This Moonlit
and
Dream-Visited World

Alfred Schwaid
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Obscure Publications – 2009
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Two of the stories in this collection previously appeared in these periodicals:

Every Doctrine of the Heart – Cream City Review; and
Just You Just Me – Orpheus Grid.

Derek Pell designed the cover.

First Edition

OBSCURE PUBLICATIONS
Paul Rosheim, Series Editor
307 River Street, Apt. 18
Black River Falls, Wisconsin 54615

"Watch Out for Obscure Publications"
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EVERY DOCTRINE OF THE HEART

The tone of a Selmer saxophone is thought by most players to be superior to any other. There are no two players whose tones are alike. Many players have been influenced by just a few others and attempt to sound like them. Sounds are particularly developed. Within a few minutes of its birth a mother knows the sound of her own child crying, can distinguish it from others. Can an art restorer ever reproduce the correct hue or tint? Can anything human be alien to me? A mother holds her baby in her left arm to be nearer her heart: heart to heart. A mother held a baby through the final night of its life. We are like and unlike our mothers. Mothers have killed their babies for various reasons: some reasonable, some not.

“I’m surprised at you, at your age, to be wasting your time this way.”

An old woman with a wen on her nose looked out a window. An old woman with one eye looked also. A young woman pushed a stroller down the street; a mylar balloon was tied to it.

“I used to walk down the street like that, pushing a stroller.”
The young woman heard a saxophone. A baby responds positively to a smiling face. A baby will respond to the semblance of a face, a circle with dots for eyes.

Someone was playing on a roof, a driving sound, rolling locomotor persistence. Dead babies have been found in dumpsters, air shafts and garbage compactors. A baby will respond to schematic representations of affection or rejection, smiling or scowling curved lines. There is no difference in sound between a Selmer and, say, a Conn saxophone.

"I started out on a Conn and stuck with it for a long time, but, I won’t lie, I always wanted a Selmer."

Look at every Madonna and Child and notice in what arm the child is held. In some paintings the child looks like nothing so much as a small man. In some sculptures a door opens up in the stomach and the child can be seen inside.

The saxophone was a tenor; the player leaned against a parapet, playing to fleecy clouds. Putti were a painter’s device to depict souls, they were bodiless infants, heads with wings, usually hovering around clouds. The moon has been seen as silvery as that mylar balloon.

The Venus of Lespugue should more properly be called the Virgin of Lespugue but the Venus of Willendorf is sinister. Neither of them has a face. How close is pity to love? The appeal of an infant’s smile is said to have had survival value. Still, infanticide has always been acceptable.

She remembered the song he was playing: the baby was crying in the next room: she retrieved another day by listening to it. She couldn’t think of the song’s name though. There is no more human depiction of Christ than Velásquez’s. "Without a Song": she had heard it long ago; her mother used to listen to it: it was one of her treasured memories. There was a line in it that
said the day would never end. That day never ended. Something came close to her thoughts and she shivered.

"In high school we had these plastic horns. With the whole band playing they sounded fine, but other than that they sounded like a shriek."

He played there all day, at night he would still be playing. The clouds changed shape many times during that time, and formed into many different images. A song can get into your head and settle there, like a disease; no matter how many he played she seemed to hear only the one. The infant cried and the tenor saxophone played it an obbligato. A mother's eyes... lips smile benignly. The old women made tea and heard the kettle whistle. There are as many as seventeen separate breasts on the Diana of Ephesus.

She sat at the window and listened. The baby was not even old enough to crawl but she already had window guards installed. King Pleasure sang that he felt "as giddy as a little one on a swing." How close is sorrow to love? Even the sound of each of the Four Brothers is not the same. He played the tenor saxophone and listened to the baby screaming. There are outcroppings on the ceilings of caves that resemble Diana of Ephesus' breasts.

One of the old women mentioned to the other that she was disturbed by the sound of a baby crying.

"Lately I hear it more and more."

It was in the building but shouldn't have bothered her; her hearing was declining. The other old woman hardly heard it. The young woman listened to the saxophone.

"My children are all dead. There were three that I buried."

Night held a child on her knees. Sunny days find us on swings. During the day when it was hot he went up on the roof
to practice. A skywriter went by and kept writing, The Horn, The Horn, The Horn . . . . The saxophonist was attempting to deform the work of his predecessors. The skywriter wrote in a substance similar to clouds. Who hasn’t sat on night’s lap? She thought the world of her child and never left it alone for a minute anywhere where it might be stolen.

“I had a son who left me one day, to join the marines, she said, and I never heard from him since. He must be alive or they’d’ve notified me.”

“How long ago was that?”

“Years and years.”

“Then he might have died somewhere else with no one to tell you about it.”

“What’s that song he’s playing?”

“I once had two eyes, now one’s clouded over. There’s that baby again.”

“I once heard perfectly well.”

They sipped tea, those two, and heard and saw a few things. The saxophonist tapped his foot on the roof. The young woman had her baby, but dreams and memories besides. Her husband was gone forever. An old story: he had been leaving places long before he left her. Many babies have been killed because they cried too much. She listened to “Without a Song” and realized that he was playing it differently than she had ever heard it before. Pigeons flew onto the roof; they were not strangers there, their coop was waiting for them. He altered the notes in the song to tell his own story but she responded to it anyway; there were some things different but they only made the similarities more telling.

“Do you hear the music?”

“Yes, but not so clear anymore.”
"But the crying baby?"
"I remember it as if it were yesterday."
The young woman had no one to talk to. She could alter her baby’s cries though and make them sound like words. The baby’s crying was to her, a conversation.

It was possible to lose his way while he played, to ride his horn from crest to troughs, sudden changes up or down, or run with meandering currents back and forth. Sometimes he used the baby’s crying as a landmark. He scooped out holes in her memory and his own and they looked through them. Imagine a baby one minute crying and the next stuffed into a garbage bag.

"I’d’ve given most of my life for my son to come home."
"I had my children till they died. I once thought it was wrong for them to die before me."
"Do you notice that that song is both happy and sad?"

He knew it while he played: he made one suit the other. The young woman hummed the actual melody, she made it fit her mood.

From his roof he could see the river and he adjusted his playing to conform to its flow. He knew much better where he was and where he was going, but he didn’t, in fact, know the value of either direction.

"You see them bury your children and you ask, Why am I still here?"

"But you still want to live."
"That goes without saying."

She wondered what he was like. "I could ask him in when he finishes playing. But with a baby crying all the time... oh, no." It was better to remember anyway. Not so long ago she was a child herself. "This is a long way from my real home." And her mother sang such a song. "She loved that very song." The
baby heard it too but what difference did it make? Silence is as
good as music. Other times were a long way off.

“We used to have a piano that my mother played.”

“We were none of us musical. Sometimes, he plays so
sweetly.”

“We’d have little parties or get-togethers and listen to
music. There must’ve been babies crying but I never noticed it.”

His foot kept time, it issued commands to the song but
without it this time was meaningless, just tapping on the roof.
It’s likely that none of them would have paid much attention to
that. But it was there all right, and a baby’s crying was there.

He was six stories up from the ground; people on the street
heard him and looked around. The young woman mused at her
window, just beneath him. Her window was open and he heard
her baby crying but it could not interfere with his playing.

“I had a Conn with an engraving of a nude woman on it, an
old Conn. I saw a guy playing a saxophone, Strike Up the Band,
and I knew that that’s what I wanted to do.”

“You’re lucky, though, in a way: your son might still be
alive; I know that all mine are dead.”

“Yes, and don’t you think he might come back at any time?
I always think that.”

Is there blood any brighter than in Goya’s painting, Saturn
Devouring One of His Children?

“I know he will. Listen, where there’s life there’s hope.”

Goya’s is one of the names we remember; he is immortal,
so to speak. This saxophone player plays into the air, but
vehemently enough to garner some attention away from a crying
baby. Sun glints off his horn.

If the baby would sleep she might forget it for awhile. She
might steal away. There was someone playing a song on the
roof. He pressed the keys, depressed and released pads, whispered breathed through his mouthpiece, lengthened or shortened a column of air, spewed out what he had sucked in.

"We didn’t always see eye to eye."
"Mine all had minds of their own too. If your son did die in the marines he at least achieved glory."
"And peace too, I hope."
"Where are you going?" "To the roof." "Why?" "To see who is playing." "You can hear very well from here." "I want to see who is there."

There are several ways to play every song: there is freedom of time and mood, melody and harmonics: bitterly or sweetly. In the end the only purpose is to string tones from silence to silence, then go back and forth on them in varying directions. When he played he either kept his eyes tightly closed or watched the clouds. A very faint quarter moon was there too. The baby’s cries struck off one of his notes more than once.

"My mother sang with that same tremolo in her voice. She held me sometimes and her fingers sank into my flesh."

There are acceptable punishments for children who are old enough to understand them. Arbitrary punishment is only beneficial to the punisher. We run to the mother for succor. Everything, though, depends upon images: images produce trust or the lack of it. If that marine was killed, it’s likely he called for his mother at the end.

"Sometimes I think he’s married somewhere and has children of his own, and I have grandchildren I don’t know."
"Soon I’ll be totally deaf, and then what sounds will I remember more than my children crying?"
"The Selmer action is superior, the keys flick to your touch. I can make runs on this horn much easier than before."
Goya, who could paint a shriek better than anybody, called his home the "House of the Deaf Man."

"And I'll be totally blind and my sight will have to travel backwards to see anything; then my son should be here again."

She had been up on the roof before, several times; clouds never came down that close but the sky did seem nearer. Before the baby was born she used to sit there waiting. If she went out of the room the baby became apprehensive and stopped crying. When her mother used to sing there was a timbre in her voice that terrified her now to remember; a patina of sorts that was only sad but that frightened her. He could reproduce that sound at times, but subtly so that she could only guess at hearing it. He folded the melody away inside his own thoughts and ran it out differently; she had to listen carefully to catch it. She had to listen to her baby crying, too.

"I practiced till my teeth dug a hole in my lip. There was something about that man's fingers on the mother-of-pearl keys that tricked me. He virtually kidnapped me, struck a spark that started me off. I listened to other players more carefully than to him but he was the one who certainly started me.

Babies have been sent tumbling down air shafts. Just a nearer brush with oblivion; someone's nerves growing a little thinner.

"Goodbye and good luck, I said, but I spent years waiting for just a word from him."

"Her husband's gone; mine died before my last child did."

"My son . . . . What kind of mother would not miss you and want you back? Sometimes I imagine there's a knock on the door, and it's him, and he spreads out his arms and I hold him and we cry and cry and cry."

"I think that baby's stopped crying."

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He could have practiced inside where he would have been heard most clearly by those in the building. People a block or two away heard him. Old papers in the wind accompanied him, sailed away with his sound, yesterday’s news and today’s.

“If he dies today, we will have heard him.”

There was a hush when the baby stopped crying, and the saxophone came in everywhere. A few blocks away in any direction and he could no longer be heard: there was a temptation to get too close or too far.

“I don’t even remember the name of that first saxophonist but he’d here with me now when I play.”

He could expect that someone would remember him. It formed part of the drive to play, the desire to be remembered, not just to dissolve in wet earth.

“A little vinegar on a cloth can sometimes stop a baby from crying.”

“I always let mine cry as long and as loud as he wanted.”

“You can pick them up; that sometimes helps. My husband worried when they cried but I told him it was healthy for their lungs.”

People stopped on the street and inquired of each other where they were going. What song was he playing? He noticed the baby had stopped crying. “Its mouth has been stopped up.” He never noticed the waning day, light filtering away into grittiness. He imagined a loamy substance attempting to gain access to his mouth, still he played.

“What song will he play tomorrow? I’ll still be here at this window. My mother went ahead and died but sometimes I think I can still talk to her.”
JUST YOU JUST ME: MIXED MEDIA

Blow Mr. Dexter; Dexter’s Deck; Dexter’s Cuttin’ Out; Dexter’s Riff; Dexter Digs In; Long Tall Dexter; Dexter Rides Again; Dexter’s Minor Mad; Dexter’s Mood; Dextrose; Dextivity.

The living museum. Emulsion. The trough of a wave in vitreous. My grandfather told me about the Norns, then later when I questioned him, I found he had forgotten them. Picture this photograph: a Siamese twin stuffed into a formaldehyde filled glass jar, two arms, two legs, two heads.

Now we can speak freely of Dasein. It has been brought to my attention that the opening to “Stardust” is almost a twin to Louis Armstrong’s solo line at measure 25 of “Potato Head Blues.” Urine, semen and hare’s blood, these have been used as colors.

Bolton Landing has yet to be discovered: Chaim Soutine, a cigarette dangling from his crass cherubic face, is eviscerating a chicken on canvas. I once found a dead chimpanzee in a burlap sack, in an area that is now an apartment house complex. Piet Mondrian’s New York studio has been reproduced.

In a vitrine. A reproduction of a dodo. A grotesque apparition that I was sure never existed. Try to imagine a shape
that does not exist, or a color. He considered his drawings finished works, and signed them.

My grandfather used to speak of the fjords, but that was long ago. Streaked out from the sun, like the cables of Brooklyn Bridge. Newels and banisters, some painted white, some a matte black. Movin' with Lester; Lester Smooths It Out. Elegant, classical and raw at the same time, like Deborah Butterfield's horses.

Feathers were flying every which way and it was plain we were speaking different languages. In at least one or two instances I was left-handed by choice. Buttercups tempt me. The differences between the spoor of the black-tailed and white-tailed deer. Taxidermy was probably the first art form. Our ancestors were Vikings, he once told me, and all had slaves. Some of them, though, were just farmers who died in Greenland.

In Walked Bud. The East and West settlements were on the same coast. The dates of the Classical period have been amended. The Ivory Coast, just the name brings back memories we no longer share. Millions of passenger pigeons darkened the sky and we brought them down with clubs.

Moody's Mood, King Pleasure, Parker's Mood. Velvet light: titles come later. "Is this a painting?" Just before the wall collapsed I caught a glimpse of a mural by Ad Reinhardt that had been hidden for over fifty years. It hung, revealed for an instant, then, a veil of dust, it fell like confetti. Suspended in air on a ground of unsupported plaster.

An installation of broken florescent light bulbs, odors, macramé and powdered wigs. For sitting shiva plastic milk crates. I imagine, would not suit the purpose. I was fascinated by punt guns. Being in the world.
Little Willie Leaps. What with the Williamsburg Bridge, Manhattan Bridge and Brooklyn Bridge, what need would there be for Brooklyn ferry? But not so cold as the waters of the Seine. Reinhardt pushed austerity to a frenzy. My grandfather claimed that our ancestors were raiders on the Volga. He also insisted on the authenticity of the Kensington Stone.

Lavender Mist. A mannequin's arm extended out from a bathtub filled with feathers. Ready to hand. There is another dimension. According to de Kooning, flesh is the reason that oil paint was invented. Mauve and rose madder for gangrene and blood.

Haloes seen around streetlights are a sign of imminent glaucoma. How many tunes have evolved from the changes of "Indiana"? Sippin' at Bells. Seagulls covered the mountains of garbage and colored them white. In the 11th century someone with our name was killed in the fight with the Skrælings.

Sven Coolson never really existed. You have to start with an image. Two prostitutes, for instance, waiting for their physical examinations, or the simple cross that Reinhardt painted for Thomas Merton. You have to believe that there are significant reasons. Calving glaciers.

A suitcase filled with thousands of prints of the same photograph spills out onto a bed. The forger of the Vineland Map used paper that is a thousand years old. Blue Poles, for example. I found in time that I could not relate to anyplace else but where I was. Marc Chagall felt differently. A discussion of light can leave you in stitches.

Stan Cools One. The sound. Being-in-the-world over and over and over. De Kooning on the Staten Island ferry with an unidentified person, wears what appears to be a gray fedora. The three grades of light are natural, artificial and imagined. The
canon divides the face into its proper proportions: I came upon it too late for it to be of any benefit to me.

Everything must happen. Sonny Stitt switched to tenor because he sounded too much like Charlie Parker on alto. A beautiful boy is chosen; his saliva is miraculous.

Lester Leaps In. Pity. I made several drawings after Oakly's sculptured lions. The American Museum of Natural History comes to mind. I, too, never had the natural awkwardness of a child. Sophistication has the truer simplicity. Again: that's all you can say about some ceremonies: again and again.

Rust, glass and pillowcases: dimensions variable. I once held a pistol in my hand, but put it back in my drawer where it remains. Interminable confusion. Ultima Thule is there. Don't tell me. I know. Fat Girl.

Chestnut trees snared the sun. Harsh and shining as mica. Laughing laughing laughing. Acid green patina. It looked like a treehouse but it was filled with the richness of a bowerbird’s nest. To die in Oregon.

Long Island Sound: Stan Getz and the closest thing to a fjord I would see. Fifty Swedes walked through the weeds at the battle of Copenhagen: my grandfather, in his cups, used to sing that. Now we would normally say, shitfaced. A sulphur whale was suspended from the ceiling.

A punt gun, fired into a flock of waterfowl, could bring down fifty at a time. Some of Marc Chagall’s people were able to fly. Picasso made the bull’s balls the same size as his head. Morning glories are pixies’ trumpets. Blue Lester. Jump, Lester, Jump.

Leo’s Bells. TV sets are bolted together to form a simulacrum of the Eiffel Tower. How many tunes have evolved from the changes of “Cherokee”? A bittern flew. The wind
stopped. We stood on line for hours in the freezing cold, and an icy rain began to fall.

My grandfather understood runes, and taught them to me, but Ernest Dowson read on a rune of roses. A nacreous moon. On at least one of the TV screens a child is blowing a bubble pipe.

Some Native Americans' bare buttocks were covered over on a mural in a U.S. post office because a postal worker somehow felt threatened by them. My grandfather insisted that the Newport Tower in Rhode Island was built in the 11th century by Norsemen but Samuel Eliot Morison strongly disputed it. Silver gelatin print. Before metal tubes, oil paint was packaged in pigs' scrotums. The scrotum was pierced with a knife to get at the paint and couldn't be conveniently closed again. The invention of metal tubes, flat brushes and lightfast colors were all necessary before impressionism could arrive.

Only Ginnungagap was. How far north do wild grape vines grow? Red, orange and yellow: leaves. Dasein is necessarily everywhere. I am here. The Inuit arrived in Greenland about the same time as my ancestors.

Selmer Conn Martin King Yamaha. How many tunes have evolved from the changes of "I Got Rhythm"? When you are taught to draw you begin with what you are truly after and must regain it. Diorama: the Kodiak or brown bear is the largest member of the bear family. Are they haystacks or wheatstacks or grainstacks or stacks of hay? Monet didn't know himself apparently.


The waters of the Connecticut are mauve. The blues in
three. Cézanne seated in front of his bathers. Contour eludes me, he said. My grandfather told me of the nekke, who are half human and half fish. Margaret Fuller washed up on Fire Island. Prepared birdskins with cotton for eyes placed side by side in glass display cases are fascinating in themselves.

Brownie Speaks. Lou’s Blues. Simba. She. The same for “All The Things You are.” The Viking ship with serpent prow was not used for voyages to Vineland. The ship used was the knorr, a squat deep drafted merchant vessel. They steered by polarized light. The Viking ship seen off Yucatan was reportedly the source of the plumed serpent.

At Phil Turetsky’s house. Live at the Hague. Collection of the artist. The glass snake was thought to break into pieces.

I Remember Clifford.

Should a memorial be abstract, or what? What is enough. Or it doesn’t matter. Dust rising up through sunbeams.

My grandfather never learnt to read English. I used to read each day to him. His favorite author was Snorri Sturluson. He particularly relished the kenning. Academic drawing instruction manuals lead you from the simplest forms to the most complex. Purple, yellow and green: irises. It is essential to forget everything you have learned.

And more. In the rain. In the rai. In the ra. In the r. In the. In th. In t. In. I.
SEASONS SHALL NOT CEASE FOR YOU

Sarah crushed a petal in her hand. Can we ever construct a rose from its perfume?
“Sarah—are you awake?”
“No, not yet.”

From my window I can see where I buried my dog in a corner of the garden. Lilacs bloomed. There were ravens. My dog barked and chased away children who were playing. She had dug up a pottery shard—she still has it—and placed the dog in his grave.

A farmer filled out the clothes of a scarecrow with straw, set it on a stick and raised it in his cornfield. In the spring, when he plowed, she followed behind him and picked up the arrowheads he uncovered.

“Do you want to sleep forever?”

Marigolds grew in a depression over the grave. I left a mound of fresh earth. The scarecrow rots in the sun, the rain rains on it. She used to sleepwalk. My feet, my hands and my face touched darkness that parted. She remembered waking up with fresh dew on the hem of her nightgown. Lightning opened the night, the scarecrow revealed for a moment, hanging there.
She used to sprinkle dried rose petals in her drawer. She touches its perfume. The children now came as they pleased, and stepped on his grave in their games. There was nothing there any longer for them to be afraid of.

Once he unearthed a bannerstone that bent one of the blades of his harrow. The ravens come, in time, to disregard the scarecrow. She remembers seeing a picture where it was impossible to tell if the ravens were approaching or leaving a cornfield.

After so many years there were still shaped stones to be dug up. Moving past the hands that made and used them, they worked their way to the surface like shrapnel through flesh.

She loved old things. Lace curtains flowed in with the wind. The dog is barking, and the children scatter. I walked with the purpose of sleep. Once they found her outside and shook her awake.

A rabbit broke across the path of his tractor. He watched its zigzagged bounce run across the furrows. A cottontail. The corn and the scarecrow were not there yet.

"Time to come down, now."

Her dog would have chased the rabbit to exhaustion. One summer night someone had set fire to the scarecrow. I felt the newly plowed ground under my bare feet, and knelt every now and then for a piece of flint centuries old, some much older, projectile points emerged from the earth. I have a box of them and used to handle them often.

The straw glowed and flew away in sparks. The scarecrow writhed and it was a wonder to see it was mute. Everyone who could came to watch it burn. More than one of us still in their nightclothes.
In his mind’s eye he raised a shotgun to his shoulder leveling it at the rabbit, leading it slightly as it ran. Sarah runs to the window and sees her dog bleeding, a hunter standing over it wondering how he could have mistaken it for a rabbit. One son of a bitch once shot one of my cows for a deer, the farmer remembers.

The scent of lilacs is one of the old things she loved. She held their flower clustered stems to her face. My hands are empty. Once they had tried locking her door at night, and found she had climbed down a tree that reached to her window. The flames reflected in her face.

I used to pick corn and bite into it for its sweetness.

“I’m coming.”

“Well, hurry on up then. I can’t wait all day with your breakfast.”

One of the stones had an engraving of a bird scratched onto it. A bird that I cannot identify; maybe it was not made around here but traded for from a distant place. A dog’s bark now can cause her to tremble. The children ran in fear from it, but when they were at a safe distance they laughed.

It was obvious that the lightning had set fire to the scarecrow. “Wasn’t worth a damn anyway, I guess.” But he put up a new one the next day. I felt warmth from the flames.

The corn grew above her head. The moon and her nightgown were white. Pottery shards were rarer, but she found them, too. Things that were hard lasted down through the years. He rode high up on his tractor’s seat, rising and lowering on its springs, the soil sifted and turned underneath him.

“Walk around all night and can’t get out of bed in the morning.”
The rose petal felt like velvet; crushed, and she smelled its perfume on her fingers and later when it lingered in the air. I once tried to fit together the broken pieces of a clay pot but found that I hadn’t enough of them. She once suspected that the ravens could talk to her. They were alert for a few days to the new scarecrow, but soon got used to that one, too.

He plowed up stones and she followed after, picking them up. One of the stones was white, round as a pearl. She kept it with her arrowheads. Ravens can be taught to speak. They called them carrion crows. I watched the North Star from my window at night, and when I fell asleep, walked toward it.

“This your dog?” the hunter asked. “Peculiar it should jump out of the brush like that, just like a rabbit.”

The farmer suggested he shoot some ravens. “That way you’ll know for sure what you’re shootin at.” But the idea didn’t appeal to him.

The star is across a mountain. You come to it after walking for three days. Travelers crossed it, the bulk of them in the same direction. I have never been a great distance from my home. The tree she had climbed out on was an oak, and now towered high above the house.

“The dog’s here,” the farmer told him, and pointed up to her window where her face, mottled in leafy shadows, looked down at them.

“I’ll pay her for it, what it’s worth.”

It has no price. She buried it in the garden along with the stone with a bird scratched on it. The people who had brought that stone came through a notch in the mountain. Deer came at night to browse on the corn. She stood among them sometimes, touching them as the fed.
“I’ll be going to church soon. You’ll have to fix your own breakfast then.”

Sometimes the hunters went jacklighting, shooting deer at night, using a flashlight to transfix them; they remained immobile staring at it and were easily shot. Because of that I saw blood many times. Once one of them caught a glimpse of a white apparition in the cornfield and swore it was a ghost. One night the scarecrow was shot full of holes. There was blood in the furrows where he plowed.

“You just go when you want to.” And ask the minister why the Devil comes from the North Star. There was blood on my nightgown in the morning. Sarah touched the velvet covering their antlers, filled with veins that would soon dry and be rubbed off.

They were hunters, too, who made the flint tools she treasured. But that was long ago. On winter nights I smelled the odor of ice blown across the mountain. She knelt at the grave and could see, as if through the earth, the dog and the engraved stone there.

The dog’s name was Ginger. The hunter walked back through the fields and crossed a stream. It was hard to know what he thought. A hawk descends. The farmer doesn’t see it but he sees the raven scatter. She turned a ring on her finger. In the morning I looked for the daisy before any other flower.

The “day’s eye” she remembered it was called. The hawk struck down one of the ravens and carried it away. The farmer looks up but loses it in the sun. I came down to pick up a black feather.

The road to the town and church was not visible from her window. It was a while since she had been on it, and it seemed not even there. When the hunter crossed the stream he turned to
look back at the house. Like someone who wanted to remember the location of a place he intended to return to, he studied the direction he had come from. The farmer unearthed a copper pendant with the image of a bird etched on it, its body in the shape of an eye.

The dog's bones were polished white, coiled in the earth. The rose took shape from its fragrance. I hold a new rose in my hand. Its perfume is delicious; you can close your eyes and drown in it. The hunter wondered that she wouldn't come down. We would have given her anything she asked, and now his conscience bothered him. If she had accepted his money he would have felt forgiven.

I can see the copper from here, the same bird shape as the engraved stone. Maybe the stone was a model that an artist carried from place to place to reproduce as a decorative motif. The farmer, though, from his high seat, could see the church steeple. Voices were singing. Some of the children shouted up to her but she avoided going to the window when they were there.

The hunter watched from across the stream. She was already burying the dog. There was absolutely nothing, he knew, he could do. There was something hideous for the farmer to see his own clothes burning, even though he had discarded them to be worn by a scarecrow.

I filled in the earth with my hands; the mound grew to the size of my dog; the dog now where the earth had been. There had been an exchange. When the farmer harvested the corn he caught sight of dried blood on the husks.

There were cars parked, virtually ringing the church. The ravens made a wide circle around its steeple and returned to the edge of the field. The hunter fired at them but they were too far away. Then he shouldered his gun and turned for home. A straw
man was burning. The dark sky was radiant with flame. Someone shook her awake and she ran. The farmer saw something of himself burning, charred and shredded away.

I can see them but they can’t see me. I used to reassure myself with that thought. The hunter was wet from the stream. The more he thought the more he wanted to bring her something, but it wasn’t likely, he knew, he would be back that way soon. She could hear faint voices singing from the church.

I will go downstairs now and eat. The farmer was in the garden. There were herbs and a pear tree. He knew she was watching him but for what purpose he never could tell. Damn fool hunter, like to shoot us all, he thought. He sometimes thought he was protecting her, but how or why that should be he didn’t know.

She knelt down to pick up her dog and blood stayed where she lifted him up. She walked with him dripping to the spot in the garden where his grave would be. There was lightning then rain. As constant as it was the position of the North Star was changing.

The flint she picked up was chipped to a sharpness that could cut and penetrate. Once she found an eccentric flint, an object not made for any practical use, but shaped into an unusual design for no other reason than that it was pleasing to its maker. Sometimes he saw her footprints in his cornfield. If he found something she had missed he picked it up for her.

She imagined what prayers they were saying in church. Each spring he puts up a new scarecrow. At first I used to look at them and think it was him because I recognized the clothes. My dog ran up to the scarecrow and barked. A raven came one day and pecked at its grave. The children came, and scared it away.
It was a drought year and the corn itself seemed to be burning. The farmer hoped they were praying for rain. Inside the church it was hot. The sunlight was hard and palpable. The minister asked God to give them rain, and wished he could do more. She felt the scent of a rose taking shape and forming a petal.

The people who made the pottery and flint must be buried nearby. There were mounds but no human remains had ever been found. The first night she found herself walking outside after going to sleep she pretended she was dreaming, to alleviate her fear. But little by little she got used to it, and expected it.

My dog is sleeping and so am I. Light is not necessary to see. She walked out onto the oak tree and climbed down. The farmer was dreaming of cornfields; they grew higher and higher and spread wider and wider, and rustled sharply at his window, sharply enough to wake him, and he looked out and saw burning. The minister saw it from his study and came running out.

There seemed more flame than material to burn. I was walking towards the brightness, and sleeping. The minister drove across the stream to the cornfield. The farmer was already there. They saw two figures in flames, one moving slowly, the other still. She was moving, and quiet; the scarecrow was still, and tumultuous. It was their waking her that caused her to remember that she and the scarecrow were burning and then it had rained. By that time the field was full of people.

The ravens circled a burnt out and blackened pyre. That day there were no prayers for rain. I was awake and I screamed and screamed and screamed.

Her nightgown caught on fire and they forced her to the earth and rolled her until it was out. It was years later that a man
came looking for her. When he found she was gone he stopped in the garden and carved on a stone the image of a bird, and left it there.
Are we not driving in the rain with broken windshield wipers? For instance: if there are voids in the universe then dark energy does not exist; for instance: as the past recedes the varnish on old paintings darkens, and verdigris, which we call patina, forms on bronze sculpture. At Angkor Wat the banyan trees have grown into the ruins, tendriling the stone in a fleshy embrace, a palpable life pulsates through them and the hard structures are softened into a spirituality truer than that intended by their builders. In a similar way Coleman Hawkins digging deep into the harmonics of “Body and Soul” came up with its true version, not the one created by its composer; choosing a different sequence of tones from the same progression of chords Hawkins cracked open the clay to reveal the geode. This was not randomness, not the I Ching, not the accidental intrusion of fortuitous sounds but the logic, the balance, the precision brought by a great artist to beauty. It was his intention made pure. Coleman Hawkins’ version of “Body and Soul” is personalized by its exactitude, is his alone, and for this reason can be played by no one else. On the other hand the stylistic convention of distinguishing paintings of holy persons with haloes derived from the Roman practice of placing discs on the
heads of statutes of the gods to protect their faces from pigeon droppings. Can we travel on one road and arrive at its end at two different destinations? Is a synthesis of objectives possible?

One night, luckily forsaken by time, at false dawn just before sunrise I stood outside Mary’s window and threw pebbles at it to wake her. She never appeared; years later standing outside the house again, where she no longer lived, I realized that I had been at the wrong window. Knowing at the time as well as I did the interior configuration of the house it seemed impossible that that was the wrong window but remembering what I had seen while in her room of the outside through the window it was impossible that it was the right window.

For instance: the harmonic rhythm of each cord during the bridge of “Anthropology” is two measures; for instance: the banyan trees of Angkor Wat have, as Emerson understood the poet’s function, reattached things to the whole.

Thomas Hovenden’s “Breaking Home Ties” painted in 1890 is certainly a precursor of Norman Rockwell’s art. Rockwell’s permutations from it were, until his death, endless.

Throwing pebbles at someone’s window to wake them was something I had learned from the movies and it never occurred to me that I might just as easily have broken the window. I’m afraid that it still hasn’t. In 1939 Hawkins left Paris and returned to the U.S.A. and Decca released his version of “Body and Soul.” Only thirty years later Ornette Coleman composed “Skies of America.” I say “only” because over thirty years have passed since “Skies of America” and nothing else has been found, and we are dealing here with an art that will very shortly become a strange, as indecipherable as the Etruscan language. The road from Lulu White’s Mahogany Hall to Wynton Marsalis’ Lincoln Center has become as hardened and rutted as the Oregon Trail;
the mavericks who attempted to bypass it have since become trapped behind the portcullis of the university.

When you entered the house the stairs were on the right. You walked up the stairs and turned right, to the door to Mary’s room. Once through the door the window was directly in front of you, on what had to be the right side of the house. When I threw the pebbles it was at the window on the right side of the house, but it was the wrong window. I had been throwing pebbles at the window of the room occupied by James who was blind and who later on lost both legs by falling onto the Jamaica El train tracks. Mahogany Hall was a New Orleans whore house and gave its name to “Mahogany Hall Stomp,” first played when jazz was spelled jass. The jazz stomp is characterized by a rhythmic repetition pattern, the Woodland Indians stomp is characterized by antiphonal singing. “Mahogany Hall Stomp” was a standard of New Orleans, Dixieland and Chicago jazz. Jass was the term for what took place in the whore house. Walker Evans’ post office has had its second story removed and turned into an antiques store. Yellow, white and purple pansies. Hawkins saw and heard the tones as colors.

James was blind but like Benet’s phantom deer, all lost wild America was burning in his eyes. He was from Tuscaloosa, Alabama and before he was blind used to spend his nights dancing and sipping corn in Fat Brown’s juke joint. His room was opposite Mary’s and I used to see him in the hall. At first we did no more than say hello to each other. Our backgrounds were wholly different and he was not someone I would have thought I had anything in common with. I remember his looking at me as we said hello, and imagined him seeing me. Memory is made possible by the same molecule that causes mad cow disease.
There are those who live and those who lie in the ground. To Sholem Aleichem America was Ultima Thule, the final place. We ask for no more than another year of life.

I spent much of the time in Mary’s room watching TV, baseball (I’m a Mets fan) during the season, but mostly movies, Westerns—one of my favorites was “Winchester ‘73,” the story of an American rifle. “Red River” another favorite, the movie fictional life of the real cattle baron, Shanghai Pierce. But not just Westerns, some others too, like “Young Man with a Horn,” the movie fictional life based on the novel fictional life, and thus twice removed from the real life of the real Bix Beiderbecke. The sound track coming to James alone across the hall in his dark room. Harry James playing the trumpet, he knew, “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen,” the gospel song, he was playing. At times I would hear as I passed his room the sound of the Delta blues, a music I knew not too much about at the time, sometimes the urban blues of Bobby Blue Bland, which I knew even less about, and sometimes, the year was 1969, Otis Redding singing, “Sittin’ on the dock of the bay . . .”

All during the fall and winter I watched movies, mostly Westerns, but when spring came it was baseball until the end of summer. Opening day I was on my way up the stairs to Mary’s room to watch the game and came on James at his door his key in one hand, feeling with the other for the lock. He turned at my sound, the sounds of footsteps as unique to him as faces. “Think the Mets can win this year?” he asked. “I don’t know,” I answered. “About time though, ain’t it?” “Yeah, about time,” he said. I went into Mary’s room and turned on the TV; he into his and turned on the radio. I filled a glass with scotch and sat down on the bed to watch the game but after half an inning and half a glass of scotch something seemed wrong. It’s hard to watch a
baseball game in silence, without kibitzing, groaning or cheering. I turned off the TV, picked up the bottle, walked across the hall and knocked at his door.

"C'mon in, Al," he said. By the sound of my footsteps he could see through walls. I opened and closed the door behind me (entering his room for the first time). "I got some scotch," I said, "but don't like to drink alone. So I thought you might like a taste."

"Yeah, I know what you mean, the only time I drink is when I'm with somebody or when I'm alone," he said, laughed and got us two glasses and I poured. We drank and listened to the game that day. We kibitzed, groaned and cheered but spoke of nothing else but baseball.

Listening to the game on the radio I was able to experience it composed of mental images, without what are normally supposed to be objective evidence and certitude, and never, I found, was baseball so rich as when it was played inside your head. We imagined every play and freely indulged in solipsism. James' eyelids fluttered at each crack of the bat, and I discovered the sight that the blind live with free of our sensory duplicities.

Baseball is a game of finesse and dust. Mimosa tree blossoms filled the air. After the game was over it (I had heard Mary's door open and close some time ago) I stayed with James while we finished the scotch and discussed baseball of the past. Before the Mets had come to fill the void left by the Giants and Dodgers departure to the West Coast I had been a New York Giants fan and James a Brooklyn Dodgers fan. No greater, more bitter rivalry in sports has ever existed, but now we could quietly reminisce about it: the past had come to it and loosed it of every emotion, like an old worn stone wall whose mortar had
disintegrated, and what remained was no more nor less than a
memory, Jackie Robinson stealing home to beat the Giants,
Bobby Thomson’s playoff home run to beat the Dodgers,
moments that had lost the edge of competition, achieving the
patina that time gave to all true things, the inevitability of
something that was constant. Finality was not only acceptable it
was comforting. The mimosa blossoms white phasing into
alizarin and violet. Are we not looking at a sundial on a cloudy
day? For instance: Can astronomers really see into the past, are
our senses so bewildered that we see what no longer is there?
How is it that stars fell on Alabama if there was no Alabama
when they fell? The melodic possibilities of any sequence of
chords is endless, each tone a touchstone to another, to
memories, rearrangements of parts into a whole—listen to the
different takes of Charlie Parker’s “Parker’s Mood,” for
instance. For instance: what was once outside one window can
at some other time be outside another. Before you can penetrate
the harmonics you need to know how to run the changes. Can
we travel on two different roads and arrive at their ends at the
same destination?

This is a relation by means of conjuncture, conflation,
linking and intertwining: I leave this to be related by others
elsewhere.

Oddly enough there was a book in his room, The Rise and
Fall of the Third Reich, occasionally while we listened to the
game I’d open and look into it reading one or two pages and he
always knew. “Readin’ my book?” he asked the first time I did it
and at first I just nodded, then told him, “Yeah, just lookin’ at
it.” Whose book it actually was and how it got there I never
knew after hearing him call it “my book” I just couldn’t ask him,
and he never asked me what was in the book. Years later I
sometimes imagined him alone, legless and eyeless, holding the book open in his two hands, his sightless eyes straining to conjure its meaning. If you look at a straight stick standing half in and half out of the water you will see a bent stick. If you stand on a railroad track tie and look to the horizon you will see the parallel lines of the tracks converge. If you look at a round coin held in your hand and tilt it you will see an oblong coin. Monet has shown that not only time but light can disintegrate stone walls.

A white moth on the window screen. One night I shut my eyes and kept them closed all night listening to the game with James, as sightless as he. At first it was strange, disorienting, not just to be in the darkness, not to see, but there was the feeling that my body was gone, I could not see it and so could not experience it. I was not just bodiless but positionless, I seemed to be everywhere at once. Sounds did not just come to me, I came to them, was filled with them. I could think but sounds were my substance. I could “see,” though, a white image of the moth. When the game was over and I opened my eyes I looked at the screen; the moth was gone but I continued to see its afterimage. James’ hand holding a tissue came down sudden and hard on a table alongside me. He held it up and showed me the crushed moth, “Damn thing’s been flyin’ around all night,” he told me. By a trick of mental perception the moth’s image had deceived me and I had never heard it. In Norman Rockwell’s painting, “Thanksgiving,” the turkey is a savory rich golden brown that you can taste, ripe with succulent juices ready to exude at the bite. In John Currin’s painting, “Thanksgiving,” the turkey is as plump as can be but menacing, opalescent with a ghastly cadaverous pallor, the pinkish juices, watery blood, are visible on the plate. Do these paintings represent two different
visions? Not at all: they are the segments of a not yet attached collage—as a dream is the perfectly realized collage—each segment is uninhibited in its own way. They are the subjectivity of memory, and are believed as a mirror is believed. They are reflections in the patina.

To see, as Henry Hudson saw the white darkness coming down to enclose him (later imagined by Edgar Allan Poe in *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*) when cast adrift in Hudson’s Bay at the beginning of winter by the crew of his Halve Maen; to see as he previously seen the landscape of the island called by its Lenape inhabitants Manahatta, later imagined by following Europeans and Americans, was more than nearly what James saw as he listened to the radio announcer’s description of the game (the announcer at the time Bob Murphy, who spoke of announcing a ballgame as “painting a word picture”) is what I knew to be there when I saw his eyelids flutter. The white moth overreached its form and expanded to a white darkness. The primary colors of pigment are red, yellow and blue; the primary colors of light are red, green and blue. I once told that to someone and he asked me, “Then where does green come from?” Who really knows? There are naturally occurring combinations of complementary colors or simultaneous contrast: red and green, yellow and purple, and (rarer, I think than the others) orange and blue. Kandinsky heard music when he saw colors. Musicians with perfect pitch say they see musical tones as colors. For years tenor saxophonists would not play “Body and Soul” fearing comparison with Coleman Hawkins’ version. Sonny Stitt and Zoot Sims did play it shortly before they died. Technically, white and black are complementary colors.

“Big Road Blues—this here’s by Charley Patton. I got two other versions, one by Tommy Johnson and another by Willie
Brown,“ James told me. The game over he put on a record. “There are dozens of other versions and except for the opening stanza they’re all different—not just the words, even the tunes and instrumental parts are different. But even the differences are not necessarily original, or even personal experiences, though they can be and sometimes are but most are taken from a great many traditional lines, stanzas, vocal melodies and instrumental parts that the blues singer knows. The originality is in the combinations. To sing the blues you combine five or six of these stanzas with a tune and instrumental part. They don’t need to be closely related—they can even be inconsistent and contradictory.”

The blues song has a traditional core known as the core stanza. You keep adding things to it to make a new song. “If you travel only the roads that have road signs you’ll never understand or appreciate the way the blues are made, and a few other things besides for that matter.”

He told me that those three: Charley Patton, Tommy Johnson and Willie Brown were from the Mississippi Delta town of Drew, nearby to Dockery’s Plantation where the blues were born.

Whenever I was in Mary’s room before James came home from his job I would wait for him to arrive, listening to the sound on the stairs of his cane, the tap, tap, tap of the telescopic metal cane such as the blind use instead of eyes when walking, tapping against objects as they go, giving them a more direct contact with the world. Their motion is attended by more of a solidity than that of the sighted, they pass through declivities, protuberances, around walls, angles, objects of all kinds, some not identified but always avoided, that others hardly notice. Each step is a calculation, everything must be touched and mentally processed (nothing exists before it is touched,
physically experienced and mentally processed), similarly to a saxophonist who hears sound through his jawbone transmitted by the vibrating reed directly into his brain without benefit of its passage through air, violinists too receive vibrations from the instruments under their chins, as Beethoven too, did by touching a reed held between his teeth to the keyboard to allow the tone's vibrations direct access to his brain. There is an extreme subjectivity of perception here, sound dependent on the size and density of the jawbone.

1969 was the year when the Mets won the World Series, going from probably the worst baseball team ever to the championship, and like all significant events it was attended by a myth (that I have since called the Cleon Jones myth), the myth that their season was turned around from its normal dismal course of defeat to its World Series glory on the day that manager Gil Hodges went out to right field where Cleon Jones had just played a ball without hustle or spirit but with a lackadaisical (what ballplayers call "doggin' it") defeatist approach that would have sent the Mets to another loss had not Hodges intervened: he ran out to right field, asked Jones if he was all right, if there might not be something physically bothering him and when Jones told him, No . . . I'm OK, Hodges took him out of the game and benched him, sending a message to the team that from that moment on turned the Mets season around. Myth or no that game changed something in myself and in James: for the rest of the season we had a different sense of ourselves as Mets fans, no longer underdogs to be beaten back, perennial losers; we were, game by game as the Mets kept winning, arriving at a baseball fans’ ultimate reward—we knew we were going to be winners.
Every day during the week James took the Jamaica El train to his job at a costume jewelry manufacturer in Brooklyn where he boxed the finished jewelry. It was dull repetitive work but his mind was on the blues and the Mets; while he worked he could hear Charley Patton singing “Stone Pony” or hear Bob Murphy announcing another Mets win. He would sit at a table arranging jewelry into cotton-lined cardboard boxes—brooches, necklaces, bracelets, earrings that he never saw but his fingers sensitive to their shapes, deftly packaged. Occasionally he brought me something to give to Mary that I left on her dresser for her to find when she came home after I had gone into James’ room.

Dell repetitive work was nothing new to him. In Alabama, he told me, he had worked in a furniture factory spray painting furniture that passed just above his head on moving racks, “That was tough work, and dangerous too, but better I thought than pickin’ cotton, like I used to . . . crawlin’ through, it seemed like, endless rows of cotton draggin’ a long white sack behind me in the hottest sun you could think of, fillin’ it up till it became almost a part of me. I’d think of the words to the song ‘That’s Your Red Wagon’ . . . ‘Keep on draggin’ your red wagon along.’ The best part of them days down south was Fat Brown’s after work, or you could just get yourself a mason jar of the corn whiskey he made around back and bring it home. But I don’t miss nothin’ else. The only time I went back I sat in the train baggage car two days with the body of my uncle they were bringin’ back south from Detroit to bury. I never left that coffin the whole time; they brought me my food and I ate it right there. I heard the train wheels, same as I still do on the A train or Jamaica El, like a little drum figure . . . paradiddle, paradiddle, parapiddle . . . . Once in a while I’d talk to him, sittin’ there the whole time talkin’ to a dead man, countin’ the towns by the
whistles. It was October and there were mists on the land—hazes, you know—but I never got to see it. I thought of the ‘Chattanooga Choo Choo’ and hummed that tune a lot, then I thought of the ‘A Train’ and hummed that one too. Everyone called my uncle Slim; he left when he was young and I didn’t know him real good; I was takin’ him home cause my mother asked me to. Some said we looked alike but I couldn’t see it; I favored my father’s side, I think. I got my interest in the blues from him; he was a musician, somewhat better than what they used to call a hamfat fiddle player down south, and could blow a jug too when he wasn’t drinkin’ out a one. I was sittin’ inside that train and wonderin’ what it looked like from the outside . . . passin’ towns and farms and people—not knowin’ I was there . . . rollin’ through the land from Detroit, alongside uncle Slim who was dead.”

As many times as I’ve listened to Charley Patton’s “Stone Pony” I’ve never been able to understand the words. I found the same to be true of most of the country blues that James played for me. There was a dialect or an articulation of speech that eluded me. But there was in it something that sang to a lost moment that could have happened differently or that could at least be remembered. James once asked me who I thought was the best ballplayer I had ever seen and I told him that without doubt it was Nebraska Crane. For instance: Norman Rockwell, and Andrew Wyeth too, have been vilified by most modern critics, who tend to misapply, or rather misunderstand, Arnold Schoenberg’s statement that, “If it is art it is not for all, and if it is for all, it is not art.” Are we not picking our way across a raging stream stepping from stone to stone, unable to turn around . . . seemingly by our motion attaching each stone to those behind it . . . imagining that they are connected. In
constructing his song the blues singer achieves a coherence from diverse elements by using the techniques of contrast and association. In the same way direction is relevant only to the sense of a percipient.

I once saw a photograph of Charley Patton, a print, made from a worn, damaged, scratched negative or plate, as enigmatic and as indistinct as a weathered petroglyph. Photograph literally means light writing.

He walked from the street up the El train station stairs counting each as he went. He knew how many steps there were and was confident. When he reached the top he tapped his way to the turnstile, once through it he knew to turn to the right where there was one more flight of stairs at the top of which was the station platform—once on the platform he turned to his right again, towards the track where his train would come in, and tapped his cane although he knew that his limit before the descent to the track was five steps, to the left he could only have gone three steps before the edge. There was always an incoming train that came in on the left track before his did on the right. He always knew when that train was coming because of the tremor of the El structure as it approached. At the fourth step his cane went down into nothingness and his foot did too, the cane falling through the ties—he heard it clatter on the street below, felt the El swaying with the weight and motion of an approaching train, tried to rise, and the train was on him rolling over his legs just below the knees. Are we not each dragging a long sack behind us putting what comes to hand into it? In “Young Man with a Horn”, a boy stands alone at night in the street listening to the music outside the doors of places where jazz was played that he could not enter. For instance: Avicenna imagined a man who was blind and deaf and suspended in the air, deprived of all the
physical senses and we wonder what might be the thoughts of that man.

I once thought about reading aloud to him from *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* but realized what an intrusion that would have been.

One night the boy is noticed by a trumpet player, Art Hazard, coming out of one of the clubs he had been playing in. There is a need in the boy that he senses; they talk and Art Hazard agrees to teach him to play trumpet. That’s not true to the actual life of Bix Beiderbecke but has a meaning beyond biographical data. What speaks to us here is less than myth but more than truth. Are we not imagining a synthesis in moments each as different as the snowflakes? For instance: although harmonically based on a standard blues pattern the separation of phrasing by rests in “Parker’s Mood” creates a melodic arrangement of balanced asymmetry.

That night I went into his room and listened alone to the ballgame.

Two days later I visited him at Mary Immaculate Hospital and brought a transistor radio; a TV was on in the room watched by another patient but I closed my eyes and listened to Bob Murphy paint a word picture of the game.

When he came home he had to be carried up to his room. I spoke with Maude, who owned the house, about having him moved to a room on the first floor so that in a wheelchair he could go outside, at least to the porch—there were stairs from the porch to the street. The first floor was where Maude lived, beside the bedroom there was a living room, dining room, kitchen and bathroom and obviously room for nothing more. She nodded and that satisfied our need. His cane had been recovered and returned to him. When I came into his room it was leaning
against the wall in a corner. I picked it up and held it. It seemed to have a vibrancy, a sensitivity, which you would not expect in an apparent inert object. I touched its tip to the floor and the floor had a new reality. He reached his hand out to me, I took it and then I handed him the cane. He telescope closed it into the size of a baton and placed it on his night table.

I’ve often wondered why I threw pebbles at James’ window and was sure it was Mary’s.

During the rest of the summer Mary cooked and brought our supper to his room then left us to listen to the game. In complete darkness—more real than being in the ballpark. The Mets played as if inspired and were relentless; inning followed inning with all the variation that is possible in a baseball game. After each game James would usually say, “See?—nothin’ could have happened differently. We’re gonna win it all this year, baby.”

Not quite yet. The night of game one of the World Series I walked up the stairs as I had done so many times that year; to the right and then to the left, knocked on his door and there was no answer. I tried it and it was locked. “James,” I called and waited for a response—“James,” I hollered, loud enough to be heard throughout the house. Mary was the only one home. She came out of her room. “James died, Al, last night; he had a stroke,” she said.

The scene in “Young Man with a Horn” when Harry James played “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen” was in church at the funeral of Art Hazard whose trumpet had been placed on the casket. The boy whom he had taught, now a man and a famous trumpet player picked up the horn and played. I always believed that in the movie, if not in the book, the preacher had said during the service that Art Hazard could now see and walk to Glory.
I remember that James rode down with the body of his uncle and wonder who rides down with him. For instance: "Red River Blues" is an example of a blues based on a traditional core concept. The core stanza is:

Which a way, which a way do the Red River run?
Which a way, which a way do the Red River run?
Well, some says east and some says west.
But I know, sweet mama, it run by the rising sun.

The variations thereafter are endless. What it means is always the same.
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This edition is limited to 60 copies.

This is number 6.

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