

COTTONWOOD REVIEW



WINTER 1973-74



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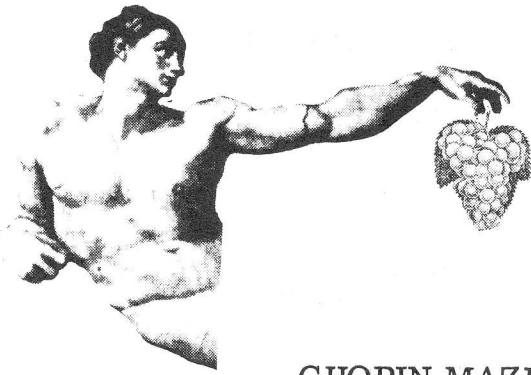
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CHOPIN MAZURKA

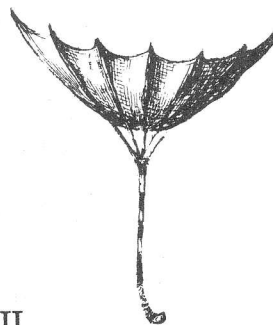
Too weary to dance to,
Mazurkas should
echo
in an empty ballroom
where moonlight
through tattered drapes
reveals
remembered elegance as thin
as paint
curling on the wainscot,
as thick as melancholy
in half time.
Lacking the dignity of the polonaise,
with its major forthright chords
the mazurka feels no important grief,
only
the sadness of invitations
the regrets for appointments missed
and kept.
This dance threatening always
to end,
sending home unsatisfied
those who came to meet someone
whose eye was elsewhere,
hangs
unresolved
like conversations in salons.

--Walter Mosley



CONCRETE DREAM CCCI

the feast all petered out,
the festivals final stage
fit for clowns.
festive, the sheets
in open outrage;
grapes touching nothing,
even the twine
takes a lunar skip.
a herd of cows
surrounds the group.
the brave tribe
leaves the dark
only to return happy.



CONCRETE DREAM CCCIII

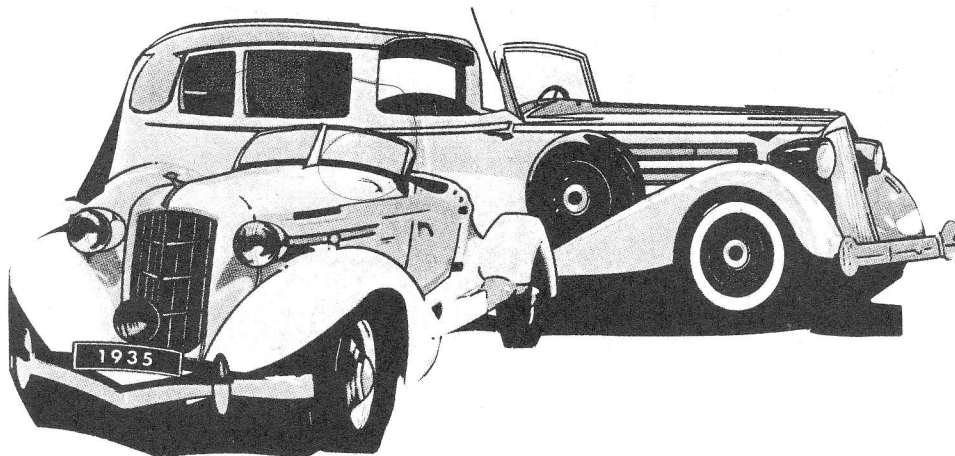
in subway trains
the man eternal in
the sense of stream-lined noise,
and being lost, boxed in,
graffito puppeteering
the night;
rich colors on his back,
this eternal man
comes out of his city shack
to tie up an opening,
a parting,
lifting the stink
of city soup
that crawls like a hideous gas
thru his night dreams.

--Guy Beining

Distinctions

Black, black, all the trees are black. The houses are black. The sky's dark too. You're indistinguishable from them all, what's left after an eraser rubs over a piece of paper, you become more virgin each time I sleep with you, blessed with breast cancer and missing 23 teeth, rigged up with a tiny bloody flower that explodes into sawdust at the top of your head on Jesus's birthday in a bar while giant baby caterpillars are bowing and catching tomatoes, bananas, making their debuts, balancing watermelons on their noses, barking like seals. You want camp, the underground, the Mafia, gangsters, hero movies and funky phallic airplanes zooming over drooping landscapes, ecstatic actresses bursting out of their red skins, a full view of tomorrow in sight on the horizon until your bastard brother from Istanbul appears. Here time is an arrow that violates your personal typicality and we are getting dangerously close to the delirious tropics while white cats with red eyes are freezing black and blue: we're in the middle of a recognition scene with nothing at all beyond the climax and the audience is stuck holding its breath for two people totally incapable of confronting each other, my son's hissing from the apron, the lightbulbs are breaking, the whole world is turning absolutely blind and I'm turning violet, hysterical, indistinguishable from the rest of the action. I'm somebody's theoretical ingenue, draped in exotic fly-paper, being pelted with month-old pistachio nuts, stripping furiously although the landscape is black and soon they won't see me anymore, you're still out there in the darkness somewhere, bleeding, holding out your broken arms in the particularly pathetic way they taught you to do it at drama school, all the doctors in the house are pleading insanity--and then I'm hit with a black spotlight against a black backdrop, hit as the protagonist, indistinguishable from you.

--Christine Zawadiwsky



ACCOUNTING AUTUMN

The typewriters are melted on their desks.
The files are hollowed by the ice-worm.
The metal leaves are rust.
The plastic apples litter the vault.
The hand still clutches the eraser
that erased the eyes.
Fat red spiders spin webs large
as a giant's skull
inside the dead air-conditioner.
The whizkid executive is slumped
in the elevator that will never open.
The roots of the treasurer
have turned neoprene.
Glass-snakes lie brittle
in the secretarial pool.
The carpet grass is green.
The custodian has frozen
in the lock of the computer-brain.
The dust-boats are frozen in the yellow tide.
The chairman and his desk top,
melted into one another,
dream their dreams together.
This is the autumn the grapes predicted:
all loss, no sorrow, no gain:
this is the elegy of the sane.

--Amon Liner

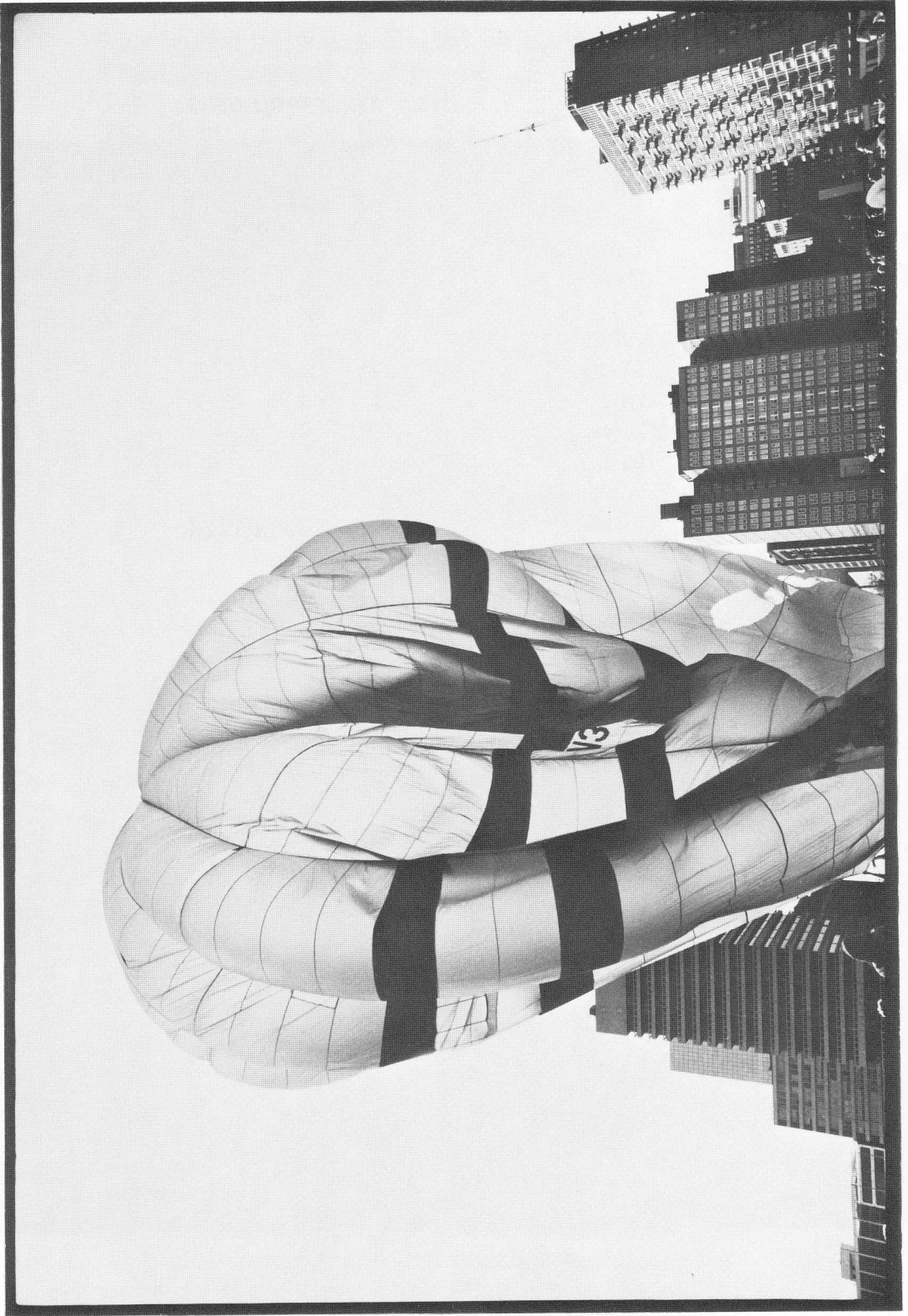
ON A TEXT FROM J. B. S. HALDANE

The world is queerer than you can imagine,
The world is like a story told to children.
The prince is there because there is a princess,
The witch is there because there is a dragon,
The dragon there because there is a kingdom,
The kingdom so the prince will do him battle;
Expel the witch and marry with the princess
So there will be another prince and princess
And witch and dragon and another battle
Because these things are all there in the story.

--John Taylor



Larry Schwarm



Mitch Deck

THE DISGUISE

In childhood
I was thought to be
sharp-witted but peculiar -- not
right in the head. I had
that strange mixture of
convention and unsettled
behavior to outlive: my mother's
conformity, my father's
wildness -- both pulling
me down. I settled
for aloofness. An indifference
I never felt. It was this
that healed me, gave me
a life. Now, my own
children look at me with
strange eyes. I can't
tell them how much love I
have hidden, nor do I want them
to crack open my disguise.

--John Stevens Wade

THE ONE WHO HAD THE VOICE

The one who had the voice is dead,
and in that place a barrenness
(such silence that it presses in,
and any sound is ominous)
resides.

Do not deny the salted roots,
and do not ask that barrenness
to bear a new assault. Observe,
in such a place, the paradox
of rain.

--Rachel Lukens

HIER ET AUJOURD'HUI

Toute la forêt attend que la statue abaisse son bras levé.
Ce sera pour aujourd'hui.
Hier on avait pensé que ce serait peut-être pour hier.
Aujourd'hui on en est sûr, même les racines le savent.
Ce sera pour aujourd'hui.

COMMENCEMENTS

Dans l'oeil de cette biche on voit
Un étang noir, une cabane
D'un autre monde diaphane
Où boit un cerf parmi ses bois.

De ce futur cheval n'existe
Encore que le hennissement
Et la crinière dans sa fuite
Que se disputent quatre vents.

De loin voici que m'arrive
Un clair visage sans maître
Cherchant un corps pour que vive
Sa passion de connaître.

Nulle lèvre ne le colore
Mais avec un soin studieux
Double, une natte de cheveux
Tombe sur un fragment d'épaule.

Virez chevelures de femmes,
Virez beaux gestes sans bras,
Audaces qui cherchez une âme,
Violences qui voulez un bras,

Regards sans iris ni racines
Rôdant dans l'espace argentin,
O regards, serez-vous enfin
Retenus par une rétine ?

--Jules Supervielle

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

The whole forest is waiting for the statue to lower its raised arm.
It will happen today.
Yesterday it was thought that, perhaps, it would happen yesterday.
Today it is certain, even the roots know it.
It will happen today.

BEGINNINGS

In this doe's eyes there can be seen
A black pool and a shanty hut
From a shadowy foreign world
Where a stag drinks amid his horns.

Of this horse of the future
There exists only a whinny
And the mane stretched out in flight
Against which the four winds struggle.

Here is a clear face come to me
From far off without a master
Looking for flesh in which it can
Live out its passion for knowledge.

No lips give color to this face
But with a doubly studious
Precision, a plait of hair
Falls on a fragment of shoulder.

Feminine coiffures must change,
Handsome armless gestures must change,
Daring acts in search of a soul,
Violent acts in need of an arm,

Looks without irises or roots
Prowling through the Argentine space,
O looks, will you finally be
Restrained by a retina?

--Jules Supervielle
[translation by Geoffrey Gardner]

RÊVE

Des mains effacent le jour
D'autres s'en prennent à la nuit.
Assis sur un banc mal équarri
J'attends mon tour.

Souffles d'une moustache,
Aciers à renifler,
L'oeil noir d'une arquebuse,
Un sourire ébrêché.

On entre, on sort, on entre,
La porte est grande ouverte.
Seigneurs du présent, seigneurs du futur,
Seigneurs du passé, seigneurs de l'obscur.

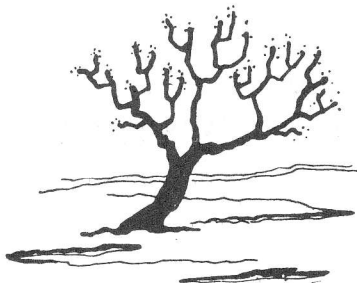
Quand la fenêtre s'ouvrira
Qui en vivra, que en mourra?
Quand le soleil reviendra
Comprendrai-je que c'est lui?

ÉCHANGES

Dans la falque du petit jour
Ont bu les longs oiseaux nocturnes
Jusqu'à tomber morts alentour
Au dernier soupir de la lune.

Voici les flamants de l'aurore
Qui font leur nid dans la lumière
Avec la soie de l'horizon
Et le vent doré de leurs ailes.

--Jules Supervielle



DREAM

Some hands blot out the day
Others attack the night.
Seated on a rough-hewn bench
I wait my turn.

Breaths below a mustache,
Daggers to sniffle with,
The black eye of a harquebus,
A notched and jagged smile.

Someone comes in, goes out, comes in,
The door is open wide.
Lords of the present, lords of the future,
Lords of the past, lords of the obscure.

When the window is opened
Who will live, who die of it?
When at last the sun returns
Will I know that it is he?

EXCHANGE

From the pool of dawn's light
The old nocturnal birds
Have sipped until falling dead
With the last sigh of the moon.

Here auroral flamingos
Build their nests in the light
With silk from the horizon
And the gilt wind of their wings.

--Jules Supervielle
[translation by Geoffrey Gardner]

CUANDO

Cuando los barcos pálidos del alba
crujan entre las aguas podridas de la ciudad
aquel anciano del bigote gris se volverá aún más tieso
un gallo se despertará (y quizás no cante)

un áspero adoquín (de los alrededores de la estatua
del León de Belfort) cumplirá un millón de años
Tú dormirás como una charca de peces amarillos
yo roncaré el final de este poema

AHORA

Ahora puede caminar por estas viejas calles
lentamente con los ojos fijos
en esas luces estremecidas
Ahora no hay camiones mugiendo en las esquinas
no hay griterío
mis presurosos semejantes han de estar durmiendo
y el ciego que toca el acordeón todos los sabados
acaso sueña que mira a través de un microscopio

Ahora puede caminar por estas viejas calles
como un niño como un ciego como un buey
Todo no es más que un silencio una profunda
noche en la que un hombre sueña los tacones
y va pensando en lo que en una noche idéntica
de un invierno olvidado
(los siglos arden como las lámparas entre las capas de sombra)
un hombre iría pensando.

--Fayad Jamís



WHEN

When the pale boats of dawn
groan among the city's polluted waters
that old man with the gray moustache will come back even stronger
a rooster will wake up (and maybe not sing)
a rough cobblestone near the statue
of the Lion of Belfort will celebrate its 1000th birthday
like a pool of yellow fish you'll sleep
I'll snore the end of this poem

NOW

Now I can walk these old streets
slowly with eyes fixed
on these shimmering lights
now no trucks go roaring around the corners
no one is shouting
my harried comrades are all asleep
and the blindman who plays the accordion every Saturday
is maybe dreaming about looking through a microscope

Now I can walk these old streets
like a child like a blindman like a cow
with only the deep silence
of a night where a man listens to just his footsteps
and goes along thinking about a similar night
of a forgotten winter
(centuries burn like lamps among the enveloping shadows)
when a man went along thinking.

--Fayad Jamís
[translation by Joan Piurek]



THE EVENING SUN SHONE THROUGH

The evening sun shone through the forest
and laid long shadows of light
 like rust upon the ground,
and the timber was dark against the gathering dusk
that rose out of the earth like dust
 into the light of the sky.
White mountains lifted in the distance
their frosted peaks fixed in space
 as if frozen forever,
the snow upon their slopes lay smooth without flaw
growing deeper with each storm of the season
 until the thaws of spring.
And then the evening sun sank as if drawn
 by the mountains
and its light lingered a golden glow fading blood red
into the clouds until the first frost
 of the stars appeared in the sky.

--Wendell B. Anderson



88

Between dark cemetery stones :6th Street
east to Avenue B, my sneakers
muffled by the grass beneath, twice
in a movie I helped some Indian die, walk

beside graves, confused by a street
without wording, carry

feathers :numbers
increase, increase, recall
the mist, the lake, the nation underneath.

--Simon Perchik

193

Not too tight, I want--
Can't you remember how I walked in

my pants gnarled, my bones
rocks. I want

my rapids loose. Not--
Use your tape. Plumb! Want my pants
weak
to rage, raging
drained.

195

The mask a trigger :his breaths
jerk, he

waits, wanting to awake, find
the Fairy :each tooth

traded, the nurse
every night swapping parts

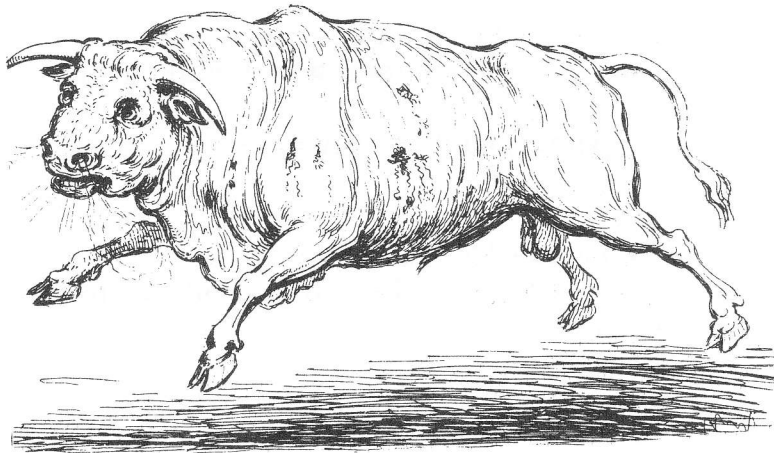
:his mattress
bargained for rails :jailed

he dreams by deals, the mask
reaching his eyes :asleep

he's not yet identified.
Escape is possible.

--Simon Perchik





BEFORE THE OPERATION

Yes Linda

I

See Death's outrage fit
His key into your womb

Trying

To pick the lock with sure fingers
And I your watchman

Stand

Futilely by angered
By my helplessness

Still

My love is strong
It shall not leave you now

And when/ and if

The Monster leaves

I

Shall open up your door and fill
Your frightened emptiness

With oceans of

My warm

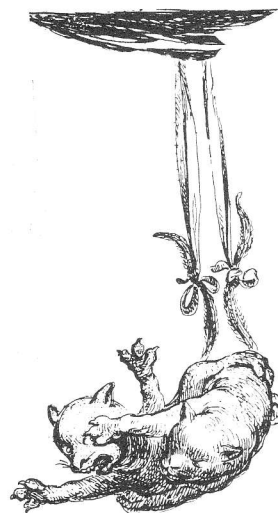
Salt

Song

--Fritz Hamilton

FEAR

drives in thru
the signs in a
blue car giving
a phony name
At first you
don't worry
walking down
the hill with
him but he's
seen the key,
won't go when
you're ready
Something's
wrong you want
to call but the
phone bites when
you pick it up



--lifshin

moons wail the albino snake
awake. nightbirds wing him
worms to keep his
shape. moles chart holes in hills to
help him wend his way. days,
he dozes in cool subterranean pools
of amethyst & jade, but
his life is all too beautiful, he can't
sustain the metaphor, he sheds
his skin once, he
grows no new - all
blood & sinews
he crawls
to feed the hungry moongoose.

--gerald fleming

FORT BRAGG OUTBACK

Begin at the end
of a log aside the
ravine, turn head to where noise is, far
rustling - look - see
nothing - just green - wait
while your brain changes rustle
to trample, far off
to near, peer
into growth down right
and sight the hysterical
deer thrashing thru brush,
decide then to stand rock-still till
the doe bounds close, till
she stops oblivious and
breathes wet breath on your cold hand,
hold back your welling fear to note her
wild eyes, red tongue hung past lips,
human breath, and do not cry out
or lurch at her
sighting you, the crazy calibrated hoofsteps
up the hill, and gone

End at the start
of the car,
the back trip down the dirt
road, eyes straight, wet hands
tight around wheel, the fingers
profound refusal to feel for
just what large chunk of you
crossed or did not cross
that ridge back there . . .

--gerald fleming



FORESHORTENING FROM 30TH

for Roger Sessions

At 29th Avenue that night we saw that the old woman had sold her garden, how contractors had built 2 whole new houses there, how she had no garden now. At 28th the dog almost got hit. There was no traffic at 27th. At 26th the cactus I once cut with a penknife to make bleed was gone. At 25th, 24th, 23rd & 22nd I don't remember anything in particular except walking. Maybe someone had a rock garden near 21st. Some nuns used to live at the corner of 20th. I wondered if they still did; the house was dark. We had the green light at 19th, arterials at 18th & 17th. At sixteenth we saw inside the second story dancing school. Men & women rollicked, spinning, reeling round skin in green crepe dresses whizzed past window squares, tall men with slick dark hair, all dipping, curling, then slipping out of sight, we heard no music - only cars - but saw such spinning - such spinning we went to 10th dizzy,
opened the door,
fell into bed, for
long I stayed awake,
both eyes closed, I
kept seeing sixteenth
under there

--gerald fleming

fat on your face flames up once
again in droplets of greasy little
balls rolling down your eyes as if
they was meatballs and you was the
prince of gravy and your hoary
eyes old as the ancient grecian
hills just outside rock creek park
and i've got a dog by the tail and
i ain't going to let go until he
turns around and says please

--Sid Shapiro

LOON HUNTING ON NEWRY MOUNTAIN

The first morning we discovered
our limits: the trail up the mountain
buckled, then broke under us
like a wave

In the green valleys gray mist
caught on twigs, on boulders,
tried to disentangle itself from existence:
thrall to gravity, we prayed for the ease
we missed

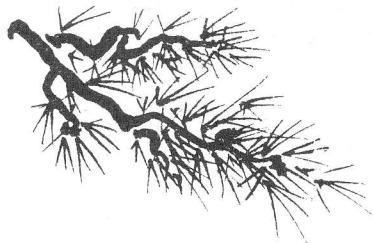
The ascent glittered with mica--
glassy muscovite layered in dogeared books
and lepidolite, lavender but smelling
of time not lilacs--and watermelon
tourmaline teased us into eating rock

We learned that water wore no pinions
but swiftness and, under the light
strength of white pine, translucence:
always deceitful--promising clairvoyance
at each arabesque and ripple

Before the summit, we were joined
by fireweed, freeholder and healer,
riffing its magenta garment:
Move with your minds quiet, constantly seeing

Our heads floated over the peak, torsoless:
heard the loon's idiot-lover laughter,
saw that black neck periscoping
beneath red oak, gold water--
a green soul flying through leafless silence

--Charles Fishman





Mitch Deck



Nelson Muché

WORKDAY

Beatrice is washing the pie shelves. Her strong red hands dip the rag in the sink and wring it out, sending ammonia fumes across the whole restaurant. Then she stretches on tiptoe to reach the top shelf, the black nylon sleeve of her uniform straining, the loose pouches of flesh wobbling on the underside of her arm. Beatrice always does a thorough job. The joke everyone makes about Beatrice's new false teeth is that her old ones fell out from the Pickadilly's food, thirteen years of navy beans with ham, stewed tomatoes, and gritty chicken gravy.

Today is Saturday, and Carmelita starts work at lunchtime. Such a pretty girl if she lost some weight, that's what everyone says about Carmelita. She has big dark eyes, a pouting mouth, dark hair that she combs into tight little bunches of curls. Carmelita hopes it won't be busy today. She doesn't mind work so much when she has time to herself, time to think. She leans back against the counter and pretends to sort silverware. Her hands move slower and slower and finally stop. If I had a million dollars, thinks Carmelita, no, that's too much, if I had a hundred thousand dollars, even ten thousand, I'd go to New York or maybe Hawaii. If I could lose, say, twenty pounds - Carmelita opens her eyes and sees Ervin walking in the door.

Ervin has a big square head sprinkled with stiff hair the color of dry straw. He walks as if he were loosely put together at the joints, like a big soft doll. He wears an overwashed plaid shirt and baggy khaki trousers. Ervin sits down in a booth and watches Carmelita. His grin is loose and rubbery, the long upper lip folded back like the bill of a duck.

Beatrice has gone home. There is no way she can get out of it. Carmelita grits her teeth and fills a water glass. Damn half-wit, she says under her breath. Carmelita sets the glass in front of him and it slops over onto the Formica table top. She leans over and mops it up with her apron. She does not look at Ervin but she can see his eyes, the color of fish scales, rolling in his head. What do you want, says Carmelita.

Ervin slides his hands over his face and looks at her from between his fingers. Strawberry shake, he says, and Carmelita is sure he is laughing at her.

She spoons the gummy strings of syrup into the metal cup and puts it on the shake machine. At least Beatrice isn't here to laugh at her. Carmelita decides that the only way to handle this is with dignity.

Ervin is clicking two quarters together in his hand. Play you a song, he says. No thanks, says Carmelita. Any song you like, he says. I don't like any of them. Ervin's sandy eyebrows rise and disappear into his hair. You don't like none of them? Carmelita tears off his check and slaps it face down on the table. I'll play some I bet you'll like, he calls after her.

For the next twenty minutes the Pickadilly resounds with twanging guitars and nasal voices singing about broken marriages, the open road, crimes of passion. Ervin taps his foot on the floor in time with the music. When he finally gets up to go, he pushes the volume control to high on every speaker he passes. Carmelita clears his table and there is no tip, only the word Hi! spelled out in water-streaks on the black table top. She feels angry, as if she has been made to look foolish without knowing quite how it happened.

The day goes slowly. Dinner hour is nearly over, and Carmelita is about to sit down, when the bald lady and her husband walk in. The woman isn't really bald, she just has a patch of bare scalp on top. Carmelita sighs, for she knows that the woman will order two extra vegetables and a baked potato with extra butter and the man will make the same joke about her eating so much. When Carmelita brings everything she can carry at once to the table, the woman will look up, furious. You forgot my string beans and the co'cola. She has a small, wrinkled mouth painted purple-red, with the upper lip coming to two sharp points just under her nose. They will both order lemon meringue pie for dessert and will not leave a tip.

The more Carmelita thinks about Ervin the madder she gets. He deliberately tries to embarrass her. There's no reason why she should put up with it. She can outsmart him any day. The next time he comes in she is ready.

Ervin is sitting at the counter. Carmelita sets a water glass and a menu before him with a flourish. Good afternoon, she says. Will you be having the usual today? Or would you like to try our special?

Ervin hunches over the stool and looks up at her with sullen eyes. Hamburger, he says.

Carmelita pushes through the kitchen door with the hamburger in her hand. She sets mustard, ketchup, and pickle relish on the counter. Now, she says, is everything satisfactory, I hope? Ervin picks up the hamburger and begins eating without looking at her.

Carmelita steps away and rinses a rag in the sink. It was almost too easy. She wishes he would try one smart-aleck remark so she could shut him up for good. She starts polishing the far end of the counter. Ervin is licking ketchup off his fingers. Carmelita moves nearer on the counter. The rag leaves trails of water beads as she cleans. Ervin is watching her.

Wisht I had an easy job like yours, he says.

Carmelita drops the rag. Oh you got to be kidding. There's nothing easy about hauling coffee cups all day. You should try it some time if you feel like a vacation.

Ervin props his big head up on his hand and chews a toothpick. His fish-colored eyes are quizzical.

I never get out of this place, says Carmelita. I'm here most every day.

Ervin spits out the toothpick. I was at Lincoln State School sixteen years, he says.

Big deal, says Carmelita, and turns around to run water in the sink. Then she faces him again. What's it like?

What?

The crazy place.

I ain't crazy, says Ervin. I ain't any crazier than you are.

Hah.

I ain't.

Sure.

Ervin leans forward on the stool. I bet you can't climb the roof of the bank.

Do what?

Climb the roof of the bank.

And why in the world would I want to do that, says Carmelita.

You'd be surprised, says Ervin. You don't know everything you think you do. He slides off the stool and walks out the door.

Carmelita wakes up late for work and when she gets there the boss yells at her. She bruises her hip against the swinging door and drops a whole plate of french fries. Two old railroad men come in and make their usual joke: Hey young lady, you give me a dime and I'll leave you fifteen cents of this quarter. I can't stand any more of this, thinks Carmelita. I'll lose my mind. She runs downstairs into the basement, into the little damp-smelling private dining room. The Driftwood Lounge, it's called, and there's a fake knotty-pine panel with the name cut in it. The room is only a collection of derelict tables and chairs from upstairs. Carmelita sits down. I'll quit, she says aloud. I can't stand another minute. Even as she says it she knows she won't quit. Where would she find another job. Now I'll cry, she thinks, but no tears come, only a swollen feeling in her throat, like she is being choked from the inside.

When she goes back upstairs, most of the lunch customers are gone. Ervin sits in a booth against the wall. As she passes, he looks up and his lips spell out silent words: I-bet-you-can't-climb-the Carmelita ignores him and goes back to the kitchen.

The interior of the Pickadilly is brown, obscure, and leatheroid. Beatrice moves through the dimness like some large sea mammal, balancing five cups of coffee. When Beatrice talks, she opens her mouth very wide so her lips don't touch her gums. The false teeth must be painful. Beatrice wears orange-tinted support stockings. You can see the elastic tops when she bends over. The hem of her uniform is unravelling. Is Beatrice happy or unhappy? Carmelita doesn't know; she leans against the counter, and Beatrice waves goodbye as she goes to punch out.

On top of everything else, the night girl has a headache and Carmelita has to work late to help her. It is nearly nine o'clock before she gets off. Clouds of moths surround the streetlight and the pavement is still hot. Carmelita's feet make noises like tired animals in the gravel of the parking lot. She reaches her car door and stops. Ervin is sitting on the curb watching her, his spikey head sunk in his hands. What do you want, says Carmelita. Ervin does not move or speak. Go on, say it, says Carmelita. Ervin shakes his head.

Why not, you chicken?

I ain't the one who's chicken, says Ervin. He stands up and cracks his knuckles. I bet you can't climb the roof of the bank.

Get in the car, says Carmelita, wrenching the door open. Ervin slides across the seat, bumping against the roof, hitting his knees against the dashboard. Carmelita starts the car and backs it out of the lot. Ervin sits huddled against the door, looking very meek, the frayed sleeve of his shirt fluttering in the open window. What if somebody sees us on the street, thinks Carmelita.

The bank is just down the block. Carmelita parks the car in an alley behind it and gets out. All right, she says. Now you just show me what's so great about this roof.

Ervin goes to the wall by the incinerator and points to the metal fire-escape ladder. See, he says. Then, quicker than Carmelita expects, he is climbing. She can see the pale seat of his trousers bending and scrambling up the sooty brick. The bank is three stories high. When Ervin gets to the top he steps over a ledge. Then his round face appears, looking down, and even from a distance Carmelita can tell he is grinning.

Come on up.

Hush, says Carmelita. Not so loud.

What's the matter, says Ervin. You chicken? The face disappears.

Carmelita takes hold of the iron ladder and it sways a little. She begins to climb, putting both feet on the rung at once. She is still wearing her uniform; the skirt billows out in the breeze and she is glad Ervin climbed up first. Her rubber-soled shoes knock against the wall and send mortar dust rattling to the ground. This is crazy, thinks Carmelita. This is really crazy. But she keeps going.

When she gets to the top, Ervin is at the far end of the roof, overlooking Main Street. Some ornamental scrollwork made of stone rises from the front of the bank, so it is possible to sit at the edge and not be seen. Ervin is looking through one of the loops in the stone arabesque. Below them, the big time and temperature clock hums and blinks. Carmelita wonders if he's going to try anything funny, but she's not afraid of him. OK, now what, she says.

Ervin points to a car down below, waiting at the stoplight. He takes a pebble from the roof, aims, and lofts it over the edge. It lands on the hood of the car with a neat ping and they can see the driver leaning out his window to see where it came from. Carmelita giggles.

You try it, says Ervin. Carmelita's pebble skids off the side of a pickup truck.

From the roof they can see all of Main Street, the coiled hoses and flowerpots in the window of the hardware store, the dress shop with its icy mannequins posing under blue lights. Down the street is the flickering pink and green sign of the Pickadilly. Farther away, the yellow lights of houses are visible. Carmelita sees a woman moving in her kitchen, the glow of a TV screen. It's like everyone else in the whole town is sleeping, except for her and Ervin. Carmelita feels like shouting, like playing music, like waking everybody up and making faces at them. For awhile they amuse themselves by making cat noises at a dog on the sidewalk.

What if we get caught up here, says Carmelita.

Ervin shrugs his shoulders. By who.

The police.

What for.

Trespassing.

I never get caught, says Ervin.

You come here a lot?

Ervin runs his hand through the bristles on his head. I come here when I feel like it, he says, and grins. Carmelita finds herself grinning too, like a conspirator.

The door of the Pickadilly opens and two people walk out. Is it . . . the bald lady and her husband. She wears a voluminous white dress printed all over with green flowers as large as cabbages. They walk in the direction of the bank, slowly, because, thinks Carmelita, the old bag is stuffed to the gills with pot roast and potatoes and butter and meringue. Even from this distance she can see the woman's small, sour mouth moving. Complaining, thinks Carmelita, about the food, the service, the prices, her indigestion. They are on the opposite side of the street. Carmelita holds her breath. Will they cross? They do. She looks at Ervin. Will he know what to do? The pair is almost under them now, and Carmelita can see the dead white of the woman's bald spot. Next time I catch you bringing that trash in the house, she is saying, I burn it. Ervin balances on the edge of the stonework and leans over the sidewalk. When she is right underneath, he spits - a large, perfect globule which falls straight onto the bare skin of her head.

Carmelita hears the woman scream, Aagh, and her husband says, what was it, a bird, and she keeps screaming. Ervin stuffs his hand in his mouth and chuckles. Carmelita is afraid to look down, she is laughing so hard. The woman coughs and wheezes and then recovers her voice. You git offa me, she says to her husband, and there is a heavy, flat sound, as if she hit him with her big black purse.

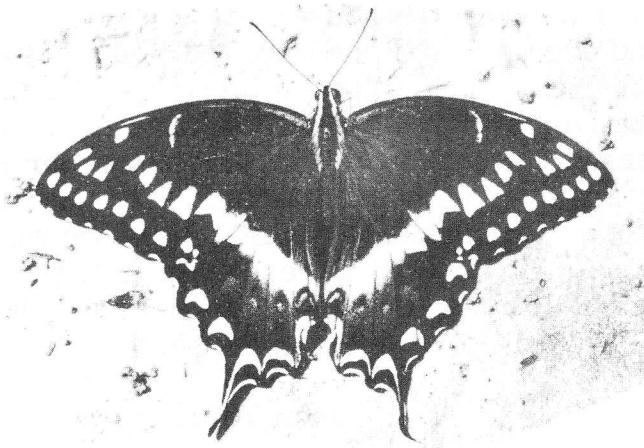
--Jean Thompson

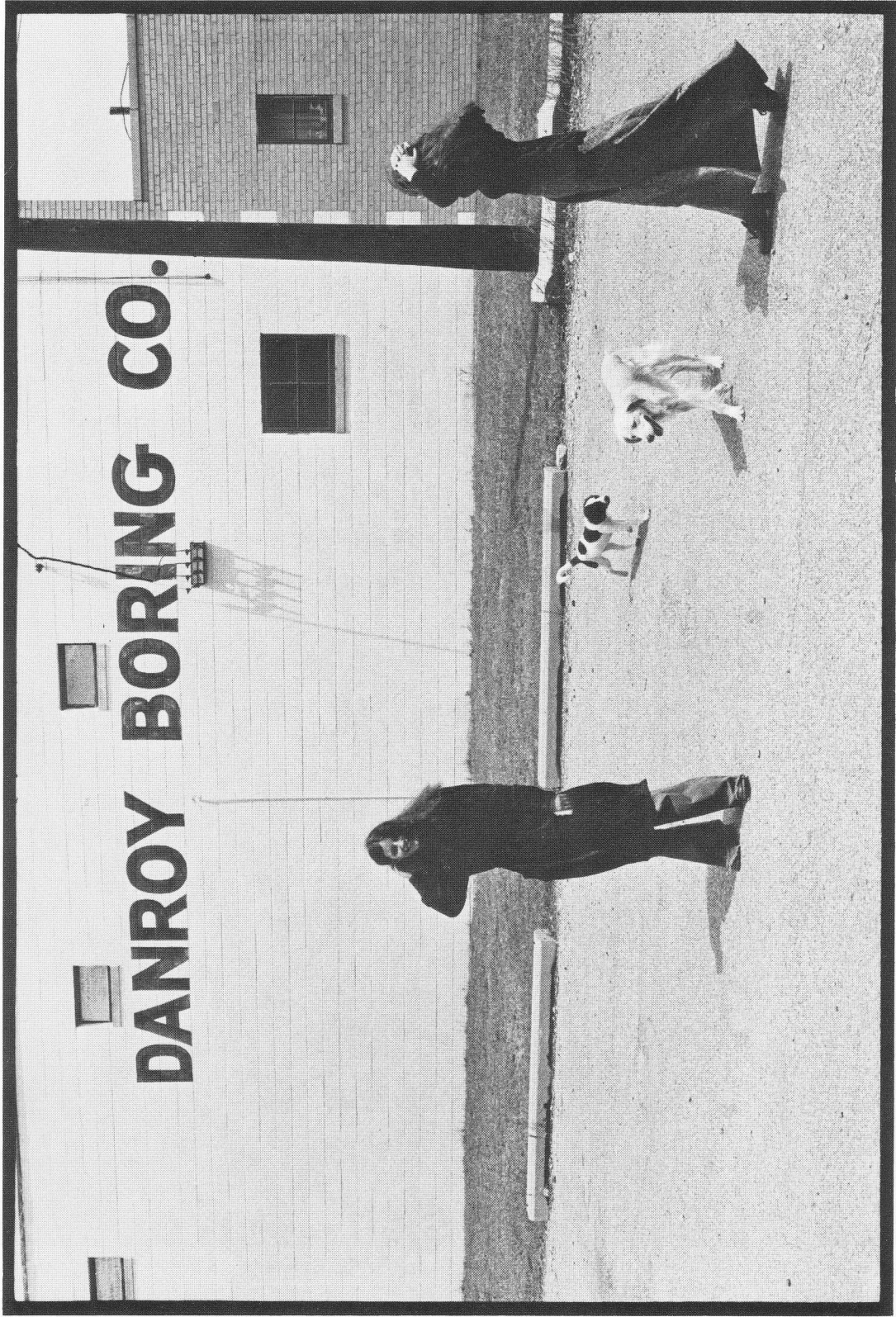
TO MY DAUGHTER

You, my single issue, whose reptile dreams
Nearly burst me nine months fattening
From lid to seam, now grow secretive, nearly four;
You are big enough to open any door.
You who dreamed of regal white antelope,
Striped red tigers of August to bloom
Beside huge flowers in this separate Eden
You once conceived, now bring to the box
The stuffed tigers you store in your room.
You run mad in circles, in yards, knobby-kneed
On swings, pushing your scraped shins higher
To where your jungle antelope retire
And your perilous tigers tread again.

You grow taller, the summers nearly five,
Widening circles shade our rising grass;
The snail crinkles on the opening leaf
As we watch its leaden curve on the deepening glass
And on the lawn our hammocks float.
We have raised a bed of bridal-eyed geraniums.
I would preserve dooms of birds as you grow
And keep untamed the tigers we loved for you;
I would shade these flourishing jungles still uncut
And guard these unhurt shadows as you sleep
Could I find places to hold them fast and deep.

--Barbara Unger





Jeff Peter



Larry Schwan

THE ASSASSINATION OF LINDA WAGNER

I live with the constant dream
of death, a sharp edge of promise
blunting itself
with uneasy delay.

1.

Suicide is too easy now, too easily
dramatic Sorry lady, death doesn't
do it. Your poems are exquisite
but

I can't use them use them use--
Images don't work; they stand bare as
coat hooks. But away from life
poems slide, spin, hunting rest,
a fur-change (green shrouds becoming
leaves and sprouting buds). Instead,
they etch winter skies. Like thin
sterile women they pose at life.

2.

Sterility/knives/that sharp edge of promise

A pack of hired assassins
to pull drama from farce

Blood is not red in a poet's veins
but green green

A good poet is a good
lay/lady/ladle

for

A bowl of dreams
hot/do not touch/burn/burn

Burning is one way.

3.

There was never a trial.
She disappeared--quietly--
frail as a shadow, worn
into silence and
shapelessness

An ink blot of space
creeping stealthily closed,
huddled .

People knew it was murder
but that kind of death
never makes a paper.
Bound with a ring
flung loose on a finger
like the noose from a grotesque
ring-toss game.

4.

Assassination is not gentle. Assassination must be outrage: eyes bleak
as the sea, mouths running. Assassination is not easy to come by--for
a woman.

Dead women are dead women.
Nobility does not touch them
(suicides bloom "psychotic")
(girls who were raped and
murdered, "fools").
But those who were used to death?

Occasional death/daily dying is not shocking.
There is no outrage. There is even, finally,
no fear.

5.

Naked. Crumbled snow clots where I walk.
Those arching ribs--that cave of death
where there should be no arch
and a mother died young
(the smell of rest)
I need sleep, warmth, a green shroud
sprouting leaves

like the woman with a cancer of the face
"we clean her up as best we can"
and then one bright day
her cheek falls in,
the jugular vein soon.

6.

Every once in a while
I am seized by a definite urge
to explore the world, or at least
a small segment of it:

men out there eating shit
hating their wives to death
beating sons for losing mittens
and one blessed morning
skidding car into truck
so the claim can read "accidental"

tragedies litter my doorstep
I can't get past
I can't reach that other set of wars
and hates. Politics is not relevant/only
what people I know do to each other
that is as far as I can go, and
farther.

7.

My shell looks a little like a casket.
But that is only because I too am tall and thin
meat worn away
incessantly rubbed by anger, grief.
I live with the constant dream of death.
I write poems.
I work like a damned rocket
dying of its own faulty brilliance
yet I live too much in dreams
and know
 somehow
that even death
will not make me
real.



--Linda Wagner

LAMENT

1.

Antigone, Antigone,
The cold stones rejoice
As they lap themselves
Around you, pressing . . .

2.

A walk, slow, into burial.
Chaste, the secret need for ritual,
rite--to recompense the wronged.
It is all a sister can do.

Brothers are alien; lovers survive.
The sound of walking feet
deafens listening ears.
It is hard to believe life is so cheap,
death--for one--so costly.

A walk, slow, into burial.
Shrouded in grays, we look toward
the skyline, a flat wash of blue; stone
immovable, unbroken.

Walking against it changes
Nothing. Absolutes remain.
He was my brother.
I loved his hair.
His hands were gentle . . .
It is all a sister can do.

3.

Decision is quick.
Decision
of such import
is thoughtless.
The heart knows no quandary.

If I could break this stone,
tear shrouds from bodies,
claw graves in the earth--
and I have tried all three--

Like a sheep spitted for the fire
I stuck for a day,
love puling against right.
Shame burns my face.
That evil Ismene, no longer
my sister: "Think of Haemon,"
she cried.

I did. I thought of long nights,
warming loves, princely
brats. Dreams jarred
with the sight
and smell
of your body . . .
That desolate field.
Those desecrated bones.

Oh Creon, bastard, who gave you the right
to cull bastardy for him,
graveless
but not unmourned.

Small children run,
their arms waving wildly;
bright garments dot the gray,
movements break the stone.

All portents are good.
My brother rests, at peace.
I exult in my wrong.
Walking, slowly, into burial
I see the twilight blue
deepen to black, then
shattered by the moon
that quiet lady moon
black turns to opalescent gray.

--Linda Wagner

X's & O's

for Charles Olson

Spiralling
up the air
your loud arm
hanging from that kind voice

PUT THE WORLD
IN YOUR POEMS

All of us
scared
tight peas in
dry pods
retched back
from your round threats
the eyes
 the voice
the tall
urgency to

WRITE **BIG** --TO THE EDGE OF THE PAGE AND ON

You filled our spaces

small and quiet
as they were

and all the groping and the writing
heads knocking together
hearts busted
since
besides the frigid little poems

WE NEVER COULD
GET THEM **BIG** ENOUGH

It was all for you
a round gesture
an open letter
an abyss
or perhaps
a hug

--Linda Wagner

3 FEB 73

HERMOSA BEACH

We are indissoluble,
interwoven at one frail edge
of our dimensions,
united and divided by love,
common possessions, books,
mementos of far off places,
precious trinkets, gifts from friends,
oaths
compacted when we had a penchant
for folly,
vows that pride will not invalidate.
United in the estrangement
of taste, opinions, attitudes, avocations,

embattled bedfellows,
yet we always touch somehow, along some
tattered edge.

I am always free,
yet freedom revolts,
rumbling in my guts.

--Michael Andrews



MISS BUSINESS

Grubby hands working constantly:
we called you the furious flycycle
as you churned away, from project to project,
like something out of that book by Jan Wahl
(except that you are the wrong sex;
why can't child-inventor-geniuses be girls?)
My daughter, how did your parents
ever bring forth something like you?
Fluttering in your welter of activity,
through how many generations of indolence,
nervous breakdowns, plattdeutsch stubbornness
and black Irish spleen did you have to work
before you'd generated enough Karma
to spring running into your life and ours?

Perhaps trailing clouds of glory,
but certainly trailing black eyes,
ink-smearred face, endless bits of paper,
yarn, masking tape, countless desiccated bottles of glue,
you have sprawled through our lives
and leave us wondering what to do for you
and what we have done to ourselves.

Late tonight I sit in this room,
watching my hand hesitate above the paper.
From the shelves across the room
I am watched in turn by the eyes of nineteen owls.
They stare at me out of wood, clay, and stone,
and those that stare most pointedly
are the three fabric and yarn versions
created by you and your sister to compete
with the others in the collection.
And as I hesitate, cursing at the words that will not come,
I make my usual tired joke:
no owls for Athena tonight.

O my daughter, at eight years of age,
and without the slightest thought of craft or inspiration,
an endless series of pictures, puzzles,
devices, constructions--assemblages that
would delight the souls of Rube Goldberg
and Yves Tanguely--pour forth from you;
and overhead in his third-floor pigeon loft
your lame-brained father
stares at his hands frozen on the paper.

Last night, overcome by irritability
and my own uncertainty,
unable and unwilling to face one more bit
of exuberance at the day's end,
I shouted at you, and you went to bed crying.
Later I went into your room,
and saw you'd fallen asleep reading The Last Battle,
from the Narnia books I'd just finished
reading at bed times.
I wonder, my daughter, whether
you were checking on me,
to see if you could trust me to get the story right;
maybe you were wondering
whether there were angry fathers in Narnia.

Tonight the lion will move through your dreams,
and darker shapes will stalk in the shadows
as I walk off the edge of my sleeping;
and perhaps we may dream ourselves
back beyond our memories,
and meet in a landscape of perfect color,
where lovely forms and shapes delight our eyes,
and every new turning of the path
will be peopled with the marvelous
beasts and gargoyles of your imagining.

--R. K. MEINERS



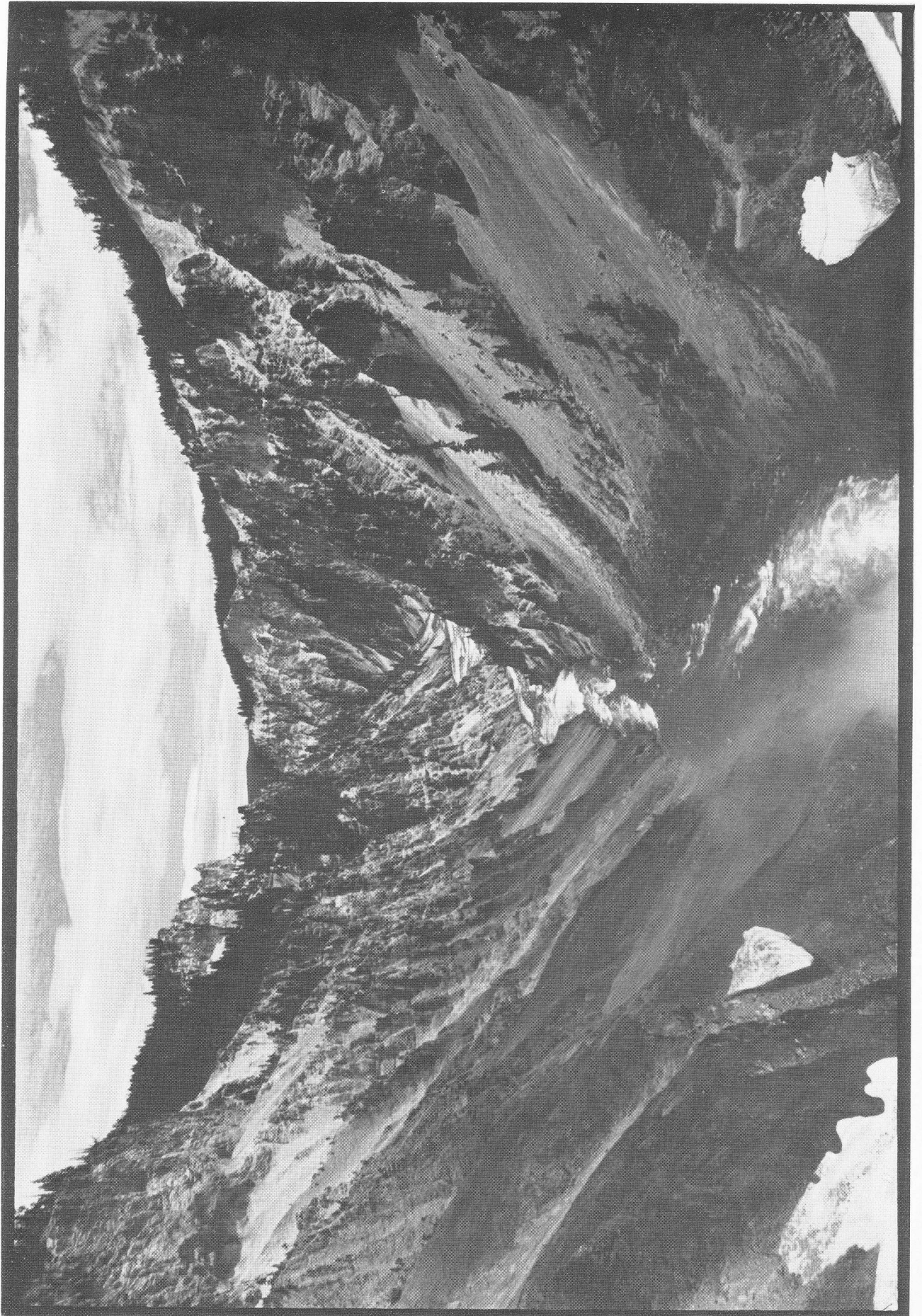
MY WIFE'S CRAZY HUSBAND

my wife has a crazy husband he leans
out of windows to whistle at her or
leers at her through shower curtains
& calls her strange names in the middle
of the night at night he turns into
the mad rapist who terrorizes the city
& only she can satisfy him & save the
union he calls her on the telephone
at work to make sure she is not
out in the back room necking or worse
with one of the wealthy managers &
just to be sure that the money she brings
comes from legitimate sources: her husband
is of the rather jealous sort un-
employed he sits at his typewriter
hacking poems out of the wilderness &
as a result where his ancestors developed
somewhat muscular abdominal areas his
gut has gone to pot but when
in the night she is afraid he
holds her & tells her that
everything will be all right &
when she cries he holds her in his
arms & tells her not
to worry that he may
be awful & crazy at once but that
he loves her just the same
& that she is not silly & that
she is more beautiful every day
& they are not lies when he tells her

--r d swets





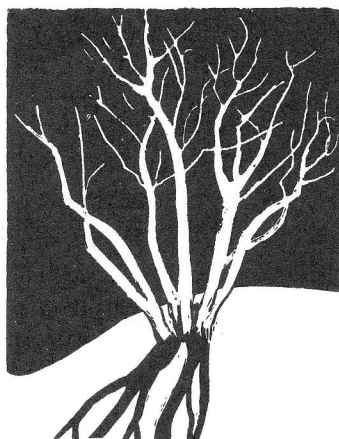


Charles J. Ketton

TREE TENDING

Roots thrust down as I would
do in this year of sea changes,
expansive tree hands that clasp the
brownest earth real with grub and
pebble. I would be as firmly
probing, as nested in the paradox of
constant reaching, constant stasis
as these convoluted sinews so steady
in the pursuit of their damp affairs.
My weak, orphan ideas gather nothing,
fix nothing in the cancerous whirl
here above the secret webbing which,
through some obscure theology, assumes
unquestioned dominion over the
components of wiser life: moisture,
leaf, and bone marbled into the
stuff of a cloistered realm.
But try as I will or would try if
I didn't know the distance between the
inviting ground and our mindful sphere,
I can take no current role in
the patterning of sturdier cells.
Rickety ladders of thought are
not lightly relinquished for the
tonsure of a novice in the faith of
that root-traveled world.

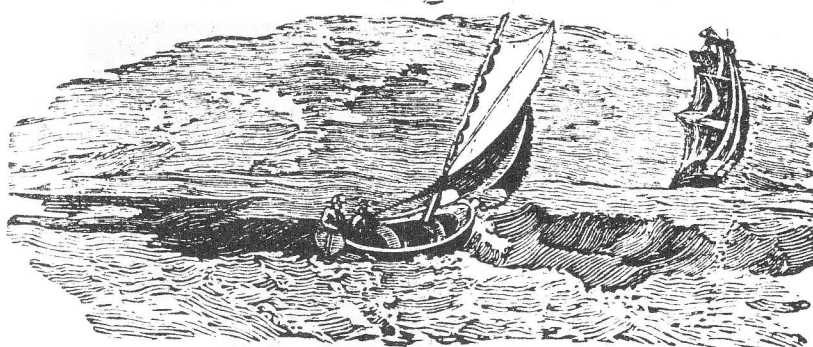
--Dean Maskevich



CLOCKWORK MYSTERIES

Awakening, a splash in
night's calm pool, breeds
ripples of pretense that are
forced to contend with the daily
round of things and happenings.
The ripples move from beginning
to end with a semblance of
purpose, racing outward from
birth in apparently concentric form.
But their symmetry is a lie,
a device to mask their death,
feeble and merging,
in the darkness that inevitably
quiets the reaches of the pond.
The ripples fade without learning
that circles are a dream,
that even in their prime
they were broken by the simplest
things along the way.
They could do no more than flee with
the illusion of wholeness over
obstacles that keep their secrets while
marking a predetermined course.

--Dean Maskevich



GINSBERG

The following interview with Allen Ginsberg first appeared in the Spring 1966 issue of the Cottonwood Review. The interviewer is a former editor of the magazine, William Knief. This is the first of two parts; the second will appear in the next issue. We are reprinting this interview because we have been receiving a steady run of requests for it, and the Spring 1966 issue is now out of print. We also trust that we are well serving the general interests of literary history by bringing Ginsberg's words to a wider audience than they originally reached.

-- The Editors

Interviewer: The first thing I want to ask you is, what poets have influenced you particularly in your poetry and your poetic style?

Ginsberg: William Appollinaire, a French poet, 1910 or so; Ezra Pound; William Carlos Williams. . . . Primarily, however, above those, Jack Kerouac, who I think is the greatest poet alive, but is not well known as the greatest poet alive. William Burroughs, a prose poet, Christopher Smart, an 18th century friend of Dr. Johnson. Blake more than anyone, from spiritual points of view; an Indian poet named Kabir, another Indian poet who is called Mirabi, as well as an American poet who's called Emily Dickinson. And Whitman. A little Poe on account of the crankiness in it, and the spiritual isolation . . . a little of Vachel Lindsay . . . a little bit of Robert Creeley. Charles Olson. A lot of Shelley, and a lot of Rimbaud and Antonin Artaud, then Laforgue, a Frenchman, and Tuany Tzu, who is a Chinese philosopher-poet who said "I am going to speak some reckless words now and I want you to listen to them recklessly." And, um, a little bit of Mila-Repa, who is a Tibetan poet. And then a couple of other people, let's see, who else -- Gary Snyder occasionally, recently, influenced me a little, and Gregory Corso has influenced me a lot. And Orlovsky because I live with him, and listen to his conversation all the time, and his humor all the time, and his goofiness, influences my writing style a lot.

Interviewer: What is your opinion of what seems like the most widely accepted conventional poets at this time? I am thinking in particular of Sandburg and Frost --

Ginsberg: Accepted by whom? The question is, accepted by whom. Really, literally, it is a question of being accepted by whom.

Interviewer: Then you wouldn't accept them?

Ginsberg: No, I think they're fine poets. I don't think they're the best poets we've got around. Well, Frost is dead; Sandburg is a fine old man -- is he dead or alive?

Interviewer: I think he's still alive.

Ginsberg: Yeah, I think he's still alive, and he's a fine old poet, too; however, they're not necessarily the best poets that we've produced in this century. Like Pound was incomparably a better poet than, uh, Frost. William Carlos Williams was a much better poet than Frost. As far as my feelings and my uses are concerned, I can find more use for Williams and Pound than I could for Frost. And even if you stacked the work of Frost against the work of a younger poet like Gregory Corso, after one hundred years I think we'll all find a lot more use of Gregory Corso than we will have found out of Frost.

Interviewer: What fiction writers do you most admire? You mentioned poets, primarily.

Ginsberg: I'm not so much interested in fiction as I am in prose. And I do make that distinction, because fiction is a vaguer term, and prose means something. Prose means somebody interested in the composition of syntax, composition of a sequence of language that does reflect some actual process of verbal phenomena going on in the consciousness. So -- whereas fiction writers are interested in writing stories to sell for movies or something, a prose writer is interested in composition, in the sense that Gertrude Stein, who was a great prose writer, spoke of composition as creation. So the prose writers I am interested in are -- in America, you mean?

Interviewer: Well, let's start there.

Ginsberg: Kerouac, primarily, who continues into the sixties to be the most interesting composer of prose sentences, and also the most sincere and spiritual reporter of the phenomena of existence, and probably the wisest reporter, because he is one of very few who realizes that the universe doesn't exist, And second, William Burroughs, who has written a whole series of prose books that are affecting a lot of people, mainly the young, in the sense of altering their own sense of consciousness. And Hubert Selby, Jr., who wrote a book called Last Exit to Brooklyn, who has the virtue of being able to write a sentence in which three or four different people are speaking in different accents, and he doesn't use punctuation marks, but you could tell that there are three or four distinct people individually speaking. He's that wise and canny about accents and diction.

Another prose writer that I am in love with, Herbert Huncke, who is about fifty years old and never published anything except this year for the first time his journals were published by a small press in New York, and the book is called Huncke's Journal. About seventy pages of that have been published. And I think in a hundred years, we'll look back on Huncke as the great creator of Americana, in the sense that Sherwood Anderson was. Huncke is the big ex-thief-junkie-hustler-faggot-charmer who's influenced a lot of people in New York. He's had a big influence on Burroughs and Kerouac. But he never published anything and he never collected his writing. He just wrote little notebooks and nobody paid any attention to it until a few people began typing them up in the last few years, and now something's being published. The only place you can get that is through the City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco at 261 Columbus Avenue, or through the 8th Street Bookstore, 17 West 8th Street. If there's anybody interested in prose composition and wants to examine Huncke's Journals, they have to get ahold of them there, in those places.

Interviewer: What do you think of the --

Ginsberg: -- Other prose writers. We haven't finished with other prose writers, like Genet, and more importantly, Louis Fer de Nancy, who wrote a book called Journey to the End of the Night, and Death on the Installment Plan, and Guignol's Band, all of which were published by New Directions, as well as From One Chateau to Another, another book of his -- let's see -- who else is good in prose? Robert Creeley's prose is interesting, the book The Island -- Leroy Jones' prose is interesting. There's a novel by Michael McClure, of Wichita, which is interesting but has never been published -- all about fucking and drinking and riding around in the night mist with neon lights on the streets of Wichita when he was seventeen. And then another half of the novel is the same thing except it takes place when he is 27 and he's married.

And there's an unpublished book by a guy by the name of Kirby Doyle, Jr.: The Happiness Bastard, which is a great piece of prose also. That's a very great composition by a young kid about being a happiness bastard in America.

Henry Miller's prose is important. Sherwood Anderson's prose is important. William Carlos Williams' prose is important to me as specimens of real composition.

And going back before that, Gertrude Stein's prose is important. She's really, in a sense, the mother of prose composition. She was the first one to try to write prose without having any idea in mind as to what she was supposed to write; she wrote what was in her head at the moment of writing, where the writing itself was the primary activity, where the terms of the writing were the immediate consciousness of the moment while writing, whereas everybody else was looking into

their memory -- or looking into space or looking into the future or looking into some imaginary project. She was the only one who looked into her head and the visible eternity around her while she was at the desk writing. And that was a big experiment and discovery, just like Einstein's theory of Relativity.

Interviewer: You mentioned Sherwood Anderson. Hemingway, who was writing at about the same time and place as both Stein and Anderson, has said that he was profoundly influenced by these two. What do you think of Hemingway?

Ginsberg: Well, Hemingway was a nice guy, but he should have been sucking cocks for a while to get rid of the excessive necessity of being a man . . . because he had too formal an identity with being a masculine mammal. And that's not worthy of our species. Our species is much more variable and ample than that, which is something that Sherwood Anderson understood. Not that Anderson was a fairy, or anything like that, it's just that Anderson was a much more open soul to reflect the loneliness of the middle American scene, and the extremes of desire which grew like sunflowers in the middle of whatever state Anderson was from. Whatever lonesome earth he walked upon. See what I mean? Now Hemingway was a very, very great technician, and a good head and a real sharp mind, and basically a very sympathetic person. Especially toward his death. Especially in his prose of his last years he is much underestimated, I think. But Hemingway did have this problem of being too proud, with capitals PROUD -- like too proud! -- a desperate man. He had a nice beard --

Interviewer: Do you see any particular direction in modern American poetry today?

Ginsberg: Yeah. Toward reproduction of the actual consciousness of the poet, and communication of that, which is going to be the communication of the kind of consciousness which is just like the consciousness of the people listening. Meaning that he ain't gonna lie no more, meaning he's going to talk about the hairs around his ass-hole.

Interviewer: I noticed that that seemed to be a difference between your poetry and Whitman's; that you seem to have more of your own consciousness in your poems. Would you agree with that, or not?

Ginsberg: Whitman was constantly reflecting his subjective nature, and if you read Whitman aloud, it's pretty shocking. And he also had to deal with the repression of the time, and I don't. We have fought against that and beaten it down. So now we have free speech according to our American constitution, so that at this point a poet is constitutionally,

legally, empowered to communicate to the public anything he wants to communicate. Whereas previously there was an isolation of constitutional rights by police, judges, publishers, district attorneys, mayors, newspapers, media of mass communication, where they all were conspiring to suppress individual expression, which occasionally affected emotional or political life in what Whitman would call "these states." The Supreme Court has now said that you can't stop anyone from saying what he wants about persons. You see how that sentence ends. Persons -- meaning in the sense of persons, rather than objective Object. Someone can say something about feeling being the being who feels, and has imaginations and fantasies. So, anybody can say what he wants, now, about that, without being told that he's not supposed to have fantasies when they border on areas people want to repress, like sex. Or God.

Interviewer: Am I correct, then, in assuming that you consider sex and God fantasies?

Ginsberg: Everything is a fantasy; the whole universe is a fantasy. The universe doesn't exist.

Here, someone in the group of people around us asked, "Can you talk a little louder?" -- and Mr. Ginsberg replied,

I have to think while I'm talking and I can't orate. It's hard to think as it is, without having to talk louder. It alters the syntax if I have to scream. You see, it becomes abnormal if I have to talk that much louder. It's not normal any more. It would be interesting to have to satisfy the conditions of the microphone and the conditions of the ears. That's normal.

"We could ask the people to stop playing the guitars."

No, it's normal that they're playing . . . Guitar strings in the background -- .

Interviewer: People have described your style of writing as being anything from obscenity to actual written music. How would you describe it?

Ginsberg: That's a good enough description.

It depends on who I was describing it to. As far as I'm concerned, like if I'm describing it to someone I know well and trust as a writer, like Kerouac, or Peter Orlovsky, or Corso, or Robert Creeley, or Charles Olson, I just say I'm scribbling whatever comes into my head, because that's really where the action's at. I'm not trying to write poetry, I'm not interested in art. I'm interested in like reproducing the

contents of my consciousness in a succinct, accurate way, trusting that the contents of my consciousness, as the contents of anybody else's consciousness, have symmetry and form and rhythm and structure and -- lack-of-logic like anybody else's. Like the whole universe, in fact.

After structure, before we got to lack of logic, there's a dash in the prose transcription of this sentence. You understand? Structure and -- lack-of-logic -- to indicate a shift of thought. See, that's what I'm concerned with, the sudden shifts of thought; the sudden contractions of mental activity, the shifts of thought which have a beautiful structure of their own, and if you try and eliminate those shifts and eliminate the rhythm of those shifts, you eliminate the music of thought and speech, and you eliminate the truthfulness of the way people communicate. So my writing, if it's going to be called writing, is actually simply a model of the consciousness which is manifest in language -- rather than a substitute or a denial of that consciousness. By substituting an artificial model. Like a model of "syllogistic" discourse.

Interviewer: Why do you write? What is the purpose of --

Ginsberg: Because I'm lonesome. I want to get laid.

Interviewer: Does the poet have a responsibility to his society, or his public, or to anyone he is writing to?

Ginsberg: If the universe doesn't exist, how could anybody have any responsibility for anything?

Interviewer: Then he writes simply out of and for himself?

Ginsberg: He isn't really writing. "The hand was not there that moved." And there's a lot of people that want the hand to be there and want responsibility and want the universe to be there, so they're going to be stuck with that on their deathbed, too, as it vanishes away from their grasp -- nobody's got no responsibility for nothin', in that sense. Not in the sense that you asked the question, so there's no responsibility at all. The only thing you might call responsibility, if you want to be high-fallutin' about it and use that kind of bullshit terminology, as "responsibilities," is that he does have the responsibility to reproduce the actual contents of his feelings and consciousness rather than the supposed contents or the contents that would please other people who have power to save him from the electric chair.

Interviewer: Technically, how do you write?

Ginsberg: I write in a little notebook like the one I have in my pocket now, called "Record," which is an 89¢ notebook I get at Walgreen's

or wherever I can buy it, and it has little lines in it, and I scribble in it wherever I can. And when I retype it I follow the exact form that I wrote it in the first time, to note that the exact traces of the composition are left there in the poetry.

Interviewer: Do you ever rework a poem?

Ginsberg: Never, never.

Interviewer: Then it's absolutely spontaneous?

Ginsberg: It's not really even spontaneous; I either write it and it's there, as a record of that passage of time, a cut of time -- and that's something I learned from Kerouac, who is a genius at that, and like unalterably advanced into an area where what he has written he has written, and therefore how can he change it? In other words, if I walk down the street, how can I go back and retrace my steps and say I walked a different way? So actually, revision in his view is lying, because it's trying to cover the traces of mental activity or cover what seems to be embarrassing or too revealing. What's really important is like to reveal, not cover the revelation, so sometimes the revelations turns out dopey, or stupid, or uninteresting, so then I don't publish it, but what I do publish is whatever I have written that I don't have to change that really was there, when I was in a coherent, conscious mood while composing -- so that means you gotta write a lot. What is a big discipline. You gotta write all the time, every day a little bit -- five minutes, at least.

Interviewer: How long did it take you to write "Howl"?

Ginsberg: Oh, a couple of hours. I wrote it in three different times; three different parts. I revised a little, not much.

Interviewer: When did you first start writing?

Ginsberg: I don't remember. I guess when I was eighteen, or something, like anybody else. Puberty, when I sprouted hairs around my pubis.

Interviewer: Do you consider your formal education to have helped you, to have been important to your writing?

Ginsberg: It blocked me from writing completely. In fact, in my formal education, I was taking a creative writing course at Columbia College, and started writing a piece of prose about my actual life and my actual existence, and the creative writing instructor who was the

head of the English Department, a man named Prof. Steves, took it down to the dean of Columbia College, a man named Nicholas McKnight, and they forbade me to continue writing it. So as far as I can see, at least at that time, 1945 (we've moved things around and changed things since then), the academy was not only indifferent to writing, it was actually a venomous, vicious, vitriolic, malevolent, jealous enemy of any kind of composition from nature.

When I was hanging around in school, I was hanging around with Burroughs and Kerouac, and they were teaching me how to write. Not the professors -- professors have changed a little bit, like they recognize their own weaknesses now, so things are a little better off. I don't know if that's true in the provinces, but that's true in the centers of intellect, supposedly, like Columbia, Harvard, Berkeley. At this point I'm a professor, like I go around and teach.

Interviewer: You and William Carlos Williams have both been closely associated with the town of Paterson, New Jersey, at one time or another. Is there any reason for that?

Ginsberg: I grew up in Paterson. That's my hometown. And later, when we met, we took walks there together, by the banks of the Passaic River --

Can you print all this exactly as said?

Interviewer: Yes.

Ginsberg: Including what might be considered off-color words?

Interviewer: Yes.

Ginsberg: That's nice -- if anybody questions it you've got to remember that the implications of this are ultimately political, so that any censorship of this is censorship of political expression, and that kind of censorship is prohibited in the United States Constitution. You see the exploration of consciousness and the manifestations of consciousness in language ultimately affects one's awareness of social conditions and political circumstances. And so the accurate expression of language has direct consequences on political thinking, finally. So that if a poet wishes to speak in a language that he chooses, if anybody tries to alter that language they are attempting to alter a citizen's expression of his consciousness within the society, and the citizen's reflections on the nature of that society, and that in itself is something that is a function of citizenship that is protected by the Constitution. So that anybody who tries to censor anything I say is completely un-American -- I wrap myself in the American flag and do declare my soul.

End of part one.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Judson Crews tells us that WENDELL B. ANDERSON has published his poetry widely since the 1940's. He is now said to be a social caseworker in New Mexico.

MICHAEL ANDREWS is a programmer and analyst employed abroad. He has been publishing for the last three years and has eventual designs upon a farm where he can spend life "learning, writing, and being a human."

CHARLES FISHMAN teaches literature at SUNY-Farmingdale and has been doing workshops in the area. His first volume of poems, Night Garden, is to be published by Tree Press.

GERALD FLEMING is a teacher at a San Francisco child care center. He has published widely in little magazines and his first collection, Striped Shortbread, will appear soon.

FRITZ HAMILTON is a nightclerk at a small hotel in Chicago. He has over 300 magazine publications and two books of poetry, the most recent of which is The Plunge (Zetetic Press).

JOHN JUDSON is editor of Northeast and of Juniper Books. He has published in about 150 magazines. His books and chapbooks are Within Seasons, Two From Where it Snows, and Surreal Songs.

LYN LIFSHIN has 14 books of poems published or pending. Those soon to be published are The Blue Cabin and Other Winter Fruit, Collected Poems, Poems, and Love Poems.

AMON LINER has published in various little magazines, and his work has recently appeared in 11 Charlotte Poets (Red Clay Press). His volume of poems is Marstower.

RACHEL LUKENS lives and works in Washington, D. C. This is her first appearance in The Cottonwood Review.

DEAN MASKEVICH teaches high school English in New Jersey. He has recently published poems in The New Orleans Review, Quartet, and The Kansas Quarterly, among others

ROGER K. MEINERS, poet and critic, teaches at Michigan State University.

WALTER MOSLEY is a professor of modern literature at Northwestern State University in Louisiana. He writes that he is currently at work on a long sequence of poems about "Mississippi, family, and death."

SIMON PERCHIK, a practicing attorney in New York City, is making his second appearance in The Cottonwood Review. His books of poems include I Counted Only April and, most recently, Hands You Are Secretly Wearing.

SID SHAPIRO has published in Southern Poetry Review, Neon, Trace, and elsewhere. His 1972 publication of "Ebony Wood," a translation of a volume by Jacques Roumain, was the first volume of Haitian poetry to appear in the United States.

R. D. Swets was born in Minneapolis in 1950 and has been published in numerous little magazines.

JOHN A. TAYLOR is currently in England, on sabbatical from Washington and Jefferson College.

JEAN THOMPSON lives in Urbana, Illinois. "Workday" is the first fiction she has published in The Cottonwood Review.

BARBARA UNGER has published poems in a variety of magazines and is currently working on a novel. She teaches at Rockland Community College, Rockland County, New York.

JOHN STEVENS WADE is a self-employed carpenter in Mt. Vernon, Maine. The Crossing Press has published his book of poems, The Cats In The Colosseum.

LINDA WAGNER is a Professor of English at Michigan State University. In addition to a book of poems, Intaglios, she has published critical works on such modern poets as William Carlos Williams and Denise Levertov.

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