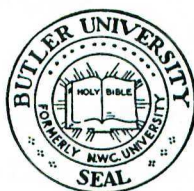


SPRING, 1982



MANUSCRIPTS

ROBERT '82



Manuscripts

Butler University

Indianapolis, Indiana

Volume 50, No. 1

May, 1982

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Manuscripts is published each semester by the English Department of Butler University. The published works are written chiefly by students from the Freshman English, the Advanced Composition, the Creative Writing, and the Writers' Workshop classes.

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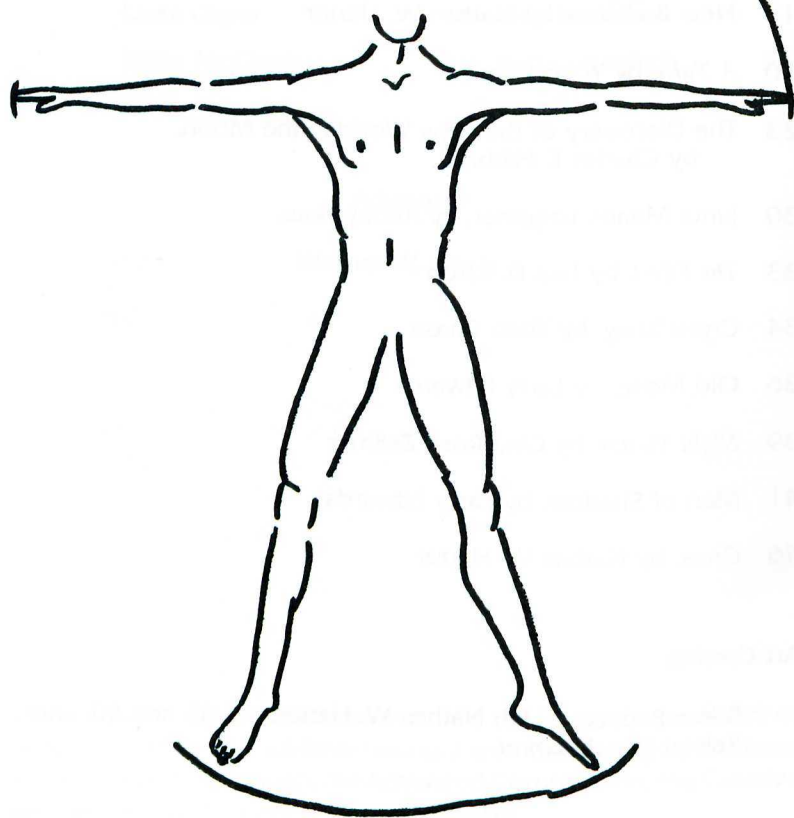
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MSS

POSTURES



Bodies are irregular, just as personalities are irregular: each person has one, but no two are alike. The postures of a body say a lot about the life it has seen and the aspirations it holds. And, of course, there are postures of the soul, both stooped and stalwart.

One of the gifts of a writer is insight into the candid posturings of men. In this issue are several studies of human posture, both physical sketches and psychological poses. For instance, our triumphant cover design is contrasted with the whimpering character of Old Mose. In this array, one is certain to find the roots of our condition, tangled in common earth.

THE MOVERS

by Lisa McCrum

Dave turned out his office light and stopped to stare out the window at the skyscraper next door. His eyes were drawn upward by the grandeur and splendor of the skylights against the March dusk. He glanced quickly at his watch and realized he had put in a full nine-hour day. It was six o'clock.

As he walked down the dimly lit corridor of Henley and Henley Accounting Company, a glimmer of light broke the darkness. Dave walked over and stopped at the doorway, admiring the brass nameplate which read Vice President Financialist. He knocked softly and walked in, throwing his briefcase on a nearby chair.

Paul's office was a comfortable room designed in modern plush architecture. He sat tipped back in his awesome leather chair, talking on the telephone while smoking his cigarette down to the edge of the filter. He looked tired, his coat was slung over the back of his chair and his tie hung loosely about his opened collar. Paul looked up, smiled, and motioned for Dave to sit down by his desk.

"I don't know, Jack, I haven't seen the figures yet. . .Right. . .Give me until next week. . .Okay. . .Will do," Paul sighed as he hung up the phone.

"Still having trouble with that Bryant account?" Dave said with interest.

"Yeah, they've switched figures on me a couple of times. How in the hell do they expect me to give them an honest opinion," he said with disgust.

"All a part of the business though, right Paul?" Dave assured him. Paul had taught him the ins and outs of the job of a financial analyst.

"You've said it. Hey, what brings you up this way? I haven't seen you in a long time."

"I've been keeping busy on my own. I guess I just haven't had the chance to see you. From the looks of you, I could say the same thing. What's the matter Paul? You look worn out."

"Nothing's the matter. I'm still going strong," he said sternly.

"Paul, c'mon. . .I haven't seen you look so beat. And I thought the doctor told you to stay away from those things," Dave said pointing to his cigarette.

Paul motioned to him to be silent.

"Things are just going a little rough right now, Dave. I've had to work a little bit longer to compensate, that's all."

Dave did not say anything and Paul tried to convince him with a broad smile. Then, he sat up quickly and the lines across his forehead drew together in a knot.

"Anne's not getting any better, Dave. I'm scared."

"What does the doctor say?"

"Oh, he doesn't have any good news. She's not getting better though. Her eyes don't light up anymore and she doesn't talk much. It breaks me up to see what she's going through," Paul said as he fought back the tears.

"I'll tell Janet. She'll probably want to see her. I know it has been a while since she's visited, but what with the boys in high school, I'm afraid all of us are on different schedules."

"Anne would like that. She needs company besides me, I'm afraid."

"It looks like you could use a change of scenery yourself. What about going down to Blackey's and sipping down a few cold ones?"

"No, no. . . I better stay in. I've got too much to do. Besides, you get on home. It's late and your wife will be wondering where you are."

"You're right. Janet's becoming the executive's widow these days," Dave said lightheartedly.

"Don't tell me you've been burning the candle at both ends too?"

"Yeah, I'm ready to move up. I would like to expand."

"That sounds familiar. You know I've told you this before, but you're a lot like me when I was younger," he said looking out his window and then back at Dave. "Yeah, back in the mid '50's I was anxious to move up the corporate ladder. I'd work late then, too. Of course, it didn't show on me like it does now."

The light bulb in his desk lamp began to flicker and they both watched it struggle to stay alive.

"You know Dave, there's a promotion coming up in the Senior Vice President's position. I've had my eye on it for some time."

"That's right. I heard Hinson is retiring for greener pastures. It must be rough having to retire to a condo in the Bahamas," he said with a chuckle.

"Ha, I guess you're right about that," Paul said lighting up another cigarette and coughing.

"Well, I had better let you get back to work."

Paul rubbed his eyes and said softly, "I can't let the Board see me slowing down."

"Right. You deserve this one," Dave smiled and picked up his briefcase. "Besides, I'm looking forward to sitting in your seat some day."

"Tell the boys and Janet I said hello."

"Okay, take care Paul."

The telephone rang as they exchanged farewells and Paul waved goodbye.

Dave walked out of his office and greeted "Whistlin' Charley," the janitor. Charley shuffled about with his cart while whistling Glenn Miller tunes.

"G'neev'nin, Mr. Saffran. See ya ta'marra," Charley grinned.

"Alright. Have a nice evening Charley."

Dave walked down the hall thinking to himself how long Charley had been with the company. He himself had been there fifteen years and remembered Paul commenting that Charley was probably the longest working employee that Henley and Henley ever had. He smiled inside thinking how happy he was that Paul's position would be opening. He was ready for a move and Paul's position would supply the right challenge. Dave knew he was the logical choice for the job. After all, Paul had trained him years ago.



Dave walked past the senior vice president's offices. He let his mind wander ten years into the future when he too would be considered for one of them.

"Dave, how are you?" someone shouted from inside the President's room.

"Well, just fine, Mr. Henley," Dave straightened his tie on instinct.

"Relax, relax, my boy. You're going home for the evening," he chuckled.

"My wife would like to think so," Dave grinned.

Mr. Henley let out a loud, boisterous laugh.

"That's the spirit. I like to see a sense of humor at the end of the day. It tells me a lot about a person."

"Probably that I'm ready to go home," Dave smiled again.

At forty years of age, Dave still looked as ruggedly handsome as at twenty-five. He had always had charm and a quick-wit to speak smoothly and comfortably with others.

"Dave, I'd like to see you for a few minutes, if you don't mind?"

"Of course not, Mr. Henley. Has my work been up-to-par?"

"Par? It has been tremendous, my boy. You're doing excellently. I've been watching you for some time now. You're a mover and I know right where I'd like to put you."

Dave sat up at attention. He let his eyes dart around Mr. Henley's office, which was three times as large as his own. All of the modern conveniences were here: a stereo, a television, a full set of furniture, and a portable bar. His heart pounded with excitement and he had to restrain himself from forming the words that made up Paul's title of Vice President Financial Analyst.

"What do you think of sitting under me as Senior Vice President?" Mr. Henley said eagerly.

Dave did not answer. He sat stunned and tried to think quickly. His mind rushed wildly with thoughts of his family and Paul and his wife.

"Well, what do you think? I've already spoken to the Board and they are just as agreeable as I am."

"I'm deeply flattered, Mr. Henley," Dave said with a frown. "But, you've kind of caught me off guard. What about Paul Denton? I would be moving past Paul?"

Mr. Henley looked down and out the window. Strained silence filled the air.

"Dave, I think we all know Paul's been slipping. Why, he's behind in his work load and he doesn't even take care of himself. I can't afford to move him into a position that would place any more stress or strain on him than he already has."

"But can't you just promote him with a title? He's been looking at this position for such a long time," he said, looking down at his knuckles, white from his clenched fists.

"Paul's too smart for that. He's got a good head on his shoulders, but he is just too old for this move. And, I need someone with innovation to keep our company competitive."

"I see."

"Listen, Dave, I know how you feel and believe me, I think it's admirable. But you've got to think of the company. Besides, there will be big things ahead for you."

Dave was silent again. He could not look up.

"Are you turning me down?" Mr. Henley said with disbelief.

Dave shook his head no.

"Great, great. I'll tell the Board on Wednesday."

"What will become of Paul?" Dave said softly.

"We'll let him stay where he is. We're not completely heartless. Don't worry. We'll give him a notice."

"A notice? That's it? I think I'd rather tell him myself."

"It's up to you. Let me be the first to welcome you to the corporate team," he said as he slapped Dave on the back.

Dave smiled weakly and walked out the door. He turned back toward Paul's office and felt his legs quiver as he passed through the lonely, dark hall.

"Fo'get somethin', Mr. Saffran?" Charley yelled.

"Yeah, I guess you could say that."

Dave walked into Paul's room without knocking this time. Paul looked up in surprise.

"Well, I thought you left a half an hour ago." Paul said.

"I tried," he answered without smiling.

Paul and Dave looked at each other; Paul waiting, Dave sifting the words through his mind.

"Paul, I . . . uh . . . I . . ." he stammered.

"What is it, Dave? You look pale."

"What I'm about to say doesn't make me feel so well either," Dave mumbled.

"Don't tell me something has happened at home?" Paul said with wild eyes.

"No, no. I just ran into Mr. Henley. He said the Board . . . well, . . . this is pretty damn hard to say, Paul." He bit his lip and continued. "The Board has offered me the Senior Vice President's position."

Strained silence again filled the room.

"I didn't know what to do, Paul. I tried to explain. . .," Dave said as he looked at the older man's eyes.

Paul looked down and turned his chair around so that his back faced Dave. His head shook with forced laughter.

"You can't beat it, you know," Paul continued to laugh.

"Beat what?"

"The system. You know, young business associate has some talent, so to make room for him the Board has to pass up the older, less productive worker. I should have known," he turned back around.

"Dave, how do you think I got here? I passed up Crosly. Now they're doing the same thing to me. Only funny thing, I feel a hell of a lot worse now than I did back then."

"But they're not letting you go. You'll stay in this position," Dave said trying to offer some comfort.

"Stay here until I die, you mean. What am I supposed to do, twiddle my thumbs?"

"You won't have to. I'll see to it that you have increased responsibility. . ."

"No, no favors for me. I've gotten this far on my own, and I'll be damned if the kid I taught is going to overtake me," Paul said as he slammed his fist on his desk.

"Please don't be. . ."

"I'm sorry Dave. I lost my temper. I better go. . . Anne's probably wondering where I am," he said as he whisked out of the room.

Dave sat there staring at his cluttered desk and the overflowing ashtray. Outside Paul's window he saw the familiar skyline. The light bulb flickered wildly in Paul's lamp and then burnt out. Dave sat alone in the dark, enveloped by depression.

Charley's whistle could be heard outside the door.

"Everythin' okay, Mr. Saffran? I saw Mr. Denton rush out'a here. Hope there's no trouble?"

"No trouble, Charley. . . just another burned out bulb."

"They shore don't make 'em like they used to, do they Mr. Saffran? I's always replacin' these things with new ones, all the time. . ."

OFFICE PARTY

by Laura Wesley

He slid between the guests delicately, making profound apologies whenever he happened to interrupt a conversation or disturb anyone's drink. He possessed the very polished mien of a gracious lord; he carried himself erect, almost to the point of seeming uncomfortably stiff, he bowed ceremoniously to all his old acquaintances, and every now and then he responded to someone's joke with a lusty chuckle which was quite audible from anywhere in the room. Finally he reached the new secretary who was standing against the wall like a lost kitten, wondering if she should approach the young man in the armchair.

"A-a-ah, LINDa!" He seemed to have just noticed her. His voice was resonant but hollow, as if he were shouting into a deep, dry well. She only nodded. He impressed her as a jovial, paternal type, and she was confident that he would soon put her at ease. She tried to appease her anxiety by imagining him as Santa Claus. The fantasy wasn't hard to conjure; he had

smile wrinkles around his eyes, and plenty of rosy color on his high cheeks, and a head full of smooth, silver-grey hair. She imagined that he smiled congenially behind his full mustache, although she couldn't be sure. His stomach bulged as if it had enjoyed fifty years of hearty Christmas dinners.

"Will you be starting work to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir, at eight." Her picture disintegrated. Santa Claus would have winked; this man only cleared his throat while allowing her answer to register. Perhaps a distinguished Englishman—in fact, he seemed to be deliberately creating such an impression. He wore a grey suit and carried a gold watch in his pocket, with a long chain which hung down for show. He was holding a pipe, and had been holding it for half an hour, although he apparently hadn't thought to light it. His tweed hat, which he had for some time been holding like a prop, was perched on top of the pile of coats by the door.

"Ah-HA! Yes! We are always eager to hire another healthy youth in this office. Healthy people are so contented and reliable, you know. None of my employees ever miss a day of work."

"Yes, sir, I understand."

His speech lacked any accent which could give it warmth. His vowels were meticulous, and he never slurred a syllable. He might have been a student of Henry Higgins'. Most startling, though, were his eyes. True, they were shaped as if they should twinkle with easy good will, but they twitched faintly at the corners, and now they looked as if they were studying her, struggling to perceive even her most minute reactions. They appeared to be suppressing some enormous tension. She envisioned him at the point of a gun, afraid to move and yet speculating wildly . . . then she imagined him behind the gun, waiting to pull the trigger if she should flinch. Something about him terrified her.

"Well, I am certain that I will be able to expect only superb work from you. Enjoy yourself—mingle! These guests are your new friends and associates." He turned abruptly to slide toward the punch bowl. Suddenly she felt like a fly among spiders. Instead of approaching the man in the armchair, she slipped out of the room through the back door and headed home.

THE SCAR

by Gina Rose Zellmer

There was an operation last night
to see
why The Important Business Man's daughter
was not normal.
They stood over her for hours
violating her thoughts with
flourescent lights and Electrocutation. . .
yet all they could find
(and they were the very best!)
was a tiny scar
that seemed extremely painful.
Near the end of the night
they finally said,
there was nothing more they could do
for the Important Businessman's daughter,
who was given a new dress
and the next day placed back
in Alphabetical Order.



BETH

by Andrew Himebaugh

My first day home for Christmas break I learned that one of my high school classmates, a girl for whom I cared very much, had committed suicide. This news, added to my concern about the finals I had just completed, greatly reduced my holiday spirit.

I had known Beth since the third grade. Through the years we always had sat next to each other in classes because the teachers seated us alphabetically, and Beth's name was one below mine on the rolls. Even in high school, teachers use this type of arrangement, I suppose as a matter of convenience.

When we got to our junior year in high school, I asked Beth to the prom. She turned me down. She had a horse show to prepare for the following day. We laughed for years afterward about how she turned me down in favor of a horse. You see, horses were very important to Beth. She spent her entire life breaking and training horses. She was a member of the Indiana Quarter Horse Association, and of the FFA. Beth always won top honors in the 4-H, and last summer she won a horse for her efforts in 4-H. Horses were her life.

Beth graduated from high school number seven in our class, and this was her sophomore year at Indiana University. People around town told me that only days before she died she had been full of Christmas spirit and was looking forward to returning to I.U. next semester. I understand she was an "A" student there.

Now that you have Beth's background, let's get back to the matter on my mind: suicide. Suicide is something we made jokes about in grade school. It is not so funny now that it has struck home with me for the first time.

Committed suicide. That is an ugly action for such a sweet, lovely person as Beth was. However, that is what she did; she took her own life, committed suicide. Her story went like this:

Eight years ago Beth's father died. She and her father were very close, and Beth never got over his death. Her brother told me it changed her whole personality. She withdrew into herself. I never really noticed a change; I had always considered her a very quiet person.

Her brother also told me that she was so upset that she could not even express her emotions at her dad's funeral, she just kept them bottled up inside her. Two days before Christmas and three days before her twenty-first birthday, she vented eight years of emotions. Unfortunately she vented them with a .22 instead of words or tears.

How does Beth's story apply to us? I am sure that the possibility of committing suicide has passed through the minds of each of us at one time or another. But how many of us have seriously considered ending our own lives?

Suicide would seem to be the ultimate solution to all of our problems. However, suicide is also an irreversible solution. Once it is done, you cannot change your mind and take it back. Consider the problems, both physical and emotional, it creates for those who care for you. Christmas is a time of joy; but for Beth's mother it will always be a time of deep sorrow. The emotions of Beth's mother when she found Beth's body in the barn are unimaginable. I cannot begin to comprehend the horrors the woman felt when she found her daughter lying dead in the hay, of suicide.

The point is, if you have a problem, express your emotions: cry, talk to someone, or otherwise vent your emotions in a non-violent way. I returned from Beth's funeral and for the first time in years I wept openly. I did not just cry; I bawled. I am sure I am not the only person in town who did. I was not ashamed; I was venting my emotions, and I felt a little better when I was done. Do not assume you are the only person with problems. Talk to someone about your problems. Maybe someone else has the same type of problems, and together you can work them out.

Try looking at your problems from a different angle. Try to look at all the things you have to live for: your family, your friends, your efforts and your achievements. Beth had her family, her horses, and a houseful of trophies. She had fellowship in the Indiana Quarter Horse Association, and in 4-H. She had all her friends from high school and college. Now all we have are the memories, and her mother has a large houseful of trophies with no one to be proud of them.

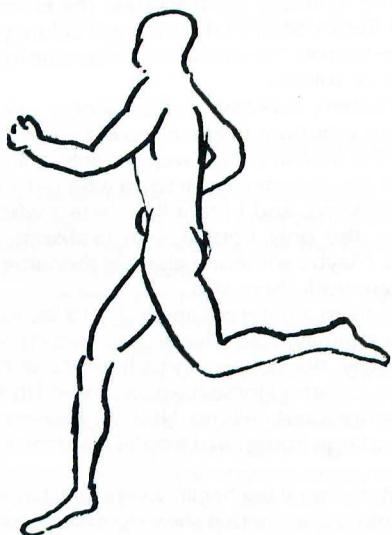
I am not going to condemn Beth for taking her life as she did; I thought too much of her to do that. I just think (and wish) that she would have found some other way to release herself from her problems. I still cannot believe such a violent act could come from this quiet girl.

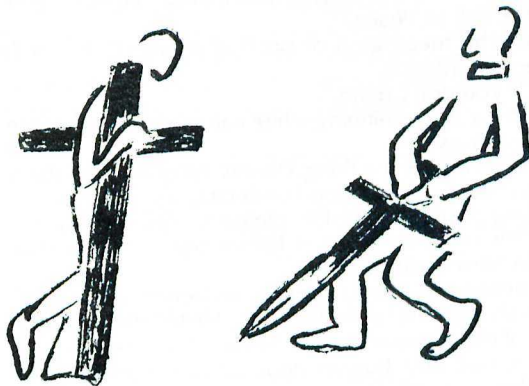
Please, if you have a problem, do not brush it off onto someone else by destroying yourself. Do not put your family and friends through the same anguish Beth's mother, several other people and myself have suffered. Reach out for help. It may take a while to work things out, but it can be done.

And remember, as in Beth's case, there might be other people besides family who love you. They might not be people you immediately think of, but they love you just the same.

To Beth

December 26, 1960 to December 23, 1981





NEW BUSINESS

by Nathan W. Harter

The Reverend Bugher shielded his eyes from the slanting rays of evening as he stepped out onto the walk. With difficulty, he searched from behind his hand for a place to sit and breathe fresh air. He spotted another minister on a nearby bench, and so he strode deliberately toward him.

"Reverend Bugher," the younger man chirped, "What brings you out here? Has the convention recessed?"

The old pastor sat down next to his colleague and sighed.

"No such luck. The women's auxiliary is giving its report."

The other pastor grinned. "Then it's just as well that we are here."

Rev. Bugher stared out across the rolling campus, absorbing the green and tranquil scene. His massive brow and drooping jowls gave him an angry visage, an instrument of righteous indignation from the pulpit and a guard against nonsense in private. For now, as he basked in the last sunlight of the day, the old man simply emptied his mind of business.

"Tell me, sir," queried Dennis, his acquaintance, "What do you hear about Resolution G, the call to Peace?"

"Do you want the theological or political answer?" asked Rev. Bugher, wary of convention intrigue.

"Well, both, if you don't mind."

The veteran drew some thinning white hair over an ear before answering. He also began to frown.

"I would hate to criticize the thing, Dennis. After all, a lot of work went into its composition." He paused. "And I understand you had a hand in the first draft." The young pastor was visibly pleased. "Yes, Dennis, it is a masterful statement, fit for deliberation. It is tomorrow, is it not, that we debate Resolution G in New Business?"

"Yes. Yes, I believe so. I'm to speak in its behalf," he added with pride.

"As well you should! The topic suits you." He fell silent, letting his attention stray to a pair of playful squirrels. The session had been long, as always, and exceedingly tedious. Rev. Bugher doubted the ecumenical significance of these gatherings and promised himself to stay away next year. He had become too old to revel in his piety with these zealots. They also serve who stand and wait, he repeated to himself.

"But are you for it or against it?" insisted Dennis.

"Am I for peace? Yes! That is simple enough."

"Do I hear you saying that you will vote for the resolution?"

This is so important to you, the old man thought to himself. Just let me pack my things and drive home to the parish. This convention will pass nearly anything, adjourn, and dissolve into little groups of two's and three's. And all our dramatic posturing will be forgotten on the way home.

"Tell me again about the resolution. What is its point?"

"Gladly!" began Dennis. "We state that conflict is an obscenity against God and that peace is His will. Toward that end, peace, we prophesy to the world against division, war, and confrontation. When a state assumes that war can be justified, its institutions then prepare for war, leaving human needs untouched. Thus, we call for disarmament, international unity, and brotherly love."

"A considerable goal, my friend."

"With God's help, we can witness to friend and foe alike. Christians reaching out across the barriers of selfishness and greed. It is a revolutionary consequence of the Gospels."

"What is the consequence? I do not understand."

"Disarmament, international unity, and brotherly love."

"All of these as a result of Resolution G? If it were possible, you would already have my vote."

Such idealism, Rev. Bugher mused. The world is ugly, so they call for

beauty. It is a noble pursuit, in its way. Strange how the younger ones argue so. How is it their parishioners leave them alone for such crusades? Sam Blackstone went into intensive care last week. Little Sheri Walser has become pregnant—by whom? The Wallaces have had their marital problems. Neddie Meyers has her gall bladder on the chopping block. And three wealthy physicians have been intimating my retirement.

And, yes, peasants are being killed by soldiers in Central America. And natives are starving in Africa. And there are rumors of war in the Middle East.

"Resolution G is today's Pentecost to a troubled age."

"You do have a way with phrases," the old man conceded as he watched the sun drop below the distant horizon. "Certainly Christ would commend your intent."

"If I might be so bold as to say, sir," interjected Dennis, "Christ would vote with us. This I sincerely believe."

Rev. Bugher turned at last to look at the earnest face of his colleague. There was hope, vigor, and there were no furrows around his eyes. His trim beard outlined a half-smile. Obviously, he did not wrestle with complexity—nor with failure.

"Would Jesus the Man have attended our convention?" It was an ironic thrust.

"I meant if He were here . . ."

"Oh, He is, in a spiritual sense. But the man Jesus, would he sit through seven hours of reports and then mingle with the witty and the well-groomed?"

"He communed with the Apostles."

"He taught; they listened. It was vastly different."

"Do you think He would vote against my resolution?" the young man snapped.

"Tell me, my good friend, why it is so important to you that he approve your agenda. Shouldn't it be the other way around?"

"I am doing His will."

"You know that for a fact."

"Do you disagree, Pastor?" the young man persisted.

"I just don't know, Dennis. And that's about the extent of my interest in your action tomorrow."

At first there was silence in the twilight. Then from the convention hall came applause and the first small cliques heading for dinner.

"The women have done their wagging," observed the Reverend Bugher. Amidst the laughter and the gossip which began to surround them, the older man stood up, cast a sullen gaze upon the dispersing assembly, then looked down at Dennis and said, "I shall pray for you and for the convention, but from my own parsonage. You had better go eat."

"I do not understand your reluctance. But I wish you Godspeed home."

"Thank you, son."

Then the aging minister made his way silently through the boisterous crowd to pack his things, go home, and tend to his flock.

The young man, joining a small clump of delegates already discussing Resolution G, entered the debate with uninhibited zeal.

A Turn

by Yoko Chase

Like a lone black hole holding dense
its breath of fury among cooled stars
a youth sitting at the end of a loaded bus
captivates a vision of his own scarlet death

The sun is slowly drowning into
the shadowed sap of the afternoon trees

The ghetto streets are scented with blues

A fatigued house sits in meditation
like a dusty rock on a crater of the moon
though haunted with the grandeur of its aged character





The blasting pant of the sinking sun
pierces through the crevasse of its eaves
and brightens an image of an old man

His furnaced eyes in the still silhouette
are rolling fiercely expecting a bus
of an irregular schedule but of a certain promise

(There! Surely it's coming rock'n rolling!)

A primal rhythm of the atomic heart
springs out of the twangy bus
The youth is caught in the two eyes of fire
that burn in their serenity the deeply furrowed face

The moment of eternity gazes at the two
vibrating characters of the ancient sun

Their memories, their lust and fury all fume into love
and a laughter deceives the darkening throats of alleys

The beaming gray of autumn meets
men regenerating souls in a doomed house

The bus turns toward a cemetery



THE DISCOVERY OF THE NEW WORLD IN THE MOON

by Charles F. Hibbard

Isaac Newton's widowed mother left him when he was three, to wed the wealthy Reverend Barnabas Smith, rector of a nearby parish, who would have nothing to do with her firstborn. Newton's lonely childhood was passed at the poor family manor of Woolsthorpe, in Lincoln, in the care of the widow's mother, Grannie Ayscough. At the death of the sexually active old minister, having dutifully borne him three children, the Widow Hannah returned to Woolsthorpe with her brood. It was August, 1653, and Newton was in his eleventh year.

The narrator, Christopher Cannon, then a youthful giant of sixteen, has identified himself as a lifelong friend, as the story resumes:

The Dutch no longer made bold in our Channel when I returned from the sea. We had driven them into the shallows at the Texel and left them dismasted and burning, the rapacious Von Tromp laid low at last.¹ Noll Cromwell had heretofore turned out the Rump for battenning on Royalist bribes, and summoned Barebone's Parliament, of his own choosing, to sanctify his tyranny over our new-found freedom. If he was more a martinet than the King he'd cut in two, our victories at sea were the warrant for high parades, to take out the sting of Puritan morality, and word got about that he'd soon have himself made Lord Protector, that he might command the obeisance of the peers whose voice he'd suppressed.

It was late in the summer of '53 when I crossed into Lincoln again. The swelling fields gave off the sweet, green odor of summer, the swallows had begun to try their wings for the long flight south, and the orchards were plump for the picking.

The atmosphere at Woolsthorpe Manor, however, was less cordial. At the scullery door, a sulky maid with a pretty mouth opened to me and offered to pour boiling water on my boots did I not take myself off at once.

"I'm looking for Master Newton, Doll," I hushed her, yet wary of Grannie Ayscough.

"'Tis nought to me, Cannon, if you're looking for the second coming," she snapped. "We've word Father Barnabas is near the end, and we're bidden cook for the wake. There's no time for the likes of you!"

She gestured with the boiling cauldron.

It was little Dolly Plimpton, grown very respectable, with her dark curls caught up under a tidy white cap, she knowing very well what a vision she made for a mariner just out of Monk's navy, with gunpowder and blood yet under his nails. She was laced tight in a purple bodice from waist to nipple, though tremulous and vulnerable above. A full skirt tied with ribands betrayed nought of its treasures save peeping petticoats, yet suggested with winsome guile that access to her virtue was not wholly out of the question. Clocked stockings guided her sturdy calves into clumsy buckled shoes, but I surmised 'twere no more than the work of a moment to have her out of them as well.

"I'll content myself with you, Dolly Plimpton, till Isaac comes along," said I sociably, relieving her of the cauldron. "Let's hope 'tis not too soon."

I pulled down her hair till it tumbled over her shoulders as I remembered it, swept her into a lusty embrace, and stopped her caterwauling with a kiss.

"Mast R'Isaac down in orchard, Christopher," grinned the cook over her shoulder. "Take hussy wi' ye. She's na been plumbed since ye left for sea."

The lass had ceased to struggle in my arms, and her own now wound urgently about my neck. Her shoes fell off, and her warm, stockinged toes crept up and down my ankles.

"Cool! Look at size of un!" gasped the chambermaid enviously. "Yon lout'll squeeze the breath out'n 'er."

I swirled my prize to my shoulder, rejoicing to be back in Lincoln, where a maid could be had for the sport of it without whining for a month's pay.

"'Twould seem Dolly Plimpton's ready to do her part to hearten the Navy," I chuckled, starting off. "Nor could I ask for a comelier lookout to man the bowsprit."

"Just 'ave a care for 'ere own bowsprit goin' to windward," sniffed the cook. "Best leave 'er in haymow, lest Mast R'Isaac take fancies of 'is own."

"Been oglin' 'er cleavage, 'e 'as," babbled the chambermaid spitefully.

"'Tis as close as he'll get to't with his lordly airs," vowed Dolly Plimpton, settling her soft bottom primly against my neck.

"Do 'e keep 'em both out till midnight," she whickered, "I'll favor 'e m'sel'."

I boggled at the vision as I made for the orchard, striving to keep in mind it was Isaac I'd come to see. It was early morning, the smoke of the breakfast ham was on the air, and a thin crescent moon tempted the sun into a limpid sky.

"The haymow is yonder, Christopher," piped the lookout, pointing with a toe and giggling. "Must you hurry so? I'm not undone."

She had begun to pluck at the laces of her bodice.

"Hold on," I commanded gruffly. "The day's still young. We'll look up Isaac beforehand, to learn how he bears the news of Father Barnabas."

She tittered as she stuffed herself back.

"I've ne'er seen the wight laugh, Christopher, but I'll warrant 'twill have set him all agrin behind that sullen pout."

"And moving his Maker the old goat won't last out the day," I affirmed.

"M'lady has served the parson well, with a drop of three. Do you suppose

she'll bring 'em back to Woolsthorpe, to comfort Master Isaac?"

"M'lord will take faint comfort in his kin," I prophesied. "He wants the Widow Hannah to himself. But she'll come back, you may be certain. There's no place in a rectory for a handsome widow, however wealthy she may be."

We were approaching the sagging orchard, and Dolly Plimpton's arm tightened about my head.

"'Tis all well to dream, Christopher," she murmured, "but the old sinner's still drawing breath, and his vitality's not to be questioned. I'm fearful he may survive, to hold her at North Witham. In that event, Master Isaac will ne'er forgive me that I've left cook to do the pans and come away from my work. He'll bear tales to Grannie Ayscough, and 'twill be the end of me at Woolsthorpe."

"Breathe easy," said I, "and save yourself for me. M'lord will have no idea what we're up to, for such innocent byplay as we intend has ne'er crossed his mind."

She squirmed uncomfortably.

"He sought to kiss me, and pinched my behind in the woodshed," she complained. "When I cried, he offered me a quotation from the Bible."

"'Tis time he tried his spurs," I defended, recalling Isaac's dream. "He's in his eleventh year."

"He'll not try his tiny spur on me!" she retorted. "I'd sooner make love to a beansprout."

I swallowed.

"That's as may be," I hastened. "Should he notice you at all, which is unlikely, I'll explain you've come to show me the way."

She giggled again, and strained forward to pull off her clocked stockings, which done, she bound them possessively about my head.

"That I shall," she promised, plying her long toes with abandon.

We had come into the orchard and there discerned Isaac sprawled beneath the drooping boughs of an apple tree, which ought to have been plucked and trimmed. His scrawny body seemed scarcely larger than when I'd found him by the bridge to Colsterworth, measuring the going of the sun with a shadow-stick, but his legs, thrust out in a vee, were perceptibly longer. At first, I could see only the top of his head, for he was clearly absorbed in a book, but as I drew closer it appeared someone had patched his ill-fitting jacket and mended his boots.

I put down Dolly Plimpton and took her by the hand as I advanced, she drawing back and peering wide-eyed round my waist. When his head came up, I detected that he had not been reading, but weeping, as was his custom in those days.

"Go away," he growled.

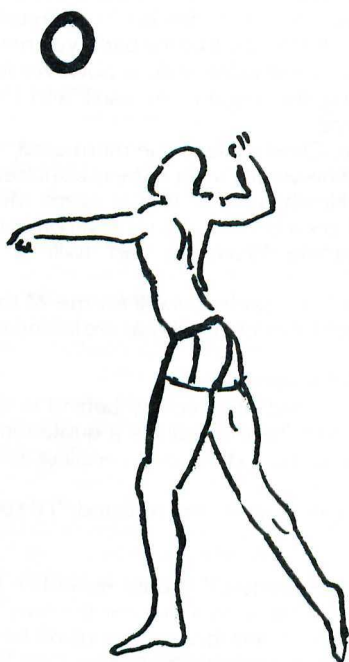
"I perceive you're mourning Father Barnabas," I observed.

"The Lord is coming for the fiend at last," he choked.

"Does it not rejoice you to know your mother will be coming home?"

"'Tis the occasion for my weeping. She'll not be alone."

"Ah, but Woolsthorpe will soon ring with childish laughter."



"Not mine, Christopher," he sulked, looking askance at the clocked stockings dangling from my head. "On furlough for the rutting season, are you?"

It would seem I'd overestimated his innocence. Earthy considerations had invaded his great head, along with his dreams, whilst I was awash in Dutch blood at the Texel.

"I've been let out for the fall plowing," I responded cheerfully, "and till now had found nought to plow."

Dolly Plimpton looked down modestly, but darted behind me with a little cry when he scowled at her.

"I shall inform Grannie Ayscough of this dalliance, Plimpton," he asserted self-righteously.

"That, you will not," I challenged him. "Would you have it out that you pinched Doll's bottom in the woodshed?"

His eyes widened.

"'Twas only to determine how much of't was really Plimpton."

"And you found out?"

"Yes. 'Twas all Plimpton."

"She had invited your advances?"

"No. She doesn't like me. None of the servants do."

"When she cried, you quoted her a passage from the Bible?"

"Yes, I told her 'twas blessed to turn the other cheek," he acknowledged sullenly. "'Twas no more than an innocent experiment in anatomy."

I guffawed.

"Shall we have an end to your threats, then?"

"Yes," he agreed.

The pretty lass was bounding up and down with glee, to find herself thus reprieved.

"'Twas really all me, m'lord," she chirped, hurling herself to the ground between us. "The pinch marks are still there. Wouldst see 'em?"

"I'm reading a book," said Isaac.

"I'll look into 'em later," I promised.

"'Tis about a machine," he went on, "which can fly free of the earth's Gravity, become weightless in space, and ultimately land on the moon. The author's powers of invention are extraordinary!"

He yearned up at the celestial crescent, yet visible in the cloudless sky, and seemed not to notice when I snatched the book from his hand. The title page was brittle, for it was not new: *The Discovery of the New World in the Moon*, wrote by one Wilkins and printed in the year of my birth. It was a palpable stroke of fantasy I'd passed him for entertainment when I entered the Navy.²

"You've had two years to read it, m'lord," I chastened him. "Do you just get round to't now?"

"I've been through't many times, Christopher," he replied. "'Tis filled with knowing observations on the outward reach of the earth's Gravity."

"'Tis filled with poppycock!" I snorted. "A child knows such a machine cannot be built, let alone thrown to the moon."

He frowned.

"Very little is known of the Gravity, Christopher," he admonished me. "'Tis the commonest thing about us, day and night, and unlike light, 'tis undiminished in the darkness."

Dolly Plimpton had crept into my lap and lay looking up beguilingly, her bright curls tumbling over my thighs.

"Shall we be long, Christopher?" she whispered, plucking at my blouse.

"Your time will come, Doll," I stayed her. "We must first help Master Newton plan his voyage to the moon."

An apple thudded to the ground beside us, and I tossed it idly away.

"You see't!" cried Isaac, delighted. "'Tis all about us!—Here's another, Christopher. How far can you throw't?"

I accepted his challenge, lifted Doll gently aside and jumped to my feet. My head struck a branch, and a cascade of apples ensued.

"All things respond to the Gravity," mused Isaac, concealing a smile. "'Tis known since the beginning of time."

His eyes still sought the moon, but not mine. My hair and Doll's stockings were caught fast in a snarl of twigs, and I struggled to set myself free.

"Absalom, you're caught fast!" snickered Isaac.

Enraged, I tore the branch out of the tree and disentangled myself at the cost of some quantity of hair, then hurled the apple so far it disappeared over the hedge to the common.

Isaac whistled admiringly.

"'Tis further by far than I could've done," he allowed.

"Aye. 'Tis halfway to Rutland by now," said I, with a shrug, falling back to recapture Dolly Plimpton.

"But suppose," said he, with a gleam, "yon hedge were the edge of the earth."

"Suppose it were."

"The apple would fall forever, for there'd be nothing to stop it."

I was drawing Doll's hair through my fingers, and fast losing patience with his childish fancy.

"Now, that is sheer nonsense," I grumbled. "Everything stops in time."

"Only if there's something to stop it," he insisted. "The moon does not stop, Christopher."

"'Tis well for us it does not, m'lord," I breathed. "'Twould occasion a crash audible for miles, I dare say."

"Yet it falls e'er toward the center of the earth," he declared.

"Like the apples!" cried Doll, clapping her hands.

I was becoming uneasy.

"Why do you say that?" I protested. "'Tis falling round us, not into us."

"The very fact that it abides the centuries in our vicinity attests the earth has a hold on't."

"Then why does't not turn into us, like the apple?"

"It possesses an inward impetus which has nothing to stop it," he surmised, "and only the Gravity to vie with. So't flies in a circle. Without the Gravity, Christopher, 'twere lost amongst the stars long ago."

"But Wilkins contends 'tis so far away as to be outside the reach of our Gravity."

"Uncle Billy Ayscough says we have from Bullialdi that the pull is mightily diminished by the distance from the earth's center."³

In spite of myself, and Doll's curls, I was intrigued by his speculation.

"You may be on to something, m'lord," I acknowledged. "Did I let loose an apple on the moon, I suppose 'twould soon find its way to the earth."

"I should think not, Christopher. 'Twould partake of the Gravity of the moon, due to its proximity, and fall thereon."

I balked.

"The Gravity shows partiality, then?"

"It must draw in both directions, though I can't imagine how. Like a river flowing two ways at once. Have you not perceived at sea that the tides follow the moon about the earth?"

"On the contrary," I objected, "There's a high tide every day, when the moon is out of sight."

He was clearly puzzled.

"I agree 'tis an obscure question, Christopher. It must be pulling from the other side."

"Then tell me, m'lord, what **is** this invisible power that pulls hither and yon at the same time, at immense distance?"

"I'm thinking on't," he assured me, as though he expected the answer to pop into his head at any moment. "I intend to find the numbers to describe its operation."

"And they will explicate what it is?"

"We know what it is, as we know God, by the feel of't."

Doll had got my blouse open and was passing her lips across my belly. Her winsome exhortation was no longer to be denied.

"'Tis time we left you to your book, m'lord," I apologized. "Doll says she's something to show me, and I'm o'ercome by curiosity."

"Put the haymow in order when you leave, Christopher," he bade me, with a wistful smile.

"One thing more," said I, getting up cautiously, chary of the branches. "Can you tell me who threw the moon, m'lord?"

"'Twas done long ago," he brooded, "when none was about to see."

"And?"

"I fancy 'twas Almighty God."

That was enough for me. I swung Dolly Plimpton to my shoulder again.

"'Tis the answer of a simpleton," I scoffed. "'Tis 1653, m'lord, and modern times. In a hundred years, your God will be sleeping with Juno!"

His glare bespoke bale.

"There be some of us in the Church of England, Christopher, who apprehend His Dominion to be eternal as the Gravity. My mother . . ."

He broke off at a shriek from the manor house, whereupon the chambermaid came pelting forth full tilt. At first, her cries were indistinguishable, but as she closed us, running side to side as women do, her arms flying like semaphors, we began to make out the signal.

"Mast R'Isaac! Mast R'Issac! 'Tis m'lady, 'ere mum! She'll have 'e at once!"

The wench stumbled and caught her breath.

"Dolly, cook wants 'e in kitchen to stuff and baste t' birds. We're to feast t' mourners beforehand, that we may avoid 'em after. — Mast R'Isaac, madam will have 'e dressed proper for funeral!"

"I'll not," said Isaac, closing his book with a snap. "Cannot the old villain let her come to me as I am, e'en in death?"

Dolly Plimpton got both hands in my hair and tugged imperatively.

"We must hurry, Christopher!" she squealed. "Cross yonder to the haymow and save a step!"

Her breath came faster, and her toes pointed cunningly.

"'Tis a happy outlook we leave to you, Master Isaac!" she called back, as I loped through the trees. "You'll have a brother and two sisters to play at your knee!"

"I shall run away with Christopher!" he shouted. "We shall go to sea and study the moon!"

¹Cannon apparently served without distinction in the first war with the Dutch, over the Navigation Act, when Dutch bottoms were excluded from English ports. Maarten Van Tromp, a Dutch admiral, was killed at the Texel, 31 July 1653.

²Apart from Cannon's account, there is no positive evidence that Newton ever saw this remarkable book by Dr. John Wilkins of Oxford (1636), although he was familiar with the same writer's *Mathematicall Magick*.

³Ismael Bouilliau (also Bullialdi), (1605-1694), French astronomer, gave the inverse square relation in his *Astronomia Philolaica* (Paris, 1645.)

JUNTA MEANS TOGETHER

by ?

"I would like to begin by exploring some anecdotes from history which should, as I recount them, prove relevant to my case. May I?"

"I have no reason to stop you," the colonel sighed. "Proceed."

The elderly scholar lifted his glasses to the bridge of his nose. As he scanned the hurried notes he had prepared in his cell, a military tribunal comprised of two young zealots and their newly-installed commander, the colonel, shifted impatiently in their folding chairs. The canvas courtroom had become intolerably hot.

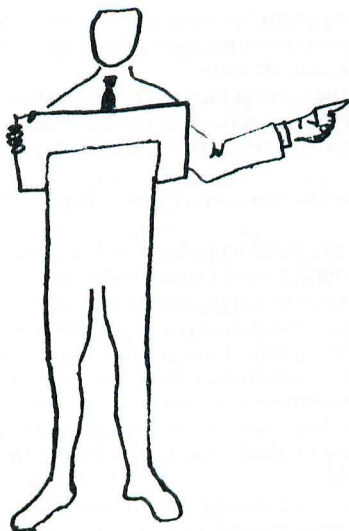
"In the West African savanna, there was a cleric named Usman don Fodio who instigated *jihad*, or Holy Struggle, against secular authorities. The ostensible rationale for this uprising was the impious administration of the Sarkis. Usman don Fodio led the faithful against the government to purge society of its impure elements. Usman then instituted an Islamic theocracy with himself as the secular head.

"As you military men might know, the legions of Rome were disciplined by their commanders in the following manner: every tenth legionnaire, regardless of record, breeding, or general worth to the empire, was killed by his comrades-in-arms. The perpetual threat of decimation is reported to have deterred excessive softness.

"During the French Revolution, the streets ran red, first with royal blood. Each party, or faction, relied upon assassination or execution to settle accounts and, quote, to secure the republic, close quote. Of course, the factions turned against each other for the same reasons—and with the same result.

"You are no doubt aware that Hitler, over in Germany, blamed the Jews for economic ruin. In fact, he ascribed to them genetic inferiority, and the rise of Nazism brought with it genocide."

The colonel, finding the tent already too humid for academics, interrupted the old professor in hopes of concluding the case quickly. He settled back in his chair and growled.



"Your argument is clear enough, sir. You would label the junta an oppressor. And since we have taken the government by force, we are illegitimate, also. Is this not your defense?"

The scholar looked up from his notes at the inquisitor. "I am sorry, but I realize that defense is futile. Please allow me to continue my remarks, which are not at an end."

"But it is simple, no? These stories tell me about misguided slaughter, and you would reason that we are guilty of the very same today."

"History is subtler than that, good sir. Let me go on."

The colonel merely waved his hand.

"Now, to illustrate the distinction I am trying to make, I would like to remind the court of the Basques in northern Spain. When Napoleon invaded the Iberian peninsula, Spain failed to repel him militarily. However, the populace did resist in other ways. For instance, gangs would isolate one soldier on patrol, castrate him, nail him to a nearby barn, and then leave him to terrify his comrades when they discovered his suspended corpse.

"Moving north and over one hundred years later, we know Stalin ruled the Soviet Union by purging its citizenry and creating a vast nation-within-a-nation of prisoners, or *zeks*. Over 66 million Russians were incarcerated and either went to labor camps or simply executed. Stalin is credited by some with vaulting the Soviets into modern times, but the overwhelming evidence indicates in him a bureaucratic barbarianism."

The lecture broke long enough for the sweating colonel to interject.

"It is nearly noon, old man. Your tales of oppression have entertained us all. But,"—and here the colonel leaned forward to emphasize his point—"the

People's Tribunal cannot afford to bake in a steamy tent while you stretch your arguments into transparent excuses which, by the way, are invalid. Put aside your notes and speak directly."

There was silence as the scholar turned and placed his prepared statement on the table behind him. Soldiers outside brought the next prisoner, another professor, to the entrance. One of the young zealots was scribbling in his notebook.

After a moment's reflection, the scholar began, choosing his words carefully.

"Good sirs, it is not my wish to judge the integrity of your political act. History will label us all, and I suspect that it will exercise great caution before doing so. It is not my place to judge, and at this time I cannot rely upon the judgment of time, either. I have presented my defense by analogy, but the significance has been lost, I fear. I am terribly sorry. Let me try again.

"To some governments history has been kind, exonerating discipline and sacrifice. To some governments history has not been so kind, castigating these regimes for senseless brutality and murder. Its criteria are, as I have said, quite subtle. It is one of these criteria I had hoped to illustrate. Now I see that I must speak plainly."

He coughed, and the colonel again shifted noisily in his chair.

"Purges are a part of government. In that, you may feel secure. But purges must have a purpose."

"Then you question our purpose?" the colonel asked. "It is all very clear to the masses. And to anyone who would listen."

"So there is a purpose," the scholar said hesitatingly.

"Of course," was the gruff reply.

"Then my defense shall become exceedingly clear! You see, a purge with a purpose should stop just short of purposeless murder."

"There will be no purposeless murder. Only justice."

"So perhaps your purge stops just short of me, for I have in no way interfered with your coup."

"You did not join our ranks as we battled the oligarchs."

"And would I have increased greatly your battle strength?"

There was a chuckle from the entrance, from the next defendant.

"Who is not for us is against us."

"Then have I in any way threatened you?"

"Who is not **for** us is against us."

"What evidence have you that I am **not** for you? I suspect and sincerely hope that your regime will require more than brutish young men with pistols."

One of the zealots, the one who had been scribbling, responded to the comment,

"Old man, we are not amused by your charade. Accused men will stand on their heads to go free. We have no evidence that you were for us. Do you wish us to decide on that basis alone? If not, then prove otherwise."

"Can you see into my heart? I ask you, can you swear that my incarceration serves a purpose? My remarks should have impressed upon you the distinction . . ."

"Those stories you told are selective, incomplete, and irrelevant!"

"Then what," the scholar asked in hushed tones, "is relevant? For justice, men have imagined evil where there was none. For justice, they have devised means of death. And we recognize even today the necessity of occasional retribution. You say that now is the time and that I am the man. Are you so right? Why you and so many others wrong?"

The colonel rose from behind the table and gestured.

"It is, as you say, old man, necessary. I am sorry."

A guard approached the defendant for the purpose of escorting him to his execution. Knowing this, the scholar dropped his head, turned to collect his notes, and mentioned almost casually, "You were also impatient in the classroom, colonel."

The next defendant, having observed the exchange, folded his prepared statement, slid it into his breast pocket, and crossed himself without a word.

The Effect

by Lisa D. Eaton

At night my mind's prismatic
Life seems more dramatic
Bottle we hold
Make colors unfold
Sensations become numbly ecstatic

Crystallizing

by Yoko Chase

When
the wings of the mirrored autumn sky
stream an impression of silken threads
in the incensed air
a stranger sits
in a chamber, invisible and cool

Dreams of alien eyes, coiling throats of alleys, boiling sky, entangled hair,
twangs of steel,
and poisoned seas
all entwined tremble
into the wind
of silent gray wilderness

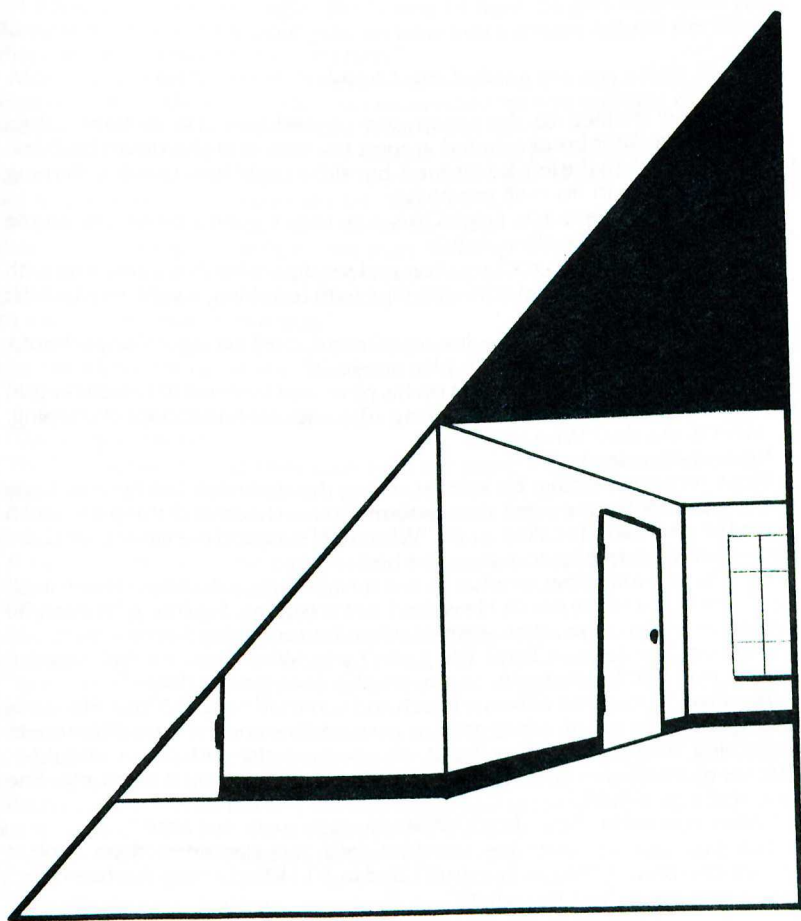
Purple flowers inflamed by moon beams in a tropical topography
shed their red pain

Memories dismember themselves into azure void

A scent of blue ice curving space
creeps into the stealthy moan
of that stranger's presence

Condensed in my absence, I am ablaze
in the vibrating glacier

Neither shadows of fury
nor mist of humility
can be contained in their white breaths
in this chamber
between blue and crystal



OLD MOSE

by Larry Edwards

Old Mose shuffled to the stoop and peered into the darkness, then shivered as a slight breeze curled around his neck and slid down his back. Craning his neck to the left, he listened, but all he could hear was the chirping of the crickets, and his own breathing.

"They's gunna' be trub'ls t'night. Yus-sug, they's gunna' be trub'ls, an ole Mose ain' a goin' offin dis porch."

He walked back to his rocking chair and sat down, his joints creaking with the strain. Picking up an old corn-cob pipe with trembling hands, he placed it between his gums.

"Wishes I hads some 'baccy, but I don' mind, cuz I ain' agoin' any wheres. Uh uh. Gonna' be trub'ls t'night. I kin smells it."

He sat and rocked, and sucked on his pipe, and listened to the crickets in the night air. Then he stopped rocking. The crickets had stopped chirping.

"Who is out der? Who is it?"

No one answered.

Mose remained sitting, his eyes scanning the darkness, but he could see nothing except for the trees that surrounded his shack, and the path which led to the dirt road. He called again, "Who is it? I's a good ole nigger, and I ain' dun nobody no trub'ls, so leaves me be."

Then he saw a shadow, or what he had mistaken for a shadow, detach itself from a tree next to the porch. He waited, not breathing. Squinting his eyes, he peered at the shadow, then gasped when he recognized who it was.

"Isn't you the Jackson Boy? You is, isn't you. What you be doin' way out here in de midd'l o de night, scarin' an ole mans haff ta death?"

The shadow stepped onto the porch and squatted next to Mose. He was a young man—more of a boy than a man really—and he was frightened. Stretching forth a trembling hand, he touched the old man's shoulder, "Mose, momma dun sent me out here. She says that you'd helps me. She says that you would."

"What you talkin' 'bout, boy? What you doin' way out here?"

The boy peered over his shoulder into the darkness, then took a shuddering breath, "Mose, I's in trub'l. Bad trub'l. I killed a man. A white man."

Mose started, "You did what?"



"I killed a white man t'night. That's why I's here. Ta gets help from you. Momma a'ways told us 'bout you, an how you's a'ways helped the slaves when dey wuz a'runnin'. I needs help."

Mose scratched his head, his eyes never leaving the boy's face. He had helped runaway slaves, but that had been when he was younger and full of vinegar. Now he was an old man. What could he do?

The boy must have read Mose's doubts in his eyes, because he clutched the old man's shoulder tighter and cried, "You's got to helps me! Momma said you would. An all those stories. You gots to!"

Mose grabbed his hand, "Lis'n to me, boy. That wuz when I wuz younger, when I wuz strong. Now I's an ole man. What kin I do?"

"But those stories? They said you wuz a man who wuzn't 'fraid o' no white man. That you wuz a man who stuck by others 'cuz they wuz you friends, an not cuz o' the color o' the skin."

Mose sat there, his forehead wrinkled in thought. He looked at the boy's face, then into the darkness, then back at the boy.

"Who you kill?"

"I don't knows. They wuz all wearin' hoods and bed sheets."

"Why'd you kill him?"

The boy sobbed, "Cuz they castrated my papa! I shots one o' them wi' papa's squ'r'l gun. Then I run'd."

Mose shivered. Damn them! Why couldn't they leave his people alone! But he was so old! What could he do?

A noise came from the path. Men's voices. And Mose could make out torches wavering in the night air.

"Mose! What is I gonna' do?"

Mose stood, then gripped the boy's arm, "Lissen to me. You gits behind dat door dere, an no mat'r what you hears, dun' you comes out."

"But Mose, how's you gonna' keep them from jest comin' in an' gettin' me?"

Mose smiled and reached behind his rocking chair, then straightened. In his hands he held an old single barreled shotgun, rusted with age, "Dun' you be worryin' bout ole Mose, boy. You jest gits like I dun tols you to."

With a worried smile the boy ran past Mose and hid behind the door. As he shut it he said, "Momma wuz right. You is the best."

Mose puffed out his chest and waited for the men. As they drew nearer he cocked the shotgun. The men, hearing the sound, stopped.

"Hey nigger, you seen a young buck come runnin' past here?"

Mose stood there, his eyes on the hooded men before him; but his mind was thirty years in the past. He had been a man then. He still was. But he was old. So old now.

"We asked ye a question, nigger. An' what you doin' wit' that shotgun?" Mose remained silent.

"Ye gonna' answer us, nigger? What ye doin' wit' that shotgun?"

Mose heard a voice behind him. It was the boy's, "Don' let 'em gits me, Mose. You is the best. The best."

"Nigger, we ain' gonna' ask ye again. Now put down that shotgun and step out'ta the way."

Mose felt the sweat rolling down his face, burning his eyes. The men stepped forward. One step. Two. They were almost on the porch. From behind him he heard the boy again, "You is the best, Mose. The best."

"Out'ta our way, nigger."

Mose whirled and leveled the shotgun, his finger tightening on the trigger. A deafening roar and Mose was hurled backwards into the arms of the men.

"What the hell!"

"The nigger's gone crazy!"

"Grab 'em! Git that gun away from 'em!"

Mose let the shotgun be wrenched from his hands as the men bore him to the ground. He felt two of his fingers break, but he didn't cry out. He just lay there on the ground, thinking how cool the dirt felt against his cheek.

One of the men, stepping onto the porch and flinging open the door, whistled, then chuckled, "Well, lookie here. Looks like ole Mose dun kilt himself a killer nigger."

The others let go of Mose and crowded onto the porch. There, just inside of the old shack lay the dead boy, a gaping hole in his stomach from where he took the blast. A look of surprise was on his face.

One of the men said, "I told you Ole Mose wuz a good ole nigger. He wuz just akeepin' the boy fer us."

The hooded men gathered around Mose, "That right, nigger? Wuz you a keepin' em for us?"

Mose remained silent.

Carefully, almost gently, the men picked Mose up, dusted him off, and placed him in his rocking chair. Then, placing his shotgun across his lap, they faded into the night, leaving Mose to his thoughts.

Mose didn't notice that the men had left. His mind was in the past.

He shifted his seat a bit and the shotgun fell across his hand, bringing a cry of pain from him. Holding his hand to his mouth, he turned his head toward the door. All he could see was a shadow.

"I is an ole man. I duzn't wants no trub'ls. I is an ole man."

A tear, tracing the lines in his face, fell upon the shotgun, and glistened in the moonlight, then fell to the porch where it was lost in the darkness.

"I is an ole man."

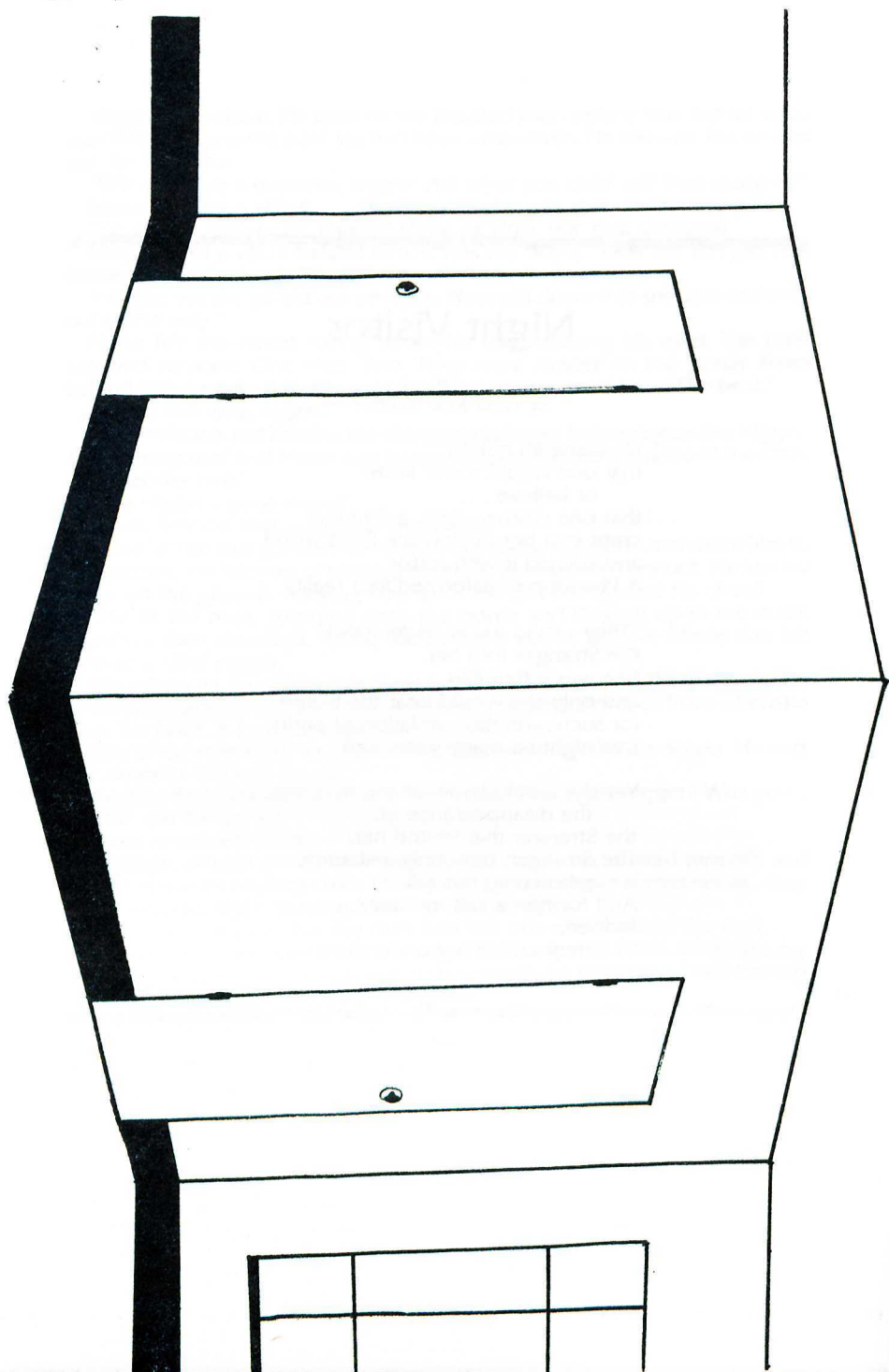
Night Visitor

by Gina Rose Zellmer

He came so quietly
that one would never know
or believe . . .
that one stormy night, a Stranger
crept into her eyelet-lace filled world
and stained it with terror . . .
A Phantom transformed into reality.

"They would never understand,"
the Stranger told her.
She was a Bad Girl,
and only she would bear the blame
for such a ruthless violation of purity
that night so many years ago . . .

Yet she would know of the mystery . . .
the disappearance of,
the Stranger that visited her.
The Stranger, now only a shadow
who could not tell,
And for her, a sad memory . . .
Indeed,
they would not understand.



MAN OF SHADOW

by Larry Edwards

*"... and the words of the prophets
are written on the subway wall. . ."
"Sounds of Silence"
Simon and Garfunkel*

My name is Willie Jeremiah Mantix—or at least that had been my name before I became a shadow, when I was made flesh and blood like the rest of you—now I'm just plain old Willie. Willie the shadow. Yeah, it's true. I am a shadow.

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking that ole' Willie boy ain't quite right in the head; and you're thinking that if ole Willie boy is a shadow, then how comes he's atalking to me. Well, I'll answer that question. You see, you don't exist either. You're not here. You're not even a shadow like me. I know. It's true. You don't become a shadow until you come to understand that you don't exist. When you can say to yourself, "I don't exist", then you'll know. Then you'll be a shadow like me.

I can see you don't believe me. That's okay. I didn't believe it at first neither. I was just as skeptical then as you are now. But I learned different. I soon found out what it meant not to exist. What it was like to be a shadow.

When I first came here I was, like I said a minute ago, pretty much like you. I had a family—or at least I thought I did—and I had what I thought was a golden opportunity. You know—the old American Dream; two cars, a thirty-year mortgage on a twenty-year house, meat six times a week. You know. That's what I miss most about being a shadow and knowing the truth. The meat. What I wouldn't give for a juicy, tender T-bone steak right now!

You see, even now I sometimes forget that I'm a shadow and that other stuff isn't real. Sometimes . . . yeah, sometimes it hurts to know the truth; and even the truth can't keep you from wondering about it every now and then.

Yes, sir, you can't help but to think about it now and then. It's enough to drive you crazy until you say to yourself that even your thoughts aren't real! Then you can exist with them knowing that they aren't real and never were.

When I first came here I was all set on conquering the world; I was going to make it sit up and take notice of old Willie boy. But it didn't. No sir, it didn't. Didn't pay the least bit of attention to me. It was as if I didn't exist.

And my wife—or at least what I used to call my wife. You see, she never existed either. Just lived inside my head like the rest of the world—anyway, my wife started telling me to make people notice me. Urged me to do things. So, you know what I did? I quit my job. Yes, that's what I did. I quit my job.

You might think that that was a pretty stupid thing to do if I wanted people to notice me, but it wasn't. No sir, it sure wasn't. For one thing my wife noticed me, though not in the way I imagined she would. She couldn't understand why I had quit what she called a golden opportunity—a job where I could rise to become the twenty-second junior vice-president in only five or thirty years. You see, she never could understand about how things are. Guess I didn't either, then. But I do now. Oh yes. I do now.

Anyway, she just kept on nagging me to go back and beg for my old job, but I had what they used to call pride. I just couldn't bring myself to crawl back. So I told her that; but she didn't understand. Instead, she asked me to think about her, her and our son.

I didn't tell you about him, did I? That's because he never existed either. He, like the rest of them, was just my imagination playing tricks on me. They weren't real.

Yes, she told me to think about her and him; about how I should be taking care of them the way I had promised her I would. What could I do? I sucked in my pride and went back; and no one even knew who I was!

When I told them I had come back for my old job, they just stared through where I was standing like I wasn't even there. At first I didn't understand, so I just waited for them to say something. But they didn't. Not for that whole morning. The people would just walk around me; not looking at me or anything.

Well, I'll tell you one thing. I was confused; that is until I saw this new man walk into the office and take my old desk—just sat down there like it was made just for him! Though I didn't know it then, that was my first hint that I didn't exist; but I was too stupid to realize it then.

I went back to my thirty-year mortgage, twenty-year house and told my wife. She liked to have bitten my head off. Then she started crying and moaning, clutching her breast and hanging her head like she was dying. Then she started calling me names—all kinds of names that don't mean nothing now; but they did then.

I took her in my arms, but she kind of threw me away from her—like I was just an old dress that she had worn out—and told me not to touch her, that she couldn't stand the thought of being touched by a loser! Again, what could I do? I didn't know any better.

Feeling the tears in my own eyes, I begged her to give me another chance, that I'd get a better job than the one I'd had. She was all smiles then, and she let me take her back into my arms for a little while; then she shoved me out the door, telling me that there was no time like the present. I can almost see her now—if I try hard enough—standing in the doorway, smiling and waving and saying, "Go get 'em, Tiger!"

I went, just as I told her I would. But I didn't find me a job that day. Nor the next. Nor the next for that matter. In fact, I never did find me a job. Even after seven weeks of constant searching I never found me a job—not the kind that my wife wanted me to have.

You see, she wanted me to get a job with potential; where I could rise, and subsequently, she could rise. But when I went to those kind of places they acted like I wasn't there either.

Oh, at first they would talk to me, asking me all kinds of questions like, "Why did I leave my last job?", and "Just exactly what are you looking for?" But when I found that I couldn't really answer them, they stopped looking at me; kind of like I was quietly and slowly fading away. At each interview I must have faded more and more because at the end of the third week my wife started to stop noticing me. She wouldn't answer me when I talked to her; and when I took her in my arms at night she just lay there; her face kind of twisted like she was having a nightmare or something. It made me feel funny; not knowing what was happening, not knowing what to do.

The fourth week of looking for a job and not finding one came and went, and as it did I found that more of me was disappearing with each new failure. It got so that the people on our block would look the other way when I met them; or they wouldn't answer when I said good morning. And my wife had stopped cooking dinner for me. But that was alright; I started eating carrots and apples and stuff like that, so I really never missed the food.

Did I tell you that every once and a while I thought about meat, although I know that it never existed? I did? Funny, I can't remember. Just goes to show you that you don't exist, else I would have remembered that, wouldn't I have?

Anyway, the fifth week I found a place where the people could still see me a little bit. I got a job in an all night gas station. It didn't pay much, but it kept food on the table.

Oh, I remember coming home and telling my wife I had found a job. It's funny, but somehow my finding that job made her able to see me—but just for a moment. Until I told her what kind of a job it was. Then I faded completely from sight again, because no matter how much I tried to talk to her, she'd not be able to hear or see me.



Then came the night when the station was robbed. I was knocked unconscious by one of the robbers, and while I lay there on the floor, they opened the cash drawer and took all the money. But they didn't get far. In fact, they were caught before they could get off the drive.

You see, the owner of the station had a little deal with the police captain of the neighborhood. If the captain would send all the police cars to the station for gas and maintenance, then the owner'd send him a little contribution each month—sort of like a thank you card, only this one was green. Anyway, a police car had just driven onto the drive—it was “thank you” time—and had seen the robbers stealing the money.

Of course they captured the robbers. Afterwards they called the owner and told him about the attempted robbery. It didn't take him but five minutes to get there.

All this time I was still lying there on the floor, half conscious and feeling like I was in a dream of some kind, and no one was paying any attention to me. Even when the owner arrived. Instead of asking me how I felt, he counted the money and checked it against the books to see if the police had kept any of it.

I moaned a couple of times, but they still didn't see me, so I grabbed one of the policemen's feet. He must have thought that a dog had bit him or something, because all he did was to kick backwards with his foot. But he missed. That was because all the while they were standing there I was gradually beginning to fade away even more.

Finally realizing that they weren't going to see me, I managed to stumble to my feet and started to walk home. It didn't take me long. Perhaps an hour. Perhaps a year. It really doesn't matter how long it took me, because it never really happened in the first place.

Anyway, after a while I got home, way before I was supposed to be home. I put my key into the door and found that it wasn't locked, but I didn't think anything about it. I just opened the door and went inside, not bothering to turn on the lights.

As I approached the bedroom I heard my wife crying or laughing—I couldn't tell which—they both sounded alike. Perhaps she was having a dream. Or a nightmare.

I started to turn away, but I heard another voice; a deeper, more masculine voice. It was laughing. And my wife's voice was laughing. And the other. And my wife's.

I opened the door, and there on the bed was my wife and a man I had never seen before. I started to say something, but I couldn't think of anything to say; that is, nothing appropriate to say. I just stood there, hoping that they wouldn't see me, wishing that they would so that they could explain to me what was happening to my life—to me.

But I shouldn't have worried. They couldn't see me. They couldn't see me nor hear me, even if I yelled at them. You see, I was standing in their shadow; I was in the bedroom's shadow, in the house's shadow, in the world's shadow.

I think it was about then that I began to understand how things really were, but I was still confused. Closing their door so they wouldn't be interrupted, I tiptoed from the house and began walking—walking and thinking

I thought I knew why the people hadn't been able to see me when I had gone to all those interviews. I was sitting in someone else's shadow; the shadow of the person who had last had the job. And when I stood or sat in someone's shadow, I became part of that shadow. I became that shadow!

I walked, and thought, for the rest of the night; not returning home until well into the day. When I got there, I noticed something funny. There were cars all around my house. And people. And an ambulance was shrieking away; its lights flashing and its siren crying like a lost soul.

This time I made sure I stood in no one's shadow! I hurried to the crowd and passed through them like I was made of smoke; until I came to a policeman who was holding the others back. He grabbed my arm and said, "Alright buddy. That's far enough!"

But as I said, this time I made sure I wasn't standing in anyone's shadow. Pulling free of him, I shouted that I was the owner of the house. People in the crowd echoed my voice and the policeman let me through.

Inside the house was another policeman, and he had his arm around my wife's shoulders. She was screaming and pulling her hair.

When I asked what was going on, she shrieked again and leapt to her feet, her finger pointing at me like a gun, "It's your fault, you bastard! It's all your fault! If you had been home when you should have been, he wouldn't have gone outside to wait for you! He wouldn't have been crushed by that car!"

She collapsed into the policeman's arms and I began to feel myself start to fade away again, only this time I knew that the job would be complete; that I'd fade until there was nothing left of me. I looked at my wife's face, and at the policeman's face, then at my son's picture on the wall.

I turned and walked from the house, stopping at the street, and seeing that red smear on the pavement. That red smear and a tiny, torn teddy bear. That was all that was left of my Son! No! I couldn't be!

A hand touched my arm and I jumped. It was the policeman who had been holding the people back. He had a sad look on his face and his mouth looked like it was struggling to get the words out, words that it didn't like the taste of, "I'm sorry, but I've just got word from the hospital. He never made it."

When he said that I felt myself fade completely away. It was then that I knew that what most—what everyone but me—calls reality, doesn't really exist! I had never had a son! Not a son who was only a red smear on the pavement! And I had never had a wife who slept with other men, who would lie with others while my son was being made into a crushed heap of bones and flesh and blood!

Suddenly everything was clear. There was no reality! There was nothing! Just shadows! And that's why you don't exist. You're just the product of a shadow, a shadow which doesn't exist! And the tragic thing about it is that you don't know. But how could you, when you don't even exist to know that?

I'm sorry. I can't continue. Even though I know that you don't exist, even though I'm a shadow, I can't help thinking about things which never were—and about how much I miss them! Oh, the pain—the pain of Knowledge! Of remembering a son who never was and will never be! The pain of being a shadow.

Cross

by Nathan W. Harter

Always alone
In quiet postures of examination,
Where thoughts reverberate
Like shuffling footsteps,
Where theories wander
Into many rooms exploring,
I leap in being.
You fix me in Your crosshairs,
Skewering the moment in one pang,
And leave me revelation
Not of what but that You are.

Both object and observer,
Half-demented by its loss,
I quiver, stop, and ponder
On the nexus of my faith.

Plodding logic, owing debts to premises,
Would conjure half an argument and fail.
But, like a conduit of power,
A synapse in a systematic world,
I am an intersection of two realms
And hang with apprehension,
Thus transfigured from beyond.

SPRING 1982

