either I am much mistaken
or this will prove
the most famous adventure
ever seen
But beneath the influence of my star I journey the narrow path of knight errantry, in which exercise I despise wealth, but not honor. I have redressed grievances, set right wrongs, punished insolences, conquered giants, and trampled down fiends. I am in love, only because knights errant are obliged to be so; and, being so, I am not one of those depraved lovers, but of the continent and platonic sort. I always direct my purposes to virtuous ends, and do good to all and ill to none.

—DON QUIXOTE

Look at the destination marker

By Paul O’Connor, C.S.B.

When I got on the bus that day on my way to work I was surprised to see how few people there were on it. Usually it was crowded at that time in the afternoon, but today there were only three people.

At the next stop after I got in, the bus stopped and let in an old lady. She sat down on the long seat near the driver to get change out of her purse. No one else on the bus was talking, so her voice sounded loud when she spoke. "I waited for this bus here yesterday and it was a half hour late. That was the first time that ever happened to me on this line." She was not angry, she was merely passing along information to the driver. "How much is it again? I always forget."

"Twenty cents, lady."

"Last week I took the wrong bus and it was five blocks before I knew it. I had to walk five blocks back and wait for another bus." She got up and put her money in the slot and then sat down again on the same long seat. She was the only one on it. "I thought the bus was going up town, but it turned down another street. I never saw that bus before, I had to walk back five blocks."

"It runs once every three hours, lady, you should look at the destination marker before you get on a bus." The driver stopped for a light and the old lady was silent. The bus started up again and I saw the old lady put her purse down next to her on the seat. Then she began to bend over from the side as if she were going to lie down on the seat. She almost did lie
down, but just before her head touched the seat she fell to the floor. She uttered no sound. I watched all this in silence and amazement. No one stood up, no one said anything. The driver saw what happened and stopped the bus on the side of the street. As he rushed out to call an ambulance he told us not to leave the bus. All four of us were still in our seats. A girl two seats ahead of me turned and asked me please to come up. I walked up and as I stood next to her seat, she stood up. The old lady lay in the isle on her back. A boy who was about twenty came up from the back of the bus. A middle-aged woman sat in the back of the bus and looked out the window. The three of us standing in the front looked at the old woman. Her head was cut and slowly bleeding. "She must have hit her head on the base of the seat when she fell," I said. The boy bent down and felt her pulse, "it's weak," he mumbled. We all stood there and watched a big vein in her feet. It would pulse very quickly and then slow down and almost stop. Then it would speed up again. No one said anything for a while. Everyone stared at the old lady and the vein on her foot. I broke the silence. "I thought she was going to lie down on the seat, then she fell." The girl said that she just heard this funny noise and looked up and saw the old lady on the floor. We all watched the vein stop pulsing, and then start up again, slowly. The driver ran back into the bus; he was sweating and white.

"Did she fall because I started the bus too quick?"

"She started to lie down and then fell. It wasn't because the bus started too fast, don't worry about that," I said.

"I have been pushing a bus for twenty years and nothing like this has ever happened before." The vein in the old lady's foot was jumping very fast again and all of a sudden it stopped. We waited to see it start again. "You will have to put your name and addresses on this as a witness," he called back to her.

"Yes, yes," she answered. I walked back and handed it to her. She took it without looking up and began to fill it out. I came back and stood next to the girl.

"In twenty years nothing like this happened before. I don't think I started the bus too quick."

"It looked like she had a stroke," said the young man.

The girl sat down and said, "I think she is dead."

"Twenty years and this kind of thing never happened before." The three of us in front filled out our forms and handed them over to the driver. I went back and got the woman's in the back of the bus. She handed it to me and looked out the window.

The driver opened the back door and told us to get on the bus that had pulled up next to ours. As we drove away, I heard the mechanical wail of an ambulance siren.

OLD MRS. CRAKER

old Mrs. Craker, the widow lady, rocked gaily in her chair, laughed a high cackling old lady laugh, grabbed the jug with both wizened hands, tilted her old gray head, and drank like a demon.

setting the jug down again, she laughed some more in her empty parlour, and swore softly to herself, that she reasoned, she just reasoned, she could rape a full grown bear, in under three minutes, even at eighty-three.

then another artery hardened, and she soon forgot all about it.

—W. PATRICK POST
TIME
LIKE A GREAT
INVISIBLE GYROSCOPE
CHURNING EFFORTLESSLY
PASSED BY THE WINDOW OF MY MIND,
TURNED THE CORNER
ONTOS THE STREET OF FORGETFULNESS,
IT STIRRED THE AIR
DISTURBING THE FIBROUS GRAY SHIELD
WHICH HAD SETTLED GENTLY OVER
A RED FIRE TRUCK
ONE-ARMED BEAR
STAMP ALBUM ONE-TENTH FILLED
AND THE DYING SWIRL OF A TOP
SUDDENLY THEY CAME
MARCHING OUT OF THEIR SHELLS
AND FOUND THEIR WAY
INTO THE QUARRIES OF MY SOUL
—DAVE FISHER

CHINESE MAPLE
When I was a boy and just growing up
there was a small tree that blossomed
in bright red leaves where
When I was a boy would say that
the day had begun.
but little boys grow tired
and leaves fall down on a day
and the air is cold and the tree is bare
When I was a man hidden in
the snow-muffled world outside,
There was no chinese maple . . . .
—PAUL FERRARI, C.S.B.
GOING ON TEN

By E. P. WALZ

All of a sudden, on Christmas Eve, my old dog Prince decided to die. Me and my dad found him the next day stretched out in front of his doghouse with his leash all twisted around the old chestnut tree. My dad said that he probably died of a broken heart because he couldn’t catch Santa Claus and his reindeer (he thought I still believed in him). But I once heard that when dogs get old they sometimes die of mistemper. Besides, old Prince never would have noticed Santa, because as my dad used to say, “He’s deaf in one ear and can’t hear a thing out of the other,” and he was getting kind of blind too. He was real old, old Prince was. He and I were the same people age, nine, but in dog’s age he was a lot older, older than my grandmother who used to stay in bed all the time and cry every time me and my dad went to see her. Old Prince didn’t stay in bed though, and he never cried, except for one time when my big brother hit him in the side with a football. But, as I said, old Prince died, so me and my dad scraped away some snow, dug a hole, and buried him. We even put a wooden cross on his grave.

The next week, on New Year’s Day, we were going to have a Mass for old Prince on the old picnic table behind our garage, with me being priest and Scott and Peter being the altarboys. But it was miserable cold, and I didn’t know if you were allowed to say Mass for dogs. So we didn’t have anything to do. Especially since we couldn’t go over and play in Scott’s house. During the winter we usually had our clubhouse in his fruitcellar, but his aunt Rita was visiting so we couldn’t play there. His aunt Rita was real fussy. Well, we didn’t have anything to do, so we were just walking on the sidewalk and trying to make snowballs, which usually busted when we threw them hard at trees and trucks and buses. We weren’t doing much talking either; we were just walking along kicking snow and not doing much of anything.

When we got to Jenny’s Variety Store, which was at the corner, we all stopped to look in the window. It was a big window, and in the wintertime it was usually all frosty, and it had a crack where one of the bigger boys had hit it with a snowball. It also had a silver ledge underneath it which Scott once put his tongue on and got stuck.

“How about some candy,” said Scott, keeping away from the ledge.

“No, it’s too cold”, I said, “it’ll be too hard to eat.”

“How about some cigarettes then?” This was Peter. He was the youngest, being only eight and a half, while Scott was nine and a half and I was going on ten. But his brother was real big and tough and once got in a fight with my brother and gave him a split lip.

“Candy cigarettes?” I questioned, looking real mad because I’d just said it was too cold for candy.

“No, real ones.”

Scott and I just stared at him, we didn’t know what to say. Finally I told him so, I didn’t feel like having any today. Peter called me a chicken and said that I never smoked a cigarette in my whole life. I told him that I smoked more than he ever thought of smoking, but that I wasn’t in the mood right now, and besides, I didn’t have enough money.

“We can pool our money,” yelled Peter, “they only cost a quarter. I know because I’ve gotten some for my big brother.”

I didn’t want to stand there and argue forever, and we really didn’t have anything to do, and Scott was giving me the funny eye, so I gave in to them. We each chipped in eight cents and Peter put in the extra penny. But he and Scott waited outside while I went in.
There were two other people in the store besides me and the man that owned it. An old man was being waited on at the magazine counter. Over by the Greeting Cards there was a lady, but I couldn't tell if she was young or old because she had her nose buried in some cards. I pulled my collar up and tipped the brim of my hat down like I'd seen in the movies and on television so that the man couldn't recognize me. I stopped and flipped through a couple of comics on the book rack. I even looked at the candy counter to make everything seem natural. When the old man began to leave, I headed for the cigarette counter.

"Can I have a pack of cigarettes for my father?" I said, going as fast as I could.

"What kind does he smoke, son?" the man asked.

I didn't know what to say. The woman started to come over from the card rack. I hesitated. The man behind the counter seemed to squint so as to get a better look at my face.

"Luckies," I squeaked. I could feel the tears running down my cheeks.

"That'll be a quarter, son," he said loudly.

I dropped the money onto the little round pad with the little nipples on it and reached for the pack of cigarettes. Just then I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"Hi, Gene, since when did your father start smoking?" It was Peter's mother, she had been looking for a Birthday card.

I dropped the cigarettes and raced for the door. They were both calling after me, Peter's mother and the store owner. But I didn't stop. I didn't even stop for Peter and Scott. It wasn't until I was in my garage that I stopped running. Right then and there I promised old Prince that I would never smoke a single cigarette in my whole life. After all, I never smoked one when he was alive, and just because he had to die was no reason for me to start. But most important, I promised not to tell another lie, because my dad had told both me and old Prince that it never came to anything but no good.

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ON RETURNING TO THE HILL

I have come back, and now
I am alone here.
Ragged puddles
reflect the twilight sky.
They lie as the discarded women's sobs
across this silent chaos
of mud: the footprint fossil
of an afternoon.
Turbid rivulets
wander down the hillside;
thick-choked and trying to forget
they blindly run.
The sky's gray muscled side
is pierced now by another lance.
The horizoned heart of sun
bleeds crimsonly its light upon the Hill;
and soon the wound is run:
the muscled sky has turned black carrion.
But so much deeper is the hill's red stain.

—RAY PAVELSKY

LONELINESS

the spartan unleashed
in the lively athenian camps at harvest time.

—DAVE FISHER
Interpolation Problem by IBM 1620, as Told to DAVE REID

Editor's Note: The increasingly important role played by computers in our modern world has not passed by the staff of this magazine unnoticed. Indeed, we can even foresee a new use for these mechanical masterminds—the writing of poetry. To prove our point, we bring to your attention part of a simple math problem. But note the view of life it presents, especially in the last ten lines.

Step 27 \( W = (Z - X(1)) / .05 \)
\[ A = T(J,1) \]
\[ B = W^* (D(1,1-1) + D(1,1)) / 2. \]
\[ C = W^* W^* D(2,1-1) / 2. \]
\[ P = W^* (W^* W - 1) * (D(3,1-2) + D(3,1-1)) / 12. \]
\[ Q = W^* W^* W^* (W^* W - 4) * (D(5,1-3) + D(5,1-2)) / 240. \]
\[ F = W^* W^* W^* (W^* W - 4) * (D(5,1-3) + D(5,1-2)) / 240. \]
\[ P = W^* W^* (W^* W - 4) * (D(5,1-3) + D(5,1-2)) / 240. \]
\[ \text{ANS} = A + B + C + P + Q + F \]
Punch 28, Ans

28 FORMAT (16H INTERPOLATED X=,E14.7)
XJ=J
TJZ=COS(XJ*ATAN(SQRT(1.-Z*Z)/Z))
Punch 29, TJZ

29 FORMAT (14H CALCULATED X=,E14.7)
ERR=100. * (TJZ-ANS)/ANS
Punch 30, ERR

30 FORMAT (16H PERCENT ERROR=,E14.7)
PAUSE
END

IN SECURING OBLIVION

By Joseph M. Chiuffini

I

It was once just an old sand lot sitting in nothing and surrounded by other sand lots. The lot lay content in doing nothing. Large grains of sand shifted; water spilled over rocks and stones and filtered into deep crevices. But nothing moved under its own power, for power was as of now, not. Only passive parts, waiting.

At the end of darkness came light and also time. With them they brought the grass, flowers, bushes and trees; then animals and crawling, writhing creatures, slimy and soft, cuddly and furry, hard shelled and rough. And they were happy.

The walking, grunting and wailing creatures mastered the slow, silent foliage and shrubbery and became the rulers at large, with none above them, except one. And among themselves they fought fiercely and in doing so, killed each other for food and for their happy life. Thus, in the brief period before Them, some remains were left on the old sand lot and the remaining creatures stood together and waited.

Waiting is a tedious time when intelligent beings choose to stay another moment or choose to go on. Each choice involves a risk; a calculated, intelligent risk.

The remainders waited for something. Something they should master as before. Perhaps they grew tired of waiting, but they waited. Passively they waited. Coldness and his
little brother watched them wait. And little brother spoke, "Why do they wait?" "Oh, little one, the extreme of myself, I wish I knew why they waited; but having no intelligence, I cannot know." From sunup to sundown they waited, and while they waited, they watched; coldness and his little brother watched intelligently, also. Watching and waiting. But while waiting, some died, and dying means birth for others. Birth filled death's shoes and the new feet watched, walked and waited.

II

Another creature soon appeared that stood on two, erect. With strange sounds emitted from deep within, the new breed strolled the sand lot amidst the vegetable and animal life. Their eyes saw the remains and they challenged the remainders. A fight for domination ensued and the remainders fought a losing battle till each dark cloud cried aloud for mercy for them and their tears flowed over the remains and washed them clean. Justice tightened his fist, and some of the sound animals were crushed by the palm of death, too. In silent sympathy the sandlot dried with flesh and bones and things with spots of red. But soon, these lingering remains were gone.

And these people mastered the life given to them and waited. Waited. And waited. People waiting. White, black, yellow, and orange people; waiting. Short and tall; thin and fat; waiting. Happy, sad, funny, sorry, worrying, laughing, and fighting people; waiting.

They also tired of waiting and began to create the things of life using the sand lot, the remains of the sand lot, and even some of the remainders of the sand lot. Waiting and making the things to use in the making of life's necessities, the people consumed time. When tired of all the good things, they began to kill, for killing has some human enjoyment attached to its time consuming relation. More remains remained. The sand lot became heavy with the remains that slid into the folds of the previous residuums.

III

More people came and waited in the old sand lot. They waited in bigger shells with up and down boxes, with sheets of white cut by lines, with pointed objects, square things, round things, things. Waiting without knowing why they waited; or, not wishing to know why they waited. However, for them there was nothing else to do except feed their environment-vulnerable framework; lapse into their daily sensorimotor inactivity; frolic with the people-made things; and labor to keep their happy life.

These people waited and while they waited they wished that they didn't have to wait in such a mystery-like manner. Some searched for why they waited and some found out why they waited, for human curiosity must be quenched; human intelligence and resourcefulness provides the liquid. These some searched the remains and realized that the remains showed the constant waiting that was before. They searched and found the Before, and the Before then found no Before to make remains.

A flame shoots out and flickers, igniting the potential, and in a sudden moment the potential materializes to actuality. These some knew, then, that they waited for the first one that did not remain, but was always. These some told the others waiting. Some believed; some refused the knowledge. Human intelligence sometimes refuses to accept a being greater than itself. Intelligence says, "I am the paramount of creation." The lights of reason are shut off by a silent switch and the intelligence gropes and stumbles looking for a new and biased interpretation. Some left and moved to another part of the sand lot and left their remains of life, their happy life.

The some and the some parted unlike one and remained thus for long. Brick is placed upon brick until a wall is built. Then, many bricks and many walls. Finally, there are two sides.
Passion is a fluctuating element of the rational being that acts with, against, and sometimes for the intelligence. Intelligence has chains on passions but if those thin will-type chains snap, -- -- -- -- --.--.

The remains looked up and saw the remainders remaining with hearts filled with vice, jealousy, hate, and other intelligent inconsistencies. They watched as hate built more and bigger things with which to fight. Yet, the good people of the sand lot waited for they knew why they waited. But the other some did not wait. They filled their minds with new and false ideas and marks of definition. But, they too, were filled with hate and fear and all the other some’s somenesses. Evil hate spit more and more fighting things from the horrid depths of its mouth while wiggling its tongue to inject the bitter venom of fear.

The struggle finally came, for to some, might makes right. Intelligence has no control in such matters. It was a short struggle; a violent struggle; but, a final struggle by which more remains were left. The remains of much and many remained and the remains of so much time were swallowed up into the sand lot.

All remains, all plants and animals, all people, all people-made things, all everythings, disappeared down into the sand lot and were washed clean by the big cloud that cried. And all that remained was just an old sand lot that was pregnant with remains no longer waiting.

The ancient words of the one above then echoed across the barren sand lot;

"Hush, my little ones,
My favorite sheep.
Wait a little while
Before you sleep."

Hang on man
i feel it coming,
yep, we’re riding,
high,
higher,
zowie —— gone;
our minds
were goosed
so now
we’re moving;

swinging from cloud to cloud
we can grab
crazy crow feathers,
or bath in the sun’s rays,

don’t
try to dry yourself;
if you do
you can be saved,
withdraw,
recede,
back man, back

that’s it
hit that hole,
pull the long green over your head,
lie flat
we don’t see you;

(where’d he go?)
hey man
You withdrew too far
that hole,
that grass,
that hump —— MAN?
Death

like a pugilistic adversary
stalks me,
walks me 'round,
jabs incessantly my tired frame,
drives home too oft
a solid blow,
cuts me up,
pummels me,
only feints his finisher,
holds it off
(toys with me . . .
floors me,
still I rise
for more,
unhero-like,
instinctively,
trembling,
fearful,
fearing the void,
the after,
the threatened ignobility—
fighting to stay afoot
when all is lost
except
to stay afoot
and lose
fighting.

—CLARENCE A. AMANN

THE DAISIES

go, my little one,
rush quickly down the street,
to pick all the gentle wind-blown daisies
in the field by the withered apple tree.
then, gloriously,
with your arms full of them, white and bobbing,
your heart racing with the thrill of precious youth,
and golden sunlight,
bring them back here to me.
together, we'll put them
in a brown earthen jar,
in cold spring water, from the well,
and stand them in a sunny cool spot in the house, my precious,
there to enjoy,
the simple beauty of creation for awhile,
till silent death
renders them brown and withered,
their little white heads drooping, mute, sad, and empty,
like the room upstairs,
where a little brother
choked silently to death in his tiny crib,
while daddy and I loved in the next room,
and I did not know it.
Oh, my little love, my little brown knees,
my little golden head, go back quickly,
you dropped one,
and it's gasping and pleading,
in the dust.

—W. PATRICK POST
you aren't changed
you're not better
your mind is maybe a
little more tightly packed
but your you is nearly the same.
the whole thing about these
great mysteries
is that they're
mysterious
and mighty too mysterious
even for an enlightened mind
you've got to look at them
and respect them
and try to take away
a thimble of the ocean
and smell it and drink it
and taste it and
stop maybe
to pray
and hope that your brother
in a way small or large
has also savored a drop
and respects both
the drop and the sea
and maybe in some
mysterious communion
in some secret
ineffable touch
you and he will share
your sacraments
or in some wordless
contemplation will
come the soft smile
of reverence
and love

—jj attinasi csb
REMEMBERING IS SHADOWS

SPRING is a time for shadows to crochet themselves on streets and sidewalks fine lace on lawns. Spring smells like grandma’s parlor.

SUMMER is a time for shadows to do dapples to umbrella picnic tables to be soft, and children’s laughter and to fall in love with moonlight.

FALL is a time for shadows to be windy to dance a crazy lindy to thanksgiving the leave that made them and to be the old earth’s tatters.

WINTER is a time for shadows to be skinny to retreat into themselves and remember how they were and how they’ll be.

—RAY PAVELSKY ’67

A REPORT FROM THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD

By Rev. L. Hetzler

"Every man an island"

Now under intensive study by educators throughout the country is a revolutionary method of teaching pioneered this year by Professor Alfred E. Neuman of Vauxhall University, North Dakota. In a recent interview Dr. Neuman explained exactly what his procedure had been this Fall Semester in the first trial of his daring new system. “I met with my class for ten minutes the first day and gave them lists of the books that made up the course, most of which could be found either in this or other campus libraries. I then informed them they were to be participants in an experiment to revitalize teaching techniques and to bring them to perfection. I told them, quite simply, that I would stay away from them altogether, that I would see them no more. Indeed, at a very great personal sacrifice to myself, I would keep myself aloof from them until January, when I would give them their examination.”

Dr. Neuman, watching the faces of the reporters, waived aside any cries of praise even before they could be uttered. But one of the reporters asked him how, even for the sake of elevating teaching, he could so deny himself the personal rewards that come from marking papers and preparing classes. “I will confess,” he replied with a wave of a sun-tanned, dedicated arm, “that when this idea first sprang into my mind late one night, that very thought of such enforced idleness at once presented itself. But I had long since learned that teaching is a martyrdom, and indeed by this time I was ready to try anything.”

Reaction from his select group of students has been wildly enthusiastic. Remarked one New York City philosophy major, “I had heard that Vauxhall was a good university and a leader in education, but I never expected anything like this. It’s thrilling to be a part of a teaching process so far in advance
of its time.” Again, Bostonian Ralph Hallam spoke up, “I think that, without a doubt, Professor Neuman is the best teacher I have.” And Sue Huntington added, “I think he’s cute—at least, if I remember him correctly in all the rush and all.” Finally, Boyd Simpson seemed to sum up the students’ sense of unworthiness at having the opportunity of studying under such a great teacher; “I think he’s really brought the ego and the thinness of the world to a real conjunction, even here. In his hands and under his guidance, really we’ve all gone away. It’s the consecration and the dream. We’re most thankful for it all.”

To carry out this experiment in improving teaching techniques that has all educators talking, Dr. Neuman has received from the Hooper Foundation a secretary (who certainly made a deep impression on this reporter) and the sum of $160,000. And although Professor Neuman longed to supervise personally his experiment, he was afraid that even his mere presence in North Dakota might unduly influence his students; so he and his staff shifted their headquarters far away to an island in the Bahamas.

Hailed as perhaps the greatest teacher of our age, certainly as the Teacher of the Year, Dr. Neuman has been featured in all the leading education journals and has, moreover, made the cover of Time magazine. Further, Professor Neuman has also been honored this year by having a high school named after him in his home town. But if the truth were known, this is a late recognition of his dynamic personality, for his childhood friends had never dreamed—“not in a year of Sundays!” exclaimed one boyhood companion—that their classmate would ever amount to anything.

Recently reporters were invited to an afternoon cook-out at Professor Neuman’s villa, where he is doing research work on the outer-and inner-self areas of teacher-student relationships. Here the doctor announced that he has already made significant changes in the working out of his new theory of teaching. He would not return to North Dakota this January even to proctor for the examination. “I feel strongly,” he said as he flicked a cigarette in the direction of his swimming pool, “that my presence there would be a betrayal of my system as I have worked it out. Such a racket,” he explained, “and outcry would no doubt arise from the excited students in the examination hall that their thoughts would be jarred and little facts would lightly fall away.” Further, Professor Neuman also announced that next year with a new grant of $250,000, he is going to revamp the whole experiment. “I shall move my headquarters from the Bahamas,” he explained first, and then added, “but the changes touch on something far more fundamental than this. It is only during these past five months of reflection that I finally realized how much of a mistake it had been for me to have met with my students at all, even for those ten minutes that first day. Next fall I shall simply mail my instructions from Biarritz, where I and my staff will further our research work.”

But Dr. Neuman may have to sacrifice some of his research time to a commitment of speaking engagements, for he is much in demand as a keynoter for educational conferences throughout the nation. And now looms ever greater the question that is haunting campuses from coast to coast as our schools look to the future: where shall Vauxhall University or any other university be able to find professors who would be willing to give themselves so completely, to “go all out,” as it were, in their teaching endeavors as Professor Neuman? We can only heartfully hope that educators all over America and abroad too will be quick to abandon selfish, outmoded techniques and join ranks behind this great teaching theorist.
The Shadow Sometimes Skips

"Life’s but a walking shadow" — Macbeth V, 5.

A man
if he’s a man,
inherits pain with the God-fire from the God-hand
that strikes his father seed and mother egg to life
at their first conjunction——
That fire seers
and never leaves the burning off
whose light he sees not but the nether side
and his life’s a shadow all——
a shadow ... walking ...
stalking him through his mite of measured moment
slow ... laborious ... painful.
Sometimes, though, his shadow lunges
with him
to a hero’s height
and is caught in the glimpse of the God-side
lit by the God-light of the God-fire
and its brilliance dazzles
and makes him lust for the lunging
albeit painful
till, looking down, the shadow
seems to skip ...
‘seems? I know not seems’—skips!
And life is as much of light as dark
or more—the more he skips
and knows ... or trusts ... or hopes
one day he’ll walk—leisurely—not skip
to take the God-light full!

—Clarence A. Amann

Beneath the cloud pregnanted skies
a once heavy tree
with withered arms
stretches
reaches
searches
to gather back
a now lost life:
at her feet
a bundled
burning
heap of ashes
sacred offering,
the warm summer dream lies scattered.

—Dave Fisher

Formal PHILOSOPHY
Intuition?
   Erudition!
Intellectual?
   Conceptual!
Oh fudge!
(That’s concrete)
—John Robbins, CSB
ALBERT CAMUS: PHILOSOPHER—ARTIST

Much of modern fiction, whether it can be said to be existential in theme or not, is concerned with deep philosophical problems. The rapid technological development and increase in the very tempo of our lives so noticeable in the Twentieth Century has caused many thinkers to re-evaluate and rediscover fundamental truths and ideas. A sense of isolation or estrangement from other men and from God is a dominant theme in today's writing. Modern man feels lost or alone when he observes the world around him. Thrown back upon the limited resources of his own mind, each thinking man feels a need for making absolute truths applicable in his own life.

Perhaps no modern writer exhibits this phenomenon more vividly than Albert Camus. Motivated by a dissatisfaction with traditional philosophical systems he sought answers to disturbing metaphysical problems and tried to explore them in his art. At all times he was guided in this search by a desire to express these ideas in concrete language, not in abstract concepts which he felt soon became unintelligible. In the words of John Cruickshank, "he approached metaphysical problems in a particular way and with a particular emphasis. He arrived at general conclusions about human existence through an instinctive distrust of abstractions and a direct concern with human beings in their individuality." It is this refusal to deal extensively with strictly abstract ideas, as so often found in philosophical essays, that led him to choose the fictional and artistic tools at his disposal to convey his message.

Camus, himself, in the Myth of Sisyphus, comments upon some of the great novelists whom he considered "philosophical novelists", such as Balzac, Sade, Melville, Stendhal, Dostoevsky, Proust, Malraux, and Kafka. He says:

... the preference they have shown for writing in images rather than in reasoned arguments is revelatory of a certain thought that is common to them all, convinced of the uselessness of any perceptible appearance. They consider the work of art both as an end and as a beginning. It is the outcome of an often unexpressed philosophy, its illustration and its consumption. But it is complete only through the implications of that philosophy. It justifies at last that variant of an old theme that a little thought estranges from life whereas much thought reconciles to life. Incapable of refining the real, thought penses to mimic it.

This then, is the essential inspiration for Camus' artistic endeavors. Aligning himself with these men that he admires for their unique expression of timeless truths, he attempted to express his own version of reality in novels, plays and short stories. For him it was not enough to see certain truths intuitively through experience and reflection; they demand expression and in the same form in which they were revealed—the stark realities of everyday life.

Another factor explaining his choice of fictional and creative expression was Camus' primary moral concern. When referring to himself, Camus stated often that he was essentially a moralist and not a philosopher. As such, he needed to concern himself not only with the clarity of his message, but also with the most effective method at hand. He decided that the easiest pathway to universal truths was through the particular. While most men may not be readily drawn to extensive philosophical treatises, they might very well read a novel. If the artist is skillful enough the reader will arrive at the same truth in a more appealing form.

The importance of Camus and other writers like him lies in the effectiveness of their attempt to communicate truth. When the reader is drawn into the mind and actions of a particular character in such a way that he too feels the importance of the problem, the frustration felt in the face of the questions, and the tendency to despair, the theme of the work becomes a reality for him. Because he can identify so readily with the hero he is led to ask himself the same questions and to seek
some solutions. The problem is felt by the whole man before any solution is given. In this way the search for the real meaning of life, that is perhaps dealt with best in philosophical investigation, becomes real for him. It is only in this manner that I feel the efforts of theologians, philosophers, and other thinkers can find the response they are seeking. Modern man wants, perhaps more than at any other time, the answers to his questions expressed in a meaningful way. This, I feel, is precisely what Camus and many other contemporary artists are doing.

—EUGENE P. WALZ

KNOW THYSELF
But their are millions of me
hungering in China,
and many of me
starving in the plenty of New York,
and the Hungary of yesterday
hid my multitude of anxieties.
The steps of the storm-troopers
stifled my strained cries,
the bigots of Birmingham
unbalance my burden,
heroin and hashish help
drown my expression
while a smashed atom pulsates at my feet,
eating away at the pillars of the floor . . .
... And then you ask
why my back is hunched,
I can only smile as I ring
the cathedral bells.

—DON DOBSCHEL
Enter MOTHER. MOTHER is a stout, middle-aged woman who has affected the style and mannerisms of the conventional social matron. Her hair is dyed red, and done up in a style that is obviously too young for her. She is wearing a bright pink dress.

When MOTHER enters, the stage immediately is flooded with bright lights.

MOTHER: As usual, she’s playing away. (Walks around table, concentrating.) Now let me see. There’s a place for Joey, and for Sue, and for May and Dave... (Looks up, shakes her head.) Always such sad songs! Just listen to her. (Back to table.) Where was I? Oh yes. I’ll place Ronnie here, and Jay next to him. And that leaves Jim. I think I’ll place Jim here, across from Laura. (Stands back.) Now that looks nice! (Clock chimes.) Oh dear, it’s seven o’clock. They should be here by now. I hope they’re quiet.

(Footsteps are heard offstage, very faintly. Then soft knocking at the door. MOTHER goes to open it.)

Enter JOEY, a dark man of about twenty-five.

JOEY (loudly): Hi, Mother.

MOTHER (finger to lips): Shh! She’ll hear.

JOEY: Ohh. (Waves others in, finger to lips.)

Enter SUE, MAY, DAVE, RONNIE, JAY, and JIM. They are all adults. They are all good-looking. All except JIM are dressed in white, the men in white shirt and pants, the women in a white sheath. (JOEY also is dressed in white.) JIM is dressed in dark colors.

These people will alternately act as individuals and a group (chorus) throughout the play, excepting JIM. They all tiptoe across the room. MOTHER points where each is to sit as they cluster around the table, sit when indicated.

MOTHER (in a whisper): Joey, you sit there. Sue, you next to Joey. May, right here. Dave, next to May. Ronny

and Jay, you sit across from each other. And JIM (she gives JIM a nice smile), I want you to sit at the end. Well, now that you’re all seated, I’ll give you your party favors. (She takes a box from shelves, hands out crepe-paper hats to everyone.) Now put them on, all of you. Come on.

JOEY (loudly): Aw, this is silly.

MOTHER: Shh!

CHORUS: Shh!

JOEY (slumps in chair): Oh, all right. I’ll put it on, but it’s, well, it’s unmanly!

SUE: Now don’t be difficult Joey. Put it on. (He puts it on.

SUE giggles. He gives her a fierce look.)

(Everyone puts on hats. MOTHER puts one on also, stands in front.)

MAY: Mrs. Adams? Is that Lisa playing now?

MOTHER: Why yes, May. How nice of you to notice. She plays well, doesn’t she?

MAY: Yes, she does. Does she always play so well?

MOTHER: Always. Some day she’s going to be a famous musician. Daddy Adams and I have been saving up since she was born to send her to the Institute.


MOTHER: Don’t worry, child. Some day you’ll get some. Jim, you went to the Institute, didn’t you?

JIM: Yes, I did.

MOTHER: And you haven’t got a girl?

JIM: No.

MOTHER: How nice. Laura’s fourteen today, you know. And she’s very advanced for her age. I understand you’ve been quite a success?

JIM: Now that depends on how you look at it.

RONNIE (raises his hand to attract attention): Mother, does Laura know about the surprise party yet?
MOTHER: Please, boys, keep your voices down. No, she doesn't know yet, Ronnie. She'll be so surprised! I can't wait to see her face. Her first surprise party! Her first party! Her coming-out party! (LAURA stops playing, stands by window in her room, looks at moon.) Why, she's stopped playing.

JAY: Mother Adams, what do you think she's doing now, now that she's not playing?

JOEY (loudly): She's probably daydreaming.

JAY (innocently): About what?

JOEY: What all girls daydream about, stupid! About boys! (All the men chuckle, except JIM.)

MOTHER (disturbed): Now that's impolite, Joey. Besides, she'll hear you. (She turns to JAY.) As for your question, Jay, I really don't know what she's doing now. She's a very unusual child.

JAY: Maybe she's studying, or something. I wish I could study.

JOEY: You're good in anatomy. (He laughs loudly.)

MOTHER: Joey! Please be quiet. (She looks towards LAURA'S room.) Oh, I wish she would come out here! Should I call her? Should I call her, children?

CHORUS (nooding): Yes, call her.

MOTHER (squeaking her hands): Oh but I do so hate to tell her what to do. She's such a difficult child. God knows, she's a difficult child. You know how she is, don't you, children? (They nod in sympathy with her. MOTHER faces JIM accidentally.) Of course she's a nice girl. A very nice girl.

(MOTHER turns towards LAURA'S room.) But do you really think I should call her? You just don't know what she'll do.

CHORUS (to MOTHER's back): Yes, call her.

MOTHER: All right, I'll call her then. I just know she'll be so happy she'll cry. (MOTHER walks briskly to LAURA'S room, then comes back.) Wait, children, I have a better idea.

JIM (sternly): I think it would be best if you called her now, Mrs. Adams.

MOTHER (surprised at his directness, then relaxed): Oh, I suppose you're right. Get your hats in place, children. (They adjust their hats; JIM takes his off, unnoticed.) Now remember, as she enters, everyone say 'surprise.'

JIM: She won't be surprised in the way you want her to be, you know.

MOTHER (Looks at JIM annoyed, then turns and calls): Laura? Oh Laura?

(LAURA turns from the window, remains in her room.)

MOTHER: Laura, come in the living room a minute. I have a surprise! I mean, (annoyed) come here a minute, will you? Enter LAURA. Her dress is overly-large, and of a dark blue shade, as can now be seen because of the brightly-lit stage. As she enters, she puts her hands to her eyes, due to the change in lighting from her room and the living room.

CHORUS (standing): Surprise! Surprise! (They immediately sit.)

MOTHER (smiling): Surprise! Surprise, my daughter!

JIM (standing after the others have sat down): I hope you have a happy birthday, Laura.

LAURA (turns to MOTHER in confusion): Mother, who are they?

MOTHER: Now Laura, don't be difficult. After all, it's your birthday. They're your friends. They were the senior class officers in school when you were only starting. Don't you remember?

LAURA (in a nervous whisper to MOTHER): Mother, I don't remember them. I never saw them before.

MOTHER (in a fierce whisper to LAURA): Of course you do! (To the group.) She remembers you all, children. (Again, to LAURA.) Now Laura, don't be difficult. Please. They've
come here to give you a surprise party. You’re at an age when you should start making friends now.

LaurA (whispering to mother, panic-stricken): But I don’t want a surprise party. I’m not ready for it. I don’t know how to act.

mother (to Laura): Of course you do! It comes natural. Just be happy, that’s all. Like the rest of them. (To the group.) See, I knew she’d be difficult. I warned you she would, didn’t I?
chorus (nodding): Yes, Mother.

Laura (to mother): But Mother, who are these people? At least tell me their names.

mother (annoyed): Oh, they’re just people, Laura. That’s Jim at the other end over there. (She turns to Jim, smiling.) Jim, I want you to meet Laura. Laura, this is Jim. He graduated from the Institute.

Jim (standing, taking laura’s hand): How do you do, Laura?

Laura (nervously): How... how do you do, Jim. (To mother, in a whisper.) Mother, he’s nice.

mother (to Laura): Of course he is dear. (To the group.) Now children, I want you all to have fun. I’ll go get the birthday cake. (She leaves via left exit. Couples at table whisper among themselves, slyly glancing at Laura. Laura sits at end of table opposite Jim. They stare at each other. She nervously fidgets with edge of table cloth.) Enter mother, carrying a big cake with fourteen lighted candles.

mother (singing by herself): Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you... Come on, children. Everybody sing. Sing happy birthday to Laura. (They all sing, including Jim. mother stands next to Laura with cake in hands. At the end of song chorus shouts ‘hooray’ and claps. Joey blows party horn. Laura remains dumbfounded.)

MOTHER (with tears): Now that was so nice. Wasn’t that nice, Laura? Wasn’t that nice now?

Laura: But Mother, it doesn’t mean anything.

mother (shocked, cake vibrates as she talks): What do you mean, it doesn’t mean anything? Why of course it means something. It means a lot. Here I go through the trouble to get all of these friends to come here to be with you on your birthday, and you say it doesn’t mean anything! I even buy you this big cake, and you say it doesn’t mean anything! I try to make your coming-out party as nice as possible, and you say it doesn’t mean anything! Oh, you just don’t appreciate anything I do for you, Laura. I try, and I try, but you just don’t appreciate me, Laura. (She slams cake on table before Laura, and exists, crying.)

Laura (dumbfounded, looking after mother): Mother?

Joey: Let’s eat. (He starts cutting cake.)

sub: Joey! Let Laura cut her own cake!

Joey: Oh. I forgot. Here, Laura. (He hands her the knife.)

Laura: Should I cut you all one big piece, or should I cut you each a small one.

Jay (not, of course, understanding): What?

Joey: Cut us each a big piece.

(Laura begins to cut.)

May: Oh, but Laura. You forgot the wish. You’re supposed to make a wish first.

Laura: I am?

May: Of course. Just wish for what you want most in the world.

Laura (looking at Jim): I wish, I wish that I really knew you all.

... ... ... ...

Laura (shyly moves to front, center, near mother, stands stiffly): But what shall I say?

Jim: Tell us what you feel, now that you’re almost a woman.

Laura: But where shall I begin, Jim? Where shall I begin?
JIM: Begin with the clouds.

MOTHER (to the audience): Sometimes I think he's as bad as she is. (She sighs.)

LAURA: Well, all right then. I'll begin with the clouds. (She gradually acquires a 'far away' expression.) You see, ever since I was very young, I've spent most of my time in my room, over there. (She points to her room. Blue lights dazzle on the shimmering wall for a moment.) I used to watch the clouds from my window all the time. Every day, except when it rained, they would drift by as free as could be, and high above the world. They were my only friends. Oh, I used to watch the children play in the park across the street sometimes too, but that was nothing compared to what went on up there.

JIM: Go on, Laura.

LAURA: Well, I never felt like I was part of anything. I felt like I was an observer, watching the world drift by every day in the sky. Always the same. Always beautiful. And then one day things changed inside of me. No-one ever told me I was going to change, but when it first happened I knew I was at last about to become part of the world. I knew I was about to become a woman.

MOTHER (disgusted): Oh my God!

LAURA: What's the matter, Mother?

MOTHER: Oh, never mind.

LAURA: Well, it was the most important thing that ever happened to me. Just think, now I could even have a baby! (The girls of the CHORUS giggle.)

LAURA (frightened): Jim, they're laughing at me.

JIM: Never mind them, Laura. I'm not laughing.

MOTHER: Joey, why don't you tell your story now. Laura, that's enough.

LAURA: I've started now, Mother. Why don't you let me finish? I want to finish.

MOTHER: I think we've heard enough, Laura. (Whispers to LAURA.) When will you ever learn, child? When will you ever learn?

JAY (as if an idea just came to her): Oh, now I know what she meant. Gee, I never thought of it that way, when it first happened.

JOEY: How could you have? You hadn't even reached the age of reason yet! (All the boys laugh.)

(Throughout the next scene, the CHORUS remain sitting, motionless, at the table. The stage is completely dark, except for the moonlight in LAURA'S room. LAURA and JIM stand by window.)

LAURA: You know, Jim, I've never shown this to anyone before.

JIM: Not even Mother?

LAURA: She'd think it was silly.

JIM: Well, what is it?

LAURA (hesitating, then determined): All right, I'll show you. (She opens box, picks out a few of the waxed flowers within. They are luminous in the darkened room.)

LAURA: They're flowers. From all over the world.

JIM (surprised): Well I'll be... How did you get them all?

LAURA: I just found names of people living in Asia and Africa in magazines, and wrote to them, asking them to send me a flower from their country.

JIM: Well, what do you know!

LAURA: After I got them I coated them with wax, so they'll last. Mother thought it was nice for me to have all these pen-pals. She never knew about the flowers, though. She'd say I was being presumptuous asking for them.

JIM (handling one): They're very nice.
LAURA: They’re real, you know. The wax makes them look artificial, but they’re real inside. (She makes a bouquet for herself.) Just think, Jim, these flowers have come to me from the other side of the world. From another world, as far away as the moon. They’re so much nicer than the flowers we have around here.

JIM: They’re not really different, Laura.

LAURA: Yes they are, Jim. They’re from places I’ve never been, where there are elephants and native dancers and things I’ve never seen before. It must be wonderful, to be able to see all those places. I can never look farther than the sky.

JIM: What did these people say to you in their letters?

LAURA: They wrote in foreign languages, of course. But I always imagine they said ‘Thank you for writing to me. Please enjoy the flower.’ And safely folded in the note was the flower.

(JIM holds his flower up to the moonlight. It sparkles.)

JIM: It’s beautiful, Laura.

LAURA: You can have it. But be careful with it. They’re all very brittle. The wax chips off easily.

JIM: Sooner or later all the wax will come off. But I’ll handle it gently. I’ll wear it in my buttonhole. (He puts the flower in his buttonhole.)

LAURA: I think I’ll put some in a vase on the window-sill, for display. They’ll look nice in the moonlight. Tonight’s a very special night.

(JAURA leaves room. JIM stands looking at his flower. LAURA comes back with vase, puts her bouquet in it, sets it by window.)

LAURA: There. Aren’t they beautiful? It took me a long time to get them all, to preserve them, but I’m glad I did.

JIM: Almost too beautiful to be real.

LAURA: Oh, they’re real. They just look artificial, that’s all.