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the watermark

volume xi

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The Watermark is UMass Boston's student-run literary and arts journal. Annually produced and paid for by student fees, it serves as an outlet for the highest quality writing and visual art of UMass Boston's undergraduate and graduate student body. Submissions are selected by staff members via a democratic and anonymous process with the overall goal of offering students an opportunity to be published. Interested students can contact *The Watermark* by calling 617.287.7960 or emailing watermark@umb.edu.

editors' note

As editors, we have worked hard with talented and motivated students and faculty to establish this publication as a home for aspiring artists and writers. We hoped to build a stronger campus community, and in the past three years that we've been a part of this journal, our support base has spread. We would like to take this opportunity to express gratitude to those who have been there for us along the way.

As always, we are indebted to the following individuals and groups for their continuous support throughout our career: our advisor, Donna Neal; Professors Robert Crossley, Tom O'Grady, and Askold Melnyczuk of the English Department and Creative Writing Program; Bob Fata and Professor Nancy Stieber of the Art Department; *The Mass Media*; and the Student Senate.

We would like to thank those who have shown support of this edition: Professors John Fulton, Joyce Peseroff, and Lloyd Schwartz of the Creative Writing Program; Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs J. Keith Motley and Chancellor JoAnn Gora; Professor Adam Beresford and the Philosophy Department; Bonnie Gerepka and Professors Wilfredo Chiesa and Liz Marran of the Art Department; Peggy Tippit of Computing Services; Caleb Stone and Kory Vergets of *The Mass Media*; Fritz Hyppolite and Rubin Urmeneta of the Student Senate; Caroline Coscia and the Graduate Student Assembly; Sanjay Patel of Wit's End; and everyone who submitted this year, and in the past.

Special thanks to David Pereira for allowing us to use "Otis Warhol" for the cover—the complete piece can be found on page 137.

One of the great privileges of our job has been co-hosting events with the Creative Writing Program. We have had the opportunity to meet Robert Pinsky, Adrienne Rich, Kevin Bowen, and Donald Hall. There is no greater pleasure than the experience of hearing them read their work. The autographed copies of their books lining our bookshelves, as well as the intimate settings we shared with them, will be lasting reminders of our days at UMass Boston.

To our staff: you have made *The Watermark* a family. Whether as co-workers, classmates, roommates, or friends, you have sculpted our experience on campus. We would like to thank our editors for their thankless work: Michele, Ilhan, Jason, and Dereck. Many told us that last year's edition would be difficult to top—we hope we proved them wrong. We believe Volume XI to be a proper good-bye and testament to the work you have given us.

Diane Costagliola & Nancy Derby
March, 2004

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MARILYN BENTOV

Castle Island

Where the Causeway crosses rip-tide tow
Strong winds drive the racing white-ribbed waves.
Below the hill and fort newspapers blow
Across the monument, the pier, the staves
Of fishing lines they catch. An old man climbs
Up behind a wall that hugs the tide.
Past the bronze young soldier's face, his frowns,
Sad stare, the plaque, the Irish names—they died
In North Korea, frozen in their boots—
An old woman swings, slapping the wind
In cherry shirt and flapping sea-green pants.
Her one eye shoots blue sparks struck by her mind.
A young girl, running, points, her arm raised high,
"Dear green wings, flying home! dad, dad! the sky!"

GEORGE KOVACH

Lear

The haggard oak out back clings
to dim November, wind flails
above the jagged crooks of boughs,
lifting limbs like surging flocks of sparrows
then drops again,
and again.

Hard rain rakes the bark black.
This bleak season takes hold. Its ardor
for the cold cusp of the moon,
its determined arc
grips like ice.

I see my father
turn from his wife of fifty years
and abdicate the hours,
embrace the long nights
wed to pain.

He's ill-prepared
to nuzzle the mirror, mark
the reflection of a breathless
gaze behind the glass. He sees
himself, misunderstood, elect.

His wife no longer cares
about his birthday in November, and I
still search his sere brown eyes
for words that he might hear.

DARRELL PENTA

In the Kitchen of Angels and Fruit

I.
All over the butcher-block countertop,
I think I see my grandfather—
in the cheap ceramic junk &
thrift-shop trinkets,
the bulbous silver fridge,
the buzzing AM radio,
on the same kitchen table
where he was born.

A stonemason, a butcher, an exemplary drunk—
I thought he ate steel rivers and crushed
sheets of marble in his hands.
After Martha died, he sat in his kiwi-green Cadillac
and watched strangers shopping at the farm-stand.
He said, once, his boyhood was "hard and foodless,"
so he made food his mistress.

Out the window of Mount Auburn Hospital
you don't see the Dutch elm disease eating away the trees.
He's a clammy, bland yellow against the neat
white bed. Machines do the lifework for him.
Consciousness, even pumped with morphine, is too painful.
Salvatore comes in, shaking, blaming himself
just loud enough for us to hear. "That's one of his drinking pals—"
my father whispers, "the only one left."

II.
I'm in his house again—
the new owners want it emptied
before they move in.

In the coffin-sized kitchen
there are shadows that remember
the foodless days of his boyhood.

The radio is a young Joan Sutherland
singing her immaculate aria prayerwise,
washing the flat air.

In between each fluttering eighth-note, I think:
What moment—what *second*—did she discover
such divinity in her voice"

Maybe she dreamt that she was singing
and when she woke up,
it was the part of the dream she kept…

Across the room, a bowl of waxed Red Rome
apples sits like a model for a still life,
He never liked music—*hated* the opera

because, he said, it's just too much noise.
It seems intuitive: People need no Sutherland;
they require nothing beyond a range of sound

to say, "I'm starving," "I'm hurt."
The apples could be black instead of red.
We need food, not art.

Food; not art.

JESSICA DelGIZZI

Ruggles Street

If you're not in the garden
Among tomatoes and parsley
Or riding around on your tricycle,
You're inside—
Every shade drawn down yellowed,
Brown peels of pear heap on the counter.
Paper bags are saved for later
Next to empty boxes of Corn Flakes.
One knickknack dances on the windowsill.
You admire her pretty painted china face,
The mouth forming a dainty red "oh."
On the tin-topped table covered in flour
Nana rolls gnocchi from under her thumb,
Breasts hang low in her old housedress.

If she motions for you to lie down,
Your tiny protest shrinks behind closed lips.
Shirtless you lean, crackling
Into see-through plastic couch covering.
Callused hands rub cool alcohol
Into yielding child skin.
You don't complain and even
Nod when she asks, *Feel-a-good?*
When it's over your dint remains.

If it's time for rest, she reclines,
Creaking in her rocking chair,
Watching three TVs at once
Through sun-glassed cataracts—
Dozing under the spell of

Days of Our Lives, the latest news, the
Price is Right.
You poke around the room to find
Dusty piles of TV Guides,
Funny looking envelopes stamped Air Mail,
Their perimeters striped red, blue, and white.
You can't read a word but try.

If you escape outside,
You hope against hope Aunt Susie won't
Come out from her half of the house.
She's missing teeth and wants a kiss.
With the promise of a cookie
You're lured inside. You chew
As I Love Lucy whines.
From the plaid bean bag ashtray
Cigarette smoke coils
Under the peeling ceiling.
She begs you for just one game until
You agree to Old Maid.
She cackles each time she draws. You win.
She makes her way to the sink, her
Long fingernails inflict their force
Onto some dirty dishpan.
The merciless scraping makes you cringe.
You know Nana realizes you're gone when
The wall shudders under her pound.
Back over there, you peek out the window
For either one of your parents.
Winking headlights cheat you.

If mother shows you don't have to stay.
You hug her suit and soft silk blouse,
Inhale her perfumed neck.
Once the two of you are in the night
Nana calls out,

Don't trust-a-nobody!

JEN-AI CASAL

Parting Ways in Santa Rosa

The rain sounds like a faucet this year.
Do you remember when there were no sounds at all
In the mornings at the table overshadowed
By the mountains? Only wings
Of toucans and green
Parrots by the bay.

Love, honor and obey—
We promised, at least, to love. How many years
Young were we? How quickly green
Tender emotions give way to all
Gray soaking pots, bills, soiled diapers, wings
Of transgressions crumpled in shadows.

I sometimes see your shadow
While I'm crushing bay
Laurel leaves, like angel wings
In dinner tomato sauce, and twelve years
Melt away like April snow, and all
I feel are two eyes, willow green,

Open, soft, forgiving. Shards of green
Anger flash now in the parlor shadows.
Fierce spars and jabs are all
We know to keep loneliness at bay,
Stave off silence for a year.
Decisions perch on swings.

Do you remember the chuparosa wings?
Humming vibrato, splash of tropical green

Against the hibiscus. Our first year
Was swathed in buttery shadows
Of tremulous forbidden embraces, obeying
Only the cry of now, always.

All
Of melancholy. Marooned on the bay,
We look back on the wild green
Passion and lament the shadows,
Daily dishes that mock twelve years.

Still you are all that is untamed, precious and green,
A quilt of soothing shadow against the beating wings
Of humdrum days, an emerald bay that could last another year..

BRIANNE KEITH

Compass

I steady the needle
to lead my face round
the north side of something, you.

I had to crawl to get here—
my head pulled south
in a polar tug
somewhere in between your shoes

a spin west, my hand tries to cover
one country, maybe
two, if I did try.
My cheeks the size of China—

imagine, you point to me,
if, by chance. My back
stretched across this globe
trying to fit every niche

you want to visit.

GEORGE KOVACH

Old Ha Noi

Song Hong, river of sorrow,
older than the ruined path
beneath the Citadel,
long like an elder's memory
that flows through mangroves
and feeds the sugar cane.
I do not understand the river; I only feel
the silted passing of generations,
and hear the cry of egrets
white against black mud.

This ancient city breathes alluvium
into its mortared cornices
and dust-filled promenades.

I am wrong about its people too.

And the breeze off the river
carries the groan of trucks
crossing the *Long Bien* bridge
drowning the voices of bamboo merchants
tethered along the banks
beneath the bridge,
tethered to the soil
forming in the bend below the city,
swelling until new floods
sweep the fertile land down to the sea.

MARILYN BENTOV

Highway

Row on row in Flanders Fields the trenches
still wind round with roots of poppies gone
a hundred years; and tunnels probe the soil
that shelves numberless buttons, bullets, shell-
cases, belts, and boots the earth can't eat,

trash for bulldozers that plough deep
through hallowed fields, their jaws consuming
bones of conscripts, bones of young men
who fought *the war to end all wars.*
Bones slide down the steel-toothed maws and

bellies of the metal dinosaurs that mash
bones into sludge weighing some tons
per inch, war's dirt revolutionized. A kind
of prophecy's fulfilled, *swords into ploughshares,*
death's knick-knacks yanked from dried-up

mud, fields that drank the blood of a gene-
ration. This was no Mother Earth—
she'll be buried underneath a highway. Signs
will read *Flanders Fields* (exits in Belgium to
Germany or France; to bistros, restaurants, gas

stations, shops, rest stops, hotels and motels)
for civilian armies in Mercedes, Saabs,
BMW's, Toyotas, and Infinities—
that roll above ancestral burial grounds.
In Flanders Fields, with luck, you still may find

a souvenir flung from a gear or crane
as the road was made. A Brit said, proudly,
he had found a strip of leather from a soldier's
belt, or possibly a kit-bag strap.
He hung it on his rear-view mirror.

fiction

ERIC BROWN

Gringo Stop

"WAKE UP," said Devi, giving Maggie a nudge. "Gringo stop." The bus shifted downward in spasmodic shudders before coming to rest with a weary expulsion of brake air. Maggie yawned, but her ears wouldn't pop. They must have climbed quite a bit from the beach town they had left that morning. Off the road to the right, she saw a military guard station perched on the edge of a cliff. Above the jungle-choked gorge, tropical forest was interspersed with patches of pasture and banana. The tops of the hills were hidden in blue-gray clouds, and although it was still early afternoon, a luminescent gloom hung over the valley. You could see the details of distant trees, and objects seemed lit from within.

Across the aisle a heavy-set man with a fishy-smelling cooler on his lap groaned. "Thanks to the gringos, my ice will melt," he said in Spanish to nobody in particular.

"It smells like it already melted," Devi said, getting a laugh from some of the other passengers. Maggie and Devi were the only gringos on the bus, and the fish man was right; due to their presence there was likely to be a delay. In the two weeks since they had arrived in the country, they had thrice been escorted off the bus for a baggage search and passport check. There was not much tourism in the country, and the rebels were said to be active in a neighboring district.

The fish man appeared flustered at Devi's knowledge of Spanish, but then recovered. "If they take you in, ask if they have any ice," he pleaded. "Bring me a kilo bag, and when I get to the city, I'll give you a nice snapper."

"They don't have ice," scoffed a woman from the next row. "You might as well toss the fish now and save all our noses."

Maggie looked up the aisle toward the front of the bus. It

would be a long stumble over all those reed baskets and plastic-weave bags stuffed with fruit and other goods. In the midst of all the clutter she could see a pig blocking the entire width of the aisle, its snout burrowed under a seat. At the front of the bus, a military guardsman walked slowly up the steps, his back straight. After saying a few words to the driver, he turned to scrutinize the religious icons, soccer decals, and photographs of lingerie models that covered the dashboard. He wore a crisp uniform, mirror sunglasses, and a white hard hat, and over his shoulder hung a semi-automatic rifle.

"God, it's hot," Maggie said, yawning and checking her watch. She had slept for five hours, but it wasn't enough. They had stayed up dancing and drinking rum punch until early in the morning at the fishing village where they had spent the last five days. Devi had wanted to make love, but for some reason Maggie insisted on conversation. After one drunken tangent or another she had inadvertently brought up the hypothetical possibility of marriage. God knows what she had expected from him, but she hadn't been prepared for the poorly disguised expression of horror that crossed his face. After a stupid fight about bus schedules, he was out the door, and as she fell asleep an hour later, Maggie couldn't help but think about the French women he had flirted with that morning who were staying at the pension down the beach.

Maggie found two Tylenol and tossed them down with some seltzer water that had lost all pretense of fizz. She would have to remind herself that she shouldn't try to keep pace with Devi's drinking. How could she consider marrying a man who knocked them back like that?

Off to her left, Maggie heard voices, and she turned to see five women wearing brightly-colored dresses hurry down a path toward them. "Naranja! Papaya! Cacahuates!" they called out as they surrounded the bus, holding up baskets of fruit to the windows. Devi stuck his head and shoulders out the window, his short dreadlocks jiggling.

"How much for the papaya?" he asked. Maggie couldn't hear the reply, as the voices had now softened, the better to bargain in private. Devi said something that made the woman laugh, and he returned to his seat and offered Maggie a papaya.

She shook her head no. "Flirting as usual, I see," she said.

"Give me a break; she was 60 and had no teeth." Devi took

a bite, and then another, and when he pulled the papaya away, there were driblets of yellow fruit stuck to his goatee.

"The sad thing is she's probably only 35," Maggie said.

"Okay, so maybe she's 50, but she doesn't look so sad about it," he said.

"Have a little sensitivity for the oppressed, gringo."

"Hey, blondie, who's the Hispanic one here?" he said.

"Half," she corrected.

"Yeah, well you're the one whose going to get our ass dragged in for questioning." Devi nodded at the guard, who was working his way down the aisle, checking papers. "Put a hat on."

"Shh," she said, but she did as he suggested and scrunched herself lower in her seat.

"Clear the aisle," the guard ordered, and the passengers struggled to move their bundles onto their laps. He moved slowly toward the back, checking papers at random and occasionally poking at an item with the barrel of his gun. He seemed to take great pleasure in the dexterity of his gun-handling technique, flipping open a basket here and poking into a box there. It seemed to Maggie that he lived in a different world than the ragged passengers. It was a realm of high expectations and clear purpose, intolerant of ambiguity. Yet, when the guard went home at the end of the day, she wondered, would he once again return to their world, to the smell of dust and manure, gasoline and marijuana, the taste of homemade cane drink and fried yucca?

"Cedulas!" demanded the guard, staring at Maggie with a triumphant expression that made it clear her disguise had fooled no one. He briefly reviewed their passports and then, with a mischievous smirk, slipped them abruptly into his jacket pocket. "Follow me, and bring your luggage," he demanded. As they grabbed their backpacks from the overhead rack, several passengers sighed. The man with the fish glared at them. "Hielo," he mouthed silently.

Inside the station, the guard handed their passports to an official who sat behind a desk. He then saluted and returned to the doorway to supervise two other soldiers who searched through their packs. Captain Oriano paged through their passports, looking serious. He was in his 50s, with wavy black hair held tight with gel. Although their papers were in order, and they were carrying nothing illegal, Maggie felt her stomach knot, and the sweat dripped down from her armpits. From what she had read, civil rights were something

of a novelty in this country, occasionally indulged, but far more often ignored.

As he perused the passports, Captain Oriano's expression gradually changed from melancholic determination to amusement.

"Señor Rankin," he said suddenly, looking up at Devi. "Forgive me, but while your name is Norteamericano, you appear as if you might be from our country."

"My mother is Honduran," he said.

The Captain's mouth fell slightly open. "My uncle lives in Honduras," he said, and then smiled broadly. "We must celebrate."

Captain Oriano walked over to a refrigerator, pulled out three bottles of beer, and led them out to a large balcony that overlooked the gorge below. As they followed, Devi glanced back at Maggie and flicked his eyebrows in amusement. She recognized the expression: he was living on luck as usual; even the cops were giving away beers. It was as if the asshole thought he was the happiest little king of the world. At that moment she knew that Devi would never mention what she had said the night before. He would act as if nothing had happened, and once they had returned to the States he would make excuses, stop returning her phone calls, and disappear from her life. The idea panicked her, and she shoved the possibility of the French girls out of her mind. She loved him, there was no getting around it, and she even had an argument to support that love: if she stayed with him long enough maybe some of his happiness would adhere to her. That's all she wanted, a year or two to cure whatever it was that ailed her. But marriage? What was she thinking? It would be up to her to set him straight, maybe blame it on the rum ("What the drunken romantic fool actually meant to say was…").

Out on the balcony, Devi offered the Captain a cigarette, and as they lit up, Oriano pointed up the valley to where a cara-cara bird rose clumsily out of a palm tree and soared away with utter grace. "What about them?" Maggie asked, nodding at the bus. The passengers looked forlornly out the windows at them. The fruit vendors sat under a palm tree, waiting.

"They don't mind," said Oriano. "The bus often breaks down anyway, so it's good to give it a rest. Besides, it's a beautiful spot, don't you think?"

"Like a painting," Devi said, waving his cigarette over the horizon. She noticed that he was given to hyperbole when speaking in

Spanish, saying things he'd never say in English.

Under the influence of the beer, the conversation between Devi and the Captain accelerated to the point where she was no longer able to keep up. Maggie moved to the fortified banister and looked down the steep slope that stretched hundreds of meters to the stream below. To her surprise, she found that unlike the opposite slope, it was not covered with tropical growth, but rather with scarred, twisted cactus and weeds strewn with garbage. She imagined for a moment what it would be like to fall, catapulting through the air, tumbling like Jack and Jill, ripped and sliced, then coming to rest, impaled on stiff, unrelenting thorns.

"We need to get going," she said, interrupting them.

They looked up at her in surprise. "You see, this proves my point," said the Captain, putting an arm around Devi's shoulder. "You, Devi, with your Hispanic blood, view this minor delay as an opportunity, a time to see the scenery and relax with friends. But your lovely gringa girlfriend here, and I mean no offense, is more typically concerned with meeting schedules, rush, rush, like a robot, just like in Miami. You know, I've been to Miami."

"Really?" Devi said, smirking at Maggie.

"The truth is," said Oriano, turning to smile at her apologetically, "although gringos are very clever at many things, they lack the soul, the warm beating heart of the Latino." He rested both hands upon his heart and smiled fondly.

At first, Maggie thought he was being sarcastic, but then she realized that he was sincere. "Perhaps by visiting here," she said at last, "I can learn to open my heart just a little."

Oriano's eyes brimmed with sudden emotion. "That is the most beautiful thing I have ever heard." He turned to Devi. "You are lucky, my friend; you should marry this woman."

"Well, somebody should," Devi said, giving her a wry smile.

"Do not wait," the Captain said. "Marry her. Don't be a fool like me." He paused, distracted, then gestured grandly at the scenery. "We live in the most beautiful country in the world, don't you think."

"Oh yes," said Maggie.

Devi nodded at a large piece of artillery that pointed out over the valley. "Do you actually use that thing?" he asked. "They told us the rebels weren't operating in this district."

"Not now, but in a few months, maybe even a few weeks,"

said Oriano, looking glum. "I've asked for reinforcements, for more artillery, but they tell me this will have to do. It's absurd. Five of us here against…"

He turned away and leaned heavily against the balcony looking out at the distant hills. A moment later he turned and whispered something to Devi, who then shrugged and nodded at Maggie to follow him. They walked over to the far edge of the balcony near the artillery piece, and when Maggie saw that Oriano was staring at them, she gently pushed Devi out of view behind the big gun.

"What's this all about?" she asked.

"He wants me to propose to you," Devi said. "He said if I don't, he won't return the passports."

"You're kidding."

"I don't think so."

"What a wacko," she said.

"I don't know, he's got some kind of babe trouble, I guess. Pretty funny about the proposal idea, though, hmm?"

"Hilarious. Now let's go back, and I'll tell him I turned you down, and we can get our passports back and get the hell out of here."

"I don't know," Devi said, putting his arms around her waist. "Maybe we owe it to him."

His eyes played the part, but she knew his theatrical ways well enough not to trust him. "Well, you know you've got nothing to worry about," she said. "No matter what drunken crap I was blabbering on about last night, the truth is…well anyway, just ask and I'll give you ten reasons why I wouldn't marry you."

"Will you be my wife?"

"Don't bullshit me," she said, shoving him back against the railing.

"But you said…"

"You can't play me like that," she said. "Did you sleep with one of those French girls?"

"No way," Devi said. "Where did you…"

"Oh, I'm sorry, did you sleep with both of those French girls?"

"No," he said. They were looking straight into each others' eyes now, and Maggie realized he was innocent. That was something, anyway. Just then, she heard Oriano call out something in a strange,

muffled kind of voice. They peeked around the big gun, but he was no longer on the balcony.

"He wasn't yelling at us, was he?" Devi asked.

"I don't know, but we've got to get our passports back and get out of here," she said, leading them back toward the guard station. Inside, there was nobody around, but their passports and papers were sitting on the desk. "Captain Oriano?" Maggie called, looking into a nearby room. Devi grabbed the passports.

The guard entered from outside, and they asked if he had seen Oriano.

"He comes and goes," he said with a shrug.

"Well, he signed off, so I guess we're done," Devi said, waving the passports before stuffing them back into his pockets.

"You are dismissed," the guard replied, his earlier pugnacity apparently having withered.

"Just a second," Maggie said, and she ran out to the balcony to the spot where Oriano had been standing. Taking a deep breath, she leaned over the edge. There was only cactus and plastic. What was she expecting to see, a body impaled on the thorns, eyes gazing up at her forlornly? But he could have dropped through, she thought, slid out of sight.

"What are you doing out there?" Devi asked, impatiently.

"Just wanted to take one last look," she said, moving away from the balcony. "Ask if they have any ice."

JOHN CENTO

Cavatina

SITTING CROSS-LEGGED atop the mountain, David Bozarth surveyed the country below him. Hawks and Saturday afternoon gliders circled silently lower down the slope and he could see the town of Hoosick through the heavy August haze, snug in its valley. The pair of hawks interested him. From his vantage point above them, they seemed neither to ascend nor descend, but floated in endless circles below him, hitching a ride with the valley thermals in long, wary loops. Occasionally, the winds would bring him the sound of a truck backing up, or of a saw whirring in the town below. He had hoped to hear the sound of children playing, or of a ballgame, but the heat must have been keeping everyone inside.

He looked over at Catherine who was napping with her head resting on her daypack and her arms folded across her stomach. She didn't bother to shade her eyes preferring to take the sun full on her face as she slept. He heard the calm, measured breathing of someone lost in sleep, her chest rising and falling with each breath. David saw his chance to really take her in now, so he took it. Took full advantage of it. He let his eyes wander over her, loitering at all his favorite old spots. The bridge of her nose, the curls at either end of her mouth, the jaw line of fine china, the smoothness of her neck. He wondered how warm to the touch her fair skin must feel after so much sun, how her hair, ever the color of wild strawberries in July, must smell of perspiration and shampoo.

She stirred.

"David?" she said without opening her eyes.

"Yes?"

"So, what's it like being married?"

Last April, when Amy, David's wife, pointed Catherine out to him at the restaurant, he didn't know how long he had been dreaming of her. Two years, maybe three. At least as long as he had been sober. Comforting dreams. He would be lying back on soft, moist grass, hands clasped behind his head, gazing up at the soft silhouette of her face, her eyes so blue they appeared black. No words were ever spoken. It was a still life. Most times he was so struck by the vividness of the image that he awoke. He would go downstairs in his robe and light up a smoke on the back stoop, trying to fix the image in his mind and, at the same time, trying to expel it.

He had not seen nor spoken to her in twenty years, which he always considered an odd blessing, a kind act of randomness, since they still knew the same people. They had ended badly. That is what he had always thought. His dismissal, for that is truly how it felt, came so gradually, and yet so suddenly. He had been with her his entire adult life. He had never been untrue. But he was young and arrogant, and altogether too careless with her affections. Without realizing it, he had taken a woman's love for granted. And, to Catherine, who at one time was so passionate in her admiration and so single-minded in her devotion, it was unpardonable. She said that he did not love her. No appeals would be heard. His sentence was life without her, an exile from the better parts of himself that could ever have deserved her. Redemption was only a dream.

"Aren't you going to go over and say hi to her?" Amy asked over her salad.

"God, no," David quickly answered

"Pussy," she teased and returned to her salad.

David had not told her about his dreams.

In the intervening twenty years information about Catherine had come to him from mutual friends. There was a long-term relationship, a live-in boyfriend, an engagement, and then not an engagement. Catherine, with a head for money, had become a bank vice president. She owned a house on a lake. She had been successful. David married, bought a house with a pool, was well regarded at work. Some people considered him successful, he thought. Though, he only really felt it when he cooled off in his pool after shooting baskets in his driveway. Success, he thought, was owning your own Y.

Not long after seeing her at the restaurant, while picking up

lunch one day, he decided to buy her a card, just to say that he had seen her and to apologize for not recognizing her and saying hello. The years and the surprise, he wrote, had conspired against it. He wrote that he hoped all was well, and, if she would agree, perhaps they could share a friendly lunch together some time. He included his business card with the note that he sent to her office, having got her work address casually from a friend. After a few days, late one afternoon, his office phone rang.

"David?"

"Speaking," he said while opening a desk drawer in search of a file.

He felt it, that split-second silence on the phone that precedes something momentous, something grand. One's life altered in the time it takes for the human voice to travel over glass and copper to reach another human's ear. Science, fiber optics, space travel. One slight deviation early and one's trajectory can be sent spinning light years into oblivion.

"It's Catherine. How are you?" She sounded so breezy, so natural, and unaffected. He flushed. His hands moved involuntarily around his desk. He picked up his stapler and set it down as if looking for something hidden underneath.

"Hi," he said, drawing the word out slowly, at a complete loss for what to say next.

"David?" she tried again. "How's it going?"

"Great!" He cleared his throat. "You got my note."

"Yes, I did," she said. "Really. That was so sweet of you."

"I felt kind of bad not recognizing you." Whatever had been hiding under the stapler may have gone under the Scotch tape dispenser. He picked it up and set it down.

"You know, we must've just passed right in front of each other because I don't remember seeing you, either."

"Amy and I eat there all the time," David said. He thought he should mention his wife. "We live right around the corner."

"I know," she said. "I heard you moved into that neighborhood. You must be so excited."

"Yes, we are. We were pretty lucky."

He heard another line on her phone ring. Good, he thought. This was good. She'd have to end the conversation. This was all he really wanted. Just to say hello, and to maybe chit-chat a while and to

get caught up. He could survive on this, he thought. He didn't know if this exchange of voice and thought with Catherine would enhance his dreams or annihilate them, if his subconscious would take the words they had spoken and weave intricate tapestries with them, spinning dazzlingly brilliant threads of storyline in and around each other into an inexhaustible *Arabian Nights* of dreams. A new tale every night revealed to him by a soft voice from above while he lay in the grass with his hands clasped behind his head and the sun falling warm upon his eyelids. Or perhaps the dreams would just stop now. That would probably be the best thing. That, he decided, is what he should hope for. But he wanted to be able to live with either possibility.

"Of course, I'd love to have lunch," she answered him. "What's your schedule like next week?"

Later, replaying their conversation in his mind while driving home, he could not remember reminding Catherine of his invitation to lunch.

Lunch took place the next week on a chill, rainy Monday in a walnut-shrouded, faux Irish pub convenient to both their offices. David ordered a Coke and waited for Catherine at the bar, checking himself one last time in the mirror behind the multi-colored bottles. He had all his life looked younger than his age. It used to annoy him in his youth. But, now in his forties, it was something for which he had grown grateful over the years. As he began to think of how much else in his life there was to be grateful for, she walked in. He left his barstool and greeted her at the door. Hugging her for the first time in twenty years, David immediately recognized the fragrance above the odor of damp wool from her coat. It was, as he had imagined, and as his dreams had led him to expect, Halston.

Catherine stood at arms-length before him. She smiled. "Well," she said, "I'm a little nervous."

"Who wouldn't be?" David returned her smile and helped her off with her coat. "But, I've got to say," he let out a breath, "it's something of a relief to hear you say that."

During lunch Catherine never mentioned Amy. And David never mentioned the problems his marriage had been facing as a result of his, very nearly, three-year sobriety. His situation was not unique. He had come to realize the world was full of husbands who found their wives and their marriages unfulfilling. It would be not only

banal to bring up his marital troubles after so many years; it would be rude. Even more, given the time constraints of a lunch hour, it would be wasteful. There would be no room for it among the chronologies and the apologies that filled their conversation.

David had fully expected that this lunch would be the end of it. He imagined there might be a few e-mails back and forth saying how lovely it was to get together, how good for the soul it was to reconnect after so many years. They might compliment each other on their looks, on how well-preserved they had managed to remain despite all the years. But, that would be it. What he told himself he wanted to gain most from their meeting was to be able to see Catherine again somewhere, anywhere, and not feel like hiding, to be able to think of her without wincing at the pain of a youthful failure. He told himself he only wanted to make right the memory of them.

But that wasn't the end of it. After that lunch there followed an explosion of communication. They exchanged long, detailed, daily e-mails full of everything their lives had come to in the intervening years; attempts to reconcile the object of long-ago desire with the person each had become. Catherine, he learned, had suffered a breakdown some years before, in her early thirties. Valium. David, himself, had spent a week in alcohol rehab at the age of thirty-five, the result of a drinking problem whose seeds had been sown in his youth, and about which Catherine had been helplessly aware. They agreed that the experience had somehow both ennobled and diminished them. He mentioned his fear that sobriety, while welcome and necessary, had caused in him a sense of alienation. Amy, he admitted, often felt like a stranger to him. He described his vegetable garden, his nephews' Little League games, and the long bicycle rides he took alone on weekend mornings when Amy was too hung over to join him. Catherine wrote to him about the improvements she planned for her house on the lake, about learning to water ski, and about decorating her window boxes. She joked that the only times she needed a man were when she had a car full of grocery bags to truck into the house. Seldom would they indulge themselves in sentimentality. They rarely discussed what happened to them and to the plans they had made together. But, on rare occasions, one would admit to the other how much that long-gone future had meant.

In one of his e-mails David described his recent interest in camping and hiking. He and some friends from college Catherine

knew from the old days camped for a weekend each fall and spring in upstate New York. Years ago, neither of them had the slightest interest in the great outdoors. It was something David had come to slowly. Slogging for miles through the woods under a heavy pack, dragging and chopping wood, sleeping on the ground, performing basic digestive functions al fresco, were for him an acquired affection. But it was a small price to pay for the sound of the wind, or the purple shadow cast by a mountain at dusk, or for watching a single ripple make its way across the mile-wide quiet of a lake.

Having known only Catherine's earlier self, he never considered her the woodsy type. He was startled one afternoon when, in one of her e-mails, she asked him to go away with her to the Berkshires. She got around to it very logically and innocently, as was her way. She, too, she explained, had done some camping. She mentioned having climbed several peaks in the White Mountains that David recognized. It was her dream, she wrote, to one day complete the Appalachian Trail, a short portion of which she knew passed through the Berkshires, where the mountain club ran a lodge, and where one could find cheap accommodations. And, "Do you think Amy would give you up for a weekend?"

It was bold. It was innocent. She was serious. He could do it. He read Catherine's letter again several times and could not find anything in it that led him to believe she was joking. He fought the urge to reply instantly, deciding rather to sleep on it, if sleep would be at all possible now. This was not going to help, David thought. A night on a mountain alone with Catherine. He could already see the impression they would leave in the grassy field of his dreams.

Amy was working outside in the yard while David packed for his trip. The day before, a couple of friends in the trades, regulars at the place where Amy tended bar, delivered an oblong, granite slab the size of a dining room tabletop to their house. A stone mason Amy knew let her have it cheap, it being somehow flawed. Her friends set it down, per her instructions, on two-foot square blocks, making a stone bench in a corner of the backyard. Amy was very particular about its situation. She wanted the bench placed with a view of both the park across the street and of their neighbors' yard, so that looking in either direction, at any given time, might offer a view of children playing.

The screen door thwacked shut behind him as he brought his hiking boots outside to brush the caked mud from their treads. He sat down on the stoop and began scraping.

"Hey," Amy called to him. She was sitting on the bench. "How do you like it? Why don't you come on over and do that here?" She patted the bench with her hand.

"I didn't know it was ready," David explained. "I thought maybe you had to do something more before we could use it."

"No," Amy said. "It's a little unsteady, but it's safe enough to sit on." She smiled and made a space for him.

He really didn't know the bench was ready to sit on. He was not as handy as Amy. He thought Amy would have to apply some kind of adhesive, level the seat, something like that. He didn't realize that over time the sheer weight of the granite would cause the bench to achieve its own level stability.

"Nice," David said as he sat down and took in the view, the park across the street, the McDavitt's backyard. "I see what you mean about the sight lines."

"I thought it would make a nice, restful spot," Amy said as she unzipped the coveralls she wore when she worked outside, and twisted herself out of the top. She hunched her shoulders and then relaxed them. Her t-shirt, soaked through with sweat, clung to her body in sharp wrinkles.

"You were right."

"Do you need any help with your gear?" she asked.

"No," David answered. He thought he shouldn't have said it so quickly. "Thanks. I'll just be doing some hiking, no backpacking." He was applying the brush to his boot soles with long, even strokes, mindful of where the discarded dirt might land because he didn't want to get Amy's new bench all dirty. Amy took a rag from her back pocket and wiped her face and neck. When she was done, she returned the rag to her pocket and folded her hands on her lap.

"David?"

"Yes." He tried to concentrate on his boots.

"You are coming back, aren't you?" Amy asked. She was looking down at the ground, watching her feet swinging slowly beneath her. "I know we've already talked about it," she said, "and I know you need some time alone and all that. But, you are coming back, right?"

"Yes, Amy. I am," he told her. "I'll be back Sunday afternoon." He knew she was asking for reassurance and he was sorry that all he could provide was his itinerary. He stopped brushing the dirt from his boots. He knew this wasn't easy and he wanted to show patience.

"Because," she went on without looking at him. "We are a family, aren't we? You and me? I mean, even without kids, we're still a family, right? You, me, the house, the park. Everything. This all makes a family, doesn't it?"

"I always kind of thought of us as more like a team."

"No." She shook her head slowly, still not looking at him. "No," she repeated. "We're a family."

He set down his brush and his boots and put an arm around her. He took in her solid frame, still damp and dirty from work, and he looked directly into her blue eyes. He would not lie again to his wife.

"Of course," he said.

"Good," she said softly. She looked up at the sky, took a breath, and looked at him. He saw that she tried to appear cheered by their conversation. "Good, then," she said. "I'll have a nice dinner all ready for you when you get back."

He squeezed her shoulder and pressed her to him. "Amy," he said gently.

She had made such promises before and she had broken them. He did not want to think about those times. Now, sitting next to her, he wanted to remember all the times she did come through for him. He wanted to see the images that really meant something to him: their house, bright and warm on the inside, and the two of them in it watching Jeopardy after dinner; their den on Sunday mornings, and the two of them in it sipping coffee, touching hands, and saying to each other, "I don't know, honey, what do you want to do today?"

He could make himself crazy if he thought about it too much, the way this trip would look if anyone found out. But he managed by convincing himself that this had nothing to do with Amy. Catherine predated her. It was Catherine herself who had helped to form the man Amy fell in love with. There would have been no broken man for Amy to restore had Catherine not broken him. He was the sum of both their love. It was all part of the unique combination of years, experience, and circumstance that led David and Amy to each other. Just as it was a combination of a card, a phone call, a lunch, and one

half-truth told to his wife that led David to this mountain, to this former lover.

He looked at Catherine and noticed she still hadn't opened her eyes.

"In what sense?" he asked. "You mean, like, is marriage two hearts beating as one, and all that?"

"Well, yeah," she rubbed her eyes, yawned, and rolled over on her side to face him.

"I think it's supposed to be like that." He paused. He snatched a long blade of grass to chew on, but he'd have much preferred a smoke. "Or, rather, I think it's supposed to turn into something like that." He paused again. "I mean, if it isn't that way to start with."

He wished she hadn't asked the question. He wished she hadn't said anything.

"Is that the way things started with you and Amy?" she asked.

"Yes."

"But that's not how it is anymore?"

David thought for a moment. He wanted to be careful. He chewed his blade of grass and looked down into the valley where a wind was blowing. He watched it ripple through the maple trees and the oak trees, lifting their boughs and exposing the leaves' lime green undersides to the sun, leaving behind the impression of fingers run across suede. He followed the effect of the wind from one end of the valley to the other and watched the pair of hawks absorb it like two corks bobbing atop a wave at sea.

"My wedding day, Cat," he said, "was the happiest day of my life." His gaze never left the valley. He didn't know what more to say. "Still is."

Catherine seemed pleased with his answer, perhaps she was relieved. He could not read her. She sat up and swept the dust from her pant legs.

"You know I don't want to say anything bad about Amy, Cat," David continued. "But I didn't come all the way up here to be less than truthful to you, either."

"Of course," Catherine said. She rummaged through her

pack and found a scrunchie. Black velvet. "Then, tell me," she said as she tied her hair back. "How was it that you were able to come on this trip?"

David exhaled. "I just told her I needed to get away for a weekend, do a little hiking, think some things through." He turned to look at her. "Where things are at now, what is she going to do, forbid me?"

"No," said Catherine. "I suppose not."

"It was easy."

David wished he hadn't added that last part about it being easy, because it wasn't. It was hard for him. Amy accepted his little retreat without question. He knew it saddened her to think that he needed to be away from her, but she wasn't going to ask him not to go. All the same, he never believed he was the kind of man who could get used to lying to his wife. But that's exactly what he did. He had crossed a line, no matter how he tried to rationalize it or explain it away. What was left for him to puzzle out was whether, once across, he could hop back safely to the other side again.

"Did you, perhaps," Catherine asked, "mention anything about, you know, a companion?"

"No. You're safe." His laughter surprised him. "I don't know. Did you want me to tell her?"

"Christ, no!" Catherine said.

"I mean," he continued, "I tried to think of a way to talk about this with her." It was true. He had. But there was just no overcoming the appearance. On paper, it all seemed so tawdry.

"David," Catherine interrupted him. "I think we might be the only two people who would understand this." She let out a sigh. "Jesus, I'd hate to have to duck every time I saw her."

"So would I," he agreed. He tried to remember Amy ever mentioning she had seen Catherine.

"What do you say?" Catherine said as she stood up. "Do you want to get off this mountain now and start thinking about dinner?"

"Sure." He stood up and cinched his daypack around his waist. He took a long pull from his water bottle, offered it to Catherine, and smiled. "You lead the way."

He preferred to bring up the rear.

They returned to their small bunk room at the lodge to

get ready for dinner. David gave Catherine some privacy by busying himself in the lodge's large common room while she showered and changed clothes. Families were gathering before dinner. Fathers were slumped in overstuffed naugahyde chairs, catching their breath before dinner and an evening of sing-a-longs and Pictionary, while a group of children coursed breathlessly in and out of the room in a game of tag. At one end of the room was a large fireplace with a fieldstone hearth, its interior cool and dark.

David browsed among the shelves of books that lined the opposite wall. Mostly, he found field guides, atlases, books on natural history. He counted a half-dozen copies of Bryson's A Walk In The Woods. That seems about right, he thought, for a lodge on the Appalachian Trail.

He continued eyeing the shelves until the thought occurred to him that, if he found something to read, the time would pass quickly, without him even knowing it. He didn't want to pass the time. He didn't want to just while away the moments waiting for Catherine. He wanted to savor them. He wanted to attenuate each one and feel himself in it from beginning to end. For so long it seemed he was always wishing he were somewhere else, and now suddenly he realized he was exactly where he wanted to be. He looked around him. He could easily and contentedly sit in one of these comfortable, semi-leather chairs in this lodge, admiring these books, in a perpetual state of delicious anticipation that at any moment Catherine would appear. In his sudden generosity of mood, he thought how oddly familiar the feeling was. It occurred to him then that he had spent a significant portion of his post-Catherine life doing just this same thing, waiting for her to appear. But this was different.

He turned from the shelves and saw her standing in the archway looking around the room for him. She wore a simple sun dress of orange-patterned calico, cool and loose. A thin gold chain hung around her neck. He had given her one a long time ago, he remembered, but he had no idea if this was it. Rather than ask, he allowed himself to think that it was. Standing there, somewhat lost and tentative, with her hands clasped in front of her, David thought Catherine had to know the effect she had, not just on him, but on all men. And, yet, there was no guile in the way she doubted it. It all made him want to touch her. He wanted to hold her by the waist and draw her to him. Instead, he approached her and smiled.

"Just beautiful, Catherine," he managed.

"Why, thank you, kind sir." A smile. A mock curtsy. "I was hoping you'd like it."

This was new. Did she need, even want, his approval? Did she really want to know what she did to him? She had not given him the slightest hint, one way or the other, as to where she stood on the matter of his attraction to her. Anything she said or did, any signal she might have given him in these last few months, he could have taken in two equal yet opposite ways.

"I promise I won't be a minute getting ready." He pointed to a magazine rack in the corner. "There's a slew of menus over there. Why don't you pick out a restaurant you like."

"Okay. But I'm starving," she warned. "And you know what I'm like when I'm hungry."

"I know, I remember," he said behind him as he headed for the stairs. "I'll only be a minute."

Catherine chose an Italian place, Il Giardino, on Route 7 just outside town. It was a family place, with slightly dangerous touches of the Rat Pack. Celebrity caricatures on the walls, Sinatra, Louie Prima, and the Three Tenors on the soundtrack, a lengthy list of drinks they called martinis, but that David didn't. The hostess led them to their table. As they made their way through the crowded room, David was suddenly seized by the pride a man feels when all other men's eyes are trained on the woman at his side. Perhaps it was his competitive nature, but that feeling, in that moment, to him was worth this trip and all the perils it held for him.

They were both relaxed and famished from the day's physical activity. Catherine ordered a Cape Codder from the bar, and David asked for an iced tea. He did not want to talk about his marriage, and Catherine, as usual, never raised the subject, preferring to follow his lead. He was more interested in hearing about her life and loves. Their lunch had been a rushed affair, and there was only so much one could convey in an e-mail. This was an opportunity for Catherine to relax, to talk, to share, and for him to devote his entire attention to her.

She confirmed her engagement, and subsequent un-engage-

ment. She had been living with an older man, Alan, who she explained had a fear of commitment. After some time, she grew tired of waiting, not to mention growing deeply hurt by his inability to appreciate her, by his seeming unwillingness to make a decision about their future. Believing that they were both wasting their time, Catherine broke it off. At times during her conversation, David could see how disappointed the experience left her. He could discern in her eyes the momentary flashes of psychic pain, though she quickly suppressed them. When she finished her story, she paused and gave it the stamp of finality.

"That was something," Catherine said. "That was significant."

For his part, David couldn't fathom such lunacy. As a man who still suffered from the loss of her affections, as one who at that very moment risked his marriage, and, in a way, risked his life as he'd come to know it, just to be with her, the fact that the only thing she aroused in this other man was indifference shook him. It dizzied him.

The waiter came by and cleared the table. Catherine waved off dessert, but ordered an Amaretto. David asked for an espresso.

"You know me, David," she confided. "I want to be adored."

Yes, David thought. To be adored. I would adore you, Catherine. I would. I could. It was a mantra he chanted sometimes outside on his back stoop, smoking a cigarette, awash in the spectral glimmer of his dreams. I would spend all of every day adoring you, Catherine. And, then, every night, I would dream of new and better ways of adoring you to practice all the next day. I would. I could.

"Alan and I still get together," she said, her voice bringing him back, "every now and then for TV, cribbage, sex sometimes."

Sex. He had, of course, fantasized about it, more often and at odder times than he cared to admit. But, Catherine's off-handed mention of it as a casual afterthought picked him up and threw him, landing him squarely on his back in a sun-kissed, grassy field.

"Isn't it funny?" she said. "And, now, here we are. I'm out there dating and you're married."

"Yes," David said as he stared into the murk of his espresso, thick as peat. "It is funny."

They returned to the lodge after dinner and went out onto

the back porch, away from the din of the common room, where they sat at a picnic table and played cribbage on a board they borrowed from the front desk, letting the warm, summer evening breezes summoned by the open windows drift over them. Catherine was losing hand after hand. David knew that she hated to lose—at anything—but, there was no way for him to let her win without it appearing obvious. He also knew that if she suspected him of throwing games, her mood would only sink further. There is no strategy to cribbage, no tactics. If fortune hands you the right combination of cards, you win; if you don't, you lose. The simplicity appealed to him, but he saw that Catherine was growing frustrated.

"How about a walk around the grounds?" he suggested.

"Now, there's an idea," she answered, folding her cards in disgust and laying them face up on the table. "Will you look at this garbage?"

They returned the cribbage board to the front desk and left through the lodge's open front door. There was a small gravel parking circle with a flag pole in its grassy center. The flag hung limp in the still night air, waiting to be run down the pole, folded, and taken in for the night At some distance along a path to the right was a lookout area that, except for its being situated lower on the mountain, offered nearly the same view of Hoosick they had enjoyed earlier in the day. The lights of the town twinkled at them far below in the evening heat. Though it was dark already, the bottoms of the clouds were painted pink and lavender from the long-ago setting sun. The muffled sounds of families gathered and children at play in the lodge could be heard behind them in the distance. Standing side by side, they leaned forward with their elbows on the wall, hands folded in front of them, taking in the view for a long while. David stole what he thought were furtive glances at Catherine in the soft, dying light. She caught him every time. But David noticed she was careful each time to act as if she hadn't. She would look straight ahead, or down at her hands. He could look at her as often and for as long as he wanted.

"I like your wedding ring," she said finally.

He had thought about removing it for the trip, but had changed his mind. The ring was of a different shape, and more ornate than a customary wedding band, with diamonds across the top. Women often noticed and remarked on it.

"Actually, it's my engagement ring," he said, bringing his hand

up for her to see better. "Amy was the one who proposed."

"Really," she said, looking at it.

"It was a leap year," he explained. "Sadie Hawkins, and all that. According to custom, on leap years it's acceptable for a woman to propose to a man."

"I've never heard of that." She was looking at him now. "Bold," she added.

"Very Amy."

"And, how long ago was that?" she asked.

They walked together farther along the darkened path that led to a hut used by hikers continuing on the Appalachian Trail through to Mount Katahdin. The lodges on the trail that run by the mountain club cost money, but the huts were free to anyone. They were low, circular structures, with conical roofs. Inside was a central hearth with perhaps eight or ten wooden sleeping platforms radiating from it. David had heard about the huts that dotted the trail from Georgia to Maine, but he had never been in one. Compared to the three-sided lean-to's he was used to in the Adirondacks, he imagined them to be plush

They pushed the door open and walked in. It was all darkness inside. The huts lacked windows in order to keep out the cold, and David could barely make out the outlines of the hearth and sleeping platforms that lay within. He kept waiting for his eyes to adjust, but it didn't seem to matter. It was all blackness. He put his hand in front of his face. Nothing. He was blind.

"David?"

"Yes?"

"Can you see me?"

"No."

"I'm right here," Catherine said.

David felt the warmth of her hand, soft and delicate, on top of his. It was their first and, to his memory, their only physical contact on their trip. He did not return the caress, as he had imagined so often that he would. Nor did he try to interpret it, or to uncover its meaning. And, he did not recoil.

Then, quite suddenly, David heard himself say, "It's not that I haven't thought of you that way—"

Catherine stopped him. She said that she understood.

Knowing her as he did, he knew she would not try to hide what had happened. Nor would she try to make it into something else, a mistake, or a misunderstanding.

"Maybe," he said, "we could just stay here a little while longer? And you could keep on holding my hand?"

"Of course, I will." Catherine was whispering to him now.

For a long time there was nothing in the hut but the sound of their breathing. He was certain now that this would be their last moment, and he wanted to hold onto it as long as he could. Because he knew there would never again be a moment like this, a moment in time that he could measure by the number of her breaths. When he felt he had wrung from it all but its last drop of wonder, he said, "Are you ready to go back now?"

"Yes, I am," she said. "Are you?"

"I am," he whispered.

He held onto her hand with one hand, and with the other felt around the walls until he reached the door. He pushed it open and let Catherine go ahead of him. Then he walked out into the soft August night, Catherine's silhouette leading him back.

JOHN R. GUTHRIE

The Luck of the Three-Legged Dog

SHE LOST HER RIGHT REAR LEG to a round from a Kalishnikov. After the bullet struck her, she lay there the entire day, barely breathing. On the second day, she began to snap up roaches and grubs for food, and lapped up whatever ooze trickled her way. I carried water to her in a cracked bowl and said, "In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful, drink that you may live, dog." She began to lick her wound. Before the stump of her leg had healed, she regained her three feet. I know, as I know my name is Nisram, that the three-legged dog is favored of Allah, for the streets of Kabul do not favor the survival even of dogs that are whole.

She has both the smile and the temperament of her cousin, the jackal. Perhaps as a pup she listened as they sang in the night from the plains beyond the city. She would stretch up from her nest, sniff, make her pointed ears stand up, and try to remember what the song meant. So God gave her the jackal's lewd smile and vile temperament for wanting to know more than a dog should know.

Basir Rashid, may Allah grant him peace, was my husband. He was a godly man with only a few small vices. He was a man of business, diligent in his work. From a stall of grand proportions in the marketplace, he sold electronic things from the nation of Korea: radios with which you could hear stations from all the world, cassette players and cassettes that contained the voices of the most artful singers, and even televisions with pictures in all the colors of a peacock's tail.

Allah blessed us with a son. We called him Akbar. Even while he yet suckled, I kept a stall of modest size in the market, a mere table with a woven awning overhead and a blanket alongside the table for overflow. I sold stacks of golden melons, pistachios from heaping straw baskets either in the shell or out, fruits, vegetables, spices. The rosemary I grew myself. All around the women exclaimed that my rosemary was unexcelled in the sweetness and strength of its savor.

The Russians came to Afghanistan. Then the Americans summoned Muslims from elsewhere to fight the Russians. After the Russians withdrew, the Taliban came to power. Seeking to hasten the Kingdom of Allah, they established the Ministry of Vice and Virtue.

My husband was away when six policemen from the ministry came to my stall in the market. Two of them drew me forth, and one knocked me to the ground with his fists and stood over me while the others took or destroyed my goods. I didn't cry out until they trampled my rosemary underfoot. Then the leader, swarthy and strong, smelling of sweat and tobacco, came over. I said to him, "Sir, I don't know what offense I have committed."

He spat upon the ground beside me and said in a voice so all could hear, "Whore, hide thy shame." He slashed me with the long stick he carried, and I curled into a ball with my hands over my head. Akbar ran to help me. They stopped beating me and turned on him, knocked him to the ground and handcuffed him to a post in the next stall, then turned back to me. He cried out, "women will not come forth without a burka! Women must not be seen in public without a male relative!" With each command, he slashed me with his stick. He grew weary of talking and beating at the same time, so he signaled another who came and helped beat me while he continued to shout. "Women will not go to school! They will not engage in commerce, for such leads to fornication and whoredom and is a snare set by Satan for the unwary!" I wanted to cry out, for it is true, "Please, even the Prophet himself worked for a woman of business, and later she became his wife." But I dared not.

They turned on my son. Not only had he intervened, but also they said he had been listening to an audiocassette from his father's inventory. For his interference, they beat him with sticks while he was still handcuffed to that pole. But for listening to the audiocassette, they loosened his restraints, and cast him to the ground again, then they kicked him on his ears, "...for you have defiled your ears! Allah does not love people who listen to the music of the infidels and devils that issues from audiocassettes!" Akbar died.

When Basir, my husband, returned, his son was dead, his wife sorely beaten, his shop and goods destroyed or taken away by the vice police. He said nothing. He sat in his chair, hardly moving the day through. In time, his cousin and some friends came and spoke to him, and told him he must redeem his honor by going to the mountains

and taking up arms against the Taliban.

A month later, my husband's cousin, wounded in his arm, returned from the foothills of the Hindu Kush. He said that the Taliban forces there had a *Katusha*—a heavy Russian machine gun—set up on a ridge so that it spat its bullets down on them. They withdrew and waited overnight, then sat out before dawn to take the ridge from which the machine gun had fired. As they ran toward to the top of the ridge, firing as they went, Basir was shot in the back of the head. The place where the Taliban had been was empty, abandoned in the middle of the night.

Tell me, what could a woman do, left alone in times such as these? I could not even emerge from the house without a male relative at my side, yet I had none in this place. Mr. Rassul Sayyuf came to my house. He is the man who, with his brother, brought produce from the countryside in the pickup truck for me to sell. Mr. Sayyuf, looking very sad, said I was a poor widow woman, and for that reason he would help me. As he prepared to leave the first time, first zipping up his trousers, he reached in his pocket and flung a handful of coins toward me. They struck me as I lay naked upon my cot, and fell to the floor and rolled about. The he was gone.

I wished my husband and my family were back, tore my hair and wept, and said I would rather be dead. Then I arose. I saw some small thing moving in the street through the window. Still naked, hugging myself, I squinted to see better. There was a girl there, no more than three. She was squatting in the street. I leaned closer to the window. She was picking bits of grain from the manure of cows and camels that had traversed the street, rubbing them with her fingers, then eating them. I knew immediately that the child was a sign sent by God to remind me that Mr. Sayyuf's presence had been of His will, and that without him, I would have no bread. There is indeed no God but Allah, and Allah forsakes not his own.

So Mr. Sayyuf is the father of my second son, Malik. Mr. Sayyuf, from the time of Malik's birth, has had little to do with him. I think that is because Malik is the issue of a whore. But he ceased to fling the handful of coins toward me when he leaves. Now he leaves them on the table beside my cot.

Malik, now five, is slender as a reed. He was a well-turned-out boy with dark hair. He had hazel eyes. If mischief dwelt in those eyes, it was only in small amounts.

The three-legged dog hopped about in a hunching, vulgar way. The neighborhood children found this and the leering smile amusing, so they threw tidbits on the ground before her to see her hop.

That is how Malik, now six years old, was occupied on the day of his maiming. He had pilfered a scrap of bread, and after rolling it between his palms to make it easier to pitch, he threw it before the three-legged dog. It was at that moment, without warning, that an aerial bomb exploded a block away. The aircraft that dropped it flew so high it was neither seen nor heard.

I ran through the smoke and dust to where he had played. I saw nothing but a clump of fabric and gore. I went closer. It was Malik. His blood soaked the clay of the street around him. His arms and legs were severed, and there was only blood where his eyes had once been.

I gasped as I worked, but I did not weep, nor did I cry out. I ripped bands of fabric from the hem of my garment and wrapped them around the stumps of his limbs. I draped a strip over the bridge of his nose. I looked at my hands. I wished that they were red with my own blood instead of his. I wiped them on my burka. I sat on the dirt beside him and hugged myself, for I didn't know what else to do. I shook as if it were very cold

Malik's uncle came. He urged me into the back of the pickup truck, then passed Malik to me. I could not look at Malik, so I looked at my burka. Already threadbare, now it was ripped at the hem and streaked with blood. Torn fragments waved in the breeze as the truck gained speed. I did not want to look at the burka, either. So I looked into the distance as the truck rattled and bounced along toward the hospital called Wazir Akbar Khan.

Malik's uncle arrived, the brakes squealing as he stopped in front of my house. He sounded the horn of his truck. He only nodded as I gathered up the hem of my burka and climbed up into the truck. He released the brake and the engine roared and clattered as the truck lurched and bounced forward to begin again the journey to the Hospital Wazir Akbar Khan. Once there, I followed Malik's uncle through the gloom of the corridor that led to the room where there

were rows of cots with the sick and injured on them. Malik lay on a low white cot at the end of a row. He had bandages where his eyes once were and over the stumps of his limbs.

"Malik?"

He awakened and began to shriek, "Allah, the beneficent, the merciful, forgive my wickedness." He called out in a voice made shrill by his pain and terror. "The dog! The dog, it is biting me very badly. Someone please take it awa-a-a-ay. What evil did I do that the dog would bite me so?" He became more confused, and moaned and babbled in a language known to him alone. He wept as he spoke. His tears leaking from under the bandage over his eyes.

The other patients cried out, "Hush that small jackal's howling that we may rest." "Quiet, banshee." "In the name of Allah, silence!"

Malik's uncle glowered at them, and stroked the boy's fine black hair. Malik began to toss from one side of his narrow cot to the other. "MAMA, MAMA, where are you, Mama?" I gathered him to me. He was too light to be my son. I glanced down, saw the shine of his hair, leaned against him and remembered the scent of him. I rocked him, and whispered in his ear the stories of how the elephant got his trunk, and of the crow that stole the kings' gold coin, and sang low to him of flowers that bloom in the desert after the flood. He fell asleep.

"We must go," his uncle said.

I first wiped the spittle from the corner of Malik's mouth, then rose and followed him closely down the dark corridor of Hospital.

I heard Mr. Sayyuf's truck coming before I saw it, for the muffler no longer functioned. I peeped through the window and saw him. When he came through the door, I was naked, recumbent on my cot, fingers interlaced behind my head, legs splayed, for that was his preference.

He said nothing, nor did I. He unzipped his trousers, and drew forth his penis. He was slight of stature, and that which he drew forth was proportional to the rest of him, but I gasped, shrank back as if I were about to be assailed by a bull. He looked at me fiercely, wrinkled his brow, took a deep breath and squared his shoulders

before he fell upon me and thrust his organ into me. He grunted, his movements like the hopping of the three-legged dog. I responded with moans, first as if of pain, then as if of lust, as I undulated beneath him. He was quickly done, withdrew and regained his feet.

I sat upon the edge of my cot and said, "A bomb fell upon Malik. He is in the hospital called Wazir Akbar Khan."

Mr. Sayyuf said nothing. He picked up my blue burka from the floor and wiped his spent and withered organ before dropping it back to the floor and rezipping. Finally he said, "I know." He reached into his pocket and laid the handful of coins on the table of unplaned alder wood beside my cot. He turned and strode toward the door. Then he stopped, turned and withdrew a roll of bills from his pocket and counted off half a dozen. He hesitated, then counted off four more. He stepped over and placed them on the table over the coins. Then he turned and was gone. I gathered up the money, held it tight, and peered through the window as his truck roared down the street.

As Mr. Sayyuf, his truck going ever faster, sped toward the end of the street, the three-legged dog hopped directly into his path. The truck did not slow even one bit. I held my breath, waiting to see the remnants of the dog emerge from beneath the truck's path. Then, at the very last instance, the dog somehow emerged from the near side, the front wheel barely missing her.

That dog, I know, is favored of Allah, just as I know my name is Nisram.

JOANNE R. ELDER

Pam

"DO I HAVE TO GO?" I whined to Nana.

I knew Nana was rolling her eyes even though her back was turned. "Ask me that one more time and see what you get, Pam. I suggest you hurry on and get dressed. Your mama's bus gets to the station at ten."

I pulled on my shorts and a t-shirt. Nana finished helping my little sister Sunny get dressed. Even though I *knew* I was risking bodily harm, I kept grumbling. "Don't even see why I gotta go. She show up and think we all supposed to be excited. I don't even care about her." I was still mumbling under my breath, but apparently Nana heard me because she moved across the room faster than I had ever seen her arthritic joints take her. She pulled back and slapped me clear across my face. My eyes watered. But I was defiant, determined not to let the tears fall.

"Nana, she don't care about us! She dropped us off like we were luggage. We been living with you for four years! She don't call or write. It's like we don't even have a mother. I bet she don't even know what we look like!" Even as I said the words, I saw my life flashing before my eyes. I knew Nana was gonna kill me. I went too far. But ever since she announced my mother's visit, I felt reckless.

"Oh, you done lost your damn mind, talking like that. Let me hear you talk about your mama in that disrespectful tone one more time. You're too damn grown, Pam. Stop thinking you know every damn thang." Nana wasn't yelling, but the tone of her voice and the repeated use of "damn," her only curse word, let me know she wasn't to be played with.

"Sunny, go on downstairs," Nana shooed my baby sister from the room.

Nana sat down on the bed. She exhaled heavily and looked at me. At that point, I noticed for the first time that Nana was old.

Old and tired. It emanated from her every pore. "Pam, you will respect your mother. When she gets here, don't you ask her nothin' about her bein' gone. Do you hear me? Nothin.'"

"But, Nana…"

"No buts Pam! I meant what I said. I know that she hasn't done right by you all, but she is doing the best she can right now and with Jesus' help she'll do better. That's my only child and I love her dearly. Lord, help her do better. She got to do better." Nana seemed like she was talking more to herself now. Then she abruptly said, "You got five more minutes to get yourself together, or you'll go looking how you do right now," and swished out of the room.

I looked around the bedroom that I shared with Nana and Sunny. The king size bed we all slept in dominated most of the room. It was covered in a royal purple chenille bedspread. A large cherry wood bureau held many dusty bottles of perfume. Some were so old that there was no scent left. The light colored walls were covered with various pictures of a silky haired Jesus tending to his flock. Crosses and other religious items adorned the room.

My gym shoes and socks were under the bed. I hurried and put them on all the while thinking what my mother's visit meant. Nothing. Funny how we have the same name. Well, almost. Her name is Pamela. Mine is just Pam. She was probably too drunk or high to even fill out my birth certificate correctly. That's the only excuse I can think of for giving someone a nickname for their name. She dropped us off for the summer at my Nana's house in Covington, Kentucky over four years ago. By the time summer ended and we were due to return to Boston, Pam had moved again, and Nana couldn't find her. Nana had to go to the county for emergency aid. Nana's priest, Father Ted, helped her enroll all of us in the parish school. He referred to Pam as the cross Nana had to bear.

According to Nana, Pam had never been responsible. Nana was careful never to criticize Pam in front of us, but I was adept at finding hiding spaces and listening to grown folks conversations. Pam always flitted from place to place. By the time she was 28 she had four kids. Nana wasn't one for abortion, but when Pam announced her fourth pregnancy, she gave her the Planned Parenthood information. But the kids came regardless. Me 12, Lenny 11, Junior 9, and Sunny 6. Lenny and me were barely ten months apart. Nana thought that Pam's insistence on keeping Sunny was that there were probably

plenty of abortions between Sunny and Junior. Maybe that's why Sunny is Nana's favorite.

I heard Lenny and Junior clump down the stairs, leaving the room they shared. I figured I better hurry up. Nana *would* make me go out looking like whodunit and did they have a good reason. I neatened my ponytail and rubbed Vaseline on my face, knees and elbows. I had the darkest skin out of all my family so it wasn't good to be black *and* ashy.

Nana called up the steps, "Pam, Mr. Otis is here! Get your tail movin'!"

I clattered down the stairs and out the front door. Sure enough, Mr. Otis' champagne-colored Cadillac was parked out front. I loved Mr. Otis' car. The backseat was huge, like a living room. He grinned from the driver's seat, gold tooth glistening in the weak sunlight. "How you, Pammy-poo?" he asked.

"Fine Mr. Otis." I climbed into the backseat and leaned forward to kiss him on his grizzled cheek. I liked Mr. Otis, so I let him call me Pammy-poo. I think he was Nana's boyfriend.

Lenny, Junior, and Sunny came out of the house right before Nana. As she was locking the door, they settled into the car. Sunny sat up front between Mr. Otis and Nana. That left Lenny and Junior to fight over the one window seat left. Junior punched Lenny in the stomach and that settled that. Nana got into the car and we were ready to go.

Nana and Mr. Otis talked all the way downtown to the Greyhound station. Usually, I paid attention when grown folk talked but I was too nervous about seeing Pam. How was I supposed to act? What should I say to her? We're her children, and of course children are supposed to be happy to see their mom, right? No matter how sporadic her visits, phone calls, or letters were? Even though our birthdays passed and we didn't hear from her?

Before I knew it, we were at the bus station. Mr. Otis let us out and then found a parking spot. Nana went to inquire about the bus schedule at the information booth. According to them, Pam's bus was on time and would be arriving at gate seven. I don't know why they called it a gate, when it was more like a door. We gathered around the chairs around gate seven. We begged Nana and Mr. Otis for quarters for the video games, and the chairs with small TV's attached to them.

It seemed as if we were only there for about five minutes before the announcement came over the loudspeaker. "Bus 66 from Boston now arriving at gate seven."

I couldn't help the butterflies in my stomach. It suddenly felt like I had to do number two real bad. When I tried to say something to Nana she just shushed me. She was already heading to the gate, presumably to be the first person Pam saw when she got off the bus. I looked over at Junior, Lenny, and Sunny, but none of them shared my anxiety. They seemed excited, like Pam's arrival was a good thing. They went to stand next to Nana.

People exited the bus looking as tired and as worn out as only an 18-hour ride on a cramped and smelly bus can make you. Pam was one of the last people off the bus. When she saw us standing there, she gave a half grin and waved in salute. She grabbed her duffel bag from under the bus and then walked over to our little welcoming committee.

She looked, as Nana would say, like an inhabitant of Sodom and Gomorrah. She had on a short denim skirt with flip-flops on her feet. Her sandy brown hair was hanging straight, with a part down the middle. Black eyeliner rimmed her hazel eyes, over-accentuating them for ten in the morning on a Saturday. It appeared as if she had freshly applied the red lip-gloss she wore on her full lips. Those lips and her ghetto booty were probably the only things that kept her from being mistaken as a white woman.

"Hey, Mama," she said as she hugged Nana. "Hey, Mr. Otis. Thanks for coming to get me on such short notice."

Nana looked as if she were trying to hold back tears and started fussing to cover it up. "Pamela Mae, you need to eat more, baby. Soon as we get back to the house, I'm gonna fix you a great big ol' plate of food. Come on now, and say 'hi' to your kids."

While the others clamored around her, I held back. Even though I hated her, I had to admit she was pretty. Her skin had a slight tan to it, and her hair hung longer and straighter than mine ever would. She kissed them all and made the types of remarks a distant family member would. "You got so big" and "How are you doing in school?" A real mother wouldn't say those things because she would be around you daily noticing your growth and helping you with schoolwork to ensure that you did well.

Pam let go of the others and faced me. She held out her

arms for a hug. I stood still. I imagined my feet were glued to the sticky, dirty floor of the bus terminal. I wasn't hugging her. "Hey Pam," I said in greeting.

Sunny gasped as if I cursed. Lenny and Junior snickered behind their hands because they knew what was coming. And so did I for that matter. But I couldn't help it. The devil made me do it. Nana took three short steps and slapped the taste out my mouth. She had me literally seeing stars. "Girl, you ain't gonna be satisfied 'til you get a taste of my paddle, huh?" she hissed. The threat of the paddle had me shaking more than the slap. Nana's paddle was a wooden creation, about a half-inch thick. In great big red letters it read PUT ME TO WORK and listed about a dozen reasons to put the paddle to work. I'd never transgressed enough to actually get the paddle, but Lenny and Junior had, and their screams echoed in my head.

"Sorry ma'am," I said. Tears were running fast down my face. I walked over and hugged Pam. "Hi, mama."

"Mama, that's alright. You didn't have to do that. I understand," Pam said as she reached down and kissed me on my forehead. She wiped the lipstick from my head and handed Junior her bag. Pam held my hand as we walked out of the train station. The trip back to the house sped by. Pam sat next to me in the car and talked softly, asking me questions as if we were the only two people in the car, or even the world. I replied to her questions with short answers. I wasn't gonna let her fool me. Pam was acting more like a teenager than a mom. She asked me about boys, my favorite singers, and my favorite hairstyles.

"I like *your* hair," I said as I reached up and fingered her light brown locks.

"We can fix yours real pretty, too. Do you have a perm?" Pam touched my crinkly ponytail. That was answer enough. "Never mind we can get it looking real good. I bet straightened out, your hair will reach your back!" She seemed enthusiastic about it.

Straight hair? That was enough to excite me. Maybe Pam's visit would be good for something after all.

Our household routine was pretty fixed and Pam settled into the routine well. She slept on a twin-sized bed up in the attic. Nana was usually up by 4:30, drinking coffee, watching Jimmy Swaggart, and playing Solitaire. If any of us woke up early, we could be assured to

hear her muttering, "Old Solitaire got me!" as she reshuffled the deck of cards. Twice a week she'd leave the house at seven to catch the bus to clean Mrs. Nau's house. Then she would head to church and clean the rectory. She was home by one, in time to watch "All My Children." She loved Erica Kane.

Pam would wake us all by nine. We dressed and cleaned our rooms. After breakfast we all parted to do our separate things. The summer offered us unlimited freedom. Sunny stuck to Nana like white on rice. She even drank coffee and ate those nasty German bologna sandwiches. Lenny and Junior ran off with the neighborhood boys. They didn't have watches, but they always showed up when it was time for lunch and dinner.

I usually traveled back and forth to the library. Before Pam came, I would walk alone. The librarian knew me, so she always let me take out more books than was allowed. Sometimes I would take my selections and read in the library. But more often, I would come home and go to my special spot. It was behind the couch in the living room. Nana had one of those living rooms that was just for special company. The only person I ever saw sit on the plastic covered couch was the insurance lady. There was about a foot of space between the couch and the wall, so that is where I would settle. I could read three or four books a day. I liked the *Sweet Valley Twins* books. I wanted to change my name to either Jessica or Elizabeth. Anything but Pam. Little, skinny, black, ashy Pam, whose mother didn't even want her. At least that's what the kids at school said.

About two weeks after she arrvived, Pam tried to accompany me to the library.

"Why you following me?" I whipped around and asked as she walked down Kinsey Avenue behind me. "I can go by myself. I *always* go by myself."

Pam smiled at my frowning face. "I think I want to get some books, too. You don't own the library, you know."

"You ain't got a library card. I bet you can't even read!" Nana wasn't around so there would be no retribution for sassing Pam.

Her eyes narrowed. "Watch your mouth, girl." Then she smiled, a bit strained, "I'm sure you'll let me use your card to get a book or two."

I sucked my teeth, long and hard. I rolled my eyes, too. Just to make sure she knew she was getting on my nerves. "Well, just

don't come in my section," and I sped up to beat her to the library and lose myself in the stacks of books.

She would read magazines while I selected my books. In the beginning, it really annoyed me. Why wasn't she following Lenny and Junior? But soon, I started to wait for her before I left for the library. Then I began letting her choose books for me. She chose things she read and loved when she was a girl. Pam introduced me to Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, and Langston Hughes. She said I should fill my head with something other than *Sweet Valley* fluff. She made me memorize "The Negro Speaks of Rivers." When she recited the poem, her light, lilting voice grew deep as a man's when she came to, "My soul has grown deep like the rivers."

One day as we were walking home she said, "You know your birthday is coming up? Think we should have a party?"

I looked at her in disbelief. "Just for me?"

"Yep," Pam sighed dramatically. "It's not everyday a girl turns thirteen. I'm officially old." She held her hand over her heart as if she was going to swoon.

Warmth flooded me. I could feel my last resistance to Pam crumbling. My very own party! I threw my arms around Pam and hugged her. "Thanks, Mama," I said, and I really meant it.

"So are you going to invite any boys?" Pam asked slyly and winked at me.

I giggled. "Well, William from my class lives up the street. But I don't like him all that much. He's too black!"

"Miss thang, haven't you ever heard 'the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice'?"

I laughed harder. "Uhn uhn. But whoever said that didn't know William. He's way black. Patent leather black! He'd be sour!"

Pam cracked up laughing against me. "You're too much for me," she said. "Who else you gonna have come?"

I thought a minute. "Quincy, Nicole, Mari, Renee, and Lisa from my class at school."

Pam jumped on that. "Quincy? Is that a boy?"

I shook my head. "No, it's a girl in my class. Her name is Quinsetta, but she'll punch you if you call her that."

"Ohhh, I see," Pam said. "I don't blame her. Are you going to invite your cousin Mia?"

I made a face. "Mia is so bratty, Mama. Every time I spend

the night at her house, she leaves me in the house while she plays with her friends."

"Well, now you can show her," Pam said. "Invite her to the party and then treat her how she treats you."

"Good idea." I ran circles around Pam, excited with her plan.

When we got home, I called my friends and my cousin to invite them to the party. I proudly announced, "My mom is giving me a thirteenth birthday party and I would be delighted if you all could attend."

The party was set for a week from Saturday. We were going to play Truth or Dare, listen to music, and dance. Pam was gonna buy a cake with Michael Jackson's face on it. We planned to decorate with blue balloons and crepe paper. Pam also bought some silver stars because she said I was going to be a star one day. She said I needed to have a special outfit for the party, so she bought new Jordache jeans and a blouse from the mall.

The night before the party, I caught Pam leaving the house. I ran up to her before she could slip out.

"Mama, where you going?"

"Out for a second. I'll be back," she replied. Pam was jittering anxiously, as if she couldn't wait to get away. I heard a horn honk. "That's for me," she said. "Gotta go, baby."

"Can I come, please?" I begged.

"Not this time, Pam. I'll be back before you know it." If I wasn't so excited about my upcoming party, I might have seen the sadness in her eyes.

"Well, I'll wait up for you. Then you can perm my hair," I said, determined to have the last word.

Pam sighed, "Go on to bed, and we'll fix your hair first thing in the morning."

I didn't hear Nana walk up behind me. "C'mon child," she said as she steered me away from the door.

Nana walked Pam to the porch. "Pamela, you will be back tonight?" Nana asked. I thought I heard them argue, but I couldn't be sure.

Nana came back in the house and locked the door. She looked over at me. "Come on and have some hot chocolate."

I sat at the kitchen table as Nana prepared my drink.

"This should fix you right up for bed. You know you need your beauty rest for the party tomorrow." Nana said as she placed the mug in front of me.

"Marshmallows, please," I said in reply. Nana just watched me drink, and didn't say a word. I slurped my hot chocolate down to the last sugary dregs. After I finished, I kissed Nana on her cheek and headed up to bed. As usual, Sunny was spread eagled over the bed, so I had to kick her over in order to make room for myself. I stared at the picture of *The Last Supper* and didn't remember drifting off to sleep.

My birthday dawned muggy, and it looked as if it would rain. I looked out the bedroom window, and a fog appeared to hover over the rooftops. Thirteen. It didn't feel any different. Maybe I'd feel older after my party. It was only eight o'clock. Sunny and Nana were already downstairs. I left the room and opened the door to the attic. I wanted to wake Pam up so she could do my hair.

"Mama?" I called out halfway up the stairs. I got to the top of the stairs and looked around. The room looked clean, as if no one had slept there last night. I walked over to the bed and saw that Pam's stuff was gone. Her makeup wasn't on the dresser and her duffel bag was gone from the chair. I turned and ran down the attic steps. I jumped down the last steps before the second floor. BOOM! Then, I ran down the steps that led to the first floor. I was going so fast that I tripped over the last steps and slammed face first into the wall. I tasted the blood on my bottom lip but I kept going. I ran to the dining room, where Sunny and Nana were drinking coffee. Nana's Bible was open and her rosary beads were twisted around her hand.

"Ismamadownhere?" The words rushed together. I was out of breath, and I could still feel the blood trickling down my lip. I wiped it away impatiently.

Nana looked up from her Bible, but she didn't answer me.

My heart beat hard in my chest. I was clenching my fists so tightly my nails were digging into my palms. "Nana," I said louder, "where is my mama?"

The longer she took to answer the question, the more anxious I got. I answered it on my own. "She's gone, isn't she?" I squeezed my eyes closed, willing back the tears and wishing that when I opened them again Pam would be sitting at the dining room table as well.

Nana walked over to me and enveloped me in a tight hug. I smelled the *Jean Nate* body splash she used after she bathed. "I'm sorry Pam. Yes, your mother is gone. She left on a bus back to Boston early this morning." Nana's voice caught as if she were fighting back tears. "She told me to tell you she loved you and she's sorry she's missing your birthday party. She did leave a gift for you. Look in that bag right there."

The bag was from a bookstore. I looked inside and saw the latest *Sweet Valley Twins* books; they weren't even in the library yet. I dropped the bag back to the floor and walked out of the dining room. In my head, all I could hear was a voice, deep as a man's, reciting "My soul has grown deep like the rivers."

EVAN SICURANZA

A Man of Pleasure

JACOB MET VIOLET at a party at Aidin's apartment.
Aidin was well known for his spontaneous and casually debauched celebrations, but there was added incentive to attend on this occasion: the mysterious and apparently lovely lady who, stepping seemingly out of nowhere (if not the pages of some steamy Victorian potboiler), had taken Aidin's heart and was now moving in on his sheets and towels. During the brief and well-guarded courtship, this woman had remained enticingly unwitnessed by even Aidin's closest friends, who knew nothing more of her than her improbable name, Violet—a name that, to some, imparted the winking scent of a shy and energetic seduction.

Jacob was Aidin's best friend; still, the invitation had come as a surprise to him. Aidin and Violet had been dating for only two weeks before he'd asked her to move in with him and she had, apparently unhesitating, accepted. This was all Jacob knew about it.

"Don't you think it's a little quick?" said Jacob on his Nokia to Aidin.

Aidin had always been impulsive, willing to throw himself headlong into love with the abandon of a moth attacking a light bulb. Aidin was scraggly-bearded and wild-eyed like a young Rasputin. Jacob, who had always preferred the careful stealth of the hunter in matters of sexual sportsmanship, worried for his friend.

Jacob and Aidin had become fast friends in prep school in Hanover, Connecticut. They had formed one of those quietly loyal male friendships grounded less on intimacy than on a mutual respect for each other's borders. They had come to Boston together for college: Aidin hitching his way through undergrad scholarship by scholarship, Jacob chauffered in on his parent's bank account. Jacob remembered how Aidin had complained about dormitory food—"made at the same factory that serves our illustrious state prisons"—over

take-out Thai in Jacob's dapper one bedroom off Tremont. It had only been a year since Aidin had entered grad school, with a big enough stipend for him to finally rent a grubby studio in Allston. At last he was settled, a man among his things, and now he was throwing away his independence for a woman he'd met in some seminar on Milton's rhetoric not even a month ago.

"Are you sure you have enough room? Things could get messy, in more ways than one," said Jacob, with one hand adroitly extracting a plate of bubbly, sunset-colored Tikki Masala from the microwave. He'd been on a curry kick recently; six new South Asian restaurants had opened in his neighborhood in as many weeks. And they said gentrification wasn't multicultural.

Jacob, whose only experience with communal living consisted of an uncomfortable summer spent in a cabin at a camp for boys in the White Mountains where he'd bunked with the greasy-skinned son of a famous television talk show host, did not understand Aidin's actions. Opening one's gates like that was risky; one breach could easily lead to another and then where were you? Jacob cherished his own solitude with the same grateful possessiveness he felt for his Palm Pilot and his Plasma TV, thin and blank as a supermodel next to the Rothko print hanging over the winebar in his immaculate and monochrome living room: a luxury that made living graceful and efficient, if just a bit glossy. He was however intrigued by the idea of this young woman who seemed to share Aidin's emotional carelessness. What would a woman like that look like?

"No, no," laughed Aidin. "Wait until you meet her. You'll see."

"Sounds like a match made in folly," said Jacob. "I'll be there at nine."

Jacob called Bonita, the redhead dancer from Johnny's Bar whom he'd planned to take out that night, and rescheduled for Tuesday. Then he called Dawnette, the mousy brunette folksinger from the Mocha Cafe talent night whom he'd politely agreed to meet Tuesday, and relievedly canceled.

He laid out a blue Gucci suit, a white shirt, and a pale red tie, and dressed fastidiously, with ritualistic purpose, arranging himself neatly in front of the large mirror above the dresser like an executive preparing for a high-powered luncheon. The rich blue of the jacket lent an artificial flame to his gray eyes. Although he was not an ex-

ecutive and hardly ever dressed for luncheons unless his mother was in town at the Plaza, he liked the way suits made him feel like a knife slicing through the air.

Jacob was flimsily attractive, like a pop song. His coloring was light and his features set gently on his face, as if they had been distractedly sketched in a minor moment by an Old Master on break from more demanding work. He was capable of inspiring 24-hour infatuations, enough to bring women to his bed—which he did, often enough to call it a hobby but not so much that anyone might accuse him of addiction. Certainly not so much as that.

He grinned like a tiger to the submissive face of the mirror.

The party was small but noisy. Jacob sat at the kitchen table drinking a beer, listening to Aidin.

"Swami Praduhba Ali Krishna," Aidin said, drawling over a cigarette, "was a very great man. I have been reading his *Aphorisms and Proverbs*." Aidin was drawn to the works of mystics, preferably Eastern ones.

"He was once a very rich man, a business man with a lovely wife and a large family, although almost certainly not a Catholic," smiling Aidin continued. "Secular Hindu, a doubting Thomas, actually. One day, his entire lovely family died in a car crash. And good old Praduhba closed up shop, gave all his money to charity, and started down the long road to Swamihood."

Jacob drifted from Aidin's syrupy voice to the young woman who sat beside him. So, this was Violet. A woman in her mid-twenties, very pale and pretty, beautiful actually, in that exaggerated way that is nearly pathetic in its stubborn symmetry, with masses of dark hair arched above her doll-white forehead like a Chinese fan. She had a late 80s kind of charm, stylishly disheveled, smudges of ironic mascara on shockingly purple eyes that matched her histrionic name. A baggy t-shirt on her bony frame made her look like she was wearing a kite.

"Sounds like a hippie," said Jacob. He thought of hippie girls and their hippie hips, and cast a drinking glance at Violet. She was leaning forward to light a cigarette balanced across the neck of a beer bottle on the table. He watched her lips pull on the filter. A little volcano of desire trembled in his gut. He shifted slightly and discreetly released a mute fart.

"He is particularly eloquent on the subject of sleep." Aidin

rubbed his finger around the rim of his margarita glass, picking up residual salt crystals and licking them off. "He ponders the nature of self. Heavy stuff, you know? He says when we sleep, our individual selves fall apart and become part of the unconscious universe. Then when we wake up, we have to put ourselves back together, like a puzzle. But the tricky part is this," Aidin raised a drunken finger, "we can never put ourselves back together again in quite the same way. Humpty-dumpty, you know, all the king's horses, and etc. Every time we fall apart, we come back together a little bit different, a little different mixture of celestial stuff from the universe, maybe other peoples' thoughts are now in our heads, maybe we have memories of things that happened long before we were born, stuff like that."

"Yes," said Jacob, "definitely a hippie."

"No," Violet laughed, joining in. "He doesn't sound like a hippie. He sounds like my old psychiatrist."

"So wait, my question is this," Aidin posed. "How long does it take, how quickly do we change, how many days, do you think, before we become completely someone else? Well?"

"Yes," said Violet, looking at Jacob with a playful smile, "Well?"

For a brief moment her eyes were strange and lovely enough to justify homicide—exquisite, impossibly purple eyes in which a secret beauty coyly concealed itself like a dancer undressing behind a screen.

Jacob laughed uncomfortably. "I don't think," he said, "we ever do."

Time passed and autumn bumped stormily into winter. Jacob visited Aidin from time to time and found that he was disappointed when Violet was not also there. He learned to time his visits so that he would be there when she came home from work. He told himself that was simply because he enjoyed the way Aidin brightened when she was around. He was a sportsman, not a savage. He would never make a move on his best friend's girl. Aidin and Violet held hands, sitting on the couch. Now and then, Violet cast him a certain look that made his stomach pang.

"You're certainly the couple," he said, and made a crooked smile.

Mornings, Jacob woke with a jittery feeling, a psychosomatic

hangover that neither cigarettes nor sex could rub away. Increasingly often, he woke alone: he'd begun to find that the presence of another body next to him when he woke unnerved him. Several times in the past few weeks, he had been startled by the sight of so much skin and breathing that was not his own. He found it harder to make conversation in the morning, found himself wanting the intrusion to end as quickly as possible.

Not that he had ever been one for prolonged engagements. The women Jacob knew fit neatly between dinner and breakfast, with no mess around the edges. In fact, there was something about them that seemed intolerably seamless.

In his mind, he ran his hands over their bodies, but they were like stone idols or cut diamonds, smooth and gorgeous and utterly inaccessible: Claudia with her artist's fingers and her eternal cigarettes who smoked while she fucked, pausing only, briefly, to cough up a phlegmy orgasm; hardcore Marguerite of the captivating laugh whose role-playing fantasies were overwrought but whose humor was relaxed and adorably filthy. Caroline with her PhD in Political Science and her outrageous underpants. Darla, Samantha, Indine, Kath, Ruth, Allie and Stephanie the daring duo. Beautiful women and not so beautiful, smart and not so smart, each one utterly overwhelming. Breasts smooth as river rocks, ruby-tipped, asses firm as frozen waves.

He sighed. Women were so far beyond him. They hung like jewels in a chandelier in his mind. His belly ached for them. For as long he could remember, women had exuded for him the scent of an incredible life, an odor as strong and sweet to the mind as juniper in spring. And for just as long, he had felt that he would never reach the source of this scent, which seemed to him must be like a pyramid of incense lighting up the altar of a secret temple high on some magic mountain. In years of nights of fervent sex, he'd searched blindly with his hands on their bodies for a map to lead him out of the jungle of his longing. It seemed to him that perhaps he'd been given his good looks merely so that he might have the opportunity to prove, again and again, his inability to ignite a single spark of real pleasure in himself.

He stood outside himself, like an aged explorer poring over his specimen jars, and sighed again. This had become a pastime of his, this clerical review of names and body parts and hairstyles, of sighs and half-remembered whispers, this tallying of beds and orgasms—one that yielded more satisfaction, often, than the actual encounters.

It occurred to him that Aidin's girl was different. Something there seemed ready to open. Good for Aidin.

He lit a cigarette and watched the milky light run down the walls.

He took to wallowing in long baths. The jittery feeling of being awake was quelled by the way the water hugged his body, the way he could poke his fingers through its warm skin. If it could be that easy—to poke his fingers through the skin of the life outside him and open a hole. He could climb through and be warm there. To tear that veil off with his hands and lay the world down, naked as a Salome, before him on an endless bed.

He gazed out through the small bathroom window, idly playing with himself. Outside, the tops of buildings nestled against the hazy sky, the city swathed in gauze, chrysalis-like. A gray, wet veil hung between him and the world. Muted sounds of life floated up intermittently through the muffle of the rain, horns and voices and the slick sound of car wheels slicing though puddles. It seemed to call to him, too distant still to determine whether it was in invitation or warning.

He'd recently seen a Discovery Channel special on exotic plants, and he thought of the Venus flytrap that snapped up insects and absorbed them in its acid, aphroditic veins. He wished something would do that to him, that some giant deadly flower would catch him in its petals and dissolve his body, some carnivorous heart that would break him down until he was no longer anything recognizable as himself. He would be only a gush of blood, mixing with the rest in the cavern of some giant's heart, pulsing senselessly, deliriously in a mighty green vein. He could drown there. That would be pleasure.

But the world was not water; it was stone, a hard gem. No matter how he plied its surface with his senses, no matter how hard he prodded and scratched at its surface, it would not yield. The things he came away with—sex, food, drunkenness, money, talk—were merely scrapings, dead mementos of sensations that had failed to draw blood.

He rose from the now cool bath, soap itching on his skin, and opened the drain. To puncture the chrysalis of the world outside, to pull that fresh young life out, and devour it, licking his fingers. It would be a part of him then.

The basin emptied with a plaintive suck.

One morning, Jacob woke early to the sound of pigeons

skittering outside his window. The sky was a sheet of damp Kleenex, blotched with clouds. He heard the sound of rain knocking on the glass: a cold, flat sound.

It was Friday and, he realized with a groan, Aidin's birthday.

They were to have dinner tonight, and she would be there. There would be beer and jokes for everyone, and kisses not for him. He tried to relax back into the edgeless shape of sleep. He felt himself dissolve partially and catch, floating in awkward solution between sleep and waking. It was no good; his skin found its shape and prickled against the cool, rumpled sheets. He admitted defeat and got up.

Jacob lived off a substantial trust fund and his parent's dwindling hope that he would become serious about putting to use the expensive architectural engineering classes he'd taken in college instead of doodling his days away making cartoons, not understanding—and Jacob had tired of explaining this to his father—that the kind of graphic novels he composed were a serious and respected cross-genre artform.

In short, Jacob had nothing to do but cultivate his boredom.

So he decided, as he not infrequently did, to walk down to Copley Square and watch the office girls on their lunch break. He followed his usual route; taking a left onto Dartmouth Street from Tremont, he passed the store with the tall bright flowers, cut fresh and standing in shallow buckets of water, and held the scent in his nostrils, breathing it in. This early in the morning, things seemed to him scored by an enchanting, if incidental, music.

Jacob sat on the steps of the fountain beside Trinity Church, girl watching. This was one of his favorite spots. The peculiar cluster of nearby buildings—the two churches, the mall, the library, the hotels, the offices of the Hancock tower, along with all the smaller shops and restaurants—reliably let out a varietal bouquet of women: chic, pampered middle-aged women in fur coats with streaks of silver in their manes moving quickly on stiletto shoes to get out of the rain; business woman in sensible trench coats showing just a flash of impeccable stocking below the hem; college girls on cell phones slouching on the grass in tight jeans and tighter sweaters, impervious to the rain, hair wet and pushed back over hoop-earringed delicate ears; Punk chicks sitting on the backs of benches, dirty-looking and dangerous and beautiful. He wondered if there were nuns in the Trinity Church, would they all be old or might some of them be young, fresh-cheeked

and maybe just a little doubtful, a little curious?

He watched them all with the avid attention of a connoisseur. He accosted their surfaces with a razor-sharp jeweler's eye but couldn't find the hoped for flaw by which to gain access. His eyes roamed over them and off.

The sky was a stain of diluted ink. Low clouds squatted over the library. He lifted the collar of his suit coat and hunched inside it, turtle-like in his blue shell. He saw the vendors from the Farmer's Market under their white awnings and thought of buying something, a piece of fruit, a pear, though he was not hungry, for the excuse to fondle the cool, colorful produce.

An hour passed. The park emptied of people. The vendors packed up their goods and went home, leaving the tents behind like giant abandoned snail shells. Everything was quiet and still. The metallic smell of damp leaves and dirt hung like an oath in the cold air.

There was a street performer on the grass across from him, a woman dressed in a bridal gown with her face painted white. In her hand, she held a bunch of roses. She stood on a milk-crate with a little basket at her feet, and when someone dropped change into the basket, she would offer a flower. Otherwise, she stood perfectly still, a department store mannequin advertising a wedding closeout.

It struck him that she was out of season; it was December and the tourists were all at home, nestled away from the increasing cold. The weather did not seem to affect her either; she was as immune as a shadow. She stood still, not moving for long periods until someone passed and dropped coins into her basket. It didn't seem to matter to her that few people stopped.

He was about to leave when a young woman passed by. She wore a red dress under an open white coat and was almost running; her long legs were quick-moving ivory stalks. Her face was tense, teeth bared, and her cheeks blotted with a deep flush. Impossibly beautiful, she passed and transfixed he stood, staring. She might be crying, he thought. It was hard to tell in the rain.

Over her arm, the woman carried a large shoulder bag from which jutted a spray of red flowers. As she passed, the bag slipped and the flowers spilled to the sidewalk. The young woman, tense and fast, kept on; adjusting her bag with a violent jerk, she crossed the park towards the library.

He stooped to pick up the flowers and called after her,

"Excuse me."

She turned. Her hot purple eyes hammered into him. Around those tropical eyes, the woman's face sharpened into an image familiar to him, one he knew well from sleepless nights, one that welcomed him on each jittery morning.

"Violet," he said. "What are you doing here?" He'd forgotten she worked nearby.

"Oh, Jacob. Nothing. I was just, oh Hell," she was definitely crying.

They sat on a bench and Violet told him that a week earlier Aidin had asked her to marry her. She had said that she needed time to think it over. But Aidin pressed, asking her every day before they went to bed, pestering her when she repeated her answer. Today, he'd come to her work to take her to lunch and over a curry chicken salad roll-up had told her he needed to marry her.

"What kind of person says a thing like that?" She asked Jacob, who shook his head in sympathy. Her button down shirt was open to where he could just see the frilly trim of her bra and a pinch of pink flesh. "Needs to marry me. I mean, I love him. I guess I do. I don't know. We got in a fight. He bought me flowers," she thumped the bouquet against her leg. "I should throw them away."

"Aidin's confused," said Jacob. "He's like a little kid. When he wants something, he pouts until he gets it." It occurred to him fleetingly that perhaps he wasn't helping Aidin out by saying this.

"He just makes me so mad," she said, and squeezed out a sigh. "Don't say anything to him tonight at dinner. You are still coming, aren't you?"

"Of course. I wouldn't miss it. Especially now," he said. "That's a joke, by the way."

"Funny," she clipped, but she gave him an honest smile.

They sat there awhile, not talking. The woman in the white dress stood on her milk-crate like a broken wedding cake decoration, groomless. She didn't look upset; she didn't look anything at all. They watched her.

"Why do you think they do it?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" she said.

"Take this woman here. She's out here everyday. No one notices her. But she doesn't seem to mind. Why does she do it? It isn't for the money; it's not for an audience. She doesn't seem to

notice anything at all. Not the cold. Not us."

"Maybe she needs to," she said quietly, as if to herself.

"How so?" He caught her falling tone and intercepted it. "I don't get it."

"I'm not sure I do either. People need strange things sometimes." She looked at the woman a long time, not speaking. Then she said, "She's beautiful, don't you think?"

"Yes," he answered, but his eyes were on Violet. "Like a ghost."

As he watched Violet watching the woman, he felt something stirring in the substratum of his heart, a hungry, glinting spark of desire.

"Why don't we take a walk?" he said.

She looked at him. He looked back into her dark eyes and tried to will the spark inside him to leap across to her, to catch hold between them and flare. "I guess that would be all right."

They walked up Newbury St. to Mass Ave., talking. She told him about herself. There was a gold light in her eyes. She was from California, she said, originally. She'd come to Boston for college, and been a theater student for two years before dropping out. The feel of playing around in someone else's skin had gotten to her after awhile.

"I wanted to be more comfortable in my own first, you know?"

That was two years ago. Since then, she'd been working as a designer for the clubs on Lansdowne St.—"hanging lights, putting up streamers, teasing out the fantasy." To kill time during the days, she'd been auditing classes, which is how she'd met Aidin. Her decorating skills she'd inherited from her mother, who kept a large garden back in California and often did arrangements for weddings and parties. Her mother loved flowers and that was why she'd been named Violet.

As they walked, Jacob wrestled with this thought: just how much did Aidin really care for this girl? Aidin would have to learn sometime that some things weren't meant to be. But Aidin was his friend, and there was a certain code to be upheld. *Amicitia vincit cupiditas*, or something like that. Her face was gold in the light and ruddy and lovely like an apple waiting to drop into a ready hand.

"I should go," he said, and waited.

She looked at him, searching his face as if reading a table of possible events. "Come home with me," she said.

The thought of going with her deliberately to Aidin's house, where his good friend's tie-dyed shirts and precious books slept unawares in the absence of their master, caused a tremor of sick desire to rise in his chest.

"Fine," he said.

The apartment lay wrapped in late afternoon shade, a garland of cool, tidy rooms. The young woman's keys clinked against the marble top of a low table set beside the door, sounding a brief note soon absorbed in cottony shadow.

"Put your coat down anywhere," she said as she held the door open for Jacob to enter, adding quickly, "if you want to."

"Thanks," said Jacob. He started to take his suit coat off, but thought better of it and adjusted the lapels instead, pulling down on them in a quick motion and letting his arms fall back to his sides. His hands itched for something to do. He put them in his trouser pockets, but this seemed too much like a pose, so he drew them out and placed them at his sides again, pulling gently at his cuffs.

Violet, closing the door, did not see his nervous motions. Turning to him, she smiled. He smiled back; the corners of his mouth twitched slightly.

"Well," she said, nodding her head softly, "let's see."

Her voice faded quickly on the air. It was as if the accumulation of silence, gathered by the rooms in their day-long solitude, had become a sponge that soaked up any new sound, a buffer to protect the fragile meditations of inanimate things from the unpredictable and clumsy actions of living ones.

"Something to drink?" she prompted. "I've got wine and tea, and some juice, I think," she listed, heading into the kitchen. "Or water. I don't know what else."

"Anything is fine," he said, waiting for another cue from her.

She poked her head around the kitchen doorframe, "I'm going to have some wine, I think."

"Sounds good," he said.

A curtain of shadows settled around him comfortably.

He looked around: Violet's influence had worked a changing spell on the apartment; he recognized hardly any of the furnishings as Aidin's. A long couch waded on the shadow-tinted floor in the living room. A bookcase stretched against one wall, a deep cushioned chair

floating nearby. Clusters of small potted plants sat on the windowsills; in one corner, a miniature palm tree spread its fingers, loosely curled. The deepness of the shadows accentuated the feeling of space between the sparse but tasteful furniture.

A frame hung on the wall across him, in shadow, gleaming dully. At first, he took it to be a mirror, but as he approached it, he saw that rather than his own reflection he was staring at the face of an old, sad-featured man man with a soft chin and a long nose and dark, melancholy, tired eyes. There was just enough resemblance between that unexpected face and his own that he stepped back in momentary shock before his mind realized that the frame held not a mirror but an aged photograph, filmed with a silver patina.

As he moved back, something warm and soft brushed against his leg.

He looked down at a lithe gray cat that looked back up at him with wide yellow eyes and showed tiny white tooth-points in a coy yawn. He squatted down to stroke its flat head.

"I see you've met little Alice," Violet said, stepping back into the living room with a glass in each hand.

"Hello, Alice," said Jacob to the cat, putting his face close to the animal's face. The cat wafted a soft miao against his nose; its breath was mild and sweet, its open mouth pink as a snapdragon.

"Here you go. It's red," said Violet and sniffed her glass. "I think it's all right."

"I'm sure it's fine," he said, reaching up to the proffered glass. Their fingers touched as he took it; he cleared his throat.

They sat together on the long couch and talked. At first, he felt awkward, like a man treading water, but as they talked, he grew comfortable. With an ease that surprised him, he pushed the image of a scraggly-bearded face from his mind.

Alice jumped up onto Jacob's lap, purring like the motor of a wind-up toy car.

"She likes you," said Violet, smiling at him.

"It's a funny thing," he said. "When I saw you today, I didn't recognize you at first. It was a little shocking. And just now, when I came into this room, I thought that picture over there was a mirror. That was shocking too, in a different way. Who is he? The man in the picture?"

"Lewis Carroll," she said. "Near the end of his life. He's still

very handsome, I think."

Jacob rose and crossed over to the picture. "In a lonely sort of way."

"That's just it," said Violet. "Most people like *Alice in Wonderland*, I guess. But I always liked the *Looking Glass* better. I love the idea of walking through a mirror into some other world, you know? It sounds so exciting, but it's sad at the same time. I don't believe what people say about him, that he was after children. I think he really wanted something impossible to have, something that's maybe more of a sin to want than anything else. Another childhood."

She looked down at Alice, stroking her. "Sometimes I want that too, don't you?" she said. She looked up him searchingly.

"Sometimes," said Jacob, "I don't know what I want."

Violet was very still and quiet. He looked at her: a line of rust colored light caught her features with a soft spark and her skin shone soft under the mantilla of her dark hair. He turned and moved toward her and slowly lifted her face to his. He could not read what was written there, but her eyes were open, offering. The room held its breath, suspended in dim light, expectant. He pressed his lips gently to hers. She opened to him.

They made love in the small bed behind a red curtain that hung from the doorway, shielding the bedroom from the rest of the apartment. Their bodies moved slowly, like heavy water, slipping into each other.

At first, it was perfection. The hard edge of sex that Jacob felt with other women was not there; instead of an impasse, he found invitation, and there inside her the long-sought incense captured him, rising burning toward him in a halo, wrapping him in heady fumes. He closed his eyes and melted away in a kind of bliss, ready to disappear completely, to dissolve into this female body that, as he moved inside it, closed around him like a blossom, not stone, not, finally, even human, but a temple of flesh. A gauzy cocoon of smoke was wrapping around him, obscuring all his senses but for the amplified burning of his nerves.

Then he felt a small hot sound, far away, growing louder, threatening to rend the delicate stitching of his newfound peace.

Violet's voice, swelling louder, pulled him back into his body, prying his eyes open. Beneath him, he saw that she was crying. Her face was the same as he had seen first that afternoon, the teary face

of a passing stranger.

"I'm sorry," she whispered. "God, this is dumb."

He held her. Still inside her, he felt the doors of the temple lock behind him, sealing him inside what was now a dark, flameless place where he was no longer sure he wanted to be. He had been so close; now he would not even know what it was he had been close to. He was angry, then ashamed, and finally tired. He held her tightly as she cried, and said nothing while she chanted, "Sorry, sorry, I'm sorry, Jacob." But he knew she wasn't speaking to him.

He looked beyond the curve of her head where it rested on his chest, to the dresser on the opposite wall where a limp gym sock hung slightly, but slightly, over the lip of an open drawer.

Two hours later, Jacob woke. A warm shape lay beside him, the enigmatic back and buttocks of a woman, and it struck him as sad and strange that as he gazed at the graceful slope of the figure beside him that she should be so much of a something other than himself.

In the still-shadowed bedroom, the furniture looked at his naked body accusingly. The hard surfaces of the objects in the room seemed to strain towards him. He wondered if the demands of staying so hard and permanent caused them any tension. He hoped they would forgive him for his meaty belly and his rubbery legs; he wondered would they crush him if they ever became angered by so much inertia.

Slowly, he rose and dressed, and entered the living room.

The orchid light of early evening stilled his senses, made him feel as though as he himself were no more than a blue shadow extending across the quiet room. He felt as if he had walked into another person's dream where everything was familiar but strange, where objects like those he knew from his own life had ambiguous new meanings, called to half-hinted memories of another mind where words with half-familiar shapes echoed back strangely in a foreign tongue. It was as if he had been transposed onto another person's existence, as if the film in which he acted, alone and inviolable, had been spliced oddly across another, where a young woman, alone in her bed, waited sleeping for her lover to return home, unaware of him who lay pressed against the veil of her life like a moth on a lantern screen, hovering there on the surface in ghostly double-exposure.

He made his way across the silent floor, and as he did, a small

life touched against him, miaoing.

"Goodbye, Alice," he said.

The cat ran its pliant body under his palms; its muscles beneath the sleek hide rippled against his hand like a stream of water. Though its body was solid, the bones beneath the skin felt delicate. He scratched it under the chin and, between its forepaws, he felt its heart beating against his fingertips. It struck him as something both fragile and full of life. It must be such a tiny heart, he thought. A cat is such a quiet thing.

A shuffling of bare feet made him look up. Violet stood in the doorway of the bedroom, her hair loose around her neck, her eyes reading the movement of his body.

"Violet," he said in a flat tone, as if he were wrapping the name in paper to store it away.

The figures of the two strangers standing in the hushed room cut stony shapes from the blue shadows. They stood facing each other, looking curiously at each other like two bottom-dwelling fish that have brushed feelers as they swim along their solitary paths across the dark floor of the murky deep.

Violet walked slowly to the door, and opened it. Hard light wedged through from the hallway outside.

"I'll see you tonight," she said. Her body was dark in the shadow and small, already closing in on itself.

"Of course," he said.

Across the endless expanse of the floor, in the mirror that hung over the low table by the door, Jacob saw another version of himself, standing close just behind her, as if about to place a phantom arm around her shoulders.

He shivered.

MARK GOLDBERGER

a blues for cat

AND I'D BE LYING if I said I didn't want to knock this girl up right now; but there's this tragic, angelic, simple complexity about her that takes all the sex out and makes me want to write. Makes me want to paint her image on brick walls and hand out pamphlets, sell all my possessions to buy a car to drive into the desert to live out the rest of my days selling clay pots and my thirst for her. Makes me want to Salinger in the woods of New England; Walden like Thoreau. Twist words into landscapes of intoxication; and we're drinking a Hungarian Tokaji, and we're talking Chicago from the side of my bed, and the Reflecting Pond, and Catherine is nothing like anyone I've ever met before and time is and isn't doing somersaults, crawling/running/skipping/jumping/rewinding and/speeding along at twice the velocity of Picasso painting on cardboard his perception of kissing, and Kant and Klimt and Klima and anyone else who ever had anything to say about art and love.

And we're on the subway and her legs are crossed and her toenails are painted and my legs are crossed and my toenails are unpainted and we're going to dinner and we're together to gather information not to coalesce, codepend, copulate...

The North End, an empty bottle of Chianti and a sidewalk.

The kind of friction that causes tiny sparks between hands...

Her toes touch mine under the table. We get up to go.

Cat is late and Government Center bound, her eyes iridescent in the alleyway dark. We pass a liquor store. "I'm nineteen," she tells me. We walk beneath the Big Dig and stare into the skyline. I'm twenty-two, talking nonsense to a nonsensical girl and isn't that what it's all about...

Momentum.

The collapse of everything in time.

Make believe—

The canal in Paris where Amelie stands skipping stones... February/Paris I couldn't find it.

Conundrum. She is wrapped in blankets of-

I met Cat on the last night in July when the moon was full of autumn and rising out of Logan, on the roof of my ex-apartment and she was drinking Coladas and I was drinking, I was drinking, I don't remember what I was drinking but Cat was smoking pot and I was pretending her sister, Julie, my friend Julie, wasn't three feet away watching me watch the smoke/Cat's sweet sultry mouth. A tangle of dark hair tied up and tiny ears that pull me to whisper to them, things. Dark and inviting things and—twists/tunnels. And the smell of sex on my tongue...

Tells me to call her whenever. From my roof we stare into a maze of lights, the sky and the line it makes against the earth. Her mouth tastes pink, looks salty.

Synesthesia.

Catherine is leaning over the railing, humming, grinding the sound of night between her teeth. We watch the moon turn brown like a dead leaf then tarnished silver then white, so still over the undulating harbor. Stare into it silent.

I'm on my hands and knees begging time to stop.

The hands of the clock in my room are out of control and I'm thinking about amputation.

We listen to alt-rock; talk about pop.

I picture her nude, dripping Dali-like down the walls of a perfect dream. This is supposed to be about Cat but my reflection in the mirror seems so distant that I must be somewhere else, someone altogether different: a bearded fractal of me, haunting me like a dull ache you can't put your finger on.

A sore in your mouth you can't stop tonguing.

And Cat looks like this girl Lacy I used to know in sleepaway camp when I was twelve.

And she squeaks when you tickle her, when you wrestle her. And she's wrestling with disbelief.

"I can't believe I'm still here. Most people wonder why I'm alive and not knocked up and stuffed in some gutter somewhere." Julie says her sister's a character. I think she's so much more than that.

Sipping on the last drag of night like an alcoholic the puddle of a melted ice cube.

That's how the night began. How night begins.

With nothing left. An intake of breath.

A generation lost again in France, she is...

...and we spoke about découpage and comic book art and lies, Michael Chabon, Kevin Smith movies, Dylan—and Cat is the complete opposite of and so much the same as me that I am and am not me with her.

She makes me dizzy.

Dream is the distortion of vast escapes of truth.

"Sometimes I like to talk to bums."

"I like to talk to you."

I came upon Cat like all great things—accidentally. The night before the day I moved across town in a ten foot U-Haul rental, at a party that ended up really being just a get-together with jazz and the big brown moon slowly rising; jazz and her big brown eyes squinting and glinting like starlight and her lips and I want/need/have to know more.

She wears a white t-shirt, "Ollie for President," and I ask her if she even knows who Ollie is, "I just like the shirt. Thrift Store. Twenty-five cents. South Bend leave me alone."

Cat.

All by herself.

Catherine.

I'm sitting here alone.

Two weeks before Indiana and I'll never see you again and I want to re-member my self inside you, imbed microscopic morsel reminders of me in the cracks and crevices of your brain, your body, your lips and I so want to kiss them.

Winter—and anguish like a snowstorm; winter, and in the middle of a silence vast; winter and the chaos of a failing dream; winter—her breath, a writer lost, and that face.

You can't understand until you understand and then it's too late.

That face—too late, the hunger, heartache, burning in my throat- a beautiful day and—

Sadness. Sadness like the end of moonlight for days, sadness like eternity remains; sadness. A fever of it. A gulag of dirty desperate sadness.

And the sax player lifts it and cries, wailing it, sips it like the last drag of the last cigarette in the whole wide world.

A blues. Yes, a blues.

For Cat.

NATHAN MOORE

You Gotta Have Faith

I NEVER IMAGINED my life like this. It is really sad to think that at 26 years old I can look back and say that my life peaked at 18. Tugging on the brim of my warn out ball cap, I lean my head against the leather headrest of my car and close my eyes. Not many people understand this. I'm a junior partner at one of the top law firms in the country, I'm recently married to an incredible girl with bee stung lips and legs that start somewhere near her collarbone, I drive a seventy thousand dollar car, and yet for some reason, I go to bed every night with part of me hoping I don't wake up the next morning. I'd trade in everything I have for that blissful naivety that I once had. I miss that youthful optimism that made every moment incredible because you never knew if you'd experience it again.

Running my finger over the small metallic BMW logo on the key, I insert it into the ignition and start the engine. I should never have bought this car. I wouldn't have, either, had Faith's father not been the biggest BMW dealer in the Southwest. She talked me into it, as she did with almost everything since we met at a frat party our freshman year at SMU. We spent the whole night together, talking, and then not talking, as it were. By my junior year, we were living off campus in an apartment her Daddy paid for and I was one more bad game away from getting tossed off the baseball team. It's funny how hard it is to concentrate on the mechanics of a cut fastball with the sweet, warm breath of a gorgeous girl on your neck.

Watching the little yellow lines in the center of the road blur into one constant flow, I downshift and accelerate rather impatiently around a school bus, taking little time to note the faces pressed against the windows, some staring blankly, others making obscene gestures before breaking out into a fit of giggling. Not even the finest of German engineering can justify the purchase of this car. I was more than happy with my old pickup truck. A few dents here and there and little

chipped paint may have taken away from the appearance, but damn it, they were my dents. I knew how they got there, and each one was a pleasant reminder of good times. I could run my finger over the nick in the fender and remember the time me and Phil backed into the wall at Dairy Queen after a day of fishing that saw us catch a lot more six packs than we did fish. I loved that 'Southern by the Grace of God' bumper sticker that I found at the flea market in Atoka driving back from a Hank Jr. concert in Oklahoma City. Pickup trucks are not, however, an appropriate means of transportation for an up and coming lawyer, as I was quickly informed by Faith.

To be fair, that girl was and is everything I had ever looked for. My mom just used to sigh and laugh, and shake her head when I told her I was going to marry a beauty queen one day. Well, she may not have been Miss America or anything, but the first time I saw Faith leaning against a wall and talking to her friends in that tiny denim skirt, I knew I had to meet her. I'd had my share of girlfriends in high school, but this girl was an angel. That first Thanksgiving, she had been so nervous about meeting my folks, but of course, they loved her. I had never been in a fight until I started dating that girl. I swear to God, she had to have horns hidden under that honey blonde hair. She loved nothing more than to get us into trouble, and while I was stuck trying to calm down the guy she had just poured a drink on, Faith would sit down with her beer, grinning from ear to ear, loving every minute of it. Afterwards, I would be fuming, and she would just smile that smile, kiss me on the lips with just the slightest hint of tongue and more than enough tenderness, and I wouldn't be able to remember my own name.

As I pulled into the parking garage, I smiled at Glenn, the garage attendant, and headed for my usual parking space. I squirmed into the backseat to grab my briefcase. It had been a gift from my mom after I graduated. She told me that I was going to be a big, important lawyer one day and I would need a briefcase for all my important papers. That woman was a saint. She worked her ass off every day for over half her life to make sure that I would be successful. Even though we couldn't really afford to send me to law school, she made it happen. I don't know how she did it, but she could squeeze more money out of a paycheck than anyone else. It was because she worked so hard that I gave up baseball. I went to SMU on a baseball scholarship and the winter before I graduated, I was drafted by

the Cardinals. Rather than reporting for training camp at Double-A Round Rock, I told them I was going to law school. I'm not sure why I did it exactly, but it had a lot to do with my unwillingness to fail. I couldn't risk not being everything my mom had always wanted me to be, and taking a chance on baseball put me in the position to do just that. So I took the safe route, went to law school, and here I am today. My mom couldn't be more proud, and a part of me feels good for having justified her years of hard work. She keeps clippings of all my cases and shows her friends down at the antique mall.

The apartment was, as you might expect, Faith's doing. Every time I push that door open, I double take for a second, wondering if I've somehow wandered into a Crate and Barrel showroom. Before Faith, I couldn't have told you what feng shui was, or why my easy chair wasn't pointing in the right direction, but thank God Faith was there to show me the error of my ways. I hear the water running in the bathroom, which means Faith has had another long day at work. She works at an ad agency, and is clearly on the fast track to success. I don't know how she does it. That single minded pursuit of reaching one's goals is beyond me. I mean, I've certainly worked hard in my life, but it has never consumed me. There is far more out there that makes me happy than success in the world of work. What then? If you achieve everything you have ever wanted, what's left to strive for? Surely with satisfaction comes complacency. At last summer's Advertising Award Show, Faith won some award for best up and comer or something. She looked incredible that night in a gown that cost more than my old truck. I was so proud of her, and sat quietly hoping I could make her that proud of me one day, so that she might look at me with those misty green eyes, glassy with tears. So that maybe one day, she might press her face into my chest, forgetting all about whether her up-do was going to get messed.

I head for my bedroom. I stretch my arms over my head and yawn, wondering why I spend so much damn time in that dark law library. The case I'm working on is a cake walk, but for some reason, despite having more than enough material to get this guy off 3 times over, I want more. I need to keep working. I hear the water stop, and know it won't be long before Faith is asking me if I prefer shitake mushrooms or shallots in my pasta. I'd love to talk about kids, but I could never ask her to derail her career right now, so I guess for the time being, that can wait. I can't wait to be a father. I'd give up all of

that business at the firm to spend my time coaching Little League and playing catch with my kids. I close my eyes again, weary, tired, and rub my hand over my face, feeling the coarse five o'clock shadow. I hear footsteps and open my eyes to see Faith standing there in my old ragged SMU baseball t-shirt, and nothing else, those lithe, muscular legs extending from the bottom of it. She comes over and sits in my lap, wrapping her arms around my neck and laying her head on my shoulder. She cocks her head to the side just a little, presses her mouth to my ear so that I can just feel her wet lips, and whispers: "I love you…" and for just a second, it's just like it was. Before law school and yoga classes. Before cocktail parties and wedding invitations. Before I put that rock on her finger. When it was just me and her, and a lifetime of expectations ahead of us. When we could be anything we wanted to and there wasn't anyone in the world that could stop us.

I've always believed that it is the ability to dream that separates man from beast. Whereas a goldfish only knows the world that immediately surrounds him and can do nothing but be satisfied by it, people are capable of constantly dreaming of something better. And so maybe the grass isn't really greener on the other side but it is the possibility that it could be that keeps people striving for something. However, a dream can be a tricky thing. Once you start adding reality to the equation, those dreams can become a burdensome weight. And so with all of this in the back of my head, I stare into the eyes of my beautiful wife and listen.

One of those little things I love about girls is when they start a conversation on the phone without saying who it is or even hello. Faith, whenever she was excited or anxious about anything, would do just that. This was one of those times. No hi, no how are ya', just straight into the matter at hand. She had great news for me, and stumbled over her own words trying to get it all out at once. I actually had to tell her to slow down, go back, and start again just so I could keep up with her. She was adorable when she was frantic. Thanks to her work on the Mastercard account last November, which culminated in an award-winning Superbowl spot, she had moved to the top of the list for a promotion which would see her in charge of her entire department, and the two of us without worry when it came to money for quite a while. Obviously, she got the job. This was what she had worked so hard for all these years. This job made those ridiculous hours spent in advertising seminars seem worth it,

and for the first time since she entered the field, she felt like she was better at it than anyone else. And not only did she get the job, but, and this was the best part, it meant she would have to relocate to the firm's northeastern office in New York—on Madison Avenue and everything! "This is a dream come true!" Faith said to me, her voice almost cracking, unable to contain the excitement.

I have been to New York City, and that old saying about it being a nice place to visit is true. But I do not want to live there. I like what I have going for me down here, and to be perfectly honest, there isn't a whole lot in the world that could convince me to leave. Unfortunately for me, Faith just might be one of those things. I love that girl with every ounce of my being, and I am pretty sure I wouldn't be able to live without her. There is no way I can go to bed at night without the smell of her shampoo on my pillows. I don't ever want to stub my toe without her there to stick out her bottom lip and mock me. But how the hell am I going to live in New York? I'm terrified of what it is going to be like when I finally have to talk to her about this. I'm just no good at this kind of thing. I like for my life to be peaceful. It tears my heart out to even conceive of hurting this girl, and I am damn sure not going to be the person who asks her to give up her dreams for me. But what about my dreams? To be honest, my true dreams kind of faded into the background on that March day when I picked up the phone and told Coach Ryan I wouldn't be coming to camp that day, or any other for that matter. They pretty much ended when I licked the envelope on the law school application and stuck it in the mailbox. I still had dreams though. It turns out I am awfully good at this law thing, and frankly, I wouldn't mind making partner by 30. I also want to be a daddy within the next 5 years or so, and no child of mine will be raised in New York City. This state was good enough for my father, and his father, and so it will be for me too. Then there's my folks. They aren't getting any younger and I'd really like to be able to be around to help them out, especially after everything they did for me. And I'd like for them to know their grandkids someday. I don't want going to see Grandma to be a trip we take once a year. There is no way I could convince them to move, to come to New York. Not that the two of us have ever discussed this. I guess a part of me has known this day would come; that Faith would need to, for the sake of her career, move out of state. And a part of me also hoped, somehow, it would never happen. I don't want to leave my home, and I don't

want her to leave me either. But will I say any of this to Faith? That's sort of the sixty-four million dollar question. I am almost Shakespearian in my crippling inaction, and while my soliloquies here help me to formulate a watertight argument, I melt staring into those damn green eyes of hers. How is it that I can go toe to toe with any lawyer in the country, but a 5 foot seven inch girl nearly makes me break out in a cold sweat?

I slip on my black v-neck sweater and toss off the Rangers cap, pausing briefly to perform that masculine institution of checking myself out in the mirror; a procedure that no man can resist in the presence of his own reflection. As I slam the door shut and drop my keys into my pocket, I can't help but imagine what this 'celebration' dinner with Faith is going to be like. She booked us a reservation at some ritzy bistro downtown with portions smaller than the TV dinners on which I lived B.F. (Before Faith), and prices that could make even the biggest of spenders blush. She read about this place in *Bón Appetite* and had been saving it for a special occasion just like this. Obviously I would have been just fine with a 14 ounce T-bone at Texas Land and Cattle, but I defer to her in these situations. She always did fancy herself a princess, and how could I possibly be any less than her Prince Charming, whenever possible. I can stomach a little fois gras from time to time, just so long as it keeps that girl sitting across from me smiling.

My problem is figuring out exactly what it is that I want from life. I know this much: I'm tired of living on the cover of a magazine. That's precisely what it feels like. It's as though my life has been ripped from the pages of some trendy magazine you might read in the waiting room at a doctor's office. Part of it is my own fault. I just live that kind of life. With my gorgeous, young wife, furniture catalogue apartment, and showroom shine BMW, it is easy to see why I would feel this way. But I should be able to do something about this clockwork routine that I go through everyday. As much as I love Faith the wife, I miss the spontaneity of Faith the girlfriend. I miss the Faith that would want to blow off a dinner party to play in the rain. Watching that beautiful woman spinning and dancing in a warm summer rain, her makeup running down her face, and her golden blonde hair plastered to her head never failed to bring a smile to my face. I remember the year before we got married, Faith and I went to see the Spurs play the Lakers in the playoffs. I watched as this normally proper and reserved

young lady screamed at the top of her lungs, and said things to the referees that would have made a sailor blush. That's what I miss: little things that change my usually mundane existence into an adventure. I'm just afraid that if we move to New York, any hope of spontaneity or adventure goes out the window. I might as well just buy a Volvo, a Shih Tzu, and a week's worth of sweater vests, a different color for each day of the week. On Saturdays, I will go really crazy and mix a little regular coffee in with the decaf, and when me and the missus are feeling a little frisky, perhaps we will try it with the lights on! I will meet my fake friends from work on Fridays for a couple of over priced microbrews, and talk about sports teams I couldn't care less about.

When I finally get to the restaurant, I look for Faith. She's been waiting, but not long. She stands and we kiss. There is something more to the kiss tonight though. Unfortunately, ever since she got so busy at work, kissing Faith has become like kissing my Grandmother. It is hurried, it's cordial, and it's more of a habit than an expression of emotion. But tonight, it's different. It could just be her excitement over her promotion, or maybe the two dirty martinis she had while she was waiting for me, but this kiss was straight out of the backseat of a car. This was not your normal "good-to-see-ya" restaurant greeting kiss. I stand back, a little shocked, and look into those green eyes and melt.

Faith and I talk. Then we talk some more. And then more. In fact, that's all Faith and I do that night. I pick at my braised scallops, but I'm really too worried to eat. This decision could really be a deal breaker. One of us is going home disappointed tonight. I know that's that. In reality, whatever is decided upon is going to be difficult for both of us. It actually, considering the weight that this conversation carried, was extremely cut and dry. She said she wanted to go; I told her I wished she wouldn't. "This is something I have to do." And that's that. I know she's right, and I know I should smile, agree, and pack my bags, but I can't leave. My whole life, I have lived to make other people happy. I can't do it anymore. I have become Holden Caufield, so jaded with this whole business of being "grown up" that I want to crawl into a cocoon and emerge 6 years old when my only concerns were whose birthday party I had to go to that weekend and whether I should get the crayon box with 64 or 96 colors. Faith and I leave the restaurant together but take separate cars home. I follow her home the whole way, staring into the oddly shaped taillights on her Lexus

SUV that was used for neither sport nor utility. We go to bed together too. I kiss her goodnight. This kiss is different. It has passion, and it is full of the love that never, in this dizzying, rewarding, and sometimes frustrating ride we've had, have I ever doubted. But it's also a kiss that reeks of desperation. It is a kiss between two people who know what their future holds. It is the kiss Romeo and Juliet might have shared knowing the two of them could no longer be together. It's the most bittersweet moment of my entire life. She is asleep almost at once. I lie awake in bed, staring at the roof, and wondering how this happened. Why do people hurt other people, especially the ones they love? Why can't Faith and I just be happy where we are? I roll over and close my eyes, hoping that when I wake up, this will have been nothing more than a dream. I will wake up tomorrow morning, Faith will make her awful blueberry pancakes, and I'll read all about OU football for the upcoming season. And I won't have to think about promotions, Madison Avenue, or life altering decisions.

nonfiction

MAUREEN WORTH

Progress Through Scientific Revolutions?

SCIENCE IS VIRTUALLY EQUATED with progress by definition—to the extent that various fields/disciplines are determined to be or not be sciences based upon whether they *progress*—i.e., "move ahead in the way that, say, physics does." So asserts Thomas Kuhn in his landmark book of the 1960's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Obviously this inherent equation of science with progress and vice versa must be, at least temporarily, conceptually disentangled for the purpose of inquiring as to whether there actually *is* any progress made within the scientific enterprise. This paper examines the final chapter (not counting the postscript) of Kuhn's *Structure*, which deals with this question of whether, and how, progress is made in the process of paradigm change that takes place through scientific revolutions. [A word about paradigms is in order here; Kuhn either invented or exhumed this word in *Structure*, and it has assumed a great popularity both in academic literature—particularly the social sciences—and popular parlance ever since. However, his usage of it was not exactly chrystal-clear; many have complained of the apparent ambiguity of its meaning as used in *Structure*. Nevertheless, according to philosopher Peter Godfrey-Smith, at least a couple primary uses of "paradigm" can be sensibly and helpfully articulated: a "broad sense," in which "a paradigm is a package of ideas and methods, which, when combined, make up both a view of the world and a way of doing science," and a "narrow sense," which refers to a "specific achievement or an exemplar" which "is a source of inspiration to others" and "suggests a way to investigate the world." An example might be Newton's laws of motion, or Darwin's formulation of the principle of natural selection. These latter "narrow" paradigms play major roles in paradigms in the broad sense.][1]

In addressing the reasons that there at least *appears* to be unilinear progress in the sciences as opposed to other disciplines,

Kuhn first points out the lack of competing schools and approaches within scientific fields during periods of what he calls 'normal science'. In philosophy, history, literature, and other humanities or social sciences, there is continual open dissent between the proponents of different viewpoints toward methodology, fundamental assumptions, etc. But in scientific disciplines this sort of intellectual wrangling over fundamentals (i.e. the most baseline definitions and assumptions the enterprise is based upon, such as which entities can be said to exist [e.g. atoms] and which do not [e.g. "phlogiston"]) is only to be found either in pre-paradigm stages or during revolutions.

He next examines the power to be gained in a discipline through the insulation of the members of its community from members of the so-called laity—i.e. those people without the shared training, experience, beliefs of the members of the discipline. Scientists (and anyone who works in a specialized field, especially ones involving complex technology) are distinguished by the fact that most people without extensive scientific training in their particular field can not participate within it. (For example, a literary theorist, or anyone in the humanities, is generally not qualified to submit research papers to physics journals. Contrast this, however, with the reality that a physicist, should s/he wish, can write a literary/critical theory essay and have it published in an academic journal—providing it meet standards, criteria, etc. In fact, this is precisely what happened when physicist Alan Sokal submitted his by now legendary 'hoax' paper to the political/cultural journal *Social Text*.) A crucial effect, Kuhn asserts, of the insulation of the scientific community is the ability of scientists (i.e. the ones who are involved in a research program of largely their own design) to choose to focus their research and investigations upon the problems that seem the most 'solvable.' (An important distinction must be made here, that is not clearly made by Kuhn, between undirected basic scientific research, and research science that is directed by either social imperatives or funding—such as medical/health research, or the research of environmental scientists.) Obviously solutions, (and hence 'progress'), result much more frequently for (basic research) problems chosen for their promise of an achievable solution, than they do for the kinds of problems found in other fields, such as political science, (or the externally directed research just mentioned in the natural sciences).

Third, Kuhn holds that the nature of scientific education

up through the graduate level presents the current paradigm as the cumulative apex of the entire scientific enterprise in all its historical development; the future scientist is thoroughly indoctrinated, as it were, in the current paradigm as a student. In other disciplines, by marked contrast, competing and incommensurable solutions to the problems of the field—as well as the problems of the past—are studied and examined as a matter of course. There is (or was when Kuhn was writing) no equivalent in the natural sciences for the 'museum' or 'library of classics' of science—such as there is for literature or art. The upshot, Kuhn says, is that the scientist is trained to become a rigid thinker—skilled at reasoning/researching within the parameters of a paradigm—but not at finding a fresh approach concerning the fundamental principles/assumptions of the paradigm when a crisis emerges. Luckily, however, the rigidity on the part of each individual scientist is countered by the flexibility of the scientific community as a whole in adapting to paradigm shift—given a generation or so for all the stodgy old adherents of yesteryear's paradigm to either change their stubborn views (or eventually exit the field through *death*!).

To sum it up, these three characteristics of the scientific enterprise—lack of competing schools within scientific disciplines, the insulation of scientific communities among a small elite of the initiated, and the way in which science curriculums are constructed in schools at all levels—go far for Kuhn in explaining why scientific disciplines appear to make such dramatic unilinear progress in contrast to non-scientific disciplines.

Having outlined the nature of the appearance of scientific progress, Kuhn moves on to examine whether there is anything recognizable as 'progress' in "extraordinary science," or, whether science as a method of inquiry and a body of knowledge progresses cumulatively—that is, not merely within single paradigms, but across revolutions.

In his carefully formulated approach to addressing this question, Kuhn first refers again to the nature of the scientific community—the shared training and assumptions, the insulation, and the nature of the education process of scientists. They are trained so thoroughly, he writes, to see science (even among and between paradigm shifts) as progress that, to an extent, they *create* progress in the form of increasing the number of solved and solvable problems along with the precision of the solutions through paradigm shifts. This efficiency

in increasing both the number and precision of solved problems results from the nature of the process by which a scientific community will adopt a new paradigm; a potential replacement paradigm for an unsatisfactory one must both solve at least *some* of the previously intractable problems of the old paradigm while being able to successfully inherit and thereby maintain most of the "concrete problem solving ability" that has been developed through scientific development across paradigms. The result of the successful employment of these criteria by scientific communities is that scientific development can be seen as a process akin to evolution by natural selection—a development proceeding from "primitive beginnings" (pre-paradigm stages) to an increasingly focused and specialized scope of questioning (along with a proliferation of fields of specialization) and increasingly precise and refined solutions. But, the key question Kuhn poses at this point, is whether a proliferation of specialized fields of inquiry plus an accruement of solved problems, along with an increase in detail and precision in solutions amounts to closing in on the truth—to which he answers a resounding "No!"

It is here that things get quite interesting. One of the most widely used definitions of "truth" in the natural sciences, which is "the match between a theory's claims concerning what entities exist in nature and what is 'really there,'" has been separated from Kuhn's definition of "progress" in the natural sciences, which is "improvements in puzzle-solving."

One large problem with Kuhn's attempt in his final chapter to identify what sort of progress science can aspire to (versus what sort of progress is illusory) is its apparent serious downplaying of the view taken earlier in the book toward the *incommensurability* of paradigms. [A word on "incommensurability:" "two theories are said to be commensurable if the claims of one can be framed in the language of the other. When two theories are incommensurable, there may be no neutral standpoint from which to make an objective assessment of the merits of the one versus those of the other."][2] For example, how can Kuhn, lodged firmly within his own paradigm, undertake to examine the nature of paradigm change by use of what are, in effect, meta-paradigmic criteria (e.g., his claim that a new paradigm must preserve the majority of the solutions found for the problems of the old, while solving a number of the old paradigm's previously intractable anomalies) if there is not supposed to *be* any such meta-criteria? As philoso-

pher James Harris argues in *Against Relativism*, the claim "(s)cience is based upon paradigms which are incommensurable" (call this proposition 'K') is *itself* a meta-paradigmatic theory. How then, might one go about answering the question "why should 'K' be preferred over other theories of science?" should it be raised? Harris proposes that 'K' can be assessed and compared to other meta-scientific theories by two possible ways—either by criteria that are internal to it (i.e., facts concerning scientific theories and paradigms which are relative *only to* 'K') or criteria that are external to it (i.e., criteria which would allow us to compare 'K' to other competing theories about how science works and to rationally determine 'K's preferability, or lack thereof, to these other theories). If we can only assess 'K' by criteria internal to it, then those criteria can apply *only to 'K'* (not to any other theories) and therefore can not be any sort of basis for assessment of 'K's merits as a meta-theory over other competitor meta-theories. Any debate based upon *reasons* would thus be revealed as a "farce," as our choice between 'K' and its competitors by necessity would be no rational choice at all, but merely a preference based upon faith, values, etc. On the other hand, if we can assess 'K' by criteria external to it, this then leads to a 'self-referential paradox,' that is, that "paradigms are and can be incommensurable only if they are not incommensurable."[3] Either we have no way to compare 'K' to other theories and therefore our preference of it must be faith-based, or our ability to compare it to other theories contradicts what it itself says as a theory!

Kuhn addresses Harris's argument (as it was made by others before Harris) in his later-written *Postscript* to *Structure*, by arguing that, first, debates over theory-choice can not be conducted entirely deductively in the way logical/mathematical proofs can be. However, this reality does not rule out *a priori* that there can be "good reasons" nonetheless used for or against a particular theory-choice; these "good reasons," however, due to their non-deductive nature, must function as values and can therefore be applied differently by various individuals and groups, as "there is no neutral algorithm for theory-choice." Due to the particularity of values among individuals, the role of the scientific community becomes crucial in determining which values will function as criteria for theory choice.

Two viewpoints, Kuhn argues, are incommensurable when two individuals, due to shifting definitions of terms, use the same vocabulary to discuss a situation that they nevertheless perceive dif-

ferently. Terms shift because objects and situations which are grouped into "similarity sets" are re-grouped in the course of paradigm shifts, that is, "some of the similarity relations change." These difficulties with differences of term reference will center predominantly on the entities and/or phenomena that the choice of theory depends the most upon.

Furthermore, according to Kuhn, these "communication breakdowns" can not be resolved through the stipulation of the shifted terms in question through a neutral language that both sides of the debate over theory-choice can use; "it is…only after experience has been…determined [through a paradigm shift] that the search for an operational definition or a pure observation-language can begin… [for example] questions about retinal imprints or the consequences of certain laboratory manipulations presuppose a world already perceptually and conceptually subdivided in a certain way."

However, due to the fact that humans are more or less hardwired similarly, we can approach understanding of the scientific theories of yesteryear—and the arguments for them—outside of our own paradigm through recognizing our differences as "members of different language communities." We can thus become "translators," a job we can gain a significant measure of success in if we "can sufficiently refrain from explaining anomalous behavior as the consequence of mere error or madness."

It is through a process of careful translation of troublesome terms, combined with a sympathy, open-mindedness, and a will to understand the persuasiveness of views considered outmoded, wrong, or crazy that we can bridge paradigms, as it were, and consider their merits and de-merits on their own terms, not ours (even if our performance of this difficult task is always by necessity imperfect).

This is how Kuhn purports to get around the impossibility of comparing paradigms when one is permanently "perceptually and conceptually" *within* one's own paradigm (of one's community and age). In doing so, he appears to utilize a meta-criteria by which different paradigms can be compared in the fact that humans are so similarly hardwired (presumably by evolution, although Kuhn does not explicitly clarify this); that is, "(t)he stimuli that impinge upon [us] are the same. So is [our] general neural apparatus, however differently programmed." As humans, we share a unifying history, by which we can come to understand each other with effort, despite the conflicts

and misunderstandings of the "immediate past;" it is because of our over-riding similarities that successful 'translation', and thus inter-paradigmatic discourse can take place.

However, all of this considered, it appears that Harris's (and others') objection still stands. Unless Kuhn's use of the term "incommensurability" has been entirely misinterpreted by them, their analytic breakdown of the ultimate incoherence and/or paradoxical nature of the term as it is used this way appears quite valid.

Yet, on the other hand, Kuhn's defense of his use of the term also seems quite sensible; his utter denial that his usage of it entails that "the proponents of incommensurability theories can not communicate with each other at all…[therefore]…some sort of mystical apperception is responsible for the decision" [between choices of paradigm] bears much significance. There *can*, he appears to argue, be communication between proponents of conflicting paradigms; this communication will by necessity, however, involve *values* (which are included in the set of things known as "good reasons") and translation.

Perhaps some confusion lies in Kuhn's strict definition as to what constitutes a *rational* argument; he appears to confine it to purely deductive logic alone. For him, the importation of other "good reasons" for deciding between competing paradigms, such as simplicity, steps outside of rationality per se, and into the realm of values. This runs counter to many scientists' definition as to what constitutes rationality; for these scientists there is no issue at all in viewing the criteria of 'accuracy', and 'simplicity' as entirely within the realm of what is rational, (probably because as standards of judgment these criteria come so naturally and are so universally accepted so as to seem inherently rational). Harris' argument, in fact, seems to share Kuhn's strict definition of what is rational; it is the use of *values* as meta-criteria that he takes issue with. Unlike Kuhn, (who invoked here the importance of the scientific community as the ultimate arbiters regarding values as criteria for theory choice), he does not seem to think it possible to invoke values as "good reasons."

The upshot is that if one can accept that Kuhn does allow some meta-paradigmatic conditions (e.g. cognitive hardwiring), and/or what he calls values (e.g. simplicity, accuracy) to slip through a strict analytic conception of what incommensurability entails, it becomes once again possible to examine different paradigms throughout the history of the scientific enterprise to try to gauge what sort of 'prog-

ress' has truly been made, and what sort is illusory (if any of it in fact is).

Notes:

[1] Godfrey-Smith, Peter. *Theory and Reality*. Chicago. The University of Chicago Press, 2003. pg. 77.

[2] Blackburn, Simon. *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. UK. Oxford University Press, 1996. pg. 69.

[3] Harris, James F. *Against Relativism: A Philosophical Defense of the Method*. Illinois. Open Court, 1992. pgs. 82-85.

NATHAN MOORE

Professional Wrestling as a Social Barometer

THE OPENING STRAINS of "Rossiyskaya Federatsiya" begin to emanate from the arena's loudspeakers. A hulking man clad in red steps through the curtain, carrying a flag. As he enters the ring, he proudly waves his flag, which now reveals itself to be the sickle and hammer of the Soviet Union. A chorus of boos fills the arena as the capacity crowd sits on the edge of its seat, awaiting the arrival of the heroic, all-American good guy. The man's name is Nikolai Volkov. He is a professional wrestler. The year is 1981, and the United States is embroiled in a bitter feud with the Soviet Union. As usual, professional wrestling has once again created story lines based on real life situations, and popular social opinion. For the almost 120 years that professional wrestling has been around in the United States, it has served as a social barometer. It seems that in order to gauge political and social opinion, all one has to do is tune in to wrestling every Monday night.

Nikolai Volkov was not the first character to be played in professional wrestling. In fact, Communist Russia was not the first foe to be dealt with by the all-American hero in the history of pro-wrestling. Wrestling has served to mimic real life for as long as it has been around. At the end of the 19th, and the beginning of the 20th centuries, pro-wrestling was overrun by whole tribes of evil Indians. Wrestlers such as Chief Thunderbird and Joseph War Hawk (Sugar) would come out to the ring, in full headdress with their tomahawks waving wildly, and emitting blood-curdling war cries. The fans would look on with genuine terror, fear being scalped, and awaite help. Help came in the form of the cowboys. Cowboy Pat Fraley and Cowboy Bob Ellis made it safe for the fans again, and the people loved it. At the time, much of the United States was still largely unclaimed territory, or recently developed Indian land. The negative sentiment towards Native Americans was still very much a part of American life. This

explains why the Indians were always the bad guys. That said, the majority of the Indians from pro-wrestling in those days were actually just everyday white men wearing stereotypical Indian attire doing comical war dances that were thought to be common practice. As for the cowboys, the old west gunslingers have always held their own as being heroic in American culture. A simple glance at the number of western movies would confirm this fact and pro-wrestling, with its finger on the pulse of the American public, capitalized on this fact. This type of scenario would be repeated over and over again throughout wrestling history, with the names and characters constantly changing.

As the World War era enveloped the United States in the first half of the 20th century, and as Nazi Germany made its rise to prominence, along came a whole slew of goose-stepping Nazis to raise the ire of the conservative, patriotic American crowds. Some of the better known names included Hans Hermann, Fritz and Waldo Von Erich, and Killer Karl Krupp. They wore monocles, had handle bar moustaches, and spoke in German, often inciting the crowd to near-riot levels. These villainous foreigners were all swinish and arrogant, and would refuse to stand for the "Star Spangled Banner," when it would play at the start of shows, even going as far as to turn their backs on the American flag. After winning the championship, the Nazis would claim they won it for the Master race, and that they were taking the belt back to the fatherland for safe keeping. Another notable name, Baron Von Raschke, was actually stabbed while in Omaha, NE. A large part of these mens' success as heels, or bad guys, was the fact that they wreaked havoc on the South and Midwest. These areas were a simpler, more conservative part of the country that still very much valued their country, patriotism, and a wholesome way of life. Again, however, these men weren't real Nazis; they simply played them, as that was the type of bad guy that Americans at the time loved to hate. The Von Erichs were actually football players from North Texas (Sugar). As the war came to a close, the German heels began to decline in their effectiveness, so a new foreign invader was needed to keep the fans interested.

With the escalating situations in the Far East, such as the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the new role of evil bad guy was taken over by the Asians. They were highly treacherous and would almost always cheat to win, throwing salt in the eyes of the unsuspecting good guy or resorting to illegal karate chops. Clad in traditional robes

and sporting thin beards and mustaches, men such as Mr. Pogo, The Great Kabuki, and Hiroshi Hase ran roughshod all across the United States. In 1977, Bruno Sammartino battled The Great Kabuki at Madison Square Garden for the WWF Heavyweight Title. As usual, Kabuki sprayed the face of his opponent with a poison mist and won the match. Incensed by this foreigner's underhanded tactics, the fans at the arena nearly rioted until they were calmed down by Sammartino himself (*Bruno vs. Kabuki*).

The 1980s saw the peak in anti-Soviet sentiments and in came the Russians. Dressed in stereotypical Russian attire, such as Cossack tunics and lamb's wool Astrakhan hats, the Soviets always seemed to hail from the reddest part of Communist Russia. The most popular of the bunch seemed to be the tag team of the Bolsheviks: Nikolai Volkoff and Boris Zukov, who marched their way to the World Wrestling Federation Tag Team titles in the early 80s. Always using their Soviet Flag as a weapon, the Russians would enrage the highly patriotic good guys such as Hulk Hogan or "The American Dream" Dusty Rhodes by disgracing the American flag or questioning the American way of life. Again, with popular culture in the United States creating a hostile atmosphere towards the Soviets, nothing pleased the crowds more than to see the bumbling 'russkies' getting their due from the clearly superior American good guys.

Once again, as is usually the case in the world of pro-wrestling, the stories had to change along with social opinion. With the conflict in the Middle East reaching its peak throughout the 80's and 90s, we saw the Iron Sheik enter the scene, dominate, and even win the coveted WWF World Heavyweight Championship. It was a title he would keep for almost three years before being defeated by the ultimate patriot and good guy, "The Real American," Hulk Hogan. Hogan would eventually face his toughest challenge when, at the height of the Gulf War, former patriot Sgt. Slaughter turned his back on the U.S. and joined the evil Iraqi forces. Of course, Hogan unceremoniously disposed of Slaughter as soon as possible and made it safe for Americans everywhere. Their match at Wrestlemania XII drew an immense crowd as fans everywhere tuned in to see Hogan vanquish the hated turncoat (*Hogan vs. Slaughter*).

Hulk Hogan was groomed to be a star. His long blonde hair, chiseled physique, and charismatic in-ring persona was exactly what the fans of the World Wrestling Federation wanted in a hero. The

Hulkster defended all that was good and provided children with his inspirational message: "train, say their prayers, and eat their vitamins" (Sugar). Even his theme song at the time reiterated the idea that he was the quintessential All-American:

> I am a Real American,
> Fight for the rights of every man,
> I am a Real American,
> Fight for your rights, fight for your rights!

Realizing that the American public wanted to have an all-American hero to whom they could turn, Vince McMahon, owner of the World Wrestling Federation, and the man in charge of character control, created the character Hulk Hogan. There was no way to have known the success that it would bring to his company.

It seemed that McMahon had hit upon an idea that had seemed dated. The American public still wanted their heroes to be the flag-waiving, patriotic good guys. This fact was never more evident than in the WWF in the 1980s, when the company was full of the type. There was of course Hogan, and Sgt. Slaughter, who was actually the spokesman for the G.I. Joe toys that were popular at the time. Also following the same mold were the Patriot, who wore a mask adorned with the stars and stripes, and "Hacksaw" Jim Duggan whose chants of "USA, USA" would be echoed throughout arenas by fans who loved his blue-collar look and unwillingness to cheat in anyway. This contrasted seriously with the heels at the time, which were always foreign and cheating in some way. Even though wrestling had evolved into a mainstream sport, and had come along way from its roots by selling out Caesar's Palace and Madison Square Garden instead of high school gymnasiums, the essentials were still in place. The story lines in pro-wrestling still had to revolve around the ideas and sentiments of the American public. Again, just as it had been 50 years earlier, wrestling was serving as a barometer for American society. It was as if the WWF rings had become a microcosm, clearly illustrating popular opinion within the United States.

With time, as popular opinion began to change, so did the stories in pro-wrestling. Rather than cheering for the all-American baby face as they had done so vehemently before, the fans of wrestling began looking to what would classically be described as the bad

guy as their hero. The perfect example of this would be "Stone Cold" Steve Austin. A beer-drinking, foul-mouthed, self-professed "mean S.O.B.," Steve Austin began his career as a bad guy, but was soon receiving more cheers than the other stars who refused to cheat and were described as a role model for kids. Wrestling also took a dramatic more violent turn with the introduction of extreme wrestling which led to matches including such terrifying additions as tables set on fire and barbed-wire ring ropes. But these newer ideas and innovations raised an interesting question: do society's views and opinions influence pro-wrestling story lines, or is it the other way around?

With this new, more hardcore brand of pro-wrestling on television, a new phenomenon has shown up in backyards all across America. Backyard Wrestling, as it is known, has become immensely popular among children of all ages. But unlike their professional heroes, these kids are untrained, meaning they are typically unable to perform many of the moves they see. As a result, hardcore wrestling becomes their style, as it requires little more than the ability to jump off of high places or swing a chair at someone's head. This backyard wrestling has led to injuries too numerous to count. Does professional wrestling compel kids to perform these dangerous maneuvers, or is it their own demand to see increasingly violent material on television that influences content? It is unfair to simply blame pro-wrestling for this problem. Kids have always wrestled with their friends. It is an almost innate desire, especially in young males, to 'play-fight' with their friends. This has gone on for decades, but it's only now that it has taken a decidedly dangerous turn. It is society in general that is more violent and certainly more tolerable of violence. Pro-wrestling has simply modified its product in order to keep up with the times, just as it has done for the past 100 years. In order to be successful, pro-wrestling must give the fans what they want to see. It is difficult to believe that pro-wrestling can completely change an aspect of society; instead, the newfound enjoyment of brutality has risen out of a change in traditional values. It would be safe to place more blame on the parents of the kids who are committing these senseless acts of violence, rather than simply pointing a subjective finger at those in charge of the major wrestling companies. All one has to do is look at society in general, not just the audience of pro-wrestling, to see that violence has infiltrated our society on many levels. It is not, however, a coincidence that kids of today have not had the strong family values

and structure of previous generations.

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GEORGE BOLEY

Kant's Moral Philosophy Rests on His Metaphysics

MORALITY CANNOT EXIST without freedom. To say that an action is good or bad implies that we believe it to be a consequence of choice. When a shark attacks someone, we do not say that he is evil for we believe that he is simply acting on his animal instincts regarding self-protection and food. But when a person attacks someone, we say that he is good or bad depending on what motivated his action. The fact that we judge other human beings and ourselves as good or bad implies that we believe that people have the ability to make rational choices, unlike sharks. We believe that people do not just act from inclination, but that they use their *reason* to decide on a course of action. Thus, if morality is to make any sense, it must be based on reason and free choice. Otherwise, we would be judging people on behavior that was not in their control. If we are to judge human behavior as good or bad, we must believe in free will. (Whether it can be confirmed is another matter, but we must at least *believe* in it.) But freedom is incompatible with the laws of nature which are fixed and determinate. How can we be both free and bound by the laws of nature at the same time? In Chapter III of Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*[1] he describes this inconsistency and explains how it can be circumvented.

Kant believes, à la Newton, that the empirical world is governed by the laws of causality. Leaves don't *decide* to turn colors in the fall, nor do billiard balls *decide* to move around; they are just responding to stimuli in nature. But this is true only in the empirical world. Kant claims that there is another world which underlies the world of experience, which he calls the noumenal or intelligible world. Our human nature requires us to experience the world in a certain way; this experienced world is the phenomenal or empirical world. But the way we experience the world is not necessarily how the world is in itself. In other words, we experience the real (noumenal)

world *as it appears to us* (phenomenally). "All ideas coming to us apart from our own volition (as do those of the senses) enable us to know objects as they affect ourselves: what they may be in themselves remains unknown" (118). Kant believes this observation can be arrived at by the philosopher and the ordinary man "without any need for subtle reflection." Everything in the empirical world is a thing-as-it-appears-to-us, but it corresponds to a thing-in-itself in the noumenal world. We cannot know things-in-themselves directly, only through the filter of our human experience.

How then does this relate to morality? Human beings are members of both worlds, the phenomenal and the noumenal. In the phenomenal world we are bound by the laws of nature, but in the noumenal world we are fully rational beings with free will. "If I were solely a part of the sensible world, they [my actions] would have to be taken as in complete conformity with the law of nature governing desires and inclinations" (121). If there were no noumenal world underlying the empirical world, cause and effect would govern our only reality and we could not escape their hold; thus we would have to see ourselves only as causally determined. But believing that the world of experience is only appearance, and that cause and effect is nothing but a necessary way in which human beings order their experience, allows for the existence of a reality untouched by cause and effect. In a world not causally determined, beings can be free. Since morality requires freedom, Kant's theory of the noumenal world is key to his moral philosophy. Unfortunately, since we, as human beings, necessarily experience everything via the laws of nature, we cannot *experience* this noumenal world. We can only reason that it exists.

It is not just because of a desire or need to believe in freedom that we posit the existence of a noumenal world. It is our experience of our own faculty of reason that demands this idea. "Reason…shows a spontaneity so pure that it goes far beyond anything sensibility can offer" (120). Reason is otherworldly by nature, and so necessitates the conception of another world. "Because of this a rational being must regard himself *qua* intelligence…as belonging to the intelligible world, not to the sensible one" (120). As humans, we have both rationality and sensibility, but since we have rationality and understand ourselves as free, we necessarily must consider ourselves in these respects as belonging to the noumenal world. To deny the noumenal world, is to deny our rationality.

As fully rational and free beings in the noumenal world, we are morally good. But in the empirical world, our reason must compete with our inclinations when we make decisions. If we are to be morally good in the empirical world, we must act as if we were fully rational and free, overcoming the pull of our inclinations. "The moral 'I ought' is thus an 'I will' for man as a member of the intelligible world; and it is conceived by him as an 'I ought' only in so far as he considers himself at the same time to be a member of the sensible world" (122). Although morality requires that we see ourselves as members of the noumenal world, it is only possible to be moral in the empirical world. Morality is acting rationally when we are not fully rational beings. If reason were our only guiding force (as it would be if we were only noumenal beings), we would always act rationally and would therefore always be moral. But then the notion of "morality" wouldn't make any sense because there would be no possibility of "immorality." This possibility only exists in the empirical world. Morality can only be understood if we see ourselves as rational beings, acting on reason alone, dispite the fact that we are trapped in the empirical world in which we are motivated by our inclinations.

Acting morally is acting rationally, and the way to act rationally is to follow the categorical imperative. The categorical imperative is a formal moral principle that is binding upon all rational beings. Could Kant's theory of the categorical imperative stand without his dual world theory? The categorical imperative is based on doing the right thing *as a rational being*. Rationality requires free will. A choice based upon reason and reason alone cannot be causally determined. Without positing the noumenal world, we have no basis for believing in free will. We must have freedom to choose, otherwise the concept of what we *ought* to do is meaningless. If we were only causally determined (as we are *qua* sensible beings) then there could be no such thing as a moral "ought" because we could only do what we were causally determined to do. The idea of the categorical imperative implies freedom, which necessitates Kant's theory of the noumenal world.

However, there is another way of preserving free will without positing the existence of the noumenal world. In his *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant shows that, of necessity, we experience the world as being governed by cause and effect, although there is technically no real necessary connection between events. Our human understand-

ing orders our experience such that we must experience all events as being caused. He could have applied this type of reasoning to morality: human beings, of necessity, experience themselves as having free will even though there is no basis for this belief outside of human cognition. In this way, free will is integral to human experience, but its metaphysical reality is superfluous.

But Kant wants to find an objective morality, based on the categorical imperative. To do this he not only needs to show that human beings have free will (the capacity for morality), but also that at base we are rational beings (being good *qua* rational being is to obey the categorical imperative). The noumenal (real) self that he posits for human beings is a fully rational being. If this is who we really are, then the morality based on the categorical imperative (morality as rationality) makes sense. But this is where he has cheated a bit. How does he know that our noumenal selves are rational beings—admittedly we can't know *anything* at all about the noumenal world. "Of that world he [a human] knows no more than this—that in it reason alone, and indeed pure reason independent of sensibility, is the source of law" (125). He seems to have reasoned that since human beings have both reason and inclination, and inclination is empirically based, so the noumenal world must be guided by reason. But he has no basis for making *any* assumptions about the noumenal world other than it exists. The existence of the noumenal world can be inferred because we know that as humans we experience the world only through our senses and not directly. But there is no basis for proposing that this noumenal world is governed by reason—for we know nothing about it, not even this. Kant holds reason in such high esteem that he probably cannot imagine that a mind-independent reality does not conform to the laws of reason. Since he equates morality with rationality, it is necessary for his own theory that he posit the noumenal world as rational, but he has no further basis for this position.

Notes:

[1] Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*. trans. Paton, H.J. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

[2] *Critique of Pure Reason*. trans. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

ILHAN ZEYBEKOGLU

How Useful is Aristotle's Account of the Soul?

IN RECENT CENTURIES, much of Aristotle's philosophy has fallen under harsh criticism from some philosophers, and has even been dismissed as being outdated and unscientific by the standards that should interest us today. Others have argued that though this may oftentimes be the case, it is no fault of Aristotle, since Aristotle's times were radically different from our own, and for this reason it is senseless to quibble over the peculiar scientific and philosophic methods he employed, and to dispute whether or not they ought to be considered valid. To do so, they say, would be anachronistic. And then there are those who believe so much that Aristotle's philosophy ought to be defended, that any criticism of Aristotle is taken by them to be an act of philosophical heresy. It seems to me that none of these positions expresses a proper balance of charity towards Aristotle on the one hand, and philosophical skepticism about his claims on the other. As philosophers it is our main duty to employ the proverbial principle of charity whenever we encounter a philosopher whose views differ from our own, whether he be ancient, modern or contemporary. Bertrand Russell once wrote, "It is important to learn not to be angry with opinions different from your own, but to set to work understanding how they come about. If, after you have understood them, they still seem false, you can then combat them much more effectually than if you had continued to be merely horrified."[1] Such is the method I believe ought to be applied when reading Aristotle. Aristotle, it appears, employed a similar method himself in many of his works. He took quite seriously the views espoused by his predecessors, and believed that in each of them could be found not only certain faults, but also elements of truth which were perhaps poorly developed.[2] I believe the same can be said of Aristotle. Not that he was absolutely right or absolutely wrong all of the time, but that perhaps some of his views can provide a gateway (in conjunction

with a more contemporary scientific paradigm) to answering some crucial contemporary philosophical concerns.

The following will focus primarily on the Aristotelian account of the soul as given in *De Anima*, and with the aforementioned framework in mind, attempt to evaluate the utility of this account of the soul with respect to modern and contemporary philosophical debates in philosophy of mind. The subject matter with which this paper is concerned is none about which I pretend to be an expert. In all modesty, I am aware that certain arguments and interpretations of Aristotle upon which I shall focus have been developed further in recent literature, in particular by Myles Burnyeat, Hilary Putnam and Martha Nussbaum.[3] For this reason, my purpose in this paper will not be an exegesis of the recent dialectical exchange which has revolved around these issues (though it will make reference to them), but rather a naive and general attempt to show that the Aristotelian conception of soul (or something like it) remains a plausible and in many ways palatable philosophical theory which rather closely resembles contemporary functionalist theories in philosophy of mind. But first it is important to look at how the want for theory like Aristotle's might arise.

Michael Frede begins an essay we wrote on a similar topic by pointing out (and quite rightly so) that philosophers nowadays seldom talk about the soul, for it has in modern times acquired a sense (namely a religious sense) which renders it of not much concern in analytic philosophy. But as Frede points out, philosophers do talk about the mind a great deal, and if we examine the historical origins of this terminological switch, which Frede attributes primarily to Descartes, we discover that talk of the mind and talk of the soul (in the Aristotelian sense) are really talk of one and the same thing. In fact, Descartes himself uses both terms interchangeably. But Descartes also marked the beginning of a new era in philosophy, one in which the mental and the physical (or 'mind' and 'matter') were to be regarded as radically different kinds of stuff which may be conceptually distinguished in virtue of their nature or principle attribute. Body or matter for Descartes has as its principle attribute extension i.e. length, breadth and/or depth and is thereby divisible, while mind has as its principle attribute thought and is thereby indivisible. According to Descartes, insofar as minds and bodies are diametrically opposed in nature *qua* substances, the existence of one does not entail the exis-

tence of the other. This is so because the conception of one does not logically entail the conception of the other. Hence, some bodies can exist without themselves having minds, and in the case of animals or plants can be animated or living things which do not have minds, and some minds can exist without having bodies, as is the case with God, who for Descartes is an infinite mental substance. By making this move into dualism, Descartes is rejecting the dominant conception of the soul which the Scholastics of the time inherited from Aristotle. This break from the traditional notion of the soul and adoption of a new way of thinking about the same problem, marks the genesis of the linguistic switch from talk about souls to talk about minds.

There is something more important to be gotten from this, and it is conceptual rather than linguistic. Cartesian dualism gave rise to a new philosophical dilemma, which, though it may have existed prior to Descartes (for of course Plato was a dualist long before Descartes), really came to the forefront of philosophy and metaphysics around his time. I am of course talking about the mind-body problem. If we are to adopt the Cartesian conception of mind and body, and take seriously his claim that every human being is a composite of the two (in such a way that they, in a sense, form a single substance during the life span of the person), the question indubitably arises, 'How can two substances, one whose nature is extension and operates according to mechanical rules, the other whose nature is thought and is not bound by mechanical rules, interact with one another?' This question plagued Descartes as it does all dualists, and neither Descartes nor any other interationist dualist to this day have given it a satisfactory response. For this reason, interactionist dualism has become a rather unpopular position to maintain in philosophy of mind. This is unfortunate since prima facie, this sort of dualism, is a rather appealing position to hold. On the one hand, you have a mind which has thoughts and experiences, and on the other you have a body which is composed of matter and can interact physically with other bodies, and the two interact with one another. The mind wills that your arm goes up and your arm goes up, your hand passes over a flame and you experience a painful sensation. This view is very much in line with our common sense. However the burden the dualist then faces is to explain the nature of the causality in this interaction. Neither a physical nor a mental explanation will suffice on its own, and it seems futile to attempt to give an account of mind-body interaction that is intel-

ligible if one maintains that there is nothing physical about the mental and nothing mental about the physical. Much of what has been put forth in philosophy of mind since Descartes' time has been aimed at formulating alternative accounts of the nature of mind, body and their relation, in order to avoid this problem. It is in this to this end that Aristotle's theory of the soul suggests an attractive approach.

In the *Meno*, Plato says that if our goal is to define something, we ought to search for the most general definition of that thing, i.e., those features which all tokens of that particular type can be said to have in common. Aristotle objects that this method leads to definitions which are not very informative. For instance, if we define what 'good' is as that feature which all things that are good have in common, we would have a difficult time picking out good things in the world, since what constitutes a good man is quite different than what constitutes a good dog which is quite different from what constitutes a good picnic spot, and so on. It would be odd to say that the common feature that Plato says they share, namely 'goodness' in the abstract, tells us anything much about what makes a man good *qua* man, or a dog good *qua* dog, or a picnic spot good *qua* picnic spot, since goodness has a radically different sense in each of these cases[4]. In *De Anima* (141b20), Aristotle alludes to a passage in the *Meno* where the essence of shape is discussed. Certainly, Aristotle concedes, it is possible to give a general definition of figure, but this definition alone will not make it possible for us to distinguish triangles from circles. To do this we must also consider those features that triangles have *qua* triangles and those that circles have *qua* circles. Similarly, Aristotle maintains that a general definition of the soul will be possible, as it is for figure, but as for figure it will not be a very informative one.[5] So we should now consider more closely Aristotle's conception of the soul, bearing in mind its contrast with dualism and tendency towards giving an empirical account of the subject rather than a purely conceptual one.

Aristotle believed that the soul could be generally defined as a sort of life force, i.e., that feature that living beings possess that distinguishes them from non-living beings. So what then is its nature (in the Cartesian sense)? For Aristotle, when we talk about substances, we mean either matter, form, or a combination of the two. Among such substances are bodies, and in particular natural bodies. Natural bodies can be divided into two categories, namely those which are

living and those which are not, where by living we simply mean "having self nutrition and growth (with its correlative decay)" (142a15). To speak of soul-having bodies for Aristotle is simply to speak of natural bodies of this first kind. Such substances may be said to be substances in the third sense of substance mentioned above, namely as composites of form and matter. For this reason, we can rule out the possibility that soul simply *is* matter or form alone, and infer that it must be understood as a sort of unification of the two. The body is the subject or matter of something which is attributed to it, namely the soul. Put differently, the soul is the form of a natural body that has life potential. "Hence the rightness of the view that the soul cannot be without a body, while it cannot be a body; it is not a body but something relative to a body" (414a20).

For Aristotle, substance is actuality (412a22). Matter itself is pure potentiality for in itself it is indeterminate. Form is that feature which when conjoined with matter makes it actually something. Thus soul can be understood as that form which when conjoined with the matter of such and such a kind produces a living body. But neither can exist *qua* living body independently of the other. We can, however, speak of the soul as the actuality of the body. In this sense, the two are logically distinguishable even though they are not actually distinguishable. Now actuality (as distinct from potentiality) has two senses for Aristotle, so it is important to determine which of these may be said to be the nature of the soul. With regard to knowing (which is Aristotle's example), the first sort of actuality is merely the possession of knowledge, while the second is the exercise of that knowledge. For instance, knowing English may be an instance of this first kind of actuality, and actually speaking it an instance of the second. Aristotle reckons that soul must be actuality in this first sense, for living bodies can be said to have souls even when they are not being exercised, e.g., when they are sleeping.

One immediately recalls the odd claim that Descartes makes in the *Meditations*, that since the nature of a mind is thought, if it were to cease thinking it would cease to be. If thinking were to stop and then commence, we could not according to Descartes, say that this occurred in the same substance, but rather in two numerically distinct substances. From this he concludes that human minds must always be thinking. Aristotle's theory helps us avoid this odd conclusion, since such a theory allows for the presence of soul even when it is

not being exercised—or to put it in Descartes' terms, it allows for the existence of a numerically identical mind that is not *always* thinking. If we accept Aristotle's distinction between kinds of actuality, and that a soul may be said to characterize a living body even when it is dormant, it seems we must conclude that soul is actuality of the first sort, since the first sort of actuality is conceptually prior to the second. That is, having knowledge of English is prior to being able to speak English. Likewise, having a soul is prior to being able to exercise it. Since the second kind of actuality implies and depends upon the first, it is logical to say that to speak of soul is to speak of this first kind of actuality. So we have as our enriched general definition of soul: that it is the first grade of actuality of matter that is potentially living (412b5).

Now the bodies of which we are speaking are bodies that are organized in particular ways (412b1). As Aristotle argues, even the parts of a plant, though they are radically different from and simpler than the parts of human beings, are organs of that body, i.e., organs which perform certain functions. So it looks as though Aristotle would contend that in cases where two different kinds of bodies comprise different sorts of matter, it is reasonable to speak of one as being made up of parts that act in the same way as, i.e., preform the same functions as, analogous parts of the other. Hence claims such as, "the roots of the plant are analogous to the mouth of animals, both serving for the absorption of food" (412b3). Even though the matter which makes up the roots of the plant and that which makes up a human mouth are radically different, they both serve the same soul-like function or role, namely as a means of delivering food and nutrients to the body in order that it may grow or stay alive. So the plant soul and the human soul have this feature or function in common: that of nutrition and self growth.

With this in mind, perhaps an elaboration of Aristotle's idea that the soul is essentially a set of functions is in order. Aristotle believed that all living things could be said to have souls—this has been established. So unlike Descartes, Aristotle believed that to talk of beings with souls was not just to talk about human beings and God, but things like plants and animals as well. Now it is obvious that the soul of a plant will be something radically different from the soul of a human being, but insofar as they both have life in them, their souls will have in common some base feature or function which allows for this. Likewise, non-human animals will share this base function, but

in addition have other functions of soul that humans have and plants do not, though not all of them. Hence Aristotle develops what may be crudely understood as a hierarchy of functions which characterize souls. Specifically, these functions are the nutritive, the appetitive, the sensory, the locomotive, and the power of thinking or rationality (414a30). It is Aristotle's view that all beings that possess this first function may be said to have souls. For this reason we may say of carrots and oak trees that they have souls. Other beings can have souls which comprise more functions, but it is true of all these souls that they possess this first or primary function also. And so the hierarchy goes. One might say that the nutritive function for Aristotle is *naturally* prior to the appetitive function, which is *naturally* prior to the locomotive function and so on. So, generally speaking, plants have souls which are simply nutritive, animals have souls that are nutritive and also perform other functions, and human beings have souls which perform all of the aforementioned functions. Further, these functions can be seen as standing in causal relations to one another and to the activity of the soul in general. For instance, the ability to perceive may allow for us to form rational beliefs which may in turn, lead us to make certain decisions and inspire actions.

I mentioned earlier that Aristotle's approach looked to be empirical rather than purely conceptual. This is why I chose to emphasize the relation of *natural* priority among the hierarchy of soul functions, as it ought to be distinguished from one of *logical* priority or necessity. There is no textual evidence that this hierarchy is a necessary one, but rather it is simply the best way of explicating that which is discovered by empirical observation of natural bodies. Such a theory is in fact quite scientific, to Aristotle's credit, and in most ways in line with contemporary theories of evolution (without being so explicitly). Though Aristotle does not say so himself, on his theory, human beings could very well have evolved from plants, just acquiring new faculties or 'soul-functions' along the way to help them better adapt to their environment. But enough of this for now since it is not our primary concern. The main point to be gotten here is that since Aristotle's theory is empirically based, as it describes natural living bodies *as they happen to be*, it is merely *contingent*. So, though in nature any being that is sensitive is at the same time capable of nutrition and self growth, the priority of the nutritive function of the soul is only contingent and exists simply because natural bodies happen to

be a certain way. Aristotle's theory accounts for this contingency, but it is not logically necessary nor is it implied by his definition of soul in general.

It may be argued in a similar way, that though for Aristotle there was a definite kind of matter that was capable of being actualized by soul, this too is merely contingent, and that logically speaking there could be other kinds of matter capable of being actualized in this way. This should not be seen as too much of a stretch on Aristotle's theory. His contention appearss to be that the body is just matter that is organized in such a way that it is capable of taking on the form of a soul. The soul is a sort of end for which a certain kind of body, e.g. a human brain, is a means. But though the end is definite, like we saw with the analogy of a plant's roots and an animal's mouth, the means may be radically different. So once again, though it happens that *in nature* there is only one kind of matter that we observe as having the capacity to actualize a *thinking* soul, as it is the only matter organized in the necessary way, it is not impossible that there may be other kinds of matter which, if organized in precisely the same way, may be capable of the same actualization.

Let us now consider the doctrine of functionalism as it is presented in contemporary philosophy of mind and see if it may be reconciled with Aristotle's view. This is the view introduced by Hilary Putnam (1973), who has remarked that the functionalist solution to the mind-body problem is essentially a more precise version of Aristotle's form-matter theory of the soul. Putnam points out that like Aristotle, functionalists are primarily concerned with answering the question, '*What is our intellectual form?*' and not so much with explaining the matter which underlies it. The matter cannot be completely ignored, but it is its organization, not its material, that interests the functionalist. Functionalism arose partly in response to the 'biochauvinism' expressed by some philosophers in their discussion of mental processes such as believing, deliberating, affirming and so on—i.e. thinking in general. Biochauvinism ultimately amounts to the view that mental phenomena and processes are the sorts of things that can only be embodied by brains. According to this view, only beings that process wet fleshy living brains are capable of cognition—i.e., belief, perception and so on. For this reason, it is wrong to ascribe to computers (or anything else that does not have a brain for that matter) the property of having mental processes, since computers are

made up of silicone chips rather than neural-proteins. The problem with biochauvinism is that though as an empirical point it may have some grounding (and this is certainly disputable), as a logical point it appears to be pulled from thin air. It is one thing to claim that a purely conceptual distinction exists between bodies and minds, but to claim that minds can only be embodied by a certain kind of matter looks to have no logical grounds. It is of course logically possible that we might discover a brainless being that is capable of having mental phenomena analogous to our own.

Functionalists like Putnam object that mental states and processes have an abstract nature about them, i.e., an abstractness relative to that which embodies them. On this model it is indeed possible that two things that have nothing in common materially except for the capacity of the parts to constitute a relationally identical network of mental phenomena, may be said to have the same perception or belief. The functionalist is not concerned with identifying a belief state with the neurophysiological states which underlie it, but rather with identifying the functional relation in which that mental event stands to other mental events. Individual mental phenomena play a functional role—a causal role—in relation to other mental phenomena. For instance, my belief that it is raining stands in a causal relation to e.g. my visual perceptions when I glance out the window and my behavioral output of going for an umbrella. To think of any mental phenomena is to think of the functional role it plays in the course of some activity. To summarize, when discussing mental states, the functionalist is concerned only with the causal function or role that is played by that mental state in relation to the whole pattern or framework of mental activity. Such a view is noncommital with respect to materialism and dualism, i.e. either of these views may be held in conjunction with functionalism; it also leaves open the possibility that mental phenomena may occur in brainless beings, such as computers, or aliens, or androids etc.

If Aristotle is to be regarded as a proto-functionalist at all, his would most certainly be a materialist version of functionalism. I.e., Aristotle's functionalism would indeed take heavily into account the physical structures which underlie mental events. But from what has been said earlier, it would be difficult to argue that Aristotle's view is committed to saying that mental phenomena, or soul activity, is *logically* bound to occur only in beings that possess wet fleshy brains.

Aristotle's account of the soul allows for the possibility that different functional features of the soul may be present in radically different sorts of matter, as long as that matter is organized in such a way that it has the capacity for that particular form. Consider Aristotle's claim that if an eye were an animal, then sight would be its soul (412b20). The claim here appears to be that the capacity for sight requires the eye, or perhaps that an eye *qua* part of a whole living body is the part that allows for the capacity for sight to be actualized in a living being, i.e., for seeing to be a feature of the mental activity of that being. This does not mean that any being that perceives redness necessarily has a *biological* eye. It may have an analogous part or feature which allows for this capacity of soul, just as a plant has roots analogous to a mouth, which allow for it to actualize a soul with nutritive capacities. In fact we often call parts of machines by terms like 'robotic eye' or 'mechanical eye', not because these parts are materially identical with our own eyes or the eyes of a dog, but because they are the features of the machine whose complex mechanical structure allows for the machine as a whole to have certain sensory capacities. So, since Aristotle is happy to define an eye as that part of a complex organized body which makes possible the capacity for sight, it is reasonable to suppose that a non-biological eye, given that its structure is complex enough, might underlie the same mental function in a machine.

The function of sight for Aristotle has its corresponding body part, namely the eye, but what about thinking in general, including things like deliberation, contemplation and desire. Do these features of mind have a home in some bodily organ? It is clear that desires for Aristotle are tightly wound up with the body—this goes to show a strong Platonic influence. But it is not always clear what part of the body certain desires are bound up with. The desire for food, Aristotle would probably claim is intimately connected with the stomach; but what about things like the desire for a bit of information, or the desire to see what is behind a locked door with a sign on it that reads 'DO NOT ENTER.' These are certainly desires that we all have, but Aristotle does not give any hint as to how they may be attributed to parts of the body. And what about deliberation and contemplation? Aristotle speaks readily about these functions of the mind, but does not locate them in any particular material organ. Of course Aristotle did not have any theory which resembles contemporary neurology, and perhaps the latter may serve to provide answers

to our present Aristotelian query. But what neurology gives us are empirical theories about the complex organization of the brain and how this organization actualizes a particular form, call it consciousness. Aristotle's project is indeed quite similar to this and his theory could certainly have benefitted from contemporary neurological advances and discoveries.

Functionalists are concerned not with what neurology tells us about neurons *qua* neurons, but what it tells us about the form, if you will, that their organization constitutes. They are very much in favor of the Aristotelian view that organization, insofar as it constitutes the form of a thing, is crucial to our understanding the nature of that thing. The twist that is thrown in by contemporary functionalists is the idea that particular organizations are possible not only in natural bodies but in artificial ones. But this is not too much to ask from Aristotle's theory of soul. At the very least, one must acknowledge that the way in which Aristotle's theory attempts to answer both Platonic dualism, and the reductive materialism of Democritus, is very much like the way in which Putnam's functionalism attempts to answer the problems that arise for Cartesian dualists and identity theorists.

So was Aristotle really the first functionalist? This is not an easy question to answer. I have given what I believe to be as liberal an interpretation as one can give in defense of the view that Aristotle's theory resembles contemporary functionalism. A more liberal interpretation, I believe, would be ascribing more to Aristotle's theory than is really evident in the text. Still, some will contend that even the interpretation given above is guilty of such an offense. It is often a temptation amongst philosophers to ascribe to ancient thinkers, views that they take themselves to be sound.[6] One might wonder if this is really all that is going on when philosophers give a functionalist reading of Aristotle. In some cases this is inevitably so, but the paradigm functionalist interpretation, what Myles Burnyeat calls the 'Putnam-Nussbaum Thesis', is in my opinion a rather good interpretation of Aristotle's theory, and one which breaths new life into an ancient conception of mind which was for some time forgotten by modern philosophy. Interpretation is a vital part of learning from ancient philosophers. For this reason, novel interpretations for modern application should be appreciated not just for their own sake, but for Aristotle's as well.

Notes:

[1]Bertrand Russell 1968, "The Art of Rational Conjecture", from *The Art of Philosophizing & Other Essays*, Littlefield Adams. pg. 25.

[2]This comment is being made in general and is not meant to ignore the fact that Aristotle begins Book II of *De Anima* by dismissing the views of his predecessors, and endeavoring to give a fresh approach to the question of what the soul is. This is only after he has devoted Book I to expositing virtually all major theories of the soul which preceded his own. Interestingly (especially for what follows) one can see an analogy here between Aristotle's method and Descartes.'

[3]See M.F. Burnyeat, "Is an Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind Still Credible?" (1984); Martha C. Nussbaum and Hilary Putnam, "Changing Aristotle's Mind" (1992).

[4]See the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. I: Ch. 6; Aristotle claims that there are at least as many senses of good as there are categories of being (1096a 24-30). But this can easily be taken to be in line with Meno's position (which he borrows from Gorgias).

[5]Descartes on the other hand would indeed be satisfied with a general account of the nature of the soul, namely that it is thinking substance, for he believed thought to be the only attribute of substance that qualifies it as a soul.

[6]In a short paper entitled "Was Aristotle *Really* a Functionalist?" Christopher D. Green notes that back in the 6th century, John Philoponus remarked that "commentators on Aristotle are inclined to try to attribute to him doctrines which they themselves think sound."

art

MARK GOLDBERGER
Allison Eats Ice Cream | 1899
black & white photography

JACQUELINE M. WALLER
Cities
black & white photography

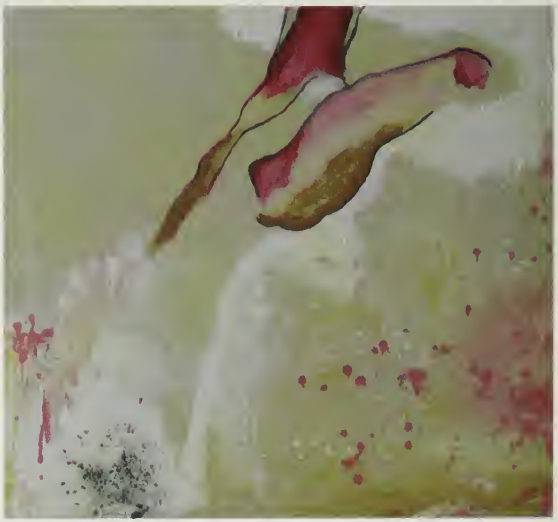
ARTHUR J. GORHAM
Tree #1 & #2
black & white digital photography

DYLAN SEO
Eiffel Tower
black & white photography, monoprint

JANET McCOURT
High Noon at the Rockies
acrylic on canvas

BRIDGETTE MELVIN
Terry
acrylic on canvas

BRIDGETTE MELVIN
It's Not Christmas
acrylic on canvas



SHAUN MacLEAN MARROW
Untitled
oil & charcoal on canvas

BHAVINI PATEL
Bike
linocut

JENELLE PIERCE
Blue: DKNY
black & white photography






DERECK MANGUS
from Critical Mass: A Bicycle Revolution
digital video stills

TARA McCAULEY
Look | Untitled
mixed media

DAVID PEREIRA
Otis Warhol
digital image

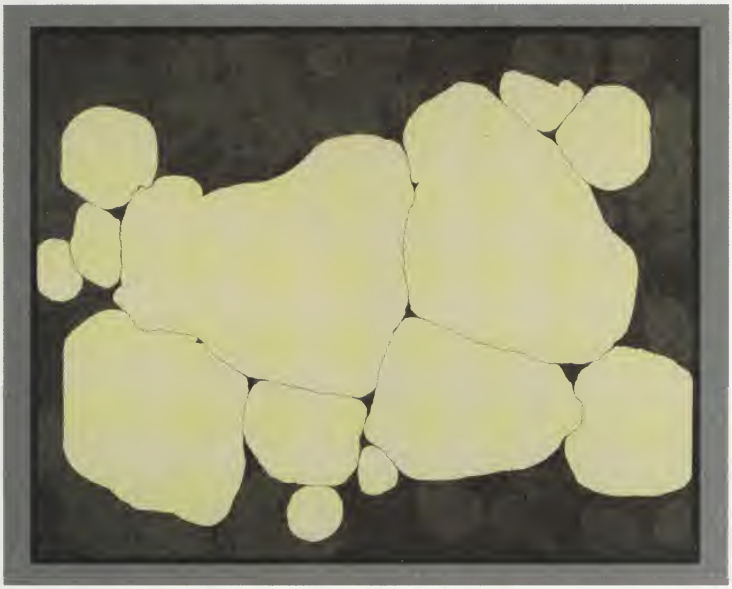
JOHATHAN BANCROFT COLON
Southbound by 42 Hours | What Happened to That Thought
oil on canvas | oil & ink on canvas

M. KARAMU SILLAH
Loosen Up
black & white photography

JUSTIN HUGHES
Portrait of the Artist as a Celebrity
cardboard cutout, lifesize digital image

LIA ROUSSET
Lost
black & white photography

VITOR CARDOSO
Unititled
printmaking



SHUNSUKE MIZUMOTO
An Existence
pen on paper

ZOE PERRY
Girl on Horse | Mother & Son Dancing
black & white photography

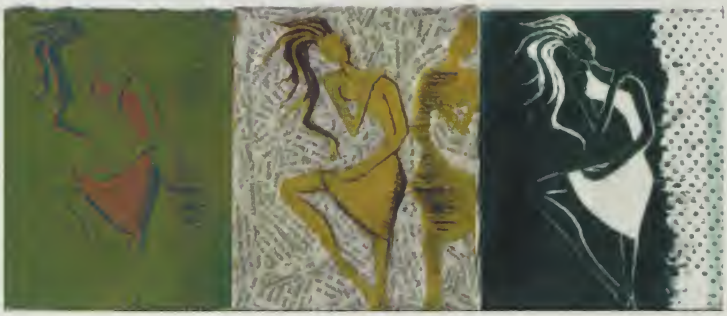
ANNEMARIE FALLON
from Faces of Expectancy
mesh form sculpture

SHANNON KEHOE
Self-Portrait
black & white photography

MAIRIM KILMISTER
The Body I & II
black & white photography

KORY VERGETS
Fleshstone | Bikes
color photography

STEVE OSEMWENKHAE
Spin Move | Superman
color photography | black & white photography



YING GONG
Fabrics | Fashion
photo etching

RACHAEL PORTER
Leisure | Bored Housewife
black & white photography

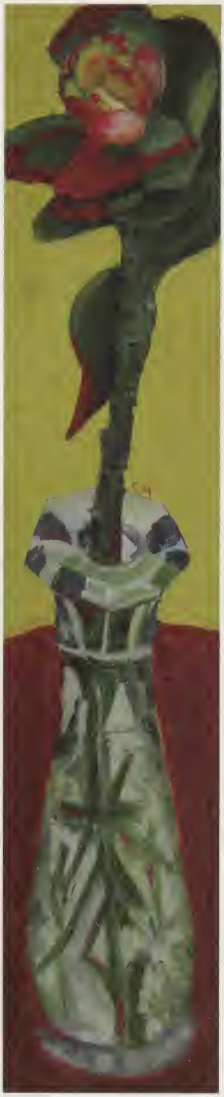
MICHAEL BODGE
OMFG!!
black & white photography

MELISSA HARDIMAN
Lost Shipyard
black & white photography

ALICIA POSELL-WILSON
Flower
cyanotype

ALICIA POSELL-WILSON
Old Mexico
polaroid transfer

STEPHANIE ROSALIE EATON
Globuless
line etching



CATHERINE D. ANDERSON
Decorative Kale #1
acrylic on wood

RON DiBONA
Greenest
color photography

RON DiBONA
Rope | Unwelcome
color photography