

The following piece is untitled, undated and the manuscript is done in printed capitals and reproduced in like manner for authenticity. It was probably done around 1978 or 1979 when Jessica was between ages 12 to 14 years.

UNTITLED

"I THINK YOU'RE KIND OF WELL-ROUNDED." HE'D SAID TO MARGIE THE DAY BEFORE HE'D LEFT THE COUNTRY FOR EUROPE AND A BETTER LIFE. NOW ARMIN, MARGIE'S LONGTIME BOYFRIEND, WAS THE OWNER AND MANAGER OF ONE OF WEST BERLIN'S HOTTEST CLUBS AND WAS PLANNING TO OPEN ANOTHER IN LONDON. SHE'D BEEN OVERWHELMED TO HEAR OF ARMIN'S SUCCESS AND YET THE PANG OF ENVY THAT HAD ACCOMPANIED THE NEWS WAS UNDENIABLE. MARGIE WAS STILL WORKING WITH THE DAMN RESTAURANT AND, WORSE, YET, SHE WAS STILL FAT.

MARGIE COLODOWICH WAS IN AN EVER-PRESENT STATE OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT. SHE KNEW SHE WAS SMART BUT SHE NEVER SEEMED TO FIND THE RIGHT MOMENT TO MAKE A BREAK FOR THE GOOD LIFE. EITHER SHE DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO BACKUP HER OVERNIGHT SUCCESS PLANS OR IT WASN'T GOOD TIMING OR SHE STILL HADN'T LOST ENOUGH WEIGHT TO SUGGEST THAT THINGS MIGHT TURN FOR THE BETTER. SO MARGIE CLOMPED THROUGH LIFE AS A WAITRESS, THEN A COOK, THEN A SUPERVISOR AND FINALLY A MANAGER AT BRANCH #21 OF THE WHITE SPOT. AND IT HAD ALL COME EASILY ENOUGH TO HER, SO THAT SHE NEVER REALLY TOOK ANY OF IT VERY SERIOUSLY. SHE STILL HAD ABOUT FIFTEEN POUNDS TO LOSE, ANYWAY.

SITTING SULLENLY ON HER OVERSIZED COUCH AFTER A TWO HOUR BINGE ON ICE-CREAM AND COOKIES, MARGIE PICKED UP THE NEWSPAPER TO READ A CURIOUS ARTICLE IN THE LEISURE SECTION. IT READ:

"DR. HENRY MACINTYRE, RESIDENT DOCTOR AT REGENCY HOSPITAL, CLAIMS THAT DURING THE COURSE OF A SNEEZE A PERSON ACTIVATES A CHEMICAL, PRODOPOLIN, WHICH IS THE PRIME FORCE IN THE BURNING OF CALORIES. THE PRODOPOLIN CAN REMAIN ACTIVATED FOR UP TO FIVE MINUTES AND IN THAT TIME BURN MORE THAN TWENTY-FIVE CALORIES, SAYS MCINTYRE. "LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT THE CHEMICAL," THE DOCTOR SAYS, "BUT IF ONE WERE ABLE TO CONTROL ITS RELEASE, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO GREATLY AID THOSE PATIENTS IN NEED OF WEIGHT LOSS OR GAIN."

MARGIE'S HEART LEAPT WHEN SHE READ THE WRITE-UP. CALORIE-BURNING SNEEZES. GOD, WHY HADN'T SHE NOTICED THAT BEFORE. PERHAPS IS [*sic*] SHE COULD INVOKE A COUPLE OF SNEEZES FOR HERSELF SHE'D START

SHEDDING SOME POUNDS. WITH THAT IN MIND, SHE BROUGHT THE TIP OF HER FINGER TO HER NOSE AND TICKLED HER NOSTRIL. SHE SNEEZED. AGAIN SHE TICKLED HER NOSTRILS, AGAIN SHE SNEEZED. IT WAS EXHILARATING. CERTAINLY NOT AN UNPLEASANT WAY TO LOSE WEIGHT, SHE THOUGHT.

FOR THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS SHE MADE A HABIT OF SNEEZING BEFORE AND AFTER MEALS. SHE BOUGHT PEPPER AND CINNAMON BLOCKS AT THE GROCERY STORE AND SNEEZED FOR A FEW MINUTES DURING HER COFFEE BREAKS, THE EFFECT WAS STARTLING. SHE LOST FIVE POUNDS IN ONE WEEK AND WITH A NEWFOUND ABUNDANCE OF ENERGY, SHE FOUND HERSELF EATING LESS AND BECOMING MORE ACTIVE. WITHIN A MONTH SHE COULD ACTUALLY BE CALLED SLIM AND HER FRIENDS WERE GOING CRAZY TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW SHE'D DONE IT. BUT SHE NEVER REVEALED THE SECRET TO HER DIETING — SHE HAD OTHER PLANS.

"SNEEZERCISE" WAS WHAT SHE DUBBED THE NEW FITNESS FAD. AFTER CONSULTING A WELL-KNOWN AD MAN, MARGIE COLODOWICH LAUNCHED AN EXTRAORDINARY CAMPAIGN THAT DREW HUNDREDS OF WEIGHT-CONSCIOUS CITIZENS TO HER NEWLY OPENED SALON. DURING HER HALF-HOUR EXERCISE SESSIONS, MARGIE EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH BY WAY OF A FIT BODY. FIFTEEN MINUTES OF THAT

HALF HOUR WAS DEVOTED TO MULTIPLE SNEEZING AND THE OTHER FIFTEEN TO LECTURES ON THE VARIOUS TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED TO ACHIEVE *[sic]* SUCH A STATE. THE CLASSES WERE PACKED AND WITHIN THREE MONTHS MARGIE OPENED TWO MORE LOCAL SALONS AND HIRED A LINE OF NEW INSTRUCTORS.

MARGIE COLODOWICH HAD FINALLY MADE IT. SHE WAS SLIM AND ATTRACTIVE, WEALTHY AND SUCCESSFUL. THE SALONS PRETTY MUCH RAN THEMSELVES NOW AND MARGIE TOOK LITTLE PART IN THE ACTIVITIES, OTHER THAN COLLECTING A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF THE FEES. IT WAS TIME TO MOVE TO OTHER THINGS, SHE CONCLUDED, FOR THE SNEEZERCISE BUSINESS HAD BECOME QUITE TEDIOUS. AND MARGIE KNEW THAT LIKE ALL MEDIA-CRAZED TRENDS, SNEEZERCISE WOULD SOON BE A THING OF THE PAST.

FIVE MONTHS AFTER MARGIE'S SALONS HAD FIRST OPENED ARMIN CALLED FROM GERMANY TO CONGRATULATE HER ON HER SUCCESS. THE TREND HAD APPARENTLY CAUGHT ON IN EUROPE AND HE HAD BEEN AMAZED TO DISCOVER THAT IT WAS SHE WHO INSTIGATED IT ALL. WHEN SHE ASKED HIM OF HIS OWN CAREER, ARMIN CONFIDED THAT HIS CLUBS HAD SINCE DIMINISHED IN POPULARITY AND THAT HE WAS READY TO MOVE ON TO OTHER THINGS. IN TURN MARGIE EXPRESSED HER INCREASING DISSATISFACTION WITH HER LIFE. SHE'D STARTED TO PUT ON POUNDS AGAIN AND REALLY DESIRED A CHANGE OF LIFE STYLE. AFTER REMINISCING FOR SOME TIME, THE TWO DECIDED TO MEET IN PARIS FOR SOME TIME TOGETHER.

THE PLANE TRIP TO FRANCE WAS REVITALIZING FOR MARGIE AND WHEN SHE ARRIVED IN PARIS SHE WAS ANXIOUS TO MAKE PLANS TO OPEN A NEW BUSINESS. A HEALTH CLUB PERHAPS, WITH A SAUNA. OR MAYBE A NIGHTCLUB WITH ARMIN. IN ANY CASE, THIS WOULD BE ANOTHER NEW BEGINNING. THE ONE MINOR *[sic]* SETBACK THAT SEEMED TO FLAW HER IDEAL SITUATION, HOWEVER, WAS THE FACT THAT SINCE SHE'D GIVEN UP THE SNEEZERCISE BUSINESS SHE'D GAINED BACK ALL HER POUNDS AND FELT MORE APATHETIC ABOUT HER WEIGHT THAN USUAL. BUT SHE SET THIS TO THE BACK OF HER MIND AND CONTINUED TO THINK OF HER FLAWS. WHEN SHE GOT OFF THE PLANE IN PARIS THAT EVENING, ARMIN GREETED HER WITH A KISS AND A PINCH OF HER REAR.

"HEY, IT'S MY WELL-ROUNDED GAL," HE SAID IN GOOD CHEER. MARGIE SMIRKED AND SQUEEZED HIS HAND; THIS TIME IT FELT OKAY TO BE WELL-ROUNDED. THIS TIME, SHE KNEW THERE WERE BETTER THINGS AHEAD.

All unpublished material from this point on has been typed or word-processed indicating that it dates from high school, that is when Jessica was between ages 15 to 17 years. Some of it is undated but dates are included where known. Marker's comments are also included.

A FAMILY TALE [Title is hand-lettered]

My father would clamber from den to kitchen to bathroom until the four of us were fully rounded up and seated expectantly before his lingering altitude. All flannel and peanut butter, we'd gaze from darned socks to glinting, dancing eyes and then file away his unrelenting majesty in our baby minds. With a slice of air at his mercy he'd sit down, lean forward, draw in his breath.

"It was a dark and stormy night," he'd growl, "and we were all sitting around the bonfire when all of a sudden..." And from there he'd carry on.

On one rather anxious Monday evening, when we'd all trespassed on the boundaries of good behavior, father gathered us together somewhat later in the evening than usual. We'd been given additional chores to finish up before bed and were feeling somewhat demoralized. Relieved that we'd been alleviated¹ from our tedious duties, we plunked ourselves down before him. He began without delay.

"It was a dark and stormy night," he sighed. The stories always began the same way before they would twist and thicken into dazzling stories of shipwrecked royalty and golden serpents. Father's voice would bubble, hiss and then finally fade as the curtain fell over our grand illusions. This night, however, his movement and voice hinted at distraction as he emptied his words into the room.

"... and we were all sitting around the bonfire when all of a sudden," he continued, not speaking in a way that great storytellers should, "a boy yelled out 'Hey old man, let's have a story!' Well, the man readily replied, 'Alright son, here's yer story.' It was a dark and stormy night and we were all sitting around the bonfire when all of a sudden a boy yelled out ..." Curiously enough, my father blandly repeated this odd tale until it had circled itself three times completely. then he stopped short in the midst of his words.

"The four of you have all finished the extra chores your mother gave you, no doubt." We nodded wearily.

"And by God," he laughed, "you're glad to have them done. Am I right?" Oh yes, we agreed, chuckling softly with him.

Swinging his eyes around to where I was sitting he asked, "Louise, what did Mum ask you to do this evening?"

"I scrubbed the tub."

"And you detested doing it?"

"Well yes," I said, smiling, "of course."

"Why." He had chosen to me speak from among the rest; I was bold and articulate.

"Why?" I repeated, smiling back at this lovely man who I knew expected as much from me as he did from himself. I had long ago exhausted the fiery² little rebel within myself that became frustrated with his probing. My father simply would not allow my mind to behave lazily. Instead he would seek out what intelligence lay within the confines of my brain, encouraging it to blossom.

"Well, it's monotonous. I just kept scrubbing and scrubbing until mother said I could stop.

"Appears to be rather a waste of time, doesn't it?"

"Well, I suppose it had to be done, but it did seem rather useless at the time."

My younger sister, having that effortless perception of youth, caught the general attitude of what was being said and interjected, "Like the story you just told. Dumb and useless. Makes me wanna fall right asleep." Quickly taking in her words I looked back to see father's reaction. He registered approval and it was then that I caught his train of thought.

¹ Underlined by marker

² Corrected to fiery by marker

“The story you told us and the tub I scrubbed both seemed to be a waste of time, yet both served a purpose,” I concluded.

“So if the tub would eventually have to be scrubbed in what way it seem to be a waste of time?” he persisted.

“The tub was scrubbed yesterday and anyway, mother always redoes the job after we finish.”

“Right, and the story? Why is it a waste of time unlike the others I’ve told you?”

“It seemed like a waste of time.” I began hesitantly, “because it didn’t go anywhere. In fact, it wasn’t really a story because it didn’t tell us anything new and it didn’t ever end. It went around and around—”

“So what possible purpose could it serve?” father demanded. I pondered his last question for a moment.

“I suppose, in a way, you told it to us as punishment. We thought we would hear another incredible story, but instead you told us this odd, interesting story that never ends.” He smiled with raised brows, acknowledging my understanding but insisting that I finalize my thought.

Sighing I said, “You wasted your time tonight because we wasted yours earlier by acting stupidly. Sort of a case of the punishment fitting the crime.” He winked at me affectionately and reached out to squeeze my hand. Satisfied now, he sent us all to bed. The others went to bed somewhat bewildered and morose, justifiably, having not fully understood my father’s intentions. He was aware that this interlude had run well above their heads, but father seized any opportunity to teach a lesson if there was one to be taught. Often times he singled one child from the rest in order to meet his or her specific needs. Although this practice excluded the remaining children, no one felt alienated. We were a family of individuals and

because my father was so proud of that fact, the same pride was dearly embodied within ourselves.

My oldest brother, the oldest of the four, now lives with his wife in a middle-class neighborhood. He’s a good man, an electrician by career, and enjoys a comfortable family life. I love him dearly and see him rarely. My younger brother is an explosive little lawyer who defends his cases with the same conviction as he lives his life. We disagree about almost everything; I am told we are very alike. The baby of the family, my sister, lives in a small town with her family. Hesitantly dubbed by myself as a homemaker, she is an extremely active member of her community. To date she has negotiated plans for extensions to the local shopping mall, influenced the building of the town’s first theatre and organized a program which aids youth in finding employment. There is talk that she will be campaigning for Mayor next year.

We are all products of our family in that we believe ourselves to be people of influence. Even my oldest brother, who can appear to be perhaps too accepting of his mediocre situation in life sees himself as a role model³ for younger men. I am perhaps the most atypical example of my upbringing. While my brothers and sister derive much of their strength committing themselves to other people, I am more strengthened by my sense of self. As a result, I have lived my life in near isolation while my siblings surround themselves with family and friends.

I am a designer of women’s fashion and have earned a relatively prominent position in my field. I work out of New York, although a Canadian by origin, and frequent the social circles talked of in the NYT gossip columns. I adore parties at Andy Warhol’s place, diamond rings and anything french [*sic*]. I detest party crashers who ask for autographs, proposals of marriage and anything suburban. My life has been, quite honestly, the stuff that trashy novels are made of — A Harold Robbins extravagance.

Many years ago I suddenly found myself overwhelmed by personal and professional commitments. Everywhere I turned there was the suggestion of further complications. I vacated my life for several months and flew to Athens, Greece. There I bought a new wardrobe, consisting of light cottons and loosely draped robes and lacking a bathing suit and most lingerie. Then I cut my hair above my shoulders and took the first boat to a greek [*sic*] island called Hydra. It is a tiny place where automobiles are prohibited. One can walk around it in three or four hours.

3 Underlined by marker

While I was there I shed my tiresome bothers for the luxury of simplicity. I sailed on catamarans and yachts and hired a masseuse three times a week. I slicked myself up and wet myself down with palm oil and cool Chablis. I swam every day in the ocean. I became well-known on the island and enjoyed the spontaneous company of many natives and travelers alike. What seemed to be something more blessed than my very fantasies ended abruptly after the first month there, however, when I discovered that I was pregnant.⁴

After a great deal of brooding in the blistering sun, I finally decided to fly back home. This time I couldn't back quietly into a foreign country and out of my newfound commitments. When I arrived in New York, I was more depressed than when I'd left. My initial reaction was that pregnancy could be categorized with the likes of party crashers and marriage proposals. Soon enough though, I was seeing through the baby-blue tinted eyes of a mother-to-be. Had this not happened, I decided, my future could well have provided no more than the bleak company of aging cats and perhaps an over-anxious parakeet; I would have grown old entirely alone. With my new child I would have someone to share my bizarre and fantastic life with. More importantly, here would be child that could be heir to the beliefs which my own parents had passed to me. This child, like myself and my siblings, would grow to be yet another example of the uniquely perfect individual; my father would be ecstatic. In that light, I called my parents and told them the wonderful news.

"Children are not accessories like the clothes you design, Louise," was my father's initial reply. Needless to say, I was angry and crushed. demanding that he try, for once, to be my friend rather than my instructor. His response was cool and efficient as he calmly asked who the child's father was.

:"That isn't important," I said.

"If you believe that," he responded, "then I have failed you as a parent." I fell silent for a moment and then protested a great deal more and fell silent once again. Father quietly questioned my decision: who would be a family to the child? From what source would he build a sense of security? Where would he go when I was in Paris at fashion conventions? With an explosion I shrieked into the dense presence of the telephone receiver, enraged responding to his every doubt. I had an answer for it all, an answer for everything — until my little boy Conrad started growing up.

He was a truly stunning child and soon enough my fashion friends were betting on how soon he'd star in an American film or for which agency he'd eventually model. Sensing the danger in their unconsciously demanding ways, however, I kept Conrad out of the limelight and moved to a waterfront home in Massachusetts. He grew to love the ocean and later we sailed around much of the world over a period of months. And as I had hoped, he was all the more an individual than myself. We was very good at woodcrafts and painting and excelled brilliantly at mathematics while in high school. Conrad was, however, a painfully shy little boy who rarely voiced his thoughts. As an infant there were suspicions that he was autistic for he did not speak in full sentences until he was seven.

Perhaps there were too many fashion presentations, too many times I was forced to leave him with a nanny. Or maybe the over-eager approaches of my eccentric friends sharpened his desire to keep to himself, for little Conrad never opened up. I don't feel that he has ever readily confided in me, yet I am his sole emotional connection. Despite the unease that I had come to feel when I was near my father (who's[sic] injured me), I left Conrad with he [sic] and mother in Ontario as much as possible when I went away. I suppose I felt that they would in some way fill the void that I refused to believe existed for Conrad. But when I'd return to take him back home my mother would greet me with a sharp kiss on the cheek and father would shake his head and say. "He's such a quiet little thing, Louise."

My parents have passed away now and Conrad is living by himself in a house off the coast of Newfoundland. Having concluded his studies at Queens University in Ontario, he works as an architect and lives in a beach house that he himself designed. While he never confessed to any personal problems, I suspect that he is lonely. He does not date women or attend social functions, as far as I'm aware of, but he never, ever complains. I occurs to me how fortunate it is that my brothers' and sister's children have

followed the family footsteps of producing large families., for both Conrad and I like our lives in seclusion. For me that is alright as I've come to believe with my lifestyle, but I often wish that Conrad had the security of a family or friends. If only just once he had 'run home to mamma' when he'd been blue — if only he'd been able,

Marker's notes:

alleviated is used only for inanimate things: *The situation was alleviated by ... and even if you intend to break new ground this does not seem to convey the sense you intend; 'relieved' is what you want.*

a role model *Assuming you intend us to accept at face value the first sentence of this paragraph, you need to provide us something more admirable about the older brother to justify his seeing himself this way. All that I know of his life is that he is "good", an electrician, and has a comfortable family life — "good" too vague for me to relate to and "comfortable" does not seem like a virtue ...*

pregnant *Someone should have warned her about "the spontaneous company of many natives and travelers"! Seriously, though, since the only person with whom, so far as we know, she has anything like a regular connection is the three times a week masseuse (clearly not the father of her child), we're free - almost encouraged - to think that she's been sleeping around pretty indiscriminately. I'm not judging her for that (if it's what you intend) but think that either way some reference has to be made to the probable father of her child.*

You've taken this in an interesting direction but haven't solved the problem of making a story of it - in fact in some ways it's less a story now than it was before! What's the connection between the carefully detailed scene that takes up the first two pages and the rest of the story? The essential point that comes through about those first two pages is the intense loving relationship of the father and his four children. Although that is referred to in passing by the narrator subsequently, I don't recognize what effect that loving relationship had on her later life. does she miss it? Does she seek for it but fail to find it? Is she trying to compensate for the absence of it by throwing herself into her career and into a social life that seems mere razzle dazzle & which she herself characterizes as "the stuff trashy novels are made of" (the one place I thought she expressed anything overtly like discontent - or any other feeling towards - the life she has chosen)? One might have expected the parallel or echo to that opening scene to occur in a later scene between her and Conrad, but he is never anything but a name and a vague set of attributes.

A story is about something that matters to a person and is either gained (sometimes at too high a price) or lost. This starts out promisingly and is well-written but doesn't provide me a strong enough sense of what this character wants, and whether she gets it or not.

It is not clear whether the following was written before or after the previous piece, but probably before, as the preceding A Family Tale appears to be an expansion of this one; at least some of the opening paragraphs are identical or similar.

The Man in the Sky

My father would clamber from den to kitchen to bathroom until the four of us were fully rounded up and seated expectantly before his graced, lofty altitude. All flannel and peanut butter, we'd linger from darned socks to glinting, dancing eyes and then file away his unrelenting majesty in our baby minds to places where repetitive decimals and trips to Mars belong.

With a slice of air at his mercy he'd sit down, lean forward, draw in his breath.

"It was a dark and stormy night," he'd growl, "and we were all sitting around the bonfire when all of a sudden..." And from there he'd carry on.

On one rather anxious Monday evening, when we'd all in some way trespassed on the boundaries of good behavior, our father gathered us together somewhat later in the evening than we were accustomed. We'd been given additional chores to finish up before bed and felt, at this point, very weary and demoralized. Relieved that we'd been alleviated from our tedious duties, we plunked ourselves down before him. He began without delay.

"It was a dark and stormy night," he said and went on. The stories always began with the same sentence before they would twist and thicken into dazzling stories of shipwrecked royalty and golden serpents. Father's voice would bubble, hiss and then finally fade as the curtain fell over our grand illusions. This night, however, his movement and voice hinted at distraction as he emptied his words into the room.

"... when all of a sudden, a boy called out, 'Father, please tell us a story'," he stated, not speaking in the way that great story-tellers should.

"And then the father replied," he carried on, "'Alright son, it was a dark and stormy night and we were all sitting around the bonfire when all of a sudden a boy called out,'" He continued until the story had repeated itself three times consecutively. He then stopped short, in the midst of himself.

"Louise," he said, "what extra chore did you kids do this evening?"

"I scrubbed the tub."

"Did you enjoy it?"

"Well, no. Of course not."

"Why?" He had, as many times in the past, chosen me to speak among the rest for I was bold and articulate.

"Well, it's monotonous. I just kept scrubbing and scrubbing."

"Scrubbing and scrubbing?" he questioned with insistent stares. I still failed to connect. What was he getting at?

"Yes, you know, back and forth," I blurted, motioning with my hands.

"Back and forth," he chimed in with me as a twinkle of laughter shot through his pupils.

Father waited as I struggled to absorb his wisdom. He sat before me with the remnants of a smile, showing me that he'd always remain confident in my perception of life. I carefully considered his mention of the tedium of my chores and then related it to the circular path of the story he had told. For both there existed no ending in sight: the bathroom would always need scrubbing, the bedtime story would surround itself indefinitely. Father had extended the punishments of our chores into what we considered our treat. In doing so, he emphasized to me that in wasting his time earlier that day, we had wasted our own. He clearly presented to me this vicious circle by the simple telling of a tale.

"I understand," I said and father nodded. The others went to bed somewhat bewildered and morose, justifiably without understanding of my father's intentions. He was aware that this interlude had run well above their heads, but father always seized any opportunity to teach a lesson if there was one to be taught. Oftentimes he singled one child from the rest in order to meet his or her specific needs. Although this practice excluded the remaining children, no one ever felt alienated. We were a family of individuals and because my father was so proud of that fact, the same pride was dearly embedded within ourselves.

I have a family now myself and my father died several years ago. My husband and I share a great deal in common and we certainly have our differences but one area in our lives which fully bonds us together is the joy we derive from nourishing our children. Like my father, I gather my three together in the early evening and build fantasies in their minds. I love to see their eyes indulged with that absolute eagerness to understand with which all healthy children are familiar.

Last night a cloud passed by and the sky was very dim. The children were worn and irritable. I was twitching from lack of sleep and my youngest son, John, brooded about unnaturally. When I gathered everyone together I could see that our energy resources had been thoroughly abused; this day was over.

I sighed and blandly stated, "It was a dark and stormy night." Just then I caught sight of John who was, so obviously, taking his own ill-humour very seriously. I cut myself short and looked into his overcast eyes.

"Tomorrow, my John, the skies will clear. Tomorrow we'll watch the sun go down," I said. I did not tell a story that night but sent my children to bed early. John went to his room dazed but without protest. The others grumbled a little as they left. But a man in the sky with twinkling eyes smiled down at us and that evening the cloud glided by.

Undated, unmarked,

Night Call

As midnight dances around the edge of time, I wait as the evening ringer stalks the telephone lines. All is black except Johnny Carson's expensive image blaring before me. No depth emerges from that colourful gloss. Boredommm ...

With a clamour and a cry the evening ringer beckons me. I eagerly destroy Johnny with my electro-charged television gun and lunge for the phone. Next, I feel the familiar cocoa softness of his voice press me closer to the receiver. Shamelessly I allow myself to be absorbed by this great plastic voice box.

I am within his voice now; I am within the box. It vibrates, shimmers, pulses with an intensity too great to bare *[sic]*. This is the dare. I must break open the box and escape the throbbing quakes. His voice track is curling and twisting itself around the strings of sanity and I am angry. Angry and ashamed for allowing myself to carelessly trip into his dangerous voice box. Now my arms are flailing wildly before me, scratching at my plastic prison. It will not open! I am frightened, terrified. Terrified for maybe he's caught me for good this time. As I thud hard against the box, I can feel what's left of my wall come booming down as the dam breaks loose and squeezes itself through my eyes. I may drown in this sorrow. Then ...

"What's wrong?" he asks, opening the door like a gentleman.
 "I hate it when you do that! Don't ever call here again," I say, running from my confines. But as he responds I trip into the box again.

I live there now, obedient to his every word.

ATTACK OF THE RUBIK CUBES

I was glued to the cement wall as I watched the oncoming Rubik cubes thunder forth. Their colourful little faces seemed menacing against the blackness of the sky. They had overtaken the world in a mad obsession to separate the multicoloured sides into solid walls of blue, yellow, white, orange, red and green. It had seemed innocent enough at first, but that was before ... well, let me tell you about it.

I first noticed 'the cube' when I was rummaging through the depths of Toys and Wheels, looking for a birthday gift for my son, Joseph. Since the age of two Joe had been dubbed 'Baby Genius', for he was speaking in rather complex sentences by this time. I mean for Joe it wasn't

"Dada, Joey dirsty, Joey wan nummy ooange doos to dwink,"

It was more like, "Father, because my gullet is irritatingly parched, I wish to consume the concentrated orange-flavoured liquid which I find most appealing."

Well I guess that may be a slight exaggeration, but anyway, you get the picture.

So here I was, completely exhausted from this endless search for a seven-year-old genius' birthday present. At Joey's intelligence level it seemed ridiculous to be looking in a toy store, but I had to remember that he was still a child. While I looked past racing cars, machine guns and basketballs, ignoring junior telescopes, boys' do-it-yourself kits and electronic baseball games, I noticed a small colourful box. It sat demurely in the corner, completely oblivious to its enticing companions. I almost felt sorry for it as I reached out to pick it up. Later I realized that other people's pity was one of its most vicious seductions.

"What's this?" I asked the pillowy, white-haired woman who stood at the counter quietly watching me.

"That," she said, "is the Rubik Cube."

I continued to examine the square with more interest now. It had six sides, each a different colour.

"It's the newest thing to come it. Sales should really pick up soon." It was obvious that the elderly woman was reciting a sales pitch. Apparently the square had not been selling well, for there were at least thirty of them sitting to my right, on a display counter.

"What does it do?" I asked. The woman was more than eager to be of service. She rushed into a back room, returning with a different box, only this example was in complete disarray. It looked like a small chunk of confusion. The woman explained to me that after several twists of the rectangular strips which held it together, the Rubik Cube would become totally disorganized. Only a genius could piece it back together she had said. That triggered me instantly.

When I brought it home to my son he was ecstatic. His undying persistence kept him twisting the sides into abstract patterns of colours. My wife was intrigued by my son's addiction to the box. Soon she was pleading Joey for her own chance to organize its six faces. Impossible, aggravating, and challenging were the words used to describe the cube. It was an overnight success.

Friends at work continuously talked about their unsuccessful tries to solve it. My wife soon bought a larger model of the Rubik Cube which *[sic]* with which she'd sit at home, absorbed in twisting and turning the box until calluses formed on her fingertips.

It was then that I noticed a complete change in the atmosphere at home, at work and on the streets. At home my wife had stopped cleaning the house, shopping for groceries and making dinner. I was busier than ever, for I desperately strove to 'keep things up' at the office. Because my co-workers were so involved with the cube, their working habits had dropped below existence.¹ Although there was much to be done, all the employees claimed to be 'challenging their minds.' Even my boss seemed to be getting behind with the paperwork. My comfortable day-to-day routine had been destroyed.

Each day I drove to work I found myself more amazed. At first it seemed easy to accept the large posters of Rubik Cubes clamped to the back of buses. It didn't even seem strange to me, then, that every pedestrian I saw was completely absorbed with the cube. I figured that it was a fad, of which everyone would soon tire. If I'd only known then what I know now!

But soon I had begun to see more than *[sic]* just the routine appearances.

On one achingly tiresome Monday morning I noticed several angry picketers marching back and forth in front of Toys and Wheels with large signs in their hands.

Finally, I thought as I breathed out some tension, somebody is actually taking a stand against these mind-wracking boxes! I stopped my car with the intention of congratulating those spirited folks. When I got close

1 Circled with ? mark by marker

enough to the rebels though, I was able to read one of the signs which read ‘Stopping shipment of the Cube is stopping progress of the mind.’ I was disgusted, to say the least. These sly little boxes were brainwashing the people of my country. It seemed as if I were the only sane person around ... and I was terrified. Shocked, I backed away from the crowd, bumping into my purring car. I hurriedly climbed in and whizzed off toward work. I was anxious to tell my friends what I had seen. I really needed some reassurance.

When I reached the office my eagerness shoved me from my car seat and into the building with which I had become so familiar. Shoving the door out of my way, I strode into my office. I was greeted by six large Rubik Cubes.

“My God,” I gasped. The sound of my muffled shock brought three of my co-workers to the main entrance where I stood.

“I’m glad you’re here,” one of them said. “It’s time you learn the responsibilities of your new job,”

“What the — my new job!” I shouted. “What are you talking about?!”

“Your new job is to sort the sides of the Rubik Cube,” a man whom I’d thought I knew well said evenly.

“You see,” another man continued, “the Cube is superior; it understands how the world should be; it knows all.”

I’m sorry; I’ve made a mistake. This was not a man; this was a computer!

“Noooo,” I shrieked, “you don’t understand. don’t you see what is hap —”

“The Cube must be organized. Once we, its servants, have accomplished this, the Cube can organize the world. The Cube must be organized. the world must be organized. Rubik peace rules.” The man’s voice droned on.

“This is not peace!” I yelled. “This is the destruction of human emotion!”

“The Cube must be organized. The Cube must be organized. The Cube —”

The three voices chanted on in unison. I flew from the room and returned to my car. It was comforting to sit back in the plush interior. As I let my mind drift, it came to me why I had not yet become caught up in the insanity of the Rubik Cube. I had never actually tried to solve it. I supposed that once a person became too caught up with it ...

A sudden rush of panic hit me as I rammed the key into the ignition. I had to save my wife and son. I knew that they had played with it, but maybe it wasn’t too late. I raced from that spot and down the unusually bare road. Soon enough though, I was slowed by a backup of traffic. Finally my car, along with many others, eased to a complete stop.

Angrily, I let myself out of the car and stomped toward the intrusion. There was no time to be wasted, for I had to get home fast. Up ahead, I made out what looked like a massive Rubik Cube. Yes, it was. My heart and body didn’t move for a moment. But then my pace quickened when I noticed that the threatening hulk was raised, on a pinnacle.

As I came closer into view I saw that over twenty people surrounded it, all pushing, heaving and changing the six faces of the Cube. Beyond that was another crowd of maybe fifty people. They formed a tightly knit circle enclosing something in the middle. What, I didn’t know.

After wondering where these people had come from, I suddenly realized that every stopped car was empty. The crowd stomped their feet and clapped their hands in agreement to a young voice that rose from the middle. After shoving my way through the crowd, I finally reached the centre.

There stood Joseph, my son, the genius. He stood firmly on his ground bellowing chants to hypnotized people:

“Solve the Cube.

Form a new world.

Organization rules the earth.

There is no God.

There is only the Cube.

Learn the ways of Rubik peace.”

Turning on my heel, I ripped through the crowd. it was hopeless. I ran past the people and down the bleak gray highway, void of any cars. My body felt leaden heavy. I could feel nausea spreading over me like a wave, but I continued to run. The once bright, glaring sky had let gray seep in, shadowing and finally blackening my view.

It seemed as though the road was infinite until I was finally flattened to the pavement by exhaustion. I’d only been lying there for a minute (or was it an hour?) when my car, pressed against the pavement, picked up loud rumbling vibrations. I timidly lifted my head, terrified of what I might see.

Gleaming from about one hundred yards away were four enormous Rubik Cubes. I lay motionless for a moment, but then worked my strained body into a stand. I had to hide. I had to escape because they were after me. My eyes quickly scanned my surroundings for any possible escape route. I immediately caught sight of a small alley to my right. I hesitated, looking back at the Cubes. They were slowly clomping toward me, now twenty yards away. Taking a deep breath, my strong legs pumped down the alley. It was dark but I could make out a high wall blocking the exit.

“Oh God,” I thought, “I’ve got to get out.” But the massive boxes had trapped me. I back away slowly, bumping into the wall. I prayed that the Cubes would, in pity, turn away. But no, they only proceeded to thunder forth. In my terror, I reached around in search for a weapon. My hands gripped onto a cold heavy object. it was a long metal pipe.

I lifted the object, holding it in front of me, and slowly moved closer to the Cubes. With a sudden thrust I violently lashed out at them until I had dismantled their bodies into smaller blocks, about the size of mice.

My body relaxed, relief and pride claiming my soul. I was relieved that I had discovered a way to destroy the Cube, proud that I had not been enticed by it. Next, I ran from the alley and broke into a nearby building. I found myself in what looked like a psychiatrist's office. This was appropriate enough because of a cozy couch that lay invitingly in the corner.

Grabbing a stack of paper, I wrote my story. It was something I had to write down immediately while the terror was still fresh in my mind. When I finished, drained of all energy, I collapsed on the couch.

I awoke this morning with a Rubik Cube (about the size of a mouse) in my hands. I twisted its body until I finally organized one side into green. I have just finished reading what I wrote last night. I am surprised at how naive I was then. To actually want to prevent the progress of the Cube. What an awful thought! But now things are different.

Now I have come to terms with Rubik Peace.

Marker's comments: Well balanced combination of fun & impending insight!

Although these next two pieces are obviously academic assignments and are dated, they are included here because, although not strictly fiction as such, they certainly qualify as 'creative writing.'

12 October 1979 (Jessica's 14th birthday!)

English 9

Org has just awoken into a dull and humid day. He sleeps under a canvas¹ shelter. There is little rain but the occasional sandstorm. Today should be a less exciting day for Org. You see, his brother's family has moved to better hunting country. The food is getting scarce now. He moves towards his wife and stirs her.

"Make good food while I check pasture and wake children too. I show son how to hunt with arrows today."

Org wanders over to his wife's garden. All the food is growing well. He scowls at the flowers planted near one end. There is no time for decoration in his life.² Now he walks briskly to the pasture. It warms him, for the morning air is cool, especially when all he wears is a loin-cloth. One of the sheep is dead. Its side is savagely bitten into. This sheep will make the evening meal. Only nine sheep are left now. The lynx are hungry too and they are killing in tens. This makes Org only happy that the people that are in his village will always help him and his family out. His village is small and some of the more wealthy people have grass huts. Org is not so wealthy.

His son became twelve just last week. This is very good, for now he is near a man and he is strong. Org gave him a good bow and arrow for his manhood. He starts back now. The fish soup should be ready for breakfast now.

Marker's comment: Excellent 10 / 10

1 Word underlined by marker

2 checkmark by marker

During The Last Twenty Minutes of Life on Earth
Will Woody Allen Change His Mis-Matched Socks?

To be read in conjunction with Woody Allen's essay My Speech to the Graduates.
 Essay Topic: "What the selected author would think during the last twenty minutes of existence."

Woody had been having a good day so far. His toaster had toasted his toast, no one had called from the zoo yet about his brother and he'd enjoyed the satisfaction of shaving off a slowly acquired gathering of chin stubble without drawing blood or leaving scars. And it was already 9 a.m. When he switched on the radio he was delighted to find that his favorite program was playing; Richard Nixon's new phone-in gripline. The topic this week was "Assertive Decision-making" and as Woody vacillated between his desire to telephone the ex-president and his nervousness at doing so, a news reporter cut into the talk show. Missiles had been launched against the Soviet Union, she claimed, and nuclear bombings were expected to hit the U.S. within twenty minutes. With a heavy sigh Woody switched off the radio. Predictably, his day was taking a turn for the worse. But then, Woody Allen was a tried and true underdog — The Original Underdog — and considering that this status had brought him considerable fame and fortune, he accepted the role resignedly. His defeat had been hard won.

Still, Nixon's radio show was now off the air and the world was, in fact, ending. What a day. Woody had once written "we are adrift in the cosmos wreaking monstrous violence on one another out of frustration and pain." Monstrous violence, however, frustration and even pain was better than doing the Nuclear Rumba. If nothing was to be done with this dying civilization, Woody thought, then he should have an equal opportunity to do this nothing, to go this nowhere. Woody could even accept the fact that history usually repeated itself, but since it did, shouldn't he at least have a fair shot at correcting its grammar? After all, he'd yet to "find meaning in a finite world given his waist and shirt size." In truth, his waist size was forever evolving, progressing, getting larger and he still didn't feel fully rounded even on this, most banal, level. But the world fully intended to end and there wasn't a thing he could do about the situation. Then he felt a sharp chill run down his spine as he imagined his worst fear realized; he would die wearing mismatched socks. Blasphemy.

The dilemma stood before him with startling clarity. Should he change his socks before the bomb dropped or not? Considering his "panicky conviction of the absolute meaninglessness of existence," he felt sock-changing might waste valuable time during which he could sit around and mope. More importantly, in changing his socks Woody would be giving credit to the manufacturers of those cheap nylon socks that he was forever having to darn. And to give credit to those manufacturers would be to credit the evolution of machines and, therefore, the catastrophe incurred from technology and violence. He now remembered asking a group of graduates if they'd "ever seen what happens when one of those things (H-bombs) falls off a desk accidentally." Then he'd asked "where is science when one ponders the eternal riddles." And as Woody pondered now, science was in the process of granting bombing assistance upon the world as he knew it to exist. Clearly it would be hypocritical to change his socks.

Despite his lack of conviction in the integrity of humanity, Woody still harbored a "healthy concern for the predicament of modern man." Yet he insisted that "certain linguistic philosophers prefer to reduce it (the predicament) to a mathematical equation where it can be easily solved and even carried around in the wallet." In that context, Woody believed that changing his socks might parallel the philosophers' facile attempt to personally resolve the human crisis. Just as fitness enthusiasts insist on jogging around excessively large parks on rainy days while they know for a fact that they will continue to deteriorate and then die, Woody believed that changing his socks would have little effect on the approaching death of mankind. In fact, joggers of an enthusiastic breed often incite heart attacks, rapid aging to the skin from wind and rain and recurring injuries as a result of their stubborn quest for a longer life. Likewise, in the course of changing his socks Woody might move to the room in his house where

the bomb would hit first. Or he could possibly change into a pair of flammable socks, set them afire after dropping a match he 'd been using to light his pipe (which he was going to enjoy during his final moments) and ultimately spend these last twenty minutes in agony from burned feet. One could only guess at how futile and destructive this daily ritual might be. Surely, he couldn't change his socks.

However, the thought of dying with mismatched socks on his feet repelled him. Why? he wondered. Did it actually matter whether his socks were matched or not? Did he somehow believe that there was an obscure sort of Order amongst this universal chaos and that wearing matched socks was the right and proper thing to do? Was it possible that despite the current state of affairs Woody maintained an absurdly optimistic stance? It was true Woody saw in the act of changing his socks an opportunity to set things straight in his world and to die on a positive, fashion-conscious note. If he was to match his socks, Woody would essentially be acting out his ideal that man must keep striving until the very last moment of life; he must care that he wears his clothes well. He would be reaffirming the will to live and thereby igniting hope from a hopeless situation. Woody now began to see this sock-matching business as an opportunity not only to avoid fixing his air conditioner, but also to manifest his belief that life could go on after the nuclear catastrophe. And pending that life could go on, what future generation of people would, in coming across Woody's mass of written and filmed material, listen to a man who'd been found dead wearing mismatched socks. They'd then know this man had been defeated and confused during the wrath of war and so had given up on his socks and his life. Woody knew he couldn't let this happen; he couldn't pass along a message of futility to a struggling new world. Maybe he would change his socks.

But supposing he didn't change his socks, Woody considered, and life did go on after World War III. Exploring the issue a little further, Woody hypothesized what might happen if these future generations (nuclear families of a whole new breed) did piece together his extensive works, along with his poorly dressed corpse, and thereafter decide that he'd been a genius of the day despite his problem with clothes. This new branch of humanity, Woody thought, would come to worship his sardonic flair in film, writing and philosophy and thereby see his habit of wearing mismatched socks as an indirect statement of urban subversity; a way to lash out at his decaying world of Rules and Order. These people, God's token gesture in the survival of the human race, would quickly assimilate what they saw as Woody's irreverence toward his nuclear doomed world; they too would wear mismatched socks. Mismatching would become a cultural trend and so a reflection of their determination to avoid the law and so-called Order that had brought on the fall of the global empires. The thought appealed to him. Perhaps these people would, in defining their new civilization, build a national monument glorifying Woody's notorious socks. This monument would be a symbol of the founding of their new world. Who could even ponder what an effect Woody and his revolutionary feet might have on this evolving race of people. Certainly, now, he couldn't change his socks.

Yet something nagged at him. Something inside himself told him that perhaps this rationale for not changing his socks was, well ... incomplete. Perhaps in the overwhelming apathy settling upon him as he waited his fated end he'd found a way to excuse himself from changing his socks. Again he hypothesized, now taking for granted that he and his works would be found by the survivors in amongst the war ruins and that he would be revered as a great mind of the day. As before he imagined that the wearing of mismatched socks would become standard mode of behaviour for the people of tomorrow. This time, however, Woody took this thought one step further. He visualized a race of people who, in taking too literally the subversity suggested in Woody's notoriously mismatched socks, would begin to wear mismatched pant legs and shoes, buy mismatched sets of chairs and live in homes where one side of the house was specifically designed to contradict the other side. Soon their obsession with mismatchedness would lead to the performing of plastic surgery on individual eyes, ears, legs and arms. Twins would be altered at birth in the hope that they would bear no similarity to one another as they grew into adults. Anything that in any way suggested a balance or equilibrium would be adjusted or destroyed. Naturally, Woody realized, this civilization would decline quickly — barely ever having given themselves a fair chance at a beginning. And who would be directly accountable for this dreadful degeneration of Man? Woody himself. All because he'd innocently declined an option to change his

socks before he died, he'd driven an entire civilization of people mad with chaos. God himself would make a footnote in his Manual of the Universe of Woody's detrimental influence on the planet Earth. What a vulgar thought — to be footnoted. Woody reconsidered; he would indeed change his socks.

Upon deciding to change his socks before the bomb dropped, Woody could think of only one question which still nagged at his conscience and kept him from acting on his decision: was it worth it? He knew that in doing so he would be making a positive and progressive step toward order amid chaos and that he would be leaving this world with the notion that life could possibly go on after WWII and even that others, too, would someday be glad to wake up in the morning and put on a pair of matched socks. However, he couldn't help but wonder if, in making this positive statement, he was in fact deluding himself with the ideal that human life was worth its own impetus of evolution. After all, if the ultimate outcome for the human race was one of destruction (demonstrated clearly by the history of other civilizations) was it worth anyone's while to keep going, to keep straightening his tie and changing his dirty underwear. "Our politicians are either incompetent or corrupt," Woody had said. "Violence breeds more violence," "Overpopulation will exacerbate problems to the breaking point," "We are a people who lack defined goals. We have never learned to love. We lack leaders and coherent programs. We have no spiritual centre." He had written these words himself and so wondered, with this in mind, how he could possibly bother to change his socks.

Suddenly Woody was struck with a startling revelation. Obviously God was to have no positive (i.e. progressive) influence on his mortality rate; he would die very shortly. So, in theory, the best thing he could do to save himself now would be to pray for his soul — since that would be the most likely of any of his private parts to function after exposure to radiation. Prayer, though, somehow seemed to him the ultimate cop-out — the coward's route to survival. Then he remembered what he'd once told those graduates: "this (tranquility inspired by a belief in a divine intelligence) does not free us from our human responsibilities." In truth he thought, human responsibilities (not God's responsibilities) lay at the essence of human life. These past years of writing and film-making hadn't been an entire waste, he was sure. And as he sat there and thought and breathed and fidgeted* and blinked and sighed and scratched his nose he realized that life did go on, even in the black face of doom. Life did go on. He stood, walked to his dresser and found a clean pair of socks. He put them on and looked at his feet. They matched. The end.

* *Marker's note: surely you needed this sort of thing all through*

Marker's comments:

*Too smoothly organized and calmly structured for W.A.? Send a copy to W.A.? or to a publication?
Would he be so calm? Would he perhaps be cured of his neurosis? Would he be at all more pointed?*

Marked A+

(continuing with unpublished material)

Non-fiction

*Material in this section consists
of school assignments,
mostly reviews and criticisms of
assigned reading.*

*Protest letter as an assignment - undated and unsent but marked as 18 out of 20
(probably never sent)*

9764 Pinewell Place,
Richmond, b.c.
V7A 2X9

The Vancouver Sun
2250 Granville Street
Vancouver, B.C.¹

Dear Editor;

I was absolutely outraged by McKenzie Porter's column in which he dictated his prehistoric views concerning co-educational institutions. This sort of attitude would sit nicely only in schools of the Victorian era, though even there I'd certainly see cause for student uproar.

Porter's claim that children who are educated in private schools emerge with "sunny faces" and "candid gazes" is completely legitimate. What Mr. Porter has failed to realize, however, is that the students are glistening with joy not due to their marvelous education but because of their newfound sexual freedom. It is these naive young things who are more apt to find themselves coerced (bludgeoned?) into marriage, not the well-balanced products of an enlightened education in a public school.

I was thoroughly insulted by McKenzie Porter's inference that only the socially unacceptable send their children to public schools. These are the views espoused by a pompous aristocrat, not a rich Canadian.

The belief that public schools only harbour² students' virility and children are encouraged to "reproduce themselves" and "pet behind the bicycle shed" is absolutely absurd. These types of warped views only induce neurosis and prejudice. Such narrow-mindedness fails to discriminate between progressive liberal education and irresponsible license.

It is quite apparent that Porter himself has failed to remain constant in his opinions of the co-educational school system. He commences with the statement that these institutions are the cause of dullness and lethargy in students, but continues to rave of the excitement which the schools induce. Sweeping statements are tiresome, particularly when they contradict each other.

McKenzie Porter must be speaking of ancient times when he mentions a "thorough education", for everyone realizes that this now includes the social as well as the intellectual aspects of a child's learning process. Co-education has always provided this cultivation and is sure to continue to do so.

Yours sincerely.

Jessica McArthur

Jessica McArthur

1 '—code?' notation by marker

2 'enhance?' notation by marker

ROMEO AND JULIET : A CRITICAL DISCUSSION

Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet tells a story of two idealistic youths who, though enemies by family background, fall very passionately in love. Their delightful affair is dampened when, after their "on-the-spot" marriage, Romeo is to be put to death after he slays Tybalt who had previously killed Romeo's best friend, Mercutio. By this time, the Capulets, Juliet's family, and the Montagues, Romeo's family, are raging with hatred for each other and the two youths realize the explosive effect the knowledge of their marriage might have on the opposing families. The situation worsens even moreso when Juliet comes to discover the marriage planned by her parents for Paris, a young lord, and herself. In her grief Juliet flees to the friar for assistance who, in turn, makes up a potion which he says will make her "stiff and cold, appear like death and in this borrowed likeness of shrunk death thou shalt continue two-and-forty hours, and then awake as from a pleasant sleep." So Juliet is found, apparently dead, the next day and placed in a cavern of the dead. Romeo soon learns of Juliet's pronounced death and proceeds to flee¹ to her resting place where he grieves and then commits suicide. Shortly afterward Juliet awakens and, seeing Romeo's dead body, plunges a knife into her own chest.

The plot of Romeo and Juliet is extremely clear, almost to an obvious degree, though at the time Shakespeare wrote I doubt this would have been true. While the plot contains no sub-plot and little comic relief, I feel this was quite intentional on Shakespeare's part. Sub-plots and comic relief tend to relieve the audience and keep them from thinking too hard. A popular example of such mindless entertainment would be the television show "The Love Boat." This show is good entertainment for children and serves well as background distraction for doing homework, but it provides no deep insights nor any universal themes that a child does not learn in a common fairytale. Certainly Shakespeare was striving for more than this when he wrote Romeo and Juliet, though he did obtain such a lighthearted entertainment in his play A Midsummer Night's Dream.

The playwright obviously wants his audience to think about what has happened and why, for he ends the play tragically. An audience always strives for reason of an unhappy ending. This play is intense and allows little time for the viewer to be distracted. A play I saw a while ago, "Rent", had a similar concentrated atmosphere about it. This play was brilliant in the way that I was so emotionally drained by watching it that I could think of little else afterward. Romeo and Juliet has a similar effect. In this way the audience, in their thoughts about what they've just viewed, delves more deeply into the theme of the story. Thus, Shakespeare has achieved the effect of gaining the audience's insight with the use of this plot. However, the plot has served merely as a skeleton in which the characters act as the "flesh" of the play.

The characters in Shakespeare's play tend to be as direct and obvious as his plot, though they show more depth. Each character acts on his or her own passionate impulse, whether it be the passion of love, the passion of hate, or the passion of compassion. All were equally hasty in their actions and acted solely according to their feelings rather than their judgement. Mercutio was as quick to challenge Tybalt without any thoughts of the consequences, as Tybalt was to accept the challenge and duel his opponent to the death. The nurse was as eager to act as messenger, perhaps matchmaker, for Romeo and Juliet in her own selfish need to be involved, as the friar was to marry the lovers and then try to solve the resulting confusion, in his wishes to keep peace between the Capulets and the Montagues. Finally, Juliet's parents were as keen to marry Juliet to Paris in their wish to maintain the family dignity, as Paris was to marry Juliet without any thoughts of how his fiancée might feel. But the most passionate and perhaps the most selfish characters in this tragic love story are Romeo and Juliet themselves.

These two young adults were so fired up with enthusiasm, passion and idealism, it is not only attractive but compelling. I found that the balcony scene in which the two proclaim their love for each

1 Circled by marker

other to be absolutely fascinating. The fact that Romeo had fallen in love with Juliet so quickly was somewhat curious, but the fact that Juliet was also in love with Romeo was amazing. Because the two were equally impulsive and idealistic it was as though the two were destined to meet. Yet it was quite fitting that it is said that “opposites attract”, and because these two were obviously very much alike everything fell apart in the end. This seemed to prove that there must be some sort of balance in a relationship because, in this way, a couple complement each other and disaster is unlikely to occur. Because Romeo and Juliet were so very much alike their over-reactions and irrationality sent them reeling “off the deep end” so to speak.

I feel that Shakespeare quite honestly portrayed Romeo and Juliet as impetuous teenagers. The play has survived all these years solely because it still applies to the teenager of today. In fact, today there exist stories such as “West Side Story” and “Endless Love” which are basically the Romeo and Juliet theme. Adolescents have always been compelled by Romeo and Juliet simply because they are easily able to identify with the lovers’ passionate nature. Romeo and Juliet are typical of teenagers in both their belief that “love will conquer all” and their defiance of their parents and their society. Though the two did not intend to so tragically affect their loved ones by rebelling against the society’s rules, their affair could certainly not have been so intense had the Capulets and Montagues been good friends. This typifies adolescents in their desire to taste the forbidden fruits. The two were “in love with being in love” and the prohibited aspect of their relationship only increased their passion. When things got out of hand the couple did not logically solve their problems; they only allowed themselves to believe that their love would lead the way. The clichés I have used in this passage are typical of what the average teenager believes in, whether it be a conscious or unconscious belief.

Overlooking Romeo and Juliet’s somewhat melodramatic nature, it is apparent that there is far more depth to Shakespeare’s renowned tragedy than one might believe after noticing the melodrama. As I have mentioned previously this play deals with the problems of being a teenager. Though Romeo and Juliet are adult enough to become intimate with each other, they are still not old enough to deal with the sudden onslaught of feelings. This is proved by their tragic and their careless way of handling the situation. Youths still require the wise help from their elders, but in their struggle for psychological independence they resist. In doing so, they go behind their families’ backs and this is resorting to a childish level of dishonesty. The “wise help from their elders” however, is often not so wise. The adults tend to be cynical and less compassionate toward the youths’ needs. Their cynicism may well stem from jealousy and resentment of the youngsters’ youth and optimism. In Romeo and Juliet Shakespeare has shown the contrast between youthful idealism and adult cynicism and the clash that results from the combination of the two. Human nature would say that basically Romeo and Juliet were right in belief in their love, yet, ironically enough, the two were sacrificed in the end. Perhaps Shakespeare was trying to say that adults grow older but they never grow so wise that they don’t suffocate a youngster’s enthusiasm. Yet he also shows that when ungoverned this idealism can be destructive. Thus, there must be a balance of the two. While adults should be compassionate toward a youth’s struggle for independence, teenagers, in turn, must strive to learn from what knowledge their elders have gained over the years. If one makes an effort to communicate with another, their struggles will be far less in number as well as importance.

Son-Rise Book Evaluation #1

“Heart-warming” is the word that first comes to mind when describing the true story of Raun Kahlil Kaufman in Son-Rise. This is a moving book telling of an autistic child and parents' patient struggle to bring him from within his subdued world. As the family, including two older daughters as well as Raun, work together in the strength of their love bond, the boy gradually reaches toward them and depends less and less on the mute serenity of his autistic existence. With the encouragement and support of people who really care, one is easily shown through Son-Rise that dilemmas even as unique as autism can be overcome. This story seems to shine a beam of light on a world too terrified of defeat: Son-Rise is triumphant.

The story of Raun Kahlil is very rewarding in the way that it is based solely on this little boy, excluding any irrelevant sub-plots. After filing my way through chapters and chapters of racy, superficial stories which centre themselves on the intrigues of rich socialites, I was truly relieved to read an honest story about actual flesh-and-blood people struggling with real problems. These people are faced with a problem that is relatively obscure to the majority of the population, however, and after reading their story I am convinced that true dedication brings about incredible results. This family's revolved around, of course, Raun Kahlil, and their result was the little boy's decision to become part of the family that had striven so hard to contact him.

The tale begins when Barry and Suzi Kaufman, Raun's parents, discover after their child's birth that he is not responding to their verbal and physical stimuli as most children do. That is to say, he preferred to be untouched, often pushing his parents away, and he usually seemed unaffected by noises such as the sound of his parents' and sister's voices. Barry and Suzi took Raun to various doctors, all of whom responded by saying that Raun was far too young to be dealt with. He was less than a year old. This left the boys' parents to one last resort: They must help Raun themselves.

With the inspiration of an attitude demonstrated through the “option method,” which is based on the idea that “to love is to be happy with,” Barry Kaufman set about to help his son. Together he and his wife developed a program for Raun which was based on this method. In doing this, they made certain that Raun felt comfortable and accepted in his household despite his unique behaviour. The couple felt that Raun might become hostile if he was forced to break contact with his autism. This sense of “loving Raun no matter what he does” proved to be beneficial for after less than two years of very intensive work, Raun chose to become a more involved part of his family and left his autistic world.

I found the method which these dedicated parents aided their child with to be exceptionally clever. Most often people will react negatively to someone who stands out as different from the rest. What can be more harmful than this? What can pressure a person to rebel against what he is told is right more than when he is told he is wrong? In using negative reinforcement many autistic children have become violent and self-destructive. However, Raun Kahlil was a very lucky little boy; he was born to parents who were understanding enough to realize the potential of their son. They disregarded the misconception that autistic children were hopeless, and instead of projecting hostility toward the boy, they made him feel at home. When the boy would resort to rocking back and forth in perfect motion, one or more of the family members would rock with him. When Raun decided to spin a plate on the floor for hours on end, someone would spin with him.

At first I was perplexed by this unusual reaction to Raun's behaviour, but as the story progressed its essentiality was confirmed; not only was the family demonstrating their acceptance, but they were showing him that their world was loving, caring and waiting for him. With this reassurance, Raun broke loose from his shell to be with his family.

Though this book may seem highly idealized and almost too good to be true, it is a story told with honesty. Because of this, one cannot help but feel the glory of triumph in Raun Kahlil's story. However, it is not merely autism that is projected as the sole disaster which may be overcome through love and dedication, but all devastations as well. Son-Rise provides a strong sense of hope for anyone who must deal with hardships, and for this reason I highly recommend this book. It is written with an open mind and open heart — providing an optimistic attitude for even the most scarred cynic.

Subliminal Seduction - Book Evaluation #2

Despite Subliminal Seduction's often hilarious use of psychological jargon, it is a very interesting work. The title sounds rather alluring and one might even expect to see it scrawled blatantly on a billboard advertising one of Seavue Theatre's temptingly mischievous body flicks in "beautiful downtown Blaine." However, this book does not even come close to exploiting sex, but instead exploits the exploitation of sex. A somewhat ironic twist. Perhaps I should be more discrete in stating that Subliminal Seduction exploits but when the book's front cover asks in bold red letters "are you sexually aroused by this picture?" I must question the author's intent. Nevertheless, whatever the intentions, Subliminal Seduction is a very informative book.

Amidst the harrying day-to-day schedule of your basic working Joe, there seems to be little time to fully absorb his surroundings. He follows the same route to and from work or school every day, but if someone were to ask him what he saw during these excursions would he even remember? Because of this lack of visual absorption, advertisers have developed other techniques to gain his attention. Wilson Brian Key, the author of Subliminal Seduction, tells in graphic detail of these perceptive devices. Even a suspicious consumer like myself was shocked to discover what the media has been up to for the past ten or more years.

It seems that for quite some time now magazines have been cleverly interjecting spicy little attractions into their all-so-innocent advertisements in order to gain the buyers' eyes, and more importantly, their money. The danger of subliminal devices, however, far exceeds the enticement of a chocolate-covered whipped cream sundae, or a muscle-bound bedroom-eyed jock, for we, the consumers, are not aware of subliminal seduction. It works on a subconscious level and therefore we have no control or awareness of what has suddenly inclined us to purchase, let's say, a bottle of Gilbey's Gin. Anyone can consciously decide that he will not buy a Playboy magazine, even though the cover model looks friendly, because his girlfriend won't like it. But what happens when the advertiser draws the word "sex" all over the model's body in such tiny print that only the man's subconscious mind will pick it up? The guy loses control of his own will-power, buys the magazine, and gets in trouble with his girlfriend. Though this is a very trivial example, it must be known that subliminal advertising has more power over the buyer than we know.

How can we tell if we're being used as puppets through these devices? We most often can't, but thank God Subliminal Seduction has managed to bring about an awareness of its deviousness. At least now we can look for subliminal techniques in television and magazines, and a careful eye will even spot them.

The techniques range from subtle inscriptions of commanding words such as "buy" imprinted on magazine covers, to muted shadows forming pictures of people committing sexual acts in ice cubes. An advertisement used as an example in Subliminal Seduction which particularly clings to mind was one which had subtly inscribed a vulgar word on the sleeve of a dress. The dress belonged to a doll—the advertisement was for children's toys. This is nothing short of appalling. The fact that the innocence of children is threatened through the deception of subliminal advertising is really very frightening. The idea that such devices can be used for political control is even more terrifying. We are all little more than children in comparison to the power of subliminal techniques.

I would highly recommend Subliminal Seduction as it is an important book with a lot to say. In order for today's consumers to keep themselves from being "had" by advertisers a thorough knowledge of the commercial techniques must be obtained. As well as providing this knowledge, Subliminal Seduction gives its readers a fuller awareness of the dangers of subliminal advertising. With this in mind we can only hope to use the powers of transmitting messages subconsciously in beneficial ways, and disallow harmful uses of subliminal devices.

If You Could See What I Hear: Book Evaluation #3

If You Could See What I Hear is the autobiography of a blind man's struggle to succeed in the sighted man's world. Tom Sullivan begins his tale from immediately after his birth to his then present ripe old age of twenty-six years. The book is short and stresses mainly his ambitions to overcome his handicap. The result is triumphant, as expected, and by the end of the book Tom Sullivan seems to have developed into a perfect human being: ambitious and yet caring toward his family, successful and yet having struggled in the past, and, most of all, blind and yet with as much or more "vision" than all the world. I feel a little twinge of guilt in saying so, but it's all very cliché. I must have covered every book there is concerning the tragedies and triumphs (and always in that order) of human handicaps from the time I was twelve and on. Now I find myself extremely bored by them all.

If You Could See What I Hear follows relatively the same plotline as Son-Rise, a book I also wrote about in a previous essay. Though I don't wish to base this essay on a comparison between the two, I must say that Son-Rise was far better. While the author of Son-Rise had some interesting perspectives on and attitudes toward life and happiness, If You Could See What I Hear merely consisted of a series of cute anecdotes supposedly comprising the author's life. Though to write a book and have it published is very admirable indeed it seems to me that if one is going to take on his shoulders such a massive project as telling his life story, he should have more to say than just "yes, I made it!"

In reading If You Could See What I Hear I noticed that Tom Sullivan never actually involved me in the darkness of his world. He occasionally mentioned the feel of a flower's petal and the smell of wood, but this did not seem sufficient. I wanted to know what his mind's eye pictured, if anything at all. I wanted to know what a human being was to him, because the sighted person obviously pictures a body of flesh and hair. I never did find out. Instead the author described various events of his life which seemed carefully concocted for the sighted person to be able to relate to. What a disappointment.

Sullivan talks of his childhood days with more confidence than most sighted children. He hardly mentions his blindness and tells of how he was most often the leader of the group of children he played with—all of whom were sighted. This shows that Tom was obviously a charismatic leader-type, but only proves that he is exceptionally confident and lucky. What about the fears and struggles of a blind child? Sullivan rarely made any reference to these.

Later the author speaks of his outstanding achievement in sports in high school, and how at first he competed with blind kids but later proved to be outstanding even with sighted opponents. Well, that's fantastic for him and I'm sure he's worthy of great praise, but this doesn't tell the reader much about how he achieved such high standing. I felt as though the readers had been used as sounding boards for Tom Sullivan to convince them that he is almost no different from anyone else. However he is different and I would have rather he'd try to help the readers understand his handicap rather than convince them that "it's no big deal" so to speak.

There are books which deal with blindness on a deeper, more emotional level, such as The House Without Windows, and therefore I would not recommend If You Could See What I Hear. Sullivan's book has its interesting moments, but if one values his reading time there are better books to read. I certainly admire Tom Sullivan's courage and effort, but I could not help but find his autobiography a little tedious. It seems a bit presumptuous to be writing the story of his life at the age of twenty-six. God help him if he feels that his future holds little more to write about.

Man, Woman and Child: Book Evaluation #4

Man, Woman and Child is an intelligent fascinating novel written by Erich Segal, the author of Love Story. It tells the story of a man's discovering that he has a son in France from a short fling he'd had with a woman he'd hardly known. The dilemma of the situation exists in the fact that he'd been happily married to his wife for years and this short affair he'd had had been his only excursion of infidelity. Now this stranger son of his had become orphaned when his mother was killed in a car accident and the child had no one to go to. These unlikely twists of fate seem more like the beginnings of a glorified soap opera than the heart-rending story which Segal has developed. However, the author has not used these events as props to keep the story adventurous. Rather he has developed his story from the man/husband/father's reaction to his circumstances. The outcome is touching indeed.

What makes this story so very special is that it's not merely another case of a ruined marriage due to affairs had on the side. It is a novel concerning honest caring people who love each other and their family. However, "good guys" make mistakes too, and Bob Beckwith, the book's protagonist, must deal with his situation as best he can. He begins by telling his wife of the affair he'd had ten years ago and its outcome. Naturally his wife, Shiela Beckwith, is shocked and hurt, considering that she'd always assumed their marriage to be nearly flawless. Eventually, however, Shiela agrees, summoning all her courage, that the child should stay with the family for a month, but no more. This is the child from her husband's affair.

Rather than filling the story with a lot of needless poetic description, Segal has written this novel as almost a screenplay. The words which the characters say tell us much more about the story than what the characters are, let's say, wearing. This is because the novel deals with emotions and morals rather than plot and action. The story's plot can be easily defined. The child stays with the family, they become attached to him, they ask him to stay, but he decides to return to France. It sounds rather dull, but Man, Woman and Child is far from that.

This story is very satisfying because it deals with people honestly. Unlike many novels in which the characters are completely black or white, the characters in Man, Woman and Child are very believable. They are people who do care for others and try to be as honest as they can, but they are also people who hurt the ones they love and who are sometimes very selfish. This is the appeal of Man, Woman and Child. In fact, the underlying theme seems to have to do with people not being completely bad or good, and that their efforts to overcome their mistakes are more important than the mistakes themselves.

I would highly recommend Man, Woman and Child for it deals with the issue of infidelity with such compassion and dignity. The author has taken the time to let his characters deal with their trauma, yet the story is far from being long-winded or dull. Man, Woman and Child is an honest novel which, and I say this without blushing, brought tears to my eyes. The characters are so alive one cannot help but become involved.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest: Book Evaluation #5

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest is an intriguing novel concerning the happenings on the ward of an insane asylum under the influence of a cleverly boisterous patient. That patient is known as McMurphy and his liveliness at first seems infantile. However, as the story progresses, it is obvious that McMurphy is more intelligent than his crude slang might allow him to seem, for he is the only patient thus far to have successfully challenged the starched white-uniformed Big Nurse.

The novel is written in the first person through an Indian who is a patient at the hospital. Though he pretends to be completely deaf and mute, he is actually well aware of his surroundings. He feels he must maintain his silence for this is what he calls being "cagey" or safe. Nevertheless, some time after McMurphy's admittance, Chief Bromden not only rids himself of his silent disposition but he also discards his phobias concerning "the fog." To Bromden "the fog" is a haze seeped in through the hospital's ward by a machine which the Big Nurse controls. It is very real to him, for the Indian seems to have some sort of schizophrenia. However, the fog is non-existent, unless we look at it as a symbol of the dangerous disorientation which the Big Nurse seems to induce.

Soon enough though McMurphy sets that straight. Not only does he virtually destroy the fog machine, symbolically speaking, but he gives the patients confidence in themselves, much to the frustration of the Big Nurse. His effect on the somewhat terrified subjects of the nurse's razor-sharp control is more triumphant every day as this boisterous fun-loving man challenges her at every turn. The more he seems to be winning, the more the patients allow themselves to creep out of their neurotic confines. He has rules changed for the better, he gains more privileges for the patients, he sets up an outdoors excursion, and even smuggles in some liquor and women on one particular occasion. Though the nurse never fails to claim that McMurphy's continual disturbances are "untherapeutic" to the other patients, irony lies in the fact that by the novel's end, over three-quarters of the "acute" patients leave the hospital on their own will.

The story starts as a mutual dislike between McMurphy and the big nurse, but develops into an intense war where the patients are victims of the big nurse's authority. Though much is gained by the patients in McMurphy's visit to the hospital, the big nurse makes certain that there are great losses as well. This disruptive threat of a man must not paint too lively a picture for the patients may follow suit. But they do follow suit. However, the big nurse is clever enough to use her acid tongue to burn McMurphy's most ardent fans. As a result two men take their own lives.

Because One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest is written from the point of view of Chief Bromden who has little education and a limited social background, it is appropriate that the book should be written in the slang of this Indian. However, this use of slang language cannot disguise the author's clever symbolism. The most fascinating symbolic reference lies in the title: One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest itself. Allow me to explain. First, the background of the cuckoo must be noted. Cuckoo eggs are dropped into the nests of other birds by the female cuckoo bird. After delivering their egg to, let's say, a robin's nest, the female cuckoo abandons her offspring. Once hatched, the newly born cuckoo kills the robin's eggs one by one until none remain. The female robin then, amazingly enough, nests the baby cuckoo, completely undisturbed by the fact that this bird has murdered her offspring. The cuckoo's nest appears to represent the big nurse's ward, and the cuckoo is of course, the big nurse who kills her patients (the robin eggs), if not physically, then mentally and emotionally, indeed. The big nurse gets away with her crimes only because she is backed by the authorities, or symbolically, the adult robins. But we all know who is the one who "flew over the cuckoo's nest." Then there are the obvious connotations of the word "cuckoo" and the implications that it is the big nurse who is actually insane. Ken Kasey, the author, is not a stupid man.

I feel that One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest is a brilliantly written novel with more to offer than merely an interesting story. Though McMurphy's end is tragic, the patients' decision to leave the hospital is triumphant. The author has projected the idea that leaders are sacrificed in leading their followers to safety for it was the strongest patient of all who fell into the hands of the big nurse and not men who had seemed doomed at first. One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest is an extraordinary novel, one I plan to read once again in the future.

These five book evaluations are undated but appear to have been submitted together all at the same time.

I NEVER PROMISED YOU A ROSE GARDEN

The Novel and the Movie

I Never Promised You a Rose Garden is the painfully intense story of a sixteen-year-old girl tormented by the terrifying mental disease of schizophrenia. While both the novel and the movie are based on real-life cases of schizophrenia, Rose Garden is not a true story. The novel begins as Deborah Blau ("Blake" in the movie) is escorted by her parents to an institution for the mentally disturbed. At first Deborah is quiet, sarcastic and cold, but as the story progresses we see a change in her character. She seems to become more frenzied and terrorized. This, however, proves to be a slow progression toward mental health, for now Deborah is reacting to her illness rather than allowing it to "rot her insides." Over a period of three difficult years with the help of a dedicated psychiatrist, Deborah makes the break between herself and the fantasy world in her head. However, the movie's version of her eventual success is somewhat altered from that of the novel's. In evaluating the story, one must note such differences and compare.

When I started to read Rose Garden I was completely ignorant of the cause and effects of schizophrenia. To me a "schizo" was simply a strange person who had no control over his actions and never a sane thought. However, after I'd finished the novel my perspective had completely changed. I felt I could relate to Deborah Blau and that she was really not so different from myself. That feeling in itself takes away the common misconception that mental illness only develops in highly unusual people. Deborah had been a highly intelligent, and perhaps a highly sensitive child, but she had reacted to her hardships in a typically childlike way. She had developed a fantasy world. Many children do this while at play. However, when Deborah couldn't cope with certain painful events she started to grip onto her world as an escape. This is an uncommon survival technique, as only small percentages of people develop schizophrenia, but it is certainly not an obscure or irrational one, particularly for a child.

Because this book was one that delved greatly in a psychological plane I was curious as to how it would be adapted into a movie version. Much of the story's climactic moments built upon Deborah's imagination, while, other than various "D Ward" brawls and visits to Dr. Fried, little surface action occurred. Basically, I was very skeptical in my beliefs that such a complex novel could be effectively portrayed on screen, and found my doubts were confirmed after watching the film. Though this television dramatization was well-acted and quite interesting I still believe that this is a story to be read, not observed. *[paragraph checked by marker]*

I Never Promised You a Rose Garden is an intricate and rather subtle novel which ever-so-carefully picks apart the well-entangled aspects of schizophrenia. A television production seemed to be almost a brass and blatant way of displaying such a delicate subject. The movie tended to rush through various incidents of significant importance, such as Deborah's move from "B" to "D" Ward and the girl's realization that she never tried to murder her sister. Such events formed the major structure of the novel's plot, but in the movie they seemed to serve merely as props by which to keep the story moving. These quick undeveloped television adaptations seemed to be squeezed into the film because, after all, "they were in the book." I feel that the television version of I Never Promised You a Rose Garden took away from the author's original intentions to enlighten people's attitudes toward schizophrenia.

[paragraph checked by marker]

Several incidents in the novel which were refined through the process of film-making I found to really alter the effectiveness of the novel. One event which particularly sticks in mind from reading the novel is the point at which McPherson, an understanding attendant, informs Deborah, after she has continually harassed another less likeable attendant, that she does not have "a corner on suffering." I found this occurrence to be one of major progression toward Deborah's mental health, for because she liked and respected McPherson she realized that what he said had been solid truth. However, such a small incident was completely undermined by the harried goings-on of the insane asylum in the film.

Yet another event which was hopelessly muted through Rose Garden's television adaptation was

Deborah's discovery through Dr. Fried that she had, in fact, never tried to throw her baby sister through the window when she'd been five years old. This turned out to be something she'd had an inclination to do, but had been too young to accomplish. This distinction between fantasy and reality was clearly another massive stepping stone toward Deborah's understanding of herself.

The way in which "The Land of Yr" is presented to its audience through the television movie is creative, spectacular but unconvincing. The continual changes from the real world to Deborah's seemed always to be only a transformation from one movie to another, not from reality to imagination. Though I find it difficult to think of another way in which "Yr" might have been presented, the technique which was chosen was a bit too flashy to be real. For this reason I am somewhat leery that any kind of visual production could live up to the novel. *[paragraph checked by marker]*

Though I do not, most obviously, believe that the movie did little justice to the book, I must say that to be able to watch Deborah's reactions to her insanity was most certainly intriguing. The actress who played Deborah Blake (Blau) had an incredibly expressive face and a real talent for captivating her audience. Admittedly, I did, while reading the book, at times find it difficult to picture how Deborah sometimes acted, and the movie helped display this aspect of her illness. *[paragraph checked by marker]*

Nevertheless I have still failed to mention many of the movie's misdemeanors in its, at times, inaccurate adaptation of the novel. The film's ending was in complete contrast with that of the novel. The movie's end was doused with "made for TV" idealism, whereas the book, though still finishing on a very hopeful note, was far more realistic. Television always tends to "gloss up" the hard, cold realities of life, in hopes of producing a "happier" story. In Rose Garden's case such changes detracted greatly from the story's effectiveness.

Though I did not consider I Never Promised You a Rose Garden a "bad" movie as such, it certainly was a disappointment after reading the novel. The film was altered so greatly that much of the book's purpose and meaning was lost amid the television producer's axe. Such changes are simply not discrete enough to go unnoticed. I was angered by the movie's fast-paced "cause and effect" layout, unlike the novel's stepping stone development of Deborah's recovery. Perhaps a more effective film version of the novel might have been accomplished by a two- or three-part mini-series, instead of cramming all the events into two short hours. However, perhaps it would have been best for all if Rose Garden had remained a book and television had developed a similar story-line of its own. The movie did not do justice to the book.

Marker's notation:

Mechanics: A Content: A+

You have made some very strong observations and valid criticisms of the movie's 'weak adaptation of the novel. Well-written paper.

November 25, 1979

ENGLISH 9

The interrelationship between the plot and the setting of this story* is very appropriate. Without this setting (stranded on an island) the plot would have been missing a certain thrill. The setting provided an eeriness to the story. And of course, the setting wouldn't have worked without the plot. For the plot was the entire cause which made everything coordinate. Together the plot and the setting developed an interesting and thrilling book.

I will give examples of why I think the plot and the setting suit each other so well. First of all, throughout the book they locked themselves in their rooms at night and suspected each other of being the murderer. The plot made the suspicion plausible and the setting caused them to stay on the island instead of leaving. On page 105 Emily Brant thinks she's going mad because she wrote 'Beatrice Taylor is the murderer.' Here the setting provided no escape from being in the hands of the real murderer and the developments in the plot was probably what caused her to be thinking such things. Near the end, Lombard and Vera Claythorne killed themselves off with no help from the murderer. Under other circumstances one of them might have gone to the police, but these weren't other circumstances. Also, each believed the other was the murderer because they had been led to believe that there was no one else on the island. Mostly everyone on the island, with the exception of Tony Marten and possibly Mrs. Rogers, did a lot of thinking about their so-called 'murders.' Being on the deserted island with no escape would give anyone time to think about it. During the end, the people that were left got very, very suspicious. But then who wouldn't under such conditions?

I feel that because the setting was so secluded and eerie and the plot so macabre, a very striking and challenging novel was produced. It keeps the reader guessing who the murderer is and keeps him so absorbed in it, he won't put it down until he's finished. When the murderer is finally revealed, it surprises the reader with great intensity. The plot in this novel was very good because it made the story convincing. It was outrageously witty. The plot the author used was fantastic and yet not unrealistic. The setting contributed to the plot's effectiveness. In the beginning the plot seems relatively simple and the circumstances uncomplicated, but as the story progresses, the plot thickens and the setting takes on more sinister qualities

THE END

Marker's comment: Very good analysis. 35 / 35 [mark rating]

* Title not identified, but believed to be Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* (alternately titled *Ten Little Indians*).

Reading Report
Book One of "The Chronicles of Tornor"

1. Elizabeth A. Lynn's fantasy trilogy consists of Book One - Watchtower, Book Two - The Dancers of Arun and Book Three - The Northern Girl. My first book report is based on Book One - Watchtower. It is published by Berkely Books by arrangement with the author.
2. The first book in Lynn's trilogy serves as a base for the succeeding books. The author tells of a land (the land of Arun) rich with warriors and, generally, the acclaimed nobility of fighting and ruling. This land is reminiscent of earlier days (centuries) on earth when royalty took charge of their castles with the help of their knights. This out-dated, rather barbaric way of living took place in the northern part of Arun. The southern part of Arun, on the other hand, was almost like an entirely different world. Though physically the southern and eastern lands and people were not unlike, their attitudes and frames of mind differed greatly. When the characters in the book traveled from north to south it was somewhat fantasy-like in the way that travelling to an unknown place always is. This, of course, gives the reader only very subtle implications that the story tells of a world other than earth. [*marker's check*]

Another, slightly less subtle implication of fantasy in Watchtower occurs when a character in the book, Errel (former prince to Tornor Keep), uses fortune cards to tell the future. The reader is led to believe that these cards are a fairly reliable source of fortune-telling. At one point the characters in this book are forced to make war with a warrior who threatens to take over Pel Keep as well as surrounding

Keeps. The people are travelling to Tornor Keep where Col, the warrior, awaits. Errel, anxious to [know] of his future, uses the cards as his vague but somewhat helpful source of information. On page 168 he states, "The Illusionist means understanding, fantasy and self-deceit. The Sun means achievement of desires." He is speaking of the face cards. Thus, Errel concludes, "Some part of our plan is based on fantasy, but not enough to turn them wrong."

The third and most prominent source of fantasy in this book lies in the power of the cheari as explained by Van (founder of the southern summer land of Vanima) on page 113.

"The southern scholars say that dance is sacred, because the dancer represents the chea, the balance of the world."

Van is a cheari himself. In fact, everyone who lives in Vanima is either a dancer or believes in the cheari's way of life which is to love and laugh and dance, not kill and conquer. The northern people, on

the other hand, have corrupted the word "cheari" to mean fool or trickster. Van continues to say, "But just as the word 'cheari' has corrupted to mean trickster, so do human beings corrupt the chea, destroy the circle and the balance." The force of the cheari is, as represented in this book, the force which evolves good from evil.

3. The book basically occurs only in the fantasy world and thus, the reader is never transported from reality to fantasy. As I previously mentioned, there are the travels from the northern warrior winter lands to the southern cheari's summer lands, but this all occurs within the same world. [*marker's check*]
4. Various types of conflict occur in this book, some more subtle than others. The man versus man conflict remains constant throughout the book as the warriors are tireless in their quest to conquer all other men. Though the chearis disbelieve in war and fatal fightings of any kind, they are forced to kill many warriors as protection not only for themselves but for the rest of Arun.

The protagonist in this story, Ryke, is faced with some man versus environment conflict. Because Ryke had been born and brought up in the cold northern parts of Arun he had adjusted to this climate. When he traveled to Vanima in the south, however, he was forced to adjust to the heat of this summer

land. This [was] too considerable amount of effort at first but he did, as expected, adjust.

When Ryke traveled to the summer land he was put under a great deal of psychological conflict. He had been brought up as a warrior and resented the southern way of thinking. Because Ryke felt the need to leave his northern home after the invasion of the southern warriors (who were not from

Vanima

where the chearis originated) he had come to have prejudiced views of all southerners. Though he

knew

these southerners from Vanima had good hearts he still felt bitter and he could not run back to the north

now for fear of his life. This was agonizing to Ryke until he came to terms with himself and the southerners. This, I would conclude, is a man versus himself conflict. [marker's check]

5. Ryke, the protagonist, represented the "average man from northern Arun." He demonstrated what any person in his position might do, act, think and feel. He helped guide the reader into this fantasy world by adjusting to his new surroundings and situations along with the reader. In this way the book was not

unrealistically overwhelming.

Errel, former prince of Tornor Keep, played the heroic role in this story. Though his father had been killed and his home overtaken by Col Istor, the southern warrior, Errel, only matured and worked toward cheari status; not once did he expose any bitterness. He remained a source of strength for Ryke throughout the story.

Sorren and Norres represented the liberal, honest and honourable way of thinking which the people

of Vanima possessed. These two female messengers were homosexual lovers, a relationship which was

not uncommon in the south but quite foreign to northerners. Through their relationship, I feel, the author was trying to show that true and honest love did not stem from man's animal drive but from a bond much more worthy than simply sexual intercourse. These women also represented the equality of men and women which was not thought to be true in the north.

Col Istor took the villainous role to complete the story's content. This southern warrior was everything Errel and Sorren and Norres were not. He lusted after power and would stop at nothing to get it. [marker's check]

6. There was only one supernatural force present in this story and that was the power of the chea. As the tale progresses the reader is led to realize that the chea (the balance of the world) is evolving as a religion amongst Vanima residents and nearby southerners. This force is practiced through a chearas (a group of six chearis). When Ryke, Errel, Van of Vanima or Van's Valley, Sorren and Norres and the chearas (which includes Van and Sorren) finally return to the north to stop Col Istor, it is implied that the force of the chea has conquered this shameless enemy.

7. The overall moral of this story is that the balance of life and the world depends upon the honesty and goodwill of people and is broken by those who believe themselves to be the judge of how the course of life should go.

8. While this story is very much an adventure tale with a succession of important incidents, I would nevertheless classify it as a vertical novel. Although much of what occurs throughout the book is physically

oriented, the effect on the reader is to force her to "break down" the psychological meaning of it all.

Be-

cause this story's eventual effect caused me to examine and compare my own life and world to

Ryke's,

I felt the book had more depth than its surface content.

9. The main character is most definitely dynamic as he went through a maturing process in much the same way a child does as he grows to adulthood. In fact, Ryke conquered at least four of Bethelheim's "Universal Problems of Growing Up." He was immediately thrust into the realization that he and his kin could be conquered when Col Istor did just that in the story's very beginning. Thus he soon overcame his narcissistic disappointment. Soon his dependencies on Tornor Keep and his kinfolk there dissolved when he escaped from under Col Istor's rule. When he came upon Vanima and the southerners' new way of thinking he eventually gained a sense of selfhood. Finally, Ryke came to realize his obligation to the northerners to save them from Col, so he followed his instinct. *[marker's check]*
10. I would recommend this book to a liberal-minded person who wouldn't end up rooting for the "bad guys," so to speak. Because Lynn has written some of her heroic characters to be homosexual, strong-willed and stubborn, it wouldn't surprise me if some readers were appalled by the whole situation. While I feel her characters were very well portrayed, I'm not convinced that every reader could see through what they themselves regard as wrong: namely, homosexuality.
While there were good traits to this novel such as the characters and the theme, I, on the whole, was not too enthused by this book. I disliked Lynn's writing style which consisted of short, choppy sentences. I am also not an avid fan of stories about soldiers and warriors and, generally, how our ancestors once lived (ignoring the fact that this is a tale of fantasy). Nevertheless this book did bring new thoughts to my head and I will recommend any book which does that.
11. This is a book of high fantasy because, although there is little mention of magic, there is an entirely unique religion which evolves from this new book. Lynn's characters are very much awe-inspiring and of very strong will. The spiritual quest to keep the peace of the chea also elevates this story to high fantasy. Even Lynn's choppy sentences reflect the style of living in this different realm.

[marker's check] Marker's comments:

I really appreciated your objectivity and honesty. You have a pleasant writing style.

Marked at 19 / 20.

AUTUMN TERM ESSAY

“Cordelia’s love for Lear, and Lear’s for her, are the most precious realities to which the whole anguished natural world of the play gives birth.”

King Lear is a play which deals with the destructive force of death and those factors which lead to the eventual incident of death. The force of life, however, is the situation prevalent throughout most of the play. Because the death force cannot act upon anything other than that of life, the life force^{1*} is greater in its magnitude. The life force, in contrast, may act upon many varying situations such as despair, failure, challenge and so on. In King Lear the life force most prominently stems from within the situation of love. For both Edgar and Cordelia the love is for their respective fathers. The love shared between Lear and his youngest daughter most prominently displays its strength of life in that the intricate plot of King Lear builds solely upon this love. Had Cordelia been of a similar disposition than Regan and Goneril, Lear would have been overthrown quickly, effectively and without complications. One might even go so far as to say that had Lear not been blessed with such an honest youngest child, he would never have developed a great trust in his children and thus never parted with his kingdom.

In this light, the love between father and daughter presents itself as the most substantial aspect of the plot. As the world begins to fall apart for Lear, he is able to transfer responsibility for the happenings onto the shoulders of not just Cordelia, but all his daughters. He takes a stand that they have betrayed him of his love. Consequently, he grasps at the one reality of love in his crazed world in an attempt to rid himself of the burden of his downfall. In this sense, Goneril and Regan have not betrayed him in that they appear to have never loved him. Lear must, to some extent, be conscious of that fact and so depends more heavily on the seeming betrayal of Cordelia as a scapegoat for his own actions. Because he is ashamed to not have realized the “darker purpose” of Goneril and Regan, he allows himself to believe that Cordelia has cleverly deceived him. In Lear’s mind, Regan and Goneril could not have deceived a wise man for they hold a pattern of deceit in their lack of human compassion. Cordelia, Lear believes, has failed him because she did once love him. In this sense, Lear must depend on the truth of his love for Cordelia and her for him or he will find himself to be a foolish man.²

The raw, earthy quality of Cordelia’s love for her father is prominent in her words to Lear:

“I love your majesty
According to my bond, no more no less.”
And later: “Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty,
Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.”

Behind this train of thought lies an intelligent acknowledgement and acceptance of the basic limitations of love. Cordelia is well aware that human nature generally prevents one from showing total devotion toward only one person. Her mistake lies in that when she attempts to portray her honesty to Lear, she comes across as detached and almost insensitive. She has failed to recognize that her father, being a king, is not used to such bluntness of speech from his ‘inferiors.’ Royal men are accustomed to the decorations and elaborations characteristic of their lives and that is why the professions of love from Regan and Goneril are far more effective in gaining Lear’s approval. However, like the exclusive life of royalty and the rich, Goneril and Regan’s speeches are a lie. The royal life is a lie in the sense that there exists no paradise for even kings and queens³ and also in that very few people are confined to such an elitist existence anyway. King Lear’s oldest daughters tell lies in the obvious sense that they speak of their love for Lear

* Footnotes refer to marker’s comments recorded at the end of this essay.

and, all the while, calculate his destruction. In contrast, Cordelia deals directly with her love for her

father and acts according to her words; when she is banished she makes no attempt to return until she hears of Lear's desperate circumstances at which point she acts upon the love she once professed, for it is truly real.

While it is obvious to the audience that Cordelia is truthful in her ways from the start, Lear himself does not become aware of that fact until after the course of events have led him to his defeat. Instead Lear denies his bond to Cordelia foolishly and thus his devastating encounters arise.⁴ Had he been more accepting of Cordelia's more 'natural' disposition, the events surrounding the plot of King Lear more⁵ likely would not have taken place. It seems inevitable that Goneril and Regan would have somehow tried to gain control of the King's estate, but less likely that they'd have succeeded had Cordelia gained a third of the power. Also, had Lear been insightful enough to see Cordelia for the devoted daughter she was, he'd also have had the insight to see liars for what they were.

In banishing Cordelia and denying his paternal bond to her, Lear puts himself in such a state that he has no other option but to believe that his remaining daughters love and respect him. In doing so, he places his fate in their hands and, consequently, is shattered by their evil motives. In turn, Lear must look back upon his ways and find strength in, at least, Cordelia's loyalty to him. Even as early as Act II, Scene IV, after Goneril has exposed her lack of devotion and Lear has attempted to banish her, the king has begun to think less accusingly of Cordelia and has transferred the blame to his young daughter's husband:

"Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took
Our youngest born, I could as well be brought
To knee his throne, and, squire-like, pension beg
To keep base life afoot."⁶

While in Act IV, Scene IV Cordelia confirms her deep devotion to her father in mourning the loss of his senses, it is not until Scene VII in the same act that the enduring and reciprocal nature of their love is evident. In this scene Cordelia comes to Lear's bedside with the loyal Kent whereupon Lear regains his sanity by recognizing his youngest daughter.

"Do not laugh at me;
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia,"

This realization signifies in Lear the regaining of his senses and a clear understanding of his daughter's motives. Had he shown continuing resentment toward Cordelia, he would have grouped this youngest daughter as an enemy with the likes of Goneril and Regan. In doing so, he would have maintained his own insanity by disregarding the reality of the incident. Instead he accepts the love of Cordelia for what it is and thus shows a newer insight into the old situation.

Lear's loss of sanity stems from his desperate circumstances. In his mind, he has lost all the strength upon which great men build: his power, and consequently his kingdom, and also the respect of his family (being his kingdom, in the medieval sense). To any man there is no greater injustice than the betrayal of their⁷ family members. It is not until after Lear, secure in his power, rashly banishes Cordelia from his kingdom that he is later able to distinguish Cordelia's undiminished love from the sinister preoccupations of her sisters.⁸ Because he can eventually verify the genuine from the false, Lear then regains his sanity.

In the cruel course of events, it is only Lear's and Cordelia's love for one another that projects any optimism. The rapturous reunion with his estranged daughter to some extent compensates for all remaining tragedies. With their meeting, one sees in Lear a newfound contentment with and acceptance of life. In Act V, Scene II, he seems to have finally 'found'⁸ whatever secret there is in life and the ways of living:

"So we'll live
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and her poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too -
Who loses and who wins; who's in who's out
And take upon's the mystery of things ..."

With this lovely new attitude, Lear sheds his grievances and finds within himself a serenity. This attitude is often characteristic of people who have lived through torment and appear unhindered. This peace of mind is equally as applicable to the minds of those having uneventful lives, however. Most notably, such an attitude is equated with those we often believe to be wise. Take, for instance, disciples of God such as nuns and monks who have in the past been revered as being deeply accepting and equally knowledgeable.¹⁰ The idea of God, himself conjures with one's head a vision of clouds, expanse of white and above all placidity.¹⁰ Even the not so ridiculous belief in Santa Claus who "knows when you are sleeping and knows when you're awake" brings to children an assurance of safety and calmness. Thus, there exists within man's culture a belief in the relationship between wisdom and peace of mind. For Lear this peace of mind comes in being with and loving Cordelia,

The conclusion of King Lear signifies the importance of Lear's attachment to his youngest daughter in that he dies immediately following her death. It is not until this event, however, that Lear's world finally comes to a close. Prior to Cordelia's death there exists definite suggestions of hope. Perhaps this hope is unwarranted, but for Lear, even the will to live is a hope in itself. While he is in despair prior to the union of himself and Cordelia, afterward he regains his senses and begins to speak more coherently. In Act IV, Scene VII he has already come to terms with his errors of the past and realizes his need to be on good terms with Cordelia: "Pray you now, forget and forgive. I am old and foolish." Regardless of his words, this statement is perhaps one of Lear's wisest. There is a distinct relationship between the admittance of one's ignorance and one's actual wisdom, as exemplified in King Lear. With Cordelia, he finds within this ignorance his bliss.

Because Lear's relationship with Cordelia is his one saving grace, his existence is finally shattered in the end. What will he may once have had to live is finally conquered with the death of his beloved Cordelia. Lear himself states in Act V, Scene III that should Cordelia live, he would disregard his tragic past:

"This feather stirs; he lives! If it be so,
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
That ever I have felt."

Thus, in Cordelia's death, King Lear is at last exposed to his final despair and finally dies.

The extent to which Lear believes in the love between himself and Cordelia is exemplified in the final scene when the fallen King speaks of having killed the slave who took Cordelia's life. In this act Lear demonstrates the revitalizing effect that this great love for his youngest child [has]¹¹ had upon him. In a grand, heroic gesture, more characteristic of a winning man than a losing one, Lear makes his statement of love and then dies. Because his essence of life is at last dead, he himself dies, rather than despairs. In the spiritual sense, the love between father and daughter is eternal. The love is never lost in that they die for each other and thus pave the path for eternal life. For this reason, their love does surmount all else: its life is one that extends beyond human life.

In considering the bond between Lear and Cordelia, the play concludes on a somewhat cheerier note than is at first evident. The stripping down of all comforts apparently forces King Lear to draw upon only that which can survive such scrutiny. In the tragedy of King Lear, the devotion of Lear to Cordelia and vice versa is the only quality which can remain vital amidst all destruction. Consequently, this love is made that much more potent and refreshing: it is the one beam of light piercing through the vile tempest.

Marker's notes:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1 <i>What do you mean by life and death forces?</i> | 2 <i>Doesn't he?</i> |
| 3 <i>What is the point here?</i> | 4 <i>Awkward</i> |
| 5 more circled presumably as overused | 6 <i>Well?</i> |
| 7 their circled presumably incorrect pronoun | 8 <i>Marker's check mark</i> |
| 9 <i>Relevance?</i> | |
| 10 placidity circled [perhaps as a non-word? But listed in OED.] | 12 has inserted by marker |

Marker's evaluation:

Very good. You begin uncertainly but end very well indeed. The beginning is a bit muddled.

The Psychic Phenomena

Since the beginning of recorded history people have been perplexed by personal experiences in which they dream about events that later occur, know what another person is thinking without being told, perceive events that happen too far away to be seen, and/or influence something solely by an exercise of their minds. Scientists who have studied the psychic phenomena hypothesized that there is an unknown factor underlying these unusual occurrences. They call this factor 'psi,' for this twenty-third letter of the Greek alphabet is often used in scientific equations as the term for the unknown. When used in this context, psi is a mystery which, though it has been investigated for one hundred years, has remained unsolved.

Some different forms of psychic phenomena are telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and psychokinesis. Telepathy is the communication of impressions from mind to mind without the aid of the senses. It generally refers to one person's perception of someone else's thoughts. Clairvoyance is the direct perception of information of someone's thoughts, as if to use an X-ray machine through a brick wall. With precognition one can receive information about the future before it actually happens. While all these forms of ESP (extra-sensory perception) are concerned with receiving information, psychokinesis, or PK, generally refers to sending information out. More specifically, PK refers to the influence somehow being exerted on the environment by mental processes alone. It is popularly known as 'mind over matter.'

Researchers of the Duke Laboratory at North Carolina's Duke University, where much investigation of 'psi' takes place, went to great lengths in order to distinguish telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition from one another. However, eventually they abandoned this practice because they felt it was virtually impossible to determine the kind of ESP that was taking place in their subjects. Nevertheless researchers still assert that the existence of each separate phenomenon has been demonstrated in the laboratory (with the possible exception of pure telepathy), and the four terms are still much in use.

It is customary to divide psychic phenomena into two separate classes of 'mental' and 'physical.' A physical phenomenon would be if, let's say, a table were moved across a room without the application of any force known to science. A mental phenomenon would be if a medium in trance were to relay information outside his or her normal knowledge. If that information were given through a trumpet floating in the air with the medium seated at a distance, that would be both a mental and physical phenomenon.

The principal type of spontaneous physical phenomenon is the poltergeist (a German term meaning 'racketing spirit'). This word generally describes 'those things that go bump in the night' which residents are never able to explain. Cases of this kind have been recorded for many hundreds of years and from all types of societies, civilized and barbarous.

The poltergeist cases show a remarkable degree of uniformity in spite of their wide distribution in time and space. It appears that there is usually a certain person or 'ghost' present in order for the production of the phenomena to occur. There sometimes may be a second agent involved such as a girl in her teens through whom the ghost is conveyed. However if the principal agent is removed the phenomena will not occur. Though some of these cases have been merely clever trickery, there have been too many cases of poltergeists to explain them all as pranks.

Two kinds of physical phenomena which have been studied intensively are telekinesis and teleplasm (or ectoplasm). Telekinesis is the alleged movement of objects without the application of any kind of physical force known to science. Its history dates back to the early days of spiritualism. Teleplasm is a 'substance' extruded from the medium's body, which can be either invisible or translucent. This teleplasm may even take the form of a complete human figure, apparently endowed with energies of its own.

The mental phenomena of psychical research consist, most often, of some form of 'supernormal cognition.' This is the knowledge of matters which a person acquires that he or she has no normal means of knowing. This supernormal knowledge may relate to another person's thoughts, or to events distant in

time or space. It may arise spontaneously due to the psychic himself or herself, or as a result of deliberate attempts on his or her part. The psychic may be in the normal waking condition, asleep, entranced or in a state of slight dissipation produced by crystal-gazing or using other similar devices.

Experiments in thought transference (telepathy) have been conducted for many years in most civilized countries. Psychics have transferred their thoughts to other people in the same house, at a distance of many miles, and even in a different country. Telepathic people have also transferred impressions of numbers, simple and complex diagrams, the suit and value of playing cards, landscapes and pictures, and incidents from books and imaginary scenes. It has been hypothesized that telepathic impressions pass first from a person's conscious to his subliminal mind to that of the psychic's, and finally emerge from the psychic's subliminal mind to his conscious.

An important contribution to the research of 'psi' was made by the German physicist, Helmut Schmidt. Schmidt became intrigued with 'psi' for the same reason that many scientists reject it: because 'psi' does not fit into the system. According to this man's traditional physics training 'psi' simply could not exist. Schmidt decided to find out for himself if it did or not. His efforts revolved around a machine he constructed called a random number generator (RNG). This device enables successful subjects to provide an intriguing demonstration of mind over matter. Many different subjects in many different experimental trails have shown themselves apparently able to 'will' lights in a ring on top of the RNG to move clockwise or counterclockwise. The machine provided an automatic source of random numbers that researchers consider at least as reliable statistically as tossing dice. Schmidt asked subjects to try to influence the numbers generated by the machine by making the numbers consistently higher or consistently lower than would occur by chance alone. Many different subjects have been able to do this.

In addition to providing significant evidence of the existence of 'psi,' results obtained with Schmidt's machine indicate that humans may not need to consciously understand the exact nature of physical events in order to interact with them. By successfully influencing the machine, the subjects apparently did something with their minds that, had they been allowed to take the machine apart and play with it, they probably would not have been able to do with their hands.

Schmidt's work also helped to eliminate the claim by skeptics that the positive evidence of PK obtained from dice and coin-tossing experiments would disappear with a larger sample. The RNG machine, which made it possible for researchers to run an enormous number of PK trials, effectively disproved the charge that results of similar experiments could be obtained by mere coincidence.

There have been thousands of scientists to research the psychic phenomena and as a result there is much greater understanding of its various different aspects. Though there is a great deal that is not known about this subject, with further investigation this could change. With the aid of psychic communication the world would change drastically. But for now, all we can do is wait for that final breakthrough which will confirm what everyone has suspected for all these years.

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Marker's comments:

*First paragraph marked with a check. Mechanics A Content A Letter A- Presentation A
Well done!*

The original of this manuscript contains photocopies of illustrations and tables probably taken from bibliographic sources and which are not included here.

13220835 (Jessica's U.B.C. Student Number?)

March 25, 1985

THE USE OF SOUND BY MARINE ORGANISMS

ABSTRACT

The following information should provide readers with a more complete awareness of the use of sound by aquatic animals or, specifically, that which is utilized by fish and marine mammals. As well as relaying the basic psychological processes responsible for hearing and sound production, the information in this paper attempts to consider the significance of these processes to man. Both economic and environmental causes have been considered in the applicable topics. Consequently, this paper should reveal to readers a more thorough concept of the subject matter as it relates to himself and his

Among the vast array of acoustically proficient organisms living within the ocean, it is fish and marine mammals that have instigated the most extensive research and appear to have the most developed acoustic techniques. The continued research of acoustic developments within fish could prove to be very beneficial in discovering increasingly effective ways of harvesting fish. The complex communications system characteristic of marine mammals, on the other hand, may provide man with a greater insight into these animals' non-violent and, in many ways, ideal lifestyle. From economic needs to human concern, there is a great deal to be learned from the 'sound makers' of the ocean.

There are four classifications of fish that are standardly used; the primitive and jawless Agnathans, the extinct Placoderms, the cartilaginous Chondrichthyes and the bony Osteichthyes. Of the four only two have been noted for their ability to perceive and create sound. These are the Osteichthyes which make up the largest group of living fish and the Chondrichthyes that include sharks, skates and rays. There exists no doubt that many cartilaginous fish utilize and respond to sound and the Osteichthyes includes within its group a subgroup called Ostariophysines which have been identified on the basis of their extraordinary adeptness for hearing.

HOW CAN FISH HEAR?

Most fish have two distinct receptor systems sensitive to underwater sound. Along the body of the fish and in its head region are stripes that are visible to the eye. These lateral line canals are surrounded by 'viscous, gelatinous tent-shaped structures (cupulae) containing hairs embedded and rooted in sensory cells (neuromasts), which are mechanoreceptors sensitive to changes in rate of water flow along canals.'

¹ It is generally considered that the neuromasts can pick up low frequency sounds from nearby sources of water displacement. The effect is exclusive to that of the sound pressure wave which is transported over greater distances and is the mode of stimulation to which ears of most organisms are sensitive.

The second receptor system occurs within the inner ear or 'labyrinth' and is far more common and effective. The superior parts of the labyrinth, the Semicircular Canals and the Utricle, take care of the fish' equilibrium, the canals bearing a striking resemblance in function to that of the lateral line. The lower portion of the labyrinth, the Sacculle and Lagena, is more directly related to actual hearing than balance, however.

1 William C. Stebbins, The Acoustic Sense of Animals, (Cambridge, 1983), p.30.

HOW CAN FISH BE HEARD?

The actual production of sound by fish occurs through stridulatory mechanisms in which bodily

parts move against one another or by way of the air-bladder or in a combination of both devices. There does not exist a single organ that conducts sound, but rather it is a cooperative effect of several parts. Some fish parts are altered for the purpose of making sound,* such as the teeth, the pectoral girdle or fin rays, but the main organ used in acoustics is the 'swim' or air bladder. This membranous sac of atmospheric gases may be divided in two by a transverse diaphragm. The bladder can be vibrated by pressure changes through internal fibres, outside muscles, skeletal muscles or fin rays and function as a result of gas expulsion. Air bladder sounds are generally low in frequency and guttural. In contrast, sounds resulting from stridulatory organs are rasping and whining occurring over a wider frequency range. A common form of sound through stridulation is that which is produced from, for example, gill teeth being rubbed against pharyngeal bones.

WHAT DO FISH USE SOUND FOR?

Fish use sound for a variety of reasons generally in relation to their environment and their species. In reproduction, for instance, the male European Cod and the male Haddock produce courtship sounds. Commonly observed in many fish are what appear to be aggressive and territorial reactions through sound, such as the agitated grunts of toadfish in 'anger' situations. Another example of sound production in connection with 'emotional' states is that of the freshwater Notopteridae living in Africa* which emit isolated or grouped gruntings by day or night and especially at sunrise and during courting parades when attacking fish give a commencement signal. There is even evidence to suggest that male fish in some species create sounds to inhibit hostile responses from others and thus there exists within these species a dominance hierarchy.

Probably the most useful utilization of sound by fish is in the process of 'echo-location.' During a study of underwater sound recordings made north of Puerto Rico, scientists were able to detect several series of short notes. Each call of every series was followed by a faint repetition at constant intervals. The source of the sound was located by calculations of depth and the interval between the note itself and the echo was determined as having occurred above the sea bed. The resulting theory was that the sound was produced by a deep-sea dwelling fish and echoed by the sea floor. This echo-locating was discovered to be a means by which the fish orients itself within its environment. For example, Australian carfishes have been sited as permanent sources of sound and may locate each other in muddy conditions by sonic ability. Another fish possessing exceptional sonar ability is the *Gymnarchus Niloticus* of West Africa and the River Nile which emits a continuous electrical signal from its tail and has the ability to avoid obstacles while swimming backwards. There are also the electric eels and rays which have electrogenic organs which discharge sonar guides or assembly signals.

HOW CAN MAN USE SOUND AS IT RELATES TO FISH?

Fisheries all over the world have been utilizing sound as a means to increase catch for years. In Herring fisheries, for example, fishermen will pound on the decks of their boats at night with wooden mallets in order to startle herring schools. In turn the frightened herrings will quicken their swimming and thus create bioluminescence in the water where they can be easily located. In a Californian Herring fishery small explosive charges are used to detect herring schools.

Other fisheries use sound as a means of scaring fish from out of their hiding places and into awaiting nets. Ryukyuan fishermen use something called a 'sound tub' in order to draw fish from within the crevices. The sound tub is a barrel with a handle that has weights fastened to it. The weights hang towards the sea floor until wave action bangs them against the sides of the barrel. The noise from this banging is said to scare fish out from hiding and into the attached net. Using the same principle as the sound tub the

* *Location of marker's large check marks over the text.*

"kuruck-kuruck" is particularly effective in catching snapper and shark in Bontang, E. Borneo. The kuruck-kuruck is a triangular bamboo frame with coconut half-shells strung along one edge and a handle placed on another. Indonesian fishermen rattle the shells under the surface of the water and scare fish

into hooks hanging from the boat's bottom. Some believe that this device does not scare the fish but instead attracts them.

The concept of sound attracting fish is not a new one. For many years the mackerel fishermen of the Madeira Islands have chopped bait in open boats on fishing ground in the belief that the noise attracts fish.* In an ancient Javanese fishery, the human voice is thought to draw fish in for catch. "When a free-swimming school is seen near the surface, a boy jumps overboard with a bamboo, about as long as his body, and fitted with a cross-bar near its upper end. As he floats with his arms resting over the cross-bar, he sings in a monotonous voice, uttering a prolonged 'ooh.' This makes the fish flock around the singer, and sometimes even jump in his face from excitement. The school is then easily encircled with a net."¹

While it is rare to influence unconditioned fish behaviour through artificial sounds, the techniques that were previously mentioned for "attracting" fish have been successfully employed for a number of years. With increased concentration on the utilization of sound as it affects fish, researchers may develop an effective means of harvesting fish. The economic implications of such a finding is singularly grand.

MARINE MAMMALS - HOW DO THEY HEAR?

Highly developed in all aspects of acoustics are the marine mammals. These mammals, referred to as Cetacea (whales and dolphins), have a hearing apparatus modified from land use for an aquatic environment. They have no pinnae, as do many Chondrichthyes and Osteichthyes, but instead have a very narrow and tortuous external canal that leads to a relatively thickened membrane. While the conduction pathway to the middle and inner ear is unsure, the widely held belief is that underwater sound is conducted to the inner ear through body tissues in the areas of the external canal and in the lower jaw, thence travelling to the "bulla" or the bony cavity containing the cochlea.

The auditory structures of cetaceans are particularly well-suited for sensitive, high frequency hearing for "there is much more extensive innervation by auditory nerve fibres, which may serve to increase the amount of high frequency information transmitted to the brain and nervous system and to ensure the animals' considerable discriminate acuity."² The dolphin, for instance, receives about one-tenth as much information by vision than humans but nineteen-twentieths more information by hearing than humans. A dolphin's hearing is to him as the human eyes are to us, therefore.

HOW CAN MARINE MAMMALS BE HEARD?

The production of sound in sea mammals occurs through complex air sacs in the nasal passages of the organism that is directed forward by a mass of fatty tissue on the animal's forehead and by the shape of its skull. During this process the mammals produce a train of echo-locating clicks which gain the response of a multi-frequency pulse returning and providing the animal with information regarding the distance from particular objects, the area these objects are in and the speed at which they are travelling. Thus, the production of such sounds keeps the organism aware of the current state of the environment and the objects within that environment. Dolphins use longwave sonar analysis for general orientation and shortwave sonar for detailed orientation.

WHAT DO MARINE MAMMALS USE SOUND FOR?

As previously mentioned, sea mammals use sound as echo-location to orient themselves within their environment. This is a complex system of survival comparable, and perhaps even superior, to the use of

1 Westenberg, J. Acoustical Aspects of some Indonesian Fisheries (London, 1953), p. 311.

2 Stebbins, p.111.

vision in humans. Echo-location is not, however, the only use these mammals have for sound. There exists within the whale, and more notably, the dolphin communities a highly developed 'language' through the use of squeal and whistle sounds. While the sounds vary from each mammal, they are generally used for the same purpose.

In the porpoise community there exists a high-pitched 'squealing' communication system similar to

that of small birds. Beluga or White whales produce remote and highly-pitched sounds while the California Grey whale emits low-pitched calls that are often audible to the human ear. During migration, Hump-back whales sing from low to high pitches in such a unique way that American zoologist Dr. Roger Payne believes these sounds to be an elaborate flock call. The long sustaining high-pitch tones, Payne says, suggests a definite form of sophisticated communication.

Along with bats and humans, dolphins rank as the most highly-specialized* of all species in “their ability to resolve differences in the fine structure of auditory signals.”¹ What makes the dolphins so fascinating, however, is their obvious intelligence and ability to communicate in such a way that may well rival human language.

The dolphin’s communication system is both enchanting and extremely complex. The language is described as being made up of clicks, whistles and the onomatopoetical “quacks,” ‘squawks’ and ‘blats.’ These sounds reach higher frequency during echo-ranging and lower during communication. These whistles are highly diversified and researchers believe that every dolphin possesses a ‘signature’ whistle from birth. This enables other dolphins to discern individuals acoustically. Infant dolphins, for example, are aided by their signature should they become lost and need to contact a parent. Even adult dolphins use their signature as a means of getting attention.

While dolphins are not aggressive creatures, they do possess distress signals within their communication system. Other dolphins will respond immediately to the distress calls of infants or of those members that are sick or injured. Then there exists yet another whistle emitted when predators such as the killer whale, the shark and man are in the area. This alarm call as well as the utilization of silence within the language alerts fellow dolphins of danger in the area.

The marine mammals, and dolphins in particular, tend to be extremely social and non-aggressive creatures. In one experiment dolphins in the Pacific ocean were put in communication with dolphins in an aquarium in Florida. The mammals managed to communicate effectively to one another, each dolphin allowing the other to finish speaking before answering in the common language. Such examples of such elaborate communication systems leads man to wonder if language between the dolphin and human species is possible. Unlike the dolphins and other marine mammals, man is an aggressive creature and as of yet there seems to exist little hope for our improvement as a race of beings. There is a great deal that might be learned from the behaviour of these peaceful animals and if humans were able to communicate with the animals we would clearly be making a first step toward harmony and understanding between the species.

The use of sound by organisms within the ocean is clearly a topic worthy of consideration. This subject effectively explains much of the behaviour and survival techniques of various different aquatic creatures. As a result man may be better able to utilize the surrounding environment of the ocean* as well as gain a greater appreciation of the significance of communication among higher and more intelligent species. From eating a fish to making friends with a dolphin, underwater acoustics compose an important part of aquatic life.

1 Stebbins, p. 113.

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Marker's Comments:

VG - I particularly liked you [sic] comments on how man can exploit the use of sound by fish.

Essay #1 - The Crisis of the Mind
Monday, September 22, 1986
English 304

Photocopied excerpt from an unknown source:

The Crisis of the Mind
deletion

First Letter

We LATER civilizations ... we too now know that we are mortal.

We had long heard tell of whole worlds that had vanished, of empire sunk without a trace, gone down with all their men and all their machines into the unexplorable depths of the centuries, with their gods and their laws, their academies and their sciences pure and applied, their grammars and their dictionaries, their Classics, their Romantics, and their Symbolists, their critics and the critics of their critics. ... We were aware that the visible earth is made of ashes, and that ashes signify something. Through the obscure depths of history we could make out the phantoms of great ships laden with riches and intellect; we could not count them. But the disasters that had sent them down were, after all, none of our affair.

Elam, Nineveh, Babylon were but beautiful vague names, and the total ruin of those worlds had as little significance for us as their very existence. But France, England, Russia ... these too would be beautiful names. *Lusitania*, too, is a beautiful name. And we see now that the abyss of history is deep enough to hold us all. We are aware that a civilization has the same fragility as a life. The circumstances that could send the works of Keats and Baudelaire to join the works of Menander are no longer inconceivable; they are in the newspapers.

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(page number on photocopy)

Also in the newspapers are the hazy photocopies of everyman young couples who've just won seven million dollars at, strangely and miraculously, the Seven-Eleven on Seventh Avenue. Once nonentities in a mundane and crowded world, this happy twosome have now arisen to the heights of instant fame and fortune. Eureka! There is a God! Yet only one page past the aforementioned headliner is another sensational caption: 'red head kills dead' reads the title, the article then considering the atrocities committed by a former government official of communist leanings who is on the loose mangling small children for fun and profit. Oh christ, there is no God. What will be our destiny? Still, on page 32 a blonde-haloed "Bob" who enjoys "fast cars and fast girls" grins smoothly at the camera from aboard a long white yacht. Apparently Bob was an investor in the Man Olympus Workout Emporium and now he's one rich dude. 'Leisure and fitness,' says Bob, 'that's where the money is!' Maybe, at least, there's a good-times demi-God.

Indeed this is a mortal world, and, sadly, a civilization so pathetically trite that we insist on living vicariously through our own vulgar reflections of success. From the Latin "mortalis" we are "subject to death" and, ultimately, the humiliated subjects of death. From this reality grows a race of people who, because of a wavering sense of pride and supremacy, must revere their own image without just cause. Granted, we are also vital beings and thus given to the quality of vitality. How often, however, is someone referred to as a 'mere vital'? The word unfailingly employed in the phrase, and particularly in conjunction with the adjective 'mere' is 'mortal' ... a mere mortal. We are mere mortals, temporarily endowed with the quality of life and destined to the permanence of death. So we live our lives from within the fishbowl prison of our world, only to go into the universe longingly, hopefully.

While technology blunders forth with savage, and science conquers disease after ever-spreading disease, we, the people, are given the reasonable impression that something is being done and that living on this earth must far surpass any alternative. To compound this showcase of optimism, the media constantly feeds on titillating stories of success and accomplishment. In glossy magazines we read about gorgeous young jock-boys who have just finished law school and married fabulous young model-girls recently accepted at medical school. "Here you have the Perfect People." claims the defensive Media-

God, “and you too can have it all!” Yet the brooding reality of this era is that now is not a renaissance age and there are no perfect people. In this world where the media truly does assume god-like proportions of power and influence, how can any life, when to what it aspires is a mere regurgitation of itself, be perfect?

Not the renaissance age but, instead, the Era of consumption, we the mortal civilization consume the media as it consumes us equally. There is a great irony in our society’s new trend toward health foods, for if “one is what one eats” we are infinitely more healthy in body than in soul. In this western world where a good diet is generally accessible, we find people spending a great deal of time planning their meals, abiding by the correct food groups and shopping for only quality food products. In the same world, and in fact, at the same corner store, we might also find a person so psychologically distraught that he cannot sleep for more than an hour each night. So, having already purchased lean beef and bean sprouts for dinner, this person will then hurry to his psychiatrist’s office for one maximized hour of psychoanalytical aerobics. Having reached the pinnacle of blind consumption, we find our people attempting to purchase a healthy mind which cannot be theirs because the world in which they live can manufacture anything but inner peace.

Through this voluminous consumption we see in ourselves a race of people so despairing that they might ingest anything from a comforting food to a stylized attitude in compensation for a national void. As a metaphor for this era’s profound lack of existential peace of mind, we are given to the compulsively pursued action of obtainment. In the western world, particularly, one may see this analogy manifested in, again, the American obsession of eating. With an overwhelming array of fast food chains and sit-down restaurants, eating has become a North American pastime: something done while driving, talking to friends and watching television. In past worlds where food was not readily available, the issue was one of effort, faith and hope as to where the next meal might come. Effort, faith and hope: at present, three human qualities notably absent in conjunction with both the life force instinct of eating and that of living itself.

As physical creatures, we have always known ourselves to be mortal; the concept of death is readily evident. As philosophers of the metaphysical, however, our understanding of death’s significance and of its universal implications have varied greatly and angrily. For religion, history explains, many wars have been fought. In these modern days, though, there is a great deal of apathy toward any form of religion and, more importantly, there is a malaised spirituality. Consequently man has become the ruler of his own destiny. If a single man in possession of explosives has the power of existence over a long-standing and united community, this ‘man-as-god’ concept becomes a distorted truth. In that context we find that where there is religious stagnation the people themselves arbitrarily replace other individuals in representative positions of good and evil. Scapegoats by way of urban subversity and moral disregard become the majority chosen examples of a universal Wrong. In the position of political and social prominence, however, are various leaders and superstars whose characteristics are, if not inherently misguided, certainly not beyond human. Not then able to fulfill the supernatural qualities of Good, these figures of authority demonstrate their immediate power and their secular possessions which are the chosen attributes through which to gauge success. For both women and men we find a wide range of idols, from physically lovely celebrities to ardent political leaders, all of whom have obtained a large degree of societal power. Consequently, generations of people grow up in the habit of consuming these media moguls as the moguls themselves had once consumed. The man with the most influential new invention or the woman with the greatest entrepreneurial skills, for instance, becomes the pinnacle to which we mere mortals strive.

There is a disease inherent in the notion that other people’s possessions are something which we too must obtain. Any coherent mind must know that success is a very personal ideal and that it cannot, therefore, be implied by either excess of gratification or other non-creative stimulation. Returning to the analogy of eating, one finds that the person who is not seduced by over-indulging in what he sees and is told is positive (food) rather than what he instinctively believes to be good for himself is generally healthy rather than overweight. In France, for example, the preparation of food and its consumption has been raised to an art form. In this country one finds an entire nation of people who enjoy and respect

food, in moderation and without a neurotic obsession. By contrast we find in North America many millions of people unhappily delving into weight and health problems, despite their better self, under the influence of a society which reinforces indulgence. At the core of this malcontent is, appropriately, a civilization in pursuit of some tangible form of success not currently obtainable through philosophical or spiritual conviction but instead begot by eating binges and shopping sprees. The consequence is one whole generation of empty minds cluttered in amongst cars and boats and clothes, without any instinct more philanthropic than giving a tip to their chauffeurs.

To refer to this age of consumption as diseased only because it discounts those individuals not privileged to consume, however, is too simple. Because the poor would then be a party to this consumption, the argument that they must be condescended to more conscientiously by the wealthy undermines the theory that excess consumption is, in fact, diseased. By way of remedy, the state of the less materially fortunate is less a concern than the state of those materially endowed. In prior reference to philanthropy, one must note the lack of this quality in our people not, in that context, for the sake of the poor but instead for the sake of us, who lack even the impetus to generate some empathy for these hungry few. In our belief and understanding of little else than a finite mortality, we find ourselves unable to rouse feeling for anything outside of the personal. If we all must die, we tell ourselves, then we are all equal. In that light, there is then no reason to extend past the immediate and the personal; outside of these qualities lies an unfathomable void.

As France reflects a far greater health in, at least, the physical act of consumption, one might also envision a less malaised spirituality in, for example, the country of Ireland. In this unassuming portion of the world one finds a place so full of religious fervor that wars continue to be fought on the basis of those spiritual beliefs. While the Irish people have been dubbed archaic by the vastly more sophisticated and cosmopolitan world, one continues to hear the familiar phrase "I never met an Irishman I didn't like." Characterized by emotional temperaments but an overall amiability, these people possess a profound and complete attunement to the life cycle. In their unrelenting faith we, the outsiders, cannot deny the validity of this attractive mode of life. Even in the countryside of this land one senses the harmony of living. There is a great pride in these people in the caring for their land and their property, as well as a cultural pride entirely void of international violence and deceit. North America, by contrast, urgently displays its acquisitions in a parade of media traffic, never content to reserve its energy for the less obvious treasures in life.

Again we might turn to another culture in order to evaluate our own by comparison. In Peru, for instance, the people are far more interpersonally connected than, certainly, Canadians. Peruvians greet one another by a welcoming kiss on the cheek and tend to bring their bodies closer to their Acquaintances while speaking to them. In our western world by contrast, there exists a distinct social barrier which generally denies such close personal contact. While Peruvian strangers are commonly found engaging in conversation together, Canadians not familiar to one another rarely even make conspicuous eye contact. On a more intricate level, Peruvian culture again exemplifies a camaraderie superior to ours, for families tend to form unbreakable bonds on the basis of that loyalty. As Canadian families disperse and disintegrate, into single family dwellings or, appropriately, bachelor suites, Peruvians weave together sometimes five generations of people in a large and diverse home base.

Inherent in the familial interweaving is a more complete approximation of the life cycle. A Peruvian child born into a household of four or five generations of people is bound to face the death of a loved one at a reasonably early age. If she remains within that situation as have her siblings, parents and grandparents she again becomes increasingly more prone to the confrontation of another's death. From a Canadian perspective this concept may seem distressing if not vaguely morbid, yet Peruvians regard the natural turn of events as a nurturing, if bittersweet, lesson. In this South American country, individual mortality is dealt with more thoroughly and frequently, and so then received as an integral facet of human life; it is a facet understood less with self-centered emotionality and more on a par with humanity. Our civilization, conversely neurotic and shallow, instead understands death as only an immediate event of destruction and pain. Culminated in our minds is an abyss of mystery surrounding our ever-present mortality, gratified only by the confirmation of that fate.

Despite whatever drastic conclusions we may draw regarding the so-believed tragic fate of living, or worse, its meaninglessness, a human life is not negated through the act of death. By the same token, that same human existence is not then verified by the type or quantity of secular possessions consumed during that life span. Someone who inexhaustingly pursues a definition of himself made whole (and obtrusive) on the basis of colourful cars and attitudes of condescension is someone who is an embarrassing plaything of life, not a partner to it. While moderate consumption is certainly an innate need, this action left blind and unharnessed displays an obtuse disposition of character entirely unable to integrate the personal with the universal. Death, after all, is not a foe to life but instead an event in its course with which there be no need to fight or barter. Mortality therefore exists not as the finality of our experience, but as a platform among many upon which we may generate and express those experiences from within our multifaceted realm.

Marker's Comments:

Start of essay and last part strongest (because specified)

Marked A

*This manuscript found in Jess' effects appears to be a draft but the only copy retained.
Therefore relatively trivial spelling and punctuation errors and typos have been corrected.*

(continuing with unpublished material)

Drama

*Material in this section
includes three short plays
and a progress (in acting) report.*

Untitled

Scene 1

Lights come up and an attractive young woman is seen seated atop a blanket thrown across a patch of grass. She is dressed unconventionally in shades of purple. There is a large bag and a radio at her side and she is nibbling some food and reading a novel. As the lights come up we hear the sound of a phone call being made* and eventually the sound of two women speaking to one another.

SHEILA: Hello
 KATE: Sheila, hello.
 SHEILA: Kate, it took you all of 10 minutes. I should think you'd hardly had time to see her.
 KATE: I'd only wanted to go for a quick walk. So, what are you having for dinner tonight?
 SHEILA: Come now, did you see the girl? Quick walk or not your purpose for going to the park in the first place -
 KATE: You are one for getting to the point, aren't you. Yes, I saw her. And I'm confused as to what the particular scandal might be; she seems reasonably normal to me. I certainly wouldn't bad-mouth her and anyway she wasn't all that strange.
 SHEILA: Kitty I -
 KATE: Katherine.
 SHEILA: Katherine. I have by no means bad-mouthed her and I don't consider her behaviour a scandal at all. However, you did call me and I assume neither one of us has any great need
 to speak of my dinner so -
 KATE: It struck me odd that she would begin to dance alone while in a public place, though.

As the conversation continues the young woman sets aside her novel and brings an unfinished sweater from her bag. She proceeds to knit as the telephone call carries on.

SHEILA: Dance, for heaven sakes. God, she didn't take her clothes off or anything, did she?
 KATE: No no. Nothing like that.
 SHEILA: If she had, I'd have reported her to the police.
 KATE: Naturally. I would too.
 SHEILA: Of course I believe in absolute freedom, but not for those that abuse their privileges. God knows how much longer we'll be able to allow our children to go to the park alone with naked women dancing around.
 KATE: Well, she didn't actually take off her clothes.
 SHEILA: Oh no, of course not. But you know what I mean.
 KATE: I just couldn't stop wondering to myself what would provoke a person to dance like that in a public area.
 SHEILA: Such exhibitionism.
 KATE: Sheila, did you happen to notice how she was dressed?

At this point the girl replaces her knitting and stands. She goes through a routine of balletic stretches, occasionally twirling gracefully for practice. The sound of the radio is heard playing softly under the continuing conversation.

SHEILA: Almost completely in purple.
 KATE: Yes! And that curious slogan on her shirt.

SHEILA: "Eat Love." Sounds almost vulgar.
 KATE: But it doesn't really make any sense.
 SHEILA: Not for us anyway.**
 KATE: When I saw her she was knitting a sweater and it looked as if she was also embroidering that same slogan on the sweater, "Eat Love."
 SHEILA: Nonsensical. Whatever happened to the "peace" slogan. "Eat Love," for god's sake?
 KATE: It's the dancing that concerns me most, though.
 SHEILA: I'm telling you Kate, it's pure unadulterated exhibitionism.
 KATE: Perhaps she was neglected during her childhood.
 SHEILA: Very likely. It's really rather sad, isn't it?
 KATE: We should make an effort to sort of take her in. It's going to be awfully difficult for her to make friends in such a close-knit and (with a smile) potentially stuffy little community as ours.
 SHEILA: (chuckling) Yes.
 KATE: And who knows, maybe we'll have her dressing in blues and beiges by the end of the month.

As the conversation ends the young woman begins to pack her things away as the lights fade.

Scene 2

Lights come up and the young woman is seen leading the children in various energetic activities. She is dressed in a different outfit, vaguely violet and "hippyish." A different conversation continues.

SHEILA: I don't know if I really like her with the children all the time.
 KATE: Yes, the way she lurks around them makes me uneasy. What with her obsession with purple -
 SHEILA: She's so damned irreverent toward our method of doing things.
 KATE: She certainly is emancipated.
 SHEILA: That's hardly the word. Rebellious is more what comes to my mind. She refuses to volunteer at the daycare centre and instead leads the kids on wild excursions to God knows where in the city. She's not yet given up her little performance of modern dance in the park and half the men in town are going wild trying to catch a peek. And of course, she continues to wear those God-awful clothes.
 KATE: Well, let's not be too hard on her. I hear she's had an unfortunate past.
 SHEILA: Like hell, I'm tired of her little exhibitions of individualism.
 KATE: Yes, it is growing tiresome ...

Lights fade as the children gather around the young woman.

Scene 3

The lights come up on the girl who is leading the children in a wildly boisterous game of "follow-the leader." The conversation begins again and continues.

KATE: I suspect she's gone absolutely mad.
 SHEILA: Oh she has! Have you seen her? clothes are absolutely bizarre and the behaviour — just crazed.
 KATE: Why do you think she's come to this?
 SHEILA: It's curious isn't it? I mean, the policeman I talked to the other day had said that they'd

in spoken politely to her a week or so back about her behaviour. They'd been quite delicate handling this situation apparently, but she seemed to get more erratic from then on.

The children disperse and the girl then removes some clothes and, raising the volume of her radio, begins to dance.

KATE: It's really the children I'm worried about. How could all this be affecting them?
SHEILA: I believe Lieutenant Barker is to have another word with her tomorrow. In any case, I'll talk to him myself and see if we can't have her calmed a bit.

Lights fade.

Scene 4

Lights come up and we see the young woman swinging slowly by herself on an empty play swing. Her feet support her so that she is only leaning on the swing. Her head is tilted sadly down and her clothes are less extravagant.

KATE: I've heard she's practically suicidal.
SHEILA: Well God knows she's toned down.
KATE: Yes, but she is so over-ridden with depression, I think. I fear for her.
SHEILA: Perhaps we'll have a talk with her, you and I. Sort of give her a shoulder to cry on and all that.
KATE: Maybe we can get her off on the right foot. She'll feel so much better.

Lights fade.

Scene 5

Lights come up and there are three women on stage. The young woman is seated between the older women dressed in tasteful blues and beiges. They are consoling the young woman who is nodding and smiling to them with vague appreciation.

KATE: Chin up, dear. You really have everything in the world going for you.
SHEILA: You certainly have a way with children.
KATE: Yes, why you're quite popular for that. The whole town is aware of your abilities in that area.
SHEILA: You know, there's a million things you could do. Why with your talents ...

Lights fade.

Scene 6

Lights come up and the young woman is dressed in blue sweat pants and a T-shirt that states "Counselor" on its front. She blows fiercely into a whistle and the children move toward her obediently. She is instructing them with confidence and firm gestures. The new telephone conversation continues.

KATE: I just think that one can never go by first impressions. They are invariably wrong. She is simply a lovely girl.
SHEILA: I agree whole-heartedly. I feel rather badly at how I thought of her. But then she's changed so.

KATE: Thank God for potential.
 SHEILA: Yes, thank God.

Lights fade.

Marker's Comments:

- * phone call *presumably off stage*
- ** Not for us. *Makes them too overtly the intended objects of our derision*

I like the dramatic premise here—the person being talked about in full view, the voices she doesn't hear audible to us—but I think the content is too simple: the two phone-conversationalists are so obviously bad and so obviously a symbol of all those things - convention, middle class attitudes, suspicion of those who are different - that we're supposed to dislike and the girl is so obviously all those things we're supposed to approve of, and in the end cynicism and suspicion and tradition grind down innocence. It's too predictable. I'd rather you had investigated a little further the feelings of paranoia we're all prone to: the girl does initially represent that which is vulnerable and solitary in all of us, and the voices, unseen, represent the opinion of others that we're all brought up to fear or respect. But there is too obviously nothing about this girl that could conceivably be a menace to these women that the dramatic struggle is too one-sided: let her actually stand for or be engaged in something that might really threaten them (in the way that all of us fear that if we ever showed people our hidden true selves they might feel threatened or repelled by us). Make more use of the fact that we in the audience are apparently seeing her without her being aware of it: let her show us something that we ourselves might be afraid to show others but which, in the course of the effort of the two women to tame her, comes to seem clearly an innocent, wholesome or creative thing, and the struggle will have more bite to it.

THE POST OFFICE

SET: The play is set in a post office. There is a long white counter at centre stage, extending to centre right and left. Behind the counter are shelves against the right, left and back walls. The shelves are neatly decorated by various mailroom essentials. The shelves are neither cluttered nor empty. Down centre and extending to down left and down right are imaginary double entrance doors. At down right, slightly above the doors, are two plastic chairs.

CHARACTERS: The Plump Postmaster: He wears dull colours. He is mostly bald. He is always distracted, always pondering.

The Lean Postmaster: He is gangly and nervous. He wears loud colours. He is always alert.

The postmasters pace around each other as they prepare to open the post office.

Lean One: Stamps in order?

Plump One: Yessiry-do (gesturing) Face down. 32 cents on top shelf. 37s on middle. 64s on bottom, cotton, rotten. Clock set?

Lean One: Yes, yes, yes. Parcels in transport cart. Bulk discount stamps piled. Documents in order. Special Delivery box cleaned and polished. Anything else?

Plump One: Else is trelse. What's on the shelf. The stamps are champs; the letter is better.

Lean One: Yes, yes. Is the clock set? Have you set the clock? (spinning around to see the clock)

Plump One: Tick-tock, I've set the clock.

Lean One: Alright. Alright then.

They turn to each other and get ready to shake hands by way of a precisely timed ritual. As their hands are about to meet, the lean postmaster pulls his away ferociously.

Lean One: Wait, wait! My good word, we've forgotten to set our watches.

Plump One: All Saint's Eve! It is true, we have, in fact, failed to regenerate these watches of gold. Gracious, gracious me.

In another, equally elaborate ritual, they set their watches in unison.

Plump One: Alrighty, calamity, minority ... let us begin.

They perform the hand-shaking ritual which carries on into a process by which they open the post office's entrance doors. They then turn their backs to the doors simultaneously and walk to behind the counter. They stand side by side, arms folded on the counter and stare through the opened doors. There is a lengthy pause.

Lean One: My good man, would you care to take a tea break?

Plump One: Lovely, heavenly idea.

Lean One: It is, tishn't it?

Plump One: Oh it is tis, let's have fizz, take a quiz?

They laugh together.

Lean One: Very good then, I'll make some tea.

Plump One: Lovely, lovely.

The lean postmaster turns toward the shelves at up left where a silver tea set sits. The plump postmaster beckons him back. The lean postmaster returns.

Plump One: Oh and, my chap ...

Lean One: Yes?

Plump One: I'll stay posted.

Lean One: Good, very good then. (vigorously shaking the plump postmaster's hand in approval).

The lean postmaster returns to the teaset. The plump postmaster remains immobile at the counter staring blankly through the opened doors. The lean postmaster tends to the tea. Without warning, the plump postmaster breaks into song.

Plump One: (singing loudly) Three blind mice, three blind mice. See how they run, see how they run.

He completes his somewhat operatic version of the nursery rhyme, As he continues into a second run the lean postmaster, still tending to the tea, sings along one sentence behind his partner. They sing in rounds until the lean postmaster has completed the song two full times and then stop abruptly. The lean postmaster then returns to the counter carrying the tea tray. He sets it before the plump postmaster. The plump postmaster puts two lumps of sugar into a cup and presents it to the lean postmaster. he then pours cream into his own cup. They sip simultaneously. They continue to stare forward.

Lean One: Lovely day, isn't it?

Plump One: Oh yes, magnificent.

Lean One: Seems we're having a warm spell, does it not?

Plump One: Yes, it seems that way. A warm spell indeed.

Lean One: Indeed.

They sip simultaneously.

Lean One: Well, that was absolutely scrumptious.

Plump One: Scrumptious, scrumptious.

Lean One: Yes, yes it was.

Plump One: Well, it's a busy, buzzy day. We'd best get on with things.

Lean One: Oh my goodness, yes! Our time is running out.

The plump postmaster lifts the lid of the teapot with his right arm. The two postmasters pour the remainder of their tea into the pot. The lean postmaster removes the tray and replaces it on the shelf. The plump postmaster resumes his original position. A young man sitting in the audience gets up, saunters down an aisle to the stage and walks through the post office's open front doors. He looks around inside for a moment and then seats himself in one of the chairs. The postmasters continue to stare, now at him. They are poised for action. The young man, languid and casually dressed, simply sits.

Lean One: Can we be of some particular assistance, my good fellow?

Young Man: Sure, sure. In a while. I'm just resting.

Plump One: Absolutely, fabulously. We're in no hurry, scurry.

The young man looks at him strangely. The postmasters continue to stand poised behind the counter. There is a long pause.

Young Man: What is it with you guys, anyway? You gonna stare at me all day?

Lean One: Certainly Not!

The two men scatter frantically behind the counter, buzzing busily about but doing nothing of consequence. The young man watches, amazed. After several minutes of quick, agitated movement, the two postmasters resume their positions at the counter.

Young Man: (easing himself up and walking toward the counter) What are you doing behind there?

Lean One: It's a busy, busy day, you know!

Plump One: Busier than a lizard.

Young Man: Busy? (peering behind counter) What kind of place is this?

Plump One: A place in space that we must chase. We paid our dime to live with time.

Young Man: To live with time? (re-examining the inside of post office and the two postmasters) What in God's name are you wearing your watches for? What is this place?

Lean One: We wear our watches all of the time, all of the time. It's a very busy place.

Plump One: All of the time, all of the time.

Young Man: There is no time! Show me time (grabbing the collars of both men) Give me time!

Lean One: But that can't be done, just can't be done.

Plump One: We're much too busy, much much too busy.

Lean One: Yes, yes. Very busy. You've got to leave.

Young Man: (releasing the postmasters) No. I won't leave. You've got what I think may be a very big secret and I will not leave this place until you tell me.

The postmasters stand behind the counter in their usual attentive positions.

Young Man: You must tell me! (slamming fist on counter) God dammit, I'll expose you to every authority in the country!

Lean One: (coming from behind the counter to where the young man stands) Now, now, now. There's nothing to worry about, nothing at all.

Plump One: (moving around to other side of man) Nothing to worry about, nothing to hurry about. You're just not like us.

With great efficiency, the postmasters lift the young man by his elbows and walk briskly out the door. The young man protests. The postmasters replace him outside of the doors, his face to the audience. They return to the inside of the post office, closing and locking the doors behind themselves. They move to behind the counter again and begin to move busily about each other, as if to tidy up. The young man still stands outside the doors, motionless.

Lean One: (moving about) Do you think he's left yet?

Plump One: He's long gone, all is done. He's back in that place where there's only space.

Lean One: Yes, yes. He's forgotten us by now.

Plump One: (slowing down and finally stopping) Long since forgotten. lazily walking back home to nothing, nothing. So little to do; no deadline to meet. No deadline to meet.

Lean One: (still pacing) Stop, stop, stop. You're acting like one of them. Soon you'll be taking off your watch — (he quickly brings his hands over his mouth and spins around to see the plump postmaster's reaction)

Plump One: My good man, that is blasphemy!

They stare at each other silently for a moment and then proceed to readjust their watches. They resume their pretentious pacing. The young man remains motionless.

Lean One: My good man ...

Plump One: Yes sir?
Lean One: I did notice that he's not left yet.
Plump One: Hasn't he?
Lean One: No, no, no. He's still there.
Plump One: Let's watch him.

They both stop, turn toward the doors and stare blankly at the man. There is a long pause. Finally the man begins to move, looking about in wonder. He scratches his head and turns around, as if to orient himself. He sees the post office doors and tries to pull them. They do not move. He shrugs, slips his hands in his pockets and walks off the stage. He sits down in his original seat.

Lean One: Very well then, he's off.
Plump One: Away for all days. Sublime without time.
Lean One: Yes,, yes, yes. And all's in order then?
Plump One: All is in order.

They perform the hand shaking ritual and proceed to re-open the doors. They assume their positions behind the counter, arms folded and staring out the doors. Lights fade.

November 28, 1983

AN AUDITION

(The set is merely a brightly lit stage. In the darkness of the audience there sits a casting director. Only his voice is heard.)

Director: Amber Bridges.

(Amber Bridges enters nervously. She is in her early 20s. She wears casual slacks and a top. She is cute and energetic and she carries a script.)

Amber: Oh ... that's me.

Director: Okay Amber, have you looked at the script?

Amber: Yes, yes, I was just kind of flipping through it —

Director: Tell me a bit about yourself, Amber.

Amber: You mean —

Director: Training, experience, particular talents.

Amber: Oh, right. Um ... well, I haven't had a whole lot of experience.

Director: What have you done?

Amber: I danced in my high school's version of "Hello Dolly."

Director: MmmmHmmm. Anything else?

Amber: And I had a bit part in "Oklahoma" ... nothing spectacular—

Director: Which part are you interested in?

Amber: The French mistress.

Director: The French mistress ... mmmhmmm. (Pause) Do you have any experience with French people? (A hearty laugh) That is to say, have you studied French characteristics at all?

Amber: Well, when I was fifteen I went to Quebec on a student exchange for two weeks and —

Director: Let's see you improvise a quick little introduction of yourself as a French mistress.

(She turns her back to the audience as if to change into character and then, uncomfortably, turns back to the audience)

Amber: Well, the only thing is ...

Director: Yes?

Amber: Could you tell me what kind of French mistress you want?

Director: It doesn't matter — do it the way you want.

Amber: But there's just thousands of ways I could act.

Director: (annoyed) Good. Then choose one and do your improv.

Amber: But, if you'd just tell me how you want it done —

Director: (getting angry) We want your interpretation!

Amber: (apologetically) But my interpretation might be different from your interpretation and that doesn't mean I can't act the way you want me to.

Director: (sighing) All right, give me a very sexy French mistress.

(Amber again turns her back to the audience in an effort to change into character. There is a long pause.)

Director: Any time this year, Miss Bridges.

Amber: (awkwardly turning toward the audience again) It's just that I wanted to do an improv that relates to the play, rather than just introduce my character.

(The casting director leaves his seat in the audience and climbs on stage to where Amber stands. He wears dress pants, a dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up, and a necktie which is partially undone. He carries a notepad.)

Director: (angrily pointing to his booklet) What does that say?
 Amber: Huh?
 Director: What does that say?
 Amber: Um ... “Keystone tablets, 105 sheets” —
 Director: No, not that. Below it.
 Amber: Oh! “Casting Director’s Notes.”
 Director: What was that first part?
 Amber: “Casting Director.”
 Director: Pardon me?
 Amber: “Casting Director.”
 Director: Good, good. And what does the casting director do?
 Amber: Well, he auditions all the actors? And um, actresses.
 Director: And?
 Amber: And casts them.
 Director: And how does the casting director decide which actors to cast?
 Amber: I guess if they fit the part and if they’ve got talent.
 Director: Go on.
 Amber: Go on?
 Director: Yes. You’ve forgotten one major factor which helps me determine who should be cast.
 Amber: What?
 Director: If the actor or actress is willing to take directions.
 Amber: Oh, right ... “willing to take directions.”
 Director: Good. Bear that in mind next time you audition. (He storms off the stage and seats himself.) Next!
 Amber: Damn. This happens every time I audition.
 Director: You always get thrown out?
 Amber: Yeah, and always for the same reason. I start telling everyone what I think and then I never get the part ... My agent says I give directors inferiority complexes. (She slowly starts to leave.)
 Director: Inferiority complexes? Hey, wait just a minute, that’s not true at all.
 Amber: (returning) What isn’t?
 Director: What your ... your agent said.
 Amber: Well, you did throw me out — just like all the rest.
 Director: Oh, ... (a forced laugh) I was only kidding. Didn’t I say I was kidding? I was just kidding. Let’s finish up this audition.
 Amber: Oh great! So ... uh ... what do you want me to do?
 Director: I still want you to do an improv as a sexy French mistress.
 Amber: But ...
 Director: But you don’t have to introduce yourself. Instead I want you to ... let’s say ... tell me that you love me and that you, uh ... need to borrow \$1,000 from me.
 Amber: Wow, that’s tough. Ummm —
 Director: And I don’t want this to drag on any more than it already has.
 Amber: (in deep concentration) Okay, okay. (She turns her back to the audience once again in an attempt to transform into character.) Bonjour, monsieur — you may not know me, but I love you weeth all my heart. Do you love me? Wait — before you ansair — do you have

\$1,000 dat you could lend me? ... There, what do you think?

Director: That was absolutely pitiful.

Amber: But I only did what you —

Director: You're supposed to be a French seductress: manipulative, beautiful, dangerous.

Amber: (frustrated) But I was trying to —

Director: One hardly breaks off in the middle of a declaration of love to ask for \$1,000.

Amber: But you told me to say that!

Director: Yes, and my point in doing so was to make you use your imagination, innovation and talent.

Amber: So you want me to do it again?

Director: Yes.

Amber: (turning away from the audience and back again) Allo bébé, I have not seen you for a while. I've meesed you, my darling — I love you so very much ... that's why what I've got to ask you ees so very hard for me. You see, ma mère ees dying and I must fly to France. But I have no money to go. I've been working night and day and day and night, hour after hour, striving and scrounging to pay for my ticket, but last night I was mugged at zee bus stop near my tiny leetle apartment —

Director: Stop!

Amber: What's the matter?

Director: (leaving his seat and going to the stage) Nobody wants to hear some longwinded explanation about your dying mother, especially your lover. You shouldn't have to explain to me, to the audience, to anybody! You've never had to explain anything before. You see, you're a magical sort of person who simply snaps her fingers and the world is at her feet. Visualize this: I'm seeing you in a brilliant fiery red satin dress. I', seeing you elevated on a golden circular platform. I'm seeing scores of striking men clawing at your feet. We're talking Redford, we're talking Newman, we're talking Olivier! The wind blows gently against your sensuous body carrying the animal musk of your Tigress perfume though the air, the native drums pulse in the distance, men begin to scream your name, the sky explodes with cracks of lightening, and you merely raise your hand in silent signal, and the world is frozen.

Amber: Wow!

Director: So you get the idea?

Amber: (enthused) Yeah, yeah — I'm beginning to see it now.

Director: (returning to his seat) Good, let's go then.

Amber: Okay. (turning away from the audience)

Director: Just ooze with sexuality!

Amber: (turning to the audience) My name ees ... No — there's no need to know my name. Only that I am French and I am ... well, I've been told that I am an enchantress.

Director: (encouraging) Yes, yes.

Amber: You seem to agree. Most people do. (a sly laugh) I tend to have zat effect. Perhaps ees my dress, maybe eet's my parfum, or eet could be ... my eyes.

Director: Good, good!

Amber: Yes, it must be my eyes. The eyes are the most beautiful part of the body. And it's no wonder — through our eyes we see all that is lovely. The colours of the sky, a single red rose, a man.

Director: Now tell me that you love me.

Amber: I feel so energetique just knowing that a man watches me now. He hears my words, he sees the way my mouth curves, and he knows what I am thinking. (a smile) For zee man that watches me ees not just any man. That man ees you. Ah, my sweet, did you think I'd forgotten you were there, watching my every move? How could I forget: I love you.

Director: Great! Now get that 1,000 bucks.
 Amber: And when I see you I know that we must be together always. We must run away — to Paris. “The city of romance.” nothing could be more magical than the two of us à Paris. The things I could show you, the things we could do! Let us leave tonight. I can make arrangements for the afternoon. And the, uh ... cost shouldn't be more than 1,000 dollars. A small price to pay for a lifetime of pleasure. Do you have that much?
 Director: Beautiful, beautiful — and so sexy.
 Amber: Oh fantastic! I knew I could get a part if I just got a chance to audition. I'm so excited. I just can't believe it! ... Aren't you going to congratulate me? ... Hello, out there? ... Earth to space! ... I did get the part didn't I?
 Director: We'll call you.
 Amber: You'll call me?

(the lights fade)

Marker's Comments:

Some good potential here! Feel free to discuss this with me anytime at your convenience. Instead of commenting on it, it might be a better idea to discuss its strengths and weaknesses. I enjoyed reading this.

Friday, December 9/1983

PROGRESS REPORT

Acting is like lying: a mischievous art that requires the quality of realism. In fact, acting is lying; lying to the audience which may or may not believe that our love for a Capulet is stronger than our loyalty to a Montague or that our feelings for Arthur, the boy next door, have suddenly take on new dimensions. I have only very recently realized my own potential, as an actress, to work toward the goal of substantiating the illusion. Since my Theatre 200 course began in September, my definition of acting has changed.

Acting, for me, did not become a serious endeavour until I came to the university, at which point everything becomes very serious. In high school, acting was a game in which the participants engaged in a battle of the wits and a struggle for centre stage glory. I played the game well and always led the class. When I started my Theatre 200 class, however, I found myself being far from ahead. Here, I quickly realized that my talent for being the “class clown” just isn’t what acting is all about.

In participating in the class improvisations my instinct was to entertain my peers with funny expressions and characters rather than react to the given situation. However, I suppressed these urges and began to approach my portrayal of characters in a completely different way. For example, during the improvisation in which we were asked to act as people in a nightclub, I selected the character of a new, young waitress. My immediate instinct was to play the girl as a flighty “bubblehead.” However, remembering what our professor had suggested, I played down my initial image of the waitress and attempted to follow my reactions to happen naturally. As a result, my character felt real rather than like a comic book personality.

Because I am an expressive person, I have strong tendencies to react in bursts of emotion that seem natural enough to me but somewhat startling to others. In making an effort to control these outbursts during class improvisations, as mentioned above, and viewing my class members’ more tame dispositions, I have been working toward a happy medium. While working on our first scene, I was able to apply these rules of modification and react more naturally. I do appreciate my emotionality to be valuable in some instances when applied during the right moment of a scene. Nevertheless, I also realize my need to break away from personal characteristics when delving into the mind of a person invented by a playwright.

I am a somewhat comical person in the explosive way I present myself to the world. In the characters I have portrayed in the past I’ve always allowed this wildness in me to run amuck. I feel this has always been my greatest flaw. In class I have listened and watched and tried and learned. In doing so, I’ve gained more control of my actress-self and I’m proud of the work I’ve done in Theatre 200. Although I realize I’ve a million new things to accomplish, I’m one step further down the road — and that counts.

*Marker’s Comments:**Jessica:*

This is a great progress report. You have shown good insight into your Progress, and it is presented in a clear and lively manner. May I read it to the class at the beginning of the new term? Grade: A+

(continuing with unpublished material)

Poetry

*None of the material in this section
is dated although
three have marker's comments
included.*

*Best estimate is that material was written in last
year or two of high school, eg. 1980—83*

Pleasure Players

Liquid eyes glint
 and sweat
 and burn
 beneath flickering, mirrored shades.
 His hand haughtily flatten
 against a rigid stomach.
 His hands slice back through the air
 into his chocolate locks.
 His hands round smugly about
 his taut and Spandexed buttocks
 while a sleek taunting image
 glows on the hot reflectors.

Cocoa-butter drips
 and slides
 and melts
 into long, compliant limbs.
 Her legs swivel smoothly around,
 thrusting into hardened stance.
 Her tongue peeks coyly out,
 gliding easily across a full lip.
 Her hand curls 'round a long neck,
 spreading down toward her ribs

while a bronze chiseled figure
 keeps union with her eyes.

Pulsing steps ream
 and push
 and throb
 atop the quaking ground.
 His fingers unravel before him
 and wrap firmly about her back.
 Her knees gently collapse
 and fall comfortably between his feet.
 Their bodies softly entangle
 upon the solid surface

while wet lurid eyes
 glare madly at the act.

Marker's Comments:

This is a powerful presentation of an experience of - I'm not altogether sure - female subordination? or collaboration in some mutually degrading act. Was it a porno session or sexual exhibitionism? I wasn't as sure as I'd have liked to be who those "wet lurid eyes" at the end belonged to, i.e., the audience most probably, or could it have been one of the participants? You push your effects too hard, though, it's as if each individual grape in a bunch was glaring at me so vividly I couldn't see the bunch as a whole. You could cut the number of adj./adverbs at least in half without, I suspect, losing a single essential detail while the poem would gain overall in having a clearer outline and moving more forcefully. The words I've underlined are some of the ones that could really go. Could you find others?*

**flickering
 back through the air
 smugly
 a sleek taunting image
 smoothly around*

*haughtily
 into his chocolate locks
 taut and Spandexed
 long, compliant
 thrusting*

etc.

Falling Apart

China Doll breaks
crying and crumbling
in little

jagged
pieces

Falling
falling
dying and tumbling, just
dying and tumbling
away.

Broken doll arms
scoop at them frantically
scoop at the shattered remains

But more tears are shed
and more china breaks

The China Doll is dead.

Marker's Comments:

We don't altogether need the last line & in fact it may be a mistake in signaling too blatantly that the poem is over, sort of commanding us to feel bad, whereas it's always more effective if we're allowed space to come forward into the experience & feel bad if we choose to. Apart from that this is much better proportioned than "liquid eyes .."

Sea 'Scape

And loneliness exclaimed
with the sullen persuasion
of wind upon her cheeks,
rough wool amongst her arms,
sleek sand between her toes.

For with the empty cries
of some long forgotten gulls,
And if the stark, stark sea
churns aloof and unrestrained

she will not ache, she will not wince and she will numb.

For when the shadows cast
upon her anguished fears,
and when the earth is cold
beneath her pearly feet

There was no warmth, there was no bond, there is no memory
Of soft
adoring
tumbles
On dazzling
silhouette
nights.

And devotion is forgotten
with the subtle erosion
of wind upon her cheeks,
rough wool amongst her arms,
sleek sand between her toes.

Marker's Comments:

rough / sleek try to avoid this kind of parallelism of effect (except of course where it is precisely part of the effect you want to make): poetry can all too quickly fall into a kind of somnambulism or mechanical-ness in which the nouns or verbs operate in a kind of buddy system, each one going hand in hand with its qualifier. I'd eliminate "sleek."
cast / is / was is a confusing shift in tenses

silhouette try not to be so poetic!

I think I could stand a little more insight into the situation the subject is in, i.e., what kind of experience brought her to this; but the evocation of her emotional space is well-paced and moving. I don't see what's intended by the shift from "sullen" to "subtle" between the first and last verses.

This is the most effective I think of the three, the most technically interesting as well as the most passionately conveyed.

Life God

brown belly beat
 arose through the sand-dust
 and the animals cried out in vain

quick black-boy legs
 blood pumping pace
 and the animals died there in pain.

UNTITLED

I'll cool stings,
 and then I'll back slowly away;
 I'll leave all the covers alone.
 And should your eyes,
 with their glint,
 then turn to me,
 I'll surely have something to say:
 "Yes, I really must uncover you."

Sleep again, if you want,
 and watch sunrise alone
 through the bittersweet window
 of hope.

For just past your kicking goats
 in black tangled fields
 is the girl
 with the
 white magic cloud'

You ignite me; you incite me
 to want to uncover you.
 If you let me I'll uncover you.
 Wake-Up
 Boy.

WHAT I LIKE MOST BEST

are popsicles that drip on the
 sidewalk and you get your hands
 all sticky so mommy washes it up
 for you and says we're going to
 have grandma over for dinner and
 that means lisa and kathy can
 come over to help eat the big
 piece of cow that daddy bought
 at the store where billy stole
 some bubble-yum and said the "f"
 word to mr. quarts and couldn't go
 to tommy's party that we played
 mother-may-i at and stupid krista
 won and got to eat two whole
 popsicles that drip on the sidewalk

Threshold

If only,
 as I heavily flung
 granite to liquid,
 sore waves had crashed
 or
 a fish had scared
 or even a drop
 could be heard
 Then I would laugh
 or cry
 or mourn
 or such.
 Instead
 I stand poised,
 the stone having been thrown
 the surface having not broken.

Over the Threshold

churning
 as ravenous ocean waves
 is my mind.
 A mechanical play thing
 in your hands
 A computer with no will of its own
 except that to perform
 for its master
 you
 a candy-coated flame
 tempting me
 for just a tiny bite
 until your outside
 slithers off
 to expose the flame
 viciously driving into me
 around me
 and letting me drop.
 Now you've had your fun
 I must prove my worth
 once again
 churning
 clinking, clanking
 func-tion-ing
 for-you
 func-tion-ing
 no-thoughts
 just-func-tion-ing
 1 - 2 - 3
 1-2-3, 1-2-3
 123, 123, 123
 too fast, too hard, too much
 no more, no more, no more
 stop, stop, stop
 click.

Withdrew

Wake-up
 Boy
 whose eyes, that glint, now rest.
 Sweet, sweet morning;
 A quilt of sleep
 is stifling you
 — becoming you, boy —
 but bringing on nightmares;
 black mares and white mares.
 Billy-goat gruffs
 in dark Marigold fields
 clambering round you
 at once.
 Heather trees swish.

 And my magic cloud
 greys in your sky
 a trickle of tears,
 thunder-lightening fears;
 I rain.

 Wake-up, boy
 from your California dream for
 I want
 to uncover
 you.
 You excite me; you ignite me
 to kiss all the wild things away.

 I know, man-child,
 you will sleep if you choose
 until fairy-tale storms bow away.
 Close your eyes
 if you must
 rousing lightly (or more)
 and I will keep guard of your dreams
 Should your lids break apart
 with lips