COTTONWOOD 30

COTTONWOOD MAGAZINE welcomes submissions of fiction, poetry, graphics, photography, translations, reviews of small press literature, and articles on the arts from both local and national writers and artists. Poetry submissions should be limited to the five best. We cannot return submissions which do not include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Since COTTONWOOD has no regular source of funding, we depend heavily on the interest and support of our subscribers. Issues appear tri-quarterly at $3.50 per issue or $9.00 for a three-issue subscription. Although issues are sometimes irregular, three issues are guaranteed per subscription. Subscriptions and submissions should be directed to:

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COTTONWOOD 30

SPECIAL PHOTOGRAPHY ISSUE

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

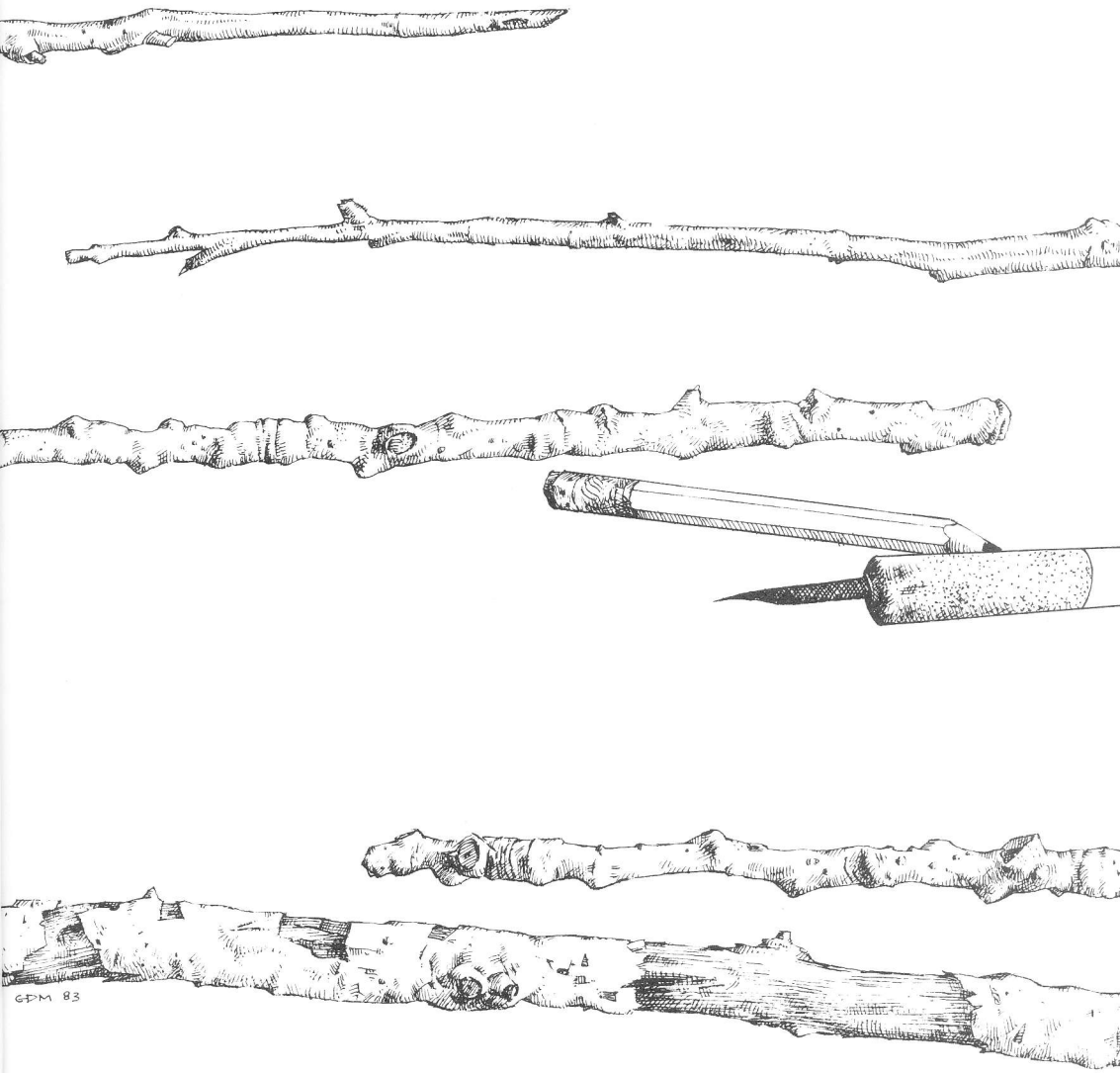
For several years, because of budgetary restrictions, COTTONWOOD has not been able to do full justice to the fine photographs we print. In this issue, we've been able to feature two interesting photographers, Luther Smith and Lyle Alan White, and to print their photographs on the high-quality paper which reproduces their work well.

We are accustomed to thanking the Kansas Arts Commission, the Graduate Student Council, the English Department, and other groups that help us with funding, but we really must also acknowledge that this project has been made possible, to a large extent, by those of you who bought COTTONWOOD 29 in bookstores, at the office, and at readings. Without the purchasers and faithful subscribers who helped make COTTONWOOD 29 a sellout issue, this special photography issue would not be possible.

A number of our titles are now out of print. Denise Low is now editing a brand-new anthology of Kansas poetry, a successor to 30 KANSAS POETS. It will come out as COTTONWOOD 31/32, our 1983 special issue and be available in September. We also have tentative plans to reissue Steven Hind's FAMILIAR GROUND in the fall.

Many thanks to Dan Massad for the pen and ink drawings done especially for this issue and to Tamara Dubin for taking major responsibility for the typing of this issue, as well as to the many staff members and friends who helped with typing, proofreading, mailing, and distribution.

Erleen J. Christensen,
Magazine Editor


GPM 83

POETRY

Elmaz Abinader

MOORING IN THE QUIET
(for Alan)

Here on the plain
the water has edges,
neat lakes bordered by small trees.
Life is motionless
and deliberate beneath the marble surface.
I stand with my boat
in the dark and listen.

I know what the sea
has told me. It has left words
clinging to my feet as they sank
into the golden sands of Valencia.
Messages surround my ankles
as I struggle up the rocks of Palos Verdes.
I cannot be this way
again, it warns me.

It is not easy anymore.
The boat is powerless.
It will not ride the silent lakes of Nebraska
alone. Nothing reaches
to the sky with white foamy passion.
No one travels on the waves to land
freely at the shore.

I drag my boat across the plain
where golden wheat lies still in the fields.
With each journey it becomes lighter.
The sails unravel
and speak to me in a language
we have invented.
And when I look behind me,
I see the contours have remained.
In case I pass
this way again.

Randall R. Freisinger

SKIPPING STONES
(for Emily Clark)

You who are so young
take the flat smooth ones
those that fit in the curl
of finger and thumb
like medallions
or new-minted silver coins.

Hold them in your hand
feel the tales they tell
their silent stories of wind
water rock and ice
slow agonies of earth and air
endless abrasions of shore and lake
that turn all to dance.

Sling the stones flat, low
and with the ribbed tide.
Do not be scrupulous
in the count of skips.
Believe that water can bear rock away
stone cover paper
scissors cut deep into stone.

And one day when you have grown
flat and smooth
like these Superior stones
you will sit by a bed
and feel a hand grow limp.
Eyes will haze like shark's oil.

Just when the breath goes
and the face closes like a fist
listen for the song of stone
on wave and count the leaps
that point us each
to the dark water's grace.

SKUNK HOUR IN HANCOCK, MICHIGAN

All summer while we sleep
and the wind drifts
moonlight in our street
the skunks come from the woods
crossing the unseen limits
to sniff out our private lives

in the plastic bags that line the curb.
One neighbor traps them
in a small wire cage
which keeps the spine unarched
the gland defused.
He drops the trap in water
and we watch the bubbles
to silence.

But still they come
implaccable, unperturbed
a nag a burr a germ
of impalpable fear
their smell clinging
like an unremembered dream.

I lie awake
listening to them
shred the bags.
My rage watches
their dance to the pale moon.

Last summer
the other neighbor heard them
while cancer moved in him
like a slow striptease.

Once the city truck has gone
I will rise as he did for years
and try again with garden hose
to wash from walk and street
what never truly leaves
and does not scare.

Rick Campbell

HANGING TOBACCO, A LOVE POEM

Blue gauze air, laces of light
bend through the barn. The peaked ceiling
smells like an old bar, walls soaked
in Camels. It hits your tongue
like your Grandfather's stained fingers.
He hugs your neck, his hand you taste
and keep.

But this is work. Love maybe,
the sweat and hurt, the one time
for the hell of it. Calves and thighs flicker.
Hands brown and sticky, face like a dustbowl
Okie, this is a feeling
we'd be lying to claim we want for more than a day.
Lying to say it doesn't feel good here
getting it done.

Seventh wagon. Leaves fat as Ohio catfish.
Tired of jerking lead heavy sticks
from my ankles to the beams overhead,
I yell down to Daniel on the flatbed.
Sing. It's hot up here. Sing like we're having fun.

"Jump down turn around/ Pick a bale a cotton"
I'm straddling the rafters singing
into the charred roof. The songs hang
in the thick air and curl around the barn.
Down below the song turns bawdy.
My hips remember a better ache, a better reason
to push for the ceiling. If there's a wrong time
to dream of making love, this is it.
Thirty feet up in a tobacco barn. No net.

They say you get high on your first smoke.
In the last six hours I've sucked down
every Pall Mall since Truman beat Dewey.
Her hair's a red river flowing over my hands,
eyes blue as the late sky outside
the slatted vents of the barn.
This is a dangerous business.

Last spike hung. Climb down the wall
like a gray spider, stretch from beam
to beam to pull the muscles long again.
Whiskey cuts the stale air in our throats.
On the back of the truck I'm belting LeadBelly blues
"You take Sally I'll take Sue"
to Lu Ann and the sweet magnolia air
all the red clay roads home.

CROSSING THE NEVADA TERRITORY

This is where they broke.
Brother strangled brother,
oxen died in the sand.
The river turned to salt
and every last chance evaporated with it.
You could suck stones with better luck.
If you walk into this land
learn to milk cactus.
Eat lizards and snakes.
The Humboldt and all rivers
might go wrong.

The Alleghenies were green as paradise
when she still woke beside me.
Mornings cool as rain. Her sweetwater
kept me alive. The sun blisters my lips.
I was a fool to try this crossing alone.

Lyn Lifshin

WALKING THRU MIDDLEBURY

the hill in the park
where my father fell
bled in the new snow
the huge chestnut
gone not even a
stump where Joyce
Whitney and I ate raw
hot dogs the
stucco house covered
with vines the
same Queen Anne's Lace
I hope no one's
covered the wide
pine floor with
plush pile carpet

I kissed first near
the Episcopal Church
said we can't too often
the trains roared

the damp wet rose up
from the stones along the
track weeds dripping
you could smell the night
flowers from Frog Alley

Beverly Love

ONE EYE, THREE EYES

(from "One Eye, Two Eyes, Three Eyes,"
The Complete Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales)

Sister with two eyes, you
are beautiful, children walk with you,
neighbors hold out their hands
when you pass. Is it any wonder
we hate you? You cry into your hands
and the gods set a table for you,
a tree bears golden apples
we cannot touch, a prince chooses
you to marry. We cry
and the neighbors whisper and stare, hide
their children beneath their skirts, the gods
laugh. Our middle eye sees
a world flat, or muddled with images
upon images, weeds that grow in the clouds,
a dead goat in the garden, hemlock
sprouting from his hooves. We take what we can,
pretend you are the strange one.

Philip M. Royster

SARAH'S BLUES

Sarah gazed across rows of vegetables
she and Charlie had planted in the empty lot
next to their two-flat. With her feet planted
firmly in the row between her mustards and collards she
had looked up from her weeding just in time
to catch Charlie sliding through the back gate
and easing down the alley. She held her breath
and squeezed her thighs together to keep from calling
him back. When she let go her stomach fluttered,
tears ran over the edges of her eyes, and she had to stand
up straight to keep from falling over, but he was gone.
Now, upright in the late evening Chicago sun, she gazed.

Oh Lord, what I'm gonna do to keep that man?
Seem like every chance he get he gone.
Most times worse when he around.
Eyes like stones and his voice
make me fraid to sit down.
Seem like he just give up hope here,
Lord, . . . what must I do?
How do you love a man
you see working himself to death
to keep from drowning in debt,
every week bring a new due bill.

My body goes so stiff when he comes over me,
one night he say it would be easier
if he were pushing a plow.
I figure he ought to know, Lord;
I figure he ought to know.
and his breath don't smell right no more
from all that worrying, so much frustration
his stomach done gone bad. And yet it seem
my fingers don't come alive
until they stroking his soft brown naps.
And his body so lean and strong I get hungry
when it comes to mind. That man
such a pretty thing.

And I know what he wants. Touch me inside
and feel my spirit giving. But I'm scared
And I can't help but draw that line
every time I feel him pushing too close.
Some times I wish he'd just give up on me
and chase some of them young heifers
switching their fast asses past his nose.
But somehow he know that ain't what he need.
He keep telling me it ain't a body

he looking for but something on the other side.
First time he told me that shit
I thought he was crazy.
What in the hell you searching for, man?
I'm a woman not a mountain.
And yet deep down I know what he meant.
Can't really put no words on it,
but Big Mama used to speak about some kind of peace
and quiet and satisfaction, but she say it only come
when your head stop turning and your heart with God.
But I want to be with this here man, Lord,
and hold on to him and give him what he looking for.

His mama say I might as well give up now
cause Charlie ain't gon do nothing
But work himself to death like his daddy did.
She say that old man tripped
on the shoestrings of his old brogans
right in that dusty road before they cabin;
so tired from bending over that cotton field
he couldn't crawl to the porch.
He just crumbled to death right down in the dirt.
"If I had waited three days
I would have had to bury
a pile of dust."
That old woman sure knows how
to play with her hard times.

But I can't laugh it off
nor let it go, Charlie.
So I'm just gon have to ask you for some time.
The sorrow in our song can't last forever,
and I'm gonna hold your heart before I die.

Sarah stooped and grabbed a handful of weeds
as the sun slipped beyond the roofs across the street.
Her tears left dry trails across her cheeks
and the earth felt cool and moist as she hurried
to finish her weeding before all light disappeared.

Elizabeth Campbell

STAYING WITH GRANDMA

I thought it was the hose until
it unwound
an slid blackly under the house.
Grandma.

She turned from the flapping sheets,
her eyes fixing me to the spot.

Between the rose hibiscus and the gray back step
She stooped,
Placed a saucer of milk,
And we waited.

My eyes ached watching her shadow
fall across the milk.
Once I looked up searching for her fear,
But her hair fell across her profile and
I only saw her knuckles white around the stick.

Then it was there
Black against the milk
Drinking her shadow.
Hurry Grandma.

But she knew to wait.
I watched the stick rise slowly
And closed my eyes.
When I looked again
The saucer was broken.

Lynne Cawood Howard

THE ONE GOOD WINDOW

Now the wild rose
twists a path
across the front porch.

And the one good window
is frosted with dust and rain;
a tin cup rests in the corner
of the polished sill.

The door has rusted open
so that light and coaldust
swirl furiously across the floor.

A doll lies in the doorway,
eyes painted open
fat blackened palms braced skyward.

Olav Grinde--Translations from Rolf Jacobsen

GREEN LIGHT

Animals that rustle in shadow, all the crooked
and deformed in this world, those with tiny feet and far
too many eyes
can hide in the grass, that's why it's there,
silent and full of moonlight between the continents.

I have lived in the grass with those tiny ones that resemble
broken twigs.
The bumblebees flew into my heart like clocks with magical words
from their marigold towers.
The winds took my poem and spread it like dust.

I have lived in the grass with the Earth, and I have heard it breathe
like an animal that has traveled far and is thirsty for waterholes.
At evening I felt it lay itself heavily down on its side like
a buffalo
in the darkness between stars where there is room.

The wind's dance and the large grass fires come back to me often:
--Shadow images of smiles in a face that always has forgiveness.
But why does it have so much patience with us,
deep in the iron core, the huge magnesium heart? That we can't
understand.

We have forgotten this: the Earth is a star of grass,
a seed-planet, swirling of spores like clouds, from sea to sea
a driving mist. Seeds bite ahold under the paving stones
and between the letters in my poem--here they are.

HOUSES OF GLASS

The old houses moan a little when they fall.
They creak when their outer walls go.
Plunk, they say, when the kitchen sink falls into the cellar
and crash bang when the living room floor splits open.

But now the raindrops slip in to where the pillow sweat was
and the bed-creak was and where all the words were spoken,
cold new rain that washes away the rifts in the air,
the nerve strain, the harsh words, and the heart thump
that sit firmly in the air like a film--a house of glass.

It's so easy with old houses,
they are not written down anywhere,
can simply be folded together like newspapers,
like a fan in the air, a kiss both have forgotten,
yesterday's sorrows.

Rolf Jacobsen, born in 1907, is credited with introducing modern poetry into Norwegian literature. His first book, Earth and Iron (Jord og Jern), came out in 1933. In recent decades he has gained increasing international recognition. His poems have been translated, at last count, into eighteen languages. His half-century of literary activity shows no signs of abating; he has a new collection due to appear soon.

Olav Grinde's two translations are both from Samlede Dikt (Collected Poems), published in 1979 by Gyldendal Forlag. "Grønt Lys" (Green Light) was first published in Rolf Jacobsen's earlier collection Sommeren i Gresset (Summer in the Grass), 1956, and "Hus av glass" (Houses of Glass) in Pusteøvelse (Breathing Exercise), 1975--both collections published by Gyldendal.

Linda Peavy

NORDSJØEN

Crossing wet and endless dunes
I hear the surf reverberating
long before I top the last small rise
and stand above a lonely shore that stretches
far beyond imagination.
I walk alone into a wind
that tears my words away
and sends them out across the blue expanse
to tell you how we'll walk this very strand,
our heads tucked low against the whipping winds
our eyes upon the grey-green waves
that build and build and build
then break upon each other
and collapse on shell-strewn sand.
arms together, hands together
warm inside a pocket, shared
like this small moment on a Norway shore.

Patrick Stanhope

CLOUD
(to Carrie 1950-77)

I have come back
to the places you had known,
sitting in the wind
in September,
watching Mexican girls
pass on the sidewalk,
their skin glowing
like oiled walnut
catching sun,
but it's you I think of,
hair trailing behind you
like smoke and white cotton

For a moment,
I hear you, laughing,
snapping your fingers
on street corners

When sunlight turned soft
and leaves rusted
I remember you,
covering the floor
with oriental rugs,
hanging tapestries on the wall,
and opening a trunk of childhood photographs
you said,
"look at me this way"

In your last September
my hands became obstacles,
and now in the evenings
I wait
below old windows
covered with wind,
I listen. . .

laugh,
tell me you're a cloud,
wild and white,
returning with the wind
in September

Robert M. Chute

I EXTEND A RESTRAINED GREETING TO AN
ANACHRONISTIC OLD MAN IN A HORSECART

Trundling along route 202,
the old man rides to the country store.
One side of the farm cart on the tar,
one on the shoulder. The shaggy old horse
walks in the dirt, saving his shoes.

On other days I've seen him, propped
on his crutches, his thumb out. We discuss
his leg, his ulcer, his horse, the weather.
He remembers the lumber wagons, axle deep,
being cursed down Lewiston's Main Street.

Now as we meet and pass, he raises four
mittened fingers in greeting, his thumb
still hooked over the reins. I return
the salute with two fingers only,
keeping both hands on the wheel.

Paul Decelles

NEW MEXICO

there should be real maps to this country.
they could be stuck away in the car,
pulled out when we have reached
another dead end road at a canyon bottom.
beasts come up to the window,
their eyes slick against their dusty fur.
they paw the ground and snort,
the road nothing but a heap of stones.
I could pull out my map, its corners
frayed like a flannel blanket,
spread it out on my lap and never fear
canyons.
I climb around the canyon wall.
in its dark folds the Datura sway
like huge linen bells,
ring of death.
I would love to pull out a map and not
be deceived.
the squash have closed for the day.
each orange mouth contains a sleeping
bee.
the leaves blanch
like fish bodies in the sun.
I would lay my hand on the map like
a faithhealer feeling disease
or like the grey moon in the west.
And the map would not lie.
later I come to the lip of the world
and drive through the moon.
the mesas are sentries without heads
and the soft voices of the people
frighten away the two-headed dogs.

Robert Harris

QUIET LIVING

there are people
that keep dried out potted plants on windowsills
inside in the bathroom
propped up by shampoo bottles and half empty such things
yet the plant is past saving
thats not what is told
its almost gone but just needs some food
or it always happens around this time of year
they keep it on the windowsill
so passersby will think the apartment has warmth
that it has a plant
that it has a lived in look that it has life
and they water it
or dont
testing the dry earth and telling you it keeps dying
and pull off another crunchy leaf
and fake a bud spotting
and change the subject
they have busy lives these people of the brittle leaves
they have very little time to sleep
and the plant will bloom again just like the crack in the
wall
will be plastered
its not hope its a place holder like the one we learn in school
in math class a place holder
like zero
but still there
it shows them roots and offspring the kind that can break
with a gust
and when they move on again they do toss it out
the roots the offspring
and tell you it all died a long time ago.

Steven W. Huss

KEY WEST

Houses are thick as salt air,
tight as cobblestones
on crab whisker streets.
Even weeds thirst,
water trickles in through a long vein.
Only shrimp, snapper, and shell pink dusk
are not imported.
Widow walks rise on white Victorian homes.
Nets dry on trawlers crowded at the docks.
Captains and The Conch
held this land long before we questioned
how they buried their dead.
In their small cemetery
graves are reopened,
bones mingled with bones,
brother holds sister,
father takes son.

Mary McAlister Randlett

THE RISK

The risk
Occurs a second after midnight;
When we are plump full of
Wines and aperitif.
After red meat, slightly underdone
And asparagus cooked to pulp.
After we have carved through
The bitch next door,
Picked at Walker Percy's last novel,
And skewered the bastards
Who shoot wolves in Alaska.
When we get up from our overstuffed chairs
To let the dog in
And he slides along the wall
With his head low
And his teeth chatter;
When he looks back with a yellow doubt in his eyes,
And we think we do not know him.

Kevin Stein

ABOVE SALAMANDER CAVE

we mow the grass
and worry whether the trim
needs painting this year.

Below us
water churns through limestone faults,
veins widen with the patience of death.

We wonder if our corn roots in air,
its tendrils dangling in empty space,
in a belly of sky without light or color.

Our basement is wet with the sound
of water roiling downhill to the valley.
There in our darkest selves
we hear the white hissing of carbide lamps,
the voices of those whose burial by water
was not on open sea, but rather an inner thing
beneath this earth hollowing from the center upward.

After each hard Indiana rain
we feel the emptiness rise up to greet us.

Keith Ratzlaff

FIELD BURNING

Dan didn't lift a finger in honor of the wind.
Kept his hands (wide and fat-knuckled, lazy
as chickens) dry and in his pockets,
let them do a little chatting with the
matches and loose change before running
them out and putting them to work.

Dan didn't listen to the radio weather, much;
didn't even look for Eldon's booming orange windsock
inching around from the east. Took kerosene
in three ten-gallon milk cans, his matches and
his hands, drove them all out in a brand-new Ford
pickup and lit his field at the western edge.

Dry corn stubble coughs more than it burns,
sputters a bit, then dies without some help.
Dan was a helpful man, generous with his kerosene--
poured it out like free beer.

Dan didn't notice when the wind slapped
around from the east. Only paid attention
when the flames, low and a quarter-mile long now,
doubled back and blew his third milk can
over the telephone wires.

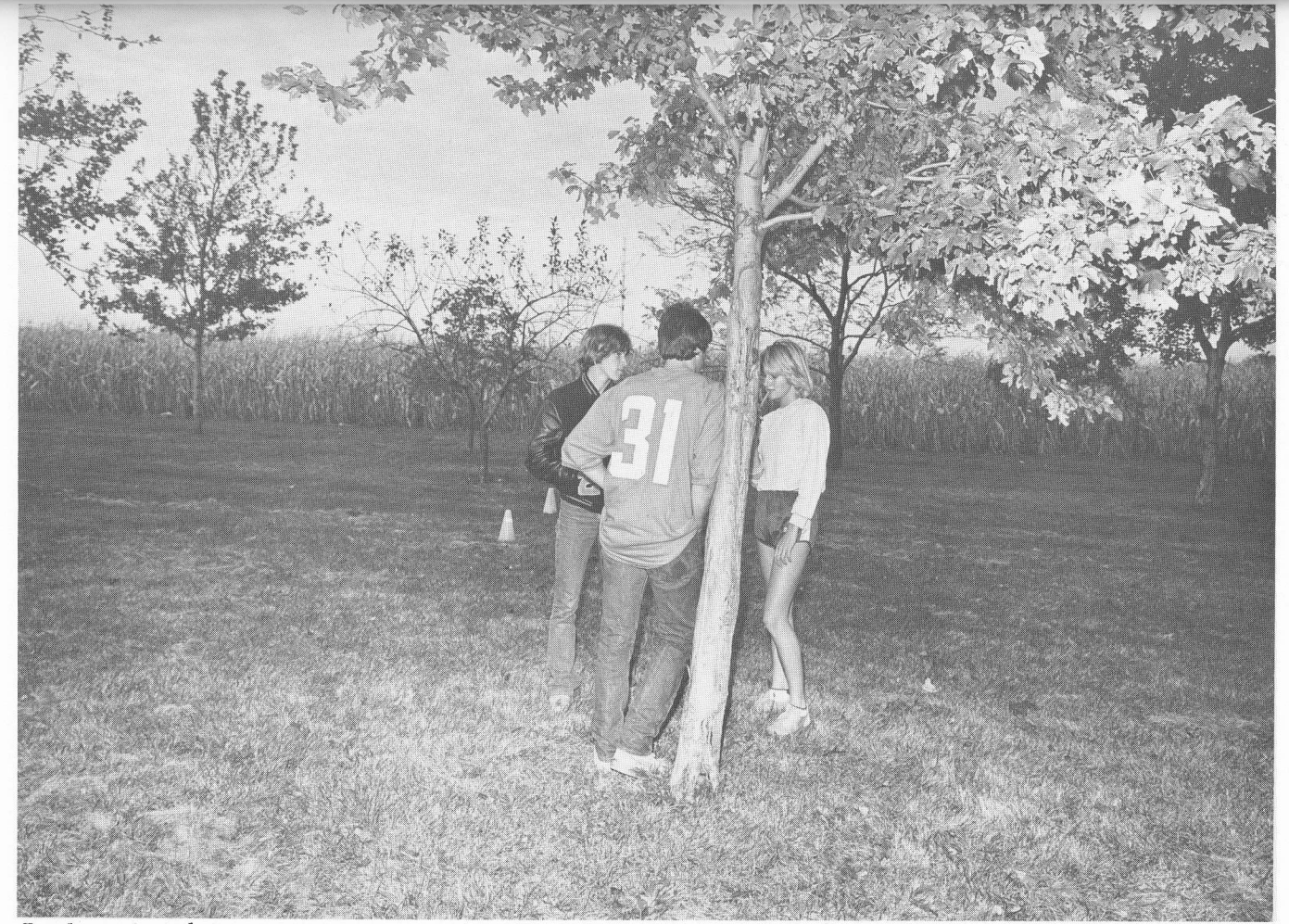
Dan didn't care about the milk can, much;
but fire was kicking his new tires.
Revved up, Dan drove smack and axle-deep into
a badger hole God saw fit to plant in his way.
He rocked the truck in the loose dirt
until it wasn't any use--barely
made it hands and knees across the road
to Alvy's rented 40 acres.
The Ford burned yellow as goldenrod,
banged open like ripe milkweed.

In the cafe next morning, Dan, crouched over his coffee,
took hoots from children-farmers half his age.
He talked about the weather. But with eyes like
a rabbit, he'd twist his head, looking over his shoulder
toward the door where the wind kept sneaking in.

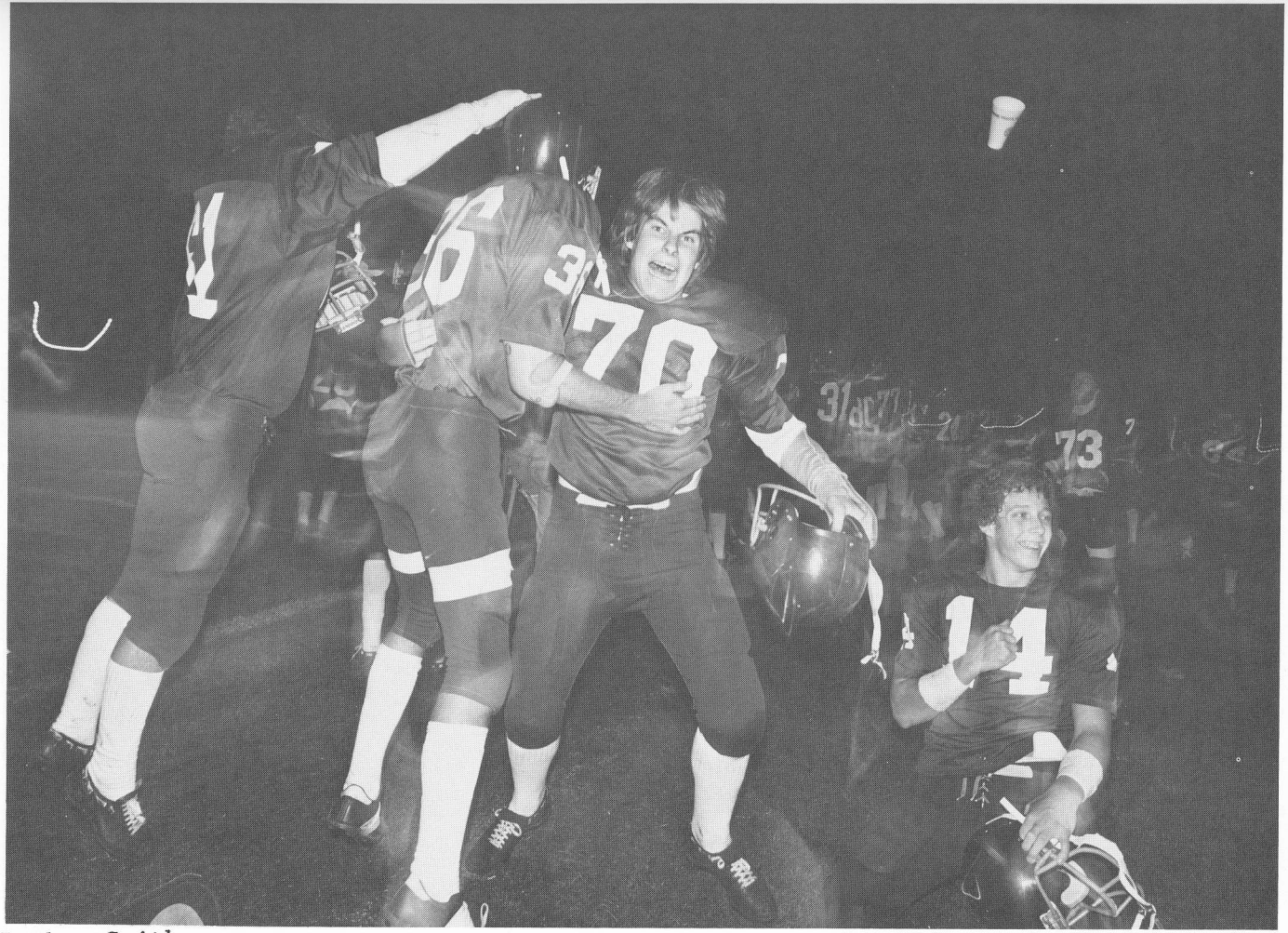
PHOTOGRAPHS

Pages 27-34:
Luther Smith's photographs are from a continuing series, HIGH SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHS.

Pages 35-42:
Lyle Alan White's photographs are from an ongoing project, THE PIONEER SPIRIT--A PRAIRIE PORTRAIT.



Luther Smith



Luther Smith

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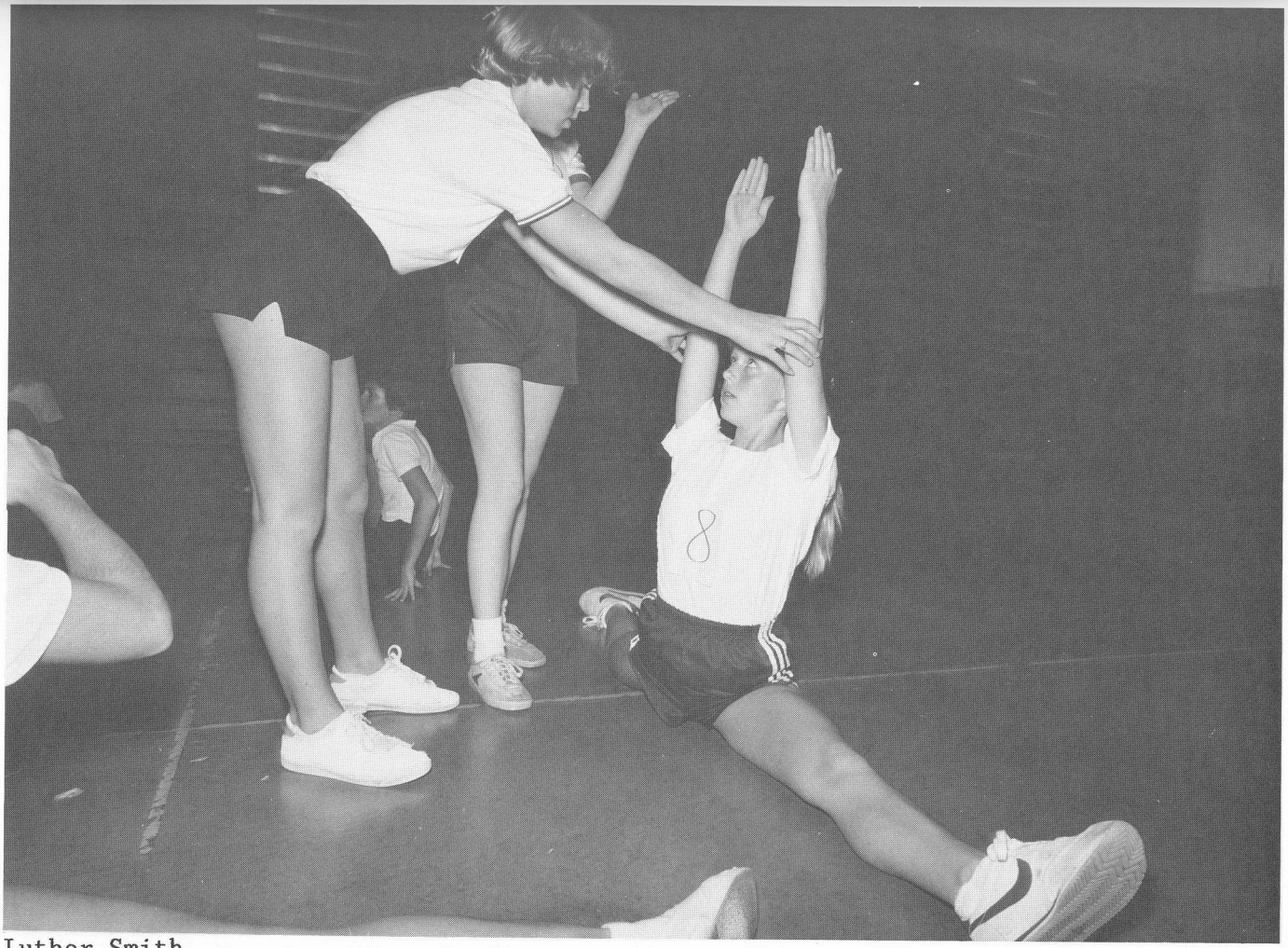
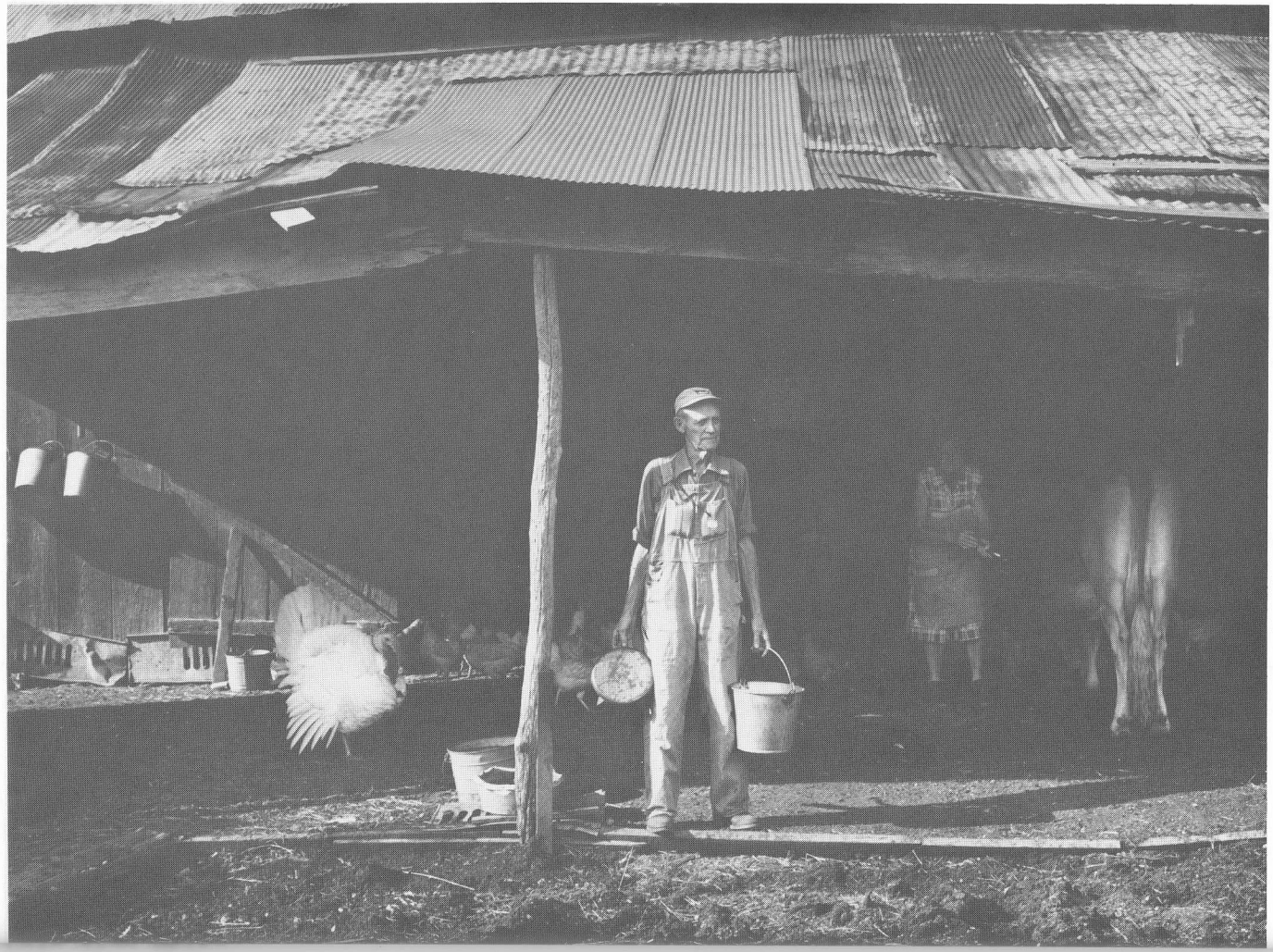


Luther Smith

adidas

Lyle Alan White

Lyle Alan White



Lyle Alan White

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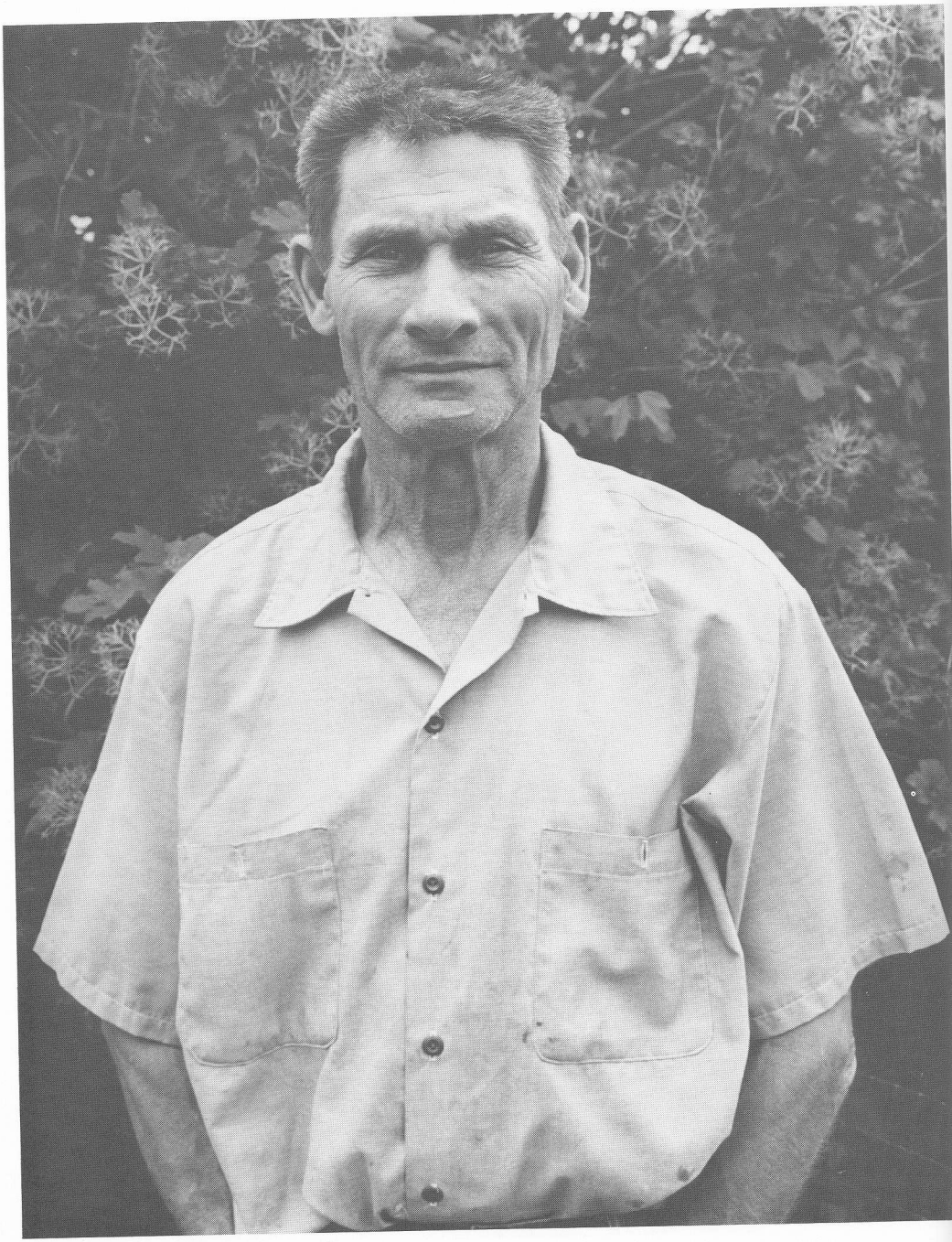

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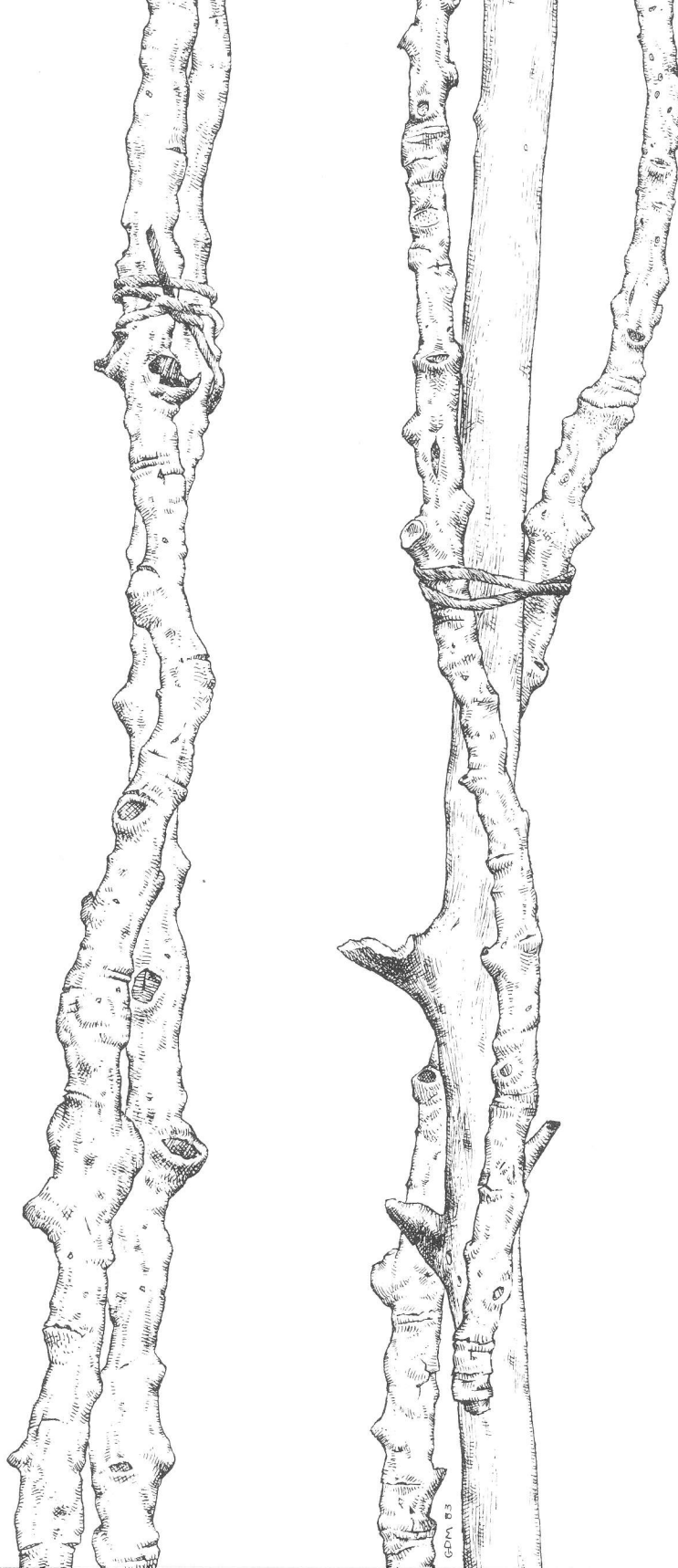


FICTION

Carl Adler

J

The atmosphere was charged with life, both common and extraordinary. Jinny often felt this as she sat enclosed in her glass cubicle in the midst of the curving oaken counters where her clerks worked, handling requests for books, bringing those books to the students who thronged the library. Perhaps those students and clerks saw only themselves, gliding under the long rays from the leaded Gothic windows as the sun's movement highlighted now one realm of volumes, now another, kindling especially those whose spines were delicately gilded with gold. But all that was merely common life, the day-to-day business which Jinny loved but could not take too solemnly--not certainly when she measured her life, all this around her, with the lives entombed within that maze of volumes. From those pages pulsed the magnificent and tragic lives of the great, lives of which they, the pygmies, were the mere keepers.

Thank God she wasn't constantly aware of the passionate dimensions of such lives. Many days she scarcely thought of them, although it was not through thought they came--she intuited them, sensed a quality of the air and light unique and exotic and melodious, and it was this alteration of the usual which seemed to open a hushed wound, as if the sense of those lives now lost was something organic within her. That sense could come to her with the sun's earliest ray as she dressed carefully before her quaint mirror with its great carved oval of black wood. She dreaded the image of the old-fashioned librarian, so her clothes were stylish, and yet with an individual touch beyond mere style--bizarre cuts and pastel colors and as much lace as was decent, considering her work. Her hair was shaped to a dome of shining red, her nails silvery, her lipstick almost white. The mirror's gaze doted on her, and that gaze was the only one that mattered--until now.

Yes, and he was here again this morning. At first she had thought he was gay. Any young man with a golden earring must be gay, but then, for some reason, he didn't otherwise seem gay, though if anyone had questioned her as to how, with one glance, she could define a person's sexual preferences she would have been unable to answer. He was tall, with a slight stoop, incongruous in one so young, a short black beard, which darkened his entire face, as if he gripped his shadow in his teeth, and a hawkish look about him. Still, with that earring, shouldn't he be gay? Ordinary students didn't wear earrings. Or was he imagining himself a pirate? This last thought amused her, and once she heard her wry, mocking voice pretend to address him: And do you imagine yourself a pirate? At that moment she could picture quite vividly the blush that would turn that shadowed face the color of blood.

The reason she knew he wasn't gay was the look he sent her everytime he came up to the counter with another slip for the

research clerks. If the glass behind which she sat had been ice, certainly that gaze would have melted it. It was a hungering stare, and it frightened her. My God, why would a young man look at her, a woman almost forty, in such a way? At first she thought the fellow must be unbalanced, that some extraordinary academic tension caused that obsessive stare--perhaps everyone encountered it. But she noticed that stare was for her alone. With others, his eyes were noncommittal, bored; only when he turned them toward her did they deepen and kindle.

She did not look back at him. She was afraid of raising his hopes, and then she doubted if hers could grapple with such a stare. So she would lower her eyes, sometimes her mouth moving involuntarily, her lower lip pushed into almost a pout, as if to say, Oh, leave me be--please. Let's not have any of that stuff here!

Somedays the weather itself made her tremble--she felt opening, opened, to each spear of sunlight, desperate glance, ghostly murmur. But then, ever since childhood she had drooped or bloomed to the sky's commands, as if she were more flowerlike than human. On certain days, like this morning, the sky seemed light-headed, toying with delicacies of clouds as wispy as her own reveries as she strolled down Lake Shore Drive, gazing at the great lake from which this diamond day was wafting, a flung sparkle all about the waters, the air itself seemingly transposed into a minor key, the murmur of radiance. The sky soared as great souls soar, a tension of ecstasy felt in clicking sidewalk and taut tree and sweeping wall and suave glow of skyscraper windows up and up into the deep blue soul of the morning itself looming above her, overarching, as if the souls of the great dead were revealing themselves to her, those passionate and desperate beings about whom she loved to read.

When she stepped into the library she felt this was a necessary sanctuary. The great walls and mazes of volumes darkened, held at bay, the giddy radiance outside, though Jinny felt the light storm the tall narrow windows. But she knew that her lunch time would be spent outdoors. Such beauty lured her, no matter what the risks. Usually she would eat lunch with Miss Carson, her superior, and Odella, the head clerk, in a cozy little back room where they could make tea and eat their sandwiches, each drawing from her purse one slim sandwich glittering with foil.

She enjoyed these intimate lunches. The two older women treated her like a daughter, fussing over her constantly. Odella was black, but very genteel--still, she came from an exotic, nether world (as it were) and Jinny could not help but notice how incongruous the tea cup looked--embarrassed almost--at being sipped by those heavy lips. She herself seemed made for teacups, as someone--probably her mother--once remarked, and she wondered if perhaps this porcelain quality of hers wasn't what attracted that dark boy's vicious gaze. He wanted to drink her--then, with a barbarian's gesture, shatter her. Her look whispered that, and her cool, ironic voice almost cried aloud in response, "Just let him try!"

Now today he would follow her outside, she knew that absolutely. Nevertheless she put on her light coat, its rather severe blue mocked by a great white collar, daring in its crisp hugeness, so enormous her head almost vanished when she turned it up. But then so frail was she that she utterly vanished within even the lightest coat--a breeze, catching in collar or pockets could hurry her along, threaten to lift her bodily. Her heels clicked ominously as she strode toward the great door: She is harder, sharper, than you think, young man-- she hoped they were sending that message. The day was glorious; she would walk down the Drive a bit, then west to Michigan Avenue to do some window shopping.

Sometimes she felt vaguely the meaning such weather held for her. And vaguely too she sensed that this going forth when she knew she would be followed was related to that feeling. The winter blew harsh and somber, day after gray day, and the humid heat of summer stifled one, stole life from limb and made one yearn for even that somber cold. And all of life--the life she saw around her, her mother's brother's, relatives'--all these lives were just as dreary and soul-stifling as her city's usual weather. So days like this--her diamond days--seemed emblems blown from over the horizon of what a life could possibly be--without grossness, aerial, a shining from moment to moment. The lives of the great dead were like that. So truly these days were their blue souls blown upon her in remembrance as it were--remembrance and lament too, for how could her life be like theirs?

Why couldn't it? The mocking gaze of a mannequin seemed to ask that out of its blank eyes. She stared at the thing behind its glass, and it stared back. A delightful dress with a billowy skirt, deep purple velvet, but above the hips tightness, the velvet sheathing a waist as slim as her own, the chin sharp, the eyes wide and staring into hers. Why couldn't it?

"Oooh, dummy!" she murmured and, before hurrying away, glanced back from where she had walked. There he was, and even at that distance the earring flashed, as if the sun itself had the lad by the earlobe and was hurrying him along, naughty as a child. She abruptly turned the corner, then paused. Should she dart into Water Tower Place, or cross the street to the bookstore, browse among the paperbacks? But why either? If she had wanted walls around her, she could have stayed in the library. So she strolled, wishing her mind as blue as the sky. The faces in the throngs around her were usual, usual--not one of them seemed enchanted by this crystal atmosphere in which they were suspended, ignorant of their medium as fish in a bowl. But she floated, an enormous happiness lightening her. Next weekend was the birthday party for her nephew Jamie, and certainly she could pick up a present now at Water Tower, but that was but a haphazard bit of mist dissipating easily within her blue. Goldfish--goldfish--stupid as goldfish in a bowl, with not one ear of gold, not one, among them all, the males of course, and then she sensed his presence, there, behind her, here, immediately, his presence by her, within touching distance.

She thought she heard him whisper something, but it could have been the hiss of a bus. The street was swarming with buses, taxis, cars, pedestrians trying to dart between them, the silver whistlings of a policeman, and shoppers hurrying to the left and right of her, conversations, so with the hurry and noise she could not be absolutely certain that he whispered. Nevertheless, she turned her head, her eyes widening with stern inquiry. It was a trick to keep salespeople in line whenever they became sassy, widening her eyes like that. But now it was as if that widening made her more vulnerable. His expression enveloped her bodily because she was expecting a leer, something suggestive. Instead his gaze shone with an almost boyish and innocent exuberance.

"Did you say something?" She stopped. She couldn't both look at him and where she was going.

"I'm sorry," he murmured (though what he was sorry for was unclear--that he had followed her? that now, standing so close in the flaring light, he could see a gossamer of wrinkles around her eyes and regretted his impetuosity?), "no, I didn't say anything."

"Oh--I thought you had. I thought you said something to me." She looked away from him, looked down away because he was so tall; he loomed over her, and looking down she saw that her shadow lay at his feet. Now she should accuse him of following her, but what if this following was as unreal as that whisper, what if he simply happened to be going the same way? She would have made a fool of herself.

She took a step, and heard him say, casually, "You work in the library, don't you? I've noticed you there."

"You have?"

"Yes. Oh, by the way, my name's Francis--Francis Suarez."

But all your friends call you Frank."

"No--I don't have any friends. I'm too busy with my research--I'm doing my thesis."

"Oh? well--that's nice. Young people should keep themselves busy. Now if you'll excuse me, I have some shopping to do in here," and she moved toward Water Tower, but in doing so she had to stop, to turn, he was at her left, and this meant somehow she would have to get by him. Suddenly she felt hopelessly awkward and simply stood there, staring at the revolving doors. They were spinning so with people she feared she wouldn't even get through them.

"What is your name?"

"My name? Why do you want to know?"

He didn't answer, as if the directness of the question baffled him. He, too, suddenly seemed awkward, twisting two fingers into his beard, a boyish gesture. He couldn't be more than twenty-three. It was absurd.

"Francis, I really do have to shop," and she hurried from him, but again he stepped with her, slowing the doors for her, and together they rode the escalator, past ferns and splashing waters. She supposed that by refusing to answer her question he in fact was rebuffing her for asking it--why does a young man

want to know a woman's name? Does the obvious need to be belabored? Are you, so ethereal in the delicacy of your appearance, really just as common as any woman? His great dark brooding silence seemed stormy with such questions, and now she felt helpless, even as he accompanied her to the toy shop. Such silence was embarrassing, so finally she murmured, as they stood surrounded by games, dolls, space ships, furry creatures, "It's for my nephew. He's going to be five."

"What does he call you?"

Inwardly she sighed--a sigh of compromise. "Aunt Jinny." And then, as an afterthought, "With a J, not a G. With a G it looks like gin--believe me, it wasn't my idea. My mother's--a long time ago." Yes, she should repeat that "long time ago" tragically, but for some reason she didn't. Instead she began touching the little furry things--bears, dogs, beavers, creatures which seemed a combination of several species, a polka-dot monkey, as if this touching would somehow enable her to choose. There was a little blue giraffe with an enchantingly silly expression on its face, seemingly amazed to find its head grown so distant from its body. She turned it over to inspect the price. Let him know she was a practical one, not one to be swept off her feet simply by a charming appearance. The real worth of an object, a person, was what interested her.

"Too expensive," she murmured. "The prices here are ridiculous. I should've gone to the dime store."

He took it from her and glanced at the price. "Don't you want it?"

"Not at that price. Well, I still have time. It isn't until Saturday." She glanced at a few puzzles, but they looked too difficult. Helen's kids were scarcely geniuses. Then, without a word, she turned abruptly and left the store. In the huge carpeted lobby she stood, seeing the glass elevators flashing up and down, crammed with people. She moved toward the escalator. The carpeting muffled the sound of her heels. She could not tell if he were following her, and she refused to glance back. Already a line of shoppers had formed at the escalator and, because she had to wait, it was possible then to look about without being obvious. He was nowhere in sight.

Down the five flights she descended stiffly, looking neither to right nor left, but staring ahead blankly, her gaze scarcely noticing the procession of people descending before her. But at he bottom of the escalator he was waiting. He must have taken the elevators. He thrust a bag at her.

"What's this?"

"Look."

He had wrung the poor neck so tightly it took several seconds to uncrumple the bag. Then the buttony eyes of the blue giraffe stared up.

"It's for you. I could tell you liked it."

"Oh, I can't take this!" She was aware that her heart had started thumping in her throat, so heavily she thought it must be visible, the pulsing of her whole body visible there, so heavily that her voice came to her own hearing thick and strange-sounding.

"Why not?"

"No, no. Then I have to pay you," and she began digging frantically into her purse. She heard his laughter. He seemed absurdly delighted by the whole situation, probably by the knowledge that finally he had caught her off-guard, shattered her composure completely.

"You can pay me by having dinner with me tonight. How about it?"

The purse clicked shut with a loud metallic snap. As if it had just snapped off somebody's head. The sound steadied her.

"Francis, I think I'd better explain certain things to you. First of all--"

"Can't you wait until tonight?"

"There isn't going to be any tonight!"

"All right." He shrugged, the movement setting the earring to winking. "Some other night then!" and he stepped away from her, smiling, and then turned swiftly and vanished. Later, returned at last to the safety of her cubicle, she wondered if the bit about dinner wasn't simply a ploy to direct her from the gift itself. At that moment, her accepting the little lavender and white striped bag was nothing compared to the enormity of a date with him. Very clever, mister, she found herself murmuring more than once that afternoon. Very clever. Now he probably thought she felt indebted to him--that now, in a sense, he had gained some kind of a foothold.

And yet, despite her annoyance, there was something amusing about the whole encounter. The boy did have a certain touch. At her afternoon break she ate her sandwich at her desk, in surreptitious nibbles, and took time to draw the giraffe from its bag. She stroked its long soft neck and thought that Jamie would surely love it. And as for not having paid for it herself--well, in a sense she had paid. Enduring all those hot glances these past weeks had been payment enough. Looked at that way, the gift could be seen as his apology for being such a nuisance. She would love to recite the whole affair Saturday evening in all its absurd details. If she did, it would reveal a side of her that none there had ever guessed.

She knew that her family admired her--in fact, regarded her with awe and surprise, as if deliciously confused by her intellectual gifts. Among a family of plumbers, clerks, housewives--nobodies if ever there were nobodies--she had flowered up, dizzying them with her accomplishments. Very long ago they had recognized that she was a being apart, and at birthdays and Christmas the presents bestowed upon her were different in kind from the ones which other members of the family received. A chess set, books, magazine subscriptions, classical records--these had accumulated over the years. But she supposed too that the usual remarks were made behind her back about not having a man--about being smart in school, dumb in life. The clichés of the ignorant. How easily she could have all that if she truly wanted it. She was prettier, more feminine, than any of her sisters-in-law, so she hoped they realized her celibate state wasn't one she had been compelled to enter. No, they couldn't

even begin to understand the freedom of personality she enjoyed because of that state. Still, in a sense this unheard gossip bothered her, not because she cared for their opinions but because it showed such a complete misunderstanding of what was really valuable in a life. In that sense they lived on the other side of the world from her, and it was just as well they communicated by talking about the relatives or Jamie's latest misadventure. There was nothing else to talk about.

But, though she didn't take them seriously, she still would be tempted to recount this adventure--almost an amorous adventure. And the fact that he was so young would be doubly shocking to them. My God, wouldn't she set imaginations steaming! Oh yes--he must be fifteen years younger than I, with a swarthy, Latin look about him--and--Dolly, you'll never guess it!--in his left ear-- a gold earring! She could imagine Uncle Stan blubbering his lips in derision, the men smirking and laughing, while the women--yes--they too would imitate their men, overtly, at least, but a shadow of longing would fall momentarily across their eyes.

And her mother--it'd be delicious. "Virginia, just what are you getting yourself into?" She could imagine the bold woman stiffening in her chair, trying to straighten her bowed shoulders, lifting her head higher to stare perplexedly at this bizarre creature she had given daylight. Then the women in the family could turn off their TV sets and lay their soap operas to rest for good. They would have the drama of a real life to savor for once. A real life! As insane as the lives hidden away in those volumes all around her! Jinny gazed through the surrounding glass at those recesses, those mazes of violence and glory. When measured against the humdrum of usual lives, it wasn't wrong to think of those lives in terms of madness. But to be able to go down to one's last rest with memories of being seared in a divine fire--if that were madness, and if all this were sanity, then who wouldn't choose to be mad? Well, certainly not her mother, nor her relatives. And as for her?

She didn't know. But she did know that emotionally she had been through enough already today, and if Francis were waiting after work to try to carry her off to some restaurant it would be too much. But she could think of no way to avoid him. Despite the library's Gothic look, there were no secret passages through which she could sidle and vanish. However, she did ask Odella to walk with her, intimating that there was a certain man who might be a bother. She was entertained by the look Odella gave her--a look and nothing more. She was too discreet to ask for particulars. Jinny wasn't certain why she had chosen Odella--vaguely she felt, perhaps, that Odella must have had, despite her gentility, some experience of the dark side of life and therefore could be a help to her.

Before leaving, she carefully stuffed the lavender and white striped bag into her purse. Carrying it in plain sight would make her much too vulnerable. And if he approached her, grinning his rare grin, she would look right through him. Yes, she wouldn't hide or blush or allow herself to be victimized.

She would look right through him with a dead blank cold stare that would turn his fire to ice.

But she didn't have to. He was nowhere in sight, and she wondered if Odella perhaps was thinking all this was in her imagination. She could have brandished the blue giraffe as proof, but she didn't. She had no need to impress Odella or anyone else. No, not anyone. She wouldn't even give Jamie the giraffe. He was getting too big for that kind of thing anyway. A toy car or truck would be more appropriate. And then there would be no excuse for narrating the adventure of the giraffe. Let them think of her as they always did. She scarcely needed those clods as an audience.

When she entered her tiny apartment she placed the giraffe on a shelf over her bed, next to the chess set given her some long ago Christmas which she never used. Who would she play chess with? That night, she put her book aside and before getting ready for bed lay drowsy and pleased, gazing up at the little creature.

It seemed staring down at her in an intensity of expectation. The light from the bed lamp glowed in its purple eyes, now really a brilliant black. For a long time she stared at those eyes, without thinking or consciously feeling anything, drifting in a wordless, imageless reverie which was still a reverie because she seemed abandoned there upon one of her blood's deepest daydreams. It was delicious, drugging, time stood still, and then did not stand still, refused to participate, and the ticking of the alarm clock tugged at her. She rose sleepily and slowly undressed, and then turned to stare at herself in the mirror. Such white and sudden beauty dazed her. She had never recognized it before, that lily suspended on the still surface of the glass.

This is my body, my flowering in time. This is all that he craved, to bare her like this, and even this moment, in some lonely room, perhaps he warmed himself by daydreaming her into this, and in his mind's eye--eyes, this very moment!--her nude image was floating as it floated before her now in the round, staring mirror. Would he have the nerve to decorate that white ghost with an earring too, to match his? Yes, she was absolutely certain he would. That fierce beard, those kindled eyes, would doom her to it, and the thought had scarcely touched her when she saw the body of that woman in the glass tremble violently at the piercing of her flesh for gold.

Dana Alice Heller

The Traveler

They arrived home on a Saturday. Joe unlocked the door and Effie held it open for him while he carried in their luggage, the camping equipment, the road atlas and emergency tools. They had been away for three weeks and Joe's apartment had mysteriously retained the characteristics of their departure; coffee cups in the sink; the clocks stopped at 6:38 and 6:41; the unmade bed still dented with the weight of their bodies falling in and out of sleep, anticipating the alarm. The air smelled chalky, clean of food odors or tobacco and Joe said, "It's like returning to the scene of a crime."

"It's just a time-warp," said Effie. She ran water in the kitchen and bathroom. Joe unpacked hurriedly, bagged his dirty laundry, fixed the clocks and put up coffee. Then they took turns calling their parents and telling them they were home and happy and in one piece. Joe was conscious of the sound of his voice contained safely within walls and he realized, as if truly for the first time, that they were home and stranger than they had ever been towards one another--maybe in danger of splitting up--and it was a let-down, the end of a long, long planned vacation.

Effie poured herself coffee and said, "If it's okay with you I guess I'll stay here tonight. I mean, I know it sounds weird my asking but if I had to sit in that car for one more minute I think I'd be sick."

"Suit yourself."

Effie opened her travel bag and Joe watched her. He saw that she was careful to select only what she would need for one night. "You take the bed. I don't mind the couch." Something in his voice alerted them both. It wasn't sarcasm. It was something they'd been hearing since Salt Lake City, something strangely sentimental and resolute. "So tell me is that okay with you?" Effie took out her hair brush, clean socks, and Joe was amazed to see that she concealed her underwear from him. As she spoke she rolled it up within her nightshirt like a child playing nurse to a wounded bird. "I don't want you to sleep on the couch. I'll sleep on the couch. I mean, doesn't that seem like the logical thing to do in a situation like this? Or should we hold out and wait until one of us decides what they really want. Not to get philosophical about it or anything."

He had expected a certain distrust. He had even expected that she would, in the end, be the one on the couch, but he never could have anticipated her bitterness. He wanted to be gentle with her on the night of their return. He had traveled with women before and knew how quickly they changed their tunes with their hearts uprooted and toured, their dreams of a slow seduction chased by travel, the intimacy and motion of each moment on the road. He had always been kind, spoken op-

timistically of a life together at home and one time he'd even meant it--would have cut off his right arm for it--but something had always gone wrong. He'd lost two wonderful women because something had always gone wrong; both of them adoring, intelligent, and open minded; both of them sworn to remembering only the good things, or so they said when they left him, their suitcases still warm from the heater of his car.

He thought Effie was different but for all his comparings, his diggings into her past, he could not put his finger on exactly why she was different. She was years younger than the women before her, less driven by scholarly pursuits, not at all concerned with a choice of either becoming something or becoming someone's wife. She did not demand Joe's undivided attention, but she wanted her particular division clearly defined and well-organized so she'd know the times to reach him and the times he'd want to reach her, and she'd know the times he couldn't see her, which, to Effie, were not moments of longing and patience but a kind of cherished catharsis that she called elemental to her emotional health, so long as she knew when to expect them. Even when Joe called her at off hours, she never teased him or made cute remarks and Joe reminded himself of this as if it were a tonic that made swallowing her mention of "getting philosophical" a little less painful going down. "If it's over, I"m sorry too," said Joe. "But you can blame me if it really makes you feel better." He said this to make her guilty. Often he thought it was the only way he had ever gained any insight into her, through her guilt.

"You're an angel. I'm going into the shower now. Do you need anything from the bathroom?"

Joe smiled and said thank you, and no thank you the bathroom's all yours, and then she left the room in such a flurry that Joe knew she was frightened of him. He frightened her because through him she had found her code: never travel with a man before he promises to marry you. Once Effie had reeled in disgust upon learning Joe's code of never marrying any woman he had not traveled with first. She had declared Joe a hopeless romantic because of the codes he claimed men lived by. She knew that she did not live by them. Effie was twenty-three. Joe met her at Nassau Community College when he was a senior graduating with a degree in psychology, and Effie was a sophomore, writing poems that she kept stuffed beneath her stereo receiver, assuring herself that many great poets had started off in secret. She took a leave of absence to travel with Joe. He was twenty seven and made a lot of money analyzing superfluous mail for his uncle's Thermos manufacturing company in Little Neck. Effie took a job at a bakery where she worked the counter and cash register. She lived at home with her mother who was divorced and alarmingly feminine; she lived solely on what she herself admitted was a finely blended mixture of scotch sours and adrenaline. She did not like Joe. She complained about his brooding silences at her dinner table and his inarticulate grooming in general. She could not comprehend what his work was about. "It's nothing," Joe told her, "I read junk mail, and I

make sure that whoever sends theirs to us gets lots of ours right back. Then I figure out how much it's costing us to get even."

She detested Joe then, and at a birthday party held in Effie's honor she pulled Joe quietly aside, fixed them both another drink and said, "I hear you two have quite a holiday planned."

"We're working on it," said Joe.

"Listen. I've been around long enough to know it isn't sex. I'd know that look a mile away. I don't see it, so I can only assume it's money you're after. I'm not a wealthy woman, Joe, but I'm no dope either. Just out of curiosity how much would it take . . .to make you disappear?"

"I don't think I understand."

"I see. Why don't you just mull it over then."

It was never mentioned again. At first Effie did not believe Joe. Later she defended her mother, explaining that she was drunk, usually melodramatic, always trying to run everyone's life. She said she had never been able to argue with her mother, had always lost, conceded. Joe insisted it was high time she defend herself so, in answer to her mother's suggestions that they postpone their trip and see one another on more gradual terms, Effie could only shut her eyes and swear that this was love the likes of which no one, not even she herself, could control. Effie's mother said, "Have it your way. It's your funeral," and Joe and Effie considered this her blessing and went about their planning. With Joe's past experience and Effie's newly acquired courage they calculated a budget and matched accounts. Over dinner dates they wondered what it would be like, keeping track of the miles they'd cover and the personality traits they would exchange without realizing. For months the trip remained something unimaginable in the offing, like a promise of just reward, urging them up and out of bed and to work. Effie said she could picture them: a couple, like other couples she had known who were always tired and happy and able to say: We've really been through a lot together.

As Effie showered, Joe fixed himself a bourbon and took it into the bedroom to drink it. He thought of a busboy they'd met in San Diego who claimed to have studied medicine at the University in Mexico City and he asked Joe and Effie to find him a more glamorous job in New York, wire him when it was all set. Effie took his address, solemnly promised to see what she could do and then, overcome with her own bravado, she burst into mad laughter, right in the bewildered boy's face. "I've never done anything like that before," she said. "I feel awful." Happily she finished the post cards, writing that she and Joe were not so rugged as they'd thought, hadn't gotten any fishing in, and the only place they'd camped out had been a bathroom in Tijuana. Effie nudged Joe and showed him the card. He laughed and used the same joke in one of his cards although, for Joe, Tijuana had been the best day of their vacation; straddling the border, the brassy, drunken music and the restaurant smelling of fried corn

and clay. He spoke in Spanish, and in Italian when the Spanish word failed him. He taught Effie to haggle and showing her gratitude she said, "I've learned more from you this vacation than I did in two years at college. I was right when I told Mom this would be a good experience for me." A feeling had risen in him then, and it stuck with Joe all night while making love to her and part of the next day while driving, a feeling of passively participating in someone else's nice experience.

He thought of that feeling now as he poured bourbon. He was exhausted. The alcohol put color in his cheeks and set his mind turning; already he felt their trip west was sinking slowly into the chasm of past events along with Key West, Nova Scotia, his college graduation. He didn't like to think of graduation. It depressed him, and he'd played it over so many times in his head that he wondered how much of it was true and how much he'd simply made up. Of course, he'd been drunk through most of the ceremony. At the reception he had seen Larry and Stephanie Newman and he had almost approached Larry, but Stephanie caught up with him at the bar. She seemed impatient, spoke flatly. "Don't waste your time. He's forgiven me for everything but I don't think he ever wants to talk to you again. If you care about me you'll leave us alone. Please."

Larry was an associate professor whom Joe had gone out drinking with a few times. When he met Stephanie, his wife, Joe sensed in her the frantic self-absorption of a woman whose marriage is in trouble, and he also knew she was giving him a signal. Their affair began the following weekend at a bar in Douglaston, and it ended in Nova Scotia where Stephanie's sister ran a biking hostel in Yarmouth; for two days they lay on a floor mat in a small gym, stuffing themselves on fresh herring and Canadian beer, content and languid in the aftermath of her first adultery. When it was over and they were preparing to leave, Stephanie had taken him, held him very tightly as if for all time and said, "Thank you for letting me pretend that I'm something I'm not. I'm not sure you even know what you're doing, but I needed this. Thank you."

When Joe heard the sad reflection in her voice he heard a kind of accusation as well and said, "What do you mean, something you're not? This is you. Maybe you just had to come here with me to find it. This is what you are for good. We can make Larry understand that now."

Stephanie said, "You think you can possess a woman by taking her away, being with her every minute of every day in a strange place. You're wrong. People take vacations to dislocate themselves so they can forget who they are. It's just playing out a fantasy. I'm not really like this. I don't even talk like this. Right now I don't know who I am, but I do know that part of loving someone is wanting to be with them around the house. I know that sounds awfully suburban, but that's what it boils down to really. That's all a suburb is, you know. A place where people can be together around a house, some stoop, a little patio now and then."

"You're kidding me. Right?"

"No. I miss Larry. I miss my house. I want to go home now."

And Joe had been silent then, thinking that all they needed was a longer getaway, just the two of them. Secretly he toyed with the hope that they might try it again; maybe ten days in Montreal. A cabin somewhere. But then Stephanie had gone back to Larry and, in hysteria, confessed everything so that even now Joe carried like a weight the hard knowledge that someone in the world would always hate his guts and maybe--depending on Stephanie's version of the story--hate him with no real passion as one hates those who are not dangerous, simply pathetic.

Joe freshened his drink and wondered what Larry would say if he called to apologize. He was getting drunk. He thought of Stephanie, felt no desire for her, and this worried him. Suddenly he felt terribly old and alone; the ravaging effects of the liquor, his road-lag, and the passing thought of suicide left Joe empty and very absurd. He wondered what was taking Effie so long in the shower, and he remembered his fantasy of her climbing out a motel window in Utah to escape him. He thought of knocking on the door, calling out for her, but then he knew that he was tired and over-reacting. Instead he tried to imagine what it would be like, to have Effie be his wife. What, for example, would she give to him that she had not already given? More spiritual ambitions? More childhood memories? A child? Joe stood, tossed down the last of his drink and decided he needed food. In the freezer he found some frozen quiche. He put it in the oven, turned it up high, and left the door open. He watched the quiche thaw and as it thawed it yellowed around the edges. Joe ate around the edges with a fork until he didn't want any more. He put the frozen part back into the freezer, poured another drink, and considered this his last meal as a bachelor.

Late one night in a motel in Salt Lake City, Effie went to the lobby to telephone her mother and report in. She was gone for a long time and when she returned to their room Joe could see the guilt in her eyes like dollar signs that fill the pupils of greedy cartoon characters. She asked, "Are we going to get married?"

"Is that what you want?"

"I'm not sure. Is it what you want?"

Joe had told her then, "Effie, I am probably the number one man who knows least what he wants. I don't think it helps. I don't think it even matters."

"You know something funny? Every man I've ever known has said the same thing to me in so many words."

"It doesn't mean anything. I don't like to get philosophical about it. How about you? What do you want?"

"Oh, I know what I want. I know lots of things that I want. . . the problem is, I think, that I could easily be talked out of any number of them. So? Are we going to get married?"

"Would you like being married to someone whose goal in life is to never know what he wants?"

"No. But I think I'd like being married to you."

"That is me. I thought you knew that."

"I knew you wanted to take this trip with me."

"Okay. I guess you're right. I guess I did want that. But I don't think it's the same thing you're talking about."

"It's not the same. Well, I don't think we're getting married."

"I guess not."

"So, that's settled then. Talk to me, okay? I don't think I'm going to cry or anything, but don't panic if I start to. Just talk to me. Say something quick."

"I'd like to change. . ."

"I'm crazy. I must be going crazy. I don't understand anything I just said. Did you hear me? What was I talking about? I must be completely in the O-Zone, you know? I mean way, way out there on Planet X."

"You're not crazy."

"Yes, I am. I'm royally fucked-up. And you know what else? I bet every woman you've ever known has said the same thing to you."

"In so many words" said Joe.

"Right," said Effie, "In so many words. But let's not get philosophical about it."

When Joe awoke he was on his bed. He was fully dressed, but the lights were off, the television was off, the room was still. In the living room he could barely make out Effie's outline on the couch. The room smelled as if she had just put out a cigarette. He whispered to her, "Effie?"

"What?"

"Did you do all the night things? Lock up?"

"Yes."

"Good. Effie? Remember that night in Salt Lake City?"

"Uh huh."

"Well, I don't think you acted crazy. Everything you said made sense. I hope you didn't mean it when you said you thought you were crazy."

"I meant every word. I'm asleep now, Joe. We'll talk later."

"Okay. One last thing. Do you still want to marry me? "

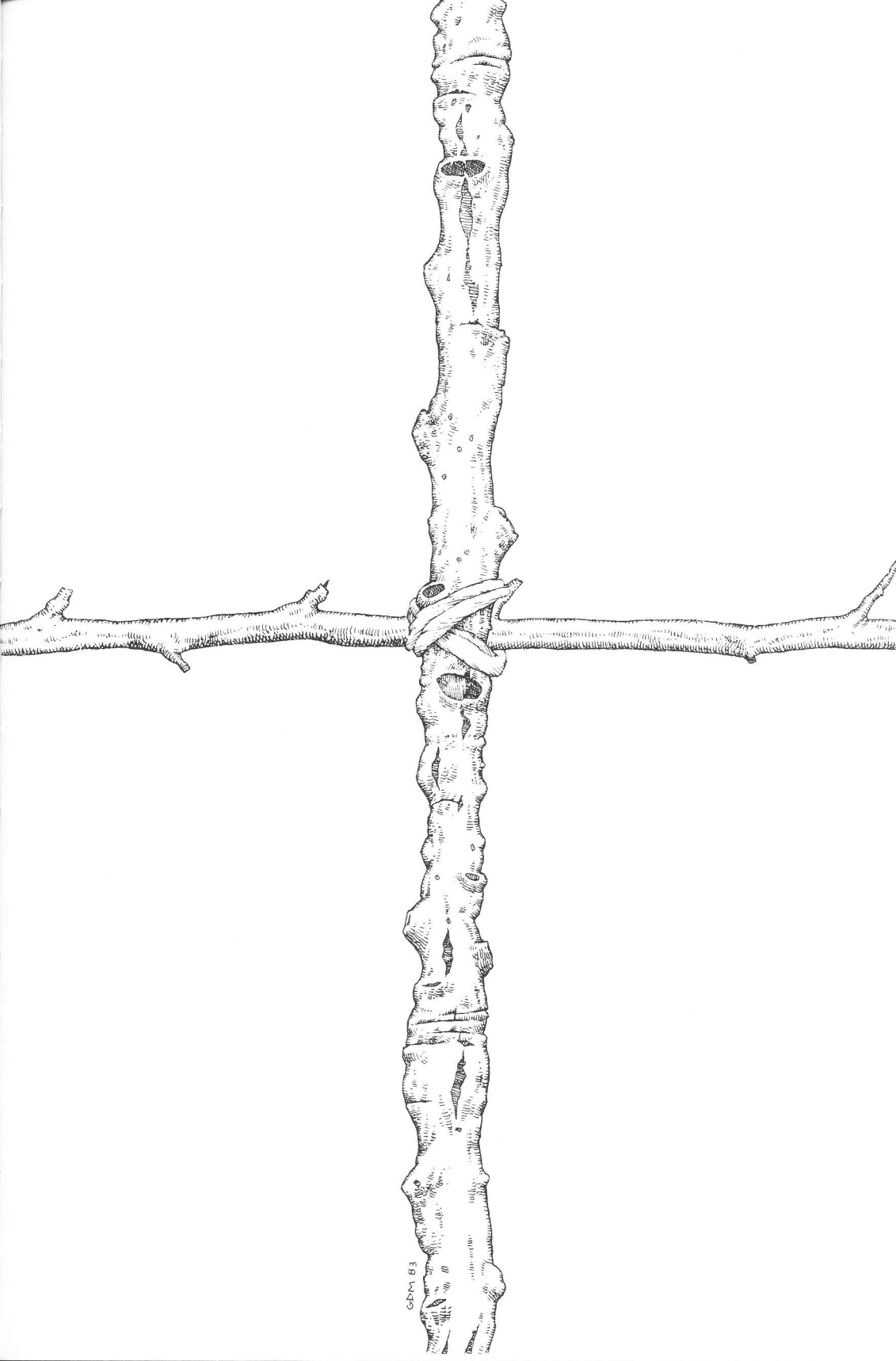
"No."

"Okay. Good night."

"Joe? Thanks for saying that. I mean, about not being crazy. I needed to hear that. Good night, Joe."

That night Joe experienced a kind of calm and contentment that he could only describe in terms of his body's temperature. He was, in fact, running a slight fever, and he suspected this, but he also suspected that it was something more, something that divided his essence--his Joeness, in a sense--into warm and cold parts that he could now control as if he had stumbled upon a

hidden thermostat. He turned it up and back down again, acquainting himself with the many levels of comfort and distress until he trusted it completely and could give it free rein, which he did, allowing it to lead him through spirals of warmth and finally into a drowsiness so heavy he could hardly remain standing. Still, he watched Effie for a long time; she had fallen asleep and was talking in her sleep although Joe could not be sure what she was saying. Joe watched her and waited, listening for the one utterance he might keep and use against her when in the future he would look back and wonder why things hadn't worked out, why nothing had been the same after they'd traveled. In her sleep she said nothing incriminating, nothing against him. He needed sleep. Joe took a last glance around the darkened room and imagined her in the morning, always so slow in the morning: one poised, confident figure, setting off for the time of her life, packing her things.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SEAMUS HEANEY

INTERVIEW

AN INTERVIEW WITH SEAMUS HEANEY

Seamus Heaney is the author of Death of a Naturalist (1966), Door into the Dark (1969), Wintering Out (1972), and North (1975), all of which appear in Poems: 1965-1975. He has most recently published Field Work (1979) and Preoccupations: Selected Prose, 1968-1978. Born in 1939 to Roman Catholic parents on a farm in Northern Ireland, Heaney was educated at Queens University in Belfast and has since taught at Berkeley and Harvard. Donna Campbell and Thomas O'Donnell interviewed Heaney when he was at the University of Kansas on October 8, 1982, to give a reading of his poetry.

O'DONNELL: In my reading of your essays I was struck by your liking of Wordsworth's poem on a shepherd, "Michael," which I also like enormously.

HEANEY: Oh, yes. But again, at a very simple basic level I knew a few Michaels myself, and the observation of that kind of patient, silent world of workers out in the field is a rare enough thing in English literature. It's not a poem about a worker, but in a documentary sense it is, and a man walking through the stones--I was not only moved in some primitive way by that subject matter, but also by his response to it. It's very bare. There's something about the choughs sailing in the sky at the beginning, and there's a kind of chastity about it.

O'DONNELL: On what kind of farm were you reared?

HEANEY: Well, I think the word "farm" covers multitudes of outfits. In the North of Ireland it was a small farm, about sixty acres, and it was mixed farming at that stage. When I was growing up in the 40's and 50's on the ground where we were we had cattle, my father was a cattle dealer as well, so there would be a grazing part to it; we had bullocks fattening over the backend of the year. There were a few cows, there would be tillage of corn, and small acreages of potatoes, and it was, you know, hens and the whole bloody thing. Nowadays my brother works at the farm and it is all milk and silage. In the last twenty years specialization and mechanization have changed it considerably.

O'DONNELL: Did you work on the farm during college?

HEANEY: Well, just as part of the action--I didn't work, say, from eighteen to twenty four on the farm. I was constantly on the conveyor belt of colleges and schools. Then I taught when I finished my degree in Belfast. So in a sense I didn't actually work on a farm, except I grew up there and took part in the activities.

O'DONNELL: You had several brothers. Did they work on the farm?

HEANEY: Well, my brother Hugh, as I say, is on the farm now. He's the next brother to me, but I have two sisters and five brothers. The farm is only big enough to keep one person, you know. I have one brother who is a publican and a couple of teachers and a fellow who works in the building trade--various jobs.

O'DONNELL: You had a Roman Catholic background.

HEANEY: Yes, that's right.

O'DONNELL: Are you Roman Catholic now?

HEANEY: Well I can't completely ever put that into past tense, really. You can declare you have done that, but I think that it's a sensibility, it's a whole attitude to experience. It is very clear to me now the nature of it because I have three children--sixteen, fifteen, and nine. And while my practice of faith certainly was eroded (I mean I didn't attend service much), I would like the children to have some sense of it. I take them to Mass every now and again and, since in Ireland the whole country is still, to a large extent, a Catholic country, they inhale a lot of that culture. Being in school, they learn their prayers and so on. I don't at all mind that. I mean I rather like that. It is allied to a kind of backwoods attitude sometimes, in some bishops, but even that is changing.

O'DONNELL: Are your wife and children in Ireland now?

HEANEY: Yes. I am working one semester a year at Harvard, but that is in the springtime; this is a five year arrangement started last springtime, so when I do that my wife and children stay at home because I do it really to earn my keep and their keep for the next half of the year; that is, this half. So I should really be at home now, instead of wasting my time.

O'DONNELL: When did you first come to the United States?

HEANEY: My first visit to America was in '70-'71. I taught at the University of California at Berkeley for a year. I went back to Berkeley in '76, for a quarter, as a thing called a Beckman Professor. Then in '79 in the springtime I went just for one semester to Harvard to do the writing classes there, and then a couple years later this offer came up to do a five-year stint. I wouldn't want to move permanently to America because I think that, taking first of all just the family situation, the kids are at a certain stage where they are secure, to some extent, in one culture, and they have a sense of the other culture. It is also easier and more secure, I think, to bring up children in Dublin than in many parts of America. But taking it from the point of view of just writing and being a writer, a small country has certain disadvantages, but one of the advantages, I think, in Ireland is a sense of having some responsibility for the destiny of the nation. This may seem

grandiose; it's really a common undertone of thinking about writing in Ireland. There is something in every writer's vision of what it is to be a writer in Ireland, some kind of redemptive impulse. You know that writers in some way (artists in general, I should say, I suppose) are part of the effort and part of the whole reality in a way that in a larger country like this they aren't. I think that's true.

O'DONNELL: I think it's true too, just from the short time I've spent in Ireland. They really care about the artist.

HEANEY: Yes, well, we mustn't sentimentalize it; there's a good deal of self-regard, people saying we really care about artists--I mean there are some who don't give a damn. But the example I like to think of is--if you publish a poem in the Irish Times, say, the Cabinet Ministers, bureaucrats, industrialists will read it with more or less attention. You know that's just writing, they don't make a big deal of it, but if you have established a presence as a writer, your relationship, not just with a literary culture, but with the more or less cultivated outside world, is fairly strong.

O'DONNELL: There is a long tradition of doing that; Yeats's "Easter 1916" was published in a newspaper. Was it the Irish Times?

HEANEY: I am sure it probably was an Irish Statesman; A.E. was running the magazine at that time. A couple of times I published poems in that. A poem called "Funeral Rites" I published in the mid '70's. And, you know, I got letters from three or four people, and a lot of people mentioned it. It was a poem addressing itself, to some extent, to a public theme. But it was by no means a public-type poem; it was operating with symbols and obliquenesses.

O'DONNELL: Do you still think of your primary audience as Irish?

HEANEY: I never really thought of an audience from the start, but it would be naïve to say that I am not aware that my books are read in America. That all happened quite suddenly and it was a result of some kind of critical response to, I suppose, Field Work in 1979, although to North a little bit. I have been knocking around the halls since about 1965, so I'm grateful for this sudden extension of the audience, but it is a bonus really rather than anything else. It could be momentary; you're never sure.

O'DONNELL: Does it make you anxious in some way to have that wide audience?

HEANEY: Not really, no. Because the real anxiety is about the proper conduct of your own poetry. And that's why it is important to stay at home. It would be very difficult, I think,

to survive in any kind of silence here once you get some kind of acknowledgement. Because the phone keeps ringing and the gigs keep coming. There are subtle pressures on poets and writers in America to succeed constantly in some kind of recognizable way. It is pretty difficult really to manage it. There is a kind of emphasis on productivity too, which can be dangerous. It's some part of the whole culture, and it applies to writing as well. I think that lyric poetry is an art and it's as much involved with waiting as going out after it.

O'DONNELL: You've written about Lowell. Did he influence you at all?

HEANEY: I think influence might be a strong word, but "corroborate" might do. Meeting Robert Lowell was an important thing. I think Lowell probably did influence some of the noises I make in Field Work; I was reading a good bit of him then. A moment ago I used the word "corroboration"; I think that's very important to a writer, to feel that somebody whom the writer admires, admires him. And that has nothing necessarily to do with verbal help coming from a senior to a junior writer. It has to do with a sense of confirmation. I was very shy of Lowell and for a long time. That this writer, who had been in the canon of modern literature when I was a student, that he took your work seriously--not that he necessarily liked it all by any means, but that he regarded it as work--was terrifically enabling. And I think he was wonderful in that way. He had a sense of authority. I mean, there are poets with a reputation and there are poets with authority, and Lowell had authority. Another thing about Lowell: he was an admirable negotiator of that little world where we now are, between your own creative endeavor and the business of standing up as a figure that's called a poet living in the world of interviews and jealousies and awards and wars and political responsibilities.

CAMPBELL: I'm curious about the way you write poetry. You once said that the poems come up like bodies out of the bog of imagination.

HEANEY: That's an image from something I wrote, all right. But it is prefaced by sometimes they come up like that. Those are the best times, those are the times you cherish and the times you trust yourself by. But I think any poem will have an element of surprise, chance, and autogenesis about it. In other words, there is, at the initiating point of the poem, some sense of tremor, discovery, excitement, possibility. And sometimes that excitement keeps itself alive in a single sweep until you finish the poem. But I think probably more often it has to be fanned alive again and again by work. And the fan you use is usually a second approach to the subject. In other words, the first thing has an exciting, inviting, come hither feeling about it. Philip Larkin, the English poet, had a very good example. He talked about a poem being written with a knife and a fork. There is a certain part of the imagination and intelligence that

is the fork, that fastens onto the thing. Then there is another artistic negotiating quality which is the knife. It is very difficult to talk about this without making generalizations that you can immediately contradict.

CAMPBELL: You have some poems, like "Anahorish" and "Broagh" based on the sounds of place names. I wonder if odd or archaic words like "pampooties" or "pash" are part of your original conception of the poem--or do they come later?

HEANEY: Those words come natural enough in the process of search and discovery. I've never gone and made a list of words saying, "These words from the dictionary I will use." I was intrigued that, when North came out in 1975, there was, in an English academic journal called Critical Quarterly, a literary review of North about my use of words. Most of those words in some way were natural to me. The word "pash," for example, I think I misunderstood. I thought I knew what it meant. I thought it meant something pashed in, you know, but I'm not sure that is exactly what it means; it came to me as just a phrase.

There's a kind of coagulation of sound that occurs if you're in good shape or if you're writing well. I think that it is really musical in some ways. It is usually not a single word. The word is part of a field of other forces or another mode or something.

CAMPBELL: In an essay on Yeats and Wordsworth you talk about the "bulletproof glass of the spirit" of Yeats, of his control, and you seem to identify more with Wordsworth. Do you consider yourself Wordsworthian?

HEANEY: Yes, I did think I was more Wordsworthian, but I've come to the conclusion that that was a hankering for that kind of poetry. Every poet has the two sides in him. He has the surrender, listen in, wait-for-it side. And necessarily, in the strict sense, the artistic, the making, the act of doing-the-thing side; that is a more deliberating, controlling, more projective, more conscious, activity.

You mention the poem "Anahorish," which is a little poem about a place name; there are four or five of those poems and they came rather quickly. Take an analogy from the visual arts. Some poems are like drawings: they're caught and they fleet across the page. The art of that is to be true to the impulse and to let it go like a drawing. But there are some poems which are paintings where you have to work at it. You shade it in and you redo the canvas a little bit and you stand back and you move it a bit; those poems are usually stanzaic poems with some kind of argument in them. I think that, in fact, stanzaic poems, poems with deliberate meter and rhyme, involve a more deliberate negotiation with the work, while a free-verse poem is a matter of groping tentatively. They're two different kinds of music; they're two different kinds of effect.

CAMPBELL: Field Work seems to have more sonnets and elegies, more elaborate poetic forms. Do you feel you are moving more toward that?

HEANEY: Well I did that quite deliberately. But I think that a stylistic move is always something more, something in the mood and conduct of your life and related to larger items. Those sonnets came after I had written a number of the poems in North. The poems of North are about uncertainty and they are written when I had moved from Belfast to Wicklow when I was searching for some sense of myself as a writer. I had published three books and I wanted to vindicate something in myself; I wanted to make an act of commitment to being a poet, whatever that meant. Nobody is really quite sure. So when I went to Wicklow I was tense and in some way troubled, but exhilarated also, so that the poems in North are all kind of cramped up and tense. There is a dedicatory poem called "Sunlight," which is very gentle in its imagery. I remember just before I sent the book in, I thought this short narrow stanza and this tight thing is a habit merely. So I wrote the "Sunlight" poem in long lines and that sense of constriction which was necessary, a sense of tightness, disappeared, and the poem somehow slipped away from it.

CAMPBELL: Yet North is dark in mood.

HEANEY: There was darkness of mood in those poems and some part of me felt that just to take pleasure in the sweetness of lyric, to be too free, to make too free with the beauty side of art rather than the truth side of it, was almost an affront to the conditions in the country. There was some kind of puritanical distress in me about the whole thing. Also, not mentioning names, I was enraged by the excellence of certain writers. There is a certain kind of poetry that is beautiful, resourceful, admirable, excellent. But there is no obstacle in it, no grit. There is no encounter. I was impatient with certain kinds of fluency. This is a long answer to your question on form, but it is a central question--I thought to myself, "Oh, damn it all, come on." And it had to do with one sonnet. I got a few lines one night:

> This evening the cuckoo and the corncrake
> (So much, too much) consorted at twilight.

I thought, that's nice. Then I thought, "That is really a very English, iambic pentameter melody. I don't want that stuff. It's too sweet." And then I thought, "Well, why are you punishing this in yourself?" And I deliberately said, "O.K., take it away, boy. Write a few sonnets."

CAMPBELL: That is what I was noticing, too. In "Punishment" you are "the artful voyeur." You express a kind of discomfort with the poet's stance.

HEANEY: I think that is true. "Discomfort" is a very good word. I'm not given to political or public stances. And yet the way the moment developed and the way a number of us were there at that moment as writers and the way the expectations grew and the way your own sense of responsibility grew, left that abstract question of the poet's role, left it at the center of your unconsciousness. And in the end I've come almost to feel that I worry too much about it. Maybe it is better just to forget about it, but it was impossible to forget it.

O'DONNELL: How did you feel when you first came upon P. V. Glob's The Bog People?

HEANEY: Oh, I felt delighted.

O'DONNELL: Did you recognize what you had?

HEANEY: Not really, no, no, I was just entranced by the photographs and the Tollund man's head. I knew I would write about Tollund man, but I didn't know when or how. To go back to what we were talking about, the originating excitement--what do you do with it? It was a completely aliterary response: "My God, that's wonderful." Everybody who sees the photograph of this preserved archaic head is moved. My response was a common one, but since I had written a poem called "Bogland," which I liked, I thought to myself, "This man is an ancestor of mine." The very face looked like the old characters riding bikes through the countryside twenty or thirty years ago. And I felt very close to him. But how, how do you do it? Then in some vague field of--thought would be too strong a word for it--of association, I thought as I read about this that he was sacrificed to the fertility goddess, and I thought that Irish Republicanism is a religion of sacrifice, of martyrdom, territorial, to do with redeeming by blood the nation. So I knew that in some way the head of this man who died by violence would be a kind of bait to call other things towards itself out of the contemporary. It was later on that I proceeded more deliberately into that image.

O'DONNELL: How long did the impulse last to write about the bog people?

HEANEY: About a year and a half really.

O'DONNELL: And you first saw this book in the late 1960's?

HEANEY: 1969. The poem in Wintering Out was called "The Tollund Man." In Belfast we poets were sparking on all cylinders then, younger, more eager. People were showing each other poems. Then there was this poem called "Bog Queen." And another before that called "Come to the Bower" and that was the first one of the new reign. "Bog Queen" was an important poem to write in a way because I remember that it was the first time in my life that I ever worked for a whole day on a poem. That

was the first time. I didn't have a job at that time, I was free-lancing, and I said, "This is what it means to be a writer." And the house was empty and the excitement stayed all day. I had a tremendous sense of joy. The poem is a relishing of a lot of words. And I didn't know I was going to go on and write. But I've got many of them in fact. A few pages of them. Ten or twelve pages--"Kinship," "Grauballe Man," the "Punishment" poem. That is about it. I often wonder if I hadn't published that book, if there might have been more of them.

O'DONNELL: Did you ever meet Glob?

HEANEY: I did indeed. I was very lucky. That was part of it, of course, the more I think of it. I did a poetry reading at Oxford at a course for schoolteachers. By accident at that meeting there were two representatives of the Danish ministry of Education--two school inspectors from Denmark. And they heard me rhapsodizing about P. V. Glob and I read the Tollund man book and I had also given a lecture on Yeats. They said, "You must come to Denmark, give your lecture, and go and see the Tollund man. We will introduce you to Professor Glob,"--who was, is, the Director of the Museum in Denmark. So indeed that happened. I had an entrancing time. I went down to Ribe, which is down near Schleswig-Holstein. And I came up through Jutland on a train on my own. It took me a day and a half to get to see the Tollund man, and then I saw the Grauballe man, who I hadn't realized was also to be seen in Aarhus. And those four or five days were very exciting and animating. It wasn't a disappointment; I was afraid it would be a disappointment.

O'DONNELL: Was this the trip after you had completed all of the bog poems?

HEANEY: No, it was after I did "The Tollund Man." I think it must have been about 1972. I'm not quite sure now, to tell you the truth. Certainly I know a lot of the images in the Grauballe man are from just a little note I made as I looked at him. I didn't want to forget it. And I had that kind of readiness and excitement which we all wish we had all the time. It's an emotional openness, a readiness, and it has to do with being solitary, because if there had been somebody with me, talking to me about this, I would never have taken it in the same way. In fact, I often regret that the person I was to meet in the museum came along to me before I had finished my excitement with the Grauballe man, and my notes stopped when that person came.

O'DONNELL: A few minutes ago you mentioned a community of poets who were showing work to each other. Were you in touch with them at that time?

HEANEY: Yes. At that time in Belfast, in the late sixties, we were a kind of gang I suppose: Michael Longley, who's still

there, James Simmons, and a young poet called Paul Muldoon, who was very young then but very good. The minute Muldoon's first poem came through my letterbox I said, "My God, this is it." And the gang met and drank and generally shared what was being done. But, in fact, by 1972 I had left. No harm to any one of the group, who were very much a group, but I felt the thing was getting almost too committee-worky. I had to get away and become myself in some kind of definitive way. And the only thing to do was to go away. Not too far.

CAMPBELL: I have a copy of the journal Ploughshares, and I noticed that what you had in there was a translation from the Middle Irish of some Sweeney poems. Is this translation something new that you're working on?

HEANEY: I'm not sure. I'll tell you about the Sweeney. When I went to Wicklow and had enough time for the first time and was going to be solely a writer, I felt I had to have a task that kept me going. And the Sweeney material is very attractive in places; it's delightful nature poetry, and with that Early Irish clarity about it. But it's long and boring as well; there are chunks of it that are very repetitive. But first of all I thought, I'll make a little children's story out of this. And then--Sweeney being cursed and turned into a bird living in the trees and so on--when I got the thing, you know, I thought, "Ah, no, don't rip it off--do the whole thing." And it was very important to me that I would finish a draft of it. I didn't want to start it at all, if I would feel that I had failed the first time. So my first year in Wicklow I did a version of the whole poem, poetry and prose. There's about a hundred pages. It was written in free verse, and it was full of excitement, which was also full of very free handling of the Irish. And when I had it finished, I thought, this isn't quite right. And anyway toward the end of the enterprise, I was rhyming the poem, and I had begun it in free verse so the artistic thing was lopsided in itself, so I knew I had to start it all again some day. I swooped on it in 1979, seven years later, had a great charge, and I knocked a lot of it into rhymed stanzas, and I got a different intonation from it. The intonation I had in the beginning, while I liked it while I was doing it, when I had it finished, I thought, this is too soft, it's too cajoling, it's too "Englishy." My use of the word English is not political; it's merely a description of a certain note of sweetness that I didn't think should be in my writing. So the long and the short of it is, just before I set out for this piracy through the campuses, I finished the second version of it. So that's the translation finished but I think you might be right, I think that Sweeney might surface again, but I mean, I don't think I should talk about that. I'm not sure what I would do with him.

CAMPBELL: You once said that Irish verse is pure and cold. When you're writing, do you have a sense that "this is English" and "this is Irish"?

HEANEY: Oh, no.

CAMPBELL: Do you feel more of a pull toward one at one time and the other at another time?

HEANEY: Well, I think some lines--iamabic pentameter, for example--are English lines. When you are writing in a sonnet form you are actually in some way in negotiation with the whole keyboard of literature that that form implies. The melodies that are possible in those fourteen lines are various indeed, but there have been various melodies played on them. In a way the thing about a sonnet is to play the melody, but to put your own improvisation on it somewhere. I think that the volcanic explosion, the atomic fission in the sonnet, occurred with Yeats's "Leda and the Swan." There seems to me to be scorched earth policy on that form afterwards. I mean, you don't think of it as a sonnet because it doesn't quite have the Shakespearean sweetness, but the actual form, the octave-sestet and so on, are perfectly used. But to go back to English-Irish, what I was saying was based to some degree on my experience in trying to translate Sweeney. I discovered a translation by Flann O'Brien from Early Irish which struck a note that was the right tuning fork, I thought, for what I wanted to do. And the note was very sparse and terse and kind of like an etching. It's a little two-stress line. It's a season song which goes:

Stags give tongue
Winter snows
Summer goes
High cold blow
Sun is low
Brief is day
Seas give spray

Those little line-by-line things don't have English melody. I wouldn't want to get too doctrinaire about it because the inheritance of English literature is in my ear. But I would like to mutate it in some way, and to hang on to the physical voice.

O'DONNELL: How close to your experience are some of the things you write? You mention Lowell's desire at some points to be autobiographical, to be accurate; you seem to say that that's not enough, or at least it's not the approach you take.

HEANEY: Oh yes. The reassuring man in all this is James Joyce, of course, who never invented anything, if you like. Joyce at one point said, "I don't think I've got an imagination at all." I know what he meant, because he kept writing home saying, "What height are the railings outside Eccles Street? Could a man climb up that at night?" and so on. "Stand at the back of the Star of the Sea Church for me and tell me, as you're standing there, can you see as far as Sandymount Strand?" He just kept writing back to his Aunt Josephine. The fact of the matter is

that I think nearly all my poems have some basis either in autobiography or observation. One or two have sources in dreams, but unless those sources in some way kick the language motor for you, unless there's some kind of excitement or generating possibility, unless it relates into words and the words themselves begin to get a little life of their own, all the observation in the world and all the memory in the world are not much good to you.

O'DONNELL: Is "The Other Side" taken from life? Did events like that happen to you?

HEANEY: "The Other Side" was a poem about an old Presbyterian neighbor, which plays with the idea of him being on the other side of the dividing stream between the two farms, and also puns on the phrase "the other side" used in the North of Ireland by Catholics for Protestants and by Protestant for Catholics. That began in a kind of a family joke. We'd been telling this joke for twenty years, and as a family we just laughed at this. Nearly every family has an inner history in which certain things become epoch making--"Somebody said this that time"--that's referred to between those people until they die. Well, one of the things that this old man said about the land and this field was, "It's as poor as Lazarus." We used to joke about that. And that's where the poem took off. I had been talking about him then--this was all before the poem--thinking about how in the North the Protestant culture is Biblical indeed, and that in the field another neighbor of ours, called Bob McIntyre, who was an elder and a stranger, when we were youngsters would talk about Jacob and Isaac and the Pharoah and Moses and all that, whereas the Catholics would only swear by Jesus and Christ. It was notably swearing and not quite obscene, but often blaspheming. And again, the Protestants were notably good-tongued. All of that was underneath the poem. But these local particularities don't necessarily guarantee any kind of success.

O'DONNELL: Where are you living now?

HEANEY: I'm living in Dublin. When I lived in Wicklow, though, something happened to me that I really liked, and that was, I was able to write about where I was living. Usually, when I was in Belfast, I always wrote about where I came from; I had one or two poems maybe about the contemporary thing in Belfast, but the place didn't animate me. Your imagination has to have some kind of erotic relationship with its material, and there's nothing erotic about Belfast for me, whereas when I went to Wicklow, I made bold to write about the house I was living in, which was something I'd never thought of doing before. And in the "Glanmore Sonnets," for that reason, there is a lot of literal record, and that was an exciting thing for me to do.

O'DONNELL: When you went to Wicklow, I wonder if you felt that you left or abandoned your home country. You were from the

North of Ireland. Did you feel you were going into another country?

HEANEY: No, definitely not, but the Unionist-Protestant-Ulsterist-British mentality did, and that gave me some pleasure. In a sense, the world picture of the Irish Catholic in the North is that Ireland is one country, and that the border is an imposition, artificial. And it is true that his imagination feels that he owns the country from Donegal to Kerry. I remember when some of us used to go down to Dublin; when we'd cross the border we'd all cheer--we were in the land of the free, out from under the Union Jack. Of course, I think that the community--the Nationalist community, for want of a better word--wouldn't have felt abandoned at all; in some secret part of themselves they'd be pleased with me for doing that. That's kind of "one in the eyes of the other tribe." But of course a lot of the Unionists--I mean liberal, nice people--felt they were abandoned, all right, felt I had left Ulster. What they wanted was for me to stay and in some way redeem Ulster as a political entity. I don't see that as part of my purpose.

CAMPBELL: In some of the poems, like "Requiem for the Croppies," you write about sectarian violence from a distance in time. And in the bog poems, you're writing about it from a distance of time and space. Then in Field Work, especially in the elegies, the violence is very much brought home. Did you feel more free then, after your move, or did you feel that it was time to write more directly of the violence?

HEANEY: Well, I think it's true that the move did help me to deal more freely with it, but it took me about four or five years to get round even to write a poem like "Casualty," which is about a man shot to death, or being blown up in a bar. The situation in the North is so explosive, because the division--the sectarian division, the political division--obsesses in some deep way everybody. Because the country is so small and because you're working with, you're living beside, you're neighbors with, you're talking to the children of people completely divided from you culturally and politically, as a way of life then you begin a kind of evasion of realities on courtesy. It's inbred almost from the start. Writers living in Belfast--and I was one of them, I mean I'm a guilty part of this thing--felt that it was an affront in some way, even though people were killing each other, to actually write about it in a disruptive way or in a prejudiced way. To take a political side was in some way to be doing a disservice. That was, I suppose, underpinned by a general literary orthodoxy that was in British literary thinking. Any poem with a hint of the partisan about it was artistically disabled, you know. There's a kind of cliché there: "The writers of the Thirties were terrible because they were Communists." Maybe they were terrible because they weren't Communists and pretended they were. So in a sense going away was an attempt to free one's self to some extent, to find out what you really felt and to find out if you could say something. But that evasive, oblique approach to things, I think, is ingrained in me. I'd like to rebuke it.

REVIEWS

William Stafford. A Glass Face in the Rain. (Harper and Row: New York, 1982). 126 pp. $6.95 paper.

Smoke Signals
--a dedication--

> There are people on a parallel way. We do not
> see them often, or even think of them often,
> but it is precious to us that they are sharing
> the world. Something about how they have accepted
> their lives, or how the sunlight happens to them,
> helps us to hold the strange, enigmatic days
> in line for our own living. It is important
> that these people know this recognition, but
> it is also important that no purpose of obligation
> related to this be intruded into their lives.
>
> This book intends to be for anyone, but especially
> for those on that parallel way: here is a smoke
> signal, ummistakable but unobtrusive--we are
> following what comes, going through the world,
> knowing each other, building our little fires.

Poetry is not for speed readers, William Stafford's new book of poems especially. Reading through A Glass Face In The Rain quickly would be like ripping through Kansas headlong: very likely little would seem to be going on.

Imagine skimming through Kansas at seventy. With the sky all wide and the land pouring under--there is a pleasure in it. To drive all day and hit the other border beat is to learn a certain thing, call it Lesson One. The scene seems empty and big, so we might feel small or lonely. All details are blurred. (Travelers from the coasts will tell you they time Kansas for a night crossing. May as well, they say, there's nothing to see and besides, all these states--Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas--look alike anyway.)

William Stafford, though mostly a coastal dweller himself since 1948, knows better. He was born in Hutchinson, raised around the state.

Through seven books now Stafford has carried a Kansan's sensibilities, registering the slivers that make up a life as a plainsman might. Teethed on an austere landscape, Stafford has learned through writing that the prairie contains lessons two and three and four; five,six, seven and. . .

Over the twenty years he has been publishing, Stafford's work has seemed of a piece--like the land he came from, cut from one bolt of cloth. And yet it seems he hones his language down further and further with each book; this new one is more spare, even, than the others. If we accept McLuhan's theory and the medium is the message, by trimming more and more Stafford hits ever nearer his mark: a lean land can't be "poemed into" parlor pieces.

Distilling poetry is dangerous--poems are distillations themselves already. Saying what a poem "means" is always difficult, and usually unwise. Poetic imagery defies neat conclusions precisely because it invites us to go on, not conclude. But to write a poetry review is to know that we must get home, even when the way is across thin ice. So, among other things William Stafford may be saying with these poems that the landscape of his remembered childhood is populated by people who share the character of that land. You can't separate them, the land and the people, in these poems. There's a bigness but not an emptiness--in some cases a harshness--in the people presented here. Like Kansas, his mother will not give up very much very easily, or for long. Mother was a soldier. Like the winter day on which the poemed event happened, Bill was cold towards his little brother Bob, now dead. In "Remembering Brother Bob" he writes,

> . . . Yes, I carried him. I took
> him home. But I complained. I see
> the darkness; it comes near: and Bob,
> who is gone now, and the other kids.
> I am the zero in the scene:
> "You said you would be brave," I chided
> him. "I'll not take you again."
> Years, I look at the white across
> this page, and think: I never did.

Even the white of his poem's page reminds the poet of the ice, the snow, that day.

If people presented by Stafford have taken their cue from place, events are treated with no less reserve. When, after two days of being holed up in a school house in the storm of 1934, children and their teacher are dug out of drifts that reach the eaves, the pony is found frozen in the shed. His death gets one raw line, "But the pony was dead when they dug us out" ("School Days").

****

New England gave America one of her most celebrated poets early in this century, Robert Frost. Frost broke new ground by struggling with what seems, now, like a simple-sounding notion: Observe nature with patience and without preconception to harvest its intricacies. Through this work he moved toward universals, away from the regional.

William Stafford, so thoroughly a poet weaned on the plains, has made his intentions felt. He carries Frost's torch, Naturalism, and our way is illuminated by his "little fire". We will not expect the purely regional; we will not expect his life on the prairie to have yielded the pastoral, the easy, or the idyllic poem. We can "take" life, Stafford seems to say, we can accept it and know it, we can have it and love it and embrace it truly, only if we see it genuinely and say it plainly. We can live if we stand and care.

You stop and look out. It's already tomorrow
somewhere, and someone like you is walking;
a wave is beginning to speak, and the rest
shrug and go on. You stand and care.
(from "Absences")

G. Barnes

David Ray. The Touched Life: Selected and New Poems. Poets Now 4. (Metucheen, N.J. & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1982). 197 pp.

David Ray's The Touched Life is a collection which includes one hundred poems selected from works dating from X-Rays (1965) through Orphans (1981). It also contains twenty-five new poems, the best of which are probably "A Portrait of the Mexican Barber," "The Ribcage Behind a Meat Counter" and "The Snake People." Ray's attention to detail and his conversion of that detail into meaningful poetry are the most striking things about the collection. Robert Peters, editor of the Poets Now series, says in his introduction to Ray's volume that Ray "sees life, in a sense, without eyelids."

Ray's selection of specific details provides images resonant with meaning. The mother in the early poem, "Greens," continually abandoned, with her son, by her husband, brushes back "the long, complaining strands / Of her hair." The man at the counter in "A Midnight Diner by Edward Hopper" has "sought the smoothest counter in the world / . . . His grief is what he'll try to hold in check. / His thumb has found and held his coffee cup." General Custer, in "A Portrait of the Mexican Barber" wears a "red strangling kerchief." And "The Ribcage Behind a Meat Counter"is "like latticework, well-spaced arcade, shadow-making, / alabaster crouching." The animal's "action / is not yet final," for "the butcher hacks elsewhere."

Frequently, the poet in Ray's world is a discoverer and interpreter, both of the lives of others and of his own past, as in "A Hill in Oklahoma," Ray has come "to dig the shards / Out of the wet leaves / And find what you left." In "At the Washing of My Son," he sees his new son for the first time and finds a physical connection to him and to the baby's mother that is surprising, "You were / Covered with your mother's blood, and I saw / That navel where you and I were joined to her."

Ray is at his best when observing others from a distance rather than speaking to them in his poetry. One of his finest love poems, "At the Train Station in Pamplona," reveals this distance as it describes a couple, at a railway station, on the verge of breaking up. The man stands over the woman, "his hands / hopelessly in his pockets." For her:

> looking between overcoats, toying
> with the green umbrella, in a smoke-
> filled station is one more way of
> keeping from crying.

One thinks of Hemingway immediately, of course, and wonders why the poem isn't titled "After Reading `Hills Like White Elephants,'" but the poem succeeds in spite of its precursor. The man touches the woman's hand and makes her smile, "using torture," and she boards the train with him. The poem ends beautifully:

When she settles herself by the window
she is already broadcasting to other
men the message of her helplessness.

Ray's poetry is at its worst when the poet, in his full-blown, self-important form, takes over the poem, as in "To One Who in His Love of Liberty." This poem, to a man who committed suicide by leaping from the State Capitol dome, opens with the thought that perhaps the man hoped "we'd notice," but Ray comments, "not a chance, it / isn't done!" Yet by the end of the poem, Ray has reversed himself;

You did it
cleanly, brooded
for a year, then
fell, in one poem.
No matter if
no audience,
save one. I heard
you, friend, I heard.

This poem does not succeed in recording the man's tragic life and does not measure up to such fine contemporary elegies as Howard Nemerov's "The Pond" or Ted Hughes' "You Hated Spain."

In contrast to "To One Who in His Love of Liberty," Ray in "Some Notes on Vietnam," for example, makes an effective political statement as he says of the draftees on their way to Saigon, "They do not sense the dark generations / saying things under the rice." And of "the sad young / marrieds" in "On Seeing a Movie Based on an Episode from President Kennedy's Life," Ray writes with appropriate cynicism, "They know / their dreams are put / to sleep like pups."

All of Ray's poems are not dark Ray brooding, however; he can be quite humorous. "Understanding Poetry" opens with these lines:

Buffalo Bill
by e.e. cummings
is on page 50,
I can never find it
right before class
when the girls are biting
their fingernails

What teacher has not had this experience? "The Snake People" has a more grotesque humor than "Understanding Poetry," for the snakes have boxes:

marked JESUS on the lid's inside
as if those snakes could read and be calmed
by such a word, a kind of snake mantra.

David Ray persistently seeks to discover and interpret his past and the lives of others. In The Touched Life, as in most selected works, Ray has written from a wide variety of moods and perspectives. But often Ray, as poet, seemed to intrude on the poems, telling us of his insights, instead of letting the poem reveal them. When his poetry is at its best, Ray steps back, if only just a little, and allows the poem to explain itself.

Philip Wedge

Roy Gridley. PRC DIARY--June 1982, Tansy no. 16. Tansy Press (Vortex House, 645 Michigan, Lawrence, KS 66044). 20pp. 50 cents.

PRC Diary was written, the author informs us, to "flesh out" the prose diary of his recent trip to China. The short poems read like notes--clear, concise, sometimes abrupt. Footnotes, some quite lengthy, give readers a sense of the background behind the poems and help us enter a different land, a different culture. In one poem, for example, Gridley presents hoes and sickles resting in a dark corner of Anyang Bin Guan courtyard. His footnote tells us of ancient farm implements discovered at Anyang, one of the most fertile archeological sites in the country. Yet the poem stands well by itself.

The poet sees China through the eyes of a Kansan, and his wonderful sense of juxtaposition, the strange and the familiar in unexpected combinations, puts them both in a new perspective. When he views a frontier fort in Northern Shansi, sky, climate, soil, and even vegetation remind him of western Kansas. The primitives of both cultures blend in his poem.

> Soapweed guards Liao lions.
> Khitan & Kiowa
> Jurchen & Cheyenne
> Mongol & Comanche
> Mounted nomads moving south
> sought grass for their ponies.

Dreams of the past? Not really. Gridley sees too much of the present to give way to dreams. The twentieth century keeps intruding. A woman walks slowly along Wangfu-jing wearing a mauve silk gown slit just above the knee and polyester anklets. Another smells of rose and cedar and Arrid. She looks for a redbird in a redbud tree and sees instead a red-orange Datsun. Young toughs, shirts open and smoking cigarettes, lick their popsicles.

In spite of some unnecessarily clever rimes, the poetry flows smoothly and gives us fascinating glimpses of Gridley's trip. When the poet proposes a toast to Tu Fu, we can raise our glasses with him.

> Tu Fu, tangy old Tang poet
> of friendship and travel
>
> we, travellers from Kanza,
> come as friends to Henan,
> to this your native place.
>
> Welcome us, great poet.
> We are grateful guests.

Victor Contoski

Cynthia Pederson. Spoken Across a Distance. Washburn University of Topeka, Topeka, Kansas: The Bob Woodley Memorial Press, 1982. 75 pages. $2.95 paper.

Cynthia Pederson's newest book, Spoken Across a Distance, reflects her concerns with her Kansas heritage and the people and places of our state. The poems run the gamut from personal family narratives to issues of global concern; however, Pederson is at her best when she focuses closely on the Kansas landscape. In "Night Songs," she concentrates on the all-encompassing prairie environment of her childhood:

> Wherever I grew up
> was Kansas.
>
> Her wind suckled me
> and beat my bones in the cradle,
> a whirlwind stepmother
> raising me on dust and dead dreams. . .
>
> And I curled up, like a grain of wheat
> an unborn kernel of the prairie.

Spoken Across a Distance is, in part, a family venture. It includes photographs taken by Pederson's brother, Kurt Daniels, and much of the typing for press was done by her sister, Celia Daniels. Close family ties figure as themes in several of the poems. Though one recognizes Pederson's love and care for her family, these poems often sink into sentimentality. However, "Grandmother's Journey" is filled with quiet, homey details and works quite well.

According to the biographical note at the back of the book, Pederson "tends to gather the details of her experience in small souvenirs-- rocks, pine cones, wildflowers--as she gathers them in her poems." Many of the poems in Spoken Across a Distance are short haiku-like descriptions of local color. Technically competent, they are apt recordings of some object which struck Pederson's imagination, yet they lack intense vision and acute concentration which one expects from poetry. Take for example:

> Extinction
>
> lined up near the barn
> cast off farm implements rear
> like rust-drenched dinosaurs.

There is not enough here to engage the reader's interest. Fortunately, not all the poems are such slight offerings. Pederson has a quick eye, which at its best, is highly reminiscent of the descriptive poems of Denise Levertov. One of my favorite poems, "Storm Sequence," ends with a vivid portrayal of flowers by the back doorstep:

the damp doormat dries
slowly
and drooping snapdragons discover
sudden pink tongues.

Cynthia Pederson's voice is relatively new and may not be widely known outside of the Topeka-Lawrence area. Spoken Across a Distance includes several outstanding poems, and Pedersen can be expected to continue to develop her talents and hone her language.

Diane Hueter

BOOK NOTES

Michael L. Johnson. FAMILIAR STRANGER. (Flowerpot Mountain Press, P.O. Box 3711, Lawrence, KS 66044) 113 pp.

The collection draws its title from a poem about the author's new son and is dedicated to the memory of Tony Gowen, a colleague and friend of Gowen's. Even the translations are primarily of poems about birth or children and death, so the collection has a wholeness of theme.

Lynn Shoemaker. HANDS. (Lynx House Press, Chris Howell, 6116 S.E. Mitchell, Portland, OR 97206). 58 pp.

Shoemaker's collection begins with "Coming Home," a poem about the poet's mother, and many of the poems in the collection evoke memories of the family, of relationships. Shoemaker's use of legend, fairy tale, and myth is distinctive and individualized. His B'rer Rabbit poems make effective use of well-known materials in unique ways.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

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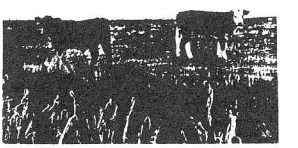

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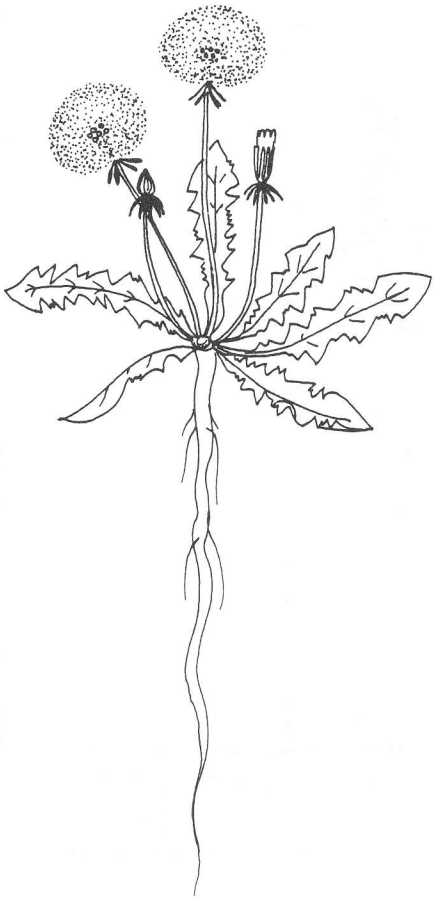

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