

1987

## The Gallery, 1986-87

Connecticut College

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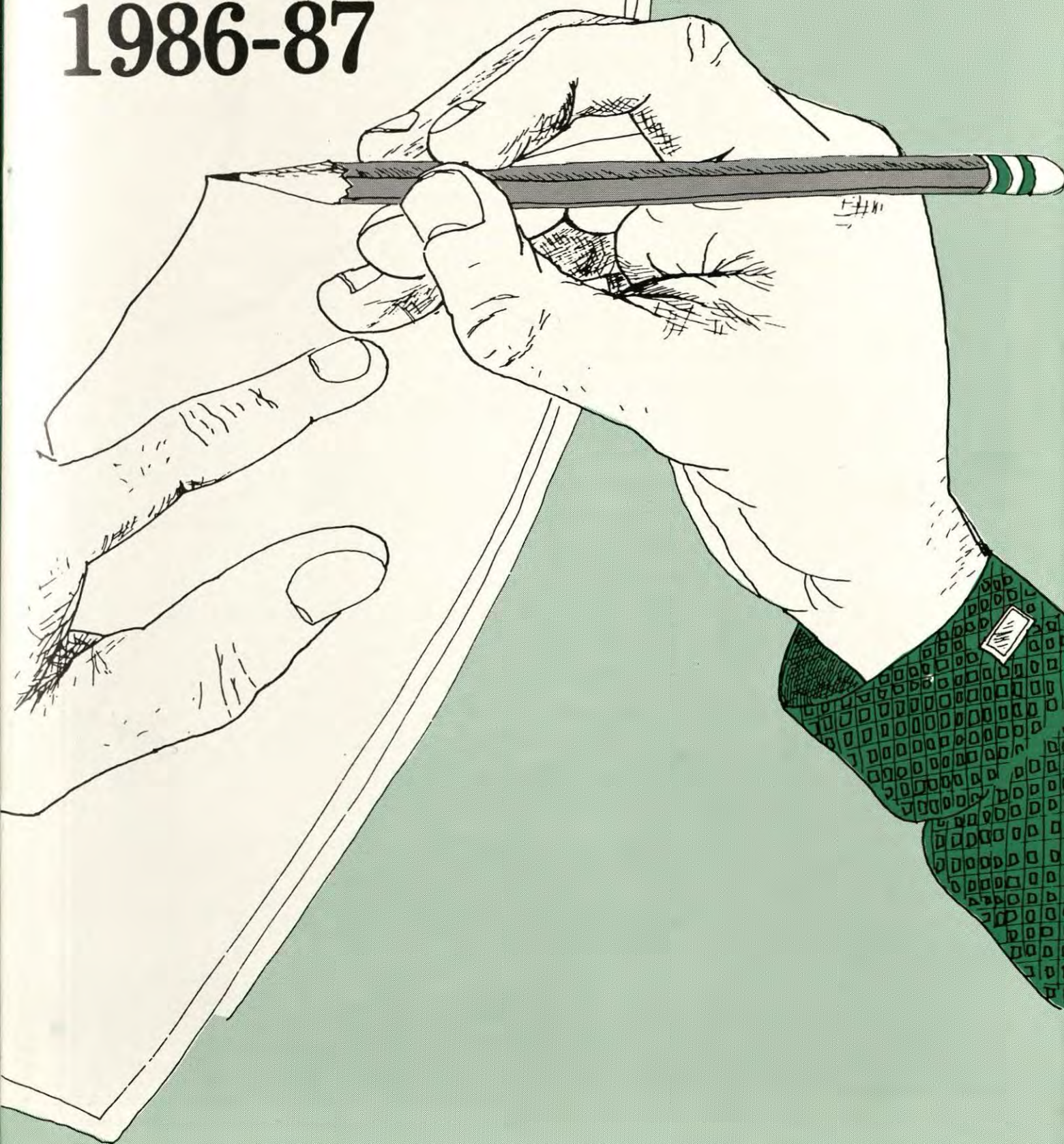
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# The Gallery

## 1986-87



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## 1986-1987

*Connecticut College's  
Magazine of the Arts*

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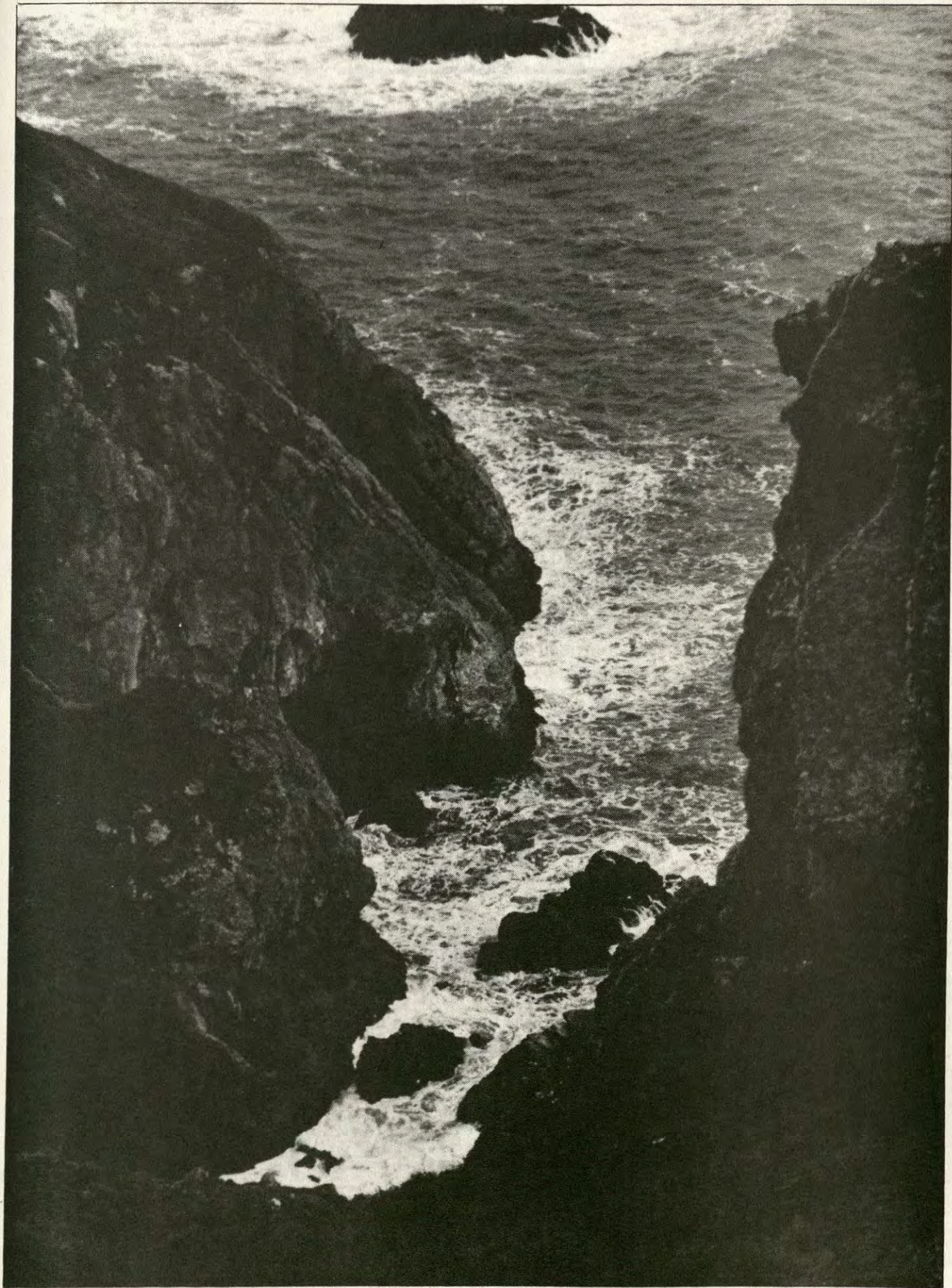
*The Gallery, Connecticut College's student magazine of the arts, is published and distributed by The College Voice Publishing Group, Room 212 Crozier-Williams Student Center, Connecticut College, New London. Mailing Address: Post Office Box 1351 Connecticut College, New London Conn. 06320. Editorial correspondence should be sent care of the Editors and mailed to The Gallery, Box 1303, Connecticut College. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited submissions or the editorial content of this magazine.*

*The Gallery 1986-1987*

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*(On the cover: "Hands" by Peter Sinclair)*



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**when i die**

i want ta go out  
in style  
i want ta be laid  
out in one of those satin  
numbers  
i want my hair  
all done up in one of  
those fancy jobs  
make-up yes lord  
pardon me mister undertaker  
i like ta look natural  
unlike rita mae  
god bless the dead  
lord i never will forget  
that day it was so  
hot ya could fry  
eggs on the sidewalk  
rita mae was laid  
up that casket  
which incidently was  
too small for her  
ya know when after  
the preacher says  
his to-do ya get ta take  
a peek at the body  
everyone was bawlin'  
like alley cats  
but like i always say  
negroes will be negroes  
after everyone saw the  
body we rode to the  
cemetery  
damn it was hot  
and no sooner was she put in  
the ground than the  
shit hit the fan  
rita mae was this she was that  
lord please don't let  
me go like that  
when i die i want  
to go out in STYLE

**Pamela Little**

---

## the soul-less boys

a little  
too close--  
no more  
boys.  
only shoes.  
black shoes  
without  
laces  
without  
souls

give their tongues  
leather to suck.  
rubber to roll  
like caviar eggs  
under their heels.  
give them my mouth--  
big mouth, big mouth

Sara Eddy

## In a Chock Full O'Nuts Coffeeshop on 43rd

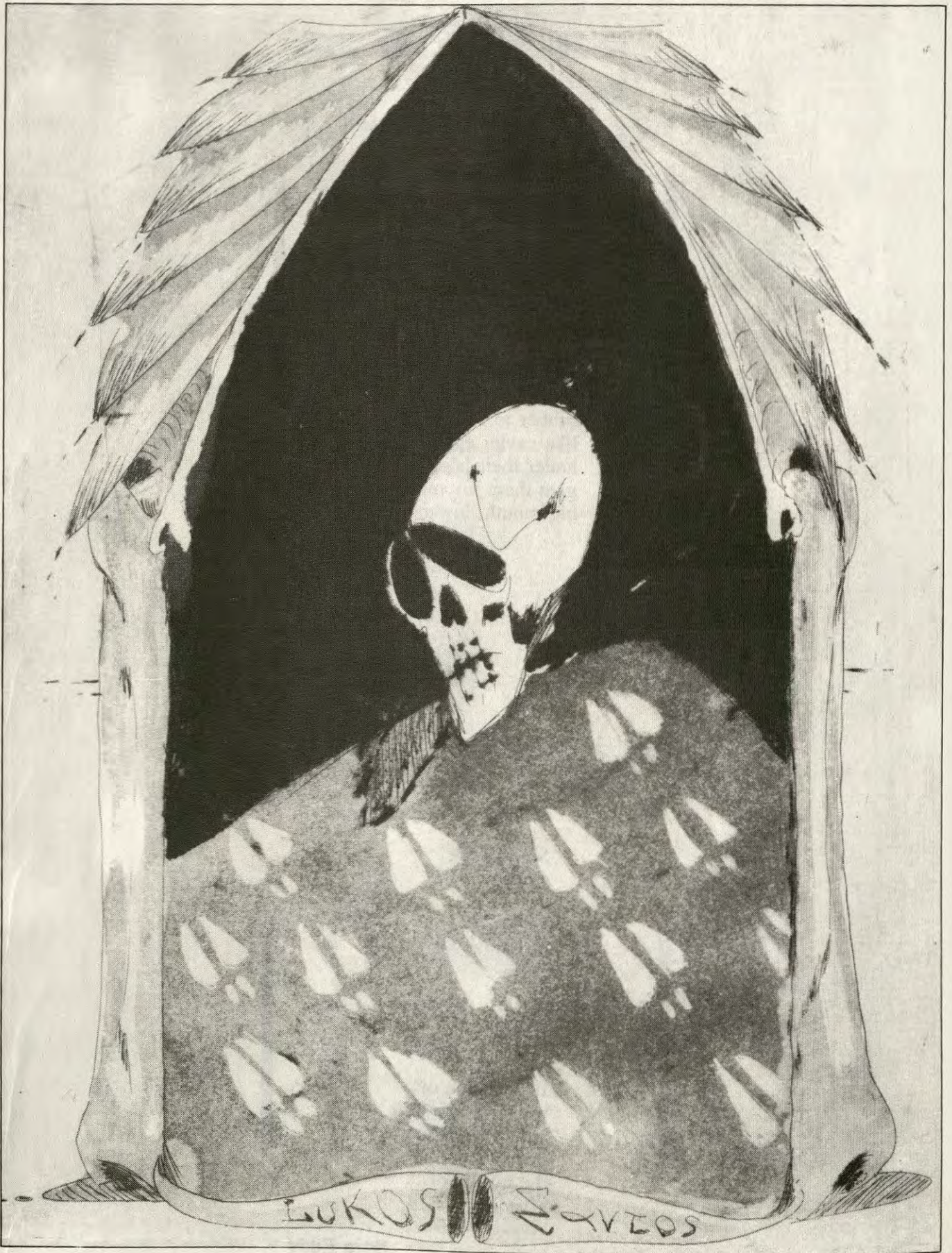
Smilin' Joe  
smiles

vacantly  
he drinks his  
coffee.

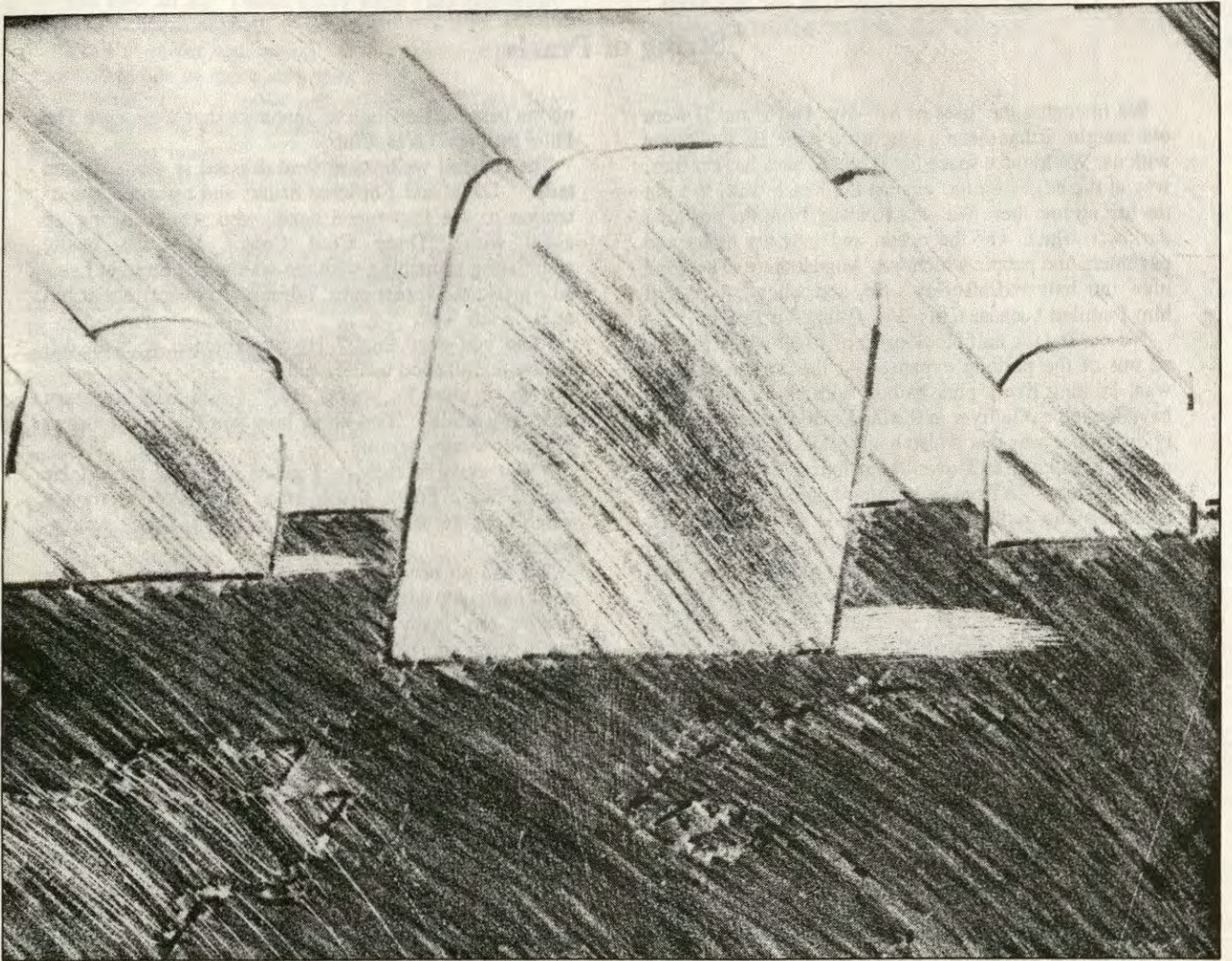
He is  
a flock of birds.

In the back of  
his head is a hole  
where someone  
once stuck  
the nozzle of  
a vacuum.

Sara Eddy



**"St. Luke"**  
*Paul Desjardis*



**"Trinity-Dead"**  
*Paul Desjardis*

**Love Poem: from S.K. to Regina**

The smell of love is in the air,  
As I sit and ponder on despair.

My love for you is so immense  
With teleological suspense,

I thank you for treating me unkindly,  
I'd give you myself if I could find me.

I love you with my every breath.  
You are my sickness unto death.

**Gini Vancil**



## String of Pearls

We (meaning the three of us --Hy, Dayle and I) were out tonight. It had been a long time since Hy had come with us. We found a space for Dayle to back her car into, way at the edge of a lot, against the beach wall. We put the top up together. We walked away from the crashing darkness which was the ocean and into the lights and pavement and people which was August there. The wind blew our hair and also Hy's tie, and when I looked at him I smiled because This Was Going To Be Fun.

We walked the half block or so of street which funneled out of the parking expanse. At the corner, there it was, looking like a pink hatbox with silver trim might have looked to Gulliver in the land of the giants. The only difference was that it also had big silver doors, highly unlike a hatbox, and over them letters said "Bubbles Balboa Club." In front of me stood a young man in full costume who pulled open the door for us. He was, presumably, the doorman, but he was dressed in a red suit with a short jacket covered with gold braid, and matching pillbox hat (Jackie would have loved it) and someone had made a mistake here because he was really a bellboy. But that was all right, and his white gloved hand ushered us into a room that glowed with a peachy warmth, maybe like the way it would feel to be a candle inside a carved pumpkin. But it was brighter than that, even though the light was soft, and the little band with the Big Band sound was filling up the space above everybody's heads with happy music, and some of the people sitting at the little round tables looked at us. We sat at one in the middle.

I could feel the people around us, in close cocktail-lounge proximity, and I wondered if they shared my inherent curiosity of other people. Did they look at us and wonder, "What are those girls doing with that man?" Or, depending on their sex, or maybe even their height, "What is that man doing with those girls?" Yes, well, Hy is rather short, especially compared to Dayle and me. Dayle's got blonde hair -- she's a real knockout. Then there's me. I've got long brown hair -- not bad, but not Dayle either. Still, it's unlikely that people would think he was specifically with one or the other of us. No, if any of these people liked to imagine the complex lifestyles of strangers, they, like me, would have been puzzled by us, and could probably have invented some stories of their own.

But this is my story, about Hy and Dayle and me, and the big pink silver peachy hatbox of Bubbles Balboa Club, a place set in a different time with people that didn't exactly match the decor. The band did, though, in their navy double-breasted blazers and ivory flannels, as they sang mildly corrupted versions of '30s and '40s tunes in perfect harmony. The squat blond bass player reminded me of Hy, actually, and looked so much like Hollywood's idea of a Big Band musician that it was a wonder that he wasn't in the movies. His instrument was at least a foot taller than himself, his nose glowed a bit, and his chubby fingers plucked the strings heartily. There was a Broadway musical in the '50s called "The Most Happy Fella." That's what he looked like -- a Most Happy Fella. After they finished the number they were working on when we got there, he relaxed his grip

on the bass long enough to announce that they were The Palm Springs Yacht Club.

The cocktail waitress arrived dressed in white tie and tails. Dayle and I ordered drinks and returned our attention to the four-piece band, who were starting up again with "Three Cool Cats." Hy was busily negotiating something with the waitress. I thought I saw an American Express card. I dropped a twenty dollar bill at Hy's left foot.

"Did you drop this?" Hy straightened up with difficulty and handed me the bill.

"No, it must be yours, Hy," I said with my most charming smile. "You know how you're always throwing your money around."

"You must be right -- I guess it's mine then." He smiled like a Fuller Brush man. "I'll take my money when I can get it." He laughed outright. Dayle people-watched.

We had all been here before but not together; Dayle and I had come without Hy, and Hy had been here many, maybe too many times. Tonight the people were nondescript tourists and a few locals, like us, out to celebrate God knows what, showing off tans and trying not to ooh too much over the interior design. Behind the bar, which was in the center of the place, a Plexiglass cylinder a couple of feet wide reached from floor to ceiling. It was filled with water constantly being injected with bubbles, so it looked like a gigantic piece of aquarium equipment. Our drinks came in little fishbowl glasses. The band launched into what had once been known as "I've Got Rhythm." They improvised their version.

I've got some peanut butter  
I've got a hardware store  
I've got some K-Y jelly  
Who could ask for anything more?

Then the champagne arrived just in time. This must have been the reason for Hy's little conference. It came in an ice bucket that looked like a top hat.

"Hy, what's this?" Dayle said, clearly pleased. "Why didn't you say something before we ordered drinks?"

"We-ell, you went ahead and ordered before I could," he said with a matter-of-fact, upturned palm gesture. He poured. "To Dayle's new car."

"Thanks, Hy," we said, and meant it. He beamed like a five year old. He loved this.

"And to Julia," Dayle said, raising her glass again. "Bon Voyage, kiddo. I'm going to miss you."

"Don't even discuss it," I said. "We're here to have a good time and I don't even want to *think* about leaving."

We sipped and listened and felt rather than said much. After another bottle or two, Dayle said, "I think I better eat something."

"Me too," I said, almost tasting Charlie's Chili a few blocks away.

Hy took charge, studying the menu. "Let's see what we've got here -- mmm, Beluga."

"Let's go for it," I said. There wasn't any possibility of a chili cheese omelet.

"But I've never had caviar," Dayle mildly protested. I looked at her in mock surprise.

"What! You've *never* had caviar? Well, you just don't know what you're missing." I dismissed her with a wave of the hand.

"C'mon, Dayle, you'll like it," Hy said.

"We-ell, O.K."

The caviar alone would have been fine, but it came with another bottle of champagne. I think we were up to four now. Hy carefully and with some difficulty spooned caviar and capers and egg and onions and sour cream on to blini. Dayle popped the whole thing in her mouth, chewed, swallowed, and announced, "What's the big deal? Tastes like fish eggs."

Hy and I savored it, and the little spoons kept getting mixed up in the little piles of condiments, and there were sour cream handprints on the tulip glasses.

I don't remember how it happened. It had happened before. Hy had certainly been sloshed before, and it only happened when he was sloshed.

"Julia, how come --" Hy began, slurring. "Now I'm only saying this for your benefit --"

"What?" I gritted my teeth. I knew what was coming. He was speaking with difficulty. I was listening with difficulty.

"You really don't need to, ya know, put on so much." His hand waved around indiscriminately.

"Put on so much *what*?" I knew exactly what he was getting at, because I'd heard him say it before, but I was going to make him say it now.

"You know -- act so phony. When you talk to men."

"How the hell would you know how to talk to men?"

I rose from my seat. "Damn you, Hy."

I teetered off to the ladies' room, feeling more and more indignant along the way. I rushed into its inviting soft light, stood at the mirror, and watched the alcohol well up in my eyes and just start to spill out a little bit. I cursed Hy and noticed the little scar along my left eyebrow, the reminder of one of the times Hy had been a real human being.

The year before, I had come home late one night, a bit under the weather, and proceeded to fall off the porch. I'm not as spastic as it sounds, really. It's a very strange porch. So I fell, and hit my head, and touched it and it was bloody. I knew Dayle was gone so I called for Hy who had the second floor apartment. I was lucky that night -- he was sober. He ran downstairs in his bathrobe.

"Julia, Julia, Julia," he began, shaking his head. "What have you gotten yourself --" He stopped when he was my head. "O.K., let's get you upstairs." He pulled me up and I saw black and stars and I was on the floor with ice on towels Cold and blood on it ice melting blood water dripping

Hy dressed Hand on my head Let's go

Out into dark car running bleeding blood on face on my clothes on sheepskin seats Where are we We're there sshh come on

Red emergency bright Door swings All right what happened Doctor leading pulling me through door

Towel bloody --

Hy

I'm here

Have you had anything to drink tonight

Here put this on I'll take your clothes

Hy

I'm here

This might sting a little

Social Security number

Pain lights wash the blood off

It's O.K. we'll sew it up wait for the doctor

Read this what is that letter

Just rest

Hy

Hy

Where is my friend

We don't normally

Please

It's not

Please

She wants you in here

Lights and doctors Hy holding my hand You're fine kiddo

No more blood

Over. Stop. Get up.

I slept in Hy's bed that night, in my hospital clothes. The doctor told Hy to wake me up every two hours. I laid there and he sat up with me all night and watched. I know because when I woke up he was still there, watching.

I touched the scar and dried my tears. I walked carefully out, head up, towards the table. The band was on a break and I ran into the clarinet player who was mingling with the crowd.

"Well, hi!" he said, his friendliness genuine.

"Hi, sorry," I mumbled. I made it to out table. As I stood over it my long pearls fell around my champagne glass. I sat down. The glass was dragged off the edge of the table and into my lap. There was a little puddle. It soaked into my dress. Cold. Wet. The final indignation. Dayle and Hy had their heads together, absorbed in drunken conversation.

"I just spilled --" They went on talking about something, the end of life as we know it or something, and I sat there feeling wetter and wetter.

"Um, you guys, I just spilled my entire glass of champagne in my lap."

They stopped.

"Oh no," Dayle said with real concern. Then they began to laugh, and eventually I did too but I was still uncomfortable. Then Hy reached over to Dayle to make a point and instead broke her champagne glass and I felt better.

"This is where we leave," Dayle said.

"Yes, let's stagger out of here before we do any more damage," I said. I avoided Hy. I held my purse over the wet spot on the front of my dress.

We walked out, the three of us, toward the ocean. The wind blew our hair and my wet dress. The champagne was still affecting my tear ducts, and the wind blew on that too, drying off my face. The dark made us all quiet, and we walked toward the sound of the waves. Then I spoke.

"Why do you do that, Hy?"

"Do what?" he said.

Whitney Smith

## Balloon

I sit  
And stare  
Recall  
The blurry visions  
My blurry past  
Split decisions  
Half bending, Half burning  
No thoughts at this time

Stare at me  
What can you see?  
Reach for my balloon  
Is it full of color?  
Or do you find it dull and hesitant  
Don't hold back  
Search deep into my thoughts  
And stare  
Deep  
Deeper  
Even deeper than that

Feel the cool breeze blow  
Listen for a waterfall splashing and running  
wildly  
Freely  
Am I angry?  
Stare harder  
Are my pupils drenched in hatred?  
Or do they laugh in an abundance of joy  
Show me a sign  
Any sign  
And I will give to you my colorful balloon

Charles Chun

---

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## Another Face

A new page  
A new day  
With old feelings  
Clinging to my thoughts  
Weighing down my head  
Dragging it across the floor  
Mercilessly

My eyes are melting  
Like sticks of cheese  
In a microwave oven  
Spilling out of my head  
And smothering my insides

You  
You will learn a good lesson  
From my suffering  
And because I am  
Who I am  
Opening doors for ladies  
Giving flowers from my garden  
Because I care  
And will watch my bones get crushed for  
others  
I will be the sacrifice

Dive into my emotions  
And feel the turbulence stirring  
Whirling winds  
Sucking the air  
And dragging you down  
Into a hellish inferno  
Of bleeding color  
And crying laughter

Touch my heart  
And feel the numbness  
Of an ache  
Undescribable  
Yet undeniable

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Jump into my dreams  
And you will jump into shattered glass  
Broken visions  
Of love and life  
Of love and life  
Of love  
And of life  
Wear your heavy boots  
For the glass is piled high

I close my eyes  
And see nothing

I open my eyes  
To wish they were closed

I lie in bed at night  
Thinking  
What is and what could have been  
Sweet, sweet memories  
Raped of their innocence  
By a truth  
Unfriendly  
And unforgiving  
Truth  
Who has always treated me so kind  
I find  
Has another face

**Charles Chun**

Generators  
Make such a loud noise  
They hum at me  
They feel my presence  
Within them  
If I left  
And soaked the sunshine  
Into my skin  
The generators would grow quiet-  
Ly jealous  
And would love me less.

**Charles Chun**



*"Come Dance With Me"*  
*Sara Brady*



**"Catch A Wave (and yer siitin at the  
end of the world)"**  
*Adam Rosen*

---

## Sing Song

Walk down the street on any given day in New York City and look at the people you meet on their way to a bar on their way to the stars on their way home from Mars driving in cars both near and far wondering what ever happened to the czar. Say hello to your friends and whether they really contend that the world is about to end or whether it's just a new trend to get people hooked on zen by the makers of men down on Wall Street. See how it looks as you start to leave Brooks with your size on the books and whether or not it cooks and hooks the attention of those around you. Look at their faces and look at the laces on their brand new shoes that they've just started to use so they won't be confused about which pair to choose when they wake up in the morning. Do they smile back or do they attack and say your name must be Jack which it really isn't? They're not like your mother and they're not like your brother or anybody other you would ever discover on walk down Main Street U.S.A. But still you go and you say hello and dance and prance in search of romance looking for the chance to say you've gone to France and didn't like it anyway. And don't be upset if you're feet do get wet while you're placing a bet on a horse called Sunset who hasn't won yet but you know is going to. It's all really a game but you play just the same even though it's inane and that's hard to explain if you haven't been to Spain but it's all that remains to pass of your life. So say amen and we'll play once again this game of friends that never really ends even in your wildest dreams.

N. Jansen Calamita

---



what's there to fear if  
we two trust in each other  
what's here to fear if  
we two really trust each other  
what's trust

**Caroline Oudin**

when trust faults  
there's a heave in my heart,  
like a crack in the sidewalk,  
a fissure created by tension in the depths  
of the crust  
layer  
above trust

**Caroline Oudin**

While I am alive  
I will  
dance  
I will dance as if I  
am the last of the  
free.

**Caroline Oudin**

my life

that's  
as long as  
I  
dance to the tune  
it's life  
what makes it real -  
I make it breathe,  
make it sing, make it  
of time  
it will be true

**Caroline Oudin**

## Voices Carry

From his chair, Tristram watched the small speck of a car hug the twists and turns in the narrow road cut out of the hills on the far side of the valley. He wondered why when you drive fast it's the things most far away that are the clearest, while the things near flash by in a blur of pavement and dust.

"Greene is such a tiresome author," she said, giving him a very serious look.

"What?"

"I said..."

"Greene who?" The glare from the noontime Italian sun off the shiny white patio furniture was almost unbearable. Both Tristram and his sister, sitting across from him, squinted.

"Honestly, T.J., Graham Greene, the English guy, I just finished..."

"What do you mean, 'honestly'. Where do you get off with that literary crap? Who are you trying to impress?" Tristram picked up his campari and soda from the glass-topped table separating them.

"Hey, excuse me. Not all of us can write for *The New Yorker*."

He hated her spitefulness, her jealousy. He looked at her, squinting, stocky and dark, like one of the girls in the village. He shook his head, stood up and walked to the waist-high stone wall at the edge of the patio. Where the wall ended ten feet below, the hillside picked up at practically the same angle. Towards the bottom of the valley, where it wasn't as steep, the breeze shook the branches of the centuries old olive trees. Small, gnarled, twisted trees, that reminded Tristram of the large mulberry bush he used to have in his back yard in Washington.

He turned and said, "Don't think this is any easier on me."

"Yeah," Julia answered softly. "I think it's time for his medication," she said, and got up from her white wire chair, the cushion sticking to her. Tristram finished his drink quickly and followed her into the bright, hot, converted Tuscan farmhouse.

\* \* \* \* \*

"T.J., is that you? We really need to put in some more lights in this place. These Italians may be real good with art, but with lights, they..."

"Do you think you want your medication now, Dad?" Tristram asked.

"It's time," Julia said, not to remain unnoticed. The room was small and bright. Not so long ago, there were bullock stalls and a pigeon coop in the large vaulted room below and an entire family lived in the room with a huge fireplace, now three rooms, on the second floor. 'The animals would keep 'em warm,' their father used to tell them. Tristram imagined it couldn't have smelled too good. Julia walked across the room to the dresser to organize the correct pills from among the pharmacy of

bottles scattered between the small pictures of her, Tristram and Maria, their stepmother. Maria was dead.

Tristram looked at his father. The intense golden light from the window made a rectangle on his bed, the kind of light their cat would want to lie in, and follow as it moved across with the passage of time. His father looked awful, like the old people in the Safeway near the Washington Home, except he wasn't old. He had looked bad for a while, but today he looked awful. Once a tall, sturdy man, he claimed he played basketball in college. Julia had commented on the almost evil look he had gotten lately, but Tristram passed it off as she seeing what she wanted to see.

"Would you turn those lights on over there? How do you expect me to see which pills I'm taking if there aren't any lights on?" Tristram stepped into the bathroom to get water for the pills and Julia reached over and turned on the light near the dresser. Tristram came back and handed his father the water and Julia handed him the set of four pills.

"What is this? I told you I need mineral water, not this tap shit. You go and get me some San Pellegrino. What are you trying to do to me?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Tristram longed for a "whopper" from Burger King. He sat back in this white chair by the wall on the patio, the cypress trees standing like bushy telephone poles gave him partial shade from the afternoon sun. He sat and he pictured the juicy quarter-pound (before cooking) of beef, the cheese melted, the tomatoe, lettuce and mayonnaise. He had had the misfortune of ordering a steak in the seafood restaurant, the only restaurant for that matter, in town. He wasn't really sure from what animal the steak had come; he just wondered if he had used the right word for steak in Italian. Once when he was ordering a seafood antipasto, "fruit of the sea" in Italian, he slipped and ordered fruit of the waiter's mother. Since then, he had been careful not to order steak or anything he couldn't pronounce properly. There was nothing to eat in the house, and Julia had walked into town, meaning a meal would be hours away.

Tristram's father had met his stepmother while his father was on assignment. His father wrote for *Newsweek*. They married shortly after his father's divorce from his mother. Tristram and Julia had lived with their mother in Washington and spent summers with their father, who had since been promoted to Italian Bureau Chief. It happened so long ago the divorce didn't really bother Tristram. Julia was a little older; it bothered her a great deal. Their stepmother, whom they hardly knew, who was foreign in every sense of the word, died several years ago in a car crash, while their father had been away. 'Fucking Italians, shouldn't be allowed behind the wheel,' Tristram's father would say.

Tristram remembered his Art History professor at Princeton pointing out the golden light in Tuscan Italian painters' work; painters like Botticelli and Caravaggio. He looked out across the valley and the golden grass around the olive trees and rows of grape vines really did

give a yellowish glow to the light and the ground. There was something very peaceful about this view--its golden ancientness, its sculptured simplicity, its lack of modern neon. He looked down and could just make out a man plowing the field next to the near olive grove, using a team of bullocks. A scene out of a Breughel painting. He couldn't wait to have some good junk food--and a lot of it.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Do you want me to fix you a drink or something, T.J.?"

"Jesus, Julia, you scared the hell...Didn't anyone ever tell you not to walk up behind people?" Tristram was still sitting on the patio; the late afternoon breeze made the heat more tolerable. Tristram liked to drink, enjoyed being buzzed. He had been known to make quite a fool of himself at cocktail parties more than once. The more nervous he got, the more he drank.

"Well, as long as you're up, how 'bout a Campari and soda? No, why don't you make that a screwdriver," he said, and went back to watching the man follow the white, graceless bullocks in the fields below. He wondered when his sister was going to get married.

"I had a long talk with Remo," Julia started. Her grasp of Italian was far greater than Tristram's. "He just got some steaks in. I bought some; he's such a nice..."

"Oh, you didn't. The last time--oh, never mind."

"What? She handed him his drink. 'I mean it.'" She sat down on the other side of the table. Tristram looked back down the hill. "Look at me. You never look at me." She narrowed her eyes and pushed her lips together. She shook her head.

After a long pause, Tristram answered, "Maybe you just don't," he turned and looked at her squarely, "don't do anything right for me." Anything right for him. "Maybe that's why you feel so guilty all the time."

Julia opened her mouth. "That's a load of shit. You really are perfect. You've done everything just the way he wanted."

Tristram followed an airplane's path over the mountains on the other side of the valley. It went right into the ball of the sun and he lost it. "A couple of years ago, Julia, Dad told me what his friend Saul Bellow once said to him. The name was there, I guess, to impress me. Anyway, he said Bellow said that the definition of grace was acting honorable in a dishonorable situation. It had something to do with mom, and of course he felt he had been nothing less than graceful. Well, no matter what kind of shitty position he put me in after that, I would just remember what he said, and be honorable, graceful."

"He really does know Saul Bellow," she answered. He finished his drink and got up to get another.

\* \* \* \* \*

"It's time again," she said, putting down her copy of another Graham Greene book. The patio was much cooler, a little breeze coming up from the valley.

"Julia, ah, would you mind going up and doing this one solo? I'm right in the middle of a new article, and..."

"You want me to do it alone?" She got up. "T.J.," she started, then turned towards the house. She turned back, the sun shining right into her eyes, he's your father."

"I know," he said, and kept on writing. Julia seemed very calm. She took a few more steps towards the house. She turned again. "What's the article about?" she asked. Tristram looked up.

"It's about a memory I had from that horse race, the Palio, in Siena. Remember that time you, Dad, Maria and I went up there with Remo?"

"Yeah, that was nice." She walked into the house.

Tristram stopped writing and put his pen down. He thought about how he could have possibly forgotten his typewriter. He had one of those new computer interfaceable, modem attachable, letter-quality jobs. And now it was keeping all the seatbelts he never put on, motorcycle helmets he never wore, down coats he forgot and umbrellas he left at home, company in the 'fat lotta good that does me now' room. That must be near the room where all the lost things go, he thought, and looked out across the valley.

The difference between katydids and crickets, like between jam and jelly, and bitter and sour, always escaped him. Something had stopped. The insects were silent, and he realized they had been chirping all day long. He thought about the noise the fluorescent lights in his editor's office made. Tristram would sometimes sit and watch as his editor read an article of his; waiting for him to laugh at the right places, hoping for him to be noticeably touched or moved. The room would be silent except for his editor's heavy breathing--he had some sinus problem--and except for the hum of the lights. Crickets and lights, you don't notice them until they stop; he thought how he could work that into an article or story. Kind of a cliché.

The sun was already halfway down, a reddish half-ball sticking up above the low mountains. There were just enough clouds to give as much contrast to the oranges, purples and pinks in the sky as to the golds, grays and browns of the different angles of the hills. He could see for miles, and every square inch was a different shade. He watched the trail the airplane had left change from red to pink to purple. He looked a little lower in the stillness and saw the lights of a small farmhouse turn on. The house was hidden, it was miles away, but he could make out four lights flickering between the branches of trees.

"T.J., you'd better come up here," he heard his sister call from his father's bedroom window. He looked hard at the just-lit far away farmhouse and he swore he could hear voices. He heard plates bumping, a top of a pot being put back on, yells across the yard.

"T.J., hurry." But they were so far away; he didn't understand. He looked at the spot where the sun had just been and got up, slowly. A new moon started to rise above the house.

**Thorn Pozen**



*“in memory of George O’Keefe”  
Jennifer Kaplan*

## The First Year

I

Summer

Because we were practically settled into this dream house of ours, and because I was tired of being cooped up all day unpacking boxes when the weather was so good, today I painted the seventy-six steps and two landings that lead from the path, down the steep shale cliff, to our beach, listening to Karla’s radio get louder and louder as I got closer to her, and generally coming up with something witty to say to her encouragements. Wearing just a pair of cut-offs because the sun was pretty hot, I started on the top step and worked my way down, painting the last step with especial care, acting as if it were artistic. Then I sat down on the dock to wait until the steps dried so we could go back up. Karla, wearing suntan lotion and a new red bathing suit, was lying on her stomach reading a musty, leather-bound copy

of some Hardy novel that she had found in the attic when we moved in. I sat down next to her and began to massage her shoulders. My hands were streaked with the red-brown paint and tiny splatters clung to the hairs on my legs. I kissed the back of Karla's moist neck, and then jumped off the end of the dock where I wouldn't splash her.

The coolness of the water wrapped around my weary body, reaching between my toes and fingers, and over my sunburned face and back. I hated to come up for air, it felt so good. Opening my eyes underwater, I could see the dark seaweed poking up from the rocky bottom. When I was eleven and went to summer camp, we had face masks and would swim quietly in the murky lake, sneaking up on fish. I decided to get us some masks the next time we went into town. I wanted to show Karla the muddy brown perch that were probably living in the weed patch I saw further out the day before. Maybe she'd like that now that we're living out here now, where we're so much more a part of nature.

I swam under the dock and came up where she was reading. Holding myself up on the edge, I kissed her forearm because it was the only place I could reach. She brushed away the water I dripped onto the pages, then closed her bookmark into the book to mark her place. She was laughing and kissed me back before jumping into the water herself. We swam wildly, like kids, trying to catch each other, then climbed out, wrapping ourselves in our bright yellow towels to warm up under the late afternoon sun. Some ducks swam past in a casual clump, on their rounds down the shore. Karla got our lunch basket, and the ducks, making low clattering noises, scrambled after the crumbs of leftover potato chips she threw to them. I would have preferred to watch them diving for weeds, tails pointing up, integrity intact. I lay down on my stomach, resting my head on the sun-warmed wood, my eyes level with a spot on the dock where the paint was chipping.

While Karla made some hamburgers for dinner, I looked through the boxes of books we had stacked in what we were going to make into our dining room. I found two boxes with my name on them, and brought them into my "office." One of the boxes had the books I was going to be using during the fall, so I opened it up and set it next to my heavy wooden chair, the only piece of furniture in the room until I finally find a desk that I like.

We've only been here at the house for two weeks. Until now we were still in the apartment that we shared before we were married. Luckily it didn't take very long for me to find a job where we could finally establish ourselves away from the city. Starting in September, I will be teaching history at a private girls' school just across the lake. I knew even before my interview that this was the job I wanted. The lake is clear and deep, a deep scar from the glacier, with pine-covered hills rising out of the water. The nearest town, Branchport, is a flashing yellow light, a Mom & Pop grocery store, a couple of other shops, and a few houses set back from the road. Our house, almost exactly two and a half miles down the lake from the yellow light, has both a beach and ten acres of woods above it. Karla likes the big stone fireplace in the living room, and the chance to have "a real garden." I already want to retire here. Karla worries that if we have kids, they might not get a good

education in a "farm kids' school." From the first day, I could imagine them building forts in the woods and damming up the creek with stones. We could catch tadpoles and watch them turn into frogs, and, even though we don't need one, we could make a swimming hole, just for the effort of it.

Karla was calling me. She wanted me to come eat with her. She was on the ugly green sofa that came with the house, reclining like a lady in a painting, holding a hamburger with lots of tomato and lettuce. I fit myself around her feet on the sofa, resting against her thighs. She lost weight for the wedding, to fit into her mother's dress, and hasn't gained it back yet, so she isn't as comfortable to lean against as she used to be, but I never say so. She worked hard to be thin and thinks I like her that way. She looks good in the new white sundress she is wearing, but sometimes I miss the roundness in her cheeks that used to make her seem so earnest, like a little girl. When it is my turn to shop, I buy her favorite kinds of ice cream and act like I forgot.

## II Fall

Today, walking up in the woods behind the house, slowly, and stepping mostly on the smooth parts of the path, to avoid crackling the newly fallen leaves, I caught a glimpse of something new just beyond the goldenrod. I moved closer; it was a grey mouse perched on the top of a rusty coil of wire, with a bit of seed or something between his front paws. But in watching him, not my feet, I cracked a stick I hadn't seen. With the seed still between his teeth, he spun away, dropping down off the wire and into a hole beneath it. A jay shrieked nervously in the background, and I felt bad for having disrupted everything.

I was in the clearing at the top of our property, just past the strip of thick grasses that separated our twisted crab apple trees and sumac from the neighbor's Christmas tree farm and no trespassing signs. In my mind I wandered down the familiar paths I cleared from animal trails: the center path which led nearly straight up, connecting the clearings like a bead necklace; the north-south tracks that lead through the stands of old pines and a few birches; the less defined walks that followed along the gully, where there was little undergrowth. Then there was the house and yard, which all the trails eventually found, and the road to cross before getting to the shale cliff at the lake's edge. Somewhere at the house, or down on the stony beach, I could see Karla, maybe in the garden, maybe reading, maybe talking with a visitor. When her brother and his family first came down at the end of the summer, I took them up on the first day and showed them where the furrows lay under the pines from when the hill had been all grapes. They had looked where the coils of wire lay useless after the workers let down the vines and carted the posts away for firewood. I told them what I knew about vineyards, and pointed out the hard green bunches that hung from vines climbing on pine branches, and they asked when they'd be ripe and whether we'd be making jelly. After the first walk up, though, when I offered to take them to where a deer had lain the night before, even Karla said that it would be more fun on the water. As they lay gossiping on the dock, I went up into the woods where it is just as warm, and the paths are filled

with the noises I was learning to recognize.

But summer, when the air is sticky with the hot smell of pine needles, isn't my favorite time up there: it's in the days between winter and spring, or fall and winter, like it is now, when the light can find its cool, silvery way through the branches of empty trees. With the underbrush mostly gone, I have made a web of paths out of deer trails, and even where the trees are thickest, I still find the coils of wire nested in the weeds that grew up around them. I see mice in them often, dashing under their rusty fortresses when they are startled. Sometimes I sit quietly nearby, and watch them come out again. When Karla walks with me, wearing a sweater she has knitted and the walking shoes she thinks are ugly, she tells me funny stories about all the people at work. She has begun to like her new job in town and thinks we should do things with them because now that I've gotten my degree and have the job the two of us ought to get more social. We used to do a lot of things before we were married. Karla's noise scares everything but the chickadees, who just fly into the thorn trees. Often I return at dusk, silent and apologetic, to guess at what makes the rattling in the bushes.

Karla won't go up after sunset; she doesn't trust herself to find her way along the paths, even with the flashlight I got her, so she stays in the house reading the Brontes. I come back and get the twigs out of the cuffs on my jeans while I'm still out on the porch so I won't track them into the house where Karla will have to sweep them up. Tonight, as I took off my jacket, she called to me from the living room. "Did you get lost up there, mountain man? You've been gone for an hour and you gotta admit it's pretty dark for sightseeing, even for you."

I padded into the living room in my thick wool socks. She was in her big wicker chair reading *Jane Eyre*. Her thick, nut-colored hair fell down in front of her face, making a sort of tunnel to read through. I couldn't see her face at all. I walked up behind her and drew back one half of her hair like it was a curtain and kissed her on the cheek. It was soft, warm, like it always was, and she smelled a little like peaches. There was a still moist pit in a saucer beside her on the table. She kissed me back and I remembered that I hadn't shaved since yesterday, which she hated. She didn't mention it though, and went back to reading. I read over her shoulder to see what was going on with Jane, then studied my hands, spotted white and red with blisters from chopping up a birch tree. I held my hands out to Karla and she kissed them on the parts that weren't sore. "Do mountain men get blisters too?" she said with a pouty, "mama will make it better" face.

"Yeah, I'd better get some new gloves. The old ones were shot, so I didn't use them."

I doctored my hands in the bathroom, using the first aid kit Karla got when we moved in, and then remembered about shaving. If I shaved then, I'd get water in the bandages and would have to start over, so I returned to the living room. Karla had a cup of tea.

"The water's still pretty hot if you want a cup," she offered, her eyes fixed on the adhesive tape around my knuckles. "And while you're in there, one of the traps sprung while I was washing the dishes."

He must have been a bold mouse to have been running around while Karla was there; usually they waited until night. I felt bad as I pulled the trap out from where he

had dragged it: from behind the fridge, past the case of beer, to behind the stove where the spring got caught on a bit of loose moulding. He was caught only by a hind leg and dangled from the trap like a toy. I went out to the gulley beside the house to toss him where I tossed all of the others, but it seemed brutal, so with my hand I scraped out a place in the soft shale on the edge of the gulley, then spread the wire part of the trap open. He dropped into the hole, and I covered him gently with a handful of the loose dirt and bits of old leaves that littered the edge of the drop-off.

The kettle was roaring when I returned, so I dropped the trap on the counter for Karla to reset, and poured the water into my mug. "He was caught by the leg. He dragged the trap behind the stove. He must have died of shock," I said as I entered the living room. Karla didn't like to hear the details; she just wanted the counters not to have turds on them. Sometimes I like to tease her about installing little public mouse toilets instead of traps: crapping shouldn't get the death penalty, I tell her. She just gives me her "but they're unhygenic" look.

Tonight we didn't talk over our tea. I think she didn't want to have another mouse conversation. So she kept reading *Jane Eyre*, and I paged through an *Audubon* magazine, looking at the pictures of a caribou migration, but mostly watching Karla read. I love her when she is reading; maybe it's because her lips move just a little, as if she were nibbling at the edges of the words, and because she pulls up her knees on the chair like a little girl. Sometimes she runs her thumb over her upper lip --when she hits an especially interesting part, I think. If I were to ask her, she probably wouldn't know she does it.

She put her book down like it was a religious object or something, sort of reverent, the red and gold bookmark carefully placed, just enough sticking out. She sat for a moment, looking into the dark fireplace, settling in her mind all that she had read, then turned to me to see if I was ready for bed too. I nodded and followed her towards our room. I took the bathroom first, while she undressed. We passed each other in the hall as we switched. She was wearing a long blue nightgown I wasn't sure I recognized. She must have gotten it on that shopping trip to Corning she went on the other day with her friends from work. She had come back all excited: "It's so much fun to be in a crowd sometimes," she had told me just before we had gone to bed.

I undressed and hung my work jeans on their hook, and threw my sweatshirt, turned almost khaki from the dirt, into the hamper. I lay down on top of the covers in my underwear and listened to her brush her teeth, lots of short scratchy noises and then a quiet spit. I was a little cold lying there naked on the bed, but I never liked to be the first one under the blankets. I like climbing between smooth cool sheets and feeling another person's legs and arms under there too, feeling Karla's body, warm and comfortable. Karla was washing her face; that always came last. I reached up to check my beard, and as I opened my hand to feel my cheek, I looked at the bandage, the whiteness glowing a little in the half-light of the room. There was dirt along the edge of the tape, and a dark smudge on the gauze, from where I buried the mouse. With a fingernail I tried to scrape it off, but then the bathroom light went out and Karla came to bed. She turned in towards me, and I rubbed her back through the flannel and fell asleep to the sounds of her regular breathing and the rough hiss of trees blowing.

### III Spring

The crack of the ax rang so loud in my ears that when I sat sweating against the ragged stump of the windfallen elm, I couldn't identify the birds who started to sing in the silence I left. My new mail-order gloves, the third pair I had gotten since we moved in, were already smooth where the ax fit. The leather on the inside was warm and slimy from the sweat. I took them off to study my hands. They looked like a working man's hands, stiff with calluses that hadn't had the chance to soften because when I wasn't breaking new plots for gardens, I was chopping the wood for the stoves that heat our house. With ten acres of trees, and another ten of the adjoining property about to be signed over to me, I saw no reason to buy as much wood as we had done for this past winter, so I was starting on the winter-falls even before the leaves above me had reached their mature, deeper green.

To the regular fall of the ax, I tried to calculate how much wood I would need for the next season. If it was going to be only me, I would need considerably less, maybe by a cord or two, because Karla always wanted the fires to be hotter and to burn much longer into the night. She had insisted on getting the stove for the bedroom, and sometimes she would wake me up in the middle of the night as she put another log on instead of using another blanket. I tried to figure out how many trees that would be, and where I had seen likely looking ones, the kind that were half dead anyway, but not too full of birds' nests as far as I could tell from the ground.

I hunched my shoulders, each muscle outlined by a prickling burn. When we first moved here, Karla would say that she had married me because I was the strong, silent type. She would rub her hands along my back and call me "strong man," and say that chopping wood was even better than weight training because you got to cuddle up by the fire afterwards. I liked to know that the heat was coming from my own effort, not that of someone I paid.

I pulled on the still warm gloves, and picked up my ax. I was splitting sections that I had already cut. It's my favorite part, because the wood rips itself open, sounding like a movie special effect, sending its somehow acidic scent into the air. The chunks fall to the ground and clatter against the other pieces until the piles get in the way. Then I have to toss the wood into heaps for stacking later. In the winter, once it is seasoned, I will haul it on a wide sled down the path that bisects the property. But by winter animals have almost always dug their holes under the stacks, so I have to leave the bottom layer of logs in place so they will still have protection.

I stopped chopping and covered the ax-head with its sheath. Most of the wood was pretty much stacked, so I shoved my gloves into my back pocket and followed the curving path I have been clearing, which leads through the new parcel I am buying from our neighbor. It took me well out of my way because the path isn't yet finished, so I have to go backwards to where it intersects with one of my old ones. But since Karla has gone to stay with her folks for a while, it's not like dinner would be waiting for me.

The path doubles back over the creek twice, and finds its way into a bright clearing which is still more grey-gold than green because the grasses haven't gotten tall enough to cover up last year's stalks of goldenrod and thistle. On one edge of the trees, there is a big lichen duster boulder, which must have been left by the glacier because the rest of the hill is made of shale. I brushed some loose sticks from the top of it and sat facing down towards the lake, which I could see through the lacework of the trees.

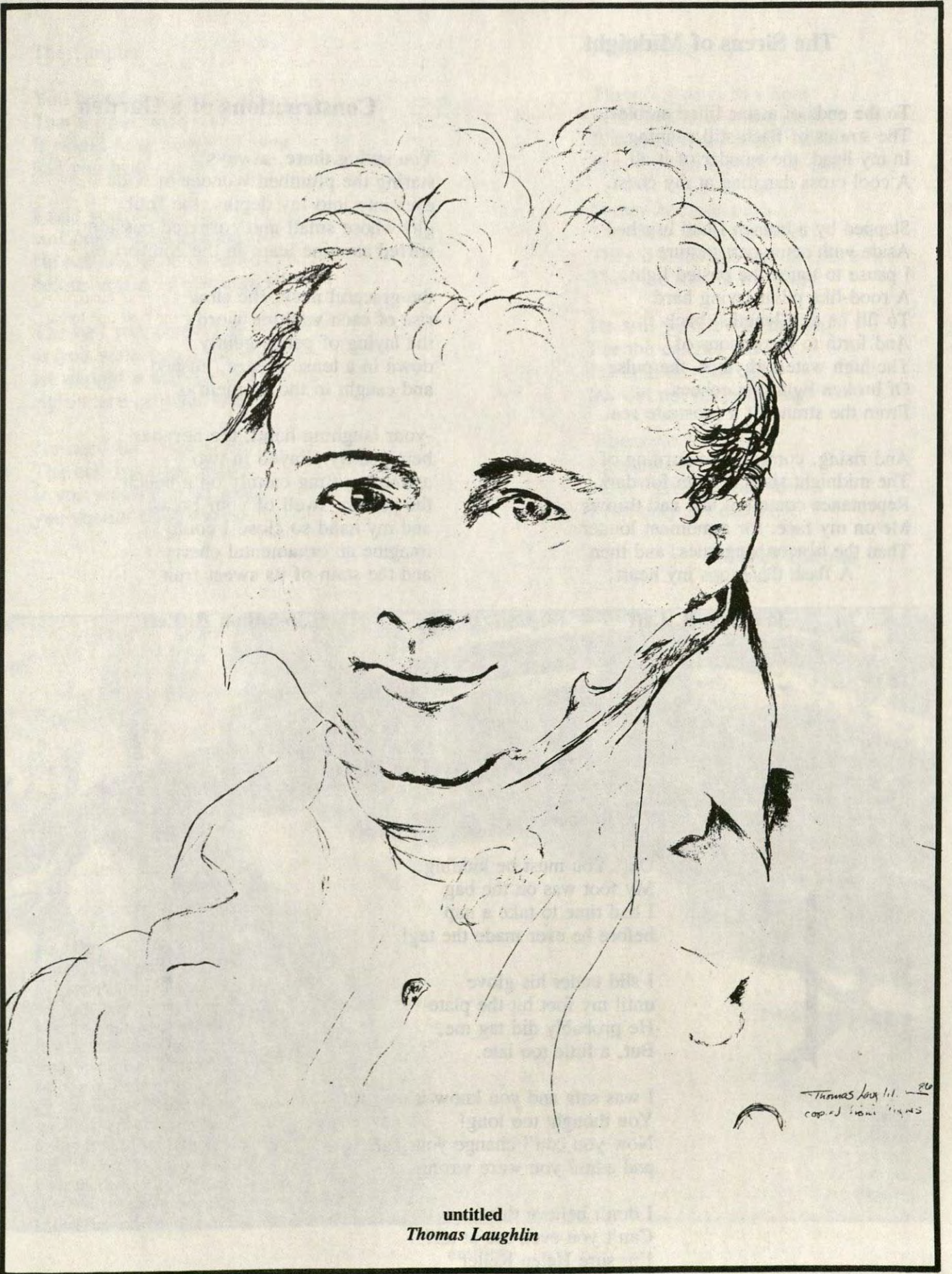
A brown shape passed the edge of my vision, and I turned to watch a big owl land on the branch of a tree directly across from me. He held a mouse by the middle, its tail and its head forming the ends of a sort of half circle. A second owl, smaller than the first, landed two trees over, as if she were waiting for the first one to eat. He jerked his head a few times, making the mouse's tail seing back and forth. Someone once told me that it was good luck to see an owl in the daylight, and I was seeing two. They flew from tree to tree, deeper into the woods, and I followed them until I couldn't find them any longer, though I could hear the echoes of them hooting, sounds like faraway dogs barking, then traced my way back to the house in the growing dusk, even though there was no hurry.

Even in the dim light, the house looked like it needed a new coat of paint. I pushed the kitchen door open, leaned the ax against the wall, and pried my boots off. They fell with two loud thumps, and clumps of dirt fell from the soles onto the floor. On the kitchen table was the note Karla had left for me ("John, I am thinking things over."), but I didn't bother reading it again. I turned on the lights on my way through the kitchen and the hall, but the house still seemed lit only by the dingy grey light of dusk. I built a fire and sat in the big wicker chair just to watch the flames. The logs shifted as the kindling snapped underneath them, and sent sparks bouncing onto the hearthstones, where sometimes they lay glowing at my feet for a few seconds before they went out.

In the pocket built into the side of the chair, Karla had left a paperback copy of *Anna Karenina*. She was halfway through with it, and the book's edges were softened and bent. Yesterday, as she got up to go to bed earlier than usual, she told me that she was coming up to a depressing part and almost hated to go on. As I stared into the fire, wrapping a granny square blanket around my shoulders, I realized that her habit of rereading was like my walking the same paths to often. But books don't change, I thought, not the way paths do.

There was a green log in the fire and it snapped and cracked loudly, interrupting the peaceful hiss that had been nice to think to. I would have to be more careful about the wood I chose. I got up and went into the kitchen to find something for dinner. As I opened the refrigerator, I peeked around the side to check the trap. An unusually brown mouse was pinned by its shoulders under the stiff wire. Under his head was the slimy remains of the peanut butter Karla used for bait. I pulled out a plate of leftover chicken and a can of beer, and went back into the living room. The mice would walk across the kitchen floor now, to avoid the dead one along their path behind the refrigerator, but what the hell, I thought, it's their house too.

Christina Fraser



untitled  
Thomas Laughlin



## The Sirens of Midnight

To the ends of a star filled amble  
The strains of Bach still running  
In my head, the wonder of it all  
A cool cross dangling at my chest.

Slapped by a branch I had brushed  
Aside with some deft gesture  
I pause to touch the posted light;  
A rood-like pillar trying hard  
To fill its arm-lengths, back  
And forth to the orisons of  
The high waters rhythm, the pulse  
Of broken light that echoes  
From the strand of a prostrate sea.

And rising, comes the mourning of  
The midnight siren scream for dark  
Repentance come too late and throws  
Me on my face; for a moment louder  
Than the beacon's agonies, and then  
A flash that stops my heart.

**Jonathan B. Leff**

## Constructions of a Garden

You sitting there, always  
staring the plumbed wonder of wide  
eyes into into my depths, the frail  
girl whose small and cornered passion  
stirred as mine leapt in the comfort of

the graceful neck, the slow  
rise of each vaulting word,  
the laying of petals gently  
down in a tense breeze, hushed  
and caught in the moment of

-your laughing hand, the nervous  
being softly allayed in two  
a couple sitting calmly on a bench;  
the passive swell of your breast  
and my hand so close I could  
imagine an ornamental cherry  
and the stain of its sweet fruit.

**Jonathan B. Leff**

## The Play At The Plate

The Runner-

Out! You must be kidding.  
My foot was on the bag  
I had time to take a nap  
before he ever made the tag!

I slid under his glove  
until my foot hit the plate-  
He probably did tag me,  
But, a little too late.

I was safe and you know it  
You thought too long!  
Now you can't change your call  
and admit you were wrong.

I don't believe this-  
Can't you even see at all?  
I'm sure Helen Keller  
could have made a better call!

The Umpire-

You heard me- you're out-  
That's final, that's all.  
It would have been different  
had you beat out the ball.

I said you were "out"  
so I don't want to hear it-  
He had the plate covered  
before you ever got near it.

The ball was thrown in  
as you went into your slide,  
He caught it and hit you  
right there on your side.

No need for discussion,  
The call has been made.  
If you wanted to be safe  
you should have stayed.

Home Plate-

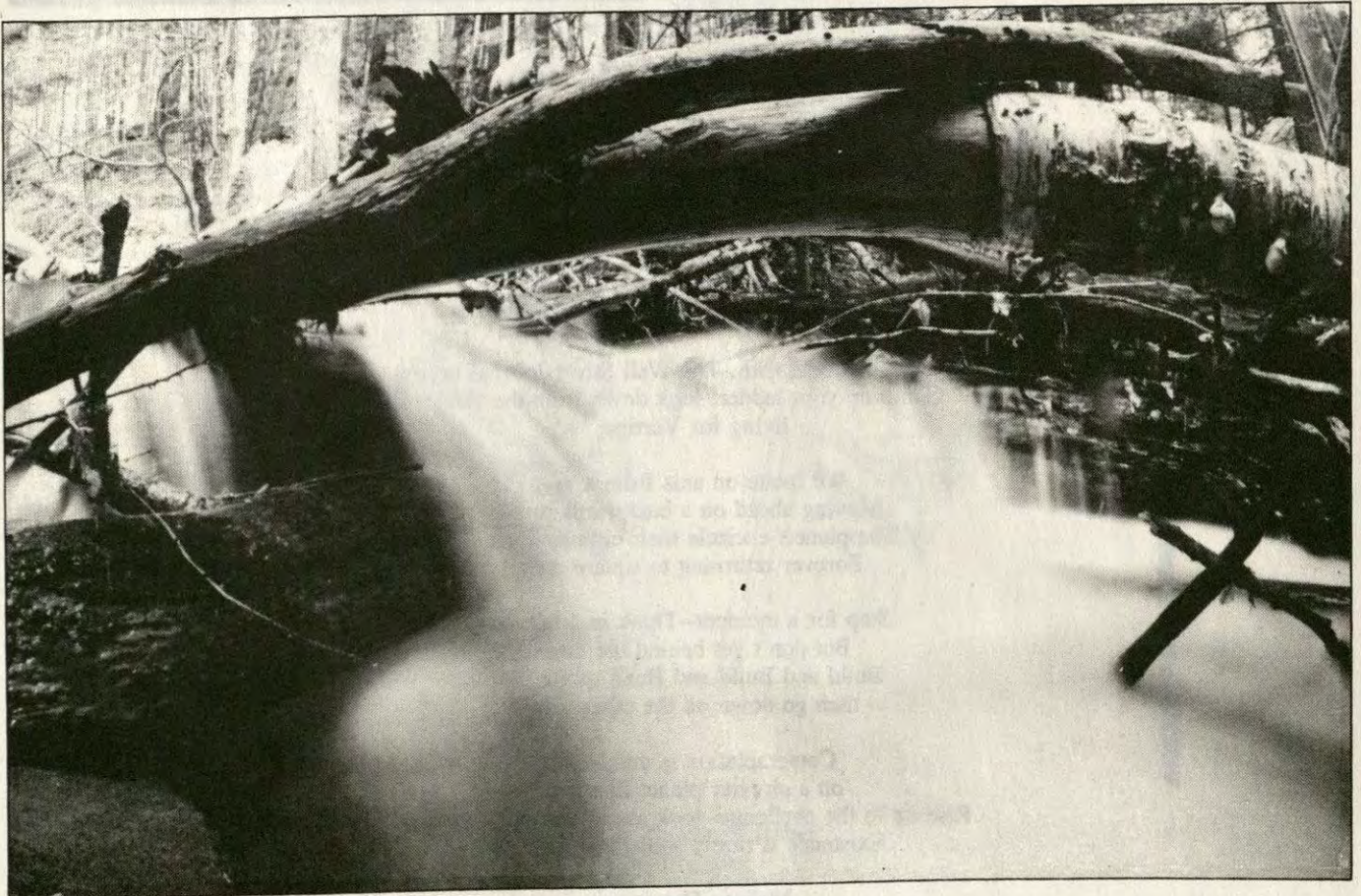
There's always this fight  
with each play at the plate-  
Was the runner home safe?  
Was the ball thrown too late?

If they had my angle,  
The view from the base,  
They'd know the ball got here first-  
Then the foot in my face.

He still wasn't out, though-  
For the catcher did lag.  
He held the ball tight  
but did not make the tag!

Whenever I see this  
I get more disgusted.  
I can't give my opinion-  
I can only get dusted.

Cathy Carolus



untitled  
Nicholas Stark



untitled  
*Nicholas Stark*

### AMUSEMENT IN WORLDLY EXISTENCE

I repeat.  
The past is the present is the future.  
Live today to exist last month.  
Work to work to work to play.

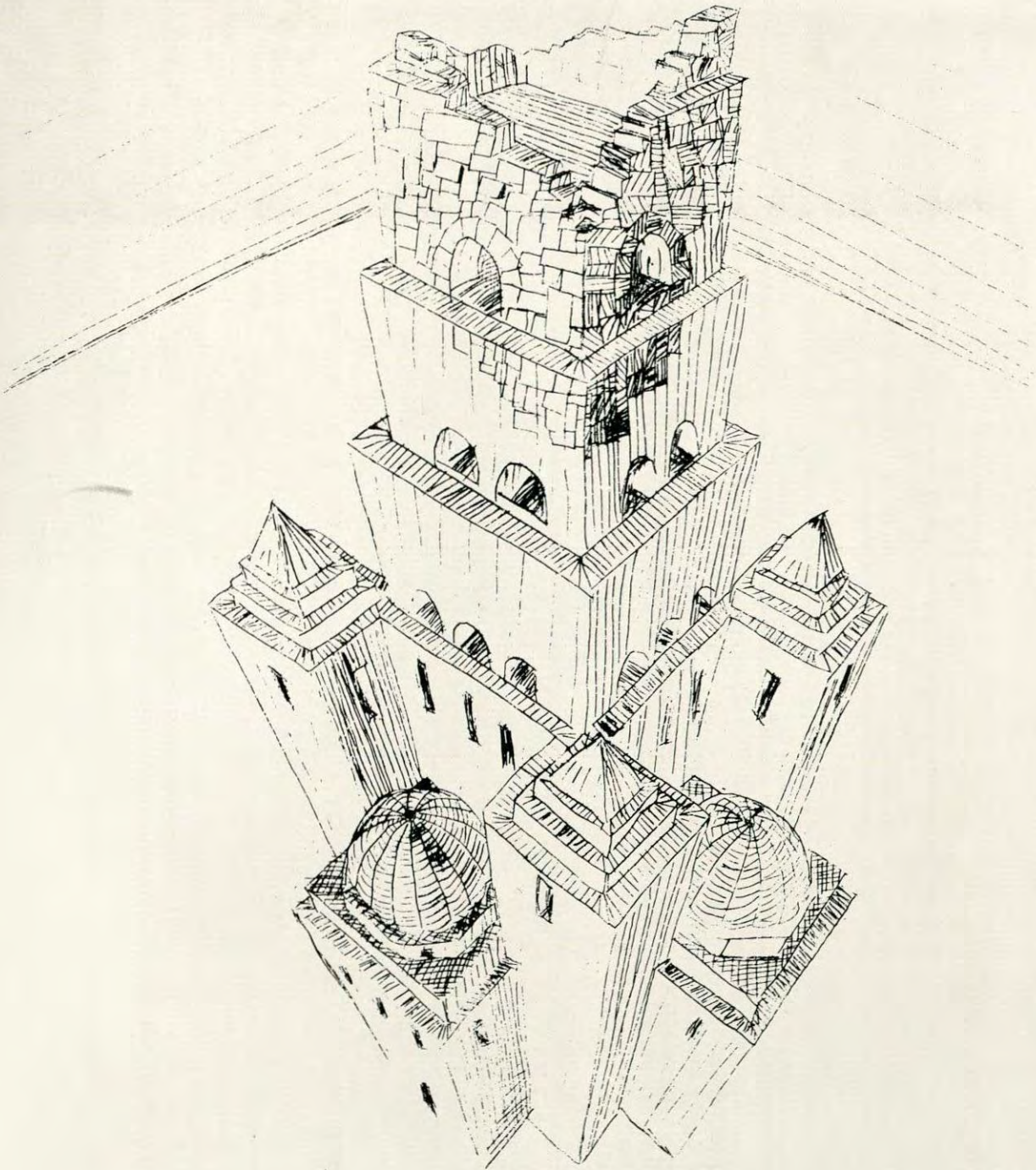
Secularism. Modernism. The Wall Street Journal in tow  
Climb up your ladder; look down from the rung  
living for Vertigo.

We rotate on axis from x to y  
Moving ahead on a backwards route  
The planets encircle their circular form  
Forever returning to square one.

Stop for a moment--Think in a second  
But don't get behind the times  
Build and Build and Build to the top  
then go down on the other side.

Contemplation is dangerous  
on a circular planet like ours  
Rise up to the challenge--look ahead through the past  
Existence is rarely something to last.

**Melissa Hennessey**



“(Echer’s) Tower of Babel”  
*Jim Piccolini*

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*The College Voice Publishing Group*  
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