Night at the Opry

by Otto Keyes

You ain't never seen water run down a rat-hole quicker'n I burrowed down in them sacks when the snow warned me he was comin'. I almost hollored when I seen that big shadow plop down in the puddle a' moonlight on the floor. He turned on his lantern and raised it with his huge, grisly list in the air like one a' them word clouds in the comic books. He turned out the light, put his mittens back on, and I heard a crunch, crunch, crunch, crunch, crunch, crunch.....and he was gone. Tarnation, if that thing looked a' like a big old blanket when he closed the door. I's just elimin' out from under the sacks when I heard the whistle and the roar a' the engine. I started to set down right quick, but 'stead a' runnin' off). Even so, I don't thinkerswitch when I got home (she don't take Buttermilk, West Virginia sounded so good

Kinda hunched over an' huggin' the downwind side a' the buildin's, I headed toward what looked like the center a' town. I was sure lookin' forward to gettin' inside some where out a' the snow wind an' snow. Wasn't that it was snowin' so much, but the stuff that was already here seemed to be in a travelin' mood an' the wind keep pushin' it over the top a' my collar an' down my neck.

I was already down past the post-office a' in a bunch a' houses before I realized I'd mozeed right through the up-town section. Walkin' skrunched over an' squint-eyed like that it's easy to miss stuff, ya' know. Anyhow, I got back up-town a' started checkin' the stores, but all of 'em was closed on the one side, so I reckoned I'd check the other. No sooner had I got across the street than these cars come a-blown' through the snow, howlin' an' growlin'—makin' a ungody, awful racket. They was all front down an' tail up—each with his nose under the arse a' the one ahead. Looked for all the world like a pack a' dogs after a bitch in heat.

'Bout that time the wind ketched his breath for another blow an' I spied a greasy light spillin' out on the clean white snow as somebody opened the door a' Doc's Cafe. I made a bee-line for it.

You could almost hear the necks a' stools turn an' creak when I come in. They was all lookin' at me kinda suspicious-like, but cold as I was, ain't no way I was goin' back outside right then. I's always big for my age, so I just drawn myself up a bit taller, walked over to the bar, an' commenced to survey the situation. Reckon as it did the job, 'cause every'body went back to talkin' an' I begun to relax a bit.

'What'll it be son?'

Geez! I 'bout jumped off the stool.

Now that question presented a whole 'nothin' problem. What is this here Doc was short on patients, an' tonight was the night he was fixin' to drum up some more down at the cafe? An' what if when I got sick he couldn't doctor me up right, or found out I didn't have no money an' just let me kick off? Didn't know as I wanted to take a chance on that. Why cold as it was, it'd be spring before they could bury me an' who wants to spend the winter in a snowdrift?! Not me, an' besides, what can a body buy for thirty-five cents anyhow?

'I'll have a sack of tater chips an' a cup a' coffee.'

Lucky I seen them in time. He looked kinda fidgety as it was an' I didn't figure it would do no good to keep him waitin'.

'Sure can son.'

He laid the chips down, reached under the bar, pulled out a little white cup 'bout the size a' Ma's thimble, an' set it down by the chips.

'That'll be a quarter, son.'

From the look in his eye, I could tell he wanted it all in cash, so I dug in my pocket an' fetched it out. That left a dime to get all the way back to Buttermilk.

'I was startin' to warm up a bit—my feet were gettin' half-way thawed out. I curled my fingers around the steamy cup an' let the heat sink in an' then put 'em up against my face, but they was still cold. Nobody was lookin', so I stuck one finger into my coffee. 'Bout the time I got two knuckles deep I knewed it was a mistake, but I had to grit my teeth an' pull it out real slow so's not to 'tract any 'ttention. Least I had one warm finger.

Well, eventually the coffee cooled down an' my fingers warmed up. By the time I had gone through the tater chips an' a refill, I was feelin' fair to middlin' an' pretty well caught up on the local news. Never heard no mention a' any reg'lar type names. Seems they was all Van den, Van der, or Van Dee; weren't a Smith or Jones in the lot. For all a' them Dutchmen, I didn't see nobody shufflin' around in them wooden gunboats.

'Parently there was some kinda Dutch school in town too—named Dork Callij or some such like. Guess that rowdy bunch in the corner was from there. Anyway, they was sayin' that a high-falutin' Opry star from New York was supposed to sing over there tonight.

(Con't p. 5)
HURRY UP, HARRY

by Syd Hielema

Peaches and Beer

by Wally vandeKleur

It was the summer I was thirteen I guess. My grandparents came the summer thereafter—or did they come the summer of my fiftieth birthday? Whenever, the summer my dad’s parents came from Holland wasn’t the summer. Opa Van Engen’s dynamic character absorbed everyone’s time; he’d never allow any teenager to run around ransacking neighborhoods’ homes. No, it definitely wasn’t that summer. Nor could it have been after their three-month summer visit. The Vaughans had moved out by then, yes, the more I think of it the more I’m sure it was the summer I was thirteen. Though all things considering, I could have been twelve at the time.

Blast this seventy-year-old mind anyway! I never did have the memory Mom had. How she would remember the most insignificant details simply through association, I’ll never be able to understand! A sort of grapevine details simply through association, I’ll never have. How Mom could have been twelve or thirteen, and either my age, worry, and much patience...
Peaches (con't)

goosed to life by loving wrenches and occasional silent curses, the garage-barn cleared of winter litter, picking harnesses more often repaired than bought, fruit contracts secured, and more. Pessimistic estimates of how little fruit was on the trees would have oh so much more fruit to pick (Dad would never have made a good stockbroker, a prophet of doom maybe, but never a stock-broker!). Blessedly content, Mom would laugh; she'd known all along how much fruit there'd be. Invariably both were wrong; knowing nothing I would average Mom and Dad's estimate and usually be right. My inevitable cockiness would knit Dad's black brows and deepen and usually be right. My inevitable cockiness would knit Dad's black brows and deepen.

"You'll make a good farmer!" But everyone knew I didn't want to be a farmer, and a "You'll make a good farmer!" But everyone knew I didn't want to be a farmer, and a defensive laugh would bring me back to my thirteenth years.

"Fifteen, Chris."
Seething silence, would only have thirteenth.
"Come on, we'll be real quiet so they won't see us. Besides, if you don't tell Mom, I won't...I'll be our secret," I would aver.
"Gracey told me they're gone for a week."
"Whada you mean?!", already plotting but not sure if the Vaughans were going or were already gone.

"She said she was gonna be gone till tomorrow."
"You sure she said Sunday?"
"Yup."
"Come on then, let's go!"
"Chris...hey, wait for me."
"Shh!"
"Why, stupid? They're gone, and anyway I don't think we should..."
"Will you shut up!"
"I'm not going!"
"O.K., O.K., I'm sorry Karen."

As we approached the Vaughans' shed—it really was little more than a shed—walking became crawling in an attempt to be stealthy. Once again my sister'd begin an objection but a quick, harsh "shh" would gain the game temporary life. The shed, encircled by a camp of garbage, squatted in a small clearing within the bush not more than twenty yards from the edge of our farm. Torn imitation brick, cardboard windows and open doorways made up the walls. A steep, by now nearly unshingled half-roof covered the rear of the house, the front protected by a seriously sunken tar-roof. An irregular uncrowned chimney sainted its way out of one side of the house, slanted chairs, and bed could be dimly perceived. Broken glass and caked dirt lined the immediate floor of the kitchen. Hard cruts, a few dirty dishes, a pulled-up rag and a pair of pants spotted the filthy, one-plank-missing table. As we ventured into the kitchen, about a half-dozen cans and a few more dishes could be seen on an otherwise almost deserted shelf. Empty beer bottles littered everywhere. "They must have moved out for good!

Karen was equally struck, but insisted that Gracey had said they were only going to her aunt's for a week.

The two closet-sized bedrooms were pitched in a musty darkness, a sour smell adding to the general taste of the shed. Slipping voices eeked the fear of small hearts as we crept further. "It's so dark."

"There's a door I think."
"Does it open? Try it, Chris."
The latch darkened our progress as we pushed now more out of necessity than anything else. Picking up a chair leg I declared that I would break the latch.

"But, I don't..."

But thought went unheeded and the latch broke. Late afternoon light shafted the two rooms, cutting dull lines of day exposure onto two disarrayed sunken beds, black-stained pink-flowered papered walls, and dirt-covered floor. Empty "Blues" had been flung into the far corner, some of the bottles jagged and unmouthed. There was nothing really to see and yet everything. Our peeking had become a staring we couldn't fully comprehend or trust; time closed in.

(continued on page 6)

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE
Mary opened up herself
To Father, Son and Holy Ghost
Let Jesus come in
Even gave Him a real home, with
Food and clothes and
Enough grief to cry
Real love on a rocky hillside
Alone.

The wise men opened up themselves
To God
Let Him lead them with their gold
To kneel before our King
In a pile of hay,
I have nothing to offer
If I open up myself
Except myself, made God made me
A mirror of Him
Can I give it back again?

-Sandy Van Den Berg
It has been said that the early Cranach was medieval. I have difficulty accepting this thesis. Just look at St. Jerome in Penitence (1502) or Christ on the Cross (1503). Neither painting betrays a medieval, double reality. The figures may reveal a Gothic expressiveness, but, as with all post-medieval painting, they are integrated into the landscape (not through Italian perspective, but through an excellent use of blue-green atmospheric light). The stage is not other-worldly. And the figures are not expressing the spirituality of a Van der Weyden. The fluent, sinuous line in the billowy garments and clouds, drooping foliage, sublime mountains and crags and distant buildings and strange light all contribute to the introspective, subjective character of these paintings. Nature has some animation and some horrific elements that only became actualized later in the art of Bosch. Strange owls hide in the trees. Violence is evident in his engraving Calvary (1502) which is accompanied by an “ordered confusion” characteristic of early Cranach. All these factors speak of an innate power which Cranach had to release, and to the use of painting as self-expression.

Sometime between 1505 and 1510 Cranach’s art changed. The expressive, violent element became controlled. Cranach began to learn how to appreciate a reality other than his subjective experiences. Ironically, in his tendency towards a more Christian appreciation of God’s creation, Cranach moved away from religious subject-matter to the more “profane.” Cranach began his many, many portraits now, employing the same neutral background and objectivity as Holbein. For the first time he had the sufficient calmness to engage in a self-portrait.

One of Cranach’s favorite subjects was the nude. He painted nudes under any excuse he could find, using classical or biblical themes for their presence. Their youthful delicate bodies with small breasts, and emphasized outlines, are sensual and alluring. A dreamy softness envelops them, encouraged by their accompanying veils. Their round heads have slanted eyes and seem Slavish. Adorning hats and necklaces contrast with their naked bodies. There is a celebration of the youthful, innocent and beautiful human body.

Cranach’s sympathy for women is even displayed in his tender, sympathetic treatment of Judith, Salome, and Delilah, despite the morbidly use Luther had intended with these evil women. In 1538 Cranach painted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The lavish goodness of the garden is in evidence. God is present as a wise, all-knowing, loving holy creator and father. He is very personal. In contrast to Durer’s studies of Adam and Eve as examples of classical perfection and anatomical specimens, Cranach shows us two lovers who were meant for each other and who are happy in each other. The Stag Hunt betrays a sympathetic understanding of the plight of the hunted animals.

The Payment displays a host of common objects, all typically rich in color. I hope these examples have demonstrated the great appreciation Cranach had for God’s creation. Much more could be discussed: his continuing relationships with Luther’s Catholic enemies, even during the most critical of times; his individual style—the original compositions, the color, the rhythm, the picturesque; his appreciation for irony; his never-ending fascination with the horrific and ugly; and his fluctuation between good and bad art.

All in all, although Cranach may not have been the genius that Durer was, he was a fine artist. His appreciation for the multifaceted creation contributed to a style that never grew stale and always changed (to the mystification of some art historians). His paintings were much more than didactic pieces in support of the Reformation. Go view some of his paintings. Let Cranach speak for himself.
I always figured the Opry was in Nashville, but maybe New York’s got one too. With somethin’ like that ... she kind a hunched over, graspin’ hold a’ the piana. Then smunchin’ up her hanky, she mashed it (continued on page 6)

I kinda got the general direction a’ this Dork place from the talk goin’ on in Doc’s, so I hopped down off the stool an’ lit out. The wind had died down some, so it wasn’t quite so bad out. But by the time I got ‘bout half a block I could feel wet sneakers startin’ to crust up on me. Hadn’t gone but a few steps more before I come upon this big yella box with a Goodwill sign on the side tellin’ people to throw in their old clothes an’ stuff. Well, figured there weren’t nobody around that needed a little good will a whole lot more’n I did right then, so I started to take a peek insic., I had the weren’t nobody around that needed a little sign on the side tellin’ people to throw in their (Continued on page 5)
“Frank and Greenie was both a-bowin’ an’ smilin’”

(OPRY (con’t))

against her chest. Frank, he didn’t even pay no mind—‘peared he’d keep on playin’ till she was an’ over; then whip into a dirgo. ‘Bout the time I was gonna hole for a doc, she come out of it an’ warbled on for a spell.

Finally she sung some songs in American, wrote by old Frankenstern, but they didn’t make a whole lot more sense than them other ones. Frank’s songs was somethin’ ‘bout sittin’ under the evenin’ star talkin’ ‘bout not bein’ able to drink forever. Well, near as I could make out, the upshot of it was that we’d best get good an’ drunk while we got the chance. The last one a’ Frank’s bunch was: “No man is an island”! Shoot! I knowed that anything.

When the guy stood up to announce that there was gonna be a short break, I was all set to cut out an’ catch a freight headin’ back south. Then he mentioned there was some kinda lunch after the show, which got my juices to runnin’ a bit, so I thought I’d try an’ stick it out.

I set at the back this time, just in case I couldn’t take the whole thing. From the first note I knew it was more a’ the same, so I got ready to head for the door.

Thumpin’ on the piana, Greenie got Frank to stop, an’ then she pointed up at the guy with the rusty shirt.

“You would mind closing the door, please?”

A chin bobbed over the ruffled shirt....creak....thump....my fate was sealed. Ma would a’ been proud a’ me then. ‘Bout the time she was ready to give me a tickin’, she’d roll her eyes up and quote, “he who endures to the end shall be saved.” I didn’t have no choice in the matter, but maybe I’s beginnin’ to see what she was talkin’ ‘bout.

On an’ it went. Pure misery. Swayin’ an’ weavin’, mashin’ up her hanky, wipin’ her mouth, stickin’ her hand on her hip, an’ old Frank a-whippin’ his hands up an’ down on the piana. She musta had a whale of a dent in her chest by the time the thing was over. Glory be! Frank an’ Greenie was both a-bowin’ an’ smilin’. Off they went around that droop wing-thing with the girl in the long black dress trallin’ along behind. Reckoned I could head for the grub now.

Oh, blast it anyhow! Here they come back again. Looked like we was gonna get the privilege of hearin’ some more. Nope, off they went again. These folks here sure have strange manners—they just kept on clappin’. Right when Frank an’ Greenie first come on they started; even before they got around to doin’ anything. Guess they just don’t know when to leave well enough alone.

They’s out again. This time it got real quiet as Frank sat down on the bench. Glidin’ over to her singin’ spot, Greenie screwed herself around real slow, slidin’ her hands out along the curves a’ the piana. leaned back, kinda easy-like, an’ gives one a’ them looks Sally Parkins used to give my big brother just before he’d mumble somethin’ ‘bout havin’ to pitch down some hay in the barn. Then she commenced to sing somethin’ ‘bout amore, while I was wishin’ it was less. By the time it was over, she an’ ever’body else had had enough, so they smiled an’ nodded a couple a’ times. Then Greenie held up her hand...

“I want to thank you all for the warm welcome you have given us. I must say that the people are much warmer than the weather....

Now the Opry ain’t never come to Buttermilk, but all things considered, it’s a site better’n this place. I figured it was high time to get headed back south where I could put the warm people together with some decent weather—soon as I got some grub anyhow.

Speakin’ a’ that, the lunch weren’t a whole lot to shout about either. All they had was cookies an’ some yella stuff to drink they called punch, but it shore didn’t have none. I just took a few swallow, stuck a fistful a’ cookies in my pocket (well, maybe two fistfuls), an’ headed back across town.

It was right peaceful out, the wind havin’ moved on to other parts. The moon was up an’ the stars was shinin’ like so many holes poked through a felt hat. My army boots made a kinda pop-crunch in the snow ever’time they hit the ground. After the cold bitin’ at my nose an’ the shadows jumpin’ out from behind the trees once in awhile, I was feelin’ pretty good. As I crossed the tracks, I thought how good it was gonna be to get home. I stuck my hand in the pocket of the old coat for a cookie.....they was gone!

Then I felt the hole.

Chucklin’ at the trick goodwill had played on me, I tore the hole open a little wider, pulled out a cookie, an’ stuck it in my mouth. Ouch! I poked my finger in to see what I bit into that was so blamed hard. Lo an’ behold it was a nickel!

I laid out all the cookies in the snow by the grain elevator an’ fished around to see what else I could find. Near as I could calculate it there in the moonlight, I come up with eighty-five or ninety cents. Weren’t exactly a fortune, but it sure beat goin’ from frostbitten to Buttermilk on a dime. They was just gettin’ the tail-end hooked on to that long old train, so I stuffed ever’thing back in my coat fast as I could. Appeared it was headin’ south, unless they aimed to push it backwards.

When the brakeman turned, I hustled out from behind the elevator, humped myself up through the door, an’ flopped down on those piles a’ sacks in the corner a’ the boxcar. I was just beginnin’ to relax when I heard the crunch of boots on the snow.

You ain’t never seen water run down a rat hole....

She knows no other life but loneliness— Walking the beach day after day— those darting eyes searching for something new to add excitement upon her wrinkles of despair.

Her bright pink bikini, not quite enough to cover up 50 years of many late nights with scotch and water friends.

Her shoulders drawn back— only to reveal the falseness of her plasticized pride.

She is not the only lonely creature that has yet to shed the dying skin of her past.

—Peggy Johnson
Walking Tall

Forgive me if I have forgotten the name of the producer and director of Walking Tall. On the other hand, why should I ask for forgiveness when ever the person is doesn’t deserve mentioning.

Let’s get a few things straight about this flick. There’s nothing delightful, amusing, reflective, or redeeming about Walking Tall. On the other hand, why should I ask for doesn’t deserve mentioning.

The producer and director of Walking Tall.

As previously mentioned, Scenes from a Marriage resembles a documentary in some ways. But once again, it is part of the elusive Bergman who resists having his films pegged as such-and-such a film. Much of the symbolistic and ironic familiar to other Bergman films is very much present in Scenes From a Marriage.

Take a familiar Bergman prop, the candle: after Josephson tells Ulmann that he has fallen for another woman, Ulmann clears the supportable and blows out the candles she has set for a romantic mood: in the last scene of the film, some ten, maybe fifteen years after the separation, the two clandestinely meet in their old rustic cabin behind the backs of their current spouses. Celebrating the event, Ulmann lights candles on a cake and blows them out—except for a few, which remain lighted. Marriage, to Bergman, is from the heart. He probably has nothing to do with the idea of institution of marriage. But that may be an inaccurate judgment—after all, we aren’t given the opportunity to view the entire six hours of the film. I hope the opportunity will come soon; after Cries and Whispers and Scenes From a Marriage, who can imagine another Ingmar Bergman film?

Young Frankenstein

Mel Brooks, producer and director

A pun-throwing contest sponsored by Mel “Blazing Saddles” Brooks is now showing at neighborhood theatres. Young Frankenstein is its title with Gene Wilder as Victor Frankenstein’s namesake, and, Madeline Kahn, Terri Garr, Cloris Leachman, Gene Hackman, and boggle-eyed Marty Feldman as the pun throwers. Filmed in 1930’s black and white, Young Frankenstein relentlessly heaves puns into stoic faces, ranging from medicine to corpses to mystic controls over animals (“Mrs. Blucher!”) and even to actor Peter Boyle whose facial peculiarities lend the first credible description on film of the Creature he naturally portrays (“’Ol zinc neck!”).

Though spoofs in film history have been uproariously successful, many have neglected features of great films. Brooks, however, is not satisfied with humor alone. Young Frankenstein plays an enormous tribute to the long-lost talents of Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, Peter Lorre, Basil Rathbone, and other comic and horror film masters. One such tribute is the precise, deliberate eye glances that are so predominant in horror films that made Christopher Lee, Rathbone, and of course Lorre the masters of Gothic films. To be totally consistent with the film’s unhaling humor, producer Brooks went so far as to utilize the actual laboratory equipment famously seen in Boris Karloff’s Frankenstein.

Reviewing past Frankenstein flocks, both on the screen and on television, Young Frankenstein is probably the first film to do some justice to Mary Shelley’s world reknowned novel. Certainly screenwriters Brooks and Wilder didn’t decide to set the record “straight in Young Frankenstein. But there is no doubt that Mary Shelley lies rotting in her grave, sopping wet from the biggest pun of all.

Scenes from a Marriage

(American version)

Ingmar Bergman, producer and director

For three hours, Liv Ullmann and Erland Josephson swiftly can approximately fifteen to twenty years of married life in Ingmar Bergman’s latest, Scenes From a Marriage. If three hours devoted almost totally to people talking seems a bit mundane, even boring for Bergman, there is a reason for this. The film was originally produced in six, one-hour segments for Swedish television, not for the theatre. Bergman, in some degree, intended to film a documentary of sorts, revealing the communicative intimacies only married people can fully grasp. In this context, other members of the domestic circle, such as the couple’s daughters and the time demanding grandparents, remain as only conversation topics. With these people excluded, Bergman ably depicted the inside, private, “off-stage” elements that flow between a married couple—flow, because without the subtitles to the film, you can still understand the communication between the couple. Comparably, it is like watching one of Hitler’s speeches, understanding the mood and meaning of his sentences through gesture and facial movements, even though you might know absolutely nothing about the German language. And language, the non-verbal, is essentially the thread drawn throughout Scenes From a Marriage. Even the film’s title is a double image: the amount of time aimed at the couple’s marriage is minimal compared to the time the film spends when the couple meets occasionally after their separation.

Film Reviews

by Wayne Farr

Cries and whispers

Ingmar Bergman, producer and director

Tear away the props, the decor, the setting and the film stands unharmed. To say it is a story about three sisters and their maid is a true but naive assumption—it could be about three brothers. There is a plot but it isn’t important.

Ingmar Bergman’s Cries and Whispers evokes the wide range of human emotion on film the way his fellow countryman Edvard Munch did on canvas. Bergman described Cries and Whispers as a dream he experienced coupled with his lifelong feeling that the human soul is a fragile, delicate red membrane—thus the red themes contrasted with white that literally saturate the hour and a half film. Inside this membrane is housed the spectrum of human personality and emotion, embodied in the four principal players.

The chronological basis for the film is a family’s trying moments (days? weeks? years?) while a sister slowly and painfully dies (presumably from cancer). Interspersed throughout the film are the sisters’ childhood and past fears, regrets, and longings that overwhelm any affection for another. The maid gains love and devotion to the dying and later dead sister, but even this unfolds an illusion—love not for the terminally ill sister but for the maid’s long deceased daughter.

The technical aspects and the outstanding portrayals by “Bergman’s Women” are Siamese twins, presenting a masterpiece of mood and human sensitivity and insensitivity. It is, next to Stanley Kubrick’s A Clockwork Orange, the finest film I have seen. Bergman, you have outdone Young Frankenstein.

Walking Tall

On the other hand, why should I ask for
“Good morning, sunshine!”
She refers to
the shadows of day
which sit outside my window.
not me.
But
it could have been me.
I’m as much sunshine
as that is.
The day it snowed,
I lost my dreams.
I think
they’re buried
out there somewhere.
I think
they’ll freeze
before I find them.
What a blob.
A sugar baby.
Fool.
Don’t dream—
you have everything.
So live.
God is not dead
just because
you are.
—Marianne Scholte

While waves slap against a rocky shore,
a small white sea-bird aviates a blue sky,
then comes plummeting downward, gathering itself up
at the final second.
The waves are dispersed by indomitable rocks,
forming small rivulets, receding slowly, unharmed.
—Cal Huizenga

FOR A FRIEND
In spring it’s easy
to splash my walls with
the colors of peace
and paint the ceiling
with thoughts of you.
Then flowers search the inky sky
With open faces, and gently sigh
For the warmth of a morning sun.
And drinking new life, they live.
Thank-you for making me
beautiful.
—Sandy Van Den Berg

Uh,
Funky blues
Turn me on.
So does
A folk song.
I’m like that.
So you think
It’s over.
If you care
It don’t show,
Babe, so
Let me know.
I feel enough to want to hang on to you.
—Marianne Scholte

American Aphrodite
by Cal Meuzelaar