

# MIDDLESEX

*A Literary Journal*

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MIDDLESEX, *A Literary Journal*

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**MIDDLESEX**  
*A Literary Journal*

A publication of Middlesex County College, Edison, NJ  
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Cover: Michael Greenhouse, *Intersection*

**Middlesex: *A Literary Journal***

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**SHE WALKED INTO THE ROOM**

wearing those red and pink striped flannels.  
I was looking at the paper when  
she toddled climbing my lap slipping behind stroking my hair.  
I felt the pull  
like my mother's touch when I was a girl.  
I looked up into her eyes  
And she smiled—a creamy innocence.  
The light was in her face.  
and when I returned to my paper  
there she was again.  
Face upside down she held onto my shoulder.  
Her forehead descended like a half-moon  
Her blue eyes, crystal blue, a tiny chin, an afterthought  
blocking my paper, the window, the shadow of the stars  
Even the TV rattling in the corner—  
and then she laughed so we both laughed.  
And there was my mother again in her laughter.  
We laughed giggles floating into the twilight air.  
We laughed until we could laugh no longer.  
Cheek against cheek  
grandmother daughter mother we laughed  
until the laughter was all that mattered  
until even our faces hurt.

## **MORNING BREAKFAST**

The silver spoon clatters its music  
against the rim of a white bowl.  
A morning's ration of cereal,  
honey wheat flakes swirling like rings around the moon,  
dehydrated strawberries transforming milk  
a fleshy pink.  
I am far away now  
in both distance and time.  
My bones, no longer sprightly,  
have grown tired and yet  
beyond the wooden blinds,  
outside the window  
I still hear the rattle of the school bus  
waiting at the corner  
a high-pitched voice telling me  
to hurry before I'm late,  
someone handing me my Cinderella book bag,  
crayons popping through the pockets.  
I slurp the last soggy flake,  
taste the sweet milk,  
and go.

## WHY I WRITE

I am afraid.  
Afraid to look  
to examine too closely  
that thing which  
beats within us all.  
Virginia's angry moth, Emily's insistent fly  
I do not like to look at them  
for fear of getting to the edge  
and plunging toward  
my own mortality.

And yet I write.  
Some say it is a futile task  
to dissect the pit of a plum when after all  
soon all will turn to ash and earth.  
What worth the pages in a desk drawer  
if no one bothers to turn the lock?  
But does not the simple sparrow delight in the beating of wings  
against the breast  
as it makes a first ascent into the clouds?  
Or the bee shiver with ecstasy as it yields its honey?  
Or the whale sound deep in a sea of liquid elixir as it plows beneath a  
wave?  
The youth who dares smile as he tastes sweet wine upon the lips?

I cannot but move toward joy—  
And if no one ever reads my words,  
would I bother to write them?  
Yes—I think—yes.

**YET**

    painted fireworks  
    of perhaps a chance meeting,  
    an eyelash wish of a charm

## LONGING

as the kettle whistled, she braided her hair  
in two thin wisps framing her elven face.  
Her face spoke of longing,  
and her eyes whispered lullabies

she gently dropped  
two chamomile tea pouches  
into a cup  
as the warm water dissolved  
and cradled the tea sachets  
steam rose in a rhapsody of  
tenderness as it echoed

every time she held onto a thought,  
it rose up into the air  
and evaporated  
as to never make a mention  
of its presence

**RAINDROPS**

these raindrop wishes fall  
who do they belong to?  
The question is the answer.  
The dancing is the dancer.

## **COLORS**

everything is connected  
to the colors of longing,  
the colors of my everlasting dream.

a bright and tender starry night  
as sunset breaks into  
a dawn splash  
along my eyelash

**WISH INSIDE OF MYSELF**

how can I make this wish  
with only a speck of dust  
that follows the night?

It reaches the moon  
                  as though a swan  
                          touching the clouds

the sparkling stream within the forest wood gleams  
the diamonds glint —  
like sparks of flint —  
and you are the joy at the end of the path.



**WORDS**

To play with words like sand  
each grain slips through our hands  
and each word slips through our heads  
into the lakes of language  
such a miracle to tread

**CUPID**

an aromatic  
thick infusion

of Love's madness  
and confusion

This superior blend

that Cupid seems to lend

**SUNSETS OUR WAY**

the sunsets come our way now  
wherever we may be  
reflecting amber memories,  
translucent dreams  
along the braided trees  
what times  
are these?

## CYNICAL CAKE

Mine is a tale like so many. When I was a little girl I dreamed of traveling the world. I spent countless hours imagining the view from atop the Eiffel Tower, I envisioned navigating the Nile, and I saw myself swimming in the Great Barrier Reef. My dreams were a map for my future, and because I loved to dream, my map was full of adventure and opportunity. Like so many children I thought myself infallible, and I loathed any cynical creature that crossed my path.

Cynicism is everywhere these days, but at nine it showed itself to me in the form of my uncle Marty. To preface this story, everyone must know that uncle Marty was, is, and will always be a creep. He's the creepy uncle that makes you shudder, and his antics were always induced by a considerable consumption of Budweiser. It was my ninth birthday. My mom had invited family and friends to celebrate. We huddled around the kitchen table for the traditional "happy birthday" anthem, and eagerly anticipated my moment. Mom had purchased a Carvel cake, Fudgie the Whale to be exact. Any Carvel lover will understand the deliciousness of Fudgie the Whale, and any nine year old can agree on the coolness of such a cake. When it came time to make a wish I blew out the candles, believing wishes were possible and probable. My uncle Marty prompted me to disclose my wish. I remember the moment I opened my mouth and shared "I wished for all my dreams to come true."

There's an obnoxious "aw" noise adults make when children do something cute or say something sweet. The whole room gave me an "aw," except for uncle Marty. As he cracked open another beer he asked, "and what are your dreams sweetheart?" I saw my parents exchange a glance. At the time I guess my father was worried uncle Marty would be a jerk, and my mom was worried he'd hurt my feelings. They were right. I hate looking back and seeing the wisdom of my parents. It's that kind of acknowledgement that really messes with my mind. I spent years defying them and believing they were wrong. Now, in retrospect, I have to own up to the fact their knowledge superseded mine.

So anyways, I spilled my soul to uncle Marty and every guest in attendance. I told them my plans. I said I was going to be a world famous traveler and photographer. Uncle Marty smiled, patted me on the head, and whispered in my ear “Be careful little girl. You’re setting yourself up for big and expensive disappointments.” Major jerk, right? I was nine. Nine years olds dare to dream. They don’t dream responsibly or reasonably. Responsible and reasonable dreams are for grownups. My brother grew up on me. Last Christmas he told me he dreamed of a John Deer lawnmower. That’s the kind of lame dreaming adults do and it stinks.

Because the beers had flowed, so did his mouth, “This is the danger in dreaming. This young lass thinks the world is her oyster. If we don’t wake her up, the world will eat her up. Happy Birthday to my niece, the dreamer.”

I remember smelling the beer on his breath and feeling my blood boil. At nine I didn’t understand much, but I knew my uncle was out of line. So I did what I felt was natural, I slapped him. I remember seeing my dad stifle a smile, which quickly faded as the embarrassment and anger of my mother made its way throughout the room. “Jennifer! Apologize and go to your bedroom.” Her tone was icy and had that classic motherly edge of “don’t mess with me.” So I said I was sorry, even though I wasn’t, and I went to my room. Uncle Marty had a few more beers, went home, and never thought of his words again. To this day he remembers I slapped him, but not what caused such a reaction.

I, however, remember everything he said, and I’m still angry because I didn’t get to eat my own Fudgie the Whale cake. Uncle Marty’s words haunted me throughout of the rest of my childhood, terrified me in my teenager years, and agitated me into adulthood. My ninth birthday was the last day I shared a dream with someone outside an extremely small and close circle.

We didn’t invite Uncle Marty to my tenth birthday party, or any other, but I think of him every year when it comes time to blow out the candles on the cake.

## THE PLAYGROUND

“...really, when I was a child, it was beautiful,” she said.

“There was a playground and flowers. Miss Iz had a beautiful garden.”

My mother described one of those animals hoisted on a metal spring that would stick out of the ground, for very young children to bounce and ride on, that was present at most playgrounds. I could picture it. I closed my eyes and saw my mother in miniature, playing peacefully in a grass-covered playground, wearing a 1950s little girl dress and Mary Jane shoes with her long, black, cloudy hair captured in a red, 1950s ribbon. In my mind she was surrounded by laughing children and she was bouncing on a pink sea horse with a blue, plastic mane. There would have been colorful flowers surrounding the place. The wind would be blowing, twisting the hair and clothing of the laughing children, sending dandelion spores through the air, and bathing the playground in a white, fluffy spring storm of cottony seeds.

“There was a slide and swings and even see-saws,” she said. Her voice was sing-song and melodramatic—like a Sunday school teacher’s—and she had a slight Southern accent. I looked at her, wondering if she were lying, exaggerating, imagining things, or just crazy. We were going to visit my grandparents, her parents. We would leave our suburban neighborhood that did indeed have flowers, marigolds that I had seen my father plant around the perimeter of our patio, and go to Cairo, Illinois. The day he planted those marigolds he wore his paint-stained, denim work hat, his T-shirt, and saggy work jeans. This was what he wore whenever he was around the house, gardening, doing yard work, or doing handiwork. This was in contrast to his insistence on wearing suits everywhere else, including the mall. “Doc always wears a suit—no matter where I see him...” a friend observed quizzically one day when I was in high school.

At our house we also had baby shrubs that Father had planted and weed-thin trees in the front yard that he had anchored into the sod with two pieces of slender lumber and rope. The house was a beautiful

colonial, designed by my father. It had a top floor flowing with bedrooms and bathrooms; a middle floor with a family room, dining room, a two-section kitchen, a large utility room, a living room, and a two-car garage; and a basement with multiple multi-purpose rooms and spaces that included a room for studying, a room for sitting, a room for storing and playing with toys, and a large, spacious room for running around and creating havoc with your siblings. That middle floor of the house had various other rooms including a cavernous, dark-paneled room that was called the den; it had a haunting picture of a boat on a dark, perilous sea that I stared at all the time. There was even a room somewhere that had a pipe bowl with three black, woody pipes that had a dark, woody, sweet smell; they were smoked by Father on a Saturday evening at home, on the patio, in the chill of the evening when the lawn was cut and the rambunctious brothers were taking their naps. The front of the house featured a long, roofed porch with room for multiple outdoor furnishings, but we did not have any at all because we were not the type of people to sit on the front porch or even be seen on the front porch, unless it was because we had to leave out of the front of the house to get into the car for piano lessons, or church, or to get to the bus stop to be picked up by the yellow school bus. In the back, on our flower-bordered patio, there was a patio table and several chairs because it was appropriate to sit on your patio in the backyard with friends or neighbors on a weekend in the summer with ice-cold lemonade. You were even allowed to laugh loudly in those instances. Toward the back of the yard, there was a 10 foot fence piece that shielded our swing set from our neighbors and where we tied up Shaft, our miniature schnauzer. We also had a mature maple tree that I climbed sometimes. Inside our house there were beautiful, ornate couches, chairs, hutches, china cabinets, chests of drawers, coffee tables, lamps, end tables, living room drapes, bedroom drapes, twin beds, night stands, a queen-sized bed, pictures, souvenirs, carpets, rugs, and more. The inside was all overseen by my mother, who was the consummate homemaker with a stunning sense of order and cleanliness that far exceeded other women, she said.

To get to Cairo, we would take a six-hour trip that would end in a mosquito-infested, sweltering town that had about 2,000 people *left*. This trip was made at least once a year at about the same time in August, the optimal time to experience humidity and mosquitos in Illinois and

especially around any body of water. In spite of the regularity of the trip, it seemed like it always loomed out of nowhere. As we drove through Southern Illinois, the black bridge that said Cairo in large red letters would suddenly appear and signal our arrival into the desolate ghost town. Upon crossing the border into Cairo in our mini-van, we would blink and find ourselves at our destination, having only passed a squatty Piggly Wiggly grocery on the way. This was a dilapidated town on the banks of the Mississippi River and there were pieces of the street falling into the river. The deserted town also contained shells of downtown buildings.

My mother pointed to a door around the side of a suite of buildings. “That is that store where I tried to work that summer.”

“That lady said, ‘I don’t hired color people.’ I had to chop cotton all summer instead to get money to fix my teeth,” my mother said.

The building was an ordinary downtown building and I could picture my mother in the 1960s, a bobby-socked, skinny teenager who imagined getting a job to buy something because it is hard to ask for things when you have a family of nine living in five rooms. *Rotten. Her teeth had been falling out. She had ended up purchasing a full set of teeth by the time she was 18.*

*“The dentist said they were all going to fall out anyway,” she told us.*

*Not being hired at the store was responsible for the notorious cotton-picking summers, in which she described riding in the back of a truck to get to a field, the hours of picking cotton until her fingers bled, and the sweltering heat.*

The projects were red and made out of brick. Each tenement entrance had a concrete stoop just large enough for one person and a chair that was usually occupied by a wiry-haired, pudgy, old woman in a flowered house dress with one or two teeth left and a coffee can filled with brown spit next to her white-socked, black, leather slipper-adorned feet—not at our grandparents’ house, however. My grandmother was 4’7, had a child-like physique, and never sat down. Her short, soft, cottony hair was plaited at all times, and on Sundays the plaits were covered by a shiny, black, curly church wig. She also had church dentures that differed from her other dentures because one of the front teeth was covered in silver.

“Close that door!” my grandmother would usually holler as soon as she heard the stretching of the wire on the swinging door. Hers



was the deep, raspy voice of an emphysemic accompanied by a cough evidencing the same. The closing of the door was an urgent matter because in August there was always a fan going inside the tenement and the slight, cool breeze that the fan could generate would be sucked out into the vortex of heat and humidity as soon as the door was opened even a crack.

We had arrived and we all piled into Grandma's house. To the left there was a single couch and a coffee table in a room that was about 10 by 12. It opened up to a kitchen that had a refrigerator, a table that seated four, a sink, four cabinets, a pantry that contained cans of food, mouse traps, and roach killer that did not work, and that was all. The staircase was located immediately in front of the front door and had about 15 stairs that led to a bathroom at the head of the stairs and two bedrooms to either side of the bathroom. All of the floors in the house were a smooth, glossy concrete.

We seven settled into the visit. After hugging Grandma and Grandpa and being asked questions like, "How do you like school?" and hearing comments like, "Look at such and such getting a little height," and any number of observations that may or may not have been nice or appropriate things to say out loud about the bodies and faces of growing boys and girls. We tried to stretch out. Boys who usually do nothing all summer but run, jump, tinker, and wrestle each other were on their best behavior, but eventually found themselves needing to stretch. I asked for permission to walk to Aunt Emma's tenement, which was all the way across the projects, and I left my grandparents' small, humid tenement—*free*.

We went through the back door of the kitchen which led to another stoop, bordered by a clothesline with clothing that had the yeasty aroma of old, washed cigarette smoke and a metal garbage can filled one quarter of the way with Pabst Blue Ribbon cans.

On the way to Aunt Emma's house we passed a fenced, concrete playground. There was a basketball hoop on one end of the playground. There were men and teenage boys leaning against the metal fence. They were smoking, cursing, or just lounging. There was a basketball hoop on one end.

There was no equipment save one broken piece.

There was a spring sticking out of the ground with a single piece of pink plastic attached, formerly a bouncing horse.

## HOUSE RULES

Dame Fortuna spins her wheel,  
a dark Vanna luring Faithful to Vanity Fair.  
Beguiled by the prize, we place our bets and let it ride  
like bouncing roulette balls seeking their slots—  
coming up zeroes or cashing it all in.  
Will it be the lottery win or the breast lump,  
the surgeon's slip-up or the summer chalet,  
the plane crash or the promotion?  
Rags, riches or both in an endless round?  
Cinderella spins and slips on the staircase—  
Bippity, Boppety, all bets are off.  
The Potter at His wheel makes and unmakes.  
Better to heed Buddha and seek the still point  
at the center of Samsara's deadly spokes  
off the Karmic carousel.

Dante says the Dame works for the House,  
the tough guy in the white tux with a table in the back,  
but He's no Rick Blaine, no sage or Sajak,  
plays it too close to the vest,  
and never smiles  
because he no longer turns a profit.  
His tilted wheel, perhaps, out-rigged,  
but how and whose House Rules?

She spins again  
with a wink and a nod,  
no Garden for this game—a wheel instead, spoked web,  
better suited to her spinning,  
and He starts to wonder if she's finally gotten  
his number.

## ARGUS

The age, a fallen one.  
Down from Olympus, I wander a man,  
and the ennui I witness outspans  
even a god's wide gaze.  
The people mesmerized--  
their eyes billions of blank screens fixed  
on the billions more that flicker and hold them fast.  
They sit spellbound by the eyes of Argus,  
forever watching and being watched.  
It drives the herds of men, corrals their will,  
pens them in with electric fences  
to short circuit contact.  
Cut off from caress or the sweet brush of lips,  
they forget the feel of rough bark or fine dirt through fingers,  
retreating sands slipping between toes,  
the scent of an infant's breath,  
the spasm of a struggling trout---  
*For these, for everything, they are out of tune.*  
*It moves them not.*

How best to strike them blind and open their eyes?  
Send Hermes to slip behind a firewall,  
lade the giant's lids with a winsome tune and a wink  
and hack it in its sleep?  
Hurl cyclopean shafts, splinter cell towers,  
and rumble belly laughs  
as they curse the surge ?  
Flood their waterways--  
a many headed hydra for their hydrocarbons?  
Will they divine the compassion in my destruction,  
rescue from their own  
Promethean thefts?

## **IMPS**

They crouch and leer, bat-faced,  
among the stalactites of gloom,  
waiting to take wing and flutter up  
into the spotlight where, for a flickering instant,  
they loom, large as gargoyles.

The urge to giggle in a eulogy;  
To refuse to hold your peace forever  
and screech some obscene reason why the groom  
and the bride should never unite;  
The insane itch to French kiss  
the boss as she patiently describes  
why your promotion has been denied.  
The poltergeist that lets you linger  
holding your wailing infant  
near the bedroom window...open wide to the winter night.  
The gremlin perched near the passenger window,  
that dares you to veer across the double yellow,  
or the pixie with a needle  
who loves to prick and wheedle you to cut  
the headlights down the mountain road,  
just for a second,  
just to see what happens.

They prick with tiny pitchforks,  
make you itch till you swat them like mosquitoes,  
or shoo them away, back to your sewers and caves,  
or stuff them still struggling  
back into your bottle, only to discover  
the next time they flutter madly round your lamp  
that you forgot to tighten the stopper.

**DEATH COMES, AN ANGLER**

Death comes, an Angler,  
luring us with hope  
like rising mayflies,  
driving his hooks deep,  
sapping our desire  
to plunge back  
into the vital current.  
No hiding among the rocks  
or the deep tree limbs.  
He draws us writhing,  
out of our world,  
mouths agape,  
wide-eyed and gasping.

Until we are raised, finally  
released  
from our heavy element,  
of murk and shadow,  
into sweet breezes and birdsong  
threading through blossoms,  
limitless light spilling  
from the never-ending sky.

## **MIDSTREAM**

No one knows how he reaches  
his island among the rapids  
where he baits and sets his lines,  
sits on his rock,  
and waits...

There will be time for his meal  
of wild trout in a black pan seared  
over a fire of brush and twigs,  
of pine nuts and blackberries,  
the canteen captures evening rain.  
Time will reflect  
on all the current has given  
and taken away...  
the family and fortune, a life overflowing  
and flown away, swept clean by the flood.

Right now, he breathes...  
in and out,  
in the branching of blood  
through temples and toes,  
the simple strength of bone and tendon,  
the humors flowing their daily rounds,  
the cancer seeping into his gut,  
the seed still stored never to be sown

In the waters downstream he hears  
echoes, murmurs ...  
bathing in their song.

No Job,  
he chooses not to sit on a burning heap  
of ash and dried bone  
and bellow out his "WHY?"  
to an indifferent F-5.  
Instead, he sits and waits...  
the rock he sits on warming  
in the noon sun,  
the rapids crashing all around.

## **ENLIGHTENMENT**

Be one with Nature, said the guru  
winking his only eye.

One with leeches and tapeworms,  
legions of e.coli teeming in Bambi's gut,  
the mangy Tom that snatched Snow White's birds,  
and Cinderella's mice spreading the Plague  
once the princess ascended her antiseptic castle.

Be one with hysterical hyenas  
that drag off lion cubs into the blackness  
packed with eyes, numerous as the stars.  
One with the F-5 that ripped through a school  
stealing even the breath of a child's final whisper.

Be one with the lust that stings the straying husband's loins,  
And the mantis that masticates her mates.  
Be one with the malarial mosquito  
that sighs softly in the ear of millions.  
Surf the tsunami and hang ten past crowds  
of the drowned that wave and gape.  
Be one with the tumor nestled in the brain's pillowed folds,  
or the one suckling like a newborn at the mother's soft breast.

Be one with Nature...  
or with the Wise Potter at his wheel,  
intelligent designer, crafty spinner  
of hells on earth where the meek and mild  
inherit their daily rounds, spiraling  
down Dante's infernal rings,  
to the nadir of enlightenment.



**MIDLIFE TRANSFORMATIONS IN LITERATURE AND FILM:**

Required Reading in “The College of Midlife Initiation”

Walker, Steven F. *Midlife Transformations in Literature and Film: Jungian and Eriksonian Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 2012

Reviewed by Mathew V. Spano

If and when our society ever becomes wise enough to open colleges for midlife initiation, as Carl Jung once famously suggested, it is likely that on the syllabus one will discover Steven F. Walker’s *Midlife Transformations in Literature and Film: Jungian and Eriksonian Perspectives*. Why would any society provide such a college? Aren’t adults at midlife typically secure in their professional careers, having scratched and clawed their way to leadership positions from which they can now mentor the up-and-coming, guiding them on the quest with the benefit of their own hard-won wisdom? Aren’t adults at midlife typically leaders and guides in their families and communities, the householders described by Manu, the veritable pillars of the social structure? Aren’t these adults typically the initiators and not the initiates? Ask anyone who has entered into midlife, or who has survived it and can look back on it with some objectivity, and you will likely hear of the hidden struggles of the initiators’ trials and suffering: the grappling with children, some nearing adulthood and leaving home; struggles to provide for aging parents, many suffering from debilitating diseases as they approach life’s end; coping with the death of parents and mentors; struggling with the realities of one’s own aging body and one’s own health problems; clinging to careers that have stagnated just for the security of having a job, income, benefits in a sputtering economy. Viewed from this perspective, the midlife “initiators” seem to be the ones who need the most help.

Yet there seems to be a dearth of serious studies dealing with this pivotal life stage, especially when compared to the rows of texts dealing with all stages of childhood and parenting. Who is caring for

the initiators, for the mid-lifers? The question takes on even more magnitude when one considers the faltering economy and the sheer numbers of Americans having fairly recently entered into midlife (baby-boomers and their children). One often hears of the mid-lifer who flees from it all, choosing an escape via suicide or regression (the midlife CEO who dons his hair piece, revs up the new sports car, and screeches off into the sunset with the young girlfriend for whom he left his wife).

Fortunately, Steven F. Walker's new book reveals that essential life-stage wisdom *has* been handed down to us from great artists of past generations and is still being provided by contemporary artists if we have the eyes to see it—but, one might infer, it has been hidden, or, at least, deeply embedded in sophisticated works of art and perhaps obscured by modern Western (mostly American) culture's obsession with youth and denial of serious reflection on the later life stages of midlife and beyond. Walker's book provides a much needed lens through which to discern this wisdom in classic films and literary works, laying the foundation for the kind of college for midlife initiation Jung once envisioned. In the title of the book, and consistently throughout each chapter, Walker uses the term "midlife transformation" instead of the more popular "midlife crisis" presumably because the latter has become something of a cliché in popular culture, typically misrepresenting the midlife experience as a kind of problem or disease (as opposed to one of several life stages) and typically associated with but one reaction to confrontation with this life stage transition—i.e., the aforementioned male regression. For Walker, successful passage through the midlife stage involves an opportunity for transformation of the personality, experienced by both men and women at various levels of consciousness. The "crisis" often results from neglecting the transformation or, worse, actively denying and resisting it.

Working within the overall frame of Erikson's formula for the midlife stage of "generativity vs. stagnation" with the virtue of "care" for those who complete the midlife passage, Walker emphasizes the importance of "generativity"—the choice some individuals make to forge through the difficulties of midlife, say "yes" to life, and commit to activities and endeavors that are larger than themselves and that nurture and inspire others in the community. "Stagnation" involves choosing a narcissistic self-absorption and regression, rejecting the opportunity for initiation and refusing to adjust and adapt to the passage of time and

one's own growth into a new stage of life. But while "stagnation" might well be a narcissistic self-absorption and regression, Walker cautions that from a Jungian perspective, it might really also involve the required growth and adaptation, albeit beneath the surface in the form of inner work, introspection and psychic development during a period of liminality. Such a "turning inward" might involve integration of certain archetypes arising throughout the midlife stage: in particular, coping with the death of the youthful hero, struggling with the shadow and anima, trusting the midlife mentor, and identifying with the midlife hero/heroine. Along the way, one may find aid in a growing sense of spirituality, perhaps even the emergence of what Murray Stein has called "transformative images," crucial for overcoming the depression and anxiety of midlife, and Walker reminds us that these images may come from external and/or internal sources. Walker also notes the importance of male and female paradigms for midlife transformation, valuing Jung's attention to the role of gender in midlife transformation.

Having fashioned and calibrated his critical lens, Walker now focuses it on particular literary texts and films that he calls "oneiric," describing them as containing highly affective and transformative archetypal images artistically stylized in a way that both masks the archetypal content and also makes it accessible to the audience of a particular time and sensibility. Oneiric texts have a particular visionary power, an almost "hallucinatory effect," Walker explains, and viewed through the proper critical lens, their therapeutic effect can be understood, appreciated and cultivated. Regarding midlife transformation, Walker hopes that oneiric texts will "enable the younger reader...to imagine a midlife transition still to come, the middle-aged reader to relate with confidence and optimism to one that is in the process of unfolding, and the older reader to discover the specific contours of one that has already completed itself." Citing Marcel Proust's comments on such texts, Walker asserts that these oneiric texts "encourage the reader to become the reader of his or her own life." Since oneiric texts feature a series of evocative, "striking transformative images," they may take the form of a dream sequence, a literary narrative, a sequence of images in visual or plastic arts, or film texts. Hence, works as diverse in time period and genre as Homer's *Odyssey*; the Hindu sacred text *Bhagavad Gita*; the series of Roman frescoes in the Villa of Mysteries in Pompeii; Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*;

Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; Proust's *Time Regained*; Fellini's *8½* and *Juliette of the Spirits*; and Kurosawa's *Ikiru* all have the potential to serve as therapeutic, oneiric texts and "stars to steer by" for a midlife audience interested in obtaining insights into the apparent chaos of their own stage of life.

Walker chooses to base much of his analysis on an oneiric text written by Jung himself—*Memories, Dreams, Reflections*—which includes an account of his own experience of the midlife transformation, an account Walker asserts may outline the stages of an archetypal paradigm for males undergoing this transition:

The demise or diminishment at midlife of the youthful and blindly self-assertive heroic attitude.

The problematic coming to consciousness of the shadow (the repressed contents of the personal unconscious).

The resurgence of man's feminine side (his "anima," in Jungian terms).

The appearance of the midlife mentor.

The acquisition of a new sense of identity.

After explaining these stages (and their accompanying visions and dreams) as they apply to Jung's autobiography and midlife transformation, Walker goes on to elaborate on each stage by choosing representative works of classic literature that may also serve as therapeutic, oneiric texts for a modern male audience, and he will devote much of his analysis to a paradigm of female midlife transformation as well.

The practice of bringing the dark and undeveloped side of one's personality up into consciousness, Walker notes, takes on particular importance at midlife. Successful integration of the shadow offers the midlife initiate a re-invigoration and renewed engagement with life that may well pull one out of midlife depression and propel one forward through the next stages of life. Shadow work is risky, however, in that over-identification with the emerging dark side may well lead one to ruin. Walker chooses Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to illustrate shadow work at midlife, providing some startling insights into the composition of the tale as well as original and important analyses of some of its secondary characters to illustrate the

varied perspectives on the shadow explored by Stevenson.

If Stevenson's novel emphasizes the danger of losing oneself in the shadow, in the Sumerian myth of *The Descent of Inanna*, Walker makes a surprising discovery of an ancient text that offers for modern readers a fully delineated example of successful shadow integration at midlife. Here, shadow integration not only reinvigorates the ego personality but also reinvents it, providing new and hitherto unknown resources that, properly channeled, may be used to bolster and defend the integrity of the transformed personality.

In addition to the shadow, the midlife ego must also contend with the "resurgence" of the contra-sexual side—i.e., the male's undeveloped feminine (anima) and the female's undeveloped masculine (animus)—and Walker guides us through several oneiric works that dramatize and provide insight into this aspect of the midlife transformation.

As a personification of a man's *eros*, the anima reflects a man's capacity for relationship with others (especially women): hence, an undeveloped anima may appear in dreams and myth as a threatening seductress while a mature anima may function as a guide to a man's emotional development. Since so many literary works and films, as well as myriad Jungian studies, have explored the negative anima figure bedeviling midlife the protagonist with her siren song, Walker does not waste time re-treading old ground. Granted, he does provide a particularly tragic example of a midlife protagonist's possession by the negative anima in Louis Malle's film *Damage*, exploring the especially tragic consequences for everyone involved: the anima-possessed midlife male; his abandoned wife; the younger woman upon whom he projects the anima (in this case his daughter-in-law); and his own son, who falls to his death from a balcony upon learning of the affair between his wife and his father. Nevertheless, Walker chooses to focus his attention more on the positive transformative effects of the anima on the midlife male, and his analysis and research into this area shed new light on the process of such a transformation.

In Fellini's *8½* Walker traces the anima development of the midlife protagonist, Guido, who ultimately encounters his positive anima in the figure of Claudia Cardinale, a figure who challenges and ultimately guides him out of his narcissistic depression, awakening him to the great love and magic that have blessed him in the many

relationships along the procession of his life. The result is a renewed passion for life that sparks his generativity as he completes the film, the ending to which reflects Guido's heartfelt gratitude to all those he has known, and loved, in his life. In support of this analysis, Walker's research leads him to uncover Fellini's intentional use of Jungian theory inspired by the director's then recent discovery of Jung via his own analysis with the therapist Dr. Bernhard. Walker even decodes the Jungian clue that Fellini mischievously inserted in the seemingly nonsensical childhood phrase from Guido's memory: "the talismanic word "ANIMA" (A-sa NI-si MA-sa)" (50).

To illustrate a different kind of midlife protagonist, Walker turns from the sulking Italian playboy director of Fellini's *8½* to the prematurely aged and terminally ill bureaucrat of Kurosawa's film *Ikiru*. Walker engagingly describes the way the anima can evoke the midlife male's generativity in his analysis of the role of Miss Toyo as she re-awakens the protagonist Watanabe's feeling and empathy for children and compassion for the community (deadened after long years as a bureaucrat) leading to his newfound purpose and passion to build the playground. Just as important, Walker clarifies Kurosawa's use of Goethe's *Faust* as a subtext for the film, acknowledging previous scholarship on the topic while also correcting some misinterpretations (Watanabe ends up a positive Faust figure who navigates a more mature relationship with the anima instead of succumbing to possession by the anima and projecting it onto the young woman with tragic consequences as Faust did with Gretchen).

In the Indian novelist R.K. Narayan's *The English Teacher*, Walker discovers an excellent example of a practical therapeutic technique Jung conceived whereby a man in the throes of a midlife crisis might cultivate a relationship with the anima. Jung held that a man might hold actual conversations with the anima, and although Jung cautioned that this technique would not appeal to everyone (and would no doubt seem ridiculous to some), if done in the proper spirit it might enable a man to further personify and objectify his vague anima feelings and projections, establish a relationship with these impulses, and hopefully lead to a more mature and psychologically developed relationship with her.

Regarding the female experience of the midlife transformation, Walker offers two examples of oneiric works that illustrate the potential

tragedy, as well as the possibility for positive renewal and generativity, that may result from a woman's struggle in midlife to cope with the emergence of the animus.

In his application of Jungian and Eriksonian theories to Racine's *Phaedra*, Walker identifies and clarifies what to many readers might appear as a confusing reversal of character in the tragic heroine. At the end of the play, having been possessed all along by the animus and having projected it onto her own stepson Hippolytus, Phaedra now seems suddenly to shed her selfish, incestuous desire and does something unexpectedly honorable and compassionate: she tells her husband the truth. Prior to this moment, she has acted upon her lust for Hippolytus and leveled false accusations against him that ultimately lead to his exile and accidental death. Now, having taken poison to atone for her crimes, Phaedra confesses to her treachery and testifies as to Hippolytus' innocence. Walker illuminates the remarkable selflessness of this act: although Hippolytus is now dead, his good name has been restored in his father's eyes. Theseus, finally convinced of his son's honor and integrity, subsequently agrees to adopt his son's beloved—a young woman of a rival family. Hence, Phaedra's acceptance of blame and confession has a generative ripple effect, and what may have initially appeared as an "out-of-character" compassionate behavior by a hitherto villainous tragic heroine is now explained as her integration of the positive animus—i.e., Phaedra has psychologically incorporated Hippolytus' qualities of honor and integrity.

Examples of the positive animus in literature and film are often rarer than their negative counterparts, with Jungian scholars frequently citing Bluebeard or Heathcliff as examples of the "demon lover" that may be found in folk literature as well as romantic novels. Finding examples of the positive animus in works written by female authors seems to be even more of a challenge with Harper Lee's Atticus Finch from her novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* (portrayed by the regal Gregory Peck in the film version) typically serving as the prime example. Atticus, of course, serves as the positive animus guide in the form of the father, but the archetype is more difficult to find in film and literature in its manifestation as lover. Walker discovers such a figure, however, in his analysis of Jane Campion's *The Piano* as he illuminates Campion's re-imagining (and transformation) of Emily Bronte's Heathcliff in the character of Baines. According to Walker, the same kind of animus

split may be seen in Campion's film that appeared in Bronte's novel: i.e., the successful, boring, "normal" man to whom the heroine is shackled via the conventions of class and custom of the times versus the primal, impulsive, unconventional and wild lover with whom she becomes infatuated in spite of herself. The split ends up killing the heroine in Bronte's novel, with Heathcliff stoking the flames of their passionate relationship that end up incinerating Catherine. Campion retains the qualities of the animus fascination and passionate affair, but has her animus character guide the heroine through a symbolic death and rebirth into a new and more genuine relationship and life. No doubt, Walker's analysis of *The Piano* provides a much needed study of the positive animus figure in an oneiric text, especially one composed by a contemporary female artist.

Unique to Walker's study of midlife transformation is his characterization of gendered midlife transformations as they appear in key myths and artworks. While he makes it clear that both genders experience the general crisis of generativity vs. stagnation as well as the emergence of the shadow and the archetype of the contra-sexual (anima/animus), Walker notes that each gender will experience these phenomena differently—i.e., that women will experience the impulse to move from intimate family concerns to wider, more generative ones differently than men, and that the shadow and contra-sexual side of women will appear differently as well since women are prone to develop and to repress different parts of the psyche and personality in the socialization process. Moreover, Walker notes a central difference in the essential struggle of each gender that informs these psychological experiences. Whereas the slaying of the youthful hero and cultivation of the midlife hero remains a central task for males undergoing midlife transformation, Walker sees the struggle to cope with a sense of tragic abandonment as central to a woman's experience of this phenomenon. The key oneiric work upon which Walker bases his study is the series of frescoes in the Villa of Mysteries in Pompeii—a sequence of images depicting what appears to have been a Roman female initiation ritual. Walker draws upon the study of the frescoes done by the Swiss Jungian therapist Linda Fierz-David in the early 1950's (and only recently published), in which the sequence is interpreted as a spiritual individuation, and integrates her work into his own theory of the frescoes as depictions of a female midlife initiation ritual.



Although Walker's choice of artwork might not at first appear to fit into the categories of literature or film, it becomes clear fairly quickly that the ritual viewing of these frescoes amounted to what was certainly a kind of cinematic experience for initiates as they followed the sequence of images in the sacred, dimly-lit chamber (not so different from a modern movie theater, one would imagine). The sequence follows a matronly female initiate from her inspiration by the statue of the emperor's wife Livia (which may be taken as a "transformative image"); her descent into Dionysus' underworld guided by the god's androgynous helper Silenus; her return with a ritualized phallus which she is forbidden to uncover; her ritual flagellation and symbolic divestiture of her old identity, guided by a wise old priestess; and her depiction in the final images as a middle-aged woman with a new identity, confident in her independence and autonomy. Walker references Fierz-David's parallel to the myth of Ariadne who, abandoned by Theseus on the island of Naxos, undergoes a transformation, becoming a goddess via her encounter with Dionysus. For Walker, the images reflect an internal marriage and transformation within the initiate resulting in a newly confident, wise woman at midlife whose image echoes that of Livia, Augustus' wife and representative of the generative midlife matron. With this introduction to female midlife transformation drawn from classical antiquity, Walker goes on to explore contemporary depictions of such transformations in Federico Fellini's film *Juliet of the Spirits*, Nina Paley's film *Sita Sings the Blues*, Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Walker also discovers examples of male midlife transformation in texts from classical antiquity and provides much needed profiles of the midlife hero as well as the midlife mentor, revealing hitherto untapped sources of wisdom in such oft mined classics as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Homer's *Odyssey*. In his innovative analysis of *Oedipus Rex*, Walker expands the definition of the play's tragedy by exposing the archetypal dimension of Oedipus' midlife transformation. For Walker, Oedipus' tragedy begins in his resistance to midlife transformation, and Walker further asserts here (and in his analysis of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* in another chapter) that the genre of tragedy often has important lessons regarding midlife transformation, often dramatizing the hero's inflation with the youthful, ambitious identity, his rigid clinging to that identity, the stagnation and self-absorption in which he finds

himself, his symbolic death and rebirth into a more generative, worldly wise midlife hero who endures and suffers into wisdom. Sophocles' Oedipus illustrates this obsessive need to perpetuate the youthful hero within which propelled him to fame in solving the sphinx's riddle, and to bring it to bear first on the mysterious murder of King Laios and then (obsessively) on the mystery of his own birth and parentage. The limitations of his youthful, heroic power of reason and riddle-solving become tragically apparent as he is forced by circumstances to bear the burden of the larger, archetypal forces that have shaped his destiny and against which his reason is ultimately powerless. In particular, Oedipus must carry the collective paranoia and paralysis that his hyper-masculine culture has always felt toward the archetypal great mother who, it was feared, had the power to emasculate the warrior and strip him of his powers. In essence, this is what happens to Oedipus who, in the brief span of the play, goes from a midlife hero obsessively clinging to his youthful talents, to a true midlife hero who patiently accepts his burden and fate having gained insight and wisdom even while having lost his eyes and having to tap his way with his cane—an echo of the wise older man, Teiresias and (as fate would have it) an echo of the next life stage described initially in the riddle of that original great mother seen as monster: the sphinx. Walker sees a silver lining in Oedipus' fate and character as the hero courageously accepts his culture's burden and the accompanying wisdom and generativity he has suffered into—wisdom perhaps he can offer to others as midlife mentors Teiresias and Creon have tried to share with him.

Walker finds a less tragic midlife transformation in Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus also struggles through the process, which seems very much forced upon him, initially resisting slaying the ambitious, impulsive youthful hero within, but he comes to struggle less against this transformation, heeds more of the advice of midlife mentors, and navigates/integrates the archetypal forces that arise at midlife more successfully (and less tragically) than does Sophocles' Oedipus. In the end, he becomes a more humble, wiser, more generative midlife hero. In many ways, Walker implies, Homer's *Odyssey* seems to serve as a useful tour guide through midlife initiation for men. Walker insightfully notes that Odysseus' behavior and attitude upon reaching the Cyclops' island hasn't changed much since his participation in the sacking of Troy and subsequent raiding of the Cicones. It is a youthful, impulsive need for

glory in battle (*Kleos*) and immature attitude toward the feminine (as property) that drives this hero and sets up a confrontation with the shadow (Cyclops) and anima (most notably Circe and Kalypso). Like Oedipus (although much sooner), he learns that youthful impulsiveness, hubris and cleverness are not enough to successfully navigate the passage into midlife and may even get him killed or bring down the wrath of the gods. Odysseus seems to learn his lesson sooner than did Oedipus, however, as he learns to accept help from a variety of midlife mentors in the forms of the wise old man (Teiresias' shade in the underworld) and positive anima figures (Circe and Athena).

Circe appears to be especially helpful once Odysseus has learned to see her not as an object of plunder and desire but as an equal at which point she turns from adversary to guide, providing essential advice and information for much of the rest of Odysseus's journey. Most significantly, she advises him to journey to the realm of the dead (the anima as guide to the unconscious) where he will meet Teiresias who wisely advises him upon his return to sacrifice to Poseidon (the god who championed Ares and Aphrodite's adulterous affair)—i.e., according to Walker, “symbolically saying farewell to such an adulterous life of sexual excess, and making himself ready for settling down permanently with Penelope.” Indeed, Odysseus is confronted time and again with the feminine in both helpful and monstrous guises: Athena, the Laestrygonian women, Circe, the sirens, the procession of women in the underworld, Scylla and Charybdis, Kalypso, and Nausicaä before making it home to Penelope—the one woman in the epic who has successfully completed her own midlife journey to be his true partner and equal.

Walker beautifully illustrates how Homer's *Odyssey* weaves the midlife transformation of both men and women together in the journeys of Odysseus and Penelope. For her part, Penelope has had to confront intense feelings of abandonment, suffering from a crowd of young, rowdy suitors who harass her and threaten to separate her permanently from her husband and from her very identity (symptomatic of a woman at midlife who might feel abandoned and succumb to doubts about her identity and self-image—the archetypal animus attack on her self-esteem and self-worth). But Penelope finds a way to turn her shadow (a crafty and seductive weaver of deception) to her own purpose against the suitors to survive the years of a liminal

and lonely existence. Her transformation into a wise and canny midlife woman is nowhere more evident than her final trick of the bow contest, which provides the means for Odysseus to kill the suitors and re-establish his reign. Along the way, of course, Athena has guided both Odysseus and Penelope in navigating their midlife transformations (as well as Telemachus in his transition to adulthood), even appearing in disguise, at one point, as a character named Mentor—from which we get the word.

One of the most important contributions that Walker makes in *Midlife Transformations* is the critical attention he gives to the figure of the midlife mentor. The problem of father-son Oedipal tensions in the young male's initiation into manhood was circumvented in ancient Greek culture (among others) via the mentor, and Walker sees the mentor playing an important role at another crucial life-stage initiation—that of moving from young adulthood into midlife. An effective midlife mentor, Walker explains, is one who does not pretend to be all-knowing and does not tamper with the initiate's freedom. Instead, the mentor is motivated by a respect for the initiate's unique life circumstance, sometimes offering to share his own struggles through the transformation, sometimes giving more indirect advice that the initiate is free to “file away” and later on test against his own experience, all the while feeling free to accept or reject that advice without repercussions of feeling judged by the mentor. Moreover, an effective mentor should be aware of “Oedipal contamination” and the younger initiate's projections of both the ideal “good father” and the tyrannical “devouring father.” Motivated by an earned trust in the mentor, the initiate feels comfortable to heed his advice in a “submission without castration”—a phrase that Walker recalls from a response by James Hillman to a question Walker had asked him following a lecture Hillman gave on Oedipus. The phrase, Walker concludes, marks a turning point in midlife transformation—a point at which the midlife initiate has moved past Oedipal projections of the negative father onto potential mentors and learns to trust them and accept their advice. Oedipus comes to this point late in Sophocles' tragedy, submitting to Creon's advice at the end of the play and as a result courageously accepting the burden of his culture's fear of the maternal. Odysseus reaches this point sooner by accepting Teiresias' advice to abandon the youthful hero model and take on a midlife heroic identity instead.

Teiresias and Creon serve as good mentors for their respective initiates, guiding them into their new, midlife identities and (in Creon's case) enduring and deflecting the initiate's negative Oedipal projections of the negative father.

Not all midlife mentors are so effective, however, and some seek to exploit their initiates as Walker makes clear in his discussion of midlife "pseudo-mentors." These are typically elder adults upon whom younger adults project the ideal mentor but who are selfish and exploit the mentor-initiate relationship for their own gain only. They are older adults who, despite their biological age, have not passed through midlife initiation and have stagnated in narcissism, never having moved into the generativity described by Erikson. Moreover, the pseudo-mentor may also become inflated with the power of the younger man's Oedipal projections. Such a dynamic plays out in the relationship between Kurtz and Marlow in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* while Lawrence's *Kangaroo* features such a pseudo-mentor in the title character but with the hero Somers resisting his manipulations—something which Marlow is unable to do. Walker carries over these important insights into his analysis of several important films featuring mentors, films such as *My Dinner With Andre* (successful midlife mentor) and *The New Age* (pseudo-mentor). Significantly, Walker also brings this analysis to bear on Jung's relationship with Freud, concluding that Jung, like Oedipus, clung to the identity of the youthful hero and could not submit to Freud without fear of castration while Freud acted the tyrant, bent on castrating his disciple, corrupted by the power his "sons" projected onto him.

In a chapter on Modernism and midlife transformation, Walker implies that midlife transformation is not exclusively an internal process and explores the interplay of this individual psychological process and its external cultural and historical context. The backdrop of WWI, for example, is more than a mere historical setting for the transformation of Proust's protagonist Marcel in his great novel *Time Regained*. For Proust, the effects of the War on Paris and nearby Combray capture and deepen Marcel's own sense of stagnation at midlife as he comes to view himself as a failed writer. The setting even has a more direct psychological impact on Marcel since many of his childhood memories have been literally been laid waste in the rubble of the buildings and places of his

youth. Moreover, friends and colleagues of his youth have either been killed in the war or (in the case of an older acquaintance) seriously deteriorated by old age.

But Walker echoes Jung's faith in the rejuvenative and transformative powers of the unconscious in his analysis of Marcel's psychological resurrection just when he seems to have fallen into a midlife stagnation from which he can never emerge. Seemingly arbitrary and ordinary experiences trigger childhood memories and bring with them startling insights into the nature of his stagnation (a vivid memory of a scene in which he felt infantilized by his mother) as well as the power of his artistic gifts (sounds and textures trigger vivid memories of aesthetic/spiritual experiences and remind him of an "extra-temporal side" to his personality). Newly aware of his poetic gifts, Marcel feels a calling to share these gifts with his future readers—not merely to flaunt his own talents but to awaken similar gifts and experiences in his readers and thus guide them to their own aesthetic/spiritual awakenings. Here, Walker makes a subtle but crucial point about defining midlife generativity—i.e., that it can come in many forms, even those endeavors that might appear to be very introverted and self-serving on the surface. An artist, like Marcel, choosing to devote all of his time and energy to his art may be more generative than another at midlife engaged in extraverted, social activities.

Walker's analysis of Marcel also reveals the importance of an intense spiritual experience sometimes at the heart of midlife transformation. Walker is quick to point out, however, that such an experience need not be linked to any particular organized religion and is often an intuition of an eternal part of the self (soul) that may arise (as in Marcel's case) in the form of an intense psychological response to an everyday experience. Moreover, this chapter is important in Walker's analysis of midlife transformation because it deepens and qualifies the definition of the midlife hero, which may be mischaracterized solely as the patient, long-suffering, enduring personality that has left all youthful ambitions and ideals behind. The midlife hero may indeed resurrect some youthful ambitions and ideals but ONLY to serve his newfound sense of generativity and NOT a regression to the narcissism and stagnation of the youthful hero. Prior to this transformation, Marcel had stagnated for years in depression rooted, as Walker has noted, in his unconscious yearning for an infantilizing mother and manifesting

in what Jungians would term “anima moods”—i.e., his loss of drive, independent will, self-esteem culminating in the negative fantasy that he is finished as an artist. Once the transformation has begun, however, he has a vision of Mlle. de Saint-Loup, the daughter of his departed friend, that seems to fire his creative imagination (the positive anima as muse). And the midlife mentor appears in the form of Charles Swann who, the midlife Marcel recalls, unknowingly blocked subsequent infantilizing visits from his mother and, later, taught Marcel a valuable lesson via negative example about anima projection and infatuation by marrying a woman who was the object of his youthful passions but who ultimately proved to be unsuited for him.

Walker concludes the chapter with an equally compelling analysis of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* in which he reveals Woolf’s modernist treatment of female midlife transformation—her stagnation in feelings of abandonment and subsequent transformation of these feelings into a newfound generativity against the backdrop of post-WWI England. As with Proust’s novel, here too the sense of death and devastation from the war lingers and penetrates the everyday life of the protagonist—the fifty-two-year-old Clarissa; specifically, the suicide of the shell-shocked veteran Septimus Smith invades the conversation of her dinner party. The atmosphere of death and destruction in these novels serves as a kind of trigger prompting sudden introspection and reflection in the protagonists. It also seems to amplify the feelings of abandonment Clarissa feels as she feels (without justification) that she might be losing her husband, Richard, and her seventeen-year-old daughter Elizabeth whose tutor, Miss Kilman, seems to bring out Clarissa’s irrational hatred and receives her shadow projections. The return of an old boyfriend who was always unduly critical of Clarissa correlates with the emergence of her negative animus as her self-esteem and integrity begin to waver. But Clarissa navigates the crisis successfully, integrating the aggressive shadow feelings she has toward Miss Kilman and re-directing this energy toward a spirited defense of herself against Peter’s criticism. His belittling of her interest in throwing parties loses its sting when she comes to realize the importance of her parties—their life affirming generativity, in Walker’s analysis. And an old neighbor woman across the street serves as a kind of mentor, giving Clarissa unspoken guidance in leaving behind youthful ambition, accepting her own life stage, and even losing fear of death. Remarkably,

Woolf is able to embed a male midlife transformation (that of Peter) in her novel and juxtapose and inter-relate the two processes as the novel proceeds. Walker notes that Peter (muddled in a midlife anima obsession and affair with a married woman half his age) comes to admire Clarissa's courageous passage into midlife and perhaps even draw strength from her example.

In the book's final chapter, Walker examines the profound insights into midlife transformation present in seminal Hindu literary and spiritual texts and explores the interplay between life-stage psychology and social and spiritual ideals within a culture. Drawing on the work of Hindu psychologist Sudhir Kakar, Walker explains some of the major parallels between Erikson's descriptions of the life stages and the Hindu conception of the life stages and their social customs and definitions as presented in the canonical Hindu text *The Laws of Manu*. In a culture with a keen understanding of life stage transformation, one anticipates the significance of life-stage psychology in other canonical Hindu texts, and Walker fulfills readers' expectations with fascinating analyses of Kalidasa's dramatic masterpiece *Shakuntala* and the spiritual epic *Bhagavad Gita*, the latter serving as the ideal example of the multi-valent nature of midlife transformation. Focusing on the warrior Arjuna's psycho-spiritual crisis on the battlefield depicted in that epic text, Walker reminds readers that the *Gita* is in fact embedded in the larger epic of the *Mahabharata*, and sheds much needed light on the context of the *Gita*—especially the episode just prior to Arjuna's crisis. At this point, Arjuna and his brothers must fulfill the conditions of a bet which they lost, agreeing to spend twelve years in exile and the thirteenth in public but disguised. Curiously, Arjuna chooses to disguise himself as a eunuch among the women at the court of King Virata. Having spent a year in this role and subsequently returned to his role as Pandava warrior, Arjuna finds himself in the middle of a civil war but astonishingly drops his bow and sits in the middle of the battlefield, refusing to fight. At this moment of crisis, Walker recognizes elements of the warrior shadow (the cowardly act of refusing to fight) as well as identification with the undeveloped anima (Arjuna's "anima mood" of depression, passivity, and self-doubt). Having an adult son also participating in the battle places Arjuna at the midlife stage, and the details of his situation on the battlefield reveal the onset of midlife transformation: refusing to fight in the battle for glory and honor



(which might have appealed to the youthful hero), succumbing to the stagnation of his own depression, overwhelmed by the shadow and anima, and the arrival of his midlife mentor, Krishna. But Arjuna's identification with the anima also provides him with the wisdom and perspective to question the hyper-masculine values of his warrior culture. Questioning the waste of war, Arjuna is open to the spiritual wisdom of Krishna whose karmayoga teaching allows Arjuna to see the battle in a completely different way than the youthful warrior—with insight into the spiritual significance of one's actions and detachment from ego and the fruits of action. Hence, Arjuna's midlife transformation in the *Bhagavad Gita* has powerful cultural ramifications in that it leads to a paradigm shift from the values of the warrior (desire for individual fulfillment in glory and honor) to the values of the yogi (selfless, generative action in the sense of spiritual practice and devotion). The interplay between an individual's midlife transformation and the larger cultural paradigm shift underscores the presence of the archetypes and their propensity for manifesting themselves in personal and societal transformation.

Overall, Walker's unique contribution to the fields of psychology and midlife studies, sociology, literary studies, film studies, gender studies, etc. is the critical tool that he fashions from a synthesis of Jungian/Eriksonian models of midlife transformation, as well as his concept of oneiric texts. Walker sees the effect/affect of texts upon a reader as that of a dream upon a dreamer—i.e., the text is alive, as a dream is, and interacts with the reader, opening a portal to the unconscious and inviting ego to enter and interact. Hence, for Walker, reading certain texts can be a therapeutic act analogous to (though not identical with) dream analysis, inviting readers to (in Proust's words) become readers of their own lives. Indeed *Midlife Transformations* will undoubtedly serve as a core text in the required reading for lifelong learners attending the colleges for midlife initiations that Jung envisioned.

CECILIA

*translated by Santi V. Buscemi*

And then? Oh, I truly did not know what happened afterwards! I understood, however, that our meeting could not end like that, so abruptly. The impression I got was not one of those futile, passing ones, which a half hour later is no longer remembered. I felt trembling at the bottom of my heart something of hers that had penetrated all of a sudden. A sweet comfort I had not felt for some time forced me to fantasize a world of indefinite things over which her beautiful black eyes smiled like the rays of the sun.

It was, in fact, the spilling over of an emotion that I had felt immediately?

“Signore, she said after a time in a tone that was courteous but firm. “I repeat; it’s useless for you to follow me; go away, give it up, please.”

“Would you,” I responded, “perhaps prevent me from looking at you?”

“People look at us and suspect God knows what! Please behave more gentlemanly with a woman you don’t know!”

And since at that point the path split, she went the other way. But I didn’t give up. I turned toward the other side around the great flower bed that divided us, and not seeing anyone nearby who could hear me, I responded by shouting across the plants of the *gianerium*, which were still not in flower..

“At least allow me the hope that I will see you again!”

We met again at the point where the two small paths joined to form a larger one, and I stopped so as to observe her face more easily. How beautiful she was. What delicate skin!

How lovely were the expression on her lips and her eyes!

A deep feeling of admiration left me speechless.

She passed over to the other side, raising the train of her gown with her left hand, and holding with the other a half unfolded Japanese fan. Then, she passed through the gate opposite the Boschetti

[Boulevard] and headed for one of the long narrow paths that the hour after sunset and the thickness of the leaves on the trees rendered almost dark.

I caught up to her, but I maintained a discreet space between her and me. “Don’t think ill of my insistence,” I continued in a tone that was close to supplication. “Allow me to accompany you.”

“But I don’t know you,” she said firmly.

“It’s not important,” I replied, “it’s one more reason to begin to know you better.”

She shook her head as if to say, “nothing doing!”

And she continued to walk, waving me away disdainfully.

Her pure white complexion, amid those shadows and through the folds of her black veil that fell on to her shoulders, emitted a strange light. There was something musical about the movement of her body, which made my heart beat faster.

We existed onto the Corso Venezia, she ahead, I behind about ten paces.

At times, she stopped to look at the displays in the shop windows, and she let me go by; at others she almost came alongside of me on the sidewalk. Then, finally, she would pass me, as I moved faster or slower so as not to lose sight of her.

She turned the corner of Via del Monte Napoleone, where she entered the gate of the Galleria De Cristoforis. I was delighted to see that, as soon as she crossed the threshold, she turned for an instant just to see if I were still following, but when I saw her enter into a busy area and then into a very narrow and deserted street, I began to lose some of my poetic illusions. Ah me! Was she one of those loose women? It didn’t seem possible.

I moved a little bit ahead of her, a bit more resolute but without presumption.

“Please,” I said, “accept my arm for a moment, and permit me to accompany you a little way. We’ve met by chance, you know. But since I feel myself being drawn behind you by an irresistible force, it must mean that we cannot remain indifferent to each other. Besides, taking my arm won’t commit you to anything. Why don’t we try to get to know each other better? Do I seem so unpleasant that you won’t even try?”

“My God!” she exclaimed, “you’re persistence offends me. ‘Know each other better?’ What for? The fact that you have followed me is not a reason. Please leave me alone. You’ve mistaken me!”

I let her pass.

She had pronounced those words in a tone between disdain and anxiety, and I felt disarmed. Wasn’t it a little true that I had misjudged her?

Then again, had I in fact misjudged her?

This doubt persuaded me to continue to follow her.

Halfway along the next street, she ducked around the corner, but little further on she stopped at a gate, glanced at me and then disappeared. The atrium of the building, enclosed by a beautiful fence, was elegant and spacious. Under the arches of the portico stood many urns with flowering trees. On the opposite wall, above the fresco of a fountain, the branches of a climbing plant made a canopy of leaves and a cluster of lilac-colored flowers hanging on a wooden trellis supported by columns that were also made of wood and painted dark green.

A cook, his white cap hanging on the nape of his neck, shook his apron to cool himself off and chattered and laughed with the female doorkeeper in the middle of the atrium.

Seeing me look through the gate, she approached me hurriedly and asked who I was looking for.

I uttered the first name that came to my lips, and naturally, since, no one by that name lived there, I became embarrassed and left. Looking back, however, I hoped to see the beautiful little head of my mystery lady appear at a windowsill at any moment, but it was all in vain.

The need to be tactful prevented me from questioning the doorkeeper for more information. Who knows, my imprudence might end up compromising her.

Every day for two weeks, I walked along the paths of the public gardens where I had met her. I waited for hours, agitated, nervous, as if the few words exchanged between us had had the magic power of some very strong potion and had already tied the course of my entire life tightly to her. I was worried. I was no longer a boy to be so enamored. And when would I see her again? And when, at last, would I ever satisfy my deepest desires? Wasn’t it better to leave in the shadows, in mystery,

that gentle figure of a woman who had unexpectedly awakened in my heart the purest and most abstract fantasies of youth? Wasn't it better to enjoy as an artist, a purely spiritual pleasure, which contact with reality would certainly diminish and, perhaps, even destroy?

But these and other arguments did not persuade me one bit.

The public gardens had never seemed as beautiful as in those evenings when I went to wait for her. The trees showed off the luxuriant green of their variegated foliage. The serpentine paths intertwined and lost themselves enchantingly in the distance. Under the shadows of the horse chestnut trees, among the magnolias, among the overhanging and jagged branches of the Lebanon cedars, there was something sweet, poetic, smiling, which I had never seen before. The sprays of water from the pools, the reflections in the canals, the leaves of the water lilies that floated on the waves; the song of the greenfinches spreading among the trees; the sound of nearby bells which, at certain moments, filled the air with their sad ringing; the people who left, who came, who stopped and who disappeared, and who, little by little, became fewer and fewer—all of this expressed, hinted at, suggested the chorus of emotions that overcame me in those days. If, at that time, a pair of newlyweds or lovers passed by, the woman resting carelessly on the man's arm, the man with his head leaning to one side, whispering in the lady's ear words that made her smile; if a young seamstress scampered around the paths, looking here and there impatiently, in search of someone who hadn't arrived for their rendezvous; if a young man came out from under the trees puffing slowly on a cigar in order to avoid the boredom of having to wait for someone— then I experienced a strange tenderness, a child-like feeling, as if those people had come there only to give me pleasure and to rescue me from that anxiety of soul against which I had fought a few days before.

Above all, I felt and I saw with great lucidity one of those mysteries which cannot be explained, a fragrant emanation of her beautiful body, a reflection, an ethereal essence of it, which confirmed for me her presence in that place after so many days. The pathways' sand had retained a vestige of the tracks of her small feet; the grass, the leaves of the flowering plants that filled the flower beds had picked up something from the corners of her dress, which had touched them as she passed; the air was impregnated, the luminous atoms that she disturbed as she walked had continued to vibrate!

I understood quite well the irrationality of this exaltation, and I became embarrassed and disdainful; but I could find no way to stop it. Often, I was brutal with myself, saying:

“Imbecile! While you dream, fantasize, and lose yourself in the clouds, how can you be sure that, meanwhile, she is not throwing herself into someone else’s arms, that she is not selling or is not giving away that beauty which so confuses your brain?”

But I immediately regretted my filthy suspicion, and I dove, once again, into a wave of fresh and vague images that seemed to rejuvenate me, a mixture of sentimentality and sensuality, which was very difficult to define.

For days, in fact, it was only her body, her physical beauty that excited my fantasies. Those perfect features that I could imagine under the pleasing folds of her dress—her white complexion, her fine skin, her throat, her neck—gave me the distinct impression of a work of art brought to life miraculously by a breath of life. I would have kissed and re-kissed her, squeezed her to my chest and felt all of the intoxication of divine contact with her; I wanted to combine her organism with mine in an interminable embrace in which the beats of our heart would become one and we would share the same breaths. At other times, instead, I felt my spirit being invaded by a sweet distress. It would have been enough to see her again and walk alongside of her along those paths that spoke so eloquently of her. We would walk around self-possessed, reading in our looks and in our smiles the most secret contents of our feelings. We would prefer to stop in places where the shadows would be denser, to listen to the whispering of the foliage and the water, to enjoy the play of sunlight on branches, on hedges, on the sandy paths, on gushing water, on statues and on the figures of passersby. And late at night, the last to leave the confines of the garden, we would resume our way toward the modest nest where she spent her happy days and where I would go, at certain hours, as if to a temple to re-create my heart, which had been devastated by a dissolute youth.

Finally, one day, when I least expected it, I saw her again at the post office. I did not notice her at first; I moved toward the window wrapped in thought, but the sound of her voice shook me, and I looked her in the face, trembling with joy to see her again and to have learned her name. As she was leaving, she stared at and recognized me, and she responded sternly, or so it seemed to me, with a nearly imperceptible

nod of her head, in response to my greeting. I was about to approach her, but I realized in time that she was not alone; a friend waited for her behind the glass of the door.

I wrote to her; I was sorry for perhaps having left a bad impression of me in her heart because of the way I had behaved that day. After having waited in vain for her every evening where I had met her the first time, I told her that I had dared to write in order to obtain her forgiveness; I wanted to be assured in person or in writing of having obtained it.

“If you could imagine the effects meeting you produced in my heart,” I concluded, “I am certain you would not be so cruel as not to return at least once, at the same time, to the pathways of the Boschetti in order that I might regain the peace that I lost two weeks ago.

“I will await every evening until late the heavenly apparition in which, for me, the secret of my future remains hidden.

“Is this an illusion? I will soon have an answer.”

I waited for a response for three days, which seemed an eternity. But when I was able to kiss her handwriting in the most beautiful English style I had ever seen, my joy was immense.

“Although your letter seems but a pretext,” said the reply, “I must thank you for the gentility with which you address me. I have nothing to forgive you for. I know life too well to flatter myself or to become indignant about that which simply happens.

“But why should we see each other again?”

“You speak of a loss of peace, of a heavenly apparition! Oh, it’s too much!

“Let’s end it here; don’t bother any more about a person who has nothing that should merit your benevolent attention.”

I wrote back:

“I’m not lying, I’m not exaggerating, and I am inconsolable over not having been believed. That which you can’t recognize from the cold lines in a letter you will understand immediately in the tone of my voice if I can persuade you to spare me a few minutes in another meeting anywhere you want.

“For me, you are surrounded by a fog, like one of those

goddesses whom the ancient poets wrote about; you have all of the enchantment of a mystery; and this fantasy works to make more attractive and more dear those shadows that hide you so invidiously from my eyes.

“To ‘end it here’ as you say, nothing would be more appropriate to dispel, at least in part, that insidiousness that excites desire and makes me conceive so many false hopes.

“But some frank explanation will restore my peace and will end for you an unfortunate persecution that you must find annoying.”

“As I write these words, my heart beats faster and protests against a conspiracy aimed at kidnapping the most beautiful joys that for years had comforted it.

“I am a bit materialistic. I believe that there is a profound physical reason behind this agitation, by which the influence of one organism can be felt in another. Why is it that, among one hundred women, all of whom are beautiful, only one possesses the power to fascinate and, in this way, to upset the ordinary course of our lives, often to make it end in a crime or in madness?

“Without believing in the existence of secret and intimate affinities, one can explain nothing. Material affinities, which turn into affinities of the spirit and produce fantasies, ideals, all of the thousands of pure joys of noble hearts.

“So I did not succeed in persuading myself that between you and me everything should ‘end...here.’ Social circumstances can create insurmountable obstacles to the union of bodies, but nothing, nothing at all, can stop the inexhaustible communion of two hearts.

“I need to fantasize, to dream, to fly on the winds of the spirit, far, very far away from the foolish reality that annoys and irritates me with its ignoble prose.

“If you only knew how much I have become a child once more in just a few days!

“If you only knew how grateful I am that you have pulled me from out of that boredom, out of that solitude of heart in which I had tormented myself for so long!

“It may be that everything will ‘end...here!’ But, don’t deny me the consolation of persuading me with your own mouth. Afterward I will make every effort to resign myself to my fate.”



And just as I was mailing my letter, I almost regretted having written and sent it. With what thoughtlessness did I proceed toward a relationship about which I should have calculated all of the possible consequences well in advance!

Yet, like poetry, like art in progress, it seemed to be quite right. From time to time, the heart and the spirit need to be shocked by a gymnastic morality that unbinds them and returns to them the agility of a power that has decreased because of long inactivity....

But what if that which seemed difficult to me became very easy? What if that woman, won over, let's say, by my insistence, seduced by the glow of a love expressed in uncommon way, and flattered by the hope that my words had imprudently caused her to glimpse, perhaps, finally came to abandon herself into my arms, which were stretched out to her with the greatest lightheartedness? If she came to me after breaking other ties, abandoning more secure hopes, sacrificing her name to an illusion, her current happiness, her future, everything? What would I do? What responsibility would I have? Was I sure that I would remain faithful to what my passionate words had promised without explicitly thinking it out?

Wasn't I giving myself great annoyance, hindrance, pain, disillusionment?

But I closed my eyes, shrugged my shoulders and let my heart have its way; I was too excited to listen to reason. Perhaps it's good that men are like that! Without such irrationality now and then, life would be too uniform, too boring, and many great things, all the beautiful things, would remain in the darkness of nothingness, from which only passion can draw them into the light.

She came. I saw her from a distance, at the end of the path, and I moved toward her almost fearfully. I felt the childish excitement of a first love.

My pulse and my temple beat violently. Even she was a bit shaken; in fact, her hand trembled.

I gave her my arm, and we walked silently for a little, looking at each other in the eyes, with that smile that comes to one's lips when we feel awkward and don't know what to say.

In such cases, it is always the woman who shows more courage.

"I realize," she said, "I was wrong to accept your insistent request. Form

a distance, one feels freer and stronger!”

“Thank you, Signora! Please don’t regret an act of kindness.”

“Very well,” she replied. “What do you want from me?”

“Little, nothing.... If it were possible, to be loved in return!”

“You don’t say!” she exclaimed smiling. “And if I were to fall in love with you, then what?”

“Love is an end in itself.”

“In heaven, perhaps, but on earth...!”

“Listen,” I said, “at thirty-two years old, I feel like a schoolboy. This gives you some idea of what I feel for you.”

And after a brief pause, I continued:

“I am free, I have no relatives, and I have a modest fortune. I live a solitary life, a bit studious; but I enjoy idly fantasizing, content to see the world through a fog, the kind that frequently takes on the form of an apparition that dissolves, and I look forward to the day that I dissolve as well. Meeting you has awakened me from a somnambulism that has been, as it were, the ordinary condition of my spirit, and it has shown me the more joyful aspects of life. I am happy to realize that there is still something in the world that can make me love and hope....

Do I deceive myself? Behind our meeting is there perhaps one of those subtle and terrible ironies of the type that murder weary souls? I still don’t understand it, and perhaps I don’t wish to understand it.”

“I have a husband,” she replied sighing and bowing her head sadly.

“What does that matter?” I said.

“The world is cruel!” she continued. “It imposes on us obligations that one can call violations of nature, and in the end decency often makes us victims against our will. I know I am not unattractive; many have told me just the opposite. Before and after legally separating from my husband, something I had to ask for, I was often surrounded by temptations stronger than a woman’s ability to resist; and although in this moment I am sure that I will not be believed, I add that I did not emerge from those battles of the heart defeated and broken hearted, but victorious, even when I would have resigned myself to being vanquished! I don’t tell you this out of hubris, nor is this some kind of female artifice.

“Oh, I believe you,” I replied.

“I will be frank; it’s my habit. And I’ll begin by confessing that I have not come here out of mere courtesy or simply to give into an impulse of

feminine curiosity. There's another emotion—I don't know what to call it—but it's indistinct, confusing, the kind that has flattered my spirit and prompted me to lend a willing ear to your invitation. I realized it as soon as I arrived, and I told you right off that I was wrong in coming.”  
“In fact you were quite right to come!”

“Your words the other day, your insistence upon keeping me in mind after so many days, your letters, which revealed to me a gentle heart open to emotions no longer fashionable, have naturally had an effect on my heart. More than any other woman and because of the situation in which I find myself, I feel the persistent need to be comforted. Whether it's illusion or reality, I don't fool myself in recognizing what you are offering in order to console me. The only reality that I seek is my consolation, the filling of an ineffable need that disturbs me and makes me suffer, and often what seems least able to satisfy it is not in fact an illusion.”

“How happy I am to hear you speak this way!”

“Don't imagine anything that might bolster your hopes; you'll find yourself disappointed.

“I swear,” I replied (at that moment I was sincere) that my desires, my hopes do not rely on what you just admitted to me.”

“Oh, that's what men always say!”

“I'll prove it to you!”

“Aren't you a man?”

“But a little different from the others.”

“See, then, I have satisfied your wish; I've come and perhaps I've told you more than I should have. All that remains is for us to part as friends and to forget each other.”

“Why forget each other?”

“Because it would be better. Don't you think?”

“But if between us there can be no room for love, perhaps we can find a place for friendship!”

“Friendship between a man and a woman turns itself into love that is ashamed to show itself openly, and I would dread any misunderstanding.”

“Let's yield to fate,” I said stopping.

And I took her hands in mine and looked straight into her eyes with my lips smiling hopefully and my eyes in intense prayer.

“And that's how you're different from the others!” she exclaimed holding

her head up affectionately and looking towards the heavens.

“You interpret my intentions incorrectly,” I said.

“I interpret them correctly!”

And she took my arm again.

“We won’t see each other again,” she told me afterward in an affectionate tone. “You will return to the tranquil work of your life, I to the boredom and the struggle of my own. That which makes me to refuse a relationship with you is pure self-interest, believe me. If I now surrendered to your kindness, if I believed your claims, I would only be preparing myself for a cruel disillusionment. One month, two months, six, a year! And then everything would end, and the heavenly apparition would become an intolerable phantasm. There would be no worse humiliation for our love, a wound that would not heal. I’ve always thought this way when my heart attempted to drag me toward the seductive appearance of a happiness that it made shine for me but only vaguely under my eyes; and thinking has always saved me. I speak frankly; I am not saying I am more virtuous than I really am. Perhaps I haven’t yet had occasion to experience one of those passions that does not surrender to reason, and when it comes, I assure you, I will not complain about it, but meanwhile I’ll avoid it. It will have to catch me by surprise, when I least expect it.

“But if every woman thought like you,” I interrupted jokingly, “what would become of the world?”

“What saves the world” she replied, “is what is preached but not practiced. Perhaps I am not expressing many convincing theories to justify the uselessness of my coming here.”

“Listen,” I said, “You think too much! Try loving instead!”

And I squeezed her arm against mine.

She stood there with her head down as if suddenly absorbed in deep reflection.

“Love,” I repeated in her ear.

“No!” she said, pulling herself from my arm and rubbing her face with her hands.

It had become late without our realizing it. The paths were deserted, the park lamps shone here and there among the trunks and branches of the trees like eyes trying to see what might happen in the nocturnal shadows; and the sound of the canal water nearby made more apparent the silence and the solitude by which we were surrounded. From time

to time, the voiceless clamor of the carriages and the horse-drawn omnibuses, which grew stronger or diminished according to whether they were nearing us or moving away, reminded us that a hundred paces away the streets of the city were still filled with people.

“Please accompany me a little way,” she asked as she moved toward the canal. “How quickly the hours pass!”

“Promise me that we’ll see each other again?” I asked, taking one of her hands.

“Don’t insist,” she responded. “Remain with the impression that you have now. Perhaps if you knew me better, you would find me very different from what you had imagined. And the same is probably true for me. We’ll both escape.”

“Let’s see each other again!” I repeated. “I feel that I will love you even more after I have known you more intimately. My heart’s instinct will not deceive me.”

“We’ve been playing with fire,” she said laughing. “Let’s not continue the game.”

For a long while, we proceeded along the same route that we had taken the day I had followed her for the first time.

The uncertainty in which she held me was almost sweeter than that which I actually wanted to take from her.

“Goodbye, Signor,” she said, stopping. “Leave me now to go on alone.”

“I obey,” I responded, “but you haven’t ripped all hope from me.”

“Goodbye,” she repeated smiling.

And until the next evening I didn’t see anything but that smile.

Was she truly separated from her husband, and through no fault of her own?

Had she truly been victorious over all the seduction that, being so beautiful and alone, completely surrounded her?

These questions confronted my spirit repeatedly, but I did not want to dwell on them just to find the answers.

I have always loved something vague, abstract, uncertain in emotions and in things, and because of this I have not been very successful in business. Can we, perhaps, with all of our research, touch the depths of reality? Doesn’t there occur, in the passage from the

senses to the spirit, an alteration, a modification, a transformation of impressions so that from the outside we often see not what actually is but the very opposite—that which only appears?

On the other hand, in that which I experienced regarding her, there was evidently nothing of the precise and the determinant. What if she did not have a husband? What if she were woman who did not find herself in her first affair? What if, fooled by a veneer of gentility, of culture, and of elegance, I had not understood that which others had realized at first glance, i.e., that she was one of those common, dangerous *femmes de proie*, as the French say, in which an excellent ability feigns the most exquisite, the most modest shyness of virtue just to ensnare idiots?

What then would become of my poor heart, of that frantic expansion of a love that lived on dew, between heaven and earth, even though it would very gladly have remained on earth for its quarter of an hour?

But I got annoyed over so many suppositions, over so much thinking, and I let it all go. I loved. That was enough for me.

I loved in fact as an amateur, a dilettante. One day, I felt a strange and delicious splitting of the spirit: half of this experienced the enchantment of the passions, half simply observed, and often the one I enjoyed more was the half that acted as a calm spectator. Meanwhile, this part did not impede the spontaneity of the bursts and the exaltations of the other.

Perhaps there was something artificial in all that confusion of emotions. A work of the imagination, combining in its own way and developing old and forgotten sensations, impressions, emotions, reconstructed the fresh and happy world of my youth and gave me an illusion, like a desert mirage that changes according to the point of view of the traveler. Now I saw before me that which I seemed to have left behind.

And then, what good would it do to think about what might come of this? In fact, I wasn't able to stop what might occur. Therefore, I wanted to go lightheartedly into the unknown; it was a very entertaining trip, albeit full of peril.

Married or not, a woman of the world or a *femme de proie*, there was, in short, something in her that was undeniable and unquestionable: beauty. When nature loses itself entirely in the creation of a perfect

body (and hers was perfect) it has not time at all to mingle much with the rest. The features of such a body are the same as those of a heart, a harmony whose forms equate without a doubt to the spirit. A strong and beautiful sensation is no less powerful than the most beautiful and generous of emotions.

I thought about this all at once, and I didn't stop for long on any one thing in particular. In my ear, I still heard the harmony of her voice; I still felt the soothing warmth of her hand and her arm. And through the blue puffs of smoke from my cigarette of *lathachié*, I spotted something luminous, smiling, that could also have been the effects of the oriental tobacco that I inhaled voluptuously, but it wasn't because of this any less loving or ideal than any love or ideal from a higher provenance.

She did not come two nights in a row. I wrote to her, but she did not respond. The third night, when I had already begun to despair of seeing her again, I heard her at my back, with her quick and rhythmic pace. It was raining hard; the raindrops made a pleasant sound among the leaves of the horse-chestnut trees. The sun, about to set, imparted a reddish hue to the foliage on the trees which, transparent, bright and dripping, looked like emeralds. Through the newly freshened air, there spread that special scent that comes in spring from soil soaked with water.

"Were you waiting for me?" she said, looking surprised that she had found me.

"Certainly," I responded, squeezing her hand tightly.

"How good you are!"

"The rain is getting heavier," I continued, offering her my arm. "It's a real downpour. Let's go into the *Café dei Giardini*; we'll be alone, very alone and we can discuss things quite comfortably.

"We have very little to discuss!" she said, closing her umbrella, taking my arm, and holding up the long train of her dress with her other hand.

No one was in the *Café dei Giardini* but an old man. Entering with her, I would have wanted to make at least one hundred eyes focus on us; I would have wanted to hear that murmur of admirations and to see those smiles of pleasure that only the look of a beautiful woman can always produce when she first appears in a salon.

By now, I believed that that woman in some way belonged to

me, and I believed to have, to some extent, the right to pride myself on her beauty as if it were something of mine.

This conversation was more sentimental, more abstract than the other. She was happy to see me more sensible. As long as it lasted like this, our adventures as young lovers could continue. How could I not be satisfied with a modest happiness, a sweetness, having found in her very nature a guarantee that it would last?

I smiled and agreed; but I read in the tone of her voice and in her yes something similar to what I felt happening inside of me, but I held my joy in check.

I couldn't say why, but it seemed to me that the words of our conversation that day expressed the very opposite of what they would ordinarily mean. The harder we tried to fly, the more we seemed to bounce along the ground. The more we spoke about the union of hearts, the more we seemed to be talking about the body. The more we spoke of ineffable, eternal emotions, the more we seemed to be speaking of sensations, ineffable yes, but also fleeting, the kind which, though they seemed to be able to last a thousand years, would be unexpectedly abandoned, without our saying a word, as if being pulled to do so against our will.

What hesitant pauses, what smiles accompanied by expressive hesitations of the head as if to say: Be careful—let's not rush into anything!

And meanwhile, she spoke of a thousand small things, of the weather, of the rain, the type that did not want to stop, of the sister with whom she lived, and of her flower vases. And I suggested a walk to the Carthusian Monastery of Carignano and to my little house nearby. She said no, especially in regard to going to my house, something she found very inappropriate. She wanted our little dream of love never to go any further than the Boulevard of the Boschetti and the Public Gardens. Delicate flowers would soon wilt when transplanted into a different earth and climate. And then, did I imagine, perhaps, that that dream would last a long time? Oh, I would soon get bored, tired; as it was, she indulged me only to show me that she was right in distrusting the most expansive offerings and the most solemn declarations.

“What an ugly thing life is,” she concluded sighing.

But a smile lit up her lips and eyes all of a sudden, and it appeared as if she were saying the opposite: “How beautiful this life is!”



Meanwhile, I exclaimed to myself: "Divine! Divine!"

From that day on, we saw each other again regularly with a frequency that did not reduce the pleasure of each new walk in the least. We spoke little about plans for the future. But did we bore each other? Tire each other? There was absolutely no sign of it. And, thus, Cecilia became, step by step, less distrustful, more expansive, and our walks lengthened from the ramparts of the Porta Nuova to the Porta Garibaldi. Once we reentered late through Via Principe Umberto and Via Manzoni. The evening was sweet; a magnificent moon glow made the gas lamps seem dim. The people moved about happy, chatty, glad to be enjoying themselves after so many days of rain. It was truly a spring-like evening. We chatted and laughed so much ourselves, like two youngsters! And now we were walking silently, absorbed, ruled by the intimacy of a sweet sadness and, without realizing it, we held each other's hand tightly with the tender and chaste pressure of newlyweds.

Passing the house where I lived on Via Manzoni several times, I had always pointed out the balconies belonging to my rooms.

"Are they beautiful?" she once asked me.

"Why don't you come see them?" I replied immediately.

But she said no and walked faster.

That night, as usual, we stopped in front of the gate and, with a simple gesture of my eyes, I asked her to come up. She hesitated suspiciously, but I reassured her with a look.

If I had said something, perhaps she would not have induced herself to go, but that intense, intimate language, which seemed as if it were not able to hide a lie because it was expressed directly, not through the intermediary of the voice, corresponded at that point so well to the state of our souls that she smiled languidly as if it were impossible to make any resistance. And so, she made the first step.

We climbed the stairs slowly, or heads down. From her breathing, I could tell that her heart was beating as violently as mine. How silly and ridiculous we are at certain times!

She entered and looked around, almost frightened at having dared to come up. In the parlor, she did not want to sit down and remained standing next to a table in the middle of the room, one hand resting on an album, the other held up suspiciously as if to ward off an attack.

I lit all the lamps and even wanted to light the chandelier. The

room was to shine in celebration of the grand reception that evening. I welcomed her, clapping my hands with joy, and I asked her how she liked it.

“Beautiful,” she exclaimed, a bit distracted.

“Let’s see the other rooms,” I told her, taking her arm.

“No,” she replied. “I’ve seen enough; let’s go.”

“So soon?”

“It’s already late.”

“Please sit here for a moment,” I said, attempting to take her by the hand in order to pull her toward an easy chair.

“No! No!” she exclaimed in a breathless voice, making a cross with her fingers and putting between her and me the table overloaded with Chinese trinkets.

This gesture of fear made me understand the significance of the confusion and of the rush of blood to my head that I felt that instant. Certainly, the thousands of desires awakened in me by the closed environment of the sitting room shone in my eyes. I was ashamed that she could suspect that I could use violence in my own home and, even though I thought for just a moment that that fear could also be one of those many gestures of feminine modesty, the kind that ordinarily wants to be taken for just the opposite, I preferred to appear to be a bit more naïve, and in a tone that made my emotions clear, I said: “Cecilia, please don’t forget that you find yourself in the house of a gentleman!”

“Thank you,” she replied, extending her hand and squeezing mine in recognition. “But,” she continued, “please let’s go!”

She did not seem fully reassured until she reached the landing. She resumed her smile, her vivacity, and she climbed down the stairs quickly like a little bird flitting among the branches.

I had not deceived myself. By chance, I discovered that one of my friends knew her husband, her, and her family, and I questioned him tactfully. She came from a good family and had received an excellent education. Because of a sudden loss of fortune, her family had married her to a wealthy man, much older than she, a brutal and vicious man, with whom she could remain for only six months. Her parents having died, she now lived with her sister, the widow of a government worker. Involved in questionable and ugly business speculations, her husband had fled to America. But even though she was free and not under the threat of menacing reprisals from that brutal man, her

conduct remained impeccable.

“However,” my friend concluded, “don’t be surprised at all to hear one day or another that she has fallen to temptation. She possesses too much of a woman’s heart and has suffered too much; and strength of character doesn’t always succeed in warding off temptations from outside as well as those from within, which are the most dangerous because we distrust them a great deal less.”

At first, realizing that I had not been mistaken, I became quite happy; then little by little I began to reflect upon the seriousness of what I was about to do. But when I saw her again, it seemed to me that the splendor of her beauty was nearly obscured by a mild and sweet radiance coming from the affectionate and resigned quality in her character. In my chest I felt the fire of love that she had awakened in me flare up even stronger.

I became more modest, more gentile, more considerate; I treated her, without wanting to, like one of those convalescents in need of careful and continuous care by anticipating her desires and predicting her whims. And I myself became ill from the enchantment that arose from this new phase of our relationship. She was moved, but at the same time frightened. She understood better than I the consequences, and she wanted to avoid them; nevertheless, she felt herself swept up by a vortex that dragged her along rapidly and swallowed her up.

We had made the public gardens our nest; we had no desire to go beyond them. There were paths that seemed to be exclusively ours, nearly part of us. There were plants, flower beds and views which, our having admired them a hundred times, became necessary elements in the spiritual life of our hearts, and we no longer knew how we could do without them. The night that we decided to exit the gardens through the Porta Venezia, along the Boulevard di Manzo, we did not succeed in going far; we felt something impede us. Once outside, we no longer felt as intimate as in the gardens, but when we decided to turn back and found the gates closed, we walked along silently and stopped to look beyond the iron bars. The shadows of the evening were dense, the trees rustled lightly, and the fountain jets were silent; from time to time a streak of darkness could be seen among the branches of the trees and a little bit of starlit sky highlighted the black edges of foliage against a dark and transparent background.

Our hearts were heavy, and we felt a vague remorse; from that

silence, from that shadow came the mysterious whisper of reproach; who knows if, the following day, we would re-discover the emotions we had felt all those days.

And we stopped and hugged each other, as if to mourn, with that embrace, a lost happiness. I searched for that hand again and she gave it to me as she might do in moments of intense pain.

“So, we have been exiled from our small earthly paradise!” said Cecilia in a voice trembling from the strange emotions of the moment.

“Oh, my Eve!” I responded, pronouncing this exclamation with a seriousness and a passion that would at any other time have seemed ridiculous.

I placed my arm around her waist and, pressing her to my heart, I placed our first kisses repeatedly on her forehead.

She remained silent, almost fainting from the ineffable quiver that ran through her body.

We enjoyed nearly physical delight in indulging, with an unconscious skill, in a moment that the two of us were certain would finally arrive.

Cecilia became ever more sad; she gave me a look that was long and full of tenderness, the kind only women can express, in which I could read: “You will hurt me, but even so, I cannot nor do I want to love you less!”

I refused to say one word, one phrase that might seem to be a hint of what was happening, and I let that small, unforeseen circumstance assume the role of a droplet that causes a cup full to the brim to spill over.

But, as usual, the woman was more frank and at the same time more courageous.

One day, while I was speaking about the eternal nature of our love, she said, “You fool yourself; this thing that you are capable of thinking eternal has never been so close to ending than in this moment!”

“Why never?” I asked, stunned to hear her speak this way.

“Because the proof” she responded sadly, “will be undeniable and quick. But it’s better not to think about it.”

“No, no it can’t be!” I said. “Do you think then that I’m deceiving you?”

“It’s the heart and nature that will weaken,” she replied. “We

are both of good faith.”

“You’ll see!”

“Oh, you’ll see too!”

That day, the gardens were lit with the sun of early June. It exploded, casting about a grand feast of light, of colors, of whispers, which made my blood hot and excited my mind.

How did we find a way shortly after to climb the stairs to my house? I surely can’t say.

As soon as we entered, I squeezed her arm and kissed her lips, exclaiming:

“This is your kingdom!”

She smiled sadly, uncertainly, but she did not reply.

She entered the sitting room with an incredibly defeated look on her face; her pupils seemed to swim in tears that would not fall.

On the other hand, I was more moved than she, but in another way.

I stood next to her and, with my eyes, I asked that she not look that way. Meanwhile, I helped her to remove her gloves and hat.

“What a mistake we’re making,” she exclaimed.

And in that same instant, she abandoned herself into my arms, sighing and covering me with kisses.

The next day, my rooms seemed to me to be a garden that had suddenly bloomed at the wave of a fairy’s magic wand. She came and went, smiling, questioning me, giving me advice about how to arrange certain pieces of furniture better. She spoke of so many little nothings that, because of her feminine genius, took on great importance. And I did not know how to persuade myself that the day before she had stayed with me and lived in my home. Above all, there was a new, clamorous coloring to it, which dazzled me. There was a sweet perfume that delighted my nostrils and penetrated all the way to my soul; there was a heavenly music, as if from an invisible orchestra awakened by the voluptuous rustle of her silk dress. It seemed strange to me, almost impossible that all these things had not been there until then!

Hand in hand, we went into the sitting room without knowing why; we turned back moving through the other rooms, stopping in front of a picture, a print, a porcelain knick-knack, so lighthearted, so content, so happy not to be saying anything to each other, not even a simple monosyllable. We spoke more effectively, more profoundly with

our looks and, when these weren't enough, our kisses helped. What kisses, dear Lord!

Her bedroom was decorated like a small sanctuary to love: the curtains were of purest white; it was all cool and shady and, entering it, it seemed as if one were bathed in the living waters of youth and happiness. How proud I was of that sanctuary, so elegant and charming, over which I had devoted so much meticulous attention, as if it were a work of art! And how blessed I felt to see her come out of that room in the morning wrapped in her white dressing gown, with a sleeping bonnet that tried hard to hold back her tousled hair with its ribbons that fluttered on her shoulders and chest, and with her feet in tiny red slippers, whose points appeared from time to time from under the hem of her dress like two small serpent tongues. I thought about the beautiful apparitions of ancient goddesses that the Greeks dreamed about, and I became aware of a sweet scent like something superhuman spreading through the air.

For a few weeks, the walls of our apartment were for us the extreme limits of all creation!

However, there was something disturbing about our dream of love.

Although she forced herself to keep it hidden in all this happiness, Cecilia felt a sadness that became more intimate and profound each day. Her eyes took on a look of inexpressible abandonment; on her lips there frequently appeared a smile that seemed to the heart like regret. That vague sigh of the soul was not, I understood, a response to lost happiness, but to a happiness that she believed would melt away, little by little, even as she noticed it becoming more and more intense. And this gave our life an elevated, austere intonation, which made her dearer to me.

Following her advice my study was adorned with flower vases. Across from the table where I read and wrote, she placed her little lacquered table inlaid with mother-of-pearl, with a work basket and few books, and she sat there on a small chair that was low to the ground, nurturing me with looks and smiles full of a kindness, almost maternal, with something indeed that transcended any extraordinary expression of love.

I often got up from the table and went to sit next to her on the floor, my head on her knees. With a gesture I made with my lips, I

asked to grant me the charity of her kisses. Another time, it was she who approached me on tip toe to say sweetly in my ear:

“Maurizio, you’re working too hard!”

And she distracted me from my studies with caresses and kisses.

Ungrateful as all lovers are, we never returned to the public gardens, nor did we speak of them ever again. She shut herself up at home like those female birds which, when hatching their eggs, never leave their nests for a minute and are fed by the males who go out and hunt for prey. She didn’t want to see anyone anymore, not even her sister; her entire world was circumscribed by our rooms. What did the rest matter?

Meanwhile, she begged me not to sacrifice myself for her. Friends, acquaintances, social relations—I was to cultivate all of them as I had before without failing to meet any obligation, without doing without any convenience.... And for goodness sake, she said, she knew I would not tell her when she had become an imposition. Unfortunately that moment would arrive; if only it would arrive as late as possible!

Her insistence on doubting the future irritated me a little bit, but I tried not to think about it.

Had I changed? No.

Was I experiencing symptoms of being tired of her without realizing that I was showing them?

Not a chance.

After I had gotten to know her intimately, Cecilia exceeded even the ideal of a picture of her I had formed when only first having seen her.

However, that resigned lament hurt me. Although confused, even I understood that something of that which she foresaw would finally come about, but I willingly fooled myself and obstinately continued to believe instead that it would not in fact happen.

“Why always so sad?” I asked her one day. “You make me suffer!”

“I sad?” she replied smiling, but in a manner that made her smile contradict her words.

“I’ve never been so happy!”

“You always fear that our love....”

“Whoever loves fears!” she interrupted. “But you’ve assured me that the day you don’t love me anymore, you will be generous and honest enough to tell me immediately.”

‘And I swear it again!’

“Besides, I won’t wait for you to tell me; I’ll know even before you realize that a change has taken place. With a woman who truly loves, it’s useless to try to deceive.”

And she laughed. Meanwhile, her voice trembled and her eyes were vacant.

It seemed impossible, but she became more tender, more expansive. In her kisses I felt a kind of fury of affection. I felt an agitation coming from her caresses, an agonizing attempt to exhaust all of the sweetness and a regret at not being able to do so. Often she called out my name twice, three times in succession, simply for the pleasure of pronouncing “Maurizio...Maurizio!”

“You’re crazy,” I told her holding her close and tapping her cheeks with the tips of my fingers, as if to reprimand her like a misbehaving child.

In short, she seemed to be in a hurry to enjoy a happiness that she saw vanishing little by little.

I, on the other hand, lived contented. I noticed no change whatever in my emotions and my actions. Naturally, I found myself calmer. My state of feverish exaltation could not last forever, but that serene pleasure, always consistent, which followed it, seemed sweeter to me, more intimate and, as a consequence, more lasting. Cecilia’s agitations and extreme tenderness oddly disturbed me like an evil omen. I chastised her in a tone that seemed like a prayer, and then I became annoyed with myself over not having been more forceful; that weakness seemed to be a crime on my part.

“You’ve been crying!” I said to her one day, surprising her with her eyes red and hastily dried as she heard me enter the house.

“No,” she replied; “I fell asleep in the easy chair. I have a headache.”

I was satisfied with this response, but I remained uneasy until evening.

Why had I accepted it? Wasn’t I sure that Cecilia had wanted to hide the truth from me? Yes, she had been crying! And it didn’t cross my mind to find a way to make amends.

She lost a little weight after that and became somewhat pale. After a few days, she persuaded me that she wasn’t sleeping very well.

One night, I was awakened all of a sudden by the rustle of a



dress in my room. I opened my eyes with a sense of vague terror, and I saw Cecilia crouching on the carpet next to my bed, with her hair hanging loosely on her shoulders and her hands grasping one of her knees. Her eyes were wide open, fixed on me, her cheeks wet with tears that flowed silently.

“My God, Cecilia, what are you doing?” I asked her.

And I tried to move her out of that position and pull her toward me by the arm in order to make her rise.

“Let me stay here!” she replied, “let me stay here. I beg you!”

“But you’ll get sick! You’re cold! Cecilia!”

“Let me be!”

She kept answering the same way, nor did she dry her eyes, but she continued to stare at me.

I got up to sit on the bed moving toward the edge in order to take her head into my hands, and I began to kiss her hair, murmuring affectionately.

“My Cecilia! Please get up! Get up! Tell me what’s happened.”

She got up slowly, like an apparition, pulled her hair back behind her and gave her hands to me, smiling sadly. The very black hair spreading across her neck, the white night cap, the pallor of her face in the light of the oil lamp, which burned on the dresser in an alabaster vase, imparted a sacred fascination to that womanly figure. In that moment.... In that moment, I was superstitious, and I believed it was something from another world.

“Tell me what’s happened,” I said again, babbling.

“It’s all over!” she replied with a delicacy of voice that seemed like that of a dying woman.

Then, after a brief pause, she decided to devour me with kisses for a few minutes straight in such away as to take by breath away, and then she fled.

I remained there until morning with my eyes fixed on the door from which I had seen her disappear like a phantom, uncertain whether I had witnessed something real or had dreamt with my eyes open.

During the day, I did not dare to question her about what had happened that night.

I was confused; I believed I had sustained a hard blow to the head, and I was not amazed at not being able to come to terms with the idea.

I saw her busy, making preparations that surprised me. I wasn't even able to open my mouth to ask her the reason.

It seemed as if she was doing something we had both agreed upon. For a trip? For a vacation? I did not remember exactly, but those were sad preparations; they tore at my heart and filled my eyes with tears.

Finally, I saw the light all of a sudden.

It was all over!

But how?

So slowly, so secretly that I was not at all aware; but unfortunately, it was all over! Cecilia had said something that my mind would not have known how to express for a hundred reasons but, above all, because it refused to believe that which it imagined could not happen.

Cecilia was calm. She folded her clothes little by little as she took them out from the armoire and placed them in her suitcase. Every outfit was for me the memory of a day of beatitudes, of a joyful hour and, seeing them being put away, it seemed as if I was assisting at the burial of a small part of my poor heart....

I suffered severe pain, sharp torment, but I didn't have the courage to approach her and say: "Stay! We'll start over!"

I did not want to lie, nor did I know how to. All at once, I felt the fatigue of an unnatural situation, into which we had embarked, I with lightheartedness of a passionate man, she resigned to the sacrifice demanded of a woman in love.

I asked sadly, "Why can't it last? Why shouldn't it last?"

And in my mind, I responded calmly: "It's the law!"

I returned a few days later to the public gardens to find a past that I no longer found in myself. It was during the same season as our first meeting: spring. The trees were rich with foliage; the flower beds green with plants, flowering here and there. The sun, nearing twilight, played with its rays among the greenery that was moving in the light evening breezes.

Oh! Those paths, those shrubs, those flower beds no longer spoke to me of the thousand heavenly things they had once revealed to me. The fountains murmured in idiotic monotony, the dark green waters of the ponds and canals reflected the sky and the objects around

them in a shade of color that disgusted me. The frogs, hiding in the leaves of the water lilies, croaked out a music worthy of the place, which now seemed pretentious and vulgar.

I turned here and there, making every effort to evoke a feeling, an emotion, but in vain.

The Boulevard of the Boschetti seemed sad, long, depressing enough to take one's breath away; from the canal next to it emerged a bad odor of moss rose, which I had not noticed before.

And I went around pondering:

“But can it be true that this world of flowers is merely a creation of our spirit? A joke? An illusion?”

Poor Cecilia. You would never believe that in the end my regret over lost love would, one black day, lose itself in the fog of a problem of metaphysics!

## TO THE ISLAND OF PHILOCTETES

*Upon Reading Hassall's Life of Brooke in a Time of War*

He came a yellow weed among  
stone mullion and coign  
and with skilled feet awoke  
thunder-damp bone corridors  
or shouted sonnets from beneath  
the shadowy corbels,  
a pearl called oyster, cascading  
always after the belle and retroussé,  
the smooth skin of youth  
hiding a roughness,  
monstrous to itself.

Subjects studied: Latin, Greek,  
limp scripture in a holy book.  
Carlyle brought a dream of death:  
Thrice stabbed, he comes  
again a ghost to haunt  
well-set Edwardian tables,  
the gaunt translucent dinner host,  
chased by a mosquito.

Bored with the Arno's molten gold,  
which poured serpentine through  
Shelley's soulskin and out  
over the pale green Tuscan-scape,  
he turns from oils of Lucretia's  
rape to the memory of lost women.

Where god's stripped out,  
sucked dry or tombed,

a temporal human love becomes  
the thing than which  
there is none greater,  
eternity's stuck in a ditch,  
and heaven's blind.

[This space is left  
for other items,  
forgotten ones,  
and wonderments—  
the severed penises  
of Hittites,  
melted steel  
of slow ships,  
the sweat-stained  
silks of young  
Victorian women.]

The weave of the sky,  
the juncture of  
a million soon-to-be  
forgotten things  
sunken in a cask  
or casket, trumps  
the thigh-bone  
of the deified:  
All gods and kings  
must be defied.

I saw a deep-tanned girl in Lancaster of late  
working in the vegetable patch near the garden gate.  
Tra-la!

And lifted light on the April breeze,  
the songstress's voice among birch trees,  
echoic on the river waves,  
her thin lovely limbs  
and fiery mane ablaze

in the lemony sun.  
Ta-la!

And Taatamata, naked to the waist,  
the straw hat broad and shadowing  
a desuetude. Brown feet  
covered half over in sugary  
sand, giving beneath  
the weight of words  
a contrast to  
the large orange  
moon above  
the lush lagoons  
of Mataia.

Later he lay five days  
in Greeley Square  
awaiting conveyance  
to Plymouth, dazed,  
unready for the coquetry  
of London life.

I turn a page,  
and Brooke falls  
out. There is some  
staining on the flyleaf.  
And like a scullion kitchen maid  
who'd lost her lover, a robin runs  
tunefully about the lawn,  
and calls beneath the shade  
of whip-tower trees,  
her russet front  
a waistcoat made of  
a loved brown leaf.

It came then, the vast shindy  
of the war. Yes, Mrs. Cornford,  
the sea and the pebbles seem

just the same, no evolution there—  
unpaid-for cake, eyed from  
beneath a tilted hat brim,  
and the tea's gone cold,  
yet every worthwhile thing is held  
in the balance of a changeful gaze—  
forthright—a raw eye  
fixed on what must be opposed  
to the cost of an ocean of blood.

Loquacious Brooke could  
no longer burble on to friends  
about a social cause and poems  
beside the slothful Cam. He'd  
seen the blackened corpses  
sizzling in a rain of petrol  
on the long march from Antwerp.

Indignant eyes safe for now over the tea table  
learned nothing. Yes, for you, he wrote,  
there is no change. For you,  
the dead are just the silly dead.

## SAND IN MY POCKET

*Upon reading Jones' life of T.E. Hulme*

1.

Walking back  
beneath the shadowy  
elms, Hulme  
tucked under  
one arm, I watch  
my penumbra  
slink along  
the cement  
and think:

*I wish  
it could be  
longer.*

Prince Ranier  
has died,  
so says  
the radio  
this morning,  
statisfy voices  
released  
on ignition.

The car door  
slams out  
the first true  
day of spring.

The Pope lies  
in state.



I drive off  
safe from sunlight.

2.

Yesterday the bumblebees  
with humming wings  
assaulted the hanging  
white clusters  
of mountain laurel  
that grows unkempt  
beside the door.

But today the whorish bees  
have disappeared, to spite  
the day's quiet brightness.

I sit in the sun  
that pours whitely  
through the wide  
mullioned window  
and read  
of T.E. Hulme.

I think: words  
do little  
to express  
simultaneousness  
as letter  
follows letter,  
word, word, so  
parataxis seems  
no ready method  
to capture being—Hulme,

T.E., was born  
at Gratton Hall,  
halfway between  
Hulme and Upper Hulme,  
a middle Hulmean he.

The rain has melted  
those Cambridge stones

where he roomed  
near the Bridge of Sighs.  
He talked philosophee  
the night through, a  
witty idler who declared  
no subject numinous,  
and then was sent down in disgrace—  
the reason vague—an untoward  
something at the boat race,  
obstreperousness in the residence hall,  
a holy ruckus catcalling actors  
from the theater mezzanine.  
Maybe he had socked a cop  
during May week riots  
to celebrate the king's coming.

He left town astride  
a coffin in mock  
obsequies, proud  
in his derby hat.

To Canada he hied  
traveling town to town  
pitching hay, lumberjacking,  
working in the timber mills  
to pay his way. He inclined  
toward the Roman Catholic,  
as the huge Canadian sky  
and flat grassland that rolled  
away from his eye to the  
far horizon taught him  
the littleness of man. Art  
and the first gods, he reckoned,  
grew from fear.

Come home on a cargo boat,  
he poured the "bull-dust"  
of imagism down Pound's  
rust-rasped throat. Hulme  
thought the theory

a kind of joke. I turn  
this over as my  
coffee cools. A bee—  
black carpenter—thunks  
twice against the pane,  
disturbing this reverie.

The American was earnest, eye  
on the ideal, the Brit  
ironic. To Hulme,  
Pound seemed a knot-head  
enthusiast who left  
Eliot seduced.

A blue-riven, sun-warmed April  
day seduces me  
from these browning  
pages and the dreams  
they bring. I plant  
beans and garlic  
and knock the ball  
around the yard  
a bit with Jared.

The while I wonder  
why my friend—once  
Hulmean—has taken a  
Victorian turn—I've  
scorned it, so we move  
without seeming in  
opposite directions,  
as ships along the far  
horizon make way  
in phases imperceptibly.

Undersea, beyond eyeshot,  
small fish turn, I wot,  
and whirl, part  
of a larger whole—  
imagism, vorticism.  
I belong  
to no school, but thrive

on chaos—hoping  
for a scum-like  
rising, having learned  
that every particular  
view is wrong—the  
political stance is  
never  
to allow  
a political stance  
to shoulder the Kalishnikov.

3.

Is man good  
and spoiled  
or limited and  
improved by order?

Hulme chose B. Hmm.

I hum bee-like inly  
as Jared presents  
tiny wildflowers  
white coronaed with  
a kind of bruised  
purple at the base—  
a royal offering. He wants  
Vanilla Fingers  
and milk.

Hulme pensive: poetry  
could never move us  
beyond the physical.

True—though I hear  
a bird singing flute-like  
high in the oaks beyond  
this yard.

Unreliable words, he mused,  
tumbling apple-like

out of the old farm cart,  
can estrange us usefully  
from the world. We feel  
afresh, wet, amniotic—  
the true cry—a new physics.

Now the sun has gone away somehow,  
like Hulme's foot, lost  
in a camera quaver,  
Though the air stays mild,  
the wind begins, rushing  
through unleaved high oaks  
with the sound of a wild sea.  
At intervals it shapes  
a violent tone—a threat  
of chaos that I like.

Hulme's logic locked him  
in a box. If the world's  
a wind-up toy, we  
wound ourselves.

Why should anything exist?  
This is the problem  
of the materialist. Reason  
sends itself  
to the dustbin, isn't this  
the postcard of  
that other Hume?

So what if I'm just  
a kink in  
the winding sheet. Can  
crickets think  
they can be other  
than they are  
and sing the same  
cheerful song?

Somehow I am always  
the houseguest at  
the Belvedere, listening  
to Raphael slap  
gaudy pigment  
on a wall.

My metaphor is showing  
its actory self  
in phony accents  
while I languish  
on the plum couch—  
a sleeper—instant  
coffee in my cup.

T.E. says the symbol  
of the wheel  
is lost. But I am  
watching the round  
wound  
on my thumb  
come from striking  
it on the doorjamb.

Mana Aboda rings  
metallic in my head  
while songbirds lend  
a lilt to  
the strengthening sun. The kids'  
shouts ring too true  
as they play  
on the swing set  
and slide and in  
the sandbox. It  
won't always be  
like this. Diplodocus  
knew the sun  
and warm, protecting sky,  
and Hulme, well-sexed,

with his Prussian face,  
    is dead.  
Shadows pool  
    like oil leaked  
    from the sun.  
    On the verge of night  
desire dreams continually of  
    the furred pocket.  
        Speech,  
        ah!

## COMPANY TOWN

On the first floor  
of a 1940s' two-story brick  
block of a building  
lolls a personal-services business  
advertising *Spa, Shiatsu,*  
*Dry and Wet Sauna.*

No one is seen entering  
or exiting but, no doubt,  
many happily-ever-afters  
have passed through its doors.

This Asian ecstasy  
has found a home in a small  
New Jersey town  
that went bust after health concerns  
out-performed the bottom line  
of corporate profits.

An unknown number of faceless  
people makes the second floor  
above the *Spa* their home,  
embellishing it with an air-conditioning  
unit or two resting on window sills  
in the best post-World War Two  
version of how to beat the heat  
in a company town –

a town that finally failed  
so it could embrace anyone  
seeking a home far away  
from what its original  
inhabitants used to call home.



## HAPPILY EVER AFTER

He did everything anticipating  
*happily ever after*. He looked for  
sunshine to greet each day. But it didn't.  
Love was meant to exist forever.  
But it didn't. A job was expected to last  
till retirement. But it didn't. Good health  
was supposed to endure till the end. But  
it didn't. Friendships were promised  
to be unbreakable. But they weren't.  
Instead, what came after always  
arrived with a shrug, a sneer  
and empty pockets turned inside out,  
one hand outstretched, not in friendly  
greeting but palm up, fingers curled  
waiting to cup whatever fortune  
he could bear to part with. And  
of course he couldn't because  
for him there wasn't ever any  
*happily ever after*.

---

**EXCERPTS FROM: AS AN ALIEN IN A LAND OF PROMISE**

“I have sung in hobo jungles.”

Pete Seeger

“Homelessness is a part of our American system.”

Jerzy Kosinski

**PROLOGUE**

*When the first settlers came  
they found a dense forest,  
situated near off-beaten  
Indian trails. The pastor looks up  
at the sun through the pines,  
it's always so dark back here,  
he says, even on the brightest days.*

They cleared the land,  
built homes, a sawmill,  
dammed the stream,  
the Metedonck, **that's Lenape  
for land of the tall timbers  
the pastor says,** that carried  
wood and later iron ore  
from Joseph Brick's place  
to Bay Head. *Brick revived  
the blast-iron furnace business,  
employed 200. Three  
Partners Mill, then  
Washington Furnace.  
Rows of log huts, housing  
employees, extended along  
Clifton from First to Main  
and between the two lakes.*

Rows of plywood-and-tarp huts  
– **this area was cleared  
before we got here he says.**



*Photo: Sherry Rubel*

## INTERLUDE

She watches the rain  
run down the sloped bank  
from Route 9  
into Lake Carasaljo.

*Lakewood is a vibrant,  
exciting place*

*— a natural beauty set  
amidst parks, lakes  
and a quaint*

*Victorian downtown.*

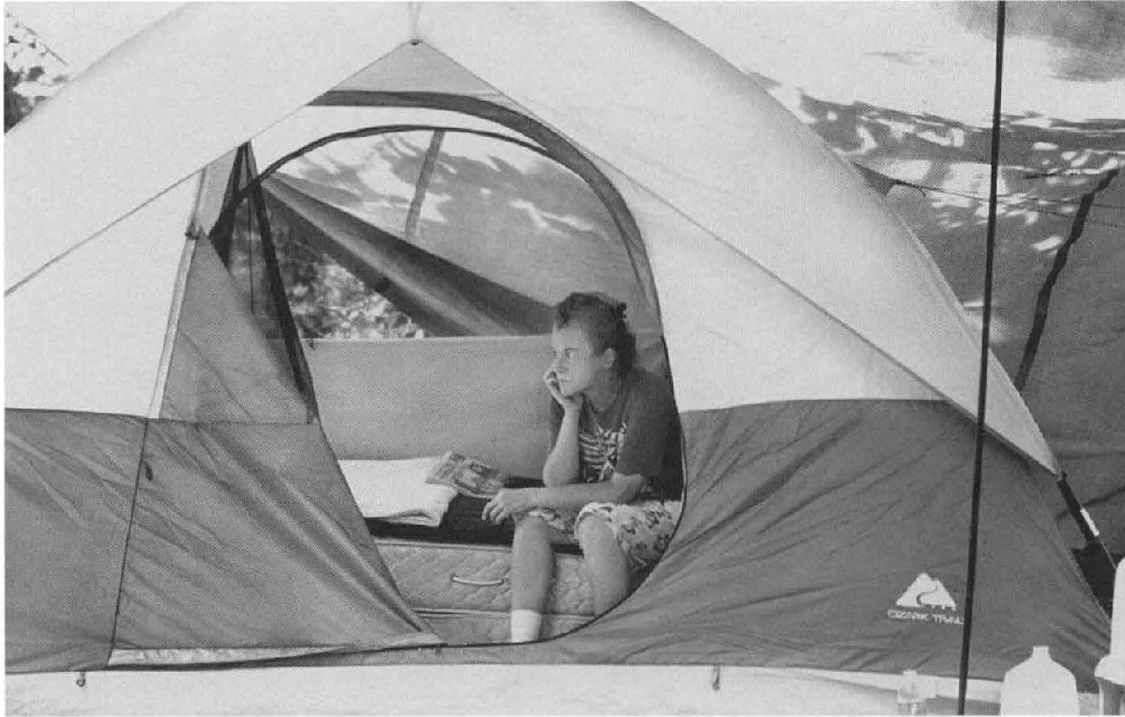
They named it Bricksburg  
for Joseph Brick, then  
Lakewood, when *the name  
of the town did not suit  
the visions of its promoters.*

**Deposition: I live  
in the woods in tent city  
most of the time because  
I have Lakewood, simply,  
a town of lakes  
and woods. nowhere else  
I do not have money  
I am divorced**

*The town offers old-world charm,  
a hometown feeling  
and solid values along with  
21st-Century amenities.*

Camps sprout in the woods,  
take root, spread,  
cumber the ground

*In general, therefore, a weed is a plant that is considered by the user  
of the term to be a nuisance.*



*Photo: Sherry Rubel*

seeds carried in crop harvests,  
relocated by heavy winds,  
food, work,

*The word commonly is applied to unwanted plants in human-controlled settings, especially farm fields and gardens, but also lawns, parks, woods, and other areas.*

white clover, dandelion, blue-tarped  
shacks on donated pallets,  
goldenrod, knotweed,  
the viney wild rose

unprofitable, troublesome, noxious

pull them by the roots  
he says

*A dozen evacuated from the wooded areas  
off of Route 37 in Toms River,  
private property, trespassing, all  
have been offered assistance, some  
temporary shelter*

*Many weed species have moved out  
of their natural geographic locations,  
he says*

\*

One million, less, more,  
counting the uncountable  
living in culverts and under bridges  
on couches and in the woods

*Any search for the “right number” carries the assumption that we  
may at least arrive at an acceptable number. There is no acceptable  
number.*

*Photo: Sherry Rubel*



*Photo: Sherry Rubel*

In the garden planted by the church group,  
tomato plants struggle,  
radishes, too, leaves withered  
in the streaks of sun, against  
the broad-leafed vines that crawl  
along the moist dirt  
as the prickly stalks  
invade the fenced-in plot.  
Rabbits eat the leaves  
of the few plants that manage health,  
squeeze beneath the chicken-wire  
and rest in the wet soil.  
We chase them away, says a man  
in a sweat-stained t-shirt,  
but I guess they don't have  
anywhere else to go.

\*

His long hair sways like a flag  
in the wind under his ball cap  
as he walks. Dressed in camouflage  
pants and a gray t-shirt,  
muscles chiseled from his thick arms,  
he has two donated cases  
of water on his shoulder.

I was an Army Ranger, he says,  
eight years, 12 total in the service.  
I was in Iraq, Afghanistan, too.  
I'm here a month, just waiting  
on my benefits. Give it  
a month, he says, I'll be out of here.

\*

## TENT CITY INTERLUDE

Michael strums, sings, *do you know this one?*

*Man thinks 'cause he rules the earth*

**The Cedar Bridge site** *he can*

*do with it as he please. is environmentally*

**sensitive.** *A half mile away, the ball park*

*where the Blue Claws play and the warehouses*

*and factories of the industrial park*

**located near the Metedeconk**

*a new town center in the master plan,*

*new stores and roads homelessness*

*stems from an inability to afford*

**The encampment threatens the integrity**

**of the property** *Mulch piled as a road block, mulch piles*

*for gardens, mulch to smother weeds,*

*trying to stem the growth of*

**uninspected structures, tents,**

**propane grills, stoves, debris,**

**chickens, trash strewn about**

*You know this, right? And if things don't*

*change soon, he will. His wife starts dinner,*

*vegan, it's a lifestyle, it's about caring*

*about life even to the point of*

*– not sacrifice, but you give up*

*material things. We're living*

*a total lie, up and down, politics,*

*science, religion, people wonder*

*why a billion starve, homelessness,*

*it's par for the course. the judge*

*made them lose the mulch, open*

*the roads, unless you can find them*

**somewhere else to go.** *It's rewarding*

*not to be part of the capitalistic system.*

*Feel the breeze, watch the pine branches*

*bounce, a truck horn blares*

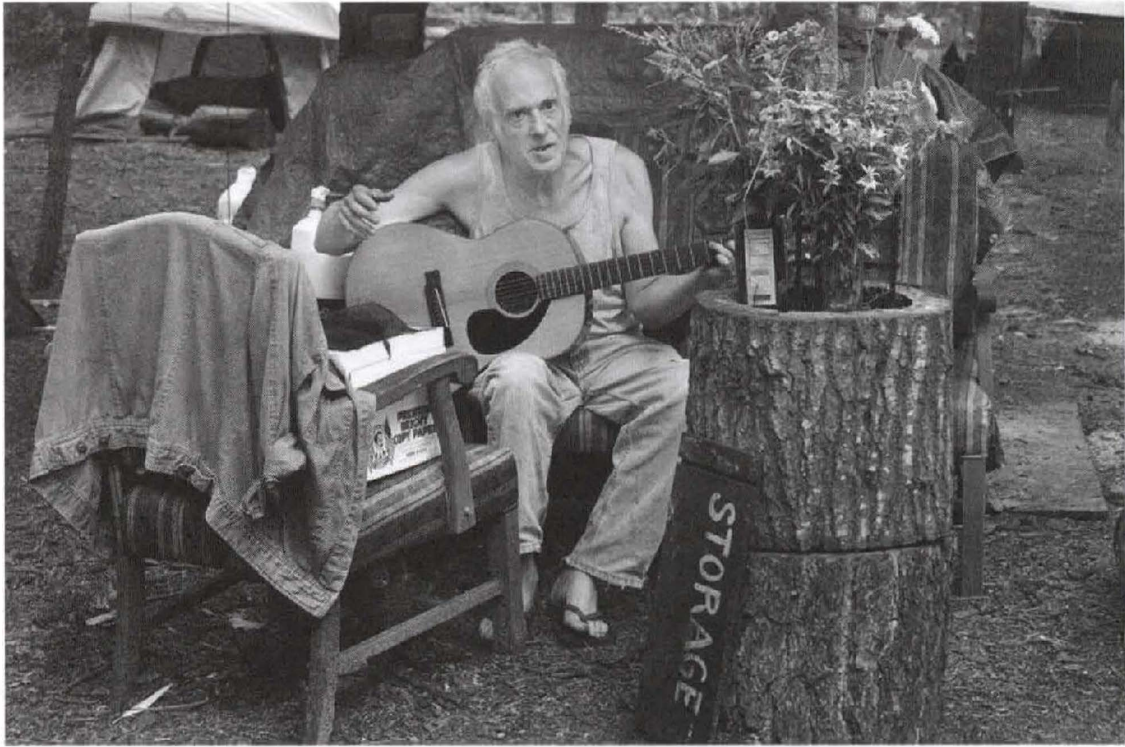
*from nearby Cedarbridge.*

*Oh, man is opposed to fair play*

*He wants it all and he wants it his way*

*You know this one, right?*





*Photo: Sherry Rubel*



*Photo: Sherry Rubel*

She had some rough times  
I'll let her  
tell you herself

We've been together –

We met at Ft. Monmouth

The old barracks there are used as a shelter, two floors, men on one,  
women on the other. You get 30 days and then you need to find  
somewhere else.

We hooked up.

When my 30 days were up they found me a place but I'd have had to  
leave her.

They were going to kick her out, too.  
Thirty days for her as well.

She broke down.

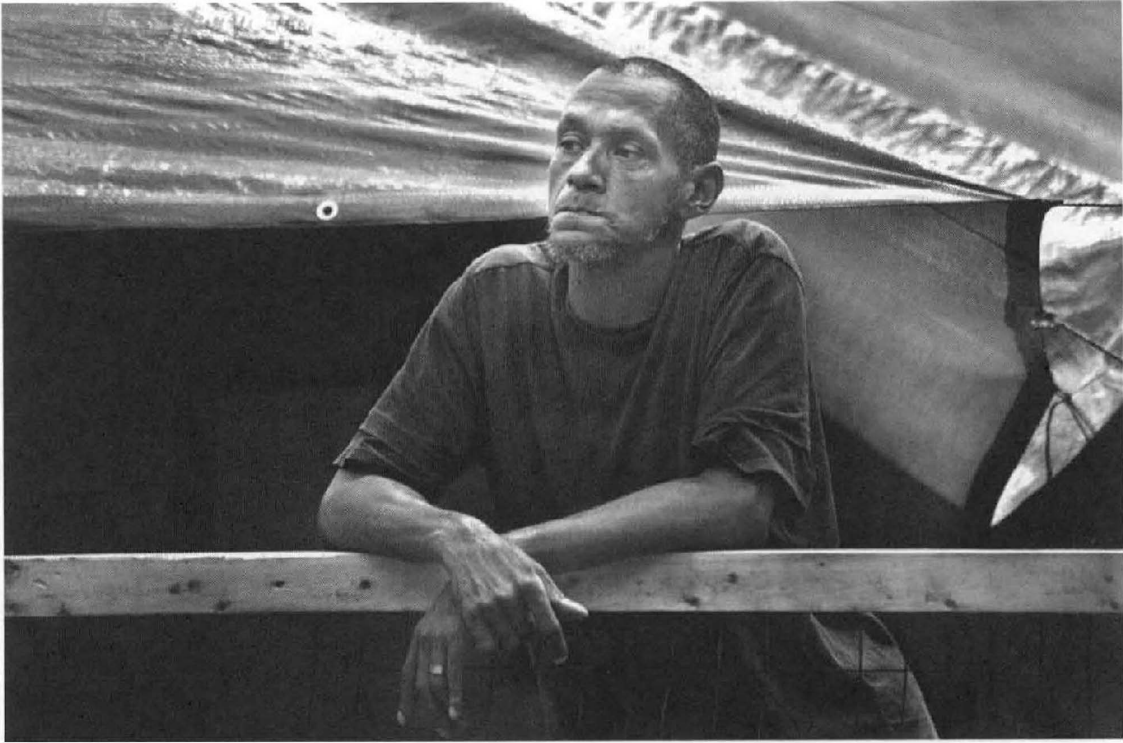
I was out of the room. They wouldn't let me be there when they  
told her.

She was screaming  
and crying.

It was only when I came back

It was only when I came into the room.  
She grabbed me, hugged me.  
I couldn't leave her.

A tinkling of piano keys, left hand  
laying down a rough bottom  
on which to build  
an architecture of light



*Photo: Sherry Rubel*

-- Handel? Haydn? *No*,  
*Mendelssohn*, she says,  
*he plays that daily*, sits  
at the keyboard  
in a kerosene-heated tent

piano, the big upright kind  
used by grade schools

*It was donated*  
*by a music school*, she says

he used to teach  
before divorce and drink drove  
his students away

\*

He's been working around Long Branch  
framing housing, plumbing,

*whatever needs to be done  
on that particular job site –  
Jay says*

*a hole needs to be dug for footing on a deck,  
I'll do that*

*I'll mix the concrete  
pour it, whatever needs to be done.*

Youngest of three,  
brother in California

*hard for me to see him*

the snow, maybe,

or perhaps

under the white,

preserved, left

whole

His arms were crossed across his chest. ***Cruzados sobre el pecho.*** Ah, Pedro. *Paramedics pronounced the man dead. The resident, approximately 47, was last seen alive last night, an official said.* They found him dead, lying on the bedroll left behind by another Mexican. No one knows what happened to him. ***Nadie sabe qué pasó con él.***

body loses heat faster  
than it can produce heat

heart, nervous system –

eventually  
complete failure

On his back, arms crossed, his tent snow-covered. The night's temperature in the teens. *The cause of death appears to be Hypothermia, officials said.*

*Hypothermia is most often caused by exposure to cold weather or immersion in a cold body of water. Primary treatments for hypothermia are methods to warm the body back to a normal temperature.*

His kerosene ran out, they think. ***Lo encontraron congelado.***  
Yes, frozen. with his arms crossed. ***Como un ángel.***



*Photo: Sherry Rubel*

## THRU THE WESTERN DOOR

In Kah-kwa town  
Red Jacket lay  
beneath an oak  
roots reaching down

& over Mary  
Jemison  
White Woman of the Genesee  
a walnut tree

Great Uncle Baby Zimmerman interr'd there too  
in shade of the great black walnut brother  
Dan & I with a wagon went each year  
till lightning fell

AUGUSTUS PORTER the Chain Bearer the Judge  
who dreamt a socket for the Falls

JOHN KENJOCKETY the Kah-kwa from White's Corners  
18 Mile Creek (Rev. Kirkland: Skendyouhgwatti  
"the second man of influence and character  
among the Seneca  
at the Buffaloe"

& the 1st, Sa-go-ye-wah-ta "he keeps them awake"  
RED JACKET (Porter got his Goat (Island with a bridge  
(& on a log, to Joseph Ellicott, 3x:

move along, Joe.  
move along,  
Joe. move  
along, Joe.

mutual exaggerated relaxation.

these three  
from tree to tree  
survey'd th' Gore

says Orasmus  
Marshall, "this will account  
for the zigzag course  
of the line  
in question."

& on Coronelli's map of 1688 a Kah-kwa village  
Kakouagoga, a destroyed nation  
@ or near the site of Buffalo

(Red Jacket Town)

now Seneca Indian Park  
Fields & Buffum Sts (original inhabitants  
the Wenroes, driven from their palisade  
in 1639 by Senecas the 80 leagues to join  
the Hurons, spoke "the neuter language"

"This sandy knoll certainly was one of Nature's  
choice gifts to the Indians where the soil is so  
friable that a grave can be dug, even with  
crude tools, with a minimum of time and effort.  
No other spot in many miles was so perfectly  
adapted to the purpose."

Buffalo Creek Reservation, south of Dó-syo-wă  
the place of the basswoods (linden the main tree  
west of the Genesee) originally claimed by  
Massachusetts Bay Colony, the Ogden Land Co.  
treaty the only one decided by simple  
majority, the Vice President casting, 3x,  
his vote (invalid said Webster, Calhoun & Clay

"for we claim, as Buffalo, a cone,  
the base of which is on a level with  
the upper surface of the atmosphere,  
and whose apex reaches down  
to the center  
of the globe . . .

We might enter  
just in front of the First  
Church, where an opening  
invites our descent.”:

George Hayes, DDS, 1869

PS 70 erected over the caves  
AD 1922 the longhouse razed  
across the street from the sandy  
knoll

Tga-iś-da-ni-yont, the place  
of the suspended bell, Seneca  
Mission House

just down the road, just West



## THATAWAY

cracking the toughest nut, we'd first  
back up the '50 Merc over black  
walnut husks, fish out the fissured  
shells with tongs to avoid tobacco  
juices prized by tanners that turn  
fingers black for a week, let them dry  
then crush them in a vise & pick  
the smoky meat for pancakes, cookies,  
fudge & poker games. Grandpa'd swig  
raw egg in beer, tend his yard of toxic  
flowers, guillotine chickens, not say  
much most days. Grandma'd bake  
cinnamon apple kuchen every week,  
remark a little, pretty much get her way.

in the unfinished attic, I held  
piratical sway over the Caribbean,  
swinging on ropes from the crossbeams,  
old before I knew about getting old.  
I'd scale the chicken coop, my alp,  
leap from the tarpapered roof on a dare,  
crew cut rakishly bandana'd, cutlass  
menacing. in my vocabulary, fear  
meant four in German. if I thought  
too much I'd stop, & read a book.  
sometimes Grandpa'd fry up brains, call  
me downstairs for a treat, man talk,  
Limburger on rye. decades later, I took  
two days refinishing his oak tool box.

## **Cold Case**

Dad & I in dream Dick Tracy  
yellow trench coats & fedoras  
watched a bear similarly clad

drive up in a convertible,  
exit, turn & lumber toward us  
like a man

we rotated backwards into consciousness before  
it reached us, its mission still a mystery  
after all these years

no fear either way, just a routine part  
of some investigation, no word yet  
of victims, leads, new evidence

just that flatfoot Columbo persistence  
a little groggy after hibernation  
but clearly on official business

later revisited with the best forensic chemistry  
available having first diligently researched bears  
as if our bear had come to tell us about itself

which of course it hadn't, nor about ourselves,  
as if our uniforms didn't say enough,  
as if we three were simply bears or men

& not just part of the perilous old game,  
farewell and resurrection  
of the honor roll

## Knowing Jack

In Anonym 4 (1969), Jack Clarke published excerpts from Blake's Milton and Jerusalem as

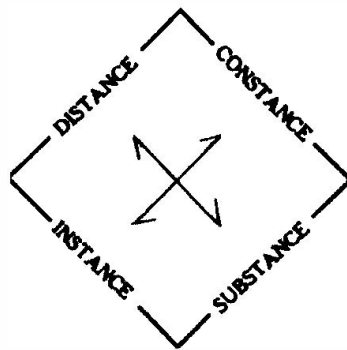
### BLAKE/EPISTEMOLOGY: STANCE I

**Distance**

*Milton* 15: 21-35

**Constance**

*Milton* 40: 32-37; 41: 1-2; 25-26; 32-36



**Instance**

*Jerusalem* 55: 36-46

**Substance**

*Jerusalem* 12: 46-50; 57-58; 14: 25-28

(All lines from Keynes)<sup>1</sup>

I read this arrangement as follows:

- Distance:** Heaven: the past Vortex, where we didn't die / Earth: the future Vortex, where we do. In our *intermediate* distance, we confuse causes and effects; the Vortices resolve them if we comprehend the nature of their
- Substance:** Golgonooza: the golden builders create the spiritual Jerusalem by opening three gates to each other (in Calabi-Yau-like spaces?) in "Childhood, Manhood & Age." This mitigates somewhat the cause/effect confusion, but the Babel-like mangling of tongues of the Western Gate's closure persists, a Serresian *parasite* (Blake's Devourer), enemy of
- Constance:** Contraries: they contend to annihilate the spectral Negation, the (confused) reasoning power (first instance: *if you eat from the Tree, then you will become like God*). This error inaugurates the Sexual, *as opposed to* Friendship, whose Human Lineaments it fingleafs. Until "severe contentions" annihilate that *intermediate* Spectre, we cannot restore true
- Instance:** "This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment. But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged." Blake says Fallen (sexualized) reason reduces the world to dust, impervious to sensual enjoyment. For  
    If Perceptive organs vary, Objects of Perception  
    seem to vary;  
    If the Perceptive Organs close, their Objects  
    seem to close also. (J 34: 55-56)  
Contracting and expanding, our Human Organs  
shake the dust from the plow and reveal the "weeping  
clods"—dust reanimated by our labors in the "Moment  
in each Day that Satan cannot find" (M 35: 42).

Years later, this Stance became instrumental for me in *Post-Avant*:

## THE MUNDANE SHELL

you never know the entire story  
passing the worn cup

the sliver passed from mother to child  
emerges only in the child's old age

it goes out like a light in the hands ahead of us

past the sky  
down under the earth  
clouds  
animals of night  
ask to be made stars  
& fall in with similar companions

hoping nevertheless to avoid bloodshed  
until we forget all but the roots' insistence

over the Great Divide & out the Vortex

## II: Chops

In *From Feathers to Iron: A Concourse of World Poetics*, Jack proposed keeping "four or five interacting analogues" active; for example, in his Prologue to that book, John Thorpe mentions

HECATONCHEIRES

XVARNAH

LTALALTUMA

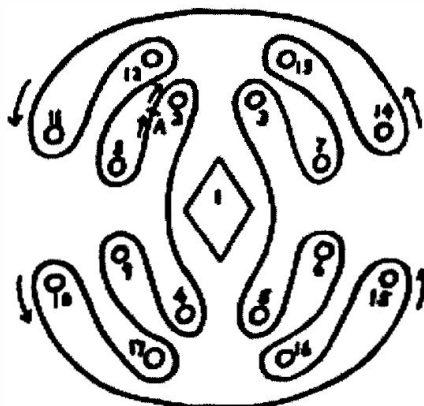
GOLEM

HOUNGAN

(xvii).

To add a fifth term to the work proposed in Stance 1, consider John Layard on the Devouring Ghost, Le-hev-hev, & the Path:

I now wish to call your attention to the remarkable test to which the Female Devouring Ghost subjects the ghost of the dead man at the entrance to the Cave. She has drawn with her finger, in the sand, a geometric figure, and she sits beside it, waiting for the dead man to come. He sees her from a distance. He is confused at the sight of her, and loses his way. When he regains his path and approaches the Devouring Ghost, she rubs out half the design. The dead man must know how to complete it. If he succeeds, he passes through the lines of the geometric design into the Cave. If he does not succeed, he is devoured by the terrible ghost.



Dance pattern of the Goddess Le-Hev-I-lev

<Fig. i. "The Path" or "The Way." This is the design drawn in the sand by the Female Devouring Ghost. The figure consists of a single continuous line drawn around a framework of straight lines. As soon as the dead man approaches, the Devouring Ghost rubs out half the design, which the dead man must complete before he can pass through the middle of the sand tracing in the direction indicated by the arrow. (South West Bay, Malekula.)>

Figure i is an illustration of the design she draws, which the natives of all these islands also draw sometimes in the sand; it is called "The Path," which might be better translated "The Way." First a framework of straight lines is drawn. Around and within this framework a continuous line is traced; the finger must under no circumstances be taken off until the design is complete. (137)

In “The Strengthening Method of World Completion,” Jack quotes Wittgenstein on this matter: “I understand a proposition by *applying* it” (154), and notes that “. . . in *The Faerie Queen* . . . a central figure, Red Cross, having reached the end of his rope, is displaced by Arthur. Blake completes the other half of the picture in *Jerusalem* when Albion (Arthur) awakens to Jesus, who is ‘identified’ with Los” (155). Jack long ago gave me Walter Jackson Bate’s *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet*, which anticipates “the progress of poetry’ as a matter of what Harold Bloom calls *misprision*—deliberate (?) misreading of strong predecessors. The Strengthening Method offers, as Blake did in *Milton*, completion rather than negation as a way further. When the dead Malekulan initially experiences (rational) confusion at the sight of Le-hev-hev, negation will doom him; completion alone—of his *own* figure—can save him. Unlike negation (which implies a thoroughly symmetrical opposite), completion (by contrariety) may entail an asymmetrical response. In “The True Vine,” Jack wrote that

Jesus’ radicalism was in his disconcern with high or low levels of past performance as a yo-yo, his sword cut that hanging judge situation, his point was to bring nothing more than you to his transaction, to invest your pieces with enough energy that you could feel the present level (baptism), that only this wine of love could relieve you of your doom. (*FFtI*10)

The poet-as-Malekulan does not have to complete the figure by remembering the obliterated half (knowing does not necessarily mean remembering), but by imagining its completion strongly enough to convince the Devouring Ghost that, like Dante in Hell, he has not really died and, therefore, does not qualify as lunch.

I see the Malekulan fifth term as a factor of Blake’s Western Gate, the (closed) gate of the tongue but also the gate of touch, a persistent finger linking the other four Stance 1 dimensions. Jack contributed the following poem to my magazine, *The Western Gate*:

JC: **The Opening of the Western Gate Upanishad**  
*for Daniel John Zimmerman*

THARMAS—on what is he based?

On water.

And on what is water based?

On semen.

And on what is semen based?

On the heart.\*

“Cf. ‘The Heart as a Subtile Organ’ Henry Corbin *Ibn ‘Arabi*, p. 221

His heart’s his mouth

What his breast forges, that his

Tongue must vent.

Spring 1970

DZ: **guide book**

places of interest clearly marked, Scenic Overlook,  
Slough of Despond, itinerary inked in fluorescent green,  
equally appropriate, that meteoric fireball I saw with Jack  
en route to Goddard to read for Grossinger’s crowd  
of earwaxed rowers who must’ve thought us booty  
at first, then windbags—Glover, Jack, me, & Harvey Brown  
each taking solos, ready though unbidden to jam in Q & A.  
we read into noise silent as snow, as dark matter holds  
the universe together, spoke into canyons unfathomable  
trusting eventual echoes to strengthen homeopathically  
titrated by shakeups of expectation in the Voids  
between the Stars obsessively scrutinized till constellations  
loom, refocused by the Magic Eye™ on loan from the poets,  
yours to keep till you reach the shore, & then return.

**III: Inspecting the Lyre**

Still, as Ralph Maud has said, “[n]othing grates more than a disciple’s  
sympathetic rephrasing of one’s ideas” (Maud). I tried to keep that (at



the time) unpublished caveat in mind when Cass Clarke generously invited me to respond to some of Jack's yet-unpublished sonnets from *In the Analogy*, remembering, too, that Jack had written to me while directing my dissertation, "[d]on't forget that as you wield the four-fold you are that penultimate 'complex occasion' not yet discriminated (till post-1950) ETC." (qtd. in *blue horitals*). In the following call and response from that collaboration, I sought fidelity to that twin determination:

JC: **Cleros-Sphota\***

Tiresias was blinded by the wrong question,  
Oedipus, too, too easily right, boringly sage  
in a place that poo-poo'd Cassandra's attempt  
to jog their thinking, what got us all going  
professionally in what wasn't one, a mystery  
that alone might strengthen what is taken  
for granted or lost to the above glibnesses,  
allowing the echo of other fine solutions  
to make light of the distances Evil traverses  
to get to us, or so one supposes who knows  
the difference between heartbreak & lost love,  
Lawrence comes to mind as one who's undergone  
the harrowing, wouldn't lose him to Pound—  
taking off together into the wild blue yonder.

Sept 18 1991

\* A lot of Zeus *noos*.

"If the subject is Cassandra it is interesting to note that she differs, for instance, from the tragic heroine of Aeschylus or Euripides in not delivering her prophecies in ecstatic verse, but standing in a dignified pose and drawing a lot."

H. W. Parke, "Dodona," *The Oracles of Zeus*

"The original monuments of perception  
are the play of light  
through the wall's membrane."

Edward Dorn, *Recollections of Gran Apacheria*

“The image or persona, what is seen in the world ‘outside’ or in the mind’s world ‘inside’, no longer is a show of that world only, an epiphany, but is a seed, a generative point of the inner and outer.”

Robert Duncan, “The H. D. Book,” *TriQuarterly*, 1968

“In this tele-topological mode, as the punctum regains its primary importance as light and suddenly becomes prime matter, transparency becomes a substance, a new material which is not exactly space/time and which is not properly analyzed, or filed, until one has attained a degree of unsuspected purity.”

Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*

DZ: **Pratibha\***

After the ball is over, after the Krell  
leave the machine enabling themselves  
to return their true heritage, my crystal set  
picks up Your Hit Parade, original  
live broadcasts I have to shush  
even the air to hear, even the blood  
to my brain, that seashell. Though I have  
no answer, can’t finish life’s sentences  
yet, can’t grasp the equal as opposite,  
the bow still threads this feathered shaft  
through bright axe-heads to restore  
the boss’ daughter, who must’ve known  
all along she’d go home with the one  
who brought her, humming their song

\* “Because the whole sentence meaning is inherently present in the mind of each person, it is quite possible for the pratibha of the sphota to be grasped by the listener even before the whole sentence has been uttered.”

Harold G. Coward, *The Sphota Theory of Language*

#### IV: Jammin' out of The Jam

At the “Soul in Buffalo” conference in Buffalo (November 18-20, 2010) celebrating a **curriculum of the soul**, Charles Palau, sommelier and Clarke’s frequent musical companion, when asked what he had done in the ‘70s and ‘80s, replied: “Jack Clarke’s homework.” He had good company:

Gerrit Lansing belongs to that much-maligned group “the Olson cult,” “the last all-male group in the U.S. gathered around a particular poet” (Marjorie Perloff). They are, perhaps, the most impressive array of unread writers this century. Taking John Clarke’s Institute of Further Studies as their measure, I count the following among their members: John Clarke, Albert Glover, David Tirrell, Robert Duncan, Michael McClure, Michael Bylebyl, Anselm Hollo, John Wieners, Robin Blaser, Joanne Kyger, Ed Sanders, Alice Notley, Robert Grenier, James Koller, Duncan McNaughton, Daniel Zimmerman, Edgar Billowitz, and George Butterick. (Friedlander)

“All-male” aside, Jack Clarke and Al Glover inspired the dedication that has kept this unprecedented project compelling for over 40 years. Jack invited me into that company in 1972, assigning me the fascicle on Perspective—‘homework’ to which I devoted much of the next two years. I lit a candle in the sunshine of my gratitude for that sort of inspiring trust in a letter to Gale H. Carrithers, Jr., then Chair of the English Department at SUNY Buffalo, supporting Jack’s promotion to full professor:

. . . I met Professor Clarke fifteen years ago, when I enrolled in his Blake course. For the first time, it was obvious that something new was going on. It took me about three weeks to adjust to the novelty of his approach and to appreciate its singularity.

. . . A central value [of his approach] is ‘watchfulness.’ One is not allowed easily to assume that a meaningful point of view can be taken ‘from the outside,’ or through some critical apparat, but is invited to hazard that one is at every moment immersed in a mythical world and responsive to its dynamic.

By accepting its ubiquity as a working hypothesis one is given, like Archimedes, a place to stand from which to move the world. But unlike Archimedes', whose place is ideal, the standpoint of 'causal mythology' is in the world—so much so that the natural man is continually tempted to forget its immanence. It is this forgetfulness Professor Clarke corrects, by presenting information either as furthering the overall investigation of a subject or as specifying the nature of an individual, concrete relationship. (Letter 27 March 1978)

The eroticized language endemic in contemporary mainstream writing and speech, shackled to the moment, "ruining life in pursuit of / itself rather than the ongoing struggle with error" (*EoTS* 14) gives way in *The End of This Side* (1979) to a Blakean situation of States. Jack does not attempt to recreate the experience of moments valorized by memory. A scientist of the imagination—not a necromancer—"by allowing rune to defeat image" he turns from the atomism of an accretion of images as a vehicle for truth to specify fields of truth of events: a process which involves the naming of states, virtual and manifest—his "transverse alternate to image-subjugation" (*EoTS* 26). "It's not what people are saying," he once explained. "It's the feeling gluing it together as a *word*." And in an epigraph to "A Poet's Job Is to Act OUT," he quotes Emerson: "We need not much mind what people please to say, but what they must say" (*In the Analogy* 144). He makes this especially clear in "Awake to Yourself," where he says that the "form of epic writing" which poetry must engage

. . . is no mimetic multiple of temporal usurpation, that it is the same as Homer's creative thrust, which is the same for every Romantic lover who lived past forty to protect his children from natural bodies of off-the-wall information that won't hold up. (*EoTS* 5)

In Twitter-land, where nearly all information has reached a level of confessional banality immune to thought, Jack's exhortation to the poets rings even more urgently prophetic. As Mike Boughn said in his eulogy, quoting Jack's comment that at the beginning of Blake's *Job* their musical instruments hang in trees, but at the end the family holds them, "The point is not to be perfect. The point is to play."

V: Sheet Music

June 19, 1986

Daniel John Zimmerman  
44 New York Avenue  
Metuchen, New Jersey  
08840

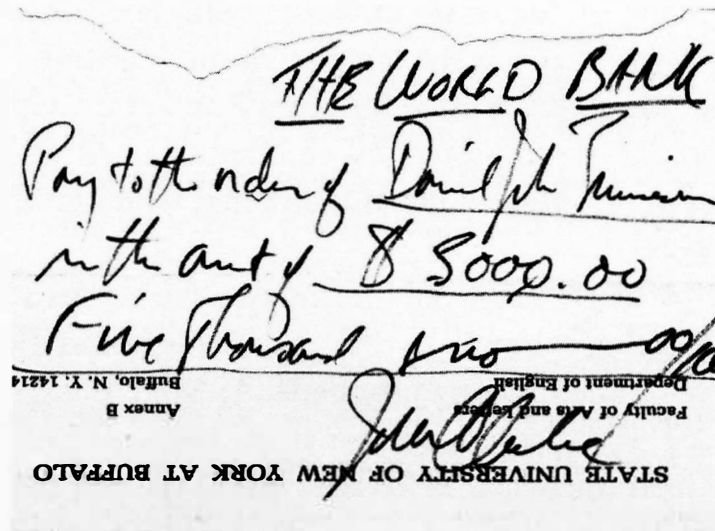
Dear Dan,

Since I speak only Venusian and am still just learning to write Sirian, and have no Martian at all—I am sending the enclosed letter along to you. If you are able to respond, please extend my regrets and high regard. I realize your own considerable Tellurian demands have kept you of late from completing your Martian studies, but I believe you have enough Equites to get through. Please don't be put off by the presumed difference in location, which is only an editorial convention to humor the ontic disposition of an estranged readership.

Fraternally yours,  
JACK

cc: David Levi Strauss

—and once when, particularly hard up, I asked to borrow \$10, Jack wrote me the following “check.” (I would have spent the ten.)



DZ: **on, you huskies**

when he got through smiling  
nothing was left to say.

he broke the sonic barrier  
in a jet-propulsion plane.

it was a Buick.  
no one knew what to expect.

go ahead I'll be your Spectre  
Jack said standing behind me.

the first thing to be overcome,  
the memory of the Golden Age.

*(Perspective)*

<sup>1</sup> Quotations from **BLAKE/EPISTEMOLOGY: STANCE I:**

## **DISTANCE**

### **Going forth and returning wearied**

The nature of infinity is this: That every thing has its  
Own Vortex and when once a traveler thro' Eternity  
Has pass'd that Vortex, he perceives it roll backward behind  
His path, into a globe itself infolding like a sun,  
Or like a moon, or like a universe of starry majesty,  
While he keeps onwards in his wondrous journey on the earth,  
Or like a human form, a friend with whom he liv'd benevolent.  
As the eye of man views both the east & west encompassing  
Its vortex, and the north & south with all their starry host,  
Also the rising sun & setting moon he views surrounding  
His corn-fields and his valleys of five hundred acres square,  
Thus is the earth one infinite plane, and not as apparent  
To the weak traveler confin'd beneath the moony shade.  
Thus is the heaven a vortex pass'd already, and the earth  
*A vortex not yet pass'd by the traveler thro Eternity.*

## SUBSTANCE

### **What are those golden builders doing?**

The great City of Golgonooza: fourfold toward the north,  
And toward the south fourfold, & fourfold toward the east & west,  
Each within other toward the four points: that toward  
Eden, and that toward the World of Generation,  
And that toward Beulah, and that toward Ulro.  
These are the four Faces towards the Four Worlds of Humanity  
In every Man. Ezekiel saw them by Chebar's flood.  
And every one has three regions, Childhood, Manhood & Age;  
But the gate of the tongue, the western gate, in them is clos'd,  
Having a wall builded against it, and thereby the gates  
Eastward & Southward & Northward are incircled with flaming fires.

## CONSTANCE

### **Oh that Death & Anihilation were the same!**

There is a Negation, & there is a Contrary  
The Negation must be destroy'd to redeem the Contraries.  
The Negation is the Spectre, the Reasoning Power in Man:  
This is a false Body, an Incrustation over my Immortal  
Spirit, a Selfhood which must be put off & annihilated away.  
To cleanse the Face of my Spirit by Self-Examination,  
To bathe in the Waters of Life, to wash off the Not Human,  
I come in Self-annihilation & the grandeur of Inspiration.  
These are the Sexual Garments, the Abomination of Desolation,  
Hiding the Human Lineaments as with an Ark & Curtains.  
Altho' our Human Power can sustain the severe contentions  
Of Friendship, our Sexual cannot, but flies into the Ulro.  
Hence arose all our terrors in Eternity; & now remembrance  
Returns upon us; are we Contraries, O Milton, Thou & I?  
*O Immortal, how were we led to War the Wars of Death?*

## INSTANCE

Labour well the Minute Particulars, attend to the Little ones  
Let the Human Organs be kept in their perfect Integrity.  
At will Contracting into Worms or Expanding into Gods  
And then, behold! what are these Ulro Visions of Chastity?  
Then as the moss upon the tree, or dust upon the plow,  
Or as the sweat upon the labouring shoulder, or as the chaff  
Of the wheat floor, or as the dregs of the sweet wine-press:  
Such are these Ulro Visions; for tho' we sit down within  
The plowed furrow, list'ning to the weeping clods till we  
Contract or Expand Space at will, or if we raise ourselves  
Upon the chariots of the morning, Contracting or Expanding Time,  
*Every one knows we are One Family, One Man blessed for ever.*

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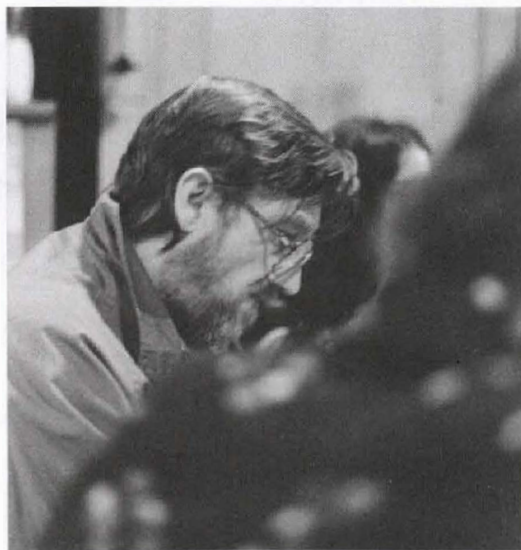
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**FOR ADAM SCHNEIDER, ON THE OCCASION  
OF HIS INAUGURATION AS MAYOR  
OF LONG BRANCH, NEW JERSEY**

The scent of musky earth  
Life-deep  
along the ocean  
as brine and  
newly dug earth  
enrich the air:  
the boardwalk awakening to life!  
the western sun  
in late afternoon  
shoots into breaking waves  
spinning rainbows!  
less strident  
the sea gulls,  
Praising the renewal,  
as on the Seventh Day,  
Adam our first citizen,  
rests briefly,  
ready to carry on  
and shoulder  
the re-building  
of our Long Branch...

**YOUR FACE WILL BE A MIRROR**

Your face will be mirror  
In my final flight  
Butterflies, yellow winged,  
Oaring the higher skies  
Your eyes with the living curve  
Of the thrush's wing  
Your hands warm  
As a lover's—  
Not even the living ocean  
Breathing in front of me  
Beckoning me to stir  
Will find room  
In my weary consciousness:  
Only you dear love  
Your eyes  
Your hands

**ALWAYS FINISH WITH A POEM**

Always finish with a poem  
in praise of children;  
mention their eyes,  
open and giving, the sun  
and moon and beetle stare,  
the hungry wolf,  
and ocean with currents without end—  
the sure look that,  
fully realizing objects  
one by one,  
doesn't rush or blur.  
Mention their limbs  
that easily somersault.  
Praise their dreams  
of birds' songs  
in restless dawns  
and rain slipping  
down tree trunks  
in those twilights cradled  
in a father's gathering arms  
or the warm nest of a mother.  
Praise the children  
for their ready tears.  
And praise the children  
for their belly laughs,  
their unstopped throats.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Santi Buscemi** teaches English at Middlesex County College. He has published seven textbooks and online learning tools for McGraw-Hill Higher Education. The son of immigrants from Agrigento, Sicily, Buscemi has translated Luigi Capuana's *C'era Una Volta* (published as *Sicilian Tales*) and *The Marchese of Roccaverdina*, the writer's *capolavoro*. Both were published by Dante University of America Press. He has also published a translation of *The Interrogation*, one of Capuana's Sicilian plays, in the *Journal of Italian Translation*. In 2012, the play was presented as a dramatic reading at the Italian-American Writers Association in New York City. Other works include "A Vision of Sicily" in *Primo* magazine, "Meeting Antonin Scalia" in *The Times of Sicily.com*, and several translations of Capuana's fairy tales in *Italica*, the *Journal of Italian Translation*, and *Forum Italicum*. He recently completed an online course, *The Literature of Sicily: A History*, for Dante University of America Press. Buscemi has lectured on Sicilian literature and architecture for the Italian-American Heritage Club of Hunterdon County and Dorothea's House in Princeton, a version of which appears on *YouTube*. He has also presented scholarly papers on writing, literature, and translation, including one at the University of Natal in South Africa. Last spring he presented at the Calandra Italian-American Institute in New York. He is in the process of translating *Profili di donne* by Capuana and *I Vicerè* (*The Viceroy's*), a novel by Frederico De Roberto, who with Capuana and Verga, was one of the Sicilian *veristi*.

**Olivia Calabrese** is a student at Middlesex County College.

**Emanuel di Pasquale** is Poet-in Residence, Professor of English at Middlesex County College, and Editor-in-Chief of this journal. Born in Sicily in 1943, di Pasquale came to America as a teenager. His published translations include Silvio Ramat's *Sharing a Trip: Selected Poems* (Bordighera Press, 2001), winner of the Raiziss/de Palchi Fellowship. In 1998 he won the Bordighera Poetry Prize for his translation of Joe Salerno's *Song of the Tulip Tree*. Di Pasquale has published twelve books of his own poetry, the latest being *Cartwheel to the Moon* (2003),

*Europa* (2006), *Writing Anew: New and Selected Poems* (2007), and *Siciliana*, a bilingual (Italian/American) collection of poems with illustrations by Rocco Cafiso (*Bordighera Press*, 2009). His translation of Dante's *La Vita Nuova / The New Life* (with Bruno Alemanni) appeared this year from Xenos Books, and he has two more books coming out this year. He lives by the ocean in Long Branch, NJ, where he serves as Poet Laureate of that community.

**Melissa Edwards** has taught English composition and journalism at Middlesex County College for 10 years. She has also conducted a year-round creative writing program for children ages 4 to 17 for more than 4 years. The creative writing program publishes a tri-annual children's literary magazine called *City Kidz World*.

**Michael Greenhouse** has been a Sociology Professor at Middlesex County College for forty-one years. He has been painting for the last ten years and had an art show in Newtown, PA, October, 2011.

**Charles H. Johnson**, a graduate of Rutgers University, is a second place winner of the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards for his poem "Sunday Comics," and the 2011 New Jersey Poetry Prose winner for his poem "Leaving." His third collection of poetry, *Smoke Signals*, received a 2010 Paterson Poetry Prize for Literary Excellence. A first-place winner of the 1998 Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards, he has edited the online literary magazine *Identity Theory*. He is the poetry instructor for the Middlesex and Monmouth county arts high schools and the Middlesex County Youth Shelter. A Vietnam War veteran and retired newspaper editor, he is also a Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Poet in the Schools. He lives in Hillsborough, NJ with his wife, Lainey.

**Hank Kalet** is a poet, freelance writer, and Economic Needs Reporter, *NJ Spotlight*. He teaches writing and reading at Middlesex County College, and is a part-time lecturer in journalism at Rutgers University. His poetry has appeared in numerous small press journals and his journalism appears in *The Progressive*, *NJ Spotlight*, *In These Times*, and elsewhere. His chapbook, *Certainties and Uncertainties*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2010. *As an Alien in a Land of Promise* is a book-length exploration in poetic form of the failures of American

capitalism and the continued predominance of homelessness in America. It is based on a year of visits to the now-closed Tent City homeless encampment in Lakewood, NJ, with photographer Sherry Rubel and filmmaker Jack Ballo. Sections of this poem have been published in *Serving House Journal* and *Blue Collar Review*. The book has not been published as a whole.

**Mathew Spano** is Professor of English at Middlesex County College where he teaches English Composition and Mythology in Literature. He earned his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ, and his most recent research has focused on the mythological and literary aspects of C.G. Jung's Red Book. His publications include scholarly essays, short stories and haiku, which he has published in numerous literary journals, magazines and newspapers. His work has appeared in the journals *Psychological Perspectives*, *The C.G. Jung Page*, and *The Hesse Page Journal*. His poetry has appeared in *The Los Angeles Times*, *Frogpond*, *The Heron's Nest* and other various journals, as well as in the anthologies *The Poets of New Jersey: From Colonial to Contemporary*; *Dust of Summers: The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku*; and *Baseball Haiku: The Best Haiku Ever Written About the Game*.

**Shirley Russak Wachtel**, Professor of English at Middlesex County College, is the author of a memoir, *My Mother's Shoes*, the story of a mother and daughter through World War II into the next century. In addition, she is the author of several children's books, including an interactive mystery series, and a poetry collection, *In The Mellow Light*. Author of a successful college reading series, Wachtel has published in a variety of venues including *The New York Times*, and has worked as a freelancer for Courier-Life Publications, a columnist for *The Brooklyn Times*, and a feature writer for *The Staten Island Advance*. She has received awards from Writers Digest, The New Jersey Library Association, The Newark Public Library, and Townsend Press, and frequently conducts presentations and readings throughout the Tri-state area.

**Daniel Weeks** has published six collections of poetry—*X Poems* (Blast Press, 1990), *Ancestral Songs* (Libra Publishers, Inc., 1992), *Indignities*

(Mellen Poetry Press, 1999), *Small Beer* (Blast Press, 2007), *Characters* (Blast Press, 2008), and *Virginia* (Blast Press, 2009). His poetry has appeared in *The Cimarron Review*, *Pebble Lake Review*, *The California Quarterly*, *Mudfish*, *Puckerbrush Review*, *Zone 3*, *Slant*, *The Raintown Review*, *Barbaric Yawp*, *The Northwest Florida Review*, *The Roanoke Review*, *Sulphur River Literary Review*, *Mobius*, *NY Arts Weekly*, and many other publications. Two of his poems were also published in *Wild Poets of Ecstasy: An Anthology of Ecstatic Poetry* (Pelican Pond, 2011). His translations of French symbolist poetry have appeared in *Blue Unicorn*.

**Daniel Zimmerman**, Professor of English at Middlesex County College, served as Associate Editor of *Anonym* that published Ezra Pound's last canto, and as editor of *The Western Gate*, *Britannia*, and *College English Notes*. His poetry has appeared in many magazines and anthologies and, in 1997, he invented an anagrammatical poetic form, Isotopes. His works include *Perspective*, a curriculum of the soul #20. (Canton, NY: Institute of Further Studies, 1974), *See All the People*, illustrated by Richard Sturm (Toronto: Open Studio, 1976—now available as an iBook), the trans-temporal *Blue Horitals* with John Clarke (Oasii: Amman, Jordan, 1997), *ISOTOPES* (London: frAme, 2001), and online: *ISOTOPES2* (Chicago: Beard of Bees, 2007). His book *Post-Avant* (2002) won the Editor's Choice Award from Pavement Saw Press in Ohio. His poem "THRU THE WESTERN DOOR" in this issue first appeared in *On Turtle's Back: A Biogeographic Anthology of New York State Poetry* (Buffalo: White Pine Press, 1978). In 2012-13, he enjoyed a yearlong McGraw Mid-Career Fellowship at Princeton University.

**Katie Zurich** is an Adjunct Instructor in English at Middlesex County College.



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