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NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY

FOLKLORE OF ELECTRICAL MAN

An essay about Marshall McLuhan

BY RAYMOND B. WADDINGTON

THE GREAT TAOS BANK ROBBERY

BY TONY HILLERMAN

THE EDUCATION OF EUGENE GANT

a new perspective on Thomas Wolfe

BY

BY ROBERT GRANT EDSEL FORD, JR. AND MURRO

POETRY

JAMES BERTOLINO, PHILIP LEGLER, THOMAS MCAFEE
JOHN GAW MEEHAN, HERBERT MORRIS, DONALD TWINELLA
HENRY TAYLOR

ONE DOLLAR

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In a Glass Brightly

PUBLISHERS are egotistical fellows, inclined to think that when their authors achieve success (the important authors are referred to as our authors), this must somehow be due to the publisher's perspicacity in recognizing talent. *NMQ* has, we like to think, an attractive record of having *NMQ* pieces reprinted by other perspicacious publishers. The recent mail has kept us in a daily sun-bath of reflected glory, as the following notes show.

CYNTHIA OZICK is the author of *Trust*, a long novel released recently by the New American Library and reviewed with high praise. Miss Ozick has written poetry and reviews for *NMQ*.

ERNEST GAINES ("My Grandpa and the Haint," a story in the Summer 1966 *NMQ*) is represented in Hill and Wang's anthology, *American Negro Short Stories* and in Louisiana State University Press's *Southern Writing in the Sixties*.

THOMAS MCAFEE (who has a poem in this issue) and HENRY TAYLOR (whose verse appears in this and previous issues) have poetry in *The Girl in the Black Raincoat*, edited by George Garrett and published by Duell, Sloan and Pearce. The volume is an anthology of poetry and fiction.

The July 1966 *Comentario*, a monthly publication of the United States Information Service in Montevideo, Uruguay, has reprinted a Spanish translation of JOHN DONALD ROBB's article, "The Function of the Contemporary Artist and Composer," which *NMQ* published originally in Summer 1965. *Comentario* publishes articles on arts and letters, science, and on contemporary politics and culture. Dr. Robb's article also is printed in Japanese in *Nishibei Forum*, No. 8, a USIA scholarly journal distributed in Japan.

KARL MALKOFF, a reviewer for the *Quarterly* in the past year, is the author of an excellent new book, *Theodore Roethke: An Introduction to the Poetry*, issued by Columbia University Press.

W. W. Norton is publishing poet WILLIAM BURFORD's volume of verse, *A Beginning*. The University of Nebraska Press is issuing STANLEY COOPERMAN's book of poems, *The Day of the Parrot*. Both authors are recent contributors to *New Mexico Quarterly*.

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✿ Former political writer, managing editor, and executive editor of *The New Mexican*, Santa Fe, TONY HILLERMAN is chairman of the Department of Journalism at UNM. Three times he has been the recipient of the Shaffer Award, in 1961 and 1962 for the best news story and in 1962 for best editorial. His experience has included police reporting, wire-service bureau management and editorships in Texas and Oklahoma. In addition, he has published pieces in several periodicals.

The Great Taos Bank Robbery

BY TONY HILLERMAN

THE NEWSROOM of *The New Mexican* first got word of the incident about ten minutes after nine the morning of November 12, 1957. Mrs. Ruth Fish, who had served for many years as manager of the Taos Chamber of Commerce and almost as many as Taos correspondent for the Santa Fe newspaper, called collect and asked for the city editor.

She told the city editor that the Taos bank would be robbed that morning. She said that she would walk over to the bank and watch this operation. She promised to call in an eyewitness account before the first edition deadline at 11:00 A.M.

The city editor asked how Mrs. Fish knew the bank was to be robbed. Mrs. Fish, in a hurry to get off the telephone and become an eyewitness, explained very briefly that one of her lady friends had stopped in her office and told her so. The lady was now waiting so that they could walk down together and watch.

But, the city editor insisted, how did the lady friend know the bank was to be robbed that morning?

Because, Mrs. Fish explained with patience, the two bank robbers were standing in line at this very moment waiting their turn at the teller's cage.

But, persisted the city editor, how was it possible to predict that these two persons intended to rob the bank?

This presumption seemed safe, Mrs. Fish said, because one of the two men was disguised as a woman and because he was holding a pistol under his purse. Whereupon she said good-by and hung up.

While astonished by the foregoing, the city editor recalled later that he had no doubt at all that the bank would indeed be robbed in the fashion described. If the reader feels less sure at this point, it is because the city editor had two advantages. First, he knew Mrs. Fish. She is an elderly woman of dignity, charm and grandmotherly appearance with an unflawed reputation for accuracy. Second, he knew Taos. While bank robbers probably wouldn't stand politely in line with the paying

customers in Omaha or Atlanta, there was no reason to believe they wouldn't in this peculiar little town.

As a matter of fact they were doing exactly this, and their courtliness was about to cause them trouble. The chain of events which followed did not reach its semifinal anticlimax until sixty hours later and was not officially ended until the following February, when the federal grand jury met sixty-five miles south in Santa Fe. By then the affair was being called The Great Taos Bank Robbery.

Lest the reader be misled by this title, he should be warned that Taos also lists in its litany of notable events The Great Flood of 1935. If the reader can accept the fact that Taos managed a Great Flood without a river and with the very modest amount of water available in its arid climate, he is prepared to hear more about what happened on November 12, 1957.

After the city editor collected his wits, he placed a long distance call to the bank. The secretary who answered didn't know anything about any bank robbery, but she referred the call to a higher ranking official. The city editor asked this gentleman if his bank had been robbed. Certainly not, said the banker. How in the world did such rumors get started?

A few minutes later Mrs. Fish called back, slightly breathless. She reported that she and her friend had walked through the alley behind the Safeway Store and arrived at the bank just as two men with drawn pistols dashed from the front door. One of the men was dressed as a woman, as previously reported. He ran awkwardly in his high heels. The two jumped into a green pick-up truck parked in the alley and drove away. From what she had learned from spectators fortunate enough to arrive earlier, the two men had not taken any money from the bank. She would investigate further and call back. Mrs. Fish, a woman of impeccable courtesy, hung up without a word of reproach to the city editor for causing her to be late for the event.

The city editor now placed another call to the banker. He asked the banker if he was sure his bank hadn't been robbed, or something. The bank official now was less confident. He was sure nobody had taken any money but he was also sure that something funny had been going on. He had been hearing something about a man dressed as a woman, and two men running wildly out of the bank lobby, and other confusing stories.

Meanwhile, the police reporter had called the Taos police department and said he was checking on a rumor that there had been a bank

robbery. The policeman who answered said no, there hadn't been one and he guessed the police would be the first to hear about it if there was one, wouldn't they? The reporter said yes, he guessed that was true. Actually, the police would be approximately the last to hear about it, being informed only after the pastor of the local United Brethren Church entered the picture.

By then Mrs. Fish had made her third call and provided the city editor with a detailed account of what had happened in the bank lobby. The two men had arrived just as the bank opened its doors at 9:00 A.M. They found a crowd of Taos businessmen waiting to check out funds to fuel their cash registers for the day. The suspects joined the rush to the tellers' cages but were outdistanced, perhaps because of the high heels, and were stuck well back in the line. Customers quickly noticed that the line-stander clad as a woman had a full day's growth of dark stubble bristling through his pancake makeup and that the nylons encased an unseemly growth of leg hair. They also noticed that this person's costume was remarkably chic for Taos, which is one of the few places where a man can still feel adequately dressed in a double-breasted suit. All this was enough to cause a modest amount of buzzing in the lobby, but probably not much. Taos is a tolerant village, well accustomed to whimsy. It has been said that if the late James Thurber had been raised here he would have never celebrated the antics of his family in print, since what seems outlandish in Columbus, Ohio, seems fairly normal in Taos. It is also said that if Sinclair Lewis had been a Taoseño, the Mr. Babbitt of his *Main Street* would have had a common-law wife and worn sandals. In Taos a certain amount of eccentricity is required for conformity.

Interest among the spectators quickened, however, when some of them saw—or thought they saw—a pistol in the hand of the psuedo-woman. The fleet-footed ones, who had beat the rush to the tellers' windows and therefore left early, spread the news of this unusual sight around Taos Plaza. Thus did Mrs. Fish receive the word, and thus were many curious townsfolk drawn to the bank to watch the spectacle.

Several days later, one of the two suspects was to complain to federal agents that some among this growing crowd of spectators began giggling. Whether or not Taos residents were guilty of such churlishness, the two young men soon began suffering from stage fright. Embarrassed by the scrutiny of the crowd, they fled from the bank just as Mrs. Fish and her friend were arriving.

It was definitely established finally that both men were armed with

loaded pistols. Although they were not to use these weapons until later, and then only when cruelly provoked, these revolvers are important because they lend an air of reality to The Great Taos Bank Robbery. It was much the same with The Great Flood of 1935. While it wasn't actually a flood in the usual definition, people actually did get wet and Taoseños defend this historic event from scoffers by pointing out that Governor Clyde Tingley declared an emergency and scores of families were evacuated into the National Guard Armory.

These facts seem persuasive unless one knows that this Great Flood was actually an epidemic of leaking roofs—the combined effect of a freakishly slow and persistent rain and the traditional Taos habit of roofing flat-topped adobe buildings with hard-packed adobe clay. This roofing material is usually as effective as it is inexpensive, since Taos rainstorms are commonly brief, noisy and productive of very little moisture. Taos learned in 1935 that when an Eastern-style three-day drizzle happens such economical roofs tend to dissolve and pour through the ceilings. Residents, Taos-like, persist in using dirt roofs and profited from the experience only by the legends of bravery, charity and outrageous discomfort which it created.

Today Taoseños rely on the two loaded pistols to lend authenticity to their Great Taos Bank Robbery just as they drag out the Governor's unlocking of the armory when an outsider deprecates their flood. But before these pistols started going off, a couple of things had to happen.

As Mrs. Fish reported, the two suspects roared away from the scene of their fiasco in the pick-up truck. Their rush may have been prompted by the erroneous notion that someone would call the police, or perhaps by sheer embarrassment. Whatever the cause, the two ran a stop sign and sideswiped a car driven by the United Brethren minister. The minister was not in the mood that morning to turn the other fender. He insisted that the accident be reported to the police and that neither vehicle be moved until an officer arrived. The suspects took a dissenting position and insisted on driving away. The reader is aware that they had good reason for this rudeness but the pastor at the moment was not. Neither could he know that the man in the pickup who wore lipstick and face powder had gotten himself up as a female for the relatively innocent purpose of misleading bank personnel. It is safe to guess that the minister must have suspected a darker purpose, since Taos has long been known as a place of confusion concerning

gender. At any rate, when the two men drove away, the minister gave chase.

Taos is a small community and its streets are few, narrow, crooked and short. It is a completely inappropriate setting for a high-speed automobile chase and offers limited opportunity for the chasesees to elude the chaser. After two or three times around the village the two suspects must have faced the fact that there was no hope of shaking off their pursuer. They began firing their pistols at the minister's car. Thus discouraged, the minister stopped at a telephone and the police, at long last, learned that something was amiss in Taos.

This seeming lack of rapport between Taos and the forces of authority would not surprise those familiar with the history of the village. The attitude of Taoseños had been largely responsible in 1847 for a joint proposal by Secretary of State Daniel Webster and Secretary of War C. M. Conrad that the United States withdraw from the Territory of New Mexico and "allow it to revert to its native inhabitants." The Webster-Conrad discouragement seems to have been due in large part to the fact that the townspeople of Taos, in a cooperative venture with the adjoining Taos Indian Pueblo, had scalped Territorial Governor Charles Bent. The residence where this unique impeachment occurred is still maintained by the village as a museum which, one suspects, celebrates the deed more than the martyr. On another and later occasion, U. S. Attorney W. W. H. Davis reported with disapproving sarcasm that the door of the Taos jail was "securely fastened with a twine string" and concluded that this lack of a bona fide lock might be why prisoners were so often missing when time came to try them. A person reading the Davis diary suspects he would have had more to say on this subject had his attention not been diverted by conditions at the Pontius Pilate Hotel. Mr. Davis had called the attention of the innkeeper to the lack of coverings on his bed and his host had corrected this deficiency by handing him the cloth off the dining table. Dr. Davis reported himself "somewhat exercised of mind" during the night with the question of how his host would supply the place of the table cloth when morning came. When the sheet reappeared on the breakfast table, the U. S. Attorney celebrated this ingenuity with a heroic couplet:

Thus it contrived the double debt to pay,
A sheet by night—a table cloth by day.

The Taos jail is now locked, but its walls are still made of adobe which is vulnerable—as a prisoner named Danny Montoya recently demonstrated—to plastic spoons. Montoya spooned a hole through the wall but made two mistakes. First, he chose the wrong wall—digging his way into the county treasurer's office, which adjoins the lockup, instead of to freedom. Second, he underestimated his diameter, jammed himself into his exit route, and spent the night like a cork in a bottle with his head still in custody.

Aside from the jail, the disinterest of Taoseños in law enforcement can perhaps best be illustrated by an obituary article to which *El Crepusculo de Libertad*, a now-defunct Taos weekly newspaper, devoted two thirds of its front page in 1953. The obituary reported the death of John Dunn, a very prominent Taos resident. It noted that Mr. Dunn had arrived in Taos after making his way from the Texas State Penitentiary without benefit of pardon or parole and with thirty-nine years and six months left to serve on a forty-year sentence. It recounted Mr. Dunn's exploits as a dealer of two-card monte and as operator of gambling establishments at Taos and elsewhere in the county. "John Dunn was at his best behind a roulette wheel or a Monte table, where you never got more than was coming to you and if you didn't watch it was less. I have seen John Dunn stand for ten hours at a roulette wheel and never look up, never asleep on the job, and never overlooking a chance to slip you a short stack of chips," the obituary writer reported.

Gambling is not legal in New Mexico. Nor, for that matter, is escaping from prison. Yet before John Dunn died in 1953 at the age of ninety-four, he had lived sixty-four years in Taos, had been in the public eye enough to have the John Dunn Bridge bear his name, and had not been molested by the law. One can only assume that, as in the case of The Great Taos Bank Robbery, police were slow in getting the word.

Once the police were belatedly informed of the doings of November 12, at the bank and elsewhere, they reacted with vigor. A search began immediately for the two suspects. The State Police were notified and the Federal Bureau of Investigation was told of the apparent affront to the Federal Banking Act. By noon, the population of Taos—normally about 1,850—had been swollen by an influx of various types of officers. In addition to the genuine gendarmes representing federal, state, county, and village governments, volunteer organizations such as the Mounted Patrol and Sheriff's Posse were mobilized.

Authorities soon had the escape vehicle. It was driven into the midst of a swarm of lawmen by Jose T. Cárdenas. Mr. Cárdenas, when he collected himself from the shock of having guns pointed at him, explained that he had loaned his truck to a friend the previous day and that it had been left at his house that morning bearing signs of collision damage. Mr. Cárdenas was at that moment in search of this friend to demand an explanation.

The reader might well pause here and recollect that it is traditional among robbers to steal escape vehicles, and not to borrow them from friends. Borrowing, while more polite, leads to speedy identification when the car is recovered. Mr. Cárdenas was able to tell police that he had loaned his truck to an acquaintance, whom we shall call Cipriano Mondragón, and that Mr. Mondragón was accompanied by a twenty-three-year-old visitor from Maine, to whom we will assign the name of Eddie Mackey.

Police also quickly received a hint of why the two had borrowed the truck a day early. Witnesses were found who had seen them at the entrance of the bank the previous morning—the morning of November 11. The witnesses remembered this because they thought it odd to see a man dressed as a woman trying to get into the bank on Veterans' Day. If any doubts remained on the subject, this should have proved that the two were not professional bank bandits, since professionals presumably would know about national bank holidays.

At this point, the authorities appeared to be in an unusually happy position. They knew the identities of both men they sought. They had excellent descriptions of the suspects. They were confident both were afoot in Taos. The village is small, the lawmen were numerous, and there was every reason for confidence that the two culprits would be in custody in a very few minutes. The officers fanned out from the plaza to press their search.

This proved to be a mistake, because Mondragón and Mackey had decided to walk down to the plaza to try to borrow some money. While the federal, state, county and city officers and their volunteer posses manned roadblocks and poked around in the outlying areas, the two fugitives were making a door-to-door canvass of downtown bars soliciting loans from the bartenders. Not unnaturally, the bar-keeps considered the two as poor credit risks at the moment. By the time it occurred to someone to inform the law of this activity, Mondragón and Mackey had become discouraged and wandered off.

When the sun dipped behind the Conejos Mountains, the lawmen

had found Mondragón's female attire abandoned in an outdoor toilet but the fugitives were still at large. The hunt continued through the night, brightening the frosty November darkness with flashlights and electric lanterns. Considering the number of officers involved and the modest dimensions of Taos it is safe to guess that at least one policeman looked almost everywhere at least once, except in the deserted house where the two had chosen to sleep. When the sun rose over the Taos Mountains the morning of November 13, Mondragón and Mackey were still at large. There was some talk now of sending for Sam, the New Mexico bloodhound, but the motion apparently died for lack of a second. Perhaps this was because the only time Sam was used in Taos County he immediately became disoriented, strayed, and was thoroughly lost for two days.

November 13 passed with a methodical and fruitless combing of the village. There was a brief flurry of excitement when officers learned in some roundabout manner that Mondragón and Mackey had again appeared on the plaza, renewing their futile attempts to float a loan. Police now discovered, twelve hours too late to do them any good, where Mondragón and Mackey had spent the previous night. They discovered that a neighborhood householder had happened by their hideout, had seen the fugitives, had stopped to chat with them about the excitement they had caused, and had then left to buy them some groceries. The reader by now will not be surprised to know that this good neighbor did not bother to notify the police. But he did play a little joke on the culprits when he returned with the food, telling them that they had critically wounded the minister and that officers had orders to get them dead or alive. This unnerving bit of misinformation drove the two to make their second return to the plaza the next morning to renew the attempt to borrow traveling money. While one can imagine that their pleas were eloquent, the bartenders remained adamant. Mondragón told a reporter two days later that by now he and Mackey were "feeling mighty blue."

If the fugitives were depressed by November 13, it is safe to guess that those involved in the search for them shared this feeling. Taos does not lend itself to extended manhunts, since the posse members soon run out of places to look. To make matters worse, the press had taken the matter lightly from the first and the newspaper irreverence increased as the search dragged on. When November 14 wore on without a sign of the fugitives, those in charge of the hunt must have been

casting about for a dignified excuse to call off the whole affair. Their ordeal, however, was almost over.

That night, a Taos resident named Nat Flores was lying on his bed reading the evening paper when he heard a tapping on his window. Outside he saw two young men whom he recognized as Mondragón and Mackey. The two inquired if he might provide them with a meal and Flores, with typical "my house is your house" Taos hospitality, invited his visitors in for supper. During the meal, Flores and Joe V. Montoya, a brother-in-law who had stopped in for a chat, found Mondragón and Mackey in a gloomy mood. The two said they had spent the previous night in frost-bitten discomfort in Kit Carson Park, a small recreation area not far from Taos Plaza. One of the possemen, Mackey complained, had almost stepped on his finger. Flores and Montoya, after a lengthy argument in which Flores recalled quoting passages from the Bible, persuaded the two that they should accept a ride down to the sheriff's office after supper and turn themselves in.

The final footnote on The Great Taos Bank Robbery was not written until February 4, 1958. After the surrender, officers found the two refreshingly frank about their activities. In due course, Cipriano Mondragón and Eddie Mackey were accused by the U.S. District Attorney of conspiring to violate the provisions of the Federal Banking Act and their case was placed on the winter docket for consideration by the Federal Grand Jury. Unfortunately, grand jury proceedings are secret so we will never know exactly what happened when the case was presented. We do know that the jury returned a "no bill," which indicates—at the very least—that the jurors could not be convinced that Mondragón and Mackey took their pistols into the Taos bank with felonious intentions. If the jurors were not familiar with Taos, they may have suspected the FBI imagined the whole unlikely episode.

Thus The Great Taos Bank Robbery was denied the official federal imprimatur of indictments and was left as the sort of thing Alice's Mad Hatter might call an Unfelonious Unrobbery.

Still, if you happen to be in Taos on Veterans' Day and the man on the next bar stool happens to be an Old Taos Hand, you're likely to hear something like this:

"You know, tomorrow is the anniversary of our Big Bank Robbery. . . ."

Or maybe he'll tell you about The Great Flood of 1935.

The Old Lineman

BY ROBERT GRANAT

BECAUSE I don't travel very often, I suppose, I still find myself as alert as a boy to the sensuality of departures. Even by train. The huge hermetic steel tubes, shivering and hissing impatiently, the cool machined air, the carpeted hush after the sweaty confusion outside, the sense of enormous power about to be released—all this excites me. And, last Tuesday in Los Angeles, the potential adventure of that empty seat beside me.

I peered down through the newly washed double panes at the cluster of humanity on the platform squeezing slowly into the car. Which of those shapes held the ticket for the seat and was coming to relax into the endometrious foam beside me to share the body-to-body intimacy of the long hurtling night ahead? Looking them over, my eyes rested on one, a blonde who seemed to have been blown into her pink suit like a balloon, one of California's finest fruits. I could almost smell her perfume through the glass and steel, a lemon orchard at night. Something told me it was she.

Something which, as usual, lied. I saw her, followed by a suntanned male equivalent of herself, swallowed by the coach ahead.

People were filing past through the aisle and no one stopped. I was beginning to think I was going to have the entire section to myself when somebody, while looking directly at the clearly marked number plate, asked me, "This here seat thirty, young feller?" It was an old man. He too had his aroma—like an old ash tray.

I nodded, my fantasies snuffing out like candles without oxygen.

"That's what I figgered."

I said nothing, but stood up and helped him stow his suitcase in the rack. Then I sat back down and shifted emphatically away from him and toward the window. Behind me I heard the whistling sounds as he caught his breath, and for a long time after the train had glided away from the platform I could feel his eyes on the back of my neck like a pair of fingers.

Finally I turned and faced forward, hoping to doze.

"Sure nice and cool in here, ain't it?"

I looked over at him. His mouth hung slightly open. For some reason I thought of a featherless nestling parrot.

"Yes it is." I sighed. He talked from Los Angeles to Needles.

Eighty-two years old he was, this comin' Friday . . . (Is that so? You don't look it.) Winfrey Yates, his name was. Winfrey—that was his mother's family name before she married his dad. Didn't have no regular first name. Win was what they all called him. (Pretty hard name to live up to, isn't it?)

I was thinking about the blonde. Not lusting. Just reflecting how her charm lay in her suppressing her individuality, which nobody was interested in, successful to the degree she became a thing, a lovely thing among things. At the same time I scanned my companion's conversation like a newspaper, which seemed to me as much attention as he wanted, since he kept beaming at me contentedly. And I realized suddenly I too, like the blonde, was most desirable as fantasy, a thing. A nice young feller, who didn't call him Pop, who had forgiven him the sin of being old, as if age were a venereal disease one caught in dirty ways.

"Lineman," I heard him say.

"Lineman?"

"You betcha, that's what I was, a lineman—and a good one too—since way before you was even a gleam in yer daddy's eye."

"With the railroad, you mean?"

"Railroad? You don't mean to tell me you don't know what a lineman is, young man? Who you think puts up all them telephone and power lines? Us fellers! Heck, I was on them lines fer nigh on forty years, crew foreman fer most of 'em, shimmy up them poles like an old monkey. Wouldn't believe it to look at me now."

He looked at me now, waiting for an answer.

"Oh, I don't know. You still look pretty spry to me."

"Use to weigh hunnert ninety-five and a half pounds. Did a little boxin' on the side—and mind you, wasn't none of this here padded-gloves stuff you fellers go in fer nowadays, no sir!"

I looked at his hands. Large and square, splotched with brown, their skin shiny and fragile and scaly. He wore a large gold-onyx ring with lodge insignia, and smelt of musty tobacco.

"Well," I said. Which was sufficient for such conversations. The train had reached Barstow and I got out for a little air. A blast of desert heat drove me black to Win's side.

"Yep, been retired now seventeen years this comin' January. Got me a little room out by Santa Monica, nice little pension check comes in first of the month like clockwork."

"Like California?"

"Oh, it's purty nice, I guess, fer some folks. But I'm a feller used to workin' hard all my life . . . git awful tired settin' around looking at the TV. But just can't do nothin' no more. Start in to puffin', head starts clickin' like this old train here. You can bet your life though, if I was your age, I'd be out there climbin' them poles right now . . . none of yer eight-hour days neither. Ten, twelve, fourteen—I mean, we really worked."

I found myself thinking it was unjust that this man had been blighted with age, wishing somehow I could arrange a second youth for him.

"Yep," he sighed, and was silent for a stretch. We watched the Mojave flying by outside, the writhing misshapen Joshua trees being persecuted by the sadistic sun. There was no sign of man except for the endless pickets of telephone poles, the crosses of progress, with their network of wires dipping and dipping and dipping between them.

"I wonder what God made the desert for?" I remarked, realizing this from some archaic instinct to talk of eternal things in the presence of old men.

"Betcha it's hunnert twenty-five degrees out there . . . many a time we was out puttin' in poles in heat jes like that. That big fat son-of-a-gun we raised up in Albakirk now. . . ."

And so on to the Arizona border.

By the time we reached Needles, I thought he'd told me everything he had to tell me. Hadn't been back East, he said, fer goin' on fourteen years now. Was on his way to Sandusky to spend couple, three, weeks with his daughter and her family. Youngest daughter, that was. Got three daughters, middle one lives in Santa Monica, husband works at Lockheed, makes good money, that's how come he moved to California. . . .

"Say there, young feller, where'bouts you hail from?"

"Me?" I was startled.

"Where you headin' fer?"

"New Mexico."

"That right? Albakirk?"

"No. Little village in the mountains above Santa Fe. You wouldn't know it."

"Wouldn't eh? Hell, boy, you talkin' to a man that's been in ever' town in New Mexico. Was workin' in that state before it even joined up with the Union. Us fellers put up the first lines in Albakirk, back when it was nothin' but a little old Messkin town. Jes wait'll we git there. I got a little surprise fer you. I got something I want to show you. I want to show you that pole, the one I put up right this side the depot. Can't miss it, one of the biggest poles you ever saw, axis pole, carry twenty-five, thirty lines. I remember settin' up that pole jes like it was yesterday. Had a great big Irishman working with me, Jimmy Noonan, name was, bright red hair, you know, tough as they come. Well, that old pole give us one helluva time, I'll tell you. We hit rock about four feet down—and mind you, that there was all hand work—we didn't have none of this fancy power equipment you guys use today. No sir, that was man's work in them days. Well, gettin' on about three in the afternoon, hot as the hinges of Hades it was, and old Jimmy says to me, 'You sure ain't figgerin' on gittin' that bastard up there this afternoon, are you, Win?' 'I sure's hell am, Jimmy,' I told him. 'Five bucks says you won't do it,' he says. 'OK, old boy,' I says to him, 'you can pay me any time you feel like!'

"And young feller, would you believe it? Time that old sun hit the tops of them Sandia Mountains, that old pole was standing up there just as stiff and solid, like it growed there!"

I said, "So you won, eh Win?"

"I sure did!" He chuckled contentedly. His old blue eyes, faded like much-laundered denim workpants, gleamed, and I knew they were seeing the red hair and face of the Irishman Jimmy Noonan, and perhaps the big steak-and-whisky meal he'd enjoyed at his expense.

"Just you wait," he said, reaching out and slapping my knee, "Just you wait till I show you that old pole me and Jimmy put up there!"

Pillows were distributed and the coach lights dimmed, so that the old lineman was obliged to subside or else disturb the other passengers. He had the kind of voice that can't whisper. But twice during the night he turned in my direction and, waiting until I opened an eye, spoke to me. The first time he said:

"Dead now, poor feller, been dead fer forty years. Used to drink heavy, you know, and one time he come to work drunk and fell off of a pole . . . broke his back."

And the second time, an hour or so before dawn:

"Eighteen inches thick, it was, weighed a ton and a half easy. . . ."

We were due in Albuquerque a little after one. It was dull out and

blowy. Small whirlwinds whipped and frolicked across the deserted prairie like the whelps of some dangerous species while tall blue twisters stood guard on the horizons. At Belen I returned from the club car where I had gone for a little break, and found the old man sitting in my seat. "That's OK, stay right there," I told him and sat down in his.

"She's twenty-two minutes late, make it up in Kansas I expect. Good thing you come back. We'll be gittin' into Albakirk purty quick. Want you to keep yer eye out now. Don't want you to miss that old pole of mine, standin' right this side the depot, about ten, fifteen feet from the track, don't want to miss it now, keep yer eye out. . . ."

I stood bending over him and we peered out, both of us, through the now-dirt-streaked window.

"Git ready now, git ready . . . here she comes . . . keep yer eye out. . . ."

Albuquerque came hurtling in as if someone were throwing it at us. Shacks, dry mud walls, wood, iron, cars, bridges, a maze of switches and signal lights, the low Spanish slums of the south side. . . .

"Right here! Right here now . . . look sharp, look sharp, it's ri. . . i. . . i. . ."

His voice drained away as the station sidled up to us in slow motion. There was no big telephone pole.

"What the . . . where'd they . . . right there, it was right there, right in that spot! . . . I swear, son, I ain't one to lie to you! We set it in right there, Jimmy and me, right exactly there!"

The faded blue eyes darted about the station in panic, like those of a little child who has lost his mother in a crowd.

If I were one who took an interest in such information, I could have told the old lineman back in Arizona that the power lines around the Albuquerque station had been taken down and buried years ago.

It was over an hour from Albuquerque to Lamy, but during all that time the old man hadn't a word to say. He sat and stared out the window at the barren, piñon-studded hills over which his face was flying in wan and ghostly reflection.

"Lamy . . . Lamy next!" the conductor called, and I reached up and gathered my belongings together.

"Well, Win, here's where I get off," I said. "You take it easy now."

The old man turned and looked up at me . . . vacantly. I saw at once that he didn't know who I was. His blue-denim eyes had been washed almost white by tears.

THE OLD LINEMAN

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Some Glad Morning

BY EDSSEL FORD

IN THE BACK YARD under a domed summer sky, Sunday School was holding. The girl Willie, being at fourteen the eldest, occupied the pulpit, a crude stool which elevated her—if she kept her feet on the ground to compensate the loss of a leg suffered by the stool long since—above her congregation.

They were three: her brother Vantress, her sister Ulinda, and Lishus Kilcannon, a neighbor girl who had been to a real Sunday School and was prone to put on airs. A fourth of sorts had come with Vantress as a bribe to get him to services; it was a frog who aimed to be christened Napoleon Bonaparte; now, tethered on a string, squinting against the hot sun, it seemed both literally and figuratively on the verge of croaking.

Without hymn books, but with divine inspiration and a stick, Willie conducted the singing.

*Some glad morning when this life is o'er,
I'll fly away.
To that home on God's celestial shore
I'll fly away. . . .*

Vantress, being present largely against his better judgment, was not above dubbing in loud la-la-la's when the facts failed him. Finally Willie could bear no more and stopped the singing.

"You always forget!" she hollered. "You always forget! How come you can't remember a single solitary verse of a song?"

Vantress told her. "I'm dumb," he said, "and I take it from you."

"I don't think he *tries* to remember," Lishus ventured primly.

"He knows the words," Ulinda countered. "He just don't hold with this Sunday Schooling."

"We could expel you, you know," Willie scowled.

"Good," the boy replied. "That'd suit me."

"But we won't. You'd just go forth and sin some more." Willie sighed grandly. "Well, never mind the singing, we'll say our memory pieces next. Lishus?"

Lishus pumped her way out of a bottomless chair brought from her own yard, smoothed the flounces of her flowery dress, and stood erect for her recitation. But the bright look suddenly melted from her face like butter. She bawled: "Vantress put his frog in my sock!"

The pulpit fell over with Willie. "Vantress! Shamey, shamey!" She righted herself and said sternly, "Come forth and kneel down at the altar," indicating a plank laid on the ground between them for such eventualities. Extracting the frog, Vantress grinned and came forth to kneel on the board. Napoleon grunted between his own cheek and the earth.

Willie took a stance and raised her hands over her little brother. "Lord," she intoned, "forgive the traipsepasses and meanness of this wicked little boy and pray keep his sins from rubbing off on the rest of us. Amen! Now go back to your seat and think on these things."

"What things?"

"All of these things, you idiot!"

As Vantress resumed his place on an upturned tub, Ulinda rasped at him, "You sinner!"

Lishus stomped her feet. "This is just awful! I'm going to ask for my letter and join another Sunday School."

"Set down," Willie said, and Lishus did. "Now get up and kindly continue with your memory piece."

Struggling for poise after an expectant glance at Vantress, Lishus declared, "My memory piece is from John. Ouch. Vantress pinched my behind." She rubbed her posterior furtively. "Never mind, I forgive you eighty times eighty. My memory piece is from John. John 1:1 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'" She sat down. Vantress applauded roundly.

Willie said, "Just fine, Lishus. Now tell us what it means."

Lishus was distressed. "You didn't tell us we had to learn what it means."

"I thought it was lovely," said Ulinda.

"It was lovely. Next week, be able to tell us what it means."

"Who knows?" Lishus wailed.

"You could ask your mother."

"She wouldn't know," Ulinda said disdainfully.

"Shoot no!" Vantress put in. "My frog knows more than her."

"Now boys and girls," Willie said, "we've got to learn to be charitable."

"What?" the younger ones hollered, united at least by their ignorance.

"Charitable. Like in 'charity begins at home.' Be nice when we talk bad about people."

"'Oh, for the scarcity of human charity,'" Lishus misquoted. As she retreated behind a high wall of self-satisfaction, Ulinda stuck her tongue out.

Willie didn't know whether the little smart aleck was quoting John again or one of the other books, so she let it ride. "All right, it's your turn, Ulinda."

"Why do ladies always have to be first?"

"You ain't any lady," Vantress said.

"Just for that, make Vantress go next!"

"You might as well get it over with," Willie told her. "Everybody has got to say a memory piece."

"Oh, all right." Ulinda rose and delivered her piece swiftly. "John 11:35 — Jesus wept." And sat down.

Vantress was on his feet instantly. "That's not fair! I had that one! She knew I had that one a year ago!"

Lishus said, "I thought it was nice, sort of."

"You'll just have to think up another one," Willie said. "Say the one you said last week."

"I don't remember it."

"Well, say something. We've all got to say something."

"All right. God damn."

The two younger girls gasped. Willie said sternly, "Shamey, shamey. Come forth and kneel down at the altar again, Vantress. Are we gonna have to spend all our time praying your sins away, so we don't have any time for the sermon?"

"Good grief, Willie. Looks like one praying would take care of me at least till Sunday School's over."

"Kneel down," she commanded. He did. "Lord, you ain't doing a very good job of keeping this wicked little boy out of meanness. Please work at it a little harder, amen."

"Isn't he a despair?" Lishus whispered as the boy swaggered back to his tub, grinning.

"If you're in need of a man around your house," Ulinda said, "please take Vantress."

"We wouldn't have him!" Lishus hissed. "Besides, you all need a man worse than we do."

From the pulpit, Willie boomed, "We will now have the sermon. Bow your heads, everybody." Everybody did. Willie got out one word—"Lord"—before the back door of the house opened and her mother blindly flung a bucket of mopwater into their midst. The flock scattered wildly. Dripping, Willie said, "Jesus Christ, Mama. Look what you've done to our Sunday School."

Vantress disappeared over the fence: "My frog! My frog's got loose, and him not christened yet!"

"Glory be," said Lishus.

Ulinda, practicing charity, said to her dumbfounded mother, "It's all right, Mama. We was just about finished up, anyway. It wasn't much of a service."

Mrs. Constantine looked out over their heads for a long moment, then turned back inside and closed the door without a word. Willie looked, too, standing on tiptoe to see if someone was maybe coming down the back alley, but nobody was there except Vantress, bounding about like a kangaroo as he sighted, leaped upon, and lost his frog time after time.

"Everybody come right back here," she commanded. "We ain't had the sermon yet. Come back, now! Vantress, you come on back here!"

"Present!" he hollered, slipping through the broken fence. When he had tied the string on Napoleon's leg, the congregation resumed their places.

"We've got to have the sermon yet," Willie said, "and take up the collection and sing the closing hymn. And nobody is going to leave again until it's all took care of. Is that clear?" Lishus raised her hand. "What is it, Lish?"

"May I go wee-wee before we do all that?"

"No. You should've done it before you came. Now everybody bow your heads." Everybody did. "Lord, we ain't got no great big old church house to hold our Sunday School in—"

"Amen," said Vantress in a deep voice.

"But that ain't stopping us, Lord."

"Amen," Vantress croaked.

"Shut up, will you?" snapped the preacher. "As a matter of fact, Lord, it ain't even Sunday, but that don't stop your rightful children from singing and praying and carrying on whenever they have a mind to. Lord, keep watch over us so's we don't fall into sin and meanness,

and if we do, just drop us over with a bolt of lightning so's we'll know that you are the shepherd and we are the sheep."

"Baaa-aaa!" The girls giggled.

"And Lord, if you don't have anybody in mind for that first bolt, kindly give some thought to this wicked little boy in our congregation by name of Vantress Constantine, who is in bad need of a lesson. Strike him down like a pistilance, Lord; thy will be done."

Willie looked up to see if Vantress had been struck down; and, sure enough, he fell off the tub and lay on the ground, writhing and grinning.

"Thank you, Lord. Amen!" Willie walked over to the prone boy, spiling, "Now brothers and sisters, mainly sisters, I call on you to be witness to a miraculous healing." She put out her hands over him. "Now, Brother Vantress, I bid you to rise up and walk." He didn't move; didn't even open his eyes. The two younger girls huddled against one another in awe. "Rise, Brother Vantress! Take up your legs and walk!"

The boy rolled over in the dirt. "I can't get up! I've been lightning struck!"

Shaken, Lishus said, "Oh get up, for crying out loud."

And Ulinda: "Get up, Vantress, so we can get this thing over with."

A gross sigh passed her brother's lips. "I'm going to hell. I see the fire and that old devil with his pitcher-fork!"

Exasperated by the delay of her miracle, Willie rasped, "Oh you of little faith, get up dammit!" She kicked Vantress soundly on the rump and he was up like a shot, the healing instantaneous.

"You're some healer, you son-of-a-bitching gospel-girl!" he hollered, rubbing his tailbone. "We gonna get us a new preacher, you keep carrying on like that! I don't have to come to your Sunday School, you know. I can get some other preacher to christen my frog."

"Oh, for crying out loud," Lishus said.

And Ulinda: "Don't be such a cry-baby. You done nothing all day but cry."

"Peace. Peace." Willie poured oil. "Is this the thanks your preacher gets for healing you?"

"You ain't healed me, you've ruint me!"

"Set down," she said firmly.

"I can't."



"Well then stand up for the rest of the services. But keep your trap shut, will you?"

"Goodness gracious, such discord!" Lishus said. "I'm going to transfer my membership to some other Sunday School."

"You can't do that," Willie said. "Membership in this domination is for life."

Lishus blinked. "You never told me that, when I joined."

"It was for your own good. What you don't know won't hurt you. Now set down."

"I've got to go wee-wee."

Willie pushed her back down into the bottomless pew. "You can wee-wee all day when you get to heaven," she told her sternly. "But it ain't going to put out the fire if you go to the bad place, so set down."

"Amen," Ulinda said fastidiously.

Vantress beat on the tub. "When are you gonna christen my frog?"

"When I get done with the sermon and not before so shut up."

"He could die of old age before then! Frogs don't live very long, you know."

"That one's gonna live a heap sight longer than you, I'll bet you a four-dollar bill!"

"Goodness," said Ulinda, "who's got four dollars?"

Willie cut in: "That reminds me. It might be a good idea to take up the collection now, instead of waiting. I ain't so sure this service is ever going to get finished anyway, and we might as well take care of first things first."

Vantress was on his feet. "I'll pass the can."

"SET DOWN! I'll pass the can." Willie reached under the pulpit and brought forth an old coffee can. "I'm first deacon in this Sunday School," she said. "You know the first deacon gets to pass the can."

Lishus cast a longing eye at the faded red Folgers can and said meekly, "Could I please use the can when you're through passing it?"

"No!" Willie passed the can. The girls giggled. When it was his turn, Vantress took the can, looked into it, and, finding nothing, returned it to Willie. She replaced it under the pulpit and looked despairingly toward the heavens. "Oh, hell, Lord, how we ever gonna build us a big fine church house if don't anybody put anything in the can? Look here, you all. Your preacher and first deacon got this all figured out. All we need is a couple of dollars. Not for the building;

I know where we can get building stuff. But we gotta buy littature. Not Bibles; there's always Bibles around that ain't being used. But we gonna need comic books and such for the nursey school children that'll be coming to our Sunday School when we get going good. All God's children need a place where they can rest their weary selfs and read up on all the latest comic books. So don't anybody come back next week unless you got at least a penny. You understand? All of you? A penny or more—and we're gonna pass the can *first*, next time. Vantress, you ought to bring two pennies, because you had healing today."

"Like fun I did!"

"A healing ought to be good for a nickel at least," Lishus opined, fidgeting in her chair.

"Where would he get a nickel?" Ulinda wanted to know.

"Never mind!" said Willie. "The Lord provides for them as needs."

Vantress said, "He better get busy, then, because Sunday School is sure going to pot."

"Is the service over?" Lishus inquired, aggravated anew.

Willie glared. "If you got to go, Lishus, go! But we're coming to the best part now, where we sing the closing hymn and everbody gets the spirit and rolls in the aisles with the Holy Ghost."

Lishus worked her way out of the bottomless pew and hurried toward the gate. "I hate to miss it, I truly do." She fumbled at the gate but couldn't spring the latch. Her voice rose painfully. "I love the closing hymn better than anything!" The gate wouldn't give. Lishus galloped desperately across the yard to the Constantines' back door, while the other commenced singing again:

Some glad morning when this life is o'er,

I'll fly away.

To that home on God's celestial shore

I'll fly away. . . .

The door was locked. Lishus beat on it with both fists. Mrs. Constantine looked out the window and yelled, "I just mopped! I don't want you younguns tracking up my floor, you hear me?"

Lishus wilted on the back step and cried softly as she wet her pants. Willie, rocking upon the pulpit, shouted, "Once more now, sing out so the Lord can really hear it! *Some glad morning . . .*"

Vantress cast an eye toward the back door and hollered, "Looks like old Lishus got the spirit, all right!"

Ulinda smiled indulgently: "Lishus always was a religious-type child."

At this moment Lishus remembered the broken fence. She made a beeline for it and disappeared toward her own house, bawling for her mother.

"Let's make the rafters ring!" Willie screamed gloriously. Their voices shattered the heat of the day and it came pouring down around their brows. "*Some glad morning . . .*"

Vantress suddenly hit the ground. "Oh, that Holy Ghost has got me by the shirt-tail," he howled. He wrestled with the spirit, and the spirit was winning. "He's got me going round and round!"

Ulinda left off singing and Willie came over to referee. "Don't fight it, Brother Vantress. Don't fight it! Go down with it, like floating down the River Jordan. Give in to it, dear Brother. Confess your sins and accept the Lord Jesus as your friend and savior!"

Ulinda clapped and jumped. "Hang on, Brother! Beat that old devil Satan! Go, go, go, Brother Vantress!"

Their brother flailed and walloped the ground. "Take that!" he yelled. "And that! and that!" He was battering himself to a pulp, grinning all the while he marched to victory.

"Sing, sister!" Willie commanded and exultantly. "*Some glad morning . . .*" Ulinda picked up the strain, ad-libbing the words but staunchly carrying the melody for her dear brother's sake. "Repent your sins and live again!" Willie exhorted. "*To that home on God's celestial shore—good God, what are you singing, Ulinda?*"

There was, all of a sudden, a magnificent hush. Vantress lay still. His chest heaved. One leg was twisted ridiculously beneath him. He commenced crying: a little heartsore whimpering at first, then louder as he sat up, delved ominously into a pocket, and pulled out the lifeless frog dangling on its string.

In abject awe, Ulinda said vaguely, "He beat that old devil Satan all right."

Willie was uneasy. She lifted her hands in blessing. Vantress got to his feet, a hurt look on his face. "Squshed," he said finally of the frog. "Squshed and gone to hell because you didn't christen him to start with!"

"Don't fret now, dear brother." Willie backed off a little. "Frogs ain't got souls."

"This one did! This one had a soul as big as yours, by God!"

"Shamey, shamey on you for taking the Lord's name in vain, Brother Vantress. Come forth and kneel down at the altar, and we'll pray your—"

"I been prayed for till I'm sick! Why'nt you pray for Napoleon Bonaparte Constantine? He was the one that needed it! Now it's too late."

"Mercy me!" Ulinda cried. "It's not as if he was one of the family."

"He is! He's your brother, just the same as he is mine."

"He is not!"

"Hush, y'all," Willie said. "Frogs ain't people, Brother. Now kneel down."

"I ain't going to do it. I'd as soon burn in hell with Napoleon Bonaparte."

Ulinda was impatient. "Well, burn then. Ain't anybody stopping you."

"Gimme the damn frog," Willie said, grabbing the string. Rapidly: "I hereby christen you Napoleon Bonapart Constantine. There. You satisfied?"

"No. You got to have water for a christening."

"He had water before. Remember? Mama threw a whole bucket of water on him."

"He wasn't dead then."

"He sure is now," Ulinda retorted loftily.

"What in tunket difference does it make, Brother? You think people out in the desert has water when they go to christen anybody? No. You think when a baby is born out in the burning sands of the Sahara Desert, he gets water sprinkled on him for christening? Heck, no. They ain't any water. If they was any, they'd make up a batch of lemonade, but they ain't any!"

Vantress sniffed. "I'd have better sense than to be borned out in the desert."

"What if you couldn't help yourself?" Ulinda asked.

"I'd make sure I could."

Willie suddenly wearied and rapped the pulpit with a stick. "I hereby declare this Sunday School dissolved."

"It's about time," Ulinda said.

"Just a daggone minute!" Vantress whooped. "I got a piece to speak."

"Too bad, °Brother Vantress, on account of it won't be official, since I already declared this meeting dissolved."

"This is a different something," he said. "You being the preacher, you got to preach a funeral."

"I don't like funerals, Brother, and I don't aim to preach none."

Ulinda said, "Mercy, who's died?"

"Who's died, for cat's sake! Our brother's died that's who. Napoleon Bonaparte Constantine is who!"

Huffily, Ulinda replied, "I'd set in on a murder trial, but not a funeral. You killed him, you know. Didn't he kill him, Willie?"

"I don't want any part of a funeral or a murder trial on an empty stomach," Willie said. "Preachers always eat a bait of fried chicken after they've preached a sermon."

"You didn't preach any sermon," her brother reminded.

She ignored it. "So you, sister, go in and ask your dear mother to fix us up a chicken dinner we can spread out on the ground here."

"Yes, preacher." Ulinda went to the back door and knocked discreetly.

Vantress was goggle-eyed. "You aim to eat in the presence of the corpse?"

"He is not dead, he is just away."

Holding up the late Napoleon on his string, Vantress said "Like hell."

The back door opened to Ulinda. With a smile she accepted her mother's stormy look and tiptoed inside with the vigor of a Shadrach testing a fiery furnace for his two pals. Outside, Willie reassured Vantress: "I'll make up something on his tombstone, but I won't preach no funeral. Now: What kind of man was he?"

"Who, Napoleon? I ain't even sure has was a man exactly, but that shouldn't make any difference."

"It'd make a heap of difference to his wife," Willie said wisely, "in case he was married. Was he?"

"Shoot, I don't know. Go on, make up something."

"All right, we'll say he was a man. What kind of man?"

"A good man," Vantress decided. "Don't say anything about his sins."

"A good man, noble and true blue, that never woke up at night?"

"Far as I know."

"That ate up mosquitoes and bedbugs and other pesky critters?"

"Yes."

"That never got in little girls' socks and scared them half to death when they was in Sunday School?"

"Well . . ." Vantress hedged. "He'd never of done it of his own accord."

Willie popped her hands together and turned away. "Nope, I can't write any epitat for him."

"Why not?"

"He ain't never done anything wrong, that's why! Nobody ever believes all the good things they read on tombstones. If we could think up some bad things, they'd know we was telling the truth."

"Well, make up something," Vantress told her, accepting her logic. "Play like he got ten feet tall every night and attacked women and little children."

She considered this. "Okay. How about

Girls got attack
On the railroad track,
But Napoleon has a soul
As good as gold."

Vantress clapped his hands. "That's pretty! Can I use that?"

"All right. After we eat our chicken dinner you get a pencil and write that on a rock."

"And will you preach the funeral?"

"I won't preach, but I'll be there and look respectable while you lower him into the grave and set the tombstone."

"Will you dig the hole for me?"

"No!" she said indignantly. "Preachers don't do dirty work!"

"How do I get to be a preacher?" he wanted to know. Before she could tell him she wasn't going to tell him, Lishus and her mother appeared beyond the broken fence.

Her faced flushed with equal parts of sunshine and anger, Mrs. Kilcannon screamed, "WILLIE CONSTANTINE!"

Willie bristled. "Don't you come in this yard, Mrs. Kilcannon."

"I ain't just about to, Miss Smarty. What I want to know is, who throwed water all over Lishus?"

"Nobody, Mrs. Kilcannon. She wet her britches."

"She says it ain't true, Willie Constantine, so it ain't."

Vantress fanned the blaze: "She lies to beat the band."

"Nobody asked you, you dirty little boy."

"At least I don't wet my britches," said Vantress.

"She wouldn't let me out of Sunday School, Mama," Lishus whined.

"Sunday School?" howled Mrs. Kilcannon. "Sunday School, Willie Constantine? What have you been teaching my child?"

"How to hold her water, Mrs. Kilcannon—but it looks like she needs another lesson."

The woman looked down at Lishus. "Did you wet your panties, darling?"

"I couldn't help it, Mama. She wouldn't let me out till the final hymn."

"Then you did!"

"I couldn't help it, Mama," Lishus wailed. "It was her fault!"

Mrs. Kilcannon swatted her daughter resoundingly. "At your age, wetting your britches! Get on over to the house and take a bath!" She glared at Willie. "And you. You're too big to be playing with my daughter, Willie Constantine! I have enough trouble trying to raise her by myself, without girls your age putting crazy notions in her head. Sunday School, pah! We tried it!"

Angrily Willie shouted after her, "Why don't you get married, if you need some help raising her?" She bit her tongue. *Oh for the scarcity of human charity!* Mrs. Kilcannon turned on her like a storm, but nothing came out, and she finally went on home.

Vantress sat down on the tub. "A hunnerd people couldn't raise old Lish up right," he opined gloomily.

Willie set the pulpit up and leaned on it. "I guess we wasn't very charitable, Vantress, but I'll be damned."

After a pensive moment her brother said, "Lishus never did have a father, did she, Willie?"

She stared through him, disturbed. "No. I don't know, Vantress. Don't ask."

"But we did, didn't we, once?"

Willie moved restlessly. The pulpit fell forward. "Brother Vantress," she said crisply, "I appoint you second deacon to go see about that chicken dinner!"

He was up like a shot. "Second deacon! Does it pay anything?"

"You ought to know right now, dear brother, virtue is its own reward. Now git!"

He plunged toward the house, imagining this to be a promise of things to come—and to come promptly. Willie, hearing voices, wandered over to the fence and looked down the back alley. It was only O'Dell, the junk man, making his rounds. Willie went back to the pulpit, picked up the collection can, and threw it over the fence. *Some glad morning, she thought, when this life is o'er, I'll fly away.*

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Folklore of Electrical Man: Marshall McLuhan

BY RAYMOND B. WADDINGTON

WITHIN the intellectual galaxy which provides intermittent illumination of our condition and the prospect before us, perhaps no star now glitters more brightly and hopefully than that of Herbert Marshall McLuhan.

Professor of English and Director of the Centre for Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto, McLuhan established a quiet reputation as an astute cultural analyst with *The Mechanical Bride* (1951) and enlarged his focus to that of broad intellectual history with *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962). *Understanding Media* (1964) provoked mainly disapproving or vaguely apprehensive reviews and—a pleasingly appropriate climax—the prophet of pop media came into his own only with the surge of response to the paperback edition issued the following year. Since the phenomenon of this underground popularity commenced, the media have found their man and it is instructive to chart the downward path of wisdom: while *Fortune*, *Harper's*, *Ramparts*, and *Film Quarterly* accept him as a potential savior, the *New Yorker* discovers with amused tolerance that he is the talk of the town; *Newsweek* and *Life* know simply that he is news. These publications clearly are reflectors not creators of public appeal; for the hip crowd the news that McLuhan “arrived” came from Tom Wolfe, the kandy-kolored, tangerine-flake, streamline baby himself. Wolfe's choice of McLuhan as subject of an essay affixed upon the professor from Toronto the imprimatur as—with Junior Johnson and Baby Jane Holzer—a bona fide culture hero.

The reasons for McLuhan's considerable appeal are not far to seek. His communication theories are broad enough to account for all human progress, past and future, but, like most such theories, simple enough to be grasped and applied rather easily. He shows that technology changes and will continue to change—in a fundamental sense—our lives and that, while the process cannot be stopped, the changes are by no means for the worse. Indeed, McLuhan conceives, by coming to understand what our technological innovations do to us, we can

control change to achieve an unprecedented good life. The problem of the two cultures is nonexistent for him; technology affects everyone and the artist holds a position of special importance since his particular sensitivity to environment allows him to function as an "early warning system," apprising us of impending change. For those unwilling to accept his larger claims, McLuhan still offers riches in his constantly surprising insights and his perceptions of occult relationships. One might not be willing to admit that a round dwelling is a sign of unified sensibility, but the comment that the airplane could not be invented before the bicycle has the ring of truth; while it is hard to swallow the disappearance of nylon stocking seams as a casualty of electronic implosion, the analyses of Russia's cultural lag in oral-visual terms are persuasive. McLuhan has a particular gift for examining the fragmented, meaningless trivia of our everyday life and finding a pattern and a significance in it. On a superficial plane this endears McLuhan to the pop art, camp, comic-book-revival people for whom he handily offers an intellectual justification; nevertheless, one of his most positive effects is to restore a sense of human value and involvement that often gets lost in the labyrinth of a prepackaged society.

Succinctly, the McLuhan system is epitomized by his aphorism, "The medium is the message," by which he means the instrument of communication itself is more important for what it does to us than is the specific content that it conveys. *Understanding Media* bears the subtitle, *The Extensions of Man*, stressing McLuhan's conception that, just as the wheel is an extension of man's leg or the hammer of his arm, so all the communications media devised by man function as extensions of his body. Every such extension creates a different environment, alternating man's sensory balance and thereby altering his entire life until new technological innovations produce a new sensory ratio. Originally man was tribal by nature—which is to say oral, tactile, communal, and directed toward depth participation. Literacy, spawned by the phonetic alphabet and universalized by the invention and diffusion of mechanical printing, shifted emphasis to the visual, resulting in Western man's dependence upon a visual epistemology, which has profoundly affected the direction of our development since the beginning of the Renaissance. Some of the major effects that McLuhan traces to this visual dependence are the rise of individualism, nationalism, the emotional distancing which produces specialization and fragmentation of knowledge—Eliot's "dissociation of sensibility" yet once more—and the mechanical or industrial society which he re-

gards as the inevitable concomitant of linear thought, modeled upon Gutenberg typography.

In the nineteenth century the invention of the telegraph inaugurated the electric age, reversing the development which had culminated in the whole industrial revolution. Typographical man had undergone an "explosion," fragmenting the unified tribal sensibility into a wasteland in which man's piecemeal existence is an outward emblem of his shattered psyche. The "implosion" of electronic media shifts the sensory pendulum from visual to tactile, which in McLuhan's vocabulary approximates something like complete sensory participation. If the media of the mechanical age constitute extensions of man's external body, the electronic media are "extensions of man's central nervous system." The metaphor (McLuhan probably would deny that it is metaphor) implies the complete accessibility, the depth of involvement, the instantaneity of electronic communication which contracts the world to a "global village" and reinstitutes tribal man; so fundamental a change in outlook does this shift mean that McLuhan regards an intelligent response to the new perceptual modality as perhaps the most significant need in the whole of cultural history.

Further refining his general conception of the differing environments created by different media, McLuhan distinguishes between "hot" and "cool" media in an effort to delimit their major characteristics. A hot medium is one which projects information aggressively by extending a single sense in "high definition"; conversely, the cool medium, by operating in "low definition" ranges, i.e. providing minimal information, requires a high degree of participation from the audience and so effects a depth involvement exceeding the perhaps more obvious but specialized, fragmentary reaction to a hot medium. In general the mechanical media tend to be "hot" and the electric media "cool," but in specific analyses McLuhan's distinctions proliferate and blur: the telephone is cool and radio is hot; but, while the phonograph is hot, hi-fi or stereo is cool. Tactile, high-participation television is very cool and a major factor in our changed environment. McLuhan predicted Kennedy's 1960 victory after the TV debates, reasoning that Nixon's "hot" image failed to project as suitably as Kennedy's "cool" image.

It is instructive with the perspective supplied by *Understanding Media* to review *The Mechanical Bride*, McLuhan's exploration of the *Folklore of Industrial Man*. The book will be overrated for a time: by those who have not read it because it is out of print and a squabble

over publishing rights currently prohibits its reissue; by some of those who have read it because it is his most conventional work. The *Bride* remains interesting by virtue of being a preliminary sketch for *Understanding Media*. The theme of the book is the mechanization of man and the humanization of the machine which occurred in the rococo period of Gutenberg, but the subject is the mass media, how they work and what they do to their audiences. Here McLuhan begins a formulation of the method that he later will employ to such startling effect. All of the elements of that method are present: from an objective viewpoint ("amusement born of rational detachment") he will attempt "to apply the method of art analysis," "providing typical visual imagery of our environment and dislocating it into meaning by inspection." That is to say, he will employ the techniques of literary analysis, his professional tools, to the examination of subliterate forms. Already his own heroes are those writers able to perceive and use these forms: "Mallarmé and Joyce refused to be distracted by the fashion-conscious sirens of content and subject matter and proceeded straight to the utilization of the universal forms of the artistic process itself." Here too is the "circulating point of view," inviting the reader to scan the short chapters in any order.

Unlike Joyce, however, in the *Bride*, McLuhan does allow himself to be distracted by the sirens of content and subject matter, despite his theoretical allegiance to formal analysis. Only in his first chapter in the description of the characteristics of newspaper layout—discontinuity, suppression of syntactical connectives, simultaneity—as combining to achieve an "orchestration" is he able to maintain a purely formal analysis. Elsewhere he cannot attain sufficient distance to perceive media form; he has not yet trained himself to distinguish consistently between form and content, as becomes most apparent by comparing the *Bride* and *Media* on radio, comics, or movies. The inability to avoid content analysis is attributable, at least in part, to the fact that McLuhan is at this time very much a visual man. The bias is evident at the outset in his description of method, that of "art analysis," and purpose, to examine "typical visual imagery," and the expectation is fulfilled throughout: although a considerable array of media is discussed, almost invariably McLuhan approaches them through the visual—pictures, advertisements, printed texts. Radio and telephone, for instance, are seen through the focus of their advertising campaigns. McLuhan is not yet the man who can say that content "is like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind." Because he is not, reading this book is a very

different experience from reading the later ones. The insight and wit is here (Bergen and McCarthy "act out a weekly parable of the big, absent-minded technological world and the robots who are its very conscious victims."), but the tone is not the same. McLuhan is, despite the attempt at objectivity, indignant at what technology does to man ("It destroys human autonomy, freezes perception, and sterilizes judgment."), and, moreover, he does not have the later self-assurance ("I do not pretend to understand all of it.").

Although the seeds of McLuhan's later work can, in retrospect, be detected lying dormant in the *Bride*, a ten-year gestation process was necessary before McLuhan could write the complementary volumes on the past and future of human communications. The transition was as startling to admirers of the early McLuhan as, say, Bob Dylan's change from folk to electric, rock-and-roll guitar and portended approximately the same mental evolution. The *Galaxy* concentrates upon the effects of psychic crises produced by the two great communication breakthroughs of the past—the phonetic alphabet and the printing press. The first of these caused the initial shift from tribal or oral/tactile man to the individual, visual man: "No pictographic or ideogrammic or heiroglyphic mode of writing has the detribalizing power of the phonetic alphabet. No other kind of writing save the phonetic has ever translated man out of the possessive world of total interdependence and interrelation that is the auditory network." McLuhan then traces the slow intermingling of visual/auditory modes until in the Renaissance the invention of movable type and the printing press made possible the mass diffusion of endlessly repeatable, visual knowledge, triggering the "explosion" to which McLuhan attributes the illusion of continuous space, mass-production, linear and mechanical consistency in all phases of life. While McLuhan conceived of the *Galaxy* as a necessary prolegomenon to *Media*, it stands on its own as his solidest, most fully satisfactory book to date. This is because its argument is carefully buttressed by such scholarship as Walter J. Ong's *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, which makes tenable McLuhan's conclusions about the epistemological effect of mechanical printing. Moreover, since the book is concerned with literary materials, most readers find themselves better equipped to follow McLuhan's reasoning here than in his subliterate excursions. Too, the *Galaxy* is far more readable than *Media*, being less repetitious in presentation and circuitous in the writing. Even the chapter headings, modeled on one-line gags, reach a more consistent level in wit and appositeness: "Schizophrenia may be a necessary consequence of lit-



eracy" and "Peter Ramus and John Dewey were the two educational 'surfers' or wave-riders of antithetic periods, the Gutenberg and the Marconi or electronic" easily surpass "Movies: The Reel World." One might be tempted to suggest that, when dealing with subliterate material, McLuhan falls prey to the fallacy of imitative form.

Anyone who has followed the reviews of *Understanding Media* is able to enumerate its faults ad infinitum: McLuhan's definition of communications media, including as it does money, numbers, clocks, and clothing along with the more predictable ones, is impossibly broad; he constructs an oversimplified theory largely on the basis of random readings in eccentric and simplistic secondary sources (including a historian who attributes feudalism to the invention of the stirrup and an economist who believes trading derives from monkeys' pastime of swinging from tree to tree); his deliberate eschewal of linear, cause-and-effect reasoning and his Whitmanesque disdain for resolving contradictions makes evaluation of his ideas impossible; his "mosaic" organization causes endless repetition; his style is unreadably abstract; he manufactures metaphors, then disconcertingly treats them as literal statements. All of this has been said a number of times. Frank Kermode, while sympathetic to the problem McLuhan has in presenting his thesis—that of delivering his message via a medium which he believes incapable of expressing that message—fundamentally questions McLuhan's solution, the creation of what Kermode terms "an antibook." Through the "mosaic of field approach" McLuhan attempts to simulate the characteristics of the electronic media, supplying much data but, by the discontinuous presentation, forcing the reader to contribute "depth perception," fusing and semicreating the message of the whole. Hoisting McLuhan with the petard of his own argument, Kermode insists that the typographic simulation of electronic presentation serves only to short-circuit McLuhan's "message," his version of the electronic future, falsifying it beyond recognition.

As the impact of McLuhan's work is absorbed, however, there is increasingly a tendency to overlook the shortcomings of *Understanding Media* and to accept McLuhan himself as—to use one of his favorite figures of speech—a kind of distant "early warning system." Thus one writer argues that "the question of whether McLuhan is right or wrong in his specific interpretation of current technological change is relatively unimportant, if not irrelevant." Another concludes that, although "McLuhan is a man of insights and his attempts to create a full-scale system out of them is not very successful," the most im-

portant aspect of his work is his effort to "describe what he senses, rightly or wrongly, as a historical inevitability." Objectively, McLuhan may well think of his value in much the same terms; his remarks on William Burrough's *Nova Express* seem deliberately relevant to the reception of his own writings:

It is amusing to read reviews of Burroughs that try to classify his books as non-books or as failed science fiction. It is a little like trying to criticize the sartorial and verbal manifestations of a man who is knocking on the door to explain the flames are leaping from the roof of our home. Burroughs is not asking merit marks as a writer; he is trying to point to the shut-on button of an active and lethal environmental process. (*The Nation*, 28 December 1964)

McLuhan has taught his readers that the medium is the message and they have learned well enough to display increasing interest in that medium. The McLuhan festival staged at the University of British Columbia and the French coinage *mcluhanisme* may carry the cult of personality to the extreme, but there is implicit, nonetheless, in such manifestations the perception that here, just as surely as with the two-dollar gypsy fortune teller, the medium and the message are symbiotic. It was with the greatest interest, therefore, that we discovered McLuhan would come to our campus in April for a lecture engagement. According to *Life*, a group of business executives recently paid \$150.00 apiece for the privilege of going to Toronto to hear McLuhan in a two-day seminar. Getting him to come to us for a similar period had to be a bargain, rather like getting the Delphic Oracle to come to Athens. When the oracle is divested of the temple, it is possible perhaps to decide whether the voice is a ventriloquist's trick or the genuine article. "The echo is there in the back of the wodes; call him forth!"

AS PROFESSORS GO, McLuhan in person is an impressive man. Tall, several inches over six feet, lean, and handsome-ish; in coloration predominantly gray, like all Canadians or like TV images. At the lecture the next day the ladies will whisper that he looks like Gary Cooper, but that is not quite right—he is Gary Cooper playing a Mountie. The Canadian stamp is subtle but unmistakable; like Californians, the Canadians are a people with residual identity. The face is definitely TV. A Kennedy rather than a Nixon face, not sharp or aggressive but low-definition and mobile, inviting a high degree of empathy. McLuhan's own sensory distribution is weighted preponderantly to oral

communication; visual response is low—he doesn't quickly recognize people or places—and he is not much of a listener—will ingest conversational leads, generally will not hear questions. But he is a talker. A "hit" conversationalist, McLuhan can be brilliant and entertainingly eclectic. Some of the talk suggests preoccupation with his new role as intellectual celebrity—conferences with the staff of *Glamour* magazine ("They're interested in my work."), his office in the *Time-Life* building ("They thought it would be a convenience for me when I'm in town.")—but most of it is simply social chatter filtered through his subject. He is chauvinistically interested in Gerda Munsinger, but really warms up with the relative size of space bubbles projected by different nationalities ("The British internalize theirs, but Americans want to be this far apart."), the sound-track of the movie, *Dr. Zhivago* ("An iconography of sound rather than the usual chiaroscuro."), baseball played under Houston's Astrodome ("It creates a whole new environment."), or the self-sufficiency of modern children ("Togetherness is out. All our children are already semi-Orientals from watching television.")

Listening to him talk, one begins to understand in just what way the book form does misrepresent his work. It is not really that, as Kermode argues, the field approach of electronics is falsified by the equivalent method of McLuhan's books; all of us, after all, are used to the imaginative leap required by symbolic structures. Rather it is that McLuhan is an improviser, a spontaneous thinker, an ad-libber of constructs. Much of what he says has the air of being tried for effect, to see how it goes over. McLuhan repeatedly has emphasized that he considers himself an "explorer" and that he uses speech as "process," not conclusion. "You must not take my statements of the most outrageous opinions as closed, but as ways of getting at things." This is apparent when one listens to him, but print imposes a rigidity that is difficult to ignore. Pronouncements, contradictions, and inequalities of the trivial and the serious that are subsumed in process of speech appear to have equal weight in print, and his written thought, one might guess, is insufficiently distanced from his spoken thought process. Under the pressure of his present commitments the problem is likely to worsen; at the moment he is involved in the writing of four books, two with collaborators and two solo. One of these may concern itself with bridging this visual-oral dilemma—it is a book on the future of books.

In the morning McLuhan is routed out of bed in order to undergo the round of obligatory sightseeing which marks the arrival of a dis-

tinguished visitor on campus. The whole procedure would seem to reinforce McLuhan's contention that his colleagues in the groves of academe are visual specialists. Whereas a visiting politician is subjected to a tactile barrage—wearing cowboy hats, shaking hands, kissing girls—a visiting professor is required to look at things, in McLuhan's case largely a waste since he is nonvisual. He is taken to the physics lab to view a laser beam; to the library to examine a rare book collection (Polite but bored. He likes to call himself a "bookman," but it is mainly nostalgia.); then to the art museum (He doesn't see the pictures; they become grist for the media mill: "Matisse's lines are sculptural, cartoon-like, revealing the new preoccupation with space. That's why he upset people in the Twenties."). This setting is a difficult one in which to judge McLuhan. Though the American academic community knows McLuhan as a man whose picture appears in *Life*, to them his valuable work is literary—the dissertation on Thomas Nashe, unpublished but a standard authority, or his study of Tennyson's landscape poetry. The *Galaxy* was studded with literary references; however, *Understanding Media* reveals a mind effectively saturated with nonliterary interests. He has ranged far from his original role and now attempts to step back into character to deliver a specialized paper to a group of specialists, a tough audience.

Lunch produces its moments of high comedy. McLuhan is a Cambridge man and the various Cambridge connections of the assembled men permit conversation to mesh tranquilly for a time; soon, through a combination of his hosts' politeness and curiosity and his own single-mindedness, McLuhan's work and theories are the topic. The scene takes on a distinct touch of unreality as one watches the circle of serious professorial faces framing the main actors while a distinguished Renaissance scholar gives McLuhan the synopsis of a recent adventure in a comic strip called *Apartment 3-G*. "I must look at that one," McLuhan responds soberly. He explains something about the nature of his Centre for Culture and Technology, in which the research and teaching is done on a volunteer basis by interested Toronto faculty members. The major project at the present time is a "sensory profile" of the city of Toronto, designed to establish for the entire population the "threshold levels" of the various senses and to determine how they shift in response to an environmental change, such as color television. Discussing the scope and objectives of the project involves McLuhan in explanations about the nature of the senses, something he now takes for granted but which can be baffling to the uninitiated. A man whose studies of romantic poetry have given him

a thorough knowledge of synesthesia asks a thoughtful question. Like an evangelist or a good car salesman, McLuhan has a way of dealing with such intrusions. He thumps the underside of the table impressively. "An Eskimo could draw a picture just as easily underneath as on top. They're nonvisual!" Attempting to ease along the discussion of the visual faculty, someone—in all innocence—murmurs that the advent of television must have given quite a boost to visual consciousness. It is a touchy moment. "Well," says McLuhan, "television is really nonvisual. But I don't want to go into all that now. It's rather complicated." Too late to get out of it, however. "I do see it, don't I?" One doesn't know whether to feel more sympathy for McLuhan, who must be experiencing this for the thousandth time, or for his bewildered auditors. The TV theory was the teaser all through *Understanding Media* and the explanation, coming in the antepenultimate chapter, was only about two-thirds convincing. But he goes through it again: low-definition, image completion, all those millions of little dots, like a pictogram, image projected on viewer rather than screen, everything funneled inward. When he is done there are polite noncommittal nods.

The afternoon lecture is prefaced by a tea—silver service, little ladies in flowered hats, the full routine. The room fills fairly fast with a more varied crowd than usual. Many graduate students, attracted in roughly equal degrees by the tea, sandwiches and cookies and the chance to talk to their hero before the lecture. A respectful young couple are downcast at having a myth destroyed: no, says McLuhan, it is not true that the Luce interests bought up all copies of the *Bride* to keep it off the market. McLuhan apologizes to bystanders for coming with a prepared speech. He felt it was a necessary concession to the university audience, but is unhappy about the loss of audience contact. Says he hasn't read a paper before an audience in several years. By four o'clock the tea cups are cleared away, people seated, ready to see what this man is like. After the initial surprise it is a source of perverse pleasure to find his lecture style the antithesis of one's expectation. Whereas the fluent, positive conversationalist should prefigure a polished, assured lecturer, McLuhan is quiet, hesitant in his delivery, irregular in speech rhythm. At first it appears that he is nervous or unfamiliar with his speech, but the content of the lecture is similarly low-keyed and erratic so it becomes evident the manner is deliberate. Although he complained about the inhibiting quality of a prepared text, McLuhan gets away from a packaged reading by using the text as an outline, interpolating jokes, comments, extended

explanations. The model for McLuhan's lecture manner is precisely Jack Paar, whose "utterly cool and casual verbal agility" McLuhan admires. It is all there: the nonchalant, throwaway delivery with key points underplayed, the ingratiating nervousness, the random and spontaneous-seeming organization, the cross-cutting from the amusing to the serious. In effect McLuhan presents a lecture as if he were on a TV panel discussion or a guest on the Tonight Show. What he is after is depth involvement with the audience. From some he gets it; empathy is the only alternative to total noncommunication. From others he doesn't. Their conventional expectations of an academic lecture are too strong to accept this; the concentration necessary to hear the speaker bothers them, the jokes and non sequiturs outrage their sense of decorum. Afterwards McLuhan comments, "I know what it means when those coughs start. It is the nonverbal expression of total disagreement and contempt."

From the standpoint of content the lecture is revealing. The title is "Space in the Poetry and Painting of the Tudor and Stuart Period," presumably an excerpt from his forthcoming book on space in poetry and painting chosen to coincide with the interests of the host organization; relatively little of the talk, however, conforms to this announced subject. We are oriented to the brave new world of electric circuitry: as man's frontiers are subject to unlimited expansion, the earth itself will become "an old nose cone" or "a kind of Williamsburg," an object of sentimental historical curiosity. The distinction between iconic, atemporal art and pictorial, temporal leads to the analogy that the frug and Watusi are "iconic and sculptural," creating their own world within the linear space of the old-fashioned dance floor. The lecture is not on the announced topic so much as it points McLuhan's habitual preoccupations and material toward an insight about this topic. The technical invention of perspective in painting made possible continuous narrative and pictorial poetry because perspective permits the illusion of a story or prospect in a particular time, instead of representing all possible times and aspects as did the medieval iconic art. Thus the poetry of Skelton is "iconic and cartoon-like" with radical juxtapositions of sound; Spenser uses the flat medieval panel form, twisting or diagonalizing a sequence of such scenic panels to create a sense of continuous narrative; Marvell's "Coy Mistress" opens with a complete recapitulation of medieval iconographic techniques before shifting to the perspective of continuous space. And finally the insight: mannerism consists in the presentation of multiple perspectives, a group of minute, private view-

points, in one painting or poem; the achievement of baroque is the attainment of double perspective.

Listening to this creates an odd effect of *deja vu* or, to be accurate, *deja entendu*. The distinction between mannerism and baroque is new; otherwise everything is familiar from a variety of McLuhan contexts. The analysis of Edgar's Cliffs-of-Dover speech (*Lear*, IV. vi. 11-24) as the first instance of three-dimensional pictorial perspective in poetry comes from the *Galaxy*; the comments on the Matisse paintings originated during the morning visit to the museum; a couple of the anecdotes were tested over cocktails the previous evening; one joke even dates back to *The Mechanical Bride*. The lecture is virtually a mosaic or orchestration of all the material McLuhan has ever used. It is possible to project two likely hypotheses, one positive and one negative, as to why it is that McLuhan should present a pastiche of all his past utterances. It may be that he simply has become the totally oral man. Like the minnesinger, the Homeric bard, or the Beowulf poet, he unlocks his word-horde and all his knowledge comes forth, structured into song by repetitions of set phrases, example, tropes, and formulaary embellishments. In this sense McLuhan's reworking of his previous statements would constitute an attempt to create appropriate verbal conventions for the electronic age. In observing how the *Galaxy* serves as a complement to Albert B. Lord's study of the oral forms of epic composition, *The Singer of Tales*, McLuhan remarked that "we also live in an electric or post-literate time when the jazz musician uses all the techniques of oral poetry. Emphatic identification with all the oral modes is not difficult in our century." Less optimistically, it might be that the intellectual monster of communications theory has assumed control of the unwary Frankenstein who created it. "In beholding this new thing, man is compelled to become it." Like the most advanced computer McLuhan has been programmed with this data and now functions only to implement it. Punch a button for the right memory-tape and turn off the mind. If, indeed, McLuhan is becoming a prisoner of his own ideas, it allows for a nice irony: the mechanical bridegroom. As McLuhan describes the victim of the syndrome he calls "Narcissus-Narcosis": "He was numb. He had adapted to his extension of himself and had become a closed system."

The lecture is done but McLuhan's tour of duty is far from complete; he must endure yet a cocktail party, a banquet, give an after-dinner talk, and finally a last party in his honor. Those people who are fond of remarking the naiveté of academics in business matters should

observe the manner in which visiting speakers are wrung dry. McLuhan somehow had not been aware of the banquet talk, but says that it does not matter. He is used to speaking without advance preparation. The cocktail party is hot, overcrowded, a sluggish lull between events. By the time of the banquet McLuhan is noticeably tiring. For once he is content to follow, instead of directing, the conversation around him. The only time he displays real animation occurs in asking a history professor if it is true, as he has heard, that Napoleon conditioned illiterate recruits to linear discipline by marching them on boards. Unfortunately, no information is forthcoming. Over dessert he tests a couple of jokes on his neighbors, jots down cues for the ones he decides to use. Then Madeira is poured, cigars distributed, and he is on again. McLuhan's weariness heightens the effects of a recent minor illness and he looks distinctly older than he did in the afternoon. Out of deference to an intellectually conservative audience McLuhan tells old-fashioned jokes with a story line, not the "cool" depth jokes (e.g., elephant jokes) that he uses to typify the mental patterns of modern teenagers. Because the banquet is stag he obligingly tells a sequence of stag stories, mildly bawdy dialect jokes, nun jokes. This time the manner is deadpan, whether from tiredness, calculation, or both; the delivery slow with a deft sense of timing. Almost without preamble and conjunctions he stands there telling a seemingly endless sequence of comic stories in a flat, emotionless way. Eventually he does run out of jokes and begins to talk; now, having nothing else to talk about, the depreciating manner seems to say, he will tell us something about the implications of the work going on at his Centre.

The effect is a remarkable one. The archetype for this performance is best preserved in the English music halls with a Max Miller or, in the aesthetic recreation by Osborne and Olivier, Archie Rice of *The Entertainer*: the weary old comic running through his stale, music-hall routine, suddenly steps out to the footlights and with genuine feeling—the heart behind the greasepaint—launches into a sentimental song. McLuhan's song is a paean to man's future. He begins with an analogy: once royalty was the only station in life for which a person's business was just growing up, learning things. "Now we're all royalty," everyone's business is simply learning and maturing. In this sense the future of work is filling a role, not taking a job. He enumerates some of the things we need to learn about, the factors which alter so quickly that we fail to notice them. Advertisements now sell information, not a particular product. "You read the ads to learn why you're satisfied with

the things you've already purchased." Cities are becoming obsolete; they will be "places to display technology, not places to live or work in." Books can be made to order; with the advent of xerography every writer can become his own publisher, the reader can be both. In a world of instantaneous electric communication children mature faster, becoming young adults as the phenomenon of adolescence is phased out. Conversely, adults become infantile in that they "make the content of their childhoods the subject of sentimental recreation." Thus the Batman success reveals the untapped potential for commercialized nostalgia.

As we learn more, the traditional mental geography changes—"the unconscious is eroded by the conscious" and it is vital to understand the effect this will have. Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, McLuhan reasons, could only have been written at a time when environment becomes "pure information," and provides the lesson that total involvement means total guilt. In these circumstances man's mythic role is that of Oedipus. "Oedipus asked, 'Who done it?' and soon found out, 'I done it.' We're all Oedipus." If, however, the electronic world of involvement imposes an awesome responsibility, it holds the potential of permitting man to mold and shape his own life as an art form. The old environment is always the content of the new and in the electric age, "We're the content."

Once again the speech is pure pastiche; it skims the cream from *Media* and undoubtedly is a capsule version of a basic talk McLuhan has given several times a month for the past year. This time, despite the familiarity, it is convincing. McLuhan manages to convey his vision with an evident sincerity and depth of feeling that for the moment projects his gospel to an audience of believers. The medium is the message and for the first time that day communication is immediate. He has, to borrow his description of the TV teacher, charisma.

Moments like this one pass quickly. McLuhan leaves the banquet room, puzzling over a joke that went flat, the only space joke that he ventured. "'Everyone's just gotta have some place.' Isn't that funny?" Now that the end of the gamut is in sight McLuhan allows himself to sag a bit. He will make a token appearance at the party, does not care for anything to drink. Even so, presence is speech for the man and he stays nearly two hours, talking out thoughts that have been stirred by the banquet performance: "Happenings" show an awareness that our environment can be given aesthetic shape; clothing serves as a means

of transportation as well as communication ("That's important. I forgot to put in my book."); Capote is a Southerner with the Southern view of guilt and shared consciousness which makes his book possible ("No, I haven't read it. Only excerpts and the reviews."). At last he does slip out to get a brief night's sleep before catching a seven A.M. flight back to New York and a day in his office. From New York to Toronto, Toronto to Santa Cruz, and from Santa Cruz to all the other unlikely places where the jet-age professor touches down. "Who gave you that numb?" Joyce asks. "I done it," Oedipus replies.

An interim report on Marshall McLuhan has to be equivocal. As various reviewers have commented, the relationships he perceives, the intuitions he has, are more poetic than scientific and the vision of the future has its affinities with science fiction. One has to feel that the fearful symmetry of this vision might be shaped as much by an aesthetic impulse as by the objective synthesis and interpretation of data. McLuhan is a man of two minds—on the one hand is the historian of ideas who brilliantly employs his oral-visual distinction to map the contours of thought as it is affected by changing environment; on the other the poetic system-builder—between which there is unavoidable conflict. Personal exposure to McLuhan tends to reinforce this impression. He frequently disclaims commitment to the process that he describes so eloquently ("I'm not for any of these things, you understand. I just think it is important to understand them so that they can be controlled."); yet the commitment is proclaimed by everything he says on the subject. The electronic age is to render both work and war obsolete, achieving a state that he compares—in imagery of high and low mimesis—to prelapsarian Eden and the world of Al Capp's Shmoo. It is difficult to say whether McLuhan's belief is in the future his theory enables him to see or is only the master-builder's belief in the creation itself, in this case the theory. Significant, perhaps, is the language with which he describes the effects of the electronic future; if it provides a reliable index, his theoretical presuppositions and evaluative criteria are derived straight from the romantic tradition. The electronic world is "organic," "mythic," "holistic" ("one starts with organic unity as an immediate fact"). While knowledge plays a profound role, it is also directed—in Eliot's phrase, "felt thought"—hence the insistence on depth experience, depth involvement and the "central nervous system" metaphor. His "Tribal Man" is a descendant of the symbolic line that runs from Wordsworth's rustics through Yeats's Irish peasants; and it is by no coincidence that

McLuhan invokes Blake's *Jerusalem* as "explanation and justification" for his methodology. McLuhan sometimes reminds one of that cosmic communications expert, Leopold Bloom: "What were habitually his final meditations? Of some one sole unique advertisement to cause passers to stop in wonder, a poster novelty, with all extraneous accretions excluded, reduced to its simplest and most efficient terms not exceeding the span of casual vision and congruous with the velocity of modern life." In its seductive simplicity and its insistence, McLuhan's message fittingly meets the requirements for Bloom's one great advertisement. Blake's declaration, "The Nature of my Work is Visionary or Imaginative, it is an Endeavour to Restore what the Ancients call'd the Golden Age," could serve as an appropriate motto for McLuhan's projections; but to learn why in our day the romantic mythographer becomes Leopold Bloom, ad man, we must, as usual, turn to McLuhan: "The intellectual is newly cast in the role of a primitive seer, vates, or hero incongruously peddling his discoveries in a commercial market."

McLuhan was the intellectual historian before he became the vates of the market place. At the conclusion of the *Galaxy* it is the historian's caution and awareness of complexities which causes him to approach the electronic age in these terms: "Our liberation from the dilemma may, as Joyce felt, come from the new electric technology, with its profound organic character" (*italics added*). And again: "A few decades hence it will be easy to describe the revolution in human perception and motivation that resulted from beholding the new mosaic mesh of the TV image. Today it is futile to discuss it at all." *Understanding Media* admits no such doubts and tentative formulations; everything is reminiscent in tone of the apocalyptic utterances of a seer who tells "of things invisible to mortal sight." McLuhan has taught us that the content of the new environment is the older environment elevated to the status of an art form. At present McLuhan's writing and speech both suggest that the intellectual historian's "environment," the analysis of thought processes as motivated by sensory changes, has become the content of the more recent environment, that of the prophetic mythographer. In essential impulse, then, the *Galaxy* and *Media* are very different kinds of books and, although they cannot be evaluated by the same criteria, the scholar must be as disappointed by McLuhan's direction of development as the convert is inspired. As McLuhan has shown, environments are not constants and one cannot predict how the man's thought might alter in the

future. At present, however, since most of us have something of both Shem and Shaun in our character the reaction to him is likely to be mixed. Perhaps the best evaluation of McLuhan's visit, of his work at this time, is offered by McLuhan himself. In closing the banquet speech McLuhan returned to that with which he had begun, a joke. It seems that a man went out on a date one night with Siamese twins. The next day his friend inquires, "Did you have a good time?" He answers, "Well, yes and no."

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Something about Two Mexicans

BY AMADO MURO

MY GRANDFATHER, Trinidad Avitia, a gray-haired street singer, managed to make a living in Parral, Chihuahua, thanks to his guitar and the saints.

His guitar and the saints had been his best friends since his boyhood—the guitar because listeners said he played it well, the saints because there are so many.

When I was a boy, my grandfather sat on a tule chair in front of the Good Tortilla Cafe all day long playing his guitar and singing for every countryman who went by. Many tourists paid to hear his songs. But Mexicans celebrating their saints' days were his most numerous listeners by far, and since every day is some saint's day the demand for his songs seldom lagged.

My grandfather worked hardest on the Day of the Lupes and the Day of the Juanes. On those days Parral's many Lupes and Juanes kept him busy singing from daybreak until long after midnight. And on those days, as well as the Day of the Pepes, the Day of the Manuels and many other saints' days besides, he got up long before daybreak to sing the traditional *mañanitas*.

Then, too, on stifling summer nights my grandfather sat outside his home in the Manuel Acuña Colony singing songs like *Glass Eye the Highwayman* and *Pancho Villa's Winged Horses* for anyone who cared to listen. Many Chihuahuenses always did. On those nights, everyone, even elderly women, shouted when my grandfather threw back his head, squared his shoulders and sang: "Soy Mexicano, soy de Chihuahua. A mi bandera le juré honor."

And everyone laughed until tears came when he stopped in the middle of a song to imitate General Francisco Villa. Parralenses swore no one else in Chihuahua could imitate Pancho Villa the way my grandfather could. He puffed out his cheeks as though he were playing a trumpet, stroked his spikey gray moustache and shouted: "Boys, don't be afraid of Pancho Murguía's bullets. Just be careful of the holes they make."

My grandmother María de Jesús sang with him on those nights. So did everyone else. They cried, "Ay, Chihuahua" and "Arriba el Norte" when my grandfather sang the brave songs that northern Mexicans like so well.

Folk heroes like Heraclio Bernal and Valentin de la Sierra rode through my grandfather's songs on those nights. So did revolutionary leaders like Villa, Martin (Blondie) Lopez, and Maclovio Herrera. Everyone made up new verses for the song *La Cucaracha* and the evenings went by all too swiftly.

These summer-night concerts became so popular that entire families from other colonies came over to hear them. Some came from as far as the María Martínez barrio almost two miles away.

Poor miners' wives, without radios or money for shows, always thanked my grandfather after the singing was done. "May the dark virgin who spoke with Juan Diego protect you and cover you with her mantle," they said.

This made my grandfather uncomfortable. But my grandmother beamed with pride.

My grandmother liked Mexican music just as much as my grandfather did. She was a cheery, smiling woman, always laughing and joking with everyone. But sometimes she, too, lost her temper. "I like everyone who walks on these streets of God," she often said with pride in her good nature. But after she said this she bit her lip and added "except American blondies."

My grandmother showed her dislike for blondes every time American women asked my grandfather to sing *Cielito Lindo* for them on their sightseeing trips to Parral. He always did. But these street serenades made my grandmother so mad she wouldn't let him in the house. "This home is for Christians," she shouted when my grandfather knocked at the door. "It's not for shameless old flirts who serenade American blondies instead of being content with what our own nation produces."

My grandfather soothed her with music. He sang *La Madrugada* until she finally let him in. After these outbursts my grandmother was always contrite. She did her best to make up for them by cooking pozole, flautas, birria, and other foods my grandfather liked. And she even tried to compete with the chic blondes herself. She wore her best Zamora shawl wherever she went out and even went so far as to pin a San Juan rose in her graying hair.

Except for these rare discords, my grandfather's work went along

smoothly. He liked the people he sang for and he made friends with them all. But he liked best the listeners who bawled and shouted when he sang Mexico's brave songs.

One of the most enthusiastic of his many admirers was a robust, middle-aged woman who ran the Divine Strawberry stand at the Hidalgo Market. This was Doña Guadalupe Carmona, nicknamed Lupe la Generala because of her fondness for recalling the days when she fought for Pancho Villa. Lupe la Generala liked to tell my grandfather about her soldiering days. "Ay, Don Trini," she sighed. "How gladly I'd give up my strawberry stand for a chance to hitch up my skirts and fight for Tata Pancho again."

The strawberry vendor was a fierce patriot. No military parade in Parral would ever have been complete without her. On parade days everyone cheered when the General marched by with a bandolier strapped around her Amazonian torso and a 30-30 rifle on her shoulder.

A militant scowl harshened her dimpled face while she waddled along with the soldiers. A cornhusk cigarette was tucked between her chapped lips. She never threw it away until time to shout "Viva Madero."

Lupe la Generala wasn't one of those women who pray to San Antonio for sweethearts. When my grandfather sang romantic songs like *María Bonita* for other market vendors, she always begged him to stop.

"Ay, Mama Carlota not that one, Don Trini," she moaned. "Sing the brave one about how the Federales chased Benito Canales instead."

The songs she liked best were revolutionary ballads like *The Wet Buzzard* and *The Three Bald-Headed Women*. But she liked corridos about manhunts, executions, and bullies feloniously assassinated almost as well.

My grandfather's brave songs made the General wail and shout. They made her bawl: "Ay, Chihuahua, land of brave men where nobody gets shot in the back."

Sometimes they even made her weep with fierce pride in Benjamin Argumedo, Felipe Angeles, and other brave song heroes.

Once I asked my grandfather why Lupe la Generala shouted and cried when he sang and why she always marched with the soldiers. I hadn't been a Mexican very long when I asked this, for I was then not quite nine years old. My grandfather, a veteran observer of our coun-

trymen, smiled at me. "Every Chihuahuense kills fleas in his own way," he explained.

Eduardo Romero, a barber, liked the brave songs just as much, if not more, than the fiery General did. Don Lalo Romero was a spindly, myopic man with a haggard face buttressed by bouldery cheekbones. Chihuahuenses called him Panza Verde because he came from the lettuce-growing center of Leon, Guanajuato.

Always timid and shy as a mustang when he wasn't listening to brave songs, he turned into a ranting patriot, fierce as the General herself, when he heard them.

He took off his bullseye glasses and defied his customers, Chihuahuenses all, every time my grandfather sang *The Defense of Celaya*, Guanajuato for him. "I'm the only real man here because I come from Guanajuato," he boasted loudly.

Then he glared challengingly at Chihuahuenses waiting for hair-cuts as though daring them to deny it.

On crisp autumn nights my grandfather went to the old Juan de Dios market quarter with a Saltillo sarape slung over his shoulder and his Ramirez guitar tucked under his arm. There he joined a working army of mariachi musicians who filled the old quarter with music all night, and never broke ranks until dawn.

The quarter's boisterous streets, so narrow and crowded two people could hardly walk side by side, were jammed with puestos, fruit and vegetable stands, and shouting vendors.

My grandfather wandered through streets named after poets and patriots looking for countrymen to sing to. He usually found them near the Meek Burro cantina. And always he sang Mexico's brave songs for them.

Sometimes he bought me steaming cups of vanilla atole at the Beautiful Indian puesto. While I drank them, he chatted with wandering musicians, clowns, fire-eaters, magicians, and other men who made their living on Parral's streets.

Then, too, on those chilly nights, he told me how he used to wander over Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Durango, sometimes on horseback but more often on foot, singing at the village fairs. Those were the days when he sang for such Mexican revolutionaries as Panfilo Natera, Petronilo Hernandez, and even Pancho Villa himself.

"Once General Hernandez made me play for almost twenty hours in the plazas, streets, and cantinas of Santiago Papasquiaro, Durango,

along with other members of the Agustín González orchestra," he told me. "He liked our songs so much he made us all travel with his army for a month giving campfire concerts out on the Durango sierra."

Only once in his life did my grandfather ever try to make a living at anything other than music. This was after the Madero revolution when he went to Flagstaff, Arizona, to work as a carpenter.

Many miners and housewives in the Manuel Acuña Colony said he could have been rich if he had stayed there. But even in Flagstaff my grandfather couldn't stop singing the songs that make Mexicans shout. He sang them for lonely countrymen and even for the American bosses. He had planned to save his money and bring my grandmother, my mother, and my uncle Rodolfo from Chihuahua to live in the United States. But the brave songs proved his undoing.

"They made me homesick," my grandfather said. "When I sang them I forgot I was earning more money and living better than ever before."

So after six weeks he went back to Mexico and sang for his paisanos again.

MANY, IF NOT MOST, of my countrymen try to sing and play the guitar at one time or another during their boyhood days. I was no exception.

Although most of the people in El Paso's "Little Chihuahua" quarter agreed that I sang and played badly, there was one who did not. This was Guadalupe Gonzáles, a powerful man with a thick-corded neck and biceps that measured almost seventeen inches.

Throughout our neighborhood, he was known as Siete Luchas or Seven Struggles, because of his mastery over many trades. Then, too, because of his heroism as a soldier in General Francisco Villa's army, Don Lupe was generally regarded as a man "more valiant than twenty on horseback." But aside from Don Lupe, I had no steady listeners at all, and my music and songs never seemed to be needed on fiesta days or tamalada nights. Also, for reasons apparent to everyone but myself, I could never find a singing partner.

And so it was that on December 12, the Day of the Lupes, I trudged Little Chihuahua's streets alone, with my guitar slung over my shoulder, in a hopeless quest for someone whose saint's day it was and whom I could serenade at the fixed price of ten cents a song. On that day guitar music filled Little Chihuahua's streets and the quarter's many Guadalupes stood on street corners or in doorways listening to

mariachi musicians. For hours I walked up and down, looking hopefully at every Lupe I passed.

While I walked, I remembered how months before, on San Juan's Day, I had plodded over the quarter looking with the very same lack of success for Juanes and Juanas to sing to. I tried to lift my spirits by assuring myself that sooner or later I would find a patriot named Guadalupe who would gladly pay a dime just to hear me sing about Chihuahua and Pancho Villa and the Revolution. But none appeared and so at the corner of Paisano and Ochoa I moved into a doorway and began to cry.

I had just about cried myself out and was getting ready to throw myself into the search again when the booming voice of a man standing at the door of his home made me turn around sharply.

"Sons of María Morales," the man bellowed. "It's raining in Samalayuca, qué caray. Ay, Emalina, it's raining in our cornfield tonight. There goes a dark-hipped Mexican from the mining town of Parral, a rooster with good spurs, who sings and plays as God commanded. You, Amadito, come and greet a friend on his saint's day."

I wiped away my tears with the bright red bandana I had wrapped around my neck so I'd look like a real mariachi and walked up to Don Lupe González. Don Lupe stood smiling and looking down at me. Then he roared: "Emalina, bring a cup of champurrado and some buñuelos for the mariachi—and make sure the champurrado is hot."

I walked into Don Lupe's home and sat down under the Aquilar Drug store calendar that had the big picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe on it. The Señora González placed before me a steaming cup of the chocolate and cornmeal drink and a plate of the sweet fritters.

"Amadito," Don Lupe said. "Today is the Day of the Lupes and I want you to sing the Corrido of Chihuahua for me just as God commanded."

I smiled—a little wanly, I think.

"Sing," Don Lupe thundered. "Sing as your father sang when he and I rode with Pancho Villa."

So I sang and after I had finished I felt less mournful.

"Qué viva Pancho Madero y muera Pascual Orozco," Don Lupe yelled.

Then he turned to me again. "Amadito, I've forgotten the name of it, but sing me the corrido that tells how Valentin 'como era hombre de nadie le dio razon.'"

"That's the *Corrido of Valentin de la Sierra*, Don Guada," I said.

"That's it, Amadito," Don Lupe bawled.

So I sang it. Then I sat there drinking hot champurrado, watching the tears stream down Don Lupe's stubbled cheeks, and thinking maybe I had been meant to be a great singer after all.

But it was not really my voice that had made Lupe González cry.

"Sons of María Morales," he said. "When I hear you sing, I think of your father. Ay, that Zacatecas shepherd—Mexicano hasta las cachas."

He slapped his knee and laughed until tears welled into his eyes again. "Ay Señora Tentadora, that paisa' was afraid of no one," he said. "Not even of Francisco Villa."

When Don Lupe said that, I forgot all about my singing ambitions and leaned forward quickly.

"Don Guada, you said my father wasn't even afraid of Pancho Villa?" I asked.

"Afraid of General Villa?" Don Lupe barked. "I swear by the pines of Majalca that Jesús Muro would have sent Tata Pancho for the groceries."

I looked at Don Lupe. His face was still drenched with tears.

"Emalina, more buñuelos for the son of my comrade," Don Lupe shouted. "And for me bring sotol and that bottle of the Widow Romero tequila."

Out in the kitchen I could hear the Señora González bustling around and singing at the top of her lungs about what Pánfilo Natera told the Federales.

I began to feel better. All the day's disappointments were wearing away.

"Your father wasn't afraid of Villa nor of General Benjamin Argumedo nor yet of Don Pablo González," Don Lupe said.

So I asked Don Lupe how he knew and he told me.

"All that I am going to tell you took place on a bitter cold night out on the Chihuahua sierra not far from Balleza," he said. "I was there with your father and The Buzzard, The Cricket and a number of other countrymen whose names I can not now recall—all like myself, soldiers of Villa.

"On that freezing night, General Francisco Villa had ordered us not to build a fire, an order we had all disobeyed for the purpose of roasting a burro. We sat by the fire eating the burro and listening to Jesús Muro sing and play the guitar. You know that besides being one of the most famous musicians in Pancho Villa's army, your father was

also one of its greatest composers. We were sitting there listening to Jesús when a booming voice drowned out the music. Amadito, how that voice thundered. Just to think of it makes my beard grow.

"We looked up to see General Francisco Villa sitting on his horse, Siete Leguas, and glaring down at us with an old spring pistol in his hand. 'Sons of I don't know how many mothers,' he shouted. 'Tell me, and quickly, which of you started that fire?'

"Nobody answered at first. Then after a moment, your father laid down his guitar and got up. 'My General, I built the fire,' he said.

"Pancho Villa did not say a word.

" 'If we are out here on the sierra looking for death,' Jesús Muro explained, 'why should we sulk in the dark and hide from it? Better to eat the burro, so at least we'll die with our bellies full.'

"I thought we were dead men after that until I saw General Villa's face relax and break into a smile. 'Look, boys,' he said after a moment. 'The Carrancistas aren't far from here—that much we know. Eat the burro and put out the fire.' Then he turned to your father again. 'Countryman,' he said, 'what was that song you were singing when I rode up?'

"That question made us all nervous again. The song Jesús had been singing, one of his own compositions, was called *Gorra Gacha*. It owed its name to the fact that Pancho Villa sometimes wore his sombrero slanted down over his eyes like a cap. But when your father told him the name of the song and how it came to be written, Pancho Villa began laughing some more.

" 'Sing it, Raza,' he said. 'Only not very loud.' So your father sang:

Señores tengan presente, miran lo que van hacer
 Los señores Carrancistas se vistieron de mujer
 Mucho cuidado, muchachos, que ay viene mi General
 Esto es Don Francisco Villa, el que ganó en el Parral

"I can still see Pancho Villa's expression when he heard that song, can see his shoulders shake with laughter. 'Ay, brother of our race, how you sang it,' Pancho Villa laughed. Then he said, 'Many thanks for the song' and rode off.

"After that we all made sure the fire's last embers were out."

When I left Don Lupe's home that night, I did not look for people to sing to. I was no longer unhappy because all the Lupes and the Juanes and Juanas before them had ignored me completely.

I could even admit to myself that it was only too true almost all the singers in Little Chihuahua had better voices than mine. Better singers they might be, but I did not envy them.

For what other boy in Little Chihuahua—or in all of Mexico—had a father so brave he did not even fear Pancho Villa?

✿ The stories of AMADO MURO's native Chihuahua have appeared in *Arizona Quarterly*, the *Americas Magazine*, and *NMQ*. Muro, who lives and works in El Paso, Texas, has traveled in Greece, Brazil and Venezuela.

HERBERT MORRIS

THE THUNDER OF THE CAPTAINS AND THE SHOUTING

What it was like days after seemed too partial,
seemed fathoms less than crucial, seemed the light
of natural day and dusk of common night,
the small gray dreams of countless small gray sleeps

endlessly signifying daily tasks
and nightly self-assignments, that surrender
seem less to make the gesture of surrender,
that breath draw different breath, and that we hope

another hope, we with no sense impaired,
whose vision only deepened, asked to suffer
not any longer wild things like belief
but something broken, mild enough to live with.

What it would be much later and years after
no one can tell you, least of all myself.
What it would be to wake at night and wonder
where the battalion on the Malay coast,

landed against all odds and never heard from
under a scorching rain and hail of mortar,
stumbles or weeps now, bathes its wounds, bears anguish;
what it would be to look up from the page

in the blaze of midsummer, some wars later,
the roses pruned, the borders green and ordered,
and taste across dry lips, for the first time
in twenty years, the names of all hands drowned

in straits whose name was never less than desperate
and latitudes too south not to mean foundered;
what it would be to live not reconciled
no one can guess or hint or hope to render.

Say a word for success, but not the kind
dutifully praised, pursued, and celebrated.
The one I mean says what force here prevaieth
does so despite our will, says some things settle

counter to invitation, past dispersal,
rational, in dim ways, beyond all reason,
anarchic with no mark of anarchy,
logical past the small gray bounds of logic.

However we may try, escape proves futile,
evasion worse, abstention a delusion.
Here, by success I mean what vastly prospers,
but mortal, mortal, infinite, forever.

What would it be to break bread with the past
day unto day, and not be done with breaking,
each morning at the table plotting silver
as ships played in flotilla, salt-and-pepper

shakers great bastions in the linen waters,
fortifications night alone might breach,
or something kin to darkness, infiltrating
beautifully where all else would go detected

over the scent of archipelago
on the wind and above the lap of blossoms
doing all night what they must do in yielding
concepts like palm, hibiscus, bougainvillea.

Say a word for the war, but not the word
every day said and night to night expected,
and not the war you think when you say war,
but something lost and garbled, some campaign

from which mere safe return was not accomplished
and, even if accomplished, not enough.
To have come back seems much the common lot,
some act that seemed not quite dependent on us,

the least we could have done, the accidental
light or luck we like to think of as human,
seeing us through again, again tomorrow
dragging us with it, not for the first or last time,

and for which we seem hardly responsible,
presences in us never sought or willed,
if we might seek or will, a visitation
for all but those who blundered and the legions

sweltering under rain and fierce cross fire
in clearings of the jungle we can conjure
but, save for midnight wakings, never fix
quite neatly in the mind or put to rest

with the precision of a lost crew's roster
nailed as a plaque against the deck or mast
to beat down hard on young crews coming after
with all the dazzle of a little sun

in its own right, or haunt them down the night
with a moon-luster like an apparition
over the waves, moving across a surface
seeming more nearly dreaming than like water.

What I must know is how reduction struck them,
whether it took them slowly or at once,
whether the light that morning and the salt
of names that lashed their lips ragged meek or total;

whether the borders wavered as they looked
or the book trembled, if some turning back
lay secret, deep, and sweet along that route
and, late, some fate insist time shall not have them.

Three Poems by Olavo Bilac

DOWN RIVER

The river trembles, rolling, wave on wave . . .
Almost night. Following the slow march
Of the water, which inundates the marshes about it,
We proceed. The wind bends the bamboo trees.

Alive just now, clothed in red, bloody,
The twilight is fainting. The night wipes out
The last light from the firmament . . .
The river rolls, trembling, wave on wave.

ONE EVENING IN AUTUMN

Autumn. In front of the sea. I open wide the windows
Facing the silent garden, and view the waters, absorbed.
Autumn . . . Curling up, the yellow leaves tumble,
The fall. Widowhood, old age, discomfort.

Why, lovely ship, in the light of the stars
Did you visit this sea, empty and dead,
If, at the wind, you lifted your sails,
If, at the light, you left the port?

The water sang. Your sides, kissed by foam,
Broken up in laughter and white flakes.
But, you came with night and you left with the sun!

And I gaze at the empty heaven; I see the ocean
And the place you were last in
Glowing in the light of dawn.

WAVES

Between the burning calms, tremulously,
Night on the high seas animates the waves.
From the depths the wet Golcondas rise,
Live pearl: the cold nereids:

Interlock, they run pursued,
Return, crossing themselves; and in lascivious swells
Dress their forms, white and rounded,
With purple algae and sea ferns.

Thighs of vague onyx, polished bellies
Of alabaster, hips of silver foam,
Breasts of uncertain opal, gleam in the night

And green mouths, filled with sighs,
Phosphor-fired and perfumed with amber,
Sob vain kisses which the wind disperses.

translated from the Portuguese
by John Gaw Meem

JAMES D. BERTOLINO

BIBLIC APPENDIX

I tried to tell my son
God put bumblebees there for the flowers
to explain the trees and not only sting,
but the honesty of poverty hung me on that limb.
I tried to tell my daughter
love is a neutral thing and dove houses filled
with cooing because it's the way of business,
but she knew both sexes meant two.
I whispered to my wife
a prayer aimless and helpless like icicles
as Christ's blood poked streams in a turnip,
but she smiled pink that hopeless didn't grow in spring.
I added sound to feel
as a stoat slyly turned the door
to the strongest of the bulbs,
and I knew all living peas were in a soup
well salted.

JAMES D. BERTOLINO

A SIMPLE THING

A thing a simple
as the*wink*ing*flash
of an airplane at night

Recalls
intermittently
complexities of fright

When the long darkness
is contrasted
with short bright.

DORA M. PETTINELLA

HILLTOP VILLAGE

High on a hilltop
the little village sits
with its tall cathedral
its pine and fir trees.

Cool are the summers;
the reaper's blade
falls thick and fast
in noonday heat.

A sea of grass
flows down the slopes—
narrow alleys running
through cobblestone streets.

Farmhouse windows burn
with meager light
dying before the darkness
heavily sets in.

Wind rakes tilting dust
windows quick-shut in flight
precarious autumn storms
are often wild as love.

HENRY TAYLOR

LONG DISTANCE

You ask me if I think you do not care
And I shall say some words to the receiver
And fear not they will not be the words you hear:
I cannot lay my hand upon your shoulder.

THOMAS MC AFEE

GARDENS

When my mother died
My father grew
His own particular kind
Of garden: vegetables.

Weeds protected
Those sick white tomatoes
No bigger than
A little girl's fist,

And scrawny corn
Not half made,
And the okra grown
Too long and hard.

My mother never cared
For vegetable gardens.
There were nice cool markets
And a boy to help you.

My father always said
That if you grew them
Yourself, they were better
But his failed because

The hired man failed to take
Interest in vegetables.
He liked beef, just beef,
Served at a cafe in town.

PHILIP LEGLER

AT THE HUMMING RAILS

—for Shelby

It runs round the nearest curve
in my mind, where the grass bends back
and the crossing gates blink, lifting.

Oh where are the old train tracks?
the diminishing poles of childhood?
our ears at the humming rails.

Poetry Contributors

✿ JAMES D. BERTOLINO's poetry has appeared in *Icarus* (Trinity College, Dublin), *Witword* (the University of Copenhagen), and *Quixote*; a short story was in the *Wisconsin Review*. He has been a painter of murals and, for six and one-half years, a pizza cook. He says that e. e. cummings, Blake, Dylan Thomas and Winfield Townley Scott have influenced his writing.

✿ Poet PHILIP LEGLER's work has been published in many periodicals including *NMQ*. The University of Nebraska Press published his volume, *A Change of View*, and his new poems appear in recent issues of the *New York Times*, *Commonweal*, *The American Scholar* and *Perspective*. He is currently working on a manuscript of poems entitled *The Intruder*. He has taught in the English departments of New Mexico Highlands University and at Sweet Briar. He lives in Santa Fe.

✿ The three poems by the Brazilian poet, OLAVO BILAC, translated by JOHN GAW MEEM, are from a rare booklet by John Gaw Meem and Yvor Winters. Entitled *Diadems and Fagots*, it was privately printed ca. 1921 at the newspaper office of the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. The edition was about fifty copies, and these were distributed by the authors among their friends. Winter's contribution consisted of translations from the last four sonnets of Pierre de Ronsard. Both authors were suffering from tuberculosis at the time and were interned at Sun Mount Sanatorium near Santa Fe. Mr. Meem, an eminent American architect, lives in Santa Fe.

✿ A teacher of creative writing at the University of Missouri, THOMAS MCAFEE is the author of *Poems and Stories* issued by the University of Missouri Press in 1960. A book of his verse, *I'll Be Home Late To-*

night, is scheduled for publication next year. *Esquire*, *The Dial* and *Genesis West* have published his fiction; *Contact*, *Transatlantic Review* and other magazines have printed his poetry. He was anthologized in *The Girl in the Black Raincoat*, a Duell, Sloan and Pearce recent volume of poems and stories.

✿ Work by HERBERT MORRIS appears in recent or forthcoming issues of the *Quarterly Review of Literature*, the *Southern Review*, *Trace*, *Steppenwolf* and the *Hudson Review*. Many other distinguished magazines have published his poetry; his verse has been included in a Borestone Best Poems volume.

✿ DORA M. PETTINELLA's poetry has been published in more than fifty periodicals. She is known as a translator from five languages; many of the American poets whose work she has translated have appeared in foreign publications. Mrs. Pettinella travels each year in Europe and has

visited many Latin American countries. She is now living in New York City.

✿ Last April, Louisiana State University Press released HENRY TAYLOR's first volume of verse, *The Horse Show at Midnight*. Taylor was awarded The Academy of American Poet's Prize in 1962 and 1964 and the Rinetti Memorial Award in 1965. Individual poems have appeared in many national magazines and he has been anthologized in *The Girl in the Black Raincoat*, a Duell, Sloan and Pearce volume; in the forthcoming *Southern Writing* in the Sixties to be released by Louisiana State University; and in *Poems from the French* to be issued by Thomas Y. Crowell.

✿ In Ernest Kroll's poem, *Transcontinental*, which appeared in the Summer 1966 issue of *NMQ*, a comma should have appeared at the end of line 11; line 12 should have read "Is slowly sinking out of sight."

The Education of Eugene Gant

BY ALBERT W. VOGEL

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NATURE of Thomas Wolfe's first two novels (*Look Homeward, Angel*; *Of Time and the River*) has been incontrovertibly established in the critical and biographical literature that has appeared since Wolfe's death in 1938. Therefore, it is not unusual for a biographer to look to the novels for the source of some biographical detail; and inversely, for the critic to seek the meaning of the novels in Wolfe's biography. And it sometimes happens that both the critics and the biographers lose sight of the novels altogether in their efforts to unravel Wolfe. Here, in tracing the education of Eugene Gant, the novels and what they reveal will be used whenever possible; Wolfe's biography will be used to clarify or explain a particular point. Readers who are interested in cross-referencing the educations of Eugene and Thomas should see Elizabeth Nowell's *Thomas Wolfe, A Biography*.¹

In a very real sense, everything that happened to Eugene Gant contributed to his education. There are few characters in American fiction who have hungered after experience as Eugene did. This essay, however, will be limited to the academic education of Eugene, because to do more would require a complete critical examination of the novels which is beyond the scope of this study.

In *Look Homeward, Angel*,² Wolfe says that Eugene was given alphabet books at age three and that his father read animal books to him which he knew by heart after six weeks. Also from his father, Eugene heard the more rhetorical parts of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, and from his sister he heard such "ever popular" lines as "Still sits the school-house by the road/a ragged beggar sunning. . . ." (p. 61). Moreover, Eugene

1. Elizabeth Nowell, *Thomas Wolfe, A Biography* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1960).

2. Thomas Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929). Page references through page 287 are to this volume.

delighted in following history in the illustrations of Ridpath's *History of the World*, even before he could read. Thus we see that Eugene was a precocious child who had been introduced to romantic and imaginative literature very early in life. Many children have similar experiences, and it would be inappropriate to say that this early influence shaped Eugene's later literary tastes; nevertheless, the influence was present, and, as we shall see, it was substantially reinforced throughout Eugene's life both at home and at school.

Eugene began school at six in spite of his mother's reluctance to let him go. She recognized that "school began the slow, the final loosing of the cords that held them together." (p. 81). A normal and justifiable fear. Eugene faced the issue by simply getting up early and going off with his friend, Max Isaacs, the day school opened. By so doing, he not only cut the cord which bound him to his mother, he also made it clear that he recognized the relation between education and independence.

For Eugene, school was a combination of pain and wonder. The boys were cruel to him because, in their childish view, he was "queer" or bookish. But the mental suffering he endured because he was not one of the gang was more than compensated for by the joy he felt when he learned to read.

His seemingly natural and sincere love of books caused his father to dream that Eugene would go into law and become a politician—even President. Eliza, Eugene's mother, dreamed of her son as a scholar. Unfortunately, the books he read

steeped his soul in steaming imagery: *With Stanley in Africa*, rich in the mystery of the jungle, Stoddard's *Lectures . . .* on whose . . . pages were stamped the most visited scenes of Europe and Asia, *A Book of Wonder*, with . . . enchanting drawings of . . . Santos Dumot in his balloon, liquid air poured from a kettle, the building of the Eiffel Tower, the Flat-Iron Building . . . (p. 83).

They were not necessarily the kind of books that would train and discipline the mind of either a lawyer or a scholar.

He also read a volume called *Palaces of Sin, or The Devil in Society* which showed "the author walking in a silk hat down a street full of magnificent palaces of sin" (p. 84), which appealed to another part of his imagination. This part of Eugene's imagination remained forever active, but like the palaces, sex for Eugene seems always to be a mingling of pleasure and evil.

Most importantly, Eugene seems to have enjoyed the "exciting smell of chalk and varnished desks; the smell of heavy bread sandwiches of cold fried meat and butter . . ." (p. 85). And like many another bright boy he learned early of the beauty of the earth and its bounty.

And now, whetted intemperately by what he had felt, he began at school, in the fecund romance, the geography, to breathe the mixed odors of the earth, sensing in every squat keg piled on a pier-head a treasure of golden rum, rich port, fat Burgundy; smelling the jungle growth of the tropics, the heavy odor of plantations, the salt fish smell of harbors, voyaging in the vast enchanting, but unperplexing world. (p. 86)

He also learned to write, not fiction, of course, mere words, but this joy at being able to write at all was as great as if he had written a novel: ". . . and instantly he seized the pencil, and wrote the words in letters fairer and finer than his friend's. And he turned, with a cry in his throat, to the next page, and copied it without hesitation, and the next and next" (p. 87).

On the other hand, he was a "desperate and hunted little animal" (p. 89) who dreaded recess and the "brawling confusion of the mob and the playground" (88-89). He was too shy to ask to be excused to go to the boy's room, and he "sat reverently before the authority of the plump woman who first taught him. . . . terrified lest he do anything common or mean in her eyes" (p. 88). It is possible that Wolfe made too much of Eugene's sensitivity, and that the boys were no more cruel to Eugene than they were to one another, but it is more likely that Eugene was an extremely sensitive boy who felt the cruelty more deeply than the other boys did, just as he felt the things he read more deeply, or the authority of the "plump woman who first taught him."

On the practical side of education, Eugene learned about girls and sex from his friend Otto Krause, a boy who sat next to him and passed obscenities to Bessie Barnes. Bessie answered Krause "with a lewd face, and a contemptuous blow against her shapely lifted buttock" (p. 92), which Otto considered as good as a promise, Wolfe tells us. Growing out of similar incidents, Eugene had his first run-in with the principal, "a plump, soft, foppish young man" (p. 92), who admonished Eugene somewhat ineffectually, if not, indeed hypocritically,

after some notes and bawdy poems had been discovered in Eugene's desk.

The principal cut the air again with his cane. He had visited [Eugene's sister] several times, had eaten at Gant's plenteous board. . . .

"What have I ever done to you, son . . . ?" he said. . . .

"Do you think you'll do it again?" said he, becoming ominous again.

"No, no, Sir," Eugene answered, in the ghost of a voice.

"All right," said God, grandly, throwing away his cane. "You may go." (pp. 93-94)

The word *God* is used ironically here. But for the first time Eugene realized that even the authorities are human and that they have their price.

His primary education had been mainly literary and imaginative; the kind of education that was more likely to excite and enflame rather than to train and discipline the mind. He developed the habit of reading gratuitously, even carelessly, without intellectual discipline, and these habits remained with him. But it must be acknowledged that through this reading he developed his first creative urges, dreamed fanciful and romantic stories of his own, and by so doing launched his career as a writer long before he had published a word.

It is important to note here two other influences from education which affected Eugene later in life. His feeling for the South, which was colored

by the romantic halo that his school history cast over the section, by the whole fantastic distortion of that period where people were said to live in "mansions," and slavery was a benevolent institution, conducted to a constant banjo-strumming. . . . (p. 155),

and by his first meeting with a "little crippled man from Harvard" (p. 162), under whom he had studied while visiting with his mother in Jacksonville. The crippled teacher took him to lunch at a buffet, where they consumed beer and pretzels. When Eugene's mother protested the tuition the man charged, the man took what she offered him. Both Harvard and the South figure importantly in the life and thought of Eugene—Harvard as a great but slightly crippled teacher, the South as a myth which Eugene knew was a lie, but which he could not force entirely out of the deeper places in his mind.

The next important sequence of events to take place in the education of Eugene occurred soon after a new man took over as principal of Eugene's school. The new principal was a heavy, dull man, who had been raised on a Tennessee farm, and who was fond of quoting the more aphoristic passages of Longfellow. The new principal called the school together and told the students that he would offer a five dollar prize for the best essay. Actually, he was conducting a kind of primitive talent search for gifted students whom he intended to invite to enter a private school he and his wife had opened. Eugene, of course, won the contest. Eugene's father was "bitterly scornful" (p. 209) of the idea of a private school, and ". . . roared the merits of the public school as an incubator of citizenship" (p. 209). The family was contemptuous also: "Private school, Mr. Vanderbilt! Ruin him for good" (p. 209). Although Eliza begrudged paying the money, she finally consented to send Eugene for a year. Her motives were mixed. Partially she relished the snobbery of having one of her children attending a private school.

Wolfe seemed to be of two minds about Mr. Leonard. He recognized that the man was dull and that his ideas were little more than clichés. However, he also recognized Leonard's sincerity of purpose, and that he could respect. The satire Wolfe directed against Leonard is mild by comparison with the satire directed against teachers elsewhere in the novels.

It would be difficult to describe just what Eugene learned during his elementary and high school years. He apparently learned something of the Latin language and literature from Mr. Leonard, but he found the work dull, and he and the other boys took considerable delight in wasting time by asking Leonard foolish questions and by leading him off the subject. Wolfe's estimate of Leonard's scholarship sounds just:

. . . in the charted lanes of custom, he gave competent instruction. He would perhaps have had difficulty in constructing a page of Latin prose and verse with which he had not become literally familiar with by years of repetition. In Greek, certainly, his deficiency would have been even more marked, but he would have known a second aorist or an optative in the dark (if he had ever met it before). (p. 220)

Leonard's puerile defense of Greek, preserved in Wolfe's presentation of that defense, suggests some of the reasons why that noble language has all but dropped out of the curriculum of schools and colleges:

THE EDUCATION OF EUGENE GANT

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"What's the good of all this stuff?" said Tom Davies argumentatively.

Mr. Leonard was on sure ground here. He understood the value of the classics.

"It teaches a man to appreciate the Finer Things. It gives him the foundations of a liberal education. It trains the mind. . . .

"It trains the mind to grapple with problems of all sorts," [Leonard] said.

"According to what you say," said Tom Davies, "a man who has studied Greek makes a better plumber than one who hasn't."

"Yes, Sir," said Mr. Leonard, shaking his head smartly, "You know, I believe he does." . . . [Leonard] had caught a glimpse, in an American college, of the great structure of the most architectural of languages . . . but his opinions smelled of chalk, the classroom, and a very bad lamp—Greek was good because it was ancient, classic, and academic. The smell of the East, the dark tide of the Orient that flowed below, touching the lives of the poet and soldier, with something perverse, evil, luxurious, was as far from his life as Lesbos. He was simply the mouthpiece of a formula of which he was assured without having a genuine belief (pp. 220-22).

Eugene's mathematics teacher suffered from something like the same intellectual malaise: "She was a good teacher . . . number to her was innate" (p. 22). She corrected lessons, answered questions, "marked answers lazily, smiling good naturedly with contempt" (p. 222), but her efforts were uninspired by even so much as a grain of human warmth and so they were lost on Eugene.

Mr. Leonard's wife's influence was of an altogether different order. And it was for that reason it would be pointless to examine here the studies and the long list of literary works of uneven quality she and Eugene explored together. For that matter, it would be difficult to support the thesis that she was a scholar. But if "she did not have knowledge . . . she had wisdom" (p. 307). She engaged Eugene's imagination and intellect, not with anything that she said, but with what she was. The boy respected her as he respected few people, and because she loved and enjoyed literature, he loved and enjoyed it with her. And they both loved and enjoyed literature naively and from the heart.

As a teacher of literature, her greatest fault was that she read without realism. She romanticized the lives of the authors she read to

make them better men than they in fact had been, and she distorted the meaning of their writing so as to always point to the highest levels of Christian or of Victorian morality. If Eugene was able to see past her limitations, it did not change his feelings for her as a person. Her subject was herself, not literature, and her teaching was directed at the soul, as Eugene might have said, and not at the mind.

Again, of the discipline of study, Eugene learned nothing; and if he studied the classics in order to sharpen his critical sensibilities, he studied the classics in vain. It is also significant that he read Melville's *Omoo* and *Typee*, literature of experience and the emotions, and that he did not read *Moby Dick*, Melville's major philosophical work. Eugene's work habits, reading everything and studying nothing, followed him through life, and, as we shall see, even the Harvard Graduate School could not tame his mind. One cannot conclude, however, that a more rigorous and intellectual school would have changed Eugene and have made him less the romantic and more the scholar. Eugene was a product of a host of influences, some of which were with him at birth, while others came from his home life and his environment. Perhaps if the school had set out to change him it would have only succeeded in breaking his spirit—or he might have broken the spirit of the school. As things stood, there was but one course for the school to follow: it had to permit Eugene a free hand to develop his literary bent in his own way. As Wolfe observes, Eugene was cursed at birth to hear “far off, a whistle, a remote thunder on the rails” (p. 319), calling him away to life at first hand. So that there should be no mistake, let me explain that I consider Eugene's reading to have been an emotional experience almost as real as life itself, and in that sense, his reading was experience at “firsthand.”

Perhaps the school's greatest failure, and one recognized by Eugene, was its remoteness from life. The outbreak of World War I was to the Leonards an insult against British poetry and the English language: “this is the earth of Shakespeare, and Milton and John Keats, and by God, what's more it's mine as well. . . .” [Leonard] (p. 351). Of the economic and political causes of war they knew nothing, and in spite of their voluminous reading in heroic literature, they knew nothing of the realities of war: “You wait!” Leonard said confidently. “You just wait, my sonny. That old fellow Joffre knows what he's about. . . . Now he's got them where he wants them.” Eugene wondered for what subtle reason a French general might want a German army in Paris (p. 350). At another time, Margaret Leonard read to Eugene,

Brooke's sonnet "If I should die, think only this of me" and gave him a copy of Hankey's *A Student in Arms*, saying, "Read this, boy. It will stir you as you've never been stirred before. These boys have seen the vision!" (p. 351)

Eugene seems to have been adequately prepared to get into college and remain there once he was in, but whether it was the education he received at Altamont Fitting Academy or whether it was his native ability that was responsible, one can only guess.

"Eugene was not quite sixteen years old when he was sent away to the university. . . . Four years later, when he was graduated, he had passed his adolescence, the kiss of love and death burned on his lips, and he was still a child" (p. 391). In a number of ways Pulpit Hill University resembled the Altamont Fitting Academy. There was the same rough humor, a "sermon in chapel by a sophomore with false whiskers" (p. 395), a bogus examination on the contents of the college catalog, and the "inexcusable blunder of making a speech of acceptance on his election with fifty others, to the literary society" (p. 394).

The faculty at Pulpit Hill no doubt had better credentials than the faculty at Altamont Fitting Academy, but there is much that they had in common, nevertheless. Both had an unworldly and unrealistic understanding of literature:

"Observe," lisped Mr. Torrington, the old Rhodes Scholar . . . "observe how skillfully he holds suspense until the end. Observe with what consummate care he builds up his climax, keeping his meaning hidden until the very last word. Further, in fact," . . . But there was no word here of the loud raucous voice of America, political conventions and the Big Brass Band, Tweed, Tammy, the Big Stick, lynching bees and black barbecue parties, the Boston Irish, and the damnable machinations of the Pope. . . .

All that, Mr. Torrington would have said, was temporary and accidental. It was unsound. (p. 397)

Eugene took courses in English, chemistry, mathematics, Greek, and Latin. In Latin he tried to do his own work, but his translations disappointed his professor who accused him of using a pony. Out of desperation to pass the course, Eugene turned to a pony, and the professor was at last satisfied with Eugene's translations. One suspects that the professor preferred the familiar sound of the pony to Eugene's honest translations: the smell of chalk dust again.

Eugene's most profitable course was Greek, under Professor Buck Benson. Buck Benson was a little man in the middle forties, a bachelor, somewhat dandified, but old fashioned in his dress. . . . His voice was low, lazy, pleasant, with an indolent drawl. . . . His charm was enormous. Among the students he was the subject of comical speculation (pp. 401-02)

If this description is a stereotype, it is so because many professors fit the stereotype. But Benson was a good scholar, if a somewhat impatient teacher, and he taught Eugene to read and to love Homer, a love Eugene never forgot.

Eugene found subjects such as metaphysics silly and badly taught, and he had no patience with them. His preference was for subjects which appealed to the imagination, not the intellect.

One might as well copy out a library catalog as try to list the books Eugene read at Pulpit Hill, but he read everything from *Oedipus Rex* to Voltaire, Swift, Poe, and *Frankenstein*. He read now with the same gratuitous abandon with which he had read at school. Of his course work, we hear little beyond what we have already seen.

Judging from Wolfe's presentation, a great deal of what Eugene learned at college, he learned outside of class. He learned to make his way through the world with a minimum of help, and he learned something of the mysteries of sex, love, and women, in that order. Again, the large role of experience is important here. But the mystery of education seemed never to have been understood by either Eugene or Wolfe: "So get your education," said Ben, scowling vaguely. "All the Big Men—Ford, Edison, Rockefeller—whether they had it or not, say it's a good thing" (p. 447). The reference to Ford, Edison, Rockefeller, suggests that education might be a "good thing" for making money, but as neither Ben nor Eugene was interested in making money, the statement cannot be read as an accurate approximation of Ben's thoughts; rather, it is more likely one of those appropriate clichés one repeats because one has no other view on the subject.

"Eugene returned to Pulpit Hill [after summer vacation] in a fever of war excitement" (p. 533), determined to go into the war and be a hero. Unfortunately, he was too young for the Student Officer's Training Corps, so he had to content himself with editing the college paper. It is during this time that Eugene began to think of himself as a writer. Many men write because they are convinced

that they have something to tell the world. Eugene felt no such compulsion; for him writing was another kind of experience, valuable as much for the process as the result, and he relished the "good warm smell of [printer's] ink and steel" (p. 535), as much as he relished the words and ideas he was putting on paper.

Eugene graduated at the head of his class, editor of the paper, member of the best academic and social fraternities, and a campus celebrity, assured of a brilliant career (p. 600). Unfortunately, neither he nor anyone else knew just what field his brilliant career was going to be in. There had been talk, forgotten since his sophomore year, that he would go into the law. His family thought of him as a bookish dreamer who would make a "good scholar, which in fact he had never been" (p. 601). There was also talk that he would go into journalism, but Eugene took no steps in that direction, and nothing came of it.

Eugene was not troubled about his future. Instead of looking for work, he returned the summer after graduation to Pulpit Hill to talk to President Weldon. In the course of the conversation, Eugene mentioned Harvard, which for him "was not the name of a University—it was rich magic, wealth, elegance, joy, proud loneliness, rich books, and golden browsing . . ." (p. 602). President Weldon encouraged him: "It's the place for you, Mr. Gant . . . a mind like yours must be pulled green. You must give it a chance to ripen. There you will find yourself" (p. 602). Such jargon bothers Wolfe and Eugene less when it corresponds to their desires. The idea of going to Harvard had apparently lain dormant in Eugene's mind for some time. How long, we do not know. But this brief conversation was enough to bring it to the surface. There were, of course, the usual family objections to overcome—"Harvard, Son, you're flying high, you are . . ." (p. 15),³ but in the end, Eugene was permitted to go for one year. A year which stretched into three years before he was finished.

Eugene went to Harvard because "he simply wanted to know about everything on earth; he wanted to devour the earth" (p. 92). Rarely has a young man gone off to college with purer motives. Nevertheless, whatever Eugene learned at Harvard by way of academic work remains an unhappy mystery. As nearly as one can make out from the novels, he took only one course: "Professor Hatcher's celebrated course for dramatists" (p. 134). One assumes that Eugene was required to take certain courses for the M.A. degree, a language examination, some

3. Thomas Wolfe, *Of Time and The River* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935). Page references through page 289 are to this volume.

kind of comprehensive examination, and write a thesis, but these things are never mentioned in the novel.

Professor Hatcher's course is mentioned satirically for the most part, in spite of the fact that the aims of Professor Hatcher's course were reasonable enough:

. . . if a man had a genuine dramatic and theatric talent to begin with, he might be able to devise from the course a technical and critical guidance which it would be hard for him to get elsewhere and which he might find for himself only after years of painful and even wasteful experiment (p. 168).

For Eugene the course was a failure. Not so much because Professor Hatcher failed to live up to his modest claims, but because Eugene was emotionally unprepared to get anything from it. One suspects that even if Hatcher had known a foolproof method of teaching play-writing, Eugene would have resisted it. One suspects, also, that the satire Wolfe leveled at Hatcher, his students, and the course, was out of proportion to the defects of all three. It was no doubt true that much of the course was superficial and shrouded in professional and psychological jargon, and that many of the students lacked talent for writing as well as the intelligence to distinguish what was important in a play from what was not. Moreover, in Eugene's view the course led:

. . . in the end . . . to nothing but falseness and triviality, to the ghosts of passion, and the spectre of sincerity, to the shoddy appearances of conviction and belief in people who had no passion and sincerity, and who were convinced of nothing, believed in nothing, were just the disloyal apes of fashion and the arts (p. 135).

Here again, we see that many of the important things Eugene learned at Harvard he learned independently, either through his reading or by associating with such men as Francis Starwick, Professor Hatcher's assistant. As for reading, Eugene continued to "read insanely, by the hundreds, the thousands, and ten thousands, yet he had no desire to be bookish He read no more for pleasure He pictured himself as tearing the entrails from a book as from a fowl" (p. 91).

As for Starwick, in many ways he typified for Eugene the idea of a Harvard man. He was aesthetic, polished, completely at home in the academic world, and a party to all of the intellectual prejudices and

cults which obfuscate the academic study of literature. At first, Eugene was overawed by Starwick's urbanity and emotional restraint, but he came by degrees to see through Starwick to the confused and unhappy boy under the intellectual veneer. Eugene was disappointed when he came to know the real Starwick, for while Eugene was incapable of being a "Harvard Man," he had hoped that such a man did exist. To discover that his idol had feet of clay may have benefited Eugene in the long run, but at the time he felt only the disappointment: ". . . you have taken from me [Eugene said] something that I wanted, you have taken it without knowing that you took it. . . ." (p. 738).

In due course Eugene takes his M.A. degree and accepts a position as an English instructor at a university through the casual procedure of being recommended by the Teacher's Bureau of Harvard, thus entering a profession he neither liked nor was fitted for. Except as a culmination of the educational process, Eugene's career in teaching does not interest us here. But one should observe that he held his academic superiors, his colleagues, the students, and the university for which he taught in absolute contempt. For Eugene, university teaching was a corrupting and degrading experience which turned the flesh "green and yellow with its poisons . . . [with] the dense rubric of their million spites and hatreds" (p. 421). To anyone interested in a description of the worst parts of the academic life, we can recommend Wolfe's pages, but we would like to remind the reader that Eugene's academic world was seen through the eyes of a man who was impatient to be a writer, and who had been forced into the work of teaching only as a means of making a living while he wrote. He was a man torn by divided loyalties and the guilt he felt at having to sacrifice his writing to his teaching, and then his teaching to his writing. In anguish and frustration he flailed about himself unjustly and unreasonably.

A summary of Eugene's three years of Harvard could draw only the following conclusion. From the intellectual life at Harvard, Eugene learned nothing. The years can best be considered a time during which Eugene's mind—in the presence of great books—matured to the point where he could acknowledge that destiny had chosen him to be a writer. We cannot say that he had learned to write at Harvard. Outside of a bit of drama, he wrote nothing. But he did begin to think of himself as a writer, and that was a necessary first step.

In the novels of Thomas Wolfe we have seen the education of a singular and unusually gifted man for the equally singular profession

of fiction writing. It would be wrong to conclude that Eugene's experience could be universalized as an educational scheme for a society or that it could be "programmed" as a way of preparing writers. Eugene's literature, like Wolfe's, was to be intensely personal and autobiographical. He was not interested, nor was he able to create the truth of fact; his only interest was in the truth of one man's involvement in his environment. Education for Eugene was not a means of preparing himself for his life work, but simply another dimension of his involvement in life. It would have to be argued, then, that there is no system of education which would be suitable for such a man as Eugene. As one who was entirely self-motivated, he could only look within himself. To even attempt to impose a system upon him would do violence to the talent and genius that drove him on his search for personal truth. We can only be glad that Eugene was able to find teachers who were willing to permit him the freedom to grow in his own way.

If Eugene can be said to have received anything from his teachers, it would be in the form of such intangibles as inspiration, respect for books and knowledge (even if the knowledge was undisciplined and unsystematic), and the wisdom and courage to face life at firsthand. In this regard Mrs. Leonard looms large, recognizing, of course, that she herself was not fully capable of achieving the high standards she taught. It is one of the mysteries of the art of teaching that certain teachers themselves either do not possess or possess only in part.

This also suggests why Eugene and Professor Hatcher got along so badly. Eugene looked to Hatcher for inspiration; instead he received solid teaching. Hatcher's method obviously worked with some students, because Hatcher could name former students of his who had gone on to become successful playwrights. But it did not and could not work with Eugene. Eugene's mistake was that he did not recognize that Hatcher was, like himself, a human being who could not accommodate his talents to each one of his students. If both men had been sufficiently gifted with insights into their own motives, strengths, and weaknesses, they might have worked out some kind of an arrangement which would have left them friends. But unfortunately, human activities are not often motivated by rational considerations.

The most important part of Eugene's education was his unbridled and extensive reading. The nature of this reading and its influence upon his own writing needs to be examined. It is clear that Eugene was not the kind of writer who could "borrow" from other authors;

neither was he in any way a scholar. He read only because reading took him into corners of experience he could not otherwise reach. And one feels, that given the choice, he would have preferred his experience at first hand. It is significant that he read most when he was at school. There are very few references to his reading away from school, where he preferred to live as his own man engaged in his own experiences. For Eugene the library was not the place where man's knowledge and wisdom were stored, but only a supplement to experience. Moreover, because Eugene was a prospective writer, one would expect him to be interested in matters of style and technique. But in this, too, he was unwilling to learn from others. "Tearing the entrails from a book as from a fowl" leaves one little time to contemplate the organic beauty of the fowl. Neither was Eugene interested in the minds of the authors he read, nor does he look upon them as colleagues or fellow authors. They are merely purveyors of experiences life did not allow him time to engage in himself. Given his choice, Eugene would have preferred to have been the author in the silk hat walking "down a street full of magnificent places of sin," than to have read about it. These things also suggest additional reasons why Eugene failed as a teacher. His experience of a book was personal and could not be transmitted by him. The teacher's job is to deepen the experience by teaching about all of the ingredients which went into the making of the book. Because Eugene was not interested in these ingredients, he had nothing to talk about with his students except his own experience with literature, a risky and painful curriculum at best.

One cannot say whether Eugene (or Wolfe) had a philosophy or theory of education. As Pamela Hansford Johnson makes clear,⁴ Wolfe's philosophical notions are confused and muddled; however, in a letter to George Baker of Harvard, Wolfe, speaking of Henry Adams, said: "In this chaos of farce and disorder, where is to be found that principle of unity, order, which his spirit seeking 'education' (which is but knowledge of unity) is on the hunt for."⁵ This passage and the structure and content of Wolfe's novels suggest that Wolfe had much in common with the pragmatic outlook, or the idea that life was a continuing pattern of experience, which was only made com-

4. Pamela Hansford Johnson. *Thomas Wolfe* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1947), p. 98.

5. Elizabeth Nowell (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Wolfe* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), p. 36.

prehensible through the imposition of human intelligence upon it, and which dismissed the apparatus of Germanic philosophy which sought to square experience with principle.

If this were Wolfe's view, it would seem that Wolfe and John Dewey had much in common with regard to education. From what we have seen elsewhere in this essay, it would seem that both Wolfe and Dewey would have agreed that education should be derived from experience first, which means reading as experience only if one reads not to accumulate the facts of the book, but to "experience" at first-hand (or as nearly firsthand as possible) the events of the book. And, of course, they would both have agreed that education was not a preparation for life, but life itself, from which one must wring every drop of experience if one's time on earth were not to be squandered.

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REVIEWS

AMERICAN SCENES AND OTHER POEMS, by Charles Tomlinson, London: Oxford University Press, 1966. 62 pp. \$3.50.

The third collection of Charles Tomlinson's poems comes to its readers highly recommended; both his first two volumes—*Seeing is Believing*, 1960 and *A Peopled Landscape*, 1963—were well received and the current volume is listed as a selection of the prestigious British Poetry Book Society. The author, too, comes to an especially prepared audience in New Mexico where his acquaintanceship as visiting lecturer at UNM and as D. H. Lawrence Fellow at Taos led him well away from the tourist trails in this longest of his several hikes through the American scenery.

It is possible, even so, that much of what he saw here to write about may strike his British readers more forcefully than his American ones, concerned as it is with the reluctant breakdown of the Lawrentian mythology, with the chrome-plated acceptance of modernity that even the Pueblo Indians seem to have agreed to by now. Mr. Tomlinson, though, picks up some finer ironies, some overlooked arrowheads, that are still sharp—particularly in his Mexican poems. His experience as translator of Antonio Machado must have been helpful, but mostly it seems a matter of attitude; it is easy to feel his sincerity and his willingness to recognize his subject matter as essentially distant and unfamiliar.

In method, many of the individual poems are probably "better" than those in the earlier volumes—certainly they are less academic, less involutely aesthetic—and there can be little doubt that the poet is still developing strongly and experimenting freely. Nevertheless, the book seems to be less coherent as a collection than the earlier ones. It is too eclectic, too multiple in its purposes, to develop as integrated an overtone of style or form or personality as does *A Peopled Landscape*. If the poems are good, the collection should be better. One gets the feeling that it may have been hurried into print a year or so too early. Also, the fact that the book is partly dedicated to as many as twelve people makes the reader edgy, as if the book itself were a discharge of literary obligations, a giving of poems for Christmas.

The consistent technique among the variety of the poems is recognizably his own adaption of what is usually called "cool, detached observation." It is an application of a poignant and unaffected linguistic accuracy to a static scene. The effect is that of a fine needlepoint or an intricate mosaic of image and sound. Mr. Tomlinson gives the phrase to it himself in a poem, like many of his, about the artist: "A mosaicist of minute attentions." The method is scenic—as the titles of all three collections remind—not dramatic nor discursive; his primary job, like Conrad's, is to make us see. When it works—as in such brilliant studies as "Weeper in Jalisco," "Letters from Amherst," and "The Fox"—this painter's method is exciting indeed. When it does not work it seems merely surgical.

One hopes, at the end, for more books by Mr. Tomlinson, for larger canvases, more dramatic scenes, and more distant landscapes; for slower collecting, fewer "private" and more "major" poems. But it is impossible not to be grateful for his "minute attentions," for his coming and looking and giving back poems of integrity and talent.

—Clifford Wood

Clifford Wood, former poetry editor at NMQ and frequent contributor, teaches modern poetry at Wisconsin State University in Oshkosh.

VALLE INCLÁN Y LA DIFICULTAD DE LA TRAGEDIA, Ramón J. Sender, Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1965. 150 pp. \$1.

This long essay, Sender's second book to be published in Spain since 1938 (a novel, *El badido adolescente*, preceded it slightly, I believe), not only adds immensely to our understanding of Valle Inclán but it also indirectly tells us much about Sender himself. It is, therefore, one might say, doubly important.

It should be noted, however, that only about two-thirds of this book is new. The other third previously appeared in the chapter on Valle Inclán in two former books by Sender: *Unamuno, Valle Inclán, Baroja, y Santayana* (Mexico: Studium, 1955) and *Los noventayochos* (New York: Las Americas, 1961).

Sender, an admirer and—in his youth—intimate friend of the Galician author, avoids pedantry and simply tells us—in direct and simple language—what Valle Inclán means to him, what he likes and what he does not like in him. But this does not mean that he does not probe deeply into Valle Inclán's mode of understanding reality and of reflecting that reality in his works. Herein lies the greatest value of Sender's essay.

More than thirty pages are dedicated to the short novel, *Flor de Santidad*, regarded by Sender as one of the very few masterpieces of this century. He laments that it has not yet been translated into any foreign language.

Valle Inclán failed as a tragedian because of an overconcern for the esthetic and lyrical projections at the expense of a true respect for and deep belief in man. But, according to Sender, Spain has never produced a true tragedy. One explanation for this, he writes, is that the Inquisition never allowed the free interpretation of reality as a work of God or of the devil. "*Ni la desesperación del hombre frente a su destino.*" (p. 95) Another reason has been the lack of innocence in almost all Spanish writers. And in the case of innocent authors each has lacked one or more of the ingredients indispensable for the creation of the true tragedy.

This is an exceptionally interesting and valuable addition to Valleinclan-esque studies—one which no student of Valle Inclán can ignore.

—Charles L. King

Charles L. King is a member of the faculty of the University of Colorado, Boulder, where he teaches Spanish. A graduate of UNM, he was a student of Ramón Sender. Dr. King has published articles in *The Modern Language Journal* and in the *Publications of the Modern Language Association*.

Chihuahua

STOREHOUSE OF STORMS

by *Florence C. Lister & Robert H. Lister*

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Robert Lister, professor of archaeology at the University of Colorado, has published over sixty reports, monographs and articles which resulted from his field trips and research. Mrs. Lister, co-author of *Chihuahua*, accompanied her husband on their latest expedition to the Sudan where they were engaged with others in the colossal salvage at the Aswan Dam.

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