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LEE BROWN COYE IS LEE BROWN COYE IS LEE BROWN COYE AND STEIN IS RIGHT THE GARDEN
RUNS A CANDY STORE AND WHEN SHE SELLS SHE'S MOTHER HUBBARD, RAPED, GONE, NEITHER
THIS NOR THAT. WHY IS COYE? COYE STALKS THE ROSEBEDS EARLIER THAN DAWN'S
MURDEROUS NOOSE. HE CATCHES, HOLDS (TENDERLY!), CREATES (MANMADE) THE BOWER--
PROBABLE-PERMANENCE SECURE AGAINST THE SUN WHICH WOULD MAKE CADAVERS OF US ALL
WHO IS COYE? HE STRIVES FOR MEDIOCRACY. IT WON'T HAVE HIM! HE STRIVES FOR
OBLIVION IN HAMILTON, NEW YORK, A BRIEF MENTION IN THE WHO BOOKS, (ONE PAINTING
IN THE METROPOLITAN?). NONENTITY WON'T HAVE HIM!

LEE BROWN COYE

MISCELLANY

by

Gene Magner

Hal Bertram has the notion that the name of Gene Magner will lend something to his promotion of interest in Lee Brown Coye. Bertram is naive and charitable--therefore an isn't gratefully writes about an is who aint Magner.

Magner was Lockwood Memorial Library's Curator, Modern Poetry Collection for a number of years. Now he is Librarian at one of the two-year colleges of University of the State of New York.

He usually dismisses his writing and painting to the cellar of an ancient ghost town house or the weekly garbage pickup.

Magner, while Coye is a genius and Bertram knows it.

Gene Magner -

Trial of the Masks (poetry), Sausalito, 1950.

Or (short stories), Portland, 1950.

A Day in Wonderland (play), East Pembroke, produced by Arlene Libroek, 1952.

Epiphany (verse play), Nashville, produced by Kenneth Lawrence Beaudoin, 1953.

"Glass Hill" (a magazine of poetry and prose), 1949-50

"The College Bookman" (campus journal), 1963-

"Glass Hill" (new series--paintings), 1965-

Miscellaneous closet publications and other "appearances" in little magazines and university reviews.

Acknowledgements are gratefully made to Accent, Approach, Beloit Poetry Journal, Blue Guitar, The Bridge, The Poet, The Sparrow, Vou, World Review -- also to Jeanne Resnick for a lead to Coye's Gothics. Copyright 1966 by Gene Magner.

A LEE BROWN COYE MISCELLANY

by

Gene Magner

Fairfax, California
New Albion Bookshop Hal Bertram
1912 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.

ORIGINALS

by

LEE BROWN COYE

Gothics
Whitestructures

Many of the Gothics first appeared as illustrations in "Weird Tales", "Fantastic", Sleep No More, The Night Side, and Who Knocks?. Unlike Dr. Frankenstein Coye is not overcome by his macabre monsters nor does he attempt to overcome them. These drawings acknowledge the contents in everyman's coffin like the late late show which becomes the mirror that does not ask who's the fairest of them all.

The Whitestructures (which adhere to Parkinson's Law by heart) were the bases of Coye's abstract paintings and sculptures of the 1940s. They are the fiery mad Alhambras early and late--and one must exclaim "Let us build such a temple that they will take us for madmen!"

Hal Bertram
New Albion Bookshop
1912 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.
Fairfax, California

G O T H I C S

I have no understanding of Lee's Gothics because they scare the hell out of me. I liked to be frightened by Frankenstein, Dracula, Lore, "Laugh Clown Laugh," and the schoolteacher's flight into insanity about Dietrich's murderous million dollar legs.

Not now. I turn off the reruns.

Perhaps kids equate scares with thrills. Perhaps their imagination is verdant enough to sense the beauty of the macabre and mordant without its bearing the label of decadence. Whatever witches, warlocks, mandrake roots and satanic mechanism the critic may find in Lee's Gothics, he may succeed in merely finding appearances. Lee began peddling these drawings in New York in 1927. After the stockmarket crash he could not sell one for a dime. Art is not art as far as its buyers are concerned when it in alteration finds. The same applies to Lee. Coye is not Coy. There are the drawings, paintings, and multitudinous applications of genius. There is also the man.

When a large group of Lee's Gothics came into the Library from the framer one afternoon, Lee happened to be present. I remember his breaking out into laughter when one was unwrapped. This opened a new approach for me, but I could not take it. I merely told him I did not see the humor because the drawing shook my plebian soul. Lee said: "I'd be scared, too, if there were real life ghouls." Lee doesn't know why he drew Gothics for pleasure. He continued to draw them for "profit" over a period of many years for various publications. His last will be issued next year by August Derleth in Three Arkham Tales.

Death is a certitude to him. So much so that he restrains himself from joining the public orgies upon the occasion of the death of a friend or acquaint-

ance. Here is no denial. He is familiar with the remaining contents of human materiality in the glass coffins of family vaults. Perhaps his Gothics are extremely close to his symbolic realism. He does not attend funerals, but he is funereal in much of his creativity. Such a sense of mortality can only indicate a mysticism similar to St. John of the Cross. This will shock Lee. He's an ordinary man, and actually he is an ordinary man. He is not an ordinary artist.

He seeks immortality in all his work both negatively and positively because he hungers for God, and he does believe in God, which is one facet no longer universal among men and artists. I don't know if this is to the point, but Lee may be a pious man--he's non-church protestant, provincial as central New York State where provinciality just escapes the danger of incestuous regionalism. I have never seen Lee when he has been impious, nor have I ever seen any of his works which would indicate blasphemy and negation of a primordial creator.

He does have a strong belief in the rights of men as individuals in society.

He may hate what I say about him, but he must freely acknowledge my right to say it. I have never seen him morbid, even when intolerable worry about health might allow that escape to anyone. He knows how to take life and however sensitive he is to ~~that~~, and he is terribly sensitive, he has a genuine sense of humor which equals his genuine realism and his genuine nostalgia for paradise.

I could continue writing about Lee's Gothics until I am blue in the face. I realize their value to art. I learned that quickly upon first seeing them and I found others who are more enthusiastic about them than I. My problem is they make me aware of mortality to the extent that I never reach the higher realms they indicate.

Lee, with a keen sense of devotion and a comparably high sense of humor, can keep both feet on the ground, in the rut, if the circumstances demand it. But he transcends the whole damn thing of living and dying and if there is any clue to him, it must consider this very definite man-and-artist-by God approach.

NOTE NO. 1

The Library has one of Lee Brown Coye's canvases, one of his wood sculptures, and several of his ink sketches. Yet the collection touches only the surface, since his creativity has been varied. Lee Coye waited a number of years to test his ever-present philosophy: "You can go home again." He did go home (to Pitcher, New York) and finds that place of origin and love the mainspring of his inspiration. He seems to have a need to create in such a manner as to break the world's bent way which would nullify his soul. His works furnish something of a point of reference. One cannot consider such an entry into reality as lacking immense value.

NOTE NO. 2

Carl Houghton writes, "I must be a fool, for nothing excites me more than to have a freshly stretched canvas before me and to gaze upon it." Lee Brown Coye's Whitestructure seems to indicate that both artists inherently and wholeheartedly are in agreement. They must accept the opportunity to create, which is to work. Both understand Parkinson's Law: "Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion."

NOTE NO. 3

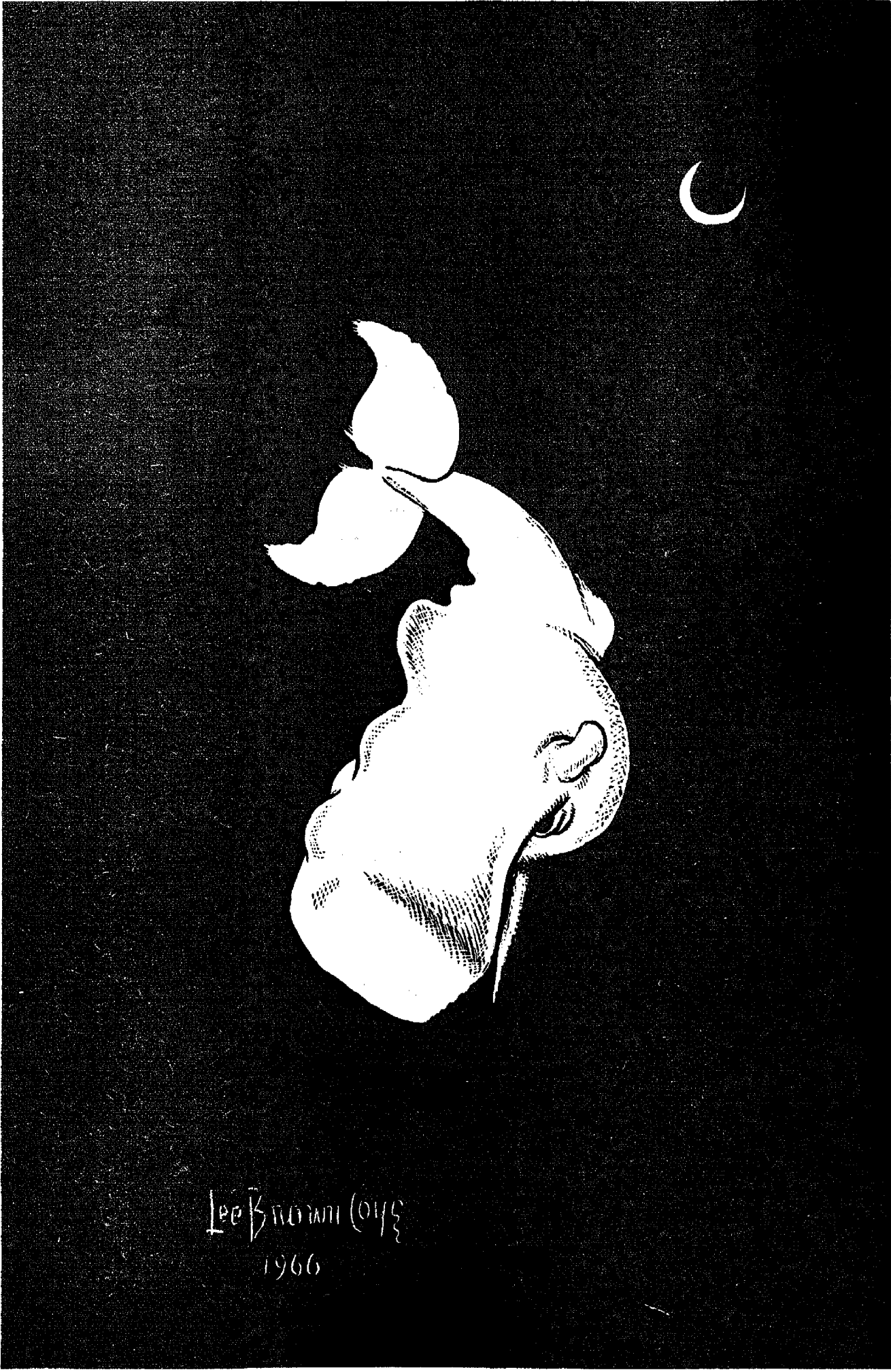
Mr. Coye is interested in creating again the structures, the people, the saints, God, and some of the animals Adam named. He does not want these former realities to lie in oblivion and wants to establish their reality once more. He attempts to invest them with his own personality and point of reference. Essentially, Coye is a poet and like Marcel Proust he is concerned with things past. Jacques Maritain wrote that poetry is more necessary than bread. Coye never attempts pop, op, ob, or kinetic representations which are currently popular. He could do such works, since he is excellent in drafting and crafts, but he does not wish to cash in on any of the trends by nullifying his spirit.

Coye is a realist. He was intensely impressed by the way of life and the art which depicted it during the era following the stock market crash of 1929. Naturally, his earliest impressions were symbolic as well as environmental. As a result, Coye has always keenly felt the vitality of being an American and a citizen in a fluctuating age. Too, he digs and must dig deep into the heart.

"The tears in things" is seen in some of the structures and people Coye has painted and sculptured. Some of his works show that a greater power overrides the world. Because houses are people to Coye, the whale is God, the saints, ordinary persons, and the lesser things, including inanimate objects are full of life, he must infuse them with vitality since this century following World War I has been happily and unhappily dying.

Coye does not give the newest variety of roses or the best-advertised instant mix. He recalls the stable elements of the past which lie dormant now. Coye sees the ghosts of that which is being overlooked, because the spirits have not actually

stayed six feet below the ground. As a result of his individual vision and his ability to reconstruct, his demanding works have many admirers. He has had many exhibitions, such as at the Whitney and Metropolitan. Lee Brown Coye is a regional artist. Central New York State is his area of reference, but likened to his sterling silver sculpture of Don Quixote in the exhibition his works are abundant in a vital realistic idealism. Coye does not present bread and circuses.



Lee Brown (1945)
1966

THE WAY TO GO HOME

by Lee Brown Coye

Some time about 1947, I received a letter from Dorothy Baldwin of Tully asking me to paint a picture of Tully Valley for her living room. She remarked that as she grew older and could not get about, she would like to have this picture to see the valley as she remembered it and also to have a painting I had done. This came as a bit of a surprise to me as I had not been back to Tully for any period of time since 1923 when my family moved away from there.

I tried to paint a picture of the valley for her, but at that time I was experimenting with abstract painting and my sloppy emotional approach to all the nostalgic old buildings was a thing of the past. I was even unable to make any sort of a satisfactory sketch of Tully Valley as I knew Dorothy Baldwin would have wanted it. I put off painting that picture for some time and finally forgot about it altogether. Then in January of 1955, about seven years later, I received another letter from her saying she was still interested in a painting. The project grew, after some correspondence, into an agreement that if I would furnish the paintings, Tully would furnish the space, and we would have an exhibit of my work in the old home town.

At first it was hard making sketches since I had not painted realistically for several years. At that time I was doing third dimensional construction work and getting a tremendous bang out of it. Before that I had gone in for serious photography, had spent one year in medical school where I dreamed of being the great American medical illustrator and had put in a lot of time in operating rooms and the morgue watching operations, doing autopsies, drinking tremendous quantities of whiskey and enjoying other vulgar activities. I am not attempting any self-

analysis, but after those ten years, I suddenly became aware that creative work of any sort is much greater than the pure emotion aroused by the things which make you homesick. The Civil War became something that had happened a long time ago and my only connection with it was the few old soldiers who had awakened my interest enough for me to make a study of it. But this, too, had been done on a purely emotional basis and was not a reality. Actually I knew nothing about the war, and nothing about Tully, as I soon found out. It was a period of great confusion. To try to be objective about "the scenes of my childhood" in order to put them down on paper seemed very silly. Just because I was able to draw an old barn and draw it well and even paint it well, depressed me, because it seemed to be very bad creative work.

I used to take the train to Tully nearly every day. There was a club car where I could have a couple of bottles of beer en route and visit with the porter. Riding in a club car the same rails that, as a child, I had ridden in a coach was fun. As the summer wore on, the train ride got to be a tradition and one day the conductor held the train for about ten minutes because he was sure I would be coming to catch it and I was late.

I think the train ride became the first reality of the whole deal. When I got off, things started to happen. It is surprising what a little publicity will do, for people began to look for me and would come out on their porches and want to visit. It got so that the day would be gone by the time I reached the place I wanted to sketch. All that had been accomplished was the renewal of many old acquaintances. As I see it now, this was very important, but at the time it was an annoyance. So I changed my approach and stayed down around the railroad tracks where nobody would see me. In this way I came up with quite a bunch of fairly good sketches. In all I made about twenty paintings of the vicinity, besides four or five that never got finished. Perhaps you could call one or two of them

good paintings. The exhibit as a whole looked pretty good. But actually it was a mediocre show for a person of my experience and background. Be that as it may, in September the show was set up in the auditorium of the Masonic Temple and was held for three days. It was of short duration because something else was going on the latter part of the week in the Temple.

We hung the show Sunday morning. It had to be put up after church since the committee who was to help put it together were all either ardent church goers or Sunday School teachers. We had planned to use some portable partitions from the Baptist Church which were used to make Sunday School rooms out of a large room in the church. These were to be carried upstairs and put the length of the auditorium for wall space on which to hang the pictures. About twelve-thirty Leon Baldwin came to the auditorium where we were sorting the stuff out and asked me if there was any other way in which we could possibly hang the pictures. I said I presumed there was but what was the matter with the church partitions. He said we had better think of another way fast, because the partitions were built in the church and there wasn't a door big enough to get them out. Ray LaSage helped me hang the show, along with other people. Being pretty good at that sort of thing, he got the collapsible tables out, set two of them back to back on another table to make some triangular hanging space and the show went up.

Besides the Tully pictures, I got together some of my abstracts, some woodcuts, drawings, sketches, some wood sculpture, a couple of those third dimensional things and a couple of small exhibits of the tools and methods used in producing my third dimensional work.

There had been some publicity about the show and invitations had been sent out. The committee had done a very fine job in this respect. The plan was to have the general reception on Sunday; Monday was the day that people went around in their cars and picked up all the old people with whom I had been associated as a

child, such as Sunday School teachers, school teachers, my mother's dressmaker, etc.; Tuesday was for the "ambulatory patients" who were able to get there under their own power. They haven't had so many people in the Masonic Temple, I believe, since the day it was dedicated in the 1920s. Everybody was completely amazed at the crowds that were there, especially that Sunday afternoon. The reception was supposed to start at five and end at nine. It started about two before the show was all hung and wound up some time around midnight. It was then that I realized there was something tremendously important about this thing.

The next day proved to be more of an old-home day than anything else. People came from as far as fifty miles away all dressed up--the lame, the halt and the blind. And believe me if I thought I was emotional about sketching around Tully, this day reeked with emotion until it was running out the seams. There was my old Sunday School teacher, who was an old woman when I was a child, now eighty-nine years old, who had fallen about a year before and broken a hip and had to get around on crutches. She was so little that she used the hand grips of the crutches under her arms and it was quite a sight to see her come in the door with these two things towering up above her shoulders. She somehow or other managed to get over to me and gave me a big kiss. Without a doubt she was the happiest and jolliest person in the whole assemblage. Then there was a school teacher of mine, my first school teacher, who just before this show had had a serious heart attack and insisted on coming up by herself to look at the pictures with the aid of a cane and remarked that she was going to do it by herself if it killed her. Another school teacher who had had not only a heart attack, but a stroke, would not let anybody help her around the room and did it with the help of a chair and had to look at the pictures and read the labels by means of a reading glass. One thing worth noting on this Monday was that not only had these people not seen me for thirty-two years, but I don't think they had seen each other for thirty-two years.

There were little groups all over the place visiting and talking and having the best time they had had since the box factory burned up. And again it did not break up until around midnight. The old people were not there that late, but many of my old friends who had come from all over.

The following day it was the same thing again, although not quite so many people were there. It was rather embarrassing for me many times, because I knew the people and could associate them with my past, but could not remember their names. Leon Baldwin realized this and sort of stayed with me and pointed out people by name and this helped a great deal. My sister came back for the three days, and all in all it was a highly emotional and retrospective performance. As far as my own reaction is concerned, it went pretty deep. It took me so completely off base that I am just now beginning to realize the importance of the experience.

However, at this point I seem to have come out on top of several heaps and am beginning to get into the proper spirit of things creative. I have at least seen the importance of such things as the old buildings in Tully, the hills, the streets at night and a new intangible and abstract element is definitely present. I do not know what to call it, but I know there is an importance to me about all of these things which goes way beyond the things themselves. Before this, my painting was based too much upon emotion. It had become completely subjective. I was in a rut. Getting out of this rut and becoming more objective has been a rich experience. I had to accept what seemed to be real problems in creative work and then attempt to work them out. I became interested in space and tried to create a tangible space I could control. When I first started to tell about this thing--this Tully experience--my friends said they felt too many people are influenced by Thomas Wolfe's You Can't Go Home Again and that this might be some proof that the philosophy is wrong and you can go home again. The point I'm trying to make is that to be a creative person takes this sort of stuff, this considerable effort and research.

--SAWDUST

DO HAVE SOME I BAKED IT MYSELF

--SAWDUST

ONE

The bells rang
The turbines began
The orchestra beat.

We looked back
Saw the vast
Last summer beach;

It was after 12
A ghostly sight
No roller-coasting.

But unlike the ferriswheel
Aghast
At our leaving

The moon
Autoromanced
An orange moon's reckoning

We danced while it favored us
Because we would dock
In time for obliteration.

TWO

Among weeds and leaves
and everything of Summer
stung upon her lips and beestung
cheeks--and a late night in her eyes:
we would have prayed she'd stay that way
but she died she died she died--the
Summer's chutes and all the flares go down.

Among weeds and leaves we sorted greens
chose the greenest for her gown and said
goodbye. The Autumn then got underway
and we had to hurry before everyone got
started down.

THREE

No, no, no, the summer cries
Lying in the summer sun
But the season is a cart
Ten thousand wheels,

Rumbledum, gestapo drive
Ten thousand leaves of the wind
Of summer, anything, anyone
Rouged and indianed, muddy and dry,

All in a cart equal to equal,
Flowers and birds, worms and weeds,
Men's damp flesh sighing,
Evolving, returning--

Orange summer goes into the pumpkin
And we fix into a pie
Or carve to light them out
Whose nightmares mar.

FOUR

No love for the lover
No rose for the rose.
The birds bathe crocodiles in cream.

A bluebird comes through the window
And the cage
Puts all Heaven in a rage.

In grey-haired Celia's withered arms
There is no Te Deum in quiet, today, tomorrow,
Tomorrow.

Celia, these arms are yours,
Are mine.
We rot. Today, tomorrow.

FIVE

The cake which was baked for the wedding of dolls
was given a coating of cockle shells:

o enter me softly
told the quiet old witch to her broom

and ever so softly
it did her wish
and the cake did enter.

LETTERS FROM COYE

Dear Gene:

Your poem came yesterday and I read it and reread it--liked it for many reasons--it has a moving form, an idea and the verbage is superb. This is the opinion of a person who is not literary but there is much here that ties in with a good painting--I enjoyed it.

Today I received your letter. I think some very interesting pictures could be made for it. However, I have no idea of what Derleth would think of it. It seems out of his line but this I wouldn't know for sure.

Have some drawings on the fire here for him and would suggest that I send your script along with drawings that I am on now when they are completed. Would tell him I would like to do pictures for poem if he had any idea of publishing it--this is the best I can do--if he buys it o. k., if not---? These people seem to know what they are up to and my influence is not of much consequence. Why do you have to paint? It seems that you have a real talent for writing--why not use it? Rejection slips are common among us but persistence and will are the important elements.

I'm not trying to discourage your painting--far from it--anything I can do to further it is done gladly but you can write to beat hell.

The paintings in Casey's have been delegated to the attic I understand. Cigarette smoke and lack of proper care have turned most of them so black they are beyond repair anyway--it is best that they are in the attic.

Let's hear from you.

Best,
Lee

Letter #2

It has been busy here. The Whitestructures are coming along but the doing of them has created many Whitestructures to frustrate and harass a man. I can demonstrate conclusively that the things exist....

Letter #3

...Be that as it may--I think you will find Gist of Art quite revealing in many ways. But if you really want to do some painting we must get out or in and do some sketching. Whether it be a valley, a city or just a jug and an apple and without the experience of seeing and transferring there is little that can be done with paint. Drawing is the first consideration. Without it there is nothing for a painting is merely the extension of a drawing.

I have become quite close to some so-called "modern" painters lately and have been able to get some idea of what these people are up to. At the moment the best I can say is that they have become a bunch of aesthetes--a thing within themselves--they paint for each other and have lost all communication with society in its great sense. The artist, in my belief, is a part of humanity and it is his ability to communicate with humanity that makes him a part of his life. When we get into groups whose only communication is to and from members of his own club we may as well collect postage stamps and go to stamp meetings or collect milk bottle caps or match folders. The thing the imitators do not seem to understand is that the great moderns such as Matisse or Cezanne and many later people have always kept within the bounds of society as such. There are no bounds in creative work except the big one of remaining a part of society. Regretably this is what is happening and the majority of these people and their works are becoming something for the Park Avenue interior

decorators and for themselves to ooh and aah over.

Well--enough of this stuff. Your dreams or nightmares concerning the Whitestructures ring bells in my head--first in the hospital my nights were horrible--all my desires - failures and disappointments plagued me unmercifully and drained me of rest. Then besides that I have the same problems now. I do more work at night than in the day and all the problems are more profound than in the day when I can work on them--this, I guess is the habit of the neurotic. I hope that by now the "pasts" have taken their proper place. Wish they would arrange themselves for me--the whitestructure, occasioned by trying to paint the Whitestructures are like a rat maze but something is happening....

LETTER FROM BERTRAM

.....Hoo, hah, always one of my favorite fantasy artists. I was reading Weird Tales regularly at the time he was illustrating for them, also had all the books he illustrated. Magazines and books since sold, much to my regret, but I remember his drawings quite well. Would like to own some of the Weird Tales and book illustrations myself if I had the cash. I don't know about his more recent, non-fantasy (that is, stuff not appearing in books and magazines) but I do think I can drum up some customers for the drawings which appeared in Weird and in the Derleth books. I seem to remember someone recently putting out a call for his drawings. I'd be happy to put my contacts to good use and try to sell the drawings and could probably do so if they are originals of the Weird and Derleth illustrations--and at a good price possibly. His non-magazine and book work might take a little more effort, but I think there's a market for it. Possibly those who want his commercial stuff could be educated to collect his other material. The whale, in the College Bookman, is something I'd like and presumably other fantasy collectors would too. If you can get from Mr. Coye a note on the date-issue of Weird or title of book and/or story for which illustration was done, this would be of help. Otherwise I may have to dig up years of Weirids plus the books, which would be difficult and expensive. I am enthused at the prospect. I've always considered Coye as one of the finest b & w artists in the business, at least in the fantasy genre, comparable to Wallace Smith and Mervyn Peake. You can tell him that an old admirer of his work is looking forward to the possibility of selling some of it. I imagine any commissions would be used to feather my own nest with Coye.

Please let me know soon about the Coye drawings.
I'd like to put out an ad before Christmas, if possible.

Best wishes,

Hal