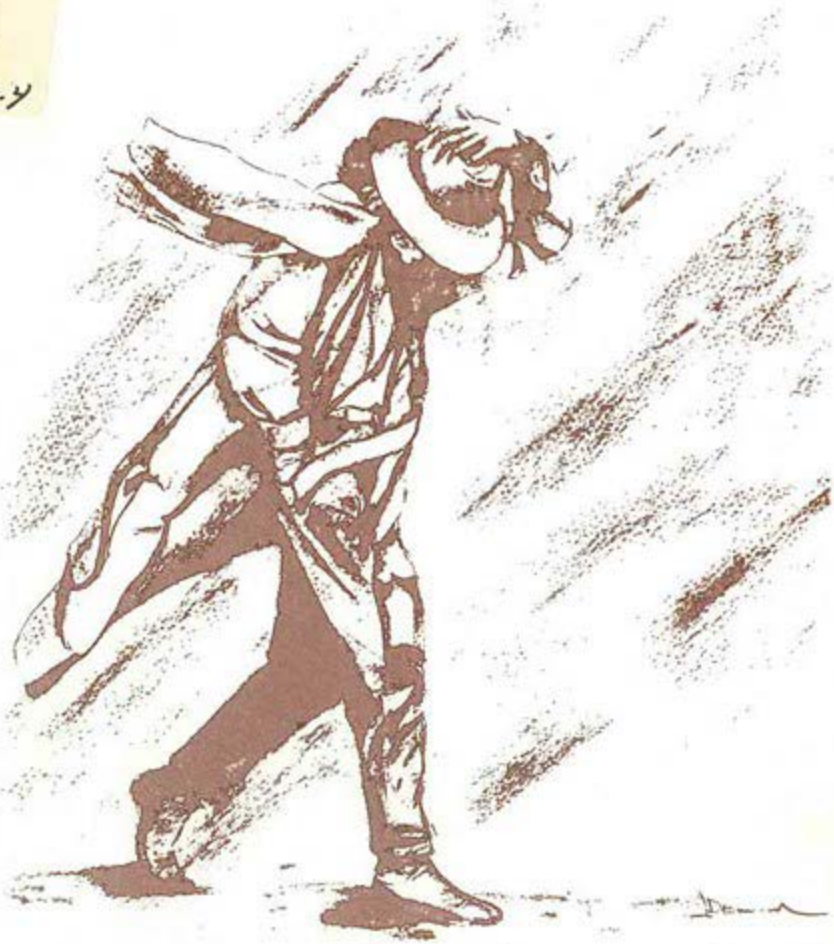
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Orpheus
A Literary Journal

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Orpheus
A Literary Journal

Solomon O. Iyasere, *Advisor*

R. Deatherage, *Editor*

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Orpheus **is an annual literary journal produced by the English Department of California State University, Bakersfield. All submissions should be typed, double-spaced, and on 8½" x 11" paper. There are no restrictions on subject matter, length, or theme; however, poems over one hundred lines are rarely published. Any use of profanity must be pivotal to the understanding of a work.**

At the present, those whose works are published in *Orpheus* **receive a current issue of the journal. In 1985, we hope to create a new remunerative policy whereby categories of excellence will be established and some published authors will receive cash prizes and honorable mentions.**

We give a special thanks for the production of *Orpheus* **to: Sabine Isquith, Joan Lewis, Vivian Cochneuer, Nancy O'Kane, David Koeth, and Sierra Printers.**

Orpheus
A Literary Journal

Editor's Notes 6

Mimi Merrill 7

Dolores Machuca 11

Jane Vontz 13

Joel Sherman 15

Lisa Lane 24

Troy Andrews 27

Charles Morrison 30

Fidel Martinez 32

Jamy Garcia-Persel 37

Ana Gong 41

Laurie Vondriska (Straham) 43

Laurie Clark 47
Kristen Muller 49
Helen Worley 52
Maria Moniz 54
Mary Allen 58
Raymond Stimson 62
Ajaykumar Patel 64
Nina Clifton 65
Lee Charles 66
C. Wilson 67
Jim Duffield 72
Joanie Oreolt 73
Chaukim Dinh 74
Anne-Marie Dull 77
Steven Ross 82
Dennis Brenneman 83
Ute Saine 84
Tina Frisbee 92
Philip Thompson 95
Bill Anderson 96
Mely González 100
Lee Charles 105
H. Z. 106



This issue of *Orpheus* is dedicated to the memory of
Dr. Daniel Jones, Professor Emeritus

Editor's Notes

This is the twelfth issue of *Orpheus*. Because it is young, it is always changing; it is shaped and then it is reshaped. Hopefully, in this process of shaping, a renewal of creativity takes place. In this isssue, there are thirty-four authors who commingle shaping the form of this year's journal.

Professor Jeffry Spencer has inspired many creative writers at C.S.B. This issue features some of the short stories which were envisioned in Professor Spencer's creative writing class. Without such forums of creativity, there would be little impetus for people to share ideas with one another.

All of the writers in this issue are stimulating and original; each tells a story of imagination and humanity. The "politique tique tique tique" of Ute Saine's *Après La Fête* is sobering. Fidel Martinez presents a haunting image in the denouement of *The Black Cat. Who Cared For Methuselah*, by Joel Sherman, is a tale of care and sanity.

Again, each writer who is included in this edition of *Orpheus* shares a portion of responsibility for its final shape and form. As people, perhaps the best which we can do is to attempt to understand one another; as writers, perhaps the best which we can achieve is to inspire one another. Inspiration is a form of celebration of life and as writers we must celebrate this issue of *Orpheus*.



Mimi Merrill

". . . Like White Elephants"

Damn fog," she muttered.

The islands across the channel rode the horizon like giant whales bobbing in the morning fog. Cassie pressed her nose against the bedroom window. Her breath formed a steamy halo on the cold glass, blurring her view of the sea. Below the house, tight against the fence rails that held back the tide, she could see a blanket of fleshy ice plant, its neon flowers purpling the sandy grey beach.

"Damn fog," she repeated.

She turned and hurried back into the warmth of the room, rubbing sleep from her eyes. In the mirrored tiles that spanned the east wall, the image of her thin, tanned body mimicked her motions. She crawled under the covers on the giant bed and closed her eyes. Shivering, she waited to see if sleep would return. No. She was awake. She sat up abruptly, pulling the quilted cover around her naked body.

On the walnut table beside the bed were a clock, a wood-and-chrome gooseneck lamp, an opened book folded face down, and a thin silver frame that enclosed the picture of a man in his early forties. She reached for the picture.

"Damn you, too." Her fingers traced the man's features, the chilled layer of protective glass warming beneath her touch.

The clock chimed. Eleven o'clock. Time to get up. She looked toward the window. The fog swirled by in thin layers that parted to let the weak morning sun shine through. The fog should lift by noon. She would get up and shower, then get ready the picnic basket.

Throwing aside the covers, Cassie hurried across the room, glancing at herself again in the mirrored wall's reflection. She patted her still nearly flat stomach.

"Not too bad, old girl, not too bad."

As the hot water pelted her body, she leaned her forehead against the tiled walls of the shower, then straightened and began to rub black Spanish castile soap onto her soft skin.

"Don't make a production out of picnics," he had said once. "I can't stand

people who think a picnic means forks and knives and plates and civilization. A loaf of bread, some good beer, a few cheeses and some fruit, and who could ask for anything more?"

"And thou beside me?" She had reached across the table at the bar where they sat sipping margaritas. His hand had met hers.

"And thou beside me. Yes. I love you, Cassie."

She sighed, remembering. Slowly, she lathered her small erect breasts, then let the water rinse her.

When they made love, his lips would return again and again to the pink oreoles. Sometimes, as he climaxed, he would pinch and twist her nipples until her responding cries became a moaning mixture of passion and pain.

She sighed again. Time to get ready. Shopping to be done.

Back from the store, she waited for him to arrive. First she boiled eggs and then she carefully cracked them open. Smooth and white, yellow-centered, without blemish, into a bowl. When there were six, Cassie cut them into even halves. She scooped the firm yellow yolks away, laying the white half-ovals onto a flat platter with red dragons coiled on its bottom. White porcelain with red dragons, a souvenir of that first trek through Chinatown. Long enough ago that the passion had begun to give way to routine. But today's picnic would be followed by lovemaking in the cave she had discovered a mile down the beach. He liked to make love in odd placees. Passion could be rekindled.

Cassie licked the egg from her finger and gently touched her suddenly erect nippes. She shivered. The clock in the bedroom faintly chimed a single lonely sound. He was late. Never mind. Finish deviling the eggs. Everything else was already in the picnic basket on the balcony. His favorite beer. The makings for stout-and-ale, should he prefer that mixture today. A crusty french bread, fresh from the baker's oven just an hour before. Two wedges of cheese, one a crumbling blue-molded roquefort, the other a black-rinded New York white cheddar. Finger foods, he called them.

She heard his car at last and went to meet him at the door. As her arms reached out to him, he placed a slim white florist's box between them. She hesitated, then moved back into the room, the box held like a child in her cradling embrace. She thought about the tiny bouquet of unboxed violets he had pushed into her hands at their first picnic.

"A penny, Cassie."

"What?"

"A penny!" He was watching her. "You know, for your thoughts."

"I was thinking about our first picnic."

He took the box from her. "Here, let's open it."

She watched silently as the box came open. He threw ribbons and white tissue carelessly aside and held out the opened box for her to view.

"There!" His voice asked approval.

"Oh. Oh, yes. They're so lovely." A dozen milky roses sent out-of-season musk into the room. She thought again of the violets that they had crushed between them as they embraced at that other picnic.

"I wanted to bring them myself. Get a vase, why don't you?"

"Yes." She paused. "In a minute. Let's go out on the balcony first. The basket's waiting, and we can have a beer before we go." She walked quickly to the sliding doors, opened them, and went out as his voice sounded behind her.

"Cassie?"

He followed her onto the balcony. She was already sitting, motioning him to the other rattan chair near the table. He hesitated, then sat. She stared silently at the tabletop.

"Cassie, I can't stay. I have to go back to town."

"I thought maybe you did, you know."

He tapped his fingers in a jerky rhythm against the bamboo surface of the table.

"I wish you wouldn't say 'You know' all the time." He stood and moved to the end of the balcony. Below, the ocean lapped at cliffs of red sandstone. In the distance, the curves of the Channel Islands wavered in and out of visibility as the lingering fog wrapped its embrace around the jagged line of the horizon.

"I'm sorry." She looked out to sea.

"Shit! That's as bad as 'You know'!"

She sighed. "I'm not going to nag you about it, you . . . about anything, I mean. I'm not going to bitch or anything."

"All I want is for you to be reasonable, Cassie."

She looked at him and then she turned her head away to stare instead into the window that reflected her face, his silhouette, the balcony railing.

"'Hills like white elephants.'"

"What?"

"'Hills like white elephants.' The Hemingway story. You know. The one where this guy and this girl sit around waiting for a train, and she says the hills look like white elephants. What they're really talking about never gets said. You know."

He twitched his head. "It would only be for a while," he said. "It would only be until she gets used to the idea. She'll be fine later. It's just that she's not used to the idea yet."

"Sure. I know."

"Shit! Be reasonable! It isn't as if I'm going to move my things out or anything like that!"

She reached into the picnic basket beneath the table. "Would you rather have a Heineken's or a half-and-half?"

"I don't want anything. I just want you to be reasonable."

She continued to rummage in the basket. The ocean below the balcony

slapped occasional waves in muffled rhythmic thumps against the worn sandstone. A phone sounded inside. She looked away as he jumped to his feet and walked into the house with quick firm steps. She pulled a Guinness from its wickered shelter and continued her search in the basket until she found a stout and a bottle opener. Snapping off the caps, she poured first the ale, then the stout, into the two tall glasses that waited on the table.

He came through the sliding door and stood just outside it, his forehead wrinkled in a frown. She picked up the two glasses and walked over to him. Without speaking, she held out the glass in her right hand.

"I told you I didn't want any. I have to drive into town soon and I don't want to be sleepy."

"Was that her?"

"Yes."

"I thought so."

"She was worried because I said I'd be there around two."

"You didn't used to care when she worried."

"Damn it, Cassie! I thought you weren't going to nag!"

She sighed. "'Hills like white elephants.'"

"What?"

"Never mind."

"Will you be all right?"

"Sure. Go on. She's waiting and worrying."

"Damn it!"

"No. I mean it. Go on. I'll wait for you."

He walked to the balcony railing and looked out to sea, lifting his hand to shade his eyes. "I might have to stay the night." His back was turned to her.

"Sure," she said. "I know."

"It will just be for a while. Just until she gets used to the idea. You know what a baby she is."

"I know."

"Well," he said. "Go on."

"Will you be okay?"

"Go on."

He retreated into the house. She turned and walked to the balcony railing, drinking from first one glass and then the other. The sound of a door closing came from the house. She emptied both glasses and threw first one and then the other over the railing. As the glasses tumbled through the air, a car motor whirred its way down the hill.

"'Hills like white elephants,'" she said.

Dolores Machuca

Time by the Fields

Since the fall
I have watched them
Snake up the wire
Slowly and calm.

Just like a watch
Time has been kept
By their growth
And by their change.

Now, at last tall
Green, they say
Soon it will all
Be over, soon.

You know, they keep
good time while they wait
for human hands
To rape their fruit.

Ode to Borinquen

Memories of spicy delights
Mingled with the stale odor
Of mustard-painted papers,
Crumpled cones stained of lime,
Tamarindo, Frambuesa;
And the salty veil of that rich port
Still lingers dear.

Oh, such a Treasure Island
Born from curiosity,
Nursed through shady bronze,
A touch of Spain and ebony,
Floating free, . . . free
As a paper vessel drifts
Void of rudder or sail.

Bread, Land, Liberty
Yes, . . . Liberty is sought;
Deliverance from tyrannies' embrace.
Boriquen, the waves kiss
your long-lost sons.
"Precious damsel" your soul
Is lost in Borinquen.

Jane Vontz

The Room

This small and pink
little being
stores the world's history
in each tiny cell,
and yet with every new
and clever cry
I feel time begin again.

at night
the last flutter of her eyes
signals the world to sleep,
for tomorrow
Emily will be ready
once more
to start her life anew.

Events

After two years
of you knocking on doors for God
and me just living
(for lack of something better to do)
We are together again
But I sill feel
the distance of Peru
between us
(though you sit an inch away)
And my pictures lie
that only two years have passed
Because your eyes tell me
it must have been
one hundred.

Joel H. Sherman

Who Cared for Methuselah?

She had to tell him *tonight.*

Richard sat on the veranda, stretched out in a lounge chair, the last of the sun gilding his silver hair. A breeze stirred across the hillside, rustling the leaves in the ash tree, carrying the scents of roses, cut grass, star jasmine and gardenias. She heard the hiss of his pipe and watched a haze of blue smoke rise around his face, carried slowly away by the wind.

Jeanette stood for a time at the screen door, delaying her entrance as though to extend the peace which had settled over the house since Joseph had left for college. Absently, she listened for the dull throb of his stereo, but heard nothing beyond the slow settling of beams and rafters, the soft whine of the refrigerator. In three short months without the boy, they had returned to newlyweds. She thought of moonlight swims in the pool, making love slowly in the warm water. There were long strolls down tree-lined streets, hand in hand.

But, she had to tell him tonight.

Jeanette steeled her nerves and pushed open the screen door.

"It's a beautiful sunset," he said as he turned. His dark eyes sparkled. "Only needed you to make it perfect."

"You fool," she said quietly.

"Really." He held out his hand to take hers.

Jeanette sat in the chair next to his, curling herself onto the seat with her knees hugged against her breasts.

"Joseph called today," Jeanette said.

"Oh? Everything okay?"

"Fine. He needs money for books."

"Send it." He nodded, sucked his pipe, exhaled smoke.

"I did." The typical silence prevailed. The sun faded orange to red, a crimson haze spreading on the horizon. The gray shadows of dusk gathered around them. Below the veranda, the hillside dropped steeply. The neighboring pool, empty like the house, was a pale opal of blue in the weed-studded yard. A few cars moved on the twisting streets. Farther in the distance, streetlights winked on in the Los Angeles basin. Stop lights gained prominence in the dark.

"Margie called," she said finally.

He grunted.

"She's having trouble with Mother."

Richard drew a breath, letting it drain slowly through his teeth. "She's always trouble."

"Don't say that." She did not look at him, heard him knock his pipe into the ash tray, saw the glowing embers.

"See," he laughed quietly. "See what I mean?"

"Margie is really having problems." She looked at her hands, frowning at her age spots.

"What's wrong?"

"Mother won't stay in the house. She wanders away."

"Running from the Nazis again?"

"Who knows? She doesn't speak much anymore." She coughed lightly. "Margie says she can't handle her anymore. She wants to put Mother in a rest home."

"It's the best thing," he said, his voice soft.

Jeanette stared at him. "She's my Mother."

Richard stood and walked to the edge of the veranda. He twisted a vine runner around the black wrought-iron, his big hands moving slowly. "She's sick, Jeanette."

"I know." She breathed deeply. "I told Margie to bring her here."

"What?"

"We have the room. She won't be any trouble."

"Jeanette—"

She recognized the tone in his voice and could feel an argument building. "I don't want to discuss it. I just wanted you to know."

He stretched, knitted his hands behind his head. "You do what you want. You will anyway."

"Fine." Jeanette stood, wrapped one arm around his thick waist and hugged him lightly. "I'm going inside. Coming?"

"In a while," Richard said, still looking out over the sparking city.

Jeanette went inside the house, closing the screen door slowly. She turned back, saw how the moon moved up from the horizon, casting silver across the veranda, framing the man where he stood motionless at the railing.

The woman came and brought her terror. The house reeked of her camphor smell, shivered under blackouts and the imaginary slap of hobnailed boots. Jeanette spent her time giving baths and dispensing medications, searching for the woman in the dark corners of the house.

Jeanette came out onto the veranda in silence.

Fall had brought lingering heat. A red haze of smog painted the sunset, burned the eyes and throat. Richard was hunched in his chair. Smoke from his pipe curled above his head. The shadow from the ash tree cut stark fingers of darkness across the stones. He jumped slightly when she began massaging the tension in his shoulders.

"Still hurt?"

"A little." He dragged on his pipe, bowl reflecting red into his eyes. "Where's your mother?"

"Asleep. I gave her a tranquilizer." She felt his flesh knot where she touched the spreading bruise.

"What about the bathroom door?"

She squeezed his muscles automatically. "I'll call someone to fix it."

"What about her?"

"A few more days. Margie will take her in just a few more days."

"*Stop it, Jeanette*!"

"Stop what?" She continued the massage.

"Stop talking about Margie. She's not coming."

"Is that so bad?"

"I don't know, Jeanette. It depends on how well you like breaking in doors."

"She was scared." Jeanette dug her fingers into his flesh. "She wasn't doing anything."

He shrugged her hands away and turned toward her. "Damn it! She could have been committing suicide."

"Mother wouldn't do that."

"No, I don't think your mother would. But that woman is not your mother ... not any more."

"What do I do? Put her in a home?"

"Maybe." He shook his head. "Hell, I don't know. But you can't control her."

"Let's just put her to sleep. It would be cheaper." She fought her tears.

He rubbed his jaw, stood and walked to her side. "I don't want to see your mother die. Christ, I'm trying to avoid that. She's going to wander out in the street and get hit by a car or something ... some damned accident. You can't watch her constantly."

"But she'll *die* in a home."

"You can't do it." He narrowed his eyes. "I won't allow it."

She backed away from him, away from his tightened jaw and pale face.

"God!" Jeanette said loudly as she turned and jerked the door open. "God, you're selfish!"

She let the door slam, hurried upstairs without looking back, knowing he would be standing immobile in the dusk, face reddening. She held the sobs in her throat, wiping at her tears, and did not let her rage vent until the bedrooom

door was closed and locked.

Christmas brought lean Joseph and wedged him into the house. There was peace for the sake of the boy. They gave him new skis on Christmas morning. The tree was green and lightly flocked, shining with ornaments. Jeanette hugged the boy close. Richard snapped the shutter on his camera. Grandma urinated placidly on the couch.

"I'll get a towel," Joseph said, hurrying from the room. Richard cursed and stalked out. Grandma moved to the other end of the sofa. Jeanette managed to keep from crying.

Later, Jeanette sat at the edge of the veranda where the hillside sheared steeply away. The empty pool in the yard below gazed up at her like a hollow eye. Faintly, she heard the door and the light step of her son.

"Mother?" He stood behind her.

"Yes?"

"Are you okay?"

She glanced over one shoulder, saw the love in his face. "Just tired."

Joseph brought a chair close, sitting near her in an arc of afternoon sunlight. she reached out and touched his hand.

"Having a good vacation?"

He squinted his eyes into the sun. "Just great. It's good to have everyone here, especially Grandma."

Jeanette tensed, concentrating for a moment on the pale oval of the empty pool, deep color carved by shadow.

Joseph cleared his throat. "I mean ... it must be tough, but I'm glad she's not in a home."

"I couldn't do that."

"It takes someone special to keep her." He stretched, his joints popping. "I've visited rest homes for some of my classes." He shook his head. "They're terrible places, Mom."

"Are they really *that* bad?"

"Mother, they're a place to die. Nothing more. Old people sitting around, lonesome, helpless, senile. No matter how nice the surroundings, how competent the staff, how efficient the services, they can't provide love."

She chewed her lips, studying the knowledge in his face. The sun was suddenly too hot. Joseph rose from the chair, bent and kissed her cheek. Her lips were soft.

"I wanted to thank you ... for Grandma. And I wanted to make you a promise, you'll always have a place with me. Always."

Jeanette tasted blood on her lips. Joseph did not notice. He turned and left the veranda. She sat and watched the sun slide into the horizon. Tears dampened her cheeks. She did not know whether they were tears of grief or fear.

Jeanette liked to walk after the rain. Scattered puddles reflected the sky, pockets of color in the road. The dust settled, smog faded. There was renewal with the rain. She left her mother in the care of her prescriptions and walked up the street into the greening foothills.

It was twilight when she returned, the sun a red sphere above the surface of the rumpled mountains. Jeanette went around the side of the house, down the ivy-choked walkway where leaves and vines trailed over the chain fence and up the side of the chimney. A cloud of smoke hung above Richard where he sat on the veranda. She saw him, leaning slightly forward on his elbows, and stalked him playfully. Her hands darted out to tousle his hair.

"Surprise," she laughed.

Richard turned stiffly. His face was hard. A livid bruise swelled one eye until it closed. Dried blood crusted on his lips and cheek. Scratches traced his neck. Spit oozed from one corner of his fattened mouth. She stepped back as he rose carefully from the chair.

"What happened?"

"She tried to kill me." His words were quiet thunder. She could tell he was struggling to control his temper.

"Why?"

"I don't know" He shook his head slowly. "Damn it, Jeanette. I really don't. When I got home from work, Sullivan called from up the street. Mother was hiding in his kids' playhouse and he wanted me to come and get her." He clenched his fists, muscles twitching in his forearms.

"I went up there. Your mother wouldn't listen to me. She didn't know me. 'Nazi scum,' she called me. And other things, with Sullivan standing right there. He wanted to call an ambulance, but I wouldn't let him. I thought I could take care of it. It was like capturing an animal." He watched her quietly for a moment. "You'd better pack her things."

"No."

"There's blood all over that playhouse," he said evenly. "My blood."

"She didn't . . ."

His temper shattered. "God damn it, woman! You think I did this to myself? *Do you*?"

"It won't happen again."

"Damn right. It won't ever happen again."

She moved toward the door, under the shadow cast by the black and white striped awning. "I can't, Richard. She'll *die*!"

Richard was motionless, a tear moving slowly down one lined cheek. "Either way," he said, his voice hollow. "Either way, something dies." He walked slowly off the veranda, his shoulders stooped, muscles slumped. Jeanette heard the front door, followed by the roar of an engine and the squeal of tires on the street.

She knew he had not even stopped to pack.

The house was a quiet tomb, two phantoms drifting through a limbo of meals and sleep. Her days were a series of interlocking tasks, like pieces of an enormous puzzle which she was too near to view completely. Mother was the matrix.

She accepted his weekly offering of money — crisp bills in an envelope addressed in Richard's hand, unaccompanied by any letter. She cleaned urine, eased terror, and locked doors. It was hard to sleep in an empty bed.

Sometimes, she sat on the veranda, waiting for the sound of an engine and his heavy step on the flagstones. She adjusted to the silence. Life became a trim routine which she handled with sober delicacy. Mother thrived. Jeanette existed. The patio gathered dust with the night breezes, ash tree rattling softly, new leaves crescents of silver in the moonlight.

When he finally came, she was taken by surprise.

"Hello," Richard said, his voice startling her. She had not heard the car or his steps on the stones.

"I didn't mean to make you jump." He stood awkwardly, his big hands shoved into his pockets. "Just thought I'd see how you were doing."

"I'm okay." She studied his face in the shadows, drawn and etched with a faint stubble of beard.

He did not move closer, maintaining his distance. "Is there anything you need?"

She turned away from him quickly, biting her lips. Los Angeles burned and flickered with electrical brilliance. A tumble of blue-black clouds advanced on the wind, shading the stars. The smell of rain was strong.

"Jeanette?" He coughed. "I'm trying to be sorry."

"I know." She heard him walk toward her chair, heard the gentle rush of his breathing. His hand found hers and enclosed it with warmth.

"This won't change anything," she said finally.

"I know."

"So?"

He smiled and she thought it good to see his smile. "We'll do it your way." Richard held her face, looking into her eyes. His kiss was soft as he helped her from the chair. She took his arm and they entered the silent house.

The storm descended late in the evening. It came with a maddening rush of wind. The buffeting air wrenched the ash tree, twisting the limbs until they groaned and popped like breaking joints. The clouds rolled, flowing into the Los Angeles basin, swollen with moisture. Thunder rumbled distantly.

On the veranda, the first drops of rain fell, globules of water spattering the stones. Lightening flickered, illuminating the house and yard, freezing the city

as if for a celestial camera. The storm exploded, drowning the valley.

Jeanette stood in the window and watched the rain descend. Rivers of water ran in the gutters. Pools formed between the stones, surfaces broken by the tumbling drops. The wind clutched the ash, snapping the thick branches twenty feet up from the ground. The limbs dropped, scraping the side of the house and plunging through a downstairs window.

Richard struggled from bed at the sound of shattering glass, scrambling to find his robe. Jeanette opened the door and hurried down the stairs, hearing his footsteps as he followed. The room was thick with darkness, wind pushing the curtains back from the broken french doors. Lightning flashed, revealing a figure, huddled with age, moving away from them across the veranda, plunging into the storm. It was Mother, her hair wet and stringing in the wind as she vanished over the lip of the hillside.

The rain lashed at Jeanette as she followed him outside, across the slick stones, The hillside was empty. Richard traversed the bank. Jeanette felt the oozing mud suck at her feet and struggled to keep her footing. Richard slipped and fell. He slid into the next yard, tumbling down the slope. When she reached him, his robe was laced with grit and mud, hands bleeding and cut. He staggered to his feet.

"Mother!" Jeanette shouted into the night. She heard nothing through the storm, not even the faint return of an echo. She stumbled in her haste, dropping to her knees on a flat concrete surface. Angling out her arm to stop a fall, she touched only emptiness, almost toppling over into the darkness. Richard clutched her shoulder, pulling her back. Lightning crackled between the clouds. Thunder boomed. For an instant, she saw their location — perched at the edge of the empty swimming pool, leaning out over the deep end.

A figure was sprawled unmoving against the puddled bottom

The evening after the funeral, the Santa Ana winds pushed out of the northern deserts, bringing warmth, a gentle promise of summer across the Los Angles basin. Jeanette and Richard sat on the veranda, letting the heat release the tension. The sky was a royal blue bowl, lit by a new crescent moon high in one corner of the heavens. The lights of the city stretched away like a lumninous sea sparkling on the horizon.

She glanced at the ash tree. The broken limb had been removed. There was an unnatural space in the green leaves, a wound filled with blue sky. She felt tears rising in her eyes.

"Damn," she said. "I should have listened to you."

"No. You couldn't have known." His face was tired.

"Couldn't I?"

"No." The man shook his head firmly. He smiled, a faint, sad bending of his lips. "You gave it a damn good try. You couldn't have done anything more."

His arm slipped around her shoulders and pulled her close. "Remember that."

"Yeah," she said, tears flowing freely down her face.

The warm Santa Ana curled around them. It rattled the remaining branches of the ash tree. The lights of Los Angeles kindled like a million fires in the rolling softness of the hills. Gilded traffic slipped along the foothill freeway.

Jeanette clung tightly to him, her face buried in his chest, while the warm spring night, scents of flowers and cut grass, surrounded the silent veranda.





Pamella Conilogue

Lisa M. Lane

Anvil Clouds & Thunderheads

lightning flashed too silently
like a 25 mile long
flourescent tube in the clouds
about to burn out
and I said
as thunder rolled
around the rivered valley
it looks like
God is taking pictures
and you said
as the strobes reflected
off clouds and hills
then we're in trouble
if God's taking
that many pictures
he's making a memory

Redoubt

Because I know me
I would know if I were you
that my defensive stance behind this typewriter
means I am unsure
and that the constant clacking
means not that I am bursting with creative energy
for contentment does not require poetry
but that I'm plastering my soul on a piece of paper
because I cannot give it to you
you cannot comprehend it
love it from your own
or shape it into a pattern
and I would worry about losing me
to Mead 8½ x 11 standard bond

Poette

I work within tiny images
scowling flame and empty ice
trying to engrave my soul on mortal paper
they are frames burned into the clouds
bells clanging long and untrue
my pencil scorching the air
cooled by the breeze from the goddess' lips
I become an archangel
within mosaic pictures that melt between the tiles

Troy Andrews

Just Buzz If You Want Me

Nurse Reynolds looked up from her crossword puzzle at the flashing red light on the panel in front of her.

"It's 405 buzzing, Zanita; you want to take this one? Last time I checked on him he seemed a little disappointed that I wasn't you."

"Sure," answered Zanita from inside the nurse's station. "I promised to play a game of chess with him if it was slow enough — do you mind?"

"No, go ahead . . . it couldn't be much slower around here, especially since you finished all of those reports so quickly. I think you deserve a little break. Have a good time. I'll buzz if I need you."

Zanita glanced at herself in the mirror as she left the nurse's lounge. Once she had gotten a few steps away from the station she unbuttoned the top two buttons of her uniform. She laughed to herself as she neared the door to room 405. Those old nurses were always so easy to fool; just do a little extra work for them and you could get away with anything. And getting away with things like she had planned for tonight with 405 was what kept her in the nursing business.

"That was a pretty short game." Nurse Reynolds called as she saw Zanita come back towards the station, "You must have won though; you look pretty pleased with yourself."

"He wasn't as good as he had said he was so he didn't last very long," answered Zanita pouring herself a glass of water from the cooler. "It was still fun though . . . he has challenged me to a rematch tomorrow night. He promised to hold out a little longer next time so I said okay. He's asleep now —I wore him out. Is there anything else I can do for you?

"Well, Mr. Bell in 410 is having trouble sleeping. He asked if we would bring down a sleeping pill. Would you mind running that down to him?"

"Oh I'd love to. Maybe I will sit and talk to him until it takes effect so he can relax."

"My goodness Zanita, I can't remember ever in all my years as a nurse someone who enjoys this job as much as you do!"

"I just enjoy making people feel good."

Zanita headed for 410. "What a night this is turning out to be," she thought

to herself as she walked, "Yes, Nurse Reynolds, I do so enjoy working your station."

"Hello, Mr. Bell. Having a little trouble sleeping?"

"Oh, hello Nurse Rhodes, I wasn't expecting you. Did you bring me a sleeping pill?"

"Please, call me Zanita," she said as she sat on the edge of his bed. "I brought you something even better than a sleeping pill."

Zanita pulled back the blanket and slowly reached underneath Mr. Bell's gown.

"Well he is sleeping soundly now." Zanita informed Nurse Reynolds upon her return to the station.

"That's great, Zanita. I guess it is about time for you to get off, isn't it?"

"Yes . . . so it is. See you tomorrow night, Mrs. Reynolds."

"Tonight may turn out to be just as good as last night." Zanita thought as she slipped her white dress over her head. She sometimes wished that her uniforms were not so ugly, but on those occasionsd she always realized that with her body she really didn't need to worry. The patients didn't seem to notice and that was what was important. She sat on the edge of the bed to put her stockings on and felt James turn over.

"Thank you, Zanita," he said groggily. "I feel so much better. You are definitely the best nurse I have ever had."

"Why thank you James! Making you feel better is just what I'm here for. Just buzz if you want me to come back later."

This is what nursing is all about, she thought to herself. She knew that he would not call later; they always seemed to sleep so soundly after she left them. She was sure that it must be all those drugs their doctors prescribed. Happily, there were plenty of other patients.

"How is James coming along?" asked Nurse Reynolds as Zanita came back to the station. "I'm sure he is thriving on all of that personal attention that you are giving him."

"Oh he is doing very well . . . . He is so cooperative and eager to please. I don't mind working with him at all. Would you like for me to bathe Tim in 412 again tonight?"

"Really, Zanita, I can't remember when I have had to give anyone a bath since you came here. I am starting to feel a little guilty."

"Now, Miss Reynolds, that's silly. Just last week you bathed Mrs. Henderson in 420. And besides, I know how you feel about bathing men. I am glad to be able to do it for you."

"Well, if you insist, Zanita. When you come back, I have a surprise for you."

Zanita bent down to kiss Tim goodbye. "There you are, Tim, all clean. But

you really must stop moaning like that — if you can't learn to behave yourself, I'm going to have to send Nurse Reynolds in to bathe you."

"I'll do my best, Zanita."

"I'll be looking forward to that. See you tomorrow night, Tim."

Zanita headed back towards the nurses' station. She was a little worried about what Nurse Reynolds' surprise would be. That had been an awful close call two nights ago. She wasn't sure that Nurse Reynolds had believed that story about her looking for a rash on Dean's thigh. If she had just waited one more minute before barging into the room, everything would have been okay.

"Zanita, you know that I think the world of you and would hate to lose your help around here."

Oh no, she thought, here it comes.

"But, as you may know, this hospital also runs the clinics at a few of the colleges around here. Well, a position has just been vacated at one of those clinics. It would be quite a change from what you are used to; you would be required to live on the campus, and most of the time you would be the only person there. It wouldn't be as exciting as it is here. Mostly you would be dealing with athletic injuries and what have you, but the pay is very good and I think it would be a good move for you career-wise. Mr. Edminson asked if I knew of any nurses that could handle it, and you were the first one I thought of."

"Which school is it?" asked Zanita.

"Well now, Zanita, this might not appeal to you right at first, but I think you would learn to like it in time. It is a small private school called Thompson College. I'm sure that a contemporary, young woman like you might find this a little old fashioned, but Thompson is a private school for men only."

Zanita tried to remain calm.

"Thank you very much for your vote of confidence, Nurse Reynolds," she said. "I would be honored to take the position if you think I can handle it."

"I think you are making a wise decision, Zanita. I hope that you won't be too bored."

"Somehow, Nurse Reynolds, I think that I will find something to keep me occupied."

"I do believe you will Zanita . . . I do believe you will."

Charles Morrison

Want

Spring,
With its full-breasted Sun
Rising each day so gently,
  Rewards those hungry teemings
  Who think not now
  About their Summer weanings.

Greedy with youth
  They hail,
    Before their time,
    Rewards of Autumn.

They hold no Winter dread about themselves
Who, nonetheless, must rest in Winter's holding.

Traffic

A statue at the corner of a street?
  It seemed so.
Then the lights went out, could be all over town;
  But left that statue standing, a silhouette
Oddly haloed behind the sockets of my eyes.

  Of course it faded there,
  Poised between thought and vision,
  Remaining still.

Then headlights:
  Motor—Door—Murmur—Door—Motor;
Noise to no noise; headlights to no light.

  Then, bright lights threaded
  Together on empty symbols
  Lighted that empty corner
  That empty street.

Fidel Martinez

The Black Cat

Mr. Poe would have laughed, or should I say snicker. I do. Sitting here in my garage in the dark, allowing the stench to raise my passions. Tammy never would have laughed. Neither would have Michael, that beautiful smooth child. Nevertheless I sit here watching and experiencing my sensual pleasures to their fullest.

My young next door neighbors, Tammy, a little nine-year-old bitch, and Michael, a seven-year-old angel as perfect as any god. I loved that boy with no reserve. He haunted me like no memory, that we call ghosts, could have.

It seems that I never took notice of anyone in the neighborhood after my wife Eloise died. People, animals, or houses were just things that existed outside my home. The passage of time meant nothing to me, nor did my life, until Michael. I remember a year ago a knock at my door in the afternoon. Ignoring the disturbance I sat back and waited for it to pass. But the knocking became louder and more insistent. Irritated, I answered my door. There before me stood a small boy with a look of desperation on his flushed face.

"Excuse me mister, but Tammy's cat got out and it's my fault and if Rosanna gets hurt, my mom's. . . ."

I cut him off before he said anymore, "Hold on boy. Hold on. Now who are you? And what does a cat have to do with me?"

With a flustered look, the boy answered, "I let the cat outside so we could play. And she jumped over the fence and came over here."

For some strange reason I was moved by the fresh innocence of the boy. Something inside of me flickered as he stood there. Apparently he noticed my staring.

Nervously, he stuttered out, "I better go home. My mom said I should never come here. Sorry."

But before he left I stopped him, saying, "Don't leave yet. I can help you find the cat if you can tell me its name and what it looks like."

A slight smile of trust appeared on the boy's face when I said this. He warmed me there and then with that sweet smile.

"Okay mister, Rosanna's her name and she's black." I thought about

what he said and pretended to mull it over seriously. Even though I hadn't been outside for a few days. Then extending my hand I introduced myself, "By the way, my name is Edward Thompson, how do you do?"

He put his hand over his mouth and giggled, then standing as straight as he could he shook my hand, "Michael Trenor is my name."

The softness of his hand shocked me. Its touch not only made me admire him, but it made me want him. "Come in and we'll see if we can't figure out where that cat of yours has got to."

Michael walked in and sat down on the couch. We talked for about half an hour, then someone knocked on the door. Answering it I found at my door a young girl with a black cat in her arms. Without regard for common courtesy, the girl shouted past me and at the boy, "Michael, Mom is mad, and she wants you home, now!"

With a sneer of defiance she turned and left. Michael immediately got up and left. Halfway down the walk he turned around and waved goodbye.

If I remember correctly, it was quite a few days before I saw Michael again. That black cat had gotten loose again, and Michael was out looking for her again. Once more the scene of the rude little girl with the smug attitude was played out. I tried to introduce myself, but she only ignored me and walked off in a huff. Michael promised he would return after I gave him an apple and told him that I would show him my butterfly collection. And so the weekly visits began. Michael would always use the cat's getting out as an excuse to leave his yard. We usually just sat and talked or looked at photographs and old memorabilia. I can't believe a young boy like Michael could hold such interest for me. But the youth blazed out of him like searing heat that revitalized me every time he was near. All I had to do was see him and I was moved beyond telling. And the mere touch or smell of him left me exasperated from excitement. Oh, it was a beautiful time until my confrontation with his mother.

It seems that Tammy was not very happy with her younger brother's visits and was going to feed her hunger for domination by exerting a little of her will over him. I had come to despise her for her cruelty to Michael. He had told me throughout the months of his visits about how dominating she was. Tammy also loved her dear little black cat Rosanna more than anyone else. Michael confided in me that she also hated me for some strange unknown reason. I laughed about it now. Thinking that she might have guessed my feelings about her dear brother.

Well, the months passed steadily. Michael visited me at least once, sometimes twice a week. Our friendship grew and so did my affection for him. But sometimes good things as this are not allowed to continue unaltered. Parents sometimes have misconceptions about things due to their over-protectiveness. Michael's mother was no different. More than likely Mrs. Trenor had some terrible feelings about my relationship with Michael. Women

and their intuition!

Michael told me everything possible about his dear little sister. And my hate for her grew. Especially the day Michael's mother came to my home and curtly asked for Michael to come home, and for me to stay away from her son. I was shocked and confused by such behavior, until I heard Tammy's high pitched laughter. When the mother left with Michael without a goodbye, Tammy ran up to my door and yelled at me as she held her black cat. "You stay away from Michael you dirty old man! You're a dirty old man! A dirty old man!"

That night I sat alone in my bedroom and cried from the pain of loneliness and anger. No one really knows what it is to lose someone until that someone is gone. And I knew, yes I knew, who was responsible for taking Michael away from me. No one on this earth had the right to take him away. No one!

So in the following months I planned and waited. Yes I waited ever so patiently. I would have Michael back and reveal to him my true feelings. And he would come to love me as I had come to love him. So I waited.

Now a figure hangs at the end of a rope and slowly wastes away. It swings to and fro much like a pendulum. I only sit back and watch with such satisfaction that warms me beyond any fire. And I have Michael back. Life is indeed good! Sitting here laughing in the dark.



Individual

I put the phone receiver
down slowly, and walked
outside.
Noticing, as I thought about
her words of finality,
a board that stood leaning
against the tool shed in my
back yard.
It had never been touched,
never moved.
The rains had come,
and the sun had dried it.
It had become warped.

A Prayer After Dark

Turning things over,
Forever reasoning with the past.
Trying to wrangle out a new conclusion
From the permanent old.

Words uttered as I stared at the ceiling.
Passing away like a moment's thought.
Slipping into a muddled sleep,
Yet, woken by the nagging teeth of realization,
I know the truth,
But it's the lies that frighten me.
Because we always believe ourselves.

Old Shirts

She opens the closet door
and sees the shirts pushed
to one side.

Washed-out colors
and stains that never
really came out.

She hangs a new shirt,
something of a surprise,
a change of pace.

Closing the door,
she need never worry
about wearing them again.

Jamy Garcia-Persel

Jets

Andrew crawled on his bare stomach, holding a short stick between his teeth. He shook his head and waved away the gnats that flew around his eyes and mouth. As he crept into an irrigation ditch, he peered suspiciously through the rows of corn. His green eyes squinted from the glare of the sun. He nodded towards the scarecrow perched protectively above him.

"Cover me," he said. Taking the stick from his mouth, he jumped to his feet and pointed it at a tall stock, heavy with green corn. "Come out, with your hands up!" He moved menacingly forward. "Okay, that was your last chance — now you're in for it!" He swung the stick hard. "Aiii-*yah*!" The plant shook, and an ear of corn thumped into the dirt. Andrew's hands clutched his chest as he crumpled to his knees, "Ahhh, you got meee . . . ." He rolled his eyes and sighed, then fell limply forward.

The damp earth felt good against his skin; the air smelled sweet and fresh. He lay on his back with his leg over his knee. He shucked an ear of corn and chewed the not-quite-ripe meat, expertly spitting the white, bitter kernels onto the ground. His freckled nose wrinkled. He wished he could play the animals-in-the-clouds game that Daniel had taught him, but there were no clouds today, nothing but plain blue sky. Andrew threw the cob into the air, remembering that that was how the sky looked at the air force base before the jets made smoke. His brother had told him, "No, they're not on fire; it's not that kind of smoke." Andrew didn't know why, but Daniel did — that was the day he had gotten his wings.

Daniel knew a lot of things, and he didn't mind Andrew's questions. Daniel had explained about girls one day when Andrew had come home mad at Peggy Louise. She had been pushing him out of line at Sunday school, getting him in trouble with Mrs. Martins. "She *likes* you, Andrew. She's just afraid to say it to you, that's all." Andrew couldn't see how that was going to get him to like her, but Daniel told him, "Just you watch, kid, that's what she means — I'll betcha." It had turned out to be true because Peggy Louise had picked him to go with her to the Sadie Hawkins dance at church. Daniel had come home for that weekend. He went with Peggy's big sister, Nancy, and they all rode together. Andrew watched them through the window of the truck; Daniel kept grinning

his coyote-in-the-chicken-coop grin and let Nancy wear his hat. Andrew was mad at Peggy Louise because she kept untying his shoes, and then when he did them up again, she'd put a knot in them. He tapped the glass to get Dainel's attention. He tried to tell on her, but Daniel just smiled and wiggled his eyebrows at him in the rear-view mirror. They pulled into the parking lot, sending dust flying behind them. Andrew jumped over the side and came around to the driver's window. "I *ain't* dancin' with that dumb girl!" he jerked his thumb backwards.

"It's okay kid, no one's forcing you. But listen to that fiddle, boy; it sounds good, don't you think?"

"Yeah, I guess so . . . ."

Daniel slipped his arm around Nancy's shoulders. "Let's get a move on, you slowpokes!" He laughed. They stood in the doorway for a few minutes, their eyes adjusting to the light. The neighbor folks turned to look at Daniel slicked up in his uniform. Then, Daniel pulled Nancy onto the dance floor and promenaded down the line. His buttons flashed as he moved. He caught Andrew's eye and motioned him to come on out.

"Aw, come on, kid. She's dumb, but she's the only partner you've got." Andrew gave in and brought Peggy Louise onto the dance floor. They had danced every dance, Daniel and Andrew, side by side. He had a good time that night. Even so, he still didn't like that dumb Peggy Louise much.

He rolled onto his stomach and pointed his stick at the scarecrow, "Pow!" That's what Daniel would do if he were here. Andrew wished he was. He heard the rumble of machinery in the distance, and it reminded him of the roar of his brother's jet. After the general had pinned medals on the pilots, the band had played while they rolled the jets onto the field. The silver gleamed as the jets screamerd down the runway. His papa had put him up on his shoulders and told him to salute them. But he'd been afraid because they were so loud that even covering his ears with his hands didn't help. When they flew upside down, he cried out, "Oh Papa! *No*!"

But Papa said, "No, son, they won't fall down. Those brave boys make our country safe; they'll never fall."

"But why, Papa?"

"Because they're going too fast, and because of the force of their engines."

"Oh." Then he asked, "Safe from what?"

Papa gestured towards the flags waving in the light breeze. "Those jets help keep our freedom safe. We live in a free nation, and we don't want no commies on *our* side of the world."

"What does a commie look like?"

Papa shrugged, "Thank the Lord, son, I've never had to look one in the eye yet." He had laughed when Andrew told him, "I'll make sure no commies get in our corn field, Papa." They had watched as the jets flew in formation, and

clapped as they landed. Daniel had walked from the field, his helmet under his arm. He shook his papa's hand. "I'm glad you could see the show — pretty good, huh?"

His mama had kissed him. "We're very proud of you, honey. You're a good boy."

Daniel crouched down and shook Andrew's hand. "Take care of the corn, kid. I'll write you." He stood and smiled at him. Mama always said they looked like two-peas-in-a-pod when they smiled, so Andrew smiled back at him.

"This is it, I guess. Good-bye!"

"'Bye, Daniel!" Andrew watched him walk away.

"Pow!" This morning he thought he'd seen something in the corn, something with a pig's nose and big horns like a bull. He'd been searching for it, sure that his papa would be glad he was guarding the corn field. Andrew put his stick on his shoulder like a gun, and stood at attention. No commies allowed on our side of the world!

Clang! Clang-Clang! The bell called him from the house. He brushed the hair from his mouth, and looked at the sky. The sun still felt hot on his face so that it was too early for supper. He ran, pushing the tall stocks from his path as he did. He could see the top of the house above the corn, the white paint peeling in big patches. As he broke through the clearing, he saw his papa on the porch next to the bell, and he waved. He stopped at the steps, panting.

"Yes, Papa?"

His papa stared at the windows, with the sun reflecting off them, leaving a pattern on his face. "Come into the house, Andrew." He held his hand out, then put his arm across his tanned shoulders as they pushed the screen door open. The service porch was cool, the big house-flies batting against the window pane, buzzing. They walked through the kitchen and into the darkened living room. Grandma's clock broke the silence as it ticked rhythmically on the mantle.

"Mama, what's wrong? Why are you crying?" She pushed the rocker with her toe and looked down at the paper lying in her lap.

"What's that?"

His father knelt beside him, "It's a telegram." His voice sounded hoarse. "Son, it's Daniel — his plane has been shot down."

"Daniel? But you said it couldn't fall down."

"It didn't fall down, Andrew; he was shot down."

His mom put the telegram on the table beside Daniel's picture and pulled Andrew into her lap.

"Daniel fell down too?"

"Yes, honey, he — he's gone to heaven."

"He's not coming home?"

"No. He's with Jesus now."

"Like grandma?"

"Yes, Andrew, like grandma."

He pulled away from her and faced his father. "Was it a commie? Was it a commie who did it, Papa?"

They looked at each other sadly. "Well, son, it's not that simple. There's a war—"

"It *was* a commie! You told me Daniel's jet made it safe!" He shouted, "A commie shot him down!"

"*Andrew*, stop." His mama cried, and held her face in her hands.

"And there's one in the corn field — I *saw* it." He pointed. "I'm gonna find it, and then, then I'm gonna *kill* it!" He turned and ran through the kitchen, stumbled, and fell in the service porch. He crawled outside and lay in the dirt crying. His papa crouched down, and picked him up. Andrew struggled in his arms, then broke down and sobbed into his shoulder.

"You told me he couldn't fall down, Papa — You told me he wouldn't fall. You told me . . ."



Ana Gong

Observations

Observing all shapes and sizes in human form,
Looking at a display — a simple store window.
The forms are still as their eyes see.
The window now becomes a frame for the bodies.
A pointing finger towards what is seen,
Mannequins that smile back.
The motionless statues appear alive and seeing
"I look at you — you look at me."
And the window surrounds all forms.

Quest

A breeze, gently blowing, a fragrant scent.
He came, he went, and is no more.
What other consciousness, what other plans?
He left, but where is he, where?

Laurie Vondriska (Strahan)

The Secret

It's like they always say," she strained in a quiet, raspy voice, "ya never think it'll happen to you." She turned her head and a wisp of dull brown hair fell across her cheek. It was so strange, I sat mesmerized by just this wisp of hair. All my life I envied her because of the mass of thickness this dull brown strand had been separated from. But it wasn't like that before. I remembered how the sun would bounce little flecks of gold from her shoulder-length tresses and I would swear she must have paid a fortune for that particular shade. But, come on, we were only fourteen then.

Now she looked one hundred. Tired, so very tired, but always lying there awake. Her lips, parched and cracked, seemed to take every ounce of strength to chew those ice chips. Sometimes she'd just let them melt in her mouth. Why can't she just have water, I wondered. Water. A liquid substance you're told has everything in it you need to survive: minerals, vitamins. Yet all they'd give her was those damn ice chips.

But then she always loved ice. We would drive across town; hot, sticky, suffocating days just to find the drive-thru that had the crushed ice she seemed to crave. I guess she didn't mind only getting ice; it was kind of hard to tell. Her face didn't seem to have the strength to show much expression, just an occasional flinch of pain.

On some days though, her eyes would betray her body and they would sparkle, intelligently, interested in whatever boring subject I might be rattling on about. That was another asset she possessed. Soft, brown, enormous eyes that at times seemed to blend right in with the blackness of her pupils. How her eyes changed with her emotions is something I could never quite understand. I used to teasingly compare her with those little animals that were sold to help forecast the weather. You know, pink for nice weather, blue for storms. Something to that effect anyway. The last day they had life they were gentle brown, like a frightened doe.

Suddenly I would be shaken from my memories by a cruel, intruding cough that would stiffen the back of my spine and raise the hairs at the nape of my neck. The coughing would seem to throw her body into convulsions. Tiny beads of sweat would break out on her forehead and I couldn't keep the cool

washcloth from falling. My hands would be clenched so tight at times I would later notice fingernail marks had cut into my palms. Water! Can't she even have a swallow of water? That might help stop the cough! This voice would scream out inside of me until I would notice a nurse telling me to relax: they had given her a small drink. Then why was she still coughing? Can't they do something? Don't they know how it hurts? Then I would see a glass of that traitorous substance thrust in front of me. God, it looked so good, but I felt guilty for even thinking of bringing it to my lips. But the nurses were adament and soon I would regain my senses.

I sat back and recalled the books I had read that spoke of death. *Death Be Not Proud*, excerpts from Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*, quotable quotes from all sorts of philosophical thinkers. Some helped to bring this insane situation to some level of semblance. I tried desperately to believe in everything: life after death, miracle cures, medical breakthroughs, Mexico, the Bible. But each time I saw her, a little of this faith slipped away so unabtrusively I had barely noticed what I was losing. Then I would read an article tucked away in some medical journal, or she would keep from coughing for longer periods of time and a new spark of hope would ignite.

Friendship goes back a long way and endures many things. But I remember, with enormous guilt, how I often dreamed (only for a moment) of just getting up and leaving. I'd drive and drive, running away and then I'd feel myself slipping back in time: learning to drive a four speed on the column on a deserted desert road; painting a room and being chased outside just because I ran the roller across her face; stuffing our beds with pillows and sneaking out the bedroom window, only to become too tired and yearn to be asleep; having a throat so dry and sore and being handed a chocolate milkshake. Then I would snap back to reality and the frail hand that rested so calmly in mine.

Why couldn't it be me? She was always the better one when it came to being consoling or comforting. At times she seemed to have empathy oozing from her pores. I was always a little shy, embarrassed and very clumsy. I figured I hadn't changed much. Then I soon came to realize that sometimes all that's needed is for someone to just be there.

She would start coughing again. Tears would stream back, falling into the hair that covered her ears. I was never quite sure if they were just from the strain of the cough, or if her emotions were fighting their way through the paralyzing pain-killers they had injected into her. She wouldn't talk anymore. It seemed she just slept, her body relaxing and finding that elusive peace. The constant rhythmic beep of the monitor felt reassuring and at times I would sleep too.

After all the days of waiting, watching, hoping and despairing, the end seemed to come all too quickly. I had just come in from spending a few moments in the morning air. I sat down next to her and picking up her frail

hand I gently squeezed it. I remembered later that the monitor must have been taken away because the room looked more like home. Flowers, cards on the wall, stuffed animals in a chair; no tubes, machines or constant beeps. Only the white walls and chrome around the bed made me remember where we really were. The doctors had even given up.

And then it happened. It was nothing ugly or cruel. It was peaceful, quiet, just as if she had finally decided to just let go. And all the books, and quotable quotes made sense to me. I knew Karen had lived life to the fullest and accepted death. For as the Prophet stated, "You would know the secret of death. But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life?"

And that she did.





Desmond

Laurie Clark

To My People

I am in control—
I have all the power—
What do I care if you people are
Miserable?

You are in control of your own lives;
Whether you believe it or not,
You put me here—
You allow me to be here:
If you people are miserable,
Well then. . .

We only live once.
I have, in my one life,
Achieved all that I set out to do;
I possess all that I wanted to own;
I am all that I wanted to be:
If you people are miserable,
Well then. . .

There is no tomorrow after my death—
My only retribution will be
The disintegration of my
Dirt-laden corpse.
Wait in foolish anticipation of my
"Just reward!"
Ah yes, wait and see!
But in your martyred patience,
If you people are miserable,
Well then. . .

This country — you people — are
Poor, underfed, and unhappy:

You are struggling for . . .
Struggling?
Why are you not
Thinking, choosing, doing?
But that is too difficult;
I am an easier mark.
And so,
At my death,
For the world to see,
To clear your own conscience,
Let my epitaph read:
"He was in control—
He had all the power—
What did he care if
His people were miserable?"

The Actors

You see our faces,
We smile so,
And yet you
Do not really know
Our feelings,
How we fight inside
A storm
That only smiles hide.

Kristen Muller

EvV and the Search or Comfortably in an Upside-Down T

Elizabeth Engel vonVoss sat quite comfortably on the sunporch floor with her legs forming a 180° angle--a line segment if so preferred. While her left toes pointed gracefully toward the penguins in the South Pole, her right toes pointed at the supposedly non-existent Santa Claus in the North Pole. Elizabeth Engel (the "Eng" pronounced "ing" as in parking, she often explained) positioned herself in this upside-down "T", vowing not to move until she found a word to rhyme with "purple." Miss vonVoss was not a poet, nor was the young lady weird. She knew this, because recently she had read that there was no such thing as a weird person, but that some people need more understanding than others. No, this little girl, who once gave a spontaneous performance of the Fig Newton dance in her orange mummy sleeping bag at Girl Scout camp, was not weird, nor was she creating a poem. EvV was merely trying to answer another one of life's inevitable, infinite question marks. Incidently, Elizabeth Engel has yet to discover, or invent, the word to rhyme with orange.

During most of her Human life, EvV has directed most of her brain waves toward phenomena that the average Joe (or Jane-sorry) was generally too busy to bother with. "Purpose, Burple, Curple, Purple. . . ." Her thinking career began at age four, when the content of cartoons jumbled her logical mind. Everyone is aware of "Death" (one more of life's inevitabilities), yet that Saturday morning, as with other Saturday mornings, the fiendish coyote launched uncountable, unsuccessful missions to hunt and capture that annoying beeping roadrunner. While EvV tuned in, the coyote suffered through flattenings, bombardments, and de-skinnings. This was okay, except that only one crunchy-sweet cereal commercial later, our coyote was healed and on the prowl again. "It's a shame we all can't live in a cartoon, then we might never die," stated Elizabeth Engel. "But then, of course, it would always have to be Saturday morning. Hmmmm." Thus, the initiation of Elizabeth Engel's pattern of thought.

Being the darling, polite little girl that she intended to be, Miss vonVoss shook hands with everyone she met. Most people's Grandmas were overly impressed with her. "Hi, I'm Elizabeth Engel vonVoss," accompanied by an extended hand. EvV's hand-shaking habits only logically induced her M&M eating habit. "I wonder if the average Joe (or Jane-sorry) can name how many and what colors the "Mars"company drops into an M&M bag." Engel only recently confessed her ignorance concerning the little candies. For weeks she thought the bag contained four varieties while much to her dismay (or delight), another color was discovered. This obvious fact led Engel to uncover more mysteries concerning M&M's and the world. For instance, why are blue M&M's not found in the dark brown paper bag? She had never encountered--nor popped in her mouth a blue one. "Blue is such a prevalent color; we have blue skies, blue bruises, blue fingernails (when cold), but no blue food. Even blueberries are purple." With this current revelation, Elizabeth set the non-existent blue matter aside, to concentrate on the word that rhymes with purple. "Murple, Ourple, Qurple . . ."

Still sitting on the sunporch floor forming an upside-down "T", Miss vV recalled a time when a point, or, when a point in time, traveled through her brain waves to add another concept to her list of concepts. "Youngsters color their pictures in an intriguing fashion. A strip of green, undoubtedly symbolizing grass, lines the bottom of the page, while a stripe of blue (blue is found everywhere except in food), representing our sky, borders the top of the same paper, leaving a blank white streak stretching from east to west. Now, why do children leave an empty space between up there and down here?" Elizabeth Engel concluded that the innocence (or was it ignorance) of childhood leads us to accept unknowns as mystery, so that we may utilize our imaginations to the limit. But, if there are boundaries to imagination, shouldn't the sky meet the earth? Hmmm. "Surple, Turple, Urple. . . .

Elizabeth Engel had fallen in love once. His name incessantly echoed in her head. When crossing streets, she tripped over every curb. Daydreams of how they would avoid crashing noses when they kissed, reappeared in night dreams (mares?). Due to the love sensation, Engel was unable to function normally. Similar events occur to most human beings when they fall in love. Engel said, "I am afraid to think of the hazards involved if everyone in the world fell in love at the same time. Hmmmm."

Elizabeth Engel's parents were in love once, too. She knew this because her father, who had a flat nose because he smashed it after falling off a fence while eating blueberry pie, presented his wife with two double-decker boxes of filled chocolates every other Sunday. Little Engel, before her days of M&M contemplation, habitually "borrowed" pieces of candy, always, of course, from the bottom layer. However, she usually anticipated the all-to-familiar dilemma of picking the right one; her favorite was the gooey, stretchy caramel kind.

interspersed with nutbits. The problem lay in the diversity of each unit. Was it the long and rectangular, the stout and square, or the round and thick? Finally, EvV devised a scheme for foolproof selection of the gooey, stretchy caramel kind, interspersed with nutbits. "I will not divulge my method, because then all would figure out who has been squishing in the bottom of every (almost every) chocolate candy." Elizabeth Engel had not yet graduated from Brownies to Girl Scouts when she was silly enough to let her secret slip out.

"Wurple, Yurple, Zurple. Hmmmm." Actually, Elilzabeth Engel didn't have any secrets. Usually, whenever one came into her possession (such as the blue secret), she gave it away. EvV was heard to say, "Life holds so many secrets, and if people keep secrets, then mysteries become more mysterious, and everybody wonders about the world even more. But," she continued, "even if all the secrets were known to everyone, I wonder if the word to rhyme with "Purple" would be given to me, or if it even exists on our planet yet. If the long-searched-for-word does not enter my vocabulary before my soul leaves Earth, perhaps I'll be okay anyway. After all," EvV concluded, "everything is part of it. Unless," she pondered, "most of it is irrelevant. Hmmmm."



Helen L. Worley

Spring Cleaning

I picked up my pencil
And began dismantling
  an old poem,
When, suddenly,
  how foolish it seemed,
Stripping the worn-out phrases
  down to their bare bones,
Then building a new creation
  on a
  second-hand skeleton.

Why should I merely hope for
  a Phoenix
Rising out of the
  cold, gray ashes
  of a spent emotion,
When a refreshing repertoire
  of new words wait,
  expectantly,
  to breathe life?

And so, I will,
I will go for the new words,
Give life to the new thoughts,
Fearlessly challenging the
  world-as-I-see-it,
  with a
Bold, new generation
  of truth-elect.

Puppetry and Poetry

Dance, little words,
  on the end of your string.
I can make you do
  most anything
I want to.
I can hide,
  anywhere,
And watch you
  say the things
I would never dare.

Thank You

I read your proposal
To be my Angel.
Read it.
Mouthed it.
Turned it sideways,
  first this way,
    then that.
Even turned it around
  and looked
    at the back.
Gently, I lifted it
  from the page
And placed it in
  a velvet-lined
    casque.
There to view it
  at my will
In the splendid setting
  it deserves.
Faith.
Gold-plated.

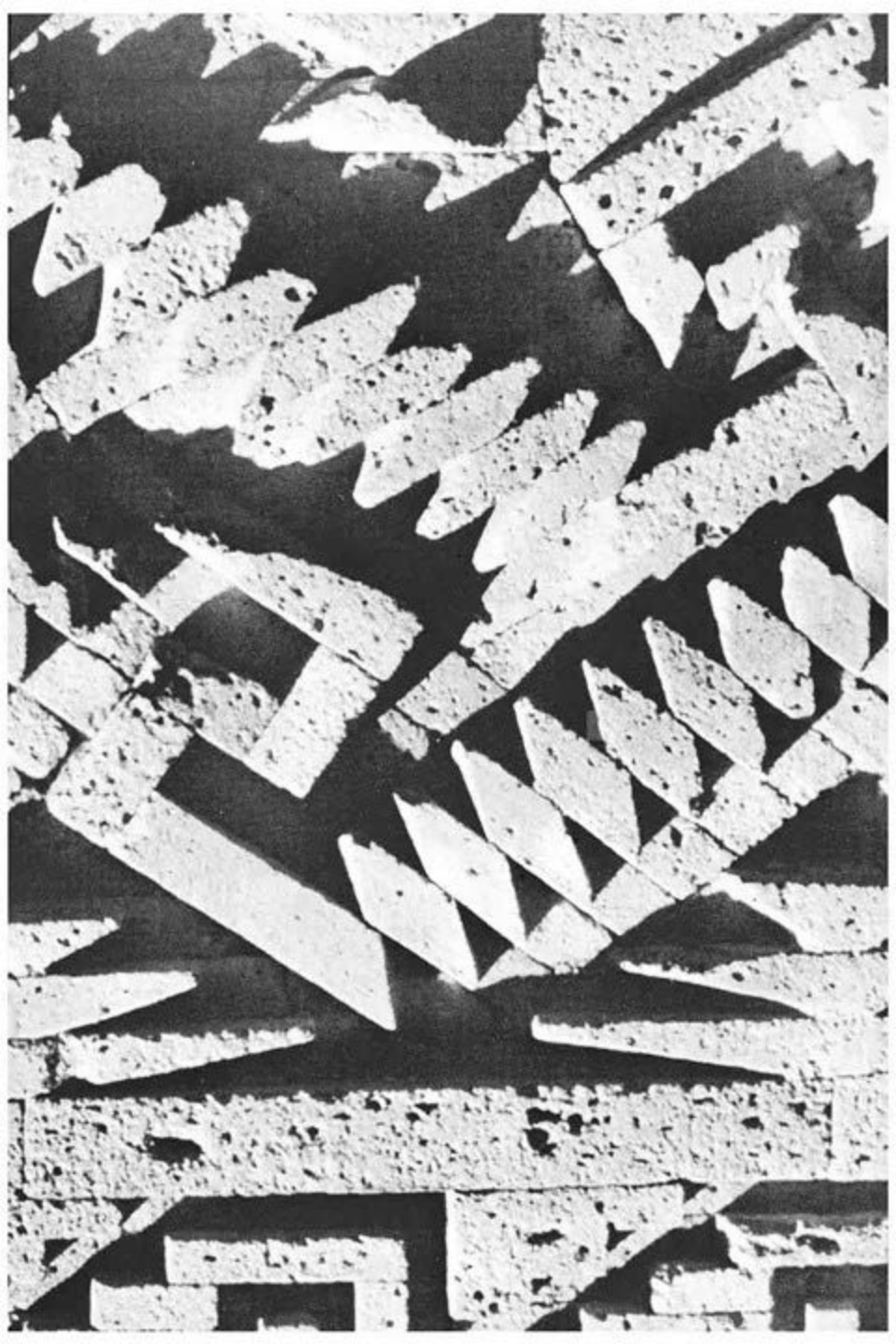
Maria Moniz

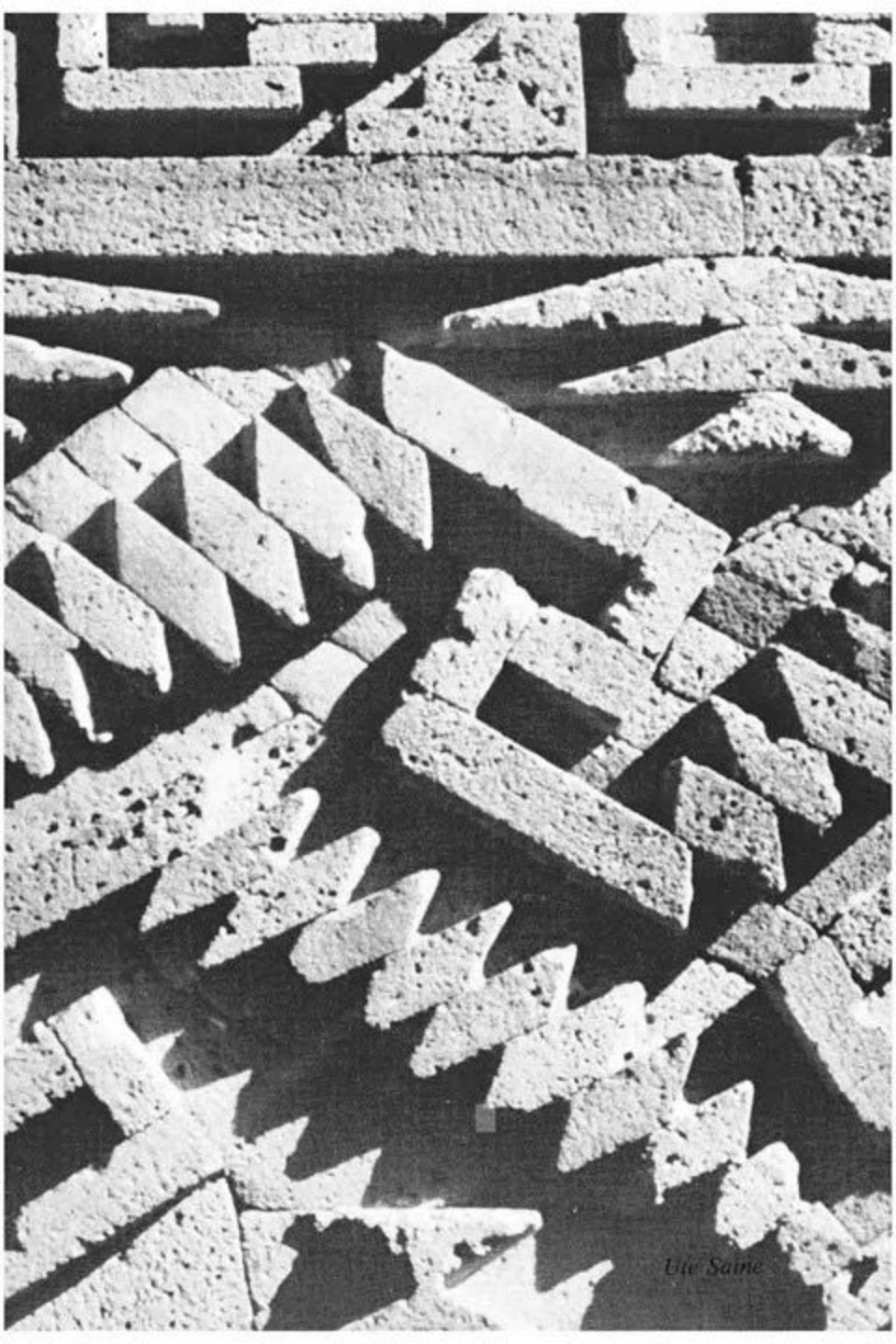
Moments

Such a fine line we tread
Tightrope walking on each other's lives.
Moments of sincere honesty
  when fearful confessions are freed from their shackles
  and massaged gently with tender hands—
  healed with human love.
Moments of frightened confusion
  when mistrust ruins the harmony of us
  and slowly unravels the fragile web of woven security—
  suspicion smothers delicate trust.
Then there are the moments
  when thoughts and emotions are
  blended into blistering body language—
  riding on the cresting waves of each other.
We become consumed,
Engaged deeper and deeper
Until there is nothing on earth but
You and I
And what we experience
Together
As we tightrope walk on each other's lives.

Watching a Widow Recall

A melancholy mist meanders over her features
Time teases tedious memories
Leaving wrinkles in their stead
Gray hairs atop her head
And one tear
Glistening silver
Against a black breast.




Ute Saine

Mary Allen

The Fat Woman

A delicate, affectionate 110 pounds at her wedding, Wendy's gentle temperament and small waist grew over the years. She was a healthy woman of good peasant stock who knew better than to starve a fetus or waste the leftover pablum. Each succeeding pregnancy and infancy left its residue, packed neatly on her hips, thighs, and breasts, just where God had intended women to store nourishment and love for their offspring. Wendy knew that life was cruel. There are so many ways for a woman to sin, but most could be hidden. One could drink in the closet, swear in the bathroom, covet in her heart, or have an affair in a motel across town, but the glutton must wear a badge around her body announcing to the world her awful habit.

Wendy went to her priest. He told her to pray for strength. She prayed over her pretzels. Her mother told her to love herself and her body more. She loved herself over lasagna. She went to a nutritionist and was told to chart her diet. When her pen ran out of ink she mailed the tear-smeared chart to the nutritionist with a recipe that the nutritionist had requested. She tried a consciousness-raising group, but decided that all they wanted to do was attack her church and husband.

"Maybe I want to be fat," she concluded to her therapist. "Maybe it's God's will or set in my genes."

Caught off guard for a moment, the therapist mumbled something about how Wendy was in charge of her life and couldn't blame God, her mother, or her genes. Then he decided to follow up on her first new suggestion in months. "You're telling me that maybe you want to be fat."

Wendy was getting pretty tired of her therapist parroting back her own ideas to her. She paid the sixty dollars and promised herself never to return, remembering the hypnotist that had helped a friend stop smoking. But over the next few days she kept thinking back to the idea that maybe there was something about being fat that she really liked. After all, why would a reasonably normal, healthy woman like herself work so hard to maintain and nourish those rolls of flesh?

It took her a few weeks of hard thought to come up with a preliminary list of good things about being fat. She knew she was getting close when she had to

hide the list from her husband and children. She didn't mind their intrusion and gentle teasing when the list said things like 1. If there were a famine I could live for months. 2. Fat is a symbol of my womanhood. 3. If I lost weight my breasts would be too small. 4. Fat people are jolly and popular. (Even she did not believe that last one, since her weight and depression tended to rise and fall together.) But, when the concept of SEX went on the list, it was definitely time to store it under the carefully folded collection of size 5 panties in her bottom drawer.

The first of these SEX items came to her at the supermarket. She had gone to school with George, the butcher; they had dated pretty seriously until her parents made them split up. George was a big, broad-shouldered, wavy-haired Italian. When she bought a stick of salami or a pork roast, she always rang the bell so that George would slice the meat for her. His smile still felt good and she always noticed how strong and sweet he was, at all like John. Not that John was a bad man, but he was built on the light side, more like a string bean than a watermelon. Sometimes, especially during tax season when John worked past her bedtime, she would lull herself to sleep imagining scenes with George. She could never do this when John was with her; somehow it seemed adulterous to think about another man when her husband snored beside her. A virgin bride, she did not have a terrific imagination in those areas, but it did not take much to make her blush. She felt so guilty about those dreams that she never told anyone, not even her therapist. There was a second reason she never told her therapist: even in her most erotic dreams she only pictured George from the waist up. The therpist might have laughed at her guilt and might have tried to force her to liberate her libido. Wendy took her guilt too seriously to risk that.

Wendy had never really gotten over her crush on George. When they handed the salami or pork roast back and forth, she would flutter her eyelashes, accidently touch his hand or wrist, and, if the meat were heavy enough, teasingly ask him if he'd carry it home for her. Good-natured George would ignore the more blatant flirting and always took a few minutes to discuss the weather with her. Wendy liked that. George rarely talked to the other customers, so she knew that she was special. She also realized that if she were thin she would be so beautiful that George might no longer be able to resist her. So, she added to her list: 5. Only fat women can flirt with men without being taken seriously.

Number 6 came to her in church. She had developed the habit over the years of scanning the pews and ramrodding her family to sit behind a man with a good physique. Wendy was really into wide shoulders. When communion came she did her best to follow the physique up to the alter, so that she could kneel beside him, just to get the feel of it. She knew that no one suspected her intentions. Her family was proud of her devout habits. But, if she were thin, people might suspect her sexuality more, hence, 6. Only fat women can follow

men around without being suspected of being on the make.

Although Wendy and John did not have an active social life, they regularly attended church and PTA affairs. Wendy was one of those women who could talk to anyone. When the men drifted to the right to discuss sports and politics and the women to the left to discuss whoever wasn't there that evening, Wendy drifted to the right. Sometimes she'd corner George with his ever-present wife. Wendy had never liked George's wife; she was one of those squat, hairy-lipped women with a raspy voice who felt like she was invited into every conversation. How could Adonis marry that witch? Wendy secretly wondered if George married her on the rebound, although there was a five year span between when her parents caught them necking on the couch and George's wedding.

"George," Wendy would say, loving the sound of her voice saying his name. "Did you ever find out the price of that special rib roast I wanted to order for next Sunday?" (She tried to pick topics that the witch could not talk about.)

"Yeah, Mrs. Morris, the manager said I could give it to you for $2.89 a pound." In the store he'd call her Wendy, but in front of his wife it was always Mrs. Morris, adding to Wendy's delight. She wondered if George fantasized about her at night. Sometimes she'd try to send him thought messages, imagining him in bed wishing that he had never married the witch. "George," she whispered to him with her mind, "Good night, Love. I know your life is tragic without me and that you life for those times when we can be together. I'll try to be more generous and shop more often so that we can touch each other's lives again soon." Wendy was very romantic under all that fat.

She knew that she would never have an affair, with George or any other man. Protected by that fat no man would ever tempt her to follow him to Tahiti. But if she were thin, she might be faced with a moral dilemma, for staying with John might lead another man to suicide. She added to her list: 8. No man ever died for the unrequited love of a fat woman. She felt morally superior over that one,

Number 9 came to her after another one of those long, honest talks with her women friends. Harriet, the blond bombshell of Buttonwillow, bemoaned the fact that men were always coming on to her. "You wouldn't believe what Dr. Ames did to me during my pelvic exam last week." Wendy didn't like thinking about pelvic exams, especially Harriet's. She tried hard to tune it out, but couldn't help hearing every juicy detail.

Of course, once the topic turned in that direction, each woman had to add her own experience with the lewd paperboy, TV repairman, or mechanic. Janet Turpin couldn't even visit her son's fifth grade teacher, since he tried to grab her during the last parent-teacher conference. Wendy kept looking at her watch and, when her turn was near, jumped up. "I've got to run, got to get Jamie to the orthodontist in 15 minutes." Later that night she added to her list: 9. Fat women can live a normal life without being bothered by every lecher in town.

Wendy had a real sense of proportion. She knew that a list of nine items was not enough; there had to be ten. She smiled when she added the last item to the list: 10. I like to eat. Then she folded up the list and stored it for future reference under the size 5 panties in her bottom drawer. She knew that the list would be safe there.



Raymond Stimson

Good Bye

The doleful
Cloud burdened sky
Shed few tears for you today.

Numb with the heat
And loss,
I sipped bitter coffee,
And greeted old faces
From our past.
Gray haired
and gray faced,
They came to say
Good bye.

At last, they let us see you.
But you weren't quite yourself,
Lying there in the suit
I never knew you owned.
A round-eyed Preacher
You wouldn't know,
Told us all about you.
You didn't move
Or fidget.
He went on
About salvation
And redemption,
But you just lay there.
Then I knew,
You were really gone.
Forever.

Every-Other-Saturday Goodnights

Asleep at last,
Your day's toils done.
Your toys put away,
Well most of them.
You lay at peace
Thumb-in-mouth
And precious blanket
Clasped in hand.

So short a time ago
I held you,
Rocked you,
Listened to your first cries,
And cried myself
To watch you burrow
Closer still.

These days
I miss the echo
Of your dashing feet
And shouts of, "Daddy's home."
No more the sparkling eyes
To greet me.

So, now I savor
My every-other-Saturday
Goodnights
And stand and
Watch you sleep.

Ajaykumar Patel

The Lamentation of a Mute

I am an aborigine . . . . .
a procession of silence . . . . .
the tomb of the tongue . . . . .
a silent admirer of ineffable beauty . . . . .
a mobile statue with breath and passion . . . . .
a one way traffic to the vehicles of thoughts . . . . .
a turbulent ocean,
with the facade of a composed lake . . . . .
a desert of flesh,
where no human phenome could sprout . . . . .
a perfect follower of Polonius' maxim:
"Give thy thoughts no tongue . . . . ." yet,
the beads of tears betray my thoughts,
for they are my only words . . . . .
  if blindness is the nap of mankind
  dumbness is its reverie.
I am an aborigine . . . . .
a procession of silence . . . . .

Nina Clifton

Highway

It winds ahead, divided
Black knifed by white
Bigger than life, bright frames march
Selling their wares.

Quick thoughts image
Fast chrome-footed chariots
Box-color, metal coffins
Ride black rubber.

Swift hisps of wind
Clip sharp the rolling riggers.
Fingers clutch, steering forward
Eyes search the scene.

It winds ahead, divided
Black knifed by white
Destinations known, unknown
Expectations.

Lee Charles

The Pendulum

in the distance
there hangs a rope from a tree
that dangles
waiting in the mistrusting wind
where seconds are murdered
inside a wooden box of time
that entraps the pendulum
yet does not interfere
as it counts off the death
of another declining day

and inside this very room
time is suspended
as if when the doors were locked
an image was cast unchanging
where dust outlines the forces
of those who passed these doors
how unceasing is the noise
of the clock counting down
the days continuously passing
an endless cycle of foes.

C. Wilson

Paradise

Looking back on how it was, and how all things came about thirteen years ago, my recall refuses to dull itself. Tall sturdy reeds of elephant grass towered above my head when I ventured through the lowlands. But standing atop a mountain called the abandoned turtle shell, from which the city of Andek-hep was named, I could see that the green blades clothed the massive land as elegantly as smooth feathers clothed a tiny duckling. Vegetation decorated my homeland with giant ferns and clumps of palm trees, an array of vines and branches collecting into a dense jungle for miles along the horizon where dark, pleasing green meets light, soothing blue.

It was usually when the forest green grew darker and the blue began to streak with orange that I pushed my way through the foliage and headed for the gathering of bamboo houses belonging to the Cham. Making my way through the rustling, squealing cage of pigs with an armload of bamboo shoots or a basket of mangos or lamut or papayas, I would give a *sam peah* to my friends who were also bringing home the fruits of their labors. Kai Wan and Sam-Sareolun were always together, laughing and tossing something, often a coconut, back and forth to each other.

The sun took hours to subdue itself, and even then the heat sweltered relentlessly. I had only a limited number of shoots, and my clothes were sponges of sweat. The work was more fun when Lon Nol went with me, but once a week her father insisted she spend the greater part of the afternoon under the bodhi tree offering incense. That should keep her from becoming bewitched by that evil spirit Behlial, he told her.

I hurried past the squealing animals and the odor that seems to accompany them over to the bamboo pile. The weight of the hollow sticks, compared to the weight of papayas or coconuts, made my choice of harvesting an easy one. Maybe if I hurried I could catch Lon Nol.

"Bopha!" Dy Bellong was staring down at me. "Where is Kuch Kong? I must see the witch doctor at once." I could see the monk's orange-colored robe from the corner of my eye, and though not permitted to look him directly in the face, I still felt his eyes searching for an answer from me.

"Have you checked the bohde? I saw him leave this morning with a spirit house in his hands."

"Which bodhi?" I shrugged my shoulders in ignorance, not knowing where my father was. Dy Bellong turned and hurried away.

Months could pass by and the seasons would never really change. It was always hot and steamy, always beautiful, and always filled with enough sun to keep our bodies dripping wet. The weeks for learning began again and during the coolest hours in the morning we all met in the clearing just this side of the open rice paddies. "Bopha, please be silent," my instructor would plead, but Lon Nol and I would laugh with Eng Ly and Saran and Somontha and the rest. Sam-Sareoun was asked to leave our presence many times for his persuasiveness in getting Kai Wan to pelt us girls with mudballs. Sometimes we would hear the sounds of a thousand giant mosquitos buzzing through the air overhead, a T-28 fighter bomber, seeking whose blood it might feed upon next. The occasional bomber was the only reminder of the violent rape the Khmer Rouge was committing in the other parts of our gentle country. But as for me, I pondered Dy Bellong's words even when the vultures weren't soaring above me. From atop the abandoned turtle shell, where Sam-Saroun led us on pompous and self-elevated missions to discover a new territory or else win a victorious battle for the Cham, I would stop amid the playful screams of my friends and look to the south. Looking to the Pochentong airport at Phnom Penh, I could not hear the tortured screams of dying Cambodians, nor hear the screams of halting airplane engines as they landed; nor could I see the wings of the planes flying off to commit further immorality, nor see the wings of a mother's soul taking her to the gods while her child held a mutilated body in his small arms. It all took place too far for me to reach, but I could feel the violence in my stomach. I could see the glow of orange from the corner of my eye and hear the words of Dy Beloong, "It is the witch doctors, they bring the bad buddhas here. The spirit houses with sacrifices and incense invite those murderers to punish the innocent. Kuch Kong is one of them."

"Kuch Kong is one of them" was a heart-striking statement that crossed my mind several times, allowing me to feel the terror of Phnom Penh within.

It was the first day of the week, a day that was not for harvesting or learning but a day for resting and meeting with friends. And it was the day I had been born in Andek-hep ten years earlier. My father spent some time of mourning by himself, for my mother's life was lost while giving life to me, and then we climbed into the cyclo together to drive north to Kampong Chhnang.

"Knyome Kleein," were the first words my father had spoken since the time we had first begun walking up and down the crowded dirt streets. Merchants occupied sturdy huts that housed their livelihood. I was hungry too, I told him, and so we squeezed in between two shops, went across the alley, and found a small eatery that served us lots of *babau* soup and *chaa*.

"Why did you name me Bopha?"

"We both loved flowers. They sway so innocently in the breeze."

"Did you see the soldiers in front of the linen shop?"

"I thought you were eyeing the fine cloth, Bopha. You shouldn't be so amazed by war."

In the hot sun I was wringing wet as on most days and the dirt was sticking to my feet and ankles as we journeyed away from the congestion of people and motorbikes. We parked our cyclo on the side of Nehru Boulevard at a spot where it widened. A few yards away, a shiny object caught my eye as it sparkled in the dirt. Maybe it was a ring with a large ruby in it like the one I had seen down the boulevard. I skipped over to it, and as I squatted down I looked up toward the sound of a thousand mosquitos. I was too ignorant to be fearful, and within seconds the thunderous clap knocked me to the ground and covered me with dirt. Screams and cries told of the pain taking place in the streets. My eyes were tearing to wash away the rough sand, and even as I opened them clouds of smoke and dust obstructed my view. The cyclo had fallen over, my father with his head resting on the front wheel. The back wheel was still spinning freely. A long oval piece of white-hot shrapnel had imbedded itself and melted into his cheek. He was lying on his side, his teeth clamped together tightly, deep lines in his forehead, his black jacket soaked with thick blood. I laid my hands upon his chest and gently rolled him over. The lower part of his arm was gone, leaving tendons and flesh torn and dangling like the vines and branches of a mutilated jungle. The left side of his chest was now a bloody cavity. Many Cambodians met a bad buddha during the attack. Kuch Kong was one of them. "Kuch Kong was one of them" rolled through my mind and the pain of Phnom Penh became the torment of Kampong Chhnang. I raised the cyclo, started it, and sped in the same direction toward the Thai border with all the others, dodging the dead and wounded lying in the dirt. Cyclos and Yamahas sped by. Families ran together toward the dense jungle with few, if any, belongings in their hands. Exploded shops that had sold fine linens and jewelry were worthless; wads of *riel* lay in the street unable to buy back the flesh eaten by metal teeth. Lovely brown skin was chopped into putrid waste. Many lay in the streets wriggling and wailing with the tortured pain of missing limbs or lost loved ones. Shouted rumors passed back and forth that Andek-hep had been overrun by the Khmer Rouge, Cambodians won over by the cannibalism of devouring their own people. A man was in my path ahead, disabled in some way or another. He cried with his hand stretching up in the air, reaching to anyone for help. A three-wheeled taxi nearly struck me from behind as I came to a halt.

"Put him in your taxi and take him with you." Relief came over his face as he began to hope. The skinny driver started to backup and scoot his *remorque* around to circumvent us. "Take him with you!" I ordered.

A scowl covered his face. "*Riel*!" He put out his hand demandingly.

"It's all over the streets." I was helpless to soften his stony heart.

"Then it's his karma." He drove off like a terrified squirrel seeking the safety of his burrow to hide him from the threatening world.

I drove off with the traffic, imagining that by the next day the Mekong River would be a vein of crimson, flowing for the redemption of the blood-thirsty.

For fifteen days or so we traveled. We were an entire group, led by experts in dark clothes through the jungle, walking long distances in the blackness of night. I felt the compulsion to return, to roll him over again and again, to find him alive. Hearing him call my name one day, I turned to look, only to have the sounds of birds and small animals mockingly answer me. The cries of hungry and tired babies mixed poorly with the fear we all carried of sabotage. I wanted to quiet them, yet whenever a plane flew overhead, I cried with them. Not wanting to show my anguish, though everyone had their share, I otherwise saved my tears for at night.

Once the arduous journey was over, my new home was one of many long rectangular tents. One hundred or so "survivors" shared a tent and the meager portions of food. Some of the "survivors," especially the young ones who had been there for quite some time, had shallow chests and hugely unproportioned bellies. Their eyes, from which the sparkle had been robbed, stood out much too far from a lack of fleshy health in their cheeks. Their ribs were perfectly aligned and all too clearly visible, serving as an ugly reminder of the way solid bars can cage the heart and its desires. Bed after bed was lined up within tent after tent, within the walls of a sturdy fence that enclosed the camp of "survivors." We dealt with boredom and confinement as if we had been criminals.

"You're just lying on the bed staring again, Bopha."

"Hi, Tak Tay. I'm tired, I suppose."

"Flowers wither if they go without sunshine."

Tak Tay's age presented a mystery to us all as we wondered how she made it across the freedom line, as they call it. Somehow I was glad for her being there because she was an excellent listener, and today she was open to receive my ramblings again. She slowly sat her large frame on the edge of my bed. "What great thoughts are weighing so heavy on your mind today?"

"Wishful thinking," I said, never taking my eyes off of a focus point; though, what the focus point actually was I didn't know.

"Wishing for what?"

"Wishing to carry the heaviest basket of coconuts. Wishing to be silent during learning. Wishing to tell Lon Nol that she was . . . wishing — to spit on Dy Bellong's shoes."

And it was lovely Tak Tay that snuck me out late in the middle of the night. She muttered something about being very old and I was very sleepy and not

sure whether to be afraid. It was so cold out and a large white man, with what I would have called at the time "banana-colored" hair, grabbed my arm tightly, pulling me along for miles with eight or nine others. We finally came to a large open space and I still felt as though I was dreaming. We squeezed tightly together for lack of space on the aircraft and again I was on an adventure proclaimed for me by fate.

Yes, I will always have a vivid recollection of the events that led to the American "paradise." But standing atop an eighteen-story highrise, I see the way many buildings clothe the massive land with an extreme lack of elegance. I see a "survivor" of that dark day, transported from paradise to "paradise," and again I begin to wish at the least that my memory will someday dull its vivid self.



Jim Duffield

History

History
Accumulation of ideas given weight,
The view of a segment of society,
Given as a whole.
Truths for a new generation,
Sorted by those who
Have the weight of gold,
The blast of gunpowder
Or the cry of a crowd.

Joanie Oreolt

Search

The moon watches
As a leaf in a lonely ballet
Disconnected from the life
Which gave it color and form
Drifts, pirouettes and
Slowly, quietly, searches
Its way back to sweet
Beginnings from which it came.

Wild Apple

Wooded countryside filled with
Lush green and tasty
Natural wildness.
Crisp flavor and sassy smile
Ripened to perfection
Succulent and tempting
Untended fruit with delicate heart
And harvested with addiction.

Chaukim Dinh

Voix de la Terre Natale

Une voix si douce si dorlotante
Une chanson mélodieuse, troublante
Un air plein de regrets doux-amer
Une robe diaphane s'étalant libre sous l'azur
Ondulant et tournoyant au gré du zéphyr
Rappellent du bon vieux temps les ariettes oubliées.

Malgré l'Hiver comme un élan de ma tendre jeunesse
Les rayons argéntés de la lune blafarde
Miroitant dans le calme de la Rivière des Parfums
Jettent une note rare enfouie sous le fouillis des étoiles!

Le crépuscule auréolé d'un arc-en-ciel splendide
Semble dire adieu à la plage déserte vide d'amoureux
Mais l'honne seul ne se sent pas seul devant la nature immense
Absorbé dans sa méditation sur la valse des vagues lengoureuses.

O images confuses de ma vie en terre natale
Elles font vibrer les fibres sensibles de mon coeur
Elles me font pleurer comme un enfant de peur éprise
Et je sanglote, pauvre vagabond sans patrie
Rejeté par les turbulences d'un monde évanoui
Je trébuche dans le pays des rock-roll accablé d'ennui.

Comme le tapis vert tendre des plantes de riz
Semble frissoner sous la caresse de la brise
Les lames lapis-lazuli sur la mer agreste des champs natals
M'enchantent comme un marin ivre d'aventures
O la senteur du riz mûrissant qui m'envôute
Comme le bouquet de nénuphar un soir d'été ajoute
Un parfum d'encensoir émanant de l'étang vert à tête dorée.

Le ciel, la mer, les monts, la terre bénie de mon pays
Tous éveillent en moi bon nombre d'impressions inoubliables

Depuis le sommet du mont de Yen-The là bas au Nord
Qui suinte dans le linceuil livide un matin d'hiver
A la main qui érigea au Centre ce vétuste sanctuaire
Sur la coquette colline une oasis de paix supreme
Où le son de cloche de la pagode Thien-Mu
S'épanche et égrène bien loin dans la campagne
Sa voix mystique emportée par la brise nocturne
L'ineffable message de paix, de concorde universelle.

Au printemps souvent on entend les confidences amoureuses
Parmi les pins chantants au flanc du Trône Royal
En été, on aime admirer les cascades d'argent
de Langbiang et les chutes dégringolantes de Dalat
Ce petit nid d'amour juché sur un plateau si haut
qu'il se fige et se mire dans son lac éternel.

Parfois, le jeune aventurier, fatigué d'aventures
Sait reccueillir le son argentin d'un trémolo inlassable
Cette voix susurrante d'une source au port des Mille Fleurs
Trouve, dans une âme triste toujours un écho mémorable.

O Grotte des Merveilles magnifique mais oubliée et perdue
Parmi le dédale de la Baie d'Nalong brumeuse
Palais digne des contes de fées et d'immortels

baie de jade jonchée de montagnes fascinantes
romantique décor qu'on croit surgir de tableaux antiques!

O saules pleurers qui effleurent
la surface sereine du Petit Lac qui leurre
les amants, a côté des belles du vieux Hanoi rêveuses
au regard voilé scrutant l'âme d' un voyageur lassé.

O chanson merveilleuse d'une assemblée de filaos
Quel concert céleste, quel violen étrange
si riche en gammes tonales, en air épique
quelle harmonie, quel crescendo fantastique
Musique d'ange qui me pâme et me transporte
des confins de la terre au pays des immortels.

O Mère, O Terre Natale, je voudrais t'embrasser
et sentir ta chaleur dans mes mains tremblantes
mais tu m'échappes entre mes doigts tâtonnants
Et comme en un beau rêve trop court, tu disparais
Au moment même où les rayons du soleil de Printemps

Surgissent comme un bouquet d'espoir réconfortant
Dans mon âme triste et ma tête branlante.

Mais écoute: ce ululement lugubre d'un hibou
Scandant de la vie et du temps la marche macabre
O roi nocturne, ange déchu, oiseau de mauvaise augure
Insatiable, ton cri perce mon âme torturée
par la tribulation des tourmants soufferts
par parents et amis, par tous ceux qui me sont chers.

Car ils vivent courbés jour et nuit sous le joug accablant
d'un régime de gens grincheux et encombrants
Car les nouveaux maîtres conduisent la marche dramatique
d'un peuple soumis et d'un monde fermé dans une ronde frénétique
Sous la férule des appréhensions les plus noires
et les promesses d'un paradis des plus illusoires!

Anne-Marie Dull

The Holocaust

I am a Jew and a survivor of the Holocaust. My original name was Zavia Mahler, but was changed to Sara Martin shortly after the war. The Holocaust did much more than change my name.

I am now settled in New York, married, and have three grown children. When I first moved to New York I was young, scared, and alone. All my family and friends had died. It was there that I met my husband (an American). From that time until the present, I pushed all thoughts of the war out of my mind. I pretended that it never happened. As did most surviving Jews of my time, I remained silent. Only now, after forty-two years, can I bear to reveal the horrors that I experienced at the hands of the Nazis.

It all began when I was sixteen. I lived in the small shtetl of Roziatow with my parents and two brothers. The war didn't actually begin for us until May of 1942. This was when the Nazis assembled all of the Jews in our town — there were around 3,000 of us — and took us to nearby Warsaw.

The Germans built a ghetto there to isolate the Jews from the Christian population. Its walls were 8 ft. high, physically cutting it off from the rest of the city. This was at first disguised as a quarantine measure to prevent the spread of typhus which was already raging in the Jewish sector. But when Jews from surrounding areas were shipped there it took on a more sinister purpose.

We were allowed a few necessities and the clothes on our backs to take with us. At that time, I still didn't fully understand the severity of our situation. My parents told me that it was a new German policy for us to be segregated in such a way.

We were given two small rooms for the five of us. The beds were made of straw and were filled with insects. My Father and brothers were sent to work in the fields outside the city. They would come home late at night with a few rotten potatoes for our supper. Then one night the city was completely blocked off. Barbed wire was hung across the few streets that connected the Jewish and non-Jewish sections. German police were stopping all traffic out of the Jewish sections. My eldest brother woke us all up and showed us the barricades. There was no way out anymore. Other people came out of their houses and stared,

stunned by the frightful suspicion that was creeping into their minds. Then, suddenly the realization struck us. Like cattle we had been herded into the corral and the gate had been barred behind us. I clutched my mother's hand and stared into the cold, midnight sky.

"What will become of us now?" I thought miserably. But I still had faith in God and in my parents to help me survive; so I slept soundly that night.

Starvation and disease quickly took their toll in the Ghetto. My brothers both died of typhus within weeks of each other. We hid their bodies under our floorboards so that their ration cards could still be used. I always went to bed hungry, but I was still better off than many. We kept the doors and windows boarded up at night. Thieves and hunger-crazed scavengers roamed the streets looking for food and they had been known to kill people while they slept.

My parents and I took to making goods for the Polish, working with raw materials already in the Ghetto or smuggled into it. We made soap, kerchiefs, and many useful gadgets that were used to trade for food. It was done illegally through smugglers or Christian workers in the Ghetto.

After a year in the Ghetto, I couldn't stand living in such miserable conditions any longer. People were dropping dead in the streets like flies and were left there to rot. Human waste and garbage were everywhere. Hunger drove some to madness, others to slow death.

One night my mother came to me and said, "Zivia, your brothers are dead, and your Father and I are slowly starving. We want you to have your chance at life, so you must listen carefully." She then proceeded to tell me of her plan of escape for me.

A young Jewish boy came to our door that night and I was to follow him to freedom. I knew that we would be immediately killed if any soldiers spotted us, but it was well worth the risk. We ran through the dark and dirty streets, hiding in the shadows and jumping over dead bodies. Finally, the boy pointed to a barricading wall before us. A clump of bushes were pulled away to reveal the small hole. I crawled on my belly through the slight opening. It seemed to take forever to get to the other side. I came into a small hut on the other side of the wall. A strong man pulled me out and into the room. The boy was right behind me and soon we were fed a small portion of bread and soup. There was a kind looking man serving it to us. He was a Christian, but took pity on the Jews. I was smuggled away that night inside a cart while the boy stayed behind.

We had barely gotten out of the city when the driver of the cart demanded extra payment for his troubles. I had none and so he pushed me out and went on his way.

There was a deep forest outside of Warsaw. I tried to reach it before daybreak, because it was easier to hide from the Nazis there. I kept running, occasionally stopping to drink from cattle troughs.

When I was finally inside the forest the early morning sun began to rise. I saw

a woman jump up from the fields and dash between the trees. I caught up to her. All I said to her was, "Amkho?" The woman answered, "Yes." She was a Jewish daughter. She told me that her small baby lay hidden deep in the forest and that she had escaped from a concentration camp.

I followed the woman to her baby. It was covered with boils and lice and was grossly underweight. I knew it would not live long. The woman offered me a piece of bread and I hungrily accepted.

She tokd me of the camps and it made me want to vomit. The medical experiments on men and women (especially twins); the tortures and the killings were unbelievable. The young woman described how babies were born and ripped apart and then discarded. She described the crys of people being sent to the gas chambers or about to be shot.

Listening to her speak I lost all my faith in God. If God exists, then He's a monster to allow the innocent slaughter of so many. "Or did He curse the Jews for what we did in killing Christ?" I thought, "No. Either God does not exist or He is the Devil." I preferred to believe in no God at all.

The woman finished her story and then fell into a fitful sleep. I did the same.

When we awoke the next morning, there was a frost on the ground and her baby was dead. Drained of all emotion my poor friend wrapped the small stiff body in a blanket and buried it with dirt and leaves.

The days were monotonous, spent digging up roots and potatoes. Sometimes a kindly priest from the village would leave bread and beets for us to eat. We lived and ate, rarely talking and never smiling.

One cold evening, while we huddled together, someone approached us from the shadows.

"Zivia . . ." said the man in a soft, broken voice.

"Jerzy!" I cried and fell into his arms. He had been my nextdoor neighbor and close friend in the Ghetto.

"I escaped!" he told us breathlessly. "But almost everyone else is dead."

My heart sank as I thought of my parents. Then he began his story.

"The Nazis came to liquidate our Ghetto. Your parents, Zivia, were old and publically shot along with 600 other Jews. It was terrible! They had to dig their own graves . . . I was lucky. They sent me to a slave-labor camp. My sister was sent with me but was killed in the gas chambers soon after. . . . One night I bribed a guard and escaped." Jerzy had cuts and bruises on him that made him wince while talking.

I tried to cry after I heard his story, but no tears would come. They were all used up.

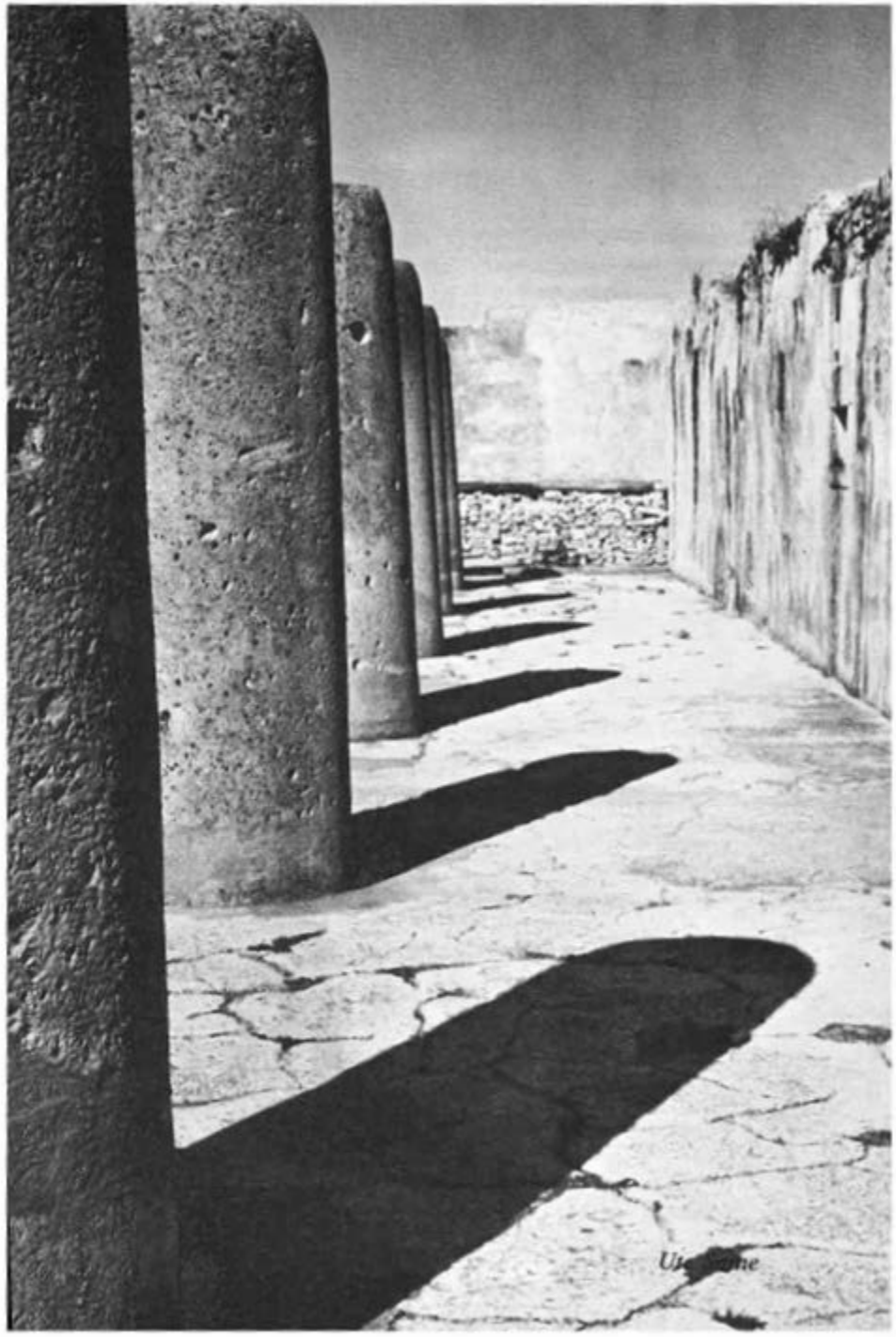
We were slowly dying in the forest. I suggested that we go to the road and stop the first jeep that came by. If it contained Nazis, then we would be shot. If it contained Americans, we would be spared. Jerzy volunteered to do it. He ran out from behind the trees and was immediately shot. The two Nazis stopped

their jeep and came to look for other Jews. The woman and I hid in different places. She was soon found, raped and then killed. I was lying under a pile of rotting leaves. There were many maggots and worms crawling on my body but I could not make a sound for fear of being found. The two Nazis walked by me several times. Finally, they seemed satisfied and went on their way. I passed out from fright.

I huddled in the forest for days. I didn't move, except to close my eyes. I hoped to die quickly. Then, two days after my friends were killed, the kindly Priest came with food and news of the Americans. They were in his town.

Of course, I am thankful that I am alive (even though I sometimes feel guilty about it); "And, still, we are one people! Made one by common misery, common distress."





Steven D. Ross

Sable Hair

Bewitched was I that day now past,
Where I first laid eyes upon
Her sable hair

Now I am captive to azure prisons,
Hidden by playful wisp
Of sable hair

I no more seek time to study
Finding my time filled with
Dreams of starlight, softtalk,
And sable hair.

Dennis Brenneman

Puzzle

Where do these women come from?
  Why
do they all have lovers in their eyes?

Frigidaire

Does someone else know
  that it doesn't take long
to freeze a banana?

Ute Margarete Saine

Lifestyle

Would you not knot your shirt
On your bike rack in back
Would you not unwind when wined and dined
Or be cringing with fear
Catching up with a vengeance
To sharks and minnows here
The undiscovered country of the few
Shocks the living daylights out of me
Life on the bald spot underscored
Coming up roses and lilies of sort
Would you not sell your shirt
And have it too
Would you not sell your soul
And be a good sport?

Horario Primaveral

Qué suerte leer
mi suerte en las hojas
mi suerte en las horas
primavera de horas
en estas hojas leer
la suerte de hojas
salud de los ramos
y bienestar de árbol
leer la suerte de pájaros
y la primavera de las ardillas
en la hoja la vida leer
y aire y viento, y sol y sombra
salud que circunda
la tierra de mi cuerpo
en las hojas de mi suerte
los pulmones y la mente
en el libro de vida y muerte
leer el árbol y el animal
y aire viento lluvia y tierra
leer en las hojas
la suerte hermana del árbol
la suerte hermana que circunda
y las horas de vida y muerte
y las horas de vida y sueño.

Abwarten

Frau Tod sitzt im Fenster
und schlackert kokett
ein knöcherner blauer Engel

NA DU HIRR sagt sie
mit dickem Akzent
NA DU WILLST DU LIEBER
DAI

Sie wartet dai was
Klang Farbe Geschrei
was soll das denn
dai

Ach spinnst du
na so was die meint
Sterben na freilich
dai

Dan geht heir wohl nicht
mit rechten Dingen
nich mal ein Mann
nich mal ein deutscher Akzent

Dai und nichts weiter
da haste Töne dai dai
zisch bums und vorbei
dai

Na warte sehr freundlich
nein danke dain Fragen
ich kucke mich gern noch
ein bisschen hier um
Bin leidlich bei Kraften
nein danke für dainen Besuch
und stecke auch mittens in einem Roman von dem Dickens . . .

Und kannste nicht anders
Klang Farbe Geschrei
komm später mal wieder
an diesem Fenster vorbei.

To Sylvia Plath

All the summer she was mad
destroy she said
flying in and out
fondling the silence
like the dark of the moon
destroy she said
dreaming round and round
hugging tree bark: tree
like the mother of earth: but
destroy she said
envying butterflies
their foundering dusty wing
petals like scales of sun
she rose she saw she said
destroy
all the summer she was mad.

Metamorphose IV

Humankind cannot bear very much reality
T.S. Eliot

Es ist als trüge
die Trauer Flügel
und schwänge hinüber
zügelbefreit
drüben zu fallen in segelnde Sonnen
Hügel dein Körper im Wind
die ungestümen Düfte
wolkentrüb verdampfende Meere
malen sich in alle vier Winde
es ist als tröge Trauer
in Freudefunkeln Lichterschauer

es ist als trüge
die Trauer Flügel

Tante

Da hängen sie wie Marionetten Reih und Glied
wie tote Vögel lendenlahm in Zweigen
wie Hüllen eines Tiers dezent verendet
bläht sich der Stoff und nicht vorhanden
der Körper und was weiter
verendet und in Falter fährt geballt
ein grauer fremder Wind was weiter bleibt
als ein zwei Bilder Orchideen und tapfre Papagein
im Stapel Dämmerfofos fruh belichtet

Da hängen flügelmatt in Reih und Glied
gespiesste Käfer an die Bügel angeschweisst
als Teil von Stoff mit fünfzig siebzig neunzig
von vielerlei Gestalt und vielen Altern
der Körper und was weiter
gleich schwimmt um Schein und Widerschein
das Spülicht saufen immer wieder Spinnen
die sich als Erdbeerbutzen tarnen
zwar bist du tot doch Wasser ist bezahlt

Im Abenddunst des taubenblauen Sonntagskleids
von tausend Tonnen Sand verschluckt
versinken westentaschenhintergartenhaft
die Körner deiner weggeflognen Stimme
der Körper und was weiter
bleibt schlecht geplanter letzter Unterschlupf
des Atems weite Strecken strenge Luft
bricht überfallig in des Morgens plumpe Nullen aus
im Schatten spiegeln Lichter aus dem toten Haus.

Après la Fête

Décidémente
je me suis bien amusée
j'ai parlé théâtre avec l'artiste
j'ai parlé art avec les musiciens
j'ai parlé musique avec la poète
et les affaires faire faire faire
et la politique tique tique tique

J'ai rencontré pas mal de trucs
j'ai raconté pas mal de types
j'ai renoncé aux punaises niaises
qui m'ont fait la fête
tête-à-tête
qui m'ont tenu tête
en tenue d'été
nudité:
je me suis bien amusée
décidément.

Facétie

—Qu'est-ce que t'as écrit, Marie?
—De la poésie, Henri.
—De la poésie, Marie?
—Oui-da, pardi, mon petit.
—Nenni, nenni, ma petite chérie,
rien qu'hérésies, rien qu'hérésies.

Le Douanier en Detresse

Yéyé, c'est moi,
me voila au Mexique,
respirant les suffocants linceuls
de tempête tropicale,
les vents hurlants
brandissant barbiches et caniches,
un tigre effaré, trois roses du sacrifice
et des feux roulant sous un ciel dément.
Et moi, sans vélo, je confesse
mouillé jusqu'aux os, jusqu'aux fesses,
que pourtant
Yéyé c'est moi,
me voilà au pays
des enchanteresses . . .
euh, euh, c'est-à-dire en P.S.
je parle de tempêtes
empêtresses.

Tina Frisbee

The Silent Force

As I meandered away from home
Nature encompassed me
with exalted grandeur . . .

Her hills, barren in spots,
covered with
muddy black clay,
she painted
in awesome golds

Upon her trees
an abundance of jewels
glistened and danced
in sunshine's
errant rays

Her wild roses,
with tiny thorns
illuminated delicately,
proudly proclaimed
their last horray

Beautiful and majestic
as she was,
I gazed away . . .

Beneath her vibrant autumnal portrait
she touched me still
another way . . .

petrified
leafless spires

jagged
colorless masses

mellow
reaching pines

each whispered
a purpose
a charm
a grace

His Smile

Crumbled
stuffed into a wheelchair,
seeming
drained of expression,
void of thought,
a soft smile
moves across
his deeply carved face,
gently murmuring
a tenacious hope

Fear

Tugging, tumbling
like a raging river,
fear wracks
my soul,
freezes
my vision

Plowing over
rocky feelings
she tosses boldly,
carving harshly
silently choking
my diligent dreams

Philip Thompson

A CLoser Look

I gaze as if they are a
thousand miles away,
yet they are so close.

Pools of liquid autumn
tranquil and undisturbed
yet, seething with feeling.

I am close but forever
distant in my mind,
yet reality is truer.

They reflect little depth
but dwell in dark shadows,
yet, none have explored.

To the touch the edge is
delicately moist, yet
cracked and dry.

A brown wood flourishes
nearly, but draws
equal fascination.

Someone special will find
this view, but now, I
am the only spectator

I am content with the
memory, and walk away
from my mirror.

Bill Anderson

The Confessions of a Recovering Nihilist

My name is Bill, and I am a nihilist. I suffer from a disease that can be controlled, but never cured. Although I have kept meaning in my life for nearly five years, it remains a constant struggle. I must wake up each morning, look in the mirror and say "I shall find meaning in my life *today*." I offer this testimony to those among you who may still suffer from the active phase of this pernicious malady. I hope that, through my example, you may find the courage to begin the slow, torturous road to recovery.

My battle with nihilism began seven years ago. I was living in Greenwich Village, and attended the City College of New York. My studies bored me, as did so much of my life at the time. I frequently skipped classes and went instead to the coffeehouses near my apartment. I fell in with an intellectual crowd and was introduced to existentialism. Although I found it repugnant at first, I gradually acquired a taste for it. I discovered that many of its writers seemed to share my view of life, that it was senseless and void of purpose. My taste soon became a craving. I even wrote a play, a work that was to mark the beginning of my downfall. It was very short, and was intended to be read, not performed. Although I realize that I do this at great risk (I never obtained a copyright), I have reproduced it here, in its entirety; such has been my increase in trust since beginning my recovery.

One and All

The Players:

One— Person; possessing the potential to be any of the following: avaricious, bumptious, conceited, deceitful, envious, feckless, ghastly, horrid, indolent, jaundiced, kleptomaniac, licentious, malevolent, narcissistic, ogreish, petulant, querulous, rude, savage, timorous, ugly, vain, weak, xenophobic, yahooish, and zany.

All— Persons; being in many and varied combinations, each of the above.

Curtain

One and *All* are huddled together on an otherwise empty stage.

Curtain

The play was instantly popular and highly praised among the literari. It was printed and reviewed in all the Village papers. One reviewer called it "an existential statement of the first order." Another termed it "an insightful indictment of life itself." My favorite was written by a personal friend, who labeled it "exquisitely mordant." I was the talk of the coffeehouses!

One week after the first reviews came out, I was visited by an off-Broadway producer. He owned a small theatrical company that catered to intellectuals. He had read my play and wanted to perform it. He felt, however, that it needed dialogue and asked me if I would be willing to write some. I replied that I felt dialogue would be an artistic compromise. I told him, however, that I might consider a few well-spaced coughs, burps, and similar noises. We met several times and eventually settled on a long, plaintive moan. This would be done chorally and would be accentuated by having half of the cast wring their hands and the other half shake their heads violently. We had reached agreement; the way was clear.

A cast was chosen and production began. I attended many rehearsals and was pleased to note that each seemed to go more smoothly than the previous one. Still, I was frequently a walking case of nerves. Then, during the early afternoon of the scheduled opening night, my world fell apart. I received a phone call from the owner-producer. He informed me that he had had the same dream, identical to the smallest detail, three times during the previous night. He dreamt that he was writing at his desk when an official of the court walked in and served him with a subpoena. It was for a ten million dollar libel suit and named him as the defendant. The plaintiff was one "Humanity Incorporated." The owner-producer related that, though he felt certain that Humanity Inc. was merely a front for some outfit in Jersey, he was pulling the play. The same dream three times in the same night was a bad omen indeed. He was sorry, but that was that.

I was crushed. For days I did nothing but lie in bed and stare at the ceiling. Then I returned to my former sources of solace, the existential writers. I soon broadened my reading to include anything pessimistic. I was miserable and I wanted as much company as possible. I was on a downhill course that nearly killed me. By the third week following the demise of my play, I was reading Schopenhauer before breakfast, if I bothered to eat at all. Once, during this period, I rented a car, feeling a need to get out of the city. I was driving the wrong way on a one-way street, a glassy-eyed vacuous stare on my face. I hit a street lamp. The investigating officer searched the car and found an open copy of *Being and Nothingness*. I was cited for operating a vehicle while under the influence of Sartre.

The end came a week later. I sensed that I was fading fast, and vowed I would not go alone. I carried a copy of Kafka's short stories to a crowded intersection. I walked to the middle of the street and began reading from in *In The Penal Colony*. Soon traffic backed up in all directions. A large crowd gathered. There were a few hecklers, but most people wore horrified looks. Many were crying. I was blazing in my final moments of glory! Then, quickly and quietly, two of New York's finest walked up to me. They took away my book and arrested me for public Nihilism. I was led away, handcuffed and shamefaced, to the precinct station.

Once inside the station, I began to hallucinate. I was very certain that the desk sergeant was the Self-Taught Man in Sartre's *Nausea*. Another officer, who had evidently read Jean-Paul, attempted to explain the reference. The sergeant cut him off in mid sentence and faced me with a fury. He made it very clear that he was quite popular with women, and had *never* practiced autodidacticism. He pointed out, furthermore, that it was *I* and not *he* who wore thick glasses. He then warned me that I had better watch my mouth, lest I need a dentist as well as an attorney. The arresting officers, apparently fearing for my safety, took me back into their custody. They put me back into the patrol car, and drove me, posthaste, to the Center for the Treatment of Philosophical Disorders.

I was admitted for a twenty-four hour observation period. I spent a sleepless night in an open ward. I was kept awake by two Platonists who argued ceaselessly whether Mayor Koch would be welcome in the Republic. I was later admitted as an inpatient with the diagnosis "nihilistic existentialism." I was moved to a semi-private room, which I shared with a Cartesian. He was a most unpleasant fellow, an absolute know-it-all.

I was at the center for six weeks. My initial treatment consisted of education about the disease process. I was given a copy of a Readers' Digest reprint titled *I am Joe's Angst*. I learned from this, and from lectures by the staff, that nihilism has a psycho-philosophical base. It is, in the simplest terms, the inability to distort reality into socially-acceptable substitutes. My later treatment consisted of helping me undergo a radical life-style change. The rationale was that novelty could provide what denial could not. Exactly six weeks from the day of my admission I was discharged, with the single word "recovering" stamped on my chart.

That was nearly five years ago. I now live in the small, central California town of Bakersfield, where I relocated immediately following my discharge. The move has proven to be, as it were, "just what the doctors ordered." There exists here an anti-intellectualism so incredibly pervasive, that I have all but forsaken my former interests. Moreover, I have assimilated well into the local culture: I chew tobacco; I drive a pick-up truck mounted on ten foot tires; and I curse the northern, big-city Fresno liberals. I have even become active in civic

affairs; I am currently circulating a petition to designate the Budweiser can as the county wildflower.

Still, there are days when even all of this is not enough. Such is the curse of nihilism; control, but never cure. It is on there days, especially, that I need to do what I do *each* morning: I look in the mirror, grit my teeth and say, "I *shall* find meaning in my life; and damn it, I will do it *today*!"



Mely M. Gonzáles

Brown Wood in Cotton Fields

Cotton fields symmetrically laid
under the summer fire ball
that crisps to paper thin
the blooming harvest

Brown skin people with
short hoes break the earth
slowly they melt
into a puddle of sweat

Flame in the sky
chars brown wood
motionless to black ashes

Ashes and dust mix
from dust to dust
from ashes to lost particles
carried by the august winds
to the ends of the cotton field

Flame in the sky
gradually dies
coolness of dawn lifts
melted souls and crisp dreams

Mi Amado Salvador

Mi Amado Salvador,
a tus pies taigo
mi humilde corazon
Roto, herido, con
solo una esperanza
esa esperanza eres Tu

El mundo y sus placeres
lejos di Ti
me tenian
pero
Tu dulce voz
llego hasta
donde perdido
llorando y herido
vagaba
Fue cuando
renacio en mi
la esperanza perdida
y sin direccion mas
quel sonido de tu voz
vine clamandote
perdon y rogandote
el amparo de tu amor
De rodillas y llorando
te pido Padre Santo
me rescates deste
cruel mundo
y me tomes en tus
brazos misiricordiosos y de amor

Como Todos las Demás

Espera, no te marches
que aún está lloviendo . . .
deja que la lluvia
se torne en arco iris

Entonces, puedes irte
y yo quedarme aquí
me quedaré un rato
hasta que mis ojos
tu figura ya no distingan

?Te he regresado todo?
Tus cartas, tu retrato,
aquel libro de poesías?
Y tú me devuelto
todo, ya lo veo . . .

Espera que llueve más
fuerte, espera que así
sin abrigo te puede hacer
dano . . . recuerda que fácil
es para que un resfrio te
enferme . . .

?Te acuerdas de aquél día
cúando nos conocimos . . .?
Estabas sentada bajo el
viejo árbol y leías . . .
cuando pasé me miraste
y nuestros ojos sus
mirados no pudieron
desatar . . .?

Supé entonces que serías
especial en mis días
venideros

Nos prometimos amor
eterno y nos entregamos
nuestras vidas en cambio
pero ahora, todo aquel
amor inagotable aquí
termina . . . somos como
todos los demás

Cuando te hayas marchado,
no te lo prometo, pero
quizás se me escapen un
par o dos de lagrimas

Y después de un mes
cuando nos veamos
pasarás lijera en traje
para mi ya desconocido,
y yo con mi barba crecida
seré otro ante tus ojos

Mis amigos te preguntaran
por "aquél" y tú con desdén
les contestarás "?Cuál?"

Y yo ansioso, con
aparencia de indiferente
hablaré de aquélla la
que hace mucho tiempo
fue mi estrella

Sí, nos miraremos frente
a frente y pasará por
nuestras mentes
aquellos dias
de dicha y que
serán memorias
inborrables

Sí, pasarás del brazo
de otro muy enamorada
como cuando del mío
te paseabas
y el eco de tu risa
será la espada
que más hiera mi recuerdo

Y tus labios forzarán
una sonriza cuando
me veas de la mano
de aquella que te
quisó quitar mi carino

Seremos como todos los demás
verdaderamente enamorados
sólo dos personas que en
un tiempo se amaron . . .

Lee Charles

Skeletal Branches

away in the abandoned field
there stood a tree of oak
whose lifeless skeletal branches
were contorted
in arthritic decay

dark birds of omen
perched by the unquenchable brook
watching with their foreboding eyes
tuned to the misfortune of the masses

then came the winds
that transcend this very plain
where a banshee was heard
crying through the branches
but went unseen
where clouds parted
and light did not resume
darkness, with its withered hands
had come to seal this earthen tomb.

H. Z.

Prayer

Lord—
The rhythm of a blade of grass shifting in the wind
sings of Thee;

Clouds rising into thunders
echo the deep majesty Thou art.

The restless seas, moving on their shores
create anthems of praise to Thee.

Help us this day, Lord, to let our small voices
also sing of Thee
in purities as beautiful as Thy natural works.

Make our quiet rhythms and our weak thunders
peal praises and excite passions of wonder
and of joy for all who hear.

For we want to respond even as grasses
and seas and mists
to the majesty in Thee.

Give us subtle graces of natural powers in music
and let us praise Thee.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

Cup of Gold — Breakfast

"Some people sleep late — ya' know.
But that's what breakfast is — breaking the fast."

(jellied rolls and bitter coffee)

"The NEST? — It's over there — where the campesinos
are bein' busted."

(before breakfast)

"This service is so damned slow
it'll be lunch before we get any."

Yellow-gold teeshirt and blue jeans Allen
does his black boat shoe jiggle —
upn'down — upn'down
pluckin' dreams with the ty's-heel rock

(hopin for breakfast)

"I got a right to take it, — ya know.
It's my ladder. It ain't nailed down.
I can take it. It's my ladder."

(Is that part of breakfast?)

The towhead blonde licks his sensuous
upper lip free of syrup —
where the teen-white moustache
hair hopes for manhood
and curls it back in a smile
over the milky teeth —

(furred with the residue of breakfast)

"Have a good day!"

(the cash-register rings up breakfast)

Hustlers — hunching over Eggs Benedict

in booth three artfully review
their "tricks" —

(the source of breakfast)

The old man — cane in hand —
smiling under the yellowed Elk's tooth —
hanging pendant as the remnant of his years —
comes in — sits — eats — leaves
hobbling to the door
talking to himself
talking to the white dude on the sidewalk
talking to the lady across the street
(who isn't there)
talking to nobody



Investiture of Dr. Tomás Arciniega
Third President
11 May 1984

If Orpheus *voyce had force to breathe such musickes love*
Through pores of senceless trees, as it could make them move:
If stones good measure daunc'd the Theban *walles to build,*
To cadence of the tunes, Amphyons *lyre did yeeld,*
More cause a like effect at leastwise bringeth:
O stones, o trees, learne hearing, Stella *singeth.*

Sir Philip Sidney



In this issue:

Fidel Martinez

Lisa Lane

Charles Morrison

Mely González

Troy Andrews

Mimi Merrill

