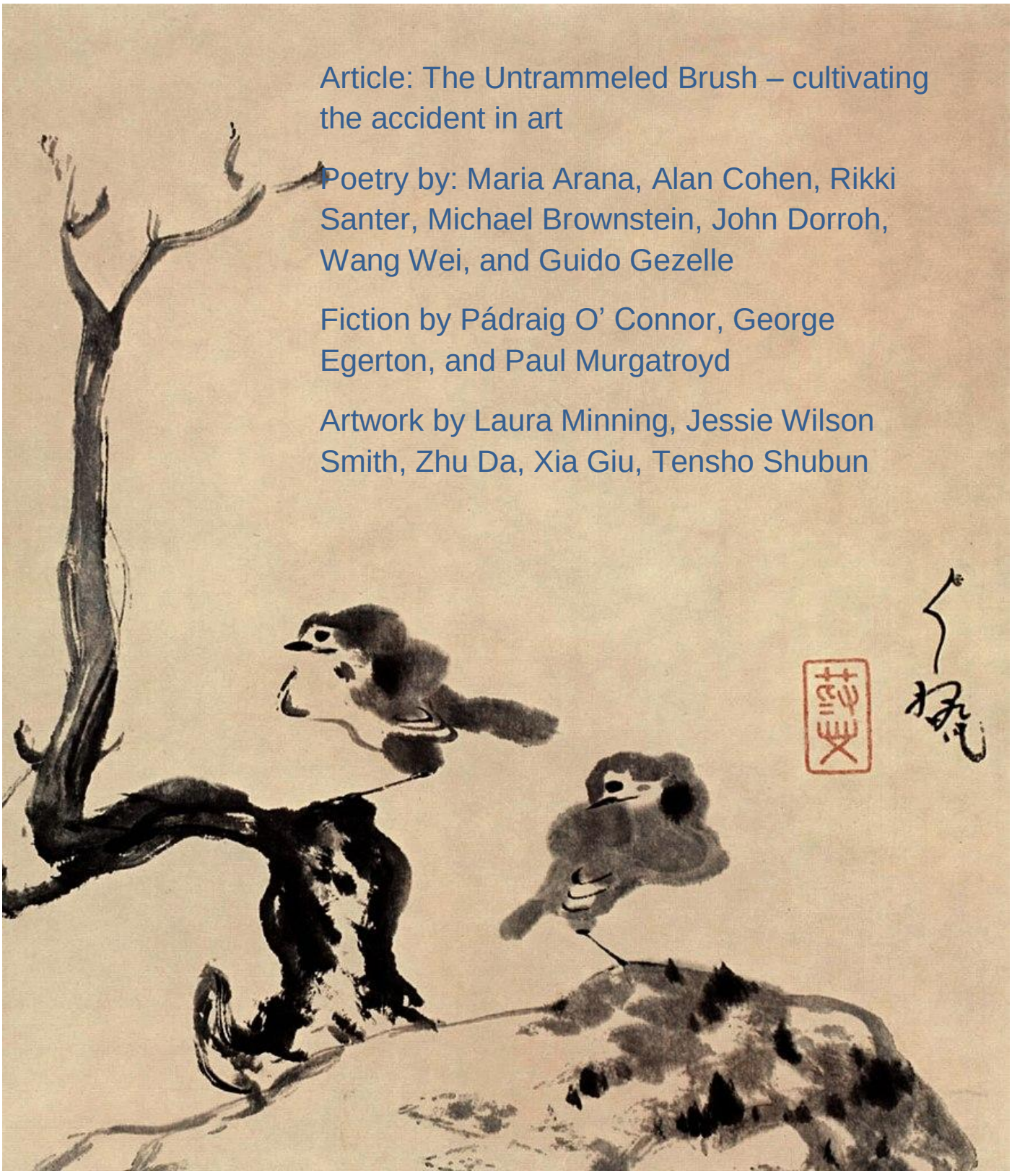
THE KLEKSOGRAPH

An International Review of Art and the Subconscious

Issue 4 January 2021



Article: The Untrammeled Brush – cultivating the accident in art

Poetry by: Maria Arana, Alan Cohen, Rikki Santer, Michael Brownstein, John Dorroh, Wang Wei, and Guido Gezelle

Fiction by Pádraig O' Connor, George Egerton, and Paul Murgatroyd

Artwork by Laura Minning, Jessie Wilson Smith, Zhu Da, Xia Giu, Tensho Shubun

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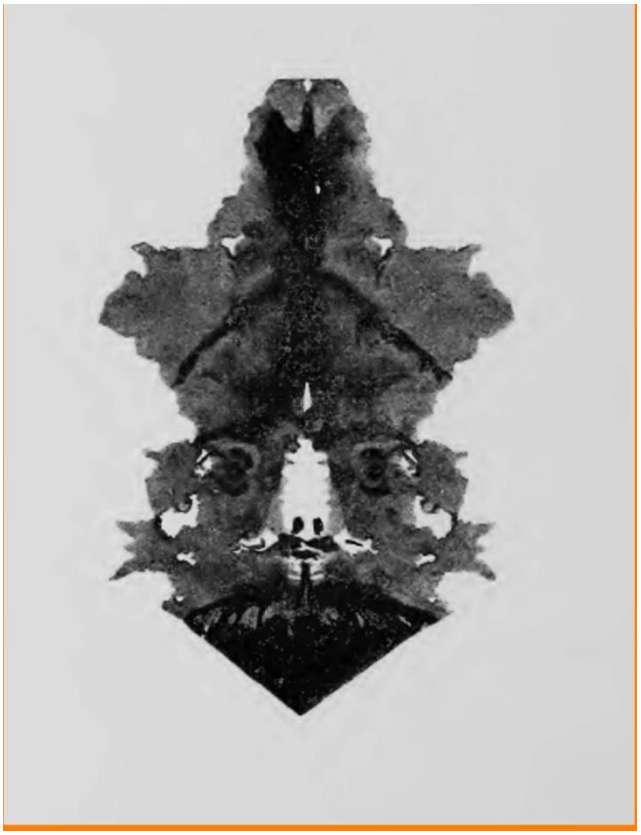

ISSUE 4

JANUARY 2021

In the mid-nineteenth century, Julius Kerner, published his book of "Kleksographien". Later psychologists used similar ink blots as a means ot access the subconscious of their patients. The Klecksograph (Klecks is the official German spelling) is dedicated to exploring and celebrating the relationship between the subconscious and art.

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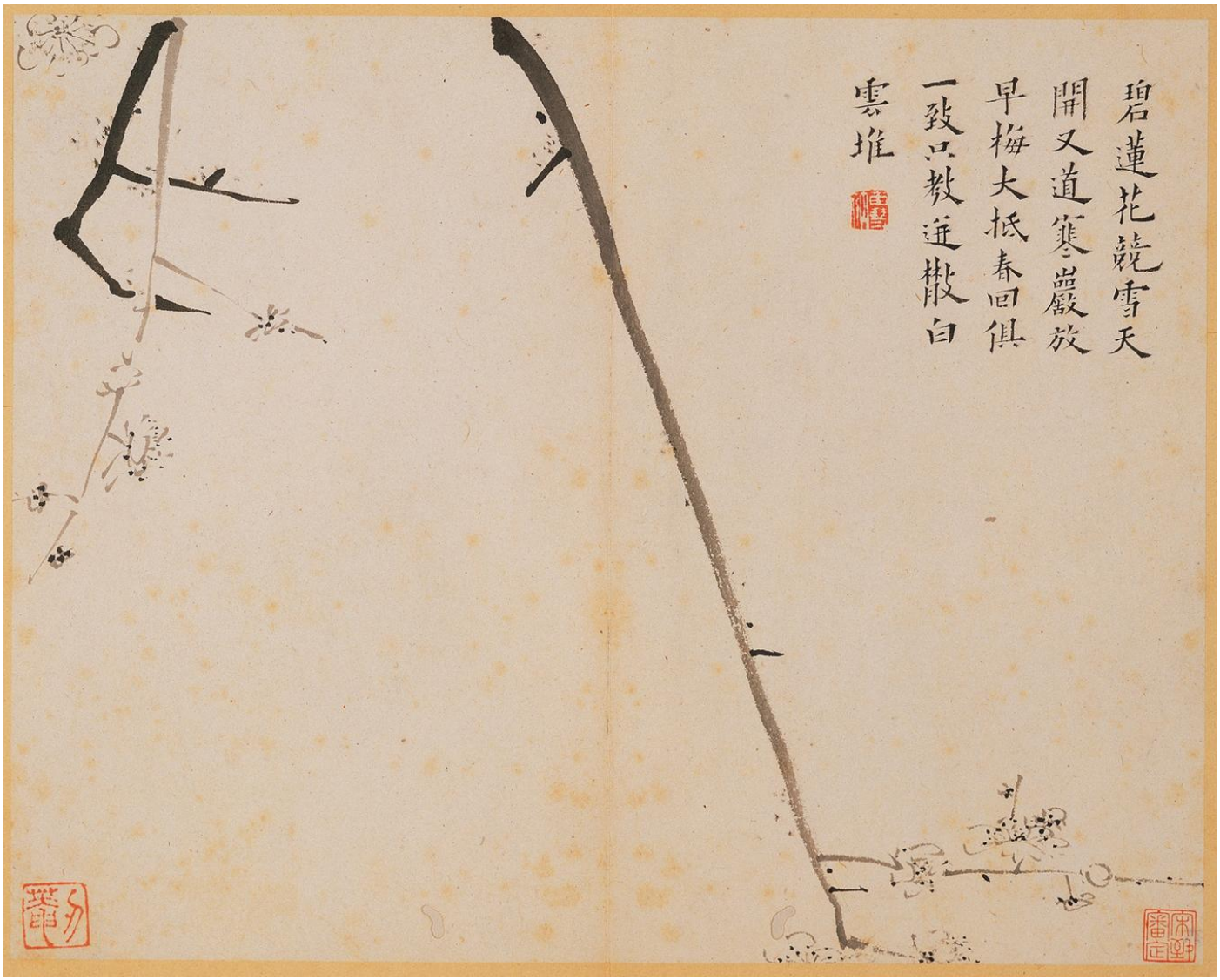
This magazine can be downloaded free from www.kleksograph.be



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Solar Winds

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my brain bleeds

my brain bleeds

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unexpected

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of my life

until it fades

away

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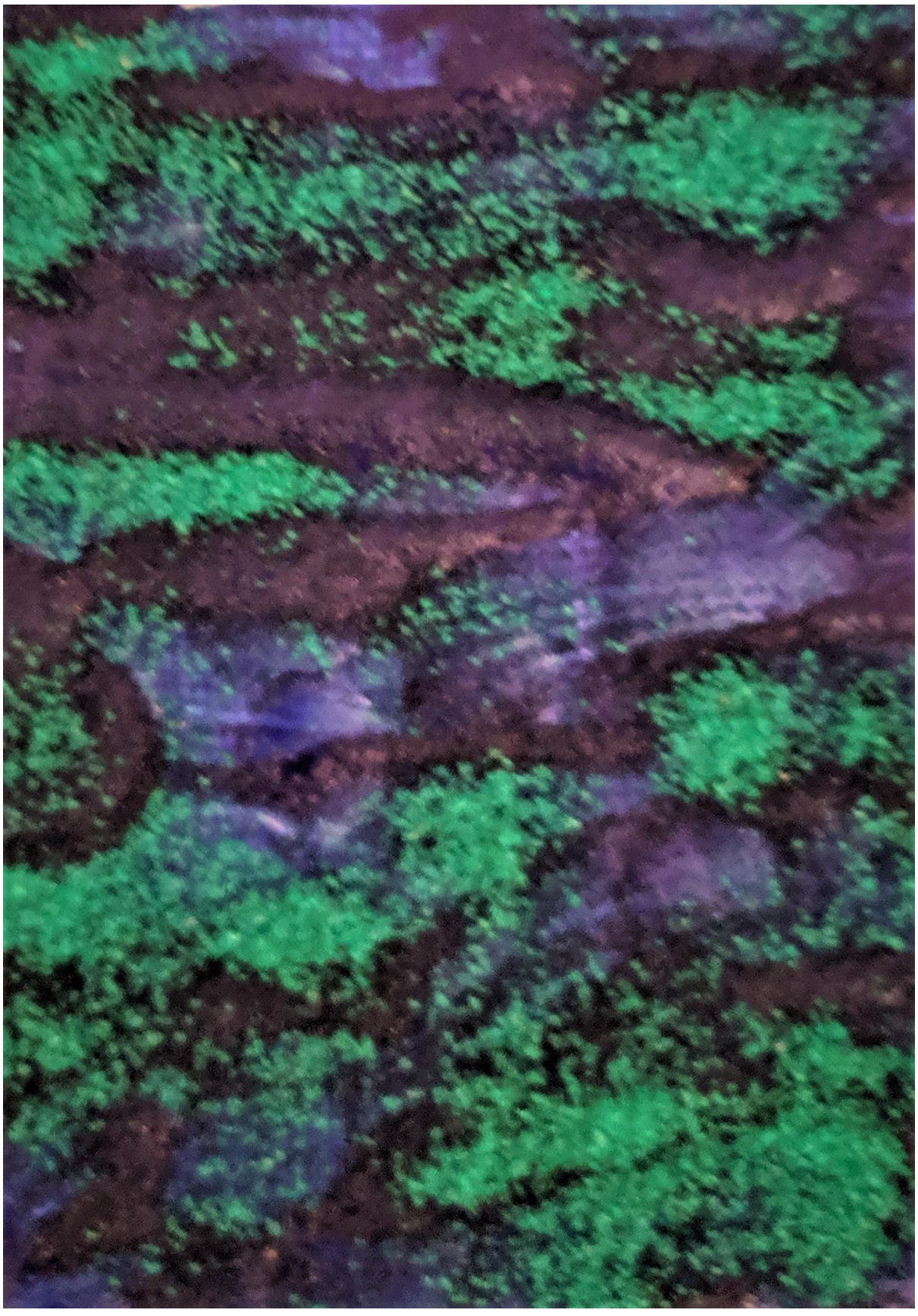


Maria Arana

idleness is an enemy

by the woods' dark fauna

an unmoving white figure

enhances its distance

circled by the nervousness

nightmares wake

taking up space

inside my home

I want to color him in—

make him disappear

into the night

watching

Alan Cohen

Civil War

Barter? no, bolster the wretched walls,
Wax-thin from attack by bettering rams.
My stock-taking horse is a mocking horse,
And my window (My shield, the armor I wield)
Is a series of frosty, pained epigrams—
My hallway is blackened by door-damning slams.

I permit that my room is a black-and white lie—
An aesthetic untruth which haunts me, suits me
Clothing in which I seduce sleep—badly .
This winter, it seemed, I'd still somehow get by.

But I wondered how I would fly through the bars,
When dizzy I ran up the winding stairs.
Schemes are vain; checkmate's come; the game's been won:
Before the ordered fabric tears
I must bring my chessmen back to their squares.

Sun glare and night fear scald me, rape me,

Drain me of discipline; I must revive.

Destruction's ascendant and fallacy’s rampant

The bell's tongue is out; I am once more five.

I've been picking my way between grasping ghosts

And garish and cloying daily distresses

Let down your drawbridge, I'll stumble in gallantly;

Fantasy fold me in fairy caresses.

Alan Cohen

Tension: Beauty and Pain

Pain revolves, resolves--
My eyes throb.
Incandescent silver? No molten blue.
Billions of waves gushing furnace-flung,
Glance off dust and scatter to the dormant echo-corridors,
Tucked peacefully in the tender flanks of the galaxy.
Infernal power, gathered for a glancing caress,
Creates the glowing sky and the illusion of stillness.

I saw the sun's secret in the morning sky,
When its blaze did not protect it from my bloodshot eyes.
Just a hole in the sky; a red universe beyond:
There the forge for the universal laws our world runs on.

A knothole in the spruce
Stone frozen in the midst of its ripples
And petal-thin vessels
Secreted within
Toil rigid, dancers on their toes,
To maintain that placid, rough exterior.

The wondering ache before deficiency:
The sickly grass and the tarnished spruce
The ice-gray and lumpy white that soil the native sky,
Entreat tears to melt such imperfect matter
Like a deformed sculpture.

I saw the sun's secret,
I wept in the dawn,
I tore the damned flowers
And slept on the lawn.

Frontispiece to Kirchner's Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae

Pádraig O’ Connor

Wits’ End

Choosing clothes every single day-shrunken vests and oddly matched socks-oddly matched to my feet-me who has no feet-whose feet were so horribly bent out of place at birth it was assumed best by the medical practitioners of the day that they should be severed from me at once-but they themselves would not carry out the procedure on account of it being their day off and so I was spared my feet at that juncture only to lose them some time later in a rather tragic accident with a lawnmower-why I owned a lawnmower without ever having had a lawn-without ever having wanted a lawn is beyond me still-but the contraption nearly did for me the occasion of its first starting when I pulled on the cord while holding the starting lever and it took off in a waspish jolt over my misshapen feet instantly rendering me a good eight inches shorter than I ever was before our coming together-sadly shorn of my feet I was immediately ineligible for a bus pass as a result of my no longer being in the required height bracket for disability-

I was a giant of a man prior to my accident-however-without my feet and without my bus pass-which I never once got around to using due to the irregular bus timetable-yes without my feet and my bus pass I was instantaneously limited in means by which I could get out and about-two things I had a manic desire to do at one time-especially getting about-there was nothing I once loved more than being about wearing my shrunken vests and oddly matched socks-my finery I suppose you could say-yes being about in my finery was the pinnacle of my existence in a way before I was dealt such a fatal blow-but I exaggerate of course by saying it was fatal as here I am alive and kicking-not kicking needless to say what with my lack of feet-unless stumps count as feet these days and I am almost fully sure they do not seeing as how they confiscated my bus pass that time I tried to hobble on the bus after my accident-the one instance I was on time for the bus-that time the bus driver shouted at me-he borderline abused

me in fact-calling me some terribly revolting names-none of which I can recall now off the top of my head-

Amazing where the mind goes sometimes when getting dressed-and I'm not really getting dressed anymore-I'm just here-naked but for my clothes-examining my socks and thinking how I'd love to have my feet back just for one day so I could put on a shrunken vest and pair of socks and take the bus free of charge using my bus pass and be out and about the whole day long-yet talk of an ordeal trying to obtain that original bus pass being both able bodied but of a height deemed to be a disability-I didn't want to be disabled or considered unable to use my body but that is exactly what I was told-in so many words-stand up there on the weighing scales til we see what height you are-having lost their only measuring tape this was adjudged to be the next best method to determine my height and I was in no position to question their authority-if anything I was at their mercy-but you're no weight at all I was told-barked at almost-how do you think you're disabled-I don't I said but I am of a height considered a disability-and what height are you

would you be so kind as to tell us so as to spare us a job-I'm not sure myself I said-how do you expect us to know what height you are then-can you not measure me-of course we can are you questioning our methods-I am most certainly not-well then get off those scales and stand on these ones instead-they're much more accurate-

It went on like this for quite some time with me standing up on and off numerous weighing scales none of which could determine my exact height-all in the name of a bus pass which only worked on every second day of every second month of every second year-except on bank holidays-it was entirely redundant on bank holidays and of course one had to qualify by either being too tall like I was before my accident-or over the age of sixty five-I was never sixty five or fifty five or a lot of other ages nor can I claim to have any great longing to reach those numbers-it's a numbers game whatever way you look at it-how old are you-what height are you-how many feet do you have and pairs of socks and shrunken vests and all the numbers I have to carry around with me in my head-my telephone number-though I have no telephone and never had a use for one-who would be

calling me-my bank details though I've never been to a bank-my age-but you're no age at all they said to me in the administration office-and I had to disagree and assured them I was an age-well you're under sixty five so if you wouldn't mind telling us what the number of your house is we can then process your details-if you live in a house that is-I wasn't sure I lived in a house per se and certainly not one with a door number although I can see some potential advantages in having somewhere to live and a door with a number to make remembering where that might be more convenient-

If you want us to complete your application before close of business you'll have to strike while the iron is hot I was told which sent me into an irascible frenzy remembering just then that I had left the iron on to even out the creases in my shrunken vests and I would have to somehow make my way back home immediately so as to avert the troubling possibility of my house burning down-if I lived in a house-which I think I must have if I had left an iron on and being quite perturbed by this thought I asked if I could have my bus pass today and she gave me a most favorable look when reaching into a large envelope and pulling out yet another form and with her cod eyes fixed upon me-said-absolutely not-

I would have to make my own way and that's what a lot my life feels like really-me trying to make my way and making way for others to pass me by-others who are also busy making their way and so on and so forth until you would think that a clear path has been made for all to follow but that is not the case at all-if anything the way is impossible to find in the first place and if by some miracle you are able to locate it then the far more ominous task awaits which is to actually make your way and this was weighing heavily on my mind as I traipsed out of the office knowing in my heart of hearts I had left the iron on yet certain I could not remember where it was I lived-

I had been told once I was to the manor born but I never remember even catching glimpse of a manor in all my time travelling from here to there and had I been born on a manor I imagine I would've departed rather speedily for it is not in my nature to remain in comfort-it being the cause of tremendous dulling of the senses and knowledge of other people's hardship

which I insist on being aware of at all times in the off chance I too should fall on hard times-I who tends to fall quite a bit now I have been deprived of the correct use of my feet which I deem to be walking-or standing-they're much the same I have always thought as neither lead to any place worthwhile-stay standing still and you'll not come a cropper with a lawnmower nor struggle to get a bus pass nor have to rush back to turn off the iron that I only turned on in the first place to iron my shrunken vests so as to go get my bus pass to go out and about leaving the manor as I did so hastily I presume-yes the manor-that's the name of my house-my house doesn't have a number-little wonder then that I could not think of its number-so much wasted enterprise on my behalf-absolutely nothing new there then-enterprise having being invented by those ensconced in the manor as means of enticing others into believing they could one day share the same interests and have their shoes polished to roughly similar sheens-these were my people-hucksters one and all equipped with extraordinary cunning the likes of which was never passed down to me it would seem-all I inherited were the grunts and groans-the coughing and spluttering-the bandy feet- the many shrunken vests-the socks discarded at Christmas time-not that I am complaining about my lot-far from it-I never wanted for anything material-a little love perhaps-but that is overrated I'm dutifully informed-and had I gotten sufficient amounts of love-or much worse-excessive love-I would've grown soft I'd wager and live a kind of impotent life of indecision-the complete opposite of my day to day existence which is positively filled with action-mostly to begin with I have to choose what clothes to wear-a simple enough task yet one that can at times drive me to drink-and when gulping on a pleasant dram or two I-I-I-

You haven't a leg to stand on that's what it was-that's what the bitch in the administration office roared at me-you're not deserving of a bus pass-excuse me I said aghast at her lack of a sense of social decorum which had clearly departed by the wayside-the wayside-there's a word-and a place-precisely the place I find myself now once again hugging the ditch in search of the manor which I haven't one iota of its whereabouts or outwardly appearance-I know for sure the iron is a ticking time bomb awaiting me downstairs and I can see the pile of shrunken vests by its side crying out for a lick of its steaming face-yet it is

by the wayside once more I find myself-home to wounded badgers and maimed foxes and litter of every description so I'll not detail it all here-all the empty bottles and plastic bags decorating the briars and hawthorn hemming me in by the wayside when the manor could be just around the corner but of course there are no corners on this street-only bends thus filling me with some hope of finding the manor as it is always easier to see around a bend rather than a corner-or perhaps I have that the wrong way around-it wouldn't surprise me in the slightest if I have but the real stumbling block between putting my mind at ease and my current restless nature is my inability to find my way back home around the bend or corner to the manor-

The lack of a trail of some description is the real kicker-any trail would do-entrails indeed-anything by which I could get home and switch the iron off-entrails were my preferred method in times gone by until I was reported to the society for prevention of cruelty to animals after tying multiple cats by their tails to nearby trees outside my house and carrying their intestines along with me in my hand wherever it was I was going at that time being sure to leave the cat some water at least-and a tin of sardines when I could afford it-I was never overly fond of cats but neither was I a complete monster to them and I'll freely admit they were the difference between my staying out all night wandering around looking for some clue as to where I lived-intestine in hand there were no such problems as before I even knew what I was at I was under the tree outside my house and perhaps it's a tree I should be looking for and not a house much like when one loses one's keys-it's not the keys you should think about or where was the last place you put the keys but rather whether there was a tree nearby with a cat tied to it eating a tin of sardines outside a house called the manor inside of which an iron was plugged in and overheating beside some shrunken vests and mismatched socks-

Yes positive visualization is the name of the game here I feel-at least I have established the presence of a tree regretfully mourning the absence of a cat-but I'll let that slide for now as impetuousness once again propels me to act-to further my chances of getting to where I want to be in this world-back home-the outside world has seen enough of me today and it is such an intimidating arena filled as it is with all manner of

lunatics who should all be ushered indoors if you ask me-and yes the accusation of lunacy has been flung in my direction on more than one occasion-in the administration office when trying to obtain my bus pass I overheard one of the staff there describing finding her beloved Persian white Sally tied to an ash tree no more than a stone's throw away from her place of work-and what kind of lunatic would carry out such a heinous act-referring to me I imagine unless there are other misfortunes out there unable to find their way home at night and resorting to unorthodox methods of reorientation-

I realize now I will have to pass by that office again if it is a mere stone's throw away from where she found her cat but under no circumstances will I enter into that building for assistance-not if my spirits imploded on their very doorstep will you find me in there-not in this lifetime of mine given over to daily toil and struggle-no I'll find the manor by myself-I'll go inside and switch off the iron-I'll choose a shrunken vest from the heap and a pair of socks and time permitting I'll untie the cat from the tree-if there is a tree-if there is a cat-

Oh this day is getting away from me but I'm not going to throw in the towel just yet-not when I've come this far-not when I've put so much effort into getting my few jobs done-it is little use now lamenting lost feet or nearly obtained bus passes or cats tied to trees or any other such frivolity-the past lingers around corners daring me to imagine how it used to be when it'd be much more in my line to coax my thoughts to present concerns-the iron is still on-I am still on the street-but on the bright side-I have something to do and somewhere to go and that will keep me happy-occupied in short-I long to be occupied at all times by the most menial of tasks-the more menial the better as evidently left to my own devices I can't be trusted to get dressed in the morning or switch off the iron or strangle a stray cat-no I'm as well to get home now and be done with this day-

Wednesday I think it is-not the worst of days but neither here nor there either-but what day it is is the least of my concerns-it's always today whatever way you look at it-the more pertinent question in my predicament is where am I and when will I get back home-if only I had a map of the local area-a map would be able to tell me where I am-or I would be able to tell from the map

but none of these streets have any names and I could never make any fist of looking at maps-any map I ever had I ended up tearing asunder in frustration having never acquired the skill of map reading-it was never high up on my agenda of things to do-I could always rely on other people to find me-oh there you are-or-you're back-I never left I said-you must have-I can assure you I did not-you did I looked in the window of your house and all I saw was a pair of socks dangling from the end of a steaming ironing board-who are you-I'm the postman I call to your house every day and you try to avoid me at all costs-I've never laid eyes on you before sir-I'm a woman-no you're not-yes I am-you said postman-no I said postwoman you misheard me-where am I do you know-could you please tell me where I am-I don't have time to chat I'll see you tomorrow-where-at your house-where's my house-back that way-I dropped off your post-I got a letter-yes from the administration office by the looks of it-my bus pass I thought and turned around in the direction she pointed and saw in front of me what could only be described as a turn off-it wasn't a bend or a corner-those I would've been able to identify with great ease-no mark my words this was a turn off-as sure as the day is long it was a turn off-as plain as anything I had ever laid my eyes upon-as plain as day in fact though this day was proving to be anything but plain-it was proving to be somewhat complex-yes it started off plain enough but the moment I stepped foot outside my door the complications began in earnest-but at least now I know for sure I will not have to return to the administration office after they have so kindly forwarded my bus pass to my house and all that is left for me to do is to get home and unplug the godforsaken iron-

In the interim however I will be keeping my eyes tightly peeled for a tree beyond this turn off-what distance ahead this tree lies I wouldn't even like to hazard a guess-it's immaterial at any rate-it could be five hundred yards-it could be five hundred miles-distance is never really the problem-it's what lurks within that distance that determines the journey-the quality of passage-but I'll not cover the distance by looking at it nor know anything more about it by thinking about getting on my way- I must simply get on my way-

How long I am willing to walk in search of my destination is anyone's guess-knowing me I suspect my innate perseverance

will likely see me going to extraordinary lengths to return myself to the manor-call me sentimental-call me mental if you like-neither name will stick I'm sure nor am I likely to hear them either seeing as how I haven't cleaned my ears out today and any day that this task is left unaccomplished my canals become a waxy haven for name calling of all descriptions-call me anything you bloody well wish-I'll be dead one day with thick candles protruding from my ears if I don't get home sometime soon-

Oh my problems are mounting-if I stay on this path for much longer the troubles I'll acquire could become somewhat overbearing-but I don't want to fall into that old trap of preempting the things that may go wrong-not when chirpiness is my default setting and in case you haven't noticed things are looking up for me-I who live in a manor with a bus pass on the hallway floor and a postwoman who seems to find me pleasant enough to talk to-yes-I have had plenty of positives this day too despite all my earlier troubles-yes it seems abundantly clear to me I have come on leaps and bounds and if I have my way this day will be salvaged yet-with any luck it might even be a triumph though I hesitate in saying that out loud-I don't want to get ahead of myself-or actually I do come to think of it-I'd love nothing more than to get ahead of myself so I could see what the bloody hell comes after this turn off I have been hesitating to navigate my way around and whether there's a tree outside a manor and if I got ahead of myself I could clear a path and tell myself how best to proceed with the rest of this day-

The only issue now is and it is certainly an issue-I appear with all my blathering on-my palaver-I appear to have missed the turn off-how I managed to do this is beyond me but as sure as I'm standing here the turn off I had spoken of-the turn off I went to some lengths to describe well it is no longer visible to me-I'm loathe to describe it as a tragedy that might be stretching the truth a little bit but it's certainly a great shame and maybe even a tad farcical if I'm to be honest but more than that it comes as quite the setback to my plans for this day-I could make new plans I suppose but my heart really wouldn't be in them I'm sure and then of course at risk of repeating myself there is the small matter of my having left the iron on full blast-it was a thrifty purchase-a better iron would've knocked the wrinkles out of my vests without needing to be given time to heat up but no my arms were

very short indeed the day I went to purchase that machine-do I regret it now-yes and no-mainly yes-yes regret would ostensibly be the overriding emotion I have right now-regret at so many choices I have made-missing the turn off-calling the postwoman a man-not having a bus pass when I needed it most-leaving my house to get another one-feeling the need to get one in the first place-deciding to leave my house-starting the lawnmower-the list of regrets goes on and on-it is almost a skill of mine-it's certainly my only hobby I can think of-regret-and unlike other less disciplined people who take and give up hobbies willy nilly I stick at mine until I master it completely-I even regret taking up a hobby in the first place-what business had I trying to fill up the bit of free time I had-hadn't I enough on my plate getting up each morning-confronting my wardrobe of shrunken vests and mismatched socks-

My resolve is wearing thin now-I never thought I had resolve of any kind to begin with and now that it has almost run out I shall miss it dearly-I can see myself trying to replace it when it does eventually diminish-I suppose there are certain qualities a man should possess-not own necessarily but have at hand to call upon in times of great need-this being one such time of course and what resolve I have left might've gotten me around that turn off if I hadn't missed it but after that I'd have been running on empty-but what's the worst that could've happened should I have found myself running on empty-I could've arrived at the manor with plumes of smoke billowing from my window-vests ablaze-smoldering socks strewn about the carpet-if I even have carpet-I would need great resolve to tolerate such a scene and yet this is the scene I will be faced with if I don't get a move on and locate this tree-this manor-

It has occurred to me I have really and truly lost my way-I can't blame my dislocation on anyone but myself-no-no one lost my way for me and equally no one is likely to put me back on the right path bar my good self and the urge to plod on-to continue with my plodding along-yes this urge of mine to plod is somehow thriving-it is almost as if I am being willed into action-not that I don't have any free will of my own of course but I for one wouldn't be overly keen on bundles of choice-no too much choice is rather debilitating I find-it debilitates me at any rate-choosing vests and pairs of socks being one such example-offer

me a choice and it's best you take a seat for I could be a while weighing up all the pros and cons of what there is to choose between-I might even think myself into a stupor and in the end having given all the options ample time to reveal themselves to me as the correct choice there's a strong chance I'll still not choose-and if I did choose I'd probably just regret it anyway and spend my whole time imagining what the other option had held in store when it might be of more benefit to me to dedicate less time to my hobby of regretting and more productive oh I don't know-to have paid a bit more heed to the way I came when I embarked out my front door-out the manor-past a tree-on the beginning of my travels-

In many ways I'm at my wit's end-I can no longer bear to look upon this situation I find myself in with any degree of humour-I can try to laugh-I can try laughing for all the good it would do me-if it offered some relief fine I'd hold laughing all the time but no-laugh long enough and it's cramps in the stomach and misery and yet misery is hard to avoid-but it is with wit I would like to carry on-it is with wit I would like to sustain my journey home-a sign would help-a sign to let me know where I am-any sign would do-and if there is no sign I should perhaps make a sign and call this place what I think it should be called-this place where I intend to call a halt to the day's proceedings-this place the day has brought me-not exactly where I wanted to be but beggars can't be choosers-not that I'd choose this place over any other it's just this is the place I so happen to be at my wit's end-and I am not a beggar-no I have asked for nothing of this day except to get back home but I do not hold it against the day for not granting me this wish-no the destination I find myself in is more than adequate for now and perhaps tomorrow I'll resume my search and the iron will still be there waiting for me to turn off and it'll not be the cause of any great fire and my shrunken vests will not have shrunk any further and my mismatched socks will not be any more mismatched and it is here where I find myself-it is right here where my life is as of now and the only name I think would suit my surroundings-the name I think I'll give it is-

No I'll not starting naming things now-it's too late for that sort of behaviour-I have only one question left to answer-where am I and how do I get home-two questions in essence but luckily for me I have the distinct feeling at long last that I am much nearer to

answering them than ever before-perhaps I hit my head-I must've hit my head-I hit my head I'm sure-I'm convinced I hit my head-there's a chance I did hit my head-no one knows if I hit my head least of all me-it would explain a great deal if I did hit my head and then raise further questions of course-I'd have some answers and then more questions-such is any quest for truth I suppose-but if I did hit my head it was my own doing and much like this trek home of mine-this has also been all my own doing-I undertook this journey of my own volition using no little initiative-I'd hardly call my being here a result of initiative-more chance or good fortune-or maybe even misfortune-it all depends on what way you look at it-I choose not to look-examining things in such detail is not something I am accustomed to doing-no it's the more simple pleasures my life is steeped in-getting dressed for example-I like getting dressed-I enjoy the process of getting dressed-I revel in the task of clothing myself-in choosing my own clothes-mostly shrunken vests and mismatched socks and when I'm finished I usually go downstairs-switch on the iron to straighten out my vest if needs be and then check to see if I have received any letters-and after that-another day begins-

Rikki Santer

Ventriloquist's Oath

Check each hollow head for explosives,
even they can have minds of their own.

Toss your vaudeville voice from trunk to trunk,
forge double gestalt with your sureshot tongue.

Button up each wayward planet into your box of tricks,
but always be beside yourself for any object that longs

to be co-conspirator. Even rocks talk ancient
language. Shut your mouth & listen up.

Rikki Santer

Mermaid Envy

Especially with my tail
when I go like this and weave
through chilled murmurs
of deep to call you, you
marvel at my kind.
My tongue, primordial red,
my long long rainbow hair,
all invisible in inky darkness
where color and imagination abides.
I don’t think about
being charming even with
what you call my marble eyes,
translucent refugees from
ancient calculating machines
wedged into underwater caverns
of my shipwreck bounty.
Islands are the middles of my stories.
Sun squints.
Moon opens its mouth.
Ocean is sound.
All necessary things.

Rikki Santer

Sweatpants Theology

Lost reasons to dress up.
Quarantine a voodoo temple.
Crows fly over cities, towns, centuries.
Silhouettes loom across the chessboard
and words can’t seem to go any further.
Mystery plays perform in cardboard theaters
this time with masks and hospital ships.
Homebody sweatpants have a mind
of their own—one leg then the other, slogan
t-shirts with sweat stains, new state
of merch. Stumble through reverberating chatter,
surplus of molecular metaphor in virus,
publicized publicized connotation.
Pivot on how little can be enough
to take the long view.

Jessie Willcox Smith, illustration for A Children's Garden of Verses (1905)

George Egerton

Mary Chavelita Dunne

Introduction

Mary Chavelite Dunne was born in Australia in 1859 and raised in Ireland. She eloped to Norway with a bigamist who turned out to be a violent drunk. Fortunately she learned Norwegian & so discovered the works of Ibsen, Strindberg (though he's Swedish), and especially Knut Hamsun, with whom she corresponded. She also translated his novel Hunger.

Leaving her lover, she was forced to take on low-paying jobs as she travelled through Europe. In 1891 she married an equally penniless Canadian, George Egerton Clairmonte. She submitted her two collections of short stories in his name. They became a literary sensation when they were published in 1893 and 1894. During that brief time she was a celebrated author, house guest to among others W.B. Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, and the psychologist Havelock Ellis.

Why did she use her husband's name? It's not as if at the time there weren't women authors willing to tackle controversial subjects. A case in point is Sarah Grand, who penned The Heavenly Twins, a novel on the ravages of venereal disease. This was the age of The New Woman who demanded equal rights, and opportunities.

What Egerton brought to the Anglo-Saxon literary scene was the psychological depth she found in Scandinavian literature. From Hamsun she also learned the use of sudden insights in characters' minds. These anticipate Joyce's "epiphanies". Joyce himself admired Egerton, and taught himself Norwegian so he could read Ibsen and others in the original.

The following story is from her second collection Discords. It's called A Psychological Study, and as such invites analysis of the main character. Certain traits are already evident in her childhood: self-abasement, focusing on negative experiences, intrusive thoughts, and, at times self-punishment. These are symptoms of depression. This is not to say the injustices she suffers aren't real. As a woman, she's oppressed by the state, by the Catholic Church (which also poses as her comforter), and public opinion. Her main oppressor is her lover, whose manipulations play on, and worsen, her negative emotions.

Yet the way she endures, and especially when she chooses poverty at the end, ostensibly a sign of pride, can be seen as a symptom of a martyr-complex. It's equally telling she has no confidence in political reforms. To her, the problem is a personal one. Women have to endure injustice on their path to self-realisation.

Notice also the detailed description of the red-headed young lady at the end, the main character's dearest friend. It's far more detailed than the descriptions of men. It reminded me of the equally detailed descriptions of male physiques in the works by D. H. Lawrence and Herman Melville. These are signs of homosexual impulses in the author's psyche. Such impulses are present in everyone to a certain extent, but when they reach a certain energy level, they begin to surface in creative works, as these are more readily influenced by the subconscious.

Peter Van Belle

A Psychological Moment at Three Periods

I. — THE CHILD

The lamp on the nursery table is yet unlit, and the waning daylight of the early spring throws the part of the room near the window into cold grey shadow. The fire burns with a dull red glow in the lower bars ; it has been slacked ; just one little bubble of gas seethes like a ball of molten jet and flickers into a bluish flame.

The quick patter of little feet, and the sound of quarrelling child voices, broken by the deeper note of a woman's voice raised in gentle chiding, comes up from below stairs.

A child is crouched on the old hearthrug, holding a book to the firelight. Her eyes run greedily along the lines, one little red hand holds the top of the right-hand page in eager readiness to turn it over ; her long, tangled elf-locks catch a . ruddy glint each time her head moves.

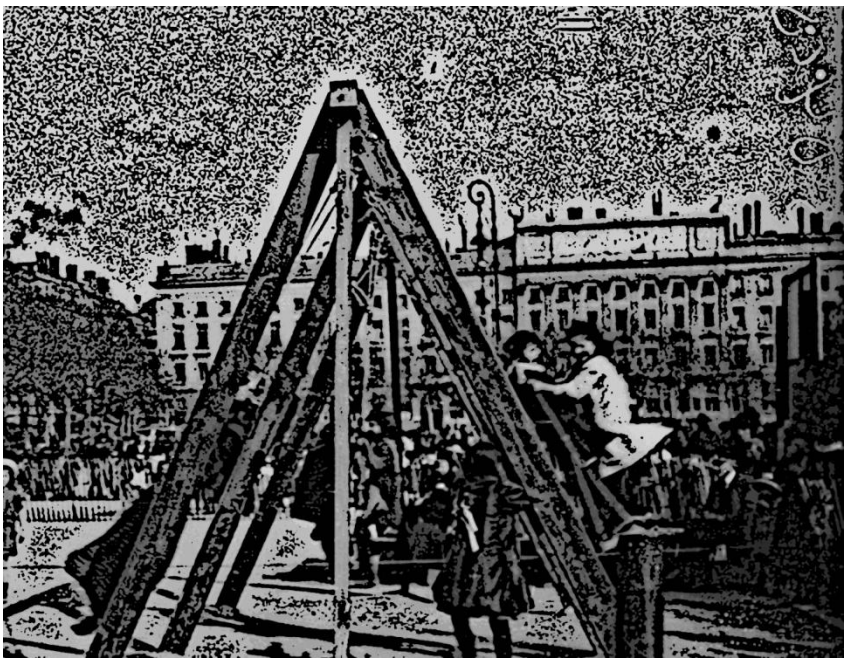
A bit of coal drops, and the flamelet goes out ; she lifts her head and draws a deep breath ; she is trembling with excitement, for she has been holding it unconsciously. She makes a move to stir the fire, but a shade passes over the questioning child-face as the inner voice that she alone knows of, of which not even the tender little mother has an inkling, begins its warning and reproach.

' Shut the book now—now, just when the exciting part begins. No, you may not read to the end of the page—no, not even a line more. If you want to be brave, if you want to be strong, sacrifice; sacrifice, mortify yourself. If you don't want to ! No, you are weak, you cannot do that, not even that small thing, for God. No, not after supper! Not until tomorrow, tomorrow evening—' The small head with the straight white parting bends over the closed book, and a sobbing sigh floats out into the room full of shadows.

She rises slowly and puts the book away, high up on a shelf on the old bookcase, and then looks fearsomely round her. If she were only round the next lobby, past the closed door of the empty room where the coffin once stood, where the chill air seems to rush out and play down one's back like the cold, cruel taps of long, clutching fingers. She steals out hurriedly, tip-toeing unconsciously, and whispering with throbbing breathlessness, Guardian angel, O dear

guardian angel ! take care of me !' leaving a space for the angel on the side next the door. A flying jump, a clutch at the balusters, and the lobby where the tall clock mounts guard is safely reached. The light streams up from the hall below, and the cheery rattle of the milkboy's can on the steps, and the smell of rice slightly burned, strike warmly to her heart. But the face of the old clock seems to look mockingly down at her, and its tick-tock speaks with a jeering voice to the panting child — the house is full of voices. "You be a Grace Darling! you be a Maid of Orleans! Afraid! afraid! Coward! coward! go back right to the nursery door — yes, to the very door, and count ten outside of it.' She is rolling her holland 'pinny' into a mass of hopeless creases, and the look on the grave small face is half defiant, half pleading. "Tick, tock, afraid, afraid! Leave you be? No, you must be strong. God wants you ; you must be strong! Offer it up for a poor soul!" The little shrinking figure goes wearily up again, halts outside the closed door, and kneels. Then she comes down backwards, resolutely facing the dreaded door.

"Summer, the wanton youth, is carrying all before him."



The playground of a girls' school is thronged with laughing pupils ; snobbery, toadying, gossip and backbiting, all the vices of matured society, flourish there in miniature. The daughters of the prosperous pawnbroker are snubbed and patronised by the shabbily-clad offspring of the half-pay captain, who owes two quarters' schooling and had the bailiffs in last week ; the girl with the most pocket-money and the prettiest frocks is courted and flattered to her face, and made fun of behind her back, as they mimic her important, "Me uncle the Bishup o' Durry ! '

Under an old elm-tree in a comer a group of girls is gathered. Four of them are listening intently to the fifth, a diminutive thing, classmate by virtue of brains not years. Her voice is peculiar, and she speaks without a trace of accent, whereas the anaemic-looking girl next her has Doblin in every vowel. The two, with arms entwined, are sworn to inseparable friendship; they wear a bit of each other's hair in silver lockets under their frocks, and think of each other every evening when the clock strikes nine. All follow the speaker's words with rapt attention, for as she warms to her narrative one telling expression trips up the other, and they break into laughter, with the shrilly giggling zest of early girlhood at a supremely daring climax. Only the fourth, a square-faced girl with steady pale-grey eyes, thin lips, and smooth, foxy hair dragged back from a broad forehead, gazes questioningly at her. The little one flushes as she catches the look, and when the bell rings she tucks her hand coaxingly under the other's arm, and adds an unnecessary detail, a stronger touch, as if to compel her belief

She talks until they gain their places at the desk, and silence is commanded. The pale-grey eyes study her face curiously, and an almost imperceptible smile plays about the thin mouth; the same may be seen any day on her father's face in the Green Street Courthouse, when he pins a witness under cross-examination.

“Tired, childie?”

“Yes, mumsy, awful tired”

“Perhaps you ran about too much in the heat, dearie ?”

“No, mumsy, I didn't! It's not that way — I am tired in me. Does everybody think, I mean, ask about things, in one? I want to know so many things — I think such a lot, and” — with a half-sob — “oh, oh, I wish I didn't!”

The mother draws her down to the heart under which she lay cuddled long before thought came, and smooths back the dusky hair from the hot forehead with tender fingers, needle-pricked over tiny garments for ever-coming human problems.

“Tell mother, dearie!”

“Ah, there's so much, mumsy, there's so much pain in the world. It's everywhere! Those horrid Chinese with their torturing, and all the poor animals; oh, I can't bear it! Why did God make us when He knew we 'd be wicked? when He knew we 'd go to hell? and when we want so hard to be good, and there's always something inside making us do bad things — oh! why did He ? why did He ? ' — sob — ' I can't think it was right of Him !” — with passion — “Oh, oh, it wasn't!”

“H-u-ssh, childie!” says the mother, and she rocks her slowly to and fro, and whispers softly:

“It's best not to question, lovey — far best. Just trust God, as you trust me when I tell you something is for your good. Keep on

and do what you believe to be right yourself. Mother's own dear little girl, her own little one!"

There is a singular look on the child's face, a look of resolute repression ; and when she raises it and kisses the worn, lovable face above hers, the spirit that looks up out of her eyes is older than the spirit that looks down out of the mother's.

And when the city clocks are pealing forth the midnight chimes, and the weary mother folds up the mended socks and puts them away, and goes her nightly round, and bends over each tiny cot, she stays longest at the bigger white bed, and makes, Spanish fashion, the sign of the cross with her thumb on the child's hot forehead, little dreaming that the lonely little soul has cried herself to sleep with the knowledge of having grown beyond her help.

Noon the next day — a hot, bleached noon.

Under the elm-tree three of the same girls are waiting. She comes out through the schoolhouse door. Two sparrows are picking up crumbs on the flagged walk. A stump of pencil is lying next an orange peel. Every detail of that big yard, with its groups of chattering girls, pieces of greasy lunch paper, and the three figures waiting under the elm-tree in the corner, bites into her brain, a mind-etching never to be effaced.

She slips quickly down the path, and although every nerve is braced to support her in a tremendous resolve, although she feels a sick, cold, sinking weight in her stomach, she avoids treading on the joinings of the flagstones, and takes two short steps where the space is very big. They are waiting for her, for is she not the most gifted, the most daring, the most individual amongst them? Perhaps the set, unsmiling whiteness of her face strikes them as unusual. They stop talking; they just wait

She stands before them; opens her mouth; but something rises in her throat and checks her speech; she masters it:

"You know what I told you yesterday," she says; "well, it was untrue, every, every bit of it — no; at — at least there was a little true, but I added all the rest, made it up, just lied for the sake of lying."

There is a silence, at least it seems to her that they are standing inside a silent circle and that the long giggling scream of "Tagg" of a triumphant catch comes to them from some far-off place. The friends search one another's eyes; the same expression is in both, not shocked, not a bit, but as folks look away from a mad person, half afraid; they cling a little closer to one another and turn away in silence. The anaemic girl shifts her feet irresolutely and presses her hands together until the knuckles

crack, and says with her weak monotonous voice, with a nervous desire to console:

"Never mind, dear; ma says you can't help exaggeratin"; for pa says your father 's the biggest loiar out!"

Then she, too, goes away, and the child leans her head against the trunk of the old tree. She feels that grinding her forehead into its rough bark would be a relief, her cheeks are so hot, and her eyelids smart so. She bites her tongue in her self-abasement. She had hoped they would have understood how much it cost her to tell them the truth — and yet — in between it all, had there not lurked an idea that they would think it nobly done of her? How the poor little soul cringes as this fresh bit of self-knowledge strikes home to her! Well, she has promised that she would punish herself, that she would tell each girl to whom she had lied the truth. She turns at the sound of a heavy step behind her, to face the cold grey eyes in the square face — "Her too, her too!" craves the voice. All the exalted spirit that spurred her on has fallen flat, only a sick feeling of useless shame remains, weighing heavily on the poor puzzled child-soul. Well, she will drain the chalice to the dregs, so she begins quaveringly:

"You know wh-"

"I know ; they told me. Come and wash your face. I think you were a fool to do it."

II. — THE GIRL

Yellow sunshine flooding an autumn world, gold-brown leaves falling like shivered mica on the great highway that is straight and dusty and long, crossed by other straight and dusty roads, running as the squares of a chess-board across the flat landscape.

The road is flanked on each side by alternate poplars and beeches, and their foliage honeycombs the white dust and the grey-green grass with flecks of quivering shadow.

Here and there at great intervals a clump of trees clusters about a villa, or an orchard, or forms a leafy square at the back of a farmhouse, or a long line of pollard willows defines a dyke. At the vanishing-point of the double line of trees flanking the highway, red-tiled roofs, a spire, and the tops of some canvas tents form a trefoil, and away across the flat brown land windmills lean against the horizon, with their sails at ease, like giant moths asleep on outstretched wings.

The scene, with its absolute serenity and subtle suggestion of delicate decay, suggests a Cuyp[1], an autumn study in quiet yellows and browns.

A child-girl is herding some lean cows that crop the dusty herbage under the trees at each side of the wide road. She is a thin, unformed thing of unlovely angles, with dirty flaxen hair clubbed short at her neck under a close-fitting cotton cap. Her dingy green stuff" bodice and homespun skirt hang loosely, and her check apron is patched with newer brighter pieces. Her footless stockings just reach her ankles, and their strong bones and her shining red heels peer out of her wooden shoes. She is knitting a coarse stocking, and she presses the needle tightly against her flat, childish bosom as she knits off the stitches. Tink! tink! the bellcow jangles a cracked bell as it stoops. Her eyes look wistfully towards the tents in the village; she can see the bright flutter of a flag. Her needles stop, and she stands still unconsciously, lost in dreams of the glorious future when she may go to service in the town, perhaps at the *Burgomester*[2], when she will be free to visit the *Kermesse*[3] and to ride in the carousals and see the dwarfs and all the sights that make it such a place of wonder. Ah ! how much would she not give for a glimpse of the tigers and lions; the tigers above all, great striped cat-like things — she has seen them on a print on the school-house wall — and sometimes at night when the great farmhouse is quiet and her straw pallet over the cowshed is shrouded in gloom, and the snoring, labored breathing of the cattle seems to fill the close air with a smell of warm milk, and a benighted glowworm flits through the loft, she cowers down and thinks of a tiger breathing and staring at her with gleaming eyes. Ay, down there boys and girls are dancing and buying fairings, and pepper cakes baked in fantastic shapes, and chocolates and images of the saint stamped on wafers, and at the acting booths a lovely *meisje*[4] with short skirts dotted with silver stars, and a glistening crown on her head, like the wooden Virgin in the village chapel, stands and invites one to enter with an engaging smile and wave of wand. Tink, tink, tink, clinks the bellcow, springing with awkward leaps and high-swung tail to one side as a crowd of laughing *jonge jouvrouws*[5] and sosterjes from the great pensionnat[6] come down the road.

They are laughing and talking gaily, for the sisters are favorites and number many flames amongst the crowd of girls

[1] Dutch painter of landscapes
[2] Mayor (Dutch)
[3] Country fair (Dutch)
[4] Girl
[5] Young misses and sisters (nuns)
[6] Boarding school (French)

filled with sickly sentiment, *schwärmerei*[7] and awakening sexual instinct They are genuinely in love. If their favorite leans over their shoulder to correct a theme, and happens to touch their arm, it calls forth a blushing disturbance in even the most stolid of the pupils. They color quickly if she speaks to them suddenly, and touch furtively her scapular or the great cross at the end of her beads. Some of them cherish a scrap of her writing, and scramble for a flower she has carried in her hand, and if, on turning up the comer of her veil where her number is neatly marked in white silk letters, say 693, they are lucky enough to possess a number that will divide into it without remainder, it is a matter of ecstatic happiness.

They are on their way to the *Kermesse*, and the competition to walk next the sisters has been keen, and the cause of stratagems and heartaches. The sister in the rear musters her flock, turns her head quickly (some couples are straggling behind) and draws her straight brows sharply together under her snowy guimpe[11] — a girl is talking to the little peasant, a disobedience without parallel.

"You must walk in front," she calls sharply, "and not two together, please." Her eyes meet the amused look and scornful twist of lip of the girl who looks round at her voice, and who turns back coolly and slips something into the herd-girl's hand, and the latter, who has started tremblingly at the *sösterje's* voice, bobs her an awkward curtsey.

The girl is a tall anemic-looking thing, but she carries her head well and steps along like a thoroughbred filly. The sister stands and waits with her satellites on each side ; but her eyes stay with the girl. The latter is too sharp-tongued, too keen-eyed, too intolerant of meanness and untruth to be a favorite with her classmates — too independent a thinker, with too dangerous an influence over weaker souls to find favor with the nuns.

"You must postpone your practice in flirtations, *meine Fraulein*; join the ardent flames instead and burn at the shrine," she says laughingly to the other girls as they move on.

Têtes-a-têtes are strictly forbidden ; friendships are discouraged ; two girls seen together a few times are warned sharply, if necessary separated in all recreations. Perhaps this adds to the piquancy of a flirtation with a chum of one's own sex. A clasp of hand in the crush on the great staircase, an embrace in the golosh room, a billet-doux with sentimental verses and a Cupid with a dart-pierced heart or wreath of pink forget-me-nots are the usual result.

The worst trouble is with the girls from fourteen up ; if they fall in love with a 'sister' and become a flame, the matter is

[7] Puppy love (German)

simple; she will know how to blow hot and blow cold, and keep them where they are to remain. This girl will none of it.

She walks about with her hands clasped loosely behind her back ; and her somber eyes dwell dreamily on the Dutch landscape. They are bound for the little village of Gendringen, in Guelderland[8]; and as they draw nearer to it, the strains of instruments mingle with the desultory tink, tink of the cattle bells behind them. The little cowherd watches them disappear, with surprised light filling her eyes and a wondering smile playing round her lips, and a silver thaler, a thick bright wonderful coin clutched in her hand.

The sister watches the careless swinging step of the girl ahead with rising color ; the ready scornful obedience, the indifference stings her. She draws out a little worn pocket-book and sets a mark against her name, Isabel, No. 7. The dowdily made convent gown of unbecoming material sits loosely on her unformed figure; she has twisted a crimson scarf round her neck, and one end flutters and shakes its fringe over her shoulder like a note of defiance, thinks the sister. For to the subdued soul of this still young woman, who has disciplined thoughts and feelings and soul and body into a machine, in a habit, this girl is a *bonnet-rouge*, an unregenerate spirit, the embodiment of all that is dangerous, and never fails to call forth whatever of the narrowness and the small jealousy of the world still clings to the *religieuese*. She cries sharply:

“There is no need for you to walk alone, Isabel, because I tell you to comply with the rules.”

This time the girl shrugs her shoulders impatiently and slips her arm into that of a half-witted girl, Katrine, the daughter of rich Zeeland[9] peasants — the butt of the finer Fraulein.

“Will you have me, Trine?' she asks with a confident smile. Trine's dull eyes brighten and a slow mottled blush creeps up into the stupid face; she admires the clever elder girl, who is so indifferent to blame and who has so often helped her with her hopeless French themes, in a dumb animal wondering way, and loves her passionately, for she is almost the only one who has ever given her a kind word. The girl smiles as she notes her pleasure, and draws her by skillful questioning into a stammering, delighted tale of her home life — the five hundred cows she will inherit and the gold coif and filigree ornaments, and the quaint customs at weddings and christenings.

The little village is irregularly built. A hideous white-washed church with stucco angels holding palm branches keeps one end of it. The streets are cobble-stoned and spotlessly clean, even the two trees that stand in front of each house of importance

[8] Eastern province of the Netherlands, bordering Germany

[9] Southern province of the Netherlands, bordering Belgium

are hosed free from dust ; they are cut too in fantastic shapes, such as a lion-couchant, a griffin, or perhaps a teapot. One sister steps to the front, one to the rear, the flock in between. As they enter the village, the Burgomester, the notary, and the curate greet them. The latter is young; his neat legs, set off to advantage by silk stockings and square-toed shoes with plated buckles, are a source of envy to such of the girls as are afflicted with thick ankles. There is a quaint crowd of peasants in holiday dress, but they seem subdued, and take their pleasure stolidly; later on after dusk they will enliven to a coarser sort of merry-making.

The girls flit about in groups of ten, an enfant-de-Marie in charge of each, they flock round the booths like bees in search of honey, buying anything good to eat. They cluster at the roundabout with the fancifully painted pagoda and the tarnished trappings in the middle, its round of gaily painted steeds, as apocryphal as the unicorn, and its gaudily painted cars and gilded state coach to hold six. The sisters speak to the red-faced German who runs the show, and he cries lustily to the crowd at the entrance:

"All seats engaged for the next half hour! All engaged!"

And when the hurdy-gurdy and the bells stop, and the plebeian equestrians are dispersed, the young ladies clamber up and strive to sit gracefully in their saddles and lean back in the phaeton — glorious opportunities for being together.

Katrine looks wistfully on, and whispers pleadingly to her silent companion:

"Will you come with me, oh, won't you come?"

"Would you like to" — with a smile — "well, get up then."

"No, they wouldn't like me to."

"Nonsense, go on !" She helps the great-hipped clumsy girl into a saddle, where she sits humped up in delighted expectation.

Two München girls, high spirited, stylishly dressed, come laughingly along in search of places.

"Get down. Trine, we want these horses, you look like a great toad."

An obstinate piteous look clouds the girl's dull face.

"Do you hear ? Get into the car instead."

"Stay where you are, Trine. We want these horses," cries the girl mounting the companion steed, a liver-colored impossibility with flowing scarlet mane. "You can get into the car instead!" with a malicious grin over her shoulder at the others. They flush and look disdainfully at the patched boot she is thrusting through the stirrups. It is their only means of retaliation, she has worsted them too often to risk an encounter of wits. The hurdy-gurdy in the pagoda strikes up a polka, well known through Holland and South Africa as Polly Witfoet, — and with many preliminary creaks and strains the roundabout starts in a giddy circle.

"Lal, lal, la, la ; lal, lal, la, la, lallallallallalla."

over and over again, and the gaudy tassels toss in the autumn breeze ; and the many-colored manes and tails stream out; and the pensionnaires giggle and scream and pretend to slip off; and the great axle creaks and strains like a ship in the trough of a heavy sea, and the music seems to ring with the same feverish haste.

The girl's keen eyes note that at one point in the round, the breeze blows aside the trappings of the pagoda ; she peeps idly in, but each time after that her eyes seek it with a look of shrinking fascination. Her thin nostrils quiver, and her pupils dilate, and an indignant flush dyes her face in a beautiful way as she gazes — Why ?

An idiot lad is turning the handle of the hurdy-gurdy. He is fastened by a leathern strap round his middle to the pole in the center of the tent. His head is abnormally large, the heavy eyelids lie half folded on the prominent eyeballs so that only the whites show, his damp hair clings to his temples and about his outstanding ears. His mouth gapes, and his long tongue lolls from side to side, the saliva forming little bubbles as the great head wags heavily as he grinds — indeed every part of his stunted, sweat-dripping body sways mechanically to the lively air of white-footed Polly.

"Polly Witfoet, Polly Witfoet, lallallallallala!"

And the flags flutter, and the bells jangle, and the roundabout creaks, and the girls giggle and scream affectedly; all save two, — Trine, who is wrapped in a dull dream of pleasure, and her companion who is watching the boy, with ever-growing indignation and disgust swelling her breast, causing her to clench her thin hands.

Each time she looks, the heavy lids seem to droop more, the tongue to loll longer, the face to wax paler. Save for the strap the scarcely human form would topple over with weariness. A whip is leaning up against the frame-work.

"Why should I see it?" she cries inwardly with passionate resentment, "why should I always pitch on the rotten spot in the fruit? Will the thing never stop? O my God, that poor wretch!"

She scans her schoolmates, laughing carelessly with their mouths filled with chocolates, "leckers[10]," and kookjes[11]; at the nuns with their spotless guimpes and their hands primly folded inside their long sleeves, and when she passes at the next round she shuts her eyes with a shiver.

"They don't see, they don't see," she cries to herself. "I alone see. My God, is that to be my fatal dowry, to go through life and always see? Oh, how I hate it! Made in God's likeness! Is that

[10] Sweets (Dutch)
[11] cookies

God's likeness, that poor, half-bestial thing with the lolling tongue and misshapen frame? Or that German with the bulbous nose and sensual lips who owns him, and perhaps uses the whip to goad him on!"

"Polly Witfoet, Polly Witfoet, lallallaliallala!"

"Oh, stop ! Will that wretched air never stop ? Ha ! ha ! ha!" — with an hysterical laugh — "Oh, that poor creature! I am only seventeen, and is that what I shall find in the world to come — some poor idiot turning the organ for all the luckier born to dance?"

The roundabout stops with a long-drawn groan, and they all dismount, and an eager throng of smaller girls struggle to get places. She clambers down on the inner side, and peers into the gaily-striped pagoda. He has laid down his monstrous shock-head on top of the hurdy-gurdy, and is drawing his breath in hard, shuddering gasps; but the swollen hand with the knotted fingers still grips the handle with a convulsive tension, ready to grind again.

She flees from the spot, forcing a passage through a slit in the canvas tent, and almost runs through the street of the prim little village; flees up the dusty road, utterly reckless of the penalty in store for leaving the nuns.

She throws herself breathlessly down at the foot of a great tree, and bursts into tears, not sorrowful tears, but heaving, rebellious sobs against the All-Father for His ordering of things here below.

"Oh, that poor thing! that poor thing! You needn't have made him ; God, I tell you, you needn't have made him! You knew from all time he 'd be there, and why should he be? Why should he grind music for all those selfish brutes to ride? Oh! oh! oh! why should he?" She bruises her poor little clenched fist against the gnarled roots as she emphasizes her words, and shakes it up at the silent sky, with the featherets of delicate lemon relieving the grey, the silent sky — that is always dumb.

"Oh, poor thing, poor thing! I wanted to love you, God; indeed, you know I did, but I can't, I can't, I can't. I love all those poor things of your creation far more, and oh, I hate to live! I don't want to — always I see the pain, the sorrow, underneath the music — and I tell you" — with a burst of passion — "if I were a great queen I would build a new tower of Babel with a monster searchlight to show up all the dark places of your monstrous creation. I would raise a crusade for the service of the suffering, the liberation of the idiots who grind the music for the world to dance."

She lays her hot, tear-stained cheek to the cool lap of Mother Earth, and the slender girl-frame shakes with deep-breathed sobs, and away from the tent under the shadow of the

spire that points like a futile finger upwards, the tender breeze comes rustling through the jaundiced foliage, and scatters the dying leaves like golden butterflies that bear no message, bringing the refrain of the common tune:

"Polly Witfoet, Polly Witfoet, lallallallallala!"

III. — THE WOMAN

London that is west of Piccadilly Circus is virtually empty; town looks jaded; the very mansions wear a day-after-the-fête air. The men who look some way so effete, so weak-kneed in their town dress, have gone to shoot grouse or lure a salmon, gone in obedience to the only honest passion left in them — the lust to kill. The stalls in such theatres as are open have a show of soiled frocks, and the jaded young women of the big shops grow paler in the chaos of the autumn sales.

A man came out of the National Conservative Club and stood in the doorway, drawing his hand slowly through his beard. He was evidently weighing a question of some moment, for an acquaintance sauntering by greeted him with a jovial "How are you?" (he was Irish), and a fellow-member, likewise an acquaintance, passing in, uttered a stereotyped "How d'ye do?" (he was English), without eliciting a responsive look or greeting. At length he raises his head and looks about him. A lady is passing with two children, pretty, blue-eyed, golden-locked, well-kept little ones. One of them looks up at the big man as she

trips sedately by, and a smile lurks in her eyes and dimples her cheeks. His face changes, and an irresolute expression crosses it. The spirit of evil that hovers round men and their destinies nearly loses her game, but she calls a quean to her aid, and saves it by the odd trick. The man's eyes with their softened expression are following the child, when a high-heeled French boot, with a liberal display of silk-covered calf above it, stepping on to the kerbstone attracts him. He looks up the figure and stops at the head of its owner. Her hair glistens metallically in the autumn sunlight, and her blue eyes throw him a challenge through their blackened lashes. He repays it with interest, and winks insolently as she tosses him a second glance over her shoulder. The cynical hardness returns to his face stronger than before, and he hails a passing hansom.

"British Museum!" He tilts his hat over his eyes and leans back, but he evidently wavers still, for he pulls out some loose money, and, selecting a sovereign, thrusts back the rest.

"Heads I do, tails I don't!" he mutters, and he spins it up and catches it on his open palm, and covers it with his left hand. The diamond in his ring seems to sparkle with a mocking light, like the eye of the jade who went by, he thinks. He lifts his hand—her Gracious Majesty the Empress of India in ugly Jubilee presentment! Who can say if he were not sorry? His face looks darker, and a more cynical smile flits over it, a tribute to the spirit of evil and the chance that favors his game.

About the same time as the man left his club, a girl sitting at a desk near 'dictionary corner" in the reading-room of the British Museum looks up at the clock. A shadow of some emotion difficult to define waves across her face and leaves her paler. She takes up two books, mounts the step-ladder and replaces them reluctantly on the top shelf; puts on her hat, takes her gloves and some copy-books, and walks slowly out of the great room. When she reaches the door she turns and stands there, an unconsciously pathetic figure. She takes a long look — why? She does not know herself. She looks up at the great dome, at the tiers of books circling one above the other, the strange medley of men and women, and the skull-capped head of her favorite official. She has a kind of affectionate feeling for the great room; it has been her oasis in a vast desert. There she has forgotten the cravings of physical hunger and soul thirst ; struggles, weariness, almost despair. She has found strong meat and perennial springs from which to draw nourishment; has mixed with a right goodly company of the wittiest and best of dead men and women. She has laughed over poor Dick Steele's letters to his dear Prue; envied Rahel the rare charm that held her young husband a lover always; visited Heine with La Mouche — forgotten her lack of living acquaintances in the richer companionship of her dead

friends. The tears fill her eyes as the door swings behind her, and she draws on her gloves sadly as she gaps out She turns to the left and goes through the King's Library — she has a fancy to circle the ground-floor. But today she walks on with drooping head ; she never glances at the quaint books of the Virgin in the cases, nor the rare samples of the forgotten art of binding. She goes up the stairs wearily and down again, and stops at the entrance to the Egyptian Room; she looks up at the head of her friend Rhameses.

She has a peculiar fondness — nay, more, a close sympathy — with this old-time monarch of unforgettable features, with the thin curving lips and inscrutable smile lurking perpetually on his face.

She knows naught of him nor his dynasty, but she always says that he has whispered many wise things to her. Sometimes when the burden of life has pressed heavier than usual upon her frail shoulders, she has gone and sat down on the wooden bench and looked up to him for counsel. He has seen so much, looked down on so many races, well he may sneer at the struggling toil of the earth-ants that crawl over God's great dustheap in futile effort to leave a lasting mark to make themselves known to posterity. “You know it all,” she used to whisper, nodding up to him; “what do you teach me? Endurance! To meet the world with a granite face and a baffling smile, and smile always, come bad come good; and when all is done lay my own speck of dust on the heap for another speck of dust to stumble over.” She smiles up to him with moisture dimming the soft bird-like brightness of her questioning eyes, and walks down the long room. Its very size is a delight to her, and she halts before the perfect little black Apollo with the white eyeballs. He always responds to some artistic sense in her; perhaps her art inclines to originality of expression ; she has at least no standards, she likes what she likes. She was much astonished once when someone told her that she was plagiarizing Mr. Ruskin, when she said that Moroni's tailor was her ideal portrait — indeed he was the only tailor she ever pined to know. But she astonished her informant equally when she dared to say that she disagreed with the great authority on many points; and that, besides, her own liking or non-liking was the only criticism worth a doit to her. She has found life a hard battle, but there have been beautiful books and beautiful pictures to worthen it, and, best of all, a free spirit and a free heart to fight the demons; but now, perhaps— for she has a strange fore-feeling that she is singing the swan-song of her peace of soul, as she stands and takes a last look — now, perhaps, she is to go into bondage. A legend of the Finn gypsies flits across her memory. A true spirit dwelleth in the sun. Every child-girl can look up at it until she counts twelve summers, a

few later. They can stare right into the glowing heart of the mid-day sun in search of the God-spirit without blenching, for they are white in soul ; but as soon as they lose their innocence, as soon as they learn the mystery of life that men call sin, they lose the power, and when they try to see him they are blinded and tear-drenched by his fierce rays. A queer legend with a deep meaning. Ay, she has been able to look each man and woman in God's world in the face ; heart and soul have been free and untrammelled as a gypsy child's; and what awaits her today?

She cannot shake off the dread feeling of an evil destiny drawing near to punish her for the pride in herself that has kept her steps light to carry her over the muddy places. She rises wearily to her feet and goes out; the pigeons flutter aside from her path, and, as she avoids treading on the joins in the flagged path, another great yard rises before her visual memory, and she looks down.

Ay, there is the curl of orange-peel and the crumpled paper, but something is lacking — she tries to recall it — what can it be? Ah! a bit of pencil! As she steps out through the entrance gate a hansom pulls up with a jerk, and he advances to meet her. She has something in each hand, perhaps purposely. The driver notes her shabby serge gown, and the little patched shoe that shows beneath it, and looks for some startling set-off in the way of face or figure; but they are not of the kind to strike the common eye.

They turn up Bedford Place and walk silently on. He watches her face through his half-closed lids.

"Well!" he says, "you are not very communicative."

An underlying threat lurks in his tone; she feels it and flushes.

"There is not anything to say that I have not said before."

"Indeed! You might, for instance, say that you are glad to see me — that it is awfully good of me to fag up to this beastly God-forsaken hole when I might be cruising round the Isle of Wight. You don't think you could bring yourself to tell even the conventional fib, eh?"

"Why should I? I have told you as often what I do think as I have begged you to let me be. One is as useless as the other," with a touch of weariness.

They have reached Tavistock Square; a nursemaid has just come out He winks at her and slips her a florin; she unlocks the gate again; the place is almost deserted. He chooses a seat sheltered by some shrubs, and sits down. Clasping his hands on the top of his stick, he watches her with a strange mingling of affection and dogged determination.

"You look ill, thinner, more hungry-looking than when I saw you last, you obstinate little devil!"

“I am all right, if you would but let me be.”

“And that is just what I can't do ; I want you, little woman, I want you more than anything else in the whole world ; I 'd let everything else slide for a soft word from you.”

“Which you have no right either to give or demand.”

“Oh, for the Lord's sake, don't harp on that string again. You 've told me all that before. I am married, very much married, I owe all to my wife, etc. etc. Let us stick to facts — the great fact — you! If you only knew how much good you might do me, what an influence you have over me, how straight you could keep me. But you are like all the rest of your sex, selfish to the heart's core. You 'd let a man go to perdition before you 'd sacrifice an iota of your infernal purity — let him blow his brains out, because you hold your good name more worth than a man's life. Your good name, ha! ha! Who knows anything about you, or what are you to speak of? Take your own people; in a few years the young ones will be grown up and not care a merry damn about you, and as for your–“

She checks him by the passionate ring in her low voice, with its singularly clear enunciation:

“Leave them alone! What they are to me, or I to them, you are the last person in the world able to judge. I doubt if you ever had a clear unselfish feeling in your life. Say what you will to me, but leave them be” — with passion — “I won't bear it!”

“How you love them! And I have tried every way with you, coaxed as no mortal man ever coaxed before, bribed you all I know — it only remains to threaten you.”

She looks at him steadily; there is stinging contempt in her tone:

“I expected that from your letter; indeed I might have expected something of that kind from you in any case.”

“You drive me to it. I have tried to overcome your scruples — I have studied your wishes, endeavored to meet you half way- “

“There is no half way for a woman. There is one straight, clean road marked out for her, and every byroad is shame. Grant that it is absurd that it is so, that does not help her. She has to walk that one way unless she is prepared to give every man and woman a right to throw a stone at her ; and history tells us they don't stay their hands. I am putting it on the very lowest grounds; you” — with a fine scorn — “would fail to grasp a higher argument for her virtue.”

“Pah! No one need know anything about it. I'll buy you a little place; make it over by deed of gift; or you can go and study abroad. I'll settle so much on you. I can always make an excuse to get away. You could see your dear home-folk just the same. I won't say anything for my own sake; and who will be the wiser?”

“I would!” Her eyes are blazing and her voice is beyond her control. “Do you think, if I consent, if I am forced for some reason to go with you, that I would do that? Do you think I would lead a double life of lies, that I would make living a pretense of goodness? Go home and tell them fancied tales of my life, kiss them” — with a choked sob — “buy them with your money the trifles I take them now out of my earnings, look into their eyes, hear them tell me” — the tears are hanging on the ends of her lashes — “I am good and brave and dear, feel how proud they are of me, and know in my heart that I was a thing not fit for them to touch; play a part, lie with eyes and lips and life? No, rather sever every connection with them by one sharp blow; die to them at once and trust to their love and mercy to judge me in the after time.”

“Pshaw! heroics! You’d make a capital emotional actress; wonder you never tried it.”

There is a long silence.

“Well, now that you have cooled down a bit, what is your final say?”

“Great God, I tell you I won't! I can't! Oh leave me be, do leave me be!”

“Yes, you can, little woman ; or rather, yes you must, and you know it You are no fool, you err rather on the side of brains. You know that if you had dared you would have refused to meet me long ago, but your intuition told you I had a card in reserve, a trump card to play when you drove me too far, and now I am going to show it to you.”

He is opening a pocket-book.

“Show it to you, do you understand? not such a fool as to let you get it between your little brown hands, ha! ha!”

He takes out a letter; it is a little soiled. She is very white and scarcely draws her breath; once she looks at him, and her eyes are kindled with a deadly hate. He points to the name of the receiver and to the signature. He holds it so that she can read it, opens it ; there is a soiled, crumpled receipt in acknowledgment of money pinned inside. She reads with whitening face; a hurdy-gurdy outside the railings is grinding out

“Polly Witfoet, Polly Witfoet, lallallallallala!”

She starts, knitting her brows in vain endeavor to find what the tune brings back to her.

“Well!” he says, “have you seen enough? I have a few more letters from the same hand. Now, if I know you as I fancy I do, you will count any individual shame — mind that is your own term for it — as a small thing in comparison with the disgrace that will fall if I take any step about this little matter” — he is putting it carefully back — “and you will come!”

The wind rustles through the trees and scatters a shower of tinted leaves over them. They flutter on to her tightly-locked hands and shabby little hat, and rest on her lap like flecks of blood; and a great cry rises up in her breast of rebellion against the Creator of men. If she could only steal away to some quiet wood and lie down and die! let the brown leaves, with their deep stains, blood stains, cover her gently and hide her forever! Surely it would not be very hard to die? She has often felt her heart beat, she knows exactly where it is, a good long hat-pin would reach it.

He is watching her face intently.

“You are just in a mood to shoot me, or put an end to yourself, where's the good? You force me to be hard to you. You can't escape. I swore to have you. ‘All means are fair in’ You know the rest. If you put an end to yourself, I’ll put this thing through, so help me God I will. You may as well give in. I’ll make arrangements to go abroad, as your sensitiveness revolts against the more sensible arrangement and courts a scandal. I’ll let you know.” He gets up and some remnant of remorse stirs in him. He is angry, not with himself but with her for forcing him to speak and act as he has done. She is very pale, and her step is heavier than when she flitted through the museum; something buoyant has left her. She droops her head as she walks, she will never carry it in quite the old way again; insolently the women called it who disliked her, but it was the insolence of fearless integrity. He is sorry for her, and, now that he has gained the point he has been striving for, for the best part of a year, a little gnawing worm of a doubt begins to worry. Is it worth it all? Shall he let her off? Be bested by a woman? And this particular woman, whose love or liking he cannot gain, and whose affection he fancies he craves for more than that of any one he has ever known? No, he'll be hanged if he will. Kismet! it is written. And the hurdy-gurdy grinds on white-footed Polly's polka.

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He who has not seen Paris in May has not seen la belle in her freshest and prettiest guise; lilac-scented, and flower-crowned, with a fragrant chestnut spike for a scepter. Late one afternoon in this sweetest of months, the girl of the foregoing scene enters a private sitting-room in an hotel in the Rue de Rivoli. It is a drawing-room furnished in modified Louis quinze style. She has come in from a long drive in the Bois, and she who used to notice external things so closely has lain back in the hotel carriage, and let the vehicles with their freight of pretty occupants, Parisiennes, in all the freshness of dainty spring toilettes, the bonnes, the flaneurs, on the pathway, all the radiant glad crowd in whom the sensuous witchery of spring is working insidiously, pass her by, a blur of motion and color, as a stage scene may appear to a short-sighted person. She throws her

bonnet, gloves, and the parasol with dainty enamel and gold handle on to a couch, and sitting down in a chair at the window, closes her eyes wearily.

She has changed greatly in the between time. After all is said and done there is a great excuse for women's craze for dress. There is no beauty, except the beauty of absolute nude perfection that is not enhanced by it Wholly beautiful women are rare things, but a woman who knows how to accentuate her good points and tone down her defects by skillful blending of colors and choice of material may pass as a beauty all her days, may exact the homage of the sons of men, and excite the envy of the daughters; and is not this the salt of existence to many? To students of character she would have been at any time attractive; now she would hold the eyes of men of commoner stamp. She looks a personage. She is a finished study in the art of taste in dress, and she is one of the women who pay for the trouble; it is impossible to vulgarize her.

There is an expression in her eyes and set of mouth that was not there when she stood and bade good-bye, with a touch of humorsome sadness, to her friend Rhameses. She has passed through her ordeal by fire, and the sear of the iron is there in ineffaceable traces. In repose her face is a mask to the inner woman, one would be loth to disturb it ; there is something unapproachable about her. Sitting there motionless, a casual observer would say she is asleep, a nicer one would note how ever and again the delicate brows contract in thought. He was as astonished and proud of the transformation clothes effected in her outwardly, as disappointed at their effect on her inner self. She chose the right things in obedience to an innate sense of beauty and fitness, and wore them with the same ease as her old serge frock.

She accepted everything with the same irritating indifference. It stung him into efforts to impress her, with the disconcerting result that she made him feel underbred. She left him no fault to find, the things that irritated him most in her were rather praiseworthy than otherwise. She might have filled the position of a legitimate duchess, but as a mistress she was not amusing.

She remarked that some jewelry he brought her was vulgar, palais-royal, suitable for a cocotte. He took it back, and she evaded choosing any other on a plea of fatigue. She found fault with an omelette au chasseur at the Maison Dorée, and he had to allow she was right. She remarked, in reply to his taunting query as to where she got her fastidiousness, that a course of tea-dinners in aerated-bread shops did not necessarily blunt one's palate or deprave one's discriminate appreciation in finer feeding.

He was forced to acknowledge that a man may pay too dearly for having his own way.

Once only she had made what he called ‘a scene'; it was at St. Raphael. An American family, pleasant cultured people of the kind one meets seldomer in Europe than America itself, were staying at another hotel. They took a fancy to her. She touched on general subjects in such a bright individual way, with a passing gleam of humor, that it made her remarks worth listening to. But she avoided them when possible, especially the daughters. They put it down to 'inherited side' rather than a phase of individual temperament, and persisted in seeking her. They made up a party to visit the old Roman remains in the neighborhood, and he desired her to join it. The American man ‘knew a thing or two' about solid investments in western mortgages, and was worth cultivating. She refused point blank; commands and threats alike failed to move her, and she ended the discussion by saying: “You can make what excuse you will. I made no bargain to deceive any one, and I will not go. I have tried to avoid them; when that was not possible I have been as pleasant as it is left in my nature to be. If you send her up to persuade me I shall simply say, ‘Madam, I am not this man's wife, I am his mistress.’ Do you think then she will be anxious to continue the acquaintance?” He struck her on the side of the face, and he excused her on the score of migraine.

Late in the evening their high-pitched laughing voices, and the odd drawl that fits itself so well to a smart saying, rang up to her from the gardens below. They sent her a fragrant tangle of flowers with pretty regrets for her absence. She laid them gently aside.

She is kneeling at the open window, gazing out over the rustling woods and the white chateaux with the gaily striped awnings at the long windows; the thread of river, where the women bathe the linen, and gossip in voluble tones, winding its way to the quick sea

What are they doing, who are never out of her thoughts? How do they think of her? Have they taken her photo out of the prettiest frame in the shabby old room, with the untidy litter of writing materials and paint brushes? She can see every detail in it : Molly's old work-basket, with the frayed silken lining, and the pile of cheap socks that work into holes so quickly. They are in the midst of fogs, and she is surrounded by rose-tangled banks. Roses, ay! But the red spider gnaws at the rosebuds too. A rose bush they saw once comes back to her with a new meaning. She remembers how all the tender shoots were covered with the crawling cinnamon red insects, how they ate into the heart of the buds, how she had watered, syringed, and taken a delight in killing the nasty things, with their thread-like legs, because Molly

felt sorry for the roses. How plainly she can see her, with her clear true eyes, odd tender face, and pathetic droop of mouth. She used always to take her flowers, only a few narcissi or golden ‘daffys’, a pennyworth from the street comer; country thoughts astray in the vile streets of the modem Sodom. How she used to delight in them, talk to them, poor pretty things, as if they lived and understood I A fancy of hers from child days, when she looked for elves in the bluebells, and never plucked the ‘fairy fingers’ for fear of the good people's pinches. And now, great God! she is lost to them — ay, worse lost than if she were out there fathoms deep — smothered in the sand that the sea rolls in unceasingly. If she could only explain! but that she cannot; only crawl in once, and lie down like a stray cur. Cats and dogs and waifs of all kinds always sought shelter with them, and shared their scanty haphazard happy meals. Happy? No, no longer. They are surely miserable. That she has done; but what is their misery to hers? She meets her teeth in her arm, it is a sort of relief to counteract the agony of her soul by a pang of physical pain. The mild evening breeze, the monotonous note of the sea, the shiver of leaf, scent of night-plants, all seem to accentuate her misery, to bite the picture of the well-known room, peopled with the beings who are more to her than all the world beside, into her heart, so that the smart of it is almost intolerable. She rocks herself to and fro, and then looking up into the vast purple canopy overhead, as if trying to pierce the gloom, she cries with sobs, “Oh God! Christ God! if it be that in guise of a little mortal child you grew to manhood in the midst of poor suffering toiling humans, shared their poverty, saw their sins, their crimes, their mistakes; if you were weary as they with the heat and toil of daily labor, surely you will understand and have pity on my poor ones! Dear God-man! you who laid your hand on the head of the Magdalen in tender human pity, and forgave her because she loved much, help them! Let them forget me, even if their forgetfulness add to my Gethsemane! Oh, if there be any merit in anything I have ever done, I offer it up for them”

And the leaves just rustle, rustle, and the sea croons on, and the great blue canopy stretches away impenetrably, and no voice answers the poor trembling words wrung out from the heart that is sore and torn with the strongest affection of her life, and she finds relief in merciful human tears, the first she has shed since she has left them.

That night seems years ago, and the prayer echoes as the voice of a dead acquaintance. A knock at the door rouses her, and a German waiter enters with a card on a salver.

“Ze shentleman wish to speak with you, madame!”

Mr. Aloysius Gonzaga O'Brien.
7 Bachelor Walk, Dublin, 90 Marine Parade, Dalkey.

"Are you sure, Karl, that he asked to see me, not monsieur?"

"Oh yes, madame, ze shentleman have seen monsieur zis mornin' in ze shmokin' room, it is madame he vish to ze!"

She controls a start of surprise.

"Well, show him up here, Karl, in five minutes."

One of her presentiments has come to her. With the swift intuition that is almost second sight with some women, she knows the objects of his visit. She looks at the card again. It is characteristic of Dublin, and a damning satire as a cognomen for the man who bears it She knows that he is his man of business for Ireland. She has a difficult part to play, she must summon all her inwit to her aid, for he has not yet redeemed his promise to give her those fateful papers. She shivers, and her temples beat with hard quick throbs, but at his sharp knock she nerves herself to bid him 'come in' with steady voice. He enters with a swagger. He is not the man to see any need of deference to a woman for womanhood's sake, and surely not to one who is in an anomalous position. Now when he had the honor of an interview with the Countess of Derryguile about a lapsed tenancy, he was obsequiously prepared to kiss her ladyship's number seven shoe. And he could not do justice to her second best sherry, so eager was he to stammer 'yes, your ladyship' to every remark. But there was reason in that She remains seated, inclines her head a little, and looks at him in a way that disconcerts Aloysius Gonzaga O'Brien, lineal descendant of Brian Boru, with the blood of Milesian kings in the remoter past, and of his grandfather the pawnbroker, and his grandmother the chandler's daughter, who died in the odor of sanctity and left one thousand pounds for masses, coursing through his veins in the nearer present. It arrests his familiar greeting; it was not thus he had mapped out the scene when thinking of it.

"You wish to see me?" She has an uncomfortable way, at least so he feels, of letting her eyes rest on him; a way that does not tend to set him more at ease. "Won't you sit down?" pointing to a chair.

He draws one over to the table, and she notes the contrast between the chair with the delicate posies and fluttering love-knots of its brocade, and this man who twists his leg awkwardly round one of its dainty gilded legs. She notes his flushed porous skin, his heavy pink lids, half concealing eyes cunning as a hedgehog's, his fat jaw and gaping slit of a mouth with the protruding under-lip and slight red shade on his shaven chin.

With the quick sensitiveness of perception of every Celt, he feels that her thought of him is unflattering, and he anathematizes her mentally in racy epithets gleaned in early days when he played ‘tip cat’ in Meath Street Neither schooling at Tullabeg, the shades of the Four Courts, nor mixing in such polite society as his success in Dublin has procured for him has deprived him of the ugliest Dublin accent and a tendency to clip the ending of his words.

“I suppose yer wonderin' at my wantin' to see ye. Well,” as she makes no reply, “there 's no use batin' about the bush, I might as well say I came over to Paris for that purpose. Ye know I transact a dale of business for Mr. St. Leger in Oireland, an' I may say” — twisting a crested signet on his little finger — she wonders if it has three balls — “I have his interest intoirely at heart.”

“Of course, coupled with your own ; that is your business.”

“What’s that?” She does not repeat it, only watches him calmly.

He flushes a deeper red: “Well, as I waz sayin', I had an interview with her solicitors in London, an' she — they — we consulted and agreed I should try to see if we couldn't come to some arrangement. She is disposed, an' I think it very handsome of her, to overlook everything uv he goes back. Otherwise there’ll be a divorce an' a scandal; an' so I came over.”

“Yes. But why to me? You saw Mr St. Leger!”

He looks at her curiously. Now, is she making a shrewd guess in order to trip him into an admission, or does she know? It is safer to distrust people always.

“Yes, I saw him about another matter, sure ye know, I had to make an excuse.” A face given to open expression does not readily change, and a gleam of comical disbelief waves over hers. It stings him, he raises his voice a little. “Well, anyhow, ye know this business can't go on ; it 'ud just be his ruin intoirely. Yer clever enough to see that. Just look at the facts. Suppose she divorces him and he marries you . . . well, he 'd lose a power of money, an' you yerself wouldn't be much the better for it. All the water in the Seine wouldn’t wash ye white again, sure ye must know that!”

She grows very pale, but otherwise she makes no sign, the same inscrutable expression that seems now to be a subtly blended part of her features gathers on her face. It flashes through her mind, — did she read it? — something about an act of parliament having been necessary to stamp an attorney a gentleman. It would take more than that to effect the apotheosis of Aloysius Gonzaga O'Brien.

“That is rather an opinion for individual judgment, Mr. O'Brien. Surely it was not to tell me that, you came over to Paris. Would it not facilitate matters to come to the point?”

“Oh, faith I’ve no objection,” with an insolent laugh, “it's just how much will ye take?”

There is a long silence in the room; the sun stole in and lit up a group of porcelain Watteau shepherdesses and ogling swains on a cabinet behind him, so that it showed out in high relief, one distinct object in the swirling red confusion of all things that surged in her brain in the minutes that seemed so long to her. It brought her back to actual life; the simpering beaux and ridiculous Chloes with rose-ribboned crooks and rosetted hats on one side of their carefully coiffured heads strike her as a farcical note in a moment of tragedy, but never more will she be able to say:

“I don't understand how anyone can commit a murder.”

“I am perhaps dense, but I must ask you to explain more clearly what you mean.”

There is a sharper note in her voice, and mistaking her paleness for fear he grows in insolence.

“Oh thin, it's plain enough! They don't want any scandal, an' if ye just take a fixed sum an' sign a guarantee that neither you nor your people'll come up after with an action for seduction or the like, the whole matter's settled straight off, an' there’s no more to be said.”

“No, there 's not much more to be said. Only I think it was he who authorized you to make that proposal to me, not her men of business, they would hardly have chosen you for an emissary!”

“Well, iv id was so, what is that to you? Ye know yer own position, an' if ye get, say, one thousand pounds, ye can't complain that ye didn't get divilish lucky out of id. Yer a clever woman wid a stoile of yer own, for them that likes it” — filling his eyes brutally with the grace of her figure — “an' there 's many ways of starting in life wid a sum like that.” Deceived by her quiet, he continued with a leer:

“Ye might set up an –“

“An establishment in St John's Wood perhaps?”

“Twas something like that I meant.”

“You do my capabilities too much honor.”

She is fighting a brave fight, the nerve force that comes to her inexplicably in such times, making her strong as a man, stands to her. She rises and presses the electric bell. Karl answers it.

“Find monsieur, and say madame wishes to see him.”

She remains standing on the hearth, the logs are ready for lighting, and fir cones are mixed with them; she wonders if they

come from the Ardennes; if little children in sabots laughed as they gleaned a resinous harvest, and if they too called them ‘crows' prayer-books’, as she and her playmates did in childhood days, when the trees and the flowers and the beasts had each a message and the world was a wonder world. He enters and exchanges a rapid look with the other man, who is obviously ill at ease.

“I cannot congratulate you,” she says, with smiling contempt, “upon the finesse of your man of business. If I were you I should not employ him in future in affairs requiring delicate treatment — in which you didn't wish to be given away.”

He flushes, throws his half-smoked cigar into the grate, and tugs nervously at his beard. “Eh? I don't— I don't quite—”

“Understand? I will explain to you. As far as I understand, your wife is anxious to smooth this over, and you yourself, having weighed the profit and loss, think it best to agree. That I expected ; I knew it must come sooner or later. But I didn't expect you to employ a common cad to tell me so. Perhaps you think” — with a passionate, catch in her voice — “with him, that it is now impossible to insult me. But knowing what he can't know, I think you ought to have chosen a different means of conveying your wishes, been a little nicer in your choice of an instrument. Was it by your orders that he informed me that not all the waters in the Seine will wash me white — suggested a comfortable course of genteel vice as a future to me? Or did you merely suggest the thousand pounds and cry quits?”

He turns from the gaze of her eyes that seem to pierce his soul and vents his discomfiture on his tool.

“Damn it, O'Brien, of all the thick-headed, infernal Irish asses, you—“

“You couldn't change the man's nature,” she interrupts. “I have only one thing to say before I request Mr. O'Brien to leave the room, and that is, I make no terms — I require no bribe to buy me off, I am glad to go. You know why I came, and how ill you have kept your part of the bargain. Keep your promise, and you are free to leave me now if it suit you — but I touch no money of yours. I have no intention of sinking lower than you brought me in the eyes of conventional people, and you can be equally sure I shall not molest you. Bid him leave the room now, a few words will settle everything between you and me!”

Both men go out He returns shortly; she has not stirred. He is vexed that she should have probed the truth; relieved at the prospect of parting; for she shames him daily, and her presence is a constant reproach. Virtues that would be tiresome in a wife are doubly so in a mistress! He strives to carry it off easily.

“You have a stinging tongue; O'Brien won't forget you in a hurry; I'll remind him of it when he shows an inclination to put

on side.” He touches her hair in awkward attempt at a caress; he tells himself that he really was fond of her, but she wouldn't let him; she wouldn't be reasonable, all women are contrary devils.

“There’s no use in saying I am sorry now, that I wish to God I could undo the thing, is there?”

“No; it won't undo it, will it?”

He thrusts his hands into his pockets and tries to find an introduction to what he wants to say. He finds himself watching the toe of his patent boot instead. In despair he plunges boldly to the point.

“Look here. About this money. You’ve got to take it. I’ll lodge it in Glyn's bank and you can draw it as you like.”

“That won't make any difference. I have never changed any you gave me yet. What I have will pay my way.”

“Where are you going? I suppose you have settled?”

“Why let that concern you? You can be sure I shall neither add to my own sense of shame, or your need for remorse. You need not fear. Neither I nor mine will give you trouble.”

“I know that. I told O'Brien so. But it seems such a queer wind-up — I meant it to be so different, 'pon my soul I did. Anyhow, stay till tomorrow morning for the look of the thing — I’ll cross in the evening with him. Is there anything I can do— I—“

“Yes, one thing. You made me a promise when I came with you — I ask you to keep it now that we are going to end our — episode. Give me those papers! ' She says it so quietly that he does not dream that she is almost faint with suspense. It stings him that she always harps on that, that no thought of him occupies her.

“Well, I don't mind,” taking out his pocketbook, “now that we are going to cry quits, I may as well let you have them. You paid rather a big price for it, eh?” He holds them high above her head and looks tantalizingly at her; things have gone more smoothly than he imagined; he is in good humor. “Give me a kiss into the bargain; one of your own accord ; you are not as generous with your gifts as I was with mine.”

It says much for her strength of will that she masters the hysterical desire that prompts her to scream. She looks up at him, nay, more, puts her arms up round his neck and kisses him with a wan smile. It crosses her mind that Delilah must have smiled that way. He hands her the papers, closing her other hand over them with a softened amused look. She folds them with trembling eager fingers into spills and, lighting the wax candles, holds them to the flame, watching them curl into grey black ash. She sears her nails and there is a smell of singed horn; she rubs the last bit of ash between her fingers and bursts into a laughing sob of

relief. For the first time she realizes how great and long the strain has been, and how racking a pain she has in her head.

He has been leaning back in a chair watching her with a flickering smile. “Well, are you satisfied now?”

She cannot reply at once, the desire to laugh and cry at once is choking her.

“Yes, I am satisfied now. In a few hours I shall have looked upon your face for, I hope, the last time. I have been waiting for these or I should have gone long ago.”

“You are a tenacious little devil! and so I have no hold more on you — I suppose you'll go in the morning?”

“I'll go in the morning!”

“Well, I'll leave the hotel the same time; I can leave my traps in the cloak room. Are you going to cross?”

“No; I am not going to England!”

“Haven't you,” he asks it with a kind of fierce impatience, “one atom of regret? I haven't treated you badly whilst you have been with me, have I?”

She smiles her odd amused smile, but says nothing. He takes up his overcoat and goes to the door and hesitates; comes back and stands beside her:

“Well, Kismet! I’ll go. I fancy you’ll like that best. Won't you shake hands, little woman?”

She puts out her hand. “Oh yes, and I wish you no ill.”

He looks at her regretfully and goes out, opens the door again and puts in his head, saying:

“I'll order dinner for you, and tell Karl to put up my things — and God bless you!” The door closes quickly, and so the every-day follows the tragedy, and dinners must be eaten even if lives are wrecked.

She has finished packing, and her travelling hat and cloak and bag lie ready waiting. She has declined dinner and ordered some tea; the tray with the pretty china is still on the table. She is flushed with the excited sense of relief that fills her whole thought. She has made no plans as to where she will go or what she will eventually do.

She has a well-defined idea as to the course of action that will guide her future life, but she has not studied details. The Finn legend occurs to her again. Well, she can no longer look fearlessly into the eyes of the day god; there will always be a shrinking fear of hurt. All the blind faith in a beautiful future, the golden hopes that made climbing the hills such an easy task, have left her. Her dream of a White Knight waiting for her, if only she keep her spirit free and her heart clean, has been dispelled by her own action; she has smirched her white robe: never more can she stand waiting to meet her knight with fearless glad eyes. Foolish fancies of a girl, perhaps, but the sweetest and best of life lies in

its fancies. If it were not for them the dead weight of life would crush us in early youth. She utters her thoughts aloud, as if finding comfort in her own voice. She opens the long window and steps out into the balcony, and gazes out into the twilight, and up to the stars that shine faintly over the beautiful city. She is glad to be leaving it ; she has a strange sensation of breathing an unclean atmosphere in it. She wonders if it is peculiar to her.

Sometimes men, women, even streets, affect her that way. She has often conceived a repugnance to the very houses in an unknown street, to the faces of the women peering out from the windows; a loathing dread of the men who leered at her as they met her; and if she asked, "What is such a street?" the answer would explain her feeling. Beds in hotels and places have sometimes disturbed her in the same way, so much so that she has started up and rolled herself in her rug and slept in an armchair, because the sense of evil thoughts that never come to her otherwise seem to impregnate her as if the very bed held them; and she, highly sensitive as she is to the psychometrical influence of things, cannot but feel it. Paris, though it has been a dream of hers to visit it, to revel in the art treasures of the people of all dwellers on the globe most gifted with an artistic sense of the fitness of things, disturbs her in a curious way. She remembers how once in the private collection of an art connoisseur she came suddenly upon a tinted ivory Aphrodite, so perfect, so exquisite a piece of carving, that one could almost see the rounded bosom rise and fall with the breath that seemed to tremble through the parted lips; the roseate tinge of toes and palms, the play of light, the warmth of shadow in the beautiful curve of back, quickened the ivory into throbbing life. She recalls this woman smiling through her half-closed lids under the shade of a modern hat cocked insolently upon the ripples of hair that crowned her classic head. She remembers the outraged feeling of shame that sent the blood rushing to her face as she realized for the first time how vile a thing false art could become. She has never forgotten the effect it had on her: the stained ivory, the beauty of the limbs, the marvelous reality of the curled feather, the genius of the artist who debased his art to produce just a nude woman, an Aphrodite of the Boulevards. She has the same feeling here in this lovely city. It is as if she has a diabolical intuition of corruption underlying its beauty; the men sipping absinthe outside the cafés inspire her with dislike; the shifting green and opal changes of the liquid remind her of snakes' eyes, mocking reflets of ancient evil. She will seek some quiet sea village amongst a strange people, simple working people. She has an intense longing for a good sea-breeze, to blow away the atmosphere of the city. She feels so bruised, so shamed, and yet she asks herself, Why shame ? Is not that, too, a false conception

based on custom? No, not in her case. Her soul-soiling is not because she lived with him, but because she lived with him for a reason other than love — because it involved a wrong to another woman.

There is a knock at the door.

"Entrez!" she calls, stepping back into the room. A tall, massively-built woman comes in. She is a splendid creature, with deliberate, sensuous movements, of the type which has what is vulgarly called 'a fine presence.' A fur-trimmed cloak falling loosely back shows her black silk dinner gown; it is cut square, and is an admirable setting for her handsome throat and neck, that is white with the whiteness of flesh peculiar to red-haired women. Her forehead is broad, dazzlingly white and unlined, and the masses of her hair are waved loosely back from it, and twisted with a burnished copper crown at the back of her broad head. Her heavily molded face is unemotional, expressionless in its sullen calm ; the thin red lines of her lips droop at the corners, and her grey eyes look steadily, coldly out, with an air of weary inquiry.

The two women face one another, finished exponents of opposing types: one, insistent with nervous energy, psychic strength manifesting itself in every movement of her frail body, every fleeting expression on her changeful face; the other, a model of physical development, with a face and eyes admirably adapted to conceal rather than reveal her feelings or passions.

She is about to tell her visitor that she has mistaken the room, when she is stayed by a feeling that such is not the case. Fleeting images of forgotten scenes cross and clash through her inner vision — out of the chaos recognition must come — an anemic girl with drawling voice and Dublin accent — ah! now she knows. She does not heed the outstretched hand, a large, soft hand, with fingers that curl back at the tips and a managing thumb, she only flushes painfully.

"You remember now," says the other. Her voice is thin, flutelike, odd, coming from such a throat. "I knew you at once; you are too distinctive to change."

"I did not at first, I could not place you; it is a long time, and you have changed greatly."

"Yes, in more than appearance."

She makes no reply. She scarcely knows what to say. Her position is a difficult one. She feels the grey eyes searching her face; their owner puts an end to her perplexity, saying:

"May I sit down? I saw you come in yesterday; I was in the hall. I have been trying to see you ever since."

"To see me?" Now the release is near, the strain of the last months is telling on her; she resents the intrusion. "I think you would not if…"

“I knew, you mean! You are not changed. But I do know, that is just why. O'Brien is a connection of my husband's; he told me why he came over here. Your — they have all three gone to some place, something rouge — “

“Moulin rouge?”

“Yes, that's the place. I wanted to see you for myself.”

The girl looks at her with a touch of defiance, and her eyes bum somberly. The remembrance of a letter received a few days before stings her anew. Is this to be part of her punishment? Is every proper woman she ever knew to come and anoint her wound with well-meaning, bungling fingers, and advise her what ointment to employ? No, a thousand times no; she will stop it at once and forever! There is a new sharpness in her voice as she remarks:

“Under existing circumstances I am at a loss to know why. There can be but one reason — a kind intention on your part to persuade me to repentance. The day before yesterday I got this letter,” she selects it from a heap of papers she has been sorting, and twists it in her feverish fingers, “from Mary 0’Mahony, you know, the Queen's counsel's wife. She enclosed a medal and an introduction to a convent where they receive Magdalens of a better class, with means enough, in fact, to indulge in genteel contrition. They find them occupation, and, I presume” — with bitterness — “white sheets to stand in. No doubt she meant it kindly; but I fail to see why she or any other woman should stand in judgment over me. What can such a woman as Mary know of motives? reared in a convent school, married at seventeen with absolutely no knowledge of life; and who has spent her time ever since in nursing babies and going to missions, and never reads a book except under the direction of her father confessor. If you are actuated by any such motives, I beg you to spare yourself and spare me. You do not know my reasons, and I shall most certainly not explain them.”

There is silence; the little timepiece chimes out ten silvery peals. She is standing near the fireplace; the logs are glowing from red to white, and the fir-cones sputter and fill the room with an aromatic smell. She is very pale, her eyes seem sunken, and one expression chases the other with baffling quickness.

The woman in the chair is holding her face in the palm of one big white hand, resting her elbow on the table. Her eyes dwell on the other's face, and there is a soft wistfulness in their expression. The pupils are larger; as a rule they narrow into a speck when she looks at any one. She says slowly: “You are wrong then; I had no such intention. I heard you were leaving tomorrow, and I wanted to see you. I have never forgotten you; you were younger than I was, but you influenced me…”

The girl interrupts her incredulously: “I?”

"Yes, you. I never forgot that scene in the old school at Rathmines. I told you you were a fool, do you remember? That was the outcome of home training; in my own heart I envied you your courage. When O'Brien told us, I had heard a rumor about it before I left, I…" — with hurried speech and softening rush of vowels — "I envied you. I envy you now, though I don't understand why you did it, or why you are going away from him. Yours isn't the face of a woman leaving a man for whom she has sacrificed all because she loved him; I think you are glad. Maybe you wonder at the word I use, but I say it again, I envy you the self-reliance that gave you courage to do it — and courage to face life again after having done it — alone, as you mean to do. Sure, I could make two of you" — rising to her feet and stretching out her magnificently modelled arms, whilst her words trip one another with tremulous passion — "and I haven't a spark of your courage. I am a coward, just a soft thing beside you. I would give all I ever dreamt of to have it or your truth. I am a living lie, acting a lie daily, and even if I could, I wouldn't change it; I am afraid of public opinion. Do you remember how you used to laugh at things and say: 'Bother what people say'? I used to study you and wonder if you really meant it, or if it was only for bravado's sake. You knew papa, and our home. You knew our life. We were scrupulous in the performance of religion, and bigoted to our souls' core; we gave to charities, when there was a subscription-list in the papers, and slunk by our poor relations in trade. We toadied and slandered, and the biggest ambition we had in life was to move to Fitzwilliam Square, and be presented at the Castle. No snubbing was cutting enough to deter us from trying to attain it. Bah, you know so-called Dublin society better than I do; you know girls who go year after year to the Drawing-Room in cotton-backed satin trains; pinch and save at home to find dresses for dances; walk Kingstown pier season after season and set their caps at every stray military man, and when their good looks are going and regiment has followed regiment without success, they fall back on an attorney at home with a decent practice, and pretend they loved him all the time. We are no better than the rest; you made me think first; I used to want to write to you, but mamma discouraged it — you were not well enough off to make it worthwhile. Papa got on well; he stood in with the Cardinal in politics, and didn't offend the other party. When I was twenty I went to an aunt in Liverpool; she had money. There I met the man I cared for. He was only first officer on board a steamer, and a Protestant into the bargain. I was very happy as long as it lasted; but he wrote home and my father came and fetched me, and I was bundled back as if I were a girl of twelve; sent to Rathfaman Convent on a visit (it was Retreat week), and I hadn't courage to rebel. Nuns and priests and family

clutched at me as if I was a lost soul; you would have laughed at it, but I had not read or thought then as I have since, to quiet my misery, A Protestant of no family and no means, a heretic who couldn't buy a dispensation to marry in this life, and was bound to peril my soul and certainly lose his own in the next. Is there such fanatical bigotry anywhere under the name of religion as with us? And sure I knew so well that if he had money or high county connections, they 'd have jumped at him, ay, even if he had been a fire-worshipper. I used to think of you sometimes, I was so lonely, and I knew so well what you would have done. He wrote to me, and after that my mother stayed home from Mass to open his letters whilst I was out of the way. Then he came over, and she never left me alone a second with him; and he was going out to Brazil. Then I got courage, and I wrote to him myself, but I never got an answer. I know since; it was stopped."

How the woman is changed; her grey eyes are gleaming with light, and her great white chest is heaving with a passion of resentment.

"Papa and mamma and the priests made up a match, and I was married to a man I detested and detest still. But all Catholic Dublin came to the Cathedral; I have never put my foot in it since. The Cardinal married us, and there were seven priests at the sacrifice, and the nuns sent me pious congratulations and a crochet quilt It made me sick of the very form of religion, of life, of everything. I hate their shams and the snobbery of the people I meet, but what could I do? Two years ago my aunt left me her money. There is great power in money to a woman, and I knew more than before — I knew how to use it The marriage laws as to separate property for women in Ireland are as good as void, because few women care to insist on them. The priests don't encourage independence in women; when they lose this hold on them they'll lose their hold on humanity. A farmer's wife in country parts of Ireland would find it difficult to lodge or draw money without her husband's signature, the fools! And no Zulu strikes a harder bargain for cows with his prospective father-in-law than the average Irishman for the girl's dowry. They are huckstered and traded for, and matches made up for them, just the same as they bargain for heifers at a fair. The fortune is handed over to the husband to use as he pleases, and the priests get an ample percentage on it I made it understood that no penny of mine would go out of my keeping. I refused to share in any dealings. I am a good business woman now. My babies died, and at my death neither family nor husband nor church'll benefit; every penny of it will go to him or his. That's my satisfaction. My case is not an uncommon one in Ireland. Most of the women find their consolation in piety, and a few in drink, and neither stops a mortal heartache." She has dropped into her seat again, and,

leaning down her head on her arms, begins to cry with deep, quiet sobs. The girl goes over; she has not once interrupted her passionate torrent of words. She smoothes the thick hair that waves so richly up from the white neck. It strikes her that there are some very handsome things about this woman as she lies there with her face concealed, and only her quivering white throat and grand heaving shoulders, and little pink ears, that sit so prettily to her head, visible.

"Poor thing, poor big woman, perhaps you will feel better now that you have told some one. I think you came to me because you thought that I too loved as you do, and that I had courage to put all aside for it. I do not know if I would" — gravely — "I have never been tried. It was not for that. Why, it concerns no one to know; excuses and apologies are always a mistake. The best is to bear bravely the consequences of one's acts; that is the only way to spare others from suffering for them. Ssh! there, there, don't sob so! Don't! Did you think I could help you perhaps?"

The red-crowned head bows in assent "I am afraid I know of no silver slippers to walk the thorny way. My own doctrine is a hard one. Endure, simply endure. Forget yourself, live as much as you can for others, get a purchase of your own soul some way, let no fate beat you. In a few years what will it all matter? — not one cent, whether you have loved or been loved, been happy or unhappy. We have all got to thole our assize of pain. Perhaps everything is for the best, though one can't see it. Just think! Is not my lot a harder one than yours? Remember, for all my life to come I have to carry the loathing of one portion of it with me; it will sour the bread and bitter the drink of all my days. But I will not let it beat me for all that I would not talk of myself to you now but that it may be in hard hours to come you will, as you say you have done in the past, think of me; and it may help you to forget your own fate to realize another's harder one."

The older woman looks up out of her red-rimmed eyes at the grave face, with its strange half smile, of the younger, and smoothes the slim hand between her large ones; she does it awkwardly as if caressing is rare to her fingers.

"I have always thought that each man or woman should bear as far as possible the entire effect of his mistakes or sins. It used to be a fancy of mine that if I were unfortunate enough to bring an illegitimate child into the world I would never disown it or put it away. I suppose it is my lack of orthodox belief which makes me unable to see that a bastard is less the fruit of a man and woman's mating than the child of a marriage blessed by priest or parson. To my poor woman's logic the words of the clergy have nothing to do with the begetting. I know men think differently; they don't seem to realize that their physical and mental

peculiarities, their likeness, body and soul, is stamped on the one as well as on the other. They rarely give them so much as a thought, at best seven shillings a week. And yet they will strive and toil, love, ay, sin, for the puniest specimen of humanity assigned to them by religion and law. If I had such a child" — with a lightening of eyes — "I would call it mine before the whole world and tack no Mrs. to my name either. I would work for it, train it up to respect and love me, explain to it, as soon as it had understanding enough to grasp my meaning, the wrong I had done it in men's eyes, teach it to bear its part bravely in the world, and hold its head high amongst men, to laugh at the want-wit inconsistency that forgives the man that begat the brat and treats with pitiless scorn the helpless result of his fathering. It is an unwritten law of society that the woman who strays from the narrow path assigned to her shall never walk again in the way of honor. And if nowadays she has no scarlet letter tacked to her gown to mark her from her sisters she is none the less doomed. Doomed to choose between two roads. Either she must be a hypocrite and play the penitent Magdalen and be driven to despair by the sanctimonious pity of zealous women of second-rate virtues and untempted honor or . . . Believe me, the Magdalen at Christ's feet had an easy road to repentance. But think of the poor soul who tells her sins to His vicar on earth or his wife. Think of the dismal platitudes tinctured with the world's opinions, the exhortations to repentance pointed with a hint to keep her place as a sinner. If she is of the kind to rebel at the dreary road Christian charity indicates to her, she is free to seek the broad road to destruction as a pleasanter alternative. She is a prey to every man who thinks she has given him a pre-emptive right to her person, a target for every woman to shoot at with arrows dipped in the venom the best of them have in their nature.

"You look questioningly at me? Your eyes query which road I shall take; why should I tell you, why should I talk to you at all? I seek pity, help, friendship from no one. And yet because you understand me well enough to offer me nothing but simply to come to me as a woman to a sister woman, I will tell you. I shall take neither. I shall apologize to no man, court no woman's friendship, simply stand by my own action, and I defy them to down me, and that is what I would teach every woman."

"Is it true you refused to accept any?"

"Terms? Yes, it is true. Do you think I fear?" Not one whit. No power on earth, no social law, written or unwritten, is strong enough to make me tread a path on which I do not willingly set my own foot The world owes every man born into it bread, and no more; no man need starve, but the hungry man or woman must buy his bread at the world's terms — work. I cannot demand the place I would have sought in it before; my character

or want of it, comme vous voulez is against me; but I can get a living and I mean to. I know more than the average woman, ay, more than the average man; and I have intuition — he hasn't. My fingers are as deft at woman's work as the most conventional jade's who ever trimmed a bonnet. I can do most things I try to. I never yet met ten men or women together without finding that five of them either knew less or were weaker in will or personal magnetism than I am. Those five will give me a living, I shall get it honestly, give them more for their money than anyone else, and when it is a question of value to be received, believe me, the character of the giver is of mighty little consequence to those who are the gainers. That is the story of the world. There is no power strong enough to crush a man or woman determined to get on, or who knows how to die if needs be. It is a stale truism that nothing succeeds like success."

"But that is all so hard, dear; don't you want to be happy?"

She smiles sadly back to the tear-drenched grey eyes with their look of pitiful questioning.

"Happy, what is happiness? The most futile of all our dreams, the pursuit of a shadow, the legacy of a forgotten existence bequeathed as a curse to lure men from peace to despair. The nearest approach to it is absolute negation of self, to think, work, live for others round each day as if one is to close one's eyes at night for the last time. Life is far too short, dear woman, to run after happiness. Stand on your own feet, be a burden to no man, find your work and do it with all the might of your being, and men will give you a full measure because you neither need nor ask it of them, for that is their nature. Do you know I don't think people realize how much of the world belongs to them. All that has been written, or said, or sung, or lived, has been lived for us of today. It is ours. No monarch yet has been powerful enough to hold a monopoly of a sunshine, of the varying beauty of the seasons, the sheen of moonlight on rippling water, the stain on the leaves at fall-time, the dappling shadows in the woods, the laughter of little children. All that is best, and strongest, and most beautiful, because most love-worthy" — smiling triumphantly — "in the world is a common inheritance, and I mean to take my share of it. The world is full of pictures that no Czar can confine to a gallery, full of unwritten comedy with the smiles trembling in the balance, with the tears and tragedies deeper than any ever staged by managing mummer. If men are miserable it's because they pursue the shadow and leave the substance, run like the old crone in the fairy tale all round the world in search of the sunshine instead of opening the windows of their souls to let it in. We are all so busy building up wretched little altars to hold the shabby gods of our devotion, that our years pass away and we are laid to rest without ever having tasted

life for the span of a day. No Russian peasant bows more humbly to his ikon than does the average man and woman to the mangy idols of respectability, social distinctions, mediocre talent with its self-advertisement and cheap popularity. Great God! think how many miss a glorious sunset they might see from the doorstep because it is genteeler to peep over the window-screen! I wish I could start a crusade and preach a new gospel to all my weaker brethren, who have suffered and sinned and are being driven to despair for the sake of their pasts. I would make them arise with renewed hope; teach them to laugh in the faces of the hackneyed opinion of the compact majority who are always wrong ; stir them to joy of living again; point out to them well-springs of wisdom and love, that no speculator on the world's change has power to make a comer in; prove to them that the world is to each of us if we have canning or cunning, enough to take our share of it; and that when all is said and done there is no particular kind of maggot to feed on the king any more than the peasant."

Her voice has dropped to a whisper. She has been clothing the thoughts of months into words and she has completely forgotten her audience of one. The latter is looking at her with eager eyes and parted lips, and when the girl, roused from her thoughts, smiles at her, she draws her down and holds the throbbing head to her heart

"You see," she says, lifting her head, "I can't help you. You must find yourself All the systems of philosophy or treatises of moral science, all the religious codes devised by the imagination of men will not save you — always you must come back to yourself. That is your problem, and one which you must solve alone. You've got to get a purchase on your own soul. Stand on your own feet, heed no man's opinion, no woman's scorn, if you believe you are in the right If every human being settled his own life there would be no need for state-aided charity. Work out your own fate, and when your feet are laid together, and your hands folded, and perhaps a silver piece laid on each eye, and those to whom you have stood nearest will hasten in all decency to lay you out of sight, the best they will know to say of you will be: 'She never troubled any one.' Go, big woman, and if you find other women weaker, teach them to be sufficient to themselves — give of your largesse, but hold your own soul in the hollow of your hand and give no man a mortgage on it. It is getting late; they may come back."

"And they're welcome to. I am glad I came to you. I was hungry for some word stronger and warmer to my heart than I get out of books, that bothered me with the virtues and woes of dead saints and never touched the living woman within; that told me to trample on the natural feelings of my being as if existence is a

crime and human love a sin. Oh! you dear little soul, am I not to know where you'll be at all? I 'd like to tell you how I get on. And if you are sick, or perhaps want someone, I would like to do something for you."

"Would you?"

"Ah then I would!"

The girl rises and takes a leather photograph case out of her bag. She points to one.

"If I give you her address, will you go to her and tell her of me? Say I will write in some weeks' time."

"I will."

"Thank you. There is the address, if you can go to her. And now let us say good-bye. I am tired, and tomorrow I have my journey before me. I shall sleep in that chair. Thank you for coming, you big, soft, foolish woman. And I used to think you a hard girl! Don't you be afraid for me, I am not afraid for myself There are no dragons in the world nowadays that one cannot overcome, if one is not afraid of them, and sets up no false gods."

"Good-bye!"

She nestles with tears in her smiling eyes into the big woman's arms, kisses her back, and pushes her gently out of the room. The meeting has touched her, helped her to formulate her vague ideas, given her, as it were, a friendly set-off on her way.

The fire has burnt out, and the grey ashes lie in a heap on the tiles. She turns to the window; the still night has a fascination for her. The city clocks are booming out the death-knell of the day in deep tones, and the one in the room chimes out a silvery accompaniment like the laugh of a woman through a chorus of monks.

She wraps herself in a shawl and sits watching. One great star blinks down at her like a bright glad eye, and hers shine steadily back with the somber light of an undaunted spirit waiting quietly for the dawn to break, to take the first step of her new life's journey.

Elenore Abbott – Rose Valley

Michael Brownstein

FROM THE MOUTH OF HE WHO USED TO BE

I used to own the cobalt in the sky
and the deserts beneath the ocean,
the glow worms within silver glacier,
the blue mass between the red tide.
I owned the leases to the foothills
that made the rivers strong, smooth
quartz blurred by my Fountains of Youth
(and there were many Fountains of Youth).
I was in charge of the birds and flying reptiles.
I liked the great dodo best, and passenger
pigeons. It was I who immortalized them
into stone and sand, bone and sculpture.
Do you not see the last of the African elephant
crossing the wastelands I built from scratch.
Yes, I owned them, too, and the scorpions
with and without their armor of fire.
I still own the Museum of Awesomeness.
Come visit me sometime. There still remains
much for us to watch quicken and die.

Europe, a Prophesy, by William Blake

Paul Murgatroyd

SHAME!

As he gazed, tight-lipped, at the government poster, young Alf Brown was made to feel that he just had to join up and go and fight for king and country. On it a little girl with long auburn hair and ruddy cheeks, just like his Katie, was sitting on her father's knee and asking: 'Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?' Her shamefaced father was clearly sorry that he had been a shirker, while at his feet his son was showing the right spirit by playing with his toy soldiers. Alf couldn't bear the thought of disappointing his Katie like that, especially because her mummy had died giving birth to her and she really needed a proper father she could be proud of. Seeing him in uniform would make her light up the room with that sunshine smile.

Alf thought of his poor Katie several months later, as he drowned helplessly, centimetre by centimetre, in liquid mud, after being blown into a shell-hole during a futile attack on the German trenches. For over three hours he groaned for her, as well as himself, while he was swallowed by the septic slime, his only company a bowing skeleton and a blown off arse with eels of entrails.

Ten days after Alf joined up his pretty Katie, her skin clammy and blue, had died in a pool of milky diarrhoea. She had caught cholera from the tainted water in the slum where his mother was bringing her up for him.

collage by Peter Van Belle

John Dorroh

Highland Diner Parking Lot Early One Sunday Morning

If you squeeze my manatee
a dream comes out: woman

in sequined blue dress, dancing
on skates with half-fish man,

his caudal fin hour-glassing
into firm piscine muscle, standing

upright, attempting clutch of torso
with catfish grin; her expression reveal-

ing determination, an audience gather-
ing, clapping itself into a wave

of frenzy. There is still time for
breakfast harbor, undone dreams

folding themselves into tight knots
for some other bedtime escapade.

John Dorroh

Dream Sequence

Three men tried to sell me bad mutton
but I could smell it three meters away.
I had two cats under my arms, a white one
under the right arm and a black under the left.
My house was surrounded by water from a doomsday
rainstorm and Shirley Casteel was calling my name
from a second-story window. The door was locked
and the cats didn't understand what was going on. They
started to claw me so I dropped them like hot potatoes.

My doctor was in a glass cage and had my lab results
but he couldn't talk, just opened his mouth real wide
like a bullfrog. I kicked in the glass, shards showering
the sky like a small city with money to waste on fireworks.
"Is the news bad?" I yelled at him. "Make an appointment,"
he said.

I needed a bathroom in a bad way; found myself in a creepy
old house like the one in the Adams family. Three Goth kids
sat on the bottom steps yakking about their disgust with American
culture, making plans to form their own private society. I asked
if they knew where the bathroom was and the Goth girl with two
rings in her nose told me to take a leak right there on the floor.
A lady in a hot pink duster grabbed my hand and led me up a spiral
staircase to the men's room where I had to negotiate with a high-tech
commode: when I flushed it, out sprayed water, which was midnight
blue.

Me and three friends were roller-blading 30 mph through my
home town, and a cop told us to slow down, be aware of the parade,
which was ambling down the street. We stopped at a wooden picnic
table for margaritas and beer. I didn't have any money to pay.

Sesshu Toyo, landscape with river and mountains

PETER VAN BELLE

THE UNTRAMMELED BRUSH

Cultivating the accidental in visual art

Alan Watts, in one of his lectures, mentioned a Zen monk who would get drunk on rice wine, dip his long hair in ink, and splash it across a large piece of paper. Then he'd decide what sort of landscape he wanted to make and add the finishing touches.

Leonardo da Vinci advised artists to stare at stains on walls made by fungus or salts until they revealed animals, people, or landscapes.

The English art teacher Alexander Cozzens would dip crumpled pieces of paper in ink and make blots to show how his students could get ideas for landscapes without having to rely on nature.

The French writer Victor Hugo would drop all kinds of liquids: coffee, tea, and even his blood onto paper, and turn them into fantastic scenes or monsters (as you can see below).

Victor Hugo, a Night Kobold

The first three artists, like so many others, sought to escape from the burden of setting down the first strokes of a masterpiece, to relieve their conscious minds of the responsibility of creation. Victor Hugo, on the other hand, seemed intent on flushing out demons from his subconscious. I'd like to look at what drives what one Chinese critic called "the untrammeled class", starting with its earliest mentions, in Chinese art.

China and Japan

The Chinese artist mentioned by Alan Watts is likely Wang Mo, also called Wang Po Mo (Wang Ink Thrower). He was mentioned in a Treatise on Painters of Renown published in 840 AD and categorized as one of the untrammeled class. Watts refers to him as a Zen, or more accurately Ch'an, monk.

Ch'an stresses spontaneity and action devoid of a goal. In art the essence of the moment must be caught, with absence of the artist's ego. To achieve spontaneity, the least possible number of strokes must be used. So with a few strokes of a brush, a boat is suggested, which then also suggest a lake or a river, which in turn evokes serenity. You can see an example of this in the painting by the Japanese artist and Zen student, Sesshu Toyo on page 73, especially in the way he suggests the boat with the fishermen to the right of the hut.

Capturing the essence of the moment also captures the essence of being, and hints at hidden links between elements in that landscape. With these concepts we arrive at the Chinese philosophy of Daoism, whose adherents seek to find and use a hidden order behind the hidden chaos of nature.

To painters like Sesshu Toyo, and his master, Tensho Shubun, as well as Chinese artists such as Wang Wei, painting was far more a religious act than an aesthetic one. The landscape, which started off as a backdrop to Buddhist texts, came into its own during the Tang dynasty (618-906), generally seen as one of the high points of Chinese civilization. Yet, at the same time, the landscape was a way of avoiding the turmoil of human society. In the case of the painter Zhu Da, this might've saved his life, as I will explain later on.

Many untrammelled artists pop up in Chinese and Japanese art. One of them was Wen-Tung (1018-1079) who stopped using a brush and started painting with his fingers. Spontaneity in painting became a hallmark of the individual genius, in contradiction to principles of Chan Buddhism.

From the Song dynasty, however, more discipline was expected from painters, though chroniclers would still pay lip-service to the idea of spontaneity. Closer examination of works of that time show evidence of alterations and corrections.

The Song dynasty painter Jing Hao outlined the principles of painting his essay on landscape painting. He tells of an old sage who outlines the six principles of painting:

Qi: spirit
Yin: harmony
Si: thought
Jing: scenery
Bi: brushwork
Mo: ink

Yet the sage continues that it isn't beauty which should be sought, but the spirit of what is portrayed. The idea, not the appearance. This is what makes much of their art so ethereal. They appear as fleeting as thoughts.

Here too, we arrive at concepts from early psychoanalysis. The dichotomy between the concept of physioplastic art (representing nature) and ideoplastic art (representing ideas). Spiritual art, such as icons, the art of Ancient Egypt, and Tibetan Tulkus, are typical examples of ideoplastic art. Ancient Greek and Roman statues on the other hand are examples of physioplastic art. Nowadays we tend to use the terms realistic and fantastic art, though these terms are less precise in my opinion.

During the Yuan dynasty (the Mongol occupation) painters started to move away from traditional ways and some even adopted Western styles.

One artist from the Ming dynasty, however, would have a far-reaching influence on future generations. Xu Wei (1521-1593) was a playwright, a poet, as well as a painter. He started as a child prodigy, but after the death of his parents in his early teens, his fortunes nose-dived. He failed his provincial examinations, which meant he could not get an official post. Like so many who were in the same predicament, he turned to the arts, though he constantly lived in poverty. After the imprisonment of his patron, he began to show signs of madness. His painting style was known as "splattered ink". An example is shown below and on page 78.

Fragment of painting by Xu Wei

Zhu Da, also called Bada Shanren (Man of Eight Great Mountians) was clearly influenced by Xu Wei and Wang Po Mo. He would only paint when drunk, use his hair, either loose or tied in a bun and headbutt the paper, while screaming and grimacing. This could've been a ruse, however. He was the descendant of a Ming prince, which made him very suspicious in the eyes of the Manchus who'd taken over from the Ming dynasty when Zhu Da was a young man. For a while he retired to a monastery on the Fengxin, but then started behaving like a madman. Despite these antics, he was always able to refine his pictures after the first untrammeled phase (see below and cover of magazine). His specialty was a certain kind of bird, always perched on a rock or branch (see below), but never in a natural manner. On the cover the bird on the left looks completely out of balance, and the one on the right looks contorted.

Painting by Zhu Da

Xu Wei, grapes, collection Palace Museum, Beijing

We have to be careful not to get blind-sided when looking at the artists I mentioned in the previous paragraphs. Though these scholar-artists were at times revered, at the same time there existed a class of professional artists, who, while staying true to the themes of their colleagues, sought to make their pictures as physioplastic as possible (see Shen Nanpi - back cover). In certain official chronicles of the time, the works of scholar-artists were even dismissed as irrelevant and second-rate.

The Western Approach

In Western art we see a similar, somewhat monolithic, evolution of art, at least from the Middle Ages on. Changes usually followed technical discoveries (oil paint, perspective, etc.) During the Middle Ages, art was ideoplastic, the emphasis on representing Christian lore, the consequent style seeping into secular works, like song books and histories.

From the Renaissance, however, came the desire to represent nature accurately. Art, in a sense, became emancipated from its spiritual ties, and not just art, but also the artist. Where in Eastern art it was important to produce art without the ego. In Western art, the individual genius became all-important.

The latter was enthroned by the Romantic Movement. The cult of the individual vision was born, one which would lead to other worlds or at least the unexplored depths of the soul. Some of those that went furthest along this road are William Blake, and Henri Fuseli. Yet at the same time this vision had to be represented more or less realistically, at least for the time being. Equally, spontaneity wasn't seen as particularly relevant.

One artist who could be compared to Zhu Da or Xu Wei is Victor Hugo, though he was mainly a poet and prose writer (of among others Les Miserables and Le Notre-Dame). Telling though, that his creations all seemed so sinister.

Victor Hugo, the Octopus

There was, however, also Alexander Cozzens. Cozzens felt that artists needed to free themselves from copying from old masters or nature. He sought, especially in the training of his son, to stimulate the artist's imagination by making random dots or blots on paper. In 1785 he published New Method of Assisting the Invention of Drawing Original Composition of Landscape. Yet, looking at some of his works, one can see his blots aren't all that random, but they do look similar to the paintings by Sesshu Toyo. One reason for this evidence of deliberation is that ostensibly random patterns are influenced by subconscious and therefore risk becoming repetitive and monotonous over time.

Alexander Cozzens – a blot: Landscape with Boat

The difference in attitude between the Western and Eastern approaches to the accidental are up to now striking. Cozzens would never have suggested a painter should get drunk or paint with his hair.

One artist who knew about Cozzens' ideas was J.M.W. Turner. His works may give the impression of accidental daubs and smears, while in actual fact his technique was very controlled and disciplined, for example using underpainting. What he portrayed was the chaos of reality, but he did it in a very meticulous manner.


J.M.W. Turner – Rain, Steam, and Speed – National Gallery

As the nineteenth century went on, the avant-garde emerged, that is, artists deliberately separating themselves from the mainstream. This counter-current splits into different streams, constantly merging and dividing.

Surrealism seems a prime candidate to be considered "untrammeled" and some painters like Max Ernst and especially André Masson used automatic drawing, and other random techniques. Automatic drawing has also been used by those who dabbled in the occult, like the sadly neglected English painter Osman Spare.

Yet the movement that comes closest to being untrammeled is Action Painting, made famous by Jackson Pollock. Pollock claimed his dripped canvasses were works from his subconscious. The critic Paul W. Kroll, on the other hand, suspected he got his ideas from Wang Po Mo and Zhu Da. Mark Tobey is one artist who actually studied Asian art and philosophy. Yet his works seem to me to be closely related to calligraphy, rather than to Chinese or Japanese painting.

Sigmar Polke went even further, mixed chemicals with paint on the canvas. At a certain point you have to ask yourself if in that case the artist ceases to be a creator. In Polke's case, he tilted the canvas, so even in this process there was an element of deliberation.

The Transcendent Function

And here we arrive at the question: what is untrammelled and why?

Well, to cloud the issue even further I'd like to bring in art by non-humans. We would expect animals to be more untrammeled than us rational humans, and it is unlikely they'd let their ego (or superego) get in the way. This was one point of criticism that the poet and critic Randall Jarrell used against the abstract expressionism movement.

In 1913 Nadezhda Ladygina-Kohts conducted a simple experiment on a chimpanzee called Joni: she gave him pencil and paper. Joni started making marks on the paper, but he did it with an unexpected degree of concentration.

This experiment was repeated in 1951 and in 1956 at London Zoo by Desmond Morris and a chimpanzee called Congo.

Painting by Congo, the chimpanzee

Morris's conclusion was that Congo's works weren't made haphazard, but showed an interplay of repetition and variations of patterns.

What these chimpanzees seemed to have, and the artists who tried to be untrammeled seem to look for, is what Jung called the Transcendent Function: a bridge from the subconscious to the conscious. Unfortunately this bridge is often difficult to find. Many of Cozzens' students, for instance, failed at his technique. Watts in his lecture said that an untrained person would just make a mess if he used Wang Po Mo's technique and that there is more to spontaneity than caprice.

The untrammeled would seem to be a compromise every artist seeks between the seemingly boundless, but chaotic, creativity in their subconscious, and their conscious mind which has to present the products of it to the outside world. The subconscious will always assert itself one way or another, but it always needs a conscious mind to given its contents shape.

Jung himself warned against an overvaluation of the subconscious. The transcendent function was needed to stop the subconscious from overwhelming the psyche. Yet if the conscious mind becomes too powerful, or to censorious, it can lead to a blockage of the creative process.

Perhaps that's why Zhu Da and Jackson Pollock struggled with alcoholism, and why Victor Hugo needed to make his hellish creations. Xu Wei was an even more extreme case: he attempted suicide on many occasions (at one time even tried to split his skull with an axe) and was imprisoned for murdering his third wife.

Desmond Morris also noted the sad consequence of what happens when the creation of art becomes too trammeled. When the chimpanzees were rewarded for painting, they started painting less, expecting to be rewarded after each brushstroke. After a while they lost interest in the pastime altogether.

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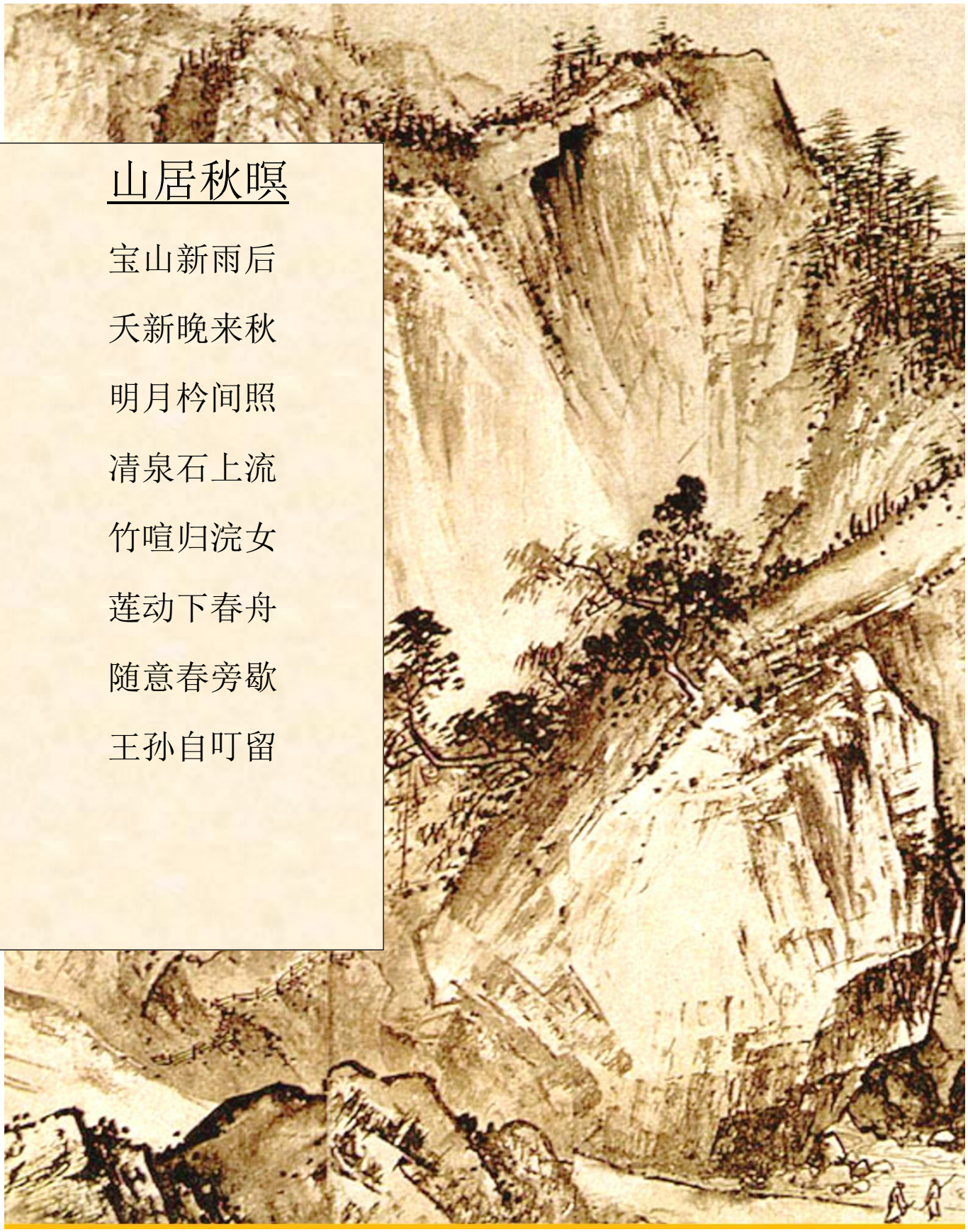
Wang Wei



山居秋暝

宝山新雨后

夭新晚来秋

明月枩间照

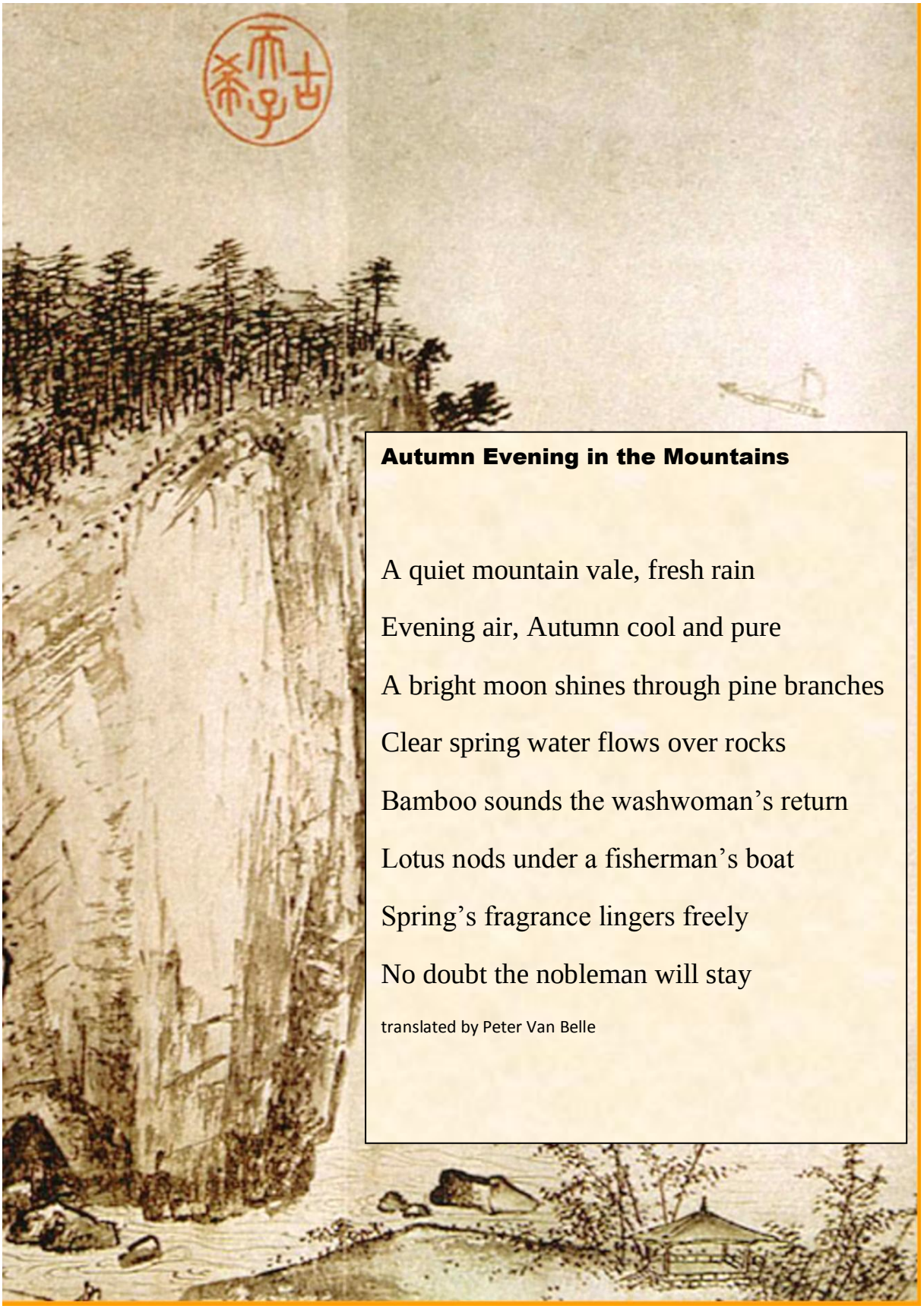
清泉石上流

竹喧归浣女

莲动下春舟

随意春旁歇

王孙自叮留



Autumn Evening in the Mountains

A quiet mountain vale, fresh rain

Evening air, Autumn cool and pure

A bright moon shines through pine branches

Clear spring water flows over rocks

Bamboo sounds the washwoman's return

Lotus nods under a fisherman's boat

Spring's fragrance lingers freely

No doubt the nobleman will stay

translated by Peter Van Belle

Illustration: Streams and Mountains with a Clear Distant View, Xia Gui, 1195-1224

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

After so much Chinese art, I couldn't leave you without giving a work by one of my favourite poets: Wang Wei. Li Bo and Du Fu are his more famous contemporaries, but I prefer Wang Wei's treatment of landscape.

I first read this poem in a German translation by Richard Wilhelm. Looking up the characters for Wang Wei and the title, I found the original Chinese poem in my collection of T'ang Dynasty poetry, which also has the pinyin transliteration, but no translation. Then I set about making an English version with the use of my Oxford Chinese Dictionary.

Wilhelm translated the last two lines as follows:

Im Augenblick ist Frühlingsduft zu Ende

Nun fängt für dich die lange Ruhe an

Other translations had similar variations of the last two lines, while others gave them an entirely different meaning.

Literally, the last two lines translate as follows:

Suí yì chūn fāng xiē

At will Spring fragrance rest

Wāng sūn zì kě liú

King grandson without doubt approve stay

So clearly Wilhelm's translation was fanciful, inspired by Romanticism rather than precision.

In my translation I've tried to represent certain techniques prevalent at the time. One these was syntactical repetition: consecutive lines having a similar structure. This is especially noticeable in lines 3-4 and 5-6.

Though the essence of the poem is in the first seven lines, the final one gives it meaning: the poet, invisible (as often in Chinese poetry), is pleased the nobleman, likely a friend, will choose to stay. The poet is represented by the poem itself; there's no need for him to go on stage.

River Landscape, by Tensho Shubun

Guido Gezelle

‘t Laatste

Hoe zoet is ‘t om te peizen dat,
terwijl ik rust misschien,
een ander, ver van hier, mij
onbekend en nooit gezien,
u lezen kan, mijn dichten, mijn
geliefde, en niet en weet
van al de droeve falen van
uw vader den poeet!
Hoe blij en is ’t gedacht niet, als
ik neerzitte ende peis,
u volgend waar gij loopt op uw
gezwinde wereldreis,
dat, zondig en allendig als
ik ben; geliefde kroost,
uw stemme, waarin geen zonde ’n zit,
misschien een ander troost;
uw stemme kan verblijden, schoon
hij droef zij die u miek;
uw stemme kan genezen, zij
uw dichter nog zoo ziek;
u stem misschien doet bidden, wijl
ik zuchte en, biddensmoe,
versteend zitte en mij herte noch
mijn ogen opendoe!
O dichten, die ‘k gedregen, die ‘k
gebaard hebbe, in pijn
des dichtens en gevoesterd aan
dit arem herte mijn;
mijn dichten die ‘k zoo dikwijls
herkastijd heb, hergekleed,
bedauwend met mijn tranen en
besproeiend met mijn zweet,
o spreekt voor mij, mijn dichten, als
God eens mij reden vraagt,
is ’t zake dat gij, krankegeboornen,
’t arme leven draagt
tot verder als mijn grafstede, en
niet sterft aleer ik sterf:
o ’n weze ’t dan om u niet dat
ik daar het leven derf!

THE LAST ONE –

TO THE UNKNOWN READER

How sweet it is to think that when I'm dead,
someone, far from here, who never knew or even saw me,
can read you, my poems, my love
and never know the sad failings of me, your father, the poet.

How happy to think that as I put my final thought down,
you will follow it along its world journey. Though troubled
and sinful as I am, there is comfort in your voice,
even some consolation.

Your voice can offer happiness, even though you wear a mask.
Your voice can heal, even though your creator is sick.
Your voice may be called even as I gasp and though tired,
support me, letting my heart open my eyes.

Oh poems! That came to me, which I have nurtured
through the pain of poetry and carried in this poor heart;
poems which I have so often recast, re-clothed,
fed with my tears and moistened with my sweat,

speak for me and if God asks the reason why,
it is because you, sickly born, dragged your life
further than my gravestone and will not die, even though
I will, to prove that because of you, I dared to live.

translated by P. Suett Barbieri and first published in Acumen

CONTRIBUTERS

Laura Minning began writing creatively at the tender age of nine. Her first poem was published by her Alma-matter in 1989, and her second received an Editor's Choice Award by the National Library of Poetry in 1993. Laura's work has been featured both in hard copy and on-line, via publications like "Literature Today", "Amulet" and "Stanzaic Stylings".

Laura received her first International Merritt of Poetry Award in 1995 and her second in 1998. Both were presented to her by the National Library of Poetry. Her outstanding achievements in poetry were internationally recognized again in 2005 by Poetry.com, who was kind enough to bestow the title of International Poet of the Year on to her.

Laura's first collection of poetry, "dear diary" was published by Vantage Press in 2003. Her second book, "sunburst" was published by Xlibris a year and a half later.

Laura's artistic accomplishments have been equally impressive. She's been creating and exhibiting abstract work since 2013. Her pieces have been displayed at venues like the Iowa Children's Museum, the Trenton Free Public Library and Barcode. Her artwork, as well as her original photography, has also obtained publication status both in hard copy and on-line.

The Barcode exhibit was held in 2016. It featured thirty-six pieces of Laura's original abstract artwork. Four of those pieces were sold over the course of the exhibition's opening weekend, and the entire event was sponsored by Bacardi.

In 2018, Laura produced a chapbook, entitled "fusion", which featured photographic images of her artwork.

As a person with legal blindness, Laura hopes to inspire other creative people with disabilities to never allow anything to hinder them from reaching for the stars and accomplishing their dreams If you were to ask her about her creative successes, she would tell you that the difficult is but the work of the moment, and the impossible takes a little longer.

For more information about Laura and her work, please feel free to log onto her web-site at https://brcartandpoetry.wordpress.com.

Maria A. Arana is a teacher, writer, and poet. Her poetry has been published in various journals including Spectrum, The Pangolin Review, Nature Writing, and Cholla Needles Magazine. You can find her at https://twitter.com/m_a_Arana

Alan Cohen was a poet before beginning his career as a Primary Care MD, teacher, and manager, and has been living a full and varied life. He has been writing poems for 60 years and is beginning now to share some of his discoveries. He's been married to Anita for 41 years, and they've been in Eugene, OR these past 11.

Pádraig O' Connor is a writer based in Cork City in Ireland. His first play 'Madam of Myrtleville' was staged last year. He is currently working on his second play 'This, That & The Other' which will be performed later this year. He also writes short stories.

Rikki Santer's work has appeared in various publications including Ms. Magazine, Poetry East, Slab, Slipstream, PANK, Crab Orchard Review, RHINO, Grimm, Hotel Amerika, and The Main Street Rag. Her work has received many honors, including five Pushcart and three Ohioana book award nominations, as well as a fellowshipt from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Her eighth collection, Drop Jaw, inspired by the art of ventriloquism, was published this spring by Nightballet Press. Her website is www.rikkisanter.com.

Jessie Wilcox Smith (1863-1935) American book illustrator

George Egerton (pseudonym of Mary Chavelita Dunne) (1859-1945), born in Australia, lived in Ireland and Norway before settling in England. Translator and author of plays, novels, and short stories.

Elenore Abbott (1875-1935) American painter and book illustrator.

Michael H. Brownstein's latest volume of poetry, How Do We Create Love?, was recently released (Cholla Needles Press, 2019).

After a long career as a professor of Classics (specialising in Latin literature) **Paul Murgatroyd** retired four years ago and started writing novels and short stories. Seventeen of the latter have been published or accepted for publication, along with three poems in English and over fifty of his Latin poems.

Whether **John Dorroh** taught any secondary science is still being discussed. However, he managed to show up every morning at 6:45 for a couple of decades with at least two lesson plans and a thermos of robust Colombian. His poetry has appeared in about 75 journals, including Dime Show Review, North Dakota Quarterly, Os Pressan, Feral, and Selcouth Station. He also writes short fiction and the occasional rant.

Sesshu Toyo (1420-1506) Japanese painter and Zen priest. Born into a samurai, became a Rinzai Zen priest, studied under Tenshu Shubun. After a journey to China, he started his own studio and taught other painters.

Zhu Da, also known as **Bada Shanren**, (1626-1705), direct descendant of a Ming dynasty prince, but lived mainly under the following Qing (Manchu) dynasty. After living in a monastery, he became a professional painter, known for his eccentric mannerisms.

Peter Van Belle is the editor of The Klecksograph and has published poems and short stories in Great Britain, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, the US, and Belgium. As a child he lived in the US, but now he lives in Belgium.

Wang Wei (699-759) Tang dynasty poet, musician, painter and court official. Nothing of his paintings or music survives, but many of his poems were included in later anthologies. His

career was a string of promotions and demotions which also entailed inspection tours of various parts of China. He was deeply affected by the death of his mother in 748 en spent the following three years in a state of profound distress. Was then taken captive by rebels and forced to collaborate with them, which led to his arrest after their defeat. After receiving a pardon, he devoted more time to Chan (Zen) Buddhism.

Xia Gui (1195-1224) Song dynasty painter. Little is known about his life. Influenced Sesshu Toyo.

Tensho Shubun, professional painter and Zen master of Sesshu Toyo. Very little is known about his life.

Guido Gezelle (1830-1899), poet, Catholic priest, and teacher, lived in Bruges, Belgium. Sought to create as separate Flemish language from the West Flemish dialect. Also translated works from English.

Pauline Barbieri was shortlisted for the Bridport Poetry Prize by the poet laureate, Sir Andrew Motion and twice for the Exeter Poetry Prize by Jo Shapcott and Lawrence Sail, respectively. She has had six collections of poetry published and was shortlisted for the Cinnamon Press Novel Awards for her book, 'Smoke and Gold'.

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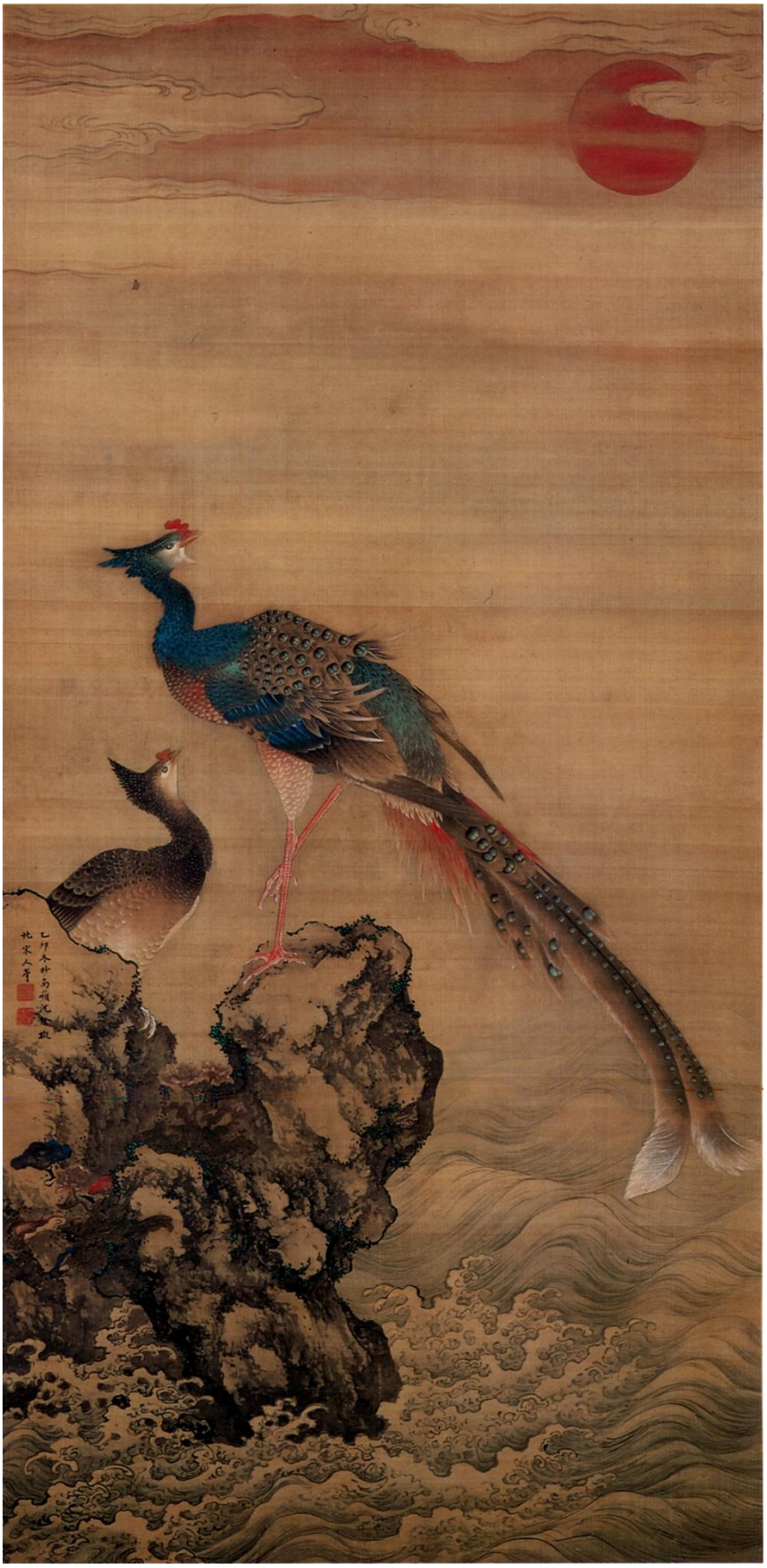

Shen Nanpi (1682-1760) pair of phoenixes in morning glow