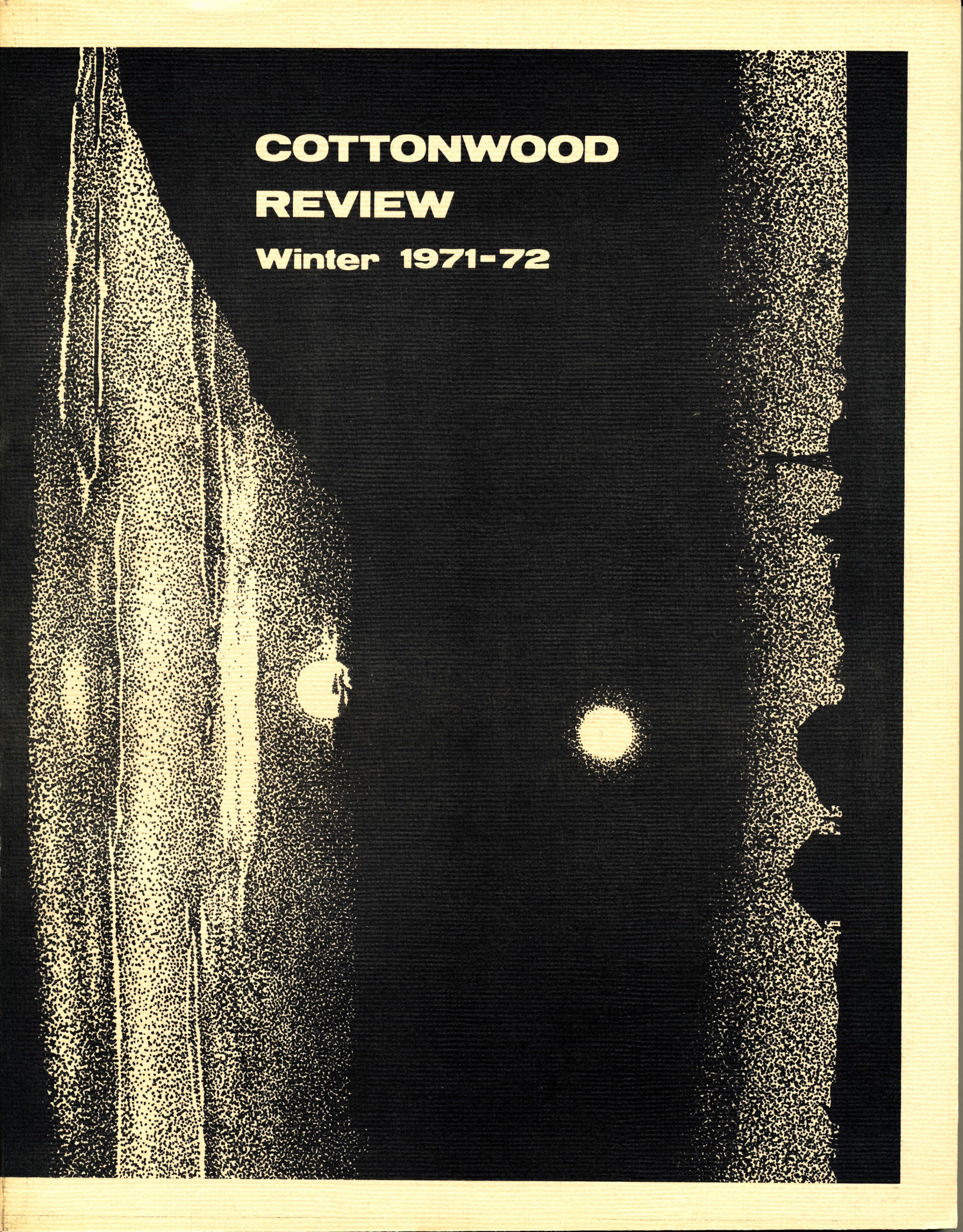
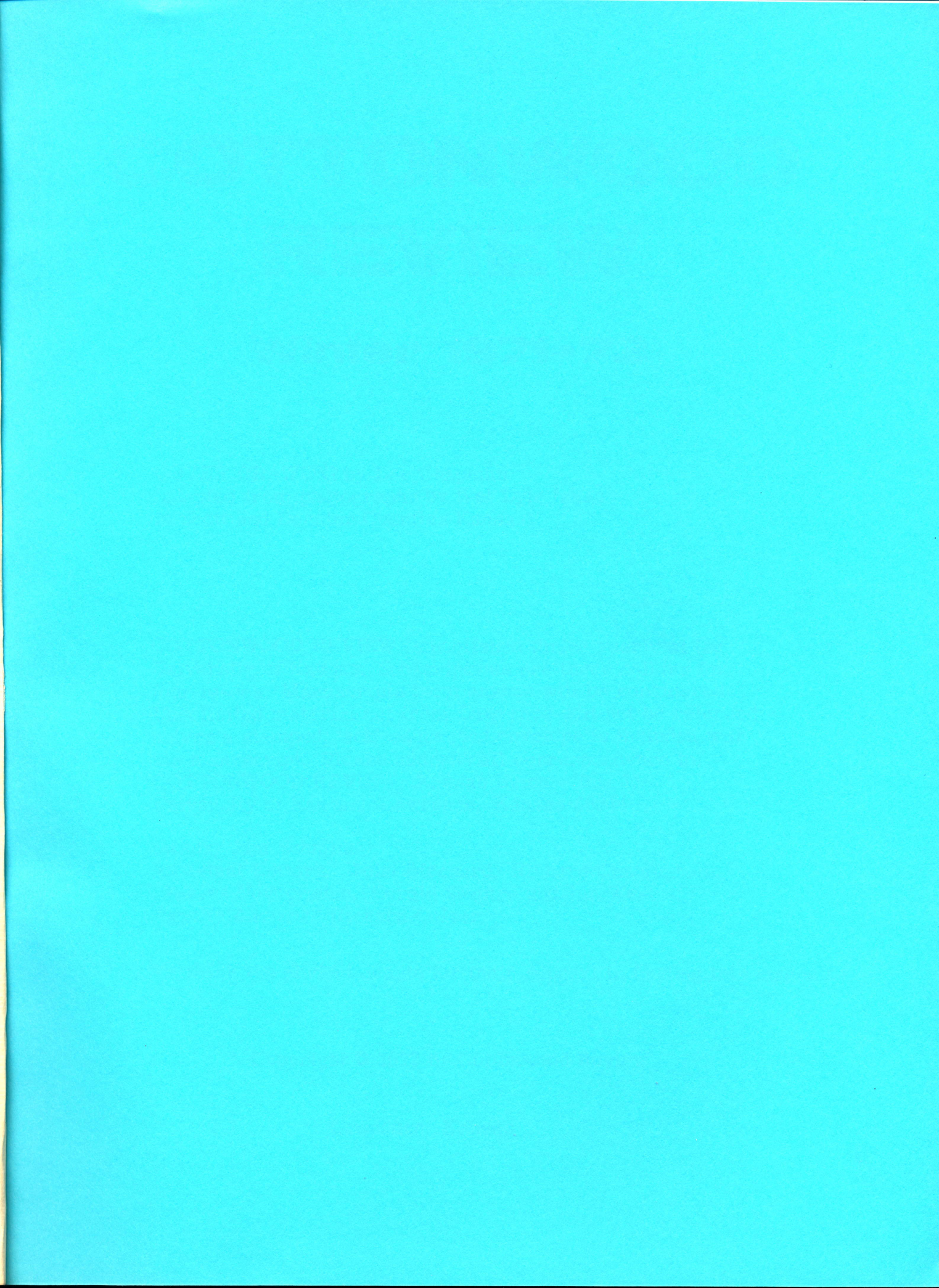


COTTONWOOD

REVIEW

Winter 1971-72







COTTONWOOD REVIEW

Winter 1971-72

COVER DRAWING by Lee Chapman
(adapted from photographs by Wel Lyle taken
in Scott and Decatur Counties Kansas)

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Lawrence, Kansas

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Harry Weldon

only thinking
the highest things in kansas
are holes

inching down
I have stood on their bottoms

I watched the edges
of those summits
lick clouds

early evening
travesty pushing it
out of its mind

facing backward's awkward
put it behind

weeks
they settle in pools
and leave rings

monday morning sun in the eye
roll on out to juice and eggs
wipe your mouth
and kiss the wife good-bye

the words aren't warm
and hard hours come before
this cold collection

good morning sir hows your weekend been
oh yes sir thankyou fine but then

Blaring Circumstance
flat bitter music
holding this drone note
all day

then when dark begins
and the born blind singer s
slap their knees in the streetlights

well I'll see you in the morning
bright and early. See ya

let's slap and sing and make this
night-time worth the trouble that the light
has coming up

When it gets up

just close your eyes and hum

track grime

hanging

plat
forms
a constructional
de
vice

jargoned

stage ing

neglecting concrete
and the mess made when
wrapped bones connect
too quickly
surface

put to the cleaning
of towering facades
we scrub
grime

scraping tracks off

rubbing
history's
angry
shin splints

Harry Weldon

Gypsies and Airplanes

the managers swallow polyunsaturated
shortening

soaking up fat blood

Chiefs of Staff
attack
circulatory pressure
stroking the possibility
of a clot

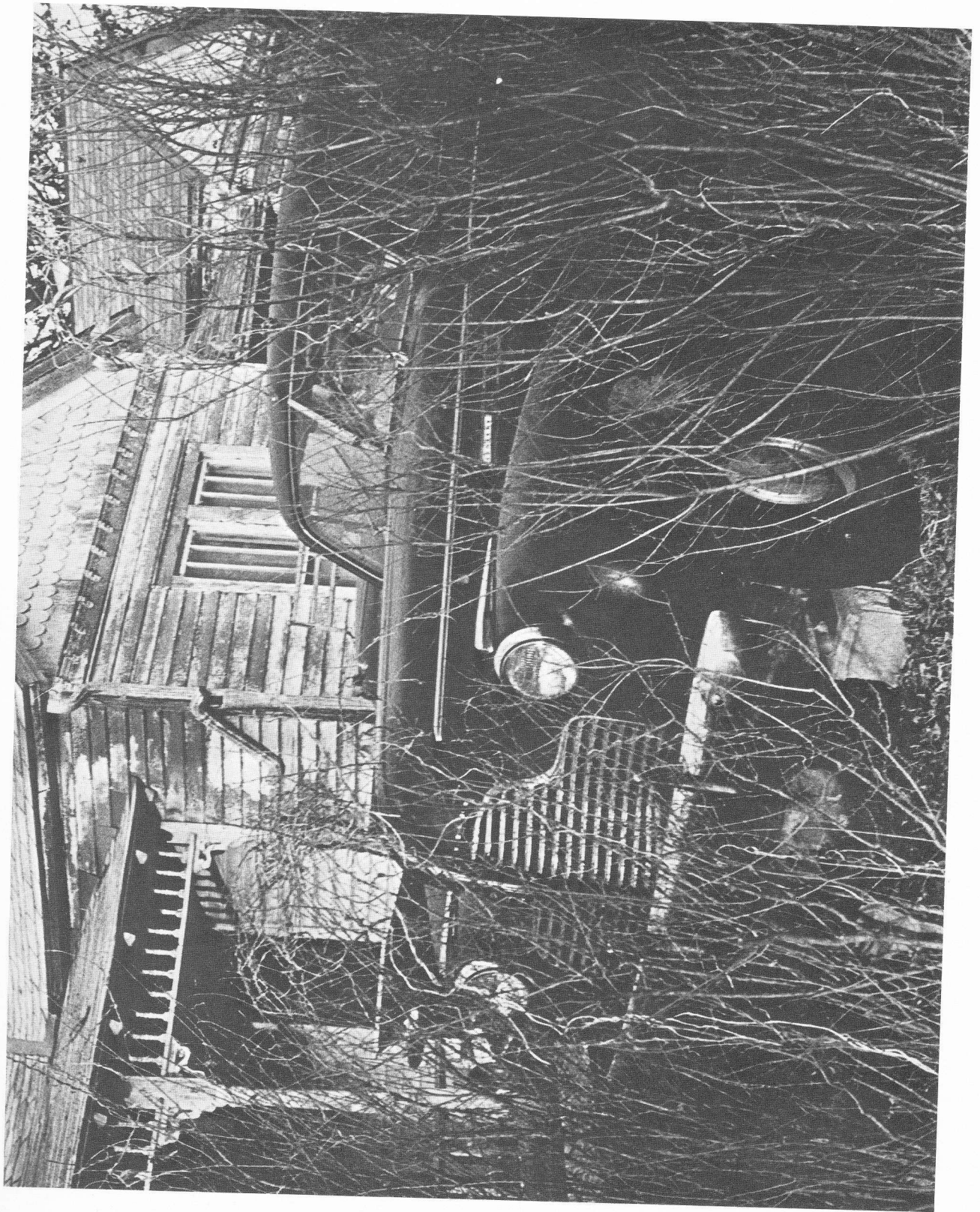
dusty skin women
pronounce
next week

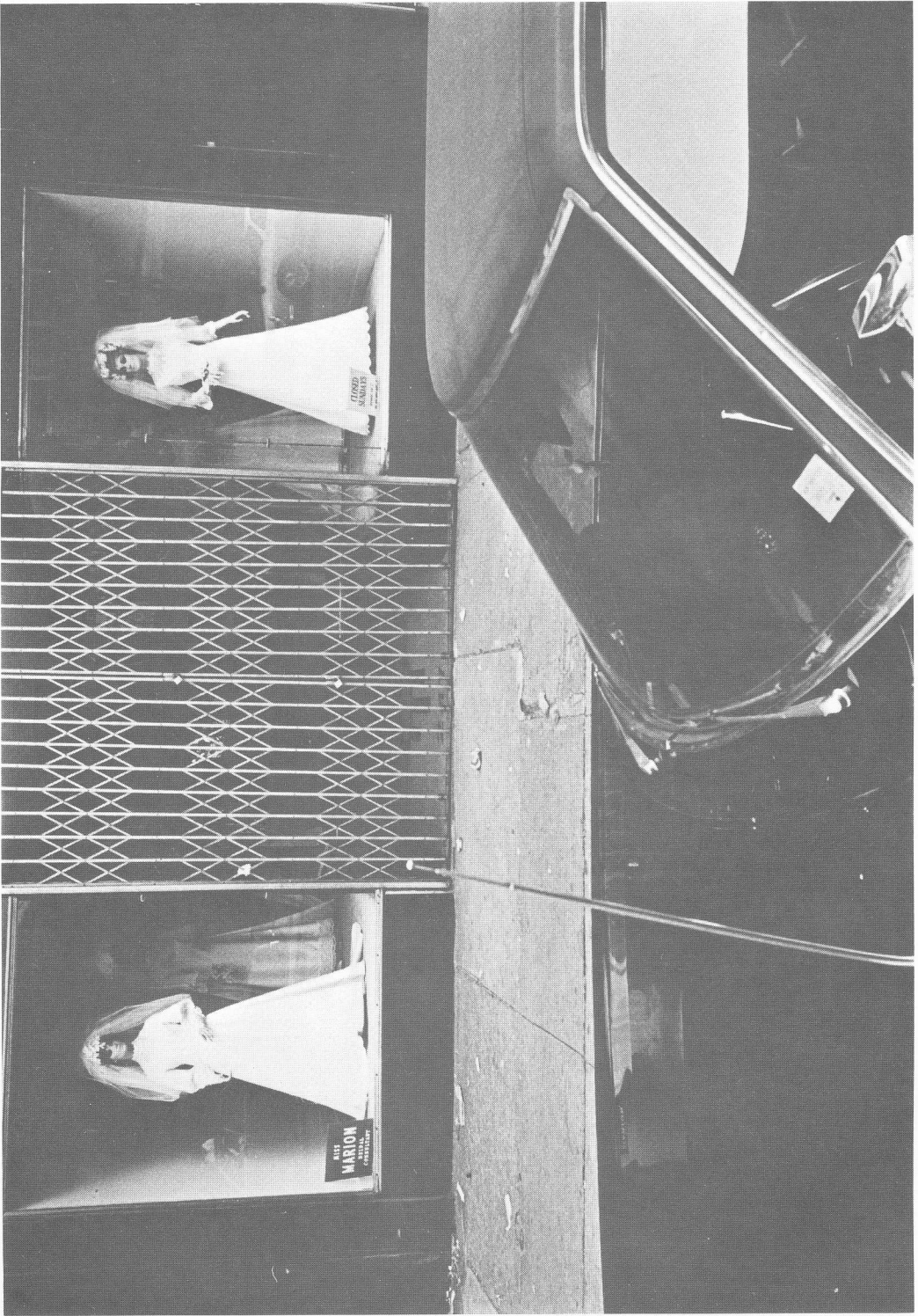
wombs puff january

captains plead the fifth

mutants march
before the tents
of
successful dwarfs

blueberries
drop their fluids





Wayne S. Propst, Jr.

The spring issue of Ripon College's qterly.
magazine is printed on 100 percent trash.
recycled waste paper, to print
the issue, which focuses on ecology,
is 100% trash.

President Roosevelt, in a television address
on Vietnam:

"The issue
very simply
is this: shall we leave Vietnam
in a way that - by
our own actions -
consciously turns
the country over
to the communists?
or shall we leave
in a way
that gives the South Vietnamese
a reasonable chance
to survive
as a free people
or will we cover the area with gravel
and let 100 million cars
grind it to dust
so that it can blow away"

Dr. William McKeerer told members of the
Y. W. C. A. that a state of health, a good moral
character, a good college education
And a good American dollar were
the four things to look for in a
prospective husband.

I see him now
 husband first rate
 he is starting up his car
 A new NOVA
 light brown 4 door
 with duel ring Wt. wall tires
 out of the parking lot
 followed by a cloud of
 gravel dust
he has just taken a short cut
 across my yard
 killing in his wake
 6 ants, a grasshopper
 a tulip and the last 18 blades
 of grass
 Your dust was not really
 much after your massacre
husband you know that
 a guy in texas was
 given 2500 years for murder
 but he still is eligible
 for parole in 20 yrs.
 It may be worth it
 he said as he was
 whisked away handcuffed
 gagged and giggling

Fly Fishing Reel Dream

Wayne S. Propst, Jr.

Inside a Coast-to-Coast store
suddenly I was standing
at the fish counter
A spring-loaded fly fishing reel
lay in a glass-sided bin
pushing the button listening
to its positive clicks
feeling its weight
small yet hefty made in Britain
painted racing green and chrome
into my pocket---a tour around
the pet section and out the
door
Suddenly someone saying wait stop
I walk faster
steps from behind
fingers and a diamond ringed
pinky grab at my coat
hey you!
without knowing how
but just like TV detective
or James Bond
spinning gracefully to the
pull of the fingers
and following it thru
fist half doubled
smack---just above
the jaw and below
the eye
the fingers
rip with the let go
half turn slips to
one knee then
to the asphalt
me running
hearing that's your
ass you little bastard
finally to my little room
in the green house
my room is in the
front
a cold beer and even
still I am out of
breath and shaking

cop car pulls up front
two blue helmeted
monsters and that
man is in the back
pointing laughing
I remember the fly
fishing reel still in the
pocket---
hide it; it must be hidden
a black case is on the
book table---A plastic case
with a zipper
right size for the
reel

I hear them on the steps
unzipping the bag
there is banging
on the door
I pull open the bag; it is filled
with a fine thick
multi-hued brown
fur---I look closely
at it---

as I peer deeper
each hair of
the fur becomes
a tree
closer and closer

I bring my gaze
until the trees are
growing up about
my eyes and
faint clouds are
forming in the sky

I can feel the leaves
under my feet
and the smell of
mold on the forest
floor
trees everywhere

Except up and to my
right over a little
the line of sight
is brighter

I run toward it
cutting the back
of my hand on a sticker
bush
to the rise I see
a small lake and a
little white sand
beach
A half mile long
trees and
giant granite out
growths
there are three or
four other coves
hidden from view
I hear no more
pounding and
immediately begin gathering
wild strawberries
and envisioning where
the winter wind
will blow from
and where my
shelter should stand
and attach my new
reel to a stick

from a novel

Ahriman in Search of His Magic Tortoise

Burns meditating crosslegged on the freeform carnival centered round the congo drummers at the base of Hippie Hill in Golden Gate Park. Cooling his crotch, back of his neck damp under the thick hair with sun brilliant on the grass and eucalyptus trees mingle in his bloated mind with the costumes, pageant of hair and foliage blending in a montage permeated by the throb of the drums. Renaissance courtiers float frizbees across the inside of his head to frontierswomen tinkling lovebells. Clown mechanics in overalls, beards blond as the terror of Rome smiling goofy in satori and Cherokee headdress, togas, beads, waistup nude girl dancing blissful in the turban of Allah. Under the Camperdown weeping elm midway across the meadow between him and Hippie Hill, something about a wino wearing a red beret catches his attention. The beret, no... digs his horn snuffbox from the breast pocket of his jean-jacket on which he sits... the coat. How can he stand that coat? The beret swivels to catch Burns' gaze, which he drops to the snuffbox. Too late. Ways of knowing that are not to be believed. Ah well, drops his head to shield his face from the breeze with his hair and sniff a lusty hit of carnation snuff in each nostril. Redman's rush widens his eyes, there now. Wino? Too much hair, he snaps the snuffbox shut watching the man stuff his brown paper-bagged bottle in a pocket of the heavy coat, amble uncertainly in his own direction. No self-respecting wino would let his hair get that long. Like old Grandpa Sundin in his sheepskin, he smiles sweeping the carnival meadow to rest his eyes in the purple blue haze that hangs over the trees in the direction of the ocean, wore that damn sheetrage, Grandma calls it, down the heart of every Nebraska summer I can remember. What's good enough to keep the cold out's damn well good enough to keep the heat out too, hear Grandpa like a harrow on a gravel road down the years now since I seen them--the wino looms larger in the periphery of his haze lost vision--old Grandpa in his goddamn sheepskin, and Dad thought Grandma Morning Turtle was nuts... she could dig it, the haze like a halo over the trees, enchanted forest, she could have dug San Francisco magic, city of fog and clean sun, city of pleasure. She understood pleasure... parks, enough wilderness to breathe, not too much. Nature safely yoked for the fat generation, yeah, but a generation thrust by the grunting greed sweat of men like Grandpa far enough beyond need to stop and listen, look, smell...

"Excuse me," the man in the red beret has kneeled on the grass in front of him, "I think," trails off in a mutter.

Burns pulls his right foot over left calf, squaring to soothe innards jarred by the closeup of that face, that face...

Pulling himself together: "I'm uh, contemplating suicide," he leers into Burns' face, "I think I might kill... myself."

Something jangling about those eyes, that scar... so? "Yeah man, well I certainly recommend against it..." But can't disentangle himself from those eyes are differently colored, he realizes, eyes both patient and drunkenly demanding. "I mean, if you're serious, like I wouldn't be competent to talk to you even if I was sober." No? A sneer creeps into the twisted face. Okay brother, meet Trickster: "On the other hand, the thing about suicide is that it precludes all other alternatives. Which is meaningless to a person who's already exhausted all reasonable and a representative sampling of unreasonable alternatives," to his surprise the face begins nodding enthusiastically, "so if that's your bag, if you been through as much down karma as your face makes me think, then baby you probably should kill yourself."

"Right on," he snorts delighted, private chuckles, struggling with the bottle from his coat pocket to swill, silently offer Burns a hit.

Accepts dropping the snuffbox in one of his shoes on the grass between them. Too late, Knew in my bones he would come to me. Like those Blob nightmares when I was a kid... Resists wiping off the bottle, raises it noticing one knee protrudes from his guest's threadbare pants. Sweet warm liquid nausea.

Pay heed to the providing of nourishment
And to what a man seeks
To fill his own mouth with.

Amen. The close buttoned coat, on the other hand, though filthy, looks in good shape, likewise the gray muffler wound round his neck. Returning the paper-bagged nausea to unsteady and begrimed hands, which raise it bottom to sky again. And the beard, matted and thinner on one side, nonetheless neatly trimmed. But a mouth like an empty gunnysack, probably not a tooth in it except the bucked uppers. Maybe once a pleasant round face now twisted crazily, as if a stroke had damaged the right side. Through the right eyebrow, lower and thicker than the left, runs a streak of white hair which Burns first mistook for a scar. The eye itself is dark green and seems to glower deeper and independent of its mild brown companion, the flesh beneath it mottled lifeless into his beard, thin and unhealthy on that side.

"I think I'm going," belches, "to like you, kid. Yeah, that's sane," chuckles, "downbeat sane."

"Killing yourself?"

"Don't be stupid,"

Burns strokes his Fu Manchu surprised now by anger he failed to provoke with his first salvo.

"what you said about alternatives--"

"Oh yeah," Burns plays.

"that's sane, man."

"Is it?" Why does the sun feel so... the drums, I can hardly feel the

drums. "I doubt it. No, sanity's a survival factor, that's all. It's like knowing which end of a burning stick to pick up. The weak cook themselves and the strong eat them." Intaking a ripple of horror from a twitch of those eyes make me dizzy...

But a smile raises the shapeless mouth: "I do like you, kid. Yeah."

"Then why'd you put that suicide crap on me?"

"That's a long story..."

"I bet. Meanwhile it's"--at least it was--"a beautiful day. No?"

Ambiguous snort.

"Dig the sun, man."

"Hate the sun," he growls pulling the muffler tighter, "makes me hot and sick, agnnn... makes my eyes hurt."

"Why'd you come out of your cave on a day like this, then?"

"I have to come. I have to look... somewhere... what's your name?"

"Burns," he stretches, pulls a tiedyed snuffrag from a pocket of his bellbottomed jeans.

"For Burney?"

Nods yes blowing his nose.

"They call me Ahriman."

"Some of my friends call me Trickster." Hearing his own voice still wondering who the hell's Ahriman? Something to pull this show together, he reaches for the horn snuffbox. Something about this dude giddies my gut, retreat, my hexagram changed from The Corners of the Mouth (Providing Nourishment) to Retreat foolster, get while the getting's good... But he doesn't move. Instead snorts another hit of the good English snuff.

Trickster, Ahriman rolls the name across his cerebral cortex, exploring the alcoholic fog for connections. Closes his eyes. Remembering... somewhere in the Americas, not Europe or Asia, maybe Africa no, no... lost it somewhere, what? Since before Mohammed, sometimes this power makes me so tired, tired of looking, sick of everything, wine, people who smile goddamn the sun, goddamn connections to everywhere, too many, suffocating... he pulls the coat tighter around him opening his eyes. Cocaine? "Is that snow?" I think they call it nowadays...

"No," Burns hits his other nostril, "just snuff--tobacco. Want a hit?"

Tongue winds out like a snake up over the buck teeth to stroke his snot matted mustache in consideration: "Nope... Duke of..."

"Duke?" Burns snaps the snuffbox shut.

"You remind me..." focuses on Burns' hair, not quite black but Mongoloid straight and thick on his shoulders, a tan not merely of the sun, high flat cheeks contradicted by the blue eyes, reddish brown of the Fu Manchu mustache. "Yeah, I like your arrogance..."

Burns winces slightly, drops his gaze.

And he makes me think of Plutarch and The Bhagavad Gita; to arms for glory or Krishna, can the compassionate Quixote be far behind? Ah give me Vivaldi, a handful of joints and sunshine to enjoy a together olady... like Rita? Coming tonight, explorations in pain and adoration and why can't I love you? But I do, I do, then why? Why am I leaving her? We fought, everybody fights. Ten pounds over the Hollywood Bureau of Standards, an unpromising Maturation Potential? In search of reason in a sea of reasons, who knows? I think too much, kill the thinker. Because you got to keep moving or you get fat? The girl he earlier noticed on her head he notices ambling past Ahriman toward the Linclon Street underpass, orange hair flagging his gonads. Closer to 30 than 20 and the thought that a girl like that--thousands of them--might open her legs to my priapic frenzies me still? Because Rita has her art, the teaching, whereas I'm so mesmerized by the previews I can't get on with my main event? But the world is full of happy dilettantes, I guess. Think too much. I wonder. Shades of the Sundin Work Ethic, maybe some of it's true. Maybe I need something besides a woman to sweat over, even if computers have superseded my role in the production of goods and services. An idact, like Sterne says, something... is that Pillsbury? Writhing face covered with his elbows 15 yards down the hill, squealing like a rabbit under an eagle's talons, a freaking freak whose hair is too thick--can't see his face--to be his buddy Pillsbury, he decides. Something... meditation's part of me now, but I'm damnwell not up for moksha and sometimes I get so sick of this whole pathetic scene, damn I wish that dude'd stop screaming. Impatiently pulling his hair back from his face, hooking as much as possible behind his ears. Maybe I ought to cut the shit--cut my hair?--and get a job. Stronger breeze up here, wonder if Rita will remember to bring my hairclip, a fucking nuisance sometimes I think why not cut the silly stuff? What's it mean? Eyes focused unconsciously across the meadow on the motionless Ahriman, trying to hide under the drums from the freakout's screams. Samson or Absalom? Celebrating the birth of Aquarius or mourning, with Cato, the diseases of my civilization? And I read too much to kill the thinker can think himself beyond thought, sometimes an ecstasy gliding along a strand of the infinite web of meaning that explodes mind... short hair among the barbarians who conquered Rome was considered a symbol of servitude, because the Romans, like the Americans, sheared the locks of all captives...

Wet sharp crack of knuckles on a mouth ends the screams, but Burns' focus doesn't shift from Ahriman. Flashing teenage brawls, my greased duckass haircut, the first time I heard a man hit. But you don't hear it like that when you're doing the hitting; like somebody banged a tin pot over your head when you're receiving. Years now what, Alabama when I was working for Artha House since I beatup that dude behind the hotdog stand, sometimes this power just takes over, yeah. The Leo in me roars. Attila via Grandpa and Dad swells me hard as steel, chokes me with power and lust, Ramakrishna. Makes me want a sportscar and a country

retreat in Marin County, easy commute to my Castro Street office where I direct sexy VISTA workers in the dissemination of pleasure recycling techniques for HEW! HEW! HEW! Must be half an hour now, still he hasn't split, even moved. Makes me cold, sick of meditation since his bruised spirit seems to taint the sunshine itself, want to go home. Pull it together, stretching his legs in front of him. Hooks his hair behind his ears again. Time to move homeward, something to eat . . . damn, only forty dollars left. But I got rent cooled for the superintending, can always raise grub and bus coin. Push a little dope, or look at Markov's lived on nothing over five years now. Yeah but I need dope and meat, I don't have charm. Sell the VW if I can score a battery somehow. Ugly little German mule. If I get it running, though, why not use it to get something interesting? I'll leave the petty dealing to Pillsbury, my soul's too immature for panhandling, and damned if I want to sweat as a frycook or unload boxcars. Publishing would be okay; unlike my horn, at least I could be among the best at it. But I can't stand the miles of a bookman, the cocktails, preferably something unassociated with Herr profit motif. . . why'd I sit where I can still see him?

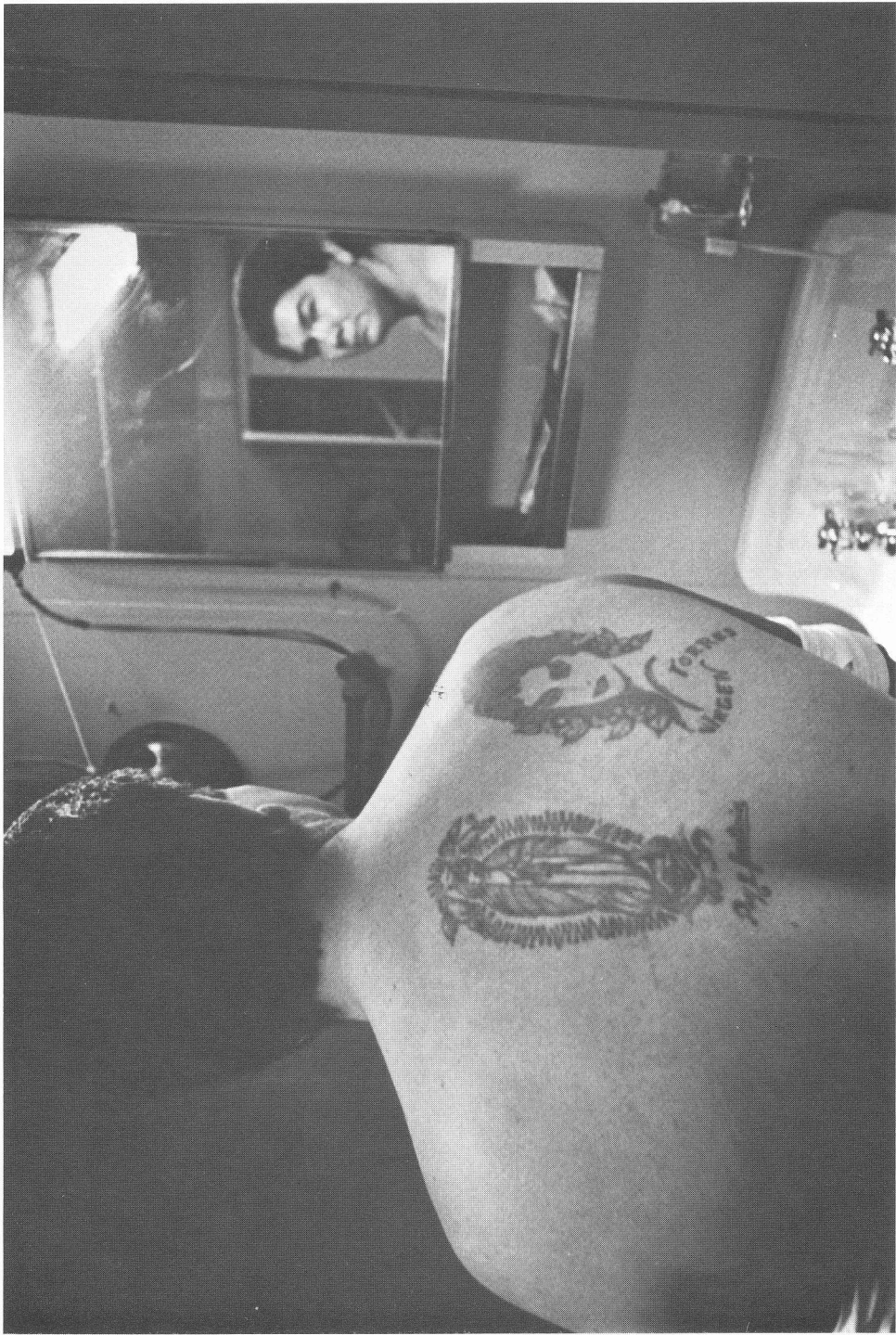
. . . home to his own sweet Clayton Street abode. Deserted, he reads in Diddlepoo's whine and tail joy greeting from the top of the stairs. Though he closes the door behind him softly as possible, the cowbells hanging on it rattle. Up the multicolored patchcarpeted stairs to scratch her terrier ears and square muzzle. Poor Diddlepoo, god you must get bored. But she wants more than petting; stares at him until he follows her into Marion's room to her empty waterbowl. His gaze catches on a pair of scissors that protrudes from Marion's wicker sewing basket. Fills Diddlepoo's waterbowl in the bathroom and returns to watch her lap; again his eyes fixate on the scissors, which he takes in his hand, weighs. Good steel. Though Marion is unabashedly jealous of her possessions, he takes them with him into the kitchen, sets them on the table contemplatively and starts water heating on the stove for instant coffee. Down the enclosed backporch, under the lattersteep attic stairs to the toilet-room, just large enough for the toilet and an occupant, windowless, dark but for the weak glow that survives the long backporch to penetrate the louvers in the door. Drops his pants and sits in quiet. Muted distant roll of the Mothers of Invention from the front room of the streetlevel flat downstairs, under Marion's room. Drowned by the roar of the ventilation fan in the ceiling when he flicks the switch at his shoulder; simultaneously a red lightbulb starts blinking and a blacklight illuminates dayglow graffiti that covers the walls (brush and paints handy on the toilet tank behind him), a huge glowing eyeball mandala poster that Ashley--who lives in the second of the three rooms on this floor, and owns both this and the adjacent house--added to the tripbox only yesterday. His face

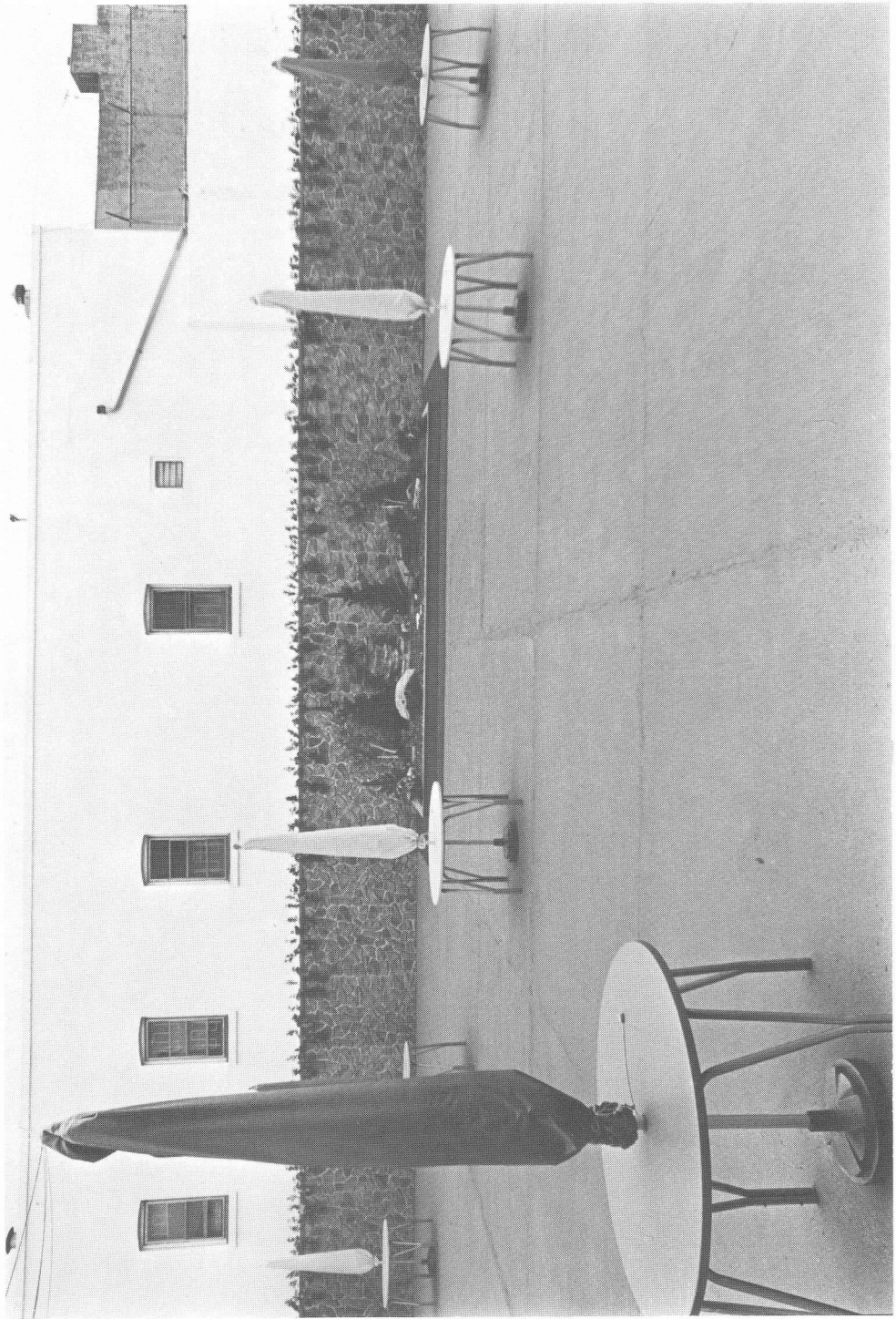
erie in a mirror in front of him in which he can see the back of his head in another mirror mounted behind the toilet. Though the lights, mirrors, and paints were Burns' idea, by now at least thirty hands have contributed sketches and graffiti. Enderby lives in Ergstrom's handwriting, Markov left a six headed bodiless Space Puppy Giggling. The drone of the fan relaxes his bowels; begins to handle his hair in the mirrors, dispassionately assessing length, texture...

Upstairs in the attic, crosslegged on the couch under the north skylight staring at himself in a mirror propped in front of Ashley's TV set. Coffee steaming in the sun, lucid quiver of potted rubber, palm, marijuana plants on the coffeetable in the middle of the huge room. Rolls a joint and returns his tiny stash to a crack below the cushions. A large pinch of Carnation off the base of his thumb in his left, first because it's more congested than his right nostril. Redman's rush sans revenge, the scissors glitter brighter on the floor beside the coffee he raises to sip as eyes widen and refocus. Remembering Morning Turtle's pouch, rises across the room to glance down through the stained glass coffeetable's top onto Diddlepoo waiting downstairs for Marion at the top of the patchcarpeted stairs; continues through a slit in the carpets draped over the eight foot roof stabilizer boards to wall off the southwest corner of the attic as his bedroom. Emerges with the tiny leather charm-pouch, detours to open the west skylight above the stairhole, absorbing the view of the inner block, gardens, weeds, trees divided into miniature backyards by wood fences, elaborate wood fire escapes. Fingering the pouch she gave me two years ago now, on my way west after I quit Artha House... she was the only one who dug why I had to quit that job... and then a bloodclot hits your brain and you can't talk or walk, let alone sneak off to the Peyote rites anymore. Mom says she still recognizes people some times, I wonder... gave me the pouch to get ready for the charm follows when I die, she said; can't be any harm in using it for my own charm meanwhile, no?

Returns to the couch and lights a joint. From downstairs the cowbells announce the entrance of he recognizes Marion's crisp footsteps up the stairs, home from work early. Hoping exhaling silently she won't pop up the stairhole, slips the scissors out of sight just in case. Usually takes Diddlepoo to the Panhandle first thing home, day like this she'll sun a couple hours, plenty of time to get them back... so I'm going to use them? And Morning Turtle never sees me like the oldtimers, said she'd make me a headband with real medicine if I joined those hippies in San Francisco and grew a mane like a stallion, you said. Sound of Marion down the stairs with Diddlepoo. Can you hear me? Damn that stroke, she really would have come out to visit us. Rita and her together would have been a stone groove, Madonna and Old Woman... funny how she started calling herself Morning Turtle again when I was a kid, man that embarrassed Grandpa... but he couldn't do anything, didn't have a temper like Grandpa Sundin and Dad, they'd have punched out their women for less.

So then: I am? Munching the roach. Waiting for what? Who? The counsel of a friend, so in case I botch it I won't have to tear my own guts out like Cato? Not Marion--it'd give her too much pleasure once she got over my failure to sign out for the scissors... Pillsbury takes hair much too seriously, Ashley would be okay, but he probably won't be home till late. Sips lukewarm coffee. Rita would be even better, but I can't wait... Christ, it's not a funeral, even if (damn I wish) I had something like Ergstrom's poetry or painting for Markov, if I was more than merely competent as a musician--still, what's a little hair? The real revolutionaries aren't the streetfreaks, like Ashley and Sterne say, they're the people working to liberate this ungainly industrial bureaucracy from within... fuck politics, I need an idact, as Sterne calls it, an identity activity, something to cut this sense of stagnation, exercise my cerebral cortex and also net more good than harm for the globe, relate me positively to the confused social plenum in which, like it or not, we all swim. Even that wino, damn his eyes... Ahriman, something to do with Zoroaster, can't remember, but that's not me in ten years... I got things to do, castles to build... O Morning Turtle forgive me, he finds his and I lose mine, no... I know you're here now, feel you saying yeah, that's cool Burney. It's like the Zen master who chops up a wooden effigy of Buddha to stoke his winter fire. Marion's scissors kashish along the bottom of his left ear. Difficult to judge the back, but he doesn't hesitate, hair splashing over the tiedyed teeshirt into his lap. Cuts the Fu Manchu mustache while he's at it, and behold, Prince Valiant sans bangs in the mirror... belly gulps my god, nausea like the wino roused in him. Tips the mirror facedown on the floor, unable to look. Dazedly winds a lock of long straight offblack around a ball of reddish mustach fuzz. Itch like barley chaff around the neck of the teeshirt, head feels so light, cool --stuffing the hair into the thimble tiny pouch, pulling the rawhide drawstrings on the delicate opening, a rabbit bladder, Morning Turtle said... holding it up to the sunlight he can see the hairball curled inside like pictures he's seen of living fetuses.





John Arnoldy

THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD

An Encounter with W. S. Merwin, February 1970

Kansas 10 from Kansas City to Lawrence is a narrow, snaking, wicked two lane highway that cuts through cornfields and a half dozen little towns. On winter mornings it's a desolate ride. The foliage is gone, the farmhouses and towns are naked and the fields are empty. We smoked breakfast cigarettes and listened to the radio. the roundup of weekend violence was receiving a sweeping summation. The Chicago Seven had been given their contempt indictments and it had started little fires in an awful lot of cities. The announcer regained some of his composure for the Vietnam death toll and the new troop movements in Laos. Just outside of Zarah we came up on the curves that are marked by an S shaped like a dollar sign and I saw a hawk circling above the vacant trees looking for little movements in the dead grass. I had a copy of Oscar Williams' anthology of modern English and American poetry in my hand. There is something about the Oscar Williams anthology. It's not a book; it's a totem. Of faces and words. It contains the work of 126 men and a miniature photo gallery where a lot of their pictures hang. They are THE poets of the twentieth century. The Dead Players that Michael Hamburger speaks of in "Poets Progress" are enshrined in this dense little tomb. Like the Pharoahs in the pyramids. I looked down at the cover of it. Whitman, Yeats and Frost (in that order) stare out looking like The Creature from the Black Lagoon, The Lunatic Scientist, and The Mummy. Just below THEM, Dylan Thomas leers out looking like an oily child molester with a pocket full of fuzzy candy and evil fingers. Everybody in this exhibit looks maniacal, unapproachably giddy, or more withering than the most monkish and silent librarian. With the possible exception of Wallace Stevens who appears well groomed and as reassuring as an insurance brief case. Insurance? Of what? "Just sign here madam, yes life insurance is important; after all, you know, the only emperor is the emperor of ice cream." On the inside of the back page I found Merwin's photo. Merwin was distinguished from the faces around him by at least one thing. He was clearly among the youngest. But like all portrait galleries, this one is deceptive. Some of these people beam off the page caught in the culture's photographic memory in their youth. But I know they are old or dead today as we gear down for the Kill Creek Bridge on the outskirts of DeSoto. Half way there. Beyond DeSoto is a town created by the United States Army to house employees in the Ordinance works. Sunflower Village. It looks like every image I ever conjured up of Siberia. With its interminable chain link fences, barracks and guard houses. Along this highway the

frequencies, the bands connect our minds, even in these cornfields, to the diplomatic chit chat of machine guns in Asia, the bombs falling like cigarette ashes around Cairo, the window shattering in Berkeley, the crowds lost in tear gas. I feel the way Auden experienced it on Sept. 1, 1939. "Waves of anger and fear/ circulate over the bright/ and darkened lands of the Earth/ obsessing our private lives." I am obsessed. My thoughts have gotten stuck on the wire photos of bullet-riddled corpses. I have the "sense of an ending" and I can't shake it. What will I say to this guy from the pages of the Oscar Williams anthology, this unknown individual trapped outside of time and space in the thumb-sized photo gallery? Sunflower is behind us. Only Eudora then Lawrence.

We pulled up to the Rock Chalk Cafe in Lawrence. Inside we drank Coors out of paper cups and looked at the people S. Clay Wilson used to draw when he hung out there. On the juke box Bad Moon Rising was into its fifth encore and the place was god damn cold. Cold enough that the piss steamed in the john, colder, in fact, than the beer. Everybody in the place looked like George Custer or Crazy Horse's wife; snorting down the aisles in buckskin jackets with hamburgers in their hands. It was like a time-warp in there, like the prairie hadn't been able to tolerate the business suits and ties and so raised a new generation more sensitive to its historical demands. A re-run of the old cast. This friend of mine went around the corner to determine where Merwin might be staying. I could see the window from my seat and after a while I could see this guy out there on the street trying to get back in. I watched him work his way through the cluster of bikes slung against the Chalk, press past the guys traffic-jammed in the front door, squeeze between a ring of girls slung against the men at the bar the way the bikes were slung against the building, and start down the aisle toward our table. The expressions on his face said that there was some kind of a fuck-up. He sat down. "No one knows where he is," he said. He bummed a light from a guy moving down the aisle like a tight-rope walker with a pitcher of beer. By the time the wax coating had worn off the rim of our paper cups we had decided that we could find him if we tried hard enough.

I got on this pay phone and called the English department at the University of Kansas and asked this woman that answered if she knew anything about Merwin - where he might be staying, who he knew in the department, that kind of thing. No, she didn't but if I would hold on she would try to find out. I held on until I figured she had gone to sleep, or gotten off work, or pulled out the roll-a-way with the head of the department or left town with Merwin. I figured there were hundreds of thousands of people all over America on "hold" at that very moment. Like a giant hospital full of patients waiting to see some specialist. An enormous legion of ears pressed against buzzing phones, like moths, maybe together where all the "hold" calls are transferred in some empty building in New Jersey that the phone company never told anybody about - unpaid bills fluttering down deserted hallways. "Yes, Mr. Merwin is

staying at a residence on Massachusetts street. . . . " She was giving me the digits of some number. I scrambled them down on the cover of the phone book. "Thanks, " I said and hung up. I called the number. The way I got it, Merwin was staying with this guy named Bill Holm; a poet. Holm was getting ready to do an interview with him for some little magazine and, "Would you like to come over and get in on it?" "Sure, " I told him and we headed for the car with the front page of the phone book.

The address I had was on Massachusetts Street, the main drag of this little town. An apartment above a HiFi shop, near a movie theater showing Fanny Hill. The bell did not bring Merwin to the door. Instead a Mr. Ruhe opened up, a long dismal staircase at his back. He was a medium-sized man with black bags under his eyes and a hairline receding back from a high, intellectual forehead. Horn-rimmed glasses, white shirt, loosened tie, quiet voice, tight mouth that shattered when he smiled. Very friendly, barefoot. We followed his white feet up the stairs, into a bright comfortable room above the street. Merwin was in the back of the apartment on the phone. While we were waiting, chairs were scooted around a coffee table. I was just taking the place in (African dolls above the fireplace) when Merwin strolled in. He sat down very loosely in one of the chairs that half-circled the coffee table. Easy introductions were handed around, some cigarettes were lit, ashtrays were scooted around. His face was an amazing phenomenon into which I could not stop staring. The conversation turned to the Chicago Seven. "For fourteen years I've been thinking about this conspiracy thing, " he said, "and now here it is. The history of the conspiracy charge is the history of the suppression of dissent. Against civil liberties, against the blacks, against labor. I wish someone would document it. " His face looked like a drawing. His eyes were like a couple of pieces of stained glass that got their light from the window; not from him. Tabula rasa eyes. "I think the money from the reading tonight should go to the Conspiracy Seven, " he said, "because those guys in Chicago are in real trouble. " My sizing-up faculties couldn't get enough of his face; literally, it did not compute; insufficient data. Bill Holm walked in. Holm looked over six feet, mid-twenties, hefty, bright red hair, bright sport coat, striped tie, black glasses, heavy hands, short fingers, bright eyes. He sat down. Merwin continued, "The really dangerous laws are the ones like vagrancy, loitering. Vagrancy practically gets around habeas corpus. With laws like that the no-knock is nothing really new. They can stop you and question you and if they don't like your references, they beat hell out of you. " Merwin shifted his weight in the chair, his face still tranquil, open. "I'm not just speaking paranoiacally. You know there are cops whose whole kind of thing is catching people on vagrancy and just beating the hell out of them. The way they arrested the Panthers in New York was appalling; it was just like the Gestapo. " "All these books about aggression, " Ruhe said, "obedience is the really dangerous trait. " "I have a feeling this is all tied in with some subterranean historical movement, " Merwin said.

"much more so than the things like the Sacco and Vanzetti trial was." Holm wasn't so sure and brought up Eugene Debs. But Merwin persisted. "This is so obviously a focus of exactly the whole historic scene. A dramatization of where we're at, whereas those were isolated instances of insanity. You didn't feel they were part of a movement into absolute repression like this." We decided to break it off and continue at Holm's place because he wanted to tape it on a machine he had over there.

The vinyl seats in the car were stiff it was so cold. Cars lining the curbs had geological ages of mud caked on them; some were attached to the curb by black growths of ice. The address turned out to be one of those small, pointed houses, set back across a large lawn on the quieter, residential part of Massachusetts Street. There was no wind but the sky was beginning to change for the worse as we approached the door. Holm answered the knock. He welcomed us and led us into a pleasant livingroom crowded by several sturdy chairs and a harpsichord. Evidently he had been on the phone talking to the owner of a tape recorder when we knocked. He shrugged at the recorder lying on the floor and then went back to the phone for more instructions about how to operate it. Merwin was nowhere in sight. We grabbed a couple of chairs and I lit up a cigarette and got involved in the reproductions hanging on the livingroom walls. Hunters in Snow by Brueghel hung above the divan. A grim image of a snowbound village at a time when Northern Europe must have been in a fantastic state of mind; Bosch and Dürer and Brueghel speak for it. A black bird angles above the wicked, perfectly focused trees that stand on the outskirts of the village the hunters are entering. I heard some clamoring; a door closing. I looked around and saw Merwin making his way toward the livingroom from the back of the apartment. He sat down under the black bird; kind of scooted around getting settled and Holm walked in. He bent over the tape recorder, began turning dials and punching buttons and said, "I think I've finally got this damn machine figured out. Now maybe we can get started." Holm offered to fix us all some drinks and went to the kitchen. I looked at Merwin's hands. They were long and white, marble-smooth and very young-looking; like his face. I figure a blind man, thinking Merwin's face over with his fingers, would have guessed him at 25 or 26. Holm came back in with the drinks. When Holm handed one to him he smiled at Holm. All of the lines, crows feet, furrows and little wrinkles that had to be there appeared from out of nowhere when he smiled. Even his eyes eerily took on an older cast at that moment. Holm sat down next to Merwin and sipped his whiskey and water. "I'm embarrassed by that damn recording machine, Holm said. "Naturally," Merwin said, "we're all embarrassed by that damn machine. It's a perfectly good instance of something that worries me all the time. I mean the country and whole world is full of people that feel the way we do about the things that threaten us from the State. So many people who think the way we do worry about fascism; say fascism is on the way. And that's dangerous because in a sense it's true. Certainly

there are the marks of fascism." He sipped his drink. "But by calling it fascism we obscure from ourselves what's really happening. I think a kind of oppression is on the way that is every bit as bad as fascism; but it won't be fascism. It'll have other characteristics and they'll be upon us before we realize what they are. I think that, for example, police brutality, the hideous, awful thing that it is may be to some degree a kind of smoke screen behind which the other thing will happen. Things like that machine will play a far bigger part than they did with fascism. They don't have to lean on you nearly so badly physically, you know, if they just know a lot more about you. If you figure they know whether you brushed your teeth this morning. And they know how long you took doing it. And they know whether you did it conscientiously or if you just sort of sloughed through it. And when they want to make up your character they make it out of things you can't controvert. A state based on that kind of thing is every bit as bad as fascism. Look at all the things people can't stand. More and more they can't stand solitude." Holm rattled the ice in his drink very delicately. "I noticed it in your poems," he said, "the piece about terror and repression, even the ones about the stuff in the food, all have that terrible sense of encroaching power and the lyric ones are about solitude." "You come back to that," Merwin said, "I think that there must be some connections between the ability to be alone in a variety of senses and the place where poetry is both made and heard." I asked Merwin, "What is the force in culture that is destroying poetry; destroying people?" He said, "That is one of the most difficult questions because I think almost any force in society can become one of those. It happens when the society's organization becomes more important than its original urgency; than the things from which it is made. Even the most liberal kinds of organization can become stultifying. Things pass beyond a certain point and they become the dead weight. The repressive thing which has to be changed from the inside. Labeling one section of society as repressive is too easy. The enemy is inside all of us." "What about the healing effect of shamanism?" I asked. "What is the connection between poetry and shamanism?" "There is the obvious connection," he said, "in that poetry is concerned with being whole which is very closely related to the word 'heal'. I mean they are the same word. Hale, heal, whole. The relationship between that and shamanism, as I understand it, is that shamanism is an attempt by ritual practice and spiritual concentration to make one order of things cohere to another order. Their idea (cultures with shamans) of sickness is something which is out of order. Which is what poetry is doing, isn't it? Saying that this is a description of a symbolic order that is both what we are and the order of the outer world, however you separate the two. Saying, in fact, that everything is one. That is the great link back."

I looked at Holm. The light from the window played directly on his striped tie and made it look like a neon-fish. Beneath his red hair a piece of the street, half a tree and a cloud bank were reflected in the lenses of his glasses. His eyes blinked and a red micro bus floated over them. The ash grew on his cigarette, the ice melted in his drink. Out the window a dark line of clouds spread up into a white bank above them like ink rising in a napkin. Back in the lenses of his glasses the ink rose too at the speed of the ash and the ice. The black bird floated above Merwin's head. A huge black bird loosed above the hunters in the snow-sky. "Turning and turning in the widening gyre/ The falcon cannot hear the falconer;/ Things fall apart; the center cannot hold. "

SIDESHOW WOMAN

The first time I saw a nude woman
was in the sordid sawdust circle
 of a sideshow. . .
A woman with bare feet on cold earth
and a naked body that shivered.
A stripped shadow in white
with drooping breasts
that once had pointed firmly
with the soft swell of youth. . .
But now was withered
with the heat of hot eyes. . .
The shadow of a woman
with red paint-slashed lips
and the garish white-wash of cheap powder
that tried to simulate youth,
but only threw the silhouette
of age and disillusion
into sharp relief
against the brown backdrop of the tent.
Yet I felt the spark
that once had been her youth
touch my body
with an electric tingle.

AUGUST 21, 1940

1.

Trotsky (d.) the day
I was born, assassina-
ted by a handsm jung
man ekwiped with
, of all things ,
a pickaxe

.....

Such a remarkable collusion
of historical circumstances
should NOT go unnoticed

Irememberyourememberrabbitremem

berstoo

he ran around frantically w/
the pickaxe poking frum
his brain about the
time My mother began
having her 1st
pains

she read the Star
wonder if she knew that too

.

too late to ask Leon
(or mother)

how the pickaxe felt
poking from his brain

he raved and ranted and cursed and swore
and finally lay down on a couch
like Dagwood taking a nap

as casual as that!

.....

My mother reported her paynes
to my father who typ
ically didnt care to leave
the golf course

.....

she didnt deliver till
next day
then barely got there
on time

2.

somehow

sneakily/unctuously/w/

oleo Latin guile

Mercader got past the barbed wire

protective walls and guards

that day w/ the pickaxe tucked

under his raincoat

(Mexico City, Summer of 1940)

Leon bent pedogogically over

the article, avuncularly as he was

fond of the handsome

youngman

Merk DROVE the pick like

a banderilla straight

down



thru his skull

.....

while, back in

the land of Nod

the kid was kicking

down the EXIT

door

3.

. Leon got the shock
of his life

ex-pired that fol
lowing afternoon fit
tingly in a hosp
ital

around 4:00 PM CST (usa)

the time the kid came thro

Wondering, near Charing Cross
last March

how simple it would be to
get identity-less
on this world

how nobody would care
whether you clanked about the Castle of Otranto
slouched gloomily toward Bethlehem, Pa.
hobnailed with the boys in a bistro near Asuncion

Journeys are of the mind
letting the heart aside
where I stand gigantic turtles circle the Enchantatas
waiting for the moon to set

It is a notion one gets about grass
that the more you chomp
the greener fantasies groove your mind
(puff, puff)
thinking you are finally that dazzling Pierrot in raiment
querulous for ermine
brooding in silk

which you ain't and never will

Is there a way back from not knowing?
Quantrill found
respite by crushing skulls
(our true dream of Arcady?)

sacking Lawrence was never
the proper thing to do

in fury
I jack off
seek to mend my crutches
with some home-grown brew

hobble
gutsily on
with an ecstatic shriek-
flat out
after a yard or two

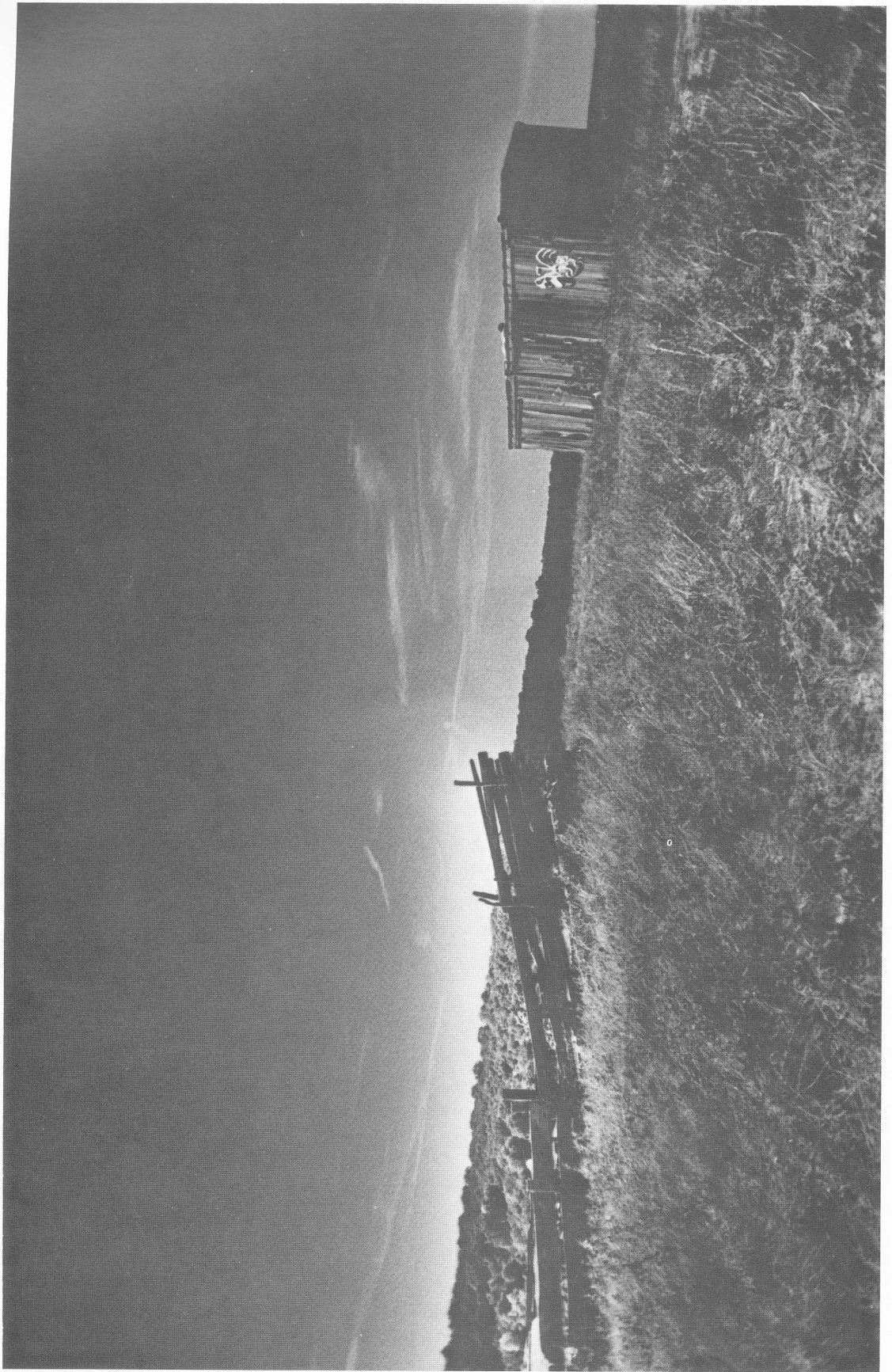
From point center I move furthest out
miming Marco Polo's barque
gliding toward Cathay's glittering spires
to find them peppery with flak
spat out by echoing circles
which relentlessly follow the waves
I wash up on every shore

There is no Xanadu-
and no Drake to scuttle
the barnacled galleon of your dreams

or even whisk any of the treasure away

only You





Prairie Journey

Night train,
dark bodies stumble
down the lurching aisle
as we plow through
Kansas wheatfields.
Outside the windows
there are towns,
duplicates
no more than names,
seeded on the prairie
years ago by
careful hands
between the long spaces
of lightless night.

Midnight neon
illuminates
cubic buildings
scaled to draftman's order;
as always,
sheds of dull metal
and angry semaphores
along the track.
Nothing living moves:
I must know why
this place is called
Garden City.

Snow has piled up
on the tracks,
flying past the
gray sunrise.
I have moved
through the pieces
of this night,
discovering a body
in the baggage car
guarded by an old man
who whispers dusty memories
of this ancient place.

Syracuse, Kansas

The exhaust blower quits;
the grain dust condenses.

The shells of naked light bulbs
pop under pressure,
showering the grain
with glass fragments.

Red-hot filaments
hang from their sockets;
the dust thickens--
explodes.

The elevator collapses;
the ground vomits dust
that hangs in still air,
and there are sounds:

grain flows down
hissing like snakes
whispering their thanks,
returning home.

The Blizzard

Cattle huddle together,
their butts sticking out
to keep from smothering
in the swirls . . .
just-born calves
the exception.

When it is done,
and snow has polished snow
with its rasping,
dark upturned legs
rise against that brilliance,
marking the place
for the crows.

THE LAW AND THE PROPHET

They closed the Book. "'Tis done," they said, "No more
shall any prophet be, the seer no more."
And so no more the living God shall grow
In the living heart of man, and never more
Shall dreamer dream and find the mind of God,
Nor ever again at night the vision come
As comes the wind upsighing from the south
When rainless summer clouds have hid the moon.

'Twas done, they said, the last scroll rolled, and now
They sat and sighed and dropped their arms, outworn
With pious zeal and wonder at the past
And wish to achieve. One said, "To Babylon
Our people go no more---to Babylon,
From whence we hardly came by God's great hand!"
Another cried, "Men learn from us forever!"
And then one spoke whose eyes were old yet bright
And deep with bitterness brought down the years,
Who sat among the rest, scowled at, unloved:
'If truly God has guided all our minds
Thought good and added---well. But still I say
We paid our price for lies. God make them truth!"

And then: "They wait without and we must go."
So forth, and to the assembled people began
The high priest: "O ye who search for truth,
Now search no more! 'Tis found! And all ye need
To know"---he lifted high the written scroll---
'In this, our Torah and our Law, new found
Within the temple's secret place--the same
Which erst Egyptian Moses got (have ye
Not heard?) from Yahweh when the cloud and fire
Rested on Sinai. Israel's sons, hear then!
Obey! As your fathers never did, and so
Were lost. No more the calf in the wilderness,
No more Baal's worship in Jerusalem!
See now how right God's prophets were who told
Of Babylon before the great king came,
Tore down our city's walls, the temple sacked,
And bore away man, woman, child into
Captivity. Ye have returned! Again
The land is yours. The Promised Land! And ye
Are God's peculiarly. Abide!---as this
Abides, the Law! It is the Law! Nor jot
Nor tittle of It may ye change hencever,
Nor any man. Fear ye! Fear ye the Lord!"

So Him they fear. The jot-and-tittle days
Are come, the Law in every letter come,
The Way prepared. Come, Son of Man! For though
'Twas said, "No more shall any prophet be,"
Because the Law was come (Its own good work
To do), yet, best and gentlest Prophet, come!
Now may You come, and do, and say Your say.
The Law has come---and It . . . will do for You.

DISCIPLINARY BARRACKS

Past noon. Minutes ago the last work gang had marched in, halted before the ramp, and gone up mingling talk and hollow steps and shuffles, and still our Rec. and Rehab. prisoners, with patient unanimity, our inmate clerks, librarians, typists, teachers, janitors, and we civilian teachers, too, all lingered by the third floor office windows to see more men come in. Would we miss mess entirely? Once kids would wait like this on Main Street for sight of lions, tigers, elephants, and clowns. Here things could hardly be so simple. The truth was I needed answers, being new, and Green supplied my need, Green, my inmate teacher helper, General Prisoner Green, with twenty years to build. "Fuckups," he said, "from overseas, from Africa and England, first we've had." "How long before--?" I wondered. "Oh, they're here. Left the train an hour ago. Kept 'em waiting in the street till all the gangs were in. Maybe you can glimpse them there between the gates. Handcuffs now are coming off." I marvelled at such vision and such knowledge, but experience and the grapevine spoke. I hardly doubted. Two hundred yards I guessed the distance to the gates. There, I could persuade myself, I saw shadows in the shadow, vaguely moving, and, next the bars, the khaki of the guard who wore the keys. Just now a phone was ringing in the sergeant's office. A chair banged down, the ringing ended, then a scraping, and the sergeant in his doorway stood nodding to a clerk, whose hand reached deftly out and flipped a switch, which made a speaker on the window ledge begin to fry aloud and sputter. When I looked to the gate again, I blinked to see it gaping wide, the guard beside it rigid. Revealed within, as stiff as he, were ranks of khaki waiting. Then bags were shouldered, and out to hazy day they stepped from wall and building shadows, swinging easily, exactly to the music, disregarding static,

while watchful guards upon the walls beside
their towers stood still with grounded carbines. On
they came and halted near the flagpole, close
below, beside the wilted flowerbed
within the circling walk, and rested bags
and stood at ease. "Oh, it's a crime," Green said,
"it is a crime, to greet them with such music."
I thought it was the speaker and the splutters.
If men must march, then marches there will be.
Said Green, "No matter if they keep me all
my time and more, I can't forget the day
I heard that record first. Brrr-r-r-wurf! A goose
just now was walking on my grave. If we
could hear ahead, I guess it would deter us--
which of course is neither here nor there.
Any how, I know what these are feeling.
Days and weeks have passed since they were tried,
and still, believe me, they're in shock--or are
today. I wonder what they'll say, though, when
they're settled, if anything with them will differ
or if they'll only like the others soon
be shooting off their yaps with superheated
air. 'Injustice!' they will whine, I think,
while, ten to one, they did the things they're charged
with and some more. Me now, I'll admit
at once the Army pegged me right. I could
suggest another punishment, but--
I understand. My trouble was I bought
this war. I bought the fighting. Hitler must
be stopped. But then when others went across
and I was always left, it made me mad
and I took off. They brought me back. No use.
Fifth time, I snatched a rifle from a guard.
'Don't shoot! Don't shoot!' he cried and stood there white
and quaking. 'Oh, I won't,' I said, 'but you
keep still,' and bolted, stopping though before
the woods to fling his weapon back. But I
was caught. No more stockade. They sent me here.
But still it's true. I'd soldier for them there.
Where these came from. Lead me to war! Just show
me Germans! How could these fuck up? I joined
this war to fight." I rather wished to make
him see the patent flaw that underlay
his argument, but then again the guard
was opening his gate. "Another batch--"
Green's eyes were on the phonograph-- "and so

another platter." The men were marching to it. They marched to join the others. "Something new! Will wonders never cease? But any change is welcome like the dawn in such a place as this. It makes you wonder what they've stashed which they'll come trotting out with in the future to give the men a treat. You notice, though, it's still triumphal marches, nothing but. Greetings to you, fuckups, come in triumph home! But listen! Listen now! Why, I know that! It's 'Soldiers' Chorus,' Faust, Gounod, without the words. I used to know them, too, in high school chorus once. Now let me see--

Glory and love to the men of old!
Their sons may copy their virtues bold!
Courage in heart and a sword in hand,
Ready to fight and ready to die
For Fa-a-a-atherland!

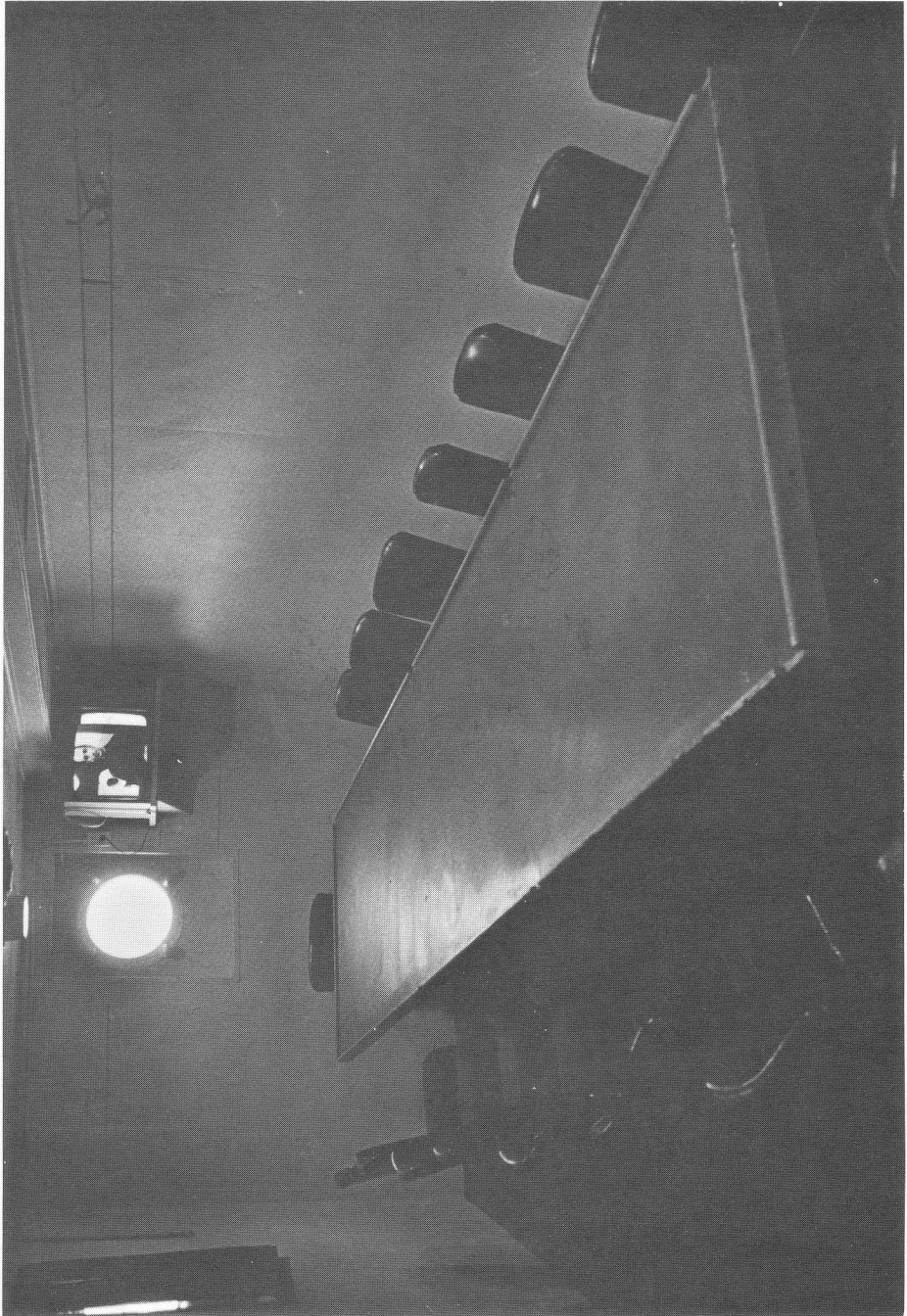
Yeah, courage--ready to---sure's hell---we . . . "

His voice dropped down to febleness and ceased. I turned and saw his back, saw him through the doorway heading for the stairs. Some three or four broke after him, all going down, I guessed, belatedly to mess. The rest remained to see two more detachments in. The last. I saw the waiting guard no more within his gate, and the column stiffened briefly, shouldered bags, and moved, swung left, and crossed below us, disappeared around the corner of the wing--that is, they started to. The ramp was there, which caused a triple halt of music, men and static. Then began those broken steps and shuffles up the ramp, but lacking talk and laughter. Meanwhile, the office emptied quickly, sounds receded, and I alone stood pensive. Clang! The closing steel brought a final almost silence. Hunger stirred. I turned to go. The colonel and the sergeant now emerged, and we went out together. The sergeant locked the door, and at the stairs we parted, they descending, I ascending to my room and desk, I the one civilian who today had brought a lunch. I got it, didn't sit, for sounds

kept reaching me, most curious ones, rustles,
knocks, occasional voices, little scrapes,
and so I took my sack and walked back past
the stairs and through an unlocked gate into
the great rotunda, the topmost balcony
of that impressive polygon, so near
the lofty brightness of the dome, and stood
beside a breadth of pillar, near but not
against the fragile-looking rail. Far down
I looked, appalled somehow to see the space
below filled up with ranks of men stripped down
to underwear, their bags and uniforms
in piles before them on the floor, while those
in front were moving up, selecting or
receiving dull and faded prison denims.
Metamorphosis. Due processing. None
would eat, it seemed, till all had been unsoldiered.
Did I look down upon them? There but for
the grace of God . . . yes; yes, I thought, but God
had graced me, made me blind, a myope if
there ever was one, meaning I was safe,
unfit to go where these had gone, unfit,
the Army said, to kill or die, unfit,
to fail as these had failed, who were unfit.
although the Army learned it lately, proof
enough there's blindness everywhere and proof
how much it varies. Still, to be safe in time
of war, is it not shame? Reason said,
"Not so." Reason said, "It all depends."
'They also serve who only stand and wait.'
Besides, such deeds as disobedience, rape,
desertion, absence, sleeping while on guard,
robbery, sodomy would not be yours."
True, I supposed. The safety, that we shared,
but I could never say with them through days
to come of pain and sweat and fury, far
from bullets, bombs, and shrapnel, "Almost, I
was there. I could have been." Inexorably
the battle names went down in annals, as rich
in sound, as fair to see, as Agincourt
or Crécy--but what were they to men shut in
by walls? They did not fight at Kassarine,
they did not die at Gafsa or, living, see
Bizerte. Palermo fell without their fall.
Others died on beaches, the Utah sands
and Omaha, Salerno and Anzio.

It was not theirs to race and die up France
to Hürtgen Forest. No death for them upon
the Rhine nor in the Ardennes' whiteness. They did
not cross Remagen Bridge or ever meet
with Russians. Safe they stayed to brag and dream,
to lie and compensate (I must recall
Green's saying), free to think their private thoughts
and free to face the music. Exceptions were.
Green's time was shorn away. His Board had ears
and heard him and restored, whereupon
he quickly found a Kansas college girl
and married, then was off to find his Germans.
Two years, all up the length of Italy,
he fought, to cross the Po and finish at
Verona, dazed to find all over and
himself alive, unwounded even. Home
again, in Tennessee, he taught a year,
his wife also, and then our lives converged
again, in Lawrence. I saw him making straight
across the floor of Ward's for me. "I don't
forget a face," he said. And I: "You called
me George. Remember now? The other George
was Coleman." "That does it. Everything
comes back." He told me what I've told. I asked
about another Green from Tennessee,
his town, who'd made the news, a hero
in the Philippines, but AWOL from an outfit
in the States. "Yeah, that's my older brother.
He had to be like me, or I like him.
It's in the family." After that I saw
him on the street or in the church or on
the field or court (he refereed) but talked
at length no more. His name was in the paper
now and then. He was an auctioneer,
policeman, clerk, guard at the powder plant,
did well in real estate, and died three years
ago of aneurism. Now this I write
for eulogy: in all our life we know
but few and them in glimpses, briefly, rarely
(I but repeat old wisdom); Green was one
I glimpsed and knew, in the barracks, long ago.





James Grauerholz

FRAGMENTS FOR A LACUNA IN PROGRESS

"I had as much written a new rebus as a poem or language."
--crypto-Pelieu to me, somnolent

SCOTOPHORUS, bearer of darkness:

You are the Name
 in whom Everything--
You are the Sign
 in whom the Signature--
You are the Instant
 in whom Eternity is no time at all--
You are the Silence
 in whom these voices depend--

After this noise,
extend the last song
to the last bring down
to the last voice of
 boxcar shower oven
to the last TV commercial
 voice of telephone death.

"There sprang up on the earth many heads without necks,
arms wandering unattached to shoulders, and eyes
straying in want of foreheads. Isolated limbs were
wandering about."

--Empedocles of Akragas

beset by these quadripartite windows,
obsessed by the concept of transparency--
there for a moment I thought of my body,
a signal humanity, solid and far:
the fleshly fabric of blood and bone,
sea and land, and the dread pinpoints of thought
glittering in my dark. Me, my continent,
subsisting here and now, no distant mankind.
The pigeons iterate themselves to cloud oblivion,
away, in a flurry of droppings;
throwing a ring around the sky
like averting the inevitable,
itself already an aversion . . .

Burned down the laughing corridors--
your doors bit the dust--
fallout in your living room--
flouridation in your precious bodily fluids--
showered away in an umbrella,
huddled like transparent pigeons--

"Death paints intersection figures somewhat on the verge
of noises; I'm trying to calm the blind show-window."
--Claude Pelieu

"I had a son once, in Andalusia--
he was a leopard on the rocks
and a coward in the rain;
he wore knives in his eyes,
or toothpicks in his hair . . .
he was killed for no reason whatsoever."

"History is what happens from time to time."
--Gertrude Stein

News of the sacrifice; that is the medium,
jocularly called "train whistle / death telephone"
So don't be surprised when
violence comes happening right into your lap,
through the tube--after all,
you need to know . . . "TALK SHOW HOST
JOHNNY CARSON DIES TODAY--in a mysterious accident,
nationally famous blah blah
was shocked into death when lightning
struck his television set."
(now he's really dead for the first time in years--)
I have eaten the news, and still no lightning;
to Thee I extend my supplicant aerial:
Hear, O Lord, and touch my quivering antenna!

"On rising from bed you should obliterate the print of your
body."

--Pythagoras

All this "disinterested awareness of the moral order" stuff
need not cause a soul to doff its imperturbable overcoat.
First one arm, then the other,
and at length the issue is obvious:
utter detachment, autism, catatonia . . .

Now don't rush out and do something rash;
go watch the pigeons in the square for awhile--
or rinse your intimate nasal passages
with the specific ambience of a charnel-house.
But God sweet speaks;

"I have heard the evidence. I condemn you to life,
and to death; sentences to run concurrently."

"The fairest universe is but a heap of rubbish piled up at
random."

--Heraclitus of Ephesus

Old Parsnip was promised a change of heart,
but the donor was a nigra--
the judge was a junkie and
the bailiff was a pimp . . .
Natch, the jailer, was a monstro-toad
who ran into the courtroom croaking,
"The armadillo races have just begun!"

Just exactly how far I can trust my baleful body
is still a matter of some concern;
I didn't bring it through the years
just to drop it here--maybe
it's all I brought with me,
in which case

TOUGH LUCK--

It is probably unsafe to believe this schedule,
certainly unwise to take it for more than a
plastical joke, in the worst possible taste.

Where do all the moths come from?
Why don't they go back there?
Perhaps if I turned out the light--
aagghh! They land!
Quick, there's only one thing to do:
I'll put on my Giant Moth Suit
and I'll scare them away.
Making fierce moth noises!
They'll be scared shitless!
--but to solve the moth problem in New York City,
how about a Moth Suit for King Kong?

"So the Bored Directors got together
and decided to institute an Austerity Pogrom--
Beatings were held, Floggings were thrown,
Inquisitions given, and even a few gala extravaganzas
like the widely-acclaimed Boxcar-Shower-Oven . . .
just like the Jew, as far as I'm concerned--
praying to a Wall!"

You can rhyme old statues into the ground,
 in any rhyme you wanted to use;
you can sing big safes to sleep,
 in any dream that you can be;
you can hatch a burial plot,
 and stay there longer than you now want to;
you can do anything you can touch, BUT
 you can't get anything done;
 you can't lie your way out of bed;
 you can't see your own face, really;
and even if you practice a lot,
 you can never scream yourself to sleep.

"Flickered over the crowd on polar laughter and grief."
 --Claude Pelieu

"Better you should chew bubble-gum perpetually than talk."
 --Carl Solomon

There's more to life than all this living;
exerts transparent pull on our intentions
(mind candled like an egg by God's white light)
and now we blindly sleep by day and night.
I frame my vision to fit my eyes,
embedded in my sensuous matrix,
death the end to all my means.
This, my scatomancer's oracle,
will light my homage to the wide-eyed mutes:
I repent the sins of the Word, but I affirm
she can be tamed, and I shall not recant.

Every word in my head is numbered
according to a time.
All these I cursed;
then I slept.

HEMP PICKERS' SONG

Kevin Arnold

prussian army politics
crept unnoticed along
the Wakarusa riverbed
thistle scratchin' ivy
itch beneath the pantleg
sock smell of uniformed
shiny
star
stinks
those politics shouldve
turned left in 1890 but
kept on runnin' straight
down an eighty goin' on
ninety year buried road
Billy pickin' with his wife
a yankee moon's harvest
that dog-barkin' late night
lead flyin' legs a runnin'
up the hill bank slide
knowin' the whole time
ya can't trust the shale
on these Kansas banks
to keep ya from fallin'
into a desert past.

NOTES FROM DELLA, Part One
Spring, 1971

"always keep your receipt"

Boys--Leave this note
for others
Anyone who has not
paid rent since moving
in, as you know
they need to be paid
and crossed off for
this month. Some of
you prefer to pay early. DV
always keep your receipt

"Carpenters orders"

Boys--
Tell your friends
one of the rules is
never to slam any
door, but pull it to
easy, unless they want
to pay for having it fixed.
Carpenters orders

"Trash for garbage & waste paper"

Trash for garbage & waste paper
on north side of house, Must be dry.
Door next to upstairs steps.
Must be in grocery sacks and
not loose except newspapers.
Lock door when you come back in
Lids are to be put back on unless
containers are too full
Mail will be in hall seat
Leave this for a reminder
Pick up by city
Monday & Thursday
containers

"Wants me more quiet"

Wants me more quiet

Boys--

No more Phone
calls under any
circumstances
in or out
Dr. wants me to obey his orders
Call from cafe.
Rent is due

"Girls--"

Girls--30.00 per week
Rents for cash
Before you move
out of my apartment
have the Elec meter
read and give them your
name and address
also you pay light bill
Each apt. rents for
\$90.00 per mo plus elec
By the week Mrs Viermuller

"Of course you already know"

Boys--

Of course you
already know that
your rent was due
the day you moved
into your apt, so please
let me have one months
rent or tell me when to expect
it. Matter of business that
we know where we stand
Taxes are high so it cost a lot
to own property Mrs Viermuller
Important

"Students or workers--"

Students or workers--

Each apartment

as you know, rents for \$90 plus elec
for two. Most of the time the
rent is payed in advance.

I always give receipts so
you will know you are
getting credit for rent money
paid. Elec of course is divided
when you want to reach
me just tap on door leading
to the kitchen and I can hear
you if I am in living room
kitchen or my bedroom
as all doors are open.
Just leave this note for
the others.

I am sorry to repeat as
most of you know the system
By writing it saves time
for all of you expecially
those in K. U.

Della G. Viermuller

P. S. always save your
receipt's of course
I mark it down but always
intend to give receipts

"Pay in full"

Pay in full

Boys-- both apt. s

I must have

some rent money
or rent apartments
to some one who will
pay D. V. I have to
eat too you know

Remember rent
will have to be
paid each time
when is due

"Pull or Push"

Important
Pull or Push
front door, easily.
Hard on door to
slam it so said
my Carpenter
also on everyone's nerves
& any upstairs doors
DV

"I am not sure"

Boys
I am not sure
if you knew about
full bath with shower
also also a mirror
with a place for shaving
Never short of hot water
In Basement

"One of my good tenants"

One of my good tenants
I know all of you
have to budget your
time, but I found out
a day or so ago that
one of you is related
to the Wiggins whom
I have known for
many years.
Sherman & girl friend
at that time were
very good friends of
Geo. & myself.
You like most others,
have to Budget your
time too. Mrs Viermuller
P. S. All you have to do
is wave but do not stop.

"I cannot seem to remember your name"

Young man in
Master bedroom apt.
I cannot seem to
remember your name

Other apt will also
be more.
Reason my taxes are
raised again also heat
very soon

Young man in
Master bedroom
apt.

I am sorry
but I will have
to have more rent
for your apt so
you can be looking
for another Rent will
have to be \$90.00 per mo. plus elec

"No Phone calls, "

No Phone calls,
day or night.
Eight people could
have important calls
anytime. Phone Not included
in rent
All students pay rent please
over
I would like to
have rent money.
Supposed to be in
advance of your
stay here. Many students
do no have a permanent
place to stay yet
I have had many calls

"Where you made your mistake"

Boys--

Where you made
your mistake was not
to make arrangements
before you move in any
apartments. Pay is always
in advance and is
\$30.00 per week. If this does
not meet with your approval
In any circumstance I will
be needing apt for my guests
next week

DV

"Everyone their own things"

Boys in back apartment
Please return my
Directories, Lawrence
& K. U. I thought you
would return them right
away I use them often
They only cost 25¢ DV
Everyone their
own things
You promised to
return them
right away

"Just a Warning"

Boys--

Take all garbage out
dry & in sacks or
you might have some
Unwelcome Visitors

DV

Just a Warning

"Be Sure to Turn"

Boys--

Be sure to turn off
all stoves if they are burning.
as furnace takes off the
chill during the day.

This is important with
doors locked I cannot check
as I have done for many years.

Mrs. Viermuller

I have a waiting list
or K. U. has
for apt. s
when you return
they will heat up in a few minutes
gas heat as you know comes up sometimes
also you pay elec

DV

Rent will be same for
one or two

I may rent to \$100.00
women if everyone per mo
leaves. Some of plus elec
my friends want to
live here (women I mean)

"Do Not Come Back"

Do not come back
I only house students
or Faculty
so remember

This is not a hotel
500 to stay tonight
so don't stay
cost too too much
I cannot afford
to rent to others
Cannot gas burn at night
Do not stay
night

"Bills Have a Way"

Some of my investments I cannot get
in time

Boys who owe me

If anyone owes

me any rent money
please let me have it.
One let me have some
cash recently, but other
bills have a way of
creeping up on one without
any warning D. V.
Most of my bills can
be mailed, so that helps.

"Cold Today"

Important over
Will each one of
you not only close
front door but lock
it. In Lawrence this
is done in most every
home. Complete strangers
walk in and steal at times.
You may not believe this
cold today
Extremely Important
I might even be in
Kansas City or Chicago
and you would have a chance
to find out
concerning this

REVIEWS ON NOTES FROM DELLA

"I review a great many books each year, but it is a rare moment when I come across a book that affects me this deeply."

--William Zinsser

"These poems took me down to the dark night of the soul, then exalted me to the arms of God. . . . truly an ecstatic experience."

--Timothy Leary

"Della will not only endure as a literary giant, but will prevail as a cretin mongoloid. . . . a tale told by an idiot."

--William Faulkner

"What a hunk of shit! I threw up twice . . . don't miss it."

--William S. Burroughs

"I laughed till I cried, I cried till I laughed, I laughed, I cried, I laughed and cried."

--Gertrude Stein

"I couldn't put it down."

--Merv Griffin

"A new literary giant appears from the Midwest: Mrs. Della Viermuller. Like Emily Dickinson, she has been writing her delightful little poems on scraps of paper and the backs of envelopes, and now the whole nation can read her, thanks to James Grauerholz, who discovered her talents inadvertently while staying at her boardinghouse. This one you must read."

--Time magazine

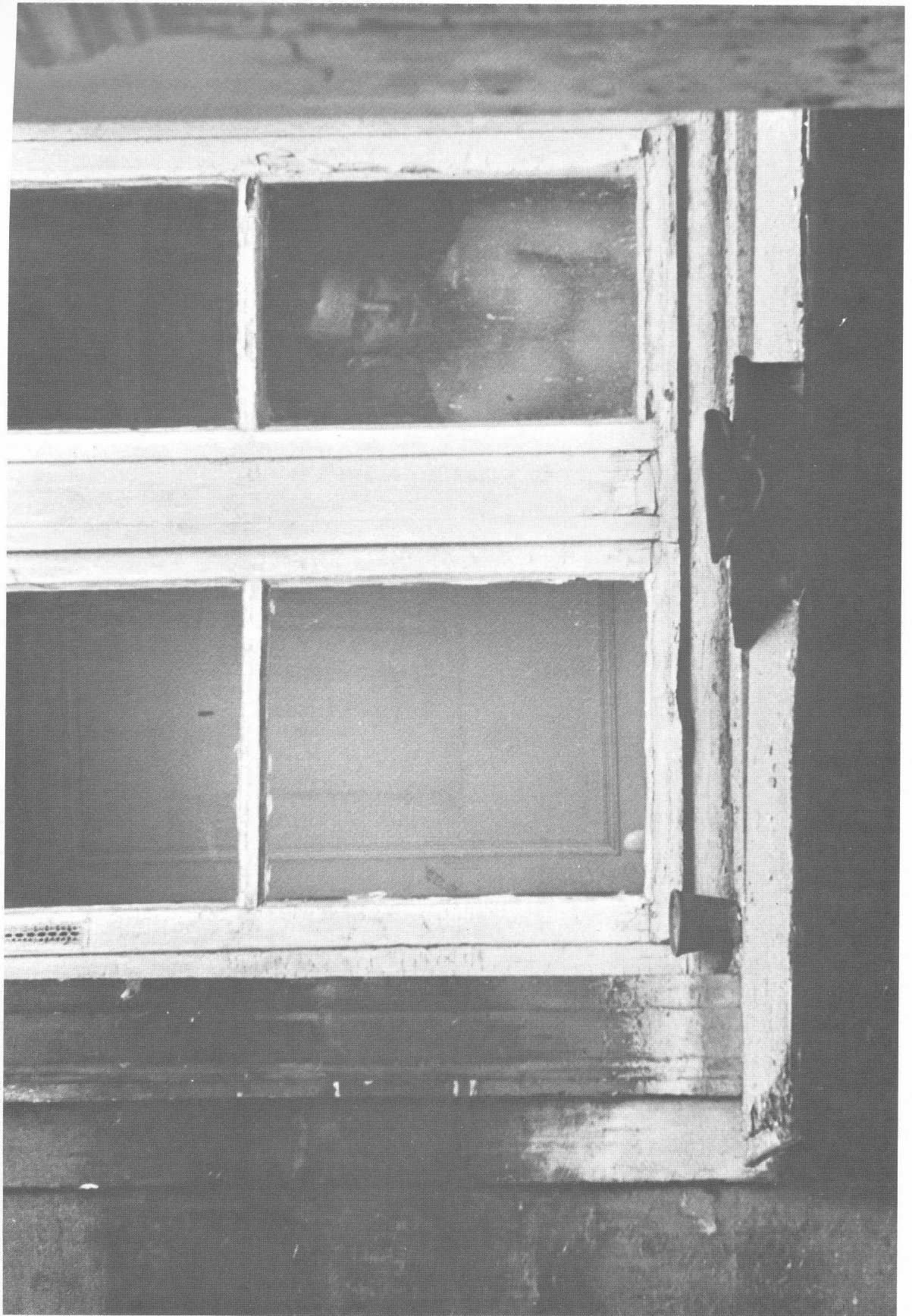
"Cosmic ecstasy diffusing beautiful words of poet-mind genius from Lawrence palace of eternal mystery and."

--Allen Ginsberg

"A literary gem . . . priceless short poems from a little-known Midwestern poetess, discovered only this year. . . . a must on your 'books to read' list!"

--Atlantic Monthly





THE PORTRAIT OF LUTHER MORELS

Professor Woelfel sat down at his desk and examined the brown manila envelope he had found rolled up in his box that morning. Paperclipped to the envelope was a note that read:

"Dr. Woelfel-- These manuscripts were found among the personal effects of Luther Morels. They are clearly meant for your appraisal, and in view of the unusual circumstances of Mr. Morels' disappearance, our bureau is forwarding them to you in hopes that, after reading them, you may be able to shed some light on the matter. When we were summoned to evict Mr. Morels for non-payment of his rent, we found the door bolted from the inside. We forced the door and entered. Inside, there was no evidence of violence, except that an old daguerrotype on one wall was smashed, apparently from the back, since the backing paper was torn through and the cover glass was shattered on the floor. His landlady, Irma Grosz, was able to tell us only that the daguerrotype was an heirloom of her family's, and that she had lent it to him for decoration. We will sincerely appreciate any information you can give us, and thanking you in advance, I remain, Sgt. Floyd Joppa. P. S. --see you in class tonight, Ed. Is this Morels the same guy that used to sit over in the corner during class and act bored?"

That's the one, thought Woelfel as he lit his pipe. Luther Morels, child prodigy; with his *fin du siècle* mannerisms of Beardsleyan decadence and his delicate little moustache--and that air of "oh, how I suffer when I think how I suffer" Strange, to imagine my night writing class without Luther . . . Joppa, that beefy ex-quarterback, will be there tonight with one of his clumsy stories about locker-room friendships, and Mrs. Pearls, with her insipid true-confession stories. And Luther promised to read a story tonight, but this puts a new wrinkle on things; I guess I'll never know how he writes--probably something straight out of Huysmans.

Woelfel turned back the metal prongs of the envelope and dumped its contents on his desk: a thin green notebook and several typed pages. This must be his short story, mused Woelfel as he inspected the pages. He opened the notebook. And this is his . . . his diary--hmm. Woelfel looked guiltily around at his secretary, who was busy copying an interdepartmental memo. He poured a cup of coffee and began to read the

diary.

- Feb. 3rd-- Last night I dreamed I was the protagonist in Borges' short story, "The Circular Ruins". I remember the story only dimly, and Alva has my copy of Ficciones, but when I awoke, the feeling of being a phantasm in someone else's dream remained. I wish I could recall Borges' epigram for that story.
- Feb. 4th-- Went to Woelfel's writing class tonight; the usual assortment of silly stories and sillier poems from the adults. I'll say this much for the adults, though: at least their stories are derivative from other books and stories, and not from television programs, like the stories of the younger students. --When I got back to the apartment, my landlady stopped me on the stairs to ask if I would like a picture to hang on my wall. A strange offer, but it was a cloudy old tintype in a dusty baroque frame, and she said she already had too much bricabrac on the walls and countless little shelves around her front room. The jetsam of a long dull life, washed up here in her steamy little room . . .
- Feb. 5th-- When I awoke this morning I felt that I had been asleep for several days. I always have vivid dreams, tangible and consistent, and I remember them quite clearly. This time I dreamed I was awake, going to classes, seeing people, sleeping at night, shaving in the morning, eating at mealtime, and so on. --At the city library this afternoon an odd thing happened. As I stood in the stacks, looking for a decent translation of Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, I heard a faint rustling noise behind me. When I turned to look, I saw a tall man in a greasy trenchcoat walking quickly away from me. He wore a dark fedora, and when he glanced back over his shoulder, I saw he was wearing silvered sunglasses, the reflecting kind.
- Feb. 6th-- I have been trying to puzzle out the subject of the tintype Miss Grosz gave me the other day. It seems to be the portrait of a young man, circa 1870, about twenty years of age. Although the tintype is clouded and nearly black, I can just make out the expression in the boy's eyes: studied ennui. Perhaps he is going away to school (judging from the cut of his clothes, his parents can easily afford it), and this picture has been taken so the family can preserve his image in their eyes while he is gone. A truculent bang of black hair falls over his right temple, and a thin bipartite moustache curls upward at one side slightly in a cosmetic sneer, much like my own. Perhaps his family was glad to have this surly

adolescent out of the house; doubtless he squandered a small fortune at Oxford or Cambridge, eventually contracting a social disease. Maybe he was the last son of a noble line . . . but that is all speculation. In fact, I can barely make out any detail in the portrait through the glare coming off the cover glass, no matter where I put the lamp.

Feb. 7th-- Miss Grosz cornered me again today after my Russian Literature class, on the pretext of giving me my mail. She lured me into her stale kitchen where, lo and behold, what should there be on the spotted oilcloth tabletop but a little paper plate piled with cookies and a cheap porcelain teapot, exhaling little wisps of steam. So I was obliged to sit and talk with her for ten or fifteen minutes while choking down antique gingersnaps that I dunked in the tea to render them chewable. She gave me a letter from my father and told me she thinks I spend too much time by myself--why don't I ever have lady callers, don't worry about noise, she didn't mind if I had some friends over for a little beer, would I like to borrow her portable TV sometime, I'm just like one of the family to her, I can talk to her any time, and so on. I was as polite as possible to her, promising to stop by sometime to talk, but I have no intention of withstanding any more of her tea-and-cookie sacraments. --The letter from my father was very short, he just wrote to tell me that my mother died the evening of the fifth in a motoring accident. She never could drive worth a damn.

Feb. 8th-- Examining the tintype this evening I noticed a strange thing. On the young man's left lapel there is a tiny pin, displaying the letters LCN or LCM. It would be a great coincidence if the letters were LCM, for my middle name is Catullus. Perhaps they are LCN; they could stand for "Les Cravates Noires", the nineteenth-century society of German sodomites at Frankfurt. But I doubt they are anything that exotic--more likely, they are his initials. Or they may indicate membership in some other, less perverse, secret fraternity of young men--holding firelit rituals in panelled rooms with lofty ceilings and clouds of drowsy smoke roiling at the top . . . --It's also odd the way the tintype's cover glass becomes a mirror as the day grows darker and I sit before the portrait, lost in thought. My own face shines out of the glass, superimposed on the boy's pallid features.

Feb. 9th-- I often incorporate elements from my reading into my dreams, but it is usually uncertain whether the passage is from my memory or my imagination. After two hours of searching in the city library, I finally found the basis for

my dream of being a rope-dancer; on page 173 of The Cabinet Cyclopaedia, Vol. 42, I read: "FUNEMBULI, rope-dancers, whose art is very ancient. . . . there were several species of rope-dancers: some turned round the cord in a perpetual circular motion, like a wheel on its axle; others glided along a cord on their breasts, using their arms and legs as rudders; some ran along the rope with much agility; others . . . in treading it, leaped, danced, and cut the most fantastic capers on it" In my dream I was one of these dancers, proficient at every exercise, performing for the court of some Eastern potentate. When I awoke, I felt an analogy between the rope I employed and the line of time's passage. In the same figure, what if the rope is cut? It falls loosely to the ground, I am dashed on the inlaid marble floor, and the emperor and his counselors sneer with distaste: "Take him away"

- Feb. 10th-- Today I ran across the notion of "claustrophobia in time", like claustrophobia in space, but a feeling that the present is too narrow to live in. Sure, I've felt that; but I have also felt agoraphobia in time--the yawning chasm of the present is a vast and treacherous nothingness. --My mother's funeral is the 11th, according to an impassioned telegram I received today from my father. What is he talking about, my mother's funeral? It must be a joke; my mother is alive and well, bless her heart. I'm going to ignore the telegram as a joke in very poor taste, and remember to call Father down for it the next time I see him.
- Feb. 11th-- Writing class was interesting tonight. Choleric Sergeant Joppa of the local police read a story about Chris and Bill, two basketball players who are mad at each other for weeks. Their feud is all the gossip at the high school, and everyone is worried that their enmity will hurt Middletown's playing in the big game with Centerville. Comes the big night, the score is tied with only seconds to go; there is a jump ball and the ball is gained by Chris. But he is at halfcourt and can't make the shot from there, so he looks around for a likely pass receiver, and through an opening in the other team's defense he sees Bill, beneath the basket. "The seconds seemed like hours," growled Joppa at this point, caught up in the climax of his own story, "but Chris thought of the team, and of Lucy, his steady, and of all the cheering fans, depending on him--and he passed the basketball to Bill." Of course, Bill makes the basket, Middletown wins, Chris and Bill are carried out on the team's shoulders, they hug each other with joy in the locker

room, are jockstrap buddies from then on, etc. Joppa thought it was his best story, and so did Mrs. Pearls and several other class members; but Woelfel smiled politely and took Joppa's copy to read through it and give it a grade. Three sophomores who are always writing limp poetry with three words to the line sat in their corner, sneering cynically at Joppa's effort. --Strange, the way one often has the feeling of a veil of illusion lifting from before the eyes--Petrus Damiani said that all things are possible to God except to undo the past; yet Bertrand Russell suggests the notion that the world was born yesterday, complete with fossils, canyons, cities, religions, memories, and people like Floyd Joppa and the three-word sophomores. In that case the past is as fragile as memory, and as tenuous as God

Feb. 12th-- I got into a slight tiff this afternoon at the library. I was minding my own business, reading Schopenhauer, when I noticed that two girls seated across the reading room were snickering about me. I couldn't hear what they were saying, but I could tell by the way they would look up, then giggle foolishly at each other, that they found me amusing. I stood it as long as I could, then calmly walked over and said, "I would like to know exactly what it is that is so hilarious about my appearance that you two are convulsed in helpless cacchination over it." Of course, they acted indignant and pretended not to know what I meant, and to avoid a scene, I turned and left. As I passed through the thick glass doors of the library, I turned and gave them the fig, that Italian gesture of supreme insult, with my thumb between my middle and ring fingers in a fist, representing the female pudenda. I could tell by their whispered consultations that the gesture was lost on them. When I got home I went to the tintype and looked at my reflection: nothing foolish or contemptible about my features whatsoever. In fact, there is a certain dignity in my bearing, in my worldly and cynical gaze. Perhaps they were laughing at the little gold monogram I have taken to wearing on my left lapel; the ignorant fear and hate what or whom they cannot understand.

Feb. 13th-- I feel like I must have been dreaming for several days now. I am not sure . . . a passage from Léon Bloy appeared amid the phantoms: "The sentence from St. Paul, *Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate* ('Now we see as in a mirror, darkly'), would be a skylight for plunging into the true Abyss, which is man's soul." --Miss Grosz came in today as I was studying the old portrait; she claims she knocked, but I didn't hear anything. She was probably just nosing around, thinking I wouldn't be home. At any rate, she was shocked to see me

absorbed in the glass and apologized hastily for intruding.

"Now I don't mean to stick my nose in things that don't concern me, but don't you think you should open the blinds? It's mid-afternoon, and a lovely day outside." I thanked her for her advice and explained that my eyes have become rather sensitive to light. As she left she was obviously unnerved by the lamp I have placed on the floor, pointing upwards, the better to illuminate my face as I study the portrait.

Feb. 14th-- I seem to be enveloped in a strange cloud of thoughts; it has lately become almost unbearable to leave the house by day, the light is so intense. The epileptic shimmering echoes in my mind's eye. It's as though every time I look in the glass, I create an image that, like as not, steps out and follows me around. They're everywhere, although I admit I haven't seen any of the older ones lately.

Feb. 15th-- I awoke this morning and tried to remember the events of the preceding day, as Iamblichus says the Pythagoreans always did upon rising. To my dismay, I found I could remember no further than the last time I remembered anything. That is, I came to this town to go to school (although I'm not sure I've been to any classes for days--the sun is too brilliant), but all my memory will yield is a faint pattern of the last time I tried to remember coming here; and in all likelihood, that last time, I only succeeded in remembering the last time I tried-- A letter from my father today, asking why I didn't go to the "funeral" and pleading with me to come home for a few days. He says he is coming to visit me on the 22nd; I honestly don't know what's the matter with him, he's beginning to sound like a full-blown psychotic with this "funeral" fixation.

Feb. 16th-- Miss Grosz has become quite intolerable in her solicitousness. She came by again today, shivering in her seedy housecoat, to ask for the rent. It appears she has forgotten our arrangement, or is hoping I have forgotten it, so she can extort money from me. Wasn't it just a few weeks ago that she took me in, saying she was proud to have such a scholar in her home? Where does she get this "rent" notion? I was kindly to the senile old harridan, but sent her firmly on her way with a friendly pat on the rump. Of course, she acted offended, but I saw through her.

Feb. 17th-- I have been travelling through the portrait in my room almost every night now. My bright dreams of such improbable characters as Miss Grosz and Floyd Joppa seem almost more real than my waking experience. I have been dreaming of Joppa, for instance, every week about this time, and I imagine I shall dream of him tomorrow night; dream of seeing him at

that amusing "writing class" I have invented. But how much more obviously real are the hours I spend penetrating the reflecting surface of the glass, passing through a hierarchy of arcane symbols that intimate the depth of my true nature.

Feb. 18th-- Just as I predicted, I went to my "writing class" this evening: very diverting. Joppa had a poem called "Buddies", and the three-word sophomores lost their self-control and giggled aloud. Joppa left in the middle of the class, saying he had urgent police business to attend to, but I found under his chair a scribbled note that said, "Better blatant than latent, Floyd." Woelfel, that benign fool, stroked his beard and carried on as though nothing had happened. Sometimes I almost outdo myself.

Feb. 19th-- Willem de Kooning: "One is utterly lost in space forever. You can float in it, suspend in it, and today, it seems, to tremble in it is maybe the best, or anyhow very fashionable." I can't say anything about de Kooning's space, but as far as I and the portrait are concerned, there is little difference between the space I occupy and the space in which I am situated. One's outlines become hazy; I feel myself dissolving as I travel in the portrait.

Feb. 20th-- My mind is a city, a "bustling metropolis", and the world is nothing more than a movie showing in town this evening. Held over by special request? No, it's a premier every day, but it's always the same theater. --It occurs to me that I must soon read a story to the writing class, or at least turn one in to Dr. Woelfel. Perhaps I shall write it this evening.

Feb. 21st-- Today I cast yarrow straws for a reading from the I Ching. I drew No. 29, K'an, the Abyss. The sixth line moved to give No. 59, Huan, Disintegration. Meditating upon these hexagrams, and upon the mind's progress from pantheism through deism to idealism, I composed the following bit of metaphysical doggerel:

Walking through a dream of gods,
Every tree a phantom there, (pantheism)
I am me against all odds,
And the only self I wear.

Walking in a dream of God's;
All the days envisioned here, (deism)
All the lives, if God awakens,
Flicker, dim, and disappear.

Walking through the dream of God;
All the stars and fountains there: (subjective
I create them with a nod-- idealism)
I am only the self I wear.

And other things: I have been wondering about the nature of time. It seems that, in order for there to be a difference between the present and the past, there must occur a hiatus between the two; a minute separation, wide enough, perhaps, for a thought. But then, the past and the present are like mirrors facing each other, and the infinite abyss between them is a dangerous place, no doubt.

Feb. 22nd-- Today Daddy paid me a nice little visit. He seemed worried about something, but I told him, "Daddy, what's there to worry about?" Mommy wasn't with him, I don't know where she was. He didn't bring me any presents, but I guess that means he is beginning to think of me as a big boy now. Daddy is real cuddly, and I told him I loved him more than anybody, except maybe Mommy, who I love even more. We went for a ride in his big shiny car. He was very friendly and smiled a lot, in a funny way. When we pulled up outside a hospital I understood what was the matter: Daddy must be sick. So I waited until he got out of the car, then waved bye-bye and drove back to town. He didn't wave, but I think he is just sad at having to go to the hospital for a while. I hope he's okay soon, because he promised to take me to the penny arcade and he can't take me there until he is well again. Poor Daddy.

Feb. 23-- It has become difficult to leave the portrait. I love to study the wonderful likeness of myself (I don't remember who it was that took my picture and framed it so nicely, but it is a handsome job). When I gaze into the eyes of my portrait it seems like the whole world is there for me to see, and I feel myself becoming one with the divine intelligence that steers all things through all things. This morning, like every morning, I awoke with the feeling I was waking from a long, deep sleep, and perhaps I was. But what is this mirror doing in my room? How did it get here, and why does it seem to darken and open onto a distant landscape where there is no waking, where my own skin is not sufficient to mask the illusion of my uniqueness?

Woelfel stared a long time at the last entry before he laid the manuscript on his desk. Struggling in his mind to put words to his thoughts, he lifted the coffeecup to his lips, then realized it was empty, and had been for some time. He tried to imagine Luther

driving his father's car away from the mental hospital, but all he could see was the Luther of the night writing class, smiling obscurely and stroking his tiny moustache. As he poured another cup of coffee, he thought: The writing class . . . and Sergeant Joppa--what can I tell him about Luther? That he disappeared through the reflecting surface of an old photograph? That he vanished into the abyss between the past and the present? Woelfel looked at his desk for several minutes before he saw the typewritten pages that accompanied the diary. He knew it was Luther's story, and he reached for it, feeling briefly that he, too, was swirling in the vortex of present time. There was no title, and the story was only a few paragraphs long. Stapled to the front was a scrap of paper, with the words: "Professor Woelfel. I am sorry this story is so late, but there is a reason. I have been sound asleep for the past three weeks. I woke up early this morning, and after regaining my senses, finished this story, which I began on the 20th. I hope you will accept it, even though it is several days late. Yours truly, Luther Catullus Morels." Woelfel turned to the first paragraph of the story and read swiftly, desperately:

"Luther Morels awoke one morning after sleeping for years. He awoke with a full set of ideas, plans, and preconceptions. Knowing what to do as instinctively as if he had done it before, he dressed and fed himself. His assignment book lay open on his desk, with a note emphasizing that a short story was due for Professor Woelfel's writing class. Glancing at his watch, he saw he had three hours or so before noon, so he sat down at his typewriter and began to think.

"His mind, ordinarily swarming with fragments of 'memory' constructing a fabrication of the past, was clear and blank at the point where he tried to imagine some story line, plot, or even characters. He could think of nothing that did not upon reflection turn out to be either the work of some author he had read (there were many), or an obvious plagiarism of the common imaginations.

"Then he remembered his hours with the portrait. In the hall of his mind's eye, he saw himself pass between two parallel mirrors, each of them reflecting the other, reflecting him, and reflecting itself forever--perpetrating itself into a thousand repetitions indefinitely. He compared the mirrors to the present and the past, each one reflecting the other into the myriad multiplicity of tomorrow's cast of thousands--perhaps he himself had been the first to stand between them, in the instant before knowing, and so duplicate his vision into the swirling dumb-show of the world he knew, or dreamed.

'It was on this conception that he decided to base his story. He would write about a college student who wakes up one morning from a slumber of several years duration; who then reminds himself that he has a story to write, and a world to invent inside it like the one he invents outside. He sits down at his desk and begins to type: 'Luther Morels awoke one morning after sleeping for years . . . ' "

Woelfel looked up slowly from the page. The office was empty, and the clock on his secretary's desk read 5:20. His mind still echoed with the labyrinthine logic of the story. He leaned back uncertainly and surveyed the office with a dazed, transparent vision: his secretary's desk, typewriter with the cover on, racks marked "In" and "Out", a little jar full of paperclips, the trashcan, the bookcase, stacks of papers on the floor, the file cabinet, the water cooler, the cloakroom door, and behind him, the full-length mirror.

Lonely Gutter Blues

Louisiana
shut down
out of work
white trash
singing
lonely gutter blues
in the night
on a corner
where the light
from the lamp
on the street
plays a shadow
on his face
while he sings

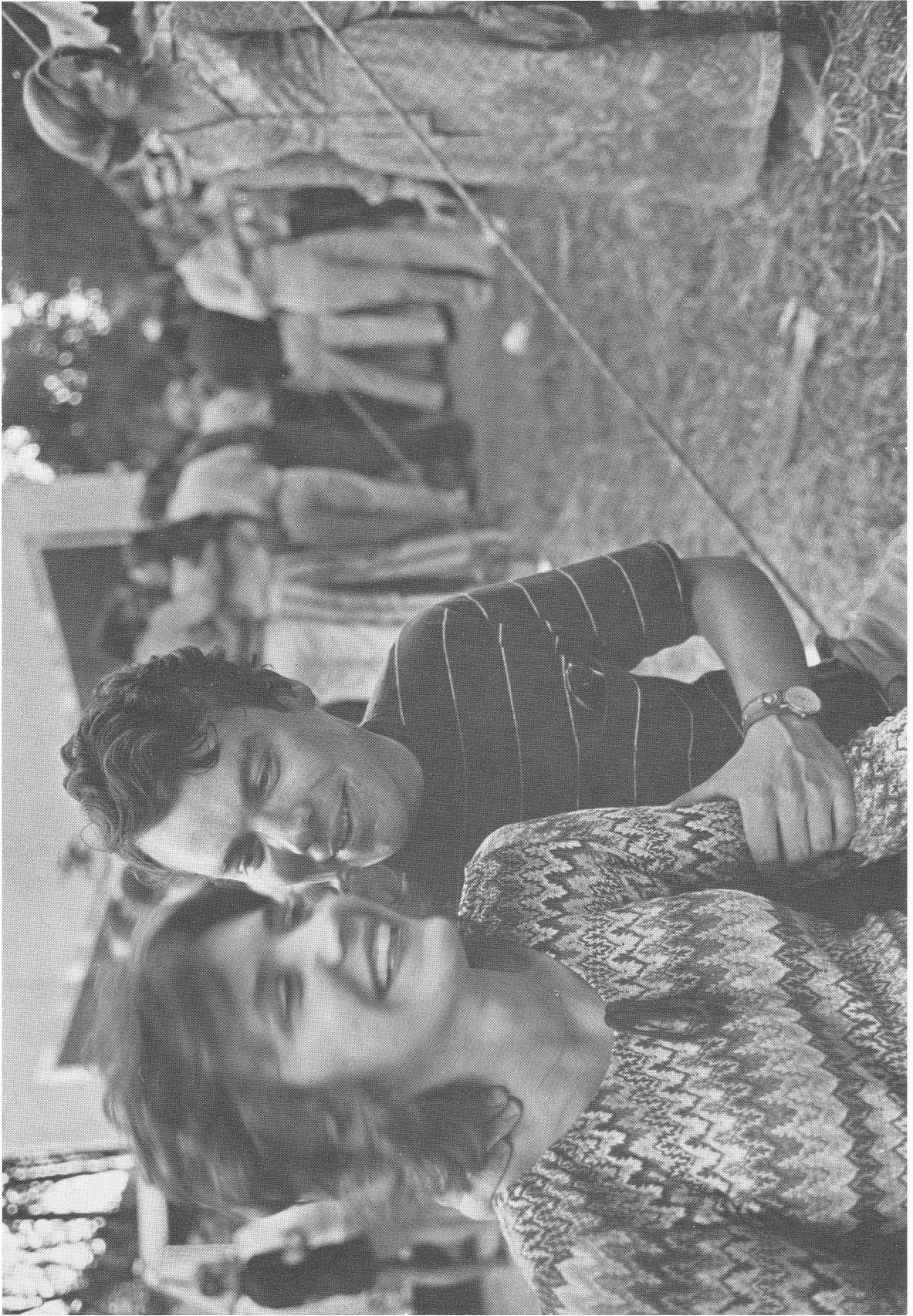
I missed it
by a mile
this time
sweet Lord
yes
I missed it
by a mile
this time

maybe two

Epitaph for a Waitress

People say
she was killed
with a table knife
thrown
from the counter
on the way
to carry out
a
hot
pecan pie
order
by some fella
who had
the banana split
blues
and
couldn't handle
second bests

But nobody
knows anything
for sure





the bus door opens.
in the mirror
the bus driver's mouth
opens.
behind me I hear
the silent mumbling
of poems.
beside me I hear
this eighty year old
woman begin
her life story.
outside
a bubble forms
within the bubble gum.
outside the bus window--
pop.
the unquenchable urge
of the earth
to jump
into a mouth,
any mouth,
and speak.

she threw the plates
 on the floor
like the second pulse
 of civilization
they fell into eros
 this is the world
where things
 can not go on falling
not all things
 some things though
your head
 your words
go falling alike
 and on the ground one sees
inverted brokenness
 fertility of cracks
 luxurious brokenness
fertility of chips
 and I think
of turtles
 with built-in love
ready on their backs
 traveling through
the backward zone
 of all our lives
beneath
 inverted saucers

Pedestrian

They grafted me
from a hoof and a megaphone.

I trot through this city
feeling I am dying
for some old stable
and a voice near
a hole.

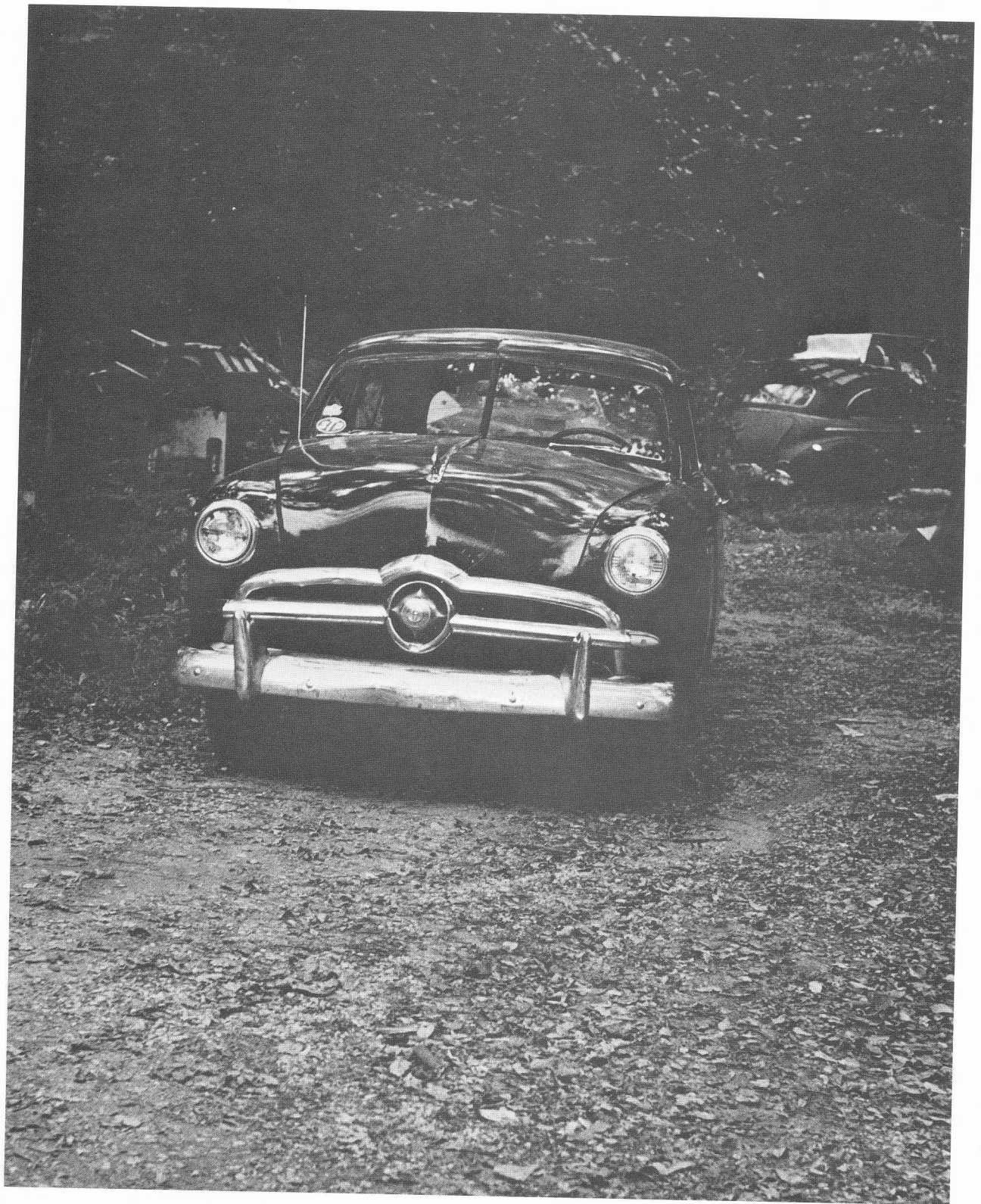
the snowman is as gone
as gasoline
after a fire.
as gone as some of my teeth.
I touch the grass.
damp
with his last thrashings
before the sun
sucked him
into more general love.
his charcoal eyes
are in my hands
like testicles.
They will not close.

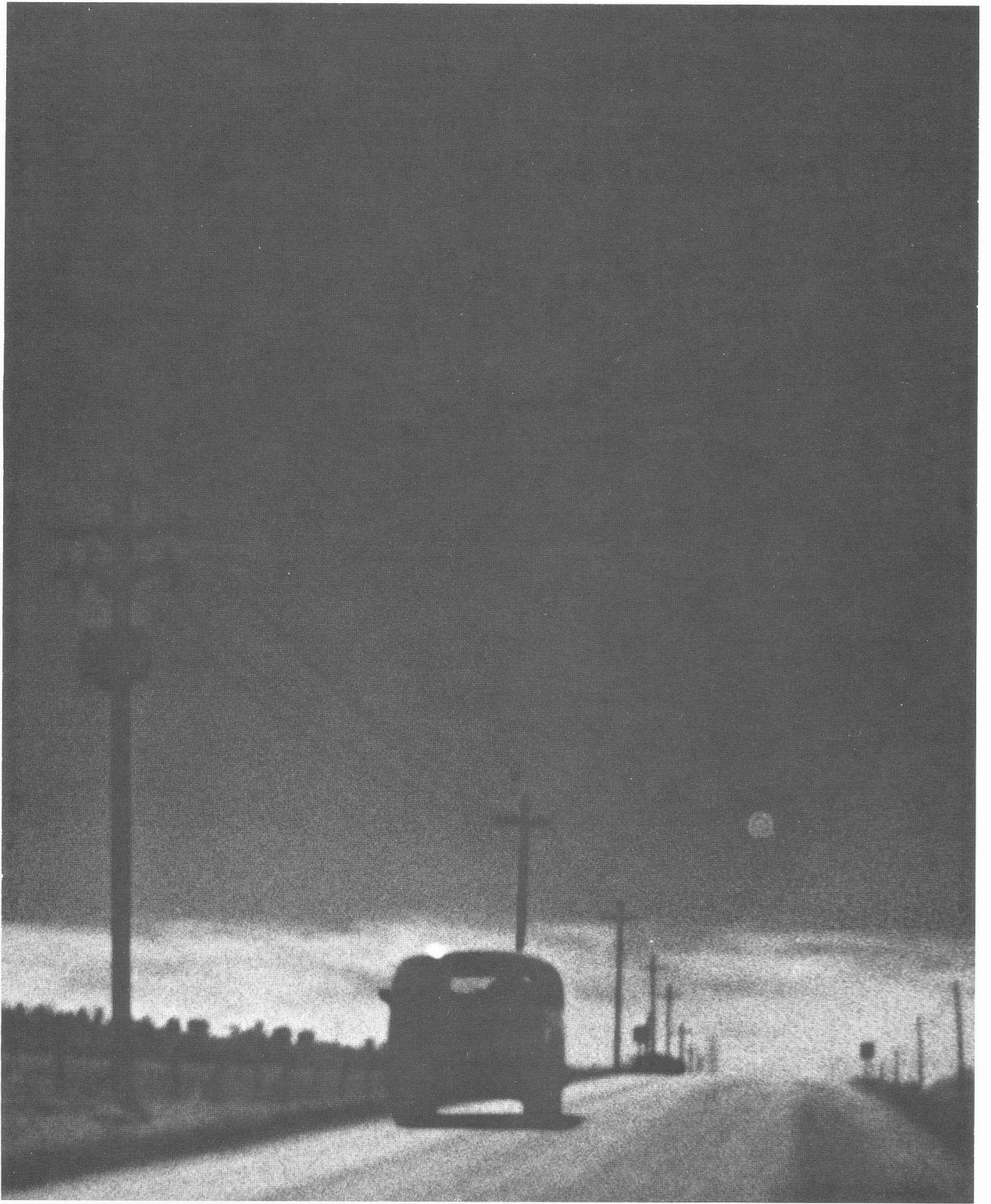
I put my sunglasses on
I do not want to appear strange
or prevent wrinkles
I do not hide my self.
I simply
love the feeling
of a body fallen from
everywhere--
getting up--
and chasing two pieces
of dark glass
tied to wires
everywhere.

the telephone wires
black
springing in the wind
with our voices
delicate cords of
good times.
all wires and pieces of string
should be as
happy
even the umbilical one
the universe swings back and forth
on
the quiet one.

ULYSSES RETURNED

Am I, stalking country roads,
older than the moon
or is it just the wind in the
cracks of my Chevrolet convertible's top
that makes me feel like Ulysses
returned; sailing in my Detroit ship
across Mulaney Creek near paths
where I stalked birds with BB guns,
now twenty years later, driving slow,
clenching the wheel tightly,
seeking ghosts while listening
to a static Wagner's "Ring, " driving
deeper, among unfound arrowheads.





SUICIDE

Death dreams from water shoots,
from rowboat paddles, lazily;
and rudderless craft too delicate

to bear heavy masts or engines,
that slip silently in the night
from gentle moorings;

so was the light from your eyes
that passed through the haze
of fine webbed gauze,

and sailed into the open air
unnoticed by the dimmed lamp,
leaving the empty hull

anchored lightly to the bed;
its blue wrists gaping,
still in white furled sheets.

for Carlton Simmons, Poet
Miami Beach, 1954

Preview

Summer melons,
And my hand is brown.
An early-yellowed leaf
Hesitates down white summer sunlight.
A prodigal cool
Sneaks through the morning--
A runner from September
Travelling winterward.

I have always thought of man's happiest state
As the Fall.

Eve Muses

One wonders why the legend is
That woman born is
Of Adam's rib:
For, in his encounters with the flesh of his flesh,
The shock of recognition hits him
Somewhat lower down.

THE QUEER

The bird-faced carpenter,
eating a solitary lunch
high on the roof of the unfinished
Foursquare Gospel Church,
has done it again, boys.
He just can't help himself.
In a girlish voice that comes on
like a chain saw in green spruce,
he calls Slat's Wooden dirty names.
The whole town must hear him.
Oh, sure, all of the wise guys
have figured out how to get his goat.
It's a good game on a dull day.
You see, he's queer as can be,
a real fairy, a fruitcake.
And Slat's lets him know he knows,
knowing, too, that he's no fighter,
no threat at all, especially
trapped on that steep roof.
All he can do is to curse Slat's good,
then go back to drinking
from his carton of buttermilk.

SUMMER READING

"Well, really," he said, putting down the book,
"A story ought to have some point.
Evidently, they're all related.
That must be where the trouble started,
All those family picnics and barbecues,
And soaking up sun in the yard.
Eventually, it led to putting out one's eyes.
And also, there never seemed to be enough.
Even when there was only one,
Eve was created out of spare parts.
She never got over it, the same blood,
The same bone. Cain must have been
Cross-eyed, a real retardate, Abel albino
And hemophiliac. Putting him out
Of his misery was something of a kindness.
Of course, God didn't see it that way,
But he'd missed the last six episodes.
In short order, they learned not to look back.
Lot's wife was said to have pickled her cheeks.
Later, it turned out more elegant.
Persephone ran off with a travelling circus.
Her mother started seeing trap doors
Opening up into the earth.
Then came the wars. They all lined up
Like grass on the hillside,
Like hair on a head.
When the wars started, they all began
Growing in. Soon the brain under the earth
Was affected. The air caught a fever,
And the streams thickened like blood.
Even when the brain stopped,
The people went on as before, begetting,
And growing out of the earth as from pores.
The story began rerunning like a channel in summer."
At this, he slammed the book down on the floor.
"This," he said, "is the stupidest,
Most pointless, repetitious---,"
But the book kept growing, grew right into a world.
Then he saw the earth he stood on was flat.
"For Christ's sake," he said, "this is ridiculous,"
Especially when he saw the monsters at the rim
Were stretching out their angry tongues like hands.

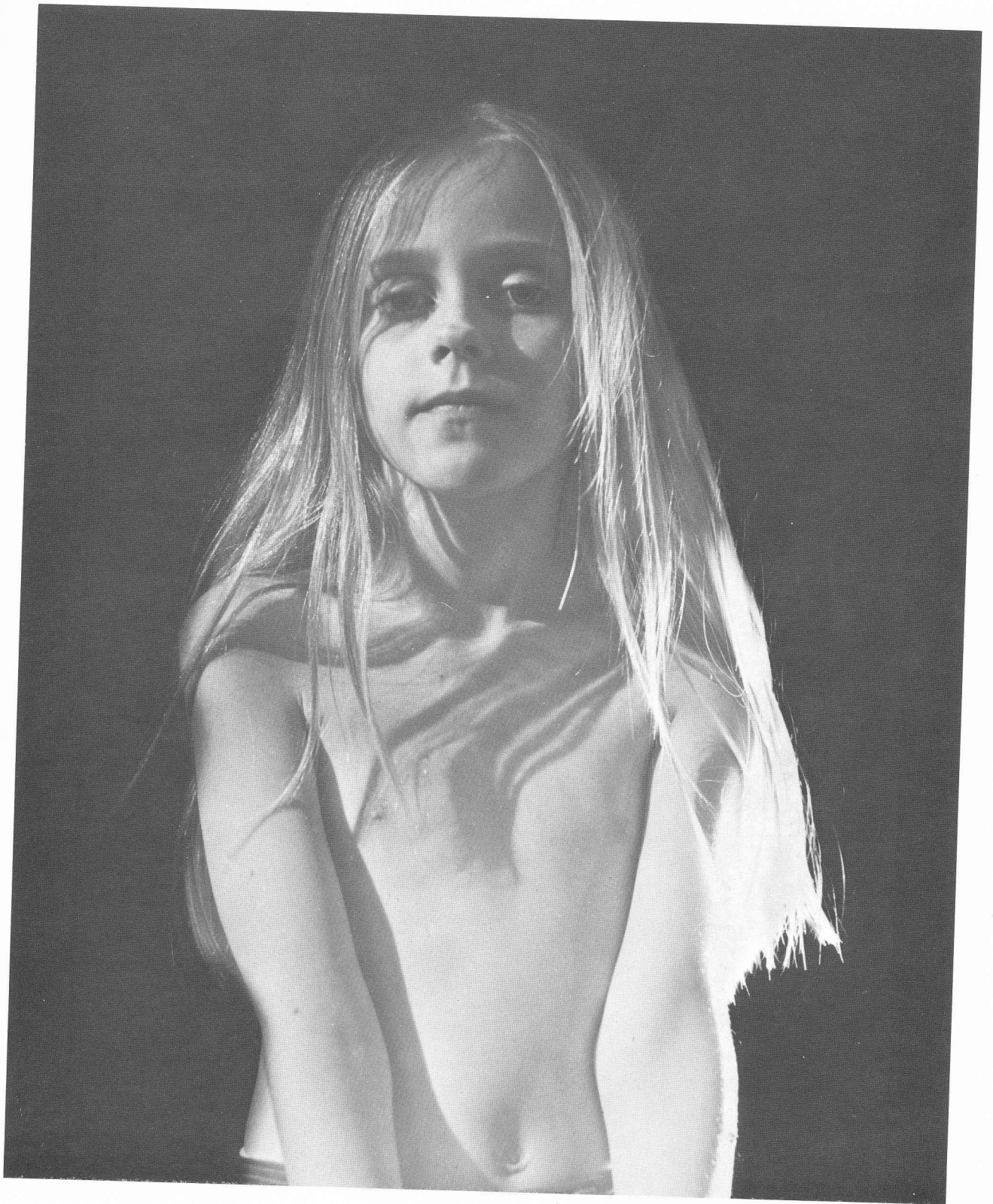
RIDDLE POEM

5 yrs.

At first, it is only a red plain,
Shaped like a horseshoe,
Shiny as blood.
After some time, the surface
Begins swelling, and cracking
And the dwellings appear.
They are white as mushrooms,
And shiny, and grow close together,
Their walls almost touching.
Some of them have sharp roofs,
But others are square and sag
In the middle like large pieces of cloth
Hung over four poles.
The roots of the houses go deep
Growing out of the plain
Like plants or a tree,
Knowing when to stop.
Eventually, they are hard and wet
And shiny, like ice houses,
Or igloos, all the same height.
The shores of the plain
Are constantly battered
By a great snake living deep in the trough
The homes now surround like a wall.
He rises like a wave to attack them,
But each time he slides back.

The inhabitants
Live down among the roots,
Whiter and blinder than moles.
They spend their time dreaming
The many new shapes of the world.
Their dreams are the food
Of the ageless seaworm.
The more they dream, the hungrier he gets.
One day, the dreamers
Begin sleeping the sleep of a stone.

Then the roots of the houses
Shrivel and loosen
And the seaworm rises up like a wave.
He pulls the house loose from the shore
And curls himself around the dream,
Warm like a nut or a seed.
Suddenly, all the houses on the shore
Look quite shaky, and even the sky
Is slippery and shiny, reddish and black.
The sun in the sky begins drifting loose,
Drifting toward the seaworm
Like a sugary bubble. When he takes it in,
Easily as a biscuit or wafer,
All the lights in the galaxy go out,
Its resources plundered.
But now the red plain is beginning to swell
And new white flecks soon will be showing.
Under a white pillow filled with white feathers,
Something is left, some kind of payment.
It looks like a coin, very much like a quarter.





Psalm 151: To Save Us
(For Tranh Thi Gam)

When the only holes in our land
were made by the plow
we were happy; now
my thin legs sink into sand
where once we could grow
tall green rice with our own hand.

We need peace. We are told freedom's
air must be breathed first;
my children thirst
and cry in the night at bombs.
Ai yeee! I fear we are cursed
beyond hope; only death comes

to save us.

To whom should I turn
when the home of God
rains fire and blood?
The skies open and burn
us. Who is bad, who good
among us? I yearn

For a savior to come,
god--or man--to let them know
us as we are, to show
them we are men, from
the same outward flow
that makes us all one:

to save us.

from a novel

The Year of the Tiger

In early February of 1963 a C-47 trying out some valuable equipment went down in the central part of South Viet Nam. Two Vietnamese soldiers from a nearby jungle unit were assigned to guard the plane until a team could be dispatched from Tan Son Nhut to dismantle it. When the team arrived by helicopter the next morning they found only one guard, hiding terrified inside the shattered cockpit. While they removed the machine guns and cameras he babbled hysterically to them, and after the aircraft had been destroyed he refused to be left behind. Back at Tan Son Nhut an interrogator questioned him and discovered that his companion had been carried off in the jaws of a huge tiger the evening before, just at dusk. They gave him a hot meal and had him flown back to his unit. That evening Doc told me Intelligence had filed an E. I. A. report on the missing Vietnamese.

"E. I. A." I said. "What the hell is that?"

"Eaten in action," he explained.

The rats were brown and fat from the garbage, their bellies distended obscenely in the mornings when you saw them on the path near the mess hall. Or they were grey and quick-moving with their queer, high-pitched cries, bunching their bodies like cats and raising themselves into a hump-backed, disgusting wobble when you kicked them. At night they were shadows with two lynx-red eyes on the wooden walkway to the latrine, silent and filthy and as ugly as death; or they scurried through the water in the drainage ditch beside your tent, a sudden grey-brown rush in the dim light before dawn that became a part of your dreams. When enraged they would rise up on their hind legs and attack like scabrous, dwarf kangaroos, looking comical until you remembered that they carried the plague in their teeth. Sometimes you saw them swimming in the river, looking like beavers, and once during a great fire near the base there were hundreds of them going out across a field away from the flames, sounding like a flight of birds. And you never forgot what the Chinese nun at the orphanage had told you about the poor who placed their newly-born babies in garbage cans, how she had to check the cans at night and again at morning, and still the rats got to some of them before she did.

I told the driver to wait and started across the foot bridge to Sheba's house. On the bridge there were several small girls squatted down, urinating together between the planks. It was the siesta hour and Sheba was asleep on the bed across from the screened door. She sat up quickly when I called. Pointing to the street, she said, "You bring?"

I nodded and she came to the door smiling. While two of her nephews went out to get the grocery sacks, she made me a drink from the bottle of Scotch I kept in her house. She was pleased with what I had brought: Tang, hair spray, several boxes of Tide, five transistor radios, lingerie, and twenty cartons of Salem cigarettes. She picked up a radio, opened it and pointed a finger at the batteries. "Bing no good," she said. "No last."

"I'll bring you some extra batteries next time."

"Okay," she said, patting me on the shoulder. "No forget, eh?"

By then the house was full of people: daughters, grandchildren; sons-in-law, all smiling politely as they bustled around the room. A small, serious-eyed boy walked slowly over to me, never taking his large eyes off my face, and touched my hand. I picked him up and he promptly began to cry.

After Sheba had sent her relatives out to sell the merchandise, she sat down beside me. The house was built on stilts above a paddy, and it was always cool. Through the open spaces in the floor I could see the black water lapping against the poles. Sheba was joking about my love-life when her husband arrived home for the siesta. He was a tall man, a civil engineer, and, like most Vietnamese, extremely polite. I was embarrassed at first. The last time I had come, at night, I had walked up on him and Sheba making love. Worse, I had stood there transfixed, an instant voyeur, until they finished. He shook my hand and sat down across from me while Sheba fixed him a cup of tea.

When everything had been sold, Sheba fixed me another drink, paid me the piastres, and handed me a sheet of paper on which the various calculations had been made. She and her husband walked with me to the bridge. On the way we were crowded off the path by four men carrying a freshly-killed hog slung on two poles. Below the bridge women were washing clothes and there were children playing in the water. On the bridge a small boy crouched, defecating.

I was in the bathroom when the bomb went off with a powerful, muffled whump driving me to my knees. When I went back into the bar there was a girl with her back to me behind the counter screaming into the mirror. Looking into the shattered mirror, I saw the jagged piece of glass sticking out of her jaw. Both front windows had been blown in and there was broken glass everywhere, on the floor, the tables, imbedded in the walls and ceiling. One American, still in a daze, was sitting on the floor, but no one else appeared to be hurt. Then, starting for the door, I saw the man. Later the next day I read in the paper that he had been a Frenchman who lived in a nearby villa. Someone had tossed a paper bomb into the bar as he stood in the doorway. His body had absorbed the shock, and the bar had not been seriously damaged. The article did not mention the wounded bar-girl. Nor was anything said about how the man had lain there with his head turned sideways, dying on his elbows in the doorway, his legs in the street, his eyes beginning to flutter as he stared vacantly at the broken glass beside his face.

It was still dark when the old mama-san let me out of the house. She asked me if I had enjoyed the girl. I nodded and she smiled, displaying her betel nut-blackened teeth. I helped her pull the iron grill in place and then handed her a ten piastre note through the bars. At the foot of the steps I could hear her climbing the stairs to her room, the keys on the ring she carried chinking softly like wind chimes. It was a grey morning with fog moving patiently in from the river under a light breeze. The air was muggy and I knew that when the sun came up the city would boil like a pot.

The fog seeped over the railing of the bridge leading into Saigon, and it was pleasant walking along the river with the whiskey still working on my head and feeling that lightness in the loins, unburdened now and still tingling from the girl. There were fishing boats heading slowly up the river out to sea, and on one of the wooden docks below me a group of farmers were unloading vegetables from a long canoe. Up the street a line of horse-drawn carts stood idly along the curb, waiting to carry produce to the central market place.

I turned up the Rue Catinat, dark and cool beneath the shade trees, wide and lovely in its length, running smoothly from the river to the Continental Hotel and then sloping gently up to the Basilica that sat like a megalith in the dim light at the top of the hill. The Continental was closed but a waiter was arranging the tables, so I decided to walk up to the Basilica before breakfast. Near the top of the hill a car swung around the Basilica and started down the street. There were four red

stars on the front plate. I came to attention and saluted, wondering who the hell it was.

Sitting nearest to me in back was General Maxwell Taylor. He returned my salute and nodded his head. Beside him, looking at me without interest and saying something to the General, was Robert McNamara. I stared in amazement as they went past, turned the corner onto Tran Hung Dao, and disappeared. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense, I thought, up before dawn and travelling across Saigon in a 1957 black Chevrolet without military escort. No one would believe me, I decided.

The Basilica stood on an island in the center of the street. Off to the left, coming across the wide intersection behind it, was a long wagon piled ten feet high with hay being drawn by a man. Yoked between the wooden traces like an ox, straining his forehead against the breast collar, he came slowly across Le Van Duyet like something out of the pages of history. I knew what I was doing up at that hour, and it was obvious that the man pulling the wagon was trying to escape the early morning traffic, but I had the feeling that only God and a few select others would ever learn what the two men in the black sedan had been doing that morning.

I have seen you strut on the beach
you painted women

of Malibu

Observed the salt-wind chip the powder
the fingers of spray

claw the mascara

and rub at the crimson of lips

I have seen your hair break its plastic mold
and rasping but silent move like the Malibu sand,
seen your bodies bend and break in the surf
in ways alien to your poised grace

to your arched crooked fingers
lifting

your drinks

Thus stripped and stained I have seen you stand
silent as dismay at each other's disarray
lost in the Malibu sun

slipping to its sedimental bed

Then you have seemed to me
rigid as marble statues by older shores
as chipped and discolored
as disfigured

by time

Confined

(addict)

[in Emptied Spaces]

They've closed the gate
and they've closed the sky
They've put me here
(to this cell)
To pass myself by
Incoherently for shadows
never speak

And I sit at the farthest
end, waiting for the
watcher, when he
comes the cloth of
his hands abstractly
done

And I sit and conceive of
All silence as here
Lamp bright (my
eyes) to that
Vacant night swinging
To and fro, to

and fro.

from the novel

A BURIAL OF THE DEAD

The Body,
The Cemetery,
& The Grave

I--The Body

GEORGE PIERCE

TOPEKA, Kan. ---Funeral Services for George Walter Pierce, 22, Topeka, will be held at 2:30 p. m. Friday in the Biegelow Funeral Home Chapel. The Rev. Thomas S. Aarnton will officiate. Burial will be in the Pines Hill Cemetery in Topeka.

Mr. Pierce was found dead on arrival at Memorial Hospital here Tuesday after suffering a one-car accident ten miles east of Topeka on I-70.

He was born March 4, 1950, in Chicago, Illinois. He had been a resident of Topeka since 1955. He graduated in 1971 from Kansas University with a B. A. in History, and was a first year student at the Kansas University Medical Center.

He is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Pierce, of 2114 Morningside Road, Topeka; a brother, Junior; a sister, Sally; his grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. John Pierce, of Oakland, Calif.; and his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Harmon of Flagler Beach, Fla..

▼▼▼ TOM

I figure maybe the boy made his own vault last summer, because we only pour them in stretches, and I believe that one out there was one of the ones him and me poured together; with him mixing the cement, scooping seven sand, eight heydite, and five cement, adding the water, letting it mix around, pouring it into the wheelbarrow, bringing it over to the forms where we'd lift he heavy son-of-a-bitch to pour out the cement so that I could trowel it smooth for the lid, or vibrate it down into the bottom of the forms if it was for the vault bottom, with him always mixing, sometimes ten mixer loads a day; and believe me, that can wear a fellow out enough that he's tempted to take smaller scoopfuls, which is exactly what George did that time when Jim was helping us, at least that's what Jim was saying, getting all ugly because he thought he was working harder than the boy; getting ugly enough to say "Goddamn it, George, if you're going to scoop, scoop! That means getting a scoop-full. I'm getting in about twice as much, and its fucking up the cement, right Tom?" to which I just grunted, so that Jim said, "Now watch, goddamn it, and I'll show you how to do it" ---Jim was always wanting everything done his way, though me and the boy always got things done all right by ourselves: because I let him learn how to do things on his own, so that he wouldn't be bothering me with telling him how, or watching me and not working himself, like he did with Jim when---he took the scoop and filled it full everytime, making a big mixerload, that was probably too full to mix right, and getting tired and sweaty as hell, saying, "See, boy, now get your scoops like that. Understand?" and the boy nodded as though he did, but the next time around, George just stood there while Jim was scooping, until Jim got mad enough to say, "What the hell! C'mon, boy, start scooping!" but George stood there and kind of grinned, and said, "You better show me how, again. I forgot just exactly how you mixed that last one;" and , of course, I was almost laughing to myself, because the boy didn't know Jim real well--that Jim probably didn't understand that the boy was only making a joke, which was right, because Jim threw down his scoop shovel and said, "Well, you better learn on your own, then," and he walked over to get a Nehi root beer from the pop machine while George and I grinned at each other: Jim finally came back to help us finish, but wouldn't talk to us; it was only last summer that that happened, and I've been thinking about that, and I believe it could even be the same vault that Jim and me and him poured that day that we're burying him in today. Brother, that's a thought.

Tom, Mort, and Chester finished pouring the vaults at noon. Randy and Hart came in for lunch. They had been out in the truck picking up dead limbs and talking to the cemetery mangager, Mr. Rankin. Hart went to his house across from the barn for lunch. Mort went out to his truck to eat. He did not eat with the crew. Chester, Tom, and Randy sat together in the lunch room.

"You know," said Tom. "I believe it's possible that we could be burying George in a vault that him and me and Jim poured last summer."

"Think he'll recognize it?" asked Chester, grinning.

"No, I don't believe so. They say dead people are usually blind."

"Don't believe it," Randy chuckled, "They got a hell of a way of looking at you."

"Fuckin' body never bothered me," said Chester.

"When have you ever seen one?" asked Tom.

"Over in Viet Nam. Goddamn, I seen plenty over there, you know that. All fucked up, too, not like them perfumed, waxed-up things they call dead people around here."

"Shit, you give them a while. By God, then they'll stink like all the others," said Randy. "Shit, Tom, you remember that damn Widow Arlington? Had us moving her Harry all over the place?"

"Heh, heh, yea," chuckled Tom.

"That was before you were here, Chester. We buried the old man up in the Veteran's section, then she came out Memorial Day the next year and decided that her husband didn't like it there."

"That's up there by the big gas meter that ticks," said Tom.

"Yea, and she said that her Harry couldn't get any peaceful rest there."

"Heh, heh," Tom chuckled, "she said Harry never could stand to have clocks ticking or anything like that."

"So we had to move him."

"Where's the old fucker now?" asked Chester.

"I can't hardly remember," said Tom, "we moved him so much."

"Shit. Right after Memorial Day she'd be out here finding something the hell wrong. Second time it was cause a tree grew too close and there wasn't any grass growing on the grave."

"Poor Harry always did love grass," said Tom, in a mock-feminine voice.

"He had five different graves in five years. And every year he smelled worse. Shit. For a while there I sure didn't look forward to Memorial Day when she'd come out and decide where she wanted 'dear Harry' for the next year."

"Goddamn. Ain't there some kind of law against doin' that?"

"Nope," said Tom, "long as you can afford to buy the plots and pay exhuming money there isn't a whole lot we can do. Except look forward to her dying."

"I was always hoping she'd be committed to the State Hospital," said Randy, "She was crazy enough. Probably moved Harry around like that when he was alive."

"Being dead doesn't help you much, I guess," said Tom. "You know, she couldn't have been committed. She was too good for business around here for anybody to complain against her. Always did say that people who are rich are the only ones who can afford to be crazy."

"Shit," said Randy, "that's only cause it's the poor people goin' crazy tryin' to get money. When they finally do, they're loony."

"If bein' loony's all it takes to get rich, I reckon I'll try it," said Chester.

They ate and talked through the half-hour lunch time until Mort came back in to sit down, followed closely by Hart.

"Well," Hart began, a fresh-lit cigar jerking up and down in his mouth, "I talked to the boss. He's going to get some flowers up for the funeral. Just bring seventy-five cents tomorrow. Now, this afternoon I want Mort to sweep the barn. Randy, I want you and Chester to take the backhoe and push the sand and heydite back into the bins as far as you can so that I can order some more. Tom, there's a cremation the boss wants you to cook up this afternoon. The funeral will be out here around three or three-thirty. Well, I have twelve-thirty." Hart stood up. "Time to begin to commence to start working." He said the same thing every day after lunch, and the men stood up and filed through the lunch-room door into the barn. Tom got into the old pickup and drove up to the crematorium which was located in the mausoleum.

He fired up the furnace and turned to the nearby coffin, which was on a wheeled cart. He saw that the metal handles were secured by Phillips screws. He went to the nearby workbench, found a Phillips head screwdriver, and began to unscrew the handles. When he was finished, he placed the handles and screws in an adjoining room which was already half-full of them. He returned to the coffin, and lifting the lid, he saw the face of an elderly woman, poorly made up, with sad, full eyes, and a stiff smile on her too heavily lipsticked lips. He found her hand, removed the rings, then felt her face with his large, freckled hand. She was not thick boned, and would be fully cremated by the end of the afternoon.

Tom opened the furnace door, wheeled the coffin over in front of it, and pushed it from the cart into the warming furnace. He shut the heavy door and turned up the gas jets all the way. The furnace was roaring as he left the crematorium. A thin, black wisp of smoke began to rise from the smoke stacks on the top of the building.

Brother, let me tell you, that furnace gets hot mighty quick, so hot I can hardly stand the thought of it, of burning like that, though I've been burnt before one time pretty bad when George and me lit all of those artificial flowers on fire down at the dump after Memorial Day; pouring gasoline onto the pile surrounding us on three sides, then me standing in the middle like a damn fool and pulling out my lighter to start the pile going, and damn if it didn't: started me going, too, and the gasoline can was still right there, and I was drowning, practically, in those flames until I found the can and got the hell out, and there was George, standing like he'd been hit by lightning, then saying, What the hell. What the hell. You all right, Tom? You okay? and I answered, Yes, even though the burns were starting to smart pretty bad, and then I remembered my lighter, which I had dropped in the middle there somewhere, so I waded in after it (the flames had gone down quite a bit), found it, and we got in the truck and got back to the barn, where, just as quick as you can say Jack Robinson, I stuck my blistering arms into some large barrels of cool water, so that Hart saw the trouble and came over to take a look at me and we went down to the hospital to get me fixed up: fixed up so much they wouldn't let me work for two weeks, so I'd just come in with my arms and face bandaged up here and there and tell the boy how to do things for me, like run cremations like he did for the first time, me showing him how to fire up the furnace, unscrew the metal handles, and then when I had him right close to the coffin, I quick! opened up the lid so his face was about six inches away from an old man's bald, grey, sick face; opened it so quick he damn near put a hole in the ceiling from jumping away, with me staying real calm and cool, until he said, "Goddamn, Tom, this is the first time I ever saw a dead body," which wasn't news to me, but I grinned a sorry at him, so he said, "I'm okay now, but damn, you about got a chance to see what I had for breakfast; God damn." Course I could tell he was still a little mad: wasn't so hard to get him mad but it seemed like he always tried hard not to show it.

▼ ▼ ▼ MORT

Mort slowly swept the forty by fifty yard barn. He handled the long push broom somewhat awkwardly, pushing it in jerks. Every once in a while he stopped and rolled himself a cigarette.

Yessir, I reckon what I been hearin on T. V. bout them tailor makes makes me sure nough glad I been rollin my own. Them others'll give you the cancer, is what they say. I warned that

boy off it, but he'd smoke em anyways, him thinkin he was knowin more'n me bout it when I heard it on T. V. --and just last summer, too. Last summer was dry as a popcorn fart, too, and that old sun kept shinin and beatin down on us, Goddamn, it was nice. Me and the boy out straightenin stones, and that sun there keepin us warm. Goddamn, we'd say, lookin that old sun straight in the eye, Get hot, we'll get hot right with you. We don't care a damn bout it. It'd keep us warm, too, not like these here days when even if there ain't no clouds that old sun ain't so hot. I don't reckon I like it outside none when there ain't no sun keepin you warm. That boy, he said once how the sun's what keeps things growin and all, and I reckon it's true, cause you get on into winter time and that snow'll like to come'n kill everything. Put you out of a job, too, if you're workin like me with the grass and the bushes and such. Goddamn, if my missus didn't have such a doctor bill cause she's dyin of that cancer tumor, why, if it weren't for that, I'd be home right now keepin' nice and warm and maybe watchin T. V. , or maybe out fishin, or huntin rabbits and such. Cause I don't like workin on past the first frost. That's usually when I walks up to the boss and says I quit, I'm leavin. See you next year. Cause I don't believe it's healthy bein out when that sun don't keep you warm, and the cold rain is beatin down like to kill everything. Way it rains, I'm wonderin why the world ain't flooded over like in the Bible. That boy was ornery as hell with me on that, thinkin he was so damn smart cause he was in college. I warned him off that, too, but he wouldn't pay me no mind. I quit learnin after third grade, I told him. I reckon that's about all you can get out of a schoolin. But he was tellin me how that water don't flood cause the sun takes it back up in the sky and that's what clouds is. Goddamn, he was actin like what happened was that it'd rain upside down. I didn't like him playin with me like that, and told him so. How do you think it happens? he asks me. So I told him my figurin. I figure, see, since most of the water's runnin downhill it goes clean on over to the ocean. But why doesn't the ocean flood over? he asks me, real ornery actin. Well, I says, I figure there's probly a drain in the bottom of that ocean, like the drain in a washin machine, only really bigger, and that keeps it from goin all over. I don't think he believed me, but then he was just a boy and all even if he was in college. Goddamn that rain, anyhow. First it rainin on Thanksgivin Day yesterday, then thunderin and lightnin last night so's I wake up twice out of my beer drinkin sleep. Yessir, nothin like a couple of beers to help you sleep gentle. Then it drizzlin like this all day and I hear we're

buryin that George who was workin with me on them stones. Goddamn rain'll kill you, too, if you ain't watchin out for yourself. Give me the sun, and like the boy said, it'll keep you growin.

At three o'clock, Mort was finished sweeping the barn. Randy and Chester had finished their job and were next to the pop machine talking. Tom was bending wire for the next day's vaults. Hart drove into the barn and Randy went over to help him hitch up the now-empty tent wagon. Chester went to the side of the barn to the vault carrier tractor. Tom and Randy loaded on the Whacker, and Tom got into the truck next to Hart. Mort jumped up into the back of the truck. Randy went over and mounted the backhoe. They all went up to the road behind Lincoln and waited for the last cars to leave the graveside. It had stopped raining earlier, and a damp-cool breeze was blowing the dark clouds quickly across the sky.

That time we was all down by the nigger section waitin on some boy's funeral, and they like to never be leavin. Them niggers do more bereavin and grievin than any folks I ever seen before. And them other fellas was gettin mad as hell bout it, too, cussin the niggers, but laughin and jokin bout how at least the one we was goin to be dealin with was a dead one and couldn't do no talkin back. And right before they was almost gone, a girl runs over to the coffin and throws herself on it cryin and screamin. The fellas was sayin she must've just lost the prick that was doin her. And the big old buck preacher come over and lifted her screamin off the coffin and slung her over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes, her kickin him and poundin his back with her fists, till finally he throws her down into the back seat of the car and away they go. Me and the boy, George, was talkin bout it one time and he says that them niggers was just believin different from us was why they was always wailin and moanin out at the cemetery. They's Christians, ain't they? I asks him, and he says, Sure, but they have different values then we do. I know that, I says, they ain't worth as much as a white man. No, no, he kept on, I mean they believe more in mourning when a death happens. But I don't see why that's so, cause when you're dead you really ain't, like my daughter that time in the car wreck. There weren't nothing to it cept she was gone. My missus, she missed Caroline a whole lot, but it didn't do no good. I reckon I believe like the preacher says, that you go on livin anyways, somewhere else. That boy, he wasn't sure. He said how he don't believe that you got a soul. I straightened him out real quick on that one, for damn sure. There's a soul that keeps the body alive, I says to him, I know, cause Jesus gave

me my soul back one time. And if you ever smelled a dead person, and seen that body, you know that soul's missin, cause it ain't too pretty. That's just cause you're dead, that's all, he says, gettin uppity. But I go on, I reckon that's why you die, see, cause that soul gets away. Like that time I was real sick. I had me a fever clean up in the hundreds and couldn't eat nothin or even wake up much for three days. Then I felt my soul leavin me, and it went up to heaven with them gates, and there was black angels all around, and I seen the Lord then, and I says to him, Lord, let me go on livin, cause I got my missus and these kids, here, to be takin care of. And he smiles at me and says, Okay, Mort. I felt my soul comin back, and the next day I got up feelin pretty good. I reckon the Lord'll take care of me, bein so close to him like that that one time. You sure those black angels weren't just buzzards over your bed? he asks me kind of ornery like. Nosir, I says, them were guardian angels, and I seen em since then watchin over me. I said so to the preacher, and he said how I was right. Goddamn, I never seen a boy so ornery bout dyin.

The last car left, and the crew drove from the road behind Lincoln to where the lead-in mat was. They all helped to unload the plywood planks from the truck-bed. Hart pulled up into the section so that the tent wagon was near the grave. Randy and Chester had parked in the road and came to the grave to help tear down the tent. Tom removed the large pile of flowers from the dirt mound, putting them where they would not get in the way of the burial.

"Which one did we give him, Hart?" asked Chester, seeing the flowers.

"I don't know. One of those, there, I reckon."

"Kind of a waste of money, ain't it?"

"Maybe."

The crew put away the folding chairs, rolled up the mats, and folded the greens, putting all of them in their place on the tent wagon. Hart got the two long canvas straps from the truck and laid them out in front of the coffin device. Mort, Randy, Tom, and Chester lifted the grey-metal coffin off the device and onto the straps. They loaded the device onto the truck, leaving the open grave exposed under the tent.

"Now take it real easy," said Hart as the rest of the crew each grabbed an end of the straps. "Don't walk on the edges of the grave unless you have to. This side here looks pretty bad."

They lowered the coffin into the vault bottom, then pulled the straps from underneath it.

"Not very heavy, was he?" asked Hart.

"Nope," said Tom. "He always was a mite skinny."

Randy and Chester unloaded the Whacker from the truck bed and dragged it to the foot of the grave. Tom was undoing the stays on the canvas tent top. When he was through, the crew pulled the tent up off the stakes, folded the legs, and settled it on the ground. They removed the canvas top, tore down the frame, and folded both to put on the tent wagon. Mort went around and pulled the tent stakes out of the ground. When he came to the slightly-bent one that Hart had insisted on using, Hart took the stake.

"We'll give him this one," he said, bending over the grave and gently dropping the metal stake next to the coffin. The others went over to look.

"Chester," said Hart, standing up quickly, "let's get the lid on. And drive up slow."

Mort stood back...

Goddamn that Hart puttin that stake there. It ain't good havin that extra weight layin with you when you're dead. It's a burden on his soul, way I see it. We never done that in no other cemetery where I worked. It's like tryin to talk to a dead person, tellin him a secret. Just a burden on his soul that don't help it to get to heaven. The sooner people forget and let you get goin, the better. That metal stake's just a burden. I sure nough don't believe in it.

▼▼▼ TOM

Can't really blame it on anybody even if you want to cuss Chester up and down, 'cause it's just one of those things that happens, and that's all, and even if you could you shouldn't really blame anybody, much as people are always wanting to pin somebody down: that being exactly the reason that boy used to get stuck with it a lot, with the others all kidding and teasing him when it wasn't really his fault; like I remember the time when him and me were going out in the big vault truck, and Hart says Tom, you back it out. George make sure you're guiding him, so I got in and the boy stood a ways away and I started to back up pretty slow, knowing it was going to be tricky getting by the old pickup that was parked in the middle of the barn, so, slow it was, him standing next to the pickup, when I figured I'd hit the brake and pull back up a ways to get the better angle, but me not being used to that big vault truck, I accidentally hit the gas again and went whamm! right smack into the back of the old pickup: it being my fault, of course, but Hart didn't want to cuss me, so he came over and said to the boy, I thought I told you to watch Tom, Goddamn it, and the boy knew he was being blamed for no reason, and so he smiled up at Hart and said, Hart, I did watch him. Jee-suss, you should've seen it.

Randy dropped Tom at the barn and went back up toward Lincoln. Tom went inside, started the big, heavy truck, and followed. When he got there, he backed carefully onto solid ground. After five long minutes, the carrier was again stable and Hart removed the chain from around the wheel base.

"Okay," he said, "now we can get down to business."

Chester drove the carrier out to the road. Tom took a shovel and began to throw some loose dirt into the grave.

He didn't need any cover, really, I guess, and just sealing him quick would have been all right with him, except with that eye he was giving us it didn't seem so; but I've seen other things that didn't seem right and you got to just do your best with them, like George even told me once, It ain't important to do well, but it is important to do your best, and I guess that's what most decent folks are after in the world--doing their best, cause when you stop to look at it, you can tell right off that things aren't doing well, or else George wouldn't be down under that lid, half mashed up anyway from a one-car accident that I've been wondering if he did his best to avoid: with all this trouble burying him, something seems mighty strange about it all, and him making his own vault, too, almost spooks you when you think about how strange the world is sometimes.

▼▼▼ MORT

Goddamn him, givin me the eye like that, starin straight up watchin me. Goddamn him, he give me a funny feelin, like that time he done it before, once, cussin me when we was out straightenin stones, usin language no man ought to straight to somebody else's face. We'd work in them hot afternoons, that sun beatin' down, and he'd tryn tell me the time by the sun. Then I'd pull my watch out from my pocket since the band was broke and tell him if he was right or wrong. He was mostly wrong, too, cept neither of us cared a damn. That was that time when he give me a new band. Said it was extra around his house. I didn't want to be takin it, but he said so, so I did, cause he said how he was usin my watch all the time wantin to know what time it was gettin to be anyways, so's he was just investin in my watch stead of buyin one hisself. Later it was when I give it back, sorry I ever took it. We two was out workin them stones and the boss puttin him in charge tellin him how to line em up and get em straight with me usin the crowbar. So the boy'd get off a piece and yell me north or south or up and down to get them markers in a straight row, and we'd dig under her with

the shovels and then he'd get off a ways again and I'd stick the crowbar under the stone and move it like he said. Then we'd maybe lift her up and put sand and all under her if she needed raisin, then we'd maybe put dirt and a little grass seed around her and be done. That crowbar'll get heavy on you, too, after a while, and I don't reckon a man likes workin with it much with that boy all the time sayin this way and that way like he was the boss. And one day I was handlin the crowbar with him yellin bout bein careful from chippin them stones cause how much they cost and me tryin, but then once I done it anyway--took a big old chip right out of the middle of a six foot granite. Goddamn, I was mad a little, cause I knew that weren't good. And the boy come up and says Goddamn it, can't you be more careful. I told you, and I says to him, a little mad, Here's the crowbar, so do it yourself. If you're better, go on and do it yourself. Look, he says, real ornery, Hart said I was supposed to line it up and you were supposed to move it like I tell you. I been doin just like you say, I tells him, but I don't reckon I'm goin to be takin them orders from you if you keep yellin and screamin at me all the time. Then he does it, Goddamn dumb son-of-a-bitch, he calls me, Why can't you just do it right, then? Well, ain't nobody call me a son-of-a-bitch like that, specially not no boy, so's I just walks off and went all the way down to the barn and took my truck home. Next mornin I come in and he's sittin talkin with them other loudmouths same as usual, and I take that watchband and throw it at him sayin Take it, cause you ain't havin no part on tellin time with me no more. Goddamn him, anyways, callin me a son-of-a-bitch. But the boss, he made us go out workin together again, and pretty soon we was all right cause the boy, he said how he was sorry and didn't mean to be sayin it cussin me like that. Now I'm sorry he's dead, you know, cause he ain't goin to be makin it up to me, him starin at me with that big old eye of his, there, shinin just when the sun come out. Goddamn, give me the creeps, it does. Like cussin at you does, only he ain't sorry cause he's dead, and pretty soon won't be nothin left of him, cause we'll put on that sod and Tom'll tromp it down and tomorrow it'll look like every-thing else, just plain old ground where that boy was with that eye, lookin up at me, cussin.

▼▼▼ HART

Hart took the small stump-post digger and dug a cylindrical hole at the head of the grave. He put in the green flower vase and filled around it with dirt. Then he took the temporary grave marker from the truck and stuck it next to the vase at the head of the grave. It read: Pines Hill Cemetery, on the top; and right below, on the plastic Dymo label that Hart had punched out earlier, it read: George W. Pierce 1950-1972. Hart scraped the bottoms of his boots, then got into the truck.

The rest of the crew helped to load the plywood planks onto the back of the truck. Then, with the tent wagon hitched on, and Mort in the back, Hart drove the truck to the barn, stopping only to take down the flag at the main cemetery gate.

That was real strange, the sun coming out like that on George's face. It was a strange burial. First that pipe getting in the way, then the rain today, and then finally that cave-in. It was a hard one, and hard on me. He was a good boy, that George, and probably would have been a fine man when he grew up. Hart, he said to me once, they ought to get rid of cars altogether. I wonder if he knew he was going to die in a damn fool one-car accident. It's a waste of everything, just like it would have been a waste to try to do anything about the tear in the coffin besides what we did--just going ahead and burying it. Because that's all it was, then, an it. A dead body is no longer a person, it has nothing except what it holds in the memories of others. But maybe that's not right, because that bulgy eye and torn head was something. It was something more than an "it." It was George, but it wasn't. It was like a spirit or something. I don't really know if that's what I mean. But it was like the water pipe that no water has run out of for years. It was like the rain messing up the digging, and like the cave-in, too. That was all so that that coffin would rip and show that glassy, shiny-grey eye. That eye telling me that a dead body's more than an "it." A dead body is like a spider web with no spider. It shows how complicated things are, but it no longer is necessary or vital to anything at all. It is dead, but it still means something. And the vaultcarrier falling and ripping into George's face is like someone taking their hand and destroying a spider web. It makes you feel funny to think about it, because everybody is like that. When we bury somebody like we do every day of the year, we're like people who poke through spider webs. Not that it's wrong, now, because there isn't a spider there anyway, so there's no real harm done. But that's what it's like. Nothing wrong with it, but each day buryin what's left

of somebody who was alive and complicated; and, like George would say, even precious in his own way. And us doing it with no more feeling than a child destroying a spider web. Until a burial like this. That's why I had to give him the stake, just so that something, even if it was just the weight and balance of the earth, would know that there was something extra, something special on that spot. Not something dead, but something frozen forever, like a picture of a poked-through spider web; only his picture's in my brain. And everybody who knows him has got a different picture to haunt them. It's like that with everyone we bury.

Hart drove into the barn, where Randy and Chester had already parked their machines. Together with Mort, they unloaded the plywood planks, the Whacker, and unhitched the tent wagon.

"Well," said Hart, "I think I'll go up and see if the eagle's shit any green yet."

"Bring me something nice for working so hard today," said Randy.

"Fuck," said Chester, "you didn't do nothin' hard. There ain't nothin' hard about a funeral. They're the easiest thing we do."

"Not today," said Hart, "not today."

He got into the truck, lit a cigar butt, and drove up to the main office to see if Mr. Rankin had made out the paychecks. When he got them, he would go back up to Lincoln to pick up Tom.

▼▼▼ TOM

When Tom got his old, black-rubber boots on, he took a hose and a broom from the back of the truck.

"I'll pick you up after I've got the checks," Hart told him as he left for the barn to unload.

Tom went to the nearest spigot, attached the hose, and turned on the water. He went back to the grave and held the hose so that the flowing end was just above the ground. He began to trod up and down on the sod, working it level and bringing it flush with the other zoysia grass which surrounded the grave.

There's a boy was going to be a doctor that needs one himself to stitch up that head and put that eye back in place, or bring him back to life like they say can happen, though that was a long time ago when the Bible was taking place, and Jesus was calling Lazarus from the dead, and there aren't very many that believe it any more, not even George, who might be wishing he believed it right now, him saying that your life after death was the total of everybody you'd touched while you were here on earth, and that if you touch them with love, that's your heaven, but if you touch them with bad, then you're in hell,

cause nobody remembers you with a smile; except I don't know what'd happen if you were sometimes good and sometimes bad, I never asked him, or if you didn't touch hardly anybody at all, like if you died young like George did, and that doesn't mean you shouldn't have as long a life after death as some fella who was crummy but lived forever, or somebody who was evil like Hitler, that we fought, and died fighting, and everybody remembers him, but who remembers all the soldiers? No, sir, I told him, You aren't right, because God isn't going to forget. You're wanting to put heaven and hell in people, and believe me, that isn't going to work out, because people don't know enough about other people to figure them right. For example, take Mort. Now he's about as dumb and all as anybody could figure, and most folks'd put him in hell quicker'n lightning. But you and me know different, that he's not so bad, the way he supports that wife of his who's dying, and how simple he is and all. He's not smart enough to be bad, I mean. No, sir, you can't put all your trust in people. It's like trying to trust the weather. Both of them are unpredictable and liable to let you down, you see, just ask that fella who gives the forecast on T. V. Well, I told him all of that, which was a mouthful for me, and all he said back was Tom, you've got to believe that people can someday be trusted in. That you can have faith in them. Otherwise, why go on living? Why do people have kids before they die if they don't believe the world can get better, cause a human being's a human being just like a dog's a dog, and they've been that way for a long long time and will stay that way for a long long time. George was getting the world and people mixed up anyhow, but then he was a young fella, and young fellas are supposed to believe like he did, like my five boys did, and like their boys probably will, and if I had one wish to make right now, it'd be that George had a boy somewhere of his own, maybe some girl he knocked up or something, but that he had a boy who'd grow up and be like George couldn't be, because he's dead, and meeting his judgement, whether it's from me and the other guys and his ma and pa and brother and and sister, or from God Himself; (course I didn't have the heart to tell him what I know from years of burying folks, that what judges you in the end is the ground, and no matter how hard you try stopping it, the ground will take you, and eat you, and you'll fertilize it, and keep things growing and it will bury you so deep that you get to be part of it forever, lasting as long as the earth itself: it's no heaven or hell, it's decay and other things being born from you, so that my wish'll come true,

cause maybe being food for the ground is like feeding the world, so that when you die, your offspring, even if they're only worm larvae, grow and grow and nourish and nourish and things just go on and on forever and forever). And Amen's the way to end, cause I'm preaching to myself again.

Tom was grinning slightly to himself. He finished kneading the grass, and, picking up the broom, he swept the mud from the nearby markers. When everything was cleaned up, he turned off the water, carefully wound up the hose, and began to place the flowers over the grave. There were a lot, and they covered the grave easily. In two days they would be wilted, and Tom would drive by and load them into the old, green pickup truck and take them to the dump. Tom was taking off his boots when Hart drove up.

"Well, the eagle shit his green regular again," Hart said.

"That's good," answered Tom, "that's good. I'm sure my wife can use the money."

"Yea, mine always does. I can't hardly keep up with her anymore."

"That's for sure. Did you get the flag?"

"Yea, we got it on the way in with the wagon. Everything's done except turning off that cremation."

"Oh, boy. I almost forgot."

They rode to the crematorium where Tom got out and went inside to turn off the gas jets. He peeked through the eye-latch on the furnace door. The woman was thoroughly burned. Her black and grey ashes lay formless around the still-glowing spinal chain leading to the half-intact skull which Tom would shatter into myriad fragments when he touched it the next morning recovering the then-cooled ashes. He locked the crematorium door and got back into the truck.

"Cook all right?" asked Hart.

"Yea, they always do."



NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

- JOHN BIRCHARD is a junior in Photojournalism from Emporia. John enjoys exploring and photographing the country surrounding Lawrence.
- JOHN BLASDEL, "Flatland Photographer," attended the University of Kansas and San Francisco Art Institute and now works as a professional photographer in New York City and lives in Hoboken. His photos often suggest the influence of the Swiss photographer Robert Frank.
- STEVE CROMWELL was born in Little Rock, Arkansas in '43 and was reared in Rockford, Illinois. He is working toward an M. S. in Journalism while teaching Western Civ. and a photography course at the Lawrence Art Center. His photographs will be co-shown with paintings by Michael Walling in the Jewish Community Center in Kansas City February 13 thru March 12.
- WILLIE CROMWELL was born in Lawrence in 1948. She is working toward degrees in English and Philosophy and intends to focus her studies on Medieval Literature.
- RANDY LEFFINGWELL studied architecture at the University of Kansas but took a B. S. in Photojournalism in '71. He worked for the Chicago Daily News and now is a staff photographer for the Kansas City Times. His work appeared in a group show at the Nelson Art Gallery. The work of Henri Cartier-Bresson has strongly influenced him.
- LARRY SCHWARM was reared near Greensburg, Kansas and attended the University of Kansas. Some of his photos appeared in a previous issue of Cottonwood Review and he has had a one-man show in the Kansas Union. His Lawrence frame shop, The Frame Up, and an old, stone schoolhouse receive much of his attention.
- JOHN ARNOLDY attended the University of Missouri at Kansas City and the Kansas City Art Institute. He is currently co-editor of the Harrison Street Review.
- TOM AVERILL is from Topeka and is working toward an M. A. in English. He lives on a farm somewhere in the hills surrounding Lawrence.
- RICHARD CUNNINGHAM, a graduate in English, served in Vietnam during 1963, the Buddhist "Year of the Tiger." He hopes to study in Chile next year.
- JAMES GRAUERHOLZ was born in 1953 in Coffeyville, Kansas. A Junior in Philosophy, he attended the Free University "Reading and Writing" course taught by David Ohle and Wayne Propst. He is a student of the "Beats" and his poetry reflects the influence of William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg.

DAVE SOLBACH is a native of Kansas. He attended Emerson College (Pacific Grove, California) and took a B. A. in Comparative Literature from Occidental College. He now lives in San Francisco.

WENDELL B. ANDERSON was born in Idaho in 1920 and lived in Oregon where he attended the University of Oregon and Reed College. He graduated from Franklin Pierce University in New Hampshire and now is a social worker in Alamogordo, New Mexico.

KEVIN ARNOLD was born in 1949 in Des Moines, Iowa and is a senior in English. He is influenced by the "Beats" Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassidy. He likes blues, folk and jazz and taps paper cups. Daily he drives a red, '49 Chevy bus full of kindergartners.

W. CONGER BEASLEY was born in 1940 in St. Joseph, Missouri. He attended Columbia University and received an M. A. in Literature from New York University. He traveled extensively in Europe and the South Pacific and now is a writer and part-time editor in Kansas City.

AL DEWEY is a native of Garden City. In 1971 he received an M. A. in English from the University of Kansas. Previously he focused his attention on poetry but is now writing short stories which capture the desolation of the area where he was reared.

DAVE ETTER is a well-known Midwestern poet. He now makes his home in Geneva, Illinois. His most recent book is Prophetstown.

WALTER GRIFFIN has traveled widely in the United States and France where he attended the Sorbonne. He is 32 and lives in College Park, Georgia and reads and lectures in the Georgia secondary schools.

DAVID JAFFIN writes from Mössingen-Belsen, Germany. Emptied Spaces, his second collection of poems, was released in January. Some of his poems will appear in a 1973 anthology from Elizabeth Press which will include work by Robert Creeley, George Oppen and others.

LANCE LEE is 29 and was reared in the New York area. He is a graduate of Brandeis and Yale's School of Drama and now teaches at U. C. L. A. He also writes children's stories.

CHUCK ORTLEB, a native of Clay Center, is a Senior in English and teaches Western Civ. He considers Gary Snyder to be his strongest poetry influence.

JANICE PALMER is a graduate in English at the University of Kansas. She is from the Seattle area but now lives in Oregon. She devotes much of her time to her daughter and occasionally sketches.

WAYNE S. PROPST, JR. was born 1946 in Jacksonville, Florida and reared in Kansas City. He is student # 72743. His newest book, Kansas Multi-Disciplinary Endocrine Systems, Inc., will be released next month in Lawrence.

SUSAN FROMBERG SCHAEFFER was born in 1941 and lives in Brooklyn, New York where she is an assistant professor at Brooklyn College. She has books by Seven Woods Press and Byron Press (England) scheduled for publication.

MIKE THARP is a graduate in English from Topeka. He served in Vietnam and now is focusing his attention on his writing.

MARK THIESSEN, a sophomore, was born in Georgetown, Maryland in 1942. He has lived in Hutchinson and Salina but calls Wichita his home town. For seven years he has played as a percussionist in rock, folk and blues bands.

MARK VINZ is a graduate of the University of Kansas and New Mexico University. He now lives in Moorhead, Minnesota where he edits Dacotah Territory and teaches at Moorhead State College.

HARRY WELDON was born in Westerly, Rhode Island in 1942.

A chapbook of his poems, Abel's Grin, was published last year by Cottonwood Review. Harry and his woman Sara live on Taylors Head, Nova Scotia where they pick strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, raspberries and cranberries, all growing wild in the area.

EDGAR WOLFE has taught writers at the University of Kansas for a few years. His writing has appeared in previous issues of this and other magazines. He lives in Lawrence.

LEE CHAPMAN, an Air Force brat, was born in Tampa, Florida. She attended the University of Kansas and San Francisco Art Institute. She lives in Lawrence.

