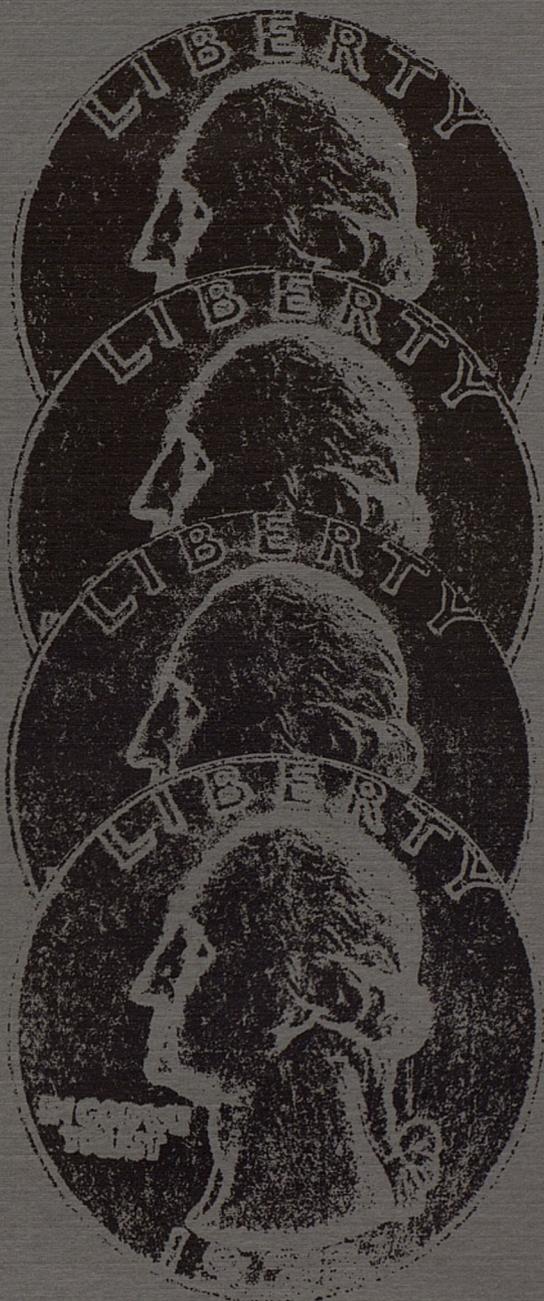


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Incorporating Malone-Stranger Review

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Perhaps not fashionable, but this issue is respectfully dedicated to B. Franklin and T. Jefferson and honoring their considerable literary skills -- in each instance directed by an enlightened, scientifically-aware, very pragmatic, human-oriented intelligence.



PORTABLE SHERWOOD ANDERSON

At the end of the
bicentennial summer,
a lady was traveling east
in a car that had seen better days,
traveling from Oregon to Michigan
for reasons that will remain unknown to us.
She was sitting beside her husband
reading a certain book
to pass the time.

Now I might as well tell you
the specific identity of that book
was The Portable Sherwood Anderson
and I was that lady traveling
as I have every summer for ten years
the road between Oregon and Michigan,
for reasons we will continue to ignore,
since what matters is the journey itself
and the road and the book and the season
and the sense of the country one gets
from two thousand four hundred miles worth
of look-alike interstate rest areas.

Wherever we stopped,
in Oregon or Wyoming or Iowa,
all along Interstate 80,

there'd be the same big brick bathroom
with the same electric
hot-air hand-dryers (for our protection)
and the same redwood information centers
and picnic benches and pet walking areas.
In Idaho or Illinois or Nebraska,
I'd ride along reading
The Portable Sherwood Anderson
and when I looked up, there it would be --
something brick that looked just like
the last one.

The Stuckeys and Texacos
were cut from one design
and Little America
was a great big gas station.
A sad feeling slipped over me
like the dark at the end of summer
on the eastern ends of time zones,
a sadness at how one place was getting to be
too much like another,
tasteless and conveniently speedy
like a factory hamburger.

And then it happened,
just this side of Laramie,
or Kearney -- or Joliet,
as we pulled into a rest area
with a statue of Abraham Lincoln,
where a CB radio club
was passing out free coffee in styrofoam cups,
and giving away red, white and blue bicentennial
anti-litter bumper stickers,
which a guy in a blue Dodge pickup
with a "love it or leave it" sign took two of
and left,
as did the couple in the van
with airbrush gargoyles all over it
and a diffenbachia hanging in the rear window.

It happened so quickly,
I almost didn't notice the boy in embroidered levis
calling and calling on the payphone,
calling to someone who didn't answer.
He knocked his forehead against the payphone,
gently, gently, waiting
for someone who didn't answer.

And I almost didn't see
the family of eight climbing out of the station wagon
with charcoal and lawn chairs,
beach balls and steaks,

a parakeet in a green plastic cage
and battery television.
When I spotted the traveler,
I was so intent on reaching him,
I walked past the mini-bus named "Utopia,"
past the red-haired cowgirl
and the Latin-looking man with five poodles;
I almost stumbled over the old couple
announcing the end of the world.
I took one of their pamphlets that warned
we would all be devoured pretty soon
by a beast that resembles Godzilla,
but I brushed them off politely
and made my way toward the stranger
with sad, familiar eyes.
I thought he might be a relative of mine
for he looked like a misplaced dreamer
or a failed chicken farmer
who had come to this rest area
like some kind of mid-American
ancient mariner.
I thought he was eating his lunch
for he had an egg in his hand
but he didn't crack it or eat it.
He just looked at it, turning it around.
He stared at the egg.
Then he looked at me.
I looked at him.
He looked at the egg again, reflectively.

And then I asked him.
Clutching my Portable Sherwood Anderson,
standing in an obscure rest area on Interstate 80
somewhere west of Rawlins, or Davenport, or Gary,
I stammered my question.
"Mister -- don't I know you from somewhere?
You famous or something?"

"Could be," he answered.
"No one knows more about eggs than I do."

THE DRAWING INSTRUCTOR

I will teach you
an old drawing class trick.
If you want to draw
a straight line,
make a dot
where you want your line
to end up.

Place your pencil
where you want the line
to begin.

As you draw
look only at the dot.
Do not look at the pencil.
Do not look at the line.
Do not look at your
moving hand.
Your line
will be tolerably straight.

Your line is not
straight enough?
Then carry a yardstick.
I have nothing more
to say to you.

-- Barbara Drake

Okemos MI

HOW TO SHARPEN THE CARPET KNIFE

Press the blade
on the stone right where you want the curve
(smooth even strokes
without forcing the edge
upon its quick)
and it will sharpen in a crescent.
The sharpness
and the angle of the curve
as you hold it to the jute
will do your work.

SECURITY

"They give you free lunch
and a little box of food for supper,"
says the white-whiskered Chicano
I give a ride to the El Rio
Neighborhood Center.

"I'm 62 now.
If I live to 65 I get Social Security.
I don't know.
None of my friends live that long."

TOBACCO

"Lemme try one of those,"

Pete says in the workshed, reaching
for my tobacco pouch and papers,
spinning one quickly, evenly
in his fingers
licking and sealing the edge --
a perfect cigarette.

"But I don't smoke anymore,"
he hands it back.

"Still like to roll em.
Back home everybody rolls their own.
I knew one buddy lost an arm,
could roll em like tailor-mades
with one hand,

inside his coat pocket."

JOHN

John the groundsman
won't give Mitch
a ride to work even though
he drives right by his apartment.
"I don't have insurance
for you," John tells him,
but to others:
"The old bum, he's a boozer
if I ever saw one."

"Piss on him," spits Mitch.
"He's an ornry cuss
to work with."

But John,
out in his yellow rain slicker
cutting weeds under the water tower
with his scythe like a golfer,
John, who doesn't
give a hoot for Mitch,

cares for the desert marigolds
that scatter wild
across the spring floor,
and, though he doesn't have to,
cuts carefully
around each yellow clump.

A JOB

"We gotta go down to niggertown,
fix a water heater,"
Ray says, "Come on."
We get into National City, find the place,
replace the copper tubing,
safety valve, roughen the insides
of the elbow joints
so they'll seal,
then solder it together.
The black man comes out to the garage
while we're working,
talks about his job, his daughter
in high school, says,
"Come on in now and have some lunch."
We go inside
and the woman grills cheese sandwiches,
pours coffee,
then a piece of cake.
We're sitting in the chairs, talking
about this and that,
the pepper tree blowing in the window.

Back at the shop, Bill says:
"You get enough of them niggers today?"
But before I can speak
Ray answers, "Bill, you shut your goddamn mouth!"

MANPOWER

"No, I'm not married," he answered.
We sat in the workshed smoking cigarettes,
the rain steady on the roof.
Our shovels, caked with mud,
stood outside the door.
Then, the second day:
"Yes, I'm married.
Married and have two kids.
But I don't tell most people cause
they ask, 'How can you support a family
working for Manpower?'"

"Christ, I get tired of telling them I can't."

SNAKE COLOR

Sam, from Brooklyn,
out cutting the weeds
around the warehouse,
sees a snake --

"Whaddy ya mean, 'What color was it?'"
he snaps at me at lunch.
"You a wise guy or somethin?
I'll tell ya what
color it was.
It was snake color!"

-- Ben Jacques

Yarmouth ME

LITANY FOR A RACCOON

The raccoon in the corner of the dining room plays hide-and-seek with her food. At night, I hear the ceramic chatter of the cookie jar lid. The raccoon rinses her Oreos in the dog's water dish. The raccoon thinks Oreos are just ducky. In the morning, the dog sniffs at the crumbs and dustballs in the corner of the dining room before she goes out. I've never seen the raccoon.

*

My roommate in college told me his sister found a raccoon in their yard in Owensboro, Kentucky. She brought it to graduation, but left it in the Holiday Inn. The raccoon shit all over the bedspreads on the two double beds in the room. My roommate's father is a doctor. He gave my roommate one thousand dollars on graduation day. My father sent me out for hamburgers and let me keep the change, \$1.38. My roommate wanted to become a veterinarian. I wanted to be a poet. The raccoon was killed by a stray dog my roommate took in and fed.

*

Maggie thinks the raccoon is a rat. But I know a rat when I see one. The man who lives behind us raises

laboratory rats in his garage for the University of Michigan. He feeds them a mixture of rat and dog food. Rats don't rinse their food. Rats don't like Oreos because the sugary cream filling bites into the cavities in their teeth. Rats are not as imaginative as raccoons. Rats don't play hide-and-seek with anything but other rats.

*

My brother-in-law found a raccoon in the woods behind his Orange, Connecticut, house. He and my sister have a friend who travels and lectures on "The Care and Treatment of Wild Animals in the Home." She told them to fix up a dark cardboard box with a small hole and plenty of blankets. She told them to feed the raccoon milk and raw fish. The raccoon wouldn't eat. The raccoon ripped the blankets into shreds. I told them to feed it Oreos. They laughed over the phone. The raccoon ran away. My two young nieces were heartbroken until dinnertime.

*

A raccoon the size of a large dog used to rattle the garbage cans at our cottage at Platte Lake. Michael and I slept on the porch. We tried to catch the raccoon in the act. Michael said the raccoon was the size of a bear cub. He said that its eyes shined in the light of the camera's flash like a cigarette burning orange at both ends. When the photo was developed, it showed nothing but garbage cans tipped over. Every morning we cleaned up the chicken bones and watermelon rinds in the driveway. We never found any Oreo crumbs on the beach. Soon afterward, Michael was drafted and I moved to Detroit.

*

I thought I saw a raccoon on Eighteen Mile Road one afternoon. The raccoon crossed the road from a new condominium complex to a new housing development on the other side. I stopped the car and was almost hit from behind. Maggie said I was crazy. She said it couldn't have been a raccoon. I saw the bushes along the road move and got out of the car. I was almost hit from behind. There was nothing in the ditch but briars and thickets. Maggie rolled down her window and said I was crazy. She said there were only deer in the fields beyond the Northfield Financial Building on Crooks Road. She told me to get the hell back into the car. The next day I found a dead raccoon on Eighteen Mile Road.

*

I buried a raccoon wrapped in old newspaper. In the grave I placed a half-dozen Oreos and a dish of water. I said a litany in French because I don't know Latin. I knew what to say from my job at the cemetery. The men I work with have never seen a raccoon but once saw a fox run across The Garden of the Last Supper. I found tiny tracks last winter in the snow there. In the spring, we fish ducklings out of the cement lake around the memorial fountain with a dipping net so they won't drown. The ducklings love vanilla wafers but won't eat Oreos. Most of them die soon after they are relocated. I said a litany for the ducklings over the raccoon's grave. My French is terrible.

*

Michael wrote that there are raccoons in Korea, but that they are not near as big as the ones in Michigan. I wrote him that there are no raccoons in the Detroit Zoo. The attendant told me that raccoons in captivity starve to death. I told him to feed them Oreos. He said I was crazy. Maggie said we should go see the Polar bears. They sit up and catch thrown marshmallows in their mouths. I threw the Polar bears an Oreo but it fell short and landed in the water in the moat around their cage. I took the rest of the package home and put them in the cookie jar. Three days later, the Oreo was still there, bloated fat, soggy, and three times its normal size. I felt wasteful and stupid. I've never seen the raccoon in the corner of the dining room.

-- Phillip Sterling
Bowling Green OH

NEW SYSTEMS

A long time ago in school I remember hearing about the barter system and how it came unraveled in the face of money. Then close to a decade ago I read in Playboy magazine that we wouldn't be getting money anymore in the not too distant future -- they are going to wipe out our money and finally get down to pure abstractions. Then we will get units.

Say 120 units a week for what you do, if you do anything worth units. If you don't do anything worth units, you are in trouble. You will not be able to steal other

people's units. Units will exist only in the minds of a few. The units will be recorded at the proper command from the proper power. You will carry a unit card with you wherever you go, and when you go somewhere where they are authorized to sell, you will hand the man your unit card and he will insert it into a machine and the machine will deduct the proper amount of units for the purchase you have made. If you do not have sufficient units, a small red light embedded into the top of the unit machine will begin to pulse and glow a deep red.

Now, as I sit in the evenings drinking my beer and watching the tv, I notice that there is an ad sponsored by the National Federation of Banks or some such thing, and this ad, paid for by the banks, is telling us that we needn't bother going thru all the hassle of receiving our pay checks and then going all the way to the bank to wait in line to deposit them -- by using the new "direct saving" or "direct banking" plan, we need never see our checks! Our employer can simply direct them straight into our accounts, and presto!

When the unit system is finally operative, you will still be able to go into the woods, but you will never be able to come back.

POETS

Always of course when we were kids it was jolly business to abuse them. They were ridiculed in the classroom as the masses of children -- boys and girls -- squirmed and sweated and giggled, their eyes burning; watching the heavy weight of the teacher move itself about the room, sensing her tiredness, sensing that she was finished, sensing that we were young and our energy endless, scoffing at the weak and cryptic words she pushed toward us, knowing that she too was bewildered by the words, had no respect or understanding for them, hid amongst them like a naughty girl in the dirty laundry.

The poets get off to a bad start in life, and God only knows they bring it on themselves. Such a bitchy lot, so highstrung and full of small rages, totally incapable of solving the slightest problem. Their ineffectuality is the most attractive thing about them, however, and as time goes on those that persevere begin to draw attention. The communities of the world begin shoving things about and doing things that are uncomfortably on the outer fringes of the sensible to make room for these poets, these marvelous creatures who will not give an inch.

When a poet reaches this plateau, he is treated with an odd strain of affection and given honors. His work is printed eventually in the new text books that are opened by the new children on a new first day of school.

-- John Bennett
Ellensburg WA

PAC & DASH

Latest macho trip in Sacramento
for underage males
is "pac & dash."
Takes minimum of 2.
One to drive one
to dash into Quick
Stop grab 6 pac
& dash out
& peel away.

DRIVING ELKHORN BULD HOME

saw myself
10 maybe 9
braced against tailgate
(front full of grownups)
pulling pin with teeth
lobbing grenades at
enemy tanks half-tracks
foot soldiers catching
them all by
surprise.

ENTERTAINER

I dont hear the
Mockingbird mock.
He entertains
with wide variety
of borrowed tunes.
Like most musicians.

FORTY

BRIDGE

Last week hung our
grass Guahibo hammock
between roof & Silver Maple.
Today it's occupied.
Tiny black ants traveling
long narrow trail
use it for a bridge.

Midnite. Sit & try
to figure it out.
How far I've come.
How much I've got left.
How much time ...
Begin to doubt.
In fit of melancholy
think of my weaknesses ...
failures as father
husband son.
Start on my if onyls.
Use them as whip
ass whipping ass
in good old
American style.

BLOCKS

My Grandmother still uses pine
blocks for heat. Orders a dumptruck
load every summer & waits
for me to visit stack
them in the basement.
She carries 5 or 6 in old
coal bucket up wooden stairs
& dumps them in wash tub
next to her kitchen stove.
Once a day in preparation.

MOTHER'S DAY

Yesterday Lisa spent half
an afternoon making her
mother a card with smiling
red sun green hills & flowers
divided by blue stream
& smiling yellow fish.
You're the sunshine
of our lives it says.
I try to call my mother
(spred a little sunshine)
but get 3 busy signals
before I get thru
then no answer.
Try again tomorrow.

-- Phil Weidman

North Highlands CA

HORSES

most are friendly
(but not all gentle)
others downright mean

-- M. K. Book

Lincoln NE

Gerald LOCKLIN'S

NAMING MOM AND DAD

My father's name, Ivan, was all wrong.
There wasn't anything the least bit Russian about him.

I don't think he even had a temper.
I'm sure there were times when he had to feign anger
because the situation obviously called for it.

My mother's name was Esther Adelaide.
It always summoned up for me
the Bible, aquatic cinematics, and marmalade.
Since I prefer the first two to marmalade,
I will let the Esther stand, but the middle name must go.

I will call my father John.
I will have the name on his grave-marker changed.

I don't think it will be necessary to tell my mother
about the loss of her middle name.
I'm not really scared of her anymore,
not at a distance of 3,000 miles at least,
but I'm afraid the whole business might get her asthma
going.

John and Esther,
the perfect parents for a girl named Walter.



THE TROUBLESHOOTER

Whenever trouble is about to break out
the saloon-keeper sends for the trouble shooter.

When he arrives, he invariably smiles a smile
big as Alaska and says, "All right, fellas,
what seems to be the trouble here?"

Then each of the potential troublemakers
has a chance to tell his side of the story.

When they are all done,
The Troubleshooter draws
and plugs anyone even remotely involved in the
unpleasantness.

Afterwards he blows on the smoking tips of his
as if they were spoonfuls of piping hot
cream of tomato soup.

If the saloon-keeper tries to offer thanks,
The Troubleshooter invariably replies,
"All in a day's work."

He moonlights on Gordian Knots and Horny Dilemmas.

SMALL FRY/SMALL TALK

Through circumstances beyond my control,
I hadn't seen my little boy in weeks.
When I ran into him, he was riding his bike,
and was waiting for his permanent front teeth.

I hugged and kissed him and said,
"How have you been?"

"I don't know," he said.

Small talk is wasted on kids.
Try it and you'll only end up
feeling like an idiot.
They know the questions you ask can't be
answered in a phrase.
Had I expected him to say, "Oh I've been wonderful.
It's great having a father and mother
who aren't speaking to each other."

So I patted him on the back and he rode on,
he who before the separation
used to hurl himself into my arms
and want me never to let go of him.

I'm not sure just how I've been either, John.

A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER TO SOCIETY

I am against making guns illegal.
I am, however, proposing legislation
for the registration of guitars.

Guns will be necessary
to shoot the guitar violators.

A PROFUNDITY

Awaiting a Bogey movie
I caught the tail-end of the red-neck news.

This very highly paid anchor man
leaned out of the tube
to conclude his report on the death of Euell Gibbons
with, "He who advocated natural foods,
died of natural causes."

PHASES

no matter what i got interested in as a kid,
whether it was girls or poetry or growing a beard,
if my mother didn't approve of it, she invariably
dismissed it with, "it's only a phase; he'll grow out of it."

then last sunday chuck and ron and i were sitting
in this mexican bar and they were giving me a ration of shit.

"yeah," chuck said, "i don't see much of the bear anymore --
he's into his foosball phase."

"i understand," ron said,
"i suffered through his billiards and his spook obsessions."

okay, you guys, admittedly i don't have much
of a backhand right at foosball,

and admittedly i could never line up longshots
over the rims of my spectacles at pool,

and admittedly i have a tendency to become absorbed in
an activity,
burn it and myself out, and turn to something else,

but back in '64-'65,
when little anthony was in his prime,
when blacks and whites marched arm-in-arm for selma,
when at garfono's pizza parlor on friday afternoons,
no one cared if i danced with black girls,
nor did i care if they danced with whites,
when al jefferson used to put me up if my wife threw me
out
and ted short taught me how to lose six bets on one race
at santa anita,

back there, for one brief shining moment as they say in
camelot
for one year about which i have never satisfactorily
written

take my word for it, i was one hell of a nigger.

LITERATURE AND LIFE

There is a scene in Under the Volcano
which I have always found incomparably high comedy
because it is tragedy as well.
The Consul, rising from a couple of hours sleep
and still half-schnockered,
finds a note from his wife informing him she has cut
out for good.

He tosses it aside, literally digs up a bottle from
the yard,
and after a timeless period of getting straight,
wanders back inside musing something like,
"I wonder where she's gone? Probably out to get some
groceries?"

To properly appreciate this scene you must understand
that he is passionately in love with his wife
(yes, I realize that isn't easy to fathom)
that she is the only thing that he had left.

Last week, after four days spent if not under a volcano,
then let's say somewhere in the foothills,
I awoke feeling pretty good,
knowing there would be no need for a drink,
and came upon a couple of unopened manilla envelopes,
manuscripts returned from magazines.
Now, again, to appreciate this you must understand
that those envelopes are to me what the Consul's wife
was to him: I live for them, I have sacrificed
important segments of my own life and the lives
of my loved ones to those seemingly innocuous manilla
envelopes.
Yet I could not remember having taken them from the
mailbox or having tossed them aside.

There are some books you would rather admire than live.

MASTER OF ARTS

After the seminar he comes to me and asks,
"These other people in the class
all seem to have heard of these authors that you're
mentioning --
what are they, a bunch of bookworms or something?"

THE PROGRESS OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

My wife tells me that my daughter
who used to want to grow up
to be a writer and to work in a bookstore
has now decided to be a writer
and to own a bookstore.

THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES

i was asked once in an interview
what were my greatest fears.
i replied that, among other things,
i feared the return of my teenage acne.

now i have always believed in the power
of negative thinking -- that, by anticipating the
worst,
you can sort of ward it off.

but i may have to revise my theory,
because, sure enough, this fall
my high school acne did return.

i'm not exaggerating when i say
i just about had a nervous breakdown,
it wasn't just the physical embarrassment;
there was also the rush of buried humiliations
unleashed by the immediately re-familiar facial itch.

when i asked the dermatologist
what was causing the pustules,
he said, predictably enough, "acne."

"yes," i said, "i know that,
but what is the cause, after all these years,
of the acne?"

"most likely, strain," he said, "emotional upset,"
and he rushed from the room.

i didn't bother to point out to him
that circumstances and myself have always kept me
more or less under strain.
obviously "strain" is the new etiological smokescreen,
just as when i was a kid
it was chocolate or french fries.

well, while the acne lasted,
i was under considerable strain,
but, amazingly, the tetracycline worked,
proving that dermatological science is progressing
in its knowledge of cures, if not of causes.

a patch of blue scars, however,
though not overly distinguishable to the untrained eye,
does remain.

i suppose bukowski will accuse me now
of deliberately setting out to look like him.

TWO FOR THE SEESAW AND ONE FOR THE ROAD

If I'm over visiting my kids and want
something from the liquor store,
it's about fifty-fifty whether I'll go get it myself
or whether I'll ask my wife to run over for me,
except that as the evening gets later
and I get more mellow and settled in
the odds improve to about 10-1 that I'll send my wife.

This outrages many of her women friends
and I've even seen a trace of concern
flicker about the eyes of a couple of my own friends,

but all it comes down to
is that she's willing to do this little thing for me
just as I am willing to do many little things for her
and just as, I'm pretty sure, if the chips were down
we'd be willing to do big things for each other also.

Now if, as I have seen happening,
her more militant friends succeed in convincing her
that there is something demeaning in her
running these errands for me,

will this truly be a "liberation,"
the "raising of a consciousness"

or just another sacrifice of the amenities to orthodoxy.

DOUBLE TAKE

I was coming out of the English office today,
when a student stopped me and asked,

"Are you the department chairman?"

He couldn't understand why everyone within hearing
distance
broke into guffaws.

A PERENNIAL

It was the Five-Thousandth Showing
of the "Big Sleep,"

and Bogie was saying, "My, my, my,
how many guns there are around town these days ...
and so few brains."

And afterwards, on the News,
Police Chief Davis
was urging the citizenry to arm themselves.

THE SEVENTIES

Yesterday, on the food-machine patio,
the Black Panther Party held a bake sale.

EASY POEM

I just had a note from a good young writer, Rob Matte,
and I was taken with his complimentary close: "Over Easy."
All the more so since my own epistolary imagination
seldom stretches beyond, "Truly Yours Truly."

It got me to thinking about how many nice 'n easy
phrases there are: "Take it easy," "Easy does it,"
"At ease, men," "Easy come, easy go,"
"An easy guy to get along with," "Easy Street," --
I'm sure you can think of many more
that won't come to me now that I'm struggling for them.

There are, of course, those like "Easy lay" and "Easy mark"
that I never much cared for,
smacking as they do of a contemptuous ingratitude.

And some things, I suppose, will never be easy,
like getting yourself to the typewriter,
whether you be Tennessee Williams
or a freshman doing his weekend composition.
It's a little easier, though, once you get down to it,
in spite of what we grew up being told,
that there was a direct proportion between
the value of a work, and the work expended upon it.
It took me many difficult years to learn that
easy could be good, if, at least,
you had some good to start with,
and that, even when accomplished with difficulty,
the difficulty need not necessarily be passed on to the
reader.

It made things easier, reading at a certain age Field
and Bukowski,
and being at ease with Koertge and Stetler,
and, although there's only one lesson permanently learned,
I think I'll take this easy chance to thank them.

TWO FROM THE FIRST DAY OF CLASSES

A student comes to my office:

"I have to get into your advanced comp class."

I tell him I can't help him.

"I have to," he says.

"Look," I say, "I can't help you,
but, just out of curiosity,
why can't you take somebody else's class?"

He says, "I can't pass anybody else's."

* * *

I flee the office but am intercepted at the elevator.
The girl says, "I want to take Directed Studies."

"What do you want to study?"

"I don't know."

"Do you want to do a paper?"

"Okay."

"What would you like to do it on?"

She thinks it over for some time.

"I think," she says, "I'd like to do it on a book."

A POEM WITHOUT A POINT

outside the door, this guy pulled up on a fire-breathing
yamaha.

what with his other-worldly helmet,
an american flag decal patched above the ear,
we didn't even recognize him at first.
then someone said, "my god, it's terry!"

he sat with us and drank a fresca.
talked about his bike and changes in the bar.
watched a track meet on t.v.
played a couple games of pool,
shook hands, and went on down the highway.

it had been less than a year
since terry killed his father-in-law.
they'd sat up drinking into the early hours,

arguing some point as silly as it was volatile,
until all of a sudden terry grabbed a bread knife
and struck him.

i don't think it ever went to trial.
he received psychiatric treatment,
is free now on the condition that he doesn't drink.

the whole thing -- i don't know what to make of it:
terry was always a nice guy; he's still a nice guy.
he did drink a lot --
i remember one time he worked a double-shift behind the bar
and on his card he admitted to over a case of beer.

he sure doesn't look like he could kill a guy.

i've always been afraid i'd do something like he did,
although i've never really come close to it.
i guess we all have that fear.
i'd like to ask him if he ever feared it in advance,
but i guess that would be impolitic.

a criminologist friend of mine says the majority
of american killings take place in the kitchen.

ron koertge always told me, "home is where you hang
yourself."
or someone else, i guess.

LARRY THE WELDER

has his own rig,
works his ass off when he works at all,
takes a week off whenever he can,
and won't allow us to buy our own beers.

he's a little guy
but i've seen him stand up to a table of four
who were trying to make mock of a stranger.

larry got married recently,
but it isn't working out.
she won't sleep with him.
she tells him he's coarse and vulgar and insensitive.
he can't afford to leave her
because he shot his wad on nuptial gifts.

he doesn't have a high opinion
of the women's movement.

GETTING OUT THE VOTE

why do i vote at all?

mostly, i guess it's like betting the army-navy game,
or alabama-notre dame, lsu-tulane.

i mean, i'm not attached to any of those teams,

but a little wager makes it more fun to watch the game.
and t.v. viewing -- election night not excepted --
is one of my constant occupations, more so certainly
than politics.

i make the latter serve the former.

also since i invariably back the loser,
i am free to vilify the subsequent administration.
i convince myself, and sometimes even others,
that things would be different if my man had won.

there's one more reason -- i still vote in belmont shore,
although i haven't lived there in eight years.

i go back to when my child was just conceived,
my marriage consummated, and we were so poor

we used to trick or treat on halloween, in sheets,
and take our booty to the beach,
with a pint of applejack if we were lucky,
and whatever my crazy-lovely wife had cadged from the
cafeteria.

life was all promise, then, and lyricism.

i thought no place could be more beautiful than long beach,
no body more enticing than maureen's. i knew better,
but i was young enough to live the lies of love.

i've never really wanted, though, to turn the clocks back,
and there's a time to cease indulging sentimental journeys.
if i don't vote in this election, the registrar will

order cremated
the remains of that barely recognizable old me.

SHORT-WAVE INQUISITION

One of the few values of a Catholic education
is that we were taught that nothing
that we did or said or thought
was hidden from the Snooper in the Sky.

There was an interim after dropping out of the Church
where it was an immense pleasure
to savor an impure desire or unsavory ambition
in the privacy of one's own id,

but in this present era of tapes, videotapes, and
of stress evaluators, micro-cameras, and psychological
lie detectors,
testing,

we're right back where we started,

except that now it isn't only God
that knows you at your worst,

it's everybody.

The trick is to keep a perfectly blank mind.
You may have noticed an increasing number of public
servants
getting very good at that.

UP THE DOWN ELEVATOR

"Whatcha been up to?" I ask,
and I get more reply than I bargained for.

"Nothing," he says. "None of it did any good.
A lot of us got lost back in the sixties.
You were right to just keep writing."

These are the seventies
when what was won with body's blood and soul's
is overturned by fiat.

The perishable rubbish of a personnel file
leaves no room for moral victories.

I'LL LET YOU WRITE YOUR OWN PUNCH-LINE TO THIS ONE

After Betty Ford's interview,
Police Chief Edward Davis held a news conference.
He was upset at what he had heard.
He was afraid it would encourage
"premarital sex before marriage."

-- Gerald Locklin
Long Beach CA

BERRYMAN

1

A short distance between reality and
fantasy walking away from Maxim Gorky
but
if Henry had turned
with Mr. Bones
and gone off from Poesy's tower
(come down) he might not have fallen
onto the stones of Hades
fallen so far through the great
yawning chasm of chance --
and instead hung to the edge
clinging to the people.

2

Henry was of them
but John denied it
happy with self (alone)
though unhappy and he drew them in
his notes composing examinations
in the dark.
Henry was of the working poor
though poet
and he failed to see it
failed his own exams
time after time
did John.

3

"Let the new crit come
and break over us;
we shall be rocks"
sd Galway who saw B. at Princeton
the dark gate of a corpse --
he was drunk with study
but Galway knew by instinct
the earth road
the hard stones
and the plane saw
of labor. Though he too
saw the twist
of language in the Dream Songs
longing to shuck his self (B.)
for Henry.

4

That was the great fall all shuttering
so sick he missed the river
smashed instead on the dock
old dry bones
must have snapped --
(they were the killer kids
all intellect)
if he had met the ones from 1969 first
he might have come down
from the poetry tower
to join hands
with the people.

5

Now it is dark Henry
and we cry your memory
a bit -- the lank old man
all Anglo-Irish
straining to capture intellect
in a bottle: the brain
a specimen
but it doesn't work that way
anymore.
(the people cannot wait
for the sound of thought
while hunger gnaws the earth.)

PORTRAIT OF HENRY

Henry had been poor for a long time -- poor and sick and ugly and old -- he had always been old and he had always been poor. The ugliness came and went: at times when his eyes flashed he was beautiful and at times when he was angry he looked well. I knew him during the days when he was just getting a break, when the lovers of literature (as he called them) were starting to mention him with interest and respect and I liked him best then. He was not a legend yet, just a man.

He lived in a small, nondescript flat in Hollywood. There were two rooms and a kitchen, one water colour painting on the living room wall and a sign a friend had made from one of those plastic print machines whose words I forget.

We always brought the beer to Henry and sometimes we supplied him with good cigars. He was usually six to

eight beers ahead when we arrived, deep in his racing form. When he was working at his machine we did not bother him.

The first time I came, the two of us, Steve and I sat across from him on the ruined couch. I wanted to discuss literature. He hated to talk about literature. "It's something you make, not talk about," but I got my way. Henry liked to talk about women and horses, But I had come to talk about literature and I got my way.

He liked Ezra Pound and he liked Céline. He told me that right off. He liked Knut Hamsun and he liked Jeffers. He did not like poets. He hated critics. I was a critic, or trying to be, for a local paper. He did not like me.

He did not like the way I smiled all the time, a nervous habit I inherited from my father. He did not like my boots and he did not like my fine new sweater made in Austria. But I liked him just the same in my way and he saw that too and said "Ok, we'll talk about literature."

He liked Hemingway, he told me. "And you've been to France, I guess?" I nodded yes. "I'd like to go," he said "but it's too late. France is for the young. Go on."

I told him I liked Hemingway too. Steve squirmed. He opened us each a beer then drank a deep draft on his and lit a cigar. He thanked us for the cigars. "Everyone brings beer but they never bring cigars." He puffed and I talked. Steve drank his beer.

I mentioned Robert Bly. "Bly is ok," he said. "Just ok." I talked about Galway Kinnell. He did not like Kinnell. I talked about Neruda. He yawned. Steve sat quietly drinking his beer. He is the best of listeners. He is the best of men.

Henry wanted to talk about women and horses. Steve liked to talk about women, but I had come to talk about literature.

I talked about poets one after the other. Lowell, Ginsberg, Alexander Pope. "He's a jerk, he's a crook, he's a phoney," he answered, one after the other flicking them down with equal distain. I went on.

We talked about Cummings. He liked Cummings. He smiled "He made me laugh," said Henry. "That's literature. And he never wrote too much. He knew when to stop."

"I like Cummings," said Steve. He was feeling less uncomfortable. I drank my beer and looked around the room.

His typewriter sat in the corner on a broken metal table. On his demolished desk stood a sorting case taken from the post office filled with letters, poems, apples, children's toys and stamp cardboards.

"So you liked Cummings," I said. I felt ridiculous. I had come as a reporter and I was getting my story. Did you like Williams? I do not know what he said to that. Maybe he said nothing.

Steve sat sipping his beer. I sat smoking my cigar. Hours passed. We stared at each other through the smoke and the beer. I asked him about Eliot, about Proust, about Dreiser. Sometimes he would nod, sometimes stamp his feet, sometimes wave me away with his hand. At times he snorted and swore. At times he just rested his head on the comfortless sofa looking sleepy but polite. He was trying to figure me out. Was this kid putting him on? How long was I going to continue?

I had invaded his world. He let me in with all the grace he had, suspending judgement for a time. He hated but he did not offend. "It's ok kid," he said when I finally ground to the end of my rambling talk. "You got a lot to learn."

I asked him if he liked the Chinese poets. He said yes, "I like the English guy who translated the anthology." "Witter Bynner?" "No, stupid, the English guy." "You mean Waley." "Hey that's right," he answered. "The kid actually knows something." Steve laughed. "A little," he said. "I think we better go."

"No stay," said Henry. "I want to hear more about literature."

He was putting me on so I asked him about his working days, his days in jail, his daughter, his former wives. He told me all he could. He told it honestly. He offered me another cigar.

He smiled. He still hated my clothes but he smiled.

Deep down inside I knew I had done something wrong. He knew that too but his eyes told me to forget it. He had lived for ten men. He was tough. He could take it. That's what I thought his eyes said. Maybe I was wrong.

He went to the bathroom and vomited. When he came out he reached for two of his books signed them and dropped them on the table. He had written "To my literary friend."

"I think we better go," said Steve.

"No stay," said Henry. He patted me on the back. He patted Steve on the back.

"Any time you need anything you can count on me," I lied. He laughed that off. I felt very ill. I got what I had come for and now it was time to scram.

Henry wanted us to stay. I had had my look at the lion in the zoo and I was satisfied. Henry knew all that but it didn't bother him. Steve stood up. I made for the door. "We could talk all night, even about literature. You can sleep on the couch," he said to the both of us. I sensed the loneliness. I felt ill, I felt truly evil.

"No," I said, "I have to get home to my wife." It was a convenient though truthful lie.

"Ok then," he said. "Ok."

I went back several times after that, sometimes with Steve, sometimes alone, but it was never the same. I'd bring the cigars and he listened as I talked about Faulkner or Henry James. He'd grunt a little, then smoke in silence. After a while I went away and did not come back. I left him to the others who came with more beer to talk about Dali or Lawrence or G. B. Shaw but never about horses or women. His life he shared with them, but they all held their cards close to their chests like me. He was up front, we were abstract.

One night I read about him belting a poet his own age, another time he supposedly wrecked a wedding and then a friend told me how he destroyed all the china in the house of a local English prof. He was making his way. The stories mounted up. I never checked back with him to see if they were true or not. I suppose they were true. Did it really matter?

I had gone to see Artaud and Chatterton and Rimbaud and Céline all rolled into one and I had seen him. That was all I wanted. I am a selfish man. I left him to his work and to his women and to his horses. I asked Steve many times about him after that but I never had the nerve to see him again face to face, naked as he was.

-- Ben Pleasants

Beverly Hills CA

FREE

there's this airline
they give free champagne
but I've been on it
before.

when the stewardess came by
I said, no.

it came right out of the
bottle.

the stewardess went up and down
giving refills.

it was a smooth flight
but then it
began:
restroom runs.

lines formed.
paper bags came
out.

I sat there listening to the
moaning and the
puking.

when we got to the airport
they were still
going.

some puked as they waited for their
baggage. others puked on the
escalators and on the parking lot
ramps. some puked in their cars while
driving home. some were still puking at
home.

when I got home
I switched on the news
opened a beer
and let the bathwater
run.

UTAH

she has 4 energetic sisters
who are into everything:
men, dancing, writing, painting,
country music, country humor,
country sex and country
love.

she is the youngest of 5 sisters.
they phone her long distance:
"oh, we're going to have a party!"
she jumps up and goes, life is up
there. wheee, wheee, wheee.

I pack up and go home.

I hear later where she danced with
Big Pappa Jones 3 times and his wife
got angry. Pistol Pablo rode a goat
in the graveyard. Billy the Dum Dum
drank a pint of his own piss. Griesa
committed -- or tried to commit -- suicide
because Laff kept eyeballing Kindra
and danced with her
6 times. o

my god. what a party.
and sister Beliah mailed off the same
novel (re-written 3 times)
to a big New York
publishing house.

back down here I am in bed with her
and she lets me read a sister-letter
and I find out she fucked Billy Big Pud
and she had some kind of loyalty to him
but she forgot that loyalty when Billy had
to go north with his truck
and so she fucked Eddie Clott
but rather regretted it later,
and even sister Beliah said,
that isn't right, and I hand her back
the letter and I say,
I shore hope to cottonpickin' hell
your sister's novel gets
accepted, then we can all go up there
and live off of
icecream and applecloud
pies.

LET'S BE ORIGINAL

now look, say the editors,
that's a Bukowski poem.

now look, say the editors,
that's a Bukowski ending.

can't you cut out that Bukowski
line? it'd be a good poem
otherwise.

well, fuck you guys, I used to have
the same trouble with
Turgenev, Ernie and
Fydor.

-- Charles Bukowski

Los Angeles CA

A PERSONAL CREDO

he arranged a poetry reading featuring the local high
schools and the board of education objected -- what's in
it for you?

-- nothing, i guess.

-- there's got to be something, they insisted and vetoed
the project.

*

the day he turned 30 his brother asks -- now that you are
30, what are you gonna do with yourself?

-- oh, i don't know, just keep on writing.

-- no, i mean, what are your goals? you know, what are
you working for?

(peanuts, he thinks) -- to write better, he says.

-- no, you don't understand. like me, i'm gonna be rich,
so rich i'm gonna retire at 35. what're you gonna be?

(a failure, he wonders) -- i'm it already, he says.

-- al, the brother pities, you'd better get your shit
together.

*

his friend, a professor and accomplished writer, asks
him -- why are you publishing a small magazine?

(because i'm a masochist, he thinks) -- because i want to,
he says.
-- no, i mean, why subject yourself? all those manuscripts,
raising money and taking none. what's in it for you?

*

to all of them he apologizes -- i am a poet. i must
speak the unspeakable. i must find ways.

THIS CAT DON'T DANCE

1

sure they want to hold you on their
lap stroke your fur hear

you purr
so what?

it's what you want to do
anyway

2

they put you in a paper bag
so they can stand around and watch
you fight your way out

so swat claw bite until you make
the paper crackle like it never
did before then

get up
walkaway

you know the food is in another
room

3

when they're putting your food in the
bowl and it's that chow-chow you
really like and you never did give a
damn about p's & q's anyway

be obnoxious

meow. rub their legs climb up the
counter MEOW. stare them in the

eyes and when they give it to you
sniff it
walkaway

there'll be time for it
later.

4

when you've been out all night cattin
around and they've let you inside
and you're sittin down and your
eyelids are droopin but you
don't want them to think
you're losin your touch

be cool

let your eyes close
and head erect
fall asleep

who cares

it's none of
their business
anyhow.

THE EXECUTIVE

36 years old, shaves his head bald
once in the marine corps he mastur-
bated in front of his platoon so he could
challenge the Article that made playing
with yourself a court-martial offense.
They let him be.

He writes with a pen that is at least
an inch in diameter, drives a '50
studebaker that he starts with a screw-
driver and signs his name with a capital
"D" that looks like the number "1"
inside a circle.

Once we fought over a woman.

He is Don Alexander, executive vice
president of Security Pacific Bank
high-school dropout, bullshit artist
who handles eight billion dollars
of the bank's money.

He is my friend.

Today in a letter he told me
-- It's probably difficult to understand
but I'm sort of friendless at this point
in my life. Not sure why, but it's
obviously by design and within me.
Frankly, there are not any folk at the
bank I would feel comfortable in approaching.

IN THE GREEN HILLS OF AFRICA

imagine how disgusting the lion
must find the domestic
cat

I AM ADAM

can you imagine the power
the awesome power
of the man who stands
balls bare and busting cock
hard in front of his lady

and says
I want you.

THE COOL DANCE #7

when you really want to play and
you've been running hard back and forth
chasing that frisbee they keep float-
-ing just out of your reach and they've
got the nerve to add, "fetch it, girl,
fetch it."

do the Cool.

maintain.

wait until they drop it then dart and
grab their plaything take it just beyond

their reach (don't worry they will fol-
-low) make them pant sweat until
they order, "here girl here, Fetch It
Now!" then tease, baby, tease, 'cause
it's their turn to come.

-- Alex N. Scandalios

Carlsbad CA

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338

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THE WORMWOOD REVIEW : 64

USA - BIRTHDAY ISSUE

I N D E X	P A G E S
John Bennett.....	121 - 123
M. K. Book.....	124
Charles Bukowski.....	142 - 144
Barbara Drake.....	113 - 116
Ben Jacques.....	116 - 119
Gerald Locklin's Special Section:	
NAMING MOM AND DAD.....	125 - 136
Ben Pleasants.....	137 - 141
Alex N. Scandalios.....	144 - 148
Phillip Sterling.....	119 - 121
Phil Weidman.....	123 - 124



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E D I T O R : M A R V I N M A L O N E