

Spring 2002

## Ballast Quarterly Review, v17n3, Spring 2002

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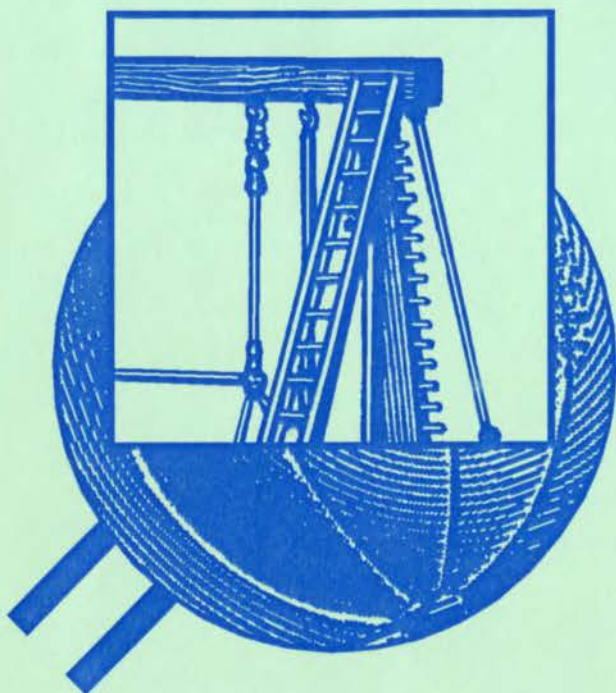
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NON OBSTANTE





ROBERT  
BENCHLEY  
One, two, three.  
Buckle my shoe.

■ Andrew Hunter, et al., *Lawren Stewart Harris: A Painter's Progress*. New York: The Americas Society, 2001. Distributed by University of Washington Press. ISBN 1-879128-21-7. Americans are unlikely to have heard of Canadian painter Lawren Stewart Harris (1885-1970), but most Midwesterners will know the name of Massey-Harris, the farm implement company that was once co-owned by his family. In addition, anyone who knows about Canadian art history will be familiar with the famous group of landscape painters in which Harris was prominent, the so-called Group of Seven. This is the full-color catalog for a solo exhibition of his work that was held at The Americas Society in New York in the fall of 2000. This modest but elegant paperbound book contains 53 illustrations, nearly all of which are full-color reproductions of Harris' intricate paintings (wide-ranging in style), which are used as the visual examples for two essays on Harris' life, his paintings, and their lasting worth. Of further interest is the fact that he lived for six years in the U.S., as an unpaid artist-in-residence at Dartmouth College, and then as a member of the Transcendental Painting Group in Santa Fe, where he made abstract paintings based on Jay Hambidge's theories of Dynamic Symmetry. In 1940, he returned to live in Canada for the remaining 30 years of his life.

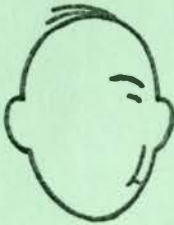
Next day I [British sculptor Henry Moore] was somewhere in the museum [of Modern Art in New York in 1946] with Dorothy Miller discussing some details of the exhibition when she received a phone call from René d'Harnoncourt who said "I know that Henry wants to see the [Alfred] Barnes Collection. Barnes is just about to come to my room now. I've had a message that he's coming to see me right away. Why don't you ask Henry to come into my office in a few minutes so that I can introduce them to each other." So Dorothy and I went down there a few minutes later, and sure enough, there was René and Dr. Barnes with two of his bodyguards who looked like Chicago gangsters. D'Harnoncourt said "Dr. Barnes, may I introduce Henry Moore." And I said "I'm so pleased to meet you, Dr. Barnes, because I was about to write to you since I would love to come, if I may, and see your fabulous collection." And for about a minute there was dead silence. Then he said "such exaggerated flattery makes me sick." I was taken aback and didn't say a word in reply. Even his bodyguards looked aghast. So did everyone else in the room except Barnes, of course, who let another minute go by—it seemed like five minutes to us—and then he said, "well, when would you like to come?"

HENRY MOORE quoted in Alan Wilkinson, ed., *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 67.

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ANON

I've got a room  
in Chicago and  
she's got a flat  
behind.



ANON

—Hey, Pop, vot  
is a vacuum?

—A vacuum is a  
void.

—I know it's a  
void, but vot  
does dat void  
mean?

FRANÇOIS  
RABELAIS

Nature abhors a  
vacuum.

*Ballast* is an acronym for Books Art Language Logic Ambiguity Science and Teaching, as well as a distant allusion to *Blast*, the short-lived publication founded during World War I by Wyndham Lewis, the Vorticist artist and writer. *Ballast* is mainly a pastiche of astonishing passages from books, magazines, diaries and other writings. Put differently, it is a journal devoted to wit, the contents of which are intended to be insightful, amusing or thought provoking.

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STUART DAVIS One day I set up an eggbeater in my studio and got so interested in it that I nailed it on the table and kept it there to paint.

JEREMY  
BENTHAM

Prose is when all  
the lines except  
the last go to  
the end. Poetry  
is when some of  
them fall short  
of it.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

A vacuum is a hell of a lot better than  
some of the stuff that nature replaces  
it with.

GROUCHO MARX

Quotes, unquotes and quotes. That's  
three quotes. And another quote'll  
make it a gallon.

**EDEN AHBEZ:**  
**On Nature Boy**  
**Spelled Backwards**

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IN LATE 1960, as a high school freshman, I was paging through an anniversary issue of *Life* magazine, made up of pictures and snippets of text from earlier features.

I stopped when I came to a photograph of a strange-looking young man, strange because he looked like Christ in those ubiquitous portrayals by Warner Sallman (e.g., *Sallman's Head of Christ*, *Sallman's Praying Hands* [with apologies to Dürer]) which, in those days, hung in every home in the Midwest. Well, Christ-like or not, the person in this photograph was at least bearded and slender, and his hair was shoulder-length. He was *not* wearing a Biblical robe, but a sweat shirt with the sleeves pushed up, turned inside out, and he was holding a couple of pigeons.

Now why was I stopped by this photo? Well, I was living at the time in a small Midwestern town in an era in which it was "extraordinary" [a stronger word is needed here] for an adult male to have shoulder-length hair (this was before there were hippies), unless he was some kind of showman like Buffalo Bill, and only in town very briefly. Beards were also "discouraged" back then because they implied concealment or deceit. So, only a couple years earlier had I seen a full beard for the first time (not counting St. Nick and the Amish), when a fellow from a nearby town had grown one in connection with a Centennial Celebration (which was the Midwest's equivalent then of the New Orleans Mardi Gras or, in Georgia, of the Rattlesnake Round-up). But even *that* fellow did not have shoulder-



ABOVE  
 Chalk talk metamorphosis by HARLAN TARBEL (1924) in which a face evolves, a few strokes at a time.

—  
 ANON  
 —I just graduated from law school.  
 —NYU?  
 —And *vy* not?

ROSE  
 MACAULAY  
*(Crewe Train)*  
 Gentlemen know that fresh air should be kept in its proper place—out of doors—and that, God having given us indoors and out-of-doors, we should not attempt to do away with this distinction.

BRAD

HOLLAND

Life imitates art:  
Not true. Art  
imitates life. Life  
imitates high  
school.



RUDOLF

ARNHEIM

(*Parables of Sun  
Light*) A young  
teacher said to  
me, "Since I am  
just beginning,  
how will I know  
when it is time  
to stop teach-  
ing?" After a  
moment of  
thought I  
replied, "When  
you hear your-  
self talking, it  
will be time for  
you to retire."

HAVELOCK

ELLIS

The absence of  
flaw in beauty is  
itself a flaw.

length hair, so this Christ-like looking  
guy in *Life* was not only unusual but  
doubly.

I'm sure I also stopped because of  
the very stark caption beneath the  
photograph, which read simply (in  
uppercase letters, as reproduced  
here): NATURE BOY EDEN AHBEZ  
LIVED ON NUTS IN A CANYON,  
WROTE A HIT SONG.

For reasons only Sallman knows, I  
decided I would write to this person.  
Don't ask me why. Was I bored? I was  
*not* on drugs, as I recall that the only  
available way to get loose in those  
days was a laxative called *Serutan*, so  
gentle that its ads could claim that  
"It's *natures*, spelled backwards." For  
whatever reason, during the next 18  
months, I contacted various places in  
the hope of finding the mailing address  
of this obscure songwriter. Eureka!  
After a number of false leads, I found  
it by writing to ASCAP, the American  
Society of Composers, Authors, and  
Publishers in New York.

So in July of 1962, I wrote to eden  
ahbez (pronounced AH-bay), who, like  
the poet e.e. cummings, insisted on  
writing his name only in lowercase let-  
ters, believing that God alone  
deserved the use of uppercase.

I have no idea what I said in this let-  
ter. Did I chat about legumes and  
pigeons? According to a newspaper  
article at the time, I apparently com-  
mended him for his austere and  
uncompromising life style.

Lo and behold, he responded! In  
only a few weeks, it seems that he  
sent me a letter (which I have no  
memory of and can no longer locate),  
along with a handwritten musical  
score and the lyrics for his 1948 hit  
song titled *Nature Boy* and—believe  
this!—a 78 rpm record of his latest  
compositions, titled *Eden's Island*.

That was the good news.

The bad news was that the record  
had not survived the U.S. Mail and had



shattered into five pieces (which I put back together with blue plastic tape, although, needless to say, it was still not playable). The handwritten score (which I still have) is personally addressed to me, as is the back of the album.

In the meantime, I had discovered that Ahbez was born in Brooklyn, New York, on April 15, 1908, at which time his legal identity was Alexander Aberle. Jewish, he had grown up listening to Yiddish songs, a fact that would take on significance when, after *Nature Boy* had become a hit, he was accused by a music publisher of (whether consciously or not) too closely basing the melody on a copyrighted Yiddish song (about a rental car?) titled *Schwieg Mein Hertz*. The dispute was settled out of court.

Almost nothing is known about Ahbez's first forty years, mostly because he refused to discuss his pre-enlightened past. In an article in *Life* on May 10, 1948 (titled "Nature Boy: Composer of top hit tune in U.S. is a bearded mystic from Brooklyn"), it was reported that he had grown up in an orphanage, and, by age 35, had walked or hitchhiked across the country eight times. Having settled in Los Angeles, one day he saw his future wife, Anna Jacobson, a mystic and a vegetarian, in a cafeteria. She was initially frightened because he followed her to a streetcar and gave her a note with his name and address. But she *did* contact him. They fell in love, and on the very day he proposed, he found \$261.67 in a trash can, and, soon after, they were married. Thereafter, they slept outdoors in Griffith Park, while spending their days in a canyon (not the Grand Canyon), meditating and sunbathing. Eventually they had a son named Zolma.

The lives of the couple changed markedly in early 1948. Having written *Nature Boy*, Ahbez tried to show it to



A N O N

—Wire you insulate?

—I couldn't get ohm earlier.

T H O M A S  
H A R T  
B E N T O N

I wallowed in every cockeyed ism that came along and it took me ten years to get all that modernist dirt out of my system.

A N O N

—Doctor, you gotta help me.

Everyone thinks I'm a liar.

—I find that hard to believe.

GEORGE  
ORWELL

Good prose is  
like a window  
pane.



RUDOLF  
ARNHEIM

(*Parables of Sun Light*) When on the front page of the paper I saw the headline *Jets Upset Dolphins*, I pictured airplanes swooping down to the ocean and disturbing the peaceful ecology of the sea animals.

A N O N

—Some people think she's a bit hoity-toity.

—Well, she may be hoity but, believe me, she'll never see toity again!

the singer Nat "King" Cole, who was appearing at the time at Lincoln Theater in Los Angeles. When Cole was unable to see him, Ahbez thrust the manuscript at the doorman, urging him to pass it on, then vanished. It eventually reached Cole's manager, Mort Ruby, who encouraged the singer to give it a try. The audience loved it when he used it in his act, which persuaded Cole that he should record it. "There was a boy," the lyrics begin, "a very strange, enchanted boy, / They say he wandered very far...over land and sea..."

So Cole recorded the song, but still it couldn't be released until they could locate its elusive author. Whether it's true or not, one story says that Ahbez and Anna were found by Ruby living in their sleeping bag beneath the first "L" (not the second one) in the big white hillside HOLLYWOOD sign.

In 1948, when Capitol Records released the Nat "King" Cole rendition of the song as a backside alternate on a 33 rpm single, it was an immediate success, quickly becoming the country's top hit tune. All sorts of other singers, among them Frank Sinatra, Sarah Vaughn, and Dick Haymes, came out with their own variations. It was reported that Ahbez was destined to make about \$20,000 in royalties. Nevertheless, he and Anna continued to travel by bicycle, to live on nuts and various fruits (which they processed with a juice squeezer), and to sleep outdoors in a double sleeping bag, residing in a friend's backyard for \$3.75 a week. The central problem in life, said Ahbez, is "not so much what you want. It's keeping away from the things you don't want."

Moving ahead to 1962 in the Midwest, I pondered what I ought to do in response to the unexpected gifts from Ahbez. At the very least, I was determined to thank him—but how should I

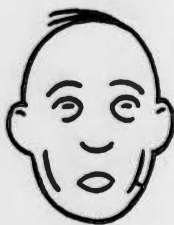


do that? As an aspiring artist, I decided I would thank him by painting his portrait—in oil paints on canvas board—applying knowledge I had gained from Jon Gnagy's *Learn to Draw* instructional kit and countless paint-by-number sets! So that's exactly what I did. I don't have a photo of the result, but I recall it was rendered entirely in burnt umber, a brown that I must have selected because (get this!) I wanted Nature Boy to look natural. It portrayed him sitting on a rock, rather small, in the center of the canvas board, beneath a tree, as if on Eden's Island. (Looking back of course, what a terribly amateur effort it was.)

It must have taken me awhile to paint it, because I didn't send it to him until the fall of 1963, which means it was almost coincident with the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Ahbez was 55 at the time, and living in La Crescenta, California. Whatever the circumstances, he had recently lost his wife.

On February 24, 1964, he sent me a typewritten letter in which he talked about the significance of my painting in relation to his wife's death. My portrait of him, wrote Ahbez, "has a beautiful conception and a warmth of composition, earthy and ethereal and monumental." Not one to hold onto possessions, he nevertheless regarded my painting as "one of my few personal treasures," along with a large photograph of Anna. "These two pictures," he continued, "I keep side by side, [because] there is a beautiful relation between them."

The letter closed with these memorable words: "I have so many things on my mind and so many things to do that it is hard for me to concentrate on letter writing but what I have said is real and true. When I was a small boy I had a vision of myself sitting under a great tree, filled with peace



ANON

—My uncle has a glass eye.

—Oh, really. Did he tell you that?

—No, it just came out in conversation.

STEPHEN

LEACOCK

(*Literary Lapses*)

Get your room full of good air, then shut up the windows and keep it. It will keep for years. Anyway, don't keep using your lungs all the time. Let them rest.

SAMUEL

GOLDWYN

We're overpaying him but he's worth it.



# RONNIE SHAKES

I was going to buy a copy of *The Power of Positive Thinking*, and then I thought: What the hell good would that do?

# JAN

# BARRETT

Veni, vidi, Visa: We came, we saw, we went shopping.

and Divine Happiness. Your painting holds a special meaning for me. Your friend, eden ahbez.”

I never heard from Ahbez again, nor did I write to him. Nearly forty years have passed, and I only recently thought of him when *Nature Boy* resurfaced on the soundtrack of the film *Moulin Rouge*. Searching the internet, I discovered that he had recorded another album in the 1990s, titled *Echoes from Nature Boy*, and that, as recently as 1995, at the age of 87, he had died in California when struck by a car.

As a way of summing up his life, Ahbez remembered an incident in the 1930s or 40s, when he was challenged on the street by a cop, who suspected that Ahbez was totally nuts. “I look crazy,” the songwriter explained calmly, “but I’m not. And the funny thing is, that other people don’t look crazy, and they are.” The cop paused, thought it over and said, “You know, bud, you’re right. If anyone ever gives you any trouble, just let me know.”

POSTSCRIPT: It appears that I was not alone in “connecting the dots” between *Nature Boy* and *Serutan*. In August 1948, Los Angeles radio personality Jim Hawthorne released a Columbia LP titled *Serutan Yob* [*Nature Boy* spelled backwards]: *A Song for Backward Boys and Girls Under 40*, described as a hillbilly parody of Ahbez’s *Nature Boy*. For more on Hawthorne, see the website <<http://members.tripod.com/~pagehogan.html>>. For more on Ahbez (including photographs and music samples), see <<http://www.shadowboxstudio.com/edenahbez.htm>> and <<http://www.spaceagepop.com/ahbez.htm>>.

# MRS. P. R. WOODHOUSE

A hefty whaler, after some discussion with [English missionary Samuel] Marsden, remarked: “Your religion teaches that if a man is hit on one cheek, he will turn the other.” And he hit Marsden on the right cheek. Marsden obediently offered his left cheek and received a second blow. “Now,” he said, “I have obeyed my Master’s commands. What I do next, he left to my own judgment. Take this.” And he knocked the man down.

# CHARLES BRAGG

Nature abhors a vacuum cleaner salesman.

## MARK TWAIN

*(Life on the Mississippi)* When I was born, St. Paul had a population of three persons, Minneapolis had just a third as many. The then population of Minneapolis died two years ago; and when he died he had seen himself undergo an increase, in forty years, of fifty-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine persons. He had a frog's fertility.

## PADDY CHAYEVSKY

Television is democracy at its ugliest.

WILLIAM LAMB  
MELBOURNE

While I cannot be regarded as a pillar, I must be regarded as a buttress of the church, because I support it from the outside.



■ *Swing in Beijing*, directed by Shui Bo Wang. VHS video. Color, 2000. 73 minutes. Available from First Run / Icarus Films, 32 Court Street, 21st Floor, Brooklyn NY 11201. Website: <http://www.frif.com>. In the late 1950s, in the wake of the McCarthy Era, a silly joke was going around in which one person says to another, "What do you think of Red China?" And the second person answers, "Oh, I think it's fine, as long as it matches the table cloth." So much has happened in the years since. Some of my oldest, finest friends grew up under Chiang Kai-shek; and yet I have also more recently worked with younger, extraordinary students from the People's Republic of China. It is impossible not to have mixed feelings about the current state of "Red China"; it is so full of promise, yet overshadowed by the killings at Tiananmen Square—just as the U.S. must never forget the massacre at Wounded Knee, the McCarthy hearings, the Civil Rights Movement, and Kent State. China has a huge, diverse population. Even if it welcomes change, like all nations (including our own, where it was recently ordered that a benign 19th-century academic sculpture be covered from public view) it must to some extent restrict individual expression. This film is a wonderful present day look at the limits of artistic freedom in China. To what degree does China tolerate self-expression? Are political and social issues allowed as artistic subject matter? Is one permitted to create and exhibit experimental art forms? Is artwork censored? And if not explicitly, is it censored implicitly, through lack of funding or exhibition opportunities? Do Western art curators also censor (or direct) Chinese art, in the sense of invariably favoring art that is provocative and offensive, regardless of quality? How can Chinese artists work to save the traditional values of their country? This is an incessantly interesting look at these vital issues, made up of a mixture of interviews with young Chinese artists, filmmakers, and musicians (who speak with surprising candor), along with clips from plays and films, art exhibitions, and visits to artists' studios. This film is of great value to American university students, not only as a way to learn about "Red China," but, more important, as a way to better understand the acts of their own government.

RODNEY  
DANGER-  
FIELD

If it weren't for pickpockets I'd have no sex life at all.

## MONIKA MARON

The artist as a citizen can be a democrat, just as well and as badly as everybody else. The artist as an artist may not be a democrat.



**STEPHEN  
LEACOCK**  
*(Literary Lapses)*  
The landlady of a boarding house is a parallelogram—that is, an oblong angular figure, which cannot be described, but which is equal to anything.

**OSBERT  
LANCASTER**  
[A certain architectural device] belongs to the “Last-supper-carved-on-a-peach-stone” class of masterpiece.

■ **Felicity Ashbee, Janet Ashbee:** *Love, Marriage, and the Arts and Crafts Movement*. Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-8156-0731-8. The British designer Charles Robert Ashbee (usually known as C.R. Ashbee or, among his contemporaries, as CRA) (1863-1942) was an inheritor of the Arts and Crafts tradition of William Morris. He was a literal inheritor in the sense that, after Morris' death, it was Ashbee and his newly-formed Essex House Press that purchased the equipment from Kelmscott Press. In 1888, inspired by Morris, he had founded the Guild of Handicraft and School of Handicraft (woodwork, metalwork, and decorative painting) at London's Toynbee Hall, a colony admired by Chicago social worker Jane Addams, who returned from a visit to Europe to start Hull House. Lecturing in the U.S. in 1900, Ashbee was a guest at Hull House, where he met and was befriended by Frank Lloyd Wright (for whom he wrote the foreword in 1911 for an important German portfolio of Wright's architecture). As this book explains, traveling with him on that trip were the two Mrs. Ashbees: His youngish, bitchy mother (called “Little Mother”), to whom he was abnormally tied; and his “comrade-wife,” as he called her (14 years younger), Janet (née Forbes) Ashbee, whom he had wed in 1898 but with whom he had yet to consummate the marriage. As this book explains, at times in honest, bleak detail, Ashbee was a prominent homosexual, as everyone seems to have known but his bride. In fact, it was only nine years later, a dozen years after their wedding, having returned from their second visit to the U.S., that they began sleeping together, which eventually led to four daughters. All this is news—sort of. It's been there for all to find, since, throughout their marriage, CRA and Janet kept a collaborative journal, in which each wrote entries in the same daily diary; they exchanged letters between themselves and with a number of close friends; Janet kept a private diary, the ninth and last volume of which records the events that eventually led to her breakdown and recovery; and, last but not most revealing, Janet wrote a thinly disguised autobiographical novel (in which only the names are fictional), portions of which are printed here for the first time. Researched and skillfully written by the second of the Ashbees' four daughters (now 88 years old), this is a candid, backstage look at the challenges faced and surmounted by her heroic Victorian mother, as she grew to accept the reality of a jolly Art “practical” marriage.

**ROBERT  
BYRNE**  
Cogito ergo dim  
sum: Therefore I  
think these are  
pork buns.

**NICOLE  
WILLIAMSON**  
The mome rath  
isn't born that  
could outgrabe  
me.

## JOHN GUNTHER

(*Inside Asia*) [A New Yorker who was visiting Vermont] said, "There are so many rocks here. Where did they come from? Do you grow rocks in Vermont?" The Vermont farmer replied, "The rocks were brought here by the great glacier." The New Yorker said, "What became of the glacier?" The Vermonter said, "It went back to get more rocks."

## JAMES THURBER

(*The Thurber Album*) [In Ohio] the words "Mary" and "marry" are pronounced the same as "merry," and there too, Gudda is spoken ("Where's he gudda go? What's he gudda do?"), which results from a partial immobility of the lips in speaking.

## HENRY MOORE

(*Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*) [Before getting married] I had argued with all my friends that really artists shouldn't get married, they should be married to their art. After all Michelangelo wasn't married, Beethoven wasn't married and so on, all the examples of really good artists who weren't married; but after meeting Irina [his future wife], I began to say Rembrandt was married, Bach had twenty children and so on. All this attitude changed, and within six months we were married.

## RUDOLF ARNHEIM

(*Parables of Sun Light*) Older people talking to each other would not have to say everything twice if our language had an opening signal like the British "I say," or the Japanese "Anone" to alert the partner that something is about to be said. The oldsters often fail to understand something the first time it is said, not just because their hearing has gotten weaker but because they have become slower in tuning in on any appeal from the outside.

GEORGE  
DENNISON PRENTICE

(*Prenticeana*) In New York City, the common bats fly only at twilight. Brick-bats fly at all hours.

## BRAD

## HOLLAND

New art: New art follows old art. Comes before new improved art.



## S. J.

## PERELMAN

(*Westward Ha!*)

I suggested that she take trip round the world. "Oh, I know," returned the lady, yawning with ennui, "but there's so many other places I want to see first."



A N O N

German for  
"Do you have  
gloves?": Gott  
mit uns?

S A M U E L B U T L E R (*Notebooks*)

The little Strangs say the "good words," as they call them, before going to bed, aloud and at their father's knee, or rather in the pit of his stomach. One of them was lately heard to say "Forgive us our Christ-masses, as we forgive them that Christmas against us."

A N I T A B R O O K E R (*Hotel du Lac*)

In real life, of course, it is the hare who wins. Every time. Look around you. And in any case it is my contention that Aesop was writing for the tortoise market...Hares have no time to read. They are too busy winning the game.

■ *John Cassavettes*, directed by Andre S. Labarthe. VHS video. Color. 1998. 50 minutes. Available from First Run / Icarus Films, 32 Court Street, 21st Floor, Brooklyn NY 11201. Website: <<http://www.frif.com>>. Among the most admired (and imitated) of American filmmakers is John Cassavettes, who was born in New York City in 1929, and died in 1989, at age 59, of cirrhosis of the liver. His equally admired wife, the actress Gena Rowlands, who often appeared in his movies, once said of him: "As an artist I love him. As a husband I hate him." This documentary, which was produced for a French television series titled *Cinema of Our Time*, consists of two clusters of footage, the first filmed in Hollywood in 1965, the second three years later in Paris. As the film begins, Cassavettes is 36 years old and has recently received the Critics Award at the Venice Film Festival for *Shadows* (1961), his film about a love affair between a white boy and a black girl. Partly scripted, partly improvised, it was filmed in 16mm for a total cost of \$40,000. That success enabled him to make two Hollywood-funded films, both disasters. In the first half of this interesting video, he talks a lot—at a pace that appears to be manic—about artistic improvisation, the incompatibility of integrity and money-making, and the pros and cons of independent filmmaking. Three years later, he is interviewed in Paris, with Rowlands sitting on the side (watch her expressions), on his way to the Venice premiere of *Faces* (1968), a film about marital breakdown. This time Cassavettes is somber, perhaps depressed, and far more introspective. In his remaining years, he would direct seven other films, of which the finest two may be *Husbands* (1970) and *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974). He was also a Hollywood actor, appearing in *The Killers*, *The Dirty Dozen*, *Rosemary's Baby*, and others. This documentary has a certain rawness to it and, like Cassavettes' own films, is not always pleasant nor easy to watch. In the end it comes off as a very brief view of a determinedly gifted but unstable man for whom all or most of life was blurred, abrupt, and ill-defined.

O G D E N

N A S H

If you get a call  
from a panther,  
Don't anther.

A N O N

A farmer once called his cow Zephyr,  
She seemed such an amiable hephyr.  
But when he drew near  
She bit off his ear,  
Which made him considerably  
dephyr.



■ Peter Selz, *Nathan Oliveira*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. ISBN 0-520-23101-5. The American painter and printmaker Nathan Oliveira was born in 1928 of Portuguese ancestry in Oakland, California, the Bay Area city in which Gertrude Stein grew up, and of which she once remarked, "When you get there, there isn't any there there." This is a full-color, 240-page catalog for a retrospective of his work, which opened in February 2002 at the San Jose Museum of Art, and will travel throughout 2003 to other museums in New York, California, and Washington. Inadvertently, it is also an off-hand reminder of the legacy of ceramic artist Peter Voulkos, who was a classmate of Oliveira at the California College of Arts and Crafts, and who died only recently. Influenced by Abstract Expressionism, it was Voulkos who brought expressionist gesture (or Action Painting) into ceramics; while Oliveira, along with other painters like Richard Diebenkorn, Elmer Bischoff, and Paul Wonner, carried it into figure painting. Among the most interesting parts in this book is Oliveira's memory of the summer of 1950, which he spent at Mills College as a student of German painter Max Beckmann. The larger portion of the text is devoted to Oliveira's paintings, the smaller to lithographs, monotypes, and sculptures; while other sections include a chronology, exhibition list, and bibliography. Seeing so much of his work at once, it is apparent why people may argue that his finest pieces were made in late 50s and early 60s, the years in which his work premiered at the Museum of Modern Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Guggenheim Museum. Equally breathtaking, however, are the watercolor, charcoal, and wash drawing nudes produced in 1989, and again at the end of the 90s, when he was 70 years old. When Oliveira is genuinely spontaneous, the resulting ambiguous images have, as Rainer Maria Rilke said of Rodin's figure drawings, the "immediacy, force and warmth" of life, with "an almost animal quality."

HENRY MOORE [While studying painting at the Royal College of Art in 1921-24, among his teachers was a Professor of Architecture named Beresford Pite, who one day] arrived in front of my painting and for several minutes spotlighted his violent dislike of it. "This student," he said, "has been feeding on garbage." That Friday afternoon I could not work, but wandered around Hyde Park to work off my hurt feelings. I almost decided I would leave the college and study on my own.

HARRIET MARTINEAU  
(*Society in America*) A Sunday school teacher asked a child, "In what state were mankind left after the fall?" [And the child answered] "In the state of Vermont."

ANON  
A bird in the  
hand is dead.



LEONARD  
RAGOUZEOS  
Those who can,  
do.  
Those who can,  
teach.  
Those who can  
neither do nor  
teach become  
administrators  
and tell teachers  
what to do.

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ELAINE  
DUNDY  
(*The Dud  
Avocado*)

I mean, the question actors most often get asked is how they can bear saying the same things over and over again night after night, but God knows the answer to *that* is, don't we all *anyway*; might as well get paid for it.

ANON  
—Sorry about my dancing. I'm a little stiff from badminton.  
—I don't care where you're from. You'll never dance with me again!

GYPSY  
ROSE LEE  
God is love—but  
get it in writing.

ALAN  
BLINDER  
If you try to give  
an on-the-one-  
hand-or-the-oth-  
er-hand answer,  
only one of the  
hands tends to  
get quoted.

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