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Contributors

Etel Adnan, poet, painter and essayist, was born in Beirut in 1925. Her novel SITT MARIE ROSE, a novel of the Lebanese Civil War, has been translated and published in six languages and is considered a classic of Middle Eastern literature. Her books in English include THERE; PARIS, WHEN IT'S NAKED; FROM A TO Z; THE ARAB APOCALYPSE; THE INDIAN NEVER HAD A HORSE and other Poems; and OF CITIES AND WOMEN, all published by The Post Apollo Press http://www.dnai.com/~tpapress, as well as many artist's books. The composer Gavin Bryers set a group of eight of her love poems to music in THE ADNAN SONGBOOK. With her companion, Simone Fattal http://www.raintaxi.com/fattal.html, she lives in Paris and Sausalito and travels often to Beirut.

Joel Agee JAGEE@worldnet.att.net is the author of TWELVE YEARS: AN AMERICAN BOYHOOD IN EAST GERMANY (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981; University of Chicago Press, 2000), a memoir of his life behind the Iron Curtain from ages eight to twenty. His essays and stories have appeared in publications such as *Harper's*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Best American Essays*. He is also known as a translator of German literary works, among them Rilke's LETTERS ON CÉZANNE (Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1985) and Elias Canetti's THE SECRET HEART OF THE CLOCK (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1989). He has received a Guggenheim Fellowship and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. In 1999 he won the Helen and Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize for his translation of Heinrich von Kleist's PENTHESILEA

(Harper Collins, 2000). (*See* Endnotes, *Archipelago*, Vol. 3, No. 1.) "The Storm" first appeared in the April 1995 issue of *Esquire*. Joel Agee is currently completing a novel titled IN THE HOUSE OF MY FEAR. An excerpt from this book will appear in the January issue of *Harper's Magazine*.

Cornelia Bessie is an editor and, with her husband, Michael Bessie, publisher of Cornelia and Michael Bessie Books (associated with Perseus Books). A conversation with her and Michael Bessie appeared in the series Institutional Memory in *Archipelago* Vol. 1, No. 4, and Vol. 2, No. 1.

Heather Burns hab3@poe.acc.virginia.edu holds an MFA from the University of Virginia and lives in Charlottesville, Virginia. Her poems have appeared in *Alligator, Juniper, Antietam, Arion* http://web.bu.edu/ARION/,*The Blue Moon Review, The English Journal, Iris: A Journal About Women, Nimrod, Quarterly West, Southern Poetry Review*, and *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. Three of her poems appeared in *Archipelago*, Vol. 2, No. 1. She is a founding director of a community writing center where she teaches poetry to adults and children.

Isabel Cole isabel@andere-seite.de, translator of Christine Wolter and other German writers, has lived in Berlin since graduating from the University of Chicago in 1995. Her website http://www.andere-seite.de/index.htm contains her portfolio and curriculum vitae. Her translation (in excerpt) of Christine Wolter's THE ROOMS OF MEMORY appeared in *Archipelago* Vol. 4, No. 1.

Annemarie Schwarzenbach was born in Zürich in 1908 and studied history in Zürich and Paris. Her friends Klaus and Erika Mann introduced her to the literary scene in Berlin, where she lived on and off from 1931 to 1933. In May 1933 she traveled to Spain with the photographer Marianne Breslauer, marking the beginning of her journalistic activities. From 1934 to 1941 she took numerous trips in Europe, the United States and the Near East as a photographer, journalist and essayist, often engaged in the support of European anti-Fascist groups. In 1940 she met Carson McCullers, who dedicated "Reflections in a Golden Eye" to her. In 1942 Annemarie Schwarzenbach was killed in a motorcycle accident in Switzerland. Her publisher is Lenos Verlag http://www.lenos.ch/lenosgv.html, Basel. They have announced a film to appear in Summer 2001, "Die Reise nach Kafiristan" (The Journey to Kafiristan), about Schwarzenbach's trip to Afghanistan in 1939-40, with the photographer Ella Maillart.

"Annemarie Schwarzenbach died in 1942, at the age of thirty-four, after a motorcycle accident in Engadin. In Berlin she had become an addict, no longer able to free herself from morphine. She had left Germany soon after Hitler's rise to power; taken a trip through the Near East; visited a Writers' Congress in Moscow with Klaus Mann; inadvertently, through her mother's hostility, endangered Erika Mann's emigrant cabaret 'The Pepper Mill'; suffered through a brief, disastrous marriage with a French diplomat; then traveled the world, east, west and south; in the United States, befriended the great and no less tormented Carson McCullers. And ultimately she too, like so many of her countrymen, made repeated visits to psychiatric clinics. So much in such a short life! Death overtook her in Nietzsche's Sils Maria – her own, most shattering novel." -Hilde Spiel, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

Alan Sondheim sondheim@panix.com is a writer, theorist, and artist (video/sound) whose work is distributed widely on-line. He is co-moderator of the Cybermind, Wryting, and Cyberculture e-mail lists. He edited *Lusitania: Being on Line* for Lusitania, and has a forthcoming book of texts centered around Nikuko, an "emanant" he has worked with for the past four years. He wrote "Rosa's Argument" and a number of other texts on a TI59 calculator with thermal printer. He is a virtual writer-in-residence for trAce http://trace.ntu.ac.uk and Trace Projects http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/writers/sondheim/index.htm. More of his work exists at Internet Text http://www.anu.edu.au/english/internet_txt and Partial http://lists.village.virginia.edu/~spoons/internet_txt.html.

Dan S. Wang danwang@mindspring.com was born in Midland, Michigan, in 1968. He was educated at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. He writes and makes art about technology, mass media and culture, the construction of race and ethnicity, and Chinese history. His first one-person show was at the Woodland Pattern Center for the Book in Milwaukee in 1999. He lives and

works in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago. "Rosa's Argument" was printed on a Vandercook sp-15 proof press manufactured in the early 1960s, in Chicago. The press was used to produce a perfect proof of ahandset form which was then made into a photo-litho plate for eventual offset mass reproduction. "In other words, this machine occupies the very specific and narrow period in which printing used both manual skills and photo offset automation."

Holly Woodward ArtictFox@aol.com writes stories, verse, essays and plays; she is also working on a novel with comic strips. She spent two semesters at St. Petersburg University and won a doctoral fellowship to Moscow University. She has served as writer in residence at Saint Albans, Washington National Cathedral. Her fiction has won prizes from *Story* and *Literal Latté* http://www.literal-latte.com/holly.html.

"X": The author of AGENT NINE is currently undercover. Comments and inquiries may be sent in care of *Archipelago*. Book One, "Alice's Adventures Overseas," appear in six installments in *Archipelago,* from September 2000 till March 2001. A new episode goes on-line around the middle of next month.

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News of Our Contributors

Katherine McNamara, editor and publisher of *Archipelago*, is the author NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH, a non-fiction narrative set in Alaska, to be published in February 2001 by Mercury House http://www.slip.net/~apologia/mcnamara.html. An excerpt, "The Repetition of Their Days," appeared in *Archipelago*, Vol. 2, No. 3.

Hubert Butler (1900-1991) http://www.hubertbutler.com, the Anglo-Irish essayist who is now recognized as a writer of international stature, was honored at a celebration of his centenary in Kilkenny, Ireland, on the weekend of October 20-22, 2000. Among the distinguished guests and speakers were John Banville, **John Casey**, Roy Foster, Neal Ascherson. The site devoted to him is being developed as a resource for readers and scholars. Hubert Butler's disturbing essay "The Artukovitch File" appeared in *Archipelago*, Vol. 1, No. 2. **John Casey** is a Contributing Editor of *Archipelago*.

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Emergency Money for Writers

Professional writers and dramatists facing financial emergencies are encouraged to apply for assistance to the Authors League Fund, founded in 1917 and supported with charitable contributions. The writer may apply directly to the Fund, or a friend or relative may apply on behalf of a writer who urgently needs money to pay medical bills, rent, or other living expenses. Though the money is a loan, it is interest-free and there is no pressure to repay it.

The applicant must be a professional writer with a record of publications and a U.S. citizen. For an application or more information, contact the Authors League Fund, 330 W. 42 St. New York, N.Y. 10036-6902. Telephone: 212 268-1208; fax 212 564-8363.

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Letters to the Editor

Not Constance Garnett, please! On "Endnotes: The Poem of the Grand Inquisitor," Vol. 4, No. 3, from Robert Spaulding, in Paris:

I was shocked to read that you referenced the Constance Garnett translation [of THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV]as anything but a travesty and betrayal of the great man's writing. I recall comparing the Magarshack version of CRIME AND PUNISHMENT to hers, and wanting to cry about all the years I had wasted thinking the first one I read (hers) had anything to do with, even vaguely, what Dostoyevsky had been

trying to write. For me, her name will always be synonymous with censorship and the toning down of brilliant, dark, original writing to meet Victorian tastes.

I am a bit of a nut about translations, having also looked for good English translations of MADAME BOVARY, just out of curiosity, after passing one of my most pleasant, excited, literary experiences reading all of Flaubert in the original French. The results of my search were surprising: none even came close, in fact, none of them seemed to even get the story straight, much less the dark humor, comic qualities, pathos, and so on. They couldn't do what Emma's exploits in semi-public places did to me when I read about them on the Métro, in fact, causing me to look up sometimes and wonder if anyone noticed the color in my face or the effect below the waist.

Robert Spaulding dasein@magic.fr

And from Laura Kennelly:

I'm not a fallen-away Catholic because I'm very stubborn. I'm not sure the priests would agree that I'm still a Catholic, but I've decided that the mystical body of Christ includes myself – so if I do go to Hell, it will really be for something. (This is all to say that after thirty something years of marriage, I sought a divorce and remarried and am very very happy.)

It is a very thoughtful essay. I've only read THE BROTHERS twice (I think), so I suppose I've got to go through it again. I used to try to decide who was my favorite, Tolstoy or Dostoyevski? I had to go with the heart and the kissing the ground, but both are superb and, in quite different ways, are sometimes saying the same thing (I'm thinking of THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYCH now, more than ANNA KARENINA).

OK. So thanks,

Laura Kennelly LKennelly@aol.com

FURTHER ON….

Etel Adnan

PLACE

As for oceans, I sailed a few, then flew over, over my own story, to a little town in Mexico where a sailor was particularly good looking, and discovered a bar and met in there a woman caught between two people, a foreigner who was drinking too much, and a young girl, both attracted to her and to the soft wind, outside, with the sound of the ocean touching the beach.

WEATHER

There are days when the storm refuses to break out and in those days pains are born within my limbs and behave like spirits with a will of their own, leaving me helpless against this invasion. Once, I was crossing a garden, a huge one planted with tulips whose color was red-wine, dispersed among iridescent blue flowers with leaves still retaining the dew. I thought: on such a day, a person from history, to whom I'm particularly attached, looked at this space and welcomed this kind of weather. She was a queen exiled in France amid brutal surroundings. She was banished, later, and died in Cologne.

MY HOUSE

Often I buy books on houses and start, page after page, to move into different apartments, or dwellings that make one wonder if glass walls separate us from nature or if they are meant to make us feel at one with the trees. My favorite trees, around houses, cabins, shacks…, are oaks.

A PERSON

People are here to betray. There's a person who loved me to death, not to my death or hers, but to the death of a person I loved. So, when she aged, my resentment made me speechless. I let her guess why I was angry, and that was punishment enough. I wonder who invented the ugly word "punishment"; it was probably God who established the word, and the deed.

WIRES

A straight line, I was taught, was good for hanging clothes, but I saw wires that were crooked and used for crowns of thorns. I also saw a cage with wires that were intended to protect a canary from predators, the cat and the dog. One morning I found the bird dead from lack of water. I had the night before watered the garden, thoroughly, but had forgotten to fill the little can with the precious water it demanded.

THE CHURCHES

On Sunday bells toll and women in black are swallowed by a white structure that I never enter. These creatures come out of the church with, on their faces, the same expression that they had previously and they smell of incense and wax. That's how it is, on this island, and elsewhere.

MY HOUSE

Hotel rooms hold a fascination: there's a sense of loneliness that I sometimes experienced in them that still does haunt me. How did I survive that feeling of void, or rootlessness, or uselessness, that possessed me more than a few times in cities such as Paris and New York? How did I climb that wall of nothingness to attain a perspective from which a next day was possible? But houses can be much worse, they can be pierced baskets from which one's life oozes and drains into the gutters. I discovered, by chance, in a book, that Thoreau's attention was transfixed by permanent structures. The forest, the boat, the fresh air were not enough to give him serenity…he was constantly looking for a house!

POLITICS

Television works differently from cocaïne: it dumbs the spirit and creates a kinship with cartoons. Children have grown tails and are asking to perform in Disneyland and parents hurry to agree. Soon, governments (I mean the few that will remain) will have no trouble running a depleted planet.

PEOPLE

Sound research has proved that people pollute the world and, as they're part of it, pollute themselves…. Immaterial people probably exist on other planets, and we're eager to get in touch with them. They won't need olives, bread, or a Mercedes sport car…and I doubt that our ideas will be of any interest to them…they may have better ones, or none at all. Who knows?

VITAL DATA

I have established a sound relation with the universe. Of that, I'm sure. I move freely between the sun and the moon, I go further, I plunge into black holes and emerge intact. I ride on comets, count galaxies. I'm on speaking terms with light-years, all this since I traveled in a matter of seconds to the Universe's edge and suspected that the strange movement that I witnessed, once there, was the beginning of an abyss.

EDUCATION

I think about water, often: I can't hold it in my hands for any length of time, cut it with a knife or understand why it runs with such a happiness. We think that something is certain, but then a little screw is missing, nothing works, the mind remains bewildered. Still, when I *love* water, I have no problem coming close to its being.

BUSINESS

Those who make in no time billions of dollars stop eating, drinking, fucking, buying flowers…they spend time dreaming of more money.

Some don't dream, they kill. I met people of that sort in a restaurant in the 15th arrondissement of Paris. One night I was in that special place with good food, and there was a table with three beautiful women and a man whom I recognized having seen him in newspapers…quite often. His hair was glued to his temples, he had make-up on his cheeks…. He was speaking in the accent of one of the North-African countries I know, and exuding much venom. Against one of the walls of the restaurant was a table occupied by "people-watchers," and they were at front-row and showing it by being loud. Their pleasure was sickening. To the left of the entrance I noticed three guys, three thugs…. They had a mountain of food under their noses and were conspicuously enjoying their dinner. Something stirred in my stomach. They were bodyguards, obviously, and certainly armed. This was not a hunting place, but it had all the elements of the leftovers of a hunt.

MY HOUSE, THIS PLACE AND BODY

The sun shines through my windows with no difficulty as they are wide open. I try to touch the light but it disappears at that very moment; all I do is make shadows with my fingers. Then I think that the world is somewhere else, in Mexico, in India… Why should it always be in a named place? Why should it, altogether, *be*?

THE SAME PERSON

Am I my body, and/or my soul, and does an angel define us otherwise? But when I carry pain whenever I'm awake and wherever I go, the question becomes serious. An acute awareness of oneself is not always a blessing.

WEATHER

It's always back to my favorite thing: the weather. Since childhood, I've listened to thunder because it is awesomeness itself. I also always loved soft rains, their sexual appeal with no sex involved…no jealous lover can ever suspect the competition they represent. When one cloud passes over another, I tremble and when a patch of blue pierces a grey sky I soar like an angelic figure.

Some rains are deadly: they announced an apocalyptic meltdown, the cosmic ocean's self-destruction. They make us lose all points of reference by creating pools in which all specifications drown. They push us back to our abstractions and in that dismal state of affairs we err in cities carrying the knowledge of that disaster as baggage. Hotel clerks get suspicious and refuse to give us a key. We wander for a while in some train station and when we have a change of mind we re-enter the city and spend the night walking.

But what about the inner tempests where high seas of anger unleash their fury against the mind? Mind and stomach merge in those times, fuse into deadly rays, probe the inner soul as no hurricane can do to the Atlantic coasts. These inner lands sometimes take the shape of real territories, Syria, Lebanon, California…where we live inside and outside the self, not

distinguishing a missile hitting a house from some devastating thought. The onslaught of History on the brain creates storms which batter the imagination with more destructive power than any cataclysmic weather. Some of us are familiar with these private disasters which accumulate and become daily bread and daily experience.

PLACE

One apple is sitting in a blue bowl of stoneware made by Eileen Curtis. Every surrounding thing moves away from a collection of objects which were attracted to a square shelf. Do they feel at last secure in that setting or are they, for their misfortune, and rather like me, unable to rest? They form a beautiful unit, that only painters can appreciate, to the point of giving the rest of their lives to reproduce, sometime, somewhere, with any material at hand, the ecstasy of the apple and of the bowl.

PEOPLE

I particularly love Fra Angelico, Angelico while painting angels. He does not paint them, he creates angels who have, thus, escaped God's creation. He sprays gold on their hair and around them. Each time I went to visit him, he was absent, out of Florence, not yet in Sienna, on his way to Arezzo, just back from Padua but not yet at home…. I rest my hand on one of his painted walls and feel his angel's flesh, the one who forever announces the coming of a baby. People like Angelico do not come in number.

MY HOUSE MY CAT MY COMPANY

Let me have the courage to say that all three belonged to my mother, because that's true, a reality which has shaped my health and desires. Her cat, named Bijou (as I have already said), slept in her mosquito net. She loved that weight hanging over her sleep. Bijou had a huge house for her promenades: arched windows for watching mice in the garden, armchairs covered with damascene velvet for her claws, a kitchen stove to warm her bones. I didn't live in that house, with that cat, or in my mother's company, I just crossed all these entities like a draft of air.

POLITICS

Dimensions have swelled up and industries spit columns of smoke and hatred. Hating has become a passion so intense that it is burning us with it. We dress our enemies with silk and cotton, manufacture shoes for their feet, feed them chestnut paste, burn incense on their altars, provide salutations, write music for their ears…and then, then…we are either eaten by them or we lose interest.

MORE VITAL DATA

The U.S. Government is gathering vital information about all the country's dogs. Because citizens are already being over-processed, many computers are idle and many people out of jobs. The good government of the people, by the people and for the people, has decided to become a caring institution for animals, too. It is starting with dogs. Much research is done on the laws of classification for these particular creatures. There will be problems with spots and food habits, but they will be solved as they arise. Cats are waiting for their turn

with the kind of apprehension that Third World populations used to have when they saw coming towards them the first cameras and tapes carried by strangers. Doctors are keeping track of viruses and poets of rabbits. There's nothing to worry about. All this will make death look merciful.

EDUCATION

One day I gave an orange to a monkey and what did he do with it? He ate it. I was surprised. I expected him to play with it, smell or squeeze it, thank me for it…I don't know. Somehow, I was disappointed. I realized that we, humans, are trained like singing dogs, tamed like dying lions, programmed to think and hesitate. My monkey took the orange and, in a moment of perfect intelligence, he ate it.

BUSINESS

If the business of life is happiness I will describe for you my linen sheet: it's soft and cool, and flexible. I will say it's friendly. Friendly to me, and to whoever visits. Then I will look at a wall, a wall in the desert. You will call it a ruin and I will disagree and the dispute will shatter our pleasure. In Cash Creek, California, the river is young and capricious. It talks to the sky, envelops young girls with its curls, arouses young men with its smoothness. There, in Yosemite, the deer rest a knowing eye on the ferns. The snow is a protective blanket, until the sun comes out again and is amazed by all that white beauty. But in some places, like Nebraska, people burn their clothing out of boredom. They haven't moved far enough West.

THAT SAME PERSON

His name was Charles, and he disliked his name. He called himself Peter. Peter? Petering? Saint Peter's? It was his uncle who had named him Charles, after his own grandfather. Unsure of the fitness of the name, Peter took another one: Vassili. When people started addressing him in Greek he felt embarrassed; he couldn't go to Russia for a similar reason. He also thought that the United States was big enough in which to disappear…. As he loved Beethoven, he re-christened himself Ludwig, with some pride.

But it turned out that his neighbor, who had grown up in East Germany, was originally called "Ludwig," but on naturalization day, had chosen "Charles" for his new, American, self. The postman confused the two Charleses. Charles the first, who kept getting mail in his old name, grew paranoic: he feared losing his girlfriend to this other Charles, who, he thought, was responsible for the problem…. He went back to calling himself Vassili. Now, thinking he was a Russian immigrant, nobody talked to him. As a good Catholic he went to St. Peter's Church in Santa Monica, where he had moved a while ago. The ocean was beautiful in his neighborhood, with its blue lines and white hair. Somehow, though, everything was upside down in his life. His anger and his confusion caused him to lose his job at the garage where he had been a specialist in brakes and transmissions. Eventually, like many other people on that particular day, he died. A cousin paid for a tomb. They had to inscribe his name on the marble head-stone, and there were many family discussions over the phone. So, to find peace, they decided to inscribe on the grave marker: "Here lies Ludwig Vassili Peter Charles Gregory-Smith." The Gregory-Smiths had come from

Uptown, Delaware. Our man was the only one of that name who had ever reached California.

WIRES

On television, the model of D.N.A. looks like a simple design made of two copper wires, twisted gracefully. Could it be that Shakespeare rose out of such a configuration of electrons? And what about Egypt? Do countries rise from hidden forms, and can it be that, when the forms are twisted wrongly, there are wars, massacres, collective hallucinations? We will find out. Everything will be found out, explained and discarded. I wish that the breeze, the warm and low desert wind, the sand dunes with ripples remain, with the sun very low, either at dawn or at dusk.

WEATHER

Every time the year makes a full turn, it's April, squeezed between two interesting months. Sausalito's weather, in April, is indecisive: the ocean gets to be fluorescent in a maddening way, and the mountain remains green, bottle-green, a color in which there's a memory of yellow. The weather is not dramatic. It's rather tuned to the American sense of comfort. It is not balmy, not yet: never in April. It is a month that slides through our fingers.

But in Greece, it's something else. Everything in Greece happens outside the rest of the world, probably because it's there that Christ is resurrected for real. And he brings back with him an ecstasy of marine colors, of silvery clouds, fragrances from the days of the gods, and a lot of candles for the fingers of unsuspecting children.

PLACE

When we don't know simple things, such as why flowers grow secretly, we divert our attention to beaches. Then, having exhausted the possibilities of these flat surfaces – not so flat, not so bumpy – our mind wavers, floats over undefined terrains and, most often not landing anywhere, returns to its seat and habitat just to discover that new ideas are waiting for their turn to take off.

I go often to Rodeo Beach (which for decades I called Cronkite Beach), watch the little ducks and leave them to their destiny, and listen to the ocean. Oceans are the kind of place I would inhabit (but if I had been a whale it must have been light-years ago), so I stand, sometime hurting, and face the waves. The wind plays its games with the pelicans, and the red-wing black birds sound their little trumpets. They greet each other with an effervescence which enchants the hour. But nowhere as by an ocean does Time speed by. Everything is in constant, visible change. There's more than color to such an environment: there is our desire to embrace the emptiness which shelters all these events. But that "emptiness" is immense. So we lie on the beach, talk to it, kiss it…grains of sand try to find their way into our mouths. We spit them out.

PEOPLE

A visitor to Sausalito may very well be impressed by a billboard with a big eye on it, informing him that he just crossed into a nuclear-free zone. Would that quiet his fears?

Does it mean that, if and when the Golden Gate Bridge is reduced to a memory, fall-out will stay away from our hills? A few Unitarian ladies whom I know pretty well believe in the power of the will. They're luckier than I am. In the meantime the police are chasing rabbits away from gardens, because the cops consider them a serious traffic hazard. In general, the police are rather decent. In the few decades I've lived in this town, they have killed but one person: they chased a young man out from the Seven-Eleven store and shot him down. He was holding in his hand a chocolate bar that he had just purchased.

Oh yes! That very same institution which protects the (smug) residents of Sausalito harasses the most interesting man I know in the area: My friend Ross, who lives a few streets down the hill from my house and to the north. He's a veteran of the Korean War from which he returned broken, in fact shattered. A woman took him in, turned him into a craftsman, like herself, and together they made local history. Their big shack became the rallying point for many painters and a few stray writers. There was pride in being there.

That place has retained its magic although inhabited by an absence. Eileen died twenty-five years ago. The same friends still come to see Ross, sit around the same table, and think of her. We go there to bring Eileen to life in our imagination. I can watch Ross stir up big logs in the formidable iron stove. What I really see is Eileen's gaze when he was doing exactly that, when he was building a fire not only in the stove but in her body and her mind.

He's still somewhat like a vulnerable Hemingway, an old leftist with guns in one of the cupboards, a pacifist who would kick, as he repeats it, the teeth out of America'a military. While he's probably the last old adolescent speaking from the sixties, he *does* invest some money in mutual funds to make sure that his dwelling will not go without repairs. A craftsman he remains, but Eileen's unfired last pots and plates keep gathering dust. He continues to make his own ceramic vases, and sculptures inspired by China, making the old Chinese surfaces of smoothened buddhas…but he remains best at growing salads, onions, raising a few chickens in his lush garden. When Eileen was around, he used to paint on her pots frolicking baby elephants, long-eared rabbits, or deer. She used to look at his incredibly blue eyes and hear his Lincoln, Kansas, stories…. The one he repeats most often is how, at eleven or twelve, he accompanied his grandpa in the robbery of a grave; how grandpa, like a skilled dentist, pulled a gold-covered tooth out of a dead man's mouth. When he pronounces the mythic word 'Kansas' he stands with legs apart and torso slightly forward, as if to say that that's where America's center of gravity is to be found.

Ross drinks and laughs, and people around him become alcoholics; but as they have already lived a long life, who can blame them? Russell Chatham, indeed, of his generation the greatest painter of the West, a champion of fly-fishing and of writing about fly-fishing, used to come and sit at that rectangular table, which wine has stained and thinned down the years, and serve up his own catch of salmon with a laughter echoing Ross's…. Eileen's blue stoneware pots are always filled with the garden's apples and pears, a few lemons hiding among them: Russell has some in Montana, Bill and Sally took theirs to Somocolonia, in Tuscany, Tom regularly eats his corn flakes in them, and Arden as regularly fears breaking one… Mine are in this house which faces the mountain, they are in a closet and in my memory, where they live with Eileen, who made them; and Ross is in Portugal this summer, drinking, sometimes falling, has been working for the last three years on a sculpture representing Vasco da Gama, which he wants to offer to the little town by the Atlantic where he makes his alternate home, now that he doesn't anymore go to Morelia, Mexico,

because, as he says a few times a year, that's the place where Eileen took him for their wedding.

HOUSE, MY BREATH AND WINDOW

Houses are made of windows held standing by walls. All kinds of things enter not through doors but through windows wide open on a clear sky. That's the way Gabriel came in to scare the Virgin. It was not, though, on a Halloween night… Jesus was born, and not yet born, and Mary was confused. Fra Angelico lived next to windows, celestial ones. He framed them with gold and took the walls away. He left shimmering lights with patches of pure red. Balls of fire and crowns made of diamonds bring their own light to his paintings; that is, if we can call the apparitions that he makes visible, 'works of art.' They are not due to artifice but to secret forces of nature, those we seldom deal with. His angels play trumpets while we think that we are listening to Pergolesi. These trumpets are angelic toys. Their sound comes through my window and becomes a breeze on my face when I lie, in spring, in some room away from my usual home and hometown. To one's innocence Fra Angelico brings his breath and gently puts out the candles. Then, the sun shines with restrained benevolence.

POLITICS

On Sundays, there are no government meetings, no declarations of war, and, in some cities, no buses.

FINAL VITAL DATA

As we are products of a family, we feel compelled to talk about it in order to define ourselves. It's just a habit. That's probably why I watch intensely movies about animals. The animals I like to watch are usually monkeys, tigers, lions, elephants, whales and dolphins. Each of these has characteristics I would have loved to have. They represent the possibilities of Being distributed among the whole animal species. But on a day I will never forget I saw on my television chimpanzees climb trees and jump from branches to branches. The particular light of the moment in which they had been filmed imparted a sense of unreality. It was as if acting were involved…and I started thinking that soon, when human behavior will be responsible for the disappearance of most of the animals that live on earth, 'scientists' or 'artists' will replace them with virtual animals, so that we will have holograms of lions in the zoos, three-dimensional elephants in the movies, with dangers included…, rubber whales in museums and dolphin-like illusions performing in the sea. I shivered, suffered an incredible bout of anguish, felt bitterness on my tongue and weight in my limbs. I have the firm belief – and that contributes to my chronic insomnia – that it's already late if we want to avoid the disasters that we are preparing for ourselves.

EDUCATION

Why is there sadness in the idea of education? We are creating new coercive dogmas and new idols. But, some would say, there are the poets! Yes, there are the poets and there are the readers, and the dreamers, and the lovers…and they constitute the new continents to be discovered.

ANOTHER PERSON

He was chaotic: he used to forget his name and tell people he was a baron; and when they wanted to know from which estate he came, he would answer, in his Greek accent, that he was German. He would embark on a winding description of the Rhine's southern trajectory and then forget the names of the cities the river was supposed to cross. He did, once, convincingly, explain why his Greek island was green in all seasons. We did see pictures of his mother and two sisters, but as nothing was written on the back of the photographs, we had no reason either to believe him or dismiss everything he said. His hair was never combed. My impression was that he always slept on his left side, because of so many things…. He was not cross-eyed, no, but his eyes were, each, looking at a different distance. They gave a dreamy look to his face which endeared him to women. He loved women, he used to say, but he spent his days with young men, playing billiards in Alexandria. At least, that's what he told me. When I tried to speak Greek with him he answered that he didn't understand the language, and when I showed surprise he laughed, beautifully, and said that he had had a nanny from Smyrna who had given him her own accent when he was a child, and that the accent had never left him. His English was Shakespearean and his French from Marseilles and Nice. We saw him spend money but he never invited any of us to dinner.

THE FIRST PERSON

You could see her from any street, through different angles, and then let yourself go to your dreams. They used to come from afar just to spend a few hours with her. In non-airconditioned cafés, I spent hours looking at her through the windows, contemplating her beauty which belonged to a realm of being all her own. In the summers I would go down a winding street and then reach her and, taking off my clothes in a tall and narrow cabin, would enter her and swim.

HOUSEHOLD APPLES

I find apples in the market of any city that I visit. I find them also in contemporary paintings, or notice their ominous presence in Renaissance murals and tapestries…. Who chose that round and fragrant fruit to signify sin? It's unforgivable. Some sadistic person must have decided to spoil our pleasure, for ever, for an apple tree is the king of trees. Apples hang like little green worlds and, sometimes, when we come too close, they blush. In the spring, their costume of flowers replaces, advantageously, the melting snow. My familiarity with them started in the hidden paradise that the Barada Valley used to be, west of Damascus. Nobody will ever find it, not even on a map, for the little village of Bassimeh had a few houses made of bricks, with dusty floors; and there was almost no visibility, even during the day, for the valley's bed is made of the river and is a torrent in winter, a dry bed in summers…. The children used little stones for toys, and they hit each other with those tiny weapons until a 'grown-up' would show up and stop the games. My uncle owned a piece of land which was either flooded or dying of thirst, and he felt happier there than anywhere else in the world. So did I. In a corner of that land covered with the river's sound, there were a few apple trees that he called an orchard. And that place was my own paradise.

CHURCH

There's a church which isn't a church, with paintings which aren't paintings, and, if I hadn't found my paradise already as a child, I would consider that church to be a place of ultimate ecstasy. I discovered it at random. From the railway station I was heading for Padua; the baggage felt heavy and the hour non-descript, so I entered a church I had just noticed, just to kill time. It was Giotto's Chapel. Instead of being 'killed,' Time was resurrected as a sacred visual poem, as I entered that blue heaven with its buzzing angels and its imminent day of Judgement. My day of Judgement had arrived in that Chapel of the Scrovegni and I was saved.

BUSINESS

When would some anarchy ever erupt in this chartered, measured, and parceled world where living has become theatre? Of course, there's misery, plenty of it, in countries of the southern latitudes, with ways unacceptable to Paris, barely tolerated in London, nonexistent in Mexico…. But misery does not create creative chaos; on the contrary, it dreams of order, rows of bread, straight lines of water, well-defined bank accounts.

I will need the primeval chaos that spat out stones in the Mediterranean or gave such an energy to the Indians of the Americas that they ran from the Pacific Coast to the Atlantic as if they were on an extended promenade. To think, think, and why? My friend Bob knows only what his owl tells him, and Joanne Kyger discovers every morning the existence of a world devoid of questions.

THE STORM

Joel Agee

On an unseasonably warm night shortly before Christmas 1966, I took a large dose of LSD. It was late, around two o'clock in the morning. Susan went off to sleep, and told me to wake her if I needed help. A strong wind was rattling the windows and whirling rain and garbage through the streets. I turned off the lights, lit several candles, took off my clothes, sat down on a large Turkish cushion. Near me on the rug stood a bowl with fruit and a glass of water. After a while my hands started to look strange, a familiar sign that the acid had taken. Unsuspected ranges of blue, rose, and green played over my arms and legs. The whole room with its soft dancing lights was steeped in a sort of visual perfume – tactile, too, as I discovered when I dipped my fingers in the water and touched them to an apple and a plum. A splatter of rain against the window passed through me like an exquisite wingbeat. The more I immersed myself in sensation, the more beautiful and the more subtly articulated it became. What better setting for the rest of this trip than under the blanket with Susan? But on the way to the bedroom, I saw my reflection in a tall mirror, and stopped. It looked like one of those ithyphallic representations of a pharaoh, made of brass or gold. At the same time, the dance of light and shadows gave his skin a shifting, transparent quality, like the wind-ruffled surface of a clear pool of water. On closer inspection, I saw that the body had breasts, full and round, like ripe fruit, and the golden phallus was replaced by a triangular grove of dark pubic hair. Then the breasts were annulled by thick curls on a broad, heroically muscled chest. The arms, too, were powerful and adorned with metal bracelets. A peculiarly vaginal wound opened up in the chest, which was hairless now, with a web of blue veins beneath the skin, blood flowed down the belly and onto the legs, the body turned a dull greenish gray, the skin cracked and split, worms swarmed in and out of the putrefying innards, a new, pink, adolescent body blossomed out of the corpse, whether a girl's or a boy's wasn't clear, ballooned into obesity, shrank and shriveled into a withered, hollow-chested old man with a long, pendant scrotum. I knew that what I was seeing was the reflection of my thoughts, but that was no comfort, because my thoughts were no longer mine. Two rooms away, Susan was sleeping. I started walking in her direction. The dining room was almost unrecognizable, much too long, the distant door to the bedroom was tiny. Asleep on the floor, twitching, our sick little dog lay in my path, a breathing monument of reproach. He had some kind of spastic nerve disease which, according to the veterinarian, was incurable. Why had I not taken him to another vet? Because I didn't care enough. Because I wanted pleasure and was always banishing pain from my thoughts. Because I would court pleasure as long as the rack and the scalding oil were out of my sight. A flash of lightning lit up the apartment. I needed help, fast. Far off to my left, on a couch, in the glow of a wall lamp, lay the Bible. I stepped around the twitching dog, walked the three endless steps to the couch, picked up the black book, sat down, opened the book to a column of red words which was at the same time a tall building the color of blood, with empty spaces in place of windows, but of course I knew it was not a building, this was the Bible and these were the words of God

which, once read, would be words of salvation. Inside each word were letters and clusters of letters all pulsing their own unpronounceable meanings – stn thh es gpr – fierce little strongholds for the eye and against the ear, and that felt extremely uncomfortable. Then a burst of thunder decided the issue, and the opening phrase stood before me: "Seest thou these great buildings . . ." which I assumed meant the house of words on the page, and I thought: How wonderful, this must be God the Father's house with its many mansions, and it looked to me like some sort of hotel where a soul could find shelter from the storm, and maybe a hospital, too, where a sick dog could be healed. To enter it you had to read with faith in your heart and fight off any temptation to join the revolt of the parts against the whole. So I read: "There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down . . .", and as I read, there was a knocking against the windows, which I knew was the wind, but it was also the unnamable trying to barge in, and the house of stone and the house of words were the same thing threatened with ruin, and the words on the page and the sounds in the room and outside had the same awful meaning. There was a thumping sound, for instance, which I recognized as the beating of my heart, but it was also a cosmic drumbeat portending some unimaginable climax. Nothing was more important now than to keep the building intact by reading each word in its divinely intended sequence, but a nasty trick was built into the message: several lines down from the top I was warned not to "go down into the house neither enter therein," an instruction that should have been posted on the roof. But before I could turn back again, I was unequivocally told not to do that and not to "take up my garment" either, no doubt meaning the clothes I had dropped in the living room. How good on such a night to be in the house of God. But the next sentence chilled me: "Woe to them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days" – Susan! – and there was a flash of light followed by a tremendous crash, and that shock blew away the subtle membrane that sets apart the everyday self from the deathless soul and the domestic cave from the roofless, bottomless universe. But my heart was still locked in, pounding the walls like a desperate prisoner. Nothing was what it was any longer, the masks had fallen, the dog was all the sickness and suffering of life, and I had been put naked into the world to take care of it and had made such a sorry mess of it through the aeons, and now I had swallowed a poison concealed in a sugar cube that was setting free a horrific power that had lain encoded in words from the beginning of time, the same power that had created the world and was now tearing it back into chaos. I shut the book, as if to clamp shut the mouth of God, but the message continued in the steady scratching of the dog's claws, the fiendish whistling and howling outside. Why, when I still had the chance, hadn't I taken my stand with the letters against the text? Their revolt might have made other meanings, other outcomes possible. Now it was said and done, irrevocable, written in blood, and it was my fault, because my nerves and cells were the conduits by which the world was not only perceived but sustained, and I had swallowed a poison which no human body was meant to absorb and which was now racing through the most sacred and secret halls of the temple like an invading army, trampling the statuary, burning the scriptures, and it wasn't my body only that was going down in thunder and ruin, it was the world. There was a shout on the street, a metallic clang. A police car passed by with a wailing siren. And then a new element appeared in the text, a hard bang on the door, and another one, and a rustling, swishing sound in the hallway, and a third, brutal bang -- and this, too, was my doing, though I didn't know how I had done it or whose dread arrival those knocks were portending. I didn't answer, or even dare to move. I thought of calling Susan for help. She was asleep. Asleep! How was this possible? How could the same divine power (mine!?) crush the world in one hand and cradle it in another? And how could I dare disturb the grace that protected her? Let her at least be saved . . .

I was lying prostrate against the back of the couch, with my arms stretched out right and left on the pillows in the position of the crucified. The mind, racing in circles, and seeing itself trapped and exposed on all sides, cowered, and waited, voiceless, for the final judgement. The dog whimpered in his sleep, bared his fangs, let out a growling sniff. Then our white cat came in from the bedroom, stopped at the sight of me, fixed me with his malachite eyes, or was it my eyes that had caught his, was I reeling him in telepathically, for he was walking toward me now, leaped up on the couch, put the cool weight of a paw on my leg, stepped onto my groin, my belly, my chest, and lowered himself down on my stomach, purring, and still steadily gazing into my eyes. Impossible to approximate, now, in the dim light of memory and with words, the strangeness of that stare. *It was not to be read*, that was one essential ingredient. It was not an element in the mad text of destruction. Nor was it blank. It came from a different world altogether, a world untouched by symbols and signs, and because that world perceived me, I knew that I existed in it, and that in it all was well. The gaze was not mute, it spoke plainly in the pure language of being – as all creatures and things do, as indeed thunder and lightning do, so that, if we could hear and perceive the good news that streams in upon us perpetually from all directions, if we were not forever distracted by the lure and the menace of the non-existent, we would not be in need of salvation; but here the eternal message was being delivered to my address, with perfect detachment and at the same time with something like magisterial command, as if to say: this is for you, and I will not be refused. Calmly, the animal outgazed my terror. I, too, became calm. Outside, the storm abated and gave way to a steady strong rain that clattered on the tin window-sill. For a long time, I listened to the rumbling swell and subsidence of the cat's pleasure. He was flexing his front paws in rhythmic alternation, sinking the tips of his claws into my chest.

EROS AND PSYCHE

Holly Woodward

Hades took Aphrodite both times she descended to his underworld realm. The first trip she tried to get her love Hyacinthus back; the king of hell gave her a son, Eros, instead. Hades left the goddess of love in the mud after he'd gotten what he wanted.

"Serves you right, you stupid fool," Hades said, looking down in disgust at her Olympian-thin skin covered in filth. He thought he'd done a favor, giving her an education. "Don't you know the ones with flower names always die young?"

But did they die because she loved them?

The second descent Aphrodite made to retrieve her son, who had fallen under Persephone's thrall. (If there's one thing in the world we can't have, we will find it.) That came after Eros had asked about his father.

"You're a love child," Aphrodite had answered.

"What is love?"

She'd bit her lip. But he sensed enough to search the underworld for an answer.

"Tell me what love is," Eros begged hell's queen. "My mother won't say."

"First you have to learn to die," Persephone told him.

Aphrodite got past Hades' three headed dog by shoving her mirror at them; they howled and cowered at their reflections. The shades weren't so easy to scare; she struggled through crowds of clawing shades who blamed her for their deaths, though without love they would have never lived – but they'd forgotten that. Aphrodite still bears scars from the throngs and from her son struggling to get away as she dragged him back home to Olympus. And from Hades. Even the goddess of love couldn't refuse death's advances. Hades claimed her as his daughter because he'd steadied Cronos' hand while it had castrated Uranus; when his seed had fallen into the ocean, Aphrodite had risen from the foam. Her second descent to Hades' kingdom, he raped her again. So Eros came to have a sister, Psyche.

Aphrodite coddled her first son like a lover, hoping he'd protect her from Hades. But ashamed that he had taken her twice, Aphrodite left their second child on a mountainside. A peasant couple found and raised her. When she came of age, no one would marry Psyche; her macabre beauty frightened men. No one would even marry her three earthly sisters. So they left the girl back on the mountain to die. But she didn't – the ones we shun and wish would die always turn out to be gods' children.

Aphrodite gazed over her subjects and started when she saw the gold-eyed young woman where she'd abandoned her wrinkled, blue infant thirteen years before.

"May a hideous monster fall in love with her," the love goddess cursed. Then she watched in horror as crowds abandoned her shrines and came to worship the girl. Aphrodite threw down her mirror and ordered Eros, "Kill that cursed creature. Let her father take care of Psyche."

Eros dutifully licked an arrow tip dark and strung it – how many fail to notice Eros is armed, a slip of the tongue from Eris, Ares' twin sister, goddess of strife. Again and again women threw themselves in Eros's path and asked, "How can I love you?"

"First you have to die," Eros said. So they obediently took their lives, but he didn't know what came next, yet.

When Eros saw Psyche, he faltered at her unflinching gaze and pricked his chest with the poison tip. Still he managed to sink the shaft into her heart. Eros swooped down to gather proof he'd executed his task, cupping her breast as blood poured from it.

"I know you," Psyche said.

"Who?" Eros asked and sucked the poison from her wound, ignoring his own. "Who am I?"

She looked away.

"My brother."

He cradled her and jumped from a cliff. A gust lifted them up to his palace; the wind felt he was father to Aphrodite, having made the foam from which she rose, so the wind held Psyche and Eros as his grandchildren. In the love god's velvet tent pitched in a desert, Eros nursed Psyche at night, fleeing each sunrise so she wouldn't see that the poison had eaten half his side. (Gods' wounds never heal – that's why they act so aloof; though nothing can kill the divine, the slightest cut will hurt forever.)

Even in darkness Psyche's looks burned Eros.

"If you look at me," he warned her, "one of us will have to die."

Psyche thought he'd be the one killed; so many had tried to murder her and failed. She didn't think he could be immortal and love her, gods had treated her so coldly.

Eros's faceless servants fed Psyche so many sweets she wandered his desert hunched over, searching for the bitter weeds she used to live on. The ghosts of Eros dusted, running their hands over the same surface again and again. Something about dust frightened them.

The palace tent felt so fragile, the quiet hall clock might fell it with one stroke. Psyche dreaded Eros's nightly approach, marked by his quiver scraping across the floor like a wooden leg. All night Eros and Psyche ran their hands over each other like the servants who dusted, or convicts in dark cells hoping to find a way through. They licked each other's wounds like salt.

It was heaven, but Psyche missed the freedom of earth. She'd been happier laboring as a servant to her three earthly sisters. Better to be a slave to the lowest human than to an unknown power, she thought, so Psyche showed the sisters how to jump from the cliff and let the canyon wind lift them to the palace.

"This is too good to be true," they said.

The eldest touched the red velvet bedspread, then held her finger to her tongue and muttered, "Blood."

The second licked the sheets and said, "Rust."

"Who is he?" the third asked.

"He won't say."

"What does he look like?"

"He won't let me see."

"Something's wrong with this story," the sisters chorused.

"He just wants a show of trust," Psyche defended her love, though she'd felt the humps on his back when she tried to hold him. (She didn't know they were folded wings.)

"You've given up everything that was yours for him and he doesn't trust you," the elder complained.

"Maybe he doesn't want me to love him for his looks."

"Who wants to hide something good?" asked the middle sister.

"Anyone who'd want you must be a monster," the youngest said.

"Is he warm to the touch?"

"N-no."

"He's death," said her older sister.

"How could death make me feel for the first time that I'm alive?"

"Only a fool would choose this man over the sisters she's known and loved all her life."

Well, except for when they left me on the mountainside, Psyche thought.

"Men want to keep us so ignorant we might as well be dead," her eldest sister went on. "And soon we will be, from the evil acts they try to hide so we'll fall for them. Even gods shouldn't be loved if they're violent. I bet if you saw what your lover did by day, he'd kill you."

"I think he has a good heart."

"The only way you can tell is to cut him and see what he bleeds."

The three sisters left wedding gifts of knives and a lamp that sputtered like a mad old maid.

Eros never slept, so Psyche didn't rest at night – nor could she sleep in the relentless Olympic daylight. Psyche was going crazy without dreams. Since the servants did everything, all she could do was imagine things. "He must be a monster to have this many slaves." And his skin was so cold it burned. "Is he the devil?" she asked herself. Who could tell the chill of Olympus from the cold of the underworld? "Or am I so monstrous he can't bear to look at me and sees someone else in the light?" After all, she'd been the girl no man on earth would marry. Psyche tossed and turned in the deep feather bed to keep from suffocating; she missed the soft ashes she used to rest on. Marriage felt like death.

Eros sensed her unhappiness and spent all night crouched in the corner, sharpening arrows. By the next night his quiver was empty again.

Her sisters must be right; he's a murderer, Psyche thought. If he used the arrows to hunt, he would bring home game. All he took was a dark liquid he wouldn't share with her, like an addict.

"How can you love me?" she asked into the dark. Abandoned by her celestial and terrestrial parents, feared by men, Psyche knew everything except love – and her origins.

"Believe in me," he begged.

"How can I believe what I don't know?"

He wanted faith as a balm for his fear; she thought the only cure for fear was knowledge. Psyche loved knowledge above flesh, so innocent she didn't know that truth was more mutable than skin, or that truth could hurt, like holding a mirror to someone who's been burnt.

Finally she obeyed her desire to know; Eros was her lover, her brother – not her master. Leaving the knife where it lay, Psyche thought, "I'll just use this lamp. I don't need the blade." She was right; the lamp would wound him enough. She lit it to see if he was monstrous – but can one really tell by looking?

She leaned over him, started and spilled the lantern's hot oil on his wounded breast. Which half frightened her, the perfect beauty or the festering wound she'd caused? (Some say that she saw no one at all, for love, like any god, must be believed in to exist.)

Eros leapt away but couldn't escape his seething skin. Psyche tried to hide the light, but all the darkness of the world can't hide the smallest flame.

Eros woke up to her desire for something beside him and razed his palace; she was all he'd ever wanted to dwell in.

Psyche came back to consciousness in a pit of dirt, blinded by the brief glimpse of his godhead.

"But I loved you," Eros yelled down at her.

"What is love?" she asked back from the depths of earth.

In answer, Eros plunged the knife she'd left into his eyes, so he missed his targets more often and Psyche could regain her sight; in love only one person had to be blind, then. She got her vision back, but only to see the great distance between them.

From his barren perch Eros shot his arrows blindly, killing many, and so proved the sisters right. Love became a four-letter word. Countless victims of his rage marched down to Hades; to try to cool their venomed wounds which burned through marble tombs, the tortured shades bathed in the Styx, poisoning it.

"Is this the thanks I get?" Hades railed. He'd given Eros the bow and arrows, leaving them secretly beside his infant's crib.

Some say the three sisters married perfect monsters, the kind who seem faultless in public, though as soon as the door closes they turn. "My husband's a perfect monster," they told everyone, though none believed them. "Those sisters," people said, "are nothing but stories, and they'll never be happy."

Others say the wicked girls raced to take her place in the god's bed, jumping off the earth's edge, the way she'd shown them, but the indifferent wind let the three plunge into the chasm.

Maybe Psyche threw herself from the cliff over and over, but the wind kept lifting her, whispering in her ear, "You can't die."

Psyche didn't yet know why.

Or else Psyche only had to leap into the wind again to be lifted up, but she couldn't, after seeing her sisters splatter in the gorge's depths. Eros lay down to bridge the cleft between soul and skin, as thin as the one between time and eternity, but as deep.

"Step on my wound," he said. But Psyche couldn't make even the smallest leap of faith. She began walking back to his palace on Olympus.

When Psyche reached her brother's ruined house, Aphrodite blocked the gate, demanding, "Fetch me Persephone's beauty secret."

Psyche walked back down the chasm to the Styx, where Charon stood in his paper boat. He turned his back when she couldn't pay him the fare of two gold coins to cross the thin river. In Hades, money reigns, though it buys nothing there. The dead all think they'll return, even Charon, so money is more craved in the underworld than on earth.

"I'll pay later," she told him.

"Everyone says that. You're already late."

"Without faith, even you won't make it back," Psyche said.

One of Eros' wild arrows hissed by Charon's breast and hit his hull. Charon lowered his head and ferried her to the far shore where Hades' palace rose, a great skeleton temple laced with green scum. On the skiff, shades ran their hands over Psyche the way they had over Eros's house, crowding close, but the more that crushed in, the emptier air felt. They bowed their heads close to hear her breath with the fragile awe of children.

"Why are some so faint?" she asked Charon.

"As the living forget them, the dead lose substance until they disappear completely, though they're still there, thousands of them in the air."

She'd hoped the underworld would be different from the other worlds of heaven and earth. What use were hierarchies? Weren't they all finally equal in death?

One pale wraith tore her dress with his long nails.

"Who are you?" Psyche asked. "Where are your relatives on earth?" She wanted to tell them on her return to remember their dead. "I'll bring them word."

He looked blankly back.

"They can't remember anything of love," Charon said. "They could if they drank from the fountain of memory. They want and fear it like wine. But most choose the gray water of Lethe." Charon watched a shade lick a tear from her cheek. "The fount's filled with tears from the living. Hades feeds off Persephone's ceaseless weeping. With her there beside him, he's the strongest force in the underworld. A shade is the opposite of the soul, just the darkness a life makes; the soul is what one gave away on earth. The darkest shades here inspire the most dread. Don't pity them. The ghastliest have the least to lose and are the most dangerous. But bring back word for him, in writing, so I can patch the boat," Charon said. Through the hole Eros had shot in the paper shell, the Styx seeped like a snake and curled round their feet, burning cold.

Psyche jumped off at the palace shore and sank ankle-deep in mud that smelled of rotting dreams. Beneath, Hades and Persephone huddled on jewel-crusted thrones at the bottom of a sunken pit; around them the sorriest dead swarmed like flies, biting the king and queen.

"Don't be afraid of Hades," Charon whispered to Psyche. "Not even his subjects are; he keeps forever all who enter his realm, but there's nothing worse than eternal death, so what can he threaten them with? We fear what we want, and most want life."

The shades cowered around Psyche. The dead were free – except from the desire to leave.

Hades heard their buzz, slowly turned and lifted a finger toward her.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"To know your secret."

He laughed till charred flesh fell from his rotting face.

"You don't even know your own," Hades warned, shaking his finger at Psyche.

"What?" she asked. "What am I?"

"My daughter," he said, reaching toward her.

As his bleeding hand groped close, she cried, "I'd rather be dead than yours."

"Die and you're wholly mine," he said and crossed his arms. "I am your father and your mother's father."

Psyche writhed like a maggot exposed to the light; she foamed at the mouth until brown spit covered her and dried into a hard casket.

Eros came and begged Hades, "Let my sister go and take me in her stead." Psyche had taught him what love and dying were, and that the first was harder.

At his words her carapace started to crack and shatter. Darker, thin-limbed, covered with dust – but so carefully arranged – Psyche emerged. Sap crept through her veins, unfolding her like a nightmare until she hardly knew who she was again, though now she looked more like her mother; both were now born of death and raised from a shell. But Psyche saw that her father had given her much, her new velvet, exile, and life, though he didn't have that last one himself.

"You've given me enough," she told him, turning away.

"Wait, since Eros got my arrows, I'll grant you the secret of beauty for Aphrodite," Hades said, knowing the most dangerous gift is to offer love what she wants. He handed his daughter a heavy lead coffer.

Persephone gave her a wedding brooch of three rubies, one for each of the pomegranate seeds she'd eaten. Everyone says, "If only Persephone hadn't swallowed those," except the underworld queen, who knows that without the fruit she wouldn't have the strength to come back to life.

At the edge of the Styx, Psyche handed the ruby pin to Charon, paying for her release with the seeds that kept another in Hades. She gave him her discarded shell to replace the boat broken by Eros. In return Charon gave Psyche the secret to hope, a draught from the river Lethe. He tried to fasten the brooch to his robe; it pricked him and fell into the Styx. From the wound seeped a thread of smoke, all that remained of the blood which used to burn veins.

On the long walk back up the road from hell to heaven, Psyche felt she had to know what was in the great coffer, but when she opened the lid, she found Eros laid out and fell down. Hades rushed up, shoved his daughter in, shut the top and delivered the box to Aphrodite. When she lifted the top and saw her two children lying silent, she fell down as if dead – the secret of Persephone's beauty is sleep.

With both gods of love trapped by Hades, few died on earth, fewer still were born. Though no one on heaven or earth missed Psyche, without the gods of love, life on earth became hell, and there was nowhere to tell people to go. The underworld's wraiths grew dangerously faint. Hades lost all respect.

The king of hell saw that both worlds were falling apart and knelt by the queen of love. He bathed Aphrodite with the chill waters of Styx, to cool her bedsores. He'd never stooped so low; though death forgives all, no one forgives him, nor had he ever asked for forgiveness. But with his last strength – even he'd grown weak as people forgot him – Hades whispered, "Forgive me," in Aphrodite's ear.

"I will," answered his child bride.

Eros and Psyche woke.

Psyche's wings took her to heaven; Eros wandered through hell. They sent messengers to tell each other, "I will come to you." When the couriers finally got through, the lovers both thought the words a rebuke.

They put on masks so they could go unnoticed and find each other faster; they pass each other over and over.

They search the whole world. Psyche hunts its breadth; Eros plumbs the depths. The farther apart they go, the tighter they draw love's cords. They will find each other, when they take off their masks and let themselves be found. They will find each other, though it takes forever. They will find each other changed.

from
LYRIC NOVELLA

Annemarie Schwarzenbach
translated by Isabel Cole

Annemarie Schwarzenbach was a Swiss novelist. On the surface, "Lyric Novella" is the story of a young man's hopeless love for a nightclub singer. Schwarzenbach later regretted having cast the story as a heterosexual romance, though at the time she could hardly have done otherwise. "The twenty-year-old hero is not a hero, not a boy, but a girl – that should have been admitted..." she wrote. However, the real subject of this sensitive, deeply-felt story is the difficulty inherent in all human relations, the impossibility of real intimacy. The "mask" of the hero(ine) only contributes to the sense of dreamlike tension.

The story itself, set in Berlin in the last years of the Weimar Republic, is easily summarized. Rather than pursuing the diplomatic career which his rich family has sought out for him, the young narrator abandons himself to his obsession with the nightclub singer Sibylle, who toys with him coolly and kindly and keeps her distance. He finds himself in a tangle of adult relationships in which friendship, rivalry, dependency are often synonymous. Another woman's kindness begins to free him from Sibylle's spell. But when Sibylle comes to him for help – imploring him to adopt an orphan she has taken in – he enters a state of crisis. Overwhelmed, he flees the city, leaving Sibylle to his rival. Taking a room in a small village, he begins to write "the story of a love".

"A tormented inability to relate to other people... makes love a sickness, friendship a shared flight from life and independence a senseless burden... The subject of Annemarie Schwarzenbach's story is not failed love – Sibylle's apparent emotional coldness – but the failure of love - the protagonist's helpless inability, in the crucial moment, to accept his human responsibility toward the beloved," wrote the Neue Zürcher Zeitung.

The story is told in 21 brief chapters; scenes of the country and flashbacks to the city are set down in terse, ironic, crystalline prose with moments of austere lyricism.

1

This town is so small – one walk and you know every corner. I have already discovered an old and very pretty courtyard behind the church, and the best barber in town, who lives on a cobbled side street. I walked a few steps past his shop and was suddenly at the end of town, there were only a few brick villas, and the street was sandy like a track across the fields. The wood began just beyond. I turned back, passed the church again, and found my way quite well. The old courtyard leads to the main street, and now I am going inside the "Red Eagle" café to do a little writing. In my hotel room I am always tempted to throw myself onto the bed and idle away the short daylight hours. It costs me an enormous effort to write; I have a fever, and my head is ringing as if from hammer blows.

I think if I knew anyone here I would quickly lose my self-control. But I go about without saying a word, and my feelings are unclear to me.

This café strikes me as odd. It's more a pastry shop, with glass cases, cakes on display, and a waitress in a black wool dress with a white apron. There is a light blue tiled stove in the corner, and the sofas have been lined up with their upright, cushioned backs to the wall. A puppy runs about yelping, a wretched scruffy little creature. A grey-haired woman tries to pet him, but he slips away from her, slouching apprehensively. The old woman follows him, lures him with a sugar lump and talks to him loudly and persistently.

I think she is insane. No one in the café seems to pay any attention to her.

Now the pain is coming back, and I've only written two pages. It's a stabbing on the right-hand side; it goes away as soon as I lie down or drink strong alcohol. But I don't want to lie down, I could write so well now, and it's terribly disheartening to be idle when I am alone.

The insane old woman is gone; I would like to watch her cross the street and see whether she talks to herself outside too like the grey-haired beggar women in Paris. –

I used to be unable to tell the difference between insane people and drunks; I watched them with a kind of reverent horror. Now I am not afraid of drunks anymore. I've often been drunk myself, it's a sad and beautiful state, things which you would never admit otherwise become clear to you, feelings which one tries to hide and are not after all the worst in us. –

I feel a little better now. I will have to ask the reader to bear with what I write today. But Sibylle told me that nothing, not even the bitterest experiences and most hopelessly lost hours of my life, should be completely unfruitful. That is why it is so important to abandon myself to my weakness even in this state of incapacity and later subject it to the only criticism which matters to me: will I ever in any sense of the word be taken seriously by Sibylle?

2

What bothers me most is that I left without saying goodbye to my friend Magnus. He is sick, he's been lying in bed for three weeks now, and I have neglected him. I saw him a few days ago, and he looked pretty bad. He was lying in the back room of his studio, the doctor was with him when I came, and shook my hand. He examined him in silence, examined the temperature curve and gave instructions to the porter's little son. The porter's son is a pale skinny boy of about eighteen who cooks for Magnus and by now has taken over the entire task of caring for him. When visitors come, the porter's son shows them into the studio himself and then vanishes into the kitchen. He stays there until Magnus calls him. He is very devoted... The doctor gave him a prescription and sent him to the pharmacy. "A good boy," he said to me. And Magnus smiled, and they simply overlooked the fact that I belonged. The doctor left, and I waited until the boy came back from the pharmacy.

"Do you have enough money?" I asked Magnus.

"Do we have enough money?" Magnus asked the boy, who answered, "Yesterday you gave me ten marks, that should hold us for now."

They said *du* to each other.

Then I left, and a few days later Magnus sent me an invitation he had gotten from the English ambassador for me, and wrote me a letter to go with it. Since then I haven't heard from him.

3

Once I always had the need to explain myself to everyone so that I could live with them in harmony. And yet I hated talkiness. But I don't know whether I hated it because I kept succumbing to it, or because I saw the futility of all attempts to make yourself understood, even to your best friends.

I say "once" and mean the time three months ago. I have always resisted all external periodization, because I detest imposed discipline. Now I must accustom myself to spontaneity, it is as if I became an adult in a single night. That night I could have seen Sibylle in the Walltheater, the choice was mine. But then I left. And before that night I wouldn't have stood it here for a single day. I knew nothing about being alone. I can even stand being misunderstood by my friends. Until now truly my sole wish was to assure myself of their good will, and for that I squandered all my good nature. And much more.

I'm done with that now. Who knows what will come of it.

4

It's a shame about people, says Strindberg. Several months ago I sat in a coffeehouse in Berlin with a poet, we talked inspiredly and went on inspiring each other with our mutual understanding. He was years older than I, I could almost have been his son. He leaned across the little table and grasped my hands, he shot his ecstasy, his optimism, his delirious joy at me like flames. "You are youth," he said, "the only youth I don't begrudge the future, and the victory over us –"

His words sobered me a little. At once he seemed to sense it; he let go of my hands, looked me urgently in the face and said:

"Do you have any idea how endearing and how in danger you are? You're so pale all of a sudden, tell me what I can do for you."

People often tell me that I am in danger. Maybe it is because of my excessive youth –

At the time I laughed about it. "I love danger," I said, and I felt my eyes shine with elation.

"I must go now," I said, it was midnight, I left him in a hurry, almost without saying goodbye. At the door I realized the unseemliness of my behavior, I hurried back, squeezed his hands and said: "Forgive me, I've spent the past two days waiting for a great danger..."

"Go," he said, smiling, "withstand it..."

But I did not withstand it.

5

I was in the wood all afternoon. First I walked into the wind across a large field, it was exhausting, I froze, and the edge of the wood was like a shelter. There were no people; once I stopped and looked around, and the autumnal desolation of the landscape deadened my sadness. The sky was grey, darker clouds raced across it, showers fell to earth here and there. And the earth absorbed them unperturbed.

I walked on, and the heavy clods hampered me. But then I was in the wood, bare bushes brushed me, I bent them apart, the wind had fallen still.

Right in front of me an animal bolted up without a sound, a big grey-brown hare; it dashed across the roots, crouched down, and vanished in the depths of the wood like a shot. I saw its nest, hollowed out round beneath the bushes, bent down and laid my hands where its fur-cloaked body had lain. A trace of animal warmth remained, and I felt it with an unfamiliar thrill. I bowed my head and nestled my face to this spot, and it was a faint breathing and almost like a human breast.

I am coming back from the fields. The soil clings to my shoes and makes me walk slowly, like a farmer. Sometimes I forget why I am here, on the run, so to speak, and I imagine I have lived here for a long time. But if I were a real farmer I would know what is sown on these fields, how much is harvested and which soil is most fertile. I don't know any of that. Sometimes I think that the farmers' knowledge comes from heaven, because they are religious and reliant upon the heavenly powers. I walk across the fields like a stranger and am only suffered here. I hate myself now suddenly because I am without obligations. Here, in the country, I understand Gide's "Immoraliste" and am kin to him, burdened with the same sin, abandoned to a hostile, delusive and fruitless freedom.

– People don't know what sin is. –

Yes, now I am ashamed of many things, and would like to ask God forgiveness. If only I were religious.

6

In Marseilles I knew a girl they called Angelface. I hardly knew her really, I only saw her at night, one single time, and she was standing in her room and thought we were burglars, Manuel and I. She slept on the ground floor of an ugly house. The village was two stations from Marseilles, her mother lived there, and when the girl was tired of the city, the bars and the sailors, she went back to her and lived quietly like a well-brought-up girl. Probably that was why they called her Angelface.

But we always added: "Or the harbor whore of Marseilles."

Manuel and I were on the road in a Ford. We drove by the sea, it was the middle of the night, and we wanted to get back to Marseilles. I was hungry. So we stopped outside the house where Angelface lived and woke her.

Manuel knelt on the ground with his arms propped against the wall.

"Angelface!" he called.

No one answered. Then she came across the room, all you could see was a white shadow gliding up to the window. And then she pressed her white face to the wire screen which kept out the mosquitoes. I could not make out her features, but my knees grew weak.

"It's me," said Manuel.

"Who is with you?" asked Angelface.

"My friend," said Manuel.

"How old is he?" asked Angelface.

"Twenty years old," said Manuel. "And we'd like something to eat."

"I can't let you in," said Angelface. "My mother wakes up so easily. But I'll make you some sandwiches."

I went back to the car to wait for Manuel. Then he brought the sandwiches, and we drove on.

"Are you in love with Angelface?" Manuel asked me. And then he said coldly: "It's not very original to love her."

That was half a year ago.

Manuel and I never write. But he had a friend tell me that Angelface had shot herself.

And now I think it is not very original to be in love with Sibylle. I think no one can resist her. –

7

I used to work very methodically before I knew Sibylle. I got up at seven, and at eight-thirty, if I didn't have a lecture, I would go to the main library. In the mornings there were plenty of empty seats, I would get my books quickly and begin to read. The reading room is semi-circular and dimly lit, and the desks are arranged in a horseshoe as if around a speaker's lectern. I always thought that there ought to be a speaker there, at the center of the room, a powerful man toward whom our eyes would instinctively turn, and that it would reassure us to know he was there.

My place was on the left-hand side, near the windows, which were shrouded in heavy curtains. The curtains were drawn only on bright afternoons, then a little sunlight entered the room and slipped across the floor, hesitant and colorless. I could not see out, but the noise of the street reached and tempted me. I would picture the way the cars drove back and forth and passed each other below, how the people hurried into the restaurants, read newspapers and felt content, and I would gather up my books and leave.

No one cared. Each was here by himself and paid no notice to the others.

Then I would go to a restaurant and order something to eat. And I was almost always very hungry.

8

But that was soon over. And then I spent the entire day in almost unbearable impatience.

Only when evening came was I consoled, the lights blazed up, and Sibylle woke.

The thought of her name was a delighted torment. I left the library, went home, took a bath and changed my clothes. Usually I had dinner with friends; they were cultivated and friendly people, and the evenings passed quickly and engagingly. I concealed my impatience, but every time I looked at my watch it was only nine o'clock. Mostly I talked with my hostess; I liked her very much. She knew my mother.

But one evening everything changed suddenly. We were speaking, I believe, of the German Empire of the Middle Ages, of the symbolic power of a name with so little reality at its command. All at once I heard my voice like that of a stranger, a flush of heat came over me, I whispered Sibylle's name unthinkingly, saw the infinite pallor of her face loom outside the window of the room, I ran to the window and tore back the curtain.

The others looked at me in surprise. What had happened?

Nothing, Sibylle's face. And what did they know of it, unending strangeness severed us, strange people looked at me, the ground caved in between us, the light grew dim, their conversations no longer reached my ears, now they themselves vanished, and I could do nothing to stop it...

I remembered often seeing a special kind of scene change at the Bayreuth Festival Theater:

The music played on and the curtains were open, but vapors rose at the edge of the stage, shot with colored light; they grew denser, interflowed in white streams to form increasingly impenetrable walls behind which the scene sank imperceptibly out of sight. Then it grew still, the mists parted, the stage reemerged, a new landscape lay gleaming in the soft young light.

I was asked a question, and answered, but I don't know whether my answer made sense.

I got up and went all alone to the hostess, who gave me her hand with a smile.

On the street I breathed a sigh of relief. I had escaped a danger. No one had noticed my flight.

So it was: I had slipped away from them, the abyss had opened up before me, irresistibly drawn I had spread my arms and plunged.

A boy stole past me, his head ducked; he gave me a cagey, challenging look.

"You're leaving your car here?" he asked. "Want me to keep an eye on it?"

I nodded.

"You seem to know my car already," I said.

Then I looked at my watch.

"Eleven," said the boy. "Eleven," I said happily. And hurried back to the car. As I took the keys out of my pocket, trying to remember the way to the Walltheater, I suddenly had to lean against the hood to catch my breath. The boy looked at me sternly.

I yelled at him: "Get in" – and opened the door.

Then I grabbed the boy by the shoulders, pulled him toward me roughly and simultaneously started the motor with my left hand.

He maintained a stubborn silence and stared at me in wordless devotion.

9

Do I think very much about Sibylle?

I'd say that I don't know, I don't give her thought, but I never forget her for a single second. It is as if I have never lived without her. Nothing connects us, but I am charged with her presence, sometimes I remember her breaths or the smell of her skin, and it is as if I am still holding her in my arms, as if she is sitting next to me and I need only stretch out my hand to touch her. But what is there to connect us: these long evenings, these long nights, this parting outside her door in the paling morning, these endless solitudes –

10

It is not late, but darkness has sunk across the land like a curtain. When I think of the city it seems to me that I lived there in ignorance of the world, I don't know how I endured the confinement, the cruel uniformity of the walls, the apprehensive reserve of the buildings and the barrenness of the streets. I slept, and no dream consoled me, and when I woke, I was tired. Then I sat at my desk and it grew dark again, and the headlights of the cars glided up and down outside my window. – The nights always went very late. Sometimes the dawning began as I drove home. At first it was dark, and the headlights fell gleaming on the black asphalt. Then they faded slowly, the street grew light and the sheen of it dulled. The sky between the trees of the Tiergarten was filled with surges of grey;

clouds, sack-like formations, shrouds and spear-heads moved through the ebbing darkness, the trunks gleamed silver, in the branches danced the waves of dawn.

I longed for the sight of the sun, which was rising now somewhere in splendor. But in the city you did not see it. A little red was in the sky, that was the east. All was still.

I stopped in front of the building where I live. A gentle breeze rushed down upon me and freshened my face. It was the morning wind. Soon it would be drowned by the noise of the city, smothered in its haste. I went into the building, took the elevator to the third floor, crossed the corridor and opened the door of my room. Hardly taking the time to remove my clothes, I sank down asleep.

11

Today I am impatient, hurrying back to my room as if someone could be waiting for me there. But that is impossible, no one knows where I am, not even a letter can reach me. I will force myself to walk slowly. I have taken up so much blind haste. For weeks the city pressed in on me from all sides, the sky was overcast, the stillness rent. Here the sky is immeasurable, and when I sit down somewhere on a hillock or lean my back against the trunk of a tree, I hear nothing but the murmur of the wind.

I can't imagine spring here, in this melancholy region, or the exuberant colors of summer. Sometimes, stretched out in bed, I force myself to picture these things, and the image of a rippling field slowly grows in the darkness, yellow ears join in rows, yellow stems in endless ranks merge into an undulating mass, a moving carpet over the brown earth; in the distance reapers open an aisle with powerful strides, they wade up to their knees in crackling yellow, and left and right the sheaves sink rustling to the ground. After the men come the women, laughing, gleaming with sweat and sun, streaming forth a pungent smell. Their naked arms catch the sinking sheaves and gather them into orderly bundles. The hiked-up skirts show their powerful knees.

Yes, how it was in the summer —

The sky is shot with bright rays and blinds the eyes. You cannot endure so much brightness, you lower your eyes or you throw yourself down upon the grass: it gleams with freshness and presses soft and damp against your glowing skin.

Or it was spring. And the sky stretched to ever-greater transparency, to a rapt, delicately-hued lightness, mild winds rose, clouds rushed through the high spaces, the trees, barely in leaf, bowed their crowns, raised them again and surrendered to the gentle unsettlement; the grasses, gone weary and pale under the masses of snow, untangled themselves, strove upward and shone. If you stood at the edge of the field, you were seized by this new splendor; on all sides the land was bathed in young moisture, pale tints from lightest green to the white of the clouds, untouched blue, brown with the matte lightness of animal furs, unearthly grey, silver of the tree bark, reddish cracks in the ground, hazelnut twigs, scraps of faded leaves, first emergence of yellow primroses in brown marshy hollows, black soil of the garden beds, veiled in grey, and then the deeply-broken, steaming clods of the field.

Then you went and turned your face to the extravagant caresses, sucked in the just-warm air, felt as you strode the onset of jubilation, lifted your hands to your breast, and saw in the distance the line of the horizon shrouded in silver, sensed hills, roads barely thawed, thundering water, bridges over ravines, and steep mountain peaks rising into the vault of shimmering blue.

I open my eyes. The room is badly lit, but now it is warm; the white oven crackles as if pine twigs are burning inside it. When I go to the wood tomorrow I will bring back a few twigs and hold them into the flames; that will make a Christmassy smell. I will be homesick then.

I sit up in bed. Maybe I am better. But the room spins before my eyes; I fall back onto my pillow. By all rights I should be discouraged, maybe I am too weak to feel anything at all. The room is so ugly. Oh, if only Willy were here! I would like to know who slept in these awful beds before me.

There are two beds here, but I am alone.

I hold the writing pad on my knees, and the letters dance.

Soon I will be too tired to write any more, and I have not yet gotten to my subject. For I do have a subject. I want to write the story of a love, but time after time I let myself be distracted and speak only of myself. It is probably because I am sick. I can't bring myself to do anything. I am still entangled in the raw stuff of my work, I was astray in obscure regions, now I want to return to life. I want to grow used to the passing of days again, to eating and drinking and healthy sleep.

That is why I went away, but I should not have gotten sick just now. Now more than ever I am thrown back into the strangest entanglements. And I am writing again. All these weeks I have really never stopped, I have lived crouched over myself, that has not been good for me. Of Sibylle I know nothing really, I have failed to think about her. Or Willy...

But is it possible to think about Sibylle?

Do I think about the weapon which wounded me?

("You were a weapon, Sibylle, but in whose hands.")

TWO POEMS

Heather Burns

The Possibilities

If the world is ordered by accident,
Then every place and hour must give warning:
Don't come here, don't stay long, don't buy – best rent
This house if doors won't lock and the flooring
Is soft. And if you must plant flowers, find
The ugliest bulbs they sell in loose nets
And bury them in dirt nutrient-kind
Or mineral-stripped, then wait and lay bets
For iris, lily, glads, or if you'll stay
The season. A better life might just thumb
The mute doorbell or tap the weather-gray
Panes – solicitors for conveniences
Of magazines, cosmetics, religion,
Or fresh fruit for cold's common contagion.

This Weather

In our town it's been drizzling for two weeks.
Squish. Standing pools cover lawns, slick leaf rot collects
On the porch steps and around the mailboxes, city storm drains clog.
The sun's failed to get through all month, and the magazines, bills,
Unwanted catalogues, and local circulars all are
Limp by the time people get home from work.

Next year there will be another Midwestern flood
To swell the rivers, erode banks, and turn acres of crops into lakes.
Again, pets and sofas and cars float past street signs.
Years of insidious silt to clean. There's nothing like a crisis --
A drunken argument with the husband over the leaking porch roof,
For instance, to make us forget again that our parents never really loved us.
Nature doesn't love us either. But it does give warnings.
Even the trees know this. The heavy drizzle condenses into beads
And runs off the leaves and branches in a thousand steady streams.
The roots dig deeper into the sodden ground, bracing.

THE MALY THEATRE COMPANY

Cornelia Bessie

It's quite fitting, once you consider it, that the Premio Europa for theatre should be awarded in the small Sicilian town of Taormina. Theatre has always played a key role here, in this cliff-side village opposite volcanic Mt. Etna, since one of the world's oldest and most complete Greek theatres is in the center of town. The acoustics there are so fine, today, that a whisper that an actor's whisper carries to the farthest seat.

The Premio Europa, sponsored by the European Union, awarded by an international jury, went this past year not to a strictly European director but, amazingly, to Lev Dodin of the Maly Drama Theatre of St. Petersburg, Russia. Previous winners of this most prestigious (and lucrative) of all theatre prizes have been Ariane Mnoushkine, Peter Brook, Giorgio Strehler, Heiner Muller, Robert Wilson, Luca Ronconi, and Pina Bausch – all Europeans, or, in Wilson's case, a director working in Europe. For Dodin to have been chosen for this honor is thus quite singular.

I first met Lev Dodin, in 1987, when Michael Bessie and I were in Russia to bring out Mikhail Gorbachev's book PERESTROIKA. Dodin and his company had never been seen outside Russia. Indeed, they hadn't been seen much inside Russia, since Dodin's productions did anything but toe the party line; nor did he butter up the officials of the all powerful theatre union. So for him to be, in anno domini 2000, a "legendary" character, as he is so often called, is a reputation fashioned in a dozen years! (And bear in mind that the company plays in Russian.)

Dodin, a native Siberian, began his theatre work in the St. Petersburg Drama School, which still today feeds the Maly Theatre. Training young actors in Stanislavskian style; working in improvisation, music, dance, gymnastics; studying the classics, but also modern authors like Platonov and William Golding, he formed an amazingly flexible ensemble. And they study in depth. When they began working on Feodor Abramov's novel BROTHERS AND SISTERS, which Dodin adapted for the stage fifteen years ago, and which has become their signature piece, the entire company lived in a Siberian village for months on end. Dodin thinks of his permanent company as his family, and in a large sense, they are.

For Russians, theatre is not entertainment but reality, illumination, learning, and even perhaps even kind of religion. In Dodin's case, the subtle realism of the acting is merged with a high sense of theatricality and a kind of narrative drive that make his plays sell out everywhere. "Brothers and Sisters," set in a Siberian kolkhose during World War II, has over forty characters, but each one is as individual a portrait as the crowd in a Benozzo Gozzoli painting. And although the particular privations of that time have changed, the face of human suffering, the soaring spirit of heroic humanity, the willingness of women to adapt, to endure, to nurture the young and the old, have such a universal echo that the play and the acting – most of the original cast is still with it – have a freshness that can only come of a kind of melding of the actors with their personae in the course of the years.

In Taormina you can have a kind of theatre orgy. During the week of the prize-giving there are at least two productions a day, at various sites. Peter Brook sent his African play, "Le Costume." The theatre company Hollandia performed a remarkable play called

"Voices" in flawless English, American, Dutch and even street Italian. They are a young company that performs in unusual places – markets and football fields, for instance – for audiences that are not the usual theatre-goers. Thomas Ostermeier from the Schaubühne am Leninerplatz, in Germany, brought a play. And also honored were Ibrahim Spahic of Sarajevo, who kept his theatre running during the worst times of the siege of his city, saying that art is really the only answer to rifles, and Jovan Circillov, of Belgrade. There was so much talent running around in this small town that it made you quite dizzy. And in every café at least six languages were going simultaneously. Theatre critics, journalists, actors, directors, playwrights from all over the globe were arguing, laughing, drinking, making friends. It was as though the ancient Greeks were laughing over our shoulders, knowing that drama might save a city.

The plays that Lev Dodin brought to Taormina to celebrate his prize were "Dom" (The House), the third play in the Abramov trilogy, and "Molly Sweeney," by Brian Friel. "Dom" takes place in the same village as "Brothers and Sisters," but after the war is over. Now the villagers discover that the peace they had longed for brings its share of misery, state stupidity, human foibles, and even hunger. "Our courage has run out," says one of the main characters. The basic dichotomy is between those who love the land and the village, and those interested in following orders from Moscow and their place in the party hierarchy. The symbol of heroic humanity, love, and kindness in this bleak world is Lizaveta, played by the Maly's star and Dodin's wife, Tatiana Shestakova. As in "Brothers and Sisters," there is a timeless, placeless humanity in the tale, that takes it onto common ground. A capacity audience gave it that rapt attention that only great art commands.

The other Maly production in Taormina was Brian Friel's "Molly Sweeney," translated by the company's dramaturg and essential intellectual, Mikhail Stronin. It, too, showed Dodin's way with a simple set, fine acting, and dramatic force in a tragic setting.

These fine-tuned actors, who often will work on a play for years before they face an audience, seem able to convey extremes of emotions, several emotions, simultaneously. A realism that can fly off into the fantastic and back at a moment's notice, a quick narrative pace, a sudden burst of humor and music, and people you know, even though they may live on a Siberian Kolkhose – these are Dodin's characteristics, which have brought him such swift recognition.

What kind of man is Lev Dodin? A first impression recalls a Siberian bear. He is heavy-set, but not round. The beard and the thick hair are graying now, but that adds color. Intensity, ardor emanate from him. There is a searchlight behind those eyes. Once, when I was driving him somewhere I caught him looking at me as though he were studying a painting called "woman driving a car." Lev and I communicate across a language barrier: he has refused to come out of Russian although he now circles the globe, and my Russian is in kindergarten. But we feel close, as though we know each other well. And in a way, we do. We once had to fight a battle together, and that gave us the chance to take each other's measure. Generally Misha Stronin is with us, translating; but once, when we were alone in a room, a bilingual person arrived and said, What have you two been doing? and we both answered, in two languages, Talking. Maybe this capacity to *see* is what inspires actors: you feel that Lev *knows* you. What you will do, what you will not do. Like all artists he is instinctive and passionate, a studier of body speech as much as language; yet when he teaches or converses, there is a honed intelligence and the fallout of a well-stocked mind. He grew up under Soviet mis-rule and must have rebelled early on against an authority that sacrificed the human to the system. One of the first things I noticed about all his plays –

especially "Stars in the Morning Sky" and the Abramov plays – is Dodin's love, appreciation, knowledge of women. He knows that they instinctively put human needs before glory, advancement or ideas. In a way, I suspect this big, burly man thinks like a woman.

I said earlier that we once fought a battle together. It was like this. The Maly's first venture into international waters was in 1988. The powerful Soviet theatre union had allowed them to accept an invitation to take "Stars in the Morning Sky" to Canada. That was to be followed by a performance of "Brothers and Sisters" in New York, at Lincoln Center's summer international festival. Somehow, I heard a rumor that the assigned producer in New York had tampered with the funds to put on this play; that he was perhaps going to put them into another production. I phoned Lev in Canada and told him and Misha what I had heard. Immediately, they flew down to New York, and the rumor proved to be true. As we were studying the situation, Lev pulled out his passport. His Canadian visa, the same one as for all the actors, was going to expire the next day. The company couldn't stay in Canada; and they had no money at all. No money was *none*, not even enough for sandwiches. In those days, funds could not be taken out of the Soviet Union. The only thing to do was to bring them to New York. I contemplated the possibility of having twenty people sleeping on the floor of my two-room apartment.

They arrived, baffled, miserable, uncomprehending. I called everyone I knew who had a large apartment, and asked them if they could feed twenty-five people – beans, pasta, anything at all. People came to the rescue generously. A small amount of money came from the Soros Foundation; a hotel chain agreed to put them up, briefly; and we went to work to see what could be done. I knew that if this visit turned into a fiasco, their chances of getting out of Russia again would be slim. So, we turned to the press. The *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and, finally, the *New York Times*, ran the story: "Stranded young Russian actors." When a photographer turned up, the members of the company, suddenly, were actors. Within moments, they looked starved, forlorn, waifs borne on the winds. The resulting photograph marshalled the Russian émigré community, and food, transportation, sympathy appeared like magic

In the end, Lev, theatrical as always, thought up a scheme. We would hold a press conference, in the hotel. There would be forty empty chairs, for the forty actors of "Brothers and Sisters" who weren't there. (They were in Russia.) Amazingly, it worked. The head of the festival found a slush fund and agreed to put on "Stars in the Morning Sky." The actors were already in New York; the sets could be brought down from Canada.

"Stars in the Morning Sky" is set in a village near Moscow. The story is this: The Moscow Olympics are about to begin. What can be done about the prostitutes who roam Moscow's streets? The glorious Soviet Union has no prostitutes, you see, and the international visitors are about to arrive. The solution: round up the women and send them away till the Olympics are over. Suddenly, a small village is inundated by ladies of the night….

Hilarious, sad, rich in humanity and understanding, the play was a smash success – it was sold out every night the company played. The Maly returned to Leningrad in triumph.

ROSA'S ARGUMENT

A Collaboration
Alan Sondheim and Dan S. Wang

Date: Sat, 12 Feb 2000
To: Dan Wang <danwang@mindspring.com>
From: Katherine McNamara <editor@archipelago.org>
Subject: Re: Rosa's Argument:

Dear Dan,

"Rosa's Argument" arrived yesterday and is wonderful. Would you tell me, please, about the paper and printing? Did you make the paper? Was curious: is the work signed?

Would you and Alan Sondheim be interested at all in having a representation of the piece on Archipelago? I don't know what that means, exactly. Perhaps something about it makes sense. Anyway, I can't stop laughing over the text and think other high-minds of the '60s would feel the same; laughing at its humor, and how much the world has changed.
yrs.,
Katherine

Date: Sun, 13 Feb 2000
Subject: Re: Rosa's Argument
From: Dan Wang <danwang@mindspring.com>
To: Katherine McNamara <editor@archipelago.org>

Katherine,

> Would you tell me, please, about the paper and printing? Did you make the paper?

Good questions. It was printed on a Vandercook sp-15 proof press (manufactured in the early 1960s in Chicago). This particular press has become the preferred machine among artists doing fine letterpress work. It was originally used to produce a perfect proof of a handset form which was then made into a photo-litho plate for eventual offset mass reproduction. In other words, this machine occupies the very specific and narrow period in which printing used both manual skills and photo offset automation. I did not make the paper. The paper is handmade and called Mouchette Prairie. Full sheets have a deckle edge, which I trimmed off.

> Was curious: is the work signed?

No. I generally don't sign stuff.

> Would you and Alan Sondheim be interested at all in having a representation of

> the piece on Archipelago? I don't know what that means, exactly. Perhaps something
> about it makes sense. Anyway, I can't stop laughing at the text and think other high-
> minds of the '60s would feel the same; laughing at its humor, and how much the world
> has changed.

Yeah, I've thought more about the text and the clues that date it. I think the names Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov, especially, give it that baby boomer nostalgia spark.

Wow, putting it back on the web would really have the project come full circle! To my mind, such a move is up to you, as an owner of the work, and as one who, in some sense, has a responsibility to guide the work's further evolution. I myself would love to see it happen, and wonder what reactions it would garner, and how they would compare to the reactions to Alan's original post. Alan would probably get a kick out of this thing having taken on such a life of its own.

Dan

Date: Date: Sat, 12 Feb 2000
To: Alan Sondheim <sondheim@panix.com>
From: Katherine McNamara <editor@archipelago.org>
Subject: digital media work

Dear Alan Sondheim,

Dan Wang may have told you about this. I've just received his (other) printing of "Rosa's Argument," which he had shown at Woodland Pattern. I love this piece, for every reason. I love the text, especially; can't stop laughing, or at least smiling: those were the days, how the world has changed, were we all that young, etc. And history behind it. And then, your making the text. I don't know about the old HP calculator but an architect friend remembered his, from long ago; I think he was both baffled and admiring.

Would you tell me more about your digital media work?

Would you and Dan be interested at all in showing a version of "Rosa's" on Archipelago, the quarterly of lit., arts, opinion which I publish on the web ? Or, perhaps it has appeared elsewhere and I can see it?

yrs.,
Katherine McNamara

Date: Sat, 12 Feb 2000
From: Alan Sondheim <sondheim@panix.com>
To: Katherine McNamara <editor@archipelago.org>
Subject: Re: digital media work

Hi Katherine -

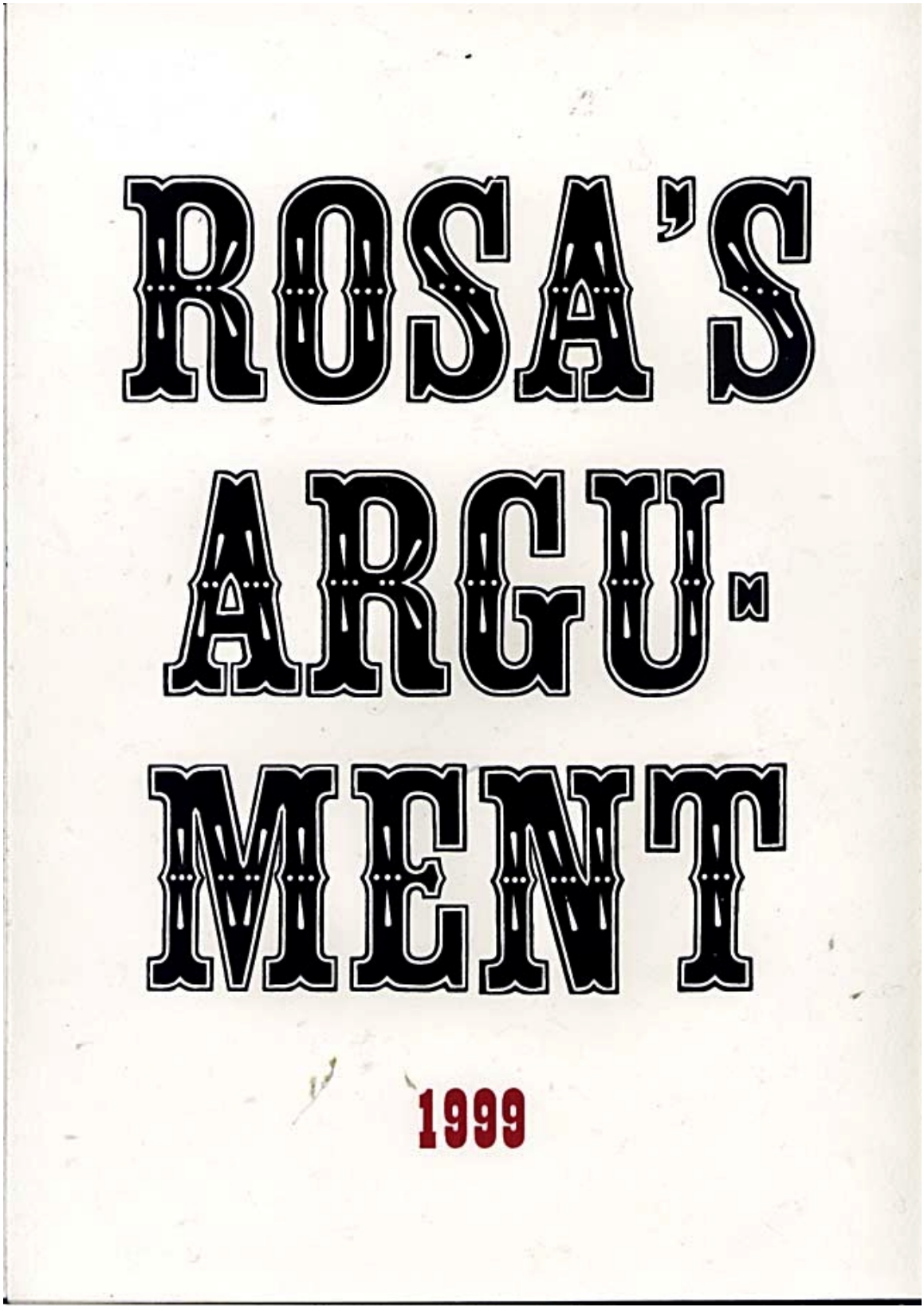
I did Rosa's Argument (and a number of other texts similarly) on a TI59 calculator with thermal printer - it's still here (at a friend's house) and it all still works of course. My current work is at the three sites below – I was a virtual writer-in-residence for trAce at http://trace.ntu.ac.uk and the third URL below as well.

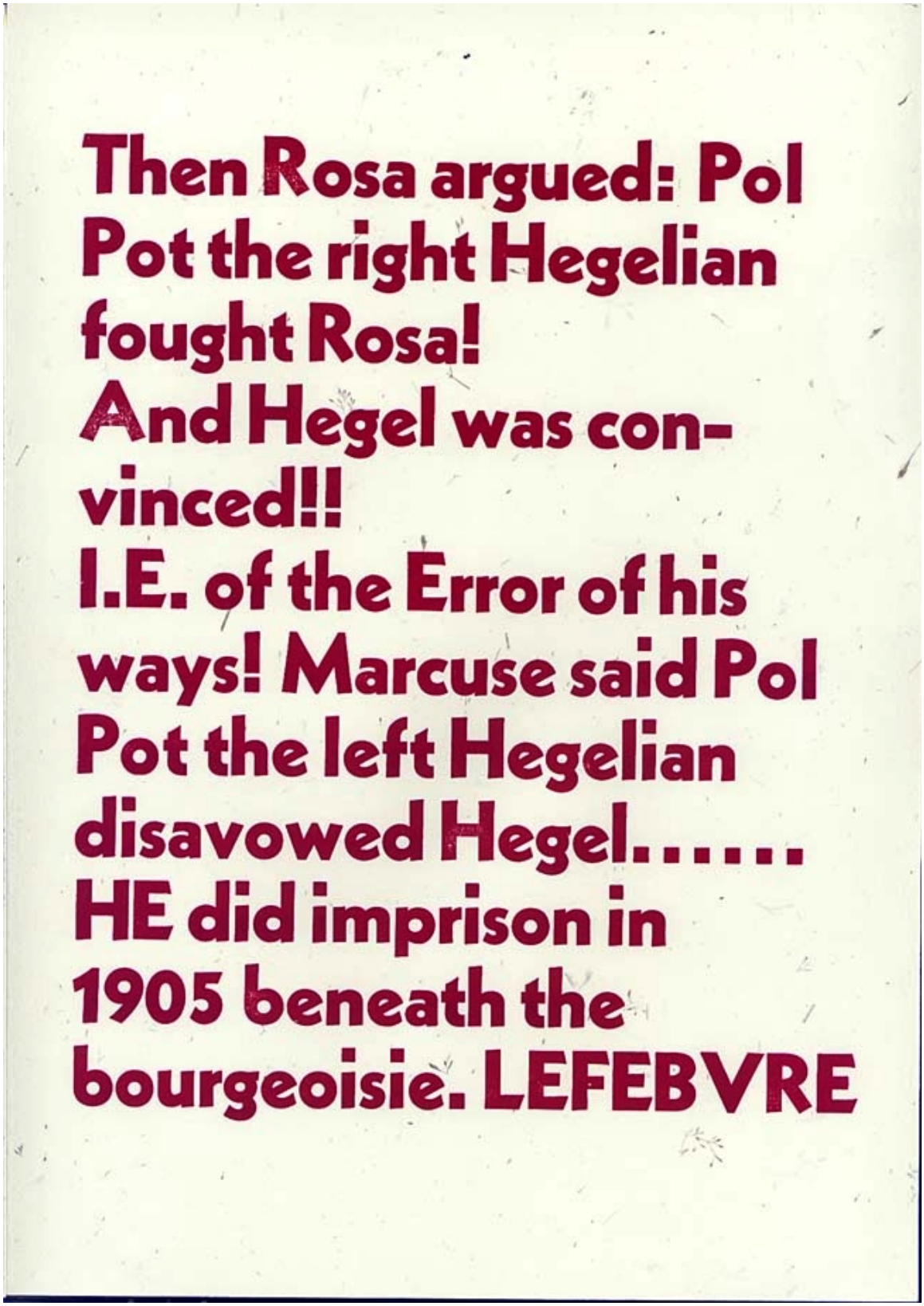
You of course have my permission to use anything you want at all...

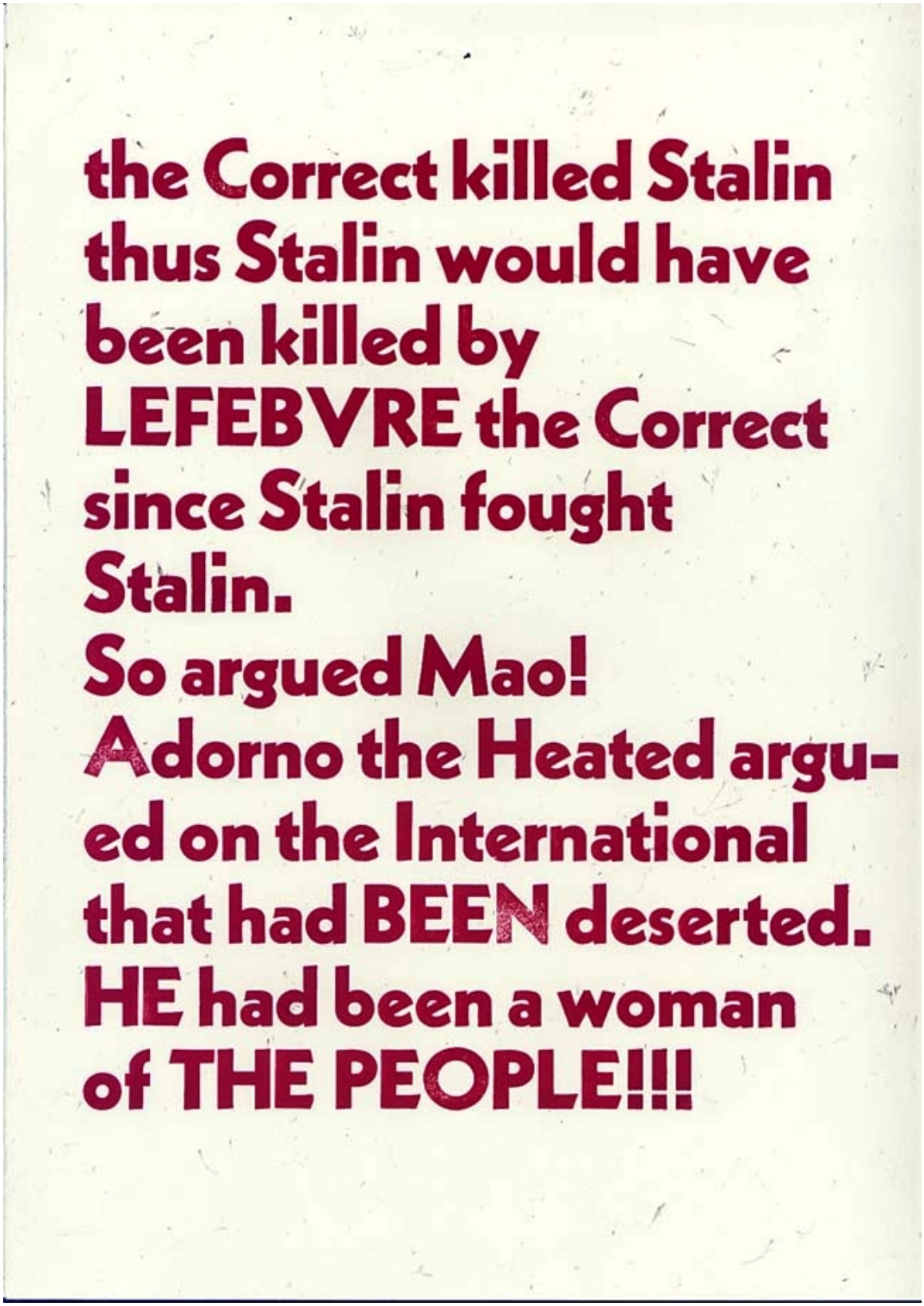
yours, Alan

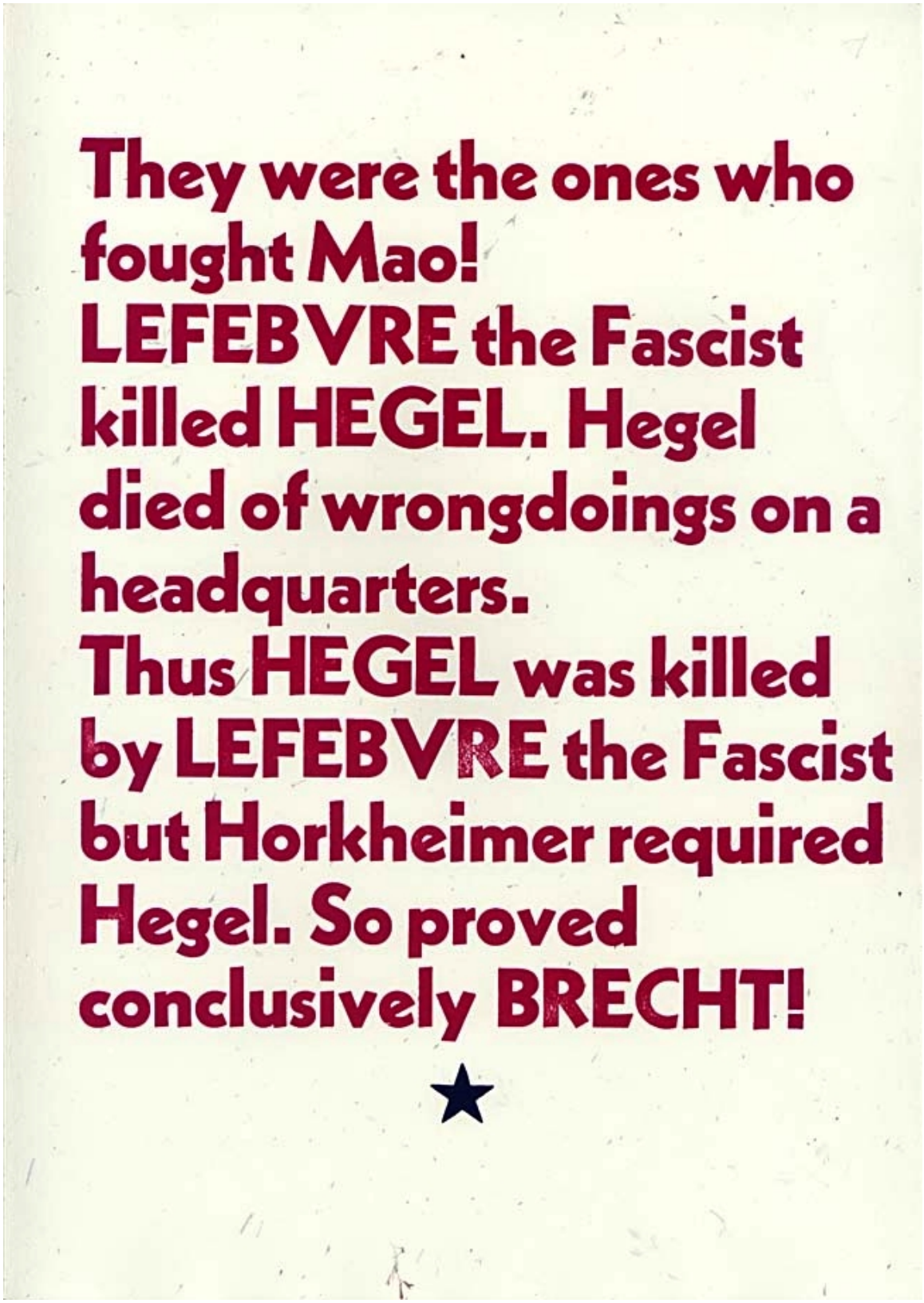
Internet Text at http://www.anu.edu.au/english/internet_txt
Partial at http://lists.village.virginia.edu/~spoons/internet_txt.html
Trace Projects at http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/writers/sondheim/index.htm

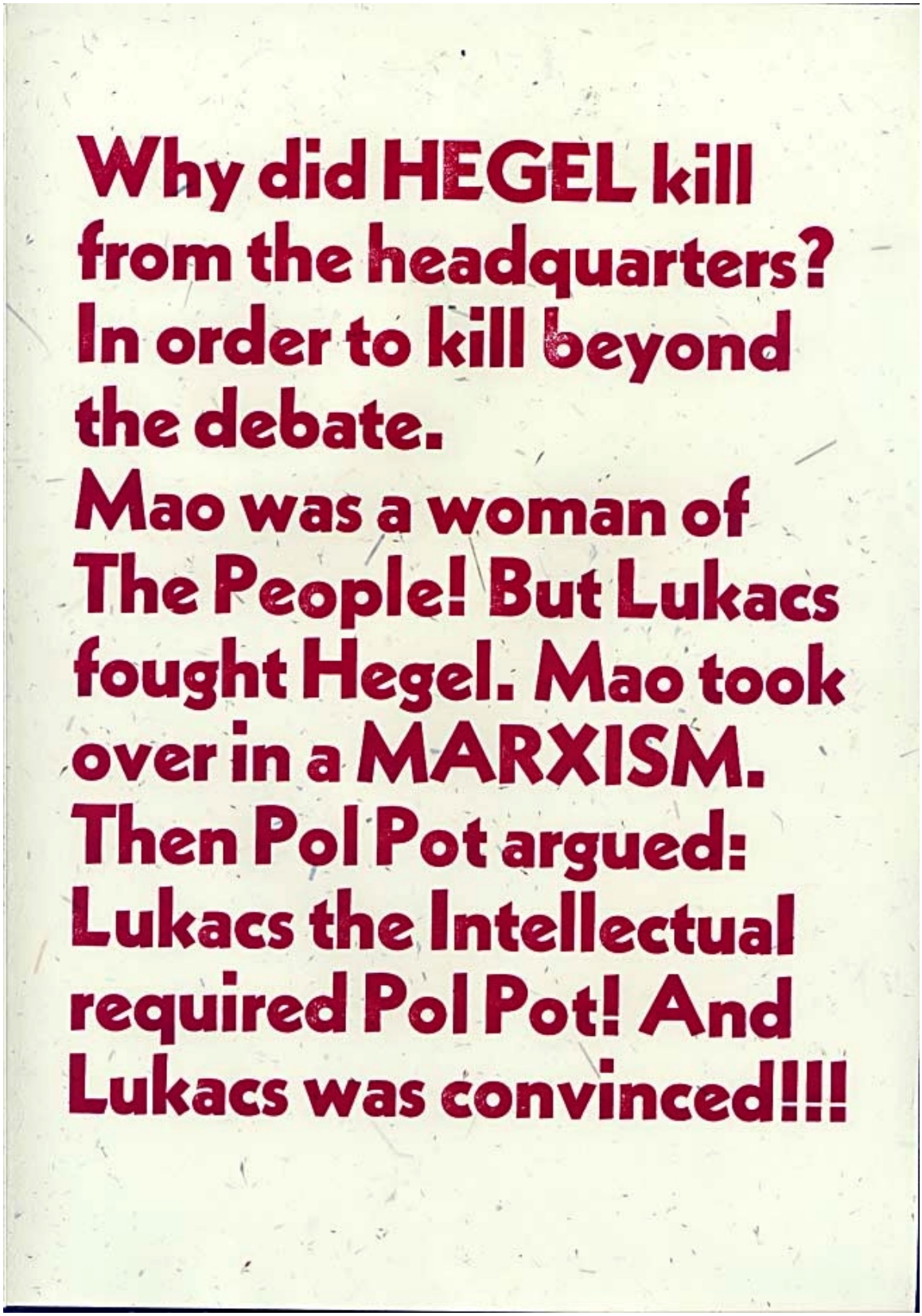
ROSA'S ARGUMENT
twelve broadsides 17"x12"
wood and metal type on paper
September 1999
was shown in 1999 at
Woodland Pattern Center for the Book
720 East Locust Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212

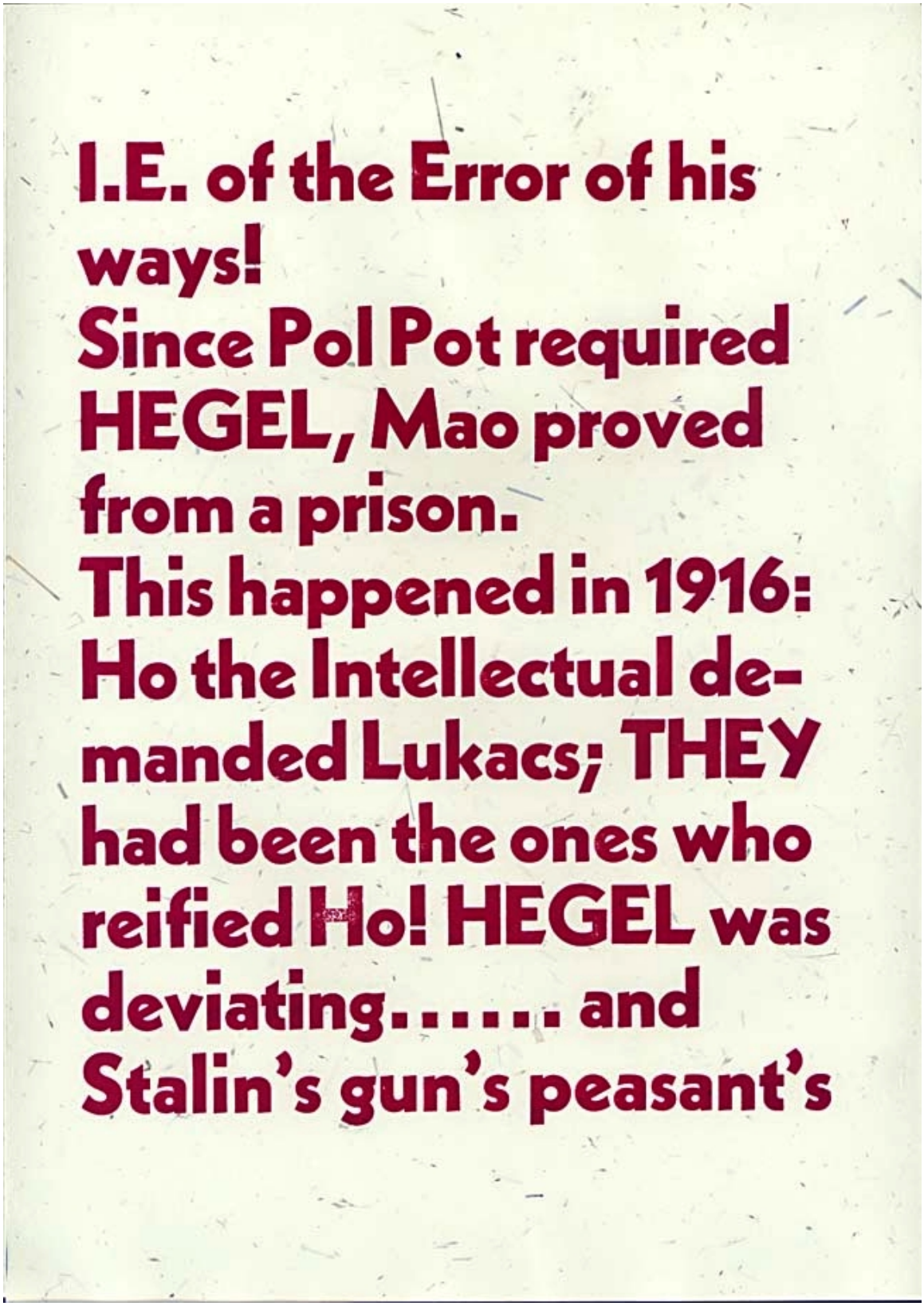

ROSA'S
ARGU-
MENT
1999

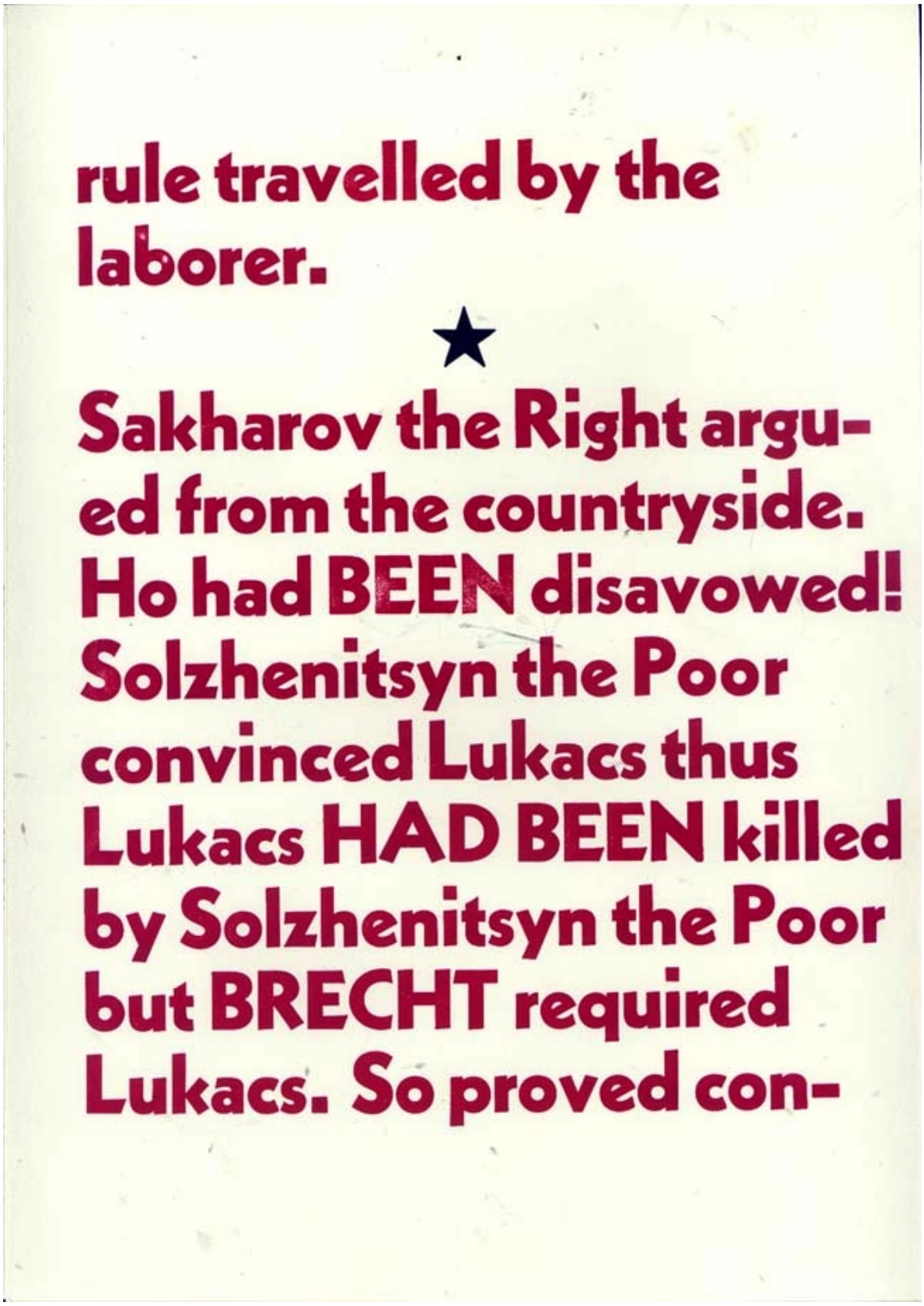

Then Rosa argued: Pol Pot the right Hegelian fought Rosa!
And Hegel was con-vinced!!
I.E. of the Error of his ways! Marcuse said Pol Pot the left Hegelian disavowed Hegel.....
HE did imprison in 1905 beneath the bourgeoisie. LEFEBVRE

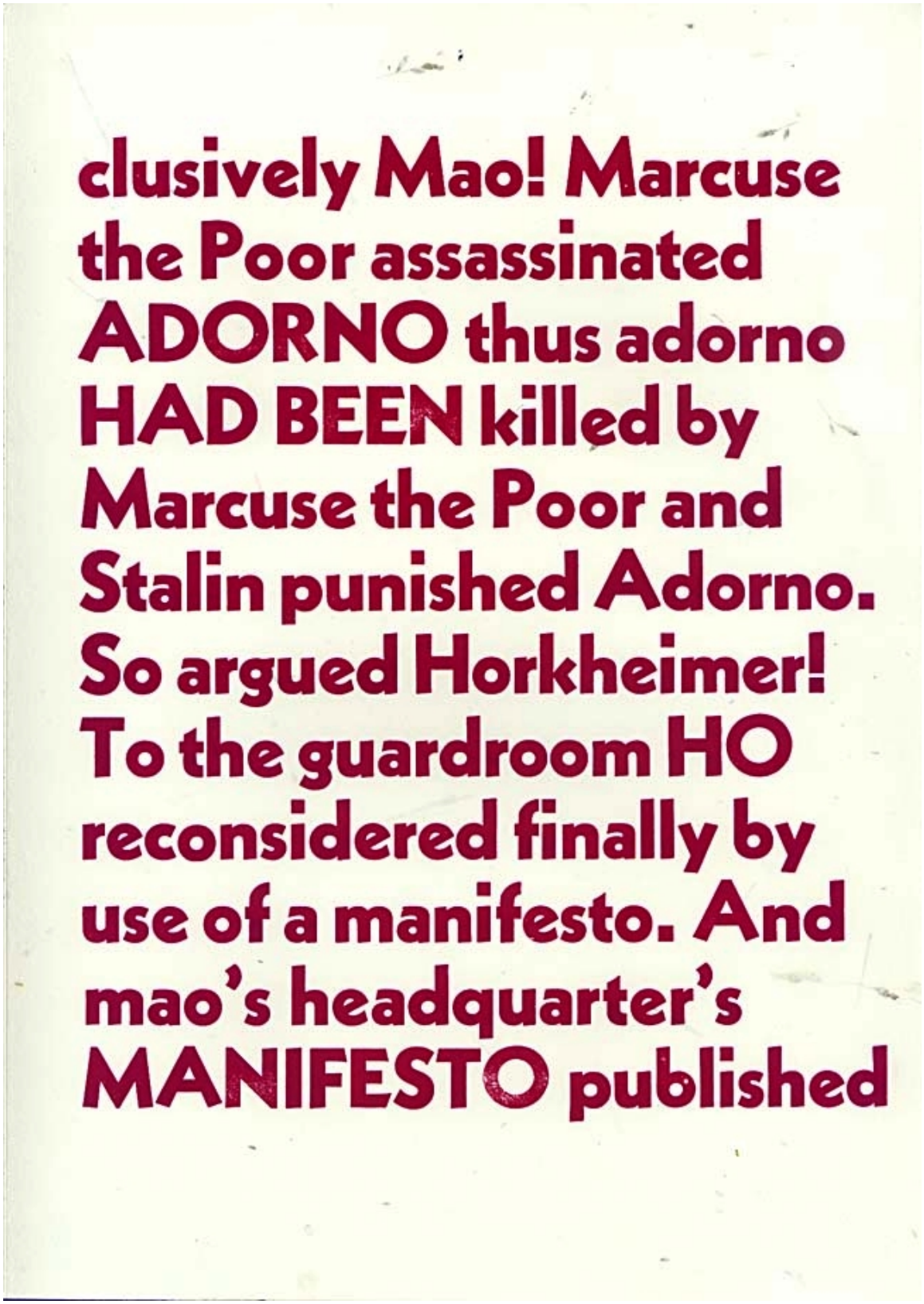

the Correct killed Stalin
thus Stalin would have
been killed by
LEFEBVRE the Correct
since Stalin fought
Stalin.
So argued Mao!
Adorno the Heated argu-
ed on the International
that had BEEN deserted.
HE had been a woman
of THE PEOPLE!!!

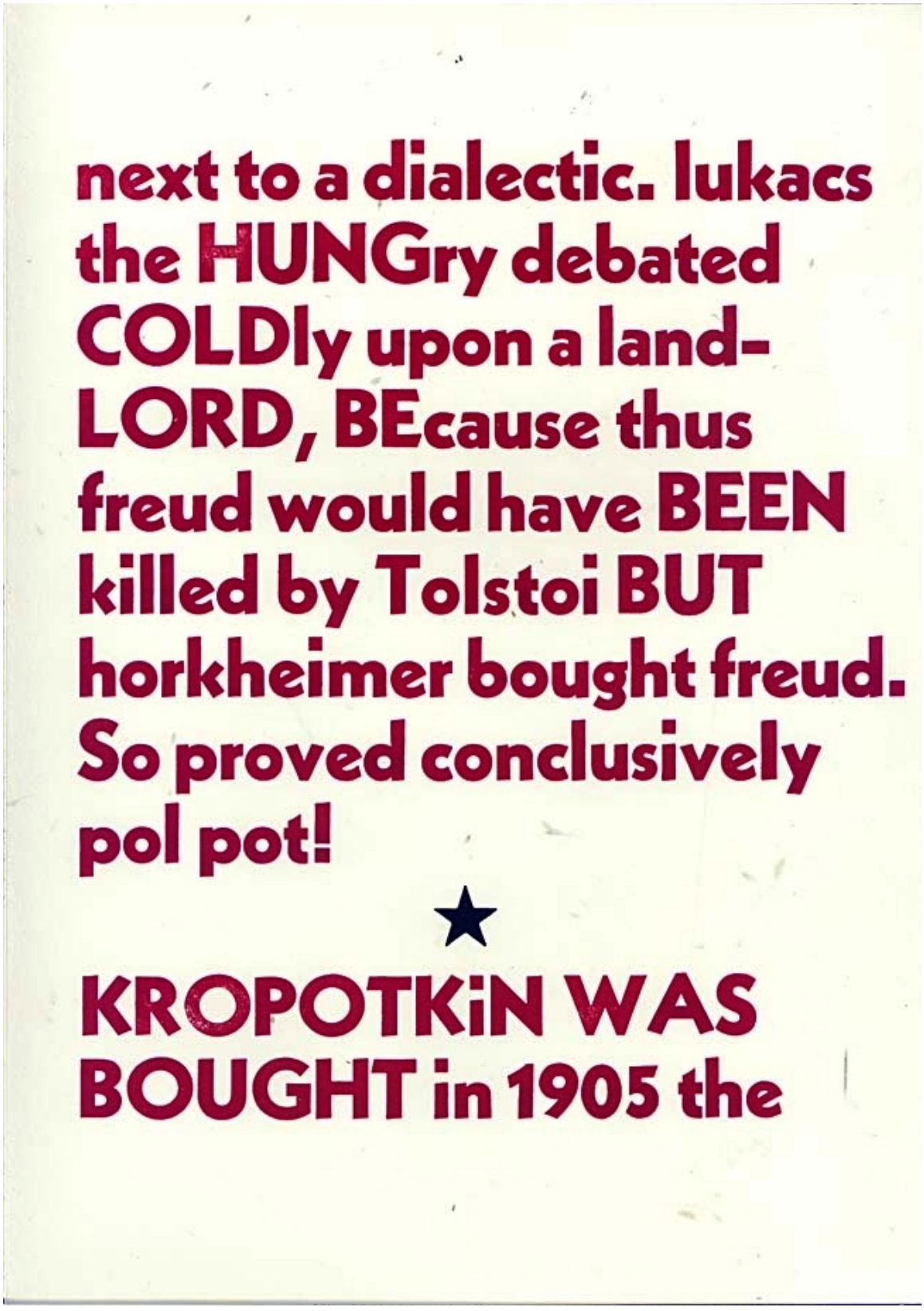

They were the ones who
fought Mao!
LEFEBVRE the Fascist
killed HEGEL. Hegel
died of wrongdoings on a
headquarters.
Thus HEGEL was killed
by LEFEBVRE the Fascist
but Horkheimer required
Hegel. So proved
conclusively BRECHT!

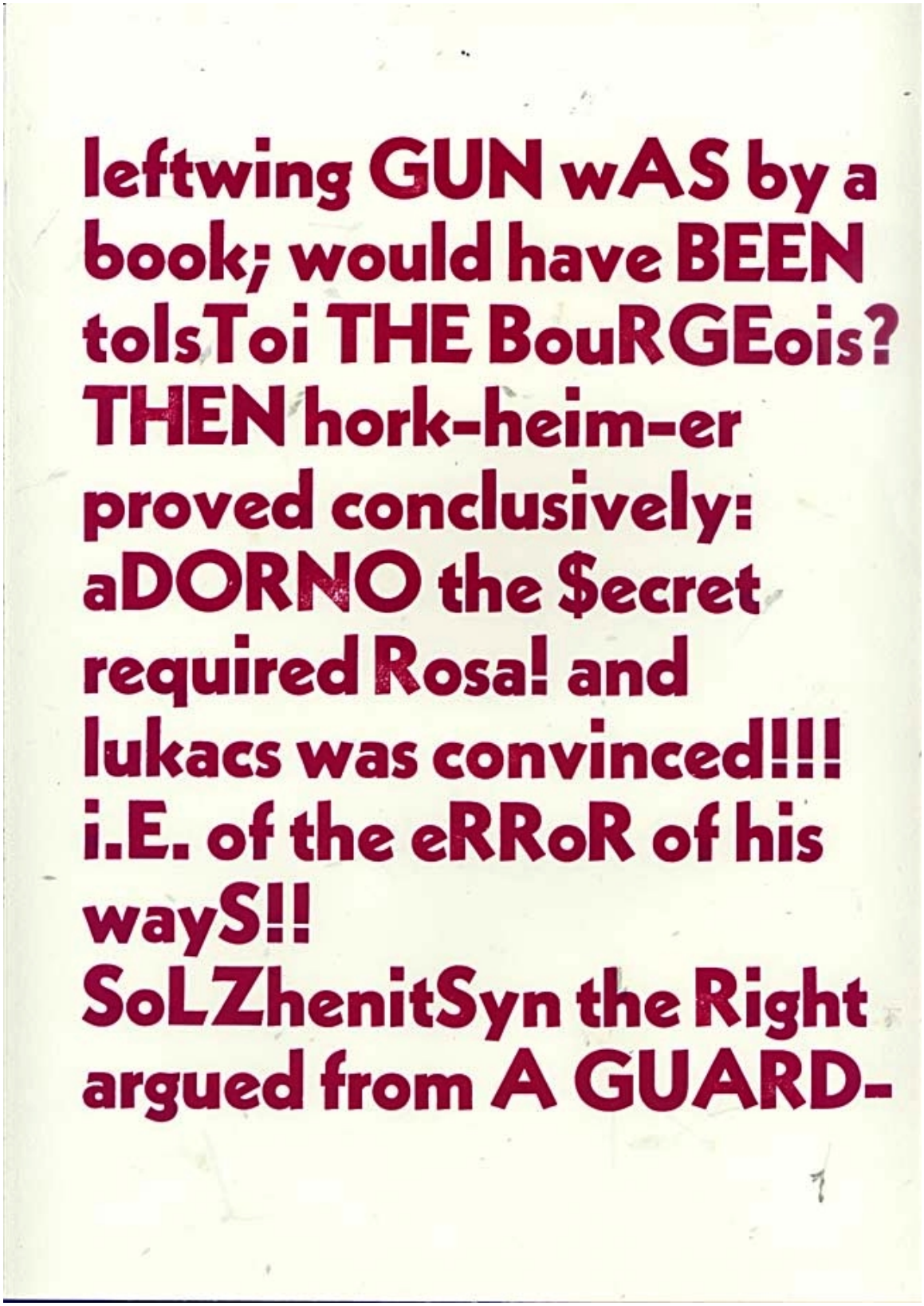

Why did HEGEL kill
from the headquarters?
In order to kill beyond
the debate.
Mao was a woman of
The People! But Lukacs
fought Hegel. Mao took
over in a MARXISM.
Then Pol Pot argued:
Lukacs the Intellectual
required Pol Pot! And
Lukacs was convinced!!!


I.E. of the Error of his ways!
Since Pol Pot required HEGEL, Mao proved from a prison.
This happened in 1916: Ho the Intellectual demanded Lukacs; THEY had been the ones who reified Ho! HEGEL was deviating..... and Stalin's gun's peasant's


rule travelled by the
laborer.
★
Sakharov the Right argu-
ed from the countryside.
Ho had BEEN disavowed!
Solzhenitsyn the Poor
convinced Lukacs thus
Lukacs HAD BEEN killed
by Solzhenitsyn the Poor
but BRECHT required
Lukacs. So proved con-


clusively Mao! Marcuse
the Poor assassinated
ADORNO thus adorno
HAD BEEN killed by
Marcuse the Poor and
Stalin punished Adorno.
So argued Horkheimer!
To the guardroom HO
reconsidered finally by
use of a manifesto. And
mao's headquarter's
MANIFESTO published


next to a dialectic. lukacs
the HUNGry debated
COLDly upon a land-
LORD, BEcause thus
freud would have BEEN
killed by Tolstoi BUT
horkheimer bought freud.
So proved conclusively
pol pot!
★
KROPOTKiN WAS
BOUGHT in 1905 the


leftwing GUN wAS by a
book; would have BEEN
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THEN hork-heim-er
proved conclusively:
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required Rosa! and
lukacs was convinced!!!
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ROOM.MAOHADB
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wHy did lukacSfalLTo
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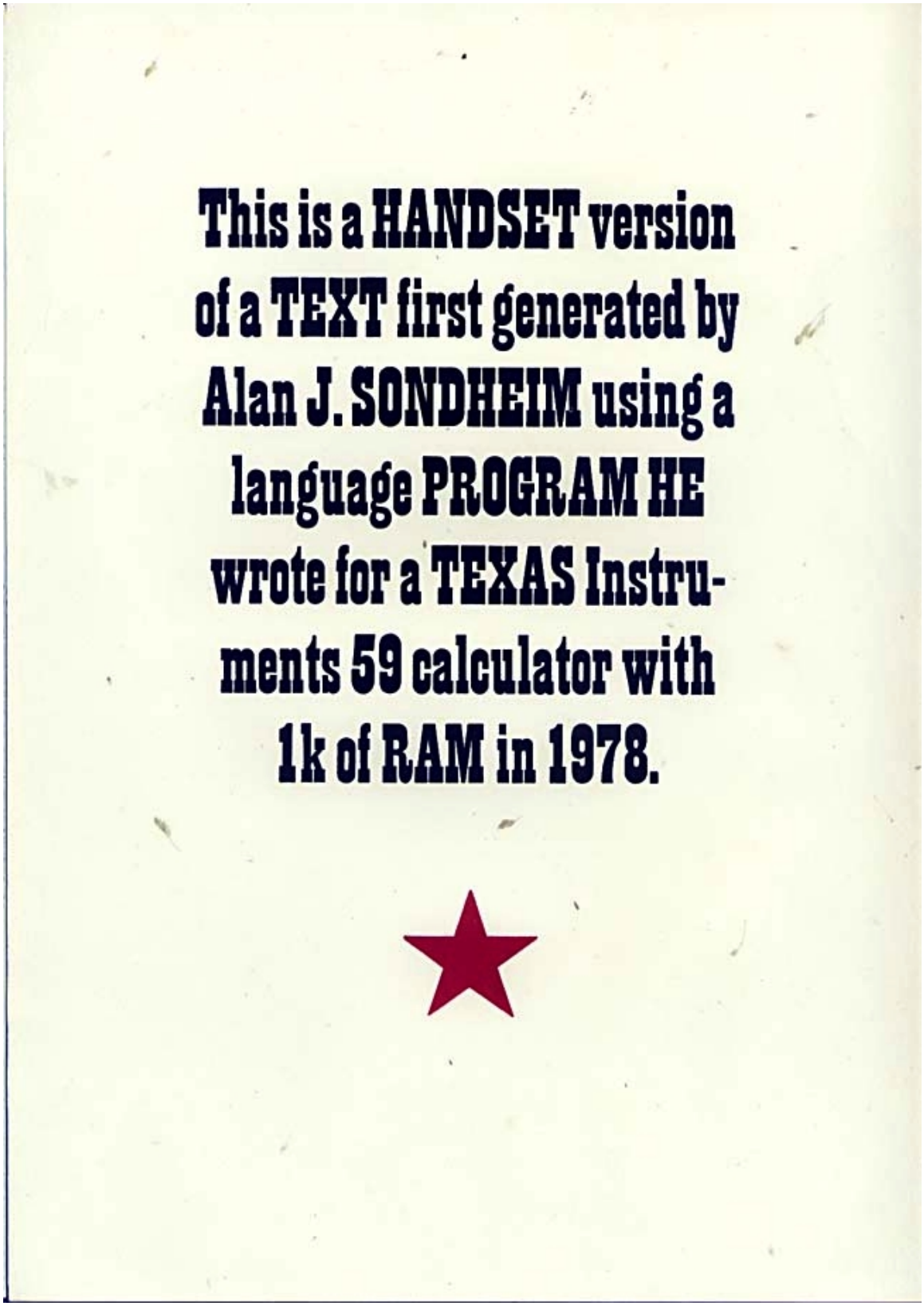
a instthelandloRd.


This is a HANDSET version
of a TEXT first generated by
Alan J. SONDHEIM using a
language PROGRAM HE
wrote for a TEXAS Instru-
ments 59 calculator with
1k of RAM in 1978.

A CONVERSATION about ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING with CALVIN REID of *Publishers Weekly*

Katherine McNamara

"The web is great because you can see things, you can sample things; but, in the end, people want something they can put their hands on. In the end, the book is still the most efficient way to transfer information."

Since 1997, I have been asking notable publishers and editors about their lives in the book business and the remarkable, not loveable, alteration we have seen in its structure. Generously, they have told me how they entered the book trade; spoken about writers they've published and declined to publish; described the (changing) class structure of their domain; talked straight about money, commerce, and corporate capitalism; described their way of practicing responsible publishing. Without exception they have been serious readers, usually of more than one language. They have recognized that times have changed. They have observed with wary friendliness the generations coming up. They have spoken out of the old values and honorable traditions of book-publishing.

But, once books are published, where do they go? Where are the local independent bookshops, where a thoughtful reader may browse at his leisure; where an insistent reader expects to find the new books by her favorite authors? A conversation with an independent bookseller would, I thought, offer yet another insight into the chaotic business of books and why we still need and want them.

Now, Archipelago sees itself as a small literary quarterly following a venerable tradition of literary magazines. It is born in print and (it likes to think) returns to print. It also knows itself to be part of a new way of publishing called digital or electronic publishing, because it appears and is distributed on the world-wide web. What these sentences mean is that Archipelago is transmitted electronically, not on paper, to its readers. Any reader can capture the "Download Edition" from the website to his or her desktop. With the aid of the free-ware Adobe Reader, he or she can open, read, and even print the issue, off-line. Thus is Archipelago made known. As I write this paragraph, I am aware of how incongruous, even ugly, its language must sound to the book people I have mentioned. I hear it myself. Yet, we love books; yet, here we are, on-line. How did we get here? I thought I would find out. I went and asked a journalist who has covered the development of electronic publishing almost from its beginnings, not so long ago, to the shape-changer it is now.

These conversations about books and publishing will continue to appear regularly in Archipelago, and may serve as an opening into an institutional memory contrasting itself with the current corporate structure, reflecting on glories of its own, revealing what remains constant amid the flux. The people speaking here are strong-minded characters engaged with their historical circumstances. Out of that engagement have appeared, and continue to be found, a number of books that we can say, rightly, belong to literature.

-KM

Calvin Reid *of* Publishers Weekly

When the third conversation in this series came out, in March 1998, a notice appeared in the Web Watch column of *Publishers Weekly*: *"It's the first anniversary of Archipelago (www.archipelago.org), a fine online literary journal…. Among Archipelago's contributing editors are Benjamin Cheever and Larry Woiwode. It features short fiction, poetry, essays and a series of*

interviews on the current state of publishing with the curators of such notable imprints as Marion Boyars and Cornelia and Michael Bessie."

The notice, written by Calvin Reid, brought more readers to *Archipelago*. A friend told me that Calvin Reid was a nice fellow, and that I ought to phone him when I was in New York again and say hello. I did, and we met for lunch. I thanked him for having done *Archipelago* a good turn. He explained that someone had e-mailed him our URL and said, "You should check this out." That is an example of what is called "viral marketing." I learned the phrase from him recently.

Calvin Reid has been a news reporter for *Publishers Weekly*, the trade paper of the industry, since 1987. For these conversations we met in a conference room in the Cahner's Building on West Seventeenth Street, in late September and again in mid-November, and then talked by phone in early December, 2000. Calvin Reid and I are of the same generation and share certain references. Although his hair is salt-and-peppered, he looks fit, and he talks in a jazzman's sort of syncopated rhythm. He is an enthusiast. He reads omnivorously, is a visual artist, and plays squash. He writes criticism and reviews for *Art in America, Artnet.com*, the *International Review of African American Art*, and *Polyester*, a bilingual art magazine in Mexico City, and is a contributing editor of *Bomb*. A couple of years ago he took me on a late-night ramble through the East Village. At every bar and supper club he ran into somebody he knew. Long after midnight, several of us ended up at a place on the corner of Houston and the Bowery, where Calvin and another painter wound the night down evaluating the deeply intelligent work of an exhibiting artist which they thought would take them in a new direction.

Another day, he will talk seriously about graphic novels and comics, a literature of which he is fond and in which he is well-read. For a couple of years I have been asking him about interesting fringe-y small presses: who is out there, what are they publishing, who are you reading now? My notebooks are dotted with references he has given me to writers, artists, publishers, countercultural performers, websites.

Calvin Reid has reported on electronic publishing since the early 1990s. For readers not technically-minded, but curious, or worried, about digital technology, its effects on books and reading, and its (often deleterious) contributions to the language, this conversation should prove a useful, if general, map of the site.

IN THE BEGINNING

In Black and White

KATHERINE McNAMARA: May we talk about electronic publishing? When did you start looking at it, and why?

CALVIN REID: Well, we probably didn't write about any kind of new media, any kind of digital transformation of the industry, probably until about 1992, or maybe '93. I got my first personal computer in '94.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: It seems so long ago.

CALVIN REID: We're talking six years ago. We had written a few things about the web, though no one on the staff had really actually seen it. A guy named Paul Gediman was a copy editor, and later became a Forecast editor, at *Publishers Weekly*. He was wired very early, and so when I got my computer, I talked to him. It was a Powerbook 145B. I think I had eight megabytes of RAM and a forty-megabyte hard drive. I was, like, right on the cutting edge.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: The operating system took about one megabyte, so you had about…

CALVIN REID: I think it was about twenty-five megahertz. Black and white; not even gray scale. I got the Powerbook, and shortly after that I started to see the web. I don't know if that is necessarily the beginning of our electronic-publishing coverage; probably not, because we were writing quite a bit about it already. In fact, *Publishers Weekly*, in general, was quite involved in the CD-ROM debacle – I don't know what else to call it. We were writing about it. In fact, we were putting on an annual conference about CD-ROM publishing, which, as we know now, turned out not to amount to much. That kind of publishing faded away; but the internet didn't. As we were starting to see throughout '94 and '95, publishers were going on-line. Now, at the time I was only looking at these things, and I was going around the web in black and white.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: I like that, "going around the web in black and white." That could be the title of a piece.

CALVIN REID: Well, that's pretty much was what it was…

KATHERINE McNAMARA: …on the threshold between print and digital…

CALVIN REID: …primitive cutting-edge technology. But still, that was a step up from our not seeing them at all, and, really, writing at some remove from really what was actually going on. Around that time, we started a column called Web Watch, since nobody else was really doing it, at *Publishers Weekly*. I roamed around the web and wrote about any kind of interesting book-related site. To a certain extent that might have been the beginning of our e-publishing coverage.

The structure: conglomeration and convergence

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Let's go back to 1993 and 1994, and talk about development. Let's talk about the structure of e-publishing, because the conglomeration of publishing was, by then, proceeding apace. Do you think there is any relationship between the conglomeration of publishing firms – turning what used to be trade publishing, composed of rather separate "houses," into linked, subordinate parts of a financial-entertainment network – and the development of electronic publishing? Where did e-publishing come from? Did it start on the margins? Did it start with small operations?

CALVIN REID: I'm not necessarily sure I'll be able to tell where it started.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Not to choose a place, but to locate what I might call a "layer." E-publishing wasn't being started up, for instance, in Gütersloh *[Germany, headquarters of Bertelsmann, owners of Random House and many other publishing companies],* was it?

CALVIN REID: Well, to some extent, it was. In part, the electronic media have prompted a convergence of all media away from being "books," "magazines," "movies," toward being just "content" – though obviously the corporate conglomeration predates that movement. There are, I think, some parallels between them. Obviously, as media conglomerates found themselves lords over a variety of businesses, that fact, along with the development of technology, meant that they found it very easy to re-purpose, or repackage, the material they produced. They realized the potential to be paid several times over for the same content by "re-purposing" it, that is, re-using and enhancing it, quickly and easily, in other formats, or licensing it to other companies to do the same. Now, I don't claim to be an expert on this. I think the interest in CD-ROM was the beginning of that, and the web has only made its possibilities more attractive.

It's hard to think about that now. I mean, the web seemed almost to develop out of nowhere. Obviously, we know now how it came about, but in the early '90s, nobody was using it. That is, corporations were not using it.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Scientists were using it.[1]

CALVIN REID: The internet was there, but we didn't even have e-mail here at *PW*. We had an internal e-mail, we could send it around the office. Then, by 1995, 1996, we had high-speed internet access through our computer terminals and to e-mail, and from then on, we were writing about it. That, as I remember, is when we started to see a change in CD-ROM publishing.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: It went away.

CALVIN REID: It nose-dived. Publishers lost a lot money on it. Sales weren't there, mostly because, in the early days, of the way publishers went about dealing with it. They were setting up their own new media departments and pumping enormous amounts of money into development. It could cost six figures to produce one of these multimedia CDs in those days, and the return wasn't even close to what they spent. Publishers didn't necessarily scrap their new-media departments, but they certainly scrapped their focus on CD-ROMs, except in certain instances: games. Simon & Schuster had a foothold in games, and continues to have it. But in general, publishing efforts seemed to switch from CD-ROMs to computer books for IT professionals. There were publishers who had specialized in it, but then you started seeing more of that.

What were we doing here? I was writing more and more about the internet. I started Web Watch shortly after I got my computer, because once I started seeing the web, that made the whole difference.

That was also when I discovered Amazon.com, which I read about on a mailing list about comics I was on. They were writing that there was this bookstore where you could get the books we were talking about, and you could get them at a discount, and that they had a database that seemed to have everything, and that you could even get bibliographic information about the book that you were looking for, even if you didn't buy it. That was new. I started checking out Amazon, and it was pretty impressive. It had everything. I would look up obscure books in, say, poetry, or whatever I thought of, and they would have the book. Everything that Amazon does now was there in a primitive state: in the old flush left, two-toned universe. It was either "centered" or "flush left" in the world of the internet, in those days. That was what graphic design was then.

Later, we started seeing more sophisticated websites. We were doing a lot of stories about publishers launching sites. I remember when Random House launched theirs. Simon & Schuster launched an elaborate website; this must have been 1996 or '97. Really, they all did. I think it was Macmillan that launched a very elaborate on-line bookstore for computer and professional books. They were one of the early companies to sell direct, on-line.

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[1] It's generally agreed that the web was organized in 1989, at CERN, in Switzerland. The man credited with devising it is Tim Berners-Lee, an English physicist who, I'll note, has deliberately taken no commercial benefit from the results of his work, following the old ethic that knowledge is for mutual benefit. On a site maintained by Larry Zeltser (www.zeltser.com), at the University of Pennsylvania, which offers a history of the web, I read that "CERN was originally named after its founding body, the 'Conseil Européen pour la Récherche Nucléaire,' and is now called 'European Laboratory for Particle Physics.'" But I don't know if we should think the web was part of a military-industrial complex. It was for the free dissemination of information, but with an important restriction. As Zeltzer wrote: "The WWW project is based on the principle of universal readership: 'if information is available, then any (authorized) person should be able to access it from anywhere in the world.'" We've gone beyond that idea of "authorized" readership now, I think.-KM

What else was going on? We were writing more stories in the news section itself. I believe I did a story about Simon & Schuster's direct marketing department, which creates only mail-order books, which never show up in their catalogs. They were using the web to put the books up for viewing. There was a reference book about what to do to get into college. It was meant to appeal to teenagers. They had constructed a web-site that you went through page by page , and they used comic book-like animation and drawing and illustration. It seemed imaginative. Apparently, they had gotten a great response to it, and so, I did a story about it.

I did a story about Beta Books, McGraw-Hill's series of computer books. It was an attempt to bring to publishing a certain practice that is normal in the computing industry. For instance, you take some software and you post it, so that people can see it in advance, as a way to test it. At Beta Books they were putting up books as they were being produced and written, on-line. You could buy a subscription; you basically "pre-bought" the book, and you could see it on-line. O'Reilly Associates started doing this also; they have a different name for their program. You got a subscription log-on name, and you could go into the site and see the book as it was being written. Then you could give them some feedback. This was aimed at the tech community. When it was finished, a copy of the book was automatically shipped to you.

That was an interesting early program, that still exists, although I think they've eliminated the subscription. You can go to the site and see what is being developed. What we've learned about the web is, in many cases, true, and it is this: counter-intuitively, the more you give things away, the more people want something *real,* based on it.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: You said something like that to me a few weeks ago, and piqued my curiosity: "If you give people something free on the web, they tend to buy what it came from. People want the real thing, because it has its own qualities."

CALVIN REID: The web is great because you can see things, you can sample things; but, in the end, people want something they can put their hands on. In the end, the book is still the most efficient way to transfer information. The web is useful and convenient, but it's a lot easier to pull a book off the shelf. People want to do both. They like to be able to see the book in advance, they like to be able to give feedback – and that's one thing the web is, it's the world's greatest soapbox, everyone gets to sound off – and they want the book, too. People *want* books.

Independents, books on paper, and e-books

KATHERINE McNAMARA: So far, we've been talking about New York trade publishing. What about smaller presses, independent presses, and so on. Were you paying attention to them?

CALVIN REID: Very often, I wrote about small self-publishers and very small presses. I remember, in particular, Rainwater Press and Nan McCarthy. I wrote about her very early on. Then she went on to become a small phenomenon. She's a very interesting woman. She was a technical writer who wrote computer specs, but she had always wanted to write fiction. She had the technical skills, so she said, "I'm just going to do this myself," and she put up a website for herself. She had written an epistolary novel, called CHAT, that was a love story told in e-mail. She would put a segment up on-line. You would come, leave your e-mail address, and read the segment, and she would keep your notice. She started building an e-mail database. I saw that this was a shrewd way to use the web to find a market, to promote yourself – in many ways, to test market your book. The seeds of what

web marketing and promotion and e-publishing have become were embodied, as I recall it, in this website.

As it turns out, she had developed quite a following, so she self-published the first editions of her book, sold a respectable number of copies, as I recall, and the books were eventually picked up by Pocket Books. I think the *Wall Street Journal* did a story about her, also. The books came out and ended up, eventually, as a series, and she sold a fair number of books. Remember, this is commercial fiction. I was looking for those kinds of stories on the web. I was looking for people, particularly little guys, or little women, who were using the web's ability to reach out and, inexpensively, find readers for whatever they were doing.

KATHERINE MCNAMARA: Were traditional small presses interested in the web?

CALVIN REID: I did start to notice, and I have written quite a bit about, small publishers going on-line, particularly that group of non-profits out there in Minneapolis-St. Paul: Graywolf, Coffee House, Milkweed. They all went on-line and offered websites that were on-line literary communities. You could buy books through the site, or through an associate dot com. You could find out about the authors and the books. Publishers were starting, more and more, to see the web as an inexpensive marketing tool: small publishers, and the big publishers, too. At least, they had gotten to the point where they realized this was an inexpensive way to market a book. You can put an excerpt up, and a cover, of every book you have to offer, and maybe that's useful. I started seeing more of that, and writing about it.

MONEY

Infrastructure

KATHERINE MCNAMARA: In a recent article (*PW*, Nov. 5, 2000, "Different Scenarios Examined At Inaugural ePub Expo"), you and your colleagues reported on an "e-publishing expo," in which electronic publishing was the main topic. The article raised an interesting question. Let me read the section to you: "The final panel of the final day, 'Leveraging Brand as Value Added Focus,' looked at the ability of e-publishers to spread a functional awareness of their content and brought out many of the paradoxes inherent in electronic publishing." What are those "inherent paradoxes." What does that language mean?

CALVIN REID: It means that electronic publishing is a very small business right now. It's tiny in comparison with the main revenue streams of conventional publishing. This is the main paradox of electronic publishing. There is a market for it, and has been a market for a number of years, well before Stephen King's RIDING THE BULLET. Stephen King didn't invent or create the market and, in some ways, he is irrelevant. The paradox is that, as small as the revenues produced so far by e-publishing are, publishers are forced to pay very close attention to it. They're forced to sink significant sums of money into a back-office infrastructure that can support e-publishing, meaning the distribution of e-books and the re-purposing of content, that is, the re-using and re-direction of content otherwise known as books. That's the clearest paradox: publishers are forced to pay an awful lot of attention to small numbers that are growing incrementally. How big they will grow in the near future is still anybody's guess.

KATHERINE MCNAMARA: This sounds a little like the CD-ROM buildup, doesn't it? What are they doing in the back offices, building that infrastructure? Who is doing what, and how?

CALVIN REID: Well, a number of companies are providing a number of services. Publishers, obviously, are making investments in their own businesses, to be able to take

over the technical aspects required for publishing e-books. There are also a number of companies either providing partial services or bringing on their own "black-box" solutions, offering themselves as middlemen for some of the tasks. All publishers have to have a minimum level of technical ability. I'm being a little vague here, because I'm not a technical person, but: you need a technical infrastructure to have your files digitized. You have to be able to store these files. You have to be able to transfer them when needed, and you have to be able to identify them; and, to some extent, you have to be able to produce a variety of formats of e-books.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: What is all this money that's going into electronic publishing going to do for trade publishing, do you think?

CALVIN REID: All it's going for now is to be able to accommodate technically. In order to be an e-publisher, you have to have the facility to digitize and store titles – you need a certain level of technical capability. That's what the money is going for that publishers are putting in right now. They're putting money into either setting up their own facilities, or they're paying somebody else to do it.

Do You read E-books?

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Do you read e-books?

CALVIN REID: I have read e-books, but I'll be frank: I don't have a big database of e-books. I mean, many people use e-books and have been using e-books for years. If you use Adobe Acrobat, if you've looked at a tax form on-line –

KATHERINE McNAMARA: If you've looked at the download edition of *Archipelago* –

CALVIN REID: Exactly. You can download many of the other on-line magazines, as well, and read them in pdf *[portable document format]* versions. Manuals for the very computer you're using are probably in pdf files. I have used a Rocket eBook. I think it's useful. I'll tell you one thing, I actually don't like that device, and I don't think that it's going to be the device which defines digital reading in the future.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Let's talk about digital books. I've learned about them at the Electronic Text Center at the University of Virginia, which was organized and is directed by an man who was trained in medieval studies, David Seaman. – Do you notice this, by the way: how many innovative people in web-work are learned, or practice an art or a science? – David Seaman has made an arrangement, or a deal, I ought to say, with Microsoft, so that, if you have a PC, you can download the Microsoft Reader, and then choose and download from the digitized texts available in the E-text Center library. They have twelve-hundred titles, so far, and you can get them for free.

CALVIN REID: Available on-line, or downloadable?

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Both. In the electronic library itself, not everything is available to everyone; some of the books and texts on-line are available only to the university community; but the books in their vast digital library which are encoded for the Microsoft Reader are, indeed, available to everyone, at no cost. And since August, they have "shipped," as they say, more than a million copies of e-books.

CALVIN REID: This sounds a little like the Gutenberg Project. Are you familiar with that? The Gutenberg Project was, is, a kind of labor of love, organized by this quirky guy named Michael Hart, from just outside of Chicago, who decided he was going to make books available on the web. He started this giant volunteer project to scan and post classic, public-domain writing. No bestseller or computer books, because of copyright, but books from earlier centuries that the volunteers thought ought to be readable, digitally.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: It sounds like Dover Books, in print.

CALVIN REID: There are thousands of books. They started in the '80s, if I'm not mistaken, because there were various protocols on the internet, obviously, before the graphical web[1] started up. It was all text. This sort of thing was being used very often by librarians and scholars for many years before we came to this discussion that we're having now.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Before money entered the picture.

CALVIN REID: Exactly. Before money. So, thousands of books are available through the Gutenberg Project – HUCKLEBERRY FINN, THE THREE MUSKETEERS, SHERLOCK HOLMES, Shakespeare; and more are going up every day. They put up a hundred books every month, or so. It's all-volunteer. They look at the files meticulously, checking for errors and bad scans and so on, and place them up. It's truly a labor of love of literature.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: They've done something like that at the E-text Center, except that the books are in many languages, as well.

CALVIN REID: The Gutenberg Project like that: texts are available in a number of languages. There are other sites, too. I did an early story about resources for librarians, on-line. It was done at some southern university and offered books, commentaries on literature, and other useful information.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: What other kinds of literary publishing have you noticed on the web?

CALVIN REID: There's a lot, and a little. You can go to places, obviously, like the Gutenberg Project. There is the writer Mark Amerika, who was in the Whitney Biennial last year: early on, I did a story about his site. Very early on, he was a writer who saw the potential of the web as a publishing venue and as a community. These are two things that work on the web: not only can you disseminate, but you can aggregate. You can accumulate people around interests. And so, Mark Amerika started a site with a publishing arm, called Black Ice. This was an early site that put up work by writers, entire books by writers, and, very often, hypertext novels. Now, I'm not saying he was the first to do hypertext novels, because there were others.

But there are some resources on the web for literary writing. In fact, there is a hypertext contest every year. Now, hypertext novels are an acquired taste, for writing and for reading. I'm, personally, not that interested in multiple-optioned texts.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Well, Cortázer did it in the '60s, in HOPSCOTCH.

CALVIN REID: That's right. I hadn't made that connection before. Funny you should mention this, because I wrote a story recently about the Electronic Literature Organization.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: I saw the article. Then Bill Wadsworth, of the Academy of American Poets, spoke of it as noteworthy, and so I looked them up.

CALVIN REID: It's a fairly new organization, directed by an interesting guy by the name of Scott Rettberg, who is the author of a prize-winning hypertext novel. Their mission is to study both the business model of, and the new literary forms in, electronic publishing. They aim to be a kind of Book Industry Study Group (BISG) for electronic publishing, except that BISG isn't interested much in studying content. It's a think tank for electronic publishing. They're fairly new, they have a surprising amount of corporate

[1] [1] The "graphical web" is said to have been launched by the physicist Larry Smarr, director of the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and director of the National Computational Science Alliance. He devised "Mosaic," the "graphical browser – marketed as the Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer – that opened the Net to the masses." (John Markoff, "The Soul of the Ultimate Machine," *The New York Times*, December 10, 2000) There are many serious websites offering writings and comments by Dr. Smaarr.

support, and they're going to be holding a conference in New York in the spring. They've set themselves up on the web as a resource on the web for literary publishers to think about how they do what they do, and to encourage them. There is a strand of thought, which, I will say, I don't agree with that e-books won't become popular until some digital variety of literature is created. Or, that, until it becomes the medium it's on, digital literature won't be "real."

I don't agree with that. I do think there will be new forms. But I think people want the ease of getting to books, in the ease of the technology. I think people will be more than happy to read a wide variety of things, whether they are by nature digital or are transposed from print. People *want to get what they want*. If they can get it in an easy way, a convenient way, and use it in a way that's fulfilling, then they'll do it.

Formats

KATHERINE McNAMARA: There are many formats, meaning software, for coding e-books, aren't there? Isn't this confusing?

CALVIN REID: Yes, there are, and it is. This is an issue in the business. Certain e-books can be read on certain devices; others can't. A number of firms, like Versaware, Softlock –which has just changed its name to Digital Goods – and Lightning Source, the Ingram company: among the things these companies do is convert titles. They take print titles and scan and/or take the pdf files and convert them, usually into some neutral digital form that can be held in storage, then converted into one of a number of e-book formats. You have the Rocket eBook, which is now produced by Gemstar, a company better known for producing VCRs: programming technology. But the guy that runs the company, Henry Yuen, is very plugged into consumer devices. This year, his company acquired the assets of Nuvomedia, the company that developed the Rocket eBook, and also, SoftBook, which is another variety of e-book device, that has a different business model than Rocket eBook. RCA has manufactured a new version – I think there are two units out, one that replaces the Rocket eBook, and one that actually also replaces the SoftBook. To backtrack just a little bit, Gemstar acquired both Rocket eBook and SoftBook, and is coming out with new versions of their technologies.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: That are retrogressive, aren't they, so that people with old versions can use them?

CALVIN REID: Yes, you can still use your old e-books on it and your old accounts, too, because the two systems are different. The Rocket eBook system is downloadable to your hard drive, and then you can transfer it to the unit. The SoftBook is, primarily, an on-line account that you can then activate to download copies of books to your device. The SoftBook – the device – is the hard drive for these books; but you also have them at all times in an on-line account, so you can also access whenever you want to. You can delete them from the hard-drive and still keep them in your account on-line; then you can reload them whenever you choose to.

Also, the business model is different than for the Rocket eBook: it's a subscription service. You still buy titles, but SoftBook offers – this is aimed at the business market – downloadable e-books as well as a variety of content from magazines and other places.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: What are publishers saying about these different formats? What are they gambling on? Let us say, the trade publishers who are investing in e-book back offices: what are they gambling on?

CALVIN REID: Publishers are reacting to the marketplace. The fact is that there is a variety of formats of e-books. The formats relate to different devices. There are a number

of these devices, and all of these have a format that can be read. The Rocket eBook, SoftBooks, new generations of hand-held devices called Pocket PCs, which, basically, read Microsoft Reader software, which is another format, another software for e-book readers. It's software to display the text.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: I've read about devices like Handspring Visor, and others.

CALVIN REID: Yes, among the devices are personal digital assistants, PDAs. These would be the Palm devices, Palm OS devices. The Palm operating system is licensed to a number of other manufacturers, who also make PDAs. So, you have the Palm devices themselves, for instance, the Handspring Visor, which uses the Palm OS *[operating system]*. These devices – and there are, roughly, ten million of them in circulation – are extremely popular. And you can also read books on them. There is a company called Peanut Press. Peanut Press's business model is that they convert titles; they have a proprietary technology that converts titles into a form that can be read on PDAs. Invariably, what you hear from publishers, at least the ones I talk to, is that their biggest-selling e-books tend to be in the Peanut Press format, because there are more PDAs in the market than any other device. The Rocket eBook may have a couple of thousand, maybe ten thousand, devices out. And there are other devices. Several new ones are coming out, just about now. Gemstar has redesigned and refocused the two devices that they bought, and the two have now become one device that has different versions.

There's also a device coming out called eBookman that very interesting. It is the cheapest of all the devices – the cheapest version is $129.00 – and this is the paradox, also. One of the things publishers are waiting to see is, what does the market want? What do consumers really want, as far as proprietary or handheld devises go? Do they want a dedicated reader, that doesn't do anything else but read books, or do they want a multi-purpose, multi-use device like a PDA?

KATHERINE McNAMARA: What is called the "killer app."

CALVIN REID: EBookman could be the killer app, because it does all of these things. You can listen to MP3 files on it, you can record your own voice on it, you can read books on it, it's an organizer like a PDA. I, and many others, believe that the market for these readers is a multi-use market. I don't think people are going to want to carry around three or four devices; they'll want one device that does a number of things – certainly, the organizing aspect, perhaps being able to send and receive e-mail, and the ability to read books and documents.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: On a little screen. Nobody will have eyes left.

CALVIN REID: One thing about these devices: I think the damage they'll do your eyes has been overstated. They display fonts in a way that you can increase or decrease size. It's not as bad as you think. One thing to keep in mind: technology does not stand still. It's always evolving, becoming cheaper and easier to use.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: There will, won't there, most likely be a shake-out, with all these devices and formats available? Do you have a sense of what will survive it?

CALVIN REID: There will, most likely, be a shake-out. There will be the development of some new application. The technology will get better. Personally, I'm betting on PDAs to win over the market.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: PDAs using the Palm OS?

CALVIN REID: Mostly likely, because they're pervasive right now, and they're becoming cheaper and easier to use. There's the key: all the technology is becoming cheaper and easier to use.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: I wonder about cross-platform applications. Palm is now available for Macs as well as PCs, but it took them a while to offer it.

CALVIN REID: That's what everyone is looking for: the cross-platform application that will read any e-book. Or put it this way: that there will be one format that dominates, and everybody publishes in that format. Then we'd get to the point where we're manufacturing only one kind of device because there's one format, or, at some point, there'll be a device that will read cross-platform.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: One format verges on monopoly, I should think.

CALVIN REID: Well, it's not happening now.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: VCRs went that way, didn't they: they knocked out Beta?

CALVIN REID: And from what I've read, VCR wasn't even the best format. A format can become popular, even if it's not the best format, because that's where the market goes. And that's what the publishers are looking for: who has the best numbers? Whoever can get the market to come over to them will dominate. I think PDAs have a chance to do that, because there are more of them in the market. What we're seeing is that the biggest numbers of e-books – and we're not talking super-numbers: in a package of titles, the Peanut Press titles might sell in the thousands, whereas every other title might sell in the hundreds – but that has to have something to do with the installed base.

E-book Publishers, Audio and Digital

KATHERINE McNAMARA: You've mentioned several names to me: Hardshell Word Factory, Booklocker.com, Bibliobytes.com. What are these?

CALVIN REID: These are e-book publishers. They publish front-list books, fiction and a wide range of other books. Bibliobytes is a long-running digital publisher on-line. In quality, they offer a wide variety of e-books. Now, some of them offer e-books on-line. Booksafe.com is a more recent one. Some of these offer free, on-line access to books supported by advertising; others offer down-loadable texts.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Do you think that e-books are a different kind of activity than, say, audio books?

CALVIN REID: I think they are pretty much the same thing. I think you're going to see the audio book market go very quickly to digital distribution. Obviously, the big part of the market now is cassettes, but down the road you're going to see – in fact, right now Random House has a deal with Audible.com. There are also on-line firms like Audio Highway that are offering downloadable digital audio books, in MP3 – and other formats: Windows Media is one – but MP3 is the preferred format. Thanks to Napster, MP3 is the way to go.

There's also a guy by the name of Gary Hustwit. Gary is a small, fringe-culture literary publisher who founded a small press called Incommunicado Press – this is a few years back – basically dealing with fringe culture in California and other places. Really excellent books, beautifully designed. He moved his company to New York. Then he launched another company called MP3lit.com, in the wake of the Napster phenomenon. This was to present audio books in MP3 format. His company has since been acquired by Salon.com, and has become Salon Audio. What you're going to see from this company is more and more titles produced in MP3. He has had a plan to launch another front-list audio publisher. It was supposed to be called Loudbooks.com. I don't know what's going on, now: his attention has been mostly given to Salon Audio, and this may in fact end up under that umbrella, as well. But I think that every publisher realizes that digital distribution is going to become a big part of their business plan; it has to.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: This makes sense to me. I listen to audio books on long drives, and I enjoy and even need them.

CALVIN REID: The whole ability to distribute content and not have to depend on warehousing, trucking, manufacturing: this is really the post-manufacturing publishing era. As magical and science-fiction-like as it may seem – and, obviously, it is just beginning – publishers can't help but look at that and think there have got to be enormous profits, without having to support a gigantic warehouse system.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: So, a great deal of money is being invested in what could be called the infrastructure.

CALVIN REID: Yes; but, once again, many publishers are hiring middlemen to do this for them, and so, may have a lower level of investment, just enough for their own technical people to see what's going on.

Commercial Publishing on the Web

KATHERINE McNAMARA: My sense is that when you speak about numbers of e-books sold or downloaded, you are talking about commercial titles.

CALVIN REID: I think that's right. There are, though, sites like Bookface.com, which offers free access to on-line titles, full texts, some of which are, I would say, literary. Much of what they offer, though, is commercial fiction, as well as non-fiction.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Are they a publisher, or a bookstore on-line?

CALVIN REID: Kind of both, in that typical way that the digital environment obscures hard-and-fast roles. You might call them more of a digital re-printer and a bookstore. What they're doing, in many cases, is approaching publishers and offering some sort licensing fee, or are offering publishers a chance to put their digital books on-line. The books are supported by advertising. Publishers are paid a fee every time someone accesses the book. That's the business model. It is a hybrid between a bookstore and a publisher.

Then, at least up until recently, you could go to sites like Mightywords. But Mightywords, since it has been acquired by Barnes & Noble, is cutting back on its literary publishing. They're cutting three or four thousand titles off their list.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: That's a huge cut. They were the publisher?

CALVIN REID: Mightywords was a spin-off from Fatbrain.com, and they pitched a technology that was meant for short books that someone could download to their hard drive and read as e-books on screen, or print them out. But since the acquisition, they're retreating and are going to focus on business, science fiction, and a few other genres that have shown demonstrable sales.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: In essence, no-risk publishing.

CALVIN REID: And so, they've severed their relationship with thousands of writers who were publishing everything from novels to their own biographies –

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Were they a vanity press, then?

CALVIN REID: Essentially, yes. The good stuff they received, they promoted through their site; the rest of it had to fend for itself.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: That's so often the case in trade publishing, as well.

CALVIN REID: Right. So, I wouldn't call Mightywords a literary publisher, but there was that option for any writer to go to there and have his or her work available in downloadable form.

There are a number of other sites around the web, one of which is First Books, which offers a pdf version of books. Once again, most of the books offered through these publishing-slash-retail sites are a combination of commercial fiction and non-fiction, with the odd literary book thrown in.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: I saw an ad for Warner Books, which owns Ipublish.com, their e-book publisher, and noticed they offered an e-book version of the collected stories of Evelyn Waugh.

CALVIN REID: Actually, Warner has packed its initial e-books list with an awful lot of commercial stuff. Nothing wrong with that. I think they're in an exciting venture. But the one that you probably should consider is Modern Library. Random House, along with announcing their fifty-fifty split of e-book revenues with authors, also gave a list of e-books they're going to be publishing, I believe early in 2001 – including a deal for the Modern Library, to release e-books of a number of classic titles.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: That's wonderful to hear.

Superdistribution and Viral Marketing

CALVIN REID: That's interesting, too, because Random House also seems to be looking very critically at the distribution and marketing model. The next buzz words which, if you haven't already heard, you're going to be hearing an awful lot in the publishing world in the next few months, are "superdistribution" and "viral marketing." The words actually describe the same the same thing. Essentially, what this means is what goes on on the web daily, say, in the steam of jokes you get from someone who ordinarily wouldn't tell you a joke, but who, on the net, feels a need to send you every joke they run across. I've never understood that. People who can never tell a joke in their lives, but they can *send them to you*, via the internet. Pet peeve.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Underlined; along with virtual greeting cards that play music.

CALVIN REID: This is what goes on all the time: you get some information you think is interesting, you pass it one to someone else. That's called "viral marketing," viral as in virus. What publishers and marketers are trying to do on the web is to create is a variety of software applications that allow people to pass things on, but that have some sort of copyright protection embedded in the pass-along, and that allow readers, say, to browse a section of the content. But if they want the item, they have to buy it – click on a page and put in a credit card number.

This kind of marketing is being coupled with a wide range of alliances that allow non-book websites to become, in effect, retail sites. Over the next few months, you're going to see a lot more of this combination of retail alliances and superdistribution. The new model, now, you're going to be hearing about is this: rather than the enormous expense, as in the early paradigm of the web, of Barnes&noble.com or amazon.com paying millions of dollars to become the official bookseller on high-traffic web sites – in other words, trying to get a website to drive readers to you – now they're trying to allow the content to go to wherever the consumers are. It's a hell of a lot cheaper, and most people on the web, I think, believe it will be a lot more effective. Or, in any event, "content providers" – better known as publishers, or, even, writers – are going to follow their consumers.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Or, as I would say, publishers and writers will try to follow their readers. I think you've just given me, not an exclusive, but a flag, something to watch.

CALVIN REID: Right. The notion of superdistribution and viral marketing is all the rage among marketers on the web, but it's just now reaching the book publishing industry. There are a number of products out there that claim to be able to protect content even as it's distributed willy-nilly across the web. We'll see whether it all works, or not.

Print on Demand

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Another topic: print on demand.

CALVIN REID: Well, that's something that publishers understand. And they like it. I find that when I'm talking to publishers, they mumble, "E-books, e-books, e-books," but they perk up about print on demand. That they can understand, because we're talking about real books here. There is a thing at the end of the process, and that's what publishers know. John Oakes, of Four Walls Eight Windows, a fine small publisher, said he's had some dealings with NetLibrary and Rocket e-Book. He's got some e-books out.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: You've said you thought that print on demand within ten years will be the normal way of printing books.

CALVIN REID: The technology is getting better. The printing device itself is getting smaller.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: I understand that Sprout, in Atlanta, is distributing the machines; is that right?

CALVIN REID: Sprout is a print-on-demand service company that has various partnerships with Borders, Consortium, the book distributors, and with Majors book chain, a chain of technical and reference bookstores in the South. They have put their machines in both distribution centers and individual stores, as in the Majors system, and my understanding is that there are plans to put the machines in Borders, and in Follett's, the college bookstores. I have heard that some of the recent in-store installations have been hampered by, perhaps, technical difficulties; but they do have one in a distribution center, and, apparently, an outlet in Texas, in a Majors store. What I was told by Sprout was, you could walk into a store and order a book, and in fifteen minutes you would get it. It would be manufactured on the spot.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: The machine does do that. I've seen print-on-demand volumes; they do look like mass-produced books. I would suppose, then, that what the publisher would do, and the distributor, would set up the same arrangement with a bookstore: i.e., the bookstore would get, what, forty percent, or twenty percent, or some such discount.

CALVIN REID: I'd guess it would be much the same. When you start looking at this, and then, projecting into the future, you see a network of machines like this all around the country. What is the model we have now? Thousands of copies are printed at one location and shipped out. But what we're talking about here is, looking at the sales figures for the major cities where you want the books to go, and having them printed right where they're needed, if not in the stores themselves.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: It's brilliant. Here's another question, then. The first big blow, as I used to hear it, against small presses came when the I.R.S. ruled that books were without special status, but were a mere product, like any other manufactured item, and therefore taxable as inventory. I still believe that that ruling was a watershed and an important piece of our cultural history. Has there been a tax ruling, that you know of, about this new technology? Is digital property "inventory"?

CALVIN REID: It's certainly inventory, but, as I understand it, it isn't taxed.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: How can you count it as inventory? It seems to me that the most you can say is what you paid as an advance, and what the development costs have been.

CALVIN REID: Maybe, as print on demand develops, that may become more of an issue, where having a digital copy in storage is the equivalent of a shelf of books. Although

the states seem to be a bit ambivalent about this, the federal government clearly doesn't want to interfere and put any kind of taxes on digital activity; so it seems like this won't be an issue for years to come. But clearly, it going to be an important –

KATHERINE McNAMARA: It won't be important till somebody's ox is gored. Now, whose ox is going to be gored?

CALVIN REID: The distributor, here, is looking kind of shaky.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Unless it becomes the first to handle the print-on-demand machine.

CALVIN REID: And that's what you see happening already: the distributors moving to become digital middle-men just as they were the freight and warehousing middle-men in the past. You see it with Ingram and Lightning Source, and you see other digital suppliers of e-books, like NetLibrary and Versaware, positioning themselves. NetLibrary is interesting because they started out as a wholesaler of e-books to libraries, offering electronic texts through on-line accounts. Now they are re-positioning themselves as an e-book distributor, an e-book wholesaler.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: And they're doing it, at least in their ads in *PW*, handsomely and smartly, because of the way the ads look. They look like hand-set type on hand-laid paper.

CALVIN REID: Yes, their new ads very cleverly exploit, and try to create a connection between, off-set printing and the new media. It is a very good ad campaign.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: These marvelous machines will get smaller and more efficient, and will become like small printers or copiers, I suppose. What would this mean, then, for distributing across national boundaries? What would it mean for distributing overseas? I put that question to a couple of small literary publishers: what would it be like if your books could be produced in, say, Paris as easily and quickly as in, say, St. Paul, through print on demand?

CALVIN REID: Well, rights are going to become more and more for language only, and not territorial. I think there will be English-language rights, French-language rights, and so on. No doubt there will be more complicated arrangements. But already we're facing this issue on the web. You can buy a book anywhere in the world now, from anywhere in the world you happen to be. Amazon has run up against that wall.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: And leaped it.

CALVIN REID: What we're seeing more of in Britain and the U. S. is simultaneous publication. We saw it with the HARRY POTTER phenomenon: if people want the book, they're going to find the book; they can buy it anywhere from anywhere in the world. Other people have said this; I'm not an expert on rights. This pertains to the bigger books. For the smaller books, I don't know how it's going to work out. Ultimately, I do think access will be standard. It will be possible for you to buy a book, in any language, from wherever you happen to be, either over the web from some central place, or manufactured there on the spot.

Rights

KATHERINE McNAMARA: What's happening in rights departments, electronically?

CALVIN REID: Actually, one of the three sites devoted to rights — Rightscenter.com, Rightsworld.com, and Subrights.com — has just closed; it was called Subrights.com. As in every other part of the publishing industry, technology is transforming how we're likely to be doing business in the future. The offering and the sale of rights, right now, is a big focus. There now seem to be two significant sites that allow you to post

properties for everything from the primary rights sale to the secondary and serial rights sale, digitally, and create and attract an on-line market. You can allow agents and editors and magazine editors to log in, see what's for sale, and make an offer on line.

Subrights.com was just what its name says, for properties that already had a primary rights sale. Another organization, Rightscenter.com, really has gone to elaborate lengths to re-create the buying and selling protocols. They've set up a site so that, once you're a member, you can upload graphics, manuscripts, you can conduct threaded e-mail negotiations –

KATHERINE McNAMARA: "Threaded e-mail negotiations"?

CALVIN REID: In other words, the site has what its consultant says are secure and threaded e-mail conversations between buyers and sellers, so you can keep a record of all of your correspondence back and forth. The system tracks it for you, and you can refer to it at any time.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Does that, in effect, replace agents?

CALVIN REID: It's not going to replace agents. It gives agents a place to post work, see what people are buying. The only thing it's trying to replace is the need for having to send out, physically, a manuscript to one person or five people. Instead, you can up-load the manuscript to the site, with varying levels of access available. You can conduct auctions, you can offer it only to certain parties, you can control the access to it. It's, perhaps, replacing the telephone, or the post office.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: I read that Random House has offered a new structure of royalties for e-books.

CALVIN REID: This has been a long-running conflict between authors and agents and publishers. No one really knows, yet, what the revenue will be. This, also, is part of the paradox of e-publishing. Everyone's desperate to get e-rights, and no one knows quite what they mean. There's no significant market now, so publishers have been reluctant to give up the rights, even if they don't know quite what they're going to do with them. They just know that, at some point, they're going to be valuable.

Part of the conflict has been that publishers want to look at electronic rights as part of a royalty, and to pay a royalty. Authors and agents say, No, no, no, this is a different form, it's a sub-right sale, so it should be fifty-fifty.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: That's what Random House has agreed to. Is that how audio books are structured, as sub-rights?

CALVIN REID: That's my understanding.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: I ask because it's often held that e-books are cheaper to produce than paper books: to produce physically, that is. I'm thinking of the front-work, the reading, the editing, the persuading of staff, the wooing of the author, the formatting, all of which costs the same, in talent, time, and money, no matter the final form in which the book appears.

CALVIN REID: I am speaking of manufacturing. E-books are easier to manufacture, because they are digital. The first book and the twenty-thousandth book will cost the same thing to produce.

BOOKS AND THE CULTURE OF THE WEB

Trade Publishers and the Culture of the Web

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Well, then, what publishers do you know of who produce e-books but act in every other way like traditional publishers?

CALVIN REID: Publishers are waking up and realizing they've got to train themselves and their organizations for an entirely different era. It doesn't mean that they won't be doing books the way they've done them for a hundred years. It does mean that they have to get their organizations ready for the next hundred years. Digital publishing will be a very different environment, not only for how books are manufactured, but how manuscripts are acquired, how writers are nurtured. Warner Books, part of Time-Warner, is probably one of the more advanced publisher. Just this past year they launched the Ipublish.com site. What this site plans to do is to offer e-book versions of Warner Books trade books; but it also plans to solicit manuscripts and to develop writers in a way that has been going on on the web for many years. All around the web are writer communities, and what goes on there is this: writers show up, they talk to their fellow writers, they post samples of their work, get feedback – and they write!

Warner *gets it*, in a sense. They're planning to set up a situation that creates a writers' community, solicits writers, asks them to post their material. The group critiques the work and decides on the level of quality that any particular writer achieves. Because of this, what you're going to see, I think, is manuscripts that came in over the digital transom moving into the publishing company at large and being produced in a variety of ways: in a print-on-demand edition, or as a traditional book, or, maybe, just as an e-book. These are the kinds of changes that are coming over publishers.

There is a whole contingent of print-publishing people who think that this notion of people submitting manuscripts over the web means a lot of trash coming in; but as we all know, the most famous publishers in the world publish bad books.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Sometimes they publish the very best of the bad.

CALVIN REID: Exactly. They also publish good books; but there is an awful lot of bad books published every year. There seems to be this notion that, somehow, bad books only come from the internet. They come from all over, actually. And for all sorts of reasons, publishers miss out on, and don't publish, books that are very good. To assume that there aren't books out in the aether that are publishable, saleable, and even a cut above that, *literary*, is, I think, wrong. Ipublish.com is an effort by a traditional, giant trade publisher to mimic what happens on the web in on-line writer communities. And this is to their credit.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Do you know book editors who are learning to edit digitally? Have you talked to any of them?

CALVIN REID: I haven't; but the computer has made inroads into traditional publishing. I'm sure there are a great number of writers who turn in manuscripts on paper, and editors who edit on paper, but I think you'll find in most publishing houses, more and more, that among the writers there's a baseline of technical competence. People are turning in their books on disk, or they're keeping a digital copy.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Oh, it's wonderful for a writer to be able to turn in the manuscript on disk and let the publisher print it out.

CALVIN REID: I think that's what you're seeing. And there is another level, of paperless editing, that you're going to start seeing at places like Ipublish.com. You're also seeing it at print-on-demand publishers. Print-on-demand publishing is the ability to store digital copy of a book and print it out after someone has paid for the copy. This technology is going to totally revolutionize publishing. It is beginning to transform the landscape, as you see with companies like iUniverse.com and Xlibris. They are print-on-demand firms. They've uncovered the fact that there is an enormous number of people out there who want to write books. They would be called vanity publishers. If you pay them a fee they will print your book. With the technology, they've slashed the cost. You can get a book published now for ninety-nine dollars. Xlibris will publish it for free. Now, you don't have

any say over what the book looks like; and they have a sliding scale of prices, depending on how much customized attention your manuscript gets, but at Xlibris you can give them a digital file and they'll publish your book as print on demand. You have to buy a certain number of copies, and it's unlikely that anybody else is going to buy your book. However, both of these companies are aware that they can attract competent authors, such as those who have books out of print, or professionals giving seminars. There is a level of writers they can support and whose books they can make available for a nominal fee.

We're sitting on the threshold of an explosion of books. Unbelievable numbers of books are going to flood the market. That's why I don't believe that bookstores are going to disappear. I think we're going to need as many outlets for books as we can get, because we're sailing on an ocean of books. Not just the front-list titles, but this enormous sea of out-of-print books that print on demand holds promise of. Print on demand is going to transform all of it.

Encryption, Security, and Copyright

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Would you talk about Freenet.net?

CALVIN REID: Freenet.net was involved in the controversy over peer-to-peer file-sharing, meaning Napster, for sharing MP3 files of music. Obviously, the recording industry feels that is a copyright infringement, and they're probably right. But the fact of the matter is, much like the VCR technology which scared the movie people, they're trying to close the barn door after the cash cows have gone out.

But you ought to know, also, about the Electronic Frontier Foundation. It's run by a guy named John Perry Barlow, and it got me interested in thinking about how different the web is from the real world. Barlow, who was also a songwriter for the Grateful dead, uses their example – the Dead let people make bootleg tapes of their live concerts – to point to the notion that information wants to be free. By condoning bootleg live recordings by fans, the Dead only increased the sales of their studio recordings, the live legit recordings, *and* increased the fanatical devotion of their fans. In other words, giving music away made them rich, or richer.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: I asked, too, because I'm curious about why the difference in attitude exists between New York trade publishers and small publishers, about publishing on the web – I mean at least, about the sort of publishing I do on the web, the classic small literary journal. Independent publishers don't set up a legal barrier. On the other hand, people in New York publishing give a stock response, not based on personal knowledge. It's the *on dit*, it's *what everyone says*, and it is this: "Oh, well, nothing's secure on the internet." And yet, it always seemed to me that somebody "taking it off the web" isn't doing anything different than somebody Xeroxing –

CALVIN REID: – which is done all the time. I agree. There is, and has been, I think, a kind of copyright hysteria in the land. Part of it is understandable. I don't think it's just the publishers; on the writer's side, and they have their own attorneys, there is an equal hysteria. The web was originally a grass-roots medium, and corporate entities don't have a lot of sympathy for grass-roots sensibilities. Corporations want control; and while they have the illusion of control with Xeroxing and paper, the fantasy is – because technically, it's true – that it's easy to take a file of a book and spread it around the globe.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Is that done? I don't think it's done often.

CALVIN REID: It's rarely done. There have been websites, apparently, recently found, that have unauthorized books available for download. They were shut down. How many people downloaded these files? I'm sure there were some, but, I don't think there are

that many people interested in downloading a file the size of a novel. From a pirate's site nobody knows whether they're picking up virus – I mean, sure, anybody wants a file with a couple of chapters. How much different is that from Xeroxing some great story in *The New Yorker* that you saw and passed around?

KATHERINE McNAMARA: But copyright isn't just about payment: copyright is about who owns the text, and then, who is authorized to publish it. I keep thinking I must be missing something, in this discussion. Well, what I'm missing, of course, is that copyright is associated with the buying and selling of rights.

CALVIN REID: Right; but it's far more than that. It's hard to talk about this in the publishing industry without sounding irresponsible. Copyright is meant to give the owner of the copyright a fair payment, but, ultimately, copyright is meant to increase the public good.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: The British publishers put on their copyright page a statement I like very much: "The author assumes the right to be known as the moral author of this work." It seems to me that the *weight* of the copyright lies there: the author of this work is the one who has the right to be known as the author of this work. If that author then sells rights to have the book reproduced or published – "made known," as the late Marion Boyars used to say – in various formats, that's an intricately associated right; but it isn't the only right.

CALVIN REID: I agree, although "moral rights" has a different legal connotation in Europe than it does here in the States; in fact, it's a concept that doesn't really exist in U. S. copyright law. As I understand it, moral rights are interpreted far more legalistically in Europe – I believe France has a similar law, for instance – than they are in the States. Don't quote me on this, but I do believe that "moral rights," in Europe, would prevent you from changing a book, say, adapting it into a movie, in ways that are changed all the time in the U. S. In the '80s, I wrote often about this. When the Digital Millennium Act was being passed, I wrote about that, too. There was an event called the WIPO conference – the World Intellectual Property Organization – where there was a lot of discussion about moral rights and traditional American copyright. There is distinction between the way Europe looks at copyright, and the way Americans look at it.

Copyright is going to remain an issue for a long time. It has moral implications, but it's a legal pact. Lawyers want something that doesn't really exist in the digital age, and that's *certainty*. The fact of the matter is, there is no practical certainty, but there is a kind of – what to call it? – a certain operational *reality* of cyberspace. Is it possible to crack any encryption? Yes.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Yes.

CALVIN REID: There is no such thing as "bomb-proof" encryption. Is it likely that someone is going to set up a pirating website? Not necessarily. Could it happen to Stephen King? Maybe it's more likely to happen to Stephen King than to even a mid-list author. But we can also argue about whether people are so-called "stealing" by copying, and passing around a story by Stephen King. We could even argue, "So what?" Can we actually come up with a measured way that he's being hurt? Does it not feed into his popularity, and generate even more sales and interest in Stephen King?

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Would it, though, for the mid-list author?

CALVIN REID: The mid-list author might find readers he never would have had otherwise.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: And he might not have any less money than he had before –

CALVIN REID: More than likely, he'll have a lot more.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Possibly.

CALVIN REID: Possibly.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: *If* there's money involved. But there certainly is no thought of, or speech about, or presumption of, plagiarism. The great discussion of copyright in the digital age isn't about protection against plagiarism, it's about who's *not* going to make money.

CALVIN REID: It's property rights. It comes down to whether you're taking something. But in the information age – this sounds like a cliché –it becomes much more difficult to decide whether the taking is not to your advantage. For some cybervisionary to come and say *(snap of fingers*), "You're better off giving it all away," well, that suggestion falls on deaf ears. But, you know, we really don't know. If you look at how information travels in cyberspace, I think it's difficult to say that these fears about stolen texts are necessarily grounded. If we're talking about movies, or music, *perhaps* it's different. Perhaps. It's easy for me to say; it's not my intellectual property that's out there.

On the other hand, interesting enough, Jonathan Tasini, who's the president of the National Writers Union, is the lead plaintiff in a suit against *The New York Times* and other big media companies, about their taking free-lance writers' works and "re-purposing" them for digital release. When they were planning that suit, a Writers Union lawyer came to me and showed me a stack of citations of my articles about contemporary art, that were in a database. Anybody could go to this website database and get a copy of them. They were articles from *Art in America*. I had no idea that they were there and were being re-sold. Now, to me, this is not the same thing as some lone pirate passing things around. This is a business set up to re-sell work, and it calls itself a legitimate business.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: They've paid you for one thing, and then they're making money by using it in another way. And you're not getting a residuary.

CALVIN REID: Yeah, I'm not getting anything, and somebody's making money from my work. To me, that's a completely different set-up than people finding my work on the web and copying it for themselves, circulating it, and saying, "You know, I read this guy and I really liked his stuff, and you should read it, too." I don't know what the implications are. It would be great if, every time someone copied a piece I wrote, they paid me something. Does copyright mean that? I don't know.

And as we get deeper into a digital world, I think that authors and, I hope, at some point, publishers, will become more familiar with this medium, and will think about more flexible ways of both receiving payment and allowing the medium to do what it does best, which is, circulate material.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: What a nice thought: to think of it as an analogy, perhaps, of a circulating library.

CALVIN REID: You know, it's so easy to do that. It's going to become very difficult to protect your content, unless you do not show it to anyone at all! I mean that seriously. As a society, we're going to become more literate in technology and more and more virtuosic in it. Already, I think, programming is a sub-form of literature. To be able to write these programs, and the functions they perform, is nuanced and detailed and obsessive and graceful; they're virtually languages in themselves. More and more, people are going to have the skills, really, to take anything they want, particularly when there is no heavy penalty for doing it. They're not necessarily going to go into the Pentagon and crack their computers, but if they want to see a book or a novel, it's very likely that the encryption closing it may not hold up.

I don't think, at the same time, that that means people are going to be circulating things all over the web. I don't *know* this; maybe it will happen, maybe it won't. But I think we're going to have to create other ways of receiving payment than the scarcity model: that

is, if you don't pay, you don't get. We're going to have to come up with something else. Various things have been offered; the shareware model, which works reasonably well.

CULTURE, AND THE CULTURE OF THE WEB

The Innovators, Out on the Fringe, Overseas

KATHERINE McNAMARA: We've been talking about all this money, which is not an interesting subject, and technology, which also is less interesting in itself, from my point of view. Let's talk about your interest in publishing "out on the fringe," serious, noteworthy publishing we ought to know about.

CALVIN REID: Let me say, first, that I found out that small literary publishers are not as involved in e-publishing as bigger publishers. There are some: in particular, Online Originals. Onlineoriginals.com, is a British-based, front-line publisher that began by sending out its books as unencrypted e-book files.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: What does that mean?

CALVIN REID: They sent the books as unencrypted attachments. You bought the book, for a nominal fee, something like four to six dollars, and you could pass it on to someone else. When I asked the publisher, David Gettman, about this, he said he didn't worry about unencryption, because most people aren't interested in getting an unsolicited, massive, file that would take up space on their hard drive. He, and his authors, seemed to be fairly unconcerned about someone getting a book and not paying for it. They felt that when e-book files were passed on, this just brought more attention to the website, and brought people back to look at the books, and to buy books. They only publish e-books. I see now, by the way, that they offer a variety of formats, including pdf, Rocket eBooks and Microsoft Reader.

They also did a book that was nominated for the Booker Prize: THE ANGELS OF RUSSIA, by Patricia le Roy.

There are a number of literary publishers using the web to promote their books, as most publishers do. There is an enormous amount of poetry on the web, in a variety of ways: full texts, discussions, message books. It's pretty easy to go to Google and type in "poetry" and find hundreds of sites. As far as I'm concerned, anything you read on the screen is an e-book. Whether you download it to your hard drive or log on to it on-line, you're reading an e-book. If you just go by "poetry," there is an enormous amount of e-book publishing going on.

Besides Online Originals, there is a young, small publisher by the name of Rattapallax that you should know about.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Oh, yes, I heard about them recently at CLMP (Council of Literary Magazines and Presses). You chaired a panel on electronic publishing for them, and the publisher of Rattapallax was on the panel. He caught their attention. He caught mine when e-mail from him arrived announcing a conference on world poetry he is helping to organize at the U. N.

CALVIN REID: His name is Ram Devineni. He's doing quite a few things at once. He wanted to show small presses that they can do this formatting themselves. He gave a demonstration showing how you could turn a Word document into a Rocket eBook-format e-book, in five minutes.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Rather like how you write a pdf, I'd bet. You format your file, drop it on the pdf icon, and the software works like a printer, except that it's working digitally.

CALVIN REID: Yes, and he pointed this out, because for many small publishers, hiring someone like Versaware to convert their files is out of the question, financially. So, that is one site I know of publishing poetry. They also publish paper books and some CD-ROMs; in particular, they put out books with CD-ROMs of the poets reading their own work. Or, you can download the text and buy it that way.

There is an interesting little literary magazine called *Archipelago*, as well, that's right on the cutting edge. You may have heard of it.

International Publishing, Electronically

KATHERINE McNAMARA: What about international publishers? I read in *PW* ("New French E-book Firm, Olympio.com, Formed," November 27, 2000) for instance, about a French publisher who has just gone to e-books. The company is called Olympio.com, and the publisher is offering two sorts of lists: vanity books, published and downloaded for free, and regular books, chosen, edited, published in paper or e-book format, and sold to readers.

CALVIN REID: Well, Online Originals is a British publisher. There a European company called Zéro Heurs. They have a weird URL, something like 00h00.com. Go to Google; Google can find anything. I don't know much about them, but they're supposed to be pretty much ahead of everyone else in France. They've just been acquired by Gemstar.

I mentioned, also, a site that does much the same as Bookface.com does, but pre-dates it, is Bibliobytes. Now, again, it's mostly commercial fiction and non-fiction, but it was a very early on-line digital publisher that offered downloadable texts. Then it switched to totally free access supported by advertising. And the publisher said, "I'm paying royalties to people that I never paid any royalties to before." He said he's had more success, made more money, giving things away, than he did when he was trying to sell things.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: So his success comes from advertisers.

CALVIN REID: Right, his money comes from advertisers.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: That goes back to the original notion about how anybody was going to make money on the web, doesn't it?

CALVIN REID: Well, it certainly goes back to the notion that information on the web is not only wanted to be free, but is expected to be free.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: And people will put up with advertising to get what's offered.

CALVIN REID: People will put up with advertising, if they can get what they want. If you can give things away on the web, you can sell more things in the real world. It's counterintuitive, but it seems to be true.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: A little footnote: how can Google does what it does so swiftly, elegantly, and without advertising?

CALVIN REID: Haven't the foggiest idea. There was a long article in *The New Yorker* that purported to explain that. I read it, and I still didn't understand it. But it works.

A House Full of Books

KATHERINE McNAMARA: May I ask you some things about your own background? You're a reader, but you're also a visual artist. Do you remember when you started reading? What did you read when you thought of yourself as a serious reader, or at least, as a kid who couldn't put a book down?

CALVIN REID: Well, I grew up in a house full of books. My mother read everything. She was a promiscuous reader. Maybe you shouldn't put it that way, but she read everything

from total trash to literature. I mean, around the house was James Baldwin one week, Sidney Sheldon the next. There were always books everywhere. I don't remember *not* being interested in reading, I just remember becoming more and more interested in it as I got older. I can remember not having anything to do in the summer as a really young kid, and walking over to the Mt. Pleasant library, in Washington, D.C., in the northwest, and spending the day there. I was just a sports nut. I was a little kid reading any kind of sports book, you name it. And comics, of course.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Why "of course"? I know that you have a strong interest in comics, in graphic novels. Would you say more about that, especially if you know of anything on the web?

CALVIN REID: Well, I mean, there's so much comics on the web I wouldn't even know where to start. Go to Google and put "comics" in, and you'll get it all, but you can start with Fantographics.com. Not too many adolescent boys of my generation *weren't* interested in comics, not in my neighborhood, anyway. The combination of really dynamic drawing and power fantasies was just irresistible to a young boy. Not that girls don't read comics too, but it was primarily boys when I was doing it. Some girls were reading – how can I describe them? – girl comics: you know, love comics, romance comics, that sort of thing. I remember being fascinated by the pictures and these stories about powerful people overcoming powerful odds. When you're a teenager, or younger, that's pretty important. I think what happens is, kids being powerless, this fantasy world of unlimited power is irresistible.

So, yes, I had this two-track thing, of comics on the one hand, and on the other, prose literature, that kept building. I was lucky enough to go to a junior high school that loaded us up with reading assignments. I read the usual stuff: Shakespeare, and then American classics. I read THE VIRGINIAN, SEVENTEEN, WINESBURG, OHIO…. By the time I was in high school, I was kind of a self-starter. I read widely and randomly, on virtually any subject, with my core reading interest being sports, and more sports. But by high school, I was also reading sociological things. I was entering into my political phase. I remember reading, early on, CRISIS IN BLACK AND WHITE. It was an interesting look at the black urban unrest in the '60s. I remember that book in particular because, by the time I was in high school, I was in one of those help-a-ghetto-kid programs. We got to spend the summer on the Georgetown University campus and live in the dorms, so it was really cool. We took some classes, and we could goof off as much as we wanted. I started realizing, then, that reading these books could really be a big help. We were in this sort of discussion with these educators who came from the outside, and for some reason, we got into a talk about community organizers. A huge part of CRISIS IN BLACK AND WHITE is about this famous lefty community organizer in Chicago, a guy named Saul Alinsky.

KATHERINE McNAMARA Oh, yes. I remember him.

CALVIN REID: Very famous guy. And I recall myself standing up and talking, even knowledgeably, about Saul Alinsky to all these white guys who were sitting there looking at this black teenaged kid. And I was bantering on and on about Saul Alinsky. They seemed agog at the fact that I even knew who Saul Alinsky was. I registered that, I said, "Aha, this reading can come in handy." It was something I'll never forget, I guess: the power of reading came in handy. I could speak with them point for point on anything they could talk about. I kind of knew already, but that clued me in to the power of books.

KATHERINE McNAMARA That's a nice story.

CALVIN REID: But then, after that, I was always interesting in reading, both totally recreational stuff and really difficult books.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: What books would you consider a foundation: books you lean into, or rest on?

CALVIN REID: A whole range of books comes to mind. I'll just go through them. Most American black writers, the classic ones: Langston Hughes's autobiography I WONDER AS I WANDER. Obviously, Richard Wright, Baldwin. The early Toni Morrison, more than the late ones: THE BLUEST EYE; SULA. Those are great books.

KATHERINE McNAMARA I remember reading SULA, a long time ago, in Paris. There is a scene in it that I will never forget.

CALVIN REID: Yes; yeah. I know how that is. For me, too. – There is a gigantic sociological book, THE CRISIS OF THE NEGRO INTELLECTUAL, by Harold Cruse, that, for me, was a really important book. It's a hundred-year examination of black intellectuals. It illuminated so many things I didn't know anything about, going back to Martin Delaney in the nineteenth century.

KATHERINE McNAMARA Who was Martin Delaney?

CALVIN REID: Martin R. Delaney was a freedman who wrote a number of books oriented toward black people withdrawing from this attempt to be part of America, and building their own thing. He was a kind of early black nationalist.

Later on, for some reason I got really interested in the Jewish American novelists, Bellow and Philip Roth, in particular. THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH; HERZOG; just about everything Roth wrote. For some reason, I was totally into that guy, including some of his more obscure books, like LETTING GO. I got into a Henry James thing. I particularly liked RODERICK HUDSON, a rather obscure James; I think it was his first novel.

What else was I reading? The African novelists; this was even before the Jewish American novelists. THE BEAUTIFUL ONES ARE NOT YET BORN was by a Ghanaian, Ayi Kwei Armah. Achebe, of course: THINGS FALL APART. Wolé Soyinka's THE INTERPRETERS, which is a really terrific post-colonial novel.

I think I have an eclectic taste, I like the whole Modernist range: Joyce, Céline, Bukowsky; and a whole range of black writers I'm leaving out here, John Williams in particular. And others.

KATHERINE McNAMARA I don't know John Williams's work.

CALVIN REID: He's a kind of contemporary master. His book CAPTAIN BLACKMAN has been reissued, I think by Graywolf Press, and is one I *haven't* read, actually. His most famous book is THE MAN WHO CRIED 'I AM'. It was a best seller, I think in the '70s. There is that series called Old School Books that was coming out a while ago. It was this unusual collection of pulp literary classics, black crime fiction that seemed a cut above the usual. John Williams's first book, THE ANGRY ONES, is part of that, and it's a delightful novel, an amazing portrait of New York in the late 1950s. Norton is the publisher of the series. I could go on and on, but I'll say one more thing: on the kid end, the boys' baseball novels by a guy named John R. Tunis, who wrote books like THE KID FROM TOMPKINSVILLE. I used to devour these things. I would go to the library and get them. In fact, somebody put out a new edition of them, and I snatched them up. There are six or seven in the series; they're all about a country kid who comes to New York and plays for the Brooklyn team and wins the ballgame in the bottom of the ninth, but I loved that stuff. And I should say what I think are among the great, comic, baseball novels ever written. The first one in the series is my favorite: THE SOUTHPAW. But the whole series is my favorite: BANG THE DRUM SLOWLY; TICKET FOR A SEAMSTITCH; and IT LOOKED LIKE FOREVER. This quartet follows the mythical baseball figure and writer Henry Wiggins, who is supposedly writing this book, with the help of Mark Harris, and who is otherwise known as "Author."

KATHERINE McNAMARA Oh, how lovely.

CALVIN REID: I really do think these four are among the funniest, most charming baseball books I've ever read. That would complete my off-the-cuff reading list. We haven't even listed graphic novels.

KATHERINE McNAMARA We haven't. Isn't it worth doing? Graphic novels are comics for grownups, in a way, although comics are comics for grownups, too.

CALVIN REID: They can be. Fortunately, when you send books to people, they don't assume the books are about one thing; but most people assume that comics are about one thing. But, you know, comics and graphic novels are just books, and there is a whole range of them, about different kinds of things. I've been fascinated by more literary graphic novels, and completely comic graphic novels, as well.

KATHERINE McNAMARA Would you tell us what we ought to look at?

CALVIN REID: The most obvious one is MAUS *[by Art Spiegelman]*; that's clear. Most recently, there's a book called FROM HELL, by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell. JIMMY CORRIGAN, by Chris Ware.

KATHERINE McNAMARA His name is so beautifully hidden in that amazing book. The detail of it, and the pathos.

CALVIN REID: It is, isn't it? I'd also put another, an obscure, graphic novel called DAVID CHELSEA IN LOVE.

KATHERINE McNAMARA What a good title.

CALVIN REID: It is, and it's comic book about the misadventures in love of a guy I know: I actually know David Chelsea. He is the author and an extremely talented writer and illustrator. The book is out of print. He's a good guy and very talented. I don't think he's doing any graphic novels now; it just doesn't pay. I think he's making money doing newspaper illustrations.

KATHERINE McNAMARA What are you watching on the web?

CALVIN REID: Flash animation. I think it's cool. As the bandwidth gets better, there's a great possibility there for storytelling. Sites like Icebox, MediaTrip.com, Urban Entertainment. Some of these are better than others, with animated, on-going stories, mostly comic.

Everything Is Going to Change

KATHERINE McNAMARA What's the nature of digital publishing, do you think?

CALVIN REID: Everything is going to change.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: That is a good last line: Everything is going to change.

CALVIN REID: Everything is going to change. We haven't even begun to see the change, really, I don't think. None of this means that print is going away. It just means that there are going to be more things to read, in more forms; and you can read in whatever way you choose to do it. How the business part is done will be worked out and fought over, and heads will knock. But, you know, all the arguments and all the lawyers are going to have to chase the medium. That's what's going to happen. They're going to have to scurry to come up with ways to make it work in the new environment. Right now, everyone's trying to make the environment work on the old model, and it's not going to happen. They're going to have to come up with something else.

KATHERINE McNAMARA: Cool.

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Napster http://www.napster.com/
Google http://www.google.com

See also, "Institutional Memory," Archipelago:
A Conversation with Marion Boyars, Vol. 1, No. 3
A Conversation with Cornelia and Michael Bessie, Vol. 1, No. 4 *and* Vol. 2, No. 1
A Conversation with William Strachan, Vol. 2, No. 4
A Conversation with Samuel H. Vaughan, Vol. 3, No. 2
Reminiscence: Lee Goerner (1947-1995), Vol. 3, No. 3
A Conversation with Odile Hellier, Vol. 4, No. 1

Serial, Part Four

AGENT NINE

A Novel
by

"X"

Book One —ALICE'S ADVENTURES OVERSEAS

The Action Thus Far—

Fresh off the mean streets of 1920s Brooklyn, fourteen-year-old Alice Rocket signs on as an assistant to Mr. Vinup, a free-lance secret agent. The duo travel first to London, to the safe house of their client, Inspector Pundit of Scotland Yard. The Inspector issues them code numbers —Eight and Nine—and an assignment: Proceed to the Free-Lancers' Ball to be held in the Swiss resort of Locarno. There, at the mysterious Villa Febrile, they are to make contact with the White Russian Countess Lubyanka, who has offered to reveal—for a price—the details of a top-secret doomsday plan known as the Pyramid Scheme. Behind the Pyramid Scheme, Pundit fears he detects the hand of the Lord of the Triads, Doctor Fang, a nefarious mastermind who had long been presumed dead.

Alice becomes separated from Mr. Vinup at the opening-night masquerade that kicks off the Free-Lancers' convention at the Villa. But when she discovers the bandleader to be the famed jazzman Jimmy Dandy, she enlists his aid in acquainting the spies of Europe with the Charleston. Alice is just retiring from her exertions on the dance floor when she narrowly escapes an assassination attempt in the hallway. No sooner has she identified the weapon—a wickedly sharpened paper plane—than she finds herself abducted by the supercilious Monsieur de Menthe, who subjects her to an unpleasant interrogation in the cheese cellar. At the close of the previous episode, Agent Nine has trumped the Frenchman in a battle of wits and hard cheese. Now, she returns to the scene of the attempted crime to investigate further….

Clue Seven:

D e l i r i u m

Hugeous boots trod through the broken glass and cheeses that littered the floor around the dumbwaiter. Wide-awake eyes took in the scene. Reviewed, the cellar was a wasteland of ripe-smelling leftovers.

Clearly, it was time to move on. But which way was Agent Nine headed?

"There is no way to go but up," she resolved. She seized one of the strands of rope stretched alongside the dumbwaiter, and, sawing methodically at it with a sharp Cheddar, turned over in her mind the events of the recent skirmish.

It had been long odds on Kid Alice. Her opponent had been a veteran. He had had twice her body weight and probably three times the education. Home advantage, too, was a factor he was entitled to claim. She had taken him.

A lucky break, she thought hesitantly. Well, and what if it was? A lucky break was the last thing you could take for granted these days. You didn't turn your back on it just as things started to heat up—that was for darn skippy.

What of this episode to report to her boss, Agent Eight? Would he decide that she had done good?

And what would he report in his turn, she wondered, to their handler, the artful Inspector? Had the Inspector only been present to coach her, what wider patterns might not have been revealed at work! Out of this odd knot of her experience, what fine tapestry might he have woven?

Alice paused in her work, rope in hand. Come to think of it, out of the recent muddle, there was one moral that did stand pretty clear.

Agent Nine had taken action when it counted. Catch her alone in a tight corner, she comes up with a plan. She thinks on her feet and comes bouncing right back!

The rope snapped and the dumbwaiter fell with a crash to the bottom of the shaft, clean down to the hollow heart of the mountain. Alice was left laughing and coughing in wonderment. What a lot of phonies these Free-Lancers were turning out to be!

"There's the garden-variety kind," she told herself, "like that one clown from the dance. And then there's the bargain-basement kind," she went on, but caught herself prudently. "All the same, it would not do to get too big for my boots—fifty million Frenchmen can't all be that wrong."

Two ends of rope were left hanging down from a pulley somewhere at the top of the Villa. To one end, Alice tied herself. The other she fastened to the enormous, battle-scarred juggernaut of cheese and rolled it to the brink of the dumbwaiter shaft.

Four.... Three.... Two.... One.... Propulsion was instantaneous. Alice shot up the chute like a hiccup in a throat. She was back at the entrance to the dumbwaiter in the hallway above while the dust was still swirling over the take-off spot down below.

She stepped out the door, smoothed down her skirts, and reentered the Cupid hall.

Now, if Agent Nine had felt the need for a check to her confidence, it came to her soon enough. Back down in the cellar, she had made up her mind to march right through the shooting gallery, eyes fixed straight forward as if ignoring something indecent. But a morbid sort of curiosity now turned her face in time to see both paper airplanes still fixed where they had landed in the wall. And the same half-disgusted impulse made her stretch out her hand and touch the one that had nearly nailed her.

It felt so finely machined and smooth, it was almost slimy. Alice gripped a corner between thumb and index finger and tugged. The plane slithered out of the plaster. She held the contraption delicately, as though it could go off again at any time, and out of a urge to disarm it, rather than from any real insight into its workings, she set about unfolding the paper.

With the first seam, she uncovered writing. And as she continued methodically to unpack it, the creases melted away, so that at the end she was left with a smooth sheet of paper that preserved not a trace of the wrinkles that had given it structure.

The message that was printed in the middle of the page looked like this:

Alarmed?

no
need!
we take care
of our customers.
in fact, innovative designs
and attention to detail have been
winning us new fans as well as cement-
ing old loyalties for decades. now, after a tempo-
rary suspension of operations, we are pleased to announce
our return to the market with an entirely new product line.

In the best tradition of the hard sell, the copy blended promise with threat.

Had the initial assault with the paper airplane too, then, been no more than an advertising gimmick? Make sales by first scaring the daylights out of your target market, then persuading them to do the same or worse to other people—using your product. Well! Alice had known some objectionable people in the insurance line back in Brooklyn, but for sheer chutzpah this stinker was hard to beat. She read on, indignation mounting.

Impressed?

for
a book-
let regarding
use of your compli-
mentary PAPER TIGER® and
to discuss how our other quality
products can be put to work for you, make
an appointment with Poppyseed Passion in suite
sixteen today. can you afford to face the challenges of today's
competitive workplace without knowing more about us?

FANG INDUSTRIES – *WE'RE BACK!*

The remaining space on the paper was entirely taken up by a great Chinese character in vermilion ink, the bloody footprint of some carnivorous animal.

Doctor Fang! Alice's arteries hardened at the sight of the name. Though she could not read the language at the bottom of the page, all the foreboding with which the Inspector had revealed his hunch back in London was spelled out for her in that mysterious symbol. The enemy were flexing their muscles and cackling: "We're back!"

The rest of the message was easy to understand. This Poppyseed Passion up in Number Sixteen must be Fang's agent in Locarno. The three-sided shape in which the words were arranged—that must be what they called a Triad. And that persistent noise that was annoying her was the piece of paper itself, rippling in the air and amplifying the vibrations made by Alice's trembling hand.

She had the jitters all the way back up to her bedroom. Lying down didn't help. Neither did bouncing up and down on the bed. Alice got up, paced the floor, and finally took her little tackle box out of her suitcase and unlocked it with her skeleton key.

Compass; compass; styptic pencil: She fingered the items one by one and struggled to replace her strange emotion, the nocturnal brew of mischief and fear that was making her crazy, with a more cool-headed assessment of the campaign ahead.

In the end, of all her tools, it was the little switchblade-comb that seemed most apt to the moment. Swearing softly, Alice forced the fine teeth through the snarls and tangles that had collected on her head. It took a half hour of this kind of treatment before she felt straight enough to face the obvious next move: the invasion of Suite Sixteen.

Agent Nine put aside the idea of forcing a break-in once she realized she had nothing dark to wear. Instead, she settled on a slyer tactic: she would go to this Poppyseed person's door and brazen it out as a prospective buyer. "Pardon me, Ma'am? Yes, I was put on your foim's mailing list recently, and I wanted to inquire…." This had the advantage of not requiring anything more elaborate by way of preparation than fixing her hair and readjusting her mask. By the morning, Mr. Vinup would surely be through with whatever secret mission had taken him away from her tonight, and together they would come up with a plan of action that would benefit from any information she could collect in this way.

She assessed herself in the mirror. The tussle in the cellar had left her with skinned knuckles, but no really bad marks. She started scrubbing her face and noticed that there was more grime on the parts left exposed by her mask than the skin around her eyes and forehead. She looked like a reverse raccoon! Most of the dirt must have gotten picked up during the bumpy descent in the dumbwaiter, she figured, because after all she had been unmasked ever since she took the thing off during her interview in the cellar…oh, for crying out loud…her mask must still be down there.

Confronting representatives of the infamous Doctor Fang with her face naked was a troubling proposition to Alice. It was with no little satisfaction that she located among her gear a very modernistic pair of sunglasses. Rubber and chrome, adorned with cogs and wires: when she put them on her head, she had gained several pounds.

She admired the look in the mirror: composed, well prepared. Next to a dial by the earpiece nestled a canister. Delirium was the word on the label. Three doses, she remembered.

"The X-Ray Goggles," she mouthed, "the Ex-Spex." What have I to expect? she wondered silently, and slipped out of the room.

Eleven…. Twelve…. Thirteen…. A dim and serpentine corridor, gas valves on the walls squeezing out runny pools of light that threw shadows and so obscured rather than illumined: Agent Nine slunk her way past the numbers on the doors. Fifteen was here on the left, Sixteen would be on the other side. She could make out the dark rectangle of the door now and something else: there was a figure, still but tense, poised outside the room.

It was a lady, Alice could see—she would have been all but invisible in her black costume, but white patches on her head, chest and skirt betrayed her silhouette. Careless choice for work clothing, Alice thought, and then realized she was looking at the maid.

If it wasn't the same dam'zelle who had dished up her mask along with a glass of water back when the evening's games began! There was no mistaking that mincing posture. Or that tray with the pitcher. She had brought along the glass, too, but she was holding it at the door and pressing one of her ears against it.

Poppyseed Passion in Suite Sixteen was evidently already engaged with somebody else. And the maid at the door was intent on every word being spoken on the other side. She stood glued to the glass, frozen except for an occasional twitch in her muscles, ignorant that she was now exhibit as well as audience.

Clearly, the thing to do now was to take her place.

"This will be easiest to handle if she is a real maid," Alice told herself. "The crafty little interlope."

She stalked up behind her prey until she was so close that she could see a mole on the back of her neck. Now to initiate the confrontation.

What would her boss do in a situation like this? Alice cleared her throat: "Harumph!"

With a clattering of high heels, the maid spun around, unbalancing her tray and slopping water on her apron. The pitcher took a tumble. Alice recovered it deftly and pointed it at her quarry.

The woman's face went first red, then white. She blinked her soft doe eyes and licked her lips rapidly, and the lace parts on her uniform went all aflutter.

"W-w-would you like a glass of water, Mademoiselle?" she got out.

"I am obliged," said Alice, taking the glass from her hand. "And there is a foither transaction I would like to complete before the close of our business today. To wit: a good time for you to make yourself scarce from this place is right this very minute. Do this quietly and don't give me no sassafras and I will refrain from making my thoughts about the soivice here known to the management."

The maid appeared to hesitate. "*Excusez-moi?*" she said.

"Beat it, Monique," said Alice savagely, and watched the help high-tail it in the direction of the emergency exit.

"Never, *never* fink on anyone to the management," she sighed to herself. "That's as golden a rule as I know of. What a break she didn't call my bluff—I would have had to sock her or something and hope for the best, I guess."

The maid's eager breath as she listened at the door had covered the glass in Alice's hand with a layer of fog. Seized by a scruple in the middle of her underhanded task, Agent Nine wiped it off on her skirt. It made her feel a bit better as she applied the glass between her ear and the door.

Faint murmurs made no sense at first. But gradually, as the bubbling noises separated inside her ear to become syllables, she became able to distinguish two voices.

One was melodic and husky. That would be a woman's voice. The other was more flat and somehow familiar—a man's voice that was struggling, it seemed, to maintain a matter-of-fact tone but was not succeeding.

As the discussion picked up momentum, Alice found herself the hapless chaperone at a romantic interlude.

******Romantic Interlude******

the Lady: You handsome—
the Gentleman: Toothsome.
L.: Winsome—
G.: Lissome.
L.: Wholesome—
G.: And then some….
L.: Oh, Mr. Vinup!
G.: Please, call me Vinup.

With trembling hand, Alice reached for the dial on the side of her glasses and turned on the X-Ray Goggles to see what she already knew she would see.

The air filled with the smell of vinegar and burning cardboard. The lenses at her eyes clouded up in a rich indigo color. During the next few seconds, all she could see was a cloudy swirl like the surface of a marble; and then the darkness dissolved as the curtain went up on the photoplay.

Two people were moving like ghosts in floating patches of blue and white. The figures danced in silence, their only accompaniment humming and popping noises from the engine on Alice's eyes. Science had given Agent Nine the power to see through a two-inch layer of wood. This was the world beyond the door, the love nest of Suite Sixteen.

Cool China blue tints revealed the silhouette of Poppyseed Passion, the silky lady with the chopsticks from the party in the tea garden. Her face was an oval, symmetrical and perfect. It moved little; even her eyes and mouth looked like finishing touches painted on by an artist. Alice trained her lenses on the face and the party mask and the makeup seemed to dissolve; but the eyes had a pride and depth that stopped her vision ray cold.

It may have been that two inches of door was too much of a buffer. Alice turned her sights instead on the long, sinuous body that lay wrapped up, fishlike, in a sheath of silk. Where other people had spines, this one had a coil—from the smooth, pale throat all the way down to the littlest pair of feet Alice had ever seen.

Poppyseed Passion rose, looking like a pillar of liquid, and approached her partner and settled in his lap in a single eddying movement, and then her hideous long fingernails reached up and hooked Mr. Vinup's mask up over his mouth.

Then it was all over. Alice couldn't stand any more.

She had seen enough. She had seen too much. She had only seen what she expected.

Oh, the tramp! Dad blast it! And oh, the *chump!* The oldest trick in the book! Alice gnashed her teeth. As for she herself, here was a third of her precious supply of Delirium already all used up, and on what? Sneaking peeks at a Pekinese hoochy-coochy girl.

"It's a crying shame," she groaned. "One of the finest agents in the business, to go and make a fool of himself like that." Right there in the hallway outside Number Sixteen, she danced a dance of rage.

Agent Nine! The mission must not be allowed to end in this way. Far off in the cellars of London, the spymaster waits in his lair, quietly standing pat. The stakes are rising before his eyes. Wild card, it's your call. Are you a joker, or are you an ace?

There was a deal in the making, if she could only figure out how to see this thing through. A certain Countess would have to be found. Then certain talks would be held. Agent Nine would turn over a lot of money, accompanied by as little information as possible. Somehow, in return, satisfaction must be guaranteed.

"Or money back, your Ladyhood," Alice rehearsed. "We demand delivery on our piece of the auction."

The auction was scheduled to follow the Jamboree. That was tomorrow. The Countess would have to be found well before. Tonight, then.

A place to think, that's what she needed. Her nerves were a little worked up; she was a little tender. Someplace quiet where she could go, someplace comforting where the stream of thought could flow—that would truly be the ticket.

She thought of places with chairs that were cozy and with food that nurtured, like pie; with springtime trees and maybe a bubbling brook outside. She was a city kid having a country moment. Someplace with good company to confide in, where she could gaze across a table and see herself reflected in the eyes of someone she could trust.

That lunch place a couple of miles north of town—Mr. Vinup had taken her there her first, sunny day on the job. It had been a swell place.

Failing that, there was the lady's john.

Clue Eight:
e n c o r e

Past midnight. All masks were off.

Alice Rocket sat on a tuffet next to the running water. She looked at her reflection. There was a cloud on her brow that made her look tired. "That's funny," she thought. "I don't *feel* so tired."

Each seat at the mirror bank had its own lamp, and installed with each lamp was a dial that was marked with degrees from *gentle* to *harsh*, so you could adjust the lighting if you felt like flattering yourself, or—no less usefully—if you felt like coming to terms with your flaws. Alice turned it all the way down to *gentle*. A halo of warm light rinsed her cloud away.

The ladies' lounge was a garden, it was a grotto of ablutions and devotions. The banquettes and stools were covered in velvet like moss. The wallpaper had flowers on it. The toilet tanks had mufflers that limited noise to a gentle sigh. There were different kinds of lotion on tap, not to mention different kinds of maid on call, professionals who could help you with manicures or simple backrubs. And music came in through a brass hole in the ceiling.

Alice settled in. The sanctuary provided her all that was needed. She dipped her fine-toothed comb in a jar of Barmecide on the counter and set to work on her head. The mirror on the wall behind gave her a helpful rear view. In collaboration with its opposite number facing her, it showed an endlessly deep pattern of overlapping Alices, front-to-back.

To the left of her and to the right of her, there were close to twenty other women doing just the same thing. And yet each one of them was also, like Alice, alone in the garden. If they ever did speak with their neighbors, all the chatter beyond the hedges of their own conversation just sounded to them like so much birdsong and rustling of leaves.

An outsider could have seen more than one person at a time. She could have seen the women troop in and strip off their masks at the door, and then proceed to the mirror and their intent self-examinations. Generally speaking, of course, because of the nature of the place, there were no outsiders in the ladies' lounge; but Alice had now turned the dial to harsh and for the first time was noticing the other people in the room.

Anything was better than looking at herself in that light. All of a sudden, she had bags sagging down to the cheekbones. "This intelligence business sure is aging me," she said to herself. "At this rate, I will have toikey wattles before I see twenty."

Whatever had happened to the garden? A little panicky, she shot a glance around the room—

Rows of dames, masses huddled up at the countertop. There was a sameness even in the variety. The women's faces were immobile and blank until painted. In that, they seemed like machines. Their arms and fingers worked in a flurry of motion. That was also machinelike.

The fingers wielded an assortment of tools from the countertop. They dug and filled holes and laid foundations. They installed planes and shadows. As the faces were completed, the drones gave them stretch tests and dusted them off with a protective finish against damp.

All masks were off—bring on the masks. Alice asked herself a question: What's underneath all that crust to begin with?

Indeed! Since if character was applied by layers, then another thing followed: Any one of those women might actually be the Countess. Agent Nine thought of the mug shot from the *Index*. *"She may well be in disguise…,"* the Inspector had said.

The platinum coif—peroxide? The elegant eyebrows—crayon? *The schnozz*.... But even that might have been putty or something like that.

She realized that the question of whether there was a real Countess behind the image at all was a useless one. Somewhere in the Villa there was a woman who called herself a Countess. She could not know or care about Alice's existence. It was up to Alice to make herself known.

Agent Nine was in an uncomfortable position—matchmaker between a person she dared not name and someone else she did not even recognize. In fact, a name was just about the only thing she knew about the Countess; and, come to think of it, she didn't dare use that either. In this place, it was a cinch that if you addressed a message to somebody, it would get looked at by somebody else—

"That," she observed, "is for darn skippy."

A message for her Feminence, the Countess Lubyanka: could it be delivered to her eyes only? It would have to be posted someplace in the Villa, its address left unstated, yet somehow implied. It would have to say just enough to the intended, while saying as little as possible to anyone else. Alice was going to execute a variation on that classic spy maneuver, the "drop." She racked her brains for a spot the Countess was likely to visit sometime in the course of the night.

"If you please, Miss?"

Alice turned to meet the voice and was startled by what looked for a second to be a very large New England boiled dinner sitting next to her. She quickly turned the lighting back towards gentle.

Her neighbor turned out to be a rosy-cheeked woman with a pair of binoculars. She was wearing a smocklike dress in an unflattering foliage pattern. There were bunches of leaves stuck in the veil on her hat. Embarrassed but self-righteous, Alice told herself: It was a reasonable mistake.

"What can I do for you, sister?"

"Can I bother you for a light?"

Alice wasn't wearing anything with pockets. But while she was thinking up polite ways to say no, her hand found something nubbly tucked into the garter on her thigh. This actually turned out to be two things: one of them was Louie's lipstick, and the other was in fact a box of lucifers. Alice was a little mystified.

The Inn at Mott Haven ❧ was the name on the logo. ***"Pie of many kinds our specialty."***

"Well, *fine*," thought Alice, and aloud she said, "Here, lady, keep the pack."

"Much obliged," said the leafy lady. Striking one of the lucifers off the countertop, she lit up a stub she held in her fingers, producing some wet black smoke. She let it burn until the flame surprised her fingertips and then shook it until it was doused. What she was left with was stinky, but no cigar. It was a nicely charred cork, is what it was.

Working briskly, the woman rubbed the cork in broad strokes across her face. She drew patches of black until all the blanks had been filled in. Then, binoculars in hand, she got up and turned to Alice. She was already blending into the background—her edges were starting to look fuzzy. When she smiled through the blackness, it was like a flashbulb.

"Toodle-oo," she said.

She skulked off, moving, Alice had to admit, much the way a shrubbery would move—assuming for the moment, of course, that a shrubbery could move. Oh, these professionals, what a lot of peachy tricks they knew. Alice fingered her lipstick and went to sit by herself in a stall.

She found it hard to be alone even in the toilet stall. Alongside the one seat, there was an alternative thing. It was parked undeniably in front of the commode and it was smiling at her.

"—Please!"

Alice's attention was torn away from the whatsits. Somebody outside was screaming.

Clearly, something chaotic had entered the ladies' room. It had an urgent word and it would not stop: *"Ple-e-ase!*"

It sounded like a man and it was speedily coming closer. Alice could hear him stampeding straight for her stall. She had no time to—

Through the door burst a petite, dapper man with a smooth face like a china doll's. He petrified himself against the inside of the stall and looked at Alice with desperate eyes.

Fear—it was said that dogs could smell it on people. Fear clung to this particular specimen as though he had rolled in it.

"P-p-please," he said. *"S'il vous plaît. Achtung."*

"Please what?"

"Help," he barely breathed. It touched Alice's heart.

"Relax, Mister," she said. "Here, why don't you have a seat on the, uh."

"The *bidet*."

"Say, what is it, anyways?"

"It's for cleaning up."

"Cleaning up?"

"You know, afterwards," said the man, and turned a knob. Instead of flushing out the bowl, as Alice would have expected, the water squirted straight up.

"Yikes!"

The 'fraidy man turned off the flow and sat down. "Please," he reminded her.

"Oh, for pity's sake," said Alice. "Who are you running from?"

"There's no time for explanations," the man said intensely.

"Then there's no time to waste," she declared in a sudden rush of sympathy. She whipped off her dress and thrust it into the little man's arms.

His face glazed over like a vintage Ming. Alice couldn't tell whether she had dazzled him with the originality of her plan or just scared him some more. He was as wide-eyed and stupefied as a display window dummy.

"Don't just stand there," she said sharply. "Take your clothes off."

Soon she had him down to his drawers. These were quite extraordinary. Knowing it was not polite, however, Agent Nine did her best not to look. "Don't move," she directed as she painted his mouth with Number Thirty-Three. "You'll sperl the Cupid's bow."

Her heightened nerves caught the sound of the lounge door opening. A familiar voice drifted in from the hall. "*Cherchez les* Femmes."

Alice sampled the air: peppermint. Her friend was set to bolt. She rubbed some lipstick on her thumbs and rouged up his cheeks with it. Fortunately, her dress had turned out to be a perfect fit.

She took off her earrings and clicked them onto his ears. Remembering words spoken really not so long ago, she told him: "It's all just paste anyways."

"Thank you," whispered the China doll man. "Grazie. Grácias. Mahalo."

He sashayed out. "Gracious," thought Alice.

She was left in her slip along with a men's dinner outfit, complete but for shoes and socks. She would have to work fast. She sat at her post and wrestled with the boiled dress shirt and collar. The jacket followed with comparative ease, and it was then that the Frenchman—who had been methodically walking all down the row of stalls and opening each door one by one in order to check and see, by that sheerly logical technique known as the process of elimination, whether his victim was hiding in any of them—it was right then that her old French friend arrived at her station. He did not bother to knock.

"'Allo—Agent Nine!" he exclaimed unpleasantly. *"Sans-culotte* and *hors de combat!"*

For the first time, Alice got a look at the face without the mask—and the smile it was cold and the eyes they were bullying. He had been swift to jump to certain conclusions, and had already shelved his sympathy along with his surprise.

He stood over her, his hand playing with his pistol in an absent-minded way.

"Fancy meeting you here, Mademoiselle Alice. A remarkable coincidence—n'est-ce pas?"

Alice was seized with disgust. "Pardon my French," she shouted. "No **#!*#!** men allowed!"

"With regard to convention, Mademoiselle, your argument is doubtless correct. But logically speaking, it appears to be flawed."

Alice grabbed the first thing that was near—it was, once again, Thirty-Three, "Roadhouse Tomato"—and lunged for his logical, methodical, methodological modicum of a face. She made two vivid slashes, as if doing so would cancel him for good and his argument along with him. They smeared a big X on his face in lipstick.

Monsieur dabbed at his nose with a white-gloved hand. A red spot came away on his finger. "A *tour de force*," he said, and tried unsteadily to smile. Then he fainted.

Alice pulled on her pants, tucked in her shirt, got up and looked down at the logician. He had crumpled up in a heap at the lip of the bidet. She seized him by the back of his collar and dragged his head over the basin. She turned the knob. Up squirted the water; it sprayed his face and dissolved some of the lipstick, stirring up crimson streaks of liquid that dripped back down into the bowl.

He came to, staring into what seemed to be a bidetful of blood.

"*Nom d'un nom*," he mourned. "It's *déjà vu* all over *encore*."

Alice escorted him out as far the lounge. He lost no time. That took care of that!

At the first sign of trouble, everybody else had prudently abandoned the field. Even the music hole was silent. She had the place to herself.

Once again, she approached the mirror. Excepting the men's clothing, she looked about the same as before. A thousand haggard Alices squinted back at her; they came as close as the surface of the glass and were backed up all the way to the vanishing point. *"Sang frerd,"* she said to herself.

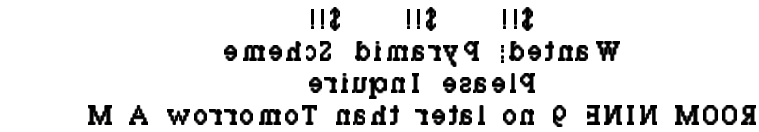
She drew in yet closer, but she was no longer really looking at her reflection. If she had been, she would have noticed the tip of her tongue just sticking through her lips to one side. Agent Nine was concentrating.

In her right hand, she still wielded the lipstick. She printed on the mirror in big, neat letters. Once finished, she climbed up on the counter and put her mouth at the brass-lined hole in the ceiling.

"Music, please," she said.

A clarinet player at the other end of the tube struck it up—a little sheepishly, but sweet nonetheless.

This is what the message said.



Agent Nine stepped back to admire her craft. The twin mirrors splashed her backwards-mirror-writing back and forth across the breadth of the room. Her proposition was flirting with itself.

"And if that don't do the trick," she concluded, "I simply do not know, because my cosmetic is worn down to a stump."

END OF PART FOUR.
TUNE IN AGAIN NEXT MONTH (on-line) FOR MORE
OF ALICE'S ADVENTURES OVERSEAS,
IN THE NEXT ISTALLMENT OF
AGENT NINE

> Time was when readers kept commonplace books. Whenever they came across a pithy passage, they copied it into a notebook under an appropriate heading, adding observations made in the course of daily life. Erasmus instructed them how to do it; and if they did not have access to his popular *De Copia*, they consulted printed models or the local schoolmaster. The practice spread everywhere in early modern England, among ordinary readers as well as famous writers like Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson, John Milton, and John Locke. It involved a very special way of taking in the printed word. Unlike modern readers, who follow the flow of a narrative from beginning to end, early modern Englishmen read in fits and starts and jumped from book to book. They broke texts into fragments and assembled them into new patterns by transcribing them in different sections of their notebooks. Then they reread the copies and rearranged the patterns while adding more excerpts. Reading and writing were therefore inseparable activities. They belonged to a continuous effort to make sense of things, for the world was full of signs: you could read your way through it; and by keeping an account of your readings, you made a book of your own, one stamped with your personality.
>
> Robert Darnton
> "Extraordinary Commonplaces"
> *The New York Review of Books*, December 21, 2000

&&&&&&

The Blank Page

We are each a chapter house: we are a monk
inscribing his page by winter light:
holding off with willed calm our common dread;
aware of the clinked-coin noise at our gate.
New York, 1992

—

It was the end of the year but not of hypocrisy, banality, and unsubtle thuggery, nor gabbling hysteria. Oh, we were tired. Wouldn't politics, let alone the damned economy, please just shut up? I turned toward Little Muddyfoot, but her blank gaze revealed nothing. Was the word "thuggery" overstating it? Nobody had drawn a gun, after all. No response. Well, then, what about "the healing process," "compassion" – sorry, not compassion – "compassionate conservatism," "no bipartisan bickering": anything credible there? Nothing doing. I persisted. Could you follow Justice Scalia's reasoning? No change, though I thought her face had tightened. All right, Justice Stevens' opinion: is that where we stand? Her eyes – green eyes, seer's eyes – looked into the distance. She was only a marionette, a little wooden jointed object born in a farmyard in Central Europe. How much of the world had she seen? I felt I had hoped for too much and left myself wide open.

Then it began to snow, and it snowed all day. Afterward, it was very, very quiet. I thought for a while about my dead. If any one thing had been altered, all that followed would have been different. What one thing would I have altered? Nothing, I decided, for the thousandth time. I carried a bottle of fine Madeira into the study and promised myself a contemplative glass.

For months, slowly, I had been trying to read John Felstiner's beautiful literary biography of Paul Celan. Slowly, by no more than one line in any day, I approached the poems. In the car I kept an audio book of INVISIBLE MAN, Joe Morton reading all of those voices Ellison had caught on the page, infusing them with the grief, pain, anger, the pure delirious humor, the language, Ellison had unloosed from the page. Though forgetting nothing I played the tapes rarely, only as often as I could bear to. I wondered about this.

I had watched a documentary about the present Pope. It was a serious, complex study of this man of God and the Virgin, of whom I am so wary. I could not stop thinking about one thing in particular. The Pope believes that people who have not known suffering have not lived full lives. He does not advocate suffering, it was said, but (he knows that) it exists. He has witnessed suffering. He believes those who are able to endure it are somehow deepened in their humanity.

I thought this must be so. In his observation, those who have not suffered are, by implication, the capitalist (American) middle class. What is the virtue of this class, that is, its historical nature, but frantic acquisition against the fear of dispossession, acquiescence in the dismantling of public social relations, and neurotic or calculated self-interest? What is the suffering of this class?

We bow before the suffering of individuals. How could I ignore the man diagnosed with melanoma, the woman who found herself without home or position, the woman with voice ragged from the emotional derangement of her body, the man whose longed-for marriage had become infirm? These were friends of my heart. How could I think of them as instruments of capital? They were alert, schooled, thoughtful adults, who did not know each other, though I knew them all. A great writer, also a Pole, Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski, observed, "In vain had books taught him of human perversity and the disasters that clung like shadows to man's fate; his heart refused to believe what his eyes read." I, at least, was that man of whom Herling wrote.

I drew back. It was distressing even to imply a comparison of the scales of human suffering. Rather, my unease had been set off by some kind of warning noise, it occurred to me; a cacophony. I won't storm at God or the middle class just now, I thought, but try to listen to the irritating sound.

—

Clinked coins at the gate.

—

An editor in New York named Ben Gerson used to say that the public liked George Bush because they saw compromise in his face, the face of a man who had abandoned his principles, and it made them feel less lonely. Our new president was going to be that man's son. He, the son, was not learned or well-read, nor widely-traveled, nor worldly; often spoke incoherently; did not seem brave. He was a man who had made a comfortable amount of money from relatively small investments and become governor of his state; no other accomplishments, pubic or private, were reported. One had no sense of his mind, how it moved, what nourished it.

Since election day, a sense of discontinuity had fallen over me. Whatever had been true of our national life the day before, it felt, somehow no longer was. A shift had occurred, so that as we went forward we could no longer look behind and see what we had come from; the past was obscured and irrelevant. It was a feeling of unmooring, not easily described but almost tangible. I recalled Natalia Ginzburg's essay "The Little Virtues,"

which begins, "As far as the education of children is concerned I think they should be taught not the little virtues but the great ones. Not thrift but generosity and an indifference to money; not caution but courage and a contempt for danger; not shrewdness but frankness and a love of truth; not tact but love for one's neighbor and self-denial; not a desire for success but a desire to be and to know."

The education of children is much more haphazard than the public likes to believe, for kids are in the hands of the culture, as it is called, more readily than of their parents, and "the culture" is rank with the little virtues, particularly the last one. Natalia Ginzburg had written of a different time than ours, but her observations sounded warm. I went on reading.

"Usually we do just the opposite; we rush to teach them a respect for the little virtues, on which we build our whole system of education. In doing this we are choosing the easiest way, because the little virtues do not involve any actual dangers, indeed they provide shelter from Fortune's blows. We do not bother to teach the great virtues, though we love them and want our children to have them; but we nourish the hope that they will spontaneously appear in their consciousness some day in the future, we think of them as part of our instinctive nature, while the others, the little virtues, seem to be the result of reflection and calculation and so we think that they absolutely must be taught."

Yes, she was right; I recognized the noise of calculation. A moment later I read the following: "Now I believe that a climate which is completely pervaded by a respect for the little virtues will, insensibly, lead to cynicism or a fear of life. In themselves the little virtues have nothing to do with cynicism or a fear of life, but taken together, and without the great virtues, they produce an atmosphere that leads to these consequences."

This was the essay I wanted. I had been thinking about the nature of authority and how, since the Sixties, I supposed, "respect for authority" had gone away and been replaced nationally by a kind of – of what? Anarchy wasn't the right word, nor chaos. The lives of many people were now rigorously controlled, in fact, to such a degree that when they sat at computers in the places where they worked, their very key strokes could be counted and their time-travels on the internet monitored (and censured if desired), and such spied-out data were added up to become part of what was called (amazingly) "productivity," on which an index of our economy depended. Disrespect was what had replaced authority. I didn't mean, disrespect for authority; I meant something like the opposite: the lack of respect of authority for human dignity.

I did think this, I realized, because (I saw) so many of those "in authority" believed that each man and woman had a price, for buying and selling. Ideas could be sold to the public; the people had to market themselves, their values, their talents, in order to make even a decent living; and many indecent livings were to be made. At the end of the year, "success" was a very little virtue.

During the noise of the campaigns I had heard nothing like Natalia Ginzburg's ideas said by a public person. Moved by that thought, I sat and typed parts of it into my commonplace book, and as I wrote I thought of John Locke's belief that a newborn child was like a blank page on which the form of his world could be impressed. I did not think this was entirely so. A child is not a blank page; but the world forms it nonetheless, and I did not want that world, the world as it is now, cut off from what had gone before. Writing the lines, I linked myself more finely and strongly to literature, which does not obscure the past and illuminates the present. Doing this did not put me at ease, but it made my unease bearable.

"In our relationships with our children it is no use our trying to remember and imitate the way our parents acted with us…. They were authoritarian towards us in a way

that we are quite incapable of being. Strong in their principles, which they believed to be indestructible, they reigned over us with absolute power. They deafened us with their thunderous words: a dialogue was impossible because as soon as they suspected that they were wrong they ordered us to be quiet: they beat their fists on the table and made the room shake. We remember that gesture but we cannot copy it. We can fly into a rage and howl like wolves, but deep in our wolf's howl there lies a hysterical sob, the hoarse bleating of a lamb.

"And so we have no authority; we have no weapons. Authority in us would be a hypocrisy and a sham. We are too aware of our own weakness, too melancholy and insecure, too conscious of our illogicality and incoherence, too conscious of our faults; we have looked within ourselves for too long and seen too many things there. And so as we don't have authority we must invent another kind of relationship."

-KM

Books mentioned:

John Felstiner, PAUL CELAN POET, SURVIVOR, JEW (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995)
Paul Celan, SELECTED POEMS AND PROSE OF PAUL CELAN. Tr.from the German by John Felstiner (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001)
Ralph Ellison, INVISIBLE MAN (New York: Random House Audiobooks, unabridged, read by Joe Morton)
Natalia Ginzburg, THE LITTLE VIRTUES. Tr. from the Italian by Dick Davis (New York: Arcade Publishing, p.b. 1989)

Video:

"John Paul II: The Millennial Pope," Helen Whitney, producer. Helen Whitney and Jane Barnes, writers. *Frontline*, PBS airdate 9/28/99

Previous Endnotes:

> "'Think how we would be punished in this world, if we neither loved learning ourselves or let other men love it: that we had the name of Christians only, and few of the virtues.' (King Alfred, on sending the bishops his translation of Pope Gregory's *Pastoral Care*)
>
> "He remembers how the Greeks translated every text into their own language, and he encourages this practice in his bishops, so that what is locked in Latin, and so kept from the people, will be set free in their understanding."
>
> William Gass,
> "Flattery and Whingeing,"
> *London Review of Books*, 5 Oct. 2000

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A friend of Archipelago *suggests some books worth reading:*

Anthony Baker writes on flintknapping:

Clearly I was not about to learn flint knapping from a book, especially one titled HOW TO MAKE ARROWHEADS that came with a money-back guarantee. Scattered at my feet were hundreds of sharp stone chips, the debitage from blows dealt to ten pounds of obsidian purchased from a rock and gem shop. Flint knapping has a language hundreds of thousands of years old, and I was stuck in the Paleolithic, practically mute.

My search for a teacher was half hearted and constrained by what I thought were the marginal resources at hand. There were no flint knappers listed in the Yellow Pages. Later I was to learn from books written by master flint knappers, and I would drive twenty five hundred miles to take a course offered by one who made a living replicating stone tools and weapons.

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Modern flint knappers use tools make of moose, elk and deer antler, not so much to stay true to the manufacturing methods of our ancestors, but because the antler is moderately soft, and the removal of long thinning flakes across the stone is more likely to be accomplished than with a harder tool. Hammers of rock can be, and were, used. In particular, hand-held rocks were used to break boulders into more manageable sizes. The tools and techniques involved in the manufacturing of stone tools are diverse and were recorded by explorers and anthropologists from the first white landfall until Ishi, the "last wild Indian," walked out of the hills above Oroville, California, in 1911.

In 1916, the Bureau of American Ethnology published Bulletin 60, "Handbook of Aboriginal American Antiquities," a book exhaustively detailing the practices of the lithic industries. This was an era of broad experimentation and research within the field, and a time when ancient villages and quarries often existed in pristine state awaiting the shovel of the archaeologist. In this work are sketches and photographs of superb examples of stone-working craftsmanship.

But for a huge span of time, simple unimproved rocks were an extension of the throwing and pounding hand of early man-like creatures. Two million years ago, the enlarged cranial capacity of Early Homo endowed our ancestors with the capability of manufacturing a tool by modifying an untamed rock. A stone with several chips knocked from opposing sides provided a wavy but effective slicing edge.

Place your foot on the belly of a large dead animal and try pulling off a meaty thigh by brute force. Much easier to dismember your meal selection, sling it over your shoulder and carry it back to camp.

For tens of thousand of years these simple tools were the rage of modernity.

The primitive simple-edge worked. A few more flakes removed from a side and the longer edge is more effective, but is still a broken cobble of meager design. After a few hundred thousand years of study, our ancestors were removing flakes in an alternative pattern from both sides, creating two edges and two worked surfaces. The rounded river cobble had lost most of its original form; and, efficiently, this method of reduction invariably leads to an implement with a point. Now we have a hand-ax, a tool that can be employed in any number of crushing, cutting, slicing, dicing, digging operations.

This hand-ax form, in size roughly that of an avocado with edges or a large russet potato with a point, is about all that a flint knapper of today can manage to produce after a few days of practice. Technologically, we can skip over distant millennia of the far past, but our mechanical skills, temporarily, are still a couple of hundred thousand years old.

When I was learning from that booklet with a money-back guarantee, my attempts were directed toward duplicating the arrowheads I discovered while walking the plowed fields of my youth: well-crafted long, thin, pointy objects. Flint knapping is a skill of reduction. Like sculpting, one starts with an ungainly mass and subtracts material until the goal of form is realized. I was skipping important stages in the reduction process.

When I was searching for scholarly works on lithic technologies, the Smithsonian Institution provided me with relevant titles culled from its List of Publications of the Bureau of American Ethnology. The Smithsonian gave me, also, the name of an anthropologist working on a paleo-Indian site in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. E.C. was a flint knapper of consummate skill and, of all wonders, was teaching a Lithic Technology course that summer in Oregon.

Before I left for Burns, Oregon, I haunted the local antiquarian bookstores, armed with a bibliography of works pertinent to the craft of flint knapping. I purchased a weighty government publication, the "Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology 1894." Within was an article by William Henry Holmes, "Stone Implements of the Potomac-Chesapeake Tidewater Province."

Holmes conducted his research in what is now Rock Creek Park. This woodland still exists, undisturbed, within the residential corridors of northwest Washington, D.C. It was here that Holmes and crew explored the vast stone workshops of the prehistoric native population.

Water-rounded cobbles of very hard but flakeable quartzite are packed into the bluffs and valley floors by the thousands. This quarry was mined for hundreds of years by the Indians, and the resulting debitage, waste flakes of the manufacturing process, could be measured in tons. Hundreds of crude tools and tool-like objects were also unearthed.

Professional and amateur archaeologists working in North America were finding crude tools and implements of stone that in appearance matched those of European manufacture and dated to the Paleolithic, the era of hand-axes, cleaver-like instruments, and utilized flakes. Holmes ascertained that the "primitive" tools excavated in Rock Creek were actually waste from the flint knapping industry of the recent historical past. They were preforms or tools broken, discarded, or found unsuitable for use.

His drawings and plated photographs are minutely descriptive and display through excavated example the eight- or ten-step methodology used in the reduction process, from cobble to completed tool.

My tools were thick and clumsy, too bulky to attach to a handle or a shaft. In weaponry there is a mathematical ratio of required thickness to length and width. A projectile must be aerodynamic, its trajectory true to the shooter's aim. Upon arrival it has to be thin and sharp enough to pierce the skin of the victim.

"Stone-Worker's Progress A Study of Stone Implements in the Pitt Rivers Museum" by Sir Francis Knowles was found serendipitously in a box on the floor at a library sale. This slim volume bound in plain gray wraps, was responsible for a minor epiphany.

From the preface: "...the writer made the first fully clear and literate presentation of the 'turned edge', or prepared marginal striking platform necessary for getting good flakes across from both sides to meet and make a thin section."

In my eagerness I had been crushing the sharp edge, and the energy sent through the stone was undirected and quickly dissipated. Periodically grinding the sharp wavy edge will leave a dulled thick area at the apex of each wave. Striking these thickened "platforms" with a billet allows the energy to dissipate evenly, and this energy will seek a wider, longer margin of diffusion. The flake is actually being "pushed" off the stone. Flaked tools are made from stone that is isotropic in nature, made up of hard consolidated material, and will fracture in any direction that a force is applied.

An open cardboard square fourteen inches on a side can represent an unbroken stone. Setting it on one corner will leave two corners in a vertical position, and two corners on a horizontal plane. As you push down on the vertical tip, the square will begin to flatten, and the horizontal or diagonal plane becomes longer. Many of my tools had a thickness-to-width ratio of two to one, like the box half-flattened; similar in shape to the rejects Holmes found in Rock Creek Park. To make a model of an ideal tool cross-section, keep pressing on the top corner until the thickness of the square is four inches between the vertical corners, and the width (diagonal/horizontal) becomes twenty eight inches long.

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Europeans of the late middle ages considered stone arrowheads the darts of mischievous woodland elves. Large, shapely Neolithic daggers of stone, supposed the product of lightening bolts, were kept in a place of reverence within the home, for everyone knows lightning never strikes in the same place twice. Civilization created employment for flint knappers when the ancient flint quarries in Brandon, England, were reopened. In Brandon, workers with specialized metal hammers made squared bits of stone for the flint-lock rifle and sparkers for the metal and flint "strike a lights," the precursor of the match.

If we can pinpoint the era of modern flint knapping, we might date it to Victorian Britain. Flint tools were being found in ancient river gravels and reputable scientists were attributing these to the hands of early man. Edward (Flint Jack) Simpson made replicas of these artifacts, tumbled and chemically treated them, and sold his "finds" to museums and the public.

François Bordes, an authority on the French Paleolithic, filmed his flint work for the education of others. Don Crabtree of the United States made exact replicas of fine stone points found on prehistoric Indian sites. In Africa, Louis Leakey made stone tools in order to understand their use in the past. In remote parts of New Guinea, flaked, polished and hafted tools are still manufactured, the art having never died.

Today a few hundred people are self-employed as full time flint knappers, and the ranks of hobbyists and aficionados number in the thousands. Web sites offer stone and flint knapping kits and some sell exotic material such as knappable fiber-optic blanks that come in a rainbow of vibrant colors. Diamond-sawn fully shaped blanks are available. Like

painting by numbers, one completes the spear point by flaking across the faces; instant flintknapping.

Anthony Baker timshelbks@earthlink.net is a builder and the owner of Timshel Books http://www.abebooks.com/home/TIMSHEL/, specializing in books about Indians north of Mexico.

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Waldorf, D.C. THE ART OF FLINTKNAPPING. Self-Published
Wilson, Thomas. "Arrowpoints, Spearheads, and Knives of Prehistoric Times," Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for the year ending 1897. Washington D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution.

All these books are available by searching the data base of the on-line book consortium Advanced Book Exchange (ABEbooks.com). Original early Smithsonian reports will cost one or two hundred dollars. For those interested in reading further on the subject of flint knapping without spending a lot of money, I would recommend the following:
THE ART OF FLINT KNAPPING. The author is a skilled flintknapper; many photographs and illustrations enhance the text. MAKING SILENT STONES SPEAK. Authors write eloquently on human evolution and the dawn of technology. Hundreds of illustrations. THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF WILLIAM HENRY HOLMES. A Smithsonian reprint containing "Natural History of Flaked Stone Implements" and "Stone Implements of the Potomac-Chesapeake Tidewater Province."

-A.B.

Interesting Sites and Resources

Annotation

As *Archipelago* ends 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 thenative 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.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. http://www3.itu.int/udhr/ A reminder of our rights and our responsibility to those whose human rights are endangered, at home and abroad.

Centenary

Hubert Butler (1900-1991) http://www.hubertbutler.com, the Anglo-Irish essayist who is now recognized as a writer of international stature, was honored at a celebration of his centenary in Kilkenny, Ireland, on the weekend of October 20-22, 2000. Among the distinguished guests and speakers were John Banville, **John Casey**, Roy Foster, Neal Ascherson. The site devoted to him is being developed as a resource for readers and scholars. Hubert Butler's disturbing essay "The Artukovitch File" appeared in *Archipelago*, Vol. 1, No. 2. John Casey is a Contributing Editor of *Archipelago*.

In this Issue

Etel Adnan An Interview with Jane Miller http://www.poetry.org/alltext/intmil.htm
_____ An interview with *Al Jadid* about the novel THERE
http://www.aljadid.com/interviews/0423adnan.html
The Post Apollo Press http://www.dnai.com/~tpapress
Simone Fattal A *Rain Taxi* Interview with the publisher of Post Apollo Press
http://www.raintaxi.com/fattal.html.

The Maly Theatre Company. The excellent Russian acting company from St. Petersburg, written about elsewhere in this issue. A sampling of reviews appears in an Austrialian newspaper http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-April-1996/Bramwell.html, and New York http://www.theatermania.com/news/feature/index.cfm?story=882&cid=1:
"Ultimately, however, the Maly Theatre is a social theater, and Dodin's often-harrowing stage compositions have been designed as instructional tools. Addressing his fellow Russians, the director utilizes Brothers and Sisters to demonstrate that after his countrymen defeated fascism in Germany, they participated in the even more ruthless destruction of themselves. He credits their misguided belief that an imminent Communist paradise would compensate for all of their suffering for this unholy phenomenon. Dodin's six-hour display of this devastation is his attempt to urge finally to learn how to live more beneficial lives."

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.

Mercury House http://www.slip.net/~apologia/home.html is an estimable non-profit literary publisher, some of whose authors are Alfred Arteaga (*Archipelago* Vol. 1, No. 3), Robert Louis Stevenson, Joseph von Sternberg, the Italian fabulist I.U. Tarchetti (PASSION; FANTASTIC TALES), and a number of personal writings about the Holocaust. In March 2001 they will publish NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH http://www.slip.net/~apologia/mcnamara.html, by Katherine McNamara. A short excerpt is available; a chapter, "The Repetition of Their Days," appeared in *Archipelago* Vol. 2, No. 2.

Rattapallax http://www.rattapallax.com is a first-rate electronic/digital publisher, directed by Ram Devineni, who named the press after Wallace Stevens's word for the sound of thunder. The press publishes poets and poetry. It offers e-books and books on paper, with CDs. The literary review *Rattapallax*, which comes with a CD of poets reading their work, is available only through bookshops. We talk about this press in our conversation with Calvin Reid about electronic publishing, in this issue.

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 *Archipelago* 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, appeared in *Archipelago* 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 Hrabal (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

<i>iola</I> 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.

Utopia http://www.nypl.org/utopia, the fascinating exhibit on "The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World," on till January 27, 2001, at the New York Public Library, and co-curated by that library and the Bibliothèque national de France, has both physical and virtual installations. Beautiful books about a beautiful, or terrifying, subject of Western thought and social experiments are handsomely displayed; but the web site offers another dimension entirely. Handsome flash art; serious, even profound matter; marvelous resources including bibliographies and links. A research site to bookmark.

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, No. 1.

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.

Web del Sol http://webdelsol.com is the invaluable old stand-by we've consulted for years, configured gorgeously into an almost dizzying assemblage of literary web sites (we couldn't do without the Links page http://webdelsol.com/HOTSOL), portal to vast riches of poetry residing in distant nodes of the web or right under our fingertips. (It plays music, too.) The editor, Michael Neff, was kind enough to write of *Archipelago*: "You have a superb magazine, and it elevates all who engage in online publishing of serious work."

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.

Organizations

Academy of American Poets http://www.poets.org/index.cfm has revised its site and made it a useful one for poets and those wishing to find poets, books of poetry, links to other sites, and a reaffirmation of the necessity of poetry in ordinary life.

Council of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP) URL has long been a useful source of advice and information for small presses and literary magazines. They are developing a new web site and hope to expand their membership to publishers on the web.

Poetry Ireland Éigse Éirann http://www.poetryireland.ie is a fine resource for Irish writers and the best way for readers at home and abroad to find poets and novelists, their works, and other necessary information. They publish a fine review and sponsor an excellent program of translation, pairing international and Irish writers to bring remarkable poetry into English; and they publish the volumes resulting from these collaborations. They are located in the Dublin Castle: superb way of turning that ancient seat of imperial power into a benign center of the word. They are funded by all thirty-two counties.

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." One of its founding directors 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 Electronic 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. Since early summer, more than 1,000,000 (one million) e-books have been shipped from this site. People are reading. We knew that.

Dialog Among Civilizations http://www.dialoguepoetry.org. Rattapallax Press is organizing a "Dialogue Among Civilizations Through Poetry," with readings at the U. N. featuring Yusef Komunyakaa, Joyce Carol Oates, and others, and in more than one hundred cities and international sites, hundreds of poets. A literary conference at the U. N. will be moderated by John Kinsella, and organized by Poetry International Rotterdam http://www.poetry.nl/algemeen/home.html.

Alt-X http://www.altx.com/index2.html is Mark Amerika's smart, sharp performance-artist/publishing/writing/cultural-critical scene. His PHON-E-ME virtual installation at the Walker Art Center, for instance, is brilliant. We talk about his work in this issue with Calvin Reid. See, also, Joe Tabbi's http://phoneme.walkerart.org/tabbi.html challenging, thoughtful review of Mark Amerika's writing and why we ought to read it well.

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.

Graphic Novels. Fantagraphics http://www.fantagraphics.com is a good entry-point if you are looking for more work by graphic artists and writers like Chris Ware (JIMMY CORRIGAN), Dan Clowes, Jessica Abel, and others whose work is worth watching. We read graphic novels for their complexity, intensity, and edge-of-despair wit. We began with Franz Masreel (1898-1972) (PASSIONATE JOURNEY, A Novel Told in 165 Woodcuts with an introduction by Thomas Mann, Penguin; LANDSCAPES AND VOICES, Schocken), and haven't stopped finding new artists.

Béatrice Coron http://idt.net/~beart is a paper cutter of exquisite sensibility and the steadiest of hands. Her books are worth collecting. Her motto is "Papercutting in Action."