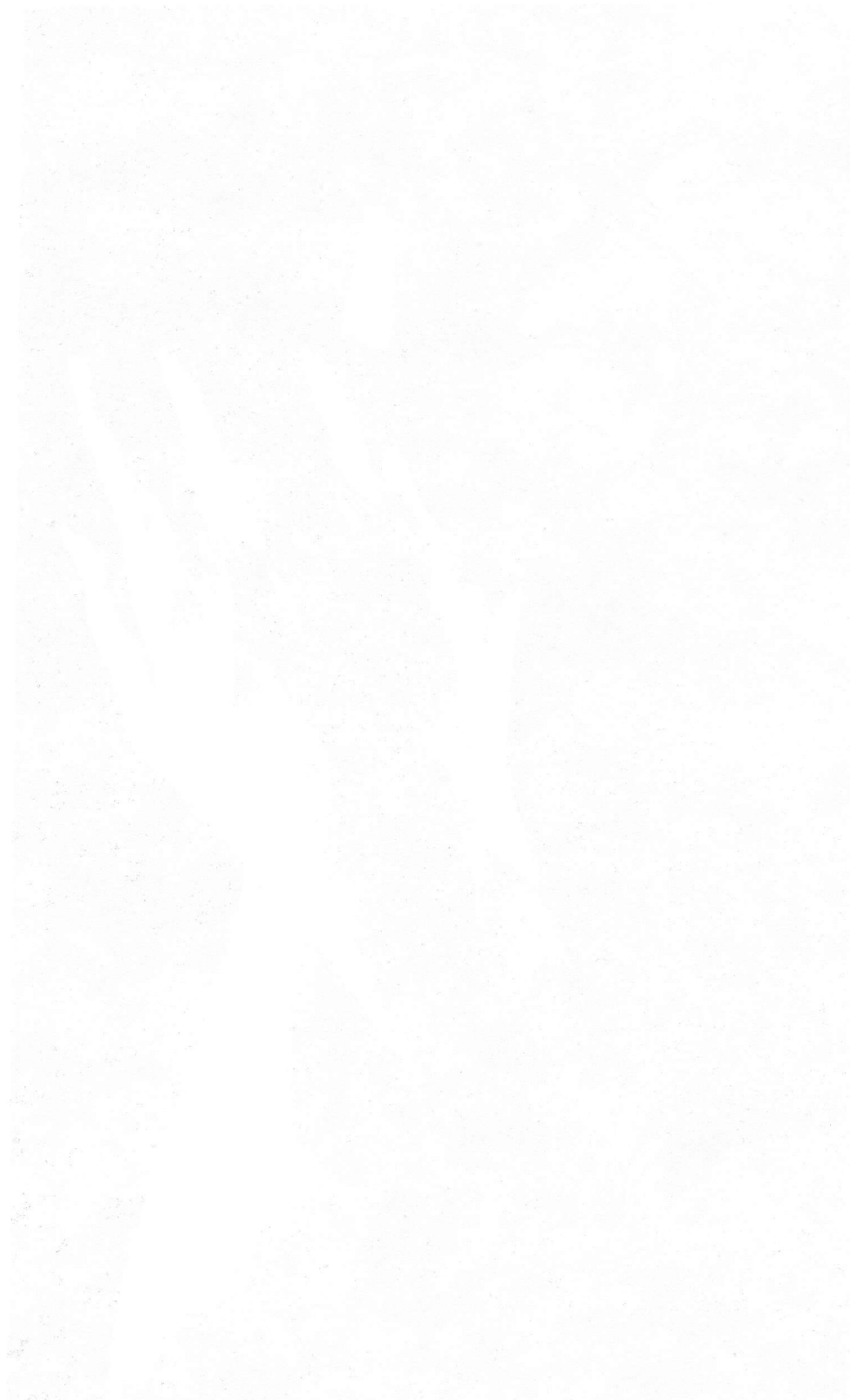


Cottonwood Review







Frontispiece "Hands" by Frank Loose, a Photo Mechanical Transfer image which illustrates the poem on page 84.

Cottonwood Review

Fall 1980 No. 23

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Cottonwood Review welcomes contributions of fiction, poetry, translations, and photography from both local and national writers and artists. Poetry submissions should be limited to the five best. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return of submissions.

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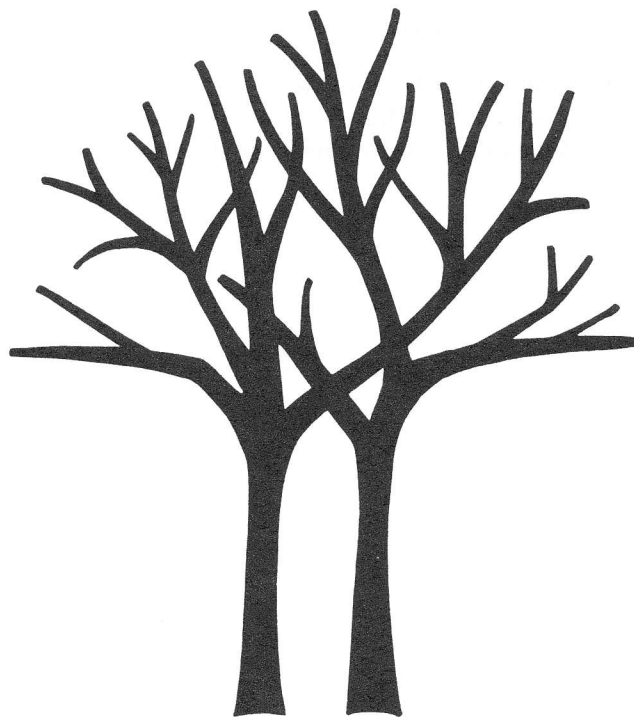
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Statement



The next volume of **Cottonwood Review**, 1981, begins a new generation of the magazine. With the collaboration of the Visual Communication and English Departments of the University of Kansas, **Cottonwood** will be able to improve its appearance and readability by using computer typesetting and professional design. We plan other new approaches to the magazine. The photographs will be unbound to form a collectible portfolio of juried images. We will publish three issues per volume in a format of classical proportions.

In addition to physical changes, **Cottonwood Review** will increase its commitment to the Midwest by publishing more reviews of local literature. We will continue to seek out the best prose, poetry, and photographs of this region, and we also welcome critical articles on these arts. We will continue to record, through interviews and publications, the visiting writers who enrich our cultural experience. And **Cottonwood** will continue to accept work from all regions that appeals to our taste, work that is solid, well-crafted, and moving.

The new **Cottonwood** is the result of Karen Huntington's and Steven Skaggs' long hours of work in the Department of Design. Additional support comes from Michael L. Johnson, Jack Oruch, and Melanie Farley of the English Department.

Join with us in our belief that Midwestern literature is an important priority.

Denise Low

Albert Drake

The Genuine Artificial Leopardskin Headliner

The horn honked three times, jazzy and impatient. Chris jerked awake, unaware until now that he had been dozing, thinking that he was at the station and that a customer had honked for service. He had worked all day and had arrived home later than usual, and had had time only to wash and change into clean clothes before falling asleep in the chair; he was dog-tired, but there was something about the jazzy trumpet sound of the car horn which revived him.

He opened his eyes and saw his father in the chair by the window, his usual place these days, where he smoked one cigarette after another until his face had taken on a yellowish cast; his father was half-turned toward the window, a squinting look of disapproval on his face. "Oh those punks," he said, dropping the curtain.

Chris got out of his chair and walked across the room to arrive at the screen door just as the car horn honked three more times. The black '39 Mercury sedan was parked at the curb facing the wrong way; Murphy and Buzz waved and yelled something about the drive-in movie.

"Go ahead," his father said, taking a final drag from a butt and snubbing it out. "Take off."

"But he hasn't eaten yet," his mother said.

She stood in the entrance to the kitchen, and as Chris pushed past he felt a sudden rush of anger that she would try to detain him, that she'd address his father rather than talk to him. "I'll grab something somewhere," he said, moving past her to his own room. He got a nearly-clean school shirt and put that on, swearing that as soon as he got some money he would buy some new clothes. When he returned to the kitchen to run a comb through his hair, his mother handed him a peanut butter and jelly sandwich; he didn't want it but she insisted and finally he reluctantly obliged her.

"Be home early," his father said, "you got work tomorrow."

"Yeah, yeah," he said, going out the door. On the porch he felt better and the world seemed normal; instead of the odors of medicine and cigarettes he smelled cut grass, Japanese plum blossoms, and fried meat. The air was cool and clean, and he breathed deeply.

"C'mon, me bucko," Murphy said, grinning.

"Yeah, me bucko," Buzz said, "get your whazoo in here."

Chris opened the door and saw the dizzy pattern of the headliner; he stepped back, whistled, and then got in. "Hey! What'd you do?" Murphy had had the stock headliner material replaced with a black and white material which dazzled the eyes; it looked as if a small animal had stepped in ink and walked on the white cloth.

"Like it?" Murphy said, starting the engine and shifting into low. "It's genuine imitation leopardskin. I think it does something...it kind of makes the car. Know what I mean?"

"I sure do," Chris said. It wasn't something he would have done to a car—he thought it was a waste of money—but the headliner was, in a strange way, impressive.

"I don't know," Murphy said, his back to the door, his right arm over the back of the front seat, his other hand steering the sedan through Chris's neighborhood, his whole position so relaxed and his attitude so dreamlike that Chris wondered whether Murphy was falling asleep. "I don't know, I'd kind of like to trade it in...on something newer...maybe a convertible."

He's never satisfied, Chris thought, but if he had this car life would be okay; he wouldn't even mind working at the service station if he had this car to drive to work in.

"What'cha got there, me bucko?" Buzz asked.

"Nothing," Chris said, rolling down the window and throwing out the sandwich; he watched it skid, then come to rest, a white square on the road.

"Well, men," Buzz said, "What say we drive around until the film begins? Or as Hop would phrase it, 'Cats, let's cruise the gut!' "

"Hey hey," Murphy said, turning the car toward Foster and as they drove westward into the slanting light of dusk he began to sing. "When the moon hits your eye like a big piece of pie...."

Chris sat back, relaxed, feeling good for the first time today. He liked the tightness of the sedan's body, the smoothness of its ride, and he liked the way people in other cars stared at the leopardskin headliner, visible as they drove past. He closed his eyes and saw the black and white pattern against his eyelid— black and white, opposites like boredom and excitement, the boredom of his job and the excitement of being with his friends.

Murphy made the light at 82nd and turned left, slowing as he approached Merhar's Drive-in. "Okay, men," Murphy said, pulling up the collar of his shirt, "look cool now." He stopped at the apron and shifted into low, driving slowly across the parking lot so that he could savor the moment. He sat sideways, his back to the door, head turned until he was actually looking over his own shoulder in order to see straight ahead.

"The guys on my side looking?" Murphy asked.

"Hell yes," Buzz said, laughing, "you got a bunch of gawkers."

At the end of the parking lot Murphy made a U-turn and came through again at the same slow pace. Chris felt conspicuous and slightly embarrassed at this demonstration, but he enjoyed being a part of the center of attention.

Murphy sat at the edge of the sidewalk for several minutes, and then floorboarded the gas, spinning a tire. "How's that, men?" he said, grinning, and

then was serious. "It's got a lot of pep, I've thought of putting on duals and....oh, I don't know, it runs okay." He sped up and passed a new Hudson, cutting in front of it to get in the right lane. Just before they got to Powell, he slowed and pulled into the entranceway to Flanagan's.

"Give 'em the choke," Buzz said, winking at Chris.

"Oh hell," Murphy said, grinning. He pulled the hand choke out all the way, and as the engine began to flood he pushed it in slightly. The engine loaded up, began to idle erratically with the super-rich mixture, and Murphy stepped on the gas once, quickly, to clear the engine. He shifted into low and they moved into the parking lot, the engine running as rough as a hopped-up engine with a full-race camshaft; they tried to pretend they were oblivious to the staring faces which turned to see the hot car. The car bucked, jerked, shuddered as the engine loped along, and when they'd reached the end of the parking lot they all began to laugh like crazy. It was a silly parody of hot car, and it didn't matter whether they had fooled anyone. Murphy, grinning, shoved in the choke and the engine began to level out.

"Did you see those peckers stare?" Buzz said. "This car is all right!"

"Oh christ," Murphy said, finally content with himself and the car, stepping on the gas and speeding out onto Powell, taking the light at 82nd without shifting from low, tires shrieking, "I like it. It's a good car, I'm glad I got this genuine artificial leopardskin headliner." He shifted into second, then high. "Oh, I don't know. Speaking factually, I might keep it until winter when the prices on convertibles are down." He looked in the rear-view mirror. "Chris, if you were me, what would you do?"

"Jeez, I don't know," Chris said, realizing that among the circuitous routes his life was taking that this was not one of the decisions he would be allowed to make. "Keep it, I guess, get it paid off."

But Murphy wasn't listening. They had stopped for the light at Holgate and on the corner stood two girls. The sun was brilliant on the horizon, illuminating specks of dust which glowed in the air, and it shone through their dresses, outlining them.

"Hiya, girls," Buzz yelled, waving. "Want a date with the Three Musketeers? With the Three Muscatels?" This got no response, although an elderly couple in the car beside them laughed. Thus encouraged, Buzz beat on the car door and sang: "Ah ha, Santa Flush, cleans your teeth without a brush."

The girls smiled as the light changed to green and Murphy took off, winding the engine out in low. "Those are what Hop would call chippies," Buzz said, "San Quentin Quail."

"Yeah," Chris said, laughing, "I can see old Hop out driving in that old Plymouth, making small talk." Hop had a beat-up 1935 Plymouth sedan which was always breaking down; they kidded him about it being as square a car as his father's Terraplane.

"I've been having some fun lately," Murphy said, his tone almost confessional. "I've been picking up girls. You know, you see a girl walking or maybe

waiting for a bus, you just ask if she wants a ride. To tell the truth, you get to know quite a few that way.”

“You old killer,” Buzz laughed. “Get any nooky?”

“Oh gawd,” Murphy said, laughing, shifting into high. As the engine levelled out Murphy seemed to relax, sinking into the seat, into a daydream, and he began to sing, softly but with intensity: “When the moon hits your eye like a big piece of pie, that’s amoooooooooa....” He turned his profile to traffic and arched his eyebrows while he sang, really getting into the song. Someone had once mentioned that he looked like Dean Martin and he had pursued this image by having his brown hair dyed a blue-black and curling it in front.

“Real good, Murphy,” Buzz said, turning to wink at Chris. Then he yelled out the window at the car beside them, “Hey, mister, your wheels are going around!” The driver looked confused, then indignant, and Buzz laughed. “Oh christ, what a gas.” Then he half-turned in the seat so he could see both Chris and Murphy, and said, “You know, this might be the best time of our lives.”

Murphy quit singing and looked at Buzz. They coasted through the intersection at Foster, past the bright lights of the Fred Meyer store with its expanse of glass, down 82nd into the thinning traffic of evening. Beyond Woodstock there was hardly any traffic and as a car passed with its lights on, the beams swept across the headliner, illuminating the vivid black and white pattern.

“Yeah?” said Murphy, looking thoughtful. “Yeah, I think you’re right. To tell the truth, it’s an awfully good time.”

Chris didn’t think so, but because he couldn’t voice his complaints without a note of self-pity, he was silent. Sure, they were having a good time: they’d both quit school, were able to work, earn some money, had no worries. Murphy’s father worked at the 82nd Street Auction Barn, and sometimes he’d hire Murphy and Buzz to move things around. Buzz’s father owned a greenhouse, and this spring Murphy and Buzz had been working for him. They had money, they had what they wanted, their lives were in order, while his, he felt, was falling apart.

“Frankly,” Murphy said, turning into the entrance of the 82nd Drive-In Theatre, “I’m quite satisfied, but I hope things get better. I’d hate to think life is downhill from here on. Jesus!” he said, laughing, to dispel this serious note.

Broken Arrow and—they were past the marquee before he could read the title of the second feature; but it didn’t really matter, a ticket for the double feature was only fifty cents, and anyway most of the audience had come to neck and drink.

At the box office the man took their money and asked if they had anyone hidden in the trunk.

“Hell, yes,” Buzz said, “we got a couple colored girls.”

The man hesitated before handing over the tickets, but Murphy kept saying no, there ain't nobody, until the man relented. As Murphy drove off, Buzz yelled: "Your daughter's back there!"

"Oh jeez," Murphy said, laughing, "we're going to get our ass in a sling!" He cruised around the viewing area, in and out of the speaker posts, until he found a parking place mid-way from the screen and near the concession shack. He hooked the speaker over the window sill and, as the darkness fell around them, he flipped on his spot light and played it around the screen. Other spot lights went on, the beams playing tag.

"Remember last summer," Chris said, "When we'd come here in your father's truck?"

"Right," Buzz said, "Me and you'd pay and the others'd hide in back. God! that was fun."

It seemed longer ago, Chris thought; they all seemed like kids then. Buzz's father's truck always had big paper boxes in it from the nursery; two or three guys would hide in the boxes in the back until they'd entered the theater and then, under cover of darkness, they'd jump out and climb on the roof to watch the movie. He found it hard to believe that only a year had passed.

"Weed, men?" Murphy asked, shaking out a Lucky and giving it to Buzz; he offered one to Chris, who declined. "You don't smoke yet?" Murphy lit his, took a drag and exhaled with the cigarette dangling from his mouth.

"Good—it's a bad habit. But fun! Right, Buzz?"

"Right, me bucko," Buzz said, lighting his. "What Hop calls 'a cancer stick' or 'a coffin nail.' God, that guy! Chris, you sure? How about a puff?"

"No, thanks," Chris said, thinking of his father and the hand-made cigarettes, smoking one after another.

"Better get with it, bucko," Murphy said, "Get some cigs, a little hooch, a good car, and you'll have a dolly with pleasure-bent legs. Oh god," he said, laughing around the cigarette. "Right, Buzz?"

"Thass right, Rastus," Buzz said, laughing, blowing smoke at the windshield.

"I'll skip the cigs," Chris said, feeling that the two were turning on him.

"What're you driving now?" Murphy asked.

"I been driving that old Buick until today," Chris said. "It busted something coming up the hill by Reed College, I had to leave it there and walk home. Piece of shit. Now I got to figure out something else."

"You still got that jalopy you and your Dad worked on?"

"It's all apart," Chris said, starting to feel hopeless about the car situation. "No time to work on it."

“Why don’t you junk that thing?” Murphy said. “Get a good car. You’re just putting good money after bad. That thing’ll nickel and dime you to death.”

“I don’t know,” Chris said, and was silent, unable to say anything. If he only had two hundred bucks and two weeks of free time, he thought, he could pull some of the loose ends together.

“Frankly speaking,” Murphy said, looking at the end of his cigarette, “I think a person has got to spend money to make money. People are afraid to do that—look at Bill, I mean, I like him, but he’s stuck with his mother and sister and all he does is sit at home after work. That’s no life. Or Yakima, I like him too, but he just doesn’t know how to handle himself in social situations. Now I figure if I can get the down-payment on a decent convertible, I’ll be able to—”

They never heard Murphy’s plan for success, because suddenly the speaker’s sound filled the car as the film began; one by one the spot lights went out and the lot was dark except for the Technicolor picture which filled the immense screen before them. A dome light flashed somewhere, a horn honked, a man laughed, the dual exhausts of a late-comer vibrated against metal, but Chris barely noticed these distractions; he was caught up in the images on the screen, pulled into the narrative, and for the first time today he really felt relaxed. He projected himself into the life of the white hunter and the Indian, but most of all he was transfixed by the setting—he’d give anything to get out of the city, to live freely in the mountains. He thought of the plan he and Horace had often discussed a few short years before; they would build a cabin on the White River and live by hunting and trapping. Where had that dream gone? he wondered.

Buzz, restless, lit a cigarette and the flash of the match broke Chris’s reverie. As Deborah Paget, the Indian woman, slipped into a cool mountain stream, Buzz said, “Gawddamn, look at those ninnies!” Murphy laughed, and, thus encouraged, Buzz stuck his head out the window and said, in a voice loud enough to carry to cars two spaces away, “I’d like to get a squaw like that.”

“Oh shit,” Murphy said, lighting up another cigarette.

When the Indian man showed up, Buzz said, “Gawdamn, Murphy, you look a lot like Jeff Chandler, anyone tell you that?”

Murphy laughed, but said nothing, and Chris had the idea that Buzz’s suggestion that Murphy looked like Chandler rather than Murphy’s idol, Dean Martin, had angered him. Murphy sat closer to the window, his cigarette smoke drifting idly upward into the night.

“No shit, Murphy,” Buzz said, “when you get a little gray....”

Chris couldn’t tell whether Buzz was serious, or enjoying the laugh he got with his first comment, or deliberately provoking Murphy, or simply bored with the movie. Buzz took a quick drag on his cigarette, flipped the ashes out the window, and said, “Hell yes, man, you look like Jeff Chandler, right, Chris?”

He smiled in the darkness, but said nothing; what response was possible to the question? He was more interested in the movie he had paid fifty cents to see than in judging a look-alike contest, but the question provoked Murphy.

"All right, knock it off."

"Oh jeez," Buzz said, laughing, sensing that Murphy's quick temper had been touched and trying to smooth things over, "I was just wondering if you got any Indian blood, if there was a Indian in the woodpile."

Buzz's brief laughter ended and there was an uncomfortable silence; Chris could see Murphy's profile against the screen, silhouetted against Jeff Chandler's, and the similarity was clear: the nose, lips, chin, and the high cheek bones, and he wondered whether Murphy was part Indian.

"Christ, man, are you pouting?" Buzz asked.

"What the hell's it to you?" Murphy shouted, flipping his cigarette out the window where it hit the next car in a shower of sparks. With a quick, precise movement he switched on the ignition and the car moved quickly forward, snapping the cord on the speaker. Wheels spun in gravel and Murphy made one fast pass through the drive-in, with Buzz laughing and hollering "Holy shit!" Chris flew into the air when they hit the speed bump at the rear exit and he came down sideways; when he looked back he saw a cloud of dust, rising to obscure the screen.

The car heeled around the corner and barrelled down the narrow back road, and Murphy drove with a silent vengeance: he was cocked against the door, eyes narrowed, lips pursed tightly, hands gripping the wheel, elbows stiff. Behind his head in the window was the drive-in speaker.

"For christ's sake, Murphy," Buzz said.

"I wanted to see the damn film," Chris said.

The car entered the curve at seventy, and Chris braced his legs for the crash. The car leaned to the right, so far that the rear tire rubbed with an angry shriek against the fender well; coming out of the long S-curve the car's weight shifted to the left, the left tire screamed against metal and emitted the smell of burning rubber. Somewhere in the long curve the window speaker fell off.

"Watch it, dammit!" Buzz said, but Murphy never lifted his foot from the gas. He slowed slightly at 92nd, and the car bounced, slid sideways, and straightened, heading at full speed toward Lents, the driver silent and unsmiling.

"Slow down, dammit!" Buzz said. He liked to provoke people, to create interesting situations, but although he did some pretty crazy things himself, he always knew when to stop; he was tough up to a point, and then fear took over. Now, Chris knew, Buzz was afraid; he could sense fear in his voice.

Murphy raced toward Lents, hit the Galloping Goose tracks and again Chris

flew upward, saw the dizzy pattern of the headliner rush toward him and fall away. Chris thought it odd that he wasn't afraid; all he could think of was that if Murphy wrecked the car he wouldn't have to go back to work for a while.

"Lemme out," Buzz yelled.

When they came to the blinking red light in Lents, Murphy slowed to about fifteen miles per hour and shoved the gear shift lever into second and floored the gas pedal, shooting through the intersection regardless of cops or cross traffic. When Murphy slowed, Buzz threw open the door and jumped out; he ran crazily beside the car for a few feet, mouth agape, hair flying, momentum carrying him to the far curb. Before Murphy raced away Chris heard Buzz yell: "Take your genuine artificial...."

Murphy continued for three blocks at top speed and around Harold Street he let up on the gas and when they reached Holgate the car was barely moving. Murphy stopped for this light, then turned right and drove slowly along Holgate. Chris couldn't see Murphy's face in the darkness, and he wondered what Murphy was thinking.

"Oh hell, I don't know," Murphy said, as if he were perplexed by this wild ride. "Buzz is all right, but he's just so darn irresponsible. I mean, you can't trust him, know what I mean?" Chris was silent, not knowing what to say. "I mean, factually speaking, his parents have always given him everything, he's never had to work for anything. It'd do him good to go into the Army. Frankly, Buzz has got a lot of potential. He's intelligent, don't get me wrong. But, to tell the truth, you just can't trust him."

There was a long silence; Murphy drove slowly down Holgate to 103rd, then turned right, in the direction of Chris's house. He lit a cigarette, and offered one to Chris, who was tempted. Chris didn't want to go home, back to the house which smelled of medicine and death, to the father who was depressingly ill. There he would go right to bed, and in the morning wake and try to figure out how he was going to get to work now that the old Buick was abandoned; when he got to the service station he'd spend another dreary day pumping gas and changing tires and lubing cars, and he'd have to give the money to his mother. In this vision he saw only blackness, unrelieved by joy or light.

"I've been looking at this Chevrolet convertible," Murphy said. "It's a nice car, it's got a swell body and a new top. Factually speaking, I could handle the payments ok— don't get me wrong, I'd love to have it, but I don't know. I'd really like to get married too, and I'm going to need some money. I don't know why I got this headliner," he said, running his fingers across the black and white imitation fur. "It cost \$50, I paid cash, and to tell the truth it's genuine artificial leopardskin. But I probably should have put that money down on the Chev convertible. But if I get married I'm going to have to find another job." They rode in silence, now that Murphy had this load off his chest, until they were on Chris's street, in front of the house where the light burned in the double window where his father always sat. "Christ," Murphy said, "I don't know, there are so damn many considerations. Things sure get complicated, don't they?"

Chris agreed that they sure did.

Bette Pesetsky

Offspring Of The First Generation

One day it came to me that I was neither adopted nor the illegitimate daughter of the King of Rumania and Magda Lupescu. Everything, of course, has run downhill since then. I wake up and go into the kitchen to have a cup of coffee. These are modern times, and I am on the quest of being someone. This is the only goal possible. I have noted that many people do not like me.

As a result of analysis, all my repressed memories have been verbalized. My analyst did not like me. I decided to have two or three children, certain that when they grew up they would be of my blood and, therefore, would be friendly and warm and desire my company. I was wrong.

Nevertheless, I am a modern woman, and many adventures have swirled past me. We will take these affairs perhaps not in order, but rather as they naturally occurred.

For instance, Lachman, who is my lover, pushes past the beaded curtain and into the kitchen. He is portly and always dignified in appearance, resembling Swiss bankers or judges whose grainy pictures can be seen in newspapers. "Why in hell haven't you taken those beads down? They grab at you like a centipede," he says.

"I mean to. I mean to." I am deferential. The beads are one of the last remnants of my daughter.

"You are pale," Lachman says and reaches over to touch my forehead. "Do you work too hard at the store?"

"I don't work at the store. Don't you remember anything about me?"

"Well," he says and sits down. "You used to work in the store." Lachman will soon be leaving me. He will have the choice of many women. Already, weeks go by between his visits. I sit there on the floor rocking. "It's been a long time," Lachman says. "What's the news?"

I clear my throat. "Harriet's husband has left her. There are five children in the house. It is an unthinkable thing. There is an Eldorado in the driveway. The house is heavy with furniture. Willa Rather comes three times a week and cleans the house. Byrd Arnold's wife has left him. There are the three boys: Byrd, Jr., Edward and Pender. There is the very goodness of Byrd. His warm, kind nature is encompassing. He hopes some day to live on a farm."

"I've been thinking," Lachman says, "of trying California."

"Yes," I reply. I have already absorbed this loss.

I have aunts, uncles, and many cousins. In their houses are hallmarked silver, translucent china and Kerman carpets that were inherited. These abundant landsleit have gatherings, parties, laugh together and share a

communal memory. I am seldom asked to join them. But I go anyway. I will call someone and say, "See you on Sunday."

"At Duvey's?"

"Yes," I'll say. "At Duvey's." I know then where the clan gathers to feast and celebrate.

Also useful is a calendar marked with important anniversaries, birthdays and the ages of children. This way I can predict weddings and graduations. Thus, I went to the wedding of Lueta and Talsman, ignoring the fact that their invitation to me went astray. I called the three acceptable catering halls and learned the time and place. I am not cheap. I bring good gifts. For Lueta, I purchased a gold wine cup for ceremonial occasions. Things of gold are always twenty-four carat. The china I supply is neither cut-rate nor seconds. If the gift is to be cash, I think only in three figures.

I am also not weird. I stand reasonable in the middle range of fashion. I cannot be pointed out in fading, sepia-toned family pictures as strange. I appear in many pictures, slipping quickly into the last row before the shutter is snapped. In my album I have just pasted the latest picture. Lueta is a lovely bride in an old-fashioned wedding dress that belonged to her great aunt. In my blue taffeta dress I am the third from the left in the row behind the bride's family.

My behavior too is discreet. My manners are good. I will inquire about the state of your health and your family. I remember all the areas to avoid, the painful divorce, the other woman, the wayward child, the failing business.

Yet I remain the one pushed from the pack. Knowing the instinctive lack of sympathy of my kind. I keep my grievances and despair to myself. My husband who fell in front of a D train at 59th Street died just before the divorce papers were filed. And the young woman at the funeral who I identified for all who asked as my cousin Sylvie was in truth the woman he would have married. Twenty-three years old with blonde hair. Martin, my son of the five-hundred dollar suits, has sources of money to tear out my heart. Leslie, who has married twice, lives somewhere on the West coast. Her mail is unforwardable.

Noam, my youngest son, is twenty-four and lives with me. We live on the proceeds of my late husband's insurance which I have wisely invested in utilities. Also, I have an income as a political pamphleteer. I can turn out the text of a pamphlet in twenty-four hours. "Your Philosophy Is Mine" is my motto.

Noam was married to Abigail. She has locked him out of their apartment shouting abuse at him. She has charged him with impotence, sodomy, lechery and vile behavior. He took his two suitcases and came home to me. "Leave me alone, Ma," he says and walks down the hall to my spare bedroom.

Thus, I have known hard times, unpleasantness, fear. All of this I am unable to share. I do not for a moment accept my separateness, the leitmotif of my

life. In third grade I always ate alone. It was an early sign of my shunning. I checked myself daily in the mirror. I don't know how they knew that I was not to be liked. Chosen last. Unpartnered. I worked hard to be smart and pretty. I washed dishes for my mother. Ran errands for my father. Gave up the biggest piece for my kin.

One day Noam leaves his bedroom. "What is it?" he shouts. "I care. I am not unkind. They hate me for the right answer. They applaud my errors."

"Your blood is good enough for transfusions," I say.

My heart has split in half from Noam, no matter what his feelings are towards me. Noam has quit his job. He languishes in his room.

I want to help Noam. I have always been a follower of honorable causes. I worked in favor of peace. I am a registered voter. I contribute regularly to the support of an Asian refugee child. Sometimes, I receive notes thanking me for my continued support.

Theories change, so I am investigating the possibility of analysis for Noam. The cost is dear, and the time is enormous. Noam will have forgotten his youth. And I know, for I have checked it all out before—if the smell of the litter is not on you, it is hopeless. There is no cure for something as primordial as being disliked.

For example, my parents did not enjoy my presence. On my wedding day they are whispering in the corner that I am pregnant, that the marriage is forced. My mother and father stand rigidly on either side of me. They are wondering by what devious means I have contrived to become the wife of young Jonathan. Wonder then, invidious kin. I am a bride. I wear a white dress. In the dining room of my parents' house is a great display of wedding gifts. I will write careful thank-you notes to each sender.

Young Jonathan is pale and sways. Within a year he will be unfaithful, in less time a loathsome husband. Yet I will make him dinners. I will offer comfort. I will tend to his needs as if they were my own. And when he turns on me, I will weep unheard. I will again not understand. His body will foul mine with the possibility of disease.

Noam says, "Abigail grew to despise me. I was a good husband, generous, kind, ardent. 'You are nothing,' she said to me. 'Never in a thousand years should I have married you.' "

I have shelves, drawers, boxes full of outlines and lists. They are useful in my work. When I was fifteen, I made a list headed Desirable Traits. On the left side of the paper were the names of ten of the most admired girls I knew, and on the right side of the paper were the qualities of their personalities that inspired admiration. It was difficult to see which traits I did not possess. I was an idealistic, honest and truthful girl. I observed that other children cheated at games, were indolent, practiced masturbation, lied. At night I prayed for a role in the school play, for two friends, for an invitation to a party.

I am ashamed that I never recognized Noam when he was a child. But he

never gave me any trouble. He was always good. Alas, my blindness was complete. Martin was delinquent, truant, a scholastic failure. Leslie traded on her prettiness. I read to these children. I cooked their meals and mended their clothes. I exist in their earliest formative memories.

I slip a note under Noam's door. "Return to work," it says. "Don't give up the ship."

Noam writes me a reply. "I am a member of the management team in my office. Responsibility is delegated to me, and I comply. I do not have a secretary of my own. I dictate onto an IBM belt in my small portable hand-held unit. This belt then goes to the typing pool. The work comes back to me in a large brown interoffice envelope. Often, two or three days go by when no one speaks to me. At first, I was not concerned. The work was enough to fill the time. After a month or so, I noticed that I ate lunch alone. I tried all the nearby coffee shops. I saw only strangers. If I joined a group, they did not make me welcome. Their conversations dealt with matters I did not understand, and they were not explained."

I am suspicious of Noam's isolation.

When I go to parties I will generally join a group and cling tenaciously. I am adept at making appropriate comments, witticisms, anecdotes. When the Byrds give a party, I volunteer to help the hostess. "Let me," I say and reach quickly for the bowl. I will help serve, wash up or run to the store for a forgotten item.

Still, when the group separates, I am alone. I must be agile and find someone else. "I'll drive you home," I call out. "No need to phone for a taxi."

Once I gave a girl named Ethel Lee twenty-five dollars for an invitation to her sixteenth birthday party. It was not in lieu of a gift; it was in addition to a gift. The gift was a small, sterling silver, heart-shaped pin. My blind date was a tall, nice-looking boy, but I fought him in the car and threatened to scream going home.

The city is filled with grey rain. The brick buildings are stained with streaks of wetness. There are puddles everywhere. My head aches with the falling barometer. Two leaves have dropped from my geranium plant. My body has grown heavy and flaccid.

The work is behind schedule, because I am busy thinking of Noam. I have gone on many solitary walks trying to find a solution for him. He has turned to me for help, although we are not speaking much, and he passes me in the hallway. If I can help him, then he will love me forever, and we will celebrate holidays and feasts together.

I have heard that the old man upstairs has committed suicide. He used barbiturates to do it. He was a cartographer. We have passed each other for years, but we did not speak. Sometimes, I would remark about the state of the weather, but he did not reply. His son and daughter-in-law came from Queens and carried his body away. If I die, there is a card that I keep in my wallet. I have willed my organs. I have never been robbed, raped or mugged.

Noam does not join me in the living room in the evenings, but his presence in the apartment is felt. I believe he weeps at times. The door to his room is locked, and when I entreat him to open it, there is silence.

Noam says one day, "I can't live as you do, Mother. I once had friends. People sometimes sought me out. I had Abigail. Mother, am I lost forever?"

"Join a club," I tell him. "Write letters. Keep active."

Noam does not understand. At any rate, he must survive. I recopy the list of Desirable Traits into a single column minus the names of the girls, and I push it under Noam's door. He must leave the nest and go into the world. I lie to him and say that I cannot afford to support him.

Noam takes a job. "Try to be friendly," I tell him. "Dress neatly, be confident. You are a fine-looking man. A good person."

I try to compile from my past those experiences that might help Noam. For instance, the first year after my husband's death only three people voluntarily spoke to me from late June to the end of October. Still, I move in the world. I avoid eccentricities of behavior. My investments do well.

I have had terrible quarrels. Martin and Leslie have yelled at me, denying our ties of blood. My late husband often threatened me. "I shall reveal you to the world," he'd say. "Hateful. Despicable." People have shouted at me. I have been the target of accusations, both wrong and unjust.

I have made Noam's success my goal. Once he learns to see things clearly, he'll be all right. It's a question of vision.

Noam has begun to perk up. I leave his dinner for him warming in the oven while I retreat to my room. I have many assignments, and work goes well.

Noam is being transferred to another city. "It will be good for me," he says. I agree and kiss his cheek. I help him pack, and I give him a check. The sum astonishes him.

"Write," I implore. "Keep in touch." He leaves me standing on the doorstep.

I have never had a lasting affair, although at various times I have had lovers. I do not bother anymore.

Noam has married Christine Charles. They did not have a real wedding, he writes. Just a simple little ceremony. Yet in my heart I know that her parents were there weeping and toasting the couple with champagne.

Noam has made it across the barrier. Someday, when I have time, I will make a list of all the people who dislike me. The list will be kept in a folder in the middle drawer of my desk. I will invite these people to dinners. There will be parties. I will buy a new supply of greeting cards. I'm not afraid of hard work.

Dr. Reports Breakthrough in Family Planning

Dr. James McFee, a physician in Blatchford, Virginia, reported today that he has found a new means of family planning that requires no apparatus, foam, pills, or hormones. According to Dr. McFee, a woman can delay conception after sexual intercourse by holding her breath. Theoretically, he claims, a woman can delay conception indefinitely by suspending respiration; the media have dubbed this method of family planning "respiratus interruptus." Critics of the doctor's claims, however, point out that holding the breath indefinitely might possibly lead to injurious side effects.

Dr. McFee first became interested in this method of delaying conception while he was doing research for his book *The Incidence of Fertility in Women with Big Lungs*. In his research, Dr. McFee was struck by the comparatively low fertility of couples who habitually perform coitus in automobiles going at high speed, in rapidly moving express elevators, and in jet airliners during take off and landing. He attributes this low rate of fertility to the breathlessness caused by the sensation of motion. He claims that the fast pace of modern life is responsible for our declining birth rate.

He gradually became convinced, he said to reporters, that there is a relationship between lung size and fertility—or more specifically—between rate of respiration and fertility. "If women can delay conception by using respiratus interruptus," he said in a recent interview, "then we should be able to increase their fertility by teaching them to breathe rapidly during coitus. Sure enough, we discovered that many women *do* breathe rapidly during intercourse and then have children. We're not sure yet why these women do this rapid breathing. Men do it too, oddly enough—although as you may know, men do not conceive. The whole secret lies in proper breathing and in breath control. I've become convinced that the key to birth control, when you come right down to it, is the proper use of the diaphragm."

As evidence of the validity of his method of family planning, Dr. McFee cites the case of a woman near Blatchford who, he claims, delayed the conception of her child for four years by holding her breath and keeping her legs tightly crossed. When reporters asked her how she became interested in performing this feat, she said, "I was never popular with men when I was a teenager because of my figure. I had a very small chest. No one ever noticed my lungs. Then one day I read an ad in a cheap magazine for a course that was supposed to enlarge your lungs to give you a more attractive figure. Well, I sent for the course, and sure enough my lungs became quite large. I began to go out with a fellow, and I eventually married him. But then I found that he was only interested in my lungs. He said that they were breathtaking, and all he wanted to do was fondle them. One night while we were making love, I became disgusted at his attitude and decided to get back at him. I have a right to enjoy my lungs too. That's when I began to hold my breath. I think that every woman has a right to use her lungs in the way she chooses. It's her breathright."

An HEW official in Washington yesterday declared that the government is skeptical of Dr. McFee's claims. "We've gone out and tried to talk to some of these women who are practicing respiratus interruptus," he said yesterday.

“Not one of them would talk to us. Most of them just got red in the face. I think it’s a big conspiracy. We don’t think there’s anything to the idea, and we’re convinced that nothing will ever come of it. Frankly, we at HEW aren’t holding our breath.”

Harlan Roedel

Urology

Press Release

Officials in Washington today announced the death of Dr. Hiram Fitzpatrick, whose discoveries in urology changed the course of World War II.

Dr. Fitzpatrick came to prominence during World War I when he found the cause of the heavy casualties suffered by certain elite military units. He discovered that noisy expectoration in spit-and-polish units allowed German night patrols to pin-point their locations and to direct accurate artillery fire upon them. After more than a year of feverish research, he discovered how to expectorate silently and taught thousands of soldiers the secret, thus affecting the outcome of the war.

During the early months of World War II, military leaders became alarmed by the heavy casualties suffered by Allied troops during night combat. Remembering Dr. Fitzpatrick’s success in reducing casualties during World War I, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill asked him to investigate. He found that soldiers were disclosing their positions at night through noisy urination, and he immediately set about to find a remedy.

He carried out his research at the Argonne National Lavatory, near Chicago, behind closed doors and frosted-glass windows. Late in 1942, he discovered how to urinate silently and demonstrated his technique to thousands of soldiers, although the work involved enormous strain. He is credited with turning the tide of the war.

Little is known of Dr. Fitzpatrick’s method of research, although his biographers suspect that, like many scientists, he used dogs in his early experiments. In his book *Victory Through Urology*, he explains that his technique is actually a refinement of one practiced by armies in the ancient world. The oldest known wall sculpture, according to the book, shows a Sumerian soldier practicing an early version of the technique the doctor has perfected (hence the term relief to describe this type of sculpture). Man’s fascination with the subject is timeless, he says, the word urology being derived from Ur, meaning primitive or first, and -ology, meaning study of.

The physician who attended Dr. Fitzpatrick in his last days reported that he died of an overdose of a powerful diuretic, to which he had been addicted for many years. Few people were aware of his addiction because, it is said, he knew how to keep it quiet.

Dawn Kolokithas

Things To Do Alone On The Way To Tucson

set the clock
play tag with a red firebird
shout superlatives in the mountains
hunt for bears flipflopping around the exit
divine the future from the clouds
play leapfrog in the traffic
look for phallic images in the landscape
beg the audio gods for rock & roll
get gas and discover what July in Arizona
 really means
politely ignore the station attendant
 with warts on his hands
 who calls you hun
intuitively know the bathroom
 won't have toilet paper
 or paper towels
feel as you pull back on the highway
 from Dayton
 that you're pulling out of hell
reappraise the value of air-conditioning
wonder where they found that Johnny Cash album
give yourself that familiar speech
 why you shouldn't smoke pot
 then light it
marvel at the mess on the windshield
 you look through
expect some of the hills to get up
 and walk away
look for a place to eat
watch the west bound truck wink
 at the east bound truck
realize that if you ever get really poor
 you could gather the rubber
 along the road and sell it
speculate what kind of animals
 the flattened corpses
 might have been
listen to the vast earth whistle
 of the car in motion
accept that you can not steer and write
 at the same time
concentrate on driving

Dawn Kolokithas

Illinois Summer

Independence Day, 1979
and I think of barbecues
in the Jaekles's backyard
after my father and Fred
finished playing golf and
Lisa's and my hands
wrinkled from swimming
too long while our mothers
gossiped under the shade
of the umbrella table
then we'd eat chicken
or steak and there was
always a salad my mother
made with slivers of carrots
suspended in orange jello
and then we'd pile in
the car back to the Country
Club and our parents would
watch from the clubhouse
while we watched from
the green and Clarence
the golf pro supervised
the fireworks on the
eleventh fairway and
the display ended with
the American flag that
never blazed uniformly
so that either the stars
or the stripes burned first
and even then I was
sure things weren't what
they were supposed to be

this fourth of July
mother and Mrs. Jaekle
are having a small
barbecue because Fred
left his wife for a
younger woman with
white hair (I know
this because they were
seen driving into the
Country Club parking lot
in the doctor's yellow
convertible) and Lisa
isn't going to school
or working but just eats
and watches her acne
and fat spread and helps

her mother through the
separation and I do
my celebrating in front
of the typewriter
while the other
Californians rush to
the beach to claim
a few square feet of
oily sand and there
are no bottlerockets
in the backyard this
July because father
is dead

a few days after
the holiday the phone
rang and it was one
of those calls that
slice through time
and the morgue looked
just like the ones
on television, bald
walled and institutional
and the antiseptic burned
burned my nose when
I identified him on
the chipped enamel table
and saw the indelible
trail across his face
and I remember mother
used to complain
about the flies in
Illinois any summer
so they watched the
display in the air
conditioned room with
picture windows while
Lisa and I lit
smoke bombs on the
patio by the pool
and they gave us a
permanent membership
without dues because
father was such
a good golfer

Toby Olson

Just This

Here
in quiet of early morning
looking in
to a city back-yard of no expanse
some light enters—
 its consequence
in the finely tuck-pointed mortar
of red brick, above
her window—
& then she begins to turn.

4 twisted ginkos
in this small & suddenly
lit space,
 their branches active
& their twigs some-
times touching one another
the way we do sometimes, & 4 birds
sparrows) too .

Maybe
we could put it all together, may
be the light joins us, but is
only a reflective quality.

Of the things discovered
it is she, her turns
 to get coffee ready;
not brick or light
trees or the quiet birds
begin it.

I make
some coffee too
for you
before day starts in earnest
to confuse it.

Toby Olson

Poem For My 38th Birthday

In the last hours of the early morning
of my birthday
 the red dog across the road is howling,
announcing something
I rise to.

Her snout is pitched upward
in the grey sky, her haunches
close to the ground.
 I think she has a rash there.
I go over
and console her.

Coming back across the road
stumbling a little in half sleep
into my 39th year
in enough light now
 to see almost clearly
the cat mews plaintively in the open window, wanting
an early feeding,
a little atypical
but she gets it.

And then another voice is singing,
quietly at first
at 5AM: "Happy

Birthday to you
Happy Birthday."

(my wife in a half sleep murmuring.

The birds chatter.
I go out and feed them
and sit and watch them.

Everything is consoled and ordered
and gone back to sleep.

It lightens up
Happy Birthday.

Toby Olson

Glass

The birds
(In this case mourning doves) gather,
puff a bit, and sit
under the pines' limbs after rain.

in the rain
a few stalwarts
walked on the feeder's boards and picked
food and water in the same breath.

It's late morning
it seems like evening tho,
no discernible sun
just clouds and a little light
and no wind to speak of.

Love,
the song feeds at times
upon the soft ambiguous casualness
of such air.

in the span of this glass: doves,
a few grackles, 2

blue jays
who refuse to break it
with the roughness
of their song.

Donald Levering

The Woman With the Book of Masks

You come striding on snake-tattooed thighs
With a book of masks under your arm
Each page a face remembered
From before our births
The snow-mask with white eyelashes
The large-featured fertility
Dance masks
The fire-faced demons
The honey-bear's bark nose

We look up from the book
To see the totems
We face each day
When we meet
Yours—a lean cantering horse
Mine—the squealing seal

The photographs show totem poles
That ages past gave up their ghosts
Their moss-covered faces staring
Into rainforest floors
You pick them up in your book
Your blood coursing behind
The eyes of each beast

Donald Levering

The Baker

*They ought to ring a bell in the bakeries,
the same as they do in Church at the
elevation of the host. –Karel Capek*

Having brought the yeast back
To life she
Kneads the dough
Like a potter working clay
Adds flour and water
Folds and tucks
The white table groans
Like a love-making bed
As she leans into the dough

She oils the pan
The loaves
Rise

She slides them into the oven
Their yeasty aroma
Bakes in our noses

She waits the prescribed time
For the bread to cool
Before the slicing

She spreads butter
On a piece
This is my body

Donald Levering

Lament From the Black Swamp

Woke up and threw off the covers
Sweating with the ague bug
And hungover
Then I shivered
When they told me
They found Juan Sada
In a drainage ditch
Drowned

At least the rain
That killed my car
That morning
Beat down the mosquitoes
Though we were stuck with
Our guilt staring
From the porch
As the gutters overflowed

Comes back like a country-tune
How she snubbed him
And no one'd fiddle with him
That night and he spun-out
Leaving, drunk and
Suicidal

Oh he sang high harmony
He played mandolin
And banjo too

That night I slapped
My own ear
After a mosquito
That might have been
His tires whining
On wet pavement

Norman H. Russell

The Land of Blind Creatures

we had to carry fire
when we went below the earth
into the stomach of ground
through the hole in the mountain

thinking to see the gopher
we saw white spiders
thinking to see worms
we saw clouds of bats

in the last light of our torches
we saw tall warriors of stone
standing before us
hanging down above us.

Seeds to the Wind

the pine tree has four cones
cones to shed pollen
cones to receive pollen
larger cones to make seeds
largest cones to give seeds to the wind

in the night sleeping
i wake from time to time
old cones fall in the night wind
their seeds have gone with the wind
they are empty

in the day hunting
old cones fall from a great pine
it is the small gray squirrel
opening the cones for the wind
throwing away the empty cones.

Norman H. Russell

Moon of the Angry Wasp

in this hot dry moon
the summer which will not die
the worms go deep
the wasps are angry
the night brings small moths
the day great orange butterflies
which no bird will eat

in the field the goldenrod blooms
a thousand insects push against each other
for these few small blossoms

at night the moon
is yellow with dust.

Jonathan Griffith

April

Still we keep on.
The boat threads its way downriver,
and fish snap at stars.

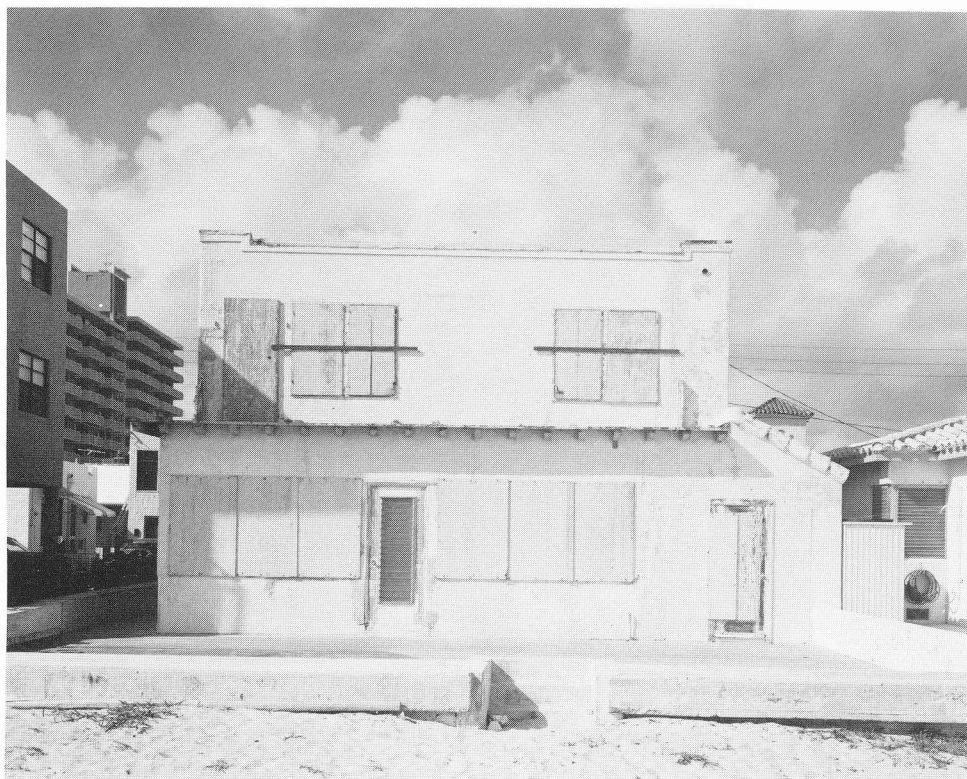
I dream myself alone
in the house of my parents.
I move through rooms so perfect
in their stillness
that I know no one is there.
The dog scratches,
rising from the garden.
In the last room, she is crying
and I lead her back to her grave.

If we could go miles from here,
if we could find that cabin
so abandoned to its uselessness,
we could make a new life.

Outside birds argue their rights.
The world halves into darkness,
that odd power that exists for rest,
for the making of stars.

Locust

I didn't know
I had you
until I saw that locust
bright against concrete.
It looked like
some primitive,
crazy eyes and wings
hammered so fiercely
as if flaked with gold.
In a quaint village custom
drunken fathers
barter white daughters
away as brides.
I offer this:
a dream horse,
the first wild brilliance
seen in years.

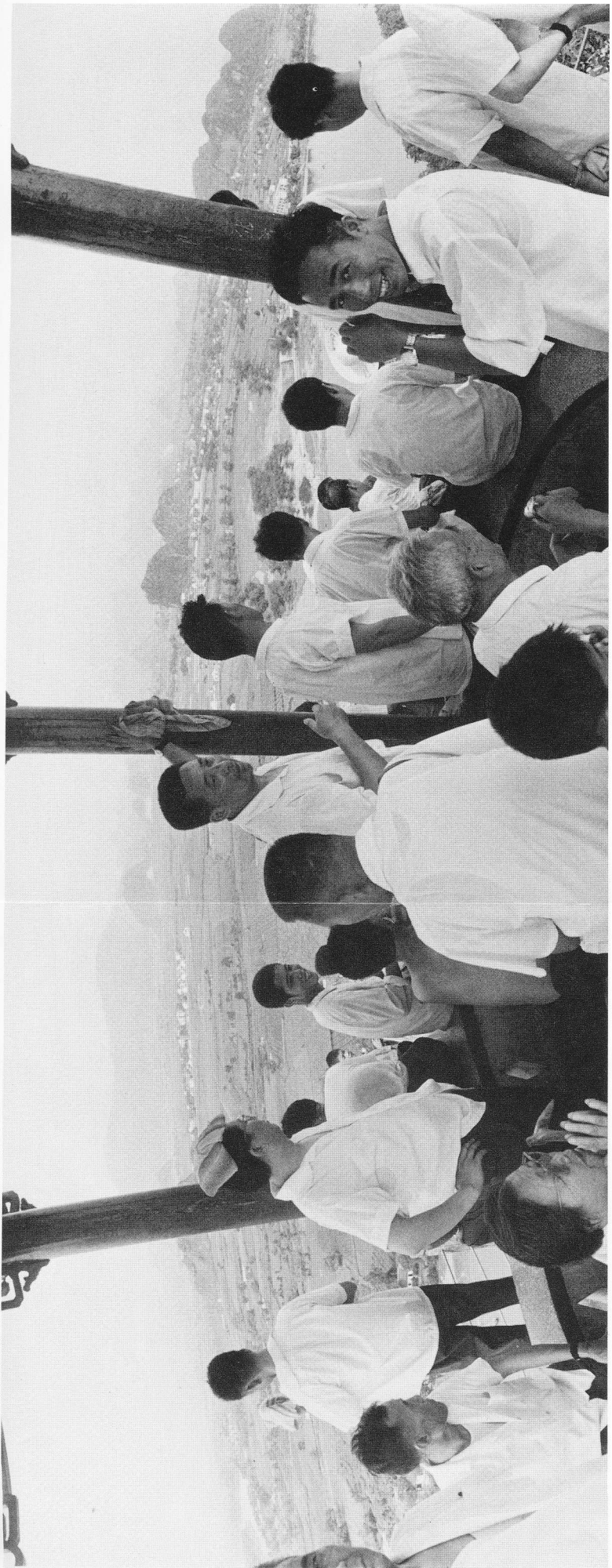


Tim Feresten



Nantasket Beach, Mass.
Cambridge, Mass.

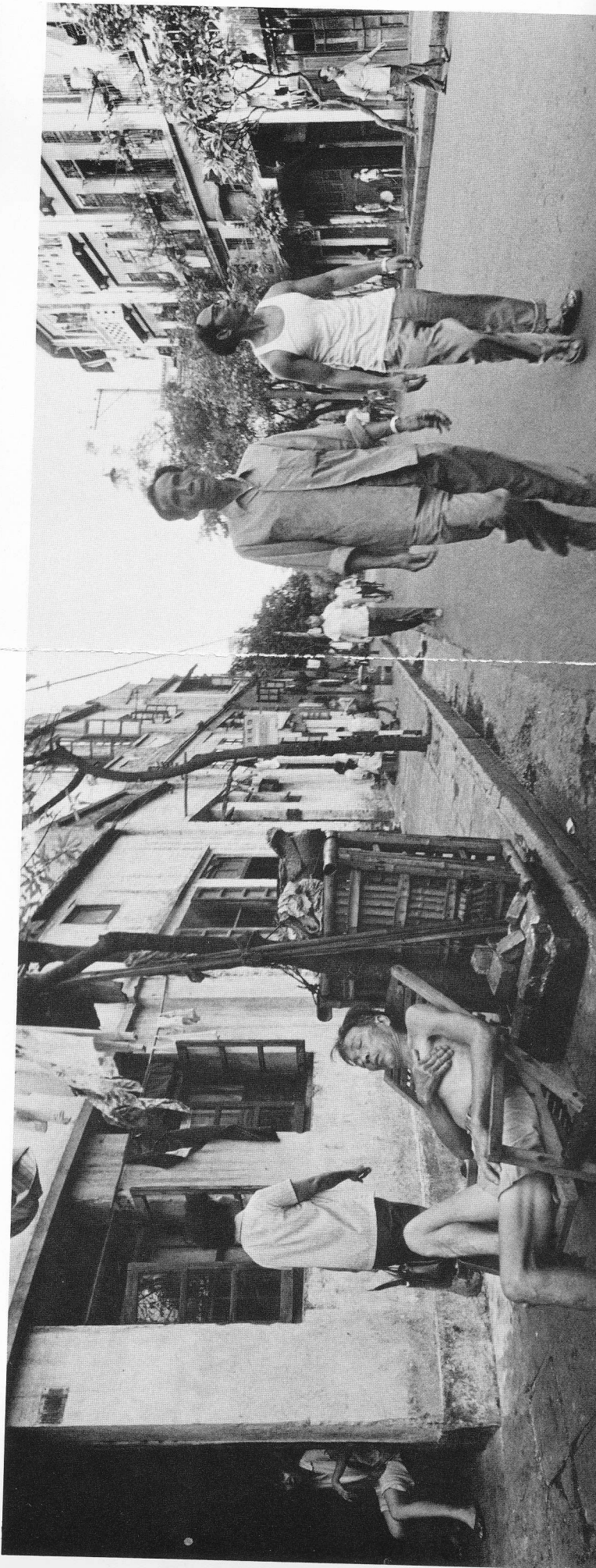
Alan Tibbetts





Alan Tibbetts

Las Vegas, Nev. No. 1
Las Vegas, Nev. No. 2





Lawrence, KS Water Tower No. 1
Oskaloosa, KS Water Tower No. 7

Judith Claire Bosselman

Jonathan Holden

Lines and Circles

1)

I used to relish bearing down, relying
on the curb of a ruler to make lines
keen enough to divide the volume of a room
in half. I liked compasses. One palm
bracing a fresh sheet of paper,
the pencil in its metal harness, tooled
like an industrial diamond, I'd trace
arc after sleek arc, each sweet
trajectory the base of the same bare
edifice, an architecture so
pure its windy streets,
two lines converging on a vanishing point
and uniformly paved with the blue sky,
were uninhabited. I liked
to join the graceful wisps of arcs,
complete a circle, inscribe the sturdy
regular hexagon. Each six-pointed star
had the authority of a sheriff's badge.
I'd summon it again, a whisper
of a circle, a circle simply
for the sake of it, still not enough,
like the full chord a rainbow
strikes inside the rain already
fading into noise.

2)

After years of watching people water
grass, I know why they do. They want
to mow as often as they can, mow
in parallel lines. They want their faint
stamp impressed on the lawn, a tidy
character. They want the sunlight
to strike middle C in all the staves.
I watch my neighbor mow,
working around the last seedy block.
I know the itch to finish
the eyesore off in one bite
like tucking the last hospital corner
of a starched sheet tight.
And I remember how,
as I surveyed a field
that I had flattened, underfoot,
like the bottom of a sea
that I had drained, the caves
under the bushes drying in broad
daylight, I was almost
satisfied.

3)

On the even ground
between two pines
I'll place the unsplit
aspen parallel and pave
the bottom course, firm
each log in the foundation
of the dirt, jamming
each equal section tight
to keep the stack wedged
stable by its own
sweet weight, circles
packed solid as a honeycomb.
I'll waste time skimming
the big nubs off,
and if one wobbly section
like a loose tooth
could come out,
reconstruct this tidy
corner where the tools
are straight, sockets
tucked snug in their holsters,
the set of bits complete,
organized by breadth,
cross-referenced by height,
not even beautiful,
just right.

Mike Smetzer

Frank Higgins. **Starting from Ellis Island.** 5725 Wyandotte, Kansas City, MO 64113: BkMk, 1979. 63 pages. \$3.25 paper.

In the apparently autobiographical title poem of "Starting from Ellis Island," Frank Higgins describes the classic arrival of an immigrant family in New York City: the shortening of the family name by immigration officials, the father and mother working at menial jobs, the Americanization of the young poet, who violates his parents' old-world mores by dating a girl that isn't Catholic and who in rebellion against his father joins the army to fight in World War II, only to end up fighting in the mountains near his father's old-world farm. Returning from the war about the time of his father's death, the poet climbs the Statue of Liberty and thinks of his father's farm and his father's journey to America. Higgins concludes, "All he could be sure of coming here was a country / he couldn't understand. / From this day on I'll be my father's son."

Higgins, however, does not write from the point of view of an immigrant. He is his father's son, not his father. The poems in this volume are all clearly those of an American looking at other Americans and American scenes. His parents' immigration and his experiences in the war lie in the deep background in most of these poems. Perhaps he is most clearly his father's son in the realization that he is a part of a varied land that requires much reflection, and many poems, to try to understand.

The best of these poems focus on simple self-contained scenes or quick characterizations: images of the poet's son as an infant, teenager, and merchant marine; the scene at the corral in "Renting the Stud Horse"; the "Tire Section of the State Street Junkyard"; and the series of quick character sketches in "Along Baker Drive." These and many other fine poems in the volume are wonderfully simple and direct, describing the people and places with detached amusement and sympathy. One of the best of these is "After Looking Through the Wards Catalogue":

Leslie Hancock (only 8)
crouches in the muskmelon patch,
pushes two melons up under
her grapefruit colored sweater,
pulls it tight, fists on her hips,
then jumps out to grin at passing cars (Yoo Hoo);
if they whistle, honk or slow down:
hands cupped under her melons
she runs to the porch for lemonade,
takes a long drink, holding one melon in place
the other slipping.

This light and humorous touch is typical of many of Higgins' poems. But in other poems, such as "When the Retarded Bowl," the humor of the scene is undercut by the cruelty of reality. In the following section from the long poem "Sleeping Out," the poet's light-hearted camping trip with his sons produces a grim undercurrent as the camp in a thicket and the boys' playing at war bring back memories of real war experiences:

Dinner's given me gas:
 like the mortars I thought
 that didn't sound like anything else
 until this,
 until the popping of freeze dried steaks.
 I see enough stars and loomy shapes to last me,
 the not-quite-a-woman-yet faces coming from everywhere.
 When we came into a village
 we couldn't go two feet
 without them running up
 "good time good time"
 or a burned-up boy poking around,
 asking 'chock-let?'
 In the sick tents, under the cots,
 in everyone's hair:
 'If soldier die I get chock-let?'
 Dust so heavy you spit and it hangs in the air,
 so hot it melts your chock-let.

In those places where Higgins' poetry is weak, the fault usually lies in over-generalization that leads to vague or conventionalized description and unconvincing characterization. In "Down to Sea in Sweaters," the individual fishermen are blurred together into a stylized type, their actions reduced and ritualized like those in Egyptian art. Despite the use of interesting details, they seem unreal and caricatured. The title poem at the beginning, "Sadie" (a poem about a black slave), and the closing summary poem ("I Write a Love Letter with A Quill Pen, in the Other Room my Mother Watches a Movie on the Nazi Holocaust") suffer from the attempt to draw in more than the poet knows from his own experience. The Whitmanesque list of American types that concludes the summary poem includes "the truck driver barreling just now late into Wichita," "English teachers who gather in the lunch room or after school to talk," and "the boy with bad teeth who keeps to himself." Although the opening and closing poems are intended to give the book the appearance of greater structure, they belie the considerable talent for vivid detail Higgins shows in most of the other poems.

I found **Starting From Ellis Island** a pleasure to read. The majority of Frank Higgins' poems are distinctly midwestern in their solidness and apparent simplicity. They show a calm acceptance of the land and life that is offset by amusement at human behavior and by an awareness of the underlying severity of life. Direct description and dialogue are used far more often than figures of speech. Some of Higgins' poems develop a Kansas-centered geography, but his subjects reach beyond the midwest, including commercial fishermen, scenes from the war in Europe, tourist America, his sons, his immigrant parents, and people who could be seen on any downtown or suburban street. This is a collection of rich insights into the character of American life.

Erleen J. Christensen

Jonathan Katz and Anthony Sobin, eds. **The Ark River Review: Special Fiction Issue**, 4, No. 4 (1979). Box 14, W.S.U., Wichita, KS 67208.

ARK RIVER, 4, No. 4, contains everything from flawlessly crafted tales to private ramblings. In this potpourri, two stories stand out as "Special Fiction" in the finest sense— Marilyn Krysl's "Inventory" and Ron Hansen's "His Dog: A Love Story."

Dentist office ladies' magazines feature houses like the one in which Krysl's narrator takes inventory—and as Krysl spins her tale, she makes superlative use of the expectations and prejudices that similarity evokes. "This is the house. Where I grew up," the narrator begins. As she takes us through the dining room with its "red venetian glass birds" and "Le Printemps pansies," through its bedrooms with matching baths, and onto its patio facing "the beach which doesn't end," we step into a world of affluence as vivid, flat, and stereotypical as a slick magazine illustration.

She speaks of the father who "bought and paid for these things," and, after the listing of the crystal in his "antique armoire bar," we are not surprised to find that "[H]e was not happy here." Nor are we surprised that he left the mother for a younger woman, or that he later walked into the ocean.

In the bedroom where "[M]y sister and I slept in the twin beds with carved headboards," it is not surprising to hear that sister found happiness in neither her horse nor her Buick, that "[H]er young fiancé, sweet as a brother, already bored her before they took their vows." And as we learn that for mother "these things she thought were hers, did not and will not give her pleasure," Krysl seems to have shown us the unhappiness we always knew lurked behind the pleasant exterior of the homes of the affluent.

Then the fourth inventory begins. The narrator, still speaking in her simple, conventional sentences of the now familiar things in their accustomed places, suddenly suffuses the home with the light of "I was the one who was happy here," of the one who "saluted the red venetian glass birds" and "smiled at my father's armoire bar, pleased by its imposing grandfatherly presence...." To her, the patio looks out on "the sumptuous ocean," where she can say, "I feel like a god." Is there cause for envy, after all?

Ron Hansen's language and sentence structures are as simple and conventional as Krysl's; he also uses the narrator as camera rather than commentator. But while Krysl's narrator walks in a quiet and orderly way through her own house of privilege, Hansen's narrator, like a department-store surveillance camera, presents a series of snapshots from a year in the life of a hold-up man.

We see the hold-up man in front of a pet shop preparing to hit the liquor store across the street. We see six- or eight-line pictures of man meeting pet shop pup, now child's dog, in park or yard. We see the man kill a clerk. We see man and dog in a backwoods cabin where "[H]e whispered, You and me. You and me." Snapshot after snapshot, winter wears on. "His food tasted bad and he was out of cigarettes." He shoots at trees in the clearing. "She [the dog] would chew a swatch of hair, then lick it, then chew again." In the

end, the year comes full circle with a last snapshot eerily reminiscent of the first one.

The emotional brilliance of Michael Koch's "Fiction" contrasts sharply with the controlled understatement of the Krysl and Hansen stories. Koch juxtaposes his writer-narrator with a dead wife, a child, an Abyssinian lunatic, and a flamboyant grandfather in several settings. He ties them all together with a photo, a pearl, a princess, and a pear tree. It ought not work, but it does—and presents a compelling portrait of the artist as father.

John L'Heureux writes a wacky little farce about a chimney man frustrated in his seduction of a housewife, but the other attempts to be avant-garde are less successful. Renau Boone's "Hunger" uses juxtaposition, surrealism, and a camera technique with considerably less success than Koch, L'Heureux, Hansen, or Krysl. Her pictures of a truck stop at dawn and a vigil on a sandstone cliff near Dead Horse Point hold out a great deal of promise, however, for the novel into which the short story is evolving.

Probably the least successful piece in the issue is Albert Goldbarth's "A Reader's Service Bonus." Subtitled "Plot Synopsis of This Season's Best-selling Thriller **Code Name: Ho-Hum**, with Exciting Excerpts," the story is not the entertaining put-on the title leads us to expect, but exactly what the subtitle says—a plot synopsis whose exciting excerpts are decidedly ho-hum.

The remaining stories are the familiar domestic narratives and chronicles of madness so prominent in modern fiction. Ivy Goodman's "Socialization" is not as good as her "Baby" (*Ploughshares* 5:4), but it does continue to show her as a sensitive chronicler of the modern non-family family.

Denise Low

John Nelson. **Little River: A Poetry of Place**. Mennonite Press, North Newton, KS. 67117: 56 pp. \$3.50. 1980.

Little River is the small town where John Nelson grew up, and this cycle of poems traces the history of that place on the map. The book begins objectively, with geologic history, but gradually, as the book progresses, history becomes personal, interwoven with human history and with Nelson's own memories.

The first poems of **Little River** anchor the book to the land, especially the poem "A Beginning." Here Nelson recapitulates the creation of the Kansas landscape:

Wait a hundred million years.
Watch the Seas storm a continent,
green and full of life, covering
swamps with deep water,

erasing landscape
and common shore
until a new surge of heat
finds its way to this mass,
transforming Inland Sea
into the clouds of the rest
of the World.

The poet is able to render history into myth, science into wonder. The opening poem of the book, "Prefix," presents the rich comparison of the land to a book,

A Text,
Land is an Open Text,
capable of being read,
decipered, embraced
& lost within....

These poems are more than illustrations of landscape.

Nelson varies his forms to suit his subjects. A number of prose pieces, such as "Nocturne to the Hungry Ghosts" and "Visitation," are written in an unpretentious prose. "Artifact II" begins,

I am in Little River, at the east edge of town, above the river in a small house looking west. Two friends, Alex and Kelly, are on the polished wood floor playing monopoly and chiding me for not joining in. I remember the smell of beer and the sound of dice on cardboard.

The succinct summary of the scene evokes the mood of small town life, the casual intimacy of friends and land, without drawing attention to itself in an artificial way. The poetry varies in form from set stanzaic patterns to open lines that use negative space on the page effectively. Nelson also uses several voices in the same poem, as in "Arrival":

"It's high time
we hold up a moment
& stand here...."

where a profusion of grasses
comes up to the knee, a hilltop, though
down by little river, in the flat of narrow valley
one must climb in a tree to be reminded of sky,
this grass cuts any skin....

The text is additionally broken up by quotations, photo-graphs, a drawing, glyphs and graphics. All together this collage approach makes the book most readable.

Absent from the latter part of the book are the other details of small town Kansas life that I remember, like the unesthetic laundromats and gas stations, interminable television drone and gossip; so the book is guilty of some romanticism. **Little River** is at its best when it probes the mysteries of time and land.

Mike Smetzer

Michael Paul Novak. **Sailing by the Whirlpool**. 5725 Wyandotte, Kansas City, MO 64113: BkMk, 1978. 63 pages. \$2.75 paper.

Michael Paul Novak's *Sailing by the Whirlpool* is divided into four sections: poems about his childhood, poems about assorted situations and people he has observed or thought of, travel poems, and poems about art and artists or poets and poetry. The book's title is drawn from "The Whirlpool in the Distance," a four-page poem in the last section with a head note that reads, "Based on the letters of Vincent Van Gogh to his brother Theo." The specific passage that generates the book title suggests the attraction that Novak found in Van Gogh and in that painter's view of art:

And you, Theo, you can be an artist,
Have company, friends, a place.
Paris has passed over you,
The streets, and noise drown you;
But only sail by that whirlpool
In the distance and you and I
Can be comrades painting
Under the deep sky. By painting
One becomes a painter.

The generalized imagery here and the suggestion to move beyond the clutter of a particular place are in keeping with Michael Novak's approach to poetry. He is at his best when representing strongly symbolic situations. His scenes are simplified and isolated, but they are often poignant, as in the short poem "Making Change":

They are like white pencil lines
Drawn by some child or drunk.
Seeing them on her scribbled wrist
As she holds out the change, he
Tries to signal her, to flash
His marks, two white worms, but she
Is out of touch, past seeing.
Only the nickels and dimes
Move from hand to hand.

This simple poem catches the essence of a human experience with precision. In another poem, "Hearing," Novak provides a concise statement of an experience common to almost all of us:

Both of the above poems are from section 2, which deals with isolated observations and thoughts. Since the poems in section 3 concern travel, we might expect evocative descriptions of the particular places Novak went to and accounts of the things he did. In fact, Novak gives us little of this. His focus, as in section 2, is on the type of situation. This approach would make for a boring travelogue, but it produces a couple of his finest poems, such as "Outside of Jerez." This is a poem that could be set in many parts of the world. Other than the two place names, nothing in the poem suggests Spain. Further, the heroine is not a particular woman but a type—

"the pleasant young woman." Yet the poem succeeds wonderfully in catching the beauty, tranquility, and humor of the trip and in presenting it as a distilled experience.

Another poem from this section, and perhaps the best poem in the volume, is "Museo de Cataluna." Here, during a tour of a museum, Novak is drawn to a painting of Bartholomew's martyrdom. As with Van Gogh's work, Novak is attracted to the strongly expressed emotion which is combined with the symbolic representation of an experience isolated from its original context. The scene is the type of suffering and cruelty. The painter leaves the museum with an awareness of the universality of the experience the painter has represented:

There are the tortured and the men
Who love their work. And there
Are other men, like Ribera,
Who paint, carve icons,
Write on walls, or fasten two sticks
Together, so we remember this:
There are saints; this is how
They bleed and die for us.

A poet who wishes to "sail by the whirlpool" of daily life into a distant place "under the deep sky" cannot be expected to document the individuality of people and places. It is not surprising, therefore, that, despite Novak's residence since 1963 in Leavenworth, Kansas, there is nothing clearly midwestern about his poetry and no trace whatsoever of regionalism. When he describes Leavenworth in "Ode to Garcia Lorca," it is described for the type of city it is—for its symbolic importance—and not for the city itself: ". . . a city at the heart of Midway U.S.A./ Where flags wave above the prisons, flags above the fort,/Flags above the fumes of the battery factory." Similarly, in "Poets, Poets Go Away," Hays, Kansas, appears only as the type of the small town. Nothing distinguishes it from any of thousands of other small towns where it might seem amusing for poets to gather.

It never rains in Hays, Kansas but it pours
Poets. There are two in this room,
Others are rumored to be on the road,
Coming to Hays, Kansas. Children
of doctors and produce men
In Hays, Kansas will announce
Any day now that they are poets.
Already I have met one.
She is always leaving her body.
Sometimes in the most awkward places.
The forecast for Hays, Kansas
Is for more poets by late afternoon,
Followed by poems. This is a warning,
Take the necessary precautions.

"Poets, Poets Go Away" is typical of Novak's lighter poems. His humor here is directed at himself as a poet and at America, and it expresses his amusement. In other poems his humor takes on the tone of bitter irony, as in the seriocomic first section of "Three Voyages to America."

In the poem, "The Assassin's View," the first stanza is a precisely executed description of what the assassin sees, which ends ". . .not staying to watch/
The wounded wonder, the fall, the grief." What would otherwise be a fine little poem like "Hearing" or "Making Change" is then spoiled by a second stanza designed to show us how we should apply this description to our society and our lives.

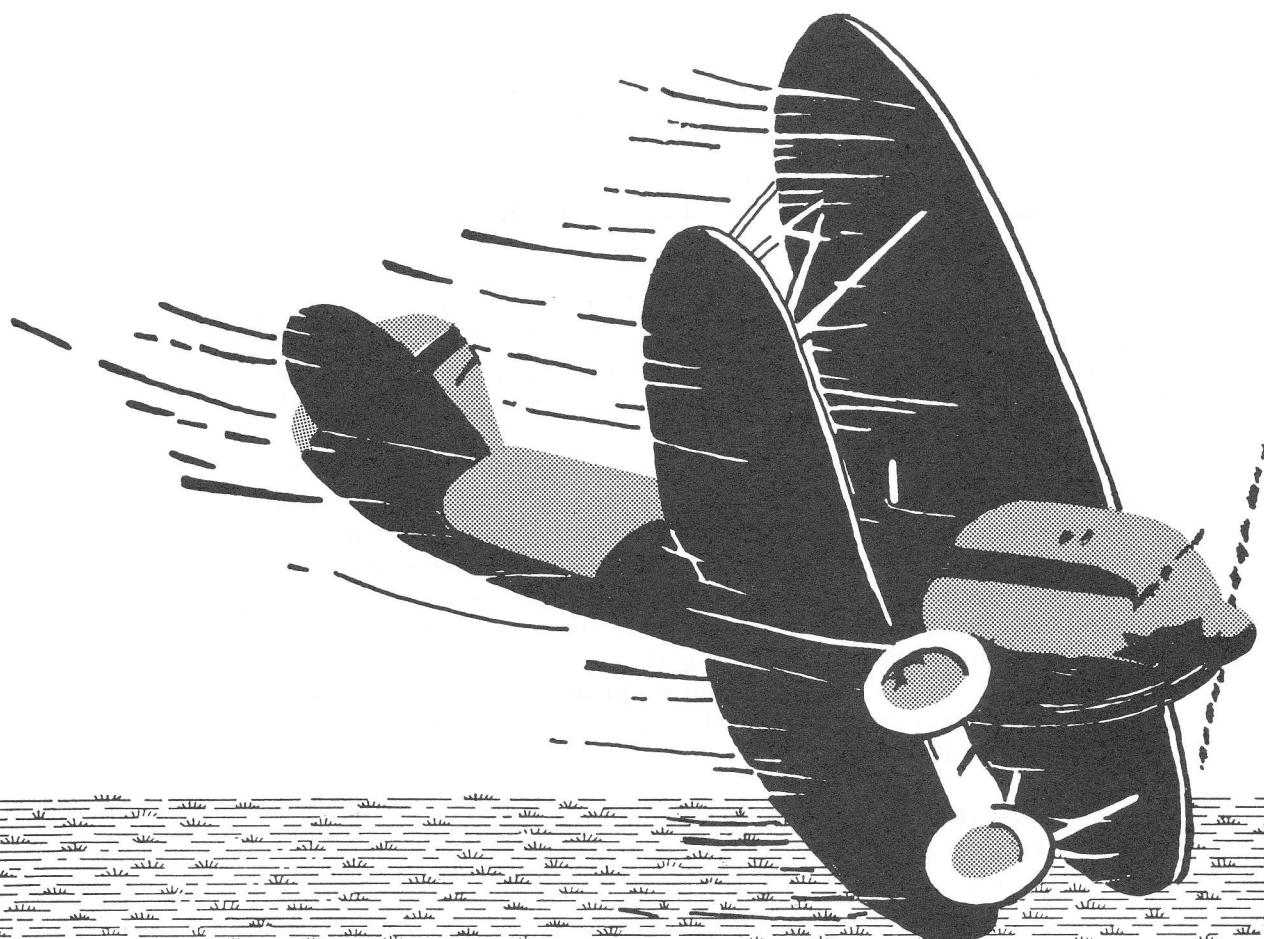
This tendency is particularly noticeable in Novak's few political poems. The second half of "Veterans" turns to sarcasm—" . . .Next Veteran's Day,/After proudly flying, let's get our guns./Let's go shoot out the stars." Yet the first half of the poem is at least competent and complete with a natural ending.

The half dozen or so clearly defective poems stand out against the high quality of most of Novak's work. They show unsophisticated faults in a writer whose work is marked by a sophisticated choice of details and language. Some of Michael Novak's poems are witty and some are openly earnest, but , in either case, the majority of his poems are effective and economical. He consistently draws what is common to human experience out of the particular event and, in his best poems, presents this generalized experience with the force and apparent simplicity of a fable. In "After the Fourth Drink," he is apparently thinking about his childhood while sitting in on a class his son is teaching:

Now in this room you glow in the light
Of your student's looking up
As I take this poem
Down the court of this page,

With hardly a fake, up and in.

Most of the poems in this volume go in, some with such accuracy they hardly swish the net.



Interview: Robert Day

Denise Low

Featured Writer: Robert Day

Robert Day grew up in Kansas and received his M.A. in English from the University of Kansas in 1966. He has taught at Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland, for many years. Book-of-the-Month Club editors chose Day's first novel, *The Last Cattle Drive* (1977) as a featured selection in 1978. He has a recent story, "Chloe and the Canoe," forthcoming from *Kansas Quarterly*. Cottonwood Review Press will publish Day's short novel, *In My Stead*, in early 1981, and his next full length novel, *I Am In California*, is due out in the summer of 1981. Day wrote the following screenplay, *Manhattan Round Up*, for the Cannes Film Festival. Cottonwood's written interview with the writer took place in October, 1980.

What was your part in the founding of Cottonwood Review?

I was a graduate student at the time and one day Professor Ed Eigner—the brother, I think, of the poet Larry Eigner—stopped me in the hallway of old Fraser and asked if I knew anything about money for the literary magazine. I thought he was talking about Charlie Nichol's *Good Elephant* which had been published the year before; or maybe *Grist 2*, which John Fowler had published out of the Abington Bookstore. So I told Eigner that he had the wrong man—that he wanted either Fowler or Nichol. But Eigner said they (in those days "they" always meant the English Department) had found a pile of money over in Strong Hall that had been budgeted for a literary magazine named *Quill*. Nobody had used the money in years, and all the time Strong Hall kept putting more in the pot. By the time "they" discovered the money (it was called a "budget item" as I remember), the pot was pretty full. Well, Charlie Nichol had graduated and John Fowler wasn't a student and "they" needed somebody to do something about that "budget item" or it might turn into a football scholarship. So I rounded up Bill Knief (the brother of April, who used to ride around campus on a white motorcycle she called Doe), and Bill rounded up some other writers, and we had a meeting down in the Classics Library of old Fraser.

I recall that L.R. Lind was in the room, but when he saw a meeting was about to take place, he put on his large black hat and left. There was gossip in those days that Lind's wife once knitted a sweater for Ezra Pound. It was when Pound was in jail in Washington, and Lind asked Pound: "Are you really nuts, Ezra?" And Ezra said no, he wasn't nuts, but he was cold, and so Mrs. Lind made Ezra a sweater. Anyway, Lind left and Bill Knief and I and some others sat down and talked about the budget item they had found in Strong Hall.

One thing led to another and pretty soon we started discussing how to get organized: I think one of us went to the blackboard and drew out a labyrinthine organization chart complete with editors, sub-editors, assistant editors—all with budget items of their own. It filled the whole blackboard. It was like a diagram of a Raymond Queneau novel. I understood for the first time how, with a mad vision and a little chalk, you can turn literature into a history of ideas, with the Dionysians fighting the Apollonians from Homer to Heller, all of it frozen forever on the final exam of Literature in Translation.

We stood back and looked at the board and started to laugh. There were only a half dozen of us, if you didn't count the bust of Aristotle in the corner; there might have been another half dozen writers getting drunk in the Gaslight or eating dinner down at the Jayhawk. But we had a chart that couldn't have been filled by the editorial staff of **Time** magazine. My contribution was that I laughed first. That, and the name—although I wanted to call it **Cottonwood Quarterly**, but Bill Knief pointed out that “quarterly” meant four times a year, and he had just fallen in love and wasn't about to put out a magazine four times a year. So we changed **Quarterly** to **Review**, and that way how often it came out was a matter of how much time we had and how much time we wanted to review.

That was about it. Bill was the first editor, and I think I was listed as graduate advisor on one issue. When the first issue came out, we sold it at a table in front of old Fraser. There was this snotty Ph.D. student whose specialty was mystery fiction. He was writing reviews for the **Kansas City Star** pointing out that the latest James Bond novel had something in common with Jason and the Golden Fleece. That winter he had accepted a three year position with a big eastern school, and so he was walking around campus with a new brief case, one of the slim models that insurance vice presidents carried. He was the kind of man who didn't erase blackboards in fits of self-amused laughter at the absurdity of it all.

Anyway, that first day he came down the steps of Fraser and picked up the magazine and flipped through it, back to front like you would **Fortune** or **Cosmopolitan**. We wanted fifty cents. All he had was a ten dollar bill. I think he must have gotten a bonus to sign that three year contract. Somehow we got the change together, and he opened his thin black brief case on our table. You could see his dissertation was in there and nothing else. He laid our magazine besides his dissertation and buttoned up his case and walked away down the sidewalk toward Watkins Watson Library.

That was our first sale, and everybody was pleased at the irony of it all—that the first copy had been sold to a literary lawyer of sorts. But I thought it was sad; I tend to think there is a pinch of sadness in all irony. Somehow I felt we had been officially accepted, and I recalled that James Agee warns us that such acceptance is a kind of castration. As the brief case and dissertation and the first copy of the **Cottonwood** headed toward Watson and some well organized cubical, I excused myself and went over to the Gaslight. I ran into Harris Flora (whose father was the fine mystery writer), and Harris and I got drunk that afternoon and talked about the fact that Wyatt was a better love poet than Sydney, although in those days we were taught it was the other way around.

Why do you write about Kansas?

I grew up in Kansas and was at first bored by it, and so I began to invent it as a more exciting place. Then I jumped into my invention and started the motor and flew away. Over the years I've added to what I first made, and what I've added came from what I saw as I lived in Kansas. I hate to say it, but there is a certain truth to fiction, much like a novel is a prose work “of a certain length.”

By now my invention is filled with the altimeters and turn-and-bank indicators of the real Kansas, and I now celebrate both the place as it is and as I've made it. At the end of my work I hope to have a state of mind that is one with the state itself. I also hope it flies on its own.

Do you think that screenplays should be published?

Some of them. Many of them are badly written and act only as manuals for the films. But I like to read the good ones, and I tend to think that if the trend continues—the trend in which screenplay writers don't have to write good sentences and paragraphs—then the movies will get more “visual,” and in so doing they will sterilize themselves. I think a movie like **The Empire Strikes Back** is too visual. But if you're stuck with rotten dialogue, a bad plot, no sense of character, and little understanding of the intertwining of stories, then you make the film “visual.” Of course, I like good writing for its own sake, but I think in the long run the better writers are going to have more to contribute to a film than the writers who don't much care about decent prose, and instead hope that a hot-shot director with a good camera man can make the film go. Such scripts will make for unbalanced films in all kinds of ways. But I'm not sure we can see that now. It may take years for us to get dissatisfied with these films. Pauline Kael recently wrote a long article in the **New Yorker** about why movies are so bad, and she blamed the directors and producers for spending too much time in bed with the starlets. She also had plenty of complaints about weak-brained businessmen who think they are artists, and she bitched about commercial taste. (That's us.) But she didn't blame the writers, and I think she's wrong about that.

Among older writers, like Walter Bernstein (**The Front**), you have people who wrote well enough to have their short stories published in the **New Yorker**. Woody Allen—for all of his New York preciousness—writes well enough not only to get published in good magazines, but also to win literary awards. Agee's sense of detail in his scripts seems to have come out of a literary mind—a mind that has a strong affection for the beauty of words, and the distinctions those beauties made. I think as long as a screenplay writer has that verbal instinct, then his work deserves publication. But the screenplays which are merely texts for film study classes, but have no merit beyond that, don't really deserve the attention of good little magazines.

What part do you think small presses are playing in the current publishing scene?

For one thing, they provide variety. I don't know many authors who can get a short novel published. Harvard University Press has had a short novel series in existence for three years now, and I haven't seen a book come out yet. No New York publisher is interested unless you've got more than fifty-thousand words. Of course, there are exceptions: John Barth put three short novels together a few years back and got them published. But most writers can't expect to get short novels or story collections published by commercial companies. University presses and small press publishers are about the only way to get such fiction in print. And the same goes for poetry. Diane Wakoski used to publish with Doubleday. I don't know what happened, but I see her most recent book is with Black Sparrow. In some ways, it might be better for a poet to be with Black Sparrow than with Doubleday. Doubleday must think they are doing you a favor to publish your poetry; a small press

tends to think that the writer and the publisher are together in the venture. It's an arrangement that has its charm. I like charm.

Beyond that, there has always been the claim that small magazines and small presses are the starting ground for writers. I think that is still true. But I also tend to think that more and more the established writers want their work represented by good small presses. I see Ted Solotoroff's **Red Hot Vacuum** is now published by Godine. Bill Gass has a book out by Godine. W.D. Snodgrass' latest book has been done by a small press. When I go to New York I head first for the Gotham Book Mart on 47th Street; to get there I have to go past Brentanos on Fifth Avenue (which I go to second), but first I go to Gotham because it is there that I'll find the newest small press books. I know what Brentanos has; I can read the **New York Times Book Review**. It used to be you'd go to the Gotham for out of print books—and they are still there. But now, for me at least, I use the Gotham to find both the new writers and the experiments and passions of the established writers. Besides, so many of the small press books are well done: excellent printing, fine binding, good design. It's a pleasure to buy a Pushcart book.

But the big problem is getting such books distributed to general readers. You must face it with **Cottonwood**—both the magazine and the books. The Kansas Regents Press should assist you in distribution. I think it's Doubleday that distributes for Fiction Collective. There's plenty of precedent for such an arrangement. And university bookstores should be at least as concerned with new fiction and poetry as they are with old Rod McKuen and picture books on cats. It's true at a hundred university towns: the best bookstore is downtown and not on the campus. That should not be. The irony is too obvious to be ignored. And sad.

What is your new novel about?

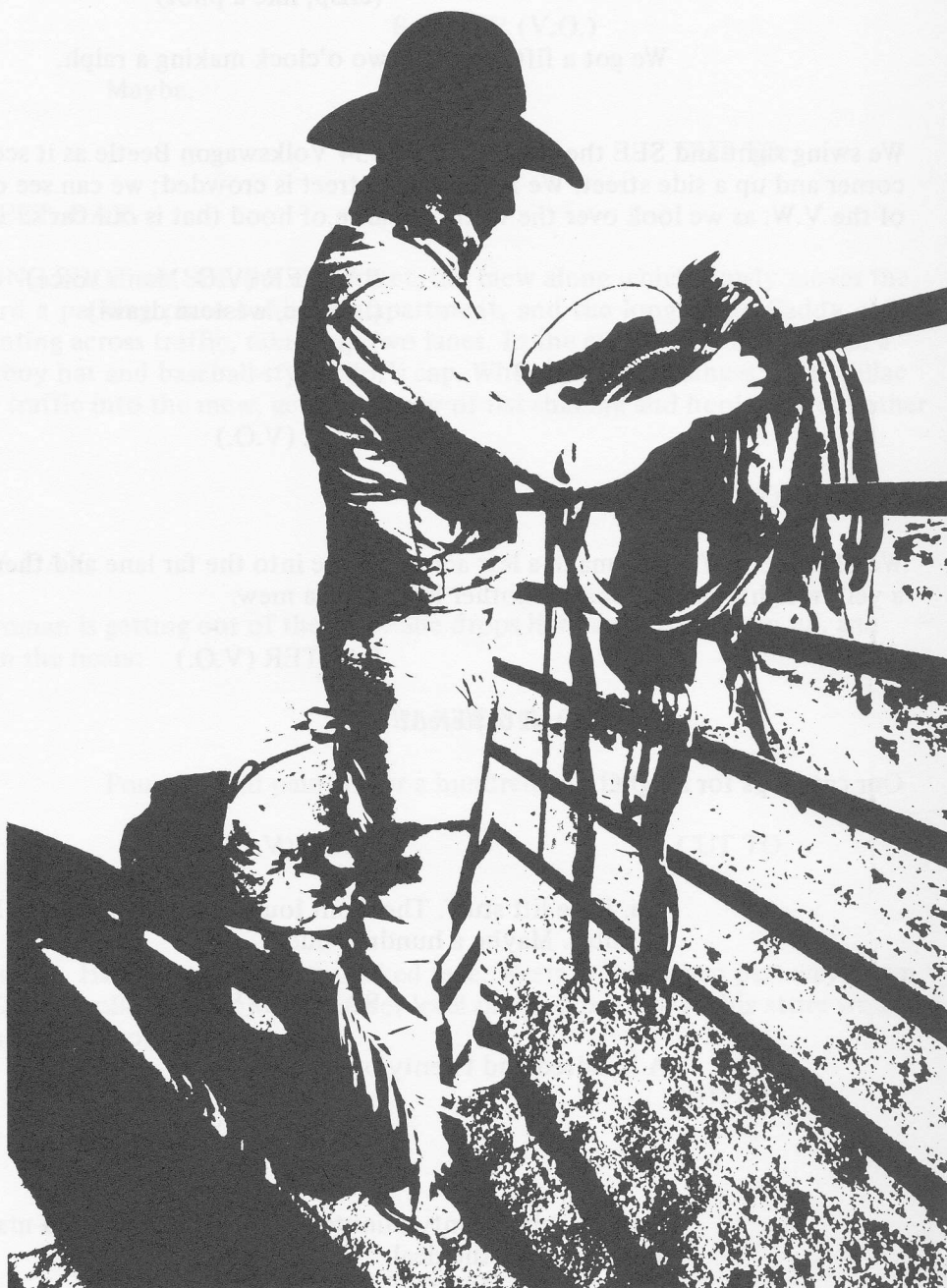
It is called **I Am In California**, and it's about the Pope, Studebakers, metal detectors, the mountain/central standard time line, the Kansas Historical Society, holograms, lists, television, frisbees, "When the World was Young," verbena, **Time** magazine, Knute Rockne and C.K. Chesterton, and Doc of Gunsmoke. It will be out next summer.

*What has happened to the film production of **The Last Cattle Drive**?*

The actors' strike has held it up. The most recent plans had been to film it in Texas this winter. But I don't know about that now. My hope is that they'll wait until next year and shoot it in Kansas. I understand that no matter where they shoot the main part of the film, they want to drive the cattle through Kansas City.

What are you currently writing?

A novel called **Indians, Cowboys, Women And Flowers**. It sort of sums up my life.



Manhattan Round Up

An Original Screen Play by Robert Day

1. EXTERIOR CITY STREET. DAY.

We are inside a moving convertible. Traffic noise is our theme music On the passenger's side we catch a glimpse of the BOY's pilot-capped head; on the driver's side the brim of a cowboy hat cuts the screen now and then, turning as it talks. Mainly, we see traffic. We HEAR (Voice Over):

TUCK (V.O.-Boy's voice)
(crisp, like a pilot)

We got a fifty-four at two o'clock making a ralph.

We swing right and SEE the tail end of a 1954 Volkswagon Beetle as it scoots around a corner and up a side street. We follow. The street is crowded; we can see only the top of the V.W. as we look over the white expanse of hood that is our car's.

BAXTER (V.O. Man's voice)
(laconic, western drawl)

Bull or cow?

TUCK (V.O.)

Girl doggie.

We SEE the V.W.'s top make a left across traffic into the far lane and then run through a yellow light—only to make another left down a mew.

BAXTER (V.O.)

Bruised and battered?

Our car stops for a light.

TUCK (V.O.)

No. Face lift stuff. The front louie fender had a ding. Maybe twenty minutes. Maybe a hundred bucks.

BAXTER (V.O.)

A hundred and twenty bucks?

TUCK (V.O.)
(louder)

I said maybe twenty minutes. Twenty minutes and maybe we can get a hundred for the deal.

There is a moment of silence at the stop light.

BAXTER (V.O.)
(musing)

Fifty-four blue. Fifty-four light blue. We got plenty of that.

TUCK (V.O.)

Maybe we can shoot her a re-paint.

The light changes.

BAXTER (V.O.)

Maybe.

CUT TO:

2. EXT. STREET. DAY.

From a LONG SHOT we SEE the city street, the mew along which slowly moves the V.W. toward a parking place behind an apartment, and the long white Caddy convertible slanting across traffic, taking up two lanes. In the car we SEE a MAN and a BOY: Cowboy hat and baseball-style pilot's cap. When the light changes the Cadillac cuts across traffic into the mew, getting plenty of fist shaking and honking from other drivers.

CUT TO:

3. EXT. MEW. DAY.

A young woman is getting out of the V.W. She drops her keys, picks them up, and jumps when she hears:

BAXTER (V.O.)

Pound it and paint it for a hundred and fifty.

CUT TO:

4. BAXTER

He is fifty-some. Handsome. Leather-cracked face. Western shirt open part way down his chest. Sleeves rolled up. Cowboy hat set level on his head. For all his attire we sense that he is not a cowboy.

CUT TO:

5. WOMAN

She is twenty-some and pretty.

WOMAN

What?

TUCK (V.O.)

Your bug. We'll take out the dents and paint it for a hundred and fifty.

The woman looks at the car and puts her hand on it, defensively. She pushes the door shut with her butt. She is a bit frightened.

WOMAN

You from a garage or something?

CUT TO:

6. TUCK

He is twelve or so. Clearly he is Baxter's son. He wears glasses, an aviator's shirt, a cap with silver wings, and a head-set down around his neck. He is leaning over the edge of the Caddy's window and looking with professional interest at the dented fender. He adjusts his glasses back and forth to get a better view.

BAXTER (V.O.)

We'll do it here. Now.

CUT TO:

7. CADDY AND WOMAN

From underneath the dash Baxter pulls a lever and up pops the trunk lid. It scares the woman. Inside the trunk we SEE that it is loaded with tools.

BAXTER

It wouldn't take but a moment this sunny morning.

WOMAN

I mean I'd have to talk to my boy friend about it. He knows about cars.

TUCK
(to Baxter)

It's clean. Not rusted through. No putty. Maybe an hour.

The WOMAN steps aside for a moment and looks at the dent. She starts to say "no" again but before she can Baxter says:

BAXTER

A hundred and twenty-five since the hand here says we can pound that out real clean. A hundred and twenty-five. Cash money.

At the word "cash" the woman clutches her bag and scoots over in front of the dented fender.

WOMAN

I don't think so. My boy friend...

(pause)

As she speaks we SEE in the background Tuck climb into the back seat toward the trunk. We HEAR (V.O.) the trunk slam—the noise startles the woman.

CUT TO:

8. EXT. MEW. DAY.

A LONG SHOT of the Cadillac pulling away. We HEAR the squeal of tires. There is a cloud of blue smoke that engulfs the WOMAN as we hear V.O.

BAXTER (V.O.)

Shit! Women and boy friends. How many times have we heard that stupid talk.

TUCK (V.O.)

She might have come around.

BAXTER (V.O.)

We'll never get back west if we spend our time talking women into anything.

TUCK (V.O.)

That's why they won't let women be fighter pilots. They can't make up their mind.

BAXTER (V.O.)

Or cowboys either. That's why I quit the Four Sixes. Girls and hippies wanting a man's job at the ranch.

There is a pause as we SEE the Cadillac pull out into traffic.

TUCK (V.O.)

We got a seventy-two on the apron at twelve o'clock.

BAXTER (V.O.)

Too clean. Skip it. And let me tell you this: You don't have any fun in life talking women into doing anything. You'll learn that soon enough unless you hear me now. Let's get something to eat.

CUT TO:

9. EXT. CITY PARK. DAY.

Tuck and Baxter are sitting on the hood of the Cadillac eating vendor hot dogs, french fries, and drinking beer. They are watching a film crew and still photographers shoot pictures of a western-type commercial— selling jeans, or hats, or cologne. It is hard to tell. There are horses, cameras, women and cowboys.

BAXTER

They wouldn't last long in the west.

TUCK

(scanning sky, adjusting glasses)

This afternoon let's go over to Astoria. We always get a couple there.

BAXTER

You just want to watch the planes out of LaGuardia.

TUCK

We got those two sixty-one's in Long Term Parking. Three hundred a throw.

There is a moment of silence between them. Baxter is watching the horses. A bag of french fries is split open on the hood of the car. Tuck tests the hood for warmth. Ahead, one of the actors is helped onto a wonderful looking roan horse that is decked out in a furry bridle with furry reins. The saddle is bejeweled with rhinestones, the saddle blanket is sheepskin.

BAXTER

They get good horses. I wonder where they get them? That tack Jesus what bull shit tack.

TUCK

(looking at the horse)

It's like that fuzzy seventy-six we shot down the other day. The one with the dog with the electric lights in the back window.

BAXTER

Jesus Larry.

They watch the photo session. In the background a twin engined commercial jet cuts

across the screen. We HEAR its whine mixed with the clicks of the cameras and the stirring of the horse.

TUCK

Seven-thirty-seven. A jet of a jet of jet of a jet. Nasty on fuel though.

The horse whinnies, and there is some commotion, some shouting. We SEE that the horse is crow-hopping around the park and that the hapless actor is loose in the saddle. Hanging onto the horse's neck, the actor rides out of sight; the crew clambers after him as the noise of the jet increases. Baxter and Tuck laugh.

CUT TO:

10. Baxter and Tuck

They are eating the last of the french fries and drinking off the beer.

TUCK

You going to learn to fly when we get to the ranch?

BAXTER

Like Sky King?

TUCK

Who's that?

BAXTER

He's a flying cowboy. On television. Maybe not anymore. Maybe he's dead.

TUCK

I could teach you after I get out of the Air Force. Or on weekends when I fly up.

BAXTER

Maybe for crop dusting I could learn. Pick up a little money that way. When cattle are bad.

TUCK

Ag wagons.

BAXTER
(cupping his ear)

What?

TUCK
(adjusting glasses)

That's what we'd use. Cessna Ag-Wagons. We could buy a pair of them and I could crop dust while you ran the ranch and in between time I'd teach you to fly and we could double buzz crop dust.

The boy flies two planes with his hands: back and forth, bank and turn, the engines growling in his throat.

BAXTER

You want to learn to ride, don't you.

TUCK

Sure. We agreed on that. So I can round-up the cattle.

BAXTER
(not fully hearing)

Not with a plane. We're not going to herd cattle with a plane. They wanted to do that at the Four Sixes and I said no to that.

TUCK

I thought you said you did that there. I thought you said you didn't do that at the King Ranch. But...

BAXTER
(nervous)

I guess I forgot. It was at the Sixes I didn't let them use planes.

CUT TO:

11. EXT. PARK. DAY.

They are finished eating. The park is quiet; the hood of the Cadillac empty of their food. They pick up the wrappers and beer cans and toss them in a near-by trash basket. In a moment they are driving down the road, Baxter looking out his side of the car at the procession of advertizing people leading back the horse; the model cowboy is walking far behind— he gestures in a wild, effeminate manner to an assistant.

BAXTER (V.O.)

I wonder why they don't use real cowboys. They sure use real horses.

TUCK (V.O.)

That's one thing about planes. You gotta use real pilots.

We see his hands move in a take-off, his engine throat coming to life.

FADE TO:

12. EXT. STREET DAY.

Slowly we are cruising the streets. Tuck is perched on the back of the front seat; his head phones (connected to the car tape deck) are over his pilot's cap. He is snapping his finger to an inaudible beat. We SEE that Baxter says something to Tuck—something he does not hear because of the ear phones. Baxter points back behind the car. Still Tuck does not notice. Finally, Baxter brakes slightly and Tuck looks at him, putting out one hand to steady himself on the top of the windshield.

BAXTER

Take that damn thing off. We got to be on the ball here. It's not like they're still making those Bugs.

Baxter looks back over the seat.

TUCK

I think we got something back in that parking lot.

Cars sweep around them; Tuck turns around on the top of the seat and peers through his glasses. Baxter fishes out from beneath the seat a pair of binoculars and hands them to Tuck. A cabbie shouts something profane as he goes by. We move to a LONG SHOT. In trade for the binoculars Tuck hands Baxter his eyeglasses to hold.

TUCK

Early seventies. Green. Combed on the nose. Kansas plates. Some woman sitting in the right seat.

(Pause)

Looks like a strike.

Tuck trades the binoculars for his eyeglasses and Baxter checks the traffic behind him as he makes an arrogant U-turn right through traffic.

CUT TO:

13. EXT. PARKING LOT DAY.

As the Cadillac pulls in we SEE a COWBOY (tall, meatless and boney, young) bow-leg it across the parking lot from a phone booth. A COWGIRL (a round Rubens of a woman with tight jeans) gets out of the V.W.

COWBOY
(to Baxter)

Hey pardner. Where can we find this LONG ISLAND.

(to COWGIRL)

Operator hung up on me. Ever hear of that? Operator hang up on you?

He looks around.

You think she could tell me where an island is.

Baxter gets out of the car and the moment he does the COWBOY goes up to him and sticks out his hand. They shake.

BAXTER

I think we can help you find Long Island. I think we can do that. Pardner.

COWBOY

You been out there? I'll tell you this having a rodeo in New York City is a pile of turkey shit for an idea.

COWGIRL

We've been driving for two days. Had to stay in a motel.

She grins.

BAXTER

Didn't know about the rodeo. We're from around here.

COWBOY

Well, how about that? We're not on your lot are we?

BAXTER

Not at all, Just stopped by to give you hand. Saw you here from Kansas and all. And saw your car, and me and the boy thought we'd stop and give you hand.

CUT TO:

14. EXT. PARKING LOT. DAY.

Our Point of View is from across the street. Traffic is cutting back and forth through the shot. We watch in silence, only the traffic noise as a background. Baxter and the COWBOY discuss one thing, then another. Tuck gets out and points to the dent in the Bug's nose. The COWGIRL laughs. Baxter rubs some loose paint out of the dent and then runs his hand over the hood and top of the car. In short, Baxter and Tuck shoot the Kansas couple the deal. The COWBOY and COWGIRL seem amazed, but not suspicious. Hand shakes all around. Smiles too.

ZOOM TO:

15. EXT. PARKING LOT. DAY.

Apparently it is Tuck's one chance to drive—in parking lots. Baxter directs as Tuck backs toward the V.W. It is as if an airplane is being brought into a gate. Tuck's glasses slip and so toward the end he has to drive with one hand while holding his glasses against his eyes with the other.

TUCK

What's my E.T.A.

CUT TO:

16. Baxter and group

BAXTER

You got about five feet back here.

BAXTER
(to Cowboy/Cowgirl)

That's his Estimated Time of Arrival. He wants to be a pilot.

CUT TO:

17. PARKING LOT.

Tuck is straining to look over the edge of the seat; his cap is askew and when he slides back down in the seat to get organized he hits the gas pedal too hard and the Cadillac lurches the last few feet into the V.W.—rocking the Bug and creasing the door.

BAXTER

I guess we throw that one in free. No charge on that one, pardner.

(to Tuck)

Adjust your glasses. You can't see for shit.

TUCK

Put your hands up in the air when I'm close. Both hands in the air.

BAXTER

What?

TUCK

Get a hearing aid. You can't hear without one.

Tuck pulls the Cadillac forward a bit and turns off the engine. He reaches under the

dash and pulls the trunk lever which pops up the lid in our faces.

18. TRUNK

It is as big as the car, and it is packed with the tools and materials of a miniature body and paint shop. Shelves are built along the sides to hold rows of paint cans; tools are strapped to the trunk lid; air compressor hoses, body putty, propane tanks, heaters, and canvas tarps are all stored neatly in the trunk's bed.

BAXTER (V.O.)

Seventy-four deep green. Let's see. Might have to open a new can.

TUCK (V.O.)

There's one open behind the metallic blue.

BAXTER (V.O.)

What?

We SEE hands in the trunk picking up paint cans. Between them they find what they want.

DISSOLVE TO:

19. A SERIES OF SCENES SHOWING THE POUNDING AND PAINTING OF THE V.W.

- A). As if in an operating room Tuck brings Baxter various soft and hard hammers with which he pounds out dents.
- B). Tuck, working by himself (his pilot's cap on sideways) sands and flares a large dent in the V.W.'s fender. He uses a power sander whose cord runs back out of the picture toward the Cadillac. The COWGIRL watches, a red bandanna over her mouth. The dust flies.
- C). By using clamps Baxter pulls out the long crease Tuck put in the V.W.'s door. The COWBOY helps with the pulling.
- D). Both with goggles and masks (but still with hats on) Baxter and Tuck use small portable sprayers to lay on a coat of orange primer. We get a FULL SHOT of the car when this is done: it looks like a snapshot of a car that looks like a ladybug. The COWGIRL laughs and dots her face with her fingers to say that the car has a case of measles.
- E). While we SEE Tuck using something like a hair dryer to blow dry the primer, Baxter and the COWBOY set up a ring of tarps around the V.W.
- F). LONG SHOT: The square and littered lower-Manhattan parking lot frames the circle of tarp that encloses the V.W. The Cadillac's trunk and hood are open and there are lines and hoses leading from generators on the engine and compressors in the trunk—all leading like life lines in an operating room—under the tarp and into the clean circle where Tuck and Baxter are putting masking tape and paper on the

glass and chrome of the V.W.

- G). Tuck is standing by the car's engine. We HEAR Baxter shout. Tuck throws a switch, then runs back toward the trunk and adjusts the air compressor valves. From his P.O.V. we SEE a cloud of green mist rise out of the chimney made by the tarp. The COWGIRL and COWBOY back away, and we follow the mist upward until we SEE from ABOVE Baxter—half hidden—spraying the V.W. Tuck enters the circle and assists with lines and cords.

CUT TO:

20. EXT. PARKING LOT. DAY.

From inside the tarp we HEAR the blow-dryers. First one shuts off and out comes Tuck, then the other stops and out comes Baxter.

BAXTER
(to Cowboy)

It's dry to touch, but if you've got half an hour to have a beer with us and let it sit, that'll be better. Two beer time.

COWBOY

We even got the beer. Brought some Coors from Kansas. Kept it cold all the way.

The COWBOY goes by Tuck (who is rolling up cords and hoses) and heads into the tarp. We HEAR a door open and in a moment after we HEAR it shut the COWBOY appears with a white plastic cooler—a large KANSAS COORS sign glowing on its side. The COWGIRL goes up to help him through the tarp; she takes a peek at the car and we, too, get a glimpse: it looks splendi—freshly green and smooth.

CUT TO:

21. EXT. PARKING LOT. DAY.

The three men are sitting on the hood of the Cadillac, sipping beer. The COWGIRL is sitting on the COORS COOLER.

COWBOY

Damn straight. I'd have to say you got a damn straight set-up here.

(to COWGIRL)

Beats Fat Ernie. Right DeAnna.

(to others)

That's the body man in Hill City. Hill City, Kansas, that's where we're from. How long you been doing this now.

BAXTER

Me and the boy, four years. I worked for somebody before that.

TUCK

That's just since he was in the city. Before that he was a cowboy. Like you. We're saving our money to go to Ten Sleeps. Wyoming. Dad's going to get us a ranch there and I'm going to learn to fly down at the Air Force Academy. In Colorado.

COWBOY

(to Baxter)

You work in the west? How about that.

BAXTER
(nervous)

The boy he's going to be a fighter pilot.

COWGIRL

I don't think they have those anymore. I think they just have rockets. And buttons.

TUCK
(unconcerned)

I'm going to fly for the ranch, too. But not to herd cattle or anything. Dad doesn't like things like that. He stopped ranching because of stuff like that. He used to be a foreman.

COWBOY

What ranch you run?

Baxter seems to want to drop the subject. But Tuck goes on.

TUCK

He ran the Four Sixes in Oklahoma. But we're going to Ten Sleeps because that's where there's still government land you can buy cheap. And it's flat so we can put in a air strip.

COWGIRL
(to Baxter)

You know Ward Johnson, then. He's my uncle. He's been at Four Sixes for years.

As Tuck talks to the COWBOY, Baxter shakes his head slowly NO to the COWGIRL.

He seems to be trying to remember her uncle. He frowns, seems to search through his memory only to find nothing. But we sense—even if the COWGIRL does not—that there is something wrong. We watch this as Tuck says:

TUCK

I'm going to fly home on weekends in fighter jets. But we're going to have our own plane. Dad's going to teach me to rope and I'm going to teach him to fly. But not in the fighter.

BAXTER

(tossing off beer)

If we're going to get all that done we better get these good folks on their way to Long Island and that rodeo. And hit the trail ourselves. We've got to shoot down more bugs. They're not exactly every other car anymore.

COWBOY

(to Cowgirl)

He know Ward?

(to Baxter)

That's her uncle. Suds Johnson. He's a Four Sixes Man. Been there since he was a boy.

Now Tuck pays attention: He looks at his father for some confirmation—not with suspicion but with pride. Baxter again looks nervous.

TUCK

He was the foreman there until after the Vietnam War and then he couldn't take all the hippies wanting work. So he quit. That's when he came and got me. I was living with an Aunt in Maryland.

There is a moment of silence as everyone waits for Baxter to speak. Finally:

BAXTER

(thin)

I guess me and this Johnson didn't cross paths.

COWBOY

(dense)

Sure you did. He's been there since the fifties. Still there. He won't even leave for Christmas. To come home. DeAnna here had to go down one year cause we heard he was sick but didn't know how bad.
(laughs)

Seems he was just drunk for too long. Beer drunk for a month That's why they call him Suds. Sure you know him. What's your name?

All during this speech the COWGIRL is trying to slow down the COWBOY. We SEE that she knows there is something wrong—but she can't get her boyfriend's attention. Baxter is getting more nervous, shifting on his butt. Tuck is watching him; he adjusts his glasses only to see the COWGIRL shaking her head NO to the COWBOY. She sees she has been observed and stops. She smiles weakly.

BAXTER
(trying for strength)

I had a lot of men to run down there. It's like you...well, it's like now that you've been to New York somebody else saying did you run into so and so who lives here. The Four Sixes is a big ranch. Lots of men.

The COWBOY starts to say something, but the COWGIRL stops him by getting into her wallet for the money they owe. The sun is getting low, and there are long shadow boxes cut into the parking lot pavement. Pigeons swirl around them then leave when Tuck throws a beer can at them. There is something in that toss that tells us he feels cheated. By himself he pulls the ropes and cords that tumble down the tarp around the V.W.: green and shiny and perfect and stark in the fading light.

CUT TO:

22. EXT. CAR. DAY.

Baxter and Tuck are riding along in the traffic noise. We stop for a red light. Plenty of cars go in front of us—one of them a battered V.W. Bug who makes a left turn and goes down the street we are on.

There are chunks of shade and sunlight on the street, and as the V.W. passes through them it seems to fade and glow. It goes out of the top of the frame.

BAXTER
(trying to be upbeat)

You miss that one or what?

(pause)

What kind of fighter pilot you going to be when you miss a doggie like that.

The light changes.

TUCK
(low, sarcastic)

A real one.

BAXTER

What? What'd you say?

TUCK

I said I'm going to be a real fighter pilot like you're a real liar. That's what I said.

Baxter jams the brakes. Tuck lurches into the dash board. His glasses spring off but don't break. The head-set flips forward and cuts him on the cheek. But not badly. He takes off the head-set and throws it at his father as he screams:

TUCK

You were never a cowboy. Were you? You never were?

Traffic piles up behind them for a moment. Horns blare and then cars sweep around the Cadillac on both sides.

BAXTER
(panic-strong)

The Four Sixes is big. It's real big.

TUCK
(screaming)

You said you knew everybody. You said they'd come into your cabin and ask for advice from all over the country. That's what you said. You said...

BAXTER

O.K. What do you want? I've never been West. I've never been west of Bridgeport, Ohio. Is that the kind of truth you want? I've never even been on a horse. Nothing. I got some other truth for you. You're not going be no fighter pilot cause you got bad eyes. You haven't got anything either.

The silence is awful. We stop the traffic noise and SEE the two of them sitting there in the Cadillac, staring at one another. In silence. The traffic going by, to and fro. Among the cars is another V.W. Bug. In a moment Tuck takes off his glasses and throws them out of the car into the traffic. The only noise we HEAR is the sound of them breaking when they hit the pavement. Tuck throws open his door; a car swerves to miss him; another car herds him back toward the Cadillac's front. Baxter springs out of his side and he catches Tuck as he is driven into his arms in front of the Cadillac. When they touch the SOUND returns: cars are swearing to stops, Tuck is screaming at his father and fighting to get free. There is a loud thud as a car going the other direction hits the open driver's door of the Cadillac. Baxter wins the struggle with Tuck, pinning him on the hood of the car.

CUT TO:

23. EXT. PARKING LOT. NIGHT.

A near-by street light reveals the scene. Tuck and Baxter are working on the damaged door of the Cadillac. They move slowly, as if stiff and wounded. They help one another in sad slow motion.

BAXTER
(softly)

I guess we'll need a little more sanding here.

He points to a spot; Tuck flares out old paint with the portable sander.

TUCK

You want to get this ding on the trunk while we're at it.

He looks absently at the trunk.

BAXTER

Guess so.

(pause)

I don't know that about fighter pilots, son.

TUCK

It doesn't matter.

BAXTER

I see those Captains out at LaGuardia coming into the parking lot and they're wearing beer bottle bottoms for glasses.

TUCK

It doesn't matter.

BAXTER

Yeah it matters. It matters to you, doesn't it.

Tuck starts up the power sander and works the spot on the trunk. In the silence that follows the moment he stops the sander Baxter, with the reflex of those who are hard of hearing says:

BAXTER

What'd you say?

TUCK

Is that true about you never being west of Ohio?

BAXTER

No. Not that either. That's not true either.

He looks around as if he doesn't want to speak if there are other people to hear him.

BAXTER
(slowly)

I never worked at Four-Sixes though. Not like I said. Or at the King Ranch either.

(pause)

I've been west. I worked for a stock yard in Dodge City. That's how I met your mother.

TUCK

Did you have a saddle? A horse? Did you have a horse and saddle?

Baxter shakes his head no.

BAXTER

The stock yard had them and we just used theirs when we needed to. I shovelled shit mainly.

(pause)

Sometimes it seems real enough to run down a Bug and call it a heifer...

Tuck takes off his pilot's cap, fiddles with it, puts it back on and blinks his eyes. Baxter goes to the trunk of the Cadillac.

CUT TO:

24. EXT. PARKING LOT. NIGHT.

A LONG SHOT FROM ABOVE. We SEE that both of them are painting primer on the two sanded spots: trunk and door. When Tuck finishes he comes down and helps Baxter with the larger place on the door. We are far away and we HEAR V.O.:

BAXTER (V.O.)

I thought we'd go to Long Island tomorrow. We did some good over there last week. Maybe you'd like to see what a rodeo is like.

TUCK (V.O.)

I guess so.

BAXTER

Then Sunday over to LaGuardia.

There is a moment of silence.

TUCK

That woman was right about fighter pilots.

BAXTER (V.O.)

How's that?

TUCK

They got rockets now.

BAXTER

You can still crop dust. They're not doing that from space.

TUCK

I guess.

BAXTER

That o.k. about Long Island and LaGuardia then?

TUCK (V.O.)

O.K.

BAXTER

You don't sound too happy about it.

TUCK (V.O.)

It's just that we're running out of bugs. There's not much future in it. What's going to happen to us?

BAXTER (V.O.)

Nothing much, I guess.

FADE TO CREDITS

Miriam Sagan

The Book of Kells

On page one
The animals have human hands.
S is a serpent,
O devours its own tail.
An exquisite bird
Nests in a green initial,
An indigo cat stalks
Along the top of the script.

On page two
The coracles lie drying
Like beached whales.
Fences criss-cross
Beneath soft weather.
The island women heard candles,
Water the tight fisted rows
Of kitchen gardens.

There is a hole in page three
In the shape of the rain,
Enter the weather,
Build a house of storm.
There is a hole in the woman
In the shape of a child,
A hole in the child in the shape of the wind.

At the edge of page four
We walk along the beach.
The gulls rise up in one pure startled line.
The sky above us is not a grid of gold,
No dragon nor coptic cross rises
In a frenzy of spirals.
Simply, a sailboat turns from the headland,
Tacks out into sunlight.
Yes, I am talking to you.

Michael Cadnum

Cold

The stump black-
snaked blown
clear two years ago
 barbed
wire silver in
sudden light the dog
 loud and
smoke-breathed

a car starts
far away and drives

farther, where the creek

is full of fish
lined like guns
against the current that

flows almost
hard from the
granite to the end.

Brian Caldwell

Crazy Time Itch

crazy time grabs me
like an itch I gotta scratch:

gotta dance
gotta sing
get all naked on t.v.
get drunk
get high
run screaming graveyard roads
climb a tree
climb a hill
someday mountains

till I feel like some old grizzly
rubbing on a tree

V. Dolores Fletcher

Deep Knee Bends: A Landscape

for Henri Matisse, 1954

Flint Hills, Kansas—
In a car barely big enough
to cause a dent in wind,
Michael Heff and I drive
our pink faces suddenly on
to something: bodies.

We putt-putt it up and over
the Jolly Green Giant's
buttocks dotted by cows,
drop down Sophia Loren's
charcoal gray cleavage
toward the green of earth,
and roll it in to Wichita,
the black crotch of Kansas,
blue tornadoes, where
inside the motel, inside
my midget body, Michael
calls out the name
of his darling wife as if
to describe the scenery
while I dream of oceans
stagnant inside of me,
dying fish fighting
to the surface as fresh buds
of sparkling winter wheat.

V. Dolores Fletcher

Growing Old with Dogs

I take careful step around this house.
Daredevil dogs live under the fridge,
flatter than ran-over cats, flatter
than Eileen Wright in high school, pink
tongues I could flip pancakes with if
they ever came out in time for breakfast.

I'm in the kitchen, turning thirty,
and all they ever do is be there,
heavy breaths lifting from under the stove,
the windowed oven. I'm backing things up
to the time I was but tall enough
to reach nothing and bent instead to look

and saw the hairy things under
my mother's finest appliances, animals,
this pack of wild dogs grown up now
surely and probably given birth to hoards,
maybe thousands of wagging tails
I could accidently step on like shadows

and the light would leap and bark
and teach new tricks around this house.

V. Dolores Fletcher

How To Make Noise
for Sam Levenson

I got a want to rub
my breasts against you,
but dip them in
the river first, come
up slick and shiny
in the broad broad sun.
I got a want to push
my tongue inside you,
lick live cats in
the alley first, come
up full of fur and fun,
come up and out
somehow brightly changed.
I got a want to birth
myself inside you,
but get in there first,
come small enough
to grow new fingers.

V. Dolores Fletcher

One Being Saddled

for Clint Eastwood

What I want
to know is:
How many red
tongues
in a girl's
good ear
before things
get too wet
to handle?
Or down one's
throat before
a permanent
cough develops?

And
How many red
scratches
make a scar,
a wound deep
enough to draw
blood and
ruin the carpet?

Will my mother
notice, send
her sincere
sympathy
and rescind
the Thanksgiving
dinner invitation?

Or
Will a fine
next man
care my back
is broken,
my door busted
wide open,
before his
lit cigar
leaves blisters?

What I want
to know is:
How many red
red times
before one
too many?

William Kloefkorn

The Burning

Grandfather, big almost
as the blazing outshed
he plunged into,
returned unmarked:
but the keepsake luggage
he had been advised to rescue
had been left behind,
and in its place
the full-blown figure of a nude
spread out uncreased like all of Revelation,
covering him that vast, wayward distance
from the knees to the stubble
of his upthrust chin.

Grandmother, disobeyed,
exhaled a wisp of prayer:
Jesus, she said,
that one word intoning
how much she knew at last
of what the old man dared to hope to spare
beyond the workbench.

Very shortly thereafter
the wine bottles began to explode,
and then, as if in wry cahoots,
Grandfather's poster
at the right lower corner
began to smoke, then to smolder,
and, fanned by a small sudden breeze,
burst into flame.

It was later rumored that Grandmother
might have survived
had it not been for the
popping of the bottles.
I believe otherwise.
I believe that the ankles and the thighs,
the belly and the breasts,
the neck, the burst of yellow hair,
the mouth, the eyes
of that uncouth intruder
had been sufficient as, say, Armageddon.

That, and the angle of Grandfather's chin,
so fixed it might have been a chiseled tongue
unsaying Virgin.

William Kloefkorn

Genepool

What is haunting the young girl at the back of the bus,
the girl across from the old woman whose lips,
suggestive of persimmon, say without speaking
(O I have only once, and that almost an accident,
touched a man) is the recurrent slice of dream
in which she sees herself as an old woman
sitting on a bus, her lips pinched and hard,
the memory of a single touch lost in the undertow
of evening after evening on a bus,
returning somewhere from somewhere to be returned to.

She is a bright unlovely girl who reads voraciously
and believes almost everything that fits her need.
Agamemnon had it coming, the officious duty-bound
son of a butcher: pity Clytemnestra.
She smiles for Medea, would, if she could,
bear the poor woman's chariot to her own empty door.
Yet not even these compare to the face
of the old woman on the bus, surely alone always,
surely always childless, her future dried beneath her belly
like the neglecting of beloved prunes.

Is it possible to see one's future in a slice of dream,
in the lip that undermines a woman's skin?
The girl, asking, shudders.
There is more than one fish in the sea, Horatio,
more than one philosophy under heaven to lay our warm
and fretful bodies down to. But the girl, turning
to touch the vinegar of her small face in the window,
aches to hold something solid and swift and beautiful,
something to give her something to joy over, to repent,
to release, scales and all, into the mystery of this widening pool.

William Kloefkorn

Pee Ess

Just wanted to add
that with luck
your father
should be out of
traction by
Easter. If
you want his address,
write.

Rubbing It In

She writes to tell me
that she is writing only
to rub it in,
that at this moment
she is sitting under a brace of pine trees,
studying a silver fox,
waiting for a friend
to take her walking.
She says, I must
rub it in. She says,
It is cool and early.
I can see my own dear breath,
she says, and when I put on my sweatshirt,
pulling it down over this blue ancient blouse,
which, she says, I am now about to be doing,
the breath no doubt will become
an overflow of timber.
Everything here is here, she says,
to help me rub it in.
Everything here is aromatic
and on the good green edge of bursting:
mountain brook, a rock, a cloud,
a gathering of aspen.
Everything here is high and undefiled,
she says, a first or second cousin
to the osprey. Excluding, of course,
herself, she says, who is the object of her own
sweet scorn, she being one of those
who hates those who cannot resist
rubbing it in. She says,
It is my death of loneliness.
Soon, she says. O dear God, soon!

Sue Ann Fredericksen

1903, Oklahoma

She never told the father's name.

She knew one book:

Quasimodo climbing
steps of stone,
winding over dirty streets;
the bells,
the young girl,
his tower,
a delicate heart
pursued.

Her son climbs red granite
far above fields
of cotton and winter wheat;
Old, he recalls adventures
in the high rocks,
his wrinkled fingers shaking.

She named the son, Victor Hugo.

June Evening

A nighthawk
dives
while I sit
rocking

the lightning
stretches out pink fingers
through thunderheads

I hear the wind
blow hailstones in the clouds.

Deborah Keenan

My Hands at Seven P.M.

The last caress has been given.
My hands are not ready to hold a cigarette,
not ready to crochet, not ready to wash up.
My hands want to be on my mind. And they are.
Resting there. My hands will not go away this week.

My hands want to picket winter.
I do not allow them to
so they crack the skin that holds them.
They want to be martyrs
so they bleed silently into the pattern of the sheets.

My hands are restless on the arms of my chair.
They are restless on my arms.
They have given so much comfort today
they are feeling suddenly useless.
My hands have never learned to fall in love
with each other.
They have learned to chart the heat waves
in my children's foreheads.
My hands could learn the hot and cold of all children.
I am afraid my hands will not be kind to each other
in their old age.

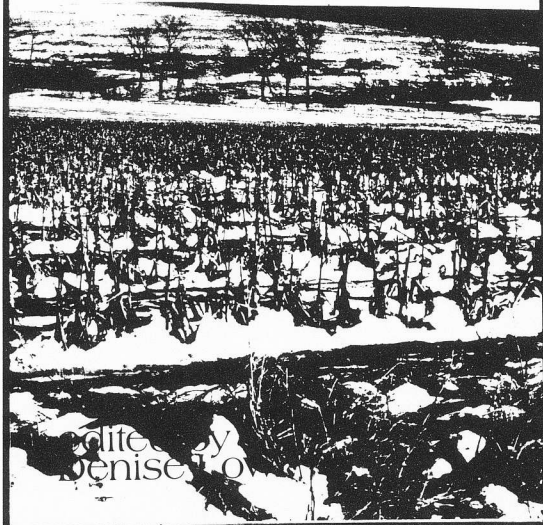
My hands are speaking to me with harsh, angry words.
They are telling me their lost dreams of dancing,
kabuki style.
They are making nasty remarks about Marcel Marceau.
They are telling me they want all the applause.
They are telling me people would not laugh at them
if I were Italian.
They are telling me what and who they will not touch.

They are reading revolutionary literature.
They take turns turning the pages.

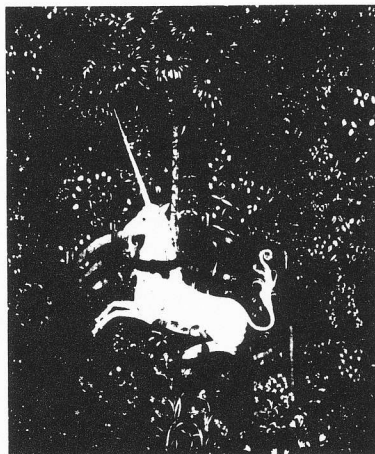
My hands are not sure of anything this week.
My hands would make the deaf weep and laugh this week.
My hands have been letting go of china for days.
My hands have a passion for children this week.
They refuse to touch anything less important.

My hands refuse to sleep.
They weave the air and blankets all night.
My hands are too sad to dream.
They have forgotten how to sleep
and only know when to begin again.

30 Kansas poets

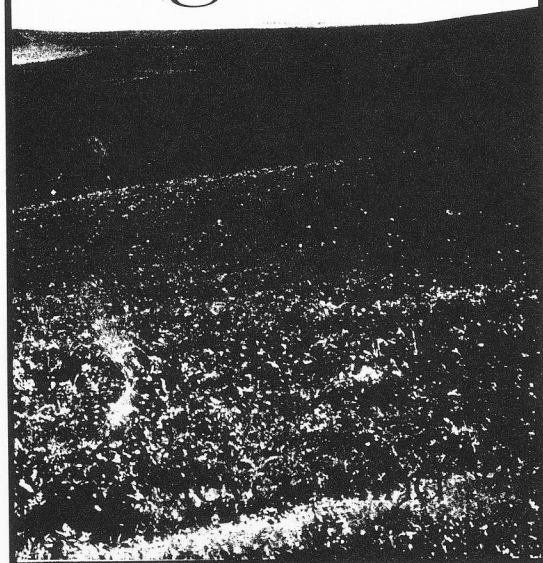


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