

Era





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## EDITOR

Sophie Balcoff

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Diane Marie Sot  
Peter McLaughlin  
Kate Hoffman

Peter Horan  
Thomas Stadnik  
Lee Woods  
Ken Girard  
Vanessa Marzipan

*Cover by* Thomas Holtz

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## AVOIDANCE

She walked straight for the university. Against her hip, six copies of an article, Xeroxed, identical, smooth as skin. She had remembered last night, remembered after finally sliding the books away on her desk, tipping back in her chair with a cigarette. Remembered there were no copies, nothing for her class today. Blank faces. Nothing. The front legs of her chair landing down, her hand nervously in her hair.

There was a place down the block and around the corner to make copies. Open 24 Hours. Nowhere could there be such a place but here, around a university. She was never frightened, but now remembering like this after midnight, pulling the thick sleeves of her coat over her arms to go out, down the steps. She remembered the newsstand at the corner, blue and cheerful with yellow letters when she stopped each afternoon for the paper. Smiling, a dumb but pleasant face, a tip at Christmas. A dollar. Now those heavy blue doors swung together as tight as lips in anger. Dark. A dark square space under the streetlamps. Suddenly she rustled the papers together and switched off the light. How foolish.

There was nothing. These same streets in the morning, the hum of bicycle wheels, the clatter of doors businesslike and purposeful to her. Here she passed the blue newsstand, its flaps yawning and innocent. Although there were people everywhere, people surging towards the mass of buildings down the block, the street seemed empty to her. These faces, those she knew and those she barely recognized, her neighbors, moved past harmlessly.

A highway, thick with traffic in the morning, separated her street from the university. Here, at the corner, a crowd gathered, waiting for the signal from the light to cross. They seemed like schoolchildren, waiting in the afternoon to

flow the other way. Children flowing in and out. Waiting. But then she remembered, these were students at the university, her students. Children. The light changed, and she lurched forward with the others.

The cars stood in perfect rows, waiting while the crowd hurried across. All hurrying, as through a parking lot when a factory, a store closes. But these cars were full, faces at the windows, men and women going on downtown, families heading towards Canada for vacations.

Twice this week she had had only three hours of sleep and it was only Wednesday. It seemed impossible. Her hair itched at the edges of her fuzzy hat, and with her thick coat her body seemed heavy, a burden. Once past the sign identifying the university the crowd thinned, people slipping everywhere between the buildings.

The psychology building was at the same time the oldest and the newest building on campus. Originally a graceful structure of towers and narrow pointed windows that dominated the central square, a simple red brick addition now tailed behind it. When she had first toured the campus before entering as a graduate student four winters ago, a tiny secretary rushed her through the building, explaining the plans to convert these old rooms to laboratory space. She had suggested to her guide that was impractical, a shame to lose these lovely high-ceilinged rooms, so perfect, like thought. The woman had looked up at her, amazed and furious, turned and clicked back down the hall to her office, her hair pulled brutally and fixed in a ball at the back of her head. When she remembered this she shivered, her own hair, her whole head crawling inside her hat.

In the few years she had been here the center of campus had shifted away from the old square. There was a new dormitory complex and a sprawl of classrooms on the other side of the library. She missed the different faces, the flood of students

between the classes she had known her first year. An exciting year. Now the careful perplexed gaits of the professors in her own department across the square. Those same exasperated glares of students. Her students.

Each morning she met the department chairman as he hobbled down the hall for his coffee. Her wrist swung up at her as she hurried up the steps, and she saw that she was late. A few minutes past nine. But he would be waiting, waiting there in the hallway, the steam rising from the glossy paper cup in his hand. Why should he bother with her? Why those punishing glances? Tardiness. It was as if she were a child again, and he her teacher. But then he was the department chairman, and she just an instructor.

"Good morning, Dr. Barbour."

"Caroline."

Nodding.

It was always this way, his greeting cut to her name, the last syllable drawn out, perfect and demanding. A line. Her name. His recognition. She hurried past, busy. Late.

This tiny man, her superior standing in the hallway, a little lame. As an undergraduate she had known his reputation and his work, something on the cellular level. Articles. The name, this place she grew to want. Now, four years into her own work on avoidance responses in rats, it seemed vague, strangely more difficult and distant than it seemed when she was younger, eager to understand it all. Cells. What could he do back behind those doors, back in his own laboratory? What could this man learn?

Just four years here, and her vision had altered so. The energy, the giddiness of possibilities in her first year had slowly turned to a grim purposefulness, a narrow band that was her own work. She no longer sought out her colleagues. She read only what she had to, and she even took her coffee back to her office in the morning.



The white wintery glare from the window welcomed her, but when she pulled off her hat and coat her office seemed cramped and clammy. Dust covered the plastic cube holding pictures of her family and Roy on her desk. Her father holding a horse by a halter at his shoulder. Her mother, Caroline could sense her mother just out of view, watching at the kitchen door. A face, broad and longer than the horse's, smiled and stared upside down from the top of the cube. Roy. Roy smiling and staring. She had not written, she had not answered his last three letters. By now he would have contacted her parents. What's the matter? What's wrong? What's the matter with Caroline? It was her work, she had suggested in her last letter, that narrow band of work.

She had planned to marry Roy, planned this since her junior year in college. It was not exactly a hometown romance, but it seemed that way to her. She had met him at school, halfway across the country and discovered he lived just thirty miles from her home. The attraction, the sameness, so much to talk about. He was older than she, settled in his job, waiting and worried for her decision. Waiting. Waiting for her letters.

Caroline stuffed her wraps between the file cabinet and the wall, wondering why she was here, nodding and apologizing to Dr. Barbour. Her first class was not until eleven. She had lost more sleep. But then she would not have slept anyway. She was unable to pick up hours of sleep that way, hours she had lost. They were gone. Lost.

At the corner of her desk a neat stack of examinations, graded for her general psych class. Just four years removed, the words, the manner of these undergraduates was a mystery to her. Hidden. Their test answers never directly wrong, their expressions in class bored and dry, but never without suspicion. Could things have changed so much, she wondered.

Caroline could hear the drone of a loudspeaker from beyond the library. A rally. Someone speaking out in the open air, students gathering, clustering around. Did they listen to these words, the girls shifting around the edges of the crowd? Did



they care, as she did? She had cared. Her days filled with activity, her years with Roy so far from home.

Nervously as she had done the past two months she pulled the notes from her drawer. Next semester she would teach a graduate course on Motivational Systems. When Dr. Barbour had first suggested it, Caroline was thankful, appreciative. A chance to extend herself, apply her work in some way. Since then she grew doubtful. The old man seemed to sense this. Caroline imagined he regretted his decision. She expected him to call her in, explain that the course had to be cancelled. No money, decreased enrollment, anything. But in the meantime she had to keep working. Preparing.

She was late for her first class. Somehow, for nearly two hours she had worried over her notes. Now, for the second time this morning Caroline was late. Banging the milky glass door to her office behind her. But her students would not mind, not care that she was late. She could hear them talking, laughing sudden choppy laughs as she hurried down the hall, their oval faces going empty when she entered.

She was fascinated, always astonished at their clothes and hair. So many colors of hair, so many lengths and textures. One always rushed in at the last moment, a long walk across campus, his fine brown hair spinning insanely, wildly off one side of his head. Their long bodies, their careful attention, tedious strained test answers, their sudden disinterest. Giving up.

The hour passed. Her students filed out, the examinations she had returned at the beginning of class slipped between the back pages of notebooks, ignored. Before she could gather her things, Tom Caflin was in front of her, his foot oddly resting at waist level on her desk.

Caflin was a graduate student in social psychology she had met her first week here. She had avoided him faithfully ever since. He always seemed to be suggesting something when he spoke. Mocking, his foot up on her desk, but what, what did

he mean? She had not seen Caflin for nearly a year, and she remembered hearing something about him leaving to work on a "transactional experiment." She could only vaguely recall this, but he treated her as if they met every day.

"You're working too hard, baby. How about dinner tonight?"

Suddenly, desperately Caroline's eyes searched the empty room, the tall windows, the perfect rows of desks. Caflin's voice had a queer hollow sound in the room. She hunched her shoulders inside her sweater coldly. Caflin noticed the evasion. She spoke.

"It's kind of chilly in here. Come downstairs for some coffee?"

Caflin was relieved, confident. He had gained more time. She would accept, she would have dinner with him. Caroline looked over shoulder as they left. Was someone there? Had one of her students seen this, noticed the two of them alone there?



With Caflin in the hall, all she could remember was her afternoon class, a two o'clock class. This was not good enough, she could not escape with this.

"I heard you left, Tom. What's the story?"

She tried his first name, realized she was awkwardly encouraging him. An invitation to coffee. She was like him, too friendly. Perhaps he was also awkward, he really meant nothing. Harmless.

Caflin was a big man, swaggering as he walked. His shoulders swung at her head as they moved down the hall.

"Word doesn't travel too fast in these fusty old halls. Didn't you hear? I have long since severed my connections with the university."

He pronounced these words formally, as if they might appear in an official threatening letter typed on stiff stationery. She was embarrassed. She flushed from her silent acceptance, these fusty old halls.

"A co-conspirator - still within these gates - clued me they owed me a degree. I left with enough credits, enough head filler but no meal ticket. The prodigal son has returned for his just rewards."

"Your old academic fever certainly burned out in a hurry."

It was a mistake. His arrogance was flimsy, a pose, but she had jabbed at it brutally, fearfully. She still disliked Caflin, his flippancy. But she had stopped him, slowed him for a moment. Already she felt she was cornered.

"And you, still faithfully running the rats through their paces? I envy you. Something comforting about those twitchy little obedient noses. Not like people at all."

Caflin's eyes flickered, joking. It was all a joke, her work, his

dropping out, returning for the degree. She had taken it so seriously. They were at the end of the hall. Students, teachers in the department passed them, staring curiously, openly at Caflin. He was cut loose and he seemed to enjoy this kind of anonymous recognition here in the hallway. Dr. Barbour emerged from the office and limped across the lobby towards them.

"Well, Mr. Caflin."

Caroline noticed the lift in the old man's voice, the respect for Caflin's independence. She knew Caflin would get what he wanted. He did not hesitate.

"I have learned the hard way, sir, and I've always acknowledged good advice. I need my degree."

"I think we can talk about it, Tom."

Dr. Barbour seemed elated, delighted to have someone to talk to, someone to break the lonely shuffle of his colleagues. He would offer Caflin a cigarette from the square wooden box on his desk.

"Sorry, Dr. I've got to meet someone in half a minute. Can I see you tomorrow? Great."

He turned quickly to her. "I'll see you at seven tonight." He was gone, slapping his long long leg down the hall.

Perhaps she had misjudged him. He had forgotten about the coffee, freed her until her afternoon class. The old man stared at Caroline, smiling.

She was ready, waiting in a chair nearly an hour early. She would be late. Caroline expected Caflin to arrive in good spirits from his breezy successes of the day. She would stand back, step free of the rush of his conversation, wait out the evening. He would be leaving soon, he had what he wanted.



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At seven-thirty, a single tap at the inside door. How had he gotten inside, past the front floor of her apartment building? It occurred to her that Caflin had been waiting in the hallway all afternoon.

He had changed his clothes during the day. A coat, a suit, his hair brushed back behind his ears. His tie looped his collar loosely. Caroline had to motion him into the room. It was as if her most bashful student had come to visit. But this was Tom Caflin in her doorway, graduate student emeritus.

"Hello, Caroline."

"Come in, Tom."

She took his coat, his huge heavy coat and dropped it over the back of her sofa. Her apartment suddenly seemed tiny to her. There was no place to go, no place for someone as big as Caflin. She wished they had left immediately.

Caflin slumped into a chair, rattled from his earlier exuberance. Had Dr. Barbour turned him down already? The upset, the disappointment of returning to an old place? Had he been drinking? Caroline realized she did not know him at all. She had not even spoken to him in nearly a year. Perhaps he just regretted having to spend the evening with her? No, it seemed something more.

"Would you like a drink? You look like you could use it."

Caroline felt guilty for her suspicions. She could not ignore his mood now.

"No, no. My father will be waiting."

Was his father waiting out front with the car? Caroline glanced towards the window. The whole evening seemed aimless, younger than ever. She remembered going to a school dance in the back seat of someone's car. The father silently driving them there, faithfully picking them up at the door of the gym. So safe.



Caflin seemed helpless putting on his coat again. She wanted to help him, hold the sleeves out for him, give this big man a little room.

"How does the department look from the outside now?"  
"Terrible. I can't leave soon enough."

It was difficult to come back. But he was terribly glum, too depressed, she thought. But then she did not know Caflin very well. She did not know much about anyone, really. Dr. Barbour? Barbielli, her advisor?

Caflin followed her down the steps and out onto the street. It was warm, warmer than it had been for days, but she was not relieved. She felt overdressed. She dreaded the evening with Caflin. A bicycle passed, and crazily she wished she were on it, rushing down the darkened streets.

How could she keep up the conversation with Caflin? Why should she try? She remembered how easy it was with Roy, to talk and talk, even silence. Effortless.

Caflin's car was dark and expensive-looking. When she sat down on the seat, it was as if she were lowering herself onto a sofa in someone's living room. It was that wide, that comfortable. He was silent for a while, then slowly he began to unfold, explaining everything carefully as if it were important she understood. Driving this car, guiding it down the narrow streets seemed to restore his confidence a little.

"My whole set of priorities, the whole way I looked at things disappeared when I left. It's so torn apart. For all those years in school I believed in that kind of logic, a step-by-step system you could build for yourself, your life, your thought, everything. It doesn't fit. It doesn't apply."

Caroline thought he would grow silent again. But no, no, he had more to add, more to chip away from his own ideal. She could not imagine her whole way of thinking or "disappearing" as he said. It seemed impossible. Caflin was only shifting gears, she thought.



They turned onto the highway in front of the university, joining a stream of red tail lights. The sidewalks seemed filled with people. Strangely she saw someone she recognized, a boy in one of her classes. He walked right out in front of their car at a red light and glanced at the windshield, but he did not notice Caroline. He did not recognize his teacher in this big car, sitting so far from the driver, like a wife. She wondered if her students pictured her this way, like a wife, listening in the front seat of a car. Caroline thought of her own mother, her careful repeated warnings of things that "one does not do." Never accept rides with strangers. Ignore them. Pretend they are not there.

Tom Caflin was a stranger, really. But here she was almost imagining herself as his wife. Suddenly it seemed easier to imagine than being married to Roy, married as she had planned. By this kind of thinking no one was a stranger. You could be safe with anyone. It seemed so easy.

Caflin was speaking faster now, forming things in the air with one hand as he talked. So unlike Roy, Roy who never gestured when he talked with her. Just the steady flow of words between them. Effortless.



Caflin explained he was being trained as a "consultant" for a king of mild group therapy. "A hell of a lot of money - a hundred fifty, two hundred dollars a day. Work with people." It seemed he was trying to sell her, sign her up.

Caroline knew almost nothing about group therapy. Some friends of her parents began attending sessions and clinics. The last time she was home, her mother had spoken of it, shrugging it off, perplexed at her friends, shrugging them off. Caroline had accepted this. She realized how many of her parents' prejudices and pet beliefs she accepted, absorbed as her own.

Caflin was talking on about his new work, emphasizing connections, reasons with his hands. She was impressed by his intensity, his honesty. It seemed almost unnecessary that she be there, but then it was important that she was listening, important that she understood. She was troubled by his moods, his depression back at her apartment, his superiority earlier in the day, but then he seemed to follow his impulses faithfully. He seemed to hear himself fully, not always trusting, but listening, listening. It was not until Caflin stopped the car in the driveway, still talking, that Caroline realized he had brought her to his house, his parents' house for dinner.

Caflin's house, the house where he had grown up, learned from his parents stood far back from the road. When she got out of the car it seemed quiet, as if they were in the country, but it was only a suburb just ten or fifteen minutes from her own apartment. Lights glittered through the trees from nearby houses. Caflin's house was old, jutting out in every direction. It was large. The front porch was as big as a room, as big as her whole apartment. She noticed boxes of books stacked carefully in the corner. She wondered if they were Tom's, his old books from years and years of school, still around.

Inside, a rush of warm air, too warm. To the left of the foyer the living room was dark, and through the doorway to the right Caroline could see the light fixture burning low over the dining room table like a study lamp. Instinctively, like her own mother, Caroline sensed the absence of women. Tom's mother.

A small woman in a print dress came forward and took their coats. Caflin ignored her, and when Caroline nodded to her, the woman seemed not to notice her, another woman in the house.

Caflin directed her to the dining room. She saw that he was accustomed to this, like bachelors, he and his father eating when it was necessary. Hearing their needs so clearly. Responding. If they were not wealthy they would eat out of cans, carelessly. Perhaps they did, anyway. Caroline hesitated, foolishly admiring something, a plain silver bowl.

"What a lovely centerpiece."

Caflin seemed surprised. Perhaps he had never noticed it before. Never even seen it. She stood at her chair, turned, tried several places for her pocketbook. Her behavior, her curious respect for the place seemed to perplex Caflin. He asked her to sit down.

The same woman came from the kitchen now, placing a drink for each of them on their dinner plates. Caroline noticed she kept carefully to the edges of the room, never far from the walls, the corners. She imagined the woman never dared cut across a room diagonally, so boldly through the light.

It was not until the woman was serving dinner, carefully measuring a heap of potatoes, two identical slices of meat onto her plate, that Caflin's father arrived, suddenly visible from the darkness of the foyer. He stood over the table for a moment, confused and disappointed there was nothing, nothing on the table but the food on their plates. The dishes were hurried back into the kitchen, out of sight, any food not measured out quickly rushed away, hidden. There was nothing to remember in this house, she thought. All you needed surrounded you, carefully, tightly. The rest, like the living room, blacked out, effectively cut off. Caroline imagined Mrs. Caflin had been gone for many years. Her bedroom upstairs closed off, curtains drawn over the windows.

Mr. Caflin looked old, seventy perhaps. Instantly Caroline respected him, this man with no wife, an empty dinner plate.



She thought his face gentle, like all old men, gently questioning her. How is it with young girls today? How has it ever been?

He spoke first to his son. "Good evening, Tom. Forgive me, the traffic coming out held me up."

He rubbed his hands together, almost shuffling, apologizing for being just a few minutes late.

"May I apologize, also, to you, Miss Colson?"

Caroline smiled. She wondered what he thought, what Tom had told him about her. Perhaps nothing. She was a prospect, a future daughter, a wife for his son. She could not imagine it, living here in this lovely dark house. Silence was a habit for them, a way they did not notice. They ate quietly for several minutes. She thought how easy it was for Tom to slide from talkativeness to silence. The gentle clatter and scrape of silver, food shrinking from their plates. She was comfortable, so at ease with these men, their quiet way. So unlike the threatening gaps at her own home, her father's brooding, sulking, his sudden anger. She looked up from her plate several times, wondering if they were feuding, warring in a way she could not recognize. The old man sighed quietly. He had nearly finished his dinner.

"Well, Miss Colson, you're still making your way down at the university?"

"More or less. They've assigned me my first graduate course for the spring. That's my big obstacle right now."

"Caroline's involved in it, Father. More than I ever was."

It seemed strange for Tom to volunteer this, like a son. He seemed to be acting again, mocking and joking. The old man did not notice. He continued to stare at her, watching for her response, friendly. She saw the family here, the large open eyes of father and son.

The woman appeared at Caroline's shoulder, placing a pudding and cake dessert in front of her, sliding a cup of coffee from the



edge of the table. The dinner had come and gone so quickly. For a moment she could not remember what she had eaten. The taste in her mouth was curious, foreign.

Like his son, Mr. Caflin responded to situations, moments. He expanded here at dessert, a moment for reflection, a rich trifle of conversation. He stretched his small fingers out for his coffee cup.

"Well, that's fine. That's fine."

She did not know what he meant: they had not spoken for several minutes.

"Tom, here, has really branched out on his own."

She saw that he did not approve, a father's skepticism. Caroline thought of her father's silence, carefully explaining what she was studying, what she was planning, her activity, her life. Once she heard her father laughing about her in the driveway, laughing those sudden harsh laughs with a neighbor she barely knew. They were talking about college, the money, her life. Laughing. She had forgotten this, but now she remembered.

"Do they have any of this business down there, down at the university?"

This man was asking her, this man she had never met, asking about his son, Tom Caflin. Earnestly. As Tom had spoken to her in the car, explaining so she could understand. Both these men followed their impulses, the impulses of father and son.

It was devious of him, jabbing, poking at his son this way. She wished she could be mocking, serious, then suddenly mocking, serious, then suddenly mocking like Tom. Putting her foot up on the desk, up on the dining room table.

"Caroline's not familiar with my work, Father. We've discussed it some before."

"I see."

It had ended so quickly, like the sudden twist of a smile on Tom's face, joking. The old man turned to other things, the chance of snow, the need to paint the house, her plans for the holidays.

Caflin spoke with her in the car on the way home, continued on as if they had never stopped, as if he had not ever pulled up in front of his father's house. She watched him, resting her head gently against the window glass. She listened, thinking of the delicate balance of suspicion holding Caflin from his father, allowing them to live together there with the woman in the print dress. Like the whirr of this wonderful engine, his veering away from the university, his explanations. The ease of wriggling free, twisting away from people, their cautions, their lives.

By the time they reached the far side of the university Caroline realized she had said so little, spoken so very little, but Caflin did not seem to notice. He was leaving in a few days. It did not matter.



For a moment before she got out of the car, Caroline wanted to stop him, take him by the elbow, explain about her work, the course she would teach, her family even. But no, he would respond, shrugging it off somehow, coming free. He thanked her, left her at the front door.

On her desk, the last letter from Roy, propped at the base of her lamp as if she would attend to it. Still more examinations and papers stood in piles on her desk, thicker than books. They irritated her, violated her sense of order, the different slopes of handwriting, the endless amblings, explanations, alibis that clogged these papers. She thought of her father's laughter again, her father who had never been to college.

Caroline switched on the light, and her desk hovered like a surface from a dream in the darkness, a dream she had as a girl, a dream she barely knew. There were sheets and sheets of color before her, as in a violent rain. She had to pass through them, each one so painful, she remembered. Once through two or three she began to forget, lose track. A dream rolling up like memory behind you.

Like the tears of gratitude she felt - Oh even now she longed to grab her mother, hug her at the knees. Her mother stroking her, alone with her, the two of them waiting for sleep. A child waiting, gratefully even now, never reaching that surface, hovering, shifting away.

*Steven Winn*



## YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE CHAMPOLLION TO READ HIEROGLYPHS

I would like to show in this perhaps unique article that hieroglyphs are not really as mysterious as most people would think or as Egyptologists would sometimes have people think. There are strict rules of grammar and orthography, and the pictures employed are used both ideographically and phonetically. This last aspect together with its lack of punctuation make hieroglyphs seem at first totally incomprehensible. However, if the reader is patient enough to follow the numerous "footnotes" which I have used extensively here, he will undoubtedly come to the realization that hieroglyphics is a language no less than his own native language.

I would first suggest that the reader peruse the hieroglyphic inscription itself. It is the autobiographical inscription of the high priest of Amun Amenemhet from his tomb at Thebes. It might be useful or even necessary to consult the explanations of the symbols found directly below the number itself or below the horizontal lines extending from the numbers; the only exceptions are those symbols which have their appropriate number to their right. It might be pointed out that the identifications of many of the symbols is based on more detailed versions of the symbols. Next, if the reader would turn to the transliteration, he will see how the Egyptologist represents the hieroglyphic symbols in Latin symbols. Such a transliteration represents the basic pronunciation of the words; however, since the hieroglyphs represent only consonants and not vowels, the exact pronunciation is in many cases uncertain. Consequently, for the sake of convenience, Egyptologists employ a simplified pronunciation, such as follows the transliteration. I cannot stress too much how greatly this pronunciation differs from the original spoken Egyptian. Finally, turning to the translations, the reader can see a quite literal translation of the hieroglyphic inscription.

By carefully comparing the numbers of the inscription, transliteration, pronunciation and translation, the reader will see that the "mystery" of hieroglyphs is really not much of a mystery.

*Diane Marie Sot*

1 2 — 3 — 4 6 8 9 10 11 12

13 14 — 15 — 16 — 17 — 18 19 20 22 — 23 — 24 — 25 — 26 —

27 28 29 — 30 — 31 — 32 —

34 35 — 36 —

37 38 — 39 — 40 — 41 — 42 43 44 — 45 — 46 —

47 — 48 — 49 50 — 51 — — 52 — 53

54 55 56 — 57 — 58 — 59 — 60 — 61 — 62 63 64 65 66

— 67 — 68 69 — 70 — 71 — 72 —

74 — 75 — — 76 — 77 78 79

80 — 81 — — 82 — 83 85 86

87 — 88 — — 89 90 — 91 — — 92 93 94

95 — 96 — — 97 — 98 — — 99 — — 100

101 102 103 104 105 — — 106 — — 108 109

— 110 — 111 — — 113 —

114 115 116 117 118 — 119 — 121 — — 122 — — 123 — — — 126 —

127 128 129 130 131 — 132 — — 133 —

## HIEROGLYPHIC SYMBOLS

- 1    forepart of lion + forearm
- 2    owl
- 3    folded cloth + star + foot + flowering reed +  
flowering reed + bread + papyrus rolled up, tied and  
sealed
- 4    eye + bread
- 5    ripple of water
- 6    mouth
- 7    stool of reed matting + forearm
- 8    forepart of lion + forearm
- 9    cloth wound on a pole, emblem of divinity
- 10   bread + horned viper
- 11   cloth wound on a pole, emblem of divinity
- 12   hoe
- 13   tongue of ox
- 14   cloth wound on a pole, emblem of divinity
- 15   club used by fullers in washing
- 16   bowl + stroke (perhaps a wooden dowel)
- 17   sedge + forearm + village with cross-roads
- 18   clump of papyrus
- 19   cloth wound on a pole, emblem of divinity
- 20   bread
- 21   head in profile
- 22   ripple of water
- 23   flowering reed + draught-board + ripple of water
- 24   flowering reed + draught-board + ripple of water
- 25   owl
- 26   forepart of lion + bread + stroke (perhaps a wooden  
dowel)
- 27   cobra in repose + hand
- 28   horned viper
- 29   owl
- 30   folded cloth + star + bread + foot
- 31   human placenta? + mouth
- 32   three foxes' skins tied together + folded cloth +  
quail chick + three strokes (perhaps wooden dowels)
- 33   horned viper



- 34 cobra in repose + hand
- 35 seated man
- 36 plant regarded as typical of Upper Egypt + quail chick + bread
- 37 forearm with hand holding a conical loaf?
- 38 seated man
- 39 ear of ox? + owl
- 40 bread + ripple of water + three strokes (perhaps wooden dowels)
- 42 human placenta? + mouth
- 43 seated man
- 44 bundle of flax stems showing the bolls + mouth
- 45 reed shelter in fields + mouth + sun + stroke (perhaps wooden dowel)
- 46 head in profile + stool of reed matting + two diagonal strokes
- 47 bundle of flax stems showing the bolls + mouth
- 48 house + mouth + bread + legs walking
- 49 seated man
- 50 owl
- 51 quail chick + forearm + mouth + bread + two diagonal strokes + two legs
- 52 bread + vulture + seated woman
- 53 seated man
- 54 desert hare + ripple of water
- 55 owl
- 56 combination of foot with a vase from which water flows
- 57 walking-stick + stroke (perhaps a wooden dowel)
- 58 ripple of water
- 59 bent man leaning on stick
- 60 owl + forearm
- 61 flowering reed + bread + horned viper
- 62 owl
- 63 desert hare + ripple of water
- 64 horned viper
- 65 head in profile + stroke (perhaps a wooden dowel)
- 66 flat alluvial land with grains of sand beneath it + irrigation canal + stroke (perhaps a wooden dowel)
- 67 flowering reed + quail chick

- 68 house + mouth
- 69 seated man
- 70 reed shelter in fields + Egyptian vulture + walking legs
- 71 butcher's block + mouth
- 72 cord wound on stick + quail chick + papyrus rolled up, tied and sealed
- 73 horned viper
- 74 arms in gesture of negation
- 75 bread + reed shelter in fields + leg + walking legs
- 76 house + mouth + quail chick + walking legs
- 77 ripple of water
- 78 mouth + stroke (perhaps a wooden dowel)
- 79 horned viper
- 80 arms in gesture of negation
- 81 mace with pear-shaped head + cobra in repose + two sticks crossed + sparrow
- 82 pool with lotus flowers + Egyptian vulture + bread + papyrus rolled up, tied and sealed
  
- 83 ripple of water
- 84 horned viper
- 85 human placenta? + mouth
- 86 seated man
- 87 arms in gesture of negation
- 88 owl + forearm + wickerwork basket with handle  
clump of papyrus + head in profile + stroke (perhaps a wooden dowel)
- 89 seated man
- 90 face + stroke (perhaps a wooden dowel)
- 91 cord wound on stick + quail chick + hand + hand + bread + three strokes (perhaps wooden dowels)
- 92 owl
- 93 face + stroke (perhaps a wooden dowel)
- 94 seated man
- 95 arms in gesture of negation
- 96 cow's skin pierced by an arrow + bread + eye
- 97 plant regarded as typical of Upper Egypt + quail chick
- 98 owl

- 99 black ibis + owl + wick of twisted flax + eye touched  
up with paint
- 100 lizard + three strokes (perhaps wooden dowels)
- 101 face + stroke (perhaps a wooden dowel)
- 102 seated man
- 103 owl
- 104 butcher's block + mouth
- 105 seated man
- 106 walking stick + hand + quail chick + three strokes  
(perhaps wooden dowels)
- 107 horned viper
- 108 human placenta? + mouth
- 109 seated man
- 110 tall water-pot + folded cloth + man with hand to mouth
- 111 ripple of water
- 112 horned viper
- 113 quail chick + seated man
- 114 flowering reed + quail chick
- 115 tall water-pot
- 116 bread + quail chick
- 117 seated man
- 118 human placenta? + mouth
- 119 arms extended so as to embrace? + stroke (perhaps  
a wooden dowel)
- 120 horned viper
- 121 mouth
- 122 Egyptian vulture + bread + head of hippopotamus
- 123 draught-board + ripple of water + flowering reed +  
an instrument used by bricklayers? + bread
- 124 ripple of water
- 125 horned viper
- 126 flowering reed + owl
- 127 hind-quarters of lion or leopard + walking legs
- 128 ripple of water
- 129 seated man
- 130 bolt + seated man + stroke (perhaps a wooden dowel)
- 131 ripple of water
- 132 palm-branch stripped of leaves and notched + bread +  
three strokes (perhaps wooden dowels)
- 133 five hobbles for cattle + four strokes (perhaps wooden  
dowels)



## TRANSLITERATION

- Guide:     3 corresponds to the Hebrew  $\aleph$   
               c corresponds to the Hebrew  $\text{cayin}$   
               ( ) represent letters or words not represented in the  
                                  hieroglyphic but which should have been  
                                  represented  
               | | represent letters or words represented in the  
                                  hieroglyphic which should not have been  
                                  represented  
               . used to separate possessive pronouns from the  
                                  noun possessed and to separate pronominal  
                                  subjects from the verb

$\text{h}3\text{t-c}^1$   $\text{m}^2$   $\text{sb}3\text{yt}^3$   $\text{irt}^4$   $\text{n}^5$   $(\text{i})\text{r}(\text{y})^6$   $\text{p}^{\text{c}}(\text{t})^7$   $\text{h}3\text{t}(\text{y})\text{-c}^8$   
 $(\text{i})\text{t}|\text{f}|(\text{i})^{10}$   $\text{-ntr}^9$   $\text{mr}(\text{y})^{12}$   $\text{ntr}^{11}$   $\text{imy-r}^{13}$   $\text{h}^{\text{m}}\text{w}^{15}$   $\text{-nt}_\text{r}^{14}$   
 $\text{n}(\text{y})\text{w}^{16}$   $\text{šm}^{\text{c}}\text{w}^{17}$   $\text{Mh}^{\text{w}}^{18}$   $(\text{i})\text{t}(\text{i})^{20}$   $\text{-ntr}^{19}$   $\text{tp}(\text{y})^{21}$   $\text{n}(\text{y})^{22}$   
 $\text{'l}^{\text{m}}\text{n}^{23}$   $\text{'l}^{\text{m}}\text{n}^{24}$   $\text{-m}^{25}$   $\text{h}3\text{t}^{26}$   $\text{d}^{\text{d}}^{27}$   $\text{f}^{28}$   $\text{m}^{29}$   $\text{sb}3(\text{y})\text{t}^{30}$   
 $\text{h}^{\text{r}}^{31}$   $\text{msw}^{32}$   $\text{f}^{33}$   $\text{d}^{\text{d}}^{34}$   $\text{.i}^{35}$   $\text{swt}^{36}$   $\text{d}^{\text{i}}^{37}$   $\text{.i}^{38}$   $\text{s}^{\text{d}}\text{m}^{39}$   $\text{tn}^{40}$   
 $\text{h}^{\text{p}}\text{rt}^{41}$   $\text{h}^{\text{r}}^{42}$   $\text{.i}^{43}$   $\text{d}^{\text{r}}^{44}$   $\text{hrw}^{45}$   $\text{tpy}^{46}$   $\text{d}^{\text{r}}^{47}$   $\text{prt}^{48}$   $\text{.i}^{49}$   
 $\text{m}^{50}$   $\text{w}^{\text{c}}\text{rty}^{51}$   $\text{mwt}^{52}$   $\text{.i}^{53}$   $\text{wn}^{54}$   $(\text{i})$   $\text{m}^{55}$   $\text{w}^{\text{c}}\text{b}^{56}$   $\text{mdw}^{57}$   
 $\text{n}(\text{y})^{58}$   $\text{i}3\text{w}^{59}$   $\text{m}^{\text{c}}^{60}$   $\text{it}|\text{f}|(\text{i})^{61}$   $\text{m}^{62}$   $\text{wn}^{63}$   $\text{f}^{64}$   $\text{tp}^{65}$   
 $\text{t}^{66}$   $\text{iw}^{67}$   $\text{pr}^{68}$   $\text{.i}^{69}$   $\text{h}3^{70}$   $(\text{i})$   $\text{h}^{\text{r}}^{71}$   $\text{wd}^{72}$   $\text{f}^{73}$   $\text{n}^{74}$   
 $\text{th}^{75}$   $(\text{i})$   $\text{prw}^{76}$   $\text{n}(\text{y})^{77}$   $\text{r}^{78}$   $\text{f}^{79}$   $\text{n}^{80}$   $\text{h}^{\text{d}}^{81}$   $(\text{i})$   
 $\text{š}3\text{t}^{82}$   $\text{n}^{83}$   $\text{f}^{84}$   $\text{h}^{\text{r}}^{85}$   $\text{.i}^{86}$   $\text{n}^{87}$   $\text{mkh}3^{88}$   $\text{.i}^{89}$   $\text{h}^{\text{r}}^{90}$   $\text{wddt}^{91}$   
 $\text{m}^{92}$   $\text{h}^{\text{r}}^{93}$   $\text{.i}^{94}$   $\text{n}^{95}$   $\text{st}(\text{y})^{96}$   $(\text{i})$   $\text{sw}^{97}$   $\text{m}^{98}$   $\text{gmh}^{99}$   
 $\text{c}^{\text{š}}3^{100}$   $\text{h}^{\text{r}}^{101}$   $\text{.i}^{102}$   $\text{m}^{103}$   $\text{-hr}^{104}$   $|\text{i}|^{105}$   $(\text{w})$   $\text{mdw}^{106}$   
 $\text{f}^{107}$   $\text{h}^{\text{r}}^{108}$   $\text{.i}^{109}$   $\text{h}^{\text{s}}^{110}$   $\text{n}^{111}$   $\text{f}^{112}$   $\text{wi}^{113}$   $\text{iw}^{114}$   
 $\text{h}^{\text{s}}^{115}$   $\text{tw}^{116}$   $\text{.i}^{117}$   $\text{h}^{\text{r}}^{118}$   $\text{k}3^{119}$   $\text{f}^{120}$   $\text{r}^{121}$   $\text{.t}^{122}$   
 $\text{mnit}^{123}$   $\text{n}^{124}$   $\text{f}^{125}$   $\text{im}^{126}$   $\text{ph}^{127}$   $\text{n}^{128}$   $\text{.i}^{129}$   $\text{s}^{130}$   
 $\text{n}(\text{y})^{131}$   $\text{.s}^{132}$   $\text{rnpwt}^{132}$

## PRONUNCIATION

Guide:    a    as in "father"                      e    as in "let"  
               ee    as in "feet"                       oo    as in "boot"  
               dj    as in "hedge"                    kh    as in "loch"

hat-a<sup>1</sup> em<sup>2</sup> seba-ect<sup>3</sup> ee-ret<sup>4</sup> en<sup>5</sup> ee-ree<sup>6</sup> pat<sup>7</sup>  
 ha-tee-a<sup>8</sup> ee-tef-ee<sup>10</sup> netjer<sup>9</sup> mer-ee<sup>12</sup> netjer<sup>11</sup>  
 ee-mee-cr<sup>13</sup> hem-oo<sup>15</sup> netjer<sup>14</sup> nee-oo<sup>16</sup> shem-a-oo<sup>17</sup>  
 me-hoo<sup>18</sup> ee-tee<sup>20</sup> netjer<sup>19</sup> te-pee<sup>21</sup> nee<sup>22</sup> ee-men<sup>24</sup>  
 ee-men<sup>24</sup> em<sup>25</sup> hat<sup>26</sup> djed<sup>27</sup> ef<sup>28</sup> em<sup>29</sup> seba-ect<sup>30</sup>  
 kher<sup>31</sup> mes-oo<sup>32</sup> ef<sup>33</sup> djed<sup>34</sup> ee<sup>35</sup> soot<sup>36</sup> dee<sup>37</sup> ee<sup>38</sup>  
 sedjem<sup>39</sup> ten<sup>40</sup> khep-ret<sup>41</sup> kher<sup>42</sup> ee<sup>43</sup> djer<sup>44</sup> her-oo<sup>45</sup>  
 tep-ee<sup>46</sup> djer<sup>47</sup> per-et<sup>48</sup> ee<sup>49</sup> em<sup>50</sup> wa-ret-ee<sup>51</sup>  
 moot<sup>52</sup> ee<sup>53</sup> wen<sup>54</sup> ee<sup>55</sup> wab<sup>56</sup> med-oo<sup>57</sup> nee<sup>58</sup>  
 ee-a-oo<sup>59</sup> em-a<sup>60</sup> eet-ef-ee-ee<sup>61</sup> em<sup>62</sup> wen<sup>63</sup> ef<sup>64</sup>  
 tep<sup>65</sup> ta<sup>66</sup> yoo<sup>67</sup> per<sup>68</sup> ee<sup>69</sup> ha<sup>70</sup> ee<sup>71</sup> kher<sup>71</sup>  
 wedj<sup>72</sup> ef<sup>73</sup> en<sup>74</sup> teh<sup>75</sup> ee<sup>76</sup> per-oo<sup>76</sup> nee<sup>77</sup> er<sup>78</sup> ef<sup>79</sup>  
 en<sup>80</sup> hedj<sup>81</sup> ee<sup>82</sup> shat<sup>82</sup> en<sup>83</sup> ef<sup>84</sup> kher<sup>85</sup> ee<sup>86</sup> en<sup>87</sup>  
 mek-ha<sup>88</sup> ee<sup>89</sup> her<sup>90</sup> wed-det<sup>91</sup> em<sup>92</sup> her<sup>93</sup> ee<sup>94</sup>  
 en<sup>95</sup> set-ee<sup>96</sup> ee<sup>97</sup> soo<sup>97</sup> em<sup>98</sup> gem-ch<sup>99</sup> a-sha<sup>100</sup>  
 her<sup>101</sup> ee<sup>102</sup> em<sup>103</sup> kher<sup>104</sup> ee<sup>105</sup> oo<sup>106</sup> med-oo<sup>106</sup> ef<sup>107</sup>  
 kher<sup>108</sup> ee<sup>109</sup> hes<sup>110</sup> en<sup>111</sup> ef<sup>112</sup> wee<sup>113</sup> yoo<sup>114</sup>  
 hes<sup>115</sup> too<sup>116</sup> ee<sup>117</sup> her<sup>118</sup> ka<sup>119</sup> ef<sup>120</sup> er<sup>121</sup> at<sup>122</sup>  
 men-ect<sup>123</sup> en<sup>124</sup> ef<sup>125</sup> eem<sup>126</sup> peh<sup>127</sup> en<sup>128</sup> ee<sup>129</sup>  
 es<sup>130</sup> nee<sup>131</sup> dee-ee-oo-fed-oo<sup>133</sup> ren-poot<sup>132</sup>

## TRANSLATION

(The) beginning<sup>1</sup> of<sup>2</sup> (the) instruction<sup>3</sup> which the hereditary prince<sup>6-7</sup> made<sup>4-5</sup>, count<sup>8</sup>, god's<sup>9</sup> father<sup>10</sup>, beloved<sup>12</sup> of (the) god<sup>11</sup>, overseer<sup>13</sup> of (the) prophets<sup>14-15</sup> of<sup>16</sup> Upper Egypt<sup>17</sup> (and) Lower Egypt<sup>18</sup> (and) first<sup>21</sup> god's<sup>19</sup> father<sup>20</sup> of<sup>22</sup> Amun<sup>23</sup> Amenemhet<sup>24-26</sup> (when) he<sup>28</sup> spoke<sup>27</sup> in<sup>29</sup> (an) instruction<sup>30</sup> to<sup>31</sup> his<sup>33</sup> children<sup>32</sup>, I<sup>35</sup> speak<sup>34</sup> now<sup>36</sup> (so that) I<sup>38</sup> might cause<sup>37</sup> you<sup>40</sup> to hear<sup>39</sup> that which has happened<sup>41</sup> to<sup>42</sup> me<sup>43</sup> since<sup>44</sup> (the) first<sup>46</sup> day<sup>45</sup> when<sup>47</sup> I<sup>49</sup> came forth<sup>48</sup> from<sup>50</sup> (the) two legs<sup>51</sup> of my<sup>53</sup> mother<sup>52</sup>. (I) was<sup>54</sup> as<sup>55</sup> (a) priest<sup>56</sup>, a staff<sup>57</sup> of<sup>58</sup> old age<sup>59</sup> together with<sup>60</sup> (my) father<sup>61</sup> when<sup>62</sup> he<sup>64</sup> was<sup>63</sup> upon<sup>65</sup> earth<sup>66</sup>. I<sup>69</sup> used to<sup>67</sup> go forth<sup>68</sup> (and) come back<sup>70</sup> under<sup>71</sup> his<sup>73</sup> command<sup>72</sup>. (I) did not<sup>74</sup> transgress<sup>75</sup> any<sup>76</sup> utterance<sup>78</sup> of<sup>77</sup> his<sup>79</sup>, (I) did not<sup>80</sup> destroy<sup>81</sup> what<sup>82</sup> he<sup>84</sup> had<sup>83</sup> entrusted<sup>82</sup> to<sup>85</sup> me<sup>86</sup>. I<sup>89</sup> was not<sup>87</sup> neglectful<sup>88</sup> of<sup>90</sup> what had been commanded<sup>91</sup> in<sup>92</sup> my<sup>94</sup> sight<sup>93</sup> (i.e. to me). (I) did not<sup>95</sup> pierce<sup>96</sup> him<sup>97</sup> with<sup>98</sup> much<sup>100</sup> staring<sup>99</sup>, my<sup>102</sup> face<sup>101</sup> (being) downcast<sup>103-104</sup> (when) he<sup>107</sup> spoke<sup>106</sup> to<sup>108</sup> me<sup>109</sup>. He<sup>112</sup> praised<sup>110-111</sup> me<sup>113</sup>; I<sup>117</sup> was<sup>116</sup> continually<sup>114</sup> praised<sup>115</sup> by<sup>118</sup> his<sup>120</sup> spirit<sup>119</sup> until<sup>121</sup> (the) moment<sup>122</sup> which he<sup>125</sup> moored<sup>123-124</sup> in it<sup>126</sup> (i.e. when he died). I<sup>129</sup> attained<sup>127-128</sup> (the) age<sup>130</sup> of<sup>131</sup> fifty-four<sup>133</sup> years<sup>132</sup>.



## SURREALISM IN THE TOY DEPARTMENT

It is at this time that the toy manufacturers and packagers present to the public their finest efforts in their fields. Recent waves of worries about training children in the American ways of violence have lessened to a great extent the variety of toys on the market (so much so that in fact the three major Philadelphia department stores no longer carry guns in their toy departments.) Nevertheless the toy stores are filled with objects which can genuinely be designated surreal. In fact, toy stores are major contributors to contemporary surrealist production. Toys and games are things made primarily for children; and children have always been a major interest of the surrealists. Secondly, toys are basically purposeless time consumers or time wasters. The very idea of a game itself is surreal, for it usually requires a certain amount of concentration or skill to play, yet when finished the participants have accomplished absolutely nothing but (perhaps) their own amusement.

I have gone to the three major department stores in Philadelphia, (i.e., Wanamakers, Gimbels, and Strawbridge and Clothiers,) and to the Market Street Kiddie City in search of surreal games and toys. I found the following noteworthy objects:

**MANIC PANIC DANGER BOX** . . . with thrilling sound, (J. Swedlin, Inc. Made in Japan, Wanamakers \$6.49)  
This is perhaps the most exciting object I found. It consists of a small black box with a bright red plunger on top. When you press the plunger, you hear the noise of a bomb being dropped from a tremendous height and followed by a huge explosion. After a few seconds of silence you hear uncontrollable fun-house-type laughter for nearly 25 seconds. When one stops to think that this object was made in Japan on the 25th anniversary year of Hiroshima, its surreality is heightened.

**THE LAUGHING ROBOT** (Made in Japan, Strawbridge and Clothiers, \$9.99)

This toy combines in itself the mechanical mode of surrealist art and the surrealists' interest in the clown figure. The battery operated, 18-inch high robot merrily walks around swinging its arms. After about 20 seconds of walking, it stops, stretches its neck, its jaws swing open, and to the rhythm of flashing lights in its enormous mouth it produces a hysterical laughing sound for about 15 seconds. It closes up and walks away only to repeat the action half a minute later. "Mystery Action" it is called on the box.

**EXPLO ROBOTRON** (Topper Corp., Elizabeth, New Jersey, 1970, Strawbridge and Clothiers, \$3.69)

The sales pitch on this self-destructing, dada-oriented toy reads:



He walks, he explodes!  
Explo's a nervous wreck!  
Watch him go to pieces!  
...easily reassembled for more fun.

The toy is a little robot man who blows himself up; suicide--the ultimate dada act. You can put him together again, but after a short time he will blow himself up again.

ROTATE-O-MATIC Super Astronaut (Made in Japan, U.S. Patent #3971 1905 818386 26809, Wanamakers \$10.00)

Another battery operated robot who walks around and, at intervals similar to the laughing robot, shoots randomly into space. When it stops walking, its chest opens up via two doors, an artillery section moves forward from within the chest and two large flashing guns begin to shoot as its entire upper body rapidly rotates while the lower limbs remain stationary. When it stops shooting it closes up and walks in the opposite direction from which it came, to begin all over.

POUND CLOWN "A Childhood Interest Toy, Safe, Educational, Fun." (Childhood Interests, Alan Jay, Roselle Park, New Jersey, Wanamakers, \$ .79)

The object of this toy, designed for two to four-year-olds, is to pound large wooden pegs, with a hammer which would be as long as any two year old's entire arm, into the clown's nose until they disappear inside the clown. The pegs may be reused by opening the back of the clown (perverted ingesting, excreting mechanism.) There is an illuminating quote from the manufacturer on the toy's package:

Not only does this provide hours of stimulating activity for the youngster, but the happy clown himself is a friendly

companion and his soft rounded contours protect baby's knuckles and mother's furniture.

**TIME BOMB** (Milton Bradley under Berne and Universal Copyright conventions, #3,304,650, Wanamakers \$3.99)

This game consists of a time bomb complete with fuse. The game is played by gathering the players in a circle and passing the bomb, ticking madly away, in a clock-wise direction. The person holding it when it explodes is "out" -- (dead?) "Play" continues until only one person remains. It is, as it were, a version of Russian Roulette.

**DYNAMITE SHACK** (Milton Bradley, Inc., #4985, 1968, Wanamakers \$4.99)

This game combines the grotesque exaggeration of a part of the human body, destruction of an object, and, by extention, self-destruction. The description of the game as stated on the outside of the box, reads:

Exciting but perfectly safe game of suspense and skill for boys and girls. Players wear giant thumbs, try to stuff 'dynamite sticks' down the chimney of the shack before the roof blows off. Great Fun!

When a player causes the shack to explode, he is "eliminated." Play continues until only one player remains.

**BANG BOX** (Ideal Toy Corp., Hollis, New York, 1969, Wanamakers \$4.99)

The game is very similar to MB's Dynamite Shack except children hammer nails into a box on which is written "DANGER," "EXPLOSIVE," "HANDLE WITH CARE." It will explode as a result of one of



the nails: the child responsible is out. The overt sexual reference in the title heightens this toy's surreality.

BASH! "a real knockout game" (Milton Bradley, Inc., 1968, Wanamakers \$2.99) "Ages 5-12. . .Adult, too."

The object of this toy is to hammer the body pieces out from under the head of a small man. The box reads:

Grab the hammer  
Hold it straight  
Whack the stack  
Wow! --It's great.

Bash! They fly  
Bash! They scatter  
Hey, he's falling  
What's the matter?



Try again  
Be neat  
Make the head  
Land on the feet.

The images corresponding to this surreal-like poem are of a maniacally grinning blonde-haired youth with an enormous red hammer and a man with tortured-looking eyes, a large frown, his lump-covered head buried in his hands. Presumably, the object is to knock out his gall bladder (for example) without making him keel over. Wonderfully printed on the side of the box is "Another MB Key to Fun and Learning. Milton Bradley, Maker of the World's Best Games."

DON'T BREAK THE ICE (Schaper Manufacturing Co., Inc., Minneapolis, Minn., 1969, Cat. #509, Wanamakers, \$3.49)

The game begins  
The ice is thin  
Be Careful  
Or you may go in.

A miniature man is set on a layer of "ice" made up of small differently shaped blocks. Each player takes his mallet and knocks out a piece. If the man falls through the ice as a result of the person knocking out the wrong piece, that person is eliminated from the game. The man is dragged out of the ice set up as before and play continues until only one person, the "winner," remains.

A similar game in the same vein is THE LAST STRAW- (Schaper - "Schaper always leaves you laughing" - Mfg. Co., Inc., Minneapolis, Minn., Cat. #390, 1969,

Kiddie City, \$2.99) - "the straw you add to the camel's back, may be the one that breaks his back." Children add straws to a miniture camel's back until he literally breaks in two.

MR. MAD (Ideal Toy Corp., Hollis, New York., 1970, Wanamakers \$6.99)

This battery operated "madman" furiously flings marbles randomly (while spinning) when a player aggravates him by tossing a marble in his mouth.

MR. REMBRANDT (Ideal Toy Corp., Hollis, New York., #4089-90, 1970, Wanamakers, \$8.99)

To operate this device you place a colored pencil in Mr. Rembrandt's bottom and he will draw a picture as he runs around on a piece of paper.

This toy is undoubtedly designed to appall any traditional art-lover by associating the sacred name of Rembrandt van Rijn with a little robot. It is also basically a mechanical automatic writer.

RAT RACE "...the madcap game of social climbing"  
(Renewal Products Co., Mineola, New York., 1970, Kiddie City, \$3.88)

Nothing so well sums up this splendid game as its own introduction:

Rat Race is a fast moving, relaxing game for adults and children. It is, most of all, fun to play. Each player starts out in the working class. Through diligence and luck he accumulates money, credit cards and status symbols and advances through to the middle

class and eventually to high society. With proper shrewdness and breaks, the winner is the first to have enough resources to retire. It takes only a few minutes to learn how to play Rat Race. It promises hours of pure enjoyment.

**THE LAST SUPPER** by Leonardo da Vinci (The Tuco Workshops, Inc., Lockport, New York., #2501, The American Sunday School Bookstore, \$1.49)  
Leonardo da Vinci, a popular subject for surrealist pranks, here has his famous Last Supper fresco turned into a picture puzzle. The reproduction is hideous and cropped to lose over half of the picture.

**LIFE SIZE BABY CARRIE** (Goldberger Doll Mfg. Co., Inc., Brooklyn, New York., #2509 114, Kiddie City, \$8.39)  
Undoubtedly a descendent of the late Betsy Wetsy, this life size doll urinates, ("wets" as the manufacturers





euphemize), which is, of course, one of the supreme surreal activities. The doll comes in both black and white and is related to the fifteen or more other dolls who piss.

I am a slight bit disappointed that the doll makers have not produced a doll who defecates (Suzy Shit? Kathy Krapp?)

JOHNNY EAGLE SAFARI GUN (Topper Corp., Elizabeth, New Jersey, 1968, Kiddie City, \$8.99)

The idea of a gun as a toy is, at least to contemporary sensibilities, very surreal. This gun, by the makers of the "finest guns in the world," is capable (in theory) of killing wild elephants.

ELDON'S MOTHER HEN TARGET "Another exciting target game." (Eldon Industries, Inc., Hawthorne, California, 1964, Kiddie City, \$2.99)

The game consists of a dart gun and a large picture of a hen as the target. If the child hits the hen in the heart, presumably killing her, she lays an egg. The more times you hit her, the more eggs she lays.

It is the firm hope of the writer that increasing "social consciousness" and psychological child rearing advocates do not mean the elimination of such surreal objects as those seventeen here described.

*Michael Quigley*

## BLACKBIRD BLUES: To Burnett Robinson

*Pennas etiam tuae menti . . .  
Wings I shall give your wandering mind;  
So will you soar singing truth-songs  
Home to your native land.*

*Boethius*

Blackbird sitting on an old tombstone,  
Singing his heart in a graveyard home,  
Songs to a bone-ghost locked in stone,  
Waiting for the digger to claim his own.

*Go down to the death-rock,  
Go down home.*

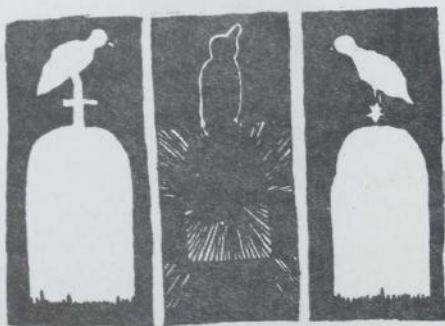
Blackbird sitting on a graveyard stone,  
Singing to a digger-man, *Come down home:*  
Some say the blackbird is a death-bright bone,  
Some say it warbles on the cold night-stone.

*Go down to the death-rock,  
Go down home.*

Blackbird, blackbird, sing my body home;  
Sing my body, blackbird on a cold, white stone.  
Some that have travelled are dead and gone,  
Some have been singing as they came back home:

*Go down to the death-rock,  
Go down home;  
Go down to the prison  
To claim your own.*

*Craig Williamson*



## EIGHT VIDEOTAPES

### 1

The night before the interview Andrew, Gailyn, Strawberry and I gathered at Lila and Ray's house to watch Aram on television. Aram said he enjoyed looking into the camera "to see what was out there."

### 2

I spent three hours at Aram's apartment. Everything was recorded on my Sony TC - 40 tape-recorder.

### 3

Strawberry, Aram and Gailyn's little daughter, was present during the interview. She enjoyed what was going on as long as we kept tuned into her receiver, but when the conversation became too involved she screamed very loudly. We quickly switched back to her channel.

### 4

When I got the typescript of the interview there were some surprises. In one section we were talking about switching channels. The next section reads:

"Is this boy your brain? So I said well you know a little mixed up. He ate like a fox. So I would never eat you know. Just destroy it. Wild you know. But they had a really good talk actually."

Neither Aram nor I could understand what this was about.

Aram and Andrew and I had gone out the night before. Walking along the dark little streets of Cambridge we told Aram about our appearance on W.X.P.N. radio station in Philadelphia. Laughing uncontrollably we slipped all over the icy pavement.

Andrew sent a special question: "what's the funniest thing that ever happened to you?" "Television" was the answer. But two weeks later I got a package and on the back was written, "correction; Jerry Lewis."

After the interview we went to a friend's house. During the course of the conversation Aram suggested that we forget about the interview.

Rock out.

*Victor Bockris*  
*Far Hills, New Jersey*  
 1972

#### BOOKS BY ARAM SAROYAN

Aram Saroyan	Random House
Pages	Random House
Words and Photographs	Big Table
Cloth an electric novel	Big Table
The Rest	Telegraph Books
Songs & Buttons	Telegraph Books



## EXTRACTS FROM A CONVERSATION WITH ARAM SAROYAN

*Franny and Zooey*, by J.D. Salinger. Little Brown and Co.

J.D. Salinger's *Franny and Zooey* is a book of two contiguous stories that originally appeared in *The New Yorker*. They are both drawn around the author's family "of twentieth century New York settlers," the Glasses.

In "Franny," the best of the two stories and much the shorter, Franny Glass arrives at what seems to be Princeton for a weekend with very likely the dreariest, clumsiest boy friend in recent American fiction. Their weekend is a disaster and the story a masterly horror-sketch, as neat and effective as anything Salinger's done.

What follows isn't "*Zooey*" is a blasted, giggly, monstrous thing that sorely wants point. The scene is the New York household a day later, and the action (all the action!) a long conversation between Zooey Glass and the now despair-dumped Franny. It is all pretty cryptic and any resolution escaped me.

The two stories together, as the whole that they are in this book, fail. Among other things, this seems to me a measure of their ambition. Salinger is a very good writer who could probably try for a lot less and make it seem a lot more.

I think that the reason I started to write originally was that I was very self-conscious about being the son of a writer. I felt that it was expected of me in high school to be sort of an unusual person and to be able to write something interesting . . . and I didn't have any kind of natural flair for it so I had to really work. Like in my sophomore and junior years in college I would go home sometimes and spend like a whole night working on something and try to put something together, something really short, I have a review for instance of *Franny and Zooey* by Salinger that I wrote, and it was very hard to write it and the minute I wrote it I immediately thought it was very bad - and yet I submitted it anyway because I felt it was like I had to do it. It was printed in the school newspaper and I never read it. I never actually experienced the thing in print because I was so embarrassed when it came out. During the last year I wrote to Trinity School in Manhattan and I got all my high school writings from the newspaper and literary magazine. They sent it to me and I read it and it seems great. Perfectly all right, but it's ten years old now so it's completely different. As a matter of fact, as writing, just as writing, I think it's as good as anything I've written.

The gray room  
the gray  
at the end  
of the bed here  
studying one's palms

Actually, while I was at the U. of Chicago, I got into the thing of writing a poem every day for a couple of weeks and sending it to the Nation, where David Ignatow was the poetry editor. I sent him one poem that was a really weird poem called *Change Money*. The last line was something like - 'the moon is certainly a lost dime' - and he wrote back and said - 'the title is fine, but what are you trying to say with it?' It was the first time I had ever sent anything to a magazine and I thought, 'gee I didn't get a rejection slip, the guy actually wrote something.' So I began to send a poem in every day that I would write at the University of Chicago in the fall and I think about the second poem I sent he accepted and he never accepted anything else. I have a copy of that poem (printed above). And that was like an incredible thing. It was my acceptance. I was accepted. I was 19.



little  
is what  
she is

The difference between my high school work and my college work - like what I wrote about a year later - was that a year later I really knew I was sick. While I was in high school I was still doing a romantic number and when I got to college I had this moment when I was lying on my bed one night and I realized - 'gee, my life is not just a series of bad coincidences, actually I'm really sick.' It was kind of a relief at that moment of realizing it. It wasn't a horrible perception like - 'oh, I'm really awful' - it was like - 'oh that's clear. I'm sick. That's the problem. I'm sick'. And it was like . . . from that point on I could figure out how to get more healthy.



GAILYN

sits  
at the  
window

When I was writing these poems - a lot of them - I was just trying to write a good poem. I wasn't trying to express anything. I had no ideas in mind, and like I did lots of different experiments. One way of writing, for instance, that I got into - like part of *The Rest* and *Sled Hill Voices*, and *Third Floor Voices* - was to sit at my desk and listen to whatever noises I heard and try to make poems out of them. Or whatever I saw, literally at my desk, try to make a poem out of it.





You can turn the pages  
while Mommy changes  
you.

*Gailyn Saroyan*



The kind of poem I would write while I was living on the  
third floor of East 85th St. was something like;

a voice only  
audible  
below

closer  
someone speaks  
Spanish

I don't consider that a violent poem. I mean it was a violent neighborhood, but like my work is . . . there's one thing my work definitely is, and it is because of just a very basic necessity, and that is it is not romantic; it is not romantic poetry. And like someone defined a romantic as someone who believes that art is the justification of life and I don't believe that. I think that art is sort of like a parallel or it's a good area for becoming sensitive to relationships between things. It's a good way of maybe using or practicing with your own senses and making yourself a more aware person

a man stands  
on his  
head one  
minute --

then he  
sit  
down all  
different

I think the reason my poems are not romantic is because I have a tendency - or I had a tendency - like my chemistry in high school was very screwed up and I had a tendency to be very mushy and romantic inside. I had a luxury of tears rising in my nervous system that would have drowned me and I started to react to that, started to put that away and get it out of my system; just by changing the way that I was thinking and by not engaging in certain thought processes. If you want to think about something in a certain way, you can do that. If you find however that thinking in that way leads to depression and feeling sorry for yourself, you're probably gonna stop doing that because it's not gonna be of any use. It's just not good. You don't do it. I really feel it's very easy not to do something if you don't want to do it.



a little  
thomas  
hardy

The only violent thing about what I'm doing is, incidental. It has nothing to do with the work in itself, but it's the fact that peoples' expectations of poetry are so specific that when they encounter something that's slightly different from what they're expecting they go through a lot of changes.



## GAS

Gas comin' in my window  
Cambridge, 6 a.m. -  
Gas comin' up my nostrils  
& not too much Oxygen.

What I'm trying to do now is . . . I'm trying to go through every experience I have in a day . . . I'm trying to do everything there is for me to do without letting any experience assume such a great importance that it fucks me up for the next day.





## ALAIN BOSQUET

Alain Bosquet was born in the Ukrainian city of Odessa in 1919 under the name of Anatole Bisk. He was educated in Belgium and in 1942, he came to the United States and fought in the American Army during World War II. Settling in Paris in 1951, Bosquet came into prominence as a poet in France during the early 1950's, a period marked by a greatly revived public interest in poetry on the continent. In 1952, he was awarded the *Prix Guillaume Apollinaire* for his book, *Langue morte*. Bosquet, always deeply influenced by surrealism, remains a major literary figure in France today.

Bosquet's volumes of poetry include *A la mémoire de ma planète* (1948), *Langue morte* (1951), *Quel royaume oublié?* (1955), *Premier Testament* (1957), *Deuxième Testament* (1959), *Maître objet* (1962), *Quatre Testaments et Autres Poemes* (containing *Poemes sans Elle*; 1967), and *Notes pour un amour* (1971). He has also written numerous novels, translations, and criticism, of which *Verbe et Vertige* (1961) stands as classic example of modern French poetic theory.

W.L. Courshon

je t'écris cette lettre  
 comme on e crit a ses poumons  
 pour leur donner quelques nouvelles  
 de ses genoux  
 et de ses lèvres qui murmurent océan  
 je ne l'enverrai pas  
 pourquoi charger de mots  
 ce qui est mots  
 ton ventre la voyelle  
 ton coeur le verbe rond?  
 je me relis  
 pour me glisser entre tes chairs  
 message  
 d'un météore cajolé  
 voici ma signature  
 peut-être que mon nom  
 te donnera naissance  
 je t'écris cette lettre  
 en salive royale

Alain Bosquet  
*Poèmes Sans Elle*  
 1966

## TON SANG : UNE ÉPOPÉE

Il manque à ma légende, pauvre amie,  
 un peu d'azur, un peu de profondeur;  
 mes grands verbes sont morts; l'épidémie  
 dépeuple mes syllabes. N'aie pas peur!  
 je ne veux ni ton sang, ni tes vertèbres,  
 ni tes seins nus: ils n'ont plus le pouvoir,  
 comme jadis, de me rendre célèbre.  
 Pardonne ma rancune : les miroirs  
 refusent d'achever mes tatouages;  
 ma chanson est malade et mes deux mains,  
 plus carnivores que des loups, ravagent  
 mes propres mots. Je suis un être humain  
 qui vit de décadence: une sangsue,  
 assise dans mes phrases, les détruit  
 comme on détruit des pages sans issue  
 sans même caresser leur dernier fruit.

Alain Bosquet  
*Langue Morte*  
 1951

## THE LETTER

I write you this letter  
as one writes to his lungs  
giving them news  
of his knees  
and of his lips which whisper the tide  
I will not send it  
why overburden with words  
what merely are words  
your womb the vowel  
your heart the honest verb?  
I read it over and over  
to slide into your flesh  
this greeting  
from a flattered meteor  
here is my signature  
perhaps my name  
will give you birth  
I close this letter  
with a king's tongue

## YOUR BLOOD : AN EPIC

It is regardless of my legend, poor friend,  
a little blue, a little profundity;  
my great verbs are dead; the epidemic  
reduces my syllables. But have no fear!  
I want neither your blood, nor your bones,  
nor your bare breasts: no longer have they the power,  
as of old, to make me famous.  
Forgive my grudge: the mirrors  
refuse to finish my tattoos;  
my song is ill and my two hands,  
more bloodthirsty than wolves, ravage  
my own words. I am a human being  
who lives with decadence; a bloodsucker,  
hiding in my sentences, destroys them  
as one destroys the endless pages  
not even caressing their last fruit.

*Translated by W. L. Courshon*

## HEIR

I sing an old cracked tune  
my grandfather left me in his will  
I found it under the worn-out bed  
playing a doleful violin.  
The notes caressed each other  
like drunk lovers  
asleep in a French café.  
The song knew the roads to Linz and to Krakow  
And it had endured the long nights  
with their secrets and their lust.  
Now it is mine  
to look at and rejoice  
It is my own cracked tune  
Oh, to hoard it in my walnut chest  
like a wise-man who has crossed a desert.

*W. L. Courshon*



## TOMATOES

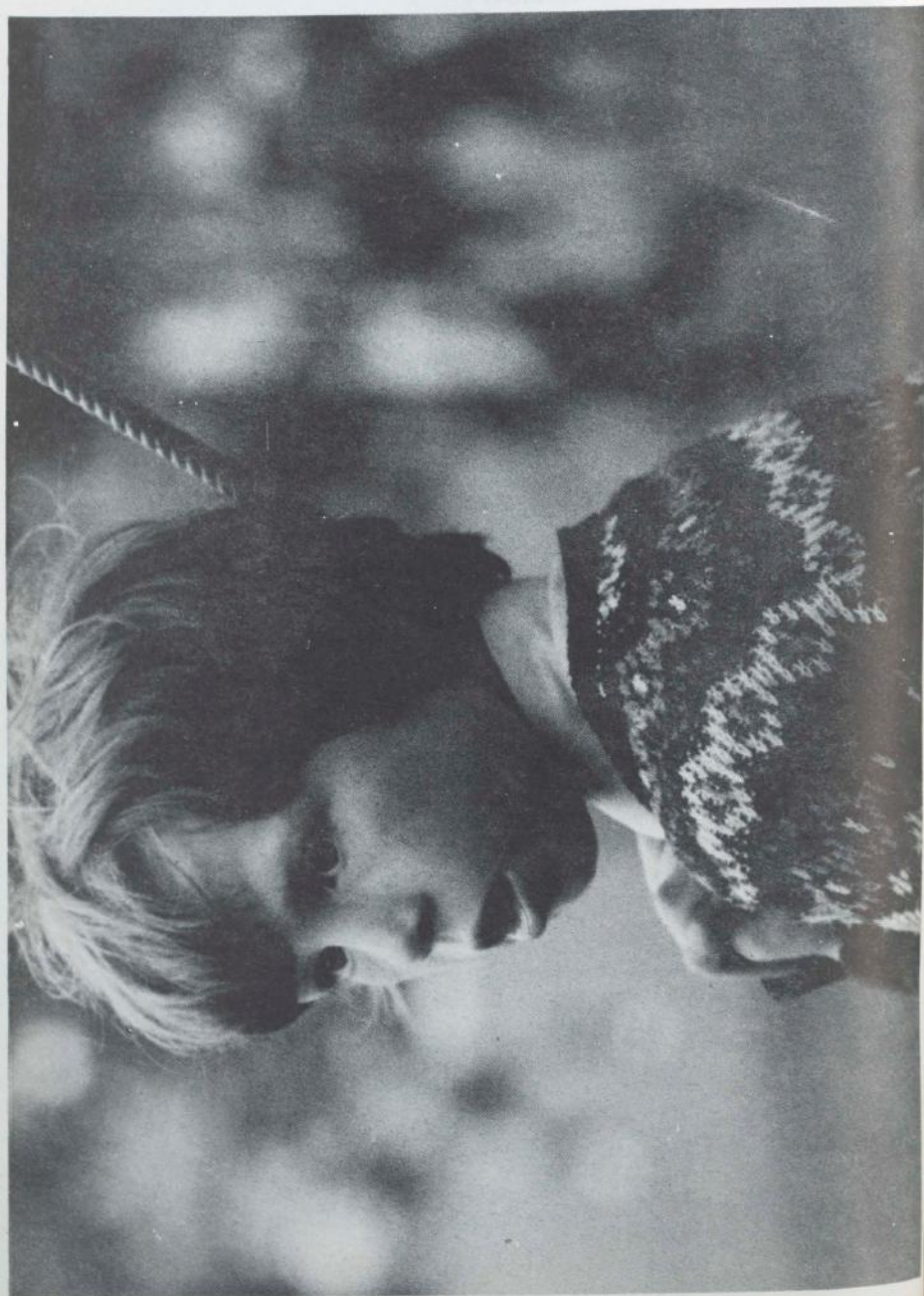
Summer's  
Our season - we harvest  
Tomatoes, those fat red fruits.  
Through a tangle

Of vines  
And leaves the swollen globes  
Glow red. Ripe, they fill the hand.  
The land still pours

Forth more.  
Our baskets strain. We're gorged  
On a blood red flood of fruit.  
First frost will kill

The flow.  
Till then, God only knows  
How we'll dispose of the crop.  
Tomatoes, stop.

*Margaret Rose Ryan*



## SYLVIA PLATH AND CONFESSIONAL POETRY: The Body as Landscape

... Sylvia Plath became "confessional," and her poetry "suicidal," two overly used terms which rapidly passed from the moment when their discovery was still part of an organic, elemental insight, to the secure realms of journalistic repetition.<sup>1</sup>

A single, precise definition of the term "confessional poetry" has yet to be offered and agreed upon by critics. The term became current in 1959, with the publication of Lowell's *Life Studies*, a book which was hailed as a departure from that poet's earlier "distant, symbol-ridden, and wilfully difficult"<sup>2</sup> style. The poems dealt with the psyche of a suffering man in a hostile world,<sup>3</sup> and constituted a breakthrough from impersonal poems, full of Empsonian ambiguities, into poetry which dealt with "very serious, very personal emotional experience," previously considered "partly taboo."<sup>4</sup>

Lowell's book created the need for the term confessional poetry, and his preoccupation with Roman Catholicism may have colored its selection. Though the sources of confessional style have since been traced back through Yeats, Eliot and Pound to Crane, Whitman and Wordsworth, only after *Life Studies* did critics seek the origins of that tradition.

Because Lowell was the "inventor" of confessional poetry, most definitions are based upon his style. Some define the term narrowly; Lowell's style becomes the only possible if the poem is to be considered truly confessional. Other definitions isolate and define only one aspect of the confessional style of Lowell: the association of speaker with poet, for example,<sup>5</sup> or the fact that the speaker makes his psychological vulnerability and shame an embodiment of his civilization.<sup>6</sup> The broad definitions which result exclude few non-dramatic poets since Catallus from the confessional category.<sup>7</sup>

Because the term confessional poetry is defined so imprecisely, the term has entered the realm of journalistic repetitions and is of little critical usefulness. The critic who refers to the poems of *Ariel* as confessional offers no insights to the reader struggling with a difficult volume. And *Ariel*, whatever else it may be, is a difficult book. Even the reader well-versed in modern poetry suffers a shock on first reading "Ariel," "Lady Lazarus," "Daddy," "Cut," "Death & Co." or "Edge." The poems seem to have no immediate antecedents. Many of them read like catalogues of disparate images. They are foreign territory which the label "confessional" does little to make familiar. Granted, the entire volume is written in the first person, the speaker is equivalent to Plath, and she looks at society through the window of her own emotional breakdown; but the poems remain difficult, and in many cases seem to bear little resemblance to the comparatively accessible poems of *Life Studies*.

Nevertheless, critics persist in linking Lowell and Plath, *Life Studies* and *Ariel* in their commentaries on confessional poetry. It cannot be denied that Plath learned much from Lowell and *Life Studies*; but it is my contention that *Ariel* moves beyond the confessional themes and techniques both of Lowell's book and of Plath's first volume, *The Colossus*. Many of the poems included in *The Colossus* were written while Plath was "dropping in" on Lowell's poetry seminars at Boston University.<sup>8</sup> Comparison of one of these poems with Lowell's work of the same period reveals the extent of Lowell's influence; comparison of this early Plath poem with her later works will reveal the extent of her own achievement.

Perhaps the best poem in the collection for purposes of comparison is "Point Shirley," which Ted Hughes calls a "deliberate exercise in Lowell's early style."<sup>9</sup> Hughes does not specify what poems, volumes or dates comprise, in his or Plath's opinion, the "early Lowell," but "Point Shirley," like several of the poems included in *The Colossus*,<sup>10</sup> possesses several of the essential characteristics of the *Life Studies*



poems, Lowell and Plath both use incidents and characters obviously taken from their own lives as material for their poems. The action takes place in carefully pinpointed settings, and the speaker exhibits an extraordinary awareness of time. Both maintain a similar attitude toward the past, and an awareness of their present emotional state. Extensive use of literary allusion, and a similarity of the sound and structure of the verse marks *Life Studies* and *The Colossus* as related works. In addition, both poets pay close attention to the specific details of nature.

The most striking feature of the *Life Studies* poems is their personal, autobiographical nature: the I of the poems stands, "immediately and unequivocally," for Robert Lowell. The poet is his own biographer, and the poems are his autobiography.<sup>11</sup> The poems are filled with aunts, uncles, grandparents, parents, the wife and child of the speaker who is also the poet. A long prose section, "91 Revere Street" details the poet's personal and familiar history. In a sense, the poet's "life" becomes the landscape of the poems.

The landscape of "Point Shirley" is also the poet's past: the poem concerns a trip of the speaker to the scene of her childhood, the site of her grandmother's home. The opening stanzas describe the locale and relate incidents of the speaker's past:

From Water-Tower Hill to the brick prison  
The shingle booms, bickering under  
The sea's collapse.

Snowcakes break and welter. This year  
The gritted wave leaps  
The seawall and drops onto a bier  
Of quahog chips,  
Leaving a salty mash of ice to whiten

In my grandmother's sand yard. She is dead  
Whose laundry snapped and froze here who  
Kept house against  
What the sluttish, rutted sea could do.

Squall waves once danced  
Ship timbers in through the cellar window;  
A thresh-tailed, lanced shark  
Littered in the geranium bed –  
Such collusion of the mulish elements  
She wore her broomstraws to the nub.

In an autobiographical essay, "Ocean 1212 - W"<sup>12</sup>  
Plath tells a similar story:

The geography is all wrong in the first place.  
Where is the grey thumb of the water tower  
to the left, and Deer Island prison at the tip  
of the point to the far right? . . . the hurricane  
was due at nightfall . . . The next day the  
wreckage was all one could wish for - overthrown  
trees and telephone poles, shoddy summer cottages  
bobbing out by the lighthouse and a litter of  
the ribs of little ships. My grandmother's house  
had lasted, valiant –though the waves broke right  
over the road and into the bay. My grandfather's  
seawall had saved it, neighbors said . . . Sand  
buried her furnace in golden whorls; salt stained  
the upholstered sofa, and a dead shark littered  
the geranium bed, but my grandmother had her  
broom out, it should soon be right.

The scenery and events of the poet's autobiography coincide  
with scenery and events the speaker of the poem describes.  
Like Lowell, Plath is her own biographer.

Both Plath and Lowell provide precise geographical  
locations for the events of their poems. The title and  
opening lines of "Point Shirley" locate the poem on a "bit  
of coast off Boston Harbour," where the poet spent her  
early years.<sup>13</sup> It is a place easily found on a map or visited,  
for Point Shirley exists in space as some poetic locations,  
Coleridge's Xanadu, for instance, do not. Anyone can  
physically go there.

In the *Life Studies* poems, Lowell also supplies a geographical setting. A title, a note to a poem, or the poem itself will provide the setting. The poems may deal with "very personal emotional experience," but the experience takes place in the human, available world.

Lowell frequently dates poems included in the *Life Studies* series, which strengthens the biographical, historical quality of the poems and anchors the action even more firmly in the human, available world. The poet acknowledges the standard, external system of timekeeping by his use of dates, and by his own personal distinctions of past, present, and future as well. The common timekeeping system enables the reader to relate the events of the poems easily to his own experience. The actions and emotions of the poems even the most personal, are put in a common context of months and years. The speaker does not lose sight of the outside world, of the overall time scheme into which his own sensations fit.

In "Point Shirley," Plath also exhibits an awareness of time, yet she never, in this poem or any other, provides dates. Her time sense seems to depend upon the landscape of the poem: this year is different from others because "this year the gritted wave leaps the seawall." It is winter, as the description of the opening stanzas and the boarded up winter house indicate. It is evening, "the sun sinks under Boston, bloody red." Time is never separated from the events or the setting of the poem. An external system of time-keeping common to great numbers of people, dates, is never acknowledged. Lowell's dates help to link the experiences of his poems with the outside world, but Plath's method of telling time by landscape has the opposite effect. The poem is a world unto itself, with its own time. The experiences of the poem, although placed in a precise geographical context, remain more personal, less accessible than Lowell's.

Both Plath and Lowell are preoccupied with the past, and their attitudes toward it are quite similar. The speaker



of *Life Studies* looks at the past not as a time of idyll, but as a period of ignorance. The conflicts which the speaker suffers in the present are traceable to the past, but in the past the speaker was not conscious of them. In "Memories of West Street and Lepke," for example, Lowell begins with a description of his present condition:

Only teaching on Tuesdays, book-worming  
in pajamas fresh from the washer each morning,  
I hog a whole house on Boston's  
"Hardly passionate Marlborough street. . ."

These are the tranquillized *Fifties*  
and I am forty. . .

The speaker's present life is calm and ordered, peaceful to the point of dullness, mediocre. He wonders if he should regret his seedtime, spent as a "fire-breathing Catholic C. O.," who made his "manic statement, telling off the state and president, and then. . ." What follows is not the explosive climax the fiery language leads us to expect, but an anticlimactic calm:

and then  
sat waiting sentence in the bull pen  
beside a negro boy with curlicues  
of marijuana in his hair.

Prison life was "hardly passionate," either:

given a year,  
I walked on the roof of the West Street jail.  
A short enclosure like my school soccer court. . .

His jail companions are a vegetarian and two Hollywood pimps, and the speaker remembers:

I was so out of things, I'd never heard.  
Of the Jehovah's witnesses.



He acquires such stimulating knowledge as the secrets of the "hospital tuck," and even the potentially romantic figure of *Murder Incorporated's* Czar Lepke only piles towels on a rack or dawdles off to his cell:

Flabby, bald, lobotomized,  
He drifted in a sheepish calm  
Where no agonizing reappraisals  
Jarred his concentration on the electric chair.

The poet, then, himself a potentially romantic figure, now drifts in a similar sheepish calm on Marlborough St. The past was no more passionate, apparently, and no simpler, than the present; the speaker was only more ignorant.

In "Point Shirley," Plath looks back on her childhood in a similar frame of mind. She remembers her grandmother as a mistress of a neat kingdom, the archetypal American housewife who baked apple cakes and wheat loaves, who swept floors and hung laundry. These activities of grandmother kept the looseliving, "sluttish, rutted sea" at bay. Grandmother represents order, and the sea chaos. Looking back, the poet realizes that it took great and continual effort to preserve order and sanity in the face of the sea which threatened destruction:

She is dead . . . who  
kept house against  
What the sluttish, rutted sea could do . . .  
Such collusion of the mulish elements  
She wore her broom straws to the nub . . .  
A labor of love . . .

For Plath, as for Lowell, the present problem has roots in personal history.

Both poets are conscious of, and articulate about, their own emotional states. Lowell, in "Skunk Hour," for example, can say "My mind's not right," or, "I myself am hell." In "Waking in the Blue," he describes his physical condition with journalistic accuracy:

After a hearty New England breakfast,  
I weigh two hundred pounds  
This morning. Cock of the walk  
I strut in my turtle-necked French sailor's jersey,

and similarly defines his mental state. He is one of the thoroughbred mental cases:

We are all old-timers,  
each of us holds a locked razor.

Plath, in "Point Shirley," contrasts her grandmother's condition with her own emotional state:

She died blessed,  
And I come by, bones, bones only, pawed and tossed.  
A dog-faced sea.

In opposition to her "blessed" (and dead) grandmother, Plath is still alive, associated with sea and its chaos. Like Lowell, she acknowledges her emotional and psychological distress, and is able to comment upon it with some measure of control.

Both poets are in fact so controlled that their statements of self-knowledge or "confession" are not "cries from the heart informed by nothing except. . . a needle or a knife,"<sup>14</sup> but respectable literary allusions of which any Empsonian would be proud. In "Skunk Hour," Lowell's admission, "I myself am hell," recalls both Milton and Marlowe, while "One dark night," should bring to mind Saint John of the Cross.<sup>15</sup> In "Point Shirley," Plath plays with a title from Shakespeare, "A labor of love and that labor lost," and her "dog-faced sea" recalls Stephen Dedalus, "poor dogsbody" of *Ulysses*, who walked another beach in a similar frame of mind.<sup>16</sup> Throughout *The Colossus*, Plath makes reference to Greek, Elizabethan, and Jacobean drama, as well as to classical myths.<sup>17</sup>

Another obvious feature of Lowell's style which Plath has imitated in "Point Shirley" and throughout *The Colossus*

is the very shape and structure of the verse. Many of Plath's early poems "sound like" Lowell - as even one "out loud reading" of "Point Shirley" and "Skunk Hour" will demonstrate. Both of these poems are mixtures of short and longer lines, written in stanzas of consistent length. Plath and Lowell make frequent use of internal rhyme and half-rhyme in the opening lines of "Point Shirley" it is one of the principle sound effects:

Snowcakes break and welter . . .  
Leaving a salty mash of ice to whiten  
In my grandmother's sand yard . . .  
Such collusion of mulish elements . . .

The tendency to use internal rhyme is less pronounced in "Skunk Hour," but it is nevertheless present:

Nautilus Island's hermit/heiress . . .  
eyesores facing her shore . . .  
Who seemed to leap from an L.L. Bean . . .

Both poets also tend to pile up accents within a line; heavy density of accents marks the style of Lowell and of the early Plath poems:

SNowcakes break and welter. This year  
Bones, bones only, pawed and tossed,  
A dog-faced sea . . .  
The sun sinks under Boston, bloody red . . .  
("Point Shirley")

My jill-spirit sob in each blood cell . . .  
White stripes, moonstruck eyes red fire . . .  
("Skunk Hour")

Frequent use of multiple consonant clusters contributes further to the density of each poet's verse.

From Water-Tower Hill to the brick prison  
The Shingle booms, bickering under  
The sea's collapse.  
("Point Shirley")

Her sheep still graze above the sea . . .  
A red fox stain covers Blue Hill . . .  
(“Skunk Hour”)

Those poems of *The Colossus* and *Life Studies* not written in conventional forms (e.g. sonnet) share another common feature: the absence of predictable rhythmic pattern. Though both poets seem to base their metrics on iambic pentameter, it is impossible to predict just what variations will be worked upon that base. Rhythmic patterns are not regularly repeated.

In addition to these similarities, both poets employ natural imagery, and pay close attention to the specific details of nature. Plath provides a detailed description of the shark in the flower bed:

A thresh-tailed, lanced  
Shark littered in the geranium bed.

Lowell pays close attention to the fine points of skunk anatomy:

They march on their soles up main street,  
White stripes, moonstruck eyes, red fire . . .  
She jabs her wedge-head in a cup  
of sour cream, drops her ostrich tail . . .

The detail provided by each poet is greater than necessary for the clarity of the given symbol.

Intensive comparison of “Point Shirley” with *Life Studies* shows that there is a relationship between the poems of Lowell and the poems of *The Colossus*. A general comparison of *Ariel* and the earlier work of Plath and Lowell, however, reveals striking differences. Poems in *The Colossus* which, like “Point Shirley” display all the characteristics of Lowell’s style, are not, one feels, the poems which presage *Ariel*, a books which does not show obvious marks of Lowellian



influence. Radical stylistic changes seem to have occurred between "Point Shirley" and "Contusion." The style of *Life Studies* and *The Colossus* has either been abandoned or drastically altered, adapted and transformed into the style of the *Ariel* poems.

One of the most troubling aspects of the poems included in *Ariel* is their apparent absence of setting. "Point Shirley," like most of *The Colossus* poems, was well anchored in space. The poet made considerable use of the landscape, telling time by it, using it to articulate her own conflicts. Yet in many of the later poems, there is no scene-setting. Neither "Cut," nor "Daddy," nor "Death and Co.," opens with a description of landscape, of natural surroundings. Trees, seas, cliffs, fields, and animals, so abundantly used in the poems of *The Colossus*, are used less frequently in *Ariel*, and very differently. While many of the poems of *The Colossus* treated places, or the spirits of places, the poems of *Ariel* treat only the spirit. They traffic in unfamiliar artistic and psychological states; movement is internalized."<sup>18</sup> In these poems there is a distinct lack of the human, available world.

Because landscape was so important in the early poems, because Plath did get so much mileage out of her description of places, the obvious question, when "natural" landscape disappears, is what symbols or techniques replace landscape in the later poems of Plath? One answer, I think, is that the poems do not achieve "internal autonomy or ventriloquism,"<sup>19</sup> do not become "disembodied" but truly "embodied." The body of the poet becomes the landscape upon which and within which the action of the poems takes place.

It is precisely here that Plath parts company with Robert Lowell, *Life Studies*, and other confessional poets such as Ann Sexton or W. D. Snodgrass. In Lowell's book, as in his followers' poetry, "Life changed to landscape." The poems were all set within the landscape of the poet's personal history

or autobiography. In many of the poems of *Ariel*, on the other hand, Plath takes the process of personalization of poetry (begun by Lowell and labelled "confessional poetry,") one step further; her body, not her autobiography, provides the landscape in which poetic events occur.

Natural landscape does not, of course, disappear immediately from the poetry, but is internalized by stages. Examination of "Hardcastle Crag," "Suicide off Egg Rock," "The Colossus," "The Surgeon at 2 A.M." and "Cut" will demonstrate how Plath perfected the techniques of positioning many of the later poems within herself. The protagonist of the poems, who, at the beginning of this sequence, is a body within a landscape, will eventually come to contain the landscape within her own body.

In "Point Shirley," as in other early Plath poems,<sup>20</sup> extensive attention was paid to the setting. The scenery was elaborately described, and the speaker, looking at that scenery, recalled past events. Changes in the landscape helped mark the passing of time, and the poem dealt with both past experiences and present emotional states of a speaker who coincided with the poet.

In "Hardcastle Crag," and "Suicide off Egg Rock," the landscape is again described in detail, but the setting of the poem, though again geographically precise, serves a different poetic purpose. The setting is not used to recall former occurrences, or to mark the passing of time but serves instead as an external referent for the emotional state of the protagonist of the poem. The protagonist (a third person distinct from the speaker of the poem)<sup>21</sup> is described as similar to, and in some ways linked to the landscape. Yet each protagonist is also distinct from the landscape, separated from it, even opposed to it. Complete unity with the natural surroundings is possible for the protagonist, but the price is death. Life, the beating of a heart or the booming of blood, is the characteristic which separates the protagonist from natural setting.

"Hardcastle Crag" concerns the night walk of a woman through the countryside of West Yorks.<sup>22</sup> The setting is described fully, and consistently in terms of stone:

the humped indifferent iron  
Of its hills, and its pastures bordered by black stone set  
On black stone . . .

Even the animals who form part of the setting are described in stone images:

the dairy herds  
knelt in the meadow mute as boulders  
sheep drowsed stoneward . . .  
birds . . . wore granite ruffs . . .

The protagonist is also described as stone - her feet are "flintlike," - but as flint is capable of producing sparks, she is stone-cum-fire. Her person is a "pinch of flame," she is "bulk," but with a "beating heart."

The setting is stone, and the woman is like it, but different. The speaker's summary of the landscape again implies a similarity, almost a union of woman with setting:

The whole landscape  
loomed absolute as the antique world was  
Once, in its earliest way of lymph and sap . . .

Lymph, with its double meaning of a "fluid which contains white blood cells" and "a spring or stream of pure, clear water," strengthens the association of character and setting. But though there exists a bond between the two, they are also in opposition. The landscape is "enough to snuff the quick of her small heat out." The woman refuses complete union with her stony surroundings:

but before the weight  
Of stones and hills of stones could break  
Her down to mere quartz grit in that stony light,  
She turned back.



"Suicide off Egg Rock," like "Hardcastle Crag," is written in the third person, though the material is obviously autobiographical. This time, the protagonist is a man, but his position within the landscape resembles that of the woman in "Hardcastle Crag." He is like the landscape, part of it, but separated from it by life.

The poem opens with a description of the setting:

Behind him the hotdogs split and drizzled  
On the public grills, and the ochreous salt flats,  
Gas tanks, factory stacks,

At this point, the omniscient narrator inserts an explanatory comment, stating the relation of setting to character:

that landscape  
Of imperfections his bowels were part of . . .

"Bowels" is a rather unexpected word here - its archaic meaning, "the internal seat of pity and the gentler emotion," may help to explain its use: the man's emotions, his internal state, are as hideous as the external setting. But the usage remains unusual, almost a shot in the dark. The sudden appearance of an unexpected word which somehow works is not characteristic of *The Colossus*, though the technique is common enough in *Ariel*. Cf. "The Rival".

Your dissatisfactions, on the other hand,  
Arrive through the mailslot with loving regularity,  
White and blank, expansive as *carbon monoxide* . . .

At any rate, man is linked to the landscape, is part of it, yet differentiated by:

his blood beating the old tattoo  
I am, I am, I am.



He smolders, as the landscape, which "rippled and pulsed in the glossy updraft," seemed to: his body is beached "with the sea's garbage." His emotional state, like that of the woman in "Hardcastle Crag," and unlike that of the speaker in "Point Shirley" is never bluntly articulated. It is merely suggested through use of the landscape as an external referent to the internal state of the protagonist.

Feeling like "the sea's garbage," the man focuses his attention on Egg Rock, the one stone image of this poem, and he walks into the water to join "the forgetful surf" creaming on those ledges."

Like the woman of "Hardcastle Crag," the man of "Suicide off Egg Rock" is capable of merging completely with the surrounding landscape. Unlike her, he takes the option, and through death becomes completely part of the setting.

In "Hardcastle Crag" and "Suicide off Egg Rock," the protagonist of the poem was placed in a natural landscape of precise geographical location. The character in some way resembled the landscape, but was differentiated from it, chiefly by the life force, the beating of the heart of the pulsating blood. The protagonist could erase this difference, becoming part of the landscape, through death. In "The Colossus," however, the title poem of Plath's first collection, landscape is used in what appears to be a radically different manner. The setting of the poem is a statue, the body of the speaker's father, and "natural landscape" at one and the same time.

The poem, by its title, insists that the setting is a huge statue, possibly the Colossus at Rhodes. That Colossus, a statue of Apollo, god of poetry and oracles, was dismantled and sold as scrap metal hundreds of years ago. Such lines as:

Perhaps you consider yourself an oracle,  
Mouthpiece of the dead or some god or other

imply that the poem takes place in the harbor at Rhodes, an impossible setting; they are more important for the contributions they make to the overall allusive texture of the poem.

Other lines of the poem make it clear that the setting for the action is the body of the poet's father. But the body imagery is inextricably mixed with images of statuary and natural landscape. The three are merged into one:

I crawl like an *ant* in mourning  
Over the *weedy acres* of your *brow*  
To mend the *immense skull plates* and clear  
The *bald white tumuli* of your *eyes* . . .  
O *father*, all by yourself  
you - are *pithy* and historical as the *Roman forum*.  
I open my lunch on a *hill* of *black cypress*.  
Your *fluted bones* and *acanthine hair* are littered  
In their old anarchy to the *horizon line* . . .  
The *sun rises* under the *pillar* of your *tongue*.

Statue, body, and natural landscape are tied together through imagery. The brow is at once a weedy acre, the brow of a man, and the head of a statue. The sun rises under a pillar which is at the same time the tongue of the speaker's father and the horizon. Statue and body, body and landscape, landscape and statue - all are mingled.

The association of the three is hardly surprising. In "Hard Crag," death was equated with turning to stone, and a stone body is nothing more than a statue. In "Suicide off Egg Rock," death meant merging with the natural landscape. In "The Colossus," Plath merely combines her images; the dead body of her father is stone, a statue, which is also part of the landscape.

In its use of landscape, "The Colossus" is very different from "Point Shirley" and other early poems. Other characteristics of the clearly Lowellian early style have also altered. In "Point Shirley," for example, the poet was literally telling part of her own life story, recalling events as they literally happened.

Nobody wintering now behind  
The planked up windows where she set  
Her wheat loaves  
And apple cakes to cool . . .

can be literally believed, whereas

Scaling little ladders with gluepots and pails of lysol  
I crawl like an ant in mourning  
Over the weedy acres of your brow

is difficult to believe in exactly the same way. The action of "The Colossus" is metaphorical or allegorical, and cannot be taken literally as the action of "Point Shirley," "Hardcastle Crag," or "Suicide off Egg Rock" was meant to be.

The time sense of the narrator has also altered. The surroundings do not give evidence of time passing; the poet does not speak of time changes currently taking place. Though the speaker tells us her daytime activities,

I open my lunch on a hill of black cypress . . .

and her night time activities:

Nights, I squat in the cornucopia  
Of your left ear, out of the wind,

and the reader is told of night changing to day.

The sun rises under the pillar of your tongue,

it is told more in the sense of "what always happens," than "what is happening now." Her mention of days and nights seems general, while in "Point Shirley" it was specific:

The sun sinks under Boston, bloody red,  
(Point Shirley)

The speaker acknowledges division of time, but those divisions are measured by her own activity, not by changes in her surroundings:

Thirty years now I have labored  
To dredge the silt from your throat . . .

Though the speaker is aware of the past (I have labored . . .) and of the future (I shall never get you pieced together entirely . . .) she seems arrested in a perpetual present, because in all tenses her activity remains the same. She no longer even hopes for change:

My hours are married to shadow.  
No longer do I listen for the scrape of a keel  
On the blank stones of the landing.

The speaker's attitude toward the past and toward the future is the same as her attitude toward the present.

Allusions in the poem are to Greek and Roman culture: the Colossus at Rhodes, the Oresteia, the Roman forum. The blue sky which arches above her recalls that the Romans invented that architectural feature: the "fluted bones and acanthine hair" bring to mind Greek columns and temples. Like "Point Shirley," "The Colossus" is a poem which acknowledges its cultural past.

The verse of "The Colossus" is similar to that of "Point Shirley," iambic based with a high density of accents and frequent multiple consonant clusters:



I shall never get you pieced together entirely,  
Pieced, glued, and properly jointed.  
Mule-bray, pig-grunt, and bawdy cackles  
Proceed from your great lips.  
It's worse than a barnyard.

The stanzas, however, are entirely unrhymed, and the full internal rhyme, so frequent in "Point Shirley," "Harcastle Crag," and "Suicide off Egg Rock," is entirely absent. The diction of "The Colossus" is also different, less formal, more colloquial than that of previously examined poems. Compare

I open my lunch on a hill of black cypress . . .  
It's worse than a barnyard . . .

(The Colossus)

with

Though a mist-wraith wound  
Up from a fissured valley and hung shoulder-high  
Ahead, it fattened to no family-featured ghost . . .

(Harcastle Crag)

"The Colossus" is full of direct, simple statements, while earlier poems seem to depend upon tortured diction and unusual, frequently compound words.

The speaker of "The Colossus" pays little attention to the small details of nature. There are no precise animal descriptions, as there were in "Point Shirley," or "Suicide off Egg Rock":

A mongrel working his legs to a gallop  
Hustled a gull-flock to flap off the sandspit.

When animals are mentioned in the poem, they are not mentioned or described for their own sake, but are used in metaphors, to describe either the statue or the speaker:

*Mule-bray, pig-grunt . . .*

I crawl like an *ant* in mourning over the weedy acres . .

Like other aspects of Plath's early style, "natural" imagery is used differently, but it has not disappeared.

Most significant of the many alterations in style evident in "The Colossus" is the change in the location of the poetic events; natural landscape and body have merged, becoming two equal aspects of the setting of the poem. In "The Surgeon at 2 A.M.," a later poem collected in *Crossing the Water*,<sup>23</sup> yet another change of scene is evidenced. Natural landscape is completely internalized; the body is made to contain the features of an external, natural setting. Though the poem is not completely successful, it nevertheless marks a clear stage in Plath's progress from poems set in the human, available world to poems which utilize the body of the poet as landscape.

"The Surgeon at 2 A.M." obviously takes place in a hospital operating room, but only the first line and the last stanza deal with the hospital setting. The rest of the poem describes the body of the patient upon which the surgeon/speaker is operating. The body lies under a "scalded sheet" which is also a "snowfield." The interior of the patient is then described in terms of vegetation:

It is a garden I have to do with -- tubers and fruits  
Dozing their jammy substances,  
A mat of roots. My assistants hook them back.  
Stenches and colors assail me.  
This is the lung-tree.  
These orchids are splendid. They spot and coil  
like snakes.  
The heart is a red-bell-bloom, in distress.  
I am so small in comparison with these organs:  
I worm and hack in a purple wilderness.

All the aspects of a landscape painting by Rousseau are contained within the body of the patient: tubers, fruits, lung-trees, roots, orchids, and snakes inhabit the "purple wilderness" of the body.

"The blood is a sunset," the speaker continues, and the line points to a complete reversal of the use of landscape in "Point Shirley." There, the sunset was described in terms of blood:

The sun sinks under Boston, bloody red.

The poet used body imagery to describe the setting sun in the early poem; here, however, she uses the setting sun, a feature of the natural landscape, to describe the interior of the patient's body.

Like the body of "The Colossus," the patient is stone as well as natural scenery. Roman architectural images appear again:

The blood is . . . a hot spring  
I must seal off and let fill  
The intricate, blue piping under this pale marble.  
How I admire the Romans --  
Aqueducts, the Baths of Caracalla, the eagle nose!

The nose, part of the body, is seen as just another in a list of architectural feats. Indeed, the entire body is seen as a thing, a feat of engineering:

The body is a Roman thing.  
It is a statue the orderlies are wheeling off.

As in "The Colossus," the speaker of "The Surgeon at 2 A.M." the landscape is within the body: organs and blood are vegetation and sunsets. The natural landscape, the human, available world, is moving inward.

It should also be mentioned that, though "The Surgeon at 2 A.M." is written in the first person, the speaker of the poem is not to be identified immediately and unequivocally with the poet. The speaker is rather a *dramatis persona*, the poem is a dramatic monologue. The surgeon/speaker claims to have "perfected" the body, he has removed:

an arm or a leg,  
a set of teeth, or stones, and tissues in slices . . .

The speaker is both doctor and torturer, the patient both patient and victim. The doctor considers his patient both person and thing.

This attitude is implicitly shared by the speaker of "Cut," a poem included in the *Ariel* collection. But the speaker of "Cut" is at once doctor/torturer/poet and poet/patient/victim; landscape is contained within the speaker's body, not within another's. The speaker's body serves as the landscape upon which and within which events of the poem take place. Speaker and poet are immediately and unequivocally recognizable as one.

"Cut" opens with a matter-of-fact statement, not with elaborate scene-setting:

What a thrill--  
My thumb instead of an onion.  
The top quite gone  
Except for a sort of hinge

Of skin,  
A flap like a hat,  
Dead white.  
Then that red plush.

Who the speaker is, where she is, remain unknown. We hear a voice, but no landscape - in the sense of trees, hills, fields, or even walls and furniture - is in evidence.



As the poem continues, the thumb is addressed as "little Pilgrim":

The Indian's axed your scalp.

The thumb, though a part of the speaker's body, is addressed as another person. The blood which flows from the wound is a "turkey wattle carpet . . . straight from the heart" and the speaker stands on the blood-carpet, not on a hardwood floor or the top of a hill.

Later the imagery of the poem turns martial:

Out of a gap  
A million soldiers run,  
Red coats, every one.

The thumb-cut becomes a terrestrial feature out of which soldiers pour. Body is used as landscape, but parts of the body are also characters in that landscape: pilgrims, soldiers, kamikaze men, KKK members, trepanned veterans or dirty girls. The body is the only setting for this cast of characters, whose appearance and disappearance (physically or imaginatively) constitutes the poetic action. In "Cut" the poet finally discards all natural landscape and places the action and characters of the poem entirely within her own physical person.

Other aspects of the early style have also altered. The poem is in some sense autobiographical; it is easy enough to equate the speaker with Plath. But the poem recounts an event which would be mentioned in few typical biographies; the cutting of a finger is not generally considered a major or particularly poetic event. No poem in *The Colossus* or *Life Studies* deals with such a subject. Without using the body as landscape, such a poem is almost impossible to write. The poet's perfected technique enables her to deal with subjects which are personal in the fullest sense of that word, allows her to treat physical and emotional experiences which would be difficult, if not impossible to handle otherwise.

The poet's personal, familial past is not recalled in the poem; there is no mention of her personal childhood, her relatives, etc. But her cultural past is remembered: former conflicts between Pilgrims and Indians, Redcoats and colonists, Japanese and Americans, blacks and whites. It is upon these conflicts that the poet calls for her images, these constitute the poem's past. Plath's attitude toward this past is similar to the attitude of the speaker of "Point Shirley," or "Memories of West Street and Lepke." The present conflict is not unprecedented; somewhere in the past a similar conflict, a similar situation arose. The past of the poet - whether personal or cultural/historical - was no idyll.

Like all Plath poems, "Cut" is undated; the time of the event is not pinpointed as to month, day, and year of occurrence. The poem does not recognize the common time scheme; time passes within the poem, but this is made clear only through the action of the speaker. The sequence of events which occur when one cuts a finger provides the time scheme of the poem: first is diagnosis, recognition of the cut; then medication, the application of "pink fizz," or mercuriochrome. Finally, the wound is bandaged, it wears a "babushka." The action of the poem indicates the passing of time, but time is also linked to the landscape, since the body which undergoes and performs the action of the poem is itself the setting.

The diction of "Cut," like that of "The Colossus," is colloquial. Direct statements are made in language that has the easy, fluid quality of slang:

What a thrill . . .  
I step on it,  
Clutching my bottle  
Of pink fizz . . .

The tortured, elaborate phrasing of the earlier poems is gone. "Cut," thrill, "onion," "thumb," "top," and "hat" are words of everyday, ordinary conversation, not curiosities like family-featured" or "mist-wraith."

Like the language, the verse of "Cut" is looser, more fluid than that of earlier poems. Accents are frequent and heavy, but they occur in shorter lines. Rhymes, which are full and frequent, are more closely spaced than ever before. The effect is closer to nursery rhyme than to elegy. Dr. Seuss might have been responsible for lines such as "A flap like a hat," had they occurred in a different context.

Like all Plath poems, "Cut" is full of allusions - Indians, pilgrims, the legendary turkey of the first Thanksgiving. The allusive texture of the poem is one feature of the Plath style which is frequently overlooked, but never entirely absent. This allusiveness helps to anchor the poems somewhat in the human, available world even when the action is entirely internalized.

Plath began, then, as a student of Lowell, and many of her early poems reflect his influence. But the action of Plath's poems gradually moves inward; the poems become personal in a way uniquely her own. Landscape, at first used in a rather conventional sense, becomes similar to the protagonist in poems such as "Hardcastle Crag" or "Suicide off Egg Rock." Union with the landscape is possible in these poems, but the result is death. In "The Colossus," the setting of the poem is the dead body of the speaker's father, natural landscape, and statue at once. The body remains a thing of stone in "The Surgeon at 2 A.M.," but contains natural landscape and vegetation instead of coexisting with them. Finally, in "Cut," natural landscape is completely absent; the body of the speaker provides the sole location of the poem. The poet has finally perfected a technique which permits her to speak in her own voice, from her own body.

Similarities to Lowell and to Plath's early style do remain in *Ariel*. The "I" of the poems does stand immediately and unequivocally for Sylvia Plath. There are few third person poems, few dramatic monologues in the volume. The poems



are extremely personal, and in this sense, "confessional."<sup>24</sup> Cultural allusiveness remains a characteristic of the verse; one partner in "Death & Co." has eyes "Lidded and balled like Blake's"; religious imagery, classical heroines, and references to Shakespeare appear again and again.

The Poet's attitude toward the past also remains unchanged, though the past to which she relates has altered. She rarely speaks of her personal, familial past, but instead looks back to Hiroshima, the Nazi prison camps, Napoleon's wars, the settlement of America. In history, man's common past, she sees the seeds of her present situation.

Though in some of the more powerful poems, most notably "Daddy," a kind of nursery rhyme rhythm takes over, the verse of *Ariel* is generally iambic based. The poet still uses rhyme, though sometimes it is more ghostly than the off-rhymes and slant rhymes of *The Colossus*, more often more obvious than ever before. The same sound often runs on from stanza to stanza with much identical rhyme.<sup>25</sup> Multiple consonant clusters are still frequently used; heavy density of accents remains characteristic of the verse.

Natural imagery is employed in the volume, but the poet rarely provides more detail than necessary for the clarity of a given symbol. As in "The Colossus," animals, plants, etc., mentioned in the *Ariel* poems are used metaphorically, rather than for their own sake. When Plath uses the image of a condor in "Death & Co., for example, it is in order to express some quality about death, not to provide a lesson on condors. The detail which she does provide, however, is strikingly accurate.

Although these characteristics of the early poems remain, there are enormous changes. Rarely does the poet make a flat statement concerning her emotional state, such as "I/myself am hell." Rather, she reveals her emotional and psychological condition throughout the poem. The diction of these late



works tends to be more colloquial than ever before. The language of *Ariel* is a spoken, not a written one; the voice one hears is not "disembodied," but the voice of a real person in a real body in a real world.<sup>26</sup>

The most significant change is, of course, that the poems no longer take place in precise geographical locations; unlike the poems of *Life Studies*, they occur at no precise moment in time. For these reasons, the poems do tend to seem less accessible than *Life Studies* or *The Colossus*, than poems located in Granchester Meadows or Boston Harbor. Plath's tendency to write poems which become worlds in themselves, with their own landscape and time-scheme, culminates in the poems of *Ariel*.

The development of the body-as-landscape technique, the perfection of Plath's own, personal style, made possible the treatment of more personal themes, themes, uniquely her own. Physical and emotional distress are discussed in an intense and surprising manner. Using the body as landscape, the poet can objectify and define her psychological states more easily; emotional torments can be equated with the physical torments which occur in a given setting. In "Daddy," for example, the body of the speaker becomes a concentration camp, and the psychological state of the speaker is powerfully objectified in terms of her dehumanized, prisoner/victim status.

The body as landscape thesis is useful in the explication of many of the names of body parts throughout *Ariel*. Since the poet is the landscape, or is becoming the landscape in many of the later poems, she calls attention to this fact by repeated use of words such as knees, hands, hair, etc. Collections of images and the movement and structure of many of the later poems become clear when examined in the light of the thesis. "Death & Co.," a relatively conventional-looking poem in the *Ariel* collection, "Ariel," the title poem, more compressed and difficult than many, and "Contusion," one of the final poems, imagistic and tightly structured, may be read and understood in terms of the unification of body with landscape.

"Death & Co." concerns the double or schizophrenic nature of death; the poet imagines death as two friends, two business associates who have come to visit.<sup>27</sup> There is no setting for the poem, but I would like to suggest that the two sides of death constitute a "landscape" with which the speaker will have merged by the end of the poem.

The poem opens with a simple statement of fact, with a perfectly assured tone:

Two, of course there are two,  
It seems perfectly natural now –

The next three and one half stanzas detail the one nature of death; the poet begins by describing him physically:

The one who never looks up, whose eyes are lidded  
And balled like Blake's,  
Who exhibits

The birthmarks that are his trademark --  
The scald scar of water,  
The nude  
Verdigris of the condor . . .

This side of death, then, is predatory; he is frightening, but somehow natural, like the condor. The poet next states her relationship to him:

I am red meat. His beak  
Claps sidewise: I am not his yet.

A potential meal for the predator, the speaker nevertheless insists that she is not his "yet," and thus implies that at some future time she will be "eaten" by him, united with him. Next she relates his subjects of conversation:

He tells me how badly I photograph.  
He tells me how sweet  
The babies look in their hospital  
Icebox, a simple

Frill at the neck,  
Then the flutings of their Ionian  
Death-gowns,  
Then two little feet.

This first partner is a connoisseur of dead babies: notice the kinds of images Plath uses in describing them. They are "sweet," and cold in their "hospital icebox," and they are stone, they wear "Ionian death-gowns." Sweetness, coldness, and stone appeal to the first partner of the company, who, Plath tells us, "neither smiles nor smokes."

"The other does that," she continues, and sketches the character of the second half of death. His hair is "long and plausive," approving, like an audience, or very believable. He is a self-centered "bastard, masturbating a glitter. He wants to be loved."

From this brief description of the second partner, the poet goes on to describe herself, "I do not stir," and then the natural setting, "The frost makes a flower, the dew makes a star . . .". Here I would suggest that the frost making a flower is linked through the imagery to the first partner of death, the one who liked sweet (as in flowers), cold (as in frost) babies. The dew which makes a star is similarly linked to the second partner of the duo, who, with his plausive hair and self-centered glitter is something of a "star" himself. In the overall scheme of the poem, the speaker's attention focuses first on the one, then on the other, then on herself. Here she focuses on the one (frost/flower), the other (dew/star), then on herself, in the lines:

The dead bell,  
The dead bell,

Somebody's done for.

The speaker is linked to the "dead bell," the duo becomes a trio in the final lines. Death and the speaker are united, and within the poem, the unification is effected through the use of natural imagery. The speaker becomes one in a series of beautifully patterned objects,<sup>28</sup> and like all union with natural landscape in Plath, this is equivalent to death.

"Ariel," like "Death & Co.," is a poem of process, a poem about the merging of body with landscape, a poem about death. The speaker begins as "Stasis in darkness," she is still and separate until motion begins:

Then the substanceless blue  
Pour of tor and distances.

The movement, the activity of the speaker defines and is defined by the landscape, which remains "substanceless," for the moment, slightly unreal.

The speaker then addresses her horse, named after Shakespeare's Ariel, as God's lioness. She says:

How one we grow,  
Pivot of heels and knees!

Rider and vehicle are felt to be one, to be physically merging at the heels and knees. They become a pivot; their direction determines that of the landscape. The fields over which they are passing are related to the horses, "The furrow/splits and passes, sister to/the brown arc/of the neck I cannot catch." Woman merges with horse, horse is related to landscape, and finally, the landscape is described in human terms:

Nigger-eye  
Berries cast dark  
Hooks, -

Black sweet blood mouthfuls,  
Shadows.



Berries are eyes or mouthfuls of blood; they cast smile-like hooks.<sup>29</sup> The landscape is anthropomorphic; the string of images has become a circle.

The speaker's attention returns to herself: "Something else hauls me through air," she says, seeming to experience herself as an individual for the final time. She is shedding her identity, though:

Thighs, hair;  
Flakes from my heels.

White,  
Godiva, I unpeel ---

The loss is a purification, from "dead hands, dead stringencies," and at the same time a process of unification with the landscape. She says:

And now I  
Foam to wheat, a glitter of seas . . .

Even the most real of all things, the cry of a child,<sup>30</sup> merely "melts in the wall," becomes part of the setting.

By the end of the poem, the speaker has merged with the force which carries her, the horse, and with the scene she travels through:

And I  
Am the arrow,

The dew that flies  
Suicidal, at one with the drive  
Into the red

Eye, the cauldron of morning.

The flight is "suicidal" because union with the landscape is equivalent to death. In the final image, landscape, speaker, time, and space become one. The speaker, through death, returns to the beginning of the cycle, to "stasis in darkness."

"Contusion," written in the final week of Sylvia Plath's life, is a dense, rich, beautifully organized poem. Like "Death & Co.," and "Ariel," it is a poem about death, but unlike the other poems, "Contusion" begins with the premise that the speaker and the setting are one. While "Death & Co." and "Ariel" can be called poems of process, "Contusion" reads like a poem written after the fact.

The first stanza of the poem describes a bruise on the speaker's body:

Color floods to the spot, dull purple.  
The rest of the body is all washed out,  
The colour of pearl.

The body is described in terms of the sea, as "floods," "Washed out," and "Pearl" indicate. The "colour of pearl" also calls to mind the song of Ariel, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

Full fathom five thy father lies;  
Of his bones are coral made;  
These are pearls that were his eyes . . .  
l,iii

The allusive texture is preserved throughout the works of Plath.

In the second stanza, the speaker develops the sea imagery she describes the bruise metaphorically while directly describing the sea:

In a pit of rock,  
The sea sucks obsessively,  
One hollow the whole sea's pivot.

The sea is described in human terms, it "sucks obsessively," like a child. The one pit of rock, that is, the bruise, is the sea's pivot, the essential component, the thing which chiefly determines the direction of the rest of the sea/body will take.

The third stanza uses household imagery, to speak of the same bruise:

The size of a fly,  
The doom mark  
Crawls down the wall.

The body, then, is equivalent to the sea and to a wall of a room; the bruise is a pit of rock, a fly or doom mark.

The final stanza of the poem unites the three sets of imagery physically: the first line deals with the body, the second with the sea, the third with domestic interiors:

The heart shuts,  
The sea slides back,  
The mirrors are sheeted.

Thus the three different descriptions actually describe only one thing: death. Body is landscape, natural or man-made.

It can be seen, then, that Plath is the central character in the drama of *Ariel*, but she stars in a way which differs slightly from the role Lowell played in *Life Studies*. Lowell, the speaker/poet, made a landscape of his life, and peopled it with members of his family, actors from his childhood. In *Ariel*, however, Plath makes a landscape of her living body: and within this world of herself she objectifies, defines and examines psychological and emotional states in a new and supremely effective manner.

Margaret Rose Ryan

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## FOOTNOTES

1. Kinzie, Mary: "An Informal Checklist of Criticism," in Charles Newman, ed., *The Art of Sylvia Plath*. (London, 1970), p. 289.
2. Lowell, Robert: "On Skunk Hour", in Anthony Ostroff, ed., *The Contemporary Poet as Artist and Critic* (Boston, 1964), p. 108.
3. Rosenthal, M.L.: in *Salmaquindi*, quoted on back cover of *Life Studies*.
4. Sylvia Plath, from an interview and reading of poems made by her for the British Council, as quoted by A. Alvarez in "Sylvia Plath," in Newman, ed., p. 62.
5. Davie, Donald: "On Sincerity," *Encounter*, 31: ii, p. 61.
6. Rosenthal, M.L.: "Sylvia Plath and Confessional Poetry," in Newman, ed., p. 69.
7. Cf. Catullus, poem 51, in which the speaker, identified as "Catullus," explains his personal and poetic madness in terms of Roman commerce and political activity.
8. Lowell, Robert: Introduction to *Ariel*, (New York, 1966) p. IX.
9. Hughes, Ted: "Notes on the Chronological Order of Sylvia Plath's Poems," in Newman, ed., p. 191.
10. Cf. "The Eyemote," "All the Dead Dears," "Blue Moles," "The Burnt Out Spa."
11. Davie, p. 65.
12. Sylvia Plath, "Ocean 1212-W," in Newman, ed., pp. 266-272 (1962).
13. Hughes, in Newman, ed., p. 191.
14. Sylvia Plath, *The Poet Speaks*, Argo Record Co. No. RG 455, London, quoted by John Frederick Nims, "The Poetry of Sylvia Plath," in Newman, ed., p. 137.
15. Lowell, Robert: In Ostroff, ed., p. 107.
16. Joyce, James: *Ulysses* (new edition) (New York, 1961) p. 46.
17. Cf. "The Eye-Mote," "Fawn," "The Colossus," "Lorelei," "All The Dead Dears," "Aftermath," "Moonrise," etc.
18. Oberg, Arthur K.: "Sylvia Plath and the New Decadence," *Chicago Review*, 20, i, p. 69.
19. Oberg: p. 72.
20. Cf. "Water Color of Grandchester Meadows," "The Burnt-out Spa," etc.



21. The writings of both Hughes and Plath suggest that both "Hardcastle Crag" and "Suicide off Egg Rock" are autobiographical. Plath's use of the third person may be an attempt to gain distance and perspective.
22. Hughes: in Newman ed., p. 188.
23. *Crossing the Water* (1971) contains a number of previously uncollected poems written by Sylvia Plath in the transitional period between *The Colossus* (1960) and *Ariel* (1965).
24. Lowell, Robert: Introduction to *Ariel*, p. VII.
25. Nims, John Frederick: "The Poetry of Sylvia Plath," in Newman, ed., p. 143.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
27. Plath, Sylvia: Quoted by M. L. Rosenthal, "Sylvia Plath and Confessional Poetry," in Newman, ed., p. 70.
28. Rosenthal, M.L. : in Newman, ed., p. 76.
29. Cf. "Tulips," *Ariel*, p. 10, "Their smiles catch onto my skin, little smiling hooks."
30. Cf. "Kindness," *Ariel*, p. 82, "What is so real as the cry of a child?"

## THE RABBIT - PRIEST

I was considering being a Priest  
for a while. Even if  
I'm not Catholic (I was), I'd make  
a neat priest.

A HUGE Rabbit - priest!

I'd probably eat the lilies at Easter!  
the palms on Sunday!  
(Get drunk at mass- - or fall up  
the steps) - -  
fall over the altar!

(something bestial).

I'll be a minister then!  
-- no one will notice!  
They'll all be calvinists  
blinded by:

The Dollar Sign!

I could yell and rant and rave!  
( an evangelist!)  
from the pulpit: "Behave!  
In the way  
of:

The Lord."

(then hop off  
paws in my vest pockets).

*T.R. Hays*

### Credits

There are three non-student contributions in this issue of Era.

Craig Williamson is a member of the English Department at the University of Pennsylvania. His poems have been published in the anthology, New Poets, and his own book of poems, African Wings, was published in 1969 (Citadel Press).

Michael Quigley, College 1971, is the Assistant Director of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia.

Victor Bockris, College 1971, is the editor of Telegraph Books. His book of poems, Brain, was published in 1972 (Middle Earth.) His forthcoming book, Posters, will be published by Telegraph Books.

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