blooded dinosaur theory," he said. "He’s cold as a sluice."

I sat down too, shivering. The fan was turning the place into a refrigerator.

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Continued next page
It took me a second, but I figured out what he was getting at. "It starts at seven," I said. "We've got to get him warm—" Before I finished I was on my way to the office where we had a space heater in the closet.

When I turned the heater on Frank he sat up, rubbed his face, and said sleepily, "You have no climate control yet?"

"Get moving," said L'Arancia. "No time for room service!" He was cracking his knuckles again.

We got Frank on his feet and walked him around a few times. Then he got so close to the heater I thought he'd burn himself, and stood there for a bit. He didn't burn himself. The idea might work.

He was still a little dazed when we left, otherwise he might have argued. But it was warm out and we gave him a coat as well; and when we got to the auditorium he woke up all the way. They may not have climate control there, but it is sure hot. It's supposed to make you feel like you're on Venus—though it's much hotter there, they say, eight hundred degrees or so even in winter.

When we got to our seats he wouldn't sit, just stood glaring at the audience. We had brought him around the back so he wouldn't see the signs, but we couldn't avoid them. "What is this place?" he hissed. "Why have you brought me here? It strikes of aliens!"

"You want our help, don't you?" L'Arancia hissed back, and I added, "This will give you something to report!" Then the lights went out, and at last he sat down.

The stage for steam-music, in case you haven't been to one yet, is a huge fish tank that they keep at really Venusian temperatures, filled with a real Venusian atmosphere. The stuff stinks, one of the stage hands tells me. But it sure looks will give you something to

By the time the lights started Frank was hissing and clicking, and I hoped he was afraid of an interplanetary incident. Pete was saying, "If my editor gets hold of you, you will be destroyed, and my tape will never be the same, even if I do get it to another publisher. Green doesn't understand that characters make themselves." L'Arancia ducked again, shrugged, and said, "Yellow!"

It was getting stuffy in there, and besides L'Arancia had a gun. I opened the door.

Frank fell on his knees at once. "Master!"

"No time for that," said the alien. "We have to find a freecor."

"I saw him and L'Arancia and I looked at each other. 'There's one in our office,' I said. "Of course, I forgot. We'll hide the tape in it,' said the alien. "Come on!"

"Wait," said L'Arancia. "Why do you have to steal your own tape?"

"It's not mine," said Yellow. "This publishing house is a tax shelter—we do thrillers and science fiction, all at a loss—and part of it is being here on Earth where you can't get tapes. Yes, I know DNA-creatures are all around,' impatiently, as L'Arancia and I started to interrupt, 'but that's just the images. All you humans and so on are just the pictures that stories make in the minds of people reading them. The tapes, the books and paper you'd say, are made on Venus, in the caves where it's cold. We only have a few here to write our manuscripts on, and they belong to the publishers. Now Green is waiting for me, come on!"

"We followed it down the hall and down several ramps—Venusians don't like
A Distant Tutorial

The real unsaid is not simply the unspoken, it is rather than which is left behind as the "other" of speech.

Thomas J.J. Alttzer

In the dream, a baseball team is playing between counters in a department store.

Players, at perfume displays or manicurists, their collars turned up, subtle sepsa or suchsa blend, an unblinking pitch tossed back when batters miss their chance. I drop two throws from my catchers mitt, the season ends my misplayed game.

Things drop away these days. Resolve or dissolution? I don't know. Except that the dream ends with the noise of pre-dawn garbage collection, slack inspected, passed over, thrown aboard. The wind ushers the chime, dog stairs, water flashes.

If I could pray it would be a solitary prayer—

an unsimulating backyard, firewood drying, a neighbor's footsteps leaving his house, a packet of poems from State Prison students—our distant tutorial.

Intimacy becomes self-division for each of us, touch and go, more memory than presence, a mute mindfulness. The way a runner, off the bag, not being held,

senses the first basemen behind him, just out of sight; stranded between pitch and reception, staring toward second, caught longing for the sound of bat supporting his move, fearing the noiseless throw, the straddling end of any change. They write about their lives, strands of mowed and unbrushed grass

cover over and over the ground fall, cut at seasons end, remaining there, forced to wait for a new call, or a new dream beginning

another image—perhaps the metaphor of department store where a baseball player practices in the clutter between counters and silent unmoving eyes

the end of something unsaid, leaving our return address, the solitary and unsimulating prayer that is everyday.

W.F. Halpin
Old Orchard Beach
in a consultant in care & learning

Robert J.
Vs. Henny Youngman

So what did Mozart say to Salieri during a passage of one of his most difficult bowel movements?

"What's sore for you?"

Michael Uhl
Walpole
in a freelance writer

Elizabeth Rike
Hallowell
Heart

I placed my ear to my wife's chest and heard her heart beating, her warm soft skin throbbing against my cheek and ear. Her heart beat so regularly and strongly against my ear. And I loved her so.

Sometimes the beating speeded up a bit, marking three beats in the time normally meant for two; sometimes it skipped a beat, slowing either the muscle expansion or contraction, I couldn't really tell, to cover the time meant for two beats with one and a terrifying silence in between. No sound coming from her chest, no deep sound at least. Just shallow breathing, scratchiness in her windpipe, but no heart beat; nothing.

And I fell into the vacuum of that silence as if falling through space asleep. When her heart again beat I would crash out of the terror and reach up to touch her face.

It is said that if you have that falling-through-space dream and don't wake up with a violent thud like hitting the bottom of the damn Grand Canyon after falling for that whole mile or however deep it is, if you kept falling, never striking anything at all, or if you hit and never wake up, you were dead.

I listened to my wife's heart beat still with my ear on her chest. I listened.

I had fallen asleep once she told me with my head in a position like this one and woke to find her smiling at me and stroking my hair like a mother and a child.

I listened.

When I read that story in the newspaper about the two Australians being sentenced to be hanged in Malaysia a shock I don't fully understand except that it is the shock of facing sudden death ran through me.

They had to stand there and listen to some judge say that they would be hanged until dead. They would be taken to some remote, cold room and with great ceremony of finality, have a thick coil of rope draped over their heads and tightened against their throbbing windpipes, then some dark, odd smelling cloth hood wrapped over their faces, a hood that muted all sounds even the fleeting footsteps of the executioner until they were left standing in a swelling silence interrupted only by the slightest crack as the floor beneath them opened and they fell for what seemed forever and then jerked to a stop as the rope tightened, their necks snapped and all sense vanished and they were dead.

Their bodies hit bottom, their bodies falling the mile or whatever it is to the bottom of the damn Grand Canyon, but they did not waken. Their souls flew on into the early morning, never stopping, ever sailing.

It is better it seems to die in an instant than to live halfway in between, to know the wall is coming and there is no way to avoid the flash of pain, then nothing, than it is to miss the wall and sail over the cliff into an unending fall-like dream that has you just missing the wall, just missing the wall, and then screaming when you know what happened. Just missing the wall and screaming.

I listened to my wife's heart still.

The police said there was little chance the rock would have missed the car. The speed of the truck, the speed of the car, the angle...

There was no chance it would have bounced at an angle. It was a large rock, and round, no edges to deflect it. It bounced like a basketball; it was that size.

There was no chance it would have bounced extremely high that last time and passed over the car, or angled away and hit the side, or maybe landed on the windshield of the approaching car. The rock rolled down the side of the sand pile as the truck rolled on, bounced on the hard surface of the road and round, no edges to deflect it. It bounced like a basketball; it was that size.

The police said there was little chance the rock would have missed the car. But it was her new car and she wanted to get used to it. In reality, she alone wanted to drive it. She was so proud. It was her brand new car. All those terrible years of having nothing vanished when she sat behind the wheel. Hers. No one else's. Hers.

I saw the rock falling from the truck as she did, too, I'm sure.

"What the..." was all she had time to say. I grabbed for the wheel and slung myself across the seat all in one motion. I think the car had begun to turn. I thought that if I could change the angle only slightly the rock would miss the car, or hit something harmless, or me. There was a scream and then a crash. Or a crash and a scream. I'm not sure.

Then the car began to spin.

When I woke up the light had changed and was alternately red or slashed with blue. There were voices shouting things I could not understand.

They came running, two or three, and yanked on the door and pulled at me, but my arms were around her and I heard her heart beating.

They came running and shouting and pulling. But the driver had died instantly.

They came too late and tried but the canyon fall had not ended. I had listened to my wife's heart beating inside her small chest. They pulled me away, I listened to my wife's heart still. I walked to the end of the road. I listened to my wife's heart. Still.

Michael Daigle
Albion
is a newspaper editor in Waterville.
The War on Teenage Pregnancy

I read where there is a new war on teenage pregnancy. This is something I am an authority about. I want to make my contribution to the war effort now, before they start confusing you with facts. Any war they are trying to run on %’s they are going to lose. Most everything I have seen in the paper begins with an awful list of %’s, and I know there never was a teenager impregnated by a % nor do they use % as birth control. They will try most anything, but only afterwards, if you know what I mean.

If you want to know how I manage to qualify as an expert in this war, I have got to run through the family history a bit. I don’t have as bad a case of that as my husband Alvah. He is purely incapable of discussing anything without knocking it back to his great grandfather. I am not about to go weesee on someone’s grave, however. It’s all underground now, no point digging people up just to have someone to chuck rocks at. What I done is nobody’s fault but mine.

It’s also nobody’s business but mine, least I have always kept it so. Why we ought to go trot these things out for visiting hours I am not sure. But it seems to be a matter of public debate, and I would rather we discussed something over and done, and which turned out all right, I suppose. Now when we get to the here-and-now of it, which is my daughter Tammy and her welfare check, I think we might just leave that to the family to sort out. We aren’t done discussing that yet, even if she thinks so.

As near as Alvah and I could figure out, there haven’t been too many people on either side, Bagleys or Harrises, that managed to get married when they were old enough to know better. Young marriages was the rule, and quite a few of them set up housekeeping with the old folks, at least for a few months. Then the fur would begin to fly, the young ones would move out, that premature baby would arrive—we have an awful string of premature first babies. Everything from five to three months ahead of schedule, but the next one always took nine months. Funny. When the baby came, the old folks would shift a bit, and a house would be found and dragged onto the lot near home, and Gram and Gramps were in for it.

And I say, this goes back a way. I have given some thought to how did we find out about this pattern of our elders and betters, and did it influence us to do the same thing when we were teenagers. Alvah knows about his brother being born when his father was away in World War II, but he says he never had any doubt but that whatever had happened had been a mistake, and that both of his parents wished it hadn’t. He says he supposed he got the idea not to trust women about marriage and babies, but then he had Unk, who was an old bachelor and honestly couldn’t see there was any women around anymore that was a patch to Alvah’s grandmother. So why get married, he says. Alvah does seem to have heard that. He really didn’t plan to.

Now in my family getting married was pretty much what there was to do, and my mother was quite practical about it. She thought you needed to, and the sooner the better. She just wasn’t one to make a fuss, and that’s probably why she and Daddy always got on. She didn’t look for ways to improve on it, and he liked that. It’s probably why Alvah and I are still speaking. He knows there is a deal to improve on, like that we can’t live on what he makes of good, though. I get mad at her about nothing and before you know it we’re having it all out again, which is no earthly use and I know it. What gets me is I know some of the things you do grow out of or away from, but some you got to lay right down and sleep with them all your life. I don’t regret too much of mine, but with her I get the feeling this could sink her. I wish I could protect her, but it ain’t that simple anymore. We are talking from opposite sides, like there was a war on. That’s what I think of, when I hear about the war on teenage pregnancy. I’d like to lob a bomb in there sometimes, but all it is is Tammy, whose jeans don’t fit, hiding in the bathroom puking.

All water over the damn now. She’s putting on a good show for the moment, but I see the end of that at hand. She has been strutting around all fall with her big bosoms stuck out, but now something else is stuck out there too, and it ain’t near so attractive. Sad to say, she’s built like me—no if’s, and’s or maybe’s, and plenty of butt. When I was carrying, we quickly got to the stage where you look to be snuggling basketballs, and then the only thing I could wear was those mommies, which I guess have gone out of style. Tammy can’t do up her jeans, and the other kids she was running with have gone back to school or work anyway, and that leaves her home with Ma. I’m at work from 7 on, but I know by the air that she spends a good part of the day being sick. I was the same.

God, I really do feel sorry for her. I can’t seem to do her the slightest bit of good, though. I get mad at her about nothing and before you know it we’re having it all out again, which is no earthly use and I know it. What gets me is I know some of the things you do grow out of or away from, but some you got to lay right down and sleep with them all your life. I don’t regret too much of mine, but with her I get the feeling this could sink her. I wish I could protect her, but it ain’t that simple anymore. We are talking from opposite sides, like there was a war on. That’s what I think of, when I hear about the war on teenage pregnancy. I’d like to lob a bomb in there sometimes, but all it is is Tammy, whose jeans don’t fit, hiding in the bathroom puking.

Catheine S. Baker
Spruce Head
is a free-lance writer

Like snow falling, I wish the words would come—effortlessly to the eyes, relentlessly to the mind, and with that aura of grace hinting at what purity might be if we knew how to let it.

P.F. Newcomb
Norfolk, VA
is a missionary native
Interview: Elisabeth Ogilvie

Elisabeth Ogilvie has written over fifty books, and considers herself a regionalist, yet has found little recognition here. Born in Boston (1917), she graduated from North Quincy High. This ended her formal education. However, she did enroll in an evening extension course at Harvard called "Writing for Publication." There, Donald Mac-Campbell, who was to become her agent for 19 years, taught her that cutting a sentence in editing was not quite like "lopping off a finger." She grew disenchantment when he became more interested in business than literature. "He had people writing romances... He'd put them under contract and they would write a month... This is just not literature."

Ogilvie came here in 1939 to reside permanently, after long summer residencies in childhood. Her longing for Maine is evident in her autobiographical work, "My World is an Island." She laughs, and Dot (her companion) answers, "There, Donald Mac Campbell, who is an island in the spiritual sense. I can carry it with me wherever I go, an island that I grew disenchanted when he came across..."

eliciting a response to their environment. They are its creatures, whether they want to be or not. Someone said that Maine is a state of mind... for me, Criehaven is an island in the spiritual sense. I can carry it with me wherever I go, an integral part of my existence. It will never go away from me."

In 1944, Ogilvie and her friends, Guy and Dorothy Simpson, relocated to Gay's Island in the mouth of Saint George River. Eventually, they moved into a ranch house on the Cushing peninsula for the winter. From Elisabeth and Dot's winter home they can see their summer haven and all the old longing, found in their Bennect's Island (Criehaven) saga. As her life went, her novels followed. Even the Jennie stories, though they start elsewhere, return to Maine. She captures island voices amazingly well. When asked how she got her ear, she laughs, and Dot (her companion) answers, "When Elisabeth came to Maine, I knew she had led a sheltered life... Yet, I recognized that she was a writer who had a novel brewing. So, I told her, 'if you want to hear some fishermen talk when no one is around, go upstairs over the kitchen... (where a heating duct would allow her to eavesdrop).'' From then on, she had no difficulty writing lively dialogue.

Ogilvie feels strongly about the power of place: "My people act and react in response to their environment. They are its creatures, whether they want to be or not. Someone said that Maine is a state of mind... for me, Criehaven is an island in the spiritual sense. I can carry it with me wherever I go, an integral part of my existence. It will never go away from me."

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Excerpt from When the Music Stopped by Elisabeth Ogilvie

I awoke to the cries of theulls and the sound of motors as the men rowed out to the moorings in the tophat light. There was an orchestra of other noises, pickup doors slamming in the parking lot, engines starting—I knew whose, I knew them all. That quarterdeck, those echoing from mooring to mooring, that brazy of laughter. The expert whistler. Someone's radio went on, and I got every word of the Coast Guard weather report. I knew each boat without seeing her as she went out the harbor mouth. I heard the voice of Little Emily and wished I were with Glen. Yachts followed the lobster boats, going out by engine power because there was no wind yet to fill the sails.

I made coffee, toasted an English muffin, and got to work at my table beside the big window. On the wharf below, Uncle Earl's outboard motored down the floor of the bait shed, Gramp went into the store to work on the books, Chad stood on the car and barked at any sea pigeon who had the temerity to paddle with its little red feet to within ten yards of him. The Barrys' outboard motor coughed and choked all the way across the harbor as they headed their dory toward a day's clamming on the Dossids.

A red sunrise burned briefly behind from Point and dulled to a harmony of greys.

Yesterday's perfection and this had meant a weather-breeder; the land was blowing, and the seabirds were washing themselves.

I did three hours of work with the dictionary and the thesaurus, a yellow legal pad and my favorite pen. Then the Temple boys came to mow the lawn, and I decided to drive to Maddox to have lunch with my parents.

There were at least two hours between now and lunch, and Gram gave me a shrewd look when I asked if she wanted any errands done in town.

"Nope. Visiting the scene of the crime, are you?"

"Ay-uh," I said. "Now that you mention it. This Rigby Esteson business is a living novel, and even if I haven't read it yet, I want to get all the settings straight in my head. Whenever I read a book, I draw a map for myself. It helps the imagination."

"Save your imagination for making your living," she advised me.

The day was cloudy and still, predominately green and silver, with the yellow leaves leaving out like flares from a sun in hiding; on either side of the black road the golden red was gasily against the woods.

I slowed down when I came to the Fox Point mailbox. There was nobody else in sight, so I stopped, staring up the driveway. All right, so I was behaving like that teenager Glen had warned me about. But who was to know but me? I had longed for the nerve to drive up there right now. I imagined them having mid-morning coffee; they would ask me to have a cup, and I would thank them for yesterday and try to say what the music meant to me. They'd ask me to sign their copies of my books. It would all be so comfortable, and Marianne would repeat Miss Emme's invitation to come often. A wondrous new dimension was about to be added to my life.
When the Music Stopped/ Elisabeth Ogilvie
McGraw-Hill, 1989 326 pages, $16.95

Some writers are like faithful friends. Year after year they generously share their stories with us. And year after year we rely on them to entertain us, to inspire us, to reassure us. They are consistent, reliable, familiar . . . and Elisabeth Ogilvie is one of these writers.

With over fifty novels and juvenile books to her credit, Ogilvie adds one more intriguing tale to her list with her most recent publication, When the Music Stopped. Readers familiar with Ogilvie’s suspenseful narratives will not be disappointed with this mystery.

As the story begins, novelist Eden Winter has just finished her latest book when she becomes aware that residents of her normally sleepy coastal town of Job’s Harbor are all gossiping about the return of the Esmond sisters. Little did she know “just how ugly the consecutive surprises were to be.” As the story unfolds, both Eden as well as Ogilvie’s readers become enmeshed in a mysterious series of events that will change this serene community dramatically.

World-renowned pianist Marianne Esmond and her sister Miss Emma, an accomplished violinist, were coming home after nearly sixty years away—and rumors and speculation about the reasons for their return preoccupy the curious Eden. When her grandmother, a childhood friend of the Esmonds, is reluctant to divulge the details of the Rigby-Esmond scandal that took place over half a century ago, Eden becomes “hooked” on piecing together the details about the notorious sisters on her own.

Not even Glen Heriot, Eden’s boyfriend, or his twin sister Fiona, Eden’s childhood friend, are immune from the curiosity that heralds the celebrities’ arrival in the quiet town. And to complicate matters further, Nick Rainstreet, a handsome stranger who works at the local boat yard, makes everyone, especially the observant Eden, wonder about his unexplained interest in the notorious sisters.

The weekly musical gatherings that the Esmonds host at their elegant family estate provide the encounters necessary to fuel the fires of intrigue further: “It’s the ambience up there that gets me. The music, them, and what they know, what they’ve lived through. Marianne’s the great romantic heroine and the famous musician, but I’ll bet Miss Emma has her own stories locked behind those twinkly eyes . . . She has had her own grand tragedy.”

However, all these seemingly congenial afternoons become blurred with one hideous and violent event that plunges Eden into a “frenzy of horror and grief.” She becomes immersed in a terrifying plot that ends in an explosive conclusion, far more chilling than any she might have concocted in her novels.

Readers acquainted with any of Ogilvie’s previous novels will recognize familiar patterns here. Into one tight braid she intertwines three related strands: the story of the past, Eden’s own story, and the town. Her characters are believable because they fit so comfortably in their setting, in this case the neighborhood of this coastal village. For Ogilvie, the background is always an inescapable and alive part of the story. Without it the other elements have no existence. The harbor, the Point, the island, the lofts where Eden lives, even the beaver dam, are as necessary to the story as are the events that the characters trigger.

And perhaps it is this strong sense of place—the weather, the seasons, the tides—that explains much of her popularity. Public libraries throughout the state have shelves full of her fiction, and titles previously out of print are being reprinted. Why? Because Maine readers understand the attitude that has guided Ogilvie’s writing for over fifty years: “When all the loves are gone and the wars won or lost, it is the place that remains.”

Carol Kontos
Windham
Teaches at UMA

Also by Elisabeth Ogilvie

- The World of Jennie G.
- Jennie About to Be
- The Road to Nowhere
- The Silent Ones
- The Deed in Tartan
- A Dancer in Yellow
- The Dreaming Swimmer
- Where the Lost Aprils Are
- Image of a Lover
- Weep and Know Why

The Bennett Island series

- High Tide at Noon
- Storm Tide
- The Ebbing Tide
- The Dawning of the Day

A Theme for Reason
- The Face of Innocence
- Bellwood
- Waters on a Starry Night
- There May Be Heaven
- Call Home the Heart
- The Witch Door
- Rowan Head
- My World Is an Island
- No Evil Angel

The Seasons Hereafter
- Strawberries in the Sea
- An Answer in the Tide
- The Summer of the Osprey
In Memoriam

Ruth Moore (1908-1989)

Mary McCarthy (1912-1989)

“Cold as a Dog and the Wind Northeast”

When I first met Ruth Moore I was ten years old. That was in the summer of 1921, when an aunt of mine took me and my sisters (rusticators all) to Great Gotts Island, about a mile southwest of Mount Desert Island. For a month we boarded at the home of Ruth's parents there, a hilltop house with a wide view of Blue Hill Bay, of the silhouetted Camden Hills, and of the sunsets. It was where she, her brother, and her sisters had been born and brought up, her family sustaining themselves well with lobster fishing, with a garden, with cows, pigs, chickens, and a woodlot.

Ruth, as later also her sisters did, waited on the summer people's table then, and it was easy for her and me to become friends. She had just finished high school in Ellsworth that year, and went off to college in Altona, N.Y., that fall.

My relatives, by then hooked on the Maine coast, as I was myself, returned to the island summer after summer for more than a decade, at first living at the Moore's home, and later, having bought a house, being summertime neighbors and, some years, boarders for the evening meal.

Ruth always claimed it was she who taught me to swim. I still don't believe it, though we never quarreled over the matter. It's true I was slow to learn that art, but I know the first assuring strokes I experienced came at a goddamned Scout Camp my parents ordered me into in New Jersey, when I knew from the depths of my being I should be on Gotts Island with Ruth Moore, Esther Moore, Louise Moore, their parents and their neighbors. True, summers, year after year, Ruth, Esther, Louise, I, and neighbors did swim a lot on Gotts Island's "Inner Pool," a placid, sheltered tidal inlet, pure then, contaminated now.

After college, Ruth tried teaching, disliked it and quit. She moved to NYC, struggled with secretarial jobs, and in 1931 even came to the University of Maine to work toward a Master’s Degree in English. One of my sisters, my college roommate, and I breezed into Orono that fall and coaxed Ruth to go down to the coast and out to Gotts Island for a three-day weekend. By that time, the island village had disappeared, all of the fourteen island families having moved ashore about 1926, but we few all felt good about being there for a day or two in a non-novitiate season; even my roommate had been communized by the Gotts Island

Continued next page

A Reflection: The Duchess of Casinte

Mary McCarthy, critic, novelist, journalist, and memoirist, died of cancer on October 25, 1989 in an intensive care unit of New York Hospital. She was 77, one of the most colorful and quixotic figures to walk across the American literary stage.

Since 1962 she lived on the Rue de Renner in Paris, and in 1967 she and her fourth husband James West, a native of Old Town, Maine and graduate of Bowdoin College, bought a house in Castine where they spent the summers. "Dark Age luminary and Irish hothead," Robert Lowell called his Castine neighbor in a 1969 poem which describes her residence near the mouth of the Penobscot:

"Your eight-inch, tan-blue, softwood floorboard, your house sawn for some doubtful Revolutionary spirit..."

She had "the weathered yeoman loveliness of a duchess," Lowell wrote, which was how McCarthy, born in Seattle of Irish-Catholic, Jewish, and Yankee stock, often appeared, standing on the dappled lawn behind her large yellow house, a basket of fresh-cut sweet peas over her arm; or framed in the front door on Main Street, in the openwork lace stockings and black-buckled shoes she favored in later years, looking not unlike a Revolutionary squire herself.

Lowell, who occupied his elderly cousin Harriet Winslow's house in the 1960s, and lobbied hard for Mary and Jim West to join him and his wife Elizabeth Hardwick in Castine when the house on Main Street came up for sale, was a great admirer of McCarthy's prose. He liked its rhythms and cadences, its exacting diction, but also its stunning concreteness in the realm of idea and emotion. Of Jim Barnett in "Portrait of the Intellectual as a Yale Man" (1942), McCarthy writes, "The ideas he put forward, familiar enough when clothed in their usual phraseology, emerged in his writing in a state of undress that made them look exciting and almost new." And the same might be said of her own writing—which is peculiarly attuned to psychic drama.

"Surrounded by friends, she rode like a solitary passenger on her train of thought," McCarthy wrote of her close friend, the political philosopher Hannah...
Ruth Moore died at 86. During her career, the Gott's Island native wrote 14 novels and two volumes of verse about life along the Maine coast. Her works were translated into five languages.

virus a few months before.

Three months later, Ruth left academia (in 1947, UM awarded her an Honorary Master's Degree) and returned to NYC. There was a gap in seeing her at all when she went off to California to be manuscript typist and companion for Alice Tielde Hobart, author of Old for the Lamps of China, but for some years of the 1930s and into the 1940s she was in NYC in a small but comfortable apartment on Minetta Lane, Greenwich Village. In the years of the Depression, years when I was around New York job hunting or working briefly here, there, and everywhere, Greenwich Village was a delightful place, especially Ruth Moore's residence where the modest but congenial parties, New Year's Eve or any other eve, were great fun. Also there were good times to talk about books, and about writing. Once Ruth suggested she and I collaborate on a novel. I felt complimented, thought about it, and declined. I doubted that we could go at writing quite the same way, or in ways that would harmonize. Probably, I believe, I was right. At all events, Ruth did extremely well without me.

She was working for The Reader's Digest in 1943 when her novel, The Wet, was accepted for publication by William Morrow and Company. Some time later came Spoonhandle and the sale of its movie rights, which enabled Ruth to desert New York and return to Maine; for a while, now and then, to Gott's Island, but essentially to a woody portion of the Town of Tremont on Mount Desert Island where she had someone build the house she wanted to live in and write in. Gotts Island, by then overflowing with far too many out-of-state summer people, no longer appealed to her. Indeed, she felt alienated from it.

As the decades passed and I and my wife and children moved from one to another of seven communities in Maine, we now and then saw Ruth, first, for a time, on Gotts Island where, through a few full years we lived, but more often at her home in Bass Harbor, part of the Town of Tremont. I remember especially the pleasure of reporting to Ruth that her book of poetry, Cold As A Dog and the Wind Northeast, had become an assigned reading in an American literature course at UM.

Then, in her last year—no, her last month, December 1989—I drove to Bar Harbor to see Ruth at the nursing home where she was, by then, for sound reasons, living. She was up and around, though moving slowly. We had a good talk about her writing, about her writing in progress, about our mutual failures of memory. Ruth said she liked that mountain-top home from which, on high, one could look out over Frenchman's Bay, not really so far from, nor so different from, the Blue Hill Bay beside which she had grown up. I believed she liked the place for other reasons too, for I noticed that the attendants kidded her in a friendly manner, and she kidded back. It was precisely what she would like, what she needed.

As I think back, I am strongly glad that she could see published, and some of them republished, the works she'd done, not just the ones mentioned here so far, but also The Walk Down Main Street, Time's Web, Second Growth, The Fire Balloon, and others. They are a valuable contribution, not just to Maine writing, but to literature.

Ted Holmes
Winterport

is a Professor Emeritus at UM

Arendt after the death of Arendt's husband in 1970. Of Arendt's own mind: "thought, for her, was a kind of husbandry, a humanizing of the wilderness of experience...." In a 1947 scowl, "The Cicerone," a character's suspicions have a certain flakier quality: "the light in him went on and off, as he touched one theory or another, crusing in his shaft like an elevator." Lowell was entranced.

I slip from wonder into bluster; you align your lines more freely, ninety percent on targets—we can only meet in the bare air.

(lines quoted from "For Mary McCarthy," Notebook, 1969.)

In Caste, McCarthy and Lowell met on the same corner outside Sylvia's Variety Store that everybody else did, though an evening's entertainment among them often took this stringing and chopping and blending—Philips Booth—regularly featured meetings of an impromptu Cercle Francais and readings of Pascal and Montaigne.

During her first summer in Caste, McCarthy welcomed a stream of visitors as she would most summers; old friends from Partisan Review in the 1930s and 40s, Philip Rahv, Fred Dupee, Dwight Macdonald, and newer friends such as the poet James Merrill, William Jovanovich, McCarthy's publisher, and the writer Eleanor Perenyi. In recent years the guests kept coming, even when the Wests' long-time cook had gone, and artistic condition of the spine made it increasingly painful for McCarthy to walk. Then she would get up early in the morning to prepare strawberry pancakes for breakfast for a houseful of guests, and repair to the kitchen in the afternoon to string a bowl of sugar snacks picked from the garden. The meals were less elaborate, there were fewer courses, less sauces, one or two glasses at each setting for dinner instead of three. The basic ingredients, unadorned, stood out more sharply as in nouvelle cuisine, reminding the visitor nonetheless that for their hosts this stringing and chopping and blending of food by hand was more than a culinary preference or a case of unwonted perfectionism as some friends believed. It was both simpler and more complex than that; the presentation of a toothsome tomato or spicy apricot ranking amidst a throng of tastes ingested from childhood—childhood being an eternity for her—nearly as important as a well-told tale.

"I am staring down a channel with some very familiar landscape on either side," McCarthy wrote Hannah Arendt midway through her last novel, Cannibals and Missionaries. The chief figure, an Episcopal minister, kept sounding either like the girls in The Group, she said, or like Peter Levi, the hero of Birds of America (1971)—who sometimes sounds like McCarthy in a letter to Arendt, as a matter of fact. "It is sad to realize that one's fictions, i.e., one's creative'side cannot learn anything...I have learned," she continued, "but they, or it, haven't." She had her own theory about the reason for "these confining boundaries" which were set by a "life experience" lying in "vaguely upper-middle class territory,...between these girls and Peter. My mental experience is broader," she noted, which indeed it was, "but that doesn't seem to count for the imagination....It all leads to the awful recognition that one is one's life."

A punishing judgment which nonetheless squares with the truth. Or half the truth—for what about a rich landowner like Tolstoy? or a bourgeois gentilhomme like Flaubert who is quite capable of imagining...a woman's life, for McCarthy, in the case of The Company She Kept—"a princess among the trollops," she calls the autobiographical heroine in The Company She Kept—in life.

McCarthy is a tantalizing figure because in transforming the raw materials of
A tumultuous personal history into literary gold—the Dickensian childhood, four husbands, many lovers, a penchant for public confrontation—she broke so many conventions we have come to expect in contemporary writers, especially women writers. She was not a feminist, for example. "I think feminism is bad for women," she once told me; "it induces a very bad emotional state," which is composed of "self-pity, crotchetousness, and greed"—three emotions with which she had to do special battle, as I learned. This animosity toward feminism—which didn't keep her from supporting women's rights in employment or the right to an abortion, neither of which had "anything to do with feminism," she believed, but were simply a "question of freedom"—left her on the shelf in influential feminist circles.

A woman who was sometimes said to write a steely-edged prose "like a man," heady, tough, raunchy, but deep from a woman's experience and with a romantic flourish which sometimes makes one blush, Mary McCarthy has always been hard to place. She wrote with what she called in 1980 (not referring to her own prose) a woman's "gift of observation and analysis," a gift which she thought "does come from their historic position of having to get their way without direct —" And here she had paused, skewered on the many implication of the thought, and I had pitched in: "Confrontation. We have to know what we're up against.

Certainly she has a woman's eye for the drama of appearances, the myriad habits of consumption, whether it be of food, opinions, values, or appliances through which character is revealed. As for the sexual drama central to so many of her stories, including the tales McCarthy tells about herself, this drama, interestingly enough, is nearly always relayed from a prone position. When the heroine of "The Man in the Brooks Brothers Shirt" climbs into bed a second time with the man she has picked up on the train (or let herself be picked up by— one is never sure), she "stretches herself out on the berth like a slab of white lamb on an altar." Waiting impatiently for him "to exhaust himself," she thinks of herself "with a burning nostalgia ... fully dressed ... in her Pullman seat," but then she is suddenly absorbed of the whole tacky business by one of those sudden revelations peculiar to McCarthy's moral universe. Having granted her seducer the tender illusion that he loves her, she, "knows now" with the firmest conviction, that for once she is really and truly good, not hard or heartless at all." Her seduction is the ultimate sacrifice: "the mortification of the flesh achieved through the performance of the act of pleasure."

The Maine house and gardens were where she played, Paris was where she worked. Even after Jim West's retirement as Information Officer for the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development in the late 1970s, and the two of them started spending more time in Castine, the book-lined study on the Rue de Rennes remained McCarthy's center of operations. "The social life, there's too much of it here," she told me in the fall of 1980 when I first interviewed her in Castine. Especially in winter, there were too many cocktail parties, too many Embassy, on the Faubourg Eugene McCarthy's behalf—while Lowell had run off with Bobby Kennedy. There was an "insurrectional atmosphere," McCarthy wrote Hannah Arendt when I first interviewed her in Castine, "so tenacious that it is suddenly absolved of the whole tacky business by one of those sudden revelations peculiar to McCarthy's moral universe. Having granted her seducer the tender illusion that he loves her, she, "knows now" with the firmest conviction, that for once she is really and truly good, not hard or heartless at all."

She admitted to me in the fall of 1980, "I sometimes say a sad farewell to Castine," she added in the same letter, striking a dolorous note; "if Black Power or Tom Hayden doesn't take it, the fascists will take me."

McCarthy, of course, went to the battlefield in 1967-68 to find out what was going on in both North and South Vietnam while most of her political generation stayed on the sidelines, or actively lobbied for a partnership between intellectuals and the government, as did Diana Trilling, one of McCarthy's adversaries in the 1960s—second only to Simone de Beauvoir and Lillian Hellman among other women writers she loved to hate. Her investigative essays on Vietnam, the trial of Captain Medina in 1971, and her Watergate portraits, originally written for The New York Review of Books and the London Observer, and collected in The Seventeenth Degree—surely the most underrated of all her books—remind one of Orwell's Burmese Days. First-rate reporting is combined with astute and forthright reflections on the political legacy of American intellectuals whose "socialism" was such that in the 1950s and 1960s only the CIA was interested.

McCarthy's own political commitments were fundamentally anti-authoritarian rather than egalitarian. Thus her anti-Stalinism in the 1930s and 1940s never hardened into anti-Communism in the 1950s; but neither did it permit any prolonged commitment to reform movements, except in the case of Vietnam. After the Christmas 1972 saturation bombing of North Vietnam, McCarthy, then 60, wanted to organize a group of distinguished citizens to go with her to Hanoi and position themselves on the Red River dikes, whose threatened destruction might have caused mass flooding and starvation. There was more than a little dramaturgy in such schemes, though not necessarily self-promotion; in the religious sense, was the unconscious theme, as it is in a good deal of her fiction.

When she died she left a train of twenty books behind her, and was at work on the carbosse, the second volume of her "intellectual autobiography," the first being How I Grew (1987). She was a prolific writer of extraordinary range and quality. Her literary and dramatic criticism, well-known for its discernment and striking a dolorous note; "if Black Power or Tom Hayden doesn't take it, the fascists will take me."

Continued next page
my opinion, and perhaps in hers as well, suffers from a certain fixity of voice and character.

She was not a feminist surely, though perhaps a feminine misogynist, though I for one have never been comfortable with that formulation more common among McCarthy's male readers. What this passage reveals to me is a tendril Catholic of a certain sensibility, more like Jean Genet in Our Lady of the Flowers among former literary coreligionists than Graham Greene (a writer she disliked).

Actually, McCarthy's opinions on the Woman Question are worth noting—and almost never are. "Men are more available for feeling," she told an interviewer in 1963, "but women have quicker minds—perhaps not such powerful intellects; ... But for sheer quick intelligence and reason women are better," she said. She wasn't being coy but speaking from a woman's perspective. Isn't that how most women regard other women and men? Or did, before the perception collided with non-feminist canon to the contrary? But McCarthy could speak like a man. "They want everything, that's the trouble," she fumed in 1963, "—they can't have everything, all the prerogatives of being a woman and the privileges of being a man ... And she railed against "those awful career girls ..." Behind this archaic dualism lay a fierce attachment to feminine "prerogatives," to "the so-called domestic arts, cooking and gardening," and clothes, not to mention the feminine arts of seduction. "I've always liked being a woman," she declared stoutly in 1963, "And it seems to me that one of the problems of a lot of feminists is they don't like being women." An interesting remark, which points to the odd connection in Mary McCarthy's case between coquetry and intellect. But that is another story ...

Carol Brightman
Walpole

Brightman's biography of Mary McCarthy, American Heretic, will be published by Clarkson N. Potter/Random House in 1991.

**Editor's Note:** Mary McCarthy judged the 34 manuscripts submitted by Maine writers for the Arts Commission's 1987 Fiction Competition. Christopher Falhy of Thomaston won with his short story collection, One Day in the Short Happy Life of Anna Bananu. McCarthy wrote a six page commentary on these writers, as an Afterword to Falhy's book. Excerpts follow:

The quality is astonishingly high ... I'd expected that half or three-quarters could be eliminated without reading more than a page or so ... [They] showed an exceptionally good ear for peculiarities of speech ... Maine is less a state than a country, with its north and south and center, its dialects, its Christian names, its family names, its farms and its lumber camps, its French Canadians, and—interestingly—its Jews. There is a high ratio of Jews represented in these fictions ... And finally, there are Maine's summer people, who are the other side of the endemic disease of poverty ... Most of the entries dealt with poor people ... The middle and the upper middle class, central to so much fiction in other parts of the world, are here glimpsed as outsiders, folk "from away." ... Most of these fictions turn on a conflict between outsiders and natives ... almost the totem native occupation is that of turning the real-estate office ... The theme of the invader is deep in the sour blood of local Maine ... Maine seems to feel as the center of a cruelly tightening dream of the impinging modern world, and the Maine vernacular—its dialects—is that drama's bland verse or heroic couplets ... Here the untamed element of the animal world is represented by cats ... not a wild animal—bear or moose—as would happen in the fiction of the South, in Faulkner, for instance ... A peculiar Maine quality, something as native to the region as jackerbrush or what the people here call popple (poplar). That is a strange wild hiliarity, almost like a shriek of mirth—not a hearty belly laugh but high, thin, elfish or gothly. It runs through the entries sometimes clear, sometimes barely audible ... the Maine hiliarity, emitting its unearthly cackle like a high-frequency siren ...

**Chevroned V-Turns & Longcove Linguistics**

Kern, cantankerous geese composing concrete poetry in space & pretending to be high-flying hawk missiles. How to decipher your freestyled patterns, your ambiguous imagery, your chevroned v-turns & Longcove Linguistics. First you shift like high-speed swimmers touching cold blue stone, then you future inverted jackknives & smooth plaited halfwists. Irresistible, eerie geese, sunbathing incongruously with your Escher-like impersonations & your swashbuckling variations on a U.S. Air Force theme.

E. Ward Herlands
Stamford, CT
In a post-printmaker
Who summered in Oxford, Maine
Letter Home

After Hoboken, where the Empire State building punctures the clouds like a syringe, I give in to being carried down steps, through turnstiles, gates, revolving doors until the city is in my blood while I walk from darkness to darkness, my eyes glazed. I keep track of the numbers on the tile, my shallow breath, the third rail where someone could punch me for the hell of it, my head tumbling out of the rear like a bowling ball balancing on a scraum of steel.

When I come out of it on 181st St. into the dull November light, the wind is stuffing papers, cups, scraps and refuse of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—and balls of rags and blankets move between the garbage bags and a coach where a man and woman are, slept, and were the insides out.

The nois is flying at my feet, and puddles from yesterday's rain quiver beneath a slick of grime that has turned the cuffs of a rainbow. Above me, on either side, the tenements empties, empty rooms, broken glass, dangling wires, and doors barricaded by boards nailed fast below the words "THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF" chiseled in the stone.

Still, given all this, I am not so far gone I can't be amazed by roses growing on a sill in Washington Heights. I stopped short, loosened the grip on my bag, and felt the petals of my heart unfold and shiver in their cage. I thought, this must be revolution, and I should sit here on the stoop and wait for them to come out from behind the yellow curtains, the iron grate, the towels stuffed against the draft. They know what else can flower from men and rain and dirt and how to cultivate defiance.

Roberta Chester
Bar Harbor
is an educational consultant
for The Holocaust & Human Rights Center

Once Upon a Time On the Banks!

Cathie Pelletier
Viking, 1989

Cathie Pelletier, in 1986, dazzled aficionados of the novel with the publication of her brilliantly comic The Funeral Makers. The enthusiastic response all over the country quickly established her in the front rank of America's new generation of writers. Combining, as great novels do, a magical mix of humor and pathos, it creates a sense of place and character so real that one somehow assumes the McKinnons, the Giffords, and the Tragagash always were there, latent in our unconscious minds, waiting for Pelletier to bring it all to life.

To eager readers of that first novel, this year's news is good. Once Upon a Time On the Banks is a handsome book that continues the saga of Giffords and McKinnons of Mattagash. Once more the remnants of the proud McKinnon clan close ranks to celebrate, not the funeral of spinster marital Marge, but the marriage of Amy Joy McKinnon to Jean Claude Cloutier from Watertown, thirty miles downstream.

In The Funeral Makers nothing seemed more overwhelmingly terrifying to Sicily (McKinnon) Lawler than the marriage of her putative daughter Amy Joy to Chester Lee Gifford. Chester Lee's death in the Packard stolen from Amy Joy's Uncle Marvin averts the trauma and, ten years later in Once, sets the stage for the wedding of Amy Joy to a Frenchman from Watertown.

Now Sicily takes her bed with a vengeance and with all her internal organs in state of near collapse. Once again Marvin and Pearl cry, their now grown children and grandchildren and married by Marvin, Jr., his bosom mistress Monique, trek north for the nuptials. Once again the Giffords and the rest of Mattagash prepare for a spectacle that will echo down the years (nothing is ever forgotten in Mattagash).

Playing as they did in the first novel, counterpart to the McKinnon story are the wonderful, wacky, high jinks of the Giffords, this time Vital and Pike, their wives Vera and Goldie, and their hordes of children.

Whether stealing hubcaps, high-jacking pizza, or cheating welfare authorities the drunken, malicious Gifford brothers, Vital and Pike, in their shank-finned Plymouth, generate the tremendous comic energy of the novel as they continue their thriving relationship with the McKinnons and anyone else that opportunity provides. The war of the Christmas tree lights is the Gifford event that parallels the impending wedding of Amy Joy and Jean Claude. The assault on the funeral cortege at the conclusion of the novel is a fitting convergence of the Gifford/McKInston double plot.

In the end the wonderful texture of life lived in Mattagash is still compounded of wishes and dreams, fears and nightmares, leavened with joy and with tragedy played out against forest and river in a setting as magical as the forest of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Once Again, as in The Funeral Makers the love affair between Amy Joy and her would-be husband (Jean Claude playing for Chester Lee) is at the comedic center of the novel. Again the hoped-for celebration of marriage, life, future becomes instead a dege of regret and loss, with Amy Joy still unwed and pushing spinsterhood.

At the end of the novel Amy Joy goes to talk to her Aunt Pearl about the old settlers and the courage and endurance that brought them in the 1830's to stake their claims in the piney undergrowth... "But, by the God, they were tough, and so are we!" Aunt Pearl raised her cup of tea to Amy Joy's... "And so they are, tough enough to withstand the awful burden of collapsed dreams. Tough enough to keep on living, creating new dreams, and coming to terms with whatever happens in the life of the town on the banks of the Mattagash River.

Pelletier's second novel is wonderfully entertaining. It makes us happy and sad, wistful and momentarily wise. It is the tale of all of humanity that lives on the banks. You'll love it.

Roland Burns
Ft. Kent
teaches at UMF

Excerpt:

Sicily heard it again, a swell of music and laughter rolling along the acoustical banks of the Mattagash, cascading, crescendoing, breaking like waves. She was not surprised to hear this. She knew that, years ago, old-timers could shout to each other from a separation of two miles and be heard. She knew that the old work-horses, trudging along in their belted harnesses, rang out like tambourines from among the gangly pines and cedars. There were all kinds of communications going on back then, before the telephone, before automobiles stimulated the weeds in everyone's dooryard, before televisions, transistor radios, and other such nonsense. Had it not been for an electric knife—yes, truly, Sicily was almost ashamed to admit it, but had it not been for a knife that plugged into the wall—Winnie Craft would still have the meaty part of her right index finger, the flabby part that pushes against a pen or pencil to help execute writing. Winnie Craft had not sent out a single Christmas card since her son bought her that god-awful contraption up from Connecticut two years ago, but Amy Joy had remarked often enough that this injury did not stop Winnie from picking her nose.
**Review**

**Voiceprints/** David Walker  
Coyote Love Press, 294 Spring St., Portland 04102, 1989, $9.95

David Walker's new collection of poems, *Voiceprints*, is available at long last. Even the publisher, George Benington, of Coyote Love Books, Portland, alludes to the fact that it took awhile, in ending his colophon with the Latin motto festina lente, make haste slowly. But that's really the only way to get to touch a beautiful place.

The look and feel of the book make such a powerful first impression that perhaps it's ok. to speak of them first. The book is oversized, 7 x 11 inches, 48 pages, with glossy, laminated wrappers and cover illustrated with an oculoscope reading of the poet pronouncing the letters of the title. The feeling of that energy, sound made visible, continues throughout the volume. Just flipping through, one is struck by the feeling of spaciousness—large, elegant type, and plenty of white space, like the snowfields that appear in so many of the poems.

Then there are the etchings, five of them, all full-page portraits, by Thomas Cornell. The first, I guess, is Walker, though I'm not sure someone who didn't know him could use it to finger him in a police line-up. Maybe that's good. The others are of Chekhov, Kafka, Charles Ives, and a fox. Here I have to fault the book slightly, because although the press release gave biographical information on Thomas Cornell, the book itself does not contain it. He is "Dean of the Art Department of Bowdoin College, and is best known for his illustrations for the Gehenna Press edition of The Defense of Gracchus Barafu."

A letterpress edition of Voiceprints, handprinted on English handmade paper, and containing original prints of the etchings, is also available. If I had my choice of etchings, I'd take the Kafkas and the Charles Ives: the Kafka because it has, with his first fiancé Felice Bauer as Earth-mother in the background, ready to take all, and a tormented Kafka in the foreground, able to give nothing, all the suggestive richness of an image from a psychiatrist's Thematic Apperception Test. And the Ives for the sublime play of light, daubed as it passes through a grape arbor to fall on the composer's bold dome, white beard, and suitably smiling smile.

The poems are divided into two sections of homages to various writers and artists—those alluded to in the etchings, and others as varied as Mandelstam, Emerson, and René Char, in the first section (plus painters, Bruegel and Khalifanalo), and then working up through the more recent past with figures like Robert Lowell and James Wright, up to living, working contemporaries and friends, with even a glimpse at the future, in a poem "For my night class in writing."

As the list of names accumulates, I sense a murmur in the vox popul that sounds like "academic." Better answer it frankly: Yes, the book does have footnotes, the sina qua non of academic, to identify some of the figures and sources used—Kafka's Letters, or Ives Essays Before a Sonata. Walker explains that the notes are meant as "instigations," and why not accept them as that, as guides to voices the writer has found rich and inspiring. "To discover what it is that makes every human voice unique is the task set by the book's epigraph, and the poems incorporate actual phrases, as well as "imitations," to use Lowell's term, to affect that discovery. The results are anything but dry (here, for example, is the last stanza of the poem for René Char, a poet and a leader of the French Resistance, the Underground, in WW II):

I'm going to all  
my rifle before I feed myself, then eat  
everything here. For if the Holy Ghost  
is done to a turn, don't deny Him—He might  
fly away with your luck. And if these thoughts  
should dare turn beautiful, I can use them  
for targets. Toilet paper. To light my pipe.

The range of pleasures in the book is great, as is the variety of forms, seeking appropriateness to subject, as in a freeish sonnet for Robert Lowell, or an open-form poem for Ives, in four sections which Walker's note says "allow roughly the movements and moods of Ives' monumental Concord Sonata." Here's a sample, to show the energy in the line-breaks, as well as in the tone:

get to get it  
all right:  
the 30 years ago band  
cutting a jagged  
brass scar across  
a summer morning,  
dust  
in the road, watering  
the petunias, moma  
baking corn-bread  
(You, Charles,  
get some on the au guisal)"

Walker has definitely gotten some on the au guisal here (long may they bloom), and although I don't claim to love every poem, and I have some serious questions, like where are the women, the collection is a pleasure to read and reread, and I accept the words of the dedicatory poem, "a good piece of work is lucky to find."

**Sylvester Pollet**

**E. Holden**

**VOICES & SIGHTS at UMO**

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**Short Skirts/** Taffy Field  
Dog Ear Press, 127 pp., $9.95, 1989

Taffy Field's short story collection reminds us of the clothes we find in our closets—some things are perfectly smashing, others we put on and look at in the mirror and mutter, "Did I buy that? First, "Scam," (originally published in the pages of Kennebec a year ago) is a good example of Field's talent, and of how the reader should approach her work, illustrating in not-quite-two-pages how much can be deduced from how little, and offering a mini-lesson in literary analysis. It also serves as a warning: the reader must pay attention, or risk missing nuances that often are the whole point.

Some of the book's best: "In the Spirit," a Christmas story with a different approach; "Chyles"—funny, poignant, and with a nice twist at the end; the hysterical (and inspired) "Stirrups;" the Magic Kingdom," a commentary on the growing plasticity of our society; "Nobody Home!" brilliantly illustrates the vapidity of lives that center around chains, linens and highly polished furniture; "Flights" chronicles some of the more popular fantasies of office life; "Marketing,"—something everyone wants to do (and should do at least once); and the wonderful "Listen, Horsey, Men Should Come With Directions"—life the way it really is. Although not a favorite piece, "Bosom Buddies" deserves notice because it says something important about the arbitrary nature of acceptance and the nature of prejudice.

Realism and redundancy are issues. People from time suddenly pop up unexpectedly, sometimes after long periods of time, and although a perfectly legitimate literary device, its repetition becomes untenable. Field should work towards producing stories of real substance and resist the temptation to write the merely mundane. "Hang-ups," "Poco Tranquilo," "Bienvenue," "Hot Spots" and the unfortunate "Won't Anyone Say Phooey!" are examples. She should also resist the urge to be clever. "Sunday Morning" and "I Think" have such affected structures that they imitate rather than challenge, and the inclusion of an index at the back of the book (yes, Virginia, an Index!) is artificial.

Field, a good writer, sells herself short by concentrating on quantity rather than quality. The advantage, to the author, is the ability to publish stories that likely would never be published on their own; unfortunately, the writer's advantage becomes the reader's frustration. Inferior stories don't sneak by: We know. The stories are so short and the characters so sketchy that it is often difficult to make the transition from one to another; we never quite figure out who is who. Minimalism as a form has many strengths, but a collection of 31 pieces by the same author wakens rather than strengthens. Field's fiction would be best showcased in an anthology, where it would stand out from the work of other writers. As is, it is essentially the proverbial "mixed bag." No question that Field is talented. Sometimes too flip, on the whole, Short Skirts is pleasant and best read one piece at a time for maximum impact.

Janet C. Beaulieu

Bangor
To be sure that ethnicity is alive and well is never the concern of many, but among those who are concerned, it is a quiet, driving force that hears and speaks. Those who ask, "Where is Franco-America?" may be surprised to find it, metaphorically, in the spirit and work of remaining French Canadian descendants who were born in the States, taught in small pseudo-French communities built around the mills and riverbanks where their parents worked. Educated by nuns in parochial schools, often speaking one language at home while learning a new one for public use, those who lived the experience have a communal feeling. These remnant thirty-to-forty-somethings are people caught in the middle, between no place and some place.

Denis Ledoux returns with a new collection of stories. This compilation extends his first, *What Beame of Them and Other Stories from Franco America* (Solled Press, Lisbon Falls, 1988). Of the four stories, two focus again on David, in his youth in a story called "Big Brother," and as an adult in "The Evening Leandre Came."

Ledoux intermingles the heritage with landscape; the sense of loss of physical place causes malaise in the central characters of each story. In "Episode with Alice," Daniel is the live-in lover of a successful auction house assistant. While residing in a large city unfamiliar to him, he becomes disenchanted with trying to find a job, which is compounded by the power of Alice's achievements. He spends a night alone on the beach, with nature, to try to find himself. Daniel embodies the "rootless" Franco-American male, without land, without purpose. The common chord of displacement, oddly, binds the stories of this collection. In each narrative the male is dealt his lot: insecurity, trying to truly belong, weakness, being between two cultures, two lands, competing with the better-assimilated female, who may or may not be Franco-American. Manhood is questioned when it must stand for strength; womanhood is a force undaunted.

As suggested in the title, mountains are described in each story; in "Leandre" David is living in a run-down house in the Quebec Appalachians where "flies, mountains encircle us." Ledoux's character adds, "I like these mountains, but sometimes I wonder if it's because I don't know any better." In the title story, Alfred takes his meddling wife on a terror ride down a steep mountain road. Tired of her nagging, Alfred must dominate through action instead of communication. Ledoux understands weakened males, but also searches the depths of emasculation brought on by the contrasting security—false or not—of others.

Is the Franco-American weakened by lack of nationalistic identity? Is he schizophrenic? Ledoux searches his soul, surrounded by his own culture and yet estranged from it. This collection is enthralling, especially the raw edge in which success is described. *Mountain Dance* is bound to amuse with its comedy, and perplex with its poignancy. Its spirit runs in the ethnic veins of many small communities in America, and is heard in the iniquities of humanity.

**Mountain Dance**

Denis Ledoux

Lisbon Falls

**Drinking from a Tin Cup**

Katry Perry

Steele Publishing Co., Gardiner, ME 04345, 1989, $9.95

(Forward to book)

Katry Perry is not a typical grandmother from Hallowell. In recent years, she has run a local craft store, provided newspaper commentary on life in Kennebec County, run for the state legislature, even traveled to the Central American nation of Belize to work in the Peace Corp. These diverse experiences have shaped a unique perspective on the world closest to her heart—country life in Maine. Her collection of short essays is a wonderful tribute to the simple life. The stories capture the unique flavor of the people, the landscapes, the towns, the land, and the culture of our state.

This book is filled with authentic images of growing up, growing old, family, community, and the pleasures of life outdoors and in the home. Everyday experiences become rituals filled with beauty and magic and the wonder of human relationships.

The warmth and nostalgia that flow through these recollections and descriptions reflect Katry's passion for her neighbors and her home state. It was a real pleasure to pick this book up and immerse myself in the special world that is rural Maine. I know that readers—young and old alike—will find that these stories strike a special chord with their own lives. Clearly, the characters speak to our experiences as much as they do their own.

For years, Maine has prided itself on a rich heritage of quality writers. Katry Perry continues that fine tradition.

Senator William S. Cohen

Washington, D.C.
The Eloquent Edge: 15 Maine Women Writers

ed. Kathleen Liguori & Margery Wilson

Acadia Press, Bar Harbor, 1989, $21.95

If you were a fly on the wall, and into a room came fifteen people who had three things in common—that they lived in Maine, were the same sex, and were writers—what would you expect to hear in the way of conversation? That's a problem with this anthology, and perhaps the only problem. This is a rich, varied and engaging collection—once the editors and writers work their way through the usual banalities about life in Maine, gender, and—most irritating—Being Writers. What good writers do best is, simply, write; what both good and bad writers usually do worst is talk about writing and Being Writers. This otherwise excellent volume has its fair share of pomposity, pretension, pious prose about the creative properties inherent in a certain kind of protoplasm, and Jungian blather about images rising out of the unconscious. There's some downright romantic silliness about "inspiration" too, the Muse, the White Goddess of Robert Graves and all that.

Here is where the book sparks. The poets' (8 of 15) verse crackles, as in Heather McHugh's "If you're not dying, you are not alive," or Lee Sharkey's query, "What is the passage back?" or Deborah DeNica's related musing about "the nomadic undertow of a silver which lures me to stray." Or even the editors' own crisp clause: "we keep leaving home to ... come home." Two of the remaining seven are essays outright, one of whom, Alice Bloom, demonstrates once again that her excellent expository prose is among the best in America (never mind Maine). The other, Margery Wilson, has the humorous easy familiarity of her public radio persona. The five fictions are also fine, and especially so when considering some are excerpts from longer work and all must fit in the constraints of shared space of 170 pages. They are all told from the third-person point-of-view, which offers the reader some distance and a nice change from the intriguing reader's blessing. Where else in the rest of the world can often go hanging. So it is in Maine; so it is with Maine women writers—what both good and bad things in common—that they lived in Maine, were the same sex, and were writers. To be safe, I had reordered the early paperback Anthology of Maine Literature, edited by Robert Lecker and Kathleen R. Brown, published by UMO in 1982. So I had a chance to get reader reactions to the two books. Maine Speaks looks like what it is—a book for the 1990s—and it makes the other textbook look like something from the 1890s. For example, the technology behind Maine Speaks results in a secure binding; the older text had loose pages by the time of the first exam.

And the contents! The older book stopped with writings around 1970. Maine Speaks has Carolyn Chute and a little-known story by Stephen King, a good story by Sandy Phippen and samples of Leo Connellan's poems, also stories by and about Franco-American workers and a selection of Indian cultures.

Students enjoy the autobiographical comments by the authors (with a couple of omissions). A good index helps (again with a couple of omissions), and the Acknowledgements supply valuable information.

Personally, I was disappointed that Maine Speaks left out Kenneth Roberts; my students liked the selection from Arundel in the other anthology. And both collections have omitted Gladys Hasty Carroll and slighted Holman Day's poetry. Maine Speaks could follow up the beautiful cover with some illustrations beyond those that introduce each section, possibly pictures of the authors, but the price would probably rise dangerously. I was especially pleased that both anthologies included Ted Holmes, retired Orono professor who taught both Stephen King and Sandy Phippen.

In general, Maine Speaks avoided the academic formats—even leaving out the standard exercises and disheartening questions. The book looks like a great Christmas or birthday gift for any friend or relative. And imagine, Jeff Fischer did it with a committee, a committee of teachers and artists. Let's have more projects from Maine Writers and Publishers, maybe one on Maine history or on Maine geography or Maine art.

Theresa Blanchet
San Francisco, CA

edit the feminist quarterly, Island Voices

Maine Speaks: An Anthology of Maine Literature

MWPA with Maine Council For English Language Arts, $17.95, 1989

The beautiful cover catches every eye. The deep colors of Marsden Hartley's famous painting of Mount Katahdin serve as a glamorous opening. Next, the size and the low price, almost 500 pages for 20 dollars! And then, as a new reader glances through the paper-bound comes a surprise at the appealing page layout, good readable type and plenty of space. Imagine all this in a book designed by teachers to be used in class.

I was lucky to get an early order, hot off the press, for my summer course on Maine writers. To be safe, I had reordered the early paperback Anthology of Maine Literature, edited by Robert Lecker and Kathleen R. Brown, published by UMO in 1982. So I had a chance to get reactions to the two books. Maine Speaks looks like what it is—a book for the 1990s—and it makes the other textbook look like something from the 1890s. For example, the technology behind Maine Speaks results in a secure binding; the older book had loose pages by the time of the first exam.

And the contents! The older book stopped with writings around 1970. Maine Speaks has Carolyn Chute and a little-known story by Stephen King, a good story by Sandy Phippen and samples of Leo Connellan's poems, also stories by and about Franco-American workers and a selection of Indian cultures.

Students enjoy the autobiographical comments by the authors (with a couple of omissions). A good index helps (again with a couple of omissions), and the Acknowledgements supply valuable information.

Personally, I was disappointed that Maine Speaks left out Kenneth Roberts; my students liked the selection from Arundel in the other anthology. And both collections have omitted Gladys Hasty Carroll and slighted Holman Day's poetry. Maine Speaks could follow up the beautiful cover with some illustrations beyond those that introduce each section, possibly pictures of the authors, but the price would probably rise dangerously. I was especially pleased that both anthologies included Ted Holmes, retired Orono professor who taught both Stephen King and Sandy Phippen.

In general, Maine Speaks avoided the academic formats—even leaving out the standard exercises and disheartening questions. The book looks like a great Christmas or birthday gift for any friend or relative. And imagine, Jeff Fischer did it with a committee, a committee of teachers and artists. Let's have more projects from Maine Writers and Publishers, maybe one on Maine history or on Maine geography or Maine art.

John Jacques
St. Portland

teaches at UMO

THE ELOQUENT EDGE: 15 MAINE WOMEN WRITERS

ed. Kathleen Liguori & Margery Wilson

Acadia Press, Bar Harbor, 1989, $21.95

The Editors' Surprise is the Reader's Blessing

Where else in the rest of the world can often go hanging. So it is in Maine; so it is with Maine women writers—what both good and bad things in common—that they lived in Maine, were the same sex, and were writers. To be safe, I had reordered the early paperback Anthology of Maine Literature, edited by Robert Lecker and Kathleen R. Brown, published by UMO in 1982. So I had a chance to get reader reactions to the two books. Maine Speaks looks like what it is—a book for the 1990s—and it makes the other textbook look like something from the 1890s. For example, the technology behind Maine Speaks results in a secure binding; the older text had loose pages by the time of the first exam.

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Pumping Iron

(1)
At the body building gym, where the men go to build up their muscles, there is even a machine just for working out the heart.

And in this exercise, the heart, inevitably, will grow harder, more tuned to its surroundings, the hollow pump of the body beating the dark song of the evening, steady and obdurate, thump-chump.

(2)
How many nights will it take those like us to learn that the heart is an imperialist, that we can hear our hearts sending out messages to the brain, telling us what we've slowly learned:

that the heart knows everything, and, like love, is hard, because love is first of all a dynamo whose motion generates its own power,

that the great conduit which runs from heart to pelvis makes us shameless bold, expensive, makes us touch one another, shuddering in that little violence of contractions with the iron will of love.

Kathleen Lignell
Bucksport
works for Planning Advisory Program & teaches & edits at UMS

Every Day Another Truth

Every day, another truth
gotta keep up, gotta keep up
another truth at least, every day
sometimes more
gotta keep up gotta keep up
adding the new truths to the old ones
gotta keep up
don't replace the old truths
do n't erase the old truths
don't throw the old truths away
just keep nailing the new truths up
every day
I am staking the house of my truth

Pam Smith
Bath
is a painter & writer

Evenings of Desire

When father quit cigarettes
he'd smoke one cigar
each evening after dinner.
He'd push back his chair, cross his tired legs and light
a thick cigar with dark pleasure.

We never knew the source of his happiness.
We just knew he was happy, as we were happy sometimes at play.

So we danced
and giggled in his swirling smoke
and ran our fingers along the back of his chair,
chanting nonsense,
choked red with laughter,
while mother scooted the pots and told us
more than once
to leave the poor man alone.

Michael Brozman
Lincolnville
is Assoc. Ed. of Down East Magazine

To Josh & David:
Turning Thirteen

If we were ancient shamans
now would be
the moment
we'd choose
to give you
shelter
from the coming storm

But we are merely survivors
of suburbs and cities
not forest nor mountain:
Modern men
offering
silence and words
to guide you
going out
on your own.

Yet we have known
for years now
that the silence
of our fathers
will not do

And, yes, we have also known
that words alone cannot become
the sacred knives you need
to bleed you free
of raging doubts.

So listen up
to what we have learned
from the silence
found
between words:

Open your fists
Watch women move
Scorn uniforms

Don't march

Dance

Doug Rawlings
Mr. Vernon
Teaches at UMA

KENNEBEC: A Portfolio of Maine Writing, Vol. XIV
Published by the University of Maine-Augusta
Some of these writers are so good it is astonishing to realize that we all use the same language. Typically, about half of the 78 poets, fiction writers, reviewers and researchers have not appeared in these pages before. Neither writers nor editors are compensated financially. 5,000 copies are distributed free throughout the state as a service to the community in an effort to bring Maine writers to the attention of a wider public. We are supported by the UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT AUGUSTA, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Deadline for submissions for next year: 9/1-12/1/90. Send SASE. Copyright held by writers.

Editors: Carol Kontos
Terry Plunkett

Layout assistance, Claire Schrider

Charles Dunford will retire this spring after a distinguished career as a professor and Academic Dean at UMA. The editors wish to thank him for his unflagging support of KENNEBEC over many years, and for his encouragement of Maine musicians, artists and writers. All are in his debt. Maine is a more civilized place because of Charlie's efforts.