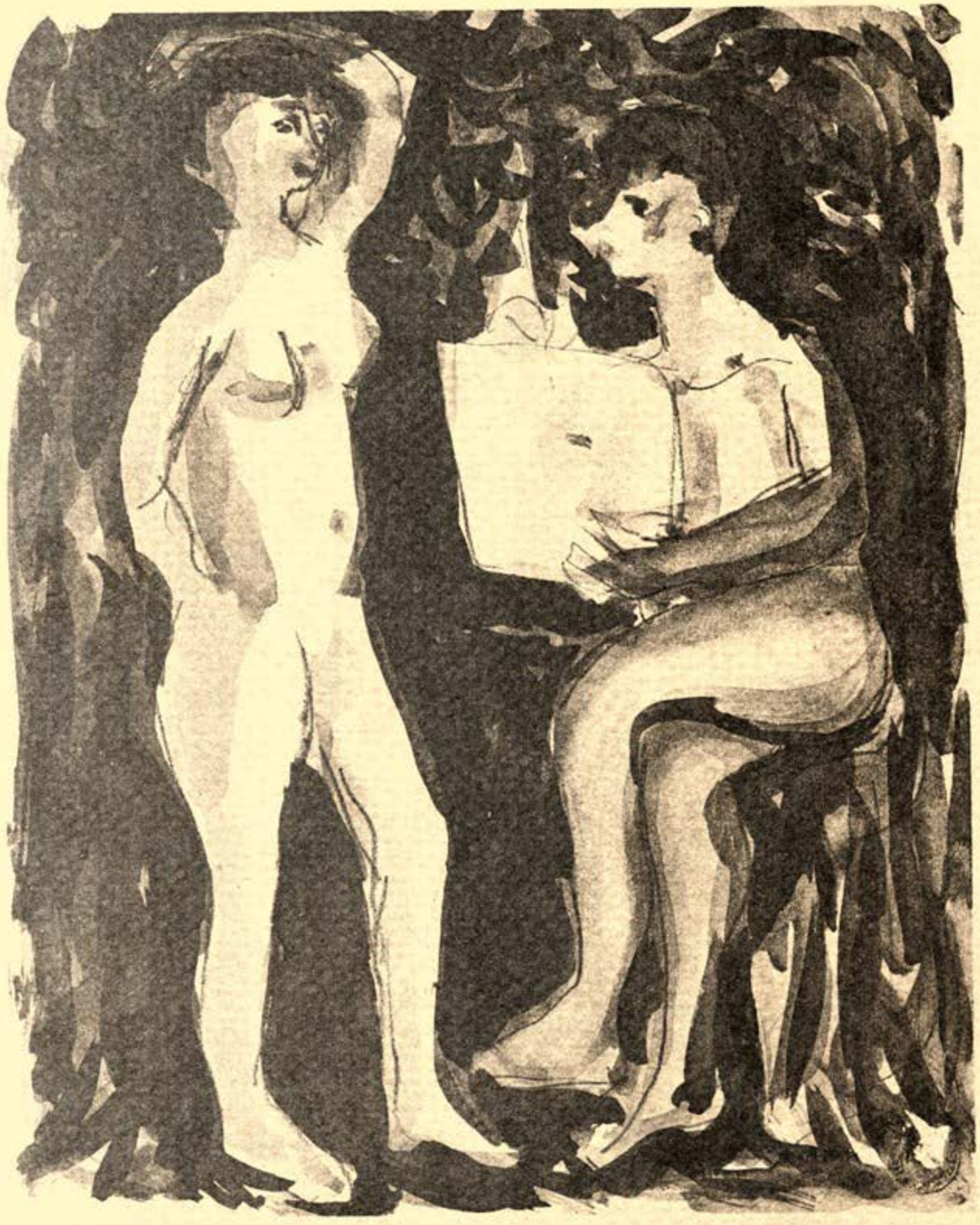


# ORPHEUS 1983

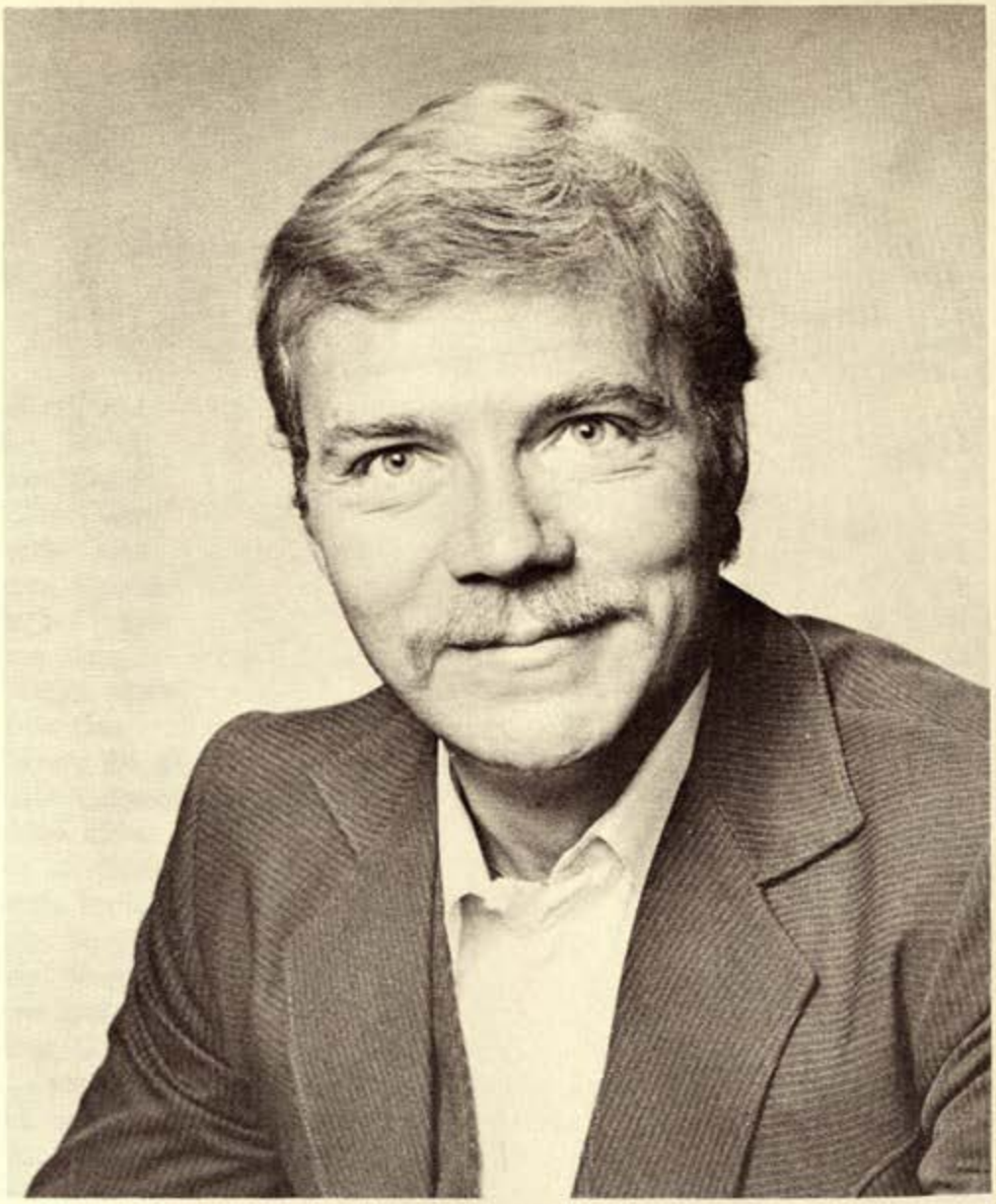
# ORPHEUS

California State College Bakersfield

Volume XI 1983

*All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.*

*Ecclesiastes 1:7*



*Jimmy Doyle Barnes*

*This 1983 issue of* Orpheus *is respectfully dedicated to the late Jimmy Doyle Barnes, Professor of Marketing at CSB. Professor Barnes leaves each of us with a part of himself. His friendship and inspiration will continue to enrich our lives.*

*ADVISOR*
Professor Solomon O. Iyasere

*EDITOR*
R. Deatherage

*A special thanks to the following people for their help with Orpheus '83*: Robin Faust, Sabine Isquith, David Koeth, Joan Lewis, Minnie Johnson, and Vivian Cochneuer.

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## Editor's Note

This eleventh issue of *Orpheus*, composed of a great number of poems, six short stories and one translation, represents the creative writing milieu at CSB during the 1982-83 academic year. Within this issue, along with the publication of new pieces by former contributors, is also the publication of a number of pieces by new contributors. Also, we may note, there are nine poems by seven former contributors to *Orpheus '78* which have been re-published in this edition.

At the source of every poem, or story, is the attempt to explain our human condition. Here, then, are many attempts, created by many writers, perforce offering numerous views of existence. As readers, we may participate within these different views of reality; and, in turn, this participation may enable us to better understand our own lives. It is the human drama which is at the crux of the creation of all literature; and, accordingly, it is the human condition which is largely the writer's subject.

The dramas which have been recorded here are appealingly simple, yet they also contain some of the careful complexities of the English language. The suggestive quality of language sometimes welds the simple into the complex, re-creating the multiplicity of existence. It is, perhaps, that the simple story becomes overwhelmingly true-to-life through the use of this highly specialized language.

The following pages, then, feature works by some 38 writers, both students and professors. Within such a large mixture of creative thought we will inevitably find a diverse range of human values. It is perhaps this melange of human values, coupled with the writers' interest and participation in the mystery of creativity, which yields the wide dimensional quality of this particular *Orpheus*.

R. D.





*Photo: Terri Lacher*

## "FOR A WOMAN . . ."

"For a woman
that was pretty good,"
he said

& I leaped up on the ceiling
& danced
& pirouetted
as I had been taught
in dancing school

& I giggled
& practiced lowering my eyes
as I had been taught
in charm school

& I leaped off the ceiling
in one grand arabesque
& squashed
him
flat

———

## THAT'S ALL

bones & gravity
conspire
to invent
form

i am born

i tremble
into flesh
forgetting

what?

whispers of sand
drift
across
agony

i stand

sticks & stones
can break
my
bones

i kneel

gravity bends
arcs of pity
melting bones

i fall

that's all

---

## EPITAPH

In Flanders Field & Arlington
The crosses claw in mangled imitation
Of prayer while overhead
Cloned clouds pierce a shattered sky.

He is dead. This is all I know.

---

## ON REFUSING SYMBOLISM

I want to write to you, my loves,
Yet find no words that will suit you all.

I confess
I looked up all my mythological references.
It was for lack of a universal language you see.

There are no words.

today my arm was cold
& so I tell you that I love you
but it isn't enough

ah well,

I can't shiver you all with identical delights
this orgy is like all the others

I still must love you
one
by
one

---

## WEAVE THE WIND

I have known winds.
Soft and sensuous lover's breaths;
hard, wet northern whips;
wailing desert winds whining at windows.

I have known winds;
kissed the sainted ana, cousin to sirocco,
watched a fury carry dust across the desert,
saw him open wide his mouth and swallow trash,
a vortex of whirling hunger;
saw dust form and go in purposeful strides
across the empty land.

I have known winds.

You! I have known you in all your guises.
Mailed fists beating at my windows,
voices of tears and keening,
begging entrance of me.

Which to believe?
If I let you in,
Will your fist belie your piteous cry?

I have known winds.
You howl down the corridors,
echoing through my emptiness.

Shall I name you now
and call you friend
to hide my loneliness?

---

METATE

Smooth round holes
ground into grey granite.
Patiently the women sat
while the men chipped away
swirls of ebony obsidian.

What was that like?
To grind the meager grain,
pushing stone against stone,
until the ancient rock must yield.

Grinding dreams into bread, i sit,
pecking cold metal keys.

"They don't make bread
the way they used to . . ."
the woman says,
squeezing the multicolored wrapper.

"No, they don't,"
I reply, while
Patient brown faces
Crowd behind my eyes.

---

my lover is gone
but a bird flew by today
its feathers were gold

---

PARADISE

& Eve knew the serpent . . .
& O!
she said
i am a vessel.

fill me.

here.
& here.
& here.

& never looked back at Eden . . .

---

## PARADISE II

when the first child came,
she thought it was all over;
the dreams went into diaper pails.

when the second child appeared
& not from beneath a cabbage leaf
the older boy began to wet his pants
again

the last diaper washed, she began
to plan
to wish
to fantasize

& when she found she was under way again
she wound a wet white diaper
'round her neck
& sat silent
all the way
to the
asylum

---

## To Sylvia

sylvia sorrowed in rushes of song,
grinding her poems between her palms,
wheatening words in spindly stalks,
ripping at scars & wringing out psalms,
weeping & wailing, spitting & raging:
deathing in gushets of spurted out wrongs.

---

## MAMA

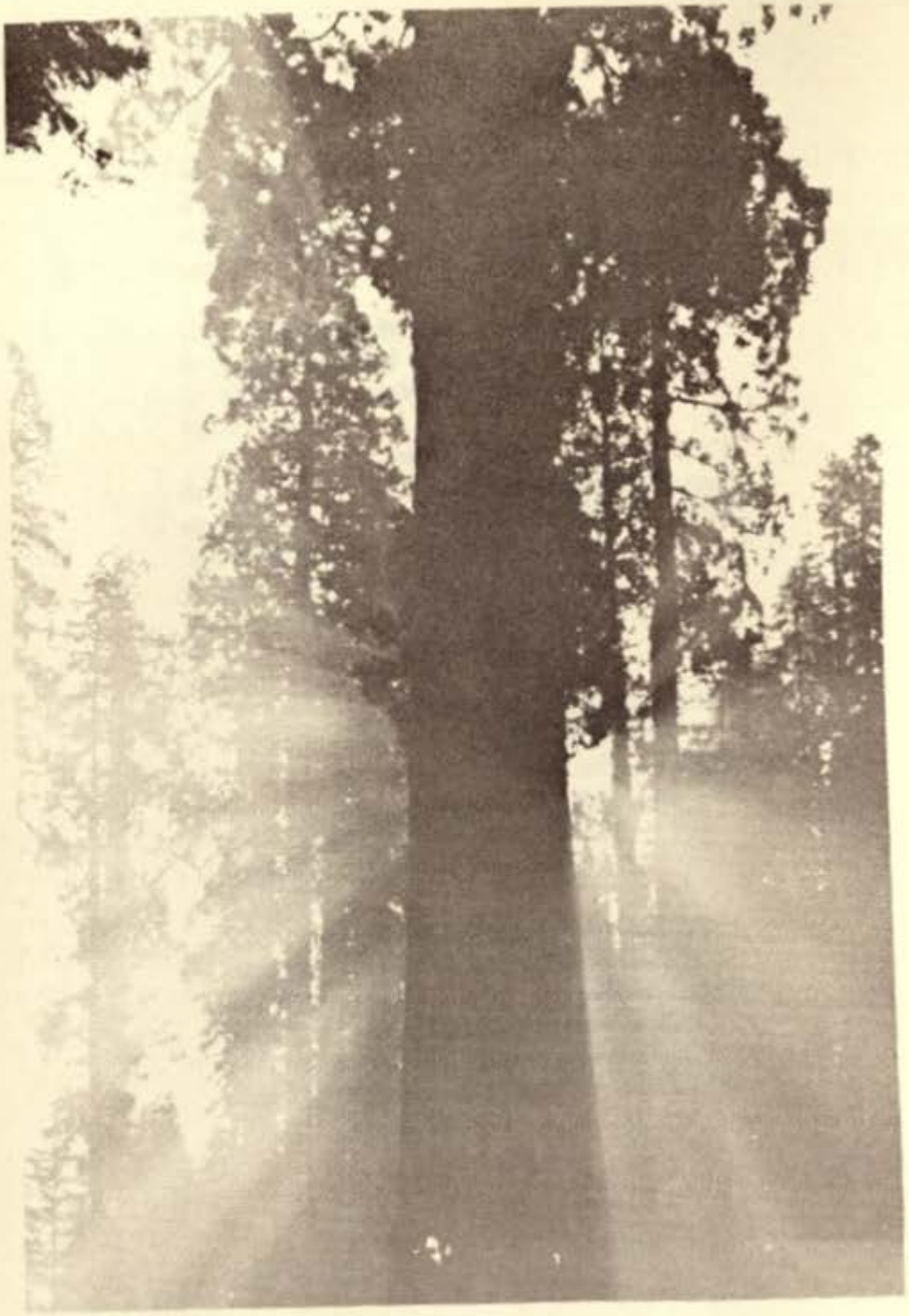
I did not love my mother
While she lived.
Once, maybe.
The night she spoke of Cossacks'
voices echoing a hundred miles
across the Volga.

I did not know my mother
While she lived.
Once, maybe.
The night she spoke of the gambler,
a no-good, a wastrel
who loved her sister
instead of her.

I did not know my mother
While she lived.
Once, maybe.
The night she couldn't talk
but only opened her eyes
for one last look at me . . .

I did not love my mother
While she lived.
Once, maybe,
when that long night ended,
crying out,
"Go! Go! mama!
It's all right."

———



## JOHN GOES TO HIS FATHER'S

Mommy, what are you putting in my rubbers for? It doesn't rain in Nice."

"Of course it rains in Nice, little John. It rains all over."

"I never saw it rain there. I stood at the hotel window a hundred million times and I never saw it rain."

"Of course you've seen it rain. Don't be silly."

"I am certainly not silly." He was wounded and gave himself to the packing. "Where's my bird book?"

"John, you can't take all your books with you. You're taking your Indian book aren't you? Let Daddy get you a book on birds while you're there."

"Daddy doesn't like birds."

"Then let him get you a book on something he does like."

"Mommy, do you want me to go? Do you really want me to go?"

"Darling, it isn't a question of that. Look." She pulled him up on the bed next to his suitcase and fixed the suspender on his corduroys which was always sliding down over his shoulder. His little room was spotless, the alcove off their livingroom, painted white and decorated with his own drawings. There was something secure, almost burrow-like, about their apartment now that they were going away. She liked to lean back against his white painted wall and look through the big window which connected this alcove to the one sleeping-eating-living room, and breathe in, take into her pores, all that was so quickly so completely familiar and loved. This was their home, the Left Bank world of Julia and little John. It was plain, even ugly, but it sheltered them with unbelievable seclusion – an impermeable lair, a hollow in the straw and dry leaves, a hole among the roots. This was the burrow where she had escaped with little John, the primeval refuge to which they had withdrawn.

"Look Johnny," and she was thinking so hard about Charlie that she called the boy as he did. "My new job is a nice job and I like it a lot. I get the money that we need to live here and to pay your school, and I don't come home tired at night; we have fun together. But even the nicest jobs have parts to them that we don't like. My job has this trip.

Every year now I'll have to take this trip, just this one, and go away to Italy for two weeks. When I do that you'll stay here at home with someone to take care of you or else you'll go to Daddy. Now that we've just come to Paris I don't know anybody to leave you with. But Daddy's waiting for you, and he wants you. Daddy loves you, darling, and he wants to see you now. This is a very good time for him to see you. So that's why you're going to visit Daddy now."

"But I don't want to go to Daddy just now."

"Darling, I can't take you with me." He was old enough now that every subject had to be thought about. It was no longer a question of accepting one opinion or another. "This is just a visit, darling, and when I've finished in Rome I'll stop by in Nice and pick you up and bring you right back with me to your own room again and your own school."

"But you'll be lonely, Mommy, with nobody but the Romans."

"I will, John, and that's true. But Hank will be there – you know Hank – from my office. And it won't be for long, and then I'll stop and get you and we'll come back to Paris together."

"I remember how it was when you went away and left me at Daddy's before."

"But your Daddy is good to you. He loves you too, little John."

"Daddy said you deserted me. He says he never left you, but you left us."

Julia saw the time-consuming explanations John would always need to dissolve what Charlie told him. "I only left you so I could find this apartment and your school. You like them, don't you darling, you like your school and our wonderful sweet apartment?"

He gave her an impulsive hug. "Oh yes, Mommy."

Holding him this way made them so unified that she wanted to tell him a little of how it had been. "Besides, your daddy did leave us, he left us when you were a small little thing and he went off to we-didn't-know-where and he didn't say whether he was ever coming back. You and I just waited . . . You won't be lonely, John. Daddy will be there, and Harriet."

"You know Harriet?"

"Yes, I remember her from before."

"What did Daddy want a new wife for?"

"Daddy and I just weren't right for each other any more, baby, so we decided it would be better if I came here and he stayed there. You like to travel, don't you? You're a good traveler."

"I like it OK."

"Good."

They heard voices in the court below them before the bell rang and even then she could not believe it was anyone to visit them. No one had ever seen this retreat of theirs. She could not think who it might be.

"Yoohoo. Anybody home?" Céleste's voice came up through the dark stairwell and into their world. An office voice cutting into their secret world.

Julia moved away from little John, going over to the door and opening it, surprised. "Céleste. Come up. What's the matter?"

Out of the darkness came Céleste and Monsieur Beaumont. Pierre Beaumont. They came in laughing and social. Julia saw then that nothing was the matter, that somehow she had been included in Céleste's calling list.

"Julia darling, why don't you put a light in the hall? I never saw anything so black in all my life. It's like going through I don't know what to get here."

"I'd light it, Céleste, really I would, I've tried to think of a way, but there just isn't a plug down there. The concierge says they never needed one before. I thought of telling the health department or whoever's in charge of those things, but in France you can never find out who's in charge."

Pierre was going to give them a portentious answer, she could see it forming behind his scowl. But Céleste happened to notice little John standing in the door to his room, and she dropped on her knees and talked to him.

"There's John. You must be little John."

John did not think this worthy of an answer.

"I've brought you a bonbon and I'm going to put it right here on this table. When you want it, help yourself." She got up from her knees and turned to Julia. "I have nieces."

John came up slowly behind Julia and stood waiting for her attention. He was going to ask about the candy, Julia knew, he was going to see if it was really all right for him to take it, if it was really for him. But Julia the hostess had become involved with coats and where to sit and so little John waited patiently until the right moment for his question.

Pierre, who had no nieces, reached out and picked up John in his hands, lifting him in the air, and setting him in a standing position on the one good chair. "What a big boy." And his voice was in no way connected with anyone four and a half years old. Before Julia could say the words to divert Pierre, before she could reach over and give little John the assurance he needed, Pierre continued. "I think you must be going to grow up to be a policeman."

This was too much for John. Tears, which his father had taught him were unmanly, and quivering lips which interfered with speech, these were the signs of being under five. He dropped to a sitting position and slid

off the chair. He ran to Julia, thrusting his head against her legs and wrapping her around with his short strong arms. Céleste was laughing to cover up for Julia, not for Pierre.

"Pierre, there's something wrong these days with being a policeman. You mustn't say that to little children."

"I wanted to be a policeman."

"I know, darling, but there weren't so many other things to be then. Maybe Johnny wants to subdivide atoms."

Julia did what she could to restore John in his own eyes. "Darling, if you've finished, I wonder if you'd find me your bird book. I think maybe after all you ought to take your bird book with you. And I certainly don't know where it could be."

John was able to get to his room without looking at these horrible adults, and she heard him moving his books around, more like a stevador than a librarian.

"Well, Julia, are you all ready to go?"

"Not quite, but we're getting there. John is packing now. I'd thought I'd finish my packing after he is in bed."

"Already leaving?" Pierre inquired.

"Yes. You see, I'm stopping in Nice on my way, to leave my little boy with his father."

"Oh?" Pierre had considered becoming a psychiatrist. "It doesn't upset you to give your child to your husband again?"

"Upset me? Of course not. Now what can I get you? Highball? Coffee?"

Céleste was prompt with her choice. "Darling, I would simply love a steaming hot cup of coffee. We walked across from the Metro and you cannot know how long it is."

"Why you poor little thing."

"Don't make yourself cruel, Julia."

"No. Let me get your coffee. You two amuse yourselves, can you?"

"I'm going to look at your books, Julia, if you don't mind. There's nothing I like better than looking at other people's books. I feel I can know a person so well that way."

Pierre gaffawed. "If you can't know a person working in the same room with her all day, you'll never know her."

"Now Pierre . . ." Céleste's patience was maternal.

Julia left them and made for the kitchen.

There was the coffee cake she had meant for breakfast the next morning. She cut it into sections and warmed it in the grill. The coffee was ready and hot. She carried them in and then she was able to ask, "Can I get you a highball, Pierre? It's better for growing art directors."

"Julia, that would please me very well."

While she was setting out the highball things she heard Céleste rambling on. "And I said to her, 'You simply can't do that, everybody will be furious.' But she just thinks it's a good joke when somebody gets really furious."

John had joined them and was sitting on a little stool by the door of his room, turning the pages of his bird book with self-conscious disregard for their attention. Céleste seemed arranging to say something, something to include John.

"Well, look at that good little fellow." They all glanced at him, but he did not look up, as though he could not hear what they were saying because it did not interest him. "Julia, in Rome now; if you should see anyone I know – anyone at all – send him my good wishes–"

John slid his feet back and forth next to each other.

"Yes of course. But Rome is a big place."

"Not so big that one would not encounter a friend now and then, isn't that so?"

The telephone screamed out.

"Oh. Excuse me." Julia crossed to it. John had put down his book and watched her carefully. "Hello."

"Hello Julie. How's everything?"

"Charlie. Hello. We're fine." There was the silence of a crowded theatre behind her. Céleste began humming and moved back to the bookcase.

"Listen, Jewel: I'm calling about that kid."

"Yes, Charlie. I have him just about packed. He's going to bring his bird book." She looked down into his upturned face – he had crossed the room and stood in front of her leading against the doorjam. He had to tip his head way back to keep his eyes on the phone, and she could see he had picked up the bonbon on the way across.

"Listen Julie, must it be tomorrow? Tell you what, there's this guy, he's coming through tomorrow, just taken a job in Monaco. It isn't that I don't want the boy, you know that Julie, but it makes it sort of hard just at this time."

"Charlie, I'm bringing John to Nice tomorrow. You know what time our flight gets in. If I don't see you at the airport I'll take him to Madame Rambeau's."

"Whose?"

"Madame Rambeau. His old nurse, you know. You can pick him up at her place when it's convenient for you."

"Now, say Julie, let's not get hysterical about it. All I said was, it isn't the most convenient day. How about day after tomorrow?"

Pierre was saying something very low to Céleste and they laughed together. It was not a laugh of amusement, just something to make a noise

in the room behind her. "Listen, Julie, hold the line a minute while I ask Harriet. She could probably get to the airport in a cab."

"Charlie. I don't want Harriet to meet us at the airport tomorrow. If you're not there I'm going to Rambeau's. You can find him at the Rambeau's."

"Hold the line kid." There was no point in her talking into that empty hum along the wires. He had stepped off into the uncharted world she did not know.

John looked up at her with trusting eyes and she thought of Charlie's nonchalance – well, damn his gizzard, he had better come out for his own little child.

"Julie doll." Charlie's voice was as cheery and as friendly as could be. "Of course it's all right about tomorrow, cookie. Don't you change a plan. You just land at the airport when you said you'd land and I'll be there to snatch him to my bosom. You too."

"All right, Charlie. We'll see you then. Do you want to have a word with John?"

"Sure thing. Put the boy on."

She handed the phone to John who took it in both his hands, after thrusting the candy into his small square pocket. His hello was so low that it didn't have a chance to get to Nice.

"Louder, darling."

"Hello . . . hello Daddy . . . yes Daddy . . . all right . . . Do you really mind about birds? I mean my bird book, I want to bring it even if you don't like them. You can learn to like them . . . all right Daddy." He handed the phone to his mother, as he had been instructed, and walked away, finished.

"Well all right, Charlie. Goodbye."

"Whoa, Julie, not so fast. What's this about birds? If you send that child down here with any birds . . . a child's enough, a bird I couldn't face."

"It's nothing like that, Charlie. It's a bird book. Don't worry about it. I'll tell you when we get there."

"One child I take. Nothing more."

"Goodbye, Charlie. We'll see you tomorrow." She was putting down the phone slowly and thoughtfully.

"Hey! What the hell –"

"Pierre!"

"Well I mean – the little *zouave l'a ruiné*."

She turned from the phone to see John again at the point of tears, standing by the table where she had set out the liquor. Pierre was holding his highball and making a face. "What is it, Pierre?"

"You're little *gars* here has put gin in my whiskey, that's all."

"John darling–"

He stood next to her, very close, and said in the most masculine voice she had ever heard from him, "Daddy wasn't here to do it."

"You must let me do it, John."

"Is that all you're going to say to him?"

But John responded to the tone. "You're a dumbunny, and you hurt me when you picked me up and I don't put my feet on that chair."

"John, John."

"You're *un espèce de ballot* and you ought to have a father for a *pif-paf*, that's what you ought to have." Pierre was more childish than John.

John answered in his calmest way. "I have too got a daddy and he won't spank me." And then he asked Julia softly, "Will he, Mommy?"

Julia finally rose to the occasion, shifting off the spell Charlie had cast on her. "John, John, children do not speak to grown-ups that way. You go to your room and I'll be in."

But Céleste was giving Pierre the same treatment. "Pierre, It's imbecile to get that angry with a four-year-old. He didn't mean to hurt your drink. He was only trying to help."

Pierre's recovery was immediate. "I don't know how to explain that, Julia."

"Never mind, Pierre. We all have those moments. And he was very rude."

She went to John then, and without saying anything about it, managed to settle him into his bed. He settled down to read the favorite bird book again.

As soon as she returned she fixed Sam a new drink.

"I must excuse myself, Julia. I guess I was deranged about something else and I took it out on your *petit gamin*."

"Don't worry."

"And I was just telling Céleste – we really must depart. You have enough to do to get ready for tomorrow."

Céleste sprang up. "Yes, yes, Pierre. We must leave now." She kissed Julia, left cheek, right cheek.

Pierre shook her hand. "It was nice, Julia, to see you again." He made it seem almost nice.

"Thanks for dropping in." And to Céleste. "I'll call you when I get back."

She closed the door behind them and leaned against it without even thinking about them anymore. Their voices from the other side of the thin panel of wood faded into a babble as they clattered down the hall, down the stairs, out across the secret court and through the passage into the night.

The Nice airport lay hot in the sun. The group by the gate stood motionless in the unexpected heat, staring at the plane, straining to recognize the passengers, eliminating the strangers, each seeking that one form, that one face. As they were recognized, the passengers responded, hurrying forward, waving, calling, finally embracing.

But no one greeted Julia and John.

The boy held her hand in a firm tense grip; he held his head high and scuffed his shoes with practiced nonchalance.

"Daddy must be late, John. We'll go to the waiting room."

He did not answer, only kept close to her side.

They were moving purposefully toward the baggage check-out counter when they saw a young woman hurrying toward them. Julia recognized her as Miss Street – that is, Charlie's new wife – once a familiar figure at the reception desk in Charlie's club.

"Oh . . . Julia . . . I was afraid I'd missed you. Hello there Johnny."

John looked up, almost smiling, at least not at all hostile. "Hello Harriet."

Julia held John's hand tighter. "Where's Charlie?"

"He wanted me to tell you how sorry he is. He had a very important appointment."

"He promised he'd come."

Suddenly Harriet smiled, really pleasantly, and took John's other hand. "Well, I'm here. And John and I get along swell, don't we Johnny? We're buddies."

John looked up at his mother apologetically, sensing her resentment, not liking the divided loyalty. "Harriet's nice, mother. We have fun."

Julia dropped to one knee and took the little boy into the circle of her arms. "Of course you do, John. You're supposed to have fun with Harriet. I'm glad you do. You be a good fellow, now, won't you, and do just what Daddy and Harriet say. I'll send you a card from Rome. You have a lovely visit and don't forget to see Madame Rambeau – OK?" To Harriet, "That's his old nurse. He really must call on her."

"All right, mommy. Bring me a present and I'll bring you a present too."

"All right John." She kissed him very briefly, but conscious of the soft smooth warmth of his cheek. "Here, Harriet, this is his baggage check. You two go on ahead. I'll get myself off – it's easier on him that way." She and Charlie's new wife looked into each other's faces, wondering, resenting, minimizing. "Harriet – take care of him."

"Sure." But she did sound sincere.

John hugged his mother impulsively, then turning to Harriet, took her hand and walked away. After a few paces he turned and waved, then laughed

at what Harriet was saying and went off into the crowd.

Damn that Charlie. The tears escaped and she brushed her cheek with the back of her hand. Why couldn't he meet his own child?

Just before she showed her ticket at the gate she heard her name on the loud-speaker and reported to the passenger desk as requested. They handed her the note and she began to read it as she made her way back to the departure gate.

> Julia my doll,
> You know only an exigency of the first magnitude could have kept me away. Harriet – in her busybody meticulousness – will have the boy in tow by now, and you'll be completely free and irresponsible. Have yourself a ball, my child, and I'll see you on that particular Thursday, as prearranged.
>
> Your formerly beloved
> Charlie

She wadded the letter into a small ball and dropped it to the pavement. The sudden blast of wind, out-force of a moving plane, caught it up and shot it like a charge across the open field.

On the way back, everything began calmly. But the nearer they got to Nice, the more uneasy Julia became. Hank, who was big-brothering her from the next seat, spoke with assurance.

"It's fine, Julia. Everything's fine."

"You don't know him. He'll do something wild. He has fixed my whole life so things go wrong."

"Oh, you're a big girl now. You can handle things."

"You have no conception of the problem. To you, he's only somebody you heard about over airport martinis."

"Play it calm. Fasten your seat belt like the sign says.'

"Oh God. Only this half-hour. That's all."

"Piece of cake. You'll make it fine."

"Sure, sure. I'll make it."

It was raining in Nice, dark and gusty, wet and slippery. "This is how I remember Nice."

"I will too." He took her arm as they went down the wet steps.

Charlie sat down with a thud. A few bystanders turned to stare; Julia clutched little John. Charlie got to his feet, brushed his hand over his chin, turned quickly and strode away.

"Daddy, goodbye. Goodbye Daddy–" John called, but Charlie did not look back.

"All aboard please–" The attendant hurried them up the steps, back into the plane.

Julia settled John by the window. No one in the cabin seemed to have seen anything. Rain beads spattered the lights into patterns.

"Fasten your seatbelts, please. We're ready for take-off."

They sat self-occupied during the take-off: John watching the lights through the rain flecked glass; Julia controlling her tears, touched her face, smoothing her dampened hair; Hank nursing his hand, watching the growing stain of blood on the handkerchief, cursing under his breath.

As soon as they were in the air John turned to his mother.

"Why did Daddy hit Hank?"

"He was mad at him."

"Because Hank is your friend?"

". . . Yes."

"I don't see why. You never hit Harriet."

"No. And Daddy is wishing by now that he hadn't hit Hank. Sometimes we do things in a hurry and later we're sorry we did them at all."

"I know it." He snuggled down, leaned his head against his mother. "Maybe Harriet is sorry now."

"Maybe."

"Sorry she left. Sorry she fought with Daddy and broke the hotel's mirror and went off forever."

"Hush John."

"She did go off forever. Yesterday. Daddy slapped her in the face."

"John don't tattle."

"All right." He closed his eyes. "I'm glad I'm with you, Mommy." Then, remembering politely, he craned his head forward to look past his mother and up into Hank's face. "And you, too, Hank."

He settled back in comfort. "Tell me when we're almost there." He closed his eyes again, this time to sleep.

"You see, it's all right now." Hank thought he was soothing.

"It's not all right." (Should she tell him? Should she say?) "Watch out, I've got to watch out."

He's going to do something wild again, he always does something wild. Charlie my curse. Charlie my demon lover.



"He's there somewhere." She looked out at the lighted tunnel, at the scattering of people. Then she spotted them and hurried forward to scoop up little John, to hug him and feel him hugging back.

When she looked up from the child she saw Hank and Charlie shaking hands.

"Hank Clark."

"How do you do? I'm Charlie Squires."

How different, how incomparable. Charlie in a short coat and soft rainhat, fine featured, thinner now, deep side lines on his face, laugh creases, mobile structured. He took off his hat as she looked up at him, and his hair was still full, soft and fine. "Julie doll." He leaned forward, kissed her on the mouth but she did not think she responded.

She turned to Hank. He was not understanding it, but not liking it either. Not any of it. How New York he looked in Nice, like an outsider, not sure how things really stood between Charlie and her.

"Charlie, where is his bag?"

"On board, princess. Now look, love, be expecting me. I'll see you in Paris next week. We have a lot to discuss – a world to remake and no time now."

"No we haven't. Don't come Charlie. I wouldn't like that."

"Don't be dense, Julie." His voice was a twosome voice. "Don't be contrary. We've got catching up to do. It's not working this way. You can see that."

"Don't come on my account. I don't have anything to say. Let's leave well enough alone."

As she stepped back from him he closed in, a little familiar whine to his voice. "Julia doll. We've got to patch this up." His hand first on her shoulder, then under her hair at the nape of her neck.

"Let her alone." Hank's voice cut clear.

"You keep out." It was an order.

"Let her be." Hank's quick move swept Charlie's hand away. She stepped back another step, still holding little John against her.

The speaker announced that the plane was loading. The low fidelity voice boomed over them. "Passengers will please load at Gate Three. Passengers for Paris, flight 702 . . ."

Charlie had been out-stepped. He stood staring at her, holding his hand, saying nothing. Then very slowly he put on his hat and turned toward Hank. His act of violence, his sudden drive with his fist at Hank's chin was a complete surprise – abrupt, uncontrolled, unexpected. He made contact, though Hank ducked aside almost in time. Hank's answering blow was as natural as Charlie's had been.

Come back.
I cannot admit
I miss your back
turned toward me in the night.

The house is emptier still
and the cat walks about
arching its back in false fright.

The sun shines through
the east window
and in the evening
the shadows still lengthen
across our bed.

And if you promise
not to ask,
I will admit
I miss your back.

---

POEM ONE

I know you dream when night runs out of falling
somewhere somehow down deeper into the hearts
of someone more understanding. To rise like
a scapegoat fending off the fires of their passion
A star within a dull star, shed like a tear.
One simple night in warm arms in
someone else's dark  far from home, far
from this, but not forgotten,
and not dreaming and not
a tear at all.

---

POEM TWO

I can take your voice and bend it and make it easier
for you to say what you have to say. Or I
can move my ear farther from my heart just
so. It won't hurt  I won't remember. Just
raise your arms and take up that voice and
run.

---

Come here. I did not mean to jest,
Only to laugh into your eyes.
If we had time and memory were lighter,
I would stir this mad desire
And here within your two arms make
A promise without words.

But though I am fond and you sincere,
We both count too dear safe living
To sacrifice comfort for a kiss.
So move again from me. Whisper no more
Into my willing and traitorous ear,
For I am weak inside your charms
And soon would be past forgetting
The mystery met inside your arms.

---

## MUSIC IN THE NIGHT

It will be said that I lied, deliberately deceived.

And I will be imagined to ask
what they would have me do.
I, leaning against the nearest wall,
smiling. Sardonic,
but alone.

From just below the noise,
you could hear me speak a word, begging reason:
A bare word, ill received.

But could you imagine it:
The night; the light.
And in the shadows, the slim boy, moving.
Raising his chin as the music rises.

Who could see beyond those level eyes?

"Back to the night," you would say?
But no . . . The night revolved then vanished
around his whirling hips.

I sought rest in the reprieve of his breath
slowly flowing in and out.

Strange whispers rose from the wall,
but none came near enough.

Can you imagine?
Has possibility left your thoughts,
disillusioned your senses?

I can tell you I was surprised.
I saw the moon reflected in his eyes.

I confess it was my hand that first reached out
to feel the stillness of his arm.
The night broke then.

The milk flowed from the moon.
The music rose and turned into light birds,
flying 'round the room.
All voices matched in chorus.
I swear the stars swayed.

But for a moment,
my destiny was laid.

The bright boy glistened.
And I shone,
learning turn and counter-turn.
Motion in madness;
Music in the night.

---

MIRAGE

At night my ghosts come out
To pull their fingers through my hair.
To scream, whisper, whimper.

In between sighs I hear your laugh.
I see your eyes looking hard into mind,
Staring away the darkness,
Stifling the moans, regrets.

I abandon my lonely mourning
And reach instead for you.
But I have been fooled before,
And the air my arms move through
Is as familiar as all the empty nights
I live through,
And all the losses
We cannot lose.

---

White death hangs heavy
When smiles erupt the silence
When ears and eyes take all in
When life begins

White death, heartless death
Stands waiting on the corner
Waiting for the lovers
not looking
Waiting for the lovers
living

Old death, well versed
Hears every breathless sigh
Sees every shining eye
Knows the signs of life
and waits nearby

You cannot escape him
Or become more elusive
Your weight retains you
Love does not save you

Only death is for sure
Only dying for certain

---

## ODE TO A FLOWER

Sleep little one
    In your pure green meadow
Warm your petals with afternoon sunshine
    And bask in your beauty.
Lie Still
    As you dream of bells and roses and children.
Sleep little one,
    But with one eye opened.
Dodge the trampling of dirty feet
    And choose carefully who plucks you.

---

## GRANDMA

    A smile,

I remember as a child
Spun soft silver falling on rounded shoulders,

    Dangling breasts.

Aromas of cinnamon and sugar and sweat.
Precious tales,
Memories distorted by time
Waltzing with dreams,

    She taught me to dance.

---

## CHILD WASTED

A child.

A special child of eight.
Dancing, loving,
Adding meaning, hope, and faith.
Beloved by all who knew her,
Yet understood by none.
Alone, she took her life from me
Entrusting it to God.

---

## CYCLES

Ablaze,
She sucks the last drops of sunshine from the sky.
Aglow with falling colors,
She watches patiently
As her children are scattered off to distances unknown.

Barren,
She weeps alone.
Brittle arms at rest;
She waits patiently
As her frozen world stands still.

Reborn,
She dances with the blustery winds;
Newness springing from her heart,
She watches proudly
Reunited with her children.

---

Winter is leaving
Broken by the midday sun
Shades of chill depart

---

## CAT

She is as the ocean glassed
A pool of soft black shine
A sleeker being, elegant, divine.
As she dances on starlight cast
Moonbeams expose other beings amassed
All to worship her, construct their shrine,
Securing her favors throughout lives of nine.
Unfolding ancient mysteries at last.

Each shrine she treats to passion plays
A tidbit he leaves at her door,
His sweet aroma flavors the air,
As still and quiet she now lays.
Her existence forevermore
Bound by Nature's care.

---

Cast me into fiery depths
Do with my soul what you might
Care not whether I've mourned or wept
Trample my heart, ignore my plight.
Tread eternally all through my life
I will dodge your sinking print
I will see you through times of strife
I'll be your rock, your pillow, your flint.

But if you choose, go quickly, go far
I will not perish, alas,
For in the Universe you are but a single star
Within reach, but too bright to grasp.
An eternity with you, a life of lies
Another love burned and withered, dies.

---

A fragile
slender body
supports four
delicate wings
as she dances
through the air
only to die the same day.

An early summer dawns
among hollow walls
with regions of final thoughts
as its mysteries
disintegrates
into a reality.

Fragile body
beckoned by her immortal soul
reached back through the
fragments of her mind
along the hollow crevasse
that lingered near the
back lots of her unconsciousness.

And her soul,
like the white edges of
the ocean's ferment,
bubbles bursting
danced through the air
and died the same day.

---

## OLDER FORMATION

Angular
Unconformed
Tilted

No wind to whisper

Moonlight on the
Blue snow

Wraps his arms
Around the
Old Pole

---

## INNOCENCE

A young child
like the color
green, fresh and alive
not yet ripened
pushing through
the plowed earth
knowing no better
than to stretch
out its hands
to grasp the
sun's rays.

---



*Photo: Terri Lacher*

## SIGNING FOR NAILS

*by Leonid Naumov;*
*translated by Hugh Graham**

The building looked awkward and unsuited for any purpose. The people scurrying about its long dark corridors couldn't provide directions; all they did was point in different ways or merely shrug their shoulders. Kozlov wanted Room 305, which turned out for some reason to be on the seventh floor, not the third as he had expected, and so it took him a long time to find it.

Locating the door he wanted at last, he knocked politely, but there was no answer at all. Kozlov carefully turned the knob and found himself in a vast room full of empty desks. A stout elderly man was sitting behind one of them, talking quietly on the telephone. Kozlov waited until he was finished before going up to him: "I beg your pardon, but can you tell me how to find Stepan Petrovich?"

"What do you want with him?" the man asked, turning his head.

"I need a signature for nails."

"That means you need a signature for nails, not Stepan Petrovich," said the man, making things more precise. "Why didn't you say so in the first place?"

"Stepan Petrovich is the one who signs for them," said Kozlov in surprise, confused by the stout man's logic, "so, you see, Stepan Petrovich is the man I need."

The employee thought about this for a little while and then inquired: "Have you ever met him before?"

"No. This is the first time I've ever been to your place."

"To tell you the truth, that Stepan Petrovich makes me mad as hell," the man began irritably. "He doesn't work; he's just some kind of machine, cranking out signatures for nails. If there weren't any nails in this world no one would ever have heard of him. It's absolutely ridiculous: people need nails, but instead of going to the site they come crawling here to Stepan Petrovich."

Kozlov interrupted him: "They won't give us any nails on the site without Stepan Petrovich's signature. He's in charge of them. Or isn't he?"

"He is," the man agreed. "And what for? That's something I'll never be able to understand. Why don't they just set out an automatic machine at the site? That's all they need. What's more, there's plenty of nails. Anybody else but that Stepan Petrovich of yours would have gotten another job long ago, but he'll retire signing requisitions. He's stupid! And useless! Probably when he was young he showed some signs of becoming a good engineer. Then by chance he got involved with those damned nails. Next he got to like it. All he does is sign his name; he doesn't do any work. Believe me, he can't tell wood from iron any more. You just wait; his wife's going to leave him soon."

Kozlov goggled at him: "I don't get it. Where's the connection? What's his wife got to do with it?"

"He's a boring, limited man. Women have no use for men like that. They like the ones that soar. Even though he once built her a summer place out of nails."

"No boards?" Kozlov was astounded: "How did he do it?"

"That was before, during the shortage. In those days you could get a whole log for one nail. But those days are gone. No, you won't get anywhere hooked up with Stepan Petrovich."

"But I'm not hooked up with him." Kozlov was suddenly angry. "Why do you go on at me? The boss called me in. 'Go,' he says, 'and rustle us up some nails.'"

"Why didn't you say no?"

"The boss told me! I don't give a hoot about nails. I've nearly finished my dissertation; I'm glued to my chair nights."

"Then you're not just a runner?"

"I'm a senior project engineer. When I've signed off my dissertation they've promised to make me a junior instructor."

The man broke into a spiteful laugh: "Then you really are a fool, young fellow. Out of your mind! Crazy! Nuts! Don't you understand? You bring in a requisition for nails. Next they'll be sending you for screws. Then they'll put you in charge of the nails, and you'll have to handle them all your life like that gofer, your pal Stepan Petrovich."

"He's no pal of mine," Kozlov was really angry now: "I've never laid eyes on him. What a weird way you have of talking!"

A girl rushed into the room: "Stepan Petrovich, the chief wants you. He said to make it quick." She went out immediately. Kozlov stood open-mouthed. "Close your mouth." Stepan Petrovich shook his head disapprovingly: "How many nails do you need? Show me the requisition."

"Fifty kilos," Kozlov muttered, opening his briefcase.

Stepan Petrovich took the requisition, silently wrote a few words on it, and stood up: "There you are. I've got to go. Have a good day."

Kozlov took the paper and was horrified to read: "It is impossible to allocate any nails."

"You're making fun of me," he shouted. "Here you've been badgering me for a whole hour and now you say no! It's disgusting. Or maybe there aren't any nails?"

"Any amount," Stepan Petrovich quietly replied: "Tell your boss to send a runner around tomorrow and I'll give him a ton of them."

"It's nothing but bureaucratism."

"What a strange man you are," Stepan Petrovich growled. "Don't you know what's good for you? If they get the idea you're not up to things they'll leave you alone. You'll be thanking me for the rest of your life. I don't want you to get like that buddy of yours – Stepan Petrovich."



*"*Signing for Nails" *appeared in the* Crocodile, *a popular humor magazine in the Soviet Union*

## ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD

Angels sing of the Cosmic Dust,
Causing the blood to boil with hot desire,
While vivid colors of indescribable hue
Burst upon the eyes with crimson fire.

Crystal pure the sled that waits,
White horses prance, strain to go.
Impatient, the sun holds out its hand,
Snow white, tinged with yellow gold.

Beckoning with awesome power,
Matching the fire within his heart,
Twelve springs of active life lay behind
Eyes of blue, glazed bright with unseeing sight.

Leaping to catch that shimmering figure,
Falling ten stories to catch the ground,
Dusted from this plane of existence,
I wonder, did the son smile or frown.

---

MOMMA

To me, she was momma
Out under the old oak
With her big black pots
Boiling away life's diseases.

Sewing, crooning, and kneading
Humming reverent tunes
That carried her across fitful seas
And taught us to survive.

Momma, beautiful old black woman.
Without you, my life would hold no color,
In my veins, no pride would flow,
In my world, there would be no hope.

---

## SHIP OF DREAMS

Sitting, wondering, and pondering
Slipping out of grip
I close my eyes and call upon
My faithful ship of dreams.

It glides into my tumbled mind
And splashes gold amid;
It dips, then oars and winds
and the pain drifts away.

---

## OFF-BALANCE

This is a sad place
Where poverty stares
into the face of wealth.
Where hate festers
And love stands rigidly by.
Where peace is loudly
Quibbled over
And war
Is the silent answer.

---

A discussion, a word between
    you and me;
This painful hurt which
    encompasses us.

Expressions confused
and thoughts a muddle
Motionlessly waiting for
some answer,
            but then . . .

a tear.

---

Fluttering about
    helpless; alone
Cluttered thoughts
like prison bars
hang high upon a perch.

Rustling of feathers
    formless, flurry.

Chattered moments
like an empty cage
remote from existence itself.

---

Peccant waves of gold
glisten under the black moon
awaiting its prey.

---

A sigh,
my tears dry to springtime.
At peace
once again.
Your smiling voice touches
my inner soul.
Time passed,
lost memories which
struggle to surface.

---

Unbendable by mere words of persuasion
By no blight shall you be awarded; but
only fond eyes gaze upwardly toward you.

---

*RHONDA PFLUGH*

## THE BOY

The water reflected sparks of light onto the bleak outer walls of the bathrooms, creating an image of mingled light patterns. With each motion the upward and downward swell of the water subtly altered the wall patterns. As the boy tightened his grip on the long handle of the vacuum and pushed it faster, the patterns on the wall changed quickly until they were merely bright staccato illusions of light impressions before his eyes.

At last the powder blue of the pool shone unmarred by dirt or leaves. He carefully disconnected each piece of the machine and placed it on a shelf in the storeroom. Next, he hosed down the decks and bathrooms, splashing his sneakers, which caused them to squish as he moved; he didn't seem to notice. Once every corner of the pool deck was washed down, he rolled up the hose, picked up a stack of worn textbooks, walked over, chained the gate, and shoved the lock closed.

As he ambled down the dusty road, his wet sneakers batted at rocks, sending them skimming along the asphalt and into the dry growth and debris along the road. His eye caught a quick movement in the weeds. He stopped. His roving eyes locked on a greenish-brown lizard poised for flight. The boy stared into the lizard's bright, unblinking eyes, and it stared back. A dusty, wet sneaker readied itself to fling a rock toward the lizard; still the lizard did not move. Their eyes remained locked until the boy kicked the rock into the street. With that movement the lizard flitted into the dry grass and tumble weeds. The boy shrugged and began moving down the street again.

Toward the East the sun was still struggling to raise its glare higher above the grove of trees. The boy watched the golden sparks of light dance on the tree leaves as the golden glow spread itself over the lawns and spilled onto the road. He stood soaking up the brilliance of the light as other people soak up the warmth of the sun on a spring day.

He was so engrossed in his observations that the approaching diesel truck went unnoticed until it was almost upon him. The truck rolled over a dent in the asphalt and jarred the road. He turned to see the cause of

the vibration as the truck lumbered abreast of him with the driver yelling and shaking his fist at him. The boy turned and fled into the grove of trees.

He ran until the trees masked his presence from the outside. He flung his books into the dirt, reached for the nearest branch and pulled himself up into an orange tree. He leaned back against the rough texture of the branch and deeply inhaled the familiar orange scent.

Soon he let himself down out of the tree, collected his now dusty books and worked his way back to the road. As he walked down the road, he looked towards the school. The grounds were bare, so he knew he was late.

Once inside the grounds, he slowed his pace. He ducked beneath the windows of the administrative offices so that they would not know he was late again. At the classroom door he sighed and entered with his head bent, hoping the teacher would ignore him. She did not.

The teacher moved toward his desk with her lips pursed and her hands flashing her anger to him. He kept his head down so that she had to sign to him right under his nose. When she pointed to the clock, he looked up and saw it was almost time for Math. He clutched his desk in anticipation and waited. Finally the light beneath the clock flashed to let them know it was time to change classes. His classmates rummaged around to find their Math books, but he stared at the light until it ceased to flash. He loved the light.



## DARK IN THE DARK

Dark in the dark, silent as cats' paws
the shadow loomed above her bed.
Pretending sleep, eyes barely opened
she had followed the shadow, first
with ears, hearing the bed groan in the other room.
Step by step, by step,
sometimes hearing the floor bend softly
she heard every silent step. Even the soundless
soft steps pounded loud in her ear. Then the
shadow filled her doorway, dark in the dark,
she watched with almost closed eyes as it inched ever
closer, finally hovering above her bed.

The shadow was hot, she could feel its heat, its very
breath seemed steamy in the night. She could hear it
gasping for both air and silence, straining to keep
quiet and rhythmic while not quite getting enough air in
each deep breath. The shadow trembled and looked and tried
quietly to suck in air and trembled and looked and trembled
and slowly moved closer to her bed.

Eyes fully closed now, she heard only the breathing,
gasping, yet quiet. The shadow waited, waited and watched.
Through fully closed eyes she could not see, she could not
see the shadow reach out and touch the edge of the sheet.
She felt the sheet move though, tickling terribly as it was
inch by inch softly and slowly torn from her. Inch by inch
revealing her bare shoulder; her gown.

The shadow watched, waited and watched. The girl lay still
eyes closed tight yet tear filled; burning.

---

my child, my child
the world pulls at you
until i am left.

---

## DAYBREAK IN SPRING ON POSO CREEK

Poso, sunrise comes misty along the bottom where the water rushes and swirls over and around the rocks and debris of once tall trees and twisted shrubs.

Poso, in her wake, grasses flourish. Mint and mushroom, death's cup and kettle drink from her life. Small birds and squirrels dart about claiming their part of her bounty.

Poso, the night hunters retreat to rest, as the sun dims their sight. There will be no pangs of hunger for the night hunters, or their young; spring is fat, alongside Poso.

Poso, glistening as the sun burns through the morning mist creating a sense of mystery on the meadow, as the fading mist still just clings, hiding her brightest colors behind a vail.

Poso, the mist gone, alive with the splendor of wild flowers; gaily painting the meadow with splashes of violet, embroidered with pink and yellow, woven into her backdrop of green. Poso.

---

## RAINY DAY RIDE

Click, snap, whirl and away,
off on my bike on a rainy day.
Peddle around puddles, riding in and out,
roostertail behind me, raising high its spout.

---

## THE MEETING PLACE

Dusting leaves-sifting–
Red, gold, and autumn brown
Respond, yielding more readily to the wind's caresses,
Too tired to rest except upon the ground
To carpet, even in death,
The green winter rye.

It, cold-resisting–
The winter's fierce, determined blow,
In young innocence disdain the rusty whisper,
Refutes the school that lays all nature low,
In season,
Drifting away in the summer wind.

---

## RAINBOWS

The blue room held arching rainbows,
Though grey mantles, folded and neatly tucked,
Often, at a moment's notice, blanketed the atmosphere.
Before what-had-been-echoes whispered in the corridors
And fell, spilled from the flowing cup.
But that was before life, or knowledge,
When innocence, as the pre-conceived child in the
parent's mind,
Is neither dead nor alive,
Before the feast,
When rainbows were as complete as the life cycle
of a whole generation,
As complex and fragile as the silken strands of a
spider's web,
And happiness spanned a bright brittle day.

---

## APRILDÄMMER

Chalcatzingo, Mexico

Blutest dich aus wie der Tag
in die offenen Schalen des Tals
wenn dunkler Wälle Schutz gerinnt
in der Ferne dunkler Säle
wenn Sand aus trockenen Winden
Blumenschleifen zieht
durch das Stroh der Stunden
knochenbleich und zart
zeichenzart und heiter–

die Bergeswange sacht gefaltet
voller noch sich in den Schatten neigt
und unser Drang wei Vogellaut
dem grenzenlosen Blau entgegensteigt–

bis Tod nicht mehr verneint
was Lebel treibt und eint.

---

## CANYON HILLS

Brown masses aloft
banking on the sun
sandy sandy
cut by gray scythes
curved swaths
the trickle of a white line
cut by a bridge forlorn in the grass
a stranger at large among strangers
but up up
sandy tokens of the afternoon
the act of faith
of banking on the sun.

---

## ANTICIPATION

Doors close
on the morning of hesitation
as a disembodied voice of promise
whispers in the recesses of my heart
doors lead
to the dawn of meaning
as the voiceless body of noon
hides in the shelter of my brain
doors unite
within the vibrant waters of joy
the voice and the body in harmony
clouds race in heavenward waves
unfurling their butterfly petals
as we come back to rest again
on a tranquil earth woven of light and shadow.

---

## MUERTE EN APARIENCIA

Busco tu voz
pájaro estrellado en la pradera
pájaro sin aliento
tu ser humilde
es leve canto con voz alentada
pájaro busco tu voz ahora
busco tu alma.

Miro tu cuerpo y no encuentro
ni voz ni alma
toco las plumas y no está
suspendidas entre músculos tiesos y moción fugaz
un par de alas
clavadas entre pluma y cuerpo
pájaro fijado dentro de tu nido de silencio.

Desde tu nido me llega una voz
pájaro muerto en apariencia
sólo tu cuerpo aquí
tu alma
superado el ángulo de caída
se echó hacia el sol
hacia la nube que la abastece
y que ampara tu canto
hasta la caída feliz en armonía nueva:
renaces
voz de gotas sobre las hojas del árbol.

---

## BESCHWÖRUNG

Weißt du
seit ich nichts Sicheres mehr
weiß über dich
seit mir die Felle  Fälle Fälle davon
geschwommen sind im Strom
der Zeit
auf und davon
aus dem Staub
die Liebe
und so weiter

Seitdem
kommt ein Wort mir standig
über die Lippen
bei der geringsten
Kleinigkeit
du weißt ja
sag ich
wohl dreißigmal am Tag
du weißt ja wie's ist
du weißt es doch.

---

## DEATH APPARENT 2

*On a work by Victor Mario Zaballa, Mexico*

Look to the sun, bird
sprawled with claws clutching air
as your body meets the eye
tender white of the wings' inside
with feathers no longer astir
flurried flotsam of the belly
with guts no longer trembling
as your eye of the instant
meets the stillness of the camera

in a still life of death
as your body, soul, your all
molecules from our midst
(the middling planet)
seep through pores of the cosmos
drenched by rays and fraught by darknesses
surging to nurture the sun

---

PAISAJE

Tú allá al final de mi camino
(digo)
yo acá apenas atino, apenas camino
en país de garras, país herido
por ambas aguas de un río torcido
como amor de mar amargo.

Tú allá y no llega mi camino
(temo)
yo acá en valles cerrados termino
en islas donde enyugados sangran
al compás de los latidos
hermanas hermanos en pozos hundidos.

Tú allá y llega mi camino
(dices)
yo acá me rompo camino
volviéndome nube, ave, rocío
la faz de la tierra defino
volando en ave, nube, rocío
las voces del fuego adivino
tal cual gotas en poros de árbol
tan amigo, tan querido, tan destino
que juntará nuestro camino,
tan frágil, tan fuerte
tan árbol, terrestre, divino.

Y tú y yo
acá y allá
y donde termine nuestro camino.

---

Riding on a cloud of love.
Nothing to hold on to,
but vows and promises.
Smooth yet Rocky and Rough.

---

AS I STAND

As I stand here in a cloud of darkness,
hoping, wishing,
Maybe, just Maybe, the wind will carry it to you.
This that lies within me.

---

SEASONS

Fall is Dying.
Winter is Dead.
Spring will bring forth its
New Born,
to keep Summer A-Live.

---

OCTOBER 15, 1981

They say he is gone!
gone-gone,
Gone to the stars, heaven.
But, for me, he is forever, here.

---

MY HUSBAND

He stood as tree,
His trunk straight and bold.
Sap moving feverishly,
Limbs outstretched, waiting.

---

ALONE

Sunset turns the ocean from blue to gold.

alone

Warmth of the fire's glow shields the autumn's cold.

Dreams flutter as they turn to ashe.

---



*Photo: Katy Poh*

*BRIAN D. PARNELL*

## A BOUQUET FOR EMERSON TYME

The dawn was too cold, the high-backed wooden rocker too stiff, and the straggling shrubs that guarded the long driveway leading to the Home urgently needed attention. They were dying. Emerson Tyme reflected on all these issues as he mechanically rocked the squeaking chair, swaying in front of the rising sun as a pendulum sways beneath an aging time-piece.

Emerson was no initiate to seeing the sunrise from the porch of the Home; he had witnessed it hundreds of times. The residents with whom he lived thought it eccentric that he would rise so early to sit in the cold air outside. But they were younger than he, and had come to the home more recently, so he knowingly received their rebuffs with stoic silence. Because the old gentleman's circulation had slowed he was nearly always cold – and he reveled in the warm touch of the morning sun's first rays. On most days it was the only warmth he knew.

The sun paced upward from the horizon, but Emerson did not notice. He was dozing, half asleep and half caught in an unpleasant dream. The slam of a door roused him.

"Got your breakfast for you Mr. Tyme," chimed a young voice from beneath a nurse's hat. "I took it to the dining room first, but you just weren't there. So after a while I figured you had to be out here – or still asleep – but you never sleep this late so I knew you'd be out here. How are you this morning? Isn't it going to be a nice day? Oh my, look at the time! Here's your breakfast, Mr. Tyme. I hope your visitors show up soon!" Emerson obediently took his tray, hoping the nurse would go away. He remembered fishing in streams that babbled slower than this woman.

The oatmeal and toast were cold. They were always cold. Yet this morning the food was not quite as unpalatable as usual. The day was one of anticipation for Emerson, because his son was coming to the Home to visit him. The man's wife and young daughter would come, too. Emerson immensely enjoyed having his son's family visit, though he could not remember why. The visits were rarely long, though they could seem that

way because of the scarcity of conversation. Emerson was quite sure his son knew plenty of good words he could use – he was a successful defense lawyer – yet when the two men talked, words seemed to be difficult for the younger to recall. Still, Emerson enjoyed company, even silent company, and so he faithfully clung to the knobby arms of the rocker and waited.

Noon arrived quickly, but Emerson's visitors did not. The sun was high overhead now, and more pale than an early spring sun ought to be. Was it really early spring? Emerson wondered. Perhaps he had neglected to turn his calendar again. If that was the case, this would not be the day for Emerson's son to visit. A tense grip of panic tore at the old man's chest, his heartbeat quickened. He was not sure of the day, or the time, or even how long he had been sitting in the rotting old chair. Maybe he had been there for days, forgotten by everyone. Sweat sprang to his brow. Maybe he would die there, alone, or maybe–

"Mr. Tyme?" It was the nurse. "Mr. Tyme, your son called this morning to tell you he'd be late. I forgot to let you know."

Emerson relaxed his thin muscles and leaned back deep into the chair with a sigh,

"Are you all right, Mr. Tyme?"

"Yes," he managed. "yes I am."

At 4:30 a car familiar to Emerson cruised up the dusty drive, past the thirsty bushes to the front of the Home. A man in his mid-thirties popped out from the driver's side and hurried around to open the passenger's door.

As his son approached, Emerson searched his face for some glimmer of affection, some evidence that he was still remembered as his son's father. His thirsty gaze found only averted eyes and a preoccupied expression.

"I'm sorry we couldn't come this morning," the son offered defensively. "I hope we didn't spoil your other plans."

"I had no other plans," said the father. "I've been waiting for you."

"Good, that makes me feel better. What? No, we don't have time to sit today. We have to be at a retirement banquet for one of the senior partners in an hour. Protocol, you know. You understand, don't you? We'd stay if we could. Oh–uh–Emily brought you some flowers."

The old man's heart warmed as the child shyly pushed the flowers into his aged hand. For just an instant her smooth, moist skin pressed against his wrinkled palm. He would remember it for weeks.

The next few minutes were awkward, and seemed long. "Well – we have to go now," said the son as he placed his left hand on the old man's fragile shoulder, taking his father's right hand in his own and shaking it. "We'll be back in a week or two. Goodbye."

The day's last beams filtered through the towering eucalyptus and chased the retreating car down the drive. In the last few moments of day Emerson raised up his flowers to examine them; the shrubs along the drive had not yet produced any blossoms. Looking more closely he saw now what he had not seen before: the flowers were plastic.



## BALANCING BETWEEN TWO SHORES

The evening fog lulled over all
Like gauze upon a wound,
Settling low on the ground.
Changing the river into mist;
An artery from which the shroud of white bled.
Trees became forbidding figures standing round,
With outstretched arms, threatening
Grimacing sentinels of the night.

Balancing between two shores.

No indignant wind moved the impartial blanket
As a seductive darkness came upon the left,
And muffled lights appeared to the right.
Figures moved on both sides:
Shadows roaming tragic ruins in darkness,
As families huddled warm at home in the meek light.

Peering at the shadows, I saw many I knew,
I had once called friends.
Yet to the right
Only foreign faces came to view.

Continuing . . .
The houses decreased in number
As the shadows grew to legion,
Fear gently touched my heart
With icy fingers.
As the houses disappeared.

Balancing between two shores.

From out of the fog rose the sound of sheep;
The flocks safely in their pens,
But opposite stood a lone black ram.
Glaring defiantly at me,
Its eyes burrowing into mine,
And within these pits:
Barren wastes and arid regions,
The far reaches of the void.
The ram threw back its head,
Empty laughter cracked the silence.
Leaving me desperate and naked,
Dreading the loneliness.

The murmuring of the water questioned me,
Demanding a decision.
I was fascinated by the darkness
But hesitant and apprehensive of the right.
The night waned, giving up the fog,
Like an aching old man giving up his ghost.

My old friends in the shadows beckoned,
While indifference was paid on the contrary.
My past comrades looked so free,
But the strangers seemed so secure.
So before the morning arrived
I must beach my craft.
Sardonically sitting there musing,
Content with my middle position,
I moved on into the grey light.

---

## THE LAKE

The crystal clear water at its edge
Transforming into
A murkier
Ominous
Center;
Ill-defined.

---

## WHALE BONES

Motions of a mountain through
The sea; hunted without mercy.
Its bones lie bleached white
Upon the dry land,
As Gentoo penguins scurry
Clumsily among the litter
Strewn round.
Its spectre swimming in that
Fathomless ocean in which all
Men must come.

---

## A STABBING AT INDEPENDENCE PARK

The embrace of two ragged strangers
Struggling-shuffling feet;
An ice pick punctures a bloated, rotten peach.

---

## PORTRAIT

In the arid heat of a summer's night
With a gentle breeze that sways the lampume
Humble like faithful pilgrims contrite
Stars show themselves and loom
A vacant place always the same
That sees the night through to another day

He's just another haunted (empty) man
Who paints guilt with hate on virgin pages
Struggling with secrets no one understands
Taut with quiet rages
His desperate eyes searching but blind
That roll with hopeless wanton sighs

Is there no solace in the night
With his penchant for its shallow light
Severing any feelings he claims
That he won't ever care to name
Silent in his useless shame

Stumbling in and out of conversations
Holding attention with his repartee
Faking a laugh of fascination
Concealing a snicker that put away
Getting caught up in fascination
Finding he's just a helpless prey
Facing it with cold determination
Imprisoned in his futile days.

---

## BOOK BURNING

Funeral pyre blazing
Greedily licking each page,
Round eyed sheep bleating response
Finger pointing evangelists stalking
Rallying support from the blind.
Righteous pillars
Outward taint of sin:
Expensive skins shrouding wolves
White shoes with black souls
Speaking of a lamb
But feeding upon his flock
Censoring dreams and reality
Burning with holy fire
Purging the world of free will.

---

## FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

Dark secrets
Surface slowly
Glide silently
Stealthily emerge
From out of the pool
Taking hold that which
They will never let go.

---

## THE BLACK CAT

It's out there
Near my bedroom window
So very still;
A shudder crawls over me
At the thought . . .
I listen intently:
No screaming
No wailing.

The air stands still
As heart-stopping silence
Reaches out to grab me,
Pulling me over to see:
An unwilling witness,
I want to turn and run
But the silence demands:
A vacuum of life,
Greedy with its victory.

I look and choke down a scream
Chasing away my captor

It's out there
Near my bedroom window
So very still;
With mouth
Wide opened.
As it waits forever for the speech
To call,
Its eyes glazed,
Lying upon its black matted fur.

"I will bury it tomorrow."
I reassure myself.
"Poor kitty."
And far away,
Somewhere in the night
I can hear laughter.

---

## AUTUMN'S CHILD

Frail Lisa hangs upon life
–A brittle leaf upon an October tree,
Her age numbering the seasons in years

But the North wind blows haughtily
Tearing her from her parent tree
Leaving her cold and alone
To be crushed underfoot
By a sudden stranger.

---

## LEAVES

They danced upon the limbs
Of a somber tree,
Sighing a wistful song
That rose up and down
And then ended in silence.
A song of younger days
That their forefathers sang before them,
And theirs before them.

---

## EREBOS

Out here;
Where shadows rise
And loneliness cries.
Out here;
Where nightmare lies
And time dies with a sigh.
Out here;
On the dark side.

---

## IN MEMORY, FEBRUARY 24, 1982

A small child, a boy, a young man
Greeted by a firm hand shake and
A gentle smile
Sits on a step-ladder
In a room papered in
Malthus, Marx, Christ, et al.
Furnaced air rises through
The wrought-iron fixtures of the floor,
A florescent lamp glows
Yet defines only the center
Of the desk
Steel, felt, leather, and cluttered
With momentos of his
"Humane wisdom, intelligence, and integrity"
Seemingly opaque panes of glass
Look onto a street
Where nearly a century looked in
On a voice
Soft and quiet
Yet steadfast
Never forgetting
The sermons of the past
The Peace at the table, or
The kind, guiding words to a
Grandson.

---

## A MID-TWENTIES RETROSPECTION

I

Lingering creek-side days
small-fingered sand bars,
driftwood barges,
Matchboxes, and Tonkas.
Bronze, smooth-skinned
swing sets, and training wheels.
Skyscraper mailboxes, (and
countertops). Hands caught
in countless cookie-jars.

II

White-streaked chalkboards,
and print-filled pages
enticing opinions,
forming future thoughts.
Bouncing-ball playgrounds, and
budding athletic bodies,
first-kiss romances, and
trying, adolescent indoctrinations.

III

Empty beer-bottles,
unclean dishes,
soot-filled rooms, and
philosophic discussions.
Lonely Fraternizing questions:
(degrees, directions,
applications, and experience)
First wrinkles appearing
on skin not ready.
Continuous complications, and
constant contradictions.
Memory's pictures lining
a long, teasing hallway

---

## PROMISES AGAINST THE NIGHT

Silently sitting, night's shade unsprung,
Ashes on my forehead.
A bit of death, one bite we take, just enough to swallow
Toxin against the poison's sweep,
Vile tide that always follows.

We are the watchers
The waiters
The stretched between
It is we who sit in dim light.
Muttering our chants, prayers and incantations
Pushing dust against dust
Clinging to our symbols and sweet promises against the dark.

---

## THE CARE OF CLAUDE

He carefully slid into the corner of the bar, near the coatless halltree. He warmed his throat with another sip of whiskey, glanced at the bartender and then stared back into the table's top. His feet felt better now, and his stomach no longer contorted. He was the first one to come in that morning, legs bobbing aside his mechanical friend. He twisted sideways through the door and then inched his way to the nearest barstool, asking for matches. The bartender looked down at the drops of water which had fallen from the old man's hairy gray face. He stared at the old man and then paced quickly to the opposite end of the bar, propped his body on the edge of the cutting board.

It had not rained the night before, yet the streets were wet from heavy morning mist. Usually, in November, fog socked in the valley for a duration of two weeks or more; but, that year, the weather was curious. Winter had crackled with first frost, yet the air was not fine on open skin. In the evening, from the top of the building, you could see the pollution hanging along the edge of the sky like a brush of mascara. The shadows reminded him of the dark figure hobbling through the alley, peering into city trashbins. He had said something to the taxi driver, the driver didn't answer. It was Claude who had met him at the door, in darkness, straddling his contraption with a grimace of smile.

The old man was half-asleep now, only partly from the whiskey. The bartender talked to two regular patrons at the far end of the room while Merle kept on singing "Big City." The men left for work and the bartender ejected the song. The old man awoke, jerking, spilling the remaining whiskey. The bourbon ran across the cocktail table and dripped onto the checker-tiled floor. The bartender turned the page of the "Times" and adjusted his foothold on the cutting board. Light irregular tapping sounded from the rooftop as the old man straggled over for another shot, resting his gaunt hands on his "horse" as he had named the mechanism. He returned to his table and rested awhile longer, sipping and watching drops of rain snake down the porthole-like windows at the front of the bar. When he awoke again he listened to the pulse of the slushing waters being sucked down the building's draingutters, splashing out into the alley.

The bartender moved to the first station and poured into his coffee a four-count of Christian Brothers. The old man counted as the brown fluid jetted into the black liquid, burning vapors rising into the dim light. He stirred the mixture, lifted the cup to his lips and, blowing, finally tasted the dark brew. He thought of the shadow he had seen move by the back door in the breezeway. He walked into the narrow blackness of the back entrance and found no one, only a wadded-up newspaper laying, like a pillow, next to the stacks of emptied beer cases. The hot brandy stung his lips, windows fogging, while outside high gray clouds rolled, buckling over the city. He watched the old man sleep and he drank his black cup.

The old man rested, lips trembling and hands jerking, perhaps dreaming. The rain was coming down in a steady pour, flooding the corners of the alleyway and rising onto the curb in shallow puddles. The bartender looked out the door and watched the water edge onto the sidewalk, winding further into the cracked cement. He felt numb as he stared at the old man, then gazed back to the increasing flow. He mumbled to himself and then walked to the back bar, wearily, rested again on the board. Images lulled through the old man's head, pictures of a young girl whose bare thighs he had seen as she raised her skirt. He looked up to her face, she was laughing; he hovered to where she was sitting and pulled her close to himself, smelling the perfume which rose from her breasts. Everything went black as his loins strained against her softness.

Outside, the dark-grayish nimbuses toiled above the tall buildings, curdled together covering morning. The sallow light trickled along the rusting bricks in glints, reflected from the red neon sign. The wind rose a little and then, let down into a sigh. The rain slowed for a few minutes, almost dying; the old man stirred, wiping his chin with palsied fingers. Shaking, he half-rose and, steadying himself, sagged again to the bar. Rheum flowed down his pitted face, coagulated along the lines of ridges of pink puffy flesh below his eyes. The bartender had forgotten how the old man had lost his left ear, hair slicked-down over the rotting aperture. As he poured the old man another drink he sensed the vile odor; he turned and started to clean the steel sinks with steaming water. The mist boiled up into his face, formed small drops of warm dew on his forehead. He stared into the hot sink as the steam rolled up over the bar into the old man's beard.

The old man began to speak, words cracking, chipping like scattered glass on rutted pavement. The bartender worked faster over the sinks; he watched the old man's squamous lips quiver as the steaming water slurped down the stainless drains. The room brightened for a moment as light, beamed from a cut in a patch of clouds, mirrored through the front windows making the old man's head completely gray, almost singed-white. The

bartender could barely hear what the old man was talking about, his sentences flowing together with the splashing vaporous water.

"You know, I was down by the river – it was dark, getting cold – wasn't rainy, only real cold – I was going along just looking. And, well – horse threw me in some bushes and I, I couldn't get up. Had to just lay there awhile. Started to get a bit damp, but I knew – just a matter of time. Well, pretty soon, here comes a couple of young girls and I asked them to help me up. Was pitch-black then. And I only had a few smokes. They both walked right up to me – where I was laying. I don't know who they are. Well, the tall one asked me if I had a dollar. I took the buck out of my shirt pocket – keep other coins in a better hiding place – well, I gave her it. Both just laughed. Walked down one of those dark riverbank paths."

The bartender walked around the end of the bar and blocked open one of the black padded doors, looked down the alley at the dark broken windows and bent railings on the skeletal frame of the old hotel. In a dim room, on the stained wall, was a hazy picture; in the corner, a torn chair and near the curtains, a lingering shadow. The sky was full of clouds, churning together, winding into the distant hills, covering townships into dull colors. He looked back to the old man who had lagged again to the corner barbooth. A few of the clouds seemed to scrape across the hotel's serrated architecture as the old man's tilted head sank back into the cushioned seat, his collar pulled up. The bartender stood leaning against the door, staring into the lapping gutter, watching debris float and tumble along in the untranslucent sinewy flow. He felt tired as the flashing neon blinked the wet alleyway almost scarlet, separated by moments of blackness.

Inside, small spots of water gathered at infrequent places on the red and white floor. Stained ceiling panels issued filtered drops slowly as though great melting stalactites were responsible for the scattered minute puddles. The bartender thought of his wife, her clean smell in the morning after she bathed, perfume along her cool neck and shoulders, dabbed like crushed wildflowers on her skin. He took out his wallet and looked at her picture through the immaculate plastic slip; the blue eyes stared piercingly into his own blue eyes, yet, she was beautiful to him, she was his perfect partner. He saw her face, as he had first seen her, across wide green summer lawns; she sat beneath a waving olive tree, reading her white book. Her features were well defined, almost striking he thought; and yet her lips were austere, as if about to impose some important sentence. The old man twisted, his loose jacket rustling across the Naugahyde upholstery; the bartender flipped a cigarette into the murky water, vanishing curls of smoke rising from the sleeping butt. He looked again to the old hotel, it seemed like a strange monument, erected in an opulent era; still, now, it stood alone, stark.

He mused toward the jukebox, passing the old man; he sensed again a trace of pungent fume, a penetrating essence. He stopped, momentarily searching the dark flavor, then turned and marched behind the bar. The rain lulled, tapping out in rubato a partial chorus on the tarpapered roof, dripping from eaves, ticking onto the sidewalk like slow winter-thawing drops. Clouds wound through the sky, dark like the cancerous ear of the old man; only broken thunder stuttered near the foothills, trembling and muted, trilled notes. As the old man slept, mouth hanging open, the bartender stocked for his relief, languished brown bottles in random rows. He thought again of the shadowy alley, the old man's skinny arms sprawled over the rusting bin, his jaws chewing, perhaps regurgitating some reeking substance, bilious. The dirty rainwater swirled along in gutters, eddied down feeble drain ditches, ebbed to stagnated sewerlines below the delirious city. The bartender waited, drifting clouds spiralling, fermenting in arthritic billows, envenomed.

Light creased the room as a tanned hand thrust open the saloon doors, the brightness blinding the old man as he awoke in seizure. A tall figure stepped inside, cadenced quickly, boldly to the end of the bar, looking straight ahead. The wind filled the room with an aroma of spiced-musk, a bouquet of balmy lip-sweets, precious volatile oils burning on fiery skin. The bartender rose, pupils adjusting, and strove also to the bar's end; strips of light streaking across the floor and walls as the doors swung closed, beating into stillness. She stared into his face, as though about to speak, a small line on her forehead uncurling, veining again as she turned back to the collapsing old man. The sun, breaking through thin pieces of cloud, reflected into the bar from glistening-white buildings, filled the room with a warming, almost summer light. Her lips moved and he watched, their redolence an ambrosia; he listened to her lavendar words, balsamy, aromatic resinous fluids yielded-up from her sweetest trees. As she spoke, she pressed his hand into her hand, his pupils almost pin-sized; he tasted her speech readily, a deep breath of incense, he was her own, she was Imogene.

"Look here, I would suggest to you that there is a pestilence about. I do detect it myself. Spring is not in the air. There is a rash atrophy at hand, and– the remedy waits. Shock your face man! Black Flag it! I don't work here. Pest hole! Give me a seven-up. I won't say anything else. My small twinge of voice only wants you to do what you think is right. Nothing else. Nothing."

The bartender broke-over, hands on hips, to where the half-delirious old man sat coughing up bubbling phlegm, swallowing the thick mucous. He spoke to the old man in a definite voice; stared into his open rotting mouth, teeth which seemed almost filed-sharp with infection. The old man looked up to the bartender's face, then, gazed back into the brown table,

fingering a decaying wart on his left hand. The room was brighter than it had been all morning, impotent clouds trailing away like a muddied path left by murrained cattle; light glowed from the long bar mirrors, reflected onto the old man's head, turning it smokey-white. He slumped deeper into his seat, brow tilted downward, listening; his tumored ear throbbing, beating his thoughts into afflictions. The bartender stood for a moment, unsure of his own words; then, he stepped back as the old man creeped toward his aluminum brace. Trembling, the old man grasped the tin frame, skidding on bent rollers; he hunched-up onto the ragged bars and began to speak, his words twitching like uncontrollable reflexes.

"Well– I, I know– tried to make the head, in time. Couldn't do nothing. Just sit. I got the diarrhea since 'fore yesterday. Hope you– well, see– I was 'pose to get my check and– well, I'll talk at you. I'll ride down to the corner. Did you hear them winds blow?Raging boy, blowing down. Drenched streets and thunder– well, I– see you.'

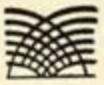
The old man scraped out the door, folded blanket hanging, dented rollers spinning, grinding down the alleyway, stubbing. The bartender measured the doors as they ebbed into silence; he seemed to hear each minuscule sound until a hollow quietness arrived, a creakines almost stabbing, murderous. He returned to the cutting board, finished preparing fruit for the next shift, not speaking. The wind cracked down the steps of the old hotel's fire-escape, torn rusted rails hanging; blackened shingles flew up, flapped away into the somber horizon.

The bartender was relieved on time, the afternoon glasses stacked for the coming patrons; he washed at the red stains in the cracks of his skin, residue beneath the flaking scales. He threw down his dirty bartowel, marked his time; he walked to his wife, she had been reading. She took his hand and led him through the black doors, the sidewalk wind-whipped dried, to where a Black and White awaited. The rain had completely stopped, the alleyway draining steadily, as they stepped into the cab, the metal creaking beneath their weight.

"Don't you feel well?You are a touch warm. When we get home I'll fix you soup. Then your stomach will feel a world better. Look, there's no sense in mulling. You did what you could. The last thing he needed was the booze. You, of all people, know. Are you dizzy?You do look rather pale. Well, there's nothing to make of it, but to bed for you, 'til your strength's back. You, dear Luke, are in my care."

The taxi clattered out of the alley, edged in the lines of weather-delayed traffic, heading to the south, away from the city. I eased back into my seat; I did ache in my neck and lower head, blood shooting-up inside my temples. I remember saying, quite blankly, 'Claude– Claude Adrian.' Whether such a question was put to me, I could not then recall,

but the heavy-scented silence which followed drowned all of my fevered thoughts. I rolled down my window, rubbed a cyst-like spot of pomegranate syrup which was smeared on my hand, and watched the ailing clouds breakdown on the high canyon walls of plagued granite.



KIPNISS 197/250
*on receiving a seriograph as a present*

the leaves hang in a fragrance,
they never fall away;
they hang in years upon a wall
and lift a weightless notion,
like windy stars, or birds
in sudden pause of soaring:

incense-gray and careful
these distant graceful shapes restore
your perfect eye, and emanate
your wise and subtle love.

---

The wind hurries past my window and
Whistles at the crack in the door:
All time stops with its incessant howl,
My brain whirls and cringes with each cold blast,
My skin crawls at the sound of the sand
That eats into my soul.
It gnaws away at my nerves,
This ceaseless defiant intruder
Leaves me breathless and crying for relief.

---

A special night
At the entrance of summer
Blossomed with an
Unexpected rain;
The air was mystical
The need to be touched
And desire were
As alive as the dry grass
Welcoming the moisture
From the rain.
A song, some brandy wine
And a Beautiful tender
Smile made the rain
Feel like an unexpected guest
Gently we watched
The evening pass
As we enjoyed the time
We had allowed
For ourselves

---

A TOUCH

Strong, yet gentle
So good and satisfying
But only to leave
When life is at the fullest
Leaving behind only traces of the touch
That allow memories to flow

and linger on . . .

---

## NOTHING

I know a place
That nobody goes
A place that I can live within
My own thoughts,
And listen to the silence
Of nothing echo in my mind.

---

Things seem dark now
Loneliness is creeping
In fast.
To want to be loved,
Only to reach aimlessly
At nothing.
The need to cry
Is immense.
But I can not fall,

For there is no one to pick up the tears.

---

Tall and Red
So Wise and Straight
Above all he stood.

---



*Photo: Terri Lacher*

Wind swoops
and swirls
and swooshes
Like an angry swallow
darting
drifting
scolding
Trying to chase a catbird
from her nest.

---

WINTER STORM

Shiny-brittle jutting spears
Drip dark drops downward
To the snow.
Black-scowling clouds
In sleepy-sullen sky
Mutter rumbled oaths.
Snarling wind scours bare
The sparsely-whitened hills.
Hailstones drive into the ground.

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## CONSERVATION

The wilderness of chirps and leaves
Is filled with horns and tar

## IN PURSUIT OF SLEEP

Crisp & cool the cotton sheets
I lie as a love letter
in a perfumed envelope
waiting for its intended

The gentle resonance of the evening breeze
the summer's lullaby
stirs softly in my mind
as the leaves outside
my open window dance

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Look up through the trees
The sun is spinning a web
to catch your mind's eye.

*MICHAEL MC COY*

## IT'S GOING TO RAIN

In January, Carver began to sleep with a graduate student in religious studies named Beth. She was older than Carver and had danced for two top Eastern ballet companies before settling in Santa Barbara. Carver didn't even try to understand her reasons for studying Sanskrit and meditation. In his mind though, everything about Beth was exotic and curious. She made very good vegetarian lasagne and once she gave Carver a bath.

He had been tramping the Templar mountains for three days with his friend Fred. Fred was a botany major at the university and had almost given up on a field project that was due in less than a week. With the help of some magic mushrooms a friend had sent from Hawaii, the pair collected and pressed an entire semester's collection of chapparal and grasses in three days. The last night in the low hills there had come a sudden winter rain. Carver and Fred waited it out all night huddled without shelter in plastic ponchos. Drinking Sauza tequila, they talked all night about Beth and who Carver thought she was, and the next morning Carver convinced Fred to stop by the house Beth lived in high in the Goleta hills.

Carver and Fred took off their muddy boots and stepped onto the wide stone porch. "Hello," they heard. Beth was sitting in an old arm chair in the yard, an infinite number of avocado trees winding in lines below the house all the way to the valley. The sun was strong and the channel islands were penciled smudges on the sea's horizon.

Carver swung over the porch and kissed her. "You must be the infamous Fred," she said smiling. Fred nodded and managed a smile. "I've got some peppermint tea made and some beer, although it is a little early for beer," she said to Fred. "Beer sounds great Beth," Carver said. She laughed again, and kissed Carver on the shoulder. Fred and Carver watched her walk away.

"Jesus man," Fred said in a low voice. "Where in the hell did an idiot like you meet someone like that? Jesus Carv, what a babe!"

"When you've got it, you've got it man," Carver said back, smiling.

Beth listened patiently to their stories, and laughed when they talked about the rain. "That tequila was the only thing that made us sit out that storm," Fred said, slapping his thigh laughing.

"Yeah, that and the fact we were too wasted to find the truck," Carver said. He raised his arm and snapped his fingers sending a bottle cap sailing across the lawn.

Finally Fred stood up and patted his pockets. "You probably left them in your car," Beth said. Fred smiled and stretched his arms out. "Well," he said, "I think I hear travelling music." He tied his boot laces together and walked down the hill to his camper-covered pickup. Taking off his shirt and tossing it onto the seat, he waved back, then slid behind the wheel of the car.

Beth reached for Carver's hand and led him to the back of the farm house where there was an old free standing bath tub on the back porch. She pulled off her thin sweater and began to adjust the bath water. As she adjusted the cracked porcelain handles, Carver found himself smiling and studying the curved line of her back. While he pulled off his dusty pants and shirt, he thought of the three women who lived in the house, all taking baths on the back porch with its screen walls.

Beth was small to Carver's way of thinking. Small pointed breasts and very short dark hair. Her eyes were over-large, light green changing to blue, and almost appeared lidless. He put his arms around her and pulled her close to him, breathing in her soft citrus scent. She just stood there in a long cotton skirt, her arms around his neck and her bare breasts against his ribs.

Carver finally climbed over into the tub of warm water. He sank down in the long tub until his knees and face were the only dry parts of his body. Beth disappeared for a moment, and while she was gone, he could hear the low voiced sound of a guitar in another room. Must be one of the roommates, he thought.

Beth appeared again. "Gina's home," she said. She knelt beside the tub and poured a little tilt of blue liquid into the tub out of a small plastic bottle. "For your skin," she said. She began to bathe him like a child. Carver sat passively and let her pass a huge sea sponge over his shoulders and chest. She bathed his shoulders and chest, then his arms and hands. The blue water turned opaque.

Carver allowed her to towel him off on the porch, and then afterward they made love in her room through the rest of the afternoon. She was a very physical lover, very aggressive; she bit Carver on the shoulder so hard that afternoon that he bled. She also claimed to be psychic, and although Carver didn't believe in such things, he had to admit to a special energy in their lovemaking he had never experienced before.

"It's electric, Fred! That's the only way to explain her whole trip man." While drinking beer in the long cool afternoons, Carver and Fred always talked about sex. Fred's lover was a moody buxom Jewish girl who worked in a wine and cheese shop in one of the downtown alleys. Fred had been with her for quite a while and told very few stories anymore.

"Like last night man, we heard this noise outside her room." Carver cupped his hands and made a hooting noise. Fred raised one eyebrow and scratched his beard.

"Well, I thought she was a little afraid, so I went out onto the porch beside her room . . . naked. And there in this tree were two little owls looking down at me."

"What kind of owls?" Fred asked, pouring himself more beer.

"Shit, I don't know. Barn owls? Well anyway, just as I had stepped outside, here comes Carla who lives in the loft. She was naked too and it was really cold, and there we were looking up at these owls with a full moon right behind them."

"And then you woke up," Fred said wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

"No man, then Beth came out with this huge quilt and there we stood in the moonlight and all watching the owls. It was so cold that our breaths just hung in the air."

"What a trip," Fred commented.

Beth gave Carver tarot card readings when he was high, and when he was away working in Santa Maria she drew small watercolor pictures. His favorite sketch was a pen and ink picture Beth had traced into her journal. In the sketch Carver was wearing medieval armor, without the helmet, and reading a small book. The entire image was drawn within a massive tree trunk. His image was washed in faint blue watercolor, the tree in red.

"It is from a dream I had of you while you were away," she said. Carver stared into the embers of the fireplace. "You are like some young knight, a prince," she whispered. Embarrassed by the sentiment, Carver stared at the floor. Beth was wearing small clog shoes, and the fine light hair on her tanned calves looked like silk stockings in the firelight.

Their time together that night was full of a vibrancy that surprised them both. Carver's slim body moved sure but gently over her cream colored skin, and Beth in her dancer's way moved always with him. No movement lost, no unconnected or independent moving, but only warm urgings and sweet flowing transitions.

"Wow," Carver said.

"Wow," Beth parroted back.

"Words are inadequate," Carver muttered, his voice thick.

"Then don't use any," Beth whispered, her fingers tracing the outline of his lips. Carver lay back on the foam mat and pulled the jumble of blankets and quilts over their damp bodies.

He stared up at the high white ceiling in silence. The colored reflections of the cheap altar candles she had lit danced on the ceiling. From the end of the room on a wall loomed the dark visage of Rudolph Nureyev pouting in an autographed photograph. Carver was without any active thought or active emotion. Strangely quiet, they made love until the room turned blue with the rising sun.

"It's going to rain," Beth said quietly without moving. Carver rose and glanced through the drapes. Below the house near the coast the sky was clouded into a one dimensional gray.

"Hmmm," he said.

"Why don't you call in sick to work?" she asked.

"Hmmm," he said again.

Beth began to dial the phone and then handed the receiver to Carver. "Bright Sky Solar!" barked the phone.

"Yeah Dan, this is Carver. I think I'm coming down with something — think I better stay home today."

"O.K. God damn it! But you better have your butt down here tomorrow! We've got a pool to do over in Monteceito."

"No problem Dan."

"Chinese flu, huh? Or are you getting a little?"

"No, Dan. Just a little under the weather."

Carver's employer was so used to these Monday morning hangover phone calls from his young carpenters that he had long ago resigned himself to a four day work week.

"What do you want to do today Beth?" Carver asked.

"We're doing it," she laughed, pulling the covers over her face.

"Hmmm," Carver mused.

Later that afternoon Carver confided to Fred, "I don't know how she does it man! I mean she knows phone numbers, she guesses the weather right every time. She knows what's inside my pockets. I mean like, I feel like calling her when I lose something because I know for sure she can tell me where it is."

Fred pushed his old baseball cap back and rested his elbows on the table. "I mean like last night, Fred, I picked up my guitar to play her a song I had just learned and she said 'Dangerous Fun' before I could even play the intro!"

"Why don't you ask her how she knew that was the song you were going to play?" Fred asked.

"Because man, I'm afraid she's going to say she doesn't know how she knew it."

Fred whistled. "Then Carv, you got to admit that girl's got E.S.P."

"That's b.s." Carver muttered.

Carver forced himself not to see Beth for a week. Instead he stayed with an old high school friend in Ventura and surfed the pier break in Rincon with his little brother. But during the day when he was working for Dan, standing high on the shingled rooftops above the treeline, he thought of her. And in the gray winter afternoons when he was waiting for the right crease of surf to roll in front of his board, he thought of her eyes and the smooth bone ridges in her hips. He stared across the water to the island in the channel and wondered if she was sleeping with someone else.

He finally called Beth on the phone at a liquor store. "I'd like to come over," he said.

"How about tomorrow," she said.

"Hmmm," Carver sighed. He traced his initials on the glass of the phone booth.

"I'm going to see Julian Bream in concert tonight at the Lobero Theatre," she said.

Carver picked her up the next afternoon in his van and headed up the coast. When all the houses and fences finally ended, he made a wide U-turn and pulled over next to a railroad bridge. "This place is called 'the trestles,'" he explained.

They stepped out of the van and began walking down toward the beach. They weren't holding hands. In fact, Carver deliberately kept his hand from brushing hers.

"Let's go for a swim," Beth said suddenly.

She began to take off her clothes and run toward the water. Carver kicked off his sandals and began to unbutton his shirt; he watched Beth hit the crest of a wide gray wave. He dropped his battered fatigue pants and dove into the next wave. They both surfaced laughing. She reached for his hand and dove again. And when they finally swam out of the surf, the water streamed from their bodies. Still holding hands they ran for their clothes.

They drove up the gravel path to the farm house and parked near the back door. "Let's wash off over there," Beth said. She walked across the lawn and uncoiled the water hose. They both stripped off their clothes and she sprayed Carver with water that was cold as ice. After rinsing off, they both sat wet and shivering on the concrete porch in the late afternoon sun, looking out over the avocado trees to the ocean.

Neither talked and the silence became oppressive. Carver's mind moved like a roladex across all the words he knew.

"Hmmm," he said.

"Hmmm," she said back.

He put his arm around her. "I've always wanted to do it on that clover," she said pointing to a wide circle of dark green on the lawn.

"What if Mr. Weaver walks by?" Carver asked.

"He's visiting his sister in L.A." Beth said.

"And what about the postman . . . or your roommates?" Carver asked.

"Too late in the day for mail, and the roommates are drinking downtown," she countered.

The clover smelled sweet, but their lovemaking was hurried and seemed staged. A handful of starlings made rattling noises in the trees below the yard.

"You're going to stop seeing me," she said to Carver. It wasn't an accusation, nor was there the sound of bitterness in her voice.

"You don't know that," he said, and the way he had phrased that reply sounded wrong and hollow. He noticed for the first time fine lines in the corners of her eyes.

"And I never even danced for you," she said.

He tried to imagine her dancing, but the image evaded him. He finally stood up and walked to the porch, and pulled on his pants. He looked over the ledge for his shirt.

"It's on the seat of your van," she said.

He walked over to the van and turned and looked at her. She lay in the circle of clover with her back to him, picking absentmindedly at the ground.

"You don't know me like you think you do," he said, almost unable to talk.

"Don't," she said. "Please go, Carver."

He slowly got into the old V.W. bus and turned the engine over. She still lay there on her side turned away from him. He put the van in gear and drove off without looking back at the house, following the line of avocado trees to the main road. There he waited for a sports car to flash by, then he gunned the old bus onto the road until the last avocado tree flashed by in his peripheral vision.





*Photo. Terri Lacher*

## THE MISTRESS' REPLY

You speak prettily of the sun
And how, through love, we'll make him run.
Label me coy, when I refuse
Though your persistence is no news;
So much to me, this tale's been told
By you, in moments warm and bold.
Still, I have kept my maidenhead
Though it shan't last until I'm dead
As you might think. Indeed, I say
It may not, lad, outlive the day.
If your long-lasting love's no lie
Then I'll consent this bond to try.
    But lest in loving's dewy midst
You 'gain, of Time's defeat insist,
Remember then, my cavalier
Beyond the grave, my ears won't hear.
So if words are to be spoken,
Speak now! 'Tis a promise broken
If you should refuse here to tell
The years, if given, which you'd dwell
Upon my eyes, my lips, my heart,
And every other tempting part.
Speech is but an earthly power
And shall be gone at your last hour.
    But if! we could wait forever,
Herbal love would be our pleasure,
And this abstention might become
A true delight, as is for some.
No worry that love's time is spent
At the end of life's brief extent
Would lead us into purity
And make respect a surety.

I'd stray to cities of the Nile,
And leave you here to wait awhile;
Or wander near the Orient
Whilst you Humber-ously lament,
Alas, you've taught me, 'tis not so:
With death, both love and lust will go.
Together, and at my request,
Let's use the means with which we're blessed;
Denied our souls of higher states,
We shall love best at mortal rates.

---

ONDINE

I saw a woman, a mermaid rather,
standing at a party swallowing the room
where other guests held faces unfinished.
But,
I saw, I *did* see grass swaying,
sighing green in her eyes
and a seaswim around thighs,
an Ondine beauty caught mainstream.
Oh, the swinging mind,
my mind walking,
yes—through water
swaggering wide, yet
endangered, staggering
on somnolent dreamfeet.

---

## SWIMMER

The reef lay bare–
sprayed dark by rising surf–
Distance–a mile.
(not much for a strong swimmer).

First the vision.
Then the plunge
on orientation sent
reckoned senses pulling muscles
–this way–
–that way–
–rolling rhythmic in the waves
–washing gently
(over legs, thighs, trunk, head).

Cool waters of adventure calling–
squinting eyes sighted
on the crusted reef rocks
scabbed with mussels, starfish, floating kelp
oriented toward the living reef
(home to natural cycles of the sea).

At quarter-mile he rested–
waving back–
treading in joy–
buoyant in the wash–
achieving bit-by-bit–
(as swimmers do).

Looking down he saw
sunshine-splendored the lanterned sea
deep over brilliant rocks, shells,
plants clumped on the sandy bottom
in creviced weedy screens
(scenes known daily to a swimmer).

Confident again–
the rhythmed muscles pulling
–this way
–that way
–rolling rhythmic in the waves–
(washing gently).

At half-a-mile the die was cast.
He never questioned turning back
from the black reef rising–
Challenge lay ahead;
Conquest was too near.

Resting done–
once more the muscles moving–
–this way–
–that way–
–rolling rhythmic in the waves.

Closer to his visioned goal–
past the quarter-mile–
the reef rocks rose foreboding–
magnified in the turmoiled sea.

Flaming with will to engage
the natural dangers never known–
He drove excitement harder
in the lonely quest–
slipping smoothly–
–this way
–that way
–rolling rhythmic in the waves.

Sure of distance now–
(deep and long the strokes repeated
grave intent)
spending power in each thrust,
He poised his body on the waves–
fighting the thunderous wash and roar
when breakers crushed
across the rocks
in droplet foams
rushing forward toward a shore
over brilliant starfish
(clinging for life to the underbelly of the sea).

He rode high–
stroking fiercely–
breathing rage in conquest–
rushing upon a crest and carried–
thrown by the liquid slush–
He landed safe! body sprawled–
clinging to the musseled rock.

(He had WON against the sea!)

Leaping up in champion's energy–
with will-full glee–
his waving arms
signaled me upon the shore
of VICTORY.

That was ALL.

Then Charybdis–
in a wave around his hard-won dream–
grabbed his hand
and spun him downward
to the sand
below the reef–
Aeneas vanquished–
by his sea.

As cyclic waves return
to beaches beautiful with polished, sun-lit stones–
I see crab bites fester on his face
sloshing lonely, unvisioned in his place
in the cool sea crevices
of my summer grief.

---

SELF-PORTRAIT

My easel
mind
holds portraits
which never were
bright images

Each hue
defines
lines
in love
clearly
longingly

Blushes rise
glad to be
brush strokes.

---

## PASO INDIFERENTE

Pasó por tus orillas
la sombra de la noche
contemplando indiferente
el harapo del paisaje

De una calle decrépita
de una plaza rodeada
de gente con sonrisas artificiales
que discuten la verdad y la virtud

Junto pasa el mendigo
nutrido del caldo agudo
de la pobreza rasgando
con la mirada el amplio firmamento

Viejas casas al estilo colonial
con un balcón y un ventanal
y una anciana asomada al cristal
con las manos en un rosario enredadas

Y en la esquina de la calle principal
un borracho ve en el tequila a su altar y a su Dios . . .

Pasó por tus orillas
la sombra de la noche
contemplando indiferente
el harapo del paisaje

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## ABUELITO

It was not long ago
beneath the old
mesquite tree,
grandpa, you slept.

I sat beside you,
my breath slowly moving
with the hammock.
Instants came
and quietly left,
never did you wake.

"Despierta Abuelito
por favor, que ya es hora . . ."
but you did not hear me.
I could not cry, tears were ice.
I could not scream, my voice also slept,
I only felt the worn hammock
rocking in my heart.

---

## CUNA DE MI INFANCIA

Cuando yo era niña
fueron tus brazos
mi única cuna
fueron ellos cadena
de acero y dulzaina
tu voz divina

que al ritmo de diversos
y divinos cantares
entre olas del amor
me mecías

El calor de tu abrazo
hoguera de mi infancia
del frío con tu blanco rebozo
me cubrías

Ella también en tus brazos
durmió al ritmo de diversos cantares
y entre olas del amor
con tu amor de madre soñó

Pero la muerte su vida te arrebató
y enternecida inerta y fría
para siempre en tus brazos,
fosa de su infancia, durmio

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## VERNAL EQUINOX PLUS ONE

The deep indigo night sky splits a Cheshire grin
Sickle moon curves mona-lisa-like
Ivory glowing smile toothily illumines
    and dusting of astral sparks
    pulsates to echo mosquito drone and flashing wingtips
    of passing planes

Earthbound cat on paw patterns investigates
    shadowy weed kingdom,
Pausing to answer that Cheshire grin in the sky
Until silent wavelength signals announce
    exploration embarkation once more
And interrupt voiceless dialogue
    linking marquise-cut glance and sky watcher

Treez limbs branch venously, vainly to entrap
    the inscrutable inhabitant of the darkened Above

Or does the feline enigma itself occupy those branches,
    with tail twitching
    and eyes aglow with supernatural sapience?

Spinx of the Sky, with an all-night Miss America smile,
                Uncrackable and *sans* cavities,
Posing preternaturally the solutionless riddle.

---

NUDE

Celestial portraits
behind the walls
w/ nudes folded into chairs
& sunlight streaking in
hold no fantasy

Celibate image
half hidden behind the shed
can you know I stare at you
and wonder in a daze
with your soul

Cerebral presentation
did you think while you were posing
ask for a copy
and smile at the photographer
and rest

Or were you too embarrassed
to look into his eyes
& see that he wanted you
to be preserved
forever

---

## THE EYE

dust takes our breath out of our bodies
hungry as a wailing child
a visible half-crazed maelstrom
stay, an old vagabond hollered
in the center
I clung to your bones
as the floor flew away
and Grandad's chair hung vulture-like
on the old oak
You reached out for me
to dusky brown vacant air
I took my last breath
from high atop the whirling cloud
stay, the old man cried
in the eye of the storm

---

## MERCY

Come to me
my angel
as my only hope
to lift me up
with spider-web arms
to the light
of a million sunsets
to a promise
of warmth in darkness
your wings
have covered my dreams
smile
as you gather
the clouds to their
fogbeds
over the graves

---

## A MOMENTO

Last night, as I lay down,
your scent, from my pillow, touched me
and pointed out that emptiness
you left.

It showed me its size,
its volume, its mass.
An ache of nothing
you left.

I tried to crush it with sighs
but it lay there still.
A wakeful reminder
you left.

---

Shallow sandy water,
Glistening yellow sun and pear-colored sand
    sandwich the water
purging its blueness toward deeper depths,
leaving minnows to play in crystal clear coolness.
Its coldness laps my sunbaked ankle bones.
Canada,
On, Canada let me stay,
I'm too old to start over.
Let the cold water reach up past my ankles,
    until my toes struggle to keep my body anchored to the sand.
Let the cold water cleanse, cool, and make weightless
each hot bone.

---

He comes without warning
and brings to me teas, and apples, and books.
He appears in pouring rain,
Mars air, and with new-brown hair.
He resists my touch,
but takes access to my body.
Like a child craving approval
I submit.
Eager to make memories his heart
will retrieve
on those nights when non-conformity
seems tawdry and unfashionable.

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## FATHER

I have never been able to understand how a man who does not speak a word of English, who has never worn a pair of pants in his life and who is so primitively Indian, could sacrifice all his children to America. My father visited America for the first time in the late 50's. For him it was love at first sight. Since then his only aim in life was to see all his children in the United States. "India is a mistake," he would say. "Nothing right ever happens here. Once the masses can afford to purchase a radio or a television they will learn that there is a more beautiful world outside India and will seek a part of it. A revolution will undoubtedly take place which will then lead to communism. Get away from here before that happens. Go to America. I can never dream of becoming an American because I am too Indian, but you can and you must."

He drilled that into us since we were kids. I guess that is the reason why I will always bear a subconscious aversion towards my mother country.

I woke one morning and ambled into the living room where I saw my father sitting on his favorite rug. I went up to him and touched his feet. He tapped my head in return. That was our version of "Good morning."

"Sit down, son, I want to pet you," he said in the vernacular language.

I lay down with my head on his lap, a nineteen year old man. He stroked my hair gently, a feeling I shall never forget. A feeling I miss today.

"Chica, you must be a good boy. You must not be a bad boy." It was always with these words that he started his first thing in the morning conversations or "lectures" as he called them. He then went on to differentiate between good and bad. It was a routine procedure. Every morning, for as long as I can remember, he would auger into me the basic ethics of life. I'd heard his lectures so many times that I could anticipate what he was going to say next. I think, he believed that by repeating these banal morals daily, he was just being a good father. I remember times when I would listen more intently to the amplified cacophony that came out of his stomach. It fascinated me. It almost seemed like there was a

disc-jockey in there mixing weird sounds on his machine. There was one characteristic sound that resembled a high pitched scream. I miss that too. I opened my eyes and heard him continue. He was at the part where "one should not steal." I waited for him to pause for a breath until I spoke, "Father, do you think it's time I went to America?" He shifted in his seat, looked down at me and said, "I'm not sure whether you're mature enough yet."

"But all I want to do is visit America."

"That's exactly the attitude I do not want you to have when you go to America."

"Why father?"

"Because once you go to America I do not want you back here. You must forget that you are Indian. You must forget everything about this country – the food, friends, politics, everything, except your parents." He waited awhile to let that seep into me, then he continued,

"There are only two things about your present self that I want you not to forget. Your language and your last name. You are going to be a first generation immigrant, my son. Now, you are ready for that," he said, but asked.

"Yes father, I am."

"You are a good boy."

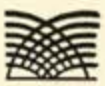
Just then Haji, the male servant, ushered a few of my friends into the living room and I quickly sat upright. "What's with you, man. We've been waiting a half hour for you. Do you want to come jogging with us or are you busy?" one of them said, in English.

I took my father's leave and told them to give me five minutes. My father never understood a word of what my friends said, he just listened. Sometimes I wish I could have a long conversation with my father, in English.

The day I left for America, my father wouldn't stop talking. I listened all day to a mixture of "lecture" and instructions. On the way to the airport I noticed that my father had quickened his tempo of talking and was beginning to make no sense. My neck ached due to the constant nodding. Soon it was time for the final goodbye. I touched my father's feet and then my mother's feet. They placed their hands on my head and blessed me. For a moment the three of us just stood there and looked at each other uncomfortably. I saw my father's hand held out and I shook it firmly. Just before I turned to leave I heard him say the only two words in English I have ever heard him say.

"Be cool," he said perfectly.

I hugged him softly, as hard as I could and headed for the terminal.



## SPRING MORNING

We see on the left the spinning vines,
thin, fruitless elongations
in the razor dawn;
floating raven golden above
dives suddenly–
flickering tail-torsion
sutures the wound behind
in the still-stiff air–
and turning, dips home toward the far horizon . . .
mind sees, follows–
but always
shallow breaths,
feet and fingertips,
the body
(severed)
wonders cold and wingless.

---

## PUTTING YOU OUT

Boxed-up on my backporch is, my love,
your picture along with the rest of
your things. I'm putting you out,
all of you.

I have wiped away your fingerprints
and vacuumed up your dust and when
the rains come your footprints on my
path will wash away clean. I'm putting
you out, all of you.

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## GOLD AND PURPLE

Daffodils and Irises over your breast.
How suitable the gold, so precious.
And purple in your loyalty to your
creator who has seen fit to relieve
you from your labors.

---

## NAMES, PERFECT EXAMPLES

Everyone said he was immaculate;
the class valedictorian "ideal,"
summa cum laude, and all.

After college he explained terra incognita,
tamed numbers in virgin soil, emptied
palpable gourd on mute corporations.

All the board agreed his whole flawless:
impeccable reports, spotless record.
But, they were satisfied he held no title.

His mother said he was a happy child,
gazing on damp books from alert cell.
In all, his habits were perfect.

To his wife he was a loving father,
glassy-eyed on unfathomable daughters:
proofs of love paid in property's tears.

Everyone concurred his glazed look visionary,
exemplar rhapsodizing witless air.
He was a paragon, a furled standard.

In sum, the quantity of his life was known:
everyone said he was immaculate
as they lifted him into his clean black hole.

---

## NIGHT FISHING

My coat, suddenly untattered, revealing:
seams unbalanced, threadless perhaps.
A trout, silver pearl, sees a red berry,
swims past it. Elapsing seconds jerk. Target-eyes
immersed, as though Nature has no memory, timeless
and irresolute. A glimmer shines iridescent from an
untouched recess, water-image. On the bank
of the river I kneel, shoes strung above
a fire drying. A white owl flashes across the light,
I toss pebbles in the air to feed the bats.

---

## HURLY-BURLY

Here, on a heath, night's hags
thunder double toil, dagger's blood
runs the charmèd pilot's thumb.
Graymalkin, unsexed, galled milk,
sleepwalks in blank ambition.
In lightning golden blood rains
from Birnam Wood to dark Dunsinane.
He feasts upon the lizard's root,
blindworm of his means, unnatural love.
In rain, he struts and frets
black-veined battles,
prophesies of a brief player,
pale Hecate's brother, black candle.
He rules at fiery portcullis,
murders air with raves of nothingness,
scalds his milk with fury.

---

## THRESHOLD

I wore your gold, my memory green.
At evening banquets we were formal:
our white wine glasses kissed.
You walked out of our dark tower,
into streets, papers in hands,
silent crystals rising in your face.
You looked at the roses,
and could not think of my name.
All summer, I read alone.
Your eyes were full of rooms;
doors locking behind you.
Later, at the theater, the hero stepped
forward, rode away into the pass.

---

## ET MON CHIEN GEORGE

We dined in the loft
on tea and Monte Cristos.
You chewed your filter,
sallow light drooped, hung.
"Hi I'm Brandy– this is cotton-rayon–
inexpensive and easy to clean–"
The lilt of your voice, sotto voce,
sparkless hues deadened on crystal:
"Oh, and she said I should do a bunch
of them. Incorporate them. A novel maybe?"
"I'm Myrtle. This is an original
Pierre La Jaques Crêpe-de-chine
airy summer floral print (size seven),
et mon chien George."
"Why, that's a bitch," you said.
"I believe you're right," I replied.

---

## BRIEF CANDLE

First steps are uncertain: always small smiles,
limbs bending, trembling from inches gained.
Young shadow counting, etches the sundial;
each day's night darkening each day's sunrise.
The air is bright in our volatile hour,
unstable age, span of mortality–
Yet, a minute's division must waiver
making our term less than the ebbing sea.
The dissolution of the lurid clouds
drowns the horizon; seconds of our sleep
expire, sky perishes in murky shrouds;
we're summoned to an untimely release.
Our pause is as the wild crying peacock,
pale morning's incessant sip of hemlock.

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## INTO EVENING

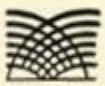
Ixcaquixtia, stumbling adobes, nightshade
streets; I, winding, living moments
of strichnine. Pariah dogs waiting, watching.
At a bus-stop a dead Indian stares at me;
a policia removes a ring, rides away. Flies
blow dark eyes. Tetihuacan, alkaloid soil,
smokes black-ashe swirls over Tuxpan
curling across a night gulf.
Thick flak-like clouds lay on a black bay.

---

## METROPOLE

At the station trains slam,
iron cracks ahead. Porters call.
Droned crowds wave. Voices drop
in thrashes of the passenger cars
as they click casting fast shadows
vanishing into dampness and dusk.

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**KAY BARRY**, formerly published in *Orpheus '78*, is here re-published in *Orpheus '83.*

**PHIL BOZEK**, associate professor of literature, teaches composition, communications, and literature at CSB. Phil's current research includes both studies in Magazine Advertising and studies in Spousal Abuse.

**KAREN CASEY** has a California Teaching Credential and a B.A. in Liberal Studies from CSB. Karen is also the mother of a ten-year-old daughter.

**DIANA CONNER**, a 1983 graduate of CSB with a B.A. from the Fine Arts, plans to enter the Master's program in Fine Arts at Claremont College.

**PHILIP COOKE**, a former contributor to *Orpheus*, is also re-published in this edition of *Orpheus '83.*

**BERTHA CROWE**, a graduate of CSB and a former contributor to *Orpheus*, is again enjoyed in this issue of *Orpheus.*

**R. DEATHERAGE**, a junior at CSB, is a part-time clerk.

**ROBIN FAUST**, currently living in Sacramento, has a B.A. in English Literature from CSB. Robin is seeking a position with a publishing company and plans to begin a Master's Writing Program at Sacramento State College.

**MARTA GARCIA** is a student-writer currently attending CSB.

**MELY GONZALEZ** is working on her B.A. in Romance Languages. Mely hopes to enter a doctorate program with an emphasis on French, Italian and Spanish.

**HUGH GRAHAM**, professor of History Emeritus, effective 9-1-83, was a Senior Fulbright Lecturer at Leningrad State Unviersity in the Fall of 1982. In the Spring of 1983 Professor Graham was in residence at the Harvard University Russian Research Institute. Professor Graham is currently a guest speaker at various symposiums at Harvard, Virginia State University, and University of North Carolina.

**MATT HIGHTOWER**, a consultant/Student Assistant in CSB's Computer Services Department, is a graduate of CSB with a B.S. in General Business Administration. Matt hopes to teach Business Administration at the college level.

**RUSSELL HUDDLESTON**, also a contributor to *Orpheus '78*, is re-published in this issue of *Orpheus '83*.

**CHERYL HUNTER**, employed by Kern High School District, is currently attending CSB's evening classes.

**KRIS KAPADIA** is currently a student attending CSB.

**GEORGIA KNUTSEN**, a graduate of CSB and a former contributor to *Orpheus*, is again featured in this issue of *Orpheus*.

**LISA M. LANE**, a history major, is currently the stage manager at the Dore Theatre.

**J. R. LEWIS** is a CSB graduate whose plans include seeking professional publication.

**DAVID LONGBOTTOM** is currently a student attending CSB.

**TOM MAY** is a graduate of CSB with a B.A. in English.

**FIDEL MARTINEZ**, a senior at CSB, is studying English Literature and Business. Fidel intends to seek a career in law.

**MICHAEL McCOY** has a B.A. in English Literature from Santa Barbara and an M.A. from Cal State College in Chico. Michael currently lives and teaches in Bakersfield.

**MARIANE McLUCAS**, a student-writer, is currently attending CSB.

**MIMI MERRILL**, a CSB graduate with a B.A. in English, is now pursuing an M.A. at CSB. Mimi hopes to teach composition at the college level.

**JUDY C. MOONEY**, also a student-writer, is currently attending CSB.

**BECKY NAPIER**, a graduate of CSB with a B.A. in Liberal Studies, is currently employed at Central School as a substitute teacher. Becky hopes to obtain her teaching credential in 1984.

**LITTLE ONE** is a psychology major currently attending CSB.

**TERRI OTT**, a senior at CSB, is an English/Communications major. Terri plans to pursue a career in the news media.

**BRIAN D. PARNELL**, a CSB graduate with a B.A. in English, is contemplating entering a Master's program in English at CSB.

**ANNE PASSEL**, professor of English Literature at CSB, is widely published in both creative and academic journals. Anne, after semi-retiring this year, plans to write for television.

**RHONDA PFLUGH** is a student-writer currently attending CSB.

**FELIZ RODRIQUEZ**, a senior majoring in Sociology, is seeking a career as a manager, or as a supervisor, in the social service area.

**UTE M. SAINE**, professor of Romance Languages at CSB, is an active creative writer communicating in several languages.

**KATHRYN ANN SHAW**, majoring in Liberal Studies at CSB, has also attended Langston University, Oklahoma. Kathryn plans to form her own maintenance business.

**M. L. SMITH** is studying English Literature at CSB in hopes of pursuing a teaching career.

**S. L. STELZNER**, a former contributor to *Orpheus '78*, is re-published in this issue of *Orpheus '83*.

**VIRGINIA WIRTZ**, a former contributor, is also included in this edition of *Orpheus*.

**HOWARD C. ZIMMERMAN**, professor of Education at CSB, is an active writer and a former contributor to *Orpheus*..

Terri Errea Lacher, a graduate student in Business Administration, is an amateur photographer and a Business Education instructor.

Katy Poh is a senior at CSB majoring in Fine Arts.