FLIGHT PLAN

Icarus! I have collected feathers and wax,
For the first foggy dawning,
I will escape to another maze.
Womb weed, star crossed, the wind erases —
Nay was it ever written/ — my leaping frog prints.
Shroud fogs the river,
Twirling crows in concentric, cawring circles,
Lapping lower arms of a spire like cedar.
Arrowing mallard,
Lonely sets to the plastic smiles and wooden talk
of like species 24.
Pellets strike — short infinitum — beyond realisation —
Empty communication.
Dylan's Heron-priest laughed among reeds.
MY MURDERER SLEEPS

My murderer sleeps in these words I write
He will awaken when my pen runs dry.
He is my destroyer
And lives in my language of love and anger.
He will prove I talk
A better death than I’ll die.

JOE BAUERS

CAROL LOVEKIN • ENGRAVING • 18x24
CROOKED RUNS THE WINTER OF WARRING DAYS

Not so much the falling feet
Attention in motion,
Of soldiers plodding mechanically along,
But the wrongness of their narrow notion
That they are right, beyond all measure of right.
That these times are as natural as
Winter coming every year.

Not so much the falling feet
But the wrongness of their thoughtless notion
Failing to see beyond blinded eyes, how
Crooked runs the winter of warring days.
How unnatural is this Nature
When men live to see death,
And feed their minds on such narrow wisdom.

Not so much the falling feet
But the unfailing habit to repeat,
A giant monkey on the world's back,
The same miserable steps, leading
Another warring winter deliriously down the drain,
Into summers and falls, running its path,
Crooked in the wake of warring days.

JOE BAUERS
With a world renowned one night bride, I left town on a midnight ride.

In a sturdy boat on a stormy sea, we rode each wave successively to a higher and higher crest then crashed to rest on a distant shore she and I had seen before.

TOM CARLIN
TOLSTOY

You wore the farmer's vest
and worked the fields
with little rest
and angered all the peasants
who cursed your name.

You dared to break the rules,
a nobleman
with harvest tools
whose panacea for suppression
was only a lesion;

You teased away
the Poorman's reason
and sang their songs
with libidinous glory —
gave them land,
money,
equality,
but bagged their story.

LAVONNE MUELLER

MARIANNE

Pressing her bare hands
Against a Christmas window
She ignores the chill
That aches my arthritic soul
And I remain
Old Patience
Clutching a red mitten

JERRY McNABB
Jesse Todd's farm lay in a shallow valley surrounded by low hills covered mostly with scrub grass and kuckle-burrs. Jesse's land was richer than most thereabouts because he tended it with all the skill and thrift of his Scotch nature and used to good advantage what scanty top-soil had washed down from the lean hills.

Jesse's house was at the very foot of old Cotton Knob Hill. Most folks in that part of Oklahoma wouldn't have set foot on that hill if it had been made of pure gold. Jesse, however, climbed it every day to look over his farm and to think.

Jesse's wife, Isobel, worried about him. She worried because he got up with the sun and worked all day when heat shimmies rose from the ground and sweat plastered his shirt to his back. She worried because his eyes no longer smiled when his mouth did; and she sometimes realized in a sudden rush of panic that he was nearly seventy — half a hundred years older than she. But most of all she worried when he climbed Cotton Knob Hill.

"It ain't that I hold with all that talk about how it's s'posed to be holy ground. Jist 'cause them Cherokees used to build fires up yonder or somethin' — what does a Indian know abou 'holy' no-way? Brother Spinney says they're pagins — Robin ain't no pagin, though. She knows moren' Brother Spinney does about God. She knows moren' Brother Spinney does about most everything else, too. So does Jesse, too. I bet Jesse and Robin put together knows jist about everything a body'd want."

Isobel walked to the door and looked for Jesse's silhouette against the sky. "It's jist that I worry about him climbin' that hill. Wonder what he thinks about up there!"

"He don't really think," Robin had said. "He listens. He learns the secret of that holy hill. He comes away strong and stilled inside." Isobel didn't want to think about the rest of Robin's talk. She grabbed the drinking bucket from the shelf and started for the well. "He will live a hundred years or more," Robin's voice said, "and you will bear him many children."

Isobel threw the bucket into the well and listened eagerly for its hollow splash. It was one of her favorite sounds, and just now she hoped it would drown out Robin's voice. She leaned out and began to jerk the rope sharply to the side so that the bucket would turn over and sink. She inhaled the smell of the water and felt its coolness on her flushed face. Robin's voice was quiet at last.

She slowly began to pull up the filled bucket, hand over hand. Her inner peace was shattered suddenly and it echoed hollowly just as the sound of the bucket had echoed in the well. She stared at her plump white arms and the smooth, childlike hands. "How can it be?" she said aloud. "How can it ever be?"
Isobel grunted as she replaced the heavy bucket on the shelf. "Why'd I have to go off and listen to Robin's silly talk anyway? Most folks around here thinks she's daft. Comes from livin' alone. Don't none of 'em know her no way, so how'd they know if she was daft? Don't nobody know her real good but me 'an Jesse. 'Cept Pa. He did, 'course." Isobel blushed to herself. "Pore ol' half-breed. Pa said Indians don't want her and white folks won't have 'er. 'N that silly boy she's got don't help none. Maybe he ain't so silly neither. Jist 'cause he can't talk don't mean he ain't right inside his head. She talks to him like as if he knowed as much as anybody, and he acts like he does."

Isobel got out the lamps and filled them and set them on the table ready to light. Without warning she felt tired. Suddenly it wasn't Jesse she wanted to be waiting for, it was Pa. A terrible longing tore at her as she thought of home with all the others waiting too for Pa to come. "I shoulda' had Katie still," she said aloud to the lamps. "She was mine! I'd took keer o' her sence she was borned an' Aunt Suzie didn't have no right in all the world to sign her away to strangers. Aunt Suzie never done nothin' for her. She was my baby sister. My baby!" Isobel's jaws ached, and she realized she'd been clenching her teeth.

"I must be as daft as Robin," she thought, "else I'd give up awantin' Katie so bad. I ain't had her now for near two years. I've give up cryin' for Pa an all the others. Jesse's made up to me for lots and lots of things. He's been bettern' Pa was to me ... lotsa' ways. Pa was always turned in on hisself someway. He looked right at you sometimes an' never even seen you. He never hardly talked — even not to Robin — 'cept to Katie some. Jesse talks to me, an' he looks at me ..." Isobel blushed. A queer, watery feeling came into her joints and she had to sit down.

"Robin thinks I sleep with Jesse!" she thought.

"Ain't we never gonna eat no more? My belly's a stickin' to my back-bone!" Jesse had burst into the room leaving the door ajar and was playfully rattling his chair.

Isobel got up and hurried to the stove. She pretended to be occupied so she wouldn't have to look at Jesse. "If you 'us t'shut the door and set down like a tame man, I'd pour you some coffee. The beans is done an' the corn bread is brownin.'" She couldn't resist a glance at him while his back was turned.

"Seems like to me, I'm always waitin' all day for evenin' to come," she thought, "an' a man t' come home to his supper. That's what makes everything worth all the trouble." She knew, but she wouldn't say it to herself, that something made this evening more important than any that had gone before.

She stood beside Jesse and carefully poured his coffee. It seemed to her as she bent over him that everything she did was part of a ritual and that she was play-acting some strange new role. She noticed everything about him as if he were a stranger. His thick white hair, curled over and yellow at the tips, grew too far down his neck. She watched his big hand curl around the coffee cup and noticed how all the hair on his arm was thick and curly, too. "Like Esau," she thought, "only Jesse ain't no fool."

"Think Ol' Bessie's gonna whelp tonight fer sure. Best ol' coon-dog I ever
had in my life. Smart as a full-growned man.” Jesse leaned toward her and put his face near hers. “You know, I was jist a thinkin’... I’m gonna take the ornriest, nosiest bitch outa her litter an’ give it to Tully.”

“Tully?” Isobel was surprised. “You think Robin’d let him keep ’er?”

“Why not?”

Isobel felt uncomfortable. “Well I jist thought, some folks says Tully ain’t...”

“Isobel, when you gonna stop lissenen’ to all the fools that pass? Who is it, says Tully ain’t right in his head? Jube Hawkins? Hank Miller? Why? ’Cause he cain’t talk? When’d you ever hear either one o’ them talk anything worth hearin’?”

Isobel was ashamed and didn’t want to look at Jesse anymore. She turned her back and took the corn-bread out of the oven. She felt his eyes on her still, and slowly she forgot about being ashamed. She was aware of herself bending over the stove; her hands trembled slightly as she cut the corn-bread and she felt cold, even though her face was hot. Her arms and legs felt rubbery, and she wondered whether she could lift the huge bowl of beans.

“God bless this food and us that eats it, Amen.” Jesse looked up at Isobel from under bushy white eyebrows. “I’m sorry, gal. I don’t mean to be a scoldin’, but if you cain’t allus think fer yourself, least be keerful who you git to do your thinkin’ fer ye.” Jesse laughed and Isobel laughed, too.

They ate in silence, and darkness began to gather in the shadows and corners of the room.

“Jesse,” she said.

“Huh?”

“Why you gonna give Tully one o’ Bessie’s pups?”

“Oh, I don’t know. Everybody ought to have somethin’ to love,” he said slowly.

“He’s got Robin. He loves her, don’t he?”

“I mean, in order to grow up. He’s gotta have somethin’ litter’n him, ’at needs him, y’ know.”

Isobel shut her eyes. “Yeah, I do know,” she said, trying not to see Katie in her mind.

“Jesse,” she said.

“Huh?”

“Do you ever feel lonesome? I mean, do you still miss Clare real bad sometimes?” She could feel her heart beating, and she was glad her face was in the shadows.

“Yes,” he said. “I do. And I reckon I allus will, sometimes.” Jesse suddenly looked old and tired, and Isobel was sorry she had asked. She wanted to reach across the table and lay her hand on his, but a stiffling self-consciousness numbed her.

“I been here near two years now,” she said, “an Katie’s been gone away, and I still cain’t think about her without I git sick to my stomach.”

Jesse got up and lit the lamp and set it on the table. Then he sat down and looked at Isobel silently, as he leaned forward and fished his pipe from his
back pocket. He packed it and tamped it down and struck a match and drew until it caught. Finally he squinted at Isobel through the smoke.

"It ain't lovin' Katie, makes you sick to your stomick, gal," he said. "It's because of not havin' nothin' to give the lovin' to. A body needs to have somethin' 'at he can look at an' touch to love."

Jesse smoked in silence and Isobel watched him. "It's funny," she thought, "how you can sometimes know all about a body and still not really know him. I know now why he come that day. I allus wondered why he showed up jest right then. I wouldn't of been so terrible miser'ble if it hadn't a been so wet an' cold. I kept on a thinkin' how we 'us all a' goin' away an' leavin' Pa out there alone. It was dark in the house and cold as a cave, an' I didn't have no heart to build a fire. I was a tryin' to find all the stuff that belonged to Ella and Katie so's they could go with the neighbors. I was a-thinkin' how I'd either have to stay alone in the house that night or go to Aunt Susie's with John and Vi'let. Somehow it jist didn't seem like I could stand to do neither one. Then Jesse come.

He looked sorta like he itched an' couldn't scratch in his Sunday clothes that-a-way. I didn't remember seein' him at the funeral. He went 'n tuck off his hat to me like as if I was a real growed-up lady — he allus did treat me like I 'us growed up ... an' then he asked me if I'd come over and stay t' his house with him an' Clare on account of Clare havin' T.B. an' all, an' they 'us a-needin' somebody to take keer of her an' cook an' everything. I tolt him I would — an' I thought until this day that I was a-doin' him a favor!"

Jesse knocked his pipe out on his plate and put it away in his back pocket. "Well, gal," he said, "I reckon I better go out an' see if ol' Bessie needs me for anything. She's reg'lar like any woman when she's in trouble — if'n I don't go see about her, she'll git her feelin's hurt."

He opened the door and then turned around and looked at her w;'th his hand still on the knob. She thought he was about to say something, but he didn't. She wanted to say something, but she could only stare at him. He went out and closed the door.

Isobel put the coffee pot on the back of the stove so it would stay hot and lifted the kettle of hot water from the stove to the table. Absently she began to swish the soap-saver around in the water.

"I come here an' I tuck keer o' Clare an' cooked fer Jesse an' that got to be just like home, what I done fer Pa an' the kids. 'An Jesse's right. I got over a-cryin' fer Pa an' them ..... jist on accounta havin' Clare an' Jesse to take keer of an' all. Only with Katie it's different. Katie was jist like my very own ... That's what Jesse meant about somethin' littler than you are. There ain't nothin' to take Katie's place; that's why I ..." Isobel plunged her hands into the hot water. Hot soapy water sloshed over its edges and made a puddle on the floor. Isobel stared at a huge soap bubble until it burst.

"I wonder if Jesse ... I wonder if he ever thinks about ... how it would be like if ..." Isobel pulled her arms out of the hot water and dried them on her apron. They were red and a little tender. She carried the lamp over to the wash stand and looked in the mirror above the basin.

"I ain't no little girl no more," she thought as she inspected her round,
childish face in the mirror. "I'm nineteen, an' I ought to pull my hair back like this." She pulled her black hair back and twisted it into a knot. "Uh! I look like Aunt Susie that-a-way." She let it fall around her shoulders again. "Jesse says black hair an' blue eyes ain't common, 'cept fer the Black Irish. I thought he meant I was a nigger at first. I told him they ain't no Irish niggers and 'sides I 'us as white as him, 'an he nearly busted a gut a-laughin'. He said by then I 'us as red as a Indian ... an' then he said I 'us like a ripe apple; an' he quit laughin' an' said I 'us perty. He thinks I'm perty even if I am kinda fat . . ." She blushed. "If Jesse knowed what I been thinkin', he'd think I was . . . why, he's been just like Pa t' me, an' I . . . S'funny though. The time after Clare died he said that to me . . . he said, 'You ain't no little girl no more, Isobel.' What he said, he said, 'Isobel, y'know I want ya to stay here with me an' go on a-keepin' the house clean an' a-cookin' my meals. I cain't jist turn you out an' y' ain't got nowhere t' go; but now with Clare gone, the neighbor folks is gonna talk about it. You ain't no little girl no more now, an' I cain't jist adopt you 'er nothin', but I tell you what ... I could marry you an' least that way you'd have a home. An' when I die, you'd have what I got. It ain't a lot, but my boys, don't need it an' it'd keep you anyways.'

I was skeer'd when he said that, an' he could tell. "Isobel," he said, "you been like a daughter to me, an' you know it . . . but the neighbors don't know that, an' if you 'us to stay here with me, an us not married, they'd say about us what they said about yer pa 'an Robin." An' I said, "Yeah, but Robin slept in Pa's bed like they said." An' ol' Jesse, he blushed. He really did blush, an' he said, 'Well, gal, nobody knowed that but you'uns, but they all talked all the same, an' they'd think the same of you if you 'us to stay here. Then when anything might happen to me, like as not you'd have a hard time to git married what with the talkin' an all. But if you was a real genuine widder an' had this farm to boot — you could marry most anybody like as not.' I couldn't stand to hear him talk about dyin', an' I told him 'at Robin allus said he'd live to be a hundred. He laughed an' said, 'Well, then, in that case you'd be takin' a awful chanct' to marry me, gal.' An' I don't know . . . I jist thought there was somethin' kinda sad about him laughin' then an all. That's when I knowed I was gonna marry him for sure." Isobel took the lamp back to the table and began to put the dishes into the kettle of not-very-hot dishwater.

"That was near a year ago, an' he said I wasn't no girl no more then." Isobel's heart felt like it got up and turned itself around. "I wonder if he'd like it if I slept in his bed! I could be a real honest growed-up wife to him an' mebbe . . . an' mebbe Robin'd be right about all them babies! Wonder what it'd be like? Robin liked t' sleep with Pa, I could tell . . . an' it wasn't jist because he was the only one in the house that had a bed neither.'"

Isobel put the dishes away and carried the dishwater outside. Usually she poured it on the ground, but this time she whirled the kettle in a wide arc to see how far she could make the water fly. She looked up at Cotton Knob Hill, crowned now with moonlight. "That's fer bein' a girl," she thought, "because after tonight I'll be a woman growed." She went in and closed the door softly behind her.
MYSELF AS NOBLE SAVAGE

This filament of madness illumines even so simple a thing as the immovable cur Groping in the darkness; that is, my self, fiercely consumed by its persistent Ignorance, batters its stupid head against the wall, and whimpers for lost scent.

He senses that what he knows is the only honest thing he knows: Although he cannot be as sure as his tormenter. Respite is Uncertainly flickering somewhere; if only he could bleed enough.

MARGO GARIeyer ROGALIN
TO YOU, MAXWELL TAYLOR

About suffering they were never right,
The Old Soldiers: How little they understood
Its human position: How it takes place
Where no man can write his name,
In the rice paddies, just as if
it were the subway in New York.
How it continues to go on, even after
The little girl's brother is blown apart,
Or the little boy's father is napalmed,
Or after 63 lepers melt to death,
(And even this by mistake.)

That even this dreadful martyrdom
Continues to run its course
While the President, like the horse
Scratching its innocent behind on a tree,
Shows the world his own little effort
To get in the act —
A scar from a gall bladder operation.

JOE BAUERS
PRAYER

Spring brings me ease
Resting by these heavy waters
Branch and slime laden
Carrying winter to some
Secret, dark place.
I, too, drift.

Hear that throbbing mass
That waves in the straining trees
That climbs and twists young stalks.
The flowing dampness beats loud
Into my knees, elbows
Pushes cool on my forehead.

EDWARD BEATTY

Near the street lamp in a puddle
I saw the sun burst this morning.
Tonight the puddle is frozen.
Near the street lamp under the white moon
a silver cat with feathers in its mouth
and two little suns in its eyes.

SUSAN JASINSKI
"This is my painting on the wall. Pretty good huh?"
"Father, Sister Callisto says I must confess in sorrow and seek forgiveness for my sins. In obedience to her, I ask you to hear me. Please."

The priest had talked to Sister Callisto long before this meeting and understood the young girl’s hesitance. Silently, he motioned her to the predieu in the corner of his office.

Father Argus watched the nun as she crossed the room and knelt, thinking how easily repentance can begin, how long it can take if there is, truly, doubt present, and how uniquely shattering the silence could be following those instances when absolution was refused. Sadly yet honestly he knew he would refuse the absolution Sister John wanted, though in truth did not need.

"Bless me Father . . .," she began. He blessed her, sitting uncomfortably in the straight-backed chair opposite the kneeler, his eyes unconsciously straying, examining the desk, the books, the girl.

". . . they were brother and sister and I refused to refuse him. I don't know why. But I did purposely allow myself to be, well, drawn into what I could only call a sordid . . ."

Well meaning? he thought, and it seemed at first that her only sin was that she had not yet learned the vital isolation so necessary . . . had, in fact, taken herself too seriously and rushed in wild-eyed with fervor and near childish glee at . . .

". . . the first cross I had the chance to bear, I suppose. Only it began so subtly. I was so off guard. I could not see what he was doing because I just didn’t know. For me this was something so completely new and strange that I naturally misjudged everything miserably and yet, finally realizing even this, I still did not stop, though perhaps it was too late by then."

As her confessor, Father Argus felt he no longer needed to listen to Sister John. Throughout the months the story had drifted in as, nearly one by one, the sisters in the small convent had related to him their own guilt over various acts of prying, gossip and so on.

They had known and during the winter as he crossed the street each morning to the convent he wondered what new item would unfold. What bothered him even more was that he knew Sister John had told only her immediate superior, Sister Callisto, stalwart, dogmatic protector of the postulants.

Dear Sister Callisto, he thought, I believe this thing grew beyond the capacity of even your bottomless heart. But you I can forgive. He sighed, relaxed a little in the chair, and turned once again to Sister John.

". . . perhaps we’re lured or lulled into a far too rigid security thinking we need only touch those weights others must bear; we need not bear them ourselves.

"So that later I began to realize that we had in some minute way transcended that which started out as nothing more than a young college student, a nun, a total beginner in nearly everything, seeking help from one of her professors."
Then the gush, the torrent on two Saturdays and even he, perceptive to
the pitch and tone of their community as he thought he was, had nearly missed it.

The first Saturday. Wearied, aching and cramped from his three hours
in the confessional, he'd walked toward the altar, breathing slowly the quiet,
cool afternoon air of the church and thinking he would read awhile and turn
in early that night.

Entering the sacristy he'd found Sister Callisto brushing and folding the
vestments. They'd talked for a moment as he put on his coat and then as he
was ready to leave he noticed her standing in the doorway, looking to the back
of the church and the remaining penitents still praying.

"It seems shameless, Father," she'd said.
"Sister?"
"The way they use us. Do you see?"

He hadn't answered her.

The second Saturday. Again she was in the sacristy as he finished his
confessions only this time she was not cleaning, purposely waiting for him and
they'd talked, going on long after the last penitent had gone home and even
long after he'd notified the rectory that he'd be late for dinner.

"Father, she seems so stubborn about this thing. I've tried and tried to
convince her that she must not get involved like this."

"... the only comparison I can think of is that, this thing with his
sister, as he revealed it to me, began in desolation and ended in desperation,
tossing him about, confusing him, prodding at him and opening old wounds until
finally everything seemed to fall apart ... giving him, though I can't really
believe it, the dream of incest and the hope of comfort and refuge.

"I was interested in his course and at first during our meetings after 'class'
he helped me a great deal. He's so young and yet has such a deep command
of his material and he gave me insights and views I could never have gotten
from the texts."

And then suddenly the student becomes the teacher and, he thought with
some irony, the father confessor, and there is no solid point at which the transition
can be seen as taking place.

Sick? Oh yes, there is no doubt that the young man was in some way sick.
His name? thought Argus ... goodness, I have been told ... surely ... "All"
something ... what is it? ... Allsong? Yes. Oh God what a name.

Undoubtedly he did manufacture that rather smutty incest thing but the
point ... the point remains that there was no point. Whom had he been trying
to impress? Sister John? But why? What good had it done?

"... he seemed to slide into various intimacies as in side comments,
interjections into his explanations, he would mention something, some connection
with his own life, and every time so deeply personal ...

"... until one afternoon he quite bluntly told me everything about his
marriage, describing his wife in detail, habits, nuances, her hair, eyes, smile,
thoughts. I wasn't really embarrassed since we did seem to have a sort of
rapport which eased the situation."
Trauma? Crash? Focus? There is obviously a key somewhere at that precise moment when the young instructor consciously decided to tell Sister John:

"... and I don't know, only that one day his wife told him they were going to have a baby. He said he was happy about it, wanted a boy, wanted a baby. He said he was happy about it, wanted a boy, wanted a family. Six months later he had driven her to suicide. She made sure there would be no chance for the baby to survive."

Oh dear Lord, thought Argus. Took the baby, too. What a fantastic fellow this Allsong must be, apparently a rather passionate blend of, say, Pilate and Marx? Well, anyway. He began to upbraid himself and stopped. I have learned not to take tragedy too seriously, though even he admitted that he had not been able to unravel...

"... he'd said he would not, under any circumstances, give his child a name. Not just his name, but any name..."

We must in our youth crumble a pre-determined number of facades, ivory towers, conventions, yes, and this Allsong had somehow touched up an ultimate... he remembered his own third decade, a romantic losing joust when as a young man he had done battle with his mind and lost, forever content and thinking it must be the same with this teacher, this Mr. Allsong, except he had won and quite naturally been defeated by his victory.

"And then..."

... as he must have, scaring the devil out of himself at his own power, his own exuberant, chest-thumping I know dammit...

"... he ran. He admitted this and shortly after I saw how trapped I was, that he had extended a lifeline to me which I could not release. But I tried. I told Sister Callisto and she told me quite matter-of-factly that it had to end, that I was only his student a religious besides with other more important obligations which meant she didn't understand."

And on and on and on... being alone then and being God at the same time he felt suspended, terrified, floating free from the world and its responsibilities and he could not take it.

"Father, I was frightened... the things he told me, lewdness, dirt, filth and I sat there! I thought 'poor dear young man he's making all of this up— isn't he? — telling me of virtual stacks of letters, telegrams, phone calls'... he'd gone to see her, a long trip, holidays, weekends, filling in the hours of those long drives with his thoughts, of what he needed, wanted, hoped for. What? Trying desperately? Fighting in his own terrible way to be demented, lost, perverted, insane and yet somehow he could not carry it through. He could not escape from his own stringent, lustig, ice-cold mind... and so he used me to fill in the gaps, charging at my vocation, trying to damn me and I pitied him and gave him what he asked for... no, no... the kindness, the ear and maybe too much of the heart...

"Until one day, in class, he said 'Sister, may I see you in my office at the end of the period?' What could I do? I went to him knowing full well that he knew and I knew we no longer were simply pupil and teacher..."
Which means, remembered Argus, that she had sat there for some twenty minutes while he went through some papers until finally, near five o'clock that Friday, the building quieting except for the janitors he had looked up at her, said "And now it's all over" and took his hat and coat and left her alone in the office.

* * *

And thus, knowing that he had now gone far beyond his own capacity to exist he pushed his game to the limit, plunging into the icy January evening, coat open and filling with the wind, tie flying out behind him and the ludicrous figure of the nun hurrying after him ... wrenched himself free of the no longer game as he wondered what would happen when he had faced the nun with hell and backed her into a corner . . . dry, chalky slabs of concrete glued together like a monstrous candle glowing in the early evening, shooting high, twenty stories upward of glass and steel, stacks of beds, stacks of rooms, emptied then, and students filling the cafeteria and the instructor and his young, self-appointed conscience crossing the campus, nearing the dorm, the pillar of light and suddenly Allsong knows that not a single black, pagan slave rests beneath the corner pilings and to him this is tragedy, hopelessness, a carelessness by the builders and architects just short of being unforgivable and that no such edifice should rest undedicated, unsacrificed and quietly he groans to himself that she must discover at least that image before it ends.

" . . . tailing behind him a nervous young nun still uninformed in the prescribed rituals for such matters and I, knowing not what to do, but nevertheless forcing the beads through my fingers as fast as I could hail Mary . . . you see, I had given up . . . ."

Nonsense, Sister, you were only beginning or so that's the picture I get. And as your confessor . . . It had, indeed, taken months, but she had at that frantic moment started to enjoy her role.

The story, enacted first by Allsong himself, later by Sister John, Sister Callisto and seemingly every other nearby nun in the convent, was finally sorted out by Father Argus:

Apparently he had never revealed his intentions to anyone, being somewhat of a solitary person and it was not until some time after Sister John had finished her story that Father Argus had solved the riddle, the joke, the something less than cruel play upon the girl's innocence. How he must have hated the Church (thought Argus) to be able to crucify — nearly literally — one of its children.

" . . . the most racking, bone-chilling cold I think I've ever experienced and . . . that darkness, knowing that to the other side of the observation deck the twilight would still be visible, but there, where we were, as though we were above the night and in some land where light was irrelevant, where thousands of tiny dots could stretch below in a blazing sea of illumination and still manage to leave us groping in the dark. I could barely see him . . . he was shivering . . . he'd been sweating from that tortured climb up those endless stairs and he'd left his coat on one of the landings . . . shaking so much he could barely speak.
"... being so close ... an actual, living madman, insane, willing his own death ... he put his hands on my shoulders — I was so cold — shouting at me 'Should I now? Should I? Would it work? Was it enough for you, Sister? Enough grime and evil and pure, unblemished, joyful, ecstatic hatred? Was it? Have I shown you? Was the song loud enough and long enough and filthy enough? Can you help me now, Sister? The beads ... for me, now, Sister, as fast as you can ... burn the little polished wooden balls ... for me! Send the Aves flying and we shall see who wins! Do I arch my back and spread my wings and scream and fly down to Heaven? Do I?' And he released me, jumping up to the railing ... I was dizzy," but I kept praying, feeling faint, nauseous, lonely and afraid, thinking it's all wrong, he doesn't mean it, it won't happen.

"And it didn't. He stopped. Everything. Half-sitting there motionless, silent, even his breathing seeming to have stopped, looking at me in far too penetrating a stare than any human being should ever have to endure from another, like a monkey, I thought, in that crouch, one hand up and grasping a post. Then he got down, standing once again near me ... so funny ... straightening his tie, tucking his shirt in, buttoning his jacket.

"And then, dear God, he began to laugh."

* * *

So Callisto had caught the gist of it on that first Saturday, before it had even happened and she'd been embittered, knowing there was no way to impress this upon the young girl.

The game is played, the quarry trapped, seduced and viciously murdered, her mind deceived, poisoned, and she thought she'd sinned. Argus had told her as much that she hadn't and even still, being so young, she had refused belief, not yet able to accept such formless, nonsensical evil.

Three months later Father Argus supervised Sister John's petition for dispensation from her vows and, the job completed, he was strangely moved when she told him:

"Father, perhaps someday I'll be able to see that you are right, that Sister Callisto is right, but for now, I simply want to believe that no person would ever completely and willfully de-humanize another for the pure joy of manipulation."

Yes, she would learn, he thought. But as she said, for now a deliberate ignorance is probably the best thing.

JERRY WUORI
ATTEMPTS

Paleolithic pillow,
fish vertebrae and nassa shells
beside my head;

I dread
the survival of the King Crab
which can
exist as a species
longer than man

and lament that sages
(according to a theory
in the middle ages)
considered fossils
incomplete creations —
as though God were practicing
allegations
by imperfections.

LAVONNE MUELLER
I ASK

I rebel, I rebel
Against the constant ringing of the bell.
Rushing people like fish into
A lake of hate and insipid remorse,
I ask — is there not some other course?
To take, to shake the foot
From the mouth of the horse?

JOE BAUERS

corduroy running
two in hand through autumn birches
corduroy damp and night insects
a pair of people . . .
and winter rusted one away.

SUSAN JASINSKI
THE GRADUATE RECORD EXAM

(and . . . College Entrance, National Merit, Medical Aptitude, General Motors Scholarship, Ohio State University Psychological, etc.)

Truth has turned on itself:
suicidal,
running mad and spawning up a stream
clearing parentheses,
bleeding decimals like a lover's milt
and leaving behind the automated/de-mutilated corpse
here (  )
there (  )
everywhere (  )
none of these (  ).

Truth has done itself in
roasting synonyms and antonyms a point;
erudition cum rote

foils with purse-string sutures
loose as a bean bag
made complex by repeated twinning
and struck like old hammered coins.

LAVONNE MUELLER

i think perhaps that god
is a little man with a moustache
who walks in baggy pants
down fifty second street
to send messages to the archangels
on penny postcards
from the mail box on the corner.
his work done for the week
he spends Sundays in the park,
his feet on a briefcase with the creation inside,
eating a firmament sandwich
and creating pigeons to feed.

THOMAS J. POTENZA
CHRISTIAN HUMANISM OR EPICUREAN HEDONISM: MORE'S DILEMMA IN UTOPIA

RICHARD L. NEMANICH

The essential ambiguity of More's *Utopia* has encouraged many differing interpretations, some obviously biased in favor of a particular, preconceived system of beliefs. For example, many conservative politicians and Christians of the present day prefer to interpret the *Utopia* as a pleasant joke, an intellectual *jeu d'esprit*, ignoring its obviously serious passages. On the opposite end of the spectrum, left-wingers and radicals are fond of construing More's work as the first great communist tract in English literature. A far more valid interpretation, one now generally accepted among discerning critics, is that the *Utopia* is a pre-Reformation humanistic document with the intention of reforming all phases and departments of the Christian state. The central argument runs that if an ideal pagan state like Utopia, which is based solely upon natural reason and secular philosophy, can attain a veritable paradise on earth, there must be something radically wrong with a Christian society which has, besides the finest products of reason and antiquity, the surpassing gifts of revelation and grace to sustain it.

In this article, I wish to examine some of the interesting, and I think unique, philosophical problems implied in the foregoing interpretation. Granting that in Book II of the *Utopia* Hythloday describes what is in some way or other More's ideal commonwealth, I find a curious mixture of at least three philosophical strains in More's thinking — those of Christian humanism, secular humanism, and Epicurean hedonism. It is my belief that in attempting to reconcile these three ethical theories in his *Utopia*, More ignored, or was honestly unaware of, certain underlying philosophical difficulties that he failed to surmount, and which make his implied ethical position largely untenable.

It is necessary to begin with working definitions of the three philosophical positions More was attempting to reconcile. By the general term Humanism either one of two senses may be implied depending upon the context: 1) In the Christian sense, humanism is the movement to exalt the dignity of man as a creation of God, and to improve the spiritual and material well-being of man on earth, with the goal of helping man to attain happiness with God in the afterlife; 2) Secular humanism, on the other hand, is concerned with exalting the dignity of man, not as a creation of God, but as the noblest specimen on the evolutionary scale of finite beings. Secular humanism is usually based on a metaphysical skepticism concerning God and the immortality of the soul, and is therefore concerned with bettering man's lot in this world only, maintaining that "this life is all and enough" for man to attain the utmost happiness possible. The
celebrated hedonism of Epicurus is a much more specific ethical theory. Based upon a thoroughgoing materialism, this theory states that the soul dies with the body, hence there are no rewards to strive for, nor punishments to be feared in an afterlife. Man must attain happiness solely in this life. Since it is a psychological fact that man by nature seeks pleasure and avoids pain, pleasure is equated with good, and pain with evil. Epicurus defined pleasure as the absence of pain, and so for Epicurus the moral being was he who, through a serene and detached existence, sought happiness by scrupulously avoiding all physical and mental sensations that might result in the slightest discomfort, unless by undergoing a small amount of pain, one were able to procure a greater pleasure.

More, of course, was a Christian humanist who arrived at his beliefs through a combination of reason, revelation, and faith. In his Utopia however, he decided to portray an idealistic society, more humane and rational than Christian Europe in every respect, and yet based on a largely Epicurean ethic. Hythloday, in narrating a detailed account of the customs of the Utopians, says at various points throughout the work: "in short, they want nothing that may cheer up their spirits: they give themselves a large allowance that way, and indulge themselves in all such pleasures as are attended with no evil consequences... their chief dispute is concerning the happiness of a man, and wherein it consists. Whether in some one thing, or in a great many? They seem, indeed, more inclined to that opinion that places, if not the whole, yet the chief part of a man's happiness in pleasures... Thus, as they define virtue to be living according to Nature, so they imagine that Nature prompts all people on to seek after pleasure, as the end of all they do." More, however, was unable to envision a perfect society that was completely devoid of an otherworldly religion of some sort. For this reason More would have us believe that his Utopians have arrived at a body of religious principles, completely through unaided reason, which conform to the eschatological doctrines of Christianity in all their essentials. The implication that More wishes to drive home to his Christian readers is that all that is needed in Utopia to make it a second paradise is Christ's revelation, as of course Hythloday himself realizes as he attempts to convert, for the most part successfully, some of the Utopians to Christianity. But what I wish to question in this paper is the entire underlying validity of More's assumption; that is, I wish to maintain that the enlightened Epicurean hedonism of the Utopians is in fact antithetical to the basically otherworldly philosophy of Christianity, as well as with the Utopians' already existing religious beliefs.

The central problem as I see it is one of ultimate concern. At one point More states that the Utopians seek pleasure "as the end of all they do", that is, as an end in it itself, independent of any other moral standard. This is in the pure Epicurean tradition of equating the Good with the maximum amount of pleasure procured. But in another place More contradicts himself with a flagrant instance of circular reasoning. He states that because of the Utopians' religious beliefs of rewards and punishments in the afterlife, they "do not place happiness in all sorts of pleasures, but only in those that in themselves are good and honest." Obviously, then, the Utopians do not seek pleasure as an end in itself, but discriminate among various pleasures according to an exterior moral standard. What is this moral standard? More or Hythloday never say explicitly,
but merely give examples of licit and illicit pleasures the Utopians engage in. For example, bodily health, eating, drinking, and pleasures of the mind are designated as “good” or “honest” pleasures, presumably because these pleasures are in accord with Nature. But premarital sexual intercourse is expressly designated as a forbidden pleasure, certainly not because the Utopians think it contrary to Nature, but because it helps destroy the monogamous marriage custom of the Utopians, an ethical rationale that is curiously close to the non-hedonistic, prescribed moral precepts of Christian marriage laws. Of course it is true that Epicurus himself disparaged sexual activity as a worthless source of pleasure, but the point that must be grasped is that Epicurus disparaged certain kinds of pleasures, like sex, only because they are likely to bring more pain than pleasure in the long run, not because certain pleasures are intrinsically good, and some intrinsically bad. The Utopians, on the other hand, through the ingrained Christian conscience of More, adulterate the pure pleasure principle of Epicurus by dragging in standards of morality other than pleasure, which lead them to designate some seemingly worthwhile pleasures quite vaguely and arbitrarily as “good” or “honest”.

We see then, that the ethical theory of the Utopians differs radically from the philosophy of Epicurus in at least two essentials. First of all, as has been previously mentioned, More, the Christian humanist, has his Utopians veer away from the secular humanism of the pleasure principle by having them appeal to a standard of morality other than pleasure, which they believe somehow conforms to the desires of a Deity who controls the dictates of human nature. This appeal to a Deity is of course antithetical to the ethical empiricism of Epicurus, who believed with Pythagoras that “man is the measure of all things.” Second, and much more profoundly, the very idea of an afterlife, where rewards and punishments are meted out to man, is by nature diametrically opposed to the purpose of Epicurean hedonism. Epicurus was primarily concerned with making man’s short life on earth as happy as possible. He observed with disgust that one of the chief obstacles to human happiness, and the greatest single cause of psychological pain and anguish for man on earth, was the fear of punishment in the next life. Being a thoroughgoing empiricist, Epicurus then set out to demonstrate, through his atomic theory borrowed largely from Democritus, that there is no life after death, that the soul is indeed mortal like the body, and that therefore fear of eternal punishment and the retribution of the gods were utterly absurd and groundless superstitions. Once man frees himself from obeisance to his most insidious creations, the immortality of the soul and the fear of death, he can live a rational existence in pursuit of happiness. Therefore the Utopians, who have also created the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and rewards and punishments out of the “rag and bone shop” of their imposed, pseudo-Christian oriented reason, are kept from living according to their avowed Epicurean ideal of pursuing pleasure as an end in itself by a theology that bids them to pursue the one great anticipatory Pleasure — the “pie in the sky by and by.”

Edward Surtz, the most articulate Catholic critic of the Utopia, argues somewhat convincingly that Mores does indeed reconcile the doctrines of Christianity with his humanistic conscience, and with the ethical theory of Epicurus. Surtz argues in his work The Praise of Pleasure, that the Utopians do consistently
follow the pleasure principle of Epicurus in all their actions, but that they believe their highest pleasure is to be found in happiness with God in the next life. Maintaining that the foundation of the Utopian view is the inseparability of religion and morality, Surtz insists that the Utopians do not practice virtue for its own sake, but because they presume that pleasure is inextricably bound up with the performance of virtuous deeds, and that a good conscience is a source of gratification. Presumably, a good conscience is gained by acting in accordance with Nature, or the Divine Will. If so, the circularity of Surtz's reasoning is obvious. Either the Utopians seek pleasure for its own sake, or they do not. If they do, those deviants from "virtue", those who gain pleasure by acting contrary to the Divine Will, would be considered to be as morally praiseworthy as those who act according to Nature. To be sure, these deviants might be considered perverted; that is, they might be persuaded that greater pleasure is to be gained by accommodating the dictates of Nature, but no one can deny that personal pleasure is the most relative of phenomena, and that such a person may gain a genuine pleasure by flouting the conventional morality, and pursuing his ego. To understand this profound psychological fact, one need only study the characters of Dostoyevsky. In this case, the theological basis of Utopian morality breaks down, and the Deity becomes only a figurehead given tacit recognition. Or, on the other hand, the Utopians may not seek pleasure for its own sake, but as a by-product of conformity to the Divine Will. If this is the case, the pure Epicurean pleasure principle takes a back seat. Obviously Surtz seriously begs the question when he states that More's final solution rests in the "natural" answer of the Utopians, supplemented and elevated by the supernatural and Christian view of faith, prayer, and suffering. It is folly to maintain that the Utopians, or anyone else, are true Epicureans because they undertake suffering and mortification here on earth in hope of a greater happiness in the afterlife. First of all, Epicurus would reply that the very possibility of punishment in the next life would be more than enough to cancel out the uncertain pleasure of hope for a reward. And secondly the Utopians in mortifying themselves, or in even foregoing any bodily pleasure in obeisance to the Divine Will, would be no different in principle from the rigorous ascetics whom they ridicule and disparage for not indulging in the licit pleasures which the Utopians believe are according to nature. It seems to me that when all is said and done, the issue is still one of ultimate concern. One seeks pleasure or one serves God.

If Epicureanism is found to be incompatible with the rational theology of the Utopians, how much more so would it be antithetical to the doctrines of Christianity? Surtz, still arguing for More's reconciliation of the two, states that More employs the selective principles of Epicurus in a thoroughly Christian context. According to Surtz, More borrowed from religion certain fundamental truths of which Epicurus was unaware — the existence of God and reward in the afterlife — and then treated the whole question of happiness and pleasure, independently of revelation and Christianity, on the basis of pure reason. In other words, Christianity, the religion of the Utopians, and Epicureanism, are all basically compatible, the latter two needing only revelation and the grace of God to become perfect. Surtz points out that were Epicurus in Utopia, his denial of the three fundamental religious beliefs of the Utopians — the immor-
tality of the soul, the providence of God over men, and retribution in a future life for good or evil — would be the only stumbling blocks to the complete acceptance of his teaching, since the Utopians already practice his hedonism in a religious context." Surtz accurately interprets More's intention, but in believing that More succeeds, he makes two fundamental errors. The first has already been discussed — he overlooks the fact that the very belief in an afterlife would destroy the foundation of Epicurean hedonism, not improve upon it. The second error concerns Surtz's discussion of virtue. Earlier Surtz had argued that the Utopian, and presumably the Christian, pursuit of virtue was really hedonistic in nature because pleasure was thought to be the necessary result of virtuous action. I have already shown the weakness in this argument through my discussion of ultimate concern. Now Surtz turns the argument around, and attempts to show that Epicurus believed that virtue is indispensable for the attainment of pleasure. This, as far as it goes, is true. Epicurus writes in his letter to Menoeceus: "All the other virtues stem from sound judgment, which shows us that it is impossible to live the pleasant Epicurean life without also living sensibly, nobly, and justly without living pleasantly." Where Surtz goes wrong is in assuming that Epicurus meant the same thing by virtue that traditional Christians do. What Epicurus meant by virtue, or wise judgment, is really prudence, that is, prudence in carefully choosing to act so that one gains a predominance of pleasure over pain. For example, Epicurus would recommend the virtue of justice to be generally practiced, but not because it is intrinsically praiseworthy to be just, but because by being just one insures oneself against legal retribution, uneasiness about getting caught, and retaliation from the offended party, all undesirable effects of injustice. If Epicurus thought that by being unjust one could gain more pleasure than pain, he would undoubtedly recommend it instead of justice. In other words, completely unlike the ethics of Christianity, as well as many other ethical systems, there are no transcendent moral laws which govern mankind. Every moral value is completely relative to, and entirely contingent upon, the all-encompassing hedonic pleasure principle. Quite contrary to Surtz's suggestion, Epicurus was far from being a "good pagan" unfortunately deprived of Christ's revelation. In fact it is impossible to find two ethical systems that are more opposed to each other in principle as well as in practice.

What, then, are we to say of More's attempt to combine hedonism and Christianity in his **Utopia**? It is my personal belief that More was caught in a profound philosophical dilemma which he tried to solve as best he could. His acute psychological insight taught him that man naturally seeks pleasure as a positive good. His natural human sensitivity also taught him that man has a duty to his fellow human beings to do all he can to alleviate needless suffering and to make life as happy as possible for all. The major underlying philosophical concern of the **Utopia** is one of formulating a working social ethic that would reconcile More's secular humanism with the body of his otherworldly Christian beliefs. The result is his Christian Humanism, a combination of the pleasure philosophy of Epicurus and the otherworldly theology of Christianity. But what I believe I have attempted to show in this article is not only that Epicureanism and Christianity are incompatible, but also that neither are successful as a working social philosophy. Unlike John Stuart Mill's altruistic Utilitarianism — "the
greatest good for the greatest number”,
perhaps the most successful social ethic ever formulated — the self-protective, individualistic attitude of Epicurus’s hedonism prevented it from turning outward toward the collective problems of society as a whole. The otherworldly emphasis of Christianity, on the other hand, by its very nature, relegates the existential problems of society to a secondary position behind the striving for reward in an afterlife. “Death is the mother of beauty,” wrote Wallace Stevens in “Sunday Morning”, meaning that man discovers beauty, truth, and happiness with a vital intensity only when he realizes that life is transitory, and that he will not live forever. More, in clinging to the otherworldly theology of his Christian tradition, never quite succeeded in avoiding the “pie in the sky” solution to man’s earthly problems, against which his strong humanistic sympathies were subconsciously rebelling.

NOTES

5. Ibid., p. 38.
6. Ibid., p. 39.
7. Ibid., p. 38.
8. Ibid., p. 42.
9. Ibid., p. 47.
13. Ibid., p. 21.
14. More, pp. 43-44.
15. Surtz, The Praise of Pleasure, p. 34.
16. Ibid., pp. 34-35.
18. Ibid., p. 32.
21. Ibid., p. 83.
23. Strodach, p. 82.
AT HOME

I can't name the trees or grasses
Even the birds bickering over the crumbs
Are only home.
We all rest by this river's flow
Go about with only glances, but always
Listening closely.
Winds, snows, the morning fogs and rains
Settle here to be breathed and sent out again
Swirling down stream.
One beak is quicker, sharper, some
Trees high while clumps of vines and thorns, lie twisting
Cool in shadows.
But all throb with the river's depths,
Breathe, grow with the water's stretch into the distance
And its constant lapping.

EDWARD BEATTY

ONE FALL DAY

Jack Midas driving south
Set leafy fires
Which so delighted Mother
She didn't cry at all
When Old Man
Roused
Cheeky country tunes.
But Ugly Roomer only praised Indians,
And drank Antifreeze.

CHARLES SCHOLZ
LIVING THINGS ARE DYING

The third grade public school class, according to a short but well standing tradition of three years, would, on a Friday in October, shortly after the commencement of the fall term, journey in a chartered bus to the nearest state forest preserve — a distance of five miles or twenty bus-riding minutes through outskirting-urban thoroughfares. The purpose of the jaunt for the school children was, as announced to them by Gloria Johnson, their teacher, to provide for them an opportunity to behold the beauty of nature first hand and an opportunity to realize that the classroom learning experience is related to that natural beauty. For more than a month the image of the trip loomed on the edge of the consciousness of the third grade generation to whom the tradition had fallen. The Monday preceding the trip Miss Johnson, who was as excited as her pupils soon would be, announced the details regarding it. All of the twenty boys and twenty-three girls awaited that glorious Friday through four arduous days (which seemed like eras) of the usual-unappealing form that the learning experience assumed.

Miss Johnson was new to the third grade. She had the previous June graduated from college. During the course of her college preparation, she gained an extensive theoretical background and a more restricted practical background in primary education. She had been taught much regarding the presentation of information to the somewhat reluctant object of the elementary educational process. A chart that she fabricated while student teaching illustrating the products of the state of Texas stuck particularly in her mind as a device for encouraging student interest. To her mind Texas had symbolized sterility, because its geographic location and features were far removed from New England, which, due to her admiration for the DAR, had become for her identified with fertility and productivity. She set out on the chart project as an act of moral patriotism — she knew that no part of America could be really materially sterile, and she was dutifully confident that upon further investigation she would discover more than the oft alluded to oil wells. She did, of course; and, when she completed the chart project, Texas had, in her mind, assumed a stature emulating that of New England. With the same dutiful enthusiasm that she had devoted to the chart, Miss Johnson assumed her professional role.

The idea of educating children inspired her. She conceived of herself as an artist forming with her delicate hands, small, malleable, indistinct objects into handsome works of art that, incidentally, constantly reflected the genius of their creator. The blunt features of the cultural leaders of the future would be determined by her deft manipulation of the raw material that, in need of discipline and direction, would enter the September third grade.

September came; her pupils came; Gloria was coming to the end of her second nine week period of teaching, this time not as a student, concluding that it was less gratifying than the first. By the time the Monday prior to the third grade nature trip arrived, Gloria found herself looking forward to the day of freedom from classroom routine that Friday would afford. She enjoyed colorful fall days, and she was hoping that Friday would be sunny so that she could descry all the living things that were dying in their full radiance. Even though
her knowledge of living things was meagre, Gloria was confident that occasional recitation of a piece of nomenclature by her regarding a shrub or a bush would reasonably affect the minds of the sensitive members of her class. Impressing students made Gloria feel significant; needless to say, only bright pupils were concerned enough to be swayed. This effect not only reinforced her so that she consciously strove to be impressive, but also motivated her so that she employed a more condescending tone when she addressed the less perceptive pupils. Gloria was somewhat aware of her vacillating approach, but she knew that she should relate differently to different individuals. All in all, even though Gloria was not finding teaching as glamorous as she had expected, she considered teaching a rewarding experience. In this vein she anticipated such events as the Friday nature trip.

The tradition of the trip was begun three years before, and, as in all of her classroom endeavors, Gloria wanted to have the mark of her individuality placed firmly upon this. She made up her mind that she would make the trip stand out in the minds of her pupils with a stature as great as the state of Texas.

With or without Miss Johnson's mark of individuality, Friday would stand out in the pupils' minds. The October Friday nature trip was a very special day of liberation in the history of the third grade. The pupils carried on the unofficial naming of the coming event as "Free Friday" in honor of its founder Miss Alma Washington, whom the preceding third grade class had nicknamed "Free Alma." The nickname had been suggested by the eldest brother of one of the boys. After the principal had requested that Miss Washington terminate her term at the school, Gloria was employed, and all that remained of her predecessor was the informal name of the event that she had initiated three years before. To the third graders three years was as long as the history of a nation, and "Free Friday" was in the spirit of "Manifest Destiny." All but one of the boys visualized themselves roaming the forest preserve as cowboys roaming the wild West and shooting Indians who sought to impede the expansion of a powerful nation, or as brave American soldiers roaming the Philippine jungles and killing the enemies of America in order to advance freedom in the Spanish-American War, which was the object of Gloria's second chart project, her first as a full-fledged teacher.

To the girls of the third, who were more down to earth, "Free Friday" provided an opportunity to see some of the natural wonders of their country — to them the edge of the city was remote and desolate enough to have seemed the edge of the earth and easily could have seemed a national frontier. The delicate creatures counted the boys' professed phantasies amusing, envied the boys a little because they themselves could never go to war, but seemed content that they could know boys who would go and then they could share in that glory as they now shared in the excitement of their classmates' phantasies.

Since the third graders were discerning enough to maintain prejudice, there were basically three groups: the girls, the boys, and Harold Quats. Harold, as he was called by those who know him well, his parents, was apart from his classmates. He was different, and his fellow students regarded him as irrelevant. Harold did not dress like the others; he wore patched pants, tattered shirts, and, frequently, no socks.
Furthermore, Harold was excused from school forty-five minutes early each Wednesday so that he could attend religious lessons at the Catholic School three blocks away. Harold's parents had reached a religious-educational compromise. His father would not permit Harold to attend the Catholic School as his mother demanded, so they compromised. Other third graders attended religious instructions, but they did not get out early to do so, and they went to "Sunday School," on not Wednesday but, they felt that it was a point of authenticity, on Sunday. In addition, Harold persisted in attempting to tell the other boys what he had learned during the ninety minute lesson. They thought that Harold was carrying his religion too far. Arguments were fun; but Christ should be referred to on Sunday or in anger, not all the time. The fourth graders recalled that Miss Washington had spoken of Christ occasionally; but Miss Johnson didn't mention Him, and she even told Harold that it wasn't nice that he should so much. A couple of the fourth grade boys also went to the Catholic School on Wednesdays, and they didn't say the things that Harold said. To his accusers Harold just replied that his soul felt good when he said things to people. The other boys didn't believe that he could feel his soul at all; they weren't aware of feeling theirs; in fact, they didn't even try.

Miss Johnson didn't like Harold either. Harold was not a perceptive pupil, and he asked many questions about insignificant points. She thought that Harold wasn't really academically concerned, because a few times she had questioned him regarding his queries, and he failed to respond adequately. It seemed to her that Harold wanted to question so that he could just talk to her; to her this indicated frivolity. He was intrusive. His purpose, as she considered Harold's situation, was to learn to the best of his meagre ability, and, when he didn't, he was worth less than even he could be worth.

The girls of the class didn't like Harold because there was nothing exciting about him. "I don't like the way he looks. He's so plain," they would say to each other. The other boys talked about the army or baseball, action things which they thought were manly and didn't quite understand. Harold didn't talk to them much, only when they made fun of him. And, being annoyed by his patience, they didn't listen to what he said.

On Thursday night while Harold was drying his feet, after taking a bath in preparation for "Free Friday," he heard on the radio that a criminal just escaped from the state prison, thirty miles from the city. The afternoon before at the Catholic school sister had been telling him about Christ's trial and crucifixion. The nasty words that the commentator was saying about the escapee made Harold think about the nasty things that nice people had said about Christ. This thought mingled in Harold's simple mind with the thoughts that Christ could do anything that he wanted to do and that even the lowest criminal should be treated as if he were Christ. Instead of having a phantasy of how he could save society from the criminal, Harold thought of the escapee, the man that the commentator said didn't belong in society in America, as Christ. He thought that this time Christ would be killed by people who didn't understand, people who were concerned with freedom for society, who didn't think of the escapee's freedom, who didn't think that Christ's glory could happen in a shower of bloody bullets shot from guns held by people who didn't understand.
Harold was afraid. He didn't want to see the man he thought was Christ. He didn't ever want to see the man who would be killed. He thought that he'd rather die than see Christ killed. He was afraid with his entire soul to be alive at the time when Christ escaped; he too would be guilty.

"Free Friday" came, and everyone was excited. Only Harold was absent from school, which more than the presence of the sun assured everyone of a pleasant day. As a measure of caution Miss Johnson had consulted the police experts and secured from them a statement that the criminal posed no real threat for the third grade on its day of merriment, that the criminal could not possibly be in the area where the class was to spend the day. In her role as the class' soul-guardian she assured them of their safety, which their uncluttered minds found palatable. The fact that Gloria gloated over the impressive stature that she assumed in the minds of the third graders due to their naïveté made her appear to them even more of an authority on everything in the realm of their security, which they were told rested in education, as well as in the realm of truth.

The third grade girls, whose fragility had been impressed upon them by their mothers, were initially terrified when their mothers revealed the danger that the criminal represented for them. The girls' fathers, however relied on common sense and succeeded in calming everyone by placing faith in Miss Johnson and the school administration, who, having the facts, would be in a position to evaluate the situation. Upon coming to school, the girls were as much relieved of their fear by the courageous attitude of the boys as by Miss Johnson's reassuring expertise. Having this double protective insulation, the girls resumed their mundane concerns.

The boys took avid interest in the escapee and immediately seized upon the revelation as a basis for phantasies of blood curdling feats of their own courage and physical prowess. They ignored what Gloria said that they did not like. This was their chance to prove that they were real men. As their fathers had fought to preserve the American way of life, so too would they meet the challenge of their generation. On "Free Friday" they would advance the cause of justice by zealously searching out the guerrilla-like foe to freedom, who hid in the jungle of the forest preserve, and club his head to pieces with large sticks.

Even though Harold loved the wonders of nature, regardless of the season, he would not take any part in the nature-trip. For the first time in his life he felt a duty not to participate as a third grader. He knew what his contemporaries thought of the escapee, and he too thought of the criminal in the forest. He felt that there was only one right act to do. But it was strange that the only positive action he could do was not go. Having outlasted his mother's encouragement to attend school, Harold spent the day at home attempting to read comic books of the West and war.

Once at the preserve, Gloria led the class from tree to tree and shrub to shrub as she spoke of how things would blossom, as if it would occur in order to fulfill her prophecy. Surrounded by Gloria's flowery verbiage, the boys maintained a keen watch for the protection of the party. In fact, their virility seemed dependent on the incongruity. Because Miss Johnson and the girls
were concerned with flowers, and beauty, and the elements present in fall, the boys were left to concentrate on the elements which really made that world, like courage, self-sacrifice, freedom, and the hunt for the criminal. And “Free Friday” passed.

Nothing more was heard of the criminal who was probably struggling for a concrete freedom of which the boys had no conception. The criminal then retired to a place among the objects which had been used to provide proof to the boys of what they really were inside. There would always be an outcast against whom they could rally to prove their courage to themselves.

The rebel Harold quickly assumed that somewhat dishonorable status. Suspicious, Gloria had dispatched the truant officer who encountered no resistance from the truthful Quates. Miss Johnson was personally offended that her Friday-trip endeavor had not drawn perfect attendance, even though she would have been displeased if Harold had made it “perfect.” His truancy demonstrated, to Gloria, Harold’s even further development of a negative attitude towards her and education. Monday, she chastised Harold in front of an enthusiastic class and sent him to the principal, who, having been, years ago, an undergraduate psychology major, treated Harold as the vermin Gloria thought he was.

After being dismissed early from school on Monday, Harold went directly home. There he sought one of the comic books and the power mower with its red gas can. Harold’s simple mind did not grasp the rule emphasis of his religious instruction. He did not understand the old law with its prohibitions, which would have made his rejection bearable. He lived the spirit of the new law, living in terms of love, while being unlOved. Using the comic as a torch, Harold smoked for the first and last time.

GEORGE SEIDENBECKER

You’ve a banjo in your brain, Susan Brown
Susan, a banjo
in your brain . . . a banjo.
minds have no form color taste
brains have banjoes

some banjoes play mountain music
some, Beethoven
some are silent.

SUSAN JASINSKI
TODAY SHE TALKS OF RAIN

Through lighted hands I blow my smoke.
She talks of weather punctuating coffee cups,
Unsilent she agrees my nodding.
Yesterday, in early night
She, yawning called me out from study
To word the air —
At times she wrote of sprawls and strong commands.
Today she talks of rain tomorrow
Tomorrow, talked of rain today.

CHARLES SCHOLZ

KENNETH CLIFFORD • PENCIL • 10x12
FOR PAUL TILLICH

The Saturday sun
And a blue clarinet
Float shapeless
In the kitchen.

I stir the music
With a pencil,
Leaving silent
On the lake
Of a shoreless morning.

Swim Away! Stroking
Sure like Noah:
Sunny eyed,
No harbor in mind.

JON KNUDSEN

REPROACH

Your truculent words quickening still;
Cut the air as sharp birds' wings
Bisect the wind. The sting remains
But half that time and then is gone
Before the gust is down.

MARGO GARIepy ROGALIN
Mortar lines seal each clay block in a family wall; soldier, deadman, stretcher, rollock, bonded one to all.

TOM CARLIN
MEETING

A crow empties the Fall sky.
Its shadow flicks across
the ground and my eyes
Bringing the damp leaves'
odors upwards.

Only I sense the shake,
Hear the din
As they meet and shatter.
Only I pause,
reach, and gather
Some bits for night.

EDWARD BEATTY
BERNIE'S POEM: 1965

(Sleeping in the rack and ruin of one's own non-committment is no sleep at all . . . and never slumber)

There is a river in the legendary tale of the land; they call it Lethe,
And all who bathe there, drown.

Sleeping deep the hours and days;
Awake is still sleeping as it is.
Words spoken leave no broken silence;
Or whispers unravelled from your flaccid mouth. Do not deny, friend,
Few thoughts fly freely articulated...

There is a river in the legendary tale of the land; they call it Lethe,
And all who bathe there, drown.

MARGO GARIEPY ROGALIN

ANCELLE

Were you a poet,
Nose pressed to glass
Peering at those thin volumes
Feeling pride for leashing some of that flame?
You tended those dark flowers from a distance
And walked Paris free
Without ever having to write a single line.

EDWARD BEATTY

Ancelle was a lawyer appointed by Baudelaire's family and the court to control all of Baudelaire's financial affairs.
TOWERS is published twice yearly by Xi Delta Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, National English Honorary. Its purpose is to stimulate creative writing and to promote an appreciation of writing and literature within the college community. The prose and poetry in TOWERS reflect the choice of the staff members only, who carefully read, discussed, then voted according to what they felt to be the best of the submitted material.
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