The Rebuff

Pat Leegwater

Her hands pinched and pressured but the blob remained. Her hands destroyed and started again. Nothing beautiful happened.

Frustration. Clay and muck splatted over the entire kitchen table. Tiny balls of hardened clay fell off the table and ground into her bare feet. Smeary clay dug into her fingernails, staining them brownish yellow. The rolling pin dried to the useless newspaper protection and her nose itched but there was nothing to scratch it with.

She didn't need another clay vase but she wanted one. She could forget it but she wouldn't. Picking up the clay glob, she stubbornly pinched again.

The doorbell's ring lurched into her ears and she tightened against it. Clutching the clay in one hand, she hopped down the back steps and opened the door.

Joanie stood there. Joanie with shiny pink rouge over flabby cheeks. Her big dark eyes hooded with moss green and black frosting. Joanie with her wispy brown hair dull and limp. Joanie with a joggly round stomach and tired jean shorts showing thick puckly legs.

"Hey Shirley, you crazy kid!" Joanie shrieked. "How ya doin', old pal? Long time no see..."

She plowed in. Shirley shut the door gently behind her.

"Been doin' fine. And yerself?"

"Listen, man, I been havin' a blast. Haven't missed school one bit. Not missin a single thing...man, it's been a helluva year!"

"Well, sit down and tell me."

She collapsed her broadened frame into the nearest chair and inspected the mess.

"Hey kid, you still diggin' 'round in the dirt, huh? 'Member you'n me used to have clay parties for two 'n we'd always end up pitchin' it at each other? What a gas! But I been too busy for that lately. What with the job and the guys and the parties—hmmm, too much to do."

"Yeah." Shirley pulled a bottle of homemade Rootbeer from the bridge

(Continued on page 3)
Humboldt’s Gift
reviewed by Jack Moww

Humboldt is a drunken, half-crazed, dying poet. He represents an earlier era when the artist was still a romantic hero, and was supposed to have uncontrollable passions and gargantuan appetites. Charles Citrine was one of his disciples, then made it big with a Broadway play and, Humboldt is convinced, sold out to Wall Street. They go their separate ways: Citrine becomes a celebrity, Humboldt a derelict. This is revealed in retrospect: when the novel takes place Humboldt is dead, and Citrine has been married and divorced. At this late date Citrine realizes that Humboldt may have been right, he had sold out.

But he doesn’t know where to go. He can hardly emulate Humboldt; the bohemian lifestyle is passe, and he has to make money to satisfy his ex-wife, who is suing him, and to maintain his shoes and underneath. In the end it is Humboldt who relents, posthumously, by leaving Citrine in his will a movie script that is worth thousands. Citrine can now patch up old wrongs, and spend his time trying to find himself.

Saul Bellow’s cosmos is a vibrant place. The almost desperate whirl of events illumines a persistent uneasiness, a feeling that this is all beyond our control; and even if we can do something, who cares enough to try? Bellow has assimilated the spirit of the age in his novels without being didactic about it. We realize that we are lost without his telling us in so many words. Bellow excels as a detached observer of modern decadence. He has a knack for picking out the disgusting detail that makes the reader nauseous for a few pages, and then, after fading away, leaves a film as a reminder that this is a dirty place to live.

Charles Citrine, who narrates Humboldt’s Gift, is an intellectual. A life-long purveyor of the myth of the superiority of thinking over doing, in late middle-age he questions that assumption, and thrashes around for another escape route. For he has come to see that he is no better than anyone else, a traumatic experience for any intellectual. Observing decadence in others is comforting in a way; to see oneself as part of the decadence is a disillusion that can be fatal.

Charles Citrine is lost, but he can’t get excited about it. It seems that everyone he knows feels right at home in this dying culture; they seem to revel in degradation. He can feel for them, but keeps a safe distance. The intellectual life may not be a valid escape from this mundane existence, but that doesn’t mean one has to come down to reality. Citrine looks for a new escape hatch in anthroposophy. The soul must escape the body and join the universal World-Soul and all that. But his interest in mysticism is as diffident as his interest in anything else. We must do something with our time, and we might even stumble across an answer some day, but we don’t really expect to.

Voter’s Lament No. 430

We voted fast.
He didn’t last.
The people didn’t see.
But this November
Please remember—
Vote responsibly.

-Dave Groenenboom

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Masthead: Lugene Vanden Bosch
The Rebuff, con't.
and fizzed it into two tall glasses. 
"How's the job?"
"Fantastic! I mean, I don't slave too
hard... but what the heck! I work for the
pay and they don't give me much. But
they do give parties. That's what I like."
Joanie guzzled the pop. Shirley got up
and refilled her glass.
"But Shirl, I gotta tell ya about the
guys. Darn, ya never saw the like. Real
hunks. Not even stuck up. 'Member
how we hated the guys here? But now
I'm outa this rinky-dink Dutch town.
Gimme some life! Look lady-o, I'm
headin' a fling Saturday night. An' yer
comin.
"There's this guy knows about ya
and wants to see ya. I
got it all fixed
up."
"But..."
"Huh? What do ya mean? He ain't
bad. He's a good friend of mine, Shirley,
you don't have ta get loaded. We might
get stoned outa our minds, but what
you do is yer problem."
Joanie glanced at her with hooded
eyes and her harsh giggle scraped the
walls. Shirley's dad turned up the
Beethoven symphony playing on the
living room stereo and, clomping
through the kitchen, slammed the door.
"Tell ya what, Joanie. If I can make
it, I'll call, 'kay?"
"Yeah, well, all right." Joanie leaned
over the table. Her shirt sagged. Shirley
gawked a moment at a graceless hickey
glaring at her from underneath; she
looked away.
"Actually Shirley." Joanie's low voice
pulled her back. "Actually, it's an
engagement party. I'm getting married
next month."
Shirley tensed. "But--Joanie, how
neat! Let me see your ring! Who's the
lucky guy?"
"I can't wait, Shirl. He hasn't gotten
me the ring yet. His name is Jim
Roemer. You don't know him; he's not
Dutch. He's divorced but I don't care.
He's the greatest guy I've met... ever."
"Oh, I sure hope he is. I really hope
so! You need to be happy, Joanie. I
hope so!"

Joanie beamed. There was silence
and Beethoven's symphony glided to a
graceful halt in the background.
A flabby yellowish-white hand swung
out and clapped Shirley's shoulder.
"Honey, let me leave ya to yer clay and
classical music. I
think I'll buzz to
Jimmy's before
I hit home fer supper."
Joanie bopped down the back steps,
hips rolling like unbalanced car tires.
She slammed the door against the wall
and bounced along the sidewalk.
"Good talkin' with ya, chick. Glad ya
like college. Be seein' ya 'round, huh?"
"Jeanie!" Shirley's voice was stiff
with urgency. "Joanie, we want you.
You with your humor and tactless way
of saying what you think. We want
someone to knock
out our cold
tradition. What I mean is... the
Kingdom of Jesus wants you. Joanie?"
She'd stopped bouncing and was
staring at Shirley.
She swore.
Joanie's formless figure flung around
the hedge. Two minutes later a yellow
Mustang fled by and was gone.
Shirley walked back into the house.
Her hand stuck to the clay glob she was
still clenching. Pitching the whole mess
in a box, she threw it in the cupboard
under the sink. Then she washed her
hands.
She opened the kitchen door and
shuffled into the living room. After
flipping on a Cat Stevens' record, she
sprawled onto the couch and picked up
another novel. Yellow stained fingers
turned the pages to chapter one.

A Philosopher in Track Shoes
—Neil Culbertson

Turkey roasting in the oven
Ham cooking in the pot
Aunts busy working in the kitchen
Nine pumpkin pies just hot
Kids come pouring in the doorway
Sitting and waiting forced
Grandpa acquires the place of honour
Impromptu speech endorsed
Vehement debates soon follow
Ice cream tops steaming pie
Nothing like a Thanksgiving dinner
"Great" "Delicious" "ahh" "sigh"

—Mary Klay
march 2

Encased in liquid glass
dripped
from the sky,
Frail fern, bent bough

Saturday,
But Aunti chatting t
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and shaping
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up anyway.
more object

“How at
shoes.” Th
would mak
She looked
her face lit

CLOWN ALLEY
I stood inside a circus tent
and smelled the roaring crowd.
Balloons were flat and money spent.
The lonely cried aloud.
Liz Esselink
Gerald Kolkerts
Judy Cook
Charlie Claus

from art students
NOT "ANOTHER JOHN WAYNE MOVIE"

The Shootist
Directed by: Don Siegel
Screenplay by: Miles Hood Saarhout and Scott Hale
Reviewed by: Dave Groenenboom

The Shootist is the story of the last eight days of an aging gunfighter named J.B. Books (John Wayne) who discovers that he is dying from a cancer. After discovering his death is near, Books, the last of the legendary gunfighters, prepares to die quietly in Carson City.

But he finds his celebrity has made such a death impossible. He moves into a boarding house, but the widow (Lauren Bacall); who runs it wants to evict him as soon as her son (Ron Howard) tells her of Books' past. He had, after all, killed thirty men. He is visited by the local sheriff (Harry Morgan) who first tells him to leave town, then wishes him an early demise. A former girl friend (Sheree North) visits him with a marriage proposal, so that she can cash in on his legend (The Story of J.B. Books, as told by his loving wife).

In time though, the boarding house widow learns to accept Books, and even begins to love him. But Books still must die. Rather than let the cancer kill him, he carefully arranges a shootout at the local saloon with three local hoods who would like to see him dead: A barroom card shark (Hugh O'Brien), a man whose brother died at the end of Books' gun (Richard Boone), and a local milk dealer whom Books had offended.

The shootout isn't your typical Western shootout: Boone drives to it in a 1901 Oldsmobile, and Books rides a horse-drawn trolley. Actually, the shootout is quite serene. It isn't really climactic, and it isn't intended to be. Books, relying on all the skills of his past, eventually kills the other three. But he doesn't escape: he is fatally wounded by the bartender, who, in turn, is killed by the widow's son, who had been outside waiting the outcome of the shootout. He walks in, sees the bartender shoot Books, grabs Books' "six-iron," and kills the bartender.

In a review of The Shootist in the "Saturday Review," Judith Crist wrote, the pointlessness of Siegel's film is the dominant factor. Wayne, mustached and chin-whiskered, is more behemoth than human; Bacall, maturely handsome, never finds coincidence between her sophisticated glance and the idiot dialogue assigned to her. The two emerge as anachronistic antiques in contrast to the 1901 Oldsmobile and the original horse-drawn trolley the set dresser came up with for atmosphere.

Saturday,
But Aunt chatting t removing th and shaping also come 01 zipper of th and zipper of rn;
arguing ... a television comedy special:
John Wayne, Jimmy Steward, Scatman Caruthers, Ron Howard, Richard
(Continued on page 7)
Three Plays by Anton Chekhov

reviewed by Sandy Van Den Berg

The Dordt Thalians once again went on stage, Oct. 14-16, this time performing three one-act plays by the Russian playwright, Anton Chekhov (1860-1904). They caught the comic tone of Chekhov's farces as they laughed, stomped, and talked their way through *The Boor*, *The Marriage Proposal*, and *The Anniversary*.

Chekhov's disgusting bitter stabs at women made me "literally" bleed to death. In *The Boor* it was the woman stupid enough to remain faithful to her dead husband, even though he had certainly not been faithful to her while living.

Mrs. Popov (Joanne Feenstra) imposes a seclusion upon herself akin to the self-pity she swallows daily. One has to laugh at her feeble attempts to hang on to her pride yet I found her self-imposed exile revolting. Smirnov (Everett Van Ee) did a great job of showing Mrs. Popov she was still a woman, in spite of what she said. He was the strongest character and actor in the plays performance, while Joanne and Martin Gelderman (Luka) broke character a couple of times and laughed with the audience.

Of the three plays *The Marriage Proposal* was the strongest. The pace didn't lag and all three actors kept their characters well. Jaci De Jong's acting was spontaneous but disciplined and controlled, while Mike Van Dyke had everyone's hearts "palpitating" with him. Dennis, with a cheery grin kept the dialogue moving between the two.

Chekhov reverts to a sense of bitter humor in *The Anniversary*. Two women are shown in contrast here—the old, harpy hag and the social butterfly. Neither seem to be contented or to live very fulfilled lives. Tatiana's (Kim Vehuizen) husband Andrei (Bill Richards) is too busy trying to make and polish his name in his bank, while Kuzma, (Bruce Hibma) the contrast to Andrei, is too busy trying to get his work done.

The men work and the women interfere. The action seems confined to the hag who storms into the bank and the wife who flits from desk to desk, trying to find someone who will listen to her silly chatter. In the end one has to feel sorry for Tatiana, the wife of Andrei, rather than for the ambitious Andrei himself.

SHOOTIST, continued...

Boone, Hugh O'Brien, Harry Morgan, and Lauren Bacall!. When watching the film, it's difficult to separate the actors from the characters they represent. Wayne, himself a living legend, won a battle against cancer. His presence in the film is vital, but one gets confused. Indeed, the film begins with scenes actually taken from old John Wayne movies. Also, everytime I see Ron Howard, I think of "Happy Days," and I still can't think of Harry Morgan apart from "Dragnet." When he walks in, badge shining, I still expect him to say, "This is the city. Los Angeles."

But these weaknesses will pass with time, and *The Shootist* may be an even better film in thirty years, when few of the characters will be entrenched in their accomplishments on television.

I hope it's still around. Maybe it will be showing with Gary Cooper in "High Noon."
Saturday,

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She looked

her face lit

march 2

Encased in liquid glass
dripped

from the sky,

Frail fern, bent bough

CLOWN ALLEY

I stood inside a circus tent
and smelled the roaring crowd.
Balloons were flat and money spent.
The lonely cried aloud.

THE IDEA

Days

when these thoughts

were nurtured

like the soon to come child,

the first harbinger

of the future tones –

the people cared,

crowded around,

followed the progression

with sated smiles

of expectation –

in these moments

this child, so tight

so warm in my womb brain

kicked viciously

and I winced in silent pain –

false hopes,

rays of gold glimpsed

for a shriveled second –

miscarriage of the mind,

I know the child was to be

a stillborn sweep

of once potent force

-Bonnie Kuipers

FIRST SNOWFALL

Sigh watch from upstairs

window sigh

on streets whitewashed

children play with

springsummerfall smiles

build pure gleam

snowballs round circle

pat harden encase in

fingers tight wonderful

smack on wistful window

target steam mist of breath

on glass

hit hard burst smile

invitation

wistful sigh swallowed

into snowy whiteness

joyful calls of children

move into snowflakes.

-Bonnie Kuipers

Krack!

one swift blow –

the soft spoken “no”

devastates like

12,000 sticks of

dynamite.

Immersed like

a broken ship

in an unfriendly

sea.

Married to pity

fitting well with the

contours of my

spirit.

-Neil Culbertson

HA IKU

A balloon flying.

A child runs, holding the string.

A hunched back gazes on.

Cold night settles

On frosted leaves, earthly stars.

Quick! get my coat.

A pie crust cooking.

I peel apples.

My nose tingles.

A dew filled dawn:

Ducks huddled beside the pond

Without any necks.

-Jhon Kleyn

A PHILOSOPHER IN TRACK-SHOES

I really did it this time!

I must have torn

every ligament in my head,

chasing an idea

always that much faster than me.

Dead . . . dead . . . dead.

That’s what it should be,

but there it is

one step ahead,

always that much faster

than me.

The idea turns

explaining its vision –

to discover the Ends of the Earth –
migration race

to its birth place.

Then my eyes stopped

one verse down the page,

The Philosopher’s Stone

that turned my leaded-reason

into a swift shaft of gold:

“The fool’s eyes are in the Ends of

the Earth.”

I stopped the chase,

Still the idea ran;

its circular pace

never slackening,

ever cracking with its speed

the Ideological Muscle

of questioning men,

who while always learning

(of the Ends of the Earth)

never learn the Ends of Ideas,

the Limits of Questions

called by God

to rest

in His Word.

-Neil Culbertson

-Phyllis Nanninga

-Author