

The
South
Carolina
REVIEW

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Brothers Together In Winter

We are squared off in the snow
a blue winter evening in Kansas
and he holds a whetstone in
his blue white fist.

Yes we are going
to kill each other this time
once and for all. It is about
something one of us
has or has not done.

On his forearm a murky bluebird
tattoo flies with blunted wings
between two veins. His body
seems to grow around it

and as his fist comes by
silent as a breath of snow just
missing my chin we stop
frozen by the near connection.

Twelve years since that standoff
and still the moment
holds us
hard beneath the blurring moon.

We stand his hand comes up
the stone glides by my chin.
Snow falls.

The bluebird
flutters outward
and our faces are like mirrors.

HARLEY ELLIOTT

**An Appreciation of Julia Peterkin and
*The Collected Short Stories of Julia Peterkin***

Edited and with an Introduction by Frank Durham

Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970, 384 pp., \$10.00

ELIZABETH BOATWRIGHT COKER

I first saw Julia Peterkin in 1927, just after the publication of *Black April*. Her Alma Mater, Converse College, was honoring her with the degree of Doctor of Letters. A silly sophomore, yearning to grow up to be a writer, I gazed up at her on the platform — completely stage-struck.

Her image at that time was composed of sharp, twinkling eyes in an almost masculine face framed by a glory of red hair. Her tall gaunt frame carried about it an ineffable elegance and presence. She wore opals and a copper satin gown that, even if it didn't, *appeared* to sweep regally behind her. In a deep rich voice she told us about her consciousness of living so far away from the literary center of things; the loneliness of being a writer; the thrill of it. A natural raconteur, she let us in on amusing secrets about her characters. We adored her.

Years later, in Gittman's Book Store in Columbia, I heard an old lady from Sumter, a one-time playmate of "the little Mood girl," fume: "*Green Thursday! Black April! Scarlet Sister Mary!* Even Julia's titles are colored."

This was intended as a rebuke to a Southern lady who did not write as a Southern lady should. But it would be hard to think of any writer in America in the twenties and early thirties more original and unusual than Julia Mood Peterkin. Obviously she wanted recognition, indeed fame; she worked toward that end with a dedicated seriousness. In her place and time the subjects she chose and the candor with which she approached them were considered outrageous. Simone de Beauvoir says "the writer of originality, unless dead, is always shocking, scandalous; novelty disturbs and repels."

Julia was the first American writer to tell stories of blacks who itched, laughed, tilled the soil, ate, lusted, grieved and died just like whites. People they were, among whom she walked every day. At first alien on the isolated plantation of her husband, she eventually learned to see them and hear them plain, and, on the urging of Henry Bellaman (of *King's Row*), to write down what she saw and heard.

In 1920, the blacks living on Lang Syne plantation were as yet unaware of the sophistication of the towns. Merry-go-rounds and automobiles were still moon-magic to them. Most of them were unable to read or write, speaking a dialect called "gullah," identifying themselves with the earth, the seasons, a vengeful God (white) and his kind son, Jesus (black), "roots," superstitions, love, hate, resisting change.

The stark tales of their daily lives were not exactly tea table chat in any society. H. L. Mencken found them too strong for his often outrè *Smart Set* magazine. The *Atlantic Monthly* described "The Foreman" as striking a deep human note but "it seemed too terrible." Harriet Monroe, a sponsor of advanced thinking called the sketches and stories "revolting."

Julia was not surprised at this reaction in the North. She realized that she was pioneering in a completely new field of American fiction: a true, non-stereotyped picture of the Southern country black, far removed from the minstrel character, Jim Crow, and the equally stagey, Uncle Tom. White people were rarely invited into her pages except peripherally as absentee landlords or, as in "Missie's Twins," to sharpen the climax.

To create Blue Brook Plantation, the locale of all her stories and novels, she combined the Peterkin place with Brookgreen, on the coast, where her husband was a member of a shooting club.

Then in 1921 Mencken published "Merry-Go-Round" in *Smart Set* and, from 1921-1925, 26 of her pieces appeared in the Richmond literary magazine, *The Reviewer*. Finally in the autumn of 1924, the big door opened: Knopf brought out *Green Thursday*, a collection of twelve short stories, with a thread of characters all more or less linked, resembling a novel.

The critics pounced on this with welcome voices. *Time* — *The New York Times* — all the major publications reviewed it with enthusiasm. Laurance Stallings said, "I think it is a great American book."

The New York Times: "Mrs. Peterkin of South Carolina is one of the first to write a book unaffectedly about Negroes, without conscious or unconscious belittling mockery in view of superior white advancement . . . has shown herself in *Green Thursday* as a literary artist, without any prejudice except the saving artistic predilection for unity and coherent form. Into the mold of the graceful form she has chosen she

COLLECTED SHORT STORIES OF JULIA PETERKIN

5

pours the distillation of a rich human observation of the secret life of a people who have not yet been understood by the whites, because the whites have always found it easier to laugh at it than to attempt to comprehend it."

Julia comprehended it.

She was overjoyed when Negro critics approved her. Of *Green Thursday*, W. E. B. DuBois said, "A beautiful book," and of Julia, "She is a southern white woman but she has the eye and the ear to see beauty and know truth." The NAACP sponsored her enthusiastically and caused Mary W. Ovington's positive review of *Green Thursday* to be released to 250 Negro newspapers.

But the local press carefully avoided mentioning her or her book. Someone once called Thackeray "an uncomfortable writer." In the beginning South Carolinians, including Ambrose Gonzales, himself a writer of Gullah stories and owner of the Columbia newspaper *The State*, considered this far too mild a soubriquet for their Julia. That is to say until she won the Pulitzer Prize for *Scarlet Sister Mary!*

Even the eminent historian, Yates Snowden, whose favorable opinion she desired, condemned her for concerning herself with a Negro's "fornications." But here she had company in her outcast condition, for Dr. Snowden was also verbosely outraged that "that fellow from Charleston, DuBose Heyward, was writing about Negroes and not 'OUR WHITE PEOPLE.'"

Carl Sandburg soothed her: "As sure as you do anything worthwhile, likely to stand the test of time, there will be murmurings. And old murmurs change and become friendly —." Mencken wrote: "Mrs. Peterkin's book appears to have shocked the South Carolina Junker . . . She tells me they are powerfully silent about it. I am advising her to be patient. Some day they will take visiting delegations of Elks and Rotarians to see her."

Finally on January 25, 1925, *The State* gave Julia a fine review of *Green Thursday* and local accolades quickly followed.

Once, visiting me in Hartsville, she said how surprised she had been at the vilification of her by so many Southerners. That proved a solace to me when, at a "literary" tea in my home town, Darlington, South Carolina, one of my mother's oldest friends, in my hearing, described my book *Daughter of Strangers* as "manure served up on a silver tray."

From what blending of bravura and common sense came the decision to take inspiration from her own surroundings? Did Julia consciously try to join the American movement toward realism? Certainly by the end of her career she knew that she HAD done so. There was something powerfully affecting about her too that eventually softened the scandal of her daring, as Henry Bellaman wrote of *Bright Skin*, to "think black and work out the destinies of her characters in black man's terms."

From the first she was praised as a genuine folk writer as opposed to a folklorist. The superstitions, charms and nature signs, the primitive attitude toward religion, that meant so much to her characters DID rule their lives. She uses them as important plot elements to prove cause and effect: Killdee ploughs on Green Thursday (Ascension Day) and his baby burns to death that afternoon; he sees the new moon through the chinaberry tree and the red rooster picks out his second baby girl's eyes; Maum Hannah says to Missie: "Red bow don' bring no peace. No gal. Red bow bring somet'ing else."

By deft phrases and quick sentences she could delineate a character or situation as vividly as if she'd written pages of explanation. After the loss of his legs Black April's last words sum up his whole life: "Bury me in a man-size box — You un'erstan'? A man -- size -- box ---- I been six-foot-fo'-Uncle - - Six-foot-fo'!"

Though the stories are largely episodic and anecdotal and told in dialect, a rereading of them today, by an eye accustomed to the new realism, shows that they take precedence in the realm of the explicit over the fashionable stream-of-conscious and writer-tells-all techniques of such deliberate shockers as *The Love Machine* and *The Valley of the Dolls*.

Julia constantly used her own vivid personal nature, her ability to record what went on around her, but there is nowhere any hint of the autobiographical except in the short "Seeing Things," published in *The Century*, telling of her bride-days on the plantation. There is no self-exposure. No self-gratification is necessary for dramatic tension and effect. She does not rely on the lurid details of sex to let you know what is going on in the dark. Killdee says (almost as if he were William Blake himself) "I'm gwine take one joy whilst I kin."

She makes no personal claims on our sympathy and acceptance. Satisfied to tell of the things and happenings that concerned and fascinated her, she cried not of the woes of the world; only the woes and

wonders that at a certain moment actually happened to her people. Nor does she attempt to impersonate the soul of her characters. She contents herself with their conversations and reactions to their fate. Though I must admit I felt she was really **INSIDE** that hungry rooster's soul in the "Red Rooster"!

Only in her last — *Roll Jordan Roll* — is the stark adjectiveless prose of the early days deliberately enriched with more sophisticated treatment. The reader sighs, disappointed. The wine has been watered. The effervescence has fizzled out. She has succumbed to popularity. Even in her own state!

Mr. Durham has done a superb job in this presentation of Julia Peterkin's stories and sketches. He has chosen wisely and arranged well. His attitude is benevolent, admiring, candid and completely without "varnish." He writes his introduction and gives his memoir of her without pompousness or self-importance. There is always something curiously modest about Frank Durham. Students crowd to his lectures, and his books are widely bought and read. When praise comes his way he seems surprised, hardly seeming to believe he has done anything unusual. And his tenderness is of the rich variety. I think, stagestruck too, he always saw Julia as Hedda Gabbler and is convinced she saw *him* as the little stage hand who helped her with her make-up and stood in the wings admiring her. But if anyone is ever to write a book-length biography of Julia Peterkin it must be, in her own words, Frank Durham.

Seashell Huntin'

Strucian, you ever go seashell huntin', when the rushin'
foam water, from FOOMIN' ocean waves may surprise wet
your sand-sunken feet?

You ever go seashell searchin' when you're jaded
from what you're doin' — of chores — and find
peculiar and beautiful abandoned oceanware homes
of mollusks?

You ever go seashell huntin' and see the stilted-
legs water birds dance-run and walk by the water's edge—
and sift through shells—and in bendin' pose
grasp a was-animal covering—a porcelain-like rose?

STRUCIAN!! CAN YOU HEAR ME?? or has salted sea air
mementoes, spiraled snail shacks and slightly crunchin'
sand assemblages drowned me out, as roarin' sea waves
sometimes do when two talk near their misty midst?

ROBERT BOWIE

*“His Reason Argues With His Invention” —
James Dickey’s SELF-INTERVIEWS and
THE EYE-BEATERS¹*

RICHARD J. CALHOUN

James Dickey’s first novel, *Deliverance*, was such a phenomenal success that anything else he produced in 1970 must by comparison seem rather neglected. Early last year he published his sixth volume of poems, a slim paperback with one of the most ungainly titles in the history of American publishing — *The Eye-Beaters, Blood, Victory, Madness, Buckhead and Mercy*. Then just as the excitement over *Deliverance* was abating, a third 1970 volume, *Self-Interviews*, appeared, simpler in its title but unique in its conception. It seems that Dickey had agreed to expound via the tape recorder on a series of topics outlined for him by two young teachers, Barbara and James Reiss, who feel that they have midwived something “neither quite like a typical tape-recorded interview nor autobiography” but rather “a new genre, the tape recorded self-interview.”

This new genre of the McLuhan era does have a much older literary antecedent which it may not quite equal for literary style or drama, the dialogue in which the writer creates two voices, one his, the other in opposition, in dialectical counterpoint. Dickey has used this form effectively in an essay on Randall Jarrell reprinted in *Babel to Byzantium*. Perhaps this kind of essay reveals more of a duality in Dickey as poet-critic and virile sophisticate than *Self-Interviews*, but with James Dickey as the protagonist the Reisses could hardly fail to produce a volume that is both entertaining and informative.

I would have to say, however, that, no matter how entertaining this spoken Dickeyese may be, the prose is not quite up to the standards of the essays in Dickey’s volume of literary criticism, *Babel to Byzantium*, where Dickey’s critical judgments are occasionally enlivened by a stylistic barb of true wit. Nothing comes across on the tape recorder to equal the preciseness of his epigram on the poetry of J. V. Cunningham.

¹James Dickey, *Self-Interviews*, recorded and edited by Barbara and James Reiss. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1970. \$5.95.

James Dickey, *The Eye-Beaters, Blood, Victory, Madness, Buckhead and Mercy*. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1970. \$2.45.

Cunningham is a good, deliberately small and authentic poet, a man with tight lips, a good education and his own agonies. His handsome little book should be read, and above all by future Traditionalists and confessors; he is their man.

The microphone is also not quite conducive to audacious but carefully worded opening paragraphs like that with which Dickey began his essay on William Carlos Williams.

William Carlos Williams is now, dead, and that fact shakes one. Has any other poet in American history been so actually useful, usable, and influential? How many beginning writers took Williams as their model, were encouraged to write because . . . Well, if that is poetry, I believe I might be able to write it too!

The only comparable passage that filters through the tape recorder to the pages of *Self-Interviews* is Dickey's account of a poem written in an advertising office and typed by a new secretary.

I wrote this poem "The Heaven of Animals" in an advertising office. I had a new secretary and I asked her to type it for me. She typed up the poem letter-perfect and brought it to me.

Then she asked, "What is it? What company does it go to?"

"This is a poem," I said.

"It is?"

"Yes, it is, I hope."

"What are we going to sell with it?" she asked.

"God," I said, "We're going to sell God."

"Does this go to a religious magazine or something?"

"No, I'm going to publish it in *The New Yorker*," I told her.

And, as it happened, that's where it came out.

If *Self-Interviews* seldom equals the wit of Dickey's best critical prose, it has the true sound of Dickey speaking, a marvel in itself as anyone who has heard him read will testify; and it is a handbook of information about Dickey and his poems, compiled not by some assistant professor at a midwestern university but by the poet himself. Part one, "The Poet at Mid-Career," provides details about Dickey's creative psyche from the first awakenings of his interests in poetry through the publication of *Poems 1957-1967*. Part two, "The Poem as Something That Matters," consists of five sections, one each on Dickey's first five volumes of poetry. Dickey's critical pretensions are very modest. He makes it clear that he is not trying "to impose an official interpretation on the poems or "to preclude anybody else's interpretation I have been

asked on this occasion, though, what my poems are supposed to be about from my standpoint and what I have tried to do in them."

What *is* surprising is that Dickey's comments are not too surprising. Very little transpires which would show that his explicators have ever been dead wrong. Instead, in part one we have further evidence for what his critics have assumed all along. Dickey has "never been able to dissociate the poem from the poet." He doesn't "believe in Eliot's theory of autotelic art." He feels that the value of literature "must be maintained if we're going to have any humanity left at all." He regards a poem as "that kind of personal connection of very disparate elements under the fusing heat of the poem's necessity." He just doesn't "have beautiful Mozartian flights of the imagination." He is not surprisingly "much more interested in a man's relationship to the God-made world, or the universe-made world, than to the man-made world." He is drawn "to a philosopher like Heraclitus" and has as "personal heroes of the sensibility John Keats, James Agee, and Malcolm Lowry." The last two items may be news.

Part two is of greater use to students of Dickey's poems. It is informative and useful and often good reading, even if Dickey fails to evoke any sense of a critical recreation of the creative process as Stephen Spender did in "The Making of a Poem" and Allen Tate did in his essay on his own "Ode to the Confederate Dead."

Some reviewers have complained that Dickey reveals himself very cautiously, giving his reader "a routine milking of the glands" rather than the "total act of the body" that he feels meaningful communication should involve. I would not call *Self-Interviews* or anything that James Dickey's imagination produces routine, but the reader may well feel that the Dickey he encounters here is the public Dickey speaking on the level of good conversation and that the voice of the inner man is not heard.

The passage in *Self-Interviews* that best provides a lead for a description of *The Eye-Beaters*, *Blood*, *Victory*, *Madness*, *Buckhead* and *Mercy* is Dickey's comment on his poem "The Lifeguard" from his early volume, *Drowning With Others*.

Allen Tate once said that he thought of his poems as commentaries on those human situations from which there was no escape. "The Lifeguard" is my idea of a poem about one of those human situations from which there is no escape.

There are seventeen poems in *The Eye-Beaters*. An even dozen are concerned with situations from which there is no escape – aging, illness, and death; and it is these poems which have attracted the attention of the reviewers. This part of Dickey's book seems to be his "no exit," that is, (if Dickey will pardon the trite phrase) his most existential volume.

Dickey has indicated in a recent interview that he is pleased with *The Eye-Beaters*, regarding it as perhaps his most successful single volume. His reviewers have not been exactly unanimous in their agreement with Dickey's judgment. Some have objected to it on thematic grounds, feeling that Dickey at his best is a poetic celebrant of the life force and that he cannot handle darker themes as successfully. Other critics have found a falling off in style. Dickey, the poet of "open forms," has not quite successfully mated the freedom of his split line with the discipline of more nearly regular stanzaic forms, *etc.* Critics always seem to voice a feeling of having been betrayed when poets change a successful style or theme.

There is some truth to these charges, however, and I must agree partially with the complaints about Dickey's style. Dickey is a bit too often both rhetorical and commonplace. I do not detect the note of hysteria that the ears of some critics have caught, but I was bothered by an overuse of rhetorical devices which tend to make Dickey sound somewhat melodramatic. Several of Dickey's poems in this volume bear a heavy freight of interjections ("Ah, it was then, Chris," *etc.*) and apostrophes ("O son," "O Chris," "O parents," "O justice scales") as well as rhetorical questions. Occasionally – and only occasionally – Dickey sounds like Randall Jarrell, who was a bit too fond of such devices.

In fact, it seems that stylistically Dickey is heading in two opposite directions in this volume. In a poem like "The Eye-Beaters" he seems to be moving impressively ahead, even beyond the "big forms" of his earlier poems, toward archetypal images; whereas in other poems he seems to revert to the direct statements of his early poems and to come up with something too commonplace.

. . . Not bad! I always knew it would have to be
somewhere around

The house . . .

("Diabetes, I")

... I'm going in Tyree's toilet
 and pull down my pants and take a shit.
 ("Looking for the Buckhead Boys")

When he touches on his illnesses, real and imaginary, his style suggests that of Robert Lowell in *Life Studies* rather than the expansive imagination of James Dickey evident in his previous volumes.

My eyes are green as lettuce with my diet,
 My weight is down
 ("Under Buzzards")

But in spite of such tatters in his poetic garments James Dickey is still a very fine poet, and his most recent volume of poetry does not represent as abrupt a change in his style or thematics as some of his reviewers have assumed or as my few examples might have suggested. A central concern of Dickey's poetry has always been contact with the Other, represented variously as animalistic natural forces, the dead, Being itself.

In his first volume, *Into the Stone*, death is regarded as a change of being, not a thing to be feared; and the dead are accessible through the imagination. An exchange of being with the dead is a part of Dickey's obsession to understand through an act of faith in his imagination events which reason alone cannot comprehend. In *Drowning with Others* this "way of exchange" is a chief preoccupation of Dickey's, but here he seems for the first time reluctant to commune with the dead, and the exchange is predominantly with vital animal forces. In his next volume, *Helmets*, even the communion with the Other has become suspect as something only temporary and even potentially dangerous, since the *persona* may lose power as well as gain it. In *Buckdancer's Choice* there are, for the first time, unsuccessful attempts at communion. In one of the finest poems in the volume, "The Firebombing," Dickey tries to transpose himself from his airplane down to the destruction he is creating below. This time, however, his imagination is incapable of penetrating such barriers as the aesthetic distance created by the space barrier, the beauty of the flight, and peacetime, middle-class comfort.

In the "Falling" section of *Poems 1957-1967* there is a further stage in Dickey's movement away from a concern with vital forces to the threat of destructive forces. Here he becomes concerned with the prob-

lem of how to face death and other threats to vitality and with the resources and rituals the merely human being has to draw on in such encounters. In the title poem "Falling," an airline hostess falling to her death realizes under the extreme pressures of her contracted life-span that the only possibility of transcendence lies in making her death a mystery for the farm boys below. Consequently, she affirms her life at the very moment of her death, stripping herself naked and preparing her body for the last fatal and sacrificial reunion with the fertile earth. She discovers within herself a resource which permits transcendence.

In another poem, "Power and Light," there is a suggestion that the pole climber represents a new concept that Dickey has of the poet, in that he is able to find the sources of his power — his ability to make connections for "the ghostly mouths" carried over the lines — *underground*, in the silent dark of his basement. Dickey seems to suggest that the "secret" of existence that he has been pursuing comes from a confrontation not with the natural world but with the "dark" of one's own death. A key passage in the poem seems to look back toward his earliest personal poems and ahead to new directions.

. . . Years in the family dark have made me good
At this nothing else is so good pure fires of the Self
Rise crooning in lively blackness

In *Self-Interviews* Dickey provides further evidence of continuity by confirming what his reviewers have always known, that there is a connection between the chronology of his poems and that of his life. In *The Eye-Beaters* the reader encounters a person who is aware that his own youth is gone, that his life-space, like that of the air hostess in "Falling," has narrowed. "Two Poems of Going Home" invokes rather effectively the inmost secret fears of a middle-aged man who finds only memories left at the locale of his youth.

. . . Why does the Keeper go blind
With sunset? The mad, weeping Keeper who can't keep
A God-damned thing who knows he can't keep everything
Or anything alive: none of his rooms, his people
His past, his youth, himself,
But cannot let them die? . . .
(*"Living There"*)

"The Cancer Match" uses that prerogative of the poet that Dickey describes in *Self-Interviews* of lying convincingly and projects a fatal illness.

I see now the delights
Of being let "come home"
From the hospital.
Night!
I don't have all the time
In the world, but I have all night.
I have space for me and my house,
And I have cancer and whiskey
In a lovely relation.

In *Self-Interviews* Dickey describes his celebration of life forces in his earlier poems as the reaction of a survivor of two very destructive wars. Rather than hysteria, the emotions that make themselves known to the reader in the poems of *The Eye-Beaters* are gratitude at having survived so far the destructive forces of nature and praise of the courage to take risks as a means of coping with the fear of death.

In the poem "The Eye-Beaters" Dickey implies the new poetics of the present volume. The poet must describe encounters with the most basic life experiences, including destructive as well as life-giving forces. He must see the image of the blind children as archetypal and imagine the reason for the children beating their eyes.

Therapists, I admit it; it helps me to think
That they can give themselves, like God from their scabby fists,
the original
Images of mankind: . . .

In *The Eye-Beaters*, consequently, Dickey presents situations, real and imaginary, where his *persona* is faced with the fear of death. He must imagine ways to cope with this fear. One solution, already indicated, is to take risks. In "Giving a Son to the Sea," the father urges his son to take to the sea to affirm life even though the sea may swallow him up. In "Under Buzzards," the diabetic drinks the beer that could kill him.

At any rate, Dickey makes it clear that the reality of death must be confronted. In "Looking Up the Buckhead Boys," the poet feels the com-

pulsion to look into his school yearbook of more than thirty years before — “The Book of the Dead” — and to go out to face what has happened to the “Buckhead Boys.” Like some of his reviewers, I regret the loss of those powerful notes of Dickey’s celebration of life; every poet today must have his existential volume, and, for better or worse, this is Dickey’s. Here he seems to be attempting to say that a confrontation with death and its associated destructive forces (aging, disease, violence, and madness) may lead to fear but it may also lead to a realization of and an appreciation of the value of life. It should be noted that the volume includes a unique and almost semi-official celebration of the courage to take risks. Dickey reprints opposite a black, blank page the two poems from *Life Magazine* in honor of the Apollo astronauts who first walked on the dead surfaces of the moon and, from that perspective, appreciated in the black sky of the universe the blue life-light of their own planet.

. . . To complete the curve to come back
 Singing with procedure back through the last dark
 Of the moon, past the dim ritual
 Random stones of oblivion, and through the blinding edge
 Of moonlight into the sun
 And behold
 The blue planet steeped in its dream
 Of reality, its calculated vision shaking with
 The only love.

The Revolutionaries

JOHN F. ZEUGNER

There was nothing magisterial about her listening. He read slowly, awkwardly, pausing to guess out the translation, and whenever he glanced, however briefly, up at her, she looked supremely sympathetic. Her eyes, faintly moist, faintly puffy, behind heavy black-framed glasses, were full of solicitation. She had patience and, surprisingly, interest — as if he were not really the fifth backward Spanish student to enter the tiny chamber. At four o'clock on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons she dispensed "help" to those intent on passing. He figured he had a C for sure. He wanted her help in another way.

"This must really bore you. I haven't done my preparation."

She stood up, ducked her head — the ceiling rafters slanted — and edged around the desk. For a moment he thought she was going to attack him, and though he guessed he could fend her hefty weight off, the possibility unnerved him. She only went to the window.

"Look," she said staring out toward the library further down the hill. "They've given me this block of time. I'd just as soon have students here. They're liable to take away this time and make me teach another class. So you see —"

"I see. I just thought it might bug you."

She slump-laughed and turned around in the window, casting a thick shadow over him. She always wore beltless shifts, which, though they disguised the large waist he guessed was there, nonetheless made her already formidable appearance overwhelming. Large people, he was thankful, had gracious temperaments. She outweighed him by forty pounds, he guessed, but her face was full of kindness.

"If you want to go home —" he said.

"You're not getting off that easy," she smiled. "I've got nothing on all afternoon."

He expected her to chuck him under the chin and say, "Bear down, Buster."

"And just more studying of my own tonight," she continued.

"Oh," he answered and picked up the tiny reader.

She moved back to the desk, sat in the noisy swivel chair. "Come on." she chided.

". . . Only the . . . the dull —"

"Unattractive."

"Only the unattractive girls study. Conchita is . . . very —"

"More."

"Is more pretty."

"We'd say prettier."

"Conchita is prettier than Luisa, but Conchita is . . . dull?"

"Stupid."

"Conchita is prettier than Luisa but Conchita is stupid."

The next paragraph began with a phrase he couldn't unravel, so he said, in the firmest, sincerest tones he could summon: "Can you understand Cubans?"

She looked at him, smiled. "They drop syllables — a kind of Spanish short-hand. When I'm talking to them I get along pretty well, though I have to fill in a whole lot. But when they're by themselves I can scarcely pick up anything." She extended her arms along the desk, flesh jiggling.

He was careful of his *entrée*: "I've wanted to drive on down to Miami and talk with the Cubans, but I guess it will take a little more study."

"Ha! You can say that." Suddenly she turned red. "You're coming along all right, but I've had a lot more Spanish than most people and I have trouble — maybe next quarter," she added.

"Not likely," he answered. "I guess the Cubans have fit in pretty well over here."

"They're willing to work — unlike a lot of people in Miami."

"Yes." He looked back into the book. The phrase wasn't any clearer, so he decided to go further into the proposition. "Have you ever read any Neruda?"

"Poetry's not my strong suit," she answered, closing the book. "Now if he had put it into drama, then we might have gotten together."

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"If I could get so I could just read Neruda. I think he's great — really great."

"I have the feeling his leanings make him —"

"Oh, there's no question about that. That's why he's so popular in South America. Don't you think so?"

"I'm strictly apolitical. Apolitical. We can call it quits for today. You've really got to do more work on your own."

He got up, took the maroon sweater from the window ledge. He pulled it on — feeling suddenly foolish, muffled for an instant in wool before her — struggling in the hairy dark. To cover, he said, "You're seeing my fraternity phase."

She frowned quizzically — watching his emerging head.

"Sweaters, pressed pants, sockless loafers, the whole course," he went on nervously. "I got over that a year ago —" Everything, he suddenly noticed, led back to the proposition. "There are more important things."

"Like learning your verb changes," she added.

"Maybe," he answered quickly. "See you Tuesday."

"Not coming to class Monday?"

"Oh, then too. I really want to read Neruda."

Her laugh was a kind of sanction to leave. He felt he'd put the opening wedge in and he looked forward to the Tuesday session.

In class on Monday he noticed she was watching him; a puzzling interest, he thought. This time he was impressed by her size twice: when she came in with that galumphing gait as if moving in sections, and when, out of a sudden sense of inconvenience, she wrestled the standing lectern to a corner away from the board. My amazon interpreter, he thought. What an impressive addition she would make — if only he could convince her.

Tuesday's warm rain hardly dampened his mood. He even did a little preparation. She wore a sparkling yellow dress and when she stood for a moment behind the desk (ducking her head) she looked like a brilliant shade drawn down to shut off the Florida sun.

"I brought a Neruda poem. I wanted to hear what it sounded like. I've read the translation."

"You want me to read it to you out loud?"

"Yes."

"After the next story."

"If you say so."

He swiftly got dull Luisa back to school and her prettier sister several dates. Then he produced the Neruda poem. She sighed and took the sheet from him.

She scanned it first, and then began to read the Spanish out loud. At first she was tentative, but with each line it seemed her confidence broadened. He was surprised to hear a touch of ham enter her voice. She got louder. Just when her intensity had reached a pitch to match her dress, she thrust the sheet back at him and said firmly, "That's drivel."

"Drivel?"

"All that business about United Fruit. Now come on, really!"

"You don't think it's true?"

"How would I know . . . Of course I don't think it's true. He wrote it, when? I bet sometime in the twenties."

"1927."

"See. I mean really, that kind of thing stopped a long time ago."

"I think it's still going on."

She looked at him quizzically. He locked his eyes on hers. She picked up the reader.

"Conchita's safer," she said with a curt, indulgent laugh.

After the session she walked down the metal fire escape with him.

"Can I buy you some coffee?" he said.

"I'll have some with you. Nobody buys me anything; it's unprofessional."

"That suits me," he answered quickly. "I've got two car payments to make this month."

She bought his coffee.

"Do you have a car?" he asked.

She sipped the coffee, put it down. "Always too hot," she said. "No."

"How do you get back and forth?"

"With these," she laughed, slapping her thighs. The sound was distinct, even above the clanking and conversation around them. He smiled. Suddenly she looked embarrassed, as if the blow on her legs had been too vigorous. "It's a short walk. I live on Anders."

"Oh," he said, looking away. "Where'd you get your masters?"

"Indiana."

"Big school."

"A factory."

For some reason he felt himself turning red. The hollows of his arms felt very cold — and then he leaned in over his coffee, the vapors almost beading on his neck. "Look," he said quietly, heat gushing up from the cup. "Look, you could help me out. You could be a big help."

"That's me all right," she smiled, picked up her cup.

"I don't think," he began again, but broke off, finally said, "Next Friday I want to go down to Miami to meet some Cubans who, who discuss politics but I need someone to go, to come along and translate for me. I was wondering. I mean I know I shouldn't, but it's only an hour's drive and I'd buy your dinner somewhere if you'd do it."

"Politics?"

"You know, the exile and things."

"I don't know anything about it."

"Well, I know some things, and I could coach you."

"Say, how did you get into all this?"

"Into what?"

"All this political stuff. You don't look —"

"I know I don't look. Some of the guys at the house — We're going to pledge a Cuban . . . Maybe. He talked to me about it."

"I told you sometimes I can't follow Cubans."

"Well, you sure can do a hell of a lot more than me."

"Don't swear."

"I'm sorry."

"I bet."

He smiled. "No, if it —"

"Please. I'm not mother yet."

"No," he said automatically with just the emphasis he needed — a summoning he was completely surprised to hear from himself. She blushed.

"I want some ice cream," he said getting up.

"Bring me a cone."

"Vanilla?"

"Chocolate."

When he came back it seemed she had regained professional distance, all composure and dignity licking her cone. He concentrated on his. Noise from elsewhere took over. He thought about apologizing. But with the final crunch of her cone, she wiped her mouth and then said, "When do we go? When do you want me?"

He coughed, tried to cover his surprise. "Friday night."

"Where do I get dinner?"

"Anywhere you want," he laughed, forcing a certain green suavity.

"Don't say that."

"No — I —"

"Just not a MacDonalds. A cut above MacDonalds. Understand?"

"Understood!"

II

On Friday afternoon he vacuumed his Mustang, and with self-conscious thoughtfulness put the right-hand bucket seat as far back as it would go. He considered washing the car but the day was hot. He put the volume of Neruda on the back seat. After he had picked her up and they had started down Route One toward Miami, she reached around (the gabardine-like material of a new green shift scratching loudly on the plastic upholstery) and scooped up the book.

"I'm not expected to quote this, am I?"

"I don't think so."

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"I suppose these people think Cervantes was a square."

"Probably." He down-shifted for a light.

"Well, the things I get myself into."

"If you're hungry we can stop somewhere along —"

"I can wait as long as you can."

He laughed. She thumbed the Neruda poetry.

"I can eat all the time," he said after some silence.

She read a poem out loud. "There's an image for you — a drying bloomer shedding one slow tear — Hehn!"

"Yeah. He really knows how to make you see."

"Hehn! One bloomer crying."

He turned on the radio. "You want to go along the beach?"

"Fine."

He turned off onto AIA. The traffic diminished and there were glimpses of the ocean, slate-grey, metallic-looking between the hedges of huge houses fronting the water. Further on, surprising clumps of pine trees shut off the view. She fiddled with the radio dial. He felt hungry, upset. He glanced over at her. It seemed her bulk slanted the car. Did she lift the wheels on his side off the ground? Not likely, but possible, he thought.

"I can't find anything." She turned the radio off, pulled her shift forward, slumped back in the seat. "I can't say this is the most exciting trip I've ever taken."

He nodded, began hoping for a restaurant.

"I make this run pretty frequently. We'll stop for dinner soon."

"I wouldn't be averse to it," she laughed.

At that moment, when the car seemed hollowest, a cement-tiered drive-in shop appeared. He swerved into Kelly's Snack 'n Snooze on (the sign said) 110 feet of golden beach front. They ordered fried chicken halves in the basket and thick shakes.

"Wanna go back there, on the beach?" he asked.

She had begun drinking her shake. "Suits me."

"We don't have to. I know some girls don't like to eat with the sand and all."

"Look, if you want to go outside that's fine. I'm not 'some girls.' Hehn! Besides, we would do well to avoid this scent." She tossed her head back and drew a whiff of noisy disapproval.

He chose the cement table nearest the water, about a hundred feet from the edge of the ocean. The table was circular and studded with dull triangles of tile, maroon, blue and green. Fortunately there was no breeze. He waited for the gnats but none came — almost, rather, a smoky, mucid warmth enveloping everything. The ocean lapped frailly, and far out its stillness became a dull chrome glare from the sun over their shoulders. There was a tanker on the horizon moving like a soundless model train.

"At Daytona," he said between licks of his fingers, "I used to drive down to the beach — when I was in high school. I used to drink a milk shake and watch the sunset. I couldn't afford the chicken."

"You were fortunate."

"Is it that bad?"

"It's fine. Just joking." She wiped her mouth. "A little old, maybe, but fine. Beats a T.V. dinner in any event."

"Is that what you eat?"

"Well, if you want the whole truth, I'm on a diet. A half a grapefruit and a T.V. dinner twice a day. Portions are small. Supposed to kill the appetite. You can have my French fries."

He pulled the basket over. "Sometimes I used to get out of the car," he said to cover as he scooped out her fries, "and walk down in the water. In the spring the temperature's just right."

"That's enough," she said, pulling the basket back. "Leave a few," she laughed. "Else I won't know whether to recommend the place."

He nodded, eating.

"Who'd you walk with?"

"Pardon?"

"Who'd you go down to the water with?"

"Oh. Most of the time alone."

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"Come on."

"I had a girl for a while when I was a junior."

"I bet."

He laughed nervously.

"You still think about high school?" she asked.

"No. Not a bit. I didn't know anything then. All the wrong things were important. It's embarrassing."

"Well, I don't know why. I liked high school. Everybody puts down their high school, but I think of it as a pretty good time. Pretty darn good time."

"Where?"

"Ohio. Silverton, Ohio. I played field hockey. Can you believe it? Now I have trouble getting upstairs." She pushed the basket away. It was empty. "Well? How about it?" she said triumphantly, turning on the concrete bench. "Well, are you coming?"

"Coming?"

"Down to the water." She kicked off her shoes.

He looked at his watch.

"The temperature's right, isn't it?" she asked standing up, then working her bare feet into the sand. "I mean it's the official way of greeting the sunset, isn't it?"

"We're already late."

"Big deal. Come on." She started for the water. He kicked off his loafers, rolled his trousers up, and, still chewing on the upper thigh of the greasy chicken, followed her.

She struck a path, churning water out behind her ankles like tides around two piers.

"Slow down," he protested between bites on the chicken.

"Slow down, hehn! You catch up!"

"Now wait a minute," he said with more urgency than he had contemplated.

She turned around, water almost to her knees.

"I think we ought to leave. I don't want to miss the meeting."

"What goes on there, anyway?"

He finished the chicken thigh. "I suppose they talk about invading Cuba or running guns over there —"

"That's illegal."

"Revolution's always illegal."

"Well — all I need is to get picked up with a bunch of anarchists."

"I don't think they're anarchists. They believe in government. They just want to get Castro out."

"I'm for that."

"We don't want to miss it. I mean the whole trip would be for nothing." He tossed the bone away.

"You threw away the best part."

"What?"

"The marrow. It's got the most vitamins. Believe me. I'm an expert at eating chicken marrow. When you live on T.V. dinners you end up eating everything but the tin." She laughed and tentatively kicked water at him.

"Aren't your feet cold?" he said, backing off.

"No. The only thing I worry about is stepping on a chicken bone some litterbug has thrown away."

He smiled. Water came over the roll of his trousers. His feet went deeper into the scratchy sand as the undercurrent passed back and forth. She seemed to be enjoying herself. He began to wonder if they would stand like herons through the night, in the shadow of Kelly's Snack 'n Snooze.

"Don't you think it's important?" he asked.

"What?"

"The revolutionaries."

"Of course! I suppose it's important. How do I know?"

"Well, I think we ought to get down there. The longer we wait here the less chance we have of helping."

"Look," she moved toward him. "I agreed to come along and translate because, because. Well, for a number of reasons. But I em-

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phatically did not say I was going to help anyone. All I need is to end up by helping a bunch of anarchists."

"They're not —"

"Well, whatever they are. All I'm supposed to do is help you out. Isn't that right?" She stared at him. The tide seemed to get thicker. He released one foot from the suction of the sand.

"Sure. That's why I asked you."

"A favor to you," she interrupted. "To help you out so you can do whatever it is you want with them."

"I don't want to do anything special with —"

"But count me out on the action part. I'm strictly *a*-political. A-political, and I obey the laws. I obey the laws and I never litter up the beach. And only once in a great while do I stand out in the cold with my feet underwater. Come on." She started back toward Kelly's. He sprinted up the beach, got to the bench first. Then, holding his feet up, knocked them together to get the sand off, he watched her galumphing toward him, massive and invulnerable.

III

For a moment he thought they would be turned away at the door. He actually stepped back to check the tilted number on the faded white clapboard house. A face pressed against the screen from the inside kept repeating "No party here. No party here."

He countered by repeating "Carlos Ariztobal. Carlos Ariztobal, my fraternity brother. My fraternity brother." There was, evidently enough, a party going on.

"Look," she said, "we've been around this neighborhood for forty-five minutes. There could be a party anywhere."

He said nothing to her — just continued to chant "Ariztobal" at the screen. Finally the door opened, held back disdainfully by a tall Cuban immaculately dressed in a three-piece suit. She went in first, a titan of a blocker, he felt, if there should be trouble. A narrow, musty hall led to a back room which was filled with people sitting on the floor. There was a keg of Michelob in the corner, a stack of unused cups on the windowsill above, but no one seemed to be drinking. The group on the floor passed a rudely-made cigarette around.

"They're turning on," he said proudly to her, pointing out a corner where they might slump down.

"What? What's going on here?"

"Grass. Can't you smell it? They're getting high."

"Great," she answered sarcastically.

He slid into the circle so as to intercept the joint going around. When it came to him, he offered it back to her. She was still having trouble arranging her legs, rocking this way and that to settle them under her. She shook her head. "That's all I need," she said.

He took three long drags on it himself, then passed it on. From across the room he saw a new cigarette being lit. Suddenly he felt her large hand on the back of his neck – like a liquid clasp of coldness, but sensual and attracting. He leaned back.

"What's going on here? I thought these people were political. I thought they were –"

"They are," he smiled, already feeling himself contract and float. "They are. We're just getting warmed up, that's all."

"Look, I came down here as a translator, as an interpreter – not an acid head."

"Nobody's dropping," he said with a certain sing-song coolness, feeling very good about his suavity.

"Oh, boy," she said, slumping back, releasing her grip. Then she leaned forward again. "Look," she said, but he had reached for the cigarette again. He held it back over his shoulder. She batted his arm away. He took two more drags and passed it on.

"Haven't you ever gotten stoned?" he said, conscious of a certain slowness of phrasing.

"Oh, I've tried it all right. The point is, I don't like it."

He stood up. "I'm sorry. I'll get you a beer. I'll be right back." He plunged across the circle.

There was a thin, red-headed fellow at the keg. He poured beers for both of them, nodded, "You just come in?"

"Yeah, I'm looking for a fraternity brother of mine, Carlos Ariztobal."

"Cuban?"

"Sure."

"Well, there's an exile group upstairs. They don't like to mix."

"I can see that. This group doesn't seem too political."

"Bunch of heads. The room's right at the top of the stairs. There's only one room up there – kind of an attic." Then the red-haired fellow went out.

After he presented it to her, she looked at the beer disconsolately.

"Sit down," she said.

He leaned to intercept the cigarette again, took several drags and then yielded it up.

"*The exiles are upstairs.*"

"Sit down."

"Okay," he said easily.

"Look," she went on, "this is not my idea of a good way to spend the evening."

"Is it too cold in here?" he said, conscious of the wide smile forming on his face.

"Very funny. I have a good job – one I need to get through Grad school, you know?"

"Have some beer."

She took three long swallows. "Look, if I'm supposed to translate, that's fine. If I'm supposed to sit around and enjoy myself with people like this," she motioned toward the group, "then that's not so fine. Do you understand?"

"Of course, I understand," he said, mimicking her inflections, then reaching for the cigarette again.

"Will you cut that out!"

He nodded while taking deeper inhalations.

She struggled to get to her feet. To keep her in place, he squatted down beside her.

"We'll go upstairs in a second. Just a second." He looked at her, seeing, he thought, something beyond discomfort in her eyes – a back curtain of real uneasiness. He tried to think about that, but the phrase

just a second turned over in his mind displacing everything. He suddenly realized he had no idea what *just a second* meant. None whatsoever. The phrase had become separated, a collection of strange sounds. That was funny and he began to snicker thinking about it.

"Are we going upstairs or not?" she said finishing her beer.

"Upstairs?"

"Oh, boy!"

"Just a second. Don't you see that . . . I . . . I mean hear it? *Just a second*. Listen to that — JUST A SECOND . . . SEC . . . OND . . . SEC . . . OND. What the hell does that mean, SEC . . . OND?"

"Is there something wrong with you?" The tone washed him downhill for a moment.

"All right. All right!" he shouted standing up, losing his balance, shifting toward the wall, then righting himself. "All right! Let's go upstairs."

Before the ascent he did manage to draw her one more beer, though the plastic trapezoid controlling the spigot felt like a brick in his hand. The steps seemed interminable — narrow, scuffed, yellow-painted, sagging. They emerged right into the center of the room, obviously a converted attic. Their entrance caused a commotion. Two immaculately dressed Cubans suddenly appeared beside them. They muttered at him in Spanish. He sensed he had intruded but comprehended nothing. He turned to her, and she answered in Spanish quickly.

"What's the name of your fraternity brother?"

"Carlos . . . Carlos," he thought a minute. "Ariztobal. Ariztobal."

At the name the two Cubans receded into the group milling near the red-haired fellow.

"What did you tell them?" he asked.

"That we belonged here."

"What else?"

"That your friend invited us. Is he here?"

"No. I don't see him. What are they saying?" He pointed toward the group.

"They're not saying anything. They're listening."

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"I didn't mean that," he explained easily, pushing at the bannister of the stairway. She drank more beer. "I meant," he went on. "I meant," he stopped, looked at her drinking, forgot what he meant and began laughing again. She swallowed quickly, watching him rock on the flimsy brass bannister.

"Stop that," she said. She pulled him away from the bannister and lurched toward the group around the red-haired fellow. Together outside the group they strained to listen, but the speaker's technique was low-keyed and rushed. Only phrases, words, filtered back: *Fanon, third world, health*. Then the noise stopped altogether and a small, evidently nervous accomplice began a halting translation for the group.

"He's getting it all wrong," she said rather loudly. "He's mixing it all up."

"How can you tell?"

"Look, I know proper Spanish when I hear it."

"Right! Right you are there."

She grabbed him by the arm. "Say, are you trying —"

He reeled some under her grasp, but their eyes met — a visual collision he found lingering and somehow meaningful. She relaxed her grip.

"Why don't you do the translation? You do the translation!" he said, slowly watching each phrase form in the air between them.

She flushed a full scarlet and let go of him entirely.

"You do the translation, and I'll get some more beer." He plunged into the group, elbowing his way toward the center. "I've got a translator, a professional!" he shouted. "She'll help you out. She's very good. I mean she's terrific. Isn't that right?" He turned back watching her, then reaching out for her hand as she ground her way through the fringes of the group.

The red-haired fellow said, "She know her stuff?"

"She teaches it."

"That's fine. Old Benny here barely gets through." Benny looked relieved.

It was a splendid arrangement, he thought. Things could not have worked out better. He pulled her into the center. "Just translate what he says. I'll get some more beer."

"All right," she answered, standing tall now, peering over her audience.

"She knows her stuff. Really knows her stuff!" he said, then forced his way back out of the group. As he started down the stairs, her voice, clear, increasingly confident, settled across the room, initiating instruction.

Downstairs, he went back to the seated group, filled a gap and waited for the cigarette to come round. He closed his eyes, imagined her wrestling a lectern before the Cubans upstairs — whipping them into a revolutionary fervor with moist, compassionate glances and a torso stronger than any of theirs. She appeared to him in bandoleers, cartridge belts over the green shift. Even now, he thought, they would be unloading mortars from his Mustang, aiming them at the established forces. Filling the charred night sky with bursts of gleaming blood.

He nodded, smiled at his own sensation, took the hot remnant of the cigarette from calloused hands beside him. It burned his lips but he managed two long pulls. He slumped back, fondled the white styro-foam cup and then remembered his errand. He thought about getting up, imagined holding the plastic handle of the spigot but only succeeded in stretching out his legs. He lobbed his head from side to side. She would be wowing them upstairs, embellishing the red-haired fellow's speech, finding the right imaginative rhetorical devices to punch the message across. The word would get back to Carlos, back to the fraternity. At length he did struggle to his feet. He stood woozily at the beer keg. Then he became aware of noise — calculated stomping from upstairs.

At first he thought someone was demonstrating that dance he'd seen Spaniards perform on television, but the noise went on, got louder. Was she underscoring a point, emphasizing a tenet? Then shouting. Vicious shouting. The calling of a riot. A mass howling from upstairs. The cigarette stopped going around. Something was wrong all right. Beer spilled over his hand. The coolness spurred him to action. He stepped across bodies, hurried back up the stairs. The yelling got louder. There was a blue blur of bodies locked and shoving at each other across the entry to the attic. He pushed at them, but they were like a collar across the room. He tossed the beer behind him, then leaned his shoulder against the group. He edged in. The accusations grew more vehement. Suddenly bodies parted and he saw the red-haired fellow actually hold-

ing up his arms to fend off blows. His former interpreter seemed crumpled. Several Cubans were punching at them both.

"What's going on?" he shouted. Where was she? She had to be a head taller than any of them. If she couldn't be seen, it meant only one thing. She was on the floor. Imagine being kicked to death by Cubans, he thought. An elbow came into his back, splaying him out and forward into the worst area of discord. He grabbed hold of two necks, delighting momentarily in the ease with which his fingers dug in. "What's going on?" he shouted at the top of his voice, reeling and crunching into the center of the room. Fists streaked into his stomach. He was tossed in a delicious delirium toward the red-headed speaker, who grabbed him as if to strike.

"Man, like it's very funny and all that. Very funny. But who's the joke on now? Who, eh?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean she's very funny and like that and it's very funny and cool and all that, but look what's happening. For Chrissake, look what's happening. I mean bringing her in here was groovy and all that, but look what's happening."

She was coming back into the group. She wasn't on the floor. She was safe after all. She was coming for him, he could feel it. Massive and invulnerable, she was wading through the crashing Cubans and would get him out.

"For Chrissake," the red-haired fellow said. "For Chrissake, she's coming back. Keep her quiet, eh? Just keep her bloody mouth shut. Benny!" He bent over the interpreter and caught a kick in the thigh. "Benny, tell 'em to stop."

She stood like a tower, flailing her elbows — clearing a path. "We better get out of here," she shouted.

"What's going on?" he said, dazed, fascinated and delivered.

"Come on. Look, come on!" She yanked at his shoulder.

A chair was passed overhead. There came the splintering sound of a shattered window. Why bust the window, he thought. Why go out the window? Who not go down the stairs? The lights went out. Whistles sounded. For an instant he thought he heard barking. Then, his eyes adjusting, he saw only a blue, swirling, reflected light off the ceiling. She never relaxed her grip on his shoulder. More whistles sounded.

Stomping on the stairs. He was shoved back toward the window, lost his balance. She snatched him up.

"The Pigs! The Pigs!" The red-headed fellow's voice filled the room.

A general scream. A couch turned over. He threw three punches in the dark, hitting flesh once — someone's back. Her hand slid down his shoulder, grabbing his arm, yanking at him. He tried to jerk away, but she pulled him to. They fell together. Her fingers around his wrist felt cold. Others fell on them. The lights came on.

The march to the police van was handdog and embarrassing. He kept gyrating his jaw, trying to decide if it had become detached. She pulled at her shift — first hiking it, then smoothing it, then forcing it down.

"This is kind of interesting," he said. "How do I get back for my car?"

She looked at him with, he felt, infinite condescension. She tugged at her shift, stroked the side of her cheek.

"Hehn! Your car? My job!"

"Yeah," he answered apologetically.

The first van filled with Cubans, then the second. For a third the police used a rented panel truck. They got in first.

"This the white only truck?" the red-haired fellow shouted as he got in. "Racist pigs! Racist pigs!" A night stick prodded him inside. The door slammed. There was no place to sit down. A sullen policeman in the front seat stared over a red flashlight beam aimed at them.

"She's too much. It's really cool and all," the red-headed fellow said sarcastically.

"I corrected your drivél," she answered, lurching toward the back doors. She pushed her hands into the ceiling to keep balance. "I listened to your drivél and I corrected it. This is a great country, so there. We came down here to translate. Nothing more." She grabbed him protectively. He worked his jaw incessantly. "But why translate drivél? This is a great country and they ought to know it. Your drivél, hehn!"

"Too much!" The red-headed fellow sat down on the ridged floor.

They leaned up against the back of the truck, against the locked doors. She still pushed on the overhead. He imitated her, straining as

if it were a dreamy isometric exercise, watching the red flashlight beam as it lolled across them.

"We came down here to translate," she said quietly, as if tentatively stating what needed some confirmation.

"I brought you into this," he answered, pushing on the roof. "I brought you into this and I'm sorry."

"It was worth it," she said softly. "Not everyday you get a chance to cut down drivel before it grows. Not everyday."

"I wonder if I can get my car —"

"We'll get it all right. Get back here and get the car too, you'll see."

"Too much!" came another exclamation from the floor.

"Don't pay attention to him," she said. "We'll get out all right."

He nodded and shoved his arms up harder into the roof. With a firm thrust against the truck's ceiling they rode steadily, in the moving red light of authority, toward liberation.

A Bed Song

Sleeping with her was like having a bird in bed,
or something less romantic — a greased pig,
say — or something incredibly romantic,
a poet's muse or a Boucher water-nymph.

For like the bird she was quick to flutter and struggle,
white and gold like a nymph, and whispering
erotic soft strange words like a poet's muse, —
but in the end he was fondest of the pig
for pigs are comfortable rutting creatures,
and when you lie close to them in the dark
they are solid and protective, like warm stones.

GAIL BROCKETT WHITE

Train Stop

Narrow winding streets
climb tall green slopes; winds
rise under tall skies
and short of breath
I lose the countryside.

For a while the train
stops at my hometown
my despair hangs limp
from steeple to tree.

On nameless days
when I feel sad
I travel by train
gaze at patches of green
bright-washed in clear air.

On mountain and cliff
ancient castles stand
quiet and peaceful
under cloudless skies.

In the run of my thoughts
mind becomes rational.
Empty illusions
grip me like a vise.
Then I lose the old craving
of returning again
to my old hometown.

D. M. PETTINELLA

The End of "Old-Time Grace and Hospitality": Richmond, 1864

WILLIAM J. KIMBALL

In May, 1861, the Confederate Provisional Congress accepted an invitation from the Virginia Convention to make Richmond the Capital of the Confederacy. During the next four years, life for her 37,000 residents and the hordes of refugees and transients who soon joined them was directed by the fortunes of war. No one in May, 1861, could have foretold the sorrow and privation which Richmond was to endure; no one could have imagined the demands which her gallant people would place upon themselves to maintain some gaiety amid this sorrow; no one could have comprehended the resistance that would be mustered against defeat. With each succeeding year her hopes rose and fell; each time not rising quite so high as the preceding wave until finally on December 25, 1863, the *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, issuing in the final full year of the Confederacy, could scarcely bring itself to wish its readers a Merry Christmas in what it called "an era of selfishness and coldness of soul."

This era of selfishness and coldness of soul had been brought about by a group of well-to-do extortioners and speculators who flourished among a people suffering such a scarcity of provisions that "rats and mice had mostly disappeared and the cats could hardly be kept off the table."¹ Many of these affluent men gathered their wealth and positions from a skill newly developed by the war — blockade running; the remainder were generally of that class of most highly despised speculators, the hucksters.

Although buying to sell again was forbidden under severe penalties, such a lucrative business was able to corrupt law enforcement officials. Those men and women who sought only their self-satisfaction no matter what the cost to others simply went early into the markets and bought everything there; then by agreement among themselves they sold the articles at double or quadruple their already exorbitant rates. When the cargoes of blockade were sold at auction, the hucksters virtually crowded out all other bidders.²

¹John B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary* (Philadelphia, 1866), II, 184.

²George Cary Eggleston, *A Rebel's Recollections* (New York, 1905), p. 89.

The over-crowded, under-nourished residents of Richmond were not concerned principally with how these speculators and extortioners obtained their wealth; for almost three years their main concern had been with the government which allowed such ridiculous, illegal and, in their estimation, immoral, practices to exist. John B. Jones, the war-clerk, although often querulous and sometimes short-sighted, saw this issue clearly. "The poor must be fed and protected, if they be relied upon to defend the country," he wrote.³ He felt that the rich bribed the conscription officers and thereby kept out of the ranks. They invested their Confederate money and bonds in real estate, and would be the first to submit to the United States Government. More to the point, as he saw it, was that the poor whom the rich oppressed were in danger of demoralization from suffering and disgust, and might also have embraced reunion rather than endure a prolongation of the miseries they had so long experienced. The surest plan to revive the patriotism of 1861, without which independence could not be achieved, was to break up speculation and put the rich as well as the poor in the Army. "There must be no partiality, and especially in favor of the rich," he pleaded.⁴

The people could not wait to see if his pleas would be heard, for life had to go on. "Extra Billy" Smith, who had been elected Governor the previous May, assumed the duties of his office on January 1 and revived the custom of public levees at the Executive Mansion on Friday evenings. The crowd was large and respectable at the President's reception. Doctor James B. McCaw, surgeon in charge of Chimborazo Hospital, returned his sincere thanks to the ladies who had furnished "the bounteous collation" on New Year's Day.⁵

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation notwithstanding, slaves were still offered for sale but at such exorbitant rates that plans "for deviating into the experiment without the irrepressible Negro were discussed with considerable freedom." The *Enquirer* commented that numerous young ladies who had never soiled their hands would have to learn to cook and keep house, while the young gentlemen would be taught the uses of adversity at the wood pile and the coal cellar, and have to get up at six in the morning to light the kitchen fire, blacken their own boots, and tote the water.⁶

³Jones, II, 271.

⁴Jones, II, 271.

⁵The Richmond *Enquirer*, January 1, 1864.

⁶The Richmond *Enquirer*, January 2, 1864.

Locked in by continuing inflation, hotel keepers advanced the rates of board from \$12 to \$15 a day; boarding-house keepers served notice that from \$40 to \$80 per week would cover the ordinary expenses at their respective establishments. House rentals almost doubled.⁷

Similarly, prices on the menu at the Oriental, one of the better restaurants in Richmond, soared: coffee sold for \$3.00 per cup; tea, \$2.00 per cup; fresh milk, \$2.00 per glass; and bread and butter for \$1.50. Nine "poor Confederates" paid \$631.50 for a dinner at the Oriental which included five bottles of Madeira for \$250.⁸

The proud pre-war city would not have recognized itself at this time. Few of the buildings had been painted since early 1861 and routine maintenance had been neglected. Planks lay where they fell, fences had gaps in their pickets and gates hung askew, signs swung crazily on one hook, broken windows were replaced with anything that would keep the moisture out. These common, everyday needs would have to wait until the mechanics in the field or in the employ of the Government could return to a more normal way of life. The streets, often unsightly with refuse, were thronged night and day with idlers, many of them coarse and often disrespectful. The scarcity of horses prevented gentlemen from riding in carriages; hence they were likely to be accosted by men who thought that the status of soldier had unlimited privileges. More and more ladies were remaining in their homes unless they could be escorted by men who were still conscious of ordinary civilities.⁹ Franklin Avenue was no longer so often graced by the brilliant officer and his lady strolling. The promenade looked more like a training ground for men trying to master newly acquired crutches.

For years, the daily newspapers had pointed out that the city was full of the vilest licentiousness. And now, gambling had become so prominent and brazen as to defy public decency as well as the law. The "law" that was defied was also often a target of the editorial writers. The growth of the transient population, swelled by the number of soldiers, had upset the normal ratio of law enforcers; so even if they had all been men of integrity (and the newsmen were sure they were not), their task would have been herculean. There were daily complaints that soldiers were being exposed to all kinds of temptations. Whiskey

⁷The Richmond *Enquirer*, January 2, 1864.

⁸Varina Howell Davis, *Jefferson Davis* (New York, 1890), II, 535.

⁹Mrs. Sallie A. Brock Putnam, *Richmond During the War* (New York, 1867), p. 43.

was everywhere available. Saloons ranged all the way from dives to fashionable hotel bars. The more respectable places of entertainment were often frequented by important members of the military and administrative departments. The barrooms, especially those along "Locust Alley" and "Ram Cat Alley" between Main Street and Cary, often fronted on dingy bawdy houses. The Shockoe Valley district with its rival gangs such as the "Hill Cats" and the "Butcher Cats" was simply not mentioned by discreet people. Accounts of court proceedings were full of every type of crime from petty larceny to murder.¹⁰ Offsetting to some extent that side of life were the cultural occasions. Metropolitan Hall offered "singing, dancing, and Negro delineations generally," but the magnificent Richmond Theatre, built on the site of the burned Marshall Theatre, offered Shakespeare and other plays of quality and both were well attended. The Richmond Philharmonic Association, amateur musicians whose rehearsals had been suspended since the beginning of the war, resumed their meetings and organizations.¹¹

Those who thought it imperative to maintain the old-time grace and hospitality for which the South was noted kept the social life "beautiful" in the face of abject poverty of the poor and the homeless. Like the President, they seemed unaware of the poor and the destitute or else blamed their condition on the war. Pretentious social life was kept up by the women. Parties, receptions, and dances were given almost nightly, and many handsome officers "danced the night away and went forth to fight on the morrow, and were buried in the evening shadows of the battlefield." On the night before he was killed, General Stuart played in charades at the home of Mrs. Ives, whose husband was on the President's staff.¹²

The high point of the social season was reached with the production of *The Rivals* at the Ives' house. Mrs. Clement Clay, wife of the Senator from Alabama, was popular for her portrayal of Mrs. Malaprop. Everyone who was anyone was present but apparently not without some misgivings. When Mrs. Chesnut asked General John C. Breckenridge if he had spent a jolly evening, the General answered: "I do not know. I

¹⁰It was newsworthy enough for the newspapers to comment on a day that passed quietly "owing," it was generally felt, "to the closing of the drinking shops."

¹¹The *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, February 17, 1864, p. 2.

¹²"An evening with the Venerable Statesman and Jurist, Hon. Thomas J. Semmes," *Southern Historical Society Papers* (Richmond, Virginia, 1876-1943), Vol. XXV, 327.

have asked myself more than once tonight: 'Are you the same man who stood gazing down into the faces of the dead on that awful battlefield; the soldiers lying there, they stare at you with their eyes wide open. Is this the same world?'"¹³ For others the gaiety may have been "too careless for such terrible times. It is all out of place in battle-scarred Richmond!" They used the ready-made rationalization that it was either distraction or death with them. They could not see how sadness and despondency would help them. "If it would do any good, we could be sad enough," they agreed.¹⁴

A prominent socialite in recalling the early months of 1864 reflected that they should not have expected suppers in those times, but they had them. Champagne was \$350 a case, but they sometimes had champagne. The confectioners charged \$15 for a cake, but they had cake. On January 31 Mrs. Davis had one of her "Luncheons to Ladies" and served gumbo, ducks, olives, *supreme de volaille*, chickens in jelly, oysters, lettuce salad, chocolate cream, jelly cake, claret cup, and champagne.¹⁵

Prompted, apparently, by this kind of entertaining, the *Enquirer* ran an editorial that took occasion "to animadvert upon the gaiety of Richmond during the past winter and upon the new-fangled 'reception days' which are attempted to be innovated upon the good old Virginia custom of social visiting."¹⁶ Agreeing that there must be recreation even in the midst of mourning and sorrow, the editorial did not condemn the people for enjoying themselves but that in doing so they consumed the provisions required for the support of the army and the poor. The editorialist commented on the impropriety of such sumptuous repasts.¹⁷

On the other hand, "Starvation Parties" were popular with the younger set during the last two social seasons of the war years. While "sumptuous repasts" continued among some, others arranged parties for which young people assembled weekly at different houses in the city for social enjoyment. They contributed money for the music provided, but refreshments were strictly forbidden.¹⁸

But, apparently, organized gaiety was not for all. The Lee family, for instance, was conspicuous by its absence from social occasions. It was

¹³Mary Boykin Chesnut, *A Diary from Dixie* (New York, 1906), p. 286.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 276-277.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 284.

¹⁶The *Richmond Enquirer*, February 16, 1864, p. 2.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Constance Cary Harrison, *Recollections, Grave and Gay* (New York, 1912), p. 150.

not that the General was critical of parties. When a lady speaking for a group asked his sanction, ending with "If you say no, General, we won't dance a single step," he replied: "Why, of course, my dear child. My boys need to be heartened when they get their furloughs. Go on, look your prettiest, and be just as nice to them as ever you can be."¹⁹

But Mrs. Lee suffered from arthritis and seldom appeared at social functions. The death of a daughter during the war, followed by that of Rooney's wife while he was a prisoner of war, placed the family in mourning, which precluded extensive socializing. In addition, the residents of the pleasant house on lower Franklin Street felt a sense of impropriety in the suggestion that the wife and daughters of the commanding general of half-starved armies, himself sleeping always in a tent and living on meager fare, should take an active part in social entertainments. Mrs. Chesnut referred to Mrs. Lee's room as an "industrial school, with everybody so busy."²⁰ Despite her stiff fingers she could knit, and at this occupation she spent most of her time.

The threat of Union cavalry raids and other military diversions kept the war ever-present for the people of Richmond. The major military activity of the Union in the early months of 1864 was west of the Mississippi, so the residents felt that there was at least no immediate danger of one of the large scale attacks which they had known in the past. These people never forgot, however, that the fall of the Capital of the Confederacy would be a most significant victory for the North. Although General Grant stated that his objective was Lee's troops and not Richmond, the residents of the city knew that both sides had come to recognize Richmond as the *Cause*. The tremendous efforts to capture the city and the *superhuman exertions made to defend it had made it so*. The people agreed that if Richmond were lost, Virginia would be lost too; and there was no logical area in North Carolina where the army could take a stand. As they saw it, if they valued *their city so highly* as a military objective, they could well expect the enemy to consider it worthy of seizure.

Richmond, having done all it could, waited quietly. It had sent up all the supplies that could be collected and forwarded under the imperfect systems; all the arms that could be manufactured, altered, or repaired were readied; every man who could not find a loophole in a

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Chesnut, p. 292.

system full of loopholes was at the front.²¹ The Capital City, lacking the buoyant hopefulness of the past, waited with patient and purposeful resolve. On March 1 the quiet was shattered once again by the sound of gunfire very close to the city. General Meade had sent a column under General Judson Kilpatrick to raid Richmond.

Kilpatrick sent a portion of his troops under Colonel Ulric Dahlgren to attack from the south and west while he with the main force came down from the north. Meeting significant resistance at the city's breastworks, Kilpatrick moved off to safety in the vicinity of Williamsburg. Dahlgren continued the raid which was thereafter to bear his name.

He came along the River Road in no apparent hurry as he allowed his men to pilfer and destroy. He spent some time at the house of Secretary Seddon reminiscing with Mrs. Seddon, who had been a school friend of his mother's and had been courted by his father. The time that he thus allowed to elapse enabled the department clerks and members of Congress (there were no regular troops in the city) to enter the defenses. When the raiders appeared, the unskilled soldiers proved more than a match for them. Dahlgren and a few men ran into a small detachment of cavalry north of the city and he was killed.²² Orders alleged to have been found on Dahlgren's body called for freeing the prisoners on Belle Isle, crossing the James and destroying the bridges over it, releasing prisoners in the city and exhorting them to burn and pillage, and killing Jeff Davis and his cabinet.

General Meade denied knowledge of the orders, and they may have been forgeries as the North claimed. False or not, they inflamed the residents to resist even more doggedly any attempt at penetration of their city and united them at a time when there were few other reasons for unification.²³

On May 4 the Union army of 118,000 men began the drive which was never to let up until, after eleven months of fighting, it ended in the capture of the Southern Capital.

²¹States rights officials never stopped fighting the administration, especially on the issue of conscription. States in the deep South threatened civil war if conscription officers did not stop trying to take troops out of the states. Governor Smith of Virginia exempted men freely by appointing them to the state administration — as many as fifty a day.

²²Alfred Hoyt Bill, *The Beleaguered City* (New York, 1946), p. 196.

²³Jones (II, p. 163) says that "It was certainly a formidable attempt to take the city by surprise . . . And indeed the coming upon it was sudden, and if there had been a column of 15,000 bold men in the assault, they might have penetrated it. But now, twenty-four hours subsequently, 30,000 would fail in the attempt.

With Grant pressing hard from the north and Butler commanding a significant force on the Peninsula, Richmond dug in for the bloody summer of 1864. Battles named the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Court House, Yellow Tavern, North Anna, and Cold Harbor increased the suffering that long, hot summer. Once again hospital facilities in the city were in straits for everything that was considered indispensable. The surgeons, working out of pure devotion, were at their wits' ends to renew needful appliances. The experience, as it had been in the past, was continually shocking and distressing. Once again Hollywood Cemetery witnessed six or seven coffins at a time being dropped into a yawning pit and hurriedly covered over.²⁴

The people of Richmond became so accustomed to the sound of firearms that they scarcely interrupted their conversations at street corners to ask from what direction the foe was advancing. They would not have been so unconcerned, perhaps, if they had known that the President's wife was utterly depressed and had admitted to a small group of friends that the fall of Richmond must come.

In the midst of all the suffering and ever-increasing privation the people of Richmond were to know another short period of hope and exultation. They read that the people of the North had been shocked at the ghastly slaughter of their soldiers. The Richmond newspapers in September and October were sure that if Richmond held until the first of November it would be theirs forevermore, for "the North will never throw another huge army into the abyss where so many lie." They felt that the present condition of affairs, compared with that of the previous year of the same season, at least since 1861, was greatly in their favor.

The *Examiner* for October 7, 1864, stated: ". . . with Sherman's army already isolated and cut off in Georgia, and Grant unable to take or besiege Richmond, we have only to make one month's exertion in improving our advantages, and then it may safely be said that the fourth year's campaign, and with it the war itself, is one gigantic failure." Their little army had performed superbly; the people had tightened their belts again and again — there were reasons for the feeling of last-ditch hope. They failed to appreciate that the surrender of Atlanta in September almost alone had restored the faith of the Northerners in the Lincoln administration, and they were wrong in their evaluation of

²⁴Harrison, p. 189.

Sherman's position in Georgia. He was far from cut off and isolated, as events proved.

Meanwhile Grant, trying always to slip around Lee, was coming ever closer to Richmond. The residents were living each day at a time.

Prisoners from the battles outside the city were coming in regularly, but this condition had been offset somewhat both by the removal of some of them south and by the news that exchanges were to be effected again. When some of the Confederate veterans arrived on flag-of-truce boats, Richmond opened its arms wide to receive them. Crowds thronged the hills of Rocketts and lined the streets along the Navy Yard. As the boats touched the wharf, the prison-worn heroes were seized upon by a thousand ladies or more, and welcomed with Virginia warmth and womanly enthusiasm. The prisoners were escorted uptown to Capitol Square where they were addressed by the President and the governor.²⁵

The enthusiasm engendered by the return of the prisoners was dampened slightly by their generally poor physical condition. They were forlorn, dried up, shrunken. Some had strange, restless, and wild looks in their faces as if they had been dead to the world for years. But they were back. The President himself had promised them that after a brief respite they would be in the field again. When someone asked how they would be fed, the President answered that he did not see "why rats, if fat, are not as good as squirrels. Our men *did* eat mule at Vicksburg; but it would be an expensive luxury now." When asked about recognition, the President fell into a grave mood and said twice, "We have no friends abroad."²⁶

Even the President's staunchest foes yielded tender sympathy when his favorite son – the merry, happy, Joe – (he who, when his father was receiving official visitors, once pushed his way into the study and though in pajamas insisted upon saying his evening prayer at the President's knee) fell to his death from the porch. All admired the self-control which the President exhibited as he paced the floor of his room all night in his grief. Every child in Richmond, it seemed, brought flowers and green leaves to the dead child's bier.²⁷

Warfare has no regard for one's personal tragedies, and so the pressure on Richmond forced the President to shake off the grief-stricken

²⁵The *Richmond Enquirer*, March 16, 1864, p. 2.

²⁶Jones, II, 175.

²⁷Harrison, p. 182.

paralysis of his mind and realize that the city was in yet another perilous situation. Butler's feint to the south had drawn off the token force which General Ransom had gathered in defense of the Capital when the raids, as part of Grant's strategy, began in earnest. While the city was totally unprotected from the north a cavalry corps under Sheridan, splendidly mounted and armed with repeating carbines, was sweeping down. Grant was using Sheridan to lure Stuart's cavalry away and Stuart had to conform. At Yellow Tavern his troopers threw themselves across the Union line, and were hit harder than they would have been even a year ago. Stuart, amazed that the enemy did not break and run after the first assault, was mortally wounded. Sheridan continued on down beyond the outer defenses of the city but realized that even though he could have gotten into the city, he could not have held it.

Stuart was taken to the West Grace Street house of his brother-in-law, Dr. James Brewer, where he died on May 12. The next day without music or a military escort, as the Public Guard was absent on duty, a cortege including the President, Generals Bragg and Ransom, and other civil and military officials moved to Hollywood Cemetery where "all that was mortal of the dead hero was shut in from the gaze of men."²⁸ Death had long ago become part of daily routine to the citizens of Richmond, but somehow the loss of certain men was felt more poignantly. Deep grief fell upon the city, already sick to death with grief, for the list was gradually lengthening — Longstreet wounded, A. P. Hill sick, Dick Ewell sick and overburdened, Edward Johnson captured, and many others gone.²⁹

It would have been difficult to bear up even if conditions otherwise had been encouraging. The cost of prime necessities continued to rise, and paper money continued to decrease in value. The President's salary was insufficient to meet his housekeeping expenditures. Mrs. Davis sold her carriage and horses, but they were returned anonymously — a dubious compliment, for the horses had to be fed.

Although rumors of efforts to end the fighting had buzzed around just under the surface for most of the war, they were really never taken seriously. By the summer of 1864, however, the atmosphere was more cordial to the possibility of commissioners accomplishing an end with honor to the terribly depressing war. It was felt that the whole country,

²⁸*Daily Richmond Examiner*, May 14, 1864, p. 2.

²⁹Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants* (New York, 1946), IV, 433.

North and South, wanted peace. Everyone was sick of the carnage. But the North demanded union of the country as the only terms, while the South would settle only for independence or at least a return to the *status quo* before the war. An unofficial group comprised of Senator Clement C. Clay, Professor James P. Holcombe, and George Sanders indicated willingness to talk with President Lincoln through Horace Greeley, himself not commissioned, upon matters of peace. But Lincoln would not treat with men not representing the Confederacy.³⁰

In a city which had grown so used to cannon fire that a day without it caused comment, the people waited. Whatever buoyancy they had was fed by a necessary confidence that Lee could keep Grant out of Richmond "from this time until doomsday."³¹

Diamonds and pearls, watches and valuable plates were frequently seen for sale in the jewelry stores, articles of former wealth offered for sale now in order to procure necessary food and raiment. Booksellers displayed valuable libraries, to be disposed of for the same purpose.³²

Many families lived in single rooms and each wondered how its room held all its contents. Often bags of peas, rice, and potatoes were disposed around the walls, and beside the hearth were arranged pots, pans, kettles, and other utensils. Wood, when obtainable, was stacked under the beds, and coal was so valuable that it had to be kept in the rooms in boxes provided for that purpose. In spite of such crowded conditions, many of the residents had visitors, demonstrating, apparently, the truth of the old adage, "Ole Virginny never tire."³³

Even the well-to-do were beginning to look a little ragged around the edges, but they kept up their "Starvation Parties" and "The Mosaic Club," brightest of all the sparkling coteries in Richmond Society.³⁴

At a reception following the wedding of Colonel William B. Tabb and Emily Rutherford toward the end of the year, nearly everyone of note in the city was present, though some of the gentlemen wore clothing that showed the effects of age and was even patched; and the ladies ransacked old trunks in the garrets or improvised gowns from lace and

³⁰*Daily Richmond Examiner*, July 26, 1864.

³¹*Richmond Daily Whig*, October 5, 1864, p. 1.

³²Putnam, p. 253.

³³Myrta Lockett Avary, *A Virginia Girl in the Civil War 1861-1865* (New York, 1903), p. 353.

³⁴T. C. DeLeon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals* (Mobile, Alabama, 1890), p. 310.

damask window curtains. The President was there, dignified and gracious, but looking careworn and thin. His lady, on the other hand, seemed exceptionally well fed. Secretary Breckinridge moved, as usual, in a mist of Kentucky Bourbon, and only the prominent blockade runners seemed able to maintain appearances of well-being and wealth.

At the sumptuous supper no sweets or ices were served, and none of the old-time delicacies such as terrapin and canvas-back duck. But there were turkeys and smoked ham and warm homemade bread, stuffed eggs, piles of sausages, tasty domestic pickles, and "real" coffee that filled the salon with its delightful aroma.

Perhaps the reception would not have seemed so elegant in pre-war times as it did against the background of a tired, dirty city and if it had not been given in an atmosphere of "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die."³⁵

The residents extended themselves to be cheerful on Christmas Day. The churches were decorated warmly and comfortably with evergreens. The usual Christmas turkey, ranging in price from \$50 to \$100 in the market, was missing from many tables, but extravagances such as tea and ginger cakes made with sorghum were explained by the well-ascertained fact that Christmas comes but once a year. It was generally agreed that the people of Richmond prayed universally on this Christmas for the greatest possible gift – "Peace on earth, good will toward men."³⁶

³⁵John S. Wise, *The End of an Era* (Boston, 1902), p. 410.

³⁶Judith W. McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee* (New York, 1867), p. 324.

Punctuation

When Aunt Sara sang in the window,
 Vowels streamed orally into the dark.
 We return where the shadows flowered
 And horse hooves left imprinted stars.
 The worms speak lipfuls of half-sweet words.
 Below the window where she leaned
 Punctuating speech with silence,
 We sit the sailing moon away
 Waiting for the singer
 To punctuate silence with speech.

WILLIAM HARROLD

Lycanthropy

Your eye, resting on mine, pressed hard as sin
 With its bare black iris. There, as we stood,
 My breast split open and the beast leaped in,
 Lapping the red, the unresisting blood
 And paused, listening. Why did the dog then wait?
 Chained to the stake of that moment, I felt
 His hollow howl, resounding, violate
 Your shy spirit; yet, underneath the pelt
 Of your human and downy arms crouches
 Another beast more cruel and fierce than mine,
 A smooth female form that pads, then couches,
 Caged by custom.

These wild things we confine
 When loosed ("brute love," "the animal embrace")
 Are kennel couplings, planned and commonplace.

W. D. STALLINGS

At Fob End

Picture yourself as a man
on the verge of being too old
to walk down the street alone

in Wien-am-Donau
circa nineteen twenty-three
in a dark suit and a black derby

and a tight-fitting collar feeling faint
at one o'clock in the afternoon
and stopping at the corner of a building

of plain white stone to bend way over
and fumble at your big gold watch
too late as it flips out like a tiny sun

and smashes on the sharp edge of stone
splintering cog and wheel
in a rush of old wounds

like bits of flotsam
in a wash of gold
as the great river might flow

in the mind of a race
too advanced for anything
as simple as a sundial

DAVID K. KIRBY

An April Fantasy

IRENE BROWN STAPLETON

It was one of those unforgettable spring days in South Carolina when the air is heavy with the perfume of flowering blossoms. Wisteria dripped its purple clusters over the boughs of tall pine trees. In almost every yard, azaleas blossomed forth in white and varying shades of red, pink and lavender. White dogwoods and the pale green of new leaves provided the perfect backdrop for the scene.

As Laura Fenton shoved open the door of the apartment building and pushed Johnny in his stroller out onto the sidewalk, she was greeted by a gust of this warm, moist, sweet-smelling air. She took a deep breath, savoring the atmosphere, and, smiling to herself, started off down the street pushing Johnny ahead of her.

The air this morning reminded her of when she had first arrived in South Carolina as a bride of four months. It had been a little more than a year ago now, when she left Kansas with an icy wind blowing to arrive a few hours later in Columbia, S. C., where she was greeted when she stepped off the plane by this same warm, moist, blossom-scented air. The happy reunion with her husband John had made it one of the unforgettable days of her life.

Now as she pushed Johnny down the street she became more aware of the heat and humidity and then began thinking of the hot, dry wind that blew almost continuously in Kansas. As she turned the stroller into an alleyway, she was recalling an August day long ago, it seemed now, when she had done nothing but lie in a hammock all day reading "Frenchman's Creek" and listening to the wind blow. Although she loved the natural beauty and friendly people of South Carolina, she had moments when she was homesick for her native Kansas.

She had pushed the stroller for several yards down the alley before she became aware of her surroundings. There was something strange about this alley. As she thought about it, she could not recall ever seeing it there before, even though she pushed Johnny in his stroller on the same streets almost every day. Looking back, she saw a white frame house and a smaller brick one on either side of the alley. They seemed familiar to her, and, reassured, she continued on her way, still wondering what was different about this particular alleyway.

Stopping by a large hibiscus bush, she bent down to tighten the strap around Johnny's fat tummy. She thought she heard voices and as she straightened up again, a momentary dizziness came over her and her eyesight blurred briefly.

When she could see again, she peered through the hibiscus leaves in the direction from which she had heard the voices. There, in a backyard garden banked by azaleas, two little old ladies sat in white lawn chairs. They were dressed in high-necked shirtwaists with long flared skirts. Although not an avid student of history, Laura knew enough about fashions to know that these were the styles of 1900 – not 1970! She looked around her again and realized that there *was* something strange about this alleyway. It looked like something from an old movie, lined as it was with carriage houses and stables. Slowly the realization came over her that somehow, somehow, on this balmy April morning, she had stumbled onto a street which had carried her back in time to the early 1900's!

The two ladies were talking again, and Laura crouched behind the hibiscus, hoping it would hide her. They were only a few yards away and although their backs were turned to her, she could clearly hear all that they said.

"This, I believe, is one of the saddest days this state has ever known," said one voice.

"Now, Clarissa, surely you haven't forgotten all those terrible days of the War – and the Reconstruction!" said the other.

"Forget? Me forget those days with a husband and brother lying dead because of it all?" It was the one called Clarissa speaking again.

"I'll never forget, and yet, we had our moments of glory then too, don't you know?" she added.

"Yes, I know," the other said. "But we must also remember that that was one of the things General Hampton always said. He urged us to try to forget the wounds of the past and look to the future."

"Oh, Miranda!" Clarissa sounded shocked. "How can you talk of forgetting the past with our dear Mr. Hampton not dead a day yet!"

Laura listened as the two women talked about the Civil War and the events afterward as if they had happened only yesterday. The General Hampton they were talking about, she realized, must be Wade Hampton

whose statue she had seen on the State House lawn when she and John were sight-seeing not long ago. John had told her that Wade Hampton was regarded as a great hero in South Carolina, but for the life of her, she could not recall why. She thought he had led troops in battle in the Civil War – or the War Between the States, as she had heard Southerners call it – but she wasn't even sure about that.

"Well, the sad thing is that now a great leader is dead." It was Miranda speaking.

"Yes," replied Clarissa in softer tones. "It is sad too that this younger generation does not seem to remember all that he did for us during and after the War. But we'll never forget; will we, Miranda?"

"No, it isn't likely that we will."

"I think someone should erect a monument to him, don't you?"

"Yes, I certainly do. Barrett says there is already some talk of such a project around the State House."

"Did you say Barrett was coming over this afternoon?"

"Yes, I told him you would be here and asked him to bring us all the news from the State House. Why don't we go in the house to wait for him? It is unseasonably warm out today, isn't it?"

As the two women started toward the house, Laura got a better look at them. Their white hair was piled high over faces which showed the many wrinkles of age, but their backs were straight and proud. They did not look her way, and Laura was thankful, for she felt sure they could see her through the sparse leaves of the hibiscus, and she shuddered to imagine what they would think of her Bermuda shorts!

The two women disappeared into the house and Johnny began to fuss and kick his feet as if he wanted his ride to continue immediately. Laura pushed the stroller on down the dirt alleyway, trying to make some sense out of what was happening to her. Had she really somehow managed to slip back in time to the beginning of the century? And if so, how had she done it?

Then she reached the end of the alley and turned into another street she had never seen before, one which left little doubt in her mind that she had indeed gone back in time.

The street was narrow by present-day standards and winding. On one side, the side where Laura stood, were huge homes set far back on

well-kept lawns. On the other, a gracious park stretched out of sight with huge magnolia and live oak trees spreading their lofty branches over the street.

In front of one house a black maid was sweeping the sidewalk. Then, to her dismay, she saw coming down the street toward her an open horse-drawn carriage with a young man and woman sitting in it, laughing merrily as they rode along.

Laura watched in fascination. As the buggy drew nearer, she glanced around for a hiding place, but saw none. She stood as if paralyzed as the carriage came along side, but to her surprise, the young people rode on by as if they did not even see her! And the young woman had looked straight at Laura, she was sure of it. A lady from another era would surely have shown some signs of shock at the sight of Laura in her shorts, but the young woman had not.

Maybe because the young people in the carriage were from another era, they could not see her at all, Laura thought as she continued on down the street. Yes, that must be it! Just to test her theory, she spoke to the maid, but even though she was but a few feet away, the black girl showed no sign of being aware of Laura's presence.

Then Laura looked at her watch, and seeing that it was Johnny's lunchtime, turned the stroller around and hurried for home, wondering if she could return to the present as easily as she had slipped into the past.

When she came out of the alleyway, between the red and white brick houses, she looked up and saw with relief their apartment building gleaming in the noontime sun.

The next day Laura could hardly wait for Johnny's noontime stroll. She always took him right before lunch, as soon as she had finished her household chores and he had had his morning nap.

As she hurried down the street, she wondered if her corridor to the past would still be open to her. Then she rounded the corner and saw that the alleyway was still there between the two houses.

This time, as she pushed Johnny along, she thoroughly enjoyed her little trip into the past — never mind about understanding it. Then she saw a young man standing by one of the carriage houses. She paused for a second; then, remembering that he could not see her if he were

a person from the past, she continued on. As she drew closer, however, she could see that he was looking directly at her, a puzzled smile on his lips. There was no doubt about it now. He could see her! His puzzled look changed to one of amusement as he casually leaned up against the carriage house, crossed his long legs in the slim buff-colored pants, and lazily observed her progress.

There was nothing for her to do now but continue on, her cheeks burning as she realized what he must be thinking of her attire!

She was almost past him when he spoke.

"Well! So this is the way women of the future dress!"

His soft Southern drawl was amused but not unkind as he gave her knees below her mini-skirt an appraising glance.

In spite of her embarrassment, Laura turned and stared at him.

"Allow me to introduce myself, ma'm," he continued. "I'm Barrett Manning," he said with a slight bow that would have been comical in another time and place but seemed perfectly natural now.

"You – you can see me?" she finally managed to stammer.

"It's not so difficult for me," he replied. "I've seen a few people from your generation before. I guess I have a sort of extrasensory perception, or whatever you want to call it, that lets me see into the future. And you, my dear, must have the same sort of perception which allows you to see into the past; otherwise, you could not see or hear me, and you wouldn't be standing here in this alleyway behind my grandmother's house."

Laura was growing more at ease now, and her only thought was to find out all she could from this one person with whom she could communicate in this strange world of the past.

"Tell me, please, what is today? The date, I mean, in *your* time," she said.

"Today? Hmmm, let me see. Why, today is April 12 . . . 1902."

He added the year as an afterthought, and although Laura half expected such a reply, it still came as a shock to her.

"Could one of those two ladies I saw sitting under a tree in that backyard yesterday have been your grandmother? And why were she and her friend so upset?" Laura asked.

Then, as she realized that she had given herself away for eavesdropping, Laura blushed and smiled, saying, "Well, you see, I couldn't help overhearing their conversation as I came down this alley yesterday."

The young man laughed out loud this time, and standing up straight and tall, suddenly became very serious.

"I imagine that was my grandmother and her friend, Clarissa Dodd, that you saw yesterday. They were probably discussing the death of General Wade Hampton. You know, he was a champion of the people in my grandmother's day, and those who remember all he did for the state are especially saddened by his death. In fact, I think he was one of my grandmother's beaux back before the War. She was quite a belle in those days, they tell me."

As he talked, Laura forgot all about little Johnny who was happily playing with a weed that hung over his stroller. She forgot everything except the comfortable drawl of his voice and the fascinating story he was telling. As she looked into his eyes, she thought they were the bluest she had ever seen, and she noticed that in spite of almost platinum blond hair, his eyelashes were long and dark.

"At the beginning of the War Between the States," Barrett was saying, "Mr. Hampton sold his cotton to raise armaments for a legion of infantry and cavalry and then went on to lead them in many great battles, including First Manassas and finally Gettysburg.

"After the War, he retired to private life for a short time, but when he could no longer stand to see what the carpetbaggers were doing to his state, he ran for governor and won. He was elected in 1876, the first native-born South Carolinian to become governor after the War. He later served in the U. S. Senate for fifteen years, where he did much to help ease the pain of the South.

"His family had a beautiful plantation home called Millwood, but it was burned during the War and after his many years of public service, Gen. Hampton's fortune was nearly depleted. However, the people could not forget all he had done for the State and built him a home here in Columbia, and that is where he died yesterday.

"Of course, I don't remember much of this myself, because I wasn't born until two years before he became governor."

"I can certainly see why the people of South Carolina loved him," Laura said.

"Yes, they really did. And that reminds me. I must be getting inside to my grandmother's sitting room or she will wonder what has become of me," Barrett said smiling again.

"I promised to give her all the details of the eulogies to Gen. Hampton at the State House yesterday."

"Oh, yes, I remember now," Laura said. "I heard them talking about you!"

Shaking a finger at him and laughing, she added, "But she was expecting you yesterday afternoon, as I recall from her conversation!"

"Yes, well, I didn't quite make it; did I?" he replied with a twinkle in his eye. "The eulogies went on till late in the night."

Then thinking of something else and wanting to detain him, even though she knew he should be going, Laura asked, "Are you a member of the legislature?"

"Yes, I'm a representative from Charleston, and I stay here with my grandmother when the legislature is in session. My visits are quite exhausting for my grandmother, I'm afraid. She's determined to marry me off before I'm 30, and she invites every eligible girl she knows to visit while I'm here!" He laughed as if this were a great joke.

"But now," he continued, "I've told you all about myself and my place in time, and you haven't said a word about yourself yet. By the way, what is the date — where you come from, that is?"

"Oh, it's April 12, 1970," she replied as if it were perfectly natural to be 1902 in one place and 1970 in another.

"And I suppose you too have a name?" he asked as he bent down to play with Johnny. Barrett waved a leaf in front of Johnny. The baby laughed out loud and tried to catch it, but didn't seem to see Barrett at all. Barrett's obvious admiration of the baby touched Laura and made her feel warmer toward him.

"I'm Laura Fenton," she replied, "and my husband John and I live not far from here in an apartment."

She went on to explain that they were newcomers to South Carolina. Her husband, too, had studied law but after completion of law school had decided to fulfill his two-year military obligation before embarking on his career. His assignment since basic training had been to Ft. Jack-

son, S. C., where he had been for a little over a year now. They had married when Laura graduated from college in January, a year and a half ago, and little Johnny had been born a year later. Their life was not very exciting, she told him, hoping she didn't sound disloyal to John, but they had hopes that things would improve once he was out of service and could begin his law practice.

Barrett had listened with interest until she ran out of words.

"I really must go now," he said with real regret in his voice, "but there are a thousand things I'd like to ask you about your place in time. Won't you please come again?"

Without thinking, Laura found herself promising to try to come again the next day at about the same time. Then, with a blinding smile and slight bow, Barrett agreed and disappeared behind the hibiscus into the white house.

Johnnie's wail brought her back to the present with a jolt. A quick glance at her watch told Laura that it was past his lunchtime. As she hurried along, pushing the stroller so fast that Johnnie laughed and gurgled, she determined to tell John all about the events of the afternoon, no matter how silly it sounded, and then forget the whole matter.

That evening, however, in the commonplace surroundings of the apartment with John reading the paper and watching TV, her afternoon's experience seemed too preposterous even to mention. Maybe it was all just one of her daydreams.

After they went to bed, Laura's mind wandered back to experiences of the last two days, and she kept seeing Barrett's clear blue eyes looking at her and hearing his voice saying, "Won't you please come back again?"

She wondered if she were being unfaithful to John in some way by thinking about Barrett so much, but then decided she really couldn't become involved with someone from another generation, another place in time. She wondered too, though, if he would be there if she tried to go back again tomorrow.

Then she remembered that the next day was Saturday and that she could not possibly meet him there at the same time. With that thought, she soon fell asleep.

The next day, she became so busy with her usual Saturday chores that she did not even think about Barrett until about three o'clock. By

that time, she had finished her shopping, had washed a load of diapers, and had Johnny down for his afternoon nap. John was reading a magazine, looking as if he too would be asleep soon.

"John, I think I'll take a little walk to look at the azaleas. You know, they've really come out this past week."

Laura knew where her little walk would lead her, and she couldn't believe that it was her own voice, speaking so casually when she was about to deceive her husband.

"You won't mind listening for the baby, will you, dear?"

"Of course not, honey," he replied. "Go ahead and enjoy yourself. I might catch a few winks myself while you're gone."

John really was a dear, and she knew she could never *really* become involved with another man when she loved John so much. So why shouldn't she try to see Barrett again, she thought, as she changed her shorts for one of her longer skirts.

Laura started off down the street slowly at first, but as she drew nearer to her alleyway to the past, her steps quickened. After all, she rationalized, Barrett probably won't even be there this afternoon. It was more than four hours later than the appointed time of their rendezvous. As she left the street and entered the alley, she was again transported into the past and all thoughts of John and Johnny left her.

She began looking for Barrett, but he was nowhere in sight. Her disappointment told her how much she had been counting on seeing him again. Her steps dragging, she walked dejectedly down the dusty road. She paused at the back of Barrett's grandmother's house to look around, but there were no signs of life.

Then, suddenly, she heard a noise and turning around, she saw Barrett coming out of the carriage house, leading a handsome black horse hitched to a buggy.

"Well!" he said. "I had about given up on you. What a pleasant surprise."

He dropped the horse's reins around a post and came over to her. His broad smile told her he was as happy to see her as her pounding heart was to see him.

"I forgot this was Saturday," she explained, trying to cover the excitement and confusion she felt at seeing him again.

"I just couldn't get away before now, with the shopping and everything to do."

"Well, I'm delighted you could make it. I was about to take a ride to try to overcome my disappointment. How would you like to accompany me and see Columbia as it looked in 1902?"

As she climbed into the carriage, she felt a thrill run through her body at the light touch of his hand on her arm. Riding along, he questioned her incessantly about the things of her time — modes of transportation, scientific developments, political and social changes. She was embarrassed that she could not tell him more, but she did her best.

Finally, Barrett seemed satisfied that he had gained all the information he could from her, and she then had a chance to ask him about some of the sights and sounds she was seeing and hearing. He became an expert guide and story-teller then, and she felt herself falling completely under his spell.

Suddenly, without warning, he pulled the carriage off the roadway and stopped under a huge live oak tree. He turned to her with his hypnotic blue eyes, gently put his arms around her, and kissed her.

Laura's emotions, which had been so confused before, suddenly became crystal clear. She was actually enjoying Barrett's kiss! She knew now that even though she loved John, she could still be very much attracted to another man, something she had never admitted to herself before.

Abruptly, Laura ended the kiss and, looking around her, realized that the tree under which they had stopped was growing in almost exactly the same spot where their apartment building was supposed to be! Then a terrible thought came to her. What if John and the baby were gone — what if she could never return to them?

"Barrett! This is where our apartment is supposed to be! Where are John and Johnny? Can I still go back to them?"

"Yes, of course. You can still go back — if you're sure that's what you want."

"Oh, yes, Barrett. I'm sure!"

She could tell by the puzzled look on his face that he was not used to having young ladies disappoint him. However, he remained a gentleman and turned the carriage around in the direction from which they

had come. As he clucked the horses into motion again, he said, "I'm sorry if I've offended you. I guess I forgot myself for a moment there."

"Oh, Barrett!" She was solicitous now. "I'm sorry, too. I guess I just wasn't quite prepared for that — your kiss, I mean. You see, I've found out something about myself today, something I learned from you, and I'm very grateful to you for it. When you kissed me just now, I found out that it was possible for me to be attracted to a man other than my husband. You may find it hard to believe, but I never would admit that possibility before, not even to myself. Do you understand what I'm trying to say, Barrett?"

"Yes, I think so," he replied staring straight ahead.

Then with a hint of the former twinkle returning to his eye, he said, "But I'll bet that if you weren't married, you would consider staying here with me, wouldn't you, Laura?"

"Do you think that would be possible? I mean, for me to stay here?"

"Yes, I do. I think that if you really wanted to stay here with me, in this era, well, I'm sure you could!" His voice, though it sounded convincing, had a sad, far-off note in it, and she knew he really didn't expect her to change her mind.

"Barrett, you *do* understand about my husband and baby, don't you?"

"Yes, I understand, I think," he said, as the buggy rolled to a stop.

Laura took one last look into those crystal blue eyes and thought to herself, yes, and you'll go right on charming the young ladies of your day and age until one of them manages to tie the knot. The main reason you're so attracted to me is because you know you can't have me! But she kept these thoughts to herself as she gave him a smile and said, "Goodby, Barrett, and thank you!"

"Thank you, ma'm," he said with a slight bow. "Your husband is a lucky man!"

Her thoughts were all of John and Johnny now, as she raced up the alley toward home. What if all she would find when she returned would be that vacant lot with the big tree on it? How could she bear never to see John or her baby again?

Out of breath from running, she rounded the corner and saw, with relief, the apartment house standing there as big and ugly as ever. Slowing her pace, she tried to regain her breath before reaching the door.

John was standing in the doorway of their apartment with a worried look on his face. Looking at the clock on the wall, she saw that she actually had been gone only two hours, but it seemed more like two years.

"Where have you been, Laura?" he asked.

He looked so good to her that it was all she could do to keep from throwing herself into his arms, but she tried to appear casual.

"Well, you know how I am about directions. I got all turned around and couldn't find my way home. I just wandered around until I finally stumbled onto our street again." No use to try to tell him the truth now. He'd never believe it anyway!

"You mean you've been out walking all this time?" John was trying to understand as he drew her into the apartment and shut the door.

"Oh, no. I stopped to rest a couple of times. Really, John, I am glad to be home, though!"

With this, she could resist no longer and threw herself into his arms, kissing him like she hadn't for a long time. John seemed a little surprised at this demonstration, but he was never one to turn down her affection.

At the sound of gurgling, Laura turned to find little Johnny, lying in his playpen, perfectly happy. As she cuddled him in her arms, she asked John if either of them had eaten yet.

"Yes, I just fed the baby, but I haven't been fed yet and we're supposed to play bridge tonight with a new fellow I met out at the post. He and his wife just live a few blocks from here. They called this afternoon and I told them we'd be there about 8. Do you feel up to going, or had we better call it off?"

"Oh, no! Don't call it off. I'd go if I were half dead." Laura loved to play bridge, but so far, they hadn't made many friends who shared her enthusiasm.

"But what about a babysitter?" she called over her shoulder as she headed for the kitchen and began fixing dinner.

"I've already taken care of that, too. Got the Jones girl from downstairs."

On their way to play bridge, John drove past the site of Laura's

alleyway to the past. She stole a glimpse through the twilight to see if it were still there. There was the red brick house, all right, and the white frame one, but in between grew a hedge, straight and strong, as if it had always been there!

Give

Just as years harden our cheeks
 Just as the clocks in glowing
 Factories smash the numbers
 Into place,
 Just as we gamble with the
 Cold austerity of lights on
 The way to shows, they ask us:

Give

Won't you help outpatients with
 Curling toes imprisoned in Peoria?
 Won't you buy hot candy to send stale
 Bread to Asia?
 Won't you lend a hand to the
 Community United Chest for
 The importation of raw silicone
 To save our starlets' smiles?
 Our goal this week is over the top
 On top of over
 The grand game —
 Fading, fading back, the
 Iron lung is thrown
 And the victims with wonderful attitudes
 Ride the night home.

FRANKLIN B. ASHLEY

Marina

"Go. Go back." Often I've heard that.
 If it were possible, I would return
 to the country of my girlhood.
 My heart's greedy to free the image
 that, in a glass, would break out, go unharried.
 I see terror's features, and I see
 my features anew, and I learn
 —bitterly, mirror—this land is mine . . .

Must grief, like joy, demand a name?
 Is it true, as you allege: that a murderer
 strikes from his own house and from his own
 hidden sight? Serpent-strange
 was my path with him; at last, he had no claim
 to "bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh."

But what venom his love! I'd grown
 unwanted. I lost savor. Is Eden the same
 as Lot's city? I am caught in pitiless fire.
 I dread looking back. And now
 you cannot shame me. Shame
 and I are one . . .
 Forgive my weakness. Yes, once I did vow
 "My heart beats to your heart, and, husband,
 my time is as you desire."
 But clocks changed for him, and the austere black
 upstanding of an hour. Who can go back?
 A girl's land is her husband's. You understand:
 this land was his. Perhaps it is
 his land yet. Perhaps his hand
 and well-taught, death-schooled fingers curve
 to the world's sure turn.

 Gentlemen, I say
 slow, awkward words. Over me, great jets
 whisper, and you come to question, to observe.

MARINA

65

Tell the mourners, then: a bride forgets
the country of her youth. I do obey
and honor this land.

Little is important?

Well, pass the paper. Two words, here, I sign:
my name, mine —
and in some part, his. The date is right?
My words are true, bitter true for this day.

SAM BRADLEY

*Park Benjamin, Henry William Herbert, and
William Gilmore Simms:
A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY*

LILLIAN GILKES

In a controversial review of William Gilmore Simms' fourth novel *Park Benjamin*, then Boston editor of the *American Monthly Magazine*, opened his remarks acclaiming *The Partisan's* author as one "we have so long delighted to honor — whose brilliant promise we were among the earliest to hail — whose growing excellence we have noted joyfully, as the fulfillment of our former prophecies": i.e., Simms' rise to the front rank of American authors.¹

This was no empty brag. For Benjamin's earliest mention of Simms had come in the first number of Edwin Buckingham's *New-England Magazine* — July 1831 — when noticing George B. Cheever's *Common-Place Book of Poetry* he regretted the omission of some poets, among them Simms whose "exquisite piece 'To the Lost Pleiad' was universally and deservedly admired."²

Simms did not see this tribute to "The Lost Pleiad." But the following year when "Atalantis" appeared, Simms' first work of consequence, he was delighted with the Magazine's "most laudatory notice . . . one of the best which have met my eyes."³ The reviewer led off with a patriotic salute to "a poem written by one of our countrymen," in which though by *no means* a perfect production," he found "much to commend . . . the author had poetry in him — the divine afflatus is perceptible on every page." It is a story of the sea, and "the writer is as much at home among its billows and sparry caves, as if he were Neptune's poet laureate."

Simms quite naturally attributed this critique to twenty-three year old Edwin Buckingham, founder of the *New-England Magazine* — although as a critic he rated him "a drone." But young Buckingham had died at sea in the spring of 1833, after an absence of eight months, a victim of lung tuberculosis. Joseph Tinker Buckingham announced continuation of the journal as a memorial to his son. But the elder Buckingham, busy with his newspaper the *Boston Courier* and heavily occupied

¹AmMM, I n.s. (Jan. 1836), 101-104.

²NEM, I (July 1831), 91.

³Ibid., LV (Jan. 1833), 82 f.; and *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, ed. Mary C. Simms Oliphant, et al. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952), I, 81. Hereinafter called *Letters*.

with politics, three times standing trial in libel suits, a self-educated man with little knowledge or discrimination in judging poetry, enlisted others to do the literary work for him.⁴ He probably saw in Park Benjamin, one of the group of young literati who had supported with their talents his son's bold scheme of launching a literary magazine, a welcome and "well-heeled" assistant who could shoulder some of the burden of conducting such a risky enterprise. Benjamin was acting-editor at this time. Both pieces bear unmistakably the stamp of his thought and expression, as do the critical evaluations of *Guy Rivers*⁵ and *The Yemassee*⁶ in later issues of the Magazine after he became editor-owner.

Benjamin felt that *Guy Rivers* showed "very respectable powers both in thought and style," the author's conception of character was "strong and vivid, but he does not finish according to nature. All his personages run, one way or another, into extravagances. They are all terribly addicted to prosing." As was the author himself. "The hero is an improbable character . . . too wise for his years" and yet "silly." The outlaw, Rivers, also improbable. "The style is too verbose . . . descriptions of persons and places too frequent and too minute. They want clipping, condensing, clarifying and strengthening."⁷

This critique gave deep offense to Simms, who supposed it to have come from Buckingham senior. Its modicum of praise seemed far overshadowed by the negative pronouncements, and in the disproportionately long preamble burlesquing the plot in summary Simms must have perceived an old editorial device for the entertainment of readers at the author's expense:

In the multiplicity of his occupations, it never occurs to the political old gentleman [father of the heroine, rich uncle and foster-father of the hero] that the tender passion may play the dickens with the young things under his special care . . . Without having the slightest suspicion of it, they fall desperately deep into the condition which is proper for heroes and heroines. How could it be otherwise? . . . They talk, walk, read, and gaze on beautiful nature together. Things would have gone on, nobody can tell how long in this dreamy state, had not Master Ralph chanced upon a romantic tale, which struck the right key, and showed him all at once what tune his heart was beating to . . .

⁴Joseph T. Buckingham, *Personal Memoirs and Recollections of an Editorial Lifetime* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed & Fields, 1852).

⁵NEM, VII (July 1834), 422-426.

⁶Ibid., VIII (June 1835), 489f.

⁷Ibid., VII, 422-426.

And several paragraphs later, "Our hero is not only the object of a wild personal hatred, but has in his possession secrets dangerous to the neck of Rivers, Munro & Co.," who are leagued against him. After a hot pursuit to the river bank a gun battle ensues which settles the fate of all concerned, and in which the innkeeper Munro is mortally wounded. "Luckily, he had life and sense enough to disclose the whole truth; luckily, a soldier had paper enough to write down the dying man's confession; luckily, the moon shone brightly enough for him to do it; and most luckily, it was actually done."

In early nineteenth century criticism generally, when noticing contemporary works, especially fiction, the resort to burlesque could serve a double purpose of highlighting defects, structural or stylistic, while the critic entertained his readers with a rapid summary of what was all too often a dull plot. Needling the author with humorous quips had long been common practice in the British quarterlies and was in high favor with their readers. In the United States the long summary, as a means of letting readers know whether or not they were likely to be interested in the book, was a prerequisite of most early reviewing. Especially was this true of foreign works, which unless available in an American reprint were inaccessible to all but the well to do, and of native works issued in small lots by local jobbers. In cutting down on the long summary and replacing it with matter of livelier interest Benjamin's *New-England Magazine* set an example quickly followed by other journals. He himself became highly skilled in this technique; with his love of the serio-comic, his scintillant wit, it came naturally to him, and in his hands at this stage it was generally good-natured.

But the bruising commentary implicit in Benjamin's mock-heroic summation of *Guy Rivers* was, in fact, aimed not at Simms whom he wished well, but at the popular romantic novel of that day, which with few exceptions, fully merited the ridicule heaped upon it by one who was by instinct and education a classicist and child of the Augustan age. It has been said of the English neo-classical poets, the Augustans, that they were "at their best when writing under the sanction of the play principle."⁸ In their prose criticism they gave burlesque examples of how the rules had been violated. In an age when classicism was in retreat

⁸W. K. Wimsatt. "The Augustan Mode," *Hateful Contraries: Studies in Literature and Criticism* (University of Kentucky Press, 1965), pp. 149-164. See also Paul Fusell, *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery From Swift to Burke* (London & New York: Oxford, 1965, GB209, 1969).

before "the forces that were working for a sublime inflation of ideas and a luxury of sorry feeling," the New Englander Park Benjamin who had strayed into the romantic wild garden with his embrace of the Lake poets, and Shelley to boot, yet held firmly to the Popean encyclical that "to dissuade the dull and punish the wicked" seemed "the only way that was left." Ever impatient of dullness and mediocrity, Benjamin's critical conscience worked overtime to discourage them. But the *reductio ad absurdum* in much of his denunciation of mediocrity, however justified, fell upon an audience unused to the subtleties buried in the serio-comic approach. Such criticism fell into the category of the "abusive" and Benjamin's "sympathetic merriment" was more often mistaken, as in this instance, for "malignity, sarcasm, and contempt."

Simms to his friend and literary agent, James Lawson, expressed surprise at the *New-England Magazine's* "extravagantly courteous notice of *The Yemassee*," that journal, he complained, having "abused Guy Rivers before."⁹ But this time Benjamin began by saying he had found much merit in *Guy Rivers*, more in *The Yemassee*. In fact, he was not sure that he ought not to rank Mr. Simms first of American novelists. None but Miss Sedgwick and Cooper could be at all compared with him; Brockden Brown being of another genus altogether, no comparison was possible. *Guy Rivers* was as good a book as most of Cooper's novels. *The Yemassee* he found "superior in plot, style, and execution, to the Last of the Mohicans . . . The inimitable Leatherstocking stands alone; but in general conception of character, Mr. Simms takes the lead."

But Benjamin took exception to Simms' "correct delineation of Indian character and manners," singled out for special praise "in the public prints," very likely having in mind the eulogisms of Lewis Gaylord Clark in the rival *Knickerbocker Magazine*, then just one year old. "No indigenous author," said Clark, "has ever gone into the wigwam of the aborigines and described them as they existed in their original degradation . . . our author has given us living, breathing sketches of aboriginal life."¹⁰ Benjamin who liked and respected both Clark and his magazine, rejected absolutely the romantic view of the Indian as "the noble savage," feeling that Simms' realism did not go far enough:

⁹NEM, VIII (June 1835), 89f.; and *Letters*, I, 71. This often-cited review was first identified as of Benjamin's authorship by Merle M. Hoover in *Park Benjamin, Poet and Editor* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 61.

¹⁰See *Letters*, I, 63, n. 26.

Like the *Last of the Mohicans*, it is an excellent story, well told. [But] the characters of both works are no more like any Indians, who ever existed, than they are like the celestial company of saints and angels. How often must we tell our actors, painters, and engravers, not to dress chiefs and warriors in petticoats? . . . How often must we tell our novelists, that Indians do not use the third person singular for the first? — and that their ordinary conversation is nothing like ‘poetry run mad?’ This book is assuredly a beautiful fiction — but it is purely fiction; and neither from this, or any other novel yet published, will the reader get anything like a correct idea of the warrior of the forest and prairie.

Deep confusion surrounds Benjamin’s next pronouncement on Simms, the controversial discussion of *The Partisan* in the *American Monthly* to which reference has already been made.¹¹ Simms, who diligently kept track of all reviews of his books, seems to have taken for granted that this piece was the work of his friend H. W. Herbert, who had lauded *Guy Rivers* “above every American novel” he had yet seen. In 1833 Herbert, with A. D. Patterson in New York, had revived N. P. Willis’s magazine of the same name which he conducted until it was taken over two years later by Charles Fenno Hoffman. Simms’ error is repeated in footnotes by the editors of his *Letters*, and again by Donald Davidson in his admirable Introduction to the five volumes. But the truth is that although Herbert continued to assist Hoffman for some months longer, by the beginning of 1836 when Benjamin became Boston editor, Herbert no longer had any editorial connection with the *American Monthly* and had ceased writing for it as well.¹² One month earlier Benjamin announced his merger of the *New-England Magazine* with the *American Monthly*, and in August or September of the next year — 1837 — having quit Boston for New York’s greener fields, he acquired full control of the Magazine from Hoffman, who had been financially unable

¹¹Ibid., pp. 101-104.

¹²See Homer F. Barnes, *Charles Fenno Hoffman* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), pp. 69, 116; and Luke M. White, *Henry William Herbert and the American Publishing Scene* (Newark: Carteret Book Club, 1943). In regard to the *American Monthly*, confusions compound from the circumstance that although Vol. I, Nos. 1 and 2 of the Magazine (new series), as edited by C. F. Hoffman and Park Benjamin, appeared in Boston, Jan. and Feb. 1836, Vol. VI, Nos. 5 and 6, edited by H. W. Herbert and C. F. Hoffman, appeared at the same time in New York. The compilers of *A Bibliography of Henry William Herbert*, William Mitchell Van Winkle and David A. Randall, argue that Herbert probably “was allowed these two 1836 issues to dispose of material on hand and paid for. The Boston issues of January and February contain no Herbert contributions.” (*Bibliography*, p. 136).

to keep it afloat.¹³ Herbert moreover, about the time the article in question appeared, had gone into temporary seclusion following a New York roominghouse scandal in which he suffered unjust arrest.¹⁴ Simms himself investigated no further, and his correspondence with Lawson makes inferentially clear that he was not then, or ever again, directly in contact with Herbert.

Though unmarked by any of his playful mock heroics, in general style and content this article bears within it Benjamin's recognizable signature. "But what shall we say of *The Partisan*," asks the troubled critic, "the latest work of a writer whom we have so long delighted to honor?" The truth. And uttering it he grieves, for his own disappointment with the novel, for the author himself, exhorting and pleading with Simms to correct his faults — largely of hasty writing — before they become finally incorrigible, spoiling his promise. Each of Simms' previous works had shown an advance from good to better. "Guy Rivers surpassed his elder brother [*Martin Faber*] with the stride of an earth-born giant." In its "shining pages" were touches "never excelled by any native novelist." *The Yemassee* "came forth another length ahead of its predecessor, and we triumphed in the accomplishment of our hopes and prophecies." Superior in every respect to *Guy Rivers*, "it was, perhaps, the novel of the season . . . No man stood higher as a candidate for popular favor," no contemporary American novelist stood so high. Cooper having entered upon a decline, Simms' only immediate rivals, Kennedy and Bird — both men of unusual ability — had yet "some leeway to work up ere they should run abreast with him." But now Simms must labor, study, revise. He could do it, he must do it, Benjamin would drive him to it with censure if need be. For censure, he declared, even when unjust and bitter, was

less cruel and injurious to a youthful and rising author than indiscriminate and undue praise . . . In the success of Simms, we are, in every possible way interested — as admirers of his upward flight we cannot endure to see his strong wing flag and falter . . . we will not suffer him to make security his bane.

Simms' great strength lay in the portrayal of strong passion, of "high and strongly marked character in his men," tenderness in his women.

¹³The transfer of ownership to Benjamin is dated from a letter to Gen'l H. A. S. Dearborn, 13 Sept. 1837, at the Chicago Historical Society.

¹⁴White, *op. cit.*; and *Letters*, I, 89f. and n. 34.

"With regard to the narrative, his great fault is want of connexion and progressive interest — with regard to the characters, vulgarity." Simms must not write half so much, or half so rapidly as he had done lately; "must adhere to established usages of the English language and of grammar." He must not coin new words when the old ones would do as well or better; he must not adopt provincialisms when writing in his own person, however desirable when speaking through the mouths of his characters: mistakes which "could no more have escaped the notice of this really brilliant author, on a careful revision, than the sun at noonday could have escaped the eye of an eagle."

Prolivity and vulgarity were the criticisms most frequently levelled at Simms in these years. As to vulgarity, notwithstanding the growing emphasis on probability and verisimilitude, prose criticism in America was still hidebound by the old rules laid down by Alison and Burke¹⁵ in matters of taste, with respect to poetry. It would be some while yet before the separation of fiction and drama from poetry, in critical theory, had widened sufficiently to admit broadly realistic treatment of romantic materials as a matter of principle. Vulgarity in the novel, by which was meant the depiction of low-life characters in their natural setting, was excused in Dickens by his American admirers, of whom Benjamin was one, on account of the ever present moral in Dickens' handling of such scenes and characters. Simms the novelist, with his emphasis on verisimilitude, was well ahead of his time, as was Benjamin the critic, who stressed "common sense" realism. But the eighteenth century reliance upon taste was already becoming too narrow a yardstick for critical evaluation, in novels and plays making use of the new and diversified subject matter of both the American past and of modern life; whereas, in the realm of the essay the exact meaning of vulgarity was even less capable of definition. Benjamin himself nowhere tells us why grotesqueries and "recondite allusions" are delightful in Lamb, for example, but unacceptable in Willis except that in the latter, he thinks, they are identified with crudity, coarseness, and superficiality.¹⁶ "There is no book and no author above criticism"; and criticism should serve constructive ends not

¹⁵Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790); Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756).

¹⁶"Willis's Poems," AmMM, II n.s. (Sept. 1836), 208-224.

"Mr. Willis's Prose," *ibid.* (Oct.), 347-356.

"Elia," NEM, IX (Oct. 1835), 233-239.

"The Letters of Charles Lamb, with a Sketch of his Life; by Thomas Noon Talfourd," AmMM, V n.s. (June 1838), 73-76.

only with respect to the individual writer, but the reader audience as well. In agreement with eighteenth century dicta, criticism should assist in the formation and elevation of standards of art, execution, morality, and taste.

It is interesting to compare Benjamin's assessment of Simms with that of Poe, whose ideas of taste differed sharply from those of his contemporaries and who gave moral didacticism no place in his critical credo. Poe in the same month, January 1836, wrote a savage review of *The Partisan* in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, but later reversed himself, calling Simms "The Lope de Vega of American fiction writers." His merits, said Poe, "are among the major and his defects among the minor morals of literature"; he thought "Murder Will Out" the best ghost story he had ever read. "Mr. Simms has more vigor, more imagination, more movement and more general capacity than all our novelists (save Cooper) combined," Poe wrote in the *Democratic Review* (December 1844); and in the *Broadway Journal* he gave it as his "deliberate opinion" that despite certain faults Simms was, "upon the whole, the best novelist this country has produced."¹⁷

Poe, whose causticity resembled Benjamin's own, was off and on an admirer of the other man's "fearlessness" and "independence" in criticism. But although Poe undoubtedly saw the review of *The Partisan* in the *American Monthly*, it would be rash to assume that his subsequent turnabout with regard to Simms owed anything directly to Benjamin in this instance. By 1842, when Poe commenced praising up Simms, he had already raised the cry of sectionalism, and his change of tune must be viewed — partly at any rate — in that context.

Simms' immediate reaction to the article he mistook for Herbert's was, on the whole, temperate. He wrote Lawson:¹⁸

Herbert, though severe, and I think unjust, yet writes in an honorable and manly spirit which I like. He does not appreciate those portions of the Partisan which belong to humble life & were intended to be humorous. This I foresaw: but you have no idea how popular Porgy is with the large majority. He is actually the founder of a sect.

In his next communication to Lawson he went even further: "I have seen Herbert's review in the Am. Monthly and in many respects esteem

¹⁷*Broadway Journal*, II (Oct. 4, 1845), 130f. Review of *The Wigwam and the Cabin*.

¹⁸*Letters*, I, 82, 85.

it just, nor am I disposed to regard him with less warmth and good feeling than before." He thought him, Herbert-Benjamin, wrong on several counts, "since one of his chief objections to the work is its abruptness — a necessary consequence of the plan, which contemplated a series . . . He is not less wrong in objecting to humor, simply because his individual taste does not seek it . . . But he is right in many other respects."

Benjamin's objections to Simms' brand of frontier humor, which he deemed "unfortunate," are partly accountable to his growing conviction that "Indian murders and the speech of Salt River 'roarers'" were becoming "a drug on the market."¹⁹ Which was but another way of emphasizing his own preference — as Simms suspected — for the laughter of the intellect over the broader, racier, Falstaffian variety. His perception of the comic was closer to that of Socrates and Pope than to Falstaff, extending down to "the Croakers," those merry pranksters in verse Irving had nicknamed "the laughing philosophers": Halleck and Drake. Simms was, of course, right in his insistence that "local humor" belonged in the portrayal of his "humble life" characters, and Benjamin's charge of "unfortunate" is loaded with irony. For he himself was often under fire for his reliance on ridicule and the serio-comic approach, in his criticism of contemporaries, and much of his own best work as poet and essayist is in that mode. He made out a strong case for humor in the *American Monthly*,²⁰ declaring that "since Knickerbocker's History, no single work of first-rate humor has appeared among us"; and was later joined by Simms in the *Southern Quarterly Review*, who felt that Americans and English alike were deficient in appreciation of the comic.²¹ Both men refused pointblank to accept Cornelius Mathews' coarse and feeble imitations of "Boz" for the genuine article. Both statements provoked loud outcries from the young critic W. A. Jones, who invoked the shades of Irving, Paulding, Holmes in rebuttal. But the real reason, Benjamin argued, for the lack of any considerable body of humor in native literature was no lack of capable writers, but rather the lack of encouragement.

¹⁹Review of James Hall, *Tales of the Border*, NEM, VII (Feb. 1835), 135f.

²⁰AmMM, V n.s. (March 1838), 288f.

²¹John Stafford, *The Literary Criticism of Young America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), pp. 75f.; and *Letters*, I, 430 n. 106. Simms' article, "The Writings of Cornelius Mathews," was later revised and reissued in *Views and Reviews*, 2nd series, under the title "The Humorous in American and British Literature." *Letters* gives no date for its first appearance in SQR.

Though one of the giants whose protean stride cuts across the entire literary map of his day, Simms nevertheless fell short of becoming America's foremost novelist. We are not concerned here with reasons for this failure, beyond noting that Simms' constitutional inability to prune and revise his work was undoubtedly a factor. Enormously productive, but a very uneven writer, Simms' letters reveal him as impatient of criticism as he was eager for approbation. He could judge the work of others with true discernment and impartiality, he wrote and published much excellent criticism, but he seems to have been unable to view his own productions with the cool eye of self-detachment until long after the period of composition ended. As to *The Partisan*, he later admitted that the novel's "design was feeble, the parts clumsily put together"; and that "in certain matters of taste & style" it was "one of the very worst of the books that I have ever written."²² Thus the hindsight.

But it was not, after all, Benjamin's review which stirred up Simms' "warm and impetuous blood," but a later article in another journal — signed by Henry William Herbert! "The disposition to disparage my books has grown active," he wrote Lawson — April [1836]

and I am afraid that some of my friends have been among the most active. I perceive in Herbert's notice . . . published in the [New York] 'Courier & Enquirer' that he is disposed to be merciless. He even suppresses all the gratifying and favorable points of commentary which were sprinkled over his notice in the Am. Mon. And why two notices of the same work in distinct periodicals, at remote intervals? — and why the insidious comparison of living and contemporary if not rival authors? Just criticism should be intrinsic, not comparative . . . When comparisons are made between Bird, Kennedy & myself, it places the Parties in an awkward predicament: God help us when our men of letters can only be judged when placed opposite each other in a cockpit.

The *Mirror* too, he added, "has condescended to join the combatants." He gave it wry thanks, "it lifts up something like a shield in my defense"; but found "the condescension . . . excruciating . . . Do when you write tell me the secret of all this hostility . . ."

Comparisons had not seemed "insidious" before, on the contrary. But this second blast, presumably from one long regarded as a friend,

²²*Letters*, II, 43, 229.

could only be counted a betrayal. Worse still, Herbert owed Simms for contributions to *The Magnolia*, an annual edited by Herbert to which Park Benjamin was also a contributor, amounting to some fifty-five pages. Unable to pay — there appears to have been only a verbal agreement concerning the rate of payment — Herbert referred the matter to his publisher Monson Bancroft, who seems to have reneged on all promises given.²³ So ended, on a dual misunderstanding, the once cordial relationship between Herbert and Simms.

Benjamin had warm praise for Simms' next novel, *Melichampe*;²⁴ and Simms in turn, knowing nothing of Benjamin's part in the unresolved mix-up seems to have set store by his critical judgment, writing Lawson in 1840, "You did not tell me what opinion Benjamin has of the B.B. [*The Border Beagles*]." Two days later he again queried Lawson, "What says Benjamin?"; and 7 January 1843, "I see that Benjamin has been doing an anniversary poem lately, — I wish you would get it sent me. I hear that it is a good thing."²⁵ Lawson was next charged to offer Simms' latest production, *William Potter, a Christmas at Castle Dismal* — a ghost story of 150 pages — for publication in Benjamin's *New World* if it were refused by the Harpers, Simms' regular publishers. The price, \$125, was "the sum Benjamin repeatedly offered me for a story of such length." Another of the same length would follow, and he urged Lawson to see Benjamin at once:²⁶

say to him that the *New World* and his extra publications have not reached me since I have been at home. Request him to see that my name is put upon his list, and have put up all of his issues, regular and extra, from the first day of September to the present time . . . among these publications of the *New World*, which I must have, are Blackwood's Magazine, and Froissart . . . I am particularly anxious to see the sort of excoriating . . . our friend Benjamin, promises our friends, the Harpers. Say to him — that he must not allow me to be disappointed in my expectations . . . I have a sort of taste for the cudgelling, in which I do not partake.

²³*Ibid.*, I, 79, 84, 86-88. The son of an Anglican bishop, Herbert is best known for his lively and still readable books on sports, under the pseudonym of "Frank Forester." For an account of his work and career, see White's excellent monograph.

²⁴*AmMM*, III n.s. (Jan. 1837), 86f.

²⁵*Letters*, I, 190, 193, 339. The "anniversary poem" was "Poetry: A Satire," the first of Benjamin's lectures in verse, delivered before the Mercantile Library Association's twenty-second anniversary celebration at the Broadway Tabernacle, 9 Nov. 1842. Published the same year by Jonas Winchester.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 390.

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

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The reference here is to the bitter warfare between the book publishing establishment and the "mammoth" weeklies, among which the *New World* held first place. In a protracted squeeze-play exploiting sensational advertising the mammoths forced the trade houses, notably *Harpers*, into competition in the production of cheap paperbacks in order to hold their markets.²⁷ Benjamin returned *William Potter*, but accepted *Helen Halsey* for his paperback library, "Books for the People," at an agreed price of \$100.²⁸

It would be pleasant to end on this note of friendly intercourse. But already entangled in the reckless mismanagement of his publisher and partner, Jonas Winchester, Benjamin presently quit the *New World* in disgust.²⁹ He has been unjustly blamed for the cheapening of the paper in its last year of life, and in the turgid aura surrounding Winchester's sharp practices he apparently forfeited the good opinion of Simms.

²⁷For the most able and comprehensive account of the "war of the mammoths" against the publishing industry, see a Columbia University Master's thesis by William Cullen Bryant II, "The Brother Jonathan' and Its Extra Novels: A Study of the Mammoth Weeklies, 1839-1845" (June 1940). See also Hoover, *Park Benjamin*.

²⁸Benjamin to Lawson, 30 Dec. 1844, in the Park Benjamin Collection at Columbia University. The partnership with Winchester was dissolved earlier in the year; *Helen Halsey* was published by Burgess, Stringer in 1845.

²⁹For important new light on Benjamin's differences with Winchester readers may be referred to his extensive correspondence with Brantz Mayer, at the Maryland Historical Society.

CONTRIBUTORS

- FRANKLIN B. ASHLEY is on leave from teaching at The Citadel to complete his work on the Ph.D. at the University of South Carolina.
- ROBERT BOWIE lives in Hyattsville, Maryland, where he works as a layout artist. He has published poems in various magazines.
- SAM BRADLEY is now teaching at Kutztown State College in Pennsylvania. He has published widely in the past decade, including two collections of poems, *Men - In Good Measure* and *Alexander and One World*, and, with Marianne Bogojavlensky, a book of translations, *Three New Soviet Poets*.
- RICHARD J. CALHOUN is Alumni Professor of English at Clemson University and an assistant editor of this *Review*. He has written numerous articles about contemporary American poets and is now preparing a collection of critical essays on Dickey soon to be published by Everet Edwards Press. He is one of the co-editors of *The Literature of South Carolina: A Tricentennial Anthology*, published this spring.
- ELIZABETH BOATWRIGHT COKER has written several novels: *Daughter of Strangers*, *Day of the Peacock*, *India Allen*, *The Big Drum*, *La Belle*, and *The Bees*. Her poems have appeared in various magazines. She was born in Darlington, attended Converse College, and has lived in Hartsville since the 1930's.
- HARLEY ELLIOTT works as a book designer for Syracuse University Press. His poems have appeared in *New: American and Canadian Poetry*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Poetry Northwest*, and other small poetry magazines. His first collection, *Dark Country*, will be published soon by The Crossing Press.
- LILLIAN GILKES is a free-lancing scholar. She is the author of *Cora Crane: A Biography of Mrs. Stephen Crane* (1960), a co-editor with R. W. Stallman of *Stephen Crane: Letters* (1960), and for some years has been at work on a critical biography of Park Benjamin, American poet and critic (1809-1864). She has also published short stories and has taught creative writing in New York. She lives in Tryon, North Carolina.
- WILLIAM HARROLD lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- WILLIAM J. KIMBALL is professor of English at Converse College in Spartanburg. He is a native Virginian, is editor of *Richmond in Time of War*, and has contributed articles to *Civil War History*, *South Atlantic Bulletin*, and other periodicals.
- DAVID K. KIRBY teaches English at Florida State University. Poems of his have appeared in several little magazines.
- D. M. PETTINELLA lives in New York City. Her poems and translations have appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Hudson Review*, *Nation*, *New Mexico Quarterly*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Shenandoah*, *Sixties*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and elsewhere.
- W. D. STALLINGS lives in Columbia, where he teaches at Palmer College and is writing his dissertation for the Ph.D. in English at the University of South Carolina. His poems have appeared in the *Laurel Review* and *The South Carolina Review*.
- IRENE B. STAPLETON is a housewife, now living in Taylors, S. C. She is a graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism and has written for industrial publications and newspapers, including *The Columbia Record*. This is her first published story.
- GAIL BROCKETT WHITE has been editing *Caryatid*, a magazine of verse, in Orlando, Florida. She has had poems accepted in *Poet Lore*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Prologue*, *Discourse*, and elsewhere. She is living in New Orleans this year.
- JOHN F. ZEUGNER is a graduate student at Florida State University. He has worked as assistant to the Books Editor of *American Heritage* publications and is the author of several stories. He gratefully acknowledges a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts Foundation for help in his writing. He is a native of New York and has a B.A. degree from Harvard.