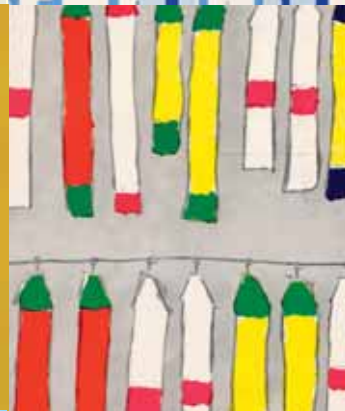
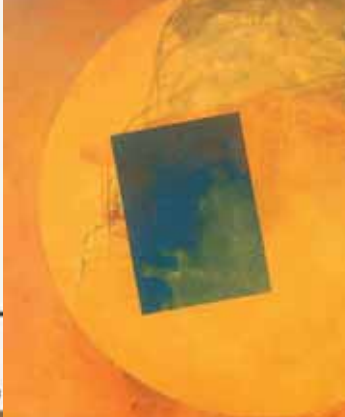


BENNINGTON
fall 2007

75

SPECIAL 75TH
ANNIVERSARY EDITION



an upstart from the beginning...

Ever since I came to the College 20 years ago, whenever I mention Bennington—at a cocktail party in Los Angeles, an opening in London, a mountain road in Italy—something is bound to happen.

For starters it would seem that everyone in the world either went to Bennington or knows someone intimately who did. Then there are the vivid recollections of what are indeed memorable moments—the war farm; 50 Bennington girls staging a sit-down strike at the downtown Bennington Woolworth's to protest the company's racial discrimination; Alexander Calder hanging mobiles on the Bennington lawns for Martha Graham and her company; Karl Polanyi writing *The Great Transformation* while teaching at Bennington during World War II; Jackson Pollock coming to Bennington for his first retrospective.

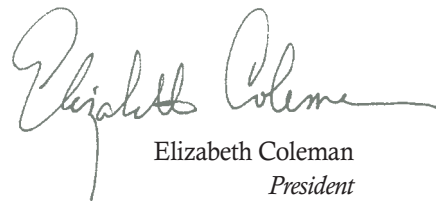
And always, the question from non-alumni as well as alumni: "What is Bennington up to now?"

This intensity of interest, vividness of recollection, general fascination started even before the College opened. The first of what would become scores of feature articles on Bennington appeared in *The New York Times* in 1928—four years before the first class of women crossed the threshold.

It is impossible to pin down exactly what causes this reaction to an institution still very young by the standards of liberal arts colleges, a college that is not just small, but tiny in size, and a college located in what Carol Channing, an alumna, refers to as the lower left-hand corner of the purple state. One thing is certain: for much of its history Bennington has been on the vanguard of the cultural, political, and intellectual life of this country. Bennington has, in short, played a wildly disproportionate role on the world's stage given its age and size.

In an effort to begin to do justice to that story at this moment of celebrating Bennington's history, this issue of *Bennington* is composed of the high points of the past 75 years of the Bennington magazine. While the name has changed, the magazine has remained startlingly consistent in its commitment to presenting the work of Bennington faculty and alumni. And like all such collections, there's sure to be something that should have, but did not, make the cut. Our apologies in advance.

This fall, we have also launched a new feature on our website as a companion piece to this issue of the magazine: an online interactive timeline. This, together with the pages that follow, does much to reveal the most important facts of the Bennington story: the remarkable work of remarkable people passionately engaged with the world.



Elizabeth Coleman
President

contents

fall 2007

BENNINGTON

1930s

- Martha Graham **3** *Letter to the World*
a photograph by Barbara Morgan
- Martha Hill **4** On Early Dance at Bennington
an interview by Rebecca T. Godwin
- Ben Belitt **6** a translation of *Libro*
a poem by Pablo Neruda

1940s

- R. Buckminster Fuller **8** Prime Design
- Helen Frankenthaler '49 **9** *Tales of Genji III: a painting*
- W.H. Auden **10** Noon: a poem
- Stanley Kunitz **12** an interview
by Candace de Vries Olesen '50
- Wallace Fowlie **14** Return to Bennington
- Carol Channing '42 **16** Back from NRT
- Peter Drucker **18** an interview by Rebecca T. Godwin

1950s

- Kenneth Burke **20** Rx for Prosperity
- Alan Arkin '55 **22** Arkin on Arkin
- Shirley Jackson **24** On Being a Faculty Wife
- The New Yorker* **27** cartoons by Lee Lorenz,
Charles Saxon, and Warren Miller
- Howard Nemerov **28** *This, That & The Other*
a poem
- David Smith **30** Reality Is a Choice
- Erich Fromm **32** The Age of Anxiety

1960s

- Bob Dylan **34** "The Times They Are A-Changin'"
- Julian Bond **35** The Social System is Part
of the Problem
- Andrea Dworkin '68 **39** a photographic portrait

- Jules Feiffer **40** Men and Women

- Kathleen Norris '69 **41** two poems

- Andy Warhol **42** On Warhol's "Campbell Soup Can"
by Suzanne Stanton '65

- The Green Mountain Boys **46** an excerpt from a *Vogue* magazine
article by Alan Solomon

1970s

- Kurt Vonnegut **48** Skylarking and Socialism
- Bernard Malamud **50** *Idiots First: a short story*
- Michael Pollan '76 **55** an excerpt from
The Botany of Desire
- Anais Nin **56** This Taboo Is Lifting
- Sally Mann '73 **58** two photographs from *Deep South*
- Milford Graves **60** "Jazz Scientist" by Mark Jacobson
an article from *New York Magazine*

1980s and upward

- Jonathan Lethem '86 **62** an excerpt from
Motherless Brooklyn
- Bret Easton Ellis '86 **64** a photographic portrait
- Donna Tartt '86 **65** a photographic portrait
- Mansour Farhang **66** Reflections on Terrorism
- Kiran Desai '93 **70** an excerpt from Man Booker
Prize-winning *The Inheritance of Loss*
- Anna Gaskell '92 **73** a photograph from 'half life'
- Steven Bach **74** an excerpt from *Dazzler: The Life
and Times of Moss Hart*
- Mary Oliver **76** *Flare: a poem*
- Nelson Mandela **78** an excerpt from the foreword of
*Shades of Difference: Mac Maharaj
and the Struggle for South Africa*
- Donald Hall **79** *The Hard Man: a poem*
- Dana Reitz **80** *Sea Walk*
a photograph by Nancy Campbell

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

martha graham, *letter to the world*

by BARBARA MORGAN



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Modern dance icon and *Time* magazine's Dancer of the Century, Martha Graham first came to campus in 1934. Through 1946, she taught Bennington dancers both at her New York studio and in Vermont at the Bennington School of the Dance, where, in 1940, she debuted her dance piece *Letter to the World*.

MARTHA HILL: on early dance at bennington

interview by REBECCA T. GODWIN

In 1934, modern dance pioneer Martha Hill founded the Bennington School of the Dance, which became a crucible for American modern dance. The School of the Dance fostered dancers who joined the companies of Hanya Holm, Doris Humphrey, and former faculty member Martha Graham. In 1951, Hill left to start the dance program at Juilliard. In the 1990s, Rebecca Godwin, faculty member and former editor of Bennington, took down Hill's memories of teaching dance.

“I always said, good dance is good dance, therefore you don't water it down for education. You teach the top of music for music—Bach, Beethoven, Mozart as well as Charles Ives, and Bartok. And so in dance, we might not have been training virtuoso dancers—we were a liberal arts college, not a professional school—but we had to give them a glimpse into the best in the world.

“We concentrated on modern dance, which has always prided itself on being, not a system like ballet at that time, but rather a point of view. That's one reason it fit so well into Bennington.

“Also at the beginning, because modern dance was not very well accepted and was thought ugly by people who were devoted to classical ballet, the first years of conflict were rather bitter. So we pushed modern dance more—more than we would have later on, perhaps—because we had to make the point.

“Our first dance space at Bennington was quite limited. We used the third floor of Commons, which had a small stage and floor space. In the summer, we stripped the house living rooms and made them into dance studios.

“The story was that we were thought of as a nudist colony by people in town, because here we were dancing in flesh-colored leotards—practically naked after the tutus of the ballet—all of which was pretty daring for the times. Linc Gillespie, a friend of the literature faculty, came up with a phrase to describe what we were doing; he called it ‘torsing around.’

“Martha Graham came the first year, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman the next; José Limón taught, too; and we finally got Hanya Holm to bring her company up. So the students got the flavor directly of leading schools in New York City, where they often studied during winter period or became apprentices.

“These people were all highly individual artists, who were not ordinarily engaged in team play, who actually considered themselves rivals. And we were able to bring them here, have them work together. We offered them a season away from the City and its pulls, with their companies in residence and enough budget for themselves with total production provided. The artists were given—as well as giving—something important.

“One unique thing about Bennington was that our performing arts productions didn't depend on one discipline or one person. *Everything* was collaboration. We wouldn't simply do a play—we did plays that combined dance, drama, music, literature. Ben Belitt and Kit Osgood were the main collaborators in literature; in music we had Gregory Tucker; Arch Lauter came up with design and theater ideas. Faculty performed sometimes, too: Wallace Fowlie, who taught French language and literature, was in several productions.

“We did the first successful Americana at Bennington before it hit Broadway—drama teacher Francis Fergusson's *The King and the Duke*—and we toured



TOM BOUCHARD

Martha Hill at Bennington in 1937

with it a bit. The dance crew even collaborated on ballets for his *Electra*.

“And then in 1939, we did *The Bridge*. That was Arch Lauterer’s idea—he loved that poem of Hart Crane’s. We started work in September—cast it, had a speaking chorus, a singing chorus, solo speakers, solo dancers, an orchestra, an original score. We had a wonderful student cast, too—Carol Channing [’42] was in it. Anybody who had ever known Hart Crane or ever written about him attended the performance—they came from all over. People were so moved, tears streamed down their faces at times.

“One of the Bennington associations I treasure most was the opportunity to work with Bill Bales. He was a remarkable man—not only in relation to the College, but to the whole world of dance. I met him first at a dance symposium organized through Carnegie Mellon. I was teaching a class with about a hundred students. Throughout the lesson, one young man became the outstanding character in this group of heterogeneous men and women. So I thought—oh, I must talk to that young man before I leave. After

class, I went over and sat near the grand piano to watch. And under it was sitting this young man I wanted to talk to, William Bales. *Under the grand piano*. So I tell people—when I met Bill Bales, he wasn’t in a basket in the bulrushes, he was under a grand piano. It was very appropriate.

“Bill became an excellent teacher, and landed in a guest teaching slot at Bennington. We were lucky to have him. Then he came permanently, and we shared the dance division, collaborating on all productions. When I left in 1951, he took over.

“I do think of myself as a pioneer—it’s what we called the first classes at Bennington: *pioneers*. But if I have to name the one accomplishment I’m proudest of, I think it’s probably achieving collaboration, sometimes between very unlikely groups.

“I like to say, my major is people. That’s my talent—I am good about understanding and reconciling different points of view. It seems to me I’m a sort of catalyst—pushing things ahead. That’s always been my role.”

From Quadrille, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1993

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

libro

por PABLO NERUDA

Mi cuaderno de un año a un año
se ha llenado de viento y hojas,
caligrafía, cal, cebollas,
raíces y mujeres muertas.

Por que tantas cosas pasaron
y por qué no pasaron otras?

Extraño incidente de amor,
del corazón embelesado
que no vino a inscribir su beso,
o bien el tren que se movió
a un planeta deshabitado
con tres fumadores adentro
capaces de ir y de volver
sin ventaja para ninguno,
sin desventaja para nadie.

Y así se prueba que después
aprenderemos a volver
en forma desinteresada,
sin hacer nada aquí ni allí,
puesto que resulta muy caro
en los finales de este siglo
residir en cualquier planeta,
de tal manera que, ni modo,
no hay sitio aquí para los pobres,
ni menos aun en el cielo.

Así las bodas espaciales
de nuestros insectos terrestres
rompieron la razón a tiempo
que rompían la sinrazón:
como una cáscara de huevo
se quebró la tapa del mundo
y otra vez fuimos provincianos
entre nosotros se sabía
cómo hacer calles en la tierra
y como amar y perseguir
y crucificar a tu hermano.

Ahora el interrogatorio
de la luz con la oscuridad
toma una nueva proporción:
la del miedo con esperanza
y la de la sabiduría
que tiene que cambiar de tiesto.

Yo me perdono de saber
lo poco que supe en mi vida,
pero no me lo perdonaron
los avestruces de mi edad.
Ellos siempre sabían más
porque metían la cabeza
en los diarios de los Domingos.

Pero mi error más decidido
fue que entrara el agua en el rostro
de mis intensas letanías:
por las ventanas se divisa
mi corazón lleno de lluvia.

Porque nacer es una cosa
y otra cosa es el fin del mundo
con sus volcanes encendidos
que se propusieron parirte:
así pasó con mis destinos
desde las uvas de Parral
[donde nací sin ir más lejos],
hasta las montañas mojadas
con indios cargados de humo
y fuego verde en la cintura.

book

by Pablo Neruda
translated by BEN BELITT

Year after year my notebook
fills up with wind, leaves,
calligraphy, quicklime, onions,
roots, dead women.

Why these? Why trifles
like these, and no others?

Love's unplaceable moment,
the heart's ravishment
that never wrote down its kiss,
or a train that moved off
to an uninhabited planet with
three smoking passengers inside
whose comings and goings
never did anyone harm and
never did anyone much good.

There's the point: one day
we learn to come back
in some other disinterested
form, having done nothing, wherever
we were—we pay dearly
at the century's end,
whatever our planet,
for living our lives
so the poor have no place on our planet
and nothing at all in the sky.

So our spatial wedding
of terrestrial insects
shattered the sense
and the nonsense of things with a blow:
the husk of the world broke to bits
like an eggshell,
we all were suburban again:
we learned from each other
how to cut streets through the world,
how to love and harass one another,
how to crucify brothers.

Now light cross-examines
the darkness and takes
stranger proportions:
the babblings of terror and hope,
the debate of our wisdom, compelled
to pick up the pieces and transpose the fragments.

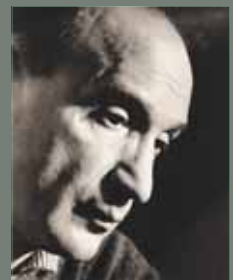
I forgive my own failings,
the little I knew in my life,
though my ostrich contemporaries
will never forgive me in kind.
They buried their heads every Sunday
in the cultural supplements,
they always knew more than I did.

But the worst of my failures
will fly in the face of my fieriest
litanies like a dash of cold water:
my heartfelt of rain that
divides on the windows.

For it's one thing to come into the world
and another to envision its end,
ablaze with volcanoes,
as if something fought to be born:
that's how it is, that's my lot,
from the grapes of Parral
[which have stayed with me since I was born]
to the mountains soaking in rain,
with Indians bending under a burden of smoke
and a green girdle of fire at its waist.

From Silo, Spring 1947

In 1938, poet Ben Belitt left his editing job at The Nation and for the next 50 years taught at Bennington. He wrote eight books of original poetry in addition to publishing the translations of Neruda, Lorca, and Machado for which he is best known.



MATTHIAS TARNAY

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

prime design

by R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER

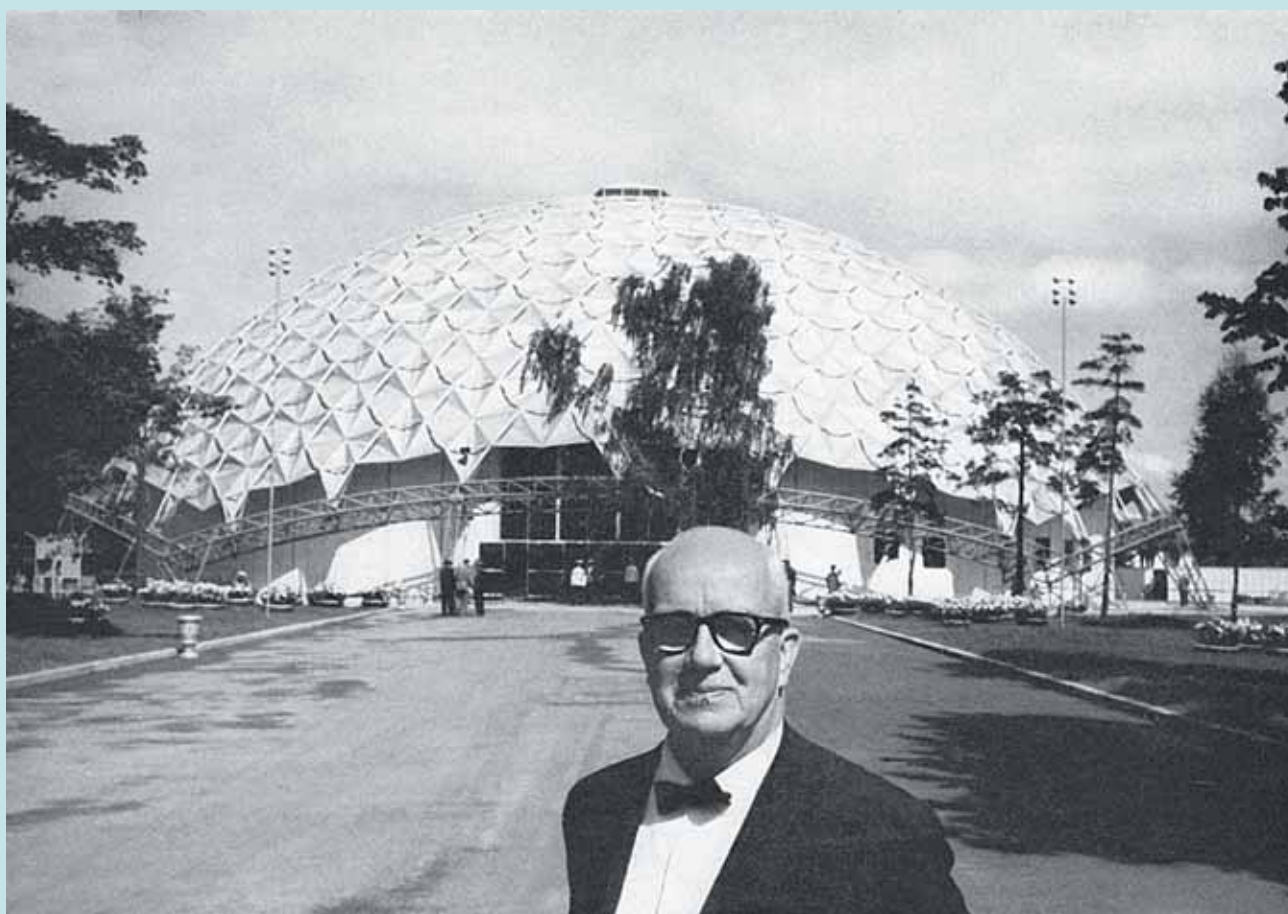
For all time man has subconsciously coordinated himself with universal evolution. He does not consciously push each of his millions of hairs out through his scalp at man-preferred rates or selected patterns and colors.

Engineering and architecture, though objective and integrative, have no economic initiative. When men design professionally only when employed by a patron, the patron becomes the prime designer. The patron initiates that which is to be detailed within the patron-conceived limits of undertaking and responsibility.

Ivory towerism in the scientist and professional-securityism in the architect-engineer have left social initiative to political man, who in turn has passed the buck to the military. The hired military service man has done his best within his limits as prime design initiator. His design authority is limited, however, to the augmentation of his tools. His tools—weaponry; their physical objective—killingry, the negative of livingry.

Only the free-wheeling artist-explorer, nonacademic, scientist philosopher, mechanic, economist poet who has never waited for patron-startering and accrediting of his coordinate capabilities holds the prime initiative today. If man is to continue as a successful pattern-complex function in universal evolution, it will be because the next decades will have witnessed the artist-scientist's spontaneous seizure of the prime design responsibility and his successful conversion of the total capability of tool-augmented man from killingry to livingry.

From Bennington College Bulletin, May 1960



LEONARD NADEL

Inventor, architect, poet, mathematician (and father of Allegra Fuller Snyder '51), R. Buckminster Fuller sought ways to reconcile technology, conservation, and society. He lectured frequently at Bennington, and his domed Dymaxion (Dynamic Maximum Tension) House, first built in 1945, was used as a campus dwelling.

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

tales of genji III

by HELEN FRANKENTHALER '49

1998, woodcut, 47" x 42"



STEVEN SLOMAN

Helen Frankenthaler '49 is one of America's most renowned and influential abstract painters. She has received the National Medal of Art as well as retrospectives at the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum.

From Bennington, Fall 2002

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

noon

by W.H. AUDEN

How still it is: the horses
Have moved into the shade; the mothers
Have followed their migrating gardens.

Curlews on the kettle moraines
Foretell the end of time,
The doom of paradox.

But lovelorn sighs ascend
From wretched greedy regions
Which cannot include themselves.

And the freckled orphan flinging
Ducks and drakes at the pond
Stops looking for stones,

And wishes that he were a steamboat,
Or Lugelzaggisi the loud
Tyrant of Erech and Umma.

From Silo, Spring 1947

Widely considered one of the greatest poets of the 20th century, W.H. Auden published many books of poetry, in addition to essays on literature, history, politics, music, and religion. Auden taught at Bennington from 1945 to 1946.



auden at bennington, 1946
by LILLI ELDÉ

From Quadrille, Spring 1995

an interview with STANLEY KUNITZ

by CANDACE DEVRIES OLESEN '50

Poet Stanley Kunitz began his teaching career at Bennington in 1946. Kunitz's poems, which influenced many 20th century poets, earned him a National Medal of Arts, the National Book Award, the Robert Frost Medal, a Pulitzer Prize, and, in 2000, the position of United States Poet Laureate. Below, he is interviewed by Candace deVries Olesen '50, in whose name the College has established the Candace deVries Olesen '50 Lecture for Distinguished Alumni.

QUADRILLE: Last March your picture appeared on the front page of *The New York Times Book Review*, illustrating Robert Lowell's review of your newest volume of poetry, *The Testing-Tree*. According to Mr. Lowell, "Stanley Kunitz is now writing in a language that cats and dogs can understand." Do you agree?

KUNITZ: My cat Celia understands every word of mine, but I won't try to speak for the dogs. It's true that I've been working now for several years, since my *Selected Poems*, toward a more open style . . . a style based on familiar speech rhythms, as uncluttered and lucid as I can make it. The difference between *The Testing-Tree* and my earlier work is not so much in the substance as in the tone, the pitch of the voice. My model is the conversation between friends.

QUADRILLE: According to the painter Edward Hopper, "In every artist's development the germ of the later work is always found in the earlier . . . what he was once, he always is, with slight modifications." I noticed, comparing *Selected Poems* with *The Testing-Tree* that a constant "concern" (if you will) is dealt with much more directly in the new poems.

KUNITZ: Maybe time itself compels a man to confront the great simplicities. At a certain stage in his maturity he frees himself from the knots and complications, the ambiguities, of his youth. So that it is easier then for him to say what he has to say without fussing too much about it.

QUADRILLE: But you say it still with a deep commitment to craft.

KUNITZ: The object is to learn the controls of language, so that you don't have to tell lies. Like any skill, if you master it early enough, it will eventually become second nature—which doesn't guarantee that you will have anything left to say. Incidentally, I don't enjoy being praised for craftsmanship. An old poet ought never to be caught with his technique showing.

QUADRILLE: Stanley Moss, in a review of your new poems, comments that much of the literature of our time is drawn to suicide or the fires of hell. You, on the contrary, "dance for the joy of surviving." How do you respond to the poetry being written today, particularly by young writers?

KUNITZ: There's so much wrong with the world that anyone can find plenty of reasons to despair. But I'm not really tempted to play the role of Jeremiah. Much of my time is spent with the young, and I consider myself a partner in their disaffections and their hopes. This generation has extraordinary gifts, including beauty. It isn't about to give up. I admire many young writers, among them several who survived my classes. My inclination is to feel reasonably sanguine about the course of modern literature.

Not that I close my eyes to the amount of showmanship, self-indulgence, and sloppy craftsmanship that gets into print. The vainest ambition is to want an art separated from its heritage, as though the tradition were a cistern full of toads instead of a life-giving fountain. A

poet without a sense of history is a deprived child. Of course, given the polluted planet that the young have inherited, I can't very well blame them for believing that their elders were horribly nasty or stupid caretakers of a civilization. The arts, in fact, have been saying precisely that since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.

QUADRILLE: Do you think that younger teachers can be reproached for failing to give adequate instruction in the craft and history of poetry?

KUNITZ: The truth is that even if one wants to teach a sense of craft, the typical young writer today won't buy it. He sees art as a kind of spontaneous combustion. The study of prosody, for example, strikes him as a waste of time, a stereotype imposed on him from above . . . the dead hand of convention. There are exceptions, to be sure, and they stand out in the crowd.

QUADRILLE: This might apply to painting too. Some young people say, "But I just want to express myself," when they haven't yet learned to see—which takes a long time and is a discipline.

KUNITZ: One of the prevailing illusions is that youth itself is a kind of genius . . . instead of a biological condition. We live in an accelerated age, with astonishingly fast rates of obsolescence. Anyone involved with creative young people soon realizes how accurately they reflect a culture, in their impatience with slow development or ripening, in their rush to become superstars overnight. They have been led to believe that all they have to do is concoct a novelty . . . a new sensation . . . or make a big enough noise . . . and tomorrow they will be rich and idolized. In this respect the visual and performing arts are worse than literature. But everywhere the young, and then the ones who are no longer quite so young but who like to think of themselves as belonging to a fashionable avant garde, are preoccupied with "making it"—a vile sort of enterprise. It's so much a part of the contemporary scene. The arts tend to become a commodity like any other manufactured thing.

QUADRILLE: You once wrote in an essay: "The hard, inescapable phenomenon to be faced is that we are living and dying at once...my commitment is to report that dialogue."



GEORGE WHYTE SCOTT

KUNITZ: I guess that pretty much tells the story of what I'm up to in the course of a lifetime . . . or should I say deathtime?

QUADRILLE: In your poetry you move from the comical-ridiculous to the tragic in the space of two lines: "That coathanger neatly whisked your coat right off your back. Soon it will want your skin." And again, in "The Bottom of the Glass"—a sort of tragic-comic title in itself, I think—you say:

Life aims at the tragic:
what makes it ridiculous?
In age as in youth
the joke is preposterous.

Do you think that because we are born to die that life is a joke? Or, sadly, a dirty joke?

KUNITZ: To say that one is aware of the comedy of life is not to deprive it of its dignity. The comic vision requires a certain distancing from the object. It enables us not to fall into the grotesquerie of self-pity or to become sentimental about our losses. The fatal temptation for any poet is to become grandiose, to write only in inflated emotional states. Holderlin said that the way to achieve nobility in art is through the commonplace. Not to overreach, not to strain for high-flown epithets or resolutions, but simply to be as true as we can to the grain of the life.

From Quadrille, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1972

RETURN TO bennington

by WALLACE FOWLIE

Wallace Fowlie, French literature scholar and a leading translator of Rimbaud, produced an astounding number of books, including examinations of Proust, Baudelaire, and Dante, and even a comparison between Rimbaud and The Doors' Jim Morrison. Fowlie taught at Bennington from 1935 to 1964.

Bennington College is far more than a series of courses and a counseling system. It is a community composed of many different elements; it is almost a way of life. There are the students, about three hundred girls, because of whom the college exists, and about twenty young men who are actors or dancers or musicians and who find at Bennington a specialized training it would be difficult to find elsewhere. There are

about fifty teachers of whom the majority are professional participants in the fields they teach: literature, music, art, dance, political science. There are a small number of administrators who admit the students and who watch over their intellectual and social behavior in accordance with the sanest and most reasonable pedagogical theories.

The students at Bennington observe their teachers at close range, in their homes, with their children, at parties and picnics, as well as in the classroom and in the counseling office. I have occupied two faculty apartments in the student houses. The first, for a year, in Booth House, on a noisy drive, near the Commons. The kitchen was in the wall between living room and bedroom. The bathroom was large—the size of two kitchens—and in it I was forced to place two large bookcases for my French books. On Saturday nights when boys from Williams came in large numbers to the campus, my door was often mistaken for the main entrance to the house. There are few “men’s rooms” in a girls’ college, and on occasion an urgent solicitation would be made for use of my bathroom. One Saturday night I was typing in my living room and the front door opened abruptly. Two fellows came in and yelled: “Where’s the john?” I yelled back “over there” and pointed to my bathroom door. They took me for a kind of janitor or night watchman. Together they stamped into the bathroom and closed the door. I went on working, and for so long a time that I forgot they were still there. Finally they emerged, each holding a French book in his hand, and asking sheepishly, “Gee, Sir, are you the French prof here?” I acknowledged my function, and pointed out that they probably had not come to Bennington that Saturday evening in order to read French literature.

The central position on the campus of Booth House, and my Booth apartment, proved to be quite a strain because I had the impression of always being on exhibit. When, at the beginning of the spring term, I came down with a case of mumps, this glaringly strategic position became a source of distress. No greater humiliation could have befallen me. I could hear the students going back and forth outside the windows of my bedroom. When the doctor came, I could hear them shout to him, “When are you going to let that man out?” So, at the first opportunity, I moved to more permanent quarters at the end house of the row, Bingham, where my apartment looked on



Bennington students dining together, circa 1940s

to fields and the hills beyond the fields. A pine tree was just outside my kitchen window. It is now a sizable tree through the branches of which I can see the tennis courts in the distance. Chickadees and cedar waxwings like the tree and grow friendly at times when they want to be fed.

The Bingham apartment has the space I need for the clavichord, the French books, the filing cabinet and the two desks. I live with a simulacrum of France inside and a rolling Vermont landscape outside. I seldom look out when I work by the window, but when I do, I take infinite pleasure in recognizing a land to which I have returned, a land which bears the signs of the seasons, the warmth of summer or the cold of winter, and at all times a noble placidity. My best working hours are early morning. As I prepare breakfast in the kitchen, I look out, first at the pine tree, then through the branches to the fields. Then, by standing at the extreme left of the window and looking to the west, I can see a large patch of sky, still and clear, which seems to correspond to the total stillness of the house. At the farthest corner of the sky, whether it is six or seven o'clock, a black smudge of smoke, slowly rising and disappearing, marks the only movement on the scene. It is from a freight train at the North Bennington railroad station. Until a few years ago the Rutland Railroad provided a train which took us to Grand Central Station, New York. But now that service is stopped, as well as the train service going in the opposite direction to Montreal. One of the pleasures of Bennington I now miss is that of boarding a train at North Bennington and savoring the excitement of reaching the city in a few hours. The pleasure of returning to North Bennington in the same train was just as intense. Flight from Bennington and return to it are equal in their power of justifying the Vermont college which exists more for the students than for the teachers. The faculty of any college are only temporary inhabitants. They move from college to college, from state to state, only a bit less frequently than the students they teach. When they don't have "tenure of office," as that mirage of stability is called in the academic world, they worry about it more than they worry about wars and atom bombs. And when finally they do have it, they worry about the implacable hardening of routine and the sensation of being caught and imprisoned in a cell they should not have chosen.

And so the Bennington freshman, escaping to New York for the weekend, can easily run into one or

two of her teachers on Fifth Avenue. And the Bennington junior, in Paris for her nonresident term, knows that one of her teachers is in a nearby hotel, another in Bari, another in Berlin. A few winters ago when I was working at the Paris-Dinard Hotel, I received visits of at least six students. They came in two's and we had tea in my room. One day I overheard the *chasseur* (bell-hop) of the hotel say to someone else that M. Fowlie was a kind of pascha who insisted on having two beauties at the same time. One of the girls had envied the comfortable temperature of my room and after some hesitation asked one morning at the desk if there was an available room. She was assured there was. A clerk showed her the room and where the bathroom was, and then pointing to a door, said, "*Et M. Fowlie est derrière cette porte.*" Olivia tiptoed out and asked for a room on another floor. I had never tried to explain to the French running the hotel what the Bennington counseling system was. But they had drawn their own conclusions.

From Alumnae Magazine, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1957

MATTHIAS TARNAY



CAROL CHANNING '42 back from NRT

Broadway legend Carol Channing '42 left Bennington after being discovered by the William Morris Agency during her Non-Resident Term (the annual term during which Bennington students worked internships—now called Field Work Term). Winner of three Tony Awards, including a Lifetime Achievement Award, Channing originated and made famous the part of Dolly Levi in Hello, Dolly! In 1975 she returned to campus to give the commencement address. The following write-up appeared in the College's Quadrille Newsletter.

This year's graduation was a happy event that was marked by parties, celebrations and fireworks. George Plimpton, who is everyone's answer to Walter Mitty, came to Bennington to shoot off the fireworks display which he termed an appropriate punctuation to Carol Channing's usually hilarious commencement address. He read the name of each graduating senior thus dedicating a rocket to each. The fireworks lasted nearly a half hour.

Carol Channing arrived in Bennington's airport at about 5 in the afternoon and posed for some pictures with Anita Loos, author of "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" in John McCullough's Marmon, a 1936

open touring car. Channing and her husband, Charles Lowe, and Loos were driven to their motel where they stayed until a dinner party at the president's home. Parents and students cheered enthusiastically when Channing made her appearance in front of Commons at about 8:30.

Her speech was a series of one-liners about what Bennington has meant to her, how she got into show business, the importance of diamonds, and even a little politics. The talk was frequently interrupted by laughter and applause.

She pointed out, of course, that diamonds are a girl's best friend, which is the theme of Anita Loos' book that made both Loos and Channing famous. Channing said, "All good work is rewarded with diamonds. Ribbons, trophies, medals and flowers: all these things wither and fade." Diamonds, she implied, were more enduring. She explained something about a diamond cult of which she and the Gabors are charter members, though Liz Taylor is a latter-day convert.

She said of money that it "is like, you should pardon the expression, manure. It should be spread around."

She also averred that "I for one owe a great deal both to my college and my religion. Between Bennington and the Christian Science faith I am excused for many indiscretions and shortcomings."

She added that "some of my friends on Broadway were quite perplexed and amazed that you had invited me to be here tonight in these intellectual surroundings, but they knew that some of these private colleges were in dire straights in the troubled times. They just didn't know that Bennington was this dire or this troubled."

After a rather lengthy tale about how she got into show business in the first place, a routine that was punctuated by three songs (and she would have danced no doubt if the microphone had been detachable), and several brief shots at political figures, she said she slept better knowing that a Bennington girl was in the White House. She was referring to Betty Ford who studied with Martha Graham at Bennington during the famous Bennington School of the Dance in the 1930s.

Channing gave NRT a plug. "Each of us girls," she said, "was expected to go out and get a job in whatever it was she was majoring in. Dotha Seaverns

[‘41] and Peggy Hepburn [‘40] were both science majors so they went to Panama to look at bugs. This we called our winter period. It’s now called the Non-Resident Term. And Puff Harriman [‘40], she was a social sciences major so she went to Washington to picket the White House. And since I was a drama-dance major, I naturally hotfooted it to Broadway to get a job performing.” She was worried about how long she might be away, but the faculty was very understanding and told her “‘Carol, do not worry. You can always come back,’ they said. ‘You get your experience while you can.’ Well, that was in 1940. Here I am, 35 years later, still getting my experience. And I know it seems like a rather extended Winter

Period. But that is what I am on.” She said as soon as she gets done with her “everlasting NRT” she would return to the “hallowed hills” and complete her Bennington degree.

The following morning, just prior to the traditional graduation ceremonies, Carol Channing went on a tour of the new arts complex [VAPA, Visual & Performing Arts center] conducted by Robertson Ward, the architect. Then the Channing party flew back to New York while the faculty and trustees conferred the degree of Bachelor of Arts on 110 students and two masters degrees.

From Quadrille, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1975



Carol Channing '42 with Bennington students, circa 1970s

talking with PETER DRUCKER

interview by REBECCA T. GODWIN

Peter Drucker, the father of modern management, published 38 books in his lifetime, including his study of General Motors, Concept of Corporation. Drucker taught at Bennington from 1942 to 1949. He spoke with the editor of Bennington in 1999, when the Peter Drucker Fund for Educational Innovation was established.

On Continuity, Change, Community

“Two weeks before his death in 1519, Leonardo da Vinci wrote in response to his great nephew who had asked him, ‘Uncle, what was the world like when you were born, 75 years ago?’ He wrote, ‘My dear nephew, nobody who hasn’t lived before 1490 can possibly imagine what the world was like when I was born, nor can it be explained to him.’ We live now in one of those transition periods—in Western society the last one was the American revolution to the end of the Napoleonic wars—and it’s very hard to explain. In every one of those periods the values are reformed—the fundamentals do not change; the configuration does.

“This is what I’ve been basically wrestling with for about 70 years. The balance between continuity and change is the critical balance in such a period, and the basic values have to be preserved or reasserted. We are

maybe two-thirds of the way through such a period in this country; in the rest of the world, perhaps only just beginning.

“The old communities were coercive communities—99 percent of humanity had no choice; you were born into the life you were going to lead. Everybody knew, even in this extremely mobile country, that the only way you could get away from your community was to physically migrate to Iowa—which about 80 percent of the people around here did in 1830, 1840. And those communities are pretty much gone, including the ones which I still knew when I grew up in Europe.

“But new communities are forming, and they are affinity communities. It may only be the local tennis club or your local church or your profession. A son-in-law of mine is a fairly well-known physicist, and his community is 187 particle physicists all over the world. He knows every one of them, they are in daily contact; and outside of that group, I don’t think he knows anyone, except his own children; the same I see all over. I teach an advanced executive program and one of the ablest of my students is a Catholic nun who runs a remedial elementary school program in Southern California. Her community is not her fellow nuns; she doesn’t live in the convent anymore. Her community is 60 remedial educators whom she talks to once a week on the Internet. Mostly they exchange experiences. And she knows about these people—about their children, their interests—but she doesn’t know where they are. These are true communities, in the sense that they share interests and, above all, they trust each other.

“I think one of the reasons we have the trouble in the school systems is that the school is no longer a community. It’s no longer a focus of common interest; it is a place, rather than a community.

“I’ve done a lot of work with mega-churches, and I consider them to be one of the most significant social phenomena in this country in the last 20 years. Most of the people who are drawn to them are not seeking only a spiritual experience, a personal experience, but they are looking for a community experience. The great majority are young, double-earner professional couples; their parents were blue collar or farmers. They are very much alone in the big city, in need of community. These megachurches might say Baptist on the door, but 90 percent are non-denominational. I know one with 4,000 people, a Catholic church. Most of the communicants are Jews. I don’t



CYNTHIA LOCKLIN

Peter Drucker at Bennington in 1999

think they know it's a Catholic church. They don't pay much attention; it's not important. The important thing is the community."

On Liberal Education and Community

"We need again to reformulate what we mean by a liberal education. What do educated people have in common by way of a common educational background? That's very important.

"I grew up in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. I was born before World War I. There were 18 major languages and I don't know how many minor ones, and the Empire was held together to the very end by a simple fact: Everybody, from the 1500s on, had had the same—not in the same language—but the same curriculum. So that every civil servant, for example—my father was one of them—knew the same nine Latin quotations. You had to know nine to be an educated man—if you knew 10, you were a classicist; if you knew only eight, you were illiterate. They all had more mathematics than an American math major has today, and they had an elementary understanding of science and of history, but they had that in common. So even though there were language barriers, every-

body in that group felt they had a common education, and they knew what an educated person was.

"One of the great Bennington things, in my day at least, was that we encouraged each student to test herself in a few areas she strongly resisted. I remember one young woman who came in, and the first thing I asked, as her advisor, was, 'What subject do you hate?' It surprised her. She had been all primed to tell me what she liked. She said, 'I hate literature.' And I said, 'You take Kit Osgood's introductory literature class, then.' Because it was most important to give that young woman a view of a much bigger world. And she probably didn't do very well in Kit's class, and she probably didn't ever teach literature, but she had to read a few novels and listen to friends and fellow students who loved it and responded to it. I think that this was one of the great things and I hope it still is, because even while those young women did not necessarily become musicians or teachers, they had been exposed to it and they were not afraid of it. They had a common foundation, perhaps not culture, but a common foundation; and that is the beginning of creating community."

From Bennington, Fall 1999



BENNINGTON COLLEGE ARCHIVES

Rx for Prosperity

by KENNETH BURKE

Prominent literary theorist and rhetorician Kenneth Burke served on the Bennington faculty from 1943 to 1962. In addition to writing influential books, such as *A Grammar of Motives*, on rhetoric, symbolism, and philosophy, he penned fiction, as well as a song later recorded by his grandson Harry Chapin.

Hegel remarks somewhere that all great, world-historical facts and personages occur, as it were, twice. He has forgotten to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. And I nearly forgot to add that I am quoting from the opening sentences of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, by one K*rl M*rx. However, in accordance with my nature, I would use the words revisionistically: for I am dealing with the fact that, whereas over twenty-five years ago I considered the so-called Higher Standard of Living fit subject for a farce (insofar as this mode of life relied so heavily upon scientifically organized methods for goading the citizens of a great nation into a frantic scramble to buy unneeded things), now, in the years of my decline, I would look upon this same state of affairs as material for an almost awesome tragedy (albeit a tragedy that lends itself, in flashes, to such shrewdly morose and wincing appreciation as can at times go with high comedy).

The terror derives from the fact that, to a great degree, unless we can somehow mend our economic ways and modify our naïve and even crude response to the range of things made possible by applied science, there is no other solution for us but to persevere in the current frenzy, a frenzy largely maintained by the paid priesthood of advertising and by the corresponding paid or unpaid priesthoods of the arts.

My article—like all burlesques—was based on what I thought was a grossly exaggerated statement of my case. But (in their May 5 and June 16, 1956 issues) *Business Week* published two articles that startled me, and even nonplussed me, by offering as simple gospel a line that, if I could have thought of it when I was writing my burlesque a bit more than a jubilee ago, I'd certainly have used as the perfect frisky summing-up of my thesis. "Just past the midmark of the twentieth century," we read, "it looks as though all of our business forces are bent on getting every one . . ." (and here is the notable slogan) to "Borrow. Spend. Buy. Waste. Want."

I would then have looked upon such a slogan as ideal material for a farce. Now presumably it is to be taken in full earnest.

In my original article, also, I thought I was making much sport of the trick psychological devices whereby a customer with a perfectly serviceable car was persuaded that he should get rid of it because there was a newer model available. In particular, I geyed the doctrine of "obsolescence" that was implied in such high-pressure selling tactics. But now I find *Business Week* referring quite respectfully to the way in which General Motors "adopted the annual model change,

helping to establish the auto industry's renowned principle of 'planned obsolescence.'" I had mistakenly thought that the principle was a joke; by now it has become "renowned."

A correction of another sort is in order, too. I had featured Henry Ford as the person most responsible for this type of economy. However, the articles in *Business Week* point out that, on the contrary, Henry Ford was an old-timer ("the archetype of the production man") with an antiquated Puritanical notion that, if you gave people a serviceable car at a price made progressively lower by increased sales, a car that the buyer might use for several or even many years before it needed replacement, you would have done enough. According to *Business Week*, it was General Motors that freed us of such old-fashioned nonsense, and started the rat-race of the annual change-over, plus the inducements of ever-lengthening time for payment on the installment plan; and Ford was reluctantly driven to the same methods by the pressures of the situation, with its technologically and financially Darwinian competition for survival.

The articles help us see how, when other industries such as appliances and plastics developed by following the same marketing procedures as General Motors, we finally came to have, in all its perfection, "the Consumption Economy," the "age of distribution, of the consumer and his foibles," in brief the Grand Convergence or Fatal Confluence of the factors that make up what now usually goes by the honorific title (and perhaps partial misnomer) of "The Higher Standard of Living."

This, then, according to *Business Week*, is the age in which "Consumer is King." And I'd like to round out my statement by meditating briefly on that resonant formula.

First, I couldn't help recalling the gnarled philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, who went crazy at the thought that the modern world was undergoing a moral upheaval, a "transvaluation of all values." But if these articles in *Business Week* are reliable evidence, then the Nietzschean supermen of our modern sales philosophy can take a revolution in moral standards simply as a matter of course. Many people, we are told, "are upset by what they see as an enormous emphasis on materialism and triviality" in the contemporary scene. Whereat the articles accurately pit their bright new asyndeton ("Borrow. Spend. Buy. Waste. Want.") against "all the old admonitions" that "appear to have been outdated," such *Poor Richard* proverbial saws in behalf of frugality and thrift as "Neither a borrower nor a lender be.... Waste not, want not.... A penny saved is a penny earned.... A fool and his money are soon parted." Discussing the "danger in thrift," the articles note that if the typical consumer should take it into his head to buy only the things he really needed, "he would scare the life out of business men and economists."

But fortunately (and we seem to have here a modernized variant of the paradox in Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, whose individual greed brought prosperity to the hive), the typical consumer "seems to prefer living just barely within his means. This may be profligate and shortsighted of him, in some people's eyes, but it is a powerful stimulus to the economy,"—and the statement looks to me as though it could be fairly translated: "This may not be morally good for the individual, but it is good for business." Or, more bluntly, the obvious *ethical* question which should always guide a state, "What is business good for?" is almost imperceptibly translated into a quite different *economic* counterpart, "What is good for business?" For the *Business Week* version of a business ethics would seem to be somewhat like the ethics of a tavern-keeper who thought it his business to get us all stinko drunk and keep us so. But surely ethical business admonishes a buyer, and does not merely seek to make a fool of him. Meanwhile I begin to fear that what I thought was pardonable in my burlesque only because burlesque is by definition a playful exaggeration, is now presented to us as the Ideal Norm. But that can't be business ethics. Here it looks to me as though the congregation is being wronged by its priesthood. Business helps supply us—and that's a good job. And surely we don't have to become damfool spenders for business to carry out its role.

From Alumnae Magazine, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1956

But surely ethical business admonishes a buyer, and does not merely seek to make a fool of him.

arkin on ARKIN

by ALAN ARKIN '55

*Alan Arkin '55 is one of only six actors to receive an Oscar nomination for Best Actor for his first screen appearance, in *The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming*. *The Second City* veteran has appeared in such films as *Catch-22*, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, and *Little Miss Sunshine*, for which, in 2007, he won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor.*

“I was arrogant, hostile, closed off. My parents were black-listed teachers in L.A., and I had grown up impoverished because my father couldn't get a job and terrified that we would be rounded up and put in concentration camps. I was split in my personality: not trusting anybody or anything, but with a desperate need to act—the most public thing you can do.

“I immersed myself in Bennington's theater department totally. Larry Arrick was a brilliant teacher; he brought me the rest of the way I needed to go, though it took me years and years to realize it. It took the criticism of another teacher, afterwards, whose approach was diametrically opposed, to tell me that what I was doing was exactly what I wanted to do, that I had become the actor I wanted to be. To me, being on stage meant the ability not to do something exactly the same each time, but to embellish. If it's not somehow different each time, there's no point in doing it. It kills the soul.

“Towards the end of my second year at Bennington, I took a philosophy course. I mistrusted everything I read. The teacher talked about Kant and 19th century English philosophers. I remember writing a note to myself, 'Philosophy is art without form and science without fact.' My frustration was that I found I wasn't reading individuals' experiences—I was reading what was in their heads. I felt that discrepancy. The teacher finally said to me, 'Read something you like.' I found John Dewey's *Art is Experience*. I felt as if I discovered myself.

“I got exactly what I wanted from Bennington, and I was very well taken care of here. Spoiled rotten. I fulfilled exactly the functions I came here for. The fact that I didn't take advantage of more than that was my fault.

“I didn't think of myself as a comic actor. I became one out of necessity. At 28, I was miserable; I had no career. Through Suzanne Stern Shepherd ['56], a Bennington connection, I got offered a job at Second City. Fat chance, I thought; I'm not going to bury myself in Chicago. Later, out of work and in a fit of despair, I said I'd like to come to work. I thought that was going to be the end of my life. But it saved my life instead, as is often the case.

“I spent whole days in the theater: hoping for a workshop, hoping for mail, hoping for an outside job, a rehearsal. It was my life, seven days a week, 16 hours a day.

“I wasn't funny at all, and I was terrified. After about six weeks, though, I finally found a character who was funny. After a bit, I developed a library of funny characters. Within six months' time, Second City was getting national attention.

“Everything that happened to me happened by utilizing fortuitous circumstances. The first singing group I started was at Bennington, with three girls—we performed at the school and at local places. I couldn't write music in those days, or notate. We'd end up with three people playing the piano at the same time and Dee [Adelaide Phillips Bull '56] writing the stuff down. It was a lot of fun. After that Lee Hayes—who was the bass singer with The Weavers—and I started The Babysitters. We wrote a series of children's songs, and sent Vanguard a demo utilizing kinds of music kids could make themselves. They liked it so much they released the demo.

“Writing was something I never felt myself able to do. Then one day I wrote a story for my youngest son,



Alan Arkin '55 teaching an acting workshop at Bennington in 1994

to make him feel better. Sometime later, I showed it to a publisher, and they wanted it.

"I completely fell into directing. I didn't think I had any abilities or leadership potential at all. When I was about 30, some friends in an off-Broadway play that was failing miserably called me to take over. I said I wasn't a director; they said, you can't do worse. I went to see the play, and agreed. After I took over, I found to my amazement that things started getting better. After that I directed *Eh?*, then *Little Murders* for Circle in the Square, and *The White House Murder Case*.

"I love directing. My beginning in directing was in service to the actors; and when you're in service, you can stay out of it emotionally. One of my favorite things in the world to do is to bring actors to things they don't think themselves capable of. Directing plays is effortless for me—the easiest thing I've ever done.

"I've taken a lot of chancy projects in my life—I like to take chances. It's damaged my career to some extent. But I wouldn't do it differently."

From Quadrille, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1993

on being a faculty wife

by SHIRLEY JACKSON

*The American writer Shirley Jackson lived at Bennington with her husband, Stanley Edgar Hyman, a faculty member from 1945 to 1970. Jackson's dark tales, *The Lottery*, reputedly set in North Bennington, and *The Haunting of Hill House* among them, have inspired innumerable adaptations, including seven films.*

A FACULTY WIFE IS a person who is married to a faculty. She has frequently read at least one good book lately, she has one “nice” black dress to wear to student parties, and she is always just the teensiest bit in the way. She is presumed to have pressing and wholly absorbing interests at home, to which, when out, she is always anxious to return and, when at home, reluctant to leave. It is probable that ten years or so ago she had a face and a personality of her own, but if she has it still, she is expected to keep it decently to herself. She will ask students questions like “And what did you do over winter period?” and answer in return questions like “How old is your little boy now?” Her little pastimes, conducted in a respectably anonymous and furtive manner, are presumed to include such activities as knitting, hemming dish towels, and perhaps sketching wild flowers or doing watercolors of her children.

I am a faculty wife. My husband is a teacher in a girls’ college. I am not bitter about being a faculty wife, very much, except that it *is* my opinion that young men who are apt to go on and become college teachers someday ought to be required to show some clearly distinguishable characteristic, or perhaps even

wear some large kind of identifying badge, for the protection of innocent young girls who might in that case go on to be the contented wives of furniture repairmen or disc jockeys or even car salesmen. The way it is now, almost any girl is apt to find herself hardening slowly into a faculty wife when all she actually thought she was doing was just getting married.

I put in four good years at college, and managed to pass almost everything, and got my degree and all, and I think it is a little bit unkind of fate that now I should find myself back in college the hard way, but of course there *are* things I might have done—or, put it, people I might have married—which would have landed me in worse positions. Bluebeard, anyway.

The three big thorns in the faculty wife’s ointment are her husband, her husband’s colleagues, and her husband’s students. Naturally a husband presents enormous irritations no matter what he is doing, and I think it is unreasonable to regard a teaching husband as necessarily more faulty than, say, a plumbing husband, but there is no question but what the ego of a teaching husband is going to be more vividly developed, particularly if he teaches in a girls’ college. For instance, if I accompany my husband to a student party and we are greeted at the door by a laughing group of students who surround us, calling out “Hello, there,” and “You *did* wear the orange tie, after all,” and “Class was simply *super* this morning,” I know, as I stand in the hall moodily looking for a place to put my coat, that

it is going to be proportionately more difficult, once home, to persuade my husband to put up the new shelves in the kitchen. He is going to lie back in his chair, flaunting the orange tie, and tell me to get a boy for things like that.

Well, I suppose husbands are all alike, at least the husbands of my friends are. Naturally, most of my friends are other faculty wives, most of us being understandably reluctant to wander out of our proper setting, and we make a comfortable little group as we gather in the corner just to the right of the doorway at student parties. “Hello,” we cry gaily to one another, “you here *too*? *How* are the children? Did you get to that perfectly ripping affair last night over at that other student house? Are the children well? Is there any news of a raise in faculty salaries? And the children—how are *they*?”

Of course, if one of them should happen to mention that they are getting a new refrigerator, or her husband has just had an article published in “The Wiltshire Archeological and Natural History Journal,” or that they are turning in the old car on a new convertible, a certain coolness can easily arise. Perhaps someone will tell us about the woman *she* knew who got herself hopelessly tangled in the descending top of *her* convertible and was late for a Trustee Tea, or someone will tell about what happened to some friends of hers with their new refrigerator the night they went out and left it alone for the first time, or we will mention with becoming modesty the articles *our* husbands have had in “The Journal of American Eth-



BENNINGTON COLLEGE ARCHIVES

Shirley Jackson (right) with former Bennington faculty member Jean Brockway

nobotany,” or “The Physical Culture Quarterly.” Sometimes these coolnesses will develop into open quarrels, with consequent feuds and taking sides and the comparative merits of publication in Wiltshire and East Lansing openly discussed, and the husbands bowing distantly in the faculty lounge.

More often, however, there are sizable advantages to living in a college community; it is easier to get a piano tuner, for instance, and information such as how to lay out a basketball court, or how to figure compound interest on a mortgage, is easily obtainable from the reference books in the library. Once, when my husband was out of town and I wanted to start the little wood-burning hot water heater which was attached to our furnace, I took advantage of living in a seat of learning, and called the chemistry professor and asked him how you started a little wood-burning hot water heater. He said that

he personally lived in a college house which had electricity laid on, but why didn't I try the logic professor, who was accustomed to working out problems and things. The logic professor said that his work was purely theoretical and the person I really wanted was the natural science man who ought to know how to start fires from camping out looking at ferns and stuff. The natural science man said that everyone knew that forest fires destroyed millions of dollars of animal life every year and if I wanted to start a fire I ought to get hold of the painting teacher, who could probably bring over some turpentine and old canvases. The painting teacher said well, he *knew* turpentine was no good, but one of the literature teachers had been at Yaddo once, and *he* ought to know something, after all. The literature professor said that aside from washing himself in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire he managed to keep pretty well away from the

stuff. I finally called the college president and he said he had the same sort of gadget in *his* house, and he came down and started it, but it went out.

Unlike faculty wives, students are nice girls who have come to college to get an education. They have very little interest in anything outside of getting an education and so cannot be expected to waste much time investigating the home lives of their teachers. I have never, for instance, met a student who was the least bit interested in my sketches of wild flowers, and their anxiety to know the ages of my children is, to say the least, perfunctory. On the other hand, almost all the students I have met are well-mannered, civil, and nicely brought-up. They are often extremely thoughtful, and courteous to the point of chivalry. They are kind to children and to animals. If they slam a door it is never knowingly in the face of a stray puppy

or a small baby. If they knock someone down it is inconceivable that it should be a teacher or another student. If they bring up some date who plays professionally for the Green Bay Packers he will carefully avoid practicing his inside blocking on someone's roommate's mother. I will maintain, categorically, that I have never yet seen any student, of whatever year, kick a sick cat. They are, as I say, neat, well-mannered, and demure. Their clothes are subdued, sometimes so much so as to be invisible. When they give parties they take pains to invite only the most congenial people, such as their teachers and selected other students. I have found, for instance, that I personally have never encountered any of that awkward difficulty at leaving a student party which might arise with a cruder group. I have nothing but admiration for the student's faith in her teachers, and the kind of innocent devotion which is frequently so touching: I am reminded of the student who crept up, one spring dawning, to leave a basket of fresh strawberries upon her teacher's pillow. Or the student who resolutely refused to remove a lilac sweater her teacher had once admired, and became known, by her junior year, as "The Purple Kid," although she dropped out, abruptly, during one winter period and was only seen once thereafter, in Paris with a retired manufacturer of pinball machines.

Perhaps the only quarrel the faculty wife might have with her husband's students is their spirit of pure scientific inquiry; they are very apt to throw out the baby, as it were, with the bath water, particularly when baby-sitting. As a matter of fact, I once had a conversation with a student upon this very topic; it was rather late at night, and we were among the dregs of a student party. She was there because she was a hostess and I was there because it was

beginning to look as though there were no good way of getting my husband home. I was wearing my "nice" black dress and holding a glass of ginger ale and she was wearing a strapless short evening dress, pink, with gardenias in her hair and holding and perhaps even drinking a glass of the punch they had been serving at the party, made of equal parts of sweet vermouth, vodka, and cold cocoa. We were sitting on the floor and I had already asked her about her vacation and she had told me she spent six weeks working as a feather duster in a museum, sometimes dusting feathers and sometimes feathering dusters, and that she had found the work very constructive and very useful in influencing her in the eventual choice of her senior program, and I had told her that my little boy was four now. After a short, agonized silence, broken only by the harmonies of six voices doing something from "La Bohème" in another corner of the room, she turned to me and asked, "Listen, when you were young—I mean, before you kind of settled down and all, when you were . . . *younger*, that is—did you ever figure you'd end up like this?" She waved her hand vaguely at the student living room, my "nice" black dress, and my glass of ginger ale. "Like *this*?" she said.

"Certainly," I said. "My only desire was to be a faculty wife. I used to sit at my casement window, half-embroidering, half-dreaming, and long for Professor Right."

"I suppose," she said, "that you *are* better off than you would have been. Not married at all or anything."

"I was a penniless governess in a big house," I said. "I was ready to take anything that moved."

"And of course you *do* make a nice home for your husband. Some place to come back to, and everything so neat."

"My spinning lacks finesse. But I yield to no one on my stoneground meal."

"And *he's* lucky, too, of course. So many men who marry young, silly women find themselves always going to parties and things for their wives' sake. An older woman—"

"He was only a boy," I said. "How well I remember his eager, youthful charm; 'Lad,' I used to say, fondly touching his wanton curls, 'lad, youth calls to youth, and what *you* need—'"

"He's *still* terribly boyish, don't you think?" She bent a tender glance upon my husband, who was waving a cigar and telling an enthralled group an expurgated story of how he graded student papers. "He's always so full of vitality."

"You should see him at home," I said. "We never have a dull moment *there*, I can tell you. Absolutely nothing but boyish vitality and youthful charm all over the place. He's positively faun-like. Why, I could tell you things—"

"I don't suppose," she said, blushing slightly and studying her fingernails, "that he talks much about us students at home, does he?"

"He babbles about you all the time," I assured her, and rose and went over to the noisy group of which my husband was the center. "Hail, ruddy stripling," I said.

"What?" he said, startled.

"Never mind," I said. "You leaving now or do I have to carry you home?"

I have been thinking of going to fewer student parties this year. I have all those dish towels to hem, for one thing, and I ripped part of the sleeve out of my black dress helping a freshman over a fence. I think that maybe I will invite a few of my husband's students over for tea one of these days and drop them down the well.

From Alumnae Quarterly, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1956

at our expense

cartoons from *THE NEW YORKER* by LEE LORENZ, CHARLES SAXON, AND WARREN MILLER*



*"Just because a girl went to Bennington
doesn't mean she hasn't any feelings at all."*



*"They sent her to Bennington to lose her Southern accent,
and then she turned her back on everything."*

*see page 33

this, that & the other

by HOWARD NEMEROV

a dialogue in disregard

This: I stand and watch for minutes by the pond
The snowflakes falling on the open water.
Though I get cold, and though it tells me
[nothing,
Or maybe just because it tells me nothing,
I have to stand and watch the infinite white
Particulate chaos of the falling snow
Abolished in the black and waiting water.
An instantaneous thing, time and again
It happens, quicker than the eye can count;
The snowflake drifting down erratically,
Reflecting for a second, suddenly
Annihilated; no disturbance to
The silent mirror spread beneath the sky.

That: I hasten to attend, I take it in.
I think I see something of what you mean:
It's just as Hermes Trismegistus said
(Or as the scholars say that Hermes said,)
The things below are as the things above.
A parable of universal love,
To see the water taking in the snow
Like that, a something neither quick nor
[slow,

Eternal in an instant, as the All
Unchanged receives the individual.

This: If that's the way you want it, courtesy
Must say it's yours to make of what you will.
But I was speaking only of the snow
(They say that no two snowflakes are alike,
How can they know?) touching the water's
[face
So gently that to meet and melt are one.
There's no more reason in it than in dreams.

That: Then I'll interpret you this dream of yours
And make some sense of it; rather, of course,
Some mind of it, for sense is what you make,
And your provision is for me to take.
First, I observe a pretty polarity
Of black and white, and I ask, could this be
A legend of the mingling of the races?
The whites, with cold and isolated faces,
Falling, a million Lucifers, out of
Their self-made heaven into the primitive
Beginnings that for centuries they hated,
In fact into the undifferentiated?
Political and metaphysical
At once I read your little parable.

This: Water has many forms and still is water.
The snow, the ice, the steam, the sailing
[cloud;
Has many ways, between the raindrop and
The great sea wave. One of the things it does
Is mirror, and there's a model for your
[thought.

That: And more's to come, for mirroring reminds
Me of Narcissus and his Echo, kinds
One of the other, though unkind to him.
Poor beauty pausing by the fountain's brim,
Is he not imaged in the snowflake's last
Moment of vanity, mirrored in the vast
Abyss and yearning toward the steepdown
[gulf
That seems to be, as it destroys, the self?

This: Echo, reflection, radar of all sorts,
The beauty of the mind is mediate,
Its beauty and its sorrow. A poet said,

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

Or had a political old fool say for him,
'By indirections find directions out.'
A thought is thinking in my head: maybe
The mind is not a spider, but a web.

That: The physicists are vexed between the wave
And particle—would it not somehow save
The appearances to think about the snow
As particles becoming waves below,
Exchanging not their natures but their
[shapes?
And then, what's said of parity, perhaps
That's pictured, and its overthrow as well,
In this weakest of reactions: if, of all,
One snowflake fell and somehow failed to
[drown
But was deflected to the sky again . . .

But there I'll stop, being compelled to see
This isn't physics, but theology.

This: Sleeveless speculation, someone said,
I disremember who, and never knew
What it could mean. For even if a sleeve
Could speculate, the arm of action still
Would thrust a grasping hand out at the cuff,
Bring morsels of this world up to the mouth
To feed these dreams of immortality
That end in death and defecation. See,
The snow has stopped, the sun breaks out of
[cloud,
A golden light is drifting through the glass.

That: A wind springs up that shatters images.

Both: The Other is deeply meddled in this world.
We see no more than that the fallen light
Is wrinkled in and with the wrinkling wave.

From Silo, Spring 1956



BENNINGTON COLLEGE ARCHIVES

Poet Howard Nemerov received the National Medal of Arts, the Bollingen Prize, the Pulitzer Prize, and the National Book Award. Nemerov, who served as Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and later as National Poet Laureate (1988–90), taught at Bennington from 1948 to 1966.

“reality is A CHOICE”

by DAVID SMITH

Widely considered one of the greatest sculptors of his generation, David Smith welded iron and steel into some of the most iconic sculptures of the 20th century. Smith taught at Bennington in the 1950s, and the following is excerpted from one of his lectures.

● In one sense no two people can see the same sculpture, as no two people are each other, with the same accent on associations and their projection. No two people can see the same apple.

The true reality of an apple is not any one image. It is not a two dimensional photograph, nor any one view. The reality is actually all apples in all actions. Apples are red, yellow, green, round, halved, quartered, sweet, sour, rotten, sensuously felt, hanging, rolling, crushed to juice; and the recording of apple image can go indefinitely, interlocked with associations until it will become life history.

Yet, when stimulated, the mind can select and experience the desired action in a flash. By the depth of associations the more complete the image will be with the beholder. This varies greatly but no more so on an apple than the response in art; neither the perception of apple nor the perception in art requires faculties beyond those of the average man.

Perception through vision is a highly accelerated response, so fast, so complex, so free, that these qualities are unattainable by the very recent limited science of word communication. Yet word communication is the educational key which the major part of our art educators employ, and upon which,

people shy from art or view with hostility, because they believe the key unattainable. Perception is regarded with suspicion; fear in its development, and enjoyment, is braked to hold within the word limit.

In perceiving, I believe all men are potentially equal. The mind records everything the senses experience. No man has sensed anything another has not, or lacks the components and power to assemble. That which censors out an individual's response is apparently a preference but not a lack of power. It is not a lack in ability to make response, but the conditioning by present pressures only to response requiring no effort, or projection. The word version of Art represents both censoring and prejudice.

No painter or sculptor of my acquaintance makes art with words. It is to be received as it is made, by perception.

By prejudiced minds, the artist is accused of unreality. As with my analogy of the apple, reality is a choice. Without perception reality is a theoretic state where minds stop.

The eidetic images of the cave man were reality; seemingly there were no censors or word limits. Since recorded origins, true perception in art has had various official safeguards and mono-interpretations, both the making and receiving being either written or unwritten law. This has applied not only to art, but to the notes of music and even to the shape of musical instruments.

Since Impressionism, the realities from which art has come have all been the properties of ordinary man. The still-life has been from the working man's household; the characters, environment, landscape have all been of common nature. Upper class reality, grandeur and pretention have not been the realities which the artist's eyes have transformed.

The controls of my art, which I do not deem important to its understanding, are not outside the daily vision of common man. My reality, which is never one thing but a train of hooked visions, arises from things found under an old board, stress patterns, fissures, the structure pattern of growth, stains, tracks of men, animals, machines, the unknown order of forces, accidental evidences such as spilled paint, patched sidewalks, structural faults, the arrangement of snow between hummocks during a thaw, the lines in marble laid by glacial sedimentation. These are all

realities by ancient pattern or unknown force to be recorded, repeated, varied, transformed in analogy or as keys to contemporary celebrations.

All men exercise perception; there is, of course, a difference in degree. The creation of known forms or symbols related, or associated, into a new image not existing before, does not exclude it from understanding; since it comes from common subconscious registry, there is nothing secret or mystical.

For instance my sculpture called “Hudson River Landscape” came in part from drawings made on a train between Albany and Poughkeepsie, a synthesis of drawings from ten trips over a seventy-five mile stretch. Yet later when I shook a quart bottle of India ink, and it flew over my hand, it looked like my landscape. I placed my hand on paper. From the image left, I traveled with the landscape to other landscapes and their objects—with additions, deductions, directives, which flashed past too fast to tabulate but elements of

which are in the sculpture. Is “Hudson River Landscape” the Hudson River? Or is it the travel, the vision? Or does it matter? The sculpture exists on its own; it is an entity. The name is an affectionate designation of the point prior to the travel. My object was not these words or the Hudson River, but the existence of the sculpture. Your response may not travel down the Hudson River but it may travel on any river or on a higher level, travel through form response by choice known better by your own recall. I have identified only part of the related clues; the sculpture possesses nothing unknown to you. I want you to travel by perception the path I traveled in creating it. You can reject it, like it, pretend to like it, or almost like it, but its understanding will not come with words, or hostility which had no part in its making. Nor have words yet explained the wonders of the human sensorium.

From Alumnae Quarterly, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1952



David Smith at a Bennington exhibition

the AGE of ANXIETY

by ERICH FROMM

Cofounder of the Frankfurt Psychoanalytic Institute and lecturer at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research until 1932, psychoanalytic icon Erich Fromm taught at Bennington from 1942 to 1955. Fromm published, among other books, the international bestseller The Art of Loving.

If we visualize ourselves, if we are to dispense with all comforting props, then indeed we look into an abyss of aloneness and conflict which makes us anxious. But this existential anxiety is not something to be afraid of or to avoid; it is one of the most important conditions for the unfolding of our strength and productiveness. It is a function similar to that of fear. It makes us desire to try to overcome it by developing our best human powers, those of love and of reason. It can never be eradicated so that we indulge in a smug “peace of mind” or “peace of soul.” But, it can be kept in balance if we succeed in our human task, in the art of living. The aims which are common to all great religions of the East and West, to the teachings of Confucius, Buddha, Isaiah, Christ, Socrates or Spinoza can be fulfilled only if we experience that existential anxiety which is one of the most powerful stimuli for pursuit of these aims.

To raise the question whether existential anxiety is frequent in our culture is almost embarrassing since the answer is so patently obvious. In fact we do everything to push it away and to cover it up. We avoid solitude and keep the company of others all the time. We

use radio, movies, liquor, cards, parties and what not to avoid being confronted with ourselves and looking into the abyss which confronts us. We even camouflage the experience of death and make it unreal and pretty. We go on whistling in the dark and feel safe as long as we hear everyone else whistling too.

Irrational anxiety is fundamentally different from fear and existential anxiety. It does not spring from the awareness of outside danger nor from that of the basic conditions of our existence, but from our feeling of powerlessness and our human impotence. It is the result of our failure in the most significant task of living, concern with our soul and its unfolding. In spite of a good deal of exposure to the virtues which all great religions stress, we are interested in almost everything except these virtues. We chase after success, power, comfort and prestige, ready to sacrifice everything else for the attainment of these goals.

I have described in *Man For Himself* the “marketing orientation” which is at the bottom of this moral and human failure. The marketing orientation has established its dominant role as a character pattern only in the modern era. In the personality market all professions, occupations and statuses appear. Employer, employee and free-lance—each must depend for material success on personal acceptance by those who would use his services.

Here, as in the commodity market, *use* value is not sufficient to determine *exchange* value. The “personality factor” takes precedence over skills in the assessment of market value and will most often play the deciding role. While it is true that the most winning personality cannot make up for a total lack of skill—indeed, our economic system could not function on such a basis—it is very seldom that skill and integrity alone are accountable for success. Success formulae are expressed in such terms as “selling oneself,” “getting one’s personality across,” and “soundness,” “ambition,” “cheerfulness,” “aggression,” etc., which are stamped on the prize-winning personality package. Such other intangibles as family background, clubs, connections and influence are also important desiderata, and will be advertised however subtly as basic ingredients of the commodity offered. To belong to a religion and to practice it is also regarded as one of the requirements for success. Every profession, every field, has its successful personality type. The salesman, the banker, the gang boss and the headwaiter have met

the requirements, each in a different way and to a different degree; but their roles are identifiable and they have met the essential condition: to be in demand.

Inevitably, man's attitude toward himself is conditioned by these standards for success. It is not enough for him to estimate his capacities on the basis of usefulness in a given activity and thus to measure his self-esteem; he cannot realize himself through the use of his powers alone. He can only hope that others' use of these powers will provide him with some reassurance of his personal worth. Thus the seller experiences himself as a commodity designed to attract on the most favorable, the most expensive terms. The higher the offered price the greater the affirmation of his value. Commodity Man hopefully displays his label, tries to stand out from the assortment on the counter and to be worthy of the highest pricetag, but if he is passed by while others are snapped up, he is convicted of inferiority and worthlessness. However high he might be rated in terms of both human qualities and utility, he may have the ill-luck—and must bear the blame—of being out of fashion.

From early childhood he has learned that to be in fashion is to be in demand and that he too must adapt to the personality mart. But the virtues he is taught—ambition, sensitivity and adaptability to the demands of others—are qualities too general to provide the patterns for success. He turns to popular fiction, the newspapers and the movies for more specific pictures of the success story and finds the smartest, the newest models on the market to emulate.

It is hardly surprising that under these circumstances man's sense of his value must suffer severely. The conditions for his self-esteem are beyond his control. He is dependent on others for approval and in constant need of it; helplessness and insecurity are the inevitable results. Man loses his own identity in the marketing orientation; he becomes alienated from himself.

If man's highest value is success, if love, truth, justice, sensitivity, tenderness, mercy are of no use to him, he may *profess* these ideals but he does not *strive* for them. He may think that he worships the God of love but he actually worships an idol which is the idealization of his real goals, those rooted in the marketing orientation.

The consequence of this orientation is inevitable: it is a deep seated anxiety, an anxiety which springs

from the failure to develop our best and most specifically human powers which in turn makes us afraid of even attempting to change our course or cease escaping from ourselves, and from our task.

This kind of anxiety is indeed very frequent. Not in the sense that people are aware of it. The avenues of escape mentioned above take care of that. But not being aware of a problem or a feeling does not do away with it. It just makes it impossible to do something about it or to change the conditions from which it springs.

Existential anxiety and irrational anxiety are correlated. The more we repress or camouflage existential anxiety and thus evade concern with our soul, the more we develop irrational anxieties which we then have to repress, wasting much of our energy in this labor of Sisyphus. We shall break through this vicious circle only if we take ourselves and the art of living seriously. If our ultimate concern is not success or popularity, but truth and love, if we consider ourselves and our neighbors not as means for any number of purposes but as ends, if we live according to the values which the great spiritual leaders of mankind have advocated at all times and have faith in our ability to approach these aims, then we shall not be free from anxiety but it will be one which is productive rather than one which is sterile and paralyzing.

From Alumnae Quarterly, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1950



"I just got a B.A. at Bennington, and now I'm going to get you!"

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

The Times They're A Changin'

Come gather round people wherever yuh roam
 An admit that the waters around yuh've grown
 An accept it that soon yuh'll be drenched to the bone
 An if yer breath + yuh's worth savin
 Yuh better start swimmin or yuh'll sink like a stone
 For the times they're a changin' —

Come writers an critics who prophesize with yer pen
 An keep yer eyes wide the chance won't come again
 An don't speak too soon for the wheel's still in spin
 An there's no tellin who that it's Namin
~~AN~~ the Loser now could be later twin
 For the times they're a changin' —

Come senators congressmen please heed the call
 Don' stand in the doorway don' block up the hall
~~AN~~ he that gets hurt'll be he who has stalled
~~AN~~ the battle outside agin
 Will soon shake yer windows an vibrate yer walls
 For the times they're a changin' —

Come mothers an fathers thru out the LAND
 An don' criticize what yuh can't understand
 Yer sons an yer daughters be beyond yer command
 An yer old road's rapidly agin
 Please get outa the new one if yuh can't lend yer hand
 For the times they're a changin' —

The line it is drawn the curse it is cast
 The slowest now will later be fast
 As the present now will later be past
 The order's rapidly fadin
 An the first now will later be last
 For the times they're a changin'

me
 Bob
 Dylan

Legendary singer-songwriter Bob Dylan performed at Bennington in 1961 with Gary Davis. According to eyewitnesses, the audience came for Davis and booed Dylan. But in 1963, after releasing *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, the giant returned to campus and even shared the lyrics to "The Times They Are A-Changin'" with *Silo*—the first publication ever to print them.

“the SOCIAL SYSTEM is part of the problem”

by JULIAN BOND

A founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Poverty Law Center, Julian Bond is a recipient of the National Freedom Award and since 1998 has been the Chairman of the NAACP. The following is an excerpt of a speech Bond gave at Bennington in 1966.

“It became apparent that hamburgers were not the final solution to the problems that Negroes faced, because it did no good to eat a hamburger in a public restaurant if you couldn’t pay for it, and that the ability to use a toilet in a bus station in Memphis is not going to make life beautiful for all Negroes in Mississippi if they can’t afford the price of a bus ticket from Jackson to Memphis.

“The simple ability to register and vote would be the final breakthrough to a better life for black people in the South. But the ability to register and vote was meaningless if there were no choices to be made on election day. In addition to being able physically to register to vote, Negroes in the South needed to be able to make alternative choices, and that was part of the job of the Civil Rights Movement. Part of giving the Negroes that choice began in the development of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964.

“Lowndes County is a Black Belt County. Negroes are 81% of the population of Lowndes County, but until 1965 they were no percent of the registered voters. The Negro did not vote in the county for 50 years until 1965.

“Now even though white people were only 19% of the population of Lowndes County, 113% of the eligible white people were registered to vote. After the Voting Rights Bill passed and it became physically possible for Negroes in Alabama and in Lowndes County to register to vote they began to do so in larger and larger numbers. Once having begun to catch up, the Negroes in Lowndes County began to think about how they would use their votes to make their lives a little better.

“Negroes in Lowndes County wondered what Negroes in other parts of the South had done, once they achieved the right to vote, to improve their situation. The first place they looked was a place closest to home—Macon County, Alabama, the home of Tuskegee Institute. In Macon County Negroes are only 76% of the population, but after a great many years of litigation, and vigorous voter registration work, they have a slight majority of voters registered in the county.

“Once Negroes in Macon County got a slight majority they were faced with several different choices of how to use their votes, and finally adopted a the-



Julian Bond speaking at Bennington in 1966

ory of 'parity politics,' which provides that groups which are a certain percentage of the population are entitled to that percentage of representation in the government.

"But Negroes in Macon County thought that if they elected 76% of the elected officials it would frighten the white people in Macon County and the surrounding counties. So they decided to adopt a theory they called 'parity politics minus' which says that even if you are 76% of the population you shouldn't elect 76% of the representation because you'll irritate your friends, even though they are not your friends right now.

"So instead of exercising their political will in equal proportion to their numerical strength they settled for electing only one or two people to public office. A great many of them are now convinced they made a very bad mistake and wish they had done it the other way.

"They suggested to Negroes in Lowndes County, anyway, that they elect 10% the first year, 20% four years later, 40% eight years later, and so on, until the people in the white community got used to the fact that the Negroes had desires and wishes too.

"Negroes in Lowndes County have a sixth grade education, as opposed to a fourth grade education in Mississippi (Alabama is a little more liberal, as you can see) but they're not stupid by any means. They thought a great deal about parity politics and finally rejected it because they said they felt it was un-American. They felt it went against basic American principle of government which suggests that government runs by democratic policy, and the majority rules. They decided that since they were 81% of the population in the county they wanted to have 100% of all the elected offices in Lowndes County. Now that is a frightening proposal to a great many people of both races, but at any rate that is what they decided. Having made that decision they had to decide how to go about winning 100% of all the elected offices in Lowndes County.

"They were told they should find out which of the two political parties was closest to their desires and wishes, join it, work with it, become a part of it and try to get that party to do the sorts of things they wanted it to.

"But when they thought about Republicans in Alabama they had to think about the people they

could see and hear every day, and the man who, at that time, was Mr. Republican in Alabama was Congressman James Martin. Mr. Martin is like a great many other Southern Republicans and Northern Republicans too, I imagine, in that he's a segregationist, a bigot and a racist, and Negroes in Lowndes County associate his brand of Republicanism with that of the former Presidential nominee of the Republican Party, Barry Goldwater, and they say about him what they used to say about Goldwater—that in their hearts they know he's white.

"And when they thought about Democrats they had to think about those Democrats who lived and breathed and ate and slept in the State of Alabama, and the top Democrat then was the incumbent Governor George C. Wallace. This was before the May Democratic Primary in which Mrs. Wallace won the nomination. They realized that she probably would win the nomination, and a victory for her would mean that most Democrats in the state think exactly the way she does, and she, in fact, thinks exactly the way her husband does—sort of the Ma and Pa Kettle of politics. So the Negroes in Lowndes County decided they didn't want to associate themselves with that sort of Democratic Party politics, and rejected it with another political slogan, 'Bedfellows Make Strange Politics.'

"Once having rejected both parties, the only avenue left open to them was the formation of a third party. In Alabama it's fairly easy to form a third party. The state law requires that a group of two or more people should meet on the first Tuesday in May on or about the county courthouse and nominate from their number candidates for public office, and if those candidates receive 20% or more of the vote on election day, their organization will be recognized by the state as a bonafide political party and will have all the rights and privileges that other parties do.

"So on the first Tuesday in May of this year, when most other people were going to the polls to cast their votes for Mrs. Wallace, about 1,800 Lowndes County Negroes met on or about the county courthouse. They wouldn't let them meet in the county courthouse, so they met in a church nearby, and nominated from their number a group of men and women to run for certain elective offices. Throughout most of the summer they continued trying to get people registered to vote and the candidates who had announced and qualified to run for office began to campaign.

“People criticized them for having the black panther as their symbol, and said it was ‘sort of a cute thing, makes a nice picture on a poster, but don’t you think it was the wrong thing to do? It’s calculated to suggest some sort of hidden, very strange and probably very vicious militancy which rests just beneath the surface in Lowndes County and suggests that you’re not the decent, free-loving Americans that you want us to think you are. Why could you not,’ these people said, ‘have chosen a more innocuous symbol, like a rabbit, or a giraffe, or something like that?’

sent them. The question was not just having Negro representation but having representation that was going to *do* something for them. They used the following example as the sort of thing they wanted their people to do for them:

“In Lowndes County there is a factory called Dan River Mills. It makes men’s underwear, shirts and women’s blouses. Dan River Mills began as an industrial plant in Connecticut and when labor unions there began suggesting they ought to allow the workers to be unionized and ought to pay minimum

We chose the black panther because we’ve never seen a white panther.

“Negroes in Lowndes County replied, ‘Well, we chose the black panther for a couple of reasons: the panther represents to us the sort of politics we want to engage in; it’s aggressive and outgoing and tries to get the sorts of things it wants. Secondly,’ they said, ‘we chose the black panther because we’ve never seen a white panther.’

“The election was a few weeks ago and all of the candidates of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization lost. It was a loss not entirely unexpected in Lowndes County, and therefore has not set back the development of the organization.

“Having lost the election, Negroes in Lowndes County are continuing to build for the elections that will come up two and four years from now. They also are continuing to talk about what they had expected those people who were running for public office to do for them. They didn’t want to do what Negroes often do in some parts of the South where Negroes have been elected to public office—just to say that because Negroes have been elected the objective is accomplished.

“What is interesting is not that they won or lost the election—although it would have been much nicer for them to win—it is the way they looked at what their party and their nominees would do, and the way they decided how they ought to use politics to repre-

wages, the factory moved from there to Danville, Virginia. Later the same thing happened there, and the factory moved to Lowndes County.

“Lowndes County is like a lot of southern counties—it is very hungry for industry. It bends over backwards to make plants like Dan River Mills feel at home. They built an industrial shell for them (a big building in which all they had to do was move their equipment and plug it in to get into operation); they dredged out the river so they could ship produce from Lowndes County down to Mobile; they built an additional spur of the Alabama-Tennessee Railroad up to the front door so they could ship raw materials from all over the county. And in addition to doing those things for them they said, ‘we’re so eager to have you here that we’re not going to require you to pay the usual taxes that industries pay in Lowndes County for ten years, until you get yourselves on your feet.’

“Negroes in Lowndes County are very disturbed about that. They think there are two reasons why they don’t get the services from the county that they ought to: the first is that they are black, and the second is that, even if they were white, they wouldn’t get it because the county doesn’t have the money to give them. So they felt one of the reasons they didn’t have the money was because of plants like Dan River Mills

People don't discriminate for the fun of it; the function of prejudice is to defend social, economic, political or psychological interests.

that move in, live off the community, and don't give anything back.

"They said, 'After the election we'll send the Negro tax assessor out to Dan River Mills and (let's assume the plant is worth a hundred thousand dollars) he'll inspect it and he'll say, 'I'll assess this plant at 50% of its value, you owe us \$50,000 in taxes. Here's a stamped envelope, with the address of the tax collector's office on it. Just put your check in and drop it in the mail.' If the check didn't come in a week or two, they'd send the Negro tax collector out and he'd demand payment on the check and if it wasn't forthcoming, they'd send the Negro sheriff out and he'd padlock the plant or seize the plant for the county.

"Now people who heard that story said, 'That's a good story to tell when you're making a speech or when you're explaining what you're doing—it sounds good, it sounds very nice, but it's not very realistic. First, because if you threaten to tax that plant at 50% of its value they're going to pack up and move out of the county and you're going to lose the income that the factory brings into Lowndes County.'

"The Negroes replied, 'Well, we don't care if the factory should move tomorrow, should burn up tomorrow, we're not getting any of the income from it because they don't hire Negroes at the factory.' Then the critics said, 'That's true, but it shows how naïve you are about economics and the way money flows in this country. Even though none of you are actually employed at the factory a lot of you work as maids and yard boys, at \$2.50 and \$3.00 a day, for white people who do work at the factory. If the factory leaves, these people are going to come home, take care of their own children and yards, and you'll lose those jobs you have now which, admittedly, are not much, but they're better than doing nothing.'

"Negroes in Lowndes County said, 'That's true, you are right, you've got us there, but here's what we'll do: Instead of assessing the plant at 50% of its value we'll tell them we'll assess it at 100% of its value

unless they agree to adopt an equal employment policy, and when they do we'll just tax them whatever the regular rate is.'

"The social system in this country as it is organized, is incapable of solving, through the normal channels, the urgent problems presented to it by history. The social system, as it is organized, is part of the problem and cannot be appealed to or relied upon as an independent arbitrator in power conflicts of which it is a part. White Americans, generally speaking, lack the will and courage and the intelligence to grant Negroes their equal rights. They have to be forced to do it by pressure.

"People don't discriminate for the fun of it; the function of prejudice is to defend social, economic, political or psychological interests. Appeals made to the fair play of prejudiced people are like prayers said in the wind. Conflict and struggle are necessary for social change. The rights and lives of real human beings are at stake and these rights are neither violable or negotiable.

"Since Negroes are a minority in most parts of this country they must make alliances. But these alliances must be based on their ability to promote racial goals. In general, the so-called alliances between Negroes and elements of the white community do not serve the interests of Negroes, they're not genuine alliances. They are ad hoc arrangements to use the Negro vote to elect certain white politicians. Negroes must initiate and support massive programs of civic and political education. They must initiate issues as well as react to them.

"Negroes must not forget race consciousness as long as they are the victims of racism, because if the issue is forgotten by Negroes the social order will continue to sanctify the established system which excludes Negroes from free and equal participation and consideration."

From Quadriple, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1967

andrea dworkin '68



BENNINGTON COLLEGE ARCHIVES

Radical activist Andrea Dworkin '68 dedicated her life to the feminist movement. In books such as *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* and *Intercourse*, she discussed female sexuality, denounced the pornography industry, and fought against the subordination and abuse of women.

men and WOMEN

by JULES FEIFFER

Political cartoonist, screenwriter, children's book author, and novelist Jules Feiffer is the only artist to have had a comic strip published in The New York Times. His editorial cartoon, Feiffer, ran in the Village Voice from 1956 to 1997 and won him a Pulitzer Prize. The following remarks are from his 1969 lecture at Bennington.

I've been writing a new play which deals with the sex lives of several men and women over a period from 1946 to 1969 or 1970 (depending on when we open).

This is the first time I've had to write seriously about women's characters. I realized—and I should have some time ago—that most of the analysis of women is written by men. I find it fascinating because almost everything written has a slightly patronizing tone about it, the way psychologists write about children.

I find it interesting that the whole feminist thing is beginning again after being dormant for the last twenty years or so. I don't see the male attitude changing radically. I think that, just as in the area of black-white relations, there are certain erosions. But what we do is simply retreat to new positions; it's a holding action. It's not that suddenly there's a blinding ray of light and a man says, "Oh my God, I've been wrong."

It's psychologically impossible to have it happen that way. People have very important reasons to hold on to all the myths without them. If a guy can't feel better than his wife, he can't feel better than anybody. His job is usually typical; the conditions under which he is living, even if he has everything he wants, are somehow

never satisfactory; his chances for attacking anybody out in the real world without retaliation are almost nil; so he desperately needs a safe target, and that reduces the targets to his wife and children. He picks one out, or both, and that invariably means countermeasures. This is the way the game has traditionally been played.

I sometimes work for *Playboy*, and part of the privilege of that is getting paid a lot by *Playboy*, going to Chicago, staying at Hugh Hefner's house, eating his food, drinking his booze, and finally getting tight enough to attack his magazine to him. During one of these periods, when we were having an argument over the sexually liberating role that *Playboy* was playing, I told him I could believe that a lot more easily if my image of the playboy man was a guy elegantly dressed who walks into a room with a beautiful girl on each arm—there are never less than two. It's a fantasist's magazine. It's what every guy is supposed to dream he wants out of life, and that way I suppose it's middle-age masturbation. There are lots of other magazines with

pictures, but never quite as beautifully air-brushed and totally unpubic, and that's what makes up the American male dream. They did a smart thing at the beginning by deliberately getting the "girl next door" to be the Playmate, to show how nice and clean and beautiful it all was. The "girl next door" has been the spirit of the magazine from the start.

The magazines women buy to find out about their own lives are *McCall's*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, etc.

Playboy is a magazine edited by middle-class males which tries to create an image of bachelorhood and freedom. All the women's magazines, edited in large part by middle-class males, create the image that all ladies should stay home and be good homemakers. Be a good homemaker to whom? Your husband who is out there with that *Playboy* chick?

Most people don't really act out their fantasies; when they do, they usually find they're very disappointing. It hardly ever comes up to what you imagined in your head. That's the advantage of writing plays or drawing cartoons; you're in control.

From Quadriple, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1969

BENNINGTON COLLEGE ARCHIVES



the two-person zero sum strictly competitive game blues...

by KATHLEEN NORRIS

...heading, of course,
into the battle . . .
 yes, I see that destruction too,
calculating the possibilities,
 is rational,
assign the given reasons—
 a terrible kind
numerical value,
 of beauty,
determine the action—
 coming, no act to this end,
no end to this act,
 once brought together, to this place,
once made, purely,
 to be undone. the reason
arbitrarily assigned, the maximum gain
 is lost at its twisted beginnings,
is time.
 and the zero sum is death.

From Silo, Fall 1966



DAVID DWYER

on commons lawn at bennington

by KATHLEEN NORRIS

October 1971

Where the mist always was, nothing looks back
Where it was only an apple, we ate it out

Some kind of truth holds us to the ground
And drives the rain down

Instead of three years, give me a blessing

From Quadrille, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1972

Kathleen Norris '69 published her first book of poetry, *Falling Off*, in 1971. Her first nonfiction work, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, was named one of *The New York Times* notable books of the year and was followed to acclaim by *The Cloister Walk*, *Amazing Grace*, and *The Virgin of Bennington*.

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

on warhol's "campbell soup can"

by SUZANNE STANTON '65

While a senior at Bennington, Suzanne Stanton '62 wrote the following story for Lawrence Alloway's Art and Communication course. Mr. Alloway showed it to Andy Warhol, who enjoyed it immensely. In November 1962 the entire article was used by the Stable Gallery in New York to announce Warhol's one-man show there.

IN THE SMALL, WOMEN'S liberal arts college nestled among the leafy trees atop a country hill, the art lecture had been going on for nearly two hours. Slumped in their chairs, the students sighed blue cigarette smoke as the Professor commented on the slides that appeared on the screen.

But when suddenly there appeared a portrait of an ordinary Campbell's soup can, such cries filled the room that the Professor covered his ears in defense and called, "Attention, young ladies, attention! Please! Let us turn on the light and discuss the matter reasonably!"

Jolted into action the students tried to express their understanding, or lack of it, in regard to the picture. When they had started for the third or fourth time, in their typically circular discussion, to exercise their views, the Professor interrupted with his own ideas.

"Because your reactions indicate," he said, "that this painting has presented an excellent problem for each one of you to try and solve, I propose the following plan:

"In order to make it more possible for you to speculate on the meaning this picture may hold for you, we shall pay a visit to the artist in his studio where we may

ask questions, view his other work, and do whatever will help you to draw your own conclusions. Afterwards, you will record these interpretations on paper and submit them to me. Since we are all individuals here, it will not surprise me to discover that no two criticisms will be exactly alike."

Several days later the students turned in their papers, and the Professor began to read.

Warhol was standing before the easel finishing the painting of the soup can when I arrived. "I'd like to ask you some questions," I told him. "Sit down," he said.

"Now," I said, "I'd like to know just what it is that you are trying to communicate with this image, Mr. Warhol. Are you trying to say something? If so, I would like your message stated explicitly in verbal form." I waited, but there was no immediate reply.

"Well," I concluded, "if you won't tell me exactly what you mean, I shall waste no more of my time." With that, I exited from the room, for indeed it is unnecessary to spend one's time and energy on meaningless things.

Obviously, Warhol's work cannot be valued as art, for real art is communication. Because the artist feels a need to express feelings and ideas from his own experience, he encodes them into an organized message, which is then decoded by the viewer in terms of his own experience. The degree of success in communication depends on the degree to which artist and spectator are related in experience, feeling and idea. The

greater the bond, the more successful the communication is likely to be; and vice versa, the weaker it is, the greater the chance that the message will fail to reach its destination.

Although Warhol's work displays a good control of technique and strong powers of observation, this alone does not make it art. In terms of communicating any significant message, it is inaudible, and, therefore, not worthy of further consideration.

The Professor smiled and picked up the next.

When we arrived at the studio we found the artist busy at work on a painting of a soup can. Every movement, every look, every touch communicated his love for life and his work. He painted in a state of childlike fascination, and every so often he would kneel in front of the little model can on a chair nearby and gaze at it and sometimes speak to it in a quiet voice filled with tenderness and understanding.

When he had finished painting the picture, he gently picked up the little can and carried it to the stove, where he poured the soup into a pan. A pleasant aroma filled the room, and Warhol breathed deeply, a smile of deep satisfaction on his face.

Standing by the door we too inhaled the fragrant odor and smiled delightedly at one another. It was then that the artist turned around and said, "Why, hello, who are you? Won't you come and share my soup with me? I'm just about to have my lunch—or is it breakfast? or dinner? Oh, the time is not important, I always



have soup no matter what the hour happens to be.”

As we sat down before the steaming bowls of rich red soup, Mr. Warhol remarked, “It is so nice of you to come and share my soup with me. I love soup, and I love it when other people love soup, too, because then we can all love it together and love each other at the same time.” He smiled and spooned the soup to his mouth, slowly and happily, like a child.

“You know,” he said, “when I was little my mother always used to feed us this kind of soup. But now she’s gone, and sometimes when I have soup I remember her and I feel like she’s right here with me again....”

His mouth watering, the Professor went on to the next paper:

At the studio Warhol made us drink some soup. While we drank it, although it badly needed salt, he revealed some of his basic inner motivations for painting cans of soup. Obviously, the patient’s obsession with the subject is simply a manifestation of complex and deep-seated desires to return to the foetal state. The can is only a symbol of the womb, which sublimates certain repressed and therefore unacceptable feelings and ideas into more acceptable channels.

It is difficult to predict future development, but if normal—and the degree of normalcy and adjustment is indeed difficult to establish at such an early state—the patient will behave in the fashion characteristic of one whose therapeutic measures are successful. That is to say, continued paintings of soup cans will continue to appear.

The Professor reached for the next paper in the pile:

Warhol has painted a portrait of an ordinary can of soup in a direct and realistic style, but the difference is that he has increased its size to monumental propor-

tions. This is his way of asking us to look at the ordinary objects around us, to reflect upon such things as their origin, structure, development and function. In short, what do they mean to us?

Warhol looked dismayed when we inquired into the significance the Campbell’s soup can had for him. “Soup!” he said, “who really cares what the soup or the can or Campbell’s means to me? The important thing is what each one of you thinks. I only want to get you started thinking and feeling like what’s art? How important is skill? subject matter? feeling? idea? style? does it matter if the work is anonymous or autographic? personal or impersonal? abstract? figurative? descriptive? evocative? What’s important in art and life? What am I saying? That’s for you to figure out. Question yourselves. I don’t have the answers. I’ve already made my statement right there.” He pointed to the painting on the wall.

The Professor looked at the papers on the desk and with amazement realized that in spite of all those that he had removed, the pile was now much larger than ever before. It was as if all the ideas had quietly bred more ideas, which in turn had given birth to still more ideas, which in turn.... The Professor picked up the next brain-child and read:

When we got to the studio we found Warhol painting furiously on the picture of the soup can. No sooner had we entered than he began to shout, “That goddamn academy, the lousy bastards! Wanting me to copy a bunch of apples! Hell, I hate the lousy things. I say why not paint something ya like, like soup! So I paint soup! Not in a bowl but right in the can like I eat it! Nobody understands! Why should I paint ordinary still lifes? I’m not trying to prove anything! I just want to paint, and paint what I want, how I want. If no one can understand my subject or my style, it’s tough. I’m not try-

ing to please anybody except myself by doing it.”

In the next paper the Professor read:

Warhol stood squarely in front of me and shrugged. “I mean, I’m not exactly sure what I’m doing, you know. It’s not a reasoned way of life. What happens is you get filled with an image and you have to put it down to satisfy yourself. You can’t help it! You’re alive and have to act, otherwise you’re dead. I’m not out to enlighten the world, I just want to give life to what is in me. Right now I’m making what we both identify as soup cans. I’m not exactly sure what or why they are, or what they will mean in the future. Later on they might make sense, or maybe they will not even exist. I don’t worry about any of this. I just do what I have to—paint—and at this moment, paint soup cans.”

Leaning back in his chair to consider some of the ideas the students had presented, the Professor saw that while he had been reading, the papers had continued to multiply and divide to such an extent that the entire room was now filled with ideas.

Suddenly there occurred a frantic fluttering as one of the papers struggled to escape death by suffocation, and the Professor snatched it up, crying, “It’s alive!” to which it replied:

Speaking of life on the most primitive and physical level, a man needs food, clothing and shelter in order to exist in a human way. But some men are not satisfied with life simply on this level and demand something more, a life for their spirit, or soul.

Talking with Warhol gave some insight into his reasons for painting the Campbell’s soup can. “Look,” he said, “it’s simple. I need to live. That takes money. Campbell pays me to do their advertisements. Personally, I don’t care about soup or the Campbell company; I

just need the money to pay for food, my room, my clothes and art supplies so that I can live and paint the things I really want. Sometime I might show the other paintings, but not until I feel ready. This soup can stuff, you take it too seriously. All it means is money. I need it to paint better things. But I don't show them yet. Wait."

Warhol led us into a large, dark store-room which had been converted into a gallery. The entire wall space from top to bottom, plus the ceiling, was covered with paintings of soup cans quite different from any that the public has ever seen.

On the left there hung a multi-colored, multi-textured, multi-viewed can painted in the intense and all-inclusive manner of Picasso. Next to it, a soft, vibrant, vertical red rectangle as Rothko might paint a can, followed by an intense can painted in short, thick strokes and bright colors in the style of Van Gogh.

Then, a dark blue vertical rectangle, or can-shape, with a white stripe down the middle suggesting the influence of Neman, followed by a muddy-looking can with a thick black outline, reminiscent of Roualt.

Higher up there hung a group of drips and spatters forming a Pollack-type tin can, next to a very elongated Modigliani-like can, followed by a rough, earth-colored and wobbly-shaped can in the style of Dubuffet, by a bowl heaped with cans like a fruity Bonnard still-life.

Across the room on the far wall next to a magical Klee can with stars twinkling all around, one saw a realistic but nightmarishly distorted soup can melting in the desert sun with little black bugs crawling in and out of its belly. Next to the Dali version there hung a soft and misty can painted entirely à la dot-dot-dot like a Seurat, which was followed by a vicious tin can whose many sharp

edges cut into each other with extreme tension, like a Sironi self-portrait.

On the right wall hung a group of bright-colored and happy-looking cans standing on each other's shoulders to form a Léger-like circus pyramid, next to a soup can nestling in lush Rousseau greenery, unaware of the nearby tigers licking their chops in eager anticipation of the meal-to-be, which was followed by a Toulouse-Lautrec line, group of soups dancing the can-can.

Nearer the ceiling stretched a painting of a scientific, daVinci-like dissection of a soup can, revealing its rich red inner contents, next to a can thrashing in a Homer sea, in contrast to another floating calmly among Monet waterlilies.

And finally, spreading over the entire ceiling, in full splendor, group after group of massive cans twisting and tumbling, revolving and reclining as Michelangelo might have painted them.

"Of course this is only the first room of the gallery," Warhol explained, "but it will suffice for now. All that everyone else has seen," he continued as we returned to the portrait in the front room, "is this."

Thus one sees that through the many different approaches, Warhol is studying, or trying to understand, an object familiar throughout the nation. Always searching, he is experimenting with a variety of expression in order to discover the image which satisfies him the most. It remains for time to tell what else he will create. Whether he will free himself from the influence of other artists' ideas and create an original work, or whether he will remain bound forever to outside ideas, this question still waits an answer.

Another student had seen more of Warhol's paintings and concluded:

In comparison to some of Warhol's other work, the portrait of the soup can lacks spirit, or imagination. It is less stimulating because it is a direct copy of an

already familiar image, except that the size has been increased. This is, perhaps, the only evidence of artistic invention, unless one considers the placement of the particular object in the context of fine art as a startling new idea.

The fact is that ultimately one feels more wit or humor, and significance, in Warhol's painting of the woman's profile before and after a superficial transformation in which the shape of her nose is altered and a mole added under her eye to make her more socially acceptable. The comic style, alone, in which the images are painted is funny, but the idea of becoming more grotesque because of the alteration makes one laugh the loudest.

Unlike this social-economic criticism, the portrait of the soup can lacks charm and humor. It is much less stimulating in this way; rather, it provokes serious and circular discussions on the definition of and relationships between art, communication, artist, and spectator, and all the ideas which for our purposes here may simply be considered as tangent.

The Professor laid the paper aside and leaned back in his chair to think about the various ideas that he had read.

But his stomach had its own idea. Mutterings of hunger suddenly turned to rumbling, and the Professor leapt from his chair, kicked his way through the papers and ran to the kitchen.

Quickly he heated a can of—you know it—and after that he drank one cold, followed by spaghetti swimming in Campbell's soup-sauce and a salad covered with Campbell's soup-dressing. Throughout the meal he continued to speculate on the messages in Warhol's painting.

And thus, we leave him, blissfully at one with Campbell soup.

*From Bennington College Bulletin,
Vol. 32, No. 2, 1963*

the green mountain boys revisited

by ALAN SOLOMON

A 1966 Vogue article, excerpted below, officially dubbed the artists Paul Feeley, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, and Anthony Caro the “Green Mountain Boys.” The artists came together at Bennington—in the Green Mountain state—and they, in turn, attracted other prominent artists to campus, including Jackson Pollock, Hans Hofmann, Adolph Gottlieb, Morris Louis, David Smith, and Barnett Newman. In this way, Bennington, which exhibited their work long before other institutions were aware of their importance to American art, became a kind of visual arts Mecca in the 1950s and 60s.

WHY GO TO ALL THIS trouble to live in the country? Bennington College is a few miles to the west, and this might seem to suggest an explanation, but [Kenneth] Noland has no connection with the school. His reasons for going there bring up that whole story mentioned earlier, the story of Bennington and a large chunk of the history of recent art.

The history actually does center on the college, going back to the time when painter Paul Feeley went to the Bennington art department after the Second World War. One of his students was the talented Helen Frankenthaler, who later became an important painter in her own right, and who devised a method of staining paint into unsized canvas, which derived from Jackson Pollock and which was to be explored by Noland, Morris Louis, and quite a few other painters. Later, she attracted the interest of Clement Greenberg, the crit-



BENNINGTON COLLEGE ARCHIVES



from top: Noland, Olitski, Caro, Feeley

ic, to the college, and he began a series of formal and informal visits to Bennington as lecturer, fan, and advisor to the Bennington art program. [*Vogue* editor's note: Greenberg, by the way, means green mountain in German.]

The first important result of the relationship between Greenberg and Bennington came out of conversations with Paul Feeley; they led to a series of extraordinary exhibitions in the Old Carriage House gallery at the college. The first of these was a show of the sculpture of David Smith, who settled in the country not too far away, at Bolton Landing, New York; it was followed by exhibitions in the early fifties of Jackson Pollock, Adolph Gottlieb, Hans Hofmann, and somewhat later, Barnett Newman, Noland, and Louis, among others. These one-man shows were in most cases the first important exhibitions any of these artists ever had outside the commercial galleries, and they were held long before other institutions were very much aware of the importance of the new American painting. The roster is certainly impressive; it is a tribute to Greenberg's acumen and Feeley's willingness to take what must have seemed at the time to be considerable risks. Feeley somehow managed all these exhibitions in the early days without funds, mostly, he said, though the generosity of the dealers, among whom he particularly mentioned Sam Kootz.

An open, freewheeling attitude has also characterized the teaching of art at Bennington from the beginning; this is in part a reflection of the college philosophy, but the approach to art is still quite



Rainfall, 1964, by Anthony Caro

1930s
1940s
1950s
1960s
1970s
1980s
1990s
2000s

without parallel. To the dismay of some observers, there has never been a conventional art historian at Bennington: The lecture courses have been taught by people who were essentially critics. Although it tried on a number of occasions, the college never succeeded in enticing Greenberg to teach there permanently, but it has done well, nevertheless, starting with Eugene Goossen, and later with Lawrence Alloway.

One of the curious things about this history is the way so many of the tough guys who have come into contact with Bennington seem to have fallen desperately in love with the situation, not as a casual liaison, but with undiminished intensity and devotion. They keep coming back....

One can see how common goals and a shared language generate a kind of community spirit among these artists, but this alone does not account for an intangible flavor which colors life in Bennington. This brings us back to something about the presence of the college which also touches all of them.

It's not easy to pick up the special quality of Bennington ambience at once. Externally, the college seems rather dif-

fuse. The buildings spotted around in a haphazard way on huge expanses of lawn, on a high plateau which looks out on the ever-present hills; for the most part, they don't look like conventional college buildings. There seem to be very few people around, given the spatial scale of the place, but, for that matter, the school is not big, only 340 girls.

In search of an explanation for all this, I asked both Newman and Greenberg why they felt such affection for Bennington, and their answers were almost echoes of one another. In both cases their sentiments go back to their first experience with Paul Feeley; they both talked about his enthusiasm and what they both called his open attitude. His efforts progressively stimulated an appetite for art at Bennington. Greenberg felt that the art program has now taken a lead among campus activities. Literature predominated ten years ago, he says, but the change came partly when contemporary painting became more interesting than poetry, and mostly because of Feeley's efforts.

But then, more than anything else, there are the girls. "It's the craziest

place in the world," Newman says, "but the girls who come out of Bennington are fantastic." He believes it has something to do with the nature of the relationship between the faculty and the students. (Small classes, permissive encouragement, and a certain esprit.)

Greenberg says: "Bennington girls make the best audience I ever had. They are attentive and quick; they catch you out in contradictions and are not afraid to argue. They could take any amount of internal talk without losing interest." I asked what he considered their special qualities, and he answered that they are intense and wide open. These words keep coming up....

Driving back to Bennington, struck by the contrast between the town and the transplanted suburb I had just left, I wondered what the townspeople make of all this.... I'll bet they don't really know that, for the second time in 200 years, local history is being made by the Green Mountain Boys.

From Bennington, Spring 1998

skylarking and SOCIALISM

by KURT VONNEGUT

Writer, graphic artist, and literary pioneer Kurt Vonnegut wrote 14 darkly comic novels, including Slaughterhouse Five and Cat's Cradle. He gave his first college commencement speech to the Bennington class of 1970. Here are some highlights.

a friend of mine, who is also a critic, decided to do a paper on things I'd written. He reread all my stuff, which took him about two hours and fifteen minutes, and he was exasperated when he got through. "You know what you do?" he said. "No," I said, "What do I do?" And he said, "You put bitter coatings on very sweet pills."

I would like to do that tonight, to have the bitterness of my pessimism melt away, leaving you with mouthfuls of a sort of vanilla fudge goo. But I find it harder and harder to prepare confections of this sort—particularly since our military scientists have taken to firing at crowds of their own people. Also—I took a trip to Biafra last January, which was a million laughs. And this hideous war in Indo-China goes on and on.

Still—I will give you what goo I have left.

It has been said many times that man's knowledge of himself has been left far behind by his understanding of technology, and that we can have peace and plenty and justice only when man's knowledge of himself catches up. This is not true. Some people hope for great discoveries in the social sciences, social equivalents of F equals MA and E equals MC squared, and so on. Others think we have to evolve, to become bet-

ter monkeys with bigger brains. We don't need more information. We don't need bigger brains. All that is required is that we become less selfish than we are.

We already have plenty of sound suggestions as to how we are to act if things are to become better on Earth. For instance: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. About seven hundred years ago, Thomas Aquinas had some other recommendations as to what people might do with their lives, and I do not find these made ridiculous by computers and trips to the Moon and television sets. He praises the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, which are these:

To teach the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to console the sad, to reprove the sinner, to forgive the offender, to bear with the oppressive and troublesome, and to pray for us all.

He also admires the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, which are these:

To feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to visit the sick and prisoners, to ransom captives, and to bury the dead.

A great swindle of our time is the assumption that science has made religion obsolete. All science has damaged is the story of Adam and Eve and the story of Jonah and the Whale. Everything else holds up pretty well, particularly the lessons about fairness and gentleness. People who find those lessons irrelevant in the Twentieth Century are simply using science as an excuse for greed and harshness.

Science has nothing to do with it, friends.

Another great swindle is that people your age are supposed to save the world. I was a graduation speaker at a little preparatory school for girls on Cape Cod, where I live, a couple of weeks ago. I told the girls that they were much too young to save the world, and that, after they got their diplomas, they should go swimming and sailing and walking, and just fool around.

I often hear parents say to their idealistic children, "All right, you see so much that is wrong with the world—go out and *do* something about it. We're all for you! Go out and *save* the world."

You are four years older than those prep school girls, but still very young. You, too have been swindled, if people have persuaded you that it is now up to you to save the world. It isn't up to you. You don't have the money and the power. You don't look like



LAURENCE J. HYMAN

Vonnegut at Commencement in 1970

1930s
1940s
1950s
1960s
1970s
1980s
1990s
2000s

grave, wise maturity—even though you may be grave, wise maturity. You don't even know how to handle dynamite. It is up to older people to save the world. You can help them.

Do not take the entire world on your shoulders. Do a certain amount of skylarking, as befits people your age. "Skylarking," incidentally, used to be a minor offense under Naval Regulations. What a charming crime. It means intolerable lack of seriousness. I would love to have had a dishonorable discharge from the United States Navy—for skylarking not just once, but again and again and again.

Many of you will undertake exceedingly serious work this summer—campaigning for humane Senators and Congressmen, helping the poor and the ignorant and the awfully old. Good. But skylark, too.

When it really *is* time for you to save the world, when you have some power and know your way around, when people can't mock you for looking so young, I suggest that you work for a socialist form of government. Free Enterprise is much too hard on the old and the sick and the shy and the poor and the stu-

pid, and on people nobody likes. They just can't cut the mustard under Free Enterprise. They lack that certain something that Nelson Rockefeller, for instance, so abundantly has.

So let's divide up the wealth more fairly than we have divided it up so far. Let's make sure that everybody has enough to eat and a decent place to live, and medical help when he needs it. Let's stop spending money on weapons, which don't work anyway, thank God, and spend money on each other. It isn't moonbeams to talk of modest plenty for all. They have it in Sweden. We can have it here. Dwight David Eisenhower once pointed out that Sweden, with its many Utopian programs had a high rate of alcoholism and suicide and youthful unrest. Even so, I would like to see America try socialism. If we start drinking heavily and killing ourselves, and if our children start acting crazy, we can go back to good old Free Enterprise again.

Thank you.

From Quadrille, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1970



Idiots First

a story by BERNARD MALAMUD

*Bernard Malamud's allegorical stories about American life, including *The Natural*, made him one of the most important novelists of the 20th century. During his time at Bennington from 1961 to 1984, Malamud won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Fixer* and served as president of the PEN American Center.*

The thick ticking of the tin clock stopped. Mendel, dozing in the dark, awoke in fright. The pain returned as he listened for it. He drew on his cold, embittered clothing, and wasted minutes sitting on the edge of the bed.

"Isaac," he ultimately sighed.

In the kitchen, Isaac, his astonished mouth open, held six peanuts in his palm. He placed each on the table. "One . . . two . . . eight."

He gathered each peanut and appeared in the doorway. Mendel, in loose hat and long overcoat, still sat on the bed. Isaac watched with small eyes and ears, thick hair graying the sides of his head.

"Schlaf," he nasally said.

"No," muttered Mendel. As if stifling he rose. "Come, Isaac."

He wound his old watch though the sight of the stopped clock nauseated him.

Isaac wanted to hold it to his ear.

"No, it's late." Mendel put the watch carefully away. In the drawer he found the little paper bag of crumpled ones and fives and slipped it into his overcoat pocket. He helped Isaac on with his coat.

Isaac looked at one dark window, then at the other. Mendel stared at both blank windows and saw nothing.

They went slowly down the darkly lit stairs, Mendel first, Isaac watching the moving shadows on the wall. To one long shadow he offered a peanut.

"Hungrig."

In the vestibule the old man gazed through the glass. The November night was cold and bleak. Opening the door he cautiously thrust his head out. Though he saw nothing he quickly shut the door.

"Ginzberg, that he came to see me yesterday," he whispered in Isaac's ear.

Isaac sucked air.

"You know who I mean?"

Isaac combed his chin with his fingers.

"That's the one, with the black whiskers. Don't talk to him or go with him if he asks you."

Isaac moaned.

"Young people he don't bother so much," Mendel said in afterthought.

It was supertime and the street was empty but the store windows dimly lit their way to the corner. They crossed the deserted street and went on. Isaac, with a happy cry, pointed to the three golden balls. Mendel smiled but was worn out when they got to the pawnshop.

The pawnbroker, a red-bearded man with black horn-rimmed glasses, was eating a whitefish at the rear of the store. He craned his head, saw them, then settled back to drink his tea.

In five minutes he came forward, patting his shapeless lips with a white handkerchief.

Mendel, breathing heavily, handed him the worn gold watch. The pawnbroker, raising his glasses, screwed in his eyepiece. He turned the watch over once. "Eight dollars."

The dying man wet his cracked lips. "I must have thirty-five."

"So go see Rothschild."

"Cost me myself sixty."

"In 1905." The pawnbroker handed back the watch. It had stopped ticking. Mendel wound it slowly. It ticked hollowly.

"Isaac must go to my uncle that he lives in California."

"It's a free country," said the pawnbroker.

Isaac, watching a banjo, snickered.

"What's the matter with him?" the pawnbroker asked.

"So let be eight dollars," muttered Mendel, "but where will I get the rest till tonight?"

"How much for my hat and coat?" he asked.

"No sale." The pawnbroker went behind the cage and wrote out a ticket. He locked the watch in a small drawer but Mendel could still hear it ticking.

In the street he slipped the eight dollars into the paper bag, then searched in his pockets for a scrap of writing. Finding it, he strained to read the address by the light of the street lamp.

As they trudged to the subway, Mendel pointed to the sprinkled sky.

"Isaac, looked how many stars are tonight."

"Eggs," said Isaac.

"First we will go to Mr. Fishbein, after we will eat."

They got off the train in upper Manhattan and had to walk for several blocks before they located Fishbein's house.

"A regular palace," Mendel murmured, looking forward to a moment's warmth.

Isaac stared uneasily at the heavy door of the house.

Mendel rang. The servant, a man with long sideburns came to the door and said Mr. and Mrs. Fishbein were dining and could see no one.

"He should eat in peace but we will wait till he finishes."

"Come back tomorrow morning. Tomorrow morning Mr. Fishbein will talk to you. He don't do business or charity at this time of the night."

"Charity I am not interested—"

"Come back tomorrow."

"Tell him it's life or death—"

"Whose, if I may ask you?"

"So if not his, then mine."

"Don't be such a big smart aleck."

"Look in my face," said Mendel, "and tell me if I got time till tomorrow morning?"

The servant stared at him, then at Isaac, and reluctantly let them in.

The foyer was a vast high-ceilinged room with many pictures on the walls, voluminous silken draperies, a thick flowered rug at foot, and a marble staircase.

Mr. Fishbein, a paunchy bald-headed man with hairy nostrils and small patent leather feet, ran lightly down the stairs, a large napkin tucked under a tuxedo coat button. He stopped on the fourth step from the bottom and examined his visitors.

"Who comes on Friday night to a man that he has guests to spoil him his supper?"

"Excuse me that I bother you, Mr. Fishbein," Mendel said.

"If I didn't come now I couldn't come tomorrow."

"Without more preliminaries, please state your business. I'm a hungry man."

"Hungrig," wailed Isaac.

Fishbein adjusted his pince-nez. "What's the matter with him?"

"This is my son Isaac. He is like this all his life."

Isaac mewled.

"I am sending him to California."

"Mr. Fishbein don't contribute to personal pleasure trips."

"I am a sick man and he must go tonight on the train to my Uncle Leo."

"I never give to unorganized charity," Fishbein said, "but if you are hungry I will invite you downstairs in the kitchen. We having tonight chicken with stuffed derma."

"All I ask is thirty-five dollars for the train ticket to my uncle in California. I have already the rest."

"Who is your uncle? How old a man?"

"Eighty years, a long life to him."

Fishbein burst into laughter. "Eighty years and you are sending him this—this halfwit."

Mendel, failing both arms, cried, "Please, no names."

Fishbein politely conceded.

"Where is open the door there we go in the house," the quick man said. "If you will kindly give me thirty-five dollars, God will bless you. What is thirty-five dollars to Mr. Fishbein? Nothing. To me, for my boy, is everything. Enjoy yourself to give me everything."

Fishbein drew himself up to his tallest height.

"Private contributions I don't make—only to institutions. This is my fixed policy."

Mendel sank to his creaking knees on the rug.

"Please, Mr. Fishbein, if not thirty-five, then give maybe twenty."

"Levinson!" Fishbein angrily called.

The servant with the long sideburns appeared at the top of the stairs.

"Show this party where is the door—unless he wishes to partake food before leaving the premises."

"For what I got chicken won't cure it," Mendel said.

"This way, if you please," said Levinson, descending.

Isaac assisted his father up.

"Take him to an institution," Fishbein advised over the marble balustrade. He ran quickly up the stairs and they were at once outside, buffeted by winds.

The walk to the subway was tedious. The wind blew mournfully. Mendel, breathless, glanced furtively at shadows. Isaac, clutching his peanuts in his frozen fist, clung to his father's side. They entered a small park to rest for a minute on a stone bench under a leafless two-branched tree. The thick

right branch was raised, the thin left one hung down. A very pale moon rose slowly. So did a stranger as they approached the bench.

"Gut yuntif," he said hoarsely.

Mendel, drained of blood, waved his wasted arms. Isaac howled sickly. Then a bell chimed and it was only ten. Mendel let out a piercing anguished cry as the bearded stranger disappeared in the business. A policeman came running, and though he beat the bushes with his nightstick, could turn up nothing. Mendel and Isaac hurried out of the little park. When Mendel glanced back the dead tree had its thin arm raised, the thick one down. He moaned.

They boarded a trolley, stopping at the house of a former friend, but he had died years ago. On the same block they went into a cafeteria and ordered two fried eggs for Isaac. The tables were crowded except where a heavy-set man sat eating soup with kasha. After one look at him they left in haste, though Isaac wept.

Mendel had another address on a slip of paper but the house was too far away, in Queens, so they stood in a doorway, shivering.

What can I do, he frantically thought, in one short hour?

He remembered the furniture in the house. It was junk but might bring a few dollars. "Come, Isaac." They went once more to the pawnbroker's to talk to him, but the shop was dark and an iron gate, rings and gold watches glinting through it, was drawn tight across his place of business.

They huddled behind a telephone pole, both freezing. Isaac whimpered.

"See the big moon, Isaac. The whole sky is white."

He pointed but Isaac wouldn't look.

Mendel dreamed for a minute of the sky lit up, sheets of light in all directions. Under the sky, in California, sat Uncle Leo, drinking tea with lemon. Mendel felt warm but woke up cold.

Across the street stood an ancient brick synagogue.

He pounded on the huge door but no one answered. He waited till he had breath and desperately knocked again. At last there were footsteps within, and the synagogue door creaked open on its brass hinges. A darkly dressed sexton, holding a dripping candle, glared at them.

"Who knocks this time of the night with so much noise on the synagogue door?"

Mendel told the sexton his troubles. "Please, I wish to speak to the rabbi."

"The rabbi is an old man. He sleeps now. His wife won't let

What can I do, he frantically thought, in one short hour?

you see him. Go home and come back tomorrow.”

“To tomorrow I said goodbye already. I am a dying man.”

Though the sexton seemed doubtful he pointed to an old wooden house next door. “In there he lives.” He disappeared into the synagogue with his lit candle, casting shadows around him.

Mendel, with Isaac clutching his sleeve, went up the wooden steps and rang the bell. After five minutes a bulky, big-faced, gray-haired old woman came out on the porch with a torn robe thrown over her nightdress. She emphatically said the rabbi was sleeping and could not be waked.

But as she was insisting, the rabbi himself tottered to the door. He listened a minute and said, “Who wants to see me let them come in.”

They entered a cluttered room. The rabbi was a skinny man with bent shoulders and a wisp of white beard. He wore a flannel nightgown and black skullcap; his feet were bare.

“Vey is mir,” his wife muttered. “Put on shoes or tomorrow comes sure pneumonia.” She was a woman with a big belly, years younger than her husband. Staring at Isaac, she turned away.

Mendel apologetically related his errand. “All I need more is thirty-five dollars.”

“Thirty-five?” said the rabbi’s wife. “Why not thirty-five thousand? Who has so much money? My husband is a poor rabbi. The doctors take away every cent.”

“Dear friend,” said the rabbi, “if I had I would give you.”

“I got already seventy,” Mendel said, heavy-hearted. “All I need is thirty-five more.”

“God will give you,” said the rabbi.

“In the grave,” said Mendel. “I need tonight. Come, Isaac.”

“Wait,” called the rabbi.

He hurried inside, came out with a fur-lined caftan, and handed it to Mendel.

“Yascha,” shrieked his wife, “not your new coat!”

“I got my old one. Who needs two coats for one body?”

“Yascha, I am screaming—”

“Who can go among poor people, tell me, in a new coat?”

“Yascha,” she cried, “what can this man do with your coat? He needs tonight the money. The pawnbrokers are asleep.”

“So let him wake them up.”

“No.” She grabbed the coat from Mendel.

He held on to one sleeve, wrestling her for the coat. Her I know, Mendel thought. “Shylock,” he muttered. Her eyes glittered.

The rabbi groaned and tottered dizzily. His wife cried out as Mendel yanked the coat from her hands.

“Run,” cried the rabbi.

“Run, Isaac.”

They ran out of the house and down the steps.

“Stop, you thief,” called the rabbi’s wife.

The rabbi pressed both hands to his temple and fell to the floor.

“Help!” his wife wept. “Heart attack! Help!”

But Mendel and Isaac ran through the streets with the rabbi’s new fur-lined caftan. After them noiselessly ran Ginzberg.

It was very late when Mendel bought the train ticket in the only booth open. There was no time to stop for a sandwich so Isaac ate his peanuts and they hurried to the train in the vast deserted station.

“So in the morning,” Mendel gasped as they ran, “there will come a man that he sells sandwiches and coffee. Eat but get change. When reaches California the train, will be waiting for you on the station Uncle Leo. If you don’t recognize him he will recognize you. Tell him I send best regards.”

But when they arrived at the gate to the platform it was shut, the light out.

Mendel, groaning, beat on the gate with his fists.

“Too late,” said the uniformed ticket collector, a bulky, bearded man with hairy nostrils and a fishy smell.

He pointed to the station clock. “Already past twelve.”

“But I see standing there still the train,” Mendel said, hopping in his grief.

"It just left—in one more minute."
"A minute is enough. Just open the gate."
"Too late I told you."

Mendel socked his bony chest with both hands. "With my whole heart I beg you this little favors."

"Favors you had enough already. For you the train is gone. You shoulda been dead already at midnight. I told you that yesterday. This is the best I can do."

"Ginzberg!" Mendel shrank from him.

"Who else?" The voice was metallic, eyes glittered, the expression amused.

"For myself," the old man begged, "I don't ask a thing. But what will happen to my boy?"

Ginzberg shrugged slightly. "What will happen happens. This isn't my responsibility. I got enough to think about without worrying about somebody on one cylinder."

"What then is your responsibility?"

"To create conditions. To make happen what happens. I ain't in the anthropomorphic business."

"Whatever business you in, where is your pity?"

The ticket collector was picking his teeth with a matchstick.

"You ain't the only one, my friend, some got it worse. That's how it goes."

"You dog, you." Mendel lunged at Ginzberg's throat and began to choke. "You bastard, don't you understand what it means human?"

They struggled nose to nose. Ginzberg, though his astonished eyes popped, began to laugh. "You pipsqueak nothing. I'll freeze you to pieces."

His eyes lit in fury and Mendel felt an unbearable cold like an ice dagger invading his body, all of his parts shriveling.

Now I die without helping Isaac.

A crowd gathered. Isaac yelped in fright.

Clinging to Ginzberg in his last agony, Mendel saw reflected in the ticket collector's eyes the depth of his terror. But he saw that Ginzberg, staring at himself in Mendel's eyes, saw mirrored in them the extent of his own awful wrath. He beheld a shimmering, starry, blinding light that produced darkness.

A crowd gathered. Isaac yelped in fright.

"This ain't my commodity. The law is the law."

"Which law is this?"

"The cosmic universal law, goddamit, the one I got to follow myself."

"What kind of law is it?" cried Mendel. "For God's sake don't you understand what I went through in my life with this poor boy? Look at him, for thirty-nine years, since the day he was born, I wait for him to grow up, but he doesn't. Do you understand what this means in a father's heart? Why don't you let him go to his uncle?" His voice had risen and he was shouting.

Isaac mewled loudly.

"Better calm down or you'll hurt somebody's feeling," Ginzberg said, with a wink toward Isaac.

"All my life," Mendel cried, his body trembling, "what did I have? I was poor. I suffered from my health. When I worked I worked too hard. When I didn't work was worse. My wife died a young woman. But I didn't ask from anybody nothing. Now I ask a small favor. Be so kind, Mr. Ginzberg."

Ginzberg looked astounded. "Who me?"

Slowly his grip on the squirming old man loosened, and Mendel, his heart barely beating, slumped to the ground.

"Go," Ginzberg muttered, "take him to the train."

"Let pass," he commanded the gatekeeper.

The crowd parted. Isaac helped his father get up and they tottered down the steps to the platform where the train waited, lit and ready to go.

Mendel found Isaac a coach seat and hastily embraced him. "Help Uncle Leo, Isaakil. Also remember your father and mother."

"Be nice to him," he said to the conductor. "Show him where everything is."

He waited on the platform until the train began slowly to move. Isaac sat at the edge of his seat, his face strained in the direction of his journey. When the train was gone Mendel ascended the stairs to see what had become of Ginzberg.

From Alumnae Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 4, 1962

Wild Seeds

an excerpt from *The Botany of Desire*

by MICHAEL POLLAN '76



CYNTHIA LOCKLIN

Michael Pollan '76 followed several family members in attending Bennington. Formerly the executive editor of Harper's, he is a contributing writer for The New York Times Magazine and author of critically acclaimed The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World, excerpted below, and The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals, one of The New York Times 10 best books of 2006.

As far as I know, John Chapman never set foot in Geneva, New York, but there is an orchard there where I caught my last and in some ways most vivid glimpse of him. Here on the banks of Lake Geneva, in excellent apple-growing country, a government outfit called the Plant Genetic Resources Unit maintains the world's largest collection of apple trees. Some 2,500 different varieties have been gathered from all over the world and set out here in pairs, as if on a beached botanical ark....

The Geneva orchard is, among other things, a museum of the apple's golden age in America, and a few weeks after my trip to the Midwest, I traveled here, alone, to see what of Johnny Appleseed's legacy I might find in its corridors.... As I worked my way up and down the aisles, consulting a computerized dictionary that the collection's curator, Phil Forsline, had printed out for me, I concentrated on the varieties listed as "American" and thought about exactly what that meant. By planting so many apples from seed, Americans like Chapman had, willy-nilly, conducted a vast evolutionary experiment, allowing the Old World apple to try out literally millions of new genetic combinations, and by doing so to adapt to the new environment in which the tree now found itself. Every time an apple failed to germinate or thrive in American soil, every time an American winter killed a tree or a freeze in May nipped its buds, an evolutionary vote was cast, and the apples that survived this great winnowing became ever so slightly more American....

The greatest biodiversity of any species is typically found in the place where it first evolved—where nature first experimented with all the possibilities of what an apple, or a potato or peach, could be. In the case of the apple, the "center of diversity," as botanists call such a place, lies in Kazakhstan, and in the last few years Forsline has been working to preserve the wild apple genes that he and his colleagues have gathered in the Kazakh forests. Forsline has made several trips to the area, bringing back thousands of seeds and cuttings that he has planted in two long rows all the way in the back of the Geneva orchard. It was these trees, apples far older and wilder than any planted by Johnny Appleseed, that Forsline wanted to show me....

No two of these trees looked even remotely alike, not in form or leaf or fruit. Some grew straight for the sun, others trailed along the ground or formed low shrubs or simply petered out, the upstate New York climate not to their liking. I saw apples with leaves like those of linden trees, others shaped like demented forsythia bushes. Maybe a third of the trees were bearing fruit—but strange, strange fruit that looked and tasted like God's first drafts of what an apple could be....

[W]e live in a world where the wild places plants live are dwindling. What happens when the wild potatoes and wild apples are gone? The best technology in the world can't create a new gene or recreate one that's been lost. That's why Phil Forsline has devoted himself to saving and spreading all manner of apples, good, bad, indifferent, and, above all, wild, before it's too late. And that's why all the other sowers of wild seeds, all those who labor under the sign of John Chapman, are to be prized.... In the best of all possible worlds we'd be preserving the wild places themselves—the apple's home in the Kazakh wilderness, for instance. The next best world, though, is the one that preserves the quality of wildness itself, if only because it is upon wildness—of all things!—that domestication depends. That's news to us, perhaps, though Johnny Appleseed was there a century before the scientists and Dionysus a few millennia before him. But how lucky for us that wildness survives in a seed and can be cultivated—can flourish even in the straight lines and right angles of an orchard. "In wildness is the preservation of the world," Thoreau once wrote; a century later, when many of the wild places are no more, Wendell Berry has proposed this necessary corollary: "In human nature is the preservation of wildness."

From Bennington, Fall 2001

“this TABOO is LIFTING”

by ANAÏS NIN

Anaïs Nin is famous for her literary erotica and for her diaries discussing prominent writers. (Her biographer, Dierdre Bair, taught at Bennington in 2006.) The following excerpt is from Nin's 1971 address at Bennington.

There was a taboo once, against looking into ourselves. This taboo is lifting. We have paid a very high price for it.

One wonders why the journey into the self should be so terribly necessary at this moment. It is because the more space we discover and the larger the universe becomes and the more we learn and the farther we project ourselves into the adventurous outer world, then the stronger we have to build an inner world. We have to equalize the pressures from without. In the self is housed the human being; the heart and the feelings. It is a place of stability in an unstable world.

As most of you probably know, I found this out through the experience of the Diary. The Diary began when I was eleven years old and was being uprooted; when my family was being separated and I was never to see my father again. The Diary became for me what the Thailand people call “The House of the Spirit”—a little refuge within a strange land and a strange language. This is how I first learned how we need this inner journey as much as we need the outer ones.

Our culture had laid great stress on extraversion, and for a long time the idea of being preoccupied with the self—even the occupation of writing a diary, or of being at all concerned with one's growth as I was—

was considered almost sinful. As a child I used to remove the earth from under the flowers because I wanted to see how things grew—which was a very scientific interest but which destroyed the flowers. I was able to do that much more successfully in the Diary, destroying nothing, but watching this organic, cellular, day-by-day discipline and work by which the self becomes something that can resist catastrophe, can resist transplantation, can resist all the strange and unstable things our world hands us.

It has taken us time to understand that the taboo on the self results in alienation from others and from society. We never realized that we were alienated from others and from society insofar as we were alienated from ourselves. Because after all, we are a camera, we are the senses, we are a receptacle of the feelings of others. If this camera, if this receptivity is not cultivated as much as possible, then how can we receive from others the messages that they send us?

This inner journey and quest of self demands a great deal of peeling off of the falsities, of the hypocrisies, of the prejudices. As R.D. Laing describes, we must reach a pure core—the genuine self—a self that is independent of the religion, of the family, of the culture in which we live. We have to begin again, really. We have to be reborn. And it is with that second birth that we are able to offer other people a genuine self to which they can respond with confidence.

We have two great fears of this rebirth. We have a fear of looking inward because we don't know what we will find and nobody can guide us except the psychologist. If we think of making the journey alone we are afraid. The other fear we have is of sharing the self; and yet in this sharing is the only human, warm, near contact that we can know. The Welsh people have a beautiful word for it which means the kind of talk that leads to intimacy. This is a kind of talk we cannot do unless we know ourselves and admit to our feelings and recognize our dreams.

The idea that it is necessary to return to the self in order to find stability and, more important, that it is necessary to find the self in order to find others, especially applies to this moment in the history of woman. It is terribly important that women proceed first of all toward liberation from within, through a knowledge of themselves. There are really no generalizations, no slogans; each woman has to work out a pattern for



Nin at Commencement in 1971

herself. She has to find out where she is situated, what her difficulties are, what the obstacles are. And so she will find many of those obstacles are from within. And that a change from within makes an incalculable change on the outside; it affects everyone with whom she comes in contact.

One of the dangers of the loss of self is contagion—the facility with which we engage in mass movements without even knowing what we are doing. Mass hypnotism. This is the way by which many countries have been led to great disasters. We have not realized that the taboo on individual development is a terrible thing for the life of the community. An unhappy man is a danger to society; a happy man is a great profit to society. And ultimately, when I speak of raising the quality of the human being, I speak of shaping the human being who will form the aggregate that we call society, that we call community living. We forget

that the quality of the group depends on the quality of each individual. The responsibility remains with us to grow to the fullest extent and to the greatest expansion ... We already know our evils are not curable by changes of systems...

What I most wanted to bring you tonight was faith. And the faith that I found most stable in life, the only one that never failed me, was the faith that I could at least change myself if I couldn't change others; that I could at least, by changing myself, inspire and encourage others. This faith was justified by the Diary, which became useful to others and which proved that attending to individual growth is not a selfish or an egocentric occupation, but is instead a gift we can give to society.

From Quadrille, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1971

from deep south

by SALLY MANN '73

Untitled, 1998



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Figurative and pictorialist photographer Sally Mann '73 is best known for luminous images of family. *The New York Times Magazine* has twice featured her work on its cover and, in 2001, *Time* magazine named her Photographer of the Year.

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

Untitled, 1998



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Both from Bennington, Fall 2000

milford graves, jazz scientist

by MARK JACOBSON

American jazz drummer and percussionist Milford Graves has made more than 24 recordings and performs internationally. A faculty member since 1973, he has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Down Beat International Award, an NEA grant, and the Critics Award for best drummer. The following excerpt, regarding his study of rhythm's effect on the body, first appeared in New York Magazine in November 2001.

“ME AND SHAQ O’NEAL?” queries the 180-pound Professor, dead serious. “Anytime. You hurt him where he’s not used to being hurt. Then teach him to heal himself, get him in tune with his natural frequencies.”

This is the essence of Graves’s basement project, which he calls “biological music, a synthesis of the physical and mental, a mind-body deal,” for which he won a Guggenheim grant in 2000. “We want to explore the true body rhythms,” Graves says, “people’s vibrations, frequencies. Because people vibrate, and they vibrate differently. There’s a true personal music. Once you get with it—it can make you feel a lot better.”

Today a great experiment is underway in the basement on 110th Avenue.

It is an inquiry that began in an epiphany 30 years ago, in the medical section of the original Barnes & Noble on 18th Street. “I found this LP, ‘Normal and Abnormal Heart Beats,’” Graves says. “It was a record for cardiologists. It blew my mind. Everyone

says the heart is the drum and the drum is the heart, but here were the secret rhythms, man...I started woodshedding the concept.”

Seeking “to merge the bush guy with the computer guy,” Milford used his Guggenheim grant to bulk up his hardware. He mastered the Labview system, a program used to measure earthquake tremors and Formula One race-car shudder. Attired in his usual homemade baggy pants, Graves attended several tutorials in suburban Holiday Inns with name-tag-wearing engineers.

“Guys like that, they’re not usually in my set, man. But I’m comfortable around hard science,” Milford remarks.

After a long winter during which his wife wondered when he would “get out of the hole and do some work around the house,” the Professor was ready to “lay on the heavy-duty aesthetic.” His heart research can help anyone, but mostly he works on musicians, “so they hear how they sound naturally, let them compare that with what they’re playing.”

Milford’s buddy, reedman Joe Rigby, has arrived at the basement. Also present is Tony Larokko, saxophonist and computer whiz, and downtown guitarist Bruce Eisenbeil. The group is working up a composition based on the collective rhythms of their hearts.

“Let’s tune you guys up,” the Professor says, bidding Joe Rigby to open up his shirt and lie down on a gurney-massage table. As Rigby—a distinguished, a generous cat who’s played with Ted Curson, bluesman Johnny Copeland,

and currently teaches music at IS 204 in Long Island City—stretches out, Graves festoons him with EKG leads.

“Thank Lord Guggenheim! You’re grooving now, Joe, somewhere in B flat,” Milford pronounces, tuning fork in hand, pressing an electronic stethoscope to Rigby’s chest. Eisenbeil, Larokko, and Graves himself go through the process. A moment later, the musicians are sitting on foldout chairs, watching color-coded readouts of their respective EKGs projected onto a five-foot-high screen. Graves mixes the four heart rhythms into a single thumping meter.

“Beats the hell out of the Sci-Fi Channel,” Rigby says.

After an exhortatory monologue on how he plans to augment the “prima materia” of the heartbeat with “ancient mathematics” of the Golden Ratio—a printout of a magic number worked out to sixteen decimal places appears on the wall—and an aside concerning the “head deficiencies” of former New York Knick Glen Rice, Milford begins to play. Working with a snare drum and a couple of cymbals, he mimics the ensemble’s heartbeat rhythm.

“We start here, then go out,” he says.

The group improvises off the beat. The sound, a rising swirl about which no neighbor has ever complained, is fantastic. So-called “free jazz” doesn’t usually translate on disc, but down here, in Milford Graves’s “little hole,” surrounded by the acupuncture ears, jars of tinctures and remedies, and blinking computer terminals—the effect is soul-

shaking, a pulsing musical Rorschach. Milford, well-timed Raconteur of the Spirit, keeps the heartbeat stoking.

Watching Milford, one is reminded of what Whitney Balliett said about him 35 years ago: "He never sounded a regular beat...repeatedly developing a welter of booms and rifle shots and clicks and tinklings.... His playing needs no one to accompany and no accompaniment; he is a one-man drum corps."

This assessment has proved prophetic. Mostly, Graves plays by himself; his recent recordings, for John Zorn's Tzadik label, have been solo-drumming sessions. This apartness has always been the rap on Milford Graves: that, for all his "synthesis," he really is too much of a lone wolf—in the collaborative ethic of jazz, he doesn't play well with others.

"Milford is a great drummer," says one player, "but there's a lot of him, personally, musically. It makes it hard."

"I hear people say that," Graves replies. "That I go too much for myself. But I don't believe it. The music is about experimenting, moving on. I equip myself with information, seek new things. I ask myself, do I really want to stay where everyone else is comfortable? Do I want to hold myself back like that?"

"I used to wonder, was I this oddball, here in this basement, fooling myself?" Graves says. "Or was I actually something special? That's not easy, because you want to stay humble. Where I've come to is: If I get an idea, I don't question myself too much. I just go ahead and do it."

The music poured on, twenty minutes without stop. Afterward, the Professor critiques the effort, reprising sections in his eerily beautiful Leon Thomas-Jimmie Rodgers griot yodel. "It was like a hurricane, harsh and rolling—good," he said. "But we need a

lifeline. A melody coming through. The hope of rescue, someone on the cell phone saying, Don't worry, we're coming to help you."

A few minutes later, after he had burned CDs of the heartbeats for Joe Rigby and the rest, Milford and I went outside to his garden. It is the first time I'd seen the Professor out of his basement, in natural light. "Queens is more fertile than most people figure," Graves said, bending to inspect the verbena and sage.

"Sometimes you have to eat like an animal," the Professor said, on his hands and knees. "I tell my students: The energy comes through the roots, the stem. You cut it, you're truncating power. Sometimes, you have to get down on the ground, open your mouth, and start chomping, hard."

From Bennington, Fall 2002

Graves making music



BENNINGTON COLLEGE ARCHIVE

“Maufishful”

an excerpt from the novel *Motherless Brooklyn*

by JONATHAN LETHEM '86

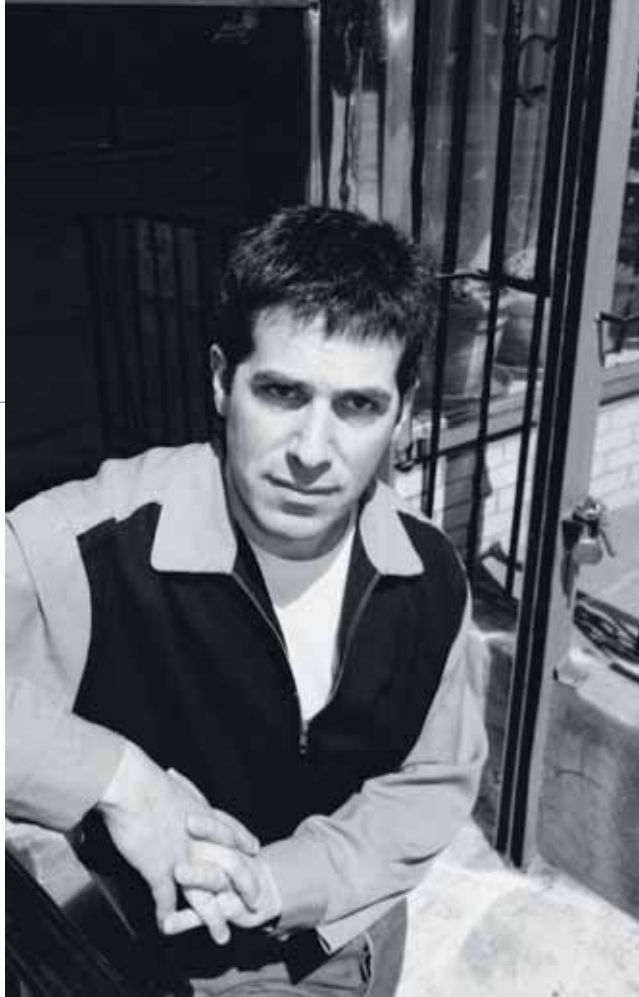
Prolific and versatile writer Jonathan Lethem '86 gave the Commencement address at Bennington in 2005, the year he won a MacArthur “Genius” Grant. He has published eight novels, including the acclaimed *The Fortress of Solitude*, *Motherless Brooklyn*, excerpted below, and *You Don't Love Me Yet*.

I'm a carnival barker, an auctioneer, a downtown performance artist, a speaker in tongues, a senator drunk on filibuster. *I've got Tourette's*. My mouth won't quit, though mostly I WHISPER OR SUBVOCALIZE like I'm reading aloud, my Adam's apple bobbing, jaw muscle beating like a miniature heart under my cheek, the noise suppressed, the words escaping silently, mere GHOSTS OF THEMSELVES, husks empty of breath and tone.... My words begin PLUCKING AT THREADS nervously, seeking purchase, a weak point, a vulnerable ear. That's when it comes, the urge to SHOUT IN THE CHURCH, the nursery, the crowded movie house. It's an itch at first. Inconsequential. But that itch is soon a torrent behind a straining dam. NOAH'S FLOOD. That itch is my whole life. Here it comes now. Cover your ears. Build an ark.

“Eat me!” I scream.

“Maufishful,” said Gilbert Coney in response to my outburst, not even turning his head. I could barely make out the words—“My mouth is full”—both truthful and a joke, lame. Accustomed to my verbal ticcing, he didn't usually bother to comment. Now he nudged the bag of White Castles in my direction on the car seat, crinkling the paper. “Stuffinyahole.”

Coney didn't rate any special consideration from me. “Eat-meeatmeeatme,” I shrieked again, letting off more of the pressure in my head. Then I was able to concentrate. I helped



MARA FAVE LETHEM

myself to one of the tiny burgers. Unwrapping it, I lifted the top of the bun to examine the grid of holes in the patty, the slime of glistening cubed onions. This was another compulsion. I always had to look inside a White Castle, to appreciate the contrast of machine-tooled burger and nubbin of fried goo. KAOS and CONTROL. Then I did more or less as Gilbert had suggested—pushed it into my mouth whole. The ancient slogan *Buy 'em by the sack* humming deep in my head, jaw working to grind the slider into swallowable chunks, I turned back to stare out the window at the house.

Food really mellows me out.

We were putting a stakeout on 109 East Eighty-fourth Street, a lone town house pinned between giant doorman apartment buildings, in and out of the foyers of which bicycle deliverymen with bags of hot Chinese flitted like tired moths in the fading November light. It was dinner hour in Yorktown. Gilbert Coney and I had done our part to join the feast, detouring up into Spanish Harlem for the burgers. There's only one White Castle left in Manhattan, on East 103rd. It's not as good as some of the suburban outlets. You can't watch them prepare your order anymore, and to tell the truth, I've begun to wonder if they're microwaving the buns instead of steaming them. Alas. Taking our boodle of thusly compromised sliders and fries back downtown, we double-parked in

front of the target address until a spot opened up. It only took a couple of minutes, though by that time, the doormen on either side had made us—made us as out-of-place and nosy anyway. We were driving the Lincoln, which didn't have the "T"-series license plates or stickers or anything else to identify it as a Car Service vehicle. And we were large men, me and Gilbert. They probably thought we were cops. It didn't matter. We chowed and watched.

Not that we knew what we were doing there. Minna had sent us without saying why, which was usual enough, even if the address wasn't. Minna Agency errands mostly stuck us in Brooklyn, rarely far from Court Street, in fact. Carroll Gardens and Cobble Hill together made a crisscrossed game board of Frank Minna's alliances and enmities, and me and Gil Coney and the other Agency Men were the markers—like Monopoly pieces, I sometimes thought, tin automobiles or terriers (not top hats, surely)—to be moved around that game board. Here on the Upper East Side we were off our customary map, *Automobile* and *Terrier* in Candyland—or maybe in the study with Colonel Mustard.

"What's that sign?" said Coney. He pointed with his glistering chin at the town house doorway. I looked.

"Yorkville Zendo," I read off the bronze plaque on the door, and my fevered brain processed the words and settled with interest on the odd one. "Eat me Zendo!" I muttered through clenched teeth.

Gilbert took it, rightly, as my way of puzzling over the unfamiliarity. "Yeah, what's that *Zendo*? What's that?"

"Maybe like Zen," I said.

"I don't know from that."

"Zen like Buddhism," I said. "Zen master, you know."

"Zen master?"

"You know, like kung-fu master."

"Hrrph," said Coney.

And so after this brief turn at investigation we settled back into our complacent chewing. Of course after any talk my brain was busy with at least some low-level version of echolalia salad: *Don't know from Zendo, Ken-like Zung Fu, Feng Shui master, Fungo bastard, Zen masturbation, Eat me!* But it didn't require voicing, not now, not with White Castles to unscrew, inspect, and devour. I was on my third. I fit it into my mouth, then glanced up at the doorway of One-oh-nine, jerking my head as if the building had been sneaking up on me. Coney and the other Minna Agency operatives loved doing stakeouts with me, since my compulsiveness forced me to eyeball the site or mark in question every thirty seconds or so, thereby saving them the trouble of swiveling their necks. A similar logic explained my popularity at wiretap parties—give

me a key list of trigger words to listen for in a conversation and I'd think about nothing else, nearly jumping out of my clothes at hearing the slightest hint of one, while the same task invariably drew anyone else toward blissful sleep.

While I chewed on number three and monitored the uneventful Yorkville Zendo entrance my hands busily frisked the paper sack of Castles, counting to be sure I had three remaining. We'd purchased a bag of twelve, and not only did Coney know I had to have my six, he also knew he was pleasing me, tickling my Touretter's obsessive-compulsive instincts, by matching my number with his own. Gilbert Coney was a big lug with a heart of gold, I guess. Or maybe he was just trainable. My tics and obsessions kept the other Minna Men amused, but also wore them out, made them weirdly compliant and complicit.

A woman turned from the sidewalk onto the stoop of the town house and went up to the door. Short dark hair, squarish glasses, that was all I saw before her back was to us. She wore a pea coat. Sworls of black hair at her neck, under the boyish haircut. Twenty-five maybe, or maybe eighteen.

"She's going in," said Coney.

"Look, she's got a key," I said.

"What's Frank want us to do?"

"Just watch. Take a note. What time is it?"

Coney crumpled another Castle wrapper and pointed at the glove compartment. "You take a note. It's six forty-five."

I popped the compartment—the click-release of the plastic latch was a delicious hollow sound, which I knew I'd want to repeat, at least approximately—and found the small notebook inside. GIRL, I wrote, then crossed it out. WOMAN, HAIR, GLASSES, KEY. 6:45. The notes were to myself, since I only had to be able to report verbally to Minna. If that. For all we knew, he might want us out here to scare someone, or to wait for some delivery. I left the notebook beside the Castles on the seat between us and slapped the compartment door shut again, then delivered six redundant slaps to the same spot to ventilate my brain's pressure by reproducing the hollow thump I'd liked. Six was a lucky number tonight, six burgers, six forty-five. So six slaps.

For me, counting and touching things and repeating words are all the same activity. Tourette's is just one big lifetime of a tag, really. The world (or my brain—same thing) appoints me it, again and again. So I tag back.

Can it do otherwise? If you've ever been *it* you know the answer.

From Bennington, Fall 2000

bret easton ellis '86



BENNINGTON COLLEGE ARCHIVES

*Bret Easton Ellis '86 published his first novel, *Less Than Zero*, while still at Bennington. With edgy subsequent novels including *American Psycho* and *The Rules of Attraction*—and their popular film adaptations—Ellis has earned further renown for satirizing disaffection and excess.*

From Quadrille, April 1985

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

donna tartt '86



CAITLIN MCCAFFREY

Donna Tartt '86 is the acclaimed author of two novels, most recently The Little Friend. Tartt's first, wildly popular novel, The Secret History, became a bestseller, was translated into 24 languages, and is slated to appear in film.

Reflections on Terrorism

by MANSOUR FARHANG

Mansour Farhang served as revolutionary Iran's first ambassador to the United Nations. In addition to writing two books, he has published countless articles in The Nation, The Washington Post, and The New York Times. He serves on the board of Middle East Watch and holds Bennington's Catharine Osgood Foster Chair for Distinguished Teaching.

TERRORISM IS politically motivated violence against civilians. Terrorists seek to influence, humiliate, and exact revenge on a target population. Contemporary terrorism can be divided into two general groupings: national and transnational. The September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon blurred the distinction between war and crime because they were simultaneously an act of war against a sovereign state and a crime against humanity. National terrorists use violence against innocent individuals as part of a strategy for identifiable political goals. Transnational terrorism is ideological, religious, apocalyptic, and amorphous in its justification or demand.

During the 1960s and 1970s, only doctrinaire leftists were associated with transnational terrorist acts. Today, all identified transnational terrorist groups seem to be religious. Terrorists, whether religious or secular, believe an act is just if it produces the right results. To prove the rightness of their acts, terrorists are always ready to produce a list of grievances and quote a "sacred" text or deified leader. Members of al Qaeda, like all terrorists, perceive themselves as

heroes at war against powerful enemies. As a manager of terror, Osama bin Laden claims to speak for Islam and the grievances of Muslims not only against their own governments but, more important, against the secular West in general and America in particular. His message has various degrees of resonance among the peoples of the Middle East, not out of sympathy for his terrorism, but because most of the regimes ruling them are cruel, corrupt, and dependent on American power for survival.

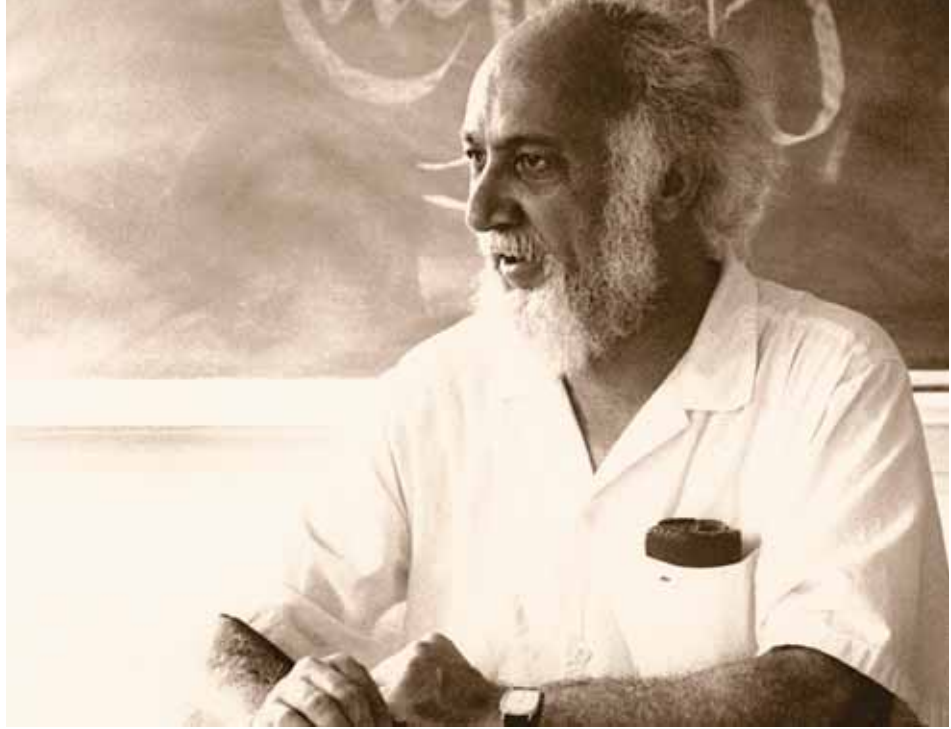
Sustained transnational terrorism requires self-sacrificing individuals, covert or overt state support, and some sympathy among those in whose name cruel acts are committed. Public approval, however silent and implicit, for al Qaeda and other transnational terrorists in the Middle Eastern countries is the focus of my analysis. What is the nature and extent of this support? Where does it come from? Why does it exist? To address these questions, we need to review a number of instances in which ordinary people in the Middle East region perceive American foreign policy as callous and exploitative.

Anti-Americanism is not necessarily the result of Washington's action or inaction. America's popular cultural products have penetrated the living spaces of many poor people in distant places. This phenomenon, emanating from Hollywood, the capital of America's soft power, makes America both a seducer and a menace in many societies throughout the world. The familiar images of sex, violence, and consumer goods are provocative and give rise to the kind of

expectations that are bound to be frustrated, which, in turn, causes resentment toward the source of the seductive but inaccessible images. This resentment, however, has nothing to do with terrorism; otherwise we should be facing armies of terrorists from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and other places where acute poverty exists. The causes of terrorism are too complex to be reduced to economic deprivation or cultural alienation.

Transnational terrorism is a threat to democracy. It is therefore the duty of a democratic state to use all resources at its disposal—military, intelligence, and diplomatic—to counter the threat by punishing the terrorists and their state sponsors. This has been done effectively in response to 9/11. What remains to be recognized is that moral harboring or popular sympathy for terrorists cannot be countered with force or threat of force. Cruise missiles can deal with terrorists, but they cannot remedy the hurt and abandonment that enhance the cultivation of new terrorists. To understand how ordinary people could come to resent U.S. policies to such an extent that they are willing to overlook the cruelty and criminality of terrorist acts, I will briefly detail four instances of American involvement in the political affairs of the region, in the course of which common people came to perceive U.S. behavior as callous, insulting, and humiliating.

During the Afghan war in the 1980s, the U.S. encouraged the formation of the first transnational religious movement against the Soviet Union. Accord-



BENNINGTON COLLEGE ARCHIVES

ing to Milton Bearden, the CIA agent responsible for the agency's covert action in Afghanistan, among the fighters who joined this movement "there were genuine volunteers on missions of humanitarian value, there were adventure seekers looking for paths to glory, and there were psychopaths." This was the time when Osama bin Laden and America were fighting the same fight.

In its decade-long war with the Soviet Union, Afghanistan suffered more than a million dead and two million injured. Of all the resources the U.S. devoted to the task of containing the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the \$6 billion spent on the Afghan mujahedeen must be regarded as the most profitable investment, because the defeat the Afghan fighters inflicted on the Soviet army expedited the demise of communism. Given the immense human cost, many in Afghanistan thought Washington would give the competing fighters some incentive for cooperation and reconstruction after the war. Instead, President Bush passively watched the country, in Bearden's words, spin "into anarchy [and become] the home of a new and little understood threat; the grievred Arab extremists."

In the early 1990s, Arab extremists, under the leadership of Osama bin Laden, took sanctuary in lawless Afghanistan and founded a unique transnational terrorist network. Al Qaeda (Arabic for *foundation*) was chosen as the name of the network which proceeded to create secret cells throughout the world. Bin Laden's financial resources and organizational skill were the engine of this ambitious project. Once the U.S. exited the Afghan scene, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran quickly moved to support their favorite warlords to gain sectarian advantage and influence in the evolving politics and economics of Central Asia. Rivalries among these and other players in the area intensified the ongoing fratricide in Afghanistan and paved the way for the ascendancy of the Taliban and al Qaeda. One could argue that Washington had little leverage to mediate the country's factional rivalries, but the fact that it did not try was a betrayal of the Afghan people.

Another example of Washington's callousness during the 1980s was on display during the Iran-Iraq war. This war was a feud between two megalomani-

acs, Khomeini and Saddam Hussein. It was a clear assault on the interests and sensibilities of the two nations. Nearly a million Iranians and Iraqis were killed in the fighting and the economies of both countries were devastated, but Washington did everything in its power to prolong the war. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger expressed the essence of U.S. policy when he said that "the ultimate American interest" in the Iran-Iraq war would be served if "both sides lose." Reagan operatives' diligent pursuit of this aim led to secret arms deception between the White House and the two protagonists; it also helped to prolong the war and aid the massive buildup of the Iraqi military machine.

During the war, Iraq dropped chemical bombs on Iranian troops without encountering serious objection from the international community. A number of European states and international human rights organizations raised the issue, but the Reagan administration remained silent. Saddam Hussein was considered an asset at the time. Days after the cease-fire took effect in 1988, Iraq used poison gas against its own Kurdish population; again, Washington

did not object. Thousands of civilians died as a result of Iraq's repeated use of chemical weapons, but there was no talk of U.S. or U.N. sanction against Iraq.

We need to remember America's accommodating treatment of Iraq during the 1980s in order to understand why Saddam Hussein decided to invade Kuwait in August 1990. The turning point in this sorry history was the 1982 decision of the Reagan administration to take Iraq off the list of countries known to sponsor terrorism, making it eligible to receive high-tech items generally denied to those on the list. During the 1980s, U.S. companies sold Iraq more than \$1 billion worth of the components needed to build nuclear weapons and diverse types of missiles, including the infamous Scud. According to a 1994 Senate report, private American suppliers, licensed by the U.S. Department of Commerce, exported a variety of biological and chemical materials to Iraq from 1985 through 1989. The exports continued until at least November 1999, despite evidence that Iraq had used chemical and biological weapons as early as 1984. In short, Hussein interpreted the attitude of the Reagan and Bush administrations as a green light to pursue his own expansionist agenda.

During the Persian Gulf War, President Bush generated the hope of a new dawn in U.S. policy toward the Middle East when he repeatedly referred to Saddam as "Baghdad's dictator." In February 1991, when the U.S. began bombing Iraq's military and industrial targets, President Bush made an explicit call for Saddam Hussein's overthrow. American planes dropped millions of leaflets on Iraqi cities, towns, and villages, calling on people to rise up against their rulers. At the same

time, a CIA-sponsored, clandestine radio station in Saudi Arabia repeatedly urged the people of Iraq to rise up against Saddam. These messages reverberated among the Shiites and Kurdish people of Iraq, who apparently concluded that if they rebelled, the U.S. would support them.

In early March 1991 heavy clashes in Basra, a city in southern Iraq, were reported between Shiites and the Republican Guard, Saddam Hussein's elite troops. After the signing of the cease-fire agreement between Iraq and the U.S.-led alliance, when the Republican Guard shelled civilian demonstrators in southern Iraq, President Bush declared the action a violation of the cease-fire agreement, but did nothing about it. During the same period, the Kurds rebelled in the northern part of the country and claimed control of wide areas. After a week of vacillation and vague threats, it was reported on March 27 that President Bush had decided to let Hussein put down the rebellions rather than splintering Iraq. In short, the U.S. incited the rebels and then deserted them, accepting the annihilation of tens of thousands of Kurds and Shiites. The result was that the rebels' praise for Bush turned to curses. Many came to believe that they had been purposely betrayed by Washington.

The American position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the most damaging source of resentment toward the U.S. among ordinary peoples of the Middle East region. The Oslo peace agreement implicitly promised the creation of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but Israeli settlements in the occupied territories never stopped expanding. American officials acknowledge

that Israeli settlements are a violation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. They are also aware that the recent expansion of the settlements to provide housing for some of the new immigrants from Russia and former Soviet block countries makes accommodation between Israel and the Palestinians virtually impossible.

The council of Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza considers peace talk with Palestinians to be a betrayal of the Jewish faith. Right-wing Israelis who regard Yigal Amir, the assassin of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, as a hero and a martyr have become an influential force in Israeli politics. They demand Israeli control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and regard as heretical efforts to give up any part of the biblical land. A parallel development exists between the growth of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the expansion of Hamas as an organization. In the early 1990s, Hamas was a marginal group with limited political influence. Today, it has become a popular movement, easily capable of recruiting suicide bombers.

News reports of uprisings in the occupied territories often give the impression that Palestinian resistance is caused by religious zeal or hatred. Another way to understand why individual Palestinian demonstrators endure beatings and imprisonment in violent encounters with Israeli Defense Forces is to consider the socioeconomic and psychological factors that make life under military occupation intolerable. Before the 1987 Intifada (Arabic for *shaking off*) broke out, an Israeli study used two images to describe Gaza: "'a cancer,' which would eat away at the

Israeli polity, and 'a time bomb,' economic, social and demographic, of almost unimaginable potency."

Fifteen years ago, 2,500 Israelis settled in the Gaza Strip controlled 28 percent of the land. Today, the number of settlers has increased to 6,500, and they keep increasing their control of the land. During the same period, the number of Israeli settlers on the West Bank increased from fewer than 30,000 to more than 210,000. So much of the underground water reserves in both the West Bank and Gaza are diverted to the settler areas that the settlers use 12 times as much water as do Palestinians. As a consequence, the amount of irrigated Arab land in the occupied territories has drastically declined.

Since the occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem began in 1967, the population of those areas has more than doubled. This means that the mindset, the perceptions, and the sensibilities of nearly 90 percent of Palestinians living in the territories are shaped by the harsh and humiliating conditions of life under military occupation. Palestinians want their own state. The truth that the U.S. and Israel must face is that the Israeli-Palestinian problem is about nationalism and occupation. Terrorism is largely the byproduct of the stalemate in the conflict.

When the 1993 Oslo accord was made public, 90 percent of Palestinians were hopeful that negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority could result in the creation of a sovereign Palestine and peaceful coexistence with Israel. Today, more than 90 percent have lost all hope of negotiation with the Israelis. They suspect that Israel intends to expel them

from their land. The continuation of the confrontation can only serve the rejectionist elements on both sides. The terrorism of Hamas and the territorial expansionism of Israel's religious fundamentalists have resulted in a convergence of interests—both condemn the idea of a peaceful solution to their conflict as sinful treason.

The strategic alliance between the U.S. and Israel is a necessity, because despots rule the states in the region. It is imperative that Washington remain committed to the safety and territorial integrity of Israel, even if Israel is militarily superior to the combined forces of its neighbors. The problem in the alliance arises when the men with most influence over Israel's design for the occupied territories claim to have a religious mission to control the land. They quote Scripture to prove their case; "to your offspring I assign the land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18). The question facing American foreign policy-makers is whether they should finance and defend enactment of "revealed edicts." We need an answer soon, because the government of Israel currently uses U.S. military equipment to fulfill the mission.

It has become a truism to refer to America as the only superpower in the world; but to appreciate the global concerns of the U.S., it is helpful to see America as the last imperial power as well. The American empire is not legally or formally constituted, but it is a de facto reality. How else can we describe a nation that commands more than 60 military base complexes in 20 different countries?

The CIA coined the term "blowback," but it is now widely used in writ-

ings on international relations and American foreign policy. In his new book, *Blowback*, Chalmers Johnson defines the term as "the unintended consequences of policies that were kept from the American people." Johnson adds that "what the daily press reports as the Malign Acts of 'terrorists' or 'drug lords' or 'rogue states' or 'illegal arms merchants' often turns out to be blowback from earlier American operations."

The media and the vast majority of American political and religious leaders ought to be complimented for dismissing as false and demagogic the attempt to blame the Arabs or Muslims as a people in the September 11 terrorist attacks. Stereotypical clichés such as "Muslim mindset" and "Arab character" are intended, consciously or otherwise, to exclude and discriminate against a collectivity. But the crimes of September 11 were committed by a group of psychopaths, not by a people or a nation. Fanaticism can plague both believers and non-believers; cruel actors are not limited to metaphysics in justifying their acts.

In the age of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, the cruelty of terrorism is the ultimate threat human beings face. While the assault on the agents and sponsors of terror continues, we should do our utmost to deprive the terrorists of the popular sympathy they receive. American foreign policymakers can lead the world in meeting this challenge, by becoming more sensitive to the daily humiliation and resentment of those who live under the rule of cruel governments.

From Bennington, Spring 2002

Marooned

an excerpt from *The Inheritance of Loss*
the Man Booker Prize-winning novel

by KIRAN DESAI '93

Kiran Desai '93, daughter of the esteemed novelist Anita Desai, first won acclaim with her novel *Hullabaloo* in the Guava Orchard. In 2006, she won the Man Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award for her epic *The Inheritance of Loss*, excerpted below.

In the end what Sai and Gyan had excelled at was the first touch, so gentle, so infinitely so; they had touched each other as if they might break, and Sai couldn't forget that.

She remembered the ferocious look he had given her in Darjeeling, warning her to stay away.

One last time after refusing to acknowledge her, Gyan had come to Cho Oyu. He had sat at the table as if in chains.

A few months ago the ardent pursuit and now he behaved as if she had chased and trapped him, tail between his legs, into a cage!

What kind of man was this? she thought. She could not believe she had loved something so despicable. Her kiss had not turned him into a prince; he had morphed into a bloody frog.

"What kind of man are you?" she asked. "Is this any way to behave?"

"I'm confused," he said finally, reluctantly. "I'm only human and sometimes I'm weak. Sorry."

That "Sorry" unleashed a demoness of rage: "At whose expense are you weak and human! You'll never get anywhere in life, my friend," shouted Sai, "if this is what you think makes an excuse. A murderer could say the same and you think he would be let off the hook to hop in the spring?"

The usual thing happened, exactly what always happened in their fighting. He began to feel irritated, for, really, who was she to lecture him? "Gorkhaland for Gorkhas. We are the liberation army." He was a martyr, a man; a man, in fact, of ambition, principle.

"I don't have to listen to this," he said jumping up and storming off abruptly just as she was in powerful flow.

And Sai had cried, for it was the unjust truth.

Marooned during curfew, sick about Gyan, and sick with the desire to be desired, she still hoped for his return. She was bereft of her former skill at solitude.

She waited, read *Wuthering Heights* twice over, each time the potency of the writing imparting a wild animal feeling to her



LIZ O. BAYLENOG/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

gut—and twice she read the last pages—still Gyan didn’t come.

Fortunately, though, a single bit of luck fell on Sai and shrouded this fall of her dignity. Her rescuer was the common domestic cold. Heroically, it caught her common domestic grief in the nick of time, muddled the origin of her streaming eyes and sore throat, shuffled the symptoms of virus and disgraceful fall from the tightrope of splendrous love. Shielded thus from simple diagnosis, she enveloped her face in the copious folds of a man’s handkerchief. “A cold!” Whonk whonk. One part common cold to nine parts common grief. Lola and Noni prepared toddies of honey, lemon, rum, hot water.

“Sai, you look terrible, terrible.”

Her eyes were red and raw, spilling over. Pressure weighed downward like a gestapo boot on her brain.

Back in Cho Oyu, the cook rummaged in the medicine drawer for the Coldrin and the Vicks Vaporub. He found a silk scarf for her throat, and Sai hung in the hot and cold excitement of Vicks, buffeted by arctic winds of eucalyptus, still feeling the perpetual gnawing urgency and intensity of waiting, of hope living on without sustenance. It must feed on itself. It would drive her mad.

Was her affection for Gyan just a habit? How on earth could she think of someone so much?

The more she did, the more she did, the more she did.

Summoning her strength, she spoke directly to her heart. “Oh why must you behave so badly?”

But it wouldn’t soften its stance.

There was grace in forgetting and giving up, she reminded it; it was childish not to—everyone had to accept imperfection and loss in life.

The giant squid, the last dodo.

One morning, her cold on the wane, she realized her excuse would no longer hold. As curfew was lifted, in order to salvage her dignity, Sai started out on the undignified mission of searching for Gyan.

He wasn’t anywhere in the market, not in the music and video shop where Rinzy and Tin Tin Dorji rented out exhausted tapes of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan movies.

“No, haven’t seen him,” said Dawa Bhutia sticking his head out from the steam of cabbage cooking in the Chin Li Restaurant kitchen.

“Isn’t in yet,” said Tashi at the Snow Lion, who had closed down the travel side of the business, what with the lack of tourists, and set up a pool table. The posters still hung on the walls: “Experience the grandeur of the Raj; come to Sikkim, land of over two hundred monasteries.” Locked at the back,

he still had the treasures he took out to sell to the wealthier traveler: a rare *thangka* of lamas sailing on magical sea beasts to spread the dharma to China; a nobleman’s earring; a jade cup smuggled from a Tibetan monastery, so transparent the light shone through making a green and black stormy cloudscape. “Tragic what is happening in Tibet,” the tourists would say, but their faces showed only glee in the booty. “Only twenty-five dollars!”

But now he was forced to depend on local currency. Tashi’s retarded cousin was running back and forth carrying bottles between Gompu’s and the pool table, so the men could continue drinking as they played and talked of the movement. A sud of vomit lay all around.

Sai walked by the deserted classrooms of Kalimpong college, dead insects balled in piles against rimy windows, bees noosed by spiders’ silk, blackboard still with its symbols and calculations. Here, in this chloroformed atmosphere, Gyan had studied. She walked around to the other side of the mountain that overlooked the Relli River and Bong Busti, where he lived. It was two hours downhill to his house in a poor part of Kalimpong quite foreign to her.

He had told her the story of his brave ancestors in the army, but why didn’t he ever speak of his family here and now? In the back of her mind, Sai knew she should stay home, but she couldn’t stop herself.

She walked by several churches: Jehovah’s Witnesses, Adventists, Latter-day Saints, Baptists, Mormons, Pentecostals. The old English church stood at the town’s heart, the Americans at the edge, but then the new ones had more money and more tambourine spirit, and they were catching up fast. Perfect practitioners, too, of the hide-behind-the-tree-and-pop-out technique to surprise those who might have run away; of the *salwar kameez* disguise (all the better to gobble you up, my dear...); and if you joined in a little harmless chat of language lessons (all the better to translate the Bible, my dear...), that was it—they were as hard to shake off as an amoeba.

But Sai walked by unmolested. The churches were dark; the missionaries always left in dangerous times to enjoy chocolate chip cookies and increase funds at home, until it was peaceful enough to venture forth again, that they might launch attack, renewed and fortified, against a weakened and desperate populace.

She passed by fields and small clusters of houses, became confused in a capillary web of paths that crisscrossed the mountains, perpendicular as creepers, dividing and petering into more paths leading to huts perched along eyebrow-width ledges in the thick bamboo. Tin roofs promised tetanus; out-

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houses gestured into the ether so that droppings would fall into the valley. Bamboo cleaved in half carried water to patches of corn and pumpkin, and wormlike tubes attached to pumps led from a stream to the shacks. They looked pretty in the sun, these little homes, babies crawling about with bottoms red through pants with the behinds cut out so they could do their *susu* and potty; fuschia and roses—for everyone in Kalimpong loved flowers and even amid botanical profusion added to it. Sai knew that once the day failed, though, you wouldn't be able to ignore the poverty, and it would become obvious that in these homes it was cramped and wet, the smoke thick enough to choke you, the inhabitants eating meagerly in the candlelight too dim to see by, rats and snakes in the rafters fighting over insects and birds' eggs. You knew that rain collected down below and made the earth floor muddy, that all the men drank too much, reality skidding into nightmares, brawls, and beating.

A woman holding a baby passed by. The woman smelled of earth and smoke and an oversweet intense smell came from the baby, like corn boiling.

"Do you know where Gyan lives?" Sai asked.

She pointed at a house just ahead; there it stood and Sai felt a moment of shock.

It was a small, slime-slicked cube; the walls must have been made with cement corrupted by sand, because it came spilling forth from pockmarks as if from a punctured bag.

Crows' nests of electrical wiring hung from the corners of the structure, split into sections that disappeared into windows barred with thin jail grill. She could smell an open drain that told immediately of a sluggish plumbing system failing anew each day despite being so rudimentary. The drain ran from the house under a rough patchwork of stones and emptied over the property that was marked with barbed wire, and from under this wire came a perturbed harem of sulfurous hens being chased by a randy rooster.

The upper story of the house was unfinished, presumably abandoned for lack of funds, and, while waiting to stockpile enough to resume building, it had fallen into dis-

repair; no walls and no roof, just a few posts with iron rods sprouting from the top to provide a basic sketch of what was to have followed. An attempt had been made to save the rods from rust with upturned soda bottles, but they were bright orange anyway.

Still, she could tell it was someone's precious home. Marigolds and zinnias edged the veranda; the front door was ajar and she could see past its puckered veneer to a gilt clock and a poster of a bonneted golden-haired child against a moldering wall, just the kind of thing that Lola and Noni made merciless fun of.

There were houses like this everywhere, of course, common to those who had struggled to the far edge of the middle class—just to the edge, only just, holding on desperately—but were at every moment being undone, the house slipping back, not into the picturesque poverty that tourists liked to photograph but into something truly dismal—modernity proffered in its meanest form, brand-new one day, in ruin the next.

The house didn't match Gyan's talk, his English, his looks, his clothes, or his schooling. It didn't match his future. Every single thing his family had was going into him and it took ten of them to live like this to produce a boy, combed, educated, their best bet in the big world. Sisters' marriages, younger brother's studies, grandmother's teeth—all on hold, silenced, until he left, strove, sent something back.

Sai felt shame, then, for him. How he must have hoped his silence would be construed as dignity. Of course he had kept her far away. Of course he had never mentioned his father. The dilemmas and stresses that must exist within this house—how could he have let them out? And she felt distaste, then, for herself. How had she been linked to this enterprise, without her knowledge or consent?

She stood staring at the chickens, unsure of what to do.

From The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai.

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1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

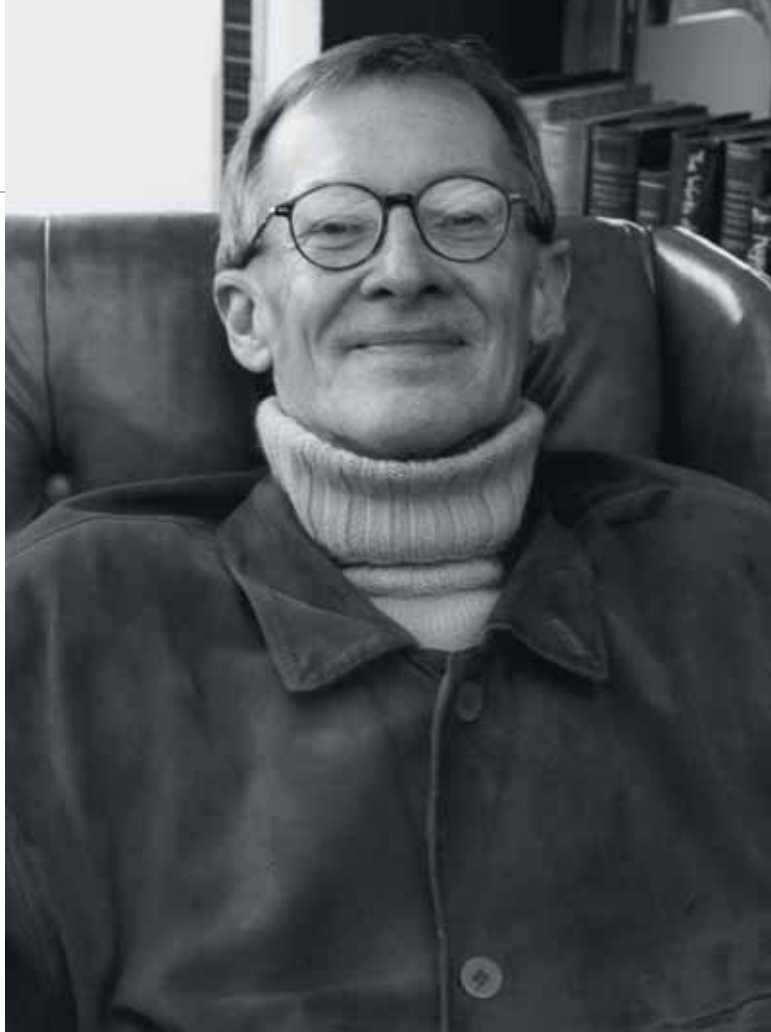
2000s

from 'half life'
by ANNA GASKELL '92



The haunting photos of Anna Gaskell '92 have been featured at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London and the Guggenheim museums in New York and Bilbao, Spain. In 2002, this former assistant to Sally Mann '73 was named one of Esquire's three Best and Brightest photographers.

Cover image, Bennington, Spring 2003



DANIELA BOHILL '01

Huckleberry Hart

by STEVEN BACH

Former senior vice president and head of worldwide production at United Artists, Steven Bach has produced such films as Raging Bull and Manhattan, in addition to writing the story of United Artists' undoing, Final Cut, and acclaimed biographies of Marlene Dietrich, Moss Hart—excerpted below—and Leni Riefenstahl. He has taught at Bennington since 1999.

Dazzler: The Life and Times of Moss Hart began when I was a student growing up in the dreary middle of a drearier nowhere and felt life suddenly given color and light by the pages of Hart's best-selling book, *Act One*. I wanted to know more about the man who wrote that tantalizing memoir of apprenticeship in the theater, the craftsman who wrote *The Man Who Came to Dinner* and *You Can't Take It With You* and *Lady in the Dark* and *A Star is Born* and—as if all that weren't enough—directed *My Fair Lady* and *Camelot*, too. The absence of any biography in the four decades since *Act One* first appeared and its author died convinced me that the only thing to do was write one, so I did and *Dazzler* is it.

The change Moss Hart made in my life was real. After some academic detours I entered the theater and related areas of show business, arenas that were creative and exciting and ruthless. The world of American show business breeds and betrays illusion, and its paradoxes—trivial and weighty—

made me more curious than ever to understand a man who lived his life there with such apparent delight and easy grace. I knew, too, that I was not alone: *Act One* still changes lives. Ask any young (or not so young) actor, dancer, playwright, composer, or director making the rounds today and he or she will tell you: *Act One* is about him, about her.

Hart spoke to the stage-struck, but quickened aspiration on stages larger than the ones with footlights. He cast his beginnings as a romance and a fable: upward striving; rags to riches; the outsider triumphantly inside; a whole catalogue of Horatio Alger virtues and rewards that can still inspire. No wonder he liked to call himself “Huckleberry Hart.”

He was writing about a Broadway that was vanishing in the late 1950s, even as he recreated it on the page. It was the end of the Golden Age, when New York was the place books and magazines and movies came from (all their corporate headquarters were there). It was the acknowledged center of American culture and no aspect of it was more dazzling than the Theater, which was what New York meant for so many who wanted to be there and weren't. Broadway defined New York more than subways or skyscrapers or the Yankees. Broadway wasn't a street—it was the Great White Way, the Street of Dreams. Lights burned brighter there.

That Broadway is gone now, which is not an occasion for mourning. The daily rounds Hart's theatrical progeny make are as likely to be in Seattle, Denver, Los Angeles, or Newark as in and around Times Square. Broadway may always have been a state of mind, but it is real estate, too, and now a theme park. The New Amsterdam Theater, where Hart began his career as an office boy called “Mouse,” is now owned by one—called Mickey.

And, on stage, a lion! New creative standards and legends will emerge from 42nd Street's renaissance, but Broadway, to the true believer, is about what is created there: the songs, stories, and plays that amuse, reflect, and sometimes reveal or shape us. Real estates sets boundaries; theater erases them.

Moss Hart was a storyteller, as all writers are, and a performer, as all playwrights must be. As I hunted and gathered for the facts of his life, I came to appreciate how artful a dramatist he was whenever he took up his pen, and how resourceful an entertainer. The man who rehearsed his dinner table bon mots while waiting for the guests to arrive was as incapable of not improving the story as he was of acting out a bad one. The differences between the life he lived and the one he told and performed were not discrepancies so much as creative, perhaps wished for improvements, and his friends mostly recognized and accepted them as such at the time. George Abbott told him he thought *Act One* had contrived a “Truth-ier-Truth” about the world of the theater. Another friend from the early days was dismayed and “shocked.” Still another smiled wryly at things “you omitted, but hell, you undertook to write ‘Act One’ and not ‘Chapter and Verse.’”

Biographers, however, must deal with chapter and verse, and I have tried to do that, just as—after years of sharing my desktop and hours with the memoirist of *Act One*—I have taken him at his word when there seemed no reason not to. There was also the life after *Act One*, a life of success, fame, glamour, and money for which he became the glittering personification. There was darkness, too, hinted at but hidden. There were rumors that needed to be tracked down and were.

What I have tried to do is depict, celebrate, and understand a life—“truth-ier truths” intact—without giving it more or less meaning than it had. It was a life of uncommon generosity in an often mean-spirited world, a life more painful than we knew and maybe a braver one, too. He was cherished and mourned by friends and colleagues not alone because of his success, but because of the man he became against so many odds and the man he aspired to be even when he seemed to have everything. I take that as reason enough to care about him now. And because he lifted spirits—not least his own—and made us laugh.

From Bennington, Spring 2001

Broadway, to the true believer, is about what is created there: the songs, stories, and plays...

flare

by MARY OLIVER

1.
Welcome to the silly, comforting poem.

It is not the sunrise,
which is a red rinse,
which is a flaring all over the eastern sky;

it is not the rain falling out of the purse of God;

it is not the blue helmet of sky afterward,

or the trees, or the beetle burrowing into the earth;

it is not the mockingbird who, in his own cadence,
will go on sizzling and clapping
from the branches of the catalpa that are thick
with blossoms,
that are billowing and shining,
that are shaking in the wind.

2.
You still recall, sometimes, the old barn on your
great-grandfather's farm, a place you visited once, and
went into, all alone, while the grownups sat and talked
in the house.

It was empty, or almost. Wisps of hay covered the
floor, and some wasps sang at the windows, and maybe
there was a strange fluttering bird high above,
disturbed, hoo-ing a little and staring down from a
messy ledge with wild, binocular eyes.

Mostly, though, it smelled of milk, and the patience
of animals; the give-offs of the body were still in the air,
a vague ammonia, not unpleasant.

Mostly, though, it was restful and secret, the roof
high up and arched, the boards unpainted and plain.

You could have stayed there forever, a small child in
a corner, on the last raft of hay, dazzled by so much
space that seemed empty, but wasn't.

Then—you still remember—you felt the rap of
hunger—it was noon—and you turned from that
twilight dream and hurried back to the house,
where the table was set, where an uncle patted you on
the shoulder for welcome, and there was your place at
the table.

3.
Nothing lasts.
There is a graveyard where everything I am talking about is,
now.

I stood there once, on the green grass, scattering flowers.

4.
Nothing is so delicate or so finely hinged as the wings
of the green moth
against the lantern
against its heat
against the beak of the crow
in the early morning.

Yet the moth has trim, and feistiness, and not a drop
of self-pity.

Not in this world.

5.
My mother
was the blue wisteria,
my mother
was the mossy stream out behind the house,
my mother, *alas, alas,*
did not always love her life,
heavier than iron it was
as she carried it in her arms, from room to room,
oh, unforgettable!

I bury her
in a box
in the earth
and turn away.
My father
was a demon of frustrated dreams,
was a breaker of trust,
was a poor, thin boy with bad luck.

He followed God, there being no one else
he could talk to;
he swaggered before God, there being no one else
who would listen.

Listen,
this was his life.
I bury it in the earth.
I sweep the closets.
I leave the house.

6.

I mention them now,
I will not mention them again.

It is not lack of love
nor lack of sorrow.
But the iron thing they carried, I will not carry.

I give them—one, two, three, four—the kiss of courtesy,
of sweet thanks,
of anger, of good luck in the deep earth.
May they sleep well. May they soften.

But I will not give them the kiss of complicity.
I will not give them the responsibility for my life.

7.

Did you know that the ant has a tongue
with which to gather in all that it can
of sweetness?

Did you know that?

8.

The poem is not the world.
It isn't even the first page of the world.

But the poem wants to flower, like a flower.
It knows that much.

It wants to open itself,
like the door of a little temple,
so that you might step inside and be cooled and refreshed,
and less yourself than part of everything.

9.

The voice of the child crying out of the mouth of the
grown woman
is a misery and a disappointment.
The voice of the child howling out of the tall, bearded,
muscular man
is a misery, and a terror.

10.

Therefore, tell me:
what will engage you?
What will open the dark fields of your mind,
like a lover
at first touching?

11.

Anyway,
there was no barn.
No child in the barn.

No uncle no table no kitchen.

Only a long lovely field full of bobolinks.

12.

When loneliness comes stalking, go into the fields, consider
the orderliness of the world. Notice
something you have never noticed before,

like a tambourine sound of the snow-cricket
whose pale green body is no longer than your thumb.

Stare hard at the hummingbird, in the summer rain,
shaking the water-sparks from its wings.

Let grief be your sister, she will whether or no.
Rise up from the stump of sorrow, and be green also,
like the diligent leaves.

A lifetime isn't long enough for the beauty of this world
and the responsibilities of your life.

Scatter your flowers over the graves, and walk away.
Be good-natured and untidy in your exuberance.

In the glare of your mind, be modest.
And beholden to what is tactile, and thrilling.

Live with the beetle, and the wind.

*This is the dark bread of the poem.
This is the dark and nourishing bread of the poem.*

From Bennington, Spring 2001

BARBARA SAVAGE CHERESH



American poet Mary Oliver is known for keen observations of the natural world. She has won the Shelley Memorial Award, the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, and the National Book Award. She was the first recipient of the Catharine Osgood Foster Chair for Distinguished Teaching and taught at Bennington from 1993 until her retirement in 2001.

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

“No Arguments, Mac”

by NELSON MANDELA



BRIE DELIA ROCCA

South African hero and Bennington faculty member Mac Maharaj is the former South African Minister of Transport under Nelson Mandela. The following is taken from Mandela's foreword to *Shades of Difference: Mac Maharaj and the Struggle for South Africa*, by Pádraig O'Malley, published in 2007.

Ahmed Kathrada (Kathy) likes to tell the story when he takes guests on a tour of Robben Island that when I was going through the list of possible ministerial appointees, I came across Mac's name and said, "What can we do with this chap?" And then, as Kathy tells the story, without waiting a second, I said, "Well, he transported my autobiography out of Robben Island, so I'll make him minister of transport!" But it was an inspired choice, so much so that in 1997, *Infrastructure Finance*, a leading international infrastructure journal, chose him as one of the eight most innovative ministers worldwide in charge of developing infrastructure in developing countries.

I have known Mac since 1964, when he came to Robben Island to serve a twelve-year sentence after the Little Rivonia trial. He arrived on the island about six months after I had arrived with the other Rivonia Trialists. We were still settling in and setting up means of communications with each other, since we had been consigned to the single-cells section of the prison, away from other prisoners. He was kept in isolation for a few months after he arrived, and then one day he, too, was assigned to our section—about six cells away from me.

From the beginning I could see that Mac would be a bit of a problem. He was tough, would give backchat to the warders, was too quick with the barbed remark, too argumentative, too unwilling to concede a point in debate even when he had won it, too intelligent for his own good. In truth, he reminded me a bit of my younger self, and I cringed! It fell to Walter Sisulu, Kathy, and me to take him under our wings and put sense in his head.

From early on, I realized that it was futile trying to win a debate with Mac, so when some issue arose and he was being his usual self—holding on to an opposite view even though the rest of us had come to a consensus on the matter—I would say to Kathy: "Go and straighten this boy out." Kathy would go, come back, and say: "Madiba,¹ there is nothing I can do with this chap. He has an answer for everything." So then I would turn to Walter and say, "Walter, Kathy can get nowhere with Mac; why don't you go and bring him into line on this matter." And Walter would go, come back, and say, "Nelson, I can get nowhere with him; you'll have to go yourself." And then I would have to go and straighten him out. "No arguments, Mac," I would say when Mac would begin to launch into his barrage of arguments. "Just answer one question. You're a Communist, a member of the leadership. Now when the leadership has reached a consensus on something, and your arguments have been heard but not accepted by your comrades, most of whom think differently, what, Mac, do you do when the leadership makes a decision?" And he would say, "Well, Madiba, of course, I'd follow it." And I would say, "Thank you, Mac." And that would be the end of the matter. "Go slowly, Neef,"² I would caution, but Mac was never one for going slowly.

Kathy tells of how he got into a conversation with Mac one morning when they were at work. Mac told Kathy, "I was having a hell of an argument last night, and I went into the two sides of the argument like two people were in a great debate." He went on to give Kathy a blow-by-blow account of the argument, and when he was finished, Kathy said to him, "But Mac, we're locked up in individual cells; who were you arguing with?" And without batting an eyelid, Mac responded, "I was arguing with myself." To this day, I wonder which side of him won!

¹ Mandela is often addressed as Madiba, which is his clan name, as a mark of respect.

² Neef is Afrikaans for nephew.

From Bennington, Spring/Summer 2007

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

the hard man

by DONALD HALL

My father wept easily,
laughed loudly when his friends teased him,
and blustered like a basso—
but *his* father was “a hard man.”
H.F. was strict, handsome,
silent, and severe. When his stallion
Skylark ran away
with my young uncle and threw him, H.F.
galloped to a stop
beside his son’s body, bellowing, “Are
you trying to kill
the horse?” I remember the time we called
on H.F. after church
to find him sitting upright, staring
straight ahead without
expression, as my uncle cut his boot
away with the carving
knife that sliced white and dark at Christmas;
I remember the leather
curling like a black rose petal.
That morning Skylark
slipped on clear ice that H.F. neglected
to notice, and the horse,
falling, rolled on his leg. Jagged pink
bone was sticking out
through H.F.’s paper-white leg skin as he
sat stiff, resolute,
without complaint or excuse for error.

From Bennington, Fall 2006/Winter 2007

Former U.S. Poet Laureate Donald Hall has been a writer-in-residence at the Bennington MFA Writing Seminars since 1994. He has published more than 50 books of poetry, prose, drama, and essays, earning Guggenheim Fellowships, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the Caldecott Medal.

dana reitz, *sea walk*
by NANCY CAMPBELL



Choreographer, dancer, and visual artist Dana Reitz has been honored with two New York Dance and Performance “Bessie” Awards and by the Guggenheim Foundation and the NEA. In 1996 she toured with Mikhail Baryshnikov, for whom she later created the piece *Cantata for Two*. She has taught at Bennington since 1994.

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Bennington is published twice a year for alumni and friends of Bennington College.

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Bennington magazine is the recipient of a University College Designer's Association (UCDA) Excellence Award and a Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) District I Publication Honorable Mention.

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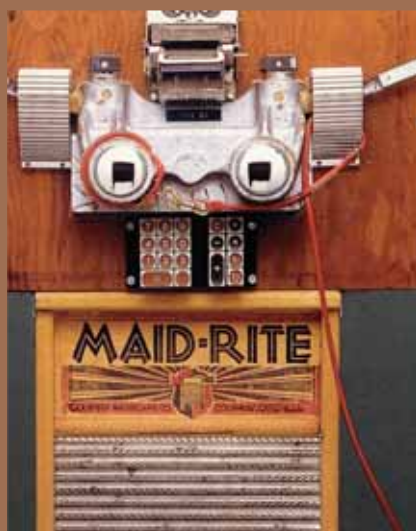
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