COTTONWOOD REVIEW

SUMMER 1974

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EDITORS	Editor in Chief:	Mike Smetzer
	Poetry:	Ken Urbansky, Irma Russell, Gregory Vogt
	Fiction:	Jim Carothers, John Glynn, Kevin Gunn
	Advisory:	Richard Colyer
	Cover Photograph:	Roger Pfingston

The Cottonwood Review is a national literary magazine with its home at the University of Kansas. Our goal is to make national poetry, fiction, and photography available to readers in our area of the country and, at the same time, make the best writing and photography in our area available to a national audience.

A man is only whole when his feet hug the grass of his home, and his head stirs the winds of the world.

M. S.

The Cottonwood Review is presently published twice yearly under a grant from the Student Senate of the University of Kansas. Subscriptions are $3.00 for two issues and $5.75 for four issues which includes the chapbooks and broadsides published during the period. Standing orders are accepted from libraries and bookstores.

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We would be glad to hear your comments on our work.

NOTES ON SPECIAL INCLUSIONS

Barbara Rakley's poems, "Rivers" (p. 1), "Nineteen Lay in My Bed" (p. 2), and "Royalty Visiting Her at Night" (p.44), were awarded first place for poetry in the 1974 Festival of Arts Creative Writing Contest.

John Solbach's poem, "Pond" (p. 26) was awarded second place in the same contest.

Eric Sundquist's story, "Independence Day" (p. 17), won first place for fiction in the Festival of Arts contest.

Charley Brown's photograph (p. 33) was awarded first place in the Scenic/Pictorial division of the 7th Annual Kansas University Photography Contest.

Paula Christensen's photograph (p. 8) was awarded second place in the same contest.

Barbara Rakley

RIVERS

I.

Hammer the vein on my ankle with a brass pestle
Hammer it hard so I feel it in my throat

Trap a hummingbird in my lungs

I will nourish it until the end of my life
Sip the blue milk
Hammer the blue vein
Stretch my blue eyes over the rack; stretch it
stretched
like Michelangelo's skin

II.

Only you can trace the convex grid lines of my body,
can stand its constant whine.
With your tongue, follow the grid lines due west
your salty tongue will meet salt water
kelp will entangle your teeth,
fill your mouth with my hair

I will never possess you so completely
My body is a high plain

Barbara Rakley

NINETEEN LAY IN MY BED

Nineteen lay in my bed and watched your face, eyes

your beard. You are twenty years old.
When you slept in my bed, nineteen locust pods

burst open, spilled water
over my eyes.

Nineteen lay by your side watching the clouds slide apart,

the wet pink sunrise. The smudges
beneath your skin.

Nineteen lay in my bed and wished for your body.
Candles dripped warm wax, sputtered out

against locust tree branches.

Nineteen touched the hard bones of your back;
you are too thin

to be soft.

Your skin smells like warm water mixed with rose
in the summer.

Nineteen lay in my bed,
dreamed of falling

through a leafy mirror, into your eyes

filled with mirrors
reflecting

nineteen in my bed, watching your eyes

fill with morning.

IN THAT PLACE

there are snails
made of sound
in that place
they trail poems
after them

living beneath old wooden bridges
each morning the trolls scamper
beards bent
brushing wet clay
gather the shiny words
into straw baskets
and wait

for the maidens
bright skirts blowing clouds
in a dance with the sun
golden hair streaming
their heels lightly
on the bridges
they see the baskets sparking

always there is prayer

for one
one must reach down
a small and perfect hand
stroke the clay
from a beard
lift the basket
with another
and turn her back
on the villages
strung out useless jewels
behind her.

Gregory Vogt

SONATA TO MAKE THE DEAD DANCE

I was a poet and loved singing
never did any more useful thing on earth
nor anything more useless
just sang.

I went to the cemeteries
when I had nothing to do
which was always
there I learned and forgot many things:
that living is not important
nor is being dead.

I would sit under the cypress
under the moon or the sun
and sing of accidentally
being alive
or I chanted about death
all this depended on the mood of the dead.

The dead made me change my outlooks:
I was no longer happy
nor sad
these things were of another realm.

Flies buzzed
and defecated happily
on my paper
on my songs.

I sometimes tired of singing but continued
between songs I would urinate
on pine trees
on gravestones.
The cemetery keeper was angry
& he had strange theories about me.

The dead often seemed repulsive
but I admired them
and loved them.

I smoked eucalyptus leaves
gathered them near the tombs
put them in my pipe
watched the smoke rise
and become confused in the air
with the prayers and admonitions.

If I fell asleep
the dead got bored
they sent flies to bite me
and turn me again to my songs
they knew that without me
they were lost.

For no reason I left one day.
I went to sing in the plazas and markets of men.
Several years I was among them
I sang but they never listened
like the dead.

Once I met a nun on the street
who wanted to make love
there was no place to take her
but the cemetery.
We fucked to the chants
of flies and the dead.

The dead loved it
and left their tombs
to dance memories on our flesh
they imitated our brutal movements
they danced and were happy.

PROCEDURE: FINDING THE DIRECTION

I lean on an oak tree's bark
and cannot hear the branches moving. I look
up the hill: a worn stone sinks in the grass
like an old dog finding sleep.

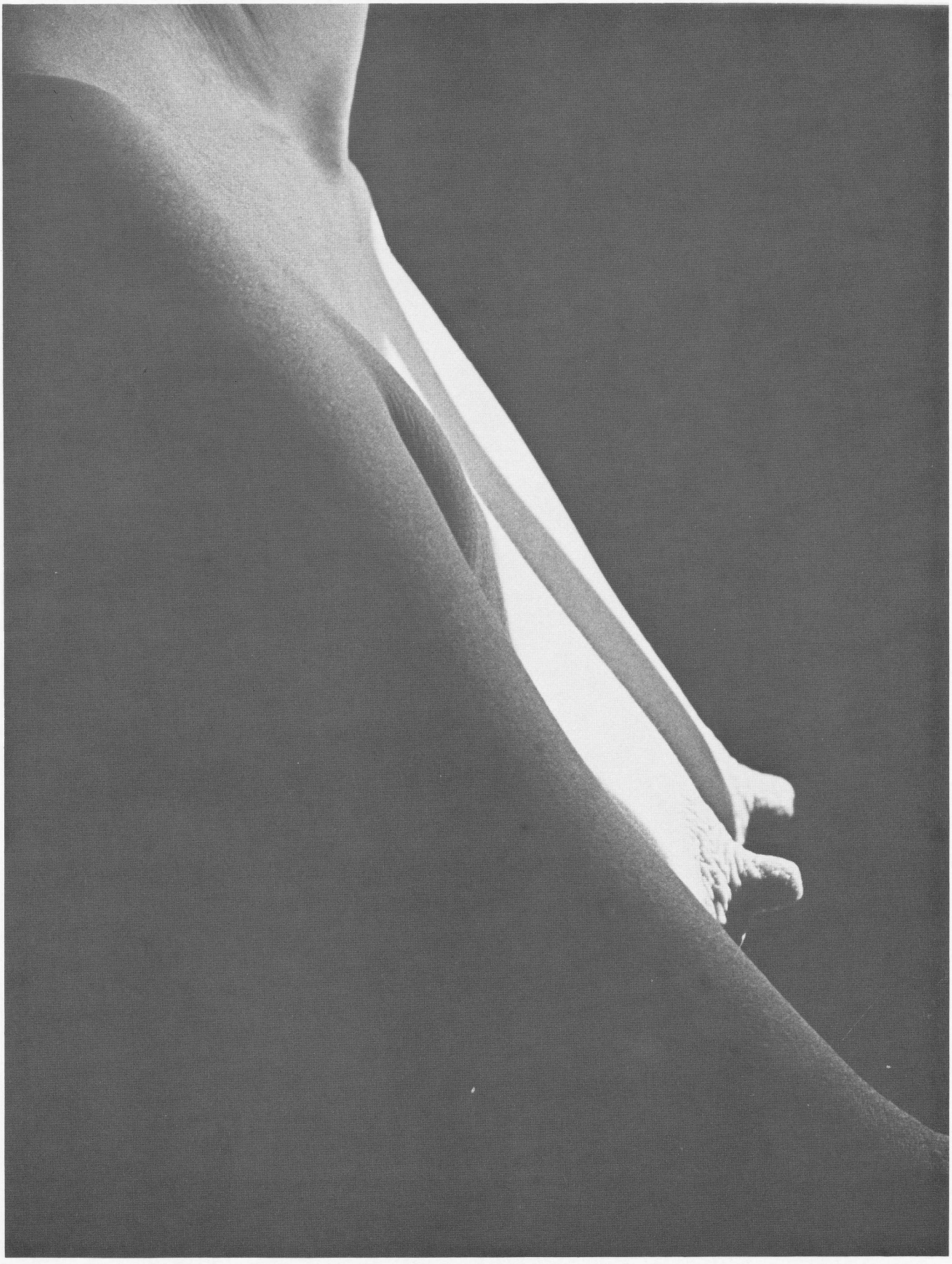
Thinking of the first fingers of winter.

In the woods leaves have closed their fists
again, the air fills with the bite
of a trap clapping shut.
A muskrat listens to the wind.
It would gnaw its
fourth leg off
to be free

I imagine
the tree trunk arching its back
the spine crackles
branches grab for the red line
of the horizon

one acorn has found
its way to the road

inevitable, like a smooth stone
and the top of a hill.



Roger Pfingston

Paula Christensen

Robert P. Martin

RABBIT BONES

I saw the devil in a ditch. He was rubbing his leg with both hands and moaning. He had red freckles, red hair with a receding hairline and his nose was long, ran straight out of his forehead and nearly touched his chin. He picked up his banjo and started playing and smiling. He played a few bars of "Take Me Out To the Ballgame" and I ran away.

I am busy building my sauna from whatever redwood or pine planks I found at construction sites, or salvaged from torn-down barns. I have cleared a circle radiating out from my car where I stopped after four days of driving. For the time being I am living in my car, but I will be moving out soon into the cheap shack I have constructed. With the help of All Mighty God our Creator, I will soon be through with my sauna too. I have oiled the roof of my house and the rains are kept out, with the help of the Lord.

Today, I am building shelves. It is pedestrian work: cutting dozens of plywood triangles and screwing them to studs, placing the pine planks on them. I need dozens of shelves for my work. I have a woodstove for the very coldest days of the rains, but I hardly need it, the climate seems so gentle. The printing press is still in boxes in the station wagon.

I tested the ground near the car, and I built my shack on a piece of stone of some extent. Yesterday I assembled my bed from its crudely carved components. I have built my house in the shape of a T and have placed my bed along the stem, installed my woodstove in one arm of the horizontal bar, and I suppose the press will go in the other arm. The doorway is placed where the horizontal meets the vertical.

Yesterday I read aloud from Samson Agonistes. I jotted a few thoughts about Jehovah on a scrap of paper and pinned it to my bedspread. I began unpacking my volumes of Aquinas. I placed the candles I brought with me in an orderly line down the special box-shelf I built to contain them. In a sunny hour today I will mow the vegetation back, nail a few more boards to the sauna and take a hot bath tonight. If the devil stays in the ditch, only a weak possibility.

I have hung Dali's picture of the Last Supper above the doorway.

Above the wall of dense vegetation, over the tops of the tallest ferns, one sees an orange glow, like arc lamps.

This world is much smaller than the evil one I have left behind. In that world Dali is known only as a great Surrealist painter, and Raphael is the name of some ordinary Negro boy.

When I first approached the devil he looked up, tears splashing down his wet, hot face. He said,

"Man, you gotta hep me man."

His red freckles stood out brightly against his charcoal face. His hair was a shocking red.

With the grace of God, I will defeat this foe. I defeated him in Vanity Fair, and I will lash him to his own wiles here, cripple him if he tries to leave the ditch.

In the city we squashed Lucifer with our press, even as I shall stand against him here alone. In the city we railed at the shocking murders by Dalmation Afro-Combs, guns, knives, we descried rapes and assaults, and we were hounded. The Lord has shown in Revelation how this is a cryptic symbol of the end of time.

We were hounded, and finally they killed my wife. I returned home, found her lying on the floor, bloodied, Afro-combs scattered about. Still, I know that this was not the work of the sons of Ham.

Have I been driven out, was there cowardice? I think I have smelled the goat in my actions, but I do not know. This morning I found a dead rabbit near the house, I cut an incision tracing the backbone and looked at the vertebrae. Nothing clear was indicated.

And yet, the man in the ditch. As soon as he spoke he winked his closed eye at me, and I could tell that a raven had pecked at his eyeball. He howled, and began to writhe in the water, speaking in an Indo-European tongue. He wailed a blues song. Little spurts of water were tubed out between his lips.

I had dug the ditch yesterday, as a latrine.

Now there was a man in there, offering me a bottle of cheap wine, "Yeah man, whuts wrong wif you?" I ran away.

I have never before heard a description by anyone, in which the devil appears as a red-headed Negro banjo player sitting in a ditch. The Evil One normally manifests in more splendid raiment and surroundings. We found him in the city, attired in splendid gold and red fabrics, in every conceivable social position, from President to poverty client, though there are times when he moves undetected about in garments as plain as those worn by ordinary men. God has not promised mortals that he will paint a red cross on the Devil's back.

It is one of the works of man to learn to recognize the devil.

After I ran from him, I read aloud from Samson Agonistes. I am thankful I have been given eyes to see.

I wonder if he will come up to the house tonight and knock on the door. I wonder if he will use my name. I know that the Lord works in mysterious ways. Will the soft Deceiver come to my door as a statuesquely beautiful and soft blond young creature of delicate female mould? Will he try to grind his soft pelvis against my sex? Since the murder, I have not slept well, and Old Nick comes to me out of the lush vegetable-matter wall, leaps out of a flower as this lovely vision. But I am dead to the love of the senses, and I am not fooled.

I think I hear splashing in the ditch, over the drizzle. I zip on my windbreaker and walk to the ditch. There is a pitiful duck in it. His feathers have been washed with detergent and he is drowning. I grab at his neck but he has filled with water and it is too late. I take him inside and boil some water and throw him in until the feathers loosen. He will make a delicious meal.

Where is my friend with the banjo.

It is so quiet out here that it is unnerving. Tomorrow I set up the press and print pamphlets and handbills again, and staple them on the house, so that all who blunder down my little room will either come up or stay away.

I sniff the air and detect the boiling duck, but I have no real appetite. It could be boiled leaves, or pine needles.

I wish the devil had stayed in the ditch--at least I would know where he was. But I know the devil will never stay still for a moment. The minute he sees you know who he is, he transforms his shape.

I wonder why they killed her. I loved her, knowing she was the sister of Eve and the daughter of the Evil One. The darkness was rampant in her, the suggestion of Eve peeping from behind each work, and still I loved her. We stood together. But they stabbed her and stabbed her and left their black combs behind, as a spattered testament.

I don't think I can stand the smell of the duck, it is so like goat meat, gamey and wild.

When I finish eating, I will cast the entrails.

Though there was no sign in the rabbit, his flesh was delicious, a living testimony to Providence.

I will go take a sauna.

I see now, that when I pass the ditch this time, there will be a fat croaking bullfrog in it. God is giving me a sign, once again, and never forgets me, though I may turn from him.

The frog <u>is</u> in the ditch.

The sauna is hot, but who started the fire. My body is the temple of God, his vessel is heated and glows. Will my civil friend tap me on the shoulder or come boldly to me, face to face? Am I as blind as Milton?

Outside, there is rain and light ashfall. Murder is avenged by our Redeemer. The smell of the goose goes right to my stomach.

Towelling off, I feel a sudden ache in my stomach, a pain stealing into me like hunger.

I run into the house and peg the towel and it hangs limply against the wall.

I stand sniffing the sharp odor of the goose and I take it off the fire and drain it and toss it in the sink. I proceed along the breast with my sharpest knife. I want no truck with the devil, I cast the devil out with thy help, oh Jehovah. I chew the wild meat of your creature, cast forth from thee by thy bounteous love.

If the Tempter tries me tonight, he will find himself in a battle for his life. I fought him my lifetime in the city, with my press, and would do it again, even though my wife died again.

I don't feel well. I will lie down.

Do I hear a splash in the ditch. There is a red-haired Negro out there. He is playing a banjo tune.

Tomorrow, the press. I will draw a picture of the devil, the one in the ditch today. I will oil the roof of this house. I will cover a wall with posters of the Evil One, to warn away the weak or the mistaken.

Tomorrow, I also build more shelves.

Guy Beining

MAD MAN ON MY BACK

brazen ripper
elegant bald head
shooting words straight up
his heart jumped
when the bottle fell
& smashed across the sidewalk
near the White Rose Bar.
his insides narrowed
as if a knee had
shot up on his groin.

Guy Beining

CONCRETE DREAM CCCLXX

your face of the bird
sighting shore
the moon in its beak
eggs strewn along
a gravel nest
blood baked by sunset,
your hands like kissing fish
in water.
somewhere in between
you stand immense & alone.

John McKernan

WAR CRIME

Most Catholics make love
At night in their unlit
Comfortable bedrooms
They pull down the shades

To keep out the stars, the moon.
My mother, my father
Created their first image
Once in that dark pink room.

But all romance ended there
What with the great war on
As father flew to Washington
To compute the cost of soap.

Mother would lie alone nights
And touch darkness when the wind
Stirred about pink curtains
Or pushed against the window.

She was looking at the Great Nothing.
And I, small I, learned also
Each varied shade of absence
Before I grew from cartilage to bone.

John Carpenter

HORIZONS

We fall through a drift's deep dream
Then break loose, wondering if a road is below
Or the grass of a field.
Snow scrapes the axle;
There is the snap of a chain. One wheel
Sings smoothly, the other grinds downward.

It is dark. Whiteness returns to our tracks
And the horizons, which were out of sight,
Suddenly reappear, running through us.

Snow sifts through the circle where our
Thoughts drift. We become remote to ourselves...

An owl's eyes look out at us over the surface--

A string of lights winds forward like a caterpillar,
Two beams cross our faces and a plough sweeps a path
Ten feet in front of us; cars snuggle in its wake.

We hobble to where sleep awaits, bringing a vast
White wilderness. Its horizons begin where we are.

Mike Smetzer

ON BECOMING TWELVE

On becoming twelve, I melted down
my crayons into wax
and lit them as rude candles in my
room

I watched their sooty struggle
till the pigment choked their flames
and one by one their little lights
went out.

Michael Smetzer

PLANTS FOR YOUR WINDOW

I had a friend was busted
growing tomato sprouts on his
sill.

Eight policemen broke the door
and carried plants and him
away
Then in a cushion they found
his secret stash.

He should have grown
philodendrons.

Kevin O. Byrne

HOLY CROW

Rummy Will-the-Wanderer
Was done
To a perfect turn--
Nicely,
Crispy--
In a barn.

Drunk again...
In the loft
He lay with death
Cupped
To his lips.

The children
Hung him up
On stakes
To keep the crows
Away.

Barbara A. Holland

TAKE FLIGHT TO MONTREAL

Do you know what that tentacle,
now weaving its length
through the slats in your fire-escape,
does for the front
of your building (It has not improved it!)

that when the citrus slant
of early sunlight
illumines it from underneath,
when lifted,
and brightens the pallor
of its rows of suckers,
wide-eyed,
cabs slew broadside
to the traffic and squad cars
settle across the street?

I suppose
that whatever pours it,
like a viscid dripping,
from one of your open casements
was quartered in your fourth floor
loft to intimidate burglars,
but,
nevertheless,
you could have encouraged
whatever it is
to hoist its excess yardage inside,
even if you balked
at arranging its removal,

or an adequate explanation.

You had better
plan on a long and immediate
vacation in Montreal.

Eric Sundquist

"INDEPENDENCE DAY"

Perhaps it was no hotter than usual, but it seemed a thousand suns were beating through the darkness onto his naked body as he lay waiting to sleep. Again he waited. Again.

He was running. Fast. But in the fine, sifting sand he seemed to be getting nowhere. The sun occupied half the sky and the tall palms inland stood still in the blue heat. Behind him the shallow waves kept covering his tracks so that he looked always to be starting from the exact point his feet were touching. The two men chasing him apparently did not want to catch him, for they ran just fast enough to keep him going at an uncomfortable pace. Occasionally they shot, but not as if they wanted to hit him either, for they sprinted along as they fired while had they stopped and taken a stance they could have brought him down easily. They were Japanese but were shouting at him in English.

"Stop, you Communist son-of-a-bitch!"

"Atheist coward, come back and fight!" Then they broke into a shriek of laughter and each pulled off three or four random pistol rounds which struck nowhere near him.

A few hundred feet up the beach an eccentric form emerged from the surf, a figure that might have been a man had it been all there. The mutant mannequin waddled ashore on six-inch stumps of legs. Where one arm should have been, a frayed sleeve hung limp, the other arm groping about vaguely as if prying the afternoon for insects. What remained of the body was clothed in wet fatigues, the head wound with stained gauze. The searching arm seized his leg as he ran by, an iron grip that felled him, and the mutilated figure, no face showing through the bloodied bandages save a black slit of a mouth that moved only slightly but constantly, held him on his back with a terrific force. Working feverishly, the shredded gauze around the lips opened and closed in what seemed an incantation, yet no sound came out. Around the stump legs, small puddles of dark blood collected in the white, floury sand and from the empty sleeve blood dripped on the chest and neck of the downed man.

The two Japanese soldiers walked up and stood for a moment catching their breath, continually screaming with laughter. They thrust fresh clips into their weapons and finally composed themselves, but then noticing, apparently for the first time, the one-armed shape that had pinioned

their prey, they suddenly grew serious, retired a few steps and talked quickly in Japanese. A few gulls landed and began to drink the blood from the little pools around the mangled man's short thighs.

Presently the Japanese stepped up officially and one spoke to him again in English. "I'm sorry Lieutenant, I guess you'll just have to wait." At this they broke into another frenetic volley of laughter and emptied their automatic pistols into the already bloody form, raising an instant dervish of bits of pink flesh and thread, then walked off in the direction from which they had come, without so much as touching the man they had been chasing. The figure's grasp on his leg remained a solid lock although the body was now little more than a mound of blood-soaked cloth, gauze and decaying pulp. It swayed slightly then toppled onto him, pushing his shoulders into the light sand. The black slit of a mouth, still moving but making no sound, pressed hard against his own.

Mason briggs woke upright in bed, in a thick sweat, but he did not open his eyes. He sat staring at the back of his eyelids, trying to think of nothing. He used to wake up screaming. Now he only woke and immediately began to forget. After he swung his feet off the bed onto the cool wood floor, he opened his eyes toward the window that was always there, a brighter electric shade of black opening on the blackness of his room. Except for an occasional car or truck passing in the street below, only sporadic clusters from a ragtime piano coiled thinly through the large silence. He stood up and pulled on a pair of briefs, poured an inch of gin in a coffee cup, lit a cigarette and went to sit in the tan wicker chair by the window and waited to be able to go back to sleep.

The dream used to bother him a great deal, until he had decided that he would not have it very much longer. He would let some other people have the dreams now. Those who had never had them and should have.

From the third-floor window of his apartment, Mason Briggs could look down into the small public park across the street. Before the base of the corroded but insuperable bronze statue of Grant on his mount was a raised wooden platform that had been erected for the coming day's ceremonies. The thick elm trees shaded out most of streetlight and despite the usual early-July torridity, the statue and its surrounding war monuments appeared to Briggs covered with a light snow. Ice perhaps, a sheer crystalline glaze that would not go away for all the heat in hell.

He had stopped remembering how many times he had sat staring into the park late at night or early in the morning, whichever it

was. And although the platform sat there only once a year, Briggs always saw it when he looked down into the park. Always beneath Grant's horse, at once an altar and a feed trough, an iridescence that nourished the slough of soul and body. It did not matter which. Not at all.

Three years ago, or was it four? he had stood on that platform and spoken about freedom and justice for all. What words did he speak? He might have remembered if he had wanted to. Why had he said them? That too he might have remembered. What did they mean? Briggs had decided he would never know the answer to that one. Or if he ever did, it would be a great surprise of some kind. He had been priest for the day. In his holy olive robes, he had tongued the secretive syllables and with back of hand pressed to forehead had led the benediction. To what? To the sacrificials of the past, and those to come? To the return of his son and his congregation's sons, tested in manhood? Mason Briggs was tired of the question, among others, and had decided it was illegitimate. Like "what was before time?" or "what is on the other side of space?" it was the kind of question that continues to occur because of a defect in the language. Freedom. Manhood. More alphabetic droppings from the mouth.

A few weeks later, his son had come home. At least part of him had. He was still alive. Briggs had spent the last few years, the hours gazing into the park anyhow, attempting to decipher the meaning of "alive" and trying to forget that if it meant what he thought it did that he was in any way connected with it. There are no pagan religions, thought Briggs as he watched the heavy green elm branches dance quietly in the black air. Or they all are. Somewhere outside of town someone, probably one of the teenagers partying down on the river, was shooting off aerial bombs that flashed through the night hot and quick, like meteors burning ballistic nurseries on the sky, then died. Copulation and death. Mason Briggs pondered the combination.

He had dozed at the window, for he woke again in a sweat. He had been running. The streetlights were still on though very early sunlight was playing over the park, and the ice on the statues seemed to have melted. Briggs knew that it had not melted. It was just that it was not always visible. Three shirtless young men had backed a red pick-up to the platform and were unloading a sound system for the celebration. Below them, a couple of old men and some young ladies in pastel summer dresses and sandals were hanging red, white and blue crepe paper on the front of the stand. Deeper in the park, near the swings and teeter-totters, children were setting off firecrackers, laughing and screaming feigned terror at each explosion. They might all have been the same people Briggs had watched last year. It did

not matter. They did exactly the same thing.

A year ago, Mason Briggs had leaned out his window and shouted obscenities at them and then collapsed sobbing on the windowsill. They, or whoever it had been then, had started and stared, shrugged, joked among themselves and gone on working. One of the young women had remarked the use of such disgraceful language around children. This year, Briggs just sat and looked, at nothing in particular. Any feeling one way or the other he might have had about the people in the park had ceased. He had only the slight sensation of a very dry wind traveling from a cavity in his brain down through his throat and chest to his bowels and back again, arousing dust in tiny whorls. Nothing more. In a few hours he would show them an obscenity of which they had never dreamed.

The mid-morning sun hung white in the clear sky and was already uncomfortably warm as he pulled into a stall in the hospital parking lot. He started to get out of his car but had to jerk the door shut again as a small foreign car whipped in quickly beside him. He recognized the doctor who got out and walked around to his window.

"Mr. Briggs, good to see you. Been a while," he almost shouted, as if to make sure he caught Briggs' attention.

"Yes, it has . . . been a while," Briggs faltered, extending his hand out the window to shake the doctor's. "Been a while," he muttered.

"What?" said the doctor, stooping to peer into the car.

"Nothing."

"Glad you came today. If you can stay a few hours we're having a little party at noon. Colonel Carlson's gonna come up and talk to the men, and the boys from Singleton are gonna do a flyover. Should be real nice." The doctor removed from the corner of his mouth the cigar which he had been chewing and spat a brown string of tobacco on the pavement. "Gonna get as many of the men as we can out here on the lawn. Have a little lunch too. Ice cream and pie and all that. Should be a real nice day for them. Can you stay?"

"What?" Briggs had been watching four patients being wheeled in chairs down the sidewalk. Two were talking quietly and seemed to be enjoying themselves. The other two would never talk or hear again and probably did not even know they were outside. They stared through dead eyes at the sidewalk passing beneath them even more blankly than Briggs stared at them.

"Can you stay? For the party?"

"Maybe. No, probably not." Briggs swung his head back to face the doctor. "I have to be at the ceremonies at home."

"Oh, sure. You speaking again this year?"

"No. Just want to be there."

"Well, we probably won't get your son out here anyway, so it doesn't . . ." the doctor broke off, embarrassed.

"No, it doesn't matter," said Briggs. The dry wind stirred in his guts.

"Look, I'm sorry, I didn't mean . . ." the doctor began to apologize.

"Forget. I understand. There's quite a few in there who won't get out for it and he just happens to be one of them. Forget it."

"Yeah, well . . ." the doctor paused but could not think of the right words. He scrutinized his cigar, trying to decide whether to light it or continue eating it. "Coming in?"

"What?" Briggs was looking at the backs of the men being wheeled down the walk.

"Are you coming in?"

"In a minute."

"Okay, I'll talk to you later." Seeing that Briggs was not going to answer or turn to him for the consolation and encouragement he was accustomed to giving, the doctor straightened, walked briskly after the men in the wheelchairs and began chatting with their attendants. The sidewalk enclosed a plane of grass cropped as short and precise as a golf green, and at the far end of the lawn some men in white uniforms were setting up a croquet game.

Briggs turned straight ahead and through the windshield studied the gray slab-stone side of the hospital. His knuckles were white on the steering wheel and if he had eaten breakfast earlier he would have vomited in his lap. It is one huge coffin, he thought, and if you could dig a hole big enough and deep enough and bury the whole fucking thing, it simply would not matter at all. He counted floors and windows until he found his son's room. Corporal John M. Briggs would be sitting, Briggs guessed you'd call it sitting, in a bed as he had for three, or was it four? years. A clean stiff sheet would be pulled up to cover legs that were not there. His one arm would be resting on a thin hip, the frail hand with fingers up-curled motionless on his groin. When the lamp was turned on, a sheet of silver metal that had replaced the left side of his skull would shine through a fine layer of gauze. The right eye, always open but never blinking, would be fixed on the foot of the bed.

What cinema, if any, moved on the back of that unmoving eye? What truths coursed among the blood and water of that distorted rectangular box of bones? Often, so often, Mason Briggs had tried to sit inside his son's head and live his life with him. But it remained not his to live. It was not for him to feel the scorching fragments of sharp metal from the mine that dug into virtually every cubic inch of

his son's body. It was not for him to feel the absence of both legs, one arm, half a face and, perhaps, the absence of all thought itself. No galley of wandering stars, no rondo of honey and fire nor incandescence of nothingness and ice could articulate the whiteness living behind the black center of that vacant eye.

When Mason Briggs was first allowed to visit his son, he had sat in the room for five days, waiting for the slightest movement in the body on the bed. The doctors finally had to drug Briggs to get him out of the room. His son then lay on his back and only in the last year or so had the doctors been able to set him up on his bony buttocks against a pile of pillows. Briggs had never wept when he sat with his son, at first because he thought it might have upset him, recently because he knew it did not matter. He could have slung the torso off the bed and jumped up and down on what was left of his chest and his son would not have known the difference. His son. Hero. The doctors were confident. New techniques. Therapy. His son.

Mason Briggs sat in his car and dry-heaved. The car was blisteringly hot, but as he looked through tears and stinging salty sweat that trickled from his thinning hair, there appeared to be a dusty film of ice covering the hospital. He wept in spasms, and with his arms tense on the steering wheel and choking as his chin slumped on his chest, he watched his trousers soak with urine. The doctor stood at young Briggs' window and looked down to the car. From the glare of the sun on the windshield, he could not tell if Briggs still sat there. Then the car started, backed out and pulled around the corner of the parking lot. Probably moving it to the shade, the doctor thought and turned to take a reading from the machine hooked up to the white form on the bed. He entered a new figure at the bottom of a list attached to his clipboard.

Briggs drove slowly the twenty miles home. Although it was a short drive and a good road, it no longer seemed either long or short. He had not been to the hospital for months and he was not sure why he had gone today. He had seen his son as well sitting in the parking lot as if he had gone up to his room. But he felt better for having gone and it had really ceased to matter, or it would very shortly. He used to hope something would go wrong and his son would die, and the last time he had visited he had even walked up next to his son's bed and had thought to strangle him, but had not. Had his son been able to speak and asked him to, he would have done it in a minute, with no regret. As it was, it was not for him to decide. The asphalt road passed smoothly beneath him and a few red-winged blackbirds and meadowlarks dipped lazily down into the yellow wheatfields and back up to the telephone wires as he drove past.

He sat on the bed contemplating the cup of gin balanced on his knee while the sun stepped across his window toward noon. He sat much as the young man in the hospital sat although he did not happen to notice it. Against the pale green wallpaper, two gold-framed black-and-white photographs on the dresser looked across the room at him. On the left, a young man in his early twenties in uniform. American Lieutenant. World War II. On the right, a man again in his early twenties in uniform. American Corporal. ------- War? What did they call it? How could you call it a war when nobody wanted to win, just wanted to go home? What was it, a mistake with honor? Mason Briggs had never questioned the war he had fought in. His closest friend since childhood had been blown into a wad of bloody rags right beside him, but he had not questioned it. He had gone on fighting. He had killed. Twice. One man he shot at a distance. The soldier was running and Briggs hit him at the base of the spine and watched him jack-knife up into the air, fall and claw along the ground toward a small rise of bush. He crawled only a few feet before the second shot hit high in his back and stopped him. The other man Briggs killed was one he thought responsible for the death of his friend. After wounding him, Mason Briggs had walked slowly to the body. The soldier's eyes were closed but he gasped and babbled in a foreign language. Briggs had stood by him for several minutes not thinking, just standing and watching the brown-blue waves surround his feet and recede into themselves.

"You shit. You killed my best friend." The soldier had opened his eyes only briefly when Briggs rested the tip of his rifle barrel on the bridge of the man's nose and exploded his head into a pattern on the sand. Afterwards Briggs was not sure that the man was responsible, but then he could not decide who in fact was. Possibly no one. He had killed no more after that. But he would have if he had had to. Mason Briggs had been in a theatre of war, as it was called. His son had only been in a theatre. A pitiful diversion. An entertainment. A joke.

There used to be a few service medals hanging on each picture but he had long since thrown them away. And at one time there had been a third picture between the other two, a wedding picture of a young woman and the man in the picture on the left. When the young man in the picture on the right had come home half in a casket, the woman had left Mason Briggs. He didn't love her nor she him, and if the horror of their son had worked any redemption it was that it had given her an opportunity to leave him. It was, after all, she had told him, his fault. Mason Briggs knew that no one was singularly at fault, but he had also known for some time that his wife was one of

those persons who no matter what abomination fell upon them would never be convinced of the simple fact that responsibility in no way entered into reality. She actually had other reasons for leaving him but it could not have been of less concern to him. So, if it is not your concern, thought Briggs, forget it. Forget the pretty answers too. Questions. Wordshit. Withered choirs of trash and brass nailed to the clouds for lovers and fools and the rest of the world. No, there is no rest of the world. Just lovers and fools. Or maybe just words.

Now he rose, walked to the dresser and took the pictures out of the frames. He placed the more recent one on top of the older one and tore them both into tiny scraps as he moved to the window. He was going to throw them out like confetti but instead just sat down in the wicker chair and let the scraps fall to the floor. It did not matter. In the distance he could hear a band warming up. Behind the platform, back in the shade of the park, a man was filling brightly-colored balloons with helium and handing one each to a crowd of excited children. At a picnic table nearby, a women's club was selling homemade ice cream and soft drinks. The sun continued to climb and it warmed his face as he closed his eyes and tried not to see anything.

He was running. Fast. He was pinned in the sand by the tremendous power of that one thin arm. The two soldiers who had been chasing him caught up, shrieking with laughter. As they reloaded their guns, the mutilated figure released his grasp and with his one hand began to unwind the bloody bandages from around his head. But instead of a head there appeared a dull metallic sphere covered with a slight coating of ice that glistened in the tropical sun. There was a sudden silence and although the mouths of the two Japanese men were moving in laughter, Lieutenant Briggs heard nothing at all. Nor did he hear the shots when the maimed man took a small calibre handgun out of his breast pocket and shot the two men, each once and cleanly between the eyes. He then handed the gun to Briggs and scudded off into the surf on his stump legs. The legs dragged a pair of irregular furrows in the white sand and down the middle of each, carved by the protruding bones, was a deeper crevice which became a small river of blood draining toward the sea.

After a while the salt water lapped up far enough on the beach and left the sand smooth and silent. Far out in the waves, a shiny metal ball bobbed on the horizon like a vagrant buoy. Even farther out, half a dozen gulls twisted aimlessly against the fiery ivory sunset.

Mason Briggs woke in his chair by the window, the noon sun pressing into his eyes. He was not sweating, but in fact chilled, and he felt that if he had touched his face it would have been covered with

frost. In the shade of the park below, the marching band was at ease and playing "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean." Several hundred people had gathered in the park and on the benches across the street, directly below his window. On each side of the platform was parked a float decorated with crepe paper and peopled by paper-mache dummies. One represented Iwo Jima but the figures supposedly raising the improvised flag looked more like a pack of wild dogs hunching each other. Several small boys were trying to climb aboard the float. On the other float, which had a Revolutionary theme, sat three girls wearing formal dresses, one red, one white, one blue, with gold- and silver-painted cardboard crowns on their heads. They were smiling and waving to the man taking their picture. Behind the girls stood a sober effigy that looked vaguely like George Washington.

Briggs was somewhat sorry to have slept through the parade, but it did not matter. It was the same every year anyway. And in a while the same speeches and prayers that had been offered annually since before the beginning would be offered again. This year, Mason Briggs had decided, would be slightly different, though. Perhaps it would not matter at all, but it nevertheless would be different.

He got up and walked to the dresser. Out of the top drawer he took a shoebox and a six-foot piece of light-weight rope. He returned to the window, removed the screen and sat again, and waited for the endless procession of proclamations and dedications to begin. Resting his feet on the windowsill, he lit the filter of one cigarette, threw it out, lit another and puffed slowly, watching the smoke twirl through a shaft of sunlight and into the shadows. Finally, after three speeches by veterans of foreign wars, a silent prayer accompanied by a profane marching band rendition of "America the Beautiful," and an unsilent prayer profane in itself, the mayor rose, thanked the minister and shook his hand, and stepped to the podium to lead the flag pledge. He wiped his face with a wet handkerchief and tested the microphone nervously.

"I pledge allegiance to the flag and to the United States of Amer . . ." The crowd had started to join in, but when the mayor heard the fighter jets approaching he broke off, knowing that his voice would soon be drowned out by their deafening roar. The jets flew north to south, low and not too fast, paralleling the highway that turned into Main Street for twelve blocks and then became a highway again at the south edge of town. If the flyover had not been off-schedule, probably no one would have seen Mason Briggs as he stood on his third-floor windowsill leaning out over the Fourth of July crowd below. He held onto the raised window with one hand and with the other appeared to be adjusting some kind of mechanism tied around his waist with a length of rope.

The jet planes were about at the south edge of town when Briggs crouched and sprang almost straight up as if to get the greatest height possible before laying back into a tight tuck position. As the trailing sound of the jets had caught up and was just then passing overhead, the explosion of Lieutenant Mason Briggs some thirty feet above the street was not as loud as it might have been. For less than a second he felt the hot white breath start at his navel and rip radially through his whole frame, bursting his life into a skein of red energy. Small chunks of bone, guts and burnt clothing, and a shower of smoke and blood sprayed over the crowd. A sliver of metal from the bomb shot into the forehead of the girl in blue seated in front of George Washington, killing her instantly, and the mayor suddenly found himself confronted with part of a charred smoldering hand that fell on his podium.

Twenty miles away, a white figure in a white hospital bed twitched curiously and his eye blinked rapid answers at the wall as if he had momentarily awakened from a dream and remembered some question far away.

John Solbach

POND

The fat catfish
Glides through muddy water, hidden
From the boy with the line, and feeds.

His white belly slides over slick silt,
Tailfin thrusts push his wide mouth
Upon a skewered, naked worm. He swallows.

A jerk in his guts
Pulls him upward, shoreward -- despite
His bending, thrashing -- lifts him splashing
Out through the sun silvered surface
To air his gills gasp empty in. He hangs
Spinning beside a beaming boy
Running up the muddy bank.

Reg Saner

SAND

Where the mountains wave
old bones
I squirm into a time
torn by its roots. Past
slopes of lithic stampede,
valleys chocked on stone altitudes
fallen, their crag chips so sheer
my head bumps the packframe
looking them up. Far higher,
gravity's big guns:
peaks creviced and charged
by weather, ripe
for unloading
into this grey thornbush
of rock. Slab after slab
so huge they earthquake
the back of the mind.

As I hurl broken cliffs
into reverse their underfoot
shambles tosses together
out of itself, then
rains down
in dinosaur herds--each beast
a smash of bare pain.

That inaudible thunder,
this tremendous beginning
of sand.

Eve Caram

QUILTING

Quilting takes a tolerance for tedium,
a liking for it, even,
and trust
that the pattern will show up,
be beautiful in the end.

When I was young
I didn't see the patchwork of my grandmother.
She cooked hearty midwestern dishes,
kept a spotless house,
attended church, aspired to money--
but also cut her own patterns
out of Sunday issues of the Arkansas Gazette.
She made the gowns my mother wore
to play the pipe organ for silent films--
had an American gift for goods--
died, cranky, cancerous, addicted to morphine
before I knew what our quarrel was over,
before I could make it up.

She left her quilts to me--
the pattern
fashioned from plain and fancy dresses
is Flower Garden--
under them I dream.

Now I see the cotton print she was sick in,
the black dress-up with orange flowers,
so art deco, so '33,
pieces of Snow White and Disney birds
from my nursery dress,
that blue striped seersucker
she wore the summer she hung wet sheets
through the house and set fans
behind them blowing.

She cut the scraps piece by piece,
pinned them patiently,
stitched,
and trusted the remnants to make a garden.

Her hands worked yesterdays
into flowers, into rows.

I used them to cover a bride,
to cover a daughter -- nursed a baby,
tossed, sick, beneath their weight,
found bits of myself with the past,
became my memories.

Now I cluster words around them,
practice her patience
on quilting of my own.

Lora K. Reiter

MICHELE IN OILS

She expects no intrusion
But I come anyway
Through the wall
I burn a circle
And catch her
In her private self
Invested with light
Though not from the hole I make
Her angles smooth and fuse
Without denying themselves
Into cream mauve
Female strength
Intense upon a couch
She faces me
Violating with my eyes
That inner space
Of dervish flowers
Whirling toward a green cool cushion
Hardened by a measured
Rectilinear red brick floor
She sits erect
With calm loose knees
Looks back through her own circles
One way lenses
Concealing nothing
But her scrutiny of me
Behind the wall
Expecting no intrusion.

Anick O'Meara

TREE WARNING

for Doug

All the mirror
is scarred
with winter trees

branches
carving words
in sky

Under a mask of glass
the water is maddened
with trees

They are witch's lace
woven from darkness
Their huge webs

trap creatures
blinded by
their own reflection

Mark Thiessen

Laid out, back bent, and shoes on
the divan
being just plain tired
staring through a dusty window
watching,
watching trees behind trees
hide behind trees gone brown
Exposed
Their intricately networked branches
crisscross against the background
of a clear, blue, late afternoon
sky
as if it's like that everywhere
outside

Mark Thiessen

Worn and bent
old man
dying day by day
in visible minutes

His room is high up
in the sunshine
overlooking
scenery he doesn't remember,
sitting quietly in the knowledge

His funeral is pre-arranged
to include the burial
of jewels
so magnificantly tooled and weighty
that his head
bows down,
before them

Duane BigEagle

NOW SHE SLEEPS

Stars in her belly,
Noon in the small
Of her silken back.

Now she sleeps,
An embryo in the middle of the bed.
Covers curl around her body in chaos
Like the past days events.

Her deep rest
Its dark silence
Protects her,
With all the strength of utter defenselessness.

Tomorrow to be born again
Into the whirl of day
Her only armor.
Her incredible softness.

Michael L. Johnson

DREAM OF AN OLD MAN

I lie here wakeful
in the waste of dreams,
remember how

they came to me
once, those ladies
who walked like

goddesses: their soft
hair winding down
long lovely backs

in chambered darkness;
eyes that awed me,
held me, then

turned cold and left me
empty. Now
I've dreamt of them

again: their eyes
remain and wink
like stars of hell

within the darkness
of an old man's
lonely chamber.

Kiehl Rathbun

Dennis Craig Demanett

EULA RED RIDING HOOD

I

She stood on the porch of her mother's cabin. Lethargic and reposed, she blinked at the heathen sunlight that dusted her blonde body with an apotheosis of honeyed mildew-light. She was not beautiful and she did not have to be. All Yoknapatawpha County knew her--the Saturday night come to town county farm men, grey, dusty, not with toil, but with unconscious avoidance of it--the Jefferson Baptist Altar Society women who discussed her in the untawdry afternoons of cool lemonade and shady summer verandas--the young men, the raw, unsmelted pseudonyms of lovers, bucking and honking, wild stallions, tossed by the monstrous throes of a youthful ecstasy, passing her mother's cabin at three a.m., fired by illicit gulps from fruit jars full of the artificial lightning, the electricity, offered by the tenant of the Old Frenchman's place, their minds eaten with the knowledge that within the shabby wafer walls she lay, unattainable, gorgeous, bathed in the cream of unholy moonlight. And so she stood, not so much leaning as reposing, supporting herself against the unpainted post of her mother's front porch, her eyes the color of stewed prunes. Inside the cabin hung the red cape on its nail, though it wasn't a nail so much as it was a peg, a hook, burnished not by time or fire, but with the awful repudiation that was somehow linked, tied to, not her own mind so much as her silence, the secret of her own fairy tale, existence, being, her immediate unthinking.

Her mother took some flour down from the shelf and mixed it in the cracked blue bowl with the eggs and water Eula Red had fetched--the water from the rusting pump in the weed-strewn backyard, drawn up from the depths of a cold inferno, an ancient Artesian consciousness--the eggs, from the lean-to chicken shed, made from a rusting alliance of dry boards and tin road signs, once tied together with strands, ribbons, bands of wire, now melted, fused together in a consolidation, a union, not so much a monument as it was an echo, not of the past, but of the incomprehensible subtleties, mumblings, musings of history. I DON'T WANT TO TAKE THEM GOODIES TO GRANDMAW. Eula Red sat at the table, her elbows not resting but reposing on the cheap oil cloth cover, her bare toes curling into the worn linoleum floor. THAT OLD WOMAN SHOULD'VE DIED LONG AGO. Her mother was mixing with her hands, cracked, stained hands, man-hands, worn with the work she had been compelled to

do while her husband was showing the county his remarkable abilities at horse-trading--he lost every penny he ever touched. So no one cried, wept or even paused when he left. And now she, the mother, baked and toiled in the hot kitchen, her putty-colored face sweating as she cut the biscuits from the leathered roll, dropping the button globs into the sizzling grease.

She took down a new galvanized pail from the corner shelf and arranged the goodies in it. Eula Red still sat, unblinking, not really watching her Maw, rather perceiving her, filtering the movements through the hyacinth haze that she saw through, her incredible eyes, glazed like honey on stewed prunes, Helenic, Lilithic, the eyes of Greece, of all Antiquity, the spangled myriad of knowledge and passion, the thrusting vision, not of truth but of carnal understanding, the eyes of slut and of virgin, of chastity and of sin--the twisting serpent and the untainted lime.

The smell of new cloth still reeked from the innermost folds of the red cape, her magenta mantle, no, not a mantle or a shroud either, but a veil, an amulet, a badge, not so much of honor, but of her essence, her unobtainable secret.

"Hyers them goodies. Take em to yore grandmaw."

She didn't answer, move, blink. THEM GOODIES AIN'T NOTHIN FOR THAT OLD WOMAN WITH NO TEETH, THAT AIN'T EATEN WITH TEETH SINCE SHE WAS OLDER THAN SHE WAS THAT FIRST TIME I HAD TO TAKE HER GOODIES AND STILL AIN'T GOT NONE AND DON'T EVEN LOOK UP AT ME WHEN I COME IN AND THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I WORE IT. She was down on the trail that cut through the tree-choked thicket of wood that ran beside the creek, the galvanized bucket swinging, hanging at her side, the label still in bland unremove, clinging with minute fingers to the pail, the bucket, not of food but of duty, tradition, and her red cape hanging, limp, moving only because she moved; she moving, not with care, thought, but with deliberateness, a steadiness, like the fathers, the men of the old times who had walked, hunted, lived in the thicket-snarled wood--that was what she was, an Indian princess, a wood-hewn goddess, a red-caped jungle baby, not looking, not caring to, needing to, just moving, breathing, not so much a girl taking goodies to her grandmaw as a priestess delivering fire to her temple.

II

Wolf Snopes had eyes the color of burnt eggshells, Left at the age of three by his mother, a Memphis whore who had married J. C.

Snopes, not so much because she needed to escape from the myriad waste that enveloped her, but more because she was looking for a backdoor, a key, a tunnel to lead from the hopeless yearning that her broiling maidenhood required, needed, demanded. Wolf had always lived by himself in the woods. J. C. Penny Snopes died two days after his wedding--a wagon load of corncobs, the apotheosis of requited harvest, fell on him, crushing his grey body into the withered, decayed, dead, lost but not lost soil of Yoknapatawpha County.

So Wolf was a loner. Standing in the thicket where in the spring the dogwoods and wild plums had bloomed, a profusion of amassed fertility, not so much dripping as bursting with the sweet, fickle, feminine liquid, beckoning, calling, seducing the bees, the raping, pillaging male-force, racing to absorb it all before the wailing trombone of summer would recall the pink virginal ambrosia to the crusted heart, the quiet bosom of the brown soil-soaked mother, Earth, he watched her as she appeared on the road, the red cape slung over her shoulders, her ripe, creamy, melon-smooth shoulders, whose surfaces faintly perspired beneath the warm caress of the tawdry veil--the robe of Salome, the mantle of an Etruscan queen, the jewelled gown of Lilith--and she, just walking in it, not seeming to care about, not having to, anything, but moving, gliding, not wilting so much as emanating, producing, excreting her impossible femaleness, red-caped, her lush representation, her ripeness--shielded only by the straining unconcern of her youth.

And Wolf could see her through the fog of misty sunlight, an aureole of noontime glow, lazy, undarkness, her movement a crimson blur--a vermillion shadow--floating on waves of a deep-rooted warmth, a condensed smouldering, a veiled flame, a shrouded inferno--gathered at the bottom of his stomach like a pair of clenched fists. So he crashed silently through the dust-smothered, choked, strangled weeds, keeping her in his eyes, she, moving along the path (the bucket, pail swinging, glinting, gleaming), a silver, red Helen. "Hey," he said, hollered, running, then not running, walking, no, not so much walking as perambulating, "Hey." And she, just walking, not pausing, not missing even one of her calculated, planned, mapped-out steps--not feeling the tree branches grabbing at her cape, just gliding, sailing in her untouchable red cocoon.

"Hey," he said, whispered, "Hey." SHE'S GOIN TO HER GRANDMAW'S. SHE'S TAKIN THAT DUTY, THAT REPUDIATION TO THAT OLD WOMAN AND I CAN GIT THERE FIRST, I CAN GIT THERE AFORE SHE DOES.

III

Steven Gavins lived in a little cabin, a shack--new-looking, but unpainted--stained where the rainwater had run, walked down the sides in rivulets, streams, not so much staining as imprinting, leaving a mark, a badge, a symbol of wet inferno. The dust-choked path ran past his shack and disappeared in his yard--became indistinguishable, the path, the yard, one apotheosis of chicken tracks and dropping, lemondrop-like, translucent gems on the dust lace textures of the ground, the soil, the earth, the dirt.

He stood on the porch, his hand in his lawyer pockets, his steady eyes the color of stale oleomargarine. He was gazing, not so much at the figure that was emerging from the woods as at the wood itself, the mother-wood, the somber womb, the chalice--the flame-thrower of his own repudiation.

"Morning', Eula Red."

"Mornin', Mister Gavins, howcome you starin at me you mule-face old Ichabod Crane?"

SHE DIDN' T EVEN STOP WALKING--NO, SHE COULD NOT HAVE STOPPED, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO SIMPLE AND EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO ME HAS TO BE COMPLICATED BECAUSE I KNOW SO MUCH MORE THAN THE PUTTY-FACED FARMERS I SAVE FROM HAVING THEIR SOULS FRIED IN THE SAME SIZZLING GREASE THEY DROP THEIR SIDEMEAT INTO, AND IT IS NOT JUST THEM, IT IS THEIR NEIGHBORS TOO AND EVERY MULE-CUT ACRE, EVERY STONE--LIKE THE ONE HARD IN MY FIST, THAT I WOULD NEVER THROW BECAUSE I STUDIED IN HEIDELBURG AND LEARNED ABOUT ART AND PAINTING AND MUSIC AND NOW I LET IT ALONE BECAUSE THERE IS NOTHING BUT MY OWN REPUDIATION, NOT MINE, BUT HERS, AND SHE JUST MOVING ON THAT ROAD, THAT DUST-RIBBON FORCE, MOVING HER, TAKING HER, NOT TO A VISION OR A SILENCE, BUT TO HER OWN SECRET, NOT SECRET BECAUSE IT IS HIDDEN, BUT BECAUSE I CANNOT FIND IT, OR TOUCH IT, CANNOT KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IT BECAUSE OF MY OWN REPUDIATION. OH, REPUDIATION, REPUDIATION, WHO'S GOT THE REPUDI ATION?

IV

He stood just outside the cabin where the old putty-faced woman lived, his burnt eggshell eyes not so much peering as digging, pouring, flowing into the window where she sat before the little stove, that was not so much a gas or electric stove as it was a wood-burning stove, or

coal if she had some, or garbage or cornhusks. He moved closer to the window, and lifting it, slowly, never taking his eyes, his face, his nose from the woman, where she sat, wrapped in a grey blanket, smoking a pipe and humming off-key, some song she'd long ago forgotten the lyrics to or even where she'd heard it first; he crawled, not like a cat, but more like a secret, a serpent, Cleopatra's adder revived from its basket of prunes, and moved, fast, not sudden, but smooth, never pausing or even thinking, just acting--and using his hands, shoving the old woman, her eyes the color of soggy pancakes, into the cellar, she, biting and kicking, not screaming but whining, whimpering, and then, bleeding and blubbering, falling, stumbling, in a grew flutter of cheap cloth and pieced together flour sacks, landing not hard or gentle either, but in a heap, like refuse, like a fallen leaf, dead, but not dead, and not alive either, and he, standing in the light, looking, not staring or breathing--moving back from the door, then turning back, unraveling, pulling, rewrapping, and then he--not the old woman-sitting, humming, warming before the not-electric, not-gas stove either, just sitting, waiting.

V

The other followed behind her on the dusty road, only he couldn't see her and she couldn't see him, but he knew that if she could see him, and if he was close enough to her to reach out and touch her that she wouldn't stop or slow down or even notice that he was near, so it was enough to walk behind her, to walk on the path where she had walked, to step on the same grey dust, to see the crinkled-paste prints of her tennis shoes, to know that the space he was occupying, she had occupied minutes (no, seconds, eons, decades, eternities) before; to sense her presence ahead on the path, her red presence, her draped angel-demon being, cocooned, bathed in red, dipped in broiling fire, and cooled with its embers, a gleam of speeding freight trains in the night, a boiling flame of sputtering grease on a fire in her mother's cabin, cold and faraway, the birthplace of his repudiation and the eruption of his latent breathing, no, of his rechanneled heat, his very blood, his throbbing, his own desires, pastel framed on the sheerest membrane of his weakness, not even love, but pure wanting, not oven-tempered for flexible strength by the memory of the Rhine, the Danube, the Moldau, but in fact, invigorated, impregnated, by it, by her being, by her living, by her myriad apotheoses.

So he had no choice but to follow, not so much to apprehend her, or even to see her, but rather to know his pursuit was available (no, mandatory, even inevitable). He saw her from the edge of thicket,

saw her walk up onto the porch, saw her enter, saw the old plank door of her grandmaw's house come shut behind her, saw the faintest shadow of movement on the cracked, yellowing window shade, the color of his eyes, heard some muffled thud, like a buried cannon, then heard not her voice, but the articulation of his own repudiation.

VI

Eula Red didn't like to take goodies to her grandmaw, because it was work, and she didn't like work. It wasn't so much that she didn't like it, as she didn't require it, need it, or find it necessary. So she walked through the woods, her galvanized bucket swinging at her side, her cape, store-bought in Jefferson, special-ordered by her Paw, for her birthday, by the Paw who raised big bean plants and disappeared one Sunday in the family bean patch after Eula's maw and grandmaw had let their combined wraths devour him, descend on him, envelope him, for trading the milk cow not for a sewing machine or a cream separator or even a jar of simple putty, the color of faces; but simply beans, a whole burlap bag of them; and so she repudiated him too, and he vanished, swallowed by the darkness of a bean patch Sunday, then belched, only not belched, because he was gone and then Eula Red and her maw lived alone.

She never seemed to need to blink her stewed-prune eyes, they just stayed open, not so much alive as transfixed, oblivious, unreaching and unreachable. She walked to the cabin across the unkept yard, the bucket still swinging, still full of the now-cold biscuits and canned fruit, not pears or apples, but peaches, picked and canned the day before, sour, green, with no sugar, the pits all picked out, pulled out, not so much with violent force as with forceful violence, tossed to the ground, the hard grey-cracked ground behind her maw's house, rat-grey, clean, but not neat and she just wrenching the pits, her thoughts not so much unwhistled notes as they were a strip of store-bought flypaper. She climbed up onto the porch, not knocking, just pushing through the door, not even stopping when she closed it, but going on to the table with its tawdry oil cloth cover and not looking at the huddled grey shape by the fire; not so much ignoring it, as not even recognizing its existence, placing her burden, the pail, with a smack, a clap on the table.

"Hyers them goodies maw put together for you, you skinny old Hester Prynne."

"Leave em on that er table."

"Howcome you can hyer me? You s'posed to be deaf."

"I kin hyer."

"And why's yore haid all covered up like a skinny old Rip Van Winkle?"

"It's cold in hyer."

"Yore nose shore looks dirty, like a skinny old Spectre Bridegroom."

"I kin smell better, thataway."

"Hey, yore eyes is the color a burnt eggshells, not soggy pancakes like they s'posed to be. You ain't my grandmaw!"

And then he sprung, no emerged, floated almost, from among the rags, and grabbed at her, pulling her over, not so much accosting, as he was raping her, or she, him, raping him, he struggling, fighting, ripping at her, she at him, they at each other, an apotheosis of rape, and then Steven Gavins was in the room, and standing there, in the doorway, and they (the raping) not even noticing, realizing him, while he said:

"So it is an obliteration, a dissolution, no, an envelopment of your repudiation, so you think it is, but you are wrong. Sholy you are wrong. Sholy. There is no relief, no unentanglement, no alleviation from the mystery that grabbed, no, surrounded, pervaded you, swallowed you, and grasped you, pulled you along its current, hot-red, a flame stream, not so much of passion as of your own fervent desire (my desire) not to escape or simplify, but to drown, entangle, bury--not so much for your safety and hope, as for your simplicity, your knowledge of your position, your thought--born back there in Heidelburg (or maybe in Oxford, or in Memphis or maybe even in Jefferson, it doesn't matter) that you must take it, the challenge, the threat, and carry it, not as a badge, a token, but as a promise, a secret, a hoping, not for any glory, honor, but for the satisfaction, the completion of your didacticism--the realization of your intotality, not of your greed, of your satiable being, but of the presence of your latent sorrow, not so much manifested as reflected, not in your hopelessness, but in your weakness, your unsubtle habits, your boldness, your contact with the inferno. Now, won't you please stop rapin' her?"

"There's no reason for her defilement; she was born defiled, a virgin, yet not a virgin so much as a female, a woman, not vile, but vengeful, capable, but impotent--unable to reflect, but only to act, to do, to be, not merely herself, but her consciousness, her unbelievable bovine essence, spiraling out of the long-forgotten regions of a sleeping past, not her own, or her race's, or her family's, but her sexual past, her demon-shape and protoplasm, breathing not her story but her plan, her division, her eternal but earthly projections, emanations, honey-glazed, like wax fruit, like maple syrup, like stewed prunes, her face, her hair, her cape--her red cape, the medallion, the badge of her secret, her significance, her innocence,

not from anything or to anything, but rather in opposition to her believing, her capability to believe, to evaluate, to judge, anything outside the honey-sweet realm of her own blistering secret, the whisper, not unspoken, a whisper so loud that every young buck in the county could hear it and not one of them able, capable of doing anything about it, unable to act, but only to react, to chastise, and to covet, to fight for it, but never to taste or even smell it. And yet you, Wolf Snopes, Flem's brother, or cousin, or uncle, or niece, you whatever you are, find the courage, no, the audacity, the Southern-repudiated knavery not to woo, not to hide and admire or chastise or secrete or whisper, but to charge into her own grandmother's house and---"

And Eula Red, breathing more slowly now, in rapt scornful unamaze: "We already done finished and he done gone more'n five minutes ago, you old idiot, you buffoon, YOU SKINNY OLD GEOFFREY CRAYON!"

Alan Britt

THE ALTAR

In a grocery store
a child wipes her foot
on a butterfly.
She kneels down
before the gum machine
and stares into its glass head.
Her saliva
rolls over the colored round balls
her fingers
streak the glass.
Thin music
settles around the edges
of the big window.
An arm
slams a silver cart
into its steel nest.
A row
of cash registers
chip away
at the child's skull.

Douglas Blazek

COORDINATION

Say hello to my old friends
my dark leg and my white leg

one will place a moon upon your tongue
the other will place a sun

as you speak the moon will breathe your words
it will house them in a leaky sky

as you speak the sun will steal your breath
it will explode it in your face every time you blink

now I must be on my way
there is much practice to walking gracefully

Barbara Rakley

ROYALTY VISITING HER AT NIGHT

I. Gold Animals

Run your fingers over her forehead,
feel the animals chasing each other
in the ravine of her skull
drowning

The unicorn squats in front of her
he is draped in fine golden chains

I have such heavy hair. When it is just washed, it is as thick as old rugs lying around my scalp. After a summer in salt water, it is a million shades of gold. Gold: he lives in a gold house, drinks eye drops mixed with orange juice, makes love to a gilt statuette. The goddess paints her fingernails silver and claws strips of skin from his back. She licks gold dust from her hands, swallows it with tea. A lover's knot grows inside her chest. Fool's gold.

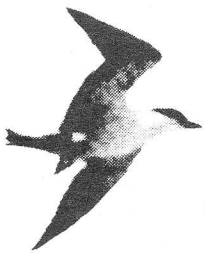
II. The Ice Queen

Chains are only gold
in fairytales.
Woven chains of hair
are around my wrists.
They fasten me to your thighs.
Bands of hair
snap,
jerk me back to you.

We linger in crystal.
Crystal like weddings.
Weddings like brass.
Brass like beds.
We sleep on crystal sheets.

I would tuck you into a crystal bed. Pull a sheet of glass over your face. Place frozen raindrops on your eyes,
weight you
down
to ice.

I have never fancied myself the Ice Queen, have always left that royalty to slim girls sculpted from marble; cut with veins of ice. Lick your cool girls and your tongue will bleed.



Thomas Kerrigan

A MAN OLD AS MANAAN

A man old as Manaan
he speaks to no one
but drifts like a grey fog
past peeling yellow shacks
along this lonely coast

He dreams of ancient storms
the crash of sea and hull
the war of sea and ship
sailors' ghostly faces
wreathed with brown and green kelp
glistening on black shores

He looks for hidden signs
in moonlit surf and hears
murmurs in the waves' roar
Some men have seen him trace
strange symbols in the sand

A man old as Manaan
One day the sea shall yield
all of its drowned to him
But now he only waits
gauging the tides' movements
and the moon's pale changes

Alan Perlis

THE CENTER

Of course, I don't agree with the people
who say that I live in a world of my own;
I think that I am perfectly normal, but I
see that there is a center. For instance,
a photograph of a lot of fat men and women
in the woods, drinking beer and singing
Hi-li Hi-lo convinces me that there is a
normal that I ought to try to achieve.
Wallace Stevens

The center, I know, is
somewhere in Bruegel,
somewhere in a twirling dance
of greasy boots and hands locked
into hands by knobs
at fingers' edge -

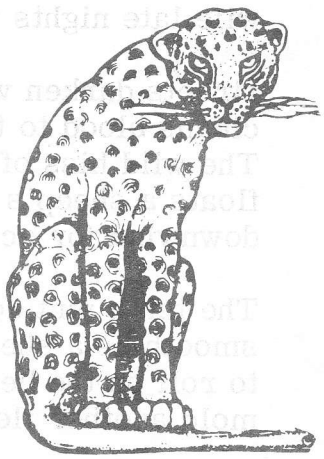
somewhere, I think, in a
burgher's member, buttoned up
but ready in his codpiece,
in a fat woman's breast
about to spill from her bodice,
somewhere in a clay jug
thick with grapes crushed
by dung-smeared feet,

in stacks of corded hay,
running lumps of cheese,
pig swill, pestiferous
in swollen autumn sun,
somewhere, almost, in me.

There is a center,
a Hi-li, Hi-lo, lippy
squeal and laugh
the viscera emit
when the body and
the swirl of clouds
are one, when the drunken face,
gaping up into the sky,
rests quiet on the rock
that gashed its cheek.

What I endure
is that I think
and watch myself -
my reflection on a lover's eye,
my body, reticulated on a beer can
someone else is drinking from.
My face is telescoped
into a bulbous nose
on a convex mirror
sitting at the center.

So it is I think
that I am perfectly normal,
like a grotesque from Bruegel
standing somewhere on the edge,
apart from these activities.
Oh to be part of the center,
pig swill and Hi-li, Hi-lo,
to swallow all these words,
regurgitate them in a
drunken dance;
to become the poem,
muttered in the sun.



Douglas Blazek

PRE-COLUMBIAN NAVIGATION

Soft lips are breathing on my car as I drive home
it is cold
cold as boat keels in the Atlantic
the air is being shredded and blown around
stars have been lowered to the tops of poles
some of the stars are red
red as the throats of special birds
the sky is exceedingly black
so very black that it is ultra-violet
and the road goes right into it
like a pier

Doug Flaherty

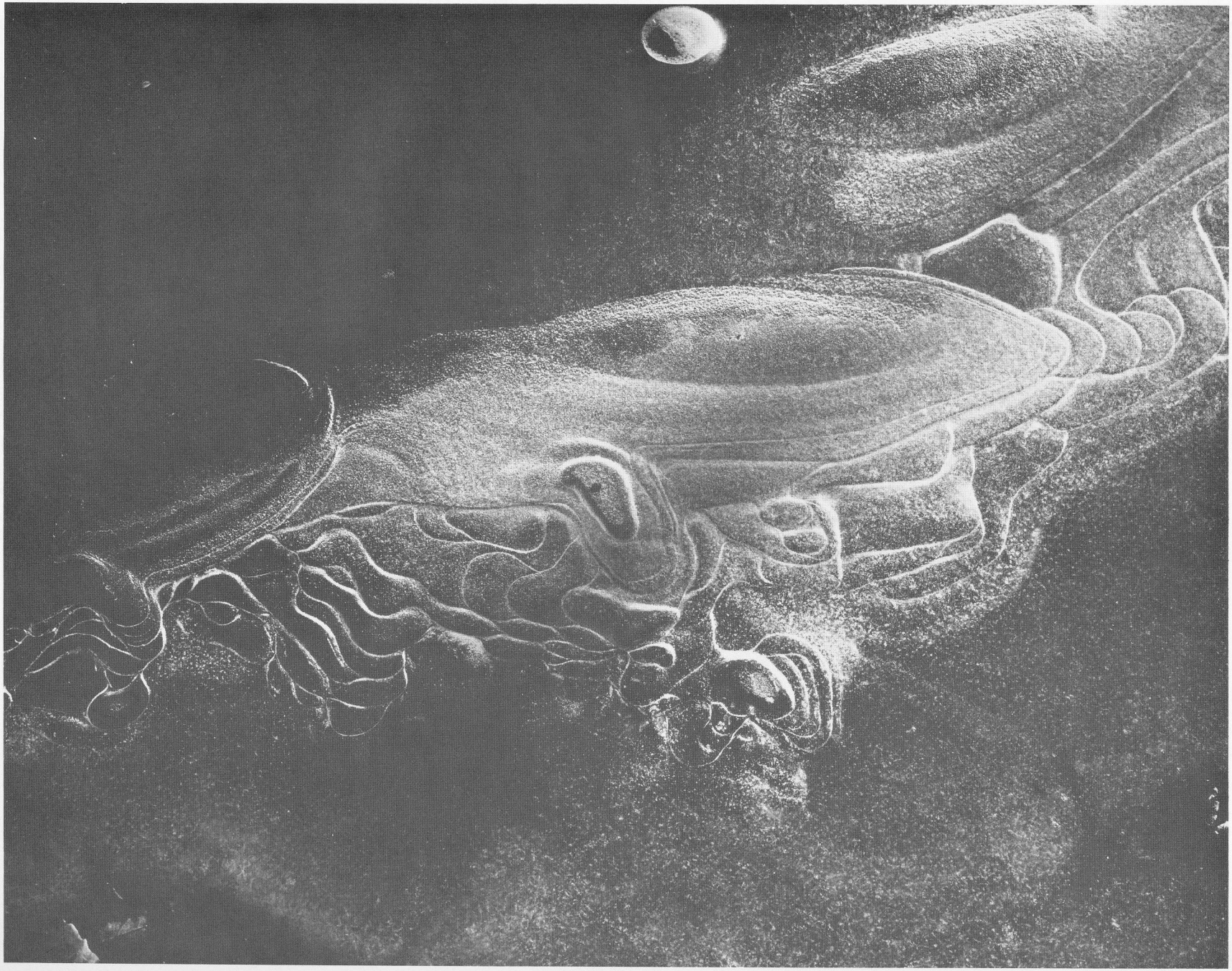
VICTUALLER

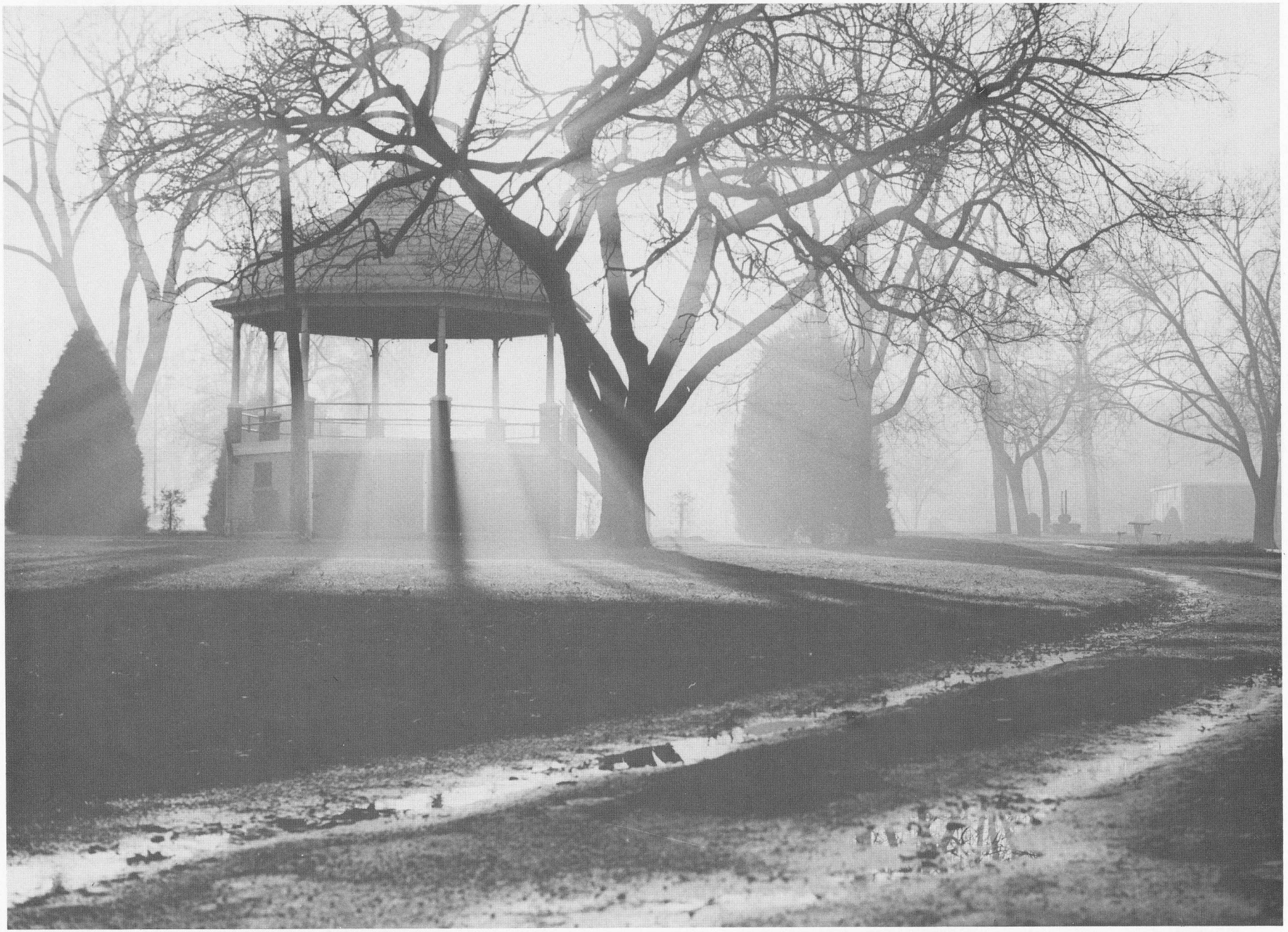
Hands of the victualler
chop beef, mutton, feel
breasts of the expectant
wife late nights when

streets darken with rain,
cleans blood to the gully.
The wild hiss of sea breeze
floats a sheep's heat
downwind for acres.

The tenth pint downed
smooth as a sheep count,
to roll on the belly of woman:
mold another fleecy child

until morning shakes the neck,
feet scuffle the sawdust floor.
And you're back hacking beef--
grass grazing its will
on the balding head of death.





Charley Brown

INTERVIEW WITH ALLEN GINSBERG

The first part of this interview was reprinted in our last issue. The original interview took place during the winter of 1965-66 at a crowded party near the University of Kansas. It was originally printed as two parts in the 1966 issues of the Cottonwood Review. The interviewer is William Knief, a former editor of the Cottonwood. The present form is abridged.

Interviewer: You said that pot altered your perception of the universe, and before this you stated that the universe is a fantasy -- please explain that.

Ginsberg: Well according to Buddhist theory and many other theories, probably Einstein, finally, the universe is a series of waves and these waves exist in what? A void? They never even took place; your flesh is a -- fake. Existence is a fake, the whole of the earth is a fake, the whole of the solar system is a fake, everything, the entire universe is a quirk, a misunderstanding that arose because there was nobody to shut off the light. The universe was originally a big unborn void. So here we are -- phantoms of illusion.

Interviewer: Then what are we perceiving?

Ginsberg: Each other, I suppose.

We are perceiving our own desire not to be wiped out from the blackboard. But ultimately we are all wiped out. In fact, the whole universe ultimately is wiped out, isn't it? Some day?

Interviewer: For us --

Ginsberg: Well, for the universe itself, I mean that's not going to last forever. So everything's going to be --. So it never was, really. Well, pot gives you a certain amount of perspective into that. Simply because it is a question of the senses -- Oh, I'm garbling it all up. It was garbled from the very beginning of the universe anyway. (Laughter) So I can't expect to undo the universe in three sentences.

But, say, you take the Buddhist doctrine as expressed in the Prajma Paramita Sutra [he spelled it out]. They say form is emptiness, emptiness is not different from form. -- Every Buddha depends on highest perfect wisdom, which is the understanding that where there is no eye, no ear, no nose, no mind, no touch, no object to touch, there is no consciousness, no world devised, no world of consciousness, --.

Interviewer: Isn't this closely related to Taoism --

Ginsberg: Yes. It's related to Zen, Taoism, everything. Everything is related finally to the fact that we are all here by accident. It's an interesting accident, and nothing to be scared of, but to take it seriously and try to reinforce it like the police do, and hit everybody on the head to make them believe that the universe is real -- is a big mistake which any priest would disapprove of.

Interviewer: Do you find that through your writing and the revealing of your innermost feelings -- do you find that this isolates you in any way?

Ginsberg: No. It communicates me more. I get more contact, more attachment with people.

Interviewer: What influence do you think T. S. Eliot has had on modern poetry?

Ginsberg: There's different kinds of modern poetry, like there's very different schools and very different styles. But there's still some modern poetry which depends on a previously organized, syntactical construction, and a previously dictated rhythmical construction and a previously dictated rhyme repetition; and a lot of that depends on Eliot. But he wasn't very useful in showing the way to reproduce authentic front brain consciousness on paper -- he influenced me a lot, with a swooning longing religious crooning melancholy which is very charming. He's charming, I would say. And everybody finds him charming, even the modern poets. But everybody took him much too seriously for a long time.

Interviewer: What about Dylan Thomas? What do you think about him?

Ginsberg: Well one thing, Dylan Thomas was writing in an old style in a way, except that he was writing out of his own lungs, and he got back to physiology in a very direct way, and in a very nice way -- how come your pupils are so large? Are you on benzedrine, or something?

Interviewer: No, nothing at all --.

Ginsberg: (To the people around us) He has giant pupils.
Your pupils are bigger than mine. Anyway he got back to physiology.

Interviewer: What do you think is your best expression?

Ginsberg: Singing, at the moment.

Interviewer: Would you like to put some of that on tape?

Ginsberg: Yeah, sure. There's too much noise outside, though -- it's very difficult to --.

Interviewer: We could ask them to be quiet.

Ginsberg: No, I don't want to interrupt the stream that's going.
What I've been doing is singing - for the last couple of years learning to sing -- Mantras. That's an Indian form of magic religious short-form prayer formula. Uh, combinations of words mostly in Hindi or Bengali or Sanskrit or Tibetan or Japanese that are supposed to affect the vibrational structure of the universe when they are pronounced properly.

Interviewer: Do you feel that they do?

Ginsberg: Oh, they affect my physiology, so they do affect the structure of the universe. Actually, if you sing out of your belly instead of out of your chest or throat, it affects your breathing and that affects the intake of oxygen, and that affects the chemical composition of your body and that affects your metabolism and that affects what you're feeling, and that affects, as I said, the vibrational structure of the universe in the sense that "the eye altering, alters all." Unquote, William Blake.

Interviewer: Has this atmosphere of notoriety had any advantages, any disadvantages?

Ginsberg: Yeah, it's had two definite advantages. Three definite advantages. It's easier to get laid. Four advantages. Two: it's easier to score, for pot or anything I want to score for. It's easier to score; that'd be one and two. Secondly, since I have seen the difference between the actuality of my own subjective phenomenon, which is to say the facts of my own existence as I can see them, and how they are reported from the outside, I've got an ENORMOUSLY useful insight into the operations of the mass media and mass communications. So that I can see the difference between the external image which is projected and the actual thing which I sense and feel with my own -- body. And I know that there are a lot of lies being sold to a lot of people, because I know that the whole Public Reality, capital P, capital R, is a shock comma, an illusion comma, a manipulation of consciousness; a mess, see? So that I can see what's the difference between what is me and the image which is reported. I can also see what actually was going on in Viet Nam where I visited, and what was reported about it. In other words I can see

the difference between Private Consciousness and Public Consciousness. Private reality and public reality. And the only one that exists is private reality; public reality is a complete lie that has been invented by people who are trying to protect their interests -- or their fantasies.

Interviewer: What would be the ideal world?

Ginsberg: No world at all, I suppose.

Interviewer: Would you elaborate on that because I sure --

Ginsberg: The bliss of the unborn, as Kerouac says.

Interviewer: What's he doing?

Ginsberg: He's living in retirement and isolation in Florida composing ditties.

Interviewer: Is it true that he wrote "On the Road" in one sitting?

Ginsberg: No, not one sitting. In about two weeks. That's quite long for one sitting. He had to sleep occasionally. He didn't revise it though. He just sat down and wrote it. I watched him, so I know. I was there while he was writing. Not every day, but I came by visiting and he read me little pieces, just as it was. On one long roll of paper. United Press teletype roll. The third advantage is -- the question of identity, or who am I, which everybody is interested in, searching for. Fame is like an image mirror, an echo, a -- pun on identity. So that, if you are originally interested in the problem of identity and then you get famous, it makes the problem in a sense more difficult to solve. In the sense that if you have no insight into the fact that you don't even exist at all, you can then from the image which is projected by other people, assume all sorts of different identities, but if you are firmly affixed in the unborn, and realize that you don't exist to begin with, then the same reproduction of identity makes it easier to understand the illusory phantom nature of all identity. So that actually it's a catalyst to the further understanding of illusions. Unless you get trapped in one or another aspect of illusion.

Interviewer: If you don't exist then how does death fit into your idea of reality?

Ginsberg: An old friend. A letter that was never sent, or Mr. Pzucqrx -- that's Corso's phrase, or something similar, maybe XbAJB. Death doesn't exist either. Our old friend doesn't exist. I am drunk and speaking reckless words, so listen to them recklessly --. That's what Chuang Tzu said: "I will now speak some reckless words and I want you to listen to them recklessly." Period. Enough?

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

GUY BEINING, a frequent contributor to the Cottonwood, is published widely in such little magazines as the Little Review, Beyond Baroque, and Invisible City.

DUANE BIGEAGLE is an American Indian poet of Osage Sioux descent. He has been published in the Florida Quarterly, Quetzel, and the Chicago Review.

ALAN BRITT is currently teaching in the Poetry in the Public Schools Project in Florida. He has recently published Mantras: An Anthology of Immanentist Poetry and has just finished a book, Incarnation of the Water Lily.

CHARLEY BROWN is a Lawrence area photographer. He was awarded first place in the Scenic/Pictorial division of the 7th Annual Kansas University Photography Contest.

KEVIN O. BYRNE has had poetry appear in Concerning Poetry, South & West, Toasted Susie, and Connections.

EVE CARAM has published in The Southwester and Epos. She is now on the editorial board of a new magazine, The Missouri Poet.

PAULA CHRISTENSEN is a Lawrence area photographer, originally from Maryland. She was awarded second place in the Scenic/Pictorial division of the 7th Annual Kansas University Photography Contest.

WLADYSLAW CIESZYNSKI last appeared in the Cottonwood in 1970. His work has appeared in the anthology, New Poetry out of Wisconsin and in the new anthology, Passing Through Oshkosh.

DENNIS DEMANETT is a Lawrence area writer making his first publication in this issue.

DOUGLAS FLAHERTY's poetry has appeared in The Nation, The New Yorker, Poetry Northwest, and the Kansas Quarterly. His most recent anthology publication is in From the Belly of the Shark (Random House).

JEANNIE HARMON is a Lawrence area photographer.

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