COTTONWOOD REVIEW

NO. 19

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Drawings for this issue are by Debbie Stika.

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, to make the best writing and photography in our area available to a national audience.

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Cottonwood Review is the spare time effort of an informal group of writers at the University of Kansas. Issues generally appear twice yearly. Subscriptions are $4.25 for two issues of the magazine plus the issues of our tabloid Open House and any chapbooks published during the period. Each issue of Cottonwood Review includes a featured poet from the Kansas Midwest, and in our reviews we give special attention to writers living in or writing about the Kansas Midwest.

We welcome submissions of poetry, fiction, graphics, and photography, both from local and national writers and artists. Poetry submissions should generally be limited to the five best. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return. Our address is

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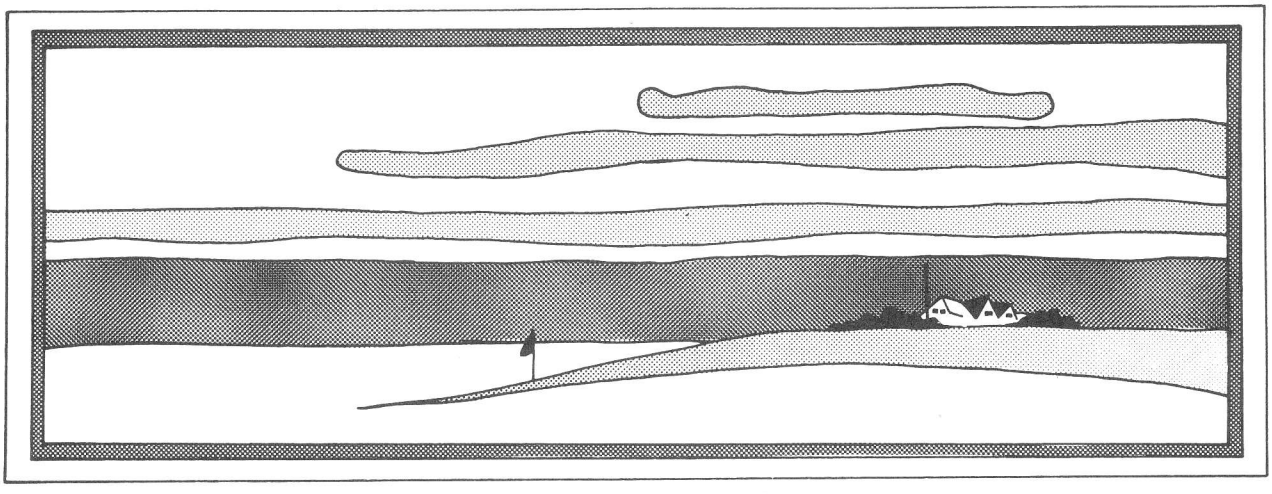

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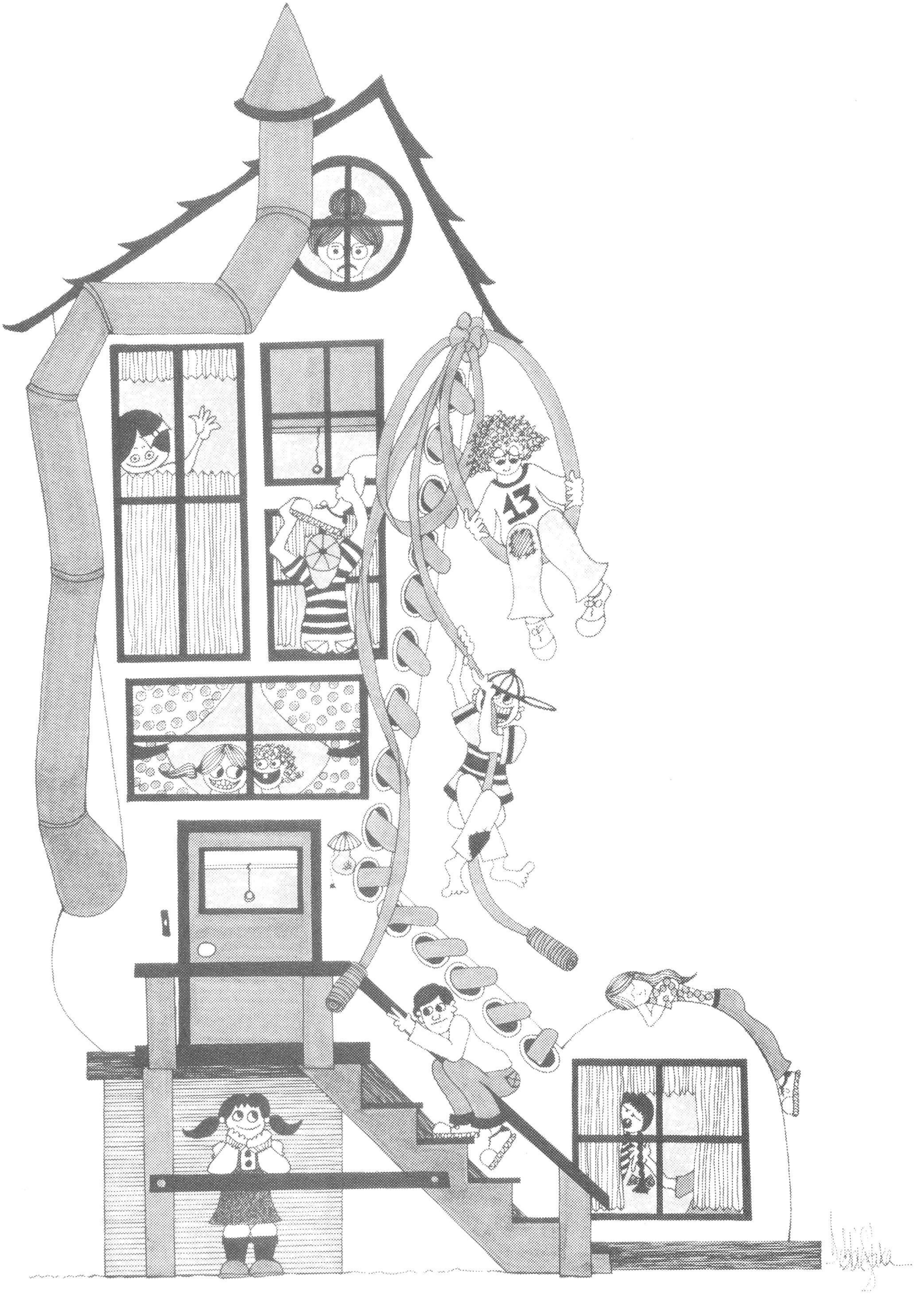
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Jan Clausen

grandma

for fifty years
his breathing at my back
then separate rooms
and then his blindness
terror of the dark
then even that light gone

i visit his body
in the nursing home
i clean this house
and hope for another summer
a few tomatoes

the amputation
arrives almost too late

my children come
heavy with money
and middle age
complaining of daughters
who refuse to marry

but more and more
i want to be alone

sometimes i remember
a winter i taught school
in a border district
it was before the war

there were nights i walked
the path, the icebound river
miles from the nearest farm
unafraid, wolves howling
on the frozen shore

John Ower

THE GUILLOTINE

Bored to death with Sundays,
We built a model guillotine.
A "SLOW. CHILDREN PLAYING" sign
Made a perfect blade.
The two by four frame
Was quick enough to steal,
And soon we were severing
Neighbors' snaky hoses
And our sisters' pink dolls.
But the hissing blade,
That winked as it descended
To cleave with a facility
Only known in dreams,
Seemed to beg for blood
In a voice too high for hearing.
The victim was an alley-cat
Left to us or winter
By soft-hearted fools.
We trussed him in a gunny sack
Almost to his snarl.
He radiated hate,
Hissed and growled all the curses
Of which his kind is capable.
A hot rock drummer
Tapped a death march mocking
At the flutter of our pulses
Like the feet of mice.
Then, the throbbing stopped
And the cat mewed terror.
We leered at one another,
Locked in this conspiracy
Beyond aid of grace.
A tug upon the rope
Sent a flash up the angle
Razor with our care.
The head dropped, frozen
In a gape of wild surmise,
And the stump shot blood
Like the first spurts of ecstacy
Not so long ago.
It spattered us with stains,

Hell to explain
To suspicious, loving mothers,
Who were not quite ready
For their sons up on felonies
Or dead in twisted wrecks.

Willy Cromwell

VIGIL

1.

At sunset
she stands in the window
of a green painted room,
her heart pounding
in rhythym
to the thrusting tongues
of flocks of
sparrows.

2.

At dawn
she wakes
to the stirring
of birds.

Panicked by light
their wings tangle;
their shrieks rise.

The taste of blood
fills her mouth.

Quinton Duval

THE ISLANDS GROW IN NUMBER

Our skiff glides upstream, feeling
the reverse pull of the headwaters.
As the river gets smaller, the islands
grow in number. We had thought, somehow,
we would just "arrive", I suppose,
at a hole maybe ten feet in diameter
gushing out the marble water that flows
these three thousand miles downhill
to the sparkling pacific.

But no. The water seems to come
from everywhere. Drawn from every possible
source, it comes down to this swamp, where
there is as much earth as water. I am surprised
to see water from as far away as my father's
village. I see it has not forgotten to bring
the characteristic baggage. Garbage and shit.

We're headed for a village on the far side
of this lake. To meet the people
who have certain things we need to support
our ongoing battle against, you could say,
the steady erosion of the soul.

We've begun to slog through the mud,
our river gone behind islands of earth.
We are careful approaching the village.
An old man sits on his stoop, smoking.
He's waving and smiling.
I'm not sure if it's nervousness
or deception.

Quinton Duval

MARRIAGE

There is the dry rattle of seed
under my feet. Everywhere there is
evidence of the death of spring. We begin
to talk heat again. Think about getting out
the straw hats and white clothing
characteristic of people like us.

If my spell breaks today, if my amulet
falls away like dried leaves, I won't
even know the difference. In my chest
a reduced heart is beating, like paper
thumped with a finger.

I remember the close call with eternity
last night. I could have broken that
brittle moon. I am walking in the dry heat
of our future. My black pencil jumps
on the paper and marks a certain way back
towards things that make sense.

A solid ebony pole outside our hut means
no one else is welcome while we perform
our job: breaking each other into smaller
and smaller people.

Trans. Emery George

MIKLÓS RADNÓTI

Miklós Radnóti (born in Budapest, 1909; died near Abda, Hungary, 1944), currently celebrated as Hungary's classicist-avant-garde poet, introduced Apollinaire and post-Expressionist influence into Hungarian poetry between the two world wars. Sixteen volumes, including six of verse, appeared during his lifetime; in 1938 he was awarded the prestigious Baumgarten Prize in Poetry. The Nazis drafted him for forced labor and murdered him in Western Hungary in November 1944. His best poems, including the contents of a concentration camp notebook found on his remains, were published posthumously (Sky with Clouds, 1946).

POEM OF POVERTY AND HATE

Brother, I've slept, nights, at the foot of
black, smokehaired firewalls with dreams
of poverty and hate, and, pockets turned inside-out,
I've screamed the song of the penniless
toward the gold-wombed furnaces!

Loving, sphere-shaped hate-words kept turning
the transmissions' slothful wheel, while full-fleshed
white dreams got caught squeezed between belts!

My hands, with the weight of hardened workman-hands,
slapped my thighs, and I loved the factories' daughters,
who lugged autumnal armies' trembling labors
onto the mountain of poverty-hate, and my fingers,
sticking on soaking paths of squirting oil,
grasped at nothing!

My lower eyelids were a Golgotha loaded with
wrinkles sagging under sweat-crucifixes,
where nights' coal-dust Christs loomed tight, blue.

11 October 1928

CHARTRES

Stone saint stirs on top of his pillar; it's eight o'clock,
the blunt light waits for the plunging dusk.
And a voice calls from on high: True, I lived in the flesh,
but it's not by flesh I saw combat and clashed.

Night eavesdrops; now the saint rejoins the ranks,
returning to dead stone. His chin is chipped.
Was it a storm or a steel-toothed pagan who took a bite?

He has vanished.
In his hand was a tablet and on his brow, the light.

1937

GO TO SLEEP

There is always a murder somewhere:
    on a valley's lap, her eyelashes
closed, or on searching mountaintops,
    anywhere, and there's no sense
in consoling me by saying it's far away!
    Shanghai or Guernica
are every bit as close to my heart
    as is your trembling hand
or, up there somewhere, the planet Jupiter!
    Don't look at the sky now,
don't look at earth, either—just sleep!
    Death has run amok in the dust
of the spark-throwing Milky Way,
    and is sprinkling the falling,
wild shades with its silver spray.

1937

LIKE DEATH

Silence sits on my heart, covers me, lazy, dark;
silent clinking of frost; the river pops and runs
along the path in the woods; mirroring painfully, stops,
stabs at its banks now.

When will this winter end? Bones of beautiful, old
lovers lie under earth, cold, and I know they'll crack.
Deep in the lap of his cave, ruffled, the grizzly bear cries,
so does the deer fawn.

On the little fawn weeps; the winter sky is lead;
dancing, the clouds' talons, blown by the dark and cold;
light of the moon glints through; snow-colored fear flies about,
shaking the treetops.

Slow, this game of the frost, slow and somber as death;
frail flower, made of ice, snaps on your windowpane,
just lace, would you believe, tumbling heavily downward,
so many sweat beads.

So this poem of mine softly steps up to you;
quietly words knock together, take to their wings, and fall
just like death. And a rustling, and a stillness that full
follow in silence.

27 February 1940

Donald Bodey

THE POPEYE--CAR TUNE

Hal was fingering his moustache and the smell of his fingers made him dream again of Lydia's smell. She wore Magnolia oil in her belly button and he loved that scent.

It had been light for more than an hour and the sky at the end of the valley looked satin: sun burnt a cream hole through, lit the river like a dynamite fuse. Pretty; really pretty. And that pretty river went to the Arkansas, and the Arkansas to the Mississippi, and She went to New Orleans. New Orleans and Lydia.

They rode along without talking. OldJohn was busy muscling the steering wheel around the chuckholes, puffing Monday tobacco. He smoked cheap stuff on Mondays and Tuesdays, wouldn't smoke at all on Wednesdays, and "breathed perfume on the slick slope of the week." OldJohn had his own smell, and his own sound.

Hal fingered his moustache and dreamed of Lydia. The scenery rushed by like it had been filmed; when they slowed for the switch-backs the river's sound was interrupted by the poplar trees, and it sounded like the cracked speaker in the Paradise Valley Picture Show. When they were coasting down the loose grade with the engine off and just the scrap two-by-fours rattling, the wind rushing into Hal's reverie resembled the noise of a projector running: he felt like he was waiting for a main feature to start, like the cartoon was playing.

OldJohn looked like Popeye. His forearms were enormous from thirty years of milking thirty head, and with his corncob pipe that was ruining another Monday with cheap tobacco, OldJohn was a three-dimensional image of Popeye the Sailor Man.

OldJohn was a character himself, a one-of-a-kind, whose nearest kin was Sarah, the bird dog that rode with the two-bys in the back of the truck. She had probably spent eighty percent of her life in the back of the truck, and she rode standing up, usually looking through the back window.

"Outhouse," Hal yawned, "You reckon we'll pitch that shed roof, first thing?"

"You reckon a horsefly knows the difference 'tween an asshole an' a eyeball?"

"What's that supposed to mean, for Chrissakes?"

"Do I have to explain everything twice? I don' b'lieve you got all that cajun perfume outaround your brain, boy."

Hal was already only half listening, watching the neon river and thinking about New Orleans, figuring once more how much longer to work before he went back. OldJohn said, "I believe you better scrub

more, 'stead o' pulling your pud in the tub," and Hal closed his eyes in surrender, pulled his cap down and rode the sound of the river back to Bourbon Street. Goddamn, those Magnolias own the delta; even on Bourbon Street you can smell 'em. And Lydia's bush smelled like those trees... he loved the delta, the trees, that smell, and he had begun wondering if he loved that particular bush.

When the tire blew the truck skidded to Hal's side and lurched into a gully deep as the truck was tall, bounced halfway across it, then stopped there, bridging its steep sides. Their lunchboxes banged against the dash, the load of tarbuckets and scrap slid forward and Sarah came through the back window, her throat raging a neon river.

So Hal was humping into town for a jack while OldJohn buried Sarah, and the river went along. The walking made him shed his coat and despite feeling bad about Sarah he felt jaunty with the coat thrown over his shoulder, his cap low, taking downhill strides towards the Perkins Place; walking into another Arkansas morning, whistling Popeye the Sailor Man. He wished he had a dog. Walking downhill wasn't right without a dog, one of his uncles always said, and Hal felt a bit lonely; he felt like talking to a dog instead of talking to himself. Or Lydia, here, walking... but she was a city lady. She would be like a deer in the hills. That thought struck him as odd somehow, backwards somehow, but correct nonetheless. Lydia was a deer.

The road was rutted and the big Spring stones were down, so it was hard walking. His work boots were in the truck and walking in the low-cuts he wore to work in tar was a stumble. He dragged his toes, turned his ankles, dreaded the three miles of gravel. This would be some day: if he was lucky he could get a thumb into town, get a garage jack, be back to OldJohn by noon. Catching sights of the Perkins Place through the trees now and then, he whistled when he had enough breath, covered another mile cussing to the poplar trees and tying one shoelace or the other about every hundred steps. Kneeling to tie one shoe, he was surprised to see a late-model sedan parked down the way.

Approaching, he scuffed loudly assuming somebody was asleep inside, and meaning to wake them but not wanting to seem intentional about it. A pair of shoes stuck out one back window and Hal was glad he didn't have those shoes on. They were made to walk concrete instead of gravel, if they were made to walk in at all. The car was from Illinois. The feet disappeared and a plenty-red face replaced them. Hal nodded.

"Morning, stranger," the stranger said.

"Howdy. Y'all travelin'?"

"You got her, son, you got her. Me and my partner are headin'

to New Orleans, just pulled in here to sleep yesterday off. I believe we drank every lick, or I'd offer you a drink."

The stranger was waking the other man and coming out the door, wideass first. His clothes were SLICKER; Hal pegged the guy a perpetual slicker wherever he was. Slicker made it around to the back of the car in three yawns, to piss. Hal chuckled to himself because he knew he was right about the guy. He was pissing into the wind and looking up, into the tree tops. The other traveler was bearded and the beard pointed up as he hung his head out the door, rolling his neck and pulling himself out with the steering wheel. He was obviously startled to see Hal there, smoking a cigarette and massaging his ankle.

"Uh, G'morning to you," he said.

Hal explained to them that he would be obliged for a ride, at least to the highway. They said sure, wait until we get woke up, then one at a time went to the woods and came back complaining about the leaves.

"What's the name, son? Eber, we got anything to drink? I wanna give ol'... what'd y' say your name is, buddy?"

"Hal," he said.

"Open up the trunk, Eber, I think we might have part of a bottle in there that... what's the name? Hap?—that Hap can get a drink off. Y'want a drink, Hap, I mean you look like you walked a long way down this dusty road. Your throat must be like the pool hall wastebasket; Eber, where's the trunk key?"

Eber came out of the ditch where he had been splashing water on his face and slapped his mussed coat for the keys. "You must have 'em," he said.

The slicker found half a cigar in the first pocket he looked in and found the keys in the ignition when he leaned in for the lighter.

"Right here. Right goddamn here in the ignition. Somebody coulda stole this car last night. Then where would we be, Eber? Eh? Then where would we be for leaving the keys in the ignition?"

"You'd be in the back seat, Rodent, and whoever stole it would be sitting on my face. Y'ever think o' that? And who the hell's gonna be out walking along here at night?"

"Always Rodney to you, Eber. Always Rodney. No businessman like me should put up with Rodent for a name. What happened to that bottle we didn't finish in Kentucky?"

"We finished it in Tennessee."

"Well, how we gonna wake up? How'd you wake up this morning, Harry? You got a bottle on you?"

"Nope. I woke up same way I wake up every morning, Mister, to the rooster."

"They got roosters around here? I never been 'round here before,

just comin' from Saint Louey, and never been around here. This is the first time, never knew you had roosters down here or I woulda got me one to wake up this morning. I wanted to get a fresh start this morning, didn't get near drunk last night before it was time to go to bed. Hadda pull over here 'cause Eber there couldn't drive anymore. How far's the town, Harry?"

"Twenty-two mile."

"That's too bad," Rodney said, "them extra two miles are likely to kill me. I know I can make it twenty miles if I have to, this early in the morning, but twenty-two without a drink would upset my teeter-totter. Any of that 300 proof shit hereabouts?"

"Homeshine?"

"Any of these farmers got some? How about that house there?"

"Nobody there but an old woman, she wouldn't have any."

"Some old lady runs that big old place?"

"Widow Perkins. You'll see her when we pass. She's always on her front porch in the morning."

When Eber found his driving shoe he turned the sedan towards the highway. Hal sat in back with a pile of smelly shirts, at least a case of empty beer bottles, and an over-stuffed Navy bag. He wondered how Rodney had slept back there, even though he was a little man. But, he looked like he was accustomed to sleeping on bottles. They came to the highway and sat in their own dust while Eber took off the shoe they had had to look for, saying he could drive better without it. When they turned onto the highway Rodney moved his visor around and got his first good look at the house.

"Jesus," he said, signaling Eber to take it slow and staring at the house. "Bless my best black bottle, that ain't no house, that's a goddamn castle! I'll tell ya, Harry, all that place needs to make it perfect is a moat full o' gin. They must own most this state! Who's they? The Arkansases themselves? And there she is, Mrs. Noah Arkansas, ain't that right, Happy? Ain't that who it is, lives there?"

"That's Mrs. Perkins, the widow. Her husband was Peabody A. Perkins and he was the richest man in these hills, died about three or four years ago, and she's run the place ever since. Hires 25 men for harvest and spends every morning there, rocking like that."

"I should go widow-wooing, I should. How'd you like to live on a place like that, Eber, eh? How'd it be if I married Mrs. Perkins and kept you around as a hired hand? You and a milk maid. I figure that'd be just right. Me and the Mrs. could sit on that porch and rock, listen to silver dollars jingle in our pocket, every rock, 'Tinkle, Tinkle,' yessire, Eber, you wouldn't have to do much as the hand neither. Maybe milk the maid, screw the sheep every morning and keep the hay mow full of good whiskey. That's all you'd have to

do. Whattaya say, should I marry her?"

Eber sneered and Hal coughed to keep from laughing. The ride to town was the most important thing to him today and he didn't want to offend these guys, crazy as they were. Eber began picking his nose and swerving over the middle of the road. Rodney had found another half cigar and was leaning under the dashboard to light it.

"The Mrs. keep cows or chickens or slaves or what in all them buildings?"

"I don't know what's in all of 'em," Hal said, "but I know some of 'em are full of old cars. All kinds of old cars."

Rodney turned him a face like a skunk caught in car lights and asked in a higher voice, "Cars? The old lady's got cars in them barns?"

"Yeah, some of 'em, I know. I saw a newspaper once. Told all about her. Peabody was a collector. He found oil and he found silver and he got so he didn't have anything to do with money but spend it on old cars; that was his hobby."

"That's my alley," Rodney said. "Hear that, Eber, the old lady and me are in the same business. I'm T. T. R. Totter, Nobody Hotter, Rodney's my third name. Y'ever been to Chicago, Harley?"

"Nope."

"Well, if you had you'd know who I am. I'm Car King of the South Side. T. T. R. Totter, a Deal on the Level is my motto. Got it over all my lots. Actually, over all the drives to my lot. I'm down to one lot 'cause I can't get the merchandise, can't get the cars. What time do the bars open, Hardly?"

"No bars."

"No bars? What're we gonna do for breakfast? Eat?"

"C'n buy beer at the market, it'll be open."

"No wonder they call these the Noah's Ark Mountains, could get left high and dry here."

Rodney was quiet for most of the rest of the way. Hal watched him closely because he had abandoned trying to light the cigar and was chewing it now, and spitting out his window. So Hal had to watch him close to know when to lean back from the wind and into the smelly pile of clothes.

They came to the cafe outside of town just after Eber had swerved a mile or more trying to take his sock off without taking his foot from the pedal. Rodney insisted they stop at the cafe, though Eber complained because he'd have to put his shoe back on. He spent five minutes in the parking lot picking the dirt out of his toes and trying to clean his toenails with a church-key. Rodney was busy parting his meager hair in the rearview mirror while Eber picked his feet. So Hal went ahead inside.

"Morning, Hal," Betty said. "Where's OldJohn this morning,

and who're them fellows, State men? Inspectors or something?"

"OldJohn's truck blew a tire about halfway down and run into the ditch so hard it threw Sarah through the window and cut her up so bad he had to bury her. I'm on my way for a jack; these dudes were sleeping along the road there, and brought me into town."

"Oh no. Sarah was OldJohn's main feature in life."

Betty was middle everything: middle-aged, middle-class, and the middle of any room she was in because she looked like a middleweight wrestler and talked like a midway barker. She kept two or three conversations going all the time, never passed a table without talking. Hal guessed she and Rodney would soon have a loud conversation going, but Betty picked Eber to talk to and Eber talked back, not in his ordinary voice either, but in a polite voice that told Betty he was in the Navy on leave, and that he and Rodney were business associates going to New Orleans.

Betty winked at Hal and asked what business they were in. Rodney interrupted and soon passed out a few cards for anybody 't might get up Chicago way and need a used car. In fact, he told them all he'd make an extra special deal just for coming up, soon's he and Eber got back from New Orleans. The business card showed a teetertotter with Rodney on one end waving his hat to the empty other end. "Levelest Deal in Town," the card said. And T. T. R. Totter himself said it about every sentence for the next five minutes.

"I'm Assistant Manager," Eber said to Betty's question.

The cafe windows were streaked in the now-bright sun. Hal took part of the paper to the bathroom and thought about Magnolias. Someday he would tell Lydia that the first time he really admitted he was in love came in the middle of a cartoon he was in.

Back at the table Rodney had a new cigar and another cup of coffee.

"Listen, Harold, how'd you like it if we took you back up to your truck? Wouldn't that be dandy? I been sitting here thinking business and I figure I can get the capital to snatch some of the Perkins' cars. You say she's got a stable full, don't you?"

"She's got one whole building full of Packards," Hal said. "I know she's got eight or ten old Packards in one o' them buildings."

"Packards, the Kings themselves. Old Packards? How old are they, Harry, how old?"

"Peabody A. was a Packard Man. Packards were his favorite cars, and he's got some from the twenties, thirties, forties... he's got a lot of Packards."

Rodney was on the edge of his seat and redder than ever. "Can you imagine? I mean, what if T. T. R. Totter suddenly filled up his lot with old Packards, Eber? Can you imagine the riots they'd have if I brought a lot of Packards into Southside Chi? I mean, they'd be forming lines to our showroom. I'd get rich, Eber. I'd never have

to ride that damn teetertotter again. Let's get this show on the road, I need to practice my widow-wooing and make a few phone calls. Eber, my hat; bring my hat."

He whizzed out of the restaurant without paying so Hal paid his bill; he needed this ride. Eber was still at the table talking to Betty and when he got back to the car he announced he had a date with her and had to pick her up when she got off at 2:00. He didn't bother to answer the incredulous Rodney who demanded what they would do for two hours. Meantime, all that widow's money rusting in them out-buildings. The two of them decided they would have to get a few beers, so they went to the market, convinced Hal he owed them the price of the beer, and pulled into the municipal park to take their siesta, so they'd be in shape for New Orleans, if they ever goddamn went there now, with things looking so good right here in "What town is this, Harry? Where we at, besides in the Noah's Ark Mountains?"

"Paradise Valley, Arkansas," Hal said. "And listen, I've got to get a jack or OldJohn will die up there in the hills, I've got to get busy."

"Take the car and get it, then come back here for us, OK? We'll be overlooking Paradise Valley through this magic looking glass." He was using his bottle like a telescope, sweeping across the valley; he jumped when he turned towards Eber. "Give me another beer, Eber, there's a monster in this bottle, big ugly bearded monster."

Hal took the car to more bad luck at the garage. The jack was being used and wouldn't be available until 3:00 or 4:00, so he could do nothing but wait. Back at the park, Rodney was explaining the intricacies of dealing with the widow Perkins. Eber was picking his nose and wiggling his toes. Hal explained that the jack wouldn't be available until later and Eber explained the need for more beer, said he wanted to call Betty anyway. Rodney lay back on the grass, and Hal went walking.

He walked mostly to be rid of Rodney, but he liked to stroll and daydream routes along the rivers of the leaves. This time he traced a route from an imaginary Paradise Valley to New Orleans. At a break in the foliage he looked down the valley to the hills splashed with dogwoods. He liked dogwoods almost as much as he liked magnolias, but dogwoods didn't smell like heaven or like belly buttons. He sat down and visualized himself beneath a magnolia with Lydia, smelling each others' belly button. He wanted to live with a woman. He could get a job in New Orleans, and they could afford something, some little shack, in the delta. He could see the shack set in a Magnolia arbor. He and Lydia and...

Rodney came up with his zipper open. "I've got to take me a shit, Happy, any place handy? Any johns around here. Don't the

city furnish the people with a private place to take a shit, and with soft yellow toilet paper maybe? Hell, any town can afford a bathroom and soft toilet paper."

Hal pointed to the woods. "Watch for rattlers if you're gonna bend over a log," he said.

"Snakes? There snakes around here too? Roosters and snakes, that's all there is, ain't it? Roosters and snakes and rich old ladies with garages full of Packards...is this Arkansas, Harry, or are we in Eden?" And with that, he dropped his trousers and pissed on his saddle shoe, first thing. Hal left him and went back to get one of the fresh beers Eber had brought.

They drank two hours away and Eber left to get Betty, backing into a tree then hanging a shit-eating grin out the window to Rodney's screaming.

"What kinda impression you think I'm gonna make on the widow Perkins with a beat-up car, you ninny. And don't leave any cum spots on that 'naugehyde seat, neither. I may have to do my wooing in that seat, and I don't want my lady dirty'n up her dress with your mess!" Eber and the sedan had died into the dust by the time Rodney finished his tirade, but he threw his bottle after the car anyway.

It occurred to Hal that Rodney was completely serious about the lady Perkins. The possibility reminded him again of a Popeye cartoon. He began thinking about OldJohn. He wondered how the old man would spend all this time. If he had plenty of tobacco and matches, Hal figured he'd smoke away what time he didn't sleep. He was probably asleep in the shade underneath the pickup dreaming about his Sarah flushing quail. Hal felt the sun go behind a cloud through his eyelids. He could hear Rodney snoring beneath a Raspberry bush. He began to think about Lydia again, until he was asleep.

Eber came back with Betty and Betty was tight; the back of her uniform was covered with alfalfa blossoms.

"Rodent!" Eber yelled. "I want to tell you about Spring love. I'm in love with Betty here, and only knew her a day. Whattaya think o' that, Rodent?"

"Spring makes men and skunk cabbage sprout a new leaf, Eber. And both them get to smelling, come the first hot day in June. That's what I got to say to your Spring love, m'man. I'm in love too; I'm in love with a Packard coupe, so let's get going to the widow's so's I can get my old Packard oiled up."

"Your old pecker needs oilin', Mister, I'd about bet on that," Betty said. Eber laughed.

"I'm gonna grab me a hunk of that womb broom off your chin there, Eber, and dust my seats off. I gotta meet my lady lookin' first class."

Betty had some whiskey and the three of them worked on it in

the front seat while Hal directed to the garage from the back. They sat in the car and passed the bottle around for the other hour they had to wait for the jack, and when it came Hal filled a small trash barrel with beer bottles to make room for it in the back seat. Rodney counted the bottles as Hal threw them away and announced he, Hal, owed $1.20 for their deposit. Hal had counted them too, and it only totaled 97¢. The jack was heavy as hell but lifting it was like shaking the hand of an old friend.

It had begun to cloud up while they were waiting for the jack and the sky was now a windy gray. The clouds were still hanging high and it would be a little while, but it would storm.

"I'll bet that old lady will go nuts for me, whattaya bet, folks? Eh? I mean, she's been stuck here all her life, in these Godforsaken, snake-infested, shit-smellin' Noah's Ark Mountains. Now, way I figure it, that's STRANDED! Boy, I'll tell you, I'll bet Lady Perkins never been to Chicago, and always wanted to go. I'm gonna walk in there, her daydream-in-the-flesh, I bet. I'm gonna be that Prince Charming she dreams about all that time on the porch. I'm gonna come driving in there, and she's gonna know I ain't no farmer from hereabouts come to chew the cud, or whatever they do, 'I'm T. T. R. Totter,' I'll say, 'and I'm here to tell you about it,' then we'll breeze into the sunset, go to Chi and see all the movies, drink the best bourbon, and drive Lake Shore Boulevard on Sundays, just so's the people can get a look at that Packard. Yes sir, Eber, pass the bottle. Who's got a cigar, you got a cigar, Hardly?"

"Oh, God! Oh, Eber! Look, look yonder alongside that thicket there's some ironweed in bloom! It's good luck, Eber, let's stop and get it," Betty said.

The weed was a good two miles off the road and she never would have seen it if there hadn't been the break in the clouds just then. But, in the distance was the unmistakeable purple weed; even Hal believed in its luck. He was glad to see there was a pasture track leading back part way along the crick. At least they could drive after it and that meant time; he was sure Betty would have insisted and Eber would have agreed to walk after the flower, despite Rodney, probably despite even the rain that was coming.

Each of them got a bouquet and Hal was stacking the separate piles carefully on the jack when Betty asked what everybody thought would be their good luck. Rodney was set to answer and opened his mouth when they backed over a log. No one could figure out how he did it, but the frame was hung up on the log and the rear wheels spun uselessly. Hal said mothafucker twice and unloaded the jack by himself. He had it under the frame and getting a hold when it began to sprinkle and he had the weight of the car on it when it began to pour. He had to get inside the car with the rest of them and the smoke of a cigar stub

Rodney found in the crack of the seat fogged up all the windows. It rained so hard the sound drowned out Rodney for an hour. Then, by the three dry matches he had, and had to hold dangerously close to the gas tank to see, Hal could tell that the downpour had washed away the earth from around his jack, and that the jack had given to one side, which forced the handle into the car's innards. That meant they would have to spend the night here. Hal had never felt so close to completely crazy in his life and not until it began to rain so hard he couldn't see did he give up his hope of hiking to the highway, even without his jack.

He could only stand the steamy sedan for an hour, then he took the keys and got into the trunk, taking some of his frustration out by emptying the trunk of most of its bottles. The sound of them shattering in the raining night was the only pleasure he had for the other hour he was awake, bumping his head on the trunk lid and feeling his feet get wetter and wetter until it was suddenly morning.

He had been dreaming that he was beneath a Magnolia with blossoms so full they leaked. When he woke up he knew why; water was running off the roof of the car and through the opening, then around the inside curve of the fender to a dropping off point directly in Hal's face. He lay there for some minutes letting the drops hit him on the nose, then each eye. He had the car keys and he had his plan: as soon as he freed the car he would drive directly to OldJohn. He wasn't about to surrender the keys to Rodney or Eber, and he wasn't about to stop at the Widow's. After two hours of blocking the car up enough to free the jack, then jacking the car over the log, then loading the jack... after that, he yelled, "Anybody who ain't in this fuckin' car in two minutes ain't goin' anywhere unless they walk, because I got the keys and I'm leaving in two minutes," and went behind the nearest tree to piss.

"Hardly, I'm glad you're driving, we should have thought of that before, instead of letting dummy there behind the wheel. I don't know why I ever let him drive in the first place because a car like this demands some things, like a driver that fits it. You fit it, Horney, you fit it fine. From now on you're m'official chauffeur, and when the Widow Lady asks you what you do, you tell her you're in charge of my stables, y'hear, you tell her you're my chauffeur, you care for my cars. You've got the nose for it, Horney, you've got a chauffeur's nose. You'll do fine. Slow down a bit though, this is an aristocratic automobile; its ancestors were never in these fields, it don't have the shocks to take these mountain lanes at, say, my boy, forty-five is too fast!"

Hal did eighty on the highway and fifty on the gravel road until he got in front of the Perkins Place. The old lady was on her porch.

"Go on down the road a piece and turn around, Horney. I see my

lady-in-waiting there, I want to be absolutely arranged here. Just go down the road there and turn around."

"Hal," Betty said, "isn't that OldJohn on the porch with her. Look yonder, ain't it?"

It was. Sitting woodenly in a cane chair, with a smile on his old face that looked like a quarter moon in the shade of widow Perkins' porch. Hal didn't have any idea why OldJohn would be there, but he didn't care, he was glad to see him.

"That your buddy, Horney, that the old man you was with? What's he doin' on my porch, y'any idea? Goddamn, he looks swelled like a cheap innertube, his arms do. How'd he get to lookin' like that?"

Hal was tempted to tell him he ate ten cans of spinach a day, but he told him the truth: "Pulling on tits."

Rodney looked like he had just walked into the bright sunlight out of a cartoon matinee, so stupid. Hal stopped the car and a redbone hound as tall as the car window barked from the end of a leash as thick as a corn stalk. Quaking and trying to smile, Rodney eased out of the car with his eyes glassed by the open stable doors, and dark gleaming hoods.

Hal tipped his cap to the lady. OldJohn looked strangely dignified. "What are you doing here?" Hal asked him.

"Waitin' for you, youngin', but truth is I never would have believed you'd be a whole day late, though a great day it's been for me."

OldJohn explained he had buried Sarah and began walking to forget and come upon some ironweed. "And it done the trick," he said. "Whattaya know? I was wandering around waitin' on you, payin' mind to the weeds, lookin' for some silk to smoke and I wandered over the fence yonder, and Peabody, that Redbone there, had me dead to rights. I'd a been dogmeat if Gladys hadn't come just then."

"Gladys?"

"This here's Gladys Perkins."

The lady smiled. He could tell by the way OldJohn looked at her that there was more to say.

"And after we got acquainted we talked, turns out we were both on this here knob during the storm of '37. Neighbors for more'n two score of years and never met. Then, us talkin' about that storm raised another one up last night. Wind, rain, lightning like Noah lived next door. I had to stay the night, y'know, and Gladys told me some dandy stories about them cars; about riding all over in them cars, years ago. We sat a lot of the night out in front of the fire. It rained hard enough to wash my ol' pickup away, I do believe, while Gladys told me about

His chair creaked like an outhouse door when he drew the keys
Hal."

"Peabody's," Old John said. "Except for the one Peabody loaned me drank the shave lotion in Missouri, I haven't had a drop, ma'am. Them cars, boy, them cars are..."

"Homely," he said to Hal, "I ain't felt this drunk since Eber and with a pink handkerchief.

He blessed his best black bottle, mopped his brow and dabbed his drool his mouth, pointing at the buildings full of cars he had just been through.

Teeterfotter came up with small balls of drool in the corners of gotten out of the car. They were wrestling, giggling, tittering.

Gladys was smiling and looking at Eber and Betty who had never

I'm goin' to the bank, on my way to New Orleans."

I ain't so sure about you. But I ain't goin' up that hill tonight neither. gonna tell you 'cause I know she was smart enough to understand and

"Outhouse," he said, "if Sarah was alive I'd tell her what I'm

Hal's thoughts snapped. His dreams and this fantasy day coalesced. than 1990."

He said be careful goin' up that knob an' have it back here no later this morning I asked him how'd it be if I loaned one o' his cars out.

"And Hal boy, when I was talkin' to Peabody there on the porch day, and maybe not tomorrow. And when I do, I'll drive one o' my Packards up after it."

Hal saw his own face fall in the twinkle that came to Old John's eyes.

Old John cleared his throat and leaned forward so his face was out of the shade. "Hal," he said, "if Sarah was still alive I'd tell her what I'm tellin' you but you're almost as good as that ol' dog was, so I'll settle for you. I ain't goin' back up after that truck to-

on the way to the truck."

brought you more luck than mine brought me. I'll tell you my story

"Well, Oldfield," Hal said, with a straight face, "that ironweed

The dog farted, Hal was sure, and he thought he winked beside.

"Peabody, that hound there."

"Who?"

'em, long as he's alive."

just yesterday. My husband left them to Peabody and I can't sell those junk cars, but they don't belong to me. I was telling Oldfield

"Mr... Mr., Tater, is it? Mr. Tater, everybody wants to buy

The redbone snorted in his sleep.

I been looking at those junk cars you got out in the barns there, I..."

I've offered him a job as chauffeur besides. But, to get to the point, brought him back from town so he wouldn't have to push that jack.

"Ma'm, T. T. R. Totter. I'm a friend of ol' Horney's there, Ha!"

touring and I told her about milking thirty head and pitching roots.

out of his pocket and tossed them to Hal. Betty and Eber got of the back seat and into the front. Betty's uniform was unbuttoned and showed one

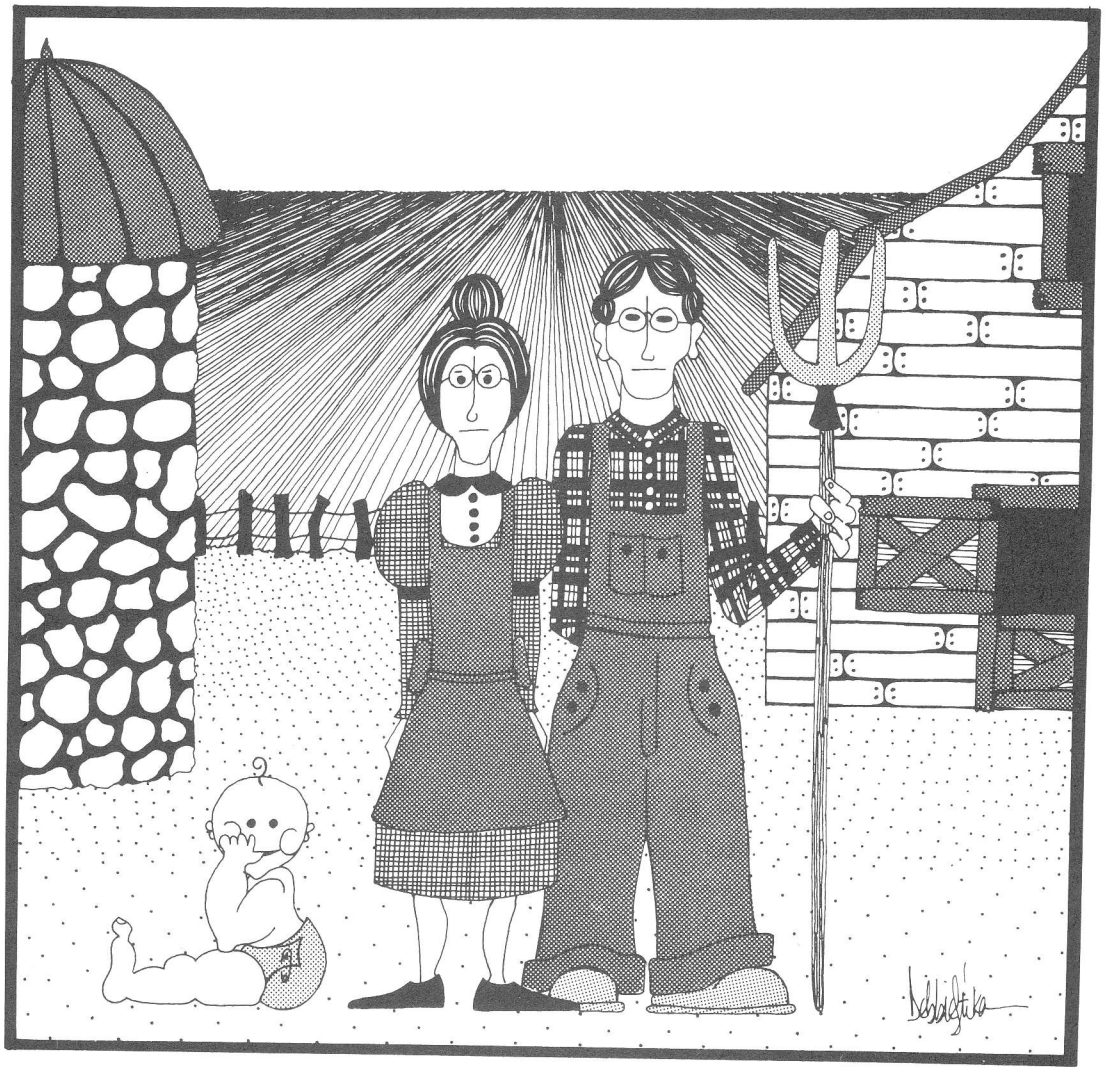
"Tit-mouse... Titbird... Tittertotter, let's go!" Betty yelled. Eber started the car.

Rodney's face looked like his film had broken.

"I...," was all he said, waddling to the car.

OldJohn wouldn't tell Hal which car he had borrowed; he said asking that was like asking which tit the milk came out of and Gladys giggled so much Hal knew there was only one way he could find out. The keys fit a 1932 coupe and he tipped his cap to Gladys on the way out the barnyard. He tried the sweet horn when he passed the car from Illinois. Rodney was standing beside it, pissing into the wind. Hal sang "I'm Popeye the Sailor Man,

Toot! Toot!



Kenneth Rosen

ACROPOLIS

Restlessness comes like traffic (who come like
coughing fish) up a street not quite center
of city—occupied by memorial
cannon, man standing or equestrian
statue, the quaint-cum-cubist, glacier gray
superfices of the stone temple, City
Hall, its windows tinted, frosted, gold-leaf
paint lettered, every lintel big enough
to gravel a driveway—whose business is
walk-up apartments, antique or appliance
stores, cars in hurry for far end of street, dust,
gilt, brass, all of which look rare or valuable
to me, is baffling and fearful to me
too, who would be cheated or kept from sleep.
Walking, talking with red-haired Milly about
a place I could live, rent: I had in mind
a pair of rooms in a fisherman's shack
in a land's end sort of place, surrounded
by sand and water, herring gulls that rivalled
the whitecaps, commas, hyphens, and paren-
theses against fir-covered paragraphs, and she
wasn't sure I'd get along with the older
artists, ex-urban savants already living there.
A green-and-yellow P. T. C. bus lumbered
among the cars, and I saw a girl's face framed
by auburn hair, too struck by disbelief to know
her, Anita, until I saw her purple, Navajo
purse, and realized the bland smile on her face
meant she'd been looking at me. She turned, I
glanced in a hurry to see who was with her:
somebody with black hair. I'd say goodbye
if I were going away! I didn't understand!
She boarded the bus. How did I feel? I
understood. Exhaust fumes. I was still,
and had a sense of how the sun in a clear sky
lit the tops of the yellow brick buildings,
making them look clean, whereas on the street
filth endlessly sifted itself, until
it became ordinary, gray, ubiquitous.
We had walked through the park to the edge
of a village atop a hill of huge, yellow-

white, smooth, almost polished stones, up which
I could see an old man toil. I took Milly
behind the village gate and reached for her
underpants under her loose cotton dress.
Isn't that what it's for? "No!" she whispered,
and we fled into the village, but women
with black hair and heavy arms were leaning
out their windows hanging clothes or tending
flower boxes. "Don't worry," I told her,
and saw she was wearing a tight, light tan skirt
over dark leotards. I held her hand,
hurried her back to the stone gate. So great
was the height of this hill, the climbing man
was still remote and tiny, but I imagined
I saw the pin-size stripe in his black suit
jacket, his hat hand-held, his cane, shirt collar,
loose tie, clipped white hair, baldness, sun tanned,
olive complexion. "I am going to,"
I assured her, and found she'd changed to a pair
of maroon, knit slacks I had to pull down. What
did I expect to find? It was human,
incompletely covered with hair, but after
I'd butted in there I lost interest
in my plans and took a taxicab home,
a black Daimler. Sure enough I saw Anita
uptown, waiting in a queue for a bus, the
person with her with black hair, a handsome
girlfriend. I woke a day later, a record
player going on my bed, my mother's
Italian repairman wiring the upstairs
for stereo: "I'm glad you're awake.
How does it sound?" She meant the music.
"I wanted to remind you about the party.
All the relatives will be here, Leon and them
all the way from Canada." "I'll be there,"
I said. The future was such an ocean,
sweeping past, sweeping over, many stones.
The constant zigzag of a colloid's matter,
caused by collision with the liquid's
molecules (named from Brown, its first demon-
strator), was, I don't know, random or not.
Human motion, station, impressed: each step
was a tableau, a riddle of familiar faces,
reasons, that made sense, and sense reared from dark-
ness, hunted the right spot (an honest shop?
a woman's genital, nipple?) to a hilltop.

Kenneth Rosen

LOSS UPSTAIRS

1.

I left my home to go to the city, where
names of restaurants and music schools are
glued on doorway windows, live chickens live
in wood cages, elevated trains roar over-
head with wire for the neon, the telephone,
trash in gutter, barrel, flat cigar-butts,
cripples, stalled, all stalled, moving fast,
moving slowly, I looked beyond flecked cursives
and uncials, the window-sign decals,
up every stairway I walked past until
I came upon one that seemed safe to me, en-
tered by the unlocked door (a business
arrangement one takes for granted, gratified
enow by clean brass at hand despite that
trace of dry, greenish polish on the keyhold
rim, by the silent and powerful spring
of the hinge: oil and attention alone
do that), undressed somewhere on up the stairs,
and went back on the street in pajama pants
and stocking feet, unalarmed, safe and sure.

2.

It was the yellowish shade that hung pulled
half-way down in the window, the ring that hung
from the string, the modest wallpaper, un-
marked, un-scarred, the well-tacked metal edging
and mostly dustless, mudless rubber mats
that must have beguiled better, wiser judgment,
and soon as I discovered myself discovered,
my poor wife came to help me find my way back,
reclaim the clothes, and, to be sure, recover.
"Those stairs were safe!" I swore, already anxious,
a hostage of my lost wallet, full of cash,
Photographs, red and yellow credit cards,
my lost pants, shoes, shirt, summoning to mind plans
against my self's apocalypse: I'd earn
more, cancel credit cards, forget the past.

3.

This time I looked at the stairways much, much
more carefully than before, saw how many
were filthy and torn. "How could I, "
I wondered to myself, "have taken off
my clothing in one of those?" "How could you have, "
my wife's face, framed by her hair, yet like a
living and tentative mask pasted against
the city as made matter's languid, un-
predictable holocaust, asked. "I think I had
a nervous break-down, " I answered. This as a
formula for what had happened came to me
just like that. "I must have, " I insisted,
and remembered a recent belief that most
of my late productions were best interpreted
by a theory of collapse. "How could I
help it?" I affirmatively asked. Finally
we found that cleaner set of stairs. It was
indeed bare, but summoning my maturity,
my new direct address to dilemma,
I went all the way up to see if anyone'd
reported finding on the stairs some clothes.

4.

I found myself in the lobby of a small hotel,
small as a boarding house, so every guest
could be a "personality, " run by
a team, husband and wife, and as I apprised
the old woman of my question, the old man
shuffled away mumbling, obviously
a-bristle with umbrage. He cursed out loud,
struggling with a stuck bureau drawer, and I
believed I saw my trousers disappear
as he helped the drawer close with force from a
lifted knee. Nearby a geezer grinned, swallowed
ivory dentures, buried his whole head
in a paper. This yellowness was neither modest
or clean. The old woman took pity, offered
me a pair of black rubbers and some strange
pants. "The wallet?" I pleaded. She glanced
at her husband and reached below the counter
as if to get it to give back. "The heck
with that, " he barked at her. "Those are my stairs!"

She smiled gently, gave me a look beseeching
understanding, and returned my wallet
empty and tattered. The man was adding
money to money, orange tens and twenties, cursing
me and insisting to himself how he had every right.
I shuffled back downstairs dressed like a refugee,
and the street, the street of eternally
unadvanced decrepitude, was ready.
Nobody noticed my striped pajama shirt,
my legs lost in baggy salt-and-pepper tweeds,
my feet awash in pretentious molds of
gutta-percha. To retrace my steps was to make
a path around a lapse. Well? "Don't leave your clothes,"
I told myself. "Press on! Believe! Bonne chance!"

FRIENDSHIP

1.

A sort of head-of-a-chicken or skull-
of-a-songbird valueless ambiguousness
here, —my friend David off somewhere overwrought,
frought with the thought I was dead: my odds and ends
everywhere, particularly the bowl of a short-stem
pipe, one minute meerschaum looking like
Richard Wagner, pale briar carved in Denmark
the next, and not for smoking marijuana
(Douwe Eggbert's Amphora for me), but for
reading, so the pipe didn't touch the page
or the book, but fit right up, as they say, snug,
out lying about—out lying about.
Could hardly slip a little finger down the hole
of the bowl, ash had built up so. So much
for that: collar stays, cuff links, and a stolen
cigarette lighter strewn on bed, on rug.

2.

When found, I moved in with him to honor
his chagrin, lay down in our bed, pulled the blue
spread with white fringe up to my chin. Dinner

was in the cafeteria at the table of a
handsome black educator-administrator,
a man with champion body, a well-carved,
flexible, equable, nut-brown face, crisp black hair.
"I got the Master's and the P. H. D.
at Harvard, but before that I was in
Missouri," he said as if to laugh
at himself in that stew. "I went to
high school in Philadelphia." At which point
I was about to intrude the news that I
had gone to high school in Philadelphia
too! A red-haired girl from the next table,
her lacquer bangs split by her porcelain
forehead, a porcelain margin over her
painted brows, now asked whether she could have
a shot of our cream, and our black candidate
did a nerve-wracking thing: he lightened her coffee
by pouring into it some from his own cup, already
creamed, though not, as far as I could see,
"French." "Here you are," he said, "nice and red,"
though what before seemed so Hannibal, so
Hamilcar, and pure, appeared as a
weaker wood grained with something inescape-
able, like appetite or fate, and I felt
rivet, like a compass, David's concern
onto her. What he would say, no one would hear,
but in awhile they would arise, he would look
fearful, she in a hurry, and they would
disappear: there, wending through tables, gone, out the door.
Now I could stalk the halls, search every room
where yellow light proclaimed the early a.m.
there would be no finding red-head, order, or David,
only life's debris, things reduced to things.

3.

My mother died. She seemed to have heart seizure
behind the wheel of the car. In the white sunlessness
of that morning I walked up over the grass
to use the gas station phone to call
the hospital and the switchboard operator
refused to understand what I was talking
about. "Perhaps you could connect me with
pathology," I said, already chastening
myself with and for the idea racing

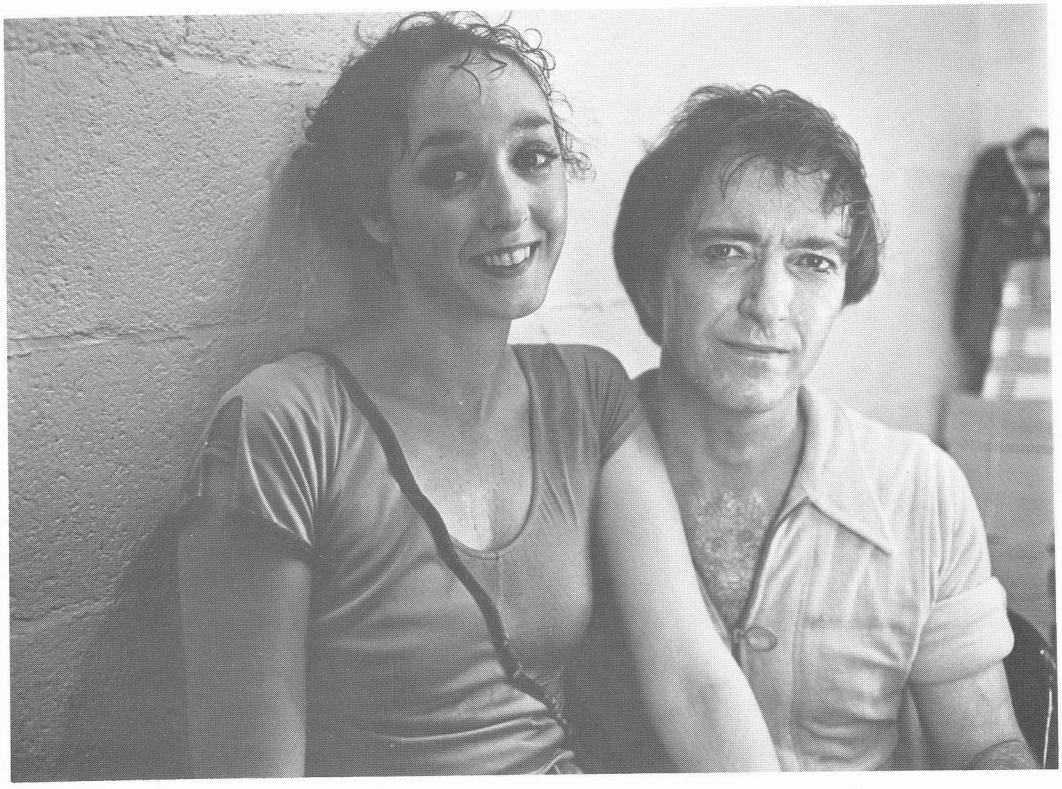
through my head that I should have telephoned
a funeral parlor directly. Surely
a hospital first, I assured myself
while she told me, "Alright. If you think
that will help." At last somebody agreed
to send an ambulance and I walked past
the chipped paint, the air meter, the concrete
repair pit. Outside I stared at the signpost.
The sign was gone. They sold off-brand gasoline.

4.

I entered an old-fashioned ice cream
parlor hoping for news of David. The lips
of the proprietor spread curled with bitterness.
"Isn't he the one that ran off with that
red-head?" he averred without asking,
leaning on his marble countertop, wipe-cloth
under one of his big hands. In another life
he could have been an extortionist or a
cruel but honest cop. The boys and girls
at the counter tittered. Anger at the girls'
long, finely grained and textured hair, the boys
with loose curls and lives without fundamental
risk or error, turned me around. There was
grass between the pavement and the curbstone, houses
tarpapered yellow and red, and the hub caps
of the parked and passing cars were scratched
or flashed. There were better bars than those
twisted into the backs of wrought iron
ice cream parlor chairs, sadder, and more serious
words to cast on life, my old, my long-time partner.

(for David Reneric)

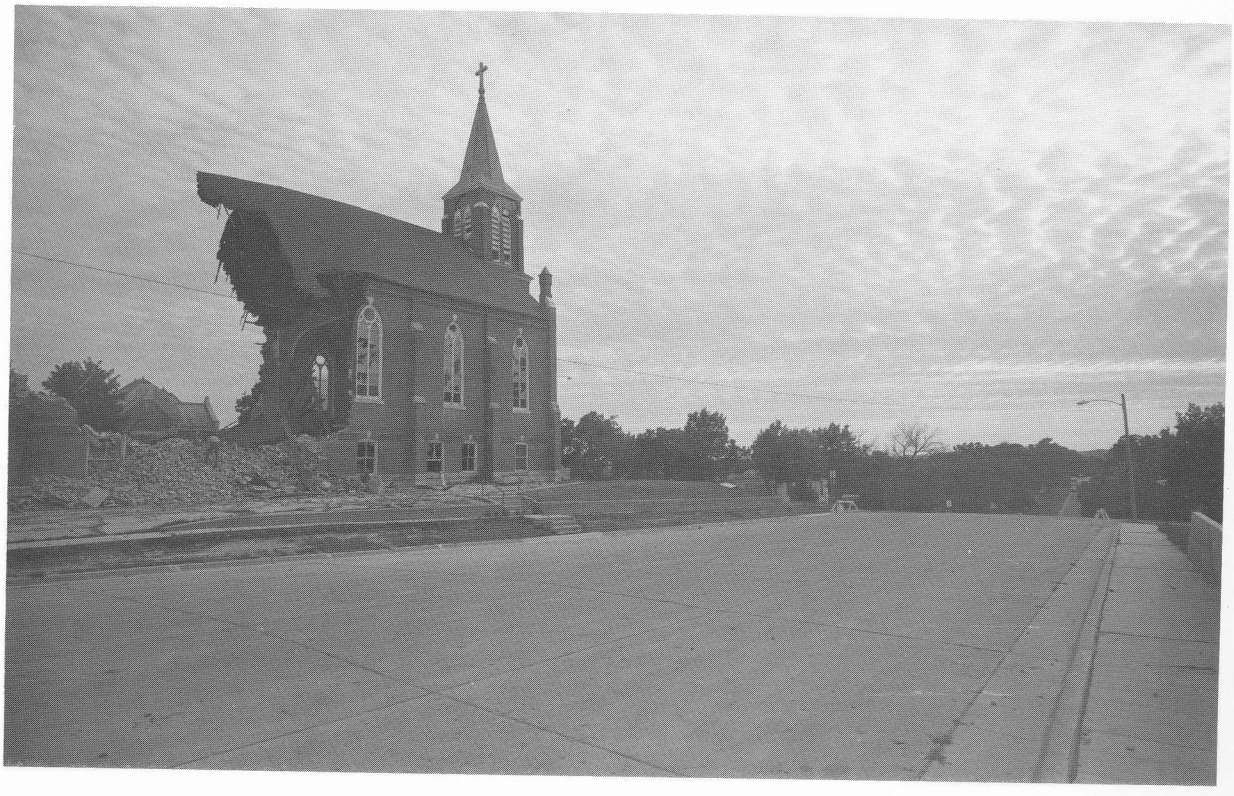
Bob Richards



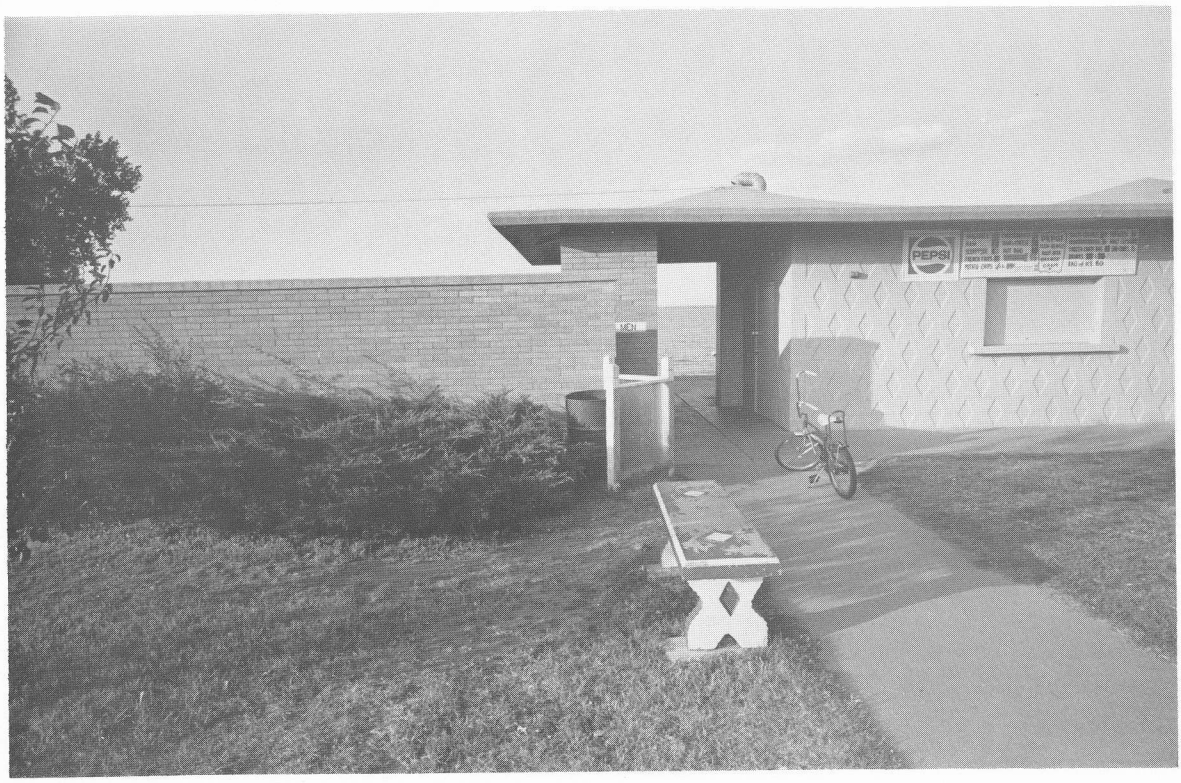
Raphael Goldman

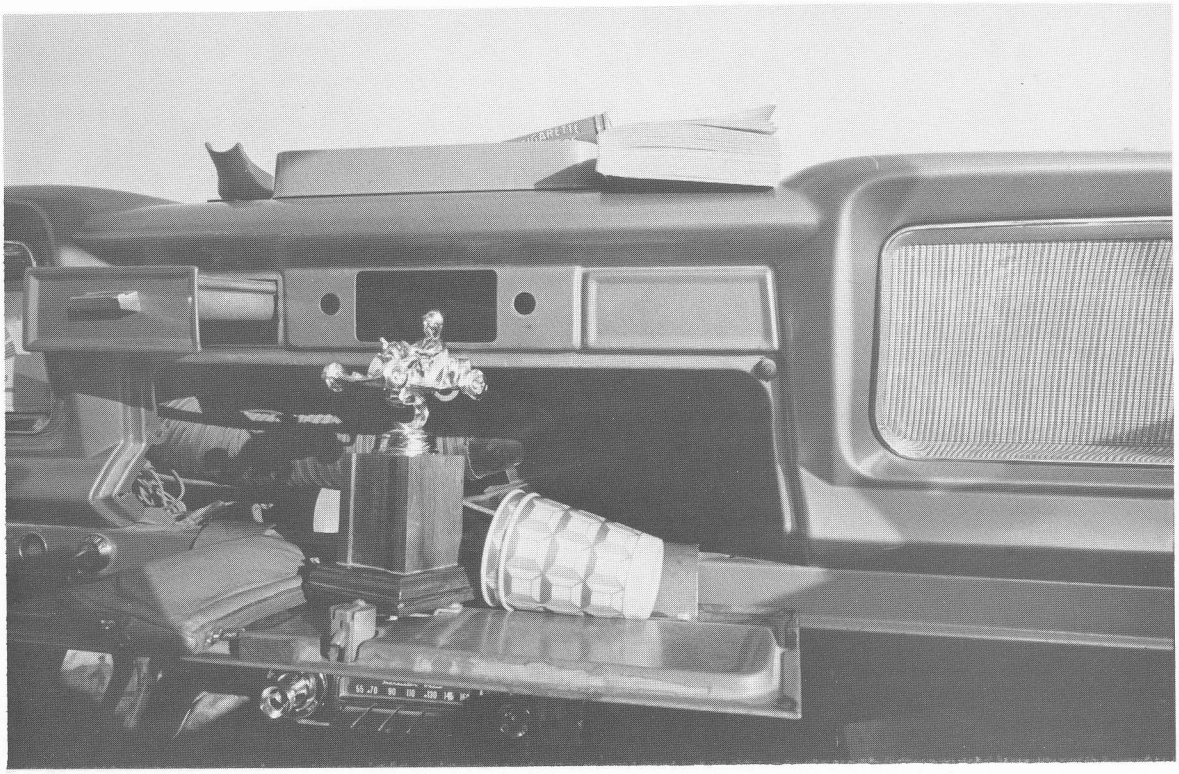
John Blasdel

Lawrence McFarland

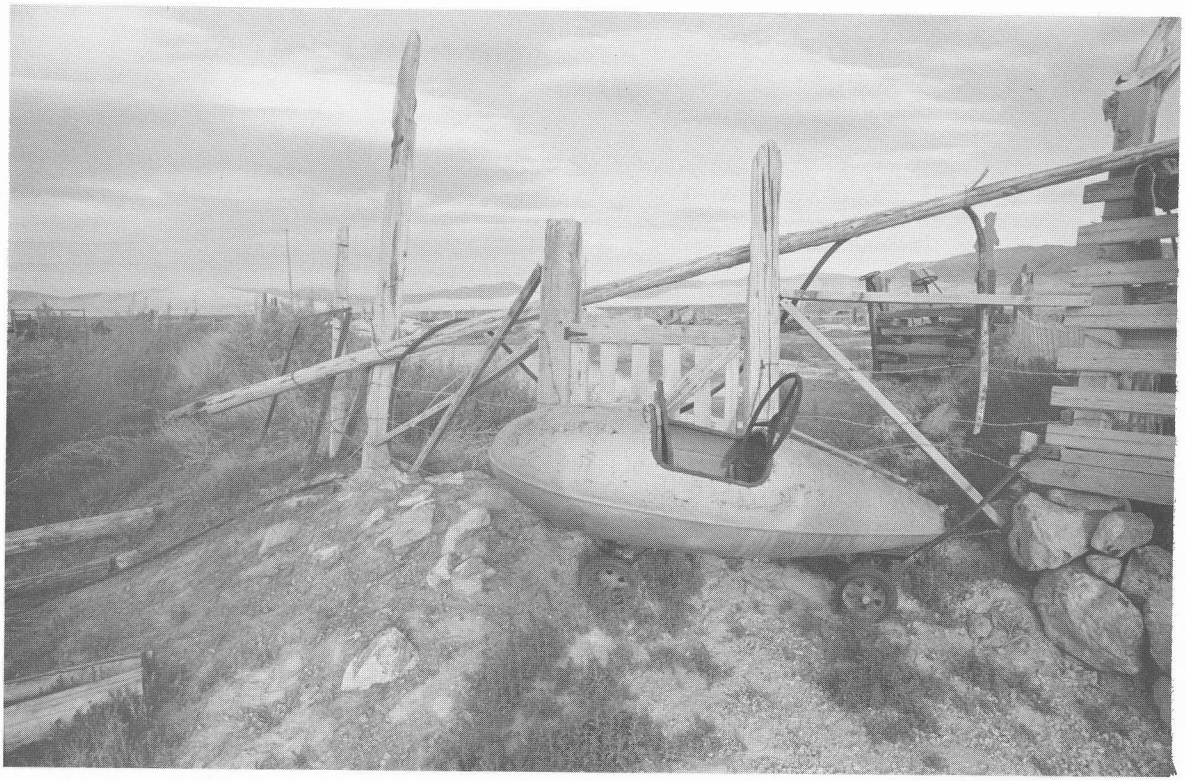


Lawrence McFarland





Bill Kipp



Bill Kipp

Matthew Kuzmich

Alyce Ingram

GYPSIES

Foolish though it may sound (for I am now a full-grown woman) to this day I still get delicious quivers in the pit of my stomach whenever I hear the word gypsies. This abnormality stems from my childhood on Chester Street when the phrase or the Gypsies will get you was used as a threat by our Saturday night sitter, Jessie, to keep us youngsters in line when we were disinclined to obey as our parents were off playing cards but most particularly to get us to come into the house the instant she whistled with her last two fingers just after dark for it was then (she would say with an emphatic shake of her fat forehead curls) that Gypsies rode in careening caravans and snatched up little children who were never ever seen by their loved ones again.

Now under ordinary circumstances it is doubtful that Jessie's Gypsy warnings would have gone beyond this foolish point but the summer I was perhaps nine we got even more strongly indoctrinated on the subject of Gypsies when Jessie's grandmother (with whom she lived alone at the dead-end of our street) broke her hip and was sent temporarily to a nursing home while Jessie came to stay with us as Mother's live-in helper and though some of my memories of childhood are more or less in bas-relief those containing Jessie remain so vivid they may as well have been tatooed on my brain just yesterday. Foremost among these is the Saturday night she arrived with her clothes and personals sacked up in two crochet-edged pillow slips and her hair brushed smoothly back for a change so that she resembled a younger edition of the Mona Lisa exactly as she had the Christmas before when selected by Mr. Kibbee, the choir director, to play the part of Mary in the pageant dressed in della robia blue polished sateen the exact color of her eyes.

Well my mother was fairly ecstatic over the addition of Jessie to our household for the freedom it would afford her and after getting Jessie 'settled in' she skipped off happily with my father to Card Club as we children scooted out of doors to play a while before dark with Jessie's last minute no-nonsense six-word Gypsy threat sounding in our ears. As usual, we headed straight for the thicket back of the Kibbees who rented catty-corner across the street from us and there, after a time, we were caught in a thunderstorm so took refuge in Kibbee's empty garage and did not immediately come running when Jessie whistled.

Now I shall never forget the lurid, spine-tingling pronouncements Jessie made after she got us home, bathed, prayed on our knees

and then popped into bed like loaves in an oven.

Did we know what happened to children after they were stolen by the Gypsy night-riders? she asked lowering both her voice and her lovely brow. Well—they were concealed in filthy gunny-sacks in the rear of the smelly caravans and hied away to camps in far-off countries where they were made first to drink the blood of chickens and then to eat a horrible soup comprised of fowl entrails on top of which floated kernels of corn and grit for Gypsy cooks were notoriously filthy and did not even bother to clean out the chickens' gizzards.

But that was not all.

Even more horrifying was the news that after this initiation you were then an honest-to-God Gypsy for life so that even if you managed to run away (which was one chance in a million for they kept blood-hounds to prevent your escape and fed them raw meat to whet their appetites) you would still be a Gypsy. You would always be even more of a Gypsy than a once-a-Catholic-always-a-Catholic until the day you died so if we knew what was good for us and did not wish to turn into dirty Gypsies we would from that day forward, rain or shine, quickly gather up our toys and come running when summoned and that was another thing we had learned from Jessie. Gypsies did not limit their thievery to children. On the contrary, though favoring them they also made off with anything else they could lay their hands on including toys, tricycles, roller skates and even chickens for they were notorious chicken-thieves and she cautioned my brother to not only lock and bolt the hen-house but also to paint a skull-and-crossbones on the door and blame that onto little Lenny Kibbee whom no one ever believed anyhow since he was a bit retarded.

In the weeks that followed my mother expressed absolute amazement at the way we children minded Jessie since we seldom obeyed her and why we never revealed Jessie's tactics I'll never know. Probably because we enjoyed the blood-curdling drama she brought into our lives but we more than likely feared that the Gypsies would, indeed, get us if we tattled or so much as breathed a word or even questioned this high-pitched emotional blackmail. Furthermore, if any of us ever expressed the slightest doubt over something Jessie said on the subject of Gypsies (or anything else for that matter) she would tell us just to go and ask her grandmother for proof and that would have been a waste of time to our thinking for Grandmother Goff smoked a pipe and was very nearly stone deaf listening with an enormous hearing horn of some kind that looked as though it had come off an old wind-up victrola.

Now Mondays and Thursdays Jessie had the afternoon off.

So, being something of an entrepreneur, she soon hired herself out to Mrs. Kibbee during those hours taking care of Lenny as Mrs. Kibbee gave piano lessons and then, in short order, Jessie herself

began taking lessons from Mrs. Kibbee in lieu of wages.

Now Mrs. Kibbee was always considered something of an outsider in the neighborhood. She did not, for one thing, kaffee-klutch with the other women and she was said to think herself a cut above them on account of being a music teacher. I remember her as being a somewhat sloppy large faded blond with a coronet of messy braids, round vacant gray eyes and thick ankles and my mother was wont to recall aloud, not without malice, how Mr. Kibbee used to bring her home chocolates and flowers regularly before she 'let herself go.' On the other hand, however, she was known to be somewhat inferior to her neighbors for she had given birth to Lenny who was not only backward but looked like an albino spider monkey minus its tail that came about (Jessie told us in due time) from his having been born in Mrs. Kibbee's purgatory years during which period the Lord did not intend for grown-ups to 'do it' (and whatever that was none of us except Jessie knew for sure just that it occurred only at night when children slept and never on Sunday) so the Lord had sent Lenny to the Kibbees as 'punishment and constant reminder' of their transgression.

Mr. Kibbee was a slightly built nice looking fellow whom my father quite openly detested calling him, on occasion, Dapper Dan. He wore a thin-line moustache that caused my father to say on several occasions to my mother was the 'earmark of a smoothie' and someone you could not trust for in those days moustaches (to our knowledge) were worn only by door-to-door salesmen and other such non-trustables and Mr. Kibbee's was the only moustache on our street. That he should be allowed to direct the choir was a constant source of indignation to my father who, when reminded by my mother that he was the only member of the congregation who knew how, replied that then someone should be brought in from the outside 'even if we have to pay him.' After one last furious exchange over the matter of Mr. Kibbee my father just up and refused to attend church staying home to play horseshoe by himself instead and that was another thing about Mr. Kibbee you couldn't trust. He was the only man in our block who wore nothing but white shirts (badly done up, however) and who did not play horseshoe evenings after supper in his undershirt and bare feet while drinking beer from the bottle and as though all this were not enough he was employed not at a he-man's job but rather downtown in a music shop where noontimes he sat in the window advertising organs and playing one while singing such songs as Tiptoe Through the Tulips and Have You Ever Been Lonely in a high, sobby voice that put steam on the outside of the plate glass as women (my mother included) pressed forward to watch and listen.

As I look back now that was probably the best summer of my childhood.

There was order in the house (we youngsters minded like automata),

my mother with her new-found freedom left us pretty much to ourselves and best of all there were incidents of high intrigue the most lurid of which I, alone, was privy to since as the eldest of the lot Jessie had now begun to take me into her bosom confidence. These tete-a-tetes took place usually after the others were asleep (she permitted me to stay up for hours) in my parents' bedroom as they played cards at Saturday Club. Here Jessie would experiment with Mother's make-up, frizz her bangs, draw on eyebrows and pretty soon I could spit in a box of mascara and fix my lashes with the best of them. By morning, however, we looked as innocent as we should and if my mother ever saw any traces of our malfeasance she did not say but instead gave Jessie a dollar a week raise and bought her a birds-and-bees book that Jessie said was pure crap.

Now aside from Jessie's many other attributes (she could iron beautifully and made marvelous fudge) she was also something of a seer but this she did not reveal to me until mid-August when, with summer waning, school just around the corner and her grandmother expected home soon she became first slightly bitchy and later disdainful. It was during her disdainful period that she told me she could read tea leaves which she did the following Saturday night as the younger children slept and our parents partied. First she spoke disparagingly of Mrs. Kibbee's housekeeping, then peeped out the window and observed that the woman had again left clothes on the line to remain all night saying that this was shanty-Irish. Then she prepared herself a cup of tea, studied the leaves at the bottom of the cup after she had drunk it and predicted that come morning something would be missing and she was right. Come morning the police were out questioning everyone about Mrs. Kibbee's stolen neck fur piece which I laid at the Gypsies' door-step but I was wrong. Jessie gave an imaginary slit to her plump white throat with a newly painted red thumbnail indicating what would happen to me if I ever told anyone and then she confided that Mr. Kibbee (she called him Earl) was having an affair with the church organist. She herself had seen him down on his knees in the choir loft at junior practice pretending to fix Pauline's pedals but actually 'diddling her tiddles' and tea leaves revealed that he had stolen the fox piece and given it to his paramour.

Well I was absolutely delighted with Mr. Kibbee's perfidy and wanted to join the choir but found I was too young. Jessie, however, alleviated the crushing disappointment by taking me aside one night to tell me that I was now her one and only confidante and she said in the shadow of the hen-house that that very afternoon as Mrs. Kibbee left her in the sun-room to practise scales (she'd taken to calling her Myra) Mr. Kibbee (Earl) had come in and she heard the two of them having a terrible quarrel over what to do about Lenny with Mrs. Kibbee wanting to keep him home, Mr. Kibbee wishing to send him

away.

Now Mr. Kibbee's relationship with Lenny was not like other fathers in the neighborhood with their children. When bringing him home in the evening he did not ever take the boy's hand but always let him trail behind so Jessie's recital was not at all surprising. And shortly afterwards Lenny did, indeed, disappear and while our parents assured us he was better off in a pink-brick place with lots of unfortunate children like himself and all kinds of swings Jessie said that the Gypsies had taken him and everyone was glad because he could no longer hold his water and had begun to smell of pee. However, during her last afternoon at our house she told me in strictest confidence the true facts of Lenny's whereabouts as gleaned from a cup of my mother's good green tea. Mr. Kibbee had kidnapped Lenny, killed him and buried the body back in the thicket. In due time he would throw suspicion on Mrs. Kibbee leaving him free to marry our pale Pauline of the pedals. Jessie's eyes flashed vindictively as she revealed the horrendous story for she was still smarting over the fact that that very day Mrs. Kibbee had told her she had fingers like fat sausages and would never ever learn to play the piano. Had then told her not to come back which Jessie attributed to jealousy 'over the way Earl's begun to look at me, she's so damn insecure.'

Well, the story was a perfect end to an unorthodox summer. As Jessie left that evening after supper with her two crochet-edged pillow slips fuller than when she came the sun had turned the sky gloriously ablaze and when I asked Jessie the cause of the phenomenon (there was nothing she didn't know) she said with a wide sweep of her pretty plump arm that it was Moses baking bread for the angels. And then she returned to her grandmother.

She did not come back to sit with us Saturday nights again telling my mother over the telephone that her grandmother needed her and since she now stopped attending church and Sunday School I saw her only once after that in mid-December as my mother and I Christmas shopped for records downtown in the music store. Perhaps Jessie had come in looking for Mr. Kibbee but by then they were gone from the neighborhood and there was a For Rent sign on the house. Mr. Kibbee had told someone they were moving upstate in order to be closer to Lenny but it was rumored the couple had actually divorced. Whichever, they were never heard from again--my mother said nobody even got a Christmas card--and even if they had remained Jessie could not have been Mary in the pageant if Mr. Kibbee had so decided because when we saw her she was somewhat plump up front so that with her then shaved off eyebrows and pencilled twin black arcs she looked like the Mona bewildered and just a little bit sad over what she told my mother Mr. Kibbee had done to her in the closet off the music room the afternoon of her last piano lesson in the Kibbee's house.

My mother did not speak a word on the bus-ride home.

When she later told the story to my father (I should not have listened) she shook her head in disbelief. Counted on her fingers. Said she still didn't believe it, not Jessie. While my father said 'huh... it's a wonder she didn't try to blame it onto me' causing my mother to give him a look that I can only now (in retrospect) describe as... perhaps speculative.

Michael Smetzer

WASP

I saw a wasp on the window glass today
a cold, wet, uncomfortable day

The wasp hung unmoving in the cold
waiting for the sun to heat its blood
waiting till the day grows warm

Snappy yellow legs, its body striped with black
glass-drawn and fresh
but silent as an empty circus

I do not think the wasp will fly today
I tap the glass. It starts.

It may at times begin to clean itself
look active, come to life
Yet it does not fly

Again it spreads its legs upon the glass

Michael L. Johnson

LA BELLE DAME AVEC MERCI

For Donna Mae

Le Regard

My gaze slides
into yours.

Le Parler

Speech falters.

La Touche

Fingers touch
and then weave.
Your lips brush
my ear: soft
whispering
like an arm
slipping through
the dark of
a silk sleeve.

Le Baiser

With our warm
tongues we plunge.

Le Don de Merci

Long play dies
in pleasure
as I arch
to the dance
of you. You
lunge like spring
floodwater
under me.

Donald G. Sheehy

RECONSTRUCTION

the death:

> He was dead before the plane struck earth on the edge of a ripening wheat-field—500 miles off course. The oxygen mask was unused. Experts surmise the pilot had been drinking and fell asleep. He died as the plane continued to climb. Out of fuel it returned to the earth.

the dream:

was blue and white
and clear

very clear
as pouring gin
streams from the lip of a glass decanter
falling into
water
over ice rising clear out of clear
crystalline
to the surface

and gathering blue
reflected
into the water
the blue-gloved hand of a
blue-eyed woman
pouring
the gin into glasses
and moving away

over
white deserts of white rolling dunes
that roll away
elusive

in mounds
the roll of a woman's buttocks
under
a clinging white dress
undulating

white cloth
the color of clouds from above
the penetration
of blown away foam
and a long-buried kiss
into
the wisping soft curls of a
white-haired woman

white over white into
white
the surrender of snow
falling into
the surf of a white-cap sea

into white
in a bed between
white sheets and blankets
re-gathering blue
translucent
through veins in the breast of a
whispering woman

and sleep

Ralph J. Mills, Jr.

OCTOBER

I

October trails clouds,
opening a path for the rain.
A voice dies among the leaves' yellow tongues.

II

The north wind thrusts
through the feathers
of the caved body of a sparrow,
its spirit wings come alive,
it cries,
swerving up between branches.

III

Faces flare like the sun
receding into a dark hood.

Autumn has emptied the house,
room by room, boarding up windows.

Another river of leaves crosses the road,
another handful thrown loose on the air.

Ralph J. Mills, Jr.

THE INSTANT, THE LIGHT

(for Hayden Carruth)

A gull fans out, tenses its wings,
poises
white and sleek of air,
gripping the instant, the light
with spread tendons
a hundred feet up over the green, gray
Chicago river
in the chill shadow of bridges.

Clouds tear apart,
shredding veils in a blue wind:
the afternoon's crystal,
flashes on glass, on walls of windows,
descends with the gull's plunging arc
toward itself,
and finds night, a door opening
in the water's mirror.

Stuart Peterfreund

FOUND POEM ON A MASS MURDER

There were sign of
breaking and entering,
but only lives
were taken.

Trans. Kenneth Rexroth
Atsumi Ikuko

JAPANESE WOMEN POETS

The following translations are part of a book, Japanese Women Poets, scheduled to be published this year by Continuum/Seabury Press. Lady Suwo was the daughter of Tsugunaka, Governor of Suwo, and a Lady in Waiting (Naishi) at the court of the Emperor Go-Reizei (1046-1069 A. D.). Princess Shikishi was the daughter of the Emperor Go-Shirakawa. She is one of the last of the great women poets of the Heian Court and lived on into the twelfth century. Lady Sagami was Lady in Waiting to Princess Yūshi in the eleventh century and married Oe no Kinsuke, Lord of Sagami, who divorced her when she became the lover of Fujiwara no Sadayori. Kūjo Takeko (1887-1928) was a daughter of the Abbot Myō-nyo of the West Hongwanji Temple in Kyoto. At 22 she married Baron Yoshimasa Kujō and left with him for Europe. After a year and a half she returned alone to Japan and lived a solitary life until her diplomat husband returned.

Lady Suwo

Pillowed on your arm
only for the dream of a spring night,
I have become the subject of gossip,
although nothing happened.

Princess Shikishi

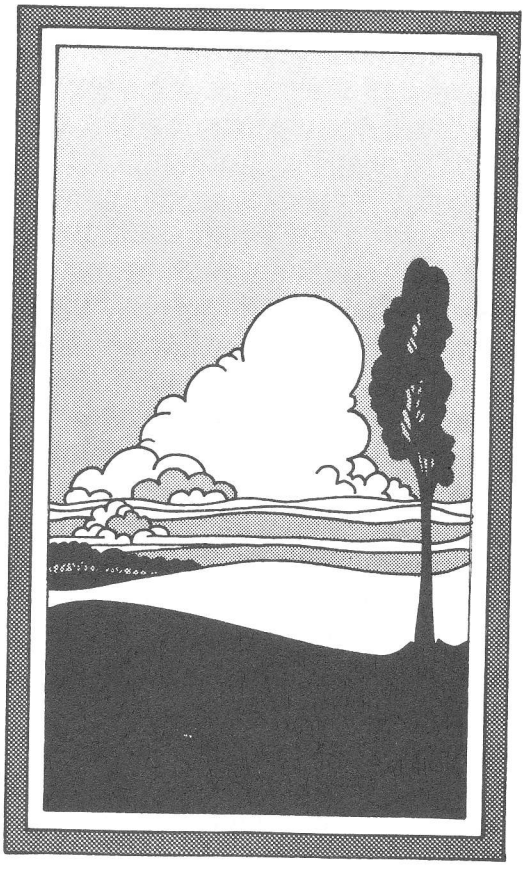
Life, like a thread piercing through jewels,
if you must break,
break now!
If I live any longer
I will weaken and show my hidden love.

Lady Sagami

With hate and misery
my sleeves are never dry.
How sad it is
that my name has been ruined by our love.

Kujō Takeko

I do not consider myself worth counting,
but sometimes even for me
heaven and earth are too small.



Thomas Fox Averill

TAKING CARE OF YOUR OWN

On the way to the lake they stopped for beer. Prine left the big car idling while he and Carol went inside the cinder block bunker of a liquor store. Tim sat silent in the back seat next to Sandy. He wanted to speak, but felt awkward, then angry with himself.

"How long've you worked on the paper?" Sandy helped him.

"Since June."

"You like it?"

"I was really lucky to get this job." He looked at his thin face in the rear view mirror, then lifted his straight brown hair off his forehead.

"You were?"

"Uh huh. Mr. Prine is one of the best managing editors in Kansas. He can teach a reporter more in six months than most men can in six years. A lot of us in my graduating class wanted to come here." Tim looked through the glass door of the liquor store. Prine was paying for the beer from a wad of bills. He was a burly man, wearing tight, flaired, checked pants. His barrel chest and big, tanned forearms stretched his short sleeved white shirt so much it looked flimsy on him. His neck was short and thick, a solid connection between head and body. Carol stood away from Prine, near the door, looking out at the car apprehensively, as though afraid Tim and Sandy would steal away. The August night was warm, and she wore a halter top and a short denim skirt which must have been too scanty for the air-conditioned cold of the liquor store, for she was hugging herself. "It's a great first job to learn the ropes in," Tim finished.

"You must be good already," Sandy said flatly.

Tim looked at her, but she was staring out the window. He had been uncomfortable ever since Prine had picked him up. He looked at his hands which lay inert beside his short legs. His desert boots seemed three sizes too big and he stuck them under the front seat. "I'm not so good now," he answered. "Some day, maybe."

"I'm a social worker," Sandy turned to him.

"Really? How do you like that?"

"It's all right." She sounded distracted. Carol and Prine were leaving the store, walking slowly to the car. Suddenly Sandy spoke quickly. "It's a crummy job, social work. It's people screwing the government after they've been screwed up by society."

Tim was surprised, but her bluntness interested him. Just as Carol and Prine reached the car he said, "You'll have to tell me more about it. I might have to do a story on it some time."

Carol slipped in the passenger door and smiled at Sandy. All three of them watched Prine open the door, throw the bag of beer into the

middle of the front seat, and ease into the car, sighing. He looked at Tim in the rear view mirror. "You two getting along all right?" he asked. His eyes were bright, but his face was sagging, wrinkled.

Sandy looked out the window again. Tim did not know what to say. "Uh, sure, Mr. Prine."

"Randy," Prine corrected him. "Tonight you call me Randy. Now I want us all to enjoy ourselves. Okay?" He winked at Tim, then stretched his big arm along the seat until it was wrapped around Carol's neck. "For old time's sake, Carol. And new times for you two." He turned to look at Sandy and Tim, who sat apart, tense, stiff-legged.

"Randy," Carol frowned, "they don't even know each other."

"That doesn't mean they can't enjoy each other."

"Randy!" Carol rolled his arm off her shoulder and moved closer to the door.

Prine straightened up and put the car in reverse. "Well now, is everybody ready to watch a hell of a moonrise? Just wait till you see that August moon over the lake. It'll make you know you're alive."

Tim grinned and looked at Sandy. She did not seem amused.

"I'm serious." Prine stopped the car and spoke into the rear view mirror. "It'll be as full and round as the goddamn lake tonight. All we need is a breeze and some beer to cool us off." He reached in the bag for a beer, snapped it open, then put the car in gear and gunned into the road.

Tim tried to relax, tried to enjoy the prospect of the evening. He looked at Sandy, who was staring straight ahead. Her mouth was a tight line below her turned-up nose. Her blond hair was cut like a boy's; he had never seen a woman with shorter hair. Her arms were firm, faintly muscled. She seemed the opposite of Carol, whose deep brown hair fell in thick waves to her smooth bare shoulders, whose lips were full, and lipsticked, whose movements were soft, even languid. He wondered how and why they had become friends and roommates.

At the turn-off to the lake Tim reached over the seat for a beer. "Do you want one?" he asked Sandy as he popped it open.

"Not yet, thanks." She looked at him fully, her face softening.

Prine drove halfway around the lake before he found just the right place to watch the moon rise. He pulled off the asphalt road into a gravelled parking area on a rise above the lake. He gave the car a little too much gas, and before he could stop he had rammed the front tires into the cement guard. As the four of them lurched forward, Prine--almost in a single motion--slapped the transmission into park, switched off the lights, and pulled the key from the ignition, holding it up in his clenched fist. "This," he said, "is the place."

Tim and Sandy climbed out the back seat and walked a little way down the slope towards the lake. They sat at a cement picnic table under a huge elm tree whose trunk was scarred white with Dutch Elm disease. Tim tipped his head back to see the stars appearing and disappearing through the swaying branches and rustling leaves. "Well, Mr. Prine got his breeze, all right," he said.

"It is nice out here," Sandy answered.

Carol and Prine--she awkwardly on elevated, clog-heeled sandals, he heavily in black and white dress wing tips--joined them, bringing the beer. Prine guzzled the last of the can he'd opened on the way out and crumpled it in his big hand. He dropped it on the ground and reached for another.

"Come on, Carol, they're getting warm." He opened one and put it in front of her. She frowned slightly, then sipped from the can.

"You, too, Sandy," he insisted. "This is supposed to be a party." He reached for a beer but Tim quickly grabbed one and opened it for her. "Well, excuse me," he said, winking exaggeratedly.

Tim was embarrassed and wished he and Sandy were alone.

"So how have you girls been?" Prine's voice was as big and thick as his body. He cradled Carol's head in the crook of his arm.

"We've been just fine, Randy," Carol answered. "Everything all right on the Herald?"

"Sure, sure. Just fine. We're teaching Tim here how to write a story so it sounds like news and not jibberish. But he's a quick learner."

"Good," said Carol. They were all quiet, sipping beer. The crickets chirped in sharp stutters.

Prine hugged Carol again. "God, it's been a long time since I saw you," he whispered in her ear loud enough for everyone to hear.

"Damn it, Randy." Carol pursed her lips and pushed him away from her.

"Oh, come on. What'd you come out here for if you didn't want to talk about old times?" He cupped her shoulder.

"I came out here so the four of us could be together. And you sounded sober when you called."

Prine was silent. Carol stared away. Tim drank more beer, though it was not cooling him off. He was sweating and his head felt clogged, as though his ears were plugged. He looked at Sandy, who seemed to be studying the words on her beer can.

"It's not like I'm drunk," Prine tried to soothe Carol. "I just came out here to relax and watch the moon rise."

"Then relax, will you?" Carol finished her beer in quick gulps. "Open me another beer."

"I think I'll go down by the shore." Tim stood up and turned to

Sandy. "Do you want to take a little walk?"

Sandy looked at Carol, who nodded her head. "Okay," she said. "But just a little one." She stood up.

"Don't be too long," said Carol.

"Aw, let the kids have some fun," Prine chuckled. "Take your time. Only don't forget to watch for the moon. It'll rise soon. You won't want to miss it."

Tim and Sandy walked away. "What's going on up there?" he asked when they were out of hearing range.

"You must not know Mr. Prine very well," said Sandy.

"I don't know. I thought I did. I mean, I see him at the office every day, but I've never seen him act like this. I'm sorry."

"What for?"

"I didn't know he'd be like this when I told him I'd come along, that's all."

"You think this is bad, you should have seen him when Carol was breaking it off with him last year. I had just moved in with her. He kept calling and she kept telling him she didn't want to see him. Then one night he came over to our place drunk. Worse than I ever saw him. He barged right in and sat down on the couch and just stared at Carol and me. It gave us both the creeps. He just sat there and stared, and didn't say a word. We pretended to watch television. After an hour he stood up and told Carol she was making a big mistake. She said she'd learn to live with her mistakes, without any help from him. His face turned bright red and his eyes bulged out. I was so scared I reached for the phone. He looked at me full of hate and started out the door. Then he turned at us again and I started dialing. He left."

"That's incredible."

"She told me she never wanted to see him again."

"Then why tonight?"

"He apologized to her. Said he'd been thinking a lot about her. Said he's pulled himself together and she'd see. And she's thought a lot about him. You don't just break off with someone you've been seeing and never think about him again. Maybe she wanted to see if they could just be friends. Or if he really was better. But, she didn't trust him entirely. That's why you and I are here. We're hostages," she sighed a laugh.

"Jesus." Tim shook his head. "I thought he called me up because we had an argument at the office today and he wanted to make it up to me."

"So he fights with you, too. How can you work with him?"

"Well, he's a good journalist. Really good. Being strong willed and full of fight is a good trait in journalism. It's something to respect. Especially when you're right. And he's usually right. When he was a reporter he brought down Mayor Dunn, that really corrupt

man who ran this town all through the 50s."

"He did that?"

"Yep."

"Was he drunk when he called you?"

"He was loud and insistent, like when he gives out assignments, but not drunk." They were at the edge of the water; it lapped on the muddy shore. Tim smiled. "Besides, he said he wanted me to meet you, and I'm not sorry I did. I don't know many people in Lamar yet." A bullfrog began croaking deeply somewhere across the lake. "Are you sorry you came?"

"No," she smiled, facing him. "I don't blame you for the way Mr. Prine is acting."

"Will you see me again?"

Sandy laughed at him. "I might."

Tim felt silly, yet bold, too. "I'd like to see you again. Just the two of us. How about Saturday night? We'll go out for dinner and see a movie."

"Okay," she said, "I'll take my chances."

Tim was proud that he'd conquered his habitual shyness. He wanted to kiss her. He draped his arm over her thin shoulders and found himself secretly wishing the moon would rise. Then they heard a muffled shout: "God damn it, I said no!"

"Let's get back up there," said Sandy, immediately starting away.

"Are you sure?" Tim hesitated. Sandy stopped for a moment and he reached again for her shoulder. "I don't want to embarrass them. Maybe they can work it out."

Sandy turned on him abruptly, her hands on her hips. "God damn," she said. "How can you say that after what I just told you? What do you mean work it out? You mean that he'll go right ahead, and she'll put up with it. God!" They heard more rustling, more hoarse protests. "You can stay here and watch Mr. Prine's moon rise."

Tim looked quickly over the lake. There was still no moon. He heard Carol again, this time shouting: "Get off me, Randy! Get off!" He hurried after Sandy, reaching the top of the slope just in time to see her standing still, her hand to her mouth, her eyes wide. Near the picnic table, Prine was straddling Carol's left leg and holding her arms above her head with one hand while he roughly kneaded her breasts with the other. Her halter top covered her face like a mask. Tim stood next to Sandy, transfixed, staring at Carol's dark-nippled breasts, almost studying her exposed thighs below where Prine had pushed her skirt up around her waist.

"God," Sandy shuddered, "do something." She turned to Tim, saw him standing dazed. She shook her head quickly, then charged Prine, hitting him on the back with her small fist.

Prine turned and grabbed her arm, twisting it hard. She screamed, falling in the direction of the twist. Prine let go and she stood up. "God damn you!" she screamed. "God damn you, you bastard!"

"Get off!" Carol kicked her legs and jerked her arms. "Please, Randy, get off," she whined.

"Tim. Do something, Tim," Sandy begged.

Tim stood bewildered. He could hardly hear Sandy pleading with him. "Mr. Prine?" he asked softly, then louder: "Don't Mr. Prine."

Prine looked back and forth between him and Sandy. "You kids beat it," he menaced.

Neither moved.

"I said beat it!" Prine yelled.

Tim felt weak, weightless, as though dreaming.

Sandy ran to the picnic table and picked up the untouched six pack of beer by the plastic rings which held the cans together. She circled Prine; he watched her steadily.

"You just be careful," he warned her, raising his free arm.

She charged him again, managing to get past his outstretched arm and landing the beer on the back of his head. She danced away, looking like a child in the midst of a prank.

"You little bitch!" Prine yelled. "I ought to kill you!"

"No, Randy, no!" Carol moaned. She began to cry. Prine looked at her dumbly.

Tim felt sick and leaned against the elm tree. Sandy came closer to him, backing away from where Prine was suddenly slumping off Carol onto the ground next to her, one arm covering his eyes. Prine breathed heavily, his white shirt heaving up and down. Carol stood up, quickly tying her halter back over her breasts and adjusting her skirt. She had stopped crying as suddenly as she'd begun, and the evening was still except for Prine's gulping breath.

In the quiet Tim felt like crying out. Everything had happened so fast, and he had been so slow, so confused. He was frightened still, and looked over to Sandy, whose eyes were slits. Her face was hard. Then, both Sandy and Carol rushed at Prine, who heard them and managed to get to his knees before Sandy landed the beer on his head again, the cans flying in all directions. He bent backwards and Carol kicked him in the crotch. Tim could feel Prine's pain, could feel his helplessness. Prine moaned and rolled over on his stomach, his arms underneath him, holding himself for protection. Sandy bent over him and rifled his pockets for the car key. Without a word she and Carol went to Prine's Buick Skylark. Before she climbed in the driver's seat Sandy looked over the car at Tim, who stood motionless, one arm against the elm, his face as pale as his white shirt against the dark sky.

"I took care of mine," she said harshly, "now you take care of

yours. You two can write a story about it!"

She disappeared into the car, started the motor, and turned on the lights. As the car backed away, the headlights flashed briefly across Tim, whose head was bent into his thin chest as though he were examining something in his hands, which were now clasped in front of him. He did not look up. He heard the tires crunching gravel, then he could hear nothing but a slight breeze in the old elm and the bullfrog on the opposite bank. He felt small, as though he could fit into his own cupped hands.

He heard Prine turn over, groaning. "Hey, Tim," Prine laughed hoarsely, "didn't I tell you there was going to be a moon? Huh?" His voice was scratchy, like the gravel crunching under the tires.

Tim turned and faced the lake. A full summer moon, red and huge, was just cresting the horizon.

"It's a hell of a Goddamn moon, isn't it?" Prine cleared his throat and stood, then leaned against the picnic table. He snapped open a can of beer and sat heavily, then cleared his throat again and drank off some beer. "Boy," he said, rubbing his big head, "that little bitch sure gave me some lumps. I'm surprised those two didn't kill me."

Tim could not look at him.

"Hey," he said louder, "where were you? How come you let them at me like that? They could have killed me."

Tim turned away.

Prine snorted a laugh. "You didn't want to get on her bad side, huh?" Tim could feel Prine staring at him. Prine laughed at him. "You kind of liked that Sandy, didn't you?"

Tim remained silent.

"Sure you did. I could tell. She's a good little woman. She liked you, too. You just wait, you'll get her yet." He laughed again.

"I don't want her!" Tim yelled. "Not like you think, anyway. You're crazy if you think she'll ever speak to me again." He stepped directly in front of Prine, his thin neck stretched forward, his face twisted in sudden rage. "You son of a bitch," he said quietly. "You dirty son of a bitch."

Prine jumped at him, and they both fell. Prine landed on top, and Tim struggled against his weight. It seemed almost a part of him, as though it was in his own body and not Prine's. He flailed his arms and legs, but they seemed as tiny and insubstantial as a spider's. He could hardly breathe, the weight almost caving in his chest. Prine breathed sour breath into his face and shook his big fist an inch from Tim's wide eyes.

"Please," Tim begged. "I didn't mean it. I swear I didn't mean it, Mr. Prine." His voice cracked and he began to cry. "Please, Mr. Prine?" he whined.

Prine moved off and sat on the ground. "Goddamn it," he said, "I wasn't going to hurt you."

Tim looked over at the big man. He wiped his eyes.

"You've got to stay tough. You're one of my best reporters. You've got a fine career ahead of you, so don't spoil it now."

Tim sat up, snivelling to clear his nose.

"Listen," said Prine, standing, "sometimes you have a little too much to drink and you do something stupid. So what are you going to do? Cry about it?" He offered Tim his hand. "Come on and help me finish this beer."

Tim felt weak. Trembling, he took Prine's hand and allowed himself to be pulled up. They sat next to each other at the table. Tim rested his head on his hands.

"And don't worry about those bitches," said Prine. "Let them take care of each other if that's what they want." He put his arm around Tim and patted his shoulder. Tim shuddered. He quickly opened a can of beer, gulped some down, and smacked the can back on the table.

"Hell, they didn't hurt you," Prine said.

"They could tell the police," Tim said, guzzling more beer. "They were sure mad enough."

Prine snorted. "Don't be stupid. What are they going to say? Randy Prine tried to fuck me so I beat the shit out of him and stole his car." Prine began to laugh. He put his arm over Tim's shoulders. "Don't you see? They can't say a thing about it. There's nothing to worry about." Prine's voice had mellowed, and was soothing. "And besides, Carol's like me. She'll figure everybody got their own and things are even."

Tim felt the beer warming his stomach. He sat quiet, nursing his beer. He was spent, totally.

"God, there's nothing nicer than coming out to the lake to watch a moonrise." Prine looked over his shoulder at the moon and laughed. Tim turned, too, so that their heads were side by side. The moon was full and bright, shining steadily above the horizon. Another moon, pale and feckless, trembled on the surface of the lake.

WILLIAM KLOEFKORN

William Kloefkorn, a native Kansan, is an associate professor of English at Nebraska Wesleyan in Lincoln. He has four published books of poetry: Alvin Turner As Farmer (Road Apple Review, 1972; rpt. Windflower Press, 1974), Uncertain the Final Run to Winter (Windflower Press, 1974), Loony (Apple, 1975), and Ludi Jr (Pentagram Press, 1976). His work is featured with Hale Chatfield's in Voyages to the Inland Sea, VII (Juniper Press). His most recent manuscript is Not Such a Bad Place to Be. At present he is working on two new series: Horses and After the Ball Game.

The following poems first appeared in these publications: "For My Wife's Father" in Garfield Lake Review, "Alvin Turner #59" in Mississippi Review, "Alvin Turner #11" in the Omaha World-Herald, "Elsie Martin" in Pebble, "looney #11" in Aspen Leaves, and "Plowing the North Forty" in Dacotah Territory.

from Not Such a Bad Place to Be

FOR MY WIFE'S FATHER

More and more my wife's father
sleeps in his chair,
as if practicing.
But I am not deceived.
I have seen him
at the muting of a single word
revive,
his osseous hands toss off
their fitful tics.
I have watched his eyes
return from the water's edge,
become sharp as spoons.
Those who catch him in his chair,
at sleep, should not be deceived.
He is not practicing.
He is at the water's edge,
listening to the sucking of the carp,
and with them gathering.

from Alvin Turner As Farmer

11.

This morning I am dizzy
With the plump brown evidence of fall.
The granary is full.
The bucket at the cistern glints its use.
The baby is solid as a tractor lug.
In the kitchen
Martha glows fuller than her cookstove's fire.
I want a dozen pancakes,
Ma'am,
A ton of sausage,
Half a crate of eggs,
Some oatmeal and a loaf of toast.
Feed me,
Woman,

Then kindly step back!
I intend to do some pretty damn fancy whistling
While I slop the hogs.

59.

Though Martha is small
I have yet to have to shake the sheet to find,
Or rouse, her.
Sometimes on an icy Saturday morning
Deliberately I calm her animation:
At such a time I view my hand as anvil,
And leaving it poised gently on her breasts
I slip away to do the chores.

And sometimes, sure enough,
I reappear to find the anvil holding,
With Martha's form beneath it, warm as cowflanks.
And O! these are the truly sweet, the sacred times.
The anvil gone,
The boys asleep,
The smell of milk and breath and chill
Against my woman.

from Alvin Turner As Farmer

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from Uncertain the Final Run to Winter

ELSIE MARTIN

She's six of one, half a dozen of another,
According to Stocker:
Not a bad looker, for a widowwoman,
But her face so knobbed with indecision
You'd swear she has hemorrhoids.
Heard of another case just like her,
He said,
Who starved to death in a grocery store,
Comparing labels.
Always and forever between a rock and a hard place—
Not fishing, quite,
And not quite cutting bait.
So precisely between the devil
And the deep blue sea
That she lives with one foot in heaven
And the other in hot water.
Split her right down the middle,
Stocker said,
And it wouldn't make a dime's worth of difference
Which half you reached for.

from Loony

11.

When Lloyd Fetrow's picture show burned flat
I was the last to leave,
uncertain where John Wayne ended
and the fine bright flames began.
And folks are not always gentle,
ripping me as they did
from my seat, my popcorn:
even today, under the arms,

I can feel their handholds,
bruises thick as thumbs.
And with each snowfall
the wasted popcorn returns,
white flak upblown, arrested,
exploding the eyes.
Later they said they had to,
that one second more
and the tip of my nose
would have gone ablaze.
Because they said that
even a mongrel has feelings,
and that no respectable
God-fearing Nebraska town,
without a fight,
lets its loony die.

47.

In the early morning
on a stool at Selma's
I can smell the hashbrowns and the bacon,
and the countertop as clean as new linoleum.
Everything is in its place at Selma's,
even loony:
how when he sits down
the puzzle comes together,
and will again tomorrow
and tomorrow.
Listen:
this is something not so small to have,
and something very large to look for:
cup and spoon and coffee steam,
the hands of Selma from behind the counter.
And he must be the loony who cannot be thankful
for the merest order:
who can only know that
life is good
when life is over.

59.

Delbert Garlow talks
on and on and on
about the rain,
says that already the mud is so deep
that all his shorter hogs
are disappearing.
Delbert talks with his eyes crossed,
as if for luck:
says where is that
God damn Noah, anyhow,
now that we need him?
Delbert sits
far tilted back
like danger
in his chair,
eating a new cigar.
In front of him
his hands are placing dominoes
in the shape of a tapered wall.
Delbert, who is keeping score,
says that the only thing
a man can do,
unless he's a duck,
is stick his finger
in the nearest hole.

from Ludi Jr

DURING THE SERMON
LUDI JR DREAMS OF THE GIRL
IN THE NEXT PEW

how her long blonde hair
must follow her
everywhere

when she sits down

the hair settling itself in place
not daring to move
until spoken to

when she enters the dimestore
the hair reaching out and down
to examine the cold cream

in potter's grocery
the hair polishing the apples
catching their fire

and at night

oh at night!

the tipends sparking the linen

PLOWING THE NORTH FORTY LUDI JR UNEARTHS THE REMNANTS OF HIS PATERNAL GRANDFATHER

who lived on sourdough and dock
grubworms and milfoil
and the breasts of small birds

who lived day in day out unaware
that he could not kiss the overgrowth
in his own ear

who heated both himself
and the scirrhus in his wife
with what the milkcows hourly
walked away from

who wore both lobes to the bone
listening for the word
of the lord

who heard it:
old man lie down

who stretched himself out in a furrow

pulling the dark soil
over him like a comfort

who without further comment
is becoming something else
the process a kindness to him
that these bones these bones
these dry white bones
shall never walk again

from Not Such a Bad Place to Be

CABOOSE

On a hill overlooking the Platte
a Burlington caboose
blooms greener than the grass
it rises from,
spoiling, no doubt,
the dream of that demented switchman
who one day sent it screaming
headlong with the grasshoppers
to this high wide pale
of no inertia.

Aunt Vera I think it was
who said she saw the end of something
once just south of Kiowa or
was it Tulsa?
But pressed for details
she slacked her jaw,
picked at her lower lip,
conceded at last to silence.

Death. Kiss it off.
Have it straight from the horse's own
calciferous mouth.

There is no such animal.

Roy Campbell

ANGELS AND ANTARCTICA

A Conversation with Donald Finkel

Donald Finkel is a professor of English and poet-in-residence at Washington University in St. Louis. The following interview took place while he was serving as visiting poet at Wichita State University. He has published seven books of poetry: The Clothing's New Emperor (1959), Simeon (1964), A Joyful Noise (1966), Answer Back (1968), The Garbage Wars (1970), Adequate Earth (1972), and A Mote in Heaven's Eye (1975). Adequate Earth won the Theodore Roethke Memorial Award for Poetry, and The Garbage Wars was nominated for a National Book Award.

CAMPBELL: When you were beginning to write poetry, what poets did you study?

FINKEL: Well, I read the collected Keats. I read a great deal of Poe. I was overwhelmed by all kinds of Romantic urges and inclinations. I was enchanted by the intensely rhythmic poets, such as Vachel Lindsey. I was attracted for a period of time to a number of Black American poets like James Weldon Johnson and Langston Hughes. I would just blunder onto things in book stores. I just found what I could find on my own. I think that I was seventeen when I came upon a translation of A Season in Hell by Rimbaud. I had no notion of what it was, but it turned me inside out. Poe was no preparation for what Rimbaud did to me. That kind of thing would just set me off reeling into space.

CAMPBELL: What poet do you find yourself going back to most often?

FINKEL: Oh, it would be easy to say Ezra Pound or William Carlos Williams. There are several poets that I go back to, but I have found myself recently more excited by new areas of poetry. I suddenly discovered how provincial I was, how little, for instance, I've read of modern and contemporary European poetry. I've been reading a lot of Eastern European poetry recently—Czechoslovakian poetry, for instance.

CAMPBELL: What is the difference between the contemporary poetry of the Eastern Europeans and the contemporary poetry of the Americans?

FINKEL: The Eastern Europeans write poetry that is more like my own, I think. I have found that things I had been doing for a long,

long time had been, very happily, transpiring in Poland, for instance, with people like Zbigniew Herbert and Czeslaw Milocz, and with the Yugoslav poet Vasko Popa. It's been like discovering brothers whose existence I had never even suspected.

CAMPBELL: As a poet, what is your favorite novel?

FINKEL: There is no particular novel. I probably turn back to Kafka more than I turn back to any poet. He's probably taught me more as a writer than any poet or novelist that I can think of. It's not just his novels, but all his writings—his short fiction, his parables, his diaries and his letters.

CAMPBELL: You teach creative writing at Washington University, yet you say that you can't teach creative writing. But you add that you don't really mean that you can't teach it. What do you mean?

FINKEL: I mean that there is no way to set into the conventional university structure a course that will teach someone how to write. No one can be taught how to write, though young writers can be helped to learn. I realize that I seem to be denying the possibility that writing can somehow be aided by the university context, but that's not the case. The university is capable of supporting a community of more or less experienced writers who can help each other in various ways. There is the initial possibility of sympathetic and critical readership, which every writer needs. And young writers have a chance to learn from each other—that's where I learned the most. Perhaps, I was lucky to grow up in New York, where it was possible, even outside the academy, to find other fledgling writers, and to discover what magazines are publishing what. It wouldn't have been so easy, I think, in St. Louis or in Wichita. In most parts of the country, the only place a writer can turn if he wants to find out what's happening is the University. Writing can't be taught, but it can be fostered. The notion that someone can stand in front of a class and train young writers is, of course, naive, but, unfortunately, since that is the way we train mathematicians and engineers and physicists and literary scholars, we have had to force writing programs into a similar mold.

CAMPBELL: Do you teach other courses at Washington University besides creative writing?

FINKEL: For the last few years, I've been teaching a critical course called "The Art of Poetry."

CAMPBELL: What do you think of the idea that every person who

teaches literature should at least try to write something creative in order to discover how difficult it is?

FINKEL: In a theoretical way, I think it's a great idea. I don't know how well it would work in practice, however, because it takes a lot longer than, say, six months to discover the complexities. I have a feeling it would be better just to let the poets and fiction writers round out what the scholars and critics have to offer, instead of compelling them to do something totally alien to their natures. Still, that's one of the things that always disturbed me when I was taking literature courses as an undergraduate: none of my teachers seemed to have asked themselves why one wrote a poem in the first place, why one wrote a poem instead of a short story, why one wrote a short story instead of a novel. Nobody seemed to ask any questions concerning the process of creation itself, as if the works suddenly sprang from the writers' brows, fully armed.

CAMPBELL: Is there any first thing you always tell a creative writing class?

FINKEL: There are things I end up repeating until I'm absolutely sick of hearing them myself. One is to hang loose. Most of my writing students, at least when I first meet them, tend to accept the first thing that comes out of their heads as the poem. They accept the order in which it is written. They accept the language in which it occurs to them. It is final. They find it very difficult to modify what they have written, and, of course, they don't understand what I mean when I tell them to revise. They fight to the last syllable every modification I suggest, mainly because they are so hypnotized by the spontaneous outbursts of their own unconscious. What I keep telling my students is to treat what they write, as long as possible, simply as notes on something they are going to write, so that, when they finally get around to the actual construction of the poem, they have already been involved in the process for days or weeks.

CAMPBELL: You have a B. S. in philosophy.

FINKEL: It's a strange degree, I know.

CAMPBELL: Do you think your readings in philosophy have added anything to your poetry?

FINKEL: I was a true dilletante. I stayed until I was tired and then I left. Mainly it was my experience with the Greeks and the Pre-Socratics that had the most effect on me. If anyone were to ask what

piece of prose I went back to more than any other, I think I would say the fragments of Heraclitus. At that time, there was no real difference between science and poetry or between poetry and philosophy. If I had lived then, I'd have found it very difficult to decide exactly which I was practicing, and it wouldn't have bothered me in the least.

CAMPBELL: Has being Jewish added anything to your poetry?

FINKEL: I doubt it. I had a very antiseptic background. To me, a Jewish ceremony is about as exotic as a Buddhist ceremony. I attend them about equally often. The symbolism fascinates me, but Jewish symbolism no more than any other. Growing up in New York, it struck me that in some ways I was a stranger in my own country, as a New Yorker as much as a Jew. I think New Yorkers tend to be somewhat parochial. When my mother comes to visit, she always speaks of how much cheaper or more expensive things are in The City, as if there were no other city. When I moved to the Midwest about 20 years ago, I moved as a stranger, as a visitor. I find the Midwest exotic, as exotic as Buddhism.

CAMPBELL: I found it interesting that on the back of A Joyful Noise, Anthony Hecht compared you, not with another poet, but with Saul Bellow, the great Jewish-American novelist. Have you ever read any of Bellow's works?

FINKEL: Oh, yes. I admire him tremendously. I think of him as one of the most literate American novelists. He's just about the only American equivalent we have to somebody like Gunther Grass. But I never think of him as a Jewish novelist. Every time I've moved into a new town in the Midwest, some local rabbi has asked me to give a talk on Jewish literature. Even though I've read the people he's talking about, it has never occurred to me to consider them as Jews. Some of them, like Malamud, I can't help noticing as Jews; but not Bellow.

CAMPBELL: So you feel good about that comparison?

FINKEL: I'm delighted when Hecht tells me I'm like Bellow. I doubt that I deserve it.

CAMPBELL: One of my favorite poems by you is one called "Chimp." And I get the impression from that poem and from others, such as "General Motors is People" that you are, for lack of a better term, anti-organization. Am I correct?

FINKEL: I think of myself as disaffiliated. I have always been very

uncomfortable with any kind of organization. I was delighted to discover that, if we are derived from chimps, we are derived from creatures who tend to gather in groups of two or three or five, like families or friends. My deepest responsibilities are to my friends and my family. I can't defend too many people at once. I can't bear too many people at once.

CAMPBELL: And the last line: "I am not your keeper"?

FINKEL: The speaker would like very much not to be somebody's keeper. On the other hand, I recognize that every good thing that has come to me has usually come at the expense of somebody else. If I am to live in any way comfortably in the United States, it is only because somebody else is living poorly, to whom I am profoundly indebted and for whom I am inescapably responsible. I've been painfully aware of this for a long time. What pains me most is how impossible it is for me to deal with it. I know that everything I relinquish is taken up by somebody much more powerful and much less in need of it than I am. Standing there looking at the chimp, I recognized it anew. But it doesn't do much good to say you are not his keeper. It's you who are keeping him in his cage.

CAMPBELL: There are angels all the way through your poetry. What does the angel mean to you?

FINKEL: It keeps changing. I think I needed a workable creature I could keep molding in various ways. The angel sometimes is no more than a comic reflection of myself looking into a very rosy mirror. Sometimes he's something more than myself, something better. Inheriting comfortably neither the Jewish nor the Greek nor the Roman nor the Christian mythology (although I'll take anything I can get), I wanted to find some kind of character who had mana. Perhaps every being has mana and especially those who are aware and nurture their own spiritual intensity. But the image of the angel struck me as the best expression of that intensity. It's true that I treat him, for the most part, fairly comically and off-handedly. That's because I feel uncomfortable when I use any religious image. Still, it amuses me to do it.

CAMPBELL: In one of your poems, "Home Movies," an angel bursts into flame. That image still mystifies me. I won't ask you to explain it, but—

FINKEL: Oh, it's not difficult. I was talking about the surprising ways in which objects transform themselves in very ordinary circum-

stances. When you look at movies in which you either slow down or speed up the motion, things that are ordinary become extraordinary. A tree begins to grow at a fantastic rate; it seems to explode into leaves. That kind of transformation—although the tree is still a tree; it hasn't changed at all—demanded that I give it a new name. It became an angel in the yard.

CAMPBELL: Do you worry about writing only for other poets? Do you have an audience in mind when you write?

FINKEL: I think any poet worth his salt will try very hard to satisfy nobody but himself. The only time I found myself consciously concerned with an audience was in the writing of Adequate Earth. I had spent a little more than a month in the Antarctic, for the most part, with scientists and, when I decided to write a book about the past and future of Antarctica, as well as the present, I wanted to write it in such a way that those people most involved with the Antarctic, the scientists, could appreciate it. If they couldn't, I would have achieved nothing, because it is, at the moment anyway, their domain.

CAMPBELL: Why did these scientists decide to take a poet with them?

FINKEL: I think it was the wisdom of one man, Philip M. Smith, who was at that time deputy director of the Office of Polar Programs. He recognized that, since most of the people going to Antarctica were in the sciences, there was little opportunity for an intelligent layman to obtain a sense of the vastness and beauty of the continent and of the richness of its history and the significance of its future. It is, after all, the last frontier on earth. Several astronauts from NASA were visiting the Antarctic at the same time I was there. They were interested in what they could learn concerning the exploration of alien environments. Phil Smith had the intelligence to insure that not only astronauts and geomorphologists, but also a poet, a sculptor and a painter were able to visit the Antarctic and register their impressions. The scientists themselves were absolutely delighted with the idea and were very eager to see the results.

CAMPBELL: Did you learn anything from the scientists there?

FINKEL: I learned a lot. I had never really spent much time with people in the sciences before. One of the things that happens in a frontier situation is that, instead of finding yourself alone, you are thrust into fairly intimate contact with other people. You can't help but learn something from them. One thing that struck me about the main American base at McMurdo Sound was the dump. We had come

there to understand and to appreciate the special ecology of Antarctica, and what we had produced, among other things, was a mountain of garbage. The scientists were more painfully aware of it than anyone else. At one point, they flew out in helicopters into what is called the Dry Valleys and collected in plastic bags every drop of the trash other scientists for years and years had left behind. Many of them believe that we have already done irreparable damage to the ecology there.

CAMPBELL: You speak at the end of the poem of Antarctica's "unnatural childhood," and you say it has to end. Does it really have to?

FINKEL: I don't think there is any question that it has to end. We are there, and we are not going to turn around and leave. We have already left our mark, and we are going to continue to leave our marks. The only thing we can do is restrain ourselves. The Antarctic treaty opens the continent to anyone. Nobody is prohibited from setting foot on that land as long as he abides by certain rules. And the human creature goes wherever there is a possibility of going; there is no use in ignoring the fact. He's probably going to establish ski resorts down there, and, sooner or later in his poking and prodding, he's going to strike oil. Our only hope is to be able to come to some kind of agreement ahead of time, as to the possibilities of carrying on with the least destruction to the environment, because there will be, under any circumstances, some sort of insult to Mother's corpse, no matter what we do.

CAMPBELL: It has been said that you used the collage technique in the composition of Adequate Earth. Do you like that term?

FINKEL: I think it's an adequate term. It's very hard to discover a term that applies only to literature and that has no previous history in any other genre. Though the collage was first employed in painting and in photography, it presented me with the poetic possibilities I was looking for.

CAMPBELL: Adequate Earth is the second book you have written using this technique. What made you start writing collage poems?

FINKEL: I have always been attracted to fragments. I discovered recently a poem I wrote about a fragment of Egyptian sculpture when I was about eighteen, in which I incorporated scraps of the descriptive material that accompanied the museum exhibit. I had always been attracted to Marianne Moore's use of quotations and Ezra Pound's

absorption of fragments into the Cantos and William Carlos Williams' technique in Paterson. So it wasn't something new to me. More and more, I discovered that my own thinking proceeds not in linear fashion but in nodes and flashes, which can be arranged in several possible orders. In composing Answer Back, I gathered together the fragmentary revelations of my experience at the time, living in Vermont, safe, almost unnaturally safe from the violence and the madness sweeping our cities. It seemed to me that I was snowbound and alone, cut off from the rest of the continent. For that reason, I found myself turning to such books as Admiral Byrd's Alone. I began to gather scraps and quotations—from Alone, from newspapers, from whatever I was reading at the time that struck me as relevant to my condition. Then, as I began to assemble it all, I found I had the makings of a new technique.

Antarctica was a collage of experiences for me. I had fragmentary experiences as I raced through it that month, visiting a new place almost every day, reading, during my few moments of leisure, documents concerning the past and describing contemporary activity. The only way I could deal with it all was the way I had discovered in the earlier book.

CAMPBELL: Are there any dangers in writing a collage poem?

FINKEL: I think the main danger is falling in love so much with the primary material that you begin to suspect it could carry the whole picture for you. You have to let a fairly long period lapse before you can begin to treat such material as part of the poem, before you can treat these elements only as elements in a larger picture. It seems to me that, for the most part, it makes things much simpler. The wonderful thing is the way it establishes the reality of the experience. I can proceed with my part of the process without having to counterfeit details and characters and events that will give the poem its verisimilitude. I can turn to the original materials for that sense of reality.

CAMPBELL: In Adequate Earth, you use a character you call The First One, who is somewhat mythological. Is he an original creation?

FINKEL: Yes. At one time, I had the notion of creating a fictitious discoverer, on the pattern of Columbus or stout Cortez. Then I began to boil him down until there was nothing left but the bones, and he became The First One. It became more and more apparent to me that he was not a person at all, but a penguin. Once he revealed himself, I was free of all human history; I could make him do whatever was necessary for the progress of the poem.

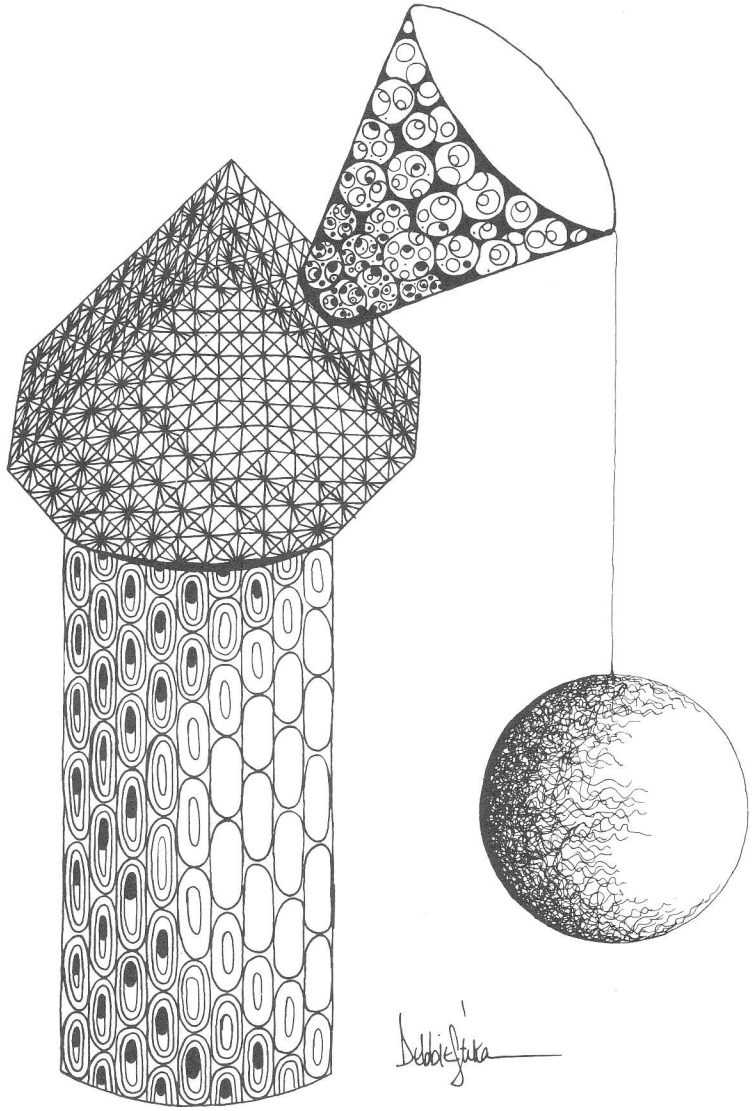
CAMPBELL: The First One goes away and the natives say he will return.

FINKEL: Yes.

CAMPBELL: Will he return?

FINKEL: I don't know. That's just the image I have. Whoever it is will come back someday. Like Quetzalcoatl. Perhaps that's what we're waiting for. Then we can rare up and do the same fool things all over again.

Nov. 1975



REVIEWS

Evan S. Connell, Jr. Mrs. Bridge. New York: Viking Press, 1959. Re-released by Simon & Schuster in a Pocket Books edition, 1977. 273 pages. $1.95.

Connell begins his novel:

> Her name was India—she was never able to get used to it. It seemed to her that her parents must have been thinking of someone else when they named her. Or were they hoping for another sort of daughter? As a child she was often on the point of inquiring, but time passed, and she never did. (p. 1)

This beginning and the epigraph from Whitman's "Facing West from California Shores," "But where is what I started for so long ago? / And why is it yet unfound?" indicate both the tone and theme of the novel, a lament for a lost woman who is isolated from, and insulated within, herself and her surroundings. Connell calls her Mrs. Bridge not only because she's defined exclusively as wife and mother. An innocent, generous, unquestioning woman, she sacrifices herself to her family.

The spare, distant narration of the book, the short titled chapters, the sketchy "plot" lines reinforce the barrenness of her life. Connell's tone is ironic, but gently ironic rather than indicting. Each short chapter covers, in fine detail, a moment in Mrs. Bridge's life: the day she lets the cook off and prepares one of Mr. Bridge's favorite meals, only to fail completely because she's so out of practice; the day at her art class when she paints Leda and the swan, clothing Leda ". . . in a flowered dressmaker bathing suit not unlike her own" (p. 104). The novel gains complexity as these short, emblematic episodes become a complete picture of a life.

Connell's gently ironic novel is, as Vance Bourjailly pointed out in 1959, an elegy, for both author and reader ultimately admire and respect Mrs. Bridge. She lives in suburban Kansas City, has a maid to cook, and do the laundry, and even has a chauffeur at one point. Her lawyer husband insulates her from the world, discouraging her from exploring her own life and ideas, and from voicing her thoughts.

Midway through the novel she and Mr. Bridge dine at the country club to celebrate Mrs. Bridge's birthday. Mr. Bridge has just announced his gift to her—a European tour—when the steward reports a tornado heading directly toward the club and advises everyone to take cover

in the basement. Mr. Bridge stays upstairs, calmly eating, peeved, in fact, when he can't find a waiter to bring more butter for his roll. Mrs. Bridge stays, too, though she is uncomfortable. The tornado lifts just before it should have hit the dining room. Connell summarizes the incident:

> It did not occur to Mrs. Bridge to leave her husband and run to the basement. She had been brought up to believe without question that when a woman married she was married for the rest of her life and was meant to remain with her husband wherever he was . . . She wished he would not be so obstinate; she wished he would behave like everyone else, but she was not particularly frightened. For nearly a quarter of a century she had done as he told her, and what he had said would happen had indeed come to pass, and what he had said would not occur had not occurred. Why, then, should she not believe him now? (pp. 163-164)

But Mr. Bridge is a staid, unemotional man who wishes for nothing to occur unless he's planned it. Her faith in him, and her obedience, contribute to making her a limited person. Mr. Bridge is uncomfortable with the limitations that he has, in a sense, created in her, but he'd rather she be limited, controllable, and demure than individualistic, demanding, and challenging. The book is poignant because Mrs. Bridge always suspects, and often knows, the limitations, the horror, the barrenness of her life.

Late in the novel her friend, Grace Barron, commits suicide. Though neither she nor her friends speak of it, Mrs. Bridge knows Grace's motive. She remembers an afternoon she spent on the Plaza ". . . when she and Grace Barron had been looking for some way to occupy themselves, and Grace had said, a little sadly, 'Have you ever felt like those people in the Grimm Fairy tale—the ones who were all hollowed out in the back?'" (p. 256).

On another occasion, while applying cold cream in her nightly ritual of preparing for bed, Mrs. Bridge has a brief but intense trauma when she

> . . . wondered who she was, and how she happened to be at the dressing table, and who the man was who sat on the edge of the bed taking off his shoes. She considered her fingers, which dipped into the jar of their own accord. Rapidly, soundlessly, she was disappearing into white, sweetly scented anonymity. Gratified by this she smiled, and perceived a few seconds later that beneath the mask she was not smiling. All the same, being committed,

there was nothing to do but proceed. (p. 236)

Mrs. Bridge does proceed, but her props are taken away when Mr. Bridge dies suddenly, her children leave home, and she is alone in her big suburban house. At this point the despair and self-doubt she has repressed all her life overtake her. The novel ends with a last, succinct delineation of Mrs. Bridge's lifelong predicament. On a winter day she starts to drive to the Plaza in the Lincoln Mr. Bridge gave her (its size has always intimidated her), but the car stalls before she's out of the garage. Then

> . . . she opened the door to get out and discovered she had stopped in such a position that the car doors were prevented from opening more than a few inches on one side by the garage partition, and on the other side by the wall. Having tried all four doors she began to understand that until she could attract someone's attention she was trapped. She pressed the horn, but there was not a sound. Half inside and half outside she remained.
>
> For a long time she sat there with her gloved hands folded in her lap, not knowing what to do. Once she looked at herself in the mirror. Finally she took the keys from the ignition and began tapping on the window, and she called to anyone who might be listening, "Hello? Hello out there?"
>
> But no one answered, unless it was the falling snow. (p. 273)

Mrs. Bridge is about a woman making lame attempts to understand, and exercise control over, her life. Her fumbling tries, her quiet despair, her defeat make an evocative, moving novel.

[Note: Mr. Bridge, a complementary novel by the same author, first published in 1969 by Viking, has also just been re-released by Pocket Books.]

Thomas Fox Averill

Michael L. Johnson. Dry Season. Lawrence, KS: Cottonwood Review, 1977. 32 pages. $1.00.

Dry Season is the first collection of Michael L. Johnson's poems, although his work has been widely published in recent years in the small magazines. A small chapbook, twenty-eight poems, Dry Season nonetheless amply suggests the range of the poet's interests; revealing a writer unafraid of exploring his own personality and experience, yet tough-minded enough to recognize that the mere expression of self-awareness cannot substitute for clear, controlled communication.

In every sense a book of poems, not of poetry, Dry Season exhibits Johnson's enthusiasm for form as a means for enhancing, as well as structuring, the experience of poetry. Nearly all the poems in this volume represent attempts to move through and beyond simple perception and imagery, in order to achieve a deliberate and focused impact on the reader's understanding. While not sacrificing the tautness of the individual line, Johnson demonstrates a greater concern for placing them into coherent, connected sequences. The resulting poems are tightly knit and self-contained, and most progress with a sure sense of plan and climax.

The imagery too remains clean-edged and precise, as evidenced in the title poem:

> Slowly I walk a fencerow
> tangled with dead brush. The trees,
> engulfed by webworm tents, grow
> a dull yellow; the grass, dried,
> brittle, is laced with grey webs.

Or in "Homemade Ice Cream":

> The slush and grind
> of steel turning slow in ice
> and salt instant by instant
> echo the long buzz and hiss
> of a windless insect night.

The real power of the poems, however, lies in the tension created by the balance that Johnson strikes between image and idea, event and emotion, concrete and abstract. His straightforward diction carries the vocabulary of intellect and the language of natural phenomenon with equal ease. In the best poems, the levels mesh inextricably; as in "Winter Birth":

> the new calf struggles to its feet;

helped by the mother's nudging nose,
the quickening lick of her tongue,

gropes slowly toward the fresh milk,
as I remember through this act

all mammalian history:
the profound information passed

intricately and endlessly
through generations, womb by womb . . .

or more intensely in describing Picasso's Skull and Pitcher:

The skull's clenched teeth, the tight grimace, recast
the human face with lines as straight and hard

as steel, nostrils pinched and sharp, sockets dark
and deep as death: geometry almost

too stark, vain, and precise to contemplate.

This tension is especially evident in one of the finest stanzas in the chapbook, from "Contrapposto":

My heel, where history
holds me, catches in a
hole in the ground, and I
twist clumsily, as I
see you standing there on
your back porch, wife and child
nearby; feel the tuggings
of each thing I have marked;
feel I am half obsessed
with unreality;
feel my life an anguish
and hunger for failures;
fall down—love's field nigger
sprawled in cold autumn weeds.

Where weaknesses exist in the poems, they derive from the lack of this balance. At times, the concepts overwhelm their vehicle of expression; and at others, as in "End Game: To Jane Before Her Leaving Kansas," the emotion becomes too stylized and refined.

Of the many voices audible in these poems, the most effective

is autobiographical. The reminiscent, contemplative, frequently remorseful tone of such poems as "Death Dream" and "Epitaph on Ivy Burley" complements the drama of other recollected moments, as those of "To a Fellow Prisoner of the 1950's":

> All night in the backseat
> we moved awkwardly,
> without a thought of love,
> and spent our numb needs
> rudely on your nyloned legs.
>
> Guilt-wrung, wordless, I drove
> you home at dawn.
> The dull-red sun
> hung in the chilly air
> like a wilted boutonniere.

These moments of crystallized emotion more than compensate for the too self-conscious vituperation of "Fear and Loathing at the Lake of the Ozarks," or the over-slickness of "Instead of a Hallmark Card" or "Impromptu on Stanley Kubrick's Barry Lyndon." For consistently and honestly the poet invites the reader to stop a moment and share the wonder (as expressed in "Breaking Ground"—the best single poem in the collection) of

> how I will survive,
> never knowing what
> I make, what destroy,
> as each sun runs down
> its uncertain sky.

Dry Season certainly rewards our pause.

Donald G. Sheehy

Mike Smetzer

BOOKS OF INTEREST

John Dennis Brown. Two Kids & the Three Bears. P.O. Box 1064, Quincy, IL 62301: Salt Lick Press, 1975. 27 pages.
A possibly factual account of two suburban newlyweds as they live rustically for a year in New England. The book features their growing attachment for their animals and the challenge of living through the winter in an ancient farm house. The prose style is good and the incidents colorful, but the narrative lacks a definite controlling purpose, relying instead on the quaintness of the setting and the cuteness of the couple's inexperience.

David Clewell. Room to Breathe. P.O. Box 11609, Milwaukee, WI 53211: Pentagram Press, 1976. 50 pages. $3.00/$5.00 signed; $10.00 hardcover.
These poems are often clever and vital, but Clewell tends to be self-consciously literary in his choice of themes, as some of his titles suggest: "To a Robin," "Composition by Ear," "The Poet Takes a Chance," or "The Real: An Obligatory Poem." He also needs to be shaken loose from his delight at his own poetizing before his insights and vitality can take a more honest form. However, for a poet of twenty-one, he shows considerable talent. His first book is an adventurous exploration of literary tradition with many fine touches.

John Fandel. Out of Our Blue. 103 Waldron St., W. Lafayette, IN 47906: Sparrow Press, 1977. 30 pages. $1.50.
These poems are brief, untitled reflections and images with the emphasis on the thoughts the images arouse. Fandel uses a delicate casualness of treatment: each image is held momentarly and then released. As a result the poems are pleasant but deliberately mild and airy.

Alyce M. Ingram. Blue Horses. P.O. Box 879, Ellensburg, WA 98926: Vagabond Press, 1976. 41 pages. $1.00.
A collection of six short stories written in a breathless style. The stories focus on family situations and reveal the inadequacy of the characters to deal with their personal lives. Her tone is playful, though often this playfulness is in ironic contrast to the actual seriousness of the situation.

Bill Knott & James Tate. Lucky Darryl. 200 Carroll St., Brooklyn,

NY 11231: Release Press, 1977. 52 pages. $3.00.
Very imaginative though self-consciously clever, this absurdest story has the dream-like incongruities and lack of definite meaning found in such Dylan songs as "Drifter's Escape," "Motorpsycho Nightmare," and especially "Bob Dylan's 115th Dream." It is well written, presenting a world of disintegrated order and containing good bits of satire. Like all absurdest writing, it frustrates the reader's desire for an overall order and meaning.

Steven Osterlund. Pendulum: New Poems. Akron, OH: Open Chord Press, 1977. 40 pages. $2.95.
Osterlund is a playful poet in his thirties whose poems show a spontaneous bursting out of excitement for imaginative and sensual life; some also reveal moods of disillusionment with his life when he is not able to sustain a state of excitement. At one point he characterizes himself as "the lugubrious goat." The poems in this chapbook vary in quality. Those about his sensual feelings tend to be the best. Those about externals, such as his landlord and apartment, are weaker.

What I like best about Osterlund is that he engages his feelings honestly and passionately, giving the reader the awareness of a real life with its problems and pleasures. He holds the reader's interest in his subjective world by his clear, lively voice and by imaginative surprises, as in "Blues for a City Dog" where,"Without warning the dog god/jerks this dog up/and hurls it into the rush hour, like/a sack of harmonicas."

Chester Sullivan, ed. Volunteer Periwinkles: A Collection of Stories. 509 E. 12th St., Lawrence, KS 66044: Lantana Press, 1976. 116 pages. $4.95 paper / $7.95 cloth.
A good selection of stories by Michael Willome, Donna Walker, Dan Thrapp, R. D. L. Sperberg, Twyla Snow, Bill Oliver, Barbara Luecke, James Carothers, Jerry Bradley, Jonathan Bell, and Tom Averill, with a cover drawing by Barbara Hawkins. The stories vary widely in style and setting, but all of the stories deal with people in hopeless situations, frustrated and without a viable direction for their lives. This dark theme of modern literature is only offset in the last story, by Averill, where the main character, an old farmer, has the old-time heroic strength to break with his dead-ended past and set his life on a new direction. Although this gives a pleasant lift at the end of the book, the world in which the old farmer can take this action has more of the characteristics of a 19th century world than of

the 20th century (or future) world of the other stories and of our lives. The old farmer has a precisely defined past of life on his family farm which serves as a firm reference from which a new course can be set. The other stories deal with lives in which the references as well as the directions are confused.

Cottonwood Review 20 is scheduled to be published in the late summer of 1978. It already includes the following contributors:

STEVE BUNCH
JOAN W. BUNDY
HARLEY ELLIOTT
JAMES FANALE
JAN GAUGER
WALTER GRIFFIN
CAROL HEBALD
KELLY JOHNSON
J. MACKIE
NANCY REKOW
CYNTHIA DAY ROBERTS
R. STEPHEN RUSSELL
MICHAEL SMETZER
PAT SMYKLO
JUDITH THOMPSON
ARTHUR WICKS

FEATURED POET: WILLIAM STAFFORD

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ship" and "Loss Upstairs" will be included in Lilies, to be published by Braziller in 1978. KENNETH REXROTH and ATSUMI IKUKO's translations are from Japanese Women Poets, an anthology to be published by Continuum/Seabury Press in 1977. DEBBIE STIKA is a senior in design at the Univ. of Kansas.

$1.90
(In Lawrence $1.50)