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FREE

TOWARD AN ENVIRONMENTALIST POETICS



Don Karr

Steven Chapman

The Environmental Crisis

It is hard to talk meaningfully about the environmental crisis without collapsing into tongue-tied despair at the magnitude of the problem, the indifference of most academic discourses, and the seeming futility of yet more words. Even with the emergence of new fields of inquiry such as Earth Science and Environmental Studies, modern intellectuals as a whole remain paralyzed before the greatest dilemma confronting humanity at this juncture in history: the pathological ecocide carried out against our planetary home by degraded forms of technological civilization.

While the seeds of our current predicament are found in certain basic assumptions lying at the foundation of the Western tradition (about the relationship between humans and nature, the correct use of technology, etc.), only now are the practical consequences of those earlier tendencies made manifest. What distinguishes the current age is the massive scale of the violence being perpetrated against the earth. We are entering a phase where the limits of growth are becoming palpable and discernible, and where the realization of the technological wonderworld is being exposed as endless wasteland. The high-energy model of economic development invented in Europe and America and now being exported to the rest of the world

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Bookpress Online

This, our first issue of the new year, marks the debut of our presence on the World Wide Web. Soon, readers will have access to *The Bookpress*, from our most recent edition to hard-to-find back issues, at any time, at virtually any location in the world.

The inaugural issue of Bookpress Online, to be posted in early February, will contain the complete text of the February issue, including Steven Chapman's cover essay on "environmentalist poetics" and a brilliant excerpt from Paul West's forthcoming novel, *Terrestrials*, as well as Don Karr's superb cover illustration. In addition, Bookpress Online will feature an archive of every issue from 1995 and allow readers to share with us their comments and suggestions via e-mail. In time, we hope to offer a complete archive containing each volume of *The Bookpress*, dating to its founding in 1989, a search engine to assist readers in locating authors and articles of specific interest to them, and an area in which readers will be able to discuss with each other issues raised in *The Bookpress*, or other topics of the day.

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Russell Underwood
Managing Editor

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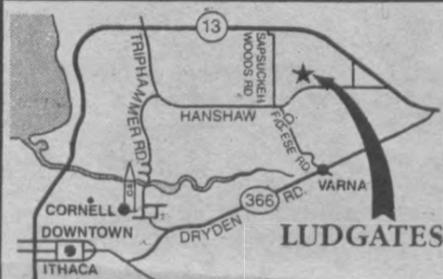
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LUDGATE PRODUCE FARMS

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Terrestrials

Paul West

I

Never having seen themselves from above, or behind, as they sat side by side in front of twin panels bristling with toggles and switches, rosy bulbs and quivering blue-metal needles, Booth and Clegg did not know they resembled two inhuman helmets with fins. In the nineteen-fifties, or even earlier, you could buy candies in the shape of these men: jelly-babies, and you popped them higgledy-piggledy into your mouth, sank teeth into several at one time, mingling raspberry, grape, honey, orange, peppermint as your saliva flowed. Or you bought plastic replicas of such men for pennies, wondering how mannequins could be manufactured at the sit, with thighs drawn up and knees bent. Then glued them, an inch high at most, into their seats in the model, usually an airplane, but sometimes a motor torpedo boat or a flame-throwing tank. The expressions never changed. The thighs and knees never unbent. The helmets never came off.

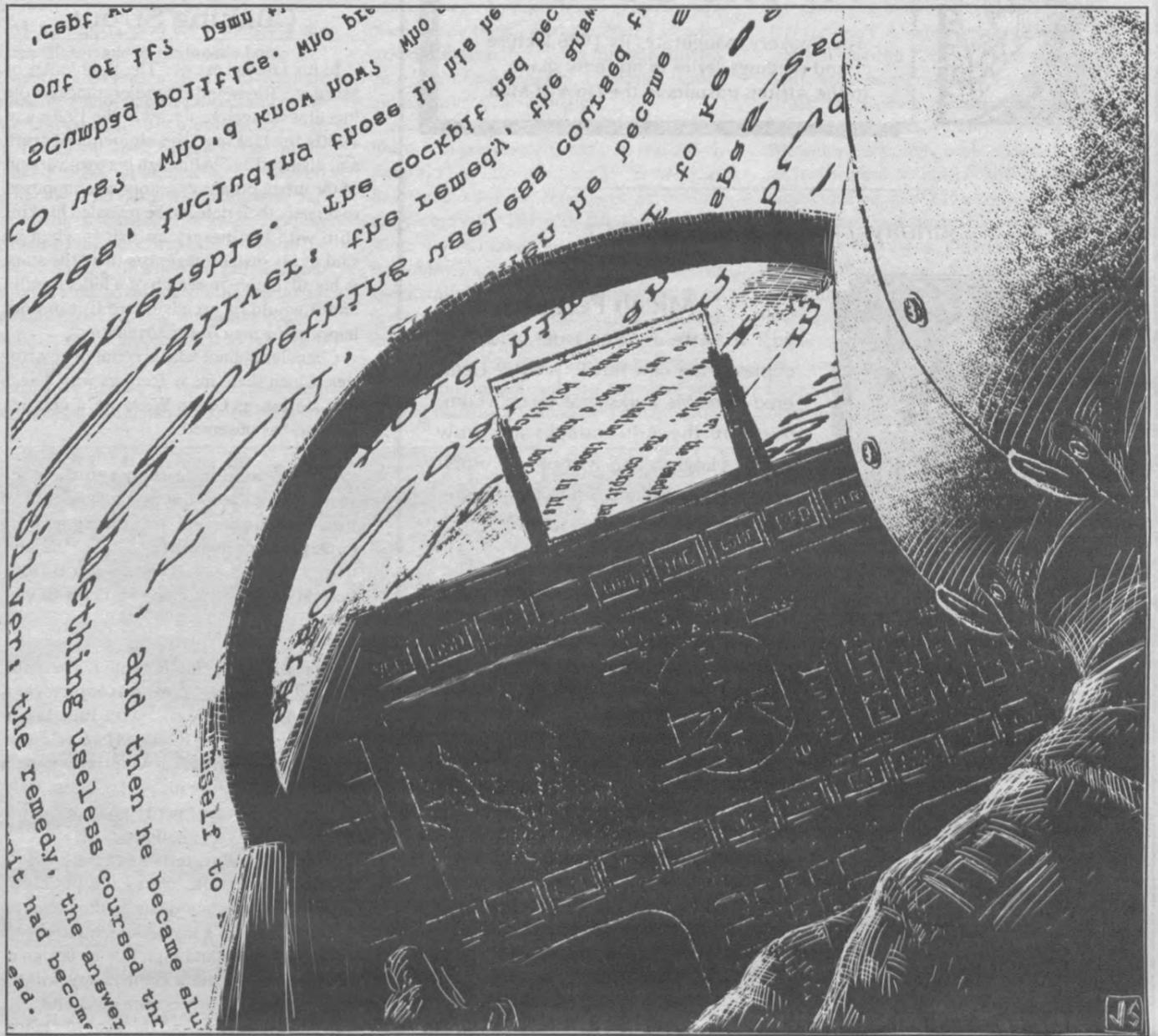
So too with Booth and Clegg, at eighty thousand feet over a smudged curl in the Nile west of Abu Hamed with Mount Oda behind them to the east. At three times the speed of sound they were only half an hour away from their Turkish base. Had their cockpit been open, as in the old barnstorming days, their speech would have been ripped away by the slipstream, or indeed their heads from their necks, and their blood forced back into its soft tubings even as the near-vacuum of the heterosphere invited it into the open.

Below them were the mother-of-pearl clouds, at over ten thousand, and the night-luminous clouds, at between forty and fifty thousand. The two men were at operational height and carried no armament. A homing missile could track and destroy them, but so far none had, this being their fifty-seventh mission over the desert and the Red Sea. They always turned back at Margherita on the equators three thousand miles outward bound, the same back, with hardly a movement of their heads, only their hands in mitts plucking on the control column. A computer flew them while they sat as if in a doll's house with the meagerest slant windows in front of them. Outward bound, the sun on their left. Homeward on the right. It barely had time to seem to move.

The airplane's name was *Cyrano*, for its long nose and its assignment to snoop. It was one of the best but least-known aircraft in the world: dartlike, black, rear-heavy, stuffed with cameras and sensors, its range preposterous, its potential unlimited. Priests in white coveralls tended it. Acolytes laden with passes and name-tapes came to eye it and yearned for the day when they too could fly it. Or would be flown by it. In that cabin nothing went wrong, nothing was unforeseen. Neither Booth nor Clegg looked down at his blunt-booted foot and saw a stow-away spider glinting emerald through the vizor. Neither man felt a draft, got a stiff elbow the next day from the wind coming in. No one threw up in there. Their privates were bound tight as the feet of children in ancient China.

The only sound was that of an oxygen tent, with the measured hiss and amplified suck of breathing. They said little, used an occasional expletive, mild as *Hell*, look at that substrate gauge, or murmured a name, *Massala*, or a map reference confirmed. Possessed, they skimmed south-east, parallel with the Red Sea, aimed at the Indian Ocean. The cameras and sensors functioned as and when the computers dictated, so there could be no blame. Yet semi-heroic this milkrun had come to be, with always the chance of a heat-homing missile impossible to elude. Not for Booth and Clegg the vision of Earth swathed in blue haze made by the atmosphere's dispersal of light's blue component. They saw curds and whey scattered over a mottled azure flecked with pale green quadrants and oblongs, and straight lines of white as if epoxy had spilled along a seam.

Jockeys they called themselves, mock-modestly, their suits vermilion, their helmets white, their mittens canary yellow, Booth tall and dark, Clegg of medium height with brownish, faintly



Jack Sherman

graying hair that showed most in his sideburns.

The cooled nosecone slid out over Lake Tana, shunted it behind as Addis Ababa appeared down-range like pumice rubble dumped on a mountain top. Booth felt an itch, really a slight induration resulting in a callus within the crack of his behind. Clegg just felt hungry and craved a smoke, he being the smoker in the pair. Alert to risk, but inured to boredom, they had only temporary thoughts and rarely remembered what they said to each other during flight. It was as if they had been anesthetized. They returned, to sip coffee, still sweat-soaked, testy with unused adrenalin, sore-eyed, and galled from the too-tight harness. Booth read a financial weekly flown in from London and printed on paper of subdued pink, while Clegg inhaled deeply his long-awaited cigarillo, sometimes tugging out from its tip a long strand of fiber inserted to hold the leaf together.

Addis past, they bore down on Lugh and Juba to the teal-blue Indian Ocean, curved round in a tight turn and came back, this time farther east so as to take them homeward along the exact line of the Red Sea's western shore. A fine day, as usual at that altitude, but dull so far. They had laughed so often at saying this, they said it no more, but it endured, like a grievance. Almost any given day in their earlier lives had been livelier than this. They longed to be novices or juniors again, and never mind the cost.

II

On first meeting, Clegg found Booth sarcastic and imperious. A man so tall, just within the maximum for pilots, could afford a less commanding manner, or so he reasoned. While Booth found Clegg a moody starrer, his hands a bit too fat, Clegg countered with affable mumbles and inaccurate quotations from the fishing encyclopedia.

So it was a standoff until they were chosen to train together, then fly together, with Booth in command. First the elementary stuff on Northrop T 38s, followed by intensive work in the simulator and five transition flights in the 71B. To thin down, Clegg went on a diet of fish, broccoli, and fruit, and then was obliged to cut it all out for steak and eggs. *Cyrano* crews had to eat high-

protein, low-residue meals, which had been Booth's favorite all his life. Gradually, Booth's manner began to seem a natural out-growth from his military role. The two of them began to reminisce together in the officer's club, quaffing tomato juice from embossed silver tankards. Somehow, Clegg's punctured feet matched Booth's broken arm, and Clegg's vestigial limp with a touch of tiptoe in his heavy tread echoed, to Clegg at least, the hand that could not quite touch eyebrow when Booth returned salutes.

When they spoke at last of sex, Clegg confided about his divorce from an assertive, tank-trunked interior decorator with periwinkle blue eyes. He missed the house but not the wife. Booth, convinced that he would be insatiably faithful if he ever married, told how he missed California, reassuring himself that in a *Cyrano* he could be home in much less than two hours. He thought of California as of a woman, and all the women it contained were his, on the beach, the freeway, the campuses, in the banks and the drive-ins. He and Clegg shared an attitude to sex, not so much casual as absent-minded. When making love, they thought about their flights, as if locked in some vaginal cramp of sheer aether, and, during their missions, they salted their tedium with improvisatory bordello vignettes, even to the extent of inserting the air dream into the ground dream, and vice versa, so that often they were not sure if they were dreaming of flying while they were having sex or dreaming of sex while flying, or dreaming of both while doing neither.

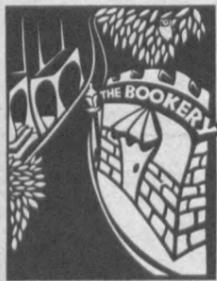
In the main, two kinds of boredom afflicted them, and they sometimes yearned for the open-cockpit camaraderie of World War One, when opponents waved at one another over chattering slow guns, or for the chastities of some mythic, decent marriage, in which sexuality mingled with lawn-mowing and grocery shopping as just another item on a list, when the children were asleep or at least in bed. At supersonic speed, when the outside skin temperature reached over 400 degrees Fahrenheit, the *Cyrano* grew ten inches in length, an almost organic, human thing. They knew this and exulted, completing a lascivious thought.

All they dreaded, apart from cramp and bore-

dom, was solar flares, lethally radiant, but these happened once or twice a year and could be predicted. Booth murmured hello to Djibouti as they slid over its khaki splotch at a height of sixteen miles. He mentally registered at the Hotel Continental, strolled outside again to stand in one of the Roman arches and study a ferny tree bang in front of him, his only thought that, seen from offshore, Djibouti's whitewashed stone-and-mud houses and its bone-white sands made an inviting vista, whereas, ashore, you found the heat, the flies, the fleas, all merciless even when a wind came in along the mole. Clegg himself dreamed of the Mal, or centaur fish, found only near coasts where the trees were so thick a cat couldn't get ashore, as Columbus once wrote in his log. Booth hated the sea, but it mesmerized him, while Clegg had no attitude to the sea at all except that, much as Booth thought California full of women, Clegg thought of the sea as full of fish. Two men, stranded priests of the highest technology, let their minds dawdle while their aircraft raced ahead.

Yet for both of them no dream, no matter how gorgeous or thick, altogether shut out the reality of the *Cyrano* itself, in which two men, though similar in age, bound by friendship, honored with the same ribbons on the chest, functioned as steeplejack photographers. Hourly they received images of some hundred thousand square miles of only potentially interesting terrain. And that was that. Like the rudimentary eye in science primers, they sat passively in a static relationship to light, no longer caring much if the film they took was of military significance or not. Something voyeurish jaded and sapped them. Their careers had begun to resemble those of mailmen, fashion buyers, dealers in antiques, all of whom plugged on year in, year out, never knowing when the ax would fall, on a snowy or a hot day, before or after a meal and the milk of magnesia, on the stairs or in traffic. Technically the missions were hazardous and the odds kept on remaining fifty-fifty. Clegg refused to speculate, as usual, but Booth pondered the odds daily, marvelling at juxtapositions of all kinds, from the permanent crease in his best pants to the map of Africa, just as permanent, that slid

see *Terrestrials*, page 10



Off Campus

At The Bookery

The Bookery inaugurates its 1996 lecture and readings series in our new space, in the Atrium upstairs in the DeWitt Mall.

Sunday, February 4, 4:00 p.m.



Micah Perks

will read selections from and sign copies of her new novel, *We Are Gathered Here*. Ms. Perks grew up on a commune in the Adirondacks and now teaches English and writing at Cornell and Hobart-William Smith Colleges in Geneva.

Sunday, February 11, 4:00 p.m.

Isaac Kramnick & R. Laurence Moore,

respectively professors of Government and History at Cornell University, will discuss the arguments made in their new book, *The Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness*. The floor will be opened to discussion and debate of this controversial issue.

Saturday, February 17, 8:00 p.m.



Nikki Giovanni,

internationally acclaimed poet, professor of English at Virginia Polytechnic, author of twelve books of poetry, and *Mademoiselle, Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Essence's* Woman of the Year, will read selections from her new compilation, *The Selected Poems of Nikki Giovanni*.

Sunday, February 18, 4:00 p.m.

James McConkey,

Professor Emeritus of English Literature at Cornell University, will read from his newly published thirteenth book, *The Anatomy of Memory*. This collection of essays is an attempt to discuss the faculty of memory itself and its values and uses, both practical and spiritual. Contributors to this volume include Diane Ackerman, Paul West, Archie Ammons, and Ken McClane.

Sunday, March 3, 4:00 p.m.

Jodi Dean,

Assistant Professor of Political Science at Hobart-William Smith Colleges in Geneva, will read from her new book, *Solidarity of Strangers: Feminism After Identity Politics*. Her argument is a crucial intervention in feminist, multicultural and legal debates that will ignite a rethinking of the meaning of difference, community, and participatory democracy. A lively discussion is expected after her reading.

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The Enigma of

Cushing Strout

In his famous essay, "The Simple Art of Murder," Raymond Chandler attacked the ingenious detective stories of the 1920s and 1930s for lacking "the elements of truth and plausibility." Although his own version of the urban private eye story was supposed to remedy their defects, he revealed his kinship with his literary ancestors when he said of his own protagonists that "the story is his adventure in search of a hidden truth, and it would be no adventure if it did not happen to a man fit for adventure."

Chandler did not take account of spy stories, which share many features with detective stories, as Glenn W. Most, a classics scholar, has observed:

the interpretation of clues and the construction, revision, and eventual confirmation of hypotheses; an atmosphere of deceit, where treachery is the rule and trust a sometimes fatal mistake; a curious fascination with the many varieties of violent death.

John Buchan's classic thriller, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, is more adventure than detection, but it begins with the classic premise of the hero, Richard Hannay's, discovery of a murdered American with a mysterious cipher in his pocket diary. Hannay, who was once "pretty good at finding out cyphers" as an intelligence officer during the Boer War, tells us that he has "a head for things like chess and puzzles." Much later, Hannay deduces the meaning of the American's mysterious reference to thirty-nine steps and high tide as designating the place where a German spy will try to escape.

Spy stories transcend the kind of "laburnum-and-lodge-gate English country house" setting that provoked Chandler's ridicule. Eric Ambler's *A Coffin for Dimitrios*, for a memorable example, does so by involving a retired professor, who writes conventional English detective stories, in a dangerous attempt to reconstruct by practical detection the history of a real criminal, implicated in assassination, espionage, heroin trafficking, and prostitution amid the violence and chaos of middle European politics in the late 1930s. But Ambler also wittily exploits the classic conventions. His innocent hero is caught up in blackmail and a double murder and is forced to deceive the police (like a character in one of his own books) by removing any signs of his own presence on the bloody scene.

Anthony Price's heroes are much like the patriotic English gentlemen in Buchan's stories, but Price, deeply versed in military history, gets the weight of history into his novels not simply by reference to present political realities as to their resonances with a more distant historical past, whether

it be England's Roman Wall, a German victory over Roman legions, the English Civil War, or (as in *Other Paths to Glory*) the Battle of the Somme.

Since Chandler's day, some superior writers of detective stories have also given a larger focus to their romances by invoking history in a way that earlier crime novels, whether English or American, seldom did. A notable French example is Didier Daeninckx's *Murder in Memoriam*, which won France's Detective Fiction Prize in 1984. Its first corpse is a historian, killed during an Arab demonstration in Paris in 1961; his son is killed twenty years later in Toulouse. To find the connection, the policeman protagonist has to become a historian himself, discovering in the archives troubling revelations about French complicity in the deportation of Jewish children to the German concentration camps.

The best recent example of the fusion of history and the detective story is Robert Harris' *Enigma*. Few computer users are likely to know that Alan Turing's machine was developed late in the Second World War for Bletchley Park, where a community of Anglo-American codebreakers had already cracked the formidable code used by the ingenious Enigma machines in German U-boats. Utilizing an earlier electric and mechanical form of a decrypting machine, the intelligence agency's success saved many Allied convoys from being sunk on their way from America to Britain; otherwise, it has been estimated, the war would have gone on for two more years than it did. The critic George Steiner judged that "Bletchley Park is the single greatest achievement of Britain during 1939-45, perhaps during this century as a whole." It was an intellectual and technical triumph, as well as a military one. Harris' *Enigma*, which reaches back to Bletchley Park for its subject, echoes the use of ciphers by Sherlock Holmes and Richard Hannay. A blend of the detective and the spy story, *Enigma* is worthy of its links to the Doyle-Buchan tradition.

At the end of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, Buchan's Hannay tells us that he did his best service before he put on the khaki. By contrast with Hannay's amateurism, Bletchley Park was a community of intelligence, operating under the stringent conditions of wartime and with the essential aid of the latest deciphering technology. While *Enigma* observes the traditions of the English thriller, it also dramatizes a historical point. Bletchley Park marked a sea change in intelligence, "turning what had been an art—a game, if you like, for gentlemen—into a science of mass production." Harris' novel has unusual weight for its romantic genre because the agency actually played a crucial role in the battle for control of the North Atlantic.

Bletchley Park's Victorian mansion was located in a railway town between Oxford

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Bletchley Park

and Cambridge, where mathematicians, linguists, classicists, historians, and daughters of earls—graduates of these universities and other elements of “the old boy network”—grew in numbers to about 1500 by early 1942. The community of codebreakers had its own dances, games, concerts, plays, and argot. According to Gordon Welchman, a senior naval analyst, many of the participants spoke of it as “a very happy place in which to live and work” and looked back on it as “the best period of our lives” when they had “an extraordinary sensation of living with history.” For some 2,000 Wrens (Women’s Reserve Naval Service), however, who did the monotonous clerical and machine-tending work, it was a different story, full of strain, breakdowns, nightmares, and (as one of them put it) “soul-destroying but vital work.”

By August, 1943, the Americans began playing their part at Bletchley Park under the leadership of Lt. Col. Telford Taylor, and while there was fear at first that the British cryptanalysts would be reduced to a minor role by superior American resources, one British member testified that “nothing of the kind happened. There could have been no happier partnership.”

In his book, *The Hut Six Story* (1982), Gordon Welchman describes how he was able to make a breakthrough in deciphering Enigma because he treated its intercepts as examples of the conventions of a military command and control system whose forms could be inferred. It is a neat form of poetic justice that the Germans unwittingly made it easier for their enemies by their formal habit of including in their messages full titles and addresses, instead of coding them with an abbreviated shorthand.

The Enigma machine contained one basic flaw: no letter could ever stand for itself. Otherwise, it would have been much more difficult to decipher Enigma’s secret. At Bletchley Park, for example, Mavis Lever cleverly intuited that a German message without any “I” in it could be a dummy message made up entirely of that letter, from which insight she could reconstruct a key to real messages. Moreover, whenever the enemy sent the same message in two different cryptosystems, one of which was readable to the Allies, they then had access to the other, a happy situation called “kisses.” Increasing the flow of traffic was always a useful way of increasing the chances of cracking the cipher, and that could be done by sowing mines in order to produce German radio reports of sighting them—a duplicitous process called “gardening.”

As a writer, Harris has a charm reminiscent of Doyle and Buchan, but his thriller has the unusual merit of being written with a veracious sense of history that smoothly integrates technical details into the plot. He has researched his setting thoroughly, interviewing participants and reading knowledgeable accounts, such as Peter Calvo-

coressi’s *Top Secret Ultra* (1980), *Codebreakers* (1993), edited by F. H. Hinsley and Alan Stripp, David Kahn’s *Seizing the Enigma* (1991), and Welchman’s book.

Enigma provides a vivid portrait of wartime England, like “a prosperous estate going fast to ruin” or “a genteel elderly lady fallen on hard times.” The hero, Thomas Jericho, an intellectually brilliant, emotionally reserved young mathematician from King’s College, Cambridge, is recruited to the codebreakers by his mentor, Alan Turing, intellectual father of the computer and inventor of the electric-mechanical decrypting machines (called “bombs”) that were essential to deciphering Enigma.

Despite the game-playing aspects of their code-breaking assignments, Harris does not

of Len Deighton’s *SS-GB* with its Scotland Yard inspector working on a homicide in a Nazi-run London.) Perhaps Harris was led to write *Enigma* by asking himself why his premise in *Fatherland* of a German victory did not become an actuality.

Enigma’s plot makes crucial reference to historical events, not only in the North Atlantic but also to those as far away as Smolensk, but these references are historically credible. The plot finally turns on some actions taken at higher levels than Bletchley Park, but since they are never specifically linked to actual persons, there is no clash with the historical record. One invention of the novel is a refugee Polish cryptanalyst. Bletchley Park had no Polish contingent, an anomaly all the more surprising because of the early Polish contri-

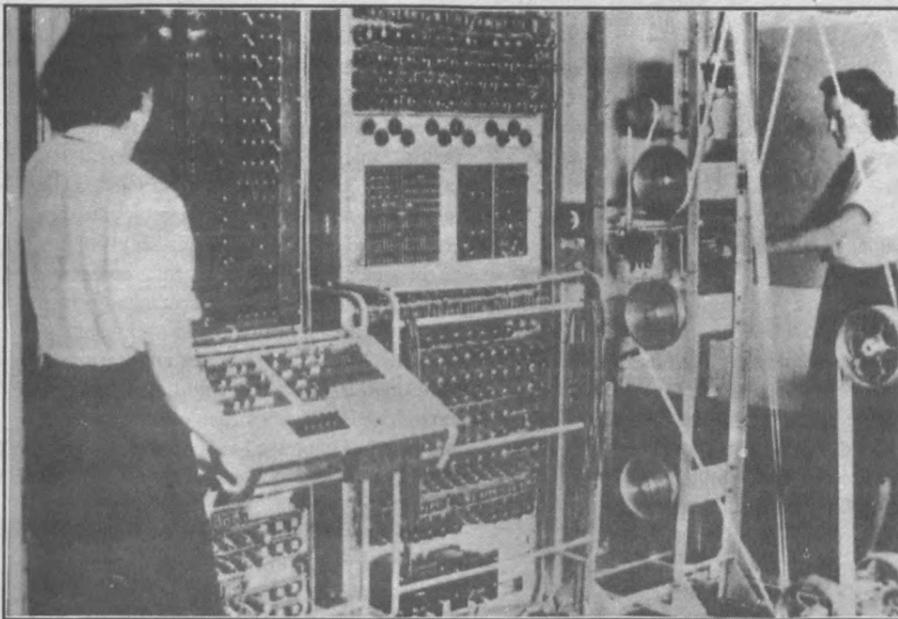
messages at Bletchley Park was Hugh Alexander, a member of the British chess team; one of Alexander’s colleagues and friends was the *Times*’ chess correspondent, who had preceded him as former British boys’ chess champion. (Harris’ hero is recruited to Alexander’s Hut Eight at Bletchley Park, and he has a kindred talent: he is a wizard at quickly solving difficult crossword puzzles.) Not only is the struggle to decode Enigma like a chess game with the Germans, but the narrative’s shape, like a good detective story, has “economy” and “unexpectedness,” and all three persons in its romantic triangle have important parts to play. It includes among Jericho’s fellow-workers a bohemian upper-class girl and a pious but resourceful clergyman’s daughter, who is jealous of her roommate’s interest in Jericho. Claire Romilly, the girl who provides him with his first emotional and sexual attachment, leaves him finally and appropriately with an unresolved question—an enigma—about the nature of her feelings about him.

Graham Greene called his thrillers “entertainments.” Harris’ novel is very entertaining, but it is more than just that. Novels, films, and plays have taken account of the communal achievement of scientists at Los Alamos in making the atomic bomb, but the Bletchley Park codebreakers, whose “bombs” did not explode, have previously been memorialized only by historians and participants—with the exception in 1980 of a fictionalized Polish film, *The Enigma Secret*, and a TV series. Harris is the first to make this important and admirable community the subject of a novel. It is being widely read in England and should have as wide an American audience.

Reading *Enigma* is reminiscent of one’s pleasure in reading Buchan, for Bletchley Park itself was not just a matter of cryptography and clever machines. It depended crucially upon intelligence successes in capturing machines and codebooks. In 1942, two British seamen climbed aboard a sinking German submarine to rescue a Short Signal Book and a Short Weather Cipher. They captured the books but lost their lives. In this sense, the individual, out-of-doors courage celebrated in Buchan’s books still had a part to play, even in the collective intellectual triumphs of Bletchley Park.

In the fall of 1944, when I and most of my fellow soldiers lay on our bunks below decks in a troopship headed from New York across the North Atlantic for England, we had no idea whatever that our safe passage depended upon the ingenious work being done at Bletchley Park.

Cushing Strout, a professor emeritus of American Studies at Cornell University, has recently written on detective stories for *Partisan Review*, *The Armchair Detective*, and *The New Republic*.



(reprinted from *Alan Turing: The Enigma*, Simon and Schuster, 1983)

An electronic cryptanalytic machine used at Bletchley Park, 1944-45.

exempt his characters from the grisly paradoxes of war. His hero usefully suggests that solving the problem of reconstructing a new German weather codebook depends upon getting more intercept data that can only be gleaned in sufficient quantity as the German submarine pack closes in on a vulnerable American convoy. The codebreakers’ success ironically depends upon an increase in the German threat to Allied ships. Harris writes, “It never ended, this battle against Enigma. It was a chess tournament of a thousand rounds against a player of prodigious defensive strength, and each day the pieces went back to their original positions and the game began afresh.”

All of the novel’s characters are fictional—except for a brief appropriate glimpse of Alan Turing. Harris plays no authorial games with actual historical characters, in contrast to his previous novel, *Fatherland*, whose Berlin policeman-hero is a disaffected citizen of a Nazi regime that has won the war twenty years earlier, in 1944. (In this respect *Fatherland* follows in the footsteps

contributions to deciphering the Enigma machine.

Using mathematical group theory rather than traditional linguistic methods, the innovative Polish analysts succeeded in furnishing both the British and the French with Enigma machines. Gordon Welchman acknowledged that Hut Six would “never have gotten off the ground if we had not learned from the Poles, in the nick of time, the details both of the German military version of the commercial Enigma machine and of the operating procedures that were in use.” Harris has a reason, however, for creating a Polish character, and it has more to do with a plot twist about wartime alliance politics than with Bletchley Park.

One of *Enigma*’s epigraphs is from G. H. Hardy’s *A Mathematician’s Apology*: “A chess problem also has unexpectedness, and a certain economy; it is essential that the moves should be surprising, and that every piece on the board should play its part.” The analogy works at several levels. The head cryptanalyst of German naval

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Toward an Environmentalist Poetics

continued from page 1

is predicated upon the rapid and irreversible depletion of natural resources, and is therefore inherently unsustainable. Current patterns of production and distribution are severely testing the amount of abuse the earth can bear, threatening to obviate the gains of economic progress made in other areas of life. To list but a few of the negative consequences of overdevelopment: global warming, acid rain, deforestation in both the temperate and tropical zones, contamination of the water tables, massive erosion, depletion of fisheries, uncontrolled urban sprawl. Only two centuries after its implementation, the model of unchecked industrial development is rapidly losing its viability. In this context, environmentalism is not just one more -ism, but an ethical imperative and our last chance for the preservation of the natural world and any sort of dignified existence for coming generations.

The Ecological Worldview

Our current age is one of crisis, but also of transition and promise. We have reached what Fritjof Capra has called the *turning point*: a fundamental paradigm shift in which the outworn creeds of technological society must be replaced by alternative models of human civility. Positive signs of the times can be seen in the founding of hundreds of organizations dedicated to the protection of the environment: the celebration of Earth Day since 1970, the United Nations sponsored conferences on the environment in Stockholm and Rio, the increasing relevance of Green politics in Europe, groups such as Greenpeace and Earth First!, and the emergence of Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism. Since the late sixties, when the environmental crisis was first thrust into the public sphere, there has been a widening and deepening of perspectives. In practically all fields—philosophy, sociology, economics, politics, theology, even (belatedly) literary studies—a gradual process of greening is occurring. There is a growing consensus among people from many different walks of life that our society needs to be reinvented from the ground up, and that the human economy must be brought into harmony with the larger economy of nature.

What is Environmentalist Poetics?

As the environmentalist movement matures beyond the concerns of individual scientists and activists, it becomes necessary to cultivate a deeper level of philosophical and cultural awareness. The deep changes in lifestyle and outlook that the environmental crisis demands

must be grounded within an ethical or even a religious understanding of the interrelationships connecting human beings with the larger biotic community. By invoking a possible *environmentalist poetics*, I am seeking to formulate what a literary component of a holistic ecological worldview might be. Its underlying motivation is a very personal concern with environmental issues and a sense that the humanities can no longer afford to remain oblivious to the fate of the universe.

Under the heading of *poetics*, I would gather not only the literary arts but all varieties of cultural expression: music, architecture, painting, dance, etc. But a poetics, at least as Aristotle defined it, is concerned in the first instance with the art and manner of making poems, with "poetry in itself and of its various kinds." By focusing on the links between nature (*physis*) and *poiesis*, environmentalist poetics explores the significance of literary works of art in terms of their manifold relationships to the natural world. Its critical focus is on the links between poetic language and nature, the multiple dependencies of the imagination on natural phenomena, the spontaneous metaphors of nature giving rise to poetic figures, and the primary role of creativity in both nature and art. The project is still largely experimental, and the following paragraphs are intended simply as notes or *prolegomena* towards a more thorough articulation. My goals here are to encourage new forms of thinking about the relationships between poetry and nature, to argue for the importance of a literary component to the emerging ecological worldview, and to show how ecological paradigms can be fruitfully applied to specific poems by authors as diverse as Goethe, Anna de Noailles and Gary Snyder.

The Paradigms of Ecology

The methodological particularity of environmentalist poetics is its invocation of the paradigms of ecology, both as field work toward a more integrated ecological worldview, and because the models of ecology have special relevance for the study of literature. Derived from the Greek *oikos* (house or home) and *logos* (word or teaching), ecology is the discourse of the teachings of the earth, and of the house rules which govern the intercourse of living beings and their environments. It was defined as a discipline in the mid-nineteenth century by the zoologist and philosopher Ernst Haeckel: "Ecology is the study of the interdependence and interaction of living organisms (animals and plants) and their environments (inanimate matter)." Building on the methods of ecology, environmentalist poetics explores the products

of human creativity in terms of their relationships with the natural world, revealing the multiple dependencies and parallelisms between creative systems and ecosystems. Since the paradigms of ecology are themselves in continual evolution, tending more and more to embrace humanistic, spiritual and cosmological concerns (human ecology, mental ecology, deep ecology, etc.), their application to poetry promises to yield a rich array of interdisciplinary insights.

First Things

Most contemporary literary criticism is hard put to talk about nature in more than trivial ways (due partly to the divergent trackings of the humanities and the natural sciences). In contradistinction to the indifference or even hostility towards the idea of nature displayed in Deconstruction, New Historicism and other currently fashionable methodologies, environmentalist poetics begins with the dictum that *nature matters*. By casting its stakes deep into the material reality of nature, it seeks to get underneath the exaggerated dualisms of the mainstream Western tradition (nature/culture, body/soul, material/spiritual etc.) and focus instead on the identities and homologies subsisting between natural and cultural phenomena, between biological and mental processes, and between naturalism and supernaturalism. In terms of its larger critical and philosophical dependencies, it is rooted in an alternative ontic-materialist "it is" tradition extending through the Presocratics, Spinoza, and Thoreau, and which is expressed today in Deep Ecology's commitment to a radical and uncompromising ecocentrism.

Environmentalist poetics thus aspires to a deeper materialism than dialectics: a materiality of rocks and trees and autumn leaves and spring flowers. It affirms the meaning and significance of nature for its own sake, while showing how specific texts illuminate that meaning in various ways. This entails a very *physical* approach to reading poems and a steady focus on the material reality behind the deployment of literary figures. It means keeping in mind the bioregional context within which given works were composed: Wordsworth's Lake District, the New England landscape for Thoreau, the Ligurian coast for Montale. It means listening carefully to what poets have to say about their feelings for nature and their claims for natural inspiration. Above all, it means attending to the creative energy residing in nature and its respiration and repetition in works of art.

Mimesis

A poetics which would cultivate an ontological awareness of the relations between nature and art could do worse than return to the concept of *mimesis*. *Mimesis* should be understood here not in the Platonic sense of a clumsy reconstruction of an ideal form, and certainly not in Theodor Adorno's awkward usage of the term to signify aesthetic autonomy, but in the most basic Aristotelian sense of organic reproduction. Art does indeed copy nature. *Mimesis* is the primary vehicle of mediation between nature and culture, functioning not only at the level of signs and visual representation, but of larger configurations of meaning as well.

All forms of poetry, in their general conception, are forms of imitation. As Aristotle makes clear in his *Poetics*, what the artist produces is not a fading copy of the thing represented, but a likeness (*homoion*) or even a living organism (*zoon*). In the broadest sense, *mimesis* is the mechanism whereby the natural world becomes constitutive of the world unfolded by the poem. In its flourishing, poetry can acquire a limited autonomy, present itself as a *second nature* of epiphenomenal reality, and even gesture beyond itself towards a realm of possible transcendence. Still, the elements which go into the making of a poem are ultimately derived from the earth, and the best poetry never loses touch with its native soil.

Earth Poetry

A poetics which would cultivate a sensitivity to the earth must first try to understand the primary language of nature within a more general

semiotics, focusing not only on the traces of nature within literary texts but on the signifying potential of trees and flowers and the inherent *readability* of the world. Poetry is permeated with natural metaphors because nature itself is charged with poetic significance.

The old topos of the *Book of Nature* has been too hastily dismissed. In the right light, nature can be seen as a complex sign-system of correspondences and signatures, what Baudelaire referred to only half in jest as "the language of flowers and silent things." That primary language, what Herder intuited as nature's first revelation ("Urkunde") to humankind, is structured like a vast cosmological poem. This poem is echoed in the founding poetic traditions of all cultures, and in the works of those modern poets who have ears to hear.

Nature has always had something to say, and what she says is expressed most eloquently in those poems written in response to her calling. A poetics attuned to the primary poetry of the earth can understand better the resonances, revel in the harmonies, and be part of the music while the music lasts.

Creativity

The deepest ecological mystery is nature's endless creativity revealed in the history of evolution and in the never-ending display of life forms in the contemporary biosphere. Of his first trip to the Galapagos, Darwin wrote: "I am astonished at the amount of creative force, if such an expression may be used, displayed in these small barren and rocky islands." While Darwin later explained the appearance of creativity through such mechanisms as random mutation and natural selection, the new biology has come to understand the earth as a living organism (call it *Gaia* if you want) whose greater purposiveness includes not only developmental stability but creative self-expression.

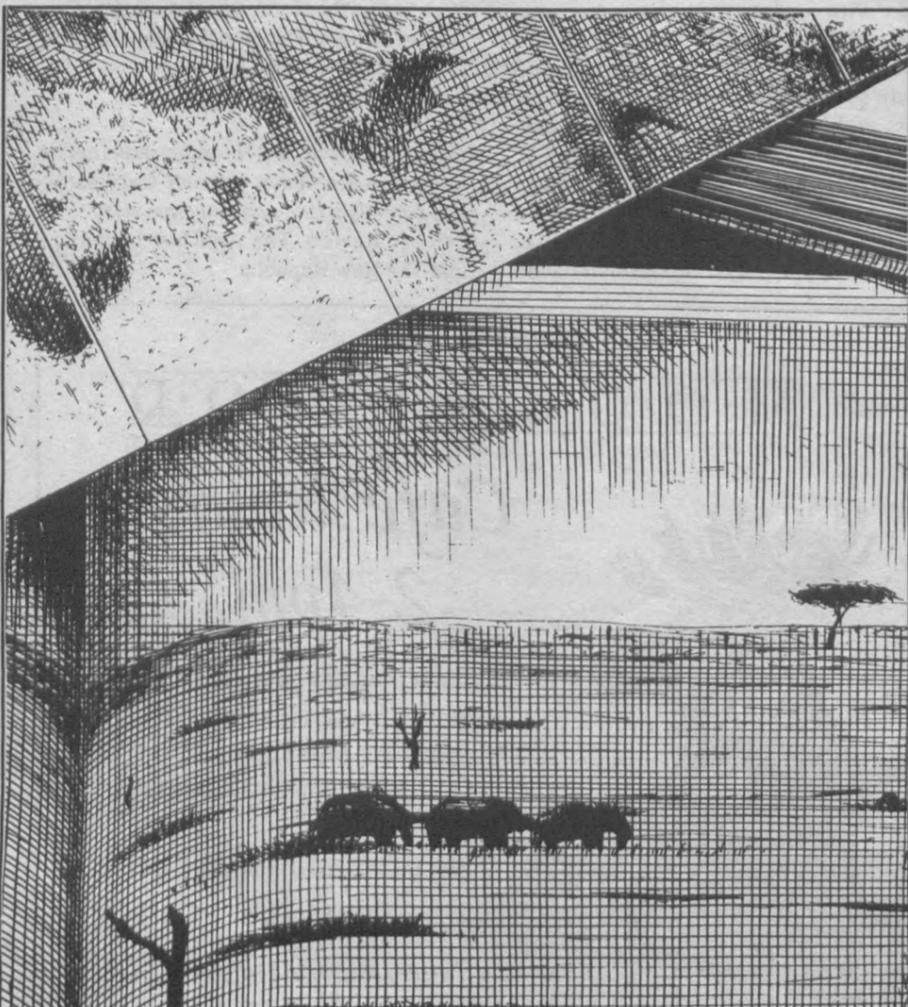
The artist shares with nature both the indwelling creative energy giving birth to expression and the impulse towards ever more refined forms. For this the poet has been called a new Prometheus, a second maker under Jove. Poetry over the ages has thrived on a privileged access to that creative power, and a poetics grounded in an affective attachment to nature can show how that creativity echoes and reverberates in a thousand individual acts of creation. Especially in those poets sensitive to the primary poetry of the earth, there occurs a kind of symbiosis between nature and the poetic imagination—as if poetry itself were but the extension of nature's own act of creation.

Poets from all different cultures have looked to nature for inspiration, and their claims deserve to be taken seriously. It is no bluff that the primary natural symbol for inspiration in almost all languages is the wind, as in the Hebrew *ruach*, the Greek *pneuma*, or the Latin *spiritus*. For it is the same kinetic or erotic energy which drives the unfolding cosmic mystery and the creative flourishings of poetry. A poetics which plies a middle course between air currents and literary inspiration can hearken to the creative power of the wind itself and to the wafting of this figure in literary texts, as in the opening lines of Montale's *Limine*: "Rejoice when the breeze that enters from the orchard/ brings you back the tidal rush of life." (tr. Arrowsmith).

Words and Things

But poems are made from words, not from airy sentiments. A fundamental and *a priori* obligation of environmentalist poetics is to examine the complex inter-referentiality between language and nature, or between words and things. At least one of the advantages of pre-Saussurian linguistics was that it did not abstract language from its material substrata. The current wisdom that a signifier can refer only to another signifier is correct as far as it goes, but fails when elevated into dogma. Language is not a prison house of signs referring to other signs, but trembles in constant rapport with the world of people and things.

Poetic language especially is not arbitrary, but historically and semantically determined.



There is an immediacy between things and signs which grounds the reality of the poem and holds its constitutive elements in place. A poem coheres because it correlates to the world of natural referents. I say a rose, and in spite of the absence of any immediate bouquet, flowers spring inevitably to mind. They can be recreated poetically only because they exist in my garden. The miracle is not the absence of the thing signified, nor even the construction of a disembodied hyperreality (as in Mallarmé), but that so many possible significations could sprout from such fertile soil. Take away that primary reality, and the whole edifice of symbolic, aesthetic, philosophical and literary connotations associated with the figure of the rose would fade into nothingness. Most worthy of veneration is not the far-off, inviolate and mystical rose of Yats, but the incomparable real rose, even the slightly faded rose, or the rose pressed between the pages of a book. This is the true epiphany, the primary revelation of nature against which the figural rose in its fullest flowering pales in comparison. As the poet and mystic Angelus Silesius once put it: "a rose is without why."

Metaphor

Even that most important and illusive trope of language, the delivery-boy of possible meanings and the basic exchange mechanism of poetry—metaphor—cannot be understood without continual cross-reference to the world of things. While metaphors break through the syntagmatic ordering of literal referents, carrying over meanings from one context to another, they still depend on their grounding in natural facts. In primitive poetry especially, what one finds is an implication of the order of nature within the order of poetic convention. The phonetic make up of the words *Hector* and *oak* may be arbitrary, but the full force of the Homeric simile depends upon an imaginative reconstruction of the natural scene. Or take this fragment from Sappho:

*Like a mountain whirlwind
punishing the oak trees,
love shattered my heart.*
(tr. Barnstone)

The power of this verse depends on the transfer of the natural phenomenon of trees being lashed by the raging wind (vehicle) to describe the psychic phenomenon of love (tenor). The metaphor does not wholly uproot the crashing trees from their mountain homes, but suggests how love is signified by every clash of the elements—vouching for the sacred intimacy of nature and the life of the emotions celebrated in lyric from Theocritus to Petrarch to Neruda.

Applications

The primary responsibility of any poetics is the study of poetry, and can be justified only insofar as it enhances our understanding of specific texts. Environmentalist poetics does this by mediating between the representations of nature in literature and the larger ecological worldview. The fruitful exchange between poetry and ecology works both ways, for not only can the paradigms of ecology provide a set of powerful critical tools for fleshing out meanings of literary texts, but poetic insights often anticipate in intuitive or pre-objective fashion the discoveries of modern ecological theory.

The larger project for an environmentalist poetics might entail something like a *natural history of literature*, showing how natural themes and images are reflected and processed among different cultures and periods. Here, I restrict myself to providing readings of three poems which serve as snapshots of a possible ecocentric literary tradition. Each of these poems bears witness to the workings of the ecological imagination, to the dependencies of the poetic imagination on natural phenomena, and to the creative symbiosis between nature and the organic imagination.

Goethe:

Song of the Spirits upon the Waters

Goethe, whatever else he may be, is the first modern hero of environmentalist poetics and the proto-ecological way of life. Many of his

poems explicitly thematize the links between mind and nature, while showing how the spontaneous creativity of nature overflows in poetic figures. Goethe's poetry of the organic imagination is succinctly postulated in the *Gesang der Geister über den Wassern* (*Song of the Spirits upon the Waters*), composed in the shadow of a gushing cataract at Lauterbrunne (near Interlaken) during his first journey to Switzerland. With its well-wrought metaphors stressing the interpenetration of the physical and psychic worlds, it imaginatively enacts the communion between subject and object which is the hallmark of the ecological imagination. It begins like a Bach fugue with the exposition of a dominant theme followed by development:

*The soul of man
Is like water:
It comes from heaven It climbs to heaven
And to earth once more
It must come down,
Forever changing.*

What strikes here is the immediacy of the comparison, captured forcefully by the dative in *gleich dem Wasser* forming an extended allegory or parable (*Gleichnis*) of the operations of the soul. The imagery of the poem applies equally well to both water and soul, suggesting an inner reciprocity of natural and mental processes. The destiny of water in the biosphere, with its various stages of precipitation, riverrun and evaporation, analogizes a vaguely Neoplatonic eschatology in which souls migrate between heaven and earth (even if Goethe's own cosmology is more pre-Socratic).

The description unfolds along an intermediate axis between the literal and figural registers of meaning with a symmetry so perfect that it is sometimes difficult to tell whether Goethe is drawing on natural metaphors to describe the operations of the soul, or on psychological metaphors to describe natural processes. The poem winds its way to closure with an extended parallelism between the wind blowing the waves and Fate (*Schicksal*) determining the destiny of man. While Goethe accepted the basic bleakness of Spinoza's moralism, he tempered it with a willful affirmation of the whole of life and an almost Dionysian exaltation in both the creative and destructive aspects of nature.

Anna de Noailles: *Living Deeply*

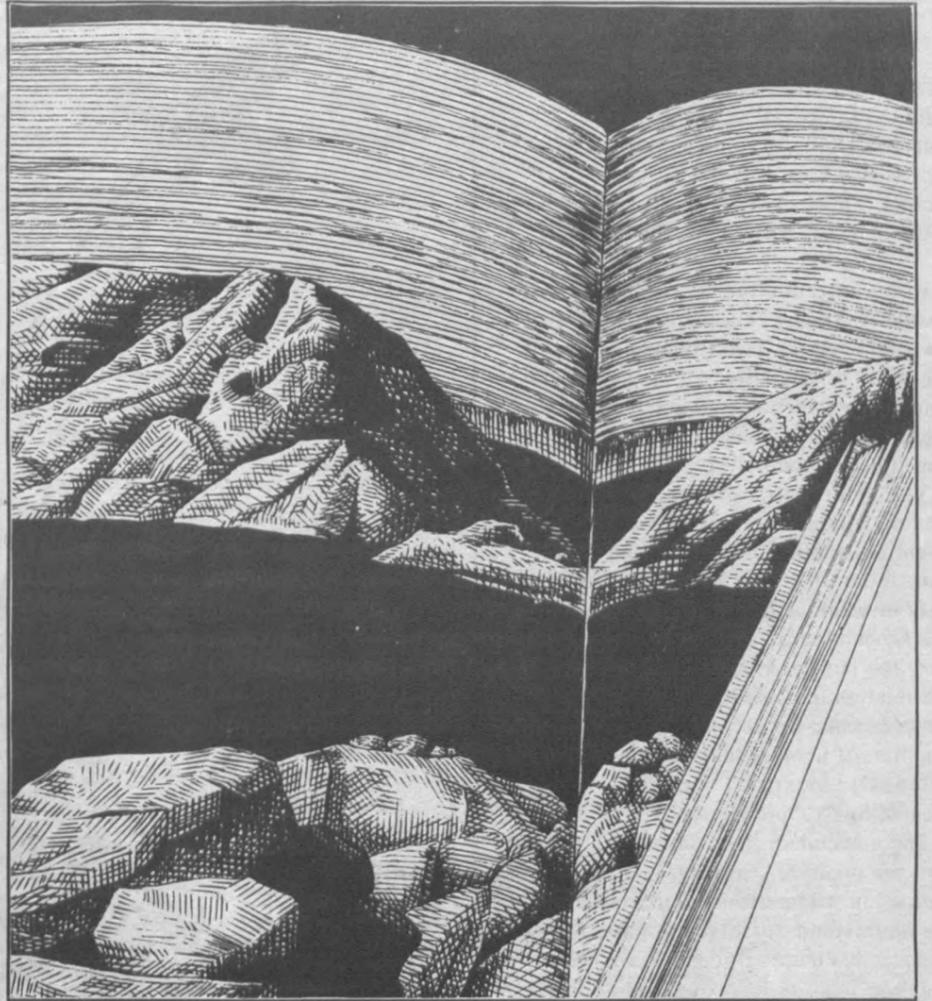
The question is sometimes posed (especially in Ecofeminist circles) whether women possess a more intimate relationship to nature than men. The poetry of Anna de Noailles would seem to substantiate such a claim while anticipating in poetic form what some modern theorists have called the *ecological soul*: the soul which comes into being through conscious participation with natural processes. In this sonnet, entitled *La vie profonde* (*Living Deeply*), Noailles articulates an almost religious attachment to nature along with the sheer joy of being alive:

*Being in nature like a human tree,
Spreading desires about like deep foliage,
And feeling, in the peaceful night and in the
storm,
The universal sap flowing through your
hands!*

*Living with the sun's rays on your face,
Savoring the heady brine of ocean spume and
tears,
And drinking deeply of both joy and pain
Which forms a cloud of humanity in the empty
air.*

*To feel within the beating heart: air, fire and
blood
Whirling about like wind on the ground;
To rise up to the Real, to peer into the Mys-
tery,
To be the rising day and falling shade.*

*And when the evening glows a cherry red,
To let fire and water flow from a crimson
heart,
And like the clear dawn on elbows propped
To sit dreamily on the margins of the world...*



This poem is about being-in-nature, combining admittedly late-romantic themes with a feminist inflection and a modernist existential urgency. It invokes a feeling of unity and sympathy with nature, in which—quoting loosely from Dylan Thomas—the green fuse which drives the flower is also the power that flows through the blood. The self-reflexive yet largely impersonal constructions of the French text form a sort of open invitation to the reader to enter into sympathy and solidarity with the rest of creation and even become part of nature's own creative self-expression. It asks us to imagine what it would be like to be one with the rest of creation, to feel the universal sap flowing through our veins, to live in the sun's rays, and to flow with the cycles of the day and of the seasons. The poem is structured like a rite of initiation into the deep ecological mystery in which the boundaries separating the "I" and the "Not I" break down. In this moment of phenomenological nakedness, nature is endowed with almost human consciousness as the perceiving soul rises upon creation to recognize its own co-creative power.

Gary Snyder: *Turtle Island*

Gary Snyder, driven by the same spirit of the wild which fired John Muir, has been vying for many years to assume Whitman's mantle to become the contemporary poet of the American ecological soul. Ecological paradigms are indispensable to understanding his work, which presents itself in explicit collaboration with an activist environmentalist platform, and is the appropriately self-conscious poetic expression of both the critical and utopian aspects of the Deep Ecology movement. Snyder's best poems, such as *Turtle Island*, are hymns of pure praise:

*Ah to be alive
on a mid-September morn
fording a stream
barefoot, pants rolled up
holding boots, pack on,
sunshine, ice in the shallows,
northern rockies.*

*Rustle and shimmer of icy creek waters
stones turn underfoot, small and hard on toes
cold nose dripping
singing inside
creek music, heart music
smell of sun on gravel.*

I pledge allegiance,

*I pledge allegiance to the soil
of Turtle Island*

*one ecosystem
in diversity
under the sun—
With joyful interpenetration for all.*

This poem is about being-in-nature with cold toes. It conveys a sense of concrete sensual experience along with the familiar correspondences between inner and outer, subject and object, creek music and heart music. It is regionally specific, paying homage to a particular place: an ecosystem, a bioregion, a microclimate in the cool Northern Rockies. Snyder's poetry is refreshingly *down to earth*, rooted in actual circumstance and in the very physical presence of his own poetic voice. In this poem, we can almost see Snyder in his rough woolly clothes, boots in hand, and a broad smile underneath his beard. The allusions to varieties of patriotism express Snyder's emphatic option for preserving the wild while intuiting the possibility of a new ecocentric model of American constitutionalism based on organic diversity and "joyful interpenetration for all": another America lying underneath the current system of economic development, a greener America of protected wilderness, maybe even a beautiful America.

The Reenchantment of the World

One of the reasons the modern environmentalist movement has made such little headway is that it is insufficiently grounded. A serious commitment to the earth must be based on more than utilitarian arguments or even common sense. In the long run, environmentalism needs to be sustained by a vision of the sacrality of the natural world, what I think Thomas Berry means when he speaks of the *dream of the earth*. The cultivation of such a vision is perhaps the greatest service that literary criticism can do for the environment. By attending to the spontaneous creativity of nature and its resonances within works of art, environmentalist poetics can contribute to a sense of a living cosmology, while working towards what Morris Berman calls the *reenchantment of the world*. The spiritual history of the West, especially during the last two hundred years, has been one of progressive disenchantment and the elimination of the category of the sacred from most people's daily lives. The poetological celebration of the earth can help us to break out of the interposed framings of technological society and rediscover a sense of the sacred vitality of the cosmos, for the same principle of creative energy and love underlies both nature and art.

Steven Chapman lives in New York City.

The Traffic In Men

Jody Greene

SEX AND CONQUEST: GENDERED VIOLENCE, POLITICAL ORDER, AND THE CONQUEST OF THE AMERICAS
by Richard Trexler
Cornell University Press
292 pages, \$29.95

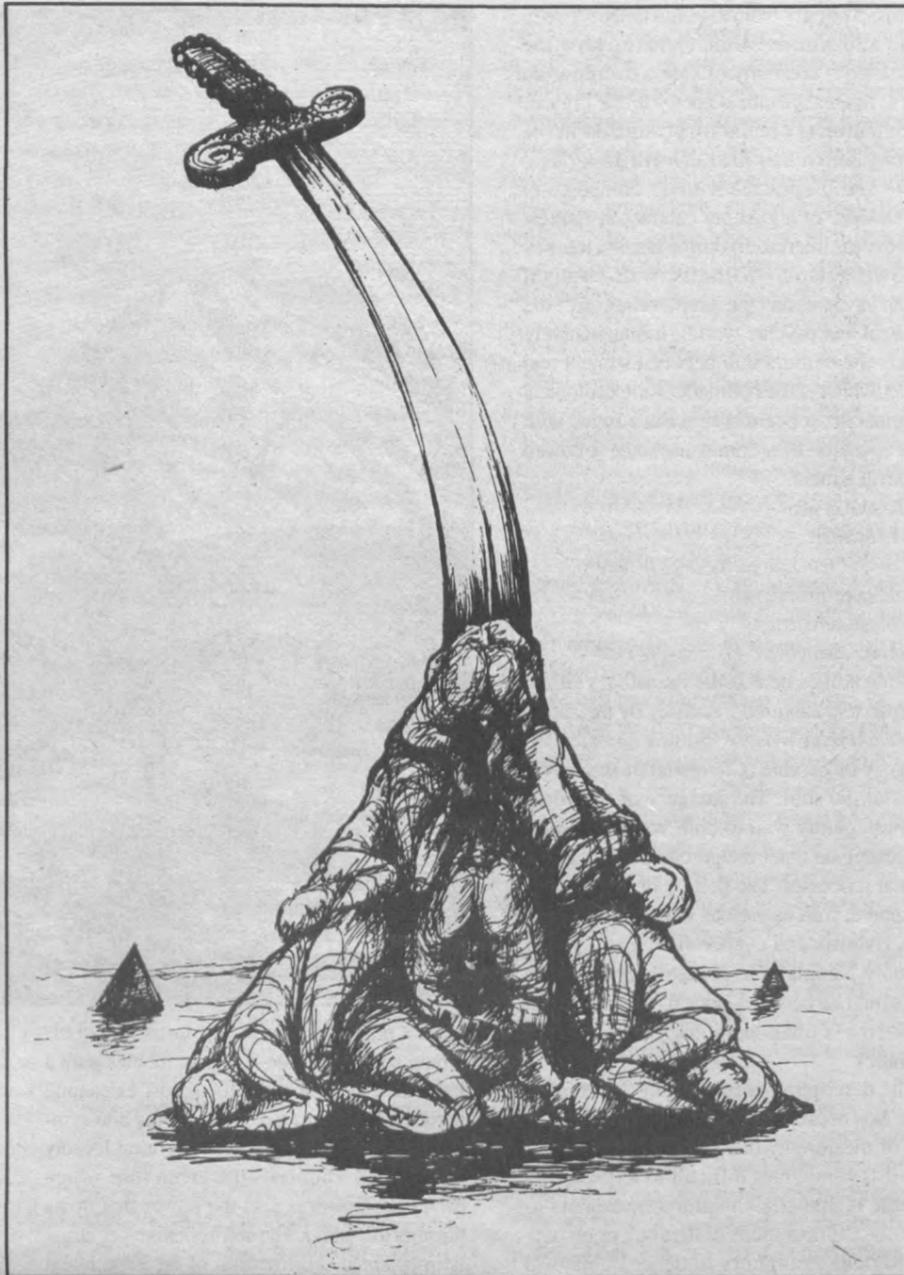
In his introduction to *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault presented what we might call the Two Commandments of the study of sexuality: 1. Thou shalt distinguish between sexual acts and sexual identities, and 2. Thou shalt not attempt to uncouple sex and power.

Through the first of these injunctions, Foucault meant to make us aware that twentieth-century Europeans and Americans think of sexual acts as markers not only of what we do, but also, in the most fundamental sense, of who we are. To take only the most obvious example, consider the relation in contemporary U.S. culture between same-sex sexual acts and the designation of homosexual (or occasionally bisexual) "identity," "orientation," or, most tellingly, "preference."

The vocabulary itself says much about how we organize sexuality: in a language steeped in voluntarism and individualism, we understand ourselves to have something called a sexual identity, we believe that that identity is or ought to be stable across the span of a lifetime, and we "choose" that identity (often, admittedly, by default) on the basis of the "preferred" gender of our sexual partners. One of the primary goals of Foucault's *History* is to remind us that sexuality has not always been arranged this way (and indeed may not always be so now). In earlier ages and in other cultures, same-sex sexual acts might tell us less about the gender-orientation of the participants than about their status, age, or relative rank—that is, about the relations of power between them.

We have a tendency, Foucault points out, to think of sexuality in transcendent terms, as a place of mutuality and equality (think, for instance, of the telling phrase, "sexual partner"). Many of us believe that sex at its best represents an escape from repression, oppression, inequality, alienation, convention—in short, from power. Foucault refuses this rosy vision of liberation-through-fornication, the promise of which he calls the "repressive hypothesis," by reminding us that sex is in fact "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power." Both between (or among) the practitioners of a given sex act, and from seemingly external sources, power exerts itself in manifold ways: inequalities of age, gender, status, physical beauty, physical strength, and experience (to name only a few) may determine relative balances or imbalances of power between practitioners, while medical, legal, educational, and religious institutions (again, the list could go on) exert power from "outside." We imagine at our peril, Foucault chillingly concludes, that "by saying yes to sex, we say no to power."

What would it mean for a scholar of sexuality faithfully to follow Foucault's twin commandments—to try to write a history which trained its eye relentlessly on acts and sought to bear witness to the relations of power impelling and pervading those acts? It would mean, for anyone writing about same-sex sexuality, refusing to romanticize the liberatory possibilities of "homosexual" relations, as well as forgoing the undeniable pleasures of searching for lesbian and gay ancestors "hidden from history." It would mean, ultimately, writing the kind of book Richard Trexler has written in *Sex and Conquest*—a stark, sometimes gruesome, always fascinating account of the history of male-male sexual violence since antiquity, which attempts, according to the author, to take seriously



Scott Werder

Foucault's "fundamental understanding of [the] relationship between sexuality and violence."

While ostensibly dealing with the "gendered essence of conquest" (150), especially the Iberian conquest of America, Trexler's book actually presents a much more extensive and comprehensive history of political ends attained through often violent sexual means. Trexler offers us a thorough introduction to the "relation between force and sex" (7), the use of penetration by men of a variety of cultures and eras for the purposes of humiliation, domination, and the cultivation of dependent cadres of male supporters. In *Sex and Conquest*, Trexler explicitly acknowledges his own attempt to take up Foucault's challenge, claiming that he wants to present a "study of eros and power" which is not, like so much recent work in the history of sexuality, "uncomfortable with questions of power" (5).

Early on, Trexler describes the three primary aims of his book: first, using primarily sixteenth-century Iberian (and some Mestizo) sources, he intends to offer, a history and analysis of indigenous South and Central American "homosexual practices and the male transvestism often associated with them" (2) in the period of the first European-American contact; second, he wants to explore the "relations between conquest and eros" (3) as they were played out in the Americas; and finally, he will offer some account of the Iberian assessment of indigenous sodomy and its relation to cultural development. While Trexler ultimately achieves all three of his aims, and does so with remarkable erudition, it is the second of these—the relation between conquest and eros, desire and power, which produces the book's most interesting and problematic insights.

In order to introduce readers to the links between sexual violence and state building, Trexler begins his account with an

overview of ancient Mediterranean and European cultures. From the Greek city-states to Moorish Iberia, Trexler offers examples of the ways in which men (and women, although Trexler, as we shall see, is virtually silent on this subject) were punished and subdued, in war and peace, through violent sexual means. From here, Trexler turns to a summary of Native American sexual practices as the Iberians encountered them at the start of the conquest. Trexler discusses Aztec and Inca sexual practices and customs, and the uses of sexual violence and domination in these indigenous cultures first on the battlefield, then in the temples, and finally in the great Meso-American cities themselves. Tackling head-on enduring myths about the prevalence of sodomy in the New World, Trexler tries to make sense of the Iberian sources which provide our only knowledge of pre-conquest sexual practices and gender organization. It is a testament to his abilities as a researcher that he gives us almost as much documentary material as he does text. He demonstrates a healthy skepticism about the material contained within those documents, yet still mines them for a wealth of material.

Trexler devotes much of his book to the institution of the "berdache," which he believes can be found in some form in virtually all indigenous American cultures. Usually from an early age, the berdache dressed and lived as a woman, and publicly took the sexual passive role of serving one man in her town or village. Trexler examines the social, cultural, sexual, and religious functions of the berdache, and attempts to reconstruct indigenous attitudes and Iberian assessments of this fascinating figure. Deftly sidestepping issues of innate or voluntary "homosexual identity," Trexler uses the institution of the berdache to investigate same-sex sexuality as a question of power rather than of desire or pleasure. Put another way, Trexler forces us to see the

berdache as a figure on whom the desire for power, rather than the desire for pleasure, was exercised. On the body of the berdache, the building of states was effected.

Trexler proceeds from the premise that what happens on the battlefield ultimately manifests itself in the rest of the social world, that "warfare [is] the incubator of civil institutions" (141). Thus, in cultures and eras as various as Ancient Sparta, North Africa in the period of the Crusades, Renaissance Spain, and preconquest Mexico and Peru, Trexler looks at the treatment of military captives and vanquished enemies as a way of discovering how sexual violence was used to subdue and even administer enemy states. According to Trexler, sexual violence moved from a form of battlefield humiliation to a broader mode of social control—perhaps the originary form of social control. Thus, Greek warriors raped both female and male Persian prisoners of war before castrating and/or killing them, in order to mark the victory and warn future adversaries of what was in store for them should they take on the Greeks unsuccessfully. In a structurally similar—if less obviously violent—move, powerful Greek citizens bequeathed younger male companions to service their sons sexually, thereby establishing that these sons were destined to lead and, if necessary, dominate other men. Regardless of the gender of the individual being penetrated, and regardless of his status as warrior or citizen, the masculinity of the insertive or "active" partner was not in question, as it might be, in certain contexts, today. To penetrate was by definition to be a man, no matter who was being penetrated. In the contexts Trexler describes, there were no homosexuals, "only tops and bottoms" (176).

As its subtitle suggests, *Sex and Conquest* tests "gendered violence" as inseparable from sexual violence. By gendered violence, however, Trexler emphatically does not refer to violence against women. He deals, instead, with the manifold ways in which the domination of men by other men, enacted through sexual means, genders the subordinate men as female. By being forcibly penetrated men are rendered not only "passive" but also, and more importantly, "effeminate." Trexler argues—and his thesis is bound to be a controversial one—that the humiliation done to male victims of sexual violence is more than the mere fact of being penetrated, "abused," by another man: the true violence, Trexler claims, in a "world of penetrative penalty" (7), is to be made *ipso facto* into a woman through being penetrated by a man. Citing Pizarro's account of the Peruvian berdache, Trexler notes that the conquistador "come[s] close to identifying less sodomy than the assumption of the woman's sexual and work roles as the 'abominable sin'" (170). Whether they considered their male enemies already to be women or they proceeded, through violent sexual means, to make them so, it was, in part, on the basis of such "abominations," that the Spaniards justified their conquest. Trexler concludes that Europeans from antiquity to the conquest of the so-called New World "imagined conquest in gender terms" (175).

Trexler's sweeping analysis often blurs the distinctions among very different cultures, conquests, and eras. From the Iberian material, the author leaps to such contemporary sites of sexual violence as the Balkans and the American *barrio*, where he sees male power continuing to be exerted and displayed through ostentatious acts of (frequently same-sex) penetration. From prison violence to the attacks on illegal immigrants perpetrated by U.S. border guards, men continue the patterns Trexler has traced from the ancient world, where-

by they "ma[k]e politics," as they have always made war, "by sexual force" (178). While he is careful to provide a wealth of documentary material about each of the cultural sites under review, Trexler consistently reduces an extraordinary variety of materials about male-male sexual relations to a single paradigm which might be summed up by the question, "who's on top?" This paradigm is also a gendered one, since whoever is on top is the one who acquires all of the privileges of cultural masculinity. While this structure occasionally leads Trexler to perform somewhat vertiginous leaps among cultures and time periods, stretching the definition of comparative historiography and anthropology to its limits, such acrobatics do allow the author to offer the sort of overview many historians of sexuality instinctively shy away from. The result is a remarkable, if vexing, book, which I found alternately impossible to put down and extremely hard to read. The book's boldest claim comes in two brief discussions of existing work on sexual violence against women and its relation to state-building. Scholars such as Gerda Lerner and Gayle Rubin (the latter of whom, oddly, Trexler does not cite) have argued that the foundation of both patriarchy and the state can be located in the "historical subordination of women," in the historical workings of "property" (6). Men accrue power through the accumulation and/or exchange of women in general, and female slaves in particular. Women represent property both in themselves and, in later stages, carry property with them as they are passed among men. While Trexler does not deny the foundational relation between property and state-building, he locates the originary moment of the state elsewhere, in male-

male sexual relations. Immediately following a discussion of the Cretan practice of allowing boys both to serve as and then to take (literally, abduct and rape) male "wives" before they had reached the appropriate age for heterosexual marriage, Trexler writes:

It has long been a truism that the family is the foundation of the state, but, in fact . . . those relations between males that begin in gangs and continue in these first homosexual marriages already provide a foundation of the state—that is, that set of relations between males that peaks in the power of the male sovereign. Only once power relations between men are established in these first homosexual marriages is property addressed in a later heterosexual marriage. (30)

The Cretan abductions, then, are far from an isolated aberration: they are, in fact, "emblematic of state-building" (30). In passages such as these, Trexler threatens to undo our most basic notions of the relations between gender, power, and political life, supplanting the concept of a "traffic in women" (to use Rubin's term) which cements social bonds among the powerful, only to replace it with a similar, but even more primary, traffic in men.

As persuasive as I found Trexler's novel analysis of the relation between male violence and state building, the ease with which he attempts to displace (or, perhaps, preempt) existing feminist work on "the family," patriarchy, and the state left me uneasy. If I understand Trexler correctly, he is arguing from a somewhat problematic analogy between the life of the individual and the life of the state: just as "homosexual marriages" preceded heterosexual

ones in selected ancient cultures, the power relations between men cemented by these homosexual relations "already provide a foundation of the state" which precedes the relations secured through the exchange of female property. Not content merely to supplement in crucial ways existing work on state-building, Trexler seems to want to "top" the "truism[s]" of his feminist colleagues by claiming that his theory gives a more "originary" account of the genesis of the state form.

Considering the revolutionary aims of this argument, it is surprising to find very little space in *Sex and Conquest*. Trexler devotes to the issue of sexual violence against women. Having begun the book expecting to see sexual violence against men-gendered-women compared to the broader category of the subordination of women, I found myself frustrated by the failure of this book on "gendered violence" to treat on more than just a few isolated occasions the issue of violence against actual women. If conquest is indeed "in part about the gender of the competitors" (150), surely this account of the European conquest of the Americas requires a more comprehensive notion of "gender" than merely that of "effeminacy." Without such a treatment, the book lacks the ability to fully address the relation between violence, gender, and "political order" promised in the title. In particular, the omission of a more sustained analysis of the treatment of women seriously weakens Trexler's attempt to rewrite the history of state-building as a traffic in men.

Another omission is no less surprising: notwithstanding the placement of the book in the era of the "European conquest of America," Trexler fails even to address

the question of either sexual violence or "gendered violence" committed by Europeans on Native Americans. Once again, a topic which one might assume would take up a substantial portion of the book was almost entirely missing. Aside from a few references to the *picota*, the phallic emblem of European presence erected outside conquered indigenous villages, Trexler fails to provide much information about how the Europeans went about re-gendering the newly subject populations. Considering the book's otherwise graphic depictions of the rape and sexual assault which had characterized both Iberian and indigenous American warfare before the conquest, it is hard to believe that such acts were absent from the conquest itself, and yet they appear nowhere in the book.

As I began reading this book, I wondered whether a history of forced sexual acts—and particularly of anal rape—could truly be defined as an integral part of the history of sexuality. I came away thinking that it not only can be a part of that history, but that it must. But although I learnt much from Trexler's work, I came away with the distinct sensation that I had read only part of the story, that the book, impressive though its scholarship may be, lacks conceptual components crucial to the formulation of its own argument. Until we study the traffic in men alongside the traffic in women and children, we have not really begun to explore the "relationship between sexuality and violence," or to understand how that relationship fits into a broader history of sexuality, state formation, and social control—a history through which we are still living.

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What It Was Like

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my grave robbing sins, but I was unrepentant. Once, we were caught red-handed by an Italian policeman, who wagged a finger at us and invited us to a nearby tavern for a drink, an example of the humane Italian tolerance for the lustful needs of others. Just as I could obtain illegal American cigarettes by going to the piazza San Silvestro in Rome, stand on a corner, radiate desire for tobacco, and an aged crone would arrive, delve in her skirts and offer me a package of Chesterfields, so too, I would travel to Greek sites in Sicily, stand among the ruins, longing for ancient objects, and a peasant would appear from nowhere with a bag full of treasures. Heedless of any danger of robbery or mayhem, I would go to his house, eye the coveted objects, and enjoy the amoral excitements of the collecting passion.

We bought a second-hand Hillman station wagon, and, on the numerous saint's days and vacations of the Italian calendar, used it on trips to see first-hand the noble examples of mural painting I had seen only in books: the frescoes of Giotto at Assisi and Padua, of Piero at Arezzo, Fra Angelico in Florence, and Signorelli in Orvieto. As it turned out, most of these murals had very little to do with my abstract theories about integrating the visual arts. Italian mural painters were allotted wall space in cramped chapels, monks' cells, cloisters, or churches, and simply used the opportunity to create their own visions of the prescribed content and formal order, whatever the surrounding architecture might be.

While I was working on the second Nebraska mural at the Academy, a friend called to tell me that the Paris edition of the *New York Times* contained an image of my first mural and an account of the outraged reactions of Nebraska legislators, who were upset by the cubist distortions in my newly installed painting. Anticipating one of the artist-versus-philistines squab-

bles that were a form of public entertainment in those days, all the major news services and CBS television sent reporters to interview me. However, mindful of my left-wing past at a time when that despicable bigot, Republican Senator Joe McCarthy, was leading a national witch hunt, and fearing that exposure might cost me my commission, I refrained from indignant inflammatory remarks that might have generated further controversy. So the episode was soon forgotten.

After I managed to maneuver my completed mural through the nightmare of Italian customs bureaucracy and on its way across the sea to Lincoln, we crammed our children, luggage, and family tensions into the Hillman and headed north to France and our rendezvous with the "Queen Elizabeth" at Cherbourg. Along the way we stopped to view the powerful Romanesque sculptures at Moissac, St. Giles and Arles, then moved on to the caves at Font de Gaume and Lascaux, visited the overwhelming Gothic cathedrals at Bourges and Chartres, had a family picnic in the Forêt de Fontainebleau, and drove on to the Porte d'Italie and Paris. In that worldly town, I spent a week trying to persuade the most hard-hearted used car dealers on earth to buy our car, but when that failed, decided to drive on ahead and put the car on a transatlantic boat at Le Havre, and then take a bus to Cherbourg.

Meanwhile, my wife, who was known for every virtue except being on time, rose to the occasion, made it with children and luggage to the boat train in Paris and arrived at the Cherbourg dock on schedule for one of the happiest reunions of my life. The great mass of the Cunard liner arriving from Southampton appeared in the harbor and slowly edged up to the pier. We boarded for a ride across the ocean to a country that seemed very far away.

Kenneth Evett has had eleven one-man shows at the Kraushaar Galleries in New York City.



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Terrestrials

continued from page 3

below them, from the knobs on the radio in his air-conditioned quarters to the toggles before him in the cockpit.

A superb line chief groomed the *Cyrano* for them. There was never a walkaround inspection. The line crews wore foot muffs and used small mats when servicing the plane. An entire medical team prepped them every time. But they had both discussed, intoning the phrase softly as if it had magical properties, breakoff phenomenon, which was the psychological feeling of being alone in space. This was their drug and their disease. The only cure was to have more of it. The lull went on, a hiatus of lulls, in which they functioned perfectly as machine-minders, good men both, high above the railroad from Djibouti to Diredawa, like a dropped strand of barbed wire. Safe in the titanium shell that was as strong as steel but lighter by far, they became somnaerialists, soothed by the same aspirin as the rest of the world, but as remote and unknown as if they had come from a different planet to look at Earth, map it, and go back home to drinks of molten rock and meals of fungus ingested through the pores of a carborundum skin.

III

When the flame died in the left-hand turbojet, the only tangible-audible effect was that of a vibration and a hum removed. Warning lights twinkled as the computer corrected the *Cyrano's* left sag, but the engine stayed dead, and the altimeter began to whirl.

"Try yours," Booth told Clegg in a rehearsed whisper, and Clegg did, with a peculiar sense of being outside his own body, outside the plane itself, and looking on, as if death had already intervened. Then the other engine quit, a rare chance but not unprecedented. Sabotage was the word Booth mouthed as the *Cyrano* dropped like a forward-lunging grain elevator from eighty to sixty thousand feet. Try as they did, they could get nothing restarted within the accelerant whine of sixty streamlined tons beginning to steepen its dive to the desert. It was a titanium sailplane now, controllable only while going fast. Level, it would have reeled sideways and rearward into stall and spin. Once again Booth was trying to land on an attack carrier, only this time in something gross and unwieldy, Earth rotated him, and was now hauling him downward, below fifty thousand, in the same passive role. Out went the encoded Mayday signal, just the permitted once, and he heard the increasing buffet and whistle from outside, a sound coarse and spasmodic. He became dizzy and told himself to keep his head utterly still, and then he became sluggish, though calm, while something useless coursed through his brain like quicksilver: the remedy, the answer, maybe, but indecipherable. The cockpit had become full of noises, including those in his head. Who did this to us? Who'd know how? Who shot us down? What with? Scumbag politics. Who prepares for this? Who ever got out of it? Damn the future. We're just like Gary Powers 'cept we have the brains. Damn all air forces.

Ejecting was simple enough, but Booth could think only of its dangerous complications, its sheer irrevocability. A poor-sounding *splumf* took Clegg upward, then horizontally because the *Cyrano* was diving, and then out of sight. Booth armed the camera-sensor self-destructs and, for the second time in his life, blasted forth like a seed, only today within a supersonic escape capsule with Mach 3 capability, survival gear, radio, and buoyant for water landings. His mind formed the cognate verbs reject, inject, project; what a pedantic taskmaster the old brain was.

Now each man was a monad in a capsule, buffeted but sealed away, each fierce in his keyed-up trance, wondering if he would ever have to do this again: Booth plucked horizonward now in a somersault that took place thirty-odd thousand feet over the rusty-looking cobweb of Eritrea. Out popped the stabilizing tubes, like telescopes, to check the spin as soon as it began, and they saw the *Cyrano* explode far below them, soundlessly. I am Booth, Booth felt his mind say. I am still Clegg, said the other's

mind. All they had were torn thoughts, not about each other. Booth had lost Clegg, and Clegg Booth, yet externally speaking their encapsulation was the same. Their throats were sore from oxygen. Their eyes dribbled. The heated canopies were not warm enough. Now Booth, beginning to think they had been shot down, saw a huge mountain range, in fact the one in which Clegg had already landed, his mind feverishly switching between shot-down and sabotage. What was that mottled darkness of splits and blanks into which Clegg had descended like a human arrow entering meat? In fact, he was marooned on a sheersided plateau, his mind a spastic jumble in which the phrases *blown up, shot down*, chattered to him derisively, reassuring him that nothing in their training got them ready for this — nothing in their lives or reading. *Cyranos* had gone down,

lonely salt-pan jamboree, troughing on soup mixes, hard candy, vitamin capsules, in a panama hat improvised from the heavy aluminum foil the food was packed in.

Dizzy again, he sipped water from a thermos, set the beacon for below sea level, and arranged the chute's main canopy into a low tent. Then he crawled underneath, came out again and daubed ointment on the insect bites that adorned his face and arms. After that, he checked his heat tablets, his signalling mirror, his penlight flashlight, and wondered what use any of it would ever be. That he was alive and unharmed cheered him no end, certain as he knew he was to be found within the day. Already the *Cyrano* was overdue, and, though no helicopter from his own base could reach him, and no rescue plane land hereabouts, he could easily be snatched up in a harness that the *Hercules* snagged by flying over

Safe in the titanium shell that was as strong as steel but lighter by far, they became somnaerialists, soothed by the same aspirin as the rest of the world, but as remote and unknown as if they had come from a different planet to look at Earth, map it, and go back home to drinks of molten rock and meals of fungus ingested through the pores of a carborundum skin.

but for the prosaicest of reasons. This, this was sacrilege.

Down Booth floated with the drogue chute open above him, plucked invisibly, small and too small until the main canopy bloomed, apex first, followed by the skirt and shroud lines. He saw two or three panels rip, perhaps even an entire gore, but he reassured himself that such mishaps were standard. Of course. The air-anchor held firm while he drifted away from the mountains, down toward the desert, then below sea level into a depression of hot salt.

It was six thirty-eight Zulu Time when the capsule, with egress window already open, clunked along the salt-pans and rumbled to a dangling halt with the mild implosion sounds of light-bulbs smashed and, harsher without being extra loud, the noise of an old snow-shovel.

Booth with sunglasses on felt less hammered-at by light, less as if he were standing on a chunk of the sun. His skin crawled as his body tried to cool itself. He shook his head, his arms, to dislodge the envelope of sweat. No sound reached that silently stoked morning, in which not a bird cried, not an animal scampered. He heard the salt creak and inhaled an aroma similar to that of swampwater. The untidy bundle of orange laundry that was the parachute lay still as the salt in that breathless oven. He was down, and almost out, and where was Clegg? Things beginning this badly ended worse.

Ah, he breathed on the compass's glass face, then spread out on a piece of chute fabric the bandages, the bandaids, the pack of knife blades, the tube of antibiotic ointment, the tin of aspirins, the ammonia inhaler, the triangle bandages, and the pack of water-purification tablets. For sure he was going to be healthy now, and he almost saw himself presiding at a

low, as over a tennis court and hooking the top cord of the net. Was it truly like that? You sat in the suit that was a harness and waited for the plane to get the cord centrally, and then the huge pull as you climbed skyward even while being reeled in. What did they call the damned thing? Breeches-buoy? No, that was a Navy thing. This was the sky-suit or the air-chair. The *Hercules* dropped it to you, like rescue manna, after which it was easy. So, OK, two required. Drop one to Clegg as well and waft us home for dinner. If you prayed for one, or two, did you get instant service? He did not even know what to pray for, but he had seen the device work in a movie when they floated out a Viet Cong general just kidnapped.

Thus far, Clegg had not even dared to move. After an endless-seeming but sunny descent during which he felt almost glad of the change in his whereabouts, he sailed past a mountain's peak, then drifted along a razor-backed ridge, thinking how humped, how rigid, how sullen and iron the planet looked. Next came a series of collisions with rock spurs projecting from a sheer wall down which his capsule coasted, twirling and rebounding with crashes that jarred his teeth. Along a ledge his capsule went, almost halting as it settled, only to be plucked up again by a ripping wind. Then it resumed its ragged descent. He felt shaken about as if inside a child's plastic rattle. All he could see now was a massif against whose anvil wind and gravity kept pounding him. Accustomed to the smooth sensations of flying in the *Cyrano*, he wished himself twelve miles higher up, sleigh-riding in the same harness and seat. He was far from ready for the sudden stop which, unlike its predecessors, remained a stop and was not the prelude to another shuddering tumble.

He glimpsed a wall of rock, haunch of something vast. On the other side was a more distant wall dropping to the valley floor, how far down he could not tell. Then all vision ended as the chute collapsed, enclosing him and his capsule in an orange blur. The only way to fix his whereabouts was to get outside and look. How wide was the shelf he was on? Going out, would he plunge a thousand feet down a sheer cliff, in a cocoon of plastic, dragging the capsule after him? Or would he lift the fabric and stride clear, down a gentle incline? He slid the window-panel open and began to use the knife. Layer after layer exposed only more orange. He found olive bird-dung on the knifeblade. He listened, heard only his breath, then some shredded kind of call — bird or what? The shroud lines creaked under a strain he could not identify, and an occasional click came from the canopy as it did something small.

After a while he became reckless and sliced away madly at the chute. When the knife finally seemed to move about in air, and wiggled freely, he cut out a patch and looked across about one hundred yards to a layer-cake wall of rock, golden tawny in the sun. There was nothing in between of whitish sand, the valley floor was perhaps four or three thousand feet beneath him, shelving gently for the last thousand, but, for the upper two thousand, perpendicular slate. The capsule was on the very edge, maybe a foot or two over it, and the chute hung uselessly down.

A sudden movement on his part and he would plummet to his death. A gust, claiming enough of the chute's area, would also send him down. At some risk, of course, he could stay put until his food gave out or he was found. He switched on his Mayday beacon, thinking he could combine shroud lines and fabric strips into a rope of sorts, but one almost a third of a mile long. Handful after handful, he slit it and pulled it in, hardly knowing what the next stage of the process would be. After all, to what would he fasten the one end of his makeshift rope? He had not yet found even one of the shroud lines with which to make a start.

Tomorrow's mission, flown by Xavier and Young, would go on as usual, while he and Booth alternately froze and boiled in the least known of the less known parts of Africa. Their only reason for being, his and Booth's, had been aerial, and now they were so much refuse. He yearned for the tie rack whose rotors had slowly turned his neckties for inspection and selection. Which tie went with which suit and which socks? Facing his walk-in closet, he used to activate the little motor and watch his ties revolve like clusters of snakeskins whereas his half dozen suits hung still, his shorts lay flat, and his shoes aimed their plane-like noses at him from a rack. That slow whirligig of draper's bliss had given way to a gradually unrolling film of Africa.

Clegg worked at his rope without even looking down, aware of blisters already forming on the tips of his fingers and thumbs. Above him blue sky quivered in the gash he'd made, requiring of him a mental effort that said it was the same sky he'd flown through earlier that morning. Lymph gathered in his blisters. The rope grew longer. He was wondering why, in extreme situations, human thought became barbaric and conjured up only violence and hate. It was the mind's way of recharging itself, a reminder not of what it feared to lose but of how not to lose it. Coughing dryly, he paused in his work for a teaspoon-size sip of water, the taste almost that of the distilled variety. What if Booth had already been saved? Had they truly resented each other? Would he care if Booth survived? If Booth died? No, he told himself, all that is beside the point. Two men, so far two survivors. It must be so. Just the onboard computers have died.

He had an extraordinary sense of having been simplified or factorized, for the first time in years equipped with a genuine horizon. He knew now where he ended and other things, or other people, began. Parameters had come to life, that deadhead jargon word sprucing up. High in what he guessed was the Tegré range, he wondered how cold the night would be, how many nights he would have alone, and how to fortify himself without hymn-singing, abrupt

raucous shouts, or biting his lips in order to taste blood. So should he work all through the night? If he went too soon, his descent would end in a long drop. Was it better to go at full strength down an unfinished rope than at one fourth strength down one that reached all the way to the ground? Other pairings occurred to him, such as half-strength down a half-rope, the one criterion being the maximum drop he could survive. Sixty feet or fifty.

It all depended on what he wanted to do once he was down, whether to walk to death in the desert or to die broken-legged at the mountain's foot.

In a daze he began to work again, cutting fabric and twisting it as if making firefighters from newspaper. Then he tied the ends together. After an hour, although he still had not laid hand on a line, he saw one coming up toward him. At his feet he had a fifteen-foot daisy chain of orange loops, an heroic promise that he would not let himself die.

IV

A shrewd observer with some military flair, and a feeling for savage topography, might reasonably conclude that these two men would now encounter different fates: Clegg, high up, likely to be torn to shreds by eagles as if he were in the Caucasus; Booth captured by some fearsome breed of desert isolatos, who would first castrate him, and his shrieks would somehow blend with Clegg's terrible cries as the eagles snipped away at his liver. They might have been bored to death, of course: first bored one hundred per cent, then giving up the ghost without a murmur. Such things have happened. Glancingly, Clegg and Booth wondered about each other, but readily got back to the matter at hand. A summary of their sufferings would be unfeeling, whereas a second-by-second recital of them would be tedious and try the reader's patience. It ill-suits to say they bled and wailed dozed and shuddered, guessing always what was coming to get them (this including a rescue machine of some kind). Say simply that they lasted from day to day by numbing their imaginations, Clegg allowing himself to think he was the mercury sinking in a thermometer, Booth a newspaperman sent to meet Doctor Livingstone. Beyond such paltry sideshows, imagination served them not at all. They sank their identity into their body processes, into their very peristalsis, their rumbles and burps, their aches. They became agonizing pre-cadavers, refusing to think in terms of numbers, and they lasted, Clegg until he had converted the remains of the parachute into an unuseable rope, Booth until a crew of shaggy-looking salt miners, accepting him as a gift from the gods of physical labor, put him to work alongside them, cuffing and nudging him to put more effort into his chores. Clegg's mind, which had at first receded from the barrenness and vacancy that surrounded him, and had then shrunk from ceaselessly peering at himself, now retreated yet farther, into the very stratosphere of self-awareness, losing himself in impersonal quavers. Booth, newly exhausted, lay down on the job, heedless of dunts applied to him with a pole. Clegg almost deliquesced. Booth drained away into the salt. No one saw Clegg and those who saw Booth took no interest in him. This was the middle of their history, a few days, but long enough to transform them into hulks of trauma, still aware, but waning fast, with just enough volts traversing their brains to wonder if God had seen them and was going to intervene.

He did. A searching Russian helicopter, on loan to the local regime, found them both (they were not far apart, not as the chopper flies) and brought them back into civilization, Clegg by now a mountain man, wordless and frozen and annulled, Booth a parody of *homo faber*, Man the laborer, not quite gruntless, but dehydrated and racked with pain. Were they still alive, they wondered. Were they still American? To whom would they belong henceforth? Neither man spoke to his rescuers, but their lips fell open at the smell of water.

The Russian helicopter had made the same overwhelming noise: how the almighty would sound if he spoke. For Clegg the chopper was like the apparition of a bridge disintegrating and

falling, for Booth a contraption not of this Earth, indeed a tractor, say, or a plough, something that could not possibly fly, but did. So fast they went from samovar and vodka to bagels and yoghurt, from an all-night orgy to breakfast. It was as if one part of a bargain had been paid ages ago, and the rest of the transaction had to be done in haste. The Russians did not want them, did not need them; it had been agreed that pilots would be returned without delay, hindrance, questioning, or even prejudice. Such were the boons of an extinct war. But, Booth thought, it was only the style that had slipped; the basic underlying situation remained the same. He had a secret self that Clegg knew nothing of; he was so open-minded he belonged to both old rivals, which made of him a Colonel Facing Both Ways, persona grata to both though only paid by one, in dollars. Clegg kept breathing hard, as if to glean

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answers from the very air, first of all back in Turkey where birds picked fortune-cookie type predictions from a tray for a pittance. Then a slow boat cruised them from Cairo to England, through the fabled Mediterranean.

"The open sea at last," said Clegg, not having relished the torrid delay on the Bosphorus. His white-sheathed arm hailed the sun lolling in the south across miles of shot-silk Aegean.

"You could cover your arm," Booth told him from the wheelchair he did not now quite need but used when on deck, almost as a vehicle of honor. His teeth had been fixed.

"I am drying it out, it always feels damp."
"You could cover it with the sleeve of your sweater rolled down."

"Don't fuss, Booth, for God's sake don't fuss. Let me enjoy the ocean."

"How green and open it is, almost like flying at high altitude."

"Never again. What will you do?" Clegg rolled his sweater sleeve half way, making a white-and-dark-gray contrast.

"Breathe deeply and slowly for a whole year."

"We fouled up. Funny thing, though, while it was all going on I never had any sense of doing the wrong thing, of not going by the book. Is that 'Lack of Moral Fiber'?"

Slyly bitter, Booth sighed, "Ah, the book. Who ever went by the book?"

"Protestants do."

"I mean military."

"But," said Clegg, "we were never very military, were we now?" He tugged the sleeve up all the way to the wrist.

"Look at the sun, it nearly did us in." Booth never looked at the sun now without a slight shiver of homage.

"It will in the end, it can't help doing that."

"You look like that statue of Poseidon somewhere in Sweden. Its arm sticks up just like yours, and a fountain plays over it."

"Then," said Clegg morosely, "I may have a future after all, as a decoration in some public park, somewhere in Albany maybe."

"They won't be naming any constellations after us."

"Or streets."

"Or latrines in foreign theaters of war."

"Not even that. Hell," Clegg exclaimed, "look at that sky!" It was the unquenchable superthick lazurite of an angel's eyes.

"Bluest blue," crooned Booth unself-consciously. "It goes everywhere. It doesn't stop."

"It's radiant," Clegg told him shyly.

"It sure is. It has no opinions."

"None of us, anyway."

"Back there? I mean up there?"

"Both."

"I was more scared in the mountains than in the underground hospital."

"And I in the desert. I chopped salt for a week. It seems like a week." Booth mined salt with his hands.

"I thought I was dead, I really did, but I didn't think I'd done anything wrong. How could I?"

Booth nodded and stared through the rail down at the Ocean scudding by. "Quite a few knots."

"Less than the old days!" Clegg's good arm flew in a vague parabola.

"It's tempting," Booth told him quietly. "You could go all the way back to the cabins, get up speed, and shoot yourself clean out of your chair into the sea."

"You could," said Clegg, making a pretense of affront. "I didn't mean anybody else."

"You'd pull me out."

No he wouldn't, Clegg told him curtly. With his arm...

"But you otherwise would," Booth insisted. "It would be your duty. As second-in-command."

"Of what?"

"Good question. Anyway, you're famous among the tribes back there."

"In a pig's eye I am."

"All things considered," Booth said, fingering his jaw as if testing the tan of his skin, "I'm none the better for any of it. It's as if somebody else lived that piece of my life for me and, in doing so, screwed up the rest of it. We didn't even make the newspapers." He took a cup.

"Not in a big way," Clegg corrected him. "There was one story."

"Yeah," Booth scowled, "they called it a malfunction."

"It sure malfunctioned us."

"For keeps," Booth snapped. "You don't want that kind of thing in the middle of your career."

"Or ever. It stops you dead."

"We survived, that's something." Booth drank all of his bouillon and slung the cup into the sea. There was no splash.

"One cup missing," Clegg chanted.

"Fucking cup," Booth snarled, then cracked a smile as he heard himself. "I was glad to discover the opposite sex again, even in the hospital."

"You always are," Clegg said dreamily. "Will we write each other over the years?"

"You bet," Booth told him crisply. "It's a deal. And maybe get drunk together, real smashed, in Cincinnati, halfway across the country."

"Chicago maybe, at the Palmer House," said Clegg from an opulent dream of deep leather chairs and twilight bars.

"Wherever." He no longer wanted to be great, only to feel so.

"You're on," Clegg said, relieved to be at home somewhere, even on an ocean liner inexplicably named *Mazzaroth*.

"No more *Cyrano*," moaned Booth.

"Already," Clegg told him, "there's a Mark Four. It was faster by fifty knots. I guess it still is."

"What a kite!"

"What a prang!"

"They no longer need us," Booth said faintly. "Want is more like it." Clegg sounded euphoric.

"Goodbye, Africa," Booth said.

"No more mountains," said Clegg.

"Case closed."

"Dumb."

The steamer veered left just east of the Dardanelles and aimed its bow at the sun for half an hour as if heeding evidence of things not seen. Everything, Booth thought, had already happened; but, as always, you only found out about it when it caught up with you, just when you weren't looking. In other words, fate was complete, but its victims (or lucky legatees) didn't know.

Paul West's previous novel, The Tent of Orange Mist, was recently nominated for the National Book Award. Terrestrials is forthcoming from Scribner.

What It Was Like

...continued from November issue.

Kenneth Evett

My baptism in the cultural waters at Cornell came as a shock. Upon my arrival in Ithaca, I was temporarily housed in the Dean's local apartment, situated in a former faculty home. The other apartments were occupied by two formidable professorial curmudgeons whose demeanor was as chilly as the weather outside.

The Art Department staff consisted of smart, sophisticated artists who had studied abroad and produced modern art in modes that were unfamiliar to me. John Hartell's architecture students were designing nonobjective constructs of forms in space; J.O. Mahoney, two-time winner of the Prix di Rome, was creating neo-surrealist assemblages; Norman Daly was painting flat, semi-abstract images derived from American Indian motifs, which he exhibited in the New York gallery of Durand-Ruel, at that time one of the most eminent art establishments in the Western world; J.M. Hanson, who exhibited at Passadoit, a New York gallery that specialized in contemporary European painting, had been a pupil of Leger and an assistant to Ozenfant in Paris. He knew all about mathematical systems of proportion and had developed a rock-solid concept of the geometric structure of the human body, which he used for knowledgeable distortions that combined Renaissance tonal modeling with Cubist ambiguities.

In addition to this impressive faculty crew, the students in the department, some of them veterans on the G.I. Bill, were far more independent and experienced than my former students at Salem College. Somehow, I survived the daunting challenges presented by my new colleagues and wound up at the end of the term having picnics at Twin Glens with my fellow teachers and their clever wives, who either spoke fluent French or had read all the novels of Anthony Trollope. I was invited back for the following year, and in the fall of 1948, moved with my family into an apartment over a grocery store in Collegetown. Later, my wife found us a place in a duplex on Heights Court, the most fecund faculty street in town at the time, where we were living when our son, Joel, was born.

The Cornell Art Department seemed to me a model of enlightened pedagogy. The teachers, all practicing artists, were provided with private studios, granted carte blanche freedom to pursue their own aesthetic goals, and given schedules that were generously balanced between time for teaching and time for creative work. In such a civilized environment, I felt free to respond to the new influences that surrounded me. I began to try out a few simple Cubist devices, such as reverse perspective, coincidental contours, and figurative distortions, whereupon I recognized the wonderful iconographic and formal freedoms that modern art had to offer. I also experienced a revelation of aesthetic perception in the work of Paul Klee. His powers of invention, his sensitivity to human scale, his wit, subtle color, and refined relationships convinced me of the worth and promise of modern art. And, of course, I was influenced by the original imagery and formal elegance in the works of Picasso and Braque. With all the zeal of the newly converted, I began to enjoy the sense of being in the vanguard and urged my students to make use of spatial ambiguity and to relate their forms to the flat frontal surface of the picture plane, which were the currently accepted pieties of the New York school.

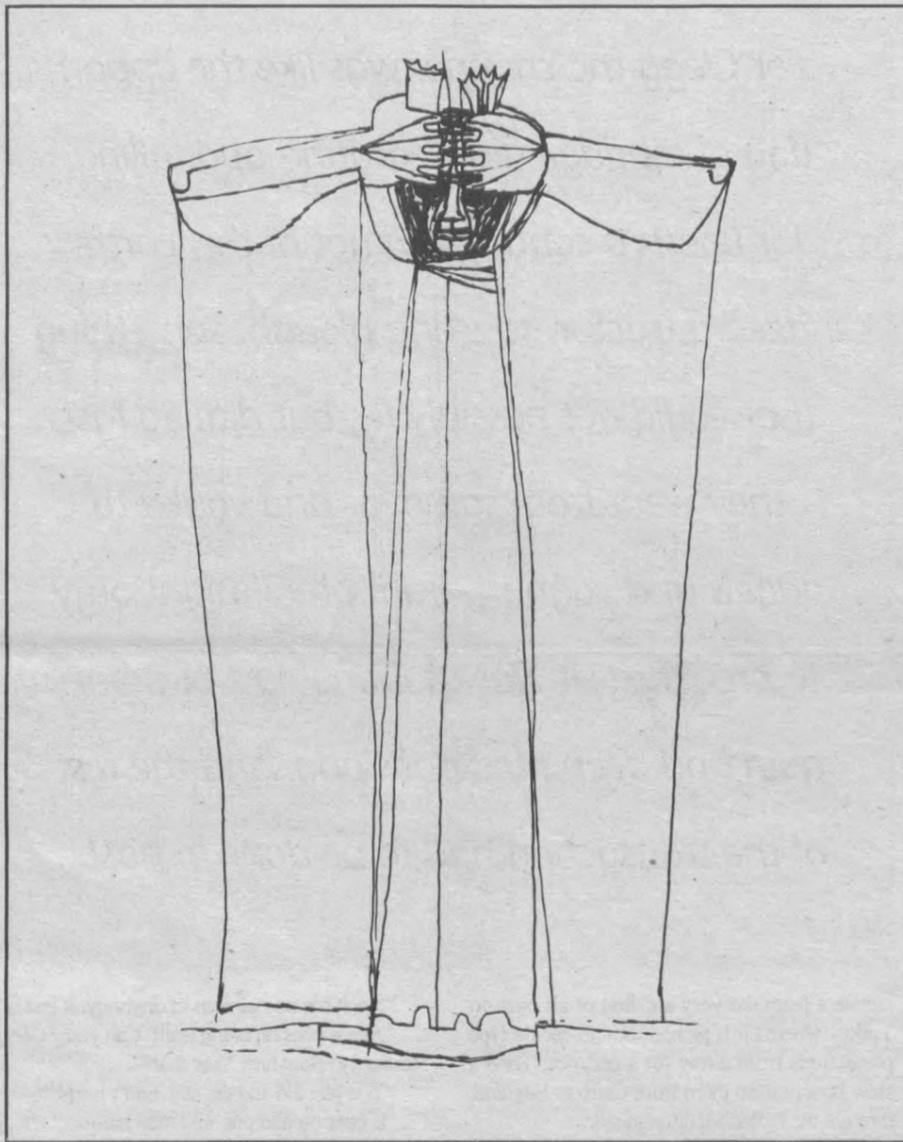
In one of those fortuitous events that can change an artist's view of life, I discovered Gustav Schwab's *Gods and Heroes, Tales of the Greek Myths*, a book I had given my son that had lain about the house unread until I picked it up one day and noticed the striking illustrations—simplified versions of 5th-century B.C. black-on-red Greek vase paintings. Because I prized the combination of vital energy, empathy, and cool reason displayed in these images, I was tempted to read the text. Then it dawned on me that these accounts of the sensuality, lust, and pain of the all-too-

human gods and mortals of the classic world were relevant to life in the 20th century. I moved on to read the dramas of Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles until I became completely engrossed in a civilization that had long been a source of inspiration for Western artists. I felt that a treasure of visual and emotional possibilities lay before me. About the same time, I became aware of the haptic power of Picasso's "Guernica," and it occurred to me that I might find a way to project my own perceptions of our physical existence through the power of drawing.

Of an evening, while depending on the liberating stimulus of beer and classical music on the record player, I would read Schwab's tales, concentrate on the physical core of a given myth, and try to capture that haptic moment with spontaneous marks in a sketch book. Next day, using one of these little drawings as a

cessor in Paris, the school assigned problems that required the integration of architecture with mural painting. As a drawing and painting teacher of freshmen architects, the idea that mural painting could animate, and even control, interior spaces appealed to me, and when I was invited as one of thirty artists to participate in a national competition to create three 15' x 24' murals for the rotunda of the Nebraska State Capitol, I had already formulated theories on the subject, which I expressed in a written statement required by the selection committee. I was chosen as one of seven artists to design one-inch-scale color studies on the given themes: "Labors of the Heart, the Head, and the Hands." While the subject matter seemed naive to me, I was sufficiently intrigued by the formal possibilities of the project to give it a try.

I looked up a 1934 copy of *Architectural*



Oedipus by Kenneth Evett

point of departure, I would take a crude lettering pen with a square tip that allowed for thin or thick lines and scratch out on large sheets of paper in a nervous, searching way, those definitions that would complete the design. While carried away by the emotional power of the myths, I was willing to lay bare my own psychic preoccupations, and in the process produced hundreds of pen and ink drawings that I later used as the basis for oil paintings. One of these, "Death of Agamemnon," was an image of the Greek king, home from the Trojan war, snared in a net while taking a bath by his wife, Clytemnestra, and held helpless by her as her lover, Aegithus, stabbed him to death. Subsequently, a wealthy midwestern industrialist and art patron, Otto Spaeth, selected this painting, among others, for an exhibition to celebrate the opening of his new Cedarburg, Wisconsin factory, offering these art works for the pleasure of his workers and suggesting that they could be purchased on the installment plan. When a lathe operator actually bought my portrayal of domestic violence, it was considered to be a newsworthy event. CBS announced the story on the morning news, it was written up in *Time* and described by Anthony Bailey in a *New Yorker* article.

In the early '50s, a vestige of the Ecole des Beaux Artes tradition remained in the College of Architecture at Cornell, and, like its prede-

cessor that was entirely given over to architect Bertram Goodhue's building, an unusual amalgam of modernism, art deco, and the European tradition of integrating painting and sculpture with architectural structure. The magazine provided a comprehensive picture of the Greek cross floor plan, the location of the murals sixty feet above the floor on three interior walls of a cube, and the space, color, scale, texture, existing decorations, and architectural details of the rotunda area.

I decided to divide each of the three murals into four vertical panels that would contain a semiabstract Cubist-Byzantine symbolic figure. Each figure would conform to the required content and pick up the vertical movement of the columns supporting the balconies below each mural, carry that flow through the mural, and connect visually with the vertical mullions of the arched windows overhead. Then, by repeating colors and abstract shapes from the mosaics on the floor and mosaics on the domed ceiling far above, I hoped that the murals, located about half-way between the two areas and surrounded by light, warm-toned Indian limestone walls, would unify the entire space, while creating a lateral zone of activity in which visual energies would jump from one mural to another.

Whether anyone ever noticed or cared about this abstract conceit I don't know, but at least

the jurors must have responded to my serious effort at integration. On a fine spring day in 1954, I walked home from a Cornell baseball game and was greeted with a telephone call from Lincoln and the news that I had won the \$26,000 commission. After a few days of pure euphoria, I was obliged to face up to the very real challenge of painting one thousand and eighty square feet of murals.

I had a movable scaffolding built and found a large empty classroom in Franklin Hall, where workmen constructed a temporary homosote wall. After attaching four contiguous vertical canvas panels to that surface, I designed a cartoon at one-third scale, using a slide machine to project a linear design of the entire mural. Then I began to paint in a coloring book, ala Prima mode, that produced an overall paint skin of the best Winsor-Newton oil pigments. At the end of the summer, I rolled up the canvases, face-out on a metal drum, placed the work in a wooden box, and shipped it out to Lincoln for installation by a company of New York experts.

With our new-found wealth and the prospect of a sabbatic leave coming up, we decided to spend a year in Rome, where, thanks to the good graces of Cornell graduate Michael Rapuano, who was a member of the American Academy board of directors, I planned to paint the second mural in a large first-floor Academy studio. Somehow, we managed to get our family of five to a pier in New York harbor in the nick of time to board the "Andrea Doria," and, as the ship's loudspeakers sounded the thrilling and portentous words "la nave é in partenza," we set sail for Italy.

...

After an agreeably monotonous nine-day voyage across the Atlantic, when all we had to think about was the next meal, how to prevent our four-year-old from climbing a guard rail and jumping overboard, and finding different routes to sneak upstairs to first class for our daily exhilarating walks around the ship, our landfall among the riotous sights, smells, and sounds of Naples seemed wonderfully foreign. The excitement of being abroad only increased as the Rapido for Rome whizzed by the bare gray mountains at Gaeta, past intermittent landscape scenes of disciplined Italian husbandry ornamented by classic Mediterranean umbrella pine, cypress, and olive trees, and the omnipresent piles of litter surrounding the old towns.

We found a marble-floored apartment in the Parioli, or "American ghetto," area of Rome, and I commuted every day across town to the Academy on the Janiculum, where I worked on the second mural and at lunch-time listened to tales of internecine warfare among the inmates of that privileged American outpost. At the end of the day, I made a practice of taking a different, leisurely itinerary by way of old Rome to the Stazione Termini and the number three tram to the Piazza Pitagora and home. This procedure eventually led me to the Via del Babuino and its shops full of banal modern art, fantastic furniture, ancient classical objects—and fakes. I developed an inordinate craving for creamy Corinthian pots, 5th Century B.C. black-on-red Greek vases, and Etruscan *bucchero* ceramics.

When my colleagues at the Academy told me about the temple dump site at Vei, where Roman terra cotta votive images (heads, feet, genitals, etc.) could be excavated with a simple stick, and described the accessibility of the Etruscan tombs at Cervetri, I lost all sense of law-abiding responsibility. On Sundays, I dragged my skinny twelve-year-old son to drive with me to those alluring sites, where he could crawl through the narrow apertures of opened tombs, look around for shards that might match, and hand them out to me as I stood in a wet ditch surrounded by brambles, enjoying every moment. We assembled several 5th century B.C. Etruscan pots, a Corinthian ceramic vase, and other precious artifacts. My young accomplice, who was fascinated by this pursuit, eventually earned a Ph.D. in the related fields of archeology and anthropology at the University of Chicago and later chided me for

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