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GREAT LAKE REVIEW

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VOLUME XXI

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I came home late the other night, worked a double shift. My roommate had left a hastily written note on the kitchen table: “Call Lenny — his brother died yesterday.” I sat down wearily in one of the chairs pushed far away from the table, and leaned my elbows on my knees, holding the note. I read it again, lit a cigarette, and inhaled deeply.

Inside the next room, Hal, the other guy that lives in the apartment, and his girl, Reeva, were fooling around, their muffled whispers and giggles penetrating through the door. I got up to go to the bathroom. The light in the bathroom was a lot brighter than the dim kitchen, and it hurt my eyes. The mirror reflected an aging man with tousled salt-and-pepper hair and a week’s growth of gray beard. I looked worn.

I guess I hadn’t been paying much attention, my mind on having to call Lenny but not knowing what to say once I reached him, so when I pulled up the seat, it slammed against the tank, knocking off the little ceramic cat Hal once bought Reeva. He had got it when they went into China Town one day.

“Look Judd,” she had said to me when they came home that afternoon. “I saw it in the winda an’ I said ‘Oh, Hal, it’s such a purty lil’ thing, I jus’ hafta have it.’ ” I had been lying on the couch, asleep before they came in. She held the statue out, toward my face, figuring I really cared what it looked like. But I didn’t. She stood there, clicking her gum and waiting for me to comment, I guess. So I propped myself up on my elbows, pretending to study the damn thing. Actually, I was looking past it, at her crotch. Reeva always wears her clothes tight, and that day her bright pink jeans cut her right up the middle. If Hal hadn’t been there, I mighta reached right out and touched her. Probably not, though, now that I think of it; Reeva’s not my type.

I said, “that’s nice Reeva,” then lay back down again, closing my eyes.

“Well, I was plannin’ on putting it on tny nightstand, right next to Hal’s picture.” I heard her high-heels, clicking down the hallway and opened my eyes again, just in time to catch a glance of her backside before she turned into the bathroom.

“But I changed my mind. I’m gonna leave it right here, on top of the bowl. You two need a bit of homeyness,” she called out to me and Hal. “Besides, I’m here mosta the time!” I rolled my eyes, but Hal didn’t see.

“Nice buns, eh old buddy?” Hal mused. I looked over at Hal, standing there with a stupid smile on his face. He winked.

“Too young for me Hal,” I said, closing my eyes once again. “I didn’t take notice.” This was a lie, and both of us knew it. Hal likes to play on my age, sometimes tease me about young girls. The truth is, Hal’s a lot younger than me. I’m almost forty and Hal’s only twenty-nine; Reeva’s twenty-two.

“Hal, honey,” Reeva said, as she made her way back down the hall, “let’s take a nap too.” Then they left. I went back to sleep.
Anyway, that’s how the dumb cat got to be there, on top of the john in the bathroom. I unzipped my fly and pissed first, since that was my intention on going in there, then got down on my hands and knees to look for the statue. It wasn’t the first time it had dropped, so I didn’t feel bad when I found one of its legs broke off. Two of the others had been cracked off a while ago, and glued back on along with its head. I knew Reeva would do her usual whining when she saw it in two, but I figured, “screw it.” I had to call Lenny, so I just left the two pieces by the sink.

I went back into the kitchen and lit another cigarette; the other had burned down to the filter. I opened a beer before sitting down, then picked up the phone to call. It was a while before anyone answered, then a tired voice said “hello”.

“Yeah, Len, this is Judd. What’s up?” I moved uneasily in my seat, not knowing what else to say.

“Not much. Hey, man, thanks for calling.” His voice was strange and low; I could hardly recognize it was Lenny’s. Then there was an uncomfortable silence, except for Lenny’s soft breathing through the receiver.

“I wanted to know if you’d go down to McGovern’s for a few -- maybe shoot some pool. You know, get your mind off things for a while.”

“Yeah,” he said, “I’d like that.” I hung up the phone and just sat for a minute, then got up to change out of my work clothes. I found a pair of jeans on the floor next to my bed, so I slipped off my pants and put those on. I didn’t bother to turn on the light, there was enough to see with from the moon through my window and the bulb in the hallway.

I heard Hal’s bedroom door open as I began to button up my shirt. He stood in my doorway, blocking most of the light; I looked up.

“How’d work go, Judd?” he asked, leaning his left elbow on the door frame, hand up over his head. I couldn’t see his face on account of the light shining on him from behind. Hal’s a short guy with a big chest and strong arms. He deeps his black hair cut short and neat, and grows a beard only in the winter.

“Okay,” I said, “nothing new.”

“Got an extra butt?” he said, holding out his right hand.

“Yeah,” I said, moving toward him. He took his arm down and leaned his back against the door frame, letting me walk through out into the hallway. I could see him now.

“Thanks,” he said, as I held out a cigarette, then flicked my lighter for him.

“Going out?”

“Told Lenny I’d meet him at McGovern’s -- take his mind off things.”

“Hey, tell him ‘sorry’ for me. You’ll do that, Judd?” I told him I would and then started down the hall. “Yo, Judd,” Hal Called. I turned back to look at him and saw Reeva rush around him, arms crossed over her bare chest, into the bathroom. I hadn’t really noticed the large thighs she had until then, since she only had on panties. And if I didn’t already know she had big boobs, I certainly would’ve gotten an eyeful that night. “Schnoggers,” Hal calls ’em when he describes Reeva, then holds up his hands, fingers arched and spread like a cat’s claws. Then he’d add, “a real mouthful,” nudging his listener, winking. She stopped just inside the bathroom door and poked her head out as Hal finished his sentence. “Take it easy, Okay?”

I nodded, then turned back around and continued down the hallway. “See ya, Judd,” Reeva called out.

I gave a wave over my shoulder and turned the corner. As I took my jacket off the hook by the door, I heard Reeva begin to whine. I went outside.

The cool, night air blew through my light shirt, so I put on my jacket and zipped it up half way, jamming my hands into the front pockets to keep warm. I walked with my head down to block the wind, kicking at the wet and rotting leaves matted to the sidewalk. Fall had come and gone, and I had hardly noticed. Now winter was here and the trees looked frail and dead. The streets were silent; it seemed I was the only one awake.

The neon sign of McGovern’s blinked like a beacon in the night, bring back memories of my young days in the Navy and the flashing of the lighthouse. Lenny and I have been friends since then. I walked into the bar, my eyes stinging from the smoke-filled air. Lenny was sitting along in a booth, hunched over a beer mug. I waved to Jack behind the bar, then headed toward Lenny. He looked up and smiled as I slid in opposite him, offering his hand.

“How’s it going, Len?” I asked, shaking his hand.

“Fine Judd, just fine.” I thought he looked as tired as I did, remembering myself in the mirror.

“Whatcha pleasure, sweetheart?” Helen said as she came to our table.

“Haven’t seen you in ages. Not been avoiding me now, have ya, Judd?” She tried to smile, I think in a way which she thought was sexy, and stood there with her tray resting on her hip.

“T’ll have a draft, and give another to my friend here.” I jerked my thumb at Lenny. When she left, I turned back around to face him. He seemed to be a far way off. I patted him on the forearm. “I rack, you break?” I said, pushing off the table to get up.

“Sure,” Lenny said, forcing a smile.

Helen brought our beers to us by the pooltable, stayed to watch a shot of two, then left. She came back when our glasses were empty, replacing them with two freshly draught mugfuls. We played two rounds of pool, Lenny winning both. Even when he’s got something on his mind, that man can still shoot a helluva game. We didn’t talk much during the games, just an occasional comment about a shot or about a song playing on the jukebox. I figured it was best this way. Get his mind off things. Lenny had just sunk the eight ball when Helen came back around.

“Jack’s closin’ up fellas, time to go.”

“We hung up the cue sticks and pulled on our coats. Lenny swallowed the last of his beer and slid the mug down the bar toward Jack; I put mine on the bar as we headed out. Helen was standing in the doorway.

“Give a lady a lift?” she said smiling, knowing I don’t have a car. “How’s bout you an’ me, Judd, go back to my place. You know a girl ain’t safe walking home along on these streets at night.” I looked at Lenny, who was just standing there, watching Helen.

I didn’t want to say ‘yes’ to Helen’s offer, but then again, I couldn’t figure out why not. So all’s I did was step through the door and hold it open, letting Lenny and Helen pass by; then I closed it.

We walked together, Helen, Len, and me, huddled close against the wind. Soon we past Lincoln Drive, where I live, but we kept on walking toward
Sixth Street, where Helen stays. Lenny lives on Tenth. A little before Fifth Street I changed my mind.

"You two go," I said, "Hal's expecting me." Helen stared blankly for a moment and then shrugged.

"Okay," she said, "Whatever floats your boat. Come on, Skipper," she said to Hal, brushing his arm.

"Just a sec," Hal answered, "I'll catch up." She started walking toward the corner, as Len and I stood there for a moment. "Hey, thanks, man," he said. "I really appreciate this." He gave my shoulder a quick squeeze.

For a moment I saw his face light up, but I can't be sure. Helen was waiting for him next to the stop sign on the corner. He turned and jogged up to her. Then I started back home.

I lit a cigarette and watched the smoke disappear into the night as I exhaled. One of the streetlights flickered on and off as I approached, and finally burned out when I passed. Hal's bedroom light was still lit when I got to the apartment. I sat down on the stoop to wait awhile. There was a leaf stuck in the wrought-iron railing, and I picked it out to study it. The dry leaf burned easily when I touched my cigarette to it. I watched the leaf smolder, took the last drag from my cigarette, dropped it to the sidewalk and ground my heel on it. The next time I looked up, Hal's light was out.

"Dead," I said, as I crumpled up the stiff leaf and scattered the pieces in the wind. I got up and went inside.
Syracuse Bewitched
“1,000 Angry Flying Farmers Converge On Syracuse.”
(Headline from a local newspaper)

Jonathon Hazelton

They are not ready,
the people of Syracuse,
for this wild concoction, this cloud
of farmers gathering in the West,
rolling dark like thunder,
gleaming wickedly like lightning,
their shovels and spades
clutched in soiled hands,
the times of their pitchforks poised
like the stingers of swarming bees:
these fed-up farmers
with their lost crops,
ribs of their wagons
curving upwards behind them,
their lands useless as Poppy fields
before the gates of Emerald cities,
their cow’s milk sour,
their horses foul-toothed.
They are not ready,
the citizens of Syracuse
who sleep comfortable in their houses
neat as rows of cabbages, carrots.
They are not prepared,
citizens of this city
surrounded by stubbed fields
of run-down farmlands
where scarecrows stretch and grin wickedly,
where pumpkins rouse themselves to fury.
They are not ready
or even well prepared
for these angry farmers
brandishing spear-like arms,
swarming like bees on the horizon
bearing down upon an unwary Syracuse
that does not believe
in hexes or witches.
They are not ready,
the people of Syracuse.
to take this walk down roads
of yellow brick under Emerald skies
where legions of farmers
swarm down around them.

Davey Gets His Oats or
The God Squad Turns On

Paul Benson 1985

It all got started at the graphics department of the Lutheran Control Center. Back in the early sixties there was the beginning of the sexual revolution. Around the mid-sixties this information reached the higher-ups of the Davey and Goliath Show and they decided to modernize. They figured with the youth nearly running out of the churches they needed a way to reach them before they all turned into heathens. The Davey and Goliath Show was their main media to the American youth, so they thought if they vamped it up a bit it would raise the ratings and if they were lucky it might help them retrieve a part of their vanishing congregation.

Like anybody else in the working world the guys in the crew at Control Center were there to earn their bread and butter, but they also knew that the jobs they had were gravy jobs compare to working out on the street with the rest of the ham & eggers. Running a cheezy religious show was an easy enough thing to do, the money was good, so they were willing to make any changes necessary to keep the gravy flowing. Plus they knew that the liberalizing of the script would send fucking Davey through the roof.

Otis Moshier and Stew Rawles were in charge of running the sets. Hudson Freneau and Toas Jackson were in charge of writing the scripts. When the word came down from upstairs that some sex had to be written into the script they were overjoyed at the prospect of being able to express their truer selves in more layed back, hip, mod, in tune, kind of layed back show that fit their natures better than the current get Davey in trouble have God bail him kind of show they had to write now. As friends and as infant hippies, they were ‘cool’ enough to know that smoking the evil weed was stimulating to the imagination, and that an occasional hit of acid with a jug of pink catawba was a good time as could be had. Along with these earthy perceptions mixed the common sense to not mix these ideas with work, so they kept their acts clean around the shop to keep the top brass’s ass’s happy and content. This is as good a general description of them as any.

After they got the news, they got together in one of the sterile conference rooms in the basement of Control Center building. Stew, who was a laid back nerdy intellectual kind of guy suggested they give Goliath back his teeth and have him terrorize the neighborhood, holding all the girl dogs at bay until Davey could come and shoot him with a paralyzer gun. Stew enjoyed the plot so much that he wanted to get right to work carving out a set of dentures that would fit Goliath’s mouth.

This was vetoed immediately as it was attributed to Stew’s last five days of doing methadrine. All these guys were short hairs, they were well dressed,
especially Freneau who thought himself the ultimate of conservative mod. Otis, more the typical Hoosier from Indiana, cropped his hair on top of his head in a greasy DA, and usually stuck to the jean and striped shirt look. He'd wear his cowboy boots when he was feeling 'groovy' but those days were usually due to his still being a little gassed from the previous nights drinking or because he hadn't done his laundry and was out of socks -- the boots were the only footwear he owned that covered his spindly ankles. Toas was a Pueblo Indian that had started working for the Lutheran folks as a charity case. The reservation missionaries recommended him because he had a rare talent among the Indians, he understood the white mentality. When he first showed on the set he was a shy kid trying to act normal in a pathetically abnormal situation. It was his first real exposure to working in the white world. But as the rest of the crew got to know him he loosened up into the rowdy hooting free-spirited self that he was. He stood six five at nineteen years old, making him an impressive sight that reflected in stilted conversations with people that met him for the first time. The missionaries intent in sending him, of course, was to get him away from the 'evil ways of his pagan culture'.

Toas, after slowly being corrupted by the team fell into the swing of things. But, in all that he did he remembered that he was working for Christians so he kept the management in mind when making decisions about the script. He also had to keep the Hanson's, who were a real family like Rex Humbard's, in mind before writing a new script. He and Freneau agreed to talk it over with them to see how far they dared go in promoting this new youthful sexual modern Christian image. John Hanson was a nice guy when he wasn't drinking. But there was many a day when make-up had to lay it on thick to keep the cameras from picking up a slightly blackened eye or a puffy lower lip on Mother Hanson.

Freneau said out loud what they all already knew. "The kids going to be a fucking pain in the ass." They commonly referred to Davey as 'the kid', it was the kindest thing they could say about him. He started out as an alright enough person, but as his fame grew from the show, it went to his head helter skelter. Vicious bastard was another common nickname, shit-head and little fucking pain in the ass." They commonly referred to Davey as 'the kid', it was the kindest thing they could say about him. He started out as an alright enough person, but as his fame grew from the show, it went to his head helter skelter. Vicious bastard was another common nickname, shit-head and little ash-ole were others.

Davey had been doing the show since 1959, or since its inception. Otis and Stew had been hired straight out of college. Freneau had been hired as the veteran writer of top religious material. He'd written for Billy Graham through the late fifties where he raised Billy's ratings and over-all popularity by talking Graham into doing a series of fraudulent healings during his revivals. The people started lining up for miles to get to see old Billy heal a heathen, within five years he started netting five million or so and he's been on the rise ever since. Toas came on to the set a couple of years later, in 62'. Davey, as a kid when he started was alright, but as he started getting fan mail and much publicity he turned into a regular snit. He would bitch about his stand-in's acting. The standing-stuntman in the episode where Davey falls down the mine shaft actually lost his life in that scene. At first the scene was going to be scrapped in respect for the man, but Davey ran to the top brass and cried until they saw it his way, which was to keep it for authenticity's sake. He said that the guy wouldn't have lost his life if God hadn't intended it to happen, so it was staying on film. "It's authenticity my audience wants, it's authenticity my au-
dience gets." The little bastard was always coming up with garbage, con-descending lines like that.

Freneau went over and talked to the family. Davey hung out by the pool the whole time and listened through the intercom. He was playing down the lower income tenant farmers with his G.I. Joes. Goliath spent his time laying on his back sucking sun with an occasional stroll for a drink from the poolside bar. Freneau was the spokesman for the group. Davey wouldn't talk to Toas, he hadn't since Toas appeared on the show. It was the episode where Davey dreams that he's back in the Pilgrim days. Personnel had screwed up the hiring, so on the day they were supposed to shoot the Indian scenes a tiny Chinese guy showed up in makeup to be fitted into an Indian suit. He was told to go home and Toas was asked if he'd fill in. He did, but as usual Davey wasn't happy with the situation at all. "I won't work with amateurs," he says. He didn't like the way Toas said 'How'. Toas leaned over and whispered something into Davey's ear. Davey's eyes got wide as pie plates and his mouth dropped open and he ran off the set. Nobody's been able to coax Toas into telling what he said to him and Davey was absolutely unapproachable on the subject. They finished shooting after Sally and Goliath calmed him down, and things finished alright.

To get back to the point, Freneau talked to the Hanson's and explained the changes the Deacons wanted to make. John Hanson who was remarkably sober was ready to go with it, Mother Hanson had no objections, if she did she kept them to herself. And Sally who walked in late in a bikini said it would be great to not have her chest taped anymore to make her look eight years old. Davey of course had to jerk the whole situation around to fit what he thought were his deserved needs. He called Freneau out to poolside to hash over the details. He wanted a double for any scene that exposed more than his fully clothed self. He wanted more money to compensate for his soon to be tarnished image. More time off, a bigger expense account, and since he was turning sixteen this season he wanted a Corvette with a full sound system to drive from home to the studio every day. Freneau said that although he wasn't in charge of the cash flow, he figured that management would probably go along with anything he wanted.

Toas and Freneau were a month in writing the first new episodes. It wasn't easy to get Davey out of his traditional virgin heaven and into the street. Even having Davey to hate didn't help them get new material. Freneau thought that Davey should be exposed to dirty magazines through his friend Tommy. Tommy would find some kind of skin mag out in his dads garage. He would bring them over and he and Davey could drool over naked girls in panties. Davies mother would catch them and make them pray for divine intervention to spare them from the vestiges of carnal knowledge. Toas liked the story but didn't thing it should be the first show. "That's a little strong for the Sunday morning crowd. The first one's got to bring them down slowly." Toas said.

He suggested that Davey and Sally discover each other out in back of the woods during their Sunday morning. Toas said it happened all the time on the reservation, he didn't see anything wrong with it. Freneau explained that incest in the white world was horrible, that people didn't talk about such things. Toas said the Indians didn't think much of it
either but that kids usually explored such things. They ended up throwing that script out with the first one.

After a few more debates they agreed that Davey should get his cherry popped. Davey was a virgin any way, so they could depend on his acting being fresh and original. The script ran that Davey and Tommy would sneak out one night against their parents wishes. They would meet in front of the fire hall, then circle around to the Widow Douglas's house and spy on her through the windows. The widow, played by Joan Collins or some other seductress, would catch Davey on her porch. Tommy would get away, but Davey would be grabbed and brought into her house for private sex lessons that would turn the boy, into a man.

All was planned. Otis and Stew built the new bedroom set. They used an old front porch set from some forgotten show. They mailed out the scripts, the folks had their usual reprimanding parts, Sally was pretty much out of this one and Davey with the lead would as usual, steal the show. The morning they were to start shooting the bedroom scene Davey's double was called in for skin shots. Joan Collins turned the part down and they ended up with a no-name actress from Glendale that filled the role perfectly. Davey had up till now kept his usual smid ass attitude, but when he saw what he was missing on the sheets his modesty collapsed like a tin shanty in a hurricane.

They let Davey have a little talk with the actress alone. He came out and demanded that all unnecessary personnel be cleared from the sound stage to protect his privacy. After it was cleared, he did his lines and then he did the actress; all went fine. Davey proved to be made of a little more than puppy dog tails in the sack. Freneau and Toas were a little surprised and Otis and Stew lost bets that Davey would choke in the heat. The scene finished and another to be shot on the morrow led to a quick breakup of personal.

In the weeks following Davey proved himself on the screen to millions of fans. Ratings for the show jumped one hundred and twenty percent in the first three weeks. The Davey & Goliath show was a hit again. Davey and Goliath take on the street punks. Davey meets the hillside strangler, Goliath saves the day. Davey and Sally get the divine word at a Hollywood orgy. Davey and Goliath meet the S&M boys in San Fran and get them to repent to the Lord. The shows went on like clockwork, the ratings rose like rockets, the more popular the show became the more liberal Davey got until his lifestyle started to get in the way of production.

When Davey was a little bastard at least his behavior was predictable. But with this new perspective on life and a new kind of audience, Davey had become a Christian sex object. He could do no wrong by his fans, and some of the letters he got from his female fans were hot enough to weld too. Plus, he had turned sixteen giving him the freedom of travel in his new Vette. He hit the gas and left smoke and rubber for six city blocks then disappeared down San Bernadeno blvd.

First his ego exploded under the pressure of the drug, making him really love his fellow man. He got up in the full drag costume and started to try to kiss everyone on the set. He even chased Toas around the soundstage trying to get him to forgive him for being 'so mean' to him. He must, after the drug kicked in full blast thought himself a female from the clothes he had on. He chased Stew up through the ceiling rafters that held the lights, yelling after him that he loved him more than anybody alive. Otis broke a rib laughing and had to be hauled off to L.A. General to be sedated to keep him out of pain: He ran and found his Vette in the parking lot and tore out after them trying to run them down. After a couple of unsuccessful runs he scrreeched to a halt in front of the stairway they were cowered under and screamed at them that he was going to save the world from hatred and he was going to start in Watts. He hit the gas and left smoke and rubber for six city blocks then disappeared down San Bernadeno blvd.

It was only a matter of hours before the studio got the got the news. Apparently, Davey, convinced he was female and full of thirty doses of STP, had driven like a maniac through L.A. down into Watts. There he picked out
one of the nastiest Black Power bars on Sagundo Ave. He had danced in like
a pixy from a Walt Disney flick and started into the folks there with a speal
about peace, love and dope that fell on rebel, revolutionary ears. The press
has been covering the riots he started for over a month now. He was
blunegoned to death by a party of Black activists shortly after arriving, he was
the cause that led to the final break-down of restraints that were fragilly held
together by a few non-violents.
Watts has been smoking and burning like Nagasaki for over a month now.
Goliath and the rest of the Hanson's were offered a contract with ABC to do a
series of holiday specials full of dancing and singing. Otis and Stew were fired
after the inquiry, and Toas and Freneau went on as a popular writing team for
shows like Laugh-In and magazines like Rolling Stone, and later National
Lampon. Davey's body was never recovered from the ashes of Watts. But a
memorial was built of granite on the Lutheran Studio grounds in east L.A.
Fans make pilgrimages to the holy spot, convinced that Davey was a saint
who tried to save the world from hate and misunderstanding. His memory
will be remembered by all Christians throughout the ages as the boy who
burned Watts trying to save heathens' souls.

A LITERARY CRITIC'S EDUCATION

The novice: Is the critic an artist? Should he delight?
Should he just inform, or should he incite
Respect and ovation for the artist
And help us to picture the sculptor's fit
Of creative frenzy as the latter
Painfully extracts "bold space" from matter?

The veteran critic:
Only a cretin critic takes credit
For years spent in learning theories mimetic,
Pragmatic, expressive, or emotive,
Or hopes that he will find one enclosive.
Let the aestheticians bash their big heads
On whether catharsis works on the dead.
There is no unified theory of art;
Each has its weakness--get that straight at the start.
Keeping in mind you must be persuasive,
Choose what will help achieve your objective
(Which might well be to kill what creates).
That is not to say you should not debate
Whether Christo is art or Larkin was late,
Though it's best to confine to footnotes ram-
Bling your aesthetic discomfort in han-
Dling Croce's opinion of enjambment.
Then again, good money (still owed) was spent
Feeding you names like Northrop Frye, Freud,
Abrams, et al, to help you find the void
At cocktail parties (modeled on Eliot's),
So why not drop a name? You paid for it!
You might say, "Jane Austin never read Plato,
Yet, in "Mansfield Park," she strikes classic blows
At theater," and "That Collingwood chap's
Emotive theory received a bad rap.
Let me explain using "Skin of our Teeth..."
It can all be quite fun, but keep your feet
On the ground and, above all, do not stray
From the course set by the Giver of Grades.

Novice: You didn’t answer the questions I asked.
Veteran: And that’s how the critic makes his job last.

Hugh A. Holden 1985
Lab Coats for Lit Class: Some Thoughts on the Possible Development of a Scientific Theory of Criticism

Hugh A. Holden 1985

"Literary criticism should be scientific." This claim has been made by a number of important personalities in the history of literary criticism, especially during the first half of the twentieth century. What does this claim mean and has it or can it be done? A working scientist would ask, "What are you looking for?" or "What is your initial hypothesis?" A practicing philosopher would observe that, in order to answer these questions, we must first attend to the question of "What does it mean to be 'scientific'" or "What is science?"

Having laid siege to a single assertion, we suddenly find ourselves crossing swords with three different intellectual domains: literary criticism, science, and philosophy. For most of the history of literary criticism, critics have very seldom addressed this issue as scientists or philosophers. This is not surprising. Critics are not expected to be scientists or philosophers. As a further complication, a chemist's or metaphysician's authority in a field not his own is always suspect. Although there isn't time or space here for a thorough-paced effort to answer these questions, it is clear that any such attempt would meet, and perhaps stumble over, the question of the transfer of authority and expertise between these disciplines. Scientists, much like artists, have tended to be people who prefer (or are simply better at) "doing" than talking about it. As for philosophers, John Crowe Ransom has opined that philosophers tend to lack real intimacy with the arts; consequently, "...the philosopher is apt to see a lot of wood and no trees...." With this said, it could still be argued that the first tentative steps toward a scientific theory of literary criticism were taken by the Occident's most revered, if not first, empirical scientist.

In watching performances of tragic drama, analyzing it into its constituent parts, and inferring causal relations between those parts, Aristotle believed that he was being "scientific." Northrop Frye writes that Aristotle "...approached poetry as a biologist," meaning that the methodology Aristotle used was basically the same for both: analyzing, categorizing, and making inductive inferences toward explanatory generalizations. If Aristotle had been content to seek the cause or causes for the emotive efficacy of drama and poetry, the Poetics would have made an interesting, though necessarily inconclusive (and probably quite short) report of a scientific investigation. Once Aristotle defines "The Ridiculous" as "a species of the Ugly," we know that he does not intend to restrict himself to the empirical-theoretical. When he renders his judgements as to what is "best" in a play, his theory has become normative and prescriptive and he has gone beyond what scientific method (as we now understand it) allows.

Centuries later, the Renaissance witnessed the emergence of physics and astronomy as disciplines distinct from the general muddle of technical knowledge, trivia, myth, and dogma posited beneath the title "natural philosophy." The attendant quagmire known as "moral philosophy" would not yield systematic, self-contained bodies of knowledge such as sociology and anthropology until the turn of the twentieth century. Thinkers with pet theories as diverse as those of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud would claim a scientific foundation or procedure for their work. It would be easy to say that Marx and Freud and the advocates of various "arts"—now pejoratively called "pseudo-science"—were willingly or unwittingly misapplying the term "science." It would be too easy. Envy of the rising intellectual, social, and economic status of people working in the physical sciences undoubtedly propelled many non-scientists to pursue scientific validity for their fields. Literary critics cannot be innocent of such covetiveness, but documenting it would be difficult.

Simple averse is not as important a cause for the misapplication of "science" as the confusion that has accompanied, and sometimes obscured the development of the various sciences themselves. Johannes Kepler applied mathematics to Tycho Brahe's observations and broke the iron hold of Ptolemaic astronomy, but Kepler's primary aim was to find the "Harmonies" of the heavens! Newton dabbled in alchemy. In this century, the repeated attempts to prove the presence of the "ether" between the stars amounted to an embarrassing demonstration of non-science.

Philosophers may have squabbled more eloquently, but their on-going debate over what is science has often been confused and misconstrued. As late as 1902, the American Pragmatist philosopher, Charles Peirce, would calmly assert that the "genuine" scientist is "...seized with a great desire to learn the truth,..." This is the common sense notion of what the scientist is after, but it is also terribly naive. The "truth" might be nice, a research physicist would say ("whatever that is"), but what scientists really look for is regularities and patterns in the occurrence of phenomena. From perceived patterns, generalizations are made and future events predicted.

Whether we say "patterns," "theories," "natural laws," or, as Northrop Frye does (with abandon), "principles," the important point is that no pattern, principle, theory, or natural law is cared in immutable matter. This is not to say that all objective knowledge is relative but that it is provisional, subject to revision or rejection with future experience. A purely scientific theory of literary criticism could only be accepted as provisional. It would always be open to refutation by as little as a single discrepant event. In fact, Karl Popper claims that we are obligated to look for that single event!

In actuality, literary critics appear to have been willing to settle for considerably less although the idea of a science or criticism maintains its attraction:

The presence of science in any subject
changes its character from the casual to
the causal, from the random and intuitive
to the systematic, as well as safe-guarding
the integrity or that subject
from external invasions.

Ransom was more prosaic: "Criticism must become more scientific, or
precise and systematic...." Ransom, a leading figure among the New Critics, made none of Frye's effort toward a scientific theory of criticism, yet he envi-
sioned the same consequence: A truly independent, self-sufficient, and academically valued discipline. That, in itself, does not appear to be an unreasonable objective. It is, in at least one sense, easier to work in a discipline that has discipline. A chemist should know whether what he is setting forth to investigate is in fact a problem in chemistry. As a student he is taught the first principles and methods that help him to make that determination straight away and proceed accordingly. In contrast, the student of literary criticism does not have guiding principles of equivalent universality and applicability. There is no simple litmus test that will tell him "This is literature" and there is, as yet, no analytical equation that will yield the conclusion, "This is good literature."

Discontent among the students of literature, especially those that became professors of literature and critics-at-large, was fueled by the all too easily made comparison between their chosen field and the natural and social sciences. I. A. Richards, with the poor suffering student always in mind, believed that if literature was to help us organize and critically examine our own lives, literary criticism must have a sound, logical foundation in theory and he thought that he had found it: "The indispensable instrument for this inquiry is psychology." Richards believed that this newly emerging science could help criticism immensely, both in the daily work of the critic and the improvement of the discipline's standing among academic pursuits.

Richards' use of ideas and terms from psychology has undoubtedly aided our understanding of western literature, but he himself did not seriously attempt to make criticism a sub-discipline of modern psychology. He freely admits that his "protocals" are not supported by solid scientific research, though he believed that they can be the beginning of such research by others. Richards' own hesitation with Freudianism, the dominate school of psychology in the first quarter of this century, is indicative of the uncertain acceptance of this young and very problematic discipline by both the public and the other sciences. Today, psychology is more mature and sophisticated, but no less problematic.

Richards was actually thinking more like a philosopher than a scientist when he thought to advance criticism into our modern, pro-science times by refining the language of criticism. The deciding difference between the sciences and non-scientific activities, he believed, is one of language. The language of literature differs from that of science in that the latter is purely descriptive and its users labor for precision in their "referential" statements, while the former is "emotive" "...expressing feeling through logical irrelevance and nonsense, through statements not to be taken strictly, literally or seriously,..." The language of literary criticism, Richards asserted, tends to be like that of literature itself when its users should strive to speak like scientists. Richards also limited himself in this discussion. Always the practicing critic, and with far closer ties to Arnold than to Wittgenstein, he was not interested in the full philosophical (pessimist) implications of what he was saying.

Northrop Frye, another literary critic without degrees in science or philosophy, has pointed out that criticism has been profiting from the sciences for some time. The historical-contextual approach to literary appreciation now makes use of social sciences that have progressed from compiling scholarly chronologies to devising theoretical explanations of historical events and predicting future trends. Textual analysis regularly draws on the skills of the philologist and etymologist. It can only benefit us more to add the psychologist and anthropologist to our list of consultants.

Frye made use of Jungian psychology and developments in anthropology in constructing his own theory of archetypes. This has helped to open up literary criticism (especially Frye's) to criticism of criticism. Thanks in part to Richards and Frye, these attacks are now coming not just from other literary critics, but also from scientists and people with backgrounds in a slew of other disciplines, including philosophy. This is good. One a small island, progress is limited. The cry of the New Critics for "autonomy" is now seen as having been needlessly unscientific, and ultimately reductionist. It would be equally unscientific to assume that a truly scientific theory of literary criticism will never be possible. In the meantime, literary criticism can only be made richer and more useful by its interaction with the sciences.
Ancient evenings in this strange and silent spring stir sudden memories and rekindle old desires.

The heart shall meditate terror while it mourns and languishes.

"My bowels! My bowels! I am pained at my very center. My heart makes a noise in me. I try, but I cannot hold my peace, my tongue.

The young man fell in the streets at the sight of my fine clothes, my fair jewels, my flashing eyes. In those days, my fruits were ripe and fleshy, fed and nurtured by living waters."

Now, she is planted in the wilderness. The west winds have shrivelled and dried her fruits. The dusty layers of years have dimmed the once-bright eyes.

The fire is gone out of the length of her withered branches.

And there is only solitary lamentation in a dry and thirsty ground.

La terre est patiente.
Winter came early the year grandma died. I'm not being sentimental, it's the plain truth. We had four inches of snow on the ground before Halloween. I remember that clearly because my brother Sam and I couldn't go out that year.

Grandma was always the one who took us out, and with her gone Halloween was no cause for celebration in our house. Papa couldn't take us. His knees were no good to him, and certainly no good to us when the weather got bad.

"Arth-or-itis," he'd said from his worn Lazy Boy chair, "Arth-or-itis is sett'n in for a long winter haul." So that was the end of it, no more dressing up, and no more Tootsie Rolls. It didn't bother me too much, I was ten and almost too old for Halloween anyway, but it was hard on Sam; he was only four and he still had a good seven years of costumes and candy ahead of him.

Grandma was fat. She was fat in the way that only a grandmother could be- warm and comfortable. When she hugged you, she wrapped her arms around you and squeezed until your feet were off the floor and you didn't know if you would ever breath again. Sometimes I thought she was trying to make me a part of her, like a drop of mercury that swallows up smaller drops when it touches them. I made that connection one morning when Sam had a fever and I broke the thermometer on the bathroom sink. We chased the tiny drops around the bathroom until grandma came in and saw us with the broken thermometer and the mercury on the sink and floor. We got a beating, even Sam, even though he was sick.

We lived on Carver Hill with the rest of the poor folk of Cedar Mills County. We were bad off, but we weren't the worst. We had electricity and indoor plumbing that worked. When mama was alive there was talk of us getting a phone, but then her health failed and she passed away, and nothing was ever said about a phone after that. Our house was small and in desperate need of a coat of paint. It had two bedrooms, a bathroom, a kitchen, and a room that doubled as a dining room and a living room, but now it was mostly papa's room.

While mama was sick, grandma stayed in the room with her, and papa slept on the foldout couch in the front room. After mama was gone, grandma continued to stay in the room, complaining that her back was sure to turn on her if she slept on that couch. Papa grudgingly let her have the bedroom. He wasn't much for arguing, and anyway it meant he would always be the first one in front of the television set- he'd have the first pick of the few stations that the old black and white clunker could pick up clearly.

I knew the couch had nothing to do with why grandma stayed in the bedroom. She'd slept on it before and never complained about her back. She just wanted to be around mama's stuff. I knew that because she never threw
any of mama’s stuff away, not even her used-up lipstick containers, and sometimes she carried them around in her apron pocket. I could feel them when she hugged me.

The last Halloween we had with grandma the weather was fine. I had begun to put on my costume the moment I got home from school. I was a witch. I was always a witch in a dress made from one of grandma’s old nightgowns, dyed black. The hat was made of cardboard, covered in material from the same gown. Grandma smeared my face with green paste and drew warts on my nose and on my chin with black eyebrow pencil. We dressed Sam in raggedy pants and an old shirt of papa’s cut down to size. Grandma tied a red bandana around his head, made an eye patch from a matchless sock, and told him he was a pirate. He seemed happy with that, but then, he was a baby and didn’t know that he looked more like an orphan than a pirate.

At seven o’clock, the three of us got in the rusty brown station wagon that had belonged to grandma’s second husband before he died. The car cursed and growled, then finally gave in under the persistence of the key and grandma’s foot hammering the gas pedal.

“You kick‘em enough times, they’ll turn over,” she chuckled, and we tore down Carver Hill Road, toward the valley, where the rich people lived. We never bothered to stop at the houses on the hill. They were just as poor as we were, and we knew all too well that to knock would only lead to hard feelings, because no one needed to be reminded of what they didn’t have.

By seven forty-five we had stopped at eight houses in the valley. I could already feel the weight of the candy in my sack. As we walked from house to house I listened to the click that the fireballs made when they hit together, and the rumpling of the plastic wrappers on the lollipops. I opened the sack and looked down at the brightly colored candy; I closed my eyes and smelled the chocolate.

The houses in the valley were beautiful. The lawns and the hedges were always perfectly trimmed, even in the winter. My favorite house was on Nettle Place. It was white brick with brass light fixtures on either side of the door. On the left there was a bay window that extended over three meticulously shaped pine bushes. On the right there were two smaller windows that glowed with a light that seemed to say, “We are happy here.”

I stood in front of the house, then took Sam’s hand and walked toward the house as if it were mine and I was coming home. I imagined my mother opening the door and kissing my forehead. I imagined a room of my own, with wallpaper and stuffed animals. I thought of carpeting and color television. I wished to go to bed.

A man opened the door wearing a plastic store bought Mickey Mouse mask.

“Trick o’ treat!” we said, though Sam’s tongue stumbled over the words. The man slid the mask over his head and looked past Sam and I toward the curb, where grandma stood.

“You people don’t miss a chance, do you?” he said, hooking his thumb into one of his belt loops. I didn’t understand. I looked back at grandma to try to read her face, but all I could see was her grey hair and the orange flowers on her sweater.

“Take it easy, they’re kids, not tax collectors,” she called back to him. I could hear the edge on her voice.

“Beggars!” the man yelled. “The whole lot of you are beggars—the only time we see you hill people is when you got your hands stuck out, asking for something!” I heard grandma’s footsteps on the walkway behind us. When she was in the light cast off by the brass fixtures, I could see her face. It was red and her jaws were churning as she walked.

“Mara, take Sammy to the car,” she said through her teeth. Her eyes, normally grey, were squinty and dark. I heard them argue as I walked back to the car. I wished grandma would just let it go, but I knew her better than that. She stood there, feet apart, one hand on her hip, and the other shaking a pointed finger in the man’s face. I thought to yell, “That’s the way to tell ‘em grandma!” but I didn’t.

Finally she started back toward the car. Silvery strands of hair clung to the perspiration on her forehead. She opened the door and climbed in. The three of us were silent while she tried to get the car started. Then she looked over at me and Sam, who was somewhere between bewilderment and tears.

“Don’t pay him no mind,” she said, “He’s just a tight-ass!” She grabbed her mouth as she would have grabbed mine had I said it. Then she added, “Why if it was any tighter, he’d have to fart outta his ears!” She paused for a moment, then threw her head back and burst into laughter. She laughed so hard the loose flesh under her neck jiggled and the car shook under her weight. I turned away ashamed...ashamed and sorry for myself. I wanted to tell her to stop it, stop laughing, but instead I laughed with her, not because I wanted to, but because words wouldn’t have changed anything anyway.

Sam, too young to understand, giggled, the way children do when others around them are laughing. I felt sorry for him, sorry because someday he’d know what happened here. We went to two more houses, then headed home to sort our candy on the floor in the front room.

We poured our sacks out on the floor and sat down beside them. Grandma sat on the couch and closed her eyes. Papa was already asleep in his chair, his chin buried deep in the collar of his blue flannel shirt and his belly rose and fell in slow, rhythmic motions.

“Grandma’s a here- ain’t she?” Sam asked, his eyes wide and his mouth chewing. I looked over at her on the couch. Her head was tilted back, her mouth was slightly open, and she was snoring quietly.

Yeah, she’s a hero,” I replied. I shoved a caramel cube into my mouth and looked at grandma. I had never thought that she looked old before, but just then on the couch, she did. I looked down at the candy on the floor and knew I would not go out again. Next year I’d let Sam and grandma go alone. I pushed my pile of candy together with Sam’s.

“Her, you have it,” I said. “He looked up at me, his face already sticky from the candy he’d eaten. He smiled at me. I smiled back at him and then got up to go to bed.

As I lay in bed I could hear Sam ripping the wrappers off of candy that he had no doubt shoving into his mouth—‘he’ll be sick tomorrow, I thought.
Limbo

Lisa Marie Bierwiler

The cell block was always still after the dinner hour. The food wasn't very
good but it gave the prisoners something to look forward to. Afterwards, most
of them went to sleep for lack of anything better to do. It was damp most of
the time in the far wing of the prison, and the occupants cuddled themselves
from the often unbearable cold. The cell block was usually referred to as Lim­
bo, a much more catchy name than death row.

Collin lay awake on his cot counting the bars of his door like he had done
countless times before. Twenty-four. Still twenty-four damn bars. Days pass­
ed, people came and went, yet still there were twenty-four tall, lean, solid,
black bars.

Collin rolled over and listened to Lenny’s soft humming. He pictured him
as a lean, frail man. Concentrating on the mellow harmony Collin couldn’t
imagine this man ever hurting anyone, not Lenny. He didn’t have a bad
voice, at least Collin didn’t think so. It was a bit out of key but it was still nice
to hear in contrast to the endless hours of silence on death row.

Voices. That’s all there was there, voices without faces. Collin knew all the
voices. Each was different, just as distinct as a face. But faces were very vague
to Collin. The voices were Collin’s friends.

“Hey, Samuel,” Collin’s voice echoed, down the corridor. A moan
responded from the cell next to his. “Sammy, wake up, buddy!”

“What’s the problem?” a deep, groggy voice whispered. It was hoarse as
usual. Typical, Collin thought. He figured Samuel was a once muscular
marine type that had turned to flab. A couple of tatoos decorated his
foreceps, and deep set eyes peered beneath a wrinkled forehead.

“No problem, just wanna talk.” Collin moved closer to the end of his cot.

“Look kid, you might wanna talk but I wanna sleep.” Sam snapped.

“Sleep? Christ!” Collin hated Sam’s attitude. “What did you do today,
Sam...? run another marathon!” Sam answered with an exaggerated yawn,
obviously ignoring Collin’s outburst. “Damn ya, then!” Collin rolled onto his
stomach and started pushing his peas around with his fork on the bare con­
crete. He hated peas, he hated all vegetables actually, especially in­
stitutionalized vegetables. He pushed them around for a while then began
squashing them and watching the green insides ooze through the prongs.

“Collin, did you eat all your applesauce?”

Collin looked up from his green ooze, “No,” he said.

“Can I have it?”

“No, Micro, you can’t have my applesauce,” Collin answered. A few
seconds past.

“Why not?” the same squeeky voice asked.

“Because,” Collin really had no particular reason for not giving Micro his
applesauce, except that he felt like being miserable. Beside, it was HIS ap­
plesauce and there were very few things you could call your own on death
squeaked when he walked so Collin assumed it must be wet outside. He put off while waiting. The lawyer took a deep breath and expelled it slowly while Collin nodded a greeting and continued to chew on a fingernail he had bitten off. He was dressed in faded jeans and a pin striped sport coat. His Pro-Keds waited for his lawyer. He tipped back in his chair using the wall to support his weight and his briefcase down hard and dropped himself into the chair opposite Collin.

He couldn't decide if the walls were a dull yellow or just dirty. He'd been in a small room in the east branch. The room was crowded with only two chairs and a card table in the center. A tiny barred window in the upper left corner had seen through the side door and screamed. Evander shot her right there on the spot. Collin was nervous but Evander swore that he had it all under control. It was suppose to be over in a couple of minutes, Evander promised. But when the owner of the liquor store only revealed 34 dollars in the register, Evander lost his cool. He kept hitting the guy and calling him a liar. Collin tried to stop him, he just wanted to get out of there. Evander was going crazy, he was going to shoot the man. A little Italian lady came in through the side door and screamed. Evander shot her right there on the spot and then he turned back towards the owner and shot him, too. Collin was yelling, he couldn't remember what he was saying, only that he was yelling. Evander turned on him so Collin shot him first. The whole right side of his face exploded on impact. Collin had never fired a gun before in his life and he was nervous but Evander swore that he had it all under control. It was suppose to be over in a couple of minutes, Evander promised. But when the owner of the liquor store only revealed 34 dollars in the register, Evander lost his cool. He kept hitting the guy and calling him a liar. Collin tried to stop him, he just wanted to get out of there. Evander was going crazy, he was going to shoot the man. A little Italian lady came in through the side door and screamed. Evander shot her right there on the spot and then he turned back towards the owner and shot him, too. Collin was yelling, he couldn't remember what he was saying, only that he was yelling. Evander turned on him so Collin shot him first. The whole right side of his face exploded on impact. Collin had never fired a gun before in his life and now he blew away his best friend. Collin grabbed Evander's gun before he ran. It was his gun, he couldn't leave it there. He was two blocks away whey they picked him up, read him his rights, and booked him for three counts of murder. Now he was going to die, all for a mere 34 dollars. Wasn't his life worth more than 34 dollars.

"Collin? Collin! You in there?"
"Yeah, Len."
"Where you been, boy?"
"Five years, three months, and three days... three loooooooong days." Collin pointed towards the scratches on the parallel wall. The guard laughed, took the tray, and shut the door behind him with a clatter. Collin winced. He was caged again like an animal, sealed off from the outside world, the world with faces.

He heard Micro ask what was for breakfast. Collin sneered and covered his ears before the guard had a chance to answer. He hated knowing what the menu was for the next day. He like to be surprised and sometimes he and Lenny would make bets. It was generally safe to bet on eggs, so they often guessed whether they'd be hot or cold. Generally, of course, they were cold. But Collin didn't really mind. He couldn't understand why they even bothered feeding them at all. Why prolong the inevitable. This was death row, most of the guys here were going to die anyway.

Collin spent his evenings reading. He'd read anything and he was thankful he wasn't picky since most of the magazines his block received were months old, occasionally years. Lately he had been reading a Bible that Griffen gave him. Griffen was in Limbo for killing his wife and mother-in-law. He told Collin he wanted to be a priest in his next life. He preached a lot and this often annoyed the other prisoners, most of whom were also convicted of murder. Griffen had given Collin the Bible about a week ago and told him to pray for forgiveness and save his soul. Collin didn't understand why Griffen had chosen to save him but he accepted the Bible anyway. Griffen had folded over various pages that he thought Collin should read but he hadn't really paid much attention to them. Collin had never seen the inside of a church before. He didn't consider himself belonging to any particular religion but he supposed there was a God. He especially like the story of Moses and The Ten Commandments.

The next morning Collin was awoken before the other prisoners and led to a small room in the east branch. The room was crowded with only two chairs and a card table in the center. A tiny barred window in the upper left corner offered the only light, and the air smelled of stale cigarette smoke. Collin couldn't decide if the walls were a dull yellow or just dirty. He'd been in numerous rooms similar to this one over the past years so he knew what to expect. He tipped back in his chair using the wall to support his weight and waited for his lawyer.

"Good morning, Collin." A lean man of about 40 stepped into the room. He was dressed in faded jeans and a pin striped sport coat. His Pro-Keds squeaked when he walked so Collin assumed it must be wet outside. He put his briefcase down hard and dropped himself into the chair opposite Collin. Collin nodded a greeting and continued to chew on a fingernail he had bitten off while waiting. The lawyer took a deep breath and expelled it slowly while rubbing his face with both hands. He leaned forward on the table with his hands folded in front of him. He looked up at Collin but said nothing. Collin watched him calmly. Again the lawyer looked down and rubbed his eyes. He seemingly avoided having to say anything at all.

"Hey Mr. Locey, what's the problem?" Collin couldn't handle the silence any longer.
"It's not good,"
"What's up?" Collin asked again.
"They won't accept the appeal."
"So we do it again," Collin shrugged.
"I don't think you understand, Collin. This is it." Mr. Locey paused, "They won't put it off anymore. We don't have enough evidence for an actual trial..."

"Hold on a minute," Collin put all four legs on his chair down on the cracked tile floor. "What do you mean this is it?"
"They're not going to give you a new trial."

Collin's hands pushed against the sides of his head to relieve some invisible pain. "They're gonna fry me, aren't they?" he asked in little more than a whisper. Mr. Locey looked down and stared at his sneakers.

Once back in his cell Collin closed his eyes and tried to swallow the lump in his throat. Why should he be so surprised? Limbo wasn't just a holding dock for outcasts and criminals. It was death row. He heard Lenny's voice but didn't know what he was saying. His mind drifted. He never thought they'd really fry him. Hell, he was only in the outside world for twenty years. There was still so much he wanted to do, so much he had always planned on doing. He wasn't a murderer. Sure, he'd killed Evander, but he didn't mean it. He wasn't like the other guys in there. Evander had been an asshole anyway.

They had it all planned. Collin was nervous but Evander swore that he had it all under control. It was suppose to be over in a couple of minutes, Evander promised. But when the owner of the liquor store only revealed 34 dollars in the register, Evander lost his cool. He kept hitting the guy and calling him a liar. Collin tried to stop him, he just wanted to get out of there. Evander was going crazy, he was going to shoot the man. A little Italian lady came in through the side door and screamed. Evander shot her right there on the spot and then he turned back towards the owner and shot him, too. Collin was yelling, he couldn't remember what he was saying, only that he was yelling. Evander turned on him so Collin shot him first. The whole right side of his face exploded on impact. Collin had never fired a gun before in his life and now he blew away his best friend. Collin grabbed Evander's gun before he ran. It was his gun, he couldn't leave it there. He was two blocks away when they picked him up, read him his rights, and booked him for three counts of murder. Now he was going to die, all for a mere 34 dollars. Wasn't his life worth more than 34 dollars.

"Collin? Collin! You in there?"
"Yeah, Len."
"Where you been, boy?"
“Right here.”
“No way!” Lenny protested. “You may be over there in body, like, but you ain’t heard a word I said. Where’s your mind at, boy?”
Collin sat silently looking at the smooth black cover of the Bible at the foot of the bed.
“Collin! There you go again!” Lenny sounded irritated.
Collin, ignoring him, reached down for the Bible and flipped it open:

> The light of the just giveth joy;
> but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

“You think I’m wicked?” Collin asked, not directing the question to anyone.

> “Yeah, you’re wicked.” Micro laughed. “We’re all wicked! We’re horrible people, society outcasts.”
> “Here he goes again!” Lenny sighed.
> Micro laughed again then continued, “We’re looked down upon by the very people who made us into what we are. We’re products of a wicked world that just doesn’t care…apathy is their god…”
> “Shut-up, Micro!” Samuel ordered, “save that philosophical bullshit for someone who can understand it.”
> “Don’t blame me for your ignorance.”
> “I ain’t ignorant, just sick of your preachin’,”
> “I’m not preaching,” Micro argued, “How can I preach? I don’t have any regrets.”
> “No hope, either.”
> “And you have hope? HA! You’re going to fry just like the rest of us.”
Both Samuel and Micro were quiet.

> “Bless you,” Griffen cried out.

It was early when they came for Griffen. Collin felt sick as he watched two men lead him out of Limbo. Nobody said a word. He never really cared for Griffen, but he never thought about what it would be like when he was gone.

“Repent,” Griffen whispered when he passed the cell. His cheeks were wet and his eyes were red when he met Collin’s. Collin tasted the salt of his own tears. He stepped back from the bars and wiped his face.

“Collin?” Samuel whispered. The block was dark and quiet except for a soft chorus of snores.

> “Yeah?”
> “You got somethin’ on your mind?”
> “Naw.” Collin pulled his blanket up around his neck to prevent his fear from escaping. He heard Samuel moving around, positioning himself closer to the bars.
> “You talked to Locey, eh?” Sam asked.
> “Yeah…” Collin paused.
> “And?”
> “Their gonna…” Collin took a deep breath in an attempt to steady his voice, “I’m gonna die.”
> “Course you are, boy.” Samuel seemed confused. “That’s why we’re here in Limbo, we’re all gonna die.”
> “But I never…I thought,” Collin stammered, “I figured I’d get off. Locey promised. He said I’d spend time in jail but then I’d get out. Shit Sam, I’ve sat here for five years dreamin’ of what I’d do when I got out. I was gonna go away, someplace like, like maybe California or Texas. Oh God, oh shit, Sam.” Collin was shaking.
> “Hey, take it easy, boy,” Samuel’s voice quivered.
> “Don’t go weak on me!” Collin was angered by Samuel’s own emotions.
> “Nothin’ wrong with being scared.”
> “I ain’t scared,” Collin snapped.
> “I am,” Samuel whispered.
Collin rolled over. So am I, he thought. He flipped open the Bible on the floor:

Watch, stand fast in the faith,
act like men, be strong.

Faith in what? What’s faith when you’re going to die? Collin closed the book and cried.

The next week, after the prisoners in Limbo were fed, a new fallen angel was brought in. Collin watched him walk by. He studied his face. The young man stared back with a placid expression. Collin thought of himself the day he was brought in. He was young, he was calm, and he was naive, very much, he suspected, like the boy he had just seen.

As he lay on his bed listening to the others interrogate the newcomer, Collin laughed to himself. Nineteen and he thinks he has his whole life ahead of him.

“I got over two thousand bucks in the bank,” the boy bragged. “When I get out of here I’m going to L.A.” There was a silence.
Collin smiled. “You ever see the ocean before?”

“Naw, never been out of the city before…unless you count this.” He laughed.

“Nice vacation spot,” Lenny kidded.

> “Real Resort Hotel,” Micro added, “Limbo on the Lake.”
> “I’ve never seen the ocean either,” Collin commented.
> “Me neither,” Samuel admitted.
> “Neither have I,” Micro confessed.

I always wanted to see the ocean, I always meant to, Collin thought. He pushed his vegetables around the plate with his fork. He started to squash the peas but then stopped. When George came for his tray it was empty.

“How ya doing, George?”

“Not bad, Collin. What’s the count?”

“Two weeks?” Collin glanced at the marks on the wall opposite him.

“Two weeks?” George looked confused.

“That’s it, George.” Collin shrugged. “Let’s make my last meals hot ones, eh?”

Collin couldn’t sleep. His eyes wandered about his cell and eventually settled on the marks on the wall across from him. Five years of his life were recorded there. The lines were as monotonous as the days that he had spent...
there. He had spent them waiting for the day he could walk out a free man. Now he waited for the day he would walk to his death. He waited for tomorrow.

Collin thought about Evander. He never really meant to kill him. He was a friend, why would he want to kill a friend? Sorry Evander. Then he thought about the old woman. Poor thing, probably never even knew what hit her. And the liquor store owner, it wasn’t his fault he only had 34 dollars. Collin closed his eyes. Three people dead for a measly 34 dollars. He opened his eyes and counted the bars. Twenty-four. Nothing had changed.

He heard the doors open at the end of the corridor. Collin shivered as he scratched the final line onto the wall. His stay there was over. He picked up the Bible and flipped it open:

We endure persecution, but we
are not forsaken; we are cast down,
but we do not perish;

As he stepped out of his cell he tucked the Bible under his arm and accepted his escorts on either side of him. He passed the newcomers bed and pushed the Bible through the bars.

“Hey, kid, here’s some good readin’.”

Walking down the corridor he kept his eyes forward, aware of the stares from the others.

“See ya, Collin.” Samuel’s voice called out from behind him.

Yeah. See ya, Sam, he thought. As Collin had expected, silence fell over Limbo.
Smile

The succulent shape of a sickle
On its back- often thought too fickle.
But slicing only with its softness.
So like the surge of intended words.

But too subtle to speak. The smooth curve
Is its consequence: a countenance,
An aftereffect, a circumstance-
The lips are merely upon the smile.

Nancy Anderson 1985
Amy Gingold
In A Great Big Room-
That's The Way We Live

Great Lake Review

Patricia Flanagan 1985
Infrared photo "Bovine Milch-Kine"