Over the Rainbow Blues

by Aristophanes Camus

Gosh, it was good to get home that day. After hanging up my coat, I made a pot of tea and threw my books into a corner where the mice and the remnants of my sanity lurk. Too depressed to read *Newsweek* or water my purple passion plant, I sat down on the couch to watch my jacket drip on the rug and to contemplate the events of the day.

The ride to school had been much like any other. The monsoon season had hit Middle Tennessee, and, for three days, I had crossed perilous bridges not-so-high-above the raging waters of the local drainage ditches, cautioned unsuspecting freshmen about the undercurrent in the commuter parking lot, wondered if my bike had ever had brakes, tried to avoid my roommate while she was wearing her snorkel, and felt my water-repellent field jacket leak. No, today was not unlike any other. Somehow, I made it to campus and, however reluctantly, waddled into my Education class, balancing two cups of coffee on my head to keep me intellectually alert and morally straight.

"Think he'll stimulate us today?" a junior from Manchester asked apprehensively.

"To riot, maybe."

"$##&*!!$%"?

"Well, class, today we're going to find the latitude and longitude of Portland, Oregon."

Fifty minutes and thirty-six latitudes and longitudes of Portland later, I stumbled into my American Renaissance class. After an exhilarating lecture on the allegory in *Moby Dick*, my professor asked me where I had been the previous Monday.

"Monday? Monday. Oh yes, yes, Monday. Well, you see, it was like this. You know I ride my bike to school?"

"Uh, huh.

"And you know the way it's been raining lately?"

"Yes."

"And you know that big drainage ditch behind Core Hall?"

"Yes, I know."

"Well, you see, it was raining like crazy Monday, and I was riding like a madman through the blinding rain. I didn't want to be late for your class, you see, because I wanted to find out why Bartleby kept saying, 'I'd prefer not to' and everything..."

"Uh, huh."

"Well, I was just about to make that turn there at the ditch when, all of a sudden, right there at MTSU, I was swallowed up, Simplex dealer and all, by a Great White Duck!"

"Sure."

"Hey, where're you going? I swear it's all true... Anything can happen around the Wesley Foundation... I tell you, I'm a better person for it!"

After an Art Orientation lecture on Gothic architecture and fallen arches, I had a break and decided to go to the grill. I put my books on a table and went to get a cup of coffee. I returned to my table just in time to catch a would-be thief making off with one of my books. Grabbing the young hoodlum by the collar and forcing him into the booth, I proceeded to lecture him on the evils of book theft. I also explained to him that if he had to satisfy his criminal passions, the courts would go easier on him if he embezzled a few thousand from the university travel fund rather than if he tried to sell my *Riverside Shakespeare*. After my little convert had thanked me and gotten off his knees, I went back to work. It was almost one o'clock, and I had to think of thirty words beginning with the letter "p!" before my methods class.

"Now, *The Sun Also Rises* would not be an appropriate book to teach to high school students. Neither would *A Farewell to Arms* or *Grapes of Wrath* or 1984..."

"Excuse me, sir, but what would be appropriate to teach to high school students?"

"Good question."

"Are you going to Shakespeare today?"

"Shakespeare who?"

But, at any rate, I was home. The tea was restoring my faith in humanity, death was still lurking over my left shoulder, and there was Leave it to Beaver to look forward to.
IN PRAISE OF PAGANS

Dry, dusty words toy with her virgin hair.
As if to mimic a child upon a gilded lyre.

Learned but vacant drunks of unknown sire.
Like child musicians call her to the fair.

Streets, laps and twist turns from a dancing bear.
Entreat attention of her and, fashioned as a gyre.

She joins with cloven motions—in chaste attire—
His wildly dance, pride of the county fair.

Self, solemn dust eddies within their air
Below the inconsequential madness they compare.

To create—new ways—but the people. The fire.
At hand, not believing; shout. 'End it there!

Dusk, silver moon marked our beginnings there.
But now and not yet to come could but in grace transpire.

Her body, life drenched, with a stretch of fire
Hovering, lies limp under silken hair.

Roger C. Register
ON THE EDGE

Life is full of bitter-sweet images,
reflecting the past,
and it's easy to lose your way.
And yet, so very easy to lose your way.

It's foggy dawndrums still pervades my brain,
even though the dry heat of reality,

Searing into my soul like a furnace of hell,
Making me feel the pain of consciousness.

It's too early yet to tell
whether I'm growing up or stepping down into a pit.

Yet, I can not see it.
All I see is a light,
Floating among the scattered images,
Making visible the burning path of today.

It commands me to follow,
Yet, I cannot quite see it.

Sandia White
The pickins are not that easy in the music business.

a feature by Robin Freeman

Most aspiring musicians dream of bright lights, fame and fortune. Some dream of making it big or not at all. Many do not get a chance to see their dreams materialize and stay in the background always wondering why. There are a few, however, who reach for the background life of a studio musician. Such a person is MTSU junior Steve Lawson.

Lawson is a picker—a guitarist. He started playing the guitar when he was 12 or 13 years old. "For no good reason," he says. "I bought an old guitar and a chord book and went from there. I practiced hard and decided I wanted to be in the music business."

But Lawson doesn't want the stardom. He wants to be a studio picker because the pickers are the "cream of the crop. You've got to be good," he says. The recording industry management major from Nashville has no intentions of going elsewhere. "Nashville is the place for pickers. You just can't go any higher," he stresses.

Studio pickers are aloof from the rest of the music business, Lawson explains. They are seasoned, hard working men who do what they like all day and go home at the end of the day. "They are dependable, solid men. They just do their thing and are respected just as much, if not more than, anyone else in the business," he adds.

Lawson works in Nashville and says his job is related to his music in a strange sort of way. He is a janitor at the Grand Ole Opry. "It would make a great success story someday," he chuckles. Turning serious for a moment, though, he adds "It's lots of fun, and it's putting me through school, but sometimes I wish I were carrying a guitar instead of that broom."

Although he doesn't carry his guitar at the Opry, he has it with him at all times. "I always manage to find an excuse to pick," he explains. "If I can pick with a group, that's just great. Jamming is the most fun." He gives his guitar an affectionate pat. Lawson calls his guitar Palantir, meaning "that which looks far away." "I wanted a special name," he relates, "not something cute like Betty. The name has to mean something."

A special name for his guitar is appropriate since the music is so special to him. He doesn't know what he would be doing if he did not have his music. "I never had a second choice. My music just hit me and I've always stuck with it," Lawson says. "The more I learn, the more I realize there is for me to learn. Like music theory. I want to learn music theory inside and

Lawson smiles as he raises cane on his banjo.

PHOTOS BY BILLY DOUGLAS

Speedy fingers pick a tune on Lawson's friend, his guitar named Palantir.

"Music just hit me and I've stuck with it."
out because when you play, you have to be able to see the changes—where the music is coming from and where it is going," he explains.

The self-taught picker visualizes going places with his music. The competition is so stiff for studio pickers in Nashville, Lawson says, that one almost has to slip in the back door. It helps if you know someone, too, he adds. Although he really wants to pick in the studio sessions, he is prepared to go where his music takes him. "You almost have to hustle yourself," Lawson says.

Lawson contemplates his turn in the recording studio.

In the meantime, Lawson practices constantly. "I listen to records and try to copy the musicians," he comments. "I can copy them, but I don't understand it yet." Artists of all ranks get frustrated at one point or another, and Lawson is no different. "Sometimes my music gives me fits and I get so frustrated... but never enough to make me want to quit. My frustration only makes me try harder," Lawson stresses.

Votes of confidence prove helpful in any young career. Lawson has had his share. He recalls one particular experience when he appeared on the Ralph Emery show during his senior year in high school. "Ralph Emery is big in the business and doesn't mess with anyone who he doesn't have to. When we were leaving, he asked me my name and told me I sounded 'mighty good.' I've never forgotten that. It's the little things like that that make you feel good."

Lawson has always felt good about his music, but his family does not share his enthusiasm. They are leary of the music business, but "they're not against it," he says. So he keeps trying. "I want to try to go from being good to being real good, but I can never be the best. Who's to say who's best?"

In addition to his guitar, Lawson also has a banjo. "So much has been done with the guitar because its about 400 years old, but not much has been done in comparison with the five-string banjo," Lawson reports. "I'm trying to develop my own unique style, so I can appeal to a lot more people, but I have to make sure I don't spread myself too thin."

Naturally, every ambitious artist has an idol. Lawson's choice is Chet Atkins. Described by Lawson as "incredibly good" and "a genius," he says that Atkins helped develop "metro country."

"He brought it uptown." Atkins is into classical guitar now, and Lawson is taking classical guitar lessons at MTSU.

His classical lessons help him when it comes to playing his favorite type of music—layback, easy listening music. "I like to play pretty songs. Anyone can play funky licks and cut corners, but a pretty song is... I don't know.... pure." A good song is like a suspension bridge with each note supporting the other and working with the whole, he philosophizes. "It's like a tapestry... a spider web... light... delicate... balanced..."

So while Lawson balances his academic career with his musical one, he dreams of the day when he can slip in the back door and join the ranks of the studio pickers. A lot of luck comes into the picture. "If you can get on a hit record and if you're good, a studio picker can get all the work he can handle and then some," Lawson says. "Those studio fellows are the best. Some stars eventually burn out, but a studio picker goes on and on."

Lawson sees his guitar playing as being three dimensional. "When I really get into my music, the strings crossing the neck become like windows to another world. It's just like getting into a good book. You don't see a white page with black words. You see the story," he explains. "It's like going to another place."

Right now, Lawson sees only the white pages of his career. Someday, he will see the story. *
The time calendar ages many men; it has cheated me, I fear. So much has been mine in but three decades. I sought life at each candle end: the double standard, the bright flame... I am burned out; some error has been made; fifty years have come to me yet I am only marked for thirty.

The ragged scar of my existence, chrstened by acute longing and enduring love, leaves me so filled with beauty that I can no longer partake of the world, can no longer meet with men in any mood near gaiety. I embraced life and am the worst for the union; She prostituted me and drained my soul, mind and body all.

Perhaps it is time I leave this planet, yet is there another to take me, throbbing, like an open wound to life: strength abundant, wisdom overflowing... strangely impotent. what good a sensitivity so strong it weakens, drains me of a vital force, robs me of the great will I once rode on to easy victories in rash abundance.

To know a thousand things is but a death too soon; this love of things has killed my voice, turned my life's juices inward, acid burning, leaving me unable to commune, except in tears and drunkenness, and then only with the soft shadows, specters of vanished men, smiling quietly beyond the pale of light.

gerald flannery
TODAY, MY MIND RUNS DEEP

Today, my mind runs deep,
In the mist of miles of forgotten thoughts.
And I strangely encounter,
The beauty of yesterdays, which I have so seldom sought.
But, as I tread along this bewildered path,
Where childish dreams and hopes once grew,
I search for only one memory,
Which was implanted, sprouted, and uprooted. You.

J. Potter

PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE

Constantly reaching into the abyss,
But finding only your own despair.
So you balance yourself on suspended tension
And try to salvage your albaster dreams
And self-conceived martyrdom.
I’m afraid, my friend, that you’re a victim of planned obsolescence.
The minor deity that runs amuck through your life
Has taught you a lesson in futility.
But, somehow, you’re ascending out of the flames,
And your smile is most welcome.

Aristophanes Camus

ON THE TOPIC OF MAN, AS SCHOLAR

Like working for an hourly wage,
Without the wages earned;
Like sitting down to dinner,
If the dinner’s all been burned;
Like waiting for the jury,
If no verdict were returned,
Unsentenced, unacquitted,
But the court had been adjourned;
Like sawing at the limb
Upon which one sits, unconcerned;
All this time in study spent,
Without the lesson learned.

Joel Rutledge
HAPPY POEM

Quickly I slip into my old comfortable world.

Into dreams I left without endings.

I can't dream tho—
all I see is your face,
telling me I shall write a happy poem some day.

I did.

It ended in the trash because it did not sound like me.

Deronda Worley
Let us not be leopards, love

A million small things must I do
to pass the time I wait for you,
to keep the mind from thinking.
Reading a poem you have praised,
I hear a step outside. Not yet.
It is too soon.
The hour moves slowly;
The glasses clean, the wine is chilled,
the music warm and filling.
in the room our love will share.

Should there not be silken sheets
for you to lie upon; or, better
a hundred roses, petal soft, like my love?
Ah, all I have is me.
Can that be grand enough for thee?
May I say I love you and not be bound
to be like any other lover
you have known?
Is passion really possible
when I dream of you so gently?

A strange and complex deja vu
this love I cleanse and bring to you.
Let me sing our song of love
in a way that is my own;
let me be all things for you,
to you, with you,
Let my lips graze on you like a lamb
in sweet and silken grass.
Let my hands be fleet and nimble
like a doe skipping in a long green meadow.
And if the lion in you comes to light,
roaring, leap into the valley
we have entered
safe and sweet together.

Yes, be a lion in your love
and have no fear,
the lamb and doe shall live
to see another year,
and yet another valley. Yes,
lions sometimes devour the young
yet both survive and live
carefully aware of the other,
each in its own place and time.

Not so with leopards, I hear.
Leopards change their spots.
Let us not be leopards, love.

Gerald flannery

Jeff Delude
INSOMNIA

The moon casts an opalescent glow,
Lighting up the clouds and making them
Oceans of white froth, bubbling over.
The trees are silhouetted against the sky
And their fragrant blooms proclaim
The newly arrived spring.
The night is very still and quiet,
Except for the occasional sound of a truck
Passing on the highway.
Finally I leave the window
And return to my bed,
Only to lie thinking of you.

Sandra White

I mentally reveal you often
Each time in a new light;
That before has accompanied
Thoughts of few.

To complement you, of that, your love
Is equally to regret the small
Percentage that never became aware
Of your untangible individuality.

The impact of you, on my life thus far
Helps to cleanse me,
Take away the tears and mark
To realize that I am not Alone.

Nancy McCravy

K. Kallenberger

Tim Hamilton
FLYING TO IBIZA: 1976

Street singers harmonize
Over sides of five Japanese cats.
Life now is 'round 'round four white cats.

When they are there
And an American street singer
Sings a Jackson Browne song
Called "For Everyone":

It is still more leisurely.

More real than Anywhere, USA.

Especially this year.

We falsify it.

By patrolling our past.

Bells ring and clocks scream.

An entirely.

Fly to Ibiza.

Recaller America.

Roger C. Register

"PARDON ME, BUT I'D LIKE TO FALL IN LOVE."

Water color harlot
Dancing and twirling past the seven early warning signals.

Shouting for applause that never comes.

And there's a goddess of prime charmsings in coxswells and black ties.

She steps into the watertanker
Into the watertanker.

But sidesteps around the bellowed eyes of the past.

Aristophanes Anasus
LOUDER VOICES

There is hardly room
For names and places to appear
In this rigid economy of words.

Comrades dies. A tomb
Is built so that we might endear
And remember our fallen, valiant herds.

Names in silent gloom
From voices we have learned to fear
Are pronounced then denied like stolen words.

Flowers failed to bloom
This spring; America seems queer
In its glory. We have to kill those birds.

Roger C. Register

There are witches in my politics,
and phantoms in my home.
No matter how I try I cannot stop their incantations
and spells,
Telling me I’m too old to play at snowballs and other
carnival games.

Andrew Vassar
A Little Recreational TV

by Tom Center

B.J. (Benjamin Jefferson) Adams sank into his favorite armchair while the TV warmed up. He was in the mood for a little recreational TV. As the picture came into focus he settled himself and relaxed. His favorite program was just starting.

The host’s smile filled the screen with what appeared to be three rows of huge white teeth (B.J. shielded his eyes); then the host shrieked, “Hello everybody! I’m John Crudescence! Welcome to America’s favorite election year game show! The show where we, by democratic process, relieve the public of presidential pretenders! Here it is—Destroy the Candidates!” Riotous applause ensued while the camera panned the set, which was done up to resemble the Roman Coliseum, and the audience, which to be in the spirit of the game, was dressed in Roman togas. The host continued at an ear-splitting volume, “Now let’s meet out Destroiers for tonight’s game. First, from politics, the Chairman of the House Ends and Means Committee, Congressman Smiley Hogg of Louisiana!” There was wild applause while Rep. Hogg waved. He looked quite patrician in his purple toga. “Second, from the Press, the Washington Snerd’s top interrogative reporter, Will Skewer!”

The audience went crazy. He was obviously the crowd favorite. While things died down Skewer nodded indifferently toward the camera. It was so slight a move that the ash, which made up half the cigarette that dangled from one corner of his mouth, didn’t even drop off.

“And last but not least, from the public sector, the five-star general of the Consumer Defense Militia, Ferd Greentree!” While the audience whooped and hollered, Greentree waved a small, green flag, which displayed a car, wheels up.

“And because this is a Bicentennial year, we also have tonight a surprise Mystery Destroyer!” The crowd went berserk. As the picture faded out to a political commercial, husky-looking ushers could be seen restraining some individuals from rushing on stage.

When the program returned, some order had been restored. Crudescence resumed, “Now, let’s meet our first Presidential Candidate, the voice of the working man, Senator Hank Labor!” There was some applause (and a few hisses) as the Senator took his seat, dressed as a gladiator.

“And for the first question, we go to Congressman Hogg!”

The crowd tensed in anticipation as Hogg removed his cigar and leaned forward. “Youall,” he drawled, “have proposed many new social programs. These will require a lot of money, an’ when me an’ the boys on the Ends an’ Means Committee git through dividin’ up the little ol’ pork barrel, don’t you know, I just don’t see where yer goin’ to git this money.”

“Well, Smiley,” the Senator began in his folksiest tone, “I believe in pork barrel as much as the next fellow, but I think that at some point in time we have to put a ceiling on it.” (Scattered boos from local officeholders.) “And I think we might tap a few minor sources of revenue by putting a tax on normality, for example. I mean here are these people just sitting there being normal and not having to pay anything for it—I don’t think that’s right!” (Scattered cheers.) “Finally, as a last resort, I would favor putting a one-hundredth of one percent tax on vice.” The audience burst into loud boos and catcalls.

“I think we can call for a vote on this candidate?” Crudescence declared. “Audience, yea or nay?” The screen showed almost unanimous thumbs down from the crowd; then, the grim-faced Senator being led away by ushers to a chorus of more boos and a hair of garbage.

The scene faded into another political announcement, and B.J. went to the kitchen for a beer.

Hard upon this Crudescence cried, “And now our second candidate, the contender from the South, Governor Sincerity Wagoner!” Politic applause. “And the questioner is Mister Skewer!”

The crowd was restless, and Skewer played his advantage by taking his time. When he finally spoke the ashes fell from his cigarette, scattering across his toga, but he took no notice.

“Governor, you’ve consistently favored greater emphasis on crime. How would you go about that? Do you favor Senator Dogood’s plan to put criminals on salary to deter them from crime?”

“No,” the Governor smiled weakly. “I think there are too many on salary now. Heh, heh. A little joke there.” (Groans and boos from audience.)

“Do you favor public flogging for speeding, then?” Skewer asked sarcastically. (Laughter from audience.)

“No, I favor a moderate approach to crime. Moderation is my watchword.” (Subdued boos and grumbling.) The Governor looked like he was beginning to crack. He continued in an excited voice.

“But you, sir, are inconsistent. First, you try to get me to coddle criminals. Then, you try to make a reactionary out of me!”

“I’m a journalist.” Skewer swaggered verbally. “I don’t have to be consistent.” (General cheering.) “How do you expect to entertain the voters if you only take dull, moderate positions?”

“I don’t try to entertain the voters. I count on their moderation and good sense.” (General boos and cries of “to the lions!”)

“Maybe that’s why,” Governor.” Skewer put in with delicate maliciousness, “you’ve lost the first three primaries.” (Burst of laughter and applause for Skewer.)

“I think we have a consensus!” cried Crudescence. “Yea or nay!” Again, there were overwhelming thumbs down. The Governor was dragged off stage struggling.

Yet another political hackster appeared, claiming, as evidence that his candidate was superior, the fact that the candidate wouldn’t appear in public. He faded away asking for faith and money.

“Now, our final candidate of the evening, the hope of the Torries, Governor Duke Whitehead! And the questioner—Mister Greentree!” Greentree prepared for the attack. The well-groomed Whitehead looked combative.
"My organization," Ferd held up his flag again for the cameras, "has stormed three pesticide plants and a platform shoe factory in the last six months in an effort to alleviate these health hazards to the American public. What would you do as President to protect the environment?"

"Nothing," snapped the Governor. "I believe in unrestrained American business! And I'd rather have a polluted world than unemployment! Show me an unemployed worker and I'll show you a commie! You have to keep the peons busy. So what if we lose a few people to cancer and all that? What's a few peons against the glory of free enterprise?"

Greentree looked stunned at this broadside, but it tickled the crowd's fancy and they were beginning to cheer. At this point Crudessence stepped in, "Now it's time for our special Mystery Destroyer!" he screamed. A wave of anticipation swept the audience. "And here she is, Hollywood star, Monica Buzzooms!"

There was wild applause while Monica teetered across the stage and leaned on Governor Whitehat, who looked disconcerted. Monica held up her hand for quiet, then purred to a breathtakingly waiting audience. "I'm here tonight to announce that I've known Duke for some time and that tomorrow I'm publishing the true story of what goes on at those fund-raising, or should I say fun-raising, lunches with all those love-starved housewives." This announcement was greeted with wild cheering.

The Governor tried to bluff his way through with an uncertain, "It's just good, clean fun."

But the crowd wouldn't buy it. They cried, "Take him away! Take him away!" They didn't even bother with the formality of a vote. The Governor was carried away sobbing, a broken man.

Crudessence's teeth filled the screen again. "Well, the bigger they are, the harder they fall! Right, citizens?"

"Right!" they answered in unison.

"That's our show for tonight, sports fans!" he continued. "Anybody got anything to say before we go?" He was addressing the panel.

"Yeah," Rep. Hogg replied. "I'd like sometime in the next few weeks to get a shot at Senator Happy Hortense, who's runnin' underground this year, but runnin' nonetheless." The other panel members nodded their approval.

"Right you are!" Crudessence intoned. "We'll do our best to get at him! And be sure and tune in next week, same time, when you, along with our studio audience of registered voters, can Destroy the Candidates!"

As the credits began rolling by and the crowd took up the chant "We want Hortense! We want Hortense!" B.J. burped and went out to the kitchen for another beer.

BAHA'I

Steve Dinberg
PRIMURX BR'IX

BY STEVE RUCKER
Beware, people of Baha'lest.
Ye walk in 12 ways of them,
Whose words differ from their deeds. Strive ye to manifest to the people the signs of God, and to manifest forth his commandments. Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most men differ from their conduct. It is through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourself from others. Through them the brightness of your light can be shed upon the whole earth. Happy is the man that heareth my council, and keepeth the precepts prescribed by him who is the all-knowing, the all-wise, the all-mighty, the all-gracious, the beautiful radiance, the absolute truth, in eternity, the most beloved of all.

Message from the Baha'i faith
Design by K. Kallenberger.