ARCHIPELAGO

An International Journal of Literature, the Arts, and Opinion
www.archipelago.org

Vol. 4, No. 3 Autumn 2000

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Contents

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All submissions must be typed and double-spaced and sent by post with SASE or envelope and International Reply Coupon. An e-mail address is appreciated. No electronic submissions will be accepted unless Editor is queried beforehand.

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Contributors

Simin Behbahani, born in 1927, in Tehran, of literary parents – her father, Abbas Khalili, was a novelist and her mother, Fakhri Arghun, a noted feminist, teacher and writer – published her first poem at 14. She is the author of over a dozen books of poetry in Persian, with one collection of translations in English, A CUP OF SIN, *tr.* Farzaneh Milani and Kaveh Safa (Syracuse University Press, 1999). She was awarded a Human

Rights Watch/Hellman-Hammet grant in 1998, and similarly, in 1999, the Carl von Ossietzky Medal, for her struggle for freedom of expression in Iran. A selected list of sites on the web relevant to her is available on the Resources page.

Thomas Crampton is a Hong Kong-based regional correspondent for the *International Herald Tribune*.

Robert Finley teaches literature and creative writing at the Université Ste-Anne in southwestern Nova Scotia, and is an associate editor there of *Feux Chalins: Littératures des Maritimes,* a bilingual arts journal. He writes regular reviews for *The Malahat Review*, and is currently at work on a short book on reading contemporary poetry, a long book on harbours, and a picture book, with photographer François Gaudet, designed for web publication.

Clara Györgyey <gyorgyey@aol.com> is a Professor Emeritus of English and Drama, and Associate Director of the Program for Humanities in Medicine at Yale University School of Medicine; and has been President of International PEN Writers-in-Exile Center since 1976. She is the author of ten books and translator of more than two dozen works of different genres including the long-running play *Catsplay* by Istvan Örkény, a critical biography, FERENC MOLNAR (Twayne's World Authors Series), and translations in A MIRROR TO THE CAGE, Three Contemporary Hungarian Plays (University of Arkansas Press). "Confessions of a Marxist Puppetmaster" first appeared in Hungarian in her book of stories, WITH ARROGANT HUMILITY (1987), then in two Hungarian *samizdat* periodicals; the English version (translated by herself) came out in *Légerité*, (1989; now defunct). The piece is a portrait of a very famous writer and sociologist persecuted by the communist regime. Clara Gyorgyey lives in Orange, Connecticut, with her husband, Ferenc.

Richard Jones is a journalist and novelist who has tried his hand at all forms of writing except for the theatre. He is a native of Cardiganshire in Wales (born in 1926) and was educated in Wales and France. He worked for Reuters and the BBC, and for a time was a correspondent in Beirut. After the publication of his first novel, in 1967, he began teaching creative writing in American universities, including Stanford and the University of Virginia. He has been a book reviewer for a wide range of publications including *The Listener* (the now-defunct BBC publication) and *The American Scholar*. His "Hubert Butler, An Appreciation," appeared in *Archipelago* Vol. 1, No. 2.

Elizabeth Knies <eknies@nh.ultranet.com> is the author of THE NEW YEAR & OTHER POEMS, published in THREESOME POEMS (Alicejames Books); STREETS AFTER RAIN (Alicejames Books); and FROM THE WINDOW (Teal Press). New poems will appear in the Spring 2000 *Hudson Review*.

Christian McEwen ChristianMcEwen@aol.com, daughter of Sir Robert and Lady McEwen, was born in 1956 in London and grew up on the Borders of Scotland. She has a particular interest in nature writing and the family memoir. She is the editor of JO's GIRLS: Tomboy Tales of High Adventure (Beacon Press, 1997), and is at work on a video sequel, *Tomgirls!* She is also the editor of NAMING THE WAVES: Contemporary Lesbian Poetry (Virago Press, 1988; Crossing Press, 1989), and, with Sue O'Sullivan, OUT THE OTHER SIDE: Contemporary Lesbian Writing (Crossing Press, 1989). Her essay "Growing Up Upperclass" appears in OUT OF THE CLASS CLOSET, ed. Julia Penelope (Crossing Press, 1994), and her new volume, THE ALPHABET OF THE TREES: A Guide to Nature Writing (Teachers & Writers Collaborative), co-edited with Mark Statman, is just out. It contains images of works by Rory McEwen.

Farzaneh Milani http://www.virginia.edu/~womenst/people/milani.html teaches Persian language and literature and studies in women and gender at the University of Virginia. She is the author of VEILS AND WORDS: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers (Syracuse Univ. Press and I. B. Taurus) and has also served as guest editor for two special issue of *Nimeye Digar* on Simin Daneshvar and Simin Behbahani. With Kaveh Safa, she translated A CUP OF SIN (Syracuse University Press), by Simin Behbahani.

Kaveh Safa has taught courses in anthropology at City Colleges, New York and Los Angeles, and at the University of Memphis, and in Persian language and literature at the Universities of Virginia and Chicago. His

current teaching and research interests are in poetics and sexuality and gender. He is completing a dissertation on concepts of masculinity in Iranian culture for the Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago. With Farzaneh Milani, he translated A CUP OF SIN (Syracuse University Press), by Simin Behbahani.

Renata Treitel <Rtreitel@aol.com> is a teacher, poet and translator. She was born in Switzerland and educated in Italy, Argentina, and the United States. She has published a chapbook of poetry, GERMAN NOTEBOOK (1983). Her translations include: Susana Thénon, distancias/distances (Sun & Moon Press, 1994), and Rosita Copioli, SPLENDIDA LUMINA SOLIS / THE BLAZING LIGHTS OF THE SUN (Sun and Moon Press, 1996). Renata Treitel was awarded a Witter Bynner Translation Grant (1991) to translate Rosita Copioli's SPLENDIDA LUMINA SOLIS, and won the Oklahoma Poetry Award (1997) for her translation THE BLAZING LIGHTS OF THE SUN. This year, she received a Witter Bynner Translation Grant to translate Rosita Copioli's FURORE DELLE ROSE.

"X": The author of AGENT NINE is currently undercover. Comments and inquiries may be sent in care of *Archipelago* <editor@archipelago.org>. Book One, "Alice's Adventures Overseas," will appear in six installments in *Archipelago,* from September till March. The newest episode goes on-line around the middle of next month.

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News of Other Contributors

THE HUBERT BUTLER CENTENARY CELEBRATION
20-22 OCTOBER 2000 ~ KILKENNY, IRELAND

Hubert Butler (1900-1991), Kilkenny man-of-letters, remains a largely undiscovered treasure of Irish literature. A celebration of his life and work is to be held in his ancestral town, on the weekend of October 20-22. Information and registration forms can be found on this pdf (requiring the Adobe Reader for viewing), and on the "Hubert Butler" http://www.hubertbutler.com web site.

The celebration will begin with a keynote address, "Hubert Butler and His Century," by the distinguished Oxford historian Roy Foster on Friday evening, followed by three sessions: "Remembering Butler" (Saturday morning), "Butler in Ireland" (Saturday afternoon) and "Butler Abroad" (Sunday morning). In each session a series of speakers will address aspects of Butler's life and work. There will also be Conference Receptions at Kilkenny Castle and at Maidenhall, the Butler family home. The speakers will include John Banville, Edna Longley, Joe Hone, Tim Robinson, Fintan O'Toole, Nicholas Grene, Chris Agee, Dick Crampton, Christopher Fitz-Simon, **John Casey**, Proinsias O Drisceoil, Rob Tobin, Peter Smithwick, Christopher Merrill, Caroline Walsh, Eleanor Burgess and Antony Farrell. The *Observer* columnist Neal Ascherson will deliver the closing address on Sunday afternoon, "Hubert Butler's Contemporary Relevance." The Conference venue will be Butler House, in the center of Kilkenny.

"The Artukovitch File," by Hubert Butler, appeared in *Archipelago* Vol. 1, No. 2. John Casey, novelist, speaker at the celebration and family friend of the Butlers, is also a Contributing Editor of this journal.

Edith Grossman, the translator of García Márquez, Mayra Montero, Alvaro Mútis, Mario Vargas Llosa, among other noted Latin American writers, has been asked to undertake a new American English version of Cervantes' DON QUIXOTE, by Dan Halpern, publisher of The Ecco Press/HarperCollins. Halpern said he expected her to spend two years on the project, including translation and notes. Her translation of Victoria Slavuski's "Music to Forget an Island By" appeared in Vol. 2, No. 1. Edith Grossman is also a Contributing Editor of *Archipelago*.

M Sarki http://roguebooks.home.att.net/, whose poems appeared in *Archipelago* Vol. 1, No. 2, and No. 3, is the author of ZIMBLE ZAMBLE ZUMBLE, from Elimae Books, just out. Bibliographic information: First edition, first printing, limited to 75 copies. 12mo - over 6 3/4" - 7 3/4" tall. Hand sewn original wraps.

Foreword by Gordon Lish. 99 pp. The text of this book was set in Polophilus. Front and back covers 80 lb. Crystal Gloss Cover. The front and back covers were hand cut, and the book was strengthened by an internal binding and bound (inside and out) with bee's-wax-treated silk thread. Designed by Deron Bauman.

Persons interested in purchasing a copy (for $55) can contact Deron Bauman of elimae books by either e-mail to <deron@elimae.com> or by post at 822 N. Clinton, Dallas TX, 75208 A signed copy from the author M Sarki can be had for $60, from 1403 Evergreen Road, Anchorage, KY 40223.

Joan Schenkar's new biography of Dolly Wilde, niece of Oscar and a personage in her own right, is called TRULY WILDE and is to be launched in October by Virago/Little Brown in the U.K. and Basic Books in the U.S. The cast of characters includes: Dorothy Wilde (1895-1941), Oscar Wilde, Natalie Clifford Barney, various members of the Wilde family, Trancred Borenius, Djuna Barnes, Bettina Bergery, Cecil Beaton, Truman Capote, Berthe Cleyrergue, Victor Cunard, Elizabeth Eyre de Lanux, Janet Flanner, and a high-spirited gathering of on-lookers.

Joan Schenkar is a widely-produced playwrite, three of whose "comedies of menace" are collected in SIGNS OF LIFE (Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1998). Her "Recommended Reading" appeared in *Archipelago* Vol. 2, No. 1.

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Letters to the Editor

On James Broughton, from Michael Rothenberg:

James Broughton is a celebrated maniac of the beat era and did a lot of experimental film work and poetry. I have seen some of his films and have heard his poetry. When I heard it I was uplifted by his lightness and gaiety and playfulness and love, though sometimes I felt it was slight and easy.

I met him at Port Townsend about 20 years ago. I was working with William Stafford, Mark Strand, Carolyn Kizer, Charles Wright, and Marvin Bell. Believe me, when Broughton dropped in – he lived around there for a while – it was such a breath of fresh air I wanted to kiss him, and I told him. But you have to consider the source; too much of the university professor can dull my senses. He didn't have that way about him. That was his beauty. But he was very smart. Certainly an intellectual. He was concerned with liberation and experimentation in art and sexuality. Jack Foley who writes *for Alsop Review*, is on KPFA in Berkeley poetry series, and writes reviews for the *Poetry Flash*, is a big fan of his and there are many like Jack.

Michael Rothenberg <walterblue@bigbridge.org>

Michael Rothenberg is a poet and edits The Big Bridge <http://www.bigbridge.org>. "Free to Die Laughing," an interview with James Broughton, appeared in Archipelago Vol. 4, Nos. 1/2.

On the Editor's conversation with Odile Hellier, from Martin Goodman:

It's interesting, this whole game of the commercialization of culture. I recognize how vulnerable a writing career is without a best-seller under the belt. The quirks and risks are commercially acceptable from a known name, a "branded" writer; but without those sales figures I have to keep coming up with a new sleight of hand to get the next book published.

I recently created a massive chart of factors that created best-sellers to see if I could write with some of those criteria in mind. It's an informative process, though I have come to see that "unique and strong authorial voice" is one of the necessary categories.

Grisham came up quite a few times in your conversation. I've not read the new piece serialized in his *Oxford Magazine*, which got some wonderful reviews, but actually have been quite impressed by him. There was one page in one of the books that made me think "wow, he can really do it if he wants": beautifully clean prose, a latter-day Dickensian style. It was like seeing the early paintings of Lowry and realizing he actually could do great art, so I should revise my opinion of his stick-people paintings, knowing they were done by choice and not creative flaccidity! I do find a lot of "literature" to be maudlin self-reflection. One of the virtues of commercial literature is that it does not major in self-reflection. It often does take quite an incisive and informed approach to contemporary society.

"Literature" keeps letting me down. I know Malcolm Lowry is great, but I've sat by his graveside in Sussex and seen what that often amounts to. There's a certain celebration of anguish, yet I'm not sure the exchange is worthwhile: the work for the failed and miserable lives. I've also sat by the river at the point Virginia Wolfe drowned herself. So much great work, written on the edge, explores the failures of life to really connect.

I'm not sure that gives the right encouragement.

Some give me hope. William Goyen's ARCADIO, Denton Welch, James Purdy, especially in IN A SHALLOW GRAVE, Michael Cunningham before THE HOURS (I realize I'm about to catalogue gay male writing, which shows how subjective comment is). Peter Cameron's ANDORRA, Mark Merlis's AN ARROW'S FLIGHT (wonderful), Pete Russell's THE SEA OF TRANQUILLITY, and Patrick White (who was my early hero) ...

Good commercial fiction gives me structure and a satisfying way out of a tangled mess, plus insights into contemporary aspects of life. "Literature" can turn my life around, make me joyful for the wonders of language; but so often seek to drag me into despair without showing me a credible way through it, and there is a way through it, so I tire of the wallowing.

Martin Goodman <http://www.MartinGoodman.com>

Martin Goodman is a novelist and essayist. His interview with James Broughton, "Free to Die Laughing," appeared in Archipelago *Vol. 4, Nos. 1/2. "Institutional Memory: A conversation with Odile Hellier, of the Village Voice Bookshop, Pars," appeared in the same issue.*

On serious reading and the web, from Phil Sheehan:

I think you are generally correct about serious readers. We (I flatter myself that I am one) take more pleasure, surely, in reading from the page, and I think there are several reasons for this.

The page in front of us – book or magazine or journal – has substance, it is real. Its content, therefore, is inherently real, substantial. And consistent. Every time I open my copy of BLEAK HOUSE, it begins, "London. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn." The computer screen, with images that come and go and change instantaneously, is the home of what is called (an oxymoron, in my mind) "virtual reality." One of its touted advantages, with respect to the Internet, is that the page very likely will NOT be the same the next time I look at it.

It is not easy to get comfortable with a monitor: it defies or prevents many of the truly enjoyable positions for reading – curled up in a chair, sprawled in the grass, huddled under the covers. And serious readers – perhaps I need to pause here and define serious readers. In my mind, they are those who read because the process itself is important, magic, defining. It may not always matter what they read; in fact, they are apt to read absolutely anything at all merely because it is there. My middle son, the most literate of six highly literate siblings, is virtually compulsive about it, reading cereal boxes and banana labels and wattage imprints on light bulbs when nothing else is available. He's been doing it since childhood, and is now in his mid-thirties. It might be that we serious readers are intent upon more than getting the score or identifying the killer or hearing the music: it is important to us to be able to translate the symbols into meaningful images; it is a critical step in bringing order out of chaos; it is a part of coming to grips with, of managing at least to comprehend, a world we know we can neither encompass or direct.

As I was saying when I so rudely interrupted myself: Serious readers enjoy the process; it enriches the entire experience, which becomes more than simply acquiring information. And one can honestly enjoy the process only if one is comfortable.

Reading on the computer screen is – it has become for most who do it for any period of time – an interactive phenomenon. It is unusual for me to read for more than a minute or so without calling on the computer to so something: call up a new page, go to a different site, bring up a different program, change parameters of the presentation. These are not the same as, not even analogous to, turning the page. They involve a change in direction, a redirection of focus, an intrusion of other elements. And that is not even to begin dealing with the more complex details of "interactivity."

I had a pleasant but ultimately frustrating argument with an acquaintance lately about the value of what he (and many others, I suppose) calls "e-fiction." It is one of the pet toys of the deconstructionists or some such nonce critical school, a technological assist in the depersonalizing of literature. He argued that e-fiction liberates the reader from the tyranny of the writer, allowing said reader to jump hither and yon in the text at her/his whim, instead of being led by the writer. My reply was that e-fiction sounded to me far more restrictive than the old-fashioned kind – readers leap around, to be sure, but only from predetermined points within the text, and only to other predetermined points within the text. If I am reading, say, a Tony to mystery, I am free at any point look sideways at the New Mexican landscape, backward at the Navajo lore, down at the probable motives of the killer. All that, without clicking the mouse or even for a moment losing my place in the story. Not surprisingly, neither of us was converted.

Probably the dominant period of "serious readers" is at an end. We will never become extinct, I think, but we will soon be outnumbered, if we are not already, by those whose reading experience is confined to the computer screen, or some essentially indistinguishable surrogate. Looking back through McLuhan, we'd probably find he had outlined a great deal of this. We are the current incarnation of what he called POBs – print-oriented bastards. I think we deserve a less derisive title, though I think McLuhan applied it affectionately.

Phil Sheehan psheehan@britannica.com

RILKE: FOUR POEMS of LOSS

tr. from the German by Elizabeth Knies

Vor dem Sommerregen

Auf einmal ist aus allem Grün im Park
man weiß nicht was, ein Etwas, fortgenommen;
man fühlt ihn näher an die Fenster kommen
und schweigsam sein. In ständig nur und stark

ertönt aus dem Gehölz der Regenpfeifer,
man denkt an einen Hieronymus:
so sehr steigt irgend Einsamkeit und Eifer
aus dieser einen Stimme, die der Guß

erhören wird. Des Saales Wände sind
mit ihren Bildern von uns fortgetreten,
als dürften sie nicht hören was wir sagen.

Es spiegeln die verblichenen Tapeten
das ungewisse Licht von Nachmittagen,
in denen man sich fürchtete als Kind.

-Neue Gedichte

Before the Summer Rain

All at once, a Something—we don't know what—
has drained all the green from the park;
one feels it approach the window
soundlessly. Urgent and intense

the golden plover cries in the woods
like Saint Jerome:
loneliness and passion rise as one voice
that will be heard in the downpour.

The walls of the room
with their pictures shrink back
as if forbidden to hear what we say.

The threadbare tapestries shimmer
in the uncertain light of afternoon
in which one felt so frightened as a child.

Du im Voraus. . . .

Du im Voraus
verlorne Geliebte, Nimmergekommene,
nicht weiß ich, welch Töne dir lieb sind.
Nicht mehr versuch ich, dich, wenn das Kommende wogt,
zu erkennen. All die großen
Bilder in mir, im Fernen erfahrene Landschaft,
Städte und Türme und Brücken und un-
vermutete Wendung der Wege
und das Gewaltige jener von Göttern
einst durchwachsenen Länder
steigt zur Bedeutung in mir
deiner, Entgehende, an.

Ach, die Gärten bist du,
ach, ich sah sie mit solcher
Hoffnung. Ein offenes Fenster
im Landhaus—, und du tratest beinahe
mir nachdenklich heran. Gassen fand ich,—
du warst sie gerade gegangen,
und die Spiegel manchmal der Läden der Händler
waren noch schwindlich von dir und gaben erschrocken
mein zu plötzliches Bild.—Wer weiß ob derselbe
Vogel nich hinklang durch uns
gestern, einzeln, im Abend?

-*Ungesammelte Gedichte*

You who already were lost. . .

You who already
were lost, beloved, never to arrive,
I don't even know what melodies you like.
I don't look for you anymore, don't hope to find you
in time to come. All the immense
images in me of distant landscapes,
cities and towers and bridges and un-
foreseen turns in the road
and that realm where the gods dwell
rise up in me to mean
that you will always elude me.

Ah, you are the gardens,
ah, I saw you with such
hope. An open window
in a country house—
and you stepped out,
pensive, nearby. I found streets
where you had just been,
and sometimes a mirror in a shop
still dizzy from you, that startled,
reflected my abrupt appearance.
—Who knows if the same
bird didn't sing for us
yesterday, separately, in the evening?

Schlaflied

Einmal, wenn ich dich verlier,
wirst du schlafen können, ohne
daß ich wie eine Lindenkrone
mich verflüstre über dir?

Ohne daß ich hier wache und
Worte, beinah wie Augenlider,
auf deine Brüste, auf deine Glieder
niederlege, auf deinen Mund?

Ohne dass ich dich verschließ
und dich allein mit Deinem lasse,
wie einen Garten mit einer Masse
von Melissen und Stern-Anis?

-Der Neuen Gedichte, Anderer Teil

Lullaby

One day, when I lose you,
will you be able to go to sleep
without me like a crown of lindens
whispering over you?

Without me waking beside you,
putting words like a butterfly kiss
on your breast, on your arms and legs,
on your mouth?

Without me closing you
and leaving you alone with what is yours,
like a garden full to overflowing
with melissa and star-anise?

Herbsttag

Herr: es ist Zeit. Der Sommer war sehr groß,
Leg deinen Schatten auf die Sonnenuhren,
Und auf den Fluren laß die Winde los.

Befiehl den letzten Früchten voll zu sein;
Gieb ihnen noch zwei südlichere Tage,
Dränge sie zur Vollendung hin und jage
Die letzte Süße in den schweren Wein.

Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr.
Wer jetzt allein ist, wird es lange bleiben,
Wird wachen, lesen, lange Briefe schreiben
Und wird in den Alleen hin und her
Unruhig wandern, wenn die Blätter treiben.

-Das Buch der Bilder

Autumn Day

Lord: it is time. Summer was so vast.
Now shadows slant across the sundials
and the wind is loose in the fields.

Let the last fruits become full;
give them two more southerly days
to reach perfection
and drive the last sweetness into the heavy wine.

Who has no house now will not be building one.
Who is alone now will remain alone,
will wake up, read, write long letters,
and go out walking here and there
restlessly, when the leaves begin to blow.

from

THE ACCIDENTAL INDIES

Robert Finley

A Departure

THE LABYRINTH OF DESIRE

The river is still greasy with night, and slow. It is half an hour before sunrise. Pale in first light, the moon at its quarter climbs down the western sky. The mooring lines slip heavily from the bows and after a moment the current takes us. The riverbanks are wet with dew and the marshes brightening in the grey dawn. On the way out a fisherman hails us. We ghost by him, close enough to speak low, but there is nothing anyone can say or think of. In our dumb wake he throws the fine net with its margin of stones. It flashes a dark circle against the water. Then the ship's boy sings.

Bendita sea la luz
Y la Santo Veracruz
Y el Señor de la Verdad
Y la Santo Trinidad
bendita sea el alma
Y el Señor que nos la munda;
bendito sea el dia
Y el Señor que nos to envia

By eight o'clock we take the tide up over the bar of Saltès and head out.

And you can see them now. Against a strong seabreeze they make their way forward, new rigging is tightened and retightened, the hills sink behind them. They stop at the Canaries and set out again, this time for the horizon only. But say, just say that the sceptics had been right all along, and that before them there was no real, no elemental sea, but only, after two, maybe three day's sail due west, the threshold of their understanding. Beyond it, despite the familiar passage of the days and nights, and the flight of the stars, say they venture into the Sea of Allegory. Before them the moon at its quarter swings down the western sky, and its chaste goddess of the hunt, Roman Diana, with her bow and quiver of plagues, walks at the ship's side, its bridle in her hand. Neptune with his trident and trinity of horses rides a Botticelli shell off to port, and scouts ahead. It is, after all, new territory for him as well. In the distance, are those islands, or clouds drifting up over the horizon into a false perspective? Sea sightings are often tricks of light, so close to the huge distorting lens of the bellied ocean. Except, yes, there they are again, just visible in the coat of arms that billows from the masthead. Sinister: anchors and a lion rampant; Dexter: a castle and the islands in the sea. That the ship is armed and cannon ready is no surprise, the sea pregnant with those shapes sea-monstrous, and there on deck is the coiled rope for binding and for bringing back. Close in to port, two lusty sea-centaurs blow a fanfare on their conch shells, while a pair of sirens off to starboard are promising a song. Columbus himself stands in the ship's centre, fully armed, out-sized, one hand at his sword, in the other a staff and Christian banner. He looks westward. Is it those islands that hold his gaze, or the sirens singing, or the standard of the Cross obscuring all? He seems aloof. Does he, coursing into history, so disdain the graceful progeny of his mythic heritage to leave them in his wake? We've seen him in this state before, the fixed assertive look, the surety. And what is that—out in front? Unsteady on the bowsprit the eager dove, wings outstretched, articulates the wooden letter of the Cross and prepares to fly.

What you cannot see in this picture are the huge circling currents, the respiration of the whale, or the whale's way turning and turning on

itself, the great ease of oceans around continents. The feathered coral feels it, the sand banks sketch it, the seethe and drag of the tides knows it, but you cannot see it here. Nor can you see the round earth made strange by the helmsman's good work, by the charged hull, the lodestone, the Genoese needles balanced on their axes, by the fine straight line (the course is true) growing westward, dividing, never turning back on itself, always moving westward.

Nor will you find here any of the icons of exploration, no instruments of observation or of record. The ship is ill-equipped, the islands are misty and remote. He is naked in that armour, the Discoverer. Where does he think he is going?

WEST

The way west is the way east. The way out is the way in. At five, maybe six miles per hour the knotted thread is unwound to the centre of the labyrinth of desire. The heart is eager, it is violent, it is empty. The winds have turned and carry him effortlessly forward.

—•—

The Accidental Indies

Already at first light, Columbus is at his table in the gallery under the aft deck. The burnished vellum is spread out before him, pinned flat, and all around him arrayed in trays and cases are his pens and inks, raw pigments, sable brushes, bottles of fine absorbent sand, his mortar and pestle, dividers in a leather sheath, his rules and compasses. Yesterday he prepared a ground of gum arabic to coat the hide and let it dry in the east wind that swelled all

afternoon behind them. Now, as they make their way in, the ship steadying when it finds the line of the island's shelter and the ground swell suddenly subsides, he leans against the table and inscribes a figure for the journey itself, a kind of invocation, the compass rose.

It is clear that he has laboured over the stencil. Here, at the centre, are the petals of a flower in perpetual bloom, this circled by a band of gold leaf on which are set eight indigo diamonds, one for each of the world's eight winds. Around these runs a horizon of plain black bordered by threads of cochineal. And from the rose's centre he has drawn out thirty-two fine straight lines, black portolan lines, that emanate across the whole plain of the vellum like the rays of a darkened sun, a cloud drawn across its face. This process he repeats around the chart's perimeter, each rose oriented to the others, their rays criss-crossing to form a loose net, weighted at the edges, for his observations. And here, leaning in from the margins, the faces of four wind gods animate the empty space between them, their cheeks straining, their hair caught back in invisible gusts.

Why are charts so wonderfully engaging? He works in a sort of rapture, does Columbus, despite the busy ship around him, now pauses to trim his pen, and now stoops again to the table, narrowing his gaze. And I must confess, I too have felt their beauty, their allure, and spent my share of hours bent over a broken-backed atlas tracing with my finger the road or river furthest north or south or east or west, or indeed, a mazy course among islands that open secretly onto other seas, into other worlds which I entered, following it. The language of charts is the visible in outline, the beach or cape or spit of land, the cliff face conspicuous from a coasting ship, the reef just breaking, the bright littoral that encloses every island translated to a black line by the flowing pen, the white foaming rock to a blackened star. This is their language, but it is not their subject: charts chart the numinous and are the textbooks for a certain kind of yearning.

But let us turn back to the Santa Maria's low gallery where Columbus sits in the shadow of the deck and awaits our full attention, a soft tipped brush poised above the island of arrival. Behind the black apostrophe

that marks the crescent of the beach, the bay the ships are sailing into, he lays down a preliminary wash of island green, vivid and translucent. And now, to show this first anchorage and its depth, uncoils with his pen a length of the lead and line. It is the small inshore lead, armed with tallow, so scrupulous in detail you can see the strips of leather at the two and three fathom marks, the white rag at five, the red at seven.

It is not disappointment, but surprise to find so little of what he had been thinking of, ghosting in on the making tide to a broad and shining bay. The bosun sounds the still water. At every fall the lead marks its own centre; ripples widening outward link with those before and after, the ship's course marked by this light chain. His singing chant comes back to them from the woods behind the beach, strong and clear and startling after a month on the echoless ocean. And with the echo come all the other sounds, a flood of the particular; instead of the dull percussion of the waves, they hear their own breath as it escapes them, and as it is drawn in, with it comes the dizzy scent of pine, overwhelming, lucid; the rustling of the palms that line the beach and just now begin to shift and sway in the first trace of the morning breeze breaks in upon them as though upon their sleep, sibilant and distinct; a brook that clatters across the beach on the far shore rings like a bell; across the hollow bay, the green of the forest keens, birdsong; the sea-worn sails furl like sheering silk; each thing astonishing in its clarity and separateness glistens under the light of the senses returning, it seems, one by one, the knot of the voyage that bound them up suddenly loosened. The morning is still, the bay to all appearances deserted: no town, no village, not even a clearing or a path presents itself. True, mixed in with the scent of the forest warming in the morning sun, there might be the sour trace of an extinguished fire, and there is at least the possibility of fishing nets draped like shadows to dry among the shadows higher up the beach.

This is nothing that he had expected.

But consider, reader, in this brief hiatus (for the bay is not deserted, nor is it still for long: if you look here, off the island's southern point, you will see where Columbus has already painted, in a dense wash of blue bice,

the shadow of the morning breeze that picks up the islands one by one all along this archipelago, bright shells gathered in a palm of wind), consider how this prospect—the running brook of sweet water, the solace of the scented air, the flowers and the earth, the white strand and safe harbour—how this prospect might allay any disappointment over unmet expectations, and instil instead a sense of wonder in one so long at sea and so far from home. The place might seem magical.

And indeed, when the first trace of morning breeze turns the mirror of the bay to the wall and the ships swing to and set their anchors, several young men and a girl emerge from the porous wall of trees and slough off the leaves' green shade, stepping naked into the sunlight. Their movements are easy and unhurried and clothed in light. They slide a boat out from a shaded lee and into the water to the depth of their thighs where they slip into the narrow hull to take up their flashing oars. The winged hull moves just a breath above the surface of the bay where it leaves no wake, despite its swiftness, and the paddles feather nothing but the bright air. The paddlers are decorated with cochineal, yelloe, black, their skin, myrrh slightly darkened. Behind them, the island itself is extravagant, a green gem set in gold, banded by a line of white and then by turquoise (fine ground azurite), and set in a deep blue wash of ocean. When they come up to the ships and speak, their voices are like the senseless soft chattering of birds.

But despite the chart's excesses (gold dissolved in ox-bile brightens some sections of the beach, and lapis lazuli deepens the inland lakes), the ships do not stay for long at this first island. When Columbus rows ashore and, unsteady after a month on the pitching sea, climbs carefully backwards over the bluff bow of the ship's boat onto the sand, he looks down to see the toe of his narrow shoe pointing seaward (and still westward); this we may, as he does, interpret as a sign, his footprint clear in its declaration of departure not arrival. Today and tomorrow they do take time to enjoy the beach and eat a local meal of conch fritters and iguana tail, cassava bread, and carry out a little trade in beads (for braiding in the hair), and in the colour red. And Columbus makes a formal proclamation which, in a word,

lays claim to this one island. But the ceremony of arrival is muted, a small speech in a large hall, and all parties seem unsure of the dimensions of their gestures, whether of conquest or of greeting: the one invents a ritual for surprise, the other for arrival at a place they cannot recognize.

Columbus is working by dead reckoning, and dead reckoning finds its meaning in motion only; a careful balance between expectation and observation, it defines where the ship is, always and only in terms of where it has been and is going. Consider the instruments he has at his disposal: the compass in its binnacle, that precipitous enclosure; the ampoletta, or sand glass, that lays down its golden path through time; the knotted log-line that measures out the ship's speed through the water; and the lead and line that leads them through the brailled shallows. He is not equipped for standing still. And so it should be no surprise that we find him even now, on this evening of the first day, mixing burnt umber with egg-white (beaten and settled) for the hulls, myrrh lightened with yelloe for the sails lit by the morning sun, and white lead for the water cresting at the bows. Look. He has already set the three ships into another day and westward under full sail, their shadows billowing before them. Vermilion pennants unfurl at the mastheads.

It is just dawn and the bows bear down on the still midnight west. Behind them the first island has flattened to a silhouette against the eastern sky when the sun lifts free and burnishes the empty sea before them. The guides he has taken lean against the gunwale and sweep the horizon from the south to the northwest, calling out between them a litany of one hundred islands that lie just beyond their sight; the ships sail out among them.

"MUSIC HIDING IN THE AIR"
A Memoir of Rory McEwen (1932-1982)

Christian McEwen

Memory is more than a looking back to a time that is no longer; it is a looking into another kind of time altogether where everything that ever was continues not just to be, but to grow and change with the life that is in it still. The people we loved. The people who loved us. The people who, for good or ill, taught us things.

Frederick Buechner, THE SACRED JOURNEY

1.

It's early May, one of the first days that really feels like spring. I've been wandering round the garden, pausing at intervals to admire the scarlet tulips and the creamy daffodils, the blue and pinkish clusters of forget-me-nots. I've been taking the time it always takes to notice things: the bright star at the center of each forget-me-not, the rich gloss on the petals of the tulips. And, as so often now in recent years, I've been thinking about Rory.

Rory was my uncle, my father's younger brother, a tall man in a kilt or summer blue jeans, his long legs going up and up. He was also a painter, best known for his watercolors of leaves and flowers on vellum. He died (too young) in 1982. But his work remains: in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, in museums and private collections all over the world.

It was from looking at Rory's pictures that I first began to see. He was my mentor for a crucial nine years, from my late teens until well into my twenties. He made time to talk to me and take me out to lunch; he invited me to his openings; he wrote to me, reliably and often. He was an artist, first and foremost, whereas I knew from early on that I wanted to write. But across all the differences of genre and gender, the endeavor was the same. Even now, he is someone from whom I'm still learning, someone whose work still startles and inspires me, whose interests (in nature, poetry, music, art and Buddhism) consistently reinvigorate my own.

2.

Long ago, back before adult time began, I remember lying on the rug beside the fire, with the gray rain pouring down outside, and my uncles' voices on the record-player: heavy, grainy, grown up voices, familiar and monotonous:

Ye Hi'lands and ye Lawlands
Oh where hae ye been?
They have slain the Earl o' Moray
And laid him on the green.

They sang "The Bonnie Earl o' Moray," and "The Wife of Usher's Well"; they sang "The Four Maries" and "The Barnyards o' Delgaty," and between getting up to stare out the window at the sodden lawn and attending – grumbling and obedient – to the roaring fire, between squabbling over *Beano* and last week's color supplement, my brothers and sisters and I learned all the words unthinking: the ancient tales of tragedy and betrayal, the sudden moments of unexpected poetry:

Oh gentle wind that bloweth south
Frae where my love repaireth
Convey a kiss frae his dear mouth
And tell me how he fareth.

We knew songs by the yard in those days: songs from *Oliver* and *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music*; sea-shanties, army songs, hymns and Christmas carols. But the Scottish ballads were the ones we returned to, brooding over the sweet sorrow of "The Craw Killed the Pussie O" or the chilling moment in "The Wife of Usher's Well" when her three sons came back from the dead, and "their hats were made o' the birk, o, their hats were made o' the birk."

It neither grew on syke nor ditch
Nor aught on ony sheugh
But at the gates o' Paradise
That birk grew fine enou'

No one told us the meaning of "syke" or "sheugh" (a brook or rivulet; some kind of pit), but we didn't mind. It was the feeling we craved, the enveloping atmosphere. We knew even then, at nine and eleven and thirteen, that there was nourishment in those old songs, the nourishment of blood and bone and home. And so we lay there by the fire, while the rain poured down outside, playing those scratched records over and over again.

3.

Rory was one of the voices on those old, cracked records. The other belonged to his younger brother Alexander, always known as Eck. As young men they had traveled round the United States together, singing Scottish folk-songs and Southern blues. They appeared regularly at the Edinburgh Festival, and each hosted his own blues and folk-song show on television. From time to time we were allowed to stay up late and watch. But best were the family gatherings when they sang together after dinner. Eck had the truer, sweeter voice, but Rory was all exuberance and panache, delighting in a rollicking refrain like "Linten adie, loorin adie, linten adie, toorin ee" or a lugubrious one like "binorie," leaning forward over his guitar, his pale eyes twinkling, those endless legs sprawled out across the floor.

He was a merry, antic figure, a kind of modern day Pied Piper. I remember the unlikely shirts in sixties' pinks and mauves, the warm dry laugh, the pervasive sense of gusto. He'd swoop up from London with a car full of children, his son and daughters, cousins, friends of friends, and at once a certain giddiness would descend upon us all. Rory was always at the center, bounding up the stairs in his huge white tennis shoes, chasing us down the corridor or across the lawn, turning suddenly, threatening to tickle us, while we fled, anguished, screaming.

He could be like that with the grownups too, whooping his way down the line in "Strip the Willow," convulsed with laughter at some reckless anecdote. But there was another, more sober side to him as well. He was both gregarious and private, modest and

ambitious; lighthearted, and at the same time, intensely serious. He knew this of himself, I think, and had learned how best to handle it, moving with great sweetness and fluidity among his many selves, somehow able to balance the prankster and the poet, the artist and musician and the family man, the traveler and the much beloved friend.

4.

Rory was born at Marchmont, in the Scottish Borders, the fourth in a family of seven children. The house was an eighteenth century one, and Rory liked to describe himself, not quite jokingly, as having been born in the eighteenth century. Certainly he was raised with both the advantages and disadvantages of the upper class. His father was a landowner and Conservative politician (also a minor poet and translator from the French), and Rory was educated in traditional fashion, first by a governess at home, and later at Ampleforth, Eton, and Trinity College, Cambridge.

He was a wonderfully deft and inventive boy; indeed, his family nickname was "Wizard." He made kites and stilts and boats and gliders, tied his own fishing-flies, and was skilled at origami and calligraphy. He also loved to guddle or catch fish with his hands, and was passionately interested in butterflies.

I have a photograph of him at the age of ten, in the late summer of 1942. He is dressed like his older brothers in jacket, kilt, and thick, hand-knitted stockings, and like them, he has his left knee slung tidily across his right. But where his brothers' hands are folded, or clasped loosely on their laps, Rory is holding something (a pen, a pocket-knife, a piece of balsa-wood?). He is looking off to the side and grinning, fiddling with that small, invisible object, while the wind pushes his hair back across his forehead, and blows the loose ends into a fan above his head.

What was Rory holding? What project was he planning next? No one thought of him as an artist in those days, though in fact he had already begun painting flowers under the tutelage of his French governess, Mademoiselle Phillipe. Years later, he remembered those early watercolors, of spear thistle, water avon, sweet pea. *They conjure up freedom and fine weather, tickling trout, bare feet in cool water.*

Later he studied Cézanne, on long dusty afternoons in the Eton College drawing schools. His teacher was Wilfrid Blunt, who was then working on THE ART OF BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION. It was through him that Rory came to look at the great flower-painters of the past, among them Robert, Redouté, Ehret and Aubriet.

But at the time it was his eldest brother, Jamie, who was seen as the painter in the family. Jamie painted birds and landscapes with uncanny accuracy; he was also deeply immersed in jazz. As a young officer, stationed at Catterick Army Camp, not far from Rory's school in Yorkshire, he'd stop by on visiting weekends to play jazz for him on the headmaster's piano. *The Southern Blues spoke to my heart from the time of my childhood,* Rory later wrote. *Leadbelly was early to become a friend and companion, as were Lester Young, Raymond Queredo, Amalia Rodriguez, Louis Armstrong, Jacques Brel, Ali Akhbar Khan.* He came to modern art, he always said, largely through twentieth century music. *I am glad that I was so long in learning to see, after I had learned to hear.*

5.

Rory left Eton at the age of eighteen, and served for two years in the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. My grandmother's diary chronicles his return from Egypt in May 1952. He'd rung her from the ship in Liverpool, to tell her he was back, and the next day she and my grandfather drove into Edinburgh to meet him.

"We got onto the platform through a barrier of police to see the troop train come in," she wrote. "It was crammed with soldiers, the pipers playing and waving their bonnets. One of the most exciting and moving sights in the world." Two days later she and my grandfather brought Rory home, "looking wonderfully well and gallant." He wandered about all over the house and park, revisiting all his old haunts, "saying very little, but looking blissful."

Years later, Rory wrote that he sat down and painted a rose the very day he got out of the army, finding to his surprise that *[his] hand had unknowingly educated itself*. My grandmother's diary says nothing of this, though she does mention that he did a watercolor of a rose for his sister's birthday in August, "the equal of a Redouté for brilliance and exactitude." Clearly she delighted in his skill, writing later that month that "Pin and Nutkin" (Rory and his youngest brother, John Sebastian) "are much taken up with painting flowers, which they do too beautifully," and again, towards the end of September, "Pin painted one of his exquisite flowers most of the day. He is trying to get a contract with Collins to illustrate a pocket flower-book, but it means 600 colored drawings, and I don't know where he will find the time."

Rory went off to Cambridge early in October, and the Collins project foundered. But he continued to paint, both on paper and (following Redouté), on the more expensive Italian calfskin vellum. His brother-in-law, Freddy Hesketh, owned the originals of the Redouté roses, and Rory was able to examine them at his leisure. It was through this family connection too, that he first met Sacheverell Sitwell, who soon became both friend and patron. In 1955, eight of Rory's watercolors were published in OLD CARNATIONS AND PINKS, by C. Oscar Moreton, with Sitwell's introduction. Others found their way into private collections; the Queen Mother, for example, owned one of his carnations, and Princess Margaret had several of his roses.

This is not as surprising as it seems. The Queen Mother was Scottish, after all, and an exact contemporary of my grandfather. Princess Margaret and Rory both loved to sing, and had a vast fund of folksongs in common. Nonetheless, Rory's sojourns with "the Royals" were always of extremely brief duration. Cambridge was what mattered to him most. He had a glorious time there, singing and playing with the "Footlights Club," along with Jonathan Miller and other budding luminaries. He was a teasing, colorful, theatrical figure, much loved by all his friends. But there were others who were less impressed, as Karl Miller remembers in his autobiography, REBECCA'S VEST.

"A friend of mine from Scotland went onto me about how, when his train to Cambridge had stopped at York, he had been afflicted with the fearful sight of a tall young man in an Inverness cape and a Tam o'Shanter, clad in tartan trews, a brace of pheasants over his shoulder, and in his hand a guitar, from which trailed a sky-blue ribbon: surely there could be no such person as this who was actually Scottish."

Rory was Scottish all right, by blood, by birth, and by passionate inclination. He cherished this heritage: its songs, its natural history. But it is also true that he was not averse to using it, even to exaggerating it a little. For example he sang his ballads in broad Scots (though he spoke with an unmistakable Oxbridge accent), and took an actor's pleasure in the various costumes that he donned along the way.

It was in this role of travelling minstrel that he and his brother Eck took off for the United States together, in February 1956. My grandfather kept all their letters home, copying them by hand into a bound album. Their immediate destination was New York, which struck Rory as a *very exciting town – ugly, raucous, pretentious, and unselfconscious, with the most scruffy streets shouldering the richest boulevards.*

They spent their first weeks with friends on East 61st Street, Eck in an attic room belonging to Alice Astor, and Rory next door with her daughter, Romana. It was a lavish, gregarious, intensely social life. *At moments one might almost be living in pre-war English society with liveried servants, bell pulls, chauffeur-driven Rolls Royces and what all.* But what really interested them was the downtown world of jazz and "colored folk-singers," whose music they'd been listening to, religiously, for years. Because this was the McCarthy era, many of their most valued mentors were forbidden to perform. (Pete Seeger, for example, had been described as "Un-American" for singing left-wing "Commie" songs). But as a couple of young foreigners, without a political axe to grind, Rory and Eck could play anywhere they wanted, *from the top social gatherings to weddings, schools, night-clubs… tenements… bars.*

Soon they took to the road with a couple of friends, traveling in a long downwards sweep from Washington to Atlanta, New Orleans, El Paso and Santa Fe. Rory was especially moved by the raw beauties of the south west: *simply fantastic, from swampy jungle to wildly romantic desert, flanked by bright blue hills.* After New Mexico, they drove north to Colorado Springs and (abandoning the car), went on alone by bus to Cripple Creek. Here, for the first time, they were employed as professional musicians, playing twice a day for a week, before continuing on to San Francisco and Los Angeles. Given their youth and inexperience, the trip was surprisingly successful. They made two long-playing records, and appeared on television several times. *40 million people saw us…and we are now accosted in the street and in shops and one small boy… asked us for an autograph.* They even got a spot on the *Ed Sullivan Show.*

Back in London that fall, Rory found work with the BBC, playing his own, newly-minted topical calypsos each evening on the *Tonight Show* (which, briefly, made him famous). In April 1958, a month after his twenty-sixth birthday, he married his hostess on East 61st Street, American-born Romana von Hofmannsthal, granddaughter of the Austrian poet, Hugo von Hofmannsthal. For several years, Rory's painting came a distant second to marriage and show business.

6.

By 1964, when my family moved to Marchmont, Rory had already been gone at least ten years. But his boats and airplanes were still propped on the shelves of our schoolroom, his hand-carved Madonna stood on the table by my grandmother's bed, and in her boudoir was the candy-striped "Box of Delights" he had made. This consisted of two miniature tableaux of painted clay and balsa-wood. In one, the weary figure of a student sat hunched over his papers under a sloping skylight, while on the floor below, miniature Christmas cards crowded the mantelpiece, and a small round man made merry over a tray of glasses and a fat black bottle. The grownups seemed to find him very funny. But as a child I always preferred the pale-faced student (or was it in fact Rory himself?) in his solitary garret.

My own father was skilled with a pencil and had illustrated several books, so for a while I thought that all grownups could draw and paint, just as all grownups could spell

and manage proper joined-up writing. But even then, I remember marveling at Rory's pictures. My favorites were a group of "flakes" from OLD CARNATIONS AND PINKS: "Paisley Gem," "Murray's Laced Pink," and "William Brownhill," whose originals hung in our drawing-room. They were crimson and white with long silvery-gray stems, and I loved their rumpled faces, sleek rounded buds, and the sudden flare of their narrow, strap-like leaves. Such beauty and precision made me shiver. It was as if the flowers themselves were shining there, beneath the glass.

Rory illustrated another flower-book in 1963, this time on the auricula. He included not just the individual blossoms and their leaves, but the delicate tangle of their roots as well. I used to stare at them for minutes at a time, trying to follow the path of different tendrils in that twisting fluid maze. Such "close-looking" was both delight and education, like the "close-listening" of the folk-songs. It was also wonderfully comforting. And there were times when I needed such comfort. My father suffered from manic depression, and, increasingly, from the ravages of alcoholism. With six children to educate, an estate to manage, and a big dilapidated house to be maintained, there was never what he thought of as "enough money." As an anxious eldest daughter, it was all too easy to get swept up in his dramas, both real and imaginary.

In the midst of such turbulence, Rory's presence came as an immense relief. At first I loved him for his ability to make things happen: a wild game of hide-and-seek or "rescue," a picnic on the cliffs overlooking the sea. But as I grew older, I began to see the man himself more clearly. He was someone who knew in his bones the world that we were part of, with its tidal pull of class and family loyalties, its fierce old-fashioned obligations. But he was also a professional artist, deeply committed to his work. He painted every day. He got things done. This fact was enormously important to me.

7.

After their marriage, Rory and Romana had set up house at 9 Tregunter Road, not far from Fulham Road in Chelsea. Rory's life changed absolutely from then on.

He had been born the middle child of seven, the third son in a family of six brothers. British primogeniture being what it was, there had never been any expectation that he would inherit. Since his return from America, he had been living in a bachelor flat on Kinnerton Street and working as Art Editor for the *Spectator* magazine. Now, fueled by his wife's money and family connections, as well as by his own show business success, he found an entirely new world opening up around him. He started making silkscreen material with his new sister-in-law, Sylvia Guirey, designing the patterns and choosing the colors himself. He invested money in theater and paintings. He also went on writing songs (with Bernard Levin), for the *Tonight Show* (at that time the most-watched program in the U.K.), as well as hosting a late-night blues and folk program called *Hullabaloo*. He and Eck cut several more records, and continued to perform together at the Edinburgh Festival and a number of other venues, most notably the Keele Folk Festival, which Rory helped organize. All this left very little time for painting.

For several years, Rory wasn't even sure that he *wanted* to be an artist. The auriculas were done on commission for C. Oscar Moreton, as the pinks and carnations had been. They were beautiful, but limited too, by the traditional framework of botanical illustration. Rory was impatient with this. He wanted to make individual portraits of flowers, not just representational ones, to honor what was imperfect and unique. He was

also interested in painting flowers across time: in bud, in full maturity, and on into a blown or blowsy, dead or dying state.

Around 1962, when he was thirty, he finally tired of the ups and downs of show business, and started painting seriously again. Among those early paintings are a pair of wonderfully giddy red anemones, like two leggy girls in mini-skirts. There is also the close-up of a lily-bud, its long proboscis reaching out as if to sniff the air, its curved sides bulging in yellow-green and strange translucent red. Looking at such pieces now, it is easy to read the cultural references (the mini-skirts, the latent minimalism). But at the time, flower painting was not thought worthy of such close attention. It was a hobby, an old-world oddity. "Real artists" (e.g. Pollack and de Staël) made abstract paintings. Torn between his own gift for meticulous realism, and the current fashion for abstraction, Rory tried a little of both, and puzzled the critics at one of his early New York shows by hanging one room with flowers and another with abstract paintings. He also experimented with "table-sculptures" in clear plastic and refractive glass: miniature skyscrapers, blazing with blue-green rainbows. Later on, there was a series of "veils," heavy canvas tarpaulins, slung on ropes, and exhibited for the sheer pleasure of their folds.

But whatever else he might be doing, Rory went on painting flowers. By the early seventies, he had added leaves and fruit and vegetables as well. I remember a gargantuan artichoke, painted in 1967. It had a bottle-green stem and stiff armor-plated leaves in purple and lime-green. Biba might have favored it, or Mary Quant. But it was an ordinary vegetable too, stumpy and vulnerable, its coarse leaves frayed and browning as it aged.

Soon after, Rory painted a series of onions, huge pinkish-brown globes in their shining paper coats, their wild roots trailing. My favorite was a glorious crimson specimen from Benares. But there were others which were not so healthy. They slumped across the page, oddly mashed and broken. One could almost smell the sour stink rising from them.

What did it mean to paint such things: crumpled mushrooms, onions, peppers, a strange little dance of dead and dying violets? Rory never said. Paintings from his 1974 show, "True Facts from Nature," showed leaves and twigs and seed-pods lined up across the page, joined only, as critic Douglas Hall wrote later, by a "sure sense of visual interval." It was hard not to search for meanings in those ragged hieroglyphs, hard not to try to recompose the original, elusive message. *A lot goes on in a dying leaf,* Rory wrote to me once. *You'd be surprised.*

8.

Our correspondence started in the fall of 1973, when I was living in a boarding-house in London, and studying for my Oxbridge entrance exam. I stumbled on a handful of Rory's poems in the *Poetry Review*, and wrote to him to praise them. Rory wrote back immediately. *How sweet of you to write about the poems! I think it is very rare that someone in your position (i.e. niece) shd write in that way to an uncle.* He then went on to praise my *largeness and generosity of mind…the rarest of qualities in my opinion*, only later returning to the subject at hand.

The praise flustered me, and made me cry. At the same time, I rejoiced in Rory's warmth and writerly encouragement. *I would like to see your poems and talk about them sometime if you'd like that… It's no good comparing yourself to anyone else, the only thing is to get it down till it starts sounding recognizable in one's own ears.* After years of Chaucer and Donne and T. S. Eliot, I felt as if a door were opening at last into the present day.

In the spring of 1974, Romana's father died, and the family flew to Vienna for the funeral. Afterwards they went to look at the house where he'd been born. Fifty yards away was the house Rilke had rented to be near his fellow-poet, Hugo von Hofmannsthal. As a little boy, Romana's father would run errands between them.

I like the idea of people with like minds getting together and making an effort to see each other, Rory wrote. *Far too much of one's life is taken up in non-communication with people one has nothing in common with, don't you think?*

He went on to comment on his own artistic endeavors. *My show is down, and I feel that once more I am invisible…But it has strengthened my resolve to be as much of an artist as I can. To commit myself as totally as possible to thinking and looking as an artist* all *the time.*

What did it mean to him "to be an artist"? In later letters, mostly written from Bardrochat, the family house in Ayrshire, he did his best to spell it out. *I want desperately to paint pictures that would be of this place. I have a distant vision of some sort of abstraction based on color.* And again, three months later, *I don't want to make Scottish Gallery-type Scottish landscapes…all dour to appearances, all Scotch restraint…I want to make landscapes that will have the appearance of giant palettes, huge daubs and blobs of infinitely subtle colors, bumping each other out of the way like clouds blowing across the sky.*

In pursuit of this dream, he spent many weeks alone at Bardrochat, drawing and painting and going for long walks across the countryside and by the sea. He also constructed a portable easel *which I prop on my knees while sitting in the back of the Landrover, parked in the middle of nowhere making watery marks on Saunders paper.*

Landscape painting was new to him, and the work didn't come easy. *I…end up every evening in a welter of confusion, mocked by the unspeakable clarity of the sky, the perfect balance and wholeness of the greens and ochers, blues and umbers of the countryside.*

Sometimes he was able just to keep going. *The only life-raft is the work done each day, which inadequate though it is, allows one to go on to the next.* At other times he went back to the close-up portraits of flowers and leaves he had been doing since his boyhood. *I return to my precise certainties of observed detail like a drunk to his bottle.*

He was lonely on occasion, but for the most part the solitude was a deep joy to him. *It really is marvelous to be alone here, really an impossible indulgence, a fantastic luxury in 1976, and one which I grasp with both hands.* And again, *Once one has screwed oneself up tight, the solitariness ceases to matter, and a kind of quiet frenzy sets in.*

Rory accomplished a great deal in those "quiet frenzies." For a while he switched from vellum to paper, painting a strange dreamy series of grasses and wildflowers, not unlike Dürer's painting "The Great Piece of Turf" seen through a misty haze. He also used paper for a series of experimental water-colors called "Homage to Karl Blossfeldt."

Blossfeldt was a German sculptor and art teacher who, like Rory, was fascinated by the business of "close-looking." His photographs of leaves and stems and buds and tendrils (some of them magnified up to 27 times) were first published as ARCHETYPES IN ART, in 1928. Blossfeldt had intended them simply as teaching aids, but the parallels between natural and human art were unmistakable. Curling fern-fronds looked like wrought-iron tracery. Horse-chestnut shoots had faces like hand-carved totem poles.

In Rory's paintings, an image from Blossfeldt's portfolio (a dandelion, say, or the dry brown umbel of a garlic plant), is superimposed on a casual water-color of the Ayrshire landscape. The landscape itself is barely hinted at: the curve of a hill, a couple of trees, a ruined castle. But Blossfeldt's image stands out proud and strong. For an impossible moment, the hills and distances are dwarfed by the outrageous architecture of the close-at-hand, as the small takes authoritative precedence over the large. Perhaps not surprisingly,

Rory's next two shows (in London in the winter of 1979-80, and in Tokyo the following spring), were both devoted to the single leaf.

They were dead leaves, dying leaves, torn and scarred, bright with hectic autumn color. Rory had been hospitalized with cancer the previous summer, and there were those who saw the leaves as a comment on this. Rory himself wrote to a friend that the leaves were just something he *had to do*, *like a debt I have to pay, or a task I have to complete*. He worked away at them all through the fall of 1979, trying to recover the time he'd lost, while his mind swirled with thoughts and memories, *all the flux of the past, present and future, dreams, colors, ambitions, possibilities*. As always, he dreamed of making what he called a *fine, fresh, dangerous painting*. It would have astonished him to know that with those dogged leaves, he was actually creating the work by which he'd be best known.

The London show, which I didn't have any real expectations for, turned out a big success, by my standards, in that it sold out, & a couple of museums [bought work], in particular the Fitzwilliam in Cambridge, which really pleased me as I love it as a museum, and it acquired recently, the entire Broughton collection of botanical books and paintings which…includes extraordinary things by Breughel, Dürer, etc.…So I am glad to be there.

In the years that remained to him, Rory continued with his leaves and flowers on vellum, as well as attempting a series of more directly autobiographical collages. He spent days going through color Xeroxes of slides he'd taken on trips, copies of old photographs of his parents, of Marchmont, of his children, recombining them with scraps of handmade paper and his own cut-up water-colors. In the spring of 1981, he produced forty-five such pictures in two months, working twelve hours a day non-stop. *I am trying to finish 74 paintings by the end of July*.

Whether he achieved his goal or not, I do not know. His letters of May 1981 are among the last I have of his. But it is clear that these new "Proustian pictures" were a great satisfaction to him. He felt he had found a use for the experiences of a lifetime: *all the pleasure and happiness and sadness, all the weather, the nights and the days, the hours spent fishing and shooting…etc. etc.* He wrote to me, quoting Bob Dylan, that at last he'd found a dump-truck to unload his head.

Meanwhile his delight in the surrounding countryside continued undiminished. *Bardrochat is ridiculously beautiful, rain or shine, at this time of year, with the hawthorn like clotted cream and the river path misty with bluebells…the other night I went down to fish & just as it was getting dark I became aware of a most striking and perfect conjunction of 3 colors – it was in the shade, in very low light, and the colors glowed, like a harmony in music*

luminous white of hawthorn
intense purple-blue of forget-me-not
green of grass and leaf

I had the thought that if you could find those exact colors, they would make the most incredible flag of some new country; blue and white and green…somehow the three were so unexpected together, and so every day.

9.

It was an amazing thing to be trusted with such letters, to be *let into* a grownup's life in quite that way, made witness to his private struggles and ambitions. At the time, of course, the details of Rory's artistic pilgrimage didn't always interest me. I skipped to the references to books and music. What was he reading? Who was he listening to? What other artists did he admire? I learned names from him: *Basho, Colette, Thomas Merton; Leadbelly,*

Charlie Parker; Kandinsky, Klee. I drank in the delight of his company, following him out into the cold when he came up to shoot at Marchmont, trudging round to his London studio for lunch, pestering him with questions about art and Buddhism and modern American poetry. If he was, as he once wrote to me, *inescapably and ineluctably and irreversibly of [his]time and of [his] class and of [his] background,* he was also (in my mind at least) a brilliant escape-artist, the one member of the tribe who'd got away.

I was keen to follow in his footsteps, though I was not at all sure how. After my Oxbridge entrance exam (which got me into King's), I had spent some months in Thailand, working at a mission for people with leprosy. Once I arrived at Cambridge, I began to study anthropology, with a special emphasis on India and the Far East. The Provost gave me a small grant to go to Laos, and I hoped to make it to Bhutan the following year. But Rory, who had been there, was not encouraging. *The difficulty lies in the fact that if you are in the country, you have to be someone's guest, for there is nowhere to stay, no hotels, and if you travel you have to be accompanied and someone has to pay for transport, food etc. (which is surprisingly expensive).*

In the end I had neither the cash nor the professional backing to go to Bhutan. But fired by Rory's example, and impatient with academia, I took a year off Cambridge anyway, and the following spring set off traveling round the United States, visiting friends and acquaintances from New York to San Francisco.

Rory was the one who gave me the money for the plane ticket (generously dismissing it as a twenty-first birthday present). He also contacted several of his friends for me, and came up with various places where I could stay. When I returned home two months later, filled with giddy stories of my adventures, he wrote in gratitude to his good friend, the painter David Novros. *She's a different person, and as far as I can see it is almost all due to you and J. and your great kindness, tolerance, interest and hospitality…I tell you, it's made her life.*

There are certain experiences which do indeed, "make your life," and Rory was right, America was one of them for me. I felt a welcome there, an ease, a spontaneity, which I'd never experienced before. Suddenly I was my own person, not my father's daughter or my uncle's niece, but my own urgent questing self. I went to art galleries and book stores, to parks and poetry readings. I stared out of the grimy windows of the Greyhound bus at Arizona, at New Mexico. I talked all night to complete strangers. Suddenly it was OK to be a woman making her own way in the world, OK to ask questions, investigate, explore. Compared to the narrow, class-bound world I'd grown up in, it was immensely liberating.

10.

Rory had experienced a parallel liberation some twenty years earlier, on his own journey to the United States. And much as he loved London and Bardrochat, he still welcomed the chance to get away, to become a traveler again, tranquil and anonymous. In fact he said as much in one of his letters, quoting *en passant* from Lin Yutang. *The true motive of travel should be to become lost and unknown.*

He was by no means averse to family holidays: skiing with Romana and the children in Austria, flying out to Greece or Italy or the American southwest. But as the children grew older, he began to travel further afield, to Bhutan and Afghanistan and the Andaman Islands, to India and Nepal. He was deeply appreciative of these opportunities, fishing for salmon in the gorgeous unpolluted waters of Bhutan, catching butterflies,

painting flowers. Here, for example, he writes to David Novros: *I had a really fascinating month in Nepal…[We] set up a fishing camp for Mahseer in this unbelievable place, with the jungle at [our] back and the whole of the Annapurna range gleaming [on] the horizon 70 miles away.*

The Mahseer they saw were small, but they did catch Goonch, *big ugly fuckers like insane catfish, very good eating, no bones – and trekked in the jungle, full of birds, butterflies, tiger tracks, bears and everything else you can think of. Every morning two Shahin falcons (Eastern peregrines) put on displays of flying like the Battle of Britain, catching swallows. I caught 62 different butterflies. I swear I'm not exaggerating, it must be about the most beautiful place on earth.*

Afghanistan was a great pleasure to him too: *I must have got all over it, mostly by 4 wheel drive Toyota…Fished, photographed, caught butterflies. It is the most rugged, harsh and beautiful place imaginable…The archeology is fascinating, as it is the melting pot of every civilization…from 1,000 BC onwards, and half of it is unknown, undug, unexplored.*

It is easy to criticise these elaborate journeys as just another exercise in colonial self-indulgence. But despite the omnipresent camera, the field-glasses, and the butterfly-net, Rory did not travel simply as a tourist, accumulating major sights and specimens for an audience back home. Instead he went as a pilgrim, a participant, striving to look, to paint, to name, to understand, always more deeply and comprehensively. Bhutan and Afghanistan were particularly moving to him. He loved the character of the people, their courage and chivalry and sense of humor. Indeed, as Douglas Hall has written, "It was as if the culture of these places (and the friendships he made there)…reassured him that the values of his inherited landscape – literal and metaphorical – still existed in the world."

Rory admired the Sung painters too, and identified strongly with Taoism. Years later, when the Soviet troops invaded his beloved Afghanistan, he remembered those early painters and tried to draw strength from their example. *The International news gets worse and worse, & still I sit and paint leaves. I feel like those Chinese artists who, in ages of great barbarism and unrest, painted images & wrote poems in which metaphor described the tragic events around them so that the message was passed on to later ages in a simple, cryptic fashion. A dying leaf should be able to carry the weight of the world.*

But the dying leaf would always be his own, picked up in Smiddy Wood, Bardrochat, or on Redcliffe Square in London. However much Rory was inspired by other cultures, he never for one moment tried to imitate them. For him, being a painter was very much tied up with being a native, attending, patiently and carefully, to a particular place, its leaves and flowers, its gradually unfolding landscape. And despite his love of traveling, he remained Scottish to the core. *We should all live with a vision hidden inside us*, he wrote once, *like Loch Enoch hidden in the cradle of the Galloway hills.* It comes as no surprise that the image is so entirely local.

11.

I was seventeen in the fall of 1973, and Rory was almost a quarter of a century older than me. But we kept on writing to each other for almost a decade, from Scotland, London, New York and California. From time to time, there'd also be a present or an excursion. Rory made one painting especially for me (a water color of an onion, with the tangled roots I loved), and gave me artist's proofs of others: a second onion (a lithograph this time), and an etching of a leaf, like a human hand outstretched to show its wrinkled, quilted palm. He asked me round to listen to music, came up to visit me in Cambridge. It was an easy, unselfconscious connection, this "diagonal friendship" that somehow

developed between us. But for good or ill, Rory was also part of my immediate family: my uncle, my father's younger brother. This role was much more difficult for him.

Looking back at his letters and my own journals too, I see the places where "Uncle Rory" suddenly takes center stage, shouldering aside the solitary artist and traveler, the dreamy, appreciative countryman. I see his awkwardness as he tries to behave responsibly, for instance in this reference to my sister Kate, who at seventeen was making her own way as an art student in London.

I saw Kate the other day and she struck me as slightly stoned (she was very sweet with it). I do hope she isn't wasting her time when she could be developing that marvelous talent of hers. I feel so utterly incompetent in almost every way myself, and often ponder the years which could have been directed towards a deepening of appreciation and understanding of art…Bopping around on the drugs scene can give you the impression of doing something exciting, or dangerous, but there simply is no recorded instance of it improving one mentally or physically. So much for the voice of the 19th century, broadcasting on 232 meters on the medium waveband.

The wry remark at the end is typical of Rory, as is the quiet reference to his own travails; he had no wish, as he said in a later missive, to *overstep his uncle bounds*. But it was not so easy to practice such restraint. His eldest brother, Jamie, had died in 1971, and a second brother, David, collapsed in 1976, both agonizingly young. Meanwhile my father, Robin, was holed up at Marchmont, increasingly at the mercy of his glooms. Rory went to visit, and was horrified by what he found. *I think he's in much worse shape than when I last saw him, and I left with a sense of despair that anyone can do anything to help him – he seems determined to do away with himself.* And again, some eighteen months later, describing a cousin's wedding: *[Your father] was in terrible shape there, it has to be said, drunk, and incapable of coherent thought. It is so sad…Your ma sails above it all sustained by her own private band of angels.*

My father died of a heart attack the following year, and the family gathered in Scotland for his funeral. Rory was strange and overwrought, awash with guilt and rage and noisy self-assertive grief. At first he tried to be funny in the usual way, greeting my mother, "Hello Widow!" (which not surprisingly made her cry), and then he ranted at us all about self-indulgence, before finally breaking down and bursting into tears. "I loved him! I loved him like you all do," he said. One night I stayed up with him till four thirty in the morning, listening to his anguished analysis of family history: money, houses, brothers, wives, the long entangled story of inheritance and loss.

Still, it was good to begin to piece all this together, just as it was good to hear Rory's description of my youthful mother, "a wild columbine grown in a mist under pine trees," and later to receive from him a detailed letter in which he struggled to articulate his understanding of my parents' marriage: *Your mother…ah! I don't know, it's the subject of a large book…I've thought a great deal about the Wa and her, not so much about Biddy; indeed, I find it hard to think of her in isolation…When they were first married, he was the Roi Soleil; he made all the decisions, called all the shots, and she never questioned anything, she was the absolute paradigm of the contented and quiescent Catholic wife, and she never ventured out into the rest of the family on her own account.*

As, for infinitely complex reasons, he began to lose his grip on life, I think she went through absolute hell… and couldn't seek help from the rest of the family for fear of increasing his paranoia. Eventually she had to simply attend at his dissolution, a truly appalling experience.

Painful as it was to read such letters, there was a relief to it as well. For once I was not struggling to make sense of the unwieldy saga all by myself. Rory was there too, to interpret and translate.

In the months after my father's death, he shouldered yet more family responsibilities in the form of my brother, James, who already, alas, had the makings of an addict. *I wish to God he wasn't going to inherit Marchmont or anything else,* Rory wrote to me privately. *He's like a walking advertisement for the banning of inherited wealth.*

Three weeks later, he wrote again, with further revelations. *It turns out that [James] has been main-lining heroin for months, is cross-addicted to alcohol, has (slightly) damaged his liver, and is in a hell of a mess (even worse than I thought).*

A clinic was found for James, and the family conferences went on. Meanwhile I was away in California, out of reach of anything but letters. I remember opening one from Rory to find a crisp $50 bill, left over from a recent trip to the U.S. He persisted with such kindnesses despite the fierce demands of his own life (he had his first operation for cancer, the removal of a malignant growth, in 1979), and his complicated dealings with the rest of my family. For whatever reason, our relationship remained very simple and direct, sturdy and affectionate and reliable.

12.

In March 1982, I visited my cousin Sam (Rory's daughter) in New York, and learned from her that Rory's cancer had returned. The following month, he took off for Australia for six weeks of intensified radiotherapy, accompanied by his wife, Romana. At first the treatment seemed to provide some relief. But by late May, a new series of symptoms began to manifest. Rory was giddy and nauseous; he had difficulty focusing. By midsummer he'd been found to have a brain tumor.

An ocean and a continent away, I did my best to keep in touch. I was afraid of seeming to intrude if I wrote to him too often. In the end I decided to send one postcard a week, a cheery, newsy postcard, written with no expectation of an answer. In one of them, I must have told Rory that I had finally graduated from Berkeley with a Master's degree in English. Here (in its entirety) is the letter he sent back, written on the soft blue paper of the London Clinic.

Darling MC
Congratuacions!
Sorry I haven't written to you
Head in bad shape can't
made words work. I having an
operation next wekee.
Better soon. Love lots to you.
Not as bad as it took as it sounds.
Much love
& congrats darling MC,
R

After the Australian treatment, the colon cancer went into remission. But by midsummer, Rory was found to have a brain tumor. Surgery provided some respite. But by late August, the symptoms had returned.

That September, I went to visit Rory at Tregunter Road. He was very thin, his face gaunt, and there was a scar on the back of his head, visible under the fine brown hair. He'd had a difficult night, giddy and sick, with a thunderingly bad headache. Nevertheless, he rose to the occasion, answering questions about his own condition, and talking cheerfully about family matters. He mentioned the brain tumor, for which he'd had an

operation in July, "an interruption," he called it, "just when things were on the mend." He remarked, mournfully, that he wished he hadn't wasted so much time. I disagreed with this, telling him outright what a relief it had been to have someone in the family who worked and made things happen, praising him directly as I'd never done before.

The light faded as we sat, and he soon dismissed me. "I won't detain you." I didn't want to be unduly gloomy, but it was clear to me his prospects were not good. Already I could see people translating their impressions of him into eulogies. At the same time I found the visit oddly heartening. It was as if I'd lost him when I first heard of the cancer, and found him again that evening: funny, courageous, generous, sympathetic, good.

I rang him a month later, just before I left for New York. By then a second brain tumor had been diagnosed, this one inoperable. It was pressing on the optic nerve, and Rory was seeing double. He told me the nerves might not recover even if the radiation made the tumor disappear. "What shall I do, M.C?" he asked. "Shall I write songs?" There was despair in his voice, and utter weariness. I remember mumbling something about working with his hands. But of course there was no proper answer. Everything was coming to an end. Sam later told me she'd seen waves of sorrow pass over him as he began to empty his beloved London studio. He'd been working there for fifteen years. And now the place was up for sale.

Oddly enough, Rory had been writing a letter to my mother at the time I rang, so for once I have his record of our talk as well as mine. *I had a really nice telephone call from M.C.*, he wrote. *She's off to New York like a well found little ocean-going tug-boat, everything stored shipshape. I do love her.*

13.

I arrived in New York at the beginning of October, and found myself a sublet on the Lower East Side, and an unlikely job making Christmas ornaments at a factory out on Long Island. The ornaments were in fact miniature mannequins: girls in green velvet dresses and matching Tam o'Shanters, eighteenth century gentlemen in top-hats and brocade, a set of Santa Clauses, red-cheeked and jolly. We called them "the little people," but some of them were as much as six feet tall.

My particular responsibility were the leprechauns or "pixies." I dressed them in bright green velvet, glued wooden soles to their feet, and stapled metal rods onto the soles. Then I fitted their feet into red velvet shoes, and stuffed them with acrylic cotton. It was an amazing place to work. You'd look up from the staple-gun to see a man hurrying past with an armful of headless dolls, or a woman earnestly lacquering a neat black nylon wig. Meanwhile the air was full of sawdust from the machine that made dolls' feet, along with steam from the steam-generator, and the unmistakable aroma of white glue. Great trucks roared by outside, and the lobby where we sat to take our breaks (a quarter of an hour each morning and afternoon, half an hour for lunch), was thick with dust and debris. You could scarcely hear yourself think. The drill whined, the loudspeaker blared, the radio gave off erratic blasts of Spanish music.

I was about three days into this new life (gray, already, with the noise and the exhaustion), when a friend of Rory's called to tell me he had died. An aunt gave me the money to go home for the funeral, and I left almost immediately. Alone on the plane, I scribbled notes in my journal about Rory, how on the one hand he'd been my "Scottish uncle," and on the other, of course, the traveler and explorer, buoyant and classless and inspiring. A rush of images came back: Rory driving fast in the Ferrari south, singing to us.

His thick shooting stockings, well-shaped legs. His warm, half-mocking "M.C." – the affection in it, the banter.

I made a list of the things we'd done together: lunch in London, once or twice; a Japanese movie; an Indian sitar concert at the Albert Hall; those endless conversations.

It didn't seem as if it added up to very much: a handful of colored pebbles snatched from the torrent of that extraordinarily busy life. And yet, even then, I somehow knew that it had been enough. "I have liked him a great deal," I wrote bleakly in my journal. Whatever the message was, it had been handed over.

I took a train up to Scotland the next day, and my mother and I drove over to Bardrochat, with nine new wreaths in the back of the car. Fresh from the dingy glamour of Manhattan, I was overcome by the beauty of the Border countryside. "It was a magnificent sunny morning, the woods were lit up in pale yellow and orange and lime green, and you could see and see and see – shadows passing over the hills, a scatter of seagulls like bits of dirty paper, the tall silvery trunks of the trees. So many little moments…Looking from a distance the sky was rich in clouds: depth on depth of them: gray and white and creamy, silver, sheer."

We reached Bardrochat about lunch time. I got an attack of what we used to call "gravel fever" at the sight of all the shiny parked cars, a child's panic at the encroaching grown up world. I'd been feeling tidy and self-sufficient in my borrowed shirt, my boots and cashmere jersey. But once inside the house I felt tiny and stringy, dwarfed by all the huge adult women with their bosoms and rings and proper calves. I hunched among them, small and inelegant.

It was only then I learned in detail about Rory's death. Ill and exhausted as he was, the brain tumor swollen to the size of a tennis-ball, he'd somehow managed to slip out of Tregunter Road unnoticed, and walk the long walk to South Kensington tube station. There he'd climbed a fence, and thrown himself in the path of an oncoming train. One imagines he died instantly. His brothers, Eck and John Sebastian, were asked to identify the body. There'd been a long bruise, my aunt told me, running down the side of his head.

I remembered my sister Kate's description, dating from the previous week: hair falling out, sunken face, left eye twitching, the gaze not properly focused. He had told one of his friends that he felt as if he had a devil in him. Sam said he'd looked like a container for a sadness too deep to imagine. But there'd been tremendous courage too, at a time when nothing at all was under his control, not his body or his spirit or even his mind; the courage to take his life in his own hands, the willed finality of that decision. Even in her grief she was able to see that, and to praise it.

Mass began, and I knelt and prayed with the rest. The coffin stood in the corner window: a narrow casket in a pale bleached wood, with gold clasps and brown silken tassels. Later it was hoisted into the Land Rover, and we all followed the piper down to the graveyard, where my two brothers, two boy cousins, and two remaining uncles lowered it into the newly dug grave.

Afterwards we went back to the house for coffee and drinks, and the usual funeral spread of chicken and salad and roast beef. At some point in the afternoon, a group of us drove off to the coast, to wander by the sea and pick up stones and shells. There was a shadow in the clouds like a man striding, his cloak spread out behind. The sun threw glory-rays into the sea, which was otherwise grim and gray. Sam said that Rory had been put in charge of the weather, and he'd thrown all the levers. Sun over Ayrshire: sun, sun, sun.

14.

The next day, Sam went up to the old garage which had been Rory's studio, and found herself on a little path she'd never seen before. She felt such happiness that she could hardly believe it. It enveloped her as she walked: joyful, tranquil, utterly reassuring. Then the bell rang for lunch, and at once it disappeared. But she said she felt quite differently afterwards. She'd been planning to go down to the graveyard that afternoon, and she didn't go, no longer needed to.

A few days later, I went to visit her in London. She had taken on the task of cleaning out Rory's studio there. It was big and light and airy, and it was chock-a-block with things: heaters and desks and books and cassettes; Navajo blankets, kitchen utensils. Sam was busy finding homes for all of it; calling Green & Stone (the local art shop), talking to friends and relatives who might have storage space. She allowed me to take away a handful of books and cassettes, as well as a few other oddments: a couple of old coins, a carved soapstone animal.

"1/4 past 2 in the morning. Talking to Sam till now. *Comfort* from her intelligence. *Enjoyment* of her courage and clarity. *Gratitude* for the rediscovery of Rory which ensued. I read his poems and his journal, sat in his studio, looked through his books and cassettes – and felt – at last – that I began to realize who I'd lost, what I had liked and loved."

In the months that followed, back in New York City, I thought of Rory often. I bought a Walkman that winter, and I played his songs over and over as I went about my business, trudging across Broadway to the sway of "Speed, Bonnie Boat," or the sprightly lilt of "Marie's Wedding." I also found him here and there in the books Sam had given me, in Neruda particularly, and in Wallace Stevens' long poem, "The Man With the Blue Guitar":

I am a native in this world
And think in it as a native thinks,
……
Native, a native in the world
And like a native think in it.

It could not be a mind, the wave
In which the watery grasses flow

And yet are fixed as a photograph,
The wind in which the dead leaves blow.

Here I inhale profounder strength
And as I am, I speak and move

And things are as I think they are
And say they are on the blue guitar.

It used to seem to me as if those words were being spoken by Rory himself. He was a guitar player, after all, and a painter of "watery grasses" and "dead leaves." Again and again I'd seen him "*hunched / Above the arrowy, still strings, / The maker of a thing yet to be made.*

15.

In one of his letters to David Novros, Rory had spoken longingly of a life of utter solitude. *I wouldn't mind living here*, he wrote from Nepal. *Just sit in a single room in Kathmandu and paint great miniatures.*

But the "monkish illustrator," as Karl Miller put it, was only one of Rory's many selves. For the other characters within him, friendship was a crucial pleasure. Given his own background, and the privileged world he'd married into, it would have been easy to ensconce himself for life among the aristocracy. But this he refused to do. His artist-friends were essential to him, in all their extravagant variety, and it is clear that he met each one on his own terms: talking painting with his painter friends like David Novros and Jim Dine; jazz and folk music with George Melly; poetry with Alastair Reid and Kenneth Koch. "He welcomed me into his house and life as people do in books," said R.B. Kitaj years later. "No one could forget him or his smiling, beaming face."

Even casual acquaintances remembered him with fondness. For Pam Christie he was "warm and leggy and accessible." She describes driving back from Española after a raucous evening, Rory dandling her infant son upon his knee, and singing lustily all the way. "I remember thinking it was pretty sweet of the laird to so regale the bairn."

Rory was always glad of an excuse to celebrate; he had wonderful parties, for example, at Tregunter Road. I remember the downstairs drawing-room crowded with people, and Ravi Shankar at the far end, playing the sitar. But conversation was what he loved most: rich, allusive, and exploratory conversation. *We all have what I would call Heart Groups*, he wrote. *And by that I mean a widening personal circle of love and affection, starting with our closest and dearest and dying out in the shallows of distant acquaintanceship.*

His pleasure in letters and letter-writing allowed him to maintain such "conversations" with a surprisingly wide number of people. *Goodness I do enjoy getting letters!* he wrote to me once. *I think the only reason I write letters is in the hopes of getting them back: and basically it makes no odds what the letter is like, short or long, coherent or incoherent…*

His own, of course, were always remarkably coherent, and legible, written in a gorgeous, tiny, clear script. They were also, if at all possible, *funny*, even in the direst of circumstances. Here, for example, he writes to David Novros from Wembly, Australia, where he had gone in search of cancer treatment:

[The doctor] has developed a technique where he shoots you full of insulin, so you more or less go into a coma, then he cooks you in a sort of microwave oven. Mind you, this has nothing to do with the cancer treatment, he just gets his kicks that way: the cancer *treatment consists of taking you out into the Gibson desert at full moon, then you all strip off and paint each other with the ashes of the Wurra-Wurra plant, and dance around hitting each other over the head with aboriginal clubs called Woolimbongs. Only the guys with cancer are allowed to take part in this ritual, and if you weren't terminal before you sure are when it's all over. He claims more or less 100% cure rate. As he remarked to me the other day, "Kill? Cure? What's the diff, sport?"*

The deliciously elaborated joke is typical of Rory, as is the keen ear for a new idiom. He was always a gifted mimic. Cornered in remotest New Mexico by two literary types from Manhattan, unwelcome friends of friends, he pretended so successfully to be a British colonel of the old school (all "rah-rah" and "bloody wops"), that the victims disappeared posthaste. This flair for the dramatic had long been apparent in his clothes as well. As a young man he went to the Pony Club dance dressed up as Sherlock Holmes (no doubt enveloped in that same Inverness cape Karl Miller mentions), and a glance at family photographs reveals a slew of equally colorful costumes: bow-tie and blazer and dark glasses in a jokey Cambridge line-up; jeans and T-shirt (in wildly clashing stripes) on a trip

to Provincetown with Jim Dine; sarong and bamboo wreath on holiday in Bhutan. Lastly, and for me most poignantly, there is the picture taken just before he died, in which he wears a heavy silken dressing-gown in red and orange, topped by a multicolored turban. His glasses are propped half-way down his bony nose, and he is working, gazing at a sketch-pad on his knee, jaunty and surprising to the last.

When Rory died, in October 1982, an exhibition of his paintings was hanging at the Wave Hill Gallery in the Bronx: "Ten leaves, a pepper and an onion." Day after day, his friends made the long trek out by bus and subway and commuter train to see the work for one last time. The room was like a shrine, said Peter Sauer, then the director there. All month the friends kept coming.

16.

For a short time in Berkeley, during the 1980s, I made a living as a floor-refinisher. Running up the stairs to the bathroom in one particularly splendid house, I caught sight of two or three of Rory's pictures on the wall. "My uncle did those," I told the owner excitedly. "Those are my uncle's paintings!" She stared at me disbelievingly, this grimy girl in workman's overalls and heavy boots. Who was I trying to fool?

The world seemed chillier without Rory in it, less safe, less populated altogether. I missed the love and good advice that he had given me, the level of wise professionalism. Alone in New York, working at an adult literacy job out in Coney Island, it seemed impossible that I would ever make a living as a writer. One night, especially desperate for some kind of break, I called up to him as I lay in bed, "Rory! You've got to help me Rory. This is just *too difficult*!"

The next morning, I happened to ring Teachers & Writers Collaborative. I'd talked to their office manager lots of times, but this time a man called Ron Padgett answered the phone. I gave him my name, and he paused for a moment. "Are you by chance any relation of *Rory* McEwen?"

I went for an interview, filled out some forms, and for once my skills and interests were appropriate. Soon I was working as a writer in the New York City public schools, as well as at the T&W office in Union Square. I began to publish bits and pieces in *The Nation* and the *Village Voice*. I had a base, a literary community, a small-scale world from which to reach out and explore.

In the years since then, I have returned to Rory often, looking at his paintings, listening to his music, rereading that thick envelope of letters. I am forty-one now, as old as he was when we first started writing to each other. But the conversation isn't over yet. There is always more to notice, more to see and say. Traveling in Colorado recently, I saw meadows full of columbine, Indian paintbrush, Western fringed gentian, flowers Rory would have loved. I wanted to tell him about them, to point out my discoveries. Instead, I read some pages from this essay at a gathering in Crestone, and passed around a couple of his catalogues for people to admire. Slowly they turned the pages, from the roses and carnations painted by that young student of twenty-one, through the leaves and vegetables and grasses of the sixties and seventies, to the blazing open-throated gentian painted in the last year of his life.

It is the leaves that I myself return to, following Rory's eye and skilful hand across the network of tiny veins, the torn and ragged places, until each leaf glows in its own unmistakable specificity: the jagged red skyscraper of staghorn sumac, picked up on Fifth Avenue and 86th Street; the speckled alder from Kew Gardens, with the curious initial

scrawled across it by some burrowing worm; the white oak leaf, also from Kew, half of it a lively yellow-green, the rest a withered brown.

What I might so easily have glanced at and discarded, an ordinary leaf on an ordinary sidewalk, is charged, through Rory's clarifying intervention, with its own revelatory "now." It is as if each leaf becomes a holy thing, infinitely fragile perhaps, but infinitely precious too: a map to a particular way of being in the world, a guide to the country of looking.

Riding on the intensity of Rory's gaze – his exuberance, his discipline – I see things in his painted leaves I've never seen before, and they return me, marveling, to the world outside the gallery. It sounds like a paradox, but his ability to paint those dying leaves is to me a validation of his "greening power," the *viriditas* of the alchemists, what Dylan Thomas called "the force that through the green fuse drives the flower." I see it in Rory's paintings, hear it in his voice: the bubbling greeny-gold in him, the charm and laughter and generosity, the hard-won lightness of spirit.

In the Hans Andersen fairy tale, on which Rory based the "Box of Delights" he gave his mother, a student sits reading in an attic out of a torn old book. As he reads, a sunbeam shoots from between the pages, and rapidly expands into an enormous broad-stemmed tree. Every leaf on that tree is green and fresh, every flower is like a graceful girlish head, and every fruit is like a glittering star. Music starts up out of nowhere – "such a delicious melody" – and even after the student has retired to bed, that music still plays on.

Fruit and flower and leaf all flourishing together; the student in the attic; the music "hiding in the air." In this way has Rory's influence impinged.

Coda

He was a braw gallant
and he played at the ba'
Oh the Bonnie Earl o' Murray
Was the flo'er among them a'

Oscar Moreton's book on the auricula, which was published by the Ariel Press in 1964, includes seventeen of Rory's colored plates. One of these flower portraits is labeled "Rory McEwen *(Blue Self)*." It is not an especially striking or dramatic flower; on the contrary, it is the smallest auricula in the book. The petals are a deep bluish-purple, with a pure white ring or "eye." Pale yellow anthers crowd the central core. The leaves are green and mealy and (one imagines) soft to the touch; the dun-colored roots spin out across the page in the usual intricate swirl. You wouldn't notice this, unless you happened to be looking out for it, but at the furthermost tip of the root is a tiny curling "R" – Rory's own, inevitable signature.

When I think of Rory now, I think of that "blue self," the blue-violet light that burned in him, modest and private and immensely dedicated. I think of him after he died, floating in the white space between the worlds, as his leaves and flowers floated; seen, seen utterly, with the loving clarity of that conscientious eye. He painted flowers, he wrote, as a way of getting as close as possible to the truth, *my truth of the time in which I live*. It was a troubled and turbulent time, and he did not pretend otherwise. But then again, *a dying leaf should be able to carry the weight of the world*.

In the ancient Celtic tradition, true riches are measured not in dollars and cents, but in a certain inner abundance: a knowledge of land and language, a store of jokes and chants and songs and stories. According to such criteria, Rory was a wonderfully wealthy man. He *belonged* to Scotland, to the countryside of his birth, as few are privileged to do. He knew its flowers and trees and birds, its culture and history. He paid tribute to it, often. But at the same time he knew how to leave, to explore, to draw from other, less familiar sources. He wanted, he once said, *to make art that is transcendental, that acts like a highway sign pointing towards an invisible country that exists everywhere and for everyone, if they could [only] see it or feel it.* I imagine it as that same country whose *flag glowed like a harmony in music:*

luminous white of hawthorn
intense purple-blue of forget-me-not
green of grass and leaf.

It was a country of which he had long been a citizen.

This piece could not have been written without the "sacred space" provided by Parker Huber, and the generosity of numerous other people. Many thanks to David Novros for letting me see the letters Rory sent to him, to Ron Padgett, Alastair Reid, Alexander and John Sebastian McEwen for making time to meet with me and talk; and to my friends and family, especially Nina Newington, Sarah Rabkin, Edite Cunha and Paula Panich, for close-reading of the manuscript. *C.McE.*

Booklist:

Wilfrid Blunt, SLOW ON THE FEATHER (Salisbury, Wilts, U.K: Michael Russell Publishing Ltd., 1986)
Wilfrid Blunt, THE ART OF BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION: An Illustrated History (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1994)
RORY McEWEN. Preface, Fenella Chrichton. (Taranman, 236 Brompton Rd., London SW3 2BB, 1979. For the show 12 December 1979 to 14 January 1980)
Eileen Dunlop and Anthony Kamm, eds., THE SCOTTISH COLLECTION OF VERSE TO 1800 (Glasgow: Richard Drew Publishing, 1985)
Douglas Hall, essay in RORY McEWEN: THE BOTANICAL PAINTINGS (Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, and Serpentine Galley, London, 1988)
Nicholas Luard, "The Envy of His Generation," *The Independent* Magazine, August 1988

Books to which Rory McEwen contributed:

C. Oscar Moreton, OLD CARNATIONS AND PINKS. Introduction, Sacheverell Sitwell. Eight color plates by Rory McEwen (London, George Rainbird in association with Collins, 1955)
C. Oscar Moreton, THE AURICULA. Seventeen colored plates from paintings by Rory McEwen (London: Ariel Press, 1964)
Wilfrid Blunt, TULIPS & TULIPOMANIA Edition 515 copies (London: Basilisk Press, 1977)

Selected Exhibitions:

1962 Durlacher Bros., New York *Rory McEwen*
1964 André Weill Gallery, Paris, *Rory McEwen*
Hunt Botanical Library, Pittsburgh *Contemporary Botanical Art and Illustration*
National Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh *International Botanical Congress*
The Gateway Theatre, Edinburgh Festival Exhibition: *Paintings by Rory McEwen*
1965 Durlacher Bros., New York *Rory McEwen*
1966 Douglas & Foulis Gallery, Edinburgh *Rory McEwen: Recent Paintings & Drawings*
1967 Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinbugh Festival Exhibition: *Fifty-Three Contemporary Painters*
Byron Gallery, New York *Rory McEwen*
1968 Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh *Rory McEwen/Alan Wood*
Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf *Prospect 68*
1969 Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh *Rory McEwen: Festival Exhibition of New Structures*
1970 Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh *Rory McEwen: Festival Exhibition: Veils*
1971 Scottish Arts Council *Art Spectrum, Scotland*
1972 Redfern Gallery, London *Rory McEwen: Paintings, Drawings*
Sonnabend Gallery, New York *Rory McEwen*
1974 Redfern Gallery, London *Rory McEwen: True Facts from Nature, Recent Paintings*
Tooth's Gallery, London *Critic's Choice: Marina Vaizey*
1975 Oxford Gallery, Oxford *Rory McEwen: A Month in the Country – Watercolours*
1976 Redfern Gallery, London *Rory McEwen: Paintings and Watercolours*
1977 Oxford Gallery, Oxford *Rory McEwen: Aspects of Nature*
1978 ICA, London *Critic's Choice: John McEwen*
1979 Taranman Gallery, London *Rory McEwen*
1980 Nihonbashi Gallery, Tokyo *Rory McEwen*
1981 Redfern Gallery, London *Rory McEwen: Collages with Butterflies*
Fischer Fine Art, London *The Real British: An anthology of the new realism in British Painting*
1982 Staempfli Gallery, New York *Rory McEwen: Recent Paintings and Collages*
Wave Hill, New York *Rory McEwen: Ten Leaves, A Pepper and an Onion*
1983 Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, Pittsburgh *5th International Exhibition of Botanical Art and Illustration*
1984 Museum of Modern Art, New York *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*
1988 Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh *Rory McEwen : The Botanical Paintings*
Aberdeen Art Gallery *Rory McEwen: The Botanical Paintings*
Sepentine Gallery, London *Rory McEwen: The Botanical Paintings*

On the Web (selected):

Rory McEwen: "Old English Florist Tulip, 1962" http://www.waterman.co.uk/mba2/mcewen.htm

Catalogue, The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh *Rory McEwen: 'The Botanical Paintings'*
http://www.rbge.org.uk/publications/catalogue.htm#exhibitions

British Library National Sound Archive <http://www.tradsong.freeserve.co.uk/nsa.htm> C544 - Rory McEWEN UK/USA recordings featuring McEwen (guitarist) and various performers made during the 1960s. C544/1-19 (reel tapes)

George Dix Papers <http://webtext.library.yale.edu/sgml2html/beinecke.dix.sgm.html>, Beineke Library, Yale. Correspondence, catalogs, lists of works, misc.

Douglas Cooper Papers http://www.getty.edu/gri/htmlfindingaids/cooper_m7.html,
Getty Museum. Correspondence 1939-1984

Koninklijke Bibliotheek National Library of the Netherlands
http://www.konbib.nl/kb/100hoogte/hh-en/hh097-en.html
Wilfrid Blunt. TULIPS AND TULIPOMANIIA. London, The Basilisk Press, 1977. Edition of 515 copies. Copy bound by Jean Gunner. "The tulip is found on Dutch paintings of the seventeenth century, especially still lifes, not only because it was a popular flower, but also because of its symbolic meaning: the fast wilting flower stood for 'vanitas vanitatum', or vanity of vanities, in the words of the Preacher (1:2).
"Jean Gunner knew about all this when she was commissioned by the Koninklijke Bibliotheek to make a bookbinding and chose this book. It deals with tulipomania and has reproductions of delicate paintings of different kinds of tulips, made by Rory McEwen."

Joseph Beuys in Scotland http://www.dmcsoft.com/beuys/exh3.html, 1970. More than 200 photographic images and video, with commentary by Richard Demarco in an interactive CD-ROM display - a digital exhibition documenting Beuys' first visit to Scotland and its Celtic world in May 1970, when Richard Demarco led him to the Moor of Rannoch and Argyll. Beuys returned to Scotland in August 1970 to install The Pack at Edinburgh College of Art, together with photographic documentation of his performance actions in a work later titled Arena. These works were Beuys' contribution to the Strategy: Get Arts exhibition of contemporary German art presented by the Demarco Gallery in collaboration with the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle. From 26-30 August 1970 Beuys performed Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch) The Scottish Symphony with Henning Christiansen and Rory McEwen.

Evelyn L. Kraus, The Picture Garden, a history of European botanical illustration
<http://www.ursusbooks.com/picture_garden.cfm>
"The Dutch, although better known for their lavish paintings of floral miscellany by such artists as Jan van Huysum (1682-1749), were also capable of the precise and scientific botanical study in the French manner in their tulip catalogs. Around 1630 vast speculation in tulip bulbs, based upon hoped-for color changes in the flower due to influences on the plant chromosomes, took place. Great fortunes were made and lost with equal rapidity but the lasting legacy to us are magnificent albums of watercolors recording the splendid varieties of tulips achieved at that time. This type of painting and resulting prints has remained popular into our own time as can be seen in the work of Rory McEwen (1932-1982) published as recently as 1977."

Cambridge Footlights 1952-1956 http://www.footlights.org/past/1952.html: former members.

Bob Dylan Chronicles: 1963 http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Studios/3427/1963.html
January 2/3: Dylan visits Rory McEwen and meets up with Eric von Schmidt, Richard Farina and Ethan Signer. McEwen also takes Dylan to meet Robert Graves.

Beatles Chronicles <http://bobcat.bbn.com/bobcatftp/public/beatles/dates/march>
March 12, 1969: George and Pattie attend the `Piscis' party thrown by Rory McEwen.

Rory & Alex McEwen & Isla Cameron Folksong Jubilee His Master's Voi CLP 1220 Folk LPs
<http://www.vinylrecords.co.uk/page28I.html>

Smithsonian Folkways Records <http://web2.si.edu/folkways/artist2.htm> McEwen, Rory and Alex - Great Scottish Ballads (1956) F-6927 - Scottish Songs and Ballads (1957) F-6930

Rory McEwen
Plate 3: 5th Avenue and 86th, New York (1979)

Rory McEwen
Plate 4: Kew Gardens III (1979)

PL. 6

Rory McEwen
Plate 6: Kew Gardens IV (1979)

On Thursday evening, July 8, 1999, soldiers and vigilantes invaded a dormitory at the University of Tehran. This had been the first day of student protests against the new censorship laws and the forced closing of the newspaper Salam. *The invaders attacked the students, beating many and throwing some out of the windows. The poem "Banu, Our Lady" is an expression of outrage by Simin Behbahani, author of over a dozen books of poetry in Persian and recipient of the Human Rights Watch/Hellman-Hammet grant, for her struggle for freedom of expression in Iran. It focuses on a scene of this rampage: an attacker invoking the name of Fatemeh Zahra, the beloved daughter of the Prophet, while pushing a student to his death. F.M. and K.S.*

BANU, OUR LADY

Simin Behbahani

tr. from the Persian
by Farzaneh Milani and Kaveh Safa

Banu, Our Lady,
this is my gift to you. Accept it.
This said, he raised his offering
and threw it down the stairs.
On the ground, the sacrificial victim
twisted with pain.
A stream of blood followed his fall.
Silence followed his screams.
A demon had made an offering,
and a person had ceased to exist.
Oh . . . for the child lost so young!
A hundred times Oh . . . for the old mother.

Banu, Our Lady, I dreamt I saw you
in the halo of the moon,
your face pale, your eyes red with sorrow.
In your arms you held two sons,
one perfect like the full moon,
the other radiant like the sun.
You sat beside the corpse,
with the road-dust still on your face,
your soul scalded by sorrow,
your heart tired of arrows.
You complained: O Justice! O Faith!
O, the shamelessness of the brute –
offering me a corpse
and asking me to accept it!

Banu, Our Lady, you shed a deluge of tears
over the man murdered by such ignorance.
You turned your silken coat to a shroud
to cover his body.

When you left, I could see
walking behind you three children:
one of them that wretched corpse,
now nimble and bold as ever.
In the grip of death
the brute had taken his place,
like a filthy stone,
like a clump of dirt.

O, Banu, our guide! O, Banu, our savior,
O, Banu, unblemished! O, Banu, full of light!

Banu is a term of respectful address for women, here applied to one of the most beloved and respected women in Islam: Fatemeh, the Radiant, embodiment of many virtues, including selflessness, purity of heart and compassion. She is the daughter of the Prophet, wife of Ali, mother of the martyred Imams Hossein and Hassan (the children in her arms in the poem), and maternal ancestor of the other Shi'a Imams. [*Trs.*]

بانو!

سیمین بهبهانی

«بانو! این هدیه به تو — او را از من بپذیر»
گفت و....بردش سر دست — افکند از پله به زیر.

قربانی بر سر خاك — تابی خورد از سر درد
جویی خون....بعد سقوط — خاموشی....بعد نفیر،
ابلیسی دست گشاد — انسانی رفت ز دست
وای از فرزند جوان — صد وای از مادر پیر....

بانو! در خواب تو را — دیدم در هالهٔ ماه
چشمانت کاسهٔ خون — رویت گلبرگ زریر
بانو! دیدم که به بر — داری نوبانوه دو تن
این یك چون ماه تمام — وان یك چون مهر منیر.

گردی نفشانده ز رخ — بنشستی بر جسدی
با جانی تفته ز غم — با قلبی خسته ز تیر
گفتی: «وا دین و خرد — آه از بی شرمی دد
نعشی در پیش نهد — گوید از من بپذیر!»
بانو! بر کشتهٔ جهل — افشاندی سیل سرشك
کردی بر تن کفنش — زان بالا پوش حریر...

چون می رفتی ز پیت — دیدم نو باوه سه تن
یك تن آن نعش نحیف — از نو چالاك و دلیر
بر جاش افتاده به خاك — ظالم در بند هلاك
چونان خارای پلشت — چونان خاشاك حقیر

بانو! ای سرور ما — بانو! ای یاور ما
بانو! رخشای سلیم — بانو! زهرای ظهیر...

TWO PHOTOS by THOMAS CRAMPTON

PHOTO BY THOMAS CRAMPTON/INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

Cambodian dancers in a traditional performance at a pavilion of the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh

PHOTO BY THOMAS CRAMPTON/INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

Shortly after participating in the destruction of poppy fields for the benefit of journalists ferried in as witnesses, soldiers in Burma's northern Shan State await further orders. Much of Shan State is under control of the United Wa State Army, one of the world's wealthiest and best armed narcotics armies.

Tale

CONFESSIONS OF A MARXIST PUPPET MASTER

Clara Györgyey

"Don't be too sweet because people will eat you,
don't be too bitter because they spit you out."
(Arabic proverb)

During the revolution of 1956 he was twelve years old – he was racing on the Boulevard wide-eyed – he carried water to the thirsty freedom-fighters, ran all the way to the Austrian border, then returned to Budapest because in the middle of the confusion he forgot to tell his parents that he'd intended to flee to the free world. Now he is a professional. New intellectual. Party member. Well-known sociologist. His name often appears in newspapers and scholarly journals. He drinks excessively. Presently his favorite author is Bulgakov. He talk little and slowly but watches all the time. He even managed to acquire a small apartment. Only once in a while, cautiously, does he meet the members of the old gang, his university chums. One evening, after the third glass of Albanian cognac, he began to talk. Although his confession is not unique, it accurately reflects the *Weltanschauung*, the existential philosophy of his generation in Hungary.

"You know, only those people are being kicked out of 'our' company who deserve it, those who don't even make an effort to play the puppeteer's role even half-heartedly. You may do anything, nobody would notice it as long as you hold up the puppet representing you: the puppet's face is well-manneredly rigid so that you can put any words into its mouth. You may freely kick your friend in the ass if your puppet bows afterwards. Then you may apologize by referring to a momentary black-out, to collective responsibility, or to some disturbing news of foreign policy. Soon, he, the abused one, will be begging your pardon; how could he even suppose that you assaulted him deliberately.

"You may be late everywhere, you don't have to keep any promise, you may get away doing nothing in the office, only the excuse text has to be convincing, say, your grandmother died, you have a personal crisis; even more effective, start complaining about how compassionless people are in general. Then, talk about your new plans, serendipitously-found ideas that captured your imagination and describe briefly how you want to accomplish them. Thus, you don't have to lift a finger. If this does not work or someone becomes a nuisance, cut his throat. Tell later that he had committed suicide because you'd discovered his counter-intelligence spying activities and in his last lucid moment he put the knife into your hand to compromise you. People will believe you since there is a need for spies all the time.

"Do anything or do nothing, only the ideology counts; have it ready at their disposal at all times, also, keep it up to date, check the syllabus, there is a wide variety in the Book of Wisdom, different shades, types for all seasons.

"But don't ever tell the truth because then they'll expel you. Don't tell you cheated on your wife because there was a good-looking chick and an opportunity, so it

just happened. Rather, talk about the significance of progress (she could have promoted you!), the ugly tactics of women or the power of alcohol. Better yet, paste a blue beard on your puppet. Then you don't need to give an explanation.

"Don't tell that you don't work because you are lazy and you hate the job, it does not interest you, or that it gives you more pleasure to collect 'numbers,' sex-scalps among women.

"Tell anything but the truth! If you do, it's not the puppet but you, the naked you, on the stage and the numerous, poker-faced other puppets, like the Lilliputians descended on Gulliver, will attack you, tie you down and will gyrate their dance macabre over a cleansed but lifeless body.

"Other topics: I tell you the story of our love. At that time, at the beginning. We had no warm home, soft nest; we owned only the doors so that we could lock out each other; we also had suffocation to blow onto each other, and we had corners into which we could squeeze each other. This way we could spare the considerable expense of a warm home, a soft nest.

"Are you interested in the history of my philosophy? Voila! At first I knew all the right answers. Later I arrived at an inquisitive stage and my entire life twisted into an enormous question mark. I was hanging, dangling on it, and believed that the rope around my throat was tightening irrevocably. But I was young, and my body extremely resilient. I went on living without ever solving any of the problems, without ever getting even one of the answers to those urgent questions even though they had meant to determine the mode of the rest of my life. In those days I could never imagine how anyone could exist this way, that my little scattering actions could not be disciplined, could not be herded into any kind of prefabricated, illusory structure designed by the forever croaking strategy-cocks.

"All of us are prodigal sons. In my family, I am the one. Millions of families can boast or curse similarly while talking about their offspring who are like me. The only difference among us is merely quantitative. My history goes like this: my progenitors had survived heroically in this most rotten spot of Europe. They did not multiply much, only moderately, enough to fertilize the Hungarian soil with one body; they threw in their seed only to guarantee their own crop. Every generation added a bit to this family heritage. They did not want to waste, rather, to hoard; their frugality was on par with the narrow feudal conditions economically, with the anachronistic modes of the Middle Age's spiritually. Their greatest profit, and most coveted, generally growing interest, was in the recurrent promise of the future. This is how it became possible that I had inherited an already considerable fortune: myself.

"One has to invest the capital gain, has to make it work; that's why my parents sold the ancestral mansion from over their heads and gave up all their earthly goods. Now they could collect the long awaited dividend: me. I am a hard glass able to reflect perfectly all the glittering of the world's gems; diamond-hard, you can cut windows facing the future into me. All hopes and anticipations of some hundred years' toil are exclusively mine. But, what can I do with it? Today the economy is still feudally narrow, the promises, too, are the same if one reads them backwards. So I squander and drink away the inheritance leisurely as it behooves a prodigal son.

"An old age sage once said: those were the true lazy people who had been constantly in the mood to do something. That's how I got hold of a wife. When it became obvious that birth and death were rather easy, I decided to make a stretch between the two a trifle more tolerable. To promote this project, and to become eligible to apply for an apartment, one needed a partner. After an early lecture at the

university, I proposed to a superficial acquaintance, a girl. Along with her came two friends of mine. We walked to City Hall. There the legal paper was acquired; soon the apartment materialized, too. I broke the nutshell of the institution of marriage with little or no effort; and like many others, found the shell empty. I live and have someone to sleep with. No hassle. For a temporary solution, this will do. Too bad women always want to look younger; nothing else is so incongruously funny and nothing makes them seem older than this ceaseless endeavor.

"People in the free world don't understand us; they are above it all, but we natives can never step out of our circles, our roles; cannot break out from behind the square box enclosure, unpunished. We are subdued, full of inhibition, maybe lazier, because why be different? What's the use?

"I no longer go to concerts or to the theater. What for? By necessity, by profession, I am compelled to read the reviews written by those who lie better than I do; from their criticism I learn the proper text for tomorrow's ideology session. If I am in a desperate need of sedation, I can put on a record. One does not have to enjoy Bach or Bartok in a crowd; formalized acting does not interest me either. I can always read the play if I want to. Among the mass entertainment I can tolerate only the movies. Every week I continue wasting two hours of my life in the dark where I don't see peoples' face; they cannot see mine as the sweat gradually covers my countenance and slowly melts the wax on it.

"The wanderings of my contemporaries, the world-trotting of these pseudo-Ulyssesses do not make me jealous or bitter. I never covet their peregrinations, even though the government granted me permission to visit no other countries but Bulgaria and Rumania. Once there, in the company of Soviet comrades, I got dead drunk and joined them singing old, reactionary songs of patriotism about the River Volga and 'Lara's Song' from *Dr. Zhivago*. For a few minutes I felt light, almost fulfilled. I don't know what freedom means in the West, I don't really care, because when your head is swollen, it is considerably more difficult to pull on the mask.

"My puppet-game, my idiocy is not an historical category. I too had dreams once, with my friends, about the redemption of the world. Now, at the threshold of manhood, they seem like no more than mere illnesses of adolescence. I write articulate, concise, well-composed articles and sometimes smuggle the gradually decreasing sediment of our old dreams into them. Once in a while I even argue; for struggle, for fighting, there isn't enough sobriety left. Anyway, for what? For whom?"

All of a sudden he seemed sad, more and more depressed, his Tartar face turned blank; his steel-blue eyes gazed coldly at the sole Matisse reproduction in the room. With a languid, emotionless gesture he threw the butt of his long-burnt cigarette into the garbage pail. One could read nothing anymore from his half-opened eyes. Like an eel, slippery, smooth, a free-swimmer. While saying farewell, without any provocation, someone asked him if he was happy. He did not seem to comprehend. "This is an anachronistic question. It cannot be answered. I am. I live. I exist. If you prefer, I am alive. No more, no less." He turned slowly, walked back to the cocktail table and refilled his glass to the brim.

Poem

THE BURDEN OF SILENCE

Renata Treitel

Seven days of bridges and wooden shoes, seven days of wine and schnapps
and sweet, skinned, boned herring out of the melting sea.
It's the season of the herring. Seven barges float by like ghosts.

The willow wood of your shoes protects you from pewter skies when
the clouds shed their skins and pelt down liquid bones.
Seven days of bridges and wooden shoes, seven days of wine and schnapps.

You swear a thimble of gin loosens up the tongue. Tongue-tied
you feel like a man who has lost a leg. You favor hand-loomed wool.
It's the season of the herring. Seven barges float by like ghosts

out of memory's past. They raise flags: words at the end
of each sentence when your mouth snaps closed like a box.
Seven days of bridges and wooden shoes, seven days of wine and schnapps

to bridge your father's silence after he lost a leg in the war.
War barges in on wooden shoes at each turn of the helm.
It's the season of the herring. Seven barges float by like ghosts.

One day your voice will come back melting like sweet herring
on your tongue. But now silence is the rule.
Seven days of bridges and wooden shoes. Seven days of wine and schnapps.
It's the season of the herring. Seven barges float by like ghosts.

REFORMING THE LORDS

Richard Jones

The British are halfway toward reforming their House of Lords. Our occasional correspondent R. J. visits this venerable, unique institution and gets a personal slant on it from a newly-created life-peer, a neighbor and friend for more than thirty years.

We were discussing, over drinks, the British government's reform of the country's institutions under the buzzwords of 'decentralization' and 'modernization.' Nobody minded that, under the first label, Scotland had been given its own parliament, Wales its own assembly, and Londoners, for the first time, the right to vote for a mayor, but what of the ambiguities? For example, should Scottish members of the Westminster Parliament vote on English matters, now English MPs have no say on affairs north of the border? And what would happen if the Mayor of London adopted an agenda disliked by the Government? The questions remain unanswered; we hope for the best.

Then, under the banner of 'modernization,' the biggest reform concerns the House of Lords, the second chamber of the British parliament. Everybody knew it was there, and, in some odd way, nobody took it very seriously. The anomaly of an unelected body, overwhelmingly male and of the political right, offended ordinary democratic feeling; how had it survived so long? It needed to be abolished, said some, and replaced by an elected senate; others thought there might be a way of reinvigorating the body from within, combining the demands of an enlightened democracy with the ceremonial trappings of the past so loved by traditionalists.

Shortly after this discussion it was announced that all but 92 of the 646 hereditary lords were to be declared redundant, an incredible move; yet the Government gave no idea what the final form of the House would be. Months after the Lords were voted out, the country still waits for the final blueprint. A political commentator, writing in *The Times*, even said the House of Lords was in limbo. This was hardly true, as the Lords continues to function, is said to have the heaviest work-load of all second chambers, and takes in new blood in the shape of life peers nominated by the heads of government and the opposition parties. The creation of these non-hereditary titles began in 1958, a measure brought in by a Conservative government. The new peers could be of either sex. This way women entered the House of Lords, forty years after a woman MP took her seat in the House of Commons.

Then came the surprise: among the new Labour peers listed in the newspapers in the summer of 1999 was an old friend and neighbour. At once, the future of the House of Lords became a matter of personal interest. We understood that our friend, Doreen Massey, a life-long member of the Labour Party and an independent consultant in health and sexual education, had been selected to strengthen the government's health team in the transformation from being a Mrs. to a Baroness. And how would a down-to-earth wife of an academic and mother of three find life in such a traditional not to say eccentric institution as the House of Lords?

The House has a long history. It began in the councils of nobles summoned by English kings in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries and since 1346, has been separate from the

elected House of Commons. Although both Houses share a building, the Palace of Westminster, by the side of the Thames, they never hold joint sessions and they operate in different ways.

For major events, such as the State Opening of Parliament, when the Queen delivers the government's program for the year, the members of the House of Commons are summoned with anachronistic ceremony to the Lords in order to hear her. Despite this ceremonial kowtowing, the elected House of Commons, on which national democratic government depends, plays the more important role. The House of Lords has four main functions: to question government ministers about policy; to save the Commons time by giving a first hearing to bills (draft laws) that are not controversial; to debate and, if necessary, revise bills sent by the Commons; and, finally, to reject entirely bills sent by the Commons which fail to please their lordships.

It is this last power that has created most of the tension between the Commons and the Lords this century, and had led people to question how members of a legislative body, in position because of an accident of birth, had been allowed to hold sway for so long. This was basically Mrs. Massey's view, and when she was asked whether she would join the government team in the Lords she accepted the challenge and considered it an honour. She wanted to be in on the reforms.

She knew from her own reading of history that from the 1880s the Lords had had an in-built Conservative majority Their first big confrontation with a non-Conservative Commons came in 1909, when the Lords rejected the Liberal Government's so-called People's Budget. In revenge for this, two years later, the same Government legislated to restrict the Lords' powers: the House could only hold up finance bills for a year, and other bills for two. This reform established the supremacy of the Commons, although any non-conservative government has always been aware of the massively hostile potential of the hereditary peers, those backwoods eminences of Gilbert and Sullivan operas and caricature, who could be called to London to hold up legislation.

She was also aware of the strange reluctance of the post-war Labour Government, despite its huge majority, to reform the situation. Although the Lords' power to delay bills was reduced by a year in 1949, the composition of the House remained unchanged, a mixture of hereditary peers, bishops and archbishops of the Anglican church, and law lords who served as the country's supreme court of appeal. A leading Labour politician, Herbert Morrison, offered this paradoxical reason for maintaining the status quo: "The very irrationality of the composition of the House of Lords and its quaintness are safeguards for our modern British democracy."

It was to end this "quaintness" that a decade later a bill to introduce life peerages was brought in, thus giving the state the power to draw on the experience not only of politicians who had left the Commons but of people from the liberal professions, the arts and the sciences.

This was where Mrs. Massey and her like came in; but however modern-minded they might be, their introduction into the Lords had to follow an ancient ritual. First came discussions about a title. A senior House of Lords official gave advice, and it was agreed that Mrs. Massey would take the title of The Baroness Massey of Darwen, in the County of Lancashire, the town where she was born and received her early education. She then was told that while her husband, Leslie, would not be entitled to any form of noble title, their three children might prefix their names with The Honourable. The elder son, Owen, a theatrical agent, would also have the right to sit on the steps of the throne during debates in the House.

There followed a longish wait for the new Baroness to be formally introduced into the House. Every new peer needs two sponsors, and Lady Massey found two other peeresses to fulfil this role: Lady Jay, the Leader of the House, and Lady Castle, a fellow Lancastrian and one time MP. (Lady Castle – famous for her red hair – when asked whether the head should be covered whilst wearing the official robes, caused amusement by saying, "When I've spent good money at the hairdressers I'm damned if I'm going to wear a hat!")

The advice was taken and on November 1st, hatless but in robes, Lady Massey took the oath, shook hands with the Lord Chancellor, who was seated on the woolsack, and became a fully-fledged member of the House. Later she was presented with a video of the ceremony courtesy of the House of Lords Information Office.

From this point onwards Lady Massey received an official stipend. At £35 a day (about $50) for every day she actually spent in the House it is far from generous but there is extra money for secretarial support and for essential expenses covering subsistence and travel.

Almost at once Lady Massey began work. As it is the custom of the Lords that members may not take part in debates until they have made their maiden speech, Lady Massey rose to address the House within days of her arrival. It so happened that the debate was on a subject made for her: the health of young people. She is a practised public speaker and her contribution was well received.

In the next few weeks there were further occasions for her to speak as the House of Commons had agreed to rescind a curious piece of legislation, known as Section 28, from the Thatcher period, which forbids local authorities to "promote" homosexuality. When this was first debated nobody could say how homosexuality could be "promoted." One woman MP, a doctor, said, "You might as well suggest promoting left-handedness and red hair." The measure was widely seen as a concession to ignorance and bigotry.

The Lords voted to retain the clause. This means the bill will, in some form, return to the House in the next few months. This early confrontation with bigoted opposition was not a surprise to Lady Massey although she was astonished by the virulence of the feeling.

For many years, after taking an honours degree in French at Birmingham University, she had taught in secondary schools in London and Philadelphia. She then went on to specialize in health and sexual education. For seven years she worked for the British Family Planning Association, five of them as its director, before turning freelance. Much of her recent consultation work has been outside Britain, in countries where open discussion of sexual matters has been taboo and family planning often clashes with religious sentiment. She also understood that sexual liberation is anathema to many older people in our society, but had not guessed there would be so much ill-informed prejudice.

As she told the Lords in the debate, some of the opinions of her fellow peers and the angry letters from members of the public were not only intolerant but contrary to everyday experience and common sense.

As the House of Lords sits for between 30 and 40 weeks a year, Lady Massey intends to keep up her consultancy work: there are projects still not completed. She also hopes to go on writing on social and sexual health. She has already published a number of books and edited a vividly illustrated guide to the arts of love (1996).

Lady Massey finds that one of the many pleasures of being in the Lords is having day-to-day contact with a wide variety of people. What has most surprised her, despite the heated debates on the anti-gay legislation, is the very relaxed, non-confrontational mood

there. Unlike the House of Commons, where the two main parties sit glaring and sneering at one another, the Lords conducts its affairs in a civilized manner.

There is even a tradition that the Leader of the House invites the leader of the opposition to a meal. The Conservative leader, Lord Strathclyde, said this was done to agree on a communication channel. The House of Lords (he said) must organize its own discipline and that can only work if the leaders are on good terms.

As the House is a self-regulating body, those who wish to speak give notice beforehand and are allotted a space in the rota, which allows each party and the independents (known as crossbenchers) to address the House in an orderly way. Lady Massey finds there is a lot of give and take.

All the same, the negative vote on the repeal of the anti-gay legislation was a reminder that the Lords is still very much a chamber of what the French call The Third Age.

Lady Massey, herself a youthful 62, quoted with approval a Liberal Democrat peer who had said the great problem faced by the Lords was: how it was going to be possible to create a House attractive to younger people? "This would have to be considered when we finally get round to discussing the future composition of the House."

The past is ever-present in the House not only in the age of its members but in its setting. The vast Gothic palace built by Charles Barry over twenty years from 1840 to 1860, after fire destroyed the earlier building, imposes its own authority; so do the grandiose interior decorations and furnishings by Augustus Pugin. Inside this elaborate setting are the statues and portraits of royalty and the late great. There are huge canvasses depicting historical events; the vast robing-room where the Queen prepares for her annual speech from the throne has frescoes on Arthurian themes.

An outsider in the building for a short visit is made to feel a part of the life and history of the nation; to be in such surroundings for every working day must be overwhelming: those endless and richly carpeted corridors, the high elaborate ceilings, the windows with their views of the Thames, the lofty bookcases filled with bound volumes of past legislation, the groups of awed schoolchildren being given history lessons by the guides; this is a public building as theatre.

All this is not lost on Lady Massey who shares with her husband, a physicist and retired university dean, a great love of the arts, especially of opera. The outsider is bound to wonder whether at times it would be hard not to feel, despite the absence of music, that everything and everyone are part of a mega-production with a cast of 665. This figure includes 92 hereditary peers, 520 life peers, 26 archbishops and bishops and 27 law lords. Women, mostly life peers, number 104.

One can understand the sadness of those 554 lords voted out of membership of a place many had regarded as a part of their lives, a very cozy and exclusive club. Although they were given certain privileges, these are strictly defined so that the social side of life does not interfere with the running of parliamentary business. The ex-peers may use the excellent library and have access, at certain times, to the subsidized dining facilities.

During the days after the crucial vote on November 11, the tearooms of the House were thronged with the family and friends of the departing peers enjoying a modest if final fling. It was in the tearoom, not on the floor of the House, that Lady Massey understood that she was a witness to the ending of 700 years of history; a solemn moment.

The next phase is still unsure; but this July government ministers took a step to further reform of the House by forming a committee drawn from both the Commons and

the Lords to deal with the matter. Meanwhile, up in Edinburgh, the new Scottish Parliament scrapped the anti-gay legislation, 99-17.

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Doreen E. Massey, THE LOVERS GUIDE ENCYCLOPEDIA. London: Bloomsbury; Emeryville, Ca.: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1996.

Serial, Part One

AGENT NINE

A NOVEL
by

"X"

Book One ALICE'S ADVENTURES OVERSEAS

Clue One:
b o o t s

Once upon a time—it was back in the 'Twenties, to be more exact—on South Sixth Street in Williamsburg, in the parish of Peter and Paul, in the Borough of Brooklyn, in Kings County in New York City in the United States of America, a girl called Alice Rocket sat at a counter drinking a cup of hot stuff. She had ordered Postum, to save on costs. She had been fired just the day before.

"I'm a bum," she said. "I am all washed up." She was fourteen years old.

Alice was down at heel in a very basic way, which is to say that the heels on her boots were all ground down. Her collar was frayed and the fuzz was wearing away in drab patches all over her coat. She did have a good-looking hat with a sharp dimple in it. This was the best item she had, and she wore it pulled down to shield the bags under her eyes. Lately, she had been having trouble sleeping.

Alice had lived in Brooklyn all her life. But it was hard for her to say just where to call home. Her mother was dead and her old man had run away. For a while, she had been able to pick up work here and there as a dance partner; but then the Gold Diggers' Union had found out that she had lied about her age, and they had impounded her dancing shoes and put her name on a list. Now finding work anyplace in the borough was going to be tough, at least over the next couple of years.

"Time to move on," she told herself.

If she had stepped up to the window, she would have been able to see across the water to the dense-packed buildings of Manhattan. At night, their lights shone like electric stars. The farther out you looked, the higher and mightier they rose. But in fact her attention generally roamed farther still, while at the same time keeping to her own side of the water; for the Williamsburg hash houses were haunted by sailors from the Navy Yard and below who liked to jawbone together over all the different places they had been, and for Alice Rocket this had long served for education and entertainment in one, for just as long as she had been taking all her meals out.

Late into the night, she would sit tight in the corner and let her ears pick up the strange names the sailors dropped between bites. Strange names like *Shanghai*. It was better value than the picture show, and sometimes, there was even live music to go with the talk, imported tunes with bold, unfamiliar rhythms; or else, homegrown standards so old and creaky about all they really *had* was their familiarity to recommend them to the tin ears of tired sailors….

That particular dark night, Alice had been left to herself, and that suited her fine.

It was already pretty late, or else pretty darn early, depending on how you reckon it; and it was vile outside. The only other body in the joint besides the fry-cook himself was a tired old salt nodding off into his potatoes. (The tattoo on his arm read: *Any port in a storm*.) Then the door opened—in fact, it sort of slammed itself open—and Alice's slightly older friend Louie, a powerful wind, and a lot of little bits of trash from the street all arrived at the Oily Boyd together at about six hundred miles per hour.

"Holy Palooka!" said Boyd, who was both Chef and Proprietor at this fine establishment; it had a grill at one end of it and a metal-top bar at the other, and a film of grease covered the whole affair as evenly as if it had been spread from an atomizer, all the way down to the barstools.

"Aw, g'wan and fry an egg."

"Boy, you watch it with all those bits of debris and whatnot," said Boyd.

"Aw, g'wan and flap a jack."

Louie sat down next to Alice and took a long sip of her Postum.

"Mmh. Now that is fine coffee."

"Boyd thinks you are a boy," Alice said.

"I am a boy," Louie said, "a newsboy."

"You are a goil," Alice said, "a chorus goil."

"Broadway," her friend snorted, "it can have my regards. Talk about dog-eat-dog—you could make that wolf-eat-wolf." Louie rolled long-lashed eyes. "If there's one thing I have loined in the theater, it's this: It don't matter what you are, it's what you wear."

Grubby fingers patted the flat newsboy's cap. "Consequently, now I am a joinalist. Shortly, I aim to be a boy reporter."

But now the cap came off as Louie got set to eat; and over on the other side of Alice, the sailor sat up and took notice. For despite the knickerbockers and stockings, despite the satchel of pages, ribbons of blond hair gushing forth like butterscotch were now making it plain that Louie was something much finer than the usual run of newsboys. She had plump little lips, and delicate nostrils that quivered as she spoke. She was such a hot patootie, in fact, that Alice generally felt aggravated after palling around with her for long periods of time and that's why they were never really close.

Still, Louie may have looked like a million bucks, but as she warmed up inside, her wet clothes started steaming, and she certainly began to smell like a dirty newsboy, or something similar that had been standing out in bad weather too long.

"What is this, the Blue Plate Special?" she said, looking at the dish in front of her. It was full of fried eggs and flapjacks. "Even a boy reporter has got to watch her figure. And that goes double," she sighed, "if she is working for Mr. Hoist. I will have a Moxie and a stick of chewing gum."

To Alice, the symptoms were clear: her friend had no money either.

"Sister, I would spot you if I could."

"I know you would. Listen, Alice. This paper route business is a racket, just the same as dancing for dimes." Louie drew in a bit closer. "I will tell you the woist. It ain't

that they don't pay me sufficient to put some bones on the fights now and again. But these days, what with the oily morning edition, I am generally in bed before I loin the results. Then the foist thing I see when I get up to work is how much I blown the day before. It is all backwards, I tell you—no time to digest before I get the news *ker-bap!* in the snoot."

("*Ker-bap!*" the sailor murmured, listing tiredly to starboard.)

"You had a paycheck riding on a fight yesterday?" Alice knew her friend's fondness for the manly art. "Have you checked the paper yet?"

"It ain't no good, kiddo." But Louie reached into her bag and handed over a rolled-up copy of the New York *Bugle*.

"You never know," said Alice politely.

"I ain't even told you the name of the pug yet," Louie said, after a couple of minutes of concentrated silence. Alice had spent them, eyebrows knitted and lips barely moving, reading through the fights page.

"What was it about that maroon," she said finally. "Was he tired, or what?" Their neighbor had capsized into a navy-blue heap on the floor.

But she had her finger on an ad in the corner of the page. It said:

> ***PEP A PLUS***
> Wanted: Discreet companion for private business man.
> Nature of work confidential. Opportunity for travel.
> Apply in person today only, Hopper Building,
> room 0–27–0, Madison Square, New York.

"Alice," Louie said. "Was you born yesterday?"

"I have been around the block a couple of times."

"Every time, the same old block, kiddo."

"Thank you for reminding me," Alice said. "Now, what do you suppose it pays?"

"Can't be good, they are advertising on the fights page."

"'Pep is a plus,'" quoted Alice.

"That is the part that gets me, too," her friend admitted. "And it is the Hopper Building, a professional address of repute, besides which it is one of the tallest buildings in the City.… Look, Alice, I would say you got a shot at it, on account of you being the foist living creature in town to see the ad. But as to why you would want it—that is another question entirely."

Louie had kept just one of her fingernails long, sharp, and red. She scored the four borders of the ad with it and lifted it neatly out of the page.

"An opportunity, Louie," Alice said seriously.

"Well," Louie said, "I would be remiss in my duty as a friend if I let you go off into the woild of commerce looking like that."

She rummaged around in the canvas bag and took out a compact and powdered Alice's nose and then brushed back her hair to reveal a shiny pair of earrings. She took these off and clipped them on Alice's ears. When Alice gave her a concerned look, she blushed and said, "It is all just paste anyways."

Louie told Boyd to look for the rag-and-bone man. Boyd sent his wife to the flophouse to wake him up. Then he topped off Alice's mug with real coffee, on the house.

Louie looked at her friend all businesslike. "Sharp hat. Nix it."

"No dice. It was my mother's hat."

"No dame ever wore a hat like that. That is a Fedora."

"That was my mother's name."

"Nix the boots. They stink."

The boots were hugeous and generous. They had thick rubber soles and storm welts. They had seen better days, but then, so had Alice. Between the three of them, they took no nonsense.

"You're right, you're right, what else are you going to wear on your feet. Let me shave your eyebrows so's I can draw in better ones?"

"No," said Alice stoutly.

"Well," her friend sighed, "then ain't nothing on oith can be done with your eyes. Round and black, like a pair of beetles. But you got a good set of lips. Try this lipstick—Number Toity-Tree, 'Roadhouse Tomato.'"

"Say, thanks," said Alice, wondering if she was grateful or mad.

The sailor dozed on. Louie decided to cut off most of Alice's hair. A bob was the easiest style to try, not to mention the latest. But would bangs make her look too young? Louie borrowed a pot of wax from the kitchen and made a razor-sharp part and a kiss curl that looped over Alice's forehead. Boyd gave them a plate of sandwich crusts on the house.

Mrs. Boyd showed up with the rag-and-bone man and with Smitty, whose real name was Julius Midscarcz. For sixty cents, the rag-and-bone man sold Alice a dress that looked O.K. from the front. Smitty shined Alice's boots, although her toes stuck out the front and he got black boot polish all over them. Louie took up a collection and gave the rag-and-bone man fifty-four cents. Boyd gave Alice two cucumber slices on the house.

"Give me the hair cuttings," said the rag-and-bone man. "I make wigs out of them."

Alice put the cucumber slices on her eyes to get rid of the bags. Then she was set.

"Smile," Louie said. She rapped on Alice's front teeth. "That's quality."

It was still so early out that there were no trolleys to dodge on the way to the train. Against the dark sky, you could just see the cranes of ships berthed over by the docks, waiting for their crews to roll in.

Louie unhitched her stockings and gave them to Alice as she stepped into the Manhattan train. To her surprise, Alice found they were made of real silk. She pocketed them gratefully.

Then they stared at each other.

"Keep steady on your feet, kid," Louie hollered suddenly, "and shift with the punches. Anyone try to catch you off balance, *berng!* you just come bouncing right back."

The twin doors closed. "Skidoo," Alice thought.

Clue Two:
s i g n s

When Alice rumbled into Manhattan in a train she had all to herself, things were just starting to get moving in the city. People in apartments uptown and down were taking off their pajamas and getting their hats, not forgetting to brush their teeth with Dent-O in between. But whistles were not yet blowing, steamers were hardly docking, boilers were not totally stoked, and joints would not be jumping for a while. Some folks were already stomping at the Savoy, but actually they were still stomping from the night before. Since everybody else was rubbing sleep out of their eyes, it was a safe bet that Alice had stolen a march on the rest of New York.

She got to the Hopper Building, the gleaming skyscraper on Madison Square, and was saluted by a doorman in a splendiferous but dignified tailsuit.

"You are magnificent," she told the doorman.

"Do you have an apperntment?" he asked.

"Oh–twenty-seven–oh," said Alice calmly.

They bowed at each other and the doorman gestured at the elevator.

"The elevator boy won't be here for half an hour. Do you drive?" he asked.

"There is no way to go but up," replied Alice Rocket, and climbed into the machine. Soon, she was in front of Room 0–27–0.

On the frosted glass on the door it read: "**C. VINUP. PRIVATE I**(nvestigator)." The door had half a dozen keyholes in it, each with its own polished brass lock. Alice rapped on the glass a few times. When nobody came to answer, she decided to whistle in the hallway to kill time.

She whistled "Long, Long Ago" and "Potato Head Blues" and "The Lady in Red." She whistled "I Love the World, I Love the Navy." She whistled "Ninety-Nine Bottles of Beer on the Wall." When she got done with that, she turned the handle on the door. It opened easily, although it squeaked a bit.

Alice stepped inside. She noted with interest that there was a big anvil hanging from a rope above the door where she came in. Otherwise, the office was pretty normal-looking.

There was a waiting room and a second door behind what she supposed was the secretary's desk. It, too, had lettering on the glass. **PRIVATE,** it read. **Trespassers will be DEMORALIZED**. Through the glass, Alice could make out a desk beyond; and at the desk, a still figure.

She knocked on the door. "I am already demoralized by this party's rudeness," she thought, but she did her best to sound respectful. "Mr. Vinup," she said. "It's me, Alice Rocket—or should I say, it's I."

There was no answer. "I demand to see Mr. Vinup!" Alice declared, and yanked open the door.

Mr. Vinup sat facing the door with a serious expression. He had a fat cigar wedged between his teeth. His nose was shaped like a hatchet and his jaw was square. He was dressed in a conservative gray suit and alligator shoes. All his clothes were well pressed, but the shoulders were a little dusty. A piece of fly paper twisted idly overhead.

"Excuse me," Alice said, but Mr. Vinup just stared. She noticed the cigar was unlit.

"He's dead," she thought.

Alice Rocket tiptoed very carefully around to the back of the dead detective's swivel chair. She wanted to check his back to see if there was a knife in it. She touched his nape and shuddered. It was as cold as a rock.

Alice began to get gooseflesh. She felt sorry for Mr. Vinup. The office smelled like carbon paper and aftershave. Everything in it was looking cheap and washed-out—a sad, square room full of cheap, putty-colored objects. Except for the big globe of the world on the desk, which was cheerfully blue and round and almost seemed to be smiling. On the outer end of Outer Mongolia, Alice found a country that she hadn't known existed. Say! Did somebody just clear his throat behind her?

—No, there was nothing there but the window. She realized that she was getting jumpy and wished that she had gotten just a bit of sleep.

"What do I do," she said to herself. "I can't leave—I got no train fare home. If I call the police, it's a cinch they will think that I have done it. And what if the lug that did do it is still—"

"Put up your mitts, or you'll be as full of lead as a Number Two pencil before you can say 'Ticonderoga.'"

It was a hard voice that came from behind, telling her next to turn around slowly. Alice followed the advice.

"My, isn't this a pretty picture," said the man in the window. "What's your little game, lady?"

Alice smelled motor oil and the suggestion of smoke and realized that the man had what appeared to be a machine gun pointed at her chest. She began to blush.

"Don't pernt that at me," she said in an unnaturally small voice. "I won't tell the Law, honest. What's it to me if Mr. Vinup bought the farm. I didn't see nothing—"

"Won't tell the Law, lady?" said the man sharply. "Well, I am the Law—in a manner of speaking." He put the machine gun back in the pocket of his trenchcoat and flashed a license mounted on a piece of leather.

"What's it to *you* if Vinup bought the farm? Why not ask, What's it to *me*? A lot, considering"—here he squinted at the license—"I am Curt Vinup, Private Eye."

"You—!" said Alice. She could think of nothing else to say.

And yet—and yet it was true that there was a certain—and as the man climbed through the window and into the office, the resemblance grew. Truth to tell, his features seemed every bit as stern and immobile as those of the stiff in the chair. He had evidently lowered himself down from the next floor up, for he unhitched an elastic band from the back of his suspenders, and it bounced back out the window and vanished upwards. When he took off his trenchcoat and hung it on Mr. Vinup's coat rack, he turned out to be wearing a businesslike gray suit underneath, well-pressed despite his feats of gymnastics.

The man sat wearily on the desk and took off his overshoes. Noting their grippy soles, Alice saw that they were top-quality rubber that would provide traction on slippery surfaces and ensure a tight spring in your step.

He said, buttoning up his 'gators: "There are only a few pieces of this puzzle that are still missing. Do you mind telling me how you got past the mantrap?"

"What mantrap? I am a goil."

"The trap in front. The trap that would have squashed you flat as a London apartment as soon as you tried anything with the locks."

"The door was unlocked."

"The door was unlocked—harumph! A likely story. Don't think I'm not wise to you and your gang of thugs. Who are you working for, Archie Mascara's boys, is it?"

"I am not working for anyone at the moment," Alice said. "You sure know how to make a goil feel like an ant. I came here looking for emplerment with Mr. Vinup, but I find my prospects have arrived at an impasse on account of he is deceased."

She stared hard at the man. He was possibly Mr. Vinup's brother.

"Save your breath," he snapped, working the angles of his jaw. "I've had just about enough of this malarkey, lady. If you sing now, it'll go easier when you face the men in blue."

"'Discreet companion,'" said Alice. "'Nature of work confidential. Pep's a plus.'"

The Vinup double shot a long, suspicious look at Alice. He walked around the desk without letting her out of his sight. Then he sat down in a chair with his back to a corner and stared at her with his mouth closed. Then he got up and took a bottle of aspirin out of a desk drawer and took a few without any water. Then he sat down again. He looked tired.

"Well, at least you're punctual," he said.

"I am Alice Rocket," said Alice, surprised.

"Miss Rocket, my name is Curt Vinup. Swell. Now everyone's jake."

"So when do I start?" Alice asked. "And if you are Mr. Vinup and everyone else is Jake, who is the gentleman at the desk?"

"Lady—," began the detective. "Miss Rocket. When I placed that ad in the paper, it was a serious business."

"I am serious," said Alice. "And who is the gentleman at the desk?"

"I need a sidekick, not a lady assistant. This is a dangerous affair.… These are murky waters.… I'm on the level, see?" he finished suddenly.

Picking himself up, he flicked open a nickel-plated cigarette lighter. Alice took careful note of the monogram, which said: C.V. He held the flame before the figure in the swivel chair. The nose began to drip liquid and then crumpled and lost shape entirely. Mr. Vinup put his fingers on the lump and played with it until it looked like his nose again.

"I had this ordered specially. An excellent likeness from the firm of Aspic Brothers, of Buffalo." He looked unsmilingly at Alice. "Wax," he explained. "Can you *habla Español*, Miss Rocket?"

"Mr. Vinup," said Alice. "I am smart and I know from hard knocks."

"Work hard?"

"I am no slouch."

"One dummy is all I can handle at the moment," remarked Mr. Vinup severely. "What are your qualifications?"

Alice gazed sadly in the direction of the floor. She shuffled her feet on the linoleum, where they made no noise.

Then she looked up. She had had an inspiration.

"I am a gumshoe, too," she said proudly. "I keep steady on my feet. And anybody try to catch me off balance, *berng!* I come bouncing right back."

Mr. Vinup reached into his pocket and produced a magnifying glass. He held it at arm's length towards the floor and looked through it at her hugeous boots. When he raised his eyes to meet Alice's own, a thoughtful look had softened his face.

"A good pair of rubber soles can save your life," he said quietly. "Don't you forget it, Miss Rocket." He put his lens back in his pocket. "Under the right circumstances, of course."

"Take a chancet," Alice told him, "just this oncet."

He folded his arms, deliberating. Alice studied him back and thought: He looks exactly like a cigar-store Indian. She held her gaze steady.

The wooden face broke into a smile.

"Well, you don't lack for pep, Miss Rocket," her prospective employer said. "Tell you what." He held out his hand. Alice held her breath.

"Why don't you leave your parents' number for my files? Don't call us, we'll call you."

"I do not have any parents," said Alice, stung.

But Mr. Vinup seemed no less stung by her answer. "No parents?" he repeated.

"What about guardians?" His tone and face had hardened again. "What about next of kin?" He was administering the third degree, and no mistake. "Do you mean to tell me, Miss Rocket," he said, enunciating very clearly, "that you have *no dependents or antecedents of any kind*?"

"Nix," she confessed.

"I see," said Mr. Vinup with sudden decision.

He strode over to a file cabinet and, withdrawing a manila folder, cleared his throat.

"Harumph! I want to make it clear, Miss Rocket, that I'm not a Government man. I own and operate a business; I'm what is known in the press as an *agent provocateur*. (The French press, in particular.) But in the trade we prefer to refer to ourselves as Free-Lancers. I hire my services to those in the market for international secrets. The clientele is a select group, and I reserve the right to refuse service to customers clearly on the side of evil. Or to anyone bent on world conquest, whatever their ideals—I have got no patience for that. The firm of Curt Vinup, Private Investigator does not undertake divorce cases or other acts of sabotage. My qualifications are highly regarded in the circles of intrigue, Miss Rocket, I know how to operate a wide range of lethal equipment and I am a master of disguise. And I am very careful. There is no code of business ethics in my line, and the competition is ruthless.

"It's a tough racket, kid, but it has its perks. I can't afford to pay you a whole lot as a starting salary, but you'll have plenty of dough for expenses—just keep the receipts. You can get into nightclubs for free, if you like that kind of thing."

"I do not need a lot of cabbage," said Alice.

Mr. Vinup made an appreciative sound in his throat. "And now to make things official. Miss Rocket, I am not going to take out any contracts—in our business, that word has a specific meaning—but I am going to assign you a code number. For the purposes of this job, I have been designated Agent Eight. Guess that makes you Agent Eight-and-a-Half."

Eight-and-a-Half. Alice felt stirred to ask a simple question.

"What happened to Agent Seven?"

Mr. Vinup narrowed his eyes. "*Secret-o profesional*, as our friends say South of the Border."

Now, moistening his finger, he leafed through the manila folder. There were long strips of photographic negatives, schedules of the tides, chemical formulas, horoscopes, fake I. D.'s, football tickets, a bird watcher's guide, a map of the canals of Amsterdam, and what appeared to be a recipe for chipped beef on a biscuit. And then there were dozens of other things that Alice could only guess at.

"You have a passport, of course?" He seemed preoccupied.

"No."

"Good. We sail for England tonight."

Mr. Vinup found the objects of his search and handed them to Alice. She had to study them for a minute before she recognized what they were—tickets for a ship. Two first-class berths on the S. S. *Transylvania*, due to sail from New York to London at six o'clock that very evening. They were made out in the names of Mr. and Mrs. Ulterior.

It seemed there was not a minute to lose. "My wax-faced understudy will keep house and stop bullets for me. We have to vamoose."

"Away!" agreed Alice, waving her fist.

Her hands felt warm and she opened and closed them rapidly, feeling that she couldn't clench them hard enough. Suddenly her heart was pounding and her mouth was full of spit. She wanted to get on the road. She wanted to drive cars, sail boats, shoot off firecrackers. "We're off to the races," she told herself.

She walked arm-in-arm with Agent Eight out of the office marked **PRIVATE** and paraded through the waiting room. The desperadoes of the world had arrived. There were a dashing young man in a cape and a dwarf with a knife and and a woolly-looking agitator in a moth-eaten sweater and a dame with a really square head. There was somebody's grandma, or was it somebody's grandpa; there was a tattooed lady in a Mexican sombrero. The only sounds they made were heavy breathing and fidgeting as they sat there waiting for Mr. Vinup to give them the job. They were tough-looking customers, every one; but Alice had beaten them all to the draw.

It was spring outside in the streets of New York. Big lumps of snow, colored black from the cinders, lay melting on the curbsides into the gutter. The doorman was whistling as he showed Alice and Mr. Vinup out. He snapped them both a salute.

Events moved rapidly after that. Alice remembered, as if in a dream, getting into a low, bottle-green Bugatti with Mr. Vinup and tearing off down Fifth Avenue. She kept her hat in her lap so it wouldn't fly off and, feeling the wind in her hair, wished it were still long the way it used to be. They took a roundabout way to the pier, picking up disguises and ammunition and other supplies, deliberately motoring out of town and making a loop on a country highway, in order, as Mr. Vinup said, "to throw others off the scent."

They had a proper lunch at a little roadside restaurant and Alice had chowder and chops and pie of many kinds. Mr. Vinup performed a variety of mysterious acts. He parked on the side of the road five miles out of Yonkers and dug a hole at the foot of a crabapple tree. When he came back to the car, he had a passport for Alice. He burned papers in a village graveyard in Bronxville and gave a fifty-dollar tip to a gas pump attendant. Alice remembered best the billboards that lined the road back to New York. Taken in sequence, the signs added up to make a new song she had never heard before:

THERE WAS ONCE A PRINCESS OF LONG AGO
TO TEST THE METTLE OF WHOSE NOBLE WORTH
TRIALS THREE THEY GAVE UNTO—
OF *FIRE* AND *WATER* AND *EARTH*.
SHE TROD THE EARTH UNDERFEET TO THE JAZZ AGE BEAT—
THE WATERS SHE STAVED WITH A PERMANENT WAVE—
SHE *FIRED* ALL HER AWE-STRUCKEN BEAUX
IN A PINK SLIP FROM SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO.'S—
FOR YOU SEE THIS PRINCESS OF LONG AGO
WAS A MODERN GAL AFTER ALL!

The last sign said: BURMA SHAVE. "Must be some kind of soap," Alice thought.

As they climbed the gangway into the ship, Mr. Vinup turned to Alice. His voice sank to a sinister whisper. "Was the door really unlocked?" he asked.

"I did it with a hairpin," Alice said.

"But your hair is bobbed," said Mr. Vinup.

"*Secret-o profesional*."
"Harumph!" Mr. Vinup said.

END OF PART ONE.
TUNE IN AGAIN NEXT MONTH FOR MORE
OF ALICE'S ADVENTURES OVERSEAS,
IN THE NEXT ISTALLMENT OF
AGENT NINE

THE POEM OF THE GRAND INQUISITOR

"My poem is called 'The Grand Inquisitor'—
an absurd thing, but I want you to hear it."
Ivan Karamazov

1.

The Karamazov brothers were so young! Ivan was twenty-five, Alyosha, nineteen. Dmitri, their half-brother, was twenty-eight when charged with their father's murder. Periodically, during long Alaskan winters, I re-read the book (Constance Garnett's translation, although now I prefer Pevear and Volokhonsky's, for they bring out its humor, even its joy, in American English.). The vastness of the Interior forests, the darkness of winters made Dostoyevsky's manic Russia imaginable. His characters' excesses, their desperation, even their mysticism, loomed up, say in some tiny village far up a frozen river. The monk-elder Zosima was not well understood in world fiction. I observed someone of his like in the Alaskan Interior, and he grew for me in body and radiant spirit, and was never passive, as critics had typified him. I saw that "passivity" was a misreading. His tenderness, his low bow before another's suffering; the focus of his mind, clarity of spirit; his humility, found in the memory of his long-dead brother's voice: *"'each of us is guilty in everything before everyone, and I most of all'"*; yet, his good cheer: this deeply Russian personage acted in the monastery in that small town, in a distance province, in the way grace acts upon the heart, and he began to seem believable in literature, as in life.

In those years, his dark, brilliant opposite, the Grand Inquisitor, more often the subject of critical exegesis, was, in my reading, no more than an abstraction and cliché devised for harrowing the Roman Church by Dostoyevsky, the Slavophil. A German professor of mine had said—this was heartening—that one's first reading of any Dostoyevsky novel was nearly useless; not till the fourth or fifth did it begin to come alive. He was not wrong; and I persevered, out there in the bush, wrestling THE BROTHERS into existence. They were young men struggling with the depravity of the "Karamazov force" running in their blood (*depravity?*) and trying to be good (*but what is a good man?).*

In a more temperate climate, I have been thinking about them again, especially about Ivan, and Ivan's poem, and the implications of his despair, and I find myself contemplating the Grand Inquisitor as rather more than a stock character. – Early on, Alyosha goes to visit Ivan, with whom he is hardly acquainted, the brothers having been brought up separately. At once they begin talking about their father and brother, and about good and evil, God and the devil. Ivan understands that Alyosha believes in God—he is a novice in the monastery, after all, and the protégé of the elder, Zosima—but wants to know by what beliefs his brothers live.

Ivan describes his fury against God, for the unredeemed suffering of children in the name of truth. He is horrified by the idea that one who causes suffering should be forgiven; that a tortured person should forgive his torturer, worse, the torturer of his child, for the sake of harmony with God. "'I don't want harmony, for love of mankind I don't want it,'" Ivan tells his brother fervently. "'I want to remain with unrequited suffering. I'd rather remain with my unrequited suffering and my unquenched indignation, even if I am

wrong. Besides, they have put too high a price on harmony; we can't afford to pay so much for admission.'" Alyosha is appalled: "'That is rebellion,'" he says, casting down his eyes.

You can't live by rebellion, says Ivan, and he wants to live. He asks Alyosha: If you, as a monk, could find the way to happiness and peace for all humanity, but at the price of the suffering of one child, would you do it?

No, replies Alyosha.

Ivan persists: Would you admit that the humans for whom you are building this happiness would accept it on the blood of the tortured, unjustified child?

No, says Alyosha: because you have forgotten that only one being in the world has the right to forgive all, for everything, and that is the Lord.

I haven't forgotten, replies Ivan. At that moment, he confides that he has composed a poem ("'Oh, no, I didn't write it,' Ivan laughed, 'I've never composed two lines of verse in my whole life. But I made up this poem and memorized it. I made it up in great fervor'"), and he wants to tell it to Alyosha.

He is as proud and nervous as any young poet, showing off, yet believing intensely in that which he has made.

In his poem, as in medieval tales and verses (he says fussily; he must have a "literary preface"), a "higher power" comes down to earth. ("'He comes onstage in it; actually, he says nothing in the poem, he just appears and passes on. . .but, strange to say, everyone recognizes him. This could be one of the best passages in the poem, I mean, why is it that everyone recognizes him?'") His poem is set in the sixteenth century, in Seville, on the day after nearly a hundred heretics have been burned alive in the town square. All the populace, high and low, are out in the street. Ivan describes the loving, compassionate, silent man going among the crowd of the sun-drenched city, and how the people recognize him: "'Here an old man, blind from childhood, calls out from the crowd: "Lord, heal me so that I, too, can see you," and it is as if the scales fell from his eyes and the blind man sees him.'"

The man performs a miracle, raising from the dead a child in her coffin. The crowd is full of joy.

The Cardinal Grand Inquisitor crosses the square and comes to the door of the cathedral. He "'is an old man, almost ninety, tall and straight, with a gaunt face and sunken eyes, from which a glitter still shines like a fiery spark. Oh, he is not wearing his magnificent cardinal's robes in which he had displayed himself to the people the day before, when the enemies of the Roman faith were burned—no, at this moment he is wearing only his old, coarse monastic cassock. He is followed at a certain distance by his grim assistants and slaves, and by "the holy" guard. At the sight of the crowd he stops and watches from afar. He has seen everything….'"

(From Ivan's eyes, too, a glitter still shines like a fiery spark.)

The Cardinal Grand Inquisitor has the man arrested and put in the prison of the holy court. After a hot, airless nightfall, he visits his prisoner and interrogates him. ("'I don't understand what this is, Ivan,' Alyosha, who all the while had been listening silently, smiled. 'Is it boundless fantasy, or some mistake on the old man's part, some impossible qui pro quo?'

("'Assume it's the latter, if you like,' Ivan laughed, 'if you're so spoiled by modern realism and can't stand anything fantastic—if you want it to be qui pro quo let it be.'")

It's absurd to try and paraphrase a poem. It is the character of the Cardinal which looms up suddenly, again, in my mind. Should I rehearse his argument, his denunciation of the good man whose identity he knows full well? It is subtle and complex. Hasn't it

been rehearsed often enough during the last, blood-filled century and a half? Not his argument, but his psychology, is my concern; his reading of human, not divine, nature is my concern. He could be called a good man, in a way, though he has burned the heretics, and would do so again, in the name of humanity, whose weakness he recognizes and pities. This is my concern.

The Cardinal's arraignment of his prisoner is drawn upon the Temptation in the Desert. He faults the prisoner for having rejected all that was offered him by the "tempter's" (the Cardinal uses the word dryly) three questions. The prisoner rejected earthly bread (and the desire of men to bow before idols), in the name of freedom and heavenly bread. But humans are weak, explains the Cardinal. They cannot bear the weight of their God-given free will. They long for satisfaction of their bodily hunger, not food for the soul; they long to worship in community, without dissention; they long to obey, and will be bought with bread.

He says: "No, the weak, too, are dear to us." They are dear because they will become obedient and dependent, because they can't stand to be free and hungry; and heavenly bread isn't enough: only for the very strong, the few. "'But we shall say that we are obedient to you and rule in your name. We shall deceive them again, for this time we shall not allow you to come to us. This deceit will constitute our suffering, for we shall have to lie. This is what the first question in the wilderness meant, and this is what you rejected in the name of freedom, which you placed above everything.'"

Secondly, he accuses the prisoner of having acted "proudly and magnificently, like God," by refusing to throw himself from the height and rely on God and his angels to save him. (The Cardinal's argument is Voltairean:) "'But you did not know that as soon as man rejects miracles, he will at once reject God as well, for man seeks not so much God as miracles. And since man himself cannot bear to be left without miracles, he will go and create new miracles for himself, his own miracles this time, and will bow down to the miracles of quacks, or women's magic, though he be rebellious, heretical, and godless a hundred times over.'"

On this, the second, count, the Cardinal Grand Inquisitor is most furious in his condemnation. Here, Dostoyevsky was at his most prophetic, by demonstrating the tortuous working of the dialectic; reading it is like going back in time.

"'You did not come down again [from the cross] because, again, you did not want to enslave man by a miracle and thirsted for faith that is free, not miraculous…But here, too, you overestimated mankind, for, of course they are slaves, although they were created rebels.'" "'I swear, man is created weaker and baser than you thought him!'" "'Respecting him so much, you behaved as if you had ceased to be compassionate, because you demanded too much of him—and who did this? He who loved him more than himself! Respecting him less, you would have demanded less of him, and that would be closer to love, because his burden would be lighter.'" If men are rebels, they are so as schoolchildren, "'feeble rebels, who cannot endure their own rebellion.'" They will blaspheme and say that Who created them rebels meant to laugh at them; they will despair; they will blaspheme, and grow more miserable, "'for human nature cannot bear blasphemy and in the end always takes revenge for it.'"

He asks: "'Is it the fault of the weak soul that it is unable to contain such terrible gifts? Can it be that you indeed came only to the chosen ones and for the chosen ones? But if so, there is a mystery here, and we cannot understand it.'" And thus, "we" must also preach mystery, and say that free choice and love do not matter, but obedience matters. The Cardinal: "'And so we did. We corrected your deed and based it on miracle, mystery, and authority.'"

The third gift refused was earthly power. But, mankind seeks "'someone to bow down to, someone to take over his conscience, and a means for uniting everyone at last into a common, concordant, and incontestable anthill—for the need for universal union is the third and last torment of men. Mankind in its entirety has always yearned to arrange things so that they must be universal…Had you accepted Caesar's purple, you would have founded a universal kingdom and granted universal peace. For who shall possess mankind if not those who possess their conscience and give them their bread? And so we took Caesar's sword, and in taking it, of course, we rejected you and followed him.'" He means "the tempter."

The Grand Inquisitor has made a mazy maze of arguments: "'Oh, we shall convince them that they will only become free when they resign their freedom to us, and submit to us. Will we be right, do you think, or will we be lying? They themselves will be convinced that we are right, for they will remember to what horrors of slavery and confusion your freedom led them. Freedom, free reason, and science will lead them into such a maze….'"

Alyosha is astonished and appalled. The poem praises Christ, not reviles him, as Ivan meant it to; and Ivan's idea of freedom is unbelievable. As for the Cardinal, he is not the whole of Rome, but the worst of it—"'the Inquisitors, the Jesuits….'"

But wait, Ivan asks, "'Why can't there happen to be among them at least one sufferer who is tormented by great sadness and loves mankind?'" Someone like this old Inquisitor, who has suffered and overcome the flesh through great will, who loved mankind all his life, only to learn that it is for nothing, and that most of mankind, weaker than he, is made miserable by its freedom. "'Having understood that, he returned and joined … the intelligent people. Couldn't this have happened?'"

"'Whom did he join? What intelligent people?' Alyosha exclaimed, almost passionately. 'They are not so very intelligent, nor do they have any great mysteries and secrets … Except maybe for godlessness, that's their whole secret. Your inquisitor doesn't believe in God, that's his whole secret!'"

"'At last you've understood,'" says Ivan. That is the whole idea: strength of will given over, first, to service of God; then, tragically disillusioned, going on in service to Man, to poor, weak, suffering humankind. "'Who knows, perhaps such 'ones' have been found among the Roman pontiffs. Who knows, maybe this accursed old man, who loves mankind so stubbornly in his own way, exists even now…with the aim of making them happy.'"

2.

The godless Cardinal was a figment of Ivan's despairing mind. Dostoyevsky looked closely into the minds of such men, intelligenty, and was not wrong about them. Their like did come to power, but in the Supreme Soviet, and, surely, the Cardinal, "this accursed old man who loves mankind so stubbornly in his own way," was a figure of Lenin. This is not a new observation, although, from where I sit, the time of the Soviet seems now so very long ago. It was curious, then, that Clara György's tale of the Marxist puppet master arrived, as if as a reminder and an incitement to think again. Puppets, and their masters, interest me. Published variously before 1987, including in samizdat, her story was the fictional monologue of a well-known Hungarian sociologist, a New Intellectual, party member, veteran of the '56 uprising, soaking in the gall of disillusion. "'My puppet-game,

my idiocy is not an historical category, I too had dreams once with my friends about the redemption of the world. . . .'"

3.

The argument about Rome continues, until Alyosha asks how the poem ends. "'I was going to end it like this,'" replies Ivan: The Inquisitor falls silent; silence weighs; his prisoner has listened intently but still says nothing. Then, calmly, directly, he kisses the old man on the lips, gently. "'That is the whole answer.'" The old man shudders, and tells the man to leave, and never to come back. He lets the prisoner out into the darkness, and the prisoner goes away. As for the Inquisitor: "'The kiss burns in his heart, but he holds to his former idea.'"

The poem of the Grand Inquisitor has been read in many ways, not least as prescient of the absolute, blood-soaked tyrannies of the twentieth century. Dostoyevsky's intuition of the absolutist's psychology was subtle and accurate. Such a one is not a cynic, he wishes to build the happiness of humans, he pities and recognizes their weakness. Isn't that nearly the same as contempt, however? His argument is with human—God-given—free will and its freedom to err. He seeks power not for "lucre" or earthly splendor, but because he "loves the weak" and will rule them for their own good. That the Inquisitor was a tragic figure, not the cynic, the lapsed idealist of the Marxist puppet master, makes him (surely) not less possible; perhaps more horrific?

Ivan advises Alyosha not to take the poem seriously, he's not about to run off and join the Jesuits. "'Good lord, what do I care? As I told you: I just want to drag on until I'm thirty, and then—smash the cup on the floor!'

"'And the sticky little leaves, and the precious graves, and the blue sky, and the woman you love! How will you live, what will you love them with?' Alyosha exclaimed ruefully. 'Is it possible, with such hell in your heart and in your head? No, you're precisely going in order to join them . . . and if not, you'll kill yourself, you won't endure it!'"

Coldly, Ivan replies: "'There is a force that will endure everything.... The Karamazov force . . . the force of the Karamazov baseness.'"

Alyosha now is truly appalled: "'You mean "everything is permitted"? Everything is permitted, is that right, is it?'"

One again, a thunderclap out of the old century. If God is dead, there is no morality; there is only despair.

Alyosha silently kisses his brother on the lips. "Literary theft!" Ivan cries, enraptured.

4.

I contrast two kinds of love. The elder, Zosima, bears one kind. "The monks used to say of him that he was attached in his soul precisely to those who were the more sinful, and that he who was the most sinful the elder loved most of all." The Grand Inquisitor carries another: "We who love the weak."

The Vatican has been trying to reverse time, and several weeks ago, two notices marked a step forward, two giant steps back. First, it was announced that Pope John Paul II would move to canonize two of his predecessors, John XXIII, who convened the great council of Vatican II, which opened wide the doors of the Church and welcomed in the

people; and Pius IX, who will be remembered by history as a tyrant who tried to reassume "Caesar's purple," and as an anti-Semite. (I note with curiosity that Pius IX and Dostoyevsky were contemporaries. The author finished THE BROTHERS in 1860, after three years of labor; while, in 1858, the pope drew his line against modernity, and in 1864, disseminated his reactionary *Syllabus of Errors*. I wonder if, after all, they might not have held certain beliefs in common, particularly an opposition to atheism and Freemasonry, and realize, again, that my little essay is skimming the surface. There are treacherous depths beneath.)

Second, the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, issued a binding letter to the bishops saying that the Roman Catholic Church would no longer refer to "sister" churches—referring particularly to the Anglican and Orthodox—at the "universal" level, as the Roman Church was the "mother" of all Christian churches. The pope's authority was to be recognized as primate over all heads of church, and the Roman church was to be understood as the true way of salvation. O, the heart sinks in embarrassment! I read, though, that some Orthodox prelates who are considered as conservative in their areas as Ratzinger is in his, have been equally insistent that the churches are not "sisters"—nor are Catholicism and Orthodoxy "two lungs" of the same body, as the Polish Pope has called them—because Orthodoxy is the true church, and only through its ministers are the sacraments administered in truth. (I hear the Slavophil argument; yet, Alyosha, the novice, at least never took the extreme position.)

After feeling alarm and dismay, I almost laughed. Perhaps these are only old men shaking their fists at each other.

Is "the Church" the hierarchy? Is it the magisterium, the teaching authority? Is the Church the visible body of Christ incarnated in its believers? Those who were born Catholic, especially before Vatican II, grew up in a hierarchical, liturgical world, in which we were a segment of, and slightly set off from, the secular-Puritan American society; but also, we were part of that society, which has no category of royalty or obedience to royalty, including the papacy.

The historical authority of the hierarchy is implicated with a deep hatred of "Woman," the near-sinful nature of women, except for the Virgin Mary, who is the exception. It carries the mummified remains of great secular power (Cardinal Ratzinger's pronouncement that there are not "sister" churches sounds like revanchism), as well as sacral legitimacy. The line of the authority of bishops is traced back to Peter. The pope is the vicar of Christ on earth. But the faithful no longer believe that in matters of faith and morals the pope cannot err, although his vicarage is the basis of the claim to his magisterial infallibility. They simply don't believe it anymore. You cannot go backward; you cannot give up freedom of thought, and allow yourself to fall back under old rules of obedience.

Cardinal Ratzinger is head of the holy office that succeeded from the Office of the Inquisition, and the most common cliché attached to him remarks this fact. I won't presume to wonder if he ever read THE BROTHERS. Would it matter? It is the portrait drawn in Ivan's terrifying, but also rather lurid, poem of a will to power based in contempt for one's fellow humans—fellow sufferers, fellow sinners—that the twentieth century proved as deadly accurate, and not as criticism of Rome. Let me grant the idealism of Ivan's Cardinal: couldn't one do what he did out of love for one's fellow men, not for love of lucre or earthly power? Grant that; grant that few have maintained the integrity of their love and desire to serve, even to the point of burning the 'beloved' heretics for the good of

their souls; while so many mimic it for their own purposes – grant it. Look, then, at its burnt-out case, the Marxist puppet master:

"'You know, only those people are being kicked out of "our" company who deserve it, those who don't even make an effort to play the puppeteer's role even half-heartedly. You may do anything, nobody would notice it as long as you hold up the puppet representing you: the puppet's face is well-manneredly rigid so that you can put any words into its mouth. You may freely kick your friend in the ass if your puppet bows afterwards. Then you may apologize by referring to a momentary black-out, to collective responsibility, or to some disturbing news of foreign policy. Soon, he, the abused one, will be begging your pardon; how could he even suppose that you assaulted him deliberately?'"

Thus, the abused one learns to forgive, begging pardon of, his oppressor. What is the difference, in that case, between love and contempt . . . ?

5.

Ashes from the collapse of the Russian empire are stirred, as an ember flares in Rome. I am dismayed by these recent pronouncements, because they call out the worst impulse in people. If Americans, as believers, as the "laity," can ignore them, if we can live with divided minds, we will be safe from their wickedness. But our experience is secular and democratic; we are not used to bowing before the hierarchy, and nobody is going to burn us as heretics. It is not doctrine that disquiets me. What disquiets me is the psychological mechanism embedded in it. It is this mechanism—a sense of superiority as the elect of God, an untouchable supreme being, which claims absolute authority for the institutional Church—which is deeply wrong. It is wrong because it permits oneself, even the smallest self, to feel superior to another person of a different faith, and condescend, and proclaim one's love even for this person. The consequences of this mechanism have been too great; the mechanism itself needs to have sand thrown in its gears. How should one think, now, of Pope John Paul II, an heroic old man without whom the Soviet Empire would not have collapsed as it did, and Cardinal Ratzinger, his distinguished theologian? They have not asked for this, but perhaps we are being asked to bow before their suffering, as the elder, Zosima, would have done?

And yet, a sobering observation was made last January, by Archbishop Rembert Weakland, the humane prelate of the Milwaukee Archdiocese, in a confidential letter to his archdiocesan priests. The letter was later published by the *Milwaukee Journal* and excerpted in the *National Catholic Reporter*, and it caused much comment. Speaking of his announced retirement in 2001, Weakland said he could not predict who his successor would be, but that the man would probably reflect a general movement in the church toward conformity, away from diversity in the liturgy.

"If my generation, the first after the council, erred in some of its more radical implementations of Vatican Council II, it did so out of zeal and unbridled enthusiasm, but with a clear theological perspective it derived from Vatican Council II," Weakland wrote. "I fear the restorationist implementation that is characterizing the second post-conciliar generation will err on the side of rigidity, rubricism and a fear of the gifts of individuals, especially of the laity, and build their renewal more on reaction than on theological insights."

He concluded, wryly: "The subsequent or third generation may well just get it right, but most of us by then will already have seen the fullness of Truth."

I write this as, among other things, a long-fallen-away Catholic. I am not writing about belief, and not only about Catholics, but about the corrupting nature of fundamental power, and I am troubled by what I see.

-K. M.

THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV, tr. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (North Point, 1990)
National Catholic Reporter, March 10, 2000
http://www.natcath.com/NCR_Online/archives/031000/031000f.htm
"Confessions of a Marxist Puppet Master" – this issue

Previous Endnotes:

On the Marionette Theater, Vol. 4, Nos. 1/2
The Double, Vol. 3, No. 4
Folly, Love, St. Augustine, Vol. 3, No. 3
On Memory, Vol. 3, No. 2
Passion, Vol. 3, No. 1
A Flea, Vol. 2, No. 4
On Love, Vol. 2, No. 3
Fantastic Design, with Nooses, Vol. 2, No. 1
Kundera's Music Teacher, Vol. 1, No. 4

Recommended Reading

I see women everywhere seeking a love that changes
but never grows less.

Linda Gregg
"The Foreign Language of the Heart"

&&&&&&

Friends of Archipelago suggest some worthwhile books:

Nikki Gemmell (CLEAVE Picador, U.K. 1999/2000, also called ALICE SPRINGS Viking Penguin U.S., 1999; SHIVER Picador U.K., 1997; LOVESONG, to appear in 2001):

"How to describe this book? A collection of ideas, questions, suppositions, wonderings about the cruelty and beauty of human nature, birth and death, exploration and spirituality. Annie Dillard always surprises. FOR THE TIME BEING is like reading Bruce Chatwin – you are constantly stimulated by the author's questing mind. A rich and wonderful read, and one I dip into again and again and always find fresh nuggets. FOR THE TIME BEING opens with a quote: 'Should I mark more than shining hours?' and I have spent many shining hours reading it." **Annie Dillard, FOR THE TIME BEING (Knopf, 1999; Vintage, 2000)**

"An old favourite that I've carried with me on most of my travels over the past decade: an early novel of Ondaatje's, a recreation of the life of the cornet player Buddy Bolden, a legendary jazz player in New Orleans a century ago. The book is written in a series of short, cinematic vignettes, and the inventiveness, energy and playfulness of the prose is dazzling. There's a muscular musicality and daring to the writing – I keep COMING THROUGH SLAUGHTER close as a reminder to always aim high and take risks with my own work." **Michael Ondaatje, COMING THROUGH SLAUGHTER (Norton 1977; Vintage 1996)**

Richard Jones ("Reforming the Lords," this issue):

"This summer I spent hours trying to read Henry James's late novel THE GOLDEN BOWL. My eyes passed over page after page of ectoplasmic prose without ever sighting an incident or a situation which made an impact. Nothing happened; people had names but no substance. Their world was airless, out of time, out of habitable space. About a third of the way through the bulky work I gave up. OK. I'm a bubblehead. I sad as much to a friend who told me to read Edith Wharton's memoirs A BACKWARD GLANCE. I did so and read how Mrs. Wharton, one of James's oldest friends and admirers, one day asked the great man why his late novels were so lacking in atmosphere and were 'more and more severed from that thick nourishing human air in which we all live and move.' Even though she had assumed James had done this deliberately and carefully, she still wondered why the four main characters of THE GOLDEN BOWL were suspended in the void. 'What sort of life did they lead when they were not watching each other and fencing with each other? Why have you stripped them of all the human fringes we necessarily trail after us through life?' James looked at her in pained surprise and she wished she had not asked the question. He thought a while and then, plainly disturbed, said, 'My dear, I didn't know I had.'"

Henry James, THE GOLDEN BOWL **(Penguin Classics) Edith Wharton,** A BACKWARD GLANCE**, An Autobiography (Introduction by Louis Auchincloss. Touchstone Books** U.S.; **Everyman Library** U. K.)

Katherine McNamara (is the editor of *Archipelago*. Her non-fiction book, NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH, a narrative of Alaska, is due out in January):

"Some time ago, thanks to a recommendation by the novelist Fae Myenne Ng, I read Hannah Green's 'perfect novel,' THE DEAD OF THE HOUSE. It was an almost ethereal work whose surface tension shimmered, trembled, but never broke. Now, LITTLE SAINT, the luminous evocation of her encounter with a small French village and its resident saint, has come out, posthumously, alas, under the careful editorial hand of the great Sam Vaughan. No matter her subject; it is her very sentences that give light."

From LITTLE SAINT:

Père André comes into the room with a small group of tourists to show them the glories of the Treasure. His large wan face is kindly and tired. The Germans took him prisoner in the war and broke his health….

"Hannah!" Père André says when he sees me. He sounds the initial *H* in a special learned way. At first when he began to know me better he called me Madame Hannah, but now he says Hannah, often repeating the *H* and saying my name over—"*H* . . . annah," and Jack, whom everyone else in Conques calls Jacques or Monsieur Jacques, he calls John-Jack, carefully repeating his two names in English and beaming with pleasure at Jack's presence (rarer here than mine). "Monsieur Rousseau," he says ever since Jack jokingly linked Père André's John-Jack to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, surprising Père André, who did not think an American would know the name, not to mention the work, of Rousseau. "Monsieur Rousseau," Père André says, his hands crossed over his comfortable stomach, looking up at Jack and laughing in low ripples. Not knowing Henri Rousseau, Le Douanier, who is in his art revered kin to Jack, Père André does not know the extra pleasure his little joke brings us. When he is happy there is no one with such largesse as Père André. Everything about him seems to be large—his heart, his nature, his ample white monk's robe, his face, as noted, with its large, rounded jaw and big cheekbones, his high wide forehead with deep creases, his blue eyes behind his thick-lensed glasses, his voice, above all his voice, which is as warm as he is, and rich and deep. When he lifts it in song to chant the mass, his voice seems to come from God.

He has a perfect musical ear, and I have seen him—on the famous (to us) day when we went with him to Rodez to visit the Musée Fenaille, though he was hurrying us through, afraid of returning late to Conques—I saw him stop, bend over an illuminated manuscript, an antiphonary of the late fourteenth century, and slowly begin to sing the written notes. Raising his hands as the priest does at certain points in the mass, he sang, going on so his wonderful voice filled the old dark-beamed room and touched the sweet face of the Virgin of the Annunciation in the next room and the stilled, tranced grief of the Virgin of the Pietà, and drifted out into the lovely glass-covered court and down in praise of the Christ in marble relief from the altar of Deus dedit, fashioned for the cathedral about the year 1000; his voice reached even, I liked to imagine, the whiskered-faced menhir (standing stone), which comes from St. Sernin on the Rance and stands now in the

Musée Fenaille on the ground floor off the court, with several other graven menhirs, all cut from the *rougier*, the reddish sandstone of the Camares in the southwest of the Rouergue, the modern Department of Aveyron.

Hannah Green, LITTLE SAINT (**Random House, 2000**); THE DEAD OF THE HOUSE (**Turtle Point Books/Books & Co.**)

Interesting Sites and Resources

Annotation

As *Archipelago* continues its fourth year of publication, we pause to remind ourselves of where we come from. In "Little String Game," our contributing editor K. Callaway traced the meaning of the word through history.

"I've looked up 'archipelago' in the OED and my Eleventh Edition (1910-11) of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*," she wrote, "and found it is pronounced arkipelago, and that the Italian word it came to us from, *arci-pelago*, is pronounced archie. Thus, at least two pronunciations are in use. To my surprise, though, I see the word doesn't mean 'islands' but *the sea in which they are found in number*. The etymology is much disputed. The OED says it comes from the Italian *arcipelago*, from *arci* (chief, principle) and *pelago* (deep, abyss, gulf, pool). The medieval Latin is *pelagus*, the Greek *pelagos*, sea. In most languages the word had at first the prefix of the native form: OSp. *arcipielago* ; OPg. *arcepelago*; M.E. *archpelago*, *arch-sea*. All except Italian now begin *archi;* according to the OED…."

"Little String Game," *Archipelago* Vol. 1, No. 2.

Centenary

Hubert Butler (1900-1991) http://www.hubertbutler.com is to be honored at a celebration of his centenary in Kilkenny, Ireland, on the weekend of October 20-22. (This link opens a site containing information and registration forms.) Among the distinguished guests and speakers: John Banville, John Casey, Roy Foster, Neal Acherson. Hubert Butler's disturbing essay "The Artukovitch File" appeared in *Archipelago*, Vol. 1, No. 2.

In this Issue

Simin Bebahani, selected sites:
"Gracefully she approached" http://www.artarena.force9.co.uk/simin.htm, poem

Selected poems in Persian http://www.iranonline.com/literature/index-behbahani.html
"Sharaab-e noor" http://www.iranian.com/Dec96/Arts/Behbahani/Page1.html, in Persian

"Dobaareh meesaazamat vatan!" http://www.iranian.com/Dec96/Arts/Behbahani/Page2.html in Persian

Brief biography and photograph http://www.ketab.com/simin.htm

"The Text of 134" Writers in Tehran, published by the PEN American Center/Freedom to Write
http://www.pen.org/freedom/mideast/iran/134writers.html

Human Rights Watch citation http://www.igc.org/hrw/worldreport99/appendix/

The Carl-von-Ossietzky-Medal citation http://www.ebe-online.de/literatur/litp14.htm

A brief introduction to the history of women in Iran notes the work of the mother of Simin Behbahani http://www.payvand.com/women.

Independent Presses

Ardis http://www.ardisbooks.com is the small publishing company founded in 1969 by (the late) Carl and Ellendea Proffer, who published the great Russian writers we needed (still need) to read, when no one else was doing it. Mrs. Proffer is still the publisher; her lovely essay "About Ardis" is worth reading. It is – she was – living history. The Ardis picture archive is extraordinary: images of Akhmatova, Bulgakov, Platonov, Nabokov, and so many of the remarkable writers of the 20th century.

Catbird Press www.catbirdpress.com publishes, among other notable books, a number by Czech writers in translation, including THE POEMS OF JAROSLAV SEIFERT; a garland of these poems appeared in *Archipelago* Vol. 2, No. 3. Daniela Fischerová,'s "A Letter to President Eisenhower," appeared in Vol. 3, No. 1;

her collection of stories, FINGERS POINTING SOMEWHERE ELSE, came out this year. *See also* the web site of the Czech Embassy, Washington http://www.czech.cz/washington, for their cultural calendar in the capital city.

The Lilliput Press http://www.lilliputpress.ie/ is an Irish publisher founded in 1984 by Antony Farrell. Some 150 titles have appeared under its imprint: art and architecture, autobiography and memoir, biography and history, ecology and environmentalism, essays and literary criticism, philosophy, current affairs and popular culture, fiction, drama and poetry – all broadly focused on Irish themes. Since 1985 they have brought out four volumes of the essays of the late Hubert Butler. Hubert Butler's "The Artukovitch File" appears, with their permission, in *Archipelago* Vol. 1, No. 2.

McPherson & Co www.mcphersonco.com publishes such writers as the fascinating Mary Butts (THE TAVERNER NOVELS), Anna Maria Ortese (A MUSIC BEHIND THE WALL, Selected Stories Vol. 2), and the performance artist Carolee Schneeman. A beautiful story by Ortese, "The Great Street," appeared in our inaugural issue, and the writer's testament, "Where Time Is Another," appeared in Vol. 2, No. 4.

Station Hill Press www.stationhill.org is a non-profit publisher run by the poet George Quasha. They publish writers of serious and surrealist bent, as well as very fine poetry and fiction. Among their writers are Maurice Blanchot and Spencer Holst (whose "The Zebra Storyteller" appeared in Vol. 3, No. 1). María Negroni, whose work appeared in Vol. 1, No. 1 and Vol. 2, No. 4, is the author of a beautiful work in poetry and prose, ISLANDIA, which they will publish this year, using print-on-demand; a noteworthy work of literature brought out by an interesting development in publishing technology.

Salmon Poetry http://www.salmonpoetry.com lives in County Clare, Ireland. The editor, Jessie Lendennie, is pleased to publish not only her countrymen, including, she tells us, the largest list of women poets of any Irish publisher, but also Alaskan poets, among whom are several old friends of ours.

Sun & Moon Press www.sunmoon.com is a fine, serious, literary press with a long backlist. They publish classics as well as contemporary fiction and poetry; writers and poets such as Arkadii Dragomoschenko (astonishing Russian poet), Paul Celan, Harry Matthews, Djuna Barnes, Paul Auster, and Russell Banks. They will publish Maria Negroni's LA JAULA BAJO EL TRAPO/CAGE UNDER COVER, tr. Anne Twitty, in a Spanish-English edition; a selection appeared in *Archipelago* Vol. 2, No. 4.

Turtle Point Press http://www.turtlepoint.com. This intelligent press, led by Jonathan Rabinowitz, Helen Marx, and Jeanette Watson, is reviving several books by the marvelous Iris Origo, including her LEOPARDI: A STUDY IN SOLITUDE. Another necessary book published here is Hannah Green's profound THE DEAD OF THE HOUSE. Jeanette Watson's Books & Co. News is posted, as well. (An excerpt from Lynne Tillman's BOOKSTORE, about Watson and Books & Co., once one of the cultural resources of Manhattan, appears in Vol. 3, No. 3.)

Twisted Spoon Press http://www.terminal.cz/~twispoon, publishing in Prague, offers works in translation by Central European writers, in handsomely-made paperbound books. Among their authors: the great Czech writer Bohumil Harabal (his TOTAL FEARS, as it is called in English, being a selection of periodic writing, is a great book), Tomasz Salamoun, fine Slovenian poet, Peter Nadas, Hungarian novelist, and other writers we will want to know about. The Prague Links are particularly useful if you are going there or are interested in the city.

Fine Arts

iola http://www.artnetweb.com/iola/home.html. This perfectly eccentric site is like the dinner party of artists, thinkers, above all, talkers you want regularly to be invited to. Its host-redactor is Robbin Murphy, who is worth looking up. Of particular delight: The Little Window.

Kamera http://www.kamera.co.uk came to us via the *Richmond Review* and is its pictorial mirror-image. Lively, hip, devoted to the cinematic arts, with features and reviews of movies and exhibits currently on in Britain.

Work in Regress http://members.aol.com/perkons23 This vertiginous site is by Peteris Cedrins, author of "The Penetralium," an excerpt of which appears in *Archipelago* Vol. 3, No. 3. Here also are two images of dark, thrilling paintings by Inguna Liepa; they are a descent into the psyche.

Journals and Reviews

The Barcelona Review http://www.barcelonareview.com, Jill Adams, Editor. A fine, multi-lingual (English, Castilian, Catalan) offering published in Catalonia by a multi-national group. Intelligent editing; interesting reading of younger writers from Europe and America.

Big Bridge www.bigbridge.org is edited by Michael Rothenberg, editor of OVERTIME, selected poems of Philip Whalen (Penguin, 1999), and PARIS JOURNALS (Fish Drum, 2000) and Wanda Phipps, who bring an open-armed, '60s generosity to this "webzine." "We think walls are good for keeping out the cold and rain," they write: "They're useless in the creation and propagation of art." Big Bridge Press publishes chapbooks and handsome botanica.

Blue Ear http://www.blueear.com/index1.html. "Global Writing Worth Reading" is their motto; we hope they will continue. The publishers of this international web journal, from Washington, D.C., publish thoughtful journalism, sponsor articulate forums, link to articles and publications (such as *Central European Review* and the *New York Review of Books*) that we read regularly. They are forthright about their views; they are (properly) doubtful about hyper/turbocapitalism and are smart to trust their readers' intelligence.

The Cortland Review http://www.cortlandreview.com. Established in 1997, this publication offers such poets as Charles Simic, Robert Pinsky, Henry Taylor, Mark Doty, Robert Creeley, Mark Jarman, Lloyd Schwartz, Neal Bowers, R.T. Smith, John Kinsella. All poetry and most fiction appear in Real Audio format. They publish in February, May, August, and November, with monthly features.

The Drunken Boat http://www.thedrunkenboat.com is a new journal founded by the poet Rebecca Seiferle. Her recent collection, THE MUSIC WE DANCE TO, was a Pulitzer Prize nominee, and her translation of Vallejo's TRILCE was the only finalist for the 1992 PenWest Translation Award. Look for new translations of Robert Desnoes and Leah Rudnitsky, a poet in the Vilnius Ghetto, poems by Ruth Stone, new translations of Paul Celan by Heather McHugh, translations of the well-known Israeli poet, Robert Friend, and more. A very welcome, serious journal of poetry as necessary as breathing.

Feed http://www.feed.com is often lively and smart, sometimes frantic and too smart; all in all, probably the most bearable of the daily news/entertainment sites. The recent Book issue (July), still available, has a fascinating session with the fine translators Lydia Davis, Jay Rubin, Christopher Logue, and Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, on what is lost and found in translation (of course).

George Meyers Jr.'s LitKit http://www.georgejr.com bills itself as a "non-commercial zine and archive" and "a larkabout for readers with brains, and for writers with lightbulbs blazing in their heads." That's close enough; it's an experience.

The Hungarian Quarterly http://www.hu.net/hungq, the respected literary journal, offers an essay by Sándor Kányádi in No. 152, Winter 1998 (linked from the cover page) An essay about Kányádi and poems by him, translated by Adam Makkai and Bruce Berlind, appear in No. 138, Summer 1995. Kányádi's great poem "All Soul's Day in Vienna" appeared in *Archipelago* Vol. 3, No. 4; his charming, heartbreaking "Song of the Road" is in Vol. 4, Nos. 1/2.

Illuminations http:www.cofc.edu/~lewis/illums.html. The web site advertises this printed literary journal appearing normally in July/August of the year. We have seen the new issue, a nicely-made printed edition, and admire it. It marks the 25th anniversary of the end of the U.S.-Vietnam war in a reflective way. The editor, Simon Lewis, writes, "You might just call us an international magazine of contemporary writing devoted to publishing new and up-and-coming writers alongside already established ones; very open to writing from around the world and in translation; mainly poetry but carrying some short prose pieces and some art work." The issue includes an interview with Tim O'Brien and poems by Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American writers.

There are also poems by Sándor Kányádi translated by Paul Sohar, and Sohar himself. The 2001 issue will feature Cuban writers.

Jacket http://www.jacket.zip.com.au was founded and is edited by John Tranter, an Australian poet whose work is published often in the *TLS*. "For more than thirty years he has been at the forefront of the new poetry, questioning and extending its procedures." In this quarterly literary journal he publishes the work of other writers generously. A new collection of his that should be read, LATE NIGHT RADIO, is published by Polygon & Edinburgh University Press. It can be ordered there (tel. 0131 650 8436), or through Columbia University Press http://www.cc.columbia.edu/cu/cup.

London Review of Books http://www.lrb.co.uk. One of the few reviews we read cover to cover; published on paper every two weeks and worth subscribing to. The on-line edition offers a generous selection of the current and past editions.

Poetry Daily http://poems.com. A daily necessity.

The Richmond Review www.demon.co.uk/review received approving notice (along with *Archipelago*) in the *TLS*. Its staff is drawn from about twenty-five young persons-about-London-publishing. The founding editor, Steven Kelly, is the author of THE WAR ARTIST, a chilling moral thriller about a man called Charles Monk, an artist who "only during wartime feels truly alive." It is published in the U.K. by Simon & Schuster.

Zimmerzine http://www.nhi.clara.net/zimzine.htm, edited by Martin Grampound, is an 'e-zine' with a flashy cover opening onto serious literature, including two poems by Sándor Kányádi, translated by Paul Sohar, at http://www.nhi.clara.net/z59.htm. Kányádi's great poem "All Soul's Day in Vienna" also translated by Sohar, appears in *Archipelago* Vol. 3, No. 4.

Places

Center for American Places http://www.americanplaces.org/ is an estimable non-profit organization "dedicated to fostering knowledge of the places we work, live [in], and explore." A founding director is the great geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, who wrote: "Americans are woefully ignorant of geography and of place–ignorant, that is, of the natural and humanly constructed worlds that have nurtured us, inspired us, and, sad to say, too often frustrated us. It is hard to imagine concretely how we can envisage the good life (the humane life), and plan for the future, unless we have some clear idea as to the sort of places that we wish to exist." The Center sustains itself by its fine publishing program, which offers a range of books about place, and places, and its other educational projects. This is good work.

Good Deed

The Hunger Site, United Nations http://www.thehungersite.com. A friend e-mails: "Quite clever of the U.N. to do this. Go to the Hunger Site on the U.N. web page. All you do is click a button and somewhere in the world a hungry person gets a meal at no cost to you. The food is paid for by corporate sponsors. All you do is go to the site and click. You're allowed one click per day." It's true, and worth doing.

Et Alia

The E-text Center, University of Virginia http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/ offers an expansive collection of books and other writings, formatted in SGML, though not all departments are open to non-subscribers. With pleasure, we found Mandelstam's TRISTIA http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/rus-on.html, *tr.* Bruce McClelland, in the Russian collection. And now, if you download the free Microsoft Reader (available for PC's, not Macs), you can then download a library of e-books available without cost, including classic British and American fiction, major authors, children's literature, American history, Shakespeare, African-American documents, the Bible, and much more. In August, 347,224 e-books were shipped from this site. People are reading. We knew that.

The Puppetry Homepage http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/index.html, is good news for devotees of the art, artifice, and folk-traditions of the marionette theater.