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Table of Contents

THE FUNCTION OF FORM IN POETRY

A poem represents the poet's desire to communicate an experience, and the success of his expression depends on form. The poet exploits the full power of the experience by ordering and restraining its profusion. He uses form as a suggestive device, to produce calculated emotional response.

To capture life in the words that symbolize it, the poet necessarily organizes his experience. His poem takes form as he orders language to project inward perceptions. He seeks to re-create the several levels of his experience; the mood in which it occured, the feelings it aroused, the implications it suggested, the conclusions it led to, all the while preserving the objective tone, color and atmosphere of the experience. Disciplining the experience into organized form enables the poet to communicate different levels of experience.

The parts of a poem must relate to the whole; the whole in turn contributes to the parts. Form depends on the poet's power of selection. It is not merely organization of the facts, but the way the facts harmonized in the poet's vision.

On the other hand, communicating the implications of the experience to the reader requires more than subjective interpretation. Form is also structural distillation of the creative impulse, supplying coherence to the private vision. Architectural devices such as meter, stanza, rhyme provide formal coherence.

Form, however, is larger than inspired blending of facts or structural grounding. It is a way of translating experience, poetic thought. Poetic thought differs from an intellectual concept. Though both may be expressed in a poetic framework, the logical argument often ends as schematized verse rather than poetry. Poetic thought is the fusion of perceptions that normally operate separately on the different planes of experience, intellectual, emotional, sensuous.

Although some subjects adapt readily to poetry, poetic expression is not limited by subject matter. The vitality of a poem is infused by the poet, not inherent in the material itself. The special order and fusion which the poet imposes on his perceptions become the form of the poem. The particular conformation of his material is its vitality.

Poetry evidently requires the fundamental structural devices of form. To communicate his total vision the poet utilizes the subtler notions of form, fusion of separate perceptive powers into an organized expression of the fluid levels of the experience. Simultaneously, form contributes to the exactness of meaning and becomes an organic part of the poem.

CYNTHIA NORTON

The Child

I met a child out walking,
and I said —
"Child, come and walk with me,
just a short way."
And when we came
to the end of the road,
I said —
"Child, go home now,
you can come no farther."
I gave her a peppermint and a kiss,
and she took the peppermint
but was shy of the kiss.
She clung to me and begged to come,
so I said —
"No, this is not the way
for children."
She hung onto me and begged me to stay.
But I said —
"As it is you cannot come,
so is it I cannot stay."
She cried and I could not stop her.
I gave her a peppermint and a kiss,
but she scorned the peppermint
and took the kiss,
and went the rest of the way with me.

NICOLE SHARPE '65

A Story

I'm going to tell you a story. I don't want to disappoint you. It's not really a story at all. But please don't make me stop.

Not very long ago I went to the gallery. I was watching a girl. There's a man in the story too. He's not like you. He was very very lonely. It sounds pathetic, doesn't it. You're bored already.

The girl. She looked at everything. She moved as if she made a business of looking at everything. Not just looking, but seeing too. Even when she moved slowly she had a very long walk. She had a way that set her off. But she gave everything a chance. I watched her face. It was fresh every time she started to look. And every painting told on her face. It wondered, and frowned, and looked wispy, or hard, then finally the whole spirit of the painting told on her face.

She was alone, in a way. I know she eavesdropped. Sometimes I think she wanted to tell what she thought. But she would never go with someone.

I think she's right about that. You should do that sometime. You never know who you'll meet. No. That's not what I mean. I just think it's bad to always go with someone. Especially if you've got to keep right with him, and even more if you have to talk.

That was enough of what she looked like, wasn't it. I shouldn't have told you the man was lonely.

The girl was standing by a window, a tall window. But anyone standing next to her would have looked like an intruder. She was looking out at the sculpture, and it was snowing. She almost looked like a mystic. She liked it, and she might have walked out but she wouldn't have spoiled it with her footsteps, or in case anyone was looking out. Suddenly, as if she couldn't possibly do less than smile, and she couldn't help that, she laughed.

And just as she laughed the man was crossing the room. He stopped behind her, not too close, and with great curiosity, looked out. Not as if to trespass. I think he wanted to be as happy as she was. But just as if he knew she would answer, he said, "You've never seen snow before?"

Even if you don't think about it, you know that the sort of person who can ask that just doesn't speak to strangers in galleries. I'm sorry now I've interrupted you.

Then there was a strange conversation. He kept behind her. She didn't turn around the whole time they talked. I don't think she especially wanted

to talk. But the way she looked just then, I think she would have talked to anybody.

He was speaking in a very thick accent. She didn't hear every word. I mean, I don't think she did. She didn't.

"Yes, I have." But she didn't stop at that. "It's the sculpture. This piece is whimsical."

"Sculpture always looks better in white." He said something more. She said nothing. I think he must be a professor somewhere.

"Here. Have you seen how this works?" He showed her something in a glass case that whirred. It whirred in a most unengaging way. I knew by her face that this time she wasn't really looking. Maybe because she tried so hard to hear him. Really, it took longer. Their conversation did. He said he was a member of somthing, and that this gave him the privilege of something I couldn't hear. And then, would she like — well, only the words coffee and penthouse were clear. She couldn't admit now that she hadn't heard all he had said. So knowing only that it was a question, she said, "Thank you, no." He asked twice was she sure. Then he left, watching her.

Somehow it just didn't get across. It's sad how that happens. You don't think that was important, do you? My story missed, you know. You don't understand. Partly I left out the saddest words. I didn't tell because you wouldn't have liked them. But it isn't finished.

When he asked if she were alone, she said she had a friend somewhere else in the city. He said, "That's nice. I had a friend once. But he died." It didn't work, his saying that. That's what confused her. She knew he was lonely without his saying that.

I wonder if I fooled you. I did at the beginning, I think. All the description was supposed to fool you. But even now, I don't think you know what I said.

Did you ever want to tell a friend what a very special letter said? And rather than try to read it or explain it, which always seems so brazen, did you just hand it to your friend? That's almost what I've tried to do. I told you the story the way it happened. Some things don't work at all well. It's partly my fault. I shouldn't have tried to tell you. That's the trouble, you know. Not just that some things are hard to explain. It's very hard to really understand people.

But still I've left something out. I couldn't tell because it's like reading a letter aloud. I presented it to you, but I shouldn't have. It hasn't worked. You didn't recognize the girl, did you? You know her, but not that way. Don't feel badly. It was a story about herself. Nobody can really understand anybody. I told you you weren't like the man. But he didn't understand her either.

MARIE BIRNBAUM '64

In Season

breathless

high breasted young

she came coltily

stiff-kneed scared

across the meadow-bed

shaky

dish face nostril flare

she stopped for shadows

butterfly-shy

through the knee-deep morning

half-wild

half child woman

she ached came archingly

skittering stalkingly

up to his halter-hand

freely.

NICOLE SHARPE '65

The Puli

From the land of Shangri-la
He pats on tiny feet
And pauses —
To ponder the universe
With piercing eyes veiled in mystery.

He seems an honored sage
With Mandarin beard of white —
A quiet zeal,
And white-shelled top-knot
To show his Mandarin rank.

From a Ringling world
He springs with elastic bounce,
And recoils —
To review his pranks
With mischievous eyes and stance.

He seems a wily clown
With shaggy, rag-mop wig.
A painted face —
A mask of gray and white
To screen, but briefly, his devotion.

MARCIA RENDLE '64

No Title

He regards the new crocus
Marvelous in ignorance
Inspired to attempting
He attests:
"Voila. La vie encore."

The timid knock resounds around
The hostile empty hall
The semi-conscious captive's pricked.
Screams in hunger,
Raises hair
Rattles teeth
In hollow hearts.

Frantically, he disregards the crocus.

SALLY ELIZABETH HIGGINS

Ode to a Bird

Carried aloft by the breathless echoes
Of a restless wind;
Fragile in the fingertips of a myriad
Of billowing clouds;
Harbinger of a thousand songs too sweet
For the harshness of a human ear,
Oh songster, Thou art the queen of the earth.
Thou art joy enriched by a golden tone
Shimmering in the sunset or the dawn:
Sunlight in a grey sky
And melody in an empty shadow.
Yours is the flight of velvet upon velvet!
Yours is the domain of purest ecstacy!

JOAN GOLDMAN '65

(Untitled)

I sat by the fire munching chickpeas,
And all my company's ease,
And allowed the lion to die.

"Lord Leary," I said,
With a turn of my head,
"Take mead if you will,
And tell me of your kill."
He presumed.

I stared at the fire
Not listening to Lord Leary,
For he was now in my stead,
And my head was lost
In the company somewhere.

The fire grew weary,
The mead grew dry,
"And he let such a cry!"
Said Lord Leary,
"That lion . . ."

"That lion?" I demanded of the fire.
"Why yes," spewed the fire.
Wail, one by one
I tossed in the chickpeas,
Company's ease,
Then in threes,
I could not face the fire.

"You did it", said the fire
With a sigh
"You allowed the lion to die."

MARTHA SMITH '62

The Dance

As when, with coiled legs released, a deer
Bounds to a dark tree space
As if on signal, there to disappear
Leaving a glimpse of fear, a trace
Of tail; as a pheasant, having feigned a wound
Breaks into flight, then with an untuned
Shriek, lights on a tree, now tame
While brightness fades and dun wings assume
The old inelegance,
So now in flight, now in a trance
Of stillness, now every muscle tense,
Now released to join the eloquence
Of the universe, they dance.

Bodies thunder-blown crash
Into air. Wind-driven, they slash
At unseen foes. Controlled
Fury churning through each line
Holds tense the burning forms. They wind
From the torn design of a storm's roar
To the pranced mimic of a light shore.

Promenade
The naked soul.
Muscle scream,
Drum roll.
Strip the facade,
Let bodies toll.

As when a pale flame bursts into light
And rears its head while bowing to its death,
Or as before relinquishing to night
The sun extends her arms, and drawing breath
Embraces one time more her glowing train,
So now in rippling forms with fire enhanced,
Glowing, leaping, twirling to again
Return with bodies flamed and moulded into earth,
They dance.

Forms caught in an electric sob
Contract; a quivering throb
Holds taut the line.
Shock fed, each new design
Reverberates
From vibrating
Current led forms; the whole
Glides through in stern control.
Swirl head, body knock
Obey muscle — bind, lock
All force. One chance
To hold course. Dance! Dance!

PATRICIA ARNOLD '64

A Boy

Lying sacrificed by moribund shapes
Of cities' stones, grapes,
Fenced between the land and sky,
The network and squared compositions of man's conquerings;
A boy lies, face-down, alone,
Inured to the passing traffic's pities.

Crying, rhythms of your heart's heavings,
Smell of grass and cold sun
Expand to bring only morbid explanations;
Earth allows the heart to heave
The warmth is not hers, my son.

(Grovel in the brown grass,
Trying to hear her heartbeat;
Her gravestone tells you it's not there.)

The only voice: traffic's self-pities
The only sight is gravestones
Or the captured shapes of cities.

Pitched as if by some damp inferno,
(The warmth is not hers, my son)
Such dark bears not upon the coming of a rainbow,
Or a space of resolutions,
(The sun is gone.)

Forcing solace by his own selfish sorrow
Diminished wail's moan,
Hurls his gaze toward the darkened sky,
The boy lies, back-to-earth, alone;
Her only requiem, the sky's vast lack;
The foretelling of tomorrow.

MARTHA SMITH '62

Dandelions

My dandelions do not lack décor
Although you think they lack a proper training.
Madam, I think your dahlias need it more,
Not meaning to offend you by my saying.
But they seem to lack the very wit
To plant themselves except where they've been put.
And dahlias won't assert their rarest charm,
But dandelions do. They're resolute
When they plant their feet, when with leafy swords they arm.
Then Vanity, in her usual pursuit,
Tells them to put their feathered helmets on,
And they stand at attention in the midst of your lawn.

MARIE BIRNBAUM '64

Prologue for Jean Giroudoux's *The Madwoman of Chaillot*

Senior Compet Play — 1962

Voice of Street Singer offstage: Do you hear, Mademoiselle,
Those musicians of hell?

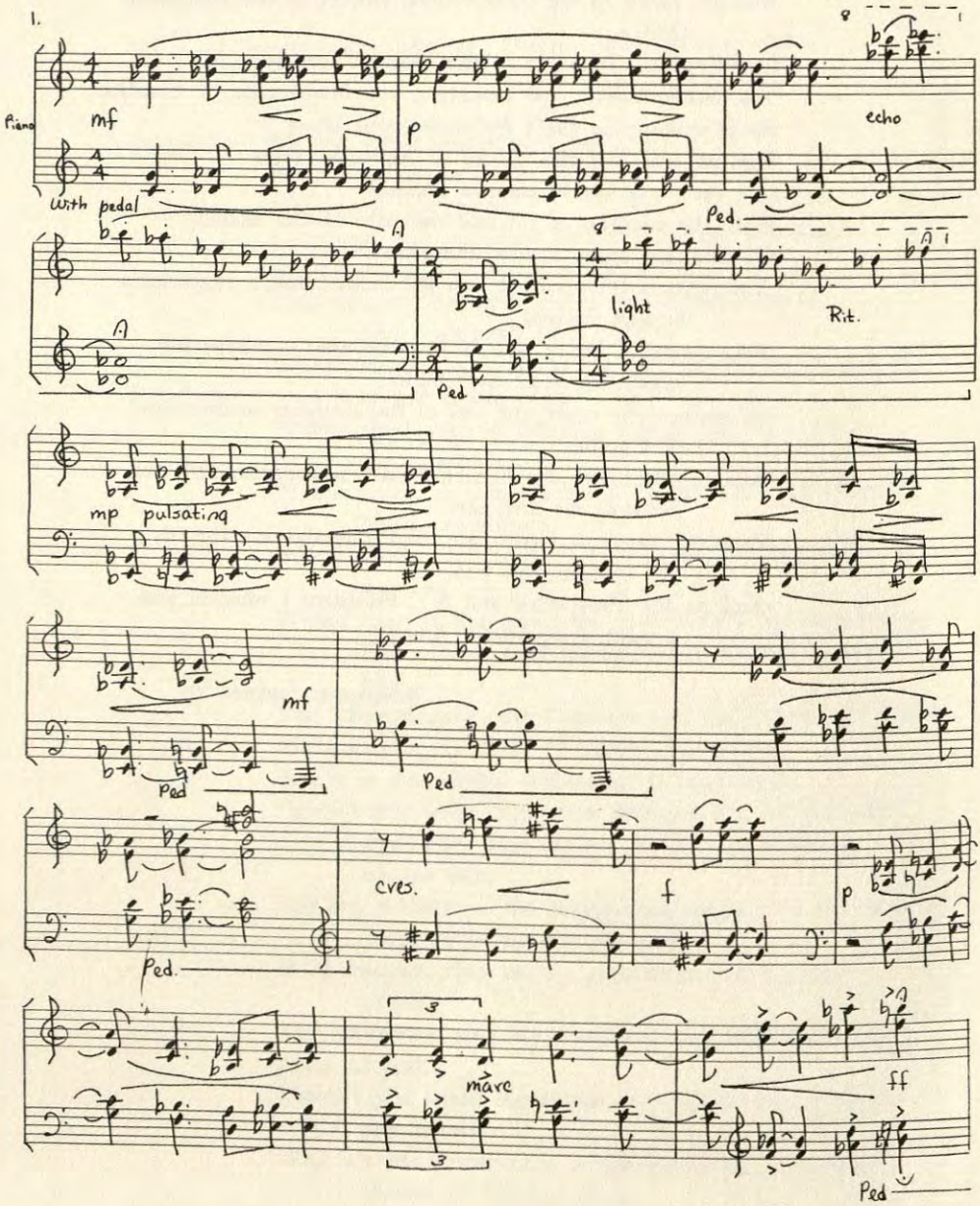
Ragpicker: Ah, the street singer of Chaillot —
He is singing *La Belle Polonaise*, you know
Not to me, of course,
I am only the ragpicker and a dilletante per force
But to our mademoiselle of the world —
This naughty, naughty world where you wake to
find your teeth in a glass
Where happiness is discarded like flowers in the ashcans
of the upper class
Where the breath of life is a sign of survival over
the corset stay,
Where justice is manufactured by the Stock Exchange's
hourly auto-da-fe
Where love is left to the subtle etceteras of the
dog and cat
Where man is the mass, the unwrinkled, the unperspiring,
the gelatin eyes beneath the never-to-be-taken-off
hat.
Yes, Mademoiselle, the Countess, our Madwoman of Chaillot
He is singing *La Belle Polonaise*, you know.
Where is your judge and where is your jury?
Haven't you heard the poets chanting the infernal fury?
C'est formidable, they say — the Elysian fields are
up for sale
Just buy a share — the playground perhaps — and measure
your worth against the pail
It's a bargain, they say — civilization for a pailful
of oil
Mr. Prospector and Mr. President, the inimitable creative
poets of toil.
Haven't you heard the march of progress beating down
the streets?
Why it's Mr. Prospector sampling his way toward the
richest of Elysian wheat

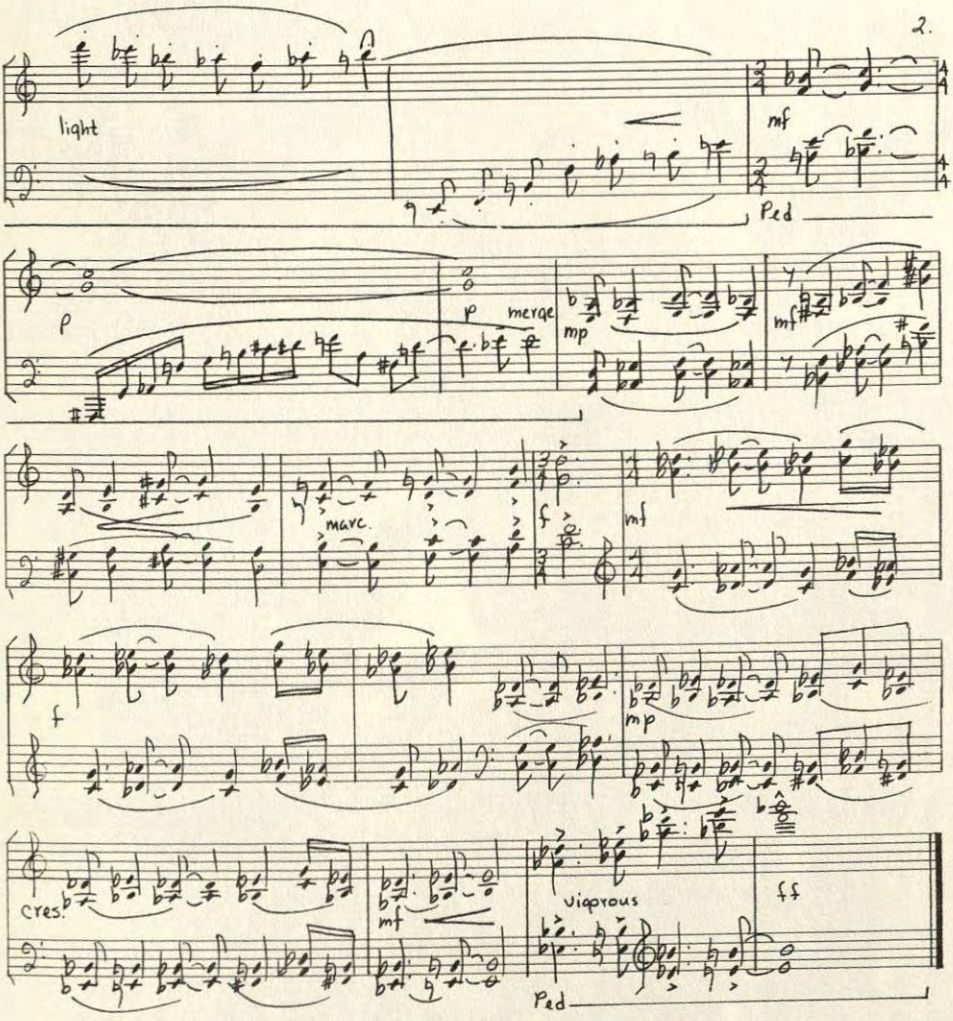
Glassful by glassful across Paris he sips
In search of the water that brings the bitter-sweet
of oil to his lips.
Why it's Mr. President calculating a Parisian eclipse
And the dawn of the standardized worker in one composite
drudge
Grunting and sweating to the world's very edge.
Yes, Mademoiselle, the Countess, our Madwoman of Chaillot
He is singing *La Belle Polonaise*, you know.
It is on you that the future of humanity rests
Not on the poets so piously blessed
With the religion of oil and the hate of the anarchy
Of sardines, roses, iodine and chianti
That makes the garbage can the humanitarian ragpicker's
highest delight
That creates a knave out of the one who worships the
smell that lasts over-night.
So convene the court, the seat of the almighty madwomen
of Chaillot
And together into the Elysian fields the judgment of the
petticoat we will sew.
Poets are poets and men are men, but alas it's forever
the women who win
And so Mr. Prospector and Mr. President I offer to you
a most sympathetic Amen.

ROSALIND LISTON '62

INTROSPECTION

EUNICE SCHRINER

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1962

WOOD CUT

Joan Ross '64

PHOTOGRAPH

Connie Cross '63

Each Day We Die a Little

She eased onto the bed, not waking Mark, and in the bright morning light crossed the bed with her shadow. Her body blocked the still-early, unwarming sun, a second shadow covered the sleeping face darkly. He hadn't moved. She came closer, brushing sleep-wrinkled hair from his forehead and with her weight light on his chest, leaned to bat his lids gently, claws tucked, as though to wake him with the paw by brushing sleep from his eyes. Mark half-woke. He reached for the cat, pushed her under the warm bed-covers, and lay still, his eyes closed against the sun. She curled there satisfied now, while Mark fought against waking further and hated her, as he did each morning, for having wakened him unnaturally. For three years he'd put up with this untimely disturbance; ah, how he longed to just once wake naturally, to sleep unbidden until, of his own, he woke.

The telephone rang bringing him full awake. Who? and at this hour? He crossed to the work desk. He sat, picked up the metronome and set it behind the insistently ringing black menace. Mark took up the loose, lined pages, shuffled them together, banging them against the desk and into a neatened pile. There was some foreign, but mean delight in letting the phone's ring jangle against and hurt his just-wakened senses — satisfaction in letting them, whoever it was, wait for him. But who is "them"? Lest he loose them and never know, he set the neatened manuscript heap quickly to the side and lifted the receiver. He heard only a buzz, empty, from within the phone. He'd been too long! They were gone. No, no — he'd lifted it in the middle of another ring; if it still rings then they must be there.

—Hello, hello — he called into the buzzing. He waited. Hello. Mark heard them then, when the ring stopped — someone breathing when the noise had quit. Hello.

— Mark? That you? Silly of me, of course it's you. How have you been?

Fran, he thought. Of course. Who else could it be. Hi Fran, yes just out of bed. Been a long time since I've heard . . . .

— Yes, she interrupted, too long, Mark, I suppose. But I'm busy with the family. Listen, you know I don't like to bother you there, break in on the artist in his self-exiled retreat, but I'm coming out tomorrow with the children. You can suffer us for a few days, I think.

The kids, and Fran, staying here. He couldn't imagine it.

— Surely Fran, come on out, but why, for God's sake, come all the way out here?

— Little trouble with Allen, Mark. Oh, nothing serious. Just better if we

pull out for a while. Few days, Leave him alone. Maybe he'll see things my way, she talked as she always had, Mark noticed, short, to-the-point sentences. Fran went on. The children will . . . .

Mark let up the hook and slid the panel cover from the metronome. At the periphery of his hearing, his sister went on speaking through the telephone. The wiry stem clicked free and he held it there, unswinging between his thumb and forefinger, then, after moments, set it going. Left to right, his eyes trailed the small pendulum. It struck to each side clicking sharply, swinging back then. While Fran talked, Mark's thoughts were swung, with the metronome stem, to left then right, left and right. "fami - ly, fam - ily", he thought with it; "Fran's - three - child - ren Fran's - three - child - ren - three - kids, three - kids - three - kids . . ."

— Well, Mark, she recalled him from the steady rhythm of the musician's tool. Have to run now; have a lot to do before then. Expect us. You're a darling. And she was gone. The line clicked empty before he'd snapped the stem into place again, back under the restraining bar that held its beat in check.

— Right. Bye, Fran. Mark guessed she hadn't heard him. It didn't much matter, but one didn't hang up without saying some kind of good-bye, heard or unheard.

He went then to feed the cat. She'd no name. Somehow he'd not come to any necessity for finding one. She was simply, the cat, not his cat or "my cat" — simply, "the cat" (that lives in my house) if he ever needed refer to her, and Mark seldom needed to make the reference.

— Here, he bent with the animal's food-dish and was startled to find his own reflection watching back at him from the glass-paneled cupboard door.

— Looking a little seedy this morning, boy, he warned himself. He brushed his hair back from his forehead and straightened, pushing morning-tired shoulders into line. The cat was content now, busy with her morning feeding. Mark went back to his bed, intent upon keeping that line straight through his shoulders. She wouldn't bother him again this morning; his morning hours were free now. Mark got into the bed to "think," as he referred to his morning's work. He'd never said it so, to anyone, unless the cat could be counted as someone; "to think" — too common sounding, unaustere, uninspiring, when said aloud. Not at all a thought to be voiced, so he said it only to himself — for he alone could know how much and just what it did mean for him.

Mark didn't expect that the others, the men in their nightly car pool, could understand properly either. They also are artists and musicians, it's true, but an artist's thoughts are sacred, immutable. For one to share with another

the form of his inspiration — Mark thought this impossible. Each evening they made the trip to the city. Fellow-musicians, creative compatriots-in-trade, each was appreciative of the other, each loved their comradeship. They spoke and joked together, six of them, during the rides to and from the concert hall — of coming programs, of their more accomplished or better, more publicized, fellow composers and virtuosi. It was never expected, or desired, that they exchange confidences of personal inspiration, anxieties, or joys. An artist's life must so often be his alone. . . .

Mark lay there planning and outlining the coming afternoon — a quartet, he thought. On the order of the Beethoven *Grosse Fuge*. A string quartet . . . Wonderful, and the cat's fed now, she won't bother my morning. The hours were his alone, his hours to use in planning for the afternoon. He resettled the pillow, added another to support his neck. At last comfortable, Mark closed his eyes and eased into the thoughts that would plan the opening bars. Soon, he slept.

Coffee was cold on the bedside table. He'd forgotten, with Fran's call, to switch it on. Commonly its 10-cup capacity exactly fitted the morning hours. Now though, he slept, lacking the oral reminder of the 10 full, black cups within the three morning hours allowed for "thinking."

She came to the bed again. With her soft muzzle, she pushed his head to one side and pushed again, to the other side, when he didn't respond. Mark reached and found her with one hand. The cat settled under the hand, against his chest, content for a time with Mark's absent petting. She was alert however, in her content, yellow-green eyes wide and ready, seeming to know he'd waken soon. Angry for the hours wasted, he did wake, with no one to vent this anger upon. His arm reached to the coffee pot and cat crept under the arm, leapt quickly and with no noise to the floor. Cold. Mark remembered then. Fran had called. He followed the cat into the kitchen. Yes, Fran had called. She more than anyone, he thought, understands my need for being alone, and damn her, she respects it less than anyone. It's as true now as when we younger. Mark could still picture the old, family house, the den where he'd practiced — rich blue carpet, the small grand piano, a gift to him from his mother. He seldom saw Fran without, at the same time, seeing his mother again. They hadn't been alike at all as Mark remembered, yet somehow so much the same and alike in a way he had never understood. Without the haze which refines most memories, Mark saw his mother, heard her speaking, saw his younger self with her there, moving into the den.

—In here, darling. Your father's tired, we can't disturb him. And they would practice then, the piano's chords beautifully muted by the carpet's thick nap. Often he'd played on for hours, his mother the arbitrator — approving or

disapproving, but always pleased — with Mark, with his progress. He'd hated it. Hated his mother, more than the piano, more than the books with lines and lines and notes unending; hated his father for being tired. He'd come to love that music, in time; now he loved his ability to make keys respond as he willed them. This music he'd wept over, hated, silently, but with all of his small body — the music that had inspired a boy's mind to thoughts of killing his parent — was now all he knew, or cared to know. That woman who had so long been a hated stranger to Mark had given him a love that was now his life. By her picture above the work desk he again thought, she and Fran never did look alike; Fran is more Father . . . we both are, for that matter.

He'd set the metronome going again, and it counted away the minutes, nothing else. It ticked a reminder of the early morning telephone call and beat off for Mark, not opening bars to be put to manuscript, but a hazed reminder only, of the fuge that wouldn't come to clear focus.

—Ah, it's no good now, cat, he spoke to himself; the day is more than half over, and that half wasted. He wondered if a drive wouldn't clear his head and went to dress.

Rehearsal over, he left the hall; the street was dimly lighted, but clear of cars, the night unusually warm and clean in this dead-end of the city. Concert halls come with a city, Mark thought, and are left then to choke in the dust and mess of its internal, suffocating growth.

Who is that girl? She passed Mark where he stood watching and continued on toward the end of the block. Mark tore a neat corner from the fold he'd creased into the billboard. Not the best side of town, he thought, and watched the girl. She'd reached the cross-street, his eyes following her. Yes, she is most familiar looking. Hadn't he seen her before? Mark wondered. Perhaps — he couldn't be sure; or did her likeness to someone else come of her attraction for him? He tried to be honest with himself — did this familiarity come of the need he'd nearly admitted to, of wanting to take the form there, now moving away from him, take this form and hold it in his hands? A walnut tree on the center-strip blocked her momentarily; he saw her reappear, dropped the torn poster-corner and began to walk toward the corner, moving down the warm September street with the girl.

That august maple, uncommonly full and coloured for deep city growth, could have taken Mark's fullest attention. His imaginative eye could have held the picture — the glorious and incongrous September tree — held it clearly in mind throughout the ride home, still intact in memory when he sat at the work desk and drew from the memory notes, staffs, bars — all put to line on the manuscript page. But a yoet has said there are too many trees for poetry. Are there, as well, trees too many for music?

They crossed to the third block. Mark followed with his eyes and walked in her rhythm, slowly, quietly, not wanting to startle her. He noticed the wall of a warehouse pass him as he walked, the wall that had passed her just seconds before, he thought smiling. A peculiar mark — what could it mean? He looked away from it then, ahead to the girl, afraid he'd let her leave his sight. She was there, yards ahead, as before. Mark's mind went back to the sign on the wall, his eyes kept the girl with him. Black ring, or a circle, if it matters, he wondered. Black point in the center. What could it mean? His eyes fixed hard on the girl's back as though to hold her, for moments, in time; his head turned quickly then, to the wall and the sign he'd seen, to reaffirm the picture he imagined. Yes, saw it right. Must be phallic nonsense of some sort, he determined, kids don't know any other way to decorate walls nowadays. But it's nothing I've ever seen. That great circumscribing circle . . . could be any number of things. Mark couldn't decide. His mind wondered on about this peculiar new mark until the girl turned and left the city sidewalk, pulling him into a bar with her.

She expected him, or so it seemed, and he went to her table with a direct bravado he hadn't known was his.

—You were looking for me? she spoke first.

—Yes, yes I was. Mark couldn't answer otherwise. Can I get you a drink? He sat across from her and nodded the question.

—I've ordered, thanks. She smiled back to Mark.

He wanted to take her arm. Lead her away from here. Where he'd lead her to, Mark wasn't sure, but it would be out of this place — away from these people, the hot breath, the smell of other bodies. He looked around the booth-lined room.

—I've ordered for you too, she called his mind back to the table. Scotch-double, all right?

Mark was surprised. Strangely pleased. The drinks came. Couple more of the same, he ordered again, bent his head to the girl. That suit you?

—Of course, she laughed. Her smile was pleasant.

—You live in the city? Mark finished the drink.

—Yes. But that's not important. Are you new here? Or out of town? The girl cradled her drink while he finished his second.

—Why, not important? It doesn't matter, but I'm interested. Nothing in the city has interested me for a long while. Yes, I'm from out of town, where suburb becomes real country, he explained it. Not far out, but a necessary distance from town. He thought he'd better explain that.

—You've probably never met a guy like me. I'm a musician, an arist of sorts.

—Oh yes, she knew what he meant. Sure, I know lots of them — musicians, I mean.

—Well, no. You see, what I mean is — Well, I write music, I compose it. I don't just play somebody else's. He couldn't explain it in the way he wanted it understood; he didn't like to talk about this difference, but she seemed to know what he meant to say.

—Well they all do that, don't they? At least the ones I know . . . , — she stopped. She did understand what Mark meant and left the sentence to end here. Have some change — want to hear some canned-music? Mark had to think to answer her and nodded, o. k., sure, to her back as she crossed to a farther corner of the room. He finished his drink and her unfinished one, clearing the table for fourths.

—Do you know, he began before she had seated herself, what the hardest part of life is? It's easy to be born a man, easy even to live like a man. The hardest thing's to die a man, — to die a man, not like a man. But just, die "a man." Do you see? Mark wanted to stop. I guess most people don't think about dying this way though.

—Why talk about dying then? She was annoyed. You're not so old. Shall we go now? One more drink and then we'll go to my place. But Mark wasn't finished; she was ready to leave, but she'd misunderstood.

—I know I'm not old. I didn't say I was old, did I? I'm tired. You make me even more tired. He didn't know how to finish the thought and knew he could put it better in music.

—Because I'm younger? And why tired . . . she held the drink to him, trying without words to push him into hurrying.

He took the drink and finished it.

—No. Not because you're young. But, he wondered again and waited. Well yes, maybe that's some of it. His fingers moved under the table, feeling along an almost-visible keyboard. He could say it better there; Mark leaned into the seat and looked to see the fingers moving. He could push his life into black and white ivory that would jump to live sound under those fingers. No, I'm wrong. It's not any of it, he tried to talk. You don't get tired like I do; and this, Mark knew, said nothing. Forget it, never mind — it's not important. He wouldn't or couldn't, say anything more. The music sent a cadence to Mark from the corner far behind him and he couldn't think through it or out of its beating. His mind, like the fingers under the red cloth, pulsed to the records beat. Whole day has been like a dream, his head nodded

to the idea. Even the early part, the part that could have been spent as usual, if Fran hadn't called. The ideas came and sat unclear in his rhythm-trapped mind — each idea removed from what he felt now, from what he didn't feel and couldn't remember.

—Too much to drink too, he thought it aloud to the girl. She stood up, pushing her chair away from the table with the backside of one leg.

—Two-thirty now. Which is it — you going to be honest and try to be untired? Shall I call a cab? And you can take me home? Or are you going to be a tired liar? She turned to Mark, then away.

—Wait. I'm thinking now, he planned the next day. I have to write all tomorrow, Fran coming out with the children. Better write in the morning too. The girl reached across to her drink while Mark planned aloud for a day she couldn't imagine. She leaned into him, including herself in the planning, rubbing an invisible fur against Mark's right side and cheek. His arm was around her, out of the way as she let more of her weight be supported by his side. The arm fell around her then, with the beat his fingers had given in to, his hand took up an automatic pat — pat — pat on her slim-skirted rump. Feeling the gentle lover, the girl laughed — a sound from deep in her throat. Mark looked to her then smiling — not for whatever her joke was, he couldn't be sure of that, but for her laughter; laughter that became almost a hiccoughing with his upturned stare, and smile.

His fingers stopped the beat and held, for short moments, on her thigh. Slowly, still touching her, but with a delicate gentleness, as though the touch might offend or burn, the hand slid down. Mark's hand hung in the air between his chair frame and the girl's leg; it hung there, evenly framed by the two. The fingers hung free, forefinger rubbing a smooth, unfiled thumbnail. Mark knew that she hadn't moved and looked to her again, — desiring, ashamed, for a thought he hadn't found. From that corner behind —

"—Frankie and Johnny were lovers,

Oh, what a couple they . . ."

How long, Mark figured, since I heard that last? He couldn't remember now where he had heard it. The juke-voice brought a memory now, of the blue carpet, the hours of practice. Certainly, that was it. Of course, — he'd played it himself in those long hours. And the same puzzle was with him now — he'd never been able to figure it and never bothered to ask. Mark wondered now which it was, which one the woman — Frankie or Johnny — and which the man?

He looked down when the girl moved from him, not aware until then that his fingers had caught at the hem of her skirt-pleat.

—O. k. I'll call a cab. She started to the door, then turned to Mark, you sit there and think, she kissed his forehead, held his chin cupped in her fingers, think about what a tired liar is. I'll get the cab.

—But, Mark's hand went to his forehead and pushed the brow into small wrinkles. He'd forgotten what he meant to say.

—Don't worry, she reminded him, I can get myself home. Say, forget what I said about tired liars. You're almost too tired to think, aren't you?

—Well, he wasn't sure what she meant; but she left him then. Yes, he leaned his neck to the cool cushion-back, closed his eyes. Yes, I certainly am sleepy.

". . . . he was her man,

but he done her wrong . . ."

The voice came to him, "he?" "Her . . . ?" He had missed the transition from names to pronouns and wondered again, in his dozing, listened to the recording that spun across the room in the jukebox. His mind, free behind closed eyes, turned the puzzle over once more — he gave it up. Damned foolish anyway, Mark decided, to worry about who Frankie is. And he slept until the cab came.

BETSY KRAAI '63

The Grunion

The beach is a jeweler's tray
Of soft velvet sand
On the counter of the world.

The eye of the moon quietly waits
To count the precious gems
And see her light mirrored
In a thousand facets.

The gems, carelessly thrown
By the dark hand of the sea
Are scattered on the tray —
A priceless array of platinum and diamonds
Catching life from the light of the moon.

We run, leap, dance, crawl, even,
With frenzied intoxication
To scoop up flashing gems,
And fill the greedy pails.

And then —

The eye of the sun quietly watches
The pails in the heat of the day
Filled with jewels — silvery and glassy
With death.

MARCIA RENDLE '64