The image features a complex abstract design. A large, light blue rectangular area occupies the top-left and bottom-right portions. A solid dark red rectangular area is positioned in the center-right. A series of horizontal red lines of varying density fills the top-left and middle-left sections, transitioning from widely spaced lines at the top to a dense, almost solid red block at the bottom. A series of vertical red lines of varying density fills the bottom-left and middle-right sections, transitioning from widely spaced lines on the left to a dense, almost solid red block on the right. The text 'COTTONWOOD REVIEW' is printed in a bold, black, sans-serif font on a white rectangular background that overlaps the bottom-left corner of the light blue area.

**COTTONWOOD REVIEW**



# COTTONWOOD REVIEW

Spring

1969

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## THE AFTERNOON OF MUNCEY'S WAR

The last real excitement the English Department at the state university had seen was when a man named Rush Dunlap, a wartime replacement in eighteenth century who had stayed on in the crowded semesters after, had suffered what had, out of kindness, been called a nervous breakdown. A victim of claustrophobia, he had been observed several times flattened against the walls in the narrow hallway of the quonset hut which housed the department. While classes changed and students passed, there he would stand, hands spread wide above him as if he had been crucified by the pencils and lecture cards he held, his eyes fearful of the crowd that swarmed by him, and his jowls quivering. The end came when he was discovered in the faculty lounge on his knees before the coke machine, lifting the door, beckoning and coaxing to something within the recess of the machine. Since then things had been quiet.

They were, in fact, too quiet to suit Muncey Mount. He had been on leave the year of Dunlap's coup, but it was still departmentally a joke and often referred to as a hazard of the occupation. Muncey Mount even wished he might have known Dunlap; he felt somehow that he might have liked the man and found affinities with him, understood even how a man could come to find solace in conversation with a coke machine. As it was, Muncey Mount could find little that was compatible within the department. There were his classes, and they were a joy to him, if not exciting. But everything else was more a nervousness than an excitement: departmental jealousies and politics, someone or other's paper appearing somewhere, a failure or success of some student before his committee. These things Muncey Mount had learned to ignore or passively to tolerate after twenty-six years. They all belonged to the general quietness of the department, that claustral quietness where even the familiarities were so quiet that the contempts they bred were hushed and restrained nervousness. Muncey Mount could not say now why it was that he should have thought of Rush Dunlap, a man he had never seen. Perhaps it was because of the departmental meeting he was on his way to attending.

The thought of the meeting and the hour or two in the skills room of the quonset hut made him slow in his walking up Slant Path. His walk became deliberate and his whole manner more delayed. Muncey Mount was a large man — tall and bunched, like some giant stump or something of a Mavan architecture, so that the height was minimized by the

stolidity. His movements had a stubborn reluctance about them though, as if his stolid body had not quite resigned to age. The hands, wrist-snapped with his walking, and there was a sly strength, an agility in the thrust of the shoulders. Though the day was cool, he was hatless, and the shag of white hair scrolled above his massed overcoat like snow on a mountain. His face was broad and divided by an exclamation point of a nose and a wide, good-natured mouth. Because of his obvious good humor or his shabby-genteel mein, or both, his students had called him Munchausen for more years than he could remember now. His eyebrows were the color of cigar ashes.

Muncey was a bit winded after the uphill climb to the quonset and was reminded of the pudding dish of brown betty he had added to his tray at noon in the cafeteria. He had been lunching with a student and in following him along in the line he had been influenced by the abundant tray and the young appetite before him into taking the forbidden pudding. With what was an old man — without family, sexless, drinkless, tobaccoless, with rusted body and tarnished mind — to spoil himself, if not with food? He had watched the boy across the table and had decided that the boy could not begin to relish the pudding as he had, that his perfunctoriness was a long way from peril, and that was what separated them more than their years.

Muncey paused a moment on the steps to the English Department, partly to catch a breath, and partly to look at the perfect pose of some birds on the wash of sky above the university spires. He felt the need of storing some of this for the ordeal of the meeting in the chalk-dusted room. Two students passed him on the steps and suspended their conversation until they were by him. Muncey watched them before he entered the building. The perfunctory and the perilous; the birds filling a momentary blot of sky, the youngsters' figures throwing a soft single shadow on Slant Path. And you, Munchausen old dotard, what is your moment?

Muncey paused to check his mail at the rowed boxes inside the door. There was nothing but the publishing announcements which he stuffed in his pocket. He wriggled from his topcoat while he walked up the hallway. The quonset was set into a deep hill, and the hallway sloped down like an endless tunnel between the offices and the classrooms. Muncey broke into an involuntary little trot while he fussed with his coat, and he was struck by the amusing thought that this was his moment, absurd as it was: impersonal mail, machine-addressed in frail-faded ink, in his pocket; uneasy from betty in his stomach; a torn sleeve lining in a coat; and a stiff-legged running to a rendezvous he was not anxious to keep but to which he was already late, judging from the deserted hallway.

The meeting was under way when Muncey entered the skills room. Smith Painesley, the chairman, turned and shot him a sinking look which came from somewhere in the region of the cornflower in his lapel. Muncey flicked his cigarash brows in defiance-apology. Painesley was a good administrator, he thought, for he had all the sheep herded down front. As he moved to the back of the room, Muncey was aware of the eyes of his colleagues upon him, and aware too of the slight cracking in the enamel of the careful masks they wore which revealed how they regarded him, revealed the figure he cut in their eyes. He made his way to an empty chair and, seating himself on his overcoat, began to read his mail.

The meeting continued in a drone. It was while Painesley was talking about responsibilities to standards that it happened. At first Muncey was not certain that it was happening, so he waited. Then, even when he was sure, he waited to see how bad it would be. It came first as a hint, then a promise, and then a realization. First just the touch, as if a hand had been laid lightly upon him; then came the grasp, and then the clutch, and finally the knotting, twisting, full chest pain. Still he waited to see if it would be like the others. When he knew that it was going to be, he reached into his vest pocket for one of the glycerin capsules and very slowly fed it to his lips and placed it under the tongue and waited again.

Muncey soothed his mind, calmed it and forced it to an unhurried poise. In order to direct his attention to something, he studied the sentence on the board: "Can you justify the subtitle of Bacon's essays . . ." The rest was blurred. Cramped handwriting. That would be cramped Truske, Dunlap's successor. Then Muncey made his attention shift to Painesley's cornflower, concentrating hard upon it.

Each time now it seemed longer for the glycerin to do its work. He clenched his teeth and talked to himself with his tongue hard against them. He forced his eyes to the alert, forward-straining faces about him, to the masquerade, as he regarded it. What was the phrase he had always liked? *Of my hearth-companions*. Burnet Farling over there with what he must consider his studious concentration look. More like a man about to belch. And that pipe-slobbering Everett Buckingham. Drivel on his chin, drivel in his head. Tod Fleming: mentally still walking the Lake Country. Brown betty to be damned. Plank, the senile old idiot; it had been Tom Fremont Plank before that big Negro boy had come down to the university to play football and became an all-American, the one who had had the same name. Moses "Coaltrain" Fremont, and Plank — the bloated bigot — had dropped his Fremont and become simply Thomas Plank.

Muncey loosened the grip on his mind just a fraction. *It* was still there. He returned quickly to his scrutiny. And Painesley. He of the detachable collars and cornflowers. The rotating chairmanship had a stick in the spokes with him. Smith C. Painesley. What the C? Smith-Corona; he was mechanically perfect, a machine. Or Cornflower? This was like Browning's Friar Lawrence, this carping cavil of his colleagues. Grrrrrr. But Muncey knew it sustained him, as if he drew the strength he now needed from cataloging their trivialities, so he continued.

There was Harold Tibbs who sat in his office cross-legged like a tailor, wrapped in a lap robe, reading Middle English. Complete withdrawal, it would be called anywhere else. And Hans Stribling with his accent as bad as his breath and always making a joke about some student calling Wordsworth Wadsworth. And Arles Lechstein there with his overshot jaw and his so-sad-suffering face . . . But wait. Was it easing some? No, only . . . Yes, yes, it was; the glycerin was getting to the tired old muscles once more.

The belt which strapped his chest slipped a notch, then another. It was passing after all. Muncey studied Huston Baumgartner of the romantic period while he waited to take the full breath that would signal the end of the attack. What was so romantic about a bald and bony old head? Like the skin over a sick horse's flanks. Or what was so immortal, for that matter? What was Baumgartner's moment? That day years ago when he was to have given a morning lecture on Charles Lamb but spilled coffee on his tie in the lounge and had removed it and put his collar on the outside of his jacket and lectured on Lord Byron instead? What a pathetically sad thing to be remembered by.

Then it was past, and Muncey breathing fully again, was at once ready to forgive and even apologize when he was struck by the thought that if this attack had been the final, fatal one he would have died here sitting among these men in a foolish meeting. Ought not a man, as he spoils himself on food, be able in some way to select his dying place and his last action? It was not the dying at all; that was nothing. He had had enough warning to know that. To die now would be no more than if the wind had shifted suddenly and dashed these birds to death, except that the birds should have had their moment. He was not of these men, these not quite humans like Smith C. Painesley who had managed to arm himself with the amulet of Academe by his family's wealth before that wealth was spent. They were not teachers, nor learners either. They cared not a whit for that. Rather they were like nervous women who collect brown glass objects. Only their collections were the cards in the shoeboxes in the library

cubicles and the esoteric articles printed on fish-food paper on which they fed but did not fatten. And like Painesley, they had found their way into a garden and had carefully locked the gate behind them, planted their weeds and thought them blooming flowers. And, in the end, their only contribution would be some crotchet or caprice, some trick with a necktie.

That, Muncey did not want for himself and knew, immediately as he thought of it, that that would not be his moment. He was willing to rest on his teaching; it had been there that he had poured all of himself, by his humor, by his being Munchausen, but at the same time he resented greatly being thought of as the old shoe of the department by these manikins. But, of course, there was nothing to be done about that now, no way to crack completely the enameled masks of his hearth companions. That would take a Rush Dunlap and not a Muncey Mount. But at least one did not have to waste his tender remaining time on them. And with that Muncey rose and stalked out of the room, trailing his overcoat down the hall-tunnel and out of the quonset.

It had clouded, and there were no birds, but the air was good and his chest felt better. He turned onto the commons and the ROTC drill field, and as he did he saw before him a precise pile of small cannon balls which had been placed to mark some maneuver. They suggested something to him, something to do with Rush Dunlap's cowering against a wall and supplicating before a coke machine.

Muncey stooped to the pile. He placed six of the heavy metal balls into the folds of his overcoat. Then, turning, with the coat swinging before him like a grain bag, he made for the quonset again. He was sweating and smiling.

He ignored the people staring at him. In his haste one of the balls spilled and rolled, but Muncey recovered it. He mounted the steps quickly and moved awkwardly through the doors until he was standing by the mail boxes once more.

The meeting had ended, but Muncey could see by the ribbons of light under the office doors that the faculty members were pulling into overcoats and filling briefcases for their departures, and that seemed to suit his plan.

He looked for a moment down the stretch of hallway. Then he spread his coat on the floor. He took a ball in each hand, aimed, and thrust them from him. They went crashing down the hall, exploding against baseboards and doorjamb. Just as doors began to open to the noise, he sent two more hurtling, rolling balls down the hall.

"It's the end of your smug world," he shouted. "Pray to Painesley. Light a candle to the coke machine."

When heads appeared cautiously in the doorways to investigate, he threw another ball.

“Come out from between your bookends. It is late. Almost over. Dunlap’s crucified. Now it’s Munchausen’s Gotterdammerung.”

Muncey paused then, to wait and laugh. One by one, the faces of his colleagues appeared in their doorways, and it had been worth it all — worth even the peril of his pounding heart, and even if he survived that, worth anything else that might come of it. For all the gaping faces were unmasked, revealed and naked in their enamel-cracked stupidity.

Muncey laughed a roar to the echoing hallway and threw his last ball.

— *Richard Snyder*

## OUSTER PIE CRUST

2 c. flour  
1½ tsp. salt  
1 c. lard

blend with fork

½ c. cold water — don't handle hardly, stir with fork

Roll out thin on floured (¼ in.) waxed paper — one ball of mix 3 in. diameter. Poke hole in ball as thick as you want the crust. Sift flour in hole. Cover hole w/edges. Do it again. Turn ball over and sift flour on top. Put waxed paper on dough. (Don't touch roller to dough) Roll out. Don't let dough touch waxed paper. Flip to get flour evenly distributed.

---

Place in pan. Sift flour on bottom and also layer of sugar. Put raw apples, fruit. Sprinkle cinnamon and flour and dabs of butter — 1½ c. sugar — for interesting flavor use part brown sugar (¼-1/3 c.). Put perforated crust on top after smoothing flour on. Put milk (w/finger on crust) also sugar.

Bake at 425° — bake 15 min.

Bake at 350° — bake 45 min.

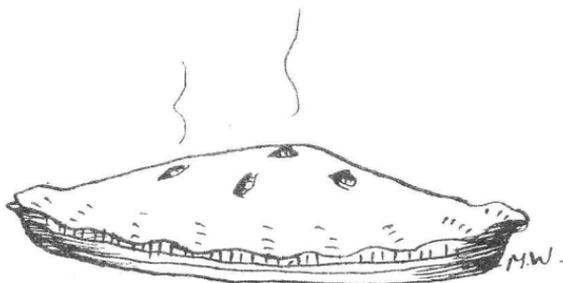
Pre-baked crust — 7-8 min.

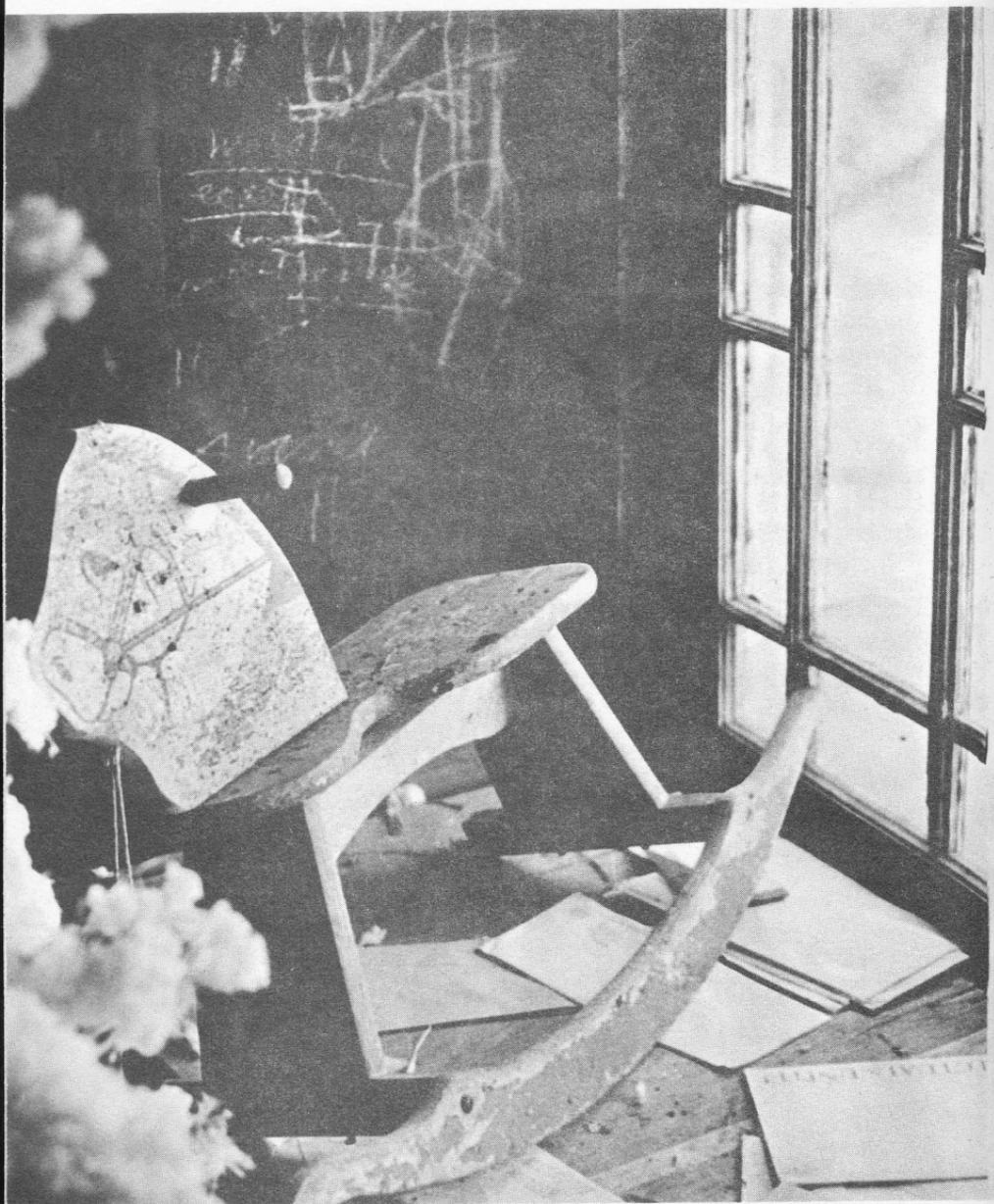
— Kathleen Bendowsky

Bake at 425° — bake 15 min.

Bake at 350° — bake 45 min.

Pre-baked crust — 7-8 min.





## SONGS FOR THE DEAF

- 1st day: When we closed the door,  
silence came in, and darkness,  
unwelcome guests.
- 2nd day: The child learned we die  
once; knowing the lie, who fears  
a finality?
- 3rd day: Beginning, ending;  
knowing these alternate,  
I'd disrupt cycles.
- 4th day: The world, made of rooms,  
has one where covering heads  
is right. I go there.
- 5th day: Since naming them  
songs for the deaf, I create  
patterns in weeping.
- 6th day: Half in, half out  
of reality, I paint  
frescoes for your blindness.
- 7th day: Happiness, the face  
I wear publicly, can drown  
in lighted mirrors.
- 8th day: Time keeps loneliness  
as stone against stone; edges  
take roundness, wear dry.

— *Lillie D. Chaffin*

## THE EVENING AFTER YOUR SON'S FUNERAL

I

They arrive on schedule  
Slowly stop their dusty cars  
Walk a plowed field pace  
Through the gate to the bare front yard  
Fifty bushel wheat but no bluegrass.  
The ritual became set sometime back  
Horse and buggy, Model A, new Buick  
Just get there quicker  
But the plowed field pace never changes.  
The missus to the kitchen  
The farmer to you.

    We're sorry

    Can't say much

    So young

    Need help with that summer follow next to me?

    Gimme a call.

Then to the front yard  
Out of the lighted bug windows to the trees  
Daytime shade habit in the evening.  
First visitor the toughest  
Just the family to talk to.  
Then another car  
Missus to the kitchen  
Farmer to you.  
    We're sorry.  
Shorter this time  
Easier to break to someone else.

## II

Farmers group

Then re-group under the trees

Their shoes in the dust continue the ritual

an X scuffed      then a backward Z

When did you hear?

a half moon      a crossed half moon

Millie called about 6:30 the next mornin.

a heel ditch      flattened with a sole

Imagine the Adler's heard then too

Could hear their clock over the line.

a line      with barbed wire X's

Oughta hear that old lady hang-up when her cocoo goes.

the river quarter      with four terraces

Hows he takin it?

five terraces      then six

Guess theyas all had a rough three nights.

two steps      half on half.

## III

The farmers scratch their designs in the dust

Parentheses a clod

Scuff it all out

Use a stick for a sharper design

A line      a cross      an asterick

A circled asterick

Scuff it out

Build dust pyramids with bulldozer shoes.

One pauses

Pondering God-like

Before mashing a June Bug into his design.

And the talk is of last week's rain

And the harvest.

The river folk averaged thirty an acre

But the divide only came to fifteen.

And with sidelong glances

In the midst of the hog crisis

They watch you.

IV

Hows he doin'?

Has he broke down yet?

Here comes Ray and the missus with another cake.

Did ya git a piece of Mrs. Micek's pie? I always watch fer it.

He ain't feelin nothin right now.

Drove by the place yesterday un the oil still showed the marks

Goin 140 they said.

Guy from Palco seen it, flipped higher than the light poles.

Could use some of that horsepower in my old Johnny Pop tractor.

Hold it, here's some uv the family.

Yeah, the federal govment's movin in more all the time.

Reckon they'd subsidize a new privy?

Who's gonna work fer him?

His middle boy'll do alright.

The first boy was a good worker.

Come on Lettie

Let's go home

So as to git un early start tomorrow

Day further behind now

Cain't do no more today.

(Besides, he ain't gonna break down fer us to see.)

— *Granger Wright*

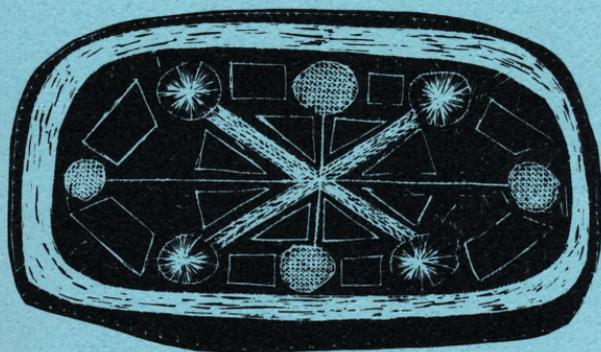


## THE MEN WITH BULLDOZERS

In the night,  
the men with bulldozers  
came and covered  
up just  
about every thing  
in town. They left  
the homes. But things  
like antique and second-hand stores,  
wallpaper and storm  
sash stores, gas stations,  
dime stores and the community  
restrooms, in one  
night of un-  
heard earthmoving,  
had gone into landfill.  
My good wife said,  
If you were to dig  
down, you would find  
a lot of good  
things, all  
the antiques you want, for instance.  
I guess there were  
a lot of good  
things buried.  
There might even be some  
people down there, like registered  
pharmacists, funeral home  
directors, used  
car dealers, real estate agents,  
or some of those girls  
I saw on the street one night — they'd  
all do anything  
for the gift of excavation.  
A lot of men  
would dig down at least  
for the girls today, just  
as others would dig  
for other things. But not  
in our backyard! I looked at what  
the men had made for us:

a long lake  
that lay out  
of view on both  
right and left,  
with pines thick  
all along its banks,  
except for our yard,  
which was broad, wild  
meadow. I looked;  
I could not  
get over it. They'd also left us  
two great,  
carousing dogs  
with half-human  
brains, who said they liked  
everything about the place.

— *Richard E. McMullen*



## THE CANDY MAN

Candy Man lies boneless.  
Propped by a pillow  
Living the late show,  
Hibernating, fat with the sins  
Of a first season.  
Slowly, in layers,  
He loses his youth,  
The second-hand senses  
Float him through nights  
The good times dissolve.

Eat our memories wisely, old man.  
Soon they're all gone.  
Pray yours are as filling.

—*Harry Weldon*

chained  
to a wall immobile  
a figure  
a man  
gray & lifeless  
sleeps to look  
at himself  
waking within dreams  
suffocating  
from the depth  
tries to retrace  
to wake  
where he started

## ON GOING TOWARD THE STARS

Hear me Dante Aligheiri! You were not the last to take the path of terror and bliss, even as you were not the first; for as long as men for love of earth, woman, or God shall separate out the elements — blood from the seas, eyes from the sun, and feeling from the sands — just so long will nightmare trapezists ferry souls outside the skies. There will be architectural dreams of azure. Then there will be logics and algebras woven into black velvet and crumbled in our arms. There will be perpetual orbits about Truth.

— *anonymous*

## WHISPER IN AGONY

(After Jules Supervielle)

Do not be surprised:  
Let your eyelids fall  
Even until they have closed  
Into real stone.

Leave the heart to its own affairs;  
Even if it stops,  
Yet it beats for itself alone  
On a secret hill.

The hands shall stretch forth fingers  
In their barge, which is made of glass,  
And the forehead shall be barren  
As some vast field,  
Stretching wide, between two armies.

—*Richard Deutch*

## AUTUMN

All autumn's colors are painted  
On the hill this morning. In the first  
Shot of sun they glow like pieces  
Of rainbows broken apart, then  
Blend into each other. Such a shock  
To find them dressed and ready  
For their trip toward twilight.

—*William Virgil Davis*

## AT THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT

"I ain't long for this job, pal."

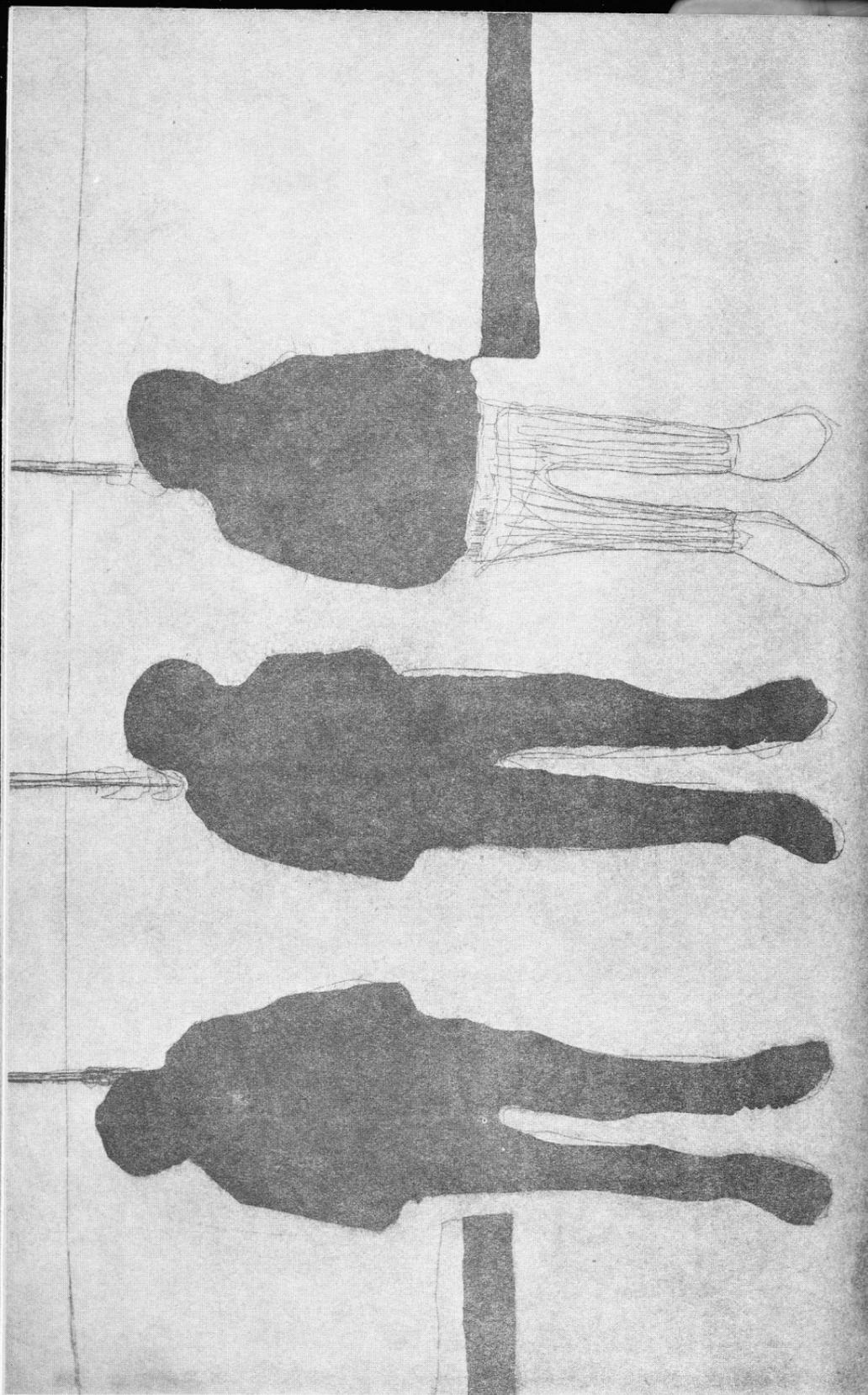
Gardener's Union, Local No. 23

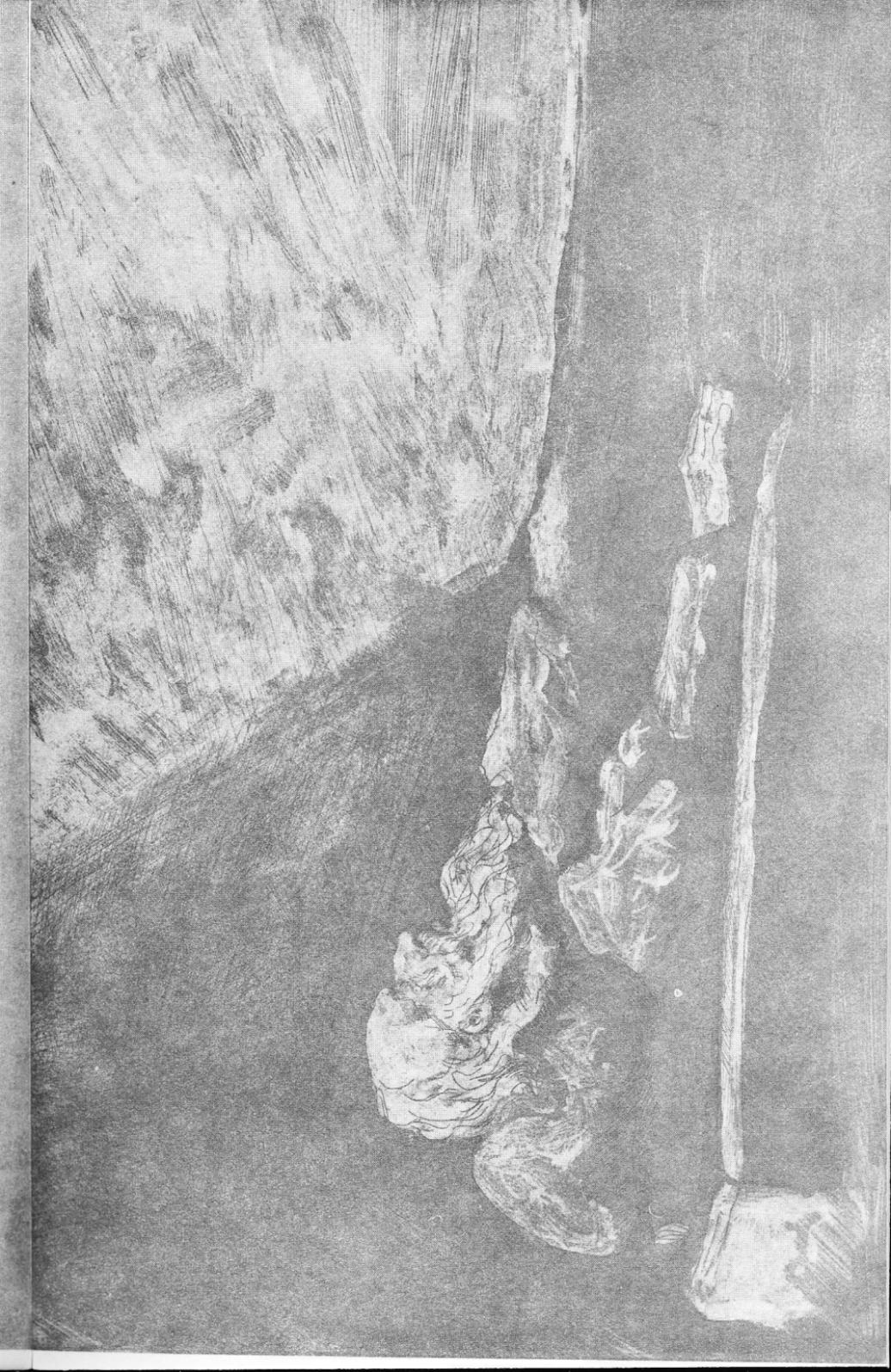
Tell me how  
can a man stand it?  
Don't.  
I ain't going to bother.  
Just trim the lawn,  
clean the walks,  
and keep kids  
back off the edge,  
six friggin' days a week.

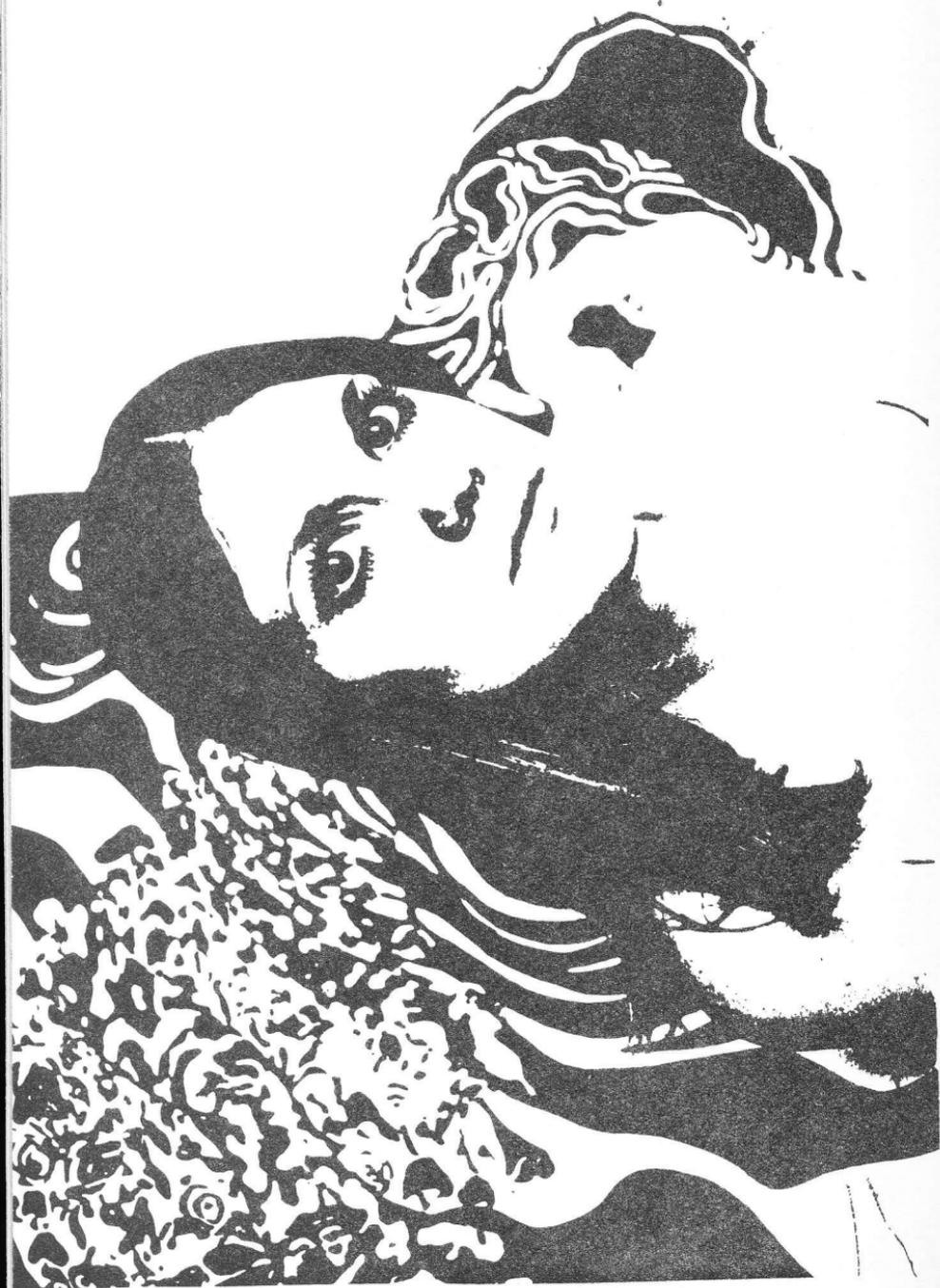
It's the kids make it bad,  
with the spittin'  
and throwin' things down.  
Isn't them have to clean it up.  
Isn't them goin' down  
five hundred fifty five feet  
feeling 'round in the dark  
for popcorn and gum.  
Nobodys wife's worth that.

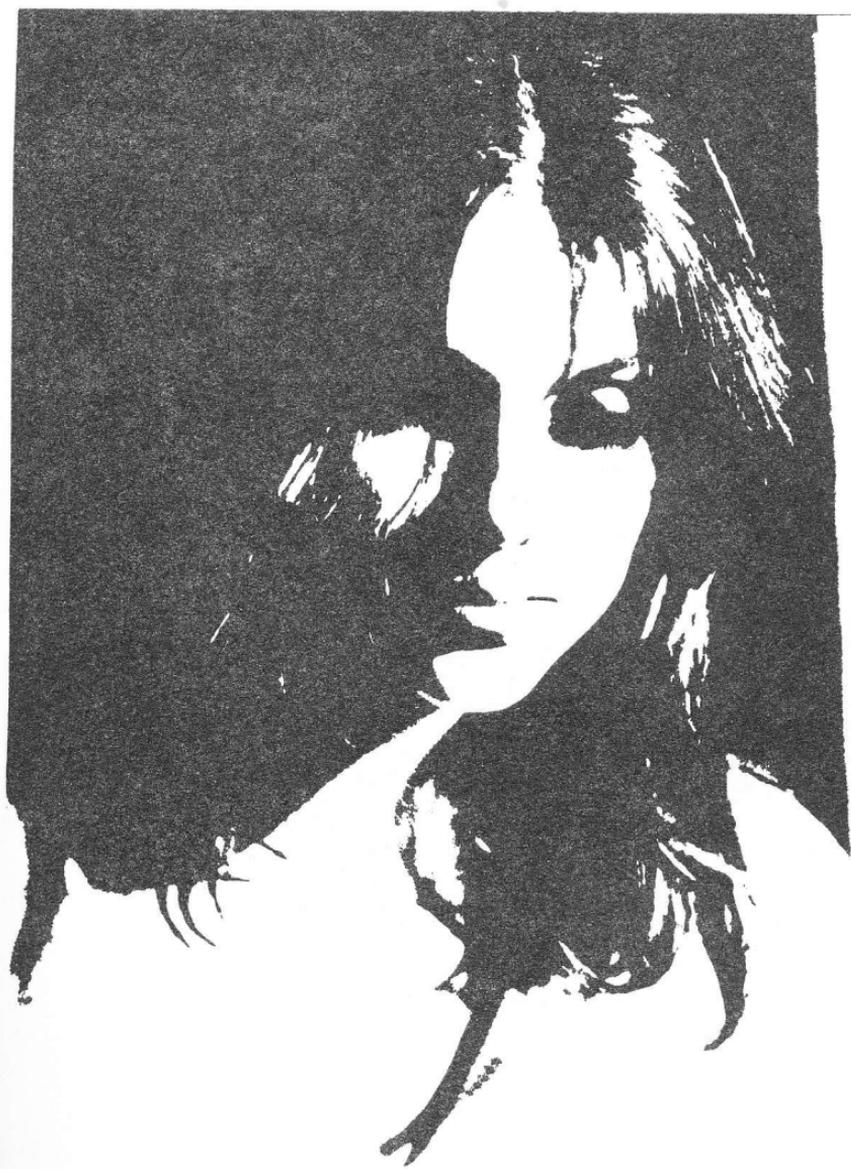
Older ones drop money,  
makin' wishes, for all I know,  
with nickels and pennies.  
Just dig a hole, I figured out,  
you got yourself a wishin' well.  
I wish they'd wish with dollar bills.

—Harry Weldon













*assassination II*

## BENEATH THE POSTS AT NIGHT

Lamps in night amount to sparks  
in a universe mad with feeling.  
Sparrows rule ground by day,  
at twilight slugs slither  
viscuous tracks across asphalt.  
Little girls seduce boys under porches,  
cops play marbles in a moon of alley  
and robbers tip their hands to masks  
tickling down gazes of un-belief by victims.  
Nothing is too late or too soon, or too  
right in this American fantasy:  
only poets sit looking at unpaid-for stars  
hoping to light graves with words  
for the now-installment dead; leaving  
lamps of light disclosing  
bare  
streets echoing a rub of too much noise  
in a silence time can envy.

## A MOMENT OF NATURAL HISTORY

Evening, high columned  
with clouds, windowing shadows  
in her eyes, and with parted lips  
she sought him.

— *Harland Ristau*

The land on stiff legs  
takes its bandit brain around the room  
in houses walls are frozen  
smell  
of phosphorous

the breath of dogs

and people an insanity  
that comes and goes

Flatlands have this yellow sky  
to keep the right perspective  
Assume  
these burned-out houses  
as the roosters were  
there were dying headless or they  
tupped their melancholy hens  
keeping one eye on the sky:

**SKY**

— *Harley Elliott*

it threatens  
heavy as a child's crayon crushed  
and flat the living rooms  
go bare in the night they break  
the long cool straws of rain

It makes no difference whether  
lilacs in the doorways  
on stalks of any kind  
in theory they  
have names  
but not in doorways  
flagstones  
sandstone  
the inscription there  
of nineteen thirty eight

someone that tried to  
date  
a glutton sky

## Игорь Чиннов

Было б неплохо поехать в Отрадное --  
Речка в Отрадном совсем изумрудная.  
К чорту страдания, к чорту старания --  
Сделал из облака ветку сирени я.  
Белой сирнью сиянье качается.

Или, пожалуй, поедem в Аркадию.  
Ангел в штанах из алмазной материи  
Будет давать нам уроки бессмертия.  
Дай нам пристанище, речка волшебница,  
Замок лазурный из лунной мелодии.

Светится поле. Оно -- елисейское.  
В нем хороводятся тени блаженные.  
Да, голубые, жемчужные жёны -- и  
фея, которая делает райскую  
Нежную скрипку из ветра весеннего,  
Нежное облако, полное пения.

It would not be bad to travel to Delight —  
The rivulet in Delight is totally emerald.  
To hell with suffering, to hell with endeavoring —  
From a cloud I made a branch of lilac.  
Like white rolls the radiance.

Or, perhaps, we will travel to Arcadia.  
An angel in trousers of diamond material  
Will be giving us lessons in immortality.  
Give us refuge, rivulet-enchantress,  
An azure castle from a lunar melody.

A field shines. It is Elyssian.  
Blissful shadows dance about it.  
Yes, pale-blue, pearly women — and  
A fairy who makes a heavenly  
Delicate violin from the spring wind,  
A tender cloud, full of singing.

Я проживаю в мире конфузорий  
/Дом ноль-ноль минус в Тупике Микробов/.  
Я казначей Содружества Бактерий.

Мы там -- танцуем -- танец -- стрептококов.  
Я улыбаюсь голубой Бацилле,  
Большой поклоннице литературы.

Я пью коктейль с ценителями гноя,  
Разбавленный питательным бульоном,  
И что-то вроде столбняка находит.

Звезда Бактерий блещет надо мною.

My address in the world of infusoria  
Is 0-0-minus, Microbe Deadend Street: I am  
Treasurer of the Fraternal Order of Bacteria.

I'm dancing at the ball of streptococci  
And flirting with pale blue Mrs. Bacillus,  
An expert connoisseur of literature.

I'm drinking cocktails of delicious pus,  
Diluted in well-tempered nutrient broth,  
Which puts me in a pleasant trance-like stupor.

And over me, the bright Star of Bacteria.

— *Translated by Victor Terras*  
*University of Wisconsin*  
*Madison*

## THE FABULOUS ARAB

The fabulous arab  
of the streets am I  
boldly burnoosed  
in silken robes of red & blue  
& clopping  
down the sidewalks  
& up the highway's yellow line  
on my camel  
the latest model: 3 humps &  
tail-fins

His name is Einstein, my  
camel  
he nibbles sugar cubes  
from my hands &  
automobile antennae in passing  
he admires pretty women  
When old ladies stare at us  
he eyes their legs  
my goodness!  
how disconcerted they become!  
land sakes!

We got a ticket in Houston

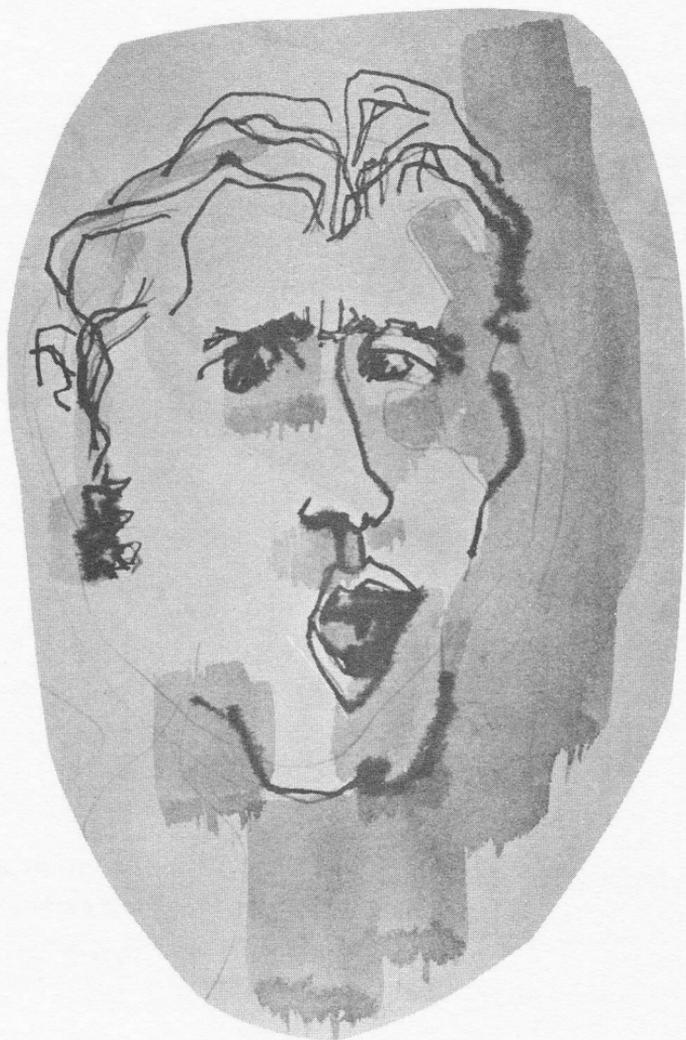
1. Einstein had no tail-plate
2. I had no license
3. Speeding

The cop was honest  
he couldn't be bribed  
but Einstein's  
a 2-time loser already  
so naturally  
I tore  
the ticket up

Oasis  
where art thou  
so long have I sought thee  
My little camel gives  
his head a shake &  
ain't no mistake  
he's dropped a huge  
steaming turd  
he couldn't wait  
Oasis

The fabulous arab  
of the streets am I  
in search  
of the oasis of dismounting  
where I'll rest my camel  
& my ass  
holy beasts

— *Eric Chaet*



*he says do you believe me*

## OUTPOST ON THE MISSISSIPPI

The French commander  
at Fort Chartres  
addressed the Indian villagers  
he was about four feet five  
he told them I have a little body  
but my heart is big enough  
for everyone  
the Indians believed him  
time has them now  
the commander  
and the Indians  
and the French soldiers

the afternoon is hazy  
several groups of tourists  
gathering in silences  
a family walking a balance  
on the stone foundation  
of the commissary  
kids on swings  
a man and a woman  
blowing alternately  
at their picnic fire  
the planet rolling slowly  
to accommodate the scene

he says do you believe me  
I say the whole nation  
wants to believe you

—*John Knoepfle*

## CANDLEDANCE

in the darkness of the drug  
waits the candledance

In this spinning  
Web  
I shall dream long  
Hard  
Dreams  
For hour days  
Each night.

Soft  
Is so slow  
In this  
Candleshadow  
Dark light  
I feel  
Cloud concealed  
In fear.

You are  
So far  
Out there  
In the imploding  
Balm burn  
Of mind.

Stay here  
Until I make  
You reappear.

I  
Some  
Times think  
So  
Fast  
Between  
Words  
I lose  
Loose  
Spun  
Weavings.

I wanted  
You  
When we  
Touched  
Long  
ago.

Rolling round  
Mosaic  
Spin more softly  
To that hard  
Drumbeat of base.

Water weighs  
Heavy  
In thought  
Bellied  
Sense spheres.

Inclosed in this  
Dark room  
I lay deep  
To wait  
The passing  
Of this  
Death.

Tell me  
Hard  
You know  
The distance  
I feel.

I wait  
To hear you say  
Shadow share.

Deep sleep  
Here  
Is deathfear:  
For weeks  
I shall dream  
To keep my  
eyes  
Moving.

— *Michael S. Glaser*

walking cold snowy streets  
    barefoot and no hat  
looking for you  
    in the dark  
groping around  
    and tripping over people  
not trying to hurt  
or step on them  
    but it happens anyway  
giving pain  
    that is no where near your own  
    yet it hurts

— *herb williams*

## THE PRESENT

In the September heat a black pick-up raised dust on the country road. Its body had been dented in a hundred mishaps, the metal dulled by coats of mud and corroded by the harsh wind and snow of the prairies. Spring rains had mixed residue of fertilizer, feed, and grain into dark brown stains, and each summer's sun had scorched that year's new blemish into immortality. The pick-up had been well used. It had taken the drunken farmer home on Saturday nights, brought his dishevelled children to drive-in movies, and obliged his dying wife.

On either side of the road stretched flat pastures of shrub and tall grass. It was a yellow land and barren but for one or two windmills and an occasional herd of cattle. The day was hot and the pick-up's valves clattered. Slumped over the steering wheel, the grey haired farmer talked with the youth beside him.

"What's the matter boy? You ain't talking? Seems to me you'd be sounding like a pig you'd be so excited."

The long boyish face turned to look at the driver. The farmer had a horse's face, long like his son's, but angular with a knobby narrow forehead, sharp cheek bones, and a round bulbous nose with black hairs protruding from the wide high nostrils. The skin was rough and had a thousand creases. The man's brown eyes were round and bright like dimes, his greyish hair thin and burr cut.

"Pa, I don't feel like goin' to town, 'sides I needed to help Flora put out the warsh, she's too little to reach the clothesline."

The man looked quickly at his son, his eyes flashing. His voice was high and nasal.

"Come now boy, you're making them excuses. My Pa took me to town on my sixteenth birthday, I'm taking you. God damn son, the way you been draggin' yourse'f round I'm starting to think I should have brung you last year. Now git your ass in gear, ain't nothin' wrong— you gotta start living early and enjoy it as fast as you can."

Chuckling hoarsely, the farmer grimaced as he twisted his finger in his right ear.

"Hell, I most talked my Pa's head off badgerin' him to take me to town. I dreamed about it for weeks. Still the best birthday I ever had."

The man's thick hands gripped the steering wheel. His fingers were coarse and scarred in numberless lines. The top of his hands were tinted red, small hairs rose in arched rows, dense and black, the nails were bitten back to the quicks.

In his corner the boy squirmed.

"But Pa, why not next year? For sure it ain't gonna fall off or anything. If Ma were alive she'd say it weren't right. I'm . . ."

Taking his hand from his ear, the farmer pushed the boy's head sharply against the front window. His son whimpered softly.

"Boy, your Ma's dead and it's your sixteenth birthday, so shut your damn mouth. If you're man enough you'll have a good time. I ain't gonna worry about you after today." It was quiet in the truck. The farmer periodically hummed a phrase and scratched himself. His boy leaned against the door looking out the window at the passing signs and telephone poles. His face was thin and white.

Slowly the black pick-up turned from the main road and jogged into the county seat town. It passed the tall white grain elevators, co-op building, and Moose Lodge, crossed the weed grown railroad track and stopped in an alley beside a sandstone wall with a "No Parking" sign. The engine popped after the ignition was off and dust danced in the sunlight on the dashboard. Springing down with a grin, the farmer shouted to the youth who sluggishly followed with eyes blinking quickly against the sunlight and his mouth slightly open.

The man in his grey striped overalls, their side buttons undone around the red flannel shirt with its sweat stains, followed the neat shabbiness of his son's shirt and jeans. He clutched the boy's arm above the elbow. The pair walked into the musty dark hall and climbed the sway-backed stairs disappearing above mottled stair walls into the gloom of the second floor.

Fans droned in the distance, it was becoming a very hot day. A woman tittered and a door slammed shut.

With his hands in his back pockets the farmer stepped into the street's glare. He blinked several times at the court house clock, hesitated, looking at the sagging truck and spat on the sidewalk. Finally, he sauntered across the street to the dim cool doorway of a tavern.

Inside the dimness, forms bent together, squatting in the darkness and holding bright glasses of cold beer. The farmer sat with his elbows on the bar top and his fingers spread open into the puddles of spilled beer. There were no shadows in the tavern, only the farm people talking and laughing in the gloom.

After he drank his beer the man belched, tucking his bristled chin to his chest. He looked back through the open doorway into the sunlight. Across the street at a second story window, a gust of dusty wind sucked out the torn bottom of a lace curtain and tossed it against the brick. Its white

fragility writhed fitfully in the wind, slowing as the dust settled, and at last hanging limp against the casement like a dead hand.

The farmer spoke.

“It’s my boy’s sixteenth birthday, he’s gettin’ his first . . .”

An old, little brown man chuckled a remark.

“At Molly’s? Bet he’s squealin’ like a pig.”

The tavern was dark and silent, outside, the black pick-up glared patches of light.

— *Jonathan Bell*

## WILLIAM H. GASS INTERVIEW

*The interview took place in one session in November, 1968, in a small room at the Eldridge Hotel in Lawrence, Kansas. Mr. Gass was in Lawrence for three weeks as a visiting "writer in residence" at the University of Kansas.*

*On a small table in the room sat a fifth of Jack Daniels "black" which, with no help from the interviewer, Mr. Gass halved by the end of the evening, diluting the stuff only occasionally with an ice cube.*

*He wore a checkered sport shirt, a pair of green chinos, sandals that looked more like house-slippers than sandals, and a wide leather wristband. No watch, no ring, just the wristband.*

*His brown hair, in the throes of greying, slid down to eyebrow level with annoying regularity and had to be put back. His outsized eyes flashed both impish joy and watered weariness, a condition which made him seem at once sagacious and froggy.*

*During the interview (less than half of which, because of space and time restrictions, is here reproduced) it became apparent, when speaking of his own work, that he both loved and feared it; that it was both a balm and a nettle; that he tended his work the way a herpetologist tends his snakes — in a compromised state of love and regret.*

*William H. Gass was born in Fargo, North Dakota, in 1924. He earned a Ph.D. in Philosophy at Cornell and at the time of the interview was Associate Professor of Philosophy at Purdue. His first novel, *Omensetter's Luck*, appeared in 1966, although his short stories had appeared in many literary reviews and in *The Best American Short Stories* of 1959, '61, and '62. In a collection of his short stories was published under the title, *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country* and in 1968 a new novel, *Willie Master's Lonesome Wife*, was published. Richard Gilman, writing in *The New Republic* said that *Omensetter's Luck* was "The most important work of fiction by an American in this literary generation."*

*— David Ohle*

## WILLIAM GASS INTERVIEW

In what way does your teaching of philosophy affect your writing?

It affects it a great deal. I have the view that the kind of style you use to write poetry or fiction reflects a philosophical position whether you like it or not. Now it may be a consistent one, but even in a single sentence I think you can detect this: that is, what the writer does is make choices and these choices reveal the way he is going to construct his picture of things. And every one of these choices has a philosophical implication and I think you can read them out. You can see it in writer after writer. For example, there is a writer who tends to isolate details, enjoining them with things like "and" or just a period, and the kind of details he isolates indicates that he is fundamentally visually empirical, and these details stand by themselves. They're not subordinated. Whereas in some other writer, like James, everything is a qualification of something which is a qualification of something else. Philosophers have for a long time been reading a great deal of their philosophical positions out of the structure of the language they use. Aristotle did it all the time. He looked at the Greek language and saw how it was set up in terms of subject and predicate, and developed a concept of substance and accident which is a clear reflection of the structure of the Greek language. Some people have no subjectivity in their world at all. Singer is a good example, if you've read any of his stuff. I suppose it's a reflection of his Jewish background. He writes in Yiddish. He writes like a materialist. For example, instead of speaking of an internal struggle that might be a psychological struggle, he objectifies. Hemingway is a very non-subjective writer too and tends to record external data, where somebody like Joyce is quite different. Writers are committed to a philosophical position, perhaps some number of inconsistent ones, but usually they're very consistent; the good ones, without even thinking about it. This can be seen in the dominance of nouns rather than qualities, for example. If you're a human empiricist, you're going to reduce objects to collections of qualities. And the name of the object, like "chair", is a mere name for a collection of qualities, and so some people will render the chair in terms of the collection of qualities. Some people will be perfectly satisfied just to say "chair" and other people will see the chair not as an independently existing entity but related to other things. I am very self-conscious of things like that. I construct things deliberately. I constructed one chapter in *Omensetter's Luck* from the point of view of Berkeley.

What chapter was that?

It's the chapter where the baby is dying in the crib and the wife is sitting in the rocking chair, rocking, and the preacher is in the corner musing on it. It seemed at that time to be the proper thing for Furber, who was really observing it, to perceive it this way. This is quite a different sort of thing. In using philosophy, for example, to argue some position or to have certain characters express certain ideas is using a philosophy as a constructive principle, though it may never be discussed at all.

I am also using philosophy in the book I'm writing now. The person about whom I'm writing is reflective and does things like this and is interested in theoretical things, so naturally he's going to think about them and act on them. But in some of my stories where the people are completely unreflective and know nothing about philosophy, then the story is just constructed from a philosophical point of view. I choose this point of view, not because I think it's the right one, but because I think it gives the kind of effect I want. Beckett is a very good example. From the point of view of language, he is sort of a nihilist. Every word falls through the void by itself, and then picks up another word, and they group by repetition just as Democritus.

Do you think that he (Samuel Beckett) is orchestrating the reader?

Yeah. Now he's abandoned the comma of late, or nearly, and in a short story that appeared recently in *Encounter*, he doesn't have any commas that I can remember. That story, which may be two-and-a-half pages, takes damn near twenty minutes to read aloud. There's so much silence between things. Of course, his punctuation problem is always in terms of signs and silences, or pauses, or something of the sort. He uses punctuation both in the conventional sense of organizing groups of words for sense, but also for marking pauses. I think he's tending to abandon that all together and make the reader do a great deal of interpreting. Because of this, you have to make the joins on your own. It's a short book to read, but a long book to pronounce. It has to be read aloud.

Have you ever tried that in any of your work?

I'm very conscious of the silence between sentences, sentence length, pace, and so forth. The problem is to write it in such a way that the reader will know how to read it. Joyce tried to do that in *Finnegan's Wake*, but the typesetter couldn't keep up. Joyce wanted the spaces between words to indicate the speed at which it was to be taken. And of course,

the typesetter was having a nightmare with that damn book anyway. Have you ever heard that record of Joyce reading from *Finnegan's Wake*? It's beautiful, just beautiful. It's just sheer music. And the "Anna Livia Purabelle" section is andante and he takes it that way and it comes across beautifully. He organized this way, too.

Do you make use of any formal musical training?

I have no formal background, but I'm influenced by musical techniques. That's the best convenient name for them. I have even experimented with themes and words in something like a twelve-tone system in which you take a certain set of words and rearrange them and bring them back in a regular pattern. If one had the text in front of him he could see a lot of them. The whole book is going to be formed that way. It's going to be a recurrent set of motifs, and I'm hoping that when they recur in certain patterns, they will take on a little more significance in terms of their new context. That's one way of trying to haul all of an earlier context into a new one and trying to make them reverberate. Of course, it's been done before, Joyce does it all the time, with all kinds of devices; sometimes very simple ones — just symbolic ones, like the soap that Bloom carries around in his pocket all day. It's even done more effectively — oh, I don't know if more effectively, but in a more original way — by Malcolm Lowry. Time and time again in *Under the Volcano*, certain objects, all bearing verbal marks, recur, like the boxing poster or the sign on the marquee for a movie starring Peter Lorre. In much the same way as Wagner did with his motifs. That's one use. I use it in other ways, too.

In *Finnegan's Wake*, Joyce has certain rhythm patterns, certain patterns of words with a very pronounced and fairly recognizable rhythm. Then he calls forth the motif again by saying something quite different in exactly the same rhythm. And that rhythm is so pronounced that you remember it and you hear the same pattern repeated later with quite different words and with quite remarkable effect sometimes, and what he wants to establish is a kind of metaphorical relationship between the two, just in the terms of the music. I try to do that, too, and I'm monkeying around with other things of this sort.

Do you think Joyce's poetry comes close to the level of his prose?

No, I don't think so. Joyce always is struggling against a great streak of Irish sentimentality. I think that in order to control that he had to almost forceably contain himself

within an elaborate formal structure sometimes almost mechanical. If you read some of the things that he wrote when he's in love, for example — incredibly maudlin! It just sags, and he verges on it even when he's at his best. He is best when he's just controlling. I'm a romantic basically; desperately trying to overcome it by rushing after formal procedures all over the place. I've called myself a formalist for years, which is true. That's the conscious application of formalism, but I really feel I'm liable to go off in twelve different directions if I'm not very, very careful. It's just sick. I'm just soppy.

You've said that the artist is like the mathematician. Would you like to elaborate?

I think the purpose of a work of art in a way is as a construction; it's a construction that fundamentally obeys its own principal, and in that sense it's highly formal and is and can be fundamentally esthetically admired for what it is: a system of concepts. In other words, what a writer is doing is arranging in a system concepts of words that are signs for or stand for concepts in the same way that a mathematician is ordering numbers. Now he doesn't do it with the same principles, he creates his own, in a way a mathematician does not. But both are creating conceptual structures of great complexity which are then and can be admired for their own sake. Sometimes you can use math discoveries to do things and you can certainly do that with books, novels too. But some areas of mathematics have no application whatever. Pure number theory usually doesn't. What does the mathematician do with his system when he has it? He'll usually say, "It's beautiful!" And similarly, I think this is one of the fundamental joys of a good book, though I don't think all writers would agree with me. A book is a very complex structure of ideas orchestrated because of the sounds of the words as well, and it's an object, a conceptual object in the way a piece of sculpture is an object, and what you do with it is you experience it. Now, if you start saying, "Well, what is it saying about so and so?", it can be used to say things sometimes in the way you can use mathematics to say things, but the mathematician doesn't dare determine the success of his mathematical system on the basis of whether you can build a bridge with it. He uses other criteria, and I think authors should, too.

Some authors actually despise that kind of concept.

Oh, yes. Sartre would. I think its partly because they mistake what they think would happen as a consequence, but

they certainly want literature to change people. They want it to be, as Sartre would think, "engaged," aware of conditions of the world and so forth. And yet it's Sartre's general philosophical position which would, I think, justify what I am saying, because what a writer is doing, it seems to me, is not creating something which is a commentary on the being of the world but adding being to the world. He's creating existence, and from a general philosophical frame I don't think its indefensible, even from Sartre's point of view. And he says this about poetry. He makes a distinction between literature and poetry. Poetry does this; a novel and literature are supposed to be engaged. And he does have a sneaking contempt for poetry because of this, but he does make that distinction and set it aside, and he says that the poets do something different. They're creating these objects, they're adding being to the world and so rather than commenting on what's here or changing what's here. In a sense if you add objects of inherent value to the world you are changing it, especially if these objects are worth living your life with, as a good book is. You can fall in love with a good book, just as you can fall in love with a person.

How did you learn to write?

I did a lot of exercises. I practiced writing sentences for two years. They weren't supposed to come to anything, they were just exercises. I had lots of practice in certain areas. The first story I wrote was called "Peterson's Kid." It started out to be an exercise and then I got serious about it. I don't clearly remember a time when I didn't want to write; it happened so early that the reasons why I wanted to I can't possibly figure out. Anything that I give now as a reason seems to me superficial. But writing is an obsession.

Are you ever totally satisfied? Like, were you completely satisfied with *Omensetter's Luck*?

Oh no. No, it's botched. Badly botched.

Did you realize this later?

No. That book went through an awful history and it took too long to write. While I was writing it I was changing my whole idea of how to write. I had an awful time constantly trying to recover the earlier part and make it integral to the later. It went on like this for years. It took ten years to finish it. . . It hasn't the proper sense of form of a large work. I'd gotten to a point where I couldn't do anything more with it. I'd been monkeying with it forever. Years of rescuing

something, really. It was time to just say *finish* and start something else. And I think I may have the same trouble with the one I'm working on now.

Do you build a paragraph? Or do you write it and then go back?

No, I'm afraid I build it, sentence by sentence. Occasionally there'll be a spurt after I get a certain amount of material. But in general, and this is one of the problems I've got, I write a sentence through and fiddle with it, and fiddle, and fiddle, and then when I think it's OK, I start trying the second sentence and fiddle and fiddle. By that time I see that the first sentence won't do and I'm back to it and then I go through and finally get two sentences and go on to the third. That goes on for page after page. So I get five pages done and I'm working on the sentence that comes first in that and I see that I have to go back and start at the beginning. And I work this way, by revision, constantly. Some of the terrible troubles of that method are that you're so busy with details that the tendency is to lose sight of the whole. I don't have a large set of material to work with; so constantly the new stuff forces me to go back and revise the beginning. It's only till I get to a certain point where I get enough so that the material that comes next tends to flow out of the first that I don't have to revise so much.

A lot of writers have quirks about how they write — like some people can't write on anything but yellow paper. Do you have any of these?

No. I work on all kinds of different pieces of paper. But I have to work on a typewriter. I can make corrections in pencil or put down notes or phrases or something. But really compose in longhand — I can't do it. I found that if I'm without my typewriter I just can't do it. I can't even write a letter. I can hardly write a note to the milkman.

How do you know when you're finished? It sounds like an agonizing process.

It is. Well, it's a sense, really; an emotional sense. Almost everything I do is a central image which I develop. And when I feel I've developed it and it's done, then I'm through. And I can't go on the basis of narration, because it's very rarely a narrative action for me. The first story I wrote was that way, a plot, a narrow set of actions. And so in a sense it's a progressive sense of development of a central image and the aim is to develop it in such a way that there is a certain emotional totality.

tern guys wanted to do it. They went ahead and stuck their necks out and a lot of dough. The *Triquarterly* people want a large distribution if they can get it because they would like to make some money. If they could make some money on this it could fund their magazine for a long time. In order to get the book released. . . I really rather liked this. It was corny, but. . . The reason for having the physical quality of the book this way is that this is supposed to be Willie Master's Lonesome Wife; she represents language, all the metaphors. . . So the body of the book was supposed to be as garish and, presumably, as lonely and as overblown as a woman who was once a burlesque queen, who's a little past it, and this is her body. So, in the hard cover, we were going to have a bookmark of a condom and the condom was to have printed on it a motto, like "Support Your Library," "National Book Week," and the motto I wrote for it was "A Dirty Book is a Clean Lay." And the idea was "Do not enter this dirty book without protection." This is like Willie Master's Lonesome Wife. Well, the press said, "No." So we had to give in on the condom. It really isn't a dirty book, you know, not compared to what comes out. I've found out how difficult (pornography) is to write, I tried to write a page and. . . oh boy! it didn't work. So I didn't do it seriously. The only way I could do it was to stylize it, to camp it up, to joke with it and so forth; I couldn't do it straight.

What do you read when you're not reading fiction or philosophy?

I read a great deal of history, a great deal of biography, a lot of natural science.

The grasshoppers. . .

Yeah, I'm fond of insects anyway. They're sort of personal friends.

I brought a friend of mine along to the meeting who is an etymologist and he was bowled over by the grasshopper thing in your reading.

Yeah, I'm very fond of spiders, for example, and in Brookston we had an old farmhouse where there were a lot of insects in the house. We had this beautiful misplaced spider who was a garden spider, one of those great big yellow-black ones. He was in the john and had this big beautiful web, and when you came into the john, out of his little hole he would come, down the web. And it was very nice being there and you didn't have to read. My wife'd get a little impatient because I didn't want the web torn down. Leave the spiders alone. Wherever a spider is, I like to read him and watch him.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Dan Jensen bases his lithographs on what he thinks the consequences of society are on the individual — to be martyr or hero...Terry Lee is from N.W. Kansas, interested in trademarks with an eye on package design...Ann Braddeley likes to go to parties and take trips...Jerry Hoffman is setting up a student co-operative advertising agency for Lawrence businesses...Lillie Chaffin has published two volumes of poetry...Miss Bendowsky has never been published before...Michael S. Glasser is working on a Ph.D. in Ohio...Harland Ristau is an art teacher whose drawings and poems have appeared in numerous mags...Richard Snyder is a widely-published Ohioan who will soon have a book of poems out called *A Map of Memnon Mornings*...Eric Chaet was found in a bottle by E. A. Poe, who exclaimed, "Jesus Maroo! They'll never believe this!" and they didn't. Quote from Chaet: "I get by with a little help from my friends. I need somebody to love. When Arthur Dimmesdale confesses, my cynical task will be through and I expect to die and go to heaven and have an infinitely long and naive conversation with Walt Whitman and Socrates on the 1959 White Sox."...Harry Weldon has published in two previous Cottonwoods and attended Wichita State. He is now writing and entertaining professionally in Skeet Harbor, Nova Scotia...Richard E. McMullen was born in Ypsilanti, Michigan, is father to three children, and teaches English to high school students...Granger Wright is a native Kansas poet from Scott City...Harley Elliott is a native of Salina, Kansas...Igor Chinnov is a native of Tukum, Russia who has published three volumes of poetry and was called by Yevtushenko the "foremost Russian emigre poet."...Richard Deutch is a widely published poet and editor who is presently inspiring the freshmen of the University of Kansas as an assistant English instructor...Jonathan Bell is a sophomore from Kansas City...Lawrence Maness is a playwright by profession.



