

COTTONWOOD REVIEW

WINTER 1969-70



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WAYNE S. PROPST, JR.

HOWARD DEWEY, MULE DRIVER FROM LECOMPTON

Kansas stretch; old Howard beatin them devils
sod dust mouth a bitter mile to Wichita
clump wheel rock clankin steel rim
gruntin mules their asses raw
Howard Dewey put a load of concrete
into Wichita eight days outa Topeka
two broken wheels and one dead mule
Howard dry landed a broken jaw
downed a good quart a sour mash laid out
damp alley wet boots whiskey
Back to broken sod wagon and lovin mules
lost to three queens and a jack
Busted Howard Dewey made way to Lecompton
bangin his lady's door she held his tattered
black hat head
unbuttoned the blue stripe of his suspenders
but left his blistered ass to beat
wooden seats of lost wagons
Howard Dewey left Annie's Inn
pullin legs outa his boots and crawlin
to his quiet grave
beggin his lord and woman another love
and sad wagon tired mules
Howard Dewey died at Lecompton August 1896. . . .

(Untitled)

breast me I want to be your trolley car
from the last century before the birth of Caesar
while we told him that he was insane what
could be done to tell them all that had happened
last winter just before the snow storm of 82
how long will it be until the shit storm
many of the men who were here last week have
died while on another vacation pins
carrots pickles match books yellow dogs
all for your pleasure what you do with
it is another thing Now we must be
gin to seriously consider for a moment
what has happened, how far can we go on a
train that may breakdown at any moment
not only that but this train perched on the
brink of a cliff where only strong birds
could escape how mud must feel when
spread over a dead body first the head
then skipping to the penis and on down
the remains of a sexual heap
thus we have the end of another
sphere





NORMAN H. RUSSELL

HIS WRATH AND HIS LAUGH

his wrath
is lovely to behold
strikes spark like fire
burns his black eyes
like dancing moose
he stomps his feet
and waves his arms
the eagles flight

the sky trembles
the earth shakes
the beasts hide

his laugh
is lovely to behold
strikes love like fire
it makes me dance
and flee his arms
down fernlit paths
to soft grass beds
he finds me there

the sky trembles
the earth shakes
the beasts hide.

LONG SMILE MAKES LOVE TO TREES

long smile whispers to his horse
long smile talks to dogs
long smile speaks love to trees
long smile is mad
long smile goes where he pleases
everyone smiles at long smile
everyone feeds long smile
long smile tells strange stories
long smile does not make war
long smile makes only love
to birds horses snakes and trees

when we are gone to war
long smile stays with the women
long smile watches the children
while the women work
long smile puts flowers in the childrens hair
when the children are with long smile
they laugh all day and in the night.

NORMAN H. RUSSELL

SWEET HONEY IN MY MOUTH

sweet honey in my mouth
cool water in my fingers
warm wind in my hair
gay colors in my eyes

all the good things i cannot
speak so many now i taste i touch
before sweet flower you came to me
i did not know they passed me by

your smile in the morning
your whisper at night
your eyes are like suns
your laugh is like summer

come love run with me
over the hills of our lives
come love lie with me
in the green valleys of our lives.

SELLING BASKETS

headlights pass on by me
 standing here collecting
 a minute at a time
 learning about refusing
 to remember 'bout an hour left behind
 Philately speak to me
 show me how to pin it to the wall
 Philately come to me
 let's go dancin' a fancy pantsin'
 at the bug collectors Ball

strawberry moody mary
 jane won't you come back home

heel coolin' bar stoolin' lookin'
 for a ticket to the freak
 show me a basket 'case
 i want to wear it
 Let it flow let it flow
 on mary let the river run
 to the relocating rhythm of a son of a gun.
 That's gun.

strawberry moody mary
 jane won't you come back home

GLACIERS

The mud freezes,
turns to small ruts
and mountains
beneath a rubber boot

The bay freezes,
flat and white
encased
wide and seasonal
within its own
irregular boundaries
beneath pines, cedar and a sky

cold
settles in
like a man set to business
slides sideways
into a cafe booth
pitching a soft
Line,
in the place where
the waitress knows
his name weekly
and within
with this

Humour the whirlpool
created in the wake
of one defined icebreaker

Deep
there is a creature
dumb to its camouflage
that survived
the dinosaur

LETTING THE DOGS IN

there are things on the floor
you know how they chew
things on the floor
two dogs you know
perpetually hungry yelping
licking your moustache and
shoving their feet into
your good clothes

following
from room to room
concentrating
on your hands
the place where all good things come from

they are down now
spread out
breathing quietly
dreaming

ARTHUR OUT
(N.Y. Sketch II)
by
WILLIAM D. KNIEF

Arthur sat down where he could look out the window, and unbuttoned his coat, pulled loose his muffler. A girl in pants sat, reading. Her hair hung so that it hid her face. It was hard to tell. Her girl's shape was twisted into a cat's shape in the chair, her legs curled snugly up: she should have had a line and circle of sunlight to nestle in, and blink her eyes in. But the season was fall, and the day, seasonal. Arthur's hands moved along clammy, simple stainless steel, remotely pleasant to the touch. He looked out without much interest. There was trash on the cold brick street, blowing. Across, workmen with wind red wrists built a building. The crane, of course, was the thing to watch. It occurred to Arthur that if he had thought, and brought his camera, he might have found something in the mud pit to photograph. He thought he might have a cigarette. There just wasn't much to do. Not enough; nothing. He was in a to him foreign city, New York, and the New had worn suddenly off, he had no job as yet, and temptingly, just enough money remained for a bus ticket out. He looked at the girl while his hand rummaged without hurry his pocket for a cigarette. She was nice to look at, nice for Arthur to look at, anyhow, and easy to look at, because she never glanced up from her book to capture his eyes. So he watched her for quite some time, but without much real interest; it was such a big place that it was easy to lose track of the personal, which counted for so little. Nothing moved inside of him except curiosity of the mildest sort, when he said, with the cigarette in his fingers as proof of his good intentions, Have you got a match? And she looked up with a smile and after a moment a match. He lit his cigarette and said his thanks, and then thought to offer her one. It was a nice gesture and a clever, he decided, idea: it could so easily lead to conversation. No, though, she said. She was stopping smoking. Pretty, really, and such damned fine hair, and a fair face. What I could use, though, is an

aspirin. You don't she said, happen to have an aspirin? Arthur said no, wishing that he did, thinking how stupid that he didn't. I could use one myself. This was not, of course, true, nor true at least in the sense he implied, and the comment did not ring true, and did not provide an easy opening for reply. He smoked. She on her side read. He might ask her what she was reading, but no, that was too obvious, too amateurish. And would take too much energy to bring off. She was probably dull, anyway, he told himself, though her eyes were certainly bright enough. Arthur stubbed out his cigarette, picked the "Times" up off the chair next. He could not seem to read, somehow. That is, he seemed to be reading, but could not. His eyes fumbled, dumb and slow, across the impossible pages. He could feel, when he searched for it, the flicker of a headache beginning behind the eyes. He tossed down the paper. He strolled past chairs and couches, nearly all now occupied by people busy reading, or else talking with friends, or else not. It was a very busy place, and, walking, he felt as if he should be headed someplace in particular. He thought about his money, and the possibility it presented of getting back to his own part of the country, being once again in his own territory, and alone by choice, and not necessity. He stopped at the main desk and bought a pack of cigarettes, to have something to do, and while waiting for change noticed that, there, a few other sundries were: gum, pencils, candy bars, magazines, breath mints, and small tins of all the brands of aspirin. He paused for a moment, considering. Then, why not, he thought, and bought, and walked back to where he and the girl had been sitting. She had however left. His chair was now occupied, so he sat down in hers, and glumly fingered the noisy tin in his pocket. He passed the time by imagining that, if he were to look up, a good-looking girl would be sitting in his chair now, and he would against all odds strike up a conversation. He'd have a cigarette, and she would mention that she didn't smoke, but that she did have a headache. And he would pull the tin out of his pocket and in one smooth motion click it open to offer her one, or two. He glanced up — the scene had been that vivid — but, surprisingly, only an old man sat there now, browsing through the "Times". Arthur wondered if he were reading, or

WILLIAM D. KNIEF

seeming. And, wondering, he stood, got out his aspirin, took one or two, drank from the wall, white drinking fountain, tucked his muffler in, buttoned his coat one two three, and left that busy dismal building for the street.

THE IOWA RIVER—ROCK

HERB WILLIAMS

it stands
alone
at a bend in the main channel
marking a backwash
where i sit

river-rock
surrounded by water
watches an occasional
 walrus looking old tire
 float by
without acknowledgement
and waits
as always
for night fishermen to cast
and sing their song of darkness

(Untitled)

on the sidewalk
 the cowboy
stood looking
up
 and down
the street
for a place
to water his horse
 in vain

sidewalk cowboy
bowed his
 head
to find a penny

New York
 is no place
for a cowboy
 sidewalk

ODE TO THE MOTHER-LODE

down deep dark holes
candle lite glitter
in men's eyes
seldom comes out

THE HANGING OF HENDERSON

by

JERRY L. MILLER

It was ten o'clock in the morning in Grenville, Oklahoma, and at the Twin Oaks Saloon, Maury Wilson was working the bar. He had worked the bar every day for several years now. Today he did not want to work it. It wasn't because he had a hangover —those he had learned to live with. He did not want to because today was the day they were hanging Jack Henderson, and every time he heard a laugh from one of the tables in the saloon, every time men at the bar stopped talking as he passed, and every time someone smirked at him and turned rapidly away, he knew that someone had just told the story, or was telling the story, or maybe just remembering the story, and since Maury was a sensitive man, it hurt him to know that people were laughing at him again. But Maury Wilson's boss had told him to open the bar at nine o'clock that morning and keep it open, because on a hanging day, people drank.

Down the street, "Perky" Perkins, the town half-wit, sat on the edge of a watering trough in front of the feed store and drew lines in the dust with the shoes that Fred had given him. A tear washed down his cheek from time to time and he blew his nose hard with his finger in a poor imitation of the way Fred did it and had to wipe his cheek and nose with his sleeve. He wished the sheriff hadn't taken the gun away from him. It was just a rusty old rifle with no hammer anyway, and Fred had given it to him because he had said he wanted it. All he brought it to town for was so he could hold it; so he'd have it in his hands when Jack Henderson was hanged. Perky drew lines in the dust and wished Fred were still alive.

Over at the Frenchman's Saloon, Gus Maddox laughed his big whisky laugh, clapped the stranger-just-passing-through on the back, and said, "You mean you ain't never heard of Jack Henderson? Well, mister, you're talking to the world's foremost expert on Jack Henderson. Me and old Henny were buddies for years —a real card, old Jack; sure gonna miss him. Hey, how about buying me a drink? I'll tell

you about the trick old Henny played on Wilson —the fella over at the Twin Oaks, the bartender you know.”

The surly German sitting at the corner table sneered in Gus' direction, and swallowed some more beer. He had tested his gallows with sandbags early that morning, and they worked perfectly. He was a highly skilled hangman, and proud of his skill. He drank again, and sat at the table hating Gus Maddox, hating Jack Henderson, hating the United States, hating Grenville, especially hating himself, wishing he were back in Germany.

And at exactly ten o'clock that morning, a young woman dressed in a neat, black suit, was seated on a train bound for Philadelphia. She had only recently gone West with her husband and was now returning to her parent's home. She sat with her back straight, staring narrowly ahead and trying very hard not to think, but with the same phrase running through and through her mind. They're hanging him today. They're hanging him today. And she really didn't hear the young man who had just sat down near her and was trying to start a conversation.

And Davy Parsons, at ten o'clock that morning, was riding in a buggy toward the town and asking his father why the man was going to be hanged. Davy Parsons' father said nothing, and Davy, looking up at his father's craggy, bearded face, and seeing his father's eyes, decided he would not ask again.

The sheriff sat in his office and thought that he should get out and take a turn around the town to make sure that everything was all right, because there were a lot of people in town, and a lot of men drinking, and there might be trouble; but he really didn't want to go out, so he sat at his desk and looked at his hands on his lap and tried not to think of all the people outside, or of Jack Henderson just a few feet away lying on his bunk and never saying a word or even making a sound on the squeaky bunk. The deputy, Jason, and the US Marshal were just across the room —the marshal having come fifty miles just for this hanging— and he thought of sending Jason for a turn around the town, but knew Jason didn't want to any more than he did, so he sent him down the street two doors for coffee and sandwiches instead.

JERRY L. MILLER

And Jack Henderson took a harmonica out of his pocket and played a sad tune he'd learned once in a jail up in Kansas after a long trail drive. He didn't see the expression on the sheriff's face when he started playing, or he might have laughed —even though he didn't feel much like it right then. Jack Henderson had laughed all his life —even when he most hadn't felt like it.

Like the time down in El Paso when he'd come back to the girl he was going to marry on the money he'd made on the trail drive, and had had to admit that he'd spent it all on a big week-long drunk, and she'd thrown him out, and he'd found out down at the saloon that she had become engaged to a rancher while he had been gone, knowing he wouldn't have any money when he came back. The guys at the saloon had been quiet because he was young and plenty tough then, but he had just laughed and said that the guy who married her was in for some tough riding anyway, and he'd rather try straddling a drunk mustang. So everyone had laughed and it was all right.

Yessir, he thought, knocking the harmonica on his hand, it's been a helluva life for only being thirty-five years long. Well, so what? Things had been going downhill for a long time, and maybe when you end up washing dishes in a place like Grenville, you've come to the end, anyway. Funny, coming back to a place like that where you've been before and had a good time and left and then when you come back everything's gone all sour, and nothing seems to go right any more right from the start. There was that trick he'd played on Maury Wilson the first time he'd been here and that Gus still laughed at whenever they got drunk together. And Gus, too —lots of fun and a hard worker before; and now hardly ever getting outside the saloon. And Maggie, with that long red hair, and a husband who worked so hard that he never even noticed what was going on. Ah, that Maggie! But after they'd run off together, he'd got drunk in Wichita and when he got out of jail he found that she had run off again. This time with a professional gambler who'd had a long string of luck. Who'd have ever thought that of Maggie? A sweet girl married to a hard-working, honest man, but with a real devil in her that'd maybe never even come out till that night

he had met her at the house raising.

And maybe that was why coming back had gone so sour; because he'd have to creep into town to find out if the husband was still around. Gus had told him that Parsons had bought another place about fifteen miles out, and almost never came to town, so he'd decided it was safe and stuck around. He'd had a good time here once, and didn't have anywhere else to go. But things were bad, and after his money had gone, he'd had to work at the livery stable, which wasn't bad, but after that had given out he'd had to go to work washing dishes at the Union Hotel. It had hardly paid him, and he'd hated it. There was something about working inside with other people's greasy plates that ate away at you and made you want to do something —anything— just to prove you were still a man. And so he'd rented that horse from the livery stable and rode out that day, not knowing what he was going to do, but just wanting to do *something*.

He had stopped at the well outside the house to get a drink, and she had come out looking fresh and clean. He'd never seen her before, but could tell by the way she looked that she had come out from the East not long before because the land hadn't worn her down any yet. And there was the way she had said "Howdy" like that was what she should say out here, but soft and musical like a woman always says a strange word. Her husband was Fred Finch and he was out mending fence with their hired man. Ah yes, Pennsylvania man just come out; seen him in town a couple of times. Another honest man worked too hard, and had hired a half-witted boy in town to help him because he had felt sorry for him.

Well, maybe it was just because he was afraid to keep a man around because of his wife, Jack had thought, and it ought to be easy —he'd made it with lots of women riding through, lonely and their husbands out working. But she got panicky when she saw what he wanted, and ran screaming into the house, to get a gun he'd guessed, and he'd tackled her just inside the house, but had to beat her unconscious to get her skirts up because once he'd started he had to go ahead even though he'd never thought he'd do such a thing no matter what else he'd done,

but he heard the horse coming and jumped up before he had time and ran out, but the husband was already there and off his horse and Jack ran to the back with the husband running after, and he'd seen the axe there by the woodpile and

"O.K., Jack."

It was two o'clock, and the sheriff stood slouched and sad by the open cell door with the shotgun in the crook of his arm.

Jack walked out of the jail, blinking a little at the light, his hands tied behind him. The sheriff had tied his hands before they left the jail, so that they wouldn't have to do that at the gallows. The crowd was there, spilling all down mainstreet. They'd been coming in all day from the country, whole families of them. The men had come to drink and talk and do their duty by seeing a hanging, and maybe store up recollections to tell their grandkids. The women had come to shop and talk and just be in town because they so seldom got to come, so seldom got to talk with anyone. They brought the kids because it would be a good moral lesson, and besides, who could they leave them with? But just before the time for the hanging, most of the women had decided that it wasn't really a thing for children to see after all, and had sent them over to Mrs. Martin's, or Mrs. Graham's, or Mrs. Somebody Else's, and then decided they would go there too, because someone was there that they wanted to see and besides it wasn't fair to push off all those children on poor Mrs. _____ and they'd better stay there and help take care of them. So the crowd was mostly men, with a few women, and some kids who had sneaked off.

Jack paused for a second, coming out of the jail. He really didn't know what he should do, and hadn't even thought about this part of the hanging; but the sheriff nudged him, and he moved on through the crowd of men smelling of beer, their stomachs still tight from the picnic lunch with their families on the edge of town.

So he walked on in front of the sheriff who looked awkwardly at the ground, the marshal who tried to look important but kept having to swallow, and the deputy who looked around at the people as if to ask them just what it was that he should do. Jack, too, kept thinking that

JERRY L. MILLER

Perky Perkins kicked his shoes in the dust, and watched the wagon carry Jack Henderson away. Even when Jack had been marched through the crowd, Perky hadn't gotten a good look at him. So he watched the wagon go away, kicked at the ground, looked at the sky, and wondered what he would do that night, and where he would go the next day.

(Untitled)

DAVID WILSON

made of iron
kind
but (hard
that she is
free
of me
(to believe
her smiles now
rigid and of
the mouth only
strong
she does
not hear
a word
by talking
i take
what metal
she is
as brittle will
break

THE CUP

to go is short
simply leave —
the matter of a door
to open then to close
behind. be
done be
gone.
to come is long long long
how do know to
when who
gets there? goes.
come to me you never did
nor said. i
go to you to lay my head
on your breast but
i dont i
 talk to you to talk to
me. what more a door
than words can be. a wall
two
 makes endless hall
where
going and coming arent.
who would care- standing there
eating apple or pear.
 some sleep
leaning at the wall by
 the door
someone said who's here? it me
 and you is where we
find us there walking in the dark of
 sitting in the chair

put for that purpose when
eating sleeping or standing still
lying down smoking cigarettes and
wondering who in hell sent us
and what for.

n more
rings the bell. box empty- no mail
what's that i smell?

Nothing.

creeping back from after that . . .
what kind of shit is that !
thats nothing. only nothing
matters me.
but nothing is not where you want
to be. or not. we
could talk of
for years —
talk! all i am is?
in what name- god's?
kick me shoot with your
boot stuff my mouth with. knock
me hit me throw me eat me
fill me.

(Untitled)

the use of what
it seems to be
the use of me
it seems
a fulcrum
in some sort of
dynam
maybe
domin
o effect
the way she cries
to get
what tool
she needs

HANDS

as line go
from to -is me is
you
between the two
not straight not
short. but what
would mean between, on and
of, i would be
were we
us- were i as much to,
with rapid heart, touch
you

JOAN

our child
 who is
 it pleases him
 to be
 and who—
 for play.

mob
 chokes this moment
 stops me
 here the more
 as memory sorts Now

into before
 and after with sun — the dial.

O time
 O it to death
 that's direction—

as such
 ideas of
 direction are away
 from whatever else moves is or can be
 called

life,
 i have only what i do
 no god to follow no way
 to be
 because there is you there
 is me.

(Untitled)

the look back to the house
was dark and sideways
was a dream this strange view
i thought he came out
floating, a sphere growing
with its forward movement
a black coat flapping
around its slow motion
a white face in a dream
when he came close
jabbering and excited
across the street
my empty pockets
were deep
and wet

DAUGHTER OF THE SUN

She was daughter
 of the sun,
 a warm memory
 of blistering nights
 fired tightly
 between her anxious
 legs, and she
 would rise each
 morning and leave
 my room, clothing
 herself and I
 in our summer lie.
 We climbed all those
 nights, one rung
 at a time,
 into the sun's breath
 that whole summer,
 for it was a stolen
 hour, both of us
 thieves, remembering
 that the morning
 was no stranger.

THOUGHTS OVER COFFEE

How stone hard
 it is to be
 a man when
 you've killed
 so many, and
 know each agonized
 breath you've
 taken at a trigger's
 distance away,
 and be awakened by it
 each morning
 to sip at a cup
 suspended on forefinger,
 hot coffee rankling
 yesterday over
 all those emptying
 nights on the end
 of your own person-
 al firing piece.

JAMES MINOR

THE LAST THOUGHT OF WILLIAM K.
BEFORE BEING TAKEN

Midway up the hill
a cross lies transfigured
as a good thief,
william K. caught,
stolen away
back in a corner
of his black ghettoed room
and skin,
thinking about
the hot buttered sun
and white coat
they strapped him in
when life left
an untreed feeling,
lasting just long
and loud enough
for the ambulance,
quietly leaving
like his mind.

A RETREAT OF ONE

Soldiers came marching
the other day
down to where
they were counted,

shell and mortar
marked an enemy breath
of gun
and swallowed one
running,

rifle knifed
in a gutted hell,
feet struck
to a dying drum
lasting
before the mortal
of his mind exploded.

BOEING AEROSPACE CORP., SEATTLE

by

DAVE SOLBACH

Down the ramp from Forty-fifth Street onto Montlake Boulevard and tin traffic like that of any morning, traffic like I am told there used not to be, traffic of squeaks and jerks, exhaust steam and irritated grunts, spurts, stops, bald drivers of carpools and of sportscars, running or loafing, a few smiling, most numb and ready to claw out, shiny or muddy or scratched, smooth tired or new tired and good old tired, going, coming to her (though a few shall fall) honking up Montlake between the university and the citydump, coming, the stadium, the bridge like a gnarled knee, having shinnied up the bony shank the noise slapping now into residential trees as a panel truck clips the side off a rusty Ford (swing left and survive attrition for the love of Darwin) a clunker clanging stupidly with its load of bright physicists, traffic engineers nodding wisely over blueprints of the new freeway, two miles completed when the mayor's third secretary avoided an unrecorded crash with myself impossibly munching cheese and bread, just hanging on over Madison on Twenty-third oh fat thigh crease don't dribble the traffic engineers ahead of me stop, having missed their turn, everybody stopped, ahead of them a black coupe, new and trimmed with light blue, occupied by a burly head and a young lady, not too close, on my left a lady alone, plump, short hair, not young, random reflections of a sprained mind over acquaintanceships American style the jam breaks and engineers turn at the next corner, aware of the face weary at 7:30 a.m. that has forgotten sleep, that is bored and sarcastic and successful, dangerous, but oblivious to the wormy glare of the duckass in flattened, frame twisted, rod knocking hotrod that screeches dangerously in ahead of me in their place, purrs then growls loud fart clap an evil beast what in a carload of carpenters cuts him off with a clever and gratifyingly impudent maneuver, snickers, he smacks them I skid left and survive attrition, cheese film dry in the back of my throat (oh, but a few shall fall by the way) making the light across Yesler and hanging on, just hanging on, swooping down to Ranier Boulevard a sweat rivulet below the great beacon to boys and punks and up it hard we scramble, all for the one lady now, goddess slut or Madonna as you will but waiting for us wanting us and pulling us to her like countless spermatozoa up a pressurized water pipe, smug plumbress she winks and twenty horsepower and little eagerness wriggles frantic with the slimy herd, no different and forgotten in the land of reluctant pregnancies but we are

DAVE SOLBACH

coming dear, we are coming, thinly prepared but hoping for
hopefulness the physicists' clanging clunker clanging on unfallen and
ahead still the lady of sprained associations too, go baby, we come
uncorked and some impatient though most just hanging on into new
chrome now and new faces up your throbbing neck panting up Airport
Way (what's the BMW's back wheel doing beside its front, what's
Darwin got against BMWs) there's no stopping us now, not now, up the
homestretch sweating the song of much, much (why in the mouth and
not in the dirty cunt like our fathers, what kind of breeding is that)
patient be patient and kind to the Plymouth, beam benevolence at tract
houses of mature aspect twenty years at least and machinists, janitors,
engineers, inspectors, copyists, code men, the family, because
breakfast's served the one of dreams is plopped into the big mouth and
we clang and roar and waddle to you the flesh comes wheezing we
come dear we come oh have a pretty baby.

JESSEL MCDERMOTT

by

GEORGE H. SZANTO

One dark night Jessel McDermott the fly swatter had a dream: he himself was being smelled out, tracked down, and would finally be crushed beneath a mighty swish.

Maybe four times he saw the swatter poised above him. Each time he escaped. But pretty soon there'd be nowhere left to hide, since someone had taken the drapes from the windows, the refrigerator had been pulled away from the wall, somebody'd rounded out the corners of the room, no, of all the rooms.

About the fifth time around he stood anchored to the floor. Each leg weighed half a ton. In the middle of his paralysis he saw the swatter coming down over his head.

He woke up shrieking.

Now it'd probably be wrong to say this was a dream of guilt. Sure, McDermott had killed flies in the sneakiest ways known to the profession. But then, flies are no damn good anyway.

They have to be killed.

Somebody's got to do it.

In his day McDermott had killed maybe three and a half million flies. That includes houseflies, midges, hornets, dragonflies, mosquitoes, tigerflies, horseflies, caddis flies and thrips, sawflies, flying ants, May flies and June flies in season, and wasps and bees —to give them all their popular names. If you add maybe another seven or eight that don't usually get classified by the Association, you've got the most common.

Now three and a half million may sound like a lot, and maybe it is. But Jessel wasn't pleased with the score. He'd been in the business for thirty-six years, and he was averaging less than a hundred thousand a year.

Of course he couldn't be sure if his count was exact, but one year he'd kept pretty close records in a pad in his back pocket. He'd come out with eighty-four thousand two hundred ninety-five. This of course

is slightly less than average. When you're in the profession you get the feel of how it's going.

Really, you see, that year it was just the business of counting which kept the figures so low. Still, except for the very best years you don't break the golden hundred thousand. The average would come to maybe ninety-two thousand five hundred a year. That's what McDermott would say.

Or at least he'd have said so until his dream. Since then he hasn't done a lot of talking about anything.

Oh, sometimes he'd mention the dream, sure. Then one day he just clammed up, and that was that.

Until today.

Last night there was another dream.

At least it started out as a dream.

McDermott lived alone. Always had. Never children, never a wife, never even a woman, but thirty-six years of devotion to the Association.

At present this was good. Made it easier not to have to speak to anyone.

He'd had a light supper of marmalade and cheese pancakes, and he'd gone to bed around nine. He took with him a sandwich wrapped in wax paper in case he woke up. Which he usually did if he went to bed so early.

Today there was going to be a Northeastern Area Fly Swatters Association semi-annual Penal Committee luncheon meeting for discussion of recommendations to be made to the Plenary Session next month concerning action to be taken against members who used swatters with surfaces of more than the legal area (a hundred and fifty-six square centimeters —they still used the old European measures). Jessel wanted to put in a full eight hour day and still get to the free NAFSA meal. Also there was talk of making McDermott a vice president.

But because of last night's events he never made it to the meeting. He'd had wine with dinner —a luxury, but a necessary one. Then

he'd fallen asleep quickly. At first he slept soundly. At least he doesn't remember anything.

Later he began to dream. This part was definitely a dream.

He was swatting a fly, arm back, clap down. The efficiency of thirty-five years brought to bear.

The fly wouldn't die.

Uncrushed, it flew to a beautiful white flower two feet away and crouched. You could make out its exact position. Because it had tripled in size.

Swat again.

No good. Again. Still leaping about. Still growing. The size of a kitten. Swat. Ridiculous. Big as a puppy, bounding about, strangely not unattractive, what shedding legs? what is this? impossible to swing at it hard, no no leave the swatter, please don't no leave it

everything black but not awful, very nice to float, it must be a dream, but now wake up. It must be morning.

Jessel opened his eyes. He was as he expected lying in bed. His brow was being mopped gently with a cool cloth and he turned to his right.

It was the fly, of course. He recognized the features. Perfectly natural, this. And very cooling, very nice. She was beautiful as she had to be, more womanly than flylike. Quite naked too, the lovely lady, in fact totally unlike any but the most perfect white butterfly, stupidly not protected by the Association. White skin and golden hair, long along the sides to the thighs, the back bare but for the wings, two long slender waxen wings reflecting candlelight curving out from white shoulderblades, golden hair flowing beneath them, all this in one glance, pretty good eh? Years of practice.

She seemed completely right, completely natural.

And yet, because of the situation, surprise must be feigned.

"What what are you doing —who are you? "

"But I'm the angel fly."

How more perfect can this become.

"You can't just come in here and and. . ."

"I come only where I am wanted."

Why does she whisper? No one will hear her if she speaks louder. A very lovely whisper.

An angel fly? This is impossible.

“What is an angel fly? I’ve never heard of an angel fly.”

“You are not supposed to hear of us. We are very rare.”

“I’ve been looking for flies for years and years, and I’ve never seen an angel fly.”

“Once in a lifetime if you look properly you may see one of us, we are always there, one of us is always near our other brothers.”

“Still, I’ve never. . .”

“Lie back now, you are very tired, you have spent many strenuous hours in many long days, now rest, rest.”

She is beautiful, impossible now to rest, lie back, beautiful in an almost human way as mermaids are beautiful, “Please take my hand,” a cool cool hand, I’ll warm it with my breath, kiss its taste is sweet, her arm is cool but soft and slender, “Come to lie beside me, warm under the sheet,” legs warm beside cool legs, MCDERMOTT YOU’VE JUST TAKEN A FLY INTO YOUR BED, this is ab surd .

With much passion and some violence, in and through his tears, Jessel McDermott forever denied his past virginous life.

They woke in each other’s arms when the daylight began to enter the window. The angel fly stretched out her arms, Jessel held her tightly, rubbed her back with the palms of his hands the full length of her white back.

The wings. There were no wings. “Your wings.!”

“My wings? ”

“They’re gone, they’re they’re broken off.” What have I done, oh what what have I done.

“Broken off? ”

Jessel found the wings on the floor by the side of the bed.

“But this happens, always, it is only natural, only.”

It is only natural? “It is? ”

She laughs, high, giddy, sweet, delicious. “Of course.”

Then she is now a woman, wingless and human, never to fly away, a

woman, "I love you."

Still laughing. "I know, good, very very good."

"And you? "

"I must go."

"Go? No no no, don't go."

"Now you have to sleep, sleep, beautiful flies lose their wings when they bear children, I will bear a hundred children, a thousand, yours, I can feel them, I have to go, close your eyes, goodbye, sleep, goodbye."

Cool cool hands and not even a very hot brow, cool hands.

Jessel slept soundly.

When he awoke he was alone. The sandwich he'd put by the side of the bed was gone. Only some crumbs and the wax paper left.

Possibly she'd eaten it. Maybe?

Maybe NAFSA would make McDermott a vice president today —never mind.

Later in the day Jessel applied for a job as an undertaker.

ANIMALS

GARY BROWER

AARDVARKS:

are funny
before you see them.
They are shaggy
all over
including their name.

I think
they have
prehensile tongues.

THE WALRUS:

is born ancient
and looks like
he could lead
his harem to bed
all at once.

The females
have all been
star sopranos.

THE KOALA:

is furry
like the inside
of a pocket.

SEAHORSES:

look just like their bodies
have just left the sculptor.
Their mouths are ready
to kiss anything.
They are children
waving in the current
like pale handkerchieves.

THE DUCKBILL PLATYPUS:

is wrong.

THE POETRY SHOW

GARY BROWER

Ladies and Gentlemen:
Permit me to remove my hat
and put it on the table
Don't yawn!
I'll not pull rabbits out of it,
nor flags nor an endless scarf
not even sounds
or a song or musicals or sonatas

Only entrails
taken out
by my own hand:
salt-hardened kidneys
a useless urethra
and cirrhotic remains of the liver.

Don't be alarmed
if among so many guts
a few pieces
of undigested food appear,
still in the process.

(I'm not to blame
for this imperfect machine.
You'll have to ask the unknown
inventor who's probably old and a little crazy.)

But we digress. Let's get on with it.
Let's put the products of this hat
on the table.

(Translated from the Spanish by Gary Brower)

CORTLAND E. BERRY

DARK SYMPHONY

Dark Symphony, provide the power-hungry ones
With music by their humbled sheep,
For they're too weak to raise complaints.

Dark Symphony, give those predatory sons
The melody for to howl and weep,
For they still sing like saints.

Dark Symphony, ever full of woes,
Lead them on with your most labored beat—
A beat led in pain style.

Dark Symphony, ever let them know
That your music's for to fatally reap
Their final massive bonepile.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT

I heard two of them rap on
 "fuckin' girls"
And I thought myself one of them,
But then they put down something about
 "fuckin' up their minds"
And I knew I was out of it.
 Fuckin' up minds
Just ain't worth shit.

IN THE OTHER MAN'S SHOES

On the whole
you will understand
what he went through
to get his feet
on the ground
when you put on
one of his shoes
and walk around
on the hole.

SOMETHING TO CRY ABOUT

The little boy
was asked by
the old man why
he cried.

When he replied,
"Because I can't do
what the big boys do,"
the old man cried too.

TIS THE TRIP TO BE SIMPLE

*Every blade of grass grew and was
happy. Everything knew its path and
loved it...only he understood nothing
...he was a stranger and an outcast.*

—Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*

Balboa had the itch for the Pacific trip.
He was so hung up he sometimes forgot himself completely.
Call me Cortez, he said then,
So they called him Ishmael.

What's that? she asks—tis never simple to get thru to her.
She doesn't know why they built the flowing roads to the
Pacific in terrific spasms of energy,
But I was trying to tell her—
She thinks men make good friends, though they won't leave
well enough alone,
But I was trying to tell her—
She thinks you can step in the same place twice,
if you keep walking with the current.
I kept trying to tell her:

(To himself:) I can't keep from growing,
The sap will rise.

When my nerves rebelled against overtaxation
& coffee couldn't keep me going any more
& I got no relaxation
I went out & got me a Russian stove
& cooked up for strength a big batch of cabbage soup.
What a stink!
By now my nerves had sprouted, waving, from my chin,
& grown the length of Tolstoy's beard.

ERIC CHAET

Along the shoulders of the highway, the grass
Waves, & fascinates the tripping outcasts.

I tried to tell her,

by trying to be silent—

(thinks:) It's not simple
to be simple.

The pines of Idaho are pining for the girl who ran from
the cabbage soup,

The riveters on the 32nd girdered storey of the Denver
bank building are just sublimating,

The oceans are only waving goodbye.

(Thinks:)

What an idiot!

The sap will rise. It's a real hang-up.

Still, when he wakes up by a pond in the morning,
Ducks are flying, he's covered with dew, has a hard-on,
&, when he sighs, he finds the grass fragrant.

LIGHT CONVERSATION

I call this song "Light Conversation," though it's a very serious song. Kind of like a very serious tree, an oak, or maybe a banyan. Here's how to play it on a guitar.

Using the G-string as a drone, play the B-string, placing a finger on the fret noted above the word in the text. Only two strings are used, and only one is changed to describe the melody. Each uncircled number is a quarter note. One circle means a half-note. Two circles mean a whole note.

Since this is a rather unorthodox way of scoring music (I'm not competent in orthodox scoring) and a way that does not present an accurate detailed melody, but merely an outline, you are free to sing any melody that fits the outline. I often modify the melody myself as I sing it. 3-0-3 often becomes 3-2-0-2-3, for instance. It's fun. And magic. Incidentally, the song should be a bit closer to Eastern than Western music, seems to me; feel free, though. . . .

- 3 3 5 ③
1. If I had to choose between your kiss
- 3 8 3-0③
- And the waves upon the ocean,
- 8 ③ 8 ③
- I'd wave farewell and smile away
- 3 8 3-0③
- Blow a kiss and dig the motion.
- 12 10 8 ③
- But if you'll come along with me
- 12 ③ 8 ③
- You'll be my boat, together we'll float,
- 3 8 3-0③
- And raise a fine commotion.

MIDAS

words and music by
ELIZABETH SCALET

I. Ev-'ry-thing he touch-es turns to him

meets be-comes him Ask an-y-one who's known him they'll tell you

Ev-'ry word he speaks is gold-en Ev-'ry step that he takes

Ev-'ry move that he makes is mag-ic

2. And if you ever want to know why
 When he passes you he just walks on by
 ask anyone who's known him they'll tell you
 that he's just that kind of guy

He doesn't need you
His loving is through
it's too hard to handle

3. And if he seems to be a little cold
 to the sad love stories you unfold
 ask anyone who's known him they'll tell you
 how often he's been bought and sold

He can't care anymore
He's been hurt before
too often

4. And now too late he finds he's a lover
 As he keeps his heart and his hurt under cover
 But ask anyone who's known him they'll tell you
 He used to be a loser

And the love that he takes
And the hearts that he breaks
are worthless

repeat first verse

COFFEE CONVERSATION

why you got no eyes johnny
she askd

got em shot through baby
he sd

to yellow haird girl
he was thinking of
by the grill
coffee
hamburger on formica

got em shot through?

FLO (the name tag sd)

yes pass me the ketchup
my gal FLO
& ill sell you the
sunrise

how can you do that johnny
you got no eyes?

that was the price i had to pay
sweet thing

JOHN MORITZ

taking a bite
sauce still on his lips
while FLO shuffled up two cups
for truckers at booth
she brushed back yellow hair
behind the counter again
wiping the formica

FLO (the name tag

alright what do you want for it?
she asked

your eyes

brown: fuck you!
and the whole scene becomes a greek chorus
chorus of marble
all a common date murdered
death at the juke
a song without rhyme
blood and beer overflowing
absorbed the sawdust
rushed the door in a swirling
slime of history
this be the floor he drink on
this be the brew
that go as the sun do

dusk, at the eldridge hotel, ralph sits reading
the "agrarian times". across the lobby, corn girls
dressed in spring formality, dance under red white
& blue balloons. everywhere the ritual. the air cut
thick by gazeboes. so distant from the stench
he keeps washing his hands on; he places that jour-
nal of earth over his lap and begins to masturbate.
the cum shoots out through the pages into the bell
of a migrant sousaphone.

Pull yourself together, Ralph! the whole scene
is coming loose at your pants. The elevator
boy is watching. The night clerk grips
his fingers in your direction. In a moment
of the most extreme uncool/cool it!

DAVID MELVIN

THE EPIC SAGA OF MY METEORIC PREORDAINED COSMIC ASCENSION
FROM TOTAL OBSCURITY TO VIRTUAL OBSCURITY

BOOK THE FIRST

A poet is shaped from stone by the raging elements.

age ten and scared of dogs
he walked in the sun
across the kansas small town streets
to a brickyard dead gone
and quarry silent in the hillside
sand pit deep and it rises with the tide
he climbed the top and stood
looking over the city
wheat dealer of the state
hog butcher of saline county
bored town
with brick streets and trees all over
and a million squirrels
and then he turned to the sun
squinted
and glimpsed
the eagle's do-do
as it fell onto his face.

BOOK THE SECOND

The poet is placed on the block and sold to the highest bidder of despair.

age twenty and scared of dogs
he walked in the sun
across the kansas small town streets
to a barroom dead gone
and jukebox silent
draught glass deep and it rises with the tide
he climbed upon the table
looking over the bar
beer dealer of the city
cigarette vendor of the campus
bored bar
with dirty floors and lots of tables
and a million squirrels
and then he turned to the john
squinted
and glimpsed
the chancellor's do-do
as it fell onto his face.

BOOK THE THIRD

Sold into slavery, the poet rebels and is chained to the wall in a dungeon.

tired of all that do-do
he
went
away
upstream to the source of all that
basically it was just a pool of it
somewhat green with age and knew no tides
he held his nose
but had to breathe sometime
and when he did he screams
it stinks!
forthwith they grab him and chain him to wall of the dungeon.
the chains are red plastic
they will not take them
off
but they will make them longer.

BOOK THE FOURTH

Doomed to perpetual chains, the poet considers his fate.

at least, he muses, no more do-do in the face
yes, he cries, they can't get me now
now that they already have me
they can't eat me
he laughs
and looks up to the distant dungeon roof.
the eagle crashes through
he covers his face
but the eagle's
iron claws tear
into
his
flesh
pull his liver
from his side
and in time
digests all his flesh
and the poet has become do-do.
the eagle flies
away.

I HAVE HERE

Fevered notes for a poetry reading:

(drink French water purchased in Kansas City on the plaza. drink it from a champagne glass. recall that a friend recently commented that she had been guilt-ridden for the past twenty-six years because she hadn't been drinking the prescribed nine glasses of water a day. Note that the prescription has been reduced to six.)

Mention that I am gratified to see so many familiar faces
after such a long absence.

Recall that April is the cruelest month.
Dedicate a poem, then, to April.

Mention also that I am gratified to see so many unfamiliar faces.
New admirers are always welcome.

Note: If the audience is very small
Omit the two references to gratification.
Mention that poetry readings are best intimate affairs.

(personal observation: my friends
are too swinging to hear poetry read
in the Forum room--
Are out of town on important
Matters--affairs that could not
wait.)

DAVID MELVIN

Try to recall some of the things you
said the other day at that picnic by
the lake. You were very witty that
day.

If you can't do that, read this.

Mention that you will not
under any circumstances
Explain any of your poetry.
Insist this is a problem
for the academics. The
Petite bourgeois intellectuals.
(be sure to inject scorn in your voice
when you say
petit bourgeois intellectuals)
Hope then that any of that sort
In the audience
Will commence this important work
(the explication of your poetry)
immediately.

Deny that you ever said
I will read my poetry naked.

Recall that at the lake,
that day you were so clever,
you added, emotionally.

Save your denial that you are a poet
Until after the reading.
In fact, save it only for those
Who did not seem to care
For your poetry.

Be sure to avoid all discussion
Before and after
Of meter
As you are abysmally ignorant
of the issues involved.

Mention that, as
Charlie Olson
seems to say
It is merely breathing.
He
seems
to say this.

Take another sip of the waters.

Contemplate shattering the
glass on the asphalt of the
Clark's gas station.
At two
A.M. in the morning.

Pause to allow the beauty
Of this image
Time to mellow.

Perhaps you had better read
Charlie Olson's essay on
projective verse
again
perhaps there is more to it
than merely breathing.

If it is merely breathing
it certainly must be
absurdly simple.

DAVID MELVIN

Say the above in such a manner
That it is plain
Each word was typed
While the poet was
In great pain.

Mention that the malaria season is approaching.

Invent a poet
A Frenchman, perhaps,
Who wrote in Caen
And who was a great influence
On your work.
Who gave it direction.
Who helped you articulate
your poetic potentialities.
Began
After this
The reading.

MARGERY-JEAN PERRY

IN ANGER

my words
sank into your flesh
like a flight of shiny pins

I stare at the places
where I know they struck
but see nothing

buried inside
like lost bullets
and you

go on talking
laugh
leaving me

no means of extraction

WHAT CHEER, IOWA No. 1

I saw your sign
As I drove east on Interstate-80
And have since
Imagined you green and white
Full of bleached-sterile people.

No. 2 (an after thought)

On second thought
You must be grey
With two arms
Two legs
and
Five tractors.

RICK IVANOVITCH

THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Born for trouble, flying
Like sparks before the wind,
But like the sparks soon dying,
There's no satisfying
People like us, who find
It's better to burn, and longer, living unresigned.

The world's a Gatling-gun
Turning around with a crank.
What bullet ever had fun
Knowing he was one
Being shot for a prank
By a marksman dressed in blue into the sky's blue blank.

Whatever is aiming us
Seems to be blind. It
Never is curious,
Always anonymous,
A mask with nothing behind it,
A target marked by nothing with nothing left to find it.

A STRAY CAT

She would stand my stroking
and would sleep on my footmat.
She would consume my food and milk.
But she could see a doom
she must claw at and leap from
when I would lift her in my hand.

YOU

All of space,
I've heard,
darkens at a failing star
or a falling bird.

All mankind,
I've read,
dwindles when a prophet dies
or a child is dead.

All my world,
I've learned,
declines when your look is cold
or your mind is turned.

TWO HOT SLICES
(From a Pie in the Oven)

by

DAVID OHLE

for Willie and C.J.
R.I.P.

I

Bricks are usually rectangular, because in that way they are most suitable for building the vertical walls of our houses. But anyone who has had to do with the stacking of stones of a non-cubic type will be well aware of other possibilities. For instance, one can make use of tetrahedrons alternating with octahedrons. They are not practicable for human beings to build with, because they make neither vertical walls nor horizontal floor. However, when this building is filled with water, flatworms can swim in it.

— M.C. Escher

On the way to the window this time Shelp brought an incident from his childhood up into his throat like an unexpected vomit. It involved a flagpole. Briefly, it went like this:

Scene: A grey schoolyard, a flagpole threatening the sky like a gargantuan dart, like an iron tree with its limbs uncorked; loudspeakers all around in circles, many children, many ages.

Shelp eats a cake donut and admires the flag.

Two antagonists approach from the left, eighth graders both.

Classmate One: Say the right password or else face the honey and ants treatment. After that you get wrapped in wet cowhide and hoisted up the flagpole in the hot burning sun. If that doesn't do the trick, we wait till the ants get hungry late at night. And remember the coyotes and the hawks. And don't forget the sub-zero temperatures. What do you think?

Shelp: I'm not playing this game. (The ring of speakers begins to spit the Spangled Banner toward a spot dead center in the middle of the

yard, where several fifth and sixth-grade Leaders re-enact the jamming of the American flag into foreign soils in times of war, and times of peace.) No, I'm not playing this game until I have to.

General saluting, random singing. But not Shelp. It is not that Shelp is unpatriotic (certainly not in these days at any rate), but that he is occupied in noticing that one of the actors in the jamming of the flag is eating a sandwich, that another is busy goosing another, and that a fourth is a girl. He is taken by the staged appearance of it all, and he is neglecting his obligations.

He walks off, right, disgusted.

The scene immediately changes, like a miracle, and we see Shelp hulking (even though he is smaller than the average, he hulks) through an alleyway behind the school's kitchens. (Some odors should be released in the house at this point.)

Suddenly Classmate One and Classmate Two attack Shelp from behind. He turns to face them, only to be temporarily blinded by a raving sun, screaming through the leaves of banana plants which grow thickly at a distance beyond the suggestion of a fence.

Shelp is thrown against the kitchen wall.

Classmate Two: Give up, fuckbag! It's hopeless.

Shelp: No!

Classmate One: (Brandishing an imaginary screwdriver) All right, then we unscrew your navel and your legs fall off. If that doesn't get results, *zit*, goes a red hot poker down your throat, and *zat*, it comes out of your delicate chuff pipe. Then we go on to harsher methods.

Shelp: (The sun in his eye, the cold of the asphalt underfoot.) Like what?

Classmate One: Maybe we'll sew wasps under your skin.

Classmate Two: Or shove a catfish the wrong way down your gullet.

Classmate One: How about a few minutes with your footsies in the trash burner?

Classmate Two: Those are the mild ones.

Classmate One: Do you intend to salute next time, snakeface?

Shelp: No. I say it's *not* hopeless.

Classmate Two: Whatever guzynnina must comatya. (*He punches Shelp in the abdomen, knocking him down.*)

Blue light.

Shelp, alone in the alley.

The suggestion of thunder and rain.

Red light.

Fade.

II

And in the morning, in my cave, and even sometimes at night, when the storm raged, I felt reasonably secure from the elements and mankind. But there too there is a price to pay. In your box, in your caves, there too there is a price to pay. And which you pay willingly, for a time, but which you cannot go on paying forever. For you cannot go on buying the same thing forever, with your little pittance. And unfortunately there are other needs than that of rotting in peace . . .

Molloy, Samuel Beckett

Months before, Shelp had gone into the outside to see about a job. He had been put into a waiting room and told to sit on rattan chairs, and when he did, a sliver of bamboo lanced his thigh on the underside. He was given a laboratory frock and told to wear it. In a corridor someone stopped him and said, "Usually the specimens arrive just after lunch."

Shelp had waited anxiously for the specimens, wondering what they would be. While he waited in his small laboratory (which he shared with custodial personnel), a nose and a pair of lips inserted themselves in the crack of his door, and the lips said: "The specimens will be here pretty soon, and you'll get to work with them exclusively the rest of the day." Shelp said, "I'm anxious to get started. What are the specimens, anyway?" Now he could see one brown eye with a polyp on its lid. "The specimens are little jars of shit," the lips said. "You'll be working with shit."

In many ways Shelp was flexible. He could bend in the wind right along with the next guy, and then snap right back again to wait for the next breeze. In that sense he was like a crepe myrtle, or a camphor

bough. But in many other ways, he was as rigid as the tomb. The breezes would hurl themselves against him, throwing his tie over his shoulder, snapping his lapel against his chin, and he would stand his ground. In that sense he was like a castle door, or a wall.

Now there was a second brown eye, and its polyp. Beneath it the lips said: "In the meanwhile, shall we bleed a few sheep?" Now the whole head was in, and a thin white arm with black hairs, and a shoulder, and then all of him. "Hi," he said, "I'm Omar. You must be the new fellow. God, you have striking eyes. Don't mind me if I stare, please. I'm horrible."

On the elevator up Omar asked: "Art, do you go with girls? I don't."

"Not right now," Shelp said. "I mean, I do normally. That is, I have in the past . . . gone with girls, and I guess I probably will again sometime. You might say I'm in a slump. I get to the plate, but I strike out. City life gets me down. If I find a certain type of girl, though, that'll be it."

"Listen, Art. That *certain type of girl* is the hardest of all to find, isn't she? And there you are, sitting around in your room pulling your pudding all day. That's no way to live, Art. Be outgoing, get together with people. Listen, a few of the fellows and myself do a few rubbers of bridge a few evenings a week — and don't search for a nasty pun there, because there isn't one, you silly. Oh, the bridge is a minor thing, really. It just gets us together. Come and play with us, Art. Do you play bridge? Oh, it doesn't matter. Come play with us anyway. Don't pay any attention to me, Art. I'm just horrible. But we do like new blood in the circle once and awhile. A quilt is more snug than a blanket, isn't it Art? You are a gay person, aren't you?

"No, I'm not." Shelp's garden-pea heart was now down in his liver's midlobe, becoming a stone. His eyes were cold and heavy in their sockets. "I said I was in a slump. People in slumps are not necessarily fags, Omar. It's not a black and white thing. There's grey. It's not so clear. There's fog obscuring it. I'm not gay, Omar. I'm sorry."

"Not even a little A.C. D.C., Art? Not even that?"

"No, Omar. I apologize."

"Art? Your hair shines in the elevator light. Forgive me. I'm horrible. God, I'm so horrible."

“You’re not so horrible, Omar. Don’t carry on.”

“Oh, thank you, Art. I’ve never seen such depth in eyes before, Art. Does my staring bother you? If it does, just reach over and swat me hard on the fanny. I’m happy that you like me. I like you, Art. Already.”

The elevator ride ended on the roof of the building. As the two of them stepped off, Omar said: “Art, did you know I was a bona fide M.D.? But a practice is such a tiring bitch, such an awful drag. So I took this job. It’s half the salary of a trashman, but I’m not insulted. A few years ago I was an up and coming communicable disease man — until I caught one. God, how I remember it. The clarity of the way it happened. There the resident sat, across from me, simply staring a *hole* in me. In a little while he said, ‘Omar, is that a chancre on your lip?’ He didn’t even notice the polyps, the stupid fruit. But, alas and alack, that was the end of my career. Don’t misunderstand, now. Listen, I’m happy. Free as a bird. I fly here, I fly there. If there’s an urge I give in to it without a thought. My life is like a Swiss movement, Art. Ah, but you began with a baseball metaphor, so I’ll continue in that. My life is a little ball game . . . doesn’t my constant punning bother you, Art? If it does, just reach over and squeeze me on the tit. Don’t be afraid. Pinch as hard as you can. Tell me, Art. Isn’t everyone a little bit queer these days? Say so if I’m wrong.”

Shelp felt obliged to leave Omar with something iffy. He said: “If for some reason,” he went on, “I don’t make it out of this slump. I mean . . . I fully expect to, but in the unlikely case that I don’t, if by some wild chance I flounder on the beach . . . I’ll do a little bridge with the fellows, that is, *if* . . .”

“That was very iffy,” Omar said.

“Whatever guzynnica must comatya,” Shelp said with a shrug.

A section of the roof of the building was separate from the rest of the roof of the building, on account of an electric fence cutting it off. Inside the fence sheep huddled, their faces a mix of fear and boredom. Adjacent to, and slightly apart from the electric fence area (Area A) was another area (Area B), the bleeding area. In the center of it was a cement lean-to, housing a bleeding table, also of cement (Lean-to C and

Bleeding Table D). On the bleeding table sat a dark black person (Person D).

Omar pointed and whispered: "Art, the way your hair is in the sun is driving me bats. That's Sterling over there right in the middle of his lunch hour, just sitting there taking in the air. He's our roof nigger. We also have a basement nigger. And each floor has a floor nigger."

Shelp waved. Sterling bowed his head and snuffled at the neck of his tee shirt. The sun was directly up. There were no shadows at all, if any.

"Sterling fucks the sheep," Omar whispered. "He thinks we don't know. What he doesn't realize is that's exactly what we pay him for. We pay this man to fuck our sheep and make them happy. It's actually a civil service position. On the books it says, Bonded Roofboy. But everyone knows except him. He thinks he's up here simply to watch the sheep and take in the air. He thinks he's putting something over on us. But actually we're putting something over on him. All he really does is fuck the sheep. Isn't he a disgusting spectacle? "

To Shelp he seemed solid, polished, and friendly.

"God, he's an ugly monster," Omar said. "I hate him. Watch how I handle him, Art. It's a scream. God, Art. Pardon me again for staring, but I'm about to swoon with the profile I'm getting of you."

"Excuse me, Omar," Shelp interrupted. "Have you ever been to Venice? "

"No, why? "

"Just asking," Shelp said.

"Now watch the way I work with this crazy coon," Omar said, giving Sterling the high sign.

Sterling went inside the electric area, wrestled down a sheep, and brought it back to the bleeding table. "Did you grab her by the tubes, Sterling? Did you sneak a feel? " Omar asked.

"Nowsuh," Sterling said, going back to snuffling his tee-shirt.

"Now put the sheep up on the table, Sterling. That's a bright lad, that's a good boy," Omar said.

"Yowsuh," Sterling said, lifting the sheep to the top of the table.

"Now hold her as tight as you can, Sterling, while I stick this enormous needle in her throat, and get about a quart of nice blood."

"Yowsuh," Sterling said.

Omar held a syringe out to Sterling, a syringe the size of a tennis

ball can. "This is the needle," he said. "It goes deep in her jugular and takes away her blood. That makes her feel very cold and not very responsive, Sterling."

"Yowsuh," Sterling said.

"Wait a minute," Shelp said. "What's going on up here. I don't think I like what's going on down there, either, with the little jars of shit. What's going on here, on this roof, Omar? What's happening in the basement, and up and down the floors? "

"Oh, God, if I had a camera," Omar said. "You show a rare kind of anger, Art. I could do with a picture of it."

Omar dabbed alcohol in a swirl on the throat of the sheep. Sterling held fast. Omar pumped his syringe and studied its action, winking at Shelp. Sterling held faster. "It looks like it's working nicely to me, Sterling. Does it look that way to you? "

"Yowsuh," Sterling said.

"Good, so now we're ready to rip on in, aren't we Sterling? " He winked again and again, and again. "Aren't we, Mr. Shelp? "

"Wait a minute. We're not ready," Shelp said, beginning to unbutton his frock. "I have a few questions."

"Oh, Art. Questions, questions, questions. It's beginning to get to be a little bit of a bore if you ask me. Don't tell me you're concerned about what the people think, about what the people think about, Art. Think about it. The citizenry. What is inside of the citizen heads? Just a little floating static, Art. That's all. They're just moving along, putting themselves in gear, operating. Don't worry about them, Art. Engage your own clutch. Go over there to the edge of the building and piss on them, down on the movement. But stay out of the works. A Swiss movement is a delicate thing. As long as there's a little motion, there's a little time, even if it isn't exactly correct. Let's think about it. We could call this high retreat The Tower of Offal and throw things down. I've written poems trying to express this thing, poem after poem after poem. Every window I saw I wanted to jump out of. But a poet must be haggard, musn't he? Look at my polyps, Art. Can a poet get by with polyps? I'm afraid I'm out of the race. Perhaps I'll do an autobiography, an autobiography of an unheard-of. It'll be called, *Going South With the Starch.*"

"Sterling, are you satisfied with this? " Shelp asked.

"Yowsuh," Sterling said.

Shelp went to the elevator and went down. He went toward the Men's to finish unfrocking. Just before he got to the door, someone stopped him and said: "If you're the new fellow, they're looking for you. The specimens are here."

Shelp said: "Tell them I'll be down there inside of a minute. I have to go in the bathroom here and wash my hands. I might cough a few times, too. Make it two minutes. Tell them I'll be there in two minutes. Let's see, maybe I'll go ahead and take a leak so I won't be disturbed in the middle of specimens. Come to think of it, I might take myself a good dump. I've got a few rumbles in my stomach. It might take as long as ten minutes. Tell them I'll really hustle. I won't even wipe carefully. As soon as I can make it, I'll be down there. Darn, I've left my comb home, and my hair's all blown around from the wind up on the roof. I've been up there with Omar and the roof nigger. Look, I'll flag a cab and rush home and get it. I could be back in forty minutes. Tell them not to hold up the jars on account of me. Tell them to go ahead and dig in. While I'm home I might as well take a bath, and I haven't had lunch yet. I'll take care of those two items while I'm there. No use wasting a chance at a bath and a good home-made lunch. Make it two hours. I could make it in two hours. Three, tops. Tell them to leave mine out in case I don't get back this afternoon. I'll come on in tonight and work through the wee hours. Tell them that. You're a good fellow."

On his way out, Shelp passed the first floor nigger.

"Excuse me," he said, "Do you know Sterling, on the roof? "

"Yowsuh," he said.

"Does he know that they know what he's doing with the sheep? "

"Yowsuh."

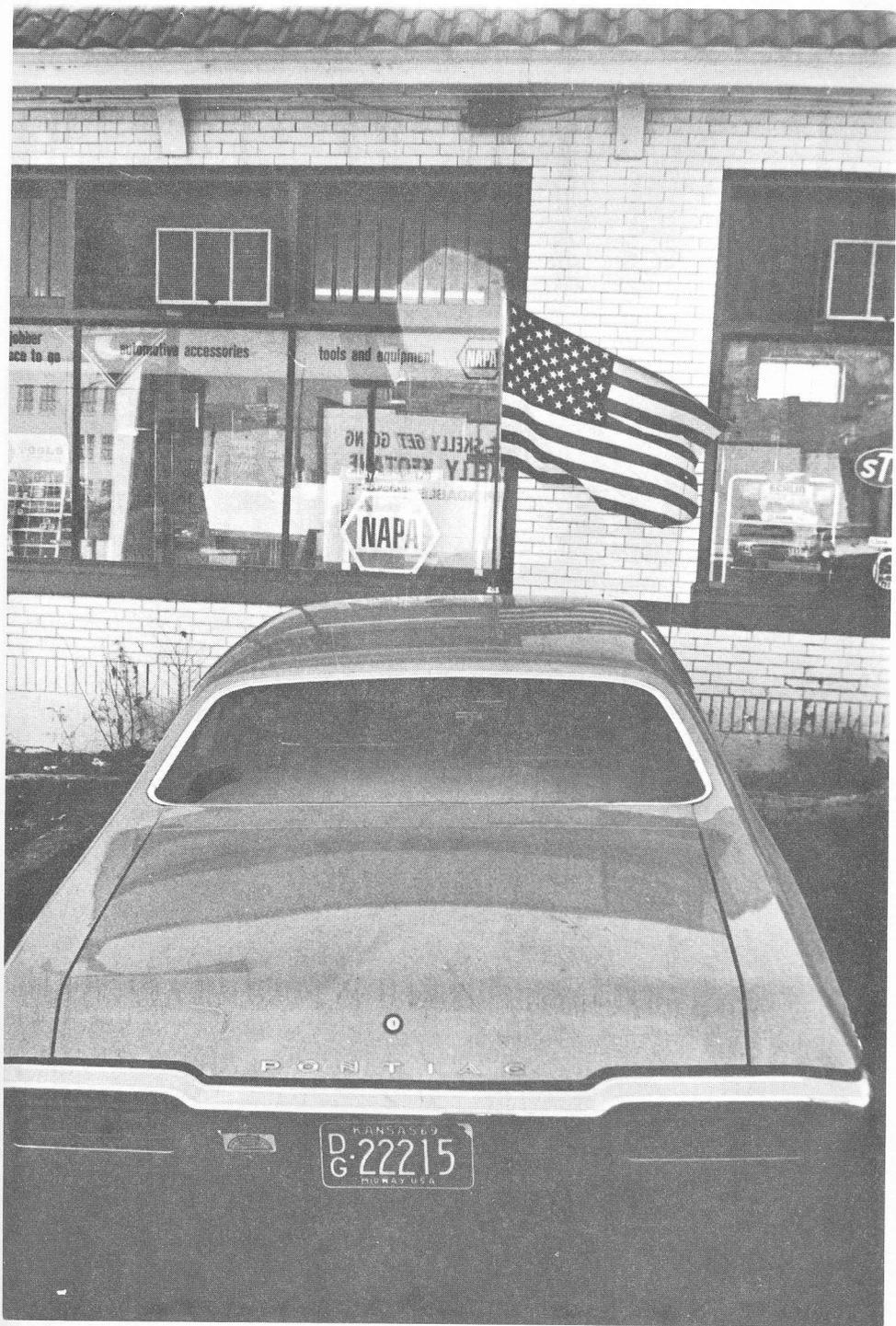
"Does he know that that's what they're paying him for? "

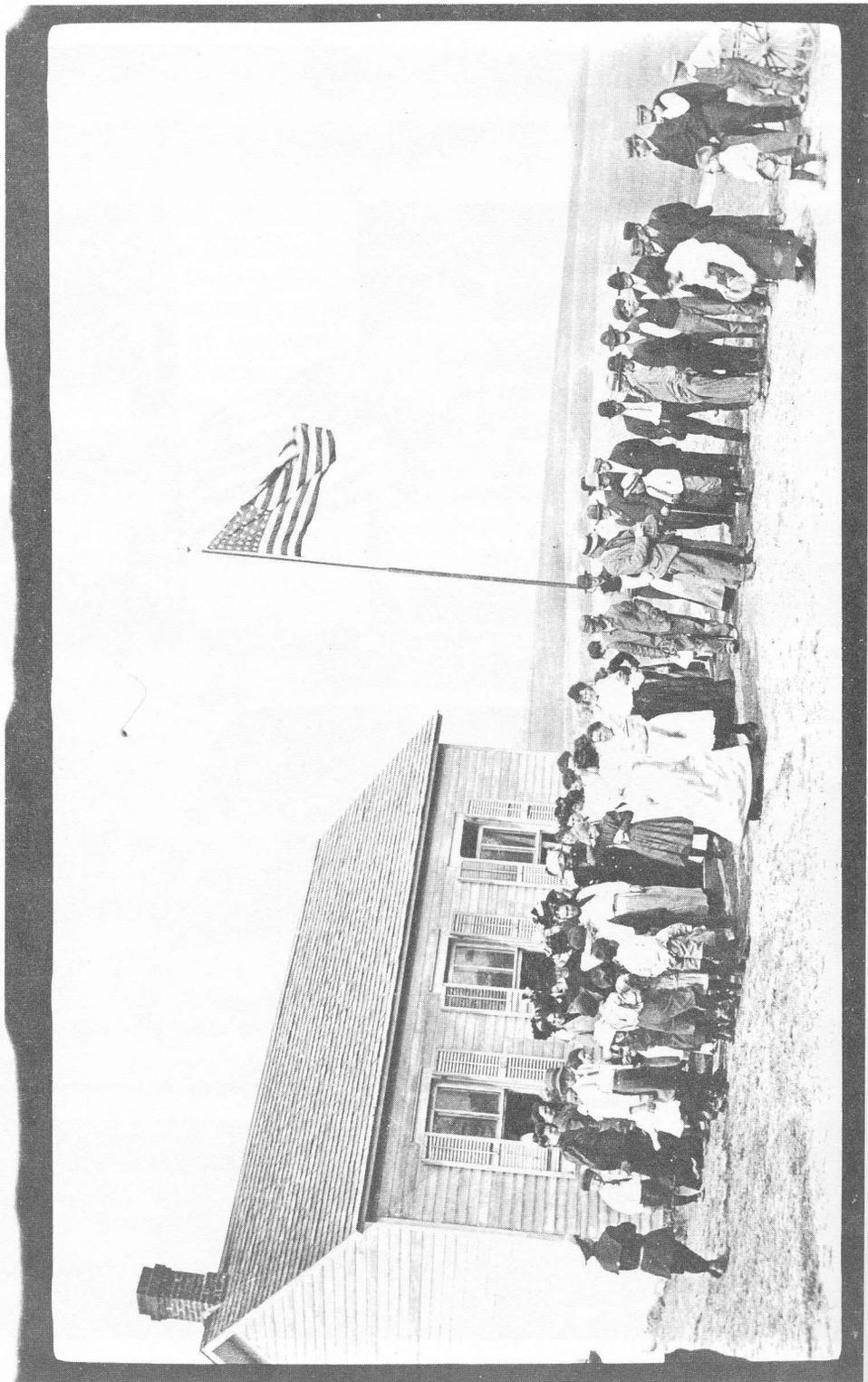
"Yowsuh."

"Why doesn't he apply for a downstairs job? Doesn't he have any dignity? What is he doing up there on the roof, a goddamn paid sodomite, when a little perseverance might get him down into the labs, where he could be working with . . . fooling around with . . . I mean, in a position where . . . where, instead of . . . he could be . . ."

"Yowsuh."

"I see," Shelp said. And he did. He was changed.





CONTRIBUTORS

CORTLAND E. BERRY was born in 1948 in Olathe, Kansas. He is presently a senior majoring in English and American Studies. Cortland and photographer Steve Ewart are planning a book for publication this year. This is Cortland's second appearance in this magazine. He will edit the Spring issue.

JOHN BLASDEL attended the University of Kansas and San Francisco Art Institute. He photographed extensively near Ithaca, New York and now lives in Lawrence working as a free-lance photographer. He has photographed writers and poets such as Robert Creely, Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder. One of his photos appeared in a 1967 issue of this publication.

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RICHARD E. McMULLEN was born in Ypsilanti, Michigan in 1926, received an M.A. in English from the University of Michigan in 1961 and presently teaches English in Michigan. His poems have appeared in numerous small magazines including the Spring 1969 issue of this publication.

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JERRY L. MILLER was born in Kansas City, Kansas in 1940 but grew mostly in the San Joaquin Valley of California. He received an M.A. from Indiana University, teaches, and has started CR Press in Cincinnati.

JAMES MINOR attended Loras College and is widely published in small magazines. With W.E. Ryan, he co-authored a book, *Reflections in a Circus Mirror*, which won the 1969 South and West Poetry Award and is available for \$2.75 through South and West, Inc., 2601 South Phoenix, Fort Smith, Arkansas 72901.

JOHN MORITZ a Chicagoan, attended the University of Kansas where he studied English and Creative Writing. His writing reflects the influence of Charles Olson, Ed Dorn and Michael McClure. Through his new Tansy book store, John is stimulating local interest in modern writing, painting, sculpture and music. Recent Tansy publications and readings have provided a medium of expression for little-known local writers. He is also editing a new magazine, *The Tansy*, which will be available in several months.

DAVID OHLE grew in New Orleans and graduated from Louisiana State University. He is a graduate student in English and is presently writing a novel from which the selection in this issue is taken. David and his wife and daughter live in a haunted house somewhere in the hills west of Lawrence.

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NORMAN H. RUSSELL has taught biology for twenty years and now teaches at Central State College in Edmond, Oklahoma. His Indian poems in this issue come from a series of over 500 entitled *indian thoughts*. He attempts "to encompass as many aspects as possible of pre-european indian society" as he thinks it might have been. He believes "the red man of fiction has always been far too noble or far too depraved to really believe in." His poems have appeared in many small magazines, the *American Literary Anthology* for 1968, and in a book, *at the zoo*, which was published in the Summer of 1969. He will read at the University of Kansas on April 10th, 4:30 p.m.

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HARRY WELDON was born in Westerly, Rhode Island in 1942. He attended 13 schools before attending 5 colleges including Wichita State University where he edited *Mikrokosmos*. He writes prose, poetry and music and is known as a blues singer in the Wichita area. His poems and prose have appeared in small magazines including several issues of *Cottonwood Review*. Harry and his woman Sara currently teach high school English in Nova Scotia.

HERB WILLIAMS is a graduate of the University of Kansas and writes and lives in Lawrence. His poems have appeared in *U-Z POMS*, *Reconstruction*, *Cottonwood Review*, *Vortex* and other small magazines. Tansy book store recently printed a broadsheet of his unique poem, "The Trolley," which is accompanied by a drawing by Janis.

DAVID WILSON attended San Francisco State Experimental College and the University of Kansas and is influenced by Robert Creely. His prose and poems have appeared in several previous issues of this magazine. His poems, "Sunnyside Sorrow & 6 More," are available in a color broadsheet printed by *Cottonwood Review*. At this writing he lives and works in San Francisco — perfecting his art, or, as he puts it:

like i said, "there's no reason
 everything i say is true —
 I take pride in my shoes"
again said once is enough
 i am shy
cause repetition of line in verse or flash
in the bucket or flash in the pan
cross the miles i extend me hand

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