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TOWERS

57

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LUCIEN STRYK POETRY AWARD

"Through the Stations" by A. Jozefiak

Honorable Mention: "Juarez" by Steve Dolgin

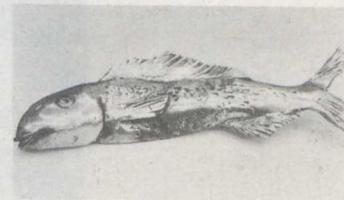
"Bridal" by Ward Smith

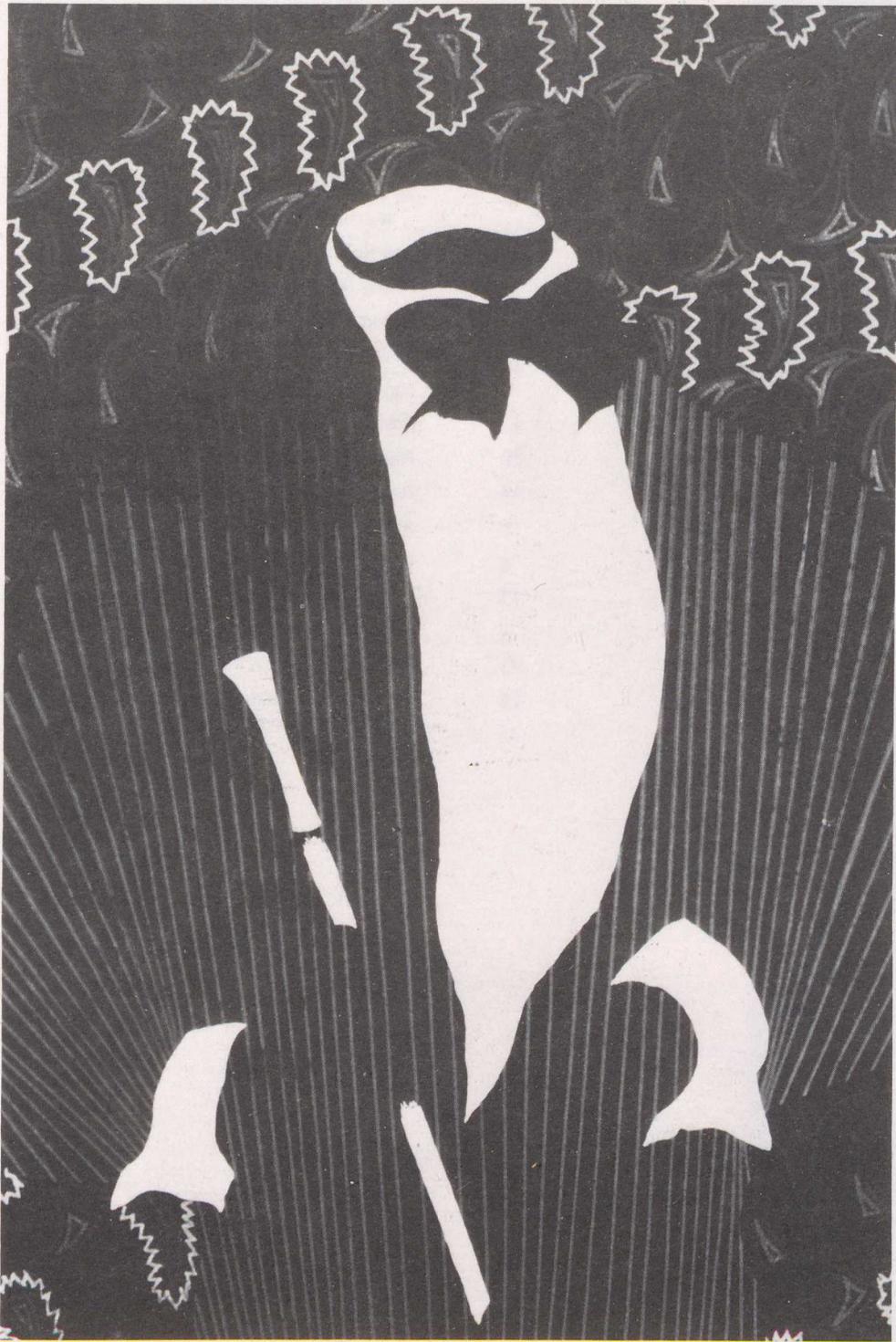
Judge: Arra Garab

E. RUTH TAYLOR AWARD FOR CRITICAL WRITING

"Paradise Lost: Richard Brautigan's *In Watermelon Sugar*" by Dennis Lynch

Judge: James R. Giles





The Road

There's a beginning to this way
an end, where the tree splits
on this long tongue road.
There are voices in the morning:
a sparrow falls from white ash
dying.
Listen, the hollow of my heel.
I breathe deep to fill that space
with sparrow songs.

Catherine Allen

Tracing an Artist

My hand tastes like yours,
salt with turpentine.
Each finger curls a paint stroke.
Wrinkles cross the palm
where fists sleep,
where books and flowers still open.
The sound of your hand
is sharper than shells.
And turning my door,
those blue nails tick.

Ward Smith



Stillwell Hotel

Swinging beef run
pulling forty thousand pounds
of dead cows hanging on chains
and if that trailer rushes out
well there they go and you got
a hellofa lotta hamburg on your back

Dead skunk under clear sky
hundred and five miles out
And it gets scary everything
burning up orange pouring
silver electricity over night shadows
poking out behind the corn and alder trees

Where Kansas wind stops
after days of sweeping south on 69
between Fort Scott and Joplin

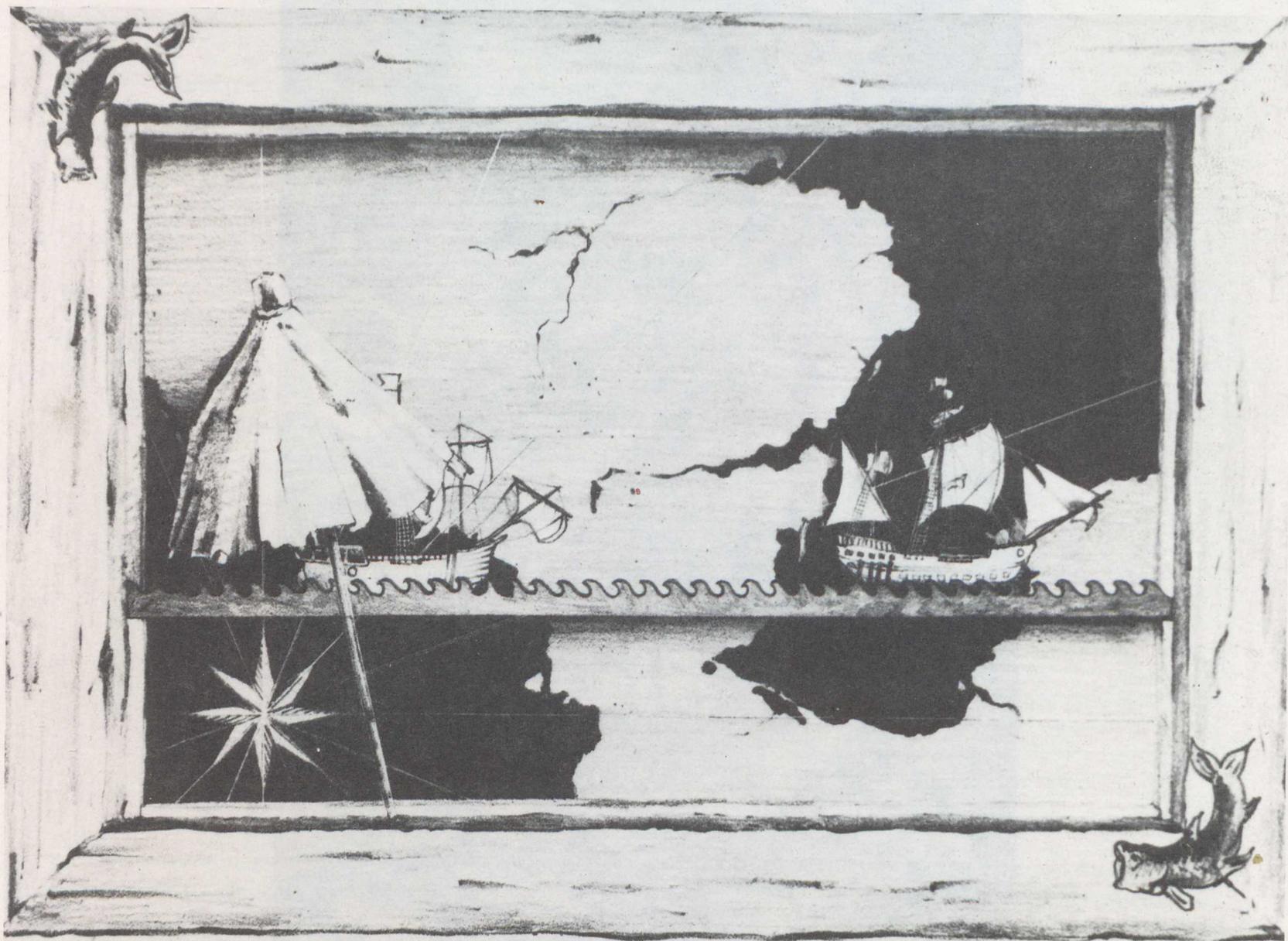
I didn't have a chance
last November in the Stillwell Hotel
Don't do well in the cold and
forget what I mean to say
trying to keep warm

Into southern Missouri
from Chicago and Springfield
and the highway through Illinois

I'm a thirty-nine dollar paint job
over rusting fenders
when I meet you for coffee

Late in August the morning is steam on the windows of the cab
Red pools in the shade of the pastures

Steve Dolgin



Ralph's Umbrellas

A.P.

J. V. Sample '81



Through the Stations (Candlelight Meditation at St. Mary's)

Last whips cut the dark
bone, bleed thin
as my flame—still
you rise, shadowy
as a sea—breaking
these sandcolored walls—
you, who are
indelible as a birthmark,
the scar in my skin.

In wood and cloth,
you, the bruise,
bound tighter than your
brother for Auschwitz,
climb by the same
guard-eye— a sharp shell,
dried in a changeless face:
i bear its mark.

The glass is flowing
stained with saints'
frozen eyes—
in swirled colors,
robes brimming
full as rivers,
even they
bear the mark.

In these fourteen
crimson deaths,
i am thinking
how we deepen,
and how you shimmer
melting bright,
our hard faces
in the Shroud.

Paradise Lost: Richard Brautigan's *In Watermelon Sugar*

Dennis Lynch

Richard Brautigan's *In Watermelon Sugar* has been the most misunderstood of his many works. The misreadings of this novel have contributed as much as any other single factor to the widely held notion that Brautigan is a naïve flower child, one who simplistically believes, as Johnathan Yardley suggests, that "happiness is a warm hippie."¹ But a close reading of *In Watermelon Sugar* reveals that the author is doing much more than merely heralding some organic millennium. Instead, as in *Trout Fishing in America*, Brautigan offers a profoundly disturbing view of a dream become a nightmare.

It should not be too surprising that *In Watermelon Sugar* lends itself to misinterpretations. On first reading it is a difficult book to understand; even trying to determine the setting of the story, when and where it takes place, causes problems. The action occurs at some undetermined time in the future. No books have been written in the past thirty-five years and only twenty-four in the last 171 years.² A total of 375 people, we are told, live in the place called in watermelon sugar, a place that includes a town, some shacks, and a kind of commune called iDEATH where the main characters live. Other action occurs at the Forgotten Works, an incredibly huge rubbish heap that just goes "on and on and on," a place where "there were no plants growing and no animals living . . . There was not even so much as a blade of grass in there, and the birds refused to fly over the place" (86). Though the narrator has no idea as to what caused the Forgotten Works, we might surmise that it is the rubble of a civilization destroyed in a nuclear holocaust, a holocaust, incidentally, that Brautigan himself feels is inevitable. Perhaps, too, whatever trauma that destroyed the Forgotten Works is responsible, too, for some of the other oddities of in watermelon sugar: the talking tigers, the sun that shines a different color every day, the stars that are always red, the rain that always comes on October twelfth. The people of in watermelon sugar lead an almost agrarian life, living in modest shacks, tending the trout hatchery, and processing the strange watermelon sugar

out of which they "carefully construct" (1) everything from clocks to wooden planks to their lives.

Though the setting of this story is astounding, the plot is fairly simple: the nameless narrator has a girlfriend, Margaret, who becomes more and more fascinated by the Forgotten Works and by a gang of toughs led by someone named inBOIL. After inBOIL and his gang mutilate and kill themselves, the narrator drops Margaret for their mutual friend Pauline. Margaret then kills herself, is buried by the commune in an elaborate ceremony, and the book ends.

From this plot, many critics have deduced that Brautigan is holding iDEATH up to be an ideal society. There is no question that the narrator likes iDEATH. "It is beautiful," he says. "There is a delicate balance in iDEATH. It suits us" (1). He adds, "I have a gentle life" (2). Echoing these thoughts, one reviewer called iDEATH an "egoless world of vision and imagination" where "all is watermelon-sugar sweet."³ Another wrote that Brautigan created "a backwater civilization reminiscent of Tolkien, a fragile world of polite chitchat, talking tigers and multicolored suns."⁴ Harvey Leavitt calls the setting of the book a "regained Paradise" and calls the work a "utopian novel" in which Brautigan offers "the utopian dream for the post-industrial age of affluence."⁵ Tony Tanner calls the setting a "happy commune" and the book "a pastoral dream."⁶ Likewise, Terence Malley calls iDEATH "idyllic" and sees the lives of its inhabitants as "serene, gentle, uncomplicated."⁷ Summing up the book's commercial success, Patricia Hernlund suggests that most readers view the book as a "lyric description of a successful counterculture" and she adds that *In Watermelon Sugar* "has become a fad book popular in college classes because students have heard that it describes 'their' way of life."⁸

To some, the book's view of this so called idyllic life is too simple. A review of Brautigan's book in the *Times Literary Supplement* began thus: "To older generations, one of the more baffling aspects of the hippie protest movement is in its cult of simplicity. The hard-line hippie has no time for all the laborious qualifications that older folk might want to append to words like 'peace' and 'love.' This in turn leaves the older folks wondering whether the hippie might not have more hair than brains."⁹ In a similar vein, Tony Tanner concludes that *In Watermelon Sugar* "is a charming and original work with touches of magic, but it is perhaps too obvious in its parabolic form. It suggests a commitment to a rather too

simple-minded version of things which the previous novels avoid."¹⁰ Finally, one critic argues, "*In Watermelon Sugar* has the charm of the fairy story it almost is. But it has neither the emotional complexity, nor the imaginative ingenuity, nor the implicit historical and cultural awareness of *Trout Fishing in America*. In important respects it really is more sentimental, less radical. In fact, many of the insights of the one book undercut the sugary values of the other."¹¹

All of these readings utterly miss the point of the book. All is *not* watermelon-sugar-sweet and gentle in the world Brautigan creates. It is no idyll, but is instead a place of death and betrayal. *In Watermelon Sugar* is not a utopia but a dystopia; not a picture of Paradise regained, but a picture of Paradise lost once more; not a pastoral dream, but a pastoral nightmare. True, the narrator does embrace the values of iDEATH and endorses them. But we readers make a terrible mistake if we confuse the narrator with Brautigan. Terence Malley, among others, does exactly this when he writes, "Based on the little that Brautigan has chosen to tell about himself, and without straining our inferences too much, we can say (for what it's worth) that this narrator is an autobiographical projection of the author, reflecting more or less directly, Brautigan's point of view, perceptions, values."¹² This is utter nonsense. Brautigan himself has remarked that the narrator of *In Watermelon Sugar*, "like many of my narrators, including the narrators of *A Confederate General from Big Sur* and *The Abortion*, is a jerk."¹³ If critics, like many college students, continue to associate Brautigan with his simple-minded narrators, it will be no surprise if they continue to dismiss his work. But Brautigan, unlike some of his narrators, is no naïve flower child; he is, instead, a writer of amazing depth. Moreover, *In Watermelon Sugar* is in no way undercut by *Trout Fishing in America*. Instead, both works reinforce each other, for both are searingly ironic portraits of the human condition.

The misreadings of *In Watermelon Sugar* extend to the mispronunciation of the setting itself. "About eighty per cent of the people who talk to me about the book pronounce 'iDEATH' as they do the word 'Edith,'" says Brautigan. "It's astounding and misses my point entirely. It's pronounced 'iDEATH'—'i' followed by 'death.'" Harvey Leavitt has missed the point when he writes, "*In Watermelon Sugar* takes us back to the beginning, for this is Eden, with its syllabic and accented soul mate iDEATH reconstructed."¹⁴ However, *In*

Watermelon Sugar is much more about death than it is about Eden. In Book One of this "gentle," "idyllic" story, the narrator's parents are eaten by tigers; in Book Two inBOIL and his gang grotesquely kill themselves; and in Book Three Margaret commits suicide. Death, then, is central in iDEATH.

What is especially curious—and telling—is the narrator's lack of emotional response to any of these deaths. After his parents are gobbled up before his very eyes, the narrator simply asks the tigers to help him with his arithmetic (39) and then thanks them. When inBOIL and his gang slay themselves, the commune merely says "That's that" (115) and cleans up the mess. When the narrator sees in the Statue of Mirrors that Margaret has killed herself, he calmly notifies Fred, who then in turn handles all of the arrangements for her funeral. The funeral itself is rather festive: "Everyone seemed to be in fairly good spirits" (166), and there is a dance afterwards. This utter lack of emotion and human feeling cannot help but trouble any sensitive reader. In the land of iDEATH, though, what happens to people no longer really matters. The "I," an individual's own life, has been reduced to an "i," something of little importance. What is of importance in this world is the commune; this, above all, must survive. Brautigan privately has expressed a distrust of any movement that places an idea above individuality. "I belong to no political party, no clubs, no groups, no causes. People are important, not movements." In iDEATH, though, the "iDEA" always comes first.

Anything that would upset the "delicate balance" of iDEATH is viewed as a threat. Though the narrator says that iDEATH is "always changing. It's for the best" (18), the environment in fact changes very little. The sun is always gold on Tuesdays, always gray on Wednesdays, and so on; the first rain of every year always comes on October twelfth. In this stasis the people over the commune find comfort. However, Margaret and inBOIL's fascination with the Forgotten Works is a major threat. The Forgotten Works represents all of the knowledge of the previous, now lost, civilization. If iDEATH is an ironic Eden, the Forgotten Works is its Tree of Knowledge. Most of the members of the commune avoid the Forgotten Works. Because it is likely that a misuse of knowledge led to the holocaust that destroyed the Forgotten Works, the unwillingness of most of the characters to learn about the place is understandable. However, just as understandable is the desire of Margaret and inBOIL to visit

there: it is simple human curiosity. The narrator, though, cannot understand why anyone would visit there, even for art's sake: "Nobody has been very far into the Forgotten Works, except that guy Charley said who wrote a book about them, and I wonder what his trouble was, to spend weeks in there" (82). Anyone who wants more knowledge, then, must have something wrong with him. Knowledge threatens the status quo; knowledge brings change.

And change does come through the insights gained by inBOIL. As his name indicates, he is boiling within, and he is the most passionate of all the residents of in watermelon sugar. To Pauline, and to many critics, inBOIL is simply "an asshole" (114), but this reading is too pat. The more one thinks about inBOIL, the more troubling he is; he cannot be dismissed. But the residents of iDEATH do not bother to think of him much. inBOIL is the "id" in iDEATH, and if in iDEATH we find the death of the "I," the ego, then we also find the death of the id. Violence and passion must be purged from this society. Terence Malley claims that the residents of iDEATH "approach that transcendent state celebrated by Blake, in *A Song of Liberty* (as well as in other poems), in which 'Everything that Lives is Holy!'" However, this reading ignores the fact that the people have killed off the tigers (hardly respecting their "holiness") just as later they will ostracize inBOIL and Margaret. With the ego and the id gone, all that remains is the superego: rules, convention, order.

During the self-mutilation of inBOIL's gang, Charley says, "I don't think you've proved anything," but inBOIL says, "We've proved iDEATH" (113). In a profound way, he is right.

"OK," inBOIL said. "This is what it's all about. You don't know what's really going on with iDEATH. The tigers knew more about iDEATH than you know. You killed all the tigers and burned the last one in here.

"That was all wrong. The tigers should never have been killed. The tigers were the true meaning of iDEATH. Without the tigers there could be no iDEATH, and you killed the tigers and so iDEATH went away, and you've lived here like a bunch of clucks ever since. I'm going to bring back iDEATH. We're all going to bring back iDEATH. My gang here and me. I've been thinking about it for years and now we're going to do it. iDEATH will be again." (111)

inBOIL's point is that society needs the id; it needs the tiger. Insane though inBOIL is, the reader cannot help but under-

stand him. Blake said "Without contraries there is no progression," and inBOIL, I feel, would agree. In iDEATH the tigers are killed, and only the lambs—or "clucks"—remain. Without inBOIL and Margaret, iDEATH has no contraries; it is merely a place of numbing sameness.

Throughout this reading I have been suggesting though the narrator may have one viewpoint, Brautigan would not have us share it. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the narrator's reactions to Margaret. On the back jacket of *In Watermelon Sugar*, the novel is described as "a story of love and betrayal." But who betrayed whom? To many critics, Margaret betrays the commune. Albert H. Norman claims that "The delicate balance of iDEATH is upset by Margaret's jealousy and inBOIL's scheming."¹⁶ Another critic writes, "Margaret, jealous of Pauline and no longer feeling peaceful-sweet and tranquil-high, feels some kind of affinity with inBOIL and spends more time in the Forgotten Works."¹⁷ Tony Tanner adds that Margaret's "interest in 'things' is, in turn, symptomatic of her inability to love in the free and gentle manner of the other members of iDEATH."¹⁸ The implication of all this is that Margaret's suicide is somehow a just dessert.

However, there is not a single indication in the text that Margaret feels any jealousy towards Pauline. On the contrary, it is the narrator who is jealous of Margaret. He is jealous not only of her interest in the Forgotten Works, but he is also jealous of what he darkly suspects—with no foundation—is going on between her and inBOIL. Moreover, Margaret does not, as the middle quotation in the preceding paragraph implies, turn towards the Forgotten Works after the narrator turns to Pauline. Indeed, quite the opposite occurs. The narrator becomes disenchanted with Margaret only after she begins visiting the Forgotten Works. In addition, Margaret never loses her "peaceful-sweet" personality. She is to the end loving and kind. While the others berate inBOIL, Margaret says only, "They're always very nice to me" (95). The narrator, reflecting later, becomes very angry at Margaret. "Her performance at dinner had really disgusted me" (96). Surely this is an over-reaction, one that Margaret does not deserve. After inBOIL's death, only Margaret expresses the very human emotion of shock (120); even this bothers the narrator. There is indeed betrayal in *In Watermelon Sugar*, but it is not Margaret who betrays anyone; instead it is Margaret who is betrayed by her lover, the narrator, and Pauline, the woman with whom

she is "almost sisters" (31). It is the narrator and Pauline who fail to love in a "free and gentle manner."

In addition, the narrator and Pauline constantly refuse to accept any responsibility for their actions, and they refuse to consider alternatives to their behavior. "I feel bad about this," Pauline says. "Margaret and I were such good friends. . . . I'm sorry that things had to work out this way, but there was nothing we could do about it" (31). She is simply wrong; she and the narrator could have done differently. Later, after Pauline and the narrator's actions have led to Margaret's death, Pauline says again, "I just didn't expect things to turn out this way, but they have, and I guess there's nothing we can do about it." "That's right," the narrator replies, "Just take things the way they happen" (159). Such complacency, such bromides offered in the face of tragedy, are not to be endorsed. Earlier, when Pauline has shown just the barest bit of concern for Margaret's feelings, the narrator has said, "Don't worry about it. Everything will be all right" (47). He is dead wrong. And when soon after this Pete tells the narrator that Margaret is "really pining for you," and the narrator replies, "I don't know about that" (55), he is lying.

While Margaret was alive, the narrator had tried to block her out. "I wish Margaret would leave me alone" (5), he says, and he refuses to open his door to her. He even tries to deny her individuality when he writes, "This morning there was a knock at the door. I could tell who it was by the way they knocked, and I heard them coming across the bridge. . . . I did not acknowledge their knocking because I just wasn't interested. I did not want to see them" (3). The narrator uses the impersonal "them" to describe a woman who until very recently has been his lover. Try as he might, though, the narrator cannot stifle Margaret's individuality. She, among all the members of the commune, is the only one who ever steps on the plank in the bridge that makes noise. "They always step on it. I have never been able to figure this out." Indeed, the narrator never will be able to understand Margaret. Moreover, she has qualities he will never be able to match. "I can walk across the bridge hundreds of times without stepping on that board, but Margaret always steps on it" (3). Margaret did not endorse the actions of inBOIL, but their deaths rightly shocked her. Though Tom McGuane says that *In Watermelon Sugar* possesses "a springtime of moral emptiness," there is a moral center to the book, and it is Margaret.¹⁹

To find moral emptiness, one need look no further than the

narrator. One of his most damning acts involves a note Margaret leaves him on the very morning that she kills herself. "It was good to be back at my shack, but there was a note on the door from Margaret. I read the note and it did not please me and I threw it away, so not even time could find it" (65). Why is there this curious silence from the narrator about the content of the note? It is not too farfetched to guess that this note was a final cry for help from Margaret before her death. This might explain why the narrator took such pains to get rid of the note. His reaction to the note is totally insensitive; instead of going to help Margaret, he takes a nap. After Margaret's funeral, we can imagine that she is forgotten forever.

Indeed, the solution to everything that is troubling to the people of iDEATH is either to destroy it, or to forget it, or to do both. After the tigers eat the narrator's parents, he burns down the shack he had lived in with them, moves to iDEATH, and seldom mentions them again. When the last tiger is himself killed, his body is brought to iDEATH, and everyone gathers as the body is burnt. Pauline says, "It burned until there was nothing left but ashes, and then the men began right then and there building the trout hatchery at iDEATH, right over the spot where the last tiger had been burned." She adds, significantly, "It's hard to think of that now when you're down there dancing" (37). Later, after inBOIL and his gang have killed themselves, Pauline will suggest, "Take them to their shacks at the Forgotten Works. Burn them. Burn their shacks. Burn them together and then forget them." Charley says, "That's a good idea" (117), and that is what is done. Finally, after Margaret dies, she is taken to the trout hatchery (the site where the last tiger was burned), and is buried in the river. The townspeople then gather at the hatchery for a dance; because the hatchery is built over the same river Margaret lies buried in, the people of iDEATH are in effect dancing on her grave. The philosophy of iDEATH, then, is to destroy and to forget all that troubles or threatens. In this world, "Out of sight, out of mind" is a credo.

The people of iDEATH cut themselves off from simple human emotions such as grief and sympathy, and, for all practical purposes, they are emotionally lobotomized. Likewise, these people are physically incomplete; they fail to make full use of their senses. It is very telling that before inBOIL and his men kill themselves, they first cut off their thumbs, then their noses, and next their ears; one also puts

out his eye. These men, then, have desensitized themselves; that is, they have deprived themselves of the senses of touch, smell, hearing and seeing. However, what they are doing overtly is only what the people of iDEATH have been doing symbolically. All of the people of the commune seem cut off from their senses; no one ever seems to experience much pleasure. Even sex is bland and lifeless. When the narrator beds Pauline he can only say, "We went over and lay upon her bed. I took her dress off. She had nothing on underneath. We did that for a while" (34). After what is simply "that" is over, the narrator says, "I liked Pauline's body and she said that she liked mine, too, and we couldn't think of anything to say" (35).

The only sense organ that inBOIL and his gang do not mutilate is each man's tongue. This is entirely fitting, for taste is the only sense that is used much at iDEATH. *In Watermelon Sugar* includes a great many references to food. Indeed, food is the main topic of conversation in iDEATH, and the conversations go for great lengths. This has bothered many critics. Tom McGuane writes that the book is "concrete to the point of a kind of studied anti-selectivity. Through whole pages people talk assiduously of nothing whatsoever."²⁰ Malley adds, "Surely Brautigan runs the risk of simply boring his readers in chapters like 'Meat Loaf' and 'Apple Pie,' the main business of which is a discussion among the narrator, Fred, and Doc Edwards about what they want for lunch."²¹ However, that the characters spend so much time discussing food is exactly Brautigan's point about them. All that's left for these people, cut off from almost every intellectual pursuit and emotionally deficient, is food. Moreover, Malley misses the subtle points Brautigan is trying to make in "Apple Pie" and "Meat Loaf." In "Meat Loaf" we find out that the restaurant has been serving the same meal on the same day for as long as anyone can remember. When everyone orders it, this is indicative of the bland conformity of most of iDEATH. However, in "Apple Pie" Fred dares to defend Margaret to the narrator. Fred says,

"Why are you mad at her? You don't think she has anything to do with inBOIL just because everyone else does, except Pauline and me?"

"There's no proof. It doesn't even make sense in the first place. It was just a coincidence that linked them together.

You don't believe she had anything to do with inBOIL do you?" (130)

To these sensible words, the narrator can say only, "I don't know" (131). However, right after this when Fred orders a piece of pie, the narrator, for the first time in the book, does not join him. Thus, he is subtly showing his displeasure with Fred, and he is indirectly indicating that he really has formed some opinion of what has happened between Margaret and inBOIL. "Meat Loaf" and "Apple Pie" are not wasted chapters, then, but are instead telling chapters that are simple only on the surface.

Though taste is the only sense fully exercised by the people of iDEATH, much of the food they eat is as bland and unappealing as their lives. Al, the main cook, puts carrots in everything. "If I eat another carrot this week I'll scream" (6), says Fred in the book's first reference to food. The last reference occurs on the next to last page of the book, when the narrator says that Pauline and Al "made a potato salad that somehow ended up having a lot of carrots in it" (165). The menu at iDEATH, then, is almost as unchanging as the lives of the people there. But bland as it is, it is all they have. Thus, it is not surprising that in iDEATH there are numerous statues of vegetables.

There is a statue of an artichoke near the shingle factory and a ten-foot carrot near the trout hatchery at iDEATH and a head of lettuce near the school and a bunch of onions near the entrance to the Forgotten Works and there are other vegetable statues near people's shacks and a rutabaga by the ball park. (29)

Food is the deity of this land, and it must be honored.

The world of *In Watermelon Sugar*, then, is a stale world of unchanging conformity. But change at any price is not the cure for iDEATH, and so the way of inBOIL cannot be endorsed. But just as surely, the reader cannot endorse the way of Pauline and the narrator. Perhaps the character who comes closest to combining the good qualities of inBOIL and the people of iDEATH is Margaret. She unites curiosity and a thirst for knowledge with gentleness and understanding. Brautigan's unreliable narrator paints a picture of "a good place," but the sensitive reader will see that this kind of world must be rejected, for a world without passion and without in-

tellectual curiosity is a sterile paradise indeed. A masterpiece of irony and an underrated and misunderstood book, *In Watermelon Sugar* is a frightening and sobering parable of a world gone wrong.

NOTES

¹Johnathan Yardley, "Still Loving," *New Republic*, 20 March 1971, p. 24.

²Richard Brautigan, *In Watermelon Sugar* (1968; rpt. New York: Dell, 1974), p. 11. All further references to this work appear parenthetically in the text.

³"Polluted Eden," *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 Aug. 1970, p. 893.

⁴Albert H. Norman, "Energy and Whimsy," *Newsweek*, 29 Dec. 1969, p. 55.

⁵Harvey Leavitt, "The Regained Paradise of Brautigan's *In Watermelon Sugar*," *Critique*, 16, 1 (1974), 55.

⁶Tony Tanner, *City of Words* (1971; rpt. London: Johnathan Cape, 1976), pp. 412-413.

⁷Terence Malley, *Richard Brautigan* (New York: Warner, 1972), p. 116.

⁸Patricia Hernlund, "Author's Intent: *In Watermelon Sugar*," *Critique*, 16, 1 (1974), 5.

⁹"Polluted Eden," p. 893.

¹⁰Tanner, p. 413.

¹¹"Polluted Eden," p. 893.

¹²Malley, p. 116.

¹³All of Richard Brautigan's comments used in this paper come from conversations I had with him in San Francisco (1979), Chicago (1980), and Pine Creek, Montana (1981).

¹⁴Leavitt, p. 18.

¹⁵Malley, p. 126.

¹⁶Norman, p. 55.

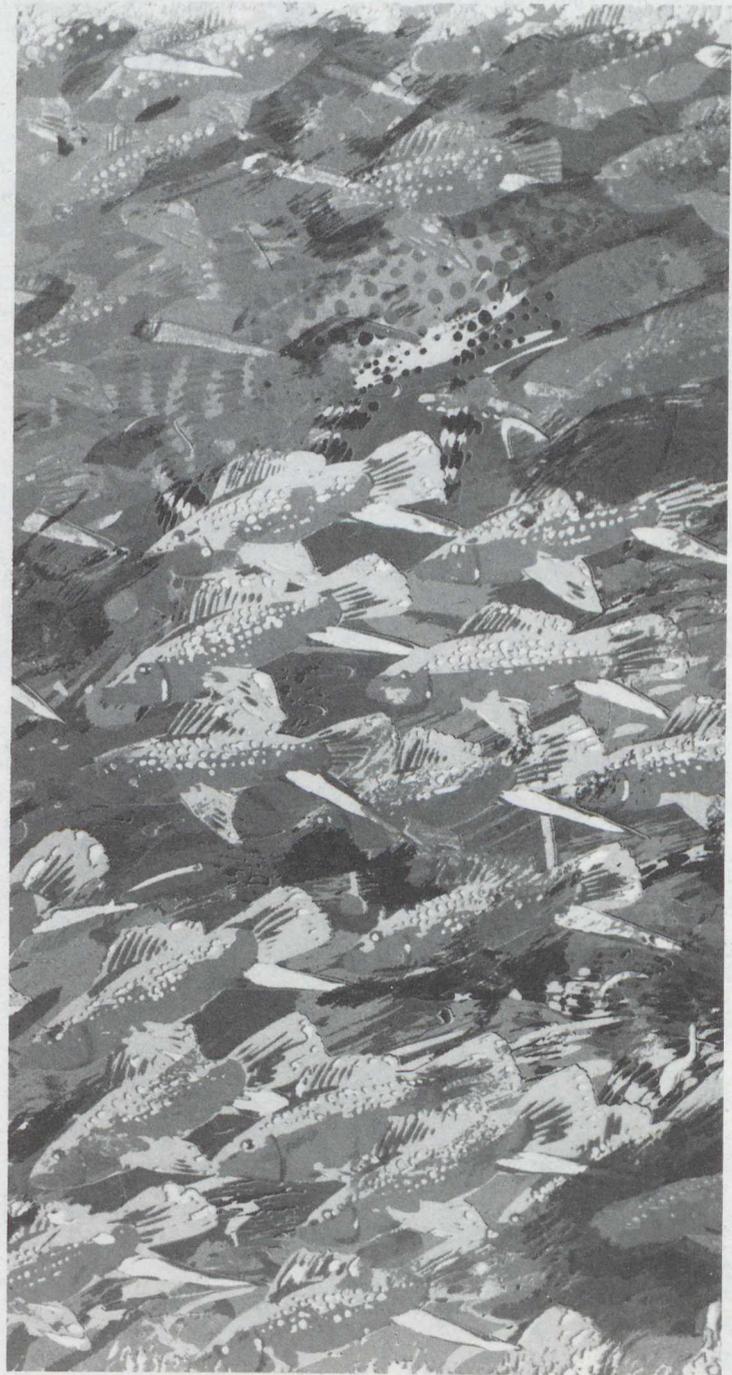
¹⁷"Polluted Eden," p. 893.

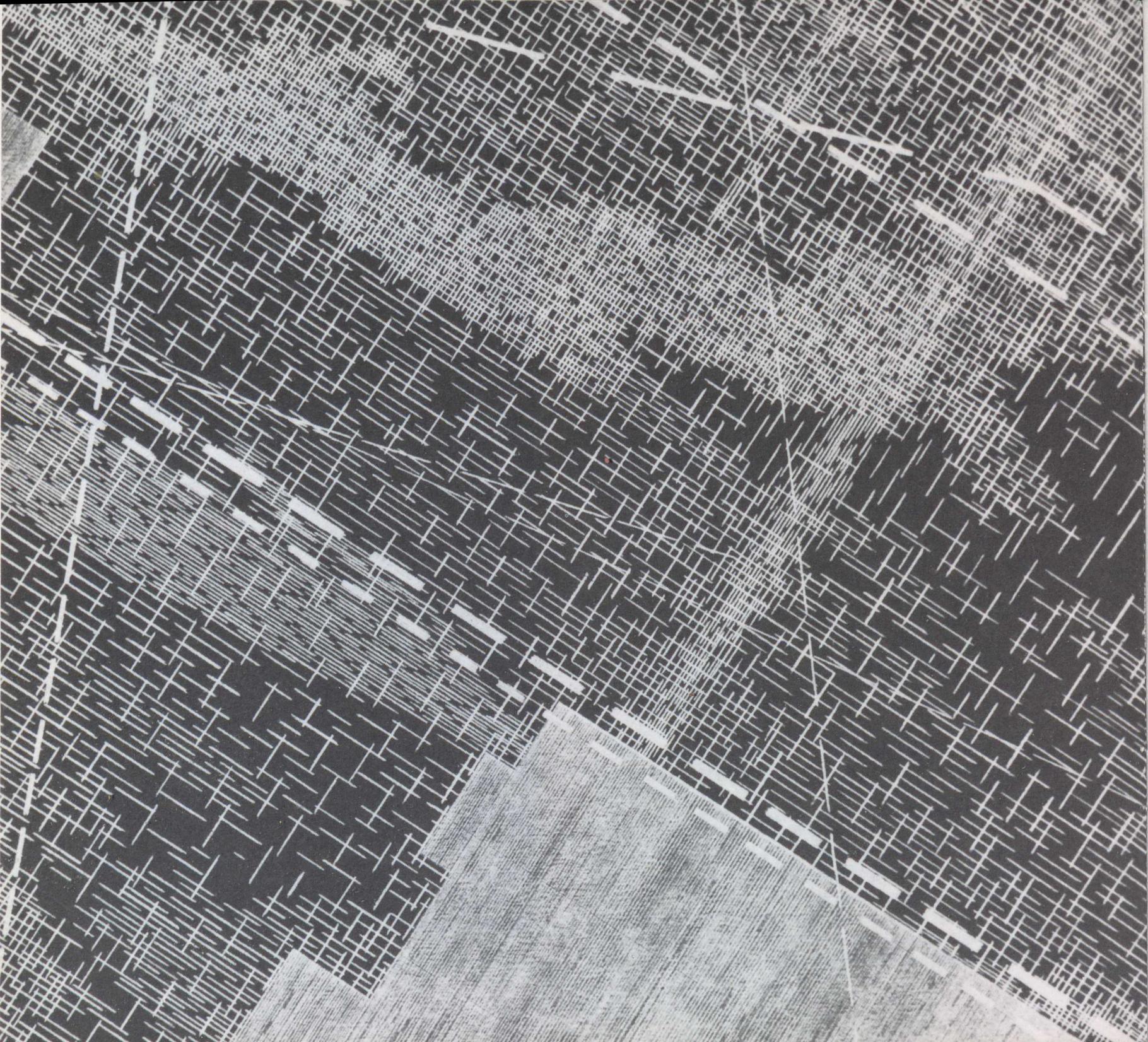
¹⁸Tanner, p. 413.

¹⁹Tom McGuane, "Trout Fishing in America, *The Pill Versus the Springhill Mine Disaster*, *In Watermelon Sugar*," *New York Times Book Review*, 15 Feb. 1970, p. 49.

²⁰McGuane, p. 49.

²¹Malley, p. 139.





The Park

Robin and
Billy joust
and whirr from
the playground
on bikes
barking at
each other
and blowing
motor spit
through grape lips

They ride in
a ring round
my wagon train
and warhoop
past a pair
of old Swedes
who swear on
the next bench

“Shoona juke”
they mimic
and charge
out the gate
tuned to the
powerline’s A

Tim Brown

Fred's Friends

Tom Dean

It was going to be the greatest practical joke in the world. All the rest had been funny, but this one was going to be the most spectacular. Tim could hardly restrain his laughter as he turned into the entrance of the park, the towering peak looming in the distance. He stopped the car, and removed the key, holding it in midair as he looked across the seat at Rudy. A harsh burst of laughter escaped his mouth and nose as Rudy, his head turned away, stared out the window, his shoulders bobbing up and down in a silent accompaniment to Tim's mirth.

"Well," said Tim between laughs. "Where's Fred?"

"He won't come," replied Rudy, desperately trying to hold back his amusement at the prospect of the coming entertainment.

"Sure he will," said Tim as he stepped outside. Rudy followed suit.

"Yeah, I suppose you're right. He gets an idea into his head and always sees it through to the bitter end." After a pause he added, "Even though that idea may have been deliberately planted by his friends."

Tim smiled and nodded as his eyes circled the park. The gathering dusk, combined with the oppressiveness of the stagnant late summer air, cast a dull sheen over the expanse of land.

As a result, the impressive mountain in the distance seemed to fade into the background, meld into the horizon, giving it a quality of remote mystery. "That old crap box of his will never make it up that mountain in one piece," mused Tim after assessing the peak.

"Well, it better," retorted Rudy. "I didn't come thirty miles to have this thing backfire on us."

"Oh, come on. Quit your whining. It'll work. It can't help but work. We've never failed in the past, have we?"

"Well, I guess not," admitted Rudy as he listlessly kicked some gravel, his hands stuffed in his pockets. "Fred's always been the perfect dupe." After a moment of thought he continued, "Even when we poisoned his hamburger, he didn't realize we had done it."

Tim cackled at the remembrance. "Shoot. When he chomped into that burger loaded with sugar, tabasco sauce,

and chocolate syrup, all he could say was 'This is cold.' Real observant!"

"Yeah," agreed Rudy, though not convincingly. "But that time was different. I mean, he really had no reason to think we had anything to do with it. MacDonald's can make mistakes. Maybe he really thought they just gave him a cold hamburger. I mean, if this—I mean when—this one comes off, he'll know we planned it all out."

Tim cast an impatient look at Rudy. "Listen. When this thing comes off, there's no way in hell he's going to be able to be mad at us. So would you just relax and enjoy this? Just think of it as our last bit of fun before school starts again."

Rudy seemed disconcerted. "Yeah, OK." He leaned his back against the car door, looking at his watch. "I don't know, Tim. It's already seven-thirty. He should have been here by now. Maybe he couldn't find the place and got lost."

Tim plucked a candy from the bag he was holding and lobbed it over the roof of the car at the back of Rudy's head. "Ow!" exclaimed his friend as the missile struck its target head-on. "What did you do that for?" he complained, rubbing the back of his head.

"Because I told you to shut up and quit worrying, you big baby. Here he comes now. See?" Rudy gazed in the direction of the park entrance and spied the aging tan Plymouth Valiant judiciously making its way over the gravel road, bobbing from side to side as if it were a storm-tossed ship on rough seas.

Tim looked into Rudy's eyes, confident and determined. "Hey, Fred!" he called, waving his hand. "We're over here."

They glimpsed the figure of Fred hunched over the wheel, his glasses precariously perched on the end of his nose. He rolled to a stop and carefully set the parking brake before stepping out of the car.

"Hey, Freddy old boy!" exclaimed Tim, slapping his friend on the back, almost knocking his glasses off. "We thought for a minute there you were going to bug out on us."

"Naw. Hi, Rudy." Rudy nodded slightly in response, still leaning against the car. "I wouldn't miss this," continued Fred, glancing in the direction of the mountain, assessing its height. "For once I'm going to show you guys that this car is worth its weight in gold."

"Yeah, right." Tim winked at Rudy. "It's worth its weight in gold if you're an eighty-year-old man who needs to get to the drug store once a week for his heart pills." Rudy silently

laughed as Fred angrily expelled short bursts of air from his nostrils.

"Well, let's get on with it if all you're going to do is stand here and mock me. Actions speak louder than words."

"OK," said Tim, shrugging his shoulders. "You know the rules. We drive up the mountain. Halfway up we pour on the gas. Whoever reaches the top first gets the last laugh. Right, Rudy?"

"Whatever you say, Tim," was Rudy's lame reply, his gaze fixed on the towering colossus in the distance. The hazy scarlet sun was just touching the peak, sucking away any sense of comfort with it in its descent behind the mountain.

Without further ceremony, Fred turned and trudged over to his proud possession. "Hey, Fred!" called Tim. Fred turned around. "Want a piece of candy before we go?" He held out the white bag. Fred shook his head. As he stumbled into the car, tripping on the gravel, he observed Tim plunge his hand into the bag, remove a piece of candy, and Rudy do the same. The pair waved their candy at him in a salutation before stepping into Tim's car.

Tim set the white bag on the seat between him and Rudy as he slid into the driver's position. "Let's go for it!" he exclaimed jubilantly. "Boy is he in for a surprise!"

"Are you sure this is a good idea?" asked Rudy as he plopped into his seat.

"Hey," chided Tim as he started the motor. "Aren't all the jokes I think up good ideas? Haven't all the things we've pulled on Fred been the ultimate in hysterics?"

"Yeah, I guess you're right."

"Sure, I am. And we're in this together. You and me. Where would we be without Fred? Right?"

Rudy smiled. "Right. Come on. Let's get going."

They heard the engine of Fred's motor rev up just as a slight rumble of thunder sounded in the distance. "Sounds like a storm's brewing," observed Tim. "We'd better get on with this before it hits." He set the car in gear and took off, leaving a cloud of dust in their wake as they headed toward the mountain.

The mountain was actually two miles away from the trio's starting point, so the joke itself was not in full swing as the two cars made their way toward the commanding peak. As the mountain gradually loomed closer, Rudy nervously eyed the darkening sky, watching the clouds gather ominously, caressing the tip of the mount as if to ward off any sojourners

to the summit of this monument to nature.

"I think you're right," mused Rudy at length, breathing in the torpid oppressiveness of the air. "I think we *are* in for a storm. Looks like it may be one of those late summer whoppers."

"Yeah," agreed Tim, trying to eye the sky and the road at the same time. "But once this is over, we won't have to worry about it. Here. Have another piece of candy."

Rudy followed Tim's lead of pulling a candy out of the bag on the seat between them. Sucking on the bittersweet chunk he asked, "You think Fred's scared?"

Tim chuckled. "Naw. He's so wrapped up in thinking he's going to vindicate his car of stupidity he doesn't have time to be scared."

"Yeah, I guess you're right. He always seems to play right into our hands when we want to bring out one of his dumb characteristics."

Tim nodded, adding, "But this time bringing out a dumb characteristic is just a pretense. The joke is going beyond that. And boy will it be great." He pounded the steering wheel several times with his open palms in gleeful anticipation, his strange cackle riding the crest of another thunderclap.

"But when we *do* set out to play on his foibles, the results are certainly gratifying," continued Rudy uneasily. He was remembering safer times. "Remember the restaurant?"

Tim smiled. "Mm hm. Fred always said one of his greatest fears was going to a restaurant and not having enough money to pay the bill."

"And you sure came up with a grandiose way of playing off his paranoia. Remember? You suddenly said you had forgotten your wallet and asked me if you could borrow some money for the bill. I said 'Sure,' but, gee whiz, I only had three bucks on me. And old Frugal Fred sure as hell didn't have enough to pay the whole bill." Rudy hunted for comfort in his recollection.

Tim began to laugh. "Yeah. God, the look on his face when the waitress said we either had to leave the car there or wash dishes all night. Total fear. Total, unadulterated, abject fear. It was great!"

Rudy joined in the laughter, hesitant. "You sure managed to set that up perfectly with the waitress. I'm surprised she played along with us."

"Yeah, well, I guess it was just the old charm. Luckily she followed through and came up with the twenty I had given her

to 'bail us out.' She could have kept it you know."

"Yeah, I kn--" The reminiscence was interrupted by a sharp crack of thunder, and Tim and Rudy looked at each other as the last vestiges of the sonic assault rumbled away over and behind the top of the mountain.

"Jesus!" exclaimed Tim, reaching into the candy bag. "I guess we'd better step on it." Rudy nodded as he chucked the piece of candy he had taken in his mouth.

They arrived at the foot of the mountain, the road ahead twisting and snaking around the bend. As Fred pulled up alongside Tim and Rudy, he glanced over at them, pushing the glasses from off the tip of his nose and then shaking his fist in defiance. Tim shook his head and looked at Rudy. "That's all we need. Melodrama." His complaint seemed particularly appropriate as another tremendous crash of thunder shook their car. The two automatically looked up into the sky towards the top of the peak.

The clouds had now gathered in a thick, dark blanket. Sporadic flashes of lightning illuminated the encroaching darkness, casting an eerie pink and orange palor over the ground, creating long, thin shadows that draped themselves over the hoods of the boys' cars. "This is really kind of spooky. Kind of weird," observed Rudy.

"Yeah, but it's not raining yet. I'd better turn on my lights, anyway. It is getting a bit dark." As he pulled the correct knob on the dashboard, he rolled down his window. Fred reached over and rolled down the window on the passenger side of his car.

"You'd better turn on your lights, Fred," Tim shouted. "Sometimes the curves along here are kind of tricky. Remember, when we reach the halfway point, we'll both completely stop, gun our motors, and go for it all the way. Right?"

"Right," muttered Fred. "How do I know when we've reached halfway?"

"There's a sign that says 'Watch for falling rocks.'"

Fred nodded. "See you there," called Tim as he rolled up the window again. He looked at Rudy. "I think he's starting to get a little apprehensive. I think he realizes that old junk heap of his might not make it. But that old stubborn pride of his is still going strong."

Rudy nodded. "He'll go through with it."

They started up the hill.

"I don't think he's really scared, though," Tim speculated as he thoughtfully sucked on another piece of candy. "Not really scared. He doesn't have that look in his eye. Not like the time we 'haunted' him when his mom and dad were on vacation."

Rudy shook his head in assent, also remembering the inci-

dent. "That was pretty mean of us. I mean here he was, all alone in that house, and we go over there in the middle of the night and prowl around like something out of Alfred Hitchcock."

"Yeah, but it was worth it. He thought for sure there was some murderer on the loose or something with all those weird noises we were making. It was great when we started banging on the windows and doors, pretending we were trying to break in. I'll never forget the look on his face, sitting up there, a solitary figure in his bedroom window, his teeth set, baseball bat firmly clutched in his hands. Now *that* was fear."

"I think it took him a week to recover from that one."

"At *least* a week."

As the intrepid duo reached the halfway point, Rudy glanced out the back window. "Looks like he's already lagging behind." He faced front again, settling himself into a comfortable position in the seat.

Tim stared at him, a haughty smirk coming across his face. "You're not scared, are you?" Rudy shook his head. "You'd better not be. You won't want anything to upset the glory of that final moment. We should go on the road with this one, it's so ingenious. Just you and me, huh? A team. Sounds good, huh?"

Rudy folded his arms. "After this, I don't think I'll be ready for much of anything in the way of excitement or glamor." He reached into the candy bag.

"Hey, come on!" Tim slapped Rudy's hand. "I want those to last. I want some left for after the big show, you know?"

"Yeah, OK."

They both turned their heads as their ears captured the sound of a motor, their eyes spying the box-shaped car rambling around the bend, its headlights illuminating the "Watch for falling rocks" sign, and finally coming to a stop astride them. The two looked at each other, nodded in tandem, and each held up a piece of candy to Fred in the same salute given earlier, promptly popping them into their mouths. Tim lifted his hand to the window so Fred could see the three raised fingers, the countdown to the grand moment of reckoning. He lowered one finger. Another. As the third finger completed its descent into Tim's palm, two feet violently jammed onto two gas pedals. The cars roared off, jerking wildly as they careened around the first bend.

Tim looked over at Rudy and chuckled. "Relax. You're tearing holes in my seat covers the way you're digging your nails in. Enjoy the ride. This is going to be great."

"Whatever you say."

As Tim commanded complete control of the car swishing and sliding around the tricky curves, Rudy looked out his win-

dow, watching the eerie shapes whiz by in a blur. The unearthly and fantastic lightning was now dancing wildly across the dark sky, sending its pointed shafts of luminescence down to the earth, capturing the trees and boulders and bending their shadows into bizarre, fiendish shapes. He looked past Tim at the wheel and saw that Fred was keeping up with them.

Tim nodded confidently, repeating over and over again, "This is going to be great. This is going to be great."

Rudy became more and more uneasy as the pink and orange hues created by the lightning gave way to menacing shades of green and purple. He could see the tip of the mountain coming into view now, jaggedly illuminated by the flashes of the angry summer sky.

"Here it comes! Here it comes!" cried Tim gleefully, his voice rising in excited anticipation. "Boy, is he going to look dumb!"

In defiance, Fred poured on the gas and belligerently thrust ahead of them, milking every ounce of power out of the machine, furiously driving the tame auto beyond reasonable limits. "No!" Rudy began shaking his head furiously. "No! This isn't right! This isn't right, damn it!"

A wild look came into Tim's eyes as he shrieked, "Well, it's too late now!" With that, he slammed on the brakes, precipitating a violent lurch and subsequent skid, the car ahead of them still going full speed. Tim still had complete control of the skidding car as they careened around the final curve. As they made a gut-wrenching halt, the two stared in wide-eyed wonder as the Valiant ahead of them smashed through the barricade and disappeared over the brink of the mountain. Tim still had a sickening smile on his face as they furiously opened the doors and dashed out to the precipice just in time to see the car hit the side of the mountain for the first time. It seemed almost like a toy as it bounced off the rocks, tumbled downward, gyrating in a graceful turn before it bounced once again off the side, propelling it further downward, turning end over end over end, until it concluded its dance by making final contact with the ground, smashing head-on into a pile of boulders at the distant ravine bottom, now nothing more than a mass of crumpled and twisted metal, barely resembling the auto it once had been. There was a pause of a few seconds as all was still, and then the car burst into roaring flames.

Rudy was dumbfounded. He stared back and forth between the blazing inferno in the yawning chasm and the bewildered face of his companion. The thunder had stopped now, but the flashes of lightning continued to provide weird splashes of

color to the grotesque scene. A crackling flame from the carriage below would occasionally reach up in an attempt to join those strange lights of nature, only to disappear into the engulfing summer night. The dank, stagnant late summer air seemed particularly oppressive now. A strange, eerie hush pervaded the area as Rudy stepped away from the jutting precipice. He was suddenly painfully aware of his own mortality and the possibility of falling off that jagged ledge was disturbing. Looking around he realized that from his perspective here at the top of the mountain the dense, obscene puffs of black cloud seemed within reach. A claustrophobic feeling suddenly came over him, for the cloying lightning-drenched clouds seemed to envelop him in a hellish embrace.

He touched Tim's shoulder. "Come on. Let's get out of here." He headed toward the car. Turning, he saw Tim still standing there, staring in mute wonder at the raging fire below, the flickering flames and heat lightning dancing across his transfixed face in the form of eerie shadows. "Come on!" entreated Rudy.

Slowly, trance-like, Tim turned around and shambled over to the car. Hesitating at the door, he stared across the roof at Rudy with blank, expressionless eyes. He slowly sat down in the driver's seat, not closing the door, the constant drone of the seat belt buzzer desperately striving to penetrate the awesome stillness outside. He looked at the middle of the seat, saw the white bag that had held the candy. He picked it up, slowly uncrinkling the top, discovered it was empty. He stepped out of the car again, bag in hand. Rudy stared in puzzlement as Tim walked dazedly over to the cliff again. Standing there, letting the lights of the flames and colored lightning overwhelm him, Tim slowly raised the empty bag, rolled it up into a tight wad, and tossed it over the edge. He mutely stared as it reprised the gruesome ballet witnessed earlier, bouncing, bouncing, turning, until it was finally lost in the blackness.

"Come on, Tim!" implored Rudy, shivering now, even though there was no cold.

Tim stepped into the car again, not saying a word. He reached over and quickly locked the passenger door before Rudy had a chance to open it and get in. As he started the engine, his friend stood in puzzlement, growing into wonder, then bewilderment. Tim set the gears in reverse, turned around, and lurched forward. Rudy began to run after him, stumbled, and finally halted as he realized Tim was not going to stop. All he could do was stand there, shivering, watching the red taillights diminish in the distance and finally disappear around the bend, out of his life forever.



Watchman

(late-shift in a chemotherapy ward)

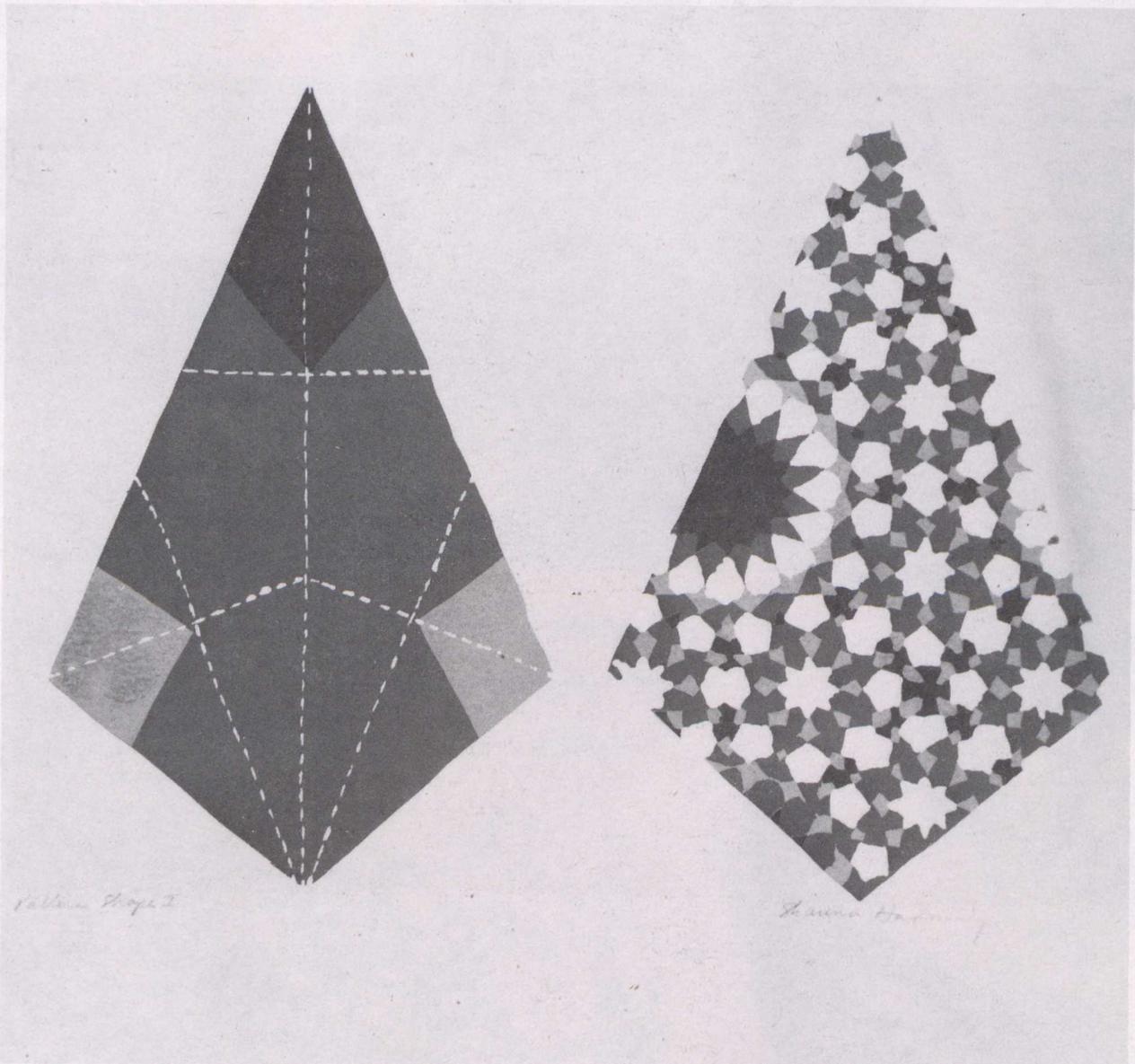
Neon and harpsichord
then flute music fills the ear.
Austere, cautious;
moving like a disembodied cancer patient
through scooped panoramas;
wards mouthing dark.

I move soulless where muscles blip and sizzle—
Emotion trailing— a neglected shadow
at my heels.

I check for problems among the dying.
A wardfull;
skulls nodding like emaciated birds.
A ribcage billows.
I watch the shoveling of hard wind.

Thomas McNulty





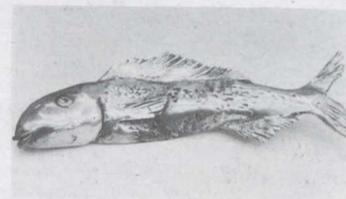
4th floor psychiatric wing

I eat pork chops with a spoon
and round hands. Everyone swallows.
I laugh. Our throats full of lumps.

Tonight, I imagine the air outside
is blue under leaves. That the sycamores
marked for cutting—freeze
to the new parking lot. I blink
when a wren hits the window.

Before lights out, a toothless friend
pushes her tongue in my mouth. Says
she'll be waiting. Later, boxes
stack my room. Nothing fits inside them.

Ward Smith



Osan, Korea 1975-76

I. The Business

They are hard,
their spines are like
young trees; their dark arms
branch to flower
spring roads with bright
fruits and skins
of daughters.
In soft-spun dress
they are hard
as these men could never be,
these men in pressed
uniform who unfold and break
this endless silent garden.

I am a stranger
winding about
the faces of children,
closed like buds—
rose tears hung
midair—and arms stemming pale,
thin, below these american
hunters lost in skins.

II. The Friend's Sewing Shop

I am american,
a foreigner
leaning into dusk
winds and roads
now iced as rivers;
the branches hung
frosted, the banks steeped
in old snows, stretch
with my miles.
I reach Miss Kim's,
feel winters rewind,
the nights inside me
deepening: she serves
Chinese tea in cracked
porcelain cups, rice cakes
on an old wood plate—
business is bad.
threads of moon
through cracks
of the woven blind
fall in the dark
fabric of her hair,
tracing seams
in cheekbones, lips.
we whisper
how pak chung hee
hung twenty students
this morning.

III. Patterns

The men are processing
me out—offer by
the plane, smiles clipped
as their metal
stars, leaves—offer
to carry my bags,
say how lucky we are
to be leaving.
their shadows hedge
against me, tall
and fixed as presidents.
they would not guess
how their metal cuts
my roots,
wings, how
I'm steeped in still airs,
closer to strangers
hanging pale, full
as moons in Winter's
starless
hours

“this is the way
the world ends”

or hard women breaking
their bodies

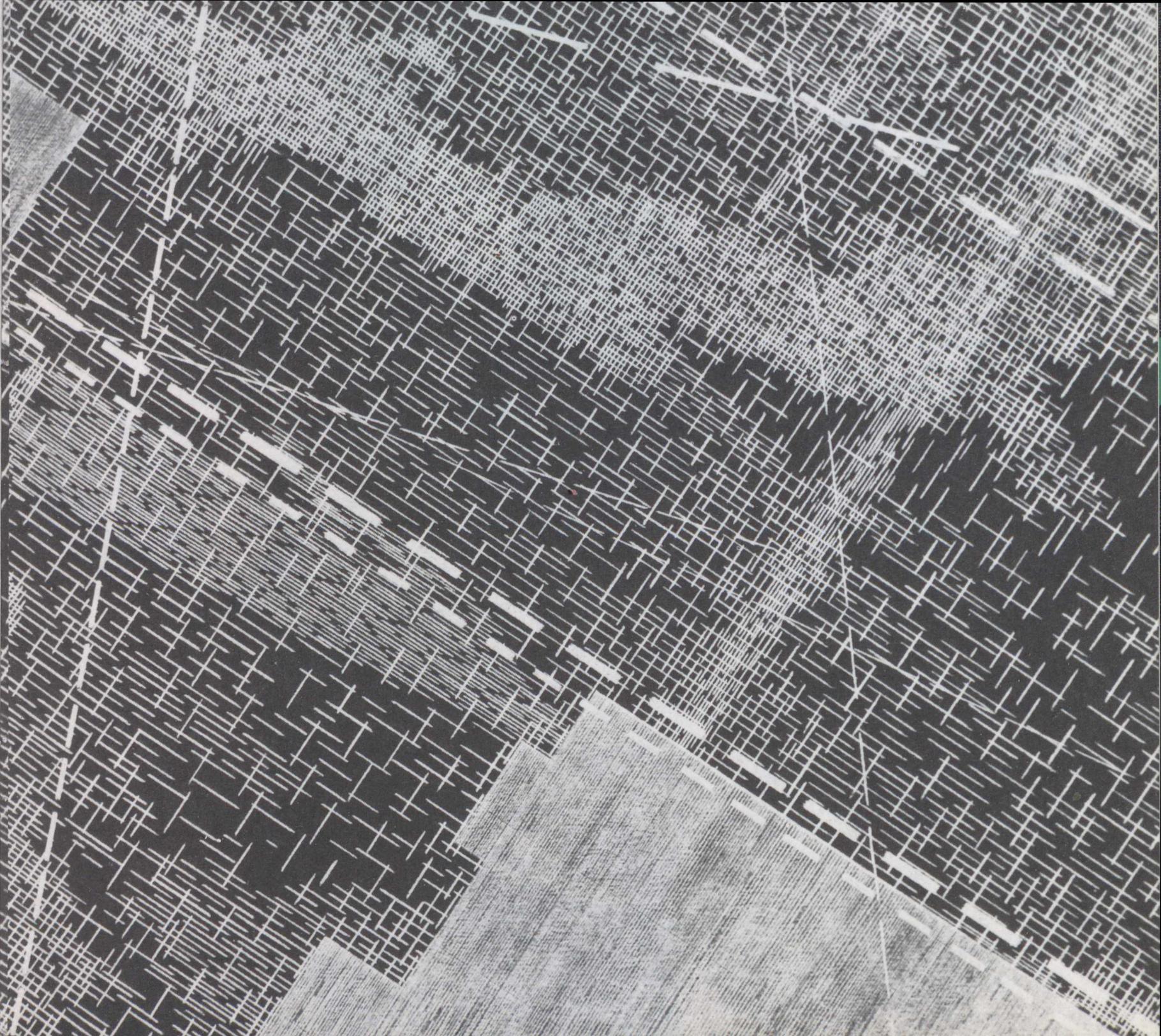
“this is the way
the world ends”

or children spilling
fragile as petals

“this is the way
the world ends”

in the dead
of Springs.

A. Jozefiak



Bridal

A bat-shape on the bed
where you moaned
in a gauze dress
under a chandelier wedding;
breathing daisies
while red-suited men
marched down
an isle of gloves.
At the altar
black petals flew
from the bride's eyes.
The groom a stained glass devil.

This morning, I cover you
with a clean sheet,
and we hear a small church;
wildwood
thongs the roof.
Statues bend
over the altar,
our hymns.
You, the bride with thorns,
flap your dark veil.

Ward Smith



Who Is That I Hear?

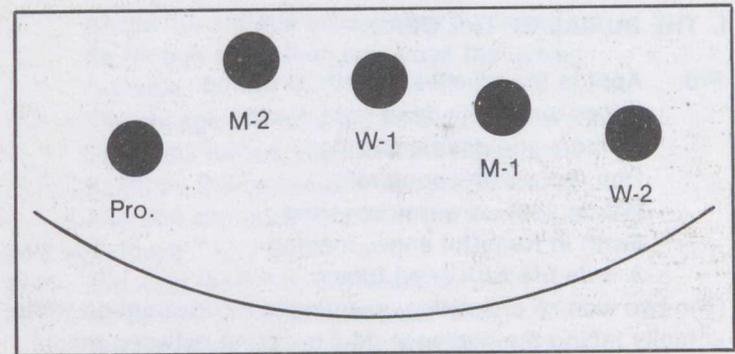
A Readers Theatre Script of "The Waste Land"
by T.S. Eliot

Carol Binkley

Introduction

Some explanation of the organizational and visual interpretation of the following script is necessary. I have scripted "The Waste Land" for three men and two women speakers, referring to them as Protagonist, M-1, M-2, W-1, and W-2. Naming the speakers would have substantiated the characters too much, fragmenting the experience of the work itself. I have chosen instead to imply characterization through a certain consistency of the speech while indicating that the voices represent the inner conflicts of one person—Protagonist. M-1 becomes the voice of historical perspective and undefined forces (such as foreign influences, logic and spiritual comment). M-2 represents the urge to seek understanding—prodding, inviting, and leading Protagonist through a maze of questions and conflict. W-1 and W-2 not only have the lines which would seem appropriate to female voices, but are also the voices of abstract concepts or relationships. Protagonist is the center of the play. He and Tiresias, the male-female blind seer, are one and each other—as are we all. It is Protagonist's journey we join and his conflicts we suffer. At times the voices are interrupted by Protagonist, who finishes the speech. This was done to indicate that while an external voice is heard, it is his remembrance or recognition or despair which is being revealed.

Because of Protagonist's unique position in the play, he should be seated at one side of the stage, the others joining or addressing him as indicated in the internal stage directions. All readers would be provided stools as the only props, arranged thus:



Finally, all consideration of external sources to shade interpretation has been abandoned except the critical writings of Eliot himself. The implications that an autobiography by the Countess Marie Larisch served as an impetus to the writing of "The Waste Land" add nothing to the final impressions of the poem. Nor does the fact that Eliot knew Wagner, who was a protegee of Duke Ludwig of Bavaria (the father of Marie who died by drowning), seem to dramatize anything other than a writer's use of resources. Eliot once said, "One of the surest of tests is in the way in which a poet borrows. Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take; a good poet makes it into something better, or at least something different."¹ I am sure whatever Eliot stole, he made better; I hope what I have taken is at least something different.*

*The source for the adaptation and lineation is "The Waste Land" in *Chief Modern Poets of Britain and America*, ed. Gerald Dewitt Sanders, John Herbert Nelson, and M.L. Rosenthal, 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 267-278.

I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

Pro: April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.

(The two women are sitting, seemingly in conversation while actually facing the audience. M-1 is sitting between them.)

W-1: Summer surprised us, coming over
the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in
the colonnade,

And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.

M-1: Bin gar keine Russin, stamm aus Litauen,
echt deutsch.

W-2: And when we were children, staying at
the archduke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.

W-1: I read, much of the night, and go south in
the winter.

Pro: What are the roots that clutch, what
branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish?

M-1: Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket
no relief,

M-2: (stands and addresses Pro.) Only
There is shadow under this red rock—
Come in under the shadow of this red rock,
And I will show you something different
from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

(M-2 sits and W-2 rises and addresses Pro.)

W-2: Frisch weht der Wind
Der Heimat zu
Mein Irish Kind,
Wo weilest du?

(whining) You gave me hyacinths first a
year ago;

They called me the hyacinth girl.

Pro: —Yet when we came back, late, from the
Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
(turning away in despair)
Oed' und leer das Meer.

(W-2 sits)

M-1: Madame Sostris, famous clairvoyante,
Had a bad cold, nevertheless
Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,

Pro: Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!

W-1: Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks
The lady of situations,
Here is the man with three staves, and here
the Wheel,
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and
this card,
Which is blank, is something he carries on
his back,
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.
I see crowds of people, walking round
in a ring.

Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,
Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:
One must be so careful these days.

Pro: Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King
William Street,

To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him,
crying: "Stetson!"
You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
That corpse you planted last year in
your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?"

W-2: (cackling) Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's
friend to men,

Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!

M-2: You! hypocrite lecturer! —mon semblable,
—mone frere!

II. A GAME OF CHESS

(M-1 and M-2 both stand to address the audience)

M-1: The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by the standards wrought with
fruited vines

From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched
candelabra

Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;

M-2: In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic
perfumes,
Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled,
confused
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by
the air

That freshened from the window, there
ascended

In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
Hugh sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the
coloured stone,
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.

Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan
scene

The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,

(M-2 sits down)

W-2: Jug Jug! (aside) to dirty ears.

M-1: And other withered stumps of time
Were told upon the walls; staring forms
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room
enclosed.

Footsteps shuffled on the stair.

Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in fiery points

Flowed into words, then would be savagely still.

(M-1 sits)

W-2: (standing and speaking directly to Pro.)
My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad.

Stay with me.

Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
What are you thinking of? What thinking?
What?

I never know what you are thinking. Think.

Pro: I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones.

W-2: What is that noise now? What is the
wind doing?

Pro: Nothing again nothing

W-2: Do you know nothing? Do you see nothing?
Do you remember Nothing?

Pro: I remember
Those are pearls that were his eyes.

W-2: Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in
your head?

W-1: (spoken with a flapper's lilt) But
O O O that Shakesperian Rag—
It's so elegant
So intelligent

W-2: What shall I do now? What shall I do?
I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
With my hair down, so. What shall we do
tomorrow?

What shall we ever do? (W-2 sits)

M-1: The hot water at ten.
 And if it rains, a closed car at four.
 And we shall play a game of chess,
 Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock
 upon the door.

(W-1 and W-2 sitting together confidentially, M-2 standing near)

W-1: (to audience) When Lil's husband got
 demobbed, I said—
 I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,

M-2: HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

W-1: (to W-2) Now Albert's coming back, make
 yourself a bit smart.
 He'll want to know what you done with that
 money he gave you
 To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
 You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
 He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.
 And no more can't I, and think of poor Albert,
 He's been in the army four years, he wants a
 good time,
 And if you don't give it him, there's others will.

W-2: Oh is there.

W-1: Something o' that.

W-2: Then I'll know who to thank.

M-2: HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

W-1: If you don't like it you can get on with it.
 Others can pick and choose if you can't.
 But if Albert makes off, it won't be for
 lack of telling.
 You ought to be ashamed to look so antique.
 (to the audience) And her only thirty-one.

W-2: I can't help it (pulling a long face)
 It's them pills I took, to bring it off.

W-1: (to the audience)
 She's had five already, and nearly died of
 young George.

W-2: The chemist said it would be all right, but
 I've never been the same.

W-1: You are a proper fool.
 Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is.
 What you get married for if you don't want
 children?

M-2: HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

W-1: (to the audience)
 Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a
 hot gammon,
 And they asked me in to dinner, to get the
 beauty of it hot—

M-2: (demanding) HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Pro: (meekly begging) HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

W-1: (cheerily) Goonight Bill, Goonight Lou.
 Goonight May. Goonight.
 Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.

M-2: (with sarcasm) Good night, ladies,
 (moves back to stool and sits)

M-1: Good night, sweet ladies,

Pro: (a weak echo) Good night, good night.

III. THE FIRE SERMON

Pro: The river's tent is broken: the last fingers
 of leaf
 Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
 Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs
 are departed.

M-2: Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

Pro: The river bears no empty bottles,
 sandwich papers,
 Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes,
 cigarette ends
 Or other testimony of summer nights. The
 nymphs are departed.
 And their friends, the loitering heirs of
 City directors;
 Departed, have left no address.
 By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept. . .

M-2: Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
 Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud
 or long.

Pro: But at my back in a cold blast I hear
 The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread
 from ear to ear.
 A rat crept softly through the vegetation
 Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
 While I was fishing in the dull canal
 On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
 Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
 And on the king my father's death before him.

White bodies naked on the low damp ground
 And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
 Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
 But at my back from time to time I hear
 The sound of horns and motors, which
 shall bring
 Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
 O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
 And on her daughter

M-1: They wash their feet in soda water
 Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans
 la couple!

M-2: Twit twit twit

W-2: (mumbling) Jug jug jug jug jug jug.

M-2: So rudely forc'd.

M-1: Tereu

M-1: Unreal City
 Under the brown fog of a winter noon
 Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
 Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
 C.i.f. London: documents at sight,
 Asked me in demotic French
 To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
 Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

(M-2 and Pro. speak as though describing the scene to the audience.)

M-2: At the violet hour when the eyes and back
 Turn upward from the desk, when the human
 engine waits
 Like a taxi, throbbing, waiting,

Pro: I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between
 two lives,
 Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see—

M-2: At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
 Homeward, and brings the sailor home
 from sea,
 The typist home at teatime, clears her
 breakfast, lights
 Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
 Out of the window perilously spread
 Her drying combinations touched by the sun's
 last rays,
 On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
 Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.

Pro: I Tiresias, old man wrinkled dug
 Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—
 I too awaited the expected guest.

M-2: (continuing his description)
 He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,
 A small house agent's clerk, with one
 bold stare,
 One of the low on whom assurance sits
 As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.
 The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
 The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
 Endeavours to engage her in caresses
 Which still are unproved, if undesired.
 Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
 Exploring hands encounter no defence;
 His vanity requires no response,
 And makes a welcome of indifference.

Pro: And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
 Enacted on this same divan or bed;
 I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
 And walked among the lowest of the dead.

M-2: Bestows one final patronising kiss,
 And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit. . .
 She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
 Hardly aware of her departed lover;
 Her brain allows one half-formed thought
 to pass:

W-2: Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over.

W-1: When lovely woman stoops to folly and
 Paces about her room again, alone,
 She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
 And puts a record on the gramophone.

W-2: This music crept by me upon the waters

Pro: And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
 O City city, I can sometimes hear
 Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
 The pleasant whining of a mandoline
 And a clatter and a chatter from within
 Where fishmen lounge at noon: where
 the walls
 Of Magnus Martyr hold
 Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

M-1: The river sweats
 Oil and tar

The barges drift
With the turning tide
Red wails
Wide
To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
The barges wash
Drifting logs
Down Greenwich reach
Past the Isle of Dogs.
 Weialala leia
 Wallala leialala

Pro: (in continuation)
Elizabeth and Leicester
Beating oars
The stern was formed
A gilded shell
Red and gold
The brisk swell
Rippled both shores
Southwest wind
Carried down stream
The peal of bells
White towers

W-1 and W-2: (in unison) Weialala leia

W-1: Trams and dusty trees.
Highbury bore me Richmond and Kew
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe.
(moves to stand at the other side of W-2)

W-2: My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart
Under my feet. After the event
He wept. He promised "a new start."
I made no comment. What should I resent?

W-1: (speaking from other side of W-2 to give the
impression of a third woman)
On Margate Sands.
I can connect
Nothing with nothing.
The broken fingernails of dirty hands.
My people humble people who expect
Nothing. (moves back to her stool)

 la la (sits down)

Pro: (a loud passionate plea)
To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest

M-2: burning

IV. DEATH BY WATER

M-1: (speaking directly to Pro.)
Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.

 A current under sea

Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose
and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.

 Gentile or Jew

O you who turn the wheel and look
to windward,
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome
and tall as you.

V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

M-2: After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
After the frosty silence in the gardens
After the agony in stony places
The shouting and the crying
Prison and palace and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience.

Pro: Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water

M-1: If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think

Pro: (lingering, at the end)
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock

M-2: Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that
cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit

There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses.

Pro: (whining) If there were water . . .

M-1: And no rock

Pro: If there were rock

M-2: And also water

Pro: And water

W-1: A spring

W-2: A pool among the rock

M-1: If there were the sound of water only

Not the cicada

And dry grass singing

But sound of water over a rock

Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees

(each one following the other rapidly)

M-1: Drip

Pro: Drop

W-1: drip

W-2: drop

M-1: drop

Pro: drop

M-1: drop

M-2: But there is no water

(In the following two sections, all speak with a sense of increasing uneasiness)

Pro: Who is the third who walks always beside you?

When I count, there are only you and I together

But when I look ahead up the white road

There is always another one walking

beside you

Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded

I do not know whether a man or a woman

—But who is that on the other side of you?

M-1: What is that sound high in the air

Murmur of maternal lamentation

W-1: Who are those hooded hordes swarming

Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth

Ringed by the flat horizon only?

W-2: What is the city over the mountains

Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air

Falling towers

Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

W-1: Vienna London?

Pro: (shaking his head) Unreal.

M-1: A woman drew her long black hair out tight

And fiddled whisper music on those strings

And bats with baby faces in the violet light

Whistled, and beat their wings

And crawled head downward down a

blackened wall

And upside down in air were towers

Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours

And voices singing out of empty cisterns and

exhausted wells.

M-2: (standing) In this decayed hole among
the mountains

In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing

Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel

There is the empty chapel, only the

wind's home.

It has no windows, and the door swings,

Dry bones can harm no one.

Only a cock stood on the rooftop—

W-2: (standing) Co co rico co co rico

W-1: (standing) In a flash of lightning. Then a
damp gust

Bringing rain

W-2: Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves

Waited for rain, while the black clouds

Gathered far distant, over Himavant.

The jungle crouched, humped in silence.

Then spoke the thunder

M-1: (standing and roaring) Da

(then meekly) Datta: what have we given?

M-2: (to Pro., who is still sitting)

My friend, blood shaking my heart

The awful daring of a moment's surrender

Which an age of prudence can never retract

By this, and this only, we have existed

Which is not to be found in our obituaries

Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider

Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor

In our empty rooms.

M-1: (roaring again)

Da

Dayadhvan
 Pro: (standing) I have heard the key
 Turn in the door once and turn once only
 M-2: We think of the key, each in his prison
 Pro: Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
 M-2: Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours
 Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus
 M-1: (chanting)
 Da
 Damyata
 W-2: (addressing the audience)
 The boat responded
 Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
 The sea was calm, your heart would
 have responded
 Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
 To controlling hands
 Pro: I sat upon the shore
 Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
 Shall I at least set my lands in order?
 London Bridge is falling down falling down
 falling down
 —O swallow swallow
 M-2: Le Prince d' Aquitaine a la tour abolie
 These fragments I have shored against my ruins
 Why then Ile fit you.
 W-1: Hieronymo's mad againe.
 M-1: (loud chanting) Datta Dayadhvam. Damyata.
 M-1, M-2, W-1, W-2: (together but not necessarily in
 unison, dropping their heads and closing scripts as they
 finish the line)
 Shantih shantih shantih
 (Pro. stands and closes his script also, but must not drop his
 head. To do so would end the play with a look of hopelessness.
 He must look ahead as though the "peace through understanding"
 which has been articulated is acknowledged.)

Presenting "The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot as readers theatre can be justified historically and literarily. A survey of Eliot's work and an understanding of his theory of poetry indicate that the author intended fragmentary "voices" to be heard, the impression of the poem to be one composed of many—a premise which leads naturally to a dramatic form.

While justification of genre seems necessary, one must also be aware of the advantages and disadvantages which occur with the alteration.

Eliot remarked in *The Use of Poetry and Criticism* that he considered the theater to be the ideal medium for poetry.² The remark is consistent with his definition of poetry, an equal blend of imagery, meaning, and sound. Eliot's earlier poems involve a "speaker" in the true sense of the word, and although the dialogue in "The Waste Land" is internal, the sound of the words is clearly important to Eliot's work. As Eliot experimented to find the most effective genre to convey his ideas, he moved toward a more dramatic form—the verse play. "The Waste Land" is a middle mark between two distinct genres: poetry and drama. As such, it proved an enigma to his contemporaries. Critical reviews of "The Waste Land" upon its publication show how disturbed others were by the form. One critic said, "'The Waste Land' is of a faulty structure which cannot be followed with complete comprehension."³ Others said, "The poem is not coherent"⁴ and "We do not derive from this poem the satisfaction we ask from poetry."⁵ These critics deftly pointed out the weaknesses of "The Waste Land" as poetry seen from their historical viewpoint. What they failed to note were the dramatic possibilities and the innovative mode of expression found in Eliot's work. Readers theatre, a middle mark between two modes of expression itself, offers an ideal form for the fullest expression of the meaning, imagery, and sound of "The Waste Land."

Certain analytical problems exist in "The Waste Land" which are elevated by its presentation as readers theatre. A cursory reading of the poem presents fragmentary images which the more dramatic form can properly reveal as the inner struggles of one mind—Protagonist or Tiresias. His presence is the eye of mankind since he is a blind composite of all humanity and all time. Whereas a reading of the poem can be confusing in its revelation of various characters, historical allusions and foreign languages, a dramatic rendition makes the wholeness of the emotional expression in the poem more obvious. Eliot said, "A character, to be real, must be conceived from some emotional unity—not scattered observations of human nature, but parts which are felt together."⁶ Readers theatre can present Protagonist as central in emotion, expression, and time while allowing the juxtapositions and inner conflict to affect the observer through additional voices. The attainment of the emotional impact and apprecia-

tion for the musical sound of expression are rarely achieved by a solitary reading of the poem.

While a communication of "The Waste Land" through readers theatre would be both entertaining and enlightening to the aficionado, it would be most notably advantageous pedagogically. The student is likely to be discouraged by the historical references and implied voices—the very aspects of the poem most delineated by a more dramatic form. The neophyte's tendency to search for meaning in each word, to understand one line before moving on to the next, hinders the thematic conceptual formation. In other words, the student may spend hours reading "The Waste Land" and despair that "I have no idea what it's all about." The rapid presentation of lines (especially those of foreign or unfamiliar languages) in readers theatre forces the observer to move on. The student's experience becomes one of accumulated impressions more expeditious to thematic formulation. The readers theatre rendition of the poem also aids the students in defining the conflicting "voices" within the protagonist or the poem. Without the distractions of a fully dramatic presentation (such as scenery and costumes), the readers theatre can, with gestures and direct address, indicate the turmoil within a single mind as well as inviting the student (the audience) to join in a quest for understanding. The student, thus disencumbered with problematic interpretations and definitions, is free to "experience" the poem and is more likely to appreciate Eliot's sound as well his vision. The sound of "The Waste Land" is melodic even without meaning—enchanted with it. The words can be mesmerizing with familiarity or jarring with revelation, but the silent reader is cheated of these emotions.

There are, of course, counterpart disadvantages to any genre alteration. The most obvious one must be that certain assumptions and interpretations are made without authorial consultation and to some extent must be subjective. Anyone who has seen a film adapted from a novel is familiar with this problem. The screenwriter and director may have tried to deal with the material honestly, but the new genre is still only one interpretation. For those who will experience only the readers theatre presentation of "The Waste Land," it will be the definitive interpretation—which is neither fair to the adapter nor Eliot.

The mode of a readers theatre, itself, also presents difficulties. There must be competent actors, time, and space for such a presentation. Considering the difficulties in finding all

three, a readers theatre production is likely to be a rare occasion. The poem exists on printed page for all, at any time, in any disposition, to partake.

Notes

¹Joseph Chiari, *T.S. Eliot—Poet and Dramatist* (London: Vision Press, 1972), p. 155.

²T.S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), p. 37.

³Bradley Gunter, *Studies in "The Waste Land"* (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Publishing Co., 1971), p. 4. The quote originally appeared in a review by Burton Rascoe. *The New York Tribune*, LXXXII, No. 27,744, Part V (November 5, 1922), 8.

⁴Gunter, p. 15. The review by Conrad Aiken appeared in *The New Republic*, XXXIII (February 7, 1923), 294-95.

⁵Gunter, p. 15. It was originally part of a review in *The Times Literary Supplement*, No. 1, 131 (September 20, 1923), p. 616.

⁶Fei-Pai Lu, *T.S. Eliot: The Dialectical Structure of His Theory of Poetry* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 61.

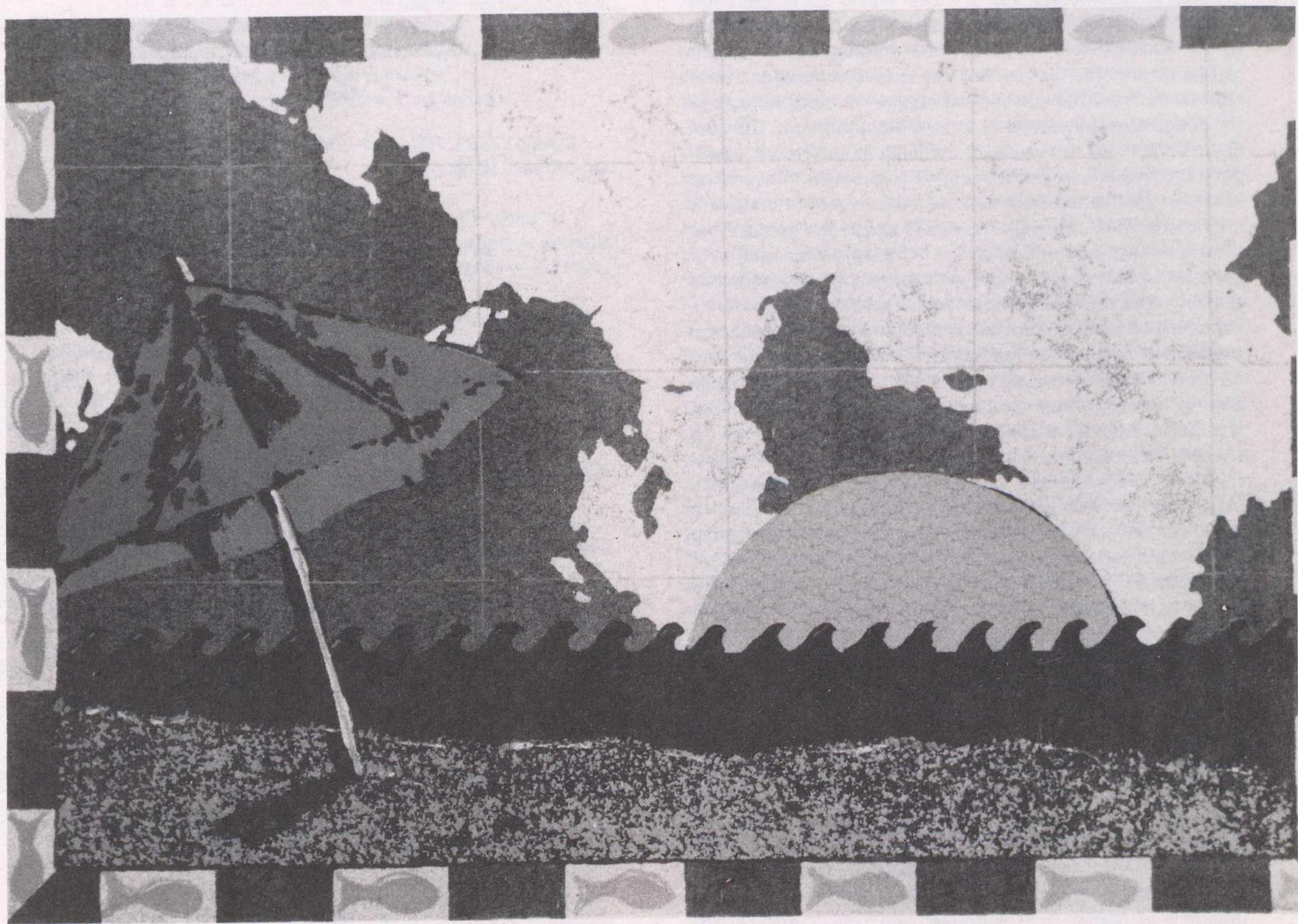
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Tread

Beneath a halo of heat the tar
road trickles by a cornfield

Grit and sweat glitter
on men housed in carapace
who sow gravel
onto the muck with shovels

The steamroller plows through the group
and planes smooth the roadbed
which will rage five more years
against the tread of sun

And beyond the barbed wire
corn tassels tan
as husks bulge and flex

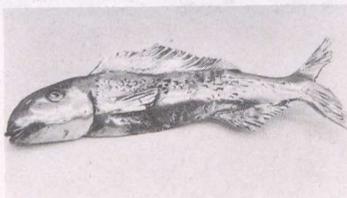
Tim Brown

Party at Roland's

After dusting
his kitchen with a box
of baking soda
Roland Belfry
sinks a pack
of cigarettes in a tank
where angelfish nip
at guppy fins.

"Forgive me!" he begs
Florine Mostess
owner of the pack
as he unscrews
a sofa leg and stabs
it in the drywall
like a dagger
in her heart.

Tim Brown





Painter

I stretch
in the window.
(You paint
leaves) and wrens
pick your straw laugh.

Asleep,
and beetles snap
your canvas. You
fling oils at the moon;
(cry when stars
open) in your hair,
a sharp spiral of birds.

Ward Smith



Juarez

Wide amber sky
Juarez didn't grow dark
but deeper and mysterious
beneath the Mexican stars
Hidden in the whiskey and trinkets
Waiting in the skeleton alley
a two dollar cancer
lighting my cigarette

Open as full moon
through empty trees
when the wind whispers secrets
to the old dogs
blind in the glare of city windows
I stepped off the train in Chicago
Kissed the dirt along Sheffield Street
Saw constellations of fireflies
above the corn on Illinois 38
Stopped in the night
to gather lilacs
behind the filling station
at Albert's Corner
and was neither the Spanish king
nor the Aztec god you needed
to reclaim the myth
that would make you clean again

Steve Dolgin

