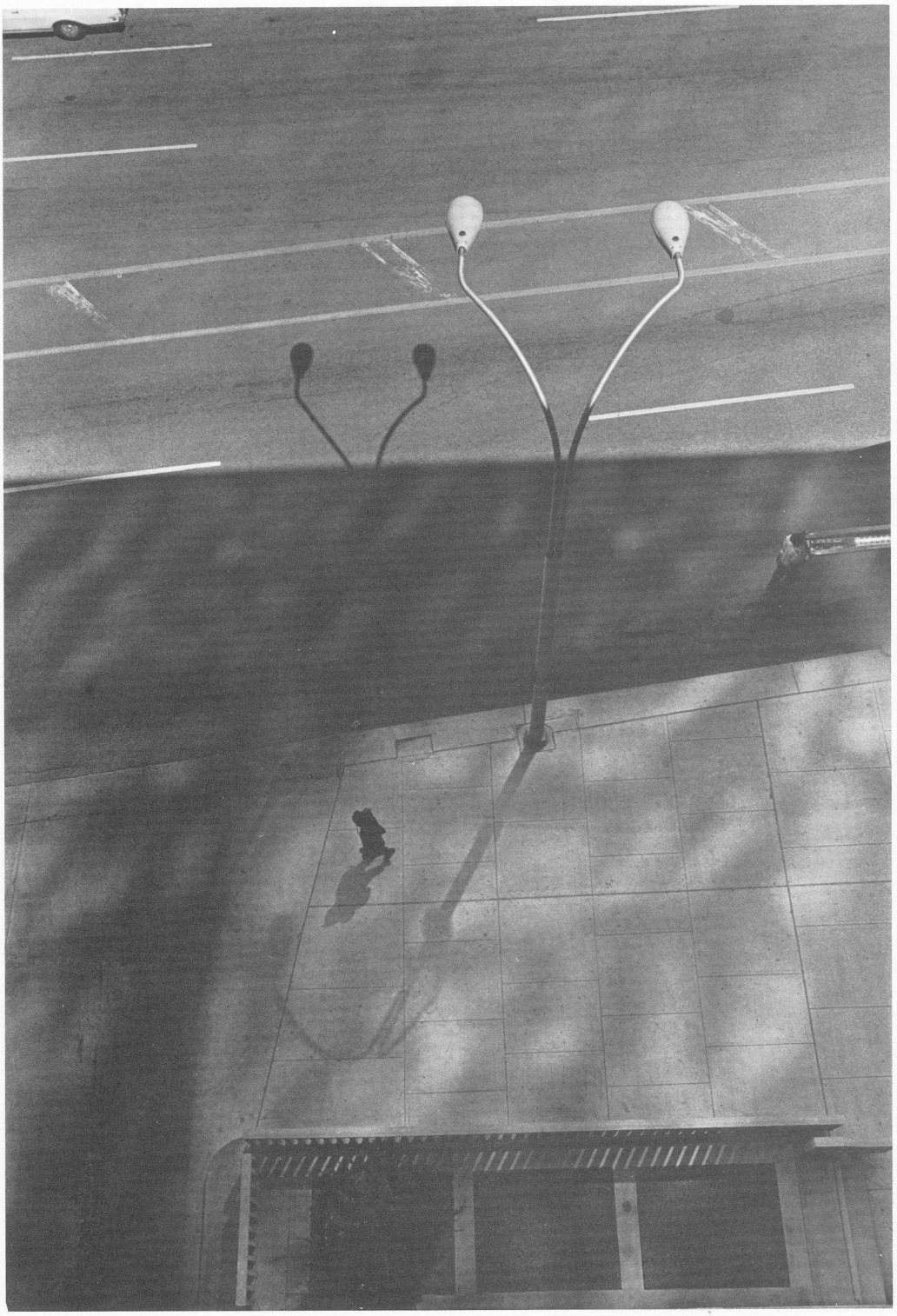
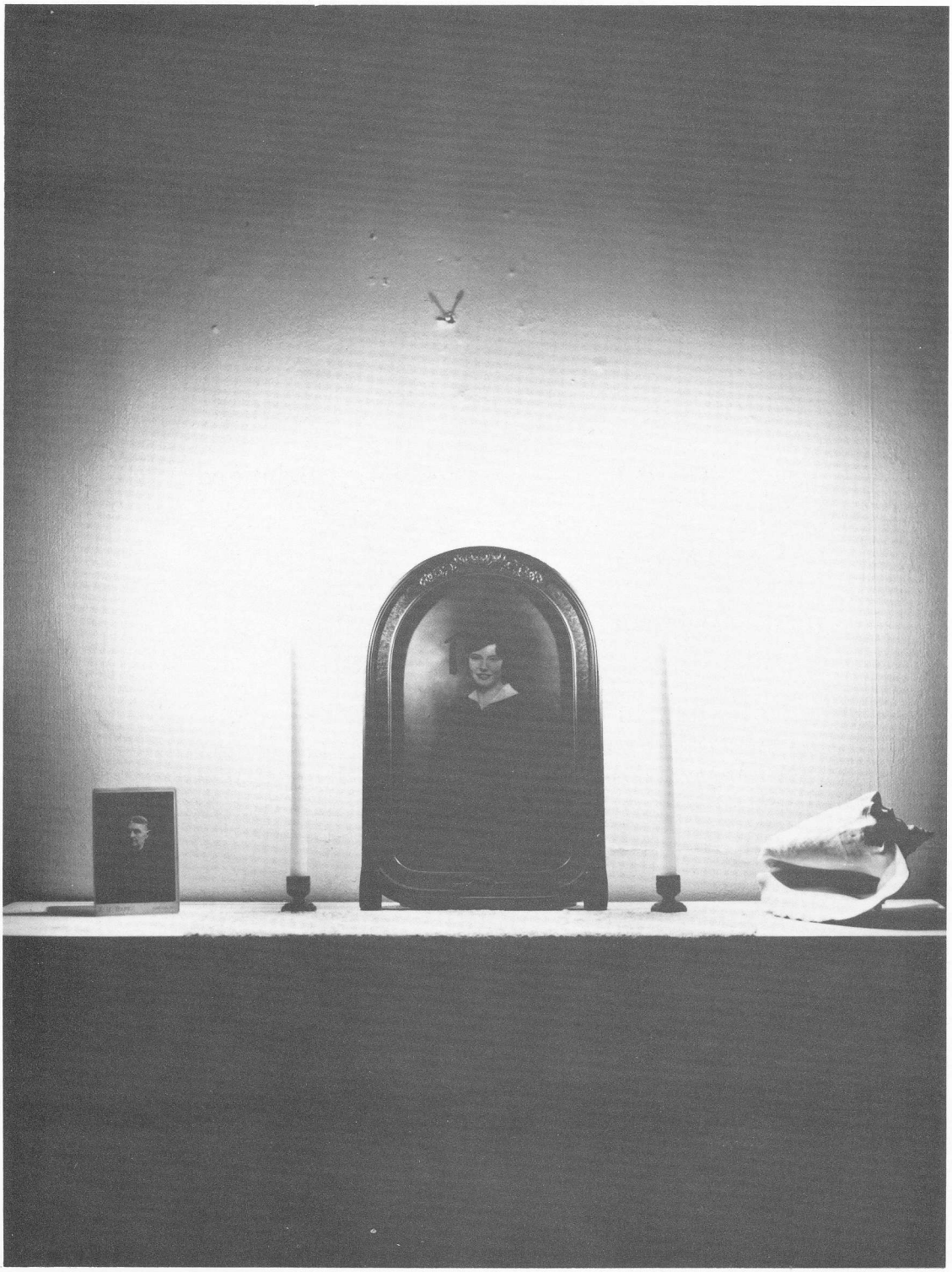
COTTONWOOD REVIEW



Lawrence McFarland



Hollywood

Jon Williams

COTTONWOOD REVIEW

SPRING 1973

COVER "And I Remember the Cry of the Peacocks"
--Steven J. Cromwell

Cottonwood Review is published twice yearly at the University of Kansas. Subscriptions are three dollars for two issues plus the chapbooks and broadsides published by Cottonwood during any one year. Standing orders are accepted from libraries and bookstores.

Manuscripts from anyone will be considered. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with unsolicited submissions.

Address all correspondence to:

Cottonwood Review
Box J. Kansas Union
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

CONTENTS

William Fisher

A WAY TO DIE

The day that Monroe went looking for death was the same day that Justin Floyd's boy shot a gray squirrel, eleven tin cans, three fruit jars, a green glass insulator on a telephone pole, a white cat, and thought seriously enough about taking a whack at a Holstein to draw a bead on her black and white udder with his new Winchester. This was the same day that Marge Johnson did her weekly shopping at Wiemer's Grocery and at the last minute chose the frying chicken that lay on its back in a plastic sack with its knees drawn sharply up beside its breast; this in place of the round steak that was turning slightly brown and had a little too much fat ringing it.

While Eddy Floyd was busily skulking and sniping on the outskirts of town, and Marge Johnson was complimenting herself on the quality of her home grown tomatoes, as compared to the scrawny green things in a cellophane package, Monroe was shuffling his eighty-year-old body over to Charlie Morton's Feed and Grain; stopping now and then to tug at the right leg of his faded overalls and pull its cuff from beneath his shoe heel. When he reached the store he trudged up the steps and halted at the door, peering into the gloom: the upper half of his body tilted forward several degrees, knees slightly bent, hands clasped behind his back. He resembled a pitcher looking in for his sign. "Get out of the way, Monroe. Can't you see this weighs a ton?" Monroe moved aside as Charlie Morton staggered out into the sunlight, clutching a keg of staples at knee level. The old man watched Charlie pass by and noted his clinched teeth, bowed back, and upturned face as red as any drunk Irishman's. He continued to watch as Charlie Morton wavered to the end of the dock, where his red truck was backed up, and walked off the end. It was a dead heat: the keg and Charlie landed simultaneously. For a moment there was silence, interrupted only by the low croon of a Rhode Island Red, being held captive somewhere inside the store. Monroe stood with his thumbs hooked inside the straps of his bibs, still bent forward, and blinked rapidly at the empty dock. Between the truck and the dock a little puff of dust was fighting its way up against the beams of sunlight. Then a couple of hands reached up and grabbed the edge of the concrete and Charlie's head surfaced between them, wobbling loosely on his thin neck. His stunned face turned and stared blankly at the red tailgate that was supposed to be bridging the

gap where he now stood, as if the word FORD was puzzling him; then he swiveled around, saw Monroe, and erupted. "Blast it! Blast it! Can't you keep out of a man's way? Why don't you keep your pelt home where it belongs? Blast it!"

Several years ago Charlie's verbal blast would have been a little less diluted and not quite so delicate, but his wife had made him break his vile language habits soon after their marriage. Up to that time women had always crossed the street when they came to his store. And if their children came home asking the meaning of a particularly juicy new word, it was immediately assumed they had been playing down by the Feed and Grain. The exact method that Charlie's wife had used was still a secret. The women of the town said, "Oh, there are ways to get men to do what you want," with a knowing smile. And the men said, "There sure as hell are; 'specially when you're big as Lucy Morton. She could strangle the little bastard if she was of a mind to. He ain't stupid, you know." But preacher talk or sailor talk, Monroe was not going to become miffed today. He was there for a reason. It was the first stop on his search for death.

Monroe had been thinking about a way to die for the past two months. Ever since that Monday his wife had come in from picking and burning potato bugs. She had ambled up to the porch where Monroe was sitting and stopped at the edge. Placing her left hand at the small of her back and spreading her feet, she bent over to pluck three marigolds. Then she sat down in the porch swing with her legs stuck out in front of her; the flowers rested in her lap. She had commented on the amount of red in the marigolds this year; Monroe agreed without thinking about it: he was watching a silvery speck in the sky as it spewed out a long, vapory trail that slowly dissolved. He figured it must be headed for Denver. And then she said, "It sure feels good to set a spell. I could just stay here forever." And she could have--that is, if they had not come an hour later to get her body in a red and white ambulance and buried it the Thursday following.

So Monroe soon decided he was not going to hang around this world any longer. He knew he was sunk the evening after Cora's funeral. As the house grew dark and he pulled the string on the kitchen light and took a pint jar from under the sink, and as he pried the Kerr lid off the top and spooned out a red, peeled tomato into a white cup, and as he sprinkled it with salt and sat there looking at it, he knew they had been too long in the harness to be parted now. Fifty-seven years in March coming. It was just too long. Twenty or thirty years maybe, but not fifty-seven. Monroe vowed to catch up to Cora as soon as it could be arranged. As soon as the problem was worked out.

The problem was just how to die. Monroe had never thought much about death. Once in a while, usually after a funeral, he would jokingly tell Cora to forget about burying him and just throw his body to the hogs. But one thing he was sure of: he was not going to kick off naturally for some time yet: the men in his family always reached their middle or late nineties. And he was in perfect health, worn slick by time and work, but in perfect health. This meant that some other way to die had to be found. The most obvious way was to do himself in; but this presented still another complication: Cora had been a churchgoer, and when her brother-in-law the machine operator had carbon monoxided himself in his garage, she mourned more for his not having the skinniest chance of going to heaven than for the actual loss of one of her kin by marriage. Monroe had tried to assure her that everything would work out and that the man was probably setting up his lathe in heaven right then, but she informed him that there was not a grain of truth to what he said. Jabbing him in the chest with a finger, she went on to say that it was there in the Book, plain and simple: that Maurice's body had been a temple and that God's spirit had been in him. And that the poor soul had defiled God's spirit by killing himself and, since turnabout is fair play, God was going to destroy him. Well, Monroe had never for a moment suspected that God's spirit lurked in Maurice, though he knew for a fact that another kind entered his carcass pretty regularly; but when forced to decide or believe, he was always on Cora's side of the fence, so he listened and nodded. She had been right about too many things for too many years for him to doubt her now. So he accepted what she said and put aside the thought of suicide on the railroad trestle as soon as it entered his mind. Not that he was afraid of going to the bad place, not one iota, but he was concerned about somehow missing connections with Cora. At this point he was left with but one alternative: somehow he must bring on death by natural means; maybe not totally natural, but he was not a man to worry over fine print. A leaner was as good as a ringer in his book; sometimes he thought maybe it was a little better. Anyway, it certainly would not be suicide, you could bet on that. He would not be guilty of defiling his own temple.

After puzzling over this problem for the better part of two months, Monroe arrived at the perfect way to die. Actually there were two better than average ways to go, but he favored this one because it did not demand quite as much of him. This best way was to quit eating. Simple. It was so simple, in fact, that he was amazed that it took so long to dream it up. If he quit eating,

he would die; if he died, he would run into Cora because he had not defiled his own temple. Lack of food would kill him--he himself would not. Now all he had to do was to throw people off his trail for a while so he could starve. Monroe considered just staying at home and wasting away in bed, but people always came poking around and he did not want to be carted off to the hospital and have tubes run into his arms and nose like his sister Sarah. Besides, there was food in the house and he did not trust himself that completely. In the end, he decided to throw them off by telling someone he was going on a trip; then if he was missed, it would leak out that he was just out of town for a little bit. And this was why he went to Charlie Morton's.

So Monroe stood and blinked down at Charlie until the scolding stopped; then he said, "Charlie, I'm going on a little trip."

And Charlie said, "Where you going? You don't have no kin."

Monroe told him, "There's somebody I got to visit that I know real good. She's a waiting on me."

"She! Why you old tomcat. You're too old for that prowling around. Why don't you get on home?"

And Monroe had just said, "See you later, Charlie. I got to go now," and walked off, leaving Charlie to shake his head and begin scooping handfuls of staples and dirt back into the broken keg.

After this move, Monroe sneaked out of town by way of the railroad tracks and slowly trudged to the river. He and Cora had fished it, off and on, for most of their lives and he knew an ideal spot: it was a little brushy stretch that was posted KEEP OUT, where people should not be pestering him in his last moments by tramping through with rods and bait buckets. And in a short time he was there, having paused long enough to pull a half eaten Hershey and three linty Lifesavers from his pocket and cast them into the river. He found a den of sorts where two elms had fallen across one another. Wedging himself between these trees, he tried to fall asleep. The whole caper was not going to be easy but he was determined. His chin jutted forward. Darkness covered the old man who finally did fall asleep with intermingled thoughts of hope and dread: that he would awake with Cora before him, holding out her wrinkled old hands; and that crawly things would come under the tree trunks and get on him.

He awoke early the next morning, as usual, and continued to lie there. No Cora. Nothing to get up for. He was a little hungry but it was a small price to pay. Once before noon he caught

himself thinking of those Lifesavers and the Hershey, but he forced himself to think of other things. He dozed soon after that and did not awake again till dusk. This time it was his nose that pulled him to a sitting position. For a moment he was puzzled as to where he was, and then as to why his stomach was paining him so; almost immediately he knew the reason: it was the smell of fried chicken. Now if there was anything the old man had had a weakness for all his life, it was fried chicken. Cora had always told her friends that she had no trouble rounding up Monroe any time she wanted him: she just had to think about killing a chicken. He could smell it frying before she got it scalded and picked. And now, here on the river bank, was that heavenly smell. Monroe sniffed and sniffed, nostrils flaring, forehead wrinkling deeper, head turning almost a full circle; then he understood: the Johnsons' house was across the river and up behind the trees. This, coupled with a wisp of errant breeze, had brought him awake and hurting. The hurting was not all physical, for instantly he sensed that his willpower was not sufficiently strong to make a useful ally of hunger. He was too old, too weak, and too used to eating. Slowly and dejectedly he placed his hands on the front of his knees and pulled himself erect. As he started to climb the wooded slope, he knew it would be a long walk home in the dark.

Two days later, most of it spent in bed with a sheet pulled nose high, Monroe recovered; determined now to use his alternate plan, the one he had shied away from earlier. This was what he should have done all along. It was simple and a lot faster, not to mention being less painful than starvation, or so he hoped. All he had to do this time around was bump into a cooperating moccasin or rattler. Even a copperhead would do.

He had always feared snakes, more than anything else in the world. Monroe used to see every Jungle Jim picture and the vicious animals in these pictures did not faze him. He would sit there gumming his popcorn and project himself into the character of Jim, having no fear of an encounter with a clawing panther, crunching crocodile, stomping rogue elephant, or a ramming rhino; but let a surly python show up and drop onto the hero and the old man's liver turned to jelly. He would sit and stare down at his feet until the music told him the wrestling was over and Jim's knife had triumphed again. He would stare at the screen and shiver as he watched the slimy crawly casting its coils around even in death. But today he had to traffic with them. He was in a hurry. Anyway, God had it in for those serpents, Cora used to tell him. And it would be that snake defiling his temple.

No doubt about it. So he knew he was on much safer grounds doing it this way.

Early the morning of the third day he arose and again took to the river. Always before he had cut a snake stick and thoroughly trounced the grass and bushes ahead of himself and Cora; he had done this before when he went out to starve, imagining snakes to be streaming away through the grass and ivy in droves. But this time he was inviting them: he rolled his cuffs up above his knees, exposing the stick-like legs spotted with tufts of white hair; deliberately walked through all the places he would have avoided previously. "Come on, little snakes. Just one little nip's all I need. Here, snaky, snaky, snaky. Come on, nice snaky," he would call softly as he intentionally walked next to large rocks, sidled up to rotting logs, stepped into bent-over patches of grass, and kicked at clumps of buck brush. It was just a matter of time.

By four that afternoon the impossible had happened: Monroe had scoured the whole river bank from the bridge to the whirlpool without seeing one snake. Previously, he had been certain that there was a direct ratio of snakes to snaky places: twenty to one; or at least ten to one. When he and Cora had gone fishing, he never failed to instruct her in the proper way to slash an X over the wound and suck out the blood and venom if it was in a place where he could not get to it (he was always fearful of one getting him when he was sitting down). And every time she had said, "Oh, don't be silly." He figured they should have nailed him years ago, as many of them as there were. This was why he was so astonished to come off scot-free. To walk up and down the bank all day, stepping right in their nests, was too much. Some things on earth are just not meant for man to understand. At this point he sat down with elbows on knees, head on hands, and knew he would have to rest up a good long while before he could even attempt the trek home. Maybe he was not supposed to meet Cora again. It certainly seemed that fifteen years or so was the soonest he would run into her, at this rate, standing there with those old hands held out to him. His mind was beginning to play with the chances of Cora looking like she did that first time, when he had taken her out to their farm in the wagon after they were married, when he was roused out of dreaming by the crashing of brush behind him. He turned and saw Eddy Floyd's face looking at him, all scratched and grimy. In his right hand was the muzzle of his rifle, the stock dragging behind. When he saw Monroe, his face took on the expression of a boy who has just cursed for the first time in the presence of his mother, and realizes it. He swallowed hard.

"What you up to, Eddy?"

"Nothing."

"What you going out here?"

"I ain't doing nothing."

Monroe let the conversation dangle for a minute while he sat eyeing Eddy.

"I saw a boy with a face like that once. He'd just busted ever watermelon in my patch."

"Well, I ain't been bustin' no melons, you can bet your hide on that," the boy said with a trace of a sneer.

"Oh, what you been doing then?"

"I been killing," said Eddy, as he lifted the rifle to a more respectable position.

"What you killed?"

"About fifty squirrels and two dozen rabbits, I guess." The boy puffed up a little.

"But what'd you pot 'fore you come traipsing down here?"

For a moment the boy's face again flashed the guilty look; then brazened. "I just bushwhacked a cow. Shot her right in the old bag."

Monroe sat and looked at the boy, watching him become more nervous as the seconds of silence dragged along. Then he turned around on the log and glanced at the muddy water sweeping by and centered his attention on a soaked log that was being sluggishly carried downstream.

"Who's cow was it, Eddy?"

"What's it to you?"

"'Cause I reckon I'll have to tell the people you done it."

"What!"

"I said I reckon I'll have to tell you done it," Monroe repeated.

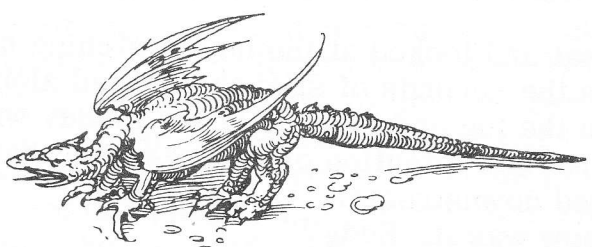
"Why you got to tell 'em anything? It ain't none of your business."

"Sure it is, Eddy. They's neighbors. They got to know, just like your pa's got to know. And it looks like I got to be the one to tell 'em."

Monroe sat there and looked at the log as it hit a small whirlpool and was tugged down out of sight. It soon bobbed up again and slipped underneath overhanging willow branches. Then he lifted his gaze up the opposite river bank and on into the orangish evening sky. Fall was coming on. The colors of sunset did not look as warm as usual. Yes, Cora would be just like that first day at the farm; he saw her this time: in a blue and white gingham dress with puffy sleeves, looking as if she was even

younger than her fifteen years; light as a child to pick up. And she came running to him, down from the porch and past the hollyhocks, and out into the grassy front yard. And then Monroe saw himself moving toward her. There he was, young and strong and tall again, running with big, long strides; arms held out wide. And he met his Corie and picked her up and looked at her face that was wet with happiness and he was swinging her around as she held onto his neck and he was seeing her eyes again and feeling her little body and smelling her hair--

When the sound of the shot faded away, the boy stood and looked down at Monroe's body. It looked terribly frail and weak where it lay slumped forward, face down. No feeling had come yet, no real thought. "You didn't have to tell nobody, old man," Eddy finally said. "Why didn't you just keep your mouth shut." Then the boy began to giggle foolishly.



John M. Bennett

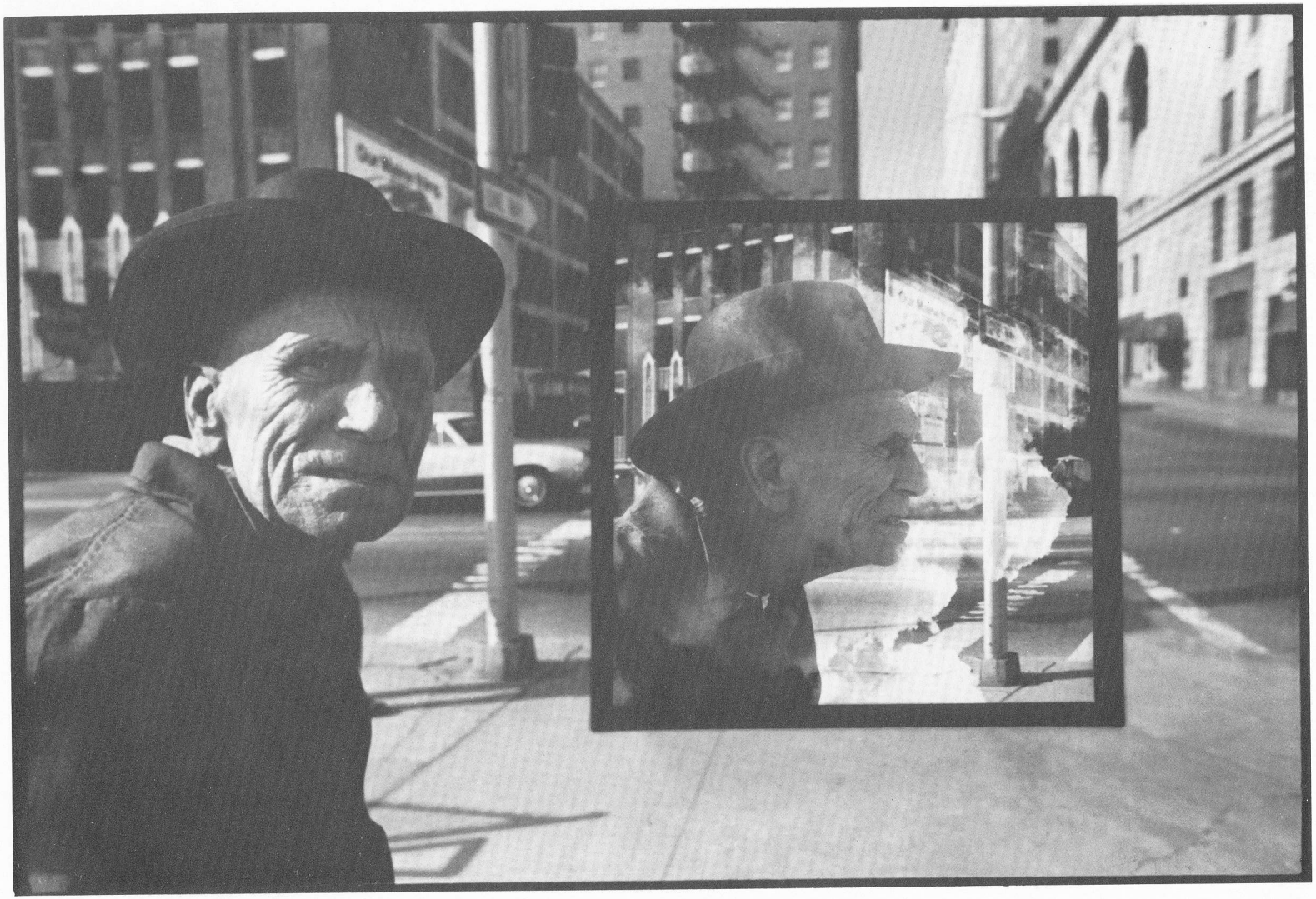
EXPLODE IT

Explode it the house blows up
fragments clitter down round my face my
hair floats in the air
screwdrivers
lightposts
Making Love in the Moonlight, he calls it
Oo the good old moon, rockets
buzzing all over it, little teeny

Round round stones stones resting on the window sill

From Falling Figure Set Three

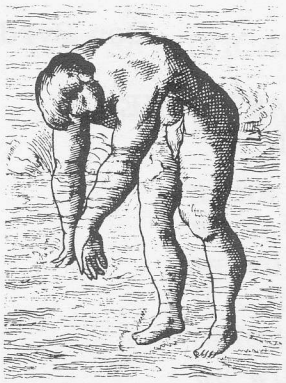
Jack Perno



Jack Perno

From Falling Figure Set Three

Jack Perno



Peter Breit

*

new years america.
trying to stay on top of this countrys economic
jolts and flounderings
is like riding some fool
headed yearling colt.
too much undisciplined
stamina, too little
restraint, direction unknown.

citys might become a season
experience necessity
something like migration
draining back down spent roads
dead heat
for us, its survival blood.

and money is the steady pulse stretching time
a form of payment since money makes home
a kind of life
within reason if not grasp.

heartstrings
here housed abruptly under a casual pollution
our being helped by any service
established only to help ourselves possibly
coinciding with paved streets
banks
places to launder shirts.

NOW IS IT ALL MEANT TO MAKE THINGS EASIER?

the answer is yes, but misguided
virtue might be worse than none at all.
and nothing has been said yet about reparations.

Don Byrd

DISCOUNTING THE YELLOW OR GREEN CAST, THE GROOMING, THE MISPROPORTION

the clouds
south
toward the Kaatskills

would have hung in March sky
in Kansas
lethargic, heavy
waiting to break spring

the sky was hairy
groomed, roughly grey
and of a size I will not try to describe
only to say it would not cover wheat fields

it needed nothing
it had no weather
even at its worst
the climate is no insult
completed, a masterpiece
who dares even walk on this ground?

America is a bowl
and this is the sky outside it
half sea, half history
I am unable to forget

never certain when to expect snow

--Albany, November, 1972

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FRONTIER IN AMERICAN HISTORY

the awkwardness is love

arms and legs
when they come untuned
we go among folk to find lost melodies
it's america's only ruse
is folklore
we will collect america

it speaks
it does not speak

pink tongues in white mouths
speaking red and black, even white trash
as they are dirtied to be honored as color

Appalachian salvation blue
grass coyote holy
peyote a ticket
round trip spin
the bottle square
dance last surviving wild
indian--from the beginning
not knowing where we were
in america--Ishi
saved
making authentic dulcimers
in Tennessee

Mississippi John Hurt
lost and found twice in his seventy-five years
sharecropper's shack Avon Mississippi

Avon! woodnotes wild collect america
and Billie Holiday, Bird Parker died of cold
the heat of their songs could not save them
collect america
you can say it is music
the way already rutted
indian trails explorers took into the bush
until it became a habit
passage was a certainty
darkening in their veins

the wait is over
I've ridden out my impatience

the addiction creeping into the loft of my need
is a chorus of nouns

each naming itself hawks a unique pleasure
all join--these moneylenders--in harmony

it is the cathedral of our history
a folk mass in progress, a requiem

Mao speaks
of art in its natural
and its conceptual forms meaning
love reaches into the plains

showers
do not come from the east
in Kansas
morning comes
the staunch elevators flat against the sky
you can hear a combine three miles away:
"the first phase
of American history
is ended."

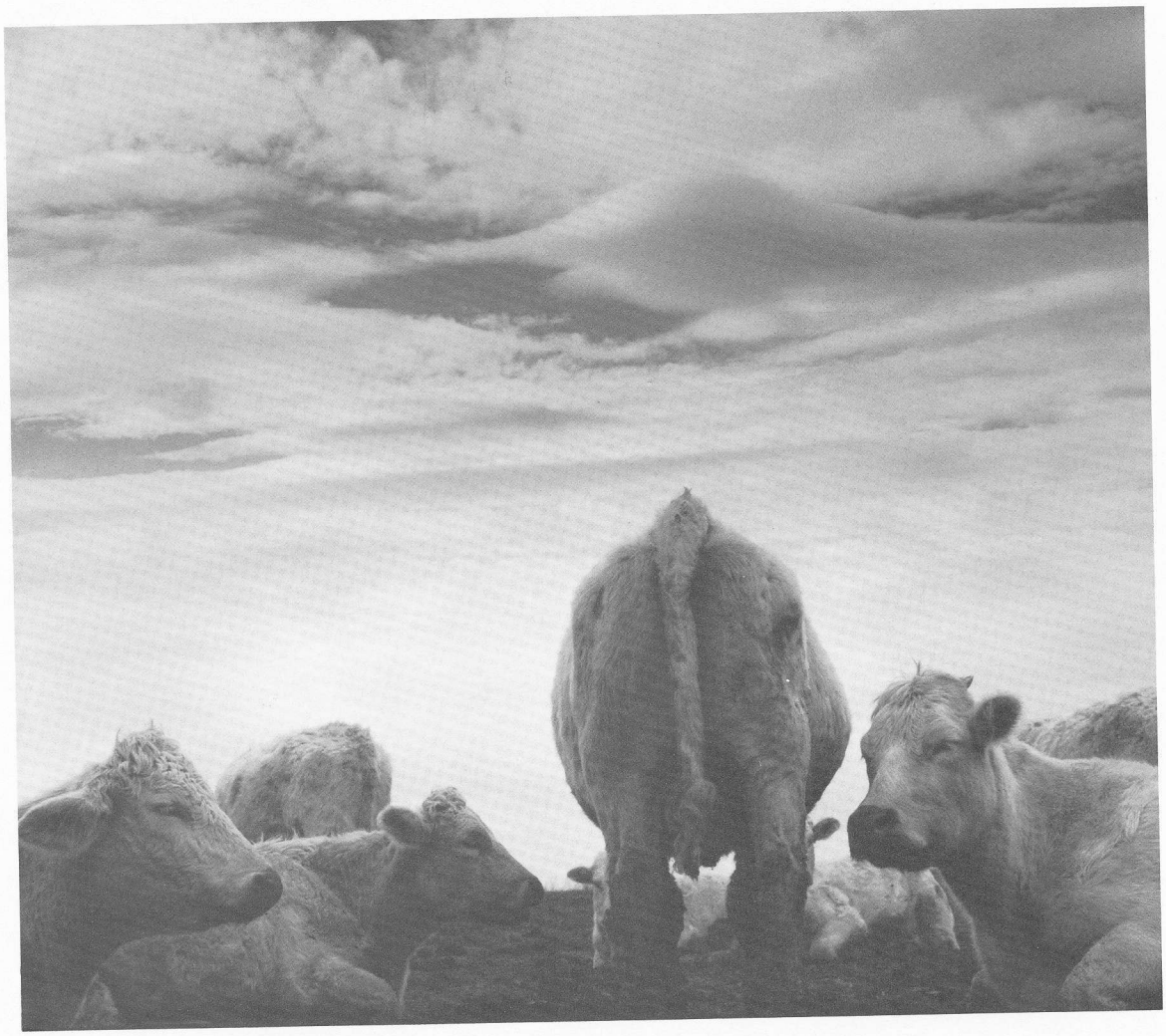
--Albany, December, 1972

Robert Hillebrand

THE POWER OF WORDS

How many years have passed
since the magic days
when wildeyed men, in time
of drought, roared crazy words
at the bright, dry sky
and fully expected to see
water come barreling down?

Not long, not long,
for today I heard
a small, round woman
in a square white room
whispering hoodoo words
to a pile of bones on a high
bed: "Don't be, don't be,
don't be dead!"



Gary Bodenhausen

Pam James

THE LIGHTNING CONVERSION OF EMILY EATON

It was a dull, white day. The sunlight came through the Venetian blinds in sleek violent blades. Knife points across the bed woke her up. She grumbled to the amorphous lump lying in the bed next to hers. It refused to talk. Just like always. The lump moved slightly, then stopped. She could see that his quilt had fallen off his body and posed indecisively half-on, half-off the bed. She looked at the clock. Five minutes and it would announce the beginning of another morning. She thought about turning it off, but decided to let it ring like a sneer. He could turn it off. She got up weighed down. She felt her body like a malicious trap; a bad joke she bore the brunt of. It kept her going--same path every day, like the same day played over and over again. She pulled at the sheet and smoothed it towards the head of the bed. She wondered to herself if there was a beginning, some signpost somewhere that marked the turn-off to a rutted road. If she could have seen it, it would have pierced her like the sunlight. She put her bathrobe on. She felt herself flashing off and on like a neon sign to the beat of her pulse. The set rhythm, she thought to herself without words. 1001, 1002, 1003. She shoved her feet into foam grey slippers. She needed a new pair; but somehow these matched her feet. She stood up and walked past the second bed, incautiously bumping it like a refrigerator door. A growl like a threat followed her out of the room.

Oh, it was morning alright. The toaster haunted her. She thought of it as an eyeless god, two mouth slits delivering manna for breakfast. Yes, they would have toast and eggs. Hardboiled? Poached? and orange juice. The refrigerator hummed. She heard the alarm like a metal shriek, and the creak upstairs of bed springs. Crrkk Crka like obscenities. Everything pained her in the morning; it all came like the sharp stabs in a limb that has fallen asleep and after a shaking receives the blood like a new wound. She could hear him puttering around, pulling open doors, water running in the bathroom. Hardboiled eggs sounded best. She put water on to boil. Today she should scrub the kitchen floor; the dirt was beginning to plague her: Coming and coming, garbage cans full of dirt, whole backyards of dirt, armies of dirt. And she should call Mrs. Walker. Obligations. There was something Mrs. Walker had said, something that followed her around. What, well. She wouldn't go after it. It would come. The water bubbled. Put the eggs in.

Lawrence McFarland

He came in through the kitchen door. The toast popped up. What was it Mrs. Walker said? Jesus, that was it. Jesus would come into your heart, that's what Mrs. Walker said. Just let him in. Just ask him. Jesus was knocking at the door and that sort of thing. Nice if you believed. Emily didn't. But what if it was all true? What if?

"Emily," he said, "where are my socks? I hope there are some clean ones. Just last week, you know, I bought a new pair, and now where are they?"

"They are on the chair," she said, words coming out hard, mock-ominous like big bells without clappers. "Right next to your bed where you put them."

"Okay," he moved away, the wrinkles in his neck asking for sympathy. Emily was unmoved. She thought he was getting too flabby, out of shape. It irritated her. He needed something and it wasn't Jesus, she thought. Then she wondered amazed why she thought it.

"Come down!" she yelled upstairs. The toast is getting cold. The eggs were done, and he was probably still upstairs putting his socks on. He was so slow. His careful steadiness made her ache; that concentrated application to the smallest things, his patience tired her. "Hurry," she yelled. She put the toast and eggs on plates and whipped napkins out from under the sink. Glasses and orange juice. She heard the measured steps on the stairs, patient thuds. She restrained the urge to yell at him. No good to yell, anyhow. She went to get the paper off the front porch. When she came back, he was slowly peeling an egg. She gave him the paper.

"Thank you," he said.

No need for thanks, she thought, if I didn't get it, he would, taking his time, looking at the flower beds, looking at the sky, trying to decipher what the weather would be for the next week. No need for thanks. It wasn't a generous act, she just wanted him to eat and to go to work and to give her time alone to scrub the floor. He sat hidden behind the paper. She could see the headlines and the columns leaning towards her and in the corner of the newspaper a little section titled Morning Prayer. What if, what if? Little possibilities grew out of cracks into certainties. Thousands of people believed. Were they all wrong? She remembered the picture of Jesus that hung in her room when she was small. Halo around his face. That soft profile. She'd felt comfortable with it. Good morning, Jesus. Good morning, Jesus. Good night, Jesus. Say your prayer, Emily. Yes, yes, Mama.

"Emily, look at this," he said, "The American Legion is having a pancake and sausage supper next Wednesday night."

"Pancakes are for breakfast."

"Oh," he said. "If you don't want to."

Pleading, that pleading tone. "We can go, if you'd like."

"No, no. It's alright," he was comforted by her comment. "Not important." He gave himself the soft words. "Not at all," he whispered to the paper. Then he looked over it again. "How about some more orange juice." She poured it into his glass. She looked at the clock.

"It's almost time."

He drank the glass of juice slowly, sipping it. She thought at him, You always get every drop. Right down to the bottom. I wish it came out solid. One gulp worth that melts in your mouth and leaves the glass clean. He wiped his face with a napkin. He smiled at her. Why do you look so useless in the morning?

He got up and walked to the door. She followed him, picking up the paper he'd left. Goodbye, goodbye. Peck, Peck. She closed the door.

She did the dishes and left them stacked in little rows, plates altogether, cups on the side. Silver in little cages and everything in order. Everything ran together, blurred, all the moments following one after the other with no lines in between to show where one began and the other stopped. When was it when they took the picture off of her bedroom wall, she wondered. She couldn't remember. Something had happened to the picture of Jesus. Had it faded into the wall? No, of course not. Disappeared. Unnoticed. No momentous occasion, no gong chimed, the house hadn't fallen down. No one expects that from Jesus.

She looked out the window. The flowerpots attracted her. Nothing was growing yet. All the little seeds she'd planted, waiting there, patiently for the sun and water. It was like having a child without the pain. So little responsibility; just water them, they are so grateful, green leaves unfolding like little gifts. Gifts from God, son of man. Greatest gift, so they say. But not much choice, you have to take it. Impossible to say to God, no thank you. No refusal allowed. What had her uncle said, all who didn't believe in Jesus were damned. It hurt her like an electric shock. Damned. All the horrors of childhood revisited. If she were sent to hell, they'd plague her with snakes. Snakes crawling all over her. The kind she'd always imagined in her little bed with all the lights out. No one saved who didn't believe. Suspended over the boiling vat by the grace of God. Are you ready to die. Voices boomed inside her. Damned, all damned. Are you ready? O God,

save me, she thought, panic descending like a sharp-eyed hawk. It wasn't too late, O Jesus, she thought she could see him, riding a mule and not too far away. She could catch up if she tried. Just to touch him. He would wait for her. She felt she had been so wrong. She reproached herself, Jesus has been waiting in my house, sitting in my furniture, waiting to be recognized. O God, I'm sorry. Wait, Jesus. Was he going to turn around? Wait, wait, Jesus. Jesus! The inward sounds should have broken the windows. Then there was such a silence, Emily closed her eyes. What if? Jesus? she wondered. Nothing. Open one eye, testing. There was nothing.

She couldn't see him any longer. No vision. No salvation. Like a vacuum she sucked in the bitterness. She couldn't, hadn't seen Jesus. Nothing came to her. No gifts, not even a sacrifice. She stamped her foot against the floor. Hard. Harder. After the emptiness, there was rage. She thought herself a fool, a raving idiot, trapped in her own need. She slammed the cabinet doors one by one. Jesus, you deceiver! Stopped. Wait. If there is no Jesus, where is the deception? Where? Emily, you did it. Stupid victim. Trapped again. No one to blame now. The kitchen and its familiar reality calmed her. Soft, soft, calm down, she thought. Settle and decide what to do. Steak for dinner. Steak and green beans. Mashed potatoes. She filled herself up with small consolations. Mashed potatoes, the toaster, the dirt in the kitchen, the refrigerator, white and humming like a friendly polar bear, the note to herself to remember cleanser and toilet paper, that was the beautiful garbage of her life. Rings inside her for all the years, she was comforted. All the small things converged on her, steady hopeful frames that held her up.

So this is it. I wanted omens, a silent scarecrow that danced, a book of magic symbols, an escort of peacocks, virgins in towers, martyrs, blessings, and I got a dirty kitchen and a husband who takes too long to put his socks on. We have such a need to believe. Sunlight, weaponless, softened into shadows. The flowerpots sat still, waiting for imagined flowers. Emily got out a bucket. She poured water in it and ammonia. Get rid of the dirt. We need to be clean. After she finished the floor, she'd fix herself a pot of tea, and then she'd bake a cake, a new kind of cake, one she'd never made before. Get out all the old cookbooks and read them one by one. Then she would go out into the garden and dig up all the dandelions, water the violets. She thought about her flowerpots. If you talk to them, they're supposed to grow faster. Like music piped into dairies. The anticipation of new plans poured into the kitchen like a benediction. Emily opened the windows as if to hear the great greenness coming up. Mute violets

looked wide-eyed in the grass. The lawn yawned sunlight, a secret communion with the silent sky, while Emily guarded it, stern sentinel with her sponge and bucket. Emily moved away from the window. Stupid, you are so stupid, she sang to herself as she began to scrub the floor.

Ted Kooser

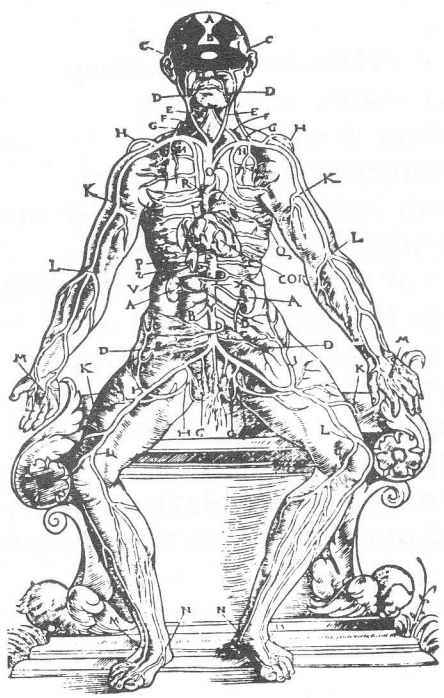
WESTERN

In a drive-in liquor store
in Omaha, a walk-in
Indian in overalls
counts out a pint of wine
from someone's coin collection,
popping buffalo nickels
out of a blue cardboard folder
onto the counter-top.
I can't resist it: " Well, "
I grin to the clerk, " there goes
the last of the buffalo! "
He looks up slowly
like a gambler playing poker,
and guns me down with a stare.

John Blakemore

VARIATIONS ON A GOLDEN-AGE THEME

To love you were I never moved, my God,
By promises of light and life eternal;
Nor serves in me the threat of gloom infernal
As a proof to vice, nor to virtue a prod.
To love you am I moved, my Lord, by seeing
Upon the cross your Self, and by your sore
Is my soul moved to rage when I behold
Your perforated love and lacerated charity.
To love you were I sooner moved, my God,
By you yourself extended on the cross
Than by your promised heaven's threatened loss,
Than by the surly foe's chastising rod.
At thinking on the sacred wounds your hands unfold,
The selfsame hands in judgment raised no terror hold
For me who loves you through the growing cold
Of unremitting death and harsh unbeing.
Your bleeding would prohibit all offense
That promised bliss and threatened hell to stay
Were powerless. Remembered but the way
Of Calvary, the depths were priests' pretense.



John Lowry

Steven J. Cromwell

I'M SORRY, WE DON'T HAVE A LICENSE TO SELL HANDGUNS

By noon the dust is raised and
the stench of desiccation returns,
on clear days the gilt steer head
glints in the sun and cowboys
off the semi-rigs parked outside
spit on the marble floor
as values assigned animals are sent out:
"on the air,"
the stockyards is getting ready
for the day's kill,

An old railroad bum in a wheelchair
threw
himself
in front of a train
at 21st and Broadway
after he spent his money
stomach shot and rooming house
being torn down anyway,
drugstore closed and no bay rum,

Some night loving
in the pens and
in the shacks between
29th and the oil refinery
after the joints close,
spent hungover happiness,
but don't listen to the trains
they run late and slow
through this part of town,

One night we had a political meeting
at 21st and Hillside, NE corner,
talking to the wind and certain
personalities,
while sitting on the headstones,
try it sometime
but be careful not to lose
to the masons there
the price of going home,

Dash up Mosley to the stockyards
from Western Union with bills of lading,
beating trains,
make a left
park in back,
run up the stairs:
What the hell are they loading today?

When they shot him on the tracks
behind the flatiron building,
even the mud splattered stucco
packing houses seemed silent in anguish,
all he could find in the offices to steal
were cancelled checks and calendars,
he wasn't making his payments:
Should have tried the Wichita Brokerage Co.

Konstantinos Lardas

CROSSINGS

These wakes across our land,
white-edged, reflective in the night,
and center-striped,
as if they were the fingertips of waves,
or, whips,--
that cut the green,
the yellow fields of home,
the ghettoed sprawlings to new, worlds.

We ride them, high and handsome,
and are driven deep in them, and wide,
and choked,
as if we were the space before the piling tide,
or, crossings, --
that catch us, open us, to where,
to no new worlds,
to where not goodness, graces.

Mason Jordan Mason

OUT OF THE WAY NEIGHBORHOOD

What a good-looking
ass she have

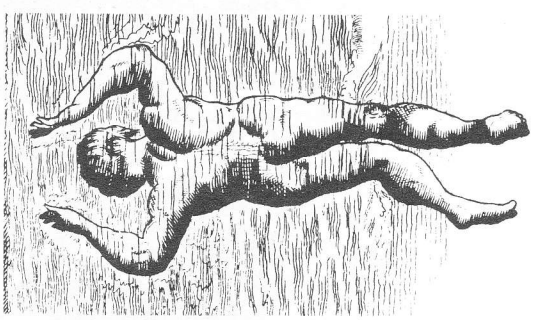
I can imagine
right through the tight skirt
she happen to have on

And what peepers
and those
good-looking teeth

Then she hiss at me
YOU SON-OF-A-BITCH YOU
when I get jostled up
too close
in this impolite crowd

And for the first time
it occur to me
what am I doing
riding around out here

In this out of the way
neighborhood



John Blakemore

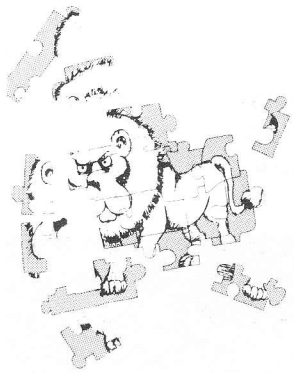
PARA ENTONCES: Paraphrase
(Manuel Gutierrez Nájera)

I should like at the close of the day to die
In a heaving sea with my face to the sky
Where grief will seem a random wakeful night
And my soul a gull who veering takes to flight.

In private I, with sky and sea alone
Attending to no other sobbing tone
Nor suppliant voice than this unuttered prayer
Of cadenced waves and soul-releasing air.

I must follow the sun who, knowing, slowly heaves
His final breath as his sad light retrieves
His gilded nets from urgent crested gold,
And his lucent charms obscure extents unfold.

He reads no promise in that single shimmering ray
For those who can by lingering betray
A maudlin fancy, and gentle hope seduce
With pomp and empire, which time and friends reduce.



James A. Heynen

HUNTERS

I leave camp before dawn
bow arrows knife
sharpness on every edge
camouflage bucklure
on crotch and hat band
I climb the high edge of a canyon
find trails smell water
as deer smell it at dawn
I sit behind oak brush wind in my face

First sun spray dew flaking from leaves
sage scent first fly buzz
I am one
with wind and brush
I wait until twigs shatter
close angling the wind
fingers harden on bow-string only
a fawn dark spots small planets rising
stop in orbit high on a ledge
in dark shade fade into rocks
the canyon sounds its danger
coyote sharp barks
steel on bone
we hide each in his place

The coyotes are wrong lose the fawn scent
move away barks rattle into distance
gone not meant for us
I live their plan clean miss at dawn
I live the fawn's hiding nestle down
in my brush share the escape
share the fawn's joy free
I am hunter and hunted coyote and fawn

But the fawn knows something quakes
like aspen in wind the fawn knows
fear seems to live in memories
deep in the earth
the fawn's legs draw tight spring into flight
body arched into sunlight falls
dies quickly the blood absorbs rocks

I break clear with my bow through brush and wind
into the silence of ancient bones
calling start back alone
I move toward my world its mysteries of men
will the coyotes return at night knowing

Clarence Wolfshohl

UNICORNS AND TARANTULAS

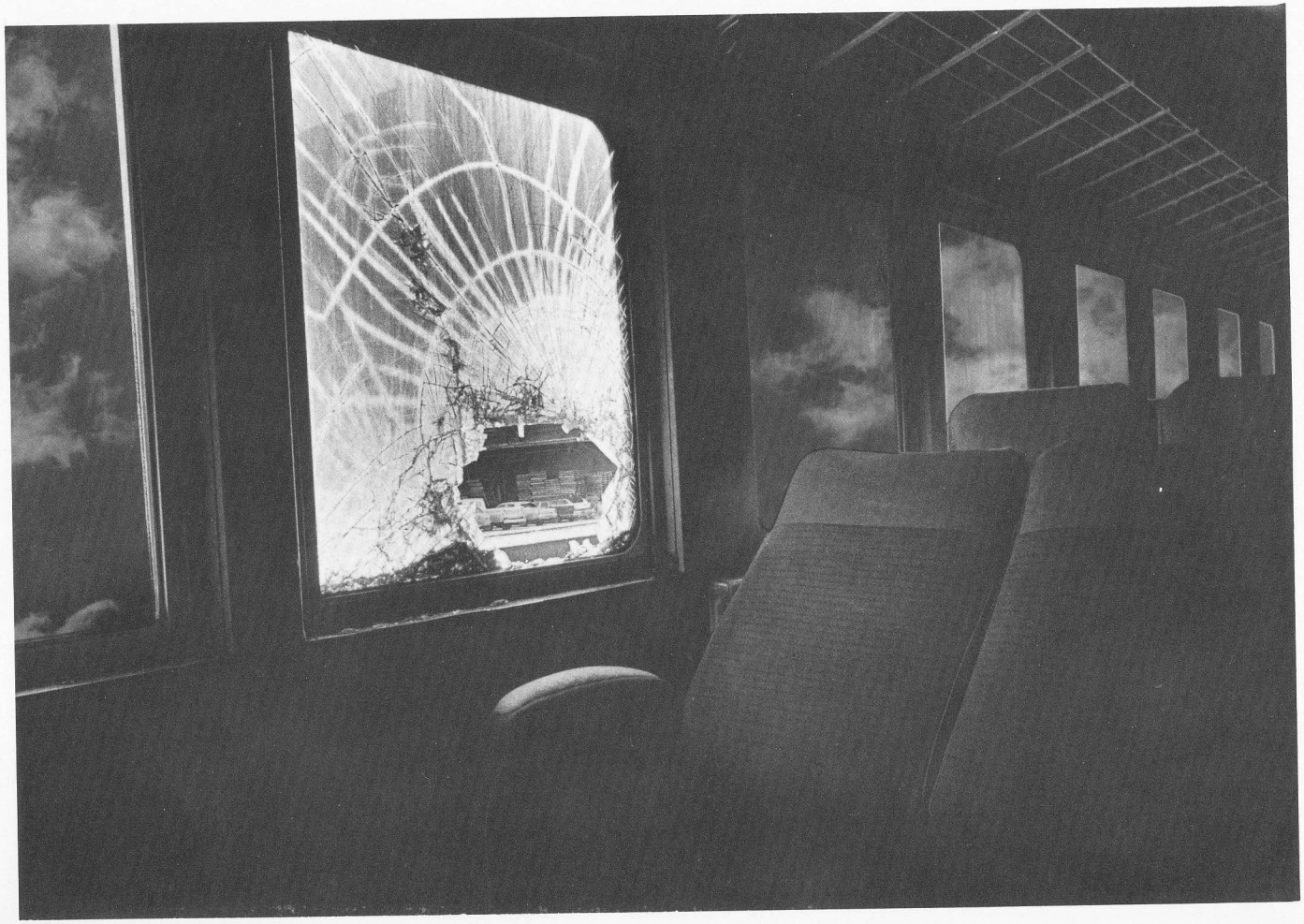
the staircase leads down
past the unicorns stable
beyond the flaming forests
out into the streets

outside the people
meet and walk around low bushes
singing the same song
with three notes about the lost tarantulas

the tarantulas once bred profusely
in the bushes
until each dawn
burned holes in their stomachs

now there are but a few golden ones
in the museums and a sable one
wounded by a unicorn last night
crying in some crowded hospital

but here inside
the pine trees bloom purple hummingbirds
the unicorns graze on lotus stalks
we climb the snow peaks into the clouds.



Fantasy Train

Jack Perno

Jon Williams

Jack Anderson

LIFE ON THE GLACIER

Life on the glacier has its advantages:
for one thing, we are in constant motion.

Agreed, the weather is beastly cold
and the Governor and I have to take such pains
to ward off pneumonia and freezing at night
we never dare remove our clothes,
which makes both sex and cleanliness difficult
(though not, let me add, impossible).
Yet, despite the inconvenience, we are moving along,
we are going someplace,
we are going South
to the sun and the citrons and the meals in the garden
stretching from pasta to dolce with three kinds of wine.

Slow progress, yes,
but we do progress: look,
we have already left that snowflake behind
and that one, and that one. And so, I maintain,
though our teeth may chatter
as we sip our perpetually lukewarm tea
(we touch nothing else,
saving up as we are
for the treats of the South)
and though the cups and saucers echo our teeth,
we know we have grounds--these shifting grounds--
for hope.

And that is why from dawn to dusk
I wave my handkerchief in a flurry of farewells.
And when the gawkers jeer
that it's only an easy day's train ride to Lasagna
while the Governor and I
will never
reach anywhere our way,
I can reply, oh yes we shall,
through chillblains and sneezing
we have followed the more arduous
--or, as I like to call it,
the heroic--course,

so we shall appreciate Manicotti all the more when we get there,
and we have moved this far--not much, but this far--
from where we began
(count it out, if you like--you'll see, you'll see):
we are demonstrably here
and on our way onward.

Jack Anderson

THE VISITOR

Each night he tiptoes to my bed,
coughs to get my attention, bows,
and tells me in calm, firm tones:

"Attend! I've come in time
to keep you from drifting into the dark
where nothing stays fixed to its shape
but slides into an endless merging
which makes all equal, equally
irrelevant.
Hold tight
to the bulk of this house, to this room
with its piles of underwear, its weight of old socks.
Seize and measure the strange feet and clouds
which populate your ceiling or sky. Frame space.
Let no point in the road slip past unnamed.
Clamp your teeth to your work,
strap on virtue like a belt,
and nurse your perversion
until it's full-grown.
Put your life in its place
and tomorrow night I'll come back to this spot
to tell you something important."

Then he clicks his heels and bows low at the door
(for he can tell I only seem to sleep)
and leaves.
Each night he returns
and says this again:
exactly the same words in exactly the same tone,
and never anything more.

Jack Anderson

LUSTS

Not this boy at the typewriter
not these slender hands
not these fingers with the nails clipped short
not this hair visible on the arm where the sleeves are rolled back
not this light blue shirt
not the way he ponders, chewing a pencil
not the brown hair falling over the left ear
not the small red pimple on the left side of his neck
not how he turns in the swivel chair, the top button of his shirt open, no undershirt visible
not this hint of a hairy chest

*

Seven people caught in a burning elevator
The passengers on a train which roars ahead and, because the bridge is raised, plunges into the harbor
The passengers on an elevated train which jumps a curve and falls into the street
The children on the school bus stuck on the tracks as the express races near
Miners trapped in a cave-in, without food, water, or light
The floor collapsing beneath the Christmas shoppers
The exhausted swimmer banned from the crowded life-raft
The girl out swimming being eaten by sharks
"I'm not kidding. I'm going to murder you."
The wails of the dying preserved on tape

*

Not this candy bar with its walnut nougat whip
not this candy bar with its dark chocolate and seven different fillings
not these chocolate cups, milk chocolate on the outside, peanut butter inside
not these chocolate covered peanut clusters
not this candy bar with its caramello filling
not these malted milk balls
not this bittersweet chocolate candy bar
not this chocolate covered coconut bar
not this chocolate nut fudge
not this marshmallow candy bar

Jack Anderson

STRAWBERRY

I was about ten years old and eating out with my parents at a restaurant. The waitress came for our dessert orders and I asked what kind of ice cream she had. After listening to her recite the list I said, "Strawberry ice cream." But when it arrived it was, somehow, not what I expected, although it was certainly both strawberry and ice cream. I stared at it, perplexed. My sister, guessing what had gone wrong, said with an ill-concealed touch of superiority, "I bet it wasn't strawberry ice cream you wanted. I bet it was really a strawberry sundae." It was then that I felt, for the first time, my whole being rise up in fury against

they don't tell you what they mean
they stay blank, mean
like a snotty sister
words which say strawberry ice cream
when I want strawberry sundae
but cannot say it
I can say one part for sure
I say "strawberry... strawberry... strawberry... hey! strawberry..."
over and over
even that loses sense
and I get scared I might have said raspberry or peppermint swirl
but no I get a dish of strawberry ice cream
is it Louis Sherry Ice Cream? or Barricini Ice Cream?
or Borden's Ice Cream made by Elsie the Cow?
it is red ice cream
when I wanted white ice cream
covered with red berries red strawberries
the word I wanted
was on the tip of my tongue
with the taste of strawberry-- (strawberry what?)
I don't want it / take it back
I don't want strawberry ice cream really I don't
but I get a dish of Howard Johnson's Ice Cream
or Jane Logan Ice Cream
or Barton's Continental or Häagen-Dazs Ice Cream
when it's not the brand that's bothering me
it's the

Look at it this way: here's a restaurant with a locked door, let's say the only restaurant in town. A crowd of hungry diners is out front. They can't get in. They batter their heads against the door for years. They still can't get in. A smart guy climbs through the window. That's how he gets in. Another smart guy runs around the back and sneaks through the cellar door. And that's how he gets in. Someone else says, "The hell with it," and goes home. The rest of the diners stay where they are. They batter their heads against the door for many years more. At last, the proprietor opens the door. Everybody says "Yum!" with anticipation. But instead of letting them in, the proprietor, without a moment's hesitation, shoots their heads off. The gutters run with blood, red blood. Above the bodies the proprietor places a sign. On the sign he writes something. He writes "Strawberry." Then he writes something else.

Tell me, is what he writes next "Ice Cream" or "Sundae" or neither? Or "N-E-I-T-H-E-R?"

Ah, have I silenced you? Good. Maybe now you know how I feel.

Charles L. Willig

BIRTH OF A CULTURE MYTH

An Alka Seltzer bottle in his hand
Jim Bob descended, on his way to myth;
Forever in the tales of good old boys
J. B. would own a volume after this.
I wouldn't argue, though, that Imogene
Had anything, including pride, to lose;
Yet there was something in her frantic itch
Grand as a marching band. (If I could choose
Right now the salvaging advantage
From some ultimate compendium of hope,
I'd take her constant want.) That thing
Got stuck, of course, and its
Attendant horror would have filled a book--
But in these myths of heroes we pass on
We overlook the witch's aging mother
Or her hopeless paraplegic child at home.

Charles L. Willig

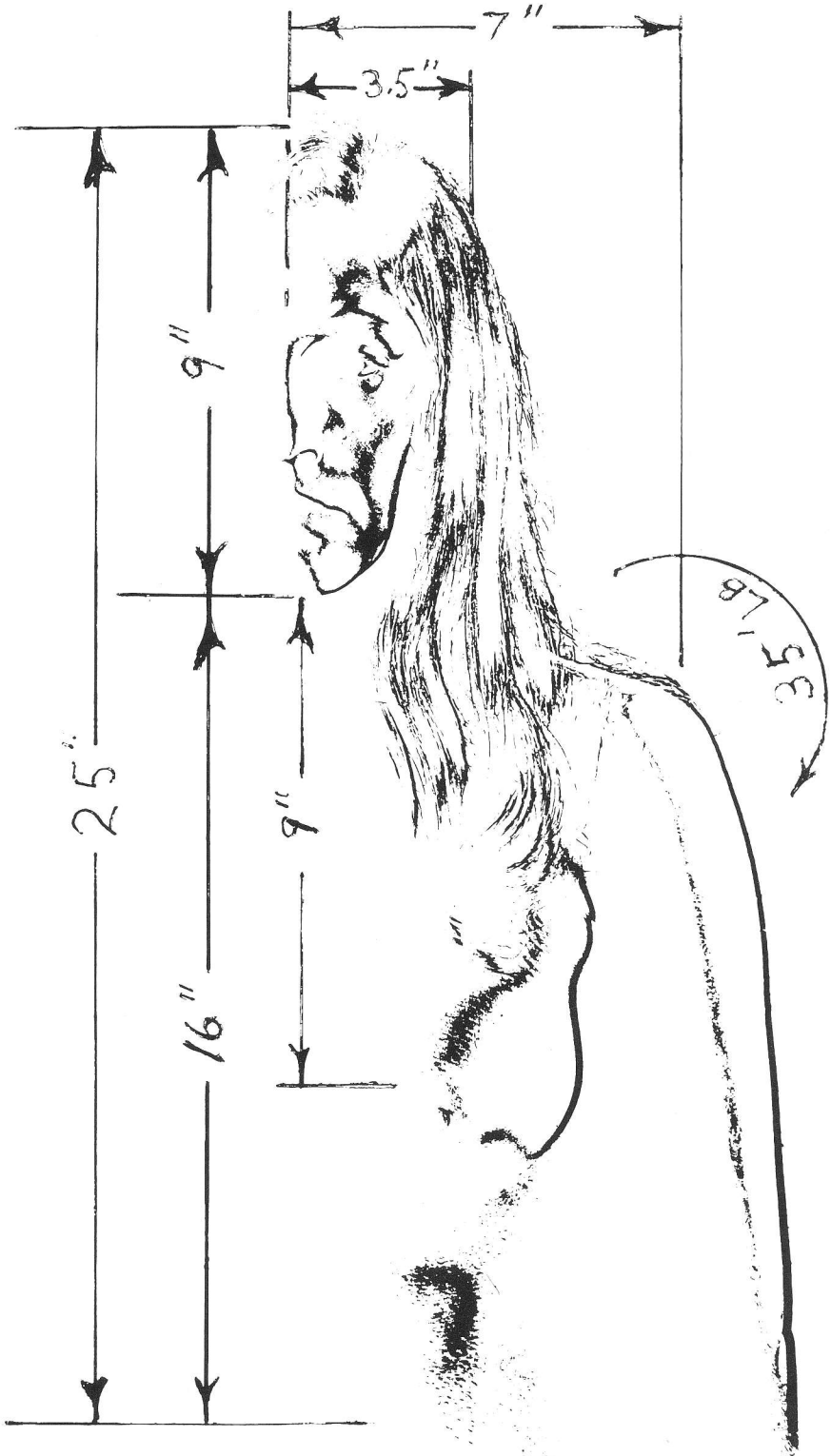
HARD FACTS WORKING ON THE COGITATIVE MAN

I.

Just when I think
In florid language, fat
Extending metaphor--all that:
"This cavern is a vault,
Its bats black worms
The rocks they cling to, Time. . . ."
From high stalactite rafters
The cavern birds explode.
The first one drops, freefall,
Still lodged in sleep, perhaps--
Then flap of saving wing
Echoes alert!
They all take flight--
Ten thousand eyelids
Blinking through the night--
No more than that.

II.

Unsatisfied. My mind insists
A solid lesson skulks
Inside this situation,
In these bats:
I contemplate the fetid floor below
All those inverted bodies, row by row,
I see a child bat grown
Heavy from his dependent indolence, let go--
As he is dropping now
I shut my eyes.



John Lowry

Richard A. Mathews

Gerry Shapiro

THE SQUARE OF THE HYPOTENUSE

I

Franklin

My mother died while riding her bicycle. It was a blue one, fenderless. Why my mother, you ask, and not my father? Because it was her that was riding the bicycle, not him. If my father had died, I would have said so. It was my mother. In the left lane of a one-way street, she was riding, her arms holding onto a sack of groceries and medicine. Just peddaling along. No hands on the handle-bars, just grabbing the groceries. And the bicycle hit a bit of a chuck-hole there in the left lane and tumbled, my mother splayed right, foreflung and cartwheeling, and was hit immediately by one, two, three cars in a row. I was sad.

She always rode on her bicycle like that, arms folded under her breasts and a grim expression on her face, defying heaven and earth, daring them to knock her down. I would ride with her when we were younger or rather when I was younger and she would sit in front, although I was the man, and we would sit close together and she would never hold her hands on the hand-grips even when she had nothing else to hold, but instead would fold them on her diaphram and peddle with her feet and steer with her weight, shifting ever so slightly here and there.

Once when I was younger we went out and bicycled into the country and it was just the two of us away from the kid and she was like a girl again although she was twenty-nine and that was still younger than she grew to be. And I was like a child again and it was fiercely satisfying to me and it was never that good again.

Years passed as they do; nothing else passed but the years, and they passed like a kidney stone passing a ureter. She bicycled still; it seemed to feed her something, the danger of it, riding like that; she thrived. Doctor, I seem to have lost my wife.

I was sick once, very sick, with the pains, you know. And my... mother, M-O-T-H-E-R, was there of course and said Darling wiping my forehead, wetting her hand, What's the matter baby? We were close. Very close. You know, as son and mother ... as son and mother are likely to be. We were--

Why would you even want to ask why it wasn't my father that got killed? What's he got to do with this? He's a lout, a

drunkard, but a good fellow. His name is--I know him well. He's here right now.

My mother said, she said Dear, I'll just go out and get you something, some medicine, some food. And I said, No, I don't think so. No, no, I said, I said, No, don't go. That's it. And then she said something else, I don't remember, I don't even have to remember, I'm not here to remember, I'm here to forget. Or maybe it was No, no, I want to go, yes that was what she said. And I said... I said... Ice...

I can't remember. But then she left, and said I'll be back soon. But she wasn't.

She bicycled off silently, no noise of departing wheels to tell me, affixed to my sweated sheets upstairs, when she had left. I lay there. And started drinking slowly, methodically--smoothly oiled gullet blinking down a silent wine. Blink and slide, whoosh, repeated, repeated.

And she never came back, no she never came back.

I miss her, and I never got well, no, never. And Dottie, Dottie's sick too, and I wish that woman hadn't gone. That sweet lady gave her natural life to me and I drank it down to my stomach and churned it to bits. Oh... my breath goes.

I lie here now. But summoning some reserve of something--

My mother died. It was my mother. She was riding her bicycle cigar-store-Indian-style, and hit a chuck-hole and flew over the handle-bars and was both injured and insulted by three cars, any of which killed her. A good way of saying it, eh?

It was a sad affair but please, not a pathetic one. I was sad, but now I am tired.

II

Fowler

This guy we're talking about was named Franklin Welles and he ran the elevator at the hotel here. Short guy, about my height but skinny, not a speck a cereal on that guy. Drank gin. Sometimes wine. Last week had his brains blown out here in the lobby. What brains he had, that is. Franklin was about as nuts as anybody'd ever been, I guess. Thought he was his own son. He didn't have no son. Had a daughter. Thought his wife was his mother, thought he was his father. You figure it out.

Daughter's named Dottie. Dorothea. As small as Franklin was, that's how big the girl was. Still is, I guess. Five-eight,

five-nine. Meat on her, too. No rail, no sir. More than once I invited that girl over to the...over to my other hotel across the street there. Told old Franklin that his Dottie'd make him some money if he'd let her. Wouldn't hurt her none, I told him. She was getting fat, see, and I told him, I says, Franklin, you better decide quick whether you want to make some money off Dottie. She keeps getting fatter, and it's not many folks these days want to dip into suet.

She'd sit over there on that red sofa in the middle of the lobby, with her legs spread like peanut butter. I'm not much for these younger girls, you know, but hell, it was a damned temptation to reach inside that peanut butter and pull out some jelly. This all started about two years ago, and my boy, Boris, woulda been thirteen then. He's always been a fast grower if you get my drift. He'd look at Dottie sitting there--she'd a been fifteen then--and he'd say Hey Dad, lookit the pie over on that sofa! I had to hush him up a couple a times, he got her pretty so riled. Jesus, what a racket. Crying to beat the band. The girl was obviously off. Fifteen years old, and she acted four or five.

As far as Boris, I never told my boy what to do. Never told him what not to do. A boy's got to find things out on his own. It was natural for him to...well, for him to look at her and such. Had tits on her that'd...well, hell, just forget it. It'd be taken the wrong way. I'm a respectable man.

But now Franklin's wife was something. A fine woman. I mean a really likable woman, no guff to her. She got him his job here. Come in one morning answering a want-ad and asked me for the job for her husband. Said he was sick at home, which was a lie, but I didn't mind her for that. Just looking after her man which is what she was for anyway. She was no kid, had grey in her hair and sagged where y'aint supposed to. But the way that woman talked. Had a voice like hair half-dried. Listening to her was like feeling the inside of a woman's thigh.

It was when she died, you know, that things went haywire. Franklin was okay till then. Didn't have this thing about being his own son for one thing. Hit the bottle but not so bad. Jesus, that was a long time ago. Dottie was okay then, too. Dumb, you know, and big, but acted her age, knew what was going on.

Franklin went to the hospital for a while to straighten things out in his head, because I couldn't have him hanging around the hotel here in the lobby like that. He was as crazy as a bat outa hell there, really. Scared me half to death. One time we're talking and he's getting heated up over something and he says, outa the blue, Okay you bastard I'm getting my gun.

Where is it? I says, and he says On the ninth floor. And he punched the elevator button and when it came he went up in it and hid in the laundry closet all day. He didn't have no gun.

People say to me, Fowler, you're a bastard, and I says to them, Franklin Welles went into the looney bin and I kept his job for him. He came out and found his job waiting for him. I didn't have to do that. Kept Dottie at the hotel for him for awhile. She was already going bad in the head, too, just like worms eating up the insides of a pear. Franklin had himself a woman somewhere, named Hildalee, and she kept Dottie for a while too. One thing I'll say--while I was around, nobody did too much hanky-pankying with Dottie. Oh, one or two folks, older guys, mighta got a little fresh with her tits, maybe reached for her tonsils the long way or such, but you got to expect that. Nothing serious went on while Franklin was in that hospital.

Dottie's there now. Might be in her father's old bed in that damn hospital for all I know. She's better off. Unless they got some fellow there like my Boris, itching to dip himself into something hot.

To tell you the truth, I ain't what you'd call an honorable man. I think it's one a them cases where my Ma ate the wrong food when she was carrying me; they say now that all that stuff makes a helluva difference. I never had no chance to be an honorable man. So I'm what I am. And one more thing: Franklin Welles was okay by me. So's Dottie. It was that bitch he was married to. Elsie. Too good, that's what she was. Too good for Franklin, too good for much of anything. Only thing comes of knowing a woman like that, is that when she's gone it ruins you. Give me a whore any day.

III

Dorothea

My father is the elevator man at the hotel and I am Dorothea, Do-ro-the-a. I am his little girl. I am his little girl. My father is sick but I am sick also and he says we are sick together, we are sick alike. My mother was there for a while but then she wasn't. And that was when I was ten and five, two hands and then one, and...my father stopped shaving then. It was when I was younger and his face grew stubbly--the color of ashes--when he'd kiss me it would hurt.

At the hotel Mr. Fowler the man behind the registration counter would take a puff of his cigarette and shut his mouth and

hold the cigarette to his ear and blow smoke out his lips and think he was very funny. My father thought he was very funny too and tie his arms around himself laughing at the man behind the registration counter, who was short and oiled and wide... and made me cry when he looked at me and told me I was a big girl.

Hildalee isn't here anymore, where I live. My father neither. But she was and he was, living here but not here, where here was before. She would say to him, Elsie this or Elsie that, and he would cry, and tears, usually two tears but once four, would come out of his eyes and slide down his cheeks into the part of his face that was ashes. I do not know Elsie but it is a name. Of a person.

Boris is younger than I am, smaller, but he says he is smarter and I don't know about smarter. He is the son of Mr. Fowler. He is Boris Fowler. At the hotel where my father is the elevator man, up and down, up and down, up and down. Boris chased me around the lobby and found me at the hat racks and I laughed and he pushed an old hat down on my head. A felt one, big. It smelled of hair-oil. Boris pushed it down over my forehead and over my eyes and grabbed it by the brim and pulled it down until it ripped and I cried and it came down over my face--

And then he touched me.

My father's name is not Boris. Boris is the son of the man behind the registration counter. Boris, Boris touched me too. My father wasn't there.

The man behind the registration counter told my father once that I was a big girl. My father said Shut up or I'll get my gun and went up and hid. The man said I ought to go across the street. Mr. Fowler did. I said I couldn't.

I don't have a leash. I'm not a dog.

Hildalee came and shot my father in the head. I could see the women across the street sitting on their wicker chairs with their hands between their thighs. Boris says they're waiting. I could see them but I couldn't go across the street even though I told my father there was no traffic. He said no to me, he couldn't understand. I think because he is sick but he always said we were sick in the same way; I was sick, we were both sick because of the same thing.

Hildalee shot him. Some of his head looked like a cream-puff and some of it looked like brains. I hate brains. Brains and eggs. Part of his head was up on the wall and looked like my pants when it happens to me and the other part was on his neck like always. He was asleep.

It was Hildalee. She came and argued with him in the lobby, him standing by the elevator and her on the red rug, and me on the

sofa, the red one. He said You get out of this hotel or I'm getting my gun, and he'd never had a gun, he had no gun. And she said Not if I get mine first you bastard. She walked out the doors of the lobby onto the street and wasn't there anymore and it was just the man behind the registration counter, Mr. Fowler and me my father, and my father punched nine but the lights didn't move. He didn't say anything. He stood waiting until Hildalee walked back through the doors and she had a pistol. The lights began to move.

My father was taking rings off his fingers it looked like but he didn't wear no rings. He looked at her and smiled and said I don't have no gun. Then she raised out her arm to him and began pounding on the elevator doors because the lights had reached "L" now, but then she shot him. His head flew up and part stayed up and the rest went down with him. He folded up and fell halfway into the elevator as it opened, doors sliding open and him dropping top-half into it.

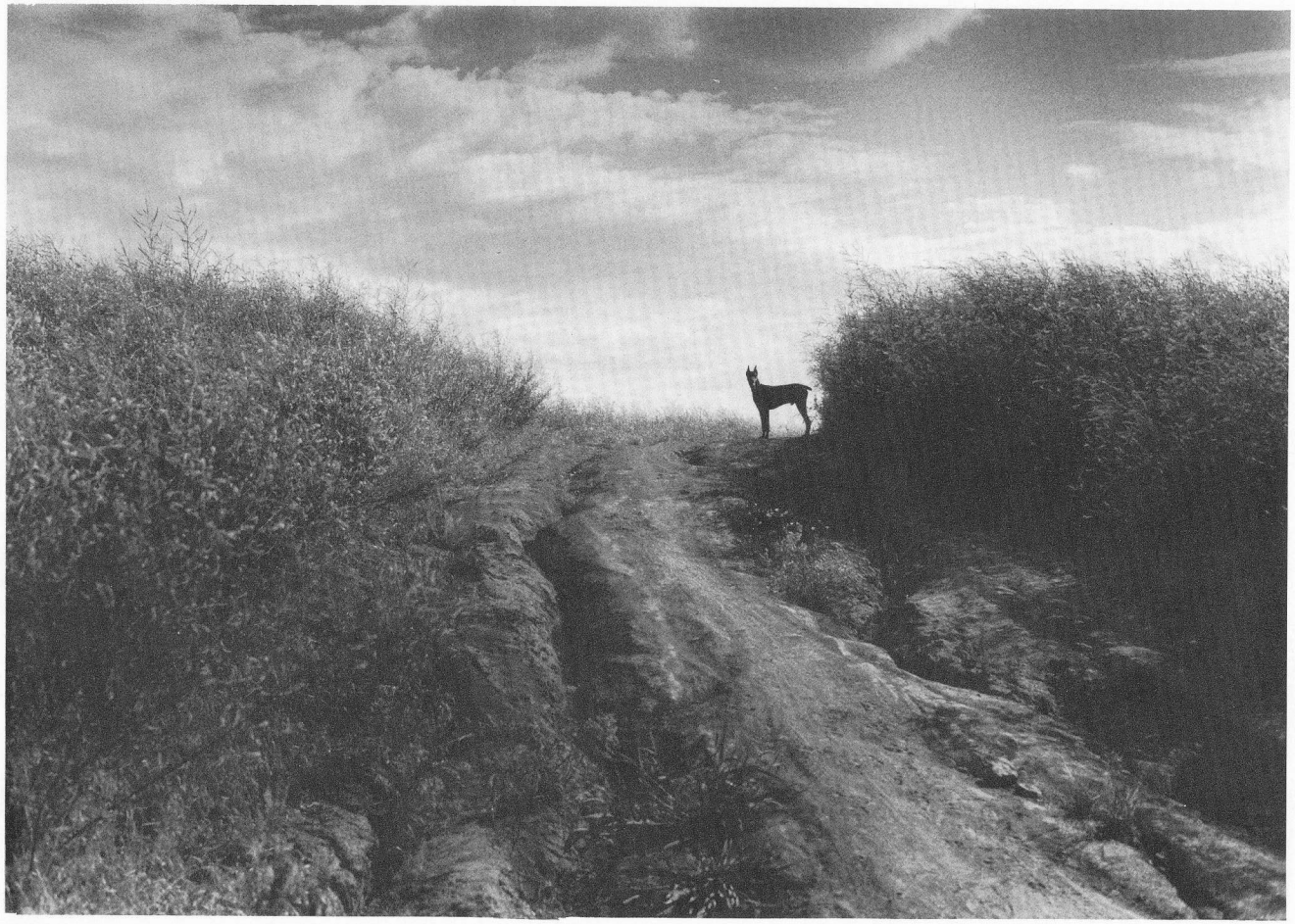
Sometimes when I see it I run over and shove his legs into the elevator so that it closes and I punch nine again and it goes up and he goes up but other times I don't do it and his legs hang out into the lobby and the doors close because they don't know him--and they... they eat him up. They slam and open and slam on him and I can't move and I can't cry--and she is gone now, out the door--and I can't move and it slams and slams on his legs and he oozes down the wall, that part of him does. Sometimes she says This is it you drunken bastard and sometimes she doesn't say anything and just shoots him. They say it doesn't matter: they say it's all the same, but it matters to me.

My fingers are my father.

My father is the elevator man.

And I am... ten and five and two... two hands and then one, and two fingers.

Charles Stainback



Gary Bodenhausen

Robert Hillebrand

TEN DAYS NOW

You'd think, wouldn't you,
that after sixteen years
of teaching at the same school
I'd merit a thought; that
someone would wonder if I'm sick
and would phone or come
to my door to find out?

Ten days have passed now,
and I've eaten everything
except half of a small can
of peaches that don't taste right
and a few stale, crumbling crackers
at the dark bottom of the box;
I haven't gone out for ten days.

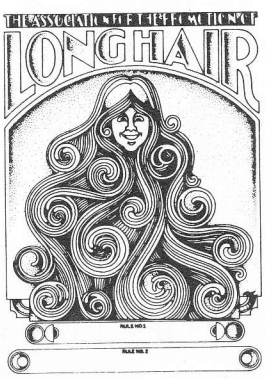
I suppose it could all be explained,
but the times when I might have asked
have slipped away, and I'm alone.
Ten days ago I was late,
the first time in sixteen years,
for my first period class:
five minutes late, no more.

And when I opened the door to my room
I found someone, so very at home,
sitting at the desk in my chair,
smiling and speaking easily; and then
I stepped a small step into the room
and waited for someone to see me,
but not a head turned my way!

I suppose he was a substitute, that man
whose smile and easy voice held their eyes
from me, called by mistake, perhaps,
or for someone else; he may have been
in the wrong room; but, oh, he looked so right
that I backed out, closed the door
and hurried away down the hall.

By the clock on the wall of The Office
I stood for five minutes, invisible,
trying to catch the eye of either
of two paper-shuffling secretaries
and failing; and seeing Mr. Greer,
beyond them, behind his heavy desk,
remote from any hope of mine.

For ten days I've stayed in my rooms
for fear of missing a caller or a call.
At first there was no resolve:
I was simply waiting. But five days
of nothing stunned my pride, and now
I am resolved. The ringing, I know,
is in my head; but wasn't that a tap
at the door?



Ted Kooser

THE WASTER

When he was young and crazy, he wasted women;
outside his bedroom window, butts and tits
were piled to the sill. He had a doormat woven
of pubic hair, and a fifteen-minute grin
like the quarter moon in April. Now, old and alone,
his famous smile falls into the bathroom sink
a tooth at a time. For something to do,
he gardens in a little, dingy window,
using whole fields to fill his flowerpots.

Fritz Hamilton

TEA LIPS

I
Guess I've always been shy so
When I learn about these tea rooms
Public Washrooms where fairies meet and ball
I
Find my favorites
On the 5th and 11th flrs of the Lawson Y where
I find a stall early in the morning and
Lovers line up all down the hall
Hundreds
Of cocks to be sucked every day
But mostly
I like the basement john of Loyola University where
The traffic's not as heavy but pretty soon
Some young freshman or old professor
Sits in the stall next to mine and
Wiggles his leg or
Passes a note beneath the separation wall
And
I score that way/ never
Having to get involved/ never
Having to show how shy I am
But
Sometimes I get lonely from
All the impersonal cock I've been eating
Then one day my
Prince Charming at last
This
Muscular young queer in the Loyola tea room
I eat him
Then
He takes me out to dinner and
First time
I have someone I can really talk to
And
He takes me home to bed
Something real
More

Than a quick score in a tea room and
We take off all our clothes me
So excited I can hardly breathe and
I suck him off and
He kicks me in the ribs and
The stomach and
The mouth that loves him

Danny L. Rendleman

HIPS

for Charles Simic

For dirigibles
you've forgotten
these fragile crafts
of harnessed bone

wide ships
that harbor home
where I do

Slim rigging with
pale sails of freckle
and sweat

Columbo fat and aft
shivering in Isabella's
dollars

You've missed a bet
Simic putting your quid
on ballast and not
this crisp galley of Daliah Lavi

alive and well
in my many hands on deck

Your deal Chuck
nothing wild

Paul Reinwald

Each Day

Will Crocker

Henry Hubert Hutto

BRITTLE BORDER OF THE FLOES

Brittle border of the floes,
Blade of the deadly freeze,
The marvel's death-mask, is not all
The swimmer sees.

What's the saw the elder says
Quaintly of memories
Flashing, flaying all who fall
Where no sky is?

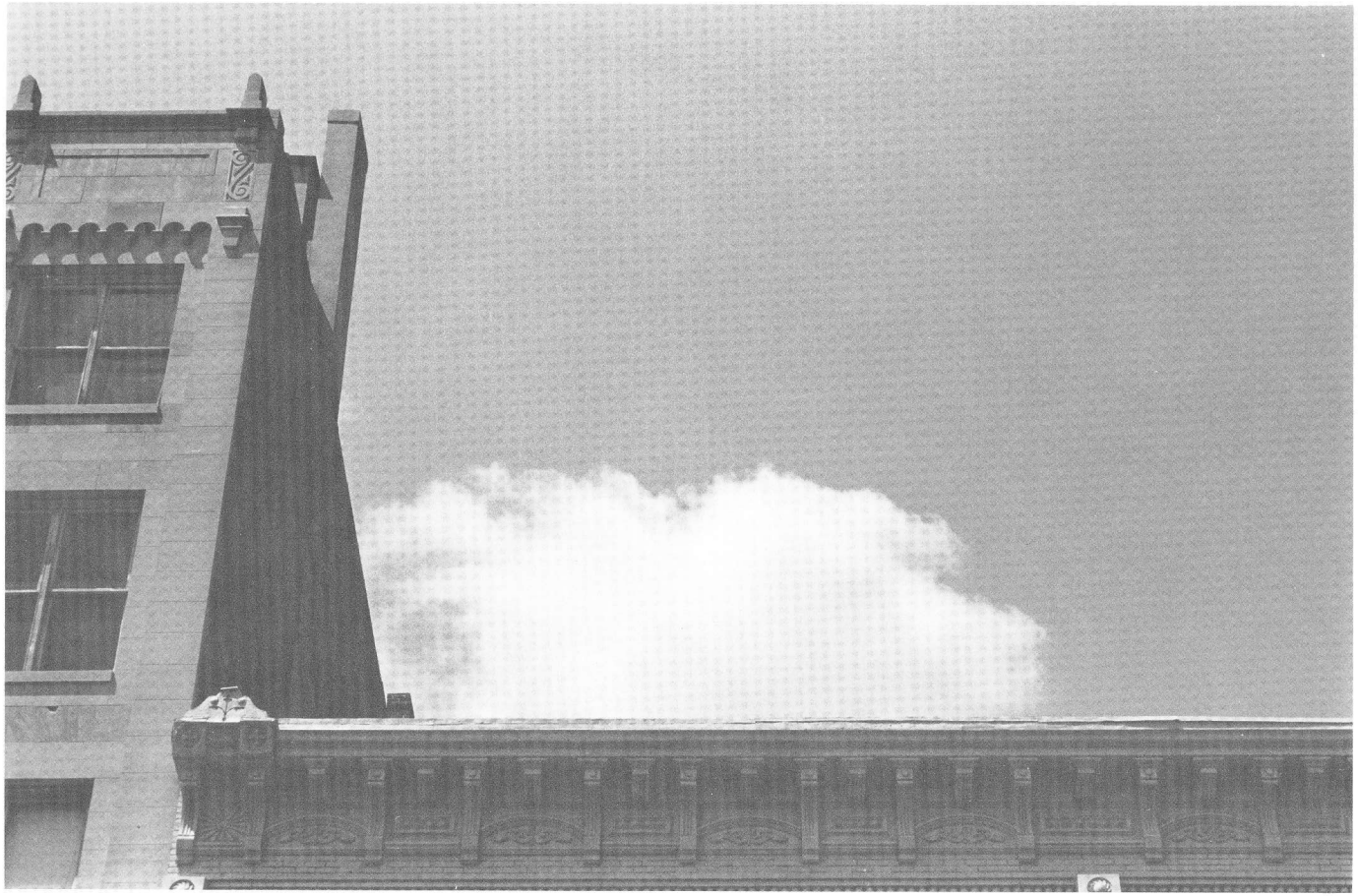
Fevers and awrynesses
Paired off once in warmness,
Beneath kind stars, beyond the wall,
And far from floes.

Knifing border of the floes,
Edge of the final freeze,
The marvel's death-mask... Now, the fall,
From all that was.

Henry Hubert Hutto

THE JOYFUL CHANTS

The joyful chants are gone. Where is our champion
Of lilt and dance, ephemeral delight?
Our Marvell, Shakespeare, Herrick, Jonson, Campion?....
By rote we groan of gangrene, cancer, blight,
Senescence, dying.... There's a time for such--
But jollity and frolic too are real,
As real as the damnations are, and much
More beneficial. For a moment feel
Liberty's dizzy bliss. Adore the rose
Before it wilts--and do not rush the wilting.
(These roses don't anticipate their woes-
To-be.) Let's take this time for lilting....
For this one day, let us neglect our sorrow--
Have Heaven today, and Hell can take tomorrow!



Paul Reinwald

OF A POET

He can't crank verses out. He can write only
When there's a certain elusive and eternal
Stirring, and the new and lonely
Come into a collision with the old and social,

As late on Sabbath days of anamnesis
When the shadows of the flowers is ephemeral,
And night comes on with exigesis
Officious to comment on what was all too virile.

And strained too much. . . . And it's then the pen is moving
A hand that aches to tell of a shared sorrow.
It tells of sunken-low souls grieving
For a gone past and also a stillborn tomorrow.

Unconsummated Sabbaths! Oh, how very
Pleasing this graying planet was when we were
One, and new, and good, and merry;
Still, there's a stirring here, and here's a low, low fever.

Henry Hubert Hutto

NON-DIONYSIAN DAYS

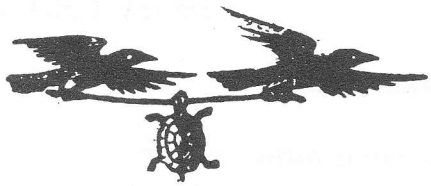
Non-Dionysian days are truly here now.
(The diction shows it.)
All dreams are set to rights.
Crazed memories are posts in a prim row,
To bound a garden neither green nor glowing.

We'll have no lust, but, then, we'll have no fear now.
Oh, it's not roseate;
We'll see by dimmer lights,
What's left to see.... Hum wishes we could go
On back to where, we know, there is no going.

Paul Ruffin

THE LOSS

How soon the yellow-haired vision
gracing the pasture green
has muddied her kneesocks
with splashings from cloven hoofs
jarring the spongy forest floor:
the tracks led everywhere
and she was only just a little girl,
reared on milk and warm arms.
We cannot call her back into the clipped
grass and up the hill
to summer supper plates;
she is far from the stars of the east barn
and the sunwarm garden turns its tale
again.



Simon Perchik

*

Through my kilned left
the buckle, thumb
clipped when my right
captured the cap
hair freed

a shoulder slips, a knee
overloads its shoe :strut
now stance
--through my left hand

this pasture, my right
was breath, was wind

the cap
still new
into this incinerator
: my right hand even now
fanning the grass.

This is no grave.
Both hands
clamped to a uniform

the belt
won't open
won't rot or burn
--the canteen empty

clanking-- all day these cows
sniffing my belt
my blisters :my clumps-- the grass

presses and wrings
empties me.

Lloyd Schnell

Lawrence McFarland

Simon Perchik

*

Fuss the cloth, pinch, pleat :a hat
not a flower --rain
has no hope here, the box--
Watered for what?

But rain
is proper
and The Lakeside Memorial Park
reads kaddish :ritual when rushed
protects the family
makes us crouch --the injury from rain
is lessened :Jack Feld

dead, balled, dropped :one more root
for thin roads in
or out

cold cuts! the sisterhood, cake
revived, the jokes starting up, drinking
:riverbeds drained for generous stories
we all remember :rites

begin this way. Sorting. A confirmation.
Return and the words to allow it.

Joel Wilkinson

ON READING AN ANTHOLOGY OF CHINESE VERSE

Ancient custom accept my bow
As courtier to curling nails.
My pen can etch characters
Single, double, and more complex;
But my hand covers up my heart.

Charles Fishman

A REFUSAL TO ENTER MY FATHER'S SKULL

Your fingers pry me
from the wound,
she is open and red
under me
held in the flat
socket of your world
your smells
singe my body:
all the truth you
give me

everything I am
is spiked with pain
unable to lean
into the wind
leap upstream

You dip me
in green flasks
hook me
to tubes intricate
with my blood,
you keep my parts
in laundered sacks
bunched at the whirlpool
your white technicians
flap
sheets in the wind
hurry to machines. . .
she mars your metallic wisdom
widens beneath you:
the way back
is too long

everything I am
sucked like a fat thumb,
your finger probing:

though you break cell walls
memory of rapids

mineral richness of streams
wakes brighter in me
each splash I make
in the shallows
hastens your decay
your flesh billows white flame
you, mother ship!
you, world!

everything I've been
calls:

what races in me is Law,
the image dancing before me
is Law
childless, self-contained
I will be shapeless
again
undetectable
will break surface
under your stained-glass
brain:
will dance perfectly
and knock upon
no martyrdom

Ed Orr

DIMINUTIVE DEATH

"of deathless earth's innumerable doom"

--E. E. Cummings

Having read Homer and lost three dogs
to natural death (one to poison;
another shot), I know how swarms
of plankton fill a fish's gut,
birds gulp insects from infinite air.
But I suspect the hyperbolic thrust
of "innumerable doom" until I see
the bones of even diminutive death.

Colette Inez

SEVEN STAGES OF SKELETAL DECAY

0-5 Centers of ossification appear as I squall
"wyde in this world wonderes to hear."
The light my second amnion.
Mother like a frog, white exhausted thighs
precede my deciduous teeth, the better to bite
the asylum where I didn't earn my keep.
Ward of the state and stable criteria.

5-12 Acetabular elements join. Illium, ischium, pubis,
a little hen's breast against my hands.
In the corpulent dark hearing children grow
a song of bones as the moon climbed
and ovary bells, my eggs and the moon tolling each month.

12-25 Epyphisial union of long bones. Long bones in my stride,
glib nights, counterfeit smiles,
trumped-up charges against what I loved.
Years blindly eating childhood's fat.
Knowledge like a shield wounds when pressed too near.

25-36 Active vault suture closing. Active designs in the skull.
Delicate zippers sealing in the stars, interstellar dust,
brackets of marriage, and one short birth
shaped like a comma between two worlds.

36-50 Lipping of scapular glenoid fossa. Fossa, a ditch.
I have not come to it. Fossa, an abyss.
I wait for the master archeologist to dig and pick,
tweezers plucking artifacts, my trail of refuse and
souvenirs.

50 plus Quasi pathological erosions of bone. The pendulum's pit.
My old electrons blow their fuse. Dark pond.
My mother like a frog, white exhausted thighs collapsed.

plus What did it mean to play a xylophone of bones?
An octave of stone. Delight. Decrease, bleached lips
dim against my fingers closing in a stiffening fist,
dumb warrior pitted against eloquent death, illiterate mulch
for those whose squalls will go "wyde in this world
wonderes to hear," the light their second amnion.

Paul Reinwald

Robert Stewart

James Carothers

BIRDS IN THE WILDERNESS

Johnny Dillingcourt sat at the corner of the shallow end of the Wah-Ken-Da Day Camp swimming pool, touching his white toes to the cool morning water. The Counselor, Lockhart, was trying to give him his swimming lesson, but the boy, wearing stiff navy blue boxer trunks, was not interested. At the deep end of the pool the other Braves ran and shouted, dived and swam noisily.

"Would you like to go in the water now?"

"No," the boy said. "I'm all right here. I'm very happy here." He drew his toes up from the water.

"Your choice," said Lockhart. "Are you sure you don't want to?" The question was perfunctory, a part of the morning ritual the two observed.

"No," said the boy, looking without envy or fear across his knees and past the Counselor toward the deep end of the pool. "I don't want to learn to swim. Let me just sit here."

"If you're sure." Lockhart rose and walked down the short steps into the water. He inhaled deeply and pushed off underwater toward the deep end of the pool. The boy watched him, looking over his knees at the vague receding shadow. He heard movement behind him, but he did not look up. "Good morning, Sally," he said.

At the other end of the pool Lockhart was breaking up a fight. Tanned, wiry Jeffrey Gail and pink chubby Bobby Benton were circling angrily on the concrete apron behind the diving board.

"He started it," said Bobby Benton, looking at Lockhart.

"I never started it," said Jeffrey Gail. He continued to circle. "He started it first."

"I don't care who started it," said the Counselor. He moved between them. "Both of you go sit out of the water for a while."

Bobby Benton looked up at him in mute appeal. Jeffrey Gail, seeing his opening, lunged past the Counselor and hit the other boy hard in the stomach with his doubled fist. Bobby Benton moaned and sat down heavily on the concrete. Jeffrey Gail dived into the water, surfaced beneath the diving board and spouted a stream of water toward the others. "See what you get, Benton," he said.

Lockhart looked at him. "That's all for you today," he said. "Get out and get dressed."

"Make me," said Jeffrey Gail, treading water. "Go to hell and make me." He tossed his head, shaking his long black hair away from his eyes.

"All right." Lockhart dived into the pool, grabbed the boy around the waist and lifted him high above the surface. He held him briefly above the water with fierce strength and then slammed him harshly under. The boy twisted with complete doomed hatred. Lockhart lifted him again and dunked him a second, longer time. He raised him again and held him, looking into the sharp dark eyes. "Do you want to get out now?"

"Yes," said Jeffrey Gail. Lockhart thrust the boy contemptuously toward the side of the pool. Jeffrey Gail hit the wall and recoiled, churning his arms and legs crazily for a moment. Then he recovered and vaulted out of the pool. Some of the other boys were laughing.

"You shouldn't of done that," said Jeffrey Gail, hotly. He held his elbow next to his taut side. "I'm gonna tell my mom you put your hands on me, and she'll get you fired."

"Talk," said the Counselor, looking up at him. "Big talk."

"Yeah," said the boy. "She told me to watch out for you putting your hands on me." He took his hand away from his elbow and looked at the scrape where it was beginning to bleed. "You about broke my arm."

Lockhart looked at the boy. "You go on up to the Lodge and have Sally put something on that elbow," he said evenly. Jeffrey Gail turned with insolent dignity and walked away from the pool. Lockhart looked at the other boys. "Okay," he said. "Swim." He rocked into a surface dive and swam cleanly beneath the water towards the shallow end of the pool. He could feel the chlorine stinging into his eyes and he shut them, swimming in the wet dark void. When he sensed that he was nearing the end he opened his eyes again and he saw in blurred outline Johnny Dillingcourt's thin legs hanging limp at the shallow edge beside the steps.

"Hi," he said, surfacing.

"Looks like you were having a little trouble there."

"Nothing I'd call trouble," said Lockhart. "Do you want to go in the water now?"

"I suppose so," said the boy, without enthusiasm. "Sally was here."

"Oh," said Lockhart. "What did she want?"

"She was looking for you," said the boy. "But she didn't say so." He yawned. "Sally really has nice legs," he said, looking past the Counselor. Lockhart followed the boy's gaze up the hill toward the Lodge where he could see, in the distance, Sally inspecting Jeffrey Gail's elbow. "Yes," he agreed, judiciously, "she does. But what's that to you?"

"I'd really like to go to bed with her," said Johnny Dillingcourt. "Wouldn't you?"

Lockhart looked at the thin boy. "What do you know about it?" he asked. "You're only twelve years old. What do you know about going to bed with girls?"

The boy smiled. "Lots."

Lockhart looked at him dubiously. "Such as?"

"Lots," said the boy, energetically. "The male sperm enters the female ovum and the embryo grows into a child, like me." He locked his arms around his knees, drawing them up towards his chest. "In this position, I mean."

"I'm impressed," said Lockhart. "Where did you learn all this?"

The boy smiled mysteriously. "Places," he said. "I've been around, you know."

"Places," Lockhart repeated. "Which places have you been around to?"

"Well," said the boy, reluctantly. "It was actually in the library that I first found out about it."

"Oh," said Lockhart. "In a book. That's different."

"Why?"

"It just is." Lockhart stood up suddenly. Jeffrey Gail was standing on the diving board. Lockhart walked rapidly along the edge of the pool toward the deep end. "No running in the pool," Johnny Dillingcourt called after him. The other Braves looked at the Counselor expectantly. "Dammit, Gail, I told you to get dressed."

The boy looked at him. There was a gauze bandage taped to his elbow. "Sally said my elbow was okay to swim with," he said.

"Sure she did," said the Counselor. "She put a bandage on you and told you to go swimming. The chlorine is good for the germs. Go get dressed."

Jeffrey Gail looked down at him. "What does she know?" he said angrily. "She can't even count."

"What do you mean?" said Lockhart.

"You told her that," said the boy. "I heard you. Up at the Lodge yesterday. You said she was a dumb bitch that can't even count and you made her cry."

"Little pitchers have big ears," said Lockhart. He reached across the diving board and pulled the boy down to the wet concrete. "Go get dressed," he said, swatting him loudly on the tight red trunks. Jeffrey Gail walked away from the pool and up the hill again. He turned once and, seeing that Lockhart was looking after him, turned again and began to run. Lockhart turned and walked slowly back to the shallow end of the pool where Johnny Dillingcourt was in the process of lowering himself into the water. The boy cautiously descended the steps, sliding along the concrete on the seat of the boxer trunks until he reached the edge where he rested momentarily, gathering courage.

"Looks like more trouble," said the boy. He had negotiated two steps. The water lapped silently against his prominent ribs. Lockhart could see the goose-flesh.

"Do you want me to try and teach you how to swim now?"

The boy looked up at him. "Try to," he said patiently. "Not try and. 'And' is a conjunction, implying that trying and teaching are distinct activities."

"Don't give me grammar, Dillingcourt," said the Counselor. "Swim." He hoisted the boy off of the steps and carried him away from the corner of the pool. He could feel the boy shaking in his arms. "Don't be afraid of the water," he said.

"But I am afraid. I could drown."

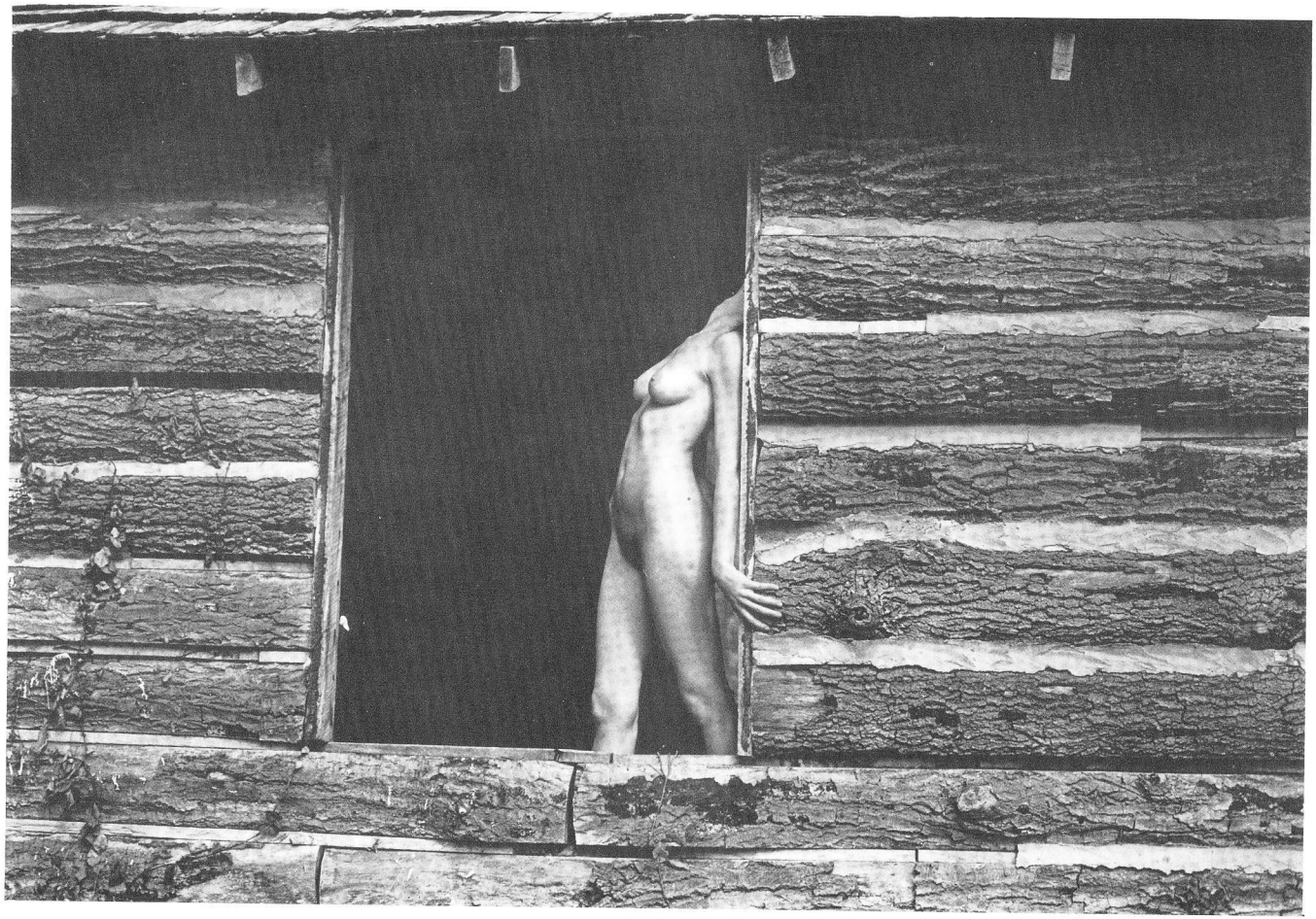
"I won't let anything happen to you," said the Counselor. His voice was smooth and professionally reassuring. "Stick your head under the water and don't be afraid."

The boy looked at the water and then at Lockhart and then at the water again. He rubbed a small fist over each of his eyes, took a deep breath, pinched his nose, and nodded. Lockhart pushed the boy's head under the water. The boy resisted immediately, but Lockhart held him. The captive flailed his arms in panic. Lockhart released the head and the boy fought his way to the surface, beating back the liquid prison. He stood gasping in the water, shaking, coughing, and rubbing his eyes. "Let's quit," he said. "That's enough for right now."

"You'll never learn to swim if you are always going to be afraid of the water." Lockhart carried the boy back to the corner of the pool. Johnny Dillingcourt shivered and looked at the sun. "It's almost lunchtime anyway," he said.

In the dining room of the Lodge Johnny Dillingcourt sat quietly while the other Braves sang.

Here we sit like birds in the wilderness
Birds in the wilderness
Birds in the wilderness



Charles Stainback

Scream

Steven J. Cromwell

Here we sit like birds in the wilderness
Waiting for our dessert.

The boy nudged the Counselor as the others chorused on. "Hey," he said. "You forgot my pills."

"No," said Lockhart. "I didn't." He extracted a small yellow envelope from his shirt pocket. "Here."

The boy shook the pills into his palm and studied them. He arranged them in a neat row on the table. "May I have some more lemonade?"

"Sure," said Bobby Benton. "Pass the bug-juice to Dillingcourt, Gail."

"Yeah," said Jeffrey Gail in a high sing-song voice. "Little Johnny has to take his pills." His voice changed and he spoke huskily. "Poopy Dillincourt's poopy pills." "Hey Dillingcourt," he said, seriously, "do you poop pills?"

"Let him alone now, Gail," said the Counselor, "or no dessert."

"There probably ain't any," said Jeffrey Gail. "Maybe Sally can't count desserts either."

"Shut up," said Lockhart. Johnny Dillingcourt took a swallow of the green lemonade, closed his eyes, put the first pill between his lips, and swallowed.

"Here's the dessert," said Bobby Benton. "Finally. All right! Strawberries."

"Hello, Sally," said Lockhart, taking the tray of strawberries and sponge cake and beginning to pass out the bowls. "I hear you were looking for me."

"I wasn't looking for you," said Sally, looking at him. She was wearing a Wah-Ken-Da sweatshirt over a tennis dress. Her chestnut hair was sweated against one cheek.

"What's new?" said Lockhart. "Anything?" He was trying to smile.

"You'll be the first to know." said Sally quietly. "Almost." She turned abruptly and walked away from the table.

Johnny Dillingcourt nudged the Counselor. "Somebody can have my dessert," he said.

"Me," said Jeffrey Gail.

"Me," said Bobby Benton and several other Braves.

"I'll take it," said the Counselor. The boys booed him. "Okay, then we'll horsengoggle for it." He looked at the bowl of strawberries and cake. "What's the matter with you and dessert today?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Johnny Dillingcourt. "I just don't like strawberries."

"You don't like strawberries?" said Bobby Benton. "You're crazy, Dillingcourt."

The boy shrugged. "I don't like them," he said simply. "Besides, they make me break out."

"Yeah," said Bobby Benton. "That means you're allergic to them."

"What's a lurgic?" said Jeffrey Gail.

"It means you break out," said Bobby Benton, knowingly. "I'm allergic too. To turpentine."

"Turpentine?" said Jeffrey Gail. He scowled and made a gagging noise. "That's the stuff you paint with. I'd rather have a lurgic to that than strawberries, any old day. Hey, Dillingcourt, how come you don't take a pill so you can eat strawberries?"

"I don't know if there's a pill for that," said the boy. He looked at the Counselor. "Is there?"

"You can get pills for just about anything," said Lockhart. "It depends on what kind of allergy you have."

"What's allergy?" said Jeffrey Gail. "I thought you said a lurgic."

"Allergy is being allergic," said the Counselor. "It's two different forms of the same word."

"That's stupid," said Jeffrey Gail.

The Counselor raised his hand. "Here it goes," he said. "Ein, zwei, drei, horsengoggle."

After lunch the Braves chose sides for Red Rover, arguing at the end about who would have to take Johnny Dillingcourt. It was another ritual. When the Braves played softball he would go dutifully to right field and he would strike out without disappointment. The Counselor settled the dispute by putting him on Jeffrey Gail's team. The two teams battled back and forth with shrill intensity. At last Jeffrey Gail and Johnny Dillingcourt stood alone on the hard clay playground.

"Nuts," said Jeffrey Gail. "This is it. C'mon, Dillingcourt, give me the Indian Grip. We've gotta try and get Benton." He put his hand strongly on the other boy's wrist. "Try and hold on for once," he said. "Okay, Red Rover, Red Rover, send Benton right over."

Bobby Benton grinned and began to run at them. "Hang on, Dillingcourt," said Jeffrey Gail. Bobby Benton flung himself at the locked arms and the three boys crashed to the ground. Johnny Dillingcourt could feel the pain and he pulled his arm away.

"Okay," said Bobby Benton. "Come on over to my team, Gail." Johnny Dillingcourt lay on the ground where he had fallen.

"That's all," said the Counselor. "Benton's team wins."

"Ain't he supposed to try and run through," said Jeffrey Gail, without hope. "Let him try."

Lockhart looked at the fallen boy. "No," he said. "There's no point in that. You lost, Jeffrey."

"That's no fair," said Jeffrey Gail. "My team should of won. We was winning until everbody started running through him." He pointed at Johnny Dillingcourt.

"It doesn't matter," said the Counselor. "It's just a game. You guys can go on down to the Fort and build something now. I've got to go up to the Lodge for a while to see Sally."

"Teach her to count," said Jeffrey Gail.

Lockhart walked away up the hill. The Braves ran down the hill to the woods where the Fort was. Johnny Dillingcourt still lay on the ground. In the hot quiet he catalogued his injuries. His right shin had been barked and his left wrist was bruised where Jeffrey Gail had gripped him. Satisfied with his inventory, he sat up and began to count to five hundred by fives. As he counted he began to pull up the sparse tufts of grass, shaking the dry clay to see if there were any earthworms. "It's too dry," he said softly. "They're all down deep." He looked up over the trees, directly into the sun. "I am a solar battery," he said to himself. "And the sun is the source of my power." He could hear the other Braves down in the woods, yelling and whooping. They were lashing a gate to the fence around the Fort and Jeffrey Gail was shouting directions. Johnny Dillingcourt looked away from the sun and struggled to his feet. "I suppose I ought to go help them," he said. As he walked down the hill he wondered what Jeffrey Gail had meant about Sally and counting.

The gate was a haphazard barrier of boards and dry sticks, lashed together with a complicated series of leather thongs. A cotton rope led from the biggest branch to a post far inside the enclosure. Johnny Dillingcourt picked briefly at the leather knots. He could hear the other Braves whispering among themselves in the treehouse. "I'll climb over, then," he said to himself. He reached for the top rail and began to climb up.

"Hey, look at Dillingcourt. He's gonna ambush us." The Braves laughed. The gate collapsed suddenly and the boy crashed forward into the enclosure. The braves came down from the treehouse and surrounded him.

"Look what you done to our gate, Dillingcourt," said Jeffrey Gail. "Nice going."

The boy looked up at him and smiled apologetically. "I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to."

"Yeah," said Jeffrey Gail, sullenly. "You never mean anything. But you do things anyway." He picked up a heavy stick. "You made my team lose Red Rover and now you've broke our gate."

"You know I didn't mean to."

Jeffrey Gail looked at the stick in his hand. "Okay for you, Johnny Dillingcourt," he said. He raised the stick above his head.

"Don't," said Johnny Dillingcourt. Jeffrey Gail looked at the boy on the ground and spit on him. Johnny Dillingcourt looked at the new dark spot on his shirt sleeve and said nothing. Jeffrey Gail threw the stick over the fence. Then he spit again. The other Braves moved forward.

"Hey," Lockhart yelled. The Braves ran away into the woods.

"He broke our gate," Jeffrey Gail called from a safe distance. "Serves him right."

Lockhart gathered the boy into his arms and carried him out of the enclosure and into the woods. He could feel the convulsive sobbing. "Never mind," he said, over and over. "Never mind. Never mind." He sat the boy down on the grass beneath a crabapple tree. "Stop crying," he said quietly. "You'll be okay if you stop crying. Stop it now."

The boy continued to sob. "I didn't mean to," he managed finally. "I couldn't help it. They tied the gate shut and I tried to climb over and it broke." He sobbed again, with renewed energy.

"And so they spit on you," said Lockhart. "The dirty little bastards. Goddamn them all to everlasting hell."

The boy stopped his sobbing for a moment. "Profanity is the attempt of a weak mind to express itself forcibly," he recited.

"Yes," said the Counselor. He took a handkerchief from his pocket and dabbed at the boy's eyes. "You'll be okay," he said, after a brief inspection. "You're not really hurt. Come on. Get up."

But the boy would not get up. Finally Lockhart lifted him to his feet and leaned him against the dark twisted trunk of the crabapple tree. He looked at the mixture of sweat and tears on the boy's face in the afternoon sun. His nose was running. "Don't cry again." The shouts of the other Braves danced in and out of hearing range. "Grab that limb," he ordered, indicating with his head. The boy reached above him and closed his weak fingers around the branch. Lockhart let go of the boy,

leaving him dangling from the limb. The boy kicked his legs and fell to the ground. "Again," said the Counselor. He lifted the boy up in the air and sat him on the limb, which swayed with the weight.

"Let me down," said Johnny Dillingcourt.

"Let yourself down."

"I can't."

"Yes, you can."

"Please let me down."

"Drop, then."

"No. Please let me down. Let me down."

"Get down by yourself," said the Counselor. "Or sit there for a while." He walked away through the woods. The laughter and shouts of the other Braves could no longer be heard. The boy sat in the tree and looked at the mossy ground beneath him. He wondered if there were earthworms here.

It was late afternoon when Jeffrey Gail found Johnny Dillingcourt.

"Whatcha doin' in a tree, Dillingcourt?"

"Nothing," said the boy. "Thinking."

"Hey, Dillingcourt, I'm sorry I spit on you."

"Did he tell you to come down here and say that?"

Jeffrey Gail rocked the limb gently. "What difference does that make?"

"It makes a difference. Quit rocking the limb."

"Well, I'm still sorry," said Jeffrey Gail. "Whether it's because I'm sorry or because he told me to. I don't see no difference, and you can't make me."

The boy looked away through the trees. "I suppose not," he said. "Anyway, you shouldn't have said that about Sally."

"Sally's okay," said Jeffrey Gail. "C'mon, Dillingcourt, quit picking at me."

"Help me down. I've got to go back up to the Lodge." He looked towards the sun. "It's getting to be about time for them to come for us." Jeffrey Gail reached up and caught the other boy around the waist. He lifted him from the limb to the ground. The boys walked through the woods.

"You shouldn't of been sitting in a tree all afternoon, Dillingcourt. You missed a great fight between me and Benton."

"It was all right sitting in the tree," said Johnny Dillingcourt. "Who won the fight?"

"I did," said Jeffrey Gail.

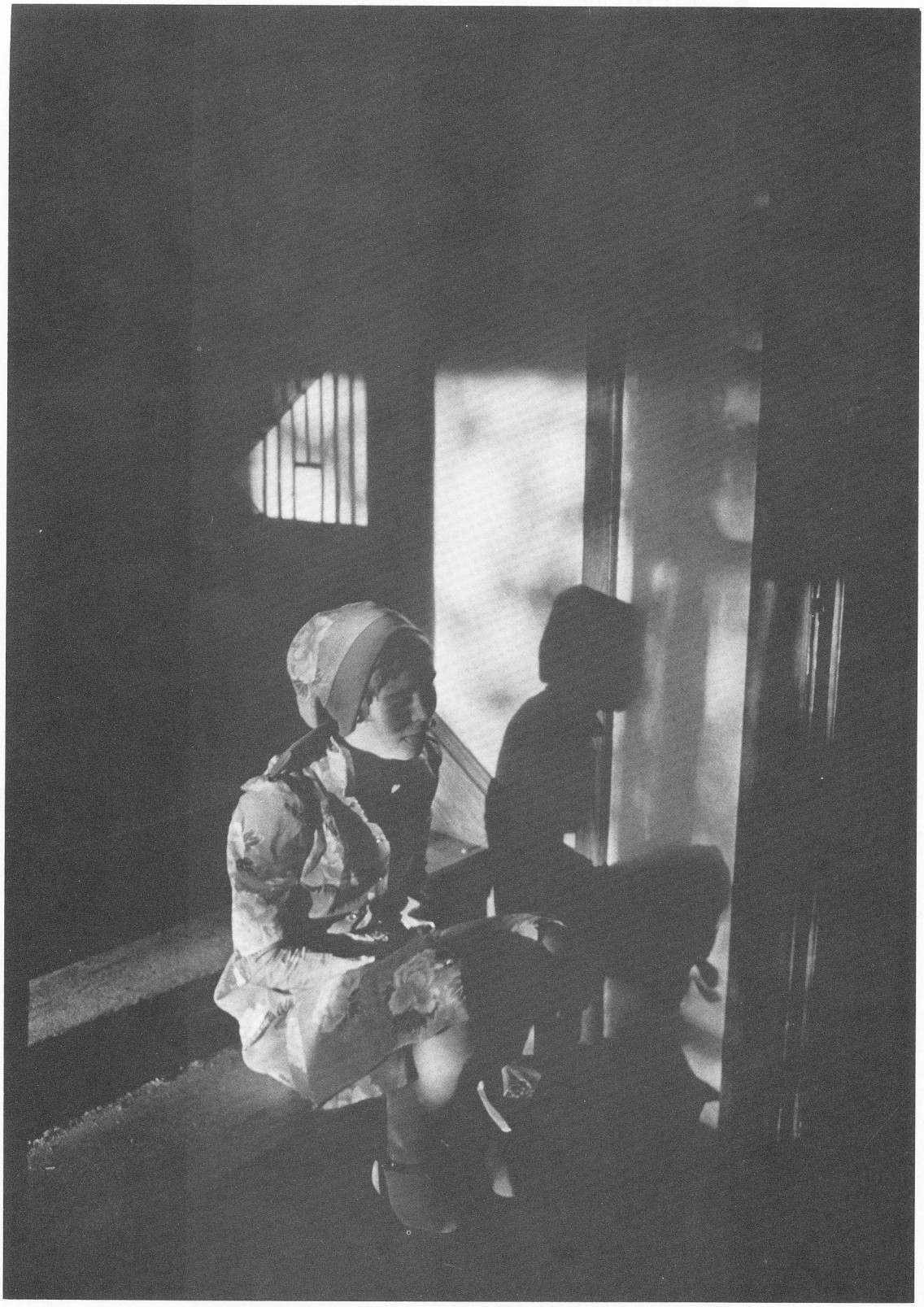
Sally and Lockhart handed the tired boys into cars and station wagons, exchanging the usual pleasantries with the mothers. Lockhart explained about Jeffrey Gail's elbow to his mother. When the last car had gone, the two of them walked hand in hand down the hill to the swimming pool. They sat beside the still water and talked quietly into the evening.

James A. Heynen

POLITICAL POEM

My friends and I pass beyond
sadness
into the resolute
silence of small creatures.
We take the order of beetles in winter
tucked under logs
hardly breathing.
Their strange manner of loving
which we trust,
taking so little from the world,
giving so little back.

Will Crocker



Lawrence McFarland

Guy R. Beining

CONCRETE DREAM CXLVI

the corpse floated
upstream,
finding a hole
in the night.
the cafe burned
in its noise;
the riverbank
clapped its watered tongue.
in rare form
these red-necks,
feeding on each others
drunks.
one girl placed
her tits on a shelf,
as lacquered waves
of Dixie death
passed bye, upstream.

Guy R. Beining

CONCRETE DREAM CXLVIII

my madame
wore britchers
& sprayed lysin
in her vacuous hair,
her high ankles
stepping far
& daring.
a broken row
of herdsmen went
sniffing at her
heels.

John N. Miller

KAENA POINT

(Oahu, Hawaiian Islands)

Only a hermit could have lived there,
Parched upon the swept rock thrusting
Into salt spray where the last scarred
Ridges of the island sloped and crusted
To their outmost point.

Over a jolting, dust-brown road
We drove there for our brief encampments--
Coming to fish, bringing our own
Firewood and water for the scant
Accomodations to be made.

The ocean dropped to deep blue
Off those juts of jaggedly bare lava,
And waves would seethe over their salt-strewn
Ledges at high tide. No son and father
Could want to stay too long there

Where your brown-seamed face sprouted its stubble
And my lips cracked from the raw exposure.
Leaving behind the spent black embers
Of old fishing camps, we returned
To the ritual amenities of home.

Joel Wilkinson

Poetry

the way bark moves up a tree and branches
into something smoother, leaves something
green in the air.

but crevices are grooved in its shriveled
trunk,

the roots go underground.

R. D. Lakin

ROETHKE

You felt its urgent clutching,
your relentless child grown big,
bubbling into words conjured
out of your coffee pot
and blowing open your cabin door.
You believed in wet birds
and streaming moss on long dark days,
peering beneath the rain,
beneath the flat grey
to find remnants of a flower.
You left us with songs of birth,
a nudging scent of rose,
the landscape of a grain of sand,
an unsheathed world of sloths
and slugs and snails as well as swans.
Your teeming rhymes defy
the standard betrayal of the living,
the orchid's sinister breath
creeping from this moldy box
of lilies and sprouting bulbs and lime.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

WILLIAM FISHER, a graduate student at Kansas University, has recently had stories in Sandstone Review, Vieux Carre, and Mississippi Gambler..... DON BYRD is now teaching at SUNY Albany and has been represented in AuxArcs, Tansy, and Cottonwood ..... ROBERT HILLEBRAND has published a novel, Penguin Dust (1969), and has been appearing in Wormwood Review, Kaleidescope, The Brass Ring, Mandala, Imprints Quarterly, Atom Mind, Beloit Poetry Journal, and other little magazines..... PAM JA MES is a Kansas University senior who is herewith marking her first published story..... MASON JORDAN MASON has poetry in the last edition of Langston Hughes' Negro Poetry anthology and has also appeared in European anthologies of Black poetry edited by Rosey E. Poole, Janheinz Jahn, and others..... JAMES HEYNEN has been writing out of Eugene, Oregon, editing for Northwest Review, and has or will appear in Prairie Schooner, Southern Poetry Review, Carolina Quarterly, South Dakota Review, Sumac, and others..... JACK ANDERSON, a loyal resident of Greenwich Village and a former editor of Dance magazine, has become a popular reader and teacher of poetry around the nation; in addition to many magazine appearances, he is currently represented on the bookstands by The Hurricane Lamp (1968) and The Invention of New Jersey (1969)..... CHARLES WILLIG writes in Augusta, Georgia, with his poetry coming out in such magazines as Nimrod, The Poetry Bag, and Western Review..... GERRY SHAPIRO has been published recently in the Kansas City Star magazine and is a graduate student at Kansas University..... DANNY RENDLEMAN has currently been feeding poetry from his house in Flint, Michigan into Field, Rolling Stone, Northwest Review, Madrona, Falcon, Epoch, and other such magazines, and his new book, Signals to the Blind (1972) is reportedly doing well..... ED ORR has been published in Wisconsin Review and others..... COLETTE INEZ lives in Orange-burg, New Jersey, and in addition to being represented recently in several magazines has published her first book, The Woman Who Loved Worms with Doubleday..... JAMES CAROTHERS teaches at Kansas University and has recently had stories appear in The Ounce, Spice, and Midlands..... JOHN MILLER grew up in the Hawaiian Islands, later worked under Yvor Winters at Stanford, and now teaches at Denison University; he has a new article on Thom Gunn's poetry in The Iowa Review and has edited A World of Her Own: Writers and the Feminist Controversy (1971)..... TED KOOSER has published in more than fifty magazines at last count, edits Salt Creek Reader, and his new book is Official Entry Blank (1969).....