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## Exile Vol. XI No. 1

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*Denison University*

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### Authors

Peggy Schmidt, Ed Brunner, Ken Booth, Bill West, Barb Bergantz, Bonnie McCarthy, Hugh Wilder, Gretchen Schenck, P.M. Grout, and Susan Sherwood

# EXILE



The  
EXILE

WINTER 1966

Vol. 11

No. 1

*Denison University*  
*Granville, Ohio*

Take thought:  
I have weathered the storm  
I have beaten out my exile.  
—Ezra Pound



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*Any student of Denison may submit manuscripts of poems, stories and essays to the editors or to the EXILE box in Slayter Hall.*

## Editorial:

### A CAMP EXCURSION INTO THE REALMS OF CAMP

with thanks to Susan Sontag  
and Martin Heidegger

To understand "Camp" we should examine the word itself as it exists in common jargon: to camp or camping-out implies sleeping in the wilderness with the aid of sleeping blanket, tent, pots and pans and other sundries. It is man living in the wilderness or in nature with the aid of artifacts which include reasonable facsimiles of civilized comforts. The idea or attitude of Camp as we apply it to things today generates from this relationship: man using artifacts to soften the rocky ground of nature.

There is, in actuality, a complex relationship here, for the outdoorsman is supposedly camping-out to enjoy the fullness of nature; but his bringing a sleeping-bag implies there is a limit to how fully man can take his nature: as long as there aren't any rocks on the ground. This then becomes a picture of man posturing as a lover of nature but only loving certain parts of it.

The whole experience of camping-out is then Camp, and the symbol of the relationship of man-to-nature-via-sleeping-bag is the sleeping-bag; thus the sleeping-bag, with its implications, becomes or is Camp.

More can be made of this. Most Camp objects are artifacts: a Victorian Era rocking-chair, a 1935 musical (preferably with choreography by Busby Berkeley; cf. *Golddiggers in Paris*), and Tiffany lamps. Therefore, the object must be a product of mass-production and mass-culture; it cannot be rare, it cannot be valuable—else it might be beautiful or tasteful. To call a rare Grecian urn "Camp" is nearly as gauche as preferring Superman to Batman.

Camp objects, being products of mass-culture, help us further to pin-point the Camp attitude. In a mass-culture fads become more frequent because they are easier to perpetrate on the unaware public (witness the mutation rock and roll has undergone in less than ten years). Fads define what is "in" and what is "out"; because of our awareness (our self-consciousness) of what is permissible, we become separated from our older artifacts: rocking-chairs are stored in attics, Busby Berkeley appears on the late late late show, etcetera. What is Camp, however, is usually what is out, so the attitude of calling something Camp is in part nostalgic and in part an awareness of what has passed and is irredeemable.

This suggests what a true Camp attitude should be. Camp today has

been fouled and denigrated by the public; it is used as a pejorative term—nothing could be worse than calling a human being "Camp" because it implies he is an artifact or a thing. This is not the correct attitude; there is no element of nostalgia in it. When something is truly labelled Camp, there is the implication of an almost wistful feeling toward the forgotten and lonely artifacts of the past. Camp is not a judging: it is an awareness of the world and the artifacts it contains.

The categories of High, Low and Middle Camp are additions, as they imply some things are more Camp than others. In reality, there are only two kinds of Camp: intentional and unintentional. Unintentional Camp often begins as well-meaning bad taste in producing an "artwork" (1935 musicals). Intentional Camp does not necessarily mean an awareness of the term itself, but it usually requires an awareness of the role of the artifacts in human affairs and also the human himself playing a role (making an artifact of himself); thus, intentional campers include the playwright Oscar Wilde who satirized the aristocratic postures of the English in the 1890's; in principle, Aristophanes show some true Camp spirit but he is too venerated to ever be accepted as a real Camp writer.

But intentional Campers are not satirists; pop art, which often desires a satirical response, is not necessarily Camp. Satire's aim is to be destructive, while Camp, in its awareness of the past (though the past may be ugly) is essentially constructive or regenerative. *Candy* is not Camp but *The Importance of Being Earnest* is, for Wilde never quite leads us so far as to hate the characters in his fantasy, while Southern wants us to hate Candy and her cohorts and to lust for their destruction (especially Candy herself). *Dr. Strangelove* is not Camp but *Fail-Safe* is (unintentional), for the characters in *Fail-Safe* are, in reality, artifacts of our imagination, clichés that symbolize our dreams and paranoias. *The Physicists* is not Camp but *Ring Round the Moon* is. Always what is non-Camp is alarming, destructive: it shakes us up; Camp not only opts for the status quo but wants to get back to the "good old days" or wants to keep our dreams and myths alive (as in *Fail-Safe*, the best way to keep a myth alive is to construct a scary fairy tale around it).

Camp objects are the objects that save us from encounters with reality; they lead us back to the past or occupy the present with banalities. They serve as the buffers to our harsh realities as the sleeping-bag saves our backs from nature's rocks. They are harmless, except for one thing, and that is best explained in the somewhat apocalyptic words of William Blake:

*The Seven Nations fled before him: they became what they beheld.*

—E. B.

## JOHNNY JOE

johnny joe  
 he didn't want to be a lawyer  
 but  
 fatherbrotheruncleousingenerations  
 preceded him  
 and in him  
 saw a reflection of themselves  
 he walked down the street  
 toward  
 his bridge  
 passed store windows  
 of blind mannequins  
 and his image  
 walking in  
 their  
 make believe world  
 his eyes  
 up  
 sides of buildings  
 staring out  
 with empty cybernetic lenses  
 his eyes  
 down  
 a side street  
 where a stupored drunk  
 reflected vacantly  
 in his vomit  
 johnny joe  
 he didn't want to be a lawyer  
 so  
 he walked on his reflection  
 in the damp cracked sidewalk  
 toward  
 his bridge  
 passed wrinkled sage-ancient  
 oaks

walking with  
 car mirror reflected eyes  
 glancing  
 off  
 him  
 onto the bridge  
 up  
 to the railing  
 went  
 johnny joe  
 watching all the images  
 reflected in the waves  
 as he fell  
 wondering which one was real

—Bill West





## BY THE FIRE OF THE CHIEF

"How do I know why my dad won't let me take you down there?"

"He said it, didn't he?"

"Yes, but he didn't say why."

"Then take me."

"No."

"All right; you go back to the house and I'll go down there alone."

"No, I'm supposed to stay with you."

"Always?"

"Yup."

"Why? You never did before."

"I don't know why. Maybe because you're younger than me."

"Your dad *said* you had to?"

"Yup."

"Look, who do you like better, your dad or me?"

"My dad."

Christopher turned his back to his cousin, so that the seat of his new jeans was toward the hill. He was angry, but he knew it wouldn't do any good to get mad at Billy. He could have beat up on Billy if he wanted, since he was taller and quicker. But he had promised the last time he visited not to do it any more. Besides, he didn't want to have to start explaining to Billy's dad.

"Billy, think your dad would care if I climbed one of your cherry trees?"

"Heck, no. I always climb 'em. Dad says they'll belong to me some day."

"Big deal."

Christopher looked around for a tree that would give him a good view of the valley. Choosing one on the crest on the slope, he pulled himself up to the crotch and stood teetering like a stalk of skinny blond wheat.

"Well, why don't you go up?"

"I am."

Christopher tried to get a footing on a knob higher up.

"Use yours arms. Shinny up it."

"You go first."

"O. K. But watch."

Christopher leaped down and Billy monkeyed up to the tree's biggest



limb. A moment later, imitating his companion, Christopher found himself climbing to a horizontal branch. Billy was already near the other end, picking cherries and flipping them up so he could tilt his head back and feel them plop into his throat. He never missed.

"Better go higher," Billy warned. "It'd be too much weight out here."

Christopher scowled. He worked his way up to the next limb and sat with his back against the trunk, one leg dangling down each side, and Billy beneath. He squirmed to get comfortable.

"Dad built me a tree-house once." He peered down at Billy, who didn't bother to stop with the cherries. "In back of the apartment. But he wouldn't let Carrie go up; she's too little."

"She's not too little; you wanted it all for yourself." Billy spit out a pit.

"Always stick up for her, don't you? You wouldn't if she was your sister."

"Sisters aren't so bad."

"How do you know, you haven't got one."

"Doesn't mean I won't ever."

"You'll be sorry if you do. I'm glad Carrie couldn't come with me this time."

"Bet you didn't tell your mother that."

"I would have, if she didn't look like she was going to cry."

"Sure you would of. I bet *you* were crying."

"Ha!" Christopher made it emphatic that he wasn't. The soles of his shoes were going in circles over Billy.

"Chris? Wan'na watch the late movie tonight? It's about Custer."

"Yes, but I saw it before, half-way. Mom got sore because I yelled a little when they had the war-dance. It was before Carrie went away and she was asleep."

"My mom won't care. They go to bed early and they can't hear things 'cause their room's so far away. But don't yell."

"I won't." Christopher was trying to see the whole valley at once, but it was too large. So he stared at a little part at a time, spying for a fox or a deer.

"Nothing wild's down there is it?"

"Not in the day. They sleep in the day."

"Then why won't your dad let me go? There's even a path."

Billy missed a cherry. Christopher waited while he stretched his body out along the branch and searched the ground below for the juicy spot it had made.

"Did you *hear* me?"

Billy hoisted himself up standing so he could hold onto Christopher's branch for balance; he pointed into the valley with his free hand.

"See that building down there? That's why."

Christopher leaned forward to follow Billy's finger and started to fall. He squeezed the branch tighter and felt its bark teeth pierce his skin.

"Look. Near where the river runs. Where the trees are thicker. You can see the top of the roof and the tower."

"Oh yes, I see."

"That's why."

"So what's so bad about that?"

"It's the slaughter house."

"What's that?"

"We don't use it any more, but you can still get in. Ralph and I used to go, before he got hit by a car and the vet finished him. I don't like to go now, but I'm not scared to."

"Then go with me and *prove* it."

"Can't."

"What is a slaughter house, anyway?"

"It's where things are killed."

"People?"

"No. Cows, pigs. That's all I guess. The people we bought this place from said it's been here a long time. They used it a lot."

"What's it like inside?"

"I don't think my dad wants me to talk about it at all."

"Did he say that too?"

"Almost."

"Well what *did* he say?"

"Not to talk about Carrie until she's well."

"What about Carrie?"

"Well, she's awful sick."

"Think I don't know that? I knew it before you."

"Did you know about her bones not being right?"

"I know everything about my sister."

"She might die."

"She won't die. Besides, I don't care."

Christopher moved farther out on the branch to see more of the slaughter house, but the trees were too much in the way.

"What do *you* use it for?"

"Nothing. Cats use it to get born in. And sometimes Dad puts stuff down there after he's gone hunting."

"What kind of stuff?"

"You ever been hunting?"

"No."

"Just stuff."

"Has he got something down there now he doesn't want me to see?"

"No, I don't think so. He said he didn't get anything today."

"Maybe he lied."

Billy brought his free hand up to Christopher's branch and began shaking it.

"Hey! Don't!"

"My dad doesn't lie."

"O. K., O. K."

"He's always got his reasons, too."

"Billy?"

"Yeah?"

"You mad?"

"Nope."

"Let's get down."

"O. K."

Moonlight through a tiny hole in the windowshade made a bright circle on the blue plaster wall of Billy's bedroom. Christopher had been studying the room to keep awake.

There was nothing in the room that seemed to be Billy's. The maple furniture was just like the furniture downstairs. The striped bedspread and curtains had been made by Billy's mother. She had hung the water-color prints of ships—one paddle-wheeler, a clipper, and a Roman galley with an insert showing the inside where the slaves were chained. On the dresser was a nearly-full bottle of men's cologne which belonged to Billy's dad, although Christopher had never seen him come in to use it. Across the mirror was a string of squirrel tails, left by a much older brother.

The only things of Billy's were his corduroy pants, his cotton shirt, and his green socks, that were piled by the bed every night. And if they were still there in the morning, because Billy had put on other things, they would be gone by noon, because Billy's mother always cleaned the upstairs by then.

Christopher felt like it was more his own room when he came; his black leather suitcase took up most of the floorspace between the bed and the dresser. His extra sweaters and pants usually got spilled out and dragged around, especially when Ralph had been alive. And Billy's mother never moved *his* things.

Christopher looked over at Billy and grinned. His cousin's mouth was open and his eyes a little bit, too—like Custer at the end of the movie. Christopher brought his clenched fist down over the silent body, as if he were driving in a spear, but he kept himself from touching Billy. He jerked his hand back, swung his bare feet into the icy linoleum floor, and executed the ten paces to the door, sidestepping the suitcase.

He walked slowly down the braided rug of the hallway and stopped at the head of the stairs. Feeling his way down the wall, he settled in a sitting position on the upper step. So there wouldn't be any noise, he scooted down the left-hand side of the staircase, being careful of his movements.

The air in the living room seemed strange and dead; the fire was gone and the jasmine scent Billy's mother always sprayed had been extinguished by the night. Unsure of his direction in the dark, he waited until his eyes began to focus. He recognized the sparkle of shelved rifles at the farthest end of the room and headed for them, thinking of how Billy's dad could swing his gun up on the rack like it was a hat or something.

Billy's bird fluttered in its cage when he passed and a white feather flashed before his nose. He hurried on, into the kitchen.

There, the night glow made objects visible. The four maple chairs had been neatly pushed against the table edges. He crossed over to get a piece of chicken left from dinner in a foil pan on the stove, pulled himself up to the counter, and gnawed the drumstick to the bone.

Remembering Billy's dad kept a flashlight in the drawer nearest the porch, he took it. He went out onto the porch, snapping on the flashlight to keep from stumbling over the jars and boxes of Billy's bug collection.

Clear of the house, he mounted the white slab-fence and tore free from the scratchy arms of raspberry bushes. He knew the path through the orchard, but not the one into the valley.

He paused at the start of the descent, seeing how small a spot his flashlight made against the black valley. The night air was turning his cotton nightclothes stiff and cold, and the insect noises grew louder from the trees below. Thick grass and thistles had cut his feet and the sting was making tears which he quickly wiped away.

Looking back at Billy's curtains, he wondered if his cousin had wakened and if the door had locked behind him. Then he thought of Billy's dad with the gun and stupid Billy who had wanted Custer to win. Smiling, he made the downward motion with his fist over a spot

where the dirt was uncovered and rubbed his feet over the ground until the hurting stopped. He danced four times around the spot, whooping softly. The heat of an invisible fire warmed his clothes.

Then he charged, racing along the path, ignoring branches that grabbed at his eyes and his cheeks.

He had to stop when he came to a pen. Its fence was higher and its unpainted slabs closer together than the white ones. He tugged at the gate and squeezed through. Soft matted leaves and fallen seed-pods sank under his toes.

He didn't realize that the brick building was before him until he stood on the threshold of its eastern entrance. Surprised, he stepped back and let the beam glide up the wall to the tower.

Like the speckled kernel-coat on the Indian corn he and Carrie hung outdoors at Halloween, the bricks of the wall were yellow and red and orange. The place hadn't any windows; but the tower seemed to open into it through the top. Christopher wondered why there weren't any bells.

Suddenly he sensed that other braves were coming down from the hill; he could see here and there bright sparkling eyes and he could hear the soft swishing of their moccasins. They were coming to see the chief, coming for their reward and their new orders. But Christopher was there first. He pushed against the grey wood door and entered.

Inside, he shut the door and shone his light around. It was a square-shaped building and tall enough for two stories, but there was only one. Another door faced him on the opposite side. The ground was lined with six wooden stalls. Two corridors met, one between the doors and one connecting the blank walls, to form a cross directed north.

At the southernmost end of the longer corridor, grey limestone chips and rusted grating had been arranged as a fireplace. Far above it opened the little hole for the tower. Ancient corncobs, chewed bare, lay half-a-foot deep on the floor.

The western door was no proper door in the least, just an opening; its frame was spiked with inch-thick hooks for several huge buckets and one lantern. A great iron trough was anchored in the cracked mud outside the opening, where a step should have been. Christopher decided he could leave only by the way he had come.

He walked slowly to where the corridors met, keeping his head high. He turned toward the fireplace, the corn cylinders quiet beneath his advance.

This was the sacred path to the fire of the chief. He knew he had forgotten the spear at the top of the path; perhaps he would be punished.

Before the limestone mound he knelt, touching his lips to the corncobs. It was still. Feeling himself forgotten, he rose and slipped from stall to stall, running his hands along the black girders while spider webs twisted around his fingers.

At last he was before the western opening. He rested on the outermost portion, catching sight of the trough. It held a pool of rainwater decorated with olive-colored froth and bodies of fat dead spiders that looked like rubber tops in the gleam of his light.

Christopher poked at a low-hanging bucket and waited while it stopped swaying. He clicked off the flashlight and knelt again, facing the opening and bowing before the stars. His hands worked through the cobs, enjoying their rough outsides pricking his flesh. A slow chant came from his throat, cursing Billy and Billy's father, praising the tribe.

His left palm struck something hard beneath the cobs. He let his fingers slide along its surface, rubbing a sleek, irregular form they could not identify. He moved his right hand to the object and caressed it with both, stroking and wondering.

Finally, Christopher sat up and lifted it in front of his eyes. The starlight showed a twisted mass of bones. A demon cat, contorted by starvation, snarled at him. The great hollow eyesockets, the gnashed fangs, the outstretched claws dug into his mind. A rotting piece of fur attached to the hind bones flapped loosely, and brushed his hand. He knew that the cat was dead and a shiver cut through his body.

He let go of the carcass. Releasing the flashlight too, he turned and ran from the slaughter house. The skeleton landed on the brink of the opening and made a heavy splat as it disturbed the spiders in the trough.

The sun was shining and Billy's dad had already left when Christopher came downstairs into the kitchen. Billy was finishing the last puff of scrambled eggs.

"I ate your eggs. Mom said they'd get cold. I'll call her and she'll make you some more."

"No thanks. I don't want any."

"You'll get hungry."

"No I won't." Christopher waited while his cousin wiped the cocoa off his mouth and then slid a thin package from underneath his sweater.

"Here. My mother said to give this to you."

"What for?"

"I don't know. For having me here."

"We always have you here. And you have me there."



"Maybe we owe you one."

Billy pulled on the gold mesh ribbon until its strands burst and then ripped off the metallic paper.

"It's a book."

"Yeah. About the FBI. I wanted it, but Mom wouldn't let me keep it."

"Well, thanks."

"Don't thank me, I didn't give it to you."

Billy scratched his initials on the gold paper with his knife.

"Nice paper." He folded a square around the initials and stuck it into his shirt pocket.

"You better put the book away, before it gets eggs on it."

"Yeah." Billy took the volume over to the shelf of his mother's cookbooks and shoved it between two checkered ones.

"I guess I've got something for you too. Out here."

Christopher stayed by the door of the porch while Billy bent over his jars of insects, held one for a few seconds, and brought it away.

"You can have Mannie." The praying mantis ignored Christopher, making him look at his slick green wings and not his slender stomach.

"I caught him on a gourd."

"Weren't you afraid to pick him up?"

"Heck, no. Once I picked up a cow's heart."

"What happened to the cow?"

"We ate him."

"You did not."

"We gave some to your dad; you must of ate him too."

"I did *not*."

"The heart was still beating."

"Liar."

Billy pulled back his jar and turned it close to his face, making a soft cricking sound at the mantis.

"He's a good one. Maybe I'll give him to Carrie instead."

"Carrie doesn't like bugs. And neither do I. Anyway, I don't think they want them in the hospital." Christopher snapped the screen door with his fingers; the resting flies disappeared.

"Mother said you got sick last night, Christopher."

"Just a little. I must have had too much chicken."

"She said you got *really* sick and you were outside."

"I couldn't get to sleep."

Billy set down the mantis-jar and walked over to his cousin.

"Yeah. I know where you went. It wouldn't have made *me* sick."

"That's because you live around here."

"It's because you can't take it. And you might never get to come back."

"Think I care?"

"Your dad's coming to get you."

"Today?"

"Yes. Because you ran out last night."

"No, Carrie must be well."

"I *told* you. Carrie might die. D-I-E, die!"

Christopher wheeled around and kicked Billy in the leg as hard as he could. Then he covered his eyes with his hands and hid his face against the porch screen.

"Mom!" Billy called. "I think Chris's going to be sick again!"

—Peggy Schmidt

## CATERPILLAR

A leaf dips, its heart shape glistens  
 As a crystal drop of rain clings, then falls,  
 From the ragged edge. In the green glow  
 Of the drying sun, a fuzz-wrapped  
 Caterpillar moves deliberately across  
 The bladeless field. Cautiously, he directs  
 His course to the center where the  
 Stem arches and backbones the leaf.  
 His army of feet sucks noiselessly  
 Against the waxy surface. His neckless head  
 Nods as if his black bead eyes,  
 Which are not eyes at all,  
 Watch each swinging foot.

—Barb Bergantz

### *A Note from the Editor Concerning This Story*

The following pages were found, arranged in the order in which they appear here, amid the effects of a recently-departed friend who was well-known in many circles as a writer of growing merit. The first page bears the title "The Diary of a Vanishing Man"; after this, crossed out in black ink, is a colon and a subtitle: "a true story." Underneath this title and also covered with black X's there is written: "Now in midsummer come and all fools slaughtered." I have tried to show the story's incompleteness—cf. the notes which end the work—by my title.

There seems to be at present some controversy over whether or not the mss. is "authentic"—authentic being one of those words the friends of the editor use to define real life. Certainly in one sense the following pages are *not* authentic, but in another most definite sense they are: just as there is a motion to time which excludes minutes-and-seconds on a clock and just as a man may continue to live years after he has died. And events may, at one time, be simple and easy to explain, but as the event increases (though it may have "died" for all intents and purposes) its authenticity increases also. Until perhaps it is so authentic that it can no longer be understood. When B. played the piano, no one could tell whether they were hearing the note, the chord, the notes in the chord, or the reverberations of the note. In the end, Who cares? The point worth remembering is that someone, somewhere, does care.

—Jay Caldwell, November, 1965

### *from THE DIARY OF A VANISHING MAN*

*September 16*

Yesterday the rates on the ferry changed,—the ultimate sign that summer was finished. Now it costs twice the usual rate to get to Woods Hole and three times as much if you bring your car. Summer is the integrated season and the actions done on an August morning are done in collusion with the green trees, blue water and yellow sand. When the trees turn grey, the water turns grey, the sand hardens like crusty snow, the August morning and what it recalls become as fixed as bark, as cold as sea-water, as hard as blue morning sky.

Autumn seems to shrivel me up, even on the dry land: but on the seacoast, on this island, everything becomes extreme and stripped. I become fascinated with the ocean, the sky, the trees, the sand—and trying to think about them, came up with the usual no-answers. I thought of change for awhile—the fascination of everything changing, so frightening and so strangely secure (happening every year)—but that idea is truly artificial, and finally I went back to the cottage to make some lunch.

Later on in the afternoon, I found myself being punished for my delicate thoughts of the morning. I was getting ready to drive into Edgartown and I felt I should dress in proper poverty in case I saw Marianne (who on seeing me would hopefully burst into tears and offer to come to Menemsha, cook my suppers, mend my shirts, console me with her lap, etcetera). As a symbol of intellectual poverty, I chose a faded denim work shirt, far too small for me, bought at least five years ago in San Francisco instead of a sorely-needed hot lunch. After I put on the shirt, I thought it was the wrong one: the sleeves came down over my knuckles and it felt as if I would finally be able to button the collar. The wrong shirt. But I took it off only to stare and realize it was the right shirt since I have only one like it.

It's Change, I told myself, Monstrous Change! (In the Abstract, of course.) After crossing the continent with me several times, after participating in everything from being crushed by women to absorbing sweat as I poured forth my writing, my shirt had undergone a sea-change into something wondrous and strange.

#### SEVERAL POSSIBLE REASONS FOR MY SHIRT'S

##### SEA-CHANGE: A List

1. The damp sea air has caused the fibers to *expand* (or *expa-a-a-a-a-a-and*); since I hadn't been aware of the moisture working on the fabric, I hadn't noticed anything until I put the shirt on after several months of its inaction. (I like this explanation because of its basis in alchemy.)

2. My shirt, through contact with me, is experiencing what mortals call a "swelling of the head"; it has imbued itself with my notions and is subtly taking over, increasing in size. (This is a fine explanation, too: it argues that, contrary to intellectual-folk wisdom, scientists, poets, politicians and the articles of the Constitution, man is *not* being inhumanized in our modern civilization but rather that THINGS are becoming HUMANIZED.)

3. I'm going insane. (This is an old revelation).

4. I've lost some weight. (I dislike this one most of all because it's most obvious, most factual, most EMPIRICAL, if you will; and therefore, probably least true.)

September 16 (later)

As I was crossing Edgartown Main Street, I was almost hit by a familiar looking car. It was Marianne driving and she stopped and said something about how lucky I was not to have scratched her car, as then I would have to pay for it. I got inside and we drove to the only place open, a sailor's diner in Oak Bluffs, for coffee. There was a pool-room in one-half of the diner and I kept studying the games; I rarely came to this diner, it was so far from Menemsha, and I hadn't watched a pool-game for years. Someone asked me if I wanted to play, but I had to refuse, never having touched a cue. Marianne wanted to play and she knew how—her parents have a table—but the fellow wouldn't ask her. Pool, he seemed to think, was a man's game.

We went for a walk even though it was windy and cold and ended up walking out to the edge of the breakwater. I told her about the time earlier in the summer, before I met her, when I had walked to the edge of the breakwater, trying to get as close to the sea as I could. I was dramatic (my story-telling vice), telling it was a moonless night and I could face in one direction and see the lights of Oak Bluffs—the folk song pavilion, the enclosed merry-go-round with the wild-eyed horses and children whirling by the entrance, the old diner, the lights on the boats—and then face the other direction and see nothing, not even the horizon, only the blackness and the afterglow of lights.

How did all this affect her? I don't know, I've never known. She doesn't talk, she only makes jokes. As I became more excited in telling the story I began to shiver while she stood there as if there was no wind coming across the harbor, as if we weren't even near a harbor. Her mind far away, playing with something else, as if she's never really totally in control (like her conversation which leaps in fitful hops from subject to subject as if she's insane). She just stood there as I shivered and looked as if she knew about everything but wouldn't say anything. Say something to her? Tell her at last, finally, that I love her? Impossible. It would have violated everything, the arrangement of sea and her and myself, and behind her, as I looked at her staring away, there was the wooden building with the merry-go-round inside, and I thought that if music came out of there, if the building fell away to show children riding the horses now, with the leaves all around them, then I could say something. But now was too late; no children and horses, just the empty sky and the sun under clouds.

Everything remained intact. We walked back to the car and we drove back to Edgartown where she left me off.

Now, late at night, I wish she could drop in and see me. Impulsively



walk in, and then I could tell her what the whole afternoon's mosaic meant to me. Only when it's late at night, three in the morning, does the day begin to seem soft; then I can talk to people, when there's no one to talk to. In an age when there was no TV and people retired early, midnight was the witching hour; since the late movies come now at one in the morning, it takes longer for time to officially end and for space to fall apart: the knitting process is pressed into a later time slot.

A good formula to remember: the end of civilization will be imminent when all-night television programs attack and new wonder drugs cut out sleep entirely. The trouble with today is people only spend one-third of their lives dreaming.

September 17

Ah, today! Today was the day my pants almost fell off. First that story, then a nostalgic interlude entered for absolutely no purpose whatsoever.

Innocent as a child, I went to the grocery in Edgartown and was talking to the owner when I felt him staring at the area around my belt-buckle. Perversion in Edgartown! I exclaimed to myself, until I realized my pants were slowly inching down my waist. I looked down, and it seemed as if there was room there for dozens of others if they'd care to join me (this was a reflection of my thoughts on how I imagined the grocer was lecherously envisioning all this). But the grocer failed his role miserably. He offered me some string, thinking my belt had broken, and went into a long nostalgic *recherche* of a Chaplin movie he and his wife had once seen. Since he had told me dozens of times that his wife was dead, I intuited the Chaplin anecdote was the comic relief before he plummeted into one of his open-ended reminiscences of his wife and him together. It was not the remembrance of his dead wife that might bother me, but the sadness of him recalling how they acted together, as inseparable, a unit. The grotesqueness of this way of life always made me think of them as a Cerberus minus one head, and I grabbed my purchases, assured him I was familiar with the film, and politely ran out of the store as fast as I could, one hand holding up my pants which, it seemed to me, had grown alarmingly even in the few minutes I had been aware of them.

Back at my house I stood naked in front of a mirror, looking for evidence of my lost weight. Along with the notion that I was looking for something which, if evident, would be gone, it also occurred to me how foolish naked man is, standing here with his mind and eyes at one pole, his legs and feet at another and his drooping genitals caught in the

middle. The mind and its piercing eyes together, the necessary feet for locomotion (so that man moves, is not inert—a quality as desired as food, shelter, sex); and then, in the center, the meeting-place for all, mind and heart, love and lust. In reaction to this, the thin wire that channels all my diversities popped to attention . . .

#### AN INTERLUDE (Autobiographical)

When he was a boy, his feet carried him into all manner of out-of-the-way magazine stores where he would peer at all kinds of one-sided magazines: Nugget, Jem, Knight,—the list is a parade of phallic symbols. No longer content with brief looks, one day he arranged an ingenious device, a loop with a sack on the inside of a bulky coat [much like the loop Raskolnikov used to carry his axe], and then would wait patiently for hours until the counterman's back was turned, or a customer came in. Then pop, swish! into his coat would go the latest Swank or Escapade or Caper (never Playboy—this was too mild for him), and he would break into a nervous sweat, feel his heart pound violently underneath his new treasure. Others would have quickly turned and run out of the store and the fat counterman would have leapt to his feet, searched, found out, humiliated. He was more clever. He continued to peer among the racks, occasionally glancing at magazines, all the time feeling his chest, until his whole body had been given up into sweat. Then meekly, he would go to the man behind the counter and ask for Down Beat or the Turnip Growers' Guide or Botteghe Oscure—any magazine he had noticed was not in the store. No, the counterman would say, they had no such magazine and he would shrug sadly and leave the store, the reason for the lengthy pondering explained. And he would never hit the same place twice.

In this manner, over several years, he amassed nearly a thousand magazines. Most of them were harmless, containing only suggestive pictures of girls who had one thing in common: one had a nose too lengthly, another's legs were skinny, one desperately had to suck in her stomach for every pose, one's hair was a brash orange, one had one huge breast while the other was tiny: they all were slightly flawed, Hollywood hopefuls, rejects because of marginalia. You could see where the camera had desperately maneuvered, avoiding a fat stomach to open on a leg, focussing on a breast so the face would be ignored. He had tremendous sympathy with them all, but he wanted more than they could give him. So one day, when his house was deserted, one Saturday night when his parents had gone out and left him alone, he took out all the magazines

and with scissors in hand, file folders ready, he started cutting out his favorite girls. An anthology of his lust.

Cutting around breasts, nipples, legs, buttocks with his delicate scissors, he discovered his power. By gouging out a half inch of neck, he could make a breast appear two inches larger; he could trim excess weight off stomachs in seconds; a nose could be pared into moderate size; thighs would grow if calves were trimmed. And before, where a long net of gauze had spread off into the background, he could remove all but the tiniest dangling piece which balanced precariously on top of a nipple a few slicings had expanded enormously.

The pictures, silhouettes, were framed in black in an old scrapbook he had bought years ago to fill with pictures of aeroplanes (then they had called them that). Underneath the pictures, imaginary stories were written or offers made by the girls with the new names he had given them. When two scrapbooks were completely filled, when all the girls he had liked had passed from two-dimensional magazine creatures into his imagination, then I put them in a paper bag, walked two miles into fields beyond the house (on a Saturday night, the stars were out, it was spring), and hid them in the crevice of an old tree that had been split by lightning.

That was the doing of his clever feet, necessary, witty; pure sex, the moment passing and damaging only himself. But at the same time, he professed his love to girls and they would look at him as if he had hurt them, stunned, surprised. They were incapable of coping with his vows of love.

How to bring the two together and satisfy the feet and the mind? It seemed to me, as I sat there writing, obvious: if I could make love to someone (Marianne), my mind could discover the path back to the tree in the middle of the fields. But how to start that process—that was what had eluded me again and again.

### *September 18*

Somehow it all continues. When I woke up this morning, I walked into the bathroom and, as usual, began to shave. The beginning of a normal day, until I saw where my head was in the mirror: it was in front of the second pane of glass in the window behind me. (Normally, shaving is incredibly boring for me—back & forth scraping—so my eyes wander down my chin, to my toothbrush, hair, bathtub and out the window. My head, for months now, had always been squarely framed by the third pane of glass—until today.)

I stopped shaving and went into the bedroom and tried on a pair

of pants. I pulled the top level with my waist and, ignoring the difference between stomach and trousers, realized that my feet were solidly resting on cloth. I pulled out a shirt, put it on, and looked at myself in the mirror, buried under a shirt and a pair of pants.

For a long time, then, I sat on the edge of my bed and tried to reason myself out of it. The only possible solution was that someone was nearby, a friend of mine, playing jokes on me. Often, late at night, I hear strange noises, wispy fragments of sound like aborted sneezes that could not or should not come from the ocean. Could someone be playing tricks on me? And who would it be, who would care enough to change the size of my mirror, completely renovate my wardrobe, and perhaps ultimately plan to move out all my furniture and install newer and proportionately larger pieces? If Marianne were doing it all, I thought, I would love her forever; in fact, if it were she, then she would love me forever. Creative madness.

But I knew it couldn't be Marianne, didn't think any of my other friends might do it. Jay was the only possibility and though it was a trick worthy of him as a high school student, he was now a prep-school teacher in Connecticut, cultivating a slight paunch and bloated reminiscences to sell to the New Yorker. So it was me. I was shrinking.

Of course it all seems like the conclusion of one of my pseudo-scientific explanations: the fiber expands because of the unusual molecules in sea-air and therefore . . . . But it was happening to me, somehow, and I rang up a doctor in Oak Bluffs and made an appointment.

Getting dressed was a problem. I clipped the ends off an old pair of dungarees and the sleeves off an old shirt, so I had an ability to use my arms and legs. And finally (ultimate absurd gesture), I took the pillow from my bed and stuffed it between my navel and trouser-tops. Padded, then, like a department store Santa Claus and feeling like a scarecrow, I managed to look half-decent, though, as I could see from a glance in the mirror, it seemed as if I had shrivelled and grown fat, aged twenty years.

The doctor's office in Oak Bluffs was behind the drugstore. Inside, must, National Geographics, a series of prints in gilt frames relating great medical discoveries. A woman at an oak desk reading Life magazine, the doctor's wife, wearing starched white and gray strands of hair. I was let in to see the doctor who was standing beside a life size model (?) of a human skeleton.

I removed my pillow dramatically and threw it on his desk and told him my story. Halfway through, I realized that there was a possibility he would think me mad and call the police. But I was too far along to

stop and I continued, giving the proof, the shirts, pants and window-pane. After I had finished, he sat down and I sat down. Somehow, I didn't care what he would say any longer, though I was a bit curious to hear his reaction. After pouring out my soul to him, it didn't really matter whether he could do anything or not; it was, if you will, how he would respond that interested me.

"You live in Menemsha, is that it?" the doctor said, looking at a card on his desk which was enormously cluttered. On the card I could see the upside-down letters of my name and address.

"Outside Menemsha, really," I said.

"Near the sea?"

"Right beside it," I said. "In an old tourist cottage, fixed up with a gas heater." Thinking I knew what he was getting at, I added: "The nearest neighbor is two miles away."

He nodded his head. "Sure!" he said, slamming his palm down on the desk. "Sure! Well, that explains it. No doubt!"

"What does?" I asked, baffled.

"Living near the sea. Here, let me draw you a picture, a diagram." He took a piece of paper from his desk and drew a line down the middle. On one side of the line he drew a square with an X in it. "That's your house," he said. On the other side he drew a cloud. Next to the cloud, he drew an arrow, pointing in a direction off the paper.

"From time to time," he said, "as I'm sure you know, the U. S. government holds bombing tests in the Pacific. In these tests, a great amount of *radiation* or *fall-out* is spread out into the air, given up into the atmosphere. The fall-out, being light, is carried upwards by the wind and dispersing, it goes to the four corners of the globe." Here he pointed to the cloud. "Settling, eventually, in *clouds*—clouds such as the ones you see every morning above the sea outside your window"—he pointed to the house and the X. He now settled back in his chair.

"That fall-out, Mr. Miller, is in those clouds outside your window. And that fall-out is making *you* shrink . . ."

He must've seen the look on my face, whatever it was—amazement, stupefaction, doubt, incredulity—and he scowled deeply. "Do you want me to draw a diagram of the fall-out getting in the air?" he asked.

I shook my head, said Yes it must be so, could in fact only be so, and asked him for a bill. He referred me to the woman, his secretary.

I gave her the five dollars for the visit and still stunned, walked outside. As I was getting in my car, the doctor came running out of his office, nearly knocking over a lady pushing a baby-carriage, and returned my pillow which I had left on his desk.

September 19

I have decided the way to save myself, and it seems to be working. Last night, before going to bed, I ate a huge meal instead of my usual soup with crackers or sandwich. It may have been my imagination or it may not have been, but it seemed to me that I filled out a bit more. At any rate, I haven't lost weight in any kind of extreme amount. This, however, could become extremely mordant: the end result being that I would spend the rest of my life stuffing myself, literally constantly eating, in order to remain the same. The prospect hardly appeals.

After a breakfast of eggs, ham, toast, pancakes, cereal and milk (no coffee), I ate half a steak, potatoes, corn, peas and more milk for lunch. All of it was hideously-cooked. The irony was that I've always joked about having Marianne cook for me, but now, when I really need her (and I'm sure she'd come, if she believed it), I refuse to let her see me in my shrinking condition. Vanity conquers.

All of this food made me feel as if I couldn't move. And of course, very sleepy. Though I didn't want to risk lying down and sleeping, I finally had to, as I tried to get down another glass of milk and almost gagged (which would've made all my suffering go for naught). So I stretched out on the couch. Soon it began to rain very lightly and the sky darkened over, filling with the good doctor's deadly clouds (I could see out the window opposite my sofa).

When I woke, it was dark outside and the rain had stopped. I walked into the bathroom and looked at myself. I was still the same size I had been before, as I measured my head against the second-window-pane. At that moment, the headlights of a car came jolting along the road outside the window and suddenly passed by.

As the sound of the car died away, I suddenly remembered a dream I had while lying down. I rarely remember dreams immediately upon awakening, but only later, if some accident occurs which reminds me of my dream, will suddenly the whole thing re-occur in my mind. This is what I thought I had dreamed and which the car's headlights reconstructed for me:

In the dream, I am driving along a desolate flat-land, sort of like the land one sees in the midwest: long stretches of corn broken with occasional houses. It is dusk and there are lights in the distance, soft yellow lights like farm house windows show on a winter evening; the long patches of corn are all light yellow and have been reaped. My car is moving rapidly along but the lights never seem to get closer.

Then far away, almost on the horizon, I see a light forming, a tiny point. It gets larger and splits into two: the headlights of an oncoming



car. There is the feeling, then, that the driver of that car is someone I know, though the car and its driver's face are too far off to be seen. As I drive faster and narrow the distance between cars, I happen to glance at the speedometer and see the mileage reading: 123456.7. The arrangement of numbers amazes me, and I immediately pull the car to the side of the road and stare at them. What a strange and wonderful thing, I think, and I am happy for some reason because I can show them to my friend in the approaching car.

But when I look up, I see that the oncoming car has nearly reached me, but it has slowed to a crawl. Finally, when it is about twenty feet from my car, it stops completely. Now wondering who the driver is, I turn off my headlights. The other car does the same and we sit there together in the gloom, waiting for our eyes to adjust to the dark.

I stare & stare ahead & I finally begin to make out the pieces of a face: nose, mouth, eyes, hair. It is Marianne and she too is peering into the darkness. If she recognizes me as the driver, or can even see me, her face registers no surprise; but then I realize neither does mine. It is serenely composed.

We sit there and stare at each other & though it is almost totally dark now, we can still see ourselves. I wonder briefly, on and off, what the digits on her speedometer tally; & we continue to stare at one another . . .

Finally, I wake up.

#### NOTES:

He thinks out most of this dream as he is sitting on a couch, as he has walked from the living room to the den. Now, as he looks around, he is amazed at how large the couch has grown. It is enormous. Even as he begins to understand this, it seems as if he is getting smaller and smaller.

Suddenly a knock at the door. He looks beyond the arm of the couch to see Marianne standing outside. He yells, 'Come in, come in!' But his voice is too small to be heard. He shouts at the top of his lungs.

The door opens, she walks in, looks around. 'Did someone say "come in"?' she asks.

Grabs hold of the cushion, drops to the floor, nearly a 20-foot fall. Badly shaken he sits there, trying to gather his strength. It seems every moment he diminishes more. The kitchen table, the ice-box, the sofa all loom above him. Somehow he gets to his feet and first thing: a huge toe

in front of him, five toes then bound in giant straps of leather with blonde hair the size of fat string woven in and out of squares of nylon fishnet.

Towering above him is darkness. Marianne, somewhere up there, as he shrinks more every moment. The feet move & he dodges them.

'Bruce! Where are you? I brought you a pie! Bruce!'

'A pie,' he thinks. 'A pie.'

'Down here!' he yells as loud as he can. No avail.

'What? What's that?'

He reaches for the top of his lungs: 'Down here!' It comes out barely a whisper.

Each moment he feels himself shrinking, his voice weakening. Finally, he collapses on the rug and feels the grains of sand swelling all around him. A piece of dirt is grinding into his backbone, a grain of sand as large as his fist.

'You're too late,' he yells, 'too late.' Then he whispers again—'too late'—for why shout? No one can hear him. No matter how hard he yells, she can never hear him.

—Ed Brunner

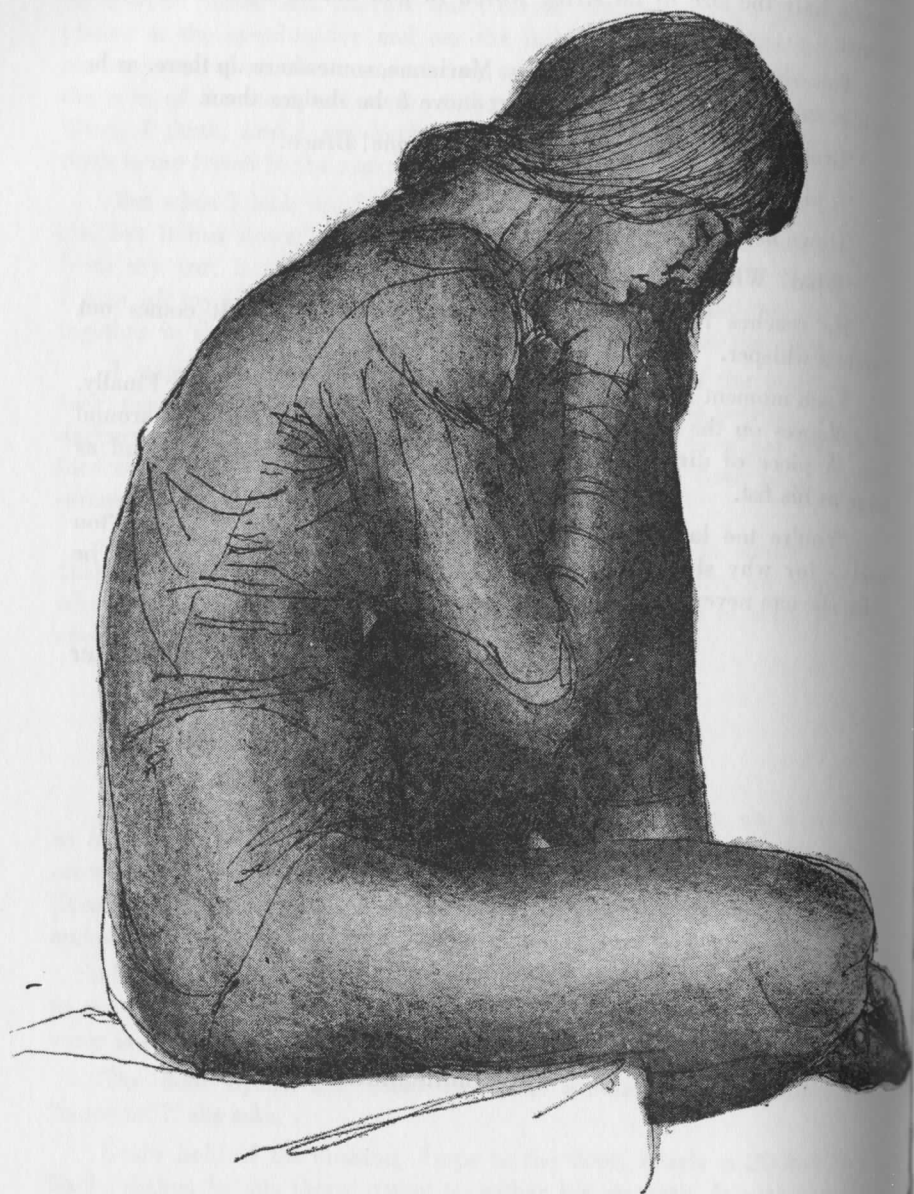
Winter is the cold

Thankless child born of autumn's

Slow gold-crimson death.

—Bonnie McCarthy





## THE QUEEN

The air of the desert is perfectly clear,  
And to prove it,  
In the night I walked out,  
And shined a flashlight,  
Pivoting around in a circle.  
She thought I had blinked the light only once,  
At her,  
There being no dust particles,  
Nothing,  
To catch and reflect the light  
Or mirages.

Then it must have been so:  
Sleep silently left me,  
And I saw, removed in simple objectivity,  
The girl, lying,  
Airy under lightly piled quilts,  
On her daisied and canopied bed,  
Raised above the floor of the sandless desert,  
Which was flat (except for the canopied bed),  
Flat, as far as I could see.  
And I had my first vision of the true horizon  
As the sun rose, perfectly white,  
Just to the left of the bed.

—Hugh Wilder

## THE CLOWN

He captured midway all the grief he knew  
But none could scrape away the mask he drew  
Across his face. His cheeks were pasted with  
Red suns that rose in dual harmonic fits;  
But the piper did not retrieve his due  
And yellow spheres of influence scraped with blue  
In mock delight. Behind a feast of faces—  
Some upturned but none released from traces—  
He watched his polka-dotted self relate  
For seven minutes a death far worse than fate.  
Again the maudlin sympathy withdrew  
And banal bursts of lungful bellowing grew  
And fed upon the spotlight's hardened glare  
Until the sawdust shuddered in despair.  
His steps retraced their entrance to the tent  
And paused, as if a moment's grace were lent  
To one whose second wind had lost its fear  
And with a sigh, his chalky cheekbone smeared  
As one red sun devoured a tinsel tear.

—Barb Bergantz

The night was gowned in grey and soundless  
Fog that flashed out signs:  
Instant pleas for time on endless roads with  
Endless lights, all sudden and unstill.  
I drove in mist alone, with you against my knee,  
Asleep. Around me there was dark and cloudy  
Nothingness and glass that I made glow.  
You slept and did not see.

I made the grey alive  
My light was all the god it knew  
And all it needed to be laughing wonder-full  
And close. I let you sleep, but wanted you to see.

Cement ships came sailing toward me, fast, edged in white  
And topped with masts or paper cups or grass:  
All ghosts, all gone within a whispered hum,  
Out of sight behind my head. Among  
The sighs of passing mist and trees  
I heard the warmth of your light breath around my knee.  
I wanted you to see that all that sound  
And all those lights were me;

I made the grey alive.  
I made it laugh around us, made it rush  
Against the glass and up. I made the ships and signs  
Alone, with you asleep against my knee.

—Gretchen Schenck



## DIALOGUE

### THE SKEPTIC, THE SO-CALLED ABSURDIST:

But can't you see from Genet that he recognizes the impossibility of anyone ever knowing himself. It's really useless. Life must be absurd. People are absurd. Look at these fools who spend their lives searching for something which they wouldn't even recognize if they found it. They are as uncertain when they die as the day they were born; even an idiot can do that well. Why does a man take his sixty-five years so damn seriously when that's all he's got no matter how he acts? You can't play Life's game because she has none. Just as soon as you think you've found the rules, she turns around and hits you in the face: she knocks you down, rules and all.

#### FRIEND:

That's right but irrelevant. We don't have to know ourselves, just what we think we are or want to be. You say that . . .

#### ABSURDIST:

There's no order to the universe. You aren't going to hold out for some kind of god or something like that are you? After all, that's nothing but an evasion and a rationalization. If you believe in God we might as well stop right here. Whenever anybody gets in a tight spot, he always falls back on religion.

#### FRIEND:

No, I don't believe in the kind of god you're talking about, but even if I did I wouldn't use him to justify myself. Life is its own religion; every man is a potential demi-god.

#### ABSURDIST:

Religion, religion. Forget it. Here's what I think about religion: aside from the fact that it's pure farce and pretty good support for my belief that Absurdity reigns everywhere, there are two things wrong with it. First of all, it's an invention of man for his own self-comfort. Where did it come from in the first place? I'll tell you—from man's mind. Man needed something to assuage his fears of things he couldn't explain, so he invented religion . . . just like the stone axe. Now it has gotten so big that he can't let go of it; and even if he could, he wouldn't, because there are still some things he can't quite figure out—mainly Death and Life. He thinks that he is rational and won't stop believing that the rest of the universe is, too. What confuses him is that he is totally irrational in a universe that might be called logically irrational. Every-

thing physical works intricately and relatively well, but organization doesn't necessarily mean purpose. So man is still trying to explain away what he does not comprehend, and religion helps him to do it by giving him an excuse to comprehend. But wait until he finds out about something which he didn't understand before—then he chucks out the part of religion that explained it. Not only is he inconsistent, but he is a hypocrite. The second thing about religion that I detest is that it is a social phenomenon. If a man *is* going to have religion, it might as well be based on faith instead of morality. After all, morality is one of the most variable parts of any culture. Attending to morality under the pretense of its having anything to do with religion is sheer laziness, to call it by its proper name. Established religion is for men among men, not men among God. Don't you see that religion is pure expediency.

FRIEND:

The trouble is that you have made your belief in the absolute absurdity of Life a religion.

ABSURDIST:

From my point of view that may be a weakness, but it is certainly all right from yours. You admit, then, that as a way of thinking Absurdity is good, despite its being absurd to consider it a way of thought.

FRIEND:

No, not in the slightest. You say that the universe has no governing principles. That may be so; in fact, it probably is, but what does it matter? Before Newton and Copernicus, philosophers looked for the nature of things and their actions within the things themselves. They believed that somewhere within the apple was the "essence of falling" or some synonymous essence which made the apple fall from the tree. And the "essence in rising" was in flame. Now, we believe in relationships and cause and effect. What would happen to the littleness of a mere clam if it were taken from the beach and away from the great ocean and placed in a single drop of water? Just because the universe has no destination and no purpose is no reason for man not to. Man cannot control the universe, but it cannot control him either. True, it can limit him, but limit and control are not the same thing. I am not an existentialist and know little about it, but I do know that man is the measure of himself. What a man is or does is not a testimony to mankind, or to a creator, or to the universe, or even to existence itself. It is a testimony to that one man's goodness or badness, his achievement or failure. He will be judged by his peers, but how they judge him is no more important than how he

judges himself, nor no less. The only thing that counts is his having done something. Let us all die with our boots on.

ABSURDIST:

The point is: what difference does his having done anything at all make when it can mean nothing to anybody. It simply doesn't matter whether your cause-effect has lived or died. Hearing you talk reminds me of the Frenchman who said, "Sleep is lovely/Death is better still/But not to have been born is, of course, the miracle." Your argument is again . . .

FRIEND:

How you have missed the point. Read what Shaw has to say about the Life Force. In fact, compare Shaw's Don Juan with Moliere's. They both seem to support the futility of Life until their motives are reasoned out. They truly recognize the Life Force. There is a vitality in the job of being, not an absurdity.

—Ken Booth

#### A TREATISE ON COSMOLOGY

Blended with three parts water,  
One part clay and a twist of faith—  
Most prefer to drink their cosmos  
In a plastic shot glass;  
Then there are those that add  
Cubes of the eternal verities.

—P. M. Grout

#### STIMULUS

Strange . . . I so desire  
your response. And don't give a  
Damn about Skinner.

—Susan Sherwood





## DEPOT

As I felt the weight of dusk on my shoulders,  
The day turned into cigar smoke and reused air  
And was enclosed by a mantle of dust. Aware  
Of heavy foods and tired transients and dejection,  
Into a moulded rest with wooden arms as my protection  
From the world, I sank. Tired of being,  
I looked around and in my seeing,  
Became what I saw. I was a man perched at a bar,  
My pride relaxed. And in my eye a far  
Thought . . . perhaps a time remembered; or forgot.  
I was a woman swollen with life, hot  
From the death swollen air. I was a woman well traveled  
With two children crying and a coat that was raveled  
And faded lavender. Then a young girl holding my child.  
Weary from riding, weary from motherhood, with eyes mild,  
Repulsed by a man with tobacco chew.  
But at last I was brought back when I saw you.  
Again I was me,  
Out in the clean air, where freedom was  
But strangely, I was not free,

—Susan Sherwood