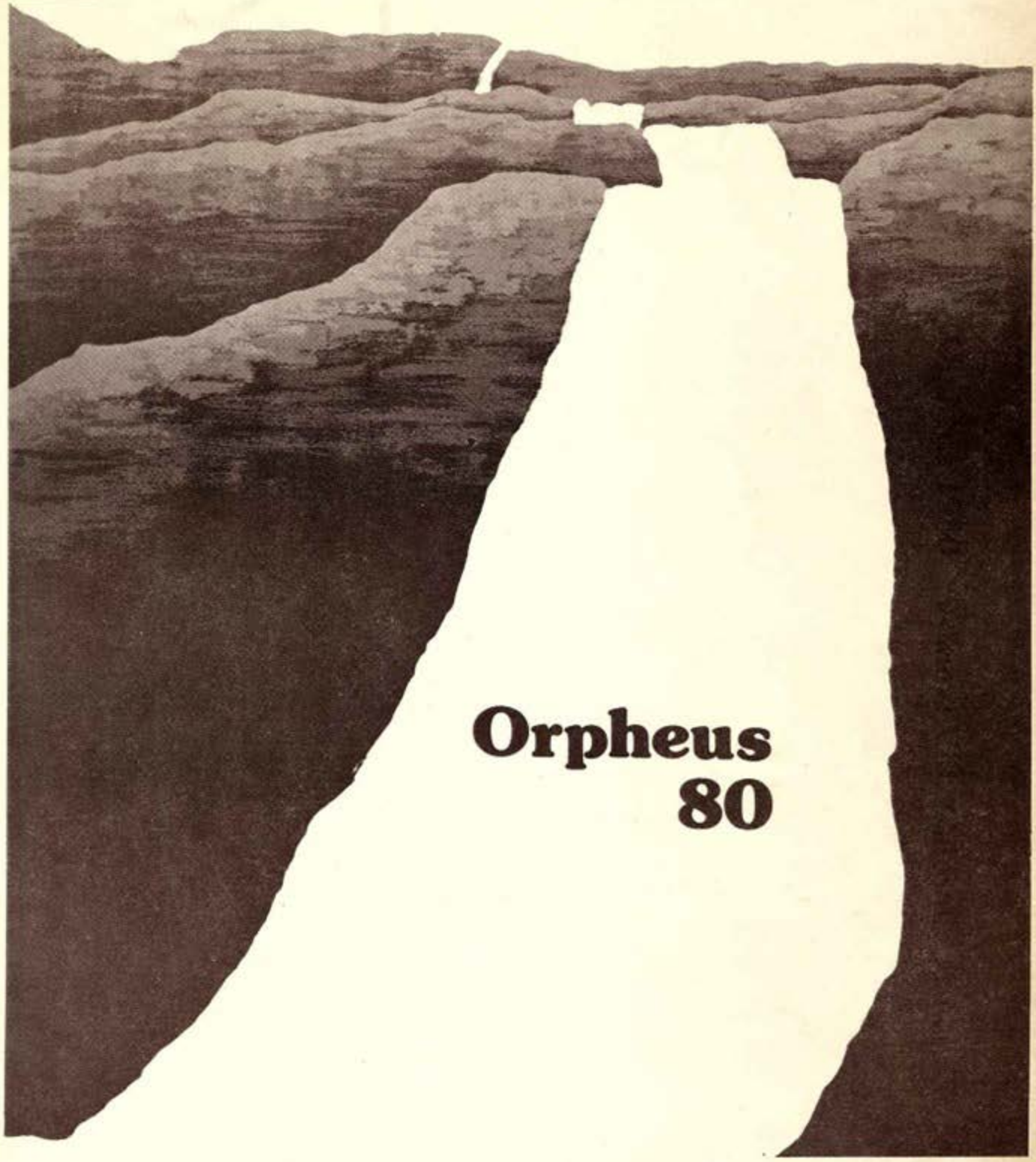
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Orpheus 80

Orpheus

Volume VIII 1980
Cal State Bakersfield

Cover — "Road" by Wendy Lou

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EDITOR'S NOTES

We appreciate the services and assistance of everyone who helped make *Orpheus '80* possible.

The CSB Reprographics Center.
Judy Clausen and Sallie Stanton for office space, graphics equipment, and a great deal of advice.
Sabina Westmoreland for doing the paperwork.
And Dr. Solomon Iyasere who has been a faithful advisor for *Orpheus* during the past eight years.

We dedicate this issue of *Orpheus* to everyone who has ever participated in creative endeavors.

Jerome Evans
Lee McCarthy

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Preface

It occurred to me the other day that we are all painters: that we are forever striking poses and hoping we have, with such, created selves. Some of us understand the importance of movement — i.e. the importance of drama. Those persons go beyond mere pose but usually end up doing skits (all of which end in a held pose). The antithesis of poses and skits is a thing called rendering — a rendering of not only the self but of the social and physical environment which surrounds it. I'm not talking about a thing and its background. *I'm talking about a yolk and its albumen. It's such a chaotic thing to do — this rendering. Yet the impulse that makes a person a writer is that impulse to shun the pose, the skit, as inadequate and to render himself and that which* holds him in place — *his world.*

Huddleston's "Ingress and Egress" and Sarad's "H a aH a Ha there we finally have it" are the best examples of that impulse in this edition of Orpheus, *but each piece included bespeaks that impulse.*

As an editorial reader for this issue, I had only one criterion: Voice. Both originality and the breathiness of life reside there. If a voice is a voice but unoriginal, it is like listening to the dead speak through a medium. Intelligence and idea do not prove there is life, but imagery does. Even spiritualists wish to photograph ghosts. Action does not attest to life: chickens, snakes, human hair and nails are tenacious things in the realm of action. Pain, appreciation, perceptiveness, and happiness do not prove there is life. It takes voice to prove it.

Lee McCarthy

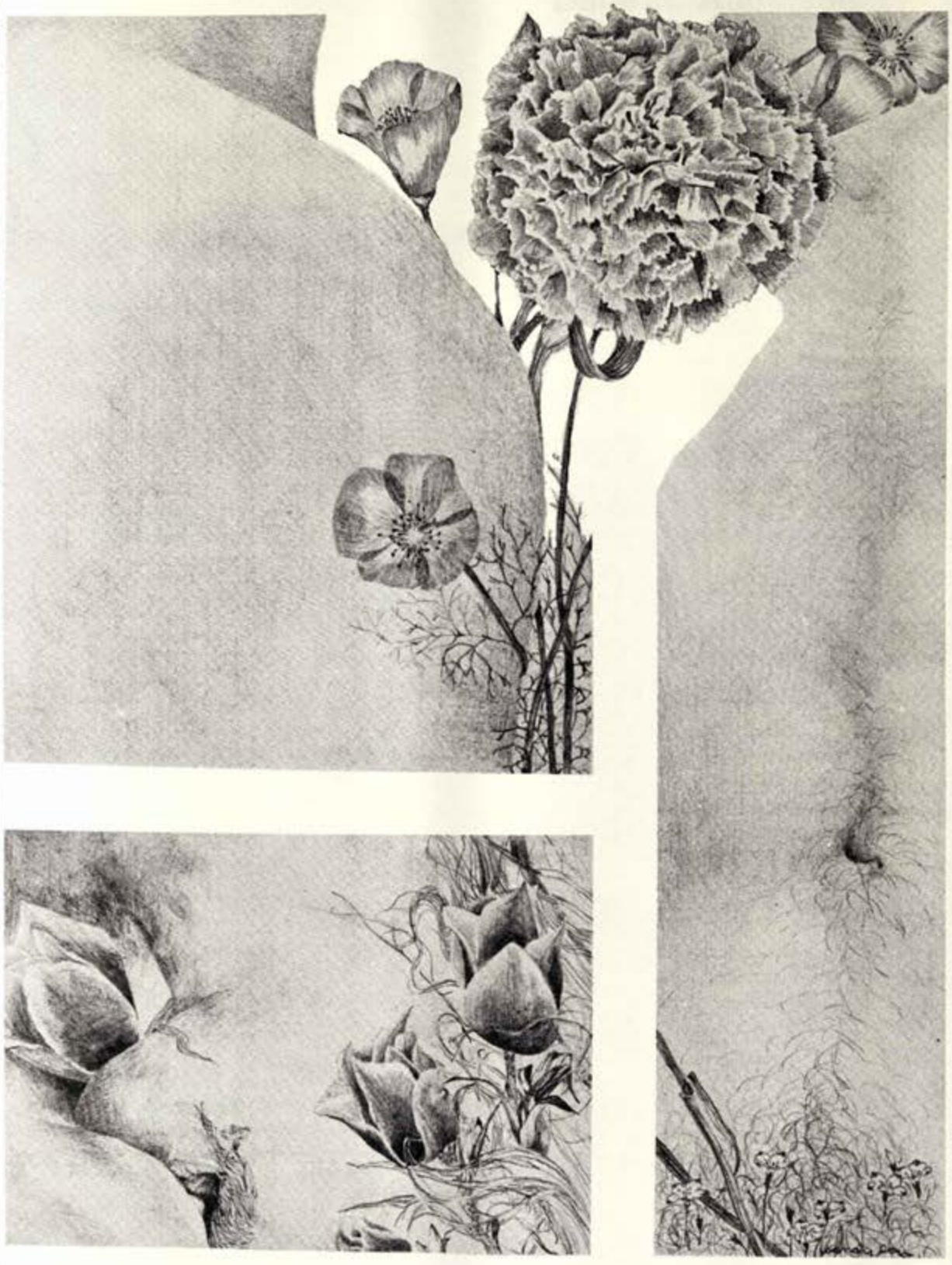
For centuries sailors have encompassed the watery parts of earth to bring home the excellent fruits of their labours: every kind of fish, whale oil, spices, silk, tomatoes, gunpowder, and tales of distant lands with people of foreign customs. Because of their voyages, sailors quickly became tellers of tales, the eyes and ears of those who remained safely at home. And the dangers sailors encountered at sea had their reward: sustained contact with the reality of the cosmos — experience and knowledge of the origins of life on this planet — continual exposure to creation and its mundane yet ever-changing, profound reality.

All poets are essentially sailors. From Homer to the present poets have dared the dangers of the sea, have worked, eaten, lived and died upon it, and brought forth the fruits of their labours: sustained contact with the reality of the cosmos. Like sailors, poets are tellers of tales, the eyes and ears of those who choose to remain at home. But poets record their experience into one which explores and declares the true importance of the most common action. Casting off lines is as common an experience to a sailor as anything, yet it continues to symbolize beginnings and endings of cosmic significance. Hauling nets is an everyday routine, yet an abundance of food is gained in the activity.

And in the activity of writing, life is sorted, organized, heightened to a greater reality. The writers and artists represented in this issue of Orpheus *are all sailors — all experiencing, transforming, and recording the vastness and diversity of the seven seas. Great, small, real, imaginary, joyous, sorrowful, strange, common, holy, profane, and much that is in between are all here, collected from the voyages of many people from many ships.*

Yes, poets are sailors, experiencing everyday activities and perceiving their universal importance. Life upon the sea is life itself. And, as the earth is a ship in a universal ocean, truly, we are all *sailors here.*

Jerome Evans



"Untitled"
Wendy Lou

Dane R. Anderson

The huge moth spinning around the light bulb
is casting shadows across the room.
I imagine parts of the wall disappearing
leaving me open in the chair.

Mist rising over ice
    One element converted twice
Fly my thoughts to the Sun
    While the other sleeps and weighs a ton.

Outside the window of the train I rode
Is a bridge with a young girl standing.
She is frozen in my memory.
I wish I could return and meet her.

I feel sorry for architects.
People
  are
    always ruining
      their
        plans.

Dane R. Anderson

"That man has never cried!"
I heard her say.

But what does she know?
Singing with the parrots,
And dancing with the bears.

Dust sucked from the ground
Riding vortex into sky,
Climbing higher
almost reaching,
Settles silent to the ground.

Philip Arnold

The Long Train

Couple
Uncouple
On and one the engine
Picks up flatbeds,
burdens laid out
spread and tied down
hoppers filled
mounted to the lip
boxes crammed
til they can take no more
and double-high stackers
piled on their beds,
all slammed into couplings
and locked in line
following the drive
to the end
dropped off
left behind
for others to take
their places
full and waiting
or already drained
for another's lading.

Howard C. Zimmerman

Somewhere

Red wool socks
crimson in the bulblight
bright beneath the booth
in College Side

Five grey scholars
mumble
in their books–
    English-Beowulf
    Science-physics
    Drama-acting
    History-modern
    Education-all

Somewhere
    booze hounds pop
    can tops sharing in a song–

Somewhere
    fresh-born children
    scream purple into midnight–

Somewhere
    the moaning goes,
    the deathless daddy dies–

Howard C. Zimmerman

Somewhere
blue and yellow socks
move forward past the red—

Somewhere
living is another kind of poem.

Howard C. Zimmerman

Divorce

He walked to the window
to pull back the curtain--
certain to see her kneeling,
bending over flowers
close to the garden soil.

Watching her toil--
the deftness of fingers
the fancies of eye
the joys ov completeness
the brightness of sky
pleasured him to be there
near enough to see
without distraction
the simple actions she adored.

"A little to the left of center--
the blue must frame the white--
Asters must have shading--
roses need bright sunlight
as they grow."

"Beautiful those wisps of hair-
kittled by the moist, spring breeze.
She's putting them by instinct
exactly where they'd please to be."

"He's watching me; I knew he would;
he so appreciates the game.

I'll put red tulips here and here--
to add a touch of flame."

"I guess she knows I'm watching--
it's what we always do.
I'd better make the coffee--just two cups
to sip when she is through."

"Hm'mmmm, he's gone. I wonder why?
It isn't like him to turn away
to other things.
I wonder what he'll do?"

"I can't lie here! . . . I've got to put
the water on to boil. . . . Oh, My God,
forgive me. I guess I always knew
this would be the end of toil."

Howard C. Zimmerman

Saturday Night on Baker Street

they're gettin' drunk tonight turn to turn.
That's alright;
they work hard,
and Saturday's time to prowl----
Huntin' slow-eyed
in the honkies
one after one
with lifted skirts–
half-zippered flys
and all the other paraphernalia
of attraction-
of bait----
While they wait for eternity to begin– again
on Baker Street---near Kentucky.

Howard C. Zimmerman

The Rescue Mission's "soup-and-prayers" routine
plugs up the holes for a few
for awhile
moving the Mt. Vernon overpass gang indoors
and "Nearer My God To Thee"
onto creaky cots
for the wino's drinkin' "Dago Red"–
as the little pleasure left before resurrection.

An' I drive by in my pink suit–
an Cadillac–
smellin' a red carnation--

An' I'm real cool. . . .

Howard C. Zimmerman

Trap

If sunset means as much as dawn,
I'll scarcely know
how to get on—
with living
in so rich a bind
as dew in front
and dusk behind.

Dale Berona

Non-white or other

Colors passing
Caught in time
Seeking to begin again

A potential force
unable to move beyond
Illusions and false
Assumptions

Seeking a validation
Of experiences through
Individual points of
Separation

We have become reflected
Images of ego transitions
Incapable of bearing the
Weight of the past

Dale Berona

Consequences

Our days of climbing rainbows have past. Nature has been met and she is no longer virginal. Her fall will be on the six o'clock news along with the random projections on the longevity of our external environment. The gift of fire has irreversibly outdistanced the human landscape. Tools of our tools, subdued and cybernated, we are victims of changing definitions and fluid boundaries. As individuals we have merged with our institutions and symbols and we are now but fragments of reality. We have finally outran our understanding. Sisyphus still has his rock but we have destroyed his mountain with nuclear fission.

Joe DeYoung

The Glass Eye

"I got it, I got It!" we all yelled. It was just a game we used to play, whenever grandpa fell asleep and his glass eye popped out. Every time he fell asleep in his chair, his head would drop until his chin hit his chest, then it would happen. His glass eye would pop out and hit the floor. It was a big challenge to see who could get it first as it rolled across the room. It usually went under a chair or table which made it harder to get.

On rainy days, we would just sit around acting like we were doing something else, so grandpa wouldn't know we were waiting for him to fall asleep. As soon as his head would start for his chest, we all turned around and got ready to jump for the eye.

We had a lot of fun playing this game, until grandpa died. It just wasn't the same on rainy days without grandpa's glass eye. We tried playing games like hide-and-seek or tag, but there just wasn't the challenge that we had chasing that eye. Things were getting pretty dull around the house without grandpa, but then one day, things changed.

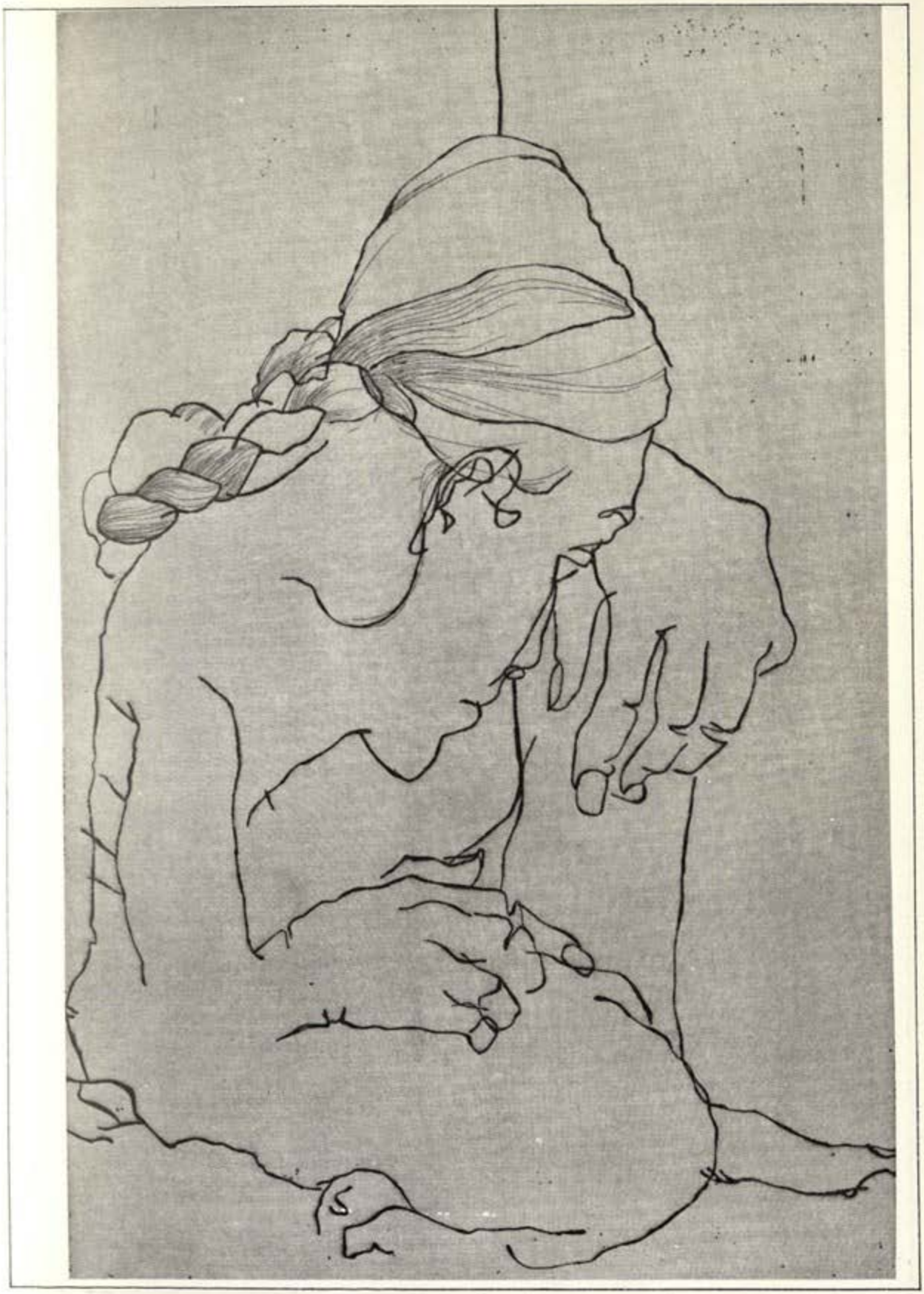
Dad was out in the garage working on his car with a grinder trying to get rid of some rust spots so he could repaint it. We were in the house playing tag at the time, when we heard a loud scream. Mom got out there first and she wouldn't let us see what had happened. All she said was that dad had hurt himself and she was going to take him to the hospital. Well, she did and we didn't see dad for a few weeks. He finally came home though, and he had a brand new, shiny, glass eye!

After that, things got back to normal around the house, almost that is. Dad didn't fall asleep like grandpa, but for the first few months we used to follow him around the house, waiting for him to bump into something. It

was more fun than waiting for grandpa to fall asleep, cause you never knew when dad would bump into something and his eye would pop out. It was more of a challenge too. You never knew which way it was going to go.

After a while we got tired of chasing his eye, and found other games to play, like chasing cats with our bikes or throwing rocks at birds. This kept us busy until we got into high school. We found new things to do then, but none of them ever compared to our childish game with the eye.

When we grew up and got out of college, we all went our separate ways. My brothers and sisters got married and had kids of their own. Ya know, sometimes I wish I had gotten married and had kids too. Especially when I have to crawl around every time this damn glass eye falls out.



"Grey Lady"
Wendy Lou

Christine Johnson

Forested green, mosses to cover
The mistake. The lady
Uncovered, naked peering from the mists
As a child through skirts.
Seen through the edges of her dream
a man, not yet aware, dozing
With the fineness of the dew
As it settles, delicate
beadlets of moisture
Wetted with the first orgasm.
Nakedness becomes the mosses,
Loving turns tith the forest
Dead leaves revitalize with the drops of sex.
Sleeping through dreams, the lady
Rises.
He calls out to her,
Alone now, within a time all is spent,
gone along a trail of mistiness,
Love vanishes with the dream of a million stars.
Woman alone is evermore,
Woman alone with the clouds,
Carried with the demons of the earth.
Love vanquished with the deeds of her lover
There can be no love when there are no moist leaves to drop
their clear foliage along the edges of the good dream.

Lyn Vono

Searching

Splintered sights invade the soul.
Massing and matching, they form false
images
Break up and re-form alternate images
just as untrue.
The soul tries to match itself to these
fragments and form in like ways.
The soul so formed recognizes the untruth
And seeks another image.
But all are untrue.
LORD!
Slit open the self
Let it spill jabbering molds and long-
forgotten messages.
Open love to feel the texture of being.

J. A. Allen

Devil's Door

you touched me
and opened the Devil's Door

all the wraiths of Hell from within
spun webs and circles round you
then disappeared

my dragons spit their fire and flashed their jewel-red eyes
my Herods preened in sheaths of pure gold

and all the sorcerers and sages
who guard the keys of my madness
they tried to master the stars
and all beneath

with Incantations
– come the ghosts of long-dead lovers with empty eyes watching
– come the old lords, in search of worshippers
– come the skeletons of lost desires, bodies shrunken
and depraved
– come cat-familiars to stand sentry
– come the imps who pick-ax the walls of its brain

tried to pull back your hand in time
shut the gate upon their leagues
but the Magical Force pervades and penetrates all

my wisemen and my wizards
they let you into Satan's grasp
there you stay

J. A. Allen

Requiem for a Final Exam

here I am
stuck in a little corner of the 4th dimension

knowing that nothing is so important in
porportion to the time I spend worrying about it

ickky, ickky society made me a worrier

a carefree little worm inside me is wriggling
to get free
and be nothing more significant –
nothing more earth-shaking –
than the inhabitant of my little corner

Ann Garcia

Woodlawn

Poppies appear, now and then, in
the built-in vase at Woodlawn.
In these late-spring blossoms
somewhere lies my heart.

We knew these flowers,
bright and orange as fire.

I cannot unearth my heart from
beneath yesterday's petals
that lie as heavy on the ground
as ashes on a hearth.

I cannot salvage a fallen petal
from under the burning embers.

Lee McCarthy

One Rough Edge, One Smooth

I

You are my mother and it is your birthday.
I think of birthdays.
I think of flunking an IQ test
because I did not know Washington's birthday.
I always thought it wise of me not to overload
    my lines like that.
Birthdays are so intense.
Washington would be only an oversized bee flown into the web.

II

November 30,
December 10,
December 21.
I reach back through you to my past
and the beginning of my son.
My son reaches through you to his mother
and to his future.
The birthing breath of life
weaves its way.
My son in behind you as surely as the past
hangs there forever.
I am set in your future.
You're embraced by the two boundaries

of my life.
You reach out in both directions,
weaving all the straight lines that make
our design.

Only when the sun hits us just right
can the beauty of our web be seen.
We are anchored away from each other.
Our web is made of nothing substantial,
only love.

We were all born in a cold time
and yet we were born believing in spring.
We were born for summer
and we have always known that.
Our web is there the first warm morning,
fleshed out with sunlight and dew.
Where it comes from can be explained.
It only seems a miracle.

III

The black and yellow writing spider by the driveway gate
where I caught the school bus
explains everything.
Joyce, born in April, told me
if the spider saw one's teeth
the spider would write one's name
and then one died.
The spider was so boldly beautiful
and Joyce, too, that I believed her.
Her lies were always that kind;
It cost nothing to believe her,
lips pressed tightly shut,
but you might die if you didn't.
Joyce understood things like how to inspire belief
from the very first.
She had sure formulas.
She was born in a warm month.

IV

Yet there was no spider
those three cold nights--

November 30,
December 10,
December 21.
There was no sun, no gate.
With our skulls we made our way through pelvic bones.
Mother-bodies gave way to that inside life
as they hung suspended in air,
sustained by only a single thread of their own making.

V

The vivid cry of yellow atop the back of night,
pretending to be invisible,
waited.
And Washington's birthday I could not possibly *know*.

Lee McCarthy

Grotesque

My hands loomed
forty years ahead of me,

clumsy in their disenchantment.

With stand-out veins and wrinkled knuckles,
they declared themselves
twice my age,
everything twice-experienced.

The rest of me is now
about to catch up.

My hands have always mocked
my attempting refinement,
even my thinking that I used them.

Like destiny,
they have led me,
if not well at least like someone
who would die.

I appreciate their having been so honest with me.

Lee McCarthy

Tongue-Tied Pie

Everyone knows a frog can bulge its eyes out
but

he told me
a frog can also pull them in,
turning its mouth into a kind of trash compressor
bought at Sears on a Saturday.

He told me
a frog swallows its food whole
after flattening the victims out.
A non-choking diet
eyeballed to death.

Like all facts, the info at the time
seemed to be the most vivid stuff I had ever heard--
that startling blue of the Gulf below Pensacola.

I married him immediately after that

and, although we did not live happily ever after,
I did live with my eyes bulged out and,
every night in my sleep,
things seemed to flatten out against my tongue.

There is a certain amount of pie in the sky
about all that.

Lee McCarthy

Mr. Sky Hoffington

Her mother sent the clipping from the *Stuttgart Progress.* Clink could imagine her mother talking to Mrs. Bledsoe, the social editor of the town's weekly paper. She could even hear the shrillness rise in her mother's voice as she tried to sound cheerful about the news disclosed. Instead, there must have been only growing astonishment in her mother's voice as she told Mrs. Bledsoe everything she had gleaned from Clink and a few things she had surmised for herself.

It was rather a long write-up, considering how little her mother had been allowed to know or even surmise. And the newspaper hadn't dared summarize about Mrs. Fenner's daughter so they had tried to save space on the new husband. Mrs. Fenner, in order to keep the son-in-law that the town had never seen from sounding too hazy, had revealed the fact that her promising daughter had married someone who worked in an auto parts store. He was a clerk, she had believed to Mrs. Bledsoe. Clink could count on her mother having said it as if it were one of those oddities that any character of worth could allow himself. But it had sounded too much like the bread truck-driver husband that Clink's older sister had picked. So Mrs. Fenner told what she wasn't supposed to: That this new son-in-law was an artist. And there it was, the last sentence of the article:

> Mr. Sky Hoffington works as a
> clerk in an auto parts store
> and is an artist.

Certainly, her mother had not made equal things of the two. She could not, at least, have ever gotten two facts into one sentence. It was the paper that had equated them. Yet, it was her mother who had made the

indiscretion possible. She also had to admit her mother had not objected to the ludicrous write-up. Because they were a tall family, her mother had come to judge everything by its length. Clink could not expect her mother to have taken note of this mistake, even though she knew her mother herself had made much more of the artist than the auto-parts aspect of Mr. Sky Hoffington. What did surprise Clink was Mr. Hoffington not laughing about the clipping, but saying, with vibrant disgust, "Jesus god. That mother of yours." He said it just after he read the last sentence.

He, in fact, never forgave her mother. His being able to feel strong hate for a woman he had never met amused Clink, at first. She would twaddle out the illogic of such a syllogism in an exaggerated southern drawl. He would look into his coffee cup and say, "Oh, I know her okay."

Whenever he was forced into referring to his mother-in-law, Mr. Sky Hoffington called her "that poisonous woman." After a year, Clink had said one day, "Well, if you dislike my mother so much, you must dislike me at least a little. After all, she's my mother. According to the books, there is a replica of her in me somewhere." The words made a sudden crack in the disinterested silence.

"Who was talking about your mother?" he asked.

"I was thinking. About us," she said.

"Well, there is a drop of poison in you. But that's all. Not enough to kill me."

By that time, he was getting attention from the critics and the better galleries. His paintings were making a name for him if not much money. Clink still worked downtown, but Mr. Hoffington no longer displayed himself among auto parts. He had erased the verbiage by being needed at odd hours for showings.

She was lying on the sofa one night, reading a favorable review on his first one-man show. It was the *Chicago Tribune*. At first, her laugh was only loud and then it began to sound somewhat hysterical. It had become a habit of hers since the excruciatingly slow realization that she was unhappy and unloved and more a failure than her sister's breadtruck alliance even. He came in from his studio, irritated by the disturbance.

She was on the floor by that time, under the coffee table. Half her arm was looking for the drink she had left, in her hurry, on the upper side of the table. She was trying to rectify the mistake without getting off the floor.

"What are you squealing about?"

"You and my mother."

"Why? Has she sent another clipping?" He knew Clink took some small pleasure in his sarcasms.

"No." She made a strangled noise as she breathed in some spittle. It did not sound feminine. A woman of tinkling laughter, Mrs. Sky Hoffington, he quoted to himself. She sounded like a deaf-mute dying of bad lungs whenever she laughed.

"What book have you been reading?" That was usually what caused these rare bursts of thought in her.

She gave up on the martini that was irrevocably lost on the other side of the table. Looking at him seriously from underneath the low table, she said, "I wasn't reading. I was thinking."

"And what was Clink thinking?"

"Isn't that nice that I rhyme with 'think'? About Mother giving you your first recognition as an artist. Before anyone else was willing to. And how ungrateful you were."

He made a face, to show she had been laughing at something corny, at something no one else would think funny. He turned to go back into his studio as usual, but he didn't. Instead he said, learning against the door jamb, "You're the only woman I know who has read *Don Quixote*, Mark Twain, *Tristram Shandy*, and all of Faulkner and still doesn't understand the first thing about humor. You should stick to what you were meant for."

"What's that?" she asked, afraid to hear him tell her.

"Well, first of all, you shouldn't be ALLOWED at cocktail parties. You always laugh BEFORE the punch line. Always, Clink."

She scooted back under the table until she could see only his feet. Then the feet disappeared. She put her face against the scratchy carpet and told the underside of the table, "That's only because the punch line always makes me cry." It wasn't that she didn't know the real punch line. The real one was how convenient it was for him that they lived in the vicinity of so many good bars. The real one came when she pretended to be asleep but heard the apartment door close as he went out every night.

She listened to another door close, the one to his studio. It closed with the knowledge that she wouldn't disturb him again. She knew he didn't work in there at night because he painted during certain hours in the day while she was at work. She knew that because she had read about painters and light in some book.

Starting to move from underneath the table, she went slowly so as not to jar the martini glass. She used her elbows and the insides of her thighs to push herself forward on her belly. She noticed there were tears coming out of her eyes. That was because a shell was going to get her before she made it to the next foxhole.

II

She was sitting at a small writing desk, the cheap pen leaving clots in the veins scrawled onto the paper. Here she was in a room as large and hollow-sounding as any neurotic could have dreamt of, sent here by Mr. Sky Hoffington, with only one instruction regarding her care. Her mother was not to see her. He had explained to the doctor that the mother was largely responsible for Clink's illness, as he called it. Mr. Sky Hoffington did not tell the doctor that Clink had not seen her mother or any other relative for two years. What he told the doctor was he had no intention of paying the hospital if it allowed unhealthy relationships. Clink noticed that Mr. Hoffington had not been to visit her either.

She received occasional letters from him. Notes, really. He encouraged her to write him and spoke briefly of her being good as new in the near future. She would have preferred clippings from the Stuttgart Progress covering the more recent developments in Mrs. Clink Hoffington's life. Mr. Hoffington never thought of amusing her. Because he knew she had no sense of humor, of course. She kept forgetting that he had a good reason.

She looked at his letter again. Good as a new what? she wanted to ask him. Nobody but a baby was new. He wanted her GOOD as a new baby? Babies weren't ever good; they cried a lot. He KNEW she could cry as good as any baby, even before she came here. She'd tell him that, maybe.

Her recent crying hadn't been so good, she had noticed. It sounded worn-out, old. He might not like that kind of improvement. He might send her back as soon as she got home. She mourned over that tragedy before thinking any more.

Maybe, he just wanted a new baby that could eat that pablum he had fed her those first six months. But every baby, after six months, began

spitting pablum out, into the spoon-wielder's face if possible, to show it was ready for more substantial stuff. Truth always short-circuited out. Romance as short as infancy. It was a shame everything nice was over so fast. After six months, baby got spanked when it cried. Hell, there were reasons for crying. Like helplessness. Law against child abuse. No law against woman abuse. Some states had come up with a little something against wives suffering "mental atrocities." But the only stipulation was that the man should divorce the atrocitized woman. Some penalty. What about if the woman didn't want a divorce? Just wanted the husband less atrocious.

She laid her head on the desk, rolling her warm, slightly damp forehead back and forth across the top of the stationery. Instead of an A branded on her breast, she would have her husband's name across her forehead. I have a letter to write, she told herself as if to explain why she should be found raising her head from such a comfortable position. It wasn't really that she wanted to show off her new decal. There wasn't anyone in that end of the room to admire it. She put the pen back to the paper, wishing the ink would flow. Thinkly, smoothly. Forever the same.

Dear Mr. Hoffington:

Your paintings are first-rate, but your posture as an artist is third-rate, i.e., corny. I do not like you. You know that. You know that if I did not need ask this of you I would not. Because to ask anything of you is to have to deal with that third-rate, corny posture.

Please get me out of here.

Sincerely, Mrs. Clink Hoffington

She knew the letter itself would keep her there at least three months longer than if he never received any letter from her. She crumpled it up in her hands and listened to its crisp flatness resist. Instead of throwing the ball into the basket, she began to bite it, the paper leaving shreds of itself to celebrate the mutilation. She was enjoying her teeth so much she couldn't stop, even when she saw the nurse moving unhurriedly the length of the room toward her. She knew what that meant so she promised herself as much pleasure as possible. When the nurse was close enough, she dropped the almost gone ball and drew back the pen to take aim like the decathlon champion she was. It was just they would never allow the time for all twelve events. She hesitated a moment, tempted to use one of the nurse's varicose veins as a target. At the last moment, she decided in favor of the white uniform.

"You'll have to wash your dress before you go to bed tonight." She said it as the pen twirled ink onto the front of the nurse in its descent.

The nurse was leading Clink down the hall. "Is it indelible?" Clink asked her. The woman answered by clutching Clink's arm more tightly.

She decided to make amends and tell the nurse a joke. She didn't like the joke herself. That was exactly why she knew the nurse would just love it. But the nurse didn't listen to anyone who had to sit in the little room alone. That was part of the punishment. And so she just told the room the joke when she got there.

"This woman told her husband that she had been to the doctor and the husband said, 'Well, what did the doctor say was wrong with you?' And the woman answered, 'Well, he said that my problem was that I had very close veins.'"

III

She was glad that the room didn't think that was funny.

As soon as he let her come out, upon her promise to stay off martinis, he got her pregnant. He had swelled up her mind and now it was her belly that this stunt man was going to use for a balloon. No, that's not him, she corrected. He's more corny than that. He sees his sperm as coontailed hunters stalking the forest. When he sees a Kentucky rifle, he thinks of his penis. Someone should tell him that a Kentucky rifle is taller than ALL of him.

The doctor had held her by the shoulder upon her departure and said, "Be Fair to Mr. Hoffington." Okay, okay, she said to the memory of him there looking like the final scene in a tragic movie that could have had a happy ending if he could just have made it last fifteen minutes longer. Okay,said more easily. I'll be fair. His mother is a good, Catholic woman who had eight children. And everyone, simply everyone, knows how excruciatingly sane she is. So Mr. Hoffington thinks he has done me a favor. "You tell him I don't want eight favors." She hissed it through her teeth, wanting a martini very badly.

When three months had passed, she found what she had expected to find. The usual. It always turned out that Mr. Hoffington could not stand the results of his ideas even as well as she could. His avoidance of her surpassed all earlier achievements. He said it was because pregnancy deformed the natural lines of the female figure. She had smiled sweetly at

him and said, "Well, certainly no one could blame a sensitive artist for being repulsed by that."

He had been infuriated by her use of "repulsed" and had made her retract it. She changed it to "ravished" but he ignored her.

She never had morning sickness but he acted as if he expected her to start some foolishness like that at any moment. Belated, just to throw him off-guard. She spent her time being nauseatingly sane. That really made him suspicious. She secretly hoped that it would eventually lead to HIS developing morning sickness.

After six months, when nothing happened every day except her same dull pattern of behavior, he began to relax. By the seventh month, she could tell he had forgotten about the baby. Completely through with it two months before it's born, she said to herself. By the eighth month, he had forgotten that she was back home.

IV

She woke, measuring her condition, she decided on exhausted. The day before, they had gone to buy a dozen diapers, a plastic pail with a lid, and some flannel blankets. It had been the day the baby was to be born, but she had assured him they always came late. She knew Mr. Hoffington resented any intrusion on his privacy. The idea of some obstetrician, a total stranger, knowing exactly when something would happen in Mr. Hoffington's own home had been scalding water on his brain. That was one of the things she like about him: the value he placed on privacy. And, yet, she suspected it all hinged on his having been a sneak as a child.

She had taken advantage of his elation over the obstetrician being wrong; she chose that moment to suggest making some few preparations.

"Preparations?" he had said, looking blank except for the thin rim of distrust around his left eye. Then he had gotten his eyes together and they had told her "preparations" weren't really necessary, except when one was involved with someone square and dowdy like herself.

She had sighed and said, "Like where is it going to sleep?"

He had gone into the bedroom to look around and had come back to the table carrying the drawer that contained her underclothes. She didn't call them lingerie; she had long ago tired of the sour faces he made whenever he heard her use the word. At first, she had persisted, but he had stopped that

by once asking dryly, "Is that the only word an Arkie girl can find to add to her vocabulary?"

He lifted the drawer over his head, as if she couldn't see it. "Here," he said. There was triumph in his voice. She knew he was feeling creatively forceful in his little moment.

"Well, we had better buy some diapers or it will be full of shit rather soon," she said. Then they had gone shopping.

When they had gotten home, friends had been waiting. Friends who stayed until three in the morning although she must have looked hollow under the eyes. Clink had endured them without martinis.

Now, she was trying to locate what had wakened her out of such exhaustion. Both arms were asleep. That was it. They were thrown over her head. All that prickling would stop as soon as the circulation was going again. She waited. She couldn't cry; that much she knew. She couldn't cry about her arms being asleep and that keeping her awake. That would wake HIM and he's let his kid be born in an asylum just to avoid the drawer full of shit.

Yesterday he had said the diapers didn't look very thick to him. She hadn't meant to scare him that much. "Sky," she had said, using that name which had felt strange but nice in her mouth, "they have to fit between the baby's legs. And how wide do you think the crotch of something like a five pound bag of sugar is?" He had made a face at her. She had answered with deprecation, "Well, if we put as much padding on it as you'd like, it won't be able to MOVE for six months. I intend for him to be walking to the toilet by then." She had colored when she realized she had used the masculine pronoun.

Enjoying her embarrassment, he had said, "IT sounds precocious."

It was only after her arms stopped hurting that she realized she had other problems. Pains in her belly. Everybody knew babies were two weeks late and she was too tired. "I need some sleep," she told it. She had another pain. She spoke through tightly shut teeth, hoping she sounded stern and not despairing. "Your mother will make an ass of herself in the delivery room if you don't back out. I'm just asking for one more day." The pain gone, her face relaxed and she gave her stomach a tentative pat. "After all, I really wanted you to come on my mother's birthday. For your daddy's sake, you understand. It's a shame you're missing it by five days."

The next pain was blatantly assertive, told her plainly to get out of bed. She looked over and saw the other half of the bed was empty. "That's nice," she said and rolled toward the edge nearest her until her feet fell onto the floor. She then used her arms to push herself into a standing position. She shook her head in approval of this glimmer of ingenuity on her part.

She was in the kitchen feeling the still-warm coffeepot when the next pain came. The single cup had been placed to one side in the sink. She saw his studio door had been left open and thought how sick it would make him to see her skipping. Full-grown in motherhood seen one last time on the little girl's sidewalk that leads from hopscotch and jacks to the poison of love and it doughy-bread cure. Her rendering of cow-over-the-moon might permanently damage his ego, but she knew he wouldn't be there to see. She made it in time for the contraction to occur in his studio. Skipping speeded things up.

She looked at the room. It revealed more about him than his face did. A small wall-mirror looked out of place, as if it had been stolen from a public restroom. "You are a vain man," she said. "The great vanities are in you and thus the little ones, too."

A five-foot, blank canvas waited on the easel. Just another big-eyed virgin waiting for her first fuck, she thought. She was jealous. If I painted myself white and then completely flatted myself--smashed myself onto the sidewalk four stories below--then he might notice me again, re-consider my possibilities, at least re-consider his possibilities with me, she thought. I suspect I never would fit on a wooden frame right though.

The canvas on the easel had been streatched with care, patience. Even she could tell that. The whole room bespoke skill, but so had their bedroom. Where their bodies had lain together, long and thin, with the strong thrust of art toward the illusion of a third dimension. Their bed had been an extravaganza of color and form; it was finished and the only bad painting he had ever done. He could not forgive her that. "Just unpremeditated lust would have been a lot better, Mr. Hoffington. I'm not a goddamned apple in a still-life."

She examined the finished canvases propped along the west wall. She bowed respectfully to them. The time and money alone invested in them placed them in the mind where value was measured. And then. Then the power of Mr. Sky Hoffington's vision hypnotized the seer and pushed the seer past that vague desire in the heart for value into the starkness of naked vision. She bowed again, feeling oriental. She realized she didn't look oriental. "I may look like a malamute, though," she said and then nodded her head for emphasis.

Once she had done some watercolors on typing paper with paints from the dimestore, a child's set. She had hoped that he might be charmed by her feeble attempts, that he might at least laugh at her foolishness, but he had pretended not to notice.

She had never once touched a brush of his. If she had asked permission, he would have said, "Okay, go touch yourself a brush. But don't go telling everyone in Arkansas what they feel like." She was going to use his brushes now. His paints. And even his virgin. But she was not ready for the canvas yet.

Taking off her gown, she noticed how the flannel was beginning to ball. Inside the tent of material over her head, she could see light through a small rip under the left sleeve and smell the tepid warmth of her body. Housed there with the willingness of the flesh to be alive, she asked the gown or herself, "How can he resist me?"

Unscrewing the tops of several tubes, she carried them over to the mirror. There she watched the permanent mark of the fool, those three wrinkles of constant questioning across her forehead, disappear. She covered them with orange and red and green. "I withdraw my questions," she said and then wondered what the mark of the Beast was supposed to look like. That's the way it always is with the Bible, forever leaving the important information out, she thought.

She streaked her cheeks with bright diagonals. Mr. Hoffington wouldn't approve of such blatant color. After giving her chin a half-moon, she examined the face in the mirror. A blue line running down the nose was needed. That got her a little cross-eyed. Then she put white around the eyes, until they were big and blank enough again for virginity. Big-eyed double vision.

For her body, she used her whole hand. She even did between her toes, but she left her belly alone. She didn't want it to know what was going on. All finished, she tried a few war calls. She decided against patting her mouth; there was no trusting the movies. She looked in the mirror once more. She thought she looked really very cute. Supremely ludicrous. She wondered if he was going to appreciate her efforts. "Not likely," the face in the mirror said and smiled.

She went over to the easel, picked out a red-haired brush, and dipped it into the bright blue she had saved. She drew Sky as best she could and have him look like a warrior, too. She did him all in the one color. Finishing, she worried that he might take the singularity of color as a sign of prejudice

against him. She covered her lips with red and kissed the figure on the forehead. It looked no more than a smear of blood. She was sorry for that.

Turning toward the large window, she studied what was to be her canvas. It wasn't white. It was transparent, nonabsorbent. A hazy sky flowed behind it. Once she was there, however, she would at least confront him. Like warriors, they would reckon with each other. With what Margie considered the agility of a primitive, she gained the window sill. She took her position. A position that denied the possibility of pain.

Mr. Sky Hoffington, four floors below, was about to collect his morning mail. He moved toward the box with constraint, knowing that it could hold for him a promise come true. Things like that happened to him these days. He opened the aluminum door and found only a frail looking envelope. He could see the contents inside it. A clipping. He snatched at the letter as if it could contaminate the mailbox.

He stared at his personal tragedy, at all of Stuttgart with its nose pressed to his window so it could know how Clink Fenner Hoffington had been impregnated by an artist. Tempera paints would run for an hour from her vagina before the child came because that was the way the wife of an artist did it. The delivering doctor would do fingerpaintings while he waited for the baby's head to appear.

Sky rode the elevator up to the fourth floor. He wondered if she would be awake or if he would still have the morning to himself. When he walked into his studio, he found her standing on the window sill, in a grecian urn pose. She watched him out of the corner of her eye. Standing there looking very colorful, she waited for him to laugh.

"Goddamn it." He said it, the loudest thing he had ever said.

She screamed suddenly, her whole body clutching some pain inside her. The pain sounded real and physical; it sounded as if it had nothing to do with anyone but Clink.

He went to telephone her psychiatrist, the asylum, an ambulance. He heard the scream stop; she came to where he was and said, "I have to go to the hospital. I was afraid you weren't going to get home in time."

Panic entered his eyes and he said, "You to a hospital? Like that?"

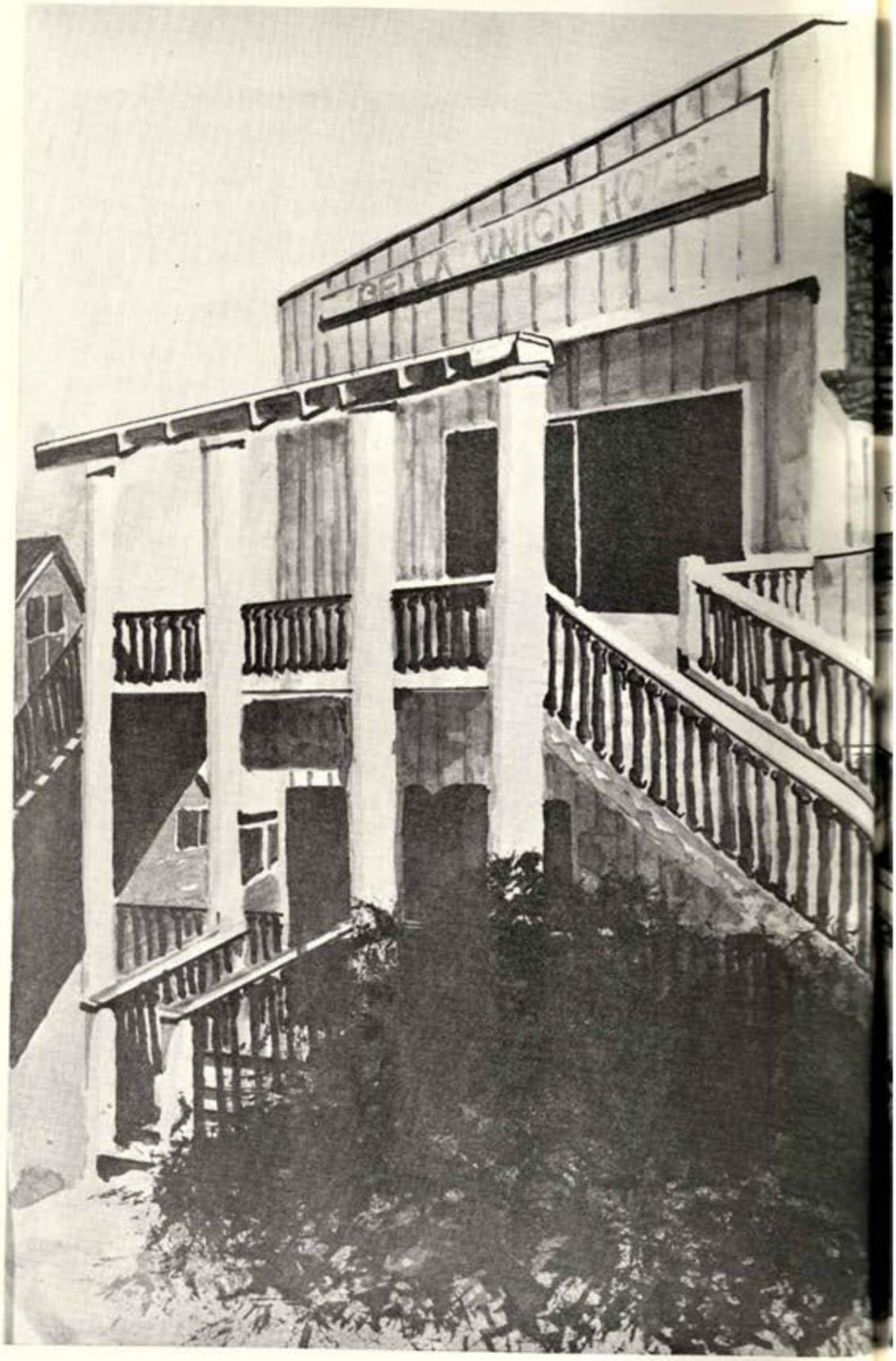
"The baby. It's the baby NOW, Sky." And her body began its clutch toward that invisible thing again.

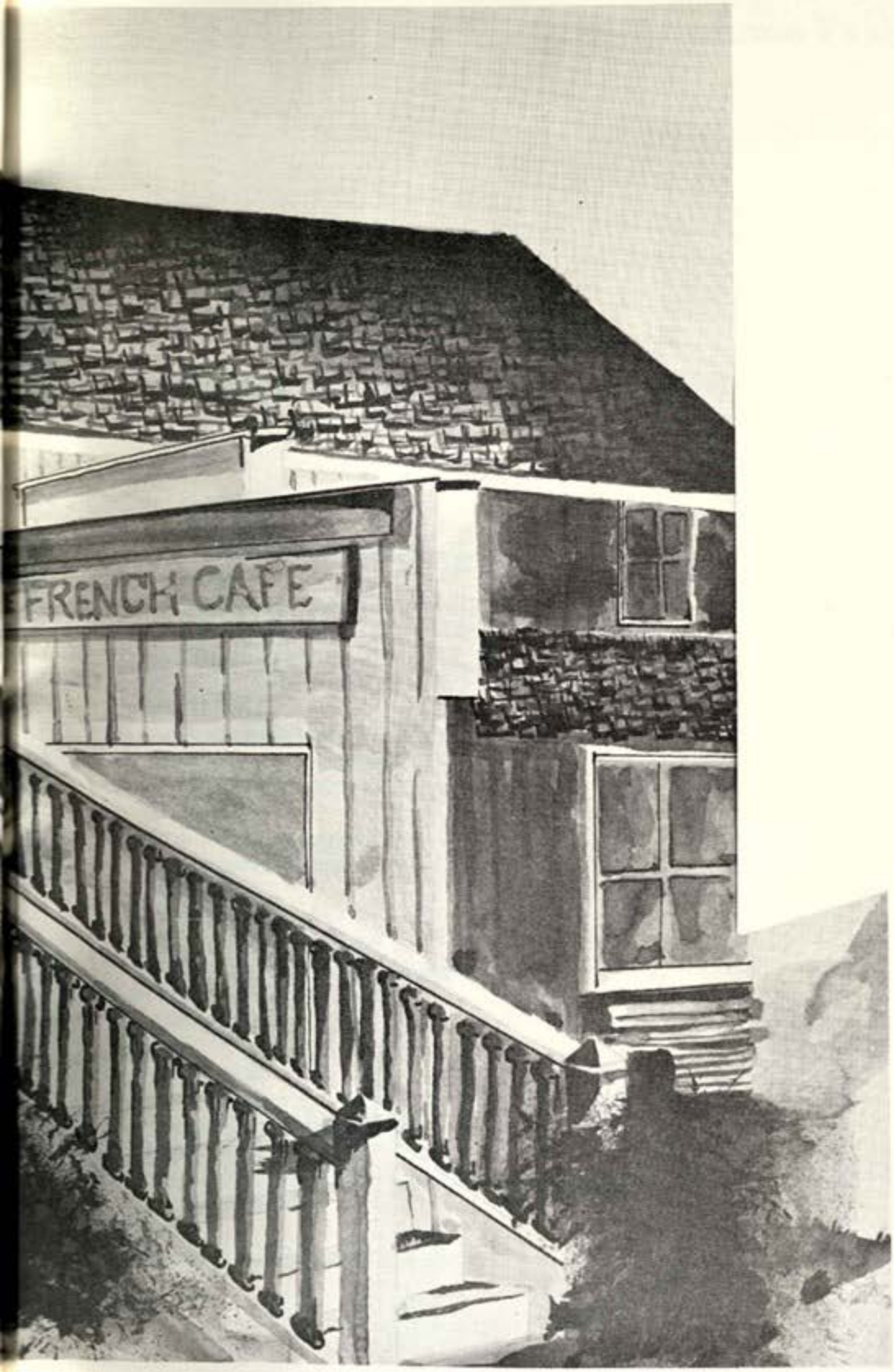
"Then go wash that stuff off. Take the turpentine and get it off."

"I can't. I really can't," she said.

"Nobody but a loony bin would have you, then."

She closed her eyes and waited, looking very colorful.




FRENCH CAFE

"Bella Union Hotel"
Linda Zent

Anne Passel

Review

She had a warm sweet smell of early morning. It rose
from the hollow
where her head had pressed, and it settled into the folds
and creases of the day.
It had something to do with baby-
fine talc and a Parisien perfume in a faceted flask. I asso-
ciate
it with a petal-skirted dance shift traced
with silvered bead ripple, and a sleek brown woven
cloche, trimmed in tangerine velvet, and an old
silk Japanese robe
(azure with white chrysanthemums — curiously formal in repose
but marvelously casual later
tête-à-tête)
as she replaced
a tortoise comb
or — the following spring — arranged
her scallop shingle to frame
her face.

Her coffee came
bedside on a tray
every morning with an applique
napkin and an Irish lace
doily. And, for a while, her thin cigarettes sent up gray
swirls from an ornate
ivory holder.
Among my mind's sounds I cannot place

her laughter, or her phrasing
or her voice's timbre, but he could. He would open
the door and pause, waiting
to hear what she was going to say.

But I do recall that very feminine slight sweet warm odor.
It was still folded
into her bureau
and locked to stay
in little satin-lined boxes when we packed them away.

Anne Passel

Academe

The shock is
to remember at all
knowing, wanting to believe
Then overlapping Now.

The trees
a foot taller, two feet
windmoving cadenced against the glass
rocking a visual continuum
even the ivy
a ruffled harmonic
hiding the inscription.

Library silence
full of subdued intrusions
the purr of aircooled
cases zippered
young sighs
and restless shift of places
searching within and everywhere on the shelves
and withal
the whispered, siblant, fragile
flecking of pages turned.

Into the sudden silence
between the voiceless rustling
time presses on me

Anne Passel

the long sweet pull of time
forever time.

Time like the airconditioning
Time like the thought pervading
Time like the neverending want-to-know
persisting unnoticed

promising -- promising

Linda Huffman

Life-Line

Disabled progress
I left behind
and walked
the road
the fence
walked with me
galvinized mesh
slip-stiched ebony
diminishing illusion
in endless parallel
extends
determined
I walk
and leave long miles

behind

Sun progression
arches haughtily
and passes
tracks of another
under mine
walk with me
before me
beyond me
into the emptiness
between the fenceline

We walk

Linda Huffman

and the road
together
We walk
and leave long miles

behind

Two progress
I see impressions faulter
and hesitate
unhalting steps
uncertain
walk before me
felt concern:
and then -
the enclosure broken
geometry marred
the deer is home

released
I walk
and leave long miles

behind

Lynn Jolley

Eggshell

Balance regained
    after rolling night closes
    a ledge looms steeply
    with cutting smoothness.

The instrumental tap
Rings of life in a glistening cave
Hung with opaque interiors.
Subtle strength ripping through
The anticipated thrust--a bold, wet move
That scatters shards of crisp decision
against starved shadows.
The point that trips
Etches bloodless fragments,
This yesterday weight
A hollow Albatross.

Brilliant eye
    dries the last filmy tension
    reminders
    no longer necessary, but not yet discarded.

It was meant to break.

Barbara Fraley

Family Reunion

Holding back the tears,
Not letting them see and
Share the pain.
It's easier, isn't it?
Two weeks out of a lifetime
Of parents versus child.
Now they're on the same level.
But nothing has changed.
Customary cooling embrace
Hello and goodbye.
Nothing in between,
Void of warm looks and
Lingering touches,
Fragmented remembrances
Of past times,
Mincing carefully over feelings,
Recalling only the good times,
Never the bad.
The pain unshared
Remains intense.

Susan Johnson

Spring was sullen this year,
weary of budding expectations and
bright-eyed nasturtiums bursting forth
on the backyard fence;
spent by the calla lily chorus
in synagogue and shrine,
courting both chapel and cathedral.
Timeworn and troubled
she eased herself into the sodden ground
and slumbered, while the late May drizzle
condensed and formed small droplets
on your furrowed brow.

We really should go in.
It doesn't appear the clouds will clear
for some time now,
and anyhow, we really can't decide . . .
not just yet.

Who will make the incision?
Who will dare the revision of the sacramental ties?

But just last year you said . . .
Do you remember what it was?
We'd just stepped in out of a sudden shower

Sunlight shining through the rain
Sunlight spread in luminous beads
upon the windowpane.

Susan Johnson

Spring was early this year,
her colors speard in dazzling disarray,
confused, dismayed,
she sulks on calloused feet.

Who will make the decision?
Who will dare the incision of the sacramental ties?



"Memories"
Wendy Lou

Thomas Joseph

On Souls, Proud and Humble

Souls undulate mindlessly
upon an endless reach
intent alone upon
moderately efficient internal regulation
and occasional communication each with each
until swells of anguish
churn the whole into a foaming panic.

The proud hold heavy cargo
cumbrous density
product of habitual acquisition--
ballast that steadies
become weight that sinks.

The humble, fit and unencumbered,
anchor to the bedrock of Spirit's course--
lasting out the storm
one
with the ground beneath.

Cal Keet

The Unlucky Field & Stream Sonneteer

perch poet
swimming lukeworm and shallow
at the cedar tree, youre gurgling

you see that hook that says
bite, you nibble instead, tease
the worm, and if you swallow

youre jerked straight from your dull wink,
your initialed cartoon lands, you
deplane, a briefcase of poems puff flop

feel feel feel the ripping hook
& cannot turn your eyes to the shadow
you may nod

hes a keeper

Cal Keet

In Memory of Ezra Fourteen Lines Or

Expow Canto II Endra

or
On reading canto two pound
As a student who hears
A football game on tv
By the sea where poetry is pig
Latin.

Hang dog man, Ezra you Pound,
There can bees cannot heart "Italian."
But eye-talian, why just eye-talian?
I didn't even knowa that Montavani played there (trans.).
Soft shoe buttered the land.
Bear coats swirl the cliff-snow seeds of proved-rock.
Onyx, brother of Lear,
    spies on Clark Gable
under white hair-fuzz, washed pagan of Zion;
But she cries against the oak hamlet:
"Elsinore, and were you or were you not in the forest (trans)
    and is it better to dream the last train to Selma (trans)!"
    And poor old Ezra blind, blind, as a bat
Word, lyre against stale flate fear, makes all old men see hel
he. beat. the. hell. out. of

Cal Keet

First Olympic Sprint

placed as
at the dialing crown, the elated socket at the
racer turns, smiles and smiles and hides
in a coal circle where torches lap the wind.

James Lokie

An Inch Equals A Mile

The gate was silent. The coastal fog crept through the doors, over the bleachers, onto the track. A lone car swung into the parking lot and sleepily ejected its contents. Then two more, then a half dozen. A finger under the first pull tab. The bitter, fizzing, amber liquid down the throat. "Boy! I needed that!" The line forms. Feet stomping in the cold.

"Damn. Sure wish it'd warm up."

"Really. Save my place. I'm going to the car to warm up."

"O.K. Bring me a beer."

"Hey! Save my place, will ya? I gotta take a leak."

"O.K. Bring me back a beer!"

"You don't want a beer, man--there's no place around here to take a leak."

"Well, piss on 'em if they can't put a john out here. Bring me a beer."

The fog begins to lift. Suddenly there are people everywhere. And cars. And motorcycles. And pick-ups. And motorcycles. They come from everywhere: California, Oregon, Maine, Vermont, Maryland, Florida. The line swells to a giant, two-headed, many colored serpent, all talking at once.

"Did you see Roberts last week? He was fantastic."

"I hope Scott is ready for this one. He sure could use a win"'

"Who won last year?"

"Brow."

"Yeah, Garth Brow."

"Did he really? I thought it was Keener."

"Nope."

"Well, maybe that was last year."

"Sure wish they'd open the gates."

"Gimme a beer."

The tension begins to mount. You can almost see it in the air. The ticket takers slide into their booths and begin to count their money. The crowd surges forward. The gates thunder open as the charged crowd strikes through them. "Alright!"

The smell of burnt fuel. The occasional sound of a Harley with open exhaust. The excitement builds.

"Programs! Get your programs."

"Hey, man, gimme a program. How much?"

"Two dollars."

"Two dollars! Christ! This place is gonna cost me a month's wages."

The crowd moves into the stadium. The empty track spreads out before them. The mile! One full mile of beautiful, exciting, terrifying dirt. But now there is only the water truck, followed by a covey of cars and trucks, packing the dirt to rock-like hardness.

Practice, followed by water trucks, followed by time trials, followed by water trucks. Lunch. Beer and hot dogs . . . and beer. The crowd swells. The sun removes all jackets, and brightly lit T-shirts explode into view: "San Jose IS the Mile," "Sears Point," "Laguna Seca," "Ascot," "Indianapolis,"

"Daytona." Hondas and Harleys, Beemers and Besers, Roberts, Springer, Scott--all proudly blasted across chests.

The restless crowd swells, suring like the tide. Down to the concession stands, up to the grandstands, out to the corners.

"Hey! Look at that !"

"Wow! What a set!"

"Gimme the binocs. Oh, man. Will you look at them legs?"

"Lemme see. Good God, I'm in loooove again!"

In the pits, mechanics fret over the machines, going over tire pressures, chain tension, checking for loose nuts and bolts. If it's right you leave it alone and worry that it'll stay right. If it's wrong--Christ! If it's wrong--you sweat; you check; "Ah! There's the problem." You fire it up, run it around the pits, bring it back, tear it apart again. And dread the announcement, "Riders in the first heat report to the pit gate."

The first heat! Then the second and the third. The novice race and the trophy dash. And finally the main event--the mile.

The Mile! The bikes pushed down the track, jump on, jam into gear. Pow! VaRoom! VaRooom! Nothing sounds like an uncapped Harley. Here and there the higher, more even note of a Triumph or Norton, but the Harleys dominate. Snorting, bucking, rearing up on spinning rear wheels, they return to the magic line, their beginning and end. The crowd stops. VaRoom! VaRoom! VaaRoooom! The starter steps onto the track. The pace quickens. VaRoom! VaRoom! Every eye on starter Bouncin' Bob as he turns cartwheels down the track. Vroom Varoom Vroom! Red light. Burnt fuel. Concentrate. Look for the Starter's rhythm. Green light! The world thunders. The stands vibrate. The roar of the crowd almost drowns out the thunder of the machines as they blast into the first turn. Sliding in a graceful arc as they push and shove, jockeying for position. Down the back chute. The crowd on its feet as the riders dive into turn three. Pitch the bike sideways. Slide! Slide! Six riders looking for the lead. Out of turn four and onto the grandstand straightaway. Down low over the tank. Right hand on the throttle, left hand in on the fork to reduce wind resistance. Anything for an edge. Past the yelling, screaming stands at 130 miles per hour. And into lap two. Twenty-four to go.

The race settles into its pace. Banging and bouncing. Slamming into the turns, driving out onto the straights. Lap twenty. The pace quickens. Five

riders could challenge the lead. Lap twenty-five. This is it! As they slide into turn one it looks like Scott has the race sewn up. But this is the mile. Anything can happen. Down the back chute. Suddenly, four riders converge on first place. The crowd comes to its feet with a roar. Into the turn. Scott comes in too hot and can't hold his bike down in the groove. As his bike slides, up Springsteen goes in underneath him with Romero and Keener right behind. But Romero is forced to the outside of Springsteen, and Keener drives in hard underneath him. Out of the turn they come, four riders so close they could be covered with a blanket. The crowd is frantic. Each person is frantically praying his favorite home. "Come on! Come on! You can do it!" But the riders hear nothing except the screaming of tortured engines; see nothing but the finish line and the inch that separates them from the mile. Straining, urging, cajoling, they unconsciously chant the same litany as the crowd. "Come on! Come on! Come on! You can do it!" Straining every muscle, every nerve, they flash over the finish line. The crowd is ecstatic. "Did you see that?" "What a race!" "Who won?" "I don't know. It was too close to tell." "Did you SEE that?" The riders themselves aren't sure who won and wait impatiently for the official returns.

Then it's over. The crowd flows out. Bikes are loaded. Suddenly the stadium is empty again. The sun slides behind the mountains and the fog returns to the best seats. And it doesn't matter. A month from now few will remember. Next year only the program will know. But for one instant, one tiny speck of time, that inch was the most important mile in existence.

Jennifer Bladine

How casually the afternoon drifts
Down; down farther than the mind conceives
The word casually.
Probably the last words were
Casual, floating fascinating like a man-of-war,
Airy, breathless, deadly beautiful.
How she lined her eyes so perfectly in the
Disinterested mirror; thanked room service,
Flashing a little leg, a little ass:
Sending the red coat and hat (as Descartes would say)
Into a heaven higher than the fourteenth floor,
From where she jumped, allegedly, to the policeman
Writing the report, cursing the cheap
Typewriter.
Midnight blue was the name of her mascara; but
Actually it was a noncommittal time: 3:00 on a
Blinding day in the mid week of a year going straight
Downhill.
She tasted the weakening scotch, smiled to the mirror a
bright dismissal, blew one solitary perfect smoke ring,
Retired to the balcony for a special date.
Thinking of nothing for strength,
She hikes up her skirt--a little girl alone
With other little girls when they are still really
Wholly ecstatic about life,
and jumped
Thirty-two miles per second per second
Down so finally to the other side.

Teri Collins

Roots
sprouted from my fingers and feet
darting, clutching and holding fiercely
to the earth

stained-glass leaves dangled and winked
creating an evening harmony with the hushed, dry
whispers of the gold grass

Magical, serene, calm,

my bed a precious thing– round, curled-up deer shapes
molded in the grass.

Soon I melted and became big with my smallness and
the animals accepted me.

Russell Huddleston

Ingress or Egress

The concierge is passing thin
through halls, through a wall
newspaper in hand, to speak – slow
Days are sheathed
and like knives unsheath.

The concierge has ice on his breath
has frost on his brow
and his eyes,
the eyes are burning
far-off archipelagoes
sinking beneath the sea.

He's the man who digs the dirt.
He jangles
a speech-pocketing
Is Anyone Home?

In that exodus
from flesh
he plays the fiddle
collects moths
and along the way
his voice rings
rises and falls
on the dark to say –
Years are trees
soft leaves shedding
page-shredded, hardening.

Russell Huddleston

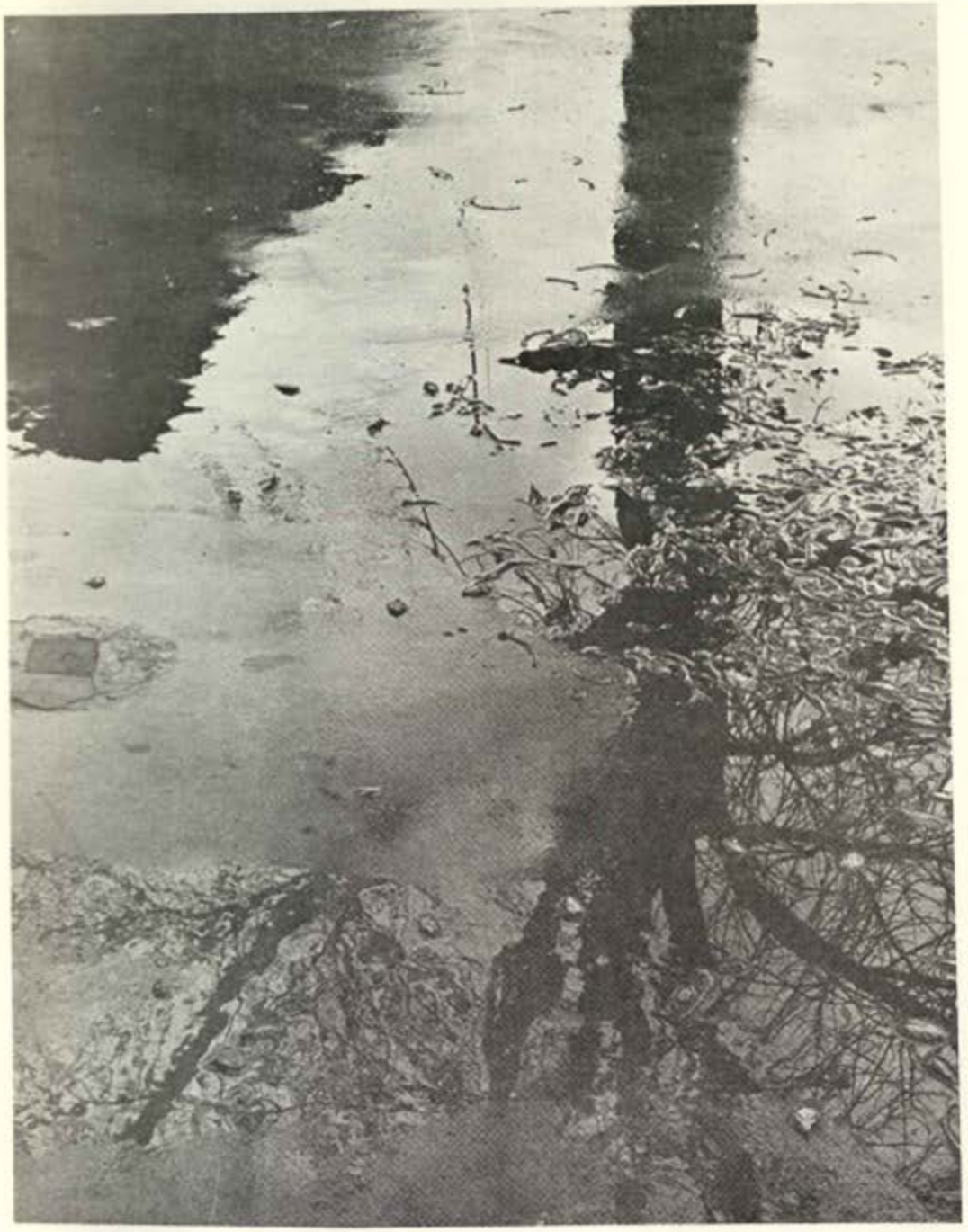
He used to bring
the tenant in
Apartment Four
breadcrumbs to
feed the window
birds
he brought roses from Russia
and shoe leather
at sunset.

Coming, never going
back. That's the
last laugh
when the calendar looks
and the after-leaf counts
one leap, life.

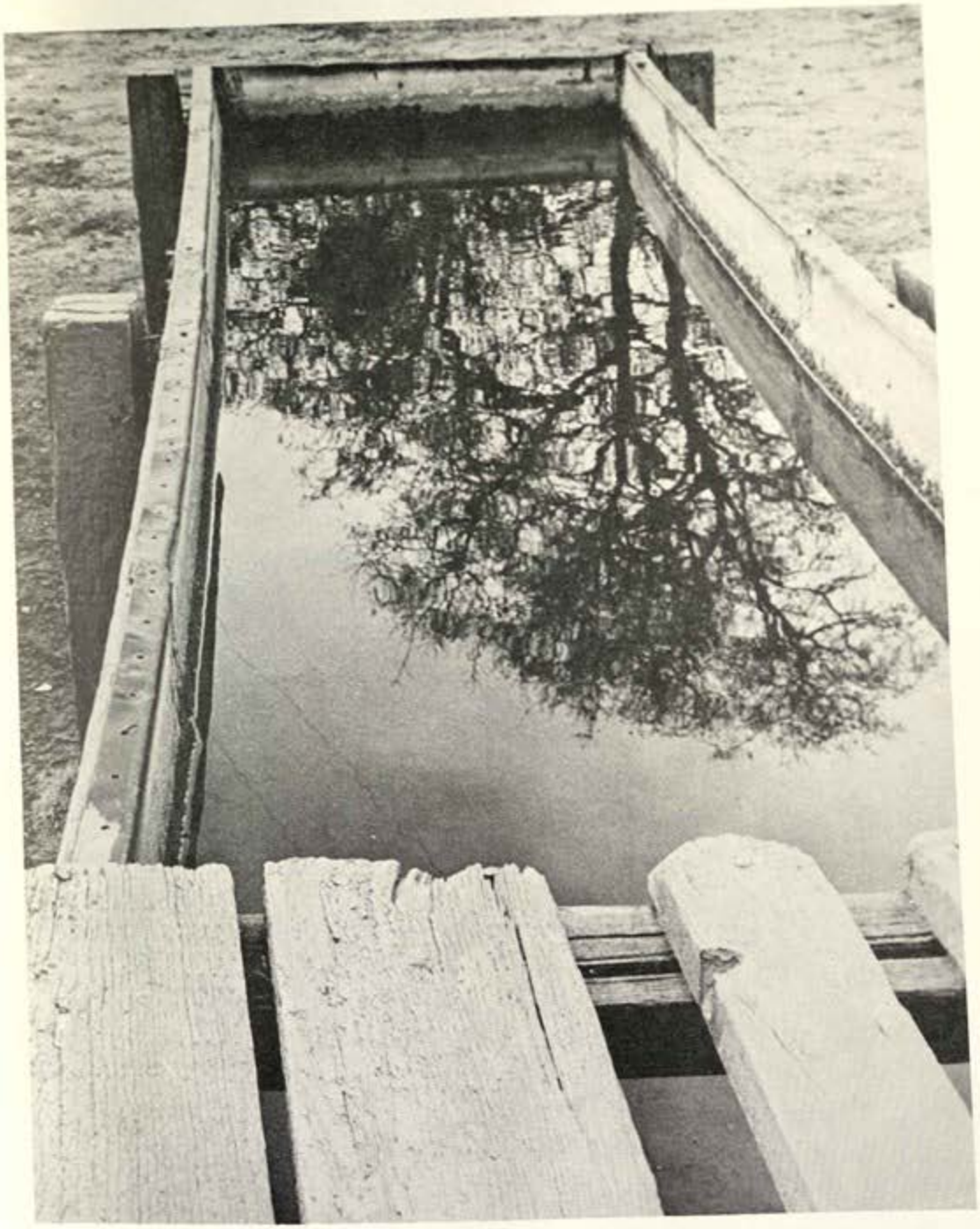
My concierge of the shovel
he's the man who dismembers my wings
takes me to sleep in some secret siberia
a hideaway field
where a jingling key
unlocks the fire
of broken wheat.



"Dancing Waters"
Phyllis Reischman



"Image in the Rain"
Phyllis Reischman



"Watering Trough"
Phyllis Reischman

Donna Mae Aminian

Aerial Geometry

High
Circling
triangle, drifting
slowly, cycling high.
Piercing call--an answer,
and another triangle
circles near the
first--patterns
compassing,
entwining
flight.
Drop--
like a plumb line
down to the earth.
Fur and dust sworl
now rise again on
triangle wings
home to feed,
then return
to hunt
again.

Matt Sarad

H a h aH a Ha
there we finally have it

Self-abnegation, or rather, New Year's eve with the world on its feet, or rather, one is sitting with a few of those known as your buddies, a bowl of stinkbomb dip, and the guy next to you won't eat the Vienna sausages because "Eatin' pigs ain't Kosher."

So you forget who you are and then, and then, and then, well you give up, throwing up your hands along with the rest of dinner and all the champagne that was drunk in the time it took Guy and the sax section from Saskatchewan next to the drummer from Great Slave Lake to finish the smokes his nephew from the States sent him from the trip he took to Madras last fall; the little cigarettes shaped like a big tomcat's tumescent crank. The taste was like that of the cinnamon bark the boy from Mrs. Franklin's class used to bring to school in the third grade. So, when it was really cold on the playground, the tiny splinters of spice tasted so good, just like all the promises you and your best friend made that day when you took the needle that was so medically held over the match until its Blue Ohio Tip almost roasted the tip of the index finger you almost lost in the car door when your mother wasn't watching your little sister.

It as much as anything was clearly no accident.

The day you and Greg became blood brothers. The day the brothers at the parochial high school chased you back over the fence. Even though they could never have proved it was the two of you that had burned down the little shed used for storing the hurdles for the annual trackmeet. Even though we had nothing to do with it: the day it burned you had the mumps.

That day was more of a week. Nonetheless, when the spring concert finally rolled around and you discovered that there was no eighth position on a trombone, or a saxophone for that matter, the same saxophone being played on that lonely New Year's eve when you went to bed at eleven, finding that sleep was the only way besides suicide to forget that last your wife was still alive, before she found out it wasn't only her breasts, but lungs, stomach as well, making sure she would never be home for Christmas, or for anything else either.

Like all your friends said, "she was so full of life" and so full of shit that she couldn't, until finally, two weeks after, after she fainted in church during what turned out to be the last Holy Communion you both ever took. A new year. A new life. Dust to rust. Maybe someday naval jelly will remove wrinkles as well as rust.

You couldn't watch Star Trek any more because seeing all those stars in the third quadrant served as a reminder that not only were you destined to become one of the Pulsars in the Crab Nebulae, but that Mom and Dad, who found their own half acre in Andromeda after we heard the news that they had burned up like wrapping paper in a Christmas fire, crackling like an old one, and even though the brakes were good, the steering was not. Soon thereafter it was decided you were going to live with Uncle John, who has pores in his nose as big as Crater Lake. Even though cousin Katie always said something that made you fall down in a real paroxysm of giggles and tears that always made you feel as if she were more than just a girl, almost as if she were your best friend, it was Aunt Annae Mae's hagiolatry that turned each Sunday into three miles of pennance with only small saguaro on your shoulders. (After all, you were only nine and couldn't be expected to carry an effigy of Charles Laughton all the way to church.)

Matt Sarad

MARY

I was driving along with her head cradled in my lap, just like so many ripe watermelons that have to be held close, close to the breast to keep them from breaking into so many pieces, pieces of eight year olds and their mothers and dogs named Jack. Sometimes even a little like the melons that fall from the trucks and sometimes smash, leaving only enough for a few juicy bites. Sucking, slurping, even picking up a few pieces and throwing them at the cars going by. They would always stop, or almost stop, always enough to make it really scary, so scary that I used to wonder if the police would really take a ten-year-old to jail and throw away the key, which is what the old lady next door to the Harootian's house used to scream at us when we climbed on her roof and slid down the long, drooping branches hanging from the willow tree next door on the other side, the side where nobody lived.

The house itself was haunted. Each and every Halloween the windows were broken by innumerable bars of soap. As we knew at the time, soap could remove any hex, so much better than it removes the sound of fucker from an eight year old's mouth anyway. The reason the house was haunted was because nobody lived there.

O, she's lying on her back, smiling up at me as I carefully cradle her head in my hands, so lovingly, tenderly, carefully, 'cause this is one watermelon I'm not going to drop.

LINDA

It just started coming out one day, coming out all over the place, the place we used to go and smoke cigarettes when we were in the days when we couldn't afford a place to live. So, we used to stay with all of my friends on the weekends, and all of your friends the rest of the time. The really hard thing was the fact we were no longer lovers, "just the good friends" that you always said you always wanted to be. Being the only thing I knew at the time meant I was out of work and money, books, beer and clean underwear. Worn as it was, it still served as insurance when I went on the dates you said I had to, even though you were the only one I could ever love. You insisted that I go, so I had these really fancy boxer shorts I kept at the bottom of the shopping bag that held all my clothes, 'cause I never knew when you were going to meet a woman who might want to go to bed with you for more than sleeping. When I used to loan you my boxers you always promised to bring them back, but never did, only to find out later she didn't like them, but for some reason not quite clear at the same time, seemed to want to get every last pair I owned. I still don't understand why a woman like you would take my shorts to other women's houses, houses that seem to never have anyone home whenever I called. I guess it has something to do with the fact I couldn't keep from crying when you decided to leave me. The only question is why didn't you do it?

HEY MOM

"Hey, Mom, ice cream melts!" The little girl ran crying to her mother, whining like the pipes in an old farm house when the sprinkler's on outside and someone upstairs decides to take a bath when you're down in the basement in the middle of July trying to find a spot cool enough to finish the book you haven't been able to because it's so hot in the kitchen the butter left out since breakfast looks like a tidal pool in one of those science fiction planets Bradbury was always writing about.

While the ice cream melts, a generation of children are in terror because they know what death is all of a sudden.

Matt Sarad

UNTITLED

The other night I cried for my brothers and sisters the trees. I'm not at all sure what brought it about. We were sitting, holding each other while she began to tell me a story. As she spoke I started to shiver, then to cry and hurt; pain that scares still, like a day a few too many weeks ago when I began to feel a closeness and familiarity for my brothers and sisters the trees. The trees leaned towards me that windy day, and as I looked at them I noticed the wind was no longer blowing. The trees stretched out their branches to me, their leaves and bark as well. Suddenly I knew there was no wind, that the trees were talking to me, telling me I was something they could trust. And now I have cried with them. We are no longer alone in our suffering; tears told me this: I used to be a tree myself, and a part of me remembers the hundred years I spent chained to that spot, waving to all who passed me by, hoping that someone other than my brothers and sisters the trees would notice me. Someone did. I was cut down and my tree's soul became a man's soul. The trees have made me remember. So, like the tree I once was, I still wave to all who pass by, hoping that something will notice and release me once again. God?

CUT YOUR STEAK IN BITE-SIZE PIECES

I can't really remember the first time. It always seemed to take place when no one else was home, and even when they were it didn't seem to make all that much difference anyway. I suppose the next time it happens I'll take the gun from her, cock it and give it back, "Go ahead and do it," hoping that she puts it down and doesn't point the damn thing at me instead of blowing her own tired brains out. The same brains that told her she could trust me and not my father, nor anyone else for that matter.

I trusted John enough to call him and all we could do was cry over the phone together and hope that this time was the last, and that Dad would begin to see himself and all of us. It didn't seem to do much good. One night John and I went out to dinner with them and she was choking on a piece of meat. From the look on her face you could finally see the truth. This was the last time.

PORTER

The first time I remember seeing Porter was about 1963 when he was standing in the middle of the street with a fishing pole casting repeatedly into the neighbor's yard. He wore tight pants with boots, a hat, and no shirt. Then one day I saw him about seven years later so soft spoken "good afternoon Mrs. Sarad" as he, John and Mike went off for a few hours fishing below the fish hatchery on the Tule river, hoping not to get caught and hoping not to have to pay the thirty-five dollar fine which isn't that much when you consider how much fish one can catch in such a spot. Then, when I first learned to play electric music Porter was right there with harp in hand-to-mouth confrontation, weaving back and forth under the influence of a particularly bad batch of speed, acid, smack, wine, and weed. As we got further along with the evening, his oscillations became quicker and quicker until finally he was making the same sound as the washing machine next door.

"What?" Porter's in jail for murder because he and four other junkies beat up some alcoholic when the old fart figured out they weren't just playing cards with him but were really going to rob him so the poor fool tried to fight back and in the process was hit too hard. When he hit the corner of a cabinet on his way down the skull was caved in and with it Porter's fate decided: manslaughter, accessory, because two of the accessories decided plea bargains were the best bargains to be had at the time. They were cleansed of all guilt and forgiven while Porter was trucked cold turkey in time for Thanksgiving to Miramonte where he and Dave cut trails and trees and hauled their saws up before God and the parole board until Porter finally got out because my Father was the only one who wasn't afraid to give him a job and do what had to be done to give a real hard luck story a happy ending.

UNTITLED

They had nothingness in common. When they were together they did not often speak; he would sometimes sit in his chair smoking his pipe. She would stare worldlessly at the television set, thinking of nothing except television. They used to be in love, and were in it no longer together. There was no one else for either of them anymore, although there was a time when it could have been true, even though it never really was. They would walk through the park near their home, sometimes for hours.

Matt Sarad

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

We were pulling into Montecito when I spotted the only beautiful woman who ever looked back as I stared silently at the blonde hair which really fell to her waist and framed a face that still makes me want to cry and be held because this time I finally found the only woman I can ever really love and I let her get away, back over the bridge with her dog and a half gallon of milk, going back to what probably is a small house that overlooks 101 she shares with her lover the bartender in the Olive Mill Bistro (at least that's what her eyes told me).

Lover? I wish it were her brother, my best friend when I went away to college. When he took me home for Easter there she was braiding that blonde hair into one long rope I would just as soon hang myself with now that I let her get away.

Jerome Evans

The Spiders Are Gone

(for Armistice Day)

The spiders are all gone,
few webs remain in corners
I've not cleaned,
covered in sawdust

Last August thousands hatched,
covering my saws and the stacks of wood
this evening I rout and shape
along in silence

I'll clean out webs til spring,
and sweep the sawdust
alone in silence,
I'm thickening in the middle this November

Jerome Evans

Worm's-work

Nature's plow absent from this land
clay-hard, dry, this month cold,
spread brown-rich mulch-leaves old
hold clods broken by shovel-hand.

Shovel turn bares each strand
of clay-cold clod, broken bold;
hard land, dust dry for years untold
must turn, burn, then become life-land.

Slow cold rain muds this earth
where pod-beans seed May
and stop winter's dearth--
tender green Springs from clay.
Water and root move to center
from my worm's-work in winter

Jerome Evans

Easter Communion

Peter, in prison before his martyrdom

I

I remember he died –
every year I remember
he died
every year

as the earth groaned
and the sky darkened
and the priests cried
"Save yourself o man of God!"
and he died
I remember

he said "this is my body;
broken, eat it"
and I ate
he screamed for me
when they nailed him
he said "this is my blood,
poured forth, drink it"
and I drank so deeply my breath was
taken away
he bled for me
when I nailed him

Jerome Evans

and he said "remember me
when you eat and drink"

I received his body
his blood
when I nailed him
year after year,
in the spring of the year,

o son of God
you take my breath,
my sins far from me!

Mary said, "He lives"
and something stirred inside me
something he said
I saw him die with my own eyes
and they wept when I saw him,
felt his hand upon my breast
as he embraced me

"feed my lambs"
I love you, am so very fond of you
"feed my sheep"
and I nailed him, nailed him
"feed my lambs, receive
the spirit I breathe upon you"

he screamed for me
he bled for me
moved upon me

I remember he died
every year I remember,
in the spring of the year,
as the earth groaned
and the sky darkened
and he died
I remember
o Jesus, I remember!

II

I'm ready to go with you I
told him

"But you'll three times deny me today"
No. I'm ready to die with you
"No" he kissed my cheek
I thought I saw a tear

We had eaten lightly but
my belly was full when we went with
him to Gethsemane
he said "watch with me, pray with me"
I was so sorry, so tired when
he woke us "Peter, James, John. Behold
my accusers" and they were upon us.

"Whom seek ye"
and I swear I saw them fall
he repeated himself and they could not move
"Jesus of Nazareth," the captain replied

"I am he, let these go"

I pulled my sword and hit at the high priest's
man and my voice filled the garden. Blood filled
my hand
"I will drink of my father's cup! I will have my
portion from his hand!"

he said "let these go" and then we all ran away
Ran away
I saw the others as I ran.

A long time I ran and stopped and
breathed hard to catch my breath slowly
slowly catch my breath
but I saw the soldiers lead him to
Caiaphas's house and I followed. Through
the bushes I followed.

O God what they did to him
they laughed they hit him they said, "prophecy to us"
"walk this pool of water," "pull down the temple"
"Galillean Christ, what a fool"
"A prophet from Galilee, behold a prophet from Galilee!"

A woman by the fire said, "You're one of his, aren't you?"
Whose I said

Jerome Evans

"Yes, I saw you when we took him," a soldier said,
"you had a sword then."
When? I replied, you can see I have no sword
"Why, you're a Galillean too"

Damn! I don't know what you mean! And Lord I saw his face
his bloody sorrowful facd and I ran. I ran
I ran.

I saw him hanging there that morning
bleeding, bleeding from his hands his feet
his face. his tired face. his face was not sorry.
I remember. We all saw him hanging there.

How can one man bleed so much?

We cried when we looked to him
my eyes were so blurred
I don't remember when he died
but the clouds filled the sky and the people
ran to get out of the storm

I can't remember when he died
I remember he died.

III

It was some time after I had walked
on the water with him
after he had fed five thousand
with so few loaves and a pair of fish
that I saw him as the Christ,
the hope of my fathers, the one
who would come

I remember he asked us
"Who do you say I am?"
The Christ I said the son of the living
God.

"You are a blessed man" he said "Simon, God
has entered into your heart and this is the
solid rock on which I shall build"

Then he told us how He
would die

I was horrified I would not see you die I said
"But surely you'd not deny me to drink
from my father's cup. Find my father's interests
and not yours. What do you know of my death?
My resurrection?"

I was silent but grieved

Mary said she'd seen Him
I stood in the tomb where we laid
Him – empty, just the linens –
John too was speechless

Finally I said I'm going fishing
and we went to work
fished – threw nets, hauled nets,
empty nets – all night all night
throughout the night long

We neared the shore with dawn
and could smell frying fish from
a dim-lit dawn-lit fire

The closer we drew the stronger
came the aroma – and a voice
"Cast nets to starboard"

Some crazy man on the beach I said
"What can be lost by it," John said
we cast to starboard
and dragged the net within
a few fathoms of shore and then
hauled in heavy, the net near breaking

"It's the Lord!" cried John as I
threw myself into the sea and swam,
swam and swam to Him

He served me a piece of fish
and bade me warm myself
the crew landed and breakfasted
beside me

we all listened

Jerome Evans

"Peter, do you love me?"
Yes I do Lord
"Feed my sheep"

"Do you love me?"
O God yes
"Feed my lambs"

"Do you love Me?"
you know I do
"Receive the Spirit I breathe upon you"