

This number of *Stand* concludes a three-part survey of contemporary writing in the USA. Last December we showcased the innovative and experimental. In March we asked how America defines itself – through violence, through cultural parody and gesture, through wholesale assimilation of what is written on the walls of history? And in this issue's startling 'America Burning' feature, we cut a section through the nation's intellectual strata, from the dissimilar graces of Olds and Hollander, to the hair-raising god of Susan Stewart's: "you will singe your arm/when you pluck him from the air, when you pluck him from that sky where/evil swirls, and you will burn again/throwing him back."

March saw the Cambridge Festival of American Literature, organized in memory of Tony Tanner. The event was sponsored by this magazine, the King's College Research Centre, and the Cambridge English Faculty, through its Judith E. Wilson Fund. The idea of staging an American Literary Festival at King's College had been on the cards a year or so before Tony died, and he was closely involved with early planning and drawing up a list of possible guests. After Tony's death, Ian Donaldson and other members of the English Faculty, with the support of the King's Research Centre and the Judith E. Wilson Fund, worked tirelessly in an effort to see that things remained on track. It seemed appropriate to dedicate the festival to the memory of Tony who, as Frank Kermode says in the text of the speech he delivered to open the festival in the Fitzwilliam Museum, "took on American literature as he took on all literature, with terrific zest and informed sympathy." One of the key events of the festival was the launch of Tony's last book, *The American Mystery* (Cambridge University Press).

In the American feature we find work by those writers who attended the festival – the prose writers Coover, Gass and Janowitz; and the poets Salter, Olds, and Hollander. Mention should also be made of magazine editors and admirers of Tony who also made the journey from the States, and contributed greatly by talking on discussion panels about their editorial work for major American journals – David Lynn of the *Kenyon Review*, Keith Botsford of *The Republic of Letters*, Alice Quinn and Bill Buford of *The New Yorker*. Along with the *Stand* editors, others from British publications who attended and spoke were the *LRB*'s Mary Kay Wilmers and the *TLS*'s James Campbell. The discussion panels were particularly lively. On both the prose and poetry panels, editors spoke about the "place" of American writing in an international perspective, about editorial responsibility, and the future of literary journals in the States. A panel celebrating the 75th anniversary of *The New Yorker* finished with Ed Koren's historical survey of satire, style, and manners in the evolution of "the *New Yorker* cartoon". We are delighted to include the cartoon Koren drew for the festival.

We like to think that the spirit of this American feature, ranging as it does from Marjorie Perloff's level gaze upon Emily Dickinson to the first publication of Robert Coover's *Public Burning* logbook, would have confirmed Tony Tanner in his understanding of the many faces of the American experience. And just as friendship linked several of our contributors to Tony Tanner, so too there are rich and long-standing links among the contributors themselves: readers of Coover's log will notice his own friendship with William Gass and Charles Simic, and it is particularly pleasing to the editors of *Stand* that his first story was published in Saul Bellow's magazine *The Nobel Savage*, for that publication was the first in a succession of periodicals co-edited with Bellow by a valued contributing editor to our own quarterly, Keith Botsford.

This quarter's *Stand* also examines those two sides of the same coin conventionally called heaven and earth – or, the spirit of place, and place of the spirit. The places of this earth may be relished for themselves, as in the poems here by Horace, Peter Howe and Anna Crowe; they may have a socio-political charge to them, as in the pieces by Ojaide, Caldwell, Kelen, Milne and Crawford; or they may (however sardonically) be probed for what they suggest of another world, as in Foley or Enzensberger. When Allison Eir Jenks ventures into a great place often found forbidding to conceive, it is to bring us this harsh message: "We love the space love doesn't give us." The greatest consolation for the earth-bound is in the extraordinary story here by Holland's wise old lady of letters, Hella S. Haasse, whose text ventures upon ground at once hallowed and cursed, only to discover a revelation of wonder. And that is the point at which visions possible on this earth meet visions given to this earth: from Robert Crawford's fine modern rendering of the Old English 'Dream of the Rood' to Louis Armand's "memory vivid/for remote things", from the brutality and tenderness of Cliff Ashcroft to the longing of Leopardi, hope still stretches ahead.