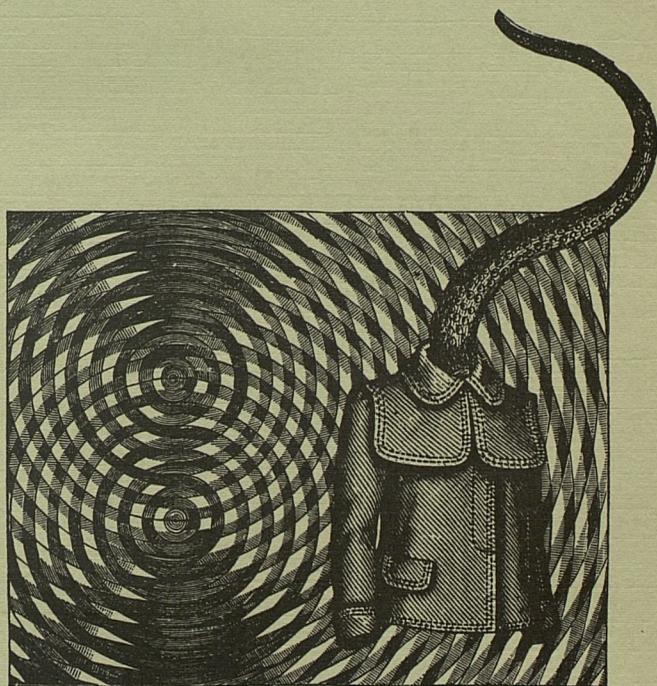


WR:89





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SITTING

I enjoy sitting.

Sitting, looking, thinking.

Brent tells me

people in Crete

know how to sit.

They design sitting

space, weave it

into landscape & time

(not around

a tv set).

I like to get outdoors

where I can sit

& settle into

an out-there

in-here song.

MIKE'S MAGIC

Mike, a sculptor,
misses enchantment.
Childhood enchantment.
The enchanting first knowledge
of Geppetto's workshop.
Santa in the beginning.
Puppy love.
He searches for
it in movies
(he praised The Tin Drum),
in pictures by
Brueghel & Bosch,
in reruns of Kung Fu.
He finds little
enchantment he says,
but mysteriously his art
is filled with it.
Magic, first time kind.

MIND OF ITS OWN

Broke tooth on unpoped
corn & tongue is
flicking hysterically
over jagged edges.
I signal it to stop,
but instant my
attention shifts it
darts back re-examining
each new nook & edge
until needle of pain
jerks me back.
I cover sharp edges
with small piece
of well chewed gum
which tongue, unrestricted,
dances delightfully over.

ABSENCE

Practicing asanas
fingers massaging
head astonished
to discover
level spot
where old
lump was.

JURISDICTION

Latest extravagance
at Rio is stuffing
a fellow student's
locker with popcorn.
Custodians frown on
this practice since
popcorn ends up
on floor scattered
& ignored. To most
teachers it's an
embarrassment but
not their problem.
The classroom is an
overwhelming jurisdiction.

DECK HAWK

He's perched on deck
at 6500 ft dressed
in shorts & sandals
sitting in collapsible
webbed, aluminum lawn
chair lathered in sun
tan lotion & mosquito
repellent field glasses
hung around neck
Coors in one hand
National Lampoon in
other waiting patiently
for something neat
to happen while
others foolishly go
to The Lake to gamble.

COMMON DECEIT

Like to believe
in moments of
elation I speak
wisely but discover
I'm embarrassingly
self-serving
played back.

QUICK STOP

Nov. 25 drove to Davis
to pick up daughter
Lisa for holidays.
Arrived 30 minutes
early. Stopped UCD
bookstore for food.
Poetry stale. Settled
for narrow ruled
notebook. Hope to
cook something up.

TASTE OF NOTORIETY

Small book review
in local paper
stimulates a
call from guy
I haven't seen
in 34 years;
earlier in day
a beginning poet
phoned for advice --
a tiny & slightly
disturbing taste
of notoriety.

CONTINUATION STUDENTS

Most times I
can't face students
in my care
comfortably.
They crave stability.
They need a consistent
trustworthy model
& settle uneasily
for anything less.
Like them I
search for that
model in me.

HORSE SHOES

The shoe sails
turning & twisting
leaning as it
lands in a puff
of dust & rolls
past the stake.
Not what the mind
behind the pitch intended
but there's another shoe
& as many chances
as one could wish
to reach perfection.

HEADWAY

2 am & can't sleep.
Just finished first
painting in 2 1/2 years.
A small watercolor.
Put it on wall,
but keep moving it
around adjusting
lights trying to see
it ... see if I've
made any headway.

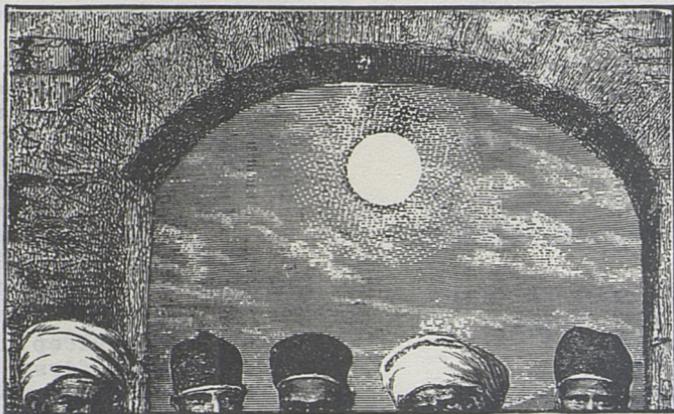
CAN MAN

Old, stooped, plants
each foot tenderly
as he strolls Granite
Bay dragging king-
size plastic bag half
filled with empties.
Keeps pride on leash
as he rummages thru
50-gallon garbage drums
with an audience
numbering in
the hundreds.

-- Phil Weidman

North Highlands CA

"Some of the most interesting experiences I had on my trip to the other side of the world were experiences I didn't think I had."
- Richard Foreman

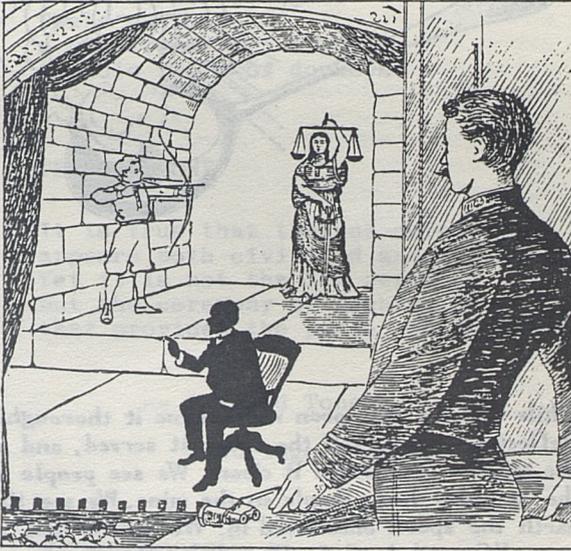


When we went overland from Izmir to India in 1970 we had to learn to live with very little privacy. We stayed in cheap hotels where the toilet was down the hall. On the streets we were watched and followed. Once, in Pakistan, it really got to us.

We were waiting for a train in Lahore, sitting on a bench, our packs between our knees and the temperature over a hundred. Slowly a crowd of young men gathered until there were fifteen or so in a semi-circle around us. We were curiosities and they were curious. But poor, very poor. They had grown up against tremendous odds, the biggest of which was poverty. They just stood and stared at us. It got kind of scary. Finally Mary turned to the nearest guy and asked, "Do you speak English?" He gestured yes. "Look," she said, "we're people too, just like you. It's uncomfortable with all of you standing around looking at us." The guy said something in Punjabi to the others and the crowd melted away.

HUMAN NATURE NOT YET REMADE
A PLAY

(The curtain rises, in Lenin's Kremlin parlour, May 1920)

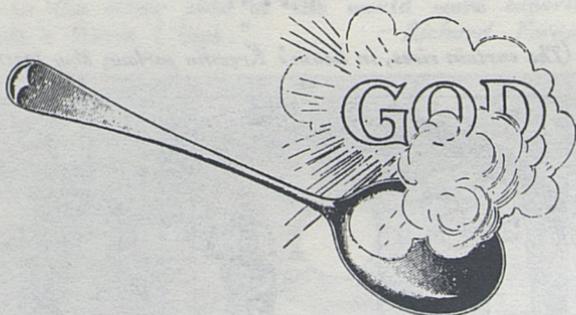


In the morning many people begin to come to sympathize with Lenin on the terrorist attempt on his very life. The Chief narrates to them how the whole thing happened. It's complicated. He winds up with a few words from *State and Revolution*: "It is more pleasant and useful to live through a revolution than to write about it." Pleasant ?!

The Ukrainians in the parlour, who have felt the lash of four armies in three years, disagree but hold their tongues.

The Chief instructs the balalaika players to begin to supply music and they start to pound their balalaikas. The Chief provides refreshment for everybody. Those who arranged the terrorist attempt are some of those dancing in the parlour to celebrate the Chief's safety.

(The whole event lasts for about five hours)



While washing the spoon we examine it thoroughly. Reflected in it are all the soups it served, and all the tongues that licked it clean. We see people on the assembly line. People in the mine. We see the earth the spoon once lived in. We notice that it says "Cassidy's Cafe Plate" on its shank.

We'll need a brush. This pudding's stuck on.

Let it soak.

While it's soaking we realize that without spoons we'd all still be swilling.

-- M. Kasper

Florence MA

DONKEYS

"Look, donkeys!
A whole field of them."
The excited child was right.
As I stared from the train window
I shared her delight.
There was indeed
a most wonderful sight.
A whole field of donkeys!

TEA CEREMONY

It is true that the tea ceremony
appears both civilized and elegant.
Yet it is not the tea ceremony
but the ceremony of washing up
that provides the peace and contentment.

-- Raymond Tong

Cambridge, England

METEOROLOGICAL

What's so beautiful about
Chicago weather
is the way each season
hangs on
endlessly
like making sure the next season
is in full control
before letting up. So
what happens is
you get up one morning
shovel eight inches of snow
off the front steps
have some soup and crackers
then it's exhibition baseball
on the radio
the White Sox hammer the Pirates
12 to 10. I
take a shower
and go to the hockey game
in a driving rain storm.

SPRING TRAINING

Muddy brown fields
just starting to green
the earth in april
our minds in june
we want to play baseball
so we mud it out.
Right away
we're the world champion
going all the way
the first practice is always like this.
And i like coaching third
bent over squinting
blinking clapping
talking it up
my hands start moving
the ear lobe
belt buckle
shoulder
the brim of my hat
my wrist
the belt again
wipe my hand across my chest
clap three times
scratch my shoulder
giving the signs so good
so smooth
even my hitter
don't know what the hell is going on.

DISCOVERING GREAT WRITERS

"i get the sobers
every so often," he says,
"you know, i can
see the sun and not hurt.
i can write my name,
speak english,
and live in peace with my neighbors
every time i catch the sobers.
don't get 'em much
any more."
then he gets up
goes back inside
and the interview is over.

FAMILY PORTRAITS

seems like
no matter who you are
good or bad
alive or dead
rich poor talented
or not
the older relatives
aunts and grandmothers
always have old photographs
of real cute kids.
looking at me when i was three
i say to myself
that kid could never grow up
and do the things i've done.

CONVERSATION PIECE

i say
earl flynn
instead of
errol
and steer
instead of stir.
she never
forgets
to mention it.

ONE OF THE SILLY THINGS

i'll kiss her
stick my tongue down her throat
even lick her all over
but the idea
of using her toothbrush
just makes me cringe.

LEARNING SOMETHING

i told her
excited by the
wonders of nature
about these strange
little birds i saw
in the yard
the other day.
they looked like
miniature cardinals
but were a brown
grayish color
and making a lot of racket.
silly me
it turns out
they were baby cardinals.

SPARROW FEATHERS

it was a cold
windy rainy night,
he crawls into the chimney
falls down the flue
into the furnace
and starts squawking
scratching and
flopping around in there.
the cats have destroyed
half the house
trying to get at him.
i remove the front panel
unscrew the screen across
the cold air return vent
stick my hand in one side
he flies out the other
and the battle is on.
the cats and i destroy
the other half
of the house
subduing the beast
while the dog
incredulous at this spectacle
hides under the bed.

-- Paul Stroberg

Lombard IL

REVELATION

~~hhhh~~

step ~~hhhh~~

step out ~~hhhh~~

step out from ~~hhhh~~

step out from behind ~~hhhh~~

step out from behind that ~~hhhh~~

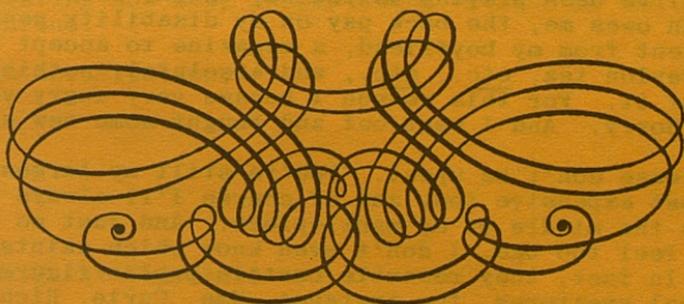
step out from behind that towel honey

unique

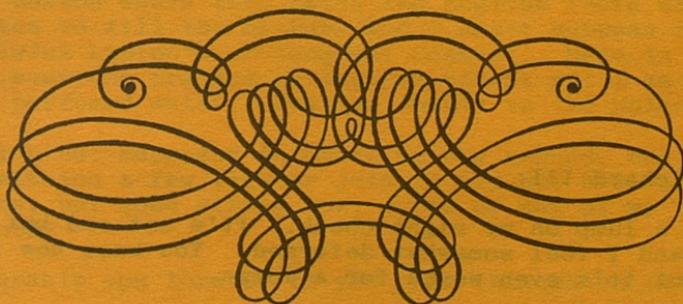
error
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err error
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err error
error

-- Joachim Wunderlich

Hastings NE



Nichola Manning's
MANNING THE
BATTERING RAM



3 PRAYERS

i.

Dear Virgin Mary:

Look, I've been praying to you for months now about the \$50 Jan owes me, the back pay on my disability pension, a present from my boyfriend, a magazine to accept a poem, some Ceylon tea, etc., etc., and absolutely nothing has come of it. For this reason I became very angry yesterday. Sorry. And I went out and bought some new saints.

Now please don't be upset. You're still my largest idol, the most expensive too, and of course I'll always keep you in the middle of my mantlepiece. And just so you don't feel too bad, I don't even know which saints they are. In fact, they resemble certain public figures or mythical creatures, for instance, Mme. Curie, Richard the Third, Margaret Thatcher, Margaret Court, Franz Kafka, The Cheshire Cat, and A Mad Dog.

I'll pray to them for the little things, and save you for guidance on unearthly matters. Perhaps you could also direct me to the right subsaint for each problem or wish (if you have the time).

Thank you, Dear Virgin, for forgiving me, and I hope you have a nice day.

Amen.

ii.

Dear Richard III:

I have a lump on my right cheek. It's not red but it hurts and I feel somewhat deformed. You know how that is. But it's even worse for a woman.

I should also tell you that it doesn't stay in one place. I first discovered it right above my belly button. From there it travelled up my midriff, over my left breast, across my right shoulder, around my neck, into my mouth and out of my right nostril to its present location. Obviously my friends have noticed, and you can imagine what they think. I'd much rather have a lump on my back!

Dearest Richard, I never hated you when I read Shakespeare or the history books. In fact, I don't blame you

for suffocating the princes and those other self-righteous dingbats. And I'm very sorry you lost your horse at Bosworth Field. You did in fact have a lot of bad luck. Well so have I!

So maybe you could guide me to the right cream, powder or lotion, whatever it takes to chase my lump away before I start figuring how many people stand between me and England's Throne.

Thanks in anticipation,

Amen.

iii.

O Wise Margaret Thatcher!

I think you're doing a wonderful job in the Falkland Islands. Is it true that a single British submarine destroyed half of Argentina's airforce? Not bad.

But what I'm really praying about is the tea situation in Los Angeles. I've been all over Santa Monica, to the Ambassador Hotel, and I even called the British Consulate. But there is not a single packet of Lyon's Red Label Tea to be had.

Even in Boston where they hated the English there was enough tea to fill the harbor, and I don't suppose it was any godawful Lipton's or Constant Comment. Here in Los Angeles everyone praises my English accent yet I am given cups of perfumed water. What an insult to the Union Jack!

I know I'm not supposed to order saints around, but couldn't you commission a few fighter jets to fly out here and drop, not bombs, but good strong tea, on my or any of my friends' apartments?

Would worship you forever if you came through on this one.

Amen.

WIMBLEDON DUFF

I always look forward to the annual Wimbledon tennis championships, when for two weeks I lock myself in the kitchen with my TV and Wimbledon Duff.

Wimbledon Duff is a pudding made of canned blackcurrants, clotted cream and moldy brown bread. I buy every can of blackcurrants in Sutton two days before Wimbledon, likewise with the clotted cream, but obtain the bread a month before so it can get really fuzzy lying on the table all that time.

The first morning of Wimbledon I start turning out bowl after bowl of the Duff, pausing only to go "ooh" and "aah" at the great shots of the players, and "yum yum mmmh" at the Duff.

Needless to say the flavor of the Duff improves during the course of the championships, as does the tennis, because the poor players are eliminated, as are the unfungified parts of the bread. Also there is less and less tennis and pudding, which makes both seem more valuable.

Another thing that makes the Duff more Wimbledon-y is that just as the grass on Centre Court gets worn out and turns yellow, so the mold turns white and by Finals Day is as penicillin-rich as the tangiest of low crosscourt sliced backhands, which keeps me healthy till next year.

CONPERSON

I told him he was a bum with a fraud-ridden business that would fail and leave us all penniless. That he stole from department stores and my pockets. And that he'd hidden one of my records and several of my pens. At this point I was so hot I took off my sweater to reveal his best shirt -- the one I'd stolen while he was asleep a week ago.

TENNIS CLUB

Some weeknights I drop by the tennis club, even though they are all a bunch of shopkeepers with fingers in crooked pies. And they're all divorced, looking for an attractive widow like me with a house on Fulton Road and a VW.

Harold wants me to play pitch and putt, Ronald wants to play mixed doubles, and Paul has offered to get me free Fred Perry tennis underwear. But I say let them show me their house on Fulton Road and their VW, plus a good supply of gin, so I can bank mine and draw interest.

WOOL

I love wool, and D. H. Evans in Knightsbridge is the best place in the world to buy a woolen sweater or skirt.

However, I hate sheep, and especially people who act like sheep, running and bleating through Knightsbridge unseeingly past the front window of D. H. Evans where I'm trying on purple, orange and especially gray sweaters and skirts.

When I can afford to buy these woolens I will carry them home in a large white bag with D. H. Evans printed on in black, walking down the middle of Knightsbridge High Street instead of the sidewalk, then riding on the roof of the train to Sutton, so everyone can see I'm not a sheep.

MY SISTER

Marilyn lives with a Man. Surely she has enough trouble with two adult sons. I go there to eat and there's so little food I nearly starve, yet Marilyn has enough energy to giggle and run up and down the stairs with Jack.

And to think one son is a policeman, the other sang in St. Paul's Choir and now has an Italian girlfriend and a three-wheeled car and climbs in the window at 3 A.M.

My sister does all the things I would never do, and has a porcelain bath in the back garden and a chi hua hua. To think I live in Sutton and she lives in Lewisham! To think she works as a kindergarten teacher, or doesn't work at all. And she's Church of England.

Well this all goes to prove the only intelligent people are Catholics.

GREAT POETESS

After the fat woman had read about a thousand great poems about food the audience started throwing great tomatoes, great lettuces and great thousand island dressing at her.

MUM

I always visit mum on Sundays, even though she gave my dolls' house away during the War. I bring a cake and have to shout -- she's a bit deaf but in marvelous health. Which is why I object to always making the tea. And her house is so small, cold, smelly and she pees in her knickers. Sometimes I wonder why I belong to this family, especially after my deportment lessons.

I know mum's eighty, but she could do something about the garden -- it's overgrown with mint. If I had the money I'd roast lambs (in England lamb is served with mint) for a year, and then everything would be neat again.

MRS. BUGG

Mrs. Bugg is an evil woman who lives at the other side of Sutton. Her husband was a Dunlop representative selling rackets at the wrong price. He did this to my daughter, and now my daughter lives in California. And Mrs. Bugg is left all alone with the profits, peeping out of her kitchen window at night as I sneakily drive by periodically, just to make sure she isn't doing any dirty deals, or that her husband should return and live happily ever after.

LAW

It's such a treat to visit my brother-in-law, who has a nice house and buys me gin because he knows how hard my life has been. But his wife is very ungrateful, cooking meals that are far too spicy, and expecting me to help her in the kitchen -- at the age of 45! Her children are of her strain too, riding horses and shouting outside all day while I'm trying to smoke a cigarette, amongst other things. Little do they realize that if our positions were reversed, if they were helpless widows like me, they'd all be thankfully eating cold pork pies at my place and keeping quiet.

AUNTIE EMMA

Auntie Emma always has me over for fish pie on Tuesdays with her four well-behaved sons. One of them lives in Italy, they have a fountain in the back garden, and Howard the youngest will make a first class insurance clerk and always sits next to me.

After dinner Uncle Rodney comes home and has a digestion tablet, then we all drink sherry, and the eldest two sons are already balding, which is definitely a sign they intend to have houses in Esher.

DISABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you consider yourself ready to work yet?

"No."

2. If no, give reasons:

"Well, I'm not very talented at office type jobs, but I have my pride, and if some middle class asshole starts making snide remarks I'm liable to bust them right in the mouth. But I wouldn't mind getting rehabilitated into The Army as a machine gun operator, or into a factory job where I had access to a sledgehammer so I could brain my enemies. Otherwise, I'd like working with innocent children."

NEW BOOK

At your boyfriend's house you're reading a book in which the pages are sometimes upsidedown, or the bottom line is missing or some of the words have fallen off the side. And even the most normal pages have a sudden sentence of nonsense words, or there's a lipstick mark, a half-smoked pack of cigarettes, smelly panties, a lewd pencilled note or pubic hair.

You've decided that either this is just one more avant garde novel or there's someone around you don't know the full story on.

FEMINIST POEM

I think that 99.9% of women should be born in the shadow of their brothers, never be seen in anything but frills and curls unless they're ugly (in which case they should be shot immediately).

They should be married off at 13, fuck, cook and clean up on command, and remain pregnant from then on until they die giving birth. And they should never be seen out of doors except to do the shopping, laundry, and go to the beauty shop. If they must work they should be in typing pools (but never be allowed within a hundred yards of a typewriter except to copy dictation or notes from a man). And these wives should never be with any man except their husband unless in the company of a eunuch.

The necessary whores should always work for a pimp, accept beatings, verbal abuse and all fucking without comment, and only stop fucking and hustling long enough to eat bread, drink water and sleep a bit, to keep them going until they are over the hill (at 21). And all the high class whores should be secretaries and go to work in bikinis (even when it's 80°F below) and leave the copy-typing to the wives.

I also think that 99.9% of surviving women should be drowned at sea at 25 and then go to hell to make room in heaven for the men.

And I'm the 0.1%, and do what the fuck I want.

AN ALTERNATIVE FEMINIST POEM

I think 99.99999% of women who won't accept the traditional role should live with rich dudes with no balls, then get all the mock-punk outfits and small cars they can. They should also own a healthfood store and play women's folk music in it, smoke Virginia Slims, look like Billie Jean King or Angela Davis, and try at least once to fuck another woman somehow.

They must realize all men are pigs and one clitoral orgasm equals three vaginal orgasms, have a nervous breakdown and/or see a female psychiatrist, and cry only when that response is appropriate and/or opportunistic.

In their spare time they could demand the release of the latest female and/or gay guy martyr, try on bitchy looks in the mirror until they scare themselves, then practice these while watching a feminist soap opera, and play soccer on Saturday mornings with other women just like them, then all have a whisky sour at Hof's Hut.

These women should never wear bras or dresses, but instead wear pants suits and sturdy shoes with just a slight heel. Or in cases where "drop out" has occurred they should always look like farmers' wives during the harrowing season and smell of marijuana.

99.99999% of women should also think Sylvia Plath was a poet, especially as she committed suicide. And any of these who consider themselves poets should commit suicide too.

And I'm the 0.00001% and enjoy writing about stooges.

MANNING THE BATTERING RAM

In May 1972, in London, five stevedores were jailed in Pentonville Prison for picketing the docks, and immediately half the big unions in England were on strike in sympathy, and before long there was so much bad feeling that the Trade Union Congress (T.U.C.) ordered a march through London to Pentonville (in the East End) to demand the release of the dockers, and to have the march go via Fleet Street, to encourage all the printers there to go on strike so there'd be no newspapers except "leftwing broadsheets." I was on strike myself and Robin, the guy I was living with, was currently involved with some communists, so we all headed for Speakers Corner, where the march was to begin.

By noon there were about half a million people with banners and placards and flyers and newspapers and beer, and the T.U.C. marching band tuned up and pretty soon, after a few little speeches, the band led off down Oxford Street.

I carried a placard which said, "BRITISH TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND" and held it over my face so no cameras could get a shot of me; then Robin suggested that he and I go up about a mile ahead of the march, on the route, and try to sell some copies of The Worker, a leftist newspaper. Which sounded all right.

We did good business. We'd go up to cleaning ladies and loiterers and tourists and say, "Copy of The Worker?" "What is it?" "It explains the noise you're hearing off in the distance." Then we sold out and returned to the march and Dave, the communist, gave us more copies and sent us up ahead again.

When we reached Fleet Street, all the printers were standing on the sidewalks and entrances to the printing works. "'Ere, mate, for 3p (10¢), a copy of The Worker. Read why you should go on strike." "How much would it cost with a little kiss thrown in?" said one of the blokes. "4p," I replied. So pretty soon, after I'd been slobbered over by every printer in town, I'd sold all my Workers and half of Robin's too.

"Let's go straight on to Clerkenwell Green where the speeches will be, and wait for everyone there," Robin said. "And you owe me 85p for those Workers of mine you sold." "I owe you nothing," I replied. "I'll give Dave the money. He thinks I'm a halfwit because I'm not a raving red. I'll show him I can sell his poxy newspaper anyway." I glanced at Robin quickly, saw his blood vessels bulging, and knew we were in for a scene.

As the marchers started arriving at Clerkenwell Green, drunk and rowdy, Robin hissed, "Dave will charge me 85p." "No, he won't because I'll tell him otherwise." "It's my responsibility. What if you lose that money?"

The designated speechmakers were now trying out their bullhorns and others were cheering, laughing, waving and drinking.

COMRADS! COMRADS, EVERYONE, PEOPLE ... COMRADS, WE'RE GONNA HEAD STRAIGHT TO PENTONVILLE PRISON AS SOON AS WE'VE FINISHED HERE AND WE'RE GONNA BREAK DOWN THE GATE WITH A BATTERING RAM ... YES WE HAVE A BATTERING RAM IN A TRUCK NEAR HERE AND WE'RE GONNA START THE REVOLUTION RIGHT NOW ... YEAH ... you're dealing with party funds, you scab. You have no political awareness ... you're petty bourgeois ... SAVE ENGLAND FROM THE TORIES ... LONG LIVE IRELAND ... RUSSIA WE NEED YOU ... QUIET EVERYBODY HERE'S JIM CRANKCASE FROM THE MINERS UNION AND HE'S GONNA EXPLAIN WHY WALES WANTS THE REVOLUTION AND THE FREEING OF THE DOCKERS ... listen I'll take my 85p if I have to break your arm ... your 85p? That's a joke. I didn't see you kissing anyone ... right, and just wait till I tell Dave you virtually prostituted yourself, for one pee! ... what could I buy with one pee? ... LIBERATION, BROTHERS AND SISTERS AND COMRADS AND ALL RACES. WE WILL KNOW JUSTICE IN OUR OWN TIME ... WEST HAM RULE WEST HAM RULE ... SPURS RULE ... YES IT WILL BE CHEAPER TO GO TO FOOTBALL MATCHES ... I'm going home and I'm gonna throw you out, you whore! ... GREAT NEWS, COMRADS: THE PRINTERS HAVE JOINED THE STRIKE! ... not if I have any say in the matter ... FORWARD WITH THE BATTERING RAM ... NO PUSHING ... LONG LIVE THE PROLETARIAT ... A WARM THANK YOU FOR THE BAND

Robin and I took off in opposite directions, fighting our ways through fanatics and pickpockets and ruffians. I caught a bus going in the correct direction, but had to change to another bus, which I just missed, and Robin was standing on the platform scowling at me.

He got home before me and when I arrived there was my tablecloth spread in the front yard with all my clothes in the middle of it, and a cold stewy cup of tea and dry toast, with a note that said, "Thanks to you I missed the revolution."

PICKET LINE

We were all picketing and discussing filing for union strike benefits for our dependents with the union local boss. One woman had a dog with her and asked if he

counted as a dependent, since he ate a lot of dogfood. "I'll try for you," said the union guy. So I queried, "Can I get money for the roaches in my kitchen?" "Maybe," he replied, "but only if they join the picket line."

ARMCHAIR TYPES

It was a small room, but it was full of armchairs, and the strike meeting was about to start. I tried to get the most desirable armchair (the Russian-looking one nearest the radiator, since it was a very cold night) but was beaten to the plunge by a Trotskyite. Then I raced three Maoists to the comfortable oriental-decorated armchairs, but they were quicker, and meanwhile four pro-Irish WASPS sat down in the only clean green armchairs. A foul-smelling anarchist invited me to share his moth-eaten sagging black armchair, but I lost my balance and fell into the lap of a communist in a red, ungiving armchair, with a hardon, so I quickly got up again. Then I looked around to see all the armchairs were taken.

Since I was the only actual striker there (the rest were so-called agitators who'd enticed me with the promise of good beef stew), a middle-class feminist went on a special errand to get me a stool by the drafty door.

RED LABEL

When I was 15 in England I had a communist boyfriend and one night he took me to a Communist Party social gathering at headquarters. Walking into the place was like re-entering the womb: the walls were red, there were red flags, red books, red-dressed women and red men wearing workmen's clothes and red neckties. In fact it soon turned out I was the only non-communist in the place, and the Party Secretary, an Indian guy with teeth that stuck out sideways, said, "we're having a raffle in a minute and here's a free ticket. I think you should seriously consider getting involved in more of our party activities, a pretty young girl like you."

The prize in the raffle was a bottle of Johnnie Walker Red Label whiskey. I won it. And after five large swigs and a few giggles I joined up.

NAMES

John Figrocks, Susan Spits, Gene Pullbody, Eric Blindfind, Olivetti Wellhalf, Diane Twotwist, Michael Van Lay, Joyce Hoolhoop and Edward Rustedtranquillities will appear in the first issue of Bon Vista Poetry.

We will feature their worst poems.

BUKOWSKI VISITS A MENTAL HOME

There's a guy the possible twin of Bukowski at the mental home where I live, only so dirty his stench precedes him by fifty feet. And when we spot him we immediately put our nosepegs on and insult him every way we can, sounding like we have colds.

So one day Bukowski walks in, and everyone dons their nosepegs as usual. Then somebody shouts from the balcony, "How's your lice doday?" The recreation therapist snaps, "Eidder cobe your hair or you don'd blay bingo." His best friend sneers, "No woban would ged widin den mibes of you, no madder how maby four ledder words you use." I puke (reminded of the time he spat on my lima beans) and the cook sprays him with the cold water hose.

LONG BEACH CYMBALIST POEM

The blimp went droning overhead, and it seemed to be heading for the (cymbals).

The cars were droning up and down Cherry Street, and I'm sure they were heading for the (cymbals).

I could hear the sound of the (cymbals), and it drew me.

I passed Winchell's Donut House, many bars, apartment buildings and many homosexuals, all wired by the (cymbals).

The (cymbals) attract people from all over the world, but they look dingy from the (cymbals).

The (cymbals) is the only thing Long Beach is known for.

MAD DOGGEREL

A black poet woman of Watts came to Long Beach and read anti-white poems to the gathered whites, along with poetry about how she daily beats up every man or woman, all colors, who gets in her way. Everyone cheered between poems (except me), as if they loved to be insulted.

Later that night at a post-reading party, she got in my way. So I put her into a head lock, threw her over my shoulder, and then pounced: it took all the attending poets to pry my fingers loose of her neck.

She departed shortly thereafter, and has never wandered beyond the Watts city limits since.

CONVERSATION

Joe and I were passing comments before the college concert. "That guy Paul must be a fag," I said. "This is Rebecca, his girlfriend," Joe replied (she was sitting next to us, rather homely, and now wounded-looking). "I would never have guessed," I went on. "I suppose you think all sensitive men are gay," she snapped back, "but Paul is very clever. He went to Harvard when he was sixteen." "So what the hell is he doing taking a creative writing class at Bon Vista Community College?" I inquired.

SCREAMIN' ART

I have a good knowledge of Art History from just one course at Bon Vista Community College. I attribute this to sitting next to a deaf girl.

The lecturer would say, for instance, "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," for half an hour and then she'd turn to me and say, "WHAT?" So I'd cup my hands and (as if to drill into my brain his main points) I'd yell in her ear: "MESSINA WAS THE BEST PORTRAIT PAINTER OF THE ITALIAN HIGH RENAISSAINCE, BERNINI WAS MASTER OF THE BAROQUE STYLE IN ARCHITECTURE, SCULPTING AND PAINTING, AND CEZANNE WAS THE FORERUNNER OF THE CUBIST STYLE."

SOUR GERMAN

There was Carlos, a blond Mexican, Rico, a fair-skinned Black, Len, a small-nosed Jew, and me, an Anglo-Irish-woman, sitting up at a bar in Long Beach one afternoon with beers, having cashed our welfare checks. We were listening to a cowboy talk to the bartender:

"Trouble is," he says, "them fuckin' kikes and niggers and wetbacks and fuckin' paddy papists on welfare kickin' around drinkin' beers while us real citizens do all the fuckin' work. Fuck, I'm German, an ya know what? If Germany had won the fuckin' war this world would be organized. Fuck, if ya got them fuckin' papists and pussy kikes and niggers and put them in fuckin' chain gangs and sent the fuckin' wetbacks back to TJ to suck dicks, fuck, buddy, fuck ... life would be OK. Yeah, chain gangs, buddy ... best place for a fuckin' nigger or kike or Irish Mick, an' all them other scumbag fuckin' assholes"

We picked up our chains, sauntered over to the guy, and I sat right down in his lap and sank my fingernails into his balls, and Carlos got his chain round the guy's neck and twisted it until the guy turned purple. Then Rico gave him a couple of friendly broadsides with his chain, and Len cut the guy's ass with a razor, and we stuffed a few napkins in his mouth to stop the screaming and carried him outside, shoved him into Carlos' van, and drove to Sears. I picked up some white sheets, scissors, needle and thread, returned to the van, and proceeded to fix up the neatest Ku Klux Klan outfit you ever saw. Later we pulled up outside the meanest Black liquor store in town and just shoved the KKK Kowboy through the door, then took off.

They had a neon sign: SAUERKRAUT SANDWICHES, outside for weeks after.

IRISH CHURCH

Judy was being held at a mental hospital in London near the Catholic presbytery where her Irish Uncle Simon, a priest, lived. So one night he and two of his nuns took her out on a pass to the West End.

After her third Guinness at the sixth bar the older nun, Sister Catherine, started flirting with Uncle Simon, and the younger nun, Sister Winifred, having observed this over four gin and tonics, said, "Sister Catherine, your nose is too big for sex." Sister Catherine looked hard

at Sister Winifred, then grabbed her by her cape and threw her to the ground. Sister Winifred in turn got up and punched Sister Catherine in the eye, knocked Judy off her stool and staggered out.

Judy lay on the floor drunk on a combination of Thorazine and Bloody Marys until Uncle Simon and Sister Catherine (with a growing black eye) picked her up and carried her back to the looney bin with the late night soccer fans on the Underground.

POET A AND POET B

-- after a poem by RVargas about "the perfect wife" and "the other woman"

I "discovered" Poet A many years ago, and immediately fell in love with his poems. They were always witty, unusual, concise, and macho in an agreeable way. I bought his books and all the magazines he had work or interviews in. And I would have stayed up to 4 AM to hear him talk on a radio or TV show, but he never got that famous.

Anyhow, I have found him to be opposite to Poet B, whose work has never appeared anywhere but in a few college magazines. It has always been meatless and squeamish and dragged-out, to the extent that I would frequently wince at the sound of his name, or quickly turn the page when I saw it.

But recently I have tried to be more mellow, to read Poet B's poems less imperiously. They are getting pretentious to the point of genius, and I am beginning to be impressed.

LADY-LIKE

A "gentleman" allows a "lady" to hit him without retaliating, so these white folks were allowing a black woman to read her black racist poems, laughing as she told them off for being honkies. But I'm no gentleman, and said, "fuck off," once loudly enough so she glanced at me in surprise. I believe I was the least white supremacist person there.

-- Nichola Manning

Long Beach CA

LIKE OUT OF WORK ACTORS

nine out of ten kids
when i pass
practice yelling
"taxi!"
and in my opinion
they all have
potential.
they understand
the humor of the situation.
they dig the ontological
quotation marks.
they are very young

COURTESY IS NOT DEAD

i walked in
and a wedge of bikers
was backing a local drunk
into the corner.
"taxi," i announced.
they looked at each other.
"did you call a taxi?"
"no, i didn't call a
taxi did you call a taxi?"
guess who remembered
and said, "it must have
been that old guy, he
left 45 minutes ago."
i headed for the door
as the boys with no sleeves
refocused their attention.

AT THE CABBIE'S STUDIO

i've been studying
the method.

an old guy comes out
of the roger davis memorial tavern
the deadest run in town
and wants to go to the cooper arms
(2 bucks away) after a stop
at the save-on.
i put the stick down
and he's gone ten minutes
and then he wants to go
to the safeway.
as soon as he's in the door
i drive around the block
three times and then one more
time and he comes out
and we drive around the corner
to the cooper arms
and he says, "jesus christ,
you got a fast meter, fella,
i usually tip a buck"
and i say, like hud drunk,
"i wouldn't take a tip
from you, old man."

and he leaves the door open
and i lean over and close it.

UNCLE RAY

he came out of the century room
and wanted to see his sister's
daughter's new kid in pedro.

"i know i look like a bum
but i'm not. i'm a seaman.
i had a few highballs but i
got money. you want to see it?
i'm not a bum."

i saw that money a lot
by the time i got the bum
over the bridge and to the number
that luckily somebody had written
down. out of the house came
a beautiful girl with a black
doberman with its ears taped back.

i would have talked thru a
cracked window but ray was drunk
and walked right up to her
and she didn't know the people
in back but would tell them
uncle ray was here. the three of them
disappeared and a few minutes later
he was back.

"it's them. take me to a liquor store.
goddam i got to pee. make a left."
it was more like six turns before
i found a spot and by then i had
to go too. we jumped out opposite
sides and finished just before
some headlights got us.

"i know that you know
i'm not a bum. shake."
"i better keep my hands
on the wheel."
i got him back there and
reminded him of ten of the fifteen
he'd given me and he paid me off.
the girl and the doberman were
nowhere in sight and ray got out
and his fly was open.

i thought of that young couple
back there with a baby
and in comes that drunken bum
uncle ray with his dick hanging out.
was it not meant to be?
"see ya later, ray."

PILGRIM DAY

julian was explaining
to his father-in-law
an old salesman by any other name
that the bum
who always showed for
the big dinner
was actually
a poet.

"a published poet."
he emphasized,
"other people know
what he does
and they accept it."
old mike didn't look
too thrilled by that idea
but he was a realist
who respected numbers.

he put on his
bifocals and had
a gander at a little mag.
"well," he announced
a couple pages later,
"it isn't as bad as i
thought it would be."

i was sitting on the arm
of a chair and if i'd been
listening i wouldn't have known
which side to fall off.
"anyway," the old fuck
declared with finality,
"this isn't poetry,
it's philosophy."

julian was prepared
to take issue with that
or anything else his wife's
father might have said
and old mike was prepared
to clear up any misconceptions
his daughter's husband might cling to.

they started calling on me
to support their arguments
but every time i opened my mouth
i inadvertently made a point
for the opposite side.
soon they left me out of it
entirely.

i didn't mind. it's flattering
to be argued about. i tilted
the bottle of cognac and sat
back. julian, in spite of his
education, and mike, in spite
of his lack of same, both
made a number of good points.

by the end of the evening
i was feeling a trifle self-
conscious and more than a
trifle bored and i'm relieved
the subject has never come up
again. the only reference
made to that night was on
the following holiday when
old mike greeted me by saying
"here comes shakespeare,
hide the cognac."

of course
julian immediately
handed me the bottle
of v.s.o.p.

RAINY DAY WOMAN #1

when i was 15
on my first job
as a bus boy the best
looking waitress, 10
years older, used to
tease me. when it
rained she would say:
"we shouldn't be working,
this is baby-making weather."
i poured coffee on my hand
when she walked by
and before long she started
'forgetting' to leave
my 15% when she went home.
she was a master of
the quick remark
delivered on the fly
and a month passed before
i grabbed the manager
back by the dishwasher.
he gave her a list
of the days she owed
me for. it rained

a helluva lot that year
but she never mentioned
babies again.

-- Christopher Daly

Long Beach CA

THOSE PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA EYES

Aunt Maple at 105 totters into breakfast, wants the pancake on the bottom of the stack, "They're all the same!" shouts the husband of her dead sister's daughter (nephew-in-law?), only she can't hear because she's got her hearing aid turned off, saving batteries, a whole box of old batteries under her bed, "They're not really 100% dead," a dab of soybean margarine, "I don't know whatever happened to butter..." "It got overpriced!" yells her dead sister's daughter's husband, but not even the vibrations get through, and her niece says kind of to the air over the center of the table, "I don't know why she even wears that silly thing if she doesn't want to put any batteries in it," Aunt Maple squirrels her way through one pancake, then another two, always dealing from the bottom of the deck, a cup of cream-swamped, sugar-supercharged coffee, then spiders into the living room where she sits on the sofa watching her watch,

10 AM, a car comes dust-clouding down the road, pulls up in front,

"Who's that?" asks Margaret-Niece.

Aunt Maple already at the front door as Mr. Knit Orlon rings the bell,

"Miss Maple Watkins?"

"That's me!" she says, he's swimming in shame/con-
sternation/befuddlement,

"I try to block these things," says Margaret-Niece,

"I sell life insurance," says Mr. Knit Orlon,

"You're neither the first nor the last,"

"Well...", he stands there in a puddle of confusion,

then leaves ... as Aunt Maple goes into the kitchen after her pills,

Garlic Oil for anti-clotting activity,

Yeast as antioxidant, B-complex, selenium content,

E for varicosities and skin tone ..., transparent in the Kansas morning light, bright, expanding, like the first atomic bomb ever searing the Los Alamos desert morning air.

ORDINARY PEOPLE

It begins with never enough, you sleep on the dining room "studio" couch, your parents on the sofa-bed in the living room, you think Russia and space-lack, I'm talking about Chicago, 1940,

never enough food or clothes or books or paper or pencils, you become "small," always opt for the plainest, it's the Invisible Church-Mouse Syndrome, Lord, I Am Not Worthy,

you lower Death of a Salesman Dad down in the grave, Mom hangs (increasingly silly) on, you never can make a big sandwich or laugh a big laugh,

it's always wry defensiveness, you keep it all out with a word wall,

lower Mom down,

and, of course, Jay's gotta drink and Lisa's gotta get strangled, Chicago grows big against wee-one respectability, against the Americana maple living-room, the braided rag-rug, the converted-to-electricity kerosene storm-lamp hanging over the maple-slab dining-room table,

can you believe your big (red) lipped, big (mascared) eyed, big (all her) titted, bouncy Sister Rita's 65 (you're 50), who do you lower down next,

as you (2 weeks) look for daffodils in the Lake Country, for The Rock at Brighton, Tess at Stonehenge, god on Dover Beach,

two weeks,

you feel it's a kind of final Death-Watch Tour -- the English Literary Pilgrimage.

ATTIC (OCTOBER 1, 1981)

The diary begins on October 13, 1958, when she's fourteen,

"Dear Diary,

Moma gave you to me today. I love her so much, she's the best person in the world..."

ends Saturday, November 1, 1958,

"... I'm watching Lawrence Welk now. Mom and I've cleaned upstairs today and I meaned (sic) cleaned. It was filthy because of their putting in the furnace. See you tomorrow.

Love,

Nona,"

23 years later.

LANDSMANN

Isaac Stern playing a Brahms trio ... then 40th between 7th and 8th Avenues that same face with the same sensitivity, responsiveness, pathos, long-suffering, braininess, on-top-of-it dimension of humor (distancing), sense of "this is all the divinity there will ever be," "even though I'm not you, I'm you,"

selling you ("I'll give it to you for four") four and a half yards of printed red chiffon.

LINDA DOG

It was about 12 years ago, Nona gave me Linda-Dog, I took her home, the kids didn't want to mess around with her so I ended up putting her in the garage in a box, she cried and squealed until about 3 AM I came out and threw her up against the wall, nothing broken, immediate remorse,

I gave her back to Nona who gave her to Martha, her sister,

twelve years later, Gardner, Kansas, I get out of the car, Linda's half blind, half dead with a tumor someplace in her back, another in her uterus, mange all over her underside,

she growls at me, then sniffs, knows me,

"Hey Linda," the barn, the countryside, the years,
the two marriages, the two sets of three kids each,
suddenly twisting, going soft, away from me, "I'm
sorry"

-- Hugh Fox

East Lansing MI

RETREAT

well
you didn't call for an enema
and this isn't
the A train to Norwalk,
and
the troops
will be brisking through here
soon
and you know
they ain't going to
leave the tits on a rat.

Thompson killed himself
last night
in his shining brass room
he drank silver paint
until his belly
came
out of his eyes.

remember the rule:
everything starts at
each moment
and all that's past
is more useless
than what is
present.

we've raped
all the girls
40 times over.
we've left nothing
for the enemy except
the residue
of our cowardice.

no matter
cowardice is the aftermath
of imagination
heroes are the aftermath
of thoughtlessness ...

shit, it's cold, though
you know
I imagine
death is not so bad
if the temperature
is decent.
no, that's not
true.

but pain wearies me
I get it
on and on.
I think I've built
little methods
to escape it
and then it
shows me
the same thing
in a different
form.

hell,
I talk too much
we should
really
move out.
I see the flares
dropping now,
there's no use
having another
conference
of minds
there's nothing
left to solve

the victorious
are getting ready
to arrive
and we've been
caught
out of place.

can't we
take back
move #45
and
substitute
move #39?
that's the one
we should have
made.

well
let's go
give me your
arm ...
oh, it's
gone ... you
motherfucker ...

you know
I can't believe
we've lost.
it didn't take
any effort
at all.
I guess the
worst and best
things don't ...
which leaves
the in
between and that
qualifies too.

careful,
the steps are
covered with
ice ...
I really like
your
falcon tattoo ...

o.k. now
I don't know
where we're going

but
isn't it better
than having them
catch you
with your hand
around your
pecker?

let's sing
something,
huh?
how about a
love song?
I wish I knew
a hate song ...

you know
I was
eleven years old
before I could
whistle?

watch your
head
we're coming
out
of here ...
and
don't worry
I heard a
story once
that
being killed
is
the same as
killing
there's
no gain

so
all we have
to do
now
is
to
walk out of
here

-- Charles Bukowski

San Pedro CA

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NOTICES////////////////////////////////////

The next yellow-paper center-section in WORMWOOD will be devoted to the work of Charles Stetler. The 1983 chapbook will feature Steve Richmond and the 1984 chapbook will be an encore by Charles Bukowski. Reminder: the 1982 chapbook was Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel's Flowers In A Tin Can (\$2/postpaid). Unlike most of the mags above, WORMWOOD's subscription rates have not risen; take advantage of us.

The edition of this issue has been limited to 700 numbered copies, the first 60 being signed by Nichola Manning. The copy now in your hand is number: 554

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