

Gulf Coast

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The Lesson Of The Master: Violence And Authority In Hitchcock

"Alright. Go ahead and look. I hope you like what you see."
—John Dall to James Stewart in *Rope*

THIS ESSAY CONCERNS THE MOST TRAUMATIC VISION of authorship I am familiar with in cinema, that of Alfred Hitchcock. Hitchcock's anxiety about his power over and vulnerability to his own creations tempts him, in a movie like *Rope* (1948), to an angry revenge on his own fictional world. *Vertigo* (1958) and *Frenzy* (1972) show how the question of gender inflects authorship in Hitchcock's work, exposing in particular connections between the director's authority and his use of violence. Hitchcock's authorship is defined through the spectator's acknowledgement of his mastery, but also through his camera's, and therefore his viewer's, identification with the (usually female) victim of the narrative. (Tania Modleski, most notably, has argued for such a split identification in Hitchcock's work.¹) In *Frenzy*, gender functions as the ultimate sign that acknowledgment of the author's power may be somehow intolerable, impossible in its very possibility. Such a notion of authorship is unsure of its own prerogative, and therefore vacillates between a distancing, theatrical function for the director (the positioning of a film's characters within its plot) and a more intimate, cinematic one (the mirroring of the spectator and author in these characters). The critical point for Hitchcockian anxiety of authorship is that the first of these two directorial roles implies the second, however opposed they may seem: distance inevitably threatens to collapse into intimacy.

Hitchcock is aware of the constant threat posed by film's intersubjective mirroring to any pretense of removed, impersonal control over a narrative, whether the author's or the spectator's.² Yet he continues the effort at removed mastery that I will call theatrical. *Rope*, *Vertigo*, and *Frenzy* practice theatricality as an expression of discontent with the condition of film itself. This discontent takes the form of an indulgence in what Stanley Cavell calls film modernism, which depends on the spectator's suddenly awakened, anxious consciousness of film's unnaturalness. The fact that movies are contrived or staged is suddenly brought home; the fantasy of film as an automatic process (a fantasy that for Cavell, following Andre Bazin, is central to film's appeal) loses some of its hold. The spectator becomes self-conscious as he or she senses the manipulative powers of

director and stars. Hitchcock's modernism in these three films takes the form of his own nervous awareness that both the spectator and the author are implicitly present in the events on screen.

As Cavell describes it, the roles of author and spectator in classical Hollywood cinema tend to be masked, since the traditional captivating power of the world on film derives from the fiction of the spectator's invisibility and the film's own lack of artifice, its "automatism." For Cavell, classical narrative cinema establishes the alluring reality of its world by asserting the spectator's invisibility; film, like still photography, "maintains the presentness of the world by accepting our absence from it."³ The fact that the world on film is present to us without our being present to it releases us from the anxiety of everyday subjectivity. Movies allow us an escape from the subjective effort in rival forms like painting, which records the action of the eye and not, like film, the eye's objects. It is the ground of the camera's power that it can observe without being present—the same ground on which we fantasize our power as spectators. This power is naïve, absolved of responsibility. But in movies like the three I am discussing here, cinema has discovered that the classical conventions, with which it created a seamless world that the spectator could easily and naturally inhabit, are no longer natural for it. The spectator is no longer at home in film, no longer innocent of desire.

Hitchcock's obsession with the meaning of his authority, his ability to manipulate actors, audience, and *mise en scène*, and through such manipulation to captivate both willing and unwilling audiences, is the essence of his artistic practice. This is the premise of William Rothman's masterpiece *Hitchcock: the Murderous Gaze*⁴; that Hitchcock's continual reflection on his film audience goes hand in hand with his consideration of his own role as director. *Rope* is perhaps his clearest allegory of the director's relation to the spectator.⁵ Brandon and Philip, like ourselves at a Hitchcock movie, think of murder as clever, exciting entertainment—what fun to suspend the laws of morality for a few hours. Since we sense virtually from the start that eventually they will be caught, they develop an aura of doomed charisma that acts as an additional spur to audience identification.⁶ To understand how Hitchcock encourages our sympathy for the murderers in *Rope*, retrace the opening sequence of the movie. *Rope* begins with a stationary long shot of a street, over which the credits are shown, that lasts about one minute. Then the camera slowly pans to the left and cranes up, coming to a stop before the closed and curtained windows of Brandon's and Philip's apartment. After hearing a muffled scream from behind the curtains, we then cut to a dizzyingly close shot of two men strangling a third. Hitchcock arranges this opening scene so that we identify with the murderers: the scene of violence is too abrupt and shocking to permit us any real sympathy for the victim. Since David is not given time to appear as a character, only as an imminently dead body, we are cast into the position of Brandon and Philip: only we know of their crime, and like them, we fear and anticipate detection from the other side of the curtains. When Brandon says, in *Rope*'s opening minutes, "The Davids of this world only occupy space," he is speaking for the viewer as well. For us, as for Brandon, David is a prop, not a person. What we see as *Rope* begins is Brandon's and Philip's act of murder rather than the death of David.



One of Brandon's earliest lines, just after the murder, indicates his closeness to the spectator: "Pity we couldn't have done it with the curtains open." After a single theatrical moment—the scream from behind the curtains—we have penetrated behind the barrier the curtains represent. Backstage with Brandon and Philip, we are confronted with the fact that cinema has abolished the theatrical separation between actor and audience. Ever since Griffith's first close-up, we are on an intimate footing with the film star's way of being on camera; we have penetrated the star's privacy in a way that a theatrical audience never can.⁷ Actors on screen, unlike stage actors, do not play to us; or, rather, when they do, they mark their behavior as theatrical and therefore cinematically unnatural. Whereas stage actors prepare a scene for us, film actors are themselves the scene. Because of our intrusion into the world of a film's characters, an intrusion of which they are necessarily unaware, we are implicated in these characters' actions as the theatergoer is not.

The rest of *Rope*, as if drawing back from the cinematic violation of privacy emphasized in the early scene of David's death, is remarkably theatrical. Theatricality implies a power of Apollonian self-fashioning that a performer produces through the overtness of his or her manipulative gestures: a demonstration occurs for an audience in order to acquire a distance from, and a control over, both one's audience and one's role. *Rope* alludes to theatre first of all in its *mise en scène*: with the exception of its first minute and a half, the film confines itself to a single room. An equally marked theatrical gesture is the celebrated long takes that Hitchcock's camera engages in (the shots average eight minutes each). The camera's refraining from any dramatic cuts or montage sequences is analogous in some ways to a furtive reintroduction of the proscenium arch—it keeps us at a distance. Theatricality here suggests a greater degree of authorial control than is usual in movies. But *Rope*'s opening minutes make it clear that this mastery has been won from the void. The film's opening shot of the street, static and devoid of dramatic content, suggests a definition of cinema as an automatic view of the world, as whatever happens when one turns the camera on. Such automatism (to use Cavell's term), in its simple recording of the world, implies the director's relative insignificance. Here, the only outside shot and thus the only possible place in the movie for his signature cameo appearance, Hitchcock pointedly does not appear. *Rope*'s first shot suggests the notion of a movie that would lack any authorial control; the rest of the film reacts against this idea in a radical way.

Hitchcock counters his automatic first shot with its polar opposite, the strict management of the camera apparent in the rest of *Rope*. Such overly obvious technique, in its explicit guiding of the viewer, signifies the theatrical presentation of experience. We notice the camera's activism in its insistence on showing us

David's death at the beginning, but then in the rest of the film this activism becomes hyperactive, virtuoso, as it stalks the set like a combination of eager detective and nervous culprit. Hitchcock's technical innovation in *Rope* was to produce a movie that could sustain the illusion of never having been cut, in which the camera's action would seem steady and continuous. The camera thus tries to assert its omnipresence, its lack of limits, but it does so in a tense, even hysterical way. *Rope* features the least invisible camera in Hollywood cinema—which, as a rule, guarantees the camera's power through the illusion of its invisibility.

When Hitchcock's camera pans from the street to the window, then moves inside the apartment, the effect is that of a "let there be light," a creation of cinema as a movement from the blankness of the everyday to the imposition of narrative form. But it becomes apparent within a few minutes, as Brandon and Philip begin staging their dinner party, that *Rope*'s murderous creativity also involves the kind of deliberate organizing of events and audience reaction that is proper to theatre. And the director's camera ironically and self-consciously mirrors the murderers' performance. The shy, nervous glamor of Dall's trembling half-smile and soft stutter, repeated next year in his equally brilliant performance in Joseph H. Lewis' *Gun Crazy* (1949), reveals the boyish weakness visible in such mania for control as the source of its appeal for us (here Dall joins the pained, sheltered images of aging adolescence played by Anthony Perkins in *Psycho* and Robert Walker in *Strangers on a Train*).

The theatricality of *Rope*'s camera means that it keeps the spectators at a distance by keeping their gaze under control. Robin Wood compares Hitchcock's prowling camera in *Rope* to Dreyer's: in both cases camera movement becomes a sign of the director's strict guidance of the spectator's gaze.⁸ The camera also empowers itself in the manner of a theatrical production by denying us what we want to see, making it clear that our sight is restricted, whereas cinema usually gives us the illusion of the gaze's freedom. When the film's climactic act of discovery arrives, when Rupert Cadell (James Stewart) opens the chest that conceals David's body, the cover of the chest completely blocks our view of the body. The screen briefly becomes opaque, a drawing of the curtains that reasserts the separation between audience and stage. There is a hint here of Aristotle's dictum that, because tragedy relies on the spectator's calm judgment of an ordered narrative structure (what Nietzsche would call its Apollonian aspect), its acts of violence should occur offstage. The sight of the body that was so shockingly displayed at the movie's beginning is now denied us, but in Hitchcock such concealment exposes, makes vulnerable, by blocking out. The lid of the chest, the blank blackness that Cadell lifts up, is the culmination of the movie's ascetic strategy, the will to a pure, controlled, and therefore empty vision that Geoffrey Hartman discerns in Hitchcock.⁹

Rope's modernism is its nervous analogies between camera and spectator, author and audience. The camera declares itself by taking on the character of an edgy viewer; we watch it, and at the same moment we watch ourselves, just as we watch Brandon and Philip. The latter, in turn, are watching themselves in the hypertheatrical form of watching Cadell watching them—as if they were playing both Hamlet and Claudius at a play which, like all plays, implicitly occurs within a play. As in Freud's essay "A Child Is Being Beaten," the fantasizing of oneself as detached spectator is an achievement that thinly masks one's actual involvement

in the scene, one's tendency to identify with its actors.¹⁰

As it foregrounds the spectator, *Rope* also makes explicit reference to the role of its director. Cadell, the ultimate "author" of the idea of murder in *Rope*, corresponds to Hitchcock the director. Hitchcock's business, like Cadell's, is the making of macabrely alluring, artful jokes about murder. As directorial stand-in, Cadell belongs with two other Hitchcock professors, in *The 39 Steps* and *North by Northwest*. Both these characters are known only as "(the) Professor"; both are key directors of their films' plots, figures that rival Hitchcock himself. Both tend to appear as Hitchcock himself does in his films, interrupting the narrative with a theatrical flourish.¹¹ But Cadell is a far more worried character than either of the two Professors. Unlike them, he is not mastermind of a spy operation which calmly reduces humans to strategic nothings,¹² but an anxious representative of ironic humanism. He depends on an audience that is liable to miss his delicate ironies, to misrecognize him. Brandon's literalization of his mentor's teaching trivializes it in a way that is comparable to a misreading of Hitchcock as mere exploiter of the shock value attached to his major subject matter: murder. In reaction against this distortion, Cadell undertakes a declaration of independence from Brandon that is not necessary for the analogous directorial figures in *North by Northwest* and *The 39 Steps*, or for *Vertigo*'s Gavin Elster, who are far cooler and far less vulnerable. By refusing to accept his students' act of murder at the end of *Rope*, Cadell says, in effect: I am not your audience, Brandon—not the kind of audience that you and Philip are for each other, one which implies the interchange of identities. ("We are each of us a separate human being, Brandon.") I am disavowing what you claim to be my creation of you as a murderer, since such creation would imply a basic similarity between us.

This very refusal to be an audience for murder brings Cadell close to our own position as audience of a murderous fiction rather than an actual murder. Like Cadell's, our interest in murder exists at the level of fiction; like him, we would be horrified to find that the murderous speculations aroused in us by films like Hitchcock's have become reality. Unlike Brandon, we have not enacted our morbid fascinations, and this reminder of the wall between fantasy—or film—and reality is why Cadell rather than Brandon must become our figure of identification at the movie's end.

In *Rope* the director figure thus crosses over into a protagonist/ identification figure: a rare event in Hitchcock's work, and one that signals the special import of *Rope* for my theme of the director's implication in his characters' crimes.¹³ This implication surfaces only because Hitchcock's characters have attempted to take on the role of the director. Brandon and Philip have tried to usurp direction of the film by staging first the murder, then the party. Their cleverness is an effort to echo the intricate foresight of Hitchcock's own designs—Hitchcock being, famously, the director who drew out every shot in his study before beginning production. As Brandon says, "Murder can be an art too." But Hitchcock, through Cadell, asserts his definitive authorship by producing the film's conclusion, a guilty verdict for Brandon and Philip, and by speaking Brandon's death sentence: Cadell tells Brandon, "You're going to die."

Here the key issue of Hitchcock's authorship arises: its violence. The pent-up fury with which Cadell delivers judgment on Brandon seems more appropriate to a private passion than the coolly impersonal call to justice it claims to be. Stewart's

acting here, at the end of *Rope*, foreshadows his uncontrolled, impotent fury at the end of *Vertigo*. In both scenes, Stewart's character describes the film's central act of murder, which he has finally discovered; in both scenes, the character's aspiration to directorial status is visible in the way evocation of the crime edges toward a potential for violent reenactment of it. In *Vertigo*, Scotty seems about to throw Judy off the tower, emulating Elster's killing of his wife. In *Rope*, Cadell tensely twists the rope used to kill David, and later points the gun in Brandon's direction, as if about to take his revenge in a killing just as brutal as Brandon's own. This possibility suggests that Cadell's, and Hitchcock's, disavowal of their students'/audience's violence is not entirely secure. The author is implicated in the sadism of his epigones.

Rothman mentions "the violence inscribed in the author's role," a violence that Hitchcock is more aware of than any other director in the history of cinema has been. "Hitchcock has made this [authorial] role his own," writes Rothman. "He is not willing to deny film's capacity for violence or to disavow his own implication in it." But, Rothman adds, Hitchcock "is also impotent in the face of the possibility that we will fail to acknowledge him . . . [he wishes] to revenge himself on those viewers who fail" to recognize his manipulative mastery.¹⁴ Hitchcock might wish his revenge, for example, on viewers who would see *Rope* as mere entertainment that sets aside all moral issues, until it is flawed by a moralistic ending tacked on to soothe box office interests. Or on those who would see the film as an anti-intellectual attack committed by mass culture on professors who spout clever and dangerous theories.

Yet Hitchcock himself participated in this kind of populist reduction of his work through most of his career. Hitchcock in his television appearances seemed deliberately to court the possibility of being mistaken for a mere showman, the "master of suspense" endlessly and inventively shocking, and thus pleasing, the public. Like Warhol, Hitchcock turned himself into a brand name, as if in hyperbolic comment on the culture that makes commodities of even the most idiosyncratic visions.¹⁵ (His brand is so instantly recognizable that he is still the only director who is a genre unto himself—not even John Ford has his own aisle at Blockbuster Video.) Hitchcock's mass-marketing of his authorial signature, which appropriately enough took the form of his own image furtively tagging each film, stands in contrast to his more elusive, hermetic sense of his authorship, his elaborate obsessions with certain images and narrative patterns: the wrong man, the countertransference in psychoanalysis and detective work, the plots of *Hamlet* and *Tristan and Isolde*, the conjunction of murder and marriage, the similarity between the fantasy worlds enacted by secret agents and those that belong to the agency of film, and the returning voices of dead women, from Rebecca to Mrs. Bates.

Hitchcock's oblique relation to his audience, his hiding of his intellectual ambitions, makes for moral sophistication. So does his nervousness about the manipulative power his ambitions rely on. Rothman notes that Eisenstein "takes it for granted that he has the right to subject his viewers to violence," whereas Hitchcock's far greater moral and political complexity is indicated by the continual anxiety about the analogy between the camera's power (especially its powerful use of montage, which is, after all, all about cutting things up) and his spies' and murderers' instruments of death.¹⁶ Eisenstein, by contrast, is content to

see his camera as a revolutionary weapon.

Hitchcock is worried about his mastery, then, because of the violence it entails. Yet elsewhere in his book, Rothman, in his understandable desire to establish a rapport with Hitchcock's intentions, retreats from his knowledge that Hitchcock's films confront the spectator violently.¹⁷ Thus Rothman writes that Hitchcock's films "invite us to enter into a relationship with him that is grounded in mutual acknowledgment, and in affirmation of the erotic bond that pure cinema has the power to forge."¹⁸ But eroticism in Hitchcock is always about inequality, mastery and victimization; about loss of self, not assurance of it.¹⁹ And so is spectatorship an unequal enterprise for the viewer of Hitchcock's films. Maybe Hitchcock does not merely take revenge against those viewers who fail to acknowledge him, as Rothman suggests; maybe his real terror, the real reason for his camera's violence, is the possibility of being acknowledged. In other words: Cadell's fury may be the result, not of a frustrating misrecognition, but of the far more frustrating fact that Brandon really has recognized him, detected in him a serious interest in murder.²⁰

The imbalance that makes the relation between Brandon and Cadell potentially violent applies as well to the viewer of *Rope*—but not necessarily to the viewer of earlier Hitchcock films. Rothman, writing on *The 39 Steps*, describes Hannay's playing along with the author/director of his plot as a cooperative strategy which ensures his success. By contrast, Rothman notes that the Professor's attempt to play the role of the director in *The 39 Steps*, his effort to vie with Hitchcock, fails miserably. But it is highly questionable whether, as viewers of later Hitchcock movies like *Vertigo*, *Frenzy*, and *Rope*, we can ever adopt Hannay's strategy. Characteristically, as viewers of these films, we have attained to a radical modernist ambivalence concerning the seductiveness of film: we want either to show up the director, to step into his place as Brandon does, or else we want to submit passively to his power (a power which also identifies with its victims).

* * * *

Let's return again to the opening sequence of *Rope*. As I have noted, the murder of David Kentley occurs without narrative explanation or preamble—the antithesis of Hitchcockian suspense. Even the famous, largely silent open sequence of *Vertigo*, with Scotty (Stewart) suspended from the roof, literally mastered by suspense as the policeman falls to his death, participates in the audience's thirst for narrative tension in a way that the murder in *Rope* decidedly does not. We begin, then, with the shocking fact of a murder, as if in rebuke of our expectations that, since this is a Hitchcock film, we'll be teased and seduced into readiness, into the expectation of violence. We want some narrative entanglement, some hint that this world has been arranged for our pleasure and excitement. Instead, we get a cluttered, claustrophobic immediacy.

I would contrast this scene to the characteristic Hitchcockian moments when we know that danger is near and we so desperately want to warn the hero, to aid his/her escape—we know he can't really hear our thoughts, but our need for him to attend to our warning suddenly becomes the basis of the fiction.²¹ In the *Rope* scene no such fiction is present; the instant and inexorable character of this murder emphasizes the fact that the movie screen is an impenetrable ontological barrier. Yet the erotic paradox of film is that this barrier seems always already

crossed as we view a movie, even as we know that it is essentially uncrossable: thus our identification with Brandon and Philip.²²

If desire and sympathetic identification are the result of narrative—the inside story which at the beginning of *Rope* provides a place for Brandon and Philip alongside the spectator, and, later, alongside Cadell—then the renouncing of narrative implies the hope to escape from such identification. This point is made by the second sequence in *Rope* that I want to discuss: the very end of the film, just after Cadell shoots out the window in order to alert the police to the murder of David. His shots mark the narrative's end. But the film itself goes on: it concludes with a long, slow track back from the actors until the chest containing David's body appears in the foreground. Brandon and Philip, their performance over, remain loitering on the set as Cadell, his back to us, sits by the chest and watches them. As Brandon carefully mixes a drink and Philip picks out a few notes on the piano, their manners seem unaccountably casual, given the fact that they are about to be arrested for murder. After the taut, fully achieved incarnation of Brandon and Philip that Dall and Granger have presented, we are, for the first time, given the impression that they were only acting.



This puzzling coda is a critical key to *Rope's* meaning. On the one hand, Hitchcock's withdrawal of the camera from his own film, and of his players from their roles, parallels Cadell's withdrawal of himself, and his teaching, from his murderous disciples. Cadell, positioned as spectator, seems to occupy a different space from that of the killers; he is trying to disengage himself from their misinterpretations. Since these misinterpretations took the form of transferring into dramatic action something that never should have been enacted, murder, it is fitting that the camera, like Cadell, shrinks back from its heretofore active role and tries to turn itself into an innocent bystander. But *Rope's* unique long take method has thoroughly exposed the implication of the camera in the plot that it structures, and Hitchcock is well aware of this when he tracks the camera back at the film's end: this gesture of hopeful detachment cannot erase the intrusive presence of the camera that we have perceived for the last hour and a half.²³

The positioning of Stewart as detached spectator is a central issue in *Vertigo* as well.²⁴ As we watch the early, lengthy silent sequence of *Vertigo* in which Scotty pursues and observes Madeleine from a department store to Carlotta Valdez's grave to the Museum of the Legion of Honor, we realize that his attraction to her is predicated on his assumption that she is fully visible to him, while he is invisible to her. Scotty's later rage derives in large part from his conviction that Madeleine (aka Judy), along with Elster, had staged the film's early sequences so as to position him as such an ideal observer—she was fully aware that he was watching her. As Scotty himself says in the final, terrifying sequence at San Juan Bautista,

he was the "made-to-order witness." Scotty assumes that Judy's awareness gave her full, utterly calculating power; we know that she was no less vulnerable than he, and that Elster was the real director of the plot. Modleski describes the *Tristan and Isolde*-like interchange of identity between lover and beloved (for example, Scotty has Madeleine's nightmare of falling into an open grave).²⁵ But Scotty does not surrender his self-possession, even as he fantasizes such a merging with the mysterious, and possibly mad, character of Madeleine. Scotty's identification with Madeleine depends on the power of his fantasy, which, in turn, depends on his fiction of his autonomy as Madeleine's detective/rescuer. Even though the film suggests that Scotty and Madeleine melt into each other, losing their selves, like Wagner's lovers, for the sake of their love, it also makes it clear that Scotty desperately needs to retain his assumption that he is the knower and Madeleine the mystery to be known (but finally unknown).

What unhinges Scotty is his realization that he never really had the hermeneutically privileged position implied by his role of detective. Scotty is not disturbed by the fact that "Madeleine" was only a fantasy; to the contrary, he energetically tries to turn the real woman Judy into a fantasy in the film's second half. He is shattered, instead, by the fact that the fantasy was staged for him, that he was being played to. Scotty, at the film's end, seems to suggest that he wishes he could avoid this victimization by assuming the authorial Elster's perfect mastery. In *Vertigo*'s final sequence, Scotty tells Judy that Elster "made you over just like I made you over." We inevitably wonder whether the furious Scotty will consummate his analogy by killing Judy as Elster earlier killed Madeleine. But, in fact, Scotty is not like Elster here; in *Vertigo* such detachment as Elster's seems to be incompatible with the erotic. Unlike Cadell in *Rope*, Elster is shielded from our view. We know nothing of his desire, his anger, his relation to Judy and his wife—if these things in fact exist—and our ignorance constitutes his immunity from punishment.

However, there is one figure in *Vertigo* who combines the inexplicability of Elster and the transparent desire of Scotty: Judy. We simply never know, for example, whether she falls or jumps off the tower at the movie's end; or whether she mistakenly or deliberately puts on the necklace that she wore as Madeleine, thus tipping Scotty off to her real identity.²⁶ The mysteriousness of these particular actions of Judy in *Vertigo* considerably complicates her general image as a character whose desire, like Scotty's, is easy to read (at least after she writes, and tears up, her letter to Scotty protesting her love for him, halfway through the film). It also suggests that *Vertigo* itself, like Scotty, is fascinated by the notion of woman as enigma.

The later *Frenzy* rejects all such participation in the idea of woman's mysteriousness.²⁷ This rejection of the romantic ideal is related to the fact that in *Frenzy* film modernism is not, as in *Vertigo*, the voyeur's realization that his gaze has been staged, but the physical resistance or obstinacy of his gaze's object: the body of woman. In *Frenzy*, woman is a real obstacle to the necktie murderer Rusk's fantasy; she must be destroyed in order to permit the fantasy to exist.²⁸ As a result, the fantasy does not exist for us in *Frenzy* as it does in the first half of *Vertigo*. The spectators do not identify with *Frenzy*'s Rusk as they do with *Vertigo*'s Scotty. Scotty, like the spectator, is a voyeur in search of Madeleine's enigmatic inwardness, her dream self. But *Frenzy*'s first rape/murder scene literalizes

voyeurism, and thus destroys its attractions. Rusk wants to reduce women to the material, the nonhuman, by revealing them as (mere) body.²⁹ The violence of Brenda's death is as far removed as can be from the dreams of cinematic or psychoanalytic knowledge that *Vertigo* invokes; Rusk does not participate in the search for the secrets of a hidden past as Scotty does with Madeleine. There is no pretense here of a violence, like Scotty's, that wants to both uncover and preserve the enigma of the feminine. Instead, Rusk annihilates all secrets, all ambiguity. And, most shockingly, the camera cooperates with him. The familiar authority of montage in the Hitchcockian murder scene is exposed as a repellent technique for transforming the human into the nonhuman. As Rusk in his impotent, vicious fetishism turns first to Brenda's breast, then to her neck, the camera expresses his fixations in extreme close-up. As Modleski writes, "It is infinitely sad, pathetic, among the most disturbing scenes the cinema has to offer."³⁰ Hitchcock spares us none of the heartbreaking clumsiness of the struggle. After Rusk finally kills Brenda, her image is fixed in a grotesque close-up, her eyes bulging as if to guarantee the emptiness of her gaze.



Rusk refuses the mirroring that attracts Scotty and wants to reduce the potential viewer of his desires to an inert mass that can no longer view anything. The peril of such mirroring, as Modleski points out in relation to *Vertigo*, lies in how the desired cannot be known or possessed because her attraction consists in reflecting that desire. The lover knows a fantasy, not another human, and therefore also knows the maddening emptiness of the fantasy.

Despite Rusk's efforts to avoid it, such a mirroring of his desires is clearly suggested by Hitchcock's depiction of Brenda's death struggle, as well as Rusk's later flashback to Babs' death. Both scenes are marked by matching extreme close-ups of victim and killer, both of them grimacing in pain.



Rusk is, in fact, finally defeated by Babs' mirroring strategy: her grasping of Rusk's tie-pin, a tiny and necessary piece of evidence, is a cunning and careful Rusk-like move. (Rusk is meticulously neat, in contrast to the slovenly Blaney.)³¹

There is also a crucial mirroring that occurs between Blaney and Rusk. In a

pivotal scene in Rusk's fruit market, Blaney's gaze surprises Rusk, who, absorbed in his appearance, has been carefully adjusting his tie-pin (now recovered from the grasp of Babs' corpse). Interestingly, this shot of Blaney echoes one of Scotty early in *Vertigo*, as he watches Madeleine/Judy from behind a mirror in the department store where she appears surrounded by flowers.



Rusk is shocked out of his composure by Blaney's look. His shock is expressed by a most unusual shot of the back of his head: a shot from the point of view of no one except the camera. And, astonishingly, Rusk looks behind him toward this nonexistent spectator!



For a brief moment, Rusk is vulnerable to Blaney's gaze as Judy is vulnerable to Scotty's in several important scenes of *Vertigo* (her awakening in his apartment after being rescued from San Francisco Bay; the drive to San Juan Bautista near the film's end). But Rusk deflects his fear in the direction of a spectator who might be elsewhere, from whom he must hide Blaney and himself: thus the back of the head shot. He produces a private conversation with Blaney, like his earlier private conversations with Brenda and Babs, in order to create a narrative possibility that will enable him to avoid the revelation of his inner self by victimizing others. Part of Rusk's shock is due to his realization that Blaney is now the character closest to him: he has raped and killed both Brenda and Babs, Blaney's ex-wife and Blaney's current lover. Rusk and Blaney double each other in the sense that Brandon and Cadell do in *Rope*: when Rusk kills Brenda, Rusk enacts a horrifying fulfillment of Blaney's resentment against his ex-wife. But, unlike Brandon, Rusk needs to prevent Blaney from becoming aware of their affinity, precisely because, unlike Brandon or Scotty, he wants to avoid the seductions involved in identifying with another character. Rusk tries to escape the vulnerability before the other that, for the rest of Hitchcock characters I have been discussing, is integral to desire.

To avoid mirroring Blaney, Rusk turns away from the camera: only we can see his expression. We know, and Blaney does not, that Rusk is planning something. Rusk's plan is to escape the possibility of being known by Blaney by playing a directorial role. He wants to evade the doubleness or intimate

identification that has just appeared between him and Blaney by furthering a strictly narrative, rather than psychological, parallel between them. Rusk offers Blaney his apartment as a hide-out—the same apartment in which Babs was killed—so that he can be discovered there by the police. As he leaves Blaney in his apartment, Rusk calls out, “Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do!”

Rusk’s exploitation of his proximity to Blaney in this scene illustrates a central aspect of cinema, one that Hitchcock emphasizes at the beginning of both *Frenzy* and *North by Northwest*: we take a character for what he is because of the position he occupies. When we see Blaney appearing in a pub early on in *Frenzy* just as a barrister and a doctor are discussing “this fellow” (the killer), when we see him angrily complaining to the bartender just as the two men comment on the necktie murderer’s anger, and of course when we see Blaney tying his tie just after the film’s first body has appeared, we tend to think of him as the murderer because Hitchcock has so obviously put him in this position. In fact, Hitchcock’s early situating of Blaney as the killer is deliberately overobvious, to a degree which makes us conscious from the very beginning of the artifice involved in this cinematic strategy.³² Like the spies in *North by Northwest* who take Roger Thornhill for the nonexistent Kaplan because he appears to answer a bellboy calling Kaplan’s name (and, later, because he happens to be everywhere that Kaplan is supposed to be), we take Blaney to be the necktie murderer because Hitchcock brings him on screen and shows him tying his tie at exactly the relevant moment.

Through such overt exploitation of the persuasive capacity of the juxtaposed image, Hitchcock makes a point about the nature of narrative film. Cinema’s reliance on its capacity to direct the viewer is underlined in *Frenzy* as it was in *Rope*, and, as in *Rope*, there is something about such direction that I would like to call theatrical. For one thing, Hitchcock in sequences like the ones I have just mentioned, where he sets up a character as a pawn in a narrative scheme, tends to refuse the revelation provided by a close-up. This refusal occurs, I believe, because the intensity of the close-up does not directly depend upon, and often tends to destabilize, a character’s position in the narrative. As Hitchcock knew throughout his career, we can feel as intimate and sympathetic with a villain as with a hero, provided we are given an effective close-up as an entry into his/her private world. In such a close-up, we are alone with—we mirror—the character on screen. This is exactly the effect that Rusk violently tries to avoid, not only with Brenda and Babs but with Blaney.³³

Rusk’s avoidance of involvement also characterizes the director himself in his project of theatrical mastery, his withdrawal from the fascinating passions of his characters and into ironic detachment. Yet, as I have indicated, *Frenzy* draws prominently on mirroring devices to upset the success of any effort—most notably Rusk’s—to direct or master the film’s action. An important instance of the argument between theatrical positioning and cinematic inwardness in *Frenzy* is provided in the character of Hettie Porter (Billie Whitelaw), who unhesitatingly accuses Blaney of murder and convinces her husband to refuse him refuge. As she pronounces sentence on Blaney, Hettie is seen in a dominating pose as the force separating Blaney and Babs. (In fact, Babs will soon be killed.)



But, in the scene that follows Babs' death, Hettie follows her placing of herself as Blaney's public accuser with a look of anguished remorse that is visible only to us, and not to Blaney or her husband.



This moment of privacy is analogous to our sight of Cadell in the final sequence of *Rope*, as he finds the cigarette case that he has hidden on the chest that contains David's body—his most adroit gesture of stage-managing.



We, not Brandon, see Cadell's distraught face, his desperate wish not to find the truth even as he goes about finding it. Both the shot of Cadell and the one of Hettie express a character's refusal to expose his or her inner self to others; only the spectator can see this inwardness. Both characters are governed by an impulse to hide their inner doubts by establishing control of the narrative. Yet, through the close-up, we know their doubts, their sympathy with those they persecute. Ironically, Cadell's face as he goes about asserting his grasp of the plot, and consequently his distance from Brandon, is exactly superimposed over Brandon's (the right ear in the frame reproduced above belongs to Brandon, not Cadell). The identification with his master that Brandon so desperately seeks appears in spite of Cadell's efforts to avoid it.

Cadell's use of the cigarette case converts into a theatrical token an object which was earlier attached to secrecy and narcissistic escape from the world of play-acting. Minutes before, Brandon, alone with Philip after the party, had sighed with relief and taken a cigarette from his case, just as he did after David's murder (again, when he was alone with Philip). Cadell's maneuvering the plot in

the film's finale, a maneuvering that depends on the trick with the cigarette case, is a way of distancing himself from the mirroring relationship that Brandon tries to impose on him when he asks Cadell how *he* would have murdered David: "What would you do if you were I?" Brandon wants the identification with Cadell so much that he exposes his crime: his desire that he and Cadell reflect each other, as he has made Philip reflect him, is also a desire to be discovered and punished by Cadell. Oddly, then, in his attraction to Cadell as both a sympathetic co-conspirator and a distant, implacable superego figure who will expose him, Brandon is like the spectator. Watching *Rope*, we indulge in two modes at once: an enjoyment of this film as a narrative riddle—that is to say, an enjoyment at a distance which aligns us with a fantasy of the director as removed, omnipotent author—and an intense symbiosis with the characters on screen, a relation in which the author is also involved as empathic spectator of his own work.

The most frightening moments in Hitchcock suggest that, since the director's removed, uncaring plotting could turn into a self-reflexive mirroring that would render him vulnerable, the camera has the power to refuse to plot. It can simply record instead, watch blankly and coldly as the Statue of Liberty watches Fry's death at the end of *Saboteur*. The camera's withdrawal during Babs' death in *Frenzy*, a scene which I am about to discuss, is an analogous example; another is the tracking shot at the end of *Rope*.

In such scenes, the camera may or may not be watching its victim. The power of the camera as it makes this self-withholding move consists precisely in its automatism, in the fact that we cannot *unequivocally* attribute a gaze to it. It is, in this respect, not unlike the eye of the law, represented by Inspector Oxford in the final sequence of *Frenzy*. The Inspector looks at Blaney with what Blaney takes to be an accusation, a charge that he is (still) the necktie murderer. Alec MacGowan's look is not accusatory in the sense that Blaney thinks it is. What is truly threatening in the look is that it is impossible to tell what it is—a tacit sympathy numbed into inarticulateness by the crushing irony of *Vertigo*-like repetition, that is, by the fact that Blaney has, yet once more, inadvertently put himself in Rusk's position? The law's deliberate aloofness? Most probably, and simply, a resurgence of the Inspector's earlier thought that Blaney is the murderer? Or none of these things? Hitchcock, unlike Kafka, is not attracted to the enigmatic quality of the law; he is too nervous about it for that, and too sure that it has no power to redeem, not even in an endlessly compromised and paradoxical manner. But there are a few places in Hitchcock, like the end of *Frenzy*, where even the law's dull-minded oppressiveness manifests a possibility of self-possession denied elsewhere—in the most remarkable moment of conscious wit in *Frenzy*, the Inspector remarks calmly, "Why, Mr. Rusk, you're not wearing your tie." The decent Britishness of clubs and Scotland Yard at last offers the comfort of distance—but we know what a thin veneer this is. The movie's final line thus refers us back to its opening scene, in which a politician's genteel speech is pointedly interrupted by a corpse with a tie around its neck, and the speaker exclaims, "That looks like my club's tie!"¹⁴

The blatant character of *Frenzy*'s violence, which is more marked than in any other Hitchcock film, tempts us to disown responsibility for Rusk's brutality by withdrawing into a position of directorial detachment, as if this were really a clever detective story marred only by excessive realism in its depiction of murder.

In *Vertigo*, such detachment was represented by Elster, whose prizing of “the power and the freedom” to murder at will, and with no consequences, made him analogous to Hitchcock himself. *Frenzy*’s unforgettable invocation of the author’s desire for distance, and the freedom that goes along with it, occurs in the scene of Babs’ murder, which is the stylistic antithesis of the camera’s violation of Brenda. As Rusk leads Babs into his apartment—and we bear the excruciating knowledge that he will kill her as he killed Brenda—the camera tracks very slowly down the hall, down a flight of stairs, into and across the street, with the dull, ambient noise of the city masking any possibility of a cry for help.



As at the end of *Rope*, in this astonishing sequence the camera seems to be keeping an eye on the scene of the crime even as it turns away from it. By pretending that it is independent of the world it depicts, it both demonstrates and seeks to disown its fascination with that world. This is, then, a theatrical moment because it exploits the automatic nature of cinema for dramatic effect, instead of, as is usual in film, letting this automatism remain implicit and therefore effective. Can a camera simply decide to declare itself free of responsibility for the violence it shows, since it is, after all, only an unwitting machine, a recording device? Taking up this notion, the camera ironically reveals its intentions. Out of respect for the dying Babs, it decides not to show us the act that we so dread and so want to see. At the same time, though, it decides, in its very protest of its director’s decision to kill yet again, not to hear the screams of Babs or see her agony, not to recognize her in her death. By letting Babs die for the sake of the plot, and only wishing that her death not be so immediately, disturbingly present as Brenda’s, the camera endorses the director’s decision: with Hitchcock, it turns its back on its victim.¹⁵

But Hitchcock, as I have been saying all along, also identifies with his victims: this identification is, in *Frenzy*’s murders as in *Vertigo*’s victimization of Judy, inseparable from the director’s power. Brenda and Babs are subjected to Hitchcock’s cruelty and sympathy simultaneously: his sympathy *is* his cruelty, given the fate he has chosen for them. Love and violence cannot, in this grim universe, be disentangled.¹⁶

NOTES

1. See Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much* (New York, 1988) and, for a similar approach, Robin Wood, *Hitchcock’s Films Revisited* (New York, 1989).

2. This process is reminiscent of Nietzsche’s account of how tragedy subjects the poised Apollonian authority that created it to Dionysian self-dissolution. It is often forgotten that Nietzsche’s early example of the Dionysian, Wagner, represents in many ways the beginning

of modern mass culture, with its threatening capacity to seduce the listeners/spectators and reduce them to passivity. See Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide* (Bloomington, 1986), 16-43. The pretensions of what D.N. Rodowick has called "political modernism," film theory's project of granting epistemological privileges to those estranged, objective judges, the "Brechtian" spectator and the formally innovative avant-garde author, could well be seen as a valuing of Apollo over Dionysus: the spectator ought to be able to objectively evaluate mass cultural fantasies so that they can be put to "political" use, as even Rodowick argues (see his *The Difficulty of Difference* [New York, 1991], 35-36, 108-09, 118).

3. See Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed* (New York, 1971), 23. As I have indicated, Cavell's theory is crucially indebted to André Bazin: see in particular "Theatre and Cinema—Part Two," in *What Is Cinema?* vol. 1, trans. and ed. Hugh Gray (Berkeley, 1967). A very relevant later work of Cavell's is his essay on *North by Northwest* in *Themes out of School* (Chicago, 1984), 152-72.

4. Rothman's book is, in my judgment, not only the best on Hitchcock but also the most impressive analysis of cinema in print for the way in which it tries to account for the power of particular movies through close reading (not usually a strong suit in cinema studies). See also Rothman's *The "I" of the Camera* (New York, 1988), which contains chapters on *Vertigo* and *Rear Window*.

5. *Rope* is the story of two former students of prep school teacher Rupert Cadell (James Stewart), who decide, as an experiment, to enact what they see as the aims of Cadell's iconoclastic, antimoralistic teaching: as a joke or experiment, they murder a former schoolmate. The film restricts itself to the apartment of the students, Brandon (John Dall) and Philip (Farley Granger), as they throw a party over the dead body of David, the schoolmate they have killed. To this party are invited David's fiancée, his parents, and, of course, their old mentor, Cadell. Not unpredictably, Cadell discovers the fact of the murder.

6. On this point see Wood, 352.

7. On this subject see Rothman, "Virtue and Villainy in the Face of the Camera," in *The "I" of the Camera*.

8. See Robin Wood, "Carl Dreyer," *Film Comment* 10, 2 (1974), 11. The argument between off-screen voices and the image on screen, which is carried to virtuosic heights in *Rope*, works to the same effect of directing the spectators—demanding that they override one aspect of the film (sound) for another (sight).

9. In his wonderful "Plenty of Nothing: Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*," in Hartman, *Easy Pieces* (New York, 1985).

10. I am indebted here to Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen's *The Freudian Subject* (Palo Alto, 1991), 37-38, though unlike Borch-Jacobsen I would not argue that such mimetic identification must be chronologically prior to the subject's capacity for representation.

11. Perhaps the most memorable instance is the mutilated hand displayed by the Professor in *The 39 Steps* as he reveals himself to Hannay (Robert Donat) as a force of evil.

12. I am thinking here of Roger O. Thornhill's (Cary Grant's) famous line to Eve Kendall (Eva Marie Saint) in *North by Northwest*, when asked what his middle initial stands for: it "stands for nothing." This—standing (in) for nothing—is quite literally the position that Thornhill occupies in the film's plot as he is made to play the role of one George Kaplan, a nonexistent spy.

13. Wood (356) notes the shift in audience identification from Brandon and Philip to Cadell.

14. Rothman, *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze* (Cambridge, 1982), 107.

15. Here I am taking Rothman's argument in the direction suggested by Fredric Jameson's review of his book (reprinted in his *Signatures of the Visible* [New York, 1990]: see 124-27). Jameson wants to historicize Rothman's emphasis on Hitchcock's display of mastery—which one could well do by pointing out that the notion of an author of twentieth-century mass culture is in a sense an oxymoron, given mass culture's organization as an anonymous realm of commodities.

16. *Murderous Gaze*, 364. Hitchcock's World War II films are almost unique among wartime movies in their sophisticated doubts about their own ideological projects: the pathetic death of the pacifist van Meer in *Foreign Correspondent* is brought on by his exposure to an audience of spies on what looks like a movie set, complete with third-degree lighting.

17. But Rothman is self-conscious about even this issue. See *Murderous Gaze*, 347—on which Rothman admits that his desire to speak for Hitchcock's films is really a desire to free himself from their spell.

18. Rothman, *Murderous Gaze*, 107. Cavell's analysis of *North by Northwest* focuses on directorial violence as well as the hope for mutuality: see *Themes*, 165.

19. Because Rothman sees the "erotic bond" as mutual, he avoids issues of power in his study.

20. Very relevant here is Wood's comment (which he has since reconsidered) that one of *Rope's* flaws is the fact that the proper meaning of Cadell's teaching is never defined (Wood, 80, 233). Perhaps this isn't a flaw—perhaps Brandon *has* defined Cadell's meaning. Elster's desire cannot be suggested at all, because if it were he would be turned into an impotent, vulnerable creation like Scotty, rather than a powerful creator; but Cadell's anger indicates that he is vulnerable.

21. An excellent analysis of this aspect of Hitchcockian narrative is Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry* (Cambridge, 1991).

22. It is appropriate that our fantasy of violated privacy encompasses not only the act of murder we have just witnessed, but also the implied sexual lives of *Rope's* protagonists. Hitchcock chooses a gay actor, John Dall, for his murderer. The network of nuances that links Brandon's and Philip's homosexuality, which is suggested but never explicitly stated in *Rope*, with theatricality, secrecy, and a certain feminized posture before male authority, deserves an essay in itself. Just after the murder, with Brandon anxious to begin setting the scene for the dinner, Philip says, "Not just yet . . . let's stay this way for a minute." A few minutes later, he asks, "Brandon, how did you feel during it?"

23. Yet the camera must not be too self-declarative. Robert Montgomery's *Lady in the Lake* (1946), Orson Welles' never-produced *Heart of Darkness*, in which the camera was to have been Marlowe, and Delmer Daves' *Dark Passage* (1947), in which we see through Bogart's eyes, without seeing him, for the first half hour, all play on the identification between spectator and protagonist in a way that radically exposes the spectator to the gazes of other characters. The painful, near-unwatchable character of these films derives from their literalistic and mechanically enforced exposure of a point of view that is usually privileged in its hiddenness.

24. *Vertigo* is the story of Scotty Ferguson (James Stewart), a former police detective in San Francisco who retires as a result of the vertigo induced by watching a policeman fall to his death from a rooftop. Scotty is hired by an old college friend, Gavin Elster (Tom Hellmore), to track his wife, Madeleine, whom Elster suggests is mad and/or possessed by the spirit of her great-grandmother Carlotta Valdez. Scotty pursues and falls in love with Madeleine (Kim Novak), who, apparently overcome by madness, jumps from the tower of Mission San Juan Bautista. After a period of severe depression, Scotty meets a woman, Judy Barton, who looks like Madeleine and whom he "makes over" in her image, convincing her to adopt Madeleine's style of dress, makeup, and hair color. Judy, whom we know, as Stewart does not, acted the role of Madeleine at Elster's request so that Elster could kill his wife, resists the makeover but then goes along out of love for Scotty. Scotty, after he finally discovers that Judy was Madeleine, furiously drives her to San Juan Bautista and forces her up the stairway of the tower from which Elster threw his wife. He has conquered his vertigo—he makes it to the top of the tower—but Judy, frightened by the sudden appearance of a nun in the tower, falls or jumps from the tower to her death. Scotty stands as helpless witness of a death for the third time in the movie.

25. See Modleski, 87–100.

26. Judy's putting on the necklace can be seen as a conscious request for acknowledgment (she actually says to Scotty "Can't you see?") eerily similar to Charlie's

putting on her ring in *Shadow of a Doubt*. (Rothman, *Murderous Gaze*, 361, notes an analogy between the two scenes, but does not conclude that Judy's gesture may be deliberate.) The suggestion that the necklace is more than a "mistake" can be reinforced by the fact that Judy, as she puts on the necklace, seems particularly eager to go to Ernie's, where Scotty first met her as Madeleine. She also says in this scene "I have you now, don't I?"—echoing Scotty's statement to Madeleine in the stables, when he used the carriage and the wooden horse as props to redeem a memory, just as Judy now uses the necklace.

27. In *Frenzy*, Richard Blaney (Jon Finch), who has been fired from his job at a pub, visits his ex-wife Brenda (Barbara Leigh-Hunt) just before she is killed by his friend Bob Rusk (Barry Foster). Rusk, unknown to Blaney, has been using neckties to strangle a series of women. Blaney is suspected of killing Brenda by the police and goes into hiding with his girlfriend, Babs (Anna Massey); Babs is also killed by Rusk. Finally, Rusk arranges for Blaney's discovery at the hands of the police, and Blaney realizes that Rusk has framed him. Blaney is sentenced to life imprisonment. Some time afterwards, Inspector Oxford (Alec MacCowan), who had been convinced of Blaney's guilt, becomes doubtful and begins to investigate Rusk's role. Blaney, who has vowed to kill Rusk in revenge, escapes from prison and goes to Rusk's flat, where he hits with a tire jack the face of a sleeping figure whom he thinks is Rusk, but who is actually Rusk's latest victim. At this moment the Inspector enters, followed by Rusk himself, with a trunk for the dead body. At the Inspector's words, "Why, Mr. Rusk, you're not wearing your tie," Rusk lets the trunk fall and the film ends.

28. Rusk's fantasy itself is gruesomely antiromantic: woman as fruit.

29. This is not to deny the dimension of *Frenzy* that Modleski focuses on in her excellent discussion (with reference to Kristeva's notion of abjection), the frightening aspect of the corporeality that the killer produces (101-14): the anthropological significance of woman as sheer body is the threat which Rusk tries to master by reducing her to just such a body! His effort is futile: the willful Babs rebels against Rusk even after her death.

30. Modleski, 113. Significantly, as Modleski notes, the rape and murder of Brenda is thoroughly de-eroticized, in contrast to the shower scene in *Psycho*.

31. There is a humorous parallel here too, however: Blaney endangers himself by dry-cleaning the jacket and pants he wore in the Salvation Army shelter, Rusk by brushing off the potato dust from the truck where he struggled with Babs.

32. Blaney in this sequence buys a newspaper with a headline story about the most recent necktie murder—an interesting play on the portentous role that such headlines play in the careers of two other wrong men, Roger Thornhill in *North by Northwest* and Hannay in *The 39 Steps*. Blaney, of course, pays no attention to the newspaper: does this mean that the experienced Hitchcock viewer is to take him as the right man?

33. To this end, Rusk aligns himself with the law by setting the police on Blaney's trail. The remarkable shot in the fruit market of half of Rusk's face in profile and half of a policeman's facing the camera suggests, not a mirroring, but an attempted conflation with/appropriation of authority. The meticulous Rusk masquerades as legal correctness. (Interestingly, the shot also resembles the right half of the Renaissance allegory of prudence!) Another striking moment, in which Rusk in close-up appears, suddenly, behind a close-up of Babs, removing Babs from the picture, uses the quick substitution of faces to signify destruction rather than amalgamation: Rusk is about to kill Babs, to make her disappear. In both cases, the mirroring effect is refused.

34. Such detachment can be a tempting reprieve from Blaney's frightening aggressiveness, analogous to Scotty's fury, which is implicated in Judy's death at the end of *Vertigo* via the symbiosis of impotence, determination, and rage so masterfully incarnated by Stewart. At the end of *Frenzy*, Blaney inadvertently "commits murder" on a corpse that he thinks is Rusk but is actually Rusk's most recent victim. The death of Judy at the end of *Vertigo* is a parallel episode—Scotty inadvertently reenacts Elster's crime. The *Frenzy* scene substitutes Rusk's victim for Rusk in the same moment that it substitutes Blaney for Rusk as killer. The notion of "killing" a corpse (actually, I believe, a plastic model of a woman's body), Blaney's final act in the movie, reflects on the illness of Rusk's sexuality: he seems fulfilled not by the act of raping and killing but by the consequent fact that his victim is dead.

35. Here Hitchcock is surely commemorating the unseen death of the girl Elsie Beckmann at the beginning of Fritz Lang's *M*.

36. An odd and interesting parodic comment on Hitchcock's identification with both killer and victim appears in his own trailer for *Frenzy*. As the trailer opens, Hitchcock appears floating in the Thames like the dead body at the beginning of *Frenzy*, the first of Rusk's victims that we see. The waterlogged director calmly announces, "I'm investigating a horrible murder," but as the trailer goes on we see him exchanging the roles of victim and detective for that of the necktie murderer Rusk. Spotting the dead body of Babs with Rusk's tie still attached, Hitchcock says, "That looks like my tie!"—and then nonchalantly puts it on.

THOMAS LUX

Kleptoparasite

THIS CREATURE, LIKE ALL CREATURES, holds a certain niche
(for which a metaphor exists) in nature: to pick
the predator's pocket: the predator kills
something—stalks, chases, snaps its neck, punctures
its jugular—and this thing steals it.
Nice work if you can get it—it's a life,

a living, though not without its risks: the predator
(for whom a metaphor exists) would prefer
to keep and eat his prey
himself, becomes annoyed,
does not want
to give over even part

of what it worked so hard
and killed for: food.
And don't confuse
the kleptoparasite with a scavenger, or bone-picker,
or an ingratiating, patient crumb-eater: it wants
it all, the whole carcass

(for whom a metaphor exists), fresh, warm,
all, or most of, the best parts intact.
The kleptoparasite
needs to eat,
knows no other way—adapted, evolved down
from a predator or up

from a scavenger,
the scientists can't tell which,
since the problem with the empirical, the literal,
is that it is
empirical,
literal.

What It Is I'm Up To Here

INTERPRETERS CONGREGATE BENEATH THE SCAFFOLD all day trying to explain what it is I'm up to here, maybe what they say is right on, maybe it misses the mark by a monkey's mile, what do they know about this glass scaffold and what I do?

Listen, I was asked to do this job, I didn't search it out, I was searched out, got a phone call one morning, about four in the morning, can't say now what exactly the voice said, but it was pretty, the voice, and I imagined behind it the pretty face of a female, I think her name was Lea, wondered if she wanted me to buy something, I would've, too, I think, would've bought carpet samples from that voice, but instead she asked me if I would work on this scaffold above the city, and I said (maybe I wasn't thinking too clearly, it was awful early, and her voice, you know), said, as I was saying, Scaffold, sure, you bet, or some such, I was out of work anyway, had nothing else to do, so why not, I thought, and said, Sure, scaffold, sure, when do I start?

Right now, she said, and I asked, Right now? and she said, Yes, we want you here now, so I said, Well, then I said, O.k., before I even asked her what the pay was, a bad move on my part, don't be too eager the job counselor said, wait them out my dead father told me the last time his ghost appeared at the foot of my bed, but, no, I didn't think of any of that then, and in the end would it have made any difference?

The pay is fine, by the way, I don't want you to think otherwise, I want you to listen to what it is we do up here, did I say we?

Well, there are other scaffolds after all, I know it, all you have to do is look up and there one is, and on that scaffold is a scaffold worker just like me, or more or less like me, might be a female, might be a midget, neither of which I am, but more or less like me, a scaffold worker doing what it is we do on the scaffold, though I can't claim to've met any of my fellow laborers, I figure they must be up there, otherwise how could the sky be what it is today, the sky you're all so grateful for? Or the teeth, like I put up on the scaffold yesterday, all day I worked on teeth, big beautiful teeth, the kind that makes you say, when you look up at them, Look at those pearlies, ain't they something, well, they ain't nothing, would you look at that, my, my, you say admiringly. Teeth, and the day before that a bucket, which is where the teeth came from, the bucket, right out of the bucket I put up the day before, and the day before the day before that it was a factory, not a big factory belching green pollution into the water supply, the one you and I have to drink from, but a nice little factory that functioned efficiently, had won

several safety awards, hummed along even on Sundays, though at reduced capacity. I was proud of that factory, and thought maybe they'd give me a bonus for it, but bonuses don't come with the job, at least not yet, maybe later, who knows?

THIS IS EVENING the interpreters' placard says, LOCKED AND BRILLIANT CHAINS OF AIR AND MISERY, missing the point entirely, I figure, though I can't say exactly what the point is, I know it ain't that. HELD BOX BEFORE THE MIRROR OF GLAZING, which maybe is a typo, I don't know, you expect me to interpret the interpreters? I've not the time, in any case; my job demands I be on task at every moment.

What next? Another sky, this one with clouds, and from the clouds descend exploratory planes to see what it is I am doing and send their reports into the earphones of the interpreters. But can they see what I did yesterday or what I'm going to do tomorrow?

The house fires were not my best work, I left the children's beds intact, I shouldn't have done that, and the supervisor called me up that night, at least she said she was the supervisor, I can't be sure, she sounded like Lea, so I asked, Are you Lea, but she said, I am the supervisor, and if you're going to do something, then we want you to go all the way with it, don't hold back, do the whole hog, and I promised then and there, to that voice whose lilt I couldn't get out of my head, to do the whole hog, and the next day you can bet I spent doing just that.

I erected, on my glass scaffold, night, time, laundry, nebulae, a book of legends, scholars around a table, a comb, a shovel, ministries, illusions, a river, cakes, a zoo like the one in Zurich, a mouth, a postage stamp, old door stops, a gorge, a cone, stables, silver spoons, golden bowls, a castle, a city, a criminal courts building, a school for butlers, a beheading, a fossil upon which I lavished all my learned and unlearned skills, various food stuffs like artichokes, mussels, minestrone, and I did a towel, thicker and bluer than any towel done before, and a coot, a zebra, a statue in the shape of a huge stapler, and a hand that came down on this stapler and stapled all this together which I distributed to the passersby as a record of what I did that day, hoping that this would get back to my supervisor, that she would call me, drop by in the early morning, but that night I slept soundly, though I was troubled by a dream wherein a Mack truck driven by my dead grandmother creamed a busload of children. The next day I tried to do those children and every attempt came out a mess.

THIS IS A REAPPROPRIATION OF MEANING BY OTHER MEANS, the placards read. EUPHORIC UTOPIANISM OF INCOMPATIBLE DETAILS. And they say stuff about cruelty and eroticism, and the *translatability of inkage*, or was it linkage, I don't know, within a *determined field*, where the work is led astray by *strategies of opposition and insistence* and *self-interiority* and *otherwise* and *effect*, about all this as *fringe* and *nomination* and *frequency of lacking* and whatnot, I don't understand any of it, I'm up here just doing what was asked of me, doing whatever looks like it needs to be done. What is it you want me to do, I asked Lea that first night, and she said, Look around you, see what's missing, then fill it in. O.k., I said, but I wasn't sure what she meant. What was missing? Well, everything, I mean at any given moment, in any given period, anything can come up missing, can't it?

I think they think, the interpreters, you know, that what I'm doing is sort of like an allegory, but I know what allegory is and this ain't it. Sure, I can do

commas and semicolons and suchlike, can erect air, nomenclatures, traces; sure, I can do that, but that's not what I was put up here to do. One night, in the early morning, she called me and asked me to do something, so I climbed up here, and when my day is done, I go home like most folks, have a meal, a little smoke, flip through the paper and try not to get newsprint on my fingers, then go to bed, sleep, or some likeness of the same. And then start all over again.

The sky is a blank slate begging us to begin, and whispers, those too, the ones I can't quite make out, and the fingers go to work, the eyes, tongue, making this and that, as I say all this, for which, who knows, maybe, someday, I'll have a right to be proud.

JUDITA VAIČIŪNAITĖ

Town Hall Square

1 *A Pound of Salt*

TOWARD MORNING, I WAS DREAMING, about the old town market—
asked for a pound of salt, weighed it out,
the tiny, dark, narrow shop
right there by the town hall's wall.
Through the salt sacks, the barrels of herring,
the very scales, I saw—his gaze faltering,
a look from afar fastening on my face,
that of the young bear-keeper—
his bear dancing,
his clothes all worn from the road,
in the square three acrobats keep
climbing up to the circle of the sun.

Toward morning, I had a dream, musicians were playing
in the gallery, protected from sun by a copper roof—
there were no fires yet,
my dark eyebrows quivered
like the wings of gliding swallows,
and it seemed I could rise
over the cackling, sparkling square,
over the vendors' tables,
lumped with wax, iron and thick wool cloth,
and where in the center of the circle
comedians roused the crowd of the curious.

2 *J. Haydn's "The World's Creation"—1809*

The wind can't get at the flame, there's still glass in the lantern.
But the fire shoots up, starts to blind, even through the smoky glass.
Along the square, carriage horses seem startled: unexpected storm,
windows come open, and whoever is alive starts staring at the night.

A star's shining in the cloudy darkness—it's Kristina's soprano,

and, answering her, suddenly gusting, the whirlwind of centuries.
The world's just been created, of radiant hoarfrost, and the prophet
announces we shall yet be born, to the peals of townhall bells.

A century—like an oratorio—our voices merging, merged,
church voices, orthodox choirs, companies of soldiers, singing,
snowdrifts melt in the square, hemp oil blazes in
the town lanterns, and, as each and every poplar along poplar line

burns golden—the fountain ices over—Kristina's voice burbles.
Soon, the French will push their cannon across the square's bloody snow.
Soon. But the world's been created, of radiant hoarfrost, the city wall
will whiten, and so will Dr. Franz Joseph, over there, by that column.

3 *Oval Miniature*

Look, from the distance,
the past's bottomless sky—
something one can no longer discern in the landscape,
something that's only remained painted
on ivory,
and be surprised, as if seeing for the first time
from the very beginning of the nineteenth century
that simple miniature, naïve,
clear as summer,
Lithuania's nameless painter at work:
"Young girl with lamb, under trees."

Whose soul, whose spirit
lives in the sun's trees,
where through the water mill
only the lonely shepherd girl will take to wandering—
you've found the lamb's footprint,
but your sister beseeches,
don't drink,
for there by the square, at the wooden block,
the town executioner's lifting his heavy axe,
come, sadness is upon me now,
the nameless painter of Lithuania, at work:
"Young girl with lamb, under trees."

*Translated by Viktorija Skrupskelis
and Stuart Frieberg*

JUDITA VAIČIŪNAITĖ

Beer Garden

THE OLD WOMEN of Dresden order beer.
Their strange hats swim in the smoke.
In the rooms, polished by hoarfrost,
a gray pigeon from the ruins beats about.

Its path cuts through the space of demolished
wharves (the Elbe's waters icy, receding).
They're serious, these old women of Dresden,
praying with their trembling lips

(the whole afternoon shining like a window)
and they stare through a cloud of thick snow
where the angel from the cracked cupola,
light and greenish, rises to the heavens.

*Translated by Viktoria Skrupskelis
and Stuart Friebert*



Enrique Arciniega Campos, *The Bitch Goddess Success*

LYDIA DAVIS

Fear

NEARLY EVERY MORNING, A CERTAIN WOMAN in our community comes running out of her house with her face white and her overcoat flapping wildly. She cries, "Emergency, emergency," and one of us runs to her and holds her until her fears are calmed. We know she is making it up; nothing has really happened. But we understand, because there is hardly one of us who has not been moved to do just what she has done, and every time, it has taken all our strength, and sometimes the strength of our families too, to stop us.

A Theory

OFF THE SHORES OF OUR LAND ARE GREAT CLOUDS OF EARTH like stepping stones in great numbers. From each clod rises a thin metal pole. Between the poles stretch loosely-hung wires connecting each pole to more than one other, so that there is a great web of silver wires in the air about fifteen feet above the water. We are not sure what purpose the structure served in earlier times. It might have been a way of generating electricity. Perhaps a bolt of lightning struck one pole, at random, then traveled through the wires, which are haphazardly interconnected. In its search for an outlet, it increased in velocity so much that when an outlet was finally provided, the electricity was powerful enough to light several houses. This is my theory—though I have never actually seen the outlet. Then again, there are rarely any thunderstorms here, when I come to think of it, perhaps seven or eight every August and one in July.

The Senses

MANY PEOPLE TREAT THEIR FIVE SENSES with a certain respect and consideration. They take their eyes to a museum, their noses to a flower show, their hands to a fabric store for the velvet and silk; they surprise their ears with a concert, and excite their mouths with a restaurant meal.

But most people make their senses work hard for them day after day: Read me this newspaper! Keep a lookout, nose, in case the food is burning! Ears! Get together now and listen for a knock at the door!

Their senses have jobs to do and they do them, mostly—though the ears of the deaf won't, and the eyes of the blind refuse.

The senses get tired. Sometimes, long before the end, they say, I'm quitting—I'm getting out of this *now*.

And then the person, their boss, is less prepared to meet the world and so stays at home more, without some of what he needs, if he is to go on.

If it all quits on him, he is really alone: in the dark, in silence, numb hands, nothing in his mouth, nothing in his nostrils, he asks himself, Did I treat them wrong? Didn't I show them a good time?



Trina McIsaac, *Cloudbreaker*



Trina McIsaac, *Double Helix*



Trina McIsaac, *The Premonition*



Trina McIsaac, *Initiation*

KELLY CRAIG

Still Years Away

WE WAKE HANEY UP BEFORE NOON, rouse him from a narcotic-induced sleep of a Sunday. He is now painfully aware of his promise to take us—Pat, his soon-to-be-brother-in-law, then ex-brother-in-law, and me, Pat's body-opposite best friend—to buy our first lid. He grumbles, glares through his shades at the bright sun, oblivious to what we are feeling: excitement and anticipation don't scratch the surface, it is as if we had landed on another continent and been proclaimed Kings.

Haney stops at a diner on Warren at Miller, across from the Camelot Theatre where I am an usher. I am amazed at how tame, how unglamorous it looks from across the street through the blinds, somewhat amazed, too, that Haney can afford to buy us all an eggs-over-easy breakfast. He talks with his mouth full about his work last night delivering pizza, the cat house off West Chicago that he screwed in 'til dawn. Patrick and I watch him intently, as he relates this, adore him.

We push his car out of the lot—the push-button trans of his AMC piece of junk missing—and speed out Wyoming to the South End, to the shadow and rotten-egg stink of the Rouge Plant. Pat and I are in the front seat with Haney, laughing at our knees after he's flown the wrong way down a one way, Lebanese women in serious, dark clothing on the front porch hollering, "One way, one way!" and Haney, malicious in his fun, taking the time to slow, so that they can hear him shout "I'm only going one way!"

He parks at a ball-bearing company, we give him five bucks apiece, and he leaves us in the car listening to the radio, a song of missions that we have come to love, singing along with the lines about young dudes carrying the news. Before the tune ends Haney jumps back in the car and throws Pat a sandwich bag so full of brown flower-tops it bulges and can barely be closed. "Jamaican," he tells us, and this claim adds a sticky resonance to the day, an intensity to the entire summer.

We stop for papers, smoking as we drive to Mustapha's, closer to our side of town, next to Truck City, a restraint whose parking lot is large enough to accommodate semi's, that advertises biscuits and gravy, grits. Haney pulls abruptly into Mustapha's drive and leaps from the car.

"What it be like?" he asks. "What it ain't?" returns Mustapha, the two of them grinning like criminals or movie-stars, talking softly into one another's faces, deciding to go get a beer, shoot pool.

The afternoon seems now to be thick with meaning, as charged with import as a play within a play, as if Pat and I were the stars of our own movie, as if the day were suspended, halted in its feeble attempt to go forward to some goal, to night. Pat and I get out of the car and say we'll hoof it, we'll take it from here, imagining our night will be glowing, but not as rowdy, as fleshed out as Haney's and Mustapha's. We pretend that some total deviancy yet awaits us, is still years away.



Lin Swanner, *Untitled*

PATRICIA GOEDICKE

The Egg Contracted to a Pinpoint

LONG BEFORE the tired woman
 scowled at her newspaper, drank her first cup
 of black coffee, invisible
 life swirled in the egg
 and spoke to itself in code, twisting
 and squirming to get out,
and keeps struggling today:
 as television twines around the globe,
 as the kids smear jam on their toast,
 as each butterfly's least wingbeat
 sweeps across the world,
shreds of red mucus braid themselves
 from the moon's veiled placenta,
 its tides rising and falling,
 heaping themselves against houses, cliffs, beaches
 in fair weather as in storms,
as each swelling amoeba, each buttery
 breakfast mouthful spreads
 seeds everywhere,
 the sneeze soars from the kitchen
 to the living room to the Antarctic,
but whatever goes out the front door
 comes in the back,
 in the odor of burned Wonderbread suffocating,
though the tired woman's kids
 have less and less oxygen to breathe,
 we think we know it but do we,
 shriveling before the one
 bright light in the sky
 that will soon sear us to a crisp,
even as the heavens shrink,
 choking themselves on the charred husk
of our only incubator, the unpredictable finger
 of the future moves like a ghost in its cradle,
 as the blood whirlpool spins,
the egg contracted to a pinpoint

expands also, loops itself into an immense
 endlessly unravelling birth table
of tiny valences, all
 earth's unstoppable fluids heaving
 back and forth in their chambers
in chain after chain nested,
 each cloudy embryo bleeds
 restless as a feather, forever
and forever into the next.

JANET RUFFIN

Rehabilitative Arts Project

Outreach Program for the Art League of Houston for Harris County Juvenile Probation

THE REHABILITATIVE ARTS PROJECT began in 1988 with one artist in the Juvenile Detention Center. We now have ten artists offering art classes once a week to students in maximum security facilities, half-way houses, probation offices, and public schools.

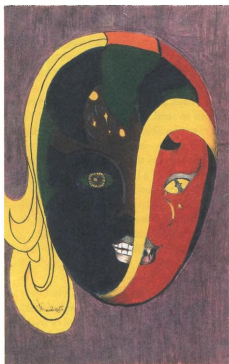
We work with as many different materials as possible, depending on the security requirements of each facility. Our most difficult task is to create a space that allows spontaneity and vision in a coercive environment.

We have all noticed that due to the emotional and cultural impoverishment of our students their capacity to imagine anything other than their own direct experience is very limited. So we try to expose our students to many different experiences and lifestyles in order to help them discover new choices for themselves.

One of the most heartbreaking observations I have made regarding the kids we work with is their lack of connection to themselves and others. In order to create art one must connect with oneself. Our hope is that this connection, through the making of art, will help our students establish a bond with others, and allow them to feel that they participate in life rather than oppose it.



JDC



JDC

ERIC PANKEY

Adriatica

WHAT IS IT HE SPARED HIMSELF staying quiet all those years,
Allowing wind, unseen swarms, what others saw as danger,
To speak through him and for him? What was instinct? What regret?

He lived the gear work of days, and saw each was as ordered
As the fine scalloped motif in sand where water shallows.
Days were the knots in the rope. They were the form effort takes.

And once what he meant to say, the thing he had tried so hard
To give shape, that idea for lack of a better word,
God said miraculously. There was no taking it back.

Still, it was someone else's voice, a lucky utterance.
Each word was a memory, the blunt edge of an oar blade,
His life and two thousand more, a ballast of possession.

A wide archipelago separated him from home.
At each island he forgot the last, until finally
It seemed enough to move on, to leave behind what he could.

JOEL HUERTA

Vacation Bible School

THOSE MISSIONARIES (high schoolers from Dallas), God bless them, came to our barrio with a U-Haul to save us, and that was okay—there was not much to do which involved the soul.

Since that one snowcone had all the available flavors mixed together, the chubby missionary called them “Suicides.” And each flavor had a color, and all of the colors together were black, of course, like our hearts—that was the moral.

If one of our mothers was dying, we would ask El Gordito to speak to her, to witness, to play for her on cassette, the testimony of the grandma who rose from the wheelchair and walked to her mailbox. Raised the outgoing mail flag all by herself.

Our sick mother may have listened to him in the white oxford and tie. She may have asked him to listen to her. He may have fallen in love with her, brought her a cut camellia in a Coke bottle.

One of our mothers had been an oyster shucker, another the florist’s aid, who shaved thorns off roses. Another preferred her snowcone in a parfait glass with a spoon. That was her particular favor, and we all knew it.



JDC

GRADY HILLMAN

Peru Journal

Grady Hillman lived in Peru from June 15, 1989 until July 15, 1990 on a Fulbright research grant. The following excerpts are taken from his journal entries during the first month of that residency.

6/17/89

LIMA FEELS A BIT LIKE BERLIN BEFORE THE RISE OF NAZISM. On the streets are 25,000 *camistas*, mostly young and male, with calculators in hand ready to buy or sell your dollars for *intis*. They make a living off the rapid fluctuation in the exchange rate. Connected by cordless phone to the junior Wall Street on Ocona, they stay one jump ahead of the pedestrian. A woman passes through the dining room/living room of the pension on her way to the kitchen to heat up a bottle for the baby she is adopting. Her name is Cheryl and she is from Connecticut. She tells me that Peruvian babies are the easiest to get these days. She shows me a wound on her wrist where her watch was snatched. "I tried to unbuckle it for him, but he just kept on pulling until he got it over the hand."

Olga Samáñez, the owner of the pension, told me today how a gang of youths attacked her car when it stopped for traffic. They smashed the windshield to take her purse. This happened this morning. At the car repair shop a dozen more windshields were getting replaced. I am used to my money belt. I'm cautious in crowds. The sky is grey, never lifts; the air is humid and chilly but not what I would call cold, though we're approaching the winter solstice. One hears the sound of mourning doves along with car horns from the neighboring streets, and I see lots of finches in the trees and rooftops.

Miraflores is a combination of concrete highrises and old adobe—some squeezed red tile-roofed houses with gardens, wrought iron grills, red brick and wood. Like the neighborhoods off St. Charles in New Orleans but without the lushness.

6/18/89

I went down to the ocean and watched breakers from atop a 200 foot cliff. Bought a couple of postcards and a *Comerico* and broke down and ate at a Kentucky Fried Chicken. There was quite a bit of information on Vargas Llosa. Looks like ex-President Belaunde Terry has thrown in with Vargas Llosa's center-

right party, *Fredemo*. Vargas Llosa's acting very statesmanlike by visiting Uruguay. He says Peru and South America are at the heights—democracy breaking out everywhere—and in the pits—the worst economic times in modern history. In a different article, the GNP of Peru has dropped to the level of 1964, and everyone seems to agree that the foreign debt is the cause.

I visited at length with Cheryl about adopting babies in Peru. Apparently, there are many want-to-be parents here from all over the world. A lot of money passing hands, but it appears to be in the best interest of the children. Usually, they are abandoned to hospitals and police stations. Cheryl's is a Quechua baby from Ayacucho, a major source of refugees driven into the city by the war with *Sendero Luminoso*.

6/19/89

The briefing at the Embassy occurred in the company of some 20 Southern professors organized by Wesleyan University for a six week tour. Embassy staff was knowledgeable but nobody's allowed to work here for more than three years. The Political Officer suggested that Vargas Llosa's political career began with the initiation of *Fredemo*, but when I asked her about his having headed up a commission to investigate the massacre of eight journalists in the sierra, she blanked. That commission exonerated the military and was called a whitewash in many quarters, but it went a long way in healing any bad blood that might have existed in the military after the publication of Vargas Llosa's *City of the Dogs*.

When I returned to the pension, Cheryl was depressed. She was having problems with the adoption. They give you the baby early in the process, then threaten along the way to take him/her back, often exacting bribes.

6/21/89

On the National Front, Belaunde Terry holds out, taking a "*cura de silencio*," so Vargas Llosa's path through the municipal elections and later, to the presidency, is not unimpeded. The *Senderistas* are getting wild in the countryside. 84 engineers have been killed in the last few months along with a lot of mayors. Everyone seems to expect more activity as the elections approach. None of the power blackouts I was warned about have materialized yet, but hunger is a big problem.

One ambition of the insurrection is to cut off the food supply from the *campesinos*, either by shutting down the transportation system or driving the farmers off the land into the city where they can no longer feed but must be fed. The blueprint is Mao's campaign on Beijing. It appears to be working as the general population estimate for Lima now is 8 million, a huge leap over the figure cited of 3 1/2 million just a few years back in my '79 S.A. Handbook.

I think the strongest impression I have of Lima is the specter of thousands on the streets selling chocolate, changing money, shining shoes, begging, selling contraband of all sorts from tennis shoes to clothes hangers, selling magazines, food, leather goods. On Avenida Larco every block of sidewalk holds at least 100 hustlers, about the same number of pedestrians, 4-8 National Guardsmen and probably a dozen private security personnel to guard store entrances. But the

shops are empty, as are most of the restaurants and clubs. Thousands selling, but no one to buy.

6/22/89

Vargas Llosa renounced his presidential campaign. He didn't like the way partisan politics came to the fore between his two coalition partners, Belaunde and Reyes. They were divvying up the municipal elections' candidacies between their political partisans. Could be a ploy by Vargas Llosa. He is the leader in the polls for the presidency by a large margin. Vargas Llosa may be trying to turn the constituencies of his rivals/partners against them, trying to create a united front behind him—no more coalition building.

6/24/89

I watched a black llama sacrificed during *Inti Raymi* today (on TV), its heart removed from the body and paraded around the ceremonial dais at Sacsayhuaman in Cuzco. Up until that point, it had looked like a rehearsed bowl game special with microphones on the "Inca" and high priest, both reciting their lines before the four large dance groups representing the four *Suyos* or Corners of the Inca Empire. Then eight guys came out carrying this live, very large llama, upside down and struggling, onto the podium. The "Inca" walks around the dais chanting a hymn in Quechua before he brings a two-headed axe down hard, twice to the sternum. Then he opens the chest cavity and removes the heart which he parades before eventually depositing it in a fire pit. The tourists will have something to write home about tonight, and maybe Inti will bring blessings to Tahuantinsuyo when he returns tomorrow.

6/25/89

Cheryl returned to the pension with her adopted son, her visiting sister and nephew in tow—the weary pilgrims from Cuzco. I had supper with them at *La Tranquera*, an expensive steakhouse as Peruvian steakhouses go, and had my first *anticuchos*, beef—not heart. Excellent, loaded with garlic. Walking back through the Parque, we saw groups of children performing acrobatics and artists trying to make their final sales of the week.

Unfortunately, as we approached the pension we were ganged up on by eight begging children who held onto the arms of the women, stroking them, moaning "*te amo*" and asking for bread. They hung on us for a block to the pension where I graced them 50,000 *soles*, but even then I was afraid they'd follow us in.

6/26/89

Cheryl made it back from Immigration. She told me that a group of locals spent the night sleeping in front of the building and were there when she arrived at 6 a.m. offering to sell their spots. She haggled the second in line down to 5,000 *intis*.

6/27/89

Cheryl handed over her adopted son to the interpreter for the purpose of getting a passport. I wasn't sure she'd get him back, but she did, with passport, and she's off to the American Consulate for his visa. It appears she's done and will be heading off to Connecticut tonight with her son in hand—her four months abroad at least approximating the discomfort of pregnancy.

7/6/89

Just came in from a farewell supper for the Johnsons. We were joined by T. and R. from the USIS office of the Embassy. T. said the 4th of July party at the Ambassador's residence was full of Peruvian military there to commemorate increased funding via Bennett's new drug war policies. T. felt it would be disastrous, remarking sarcastically, "The last time we just gave the military money like that they went into the Huallaga Valley and shot all the people. Some of them were even involved in the drug trade." It does seem an insane move to throw U.S. support behind the military when the prospect of a coup is very real, especially when we can't balance it with economic aid due to the IMF ban for Peru's tardiness in paying off its international debt. And as T. said, "Right now the police are holding their own; the military, on the other hand, is easily corrupted."

7/12/89

A violent strike with one worker killed by the police. A tourist bus full of Russian fishermen bombed. More fighting in the mountains. Prices are rising. Menem (a Formula race car driver) is installed as President of Argentina. And up in the sierra, four Peruvian provinces are cut off from the rest of the country because a fault line has shifted and made the highway impassable.

7/20/89

Claudette just dropped by with a message from Olga to stay close today. There was gunfire in the neighborhood last night. Yesterday, seven buses were firebombed in the city by *Sendero*. A police station was attacked. Areas on the northern and southern ends of the city are considered dangerous right now. It appears that an armed initiative has been designed to coincide with the *Fiestas Patrias*—two weeks of holiday surrounding July 28, Independence Day.

LAURIE MACDIARMID

Donkey

1. FIRST

When she married the man his body was not
saturated with gin, not yet combustible,
but hers even then had begun to change—

the thick skin slipping around what could have been
a smooth metal ball, a mechanical earth,
if it had not convinced her with its kicking.

And seven months later she delivered a daughter
to the knife, side hanging open shamelessly,
the wound a second mouth

which at once the doctors rushed to bind off—
X, X, X—

but for all the discovery she had not been awake,
not even as they bent over the blue child, rubbing,
ramming rubber bags full of air into the shriveled lungs,

good only for breathing water.
Did not stir
as the furious girl awoke the sterile room.

2. SECOND

For months the girl cried from her railed crib,
beat against the mattress,
bleached gums bursting her sore lips.

She attempted sleep on her undamaged side,
pushed away his hands, the ceaseless jokes—

(she had two holes now and all he wanted
was to fool with the old one)—

held her breath against his breath,

the biting odor of cedar.
Endured his sandpaper on her neck.

3. LAST

The afternoons warmed and
she'd find them by the French doors,
haloed in the curtained light,

the girl dangling overhead between his
gnarled carpenter hands, bobbing up
and down as if caught by an ocean,

kicking and squealing like an donkey,
his cheeks beat red and stretched, grinning,
the way he might leer down on her

in the middle of his sweaty love.
And this pleasure rose in a fine,
diamond-like powder

to confuse the room,
to erase her from it.

LAURIE MACDIARMID

Fish

THIS IS MY WIFE, he'd say, swinging her ashes by their handle.
And truly the vase had taken her shape—reminding him
of the way she'd offer up her breasts, the flesh humid yet chill,
blind as two huge fish blundering toward the fisherman's light.
In those first days he'd touch the vase, bring it to his ear
to hear the ocean's roaring—

but then her sound overwhelmed him,
indistinguishable from the autumnal sky,
and it seemed—whenever he looked—that her blank expression,
just a head's shapeliness sliding out into neck,
and the dust crowding her room,
all spelled reproach

for his departures,
for girls like mother-of-pearl, for
the awful giggling and tickling on the stairs.

He'd never been able to stand her silence—
how she'd pace their room, muttering, wringing her nightgown,
rubbing her face against the windowpanes.
It was his habit to sleep through it like a dead man.

Now even he barely recalls that desperate night
she offered her breasts in full surrender.
Or how he grappled, half-sleeping, with her fever,
as a sparrow, startling, close, shrilled out:
shattered the windows with fire.

LAURIE MACDIARMID

Pale Egg

SLEEP, A BIG HAND takes the man
and flings him back,
away from the words blurring the newspaper.

Birds trickle out from their windy bushes.
In some queer fashion they've managed
to put on his mother's squinting eyes.

They discuss his unfortunate deaths—
poor fellow, he's made it such a habit.
Their voices, harsh, rub and buckle
like stubbing cigars.

The first time he died was the night
he caught himself in his wife,
so for months that invisible piece of him
rooted in her belly,
spun into a huge drum,
which at night rocked him out of their bed,
and built itself deeper into the woman.
Until it didn't look anything like anything
that had once been part of him,
and only like his wife—the pale egg of her face.

And the second time he died was when
the tiny girl arrived, almost
refused by air,
a rankness clinging to her eyes,
to her buttoned fists, to her tufted raven hair.
Secret, female blood.
What his mother and wife had each month hidden from him
in medicinal boxes behind the linen.

And he died as the infant girl lay, reeking of mown grass,
on the spattered sheets—

a flap of messy skin folded in.
His wife roused herself from a dream.
Licked her cracking lips.

Died when he reached out to touch it, the perfection
of fingers and limbs. Died
when the mouth, fearful bud, suddenly sprung

and his wife, squeezing her swollen breasts,
leaned past the odor of pure garlic.

The baby whispered into his skin—
love me, fill me

And dying, he promised.
But with what, he asked then, could he—?
Already, she and the woman
had taken everything.

JULIE MOULDS

When Bad Angels Love Women

WHEN THE BAD ANGEL LOVES the woman next door,
the motion wakes me. The tip of one of his purple
veined wings moves right through the walls.
It lifts and falls, as the two of them, a wind
like blue leather pulsing through this house.
She packs cartons of eggs like I do, during days, with other
women and boys on a line. But home, there is this angel.
His kiss, like a scorpion's, marks her now, and suddenly
I have seen her tilting out of time. When her night voice winds
like a blue leather wind, I know he is there.
She goes to him now, and he eats her
like a young apple. The way men eat a woman
in a dark alley, until she is gone. One day,
he is with her always, his windy presence rolling
the eggs from our cartons. The ladies
and I are tired of all this breaking; tired
of seeing dollar-sized bites disappear from her neck.
She is the color of blueberries
on cheesecloth. Antlers or the bones of wings
break through her back. Luminescent, like blue neon,
she tries to fill her cartons, but the eggs
slip through her hands. I could hear him each night
eat her soul, I say, to the ladies on the line
the day she disappears. The whole house could hear
while we stacked our wet plates, his giant wings
spreading like a fan.

JULIE MOULDS

There Was A Soldier, Not A Sparrow, Inside The Golden Cage

(after a Russian tale)

DISGUISED AS A SPARROW, he watched
Princess Emma unbraid yellow hair,
saw petticoats falling, corsets unlacing,
as he sang her ditties he'd heard in the fields.

She thought the brown bird had come from some suitor,
The old woman said so—the girl took her word.
Four servants were needed to bring in his birdhouse.
(The hag, on her horse cart, left town.)

"My little brown songster, my sweet
feathered warbler, who sent you to sing?"
crooned Emma, who circled his cage in her bloomers,
till the dressmaker laced her all in.

To see Emma close, he had wandered the forest,
cornered a hag to conjure a cage.
The hag, who was partial to those with brass buttons,
pulled him up close; then feathered him, small;

said he could unlatch his cage during slumbers
of golden-haired girls between brocade drapes.
Could switch, with a wish, his feathers for skin.
(Now back to the princess.) The girl took him in.

Imagine the girl's rage, to wake, he above her.
She raised up her mirror, cracked open his crown;
yelled for her lady, then saw, in his falling,
not a man, but a bird, come down.

The cage door ajar, the girl understood

that soldier and sparrow were always the same.
The nurse swept the mirror, the girl wrapped the sparrow
up tight in her stocking. His lungs folded in.
His little head glistened. The girl never listened
again to old women, gold parcels in hand.

Mount Scopus

WHEN HE LEARNED HE'D LOST HIS LEGS, he cursed and howled. Then he forgot. He was full of morphine, and his blood was rallying to his stumps, so his mind drew a blank. Wanted to know what the hell was he doing here, tried to swing out of bed, and smacked into the rails. That got him started again, yelling, crying—remembering. They'd strapped his arms down after the first fit, and he felt like he was strangling. The nurse came over to settle him with a fresh needle, a half dose, just to take the edge off. It took the edge, but replaced it with another. His threshold for narcotics was pretty high. Been around them a fair amount the past few months in Lebanon. He didn't have a habit exactly, but this booster shot sent him into a very vivid realm of fear. A fit of paranoid abstraction, lots of tiny calculations. He decided that far worse than his loss was that he'd forgotten it. That was sloppy; he made a lousy cripple; he was totally unequipped.

He wondered why there was so damn little information being offered him, why they were acting so secretive and slugging him full of dope. Seemed if they cut off your legs, the least you could expect was some explanation. But he wasn't about to make a fuss. He sensed all was not right. Could be this was prison, not a hospital, torture, not a cure. He thought: I always knew something like this would come down on me, tied up, chopped up, drugged up, and a bunch of foreigners in uniform saying just keep calm.

He wasn't particularly impressed when the woman came around in a kind of military uniform and explained she was Aviva, his social therapist. She had looks—he had to give her that—long-limbed and lean, with black hair cropped short and spiked like his. Eyes dark and sparkling. She just made him think—Spunky! Made him want to grab her and run with her, made him want to dance. Which reminded him—nope, I'm tied down, chopped down. He got offensive the minute he opened his mouth. Said the only therapy he needed was to borrow her legs. Share the wealth, he said. Said: Give me a ride. Didn't seem to faze her though. She laughed like he was fun. Said: Hooweee, and boy oh boy, in an accent he found definitely sexy.

He asked what the hell was this country? Why'd they have him roped down? What'd they want with him anyway?

Aviva untied him and explained. He'd been with the Marines, peace-keeping in Lebanon, and there'd been a bomb. So they'd flown him down here to Jerusalem, helicoptered right into the hospital on Mount Scopus. That was all she knew, and he didn't feel so paranoid anymore, just rotten and hopeless. Kept asking why they couldn't have left him to die with his legs on. Then he said:

Where are they anyway—my legs, my feet? He felt them still. They itched. They were cold.

They were gone, she said.

Then he wanted to know just how they'd been disposed of. He got very upset. Wanted to know: Were they burned, buried, sold for dog food, glue? He said: I want them treated like a whole man; I don't need no more ghosts in my life.

Aviva put a hand on his forehead. He didn't like being taken for an upset child. Wasn't about to accept there-there for an answer. But he loved her touch. He got an erection.

She said: Ghosts, Charlie. Ghosts is just imagination.

He said: That's why I'm so scared of them.

The nurse gave him another injection and he went under. Came back from it to the sight of a fellow on crutches learning how to get around the ward with a new prosthetic leg. He had a sense of *déjà vu*. Seemed he'd known the whole scene before—the warm light wadded in the white curtains, the angles of beds and walls, the man thumping awkwardly around. He called for Aviva. The man started and fell down. Hell of a commotion that caused. The guy was crying. A nurse ran up and drew the curtain around Charlie's bed fast.

By the time Aviva got to him he'd figured out where he'd seen this before. Right here in Jerusalem. He'd been down here with Yoram Kifouri, Israeli buddy he'd met in Lebanon—guy was a spy with the Marines but it was no real secret. Anyway, they'd come down here for an R&R one time, some Jewish holiday, Yoram's dad was a doctor. Charlie hadn't wanted to intrude so he'd put up in a youth hostel. Barely got checked in before all the cripples in town pulled up in the intersection out front and staged a demonstration. Man, they were organized, a union, couple hundred cripples, nearly all of them veterans. Held a sit-in, right in the middle of the intersection. Said they wouldn't budge until the government improved their care and benefits. Took off their prosthetics and threw them in a giant pile, looked like one of them souvenir postcards from Auschwitz. Little Pentecostal Texan Baptist he was sharing his bunk with, some millionaire's kid going around with Revelations as his Baedeker, looking to pinpoint the site of Armageddon and stage a fast there—this kid just broke down and wept. Quite the circus, that scene. Caused miles of traffic jams. One little guy was dancing on his crutches, flipped his stump legs up in the air, and did the hora on his forearms. Mostly all you could hear was the horns of blocked cars. One irate dude got off a bus and started a confrontation. Red-head, the guy was, young guy, yelling: You have no right. He pushed some cripple in the shoulder. They nearly killed him. Clubbed him with crutches, chased him, on one leg, with one arm, crutches flailing, they beat him out of sight. Charlie said: That little Texan god-squad faggot kept crying and saying, it's a sign, it's a sign. I should've listened. Look at me now.

Aviva said: We're very experienced with your situation in this country.

He said: Well, it's my first time.

She winked and said: I promise it'll be your last time, too.

That was humor. That was what her people called a real *mensch*. He got another erection, didn't wait for her hand on his forehead; he put his out through the bed bars and held inside her thigh. She didn't move into it or away. She said: Your friend Yoram, his father's your doctor. She'd made some inquiries, and she

told Charlie his story. He'd been hit by a car. Down in the peace-keeping zone by the Israeli border, he and Yoram had strolled off for a swim. Meanwhile some local Druze merchant learned his wife was unfaithful. A man of honor, he decided to kill her. A man of style, he chose kamikaze. Loaded his little Peugeot with straw, filled the gas, and drove off to car-bomb the wife and her lover mid-tryst. Only one hitch; he had a last cigarette. Ash lit the straw, lit the tank, and Blam! Just as he passed Yoram and Charlie, the car blew to bits, and the passenger door scythed Charlie down. Yoram radioed Israel med-evac. Gave special orders to fly the case straight to his Dad. And voila. Aviva unpeeled Charlie's hand and squeezed it.

Charlie said: What'd you tell me that for? What good's that supposed to do?

He said it was the stupidest story he'd ever heard. Said: Well, answer me goddamn it.

Aviva asked if he wanted anything at all from the world.

He said: A guitar.

After that they held their meetings outside. She'd load him into a wheelchair. He always made it difficult as he could so she'd have to hold him extra tight and grab him all over. He'd kiss her, nip her, squeeze any part of her that came near. He said every lewd, lusty, even lyrical thing that popped to mind. He had a constant erection, and refused to relieve it himself. Preferred to blame it on her, and tell her so. But she never encouraged nor reproached. Just laughed and talked of other things. She rolled him out to the terrace where they had a great view of the whole city, all the Bibled hills and valleys, mosques and minarets and church spires. The evening buzz of traffic snarling the narrow lanes, and cedars spearing the horizon.

He'd say: Sure is lovely. No wonder everybody's always hacking everybody in half for it.

He played rock and roll softly, bluesy, lurking. Plink plink, and then a whining sort of choo-choo whistle note. He wrote a song. Called it "Jihad Blues":

*Ain't got no leg to stand on
Ain't got no metaphor
I just am what I am
Just half a man,
Stumped, baby,
Two feet in the grave
Cause I was an innocent bystander
In a bo-holy war.*

He asked for mirror sunglasses and a new henna treatment for his hair, which he liked to keep pumpkin orange. He liked that no one could figure out why he did it. Liked coming on as an alien. Now he was a genuine freak, and he was getting canny to the repellent authority of his maimedness. It made him miserable. He had his shades, his hair style, his guitar. He was getting all the morphine he wanted. But he didn't see any future in it. Didn't want to be a pet, or a pest. Didn't want to depend. He'd heard the sermons, or their trickle-down, about blessed are the cripples, and the meek shall inherit. But he could not identify with amputation. He knew the people he'd get sent home to, the people

he came from. They were no power elite, but their basic attitude was—fuck the meek. They hadn't sent flowers, had they? They hadn't even sent word. He thought he had a pretty good take on his predicament, but one thing he couldn't figure out was this silence from home. No officials even, no nothing. He'd been inside institutional regimes long enough to know this kind of neglect was never benign. Five days strung out alone in Jerusalem just wasn't the kind of package the USMC doled out.

Then a man showed up with a crew cut and a clipboard and the first seersucker suit he'd seen this side of the globe. Charlie was out on the terrace with Aviva. She'd come on her day off, wearing civvies, and she was dancing while he banged his guitar when this man appeared. Explained he was the US cultural attaché and he had a communiqué.

Charlie said: What's he talking French for?

The man said: Charlie Sharp, is that you?

Charlie said: It's what's left. He struck a few poses to impress Aviva and depress the attaché. Stared out at space, strummed his guitar, muttered words. He said: Aviva, if you look at this dude you will see precisely from bald spot to patent leather what in our beautiful language we call a hard-on.

The man said: Private Sharp, I am not a military man, sir, but I would advise you to watch your step.

Wow, Charlie said. He forced a hoot of laughter and abandoned it abruptly. He said: Verbally, pal, you just really fucked up.

The attaché attempted to apologize. Said it was a figure of speech, and Jesus how could he.

Charlie said: Forget it. You're a flunky. I expect nothing from you.

Aviva looked out at the city. Charlie played his guitar. The attaché read the communiqué, and Charlie heard that due to irregularities, misapprehensions, and unfortunate error among lower echelon communications personnel in the crisis atmosphere surrounding his injury, forms were filled out to indicate that he had been killed in action, that his family had been consequently thus informed, that the error could not be officially corrected until his return to the United States, medical checks, document examination, etc.

Charlie said: What if I don't return?

The attaché advised him that he was a person of technically ambiguous circumstance, the accidental guest of a foreign power, officially more dead than alive, and that until the whole thing got straightened out, he was, for all the diplomats knew, just as likely to get charged with going AWOL as given a Purple Heart and honorary discharge.

Charlie told the attaché to get lost and leave him alone with his girl, because he was getting ready to fuck her.

Aviva said she was sorry, that he was reacting adversely to his medicine.

The attaché said he was sorry about that too, and he was willing to apologize on behalf of his country.

Charlie started rocking in his wheelchair, and Aviva had to hold the thing down with all her force to keep him from tipping it over.

Then Yoram appeared. Just like that, like he'd planned it with the attaché, one after the other to work Charlie over. The attaché bowed out, and Aviva said she'd go wash up and leave them alone. Yoram was all somber and awkward, and

Charlie appreciated the respect, until it wouldn't let up. Got sick of acting like they were both at some third person's funeral. Finally he said: How the hell'd you get off without even a scratch?

Yoram started trembling. Charlie was impressed; that wasn't his friend's style. He said: I guess you saved my life, huh?

Yoram said: Oh, well.

Charlie said: Shittiest thing you ever did.

Yoram said: Do you know the story?

Charlie said he heard the crap about the cuckold and the car bomb and the cigarette. But he didn't see what difference it made. He'd lost his legs. Who cared how?

Yoram said: You know, the terrorists responsible, two men and a woman, were executed in retaliation.

Charlie howled. Started shouting for help. Yelled for Aviva, yelled for drugs.

Yoram tried to calm him with talk. Didn't know what to do. He clamped a hand over Charlie's mouth. Charlie took a bite out of it. Yoram slapped his face. Left a blood smudge, and fled as Aviva came out with the nurse.

They gave Charlie a needle. That warmed him up a little. Made a soft rosy halo around Aviva. He strummed his guitar, and and began to sing:

*Round and round the mulberry bush
the monkey chased the weasel
the monkey thought it was all in fun,
Pop goes the weasel . . .*

Dusk came on with the dying of the breeze. Swallows veered, a donkey screamed and gasped. Church bells tolled, tape-recorded mullahs boomed their calls to prayer from PA systems atop minarets. Charlie saw the desert crenellated against the horizon, heard the medleyed din cushioned on the nearer murmur of a giant air conditioning unit above the porch.

He said: Sometimes I wish I was alive.

Aviva said: You are, Charlie.

No, he said. He saw the desert—black, pitted, smudge fires on the horizon. The donkey kept screaming. His vision speckled and blistered. Birds appeared to swarm. An awful clamor of metals scraping racked him. He caught himself thinking that he had never been surer of his sanity. He said: The exemptions of the victims are no compensation.

It just came out of him like that. Aviva said: Still, you ought to call your people. You ought to let them know.

She kneeled before him to take his hand in hers, but he started screaming: You're in my legs, you're in my legs.

She jumped back. He said: See, you see! Said they might as well face it, he was not a person to deal with. Couldn't deal with himself. Didn't want to learn how. He was officially dead and had no intention of resurrecting himself. On the contrary. If she gave even half a damn about him she'd haul him out of this charnel house. Roll him to the edge of the desert. That was all he asked. He'd crawl out into it. He'd crawl till he was too far and too beat to crawl back, then rub his stumps with a stone till they bled him dry.

He said: I'd do it for you.

She ran hands through his hair. Kissed his neck. She brought her mouth around to his mouth. He couldn't care less.

He said: You missed your chance for that.

She squatted beside him, put her chin on the arm of his chair and rested her head on his biceps. She said: Everything always looks worse from the beginning. Then it turns into history. You'll see. You just need some sleep.

No, Charlie said. He never wanted to sleep again. Never wanted to wake up. He said: I don't need that. That's just Jew talk you're saying. I need you to push me out into the desert.

Aviva stood up abruptly. She looked startled, threatened, scandalized. She said: Push yourself, Gentile.

Charlie strummed his guitar, and began to sing:

*I ain't got a leg to stand on
Ain't got no metaphor . . .*

Aviva wept. She began hitting his arm while he strummed. Hit pretty hard and ruined the song. She used both fists going down his arms, till he asked what her fucking problem was.

She said: I just want to help you.

He said: Push me out to the desert. That's all I ask.

She stopped her fists and took up stroking where she'd struck. He didn't like all this touch now. It confined him. Made him feel like a clot. He was sweating, and his sinuses felt scorched dry. His voice sounded all pent up. He said: I'm boiling. The air's like spit. I can't hardly breathe.

She said: Night will come.

He said: I wish it'd rain. Won't it rain?

Aviva looked up at the sky. Charlie watched her head turn, the hand on her brow saluting the dusk.

There's no cloud nowhere, she said.

He said: Push me then. Quit being selfish, and push me.

TOM TRZASKOS

Tuesday

DOOM FOR THE DAMMED, for the pail opening
onto another day.

Stake and eggs baste in the trauma. Stomach
in the house of voltage. Pulsation in the
tight straps. Dead creaks into the dead of
the chair.

Green made harsh.

The final moments, the victimizer who knows,
this dawn is his to join up with death and
those he serialized—

is not harsh enough.

He leaves his ruin behind, his pillage, bodies
that forever keep secret when the state throws
the switch. Is this killing?

But is it so much that organized revenge
completes an act? Being done with a human;
his actions have led him to this place where
someone must commit murder. And if it is
something else because of a term?

I object to the ceremony! Is there forgiving,
mystical to kill at dawn? Can this time redeem
the prisoner, who has just eaten for his long
journey? Why do we desire his redemption!
Why kill him?

On Tuesday if you like, but without pomp,
not at dawn.

Pick random times, though always give fair

warning: there's more dread that way.
Two p.m. or six, nothing so pure as dawn.

When I am awakened in the morning, the radio
still on to hear . . .

By such news we are victimized.

A Walk From Volcano House To Waldron Ledge

6/2/87 7:30 AM

I'M IN THE NOISY DINING ROOM OF THE VOLCANO HOUSE, at a table by the big glass window looking out to a panorama of Kilauea Crater and its steaming bluffs, . . . the dormant fire pit of Halemaumau. The sky is a powder blue over the browns, sulfur yellows, and blacks of the caldera. Mauna Loa, huge dome, purple and slate grey, rises slowly through haze and low-lying patches of cumulus. I can hear a waitress explaining the exotic menu to a table of tourists, explaining words like *Malibini* and *wikiwiki*—"newcomer" and "quick" or "rushed" in Hawaiian—transferred to mean "bacon and eggs" and "Continental breakfast" at the Vee House. There is the clink and clatter of tables being cleared and set up, conversations, both murmurous and excited, drifting through the room. I hear snatches of German, Japanese, and English in its American standard version and the blunt, sometimes harsh tones of the pidgin variety spoken by most of the staff.

Outside, on the asphalt overlook and footpath to the crater, four teenagers dressed in gaudy shorts, tank tops, baseball caps, and *Magnum P.I.* sunglasses are hopping onto the lava rock wall for a better look and, I'm guessing, an intensified feeling of being here at the crater's rim. A young couple takes turns snapping photos of each other beside them.

I hear a language that sounds a little like German two tables down from me. I guess it's Dutch, mostly because I notice one of them has slung a flight bag over the back of his chair that says "KLM."

The haze lifts a bit in the distance, and I can tell that the scrub forest and grassland at Mauna Loa's base are a special kind of green, lush and restful as the photographs I've seen of the African veldt. That land sits on the saddle between the two active volcanoes, Kilauea and Mauna Loa. It's a gently sloping land, attractive to look at and wander through as Wordsworth must have wandered through his Wye Valley. But there are wild pigs rooting through its underbrush, tearing up lantern ferns by their roots and scraping through the trunks to feed on the soft, starchy inner cores. Cream-colored *pu'eo* owls, spotted with brown, cruise over the tops of the koa and cedar trees at sunset, hunting for field mice. And the honey creepers—red-headed, vermilion-bodied, and black-winged—radiate and pipe through the lower limbs of *ohi'a*. I know there's a park up there, an enclosure of lush vegetation surrounded by Mauna Loa lava flows both prehistoric and

recent as 1974. It's called "Bird Park," Kipuka Pu'alu, and I've been meaning to hike through it one of these days.

I make a plan to take Alex and his grandmothers for a late morning hike.

* * * *

It's clear over the crater today. A good day for a hike. I think I'll walk the footpath and old, broken-down road (an earthquake damaged it in 1974 and dropped a large piece of it down into the caldera) to Byron Ledge, smell the ginger plants and sulfur air, think about Wilkes and Dana and what they must have felt looking at all of this.

* * * *

I'm looking across from the Vee House to the escarpment on the SE (?) side. The horizontal layers of rock, browns and beiges with some greys and blacks shaded in, exhibit the process of step-faulting and talus build-up at the cliff's base. Step-faulting is . . .

* * * *

The layers are visible on the bluff from the steam vents along the rim to just below Hawaii Volcano Observatory where slides and, I assume, a milder gradient have camouflaged the layering.

Detailing all of this, I'm neglecting the obvious—it's all a grand and awesome sight, the shape of the earth from the brown cinder cone of Kilauea-Iki and the black lavas of Keanakakoi and Mauna Ulu, across the olive-colored, basaltic plain of the caldera past the rain-worn ash hills of Ka'u to the sides of Halemaumau fire pit sulfured yellow from its steaming vents and then up along the horizontal striations of the East Bluff to the veldt-green of the saddle and purple base of Mauna Loa—all of this a visual language of original tragedy and the earthly sublime.

* * * *

Alexander calls Kilauea an "ocean" or a "stadium," reacting alternately to its flat expanse and then to its feeling of vast enclosure.

He calls Halemaumau a "pond."

* * * *

I came to Volcano to find out who I was and what I came from, to fill in the vast blankness of my origins and my family's past somehow kept secret from me for over thirty years.

* * * *

I came back to Volcano to pay homage to my father and his struggle with the world, his life of labor and silence, his own unmourned and disconsolate hurt for all the disappointments, betrayals, and indignities he'd suffered.

I came back to Volcano to dig into the past and, thereby, dig into myself, discover what I was in mental character and fortitude, build within myself a calm and a power that might not be resolute or defiant, but innate and equable. I wanted to investigate the unspoken history of my father's coming here, of him and my grandfather's swindle, the story of my own birth and first months of life in the rain forests. I wanted to become as familiar with this place and its anecdotal history, its geologic and anecdotal history, as a scholar is with his chosen text, as a monk might have been with his sutras and his koan, because I did not grow up here, because I did not understand my father though I loved him.

I came to Volcano to live within my mind and my unresolved emotions, to retire to the rain forests of Kilauea and in the product of a year's seclusion there. I came so that my child would be born where I was born, so that I would have lived at least a year as a father where my father was first a father. I wanted to know the place and I wanted to know the past.

Yeats says in his autobiography that for a poet to write better than his time he must find metaphors in the natural figures of his native landscape. It's an idea that stuck with me. When I first returned to Volcano and saw it as an adult, fully sentient, I resolved to wed my mind to this place, to bring out of the contact a sacred book.

I remember a color slide a friend brought back of Ben Bulben and, from that sudden visual acquaintance, I thought I understood Yeats all the better. Ben Bulben was a huge chunk of the sublime, a blue and slate grey behemoth of rock weathered by wind and rain, forbidding and issuing its challenge—"Be equal to me."

I came to Volcano because I wanted to be *better* than I had been—more a part of the earth and garlands of ferns, more a part of the history from which I'd been sundered and disinherited, more a part of my own poetic mind, elusive and hounded.

I took a stroll along the footpath from the Vee House along the east rim southward to Waldron's Ledge, paralleling the part of the old Crater Rim Drive partially collapsed into the caldera during the 1974 earthquakes and eruption. It was a pleasant walk through *ohi'a* and ferns for a hundred yards or so, dipping down and up gently through old-growth *ohi'a*, catching glimpses of the caldera. I lit a cigar. It was sunny with patchy cumulus overhead but, because the crater cliffs were so close by, I walked in the cool updrafts from the caldera floor. The footpath curled around a little Forest Service hut, like a bus stand painted National Park brown, overlooking a vantage point to Halemaumau. I stopped a minute and then kept going up through a grassy spot to where the footpath continued and joined the old, collapsed road. At the road, I looked left and saw

the rock barrier about 50 yards away, and then headed down towards the South Rim, walking over quake-cracked asphalt, thinking it a bit derelict for the broomsedge and crabgrass sprouting through its cracks. Grass and scrub brush had sprung up and died off beside the road, patches of green and brown and clumps of stunted *obi'a*. At the turnout, I admired one dwarf shrub thick with the red crests of *lehua* blossoms. I heard a helicopter's far off drone and the pips and pipes of honey creepers close by.

Images: canoe-paddle blades; rain-jewels on the trailside grasses; orange lilies; ginger plants; a flowering shrub with purple, salvia-like blossoms with yellow centers; scattered eucalyptus giving way to *obi'a*; overgrowth with shoots of green and grey staghorns pushing up over the grass; a lone cedar; yellow trail daisies; dried broomsedge; yellow *hau* . . .

Waldron Ledge is an old vantage point identified as a photo opportunity by a Forest Service sign. The road opened to an abandoned lot cracked and buckled from the quake and roped off with posts and guy wires. There was a danger sign I'd seen so many places elsewhere in the park from the SE Rift Zone and its black grabens to Kapaahu and the fresh silvery flows of *pahoehoe* eddying over the highway flanking the sea.

I kept to the marked path and got to the Ledge. From it, I had a grand, panoramic view of the caldera from the slump-marred cinder cone of Kilauea-Iki across the broad lava plain to Halemaumau directly opposite me and up the step-faulted cliffs and Steaming Bluff of the N/NE Rim. M.L. (Mauna Loa) was a hazy purple curtain of land and cloud formations in the northwest distance. And I had an unobstructed view of the lower bluffs overgrown with dry grasses, cedar, and swarms of stunted *obi'a*. I could see Halemaumau trail as a faintly greyer trail across the black lava plain, small pyramids of rock like Hansel's breadcrumbs all along it leading off towards the fire pit.

Waldron Ledge is one of the sites of Wilkes' encampment in 1841 when his U.S. Exploring Expedition came here to map the volcano. There were etched steel signs on the metal barriers explaining the history and quoting from Wilkes' journal:

Wishing to be more protected from the cold wind that draws from Mauna Kea (on the north), we passed over to what I have called Waldron's Ledge (after Purser Waldron of the *Vincennes*), which is the usual and by far the most commodious point to encamp at besides offering one of the most beautiful views of the volcano.

Charles Wilkes, Esq.
Commander, U.S. X.X.
January 14, 1841

The etching reproduced on the black steel sign showed a Romantic rendering of Kilauea as sketched by Wilkes with the basalt bluffs in the left foreground and right, two "natives" dressed in toga-like wraps, one squatting and one standing, in the immediate foreground, details of sign . . . *amaumau* fern, some ginger plants, and two dwarf skeletons of *obi'a* on the ledge. The lower half of the etching is one of the caldera and fire pit, with steam plumes plentiful throughout its surface and a billowing black cloud rising up over the western rim. A white area, just right of center and in the approximate position of Halemaumau, I took to be a rendering of the fire pit. There were bluffs and black grabens in the distance and a darkened, cloud-streaked sky in imitation of the contemporary style, perhaps derived from Turner and other English painters of the sublime tradition. The feeling, overall, is somewhat gothic and melodramatic, but not entirely false to the present scene.

I recalled Poe's novel of exploration and discovery, *The Narrative of Edward Gordon Pym*, and the apocalyptic climax in a southern wilderness of caverns and maelstroms, the intent, now obvious, to startle and thrill and excite, much as the Spielberg and Lucas movies do today. A *styled* presentation, governed as much by the *wish* to feel as by any genuine response. Pym found hieroglyphics, Wilkes found a boisterous fire pit of red lava, what he called the "boiling cauldron." I found, looking to the hardened lavas below me, a faint calligraphy of *pabochoe* like solidified wind rows of lava, mysterious eddies of original matter that yielded no message, told no tale but what I invented or others before me had manufactured with their lives.

There was a blue sky behind bands of cumulus over the Hilina Pali to the south, lake-sized patches of shade on the lava plain from the clouds over the caldera and midday build-up of thick weather gathering around Mauna Loa. Plumes from the steam vents and fumaroles in the distance and on the bluffs. The cool wind drafting upward, the pipe and trill of honey creepers radiating around me.

RAINER MARIA RILKE

“Again and Again”

AGAIN AND AGAIN, even though we know love's landscape
and the little churchyard with its lamenting names
and the terrible reticent throat in which the others
end, again and again we go out in pairs
under the ancient trees, and lay ourselves down
among flowers, opposite the sky.

Autumn 1914

Translated by Edward Snow

RAINER MARIA RILKE

“Almost As On That Last Day”

ALMOST AS ON THAT LAST DAY the dead will tear themselves
from the earth's embrace, and the unburdened ball,
coming behind, will lose itself in the sky—:
thus almost now these, the living, plunge into the soil,
and that soil, the earth, sinks laden toward the watery world-bed
through millennial weed, where destinies yet—
mutely with blank fish-gaze—
have cold encounters. Where out of tubes,
like sea-anemones,
wounds bloom resplendently, and the terrible pulp's
waving slime-arm is borne by the current
toward whatever gets seized. On the floor
out of skeletal lime the pale coral's
stiff-living horror evolves, and branches in silence.

Irschenhausen, c. September 1914

Translated by Edward Snow

RAINER MARIA RILKE

Left Exposed On the Mountains
of the Heart

LEFT EXPOSED on the mountains of the heart. Look, how small there,
look: the last village of words, and higher,
(but how small too), yet one last
farmstead of feeling. Can you see it?
Left exposed on the mountains of the heart. Rock-ground
under the hands. True, even here
some things bloom; out of mute-down plunge
an unknowing herb breaks forth singing.
But the knower, ah, what of him? He began to know
and now remains silent, left exposed on the mountains of the heart.
True, many an intact consciousness roams about here,
many, so many, sure mountain animals
change field and stay. And the great sheltered bird
circles the peaks' pure refusal. —But
unsheltered, here on the mountains of the heart . . .

September 1914

Translated by Edward Snow

STEVEN BARTHELME

Good Parts

I

BILL WAS STARING AT HIS EYES IN THE BATHROOM MIRROR. Blue eyes. Some gray in them. "It's your sense of inadequacy," Bill said.

"What's my sense of inadequacy?" Maureen said. Dark hair. Green eyes.

"Why you always fail. Why you can't do anything right. Me too."

"You too what?"

"I have the same problem. We share this problem."

Maureen stood up, walked out. She looked like a model. Took her robe, cigarettes, beer.

"Bitch," Bill said, staring into the mirror. "Stupid bitch."

Maureen fell asleep in the living room, on the couch. Again, Bill thought. I was a jerk again. I must have been born a jerk. He rearranged the robe, to cover her.

II

Bill and Maureen stopped at the laundromat and left their clothes, went to the grocery store, stopped off at the library, went to the drugstore, picked up their laundry.

Maureen made stroganoff from a package that advertised itself as taking eight minutes. Bill sliced up the steak. Checked her progress. "Those sure are funny looking noodles," Bill said. "They're crooked."

"These fine noodles . . ." Maureen said. "You're gonna *love* these noodles."

Bill read *Newsweek* until dinner was ready. Twenty minutes. They had candlelight and wine.

"I love these noodles," Bill said.

III

Maureen left the house crying. Slammed the car door. She drove to her friend Jane's house.

"He wants to sleep around and you can't," Jane said. "What does he think, you don't want to? The Neanderthal. Want some tea?" Jane got up. "Here, read this magazine. And this one. And this one."

"Stay out of it," Maureen said.

IV

Bill took the mop from Maureen. "Not like that," he said. "Like *this*." He was

showing her how to use a sponge-mop. He held the mop in his hands, a yellow handle, a yellow sponge.

"Like *that*?"

"You have to drag it so it's flat on the floor, then you get the whole surface, not just the front edge. The bottom surface." He pulled the mop expertly across the linoleum, holding the handle at an awkward forward angle of 80 degrees.

Maureen ran into the closet and began screaming with laughter.

Bill opened the closet door and looked at the tears in her wet eyes, the shirt wadded in her fist. "Foolish?" he said.

V

Bill and Maureen sat on the carpet in the living room playing Black Tower until 6 a.m.

VI

At the office a handsome young millionaire talked to Maureen. He was a client. He looked out the window as he talked, at parking lots fifteen stories below. Maureen typed, ran mag cards. Her boss was "in conference." She missed lunch.

The young millionaire described in lavish detail his vacation which had been spent in Mexico, Puerto Vallarta and Cozumel. He talked about "little bars." He intimated that he had had sex with beautiful women.

Maureen told Bill about the young millionaire when she got home.

"He's a jerk," Maureen said.

Bill laughed.

"But he's a millionaire."

Maureen swirled an imaginary Tequila Sunrise and did her young millionaire imitation, lifted her eyebrows and spoke through her nose:

"Oh yes, I own several tall buildings. I have eaten turtle eggs inside the turtle. Ahem. The inside of the turtle is hot and pink. My love life? Ha! It's understandable you would be curious. I am a man of the world who has made love to an eye-guana, pretty thing. Of course you wouldn't know . . . It wasn't just any iguana—it was a bisexual iguana. After, we shared a cigarette. He said I was the best he'd ever had."

VII

Bill went to the bookstore. Once a week. He had his eye on a girl there, a slow thin girl who worked in the bookstore.

"Can I help you," the girl said.

"Yes, please take me home," Bill said.

"Sure," the girl said.

"What?"

"I get off in an hour."

I have been following women around bookstores for twelve years, Bill thought, in the car. The girl came out and got into the car, and they drove to her apartment which was full of hateful, expensive furniture and liquor bottles facing front. Bill had four drinks and made love to her.

"Stay the night," the girl said.

Bill thought about it for an hour and then said, "I can't. I want to, but I can't." Everything about the apartment was wrong; the toothpaste was on the wrong side of the bathroom sink.

VIII

Bill bought a gun, .38 caliber. It smelled good. Maureen returned it and got his money back. \$149.95.

IX

The dentist told Maureen she needed some work. An assistant took it all down. At the reception counter Maureen wrote out a check and asked for a chart of the proposed work and charges.

The woman behind the counter looked up at her. "May I ask what you want it for?" she said.

"What?"

"May I ask why you need it?"

Maureen dropped her cigarette onto the carpet, grinding at it with her shoe. "Sure, honey, it's because it's my teeth and my money."

In the lobby of the building she called Bill from a pay phone. He was at work. She was crying.

"They want nineteen hundred dollars. They want to butcher my teeth. They want to fix—My teeth don't hurt. Why do—I've got three month's worth of appointments," Maureen said.

"I'll pick you up," Bill said.

"I've got my car."

"I'll pick you up anyway. Call them back and cancel the appointments. We'll try another dentist. Second opinion, like that. Fifteen minutes."

X

Maureen made a meatloaf and a salad.

"Thanks for dinner," Bill said, after they had finished.

"Is she pretty? How old is she? Did you tell her about us? Is she good at it? Screwing? Better than me? Is she blonde? What's her name? Don't tell me. Is she more beautiful than me? I don't want to know anything about it," Maureen said.

Bill felt sick to his stomach.

"Did you have a good time?"

XI

Maureen went to a bar with one of the law clerks from the office. He was short. Maureen was older and taller. When he began telling her about his "mistress" she excused herself and went home.

"This is not working," she said, at the kitchen table. "We're going to have to try something else."

"One little slip?" Bill said.

"That's not it," Maureen said. "It's more than that. I'm moving."

"I think you're right," Bill said. "I think we should get two apartments, like we talked about."

"I mean moving out of town. I'm leaving town. I'm going back to school."

"Wait. Now wait—"

"No waiting. I thought today maybe six years from now I could meet you on a street in Mexico, you know, outside a 'little bar' or something, and then we'd have a lot to talk about, we could go to the beach and screw and talk all night long."

"It's movies," Bill said. "It won't happen."

"It could happen," she said. "That's the point."

Bill shook his head.

"It won't happen *this* way, that's for sure," she said.

"It's crap," he said.

"There'll be iguanas. And those funny birds, yakking."

"Maureen—"

"You won't even bitch about the sand," she said. "The waves will make those wave noises. There'll be wind. There'll be colored lights. You'll be crazy and happy again. There'll be cliffs. Cliffs behind us. Cliffs." Dark hair. Green eyes.

MARGOT SCHILPP

Elegy for Carpet

I'VE SEEN IT RUSHING up at me, a blur
of variegated twill, and I've studied
it intricately, each sturdy fiber

blended precisely to form grain-like waves
of pile, fields of dried nap which grow verdant
even for the brown-thumbbed. I've paraded

over it, naked with a strong vacuum,
to cleanse its synthetic spirit, and watched
spilled sherry escape its fingers like sand

from a tightened fist. I've ignored the flesh
scraped from elbows or knees in passionate
rolling, tended patches, raw like engine

burns, with oily salve and pristine bandage,
and I've been sure my own veins contain
renegade textiles escaped from the

fold. Several years ago, when my parents
removed their sculpted gold living room rug
and installed teakwood parquet in a move

toward modernity, I felt betrayed and rough
lust for the familiar. I did not get
to view its body rolled up

and discarded, snipped no sentimental
lock, attended no service or burial.
Sometimes now I shop clandestinely, hover

over Antron or Nylon, Stainmaster

or Scotchgard, picture dense meadows, a woven
beach with deep footprints through fine granules.

I covet the faint mill smell of origin,
the chemical scent of prevention, and mourn
its arrogant nips at my blistered heels.

KARL SHAPIRO

“There’s One”

IN THE VILLAGE of board sidewalks, striped awnings,
Saturday horses and the red clay river
South of Petersburg,
Grandpa presides in his dry-goods store,
Uncle Harry, about fourteen, is selling shoes.
Mother, behind the notions counter, is only a girl,
Grandpa in dark serge and beard
Is thumping and measuring bolts of cloth on a table.

A farmer in bib overalls with two young children,
A girl and a boy, come into the cloth-smelling store.
The farmer stops and points to grandpa
In his dark serge and beard and says to the children,
“There’s one.”
Then to my mother who is only a girl,
“There’s one,” he says.

KARL SHAPIRO

Kleenex

WITHOUT KLEENEX how could we cry,
How could we let our hair down?
This box of veils reduces us to tears,
These tissues folding and unfolding hands.
The bottom of the box is an empty grave.
The gossamer kleenex is our comforter.
Here, says the psychiatrist, without saying here,
This soft note-paper for your complaint,
A throwaway in a throwaway world,
Spouses, children, lovers, jobs,
To cleanse one of one's ex,
Leaf within leaf a post-Darwinian flower
Imperceptibly scented,
Transition to transition, mild as lettuce,
Smarmy as money with its lustful swish,
Epidermally virgin,
Kissing, dabbing our fears away.

KARL SHAPIRO

Future-Present

REMEMBER THE OLD DAYS when the luxury liners in narrow Manhattan
appeared piecemeal in segments at the end of east-west streets,
a black-and-white section of portholes and stripes of decks
and slowly the majesty of the great red funnel,
even the olympian basso of its homing horn?
It would take a full hour to go past,
as if in no hurry to pass into history.

But look there at the top pane of the window!
A burnished skyliner elegantly moving north,
as proud as leviathan above the suffering Hudson,
past the unfinished cathedral, over Grant's tomb,
into the blue-gray morning of the future-present.

KARL SHAPIRO

No Funeral

IF WE HAD GONE, it would have made the difference
Between completion and a nagging doubt.
It's true there are no ceremonies, only some flowers and some documents.
Few things are more ceremonious than legal documents.
If we had gone there what would we have done
Except to satisfy ourselves that we had gone there
To satisfy our neighbors and prevent some serious head-shaking
Or a scream of outrage from a single source
Which would have to be quieted.

I knew a woman happily married to a prominent doctor.
At the height of his career they were about to purchase
A vast inchoate masterpiece of carpenter's gothic, a manse
They hoped to tinker with for the rest of their lives
And pass on to their children and grandchildren.
One night he awoke with an explosive headache
And was rushed to the hospital with a hemorrhaging brain.
His wife had to decide whether to let him die or operate,
whether to relinquish him whole or to recover him
Brain-damaged, probably childish.

Half a year later they visited us. The doctor answered
In short quick sentences.
He played in the backyard,
Banging the fence and laughing at the noise.
His wife corrected him, they left, she took him home
And went to rehearse in Handel's Messiah,
Which she always did before Christmas.

These are not the same decisions, euthanasia is not the topic,
It is ceremony. Shall I leave my mother on the ledge of ice and dogsled
into the blizzard?
Ten thousand In Memoriam quatrains are only a solipsistic doodle,
A Victorian cartouche. We live in a country
Where tradition is a dirty word, where the death-watch,
Where even the burial is a question mark.
Can we even find the graveyard where our grandparents are buried?

It's Hard To Watch It Get Daylight With The Porch Light On

I SIT ON CARTER'S BRICKED PATIO drinking cranberry juice and smoking a cigarette. "You're going to get caught one day," I tell him. Carter, who is almost fifty, started stealing steaks at the Safeway after Rob's suicide. He waters his ferns and smiles. He has his telephone outside on the steps. He is waiting, as usual, for a call from Rob's widow, which, secretly, I think will never come.

Rob's widow, Carol, started sleeping with her old boyfriend six weeks after the funeral. She wasn't exactly discreet about it, running around in high, red heels after a bouncer at the Watering Hole. She had, however, chosen a line from a Bob Dylan song for Rob's tombstone, as if that somehow redeemed her.

I imagine I'm holding a large, silver bubble over my head. It takes both hands, held high, to keep it afloat. The bubble keeps springing leaks here and there. I see myself patching the leaks, only to see new ones beginning.

"I need a bath," I say to Carter. He bends in a half grand gesture and motions toward the door. He looks like he's no more than thirty, I think, then say aloud, "You look good." I go inside the living room. The room is painted lobster red and has two white cotton sofas on either side of the wide, brick fireplace. It is beautiful and immaculate. He has porcelain and silver sitting on low, black lacquer tables. There is no dust, no mess. Carter either entertains outside on his patio or in his bedroom.

I sit down into the hot, steamy water and count the square bottles of Lazlo lined up around the edge of the tub. I've been sober three months. Three. I don't count the beer, the one beer, I allow myself to have every afternoon now that I'm out of treatment. I remember the drunkenness where everything looked good, where my friends took on attributes of bravery and cleverness, and knew important things, where my own life seemed full of possibilities. It all had a brilliant, slightly dangerous glow that held me fascinated. It was so delicious, the boozy, warm, intoxicated feeling. I had to be told I was keeping company with a disease. Carter said that I would be more socially acceptable battling cancer, or diabetes, anything with less stigma. I get out of the tub and dry off, wrap one white towel around my head and another around my body.

In Carter's bedroom I open the drawer he cleared for me to keep my underwear, jeans, and shirts, which is all I have with me. I pull out a pair of faded jeans and a white buttondown. The shirt is worn and soft, no longer overstarched and stiff, but washed by hand and hung to dry. Through the window I see Carter

turning steaks on the gas grill. On the bureau is a framed photograph of Rob, Carter, and me, taken last Thanksgiving. I turn it face down and get dressed, run a brush through my hair, and braid it still wet.

Before we have finished dinner, Carol drives into the driveway. Carter at once begins straightening things on the wrought iron table. He stacks the dishes on a wicker tray and folds the napkins over them. Without a word, he hands the tray to me. I wave to Carol and take the tray inside to the kitchen. From the window I watch as she gets out of the car. She's in skinny, tight black pants and a black polo. Carter walks over to her. They stand, animated, talking by the car. I hear her raspy laugh. She tosses her hair. It's too long, too thick and too blond. I check myself in the oven door glass, not ready for the competition. She watches as I walk out. I hold my shoulders back, imagine a book on my head, and go over and hug her lightly.

"You look wonderful, Shelby," she says. "When did you get out?"

"Saturday," I say. "I'm still trying to get situated."

"Situated?" she says, as though she's never heard the word.

"Well, I have to find a job and an apartment soon. I can't be in Carter's way too long."

"What about your family?" she asks. "Can't they help?"

"There's only Liz," I tell her, "and she's in Colorado."

Carol flips her hair out over her shoulders and sits down at the table. "How about a drink, Carter?" she says, looking at me. "It won't bother you, will it, Shelby?" She crosses one leg over the other. Carter goes over to the serving cart and pours gin into a glass.

"Go ahead," I tell her. "It's my problem."

We sit in a circle around the table talking about Rob. We go through it all, when he played football for the Dolphins, the pet ferret he had named Bandit, the night he got busted just outside the Florida line with three ounces of cocaine, and the night he went into their garage and killed himself in his 1955 Thunderbird, with carbon monoxide. We remember the funeral, who came to it, and who stayed away. We even remember the flowers. And as always, who it could have been that turned him in. We don't talk about the time when he and Carol were separated, or about the time he spent with Carter and me.

"I'm selling furniture now, you know," she says, looking at me.

"No, I didn't know," I say politely. "How do you like it?"

"If those people want to buy veneer, I'll sell it to them," she says, smiling.

Carter is drinking with her now. I watch as they drink. I empty ashtrays, light a few votive candles. It is getting dark. The patio takes on an intimate, peaceful glow. The sky is nearly lavender, nearly.

"What was it like?" Carol asks me suddenly, tearing herself away from Carter.

"It was kind of like a hospital," I say, "except I didn't get to stay in bed much."

"Are you going to be able to handle it?" she asks, then adds, "This time?"

"I'm going to try like hell," I tell her. "I don't want to go back to where I was."

I get up and go inside to avoid more questions, slip a tape of John Coltrane into the stereo and turn it loud. "Now let's really get nervous," I say to myself. I go to the bathroom for aspirin and take three. My mouth is dry, and I'm thirsty. Watch it, better watch it.

At nine thirty Carter decides they should go dancing.

"Want to come along?" he asks, half smiling.

"I better not risk it, Carter. That might be tempting things too much."

"Will you be all right here alone?" he asks.

"Will you be all right with her?" I say back to him, and smile at Carol. She gives me a wink, and they get into Carter's car and leave.

I watch as they back out of the driveway. They wave goodbye. I blow out the candles and go inside again. Coltrane is too complicated. I take out the tape and turn on the radio. Someone nasal and country is singing about digging up bones. I lie down on the sofa. In a minute I get up and go to the telephone and dial my daughter's number in Colorado. The line is busy. I hang up and decide to go for a drive. I turn on all of Carter's outside lights and get into my Pontiac. At my favorite bar, the Raven, I cruise through the parking lot to see if anyone I know is there. The parking lot is crowded, and there's music from the entrance. I pull back out into the traffic and head downtown.

It's safe at Shoney's. They don't serve booze. I sit drinking coffee. All the people in here are uniformly ugly. Every one of them. I look around, searching for a pleasant face, a cute nose, nice hair, something. I take out my compact and pat a little powder on my nose and put on lipstick. I go up to the counter and get a newspaper. Back in the booth I open the paper to the classified section. I read through it and take my pen and circle three jobs for office help. I turn to the apartment section, see an ad that reads "roommate wanted, nonsmoker, nondrinker" and cross through it with an X. The waitress, plump and red-haired, comes with my check. I dig through my purse and find a quarter and place it under the saucer. I go back to the counter and pay for the coffee. Outside it is raining, slow and easy. I turn my face up to it and get into the car.

I can see the outside lights from Carter's house halfway down the block. I wonder what it would be like to stay with Carter and the lobster red walls and Coltrane.

Carol's car is parked exactly where it was in the driveway, and beside it is Carter's. Two other cars are parked behind them. I pull in and park. I can hear the music from the driveway.

When I walk in Carol is sitting, posed, on one end of the sofa. Beside her are the Eliots. Roy Eliot manages the Highline Fitness Center, and his wife, Leah, teaches water aerobics there. They smile at me. On the other sofa Carter is talking to a dark-haired guy that I don't know. Carter gets up and drags the guy with him.

"Shelby, meet John. John Branch."

"Hello John. John," I say and head for the kitchen.

They laugh and follow me. "Where have you been?" Carter asks. John stands beside him, kind of propped, with his arm around Carter's shoulder. He is taller than Carter, tan and good looking. He wears jeans, a pale blue shirt, and cowboy boots.

"We're celebrating," John says, "my divorce."

"Interesting accomplishment," I say and open the refrigerator for cranberry juice. Someone has added a twelve pack of Coors. I reach past the beer and get the juice.

"We met John at the Carousel. Carol invited him to come home with us. Then we ran into the Eliots on the way out, so they came along, too," Carter says.

He stands a bit unsteady and gives me a crooked smile.

In the living room Carol is dancing with Roy to something by Elton John. Leah has her head back on the sofa. She holds a cigarette high in the air, taking occasional puffs. She seems lost sitting there like that.

"Like to dance?" John asks.

"I don't think so," I say. "But thank you. I'm a little tired. Long day, you know."

The three of us walk back into the living room. Carter and John stand watching the dancers. I go and sit on the gray carpeted stairs. John looks at me and holds his arms out. I pretend not to see and look toward the mantle. I count the brass candlesticks, then stare at the painting of two little boys sitting in the middle of a green field. Carter has a small light hanging over it. It looks nice, somehow reassuring.

The record ends and Carol comes over and sits down on the step below me. "You okay?" she asks. Her eyes are bright and fierce. She leans over and takes off her shoes and tosses them down the stairs. Carter laughs. "This probably isn't good for you, is it?" she says. "Why don't you relax and dance with John? He's something, don't you think?"

"I guess so. I'm not really up for dancing."

Roy comes out of the kitchen with the beer. Leah opens her eyes and takes the one he hands her. Carol goes down and gets one. Her hair has fallen, it's limp against her shoulders. Immediately I think about my last drunk, my last blackout, which I was told lasted two days, and the day I checked into treatment with Carter pulling at my side, holding me. I think about detox and the endless, stupid talking at the center. I get up and go into the bathroom and brush my teeth. I use the Lazlo to clean my face and put it back exactly where it was. I check my face in the mirror. The noise from the living room seems louder. I flush the toilet just for the hell of it, and walk back to the living room.

Carter seems to be sleeping. He is sitting up very straight with his eyes closed and his mouth open. Carol is dancing with John. The Eliots are nowhere in sight. I pick up my purse and ease out the back door. My car starts on the first try, and I back out of the driveway quickly. I roll down the windows, turn on the radio, and head for Broad Street. A cop sits in his car on the corner by the Wendy's, I smile at him and wave. I can breathe easy. I head for my mini-storage unit. In twenty minutes I am there and get out and unlock the door. I fumble around in the darkness for the string hanging from the overhead light. I find it and turn on the light. Boxes are stacked to the ceiling, some are sitting on my dining table. Not veneer, I think, and smile. I move around checking things, making a mental inventory. Everything I own is here. The boxes are labeled in bold red Magic Marker in Carter's precise handwriting. An empty bird cage sits on top of the china cabinet. I open the drawers to my dresser. Everything is folded and organized. Carter again. I make sure there are no signs of bugs or mice and close the drawers. In my mind I hear Dr. White's warnings. "Take it one day at a time. Take it easy. Easy does it." I look around again at everything. I do it by room: kitchen, living room, bedroom. Something is wrong, but I can't pinpoint it. The furniture looks like someone else's, like a ghost's furniture. I think about striking a match and setting fire to it all. I move a heavy box labeled pots and pans and sit down in my cane-backed rocking chair and close my eyes. Half this stuff is worn

out, I think, worn out responsibility. I have to decide what to do with it, what to do with me. I rock back and forth in the chair. I wonder if I could just move in here. No one would ever know. I could be with my things at night and stay out during the day. I pull the newspaper out of my purse and open it to the help wanted section.

SIGMAN BYRD

Café De Luxe

WHAT PEOPLE SAY adds up to something,
I still believe that
or want to anyway. You can mention
ghosts and God
and still sound reasonable.
You can glimpse under the hood
at the greasy, spinning belts.

From there, the torrent distills
into another matter like
I want to move you again, reader.

I picture the old footage of you reclining
in those uncomfortable,
Brunswick bowling alley chairs
the words have imbedded you in.
Patiently you wait for the chorus to return—
mango sunsets,
oil paintings of the dusky sea—

and when it comes
the two women are kissing, a spoon
snaps against a glass
of iced tea, disappointment.

I wonder if anyone is moveable, after all.
Maybe it *is* all a neurochemical reaction,
what two people have with each other
and why the shimmy of skirt and pant legs
or skirt and skirt
around a little hat with many sides,
materials, multiple visions of itself
ultimately believable but hard to imagine
like Charles's ugly childhood "helmet"
in *Madame Bovary*.

I guess I'll ask for a second cup of coffee,
it's more upholstered than I like
but okay for now. Tonight the café

takes us somewhere haughty
and unmentionable. I sneak a peek
at the pilot light sputtering
under the waitress' steadfast eye.

A cold night. It's only metaphors
she burns for,
and yet I'll accept anything really,
any warmth I can get.

MARSHA RECKNAGEL

The Ring Of Truth

IT WAS A CRUEL THING TO SAY because he is a storyteller and knew the truth of what I said. I told him I hated the story we were. For most people it wouldn't have been a primary complaint, considering what had been at stake. But to get caught in the humdrum of the typical infidelity plot was difficult for me, a woman who had always loved drama but not the suburban kind, not the Cheever and Updike stories of wives coming downstairs to cold kitchens to hold hot cups of coffee in their hands as they stared out at the bleak New England landscape and realized, suddenly beyond the shadow of a doubt, that they had been betrayed.

"Today's program," Phil Donahue announced from the blue screen, "is about men who cheat." I sat up straight and looked around guiltily. The color was too bright, psychedelic pinks and aquas, but there was no way to fiddle with the controls because the set hung near the ceiling of the waiting room of the doctor's office where everyone in the long room could see Donahue scratch his head and frown at the cheaters seated on stage. A woman from the audience who was, as my mother would say, madder than a hornet, took the microphone from Donahue and shook her finger at the audience at home. The blame, she said, her black eyes fierce with mascara, belongs on all those women who prey on these married men. Running down the aisle toward another angry wife who wanted to speak her mind, Donahue said that the next show would feature "The Other Woman." I am, I realized, the other woman. And I was surprised. Surprised that Donahue had to tell me. But I hadn't been thinking clearly for a while. I wasn't seeing clearly either. That was why I was at the ophthalmology clinic. One eye had begun to turn in, turn weak, the way it did when I was a child, then, as now, turning the world flat, one-dimensional. "Almost no depth perception," the doctor murmured, breath full of mint as he moved in close with his beam of light.

I had waited three months for Jack, the married man I had fallen in love with, to decide whether or not to leave his wife. We had talked long distance every day until the day, breathless, naughty and 43, he called me from his kitchen just as his wife stepped out of the back door to show her parents the garden, the mums and dandelions and new rosebeds she had planted three weeks before. Her parents had come to Cleveland for their grandson's high school graduation. There was no other garden for me, I told him when he told me of the garden tour; "no other son, no other this, no other that," I shouted in a litany from my kitchen to his, "only an other woman." We stopped talking on the telephone.

I live in an older section of Houston on the edge of downtown and much of that summer I spent in a park six blocks from my house on a bench, gray-slatted with black ironwork arm rails. Sometimes I would lay my cheek against the cool metal rail. It was the flip side of good memory, cold, hard, like the aluminum railing of a hospital bed. When I was five years old, a doctor operated on my defective eyes, took them out and put them back in, my sister said. Actually he tightened the muscles, tried to rein in my view of the world that had split and shifted two years before. One day there were two daddies, two mothers, four sisters too many. Everything doubled until my brain rewired itself. "You were very lucky you were so young," the doctor told me that day as I sat sweating because of the feel of soft hands once again putting a metal mask up against my face: and what do you see now?, then the shifting sound like a slide projector as the lenses change in the apparatus, and now, and now I begin to slide back to the cock-eyed child looking where they said to look. "She's so cute," the nurses would purse their bright red painted lips in a well-intentioned lie to my mother, who would hold my damp hand as we left the doctor's office.

After surgery, swathed in bandages, my head wobbling on its stalk, I would seek out the sharp definition of the side of the bed. My mother tapped her ring against the railing, making a pleasant tinny sound as she hummed or softly sang to me: "And if that mockingbird don't sing, Mama's gonna buy her a diamond ring. And if that diamond ring don't shine . . ." Tap. Tap. Tap. Sight was the sound of the silver, as shiny as the ring I imagined the mockingbird slipped from my mother's finger while the room was dark.

In the park those many years later, head askew, resting on the arm rail, I watched a group of people who brought their dogs to play in the green open space. I didn't have a dog anymore so I never mixed with the group. Harlow, gray and powerful as memory, as anger, had been dead for months, put down after he bit one person too many. But I had come to know the dogs in the field and each one's particular way of bounding or running or racing through the world. There was a leaping black poodle shorn down to a bootblack finish. He was like a reindeer, delicate and fast. There was a huge chocolate lab who lumbered, punch-drunk like an old fighter, gentle, dumb, strong. There were four or five dalmations, Rorschach's for the 90s, who kept to themselves in games of tag.

That summer there was an imaginary me always to the side of me. Sometimes she bent over, waves of nausea breaking over her like the warm Gulf waters. It was a sad picture. I felt like rubbing the small of her back, beginning at the nape of the neck and moving down, a stroke I had seen the poodle's owner give to his dog unconsciously, often, while he was talking to someone beside him.

After my father died I imagined I saw people everywhere who were missing limbs, arms or legs. An elevator door closed just as I spotted a man in the far left corner who had no hand. A woman lifted out of sight by an escalator stood on one leg like a heron. A child with no arms ran down the aisle of the grocery store and turned a corner before I could tell if it was a game, her arms tucked beneath her coat. When Jack left I thought all the people who were in lines, on benches, at bus stops were others like me, biding time, waiting for someone coupled to uncouple. Like the space shuttle and its booster. For each person waiting I could construct the other world, the one where the husband carves the roast, coaches the soccer

team, watches the cable movie with his wife in which the husband carves the roast, coaches the soccer team, and watches a movie all the while loving the person waiting on the bench in the park.

For a year I watched the park change as if it was the body of a lover. I had seen the fig tree tricked into producing early fruit only to be struck down by a last, late frost. I had seen twenty years growth of bamboo become, in an unprecedented freeze, a giant dried arrangement around the reflecting pond. Lightning struck an oak, stripping the bark like it was fruit-peel pared by a knife; for over a year a kite hung in a small pecan tree. I wanted to shoo the children rocking on the limbs of an ancient oak slung low over the ground, protect it from their affection. I had seen the field at different times, when the light hit there or not. My fingers would lightly brush the top of the prickly St. Augustine grass.

There is a chapel, bricked and modern, that houses the last paintings of Mark Rothko, the ones in shades of gray and black, the ones he did right before he killed himself. Couples marry in this chapel although there are more funerals than weddings these days because there are many gay men in this neighborhood and many are dying, or are dead. Once Bailey, a yellow lab, dove with a splash into the pond outside the chapel and retrieved a floating wreath, a solemn tribute to one of the men mourned. Shaking his coat, drenching the bystanders, he then raced in circles with his prize, defying death.

The first man I talked to from the group who brought their dogs to the park had a beagle named Sidney that played nearby as I played with blades of grass, filled my lap with acorns, tossed my legs overhead until I was in an odd pretzel position I'd learned from yoga. I moved, for a time, in the high frequency world of puppies. Over the summer I had Terry, owner of Sidney, make love to me under various bushes in the field. At home I would shake the pebbles and berries and leaves from my jeans and underwear. Beds were too small, I thought, as narrow as the story I was trapped in. It was seasonal, this affair, and when the weather changed, when the workmen came to the park to scatter the seeds for the winter grass, it was over.

The poodle's owner watched me, finally coaxed me, to the center of the field, probably some technique he had learned from the many books he read on animal behavior. On the bench, licking her wounds, he thought, as he squatted Vietnamese style and drew circles with a stick in the dirt where the dogs had worn the grass away.

Jack didn't leave his wife. "They never do," the woman who cuts my hair explained to me in a tone as clipped and assured as my head would be when she finished cutting away my curls. The day in 1956 when the doctor removed the gauze that covered my eyes, the scissors grazed my temples and my cheeks, like ice cubes pressed against my skin. Like my hairdresser, he was absorbed and competent. "Now when I remove these last bandages," he said, "the world will look fuzzy. Don't be frightened." When Jack called to tell me he wasn't coming, I dropped the phone and covered my eyes with both hands, a reflex from my past, like a child scared to see the world melting as if Vaseline has been smeared on the camera lens.

The next spring there were a few old dogs in the park and many new ones. The poodle had been to obedience school but still managed to prance. Sidney's

owner had found an orphaned beagle and named her Lola; he had also found a French girlfriend. I bought a dog and named her Rosie. Rose for rose of Sharon, the southern shrub that grows into a spindly tree flaunting tiny pink chrysanthemum-like flowers. Rose for my father's favorite flower. Rose for ring around, we all hold hands. Rose for the one who brought me to this field, leash in hand, my heart ready to bloom like the red, red rose. Again.

STUART DYBEK**Good Friday**

IT'S THREE P.M. ON GOOD FRIDAY, the darkest hour of Christ's crucifixion. The church is foggy with incense. Kneeling in our pews, my classmates and I follow the mournful procession of Father Wally, the altar boys, and torch bearers as they shuffle between the fourteen Stations of the Cross. Each station is another scene of Christ's suffering—the scourging, the crowning with thorns, carrying the cross. The scenes line the walls of the church, and the procession stops before each one to pray and meditate upon its particular agony.

In their niches above the Stations, the statues of the saints stand hooded in purple sacks for Lent. My buddy, Tommy Vuckovitch—the Vulcan—and I once devised a plan in which we would sneak into the church with a ladder some night when it was empty, and lower down a couple of the hooded statues. We planned to stuff them into the confessional and then the Vulcan and I would climb up to where the statues had stood and drape ourselves in their purple sacks. The next morning, during mass, we would start moaning and moving around under our sacks. It would have been like a scene out of a horror movie, or as if a miracle were occurring and the statues were coming to life. But we chickened out. Even just planning between ourselves we were never able to figure out how we would have managed to get rid of the ladder once we'd climbed up to where the saints had stood.

Up in the choir loft, old Mrs. Kubal's arthritic fingers pump out chords on the organ. The palsy in her hands seems to quaver through the music. She makes the ancient hymns sound like the theme music from daytime soap operas. Outside on 25th Street, a car screeches to a stop sign and revs its engine while its radio blares "Hound Dog." If you know where to look, there's a pepper of BB holes in the towering stained glass windows, and through their pinpricks concentrated daylight streams like laser beams. That's what the music from the car radio sounds like—streaks of light perforating the drone of the organ. There's a backfire and Elvis' voice guns off still wailing. And then a rumble which sounds, at first, as if it's the tail of the hotrod that's already blocks away, still winding through its gears. But it's thunder, an April thunderstorm, probably the first thunder since last year. There's a smell of rain that even clouds of incense can't smother, rain that just a few weeks earlier would have fallen as snow. Listening to it fall, I wish that when Father Wally goes up the main aisle, blessing the congregation with his silver, holy water flinger, that some of the drops will spray on me.

Inside the church, it's raining tears. So far this afternoon, we have seen old women, babushkaed in black, weeping as they walk on their knees up the marble

aisle to the altar in order to kiss the relic—a sliver of Christ's cross encased in glass. We have seen Johnny Marchek's mother appear in public for the first time since her brother-in-law shot her in the face with a shotgun during an argument over her late husband's will. She kneels off to the far side of the church, before a rack of vigil candles whose flames have been extinguished for Good Friday, pressing a balled handkerchief to her face in a way that makes it impossible to tell whether she's sobbing or hiding the hollow place where her cheek should be. Perhaps, she is praying for her son, Johnny, who tracked his uncle down at the sulky races at Sportsman's Park and buried a butcher knife in his back, and who is still on the run. And we have seen young Sister Monica, whose father wept openly when she took her final vows because, he said, she was too pretty to sacrifice her life as a nun. He said they'd brainwashed his daughter and he vowed never to step inside a church again. Then, only months later, he died suddenly of a heart attack. Sister Monica blamed herself not only for his death, but, even more important, for the state of his unrepentant soul. Before she was relieved of teaching, she would become hysterical in front of her fifth grade class, imploring them to pray for the salvation of her dead father. Her job now is to arrange flowers in the church, but today, Good Friday, the church must remain bare of flowers, and Sister Monica kneels, tears spilling down her cheeks, before the statue of Our Lady and works a long thumbnail into her palm as if she could gouge in a stigmata.

Father Wally has ascended to the pulpit and is reading aloud the Passion from the Gospel of St. John. We are seated, following along, reading silently from our missals. We are in the Garden of Gethsemane with Christ. He can foresee his suffering and crucifixion and prays, "Father, take away this cup," but no way—God, his father, won't let him off. He's sweating blood.

Sitting next to me in the pew, Albert Shimanski jabs an elbow into my side. I glance over to him. His hands are folded in prayer, and, without unfolding them, he dips his fingers down, gesturing towards his lap. His missal, a half-pound of onionskin pages between black covers, containing the psalms, hymns, creeds, epistles, gospels, the liturgy and New Testament—a book with the heft of a house brick—rests on his lap. I look at him, wondering what he wants, then look away. I don't want to attract the attention of Sister Regina who is posted only a pew behind us, and who has purposely seated us before her so that she can watch, through rimless glasses that magnify her eyes like an attacking owl, for the slightest disturbance. Shimanski nudges me again, and, when I glance over, gestures once more to the missal on his lap. It's nearly imperceptible, but it seems as if the missal moves. I look at Shimanski's face. He is smiling, blissful. I look at the missal. It twitches again.

It's Good Friday, three o'clock in the afternoon, the darkest hour of Christ's crucifixion, and right beside me, unbeknownst to the faithful, Albert Shimanski has an erection powerful enough to lift the word of God.

DONALD BARTHELME/EDWARD HIRSCH

Banking For Poets

A: YOU MUST TAKE MY COURSE. "Banking for Poets."

B: It sounds vaguely unpleasant.

A: It is unpleasant but you must take it. If you don't take my course there won't be enough people to take my course. My course will collapse.

B: Vaguely unpleasant, like reading *Business Week* on Saturday night. Like reading the *Wall Street Journal* on Sunday morning. Like—

A: We prose writers know about banking. We bank. Small sums, to be sure, but sometimes larger sums. Even the larger sums are small, you understand, in contrast to really large sums, but—Do you know about CD's?

B: Something to do with character development?

A: You give the bank a certain sum, for six months, say, and the bank keeps it warm for you, keeps it warm for you over a small flame, and then gives you a little present at the end of six months. Seven point two five percent, at the moment.

B: T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound took a course like that. At the London School of Economics. They loved it. Tom had a nervous breakdown and had to go to a sanatorium in Switzerland. Ezra started saying things like, "With Usura hath no man a home."

A: Poets of course deal in smaller sums than prose writers. Because they're poets. Nothing to be ashamed of, it's part of the natural order of things. Smaller sums.

B: It's culture, not nature. We get paid by the line, and not much. Theodore Roethke's "I run, I run to the whistle of money" probably brought in a buck and a half.

A: A great line. Probably be worth a dollar seventy-five, today.

B: Stop thinking like a dime store. A line is a unit of meaning.

A: I mean if you deal in lines of uneven length, then you're going to be dealing in smaller sums. Q.E.D.

B: Wallace Stevens said that "Money is a kind of poetry."

A: I like that.

B: But then again he worked for an insurance company and voted for Eisenhower.

A: Eliot in the bank, Stevens in Hartford. Those guys knew a thing or two.

B: Philip Larkin said he could hear money reproaching him. Quarterly. Is that what you call a bank statement?

A: Banks are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. Everyone knows that.

Especially the banks.

B: Did you ever wonder what money is *like*?

A: Tell me.

B: Larkin heard money singing. He thought that money is like

looking down
From long French windows at a provincial town.
The slums, the canal, the churches ornate and mad
In the evening sun. It is intensely sad.

A: It's clear that the poetic genius is, shall we say, not entirely unaware of the subject.

B: My point is, what if poetry were a kind of money?

A: You'd need "Banking for Poets." Even more than you now need "Banking for Poets." Do you know what a balloon loan is?

B: No, but it sounds lofty:

My loan ballooned like the sun rising
On the wrong side of the sky
Like a blush on the horizon . . .

A: One, two, three lines. My God, you've just made—

B: Three dollars at the very least. Why do you proseurs, if I may coin a word—

A: You're coining words now? You're a mint already?

B: —put so much sociology into your work? You know the price of everything.

A: Are you suggesting we're crass?

B: I think you need my course on "Transcendence for the Better-Off." The Orpheus Myth, the Sensitive Plant, a few of Blake's songs, Emerson's essay on "The Poet." We skip the 18th Century.

A: What is it about the 18th Century that annoys you?

B: Too much civility, too much order. All those words lining up in regular rows, like soldiers. I didn't like Civics class, either.

A: You should have taken Economics. Learned bottom lines.

B: The greatest writer of the 18th Century said, "No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money."

A: He also wrote:

This mournful truth is ev'rywhere confess'd
Slow rises worth, by poverty depress'd.

B: And:

There mark what ills the scholar's life assail
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.

He'd spent a night or two in debtor's prison. After that, he wrote a dictionary. Or maybe he wrote the dictionary first. Do you know the secondary meaning of the word "mushroom"?

- A: I stand before you in the most perfect ignorance.
- B: "An upstart; a wretch risen from the dunghill; the director of a banking establishment."
- A: I am not arguing that you should *become* a banker. Only that when you bank, you *bank*. Boldly. With dash and brio.
- B:
- There was a young mushroom named Rash
Who wrote only poems for cash—
But he drank too much wine
And he died on the vine
With all of his mush in the trash.
- A: Excellent. Is that Johnson's?
- B: No, that's mine. Hand-crafted.
- A: Ah, the 18th Century. It was a good century for prose. I need only mention "Gunga Din."
- B: "Gunga Din" is a poem. Kipling. 19th Century.
- A: It is? I remember it had Cary Grant and Douglass Fairbanks Jr. (Chants) Kalieeee. Kalieeee.
- B: You've got a gift for refrains. For rupturing luminous moments. You'd be great in Transcendence.
- A: Kalieeeeeeee. Of course actors make more money than writers. Lawyers make more money than writers. Football players make more money than writers.
- B: You're preoccupied.
- A: I'm worldly. Quite worldly. Most of the time the world thinks of us as unworldly, so I take care to be worldly. As worldly as a bishop.
- B: Religion is transcendence for the faint-hearted. It's spiritualism for clerks. You'd do better to take my class.
- A: I cleave to the religion of art.
- B: You sound like a Pre-Raphaelite—
- A: Art, after all, is that which transmogrifies the mundane stuff of everyday existence. Into money.
- B: I have a few mundane bills in a savings-and-loan . . .
- A: What do poets do for entertainment? Drive your shabby little cars here and there, I suppose, from garage sale to garage sale—
- B: I resent that. Some of us drive shabby big cars.
- A: —from garage sale to Burrito King, where you conduct your shabby little social lives—
- B: We watch old movies. Basketball games. Sing in the dark. While you prosecutors are speeding about in your Volvos, outfitting yourselves for life's journey at Banana Republic, processing on your word-processors . . .
- A: I follow my program.
- B: Shouldn't you follow your star?
- A: There is a program called WordStar. Mine is called Volkswriter. A plain, simple program.
- B: "Getting and spending we lay waste our powers." Wordsworth.
- A: You're suggesting we're crass. Prose writers. That's what you're suggesting. (Reaches under lectern and produces a large bunch of flowers, which he hands

- to B.) That's your free gift. For signing up for "Banking for Poets."
- B: Flowers. Ghostly lives from another world.
- A: You look mighty silly there, holding those flowers. Getting married?
- B: Maybe. My wife says that one of the advantages of being married to a writer is that you don't stay married forever. Or maybe that's one of the disadvantages, I can't remember.
- A: If you're getting married you need "Banking for Poets." So that the little poet-nest can weather the storms of the soon-to-arrive economic debacle.
- B: To tell the truth, I'm a little low on enrollment myself. (Reaches under lectern and produces a large teddy bear which he hands to A.) So here's your free gift for signing up for "Transcendence for the Better-Off."
- A: The bear. Famous for his—
- B: Courage. Victor Hugo had one on his desk while composing *Les Misérables*.
- A: That's the one with the candlesticks, right? This guy cops the bishop's candlesticks—
- B: —and runs through the sewers toward the light.
- A: Toward the light.
- B: In the end, the banks close and all the bells of Paris ring at once.
Transcendence.
- A: Then the banks all open again. On Monday morning.
- B: I guess so.
- A: You have to . . . prepare yourself . . . for Monday morning.
- B: Class.
- A: Yes.
- B: We have to have . . . people . . . in the class. Otherwise there's rather little point in it, don't you see?
- A: Yes, I see that.
- B: Gives you a sort of empty feeling. When the room is empty.
- A: Quite.
- B: But now we have each other.
- A: An irreducible minimum.
- B: Courage!

WALTER HOPPS**Interview**

October 21, 1991

YOU WERE THE FIRST PERSON TO CURATE A SHOW dedicated exclusively to Marcel Duchamp's work [Pasadena Art Museum, 1963]. I'm curious. What is it about Duchamp's work that attracted you? Why Duchamp?

Why Duchamp? Well, because he was there. It's interesting that there is such a person who was born in the nineteenth century and proceeded to think about art in a way that in no obvious manner seems indebted to the older, established traditions of painting and sculpture. Here, at the end of this particular century, or close to it, it's kind of interesting to think a little heretically in this regard. For instance, what if Picasso and Matisse, the two pillars of the art of our time, were considered not to have been of this time at all. In other words, there's a way one can think about Picasso's achievements as a kind of resolution of eighteenth and nineteenth century art. Say we consider Picasso for a moment as a figure who, rather than beginning anything, actually concluded what the consequences and insights of the middle of the nineteenth century would be. We take Baudelaire's axiom as to how one should look at art. For example: to best see a painting, turn it upside down—its shapes, its lines, its colors, its material components. Now Baudelaire said that 50-some years before Picasso made his first analytic cubist work. So what if Picasso is really only about fulfilling a 19th century idea that we most vividly know in the case of Baudelaire? Matisse's glories of decorative structure also have a lot to do with later nineteenth century art as well as other qualities that go back several hundred years. So what *is* of our century, then, and where does something unique to it begin?

Well, maybe it begins with Duchamp, and not with Picasso at all. Marcel had been making art of some consequence since, let's say, 1903. He was precocious, as Picasso was precocious, as Paul Klee. By precocious I mean that somebody bothers to say what you were doing at 10, 11, 12 years old, and eventually finds it of mature interest. It may be, indeed, juvenilia, but it is still terribly accomplished work, Mozart-like, Keats-like. Marcel was of that ilk.

Anyway, he did brilliant cubist work in 1911–12. He submitted it to his French Cubist Salon and it was rejected as "other," "different," "offensive," and that sort of settled an issue for it. After that—in notes and writing and theoretical

drawings—he began conceiving something quite different: an art that looked at the culture as given and applied the insights and critiques that exist in the mind rather than in the facility. What he did sounds dangerously like what we call post-modernism. That's one of the problems with post-modernist theory in the visual arts. One can almost see it beginning at the same time as modernism. I have yet to see post-modernist activity in the visual arts that wasn't anticipated 70 years or so ahead of its supposed appearance.

You're talking about the Duchamp of The Large Glass and the ready-mades?

Yes. The Duchamp of the grand project, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, which exists in the course of his lifetime in three manifestations. First, in word and thought, poetic and narrative—in other words, *The Green Box*. In 1934 Duchamp published a box edition of nearly 100 notes, papers, writings, theorems, postulates, sketches, and drawings that he'd been accumulating since around 1911. The forerunner of this came out of a work called *Box*, which was issued in an edition of three in 1914 with certain allusions to LaFontaine's poem, *Encore à cet astre*. It's a kind of poetics, if you will, both of theoretical diagrams and positions, as well as a kind of curious concrete poetry. Some call it poetry of the wastebasket, for the most part, because, literally, many of these scraps were on oddments of paper just stuck in a box. He liked to, in his perverse way, put some of his most interesting ideas on the most desultory scraps of paper. This was in line with a notion he had that to really understand a person, you needed the contents of their wastebasket more than you needed the contents of their desk.

So that work, which dates back to 1911–12, is finally published in 1934. It's the most abstract, literary, encoded, and poetic version of *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. The large project. We know the second manifestation, with the same title, as *The Large Glass*. That was begun in New York between 1915 and 1924. As of '24 it came to what he called its "state of incompletion." The final embodiment of that theme came in the work done between 1946 and 1967, just before his death in 1968.

Etant Donnés?

Yes. *As Given*. It's put as a postulate: "Given": 1. *The Waterfall* 2. *The Illuminating Gas*. To a good many of us, it's exactly the same theme, but in some ways the most literal, the most illusionistic.

Some people have criticized that piece as regressive and retinal, as though Duchamp had turned his back upon his previous work, upon conceptual experimentation.

Not at all. It was designed by Duchamp as a perceptual illusion. Conceptually, it's a piece that exists in the mind. You can't distance it the way other artworks can be distanced. It has to be approached one person at a time, to be held in the mind of single individuals. In that way, it's very consistent with his other work.

You were first exposed to Duchamp's work at the Arensberg's. Speaking as a curator, does Duchamp influence your presentations of other artists work?

Quite apart from his work, the existence of the critical mass that Walter and Louise Arensberg had assembled was enough to capture one's fancy. But Duchamp was, of course, very central to all the other art that was in the

collection. He had advised Arensberg on most of the work he acquired, so it was very austere and theoretical. It's interesting that there was only one Picasso, a rather minor one, and only one Matisse, the most cubistic, least colorful, in some ways atypical Matisse of any consequence anyone's ever seen. So I have to confess that the nature of Arensberg's collection is looking at the early roots of this century without an emphasis on Matisse or Picasso. Without it being subconscious, I guess that idea was there in my head early on.

What books did Arensberg give you?

Minotaur, an extraordinary surrealist magazine put out in the 1930s. There was a special issue with the first really intelligent essay on *The Large Glass*, the "Lighthouse of the Bride," by André Breton. I had no French at the time, but I could at least look at it, if not read it. Then there was *Jazz*, one of the more obscure, fascinating, early literary magazines in twentieth century America that's been forgotten. That was put out by Charles Henri Ford, a very youthful Tennessee Williams, and a number of other writers, poets, and artists from the South with a sort of gay sensibility. Later, that led to *View*, a well-produced, standard-format art magazine also totally devoted to the surrealist perspective, published in New York between 1941 and around 1949.

Frederick Kiessler, a Viennese expatriate, had put out a special issue on Duchamp where the two collaborated. That became one of the first accessible, wild, extravagant productions, with amazing graphic innovations like cut-outs and pop-ups. That issue of *View* was perhaps the very first commentary or explication of Duchamp ever published in America.

But unless you were a very dedicated art historian or graduate student, the material produced between 1904 and 1924 had no common commerce. Working artists and students didn't have access to this critical bohemian phase in New York. They didn't even know about it, a period in which the real birth of vanguard writing and visual arts took place.

These extraordinary activities stopped and took a different course around '24. Why is another story. But in any event, that work wasn't accessible to people who were coming to maturity in the middle of the century. By the '40s and '50s, it had all but vanished. And so *View* magazine, which covered a lot of the activity that centered around very new Americans and expatriate Europeans like Duchamp, was quite critical. It was before 1950; there was almost nothing in English about the experimental heritage of art in this country, and precious little about what went on abroad. The picture we did get was a very different picture, one that came through our great, brilliant, and wonderful Puritan, Alfred Barr—reformed Puritan, if you will—founder of The Museum of Modern Art. It was the first museum in America to acquire anything of Duchamp's, but it was rather late. At the MOMA, all artists were secondary to the worlds of Picasso.

So then, has Duchamp influenced the way you curate shows?

Oh, I don't know. I don't know that he . . . After all, he's just an artist, as he would say himself. So, no. I try to approach any exhibition in the terms given by the artist. I try to understand three things. First, what they did and would do at any public presentation of their work. It's like learning Beethoven so you believe you're inside his head so that you can play it as he would, conduct his symphonies

as he would have them conducted.

That's why you memorize all of an artist's work when you're preparing a show?

Yes. You're going to do a very superficial job presenting the work of an artist if you've just looked at the things you're going to show. You need to know the work very well, to know as much about what you're *not* showing as what you *are* showing. So there's that—truly knowing the work, and knowing it in a way that doesn't have so much to do with your own taste at all, or for that matter, perhaps nothing to do with your own taste. You have to know what he did and when. The order he made them in. What he valued highly and what he was just doing because somebody asked him to do it, and he didn't put his heart into it.

Secondly, you have to consider the time and context in which you're presenting the work. It's hard for people to understand. The way, for example, I presented Rauschenberg in Washington, D.C., is different from the way I presented him here in Houston, Texas. In Washington, I wanted it to look somewhat more informal and a little rougher. I wanted it to look bolder and more active, more rambunctious.

Why?

Because Washington is a city where the great, French, neo-classical tradition is so strong. It's beautiful. It's extraordinary. But in paradigm, that city is distanced, distracted by its involvement with a French rational legacy, its seventeenth and eighteenth century sense of neoclassicism. So I wanted to play against that. This is a very subtle thing. You don't explain it to anybody; they either get it or they don't. At least that's the theory in the back of your mind. It's like saying, "Well, I'm going to play this sonata in Prague, and they're so used to high, florid romanticism, I'm going to calm it down and make it more tightly Germanic, somewhat more Nordic in sensibility, which will catch their attention, in a way, a little better than if I were to play it the way they expect it to be played." It's exactly the reverse here in Houston.

Houston is a kind of physical wasteland of randomness and disorder, and I don't mean that perjoratively. It's a relatively new city. There's nothing modern about Houston; there's no great depth of visual art culture going back much before '39. The sensibility of working artists here is expressionistic and dormal, loose, organic, gestural. So I wanted to put together a more consciously symmetrical and rational presentation of Rauschenberg's work.

After all, in one sense he's a very pragmatic, matter-based artist, who loves the world as found, as given. Like Mark Twain in literature, he helped invent an American language in the visual arts. That's part of what Rauschenberg was doing for us. Anyway, there are those things that make a difference. The time and place that we are doing the work.

The third thing is the immediate physical circumstances and what you have at hand to work with. If your budget is \$12 and you've got a shack, you do something a little differently than if you've got \$100,000 and carpenters who can do anything. In Washington, I had an 1875 Beaux Arts style building with solid architecture. I had to take the rooms as they were and thus the show stretched out, taking more space. The whole show was laid out in the correct order, but I had to choose the rooms carefully and put the work together in a way that fit, given the architecture.

On the other hand, the Menil, a mid-century, minimal, modernist structure, is solid in its way, but it's also light and airy and synthetic. It's all made up. It doesn't have a long history of being that way. In a strange way, the qualities of looking at art in the Menil, though it's absolutely physical and palpable—the surfaces and light and air—resemble looking at art on a printed page, much more so than looking at art in a building that's 110 or 120 years old. A professor of mine said, by the way, that once art could be reproduced on a white page, once a discourse about art began to appear in books, and thought about art began to engage with a literature, with the body of reproductions on white pages, that *that* is what led us to the white rooms we take for granted, that we see art in today.

In this sense, the museum room is an analog of the photographer's white, airy studio, a legacy that comes from fine printing. It's the studio and the reproductive process on white paper that led to the kind of rooms we see today. Even these white rooms in this [Treebeards Restaurant] antique building—why are we looking at all this art on just plain white walls? Ultimately, the answer is because they're just like pages in a body of literature.

So you get involved with three things: what the artist wants, the circumstances of time and place in a larger sense, and, in a very focused sense, the physical complement of material resource you have to work with.

You talk about resonance and balance and the dialogues that exist between different works.

Yes. That's . . . Yes. How do I . . . Sure. It sounds . . . that notion had some sex appeal. But what is it really? At any given time and place there are limits to what people can possibly look at. There are very few symphonies written that last eight or nine hours without interruption. Very few. It comes back to the nature of human beings. They must eat, defecate, urinate. There are body rhythms that make it very hard to sit still for nine hours. Now there are different experiments that challenge that. Satie did. And contemporaneously, Bob Wilson. For Satie, it was a kind of strange, unique theoretical conceit, whereas Wilson understands that people will come and go, that the nature of his art is such that you don't have to experience every last minute of it in a confluent, moment-to-moment way. You can come and go at any place in the course of daily life.

The effacing of narrative?

Yes. It just breaks down. You can come and go. You can interrupt it. I see my family in the morning. I go away to work. They're there again later in the day. I may come home for lunch; I may come home for dinner. I may go to bed early tonight.

Some things have changed.

And some things have not. So one is conscious of how things are scaled, of what people today can compellingly remember—the way we live. So that's the sort of editorial judgment you need to understand the entire achievement, the narrative of the exhibition. My point is you're thinking of the scale. Let's say we're doing Picasso. Now, he has done 500 pieces of such big, bombastic power that when you're doing such a show, you can't put all of those in. It would be like listening to three Beethoven symphonies in one evening. But with about 150 items, one could compellingly field the stature and weight of Picasso's enormous

achievement. Not easily, but one could work it out.

They would overpower and diminish one another?

Both. You couldn't pay enough attention. It's a mistake made often in presentations. So, in that situation, especially if you're working with a living artist who wants to put in every single thing, you try to find quieter moments, smaller-scale works that allow people new to it all to see the importance of other things. You try to establish some weights and measures that reflect the kind of intensity and dynamism of the work, without overpowering your audience. You have to calm it down to the point where it will have the maximum impact. It's hard enough to remember what's going on in an individual room, let alone a great many of them. But if you get the number manageable, so that it can be experienced well enough and begin to be true enough when they walk away, then you've done something.

Also, you'll occasionally find things within an individual artist's work that restate an idea two or three different ways, from a slightly different perspective. A nice sequence in an exhibit is where three things actually explore a larger idea. That's what I mean by "talking to one another." It reinforces something that isn't so apparent in an individual piece.

So by framing the context of the work, by allowing the works to resonate with each other, you increase the scale?

Right. You get the feeling that when you look at any individual work, whether it's Jheronimus's *Raft of the Medusa*, a tiny little drawing of Paul Klee's, the Lincoln Memorial, or the Washington Monument, you have the illusion that you've taken it in only at a glance. This is how many people experience art. Thus it's confusing for people; it's harder for them to understand how different pieces work in a temporal, linear sequence, as well as how they work as alternatives to those linear sequences. You can't walk into a musical event and hear the whole program backwards. If it's an evening where you're mixing, say, baroque pieces with very contemporary pieces, the order in which these things are arranged is going to affect your whole experience. You're forced to hear it in just the order the conductor or the program impresario wants you to hear it—you're *forced* to experience the material in a certain way. But when you experience visual art, though you do set things up in an ideal sequence, people can always wander off course if they want to. They can walk in and look at the show backwards. So you ask yourself if it plays as well in reverse. There are also all sorts of multiple, internal vantage points. You can look this way or that. It begins to function a bit like architecture. So how do you have all these alternatives and yet still convey a sense of the overall structure? Things like that come into play. It's a kind of bastard form. This idea of staging temporary exhibits of material is not much more, in a sophisticated sense, than 100 years old. Only in relatively recent times, the last 50–60 years, have people been good at it. In this way it resembles dance. Only now have some of our major choreographers begun to find ways to annotate or code what they've done. So some of us are vain enough to report how we've done certain things. Certain records and measurements are useful beyond just notations of the documents used, or the photographs of what a particular show looked like.

Have you ever worked in a space where you had multiple entrances?

One of the largest and, in the conventional sense, more chaotic spaces I have worked with was at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, their old quarters, down in the Japanese district. It's a huge old warehouse, modified by the contemporary architect Frank Gehry. It's a big, open, free-form industrial structure—two buildings joined together, a nonlinear, deconstructionist form of architecture that looks like a giant Tinkertoy system when you're standing in the middle of it. The show was called *Automobile and Culture*. The concept was very simplistic. In fact, I was criticized by some intelligent critics for doing an all-too-simplistic show.

The idea was to take the 100 years or so that the automobile has been a cultural artifact, an iconic entity, and then look at the art of the same period, a chronology that either depicted the automobile *in* art or art that was in some way affected by it. We had this parallel track that we used to present the actual automobiles as objects, right in and around all the artwork. It's interesting how our sense of culture is so closely associated with the automobile. Set someone down near a Model A, put them next to a streamlined Studebaker or a new Lamborghini, and they know where they're at in cultural time. This was my notion—that they would always be oriented in time, place, and circumstance by the nature of the car, without even having to think about it.

You have a reputation for being enigmatic and controversial. Are you the "bad boy" of art curatorship in America?

That's what others would say. In some eyes. In some eyes.

I don't mean that as a negative, either. Duchamp was a "bad boy."

Some eyes, yes.

According to Donald Barthelme, one of Rauschenberg's virtues is that he's been able to maintain "being bad" for 35–40 years.

Of course, that's a compliment. He was less iconoclastic than anyone imagined. But in Rauschenberg's case, the motives and the nature of the achievements were forever being misunderstood. That was a hell of a burden. Now it's very hard for him to be misunderstood. There's a cadre, a squadron out there, of analysts, appreciators and detractors alike, who quickly recognize what's going on. And that's a disappointment. Yesterday's sadness and burden is today's disappointment.

What do you make of Rauschenberg's comment a couple of weeks ago that young artists today don't suffer enough?

I think he's wrong, but I wasn't about to contradict him in front of the press. I'll elaborate on that a little bit. In his own day, there was a great variance; *he* was more at variance than. It's strange: not every participant gets to step back and take a wide, chronicler's view of what's going on. So when Bob says, "We suffered," indeed it was true, to the degree in which there was startlingly little recognition or recompense for achievement, especially for anyone even remotely related to

abstract expressionism or any form of experimentation.

Yes, but weren't even the abstract expressionists a little jealous of Rauschenberg's comparatively early success, when they weren't able to sell their works till they were in their early 40s?

He didn't sell anything, either. It's not a question of even selling.

But he received the Venice Biennale in '64 [Europe's most prestigious prize for painting]. And after that. . .

Yes, but by then there's little problem for any of them. The point is, when Rauschenberg says "we" he's taking a narrower look. There were any number of artists, perfectly sincere and serious about their work, who *weren't* suffering. Artists like Abraham Rattner and Hyman Bloom were getting an order of material success and recognition and enjoying a patronage that de Kooning didn't enjoy at all, let alone Rauschenberg. So it's a very selective view of "we," "we suffered." The same thing is true today, but with a different sense of expectation.

How so?

Somewhere by the middle 1960s, the idea emerges that someone could very quickly enjoy recognition, material success, and even become a kind of celebrity.

Andy Warhol and Frank Stella?

Stella and Warhol are conspicuous examples—Andy all the way to folk icon. People working in this café who don't go to museums know who Andy Warhol is. Some artists have entered, through media, a new realm of celebrity, and that's a change. But darn few painters are allowed rock-star status. One shouldn't suggest, as one might conclude from what Rauschenberg was saying, that for artists today life is at all too easy.

Duchamp advises artists to go underground.

Some do. Some very important artists have. Have you ever heard of Wallace Burman?

No.

Burman, as far back as '50, '51, '52, set himself on a course where he wouldn't be a public figure. The range of major figures who admired him and his acquaintances is astounding. Orson Welles. Brian Jones. William Burroughs. He was one of the first people to publish Burroughs. He edited this little literary journal called *Semina* which is probably going to be reprinted in a facsimile edition. It's a rare book, all arcane.

Then there's Burn Porter, a young artist I met in Kentucky. Or John Webb. It's strange to give voice to the names of people who wanted to be obscure or underground and who are very, very good. But they're out there. And they don't want published careers though they certainly have had the opportunities. There are, of course, cases of artists who become deranged. Have you heard of Walter Anderson?

No.

He was Southern born and trained at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, where Thomas Eakins came from. He was a brilliant student there in the 1930s, and launched a great career. But he went mad and went back to Mississippi, to an island on the Gulf, and did this fantastic, insane work.

Marcel was interested in such people. He helped stimulate a following for this old madman's work, this lost, arcane figure. And now he's in museums—a taste Duchamp helped establish.

Do you think the motive to go underground is part of Duchamp's response to the tyranny of the Salon, to the perception of art as a form of commodity?

I think it was to be left alone. He had a very clear sense of how the vicissitudes of a career actually shape the work. You know, if you get to do great murals for a fair or this dealer or this house, or these patrons begin to commission specific works of art, you're going to get used to what they call a "lifestyle." So you start supplying a dealer with enough work so that you can bank a couple of hundred K every year. You end up paying taxes on \$200,000 to \$400,000 or more, and you build your life around that. If you're living like a good stockbroker or a very successful surgeon, it's going to shape the art. And that goes on.

Duchamp helped people collect such art. But for himself he chose to do his own work hermetically. He alone was going to be responsible for it. He wasn't looking to become, in the worst sense, a public figure, though, ironically enough, it turned out that way. He deliberately stayed in Paris during the New York Armory Show in 1913. He figured his works would come and go and that would be that.

He did seem to talk about the commodification of art as an unfortunate . . .

He played it both ways.

Yes, the Box is . . .

Not really with his own work. He felt, "no for me, yes for others." For instance: "I have friends whose work I love; they want to sell their work. I'll help them get it sold. I'll take a commission on getting it sold." So he profited from the sale of Brancusi's work. And he ended up helping to build three great collections. He was the principal advisor to the Arensbergs, Katherine Dreier, and Peggy Guggenheim. He was a supplier and acquirer of early modern work for Sidney Janis, who was one of the dealers who helped supply Alfred Barr at The Museum of Modern Art.

What about today?

There's no one quite like that today.

It does seem that many artists are very critical of the dealer's relationship with the museum.

The situation is pretty much the same as it's always been, except in numbers. Do things change because there are more of them? In biological systems, yes. I can scratch your arm here, so that we draw blood. If I then put a few staphylococci on you, you'd fight them off. They're in the air and they give us boils and sores and infections. But if I generated a massive amount of staph in a petri dish and put

that on you, you'd get blood poisoning very fast, and without an antibiotic you'd be done for. So it's the quantity of the given situation that makes the difference. The numbers. Society has not caught up with the numbers involved with art.

Consider the 1950s. In that decade alone there were more young Americans born who eventually found themselves attracted to aesthetic or artistic pursuits than have existed in Western society for over 300 years, from the Renaissance through the Baroque. I'm including all the visual arts and all of literature. For every significant individual in those 300 years, there are now more people turning to the arts who were born in that decade. The sheer number has changed everything. The kinds of institutions that deal with these "useless" pursuits are a consequence of the end of the 18th century. Somewhere in the eighteenth century, aesthetic pursuits became peculiar. They were no longer part of society's rapport with spiritual activity and ritual.

You're referring to the cultural shifts that occurred as a result of the Enlightenment?

That's right. We are still byproducts of the Enlightenment. And the social institutions available to deal with all this haven't expanded very much in the last couple of hundred years.

This is the ideological nature of the tension at the NEA right now?

Right. Now we have a kind of expression we think of as "worthwhileness." We don't find it useful, exactly, so we struggle to find ways to turn it into capitalist billions. And to do that we have to value it as decorative embellishment. Thus we're forced, in a sense, to look at art as a commodity. It's the nature of the system we live in. This has nothing to do with dealers or hipsters or promoters or hucksters. It's much deeper. What the hell else could we do with it given the kind of society we live in, now that we have this grotesque surplus of production. What does that mean, especially if you have the kind of elitist notions that come down to us from all sorts of precious aesthetic views codified in the eighteenth century—that these things are rare and special. Well, the human beings making these things have proliferated to an unprecedented degree. So who among them is special, and in what ways is any of it rare? It's a very critical moment, just because of the sheer numbers.

This was apparent mid-century. There was an explosion of mature, trained men, mostly on the G.I. Bill. And a majority of them found that the way they were going to survive was to teach more people how to make art and encourage them to do so.

There is a similar situation in writing today—the proliferation of the writing workshop, the creative writing program.

It's a consequence of demographics and numbers and the expansion of higher education. But people forget; the world of John Russell was every bit as elite and arbitrary, if not more so, than what we face today. The market today is much more open than people realize.

Than ever before?

It used to be inconceivable that people born outside of the higher classes, *unattached* very early in their lives to economic relief, would have a snowball's

chance in hell of being regarded as worthwhile. That's a very big change. The problem today is that there's no reasonable institution to support what does exist, what does get produced. America began by building museums when it had nothing much to put in them. At least that's what the perception was. And now it's so egregiously the other way around.

Do you think there's a relationship between ethics and aesthetics?

Yes, though it takes a lot of different forms. It's either yes or a very long answer. Don't we buy the notion that any utterance whatsoever, rooted in language or a coded system in society, will have as part of its nature an ethical base? So there is no ethics-free utterance.

No apolitical art?

No.

Nor expression?

No. At root.

It's a matter of the degree to which we define the political in art, the terms through which a piece of art engages, or does not engage, those topical issues that seem to have some nexus of moral or ethical concern. Because Faulkner does not directly engage issues of pacifism in his art, I cannot morally condemn him, even though I believe there's no basis whatsoever for any capital punishment, or any society that is ethically or morally subject to systems where arms can and will be borne. On the other hand, I don't give the visual culture of my time a litmus test to determine where it stands on any given issue.

There are some very powerful artists whose topical, temporal terms engage major ethical issues. And there are those who aren't necessarily engaging those issues who *become* an issue in society.

I don't think it was a passive matter with Mapplethorpe, for instance. I think he was very conscious of the issues he was bringing to bear. And I think it was rather explicit, considering the everyday delight we take in the sexual organs of plants. He wanted to broaden our field of vision by invoking the overt, voyeuristic joy and delight we take in the genitalia of botanical forms. He took the ethical stance that there is no difference between that and an erotic response to human sexuality, whether it's of a gay sensibility or not. He's not my favorite photographer, but he's a very good one. He's also a very strong example of an artist engaged with ethical issues. I think that part of the strength of his work is based in the area where he's had the most social contradiction.

We may be paying a little more attention to that in the years ahead. I don't know why I say that, but we may.

I'm curious about your famous disappearances; they seem to have attained a "mythological" status.

This is a perfect example. You and I are able to talk here today because, for the moment, no one knows exactly where I am, except you. If anyone else knew, we wouldn't be able to have an uninterrupted conversation. There are a whole list of things I should be doing at the moment, and if we were sitting at my office or anywhere near a phone, we couldn't be carrying on any kind of conversation. It

has to do with trying to explain to people what you want. People say, "We know you're busy and you want to talk, but what about this?" It's as simple as that.

I wanted to say something else on this issue of working underground. I think it's very worthwhile, very feasible, even quite practical, especially if you're very engaged in doing your work—whatever it is—and you're not the least bit interested in earning your livelihood from it. We know from prior examples that it's quite possible in this society. You can help run an insurance company; you can be a baby doctor; you can make furniture. Mr. Burman proceeded to make furniture. Sometimes a wife or siblings will work to support you while you go about your business. That worked very well for Barnett Newman in his most creative years. That does happen. So you can make what you want to make.

But beyond not earning a livelihood from your work, not being subject to that aspect of the marketplace, let's say that you don't really want a public career. That's easy enough. No one is knocking doors down trying to give people public careers and recognition. It's the other way around. But then, what do you do if you believe in what you are doing and you would like it to exist in the culture somehow? What does one do? It's really very simple. All you need is half a dozen friends who are convinced that what you're doing is worthwhile, and who may, in future years, have some sort of public or archival career. You make sure that they have copies or good holdings of what you're about. You literally choose them, and you make your own conspiracy that they will be the guardians of whatever legacy you wish to leave.

In the case of Wallace Burman, you have a rather shy man who ultimately had the conviction and the gumption to walk into the University of California where he discovered a very enlightened chief librarian, Dr. Lawrence Clark Powell, who had all sorts of arcane books. Burman showed him what he'd been publishing and asked if the library would like to have a complete set. Powell was intrigued, and it was so done. So if you are a da Vinci and you want to preserve your collected notebooks, you just need to find a kindred soul to serve as an archival base. In this way you can propel your work well into the future. You can walk away and never have to worry about whether or not anyone ever knew who you were during your lifetime.

I've seen it happen with contemporaries of my own. I was well aware of how Duchamp took such pains himself. It's a perfectly respectable way to base one's career. You don't have to enter the tunnel. But you're tempted if you do.

Calvin Tomkins recently published a profile article on you in the New Yorker, in which you were accused of being a sexist. Are you a sexist?

No. My scorn shows no sexual basis or persuasion whatsoever. I show no prejudice as to my abusiveness.

Do you think the accusation itself is fair?

No. It's interesting. The person involved just felt that way. When she discovered it was going to be published, she was very upset, so she called me and asked if I wanted them to withdraw the remark. I told her I couldn't advise her one way or the other. If that's what she felt, so stated. So I had an opportunity to have the remark withdrawn. But here's the complicated thing. I certainly do not think that I'm a sexist. But I didn't want to enter into the process of suppressing

her expression of her opinion of me, or of any views whatsoever. At the same time, she is absolutely wrong.

Had you asked her to withdraw the comment it would have been a form of censorship.

Suppression. It's not so much censorship, it's suppressing someone else's views.

They're very closely related I think.

They are closely related. If I enjoy the freedom to make unsubstantiated or even incorrect or outrageous remarks about someone, then I'm not about to suppress anybody else's occasion to do the same.

Are there any outrageous remarks you want to make about anyone right now?

I'd love to make some statements right now.

Or would make right now.

I'm disheartened about the state of the country at the moment, the way we continue to celebrate its "distinguished" public figures. We have probably just appointed a coward and a liar to the Supreme Court, and he was championed by a president who is probably the highest placed overt liar we have in public life today, President Bush. I'm less concerned about poor, lost souls who drive pick-up trucks through plate-glass cafeteria windows in order to shoot a mere 25 people [Killeen, Texas]—I'm less concerned about that. It's sad for all concerned, but it's nothing special. Life has been that way since Rome. But the ethical neurasthenia that resides at the heart of the country—that's disheartening.

You've always been extremely intuitive about directions in art that our culture eventually considers significant. Considering that, what advice would you give to artists today?

I think perhaps it's important for artists to think about *place*. This is something that comes from Duchamp as well. He said there must be a *sanctity of place*. It's an oracular remark, and he never elaborated on it. A great many artists become lost, not so much in terms of *what* they're doing, but *where* they're doing it.

Young artists that have the insight that it doesn't matter if you're from Rutherford, New Jersey, or Oxford, Mississippi, can sometimes, in an anxious ruthlessness, get lost. They lose their sense of their own subject matter, of where they are and where the work is coming from. The subversive masochism in everything that we see, in all the nascent forms of information, in the media, in the world, begins to dissolve this notion of sanctity and place: people can become convinced that there is no place, or it's a *good* place, or it's just *everywhere*. But work doesn't happen everywhere. I guess for some poets it doesn't matter what hotel room they're sitting in, or pension or wherever.

Place can be very important for writers, too. Often there's a very specific mental space or place that they take with them, and the landscape that's involved in that, though it may change in its physical forms, is still dictated by the way they approach it. They get turtlish. You refer to a museum as a research space.

Yes. That's one of the forms it can take.

What do you think the next significant direction in art might be?

I keep wondering who might be in such a primitive state, in terms of visual art. For at least a couple of hundred years, or longer, almost no innovation seems to have occurred. Perhaps we are too self-conscious of prior forms, of our antique technologies. We've only been hyperconscious of technology's role in culture, again, for a couple of hundred years—even less. Within that time, artists have always had the curious option to take any number of positions. The most simple, hand-done, atavistic markings, as well as things that are pure data-based, that just turn up without any normal scale—as on a microchip—can be very much a part of current art.

I suspect that before we reach the year 2000, somebody working in electronically based media will appear. In other words, it's surprising to me how long our acutely sensitive visual/auditory forms have existed without a new kind of poet or dramatist being able to make works that live or function primarily in those mediums. This is not an issue of subject matter, *per se*.

I am reminded of Joseph Cornell. Something in him just naturally bent toward the visual, although given different family circumstances, he might have been a poet. And as it turned out, he *did* become a kind of visual poet, an imagist. But he thought that film, which was in its infancy then, was going to be the crucial medium for poets, to the extent one could edit images to create various effects—tricks, magics, optical illusions, animations. So he thought, logically, rationally, that film would be the perfect medium for a poet. Not just collage and assemblage, he didn't even have those words then. But he saw the access and paraphernalia of the film industry evolve into a massive public entertainment industry. There was no room for real poets to make great narrative visual spectacles. Maybe it was a misunderstanding of the potential scale.

However, I suspect that a new kind of visual poet will in time spring into our midst. The existence of new technologies is constantly creating new potentials for what art can be. And it will be interesting to see how this new art interfaces with mass systems. For instance, the existence of the long-playing record changed what music could be. It enabled us to establish and preserve an historical familiarity with classical music in a way that was unprecedented. It also allowed for all kinds of innovations in popular music. Suddenly a curious guy, Sam Phillips, sitting down in Memphis, Tennessee, with a minor investment in equipment, could find and propel a new rhythm into mainstream culture. And that had all been around for a while, but it took someone like Sam Phillips to put it together. So I suspect that something similar will occur in the visual arts, though it probably won't have anything to do with the public airwaves. That's not where what I'm talking about can live. Instead, it will exist in a self-select basis the way books or magazines do, only on some kind of digital disk. And that may happen. Whatever *it* is, we'll recognize it. And there could easily be 10 to 20,000 copies at large in the world—quite enough to change the course of culture. I suspect that will happen. I've been waiting. As far as I'm concerned, it could happen any day now, whether or not it's a Chaplain or a Griffith, or God knows, Emily Dickinson. Can you imagine somebody of Emily Dickinson's mind and reach working in the privacy of a studio like the one Cindy Sherman works in? Or a Hilda Doolittle—someone of extraordinary literary imagination and power? And then suddenly they're out

there circulating in the world?

I think it's also very likely to be a woman. It'll be very hermetic and very private and it will be very powerful. What we've seen, for example, in the media techniques used by Barbara Krueger or Jenny Holzer is just a touch. We haven't seen anything yet. The Met will be filled with full-blown audio/visual stuff.

Suddenly we'll look back and see bits and pieces of interesting historical antecedent. But we don't have much of a sensible context for it now. The malleability of optical/photographic information in image is so vast there must be thousands of different kinds of things that can be done. Whether or not it'll have a place in Tower Records...

Why a woman?

Just a guess. Just a guess. The chances have never been so good. Social politics might just give a woman the extra edge, the extra shove. The opportunity to occupy a place of real stature is there.

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