I have weathered the storm,
I have beaten out my exile.
—Ezra Pound
“England’s one step closer than America to communism. It’s a socialist state. The government controls all the big business. There are no privately owned big businesses.”

“England is not a socialist state. That’s what I hate about you Americans. You think you can come to England and start explaining to me about the government. I’ve lived there practically all my life. You don’t know what you’re talking about. England is a democratic country.”

“But, Dolly, I’m not saying it derogatorily. Socialism is good. The people are more equal. Everyone gets medical aid without even paying for it.”

“England is not a socialist state. You think you can come to England and suddenly know everything about the government.”

“And there’s no competition in business, because the government owns it all.”

“England isn’t socialist and you don’t know what you’re talking about. I could explain the government to you, but I don’t want to waste my words. Let’s just drop it.”

“Okay, Dolly, you win. You got that last line out before I did. Let’s drop it.

Here I was in the Grecian dusk with my knapsack at my feet waiting for the night boat to Crete, and arguing with Dolly about the English government for Christ’s sake, as if I cared whether it was democratic or a goddamned utopia for all that matter. As my anger flared, I figuratively donned my kid gloves.

“Where’s Darlene?”

“She’s probably kissing her Grecian bloke goodbye somewhere. I saw him doing it to some other girl before he got on the coach in London.”

“Now, Dolly, you know they’re only friends. Darlene told him all about Stephen. And anyway Thomas is so sweet. We never would have survived that horrible bus ride without his help.”

“Yes, I know. He is sweet. But I wouldn’t put it past Darlene to two-time Stephen. She’s been with him for the last two days, you know.”

“She’s only eighteen and she’s been closeted up by Stephen all her life. Give her a chance to find herself. Besides, she’s come back at night. You know that.”
"Age makes no difference, Evie. You shouldn’t be so naïve. I’m twenty-eight but I would never do such a thing."

I tightened my kid gloves. She’s not doing anything. You shouldn’t be so suspicious.

"She is very young, though. It’s so irresponsible of her to make us wait like this."

"It doesn’t matter. The boat’s not in yet anyway."

"Yes, I suppose you’re right." Dolly sighed and sat on her knapsack. "I’m so glad you’re here with me, Evie. I never would have been able to travel with Darlene alone. It’s amazing how one’s true colours come out when one is travelling."

I coughed to hide my smile and reflected upon the paradox of anger and laughter.

Darlene, Thomas, and the boat arrived simultaneously.

We said our goodbyes to Thomas and he gave each of us a kiss on the cheek. Dolly was quite pleased.

"He’s so sweet, that boy. You hardly ever meet anyone like him nowadays." Abruptly her tone changed to a harsh whisper. "Oh, look at this place. Just look! Why, where are we to stay? I don’t see how I can spend the night here. I really don’t see how... Phew! The smell! You can smell the loos clear over here. Oh, how disgusting! What a bloody pit!"

Darlene giggled. "Oh, Dolly, it’s so good to see you again. Come on, we better get some bunks while we can."

We were travelling third class. Greeks in black littered the bottom deck. We were lucky enough to find three empty bunks. I threw my stuff on the bunk above Dolly’s and Darlene was across from me. Occupying the bunk below Darlene was a heavy Green woman with a baby who had a plaster cast over both of its legs.

"I must get something hot to eat," Dolly announced. "I’ve only had cold food out of my bag all day. Will you come with me? Are you hungry, anybody?"

Darlene said she had just eaten with Thomas. I told her I would eat something from my bag. Dolly had had the foresight to suggest that we buy bags of food before we left. Darlene had not done this; Dolly had gotten mine, complete with good old English crackers, the old standby: peanut butter, a tin of red herring which I had discarded upon opening and seeing eyes staring out at me, and other miscellaneous items. I rejected the idea of going nearer to the loos than I thought absolutely necessary, so Dolly left by herself. Go. Eat.

Transform into that sweet creature I thought I knew back in England while you’re at it.

"Thanks for leaving me with Dolly for so long. What did you do with Thomas anyway?"

"I’m sorry, Evie, but I can’t stand to be around her. I really can’t stand it. She’s being such a bitch, expecting us to pamper her every minute like a little baby."

"Tell me about it. Did you have a good time with Thomas, then?"

"Oh, yes, very nice. He took me to meet his parents, so I got a close-up view of a real Greek family. His little brother is so cute. I ate supper with them. Real Greek cooking, I’m learning quite a lot of Greek words."

While Darlene prattled on, my hand, quite in spite of the dictates of my courteous conscience, crept into my knapsack and directly withdrew East of Eden. John Steinbeck. My Saviour! I could have never made it this far without Samuel and Abel’s Chinese cook and the image of James Dean as Cal still lingering in my mind. Fortunately, I had about two hundred pages left. I wished it were eight hundred. If this trip to Crete turned the tide, I could leave it alone until the horrendous coach trip back. All I knew now, with the delightful scent of the loos and sweating Greek bodies in my nostrils, was that I could use a good hit of about twenty-five pages, but better make it fifteen — one never knows what will happen in Crete.

Yes, my good pal East had gotten me through the wee morning hours of that first dreadful night in Paris, after our seasick journey across the Channel. Our first great mistake, other than going on this trip together in the first place, was refusing the offered lodgings in Paris at only five pounds extra. This sum, to our niggardly minds, was an outrage. Instead, we were going to “do” Paris in one night. See everything, go everywhere, and tear ourselves away from the gripping Parisian sights only to catch the bus in the morning at the last minute. Needless to say, this is a rather misleading description of what actually took place.

First of all, the hotel chosen by our sensitive and concerned Greek bus drivers was located in the pits of Paris. Here it was that we were dumped. Sex shops with lewd pictures lined the streets. Here and there a transvestite in high-heeled shoes made his way through the crowd. An isolated blond prostitute with one stockinged leg propped on the seat of a chair gazed absently through a window.

"Those pictures are so disgusting! I can’t stand to look at them,” commented Dolly.
"No one is asking you to," retorted Darlene. I, however, was too absorbed with the prostitute to notice.

"Did you see her?" exclaimed Dolly, as if she wasn't the only one who had. "I swear she was looking right at us."

"I thought she was fascinating," returned Darlene. "You shouldn't judge people, Dolly. She's got just as much right as we do to be looked at."

"I thought she was fascinating, too. I was just going to say it when you didn't give me a chance. You're always jumping in ahead of me when I haven't done anything."

"Well, you said it in a very degrading tone of voice." "I wonder what her life is like?" I hastened to say myself between them. Second of all, all European cities, unlike American cities, close down even on Saturday night, as this happens to be, well before morning. At three o'clock, we were thrown out of a Montmarché cafe. Five more hours until the bus left, and a teeth-chattering conversation to plan our next course of action.

"I drank some water in the loo at the cafe. Do you think I'm sick from it?" asked Dolly.

"I drank some, too. It tasted good. Don't worry about it," I said. "But maybe I should take one of my foreign tummy pills. I'm awfully glad I thought to bring them. My mother always had them when we travelled. My father told me to get some when I called him his name, he gave me all the pills free. Lovely man. He was so sweet. You can take one, too, but I'm afraid I left them in the coach."

Saved from the evil clutches of the foreign tummy pill and aided by Darlene's "I've got to find a loo. I'm dying!" I suggested that we attempt to beg our way back into the hotel.

This we did and were allowed to sit up in the lobby for the remainder of the night. Darlene and Dolly dropped off to sleep while I took a good long hit of East.

Yes, East it was that got me through the remaining three claustrophobic days on that bloody coach. It was because of East that I was able to withstand the fat Greek on the seat in front of me, who would suddenly turn at intervals throughout the trip and scream "Attens! Attens!", and just as suddenly turn back and resume his sober dignity, gazing out the window.

And it was because of East that I was able to divert my thoughts from the tall, thin man in the black suit sitting cate cornered from me, who was continually shaking uncontrollably. I kept expecting him to take out a revolver and shoot everybody or to go into a violent epileptic fit or to simply expire altogether.

Don't get me wrong. My relationship with East was a give and take deal. I was not selfish. I was willing to sacrifice. It was to give my deal. I was not selfish, bright reading light he deserved on those dark and East the good, bright reading light he deserved on those dark days. I was simply being generous.

East was a give and take deal. I was not selfish, bright reading light he deserved on those dark days. I was simply being generous.

His nickname was Sewer-mouth and, true to his title, he began a scene by scene narration of Monty Python's "The Holy Grail," supposing I was capable of understanding the laughter in the right places when I found myself unable to do so. When he had finished this relation, he promptly fell to sleep, his head on my shoulder, and I tremble to say I snored away with his head on my shoulder, and I tremble to say I even began to have second thoughts about East.

Nevertheless, here I found myself in Crete, walking between Dolly and Darlene after having spent the afternoon sightseeing at the Minoan ruins. They were fascinating enough: a whole civilized city in ruins dating from 1000 B.C. complete with sewers and huge ceramic pots scattered everywhere. The most interesting parts were The Old-Throne in Europe, which was a battered old wooden chair I wouldn't send my dog to sit in, and The Queen's Bathtub, which was about the size of a cooking pot.

We came upon a row of tourist shops and feeling the shopping spirit come upon us, we paused to ponder over some trinkets which were set out on stands in the street. When a youth of about fifteen popped his head out of a nearby shop and inquired in a thick Greek accent, "How many thousand dollars you spend in here?", we ducked into another shop where we met a handsome man in his thirties who came immediately to our service and introduced himself as Lochis.* He told us about his professional days as a boxer in America, how he had become disillusioned through being manipulated by his "owners", and how he had returned to Greece financially able to support himself by owning his own shop. During the relation of this short history, he had ushered us into a convenient little kitchen in the back of his shop where he made us some "real

* Pronounced Law-kess.
Greek coffee." He then invited us to his nightclub that evening, giving us directions.

"I'm so excited about tonight. I really am. Now we'll experience the real Greek nightlife. Oh, I've been wanting to get out. I'm so glad I brought my evening gown. How do I look?"

"Oh, you look stunning. Black quite becomes you."

"Yes, you look very nice, Dolly," said Darlene. She had also brought a skirt, which I had neglected to do, not anticipating a night on the town. I pulled my most sexy shirt on with my blue jeans and felt glad I had washed my hair the night before.

We got lost trying to find the place, but Lochis appeared mysteriously out of nowhere and ushered us into a very dark barroom with a dance floor and blinking lights and good old American music. We sat down at a table by the dance floor and suddenly a wine bottle and glasses appeared. We talked with Lochis awhile and putting down our empty wine glasses for refills, suddenly again appeared two more Greeks complete with drinks in hand who were seating themselves by each of our sides, respectively.

Lochis was dancing with Darlene. Dolly was smiling and chatting to a tall, almost blond-haired Greek in his thirties. Mine was a plump old bastard, a business man probably in his late forties. His name was Phillip and he was guzzling down rum and cokes like they were going out of style. He plunked down an empty glass, pulled up a full one, and started a conversation about American politics, money, business or some such idiosyncrasy that only foreigners are concerned with.

Now, at least for me, conversations with Greeks require a great deal of concentration because their accents are so thick that it sounds as if they are speaking Greek even though the words are English. But this fellow seemed to be holding his own all right, leering at me over the rim of his glass, so with an occasional, "Oh, I think so, too," I was able to sit back and smoke my cigarettes, one after the other, without paying too much attention to what he was saying. I suppose it didn't matter to him as much as it didn't matter to me, and he was happy enough to have my ear for a start. I watched Darlene dancing in her wild way with Lochis, and Dolly sweeping the floor with her black gown.

That's right. Chatter away. Just don't ask me to dance. Here, have another rum and coke. That's right. Anything. Just don't ask me to dance. Please don't throw me into the briar patch. But, as I feared, I was already thrown.

"Do you want to dance?"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Do you want to dance?"

"No. I really can't. I mean I really couldn't. I really don't feel like dancing, please."

Now, the one thing one has to remember when dealing with Greeks is that they are very easily offended. This is why one must drink their wine when it is offered. Though I did not take much pleasure in offending Phillip, it somehow did not weigh much on my conscience either. I figured that Lochis has me pegged as the reticent type and that's why I got stuck with Phillip. It looked like poor old me.

Phillip had lost out again.

Phillip stalked off to get more rum and coke. I drew frantically on my cigarette. I suddenly noticed that the music had changed from Rolling Stones to soft, mellow junk, good for nothing but close dancing, and it was getting slower with every song. Something had to break. I glanced at my watch. Good. It was nearly twelve o'clock, the hour at which out hotel-keeper closed his doors. We would have to leave soon or else we would be locked out.

My Greek returned and in sitting down, he knocked over his glass into my lap. Clumsy fool. That was it. I stood up, ignoring his pleas. He did not and would not mop at me with his handkerchief - he could not justifiably even touch me at this point and he was at a loss as to what to do — just said what I have him say, "That's all right. It's all right. Sit down." It very well may be all right for you, my good fellow, but not for me. I went over to the dance floor and wrenched Dolly from the fond embrace of her partner.

"I'm going back," I announced.

"So soon?" Wait a little longer, will you? Do you mind?"

I managed a strained whisper. "He spilled rum and coke all over my pants. I'm sopping wet. And besides, it's almost twelve and we're going to be locked out." Darlene and Lochis came up.

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, she's had an accident and her clothes are all wet. She wants to go back to the hotel!"

Right. I've had the accident.

"Well, just wait a minute and we'll drive you back," Lochis said.

I went out the door and waited. Soon Darlene burst out.

"Lochis has just asked us to go with him to another nightclub for a late dinner and some real Greek music. Dolly wants to go but I'm not sure. Do you think I should? I'm having such a good time. I think I want to go."

"Well, it's up to you. If you want to go on and have a good time, go. I don't think I would go, but then I don't like parties much. I
think as long as you go with Dolly, you'll be safe. I know she won't let anything happen. She's got her strong temper, you know, and her morals. I don't know how you'll be able to get back in the hotel though. The door's too far for me to hear you knock."

"Yes, but Dolly wants to go and I am hungry. I'd like to see some real Greek dancing. I think I'll go with her."

Back at the hotel, I took a short hit of East, which was dwindling fast, and tried to go to sleep. I kept thinking that maybe I should have told Darlene not to go. That's one thing I've learned about friendship though. It has its limitations. One can only go so far. One has no real power or control over the other person. In order to retain the friendship, it must be that way. Hell, everyone has a mother they don't need two.

Consoled by these rationalizations plus the fact that Darlene was in good old experienced twenty-eight year old hands, I dropped off.

It was ten o'clock the next morning when I first heard their voices as they burst into the room.

"Well, for all I knew you wanted to go to bed with him."

"Oh, Dolly. How can you say that, knowing me for as long as you have."

"Well, how should I know? How do you expect me to know what's going on in your mind? first you're running around with Thomas and I didn't know what that was. For all I knew, you wanted to go to bed with him."

Darlene heaved an exasperated scream. "Well, that's the last time I count on you for anything. I knew you didn't want to go with your bloke. I expected a little help for you at least. I'm only eighteen, Dolly."

"All the more reason you might have wanted to go to bed with him. How do you expect me to read your mind."

I couldn't believe my ears. "Now calm down you two and tell me the story from the beginning."

Darlene brightened. "Well, we went to the nightclub and Lochis bought me the nicest dinner. The meat was so good, but he wouldn't let me eat it, Evie. He kept taking my hand and the meat was getting cold. I just wanted to eat, for God's sake. I was starved!.."

"And the music was so good. We danced for a long time and then they invited us over for coffee and we thought we might as well go, it was so late anyway."

I rolled my eyes. Not you too, Dolly. Even I knew that an invitation for coffee by two men, at their apartment, in the early hours of the morning was not just an invitation for coffee.

Dolly continued. "And then they said it was too late to go back to the hotel and we were probably locked out anyway so they offered us their beds to sleep in and said they would sleep on the floor in the living room. I didn't want to put them out, they had been so nice, and I thought it was very sweet of them to offer a bed to sleep in."

"And I went into Lochis' bedroom and the first thing he did was drop his drawers. Darlene giggled. "So there I was sitting on the bed and he was walking about the room in nothing but his undershorts. I didn't know what to do, Evie."

"And I was in Tom's room when we were talking. I knew he wanted to sleep with me so I started to get mad. I told him I didn't do things like that and I started to stalk out the door. Then I thought I had offended him, poor dear, and I went back to talk with him some more and explain."

Once more my eyes rolled in their sockets. God, Dolly, stay mad for once in your life.

"And Lochis said he wanted to sleep with me and I told him I didn't want to. I told him I wanted to sleep with Dolly and he said, 'What do you want to do that for?' And then he started making out like I was a Lesbian. Bloody cheek!"

"Yes, he was just doing that so you would prove you weren't by having sex with him, you see," said Dolly. "You shouldn't have minded him, dear."

"But I'm not a Lesbian. There's no reason he should think that just because I wanted to sleep with you. It was because I didn't want to sleep with him —"

"So what did you end up doing?" I asked, frantic with suspense.

"Well, I went into the living room and Dolly was already asleep on the couch so I slept on the floor right next to her and in the morning we came home. They were still asleep."

"Yes, I'm so afraid they'll come back to find us. Do you think they will? We really made them quite angry. And that Lochis is a boxer, you know."

"Yes, Lochis was hopping mad when I left him. He said this always happened when he brought more than one girl home."

"And they know that we're staying in this hotel. I think we should go back to Athens tomorrow."
"Don't worry about them," I said. "They missed their chance. It's happened to them before. They won't come back to get you. We might do well to go back to Athens, though."

"Yes, I'm quite sick of this place. I don't think I could stand it here another day after what's happened. I really don't," said Dolly. "But I'm going to sleep now. I'm so tired."

"Yes, Dolly. Take a foreign tummy pill, for heaven's sake, and go to bed.

"Yes, we must have a nap. Oh, my own little bed." Darlene giggled and slipped between the sheets in her frilly, white nightie.

Reflecting upon the situation, I unfortunately blurted out, "You know the one thing I don't understand, Dolly, is how you could possibly think that Darlene wanted to go to bed with Lochis. That's insane! I knew you wouldn't do it. I was putting her in your hands. I was depending on you to stop the whole thing by getting mad and putting your foot down."

"Well, how was I to know she didn't want to? You all expect me to be some kind of prophet just because I'm older than you. She can do what she wants. I don't see how you expect me to know what she wants to do when she probably doesn't even know herself."

"That's silly, Dolly. Of course I didn't want to go to bed with him. You should have known that."

"You two are always ganging up on me. You talk about me behind my back and expect me to know things I can't possibly know. When you're a little older, I hope you'll be able to see how juvenile you're being. On the whole, I think I've been the least selfish one on this trip and you're always tearing into me. Well, you're no friends of mine." Dolly hunched down in her bed and drew up the sheet.

Tears stung my eyes. In a trembling voice, I said, "Well, I've just got one thing to say, if I might, and that is that I have tried. Ever since this trip began, I have tried to get along with you, Dolly, and I just can't try any harder. You make me cry and nothing I can do seems to do any good. I've tried the hardest I can to be a friend to you and all I get back is 'You're no friend of mine.' I'm sorry you feel that way. There's nothing more I can do."

"Oh, Evie. I know. I'm sorrry, dear. You're my friend."

I took out my beloved East and read the last few pages. I closed the cover and looked over at beautiful little Darlene. She was asleep on her side, with her thick, dark hair spread out like wings behind her against the whiteness of her pillow. From the bed beside me, I could hear Dolly, snoring softly.

Lilt

by Andrew Calabrese

The mother pulls up the zipper on the child's coat, kisses him on the cheek, and he runs out the door. He goes to the swingset, unzips the coat, lifts his arms, grabs the chains, and pulls himself up onto the swing. He looks up at the house, and sees his mother watching from the window. He pulls the zipper up to about where it was, and begins pumping his legs. He strains, and gradually gains momentum to the point where he is swinging as high as the bar from which he is hanging. At this point, the force which keeps the chain taut loses to the force of gravity. The chain gets loose, and he comes down with a snap. He continues swinging, when a friend comes over, gets on the other swing, and asks why he swings that way.

The boys are now in their twenties. They sit in the living room of an apartment and recall the hours spent on the swingset. They talk about the songs they used to make up. They laugh over one song about a fat, crazy lady named Mrs. Mullino. She would come into the schoolyard during recess, and scare the kids away. They used to tease her and run away, because they didn't want to be touched by a fat, sloppy, dirty, crazy, lady.

The two boys, now in their twenties, are sitting in the apartment, recalling the hours spent swinging and making up songs like the one about Mrs. Mullino, the fat, crazy lady. There are no lights on in the living room. The kitchen barely illuminates their faces while they laugh and talk about the swingset. Eventually, they sit back and remain silent.
The Egg Lady

by Nancy Jones

Living in a wheelchair meant everything and nothing to Eva Frech. Early Easter morning she wheeled up and down between tulips and jonquils, depositing one hundred dozen colored eggs, shaking each one gently and counting, making sure that every twelfth egg was uncooked. In four hours sixty-two children would be running all over her lawn. Resting by the forsythia, Eva let the heavy scent invade her nostrils and sink to her stomach, waiting for the plover to settle down to his scream, “kill-deaah kill-deaah kill-deaah kill-deaah.” The insistence of the screech pleased her immensely, it would be a grand hunt.

The sun breaking through the mist brought fragments that lolled, even languished in her memory. Many, many years ago, long before Eva found power in her throne, at a time when the chair seemed almost a burden to her, she spent three months in Ireland. She stayed at the mineral spa in Listdonvarna, though more from her father’s insistence than from any private hope of curative powers. Perhaps for a moment or two she was lulled by the soft pull of the saying that young American girls never leave the country, that they stay to have families for Irishmen. Young Eva could spend few dreams on romance, though at times she watched the eyes of Irishmen, looking for the fine dark ones, the ones put in by sooty fingers.

She hoped for some small twinkle, some magic promise but she would find nothing, and would turn instead to the old broken ballad singers and their drunken songs of misaligned marriage nights and vengeful faery brides. A later generation of American visitors might call them poets, but they were dark and ragged men, and she loved them for their rancorous voices that rose and mingled with sweat and stout in corners of public houses, etching out the last wail of a culture to weary to resurrect.

An’ ha, he found th’ faery in hi’ bed!
O he burn’d an’ lurch’d t’ kiss, t’ hug,
an’ closed an eye for maidenhead —
Aye, she turn’d — h’ found a SLUG!

Eva would listen, cold and eager, thinking of the strange creatures St. Patrick forgot about when he purged the snakes from his country with a shamrock.

She would tire of the spa and the brisk attendants who seemed to lurk on every bench and pathway, always wanting her for “a short walk” or “a little stroll”, or for some inane club where members stumble through a tiny fraction of a mile. And when she grew to loathe each careening progress, she would take her excursions; after a downpour, tucking her braces under her cushion, she would wheel up Doolin Point Road to watch the slugs come out.

They were huge, inches long, and she would love them for their unashamed ugliness coating the bottom of every spongy homes in the loam to roll and spread themselves over stone sidewalks, making it impossible for pedestrians to follow their normal gait. Some would lose their nonchalance at that last unbearable moment, and swinging a leg out hard from a knee, would lurch and flail for balance. Young women and pregnant mothers would take ragged half-steps, locking their knees and bobbing their heads like huge ridiculous pigeons.

Eva watched slyly, coldly. She would decide that slugs were infinitely better than snakes, that they were braver, more open, and she even fancied that St. Patrick knew very well what he forgot. The thought excited her a bit, and more and more she wanted to leave the spa, and more and more she wanted to take this Ireland home with her.

She jumped at the Killdeer’s sudden halt, and decided to travel across a dozen parishes to go to Mass at St. Pat’s.

“Stonelock!”

With no immediate answer, she reached for her bleeper, checking herself as a large, moonfaced man appeared from the toolshed.

“Yes Miss Frech.”

“9:30 Mass on the corner of Woodlawn and Briskett.”

“Yes M’am.” Jason Stonelock did not question this sudden interest in religion, after the first week he learned not to ask, and after twenty-five years of service he usually forgot to wonder.

“Have the car ready in thirty minutes,” she said with her back to him, wheeling toward the house.

Jason had grown accustomed to her strange ways. He had bought the eggs himself, he had watched her pick out the largest and had probably felt her eyes on his back as he put the rest in the pots. There was nothing he could do and he stood big and dumb among the flowers.

When the doors of the elevator opened onto the basement, Eva touched her wheels with the cool, brute tenderness of an athlete before a meet. She moved oddly, giving her wheels a strong push, she folded her arms in her lap, letting them roll to themselves, and she rocked her weight to turn them toward the cupboard where, for
thirty years, her braces had hung like horse thieves preserved as but examples.

She was coming to gloat over her secret prisoners, to look and laugh at them on this great day of triumph and she wanted to see her legs hang there too, and they would be dead, dead, finally dead. And she laughed at Easter and everything innocent, at babies and mothers and children with dreams. Her chair rolled slowly on toward that moment when momentum falls back on itself, and she rode and waited with her chin up, knowing just how far her wheels could roll without her.

It crept toward a depression in the floor, and Eva held her breath, suddenly hoping the wheels would cease. Down they rolled without the momentum to climb the other side and they rolled back and up again and down, over and over again, never gaining the momentum to escape and never losing it to stop. She grew dizzy, fearful for a moment that the wheels had taken on their own minds, that they would roll and roll and wrench her hands from their surfaces if she tried to interfere. The sudden tensing of long dormant muscles sent dull pains through her legs, and a sob grew from her thighs, trying to push through an old and cramped up body. But the chair trembled in a halt, and Eva relaxed, slumping her body for a moment before drawing herself up. The cupboard loomed before her, and Eva was angry at her own, brief lapse into fear. But when she saw then hanging the old gloat came back to her. “We’ll show you,” she said, “Teach you a thing or two about wheels.” And though she had not planned for it, she took them down and folded them under her cushion.

She was late for Mass, and her full composure returned as she rolled up the aisle to the choir’s “Gloria in Excelsis Deo;” and to the horror of the usher in the back, she rolled all the way to the front, parking herself between the communion rail and the congregation.

Behind her, a small child crawled between her father’s legs and peered eagerly at the dull greying hair of the woman in front of her. So she’s going to have the egg hunt! Eggs, she knew something about eggs, Morrie Anderson had told her about eggs and something else, that she had the eggs and he had the something else, and, and then she couldn’t remember. But she knew that there were no storks and no cabbage patches, and that Morrie’s mother had a big belly that had to do with eggs and babies, and that Morrie had said in his mother had said it was the big wonderful secret of life. And now she was going to an egg hunt and she knew there were no Easter Bonnies, only Easter Eggs, but they were cooked and you ate them. And, and then she couldn’t remember.

She listened to the priest eagerly, greedily, wanting to wring the last drop of irony from this gorgeous day. The Mass was good, oh so sweet; and now with the priest saying, “each will be a Lazarus in one with the risen Lord: ‘I am the resurrection and the Christ!’” Eva almost laughed outright, but the words faded and she recalled a line more sweet: “If anyone walks in the night, he stumbles.” And yes, she wanted them to stumble, to slip and fall and roll with their faces in slugs, and she wanted to see all children fall with eggs dripping from their limbs, lost and forgotten in the horrible rollings of the universe. She wanted no less than an apocalypse, a huge catastrophe
of children crying for their lost hopes and dreams, for the end of everything, for the end of love and hope and babies being born. And she, the poor old cripple woman, would seem unbearably innocent to all the young parents flailing out for some evil to blame. And she would put the rent in their perfect lives, and they would learn broken by children who no longer believed in God and the clear white Easter Bunny, and their future would darken, and they would stumble through their lives without love, without touching, careening away from the lost childhoods of their children, without a single hope to sustain them. And her mind reeled faster and faster and the ragged ballad singers sang and laughed with her, and the slugs came out and she cracked eggs over babies, over dead bodies, and she drew the whole world in to watch her defile every secret, dash every hope of every young lover. And her mind went faster still, racing in toward some dark, cold center, until she frightened even herself.

Sweat clammed on her brow, and her legs ached horribly. For thirty years Eva had known them to be her only enemies, and now she fought them, purging the life from them, relaxing only when she felt certain the last bit of sensation had dripped from her toes. Her mind sharpened like that of a general before a losing battle, and she realized with a start that she must temper the intensity of her gloom. Her mind was fixed on self control as she turned without thinking and rolled down the center aisle, past the people lining up for communion, and she swore to herself that she would watch the hungry coldly, without interest.

April pulled on her mother’s pink sleeve, saying, “Momma why is she leaving,” and Ellen Gillespy stared toward the door, as if unable to believe that the woman had passed without even a nod of recognition.

Parents were already pulling their sobbing children toward their cars when they arrived, but before Ellen could demand “what is going on,” April broke from her grip, and Jason Stonelock approached from the porch, his large, dumb hands stretching outward.

“M’am please go home m’am there’s been a terrible mistake,” and before he could finish, Ellen saw tears welling in his eyes, and another screaming girl flew by, close enough for Ellen to catch the flash of two large yellow handprints on her dress.

“Please m’am go fetch your child.”

Her face fell, as if she understood that there would be no promotions lurking behind this Easter, then drawing herself to a storm of maternal rage, she turned to find her daughter.
knew it was different. And she cracked it and it oozed over her leg and she giggled because it tickled, and she wanted to squish it between her fingers but not just yet. She cracked the green one and saw both together in her dress, and she looked closer and saw white lines between the clear and the yellow, and she wondered if they were there for secrets. She stirred the eggs and tried to grab one but it slipped and she laughed. And she laughed because they felt so wet and warm, and lifting one to her knee she laughed and it dripped, and she laughed and squished it on her thigh and it broke and ran, and she laughed smearing it on her leg, and doing the other one she laughed, "Secret, Secret," still laughing at the warm wetness that ran and ran and never dried.

Eva could stand it no more and cried out "My Child!" and she wanted the pain and she wanted it back, and her young knights came back to her, all the tears, all the hands that never touched her. And she cried, remembering the slow awful walk, the heavy boots and awful clanking braces, and everything rushed and hurt and she cried "O Child, Child!". And she heard nothing but clanks and thuds and saw the faces and eyes of young men who only looked with pity and never touched, and every thing hurt and roared and she knew it would stop only if she could get up, and fell, screaming "Child, Child" and she saw faces over her, and cried, touching the wretched leg of the child.

The train lay long and restless under the glare of the station's lights, alive with the energy of people awkwardly boarding. Steam shot from the undercarriages of the cars, and drifted down the platform. The great steel discs grated in their bed of rail. Like a giant emissary from another world, the train poised before the opening into the black opening of the Spanish night.

I finished my coffee, and glanced at my watch. Ten minutes till departure. I decided to board early, and seek out a secluded, empty compartment. I paid my bill, slung my bag over my shoulder, and walked toward the train.

I had found that travelling light was the most convenient way to go. Since my first trip I had gradually reduced what I carried to what I considered the essentials. I was down to ten pounds now, in the shape of a small pack. I carried food, a few changes of clothes, and a book.

It was with a small sense of superiority, then, that I threaded my way through the platform of burdened people, struggling to get their trunks, suitcases, and parcels onto the departing train. I stepped up in the second-class compartment, and boarded the train.

Finding an empty compartment was usually difficult. I now walked several cars, examining each glass enclosed space. I realized that even if I found one, that was no guarantee that it would remain mine. More often than not, someone would see me sitting alone and decide to join me, unaffected by my stare of territorial right.

I continued my search, turning down groups of old women, families, and typical tourist types. At first I had enjoyed stumbling onto other Americans, but lately it had become tedious. It was always the same questions, the same answers. Now I avoided them. Tonight, however, I hadn't seen any. I felt as if I were the only American in Madrid.

I tried to conceal the fact that I was an American. Of course, people could still tell, there was no denying that. All I had done was to eliminate those things that seemed the most conspicuously and crassly American to me. I fancied myself an international man.

After walking several more cars I found an empty compartment. I quickly took it, sliding the glass door closed behind me. It was a small compartment, with the glass door on one side, and a window on the other. I opened the window full, and breathed in the station odor, full of the friction of people on the move, sweat, leather, and quick food and the heavy, black scent of the train’s thick lubrica-
The engine was connected, and the shock passed down the coupled cars. I saw people exchange final hugs. I settled back on the seat next to the window. Any minute now the train would sluggishly rouse, extend itself, stretch and glide into the night. The compartment would then be mine until the morning transfer at the border. I unfolded my paper, and began on the crossword puzzle.

I had just glanced it over once when the glass divider was flung back, and a large, looming black man stepped in. He carried a bag of luggage, and moved and gestured freely. He examined the compartment, and then fixed his gaze on me. I went back to my paper.

"What are you," he demanded abruptly.

I looked up slowly. "What?" I said.

"Ah, American," he said. "Good, good." This last he chanted as he stepped out the door, and down the aisle. I could hear him march down the car, brushing people aside, shouting to some one to hurry. Most people I found travelled with another person. I had always found it a bother. I preferred to remain detached.

The black man returned, and stepped back into the room. I took him to be African, from the full darkness of his skin, and his pronounced features.

"Hurry up. We will sit in here."

His companion appeared at the door, and shyly stepped in, carrying two enormous bags. He was smaller and rounder than the first man, with eyes that peered out nervously from behind glasses.

"Put the bags up. No, no. What do I tell you, listen. Put them up over here."

The little man pushed the bags to the middle of the compartment, lifted one to the rack, but couldn't manage the other. The first man took the bag with an air of disdain, and hoisted it easily into the rack. He then told the other to sit, as he sat himself.

These two would be with me all night. I knew now that I wouldn't get to sleep as I desperately wanted to. I decided not to speak, but knew I would if I was spoken to first. I found it impossible to be rude to people.

"We are Africans, Nigerians, travelling to France, and you are an American student."

"I'm not a student," I said, and smiled at my own lack of resolution.

"But you are American. That is why we travel with you. We do not like Europeans. This is my friend's first trip to Europe, so I help him out."

The small man nodded, and the African continued.

"He comes to study in Europe. He thinks it easier than it is."

The small man nodded, and the African continued.

"We are from the same country, we are brothers. So I helped him to learn English, and to live in Europe. Is that not right?" he asked me.

"All over," I said, and smiled at my own witticism.

"Where live you?" asked the smaller man.

"Yes. Where do you live?" repeated the small man.

"Do you know the States?" I asked him.

"Ah, I have been many times," said the African. "I have been to Cleveland, and to San Francisco. Detroit is also nice. America is a very big place, with many, many people, and things happening all the time. Everything is very large, and everybody's rich. That is America's problem. They make very little progress. That is why you had to go to Vietnam."

"I didn't. I've never been to Asia," I said.

"Ah, yes. H, ha. I see. But America did," he replied. "Ah, we are off."

Our car jerked, caught, and pulled forward. I could feel the discs begin to turn beneath us. Outside the window the station glided past. Slowly the train picked up speed, and soon the station was replaced by a suburban landscape, shrouded in night.

I quietly said goodbye to Spain. The trip had been a good one. I had spent several days wandering the streets of Madrid, practicing my Spanish. Franco had recently died, and the city was alive with the new sense of freedom, excitement, and change brought on by his passing, and the recent demonstrations. I had spent one afternoon quietly watching the police battle proponents of change with tear gas. The whole country shook itself awake after the forty year slumber of oppression, and a new fever began to sweep over the ancient land. Not that I cared about politics. I didn't. I would have still come even if Franco hadn't died. I just didn't care about things like that. What I did care about was language, and I had come to hear it
spoken. I had listened to their practiced lisp, and tried to imitate it, priding myself on the way I ordered cerveza. But now I was exhausted; travelling always did this to me. All I wanted was to be home in London in a hot bath, melting the layers of filth away from me. I don’t say this as an excuse, but merely as a description of my state of mind. I was mentally and physically exhausted.

The train continued to roll and soon we were into the sandy plain of the arid Spanish countryside. The first African continued to talk on about his experiences, and knowledge, and about the helplessness of his companion. Most of his travelling had come when he was with the merchant marines. There was no telling his age, or the amount of experience he had had. In fact, there was no telling anything about him. He was a very confident type, and talked endlessly about himself, and about his companion. I found myself doubting most of what he said, if only because he was so self-assured.

With the other, smaller man I felt much more at ease. He was a boy, or seemed so, he was so in awe of Europe. He spoke little, but appeared to be intelligent. Nevertheless, he was totally cowed by his larger friend.

The conductor came by to check tickets and passports. I gave him my passport, he looked it over, stamped it, and then gave it back. In the meantime, the African had his friend searching through the bags. The smaller man found them, and handed them to him.

"Here are our passports," said the African, handing the books to the official. "Everything is in order."

The man looked at the books.

"This is routine," the African reassured his friend.

"Where are you going?" asked the man.

"What? London. We are going to London."

"You’ll have to get visas before you enter France."

"Yes. We know that. Thank you."

"That will be at Irun."

"I have travelled this way before. I know all you say."

The man handed the passports back and left. The African was excited now; his eyes danced around the room, and he gestured wildly as he addressed his friend.

"This man is an idiot. He is stupid like the rest of the Spanish. He is a minor official, not important, and he tries to tell me what to do. Idiot!"

A food vendor, a small, dark man, with deep brown eyes, pushed his cart down the aisle of the train, peddling rubbery sandwiches and warm sodas. He stuck his head in the door, and the African, still incensed, waved him away with a short burst of curses.

"Away! We do not want any of what you have," he said.

The man continued on, unaffected. The African now turned to his companion.

"The Spanish are very stupid. That is why they are nowhere in the world today. This is what you must know, this is how you must act. Do not act as if you are the inferior one. Look at me. Your English must be better, this is what I tell you."

"I try," offered the other.

"Why do you not listen. I waste my time on you I think. Perhaps I will not help you any more," the African told him, and paused.

"Your English must be good. It must be best. What do you expect? You come to Europe with no English, no university, and you think it will fall in your lap? The white man does not give such things away. Instead he will take advantage of you. That is why I protect you, and teach you." He paused. "Get me my sweater."

The small man, who had sat nodding his head through all this, jumped up and pulled the suitcase down. He opened it, rummaged through it, and pulled out the sweater. Then he put the bag back, struggling to reach the rack.

The African grew suddenly calm, accepting his sweater without comment. He fixed his gaze on his friend, and waited for him to sit. When he was seated, the African began.

"This is what I tell you. The European will try to order you around, but you must show him that he cannot do it, for he is old and weak, and we are young and strong. Because he is white, it is in his blood. He will think you inferior because you are black, and he will try to make you his slave. This is the way of Europeans for hundreds of years. But we are free people now, and he will only succeed if you let him. You must stand up to the European and show him you will be no slave." He sat back to catch his breath, and the man continued to stare at him, absorbing his advice, waiting for the next outburst.

This speech made me feel uneasy, and vaguely irritated. After all, I was a white man, even though I wasn’t European. My first reaction was to take issue with it, but arguing would accomplish nothing; I could see that. Besides, there was truth in what he said. History had a way of putting me on the weak side of arguments. There was nothing to do but admit the cruelty and injustice of your ancestors, which by implication made you a better man. But still you had to atone for
their transgressions, perhaps by continually losing arguments. I hated these types of arguments, however, and so I avoided them.

I saw that the abrasive African would never have any problem with prejudice. He would continue to confront it even where it didn’t exist, and he would come through all unscathed, supported, lifted, and insulated by the thick crust of his ego. The other, smaller man I had less confidence in. He would be oppressed all his life. It wasn’t a matter of politics, or of races, but of individuals.

The tirade against Europeans was now over. The African was sitting back, relieved for the moment of his sense of injustice and his need to school his friend. It was hard to determine the effect of this speech on the smaller man. He had been attentive to the African’s every word, nodding his head slowly as proof of his comprehension. He was comical in his seriousness.

After a few moments, the African started up, pulled down one of the bags, and opened it. His hand made a quick search of the contents, and emerged grasping a vial.

“My medicine,” he explained to me when he saw me watching him. “For to sleep.”

He turned to his friend and said, “Get me water. I cannot take these without water.”

The small man looked puzzled.

“There is water in the bathroom,” I said, “Try there.”

“Yes. The bathroom. Bring me water. Cold water.”

The small man rose and left the compartment. I was now alone with the African. There was an awkward pause, and then he spoke.

“Do not think my friend and I hate all white men.”

“I don’t.”

“It is only those who would exploit us, those who are . . .”

“Imperialists.”

“Yes, imperialists. This my friend must learn and I must teach. You see, my friend is very naive. I found him in Morocco, waiting for the boat. He was very confused. As a countryman, he naturally turns to me, and so I help him out. He did not know which way to go. I help him to reach Spain, and I tell him about Europe. So far everything goes good.”

“Why not let him learn for himself?”

“You joke,” he laughed and slapped my knee. “But no, no, he must need me, for this is his first time to Europe. There is much he has to learn.”

“Like I said, he could learn them on his own.”

“Why on his own? I am his brother, I do him no harm.”

“You treat him like a slave,” I said.

“A slave? No. You do not understand. This is what I teach him. If not for me your people . . .”

The small man stepped into the room then, empty handed.

“No water,” he said apologetically, and held out his hands as if to prove it.

“There is water,” the African said. “Try again.”

The man was just about to leave when I spoke.

“Wait. I have water.”

He took the pills and chased them with a slug of my water. Then he handed the container back to me. I recapped it, and put it away.

The small man had remained standing at the door during our exchange. The African now told him to sit, which he did.

I was not anxious to continue our previous conversation, and so I avoided the African’s look. After a while of sitting in silence, he reached across and took the newspaper from where it lay by my side, and began to leaf through it.

“Ha Ha! Listen to this, my friend,” he shouted at me, suddenly starting up. “In a comment released yesterday to coincide with the opening of the Third World summit in Addis Ababa, the French foreign minister acknowledged the claims of underdeveloped countries, stating that ‘it is time all countries of the world work together for economic progress.’ Acknowledged the claims. Ha Ha! That is because it is to France’s advantage.”

“Certainly it is to France’s advantage,” I said, indignant at his cynicism. “It is to the world’s advantage, also. Everyone will benefit from increased cooperation.”

“So why is it that everyone suddenly recognizes it? No, you are wrong, my friend. It is not to our advantage to cooperate, for if we do, nothing will change. It is from a position of power that we will bargain, and then we will get what we need. It is our power which makes France acknowledge us.” He picked up the paper again. “Ha Ha! Listen to this — ‘The purpose of the summit is to fuse economic bonds between the countries involved, but it is doubted that political differences can be overcome to achieve this.’ Ha Ha! That is what the European would like to think.”
"No doubt they know what they are talking about," I said. The Herald Tribune had been my bible since I came abroad. It also had the best crossword puzzle. "This is an international paper, with some of the best journalists in the world, informed, objective reporters." I had often fancied myself a journalist, it was my desire to be one, and I admired the standards set by the Tribune.

"You are naive, then," the African answered. "This is a European newspaper, written by white men. They cannot understand the poor countries of the world, their sympathies lie with their own people."

"They are objective reporters, they have no sympathies."

"Everyone has sympathies."

"It is your sympathies which blind you to the truth."

"As do yours."

"That is absurd," I said, and grabbed the newspaper back from him. He offered no resistance, responding with a half smile, I refolded the paper to the puzzle, and pretended to concentrate upon it. The smaller man had quickly lost interest in our conversation, and gone back to staring out the window.

I suddenly felt sorry for him. I wished that I could somehow reach him. I quickly checked myself, however. It was nice to think everyone should be free, but then again it wasn't my responsibility. I realized at most I would be with these people till morning, and then I would see them no more. I would say goodbye to them, and despite what I was thinking, things would remain the same.

The three of us sat like this for about an hour. I made a feeble attempt at the puzzle and finally abandoned it. The little man continued to stare out the window, occasionally glancing at his friend who sat staring off into space.

The African was the first to break the silence. He rose, stretched and informed his friend he was going to sleep.

"Get me the blanket," he said. He spoke slower now, slurring his words.

The smaller man stood and reached for the bag.

"Not that one. Idiot... yes, yes... now bring me the blanket."

While the small man fumbled through the bag for the blanket, the African removed his shoes, and reclined full length upon the seat, resting his head on one of the provided pillows. His friend found the blanket, and gave it to him.

"Now the light. I cannot sleep with it on."

It looked as if we would all sleep. The man turned off the light, and the darkness of the Spanish plain poured in. I put down my paper, and decided to try to get some sleep. I had to share the remaining couch with the smaller man, so I pulled down the armrest which gave us each exactly half. I rolled up my jacket for a pillow, curled up and lay down. I must have lain like this for a half an hour, gently rocking with the rhythm of the train, listening to the whirr of the wheels beneath me, like some vast, gentle animal. I could hear

I drifted into a waking reverie, which had the events of my journey mixing in a soft solution, with the African towering as a figure in the compartment filled with the dank odor of dried sweat.

A feeling of hate welled up in me for the comfort of the African, and the foul odor of his obsequious friend. I killed them both many times in my mind. Sleep was impossible now, I was too worked up. I got up and went out for a cigarette.

All the compartments were quiet now. I went and stood between two cars, above the coupling mechanism, straddling it, with one foot on each of the metal platforms which terminated the cars, and acted as a link to the next. The wind whistled through this no man's land, and swirled around my head. I concentrated on keeping my balance, as first one and then the other car jumped and rocked beneath me. My feet were thrown ahead of and behind each other, apart and then together again. I rocked on the soles of my feet, and absorbed the cars' mechanical dance. I wanted more than anything to be home in my own bed.

The small man passed through on his way to the john. I stepped aside to let him pass, and we acknowledged each other with a slight smile.

On his way back, he stopped in front of me, and looked at me with the inborn passivity of his dark brown eyes.

"Do you have money you can give to me?" he asked. His English was bad, and his voice was obscured by the roar of the wheels beneath us, but I knew what he was asking for. I reached in my pocket, and then checked myself.

"If I give you money, you will give it to your friend?"

"Yes."

"Your friend is no good," I blurted out. "He is worse than the white man." I paused. "Does he tell you to ask me for money?"

"Yes, we have none."

I hated him for making this guy do it.

"Your friend is exploiting you. He is the new European." He didn't understand.
“Money?” he asked.

“No, no!” I made myself heard above the machine. “He is using you. You are his slave. Slave!”

He understood this time.

“No,” he said. “He teaches me. How to live in Europe. We are friends.”

“He teaches you wrong. He teaches you to be his slave, not how to live in Europe. He is not good.” My voice rose as I felt the urgency of it all, and wanted to take him, and shake him, and make him understand. “Man, I’d kill the son of a bitch if he ever did it to me. If you are ever to be free you must be rid of him.”

He stared at me with bewilderment, uncertain of how much to believe, or what to think of the maniac American, screaming at him while the train plunged on through the dark night of the Spanish countryside.

“You will give money?” he asked.

I threw up my hands in frustration, and he flinched.

“Yes, yes,” I said. “To you, not to him. He is against everything I stand for. You have a right to be free, just as I do. So take it.”

I wanted to know what was going on behind his stolid face, but he just stared at me, the yellow rims of his eyes luminous, his head nodding slowly. I stared back. He turned and walked back to the compartment.

I wondered why I had bothered to involve myself. My civilized raving on freedom and rights and exploitation, all of it politics, human politics. What was funny was that I had meant it. It had struck me oddly as the words left my mouth, as if I were someone else speaking, but the more I thought of it, the truer it sounded. It had suddenly mattered very much to me, and I wanted it to matter to him. But this last was a foolish hope.

I ground out my cigarette, and went back to the compartment, threading my way between the outer wall of moving plain, and the darkened string of glass cubicle. All was quiet now, except for the blind rhythm of our shared movement. I reached our compartment, dark also, and before I stepped in I saw a shadow move across the glass divider. The small man was standing over the African with a pillow in his hand. I sank back to the far wall, and watched as he slowly lowered the pillow over his friend’s face.

I leapt forward with the horror of my realization, but caught myself before I reached the door. I sank back again to the far wall, and my mind pictured a myriad of far off places I could be, as I stood and stared. A thousand times I started up but stood frozen, as

I watched the huge timberous legs begin to writhe, striking out at the shadows in that far corner. The little man pressed the pillow with amazing strength deeper and deeper, down into the contour of the seat, and the scant outline of the African’s face rode the crest of that seat, and I felt sick to see the flailing legs slow and drop, white death, and I felt sick to see the flailing legs slow and drop, and I let myself into the room, and closed the drapes. The man stood staring at me with a shy grin on his face. I went to speak, but couldn’t.

“Free,” the man said.

I swallowed hard.

“What the hell is freedom?”

“Free,” he repeated, but now the grin was gone, he had picked up the worry in my voice. He stood before me, the sweat illuminating his dark face in pools and streaks, painting it with the soft white glow of reflected moonlight. I turned and saw the African lying lifeless on the couch, face contorted in a death mask, teeth bared, eyes large and yellow, staring.

The man shifted back, and stood silhouetted against the window, and I saw his hand tentatively reach forward.

“Money?”

I choked as he said it. So this is what it all came to — the sweet currency of my advantage, the soft paper of my influence, and my righteous anger.

With one hand I shoved him down on the seat, as I reached with the other for my pocket. I drew up a crumpled mass from that depth, and flung it at him. The red bills swung like descending pendulums down, around and on his wrinkled suit. The suit he had put on for Europe, littered with crimson centavos.

I grabbed my bag and ran from the car, ran until I found a restroom. I locked myself in and began to retch. My body heaved in spasms, as I felt the poison suction clench my bowels, rip up through my chest and throat, gushing out my mouth a torrent of black bile and crude, vile green muck pour out and slop into the bowl, a swamp of bloody vomit, sucked down to the whirling discs beneath.
Theme and Variations

Larghetto. (d = 88.)

J. J. Furtwängler

VARIATION I

Andante. (d = 200.) espressivo Sempre legato
"Thrown Out Of The Game"
by Heberto Padilla
To Yannis Ritzos in a Greek jail.

The poet... fire him!
He doesn't have anything to do.
He doesn't play the game.
He doesn't have enthusiasm.
He doesn't clarify his message.
He doesn't even pay attention to the miracles.
He spends the whole day thinking.
He always finds something to object to.
That guy... fire him!

Leave out the spoil-sport,
that summertime bad tempered guy
wearing dark glasses
under the newborn sun.
Always
seduced by new adventures
and beautiful catastrophes
of time without history.

He's

even obsolete.
He only likes the old Armstrong.
He whistles, if he does anything,
a Pete Seeger's song
He mumbles
La Guantanamera.

But no one makes him
laugh when the show
is going on.

Translated from the Spanish by Jose de Armas
Taken from Fuera del Juego (Thrown Out of the Game) La Habana, 1966.
You ask me how I feel
I write this poem —
I've built this house against a hillside
where I can watch the birds,
I intend to learn
    not to be dominated by ideas.
When birds want to fly,
    they fly,
when they want to sleep,
    they sleep,
sometimes I feel as free as that,
    but I think of my reputation
or get interested in collecting things,
    get interested in parties,
    in afternoon sherry.
I dream
    of Chinese pavilions halfway up some mountain.
Wake up needing coffee,
take trouble over the morning mail,
forget to take the phone off the hook.
Satori is rare
    you have to be ready for it.
"The women all entered the deserted empty house
Went in as one
Not one no not a single one turned around to look behind
They left without regret."

In the store of my body
faces crumble.
Mouths swallow themselves.
Ears lie together like dead birds.
Hands are released.
Lovers slide from me,
their snail tongues trailing.
I am elegant with pain.
Our thighs stretch and climb.
Breasts rise. Your hand is lace
at my neck. Our lips join.
Small pearls bubble and float.
In the store of my body
a woman waits in dampness
and turns herself out
to lie in my bed.

*Guillaume Apollinaire from "The Musician of Saint-Merry" translated by Michael Benedikt.
sketching
sides
backs
thighs
you, face, face
your face, your bones
my bones sticking up from
the earth like tombstones
or mile markers along a highway.

sky between my fingers
dismembers moon,
blue white welts
across my chest.
don't touch me
don't touch me.
bit stuck deep
in my mouth pulling
waves with leather
straps, foam sweat
shadows from above.
blood branches
stretching over me,
surfacing

our bodies arabesque,
our love stretched
and strained within
the thigh of a dancer.
Mountain Ash

I. IDENTIFICATION

Hands against a screen scratching.

This is the tree
with fern-like leaves
sandy bark
and fire-orange berries.

Looking up mossy rings,
you and I
found creatures giving
if we give.

Finches dotting morning,
leaving
lavender light.

A sense of learning
and disappearing.

You sleep still
waking late hours,
chick-a-dees calling two notes,
see-saw from branches, lanky
as legs which carry you
flitting in concentration
from corner to mirror to door.

Below windows, you stir
old dusts and your own,
willing as outer-yards,
urging, meeting days,
each one, a wooden stair
I take to the room;
tree creaking.

Pollyanna could climb
twice my time. Lumbering,
I am the brown bear
shaken from hibernation,
hearing trees tip-edge
we label; bud, blossom,
burn, rebuild.

Nest made soft,
I see you certain of caring,
kicking farther. Knocking rocks.
For you
crowds roar
winds turn.

II. CLASSIFICATION

Separately, we play all day,
me locked up here in wood
with one eye
on you gripping grass with sneakers.
Evening descends, rolling
into your streets,
breathing,
wishing I were not desolate
for your sake,
stars explode

new blue and old
red nebulous ones,
oblivious, you
are fireworks
rushing before me.
Speaking sullen,
I drench you
in morality.

You take your rock stance:
eight years of, "I’ve been around
for eighty," sure-footed sign
of catchers, pitchers, stars
in your clear eye, a promise
of love competition revenge
leave me speechless
as you surge forward;

I praise the sidewalk,
cars come toward us,
bathe you in light
more holy than angels.

Your form a free-sculpture,
a jester’s scepter,
microphone tossed
by Janis of Texas.
Perfect arms flash
wiry foot-pound
foot-pound power
of legs too long.
by Mary de Rachewiltz

Think ill?
It hurts too much.
Think well?
You dope.
Think not at all?
Impossible.
Drown yourself?
In sloth.
Or hope?

Kai Gar Onar Ek Dios Estin¹

by William McNaughton

General Christian Marie Ferdinand de la Croix
de Castries,
Commander of the Legion of Honor,
The descendant of a Marshall of France, and Minister
of France under Louis XV;
And of a lieutenant general,
A peer of France, and a companion of Lafayette; and
of one marshall,
One admiral,
Four lieutenant governors, five knights of the Holy Ghost,
and eight lieutenant generals;
With sixteen mentions in dispatches
And two world jumping championships; who used to wear
The scarlet scarf of the 3rd Spahis: has put on weight
and rides every day in the Bois²
and only in dreams now does he hear: "Ho keo phao."³

¹From the Iliad by Homer, translated; The Dream Too Comes From Zeus.
²A riding area south of Paris.
³The song popular with the Vietnamese at the besieger of Dienbienphu in 1954.
slicing into the photograph
you severed your left arm
from his grip
& trimmed close to your head
leaving it tilted to the right
propped against mine
our permanent curls caressing
for less than a minute
my eyes retreated from the sun
glossed print
and lowered in search of his starched sleeve
that had dropped
wrinkling beneath
the plastic creases
i discovered his rectangular jaw
  squaring into a grin
  too broad to fold
into the round antique locket
that beats a muffled staccato
  between your breasts.
the triangular cut image
you focussed obtuse
  fit perfectly
when i slipped it into the taped corner
of the album page.

Annihilating All Made To A Thought
by Tony Stoneburner

students stoop
to their pure work
an ice core
packed by cupped gloved hands
is snowballing
into the Buddha

he is
campus nobody
flakes are falling
but not on him
the sun is shining
on a head wholly eggshell
but for an enigmatic smile

&
on his diamond body
invisible
in the blankness of snow
except as
college buildings
block
brilliance
throwing
large blue shadows
let the cold Buddha bless
us with his nothingness

Dead Fish
by David A. Goldblatt

flat
floating
one eye
stares
mouth
gapes
white lips
A hook
wet
winking sun

Changing
by Deb Allen

This is not my house
I wander as a visitor
I must make myself at home
and end this living
out of suitcases
confined
to necessities
I am all sinew, bone, and thought
no insulation where reason resides
the wind leaves cold bruises
I speak
at a lower pitch
my steps
are slower smaller
since
no one is expecting me

Finish Lines
by Deneise Delisle

I leave things incomplete
I've learned, and they will always be a part of you.
My problem is:
I am obsessed
with finish lines.
Here is the history:
I ran hard
legs powered against wind of their own creation.
Looking down,
the cigarette butts flattened
between sidewalk cracks.
Or up,
guarding against
slaughter from above.
But still,
I see them everywhere:
Finish lines.
Clean, indifferent,
unassuming.
Our mangled spirit
puts them where we look.
Past infecting futures.
Riding off
into red-eyed sunsets,
out of unslammed doors,
down the corridors
of airports,
mudtracks on ammoniaed tiles,
eating at our dreams
long before
we fall asleep.
Malinche's Sister

White melted candles frame Jesus portrait hung. Dust covered King James. Mid-day sun glares through dining room into kitchen. She gazes into mystical cookery; aluminum pot simmers black beans plantains fry in her iron skillet. Will husband be home o con su amante? Stretch marked stomach tender under her hands. Metal bars enclose uterine cell. Lining sheds down vaginal corridor. No blood. God's living gift. The Spirit The Mind The Flesh Three black strands intertwine. She looks into gold plastered mirror positioned opposite window. Beyond her tilted head into vista aqua sea reaches to cleanse.

*Malinche: The woman who, seduced by the Aztec enemy, revealed their hidden gold and by this, saw the crumble of the Aztec civilization. This seduction of a woman into the arms of a man has historically been referred to in Latin America, as the reason women are inferior.
"Cuadrados y Angulos"

Casas enfiladas, casas enfiladas, casas enfiladas.
Cuadrados, cuadrados, cuadrados.
Casas enfiladas.
Las gentes ya tienen el alma cuadrada, ideas en fila
y ángulo en la espalda.
Yo misma he vertido ayer una lágrima,
Dios mío, cuadrada.

(1918)

"Squares and Angles"

Houses in rows, houses in rows houses in rows.
Squared, squared, squared
Houses in rows.
The people already have squared souls ideas in rows
right angled shoulders.
I myself shed a tear yesterday;
Squared, My God, squared.

...Alfonsina Storni
(El dulce dano)
Translated from the Spanish by Joan Straub
(Postmodernist Period)
“Energy is Eternal Delight” — William Blake, in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. What are we to make of this? As the overdeveloped world (the U.S., Japan, etc.) approaches an “energy crisis” shortages of oil and electric power (and some nations plan a desperate gamble with nuclear generating plants) we must remember that oil and coal are the stored energy of the sun locked by ancient plant-life in its cells. “Renewable” energy resources are the trees and flowers and all living beings of today, especially plant-life doing the primary work of energy-transfer.

On these fuels contemporary nations now depend, but there is another kind of energy, in every living being, close to the sun-sourced but in a different way. The power within. Whence? “Delight.” The delight of being alive while knowing of impermanence and death, the acceptance and mastery of this. A definition: Delight is the innocent joy arising with the perception and realization of the wonderful, empty, intricate, inter-penetrating, mutually-embracing, shining single world beyond all discrimination or opposites.*

*An alternative definition has been suggested by Dr. Edward Schafer of Berkeley, who describes himself as “an imaginative but unreasonable pedant” (but who is really a scholar of the prosody of artifacts, the poetry of tools.).

Delight is the sophisticated joy arising with the perception and realization of the wonderful, replete, intricate, rich-reflecting, uniquely aloof, polychrome complex worlds beyond all indifference to nuances.

On “As For Poets”
by Gary Snyder

This joy is continually reflected in the poems and songs of the world. “As for Poets” explores the realm of delight in terms of the elements that ancient Greek and China both saw as the constituents of the physical world. To which the Buddhist philosophers of India added a sixth, consciousness, or Mind. At one point I was tempted to title this poem “The Five Elements embracing; pierced as illustrated in the mudra (hand position) generally seen images of Vairocana Buddha (大日如来).

At one point I was business, or Mind. At one point

Now, we are both in, and outside, the world at once. The only place this can be is the Mind. Ah, what a poem. It is what is, completely, in the past, present, and future simultaneously, seeing being, and being seen.

Can we really do this? But we do. So we sing. Poetry is for all men and women. The power within — the more you give, the more you have to give — will still be our source when coal and oil are long gone, and atoms are left to spin in peace.

Reference to ‘As For Poets’, A Poem by Snyder found earlier in his collection Turtle Island.

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Something Happened and the Problem of Community in Modern America

by Jack Kevorkian

For those who cherish the hope that this society might become more conscious of its collective dependencies and less obsessed with its individualistic self-interests, Joseph Heller's Something Happened offers a fascinating but hardly reassuring vision of American life.

The single character in Heller's long, frequently repetitious novel is Robert Slocum, a middle-aged, upper-middle-class corporate business type who lives in an affluent Connecticut suburb with wife, daughter, and two sons. Something Happened is a monologue by Slocum (no one else is allowed to speak in the novel) concerning his work, his family, and his struggle to discover what has made him the kind of person he is. And what kind of person is that? William Kennedy, reviewing Heller's work for the New Republic, sums up Slocum's life this way: "Bob Slocum is no true friend of anybody. He is a woefully lost figure with a profound emptiness, a sad, absurd, vicious, grasping, climbing, womanizing, cowardly, sadistic, groveling, living, yearning, anxious, fearful victim of the indecipherable indescribable malady of being born human."

One might disagree with Kennedy's assertion that such traits are an inevitable product of being human but his portrayal of Slocum is, I think, an accurate one. Slocum is not a happy person. He finds little comfort or fulfillment in his job, his family, or the community in which he lives; in fact, they are the source of his considerable discomfort and unhappiness. Some might argue that what Heller has done is to present us with yet another example of the vacuity of contemporary upper-middle-class, corporate life. But what makes Something Happened a meaningful intellectual experience and, for the historian, a significant document of contemporary society, is less the fact of what Robert Slocum is than how and why he seems to view himself and his condition in the manner that he does. What is important is that Heller allows us to get inside the mind and soul of a very disagreeable, disillusioned, and disaffected human being and by looking at the world from his perspective he offers us the opportunity to perceive the last decade or so in America from a distinctive vantage point. From the very beginning then when Slocum remarks that "Something must have happened to me sometime," an historical question is posed and we become joined with Slocum in his quest to find out what it is that has "happened."

Slocum's dialogue with the self begins with his discussion of his job, and the view he gives us of his life's work is not very attractive. There is no analysis of what he actually does or why he does it. Indeed, we are never told what kind of company it is which employs him nor does it seem to matter. Heller clearly suggests that much of corporate America is the same and what it represents is a mindless, bureaucratic structure where fear determines the nature and status of the employee. "In the office in which I work there are five people of whom I am afraid. Each of these five people is afraid of four people I am afraid of (excluding overlaps), for a total of twenty, and each of these twenty people is afraid of six people, making a total of one hundred and twenty people who are feared by at least one person. Each of these one hundred and twenty people is afraid of the other one hundred and nineteen, and all of these one hundred and forty-five people are afraid of the twelve men at the top who helped found and build the company and now own and direct it." Much of the rest of his discourse on work is confined to his singular pursuit of "rising" within the corporate hierarchy and his need to escape from the monotony and depersonalization of his job by engaging in various sexual adventures. Though he "hates" the entire system, the novel ends with his promotion. Such is success in Slocum's America.

Homelife for Slocum is no more engaging than his work. "All of us live now — we are very well off —... in a gorgeous two-story wood colonial house with white shutters on a choice country acre in Connecticut off a winding, picturesque asphalt road called Peapond Lane — and I hate it." About his wife, he simply notes that she is "unhappy. She is one of those married women who are very, very bored and lonely, and I don't know what I can make myself do about it (except get a divorce, and make her unhappier still)."

Slocum and his wife no longer communicate with one another — if they ever did. He locks himself in his study and increasingly, she escapes into alcohol. He has clearly grown tired of her but he is also used to having her around so he is not terribly motivated towards any drastic change in their relationship. When forced to confront some issue involving their lives together or their children, they don't discuss the matter at all — they go to war and then withdraw into their respective sanctuaries.

Isolated rooms and doors are central to the Slocum family experience. Someone is either closing a door on someone else or having it closed on them. Only Slocum's nine-year-old son, whom he professes to love because he is not the kind of selfish, materialistic gnome Slocum, his wife and older daughters are, is welcomed in his father's
study. His son, who is nameless like all the other members of the family except his mentally retarded boy, Derek, represents the youth and spontaneity which Slocum likes to associate with his own childhood and which he believes was present at one stage in his daughter's existence. At one point, Slocum exclaims, "I know at least what I want to be when I grow up. When I grow up I want to be a happy boy." Indeed, Slocum's sexual encounters seem directed in some way toward retrieving a kind of excitement and innocence of youth which he associates with his work. He is as unsuccessful in attaining this for himself as he is maintaining it in his children. He has already shaped his daughter into a living image of his present self — an unattractive, self-indulgent, egocentric 16 year old whom he despises. And the very qualities which endanger him to his nine-year old son — love, trust, and concern for others — are the qualities Slocum fears will destroy his boy in the "real world." Thus, much of his effort is given to teaching him to be competitive, selfish, and distrustful of others. He succeeds and is rewarded by his son leaving him. "My boy has stopped talking to me, and I don't think I can stand it (he doesn't seem to like me). He no longer confides in me. There are times he rebuffs me and I want to cry. I remember the rebuff and it tears at my heart. Why should I want to stop talking to me? I want to be his best friend. Doesn't he know I probably love him more than anyone else in the world? He used to have dreams, he said, in which the door to our room was open and he could not get in to see us. Now I have dreams that the door to his room is closed and I cannot get in to see him. He goes to bed without even saying good night to me, closing his door."

The less Slocum has to think about his mentally retarded child the better. He has hired a nurse (whom he hates) to keep the boy out of sight and only his memory of the boy's existence (which he tries to repress) makes him aware of his presence. The family for Slocum represents finally the same circumscribed and repressive environment which he associates with his work. "In the family in which I live there are four people of whom I am afraid. Three of these four people are afraid of me, and each of these three is also afraid of the other two. Only one member of the family is not afraid of any of the others, and that one is an idiot."

After five hundred pages of Robert Slocum relating what Kurt Vonnegut describes as the endless "tap-tap-tapping of facts" about his life, what does Slocum learn that might answer his question of what "happened"? The real fact is that he doesn't learn much of anything. How he became what he is, what the relationship is between his past and present remain a mystery. "Mountainous seg
man Slocum is deaf and blind to them. He receives signals from three sources: his office, his memory and home. But is Slocum really deaf and blind to all the events of the past decade and to Vietnam; counter-culture youth; blacks; women's liberation; politics and the environment? I think not. Many of these events sneak into his consciousness and into his discussion of work, life and family but they are shaped by his very limited vision. The worries that the new “sexual mores” may leave his daughter pregnant and cause him considerable grief or that she’ll become involved in drugs and cause him even greater pain and discomfort. He is worried about his black maid and worries about whether her blackness and poverty will present troubles for him. “If I were poor, I believe I might want to overthrow the government by force. I’m very poor, however, that everyone poor isn’t trying to overthrow the government, because I’m not poor. I don’t know why every Negro doesn’t steal from her white employer (but I’m glad our Negro doesn’t, or at least has not let us find out she does). If I were rich and poor I don’t think I’d have any reason for obeying any law more than the risk of being caught. As it is, though, I’m glad color people obey the law (most of them, anyway), because I am an enemy of Negroes and have moved away from them. I am afraid of them. But I’m glad there are cops and wish there were more.”

It is not that Heller’s Slocum is unaware of the forces around but his ability to comprehend them, to grasp their meaning historically and presently — is determined solely by his restricted perceptions. It is not surprising then that race and war and political crises are seen as threats to his life since he can decipher nothing except in terms of its personal impact upon his selfish existence. And since his existence is so compartmentalized, he places all other experiences into similar cubicles where he hopes they will remain safe and secure. It is no wonder that when he reflects on the nature of American society, Slocum interprets society from the perspective of his structured yet disoriented sense of being.

“Who am I? I think I’m beginning to find out. I am a stick; I am a broken waterlogged branch floating with my own crowd in the one nation of ours, indivisible (unfortunately), under God, with liberty and justice for all who are speedy enough to seize them first and hog them away from the rest. Some melting pot. If all of us in this vast, fabulous land of ours would come together and take time to exchange a few words with our neighbors and fellow countrymen, those words would be Bastard! Wop! Kike! Spic! I don’t like people who run things.”

If the community ideal represents in some way values of shared INTERDEPENDENCY or with the notion that we limit individual greed for the sake of a “common good.” Some of us might wish that was the case but wishing it does not make it a reality. Something Happened suggests at its worst that the opposite may be closer to reality in American today; that segmentation, separation, and isolation are the means many people have chosen to survive in this world. Even if such a path is chosen unconsciously, Slocum’s compartmentalized life indicates that it is unlikely one can find any basis for shared endeavor when one’s vision remains so one-dimensional. What a Slocum sees around him — the struggle of black people, women, the young or whatever, is internalized from that single perspective. Historians may continue to discuss these major events in terms of their societal implications but how they are finally understood, Heller indicates, depends upon the consciousness of each individual member of society. For Slocum, the movement of disadvantaged and dispossessed people is not a movement that confirms a shared humanity but one
which threatens his personal existence and "he hates it." That there are people "different" from him simply reaffirms his and their separate nature and destinies.

What Slocum symbolizes in his being is both the need for society to affirm values which might provide the opportunity for Slocum to realize the self more fully in relation to others while the same time, indicating how terribly difficult it may well be to achieve such values. Clearly one cannot assume that because "social and institutional nature" of our contemporary existence forced us into greater dependence on one another that we have come to understand what that means in our individual lives. The search for community will be fruitful, I suspect, only when we are able to confront the full implications of Robert Slocum's own failure to answer "what happened."

A community comes into being because man is not individually self-sufficient. An individual has a spectrum of needs, and this is reason enough for the association of individuals into a community.

"I was told as a child that there was no act without a cause. I was a teenager that 'nobody feels any pain'. As an adult I leave the past and ask for responsibility, sensitivity and understanding of communal change.

No matter one's theory of community, individual responsibility is necessary. A community is comprised of individuals working together; lose the community and you lose the individual. It is the responsibility of the individual to understand his or her role in the communal structure. It is the responsibility of the individual to understand their essence as a separate entity from a group. This responsibility is the key to a working community's success; a sensitivity that is not a product of consciousness alone, but also of need.

The individual in a community must be aware of his resources as well as the resources of others. This is an important sensitivity that must be realized by all members of the living organization. It is as simple as one person cooks better than another and enjoys it, another cleans better and enjoys it. These two members must be aware of this and sensitize each other to it. This is of course simplifying the facts so much that it borders on being tautological, but that's what I want if it gets the message across clearly.

Community can be defined in as many ways as there are groups of people to utilize its need. It is a self-analysis of living needs. This self-analysis creates the concrete relations with others that is needed for a community. It also gives the group strength to decide what type of physical structure they want. (For example, how to arrange living quarters, homes, energy, food, and even climate.) As Sarte states in Being and Nothingness, "Each relation in its own way presents the bilateral relation: for-itself-for-others, in-itself." We must be responsive to the self and to the other and then take Sarte one step further and weave these threads into a working tapestry.

People live with each other and always will. The community is the stabilizing factor while the individual is transient as morning dew. And now with fossil fuels' deaths in sight we must make ourselves face the responsibility of our individuality within the community.

Community changes, individualism does not. We must move with the changes, learn them and change again. History offers us many answers as does our own mind. To understand the life style of ancient times as well as our conceptions of the future, will help in our living happily together.
Existence precedes essence, community precedes individual. Learn yourself, learn each other, be sensitive to each other's needs, sources and understand change as a spiral, circling and moving onward.

The community comes into being because man is not individually self-sufficient. The energy of people living and working together will never die.

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A Prelude

I know only the bare rocks of today.
In these lies my brown sea-weed,-
green quartz veins bent through the wet shale;
in these lie my pools left by the tide-
quiet, forgetting waves;
on these stiffen white star fish;
on these I slip bare footed!

Whispers of the fishy air touch my body;
"Sisters," I say to them.

William Carlos Williams
(1917)