

Spring 2000

LABYRINTH

T. C. Williams High School
Literary/Art/Photography Magazine

Spring 2000

Volume 32

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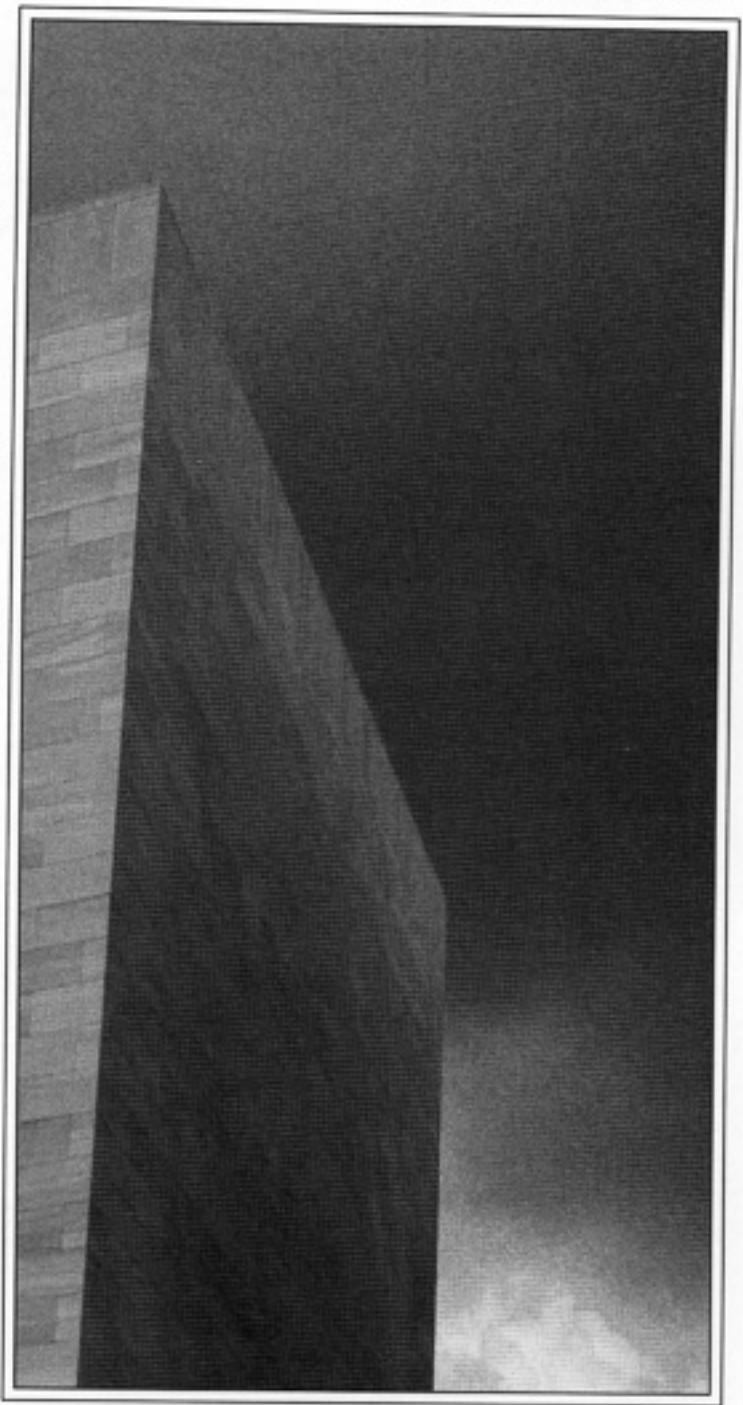
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Labyrinth

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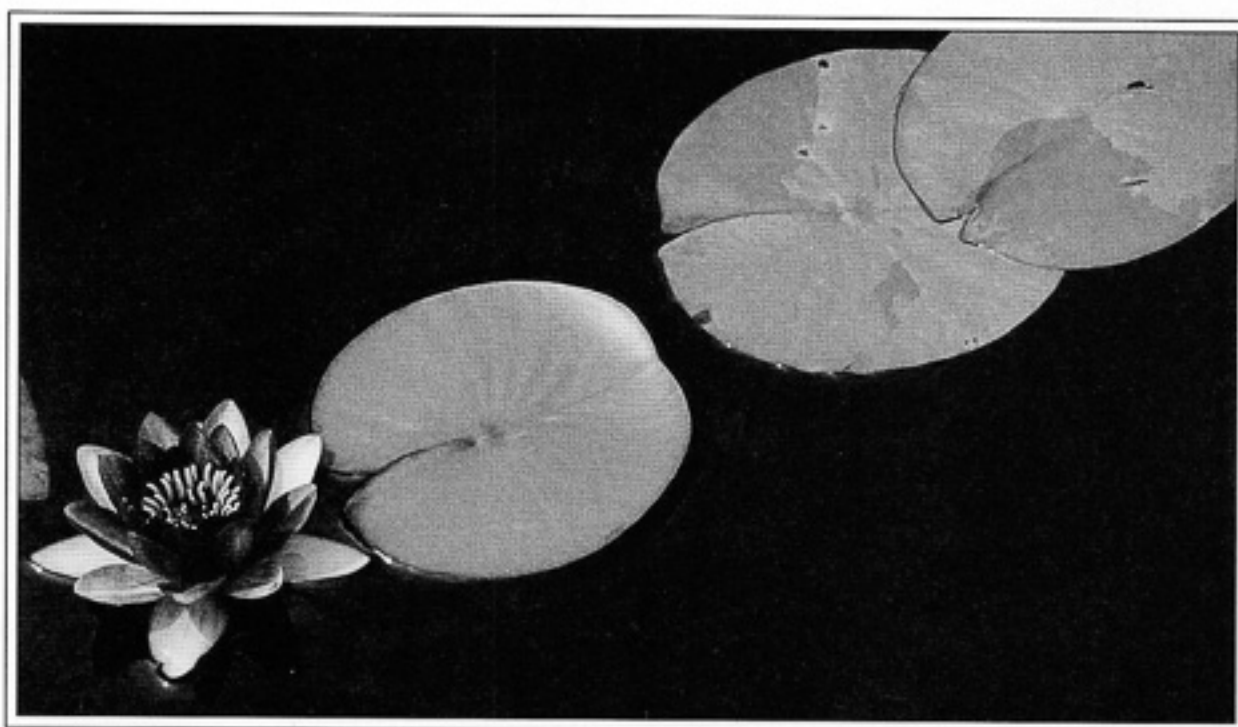
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Andrew Rankin

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photographs by *Andrew Rankin*

An Essay

by
Ben Krohmal

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So I said to him, "Bobby, I've had it up to here with you! As long as you're living under my roof you'll do what I say, and if I catch you doing that stuff again, that's it, you can find somewhere else to stay." The other women made supportive comments to Mrs. Warsquick and nodded in an understanding manner. It was a meeting of my mother's group, and the women were sitting on couches around my living room, discussing and dissecting the alarming behaviors exhibited by their adolescent children. They had already gone through smoking, alcohol consumption, premarital sex, and drugs use. But the worst was yet to come. It was my mother's turn to share.

"Benjamin," she said, pausing for effect, "Benjamin gets up in the middle of the night and goes for walks."

"What!?" the other women shrieked.

"What, is he crazy?" asked Mrs. Scropes.

"Typical adolescent male," quipped Mrs. Warsquick for the fourth time that night, "thinks he's invincible."

"But he's such a *good* kid," said Mrs. Mims, who was better acquainted with me. "Why would he go and do something stupid like that?"

Although it may have seemed that way to a number of the women in my living room, my walks are not an expression of "teenage rebellion." I walk because I love being outside at night. I love how the air feels, and how the sky looks so much bigger when it's dark. I love the moon and the stars, the solitude and the silence. I walk when I need to think or sort out my feelings or make an important decision, or just need to get out of the house. I do my best thinking out there, and when I get

My neighborhood has hundreds of huge oak trees that take on a life of their own in the yellow light from the street lamps. The houses look different at night, too, foreign and unfamiliar, but above all completely still.

back, I write my best poetry.

My neighborhood has hundreds of huge oak trees that take on a life of their own in the yellow light from the street lamps. The houses look different at night, too, foreign and unfamiliar, but above all completely still. In the darkness they take on an almost two-dimensional quality, like props in the set of an all encompassing play. Walking down Ebony Street between the rows of trees, hearing only the wind and my own footsteps, it's possible to imagine that I'm the only person in the world, and that I own my own place. It's one of the few times when I can still play make believe.

We had been walking about an hour and the full moon was almost directly overhead. By my reckoning, we had about fifteen more minutes to go before we reached California. Josh had called me a few days before and suggested half seriously that we pick up and drive to San Francisco. He was going through a lot at home, didn't particularly care about school anymore, and generally wanted to be anywhere but with his family. So he gladly agreed to go when I called him around 11:30 PM and asked if he would

like to walk across the country with me. To California and back, all before morning. Of course, in a strictly literal sense we never left Virginia, but that wasn't the point. I'd stop every few minutes, look around, and grandly

proclaim that we had just entered the next state.

We ended up leaving the quiet, tree filled suburbs and walking through the brightly illuminated storefront section of the country. Beyond that we passed the train station and entered the woods. It had rained during the day and our boots sank into the mud as we climbed over fallen branches and jumped across the tributaries of the Mississippi. Twenty minutes later the trees came to an end abruptly at the top of the Grand Canyon, a long steep, grassy embankment bathed in moonlight. After exchanging a knowing glance, we ran

down the side of the canyon and slipped and skidded to the bottom. Soon we were in California.

After reaching the West Coast we decided to push on to Alaska. We eventually crossed over to Siberia, walked south through China, Laos, and Malaysia, hopped some islands to Australia, and crossed a bridge to Antarctica. We then walked North through South and Central America, before arriving home feeling refreshed and invigorated, having circumambulated the globe.



When

I got to my front door I was careful not to jingle my keys so my mother wouldn't wake up. Nevertheless, when I came in she was standing there in her pajamas, and she wasn't pleased.

"Where were you?" she asked.

"Didn't you get my note?"

"Yes, 'gone to California, back by morning.' I wasn't amused. It's just not healthy. Promise me this is the last of your crazy outings"

"Yeah, ma, I promise. G'night."

Then she went to sleep.

.....

I turned and trekked to the foot of the staircase that leads to my room. From the summit, my bed was calling to me. But between it and me lay a vast, snow capped mountain, the likes of which no mortal had ever witnessed. I started climbing... *End*

Art by Kim Hunter

Every youth wishes to break away from the restricting latticework of family and childhood, to soar free of rules and limitations in an open and endless sky. Most young people with this desire get their wishes one way or another, but many can't say exactly when it was that they broke through the fence of innocence bursting into the wild blue yonder of adulthood. To be able to pinpoint the exact moment when the white-washed pickets were broken, to know the precise experience that evinced the change would be a glorious thing, for then a beautiful and mysterious occurrence could be caught and studied. This is the attraction of the scene in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* when Stephen Dedalus has the great epiphany on the banks of the Liffey that his time has come to fly away from adolescence like Daedalus from Crete; it is the most important scene in the novel in the sense that it brings Joyce's thesis so clearly into the open, exposing Stephen's metaphorical escape for all to see.

Unlike most of the novel, in which Joyce's metaphors and symbolism are deeply hidden in the text, the scene on the beach is plainly written and the link between Stephen and Daedalus is purposefully thrust into the open. Joyce readily admits that he is revealing "a prophecy of the end [Stephen] had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood." The revelation is laid bare by the obvious hints like the one aforementioned, as well as the reference to numerous bird images, Greek names, and natural metaphors. For example, the girl that Stephen notices is strongly related to a bird: she has "long slender bare legs that were delicate as a crane, . . . hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like the feathering of soft white down Her . . . skirts were . . . dovetailed behind her.. Her bosom was a bird's". The bird

imagery calls attention to the myth of Daedalus, flying away from captivity with wings like a bird's.

"Heavenly God!" cries Stephen, as he finally realizes the link between himself and that "ancient artificer," and that his time has come to fly like Daedalus into adulthood. The second strong indication that Stephen is ready to "forge in his workshop . . . a new soaring impalpable imperishable being" is the way Stephen's friends call out to him in Greek. "Stephanos Dedalos! Bous Stephanoumenos! Bous

Broken Fences

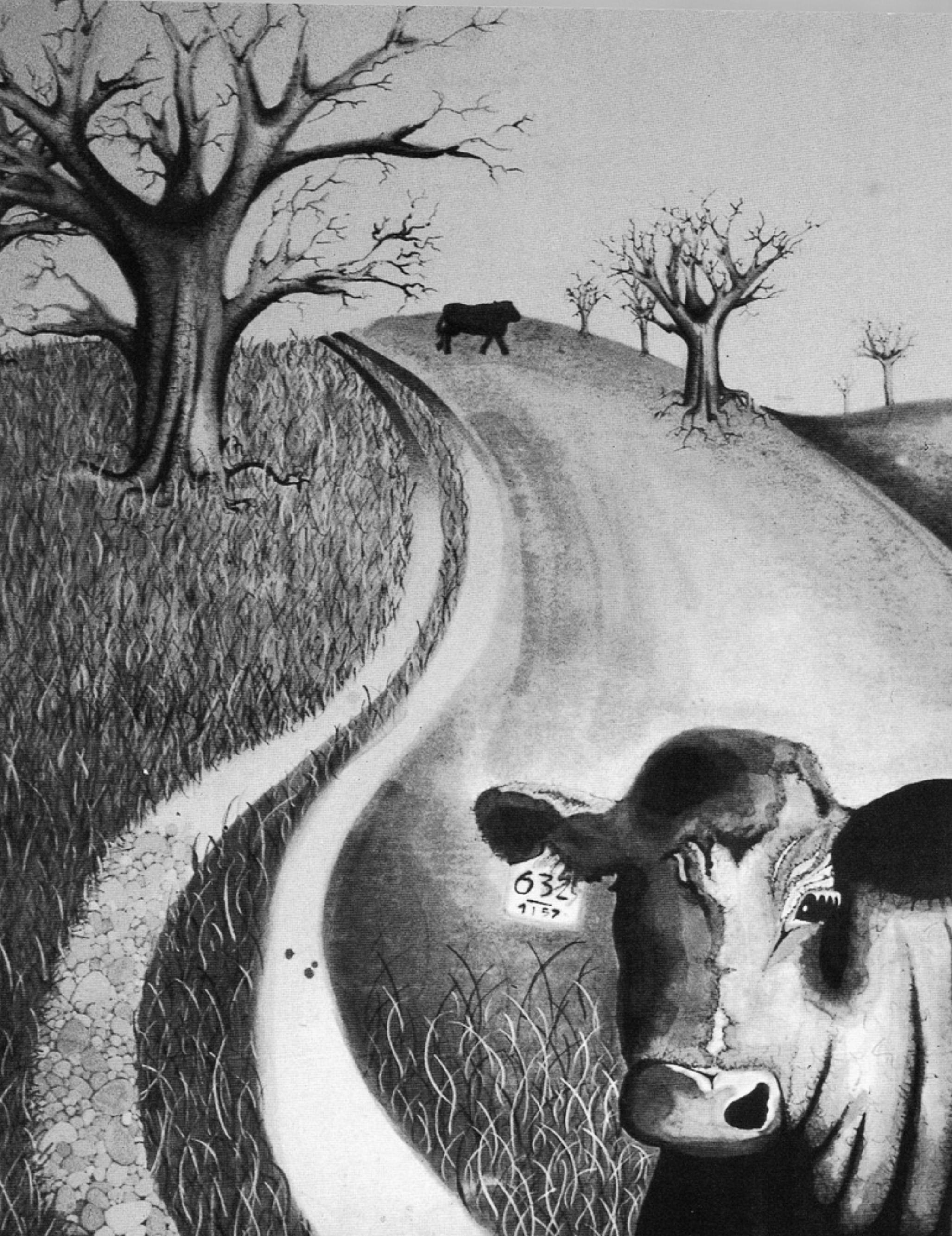
An Analysis of James Joyce's
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

An Essay by Danny Drachsler

Stephaneferos!" they cry, using new and exciting names to emphasize the fact that a fresh and exhilarating time in Stephen's life is now approaching.

The final hints of Stephen's transformation that Joyce includes in the scene are the use of nature metaphors particularly of the seaweed and the clouds. In this scene the clouds represent freedom, for when Stephen thinks of the "dappled seaborne clouds," he thinks of the strange and interesting countries from whence the clouds have wandered, hoping that he, too, will wander among varied and exciting places. The seaweed represents the three "nets" - nationalism, family, and religion that Stephen must "fly by" to achieve his full artistic potential and escape mental death.

Joyce is able to communicate these connections easily because the imagery in the scene is so beautiful, the setting well-suited to emphasizing the ideas, and the language is highly lucid and flowing. Joyce portrays the awesome emotions enveloping



Stephen as the image of the ghost of the Danes and the mysterious flying creature Stephen thinks he sees:

"So timeless seemed the grey warm air, so fluid and impersonal his own mood, that all ages were as one to him. A moment before the ghost of

The final instrument that Joyce holds in his power is the lithe, beautiful language which he uses to add to his imaginary and setting.

the ancient kingdom of the Danes had looked through the vesture of the haze wrapped city. Now, at the name of the fabulous artificer, he seemed to hear the noise of dim waves and to see a winged form flying above the waves and slowly climbing the air."

The idea of the ancient city suddenly flashing forward to the present in Stephen's mind and then giving way to the high-flying vision, deftly communicates timelessness, contentedness and possibility. Joyce also imparts the idea that Stephen is at last ready to shed his youth, and hints that if he had not, it would have meant spiritual death for him. "What were they now but the cerements shaken from the body of death- the fear had walked in night and day, the incertitude that had him round, the shame that had abased him within and without- cerements, the linens of the grave? His soul had arisen from the grave of boyhood, spurning her grave clothes."

Spurn he must, and what a better place to do it than the wide and inviting beach? The "warm isles of sand gleaming above the shallow tide," and the "long oval bank of sand lying warm and dry amid the wavelets," offer a vision of a soothing beach, one which comforts and lends a supporting hand to any new venture. The calm beach offers Stephen support for his adventurous departure. The beach also represents the extent of the possibilities open to Stephen in its wide, open appearance, "On and on and on and on he strode, far out over the sands, singing wildly to the sea, crying to greet the advent of the life that had cried to him."

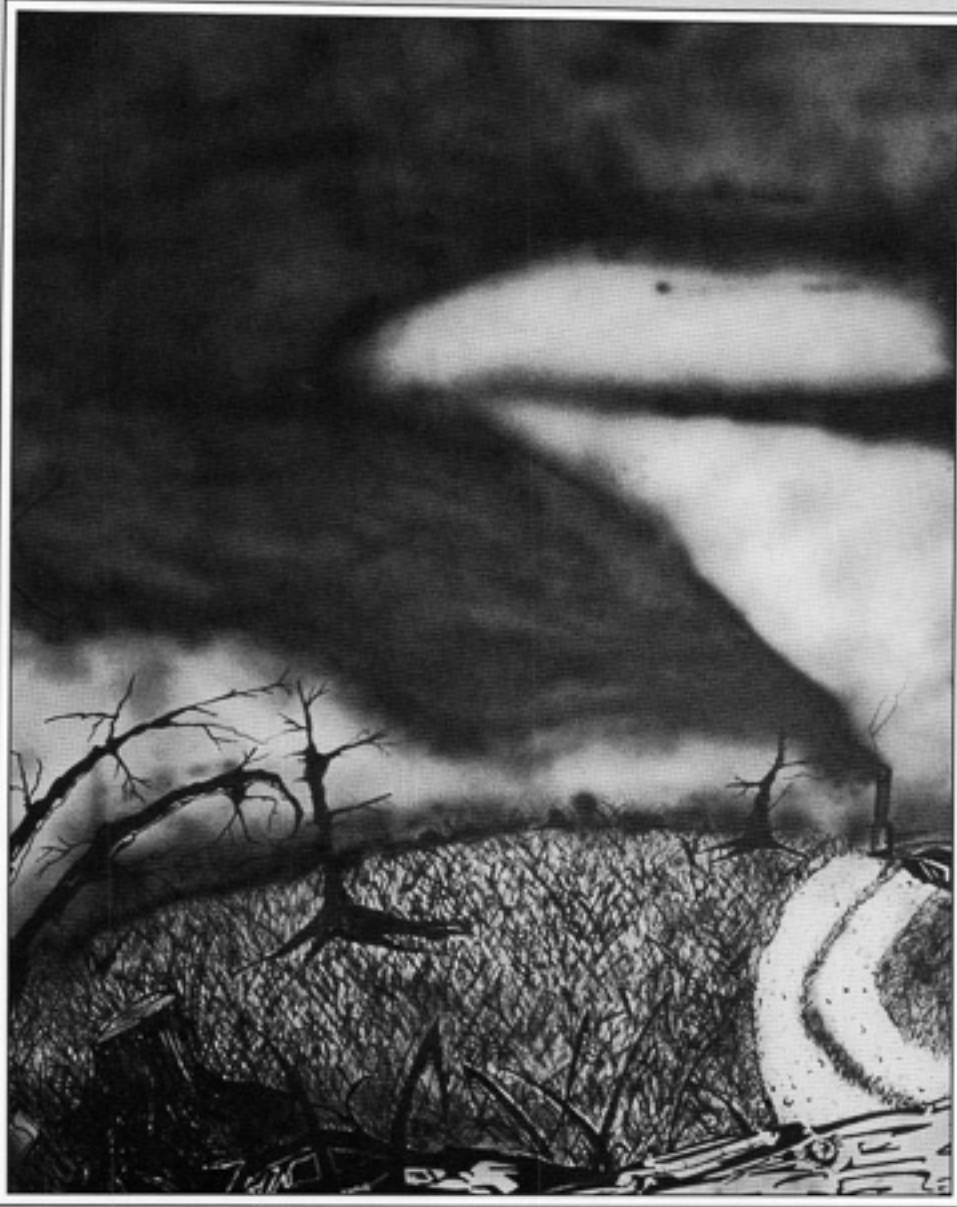
The final instrument that Joyce holds in his power is the lithe, beautiful language which he uses to add to his imaginary and setting. Forgetting commas and loving the word "and" gives his writing a smooth, easy quality, as in this passage, "An ecstasy of flight made radiant his eyes and wild his breath and tremulous and wild and radiant his windswept limbs."

Joyce also loves to use the same adjective to describe two different things, and does so with a satisfying rhythm. Here, the adverb is "silently": The clouds were drifting above him silently as the sea tangle was drifting below him." The alliteration of "s" adds to the smooth feeling of the language. In another passage, the doubly used adjective is "girlish," "But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face."

Joyce is able to communicate these connections easily because the imagery in the scene is so beautiful, the setting well-suited to emphasizing the ideas, and the language is highly lucid and flowing.

Joyce can also be extremely descriptive in a short space, as in this excerpt, "He was alone and young and wilful and wildhearted, alone amid a waste of wild air and brackish waters and the sea harvest of shells and tangle and veiled grey sunlight and gayclad lightclad figures of children and girls and voices childish and girlish in the air."

This novel-defining scene, in which Stephen prepares to make his final lunge at the fence of youthful restrictions and makes ready to blast toward a new part of life, will long be remembered for it is a scene in which Joyce uses all his abilities so well: imagery chosen to evoke quick and powerful responses, setting which naturally aids to the tone of the scene, and language both mellifluous and exact. Indeed, the scene offers a true portrait of the inner feelings, motivations and environment of the young man Stephen is and of the artist he will become. ♪



Isaac Ashraf

On Hearing a Six Year Old Child Killed His Classmate

*Where is the world gone?
Can we still hold on?
What is truth? What is deceit?
I can't learn anything from the past few days.*

*Is dying - killing - going away - the only way to pay?
Where is the line between good and bad?
To whom should I listen? What should I do?
The world is dark, no star in the sky...*

*No, that's not going to happen - I am not gonna die.
The one who fights can lose;
The one who doesn't fight has lost forever.
The pain drives me, time is passing by
In the end - we will see who's still alive.*

Gedanken zu einer schrecklichen Tatsache!

dt. Original

Wo ist die Welt geblieben?
Koennen wir uns noch einander lieben?
Was ist Wahrheit? Was ist Trug?
Aus den letzten Tagen werde ich nicht klug.

Ist sterben, toeten, von uns weichen
der einzige Weg Schulden zu begleichen?
Wo ist die Linie zwischen Gut und Schlecht.
Wer hat am Ende Recht?

Auf wen soll ich hoeren, was soll ich machen?
Die Welt ist dunkel kein Stern am Firmament.
Nein das ist nicht das End'.

Wer kaempft kann verlieren wer nicht
kaempft hat schon verloren
Der Schmerz treibt an, die Zeit vergeht-
es wird sich zeigen wer am Ende steht...

Stefan Peintinger

Editor's note:

German exchange student Stefan Peintinger was appalled at the news that a first grader in Michigan brought a gun to school and killed a little girl in his class. Inspired to write a poem in German, we have included both the poem and translation.

The Cafe

Megan Dolye

*Short Story Contest
First Place Winner*



Ali Miller

She came everyday. It had come to the point where he no longer allowed anyone to sit there after six for fear she would arrive and find her seat occupied. He always found

a reason to work the counter at seven, always anxious that she would come early and he would miss her. Everyday at seven fifteen she would arrive carrying a tattered book and a black notebook and a matching black pen. She would order her coffee black and sit until eight fifteen at which point she would depart. Whenever she paid, he always noticed how bare her wrists looked with neither bracelet nor watch to adorn them. Just as surely as she arrived at seven fifteen she left everyday at eight fifteen. Had she left slightly earlier, he would have replaced the battery on his own watch.

With no one to greet him in his tiny apartment four floors up, he found himself extending his work day by fifteen minutes as if not to miss a

As if looking for inspiration, he drew every object of his apartment until soon, he was the only thing without an exact matching pair!

moment that she was in the shop. Sitting alone in his apartment he had long ago taken up sketching. As if looking for inspiration, he drew every object of his apartment until soon; he was the only thing without a matching pair. Yet as his walls were filled with his own drawings, he found himself even lonelier.

Time had passed without being measured and

still she came. One day an idea struck him almost as if it had always been there waiting to be recognized. Perhaps it was only hidden until his pencil touched his paper that night. Before he finished that evening, he had drawn a portrait as if guided equally by the hands of Erato and Melpomene.

Although he longed to talk to her, his taciturn manner seemed even more prevalent at the sight of her black coat. Watching it silently sweep along the ground he could almost count the seconds until the bell atop the door chimed signaling her entrance. She never smiled but once it seemed as if her eyes sparkled for a moment until she remembered herself.

He had taken all liberties due an artist in portraying her and although her mouth stayed straight in her usual manner, one could read mirth in her eyes. If she had ever seen it she would have been pleasantly amazed at the similarity between the face in the picture and her own, a few years earlier. It was as if he had captured that which she had long since lost.

Watching people depart from her table in the coner he cautiously guarded the table until she faithfully appeared. Today he decided to have her coffee ready at her table when she arrived. Her

coffee black like always, sat in the center of the table for two minutes until simultaneously she walked in and the clock hit a quarter to seven. She nodded her head in thanks and handed him exact change before sitting down.

Watching her walk out the door he kept his eyes on her black coat until she turned a corner. Only after averting his eyes did he realize that she had left a sheet of paper on the table. Making his

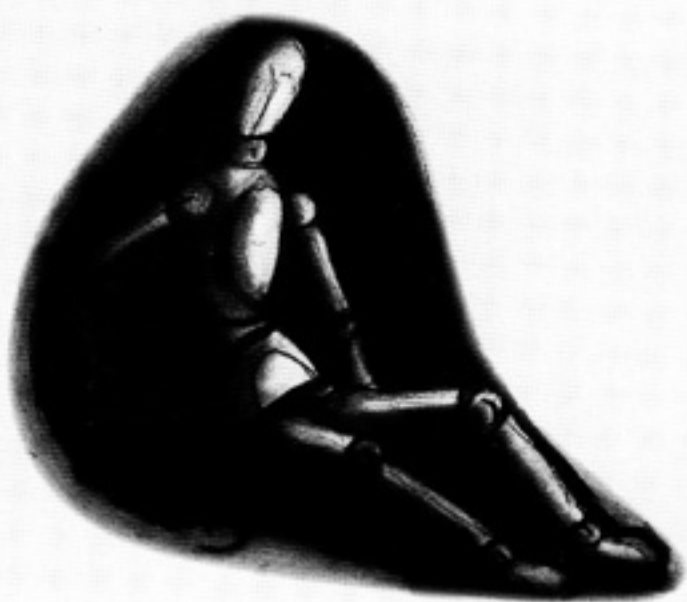
way to the table he found the sheet of paper and just before balling it up an image on the other side caught his eye. The he discovered a picture of himself signed only with a single word, "Thanks".

The next day he was ready with his own picture in hand. The clock hit seven fifteen and her table remained empty. As seven thirty melted into eight, he began to worry. At eight fifteen however, he was filled with anguish. Slowly he made his way upstairs and carefully placed the two drawings side by side on his wall. People who saw later saw them would silently because where the artists should have signed their names, one had written, "Thanks", and the other, "You're welcome" If anyone had taken the time to look down from where the pictures hung on the wall they would

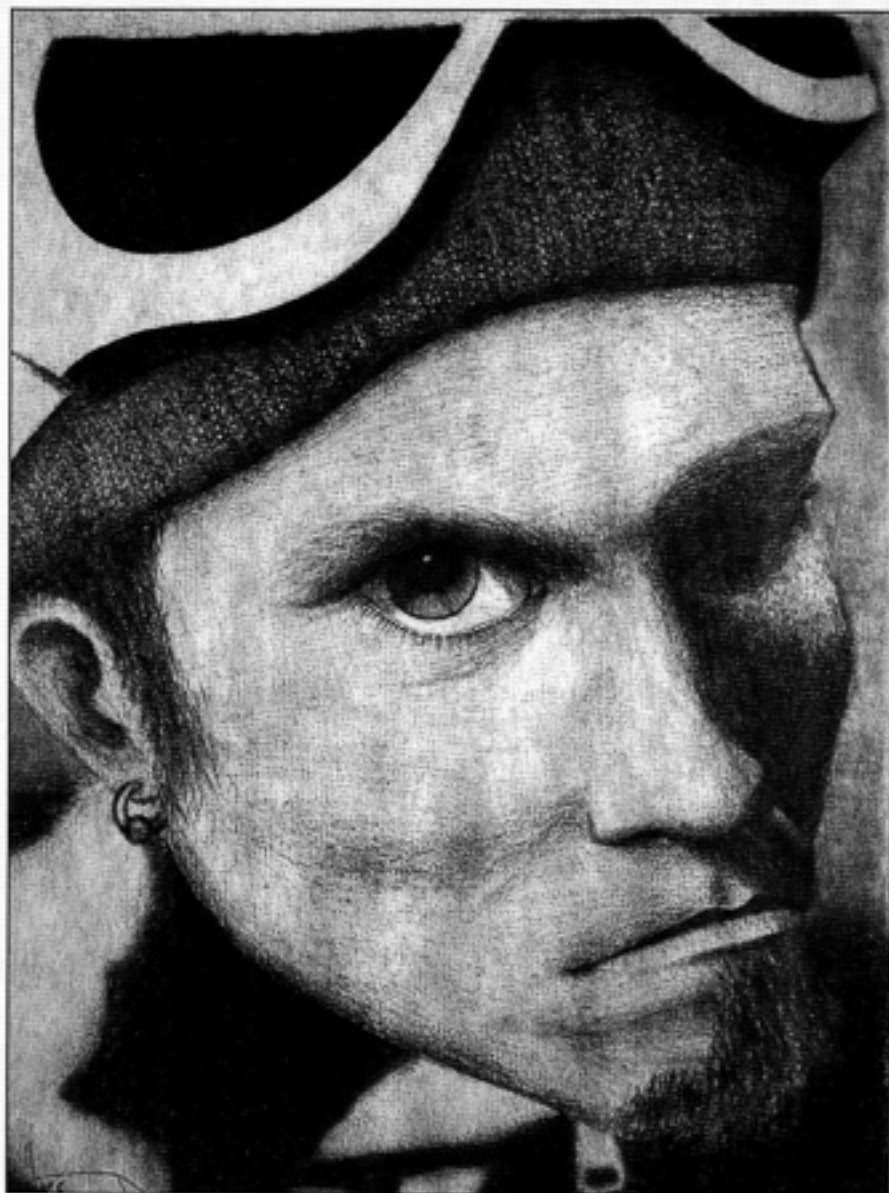
have seen a man, sound asleep. A man who, although quite old, bore a strange resemblance to the young man in the picture. *✍*



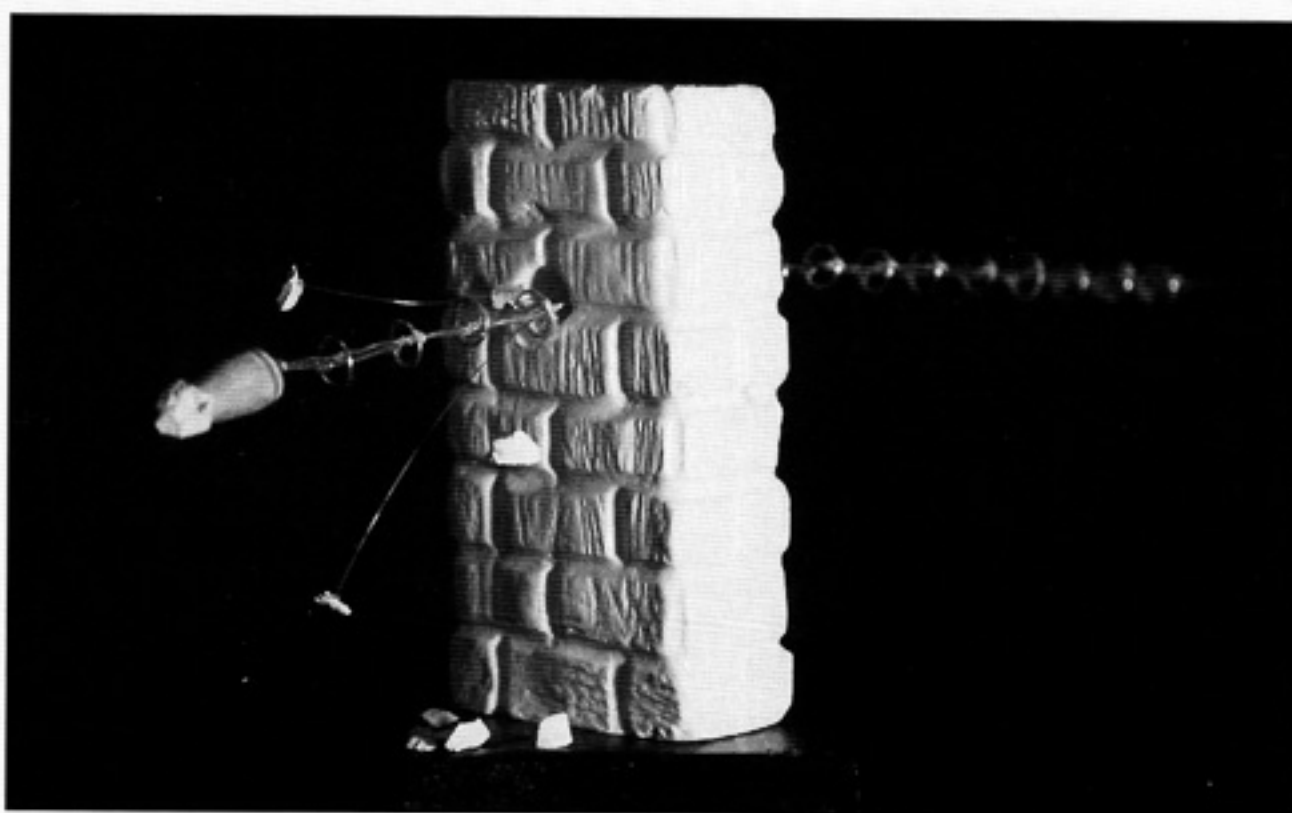
Art by Kim Burke



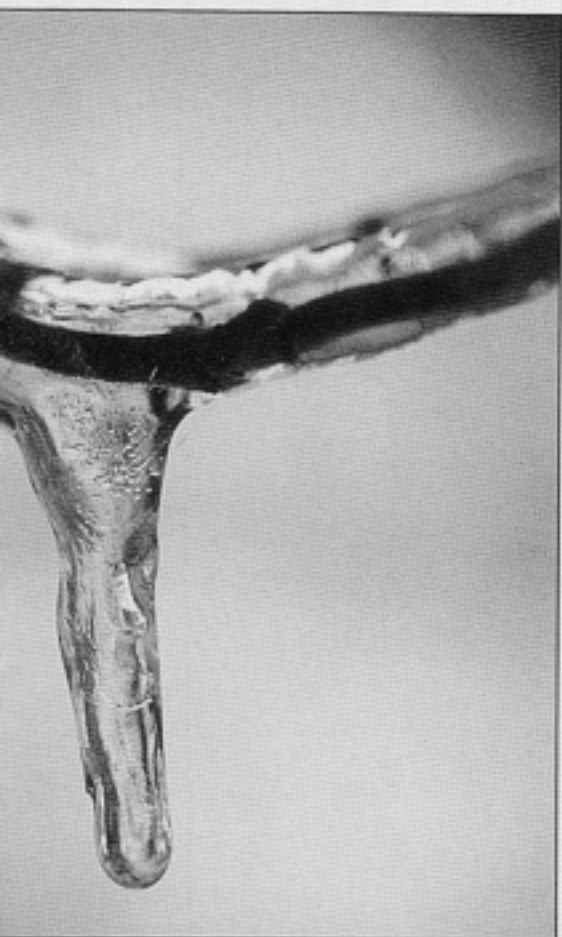
Andrew Johnson



April Banks



Tim Tractman



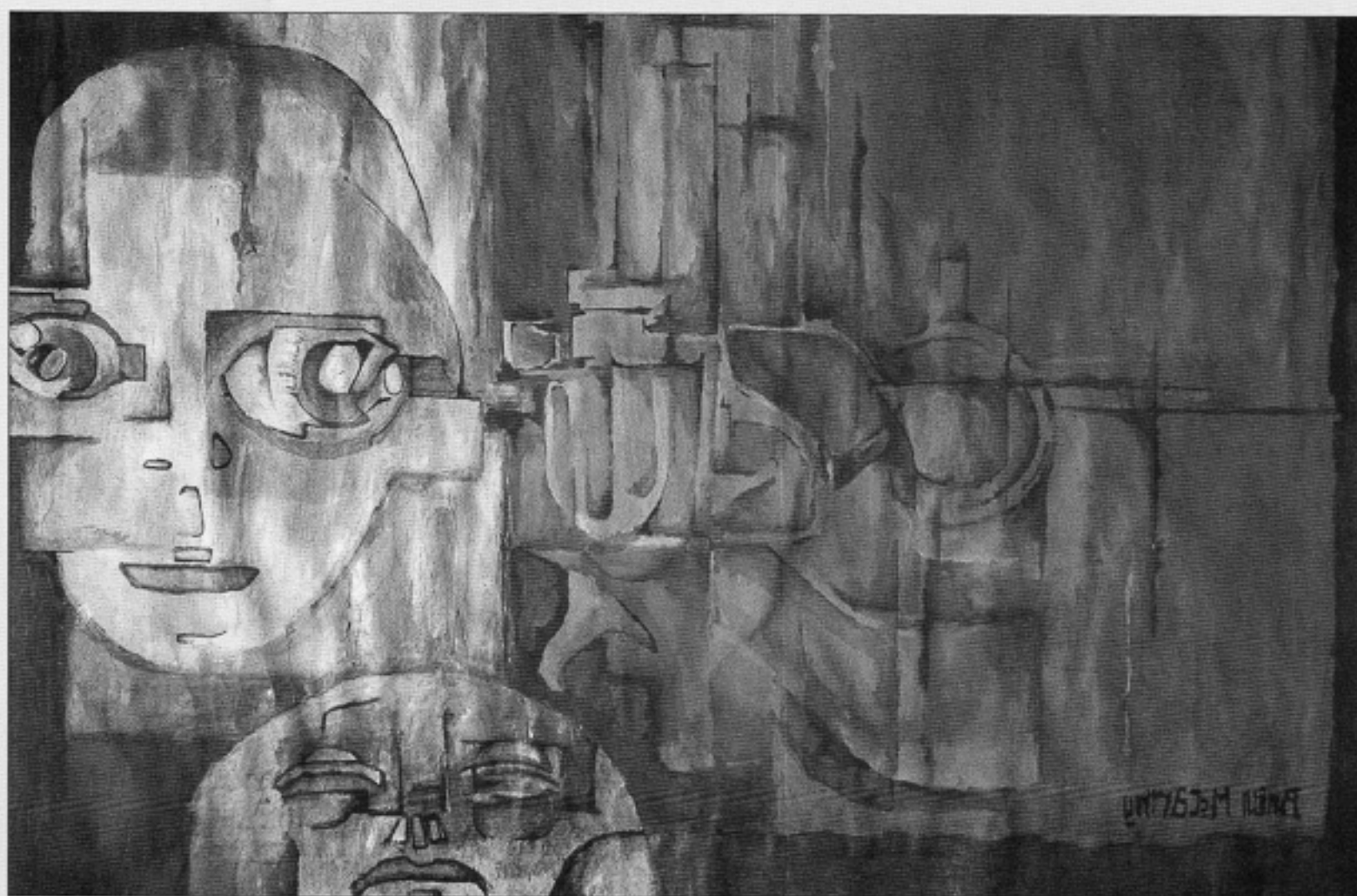
Andrew Rankin



Jennifer Santos



Ali Miller



Brian McCarthy

Editors Note: One splendid afternoon Creative Writing teacher Jeff Cunningham used our star photographer Andrew Rankin's photos as writing prompts. The assignment to write a poem from differing points of view generated the following poems. Real creativity often sparks more kinds of creative expression.



A Collection of Poems

Photographs by Andrew Rankin

Water

Golden streaks of hushed movement
Intertwined with shades of blue
Create a cooling current
As ancient as is now

Peter Gamber



Alone You Stand

(Adressed to the Flower)

Alone you stand,
An unquestioned beauty,
Unaware of life's hardships,
Bringing joy to those who pass
Those who see you standing there-
In the sun,
with gentle assurance
And are reminded by a time
when life was simple

Blair Confil

Little Beauty

(Years after the picture was taken)

Little Beauty, I wonder where you are now?
Have you survived so bravely
The bitter cold?
The passing years?
The days without sun?
Or have you bowed
To life's struggles?
It's hard to stay strong
When time weighs heavily upon your shoulders.

Blair Confil



Shutter Reflex

(From the view of the photographer)

1/2 dark 1/2 light
 exposure
 two lighted
 dark shadows
 angles
 lines
 planes and curves
 CLICK
 captured images
 nature
 lit by the
 FLASH
 leaves weaving dark
 and light
 a tapestry behind the
 LENS
 now mine

Rebecca Berlin

Ray of Light

(From the view of the leaf)

Morning shines on me
 Awake from my eye-shutless slumber
 The rays of scattered sunshine
 Warm me and leave the others
 To a subtle darkness
 The cool dew of the awake-up call
 Nature's soothing invitation
 To join the day

Rebecca Berlin

Last Year's Leaves

(Photo is found years later)

A mysterious aura
 Of light
 Fascinating fill of darkness
 Glimpse of a world
 Held fast in time
 Still familiar in the smell of fall
 And the warmth of the start of
 Another day
 Dusty edges turn like
 The edges of the leaves
 The photo holds
 Inviting reflection
 Like a looking glass
 Smooth and binding
 The sands of time
 And the transformation of the images
 Light and dark
 Deep richness of fall
 Last year's leaves

Rebecca Berlin



REBMUN 7

TSEW DNUOB

NUMBER 7 WESTBOUND

A short story about

AIXELSYD

(dyslexia)

by

Rebecca Berlin

NOITALOSI

That's how you spell isolation backwards, and it's the story of my life.

Funny. That sounds so strangely poetic or eloquent or something, and yet it's just not that simple because it's real. I've always been the backwards one; where CAT is TAC, and TOMORROW is WORROMOT, and FUTURE is ERUTUE. Normal life? For me it doesn't exist. I can't picture that at all. I can't even picture you. After all, no one is really what they seem. What do you picture when you see me? Or should I ask, what do you picture when you see dyslexia? No one sees me beyond that.

Do you know what I picture? I could tell you, just like I've told the others and just like I'll tell the new people. But it doesn't help. No one really understands what it's like to see the picture of life with distorted eyes. A portrait where nothing I know is anything you believe, and everything that you see and know is what I struggle to understand.

The wheels of the train are turning fast now. **REBMUN 7 TSEW DNUOB**. Posted are these words, whatever they mean or really say.

art by Timothy Tractman

People are sending me to a place where they can help me. Perhaps. Probably not. The person next to me is snoring away, probably in the nostalgic land of dreams. The scent of her coffee, sitting, is losing its warmth in the **SKCUBRATS** cup. I wonder how she sees herself. I wonder if she knows why she's here and what the book at her side, **EHT REGNARTS**, means or says. I wish I did.

When I was ten, I had to read in class. Right there, in front of everyone, I wrote on the board that **KCAJ DNA LLIF NAR PU EHT LLIH**. They never forgot about that, or the time I said that the

answer to number four on the history quiz was **ACIREMA**. Sometimes I could fake it; make people believe that I was normal. I would spend hours at night memorizing the shape of certain words and what they looked like so I could make everyone think I was getting better. But eventually people caught on. No one really sees the me behind my backwardness anymore. Do you have any idea what it's like to be seen as dyslexic in spirit just because I can't spell or read or write like you?

Sometimes I wonder who I would be if I was someone.

We're getting closer to **WEN KROY**, I know because I just saw a sign out of the window. And do you know what else I saw in my mind? A little girl standing all alone at a train station, waiting for parents that never came to pick her up because they died in a car crash. It was six years ago, but time doesn't buy love any more than dyslexia buys sympathy. When I step off this train, I'll be somewhere that I've never been before, in a city where there are all sorts of new people just waiting to tell me that they are waiting for me to fail so they can laugh at me and make me their joke for the day. Do you ever feel your failure so strongly that you can hear it? I hear it in the whirl of this train, taking me to another nowhere. I remember the first time I went to a nowhere. I was in the 5th grade and my teacher had

recommended testing for me because I had failed all the spelling and reading tests so far that year. The specialist took me to this room where all she did was tell me to read what she was showing me. It was **DER**, and **RAC**, and **ELZZUP**.

your life will never be normal. You know it's your fault.

Will this new place be any different? I doubt it. They say I'm going to the best but that's what they say and it's never true, unless the best are those who

R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W
N O I S U F N O C
N O I T A L O S I
R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W
Y T E I X N A
R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W
N O I S U F N O C
N O I T A L O S I
R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W
Y T E I X N A
R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W
N O I S U F N O C
N O I T A L O S I
R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W
Y T E I X N A
R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W



Shapes of words I had been seeing all my life. She told me, "Go back to first grade and learn to read honey."

Soon they told me that people like me go nowhere. They meant that I'd be locked in a place where people only will see you how they want to see you and where you are nobody and where you're told

want to send me to another nowhere because they don't believe in me. They say that there's a little bit of truth in everything. I think that they are wrong. There is no truth for someone like me. Truth is only for those who have hope to go along with it.

We're here! We're here.
Now, I suppose I'll get off the
train. The lady is still asleep beside
me, still dreaming about the
people she gets to see and the
places she has to gothe world
that she has at her fingertips, or

find someone in the world who
would like to love a nobody and
who I can make believe that I am
more than the eight letter word
"dyslexia." The train recedes into
the distance.

"Hello?! Is anyone out

through to whoever's up there.

"HELLO. ARE YOU
THERE??? CAUSE YOU
NEVER ANSWERED ME! IS IT
BECAUSE MY PRAYERS
WEREN'T SPELLED RIGHT?"

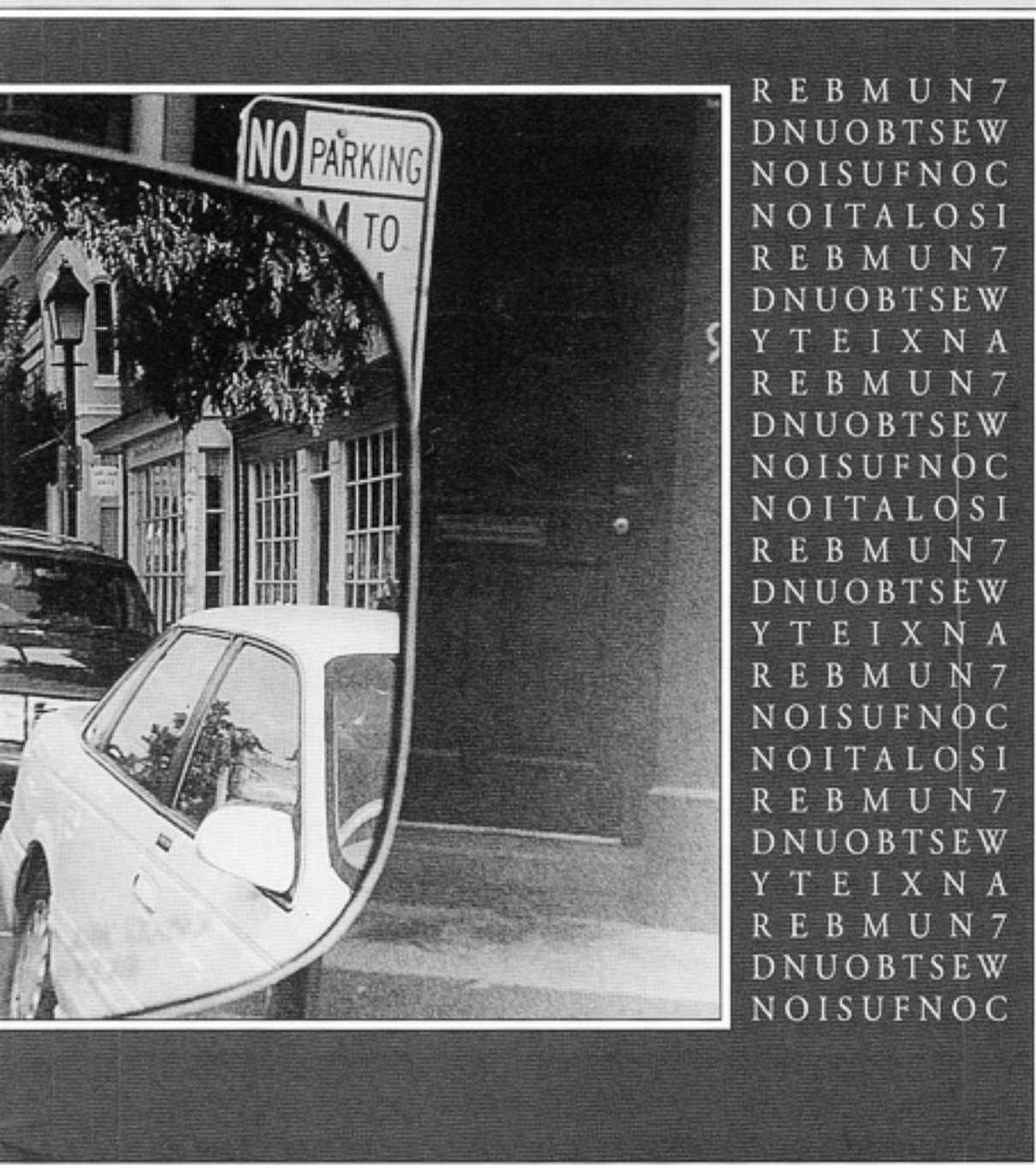
There aren't that many
people out at this time of night.
I've been walking for a while now.
The sign on that motel back there
said YCNACAV, but I don't know
what that means, and whatever it
is, the people in there wouldn't
probably wouldn't sell it to a
nobody. Words and their power
are only for you who can see them.
So I suppose I'll just keep walking
until I find... something, or maybe
nothing. I always fit in with
nothing.

It's getting darker. The
numbers on my watch read 34:01.
I see a sign over there. I can't read
it all, but there is a word that I
memorized once: LAKE. L-A-K-
E...You know that looks like
EKAL to this nobody.

I'm getting closer to the
LAKE. I can smell it. The road is
changing under my feet; it feels
hard. Now, I smell the damp,
warm foresty smell of pine. I
went swimming one time. I liked
it. I remember the instructor told
us never to go out alone at night
because we could drown. I sup-
pose the warning would matter if I
were you; but since I'm not, I'll
just put my bags down here and
go for a swim. A midnight swim,
invisible and silent in the piney,
smelling dark. I'll just leave
behind this slip of paper for you to
read when you find it sometime.
It's the only word I really under-
stand-

GOOD-BYE. ☞

Photograph by April Banks



R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W
N O I S U F N O C
N O I T A L O S I
R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W
Y T E I X N A
R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W
N O I S U F N O C
N O I T A L O S I
R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W
Y T E I X N A
R E B M U N 7
N O I S U F N O C
N O I T A L O S I
R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W
Y T E I X N A
R E B M U N 7
D N U O B T S E W
N O I S U F N O C

should I say, the world she has
ahead as far as her eyes can see....
It's getting dark outside.

You know what? Some-
times when I think about it, I
dream that someday I'll be what
you are. Right now reading this
story. I dream that I'll be able to
read and see things as they are and

there?" I guess not the stars don't
even hear me. Do you know that
song? "When you wish upon a
star..." I used to wish on stars. I
had a star for every word that I
could think of; for every hope;
every prayer that I ever prayed;
thinking that just maybe one out
of a million would make it's way

The Venerable Black Bedes Go to London

Morgan Metz

I say, Brother Balthazar, whatever are you doing?" called Brother Caspar to his ancient, shrunken, ebony peer. For Brother Balthazar, walking through the cloister's garden where Caspar was taking his leisure, had become so absorbed in the parchment he was studying that he had tripped over the low wall lining the path. He raised a dazed, wizened face at Caspar's call, and allowed the younger, though tiny, monk to help him to a nearby bench. There he handed over the paper that had so engrossed him.

"Have ye ever seen the like?" Balthazar eagerly inquired in his heavy North Yorkshire accent, as his comrade perused the worn paper. Caspar had to admit that he had not. The wrinkled black parchment was nearly the same color as the faces of the men who bent over it. The worn parchment was crisscrossed with white lines in no pattern Caspar could discern.

"What is it?" Caspar asked. "Wherever did you find it?"

Balthazar cackled gleefully. "Melkior and I were cleaning the library, since you know what a state it is in, and this was tucked between a couple of tombs in the back corner. It's a map. And I'll wager your hope of salvation you can't figure out what it leads to."

He was quite right. Try as Caspar would to reason out where the abstract map's destination could possibly be, his best guesses were met with

vigorous head-shaking and delighted chuckles from the old brother. Finally, Caspar gave up.

"Tell me," he pleaded.

Balthazar's old eyes danced. He leaned in close and dropped his voice for emphasis.

"The Grail," he whispered simply.

Caspar's eyes sauced, and he searched the aged monk's face for confirmation of his words. Seeing the excitement the venerable elder could not mask, Caspar felt his own blood quicken.

"How can we seek it? Who else knows about the map? Will Father Abbot let us search? Should we tell the rest of the world? Have you had a vision? What is it we are meant to do?" The questions poured in a breathless rush, and Brother Balthazar laughingly tried to stem the flow, beside himself with glee that someone else now shared his exhilaration over the map and all it promised.

The way to the Grail has always
been dangerous; but I do feel
called to seek it just the same.

"Easy, Brother, easy." Balthazar cautioned.

"There is time enough for all purposes. As for your questions: we shall find the Grail by following the map, of course. That should not be too difficult. We are almost to the end of it here. And before you ask how I know that," he added, catching the questioning glint in Caspar's eyes, "those lines that you cannot read, do not all mark the paths to follow, some of the lines just name other paths that are on the way."

He sighed. "I know where it is that we must go, but I do not think Father Abbot will approve. The way to the Grail has always been dangerous; but I do feel called to seek it out just the same. Only you and Brother Melkior know the existence of this map, and it is only you two I would take with me, if you would come."

Caspar vehemently nodded an enthusiastic assent. And so it was that Balthazar, Caspar, and Melkior, the three venerable black Bedes, set out on a quest for the Holy Grail, following a map that only Balthazar could read, and leaving behind a monastery full of brother Bedes believing the three were visiting aunts in Cornwall.

Brother Melkior glanced at the sun, which was threatening, even in London, to burn him in spite of his chocolate complexion. He sighed. Balthazar had been so sure that today was the day, that all mysteries would come clear when they reached the last Underground station and found the Grail. For it had to be in a station, that much was somehow discernible from the map. Yet here they stood outside Morden Station, the last stop on the remote end of the Northern Line, and still, after three weeks of searching, they had not found the treasure they sought. They had combed every one of the Tube's nearly three hundred stations, and now they had reached the end of the line. Their time to visit their "aunts" was up, and the three travelers were no closer to the Grail than when they had left Bede Abbey. Even Brother Balthazar's former unwavering optimism had faded, and he reluctantly allowed himself to be persuaded by his brother Bedes to board the next northern bound train out of King's Cross Station. Soon all three men were bouncing along on the old train.

An hour later, the three monks had secured BritRail passes that would return them to the station in the village three miles from the monastery. As they were passing a barrier between platforms nine and ten on their way from the ticket counter to the waiting area by their own platform, a large group of rowdy teenage American tourists rushed past. In their haste the teens bumped into Balthazar, who being old and rather fragile, tumbled into Caspar and Melkior. Off balance and stumbling, the three slammed into the spot where the barrier should have been. There, instead of a barrier, stood a large wrought-iron gateway reading,

**Platform Nine
and
Three-Quarters**

"UH-oh," thought Melkior. "we've stepped into a story here, and someone else's story at that." The others were dumbfounded and too startled to think anything. They certainly weren't in King's Cross, they realized, though very plainly another sign on the grey, stone archway had proclaimed that it lead back into the metro station.. Be-

mused, but not frightened, the brothers ducked through the archway and wandered around a bit. Suddenly a voice called out of the shadows behind a column, "Greetings, venerable Bedes. What you seek is no longer here. It is not for you to find."

The monks gaped as a handsome, young Italian appeared. "How did you...?"

"Who are...?"

"What on earth...?" they chorused, much perplexed.

The young man smiled. "In my country I am

Brother Melkoir glanced at the sun,
which was threatening, even in
London, to burn him in spite of his
chocolate complexion.

called Muse, but here find its simpler to go by 'Moose.' I am a wizard, which you would realize if you had read any of your current fantasy novels, and I have a gift for knowing the circumstances that surround those I meet. You three seek the Holy Grail. It is no longer here; it is not yours to find. This disturbs and frustrates you. You have been deemed worthy men, as you sought the Grail, not out of desire for personal glory, but for the good of humanity. This also I know. Therefore, your search will not be in vain.

"Many years ago a child was born into this world with a magic far surpassing any I can call my own. Three wise men, not so unlike yourselves, brought him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. He received these gifts with gratitude and used them with humility. Now He no longer has use for these gifts. How they came into my possession, I am forbidden to say, but I do know that He now returns them to you with His humble gratitude."

"You three have sought the Holy Grail, but I offer you, instead, relics just as holy. They also hold a great promise of good for the world, if used correctly. Take them now and return to the Muggle world. And henceforth be wary of enchanted maps, if you wish to avoid trickier situations than this."

He paused. "If you like, there is a use to which

your map can be put which will further the purpose for which you sought to use it."

The young Italian held out his hand for the map. Balthazar, still too stunned to speak, silently placed the relic in the good man's hand.

"We thank you. And now, if you would not miss your train home, it is time for us to part ways. Walk back through the archway and you will find yourselves back in King's Cross, just beyond the barrier. Godspeed!"

With that, the young Italian walked away, back into the shadows, and the brothers, as if coming out of a trance, picked up the gifts he had left and made their way back through the gateway and onto their train. The rumbling of the subway seemed to bring Balthazar and Caspar back to their senses, and they started in

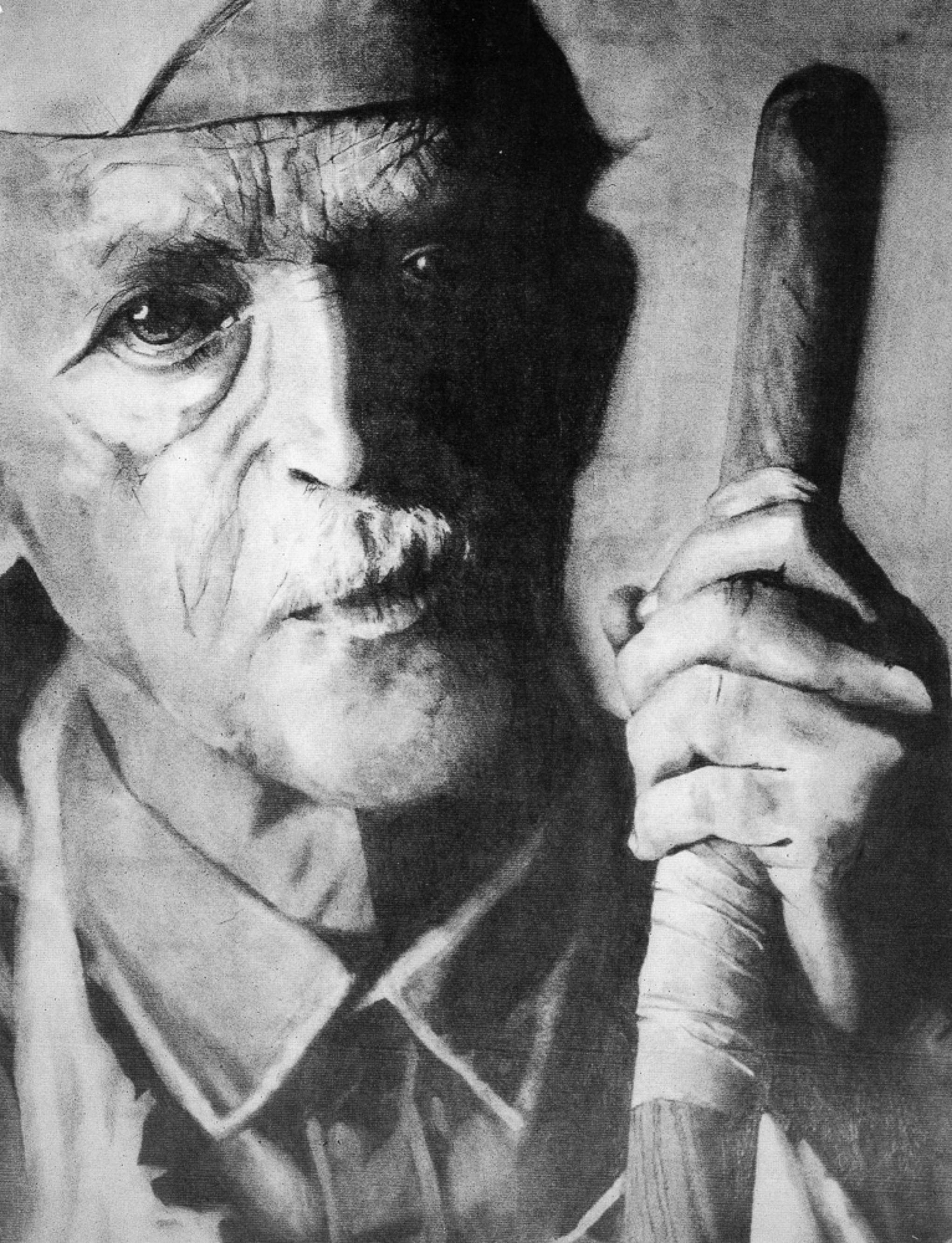
"Many years ago a child was born into this world with a magic far surpassing any I can call my own.

Three wise men, not so unlike yourselves, brought him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

He received these gifts with gratitude and used them with humility. Now He no longer has use for these gifts."

on a heated discussion of the day's events. Was the Italian an angel? How on earth could he be a wizard if wizard's didn't exist? Could the gifts he had "returned" to them **really** be what the young Italian had claimed?

Over the long miles they argued. And Melkior, leaning against the window, thought how like a tall tale it all sounded. But, the old Bede mused, that it was often the oddest tales that held the most truth. After all, he believed in the Bible. ♫



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Editor's Note:

The 1999-2000 Labyrinth staff wishes to dedicate this *Labyrinth 2000* to our devoted advisor, Laurie Hinners. After 30 years of helping her students produce over 60 award-winning editions of *Labyrinth*, Mrs. Hinners is retiring; however, her legacy will live on. Her hard work has helped make *Labyrinth* one of the most outstanding student publications in the state of Virginia. Mrs. Hinners, your good-natured humor, compassion, and vitality will be missed. We wish that the sun will shine on your face, the wind will be always at your back, and the retirement road will rise up to greet you every day. Good bye to a great teacher and wonderful person, we will all miss you very much.