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Dead letters! Does it not sound like dead men? Conceive a man by nature and misfortune prone to a pallid hopelessness: can any business seem more fitted to heighten it than that of continually handling these dead letters, and assorting them for the flames? For by the cartload they are annually burned. Sometimes from out the folded paper the pale clerk takes a ring: — the finger it was meant for, perhaps, moulders in the grave; a bank-note sent in swiftest charity: — he whom it would relieve, nor eats nor hungers any more; pardon for those who died despairing; hope for those who died unhoping; good tidings for those who died stifled by unrelieved calamities. On errands of life, these letters speed to death.

— Herman Melville
Bartleby the Scrivener

dead letter

uni magazine of the arts

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(look familiar, Rob?)

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Dream Series, by Cheryl Roth



threw
 away two yellowed
 roses
 today.
 had been sitting on my shelf
 of books.
 beautiful roses crinkled
 and still.
 one straight
 one curled
 given by one person
 two yellowed roses
 thrown away
 today.

— michael swanson



MEMORIES OF AVALON

Kenneth Lyftogt

The era of the 1960's, like my youth, has drifted into a past of memory and mythology. It was a passionate time of radical social movements and rock'n'roll romanticism set against the bloody backdrop of the war in Vietnam. The World War II generation, proud of its self-appointed role of world guardian, found itself squared off against its own children, who saw the role as hypocritical. The elders took the nation into war in Southeast Asia and a radical segment of American youth responded by declaring a war of independence at home.

Just as the hobos of the Depression years came out of economic disaster and the cross country rail system, the modern interstate highway system and the disaster in Vietnam produced the "road freaks." For a brief period, these freaks (called hippies by the straight press) created their own Camelot, an underground nation of gypsy outlaws built on rock music, marijuana smoke, and bitterness toward the war-makers. Some called this alien community the Woodstock Nation; I called it Trans-Amerika. Parents across the country watched their children leave home and disappear into a mysterious long-haired underground. The FBI's ten most wanted list was dominated by young radicals who could vanish like grasses in a field simply by hitting the streets. The military found members of what appeared to be a foreign country among its draftees. Virtually every city had a hippie enclave as foreign to middle class America as the Black ghettos. Anyone traveling across the country saw the ragged, shaggy-haired thumbers hitch-hiking toward some far off Avalon.

My own experiences as part of the hitch-hiking segment of Trans-Amerika resulted in my book, *Road Freaks of Trans-Amerika*. The book was meant as a story of one member of that underground existence. Any reputation the book has earned has been, happily, due to that approach. I have found that people care about the character in the book. They are also curious how someone who was given and claimed the title "outlaw of Amerika" in the sixties has fared in the seventies and eighties.

Times have changed and the freaks of the sixties have gone many different ways. Many activist types who flamboyantly renounced materialism in the sixties have changed and today use their organizational talents to flamboyantly make money. Jerry Rubin, for example, has made a career out of flaunting his hair cut and his wealth. Others have embraced right-wing politics and fundamentalist Christianity with the same blind enthusiasm they once gave Mao or Giap.

The music of the sixties, the true catalyst of social conscience, is now used to sell bathsoap, and beer companies sponsor rock concerts while marijuana smokers are still jailed.

My hair is still quite long and is as much an oddity as ever. At one time, long hair meant something — a renunciation of authority and an arrogant declaration of personal freedom. It took a heavy commitment to wear long hair; long-hairs were kicked out of school, fired from jobs, subject to attacks by red-necked thugs and hassles by the police. Today it seems every other person *used* to have long hair and is eager to brag, "mine used to be longer than yours." A generation of *former* long-hairs. A young man recently asked a friend of mine if he thought I would ever amount to anything with such hair. Twenty years ago, he would have known that the hair was evidence to the fact that "amounting to something" in the sense of a job and community status was not a goal. Even in the eighties a personal measure of my freedom has been my hair.

When one writes about the sixties, there seems but one reality — Vietnam. That damned war on the fringes of the empire twisted and shaped every aspect of those years. The great triumph of the sixties, the Civil Rights Movement, was cut short by the war as poor blacks were made available for cannon fodder before being made available for decent jobs. The money and national enthusiasm needed to actually create a "Great Society" were squandered in Southeast Asia. The national pride needed to bring the races together was thrown away on a war as significant for its racial characteristics as any other.

The war was a major reason for the power of the youth culture. Politicians could sputter and spout about national duty from the comfort of their Washington offices, but youth had no such luxury. The I-A draft card was a young man's passage into adulthood — and war. Young people knew their opinions on the war were not academic; they all had friends killed and mangled in the war, or lost friends to jail and Canada. For many, it seemed the nation had declared youth expendable currency. Before being granted the privilege of voting, American youth were told to prove patriotism by killing and dying in a war so controversial the statesmen responsible would not risk their careers by *declaring* it a war. Jail or jungle combat welcomed youth to adulthood. A lifetime's living had to be completed before that passage.

The mythology of the eighties has each Vietnam veteran

coming home to find his plane surrounded by spitting demonstrators. Few myths are as wrong. The anti-war movement was anti-military, but not anti-soldier. The troops sent to Vietnam were seen as victims, draftees captured in the prime of their lives and sacrificed to presidential politics. I was in Washington, D.C. during the great Mayday Demonstrations of 1971 and watched hundreds of vets storm the capital, many in wheelchairs or on crutches, and throw their medals back. If the Vietnam soldier was betrayed, it was by the government that sent him in the first place. If the government had had its way, Vietnam would have been the great national secret. It was the *government* that refused to acknowledge its warriors, sending them home as if they had merely been on another tour of duty. It was the *government* that sprayed Agent Orange and other poisons on its own soldiers (and the people of Vietnam) and then refused to accept responsibility, forcing vets to go to court to force proper redress. Often when the vet came home it was in the hippie enclaves that he found refuge. While it was not deliberate at the time, it is now obviously appropriate that the first of the freaks introduced in *Road Freaks of Trans-Amerika* is a limping Vietnam veteran seeking shelter in a mountain commune.

Most film records of the sixties are of crowd scenes, rock festivals, mass demonstrations and riots. Often forgotten is the loneliness of the freaks of Trans-Amerika. The Vietnam vet also knew the loneliness. Even though he had been part of a large army, there were no hollow squares to give shelter and his combat experiences were intensely personal. There would be a special few who understood, but for the most part, his life as a warrior would be carried within. The anti-war hippie was no different in that respect. Though the anti-war movement was large, it offered little in terms of protection, and all freaks knew that once busted or cornered there was no place to turn for help. There are two recurring nightmares from my life. The first is the memory of being escorted along a jail tier and hearing the threatening voices from the other cells calling, "send that pretty long-hair in here, guard!" The other is the memory of a midnight highway and an attack by a pack of vicious mudsharks eager to be patriots by wasting a hippie. Outside of each small community of outlaws was a very hostile world. Much of the story of *Road Freaks of Trans-Amerika* is about traveling from one sanctuary to another across a dangerous land. One of the reasons the huge rock festivals and mass demonstrations were so important to the counter-culture was that they reminded us that we were not alone out there.

Within our shelters we gloried in our outlaw status, giving great loyalty to our own and viewing those on the outside as the enemy. Each act of rebellion, and each retaliation for that rebellion, enhanced our solidarity and our estrangement from the rest of society. I remember hearing then radical Yippie Jerry Rubin proudly declare, "I don't trust anyone who hasn't been in jail!" He was right; jail time or a fugitive's status were all but obligatory proof of one's commitment to the freak revolution.

All social institutions were viewed as part of the establishment's power structure, designed to turn out mindless beer drinking workers and soldiers. If the individual could not be made to conform in school, then the necessity of keeping respectable employment would do the job. If a person still refused to knuckle under as an employee, then there was

either the military and the war or the prison system. I remember lying in a jail cell facing several years of hard time for possession of weed and flag desecration, wondering if I should accept the DA's offer to drop the charges against me if I joined the army. It seemed obvious that the war in Vietnam was not being fought to protect the nation against an outside threat, but was being waged as another tool of internal discipline.

The hardest memory of the war of freak independence was the war between the generations. Parents were society's first line of defense, and if society had lied to us and betrayed us, it was done with the willing cooperation of our parents. The sledge hammer destruction of our parents' values was an important objective, as if each and every one of them was personally responsible for racist institutions and the war. The wounds suffered in those battles have often been the hardest to heal. I think of my mother, whose family had always proudly sent its sons into the military; military service was a right of passage for the young man and for the parents it meant acceptance by the rest of the family for a job well done. I denied my mother that acceptance; in the opinion of her peers, she failed by raising a traitor.

The freak also threatened the families of his or her friends. In the spring of 1971, I spent about a month thumbing across Iowa to different cities and colleges helping organize the Mayday Demonstrations in Washington, D.C. The night I got home I met a young woman, the daughter of one of the town's leading citizens. When she told her father of her involvement with me, he beat her bloody and locked her in a closet. When she escaped, she hit the highway with me and two days later

THE SLAUGHTER

If I could hear him read again,
his head on my belly in the grass,
of Agamemnon, the hero returning,
of Don Quixote, wiping vomit
from his friend's mouth . . .

My blood spinning
from this Merit Ultra-Light,
chewing on the touch of him
and his vinegar-rinsed curls . . .

Tell me, lioness, Klytainnestra,
what was the power
rising in your body, sword in hand,
to draw your knight's blood?
This man laid his soft neck in my lap,
and fingered, with olive caresses,
his pages and my legs, legs willing to open
and enclose him.
Tell me, Mother of Innocence destroyed,
the slaughter, did it satisfy?

— Pamela Lee

we were in Washington, part of the largest anti-war demonstration yet organized. A month later we said good-bye on a warm morning in San Francisco. I don't know if she ever saw her father again.

In the comfort of memory, it is easy to forget the pain of that era. There weren't just love troops massing in the hills. Charles Manson was no aberration, but a real example of the dangerous and seamy side of Trans-Amerika. Anyone on the streets in those days could point out some Manson type on every block; mystical, power-mad gurus using drugs, sex and youthful rebellion to control their disciples. Madman Jim Jones came out of the sixties using anti-establishment rhetoric and paranoia to prey upon alienated liberals, Blacks and poor people. There were heroin deaths at Woodstock and the Hell's Angels terrorized Altamont. Trans-Amerika was not clean.

There is no place where myths of the sixties mingle so freely with memory as in my reflections of life on the road. The drifter has been acknowledged in song and story as a free person. The drifter comes and goes at will, bowing to no one and living by a self-imposed code of honor. As a hitch-hiking freak, I had my pipe, my blanket and my freedom and wanted nothing more. My solitary campfires nestled comfortably away from the straight world remain memories of home. I have ridden my thumb through almost every state in the country, as well as parts of Canada and Mexico, and a thumber's freedom is still the most exciting rush I know. I have fallen in love in the mountains of West Virginia and I have shared a bottle of rotgut with a wino on a stoop in Oakland, California. I have watched the sun set in glorious splendor in the Pacific and have seen the autumn leaves in New England. Who I was and who I am have been shaped by thousands of miles of highway.

The road is addictive and like any addiction it costs. The memories of a sunny day spent making love on a California

beach or the beauty of a Montana night make it easy to forget what the road demands. Solitary freedom also means a life of being the solitary outsider, at best a welcome guest, at worst an enemy. Love found along the way is all the more precious because it has its own way of drifting into the wind like the smoke from my campfire. Freedom can be way lonely on a cold, rainy night when it seems the rest of the world is safe and warm in their homes.

From the comfort of my small house, and my mid-thirties, I look back on that era, a time of memories, both painful and warm, floating ever farther into the distance. The highway stretches off into a receding horizon and back to yesterday. Somewhere along that road of memory and mythology I spent my youth. ■

fourteen days and.

match flying towards
—beer full pitcher
filled ashtray—

where

they ask looking honestly.
smiling

there she
pointed

knowing
unknowingly where.

—michael swanson

Got a
literary
itch?



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Lake Topelo, New Zealand with Mt. Cook, *by Irving Herman*

CATCHIN' SOME HEAT

Caught a utility bill at the city's
tree dump today.
Kinda like fishin' a well known stream.

There's a pool of maple leaves
hiding six, no
eight maple fillets.
Must be someone's creel
stashed by a city worker.
Stashed for a brother-in-law.

Grandpa oak glides below
willow ripples. Lazy.
Nothing
but brush until
I snag out the weeds.

Rusty truck reels in log chain line.
Green stickleback crabapple hits,
spits, gets away
this time.
Set the hook, spin tires up muddy bank
scattering wormy caviar
through regrouping tadpoles.

— Dave Gibson

MOSTEL, THE CELLO PLAYER

Amy Lockard

Mostel Bostrovich does not just play the cello. He breathes through it. He cries with it. He makes it growl and whisper and laugh and sigh and roar and soar.

The review was taped to the corner of the dressing room mirror. "Ahh..." sighed Mostel Bostrovich to his mirror. "The critic of the *Yorktown Gazette* is a fine critic and kind to Mostel Bostrovich. But he does not say what cannot be done with the cello. Mostel Bostrovich grows old, and with Bostrovich dies the cello. The music does not last."

"Half an hour to performance!" a crier yelled, shutting Mostel's door hastily before he could turn to scowl.

Mostel opened a jar of olives. His wife walked into his dressing room. She had the reddest hair, redder than human hair should be. She talked too much and smoked too much and Mostel could not wait until she left.

"Mostel," she said. "You old badger. How did you get away without me? You must have bribed the chauffeur again." Petra Bostrovich strode across the room, her heels clicking on the tile floor. She patted Mostel's head. "You know I like to come with you to the concert hall, darling." She took the jar of olives off the dressing table and jammed her fingers into it. "Do you like the new dress I am wearing?" she asked, opening the front of her coat with her free hand. "Mostel, are you listening to me?" She popped an olive into her mouth.

"Mostel, I ask you a question. When I have my colors done, the girl says this is one of my best colors. She says I am an 'autumn.' And I hate autumn. It is so sad with everything dying. She says that has nothing to do with it, if you like it or not."

Petra continued talking as she knelt by Mostel's cello in its open case by the door. Mostel had his back to her. He was fussing with his moustache, combing it different ways with a toothbrush. Folding the dark hairs over the gray.

"I was so hoping I would be a 'summer,'" she continued. "Things in my wardrobe are for a 'summer.' Maybe I will give all my clothing to my sister. She has the coloring. Then I start all over buying a new wardrobe." Petra lit a cigarette. "Mostel, you are not listening. I mention my sister and there is not a chop remark. And I talk about spending money and you are not having fits. You are not hearing me, Mostel? Are you?"

Mostel was not listening to his wife. In his daydream, Babette was leaning against him and licking his ear. He was holding her, just as he held his cello.

Babette was the love of his life. She was bigger than his cello. She was big as a cow. She had big, brown eyes, and the

long eyelashes cows have. She had the biggest breasts Mostel Bostrovich had ever seen. Especially now that she was pregnant. She was eight months along.

But last night Babette told him the child might not be his. It could be the piano player's, she said. Thinking about it, sweat broke out on Mostel's forehead. He wiped it with his handkerchief. His wife was still talking. Let her talk. she who gave him no children. If his children resembled his wife, perhaps it was better to have none. Perhaps.

Soon she would leave. It was almost curtain time and Mostel would do what he must do. Just before the interval, when the orchestra played the last of the Dvorak, he would reach for his pistol and he would shoot the piano player in the back. It was as simple as that.

"Petra, what a pleasure," the conductor said, walking into the dressing room. He kissed her on the cheek. "You'll have to take your seat now, my dear. I must speak to my star performer a moment." He kissed her again on the cheek. Mostel paid no attention to them. He was flipping his hair back and watching the effect in the mirror. Petra walked across the room. "Play beautifully for me, my Mostel," she said and kissed Mostel on the cheek and left, her fur coat rippling.

"Well, Maestro, to what do I owe this honor?" Mostel asked, rising.

"I am worried," the Maestro confessed. "I am worried about tonight's performance. I feel something is wrong. It's not stage fright," he protested. "I know this symphony like I knew the old neighborhood. It is not that. I just have a feeling, a strange feeling." As he talked he stalked back and forth across the room. "Mostel, how long have we known each other?"

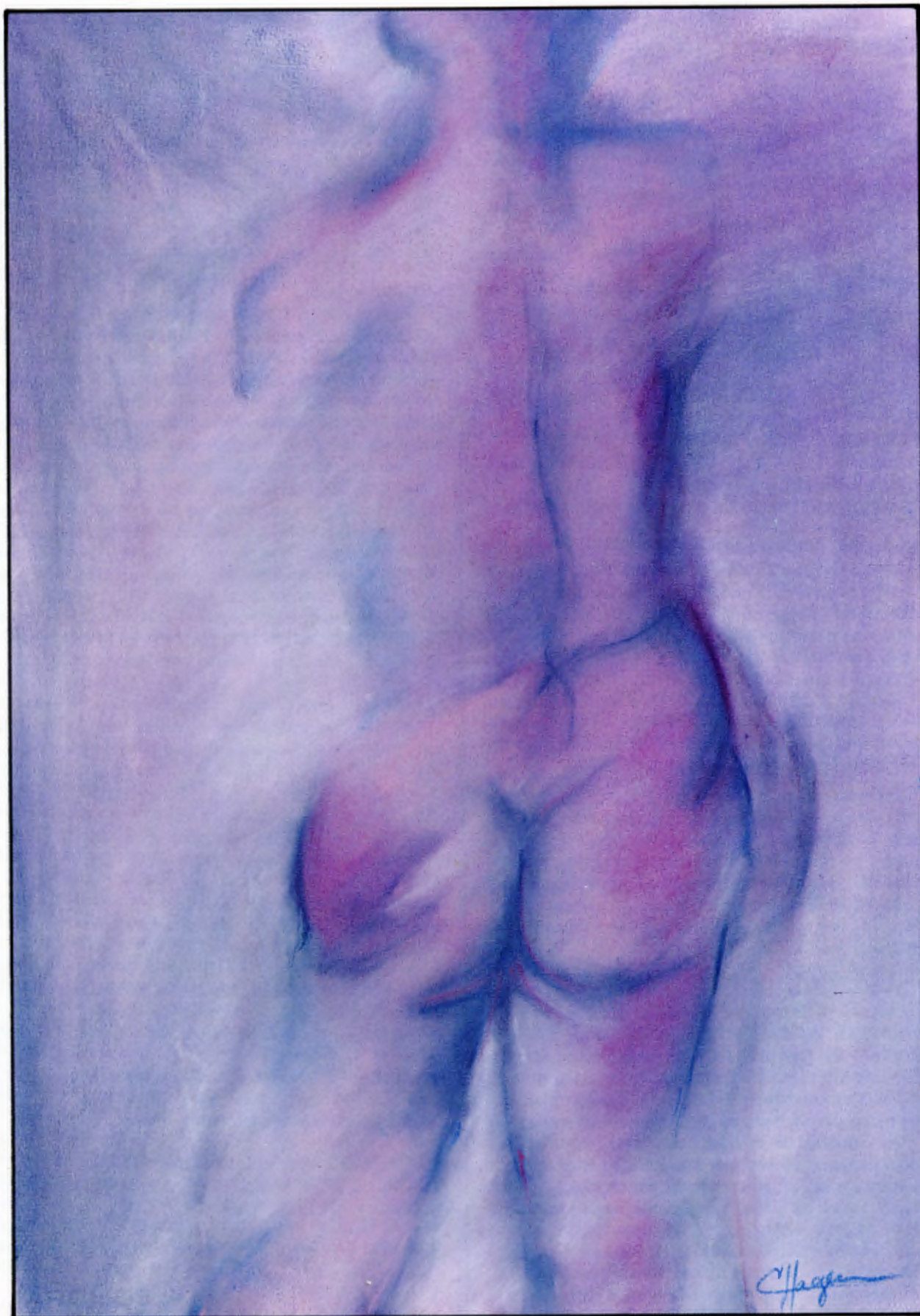
"Fifty years, I would guess," Mostel replied, combing his moustache again. "Since first school in Warsaw. How do I know how long? You are the sentimental one."

"Would you tell me, then, your oldest friend, if something was disturbing you? Because I feel something is."

"Nonsense," Mostel replied. "You are not rational."

"I am not rational? Oh, Mostel. Promise me this, then. Will you join me at Sardi's after the performance? No matter what happens, will you drink with me tonight and forget your sassy French slut?"

Mostel did not bristle at the conductor's words. Babette, his darling, a slut? It was true she did have a lust for all of life. But Babette, with child, and not knowing whose child she carried? That was another matter all together. Well, what could one say about that? She was a slut.



Carol Hagen

"Did you remember to tell the stage master I wanted the front row reserved, the entire front center?"

"Mostel, you have asked me a dozen times. I told him. But your party is still not here. We may have to fill the seats with other patrons."

"But Babette . . . She is here?"

"She's seated now. She'll be directly in front of you and your cello. So," the conductor patted Mostel on the shoulder, "what do you say? You will drink with me afterward?"

"The question is, will you drink with me? Because you may not want to. Who knows what tonight brings? Tonight you may despise me."

"Mostel, you are impossible. I am your oldest friend in the world and you talk to me in riddles. You have always such crazy schemes. You know you do not mean to carry them out," the Maestro said. "Just say you will come to Sardi's and be done with it."

"Did you know that Babette is with child?" Mostel liked to say "with child." The words rolled off his tongue.

"I had heard. Is it yours?"

Mostel turned to face the conductor. "It is mine," he said.

"We must go, Mostel. It is nearly time."

"I will follow in a moment. There is something I must tend to."

The Maestro left. Mostel picked the cello gently up from the case. The revolver shifted inside. It was hidden by shadow. He reached for it. "The child is mine," he repeated to himself, tucking the pistol under the front of his cummerbund. He pulled his jacket on, brushed the tails, picked up his cello and followed the Maestro on stage.

Mostel took his chair. Yes, there in the front row sat his Babette. Her face shone even in the dark auditorium. She always had a greasy face. He did not acknowledge her. He would ignore her to entice her further. It would be all the sweeter for her when he finally did look at her.

The violins were tuning. He hated the violins. Squeaky little fiddles, they never sounded full enough. They were not real instruments. When they tuned they made his hair fall out. That was why he was going bald. Every time he listened to them, he felt the roots loosen in his scalp. Then, in a matter of seconds, a hair follicle shoved a single hair out, then another and another. His hair seemed to fall in piles around him. The violins aged him so.

But the cello, the cello was truly an instrument. Mostel stroked the strings of his cello fondly. It was fine and big, like life should be, full of drama and grandiose gesture.

Life should not be diminutive and squeaking like the violins, like his wife. Instead, it should be large and encompassing like his cello, like his Babette. Ah, so she was a whore. She loved life, she loved men, she could not get enough.

Still, the piano player must be shot. Mostel was rather sad about it. But he needed the child. The piano player might lay claim to it. The piano player was not going to ruin this last chance at immortality. What a pompous whimp the man was. It was difficult to believe Babette had not crushed him in the act. There he sat now, at the piano, fluttering his fingers like fruitflays up and down the keyboard.

After he shot the piano player, they would take him away and make fingerprints and unflattering photographs. Mostel knew all about it from the movies. He would tell the police he had committed a crime of passion. They could not convict

him. After they released him from prison he would return to his Babette, his cello, and his child. They would be happy.

What a fuss they were making now about the first chair violin. He was out there with the Maestro, bowing and prancing as if he was personally responsible for the entire orchestra. Mostel sneaked a glance at Babette. She was looking about anxiously. She probably wondered why nobody was seated near her. This show would be just for her. He would see just her face when he pulled out his pistol and shot the piano player. She would be overcome with love at Mostel's devotion. She would feel like Helen of Troy.

The orchestra was ready. The Maestro lifted his baton and the music began.

Mostel played the *Concerto in B Minor* better than he had ever played it, working up to his featured part. His bushy eyebrows held the sweat from running into his eyes, but when he bent his head it sailed off, hitting the chair in front of him. Sweat dropped, too, on his cello and ran down. He could hear himself breathing heavily to the beat of the music. When the spotlight turned on him he was blinded. He played feverishly, brilliantly, in the brightness of the spotlight. The entire orchestra finished the piece.

He broke to the applause of the audience. They were standing. It was the interval. And he had forgotten to shoot the piano player. The greatest physical act of his life, the most dramatic gesture he would ever make, for his posterity, for his son, and he became carried away with Dvorak and forgot to shoot the piano player.

SCRAPS FOR A THESIS

When next at this cold desk I sit
When my bald eyes stare blankly at the sky
Behind which well-shaped image shall I hide

Would a well-oiled anus squeak
Is death more death because he wears a tie
Who gagged the blackbird

When the slack-jawed logman stands with thirsty tongue alack
Where then the guttural utterances
Where the crow's cacophonous caw caw

Throw these sickly thin sinful words into the flames
Step back as they grackle crackle into ashes
Ashes that even piss can't wash away

Walt Whitman childless father of us all
Did you not shake the paint from your ragged brush
And Beat Beat Drums

— Craig Vala

Mostel put his face in his hands. The rest of the orchestra was standing, most were leaving to smoke or visit friends backstage. It was his wife's social time. She liked to have people view her at the concert hall. And in the dark hallway, by the men's bathroom, his sweet Babette would be waiting in her customary place for him.

Mostel hurried to the hall. Babette was not there. The xylophone player had not seen her. He went to use the restroom and remembered, pulling down his zipper, that the pistol was there. He pulled his zipper hurriedly up and went back to the hall. Several of the symphony patrons shook his hand. He still did not see Babette anywhere.

A thought dropped from his head to his stomach. Babette had had premature labor pains and left for the hospital. Mostel's heart pounded. He tried to remember what Babette was wearing as he swerved through the crowd.

First call was sounded. People were returning to their seats. His child was about to come into the world and he would not be there.

Mostel returned to the stage and looked out at the audience. Babette could, by a miracle, just be in her seat. He peered through the middle curtain. A lady in the audience waved at him. She jabbed her neighbor, who also waved. He saw Petra returning to her seat. It was impossible to miss his wife with her flaming hair.

Babette was behind her. Oh, relief. Oh, a thousand reliefs. It looked to Mostel as if his wife turned and said something to Babette. But they did not know each other. It must have been small talk, if anything.

Mostel went back to his chair. The violins were tuning again. Maddening. The years of violin torture he had suffered with this orchestra. Mostel tried to ignore them. He stuck his hand in the cummerbund to feel the gun and to remind himself what he must do.

The second chair cellist smiled at Mostel. Mostel did not like him. He had tried to talk to him once of his love for the cello, how he felt the instrument was so grand, its notes so full. But the fellow had just nodded. He did not really listen. He did not live with the cello like Mostel did. He merely played it. Yet some people were stupid enough to think that what Mostel did and what this imbecile did were the same.

The orchestra began *Enigma Variations*. Mostel forgot about the violins and the cello player. He even forgot about Babette. He played Elgar better than he ever had. The spotlight circled him for the cello solo. He felt the spotlight shone out from him instead of upon him, the emanation of his music and his joy. This is grand, he thought. This is life.

The audience was on its feet, applauding wildly. Mostel would not look at Babette as he bowed. She had missed their meeting, so let her suffer.

The last selection was Tchaikovsky's *Overture Solennelle 1812*. This piece would be better for the assassination anyway. The Maestro had arranged for a cannon shot to dramatize the ending. Some renditions called for it. At rehearsal it was booming. It was then Mostel would shoot the piano player. It would be perfect.

Mostel followed the music carefully. He knew the piece by heart. Midway through he reached into his cummerbund and pulled the revolver out. He was not nervous. It was a matter of his life, his continued life through his son. He looked at Babette. She would so appreciate his grand gesture he was Published by UNI ScholarWorks, 1987

about to perform. The piece was drawing to an end. The tension in the music mounted.

Mostel did not falter. How many chances does one get for immortality? He lifted the gun and aimed it over the cello at the piano player's back. The orchestra seemed to stop. He shut his eyes and pulled the trigger.

Nothing happened. The orchestra kept playing. Mostel looked at the gun, astonished. He opened its chamber. The bullets were gone. The Maestro kept conducting. He would not look at Mostel. Mostel could not see his wife. He looked at Babette. She looked away.

The second chair cellist sat staring at Mostel. The Maestro motioned for the cellos to join in the last stanzas, and Mostel bent forward, laying the pistol beneath his chair. Mostel embraced his cello and drew the bow across its string. A deep moan emanated from the instrument, mingling with the other sounds of the orchestra and, as the piece ended, echoing in the concert hall, dying in silence. ■

ODE to GEORGE CLINTON

Jive on, George,
exhaustion is one pleasure
I haven't grooved on in months.
Wail on. Jab another hole
in my heart.
Storm me to sleep with the jism
of your royal rap.
Render me mindful of my own
missing bodyguard
and some sweet birthday
I'll have later,
lacking my favorite lover.
He's got other engines to rev up.
So do it, George. Put my mind on
that certain hopeless man
and his chilled down,
cooled out hands,
and rap on.

— Pamela Lee

I sat at your desk today
in your chair.
looking through your books.
In Brautigan you marked
Worms as "Good!"
I read *Worms*,
more than once,
wondering what thoughts
you thought
as you sat
at this desk
in this chair.

— Sandy Reno



Linda Anderson

NOTES ON *PALLET KING*

Dave Gibson

Those of you who read the story know that Nigel Nostrum collected and stored firewood in the form of pallets on his four empty lots adjacent to his antique two-story frame house in Pray's Plat (on the wrong side of the tracks). City officials thought his display of conspicuous wealth would not do and proceeded to end his reign. The matter was dragged through the courts and Nigel was fined a substantial amount. (It should be noted that the author's typist pulled the \$1,000 figure out of thin air). Other parts of the story weren't exactly true either. In the interest of continuity and responsible journalism, certain factors should be cleared up.

A couple integral characters were omitted from the first go round. Nigel's twelve year old daughter, Moons of Saturn, was ignored. In the fourth grade the children were asked to write "book reports." The other kids wrote (or borrowed from their older siblings and the end leaves of the book covers) about *Little House on the Prairie*, *Charlotte's Web*, or *The Outsiders*. Moons of Saturn reported on *Steal This Book* and *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. In the fifth grade the children constructed musical instruments as part of the "Culture in America" unit. The other kids designed and built (with the aid of their parents and interested affines) cigar box guitars, toilet paper roll flutes, electrical conduit wind chimes, peach crate mountain dulcimers, and wash-tub string basses. Moons of Saturn built an electric combination tambourine and sitar.

Another character excluded from the first version was Nigel's girlfriend, Felicity.

Note to reader: These names all come from the *The Random House College Dictionary*. It isn't a very good dictionary, but the names section comes in handy at times like this. Nigel means: black, dark <L Nigellus. Felicity is <L for happy. It is not listed as a proper name, but the definitions section states: "the state of being happy, esp. in a high degree: marital felicity." It should be noted that a long involved discussion between the author and his typist ensued upon the choice of Felicity as this particular character's name. The typist tried to influence that portion of history by appealing to the author's sense of journalistic integrity. Since he has little or none, the name stands. It is at this time pointed out that nowhere in *The Random House College Dictionary* are the words *felicity* and *joy* associated in any manner whatsoever.

Joy, I mean Felicity lived in a structure in North Collins. It was built from stacked wood cut to twelve inches joined and covered with mortar. The walls were not built to any standard of straightness. The windows were all bowed in around the frames because the builders had neglected to put in temporary braces to hold them straight against the pressure of the concrete. Despite its faults the house was fairly airtight thanks to the modern miracle of styrofoam, vinyl siding, replacement windows, and plastic installed under the retro-fitted drywall. Due to the nature of the original construction it looked like hell; but it was cozy.

Felicity delivered car parts to dealers and auto mechanics for Luke's Auto Parts. In her spare time she read tarot cards, palms, and her magic sticks. (The sticks came in a cylindrical package and were used in conjunction with a booklet of catchy poems. Each stick was numbered and the subject shook the can until one stick plopped onto her special reading cloth. The stick's number was looked up in the booklet and the poem was the person's fortune for that particular situation. Felicity had great faith in the sticks; with a great deal of imagination the subject could usually apply the poem to his or her fortune depending on his or her parameters of faith in the system. The sticks were a Milton-Bradley product.) She'd warned Nigel that the city was about to put a cabash to his BTU reserves when he shook a stick onto her suede and seersucker reading cloth one night. The fortune, number 44, read:

Beware of strangers at your door,
Who come to advise and have no beans for the kettle.
Watch for them that always want more,
And remember, never has so much brought so little.

Note to reader: The number 44 was the number of Peace Chiefs in the Cheyenne's Council of Forty-Four. The organization reached its height during the horse and buffalo days (1800-1850).

Delivering car parts for Luke's Auto Parts privied Felicity to inside information. Luke only delivered to bona fide dealers and mechanics. The people who could afford to have their machines repaired by real live tax paying technicians were the upper crust of the core community.

Felicity never made it a habit to snoop, but she was far from deaf. One day as she was dropping off parts at Alexis' Standard Station she overheard Alexis and his head mechanic Leopold talking in the back room.

"No shit Alexis. That son'bitch has a lotta nerve ruining the scenery with his damn pallets. But I heard the city has plans for his piles."

That's about all Felicity could hear through her stethoscope, but she got the general idea. When she read Nigel's fortune that night the sticks confirmed her suspicions.

Harm will pass those at home,
Who bloodstain the casing of their door.
But when all your wealth is not accounted for,
Beware of that which came to Rome.

One day early that fall or late summer Felicity saw an ad in the *Shopper's Shopper*. The ad read like this:

FOR SALE: Slightly used 8' by 16' solar collector. Used only on sunny days. Well built. Cheap. PHONE: 286-7382.

All the ads in the *Shopper's Shopper* took that basic form. (Everything was used little, in good shape, and cheap.) When Nigel and Felicity went to look at the unit they saw why it was cheap. The clear glass covering (as the enlightened reader knows it should be) was made from translucent plastic. It edged toward the opaque side. The back of the inside was painted an off shade of Poverty Pink. The latex caulking was beginning to pull from the joints between the half inch

pressboard box parts.

Felicity talked the owner down to five dollars and they loaded it onto Nigel's truck. They took it to her house and leaned it against the house under the kitchen window. Nigel bought a fan and some hardware; but due to the trial and all he wasn't instilled with the installation urge. The collector looked nice leaning against the house. It collected snow and made a great conversation piece. On December Fourteenth someone drew a heart in a fresh condensation collection.

The author would like to interrupt at this point to recap the situation and add some conjecture for the reader to consider.

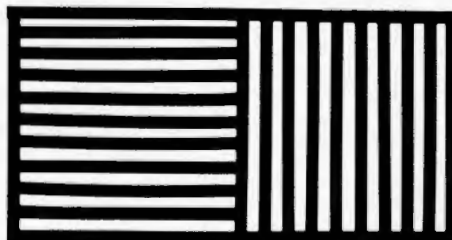
At this point you can see that the story has taken a twist. We see that Nigel has priorities. He must have goals in life too. As the author sees it, they are:

- 1) To raise Moons of Saturn, his daughter, to the best of his ability and to impress upon her the importance of Ben Franklin's famous saying, "A pallet saved is a pallet burned."
- 2) To keep the bean pot full.
- 3) To keep Felicity happy, and allow his cards, sticks, and palms to be read. (And keep a straight face.)
- 4) To stay warm.
- 5) To install Felicity's solar collector, come spring.

In *Pallet King* Nigel was fined \$1,000 for storing pallets on his vacant lots by the swamp. In reality he is being charged with storing pallets in an improperly zoned area for storage. (Pray's Plat is zoned agricultural. Nigel, the author, the author's typist, Felicity, and assorted un-named reliable sources

NORTHERN LIGHTS

used books



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can't figure out how farmers get away with storing hay in their barns. But the Collins City Zoning Commissioner and the city attorney don't see any conflict. The pallets are supposed to be a fire hazard. And hay isn't?)

In *Pallet King* a little girl was bitten by a rat in the pallet piles. The girl had to have the rabies series and Nigel felt terrible about the whole thing. The author doesn't think Nigel needs any more problems so let's forget that scenario. But, it has been pointed out to the author that a rat, given a choice, would not live in the pallets. That is, if the rat were given the choice between that and an 800,000 bushel grain elevator situated 450 yards to the southwest . . . (That being the logistics of the situation.) As Joe Ansgood suggested to Nigel, "You should ask the judge, 'Your honor, if you were a rat, let's just say you were a rat for the sake of argument, would you rather eat solid oak pallets or bushels and bushels of deficit corn?'" Of course Nigel won't do that, but the author's typist thinks it would impress the judge. (Or further piss him off.)

In *Pallet King* Nigel burned the pallets and made it look like an accident. That ending was added after a mushy, romanticized, highly unnaturalistic first draft. The author's typist awoke early after a late drunk and took matters into his own hands. Thus the conflagration. The author's typist has gone off to see the world now and won't be pulling nasty tricks like that for a while. So, the author has again taken the helm. Here is how he thinks the story could have ended. (It's Christmas Eve and a glimmer of hope has hit. Hang on though readers; it might not last long.)

On October Fifteenth Nigel was scheduled to go before the judge. It was only a hearing to determine whether the matter of the pallets would be dragged through the courts. Nigel's lawyer claimed that Collins City had nothing on him and instructed him to plead innocent, and to not plead, as in the previous draft, "Palletized, my friend." The hearing went unheard because that particular day another resident, this time of North Collins, was being tried for storing 14 Edsels on his property. The Ford fiasco went into overtime and the pallet hearing was moved to November Fourth.,

Nigel's lawyers claimed the city had no precedent for the case. At the time no statutes had been set for the amount of firewood residents could legally store on their properties. The Zoning Commissioner, Tom Breathehard, had been mistaken when he said that Pray's Plat was zoned "greenbelt." As a point of fact it was still zoned agricultural, a zoning stemming from the original land use that the Prays had industriously, yet somewhat neglectedly, established. (The reader may recall that the Prays lost the land to back taxes of 1871?)

Collins City had no precedent for the case but was willing to set one. The trial was slated for January Fifteenth at ten a.m. Nigel was anxious to get them off his back so he could spend time with Moons of Saturn and Felicity. Joe Ansgood took an interest too. He wanted to see some of the pallets make their way into his newly installed Vermont Castings Parlor Stove. He sure didn't want to see the pallets buried at the city dump. (Joe knew that 1,000 people created an acre of waste a foot deep per year. That is a foot acre/year/1,000 people.) With that in mind the author would like to remind the reader of Henry Thoreau, Ghandi, and Martin Luther King Jr. I KNOW IT'S STRETCHING IT A BIT BUT BEAR WITH ME. Joe had a plan.

"Nigel?"
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"What's that, Joe?"

"The city doesn't like your pallets and they say you can't store firewood that way. What if everybody we know who burns wood was to partially palletize their lawns? Can they bust everybody? Can they afford to clog up the court with pallet cases? Can we fight city hall?"

"My friend, I think you might have something. Let's try it."

The pallets were soon distributed around Pray's Plat and into North Collins. Felicity said she wouldn't mind a few on her place. Joe Ansgood dragged 100 home and piled them in ten neat stacks on the front lawn. Several other neighbors took twenty each. Fred Gamehorse took 50, and he didn't even burn wood!

Thanksgiving passed and nobody had been cited.

Christmas eve arrived.

Across the street and down two houses Nigel's neighbor's, Cal and Madeleine Favorall, threw their annual Christmas bash. The party started simply, but as the night wore on things loosened up. Madeleine made a general announcement.

"Hey everybody! We've got some sky rockets and firecrackers. Come out on the porch and we'll shoot some over the tracks. No one will care."

The skyrockets went over big. In fact they went over so big that everyone wanted a turn. One went over so big that it travelled 673 feet over the tracks and landed in the hay-lined dog house of Orville Schmidt's dog, Floyd. (Fortunately for Floyd he was holding down more than his end of the couch inside.) The resulting smolder attracted the attention of Fat Louie, C.O.P. Louie pinned down the action, notified Orville, and proceeded on his rounds.

That night was special for Fat Louie. He had been given the dubious distinction of delivering citations for illegal pallet storage to their respective recipients. The Zoning Commissioner and the cops knew they could find the crowd at the Favorall's. They wanted the action to be stunning. Sort of a biltzkrieg of justice. They knew a party bust would look impressive. The Zoning Commissioner, Tom Breathehard, knew that public opinion could be swayed if the miscreants were hauled in en masse. Fat Louie had a general idea how Floyd's dog house was kindled, and he knew that would add punch to the bust.

Note to reader: You will notice that the author could have had one of the skyrockets from Favorall's party land in the pallet piles and start them ablaze. Note that that course was not taken.

Fat Louie arrived right on schedule. Most of the pallet pirates were there. Louie knocked with his best police school rap. Cal and Madeleine greeted him.

"Louise, come on it. Put your coat on the bed and have a seat," Cal said.

Madeleine added, "There's beer and chips in the kitchen."

That was all Louie needed to hear. He forgot about the citations and settled into the crowd. After the situation had been explained to him, and the complete tale of the Pallet King was related, Louie produced the citations and proclaimed, "Merry Christmas everyone. How 'bout a small fire?"

The citations burned well and the matter was reported to the police chief as it happened. Fat Louie was reprimanded and laid off for a week, sans pay. that's exactly what he needed, wanted, and deserved. He took the opportunity to visit his sister in Chicago.

Note to reader: So you're probably wondering what happened to Nigel and the pallets. Since it is Christmas Eve and this is a sort of fairy tale anyway, the author has decided to let him off with only a slap on the hands and his promise to not increase his BTU reserves. Excuse me, there's a clatter out on the lawn. I'd better get up and see. It's either Santa Claus or the author's typist.

Just as I suspected. He's got a red nose but it isn't Saint Nick. "So, what are you doing back so soon? I thought you were off to see the world?"

"I was. But I saw enough by the time I hit Cleveland. How's the *Pallet King* doing?"

"Real fine without you around."

"Well let me at that typing machine. I got an idea when the bus stopped in Joliet. Let's see now: a thousand dollar fine, Moons of Saturn gets expelled from school for corrupting the youth, Felicity gets arrested for practicing witchcraft without a license, and the Collins City officials decide to build a tourist lake on Nigel's property . . .

As the author's typist slumps to the floor beneath the Underwood, truth and good karma again prevail.

And if you believe that . . . ■

MOTHERS' DAY IN THE DISTRICT

Here where the piss-warm bourbon tastes its temperature
Where thighs grow thick with pork skins and rib tips
Young John Gacy makes his way

To that splendid crossing of Charles and Manson
Dreaming of young boys with big knees
Baseball cards polyester shirts runaway fathers

Litter clutters these chuck-holed streets
Where the first of every month is Mothers' day
And the Waterloo sun is falling falling
— Craig Vala

RAKING LEAVES

How good of you
To be out raking leaves old friend.
Perhaps I would have hesitated
To bring my anxiety across the threshold
Into your house.
But in the autumn air
With piles of leaves around
I could lay this burden down
And watch it disappear in smoke.
— Ann Ellsworth

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REFLECTIONS ON THE “IN-BETWEEN:” A ROMANIAN EXPATRIATE IN AMERICA

Michael J. McKinlay

[Marcel Cornis-Pop has taught in the UNI English department since coming here on a Fulbright scholarship in 1983. Next year he will teach at Harvard University, where he has been granted a fellowship. Michael McKinlay, an English graduate student, spoke with Dr. Cornis-Pop about his thoughts on Romania, leaving his home-land, and his experience in the United States.]

What is Romania like? What is important to Romanians?

I don't want to simplify things, but Romania is a mixture of East and West, a Latin oasis, a little western island adrift in the east. An interesting part of Romanian culture is a focus on language and languages. Romanians can speak many foreign languages, they have to, you might say. Romanian is a very rich language; you cannot understand it without knowing Latin, some Slavic, some Hungarian, without knowing some Greek or something about the modern romance languages such as French. Every language adds a little window to the world outside and also a very important window on your own language and culture.

This kind of linguistic emphasis and language consciousness goes all the way back to our folk culture. There are strange productions in Romanian folklore; surrealistic, language oriented folk ballads that talk about the medium in which ballads are supposed to be uttered and the problems of the utterer.

After the second world war, language orientation/linguistic consciousness became a matter of politics — one of the tasks that Stalin undertook, this very busy man otherwise, was that of deforming Romanian language and linguistic history. He even wrote a brochure on its origin in which he argued against the “mis-concept” that Romanian had anything to do with Latin, decreeing that it was pure Slavic!

I am sure the Romanian people didn't accept that readily, but it must have made it difficult to learn.

I had many students who had come to the university to study English and French and German with the idea that they were adding an almost forbidden territory and gaining some sort of access to the tradition, reconnecting ties with Europe. You must understand that English studies were banned for a time and reintroduced in the curricula only in the later 50s.

That was part of the liberalization process, what little we had of it in the 60s.

You make it sound as though language became a freedom in Romania. Not just the American ideal of freedom of speech, but a more basic freedom to communicate. Knowledge. Understanding.

Language-awareness is a freedom, absolutely. Language-awareness is a freedom not just in the Romanian or the Eastern European context, but in other, more open cultural contexts as well. One of the things that annoys me about some of my students here is the difficulty I have getting them to talk about their own language. It amazes me to see these generations losing literacy; not literacy in the old sense of the word, the humanistic sense, but the very basic literacy — that of knowing and caring about your own language; the language that you use and that other people use, for or against you.

One general impression of Americans is that they are careless of using their freedoms and yet very protective of their freedom of speech. Perhaps its guarantee in our government structure nurtures complacency in its citizens. Yet if America did not promise this freedom it might not have much else to offer.

America is still a very attractive myth for Central and Eastern Europeans — the promised exilic land. As a professor of American and British literature, I had to come here at least at some time in my career. Perhaps if I had a chance to do this earlier and the opportunity to teach some years here and then go back to Romania I would not have taken the radical step that I took in 1983.

Leaving your homeland must have been very difficult. But did things in Romania really get so bad that you had to leave?

I still talk to friends here who remember the Romania that was declared in the 60s as a Miracle of Liberalization. They remember the Romania that was one of the most active, balanced and intellectually-oriented cultures of the time. But that period lasted very little, say from 1963-64 to 1971. I stood my ground, some say “heroically,” through the rapid deterioration of the political and cultural reforms. In the late 70s I had not only the feeling but the certitude that whatever I was able to do a few years before I was not able to do any longer: I had increasing difficulties in getting things published, I was not allowed to go abroad, I was not allowed to publish abroad,

I had problems even with my classes.

But when you were offered the Fulbright you were given an opportunity to come to America. What did you expect to find when you got here?

That essential myth of America which is a creation of central Europe.

When I came here, almost unconsciously the first great trip that we took was to California. It wasn't just to see San Francisco and Los Angeles, but to scout out every canyon and desert in between. We drove thousands of miles all-in-all. I had a sense that I needed to go as far west as I could. The end of the trip was a great disappointment; a very cold Pacific Ocean. I didn't make it to Hawaii.

If your myth of the American continent was somehow diluted by your coming here, perhaps now you are reconsidering the myths about American freedoms and intellectual ideologies.

I come from a skeptical culture, one with an active underground and totally censored — every word, every passage that you publish involves some dickering, a rough battle with the censors and your own self-censorship. In this post-modern western world of total eclecticism you can publish anything and yet sometimes you wonder if what you publish is significant or if it is just lost in a sea of countless other things that are going on. In my culture the unsaid occupies vast territories and sends, like Freud's subconscious, cryptic messages to the surface. Whatever is said is only the tip of the iceberg. Here somehow the iceberg is reversed — the bottom looms at the surface and the little tip is hidden deep in the sea. There is a problem in adjusting to a culture of many tendencies, over-rich and contradictory manifestations; the post-modernism that Leotard calls "the degree zero" of culture because the various trends somehow cancel each other.

You just described what I have come to call the western "marshland" that has replaced Eliot's "wasteland" through the steadily increasing downpour of ideas generated by an atmosphere of self-fulfillment and self-contemplation. Everyone's answer is different and everyone has an answer. Sometimes I wonder if there is any reason to get mired in it.

I argue with friends around here who sit back and wait for so-called "fads" to vanish. I've been telling them that they may

end up wasting their entire professional lives waiting for the fads to disappear. The "post-structuralist" fad, people like Barthes and Derrida and Heidegger have been with us for quite a while. You can't waste your life waiting for these people to disappear. I am satisfied to do my little work on the people I think are important in literature and in criticism hoping and, in fact, knowing that they will stay important.

From a society of non-self-expression to a society of over-expression, here you find yourself. Culture shock notwithstanding, it seems as though you are on the fringe, sort of surveying the boundaries of your discipline.

I think of myself in a double position; the typical position of the exile, *homo duplex*. I am the self-exile who did not defect but chose to stay on to transplant something, bring out something from my culture. What I am also doing is allowing my new culture to absorb me. Ideally, the exile should produce as much as possible in the interregnum because once

speaking loudly
three in conversation

a child, a tree, a gold crayon.

— michael swanson





Pam Bunkofske



Bone Shadow I, by *Tim M. McAninch*



The Puh-Puh-Puh Slap of the Canoe Paddle Against the Water,
by Nicholas Stewart

he is totally absorbed, he loses that particular perspective, that inbetween perspective. A wonderful metaphor of Derrida's is this "inbetween." The typical inbetween zone of the reader of which Poulet also speaks. You might think the inbetween is a very grey area, but not in this case, not inbetween cultures. Inbetween cultures is a very interesting area — it produced writers like James, Conrad, Joyce, Beckett, and so many others. In immediate human terms it is an area that generates a lot of anxiety — you are inbetween statuses and inbetween homes, it is not easy to be suspended inbetween — but culturally speaking it is interesting to be at the crossroads of cultures, the generic intertext, at least for awhile.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries America was called the melting pot of the world, absorbing all cultures into something unique. But even in America there are still cultural differences, socio-economic differences, so that all of us are still inbetween in some way or other.

Of course. I was inbetween in Romania too, because I was studying and writing about American and British literature. I was politically "bilingual" — condemned to a schizophrenic inbetween where you profess one thing and do another . . . where you speak one language and secretly produce another. That sort of thing people call the inner exile. Many of us who came out of eastern and central Europe wonder, "How did I

adapt so quickly? so easily?" I was accused, even as a student, of cosmopolitanism and maybe that's the explanation. If ever I was assimilated, it was in the 50s and 60s.

To draw an analogy, you were artificially acclimatized to a different environment and then transplanted here. There is a shock in the transplanting process, but you are still here, trying to thrive in a new atmosphere, a new environment. How are you doing?

Right now I am trying to function as an insider as much as I can. Mircea Eliade, a great predecessor on this journey to America, talks about the ordeal of the "passage," in this type initiation into a new world. It's not easy for someone at 40 to start over again. I am at an age where people here or people in my own country relax, sit back; start to suck their fingers of the wisdom they have accumulated over the years. I realize I have an advantage over this, but there will always be some doubt, however small, "Am I inside, I mean, really inside? Or is there just some area where I am overlapping?" My situation mirrors the archetypal condition of the literary critic (which I am): desiring to gain access into the warm intimacy of the text's secrets and establish himself as an authoritative *insider*; yet knowing that his claim of objectivity depends directly on an evaluative distance from (to quote Melville) "all this din of the great world's loom." Can anyone ever solve this paradox of the interpreter inbetween cultural texts? ■



a death

"The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within
The unknown want, the destiny of me."

— whitman

first gasp of death
rolling rolling PUSHED rolling
warm wet red secure rolling
PUSHED ahhhh PUSHED ahh PUSHED ahhhahhhh ah ah

Gone. Realized from pain

cut off

gurgling sounds lost sounds. My god left behind.
alone sounds.

Aware of me

soul not conscious of the body I would be.
Cold. So cold. Where is my world
why was I forced

Mother.

Such a short life.

A picture on the wall.

Letters and cards in a box.

Vinyl photograph albums in a trunk
protecting faded Kodak paper.

Laurel was a small town in central Iowa. Most of the two-hundred and fifty people who lived there worked in Marshalltown at Fisher's. The family lived a mile or so south. The mother and father were still together. They were young, only married for six years. They had two children, a girl and a boy. Happy children. They didn't know their parent's marriage would not work from the minute they walked out of the church.



Extinction, by Cheryl Roth

I play in the ditch
 becoming Davy Crockett.
 I hate my sister and I like to play
 Alone.
 never knew my body before
 shot lying in the grass of the ditch dead.
 listening to grasshoppers bees katydids
 oh
 other bugs flying and
 making noise and landing on me.
 But.
 It was that snake biting me
 I knew my body then
 it cried and felt
 rolling rolling PUSHED rolling
 warm wet red secure rolling
 Such a short life.

Oelwein was a larger town in northeast Iowa. Most of the eight thousand people who lived there worked in Waterloo at John Deere's. The mother and father had split up after fourteen years of being brave. The girl and boy had not been aware of such bravery and were called from their lives to be told that their mother had gone insane. Their father would take care of them.

Eventually, their father acquired a woman friend and was never in Oelwein. Never at home. The girl took care of her brother. The boy became aware of his sister.

cold shadows across my sister's face.
 tears warm steam rising
 from her cheek.
 blond the color of her hair.
 matted twisted
 her hands cry.

I love her. Get up. Walk out.
 Open front door. Close eyes.
 Close front door. Open eyes.
 Something to hit. Close eyes.
 Deep breathe. Open eyes.
 The car. Father's car.
 Clench fists Walk closer.
 Close in. Fuck 'em.
 Close enough. Punch...

Gone. Realized from pain. cutoff left behind.
 rolling rolling PUSHED rolling
 warm wet red secure rolling
 Mother. Why such a short life.

Mister Sandman, I'm so alone.
 I don't have anyone to call my own.

Cedar Falls was a larger town. Most of the thirty-two thousand people who lived their either worked at John Deere's or went to school at the university. The girl and boy were nine years older. Their lives together ended.

The girl married and moved to Phoenix. She gave birth to a happy little girl — her way of forgetting love lost.

The boy wandered. Trying to forget. Until . . .

orange clouds
of rabbit fur
gnaw gentle on the air.
nibble heat
swallow life.
run RUN to the burrows full and stupid.
A snake.
Grey from saturation
Constricts.
rolling rolling PUSHED rolling
frost clear crisp phase
of an unanswered question.
it rises to warm darkness
above
orange and yellow daisies in a field.
a strange death of toadstool roots.
rolling rolling like marshmallows
in a cup of cocoa.
a finger caresses away
away and down
up over the earth
mosquitoes mayflies
die deep
rolling rolling PUSHED rolling
born of heat and anguish
Emotion's growth was steady.
And.
Alone.
deep in the womb of blood and mucus
a feeling kicked like an idea
with eyes of hazelwood roots
in
shallow sands by the river
sticks
flow
down below the bridge.
moss bricks and snot
covered stones swell tears.
A kick. Remember. Solid and swift.
rolling rolling PUSHED rolling
warm wet red secure
rolling
. . . he died. Leaving an epitaph.

Praised the mold which formed my body.
I gave nothing for a dream. Dreams
Should be ours without restraint
Remember the tree waiting for us
In Greenwood.
I have died. Not remembered.
For a life of searching is not
The answer in these times. *One
Must be absolutely modern — it
Seems Death is modern.*

— michael swanson

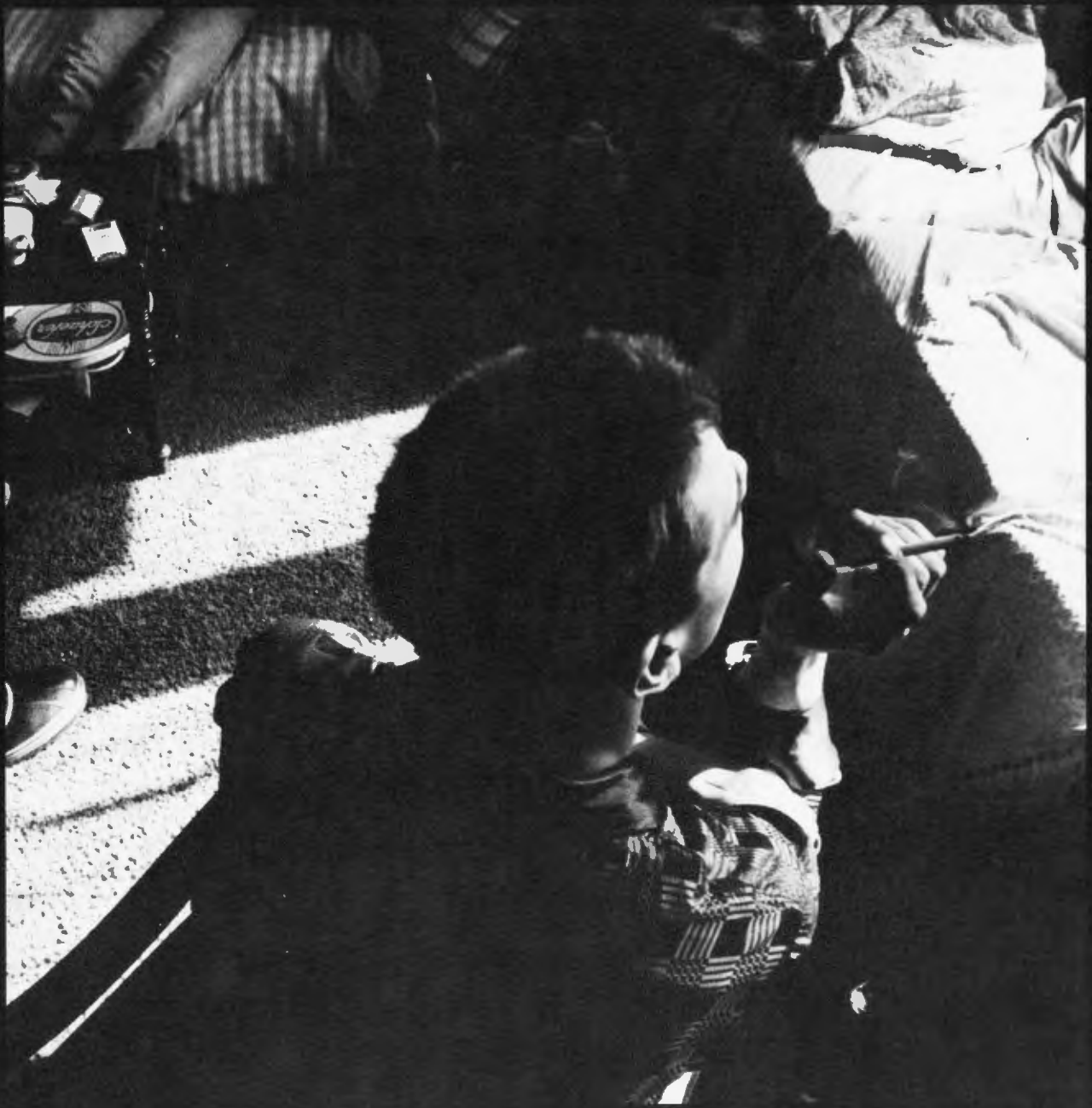


Elizabeth Wheeler





Man Entering Body Bag, *by Wes Yeoman*



IL LE PENSE... DES TEMPS QUAND LES CHOSES
N'ÉTAIENT PAS SI BONNES
Todd Stenson '85

Todd Stenson



Todd Stenson

By the way, your last letter shows strong evidence of a budding literary style.

— Richard Brautigan

A Confederate General from Big Sur

