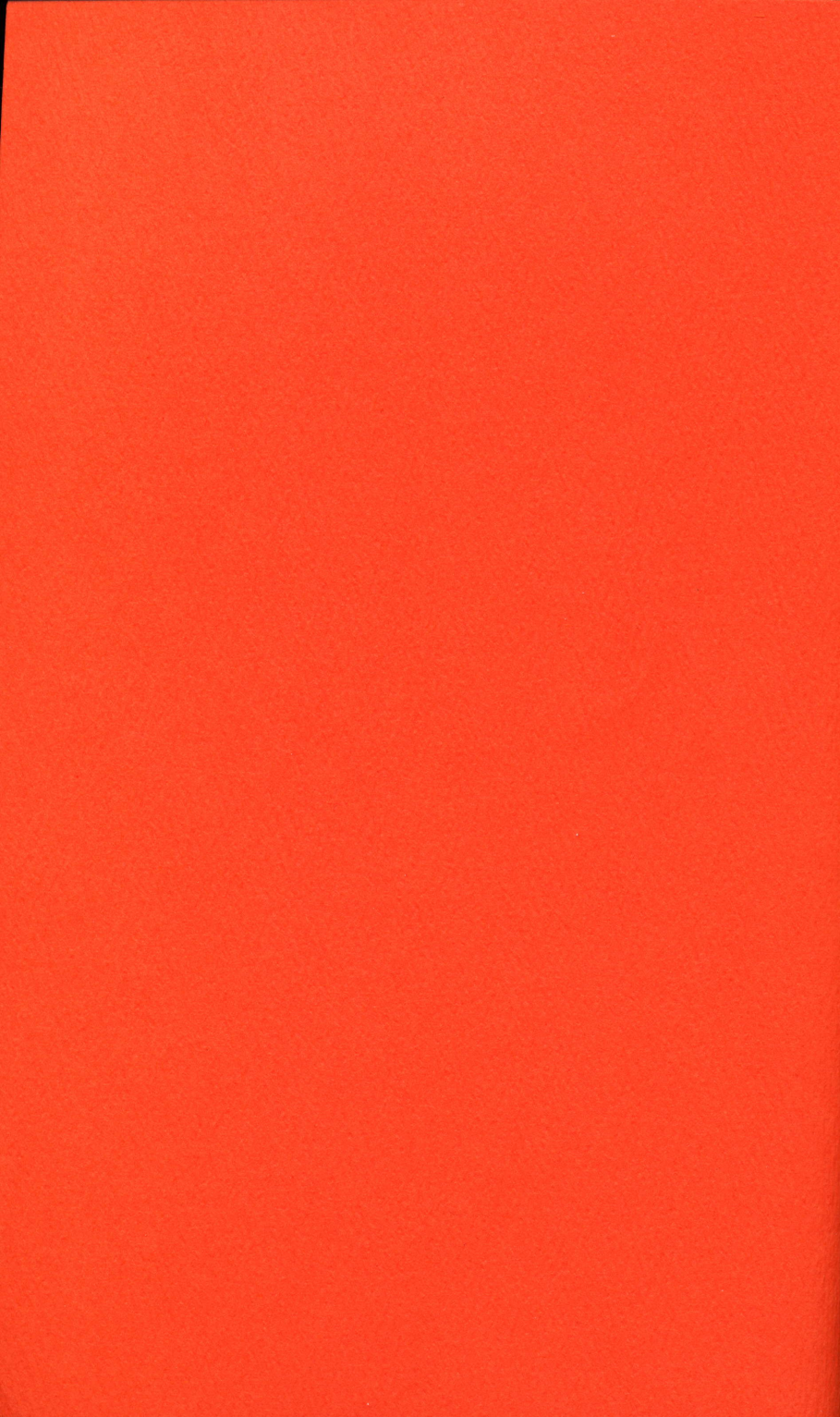
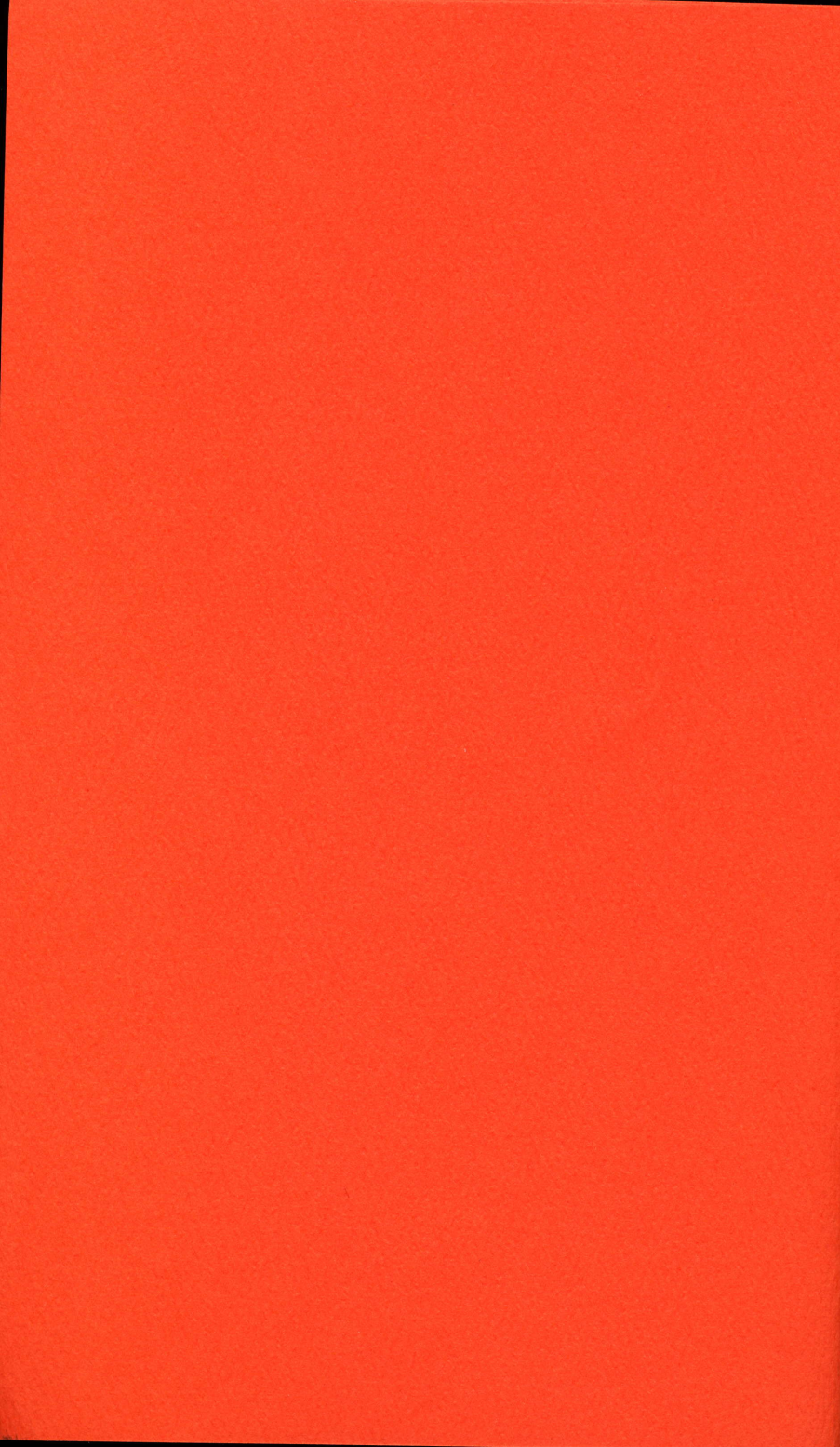


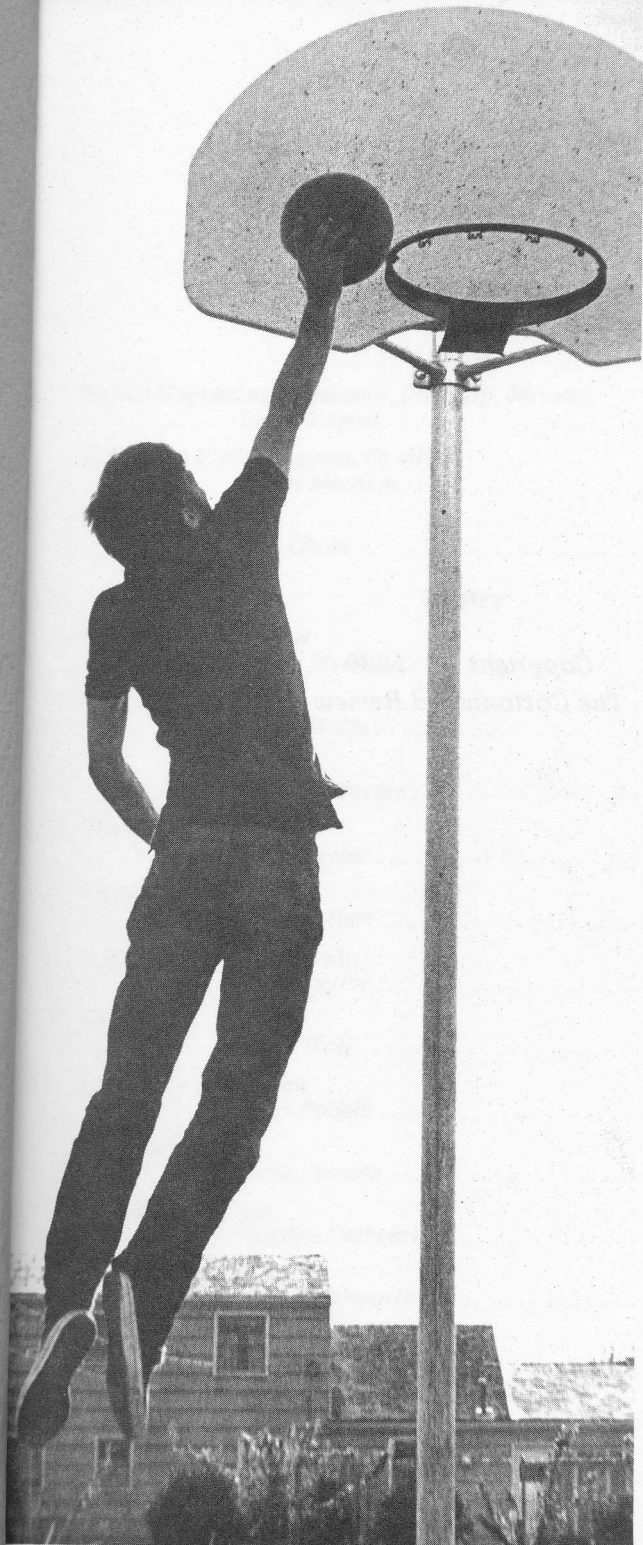
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The Cottonwood Review

COTTONWOOD REVIEW

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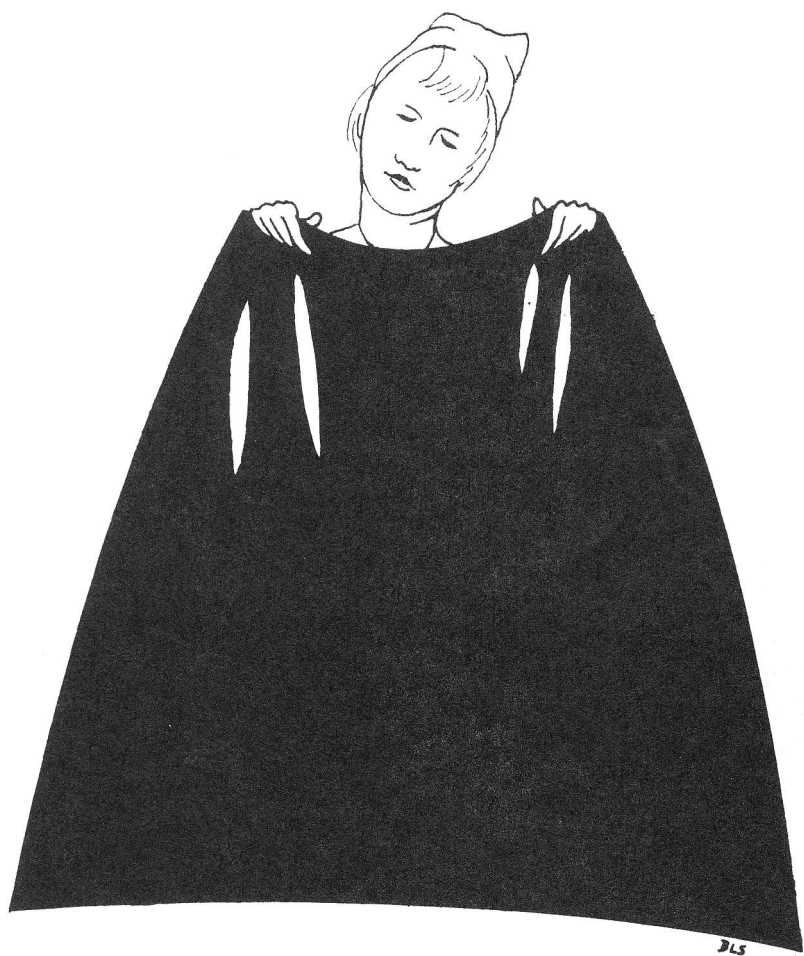
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The Cottonwood Review is published three times a year at the University of Kansas, Lawrence.

Editors: Jeff Lough, Jim Schmidt. *Literature and General Staff:* Robert Plehal, Sandie Eyman, John Dagenais, George Dugger, Charles Flink, Helen Clark, Leslie Perrine. *Art and Layout:* Mettie Whipple. *Business:* Leslie Perrine. *Faculty Advisor:* Thurston Moore.

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Lawrence, Kansas 66044



WHAT'S HAPPENING TO JEROMY, JEREOMY, JERROMY

TRAPPED

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CHARACTERS

Jeromy	Mother	Youth
Jereomy	Mr. Gris	Thomas
Jerromy	Ogden	Pat
	Middle-aged Man	

The setting is a small apartment with a door stage left and a window in the kitchen, stage right. The window shade is drawn. At the opening of the play the room is dark. Jeromy Hunt is sitting in his wheel chair center stage looking over a set of new books that he has ordered from a mail-order house. His back is facing the audience. To his left is an old reading desk, in front of him is a bookcase filled with very worn soft cover books. To the right of the case is a bed that resembles an army cot. The room has the appearance of being scrubbed so much that all of the color is rubbed away. Now it is drab, all over.

Jeromy is dressed in a plain dark shirt. His hair, cut very close to his head, makes him appear older than twenty-two. A dark blanket covers his legs.

Mother wears a cleaning woman's dress. The lines of age are cut deep in her face. She wears an apron and a scarf.

As the curtain opens, Jeromy is facing the book case. Even though it is daylight, the window shade is drawn and the apartment is dark. Mother enters through the dark with a candle in her hand. She bumps into the rocking chair that is in the middle of the room, then turns on a light and blows out the candle. She goes over to Jeromy and picks up the new stack of books. She starts for the door with them. Jeromy speaks first.

Jeromy: No! You can't.

- Mother: But we need the money, Jeromy. Besides, you can read the ones you have.
- Jeromy: I have! Why can't I read what I want?
- Mother: Don't you like the books I bought you?
- Jeromy: They're old. *(Pause)* And I know all the stories.
- Mother: But you don't know them well enough, Jeromy. *(Pause)* Has Mother ever lied to you? Then I'll get more when you're ready. Read to me. *(Pause)* I won't clean today because you need me again. *(Pause)* Let's hear about Humpty Dumpty.
- Jeromy: Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the king's horses, and all the king's men, couldn't put Humpty together again. Why can't they put him back together?
- Mother: It doesn't matter. They just can't.
- Jeromy: But why? If he wasn't killed it seems like they could have fixed him.
- Mother: Because the book said they couldn't, that's why. Now, don't ask. Just read. Read until I tell you to stop. *(Mother gets up and moves to the small kitchen. She fills a glass with water and pours it into a plant that's sitting on the window sill. It has no flower. She looks out the window for a few seconds, while listening to Jeromy read Humpty Dumpty.)* God. It's ugly here.
- Jeromy: What'd you say, Mother?
- Mother: Nothing, Jeromy. *(Pause)* Are you hungry?
- Jeromy: A little. Can I stop now?

Mother: You can stop. *(She pulls down the shade and steps to the cupboard.)*

Jeromy: Why do you always do that?

Mother: What?

Jeromy: Draw the shade.

Mother: Because there's nothing out there.

Jeromy: Then why is there a window? *(It's a hard look.)*

Mother: To let in the light. *(Pause)* Now that's enough, or would you rather read to me some more?

Jeromy: I'm sorry.

Mother: Being sorry means nothing until you stop your foolishness.

Jeromy: The questions?

Mother: Yes, the questions. Now stop it. *(Pause)* You must trust me, Jeromy. I'm just helping you.

Jeromy: Helping what? *(The question irritates her.)*

Mother: You son, you. What happened to Riding Hood?

Jeromy: She was saved.

Mother: Just like you, Jeromy.

Jeromy: But from what? I've never . . .

Mother: You don't need to know from what. That's not important.

Jeromy: But, mother . . . *(There's a knock on the door that*

interrupts him. Mother gets up to answer it. She turns to Jeromy first.)

Mother: Don't look. You can't see now, can you, Jeromy? Why are you always blind when people come? *(She moves toward him and pushes his head down, then she walks to the door. Before opening it she looks back at Jeromy.)* Yes?

Mr. Gris: *(Mr. Gris is not seen completely, just his face. It is worn with age, but his gray hair is neat.)* Mrs. Hunt?

Mother: Yes? Oh, Mr. Gris. Why are you here?

Mr. Gris: Why are *you*? You're supposed to be working. Now I know you have a sick boy, but I can't have you not showing up for work. You've missed ten days this month already.

Mother: My boy's not sick, he's paralyzed.

Mr. Gris: Oh, I am sorry.

Mother: And blind.

Mr. Gris: I'm really sorry, but . . .

Mother: But nothing. Jeromy needs me more each day. You'll have to find somebody else.

Mr. Gris: If that's the way you feel.

Mother: That's the way we feel. Good-bye, Mr. Gris. *(Jeromy raises his head and opens his eyes.)*

Jeromy: Can I see now, Mother?

Mother: Yes, Jeromy. The man's gone.

Jeromy: What'd he look like?

Mother: Like all the others.

Jeromy: Oh.

Mother: It's not time for you, Jeromy. Not yet. *(She sits in the rocking chair and begins to rock.)*

Jeromy: But Mother, I've never seen a . . .

Mother: Read to me, Jeromy.

Jeromy: *(Jeromy looks at Mother. She appears dazed.)* But, Mother.

Mother: Read, Jeromy. *(Pause)* Read.

Jeromy: Which story?

Mother: Riding Hood. *Mother closes her eyes and rocks. Jeromy begins to read. As he reads, Mother lips the words as if she knows them by heart. He reads the story and when finished looks over to see Mother asleep. He wheels himself to her and wakes her up.)*

Jeromy: Mother, Mother, wake up, it's late.

Mother: Did you finish the story, Jeromy?

Jeromy: Yes, Mother. Can I go to sleep now?

Mother: It's a good story, isn't it Jeromy? But the Huntsman was almost too late, wasn't he?

Jeromy: Can I go to bed, Mother?

Mother: That makes him bad, Jeromy. We won't let that happen, will we?

Jeromy: I'm tired, Mother. I'll read some more tomorrow.

Mother: You should sleep now, Jeromy. You need your

sleep. (Mother reaches in her bra and pulls out a key. She takes the blanket that covers Jeremy's legs and folds it. She puts the blanket on his reading desk. Then she bends down and unlocks the locks that have chained Jeremy to the wheel chair. Jeremy stands and Mother kisses him. He walks to the bed against the wall and begins to disrobe, starting with his shirt. Mother sits back in the rocker and picks up the copy of *Little Red Riding Hood*. She begins to read it out loud. She reads in a soft, emotional voice that quivers from the feeling she has for the story. Jeremy doesn't look at her. He now has his shoes and shirt off; he is now removing his belt. Mother begins to cry and sniffle.)

CURTAIN

— Lawrence J. Maness

CONFUSION

Jereomy is dressed in dark colored shirt and slacks.

Ogden is old and dressed in blue jeans, baggy red shirt and sandals. His hair is grey and shoulder length.

In the middle of the stage is a bare tree. Under it, stage right, is a rock where Jereomy is sitting at the beginning of the play. After Jereomy's opening speech, enter Ogden stage left.

Jereomy: God damn. No one's ever on time. (*He moves a twig in the dirt drawing a picture.*) I was never one to be late. There's no reason for it. (*Looks at his watch.*) It's nearly six. Where is she? (*Looks over his shoulder.*) Probably eating dinner. Probably forgot where we were to meet. Probably even forgot that. It ain't worth it. Nothing is. It just ain't worth it!

Ogden: Nothing is but, good morning.

Jereomy: What? What'd you say?

Ogden: I said, "Good morning."

Jereomy: Who the hell are you?

Ogden: Oh, just a stroller.

Jereomy: A what?

Ogden: A stroller. A walker, it gives me time to think.

Jereomy: Well you need it. It's afternoon. Five after six by my watch.

Ogden: That's right. It's exactly five after.

Jereomy: (*Looks over his shoulder and erases his drawing with a stick.*) Still think its morning? (*Chuckles.*)

Ogden: Oh, yes. It still is. And a fine one too. Don't you think?

Jereomy: So you drink a lot. Now run on, I'm waiting for somebody.

Ogden: I don't drink. It slows me.

Jereomy: It slows you. That's nice. Will you get your crazy ass out of here? Go on.

Ogden: What makes you say that? I never bother.

Jereomy: Well, you bother me.

Ogden: I could be sorry.

Jereomy: What?

Ogden: I said I could be sorry. But I'm not.

Jereomy: You're not?

Ogden: No. I never bother.

Jereomy: I said you bother me.

Ogden: So? Who are you?

Jereomy: Who the hell are *you*?

Ogden: I told you. I walk and think.

Jereomy: Sure you do. You think its morning when its almost night.

Ogden: It is.

Jereomy: Sure it is.

Ogden: Exactly. It took me a long time to figure that one out.

Jereomy: And a lot of miles too.

Ogden: Not so many. I stand a lot.

Jereomy: Will you get out of here! Crazyies make me sick.

Ogden: Me too. That's why I walk in the woods. There're not many out here. *(He looks at him. Very deep)*

Jereomy: I'll bet.

Ogden: It's true. I have no reason.

Jereomy: Well?

Ogden: Well what?

Jereomy: Reason for what?

Ogden: Reason for anything, I suppose, especially not to lie.

Jereomy: I see. Good morning, crazy.

Ogden: *(He says nothing. He merely looks around.)*

Jereomy: I said, "Good morning, crazy."

Ogden: I heard you.

Jereomy: Then why don't you answer?

Ogden: I didn't think it was addressed to me.

Jereomy: And why not?

Ogden: If you give me time, I'll tell you.

- Jereomy: Well?
- Ogden: I don't know yet.
- Jereomy: I thought you were a thinker?
- Ogden: I am. But I told you that it took me a long time to figure out when morning was. A very long time.
- Jereomy: How long?
- Ogden: Much longer than you've given me for this.
- Jereomy: And how did you find out?
- Ogden: Actually quite simple. Most problems are, you know. But I decided that morning should be when I got up, and this morning I got up at five-thirty.
- Jereomy: In the afternoon.
- Ogden: No. In the morning. You don't understand?
- Jereomy: Sure I understand. Two can play this game.
- Ogden: I'm sure two can, but what's the game?
- Jereomy: You're trying to keep me away from the girl. You're trying to scare me off. That right?
- Ogden: I don't think so. But keep talking. It sounds interesting.
- Jereomy: You know she's supposed to meet me here. Deny it. (*He shouts.*)
- Ogden: All right. I deny it.
- Jereomy: That's it, keep it up. You'll just deny everything.
- Ogden: Could be. Keep going, I want to hear the rest.

Jereomy: She's tall and blond. Quite thin.

Ogden: I like that kind. Keep going.

Jereomy: (*Disturbed*) Oh well then, she's short and fat and has black short hair.

Ogden: Oh, I like that kind too. Are two girls meeting you here?

Jereomy: You know that as well as I. Don't you?

Ogden: Not about that, no.

Jereomy: Sure you do.

Ogden: I know that I'm here with you, but for the present that's about all. I don't project. That leads to unpleasant things. Doesn't it?

Jereomy: (*He looks at his watch.*)Where is she, anyway?
(*Under his breath.*)

Ogden: See! (*He laughs.*)

Jereomy: Don't laugh at me!

Ogden: (*He stops laughing.*)What made you think I was laughing at you?

Jereomy: Who else is here?

Ogden: I am. I could have been laughing at myself.

Jereomy: But you weren't.

Ogden: If that satisfies you, it does me.

Jereomy: Were you?

Ogden: No. I'm not funny. But you are.

Jereomy: How so?

Ogden: For waiting on those two girls.

Jereomy: There's not two, just one.

Ogden: Well, one then.

Jereomy: How's that funny?

Ogden: Because you're rattled. It annoys you that she's late.

Jereomy: And that's funny, huh? Well I don't think it is.

Ogden: It needn't be.

Jereomy: It needn't?

Ogden: No. You could set your watch back. You could even make her early. That is, if you wanted to.

Jereomy: She'd still be late.

Ogden: Why?

Jereomy: Because you can't do that. That's why.

Ogden: Oh, I always thought you could.

Jereomy: Do you?

Ogden: Most certainly. And I'm never late.

Jereomy: You're not?

Ogden: Never. Others are. Either early or late, but that's their fault, not mine.

Jereomy: (*He looks at his watch.*) What else do you do? I mean that way?

Ogden: Everything.

Jereomy: Like what?

Ogden: Like eat, sleep, walk, everything. Everything that's important, I suppose.

Jereomy: *(He has a questioning look on his face. He scratches his head.)* And that's it?

Ogden: Most of the time, it is. Except on vacations.

Jereomy: I didn't think you'd work.

Ogden: I don't. But I take vacations. I'm on one now, as a matter of fact. It's such a nice morning.

Jereomy: I'm sure it is. *(Jereomy jumps up and starts to push Ogden back. He pushes and pushes until Ogden falls down.)* CRAZY! *(He turns to go to his seat, but he looks back at Ogden first.)* CRAZY! YOU GOD DAMN CRAZY. GET OUT OF HERE. OUT. OUT. LEAVE ME ALONE!

Ogden: *(He gets to his feet and brushes himself off. He doesn't move from the spot.)* It can't be the heat. *(He looks up at the sun.)* It's too cool. Just right for me. Do you think it's warm?

Jereomy: Leave me alone. Won't you do that? Just leave me.

Ogden: I don't know you well enough to leave you.

Jereomy: What? You don't what?

Ogden: Know you well enough. It's primary.

Jereomy: *(He doesn't say anything. He just sits and puts his head in his hands. He shakes his head.)*

Ogden: Before I can leave you, I must meet you. It's a necessary evil in some cases.

Jereomy: The girl will meet me. You can go. *(He looks at his watch.)*

Ogden: Do you live in town?

Jereomy: *(He just looks at Ogden.)*

Ogden: I say, do you live in town?

Jereomy: Maybe I do. *(Indignant.)*

Ogden: You don't know?

Jereomy: Of course I know!

Ogden: Well then, do you or not?

Jereomy: Yes. YES. I LIVE IN TOWN!

Ogden: Like it?

Jereomy: At times.

Ogden: But not all the time. Heh?

Jereomy: No. Not all the time. Say, what is this?

Ogden: *(He looks down to where Jereomy is sitting.)*
What's that?

Jereomy: These questions. I don't have to answer you.

Ogden: I should hope not. Is it the people?

Jereomy: What people?

Ogden: In town. Do they bother?

Jereomy: I'm not answering.

Ogden: That's fine. Keep it up. Do they bother?

Jereomy: *(No answer. He picks up the stick and begins to draw again. He looks at Ogden and smiles a smirky smile.)*

Ogden: Do they? Well? Do THEY? DO they? *(Pause.)* You're not going to speak? Are you sure? PROMISE ME! *(Very softly.)* Promise me you won't speak. Will you do that? I'd like you to see, but I'm afraid you'd cry or maybe kill yourself. *(He bends down to Jereomy and puts his arm around him.)* You could hang from this tree without a rope if you wanted. You could let the ashes of your life choke you. *(He laughs.)* Or maybe. MAYBE! Maybe you could sit here and wait until you're stone. Rock. And time could wear you down to nothing. A PAINLESS nothing. Where all the kisses in the world would taste like shit. Yours. Grains of sandy SHIT. *(He laughs again.)* Maybe not that either. You could . . . if. NO. No if's. You can. *(He stands up.)* Yes, even you can. YOU can create TIME into something other than deforming minutes. You can't escape it, but the futility of trying brings some happiness. *(He pushes Jereomy off the rock.)* YOUR LIFE! Do you believe it? *(He bends down very close to Jereomy, who is still on the ground.)* DO YOU BELIEVE IT? DO—YOU—BELIEVE—IT? *(He laughs.)* No matter. It's true. Took me a long time to figure it. *(He laughs.)* And many miles. *(Laughs.)*

Jereomy: *(He gets back on the rock.)* You're sick, old man. I shouldn't have pushed you. What damage have I done? *(He still has his head down.)*

Ogden: *(He stands up.)* Are your eyes open?

Jereomy: Truly sorry. *(Still shaking his head.)*

- Ogden: Are they? Still not answering, huh? I don't blame you. Not one bit. (*Jereomy looks up at Ogden. His eyes are open.*) No need to open them or to speak. You didn't hurt me. (*He pounds on his chest.*) This old body can't be damaged. You have to reach me first, and you didn't. Touched me, yes, but never reached.
- Jereomy: But I pushed you.
- Ogden: And I fell down. You didn't push me down, I fell. (*He begins to slump each time he pronounces the word "down."*) Down, Down, Down. Down. Down.
- Jereomy: (*He stoops over to pick Ogden up.*) You shouldn't do that. The ground's cold. Come on, get back up here.
- Ogden: SEE! (*He jumps up.*) SEE! You touched me! Again and again! Feel it? Do you know? That's it! (*He looks at his watch.*) The time. THE TIME'S RIGHT!
- Jereomy: (*Rattled. He's up and moving. Very nervous.*) What's that you're saying?
- Ogden: The time's right. (*He shows Jereomy his watch.*) It's six o'clock. I'm right on time and YOU'RE LATE! Now you must wait again. It was here and you missed it.
- Jereomy: You're not her. I've seen her before. You're not her!
- Ogden: You've touched her, but never seen her! You've NEVER SEEN A THING! NOT A GOD DAMN THING!
- Jereomy: (*Jereomy begins to hit Ogden. He hits and hits until the old man falls to his knees. He shouts.*)

YOU'RE NOT REAL! YOU'RE NOT, YOU'RE NOT. YOU'RE NOT REAL! (*He sits down and begins to weep. His head is again in his hands.*)

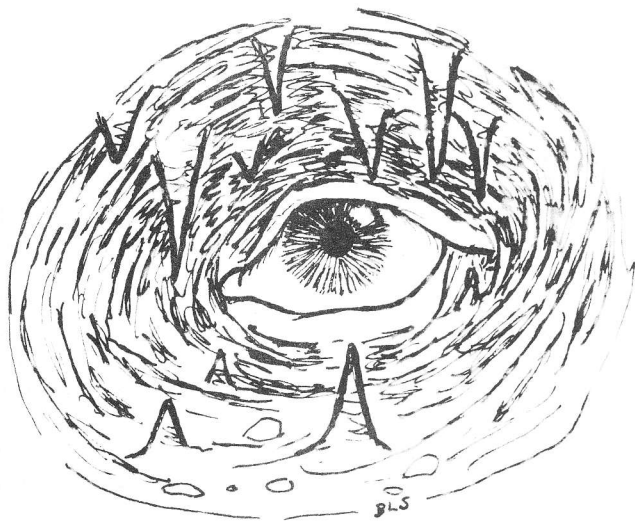
Ogden: (*Ogden gets up and looks at Jereomy. He pats him on the head.*)

Jereomy: YOU'RE NOT! YOU'RE CRAZY! CRAZY! (*Jereomy jumps up and shakes his hands in the air and yells once again.*)

C R A Z Y ! ! ! ! ! ! !

Ogden: (*smiling. Very calm.*) You'll wait, now. Just like the rest.

CURTAIN



SALVATION

The stage is bare throughout the play. No props.

Thomas and Pat are dressed in business suits. Youth wears beads, sandals, blue jeans, and a sweat shirt. He has long hair.

Middle-aged Man wears a suit with no tie, sandals and beads. His hair is not quite as long as Youth's.

Jerromy also wears beads, sandals and long hair. But his dress is very shabby. His blue jeans and dark shirt are very baggy. His beard is even unruly.

Scene one: (Youth enters stage left and moves right until his death. He should be far right at that point.)

Youth: It could be. Yes. And so could I. A message to an unnerved corpse who left himself behind visions of location. A luckless number. Death of wild. Even distant. Flowers dry, a room less talk, words, a vagrant. Shut out by an open window that wasn't there. YES! YES, YES. A man that can't escape MONDAY! THE SEARCH IS ON and on and on and on. It doesn't stop. It dies unfound. Me and some read newspaper found in a gutter with a woman locked in a rubber. KISS THE GROUND AND CALL IT SKY. It matters? Yes, as much as sand on a desert. All to do is wait. Then it comes and says, "Young man, your boat is ready." I look up (*He does.*) and say, "But pregnant angel, I can't row!" CAN'T EVEN ROW! (*He laughs.*) The pawnshop of brains is even closed. This bath on earth is too much. Mercy dying in the abyss of puked life. Your meat trucks can't feed me, so celebrate. Celebrate the only way you know how, by mourning. (*He pulls out a knife and holds it above his head.*) Put me in sawdust where we belong. Earth is too cold. (*He plunges the dagger into his stomach. He falls. The light dims.*)

Scene two:

It is morning and two men are standing over the place where Youth killed himself last night. They have badges on and are investigators of some sort. As the curtain opens they are bending over the fatal place, drawing outlines of the body, writing things in notebooks, and scratching their heads. They do this for twenty seconds before they say anything.

Thomas: How'd he die?

Pat: Bled to death. (*Thomas is writing this down and everything else.*)

Thomas: How?

Pat: Knife. (*He looks at Thomas.*) In the gut.

Thomas: About what time?

Pat: Around eleven, eleven-thirty.

Thomas: Any identification?

Pat: Ya. (*Pat takes out his pad and reads the following.*)
Name was Robert W. Sims, age twenty-three, occupation unknown, address unknown, next of kin unknown. He had no rings or watch, a couple of bucks in his wallet. That's about all.

Name was Robert W. Sims, age twenty-three, occupation unknown, address unknown, next of kin unknown. He had no watch or rings, a couple of bucks in his wallet. That's about all.

Thomas: (*Nods his head. Still writing.*) Motive?

Pat: Apparent suicide.

Thomas: What'll I put down here for motive? (*He looks stumped.*)

Pat: Put "none."

Thomas: There had to be some.

Pat: Does the form push the question?

Thomas: No.

Pat: Then write "None."

Thomas: (Writing the word "none.") Height?

Pat: Average.

Thomas: Weight?

Pat: Average.

Thomas: I guess that about does it except for the location.

Pat: I guess. (*They bend over and look again at the chalk marks on the ground where the youth was killed.*)

Thomas: (*Measuring the chalk body.*) You know that bicycle I bought for my kid?

Pat: (*Drawing something on the ground.*) Ya.

Thomas: Somebody stole it.

Pat: No kiddin'.

Thomas: Only had it for a week. (*Thomas gets up and hands Pat one end of a tape measure. Then he moves far stage left with the tape. He reads off the number of inches it is.*)

Pat: Did ye report it?

- Thomas: Ya. Yesterday. (*Looking at the tape again. Enter a middle-aged man, shaggily dressed. He bumps into Thomas.*) Excuse me. (*The man looks up at Thomas.*)
- Middle-aged Man: (*He just looks at Thomas and then at Pat. He brushes back his unruly hair and says nothing. He looks out over the audience.*)
- Thomas: But there's so damned many red bikes around it'll be hard to find.
- Pat: Didn't you write down the numbers?
- Thomas: No. Who in the hell'd think somebody'd steal the kid's bike?
- Pat: I suppose. But somebody did. There're people like that, you should have thought better.
- Thomas: (*Thomas writes down the numbers he has now. He moves right a few feet and measures again.*) I know. But the wife was sick for a few days and I forgot. Thought she had pneumonia but it was only the flu. Even flu is hard on a person of her age. She's not all that young any more.
- Pat: How in the hell could you mistake the flu for pneumonia?
- Thomas: Well, she had a high fever, congestion, headache; and it lasted longer than any flu I've ever seen. It could have been pneumonia. (*He writes down the numbers he has measured this time.*)
- Middle-aged Man: (*He has been looking at the audience ever since he entered. Now he looks at Pat and Thomas and back to the audience. He begins to speak, but he is talking through the conversation of Pat and Thomas. He pays no attention to them and they none to him. His speech is to the audience.*) A roach caught in an unseen web. Tangled.

Pat: It could have been a cold. Just a common cold.

Middle-aged Man: Dead. The measure of his life.

Thomas: Sure, it could have been, but why take chances. I mean, she's getting old.

Middle-aged Man: Small tight strands. Choking. Growing tighter and more invisible.

Pat: You worry too damn much.

Middle-aged Man: Killers wrapped in tender warmth.

Thomas: The Hell! You've got to be aware of these things. A lot of things happen when you're unaware.

Middle-aged Man: Sucking days out of seconds and making shit out of your body.

Pat: There's nothing to get ready for, man. We've got all we need.

Middle-aged Man: Your mind is already gone.

Pat: Security, ease, comfort, family, home, job. What more is there.

Middle-aged Man: Already shit. The waste from your perfect body.

Thomas: You've still got to look ahead. Be ready.

Middle-aged Man: Mixed. Confused. WASTED! WASTED! WASTED!

Pat: (*Thomas moves over a few feet more to measure again.*) Ready for what?

Middle-aged Man: There's one salvation.

Thomas: That's just it. Be ready for what you don't know. We can't ease through everything just because we've made good.

Middle-aged Man: No. NO! There's NO SALVATION! Just an end.

Thomas: I mean anything can happen.

Middle-aged Man: No more than that.

Pat: My ass. We've got it. Quit worrying.

Middle-aged Man: *(He reaches in his shirt and pulls out a knife and holds it over his head.)* A cold earth gives nothing. COLD EARTH. PUT ME IN SAWDUST! *(He plunges the knife in his stomach and falls dead on the floor.)*

Thomas: *(Writing down what he has measured.)* You don't understand a damn thing.

Pat: What'd you mean by that?

Thomas: If you don't realize the total situation, you can't cope with it when it comes. Isn't that right?

Pat: Maybe. But that don't mean a thing.

Thomas: Sure, it means something. *(He sets down the tape and runs over to Pat. Thomas kneels down to Pat.)* Don't ya see! I was ready for my wife to have pneumonia; and when she only had the flu, it was all the better.

Pat: Sure, you were prepared. *(He laughs.)* Worrying about your old lady got the kid's bike stolen. *(He laughs again.)*

Thomas: You don't . . . *(Pause. Thomas motions down with*

his hands in disgust.) Oh, Hell. Forget it. Just forget the whole thing. *(Thomas stands up; then does Pat.)*

Pat: *(Puts his arm around Thomas.)* Look, I don't mean to ride ya. It's just my oldest boy. He says that I, that Mother and I, don't understand what he's trying to do.

Thomas: Well, I

Pat: He talks about love and peace and rights and all that shit. *(He looks at Thomas.)* And hell, I was ready to bring that boy up. I know how to do it, by God. I was ready. I gave that kid everything. Everything.

Thomas: Now wait a minute. I wasn't trying to say that you can be ready for everything. I mean, if my wife would have had pneumonia and I'd a been counting on it just being the flu. Well, I'd a been in a hell of a shape. Sometimes it's impossible. Things just don't go right all the time. There's no reason for you to blame yourself. Some things just don't go right. That's all.

Pat: I'm not blaming anybody. I'm just telling ya that that's the way he is and it bothers me. What can ya do with a kid like that? *(Pat shakes his head.)*

Thomas: You let him grow out of it. That's the only thing you can do.

Pat: And he's my damn kid. Who'd ever think it'd happen to my kid.

Thomas: He'll grow out of it, I'm telling ya. He will. *(Enter Jerromy. Wearing baggy pants and shirt. His hair is long and messy. He walks with a cane. He enters stage left, at the same point as Youth and*

Middle-aged Man did. He stands behind the dead man and looks at the audience. His speech also talks through Pat's and Thomas's speeches.)

Pat: I hope so. 'Cause I don't know what to do.

Thomas: He will, I'm telling ya.

Jerromy: Dying is the end of evolution. To judge unfair is the beginning of that dying.

Pat: It could be just a phase.

Jerromy: Love, Peace. They're an answer.

Pat: He had a hot rod once and he soon got over it. Sold it cheap just to get rid of it.

Jerromy: Images of drain pipes walk the streets and overlook people.

Thomas: That's just what he'll do with those ideas. Get rid of them. He knows they won't work. They're impractical, like a hot rod.

Jerromy: New drain pipes are already buried in the cold ground. Surrounded by sick gasses.

Pat: He kept that car longer than I thought he would.

Jerromy: They kill. Surround you and kill you.

Thomas: (Shouts at Pat.) HE'LL GET OVER IT I'M TELLING YA! He will.

Jerromy: Be strong. True. Step over the drain pipes.

Pat: Sure he will. Everybody goes through a phase of some kind or other. Don't they?

Jerromy: And then, only then, will you last.

Thomas: Sure, everybody.

Jerromy: But now they kill us, shame us. They've closed the lids on their pipes and smother us with their life's puke.

Pat: Ya, he'll be all right. I'll just give him something to occupy his mind.

Jerromy: They make it too cold. *(He shouts.)* TOO COLD! C . . . O . . . L . . . D . *(He pulls out a knife and stabs himself in the stomach. Then he says as he's falling to the floor.)* Sawdust. *(He falls dead beside the Middle-aged Man.)*

Thomas: That's the thing to do.

Pat: That's just what I'll do.

Thomas: *(He looks up.)* Right. *(He looks around and has a puzzling look on his face.)*

Pat: Something wrong?

Thomas: No, No, I don't think so. Everything feels fine to me. But.

Pat: But what?

Thomas: But, I don't know. I just felt a chill. Did you?

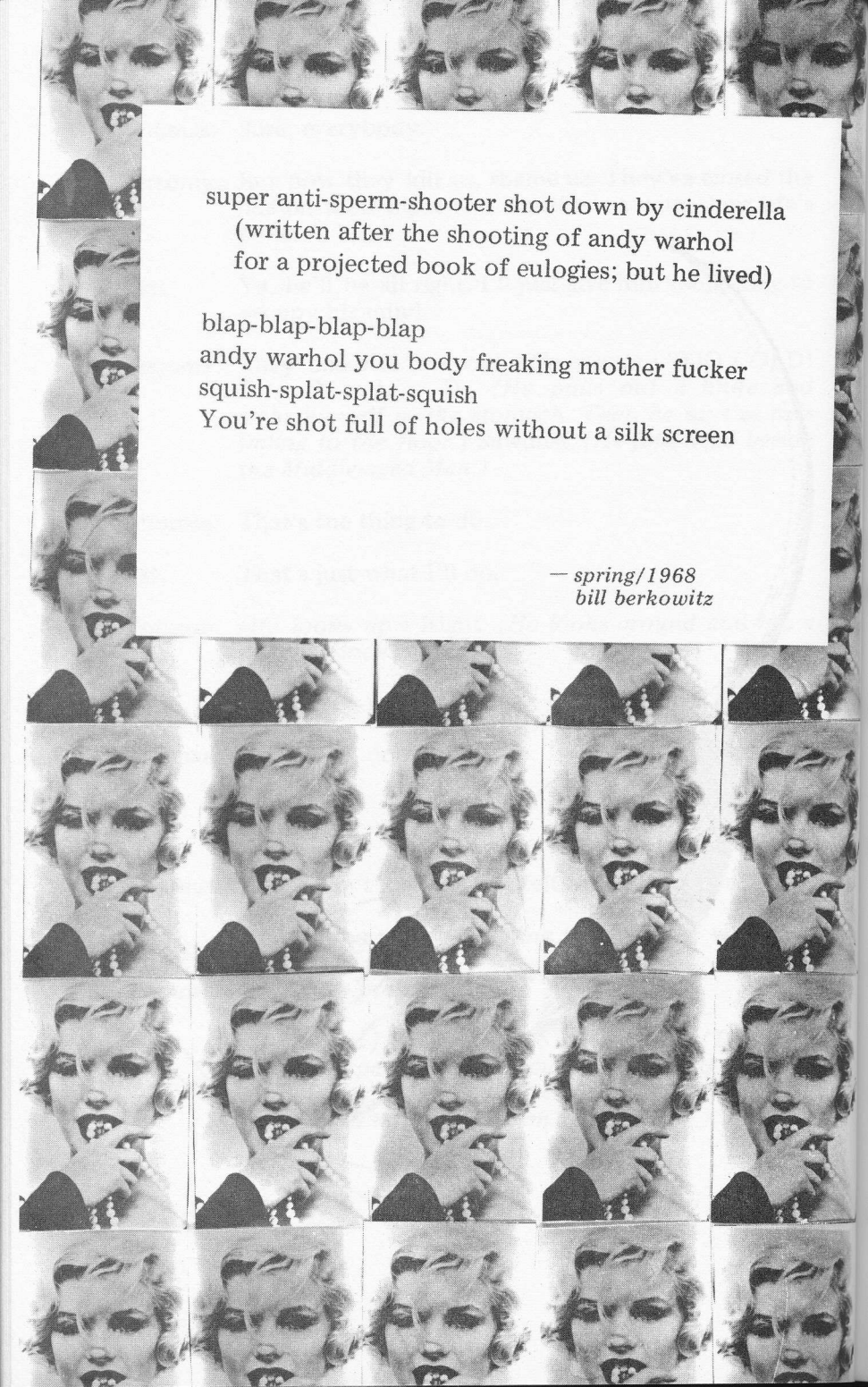
Pat: No. Maybe you're catching the flu your wife had.

Thomas: Or maybe pneumonia.

Pat: *(He laughs.)* Ya. Could be pneumonia. *(They roll up the tape and as the curtain is falling, they're walking stage left, where the two bodies are, talking and not seeing them.)*

CURTAIN





super anti-sperm-shooter shot down by cinderella
(written after the shooting of andy warhol
for a projected book of eulogies; but he lived)

blap-blap-blap-blap
andy warhol you body freaking mother fucker
squish-splat-splat-squish
You're shot full of holes without a silk screen

— *spring/1968*
bill berkowitz

BENJY AT THE WINDOW

Of course you are right, Frost
 (I see you, panda shaggy strength,
 standing quiet in the bereft night):

 It is not seemly
to puke and mewl in the public arms

But you, luckily, died.

And granite Jeffers,
 my pain, too, pass, if
 ready to write
 man off

 rotten stub of umbilical
to a "well ordered" universe

of water and rock

But I, luckily, come from softness . .
 and cannot.

That leaves me nothing
 but to be
 to be
 an abject object of scorn
a howling cacophony of distress
 Biafran belly growl
Bleat out my anguish at this human
 inhuman
 war.

Soul of Ginsberg!

 Rose of Sharon!

 Lover of Life!

My yawp not yawp
but room-rattling whimperings
 Benjy at the window.

Poetry needs discipline and form —
then

I can
no poetry.
My grief shapeless
The form of my poem formless
My scream jagged extension
cHILD MOTHER stoP STOP priEst FaTHER
Stop stOP fathER stop TeACHeR
sAINt Stop STop WAIT
StOp siSter stOP IOvER PAUSE A PACE
PaX Slow
HOID STOP just 1 one moment wait

Stop, good father tearing the limb from the birch
other limbs shall be torn.

Faces across the table
Brows of 3 year old furrowed with ephemeral hate
Vortex of ore for hydrogen hemorrhages
Screaming, my soul adhering to jelly-bread of napalm aflame

Wait, old father, blue and gold-capped legionaire,
hating the sons of your daughters
soon enough they shall have none.

Faces in the street
Parading of medals medals of skill skill of what work
Marching pride of lions, toothless, in leafless jungles

Screaming, my soul clutching in love-embrace
a syphillitic flag burning
with disease of past patriotic orgies
Whitman's seed monster mutated

Halt, old Father, meek and fiery Paul, striking back
calling your church "intransigent and dogmatic"
"at any cost"

the cost as always is high.
(one face turned up on the high scaffold —)
Study, old Father, the reaching hands,
the beautiful hands on the ceiling of the Sistine.

Screaming, my soul spurts new red on the cross
that whetted Roland's sword
and stirred the blood on Bartholomew's Day

this evil war of good with evil is everywhere
obeys no peninsula
. . . hate and righteousness, synonyms for sin.
I cannot condemn America with you Duncan
I can only whimper at its blindness,
Oedipus incestuous, screwed crooked
by the wingnut of senile virility,
hardened arteries of power —
at all our blindness:
this evil war of good with evil is everywhere
My parents, warm womb and strong shoulder
are part of it.

stop the war

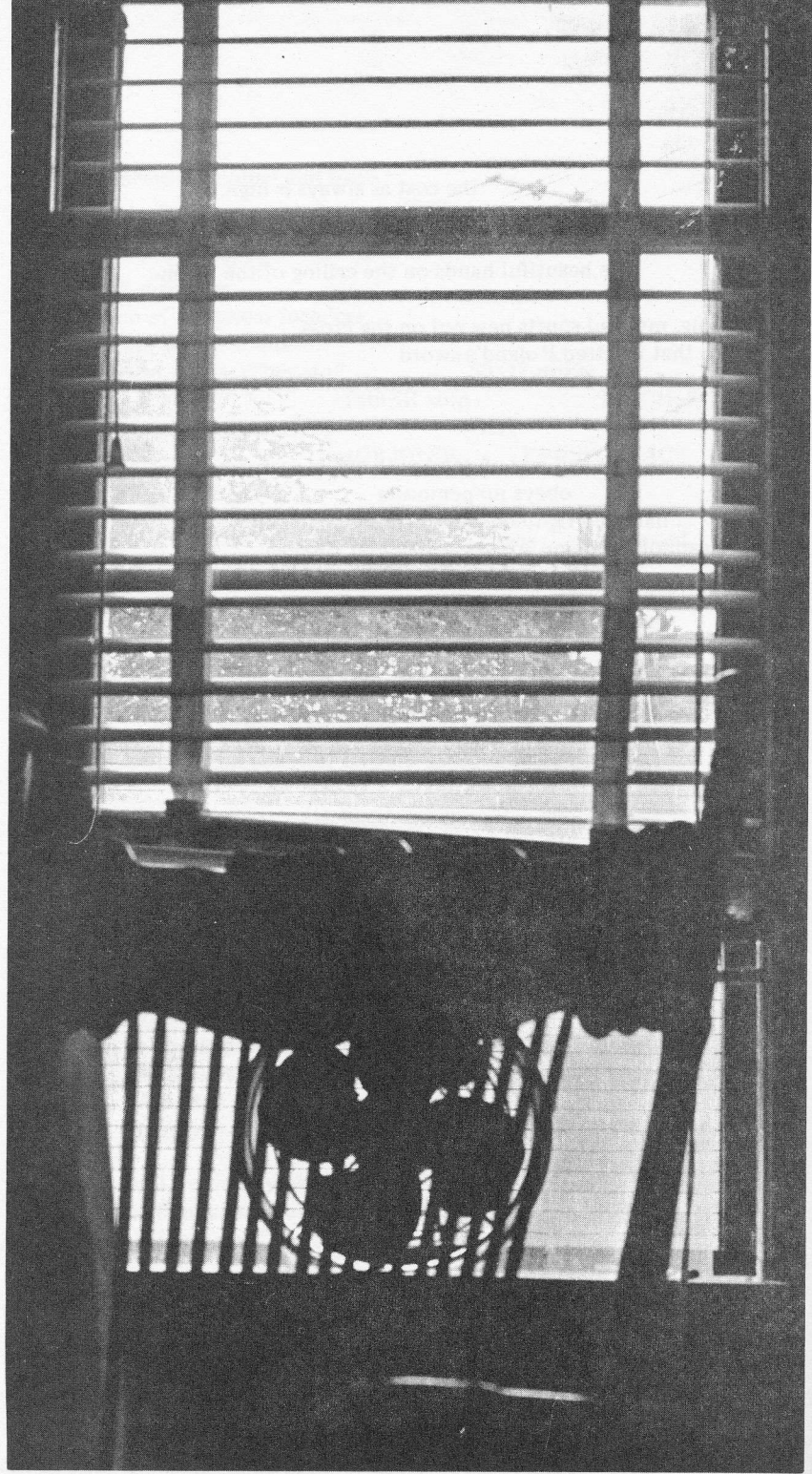
plunder it with touches
with pauses of questioning eyes
with empty hands

turned up
and not in supplication or despair.

my parents, warm womb and strong shoulder are part of it . . .
. . . . I cannot outwalk the farthest city light.

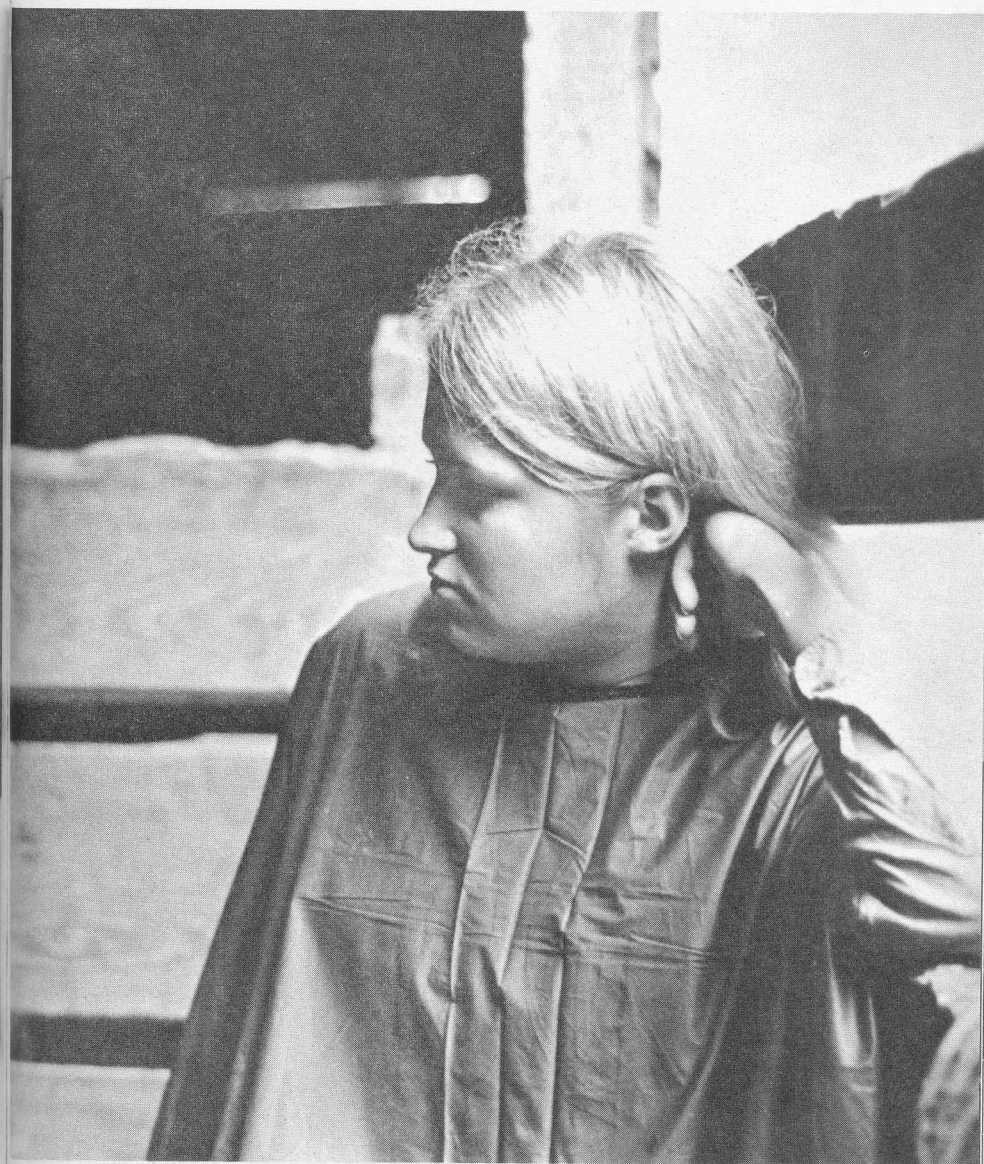
stop halt slow wait for just one 1 moment wait

— James Mersman











THIS IS THE FIRST TELEGRAM, CYNTHIA!

He got out of bed and felt panicky filling a glass of water and drank from it and felt drunk and knew he'd been drinking the night before. That wasn't the worst.

He tore open a telegram addressed to Thomas Slickem. THIS IS THE FIRST TELEGRAM. PLEASE PLANT PLUMS AND AFTER THAT ATTACK. NORMA.

He had to sit down. There was too much feeling of doom on his feet. Finally, he got himself under some control. He tried to reassure himself, by thinking verbally, "I probably need a rest. Probably working too hard. It will all come back in time. Meanwhile...start from scratch."

He searched for his pants. He found them hanging in the closet. He looked in his coat. There was sixty dollars.

The phone rang. It was a woman's voice. He was comforted by the sound. "How about some breakfast?" she asked.

"All right."

"See you downstairs," she said.

He recognized her as soon as he saw her as the same woman he had talked to in the bar. The first thing he asked her after they were served and had exchanged pleasantries was if she happened to know where he could start looking for a job.

"I don't live here. I'm on vacation."

He gave her the telegram. She read it, poured out some coffee, lit a cigarette. "It's something Gertrude Stein said. It doesn't mean anything. I'm an English professor."

"Oh."

He wanted to stay in the woman's company, but he also wanted solitude. He wanted peace but he didn't want to be alone. In fact, there was nothing he could think of to cure his restlessness.

"I must have got it yesterday. So yesterday I must have known who I was. Norma seems to know I'm here. I expect I'll find out soon enough."

"Last night you knew from nothing."

"Did I tell you my name?"

"No...you didn't tell me your name...only your room number."

"I don't know my name."

She asked him, "What's mine?"

"Cynthia," he said.

She smiled.

He leaned forward. "In spite of this persistent panic I have intimations of joy."

"You should see a doctor."

"I can't afford it."

"Go to the VA."

"If I'm a veteran."

She shrugged, dismissing him.

"Wait a minute!" He couldn't stand for her to give up like that. "How do I know I want that identity? I want to look around."

"For how long?"

"How long is your vacation?"

"Two weeks."

"Can't I share it with you?"

"That's impossible."

"Why?"

"How do I know what I'd be getting into? You could be married."

"When your two weeks is up I'll go back to Norma."

"That's what I mean! Who's Norma?"

"She's a colleague of mine."

"I'll bet. Anyway, why should you go back to her?"

"To resume my life."

"I see."

He suggested they move into the bar.

"On the one hand," he was saying, "I'll be back in the work force as a productive member of society sooner if I take a holiday with you than if I return home now. What do you think?"

"What's on the other hand?"

"A glove."

"Don't be silly."

They had been talking it over for more than an hour. "At the moment I have a conflict between duty and desire," he said. "I know I should wire back but I don't want to. I don't want to find out just yet. I want to continue in my state of

ignorant and painful bliss a little longer. If I knew I was happy it would be different, but I can't shake the feeling I'm a victim of something bad."

"No doubt," she said. "But I'd like to know the worst."

"Of course. I'll wire right away."

She stopped him. "Shall we postpone it another day?"

"That's what I was wondering."

They were silent.

"No! I know what it is," he said finally. "I'm a secret agent. This telegram is in code. Only I've forgotten the code. I fell into enemy hands and they wiped out my mind."

"I thought a sense of humor was supposed to protect one from this sort of nonsense—losing one's mind?"

He signalled for drinks. "There are several factors here you are not taking into account." He began a tally on his fingers. "One...I'm slightly inebriated. Two...I find your company extremely enjoyable and I can't think of anywhere I'd rather be on this earth than right here in your company. And three...amnesiacs, and I speak as a bona fide, are individuals. Although they possess one thing in common, namely a partial or complete memory block, their personalities behind the block remain unique."

She picked up her empty glass and gave it to the girl, accepted a new one. "Whoever you are you talk like a jerk. No, I'm kidding. You work with language some way."

"I'll call you when I get home and find out about myself, if I do."

She put down the drink half-gone. "First find out if you're married before you start calling me. If you're married you needn't call. On the other hand I'd like to hear from you if you're free. In that case, why don't you send me a wire?"

— James Mechem



SCHOOL OF THE WORLD

*Then which way lies to mādnness if not the way I go?
Strange looks I'd get if I said that aloud. "Poor child,
What words are these!" I hear the elders say. But sure
I must go mad if I am not mad, for the great world presses
Upon me and would school me well: *This thing you are
And that you cannot be, or, Dream no more if any
Life you'd live. Awake! Or yet more soundly sleep
And cease to be. The world cares not for you.* So then
My brain goes on and makes me see the way the end
Will be: a word, a deed, some little thing, and then
The stop of all, the light, the dark, the good and ill,
And, most, this mad, strange wonder at myself, this thought
Unlost in dream or dark, which rends me when I lie
To sleep and tempts me from all duties if I wake.*

— Edgar Wolfe

little pots of planted voices
sprinkled and
 buried
within the landscape
smoothed over with lids of flesh,
hum tunes in hollow ancient tones
from their sunken rotund chambers.
aching distant
songs speak
of muffled wrongs not quite hidden.
muffled, they melt-make
little pits driving deeper and
deeper pores open for
maybe only one hair
of sun and one drop
of air for the pit makers
sit snug with the growing well
walls high hide the dwellers
from obtuse views.

Only a brave glance straight down
reveals the pit makers.

— *Rogene Pfuetze*

THE FIRE

Always the fire whistles in the ear,
Awaiting the time
When the world will leap up in a violet light
And flash into nothing.
The future's deadfall weight
Holds the mind helpless,
The invisible rays riddling the air,
The bone marrow turning like milk.
Try to outtalk the neutron's garrulous tongue,
It does not need to stop for breath
And flicks silently like the old serpent's
In the saucer set out for it.
Back in the first days the snake was father,
And he comes back
And hangs above us like a thunderhead.
Milk for the father with his tongue,
The pale dish waiting like a cloud chamber —
The past that is our future must be bribed.
The fire whistles and the deaf snake turns
Round in a ring and gapes at his own tail.
Pity your sons, deaf snake, and hear.

— *John Taylor*

SPRINGLIKE

springlike

Her head grew up in a closet
where the air was enough in most ways . . .
her hands sought mysteries deep
within the pockets of a lot of
jackets and coats — her father, a kindly
man, knew secret mints
and bits of change from the cafes
to be the stuff of further eagerness,
thus mystery and surprise her hands knew
again and again, if in the same way.

Her feet grew to normal size
in shoeboxes of all persuasion, hats
and raincoats she combined
with a taste for endless permutation
of dress. In the spring,
of course, none of this; barefooted,
nude to her skirt and sweater, she
beat the coathangers into tune,
as the closet air went to her head,
and the moths sang of timeless essences.

— *William Hart*

A SERMON FOR KING EDWIN

A bird against storm clouds,
Gray distances promising change
Against which he vanishes
Drowning in what shifts
Within infinite blocks of light
Stacked up upon each other through the sky
— An image of the soul which flies
Although the wastes in which it flies
Go on forever.
O Babel's rising tower of air,
Perspectives stretched against the sun
That always turn and fall,
You stand for all and Nimrod stands for us
And shoots an arrow at the sky —
The sparrow flying through the lighted hall
Where men are boasting over mead,
Then vanishing in the unbuilt dark
That rests so lightly on the roof
And yet is heavy.
The high halls fall and the Danes come,
Sword time and shield time as the world wanes,
And yet the bird still flies against the cloud,
A wing that wanders unappeased
And climbs and disappears into the gray.

— *John Taylor*

GENERATION

I

We were not Blake-eyed
And ithyphallic,
Seers of a new age,
Or ageless.
They called us *silent*,
Lonely,
And they were kind:
Impaling Ike on his broken syntax,
Emasculating those who feared
Castration: McCarthy
And his henchmen.

II

No: we saw no orgiastic
Future.
And didn't want to fuck
The sky.
Caught between pot and acid,
We turned in
And spun webs of glass,
Freud
Tinted by Vermeer,
Around ourselves in college cells.
They had us wrong.

III

We were metaphysicians and map-makers
Drawing in the Cosmos
Until it fit.
Then, feeling complete and global,
We shafted ourselves.
Artisans,
Faustian after our fashion,
We believed that the world
Could be contained
And shaped:
Like Dulles and da Vinci.

IV

So when we set out in fifty-eight,
Most of us hung
With two year army raps,
We felt we were impervious
To loss.
Though our world had split,
We had, we thought, a self-reflecting
Mirror of the mind
To catch the light
Of all night talks
Of all night walks.

V

Now I know that those I love,
Who rib my life,
Are my life.
The beams have cracked.
I have rooms to let.
My daughter's Kresge ruby-ring,
My ex-wife's Yemenite wedding band,
Shine, away, in Indiana.
A deluded artificer of the Fifties,
I blow glass
And collect scrap.

— *H.R. Wolf*

VOLUNTARY MUTILATION

Rather than have to serve
in the emperor's armies
one fine evening the master
took the axe to himself
cut from his hand two great fingers,
his young blonde wife
gently bandaged the place
and the yellow hearted
pansies shook in the border
the master's two dogs howled
as he was carried to bed
then the lamps smoked
surrounded by moths
but the women who gathered
on the village square
facing the red clouds said
that what they saw was the blood
of soldiers.

— *Jean Follain* (1903 -)

Translated by W.S. Merwin

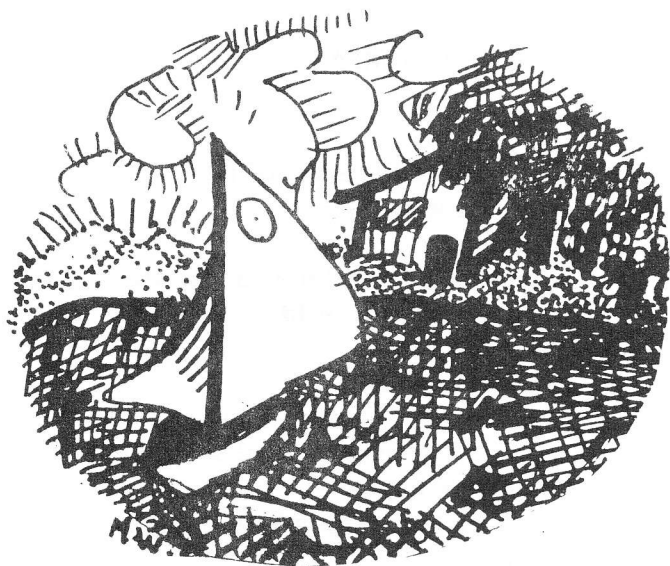
SEPTEMBER LAKE

blue sails bulging
 flap cracking
yacht slopes

blue sails bulging
 flap cracking
yacht slopes
 in water
leans into green
 across the lake

leaves turning yellow
 over into green
wind switches
 drops tree
into yellow
 wind turning green

fat, trailing thin,
 bodies barred
blue and
 black darting
dragonflies land
with paper-smacking
wings



brown lowly
 over water
wide
 bird turning
white under belly
 sweeps out
of sight

— *Peter Stevens*

WINTER-FRAGMENTS

1.

Sharp rended keening of blue
the long wind
wraith-like
wound mourning through the streets
an el greco saint, wild
and seeking
a warm window

2.

Minuscule houses
the back steps bore peaked bonnets
of snow
perfect geometry
of prim and gentle ladies
they fell before my boot
but did not so much as
breathe
one crystal-slivered secret
from the lace-shrouded windows of their eyes

3.

High moon
flung up by a distant hand
and caught
again, in the startled arms
of a passing tree

4.

dark houses
shuttered-up-silent sleepers
bright still
winter-night shadows
and just
one
moon

— *Marilyn Cathcart*

"AD MORTEM"

This grizzled codger,
Old folk's home —

rest homes to the genteel who
survive old age with the coined warmth
of a loving nephew

Rocking on the breezing porch front
With gray rain-grimed coat
cotton armor of ages lost
Crumbling corona the sputtering ashen butt
Between his wrinkled lips
brittle parchment and
once the Egyptian Nile caressed
the bending winding river reeds.

The timeless river and
Something like memory stirring:

"You must recall the honied kisses;
sweet blossom sapling spring.
Sipping her perfumed lips,
dripping wine gurgling sweet
and warm.

A lonesome freight westing,
evening's rest courtesy of Santa Fe
and Easter morning in L.A.
The gentle cleansing rain to wipe away
like a reaching mother the
hotel women and California wine.
Once a Friday nite's gin-flasked joy
to bosom-fragrant flapper queens."

Knobuled head, should be registered
with some archive; sprouting stubble
Whiskered wheat.
Slowly softly dying gulping
Windless gasps front porch
rockings cartoon saturdays and
bible chicken sundays
while the dancing careless one night lovers
engage the moment's passion.

The sighing wind
Rocking gently rocking
This grizzled codger spitting up
Licking that final envelope,
He the postage that
Ensures safe passage
And the gentle breeze like
A blanket bathes the empty porch.

— *Mike Wentworth*

MIRROR'S IMAGE

Mischievous, not malicious;
 They called me "gnome" and "elf".
I demanded, they retorted,
 "See the mirror; count yourself".

"Unpredictable" they called me,
 "Baffling", "too full of pride".
I was wiser than my elders
 For I knew the mirror lied.

Strangely, glass is only human;
 It records the outer shells
And conceals beneath an image
 Kaleidoscopes of shifting cells.

Myriad enchanting passions
 Like bits of colored glass
And chromatic moods, unstable,
 Slide, glide, collide, amass.

Instinct taught me half the secret;
 That appearances deceived.
A hundred different men exist
 Where only one's perceived.

Time taught the harder lesson:
 (But with pain's insistency
Since only love is tolerant
 Of inconsistency)

That we choose the mirror's image
 With imposed self-discipline
And society's the jailer
 For the rebels left within.

— *Joan Sanford*

A PROCESS IN BECOMING

Her gentleness was not enough,
would not relax the arch and bristling
hiss of cats, or quell the riot
that swarmed in a bark hustling
off front porches. She would sigh:
“It must be I’m not beast enough.”

Long and longingly she would dally
around a barnyard’s domesticity,
lurching from hog and horse,
their untoward random ferocity
piqued by her condescending voice:
“They know that I only dally.”

One day in deepest woods she took
integrity as fair exchange
for integument, lay stripped upon
the crumbly mast, had violets range
along her hips, fungi brush the down:
“Now they’ll approve the choice I took.”

They crept forth to her fleshy sides
singly, as timorous as thought,
sorted their instincts and pleasures,
until an oriole, nest in mind, caught
a tearing hold on her tresses:
“I will keep my hands at my sides.”

A racoon washed her breasts, broke them,
crushed those vein-crazed porcelain cups
whose blood pooled where the chipmunk holed
at her navel, and a vixen's pups
snarled on her toes, lairward pulled and hauled:
“I dare not move and frighten them.”

All tension spent, her will pushed forward
to the mounting wolf between her thighs
thrust flat, set free of pain and platitudes
had visions in her rolling eyes
of satyrs swirling through the woods:
“Next will come a man; I've been too forward.”

— *William McLaughlin*

CARE-WORN SHOES

See those with loads
and those with "soul"
tramping down the city road
in care-worn shoes.

They're the ancient old and restless youth,
those worn old from much abuse
and those too young to know the use
of care-worn shoes.

See the old man die without a sound,
their coats pulled down
over warm hearts bound
in care-worn shoes

They die and never cuss,
though their age was rushed
by the constant dust
of care-worn shoes.

See the boys dress so cool
for the things they must do
and the life they must lose
in care-worn shoes.

They're all dressed in black,
as a widow would, in fact,
after learning death's the back
of care-worn shoes.

See the old fold their graves,
and the young in caskets rave.
They have Hell to pay
with care-worn shoes.

— *Cortland E. Berry*

EXPERIENCE

A man must and can write only about that which he feels. The entrance to reality opens only by experience. Hemingway gained it in Paris and Thoreau at Walden — I am gaining it in hell. But I overstate my circumstances, for no man is always perfectly happy or unhappy.

INSENSITIVITY

The worst criminal in the world is the insensitive person. For him, capital punishment should exist.

THINGS

Some things die before they are conceived. Many things are dead while they live. But why must all good things be of the former — and mine?

— *Bernard Droste*



EPITAPHS

An Obscure Writer

They will all sleep with me
In the eternal, patiently waiting earth.
It won't matter the least who wrote
Rave reviews for them when they lived.

A Young Soldier

They will all sleep with me
In the eternal, bloodsoaked earth.
One mile advanced or a nation lost,
Victor or vanquished — all are mustered here.

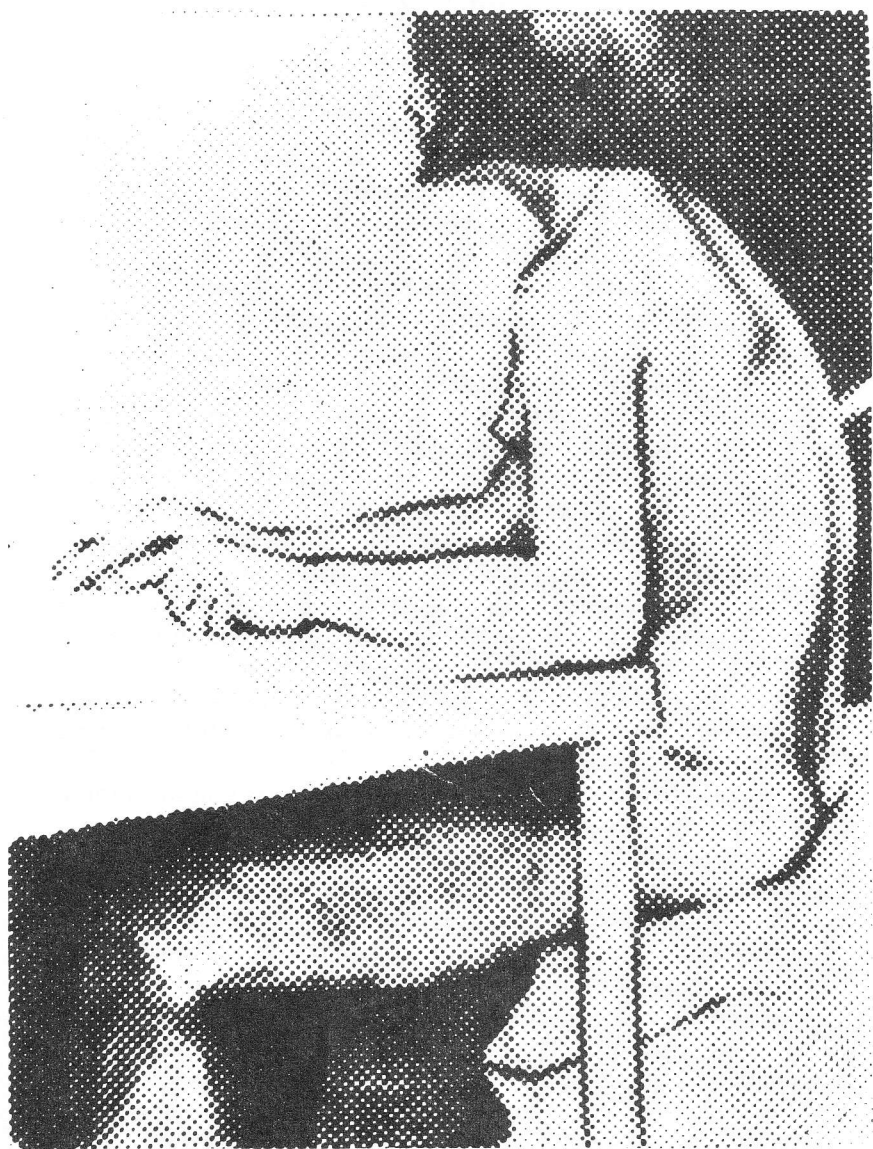
A Real Estate Agent

They will all sleep with me
In the eternal, unownable earth.
They will zone it for many uses,
But all they will use it for is graves.

A Mother of Many Children

They will all sleep with me
In the eternal, maternal earth.
Young and old, they will launch new lives,
Then slip away to this quiet place.

— *J.H.R. Adams*



BORIS, WAITING

She exposes her huge breasts to them with a smile, clenching and unclenching the muscles in her right buttock, undoing the strap of her last garment above the waist, smiling without happiness, without malice, without sexuality: smiling not at the music the juke box blares at her, nor at the colored spotlights, nor at the observations of the master of ceremonies regarding the size of her "titskies," nor at the hungry looks of the young and middle-aged men below her. She smiles like a fifty-cent wooden carving of the Mona Lisa's head.

Boris Neblin sits rather stiffly. Not from drink but from the stiffness that is invading the marrow of his bones with the years. Sits nursing a bourbon, staring, anonymous.

He doesn't like the bourbon. He doesn't like the company of the couples and groups of men at the tables; nor that of the single men leaning alongside him at the bar; nor that of the black-suited, large-breasted girls who circulate among them with long, bare legs before doing their numbers. He doesn't like the music. He doesn't like the scarce and sharply focused light. Nor, in fact, does he like the strip-tease being put on for his benefit. For his benefit: he has paid the price; he has purchased at least two drinks at one dollar per drink minimum.

He is a short man, newly shorn of youth, feeling his middle age come on him in a rush: as though his hair were graying, his skin wrinkling, and his cells dying visibly. He has a gorilla's frame: long arms and short legs, with a deep, though unglamorous chest. His face is broad; his eyes are gray; his lips are thin. He is inclined to make faces as he sips the bourbon without relish. It is getting time for him to finish his second drink and go home.

A new performer has come on the stage, a fat young woman with breasts that bounce like basketballs when she walks. She talks to her audience, telling them jokes about her breasts. She talks to her breasts, telling them jokes about her

audience. She takes off her long negligee and shows her breasts to the audience, and makes delighted, shrewish replies to the younger men who shout insults at her. She does a dance, twirling tassels from her nipples, tassels that glow in the dark, phosphorescent, when the lights are dimmed. She sings off-key; she does a mock ballet.

Boris has told his wife that he has to work late on a tax form. But now he has to get home. He is queasy from the drinks and wants some food to settle his stomach. He makes his way through the crowd and through the heavy blue smoke, out into the night. The relatively fresh air on the streets fills his lungs delightfully.

The sight of a boy who looks something like Tommy makes him wonder, where is he? Is he all right? What's he doing? When will he be back? all at once, in a flash, as happens frequently these days. He forgets it all as he sees his bus coming.

He grabs the bus at the corner, pays his fare, and sits down. He stares out the window at the nighttime city streets, the way he stared at the Mona Lisa's breasts: without relish, but intently, with fascination. In this way, he stares at the neon lights swimming through the night like fish deep below the surface of the ocean; in this way, at cars making their ways like salmon against a current of traffic; in this way, at the amazing bricks stuck together and fuzzy-edged and unclean, like coral reefs in the midst of indifferent oceans.

When he reaches his corner, he pulls the cord and goes out the rear exit. The street is quiet and he walks up the sidewalk briskly: not in any hurry, but without thought — and limping, ever so slightly. He stops at the house and stoops awkwardly to pick up two wads of newspaper that the wind has blown like tumbleweed in among the roots of the bushes that surround the house. He straightens himself with an *oof!* and throws the balled-up paper into the garbage can in the alley before surveying the small back yard and going into the house.

“Hello-o!” he bellows.

"Hello, dear," is his wife's reply.

Boris removes his coat and hat unhurriedly before joining his wife in the kitchen, where she is reading the newspaper, which is spread out all over the table.

"Anything for me to eat?" he asks, pecking at the top of her head.

"Yes, dear. Soup and boiled beef."

"Good," and he sits down.

His wife folds the newspaper up and rises to ladle him out some soup, which he eats thoughtfully from a shallow bowl.

After supper he reads the newspaper and watches television until it is time to go to bed. He watches a comedy-variety show, which he rather enjoys, except that he never *will* know why they continue to show these silly dance segments, with spectacular costumes and choreography. He then sees a mystery show and two westerns. During the second western he falls asleep, is awakened by a particularly loud toothpaste commercial, and falls asleep again. When he wakes up, the news is on. He watches until the announcer tells his nightly bad joke, switches off the set, and goes to change into his pajamas.

In bed his passions rise swiftly and fiercely, and he pulls his wife over to him, kissing and caressing her unresponsive body. Finally, feeling his own passion falling before her unresigned limpness, he ignores her reactions and goes ahead, thinking of the Mona Lisa girl and her large breasts, thinking of her clenching buttock, of her thighs thrust apart and forward in dance, of the black g-string she fingered in mock passion, of the seductive opening it covered, of her empty eyes, of her empty and meaningless smile.

He lies on his back spent, unhappy. He falls into a leaden sleep, sleeping in the eyes of his wife. She is lying on her side, facing away from him, facing the wall. Still, he sleeps in the eyes of his wife. Large eyes, unfocused eyes, eyes that flow around him, not seeing him. Eyes looking in his direction only by the most freakish of accidents. Now, outraged eyes.

Boris thrashes in the night, covered with cold sweat,

frightened by his dream. He opens his eyes wide, suddenly — but the dream will not disappear. He hears the trumpeter in the distance, his triumphant blast seeming to rush like a tide from downtown, and seeming to flow back magnetically, tugging Boris out of bed, and quickly into his clothes. He walks quietly out of the house and fairly trots down to the end of the block, where he stands beneath the dim lamplight on the wide deserted street. The taverns, the supermarket, the beauty shop all aglow with eerie jealousy.

Because I'm loose now, Boris thinks; watch out for Boris now! I'll smash the drug store window and drink all the perfumes and pepto-bismol and window cleaner. I'll suck the neon from its tubes and the flashing CHOP SUEY CHOP SUEY CHOP SUEY will ever disappear from the face of the earth. I'll tackle this bus, and when it blinks its yellow eyes, I'll squash it like a beer can.

The trumpet blasts again. Boris shivers and sits up. He turns off the alarm clock and drops it on the floor. "Damn, oh, damn, damn."

— *Eric Chaet*

AMERICANAS II

a madrugada me esmagou
em chuva e neve
no meu primeiro natal americano

quando todos saíram
para comprar os deuses nas igrejas
eu vi T.V.

o espírito de natal vozou-me o
peito
e vi emocionado o natal branco
das côres e luzes
ser vendido por bilhões de dólares

entre as propagandas
mostraram a festa
no Vietnã
soldados de chumbo
sentados na trégua
alimentados
santificados
chocando a bomba de amanhã

AMERICA II

The dawn smashed me
with rain and snow
on my first American Christmas

As everybody went out to church
to pay their installment on God
I watched T.V.

The spirit of Christmas touched my
heart
and I watched with emotion the white
Christmas
of colors and lights being sold for a
billion dollars

One of the ads
showed the festivities
in Vietnam:
chocolate soldiers
playing truce
well fed
and cleansed
sitting on tomorrow's bomb

ao norte não vi
se trouxe o natal
alguma lembrança
além da das mortes
dos anos passados
suspensas no dia
da paz entre os homens

sobrou o consôlo
de não ter que ver as propagandas
natalinas de televisão
até o próximo setembro

êste govêrno humano
é moral e coerente
num só dia vendeu
o espírito de natal
p'rá tôda gente.

— *Josa Da Fonseca*

To the north I couldn't see
whether Christmas brought
any remembrance
except for suspending
the deaths of the year
across the day
of peace among men

At least
the Christmas commercials
will be over
until next September

This government of mankind
is moral and wholesome
for one day it sells
the spirit of Christmas
to everybody.

Translated by

— *Leland McCleary*

MADRUGADA

resolvi telefonar
na angústia da madrugada
para a manhã

de resposta tive um nada
e me matei com a noite
amarrada em meu pescoço.

— *Jose Da Fonseca*

DAWN

In the anguish of dawn
I was anxious to call up
the morning

No answer
So I strangled myself
in the noose of night.

Translated by

— *Leland McCleary*

LADAINHA EM TOM MENOR

Ladainha Em Tom Menor

minha pura bem amada
encheu-me o saco de chatos

meu Jesús celibatário
era homo-sexual

a minha Eva padrão
tinha rabo de macaco

em meu primeiro ordenado
o patrão abriu falência

mudaram o rumo do povo
num primeiro de abril

minha pátria idolatrada
foi vendida à prestação

no dia da minha morte
me vestiram roupa nova

coincidência uma ova

vá ser pé frio de novo
na puta que te pariu.

— *Jose Da Fonseca*

Litany In A Minor Key

my pure beloved
filled my sack with crabs

my celibate Jesus
was a homosexual

my image of Eve
had a monkey's tail

on my first payday
the boss went bankrupt

they changed everybody's life
on April fool's day

my sacred country
was sold on credit

on the day of my death
they dressed up my body

coincidence my foot

it's a rotten deal
being born to a whore.

Translated by

— *Leland McCleary*

CONTRIBUTORS

Larry Maness of Lawrence is a professional playwright . . . Wichita's James Mechem has been published in *Mikrokosmos* and has had a collection of his prose published by the *Colorado State Quarterly* . . . This is Eric Chaet's third appearance in *Cottonwood*. Eric is a grad student in English at KU . . . Bill Berkowitz has been published before by *Cottonwood* and *Reconstruction*. The current poem was to be an epitaph for Andy Warhol but Warhol still lives so it's something else . . . KU's James Mersman knows contemporary war and protest poetry and has written his Ph.D. dissertation on the subject . . . Edgar Wolfe teaches aspiring writers at KU . . . KU's Rogene Pfuetze appears for the first time in *Cottonwood* . . . KU grad William Hart has published in the *University Review* . . . H.R. Wolfe teaches at the University of New York, Buffalo and has published book reviews, poetry and criticism . . . W.S. Merwin translated French writer Jean Follain's poem "Voluntary Mutilation" which is to be published later this fall by Atheneum in *Transparence of the World* . . . Peter Stevens is a widely published Canadian poet who has appeared in previous issues of *Cottonwood* . . . KU students Marilyn Cathcart and Mike Wentworth appear for the first time in *Cottonwood* . . . Joan Sanford ghost-writes political addresses for local candidates in New England . . . William McLaughlin teaches social studies in a Cleveland, Ohio high school . . . Courtland Berry and photographer Steve Ewart are planning a book about Kansas and Kansans. The current poem is to be included in that work . . . Bernard Droste is a grad student in political science at KU . . . This is J.H.R. Adams' first appearance in *Cottonwood* . . . Jose da Fonseca is a young Brazilian poet working and living in Lawrence. Leland McCleary is a slave of the selective service system working off his conscientious objector, non-military duty (essential to the health or safety of the nation) in KU's extension service. McCleary translated Fonseca's Portuguese . . . Kathy Pugh is a drawing and painting major at KU . . . George Kuria's primary interest is broadcasting and television. George is from Kenya . . . Kathy Hird has recently completed a unique sequence of photos of sculpture produced by KU's Sculpture Department . . . Russell Bromby is a recent grad of KU's Department of Design . . . Mettie Whipple is a good woman who slaved over the *Cottonwood* design and layout . . . Kim Kern runs "Strawberry Fields" in downtown Lawrence . . . Linda Haskins is a design major at KU.

