ARCHIPELAGO

An International Journal of Literature, the Arts, and Opinion
www.archipelago.org

Vol. 3, No. 1 Spring 1999

Printed from our Download edition

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Contents

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About Our Contributors

Neil Bermel teaches Czech and Russian at Sheffield University in England. A graduate of Yale University, he received his doctorate in Slavic Languages and Literatures from University of California, Berkeley. He is the translator of two novels by the Czech writer Pavel Kohout, I AM SNOWING (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1994) and THE WIDOW KILLER (St. Martin's Press, 1998). His translations of works

by Daniela Fischerová appear in DAYLIGHT IN NIGHTCLUB INFERNO: Czech Fiction from the Post-Kundera Generation, selected by Elena Lappin and FINGERS POINTING SOMEWHERE ELSE, both published by Catbird Press <www.catbirdpress.com> (1-900-360-2391).

Daniela Fischerová is one of the leading Czech writers of the generation born after the Second World War, whose members began to be published only after the Prague Spring ended in 1968. She is best known for her plays, which have been staged around the world, including in the United States. She is also known for her children's books, mostly recently LENKA AND NELKA, OR AHA! (1994), and for her radio plays and screenplays. FINGERS POINTING SOMEWHERE ELSE (Catbird Press <www.catbirdpress.com>, forthcoming) will be her first book to appear in English. "A Letter to President Eisenhower" appears in DAYLIGHT IN NIGHTCLUB INFERNO: Czech Fiction from the Post-Kundera Generation, selected by Elena Lappin (Catbird Press, 1-800-360-2391).

Spencer Holst has published two collections of stories, THE LANGUAGE OF CATS and SPENCER HOLST STORIES, and for three decades has been storyteller *par excellence* of New York's literary cafés. He has received the Rosenthal Award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and an award from the Foundation for Performing Arts. He lives in New York City with his wife, the visual artist Beate Wheeler. THE ZEBRA STORYTELLER, stories and prose works including Holst's unfinished baseball epic, "The Institute of the Foul Ball," is published by Station Hill Press <www. stationhill.org>. Station Hill Press will bring out his newest collection, BRILLIANT SILENCE, composed of miniature fictions, later this year.

Kirin Narayan <knarayan@facstaff.wisc.edu> is the author of STORYTELLERS, SAINTS AND SCOUNDRELS: Folk narrative in Hindu Religious Teaching; MONDAYS ON THE DARK NIGHT OF THE MOON: Himalayan Foothill Folktales; and LOVE, STARS, AND ALL THAT, a novel. She teaches anthropology at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. She has received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, the Victor Turner Prize for Ethnographic Writing, and the Elsie Clews Parsons Prize for Folklore.

Stella Snead was born in England in 1910. She studied with Ozenfant and Henry Moore and for fifteen years was known as a Surrealist painter whose works were said to be "amongst the most interesting of the strong surrealist movement in [England] in the 1930s and 1940s." During that period she had eleven solo exhibitions. She migrated to America, living in New York, then Taos; and in 1956, began photography, while traveling in the Americas, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Greenland. She lived in India for eleven years. She has exhibited in a great number of galleries, including the Institute of Contemporary Art, London; Kodak House, London; Lincoln Center, New York; Donnell Library, New York; Gallery Chemould, Bombay. Photographs by her are in the permanent collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, the International Center of Photography, and Harvard University Archive. She has published eight books: DROWNING CAN BE FUN? A Nonsense Book (Pont La Vue Press, New York, 1992); ANIMALS IN FOUR WORLDS: SCULPTURES FROM INDIA, texts by Wendy Doniger and George Mitchell (University of Chicago Press, 1989); BEACH PATTERNS (Clarkson Potter/Barre Publishing, 1975); SHIVA'S PIGEONS, text by Rumer Godden (Chatto and Windus, London/Viking Press, NY, 1972); CHILDREN OF INDIA (Lothrop, Lee & Shephard, NY, 1971); THE TALKATIVE BEASTS (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1969); SEVEN SEVEN (Folder Editions, NY, 1965); RUINS IN JUNGLES (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1962). She lives in New York. A retrospective of her existing paintings is on view at CFM Gallery <cfmg@mindspring.com>, 112 Greene St., New York, (212) 966-3864, from April 8 to May 9, 1999; a catalog is available from the gallery.

Eleanor Ross Taylor was born in 1920 in North Carolina and was married to the fiction writer Peter Taylor. LATE LEISURE (LSU Press) is her fifth book of poems, the others being WILDERNESS OF LADIES, intro. Randall Jarrell (MacDowell & Obolensky); WELCOME EUMENIDES, intro. Richard Howard (Geo. Braziller); SELECTED POEMS (Palaemon Press); DAYS GOING/DAYS COMING BACK (Univ. of Utah Press). In 1998 she received the Shelley Award from the Poetry Society of America and, earlier, was awarded a fellowship by the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Pavel Zoubok <pavel@bway.net>is a private art dealer in New York City specializing in twentieth century collage and assemblage. A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College (BA) and Hunter College (MA),

he has done extensive research into the history of collage and has written an unpublished study of the Czech poet and collagist Jiri Kolar. He regularly presents exhibitions of contemporary mixed-mediaartists at Mary Delahoyd Gallery in New York and is gallery representative for Stella Snead's work in photography and photo-collage. For information about upcoming exhibitions and gallery artists please call (212) 675-9619.

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In Memorium

MARION BOYARS
(1928-1999)

A Conversation with Marion Boyars appeared in
Archipelago, Vol. 1, No. 3

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Our friend and contributing editor **Benjamin Cheever**'s new novel FAMOUS AFTER DEATH is just published by Crown.

"If you buy one book in 1999, let it be this one. There's more knowledge, more humor, more wisdom packed into the pages of this novel than available in the entire self-help section of your average megastore. Within a month of purchasing this volume, most men experience a significant increase in the thickness and lustrousness of the hair which grows sometimes on the top of the scalp. Read this book carefully and your wife or husband or significant other, will fall in love anew. Or barring that, they'll fall in love for the first time. That's right. With you. Everybody who reads this book carefully loses weight. Sure to be an international bestseller, FAMOUS AFTER DEATH is a must read. Benjamin Cheever is a great writer indeed. He's also a wonderful, wonderful man."

—Benjamin Cheever

Moshe Benarroch <http://redfrog.norconnect.no/poems/poetpage?author=Moshe+Benarroch>, whose poems appeared in Archipelago Vol. 2, No. 1, has published a new book of poems with Yaron Golan, 3 Burla Street, Tel Aviv, Israel. The volume, in Hebrew, is SHIRAT SOF HAOLAM (The Poetry of the End of the World), and costs $15, p/p. A selection of his work appears on-line in *Ygdrassil* <http://www.synapse.net/~kgerken/>

A remarkable work by our contributor **María Negroni,** ISLANDIA, is to be published this year by Station Hill Press <www.stationhill.org>. A dual-language edition, translated by Anne Twitty, ISLANDIA "is written in alternating prose and verse sections. Its prose tells of a race of exiled Nordic heroes who have lived for generations on an island, while the sophisticated verses of the author's own persona (as a poet exiled in present-day New York City) speak to the condition of a woman's life in urban America. Apparently polar aspects of the work's historical/contemporary, remote/local, mythical/personal, traditional saga/modern poetry approach each other, but never quite touch, across a chasm of mutually reinforcing but sharply distinct senses of absence. María Negroni is the celebrated Argentinean author of six books of verse and the recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship for 1994." Excerpts from her long sequence EL VIAJE DE LA NOCHE/NIGHT JOURNEY appeared in Archipelago, Vol. 1, No. 1. Her LA JAULA BAJO EL TRAPO/CAGE UNDER COVER, also tr. by Anne Twitty, appeared in Archipelago, Vol. 2, No. 4.

ANNIVERSARY

Archipelago Vol. 3, No. 1 marks the beginning of our third year of publication. We are now a non-profit corporation, signifying, perhaps, an official recognition of our fictional personhood. Our readers have been generous and alert. We are pleased at how they have accepted our offerings, and hope their numbers continue to grow. We welcome them.

In our fictional youthfulness we salute two indomitable women of august experience and accomplishment. Stella Snead, long known as a photographer of mark, is about to be "rediscovered" (because, as she says, "*I* always knew where I was") by Art History as a British Surrealist painter of great interest, whose work had not been seen in public for more than forty years. The poet Eleanor Ross Taylor, a decade younger than her Archipelagean neighbor, has just published her fifth volume, LATE LEISURE, from which we bring our readers six handsome poems.

We are especially pleased in this issue to offer a virtual collection of Stella Snead's paintings, currently being exhibited at the CFM Gallery in New York City. The paintings here range from her very first production, "Begonias" (1936) to her most recent, "Signals From the Grotto" (1995). We include her autobiography and chronology of her life as a painter; an overview of her work by Pavel Zoubok, a private dealer in collage and works on paper; and a reflection on growing up near Stella Snead in Bombay, by her godchild, Kirin Narayan.

Readers will not yet find Stella Snead listed in the histories of Surrealist Art. Of her, the art historian Whitney Chadwick writes:

> Stella Snead's paintings are not easily categorized by movement or style. Not a follower of geometric abstraction, she nevertheless worked closely with Amédée Ozenfant in London and New York between 1936 and 1941, and her paintings display the crisp contours and precise articulation characteristic of Purism....
> She has said that often paintings appear, fully formed in her mind's eye, waiting only for the hand to translate the vision to pigment on canvas. In this, she shares with the Surrealists an attitude toward painting as a kind of metal alchemy, fluid and organic.
>
> from "*Rediscovery*" *The Paintings of Stella Snead*
> CFM Gallery, New York, 1999

With this issue Archipelago launches a series examining the work of artists on the margins of current trends, although undoubtedly, like Stella Snead, *they* know where they are.

—KM

FABLE

THE ZEBRA STORYTELLER

Spencer Holst

Once upon a time there was a Siamese cat who pretended to be a lion and spoke inappropriate Zebraic.

That language is whinnied by the race of striped horses in Africa.

Here now: An innocent zebra is walking in a jungle, and approaching from another direction is the little cat; they meet.

"Hello there!" says the Siamese cat in perfectly pronounced Zebraic. "It certainly is a pleasant day, isn't it? The sun is shining, the birds are singing, isn't the world a lovely place to live today!"

The zebra is so astonished at hearing a Siamese cat speaking like a zebra, why, he's just fit to be tied.

So the little cat quickly ties him up, kills him, and drags the better parts of the carcass back to his den.

The cat successfully hunted zebras many months in this manner, dining on filet mignon of zebra every night, and from the better hides he made bow neckties and wide belts after the fashion of the decadent princes of the Old Siamese court.

He began boasting to his friends he was a lion, and he gave them as proof the fact that he hunted zebras.

The delicate noses of the zebras told them there was really no lion in the neighborhood. The zebra deaths caused many to avoid the region. Superstitious, they decided the woods were haunted by the ghost of a lion.

One day the storyteller of the zebras was ambling, and through his mind ran plots for stories to amuse the other zebras, when suddenly his eyes brightened, and he said, "That's it! I'll tell a story about a Siamese cat who learns to speak our language! What an idea! That'll make 'em laugh!"

Just then the Siamese cat appeared before him, and said, "Hello there! Pleasant day today, isn't it!"

The zebra storyteller wasn't fit to be tied at hearing a cat speaking his language, because he'd been thinking about that very thing.

He took a good look at the cat, and he didn't know why, but there was something about his looks he didn't like, so he kicked him with a hoof and killed him.

That is the function of the storyteller.

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND BEFORE

Stella Snead

In a bedroom of a London house a woman, my mother, was in labor. I was told, in the fullness of time, that it lasted thirty-six hours. Perhaps a maid was there, and a nurse; a doctor, at intervals. My father would have been hiding, sheltering himself, one might say, in some other part of the house or walking in the garden nursing his neuroses, quite unable to take any part in the natural drama of the birth of his first and, as it turned out, his only child. It was a difficult birth. When I did finally emerge into this world I was not breathing. Smacking did not help; I was given oxygen and then I yelled, showing that I meant to live.

During these same hours England's King Edward VII was dying. Some of the population might have been grieving, the rest contemplating the next in line to be enthroned — George V and his already queenly wife, Mary of Teck. First would come the sombre pageantry of the funeral and, later on, a splendid display of pomp and circumstance for the coronation of the new monarchs. For centuries England had been well versed in the art of pomp, and in 1910, it was unlikely that any diminishment of such power and glory was thought of. The shows would proceed with their traditional expertise with perhaps only the weather being perverse — cheerful sunshine for the funeral, hard rain and deadly grayness for the coronation. What the weather did, I do not know, only that these events were kept from my mother until after my birth. Also at about this time Halley's Comet appeared on one of its known and regular rounds of the heavens and was clearly seen in the northern hemisphere. For those who believe in astrology, as my mother did, this would have been considered auspicious; actually I would say that my life has been a mixed bag like anybody else's, albeit with some remarkably good luck here and there.

Let it be said that this account of the marriage of my parents, as well as much in my early years, is based on what my mother told me, facts and memories repeated through my childhood and on into adulthood. They were part of the atmosphere, and were absorbed into my mind almost as unconsciously as breathing. Conjectures concerning my father are mine; actual memories of him are dim; and after the age of five I never saw him again. And I never heard his side of the story.

When my father, Clarence Frederick Heron Snead, married my mother, Ethel May Johnson, the chemistry, as we say of star-crossed couples, was all wrong; one might just as well say there was no chemistry, merely two rather unsophisticated people trying to make a match, each with their differently wrong reasons. From hindsight it would appear that my father married my mother for her money so that he could give up a career as a barrister which he had not the confidence to pursue; and that my mother, as the eldest of a large family, knowing that marriage was expected of her, especially since her two younger sisters had already found husbands, had felt duty-

bound to accept the proposal of the good-looking Clarence. They were wed in 1901, when my father was twenty-five and my mother two or three years older.

It would seem that very little happiness graced this union. My mother probably married with some reluctance, my father out of desperation. Even as an adolescent he had black moods which isolated him from his companions and mystified his cheerful half-Spanish, half-French mother. She, Afra Rosa Augusta, had met the Englishman she married in Rome, who brought her to live in suburban London. My grandfather seems to have been a background sort of man, rather conventional, not very successful. My father was their only son among three daughters, two of whom fared no better than he did. The eldest had mental trouble similar to my father's, becoming mad in later life; the second daughter had severe bouts of depression, and committed suicide. Only the youngest was balanced enough to teach school in Canada most of her life. The fact that three of the four offspring of these seemingly normal parents should be so mentally afflicted is an unsolved mystery; nothing is known of their families except that a brother of Afra Rosa was governor of the Balearic Islands.

After returning from a joyless honeymoon on the French Riviera, my parents settled into a pleasant house with a large garden in the south London suburb of Dulwich. My father, who had had a reasonably good education and had completed his studies in law, quickly abandoned the idea of pursuing his profession; thus the bridge between himself and the world became less and less used and therefore more fragile. His only known activity was pruning the roses. Floundering in mental troubles then so little understood, he became a recluse, venting his frustrated energies in bouts of uncontrolled temper, dominating and frightening his inexperienced wife, isolating her from friends, neighbors and most tragically from the family she loved.

Today my mother's situation and her submission to it seem almost inexplicable. Why didn't she run away then instead of fourteen years later? Why didn't her parents help her, rescue her even? Why did they allow themselves to be estranged by the abusive letters my father forced her to write? Why didn't she confide in them, or in anyone? Perhaps she really was a born old maid yet did not want to admit it. She had lived contentedly at home until her late twenties, had looked after her mother, particularly after the early death of her father; she had been devoted to her two much younger brothers, helping with their upbringing. Both she and her mother were sheltered and shy, knowing little of the world beyond the church and their genteel suburb. But her father was a competent and forthright businessman who had made a fortune. Surely he could have stood up to Clarence Snead and somehow rescued his unhappy daughter. But all too likely it was around the time of the marriage that he died. Perhaps he had warned her during their engagement that she had not made a wise choice; but my mother could be headstrong, and she plunged right in. It was a plunge into quicksand.

During those first years of marriage my father was often unkind and uncaring, but not yet violent. My mother was constrained, perhaps trying to please, above all, trying to avoid trouble. His black moods would occasionally lift and he would exclaim, "I've never felt better in my life!" a remark disturbing to my mother since it was too often followed by a tirade about some trivial matter.

It could have been during one of his more positive mood periods that the idea of another trip occurred to my father; in fact why not a Grand Tour, the then popular diversion of the idle rich? — for although only moderately rich my parents were rather immoderately idle. They chose Egypt and travelled in style, if not exactly light-heartedly, to a fabulous land. It was, of course, sheltered travel, not the rugged,

exploratory kind of those much bolder individuals of earlier centuries. It was polite, drawing-room travel; but what an adventure it must have seemed to a suburban couple who seldom, if ever, went into central London! They went a thousand miles up the Nile, as far as Wadi Halfa in the Sudan. Wadi Halfa was then a sleepy desert town of mud with one brick-built hotel for visitors. They probably stayed several days at this farthest point of their journey. Such tours were leisurely affairs more often than not arranged by the redoubtable Thos. Cook & Sons, one of the earliest of travel agencies. Transportation was mainly by Cook's Nile Steamer, something like a small cruise ship. It docked at several points along the way, from which passengers would travel by horse-carriage to see the finely preserved temples of one of the world's oldest civilizations. These excursions were not arduous as most of the monuments were close to the great river. At Luxor, the most prolific center of ancient tombs and buildings en *route*, they would have left the ship to stay in the then-renowned hotel, with its grounds charmingly exuberant with bougainvillea and other semi-tropical plants, with its balconies to every room and a terrace where dinner was served on balmy evenings. There were the dragomen or guides who conducted the sightseeing, but never were there hordes of tourists. When back in Cairo they would have gone, again by carriage, to the Great Pyramids of Giza, for then there was neither hotel nudging the desert nor *Son et Lumière* coloring up the monuments; but chances are they could have ridden camels for a short distance and walked close to the Sphinx. Finally they went to the oasis of Biskra, which was then surely remote enough to be idyllic. My father likely did some reading which involved him in Egyptian history: the colossi, those twice life-sized statues of the kings; the treasure-filled tombs; the reliefs covering the walls of so many of the temples and telling intricate stories of a people and their animal- and bird-headed deities. Was he perhaps soothed for a while and drawn away from his tormented self? It might have happened, but it did not last; once home, he slid further into the pits of depression.

Although Sigmund Freud's theories had been pouring out of him since the late 19th century, translations of his works into English did not appear before 1910. So in the first years of the 20th century, in insular Great Britain, little was recognized or named between mental health and insanity; doctors lumped it all under the term "neurasthenia" or, simply, "nerve trouble." Thanks to Freud, Jung and others, we now know something about this vast and pulsing area, those spaces in the brain where lurk minute gradations of disease: from mild disturbances and fleeting obsessions to suddenly inexplicable fears; fantasies more and more menacing; moods that swing first among shades of gray until the contrasts intensify into dense, heavy black zooming to a high white glare. The worst agony comes when the brain seems to divide against itself, when emotions and intellect withdraw into the limbo of insanity.

People such as my parents would have been deeply in the dark, but possibly at some point my father might have decided that he had a mental illness and that the time had come to seek a cure. Spas were known and were already popular, and there were sanatoria; the latter occasionally advertised treatments for mental troubles. And so to one of these establishments my parents went. It looked like a country hotel, the diet was vegetarian, and this almost certainly was something new and unexpected. Although it worked no magic on my father's condition, the idea of not eating animals appealed to both of them. It was by no means an immediate transition but it prompted visits to other such places, some offering even more unconventional cures. There was

heat, presumably designed to cause the patient to sweat out poisons. One sat in a wooden box surrounded by rows of light bulbs, head only emerging from a hole in the top; there was air-bathing, an early precursor of nudism, but in those pre-World War I years people wore a loose, light garment and simply walked in the breezily bowling air; there was also dew-walking to be done in the early morning on one of those fine grass lawns so prevalent in England — prevalent too were big, slimy slugs also enjoying the damp dawns. So as my parents indulged, if somewhat gingerly, in all this, there followed, for my mother at least, the first intimations that she was not a thoroughly conventional person.

For centuries many Hindus and Buddhists have observed particularly strict forms of vegetarianism while in the West it only became a "movement" from about the middle of the 19th century — my parents therefore were close to being pioneers. The basis of the practice can be religious, humanitarian or health. At first my parents adopted it from a humanitarian point of view believing that animals should not be made to suffer and die to feed mankind or to clothe them in furs; also the cruelty of vivisection was abhorred, together with fox hunting, bullfighting and other blood sports. On the health side, it was thought that refraining from meat led to fewer diseases, that herbal medicines should be used in place of drugs and injections. The ways of cooking vegetables, in particular in England, were an abomination: fast boiling in quantities of water which rendered them tasteless, adding soda which turned their natural color to a fierce metallic green; and then came the final mistake of throwing out the cooking water which might have retained some of the taste and nutrients of the mistreated vegetables. Running side by side with vegetarianism there are often other persuasions such as Theosophy, astrology, a belief in reincarnation. All of this was in no way fashionable as it is now, rather it was considered crank nonsense and socially unacceptable. Nevertheless my mother, in particular, became a stalwart believer in and an ardent missionary for these convictions for the rest of her life.

Many years elapsed before my parents journeyed abroad again, but the visits to sanatoria continued. Certainly they must have been more cheerful places to be than the gloom of the Dulwich house. They offered respite as well as hope and then there was the new thinking of vegetarianism to be further discovered. During this time too my mother did a surprising thing: she took up photography. Perhaps the first seeds of interest were sown by her father, who headed a large and diversified printing firm. She had grown up in a house hung with large printed reproductions of oil paintings, some of which migrated with her when she married. Alternatively, perhaps while in Egypt she had wished she knew how to record its beauty and strangeness in order to have something tangible to take away, or perhaps it was not until she knew she was pregnant that the means to make a record of the coming child became imperative. No diary of my mother's has survived, no photographic notes while learning, no information even as to how she learned. The fact that she not only took photos but developed and printed them herself and later hand-colored them, makes me regret enormously that I was such a dull child and never asked any of the right questions. Luckily at least I remember the camera, a rather modest one of the period, in which glass plates were used; hers were only 3 x 4 inches. The outer casing was of wood, as was the tripod it stood on, and a black cloth covered the head of the photographer. Obviously she must have set up a darkroom somewhere in the house but I have no recollection of visiting it, though I do distinctly remember that the printing was done by the sun. Small wooden frames, each containing photo paper and plate, were put at suitable sun-catching angles on the back terrace. The trick, of course, was to take them

in at just the right moment, a skill my mother had diligently acquired, judging by the two fat albums still existing. Each page holds four photographs and each album has thirty-six pages. At a guess, the pictures date from 1908 or 9, and the first five pages show the house, front and back, sections of the garden, a uniformed maid, a fluffy cat, a formally posed group of three women and three children, all unidentified and with serious expressions — no "say cheese" grins here — and it is the same with my father. Invariably he sits in a deck chair either reading or looking straight at the camera, he has a moustache and his good looks are apparent, his stance tends to be hostile and suspicious. In one he nurses the cat, in all he wears high-buttoned, well-polished boots, a dark suit with sometimes a rose in the lapel; beside him there is usually a soft drink or a plate holding an apple or two. In not a single photo does he smile.

It was most likely the latter part of June 1909 that my mother found herself pregnant, and quite a surprise it must have been. More than eight years had elapsed since the beginning of this inharmonious marriage, based as it was on misguided motives rather than love or even friendship. My mother, though, was a loving person and to find herself with child was as if a boon had been granted; her apprehensions and anxieties were flooded more often than not by a glow of joy. Around this time too, possibly before he knew of the coming child, my father was contemplating another journey abroad. He had decided on a boat trip up and down the fjords of Norway and he went ahead with these arrangements. My mother had no choice; they went, she took photographs of glass-like water and ships backed by misty mountains while suffering the morning nausea of pregnancy. Probably they were only away two or three weeks, then she was home to prepare in earnest for the baby.

How isolated my mother was by this time it is hard to say. Her mother was still alive, her two younger sisters must have been well versed in the raising of babies, both having been married before my mother and having had varying numbers of children. It would be nice to think she had some contact, together with help and advice. Whether my mother did it alone or with the assistance of family and friends, the baby paraphernalia accumulated: a cot hung with white flounces and with a high draped headpiece, a large and handsome perambulator on four wheels protected by mudguards and with a folding hood like a carriage. My first baby clothes were long, shielding my feet, and they, like the coverlets of the pram, were edged with patterned crochet worked by my mother. Everything I wore was white only, and this, with the crochet, continued, with a complete disregard for school uniforms, until I was eight or nine. At first there was a nurse who, according to my mother, only stayed a month, although there is a photograph of me at just over a year being held by a neatly dressed nurse-like woman — maybe she had come back on a visit only. In any case it is certain that from a very early age I was looked after solely by my mother, and not by a nanny as was the usual English custom in those days.

Quite early on it was decided by my parents that I was to be a life-vegetarian, untainted by meat, fish or fowl; nor was my pure baby-blood to be contaminated by anything like a vaccine; so, as a baby, I was not vaccinated against smallpox. I was not christened or baptized either, but this was not a decided-upon omission; rather it was caused by stress. My father had quickly begun to resent my mother's joy in the baby and the time and attention she lavished on me; his heart could not open to hold any of the delight she felt in this new possession they had acquired and thus his meanness toward her increased. He insisted I must be called the rather uncheerful name Magdalene and had me registered thus; my mother's choice was

Stella, which was adopted later on, and Magdalene was demoted to an unused middle name.

There is no doubt that my mother became a more ardent photographer once I was born, though beside the first baby photo in the albums I am labelled five months. I am lying, with a backdrop of white pillows, on a garden seat; my face is chubby but I appear to have no hair. Soon my mother began to color some of her pictures with tiny brushes from liquids in minute bottles. The house became dark green since it was covered with ivy; the blossoming garden was brilliant, the well-tended lawn an extra bright spring green; her favorite trio of colors at the back of the house — yellow laburnum, mauve wisteria and a copper beech tree — were shown at their best. The shower of clematis over the front door was a luscious purple and the round pillar box across the road for mailing letters was red, indeed. The tree for my first Christmas touched the ceiling and was hung with scores of glistening glass ornaments, which, oddly enough, my mother did not color in the photographs. I got to know these fragile decorations well in later years as they were preserved in boxes with divided spaces to fit their varying shapes and used again year after year. By the time I was one I had a neat crop of brown curls clinging tightly around my almost intellectual forehead. At a year and a half the hair was bushier and a quite substantial curl was trained to hang down mid-center, so that I fretted, probably in more ways than one, the nursery rhyme — "There was a little girl who had a little curl right in the middle of her forehead./When she was good she was very very good but when she was bad she was horrid." I did seem to pout a lot; soon with my coloring my plump cheeks were rosy, my lips several shades too bright. At nineteen months I smiled, showing two teeth. And here comes the only photograph in the albums of my mother and me together, which I would guess was taken by her best friend, known to me as Aunt Kitty, who evidently visited us just then. My mother looks nervous and wary, holding me on her lap, both of us in total white. Next to us is a picture of Aunt Kitty looking serene in a deck chair wearing a white high-necked blouse and a long khaki-colored skirt.

The pictures continue as I grow older month by month and the garden blooms; often a color and a black & white version of the same shot are placed side by side. It would seem that rather more visitors came than I was led to believe, for there we are, grouped in the garden. In one picture labelled "2 & 92" I sit gazing up at a very ancient lady, not a relative but a friend of my mother. Then there are photographs of our next door neighbors, the father solemnly proud of his family, his wife smiling contentedly, the two well dressed daughters in large hats full of feathers or flowers. Elsewhere there are several of their son sitting at a table, busy with papers. He had become a barrister and might have struck a chord in my mother who must have wished her husband had been normal enough to have successfully entered this profession. But mostly the second album, like the first, contains more images of me and the garden than anything else.

When I was about two my toys began to appear; a teddy bear almost as big as I was, which I could barely carry, or I sit at a table, standing my wooden building blocks on end like skyscrapers. It was extremely unlikely that then I had ever heard of New York; nevertheless I look pleased with my unconscious imitation. Sometimes I wore a pink sunbonnet or was sheltered by a black and white checked parasol or I stood obediently under bowers of roses and, surprisingly, there I am on a white-painted garden seat draped in furs — my mother's put out to air, but no doubt to be disposed of as she became more thoroughly and seriously vegetarian. By the time I was three, my hair had acquired the proportions of an afro. One of my birthday presents was a pale

blue doll's pram with a doll wearing a straw hat. I, too, had a straw hat, a rather battered one which I wore at home only; it was a kind of play-companion and I loved it. Somewhat before I was three comes the last picture of me with my father; we sit side by side, he looking severe in a stiff upstanding white collar, but he holds my hand. My rolled forehead curl reached down to between my eyes; fortunately it was often displaced, so I did not become cross-eyed. I learned to bowl a wooden hoop and to beat a cheerful-looking drum. I had a fine doll's house, verandahs outside, four well-furnished rooms inside, and an even more elaborate Noah's Ark with two stories of separate cages, each with a manger and beautifully made pair of animals. My rocking horse was covered in real ponyskin and could be detached from the rockers and dragged around the garden with me on its back. This was hardly exciting; I think I preferred rocking.

Perhaps what I liked most as I grew older was to take walks with my mother into that little-known outside world. There was a park near us, not a very manicured one, or was it what in England is called "a common"? — just a piece of land for recreation among wild flowers, bushes and trees. I could run and hide, telling myself tales of the creatures that seemed to me to populate these hidden places, then back to my mother, brimming with stories of nymphs, elves, monsters — each with names presumably invented by me since they were unlike any I might have heard. Later, my mother used to lament that she had never written down any of these wisps of an emerging imagination.

It sounds like a placid childhood but there were intimations of danger. One of my first memories is of being held by my mother while with one hand she tried to ward off blows from my father. After my birth I think his condition must have deteriorated considerably. Beyond the fact that he held my hand in one photograph, I never remember even the smallest gesture of affection from him, though I do remember that, like so many fathers, he played with my toy train more than I did; perhaps this was when I felt closest to him.

To distinguish the real memories from hearsay becomes increasingly difficult, even impossible, as time marches on, so let us assume that the exercise is not of great importance. A blow is a blow; any child can be exceedingly irritating when disobedient; and a father with an uncontrollable temper can hit hard. One day he knocked me unconscious. It was temporary and perhaps only happened once, but in my mother it must have instilled a very real fear that persisted and seethed into her mind; quite possibly it was from this moment she knew that, somehow, she must make an end to her marriage. My own reactions are totally forgotten; but there came another incident in some way comparable, which perhaps gives a clue and also suggests that the blow was not as serious as some psychologists would have us believe. My father decided that we should have a dog. It was to be a chow and one of impeccable pedigree was chosen. I was probably delighted by this young and jolly companion. My father, fanatic that he was, ruled that to avoid catching distemper, the dog must not have contact with other dogs, so therefore must not go out beyond the garden. When the danger of infection had passed he was big, strong and unmanageable. His first encounters with other dogs were wild and frightening; nobody could hold him. Chows as a breed are known to be aggressive and inclined to fight; he was untrainable as well. The servants were nervous to say the least; my father retired to his room. Ultimately, our unhappy dog had to be sent back to the kennels. I was the only member of the household who was, innocently rather than bravely, unafraid — so much so that one day I took his bone away from him and he promptly bit me. No doubt I screamed and cried, but my

disposition towards dogs remained fearless for many years to come. At the time of the bite, I was used to taking daily walks with my mother. I was attracted to every dog we met large or small, and this easy confidence was there as much after the bite as before. Similarly, I was not aware that my father's hard hit had estranged me from people in general. I might even have had the comfortable feeling that people liked me, since my mother often told me that from an early age my pram would be stopped by admiring strangers.

When I was about three the health of my mother's mother was deteriorating, and her doctor advised that she should spend the winter in a warmer and dryer climate. One of my mother's sisters was taking her by ship to Madeira when she died on board and was buried at sea. When this news was repaired it was the first time I had become conscious of sadness in my mother, and, oddly enough, it had nothing to do with my father. As I watched her trying to hold back tears I became upset too, but all I could say was, "Mummy, please put your face right."

The brooding blackness of my father's moods was both penetrating and enveloping, giving our house a menacing atmosphere. My mother had difficulty in finding servants; when she did and they had settled in, all too often they wished to leave, and did so. However there were still times when the tensions lightened, and during one of these we suddenly had a car. As far as I knew it was the first occupant of our garage and it was quite handsome. It rose in tiers from the front to the back, and it was very convertible; it could be open, semi-open or closed, even the windscreen could be half-open. Inside there was the rich, attractive smell of fine leather; probably it was of a make long extinct. Our chauffeur had a winter and a summer uniform and he always looked neat. There is a photograph of him holding open the car door as I emerge — I hope I felt like a princess although I never remember actually going anywhere in this well-polished vehicle. I think its life with us must have been brief, because when the First World War started, in 1914, our chauffeur had to become a soldier.

Sometime near the beginning of 1915, a vegetarian cook-housekeeper called Hetty, who Mummy liked and trusted, came to work for us. She was comfortably plump and she was kind, but quite soon she too wanted to leave. My mother begged her to stay, saying she would get a live-in male nurse who could control my father during his fits of fury. Hetty had a good heart and agreed to stay, although the male nurse could not be found on account of the war. By this time my mother was particularly fearful on my behalf and I was never left alone with my father. It soon became clear that my mother's nerves were giving way. She would collect all the knives in the house each night and have Hetty hide them in her room. I slept with my mother, doors locked, while my father often paced back and forth for hours at a time. I suspect I was the only one who got a good night's sleep. Finally my mother sent for a doctor. My father, furiously shouting, refused to see him. The doctor, observing my mother, asked her a few pertinent questions. "It is time to go," he said, "your husband is at a dangerous stage of a long mental illness. You must escape with your child to somewhere he cannot find you, so leave no clues." It was precisely the kind of advice my mother was more than ready to receive. Within a few minutes of hearing these remarks my mother's mind switched from frightened uncertainty, and she began to gather the positive energy needed to follow the doctor's instructions.

"It was extraordinary, almost a miracle," Hetty told me when we met again very much later. "All your mother asked was that I should come too as a helpful companion and I readily agreed." But back then, how to get away was the immediate

and baffling problem. This near-madman, my father, seldom left the house. He was seemingly detached and uncaring yet always controlling us; we were the mice while he was the hawk. Then came another of his unpredictable mood changes; he swooped into one of his up-moods, which brought him a degree of confidence and enterprise. He announced he would go alone to one of the sanatoria he had previously visited. Within a few days he was gone. Sensing that every moment was precious, my mother and Hetty quickly packed us each a suitcase. The doctor had said that someone should be at the house to receive my father on his return, and Hetty's mother had agreed to come. Although he was not expected back for two or three weeks, we left hurriedly the following morning. Later we heard what a shockingly narrow escape it was, for my father came back the very next day.

So on that mid-summer morning of 1915, since our car was no longer in use, we summoned our local cabby — I do believe it was a horse-drawn carriage — to take us to Waterloo station. The war, just across the Channel in France and Belgium, was going full blast, yet families in England, mothers, grandparents and children, were going to the coast on holiday. The crowds at the station suited my mother's plan; we waited among them for perhaps fifteen minutes to be sure the cabby, who knew us, had left. Then we were anonymous and took another cab across London to King's Cross, from where the trains go north. My mother's only remaining plan now was to be where we knew nobody, so we sat on one of the several platforms and got on the first available train. I suppose it was easy enough to pay on the train. We got off at a small town in Hertfordshire and rented a cottage near a village called Potter's Bar. It seemed a peaceful and off-the-beaten-track kind of place but all too soon it was in the news — the war news.

On warm summer nights I was allowed to sleep out on a balcony. On one such night I remember being awakened and bundled downstairs to the parlor, where we sat around a table with a dark green cloth. The sky, what I could see of it, was a deep dark red. There was an intense silence except for a crackling sound. My mother and Hetty sat very still; very possibly I fidgeted, asked questions or fell asleep again. The fact was that a German zeppelin was hovering above us — on fire. Had I been anything but an uncomprehending child I think I would have wanted to run outside and see this object of destruction destroying itself. But my two adult companions chose to sit tight for what they assumed were their last few moments of life. At this point, the fiery monster above us could no longer have been manipulated by the men on board, their lives already consumed by the flames and smoke. Only the wind directed the still-burning skeleton of that once bulky craft; perhaps an updraft, a puff or two moved it onward a few hundred yards, and not even a fragment dropped to ignite our defenseless roof.

The next morning, far more people than usual were passing down our lane, and we heard that the zeppelin had come to earth only two fields away from where we were. We joined the stream of young and old converging from all directions to view the still-smoldering wreck. But we never reached it. My mother suddenly stopped and blurted out, "No! we must turn back — your father might come down from London to see it. We are not safe here." Perhaps we fled that very day to a more remote and hidden cottage.

Understandably these were difficult days for my mother. She had survived fourteen years of a drastically unhappy marriage, a long submissive period of seldom if ever feeling at ease with my father, and over the slow-moving years this unease had developed into sickening apprehension, into fear. Then, quite suddenly,

action was demanded of her: revolutionary action it might have seemed to this rather retiring lady brought up on Victorian precepts such as marriage was "until death do us part." Only the very bold or the desperate left their husbands. During those few days of planning and undertaking the flight my mother had become one of the desperate; courage welled up, adrenaline flowed. There was no time for contemplation or hesitation. She had done it. She had left her husband, she had escaped with her child, and now perhaps freedom, which she had hardly ever experienced, lay ahead. But she was assailed by a new kind of fear, that of being caught, of being forced back into the old life which could only become more unbearable, if not fatal. Being found was not very likely, but by some rough turn of luck it could happen. She had heard via Hetty's mother that my father had gone to Waterloo Station every day and taken trains to the south coast resorts, hoping to trace us. His desperation must have been extreme, for without the sheltering presence of his wife he was helpless. My mother had nightmares; a noose hung over us which must be avoided at all costs. One day when Hetty ran into an acquaintance, panic seized my mother and, like fugitives, we moved again.

Throughout all this there was one remarkable fact on our side. The money we lived on was, and always had been since my parents' marriage, my mother's, and she was still in full charge of it. I never remember hearing that my father had made the slightest attempt to take control. Really, in this case it was his illness that saved us; he could not bring himself to assume responsibilities. Just how my mother made our leaving arrangements I'll never know. Presumably she had a quick chat with her bank manager, swearing him to secrecy, or perhaps the doctor was an intermediary. No firm receiving spot could have been plotted before we left, as we had no idea where we were going. Whatever these arrangements were, they worked. We ate and had the means to make our several moves. My father and Hetty's mother ate, too, and her salary was paid. In fact, to the end of her life my mother had the reputation for paying all bills promptly; and as well, she had the habit of deducting 5% of the bill's total for this promptness, showing perhaps that she had inherited something of her wealthy father's business acumen.

A month or two into our vagrancy, an occurrence on the ex-home front, as one might say, made it imperative that Hetty's mother must leave; one of her sons had returned wounded from the war and she must look after him. She no doubt informed the doctor. My father found himself at an impasse which he had neither the wit nor the incentive to surmount. His search for us came to an abrupt halt. He gave in and, without protest, allowed himself to be confined in a private nursing-home selected by the doctor, my mother of course paying the bills. What intense relief! There was now no chance of coming face to face with him on a street or country footpath, no chance of the doorbell ringing and finding him there. With these tensions lifted, my mother relaxed almost into collapse, but with so many other problems still to be faced, she rallied once more.

Our present roving way of life was never considered to be anything but temporary. For my mother, particularly, it was alien; she was in no way a nomad. At forty she had had no more than two, perhaps three addresses in London; her trips abroad had always been instigated and arranged by others, otherwise she might never have set foot outside of England. In her late teens she was sent to a finishing school in Dresden, where she learned some German and longed to come home; the rest, as has been said, were decided upon by my father. At this juncture she needed to be in one quiet place and to be looked after with kindness. The idea of returning to the house in Dulwich, so heavy with scary memories, was abhorrent, and after the zeppelin

experience, why return to London at all? Her best friend, Kitty, lived in Leicester, and there, too, was a vegetarian sanatorium where meals and treatments were available. We said a fond good-bye to Hetty and took a spacious room for one month. It was so much the right place that we stayed for two and a half years.

Leicester was a medium-sized town in the Midlands, a good 100 miles from London. The couple who ran the sanitorium had five daughters, ranging in years from teens to two, so for the first time in my young life I was daily surrounded by playmates. The last few photos in the album are of us girls in the large garden. The whole atmosphere was cheerful and so close to normal that it seemed almost strange. Still, there were irregularities stemming from the old life to be faced; two of them, in particular, were difficult for me. Sometime after we had settled into the sheltering calm of the sanatorium, school became my next new experience. There was a reputable girls' day school just across a corner of the park opposite. I was enrolled and eager to go. My mother must have been aware that there was a school uniform but, apparently without giving it a thought, she sent me in white. I don't believe she meant to be cruel; it was just that she had become in some ways a nonconformist, and I, as a child of six or seven, had not yet had a chance to develop this precious faculty. So from that first day I stood out like a very sore thumb and was pestered week after week about those little white dresses with their crochet borders and inserts. Actually, the uniform of this school was just about as outstanding in itself as my dresses, but since it was worn by all, it presented no problem to any. It was a garment in a style copied from medieval Italy and referred to as a *jibba* (the spelling is mine since I have not been able to trace it in any dictionary, but because I desired it so ardently the name is strongly imprinted in my memory). It came in shades of brown: first, a long-sleeved blouse of a reddish tinge, topped by a darker tunic with projecting epaulettes and a pointed vee-shape in front bearing an embroidered emblem. I was evidently taken to a professional photographer to commemorate my belated acquisition of this treasure. I am seated on an absurd chair of the kind often found in photographers' studios of the day, looking far from ecstatic, my hair grown long and straight, my legs, in thick brown stockings, ending in a cloud.

My second ordeal turned up sometime after the first and was worse. In order to cover our tracks more thoroughly at the time of our escape from my father, my mother changed our name to Slater. It was perhaps wise, as at that time Snead was a decidedly unusual name; in fact, when we moved back to London, in the late '20s, there were still no other Sneads in the telephone directory. So there I was, enrolled as Slater in this perfectly proper and conventional school; then after a year or so I became Snead. It was bewildering, painful and irritating — just about every child asked me, "Why have you changed your name?" I had only one thing to be thankful for: my first name, Magdalene, had been promptly supplanted by Stella when we left my father — a mercifully small and private alteration taking place perhaps in one of the cottages; or, even on the train as we left London, my mother may have said to Hetty, "Well, now I am going to call her Stella." And that was that. A surname is different, it is more formal and public, and besides, it is something that does not normally get changed when one is a child. I was seven, that boundary between early and mid-childhood, and I was a 'new girl' in the largest gathering I had yet encountered. As do most children I longed to be like the rest, to find my niche — originality was not the aim. But those white dresses being oh-so-insistent in the wrong direction, reducing me to a noticeably unfortunate white blob among all those exotic and contented browns. And then came Snead blustering in, shriveling me, shutting me out like a bad puppy. I was indeed out

of luck; both situations called for more brazenness than I could muster at that stage. But of course it was not the end of the world, just the beginning of learning how to cope. Time simply moved things along, winds blew, no doubt rounding up the next obstacles to take the place of these first two. In spite of all, I believe I grew to like school and managed, in most ways, to be after the relatively ghastly introduction, a fitting-in-child.

END.

August /91

CHRONOLOGY AS PAINTER

Stella Snead

Part 1

1910 Born London, England. (See "Early Childhood and Before")

1915 With mother, Hettie (vegetarian cook-housekeeper) run away from mentally troubled and beginning-to-be dangerous father.

1916 Settle in Leicester (Midlands) first in vegetarian sanitarium, later in own house until I was eighteen.
Education: At first, scattered village schools.

1917-24 Proper/snob girls day school.

1924-27 Progressive, co-ed, self-governing, Theosophical, vegetarian boarding school — St. Christopher's, Letchworth, Herts., England.

1927 Last three months of year, stay with French family in Paris, meet first Americans, attend Alliance Française, meet almost every other nationality — a heady experience for someone confined until then to England only and also confined to a background based mainly on vegetarianism. I was nevertheless entranced by Paris although I knew nothing of the special and extraordinary people who made it the place to be in these, the golden years, the '20s & '30s.

1928 Move from Leicester to Sutton, Surrey (edge of London).
Secretarial course in London.

1929 Have own car. No need to earn a living. Try this, that and the other. No satisfaction, lonely, bored. During my early twenties, deep depressions started to descend, self-pitying they were, and would hang around for months. I cried a lot, wanted to hibernate like the bears or to be very old or dead. Eventually would come a day when I would zoom up and out of it, like a kite caught by the wind though the outside conditions were exactly the same. So what was this? It must be connected with my father, inherited perhaps. My mother was sympathetic but she had no clear idea, it seemed, though she had lived with someone much worse afflicted for fourteen years. Neither of us knew much about psychiatry. And so it
1936 went on, just one long slow-moving waste of time, until in May '36, I was with my one and only artist friend on the Spanish island of Teneriffe. We had access to a delectable private garden where she was painting flowers using oils. I watched her closely one day and had a strong and

immediate conviction that I could do this, at least I could do what she was doing — applying the oil paint neatly with a brush and it stayed where she put it, quietly and obediently. That appealed to me. I did not have to be quick and dexterous as with watercolor and some other skills. Luckily we had a garden at home with some of the subject matter I needed. I painted in my bedroom for the rest of the summer. My mother was somewhat disturbed; I was taking no exercise, neglecting friends, hardly using my car even.

Come September there were three choices open to me. My painter friend had the offer of a house in Tangier where we could both stay, or I could just stay home and paint without tuition, or I could study with the French painter Amedée Ozenfant, who was coming from Paris to open a school in London. Of course I had not heard of him, but the idea of one teacher and a small number of students appealed to me far more than one of the big schools, so I chose this, rather tentatively, for one semester. I now heard that Ozenfant was a friend and colleague of Léger and that they had taught at the Académie Moderne in Paris, that Le Corbusier had built Ozenfant a house, and that together they had started the Purist Movement. The Ozenfant Academy of Fine Art opened in London in mid-September '36.

By then, I had done six small flower paintings. I took them along and said nothing. This apparently was the right thing to have done; teachers like beginners. There was one other student in the nicely spacious studio: she was Leonora Carrington at nineteen, beautiful, her eyes intense and mischievous. What people! I had never met anyone remotely like them. Other students soon joined us. Against the back wall was an immense mural-sized painting on which Ozenfant was still working; I was doubtful if I liked it. The main thing was that I was enthralled by meeting so many people in the arts and to have found for myself a passion at last.

And it was such an absorbing passion; although I was to have depressions for many years to come, I don't think I was ever bored again. Leonora stayed two or three months, met Max Ernst, went to live with him in France. I went on to study with Ozenfant for three years in London, then for two more years in New York.

1937 I was often shy in the studio as I knew so much less than anybody else. The model took the same pose every day for two weeks, and we drew on double-elephant sized paper meticulously stretched onto a board. We could attempt the whole figure or any detail of our choice. We used well-sharpened charcoal pencils, building slow compositions with small ticks and much thought, no dashing quick sketches allowed. It was probably a unique method not happening elsewhere (in any other school). It suited me. I began to be a favorite student. I think, though I was not conscious of it at the time, that it was this Ozenfant method of working that freed me to boldly decide that I wanted to be a painter more than anything else, regardless of my lack of facility in drawing.

We students often spent Saturdays in the museums, for me one continual revelation. At first I was most attracted to Gauguin and to Le

Douanier Rousseau. Around this time, I decided to do a painting at home, as I was in no way confident enough to do it with others looking on. It was of a woman, naked, sitting cross-legged on the ground; on either side of her a short distance away sat a cat; stretched across the foreground was a snake; in the background, Rousseau took over: it was all fat, highly-indented leaves. When I brought it to the studio there was a hush at first and then Ozenfant kissed me.

For some time now, I had wanted to get to America. I really wanted to emigrate, as I had the over-exaggerated notion that if the Nazis should win the coming war it would be the end of civilization in Europe. I believed all those in the fields of culture, that is, all kinds of artists, teachers, philosophers, writers, poets, musicians, and scientists, should make for the New World. I talked to the other students, wanted to tell Ozenfant; but who was I to tell him what to do?

1938 Ozenfant invited to give a summer course in Seattle, Washington, U.S.A. Henry Moore came to the studio to teach us for a semester; a rewarding period but also disturbing, because of the Munich crisis — we were close to war and the possibility that Ozenfant might not return. I was perturbed as it seemed so important to continue studying with him. But return he did, and with the great decision to move the Ozenfant Academy of Fine Arts to New York, just as I hoped he would.

1939 World War II declared in Europe. I leave mother and lover and board ship for New York, taking more books and reproductions of art than clothes. Start work immediately and continue with Ozenfant for another two years.

1940 August — my first journey across the U.S., to California. The further west we went, the more exhilarated I was by the bigness of the country, especially the desert-like Southwest, parts of which were still to be explored and mapped! Returned in October to New York. Knowing something of what was behind and beyond N.Y.C. made me feel more at home and content to be in this most stimulating of cities (& this still holds). But the atmosphere in the studio had changed; Ozenfant was less friendly and I was having money troubles; my allowance from my ever-generous mother could not be sent out of England.

1941 Early in the year when funds and hopes were at their lowest came a telephone call from a millionairess, the result of a complicated labyrinth of connections. She invited me to lunch and said she would be glad to lend me money for the rest of the war. Miracle! I could go on working with Ozenfant, though it was not to be for much longer. I left in May, feeling glad, and also capable, to be on my own. At this time, refugees from all over Europe were flooding into America; in particular, many of the Paris Surréalistes came to New York. Even though I was not part of this group and had not done anything consciously surrealist, they were among the artists that interested me most. I went to a few of their parties; at one requiring fanciful dress I wore a handsome tail of

greenish-black cock feathers, and one Xmas I hid small bells in my poodle-cut curls. Earlier in the year, Leonora Carrington and I had most surprisingly run into each other on the N. Y. subway just a week after she arrived from Europe. For those several months, we met regularly. In the fall I was to have my first solo show as a painter at a gallery on East 56th Street. On an impulse, knowing Max Ernst was likely to come, I worked days and into the nights to produce a small surrealist painting; there was another painting inspired by the Southwest that Max liked better. Ozenfant also came, bringing his present students, friendly this time and full of praise for this ex-student who had worked with him five years and followed him from England to America! In December, suddenly — it seemed nobody was prepared for this — Japan attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. This drove America into the war, thus coming to the help of Britain, the only country in Europe still openly resisting Hitler.

No. 10 Gallery
19 E. 56th St.

1942

I now had friends in California, most of them refugees from Middle Europe settled in Hollywood. During the summer I set forth again by bus, my favorite vehicle for long-distance travel, especially in a front seat. I was eager to know more about the Southwest, the interior away from the main roads. We were on the old Route 66 in northern Arizona, on the edge of the Painted Desert and the Navaho reservation. In Holbrook, a tiny town, I got off the bus and went to a small hotel. The woman at the desk told me how to travel in wartime America (gasoline was the only commodity rationed here): Go to the Post office, the woman said, find out when and where the mail truck is going. The driver would very likely take me for a couple of dollars or nothing. These men were responsible local people who knew the white traders to the Indians and the country. And they went to remote areas, usually staying one night — no hotels, but I could stay with the trader or a school teacher. At this time, these were the first traders to the Navaho and the Hopi, and what trading posts they looked after! Full of the splendid jewellery and rugs the Indians still made. Most of the jewellery they wore themselves, the women in velvet covered with silver buttons and brooches, the men sometimes wearing three huge concho belts at once, silver hat bands on their sombreros, satin shirts in deep, shining colors.

This part of the country was so recently occupied by outsiders; Arizona only became part of the United States in 1912 — two years after I was born. Many of the people I was meeting then were the first of their kind in the West. For instance, John Weatherall was the first white man to find the Rainbow Bridge, the largest natural arch in the world. I stayed with him and his wife at Kayenta, just to the south of the now famous Monument Valley where Goulding was its first trader. Lorenzo Hubble, one of the most legendary of them all, had only just died; in fact, the woman in the Holbrook hotel had been his nurse, and I will always be grateful to her, for she guided me to one of the greatest trading posts ever.

Finally, I got back on a Greyhound bus and continued the rest of the journey to Hollywood, and settled down to painting. I was finding my own style; I had a new lover and was full of ideas. Many of the

paintings I saw whole just there in front of me. I ignored Hollywood, but I had a Victory garden which I walked to — I didn't have a car. I grew melons, peppers, eggplant and the best green beans I've ever eaten. I took a first aid course and thought often of England, even of going back. My mother was more or less safe in a remote vegetarian guest house and did not want me to face the high seas and the U-boats. We wrote to each other every week.

1943 Painting was going well. I took a brief job as a waitress at the hotel on top of Mt. Wilson; I was having a painterly interest in astronomy, and up there was then the largest telescope, the 100-inch, but it was closed to the public during the war. I penetrated a little, met some of the astronomers; seeing the Hercules Cluster through one of the smaller telescopes was breathtaking: I had never felt space so completely. Mt. Wilson was an inspiring place in several ways; if you were lucky you could see the sun set and the moon rise, so big and with a reddish glow, facing each other. The coyotes howled like wolves. I was warned not to wander too far, as there were also mountain lions.

1944 First visit to Mexico. The main idea was to see the newly-erupted volcano, Paracutín. As I was nearly a year late, it was almost dormant, but I stayed on though I did not really like Mexico at first. There was a feeling of evil, and I was appalled by the cruelty embodied in much of the pre-Colombian art. At the same time it was an appealing country, underpopulated as compared with now. I have returned frequently, into the early '80s.

For some time the British Isles had been filling with American troops and the equipment of war, for the invasion of Nazi-controlled Europe. In far-away California we knew little, as plans were secret until it happened, and that was in June 1944. The end of the war was now predictable, but no one knew when. I returned to New York with many paintings, as the first step towards London, where I would go to see my mother. Although I had been away from New York and other painters for most of two years, my work since 1943 had taken a jump towards fantasy. Animals were represented rather more often than people, e.g. "The Sulky Lion: hardly more than two-dimensional, the buildings small and quite out of scale. "Tiger in the Sky": similar, but more three-dimensional; and from then on, distances increased, by '43 giving the sense of a place where you and the viewer might be. This is one of the characteristics I like about Surrealism. It was also in the early '40s that certain American Abstract painters were gathering in New York. William Baziotes was the only one whose early work really pleased me, but small suggestions of abstraction mixed with fantasy did creep into my work, especially in some line drawings: "Herb People" & "Drug People" and others (almost doodles, perhaps).

1945 In New York; the war continuing. In February, a solo exhibition at the
Bonestell Gallery Bonestell Gallery, 18 E. 57thSt. I was pleased with the invitation with

18 E. 57th St.

"Tiger in the Sky" and my name in bold print on the cover — 16 paintings, plus ink drawings. I liked the way the show looked, but nothing sold. I was still not participating enough in the New York art world, I suppose. By now the Western countries had been freed from the Nazis; the Russian Army was converging on Berlin from the east, the Western Allies from the west. In March, Hitler and the other leaders surrendered, died or suicided in the ruins of Berlin. In Asia, Japan was losing ground everywhere but refused to surrender. In August, the atomic bombs were dropped. By early September I was on a liner for England, not a luxury one; it was the *New Amsterdam* converted to a troop ship, meaning ten to twenty bunks to a stateroom; and, for no understandable reason, since everything was still available in America, no alcohol was served to the passengers, only to the ship's officers!

Returning to what had been home, England, was a difficult experience, sad but heartwarming at the same time. The country had been victorious but was on its knees, bankrupt from the effort of holding out alone for nearly two years. Just about every necessity was to be rationed for years to come. A remarkable amount of London was still there, but there were gaps, big gaps. People were still good-tempered and cheerful, but the stimulus of holding out against no-matter-what had gone, and left another kind of gap. However, absolutely nobody every derided me for leaving; they were gracious and welcoming, and I soon made new friends; several were from introductions in the U. S. some of which were important to me for years to come. One of these was a Viennese art dealer, a refugee who also ran a gallery in Mayfair right through the Blitz. He offered me an exhibition almost right away, so the best thing I could do was to get myself a place where I could work and do more paintings. I must say that I was longing to be back in America, but this was impossible; one could not even pay the fare in pounds, so I painted the floor of my new flat bright pink and acquired two cats.

1946
Arcade Gallery Old Bond St.

The show was set for January at Paul Wengraf's Arcade Gallery, Old Bond Street. It was the largest show I had yet had: nineteen oils, twelve water-colors, eight pen drawings, two charcoal-pencil drawings from student days with Ozenfant (1936-41). Quite well received; a collector immediately bought "Woman with Cats" (1936-37), one of my earliest paintings. Later, this same collector, a Mr. Rose, bought two of my best charcoal-pencil drawings, but, unfortunately, I don't know what happened to them after he died. "Women with Cats" was acquired by Lalita Frye. This and another of my paintings, "Rigidity and Mirth" (late '40s), she gave to an obscure young friend of hers sometime before she died. I managed to trace them to his small house in Fulham, London, on a visit in '96, rather hidden from the world but loved. I also found that "Woman with Cats" was in a group exhibition on cats at the Louise Hallett Gallery in Bayswater, London (I have the address, but the gallery is not still there).

Louise Hallett Gallery, 1987

The show was in 1987, which of course is a long time after I stopped painting; but it happens to be the year I started again. I certainly wish I had happened to hear of it then; I could have made

myself much less mysterious than I sound in what is written in the catalog: "Stella Snead is a British Surrealist painter of extraordinary quality about whom very little is known. She has been apparently very private and unprolific, and the few works of hers that have come to light in the past years are amongst the most interesting of the strong surrealist movement in this country in the 1930s and 1940s."

These months soon after the war were often dreary; grey weather, time-consuming queues to buy the most meagre rations almost prevented painting (solved by paying cleaning lady to stand in line and shop). The one painting I know I did at this time was "Advancing Monuments"; it was something of a breakthrough — the figures were two-dimensional shapes, but placed in the spaciousness of distance: a way of working which continued through the rest of the '40s, with, sometimes, the figures becoming three-dimensional, also. That unexpected gift of seeing the paintings whole had more or less ceased, but ideas were still flowing from other angles and interests: for instance, physical exploration of the planet. In those days I often heard myself saying, "If I weren't a painter I'd like to go on an expedition." I was fascinated by the earth's phenomena, the more spectacular the better — volcanoes, lava lakes, mudpots, geysers, waterspouts, tornadoes, twisters. A painting called "Tornado" done at this time has a determined-looking twister at its center as well as some quite abstract shapes, one of which is reminiscent of pre-Colombian Mexico.

There was another painting, small, almost square, "The Green Witch." I know when I sold it (late '40s, Taos), but not when I did it. It had an arresting shape in the sky, and below this so-called witch are buildings as if made of adobe, some with animal heads. This I might claim as a prophetic touch, as I had no thought of going anywhere other than New York or California when I would finally get back to the States. But shortly before I left London, in late summer, Taos, New Mexico, was to be my destination. In this area of northern New Mexico, adobe has been the usual building material since the Pueblo Indians started their village settlements here, long before the coming of the Spanish Conquistadores, who in turn built their Mission churches of the same mixture of mud and straw. In both Taos and Santa Fe today, there are many splendid houses, even hotels, in the same building-style, though it is often reinforced by more easily maintained materials.

Paul Wengraf had offered me a second show in September '46, but I did not stay to see it. It was mainly of the large charcoal-pencil drawings I had done as a student of Ozenfant. So Taos was where I found myself in the Fall of '46, in superb weather and amid the most magnificent scenery up the Rio Grande gorge, some 80 miles north of Santa Fe. The road, the only paved one in those days, brings you to what is surprisingly known as Taos Valley, an extensive plain open to the west but contained on its other three sides by higher mountains going up to 13,000 ft. Both Santa Fe and Taos are around 7,000 ft., on this tail of the Rockies which dwindles to semi-desert flatness soon after Albuquerque, to the south. I was enchanted, and particularly, by the arrangement of the land in the Taos area; it was quite simply so satisfyingly right, it

brought both serenity and excitement. Furthermore, it was the first small, dominated-by-its-scenery place I had ever lived. My house had just two adobe rooms, one with a corner fireplace made by an Indian woman; not only was it good-looking, with its built-in adobe seat to one side, but it was of the kind that never smoked. The wood we burned was piñon or cedar, and there was room for it to be stored in my outhouse, assuring it of being continually sweet-smelling. For water there was a tap in the yard (baths were taken when invited for dinner with friends). I loved it all — that is, except for the gossip, everyone liking to know what everyone else was doing.

I soon started doing some work and, during these nearly four years, did many of my better paintings. Christmas, my first in Taos, was like no other, as our celebrations included gong out to Taos Pueblo on Xmas Eve, where the two processions, one Indian, one Christian, would meet and follow one another, bonfires blazing all around. The next day, in snow or sun, the Indians would perform one of their mass dances in the wide space opposite their five-storey village.

1947 My tiny adobe house was between five and ten minutes' walk from the Taos Plaza, according to the weather — the winters could be severe, the temperature dropping sometimes to 20 below zero, when walking in either snow or slippery mud could be difficult. It was worth it; the surroundings were so beautiful and the summers, ideal. I was content without a car, the long days of work uninterrupted except when a friend would drive me to some viewpoint, or to a hidden village where most people only spoke Spanish. I was fascinated again to feel how close to the past these places were. If I had my own car it would have been impossible not to wander too far too often, to go on and on into the inviting magic of this part of the country. I had already found some very special places with the help of the mail-trucks in 1942, and was, in the not-so-distant future, to do much more exploring under quite different circumstances, and in countries of whose existence I was then only vaguely conscious.

For the present, in this Spring of '47 I was most content to be stationary in this tiny town, feeling little or no nostalgia for the big cities. Except for those moments of doubt and hesitation, painting was an absorbing and satisfying occupation. I thrived on it, was never bored. And there was variety here — the weather; new phenomena, such as complete double rainbows; clouds imitating the flat-topped mesas; shooting stars, sometimes showers of them; a moonbow; black skies heralding storms; but more sun than anywhere else I had lived, together with refreshingly cool mornings and evenings, due to the altitude. And new people: our population of 2,000 rose in summer to 3,000. There was a small upheaval ahead of me, as I had promised my mother I would return to London for a couple of months in the summer. I streaked cheerfully through New York, languished a little in London, was soon back to the sun and sagebrush. Exhibits were getting set up; I believe I did most of them myself but cannot clearly remember how or when. Of

course, showing in Taos or Santa Fe was easy; Taos had almost as many galleries as there were artists.

Santa Barbara; San Diego; U. of N. Mexico; Los Angeles

As well, during the next two years, I had solo exhibitions in the Santa Barbara and San Diego Museums, at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, and at a gallery in Los Angeles.

1948

Another year, for me, happily similar to the last, weathering the winter, forever putting on and taking off boots, welcoming the return of my two male cats from their nights out (they longed to melt the icicles hanging from their tummies on my bed but had to be diverted to the rug by the fire). We artists dined at each others' houses; I accommodated up to six, even without a table, cooking on kerosene, with a small Dutch oven. The tap in the yard would sometimes freeze, but how rewarding it was to wrap its foot-high stem in newspaper soaked in kerosene, light it and see the water flow again. This wee house cost me all of $15 a month.

The summer slowly and gracefully enveloped us; and this year, I stayed in Taos. On the edge of town there was a swimming pool with no facilities, except that it was warmed by a hot spring; we could swim by night (as well as by day) lit by the headlights of a car or the moon. In the town there were several places to dance; in those days, we still danced with partners. One dance was the *vasaviana*, left behind by the Spanish — a rose in the teeth, why not?

I don't think the other resident artists were much interested in my painting; most were moving headlong into abstraction, so, again, I was not part of a group. This seemed to be a repeating pattern for me; I wondered, was it good or bad? Perhaps I had more talent for remaining an outsider than for anything else. Should I worry? I hardly could, with the urge to go my own way pushing so firmly and spontaneously; but I noticed that I made a few sales, and also, that peoples' comments on my work, mainly from visitors or strangers, were often wildly contradictory, ranging from "highly spiritual" to "brazenly pagan": a little disconcerting and puzzling, as I was not inclined to interpret my paintings in either of these ways, thinking of myself as very much a visual person. I was and am still enormously pleased and stimulated, or repelled, by the look of things, be they real and tangible, in the outside world, or arrangements of form and color. My paintings are not telling a story, nor are they making a statement; yet, they are not truly abstract. They are showing a place, nearly always three-dimensionally real, yet a fantasy.

One of the Taos galleries, run by a woman and friend of mine, had arranged to take a large group of Taos artists to Palm Springs, a well-known resort and a center for earthquakes. I and several of my pictures were greeted by just that: an earthquake, a smallish one but with repeated after-shocks. We were invited for cocktails by an elderly British expatriate couple, the kind who would know how to behave in whatever circumstance. The whole house shook. The wife, glancing at the ceiling, remarked to the husband, "I think that's a new crack dear, don't you?" All we did was sip and make agreeable conversation. The shocks

continued into the night, but my friend and I had acclimatized quickly; we slept and awakened next morning to a still and steady day. That evening, at the opening of the exhibition, the martini glasses could be filled to the brim. There were film stars; it seemed a success, but I don't know how many sales: none for me; I didn't mind. Selling did not interest me very much; In fact, I liked *having* my paintings, and the important thing was always to do a satisfactory job on each one.

1949

The London Gallery, 23 Brook St.

Another visit to England during the summer, and a firm arrangement with The London Gallery, 23 Brook Street, for a solo show there in May 1950. It was the leading gallery in London, at that time, devoted to Surrealism, directed by E.L.T. Mesens, poet, long closely connected with André Breton and the Paris Surréalistes. In this exhibition much of my work done in New Mexico would be shown internationally for the first time. In the next room was to be a Homage exhibit to the well-known collagist Kurt Schwitters, who died in '47.

Carnegie Int'l. Exbt, Pittsburgh

This year, 1949, my painting "Advancing Monuments," was chosen to be shown in the Carnegie International Exhibition in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

These were encouraging signs. Back in Taos that Autumn, life took on a fresh bloom with a new relationship, one that seemed to promise permanence; and, after the show in London, an extended sojourn in Europe.

1950

There was much packing to leave Taos, and much to be left behind. We left in the early months of 1950, for New York, and planned to be in London by March. Then came the signs of break-up. I couldn't understand it, nor could I stand it. This lover was leaving me; and for the first time I realized that I had always done the leaving: I had never been left before. I cracked up. I was in smithereens, could hardly speak. I remembered my mother telling me that, after they put my father in a home for the deranged, he did not speak for a year; just as my father had not been able to organize himself to be a barrister, which he had worked for and planned to be, I could not even face my exhibition. Some friends wrote, offering sanctuary. They lived on the slopes of Mt. Palomar in California.

My work was well on its way to London, while I went west, in the opposite direction. A friend from Taos was in New York, and she accompanied me as far as El Paso, I being, I am ashamed to say, the most dreary of travelling companions. Mt. Palomar was a special place; again I was near the world's largest telescope, this time the 200-in., now on its summit. My friends were painters, owned a vast amount of land and had four cats who took walks with us in this wild area. I began to be soothed, and tried to get back to painting — smallish, modest, stilted, ad they were, their centers often blank, with awkward, angular, spiky shapes around the edges. Where had the exuberance gone?

Fortunately, perhaps, it was decided we would drive to New Orleans and see something of the Caribbean by taking small boats. We were out of date, there were no such boats. We took a banana boat to Cuba, then managed to get to Jamaica, which then was like smooth

velvet after the noisy brashness of Cuba. It was out-of-season August, and rather pleasant. I think we may have flown back to Miami, where we parted, my friends going to pick up their car in New Orleans, I taking a bus to New York. I had nothing else to do but go to London and find out about my show. The news was not good; more precisely, there was no news: perhaps this was my least-noticed show. But here and now, emptiness surrounding me, I found the most attractive flat, so why not try living in London again and pay more attention to my mother — she was overjoyed. I even acquired a pregnant poodle. The flat had a 14-year lease, which I signed. The mistakes were piling up. My longest depression established itself, with only the briefest up-spells; it lasted two-and-a-half years. Being in England was difficult; perhaps I could do better in America. I got back probably at the end of 1950; my ever-loving and patient mother coped successfully with the 14-year lease.

1951 Being in trouble in America means going to a psychiatrist. A Dutch Jungian was found and highly recommended. He had an interest in the arts, was a collector — a Feininger hung over the fireplace; he was kind, supportive and interesting, even though I wept much of the time at the beginning. Later, I started selling textiles as a free-lance agent; they were mostly those of other people. Occasionally I made a sale, and once it was of one of my own designs. I felt less than half a person. After nearly a year, and countless sessions with the doctor, I started thinking how vacuums are likely to be filled, so let's stop trying, relax, and see what was going to fill my vacuum. I stopped the psychiatry — perhaps it was
1952 early 1952. And along came an invitation to go to India, a place to which I had never thought of going. A new idea. I was stirred. It came from a young woman, Didi, I had met while living in Taos, who had gone to college, met and married one of the [Asian] Indian students. In 1951, with one child already, they returned to India, to live joint-family in a small town, Nasik, 115 miles northeast of Bombay. My mood was already rising during the summer of '52. It was not a zooming-up, but rather a quiet creeping from under the long, stifling depression.

We, Didi's mother and I, left England for India by ship in November '52. Before I had even set foot in India, while the ship was waiting "in the stream," as they say, for a place to dock, and we could see the Gateway of India and the Taj Mahal hotel, I became enormously excited to be there. On landing we were driving almost at once up to Nasik, the country somehow resembling New Mexico, only greener and more cultivated, the heights flat-topped like the mesas. For two weeks I hardly slept, just kept on saying to myself, with amazement, "I'm in India!" I was not even thinking of my vacuum, that space left by not being a painter. It was some weeks before I realized it was being filled by India itself, its sights, its people, its ways of being, its un-selfconscious beauty, even its ugliness. It no longer mattered that I was not a painter; there were other ways of filling a life.

1953 At this point, I had no clear idea of what exactly I was going to do. I was simply absorbing with gusto. The plan had been to stay six months. In

mid-year, I decided I couldn't leave. I had been doing much lone traveling on the grand old British trains then still in general use, nights in the bungalows built for the British civil servants, or in station waiting-rooms. After one such night, with the addition of bedbugs, I wrote to my mother that I could not bear to leave. I stayed on for all of 15 months. From time to time I came back for rest and the feeling of belonging to the most-hospitable Nasik family; sometimes I wrote small pieces on this or that happening. I was learning the ropes of India. And I was very, very happy.

1954 In February, I returned via England to the States. Lived in sublets in New York, slowly planning a return to India, this time overland, on the surmise that if there were roads there must, or at least might be, busses. It seemed to me a most intriguing project. It was important not to hurry, to move unpredictably, certainly in a leisurely fashion, making detours; no deadlines. I've always liked the idea of travelling without reservations. No companion was found who had this amount of time — say, three or four months — and, furthermore, I felt quite capable of doing it alone. I hardly spoke of it to my mother, at first, but got down to reading books by earlier travellers to the Middle East, Persia, Afghanistan.

1955 My mother had turned eighty, and she had never been to New York. I suggested a visit and got a big, enthusiastic yes. We had been getting on much better since my India sojourn. She came in June. All prejudices dropped away: she loved teabags, the skyscrapers, finned cars in pastel colors. Among my friends, her favorite was a black film maker, with car, who drove her over the bridges and through the tunnels; a Chinese who made animated films; a Russian woman mad about black traditional dancers. The New England-types she liked less. All together, it was a happy visit. We returned to England first-class on a French liner (she would never fly), I being vegetarian all the way, as I had never dared tell her I now ate everything.

1956 January — mother less well. She was brought to my flat, as she refused to go to a hospital, as she distrusted conventional medicine. After two weeks she died of a blood clot. It seemed an easy death. By April, I was free to leave. I flew to Istanbul, and from there, one of the most wonderful journeys I ever made started, via Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, and into the arms of the Nasik joint family. I was suitably attired, and perhaps more acceptable? Anyway, glad to stay still and start writing the book (probably, GO WITH GOOD LUCK) on the trip. I did not realize at the time that I had had two releases — my mother's death, and the release from painting into travel. By seeing black and white darkroom work for the first time, a new passion had seized me: to be a photographer and do my own printing.

Part 2

1987 In this year, two unexpected events happened connected with my long-neglected painting. One day, while working in the darkroom, a curtained-off part of my New York apartment, an idea popped up and spread: Why not find out if I can still paint? I tried, and I could. As I had no particular notion of what I wanted to paint, I chose one of my photo-collages and did a variation on it. The paint went on easily; I completed it in four mornings. Although I was not thoroughly pleased with the result — I preferred the photo-collage as I was back with painting; or so it seemed. For many years, friends had been urging me to paint again; I had always said I never could, but there it was, like riding a bicycle, once learned never forgotten. But what next? Images and ideas were not flowing. The second painting I did was horrible; the only thing I liked about it was the title: "Caldera." I went small, 12-inches square; two were versions of a friend's dreams, not very successful, either. There followed two more versions of photo-collages done in the '70s. Their titles: "With An Eye To Horizons" (there were two of the latter, or, if you like, two of them at different levels), and "Tilting the Horizon." A series based on geographical concepts might be interesting, I thought and hoped; but it petered out. Fortunately, through the '80s my photography was more or less flourishing, so that the gaps and disappointments with painting were not too severe.

mid-'50s To go back, briefly, to the mid-'50s, when my photographic activities began to take off: I was so absorbed in research and travel to far places, and when at home learning to print and doing my own darkroom work, that I paid little attention to the whereabouts of my paintings. Some were lent to friends from the late '40s onwards in Taos; one, "Tiger In The Sky," was bought by my gallery there (for a song); in the '60s, "Rigidity and Mirth" was given away, as was "The Red Mesa," which I took to India in 1952. There were several others I had taken to India, as I had lived there from 1960 to 1971.

1971 On returning from India to live in New York, I brought back all the paintings I had taken, except for one, "Rio Grande," which was damaged beyond repair when it fell off the wall. I settled, in 1971, in an apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, just behind Lincoln Center, and am still there, making this the place by far the longest of any I have lived in my whole life. Although still much occupied with photography and with photographic books, articles and exhibitions, I began to take stock of my paintings. It became clear that I had lost track of a good many. There were those lent to friends, who had since died while I was on the other side of the world, and when I came back it was impossible to trace them. The largest of them still hung on my mother's wall; after she died, in 1956, I was preparing to leave on my overland journey from Istanbul to India, and I shamelessly let the paintings go with the furniture. I am at a loss to explain this indifference and neglect. From the early '70s, except for the six or eight I kept beside me in New York and sometimes hung, the rest were stored in a friend's garage in London. I continued to

be careless, never even making a list, and having this so-called friend sign it. So when in the ‘80s I discovered many were missing, he chose to insist I had already removed them. The only redeeming feature was that, while living in Taos, in the late ‘40s, where most of my work was done, black-and-white photos were taken of them. From these photos I could tell that at least a dozen paintings were stolen. Some time elapsed until a friend, on seeing these photographs, had the bright idea that, with their help, I might be able to paint “variations” on those stolen. I went happily, and I think fairly successfully, into this from the beginning of
1990 the ‘90s. Color was freely chosen, and they probably looked fresher than the originals; but somehow it was satisfying work, and I was pleased to have the variations as company once again. I sometimes wondered what I would say or do if I suddenly came face to face with one of the originals, but none have ever come to light — never a trace.

1987 Curiously, it was also in 1987 that I heard that two of my paintings had been spotted on the London art market, priced at £4,000 each, but which ones, I could never discover. Very possibly it was false rumor. In 1987 there was a group show entitled “Cats” at the Louise Hallett Gallery in Bayswater, where my “Woman With Cats” was shown. (Please see year 1946, in Part 1 of this chronology for quote in the catalog.) This catalogue was given me in 1994, when I visited the aforementioned young man who now owns “Woman With Cats” and “Rigidity and Mirth” (sometimes referred to as “Dark Continent”). He is D. Godber, 28 Fabian Road, London SW6, Tel. [171] 385-1356. I was unable to find the gallery or the whereabouts of Louise Hallett. Any such information would be most welcome.

The last painting I did was in 1995: not a variation of one of my own, but from a postcard which I surrealized. It is called “Signals from the Grotto.” I like it better than anything I’ve done since ‘87.

In all the years since 1950, only one other of my paintings has been shown publicly. This was in a large group show arranged by Robert
Aldrich Museum Metzger at the Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut, September-
Ridegfield, Ct. December 1985. The exhibition was called “A Second Talent.” It concerned artists who had started as painters and become photographe photographers, or the other way round. I showed “The Plaza,” an oil done in New Mexico in 1948, together with a photo-collage and two photographs from my India collection. There were big names in the show: David Hockney, Rauschenberg, Samaras, Barbara Morgan, Cadmus, Ellsworth Kelly, Gyorgy Kepes, director of Advanced Visual Studies at M.I.T. No particular notice taken of me, but I thought my piece of wall looked good. Still, I failed to get even a toe in the door of the New York art world or among the surrealists. I simply did not know
1998 how to manage my career. In 1998, I had turned 88 and time was running out to be rediscovered as a painter. Quite suddenly the doors were flung open, and there was Neil Zukerman wanting to do just that! A solo exhibition in April 1999; a handsome catalogue; enthusiasm, encouragement, kindness, reliability, generosity.

What lovely luck!

"Rediscovery" The Paintings of Stella Snead
April 8 — May 9, 1999
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PAINTINGS by Stella Snead:

Begonias 1936
The Sulky Lion 1943
Ecstatic Cow 1943
Smothered City 1943
Arrival of a New Planet 1944
Advancing Monuments 1946
Tornado 1946
The Plaza 1947
Animal Totems 1947
Animal Kingdom 1948
Crisis Birds 1950
Depression Center 1950
Stopped painting 1950
Turned to photography 1956-7
Restarted painting 1987 — approx. 35-yr. block
Stupa Yell 1987
Caldera 1987
Celia's Voyage 1987
Tilting the Horizon 1987
The Land at Sea 1987
With an Eye to Horizons 1988/alterations 1994
Deep Shell 1989
Snake Tongue Pier 1989
Nearly stopped painting again around 1990
Starting doing Variations on Stolen or Lost Paintings
Ritual — original, late 40s, Variation 1992
Planetary Figure Orig. 1944, Variation 1992
Grasslands Orig. 1944, Variation 1992
Black Mesa Orig. 1948, Variation 1992
Sandstorm Orig. 1949, Variation 1993
Ladies from Afar Orig. 1949, Variation 1993, 1994
Bird Sanctuary Orig. 1948 Variation 1994

Section of a Labyrinth Orig. 1949, Variation 1994
Cat by Ghost Light late 40s, variation 1994 — no slide
Signals from the Grotto — new, 1995

BOOKS by Stella Snead: Photography:

CAN DROWNING BE FUN? A Nonsense Book. New York: Pont la Vue Press, 1992
ANIMALS IN FOUR WORLDS: Sculptures from India. texts, Wendy Donager and George Mitchell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989
BEACH PATTERNS. Barre, Ma.: Barre Pub./Clarkson Potter/Crown, 1975
SHIVA'S PIGEONS. Texts by Rumer Godden and Jon Godden. London: Chatto & Windus/New York: The Viking Press, 1992
CHILDREN OF INDIA. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shephard, 1971
THE TALKATIVE BEASTS. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shephard, 1969
SEVEN SEVEN. New York: Folder Editions, 1965
RUINS IN JUNGLES. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962

WORKS by Stella Snead in Other Peoples' Books:

INTIMATE RELATIONS: EXPLORING INDIAN SEXUALITY. Sudir Kakar. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1990 (cover photo)
THE PLACE OF THE HIDDEN MOON. Edward Dimrock. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1989 (cover photo)
LUCIE RIE. Tony Birks. Sherborne, Dorset (Eng.): Alphabooks, 1987
ISLAMIC HERITAGE OF THE DECCAN. ed. George Mitchell. Bombay: Marg Publication
VILLAGE INDIA. Stephen Huyler. New York: Abrams, 1985 (25 photos)
ADIDI. Catalog. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985
INDIA: ANCIENT LAND, NEW NATION. Amitra Sarin. Dillon Press. (S.S.: cover and 23 photos)
WAYS TO SHIVA. Joseph Dye. Philadelphia: Phila. Museum of Art, 1981
NATURE IN THE CITY. New York: Viking, 1972
MAGIC OF THE SEA. New York: Viking, 1971
THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE SEA. London: Aldus Books, 1970

SELECTED (Other) Publications:

"Early Cabbage" A spoof with photographs. *ARCHIPELAGO* Vol. 1, No. 3
"REDISCOVERY" The Paintings of Stella Snead, with text by Stella Snead. Contributions by Whitney Chadwick, Salomon Grimberg, Stephen Robeson-Miller, Pavel Zoubok, Neil Zukerman. New York: CFM Gallery <cfmg@mindspring.com>

STELLA IN BOMBAY

Kirin Narayan

The completion of Stella's house in Bombay was held up by my birth. My parents had bought land for a house of their own in Juhu, a beach-side suburb; my American grandmother, Nani, retiring from Taos, had bought a second plot beside them. Stella had been visiting my mother in my father's family home in Nasik through the 1950s. Now, in 1959, Stella suggested that my parents' new Bombay house be built with a darkroom for her use. "But why don't you have your own house?" my mother replied. She proceeded to sketch out such a house — bedrooms here, darkroom there — and Stella was convinced. But then, as Stella put it, clearly exasperated, my mother "went and had another child," derailing building schedules. That was me, the fourth and last.

We lived near the beach at Juhu, but not right on the sea. The house with the sea view was where Meena Kumari, the film star, lived. "Behind Meena Kumari," was one way to instruct taxi-drivers on finding us. Behind Meena Kumari there was a long enclosed property with three simple white cement houses set in a grove of coconut trees: my parents', my grandmother Nani's, and Stella's. Though we weren't right on the beach, it was only a short walk to the sand and horizon of water. At night, we could hear the waves rush and swish.

The houses were all very similar, though Stella's, with the air-conditioner, the darkroom, and the lack of children's scribbles, was the fanciest. Designed by my mother, a self-taught architect who admired Frank Lloyd Wright, they were built under the supervision of my father, a civil engineer. The houses all had high ceilings and sloping roofs made of corrugated asbestos that monsoon rains would drum on, then slide off in vertical lines. (Once in a while, during a storm, milk-heavy coconuts or even an entire head of a coconut tree would crash through a roof amid torrents of water.) All the houses had a sense of space, light and circulating air, with open porches. Long flat windows set high under the roofs made frames for swirling palm fronds against sky. Lower down, there were windows with black panes, rectangular bars, and white wooden shutters. The doors to all the houses were always open, except for the hours of sleep at night.

Stella's open door, though, did not mean free visitation rights. "Stella doesn't like children" was an adage that I grew up with. There were occasions when we were formally taken over to visit Stella, scrubbed and brushed and admonished to be on best behavior. Otherwise, we observed Stella from afar: through hedges, across porches, from the other ends of gardens, or even by actually creeping into her own well-tended garden when the air hung heavy with afternoon siestas.

Stella was unlike anyone's mother or grandmother. Yet she had emerged from the mythic realm of New Mexico where my mother and grandmother once lived. My mother had been fourteen when Stella first arrived in Taos, glamorously announced as "my English mistress" by the Dutch sculptor who played Spanish guitar

and counterfeited ancient Greek coins. Through the winter, Stella rented my grandfather's studio. When my mother went to college in Colorado, Stella had driven along with her through the high desert and winding roads. After my mother met my father at college and had moved to India, Stella accompanied my grandmother and another friend on the long ship journey for a visit. On that ship, in 1952, when she was forty-two, she had met a young British anthropologist of twenty-four whom she affectionately called "Pink Blimp." As the story went, my grandmother had accused Stella of cradle-snatching, and Stella had retorted, "You're just jealous!" (This was a story that my mother, not my grandmother, told. The term "cradle-snatching" added a delicious scare to the figure of Stella).

While everyone else seemed to have family trailing in every direction, Stella was her own person with no relatives at all. She had short curly white hair, wore slacks, drove her own white Ambassador car, and locked herself away in the darkroom for hours. Music drifting from her house might be anything from the hoarse voices of women singing Flamenco, to energetic baroque trumpets, to the thrilling new Beatles. Stella smoked cigarettes. She hosted parties filled with glamorous people in advertising, calling for her servant "Zach-a-RI-ah" to serve drinks. With her airy wit, she made both men and women laugh. She also had no fear of disagreeing emphatically, her British voice rising above the others.

This was all big-Sahib, male behavior. And yet, Stella was also feminine and beautiful. She was tall, slim, and shapely. Her eyes were the color of a moss-green shawl with long tassels that she had once brought my mother from Oaxaca. She had silver rings on her long fingers, and brilliant scarves around her neck. Sometimes her tailored slacks were raw silk. She often wore gold *chappals* on her slim, elegant feet. Her toenails were painted the same vivid pink as her lipstick.

Stella took photographs: that we knew. She sometimes even emerged to take photographs of us children. Some of her photographs were in books on our shelves. But we also knew that like my mother's parents and mother herself, Stella was also a painter. Her name, with the distinctive snaking zigzag of a starting 'S,' was signed at the edges of paintings in our Nasik house. One painting was of pale plateaus with bits of orange lightning and surreal, dancing figures. Another was of a staring-eyed lion-gargoyle. We heard that she had somehow "lost her painting" — a terrible affliction — and had been depressed, and so had visited my mother and taken up photography. Her photography, then, was a crucial part of the story of her being here, in India, and next door to us. It kept her occupied: wandering down to the beach with her camera to contemplate patterns draining tides left in the sand; going out in her car, camera beside her; disappearing into a mysterious chemical scented room for hours to develop her prints.

"Going over to Stella's" was an occasion that came twice or thrice a year. Coming from our house, with too many children and never quite enough money, Stella's house — so similar with its white walls and high windows — seemed dreamily opulent. An entire table was often set aside for a jigsaw puzzle she was working on, at her own speed, with no one to tell her to pick it up. She read the latest expensive books with glossy covers. On the walls, or simply hanging from lines, were the latest black and white pictures she had developed: beach patterns, jungle ruins, animals from temple friezes, interesting looking people. The servants, Zachariah and Raghu, in their white uniforms, exuded faint disapproval at us, the raggle-taggle ensemble. It was at Stella's house that I would feel the most acutely that my mother did not remember to trim or groom, let alone paint, her toe-nails.

If we were invited for tea, we were served on china that had belonged to Stella's mother. The delicate plates, saucers and cups had floral patterns in brown and black along the edges. We were given little forks with shell handles. In an early memory I have of such an occasion, I must have been about four. Whoever was beside me — my grandmother, or mother or elder sister Maya — was trying to make sure that I ate leaning forward towards the glass-topped table without sending that precious china crashing to the floor. My brother Rahoul was whispering in my ear that if I poked Stella's fruitcake into my belly-button, that would be the most direct route to the stomach. At other times, when Stella had returned from one of her trips, we were invited for slide shows. These were always at night. Her living room vanished into the vivid colors of distant places and people: Mexican markets, gigantic Egyptian figures, arched natural bridges. Stella narrated her adventures above the hum of the machine. Mostly it was my mother who asked questions. (My father and Stella did not particularly like each other, and so he never came to these shows.) As each of us grew older, we felt freer to speak up too.

Rahoul was the most fearless with Stella, for he was her godson. Stella had been present in the next room of the Nasik house at the moment of his birth in 1953. He liked to tell us that actually, he was Stella's illegitimate son. Stella, he said, had lived with an Afghan chief on her way from Europe. Since she wasn't married and didn't like children anyway, when Rahoul was born of this union, my mother had agreed to pass him off as her own. Rahoul used his Afghan-sized nose as proof. Never knowing whether to believe or disbelieve my story-spinning brother, I observed that Stella did indeed seem to tolerate him more than she did most children. For example, she would show him her huge snakeskin and polish it in his presence, leading to the family saying, "polishing a snakeskin" for situations when two people were bored by a task but kept at it, each believing they were humoring the other. It was under Stella's direction, I think, that Rahoul first handled a camera.

I was ten when Stella prepared to leave her house in Juhu. She had "done India" and now she was ready for a new life in New York. She weeded through her possessions for the move. There was a new incentive to steal over to her back porch in the afternoon: to view the latest things she was piling under the crimson bougainvillea for the sweeper to come gather. Books, scarves, old photographs! Once, there was a seated group portrait of "foreign" people, all sedately posed, all quite nude. She gave us her unused Kodak printing paper, boxes upon boxes to "develop" under the sun, using leaves, or hands to make patterns. I was finally becoming an age more acceptable to Stella. I remember a conversation about the books of Rumer Godden we once had as she sunbathed on the beach, and the terrific sense of grown-up pride that Stella's attention granted. I felt even more special and graced when, before she left, she gave me a tiny, doll-sized book bound in maroon. "The Language of Flowers" was printed in gold lettering on the cover, and "Ethel Johnson, 1894" was inscribed on the fly-leaf in faded black ink. Ethel Johnson, I learned, had been Stella's mother. This connection to a previous century, and a poetic time when people sent messages through bouquets entranced me. I have lost many things from that childhood era, but I still have that book.

When I came to Sarah Lawrence College, at sixteen, I had moved far enough out of the child category to be invited to dinner with Stella. Her familiar possessions were reinstalled, along with new ones, in a tall apartment building near Lincoln Center. Having always seen her with servants, it was a revelation to know that she could not only function in a kitchen, but could actually cook exquisite dishes.

Instead of her plump tabby cat, Tipoo, her new companion was the inimitable gray Pandolfo who literally seemed to fly between bookshelves and counters.

Rahoul moved to New York in 1978. In the intervening years, he had become a photographer and color-printer. Visiting his workplace, I recognized the smells of Stella's darkroom. I gained a new appreciation of Stella through Rahoul. He and she had a similar outrageous sense of humor. They made each other laugh. Teasing with all his high spirited energy, deep-set eyes flashing over his black moustache, Rahoul called her his "Good GOD!-Mother." I especially remember a Christmas Eve that the three of us spent together. After the flaming Christmas pudding, Stella showed us old photographs: of herself as a beautiful child dressed in white, cheeks colored pink by her mother; of interesting "lovahs;" of the Taos days, and India days too. That night, I heard some the same stories I had grown up with in Stella's own words.

Rahoul died young, in 1985. For a few years, it was his absence that most bound me to Stella. When I received my first teaching job on the East coast in 1987, I visited Stella during vacations. She asked if I had a godmother. I didn't, and so we agreed that I would become her goddaughter. I see this relationship as a gift from my brother.

Stella appears to have forgiven me for being born, though she does on occasion remind me that I was a dreadful child. As her adult goddaughter, I have learned many things that are now part of my life: "beheading" a soft-boiled egg; the trick of marinating sliced cucumbers in olive oil, lemon juice, and garlic before adding lettuce; rinsing hair last with cold water. I think of Stella when I paint my toe nails bright colors, or when I wear gold slippers in summer. Beyond these practical details that weave through the textures of my everyday life, Stella is an inspiration in how to live. I marvel at her curiosity, intelligence, talent, generosity, and wit. The distant and intriguing figure next-door taught me early that women could be independent; the godmother who I have come to adore reminds me of the many ways to enjoy life, playfully, creatively, and with delighted pleasure.

FOR GOING UP: THE FANTASTIC JOURNEY *of* STELLA SNEAD

Pavel Zoubok

Stella Snead has traveled to many places in her life and work. Her decision to become a painter during the mid-1930s, in her native England, marked the beginning of a long love affair with places unknown, both real and imagined. During her studies in London with the French painter Amedée Ozenfant, she developed a meticulous draftsmanship and sure taste for the fantastic imagery of Surrealism, which in 1936 made its first major appearance in England. There she worked alongside fellow artists Leonora Carrington and Sari Dienes. When the possibility of war threatened Europe, however, Stella Snead felt it imperative for herself and all "makers of culture" (painters, poets, intellectuals, etc.) to flee Europe for America, as many did. In November 1939, she boarded a ship bound for New York.

Her first decade in America was spent in New York City and Taos, New Mexico. In New York she associated with various members of the Surrealist group in exile. It was her travels across the American west and southwest, however, that were most clearly reflected in her paintings from the 1940s. In works such as "Advancing Monuments" (1946), "Animal Totems" (1947), "The Plaza" (1947), and "Animal Kingdom" (1948), sparse organic landscapes painted in rich earth tones that recall the native art and architecture of the southwest are populated by totemic female and animal figures. Stella Snead's paintings reflect a strong interest in the relationship between landscape and human experience. When animal or human figures appear, their meaning is always elusive and enigmatic. Her emphasis on landscape and the sense of place has a strong affinity with the work of Kay Sage and Yves Tanguy, both artists whom she admires.

Stella Snead's long hiatus from oil painting after 1950, and subsequent career in photography, should not be interpreted as an abandonment of her distinctly Surrealist sensibility. Rather, many of the formal and thematic concerns of her paintings are echoed in her photography. A long and fruitful association with India, a country whose visual culture is vivid with fantastic imagery, demonstrates her continued interest in the disjunctive language of Surrealism. In India she photographed the oddities of street life, the mysterious and abstract worlds formed by natural patterns in the sand, and the strange and wonderful iconography of Hindu sculpture. Her photographic work resulted in the publication of eight books, including SHIVA'S PIGEONS (1972), BEACH PATTERNS (1975), and ANIMALS IN FOUR WORLDS (1989). During the 1960s and 1970s, Snead's photography became more explicitly Surrealist, with a series of black and white photo-collages. These strange, playful works, constructed from documentary photographs of her travels, set the stage for her return to painting during the late 1980s. By cutting and pasting, Stella Snead constructed a dream-like vision of reality from the literal fragments of her own experience. Her paintings had represented an expressly formal consideration and abstraction of places

and things seen, or experienced. By contrast, her photo-collages were more emphatically poetic, or literary, in their displacement and reconstruction of memory.

When one considers the histories of women artists who were associated in varying degrees with the Surrealist movement, it is easy to understand how Stella Snead's career as a painter could go almost completely undocumented. Unlike certain of her female contemporaries, she was never publicly associated with the Surrealist group. During the short but fruitful period in which she was painting, however, she enjoyed no less than eleven solo exhibitions, three of them in museums. While many of the more widely-known women Surrealists had professional and/or romantic associations with their male colleagues, Stella Snead had none. Despite her personal and professional autonomy from the official ranks of the Surrealists, certain aspects of her painting place her firmly within their theoretical and aesthetic traditions. Like many of her female contemporaries, she turned to nature and to her own experiences for inspiration. By contrast, however, she did not employ self-representation and narrative structure as vehicles of communication, but, rather, conveyed her thoughts and feelings through a distinctly Surrealist vision of the physical world.

Collaboration was an important characteristic of the Surrealist enterprise. Personal and professional associations between the groups members came to fruition in numerous joint publications by Surrealist poets and painters, in the iconography of their paintings and collages, and, perhaps most effectively, in the visual products of the Surrealist game of *Cadavre Exquis*. Stella Snead's art, however, reflects a distinctly solitary nature. Her decision to become a painter represented an escape from the stifling boredom of conventional English life and was a decisive move towards selfhood. Surrealism provided her with an aesthetic and ideological framework within which to express herself. To pursue an active participation in the Surrealist group would surely have meant giving up a good deal of her autonomy. It is important to note, however, that despite Snead's marginal participation in the activities of the official Surrealist group, she has always considered herself a Surrealist.

What is apparent when looking at Stella Snead's recent variations — paintings loosely based on earlier works that were either destroyed or stolen — is the consistency of her artistic vision. Her return to painting after 1987 coincided with the rediscovery of certain lesser-known Surrealists by curators, critics, and collectors. Significantly, the rise of Feminism during the 1970s, and its lasting impact on the art world, brought international recognition to women Surrealists such as Leonora Carrington, Leonor Fini, Frida Kahlo, and Dorthea Tanning. Stella Snead reentered the practice of painting with a knowledge that the histories of these women and others were finally receiving critical attention, and the determination that her own story eventually be told. Her remarkable variations demonstrate a renewed sense of optimism in their noticeably brighter palette. Perhaps the most striking of the late paintings is "Signals from the Grotto" (1995). Here, a seated cloaked figure accompanied by an elegantly striped cat faces away from the viewer to observe the passing of a ship-like bird. It is easy to imagine that the figure is the artist herself, who crossed the Atlantic Ocean by ship no less than twenty times! Stella Snead's artistic journey continues to unfold as, at the age of eighty-nine, her paintings are exhibited for the first time in almost fifty years. The initial re-assessment of her career as a painter does much to clarify her unique contribution to the rapidly expanding history of Surrealism.

A LETTER TO PRESIDENT EISENHOWER

Daniela Fischerová
Tr. from the Czech by Neil Bermel

Sometimes it seems that everything's pretend. That it's only a gesture that misses its mark. I am ten years old.

&

This was the year synthetic materials hit Prague. A new store, Plastik, appeared on Wenceslas Square and there were lines in front of it every day. Everything still amazed us: parkas, nylon bags, PVC statues.

One day my mother returned victoriously with plastic cutlery that looked like wood. The marvel was that wood wasn't wood, just like the statues' marble wasn't marble. This collective seizure would soon pass: within a year, the plasticware would land in the trash, but now we raised the strangely weightless knife up to the light; the knife tipped upwards like a finger pointing somewhere else and, marvelling, we fell under the spell of its artifice.

&

One morning Comrade Principal comes for me and for my best friend Hana. To the envy of all our classmates, she plucks us out of a quiz and brings us to her office. She doesn't say a word. Hana's dark ponytail trembles. She is perpetually alarmed, always more exemplary than me.

"Our school," the principal says curtly, "has decided to write to President Eisenhower."

She sits behind a large desk, wearing an army jacket: small, bent, and wrinkled. To my horror, I see that she is holding our notebooks. Hana's are much more attractive than mine. Hana has great handwriting. She gets to write for the bulletin board. Her handwriting is just like her: tiny, well-formed. Always the same, neat.

"The West," the principal continues, "is secretly preparing for war. They want to stab us in the back. But we won't let anyone take peace away from us!"

She picks up a composition I recognize, and fear makes my heart leap in my chest. It is my contribution to the Young Writers competition. It won second prize in the Prague 10 district. It is called "A Merry Christmas Party."

"You," the principal points her finger, "you will write the letter. And you: copy it over in your best handwriting. I want to see it before vacation. You have two weeks."

She opens the desk and spends a long time looking for something. She seems to have forgotten about us. I don't even dare utter a word. Suddenly she stands up and stares me straight in the eye.

"It's high time the truth be told!" she shouts as if from a deep sleep. The tips of my fingers go numb with excitement. The principal hands me an outline to work from.

&

I fly home, riding the crest of the moment. Outline, point one: greeting. Dear President Eisenhower! Outline, point four. The horrors of war. Like in Soviet films. Signature: We, the children of Czechoslovakia. And it was I who was given this historic task!

&

Fourth grade took something out of me. Just last year I swam through life like a fish through water. Now I'm a dry cork on the surface. I tread water and try to get down inside it. Life's every-day certainties are irrevocably gone.

Everything is just pretend. Since I can still faithfully imitate that loud, plump little girl I was not so long ago, no one has caught on yet. For example, everyone believes I love writing essays, but actually it bores me to death. My "Merry Christmas Party" was made up out of thin air. About thin-air kids doing thin-air things. In spite of this, everyone believes I'm going to be a writer. I'm sentenced to fiction for life.

It doesn't bother me. I play laboriously at playing. Sometimes I sense adults' fleeting anxiety that everything's already happened. I secretly hope for a "jolt," for some sort of catapult of transformation, as if I were a larva that ravenous inertia drives forth from the cocoon.

&

Is this my jolt? Presenting mankind's credentials in a letter? It's high time the truth be told! For ten days I write as if in a fever.

First I describe rivers of blood. I awaken the conscience of the American government. I speak with Eisenhower as an equal, but then behind all mankind's back I chew my pen. I cross out whole mountains of pages, I don't sleep, I fall exhausted beneath the steps of the White House. Hana's mother says the whole thing is pretty stupid. Hana, of course, repeats this to me.

Finally the letter is ready. It has the horrors of war, as depicted in films. It has many, many exclamation points. It has the sentence: "After all, I myself am still a child!" Hana complains that it's too long, but doesn't take a stand. Her copying is exemplary, without a single mistake.

&

That evening I come up with an excuse to go out, and I run over to Hana's. My authorial pride goads me on. I want to see that beautifully copied letter. I want to touch it before Eisenhower does. To weigh in my hands the paper confection in which my challenge to the White House will arrive.

Hana hesitantly lets me in. Usually we run right to her room, but today we stand in the hallway, shifting from foot to foot as if on a train. Suddenly I hear an explosion of laughter behind the wall and the voice of Hana's mother. She's reading my letter to her guests. "We children are still too weak, our hands cannot carry bombs," she quotes in a flat, cadaverous voice. That's how the TV comedian they call the Sad Man speaks. Hana doesn't laugh, but from her neat, perfidious face it's clear that she completely agrees with the antics behind the wall.

"My parents say the principal's crazy," she says defensively, and she looks straight at me with prim courage.

"You're the one who's crazy! Just wait till there's a war!"

I turn on my heel and trot down the dark hallway. Hana quietly closes the door, from which waves of laughter roll forth. Blind with humiliation, I vanish into the darkness.

&

For the three days till the end of the school year we don't speak to each other. On Friday, on the very brink of vacation, she stops me and says she can't be my friend anymore. Stunned, taken unawares, I say that I never asked her to. She says that there's no point in it. I say that I agree. Hana heads home with an even stride, trailing straight A's from her beribboned folders.

I flee into the coatroom and cry a little. It's my pride that hurts, not my heart. This year I have no heart. The principal sees me in front of the school and stops me with a stern gesture. She stares at me silently for a while, as if trying to remember who I might happen to be. Then she shakes her head with a strange horselike movement, strides off and, as she walks, says adamantly: "The letter's fine."

&

July is desolate. I wander listlessly around the garden with nothing to do. A dull film lies spread over everything; the summer fades under its protective coating like a cabinet under a plastic slipcover in a deserted room. I attempt to think about President Eisenhower, but since the incident with Hana a film has spread over him too. The cool gray days slide by.

On Sunday evening someone rings the bell. The superintendent's wife, Mrs. Zámsky, runs to the gate. Boredom keeps me forever hanging out the window and so I see a burly old man come in. He has a cane and keeps coughing. Behind him walks a strongly built, dark-skinned girl. She furrows the ground with her dark, indifferent eyes, and scowls.

"Hello!" Mrs. Zámsky shouts, and she waves at me. "We've brought you a friend! She's from Votice! Show yourself to the young lady, Sasha!"

&

The next day they put us together. It's wet, and we're wearing sweats and jackets. We hang around near the house. Sasha is glum.

"How old are you?" I ask.

"Just turned thirteen."

Even under the jacket I can see that she has breasts. She doesn't look at me. She doesn't look at anything. She just walks wherever she's headed, with a heavy, uninterested tread.

"Are you starting eighth grade?"

"No."

"Why not? If you're thirteen. . ."

We pass by the bench. Mr. Zámsky lets out a guffaw. He slaps Sasha on the backside and for about the fifth time says:

"Thatta girl! And what a piece of girl she is, huh?"

Mr. Zámsky gives me the jitters. His big head is continually shaking. His tongue hangs out of his mouth and his eyes swim around as if bobbing in formaldehyde.

"Is that your uncle? Is he nice to you?"

Sasha just shrugs her shoulders. "He's nuts."

My feet are killing me. I'd like to go home. I have no idea what to say, but the footpath pulls me onward like a tugboat.

"What do you like to play?"

"You won't tell my aunt?"

I raise two fingers, wet with my saliva.

"Lovers," Sasha says. I'm dumbfounded.

"But . . . how?" I ask. It begins to rain again. Sasha looks around.

"Come over behind those trees," she whispers. We step into the cool, damp shadows. Rainwater drips down our necks. Sasha doesn't hesitate. She bends over and kisses me on the lips. Her mouth is smeared with baby oil.

"That's how," she says matter-of-factly. I guess that's all there is to it. We run out into the rain and then play rummy with Mrs. Zámsky until evening.

&

And after that we're together all the time. We don't budge from the garden; we play uninterruptedly. At what? At being lovers. Sasha doesn't want to play anything else. How? It's simple. We walk through the birch trees hand in hand and give each other kisses. Do I like it? Not at all. I have just outgrown the cuddling phase and they won't get me back so quickly. Besides, there's something missing for me in this game, but I don't know what it is.

"And what are we called?"

"What is who called?"

"Ow, why'd you bite me?! I mean the lovers!"

Without names it just won't work. A name is always more than a body. Sasha licks a blade of grass, and concentrates on tickling my ear. I fidget uncomfortably.

"So are we going out with each other? And will we get married someday? And have children? Yes or no?"

Who knows. Sasha never asks things like that. The world around Sasha stands still. I have a Young Writers silver medal and I know full well that the world is a story, a finger pointing somewhere else: a direction.

"So let's make something up!"

"Why? I don't want to."

"If I make something up, will you play it with me?"

Sasha doesn't know. It's all the same to her. She stops tickling me and focuses her attention on squashing ants with her fingernail.

&

The next day I'm in the garden at eight. Furiously I stomp by the Zámskys' ground-floor window. Sasha is sleeping and doesn't want to get up, but I'm stomping like a real live elephant.

I have a story! I couldn't fall asleep until two last night. A profusion of versions ran through my head. I'm as prolific as Adam in paradise. I am amazed how easy it is to create new worlds. Before sleep finally overtook me, I decided with solemn finality who Sasha and I really were.

At the window, Mr. Zámsky is threatening me with his cane; he's angry that I'm making noise. Sasha yawns. She spends ages eating breakfast. Finally we're together behind the birch trees. Mumbling, I tell her her role. I know everything, absolutely everything! I (he) am called Mount Everest. Sasha (she) is Kilimanjaro.

&

There exist two famous mountain climbers. They bear the names of the mountains they have climbed. They have never in their lives met, but the world considers them fierce rivals. There is but one unconquered mountain left in all the world. It is the highest of them all and it has sent hundreds of climbers to their deaths. In the language of its country — Himalayan, I think — it is called the Mountain of Mountains.

Both decide to climb it. The whole world waits with baited breath to see who will be the first to raise the flag. The reporters are frantic, every transmitter is straining its ears. But a shock hits shortly before they set out.

At the foot of the Mountain, Everest discovers the amazing truth. The whole world thinks this is a battle of man against man. Only Kilimanjaro is not a man.

Sasha: It was only for your sake that I played this silly game. If you'd known I was a girl, you would never have competed with me.

Mount Everest (horrified): Kilimanjaro, I warn you — the Mountain of Mountains is the ends of the earth! At the summit there is nothing but sheer frost.

The ascent begins. Step by step the way grows harder. The sky is like a white abyss and the world is so tense it forgets to breathe. The most frightening part of the mountain draws near, the Wall of Death. No one, not even Sasha or I, foresees the truth.

&

From that day on, the game takes an unforeseen turn. At the end of the garden is a steep hill. The ground here is perpetually moist, covered with brushwood. So it

becomes the Wall of Death. We press through the bushes on our bellies; a mountain hurricane rips us asunder, thorns catch on our sweatpants. The Young Writer has turned a fin-de-siècle stroll in the park into a military exercise.

Most of all, our love is now different. There's no more kissing, thank God. Love is no longer a perpetual dance in a circle. It's a contest, agony. It's a finger pointing straight up — direction! We crawl across the icy plain, exhausted. There is no thought of embraces, and anyway we are kept apart by layers of walrus skins. At these heights, a kiss without an oxygen mask spells death.

&

My parents are just thankful I'm playing and not lazing around the apartment with a bored expression on my face. Two or three times they invite Sasha over for a snack, but in the apartment she's glum again.

That evening my mother says that Sasha's a dim bulb.

"She's got breasts big enough to be nursing, but she keeps getting held back."

It doesn't make any sense to me. Sasha doesn't seem at all dim. On the contrary, she's fabulous. For example, she figured out how to freeze all by herself. I've never seen anyone freeze; I have nothing to compare it to, but she stiffens up like an icicle. She says I have to massage her with snow. Everest diligently rubs her with hands calloused by the fasteners of his coat, but Kilimanjaro does not wake up.

"Kiss me!" she hisses suddenly out of her unconsciousness, her eyelids still squeezed shut.

How do I know that the fateful moment has come? Like the snake-prince, I can even see in the dark. I know even what I don't know at all. With a single tug I rip off my oxygen mask. Everest falls head over heels in love.

The elderberry thicket encloses us. All around, the silence rumbles like a cracked bell, and the distant roar of avalanches gradually falls silent. Face to face with the sheer frost of death, Everest comes to know the terror of love. Practically without touching her, in a panic, he kisses the frozen girl. Sasha immediately opens her eyes, and — although she knows I don't like it — the cunning girl licks me all over.

&

One evening, there's a commotion downstairs. Sasha and I secretly peer through the window. Mrs. Zámsky is chasing her brother around the kitchen; she swipes at him with a broom whenever she's close enough, while he cowers in horror against the wall and, with a shaking hand, parries with his cane.

"Shame on you, you pig!" she screams, and she swings the broom round her head. "I'll throw you right out! Go back to Votice, you pig! Bet they don't want you either, you swine!"

She throws a brush at him. Mr. Zámsky bursts out of the door and makes his getaway. Sasha's eyes are shining.

"I know why my aunt's upset!" she whispers. She bites her fingers until red marks are left on them, brushes against me, and giggles with excitement.

&

By the end of the week, Sasha starts to revolt against me. We're all scratched up, we've broken our nails, and under our sweats our knees are thoroughly bruised. We've already climbed a slippery path along the Wall of Death, where the brushwood straggles to the ground. Sasha grumbles that she's lost interest.

I understand her. After all, we're always playing the same thing. What's more attractive in love than the starting line? I am perpetually rewinding the hands of our story back to zero. Sasha freezes, Everest stands over her. The circulation of his blood pauses, like an elevator. This helping of emotion is quite enough for me, but Sasha is muttering. She wants to know when we're going to get to the top.

The worst thing is that I don't know myself. The Young Writer is stuck in a creative crisis. I dragged us out to the ends of the earth, and for a week I've been holding us there like a customs official. Just short of the goal, my imagination has run dry. What awaits love at the summit of the Mountain of Mountains?

I compress my feelings like a cylinder of gas. I cross out the kisses; we're fighting for every gasp of air. The mountain belches frost, I camp just shy of the summit and lack the courage for that last step.

"I'm not playing!" Sasha pouts. Spitefully, she sticks a thorn through my sweats. I beg her: just one more time. We both roll down to the fence and with a sense of relief I slip back under the starting line of love and once again I'm crawling along on my belly like a newt.

&

On Sunday, Sasha gets the flu. I can't go see her and I'm desperate. I thrash around the apartment like a Christmas carp in a trough, I talk back and cut people off and am so nasty that my mother ironically asks me:

"Do you love her so much you can't be apart for even a day?"

The question takes me by surprise. I don't love Sasha at all! It would never occur to me to love Sasha! Everest loves Kilimanjaro with the insanity of sheer frost, but it has nothing to do with Sasha and me. We are mere game pieces — a finger pointing somewhere else. We are only representatives, even if I don't know what of.

&

A dull excitement dogs me all day. I read a little, but made-up stories irritate me. I stuff myself with cookies. Finally, right before dinner, I get an idea for the next act of our game.

The exhausted Kilimanjaro is sleeping in the cliff grotto. Everest sets out for the summit. He stands right beneath it. One more step and he could leave his fingerprint upon the very apex of the world. The lofty vacuum turns his blood to foam. He is alone like no one anywhere ever. He sits down on a rocky protrusion and takes out a piece of stationery. Beloved Kilimanjaro!

The love letter is an utterly alien genre for me. Laboriously, I look for sentences to borrow, and cobble them together into something exceedingly odd. I don't believe

what gets into my pen. What I understand perfectly as an inarticulate feeling is, when put into words, even thinner air than my Christmas Party.

Kilimanjaro! It's high time the truth be told. Until today I did not know what love was! . . . They call me to dinner, three times. Woodenly I stack line on line. I love you. Meanwhile, the spinach on my plate is getting cold. Till I die I will love only you. The fourth time around, they hound me to supper.

&

Then, to stay within the boundaries of the story, I figure out how we can correspond properly this far above sea level. With the help of some thin rope, of course! I run downstairs. Mrs. Zámsky is in the kitchen with curlers in her hair. I'm hopping with impatience, I've explained it to her so many times! I'm even shouting a little. Mrs. Zámsky wants to know why I don't just hand her the letter. With a speed borne of exasperation, I spill the whole thing again. Mrs. Zámsky asks: And what kind of game is it? Finally she waves her hands at me and goes to wake Sasha up.

I stand on the balcony, tying the rope. Carefully I lower the letter. WRITE BACK IMMEDIATELY! Everest adds. I mope around upstairs, practicing my blandishments on the twilight. Hurrah! Sasha's hand sticks out from the rocky grotto. She attaches a note:

"My temperature's almost normal. My aunt's going to the movies tomorrow so if you want, come over."

&

As if to spite me, the heat today is like a frying pan. The sun pours through the closed windows. The basement apartment is oppressive and stifling. Mr. Zámsky is sleeping in a chair in the garden, and Sasha is sitting on her bed in a rumpled nightgown.

"Do you still feel sick?"

"Uh-uh."

"Still have a temperature?"

"M-hm."

Suddenly I don't know what to say. I stand up and look around. Most of all I'd like to crawl right into the game, like a hand into a glove.

"So are we going to play? Like always?"

"Hey, could you bring me something to drink?"

"I'll bring it to you when we pretend."

"What do you mean, pretend? I'm dying of thirst!"

"So pretend like he's coming back to free her from the snow."

Everest brings her warm lemonade in a plastic glass; even Mrs. Zámsky has had a plastic seizure, but she doesn't have a refrigerator. He finds Kilimanjaro asleep. No, she's frozen. Everest stands for a while, completely taken aback. Then he puts the glass aside and begins to massage the forearms of this victim of the Mountain.

"Kilimanjaro! Don't die!" he whispers — today he's not at all convincing.

The victim opens one eye slightly: "Got the drink?"

She gulps it down at once and wipes the spills off her nightgown.

"You know what you have to do!" she says, and freezes. Mount Everest is taking his time. It's not easy to introduce sheer frost into a hundred-degree zone. Sasha breathes aloud. The hairs on her neck glisten gold with sweat. Everest still cannot get into the game. Finally he leans over, perplexed. A dying arm grabs him around the throat. He didn't expect this; his legs slide out from under him and he topples right into the featherbed.

&

When it gets dark outside, Everest's first fear is that they will find him in the Zámskys' bed in his sneakers. He jumps up and comes to attention like an army major. Mr. Zámsky is squatting outside, tapping on the glass and snickering.

"Go jump in a lake, old man!" Sasha says irritably.

"What's he want with us?"

Sasha puts on an idiotic expression:

"Go for it, girls, that's right, do it!"

Then she tumbles back into the featherbed and snores. Mr. Zámsky shuffles inside. He slaps me on my rear and sits down on the bed.

"Well, girls! Want to look at some pictures? Not a word to Mrs. Z.! She doesn't need to know everything, right girls?"

Sasha is snoring like a steam engine. And she's poking me in the back with her foot. The fever has unleashed her somehow. Mr. Zámsky pulls out a tattered book.

"Come on, girls, let's have some fun together! After all, I saw you — you know how to have fun!"

Sasha leans forward and props her chin on his shoulder. Cardboard figures stand out on the page, a ballerina and a man holding a hat right below his belly. Strings hang down beneath them. Mr. Zámsky winks at us. He pulls one of the strings and the ballerina raises her leg up high. It turns out she isn't wearing any panties.

"Whoa!" Sasha yelps, and she rips the book away from her uncle. She pulls the other string. The man jerks his arms backward.

"Give it back! Sasha!" Mr. Zámsky shouts. Sasha jumps around the bed, the bed springs like a trampoline. In a panic, her uncle grabs the footboard.

"Get on over here!" Sasha calls to me. I waver, but she holds out her hand. I don't recognize her at all today. Hastily I kick off my shoes and climb over to her.

"Sasha! You little devil!" Mr. Zámsky moans. He's afraid to stand up and can barely hold onto the crossrail. I'm jumping as well. It's easier than keeping my balance. Suddenly a strange hotness enters me. Sasha jerks on the string, the man thrusts his naked belly against the ballerina, and we both yelp, "Wow!"

"You! Little girl! Make her give back the book!"

I'm choking in the stifling heat. I don't recognize either Sasha or myself. I jump and shriek with all my might, "Wow!"

Suddenly Sasha yelps, "Auntie's coming!" and quick as a flash throws the book behind the bed. Mr. Zámsky is horribly frightened. As he shoots out of the room, he drops his cane, but leaves it lying on the ground and flees. I'm also horribly frightened;

I've turned white as a sheet. Sasha laughs wildly and burrows into the featherbed up to her nose.

"No one's coming, don't worry. I just said that so he'd leave. Come crawl under the featherbed so he can't see us!"

She pulls out the book and blows off the dust. She nods at me and pats the place next to her.

"I'm still going to tell my aunt on him tonight!"

She sits up, takes off her nightgown, and spreads her legs apart. Carefully she examines the picture and then between her own thighs. Everest stands on the bed; he can't move, must be frozen.

"Come on already!" Sasha shrieks at me. The featherbed falls on us like an avalanche.

&

As I run up the steps, lightning flashes. It creates the impression that evening has arrived early today.

My parents aren't home, but there's a letter on the table. At first I overlook it. Only when I get out of the bathtub do I see that it's from Hana. I spend a long time rubbing my face with a handtowel. My hot skin itches as if an electric current were buzzing through the air.

The letter takes me by surprise; I had completely forgotten about Hana. I take out the folded pages and can barely focus on what I'm reading.

Two, three pages, an ordinary vacation letter. Swimming, the country house at Strakonice, colds, trips, mushroom picking. Do you already have your assignment done for September? Not me. Then I turn the page over.

"And I also wanted to write you and say how much it bothers me that we ended what was a beautiful friendship. Maybe you already have another friend, but I still love you and will love you till I die."

All of it in tiny, perfectly formed handwriting, good enough for the American government. Just outside the window, lightning flashes. Suddenly fear pins me to the wall. Scarcely an instant later, the thunder hits.

&

Sometimes it seems that everything's just a fiction. A substitute for something that doesn't exist. In spite of this, each life has its moments that stand for nothing but themselves. This is one of them.

Outside it's pouring. In bed, flashlight in hand, I'm writing a letter propped on my knees. I love Hana so awfully much that there is no room for wonder. I didn't know it this morning, but now the whole past serves only as the foundation for my love. In the feeble glow of the flashlight lines pour forth from me onto page after page.

I love you. Till I die I will love only you. The mountain hurricane carries me through the skies. A full five pages spill forth, foaming, over the margins of the paper.

When I finish writing, it is midnight. The house is asleep. I run along the balcony in the pouring rain and try to guess where Strakonice might be. Then I stand

there in sheer triumph and transmit myself south-southwest. This is no fiction. This is no gesture. It is love itself. For it is high time the truth be told: what wouldn't I give to experience such love again!

&

In the morning, Sasha is allowed out into the garden again. For the first time she hangs around alone. I stay home reading. Sometimes I peer out under the curtains at her as she wanders along the paths. Only when I should be chopping carrots do I run out to see her.

"Hi. Were you sleeping?"

"No, why?"

"'Cause you're later than usual."

"So?"

We sit, swinging our legs, on the edge of a basin full of wet branches. Sasha brushes lightly against my ankle.

"Are we going to play?"

"Play what?"

"The usual."

I don't respond. The sun makes a burning cap on my head. I twist my ankle around my other leg.

"I can't today."

"Why not?"

"I have a vacation assignment to do."

"An assignment? Over the summer?"

"Only the best students have to do them. Like me and my friend Hana."

Sasha loudly kicks at the basin wall. A yellow powder drifts down from a crack.

"We both write pretty well. We wrote to President Eisenhower together."

"So then will you come down?"

"And we also wrote to the American government. To make sure there isn't a war. My friend has the prettiest hand-writing in the whole class. And I have the best essays."

Sasha falls silent. Mr. Zámsky comes trudging down the path. As soon as he spots us, he heads off somewhere else. At that moment a black spark of hatred flashes through me.

"Why do you keep kicking our wall?" I say. "You're going to wreck it!"

Sasha jumps down off the rim. Out of spite, I carefully pick up bits of gravel out of the grass, but she doesn't turn around. I have to go home for lunch anyway.

&

Sasha left Prague two days after this. We said good-bye casually. Mr. Zámsky left with her. I never sent the letter to Hana. I carried it around with me for a few days and then left it in the pocket of my windbreaker.

As for the Mountain of Mountains, Mount Everest got the furthest, but even he never made it to the summit. His transmitter went dead. He must have wiped away the snow and then covered the frozen girl with his own body. Somewhere there the track was lost. No one ever conquered the Mountain of Mountains.

&

In September, Hana and I sit next to each other, but it's awkward and futile. The wheel of friendship doesn't spin up again. Fifth grade languidly and painlessly draws us apart.

One day, I'm rushing somewhere through the hallway at school. There's a bulletin board there for the class council. Suddenly something stops me in my tracks. "Dear President Eisenhower!" a tiny, familiar hand has written.

For a while I can't believe my eyes. Our letter has been in America for ages! After all, it was for President Eisenhower! Until finally the shock hits me and in a flash I understand it all.

That letter was never intended to be sent. There was no hope it would reach its addressee; it was just pretend. It too was a gesture that missed its mark — a finger that might point somewhere, but somewhere it will never touch.

SIX
from LATE LEISURE

Eleanor Ross Taylor

Diary Entry, March 24

Today
walked home tho cold
No coffee no Crackerjack no
books $200 cash 3.50 taxi
saved 5.69 coffee not spent
Wind blowing
hard Scarf tossing in my face
breathing fast the cold
A young man boy walking
like that boy in Ellerbe hands deep
in pockets shoulders twisting
mouth bitter
glittering eyes black-fringed into looking
Kiss-me-quick-I'm-off-goodbye tied
my scarf under my chin
Hurry
Just past the bridge wind threw
a foam hot dog carton onto
the walk ahead of me It landed
flat waddled along open a little casket
determined to get home first But
the wind lifted it again took it off I,
determined to get there before it
Waddle
as the wind blows, casket
A fling

of maple keys to street
That's the way the money goes
Keys eyes bluegray Black-fringed

Don't shiver little star
It's not as cold as all that

A Change of State

Was it a car?
  A tree limb raked the house?
A lost wasp
  battling bedroom ceiling?
Just time to wake up?

  How do I? Not on purpose.
Calm surprise, a flower unclosed.

  A fine flower,
one foot in the grave,
  stiff ankle, unsteady leg,
peering where to situate
  next step.

But the way I burst up
  from deeps, detach
a buried habitat,
  re-enter,

a yes-but-little-lower than;
  pink squalling efflorescence;
a hatching half old cilia,
  half mutant April wings.

I read somewhere
  just waking up can kill you.

The Diary

1
Too much like myself,
it listens critically.
Edits, though seldom rereads.
In the margins: *here incoherent.*

Like me, it mumbles.
The more I "Speak up, girl!"
the less it says outright,
wants in fact not to say.

2
Contrary to belief, the word *diary*
means undivulged; clues trail
the pages and the trail breaks off,
scent's lost. Wandering is
the only way out of this place.

Yet the helpless subjugation
to the daily task,
the need for trysting-place,
love for the white-hot page
that drains the wound, seals it.

3

I know the heroines of the craft—
the small-town wife, the *clear some,*
cloudy some fretful refrain
in her doubtful second marriage;
Jane Carlyle's war with crowing cocks.

To whom? To me. They write to me.
From pages hidden in the covered wagon,
"I said nothing, but I thought the more."
(But in a letter home:
"We are at the mercy of a madman.")
Missing, Fanny Kemble's account
of the night she fled upriver.

4

How to confide the footsteps of a shroud
under your window in the night?
The denials, the costumed felons
lurk in your wakings, nervously
pressing mustaches over their teeth.

Why are those scuds of gulls
hanging over the swamp today?

I, splashing, choking, struggling,
sinking in self-sight—

Oh, that little straw!

Find Me

by my trail of fragments,
stale crumbs,
green broken boughs
of protocol.
Footprints
all missteps,

tatters of sackcloth
on the undergrowth,

confused backtracks.
A rough HELP
lipsticked on a map
tossed out too far
with backbite cream.
Here

left the highway

for the woods
pressed jungleward. Discover

a trace of desiccated residue
staining a sheet of paper

struggling to speak.

Like One Concussed

Like one concussed, he wakes.
Where's this?
A hole's bombed in the barracks.
He knows damnwell
there is no window there.
This quiet should not be.
He sweats. The tanks have
left without me, one lost survivor.
                His hot cheek
grazes lace and lofted down;
the blue wall's whispering.
Bare feet, deep mirror's face,
his, his, his. Oh I do
thee wed, this place.

At Your Own Risk

Blessed are the brave,
for their skulls shall be crushed
Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall be tortured
Blessed are the idealistic,
they shall despair
Blessed are the generous,
their bones shall be picked clean
Blessed are the achievers,
they shall exchange achievement for life
Blessed are the accepting,
they shall be buried under a mausoleum of woe.

&&&

The winning of battles is not determined between men who plan and deliberate, who make a resolution and carry it out, but between men who are drained of these faculties, transformed, fallen, either to the level of inert matter, which is all passivity, or to the level of blind forces, which are all momentum. This is the final secret of war.

Simone Weil

The human spirit is prey to the most astounding impulses. Man goes constantly in fear of himself. His erotic urges terrify him. The saint turns from the voluptuary in alarm; she does not know that his unacknowledgeable passions and her own are really one.

Georges Bataille

&&&

PASSION

I've read a poem in the form of a play, Joel Agee's translation of Kleist's *Penthesilea*, and can't get it out of my mind. This German poet, not recognized in his greatness until a century after his death at an early age (suicide), wrote, elsewhere: "I carry around a heart the way a Northern land carries within it the germ of a semitropical fruit from the South. It sprouts and sends forth shoots, but it cannot grow ripe." This, from a *dichter* who lit extremities of the human heart with such intensity that a reader may long to shield her eyes, at certain moments, from the blaze. I think his heart could not have endured more life than it did.

Here are the Greeks before the walls of Troy. Their hero Achilles has defeated Hector, Trojan prince, and dragged his body around the walls of the city under the eyes of the king his father. Suddenly, like wolves the Amazons descend upon the combatants. Wily Odysseus, Greek commander, has just retreated before their onslaught: having pounded the Trojans, they then, bafflingly, turned on the enemies of the Trojans. Their fury astonishes the rational Greeks, who cannot divine its cause — "I swear by Jupiter, they don't know why!" Even more strange, the Queen of the Amazons, the maiden Penthesilea, seems to bear hatred toward Achilles, whom she seeks out and pursues on the battlefield. The Greeks are observing from a cliff above. Diomedes describes the scene to Odysseus and Antilochus:

For as they met in combat yesterday
At eventide, Achilles and the Queen,
Deiphobus comes, the Trojan, of a sudden,
Takes a position at the maiden's side,
And smites the son of Peleus such a savage
And cunning blow that you could hear the elms
Reverberating with the clash of steel.
The Queen turns pale, two minutes long she waits
With sinking arms: and then, indignantly,

She shakes her locks about her flaming cheeks,
And, rising tall above her horse's back,
Brings her sword plunging, like a bolt from heaven,
Down with a blaze of light into his neck,
And sends the meddler rolling to the feet
Of bold Achilles, Thetis' godlike son.
He thereupon, Achilles, wants to thank her
By dealing her a similar blow; but she,
Bent low against her piebald's flowing mane—who,
Gnashing his golden bit, throws himself round—
Eludes the murderous blow, lets the reins loose,
And turns her head, and smiles, and is gone.

What sort of courtship is this? A courtship of noble warriors; nothing moderate or gentle about it. They would kill each other, with love; do.

The play was sent to Goethe by its young author. Goethe was the unscalable mountain, the Sequoia of European literature, in that year of 1808; respected councilor to the court of Weimar, he advanced the careers of third-rate artists (it was judged later) while setting back those of writers whom he must have recognized as competitors, or successors: Kleist, Hölderlin. He snubbed Kleist badly and refused to stage the play; indeed, was horrified by it, and rejected its author as unbalanced and immoderate. His own contribution to German Romantic literature, and suicide, THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER, was long in the past.

Kleist was the descendant of distinguished Prussian officers of the old nobility; was educated privately by a Protestant minister; served in the military; hoped to fight against Napoleon. In young manhood he suffered some sort of crisis. Joel Agee thinks it was not "his reading of Kant" — as is usually said — "that unsettled him but the volcanic eruption of his own artistic vocation. There was, in any case, a crisis of faith in the ordering power of reason, and it was permanent." He was also inept in social situations, being seized (perhaps like Coleridge) by enthusiasms, tremblings, false starts. By the time he was ready to end his life, at thirty-four, he had written eight plays, assorted stories, poems, essays, anecdotes, and remarkable letters; all in less than ten years. He had during those same years been employed by the Prussian Ministry of Finance, imprisoned by French troops occupying Prussia, suffered a nervous breakdown, endured illnesses, voyaged to France and Switzerland, established (then saw fail) a literary journal, *Phöbus*, founded and edited the first daily newspaper in Berlin, and more. He was poor and in debt, had not gained for his distinguished family name the glory he had sought from literature. He no longer cared to live, and persuaded a friend, a young married woman ill with an incurable cancer, to die with him.

Penthesilea raised the hairs on the back of my neck; this was a degree of poetry one seldom reads. Kleist traced the movements of the aristocratic heart in love and in war: beauty of language, swiftness of action, implacable fate of lovers whose word for *kiss* echoes *bite*.

The new war in Kosovo and Serbia deepens the reading of that drama of another age, whose author, says Joel Agee, deployed the "disjunction of German speech" in "martial strategies" "like war machines for the liberation of affect within the

stately rhythms of classical pentameter. The aesthetic effect is both explosive and serene, and it cannot be duplicated." The drama is of a very high order, aesthetically; also, it is shocking, is meant to be so. "Horror" is the word with which the various actors describe what deeds are done before their scalded eyes. Achilles and Penthesilia are lovers who would kill each other with the honor and valor required of great opponents. The rules are implacable; combat is bloody and exhausting. Perhaps the opening of their hearts to love is a dream. Penthesilea and Achilles, each, flick in and out of dream, or madness, are seized by passion which is itself an unhealing wound. The laws of their sovereign nations require each warrior to bear the consort-captive home to the altar of their highest deity. There is no psychology in these antagonists; they are terrifyingly innocent in the directness of their feelings. Their desire is carnal. Penthesilea, mistaking Achilles' challenge to single combat as betrayal of his earlier, pretend submission to her, slaughters him, then, down among her dogs of war, gnaws at his alabaster breast. Her frenzy spent, she becomes conscious of what horror she has perpetrated, and takes her life.

Joel Agee suggests that Kleist's drama took the German theater back toward the archaic sources of Greek tragedy as Goethe's classical restraint could not, for the death of Achilles is played out as a sacrifice to Mars, god of war, and the fury of Penthesilea the re-enactment of the bloody act of vengeance which gave birth to her sovereign nation.

Of the origin of the Amazons' nation, Penthesilea tells Achilles:

> Where now the Amazonian nations rules,
> There lived before, obedient to the gods,
> Warlike and free, a tribe of the Scythians,
> Equal to any nation on the earth.

This free tribe is located in the Caucasus; it was conquered by "Vexorus, the Ethopian King" who "[cut] down old men/ and boys" and took the women as their prize: "And, to allot us our full measure of shame,/ Forced us to tender them a loving welcome". Their queen, Thanaïs, was constrained to wed her conqueror. At her direction, all the women of the tribe hid and sharpened metal objects. Wedding him, Thanaïs stabbed her victor-husband: "Mars in his stead carried out the marriage rite,/ And in a night the murderers had their itch/ Well satisfied, with knives, till they were dead." The "people's council" then proclaimed:

> Hence let there be a sovereign nation founded,
> A state of women where the arrogant
> Imperious voice of man shall not be heard;
> That gives itself its laws in dignity,
> Obeys itself, provides its own protection....
> And should a man set eye upon this nation,
> That eye shall be forever closed again;
> And should it happen that an infant boy
> Be born of tyrant blood, dispatch him straight
> to Orcus, where his savage father went.

When Thanaïs is crowned, in the temple of Ares/Mars, a voice cries out that this state of women, whose ruler dares carry the great golden bow of the former Scythian kings,

will be "the laughingstock/ Of men, no more than that, and at the first/ Attack of warlike neighbors, it will crumble" because women's breasts will get in the way of their bow-pulling arms. Thanaïs waits for a moment to observe the effect of this speech on the crowd; the effect is fear; at once she tears off her right breast "and baptized those/ Whose task it was to wield the bow and arrow,/ And fell into a faint before she'd finished." Thus began the defended state of the Amazons, the "bosomless."

Achilles cries in admiration, "By Zeus the thunderer, she didn't *need* breasts!/ That woman could have ruled a race of men...."

Whatever that speech first stirred in me — for it is gratifying to read at this remove any tale, no matter how legendary, of the valor of women — I would stand away from that dramatic thrill, considering its implication. Achilles, tender with desire, is dismayed to learn that Penthesilea, too, is bosomless. She pleads that her feelings have "found refuge" in her remaining breast, nearer her heart. This is pathos yet nearly risible, but for the *fact* of her having been amputated.

No use, if hard to resist, clothing these personages — she noble; he noble and semi-divine — in modern guise; if I recognize any trait in them, if I see in him condescension toward her, and in her, terrifying innocence, meaning purity of purpose, and the unreasoning, yet very sharp, intelligence of the great warrior or athlete, nonetheless I can't ignore their tragic situation, their fatedness. No matter their desire, they must carry out their hieratic roles unto death. An archaic sacrifice was a bloody event; re-enacted classically, off-stage, it still horrifies even the Homeric Greeks, even the Amazonian High Priestess of Artemis under whose auspices the rite is carried out. If in war any exercise of reason occurs, it must be because statesmen and commanders, agents of gods, knowing the reality of human barbarity, have agreed to restrict it by mutually-agreed-upon rules according to which heroes will face each other. Such rule-makers must be wise enough, then, to know that the fury and desire for war, passion for war born of revenge or aggression or whatever dawn-of-the-world human impulse fathers and mothers it, is also eternal. It is part of what is human. The passion cannot be exterminated, they knew and believed, nor truly governed but, at best, bounded by agreement; but when unloosed, it must run its terrible course.

Artistically, Kleist dramatized a terrible vision of the collapse of "the ordering power of reason." Goethe, a man of the educated middle-class, could not (I believe) stomach this. Artistic vanity may have warped his treatment of Kleist; but, surely, Goethe's was a *moral* revulsion, expressed in aesthetic terms, driving him back from this thrilling, exhausting play. Kleist had no hope for and no belief in the ordering power of human reason; he, descendant of eighteen Prussian generals, knew that life, not only *The Iliad*, was (in Simone Weil's phrase) a poem of force. I can hardly bear to know this: surely, I must know, not deny, it if only to conceive of civilization as the alternative to the endless repetition of ritual sacrifice; or is the martial god our ruling diety?

— KM

Heinrich von Kleist, PENTHESILEA. Tr. Joel Agee. Pictures by Maurice Sendak.
NY: Michael di Capua Books/HarperCollins, 1998

see also:
Hubert Butler, "The Artukovitch File," Archipelago Vol. 1 No. 2
"Hecuba in New York," Vol. 1 No. 2
"'Hecuba' Writing from New York," Vol. 1 No. 3
"On Love," Vol. 2, No. 3
"'Goethe,'" Vol. 2, No. 3

Recommended Reading

> On my naming day when I come 12 I gone front spear and kilt a wyld boar he parbly ben the las wyld pig on the Bundel Downs any how there hadnt been none for a long time befor him nor I aint looking to see none agen. He dint make the groun shake nor nothing like that when he come on to my spear he werent all that big plus he lookit poorly. He done the reqwyrt he ternt and stood and clattert his teef and made his rush and there we wer then. Him on 1 end of the spear kicking his life out and me on the other end watching him dy. I said, 'Your tern now my tern later.' The other spears gone in then and he wer dead and the steam coming up off him in the rain and we all yelt, 'Offert!'
>
> Russell Hoban, RIDDLEY WALKER
> Expanded edition, Indian Univ. Press, 1998

Several writers and readers, friends of Archipelago, suggest some good books:

Odile Hellier (The Village Voice Bookshop, Paris; by phone):

"One book I loved very much: ADA, by Nabokov. What a wonder, the writing! Reading Russian, I'm all the time tuning into the Russian mind and, reading him, I see the playfulness of his Russian mind translating itself into English. It comes through in the irony, the ridiculousness of the world, the distance between the character and what happens to him. How he plays: puns in three or five languages: French, English, Russian, sometimes German, sometimes Italian — *and* the language of the entomologist, with his complicated, ornamental descriptions of plants and insects: a Baroque playfulness, combined with tenderness and a totally subversive love. This book is about culture, society of course, with an ironical eye on the upper classes of France, England, and America, which he knows because that was his milieu. I cannot tell you the pleasure I had reading this book, how it stimulates the imagination: it takes you above the ground." **Vladimir Nabokov, ADA (US: Vintage; UK: Penguin; paperback)**

"It's incredible that Grace Paley would be in Paris just now, reading [at the Village Voice] these essays written over the years, given the political climate of the last week, the bombing of Kosovo, because these essays also dealt with political activities of the past. She's certainly against the bombing, as she was against the war in Vietnam, but although she did not speak about Yugoslavia, she understands that it is necessary to get rid of evil. Her life as an ecologist, woman, feminist, pacifist, an activist in many issues: it is meaningful for me to have her here, now." **Grace Paley, JUST AS I THOUGHT (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1999)**

"Barbara Kingsolver's new book is a quantum leap up from her previous novels — the scope, the canvas, the destiny: enormous; really wonderful. The book is about the imposition of cultures on other cultures. The title says it all: the preacher who carries his guilt with him to Africa, to the Congo of Patrice Lumumba. In a small village where the people speak Kilonga he wants to baptize the children by immersion, because he feels they live in darkness, though the river is filled with crocodiles! He speaks about 'Patajesus,' drawing on the Kilongan word for 'truth'; but he pronounces it as 'poisonwood,' and so is totally wrong: he preaches not that Jesus is 'truth' but 'poison.' This is a real novel, of 'real' lives: the preacher, his wife, and their three daughters. Five different lives lived with humor and tragedy in moral, cultural and political situations; a masterpiece." **Barbara Kingsolver, THE POISONWOOD BIBLE (US: HarperCollins; UK: Faber paperback. 1998)**

"I read a British book which you may want to know about, by a man who was in prison and then worked in a slaughterhouse. Despite the fact that it was a little bit difficult for me to enter that world at first, I found the author is very, very generous with his rather picaresque, rather deformed characters. A very generous book, funny at times in spite of the very, very, very dark world. It's really a beautiful book." **Jimmy Boyle, THE HERO OF THE UNDERWORLD (UK/US: Serpent's Tail, 1999)**

"Jake Lamar is an African-American writer living in Paris who is best known for BOURGEOIS BLUES. His third novel, CLOSE TO THE BONE, is just out. His novels are always contemporary and interesting, about the African-American middle class which has money and education and goes back and forth between Europe and the States. He is a subversive kind of writer. He writes about African-American characters, but he's not protecting them at all: he blurs borders, frontiers, lines between white and black. He debunks the polarization and, though he certainly speaks about racism, undermines it all the time. Racism is an issue, but not treated as we've been used to seeing it dealt with in novels. This is a new kind of African-American literature. He's not carrying the banner of race, but describing a generation across colors." **Jake Lamar, CLOSE TO THE BONE (NY: Crown Books, 1999)**

Susan Garrett (TAKING CARE OF OUR OWN, Dutton, 1994; MILES TO GO: Aging in Rural Virginia, University Press of Virginia, 1998):

"I marvel at the hours of total delight I spend pouring over a large book called ON THE ART OF FIXING A SHADOW. This is a treasure house of photographs, from the beginnings of photography in 1839, through photography's transformation into art and beyond, to 1989, accompanied by four essays written with penetrating grace by some fine art historians: Sara Greenough, Joel Snyder, David Travis and Colin Westerbeck. Hold this book in your lap and make yourself comfortable, let your eyes travel deep into the magic of Fox Talbot's ordinary scene "The Open Door" (1844), from there to French, British and American photographs of architecture, soldiers and chimney sweeps, bridges and industrial plants (I love Albin Coburn's "Pittsburgh Smoke Stacks" [1910]), street scenes in Paris, London, New York, the wild American West, and the artistic amazement to be found in light on the human body. If your library doesn't have it, beg them to buy it." **ON THE ART OF FIXING A SHADOW, ed. Sarah Greenough, Joel Snyder (National Gallery of Art and the Art Institute of Chicago, 1989)**

Elizabeth Benedict (THE JOY OF WRITING SEX, A Guide for Fiction Writers, Story Press, 1998; SLOW DANCING, 1985 and THE BEGINNER'S BOOK OF DREAMS, 1988, Knopf; SAFE CONDUCT, Farrar, Straus & Giroux):

"My favorite definition of fiction is Henry Green's, who said that it should be 'a long intimacy between strangers.' On the scale of intimacy, the three books I've picked are all at the extreme end, and all, it seems, are about nostalgia for lost worlds, or longing for the innocents we were when we got to live in those distant but flawed lands.

"Elizabeth Hardwick's SLEEPLESS NIGHTS is a dreamy yet tightly written burst of what she calls 'backward glancing.' Back at the childhood in Lexington, Kentucky; the flight to intellectual life in New York; the encounters with Billie Holiday; the marriage that is over ('Are you lonely?' a young women asks the divorced narrator. 'Not always,' is her answer.) What endures for the narrator in this work of what she calls 'transformed and even distorted memory' is her life of reading books, 'all consumed in a sedentary sleeplessness.' The last page of SLEEPLESS NIGHTS is magnificent." **Elizabeth Hardwick, SLEEPLESS NIGHTS (o.p. but available in used bookstores)**

"It's only been in the last few years that James Salter's books have had the wide audience they deserve. My favorite is LIGHT YEARS, a novel about the slow, quiet disintegration of what seems like a perfect family. Set in the late 1950s and mid-late 1960s, the parents are ex-urban intellectuals and aesthetes and devoted to their two small daughters. They live in a great old Victorian house along the Hudson, among good friends, good books, children's games from another era. 'They lived a Russian life,' Salter writes, 'a rich life, interwoven, in which the misfortune of one, a failure, illness, would stagger them all. It was like a garment, this life. Its beauty was outside, its warmth within.'" **James Salter, LIGHT YEARS (Vintage)**

"THE BOOK OF EBENEZER LE PAGE, by G. B. Edwards, is an oddity and a great literary wonder, written in the beautiful French patois of Guernsey, one of the Channel Islands. It was brought to light by John Fowles, who wrote the forward, after the manuscript was found among the author's papers when he died in 1976. It's set on Guernsey, between the 1890s and the 1960s, from the time of the island's isolation and innocence, to its darkest days when occupied by the Germans – and to its current status as a trendy, 'quaint' vacation spot, which we're as angry about as Ebenezer is, by the time we've spent so much time in his company. He feels intensely about everything and everyone in this deliciously rich novel of longing and love." **G. B. Edwards, THE BOOK OF EBENEZER LePAGE (Moyer Bell Ltd., paper)**

Interesting Sites and Resources

Independent Presses

Catbird Press <www.catbirdpress.com> publishes, among other notable books, a number by Czech writers in translation, including Jaroslav Seifert, whose THE POEMS OF JAROSLAV SEIFERT is the first large collection of his poems published in America; a garland of these poems appeared in Archipelago Vol. 2, No. 3. DAYLIGHT IN NIGHTCLUB INFERNO offers Czech fiction from the "post-Kundera generation," including work by Daniela Fischerová. Her "A Letter to President Eisenhower," appears elsewhere in this issue. Her volume FINGERS POINTING SOMEWHERE ELSE, the first volume of her work to appear in English, is due out this year. Robert Wechsler, publisher of Catbird, has written an interesting book-length essay, WITHOUT A STAGE; THE ART OF LITERARY TRANSLATION; worth reading.

Chelsea Green Publishing Company <www.chelseagreen.com> in White River Junction, Vermont, specializes in books about sustainable living, with selections of environmentally friendly, thoughtful, and hopeful books. GAVIOTAS, A Village to Reinvent the World, by Alan Weisman, has received much attention. The editor in chief, Jim Schley, wrote us about our conversation with Michael and Cornelia Bessies (*Archipelago*, Vol. 1, No. 4; Vol. 2, No. 1): "As a younger editor who has every intention of emulating such ... predecessors, I find this conversation to be truly illuminating." This press has high standards.

Columbia University Press <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup> puts up a utilitarian site through which their useful catalog of books and reference works, including CD-ROMS, can be ordered. Two noteworthy CD-ROMs are THE COLUMBIA I CHING and THE CLASSIC HUNDRED POEMS; the latter is very expensive, but delightful. William Strachan, the director, spoke to us about publishing in Archipelago Vol. 2, No. 4.

The Harvill Press <www.harvill-press.com> publishes, among many estimable authors, Richard Hughes, Richard Ford, and in translation, Anna Maria Ortese (THE LAMENT OF THE LINNET), Ismael Kadare, Javier Marías. Many of their titles are available in the U. S., particularly at independent bookstores. We urge our Readers to look for their books.

The Lilliput Press <http://indigo.ie/~lilliput> is an Irish publisher founded in 1984 by Antony Farrell. Some 150 titles have appeared under its imprint: art and architecture, autobiography and memoir, biography and history, ecology and environmentalism, essays and literary criticism, philosophy, current affairs and popular culture, fiction, drama and poetry – all broadly focused on Irish themes. Since 1985 they have brought out four volumes of the essays of the late Hubert Butler. Hubert Butler's "The Artukovitch File" appears, with their permission, in Archipelago, Vol. 1, No. 2.

McPherson & Co <www.mcphersonco.com> publishes such writers as the fascinating Mary Butts (THE TAVERNER NOVELS), Anna Maria Ortese (A MUSIC BEHIND THE WALL, Selected Stories Vol. 2, just published), and the performance artist Carolee Schneeman. A beautiful story by Ortese, "The Great Street," appeared in our inaugural issue, and the writer's testament, "Where Time Is Another," appeared in Archipelago Vol. 2, No. 4.

Online Originals <www.onlineoriginals.com> is an internet publisher of literature who take the position, one we find ourselves much in agreement with, that "Conventional book publishing has changed dramatically in recent years. Most of the world's publishers are now owned by a handful of media conglomerates, ruled in turn by their finance and marketing departments. To guarantee high profits, they tend to accept manuscripts only by only celebrity writers whose output conforms to the conventional mainstream market.... We believe that the Internet is the way forward for all kinds of publishing. But for the benefit of our authors, we do not prevent them also publishing printed versions of their works at a later date." They deliver "book-like" texts by e-mail.

Station Hill Press <www.stationhill.org> is a non-profit publisher run by the poet George Quasha. They publish writers of serious and surrealist bent, as very fine poetry and fiction. Among their writers are Maurice Blanchot and Spencer Holst (whose "The Zebra Storyteller" appears in this issue). María Negroni, whose work appeared in Vol. 1, No. 1 and Vol. 2, No. 4, is the author of a beautiful work in poetry and prose, ISLANDIA, which they will publish this year, using print-on-demand; a noteworthy work of literature brought out by an interesting development in publishing technology.

Sun & Moon Press <www.sunmoon.com> is a fine, serious, literary press with fine test and a long backlist. They publish classics as well as contemporary fiction and poetry; writers and poets such as Arkadii Dragomoschenko (astonishing Russian poet), Paul Celan, Harry Matthews, Djuna Barnes, Paul Auster, Russell Banks. They will publish Maria Negroni's LA JAULA BAJO EL TRAPO/CAGE UNDER COVER, tr. Anne Twitty, in a Spanish-English edition; a selection appeared in Archipelago, Vol. 2, No. 4.

Fine Arts

Colophon Page <www.colophon.com> and Photo Arts <www.photoarts.com> are two handsome sites devoted to the fine arts. Colophon Page reproduces artists' books, which are displayed in pages as if in a gallery; there is an attendant shop, and review and forum pages. Photo Arts presents and offers for sale the works of fine-arts photographers and photojournalists. The design and quality of reproduction of these sites are excellent. Read Jeanette Watson's 'Off the Wall,' book reviews by the owner of the now-closed Books & Co., Manhattan, at <http://colophon.com/offthewall>.

Fray <www.fray.com>. Strange. Cool. Heartbreaking. A delight.

Octavo <www.octavo.com> is a digital publisher committed to conserving books, manuscripts, and antiquarian printed materials via digital tools and formats. They make original works available to readers and book lovers through partnerships with libraries, individuals and institutions. As a sample, they offer a PDF download of William Shakespeare Poems. We are always pleased when web publishers use PDF files, as we do for our Download edition.

Sites devoted to Surrealism, in honor of Stella Snead, whose work appears elsewhere in this issue:

The Surrealism Server <http://pharmdec.wustl.edu/juju/surr/surrealism.html> Whereas it does contain a short overview of the movement, some documentary photos and a few links to sites dedicated to the original artists, this site is most noteworthy for its links to interactive Surrealist games on-line. These include The Exquisite Sonnet Project run by Ranjit Bhatnagar <oz.sas.upenn.edu/surreal/sonnets.html>, The World's First Collaborative Sentence, The Infinite Story, and the Cadaveric Enigma Engine Generator.

The Duchamp Pages <www.MarcelDuchamp.org> are a thorough and beautifully arranged exhibition of Duchamp's work.

The WebMuseum of the Louvre <www.oir.ucf.edu/wm/paint/glo/surrealism> offers a concise overview of the movement (in English).

The Salvador Dali Museum <www.daliweb.com/daliweb.html> is operated from a site in St. Petersburg, Florida.

The Magritte Art Gallery <www.magritte.com> is a well-maintained commercial venue. It curates a virtual museum of 331 JPEG images of works by the painter, and a complete gift shop.

A Texan named Mark Harden <www.artchive.com>runs a well-designed site. He calls himself an "amateur" art critic, but such a designation seems arbitrary in hyperspace, and his pages display more taste and intelligence than most of the "professional" sites. You'll find here such classics as Leo Steinberg's critique of modernism in "Other Criteria." Students of Surrealism will wish to read Rosalind Krauss's essay "No More Play" lifted in its entirety from her book The Originality of the Avant Garde and Other Modernist Myths. Rosalind Krauss was a founding editor of *October;* her previous book was The Optical Unconscious. The essay Harden has selected relates the work of Alberto Giacometti to the Surrealists.

Alan Gullette <www.creative.net/~alang/lit/surreal/writer.sht> in San Francisco maintains the Internet's best reference-source of Surrealist literature, including information and links to sites about Surrealists and earlier writers who may have influenced the movement, such as Valery, Rimbaud,

Apollinaire, and the Marquis de Sade. The complete text of André Breton's What is Surrealism? is offered <http://www.creative.net/~alang/lit/surreal/ writers.sht#Breton>.
Stefan Sinclair's bilingual site OuLiNPo, or the Workshop of Potential Computer Literature <http://qsilver.queensu.ca/~4ss42/Oulipo> might attract those interested in the relationship between Surrealist automatism and computers. The project grew out of the ideas of the French Surrealist Raymond Queneau, who started Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle or Oulipo.

The Art in Context Center for Communications <www.artincontext.com> is a nonprofit on-line reference library supported by the New York State Council of the Arts and other sponsors. It contains information on galleries, dealers, past exhibitions, and images for the works of thousands of artists. Visitors may search by many methods, but we suggest searching by artist, rather than by subject heading.

Literary Reviews

Arts & Letters Daily <http://www.cybereditions.com/aldaily> A portal site organized and selected for intelligent readers, directing us to information about books, authors, and commentary worth reading; nothing flashy or 'entertaining' here, thank goodness.

The Barcelona Review <www.web-show.com/Barcelona/Review>, Jill Adams, Editor. A fine, multi-lingual offering published in Catalonia by a multi-national group. Intelligent editing; interesting reading.

The Cortland Review <http://www.cortlandreview> Established in 1997, this publication offers such poets as Charles Simic, Robert Pinsky, Henry Taylor, Mark Doty, Robert Creeley, Mark Jarman, Lloyd Schwartz, Neal Bowers, R.T. Smith, John Kinsella, and others. All poetry and most fiction appear in real audio format. They publish in February, May, August, and November, with Monthly Features in the off-months.

Jacket <http://www.jacket.zip.com.au> was founded and is edited by John Tranter, an interesting Australian poet. "For more than thirty years he has been at the forefront of the new poetry, questioning and extending its procedures," according to his biographical note. His own work has been published widely and deeply; and in this quarterly literary journal he publishes the work of other writers generously.

London Review of Books <http://www.lrb.co.uk> One of the few reviews we read cover to cover; published on paper every two weeks and worth subscribing to. The on-line edition offers a generous selection, including a review by Iain Sinclair of James Sallis <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v21/n06/sinc2106.htm>, a writer we've admired for some years. Among his talents are his translations of Raymond Queneau.

The Richmond Review <www.demon.co.uk/review/> received approving notice (along with Archipelago) in the *TLS* last year. The founding editor, Steven Kelly, "lives and breathes" literature as an editorial consultant for various English publishers. He set up this site in October 1995, "when it was the UK's first lit mag to appear exclusively on the World Wide Web." Published ten times a year.

Media

Radio B92 On-line <http://www.opennet.org/> Broadcast from Belgrade; available on-line at the time we published this issue. This radio station was shut down by Milosevic when the bombing began, but continues broadcasting on the web.