

PICTURE POSTCARD

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Caudill College of Humanities

Morehead State University

In Partial Fulfillment

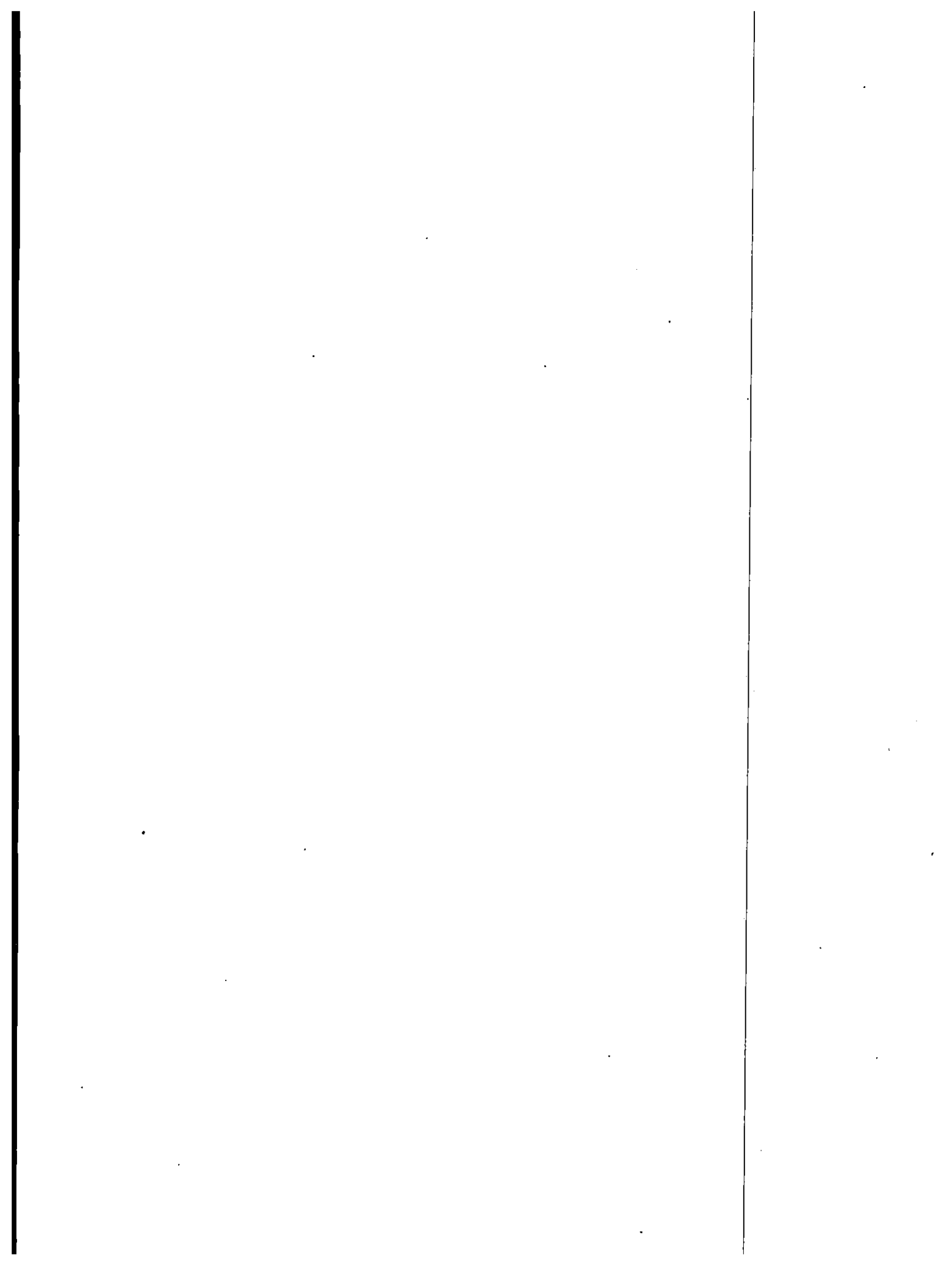
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Anthony Fife

12-14-07



Accepted by the faculty of the Caudill College of Humanities, Morehead State University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree.

Greg Ekland
Director of Thesis

Master's Committee:

Greg Ekland, Chair

Lynne Nease

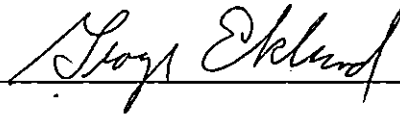
Crystal Wilkinson

12-11-07
Date

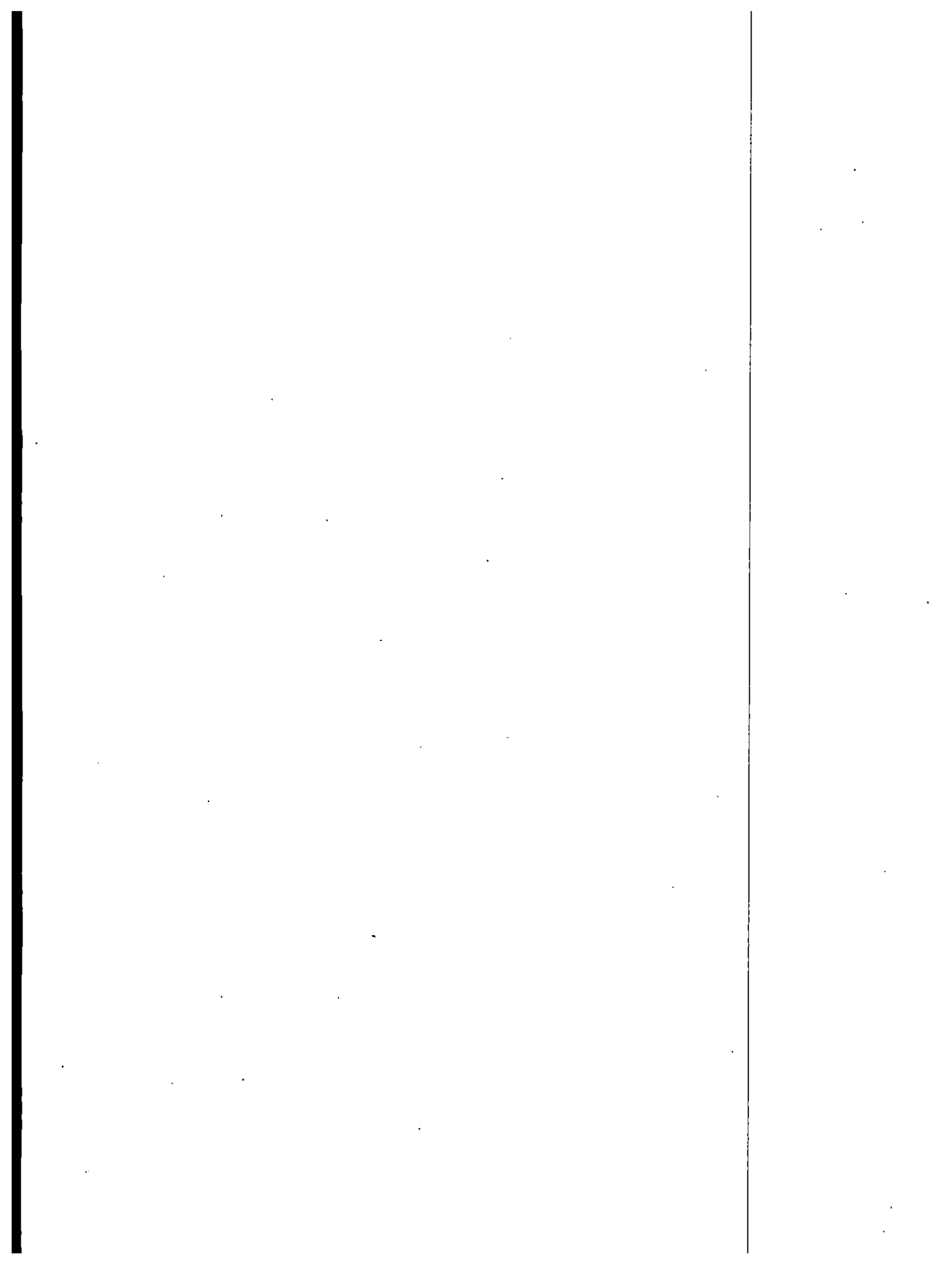
PITURE POSTCARD

Anthony Fife, M.A.
Morehead State University, 2007

Director of Thesis

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Greg Eklund", written over a horizontal line.

Here are some poems which appear to me to be of a similar theme. Well, not theme exactly...let's say approach. Each, in its way, plays with perspective. In some, the perspective is of a child who doesn't comprehend the acts he or she is witnessing. In others, a scene plays out, and is described by an unknown narrator; in this case I would say the perspective is quite mysterious; perhaps not. Anyway, the reader is not necessarily privy to whom, or what, the narrator is, and I've attempted to leave room for a conscientious reader to contemplate some of the possibilities. Regardless of details specific to each, suffice it to say all the poems in this collection,



and the one short story—which is just a different kind of a poem—attempt a description of something that can only be explained through a variety of eyes; not just one particular set. And some are propaganda. That's about all I know to say at this time.

Accepted by:

Greg Eklund, Chair
Lynne Weiser
Crystal Wilkinson

Trust

begin where the grass grows undisturbed
walk south along the tracks
 from here you can see the river
 it spills into the lake's north end
 from here you can see the meadow
 and in it grows the weedy flower
these are places I have never been

Reach

Little rivers swell
to quite a nuisance in the rainy season.
The top field is unreachable.

Do as the frogs do:

Sing the water's praises through the evening,
Burrow in the mud and sleep through heat of day.

I waded here—
current up to a boy's mid-thigh—
and many nights camped in ear-shot
of the current's tasteful roll.
But now the river's grown to twice my size
and that grass looks so green from over here.

Echo

whose light is brightest
on a bridge
across to sparkless city night?
“My moon is lightest
when no lick of fire
comes to greet the night.”
whose tongue is forked
to speak that night
should be bright as the day?
“My moon can guide
the traveler
till birth of light of day.”
whose fog is thickest
as the sea
slips up to weedy shore?
“My fog can swamp the echoes
from each drowning voice
upon the shore.
and if it's such

That I must cringe across
the broken dust—
never steps that bend
to ends not listed
in my morning prayer—
 will it stop my eager tilt,
 will it build me from tomorrow's night?”
I think yes

Travel at Night

First, they said: "How far
to Santa Fe," and startled
eyes of hungry town laughed
and cried at such ignorance,
replied: "we've no time for this."
But Sun is a hot one, and furious,
used his power to scald their helpless
hours: those who sought and those who laughed.
Second, they asked: "How far
to Santa Fe," and Sun remembered:
Moon is a cool breeze through the night

Zenobia, I-77

This day burns
bad across the hill-lands of Ohio.
Roads rise up ahead like dough
in Sunday ovens. No signs
on this stretch tell how far home.

Hilltops like dry-ice glaciers drudge
inch by inch, mile
upon crooked mile. Open windows
breath a furnace blast
against our bare chests, yours
& mine.

What would Pharoah do
when days are hot
with no water for the drinking?
find a shade? taste of pomegranate's
juice sticky run from chin
down sallow arch of neck?

Our finger's prints litter this draining place.
"Whose bones" two thousand
years from now, bleached beneath the rotting sun,
"Zenobia and her driver."
"How they died?"
"Drank each other's blood to nothing."

Gathering

Is their silence beyond our knowing?

'Yes, and it has touched me.'

Is their quiet when the wind dries,

When the stillness moves

Out to the distance of the stars?

'Yes, it grows from within.'

Is there another way to get where I am going?

'No, and you must travel it alone.'

Box Score

I saw a young man beaten
By young men; fists
Daily soaked in the brine
Water of hate and fear.
 They feel it in themselves,
 therefore destroy
 it in others.
“Faggot” “Cocksucker”
dragged by a car
or tied with barbed wire.
Fear is the land where happiness comes to die
Rage is the words that say, “I hate
this part in myself
and will burn it out with acts of cruelty.”

The newspaper called it HATE CRIME
(it floats sweetly up and mingles among the headlines)
but tangled in last night’s box scores
and diluted by the Flag Day news,
we lose some truth. Hate, yes. Crime,
perhaps (depending upon where you come from)
but I can’t wait for the large print to read
1 FAGGOT KILLED BY A GANG OF YOUNG FAGGOTS,
can you?

Burn

*was it fire from the fly's blood
sparked the hillside for to burn?
the hot glow from the wildcat's night eye?*

Down at the house you could taste the smoke;
It filled our throats and caused our blood-
Shot eyes to swim. Then ash fell like January
Snow.

There were no bird-songs up Red-
Branch Holler, just days and nights of dying.

was it lightening striked the old growth like a match

Clack
Balk & Jerk
Fall upon front
Right carpus (spindle
Legs trembling) then quivering
Body heavy thud down on its heaving
Side in a billowy cloud of lingering dust.

horse put down

blue metallic barrel spits poison
scream & drunken stagger
silent on the ground

Acts at Night

I have seen a woman, dead
Upon a bed of shrubby growth
In lightless forest.
The facts of how she came to rest
Here in the thicket are lost, but I can guess
It had to do with powerful hate
Of all women everywhere,
And hate of one's own self; one who
Would put a knife through the belly
Of a flower print dress
And leave her there to bleed
A stain down on the forest floor,
Who would run home and forget
There ever was enough love in the world
To share with the object of our hate,
Our adoration. Incidentally, he raped her.

I am a killer who...I am a killer who...
The rest is speculation

Drowning

A girl 14 & blue
She has nothing but dark lips
And a father that could not swim to save
Her
Hair is a leafy plant
At the bottom of a swollen creek
Waving when the water runs

I walked
 the trees wave in unison
 —ballet for the orchestral breath
I knelt

I.
 What are You to Me

The shadow of the hills is cold & water.
 I swim through it,
 Find silence on the other side; a last
 Look cast down on fields and streams
 From eyes that sparkle in the glim of lungful wondering.

rows of withered cornstalks, ripened
 to parchment, scratching the tender underbelly
 of inky sky, drawing blood in the guise
 of wind pumping from the throbbing heart of fragrant
 hills, singing songs of the slumbering fields.

cracking branches, frayed at joint end, shattering
 with the weight of much knowing, and falling to the soft-
 nettled bed where a thrush of warbling hymns
 guide the faller to its resting place
 in the transition of life to death, to life.

october crops catching fire from the amber flame,
 the downward light waking
 aged blush into one last
 thrust of remaining season's light.

still of the wood; nothingness of meaning being cold all
 over, comforted by the chilling empty, two feet planted
 in crushing snow, building me to a heightened
 sense of warm things found in you.

the wide valley is a bowl from which the heavens drink.
 I drink the blood from your bowl
 and listen for the echo of my breath
 from off the frost of chill morning.

starlight molding green while two bodies,
 the rigid part of the earth and liquid celest, envelope
 one another, flesh to waiting flesh, tremble
 neath the burden of hot growth, and melt into an ocean pools.

Low of the cattle reaching the ears of the lonesome farmer's boy in bed;
 Waiting for sleep to carry him past depression, past heartsick longing,
 Beyond wearied notions of himself and into the promise of running
 In the morning, wide awake, broken face to the sun.

II

Walk Away from Me in Daylight
 and I will Walk Away from You

My work lies inanimate about me, dead,
 until my lungs breath life back into the pen
 the pick the shovel, with current of intent
 the bend of my back, the fold of my fingers.

I wake these things from sleep because I
 Must do so to justify my life with you. I needn't
 Listen to the sound of the saw, only feel its vibration
 Against my palm, travel up my arm and gather
 In my throat the words to whisper when the sun is beating down.

Your footsteps point me, but your hands work
 away. Long separated, since dark of early day,
 I am patient, waiting slowly while cedar dust
 settles on my skin or plow sparks hard
 against a place beneath the border of clean air and dark ground.

Follow me to afterlight, where living is the scent of you.

III

Return to Me in Evening

a crooked remark
 and you there in the hallway,

a crooked smile upon your face;
arms crossed in mock anger.

I move to you, hands
find your hips, parted lips follow the flow
of your neck, let your smell overwhelm me—bathe me in its hot taste—slide
my hands upunder your shirt, explore the welcoming warmth of your back.
You lean in touch your face with my own
Hot breath presses my ear hot breath pulse
Of flow of lungs move both our bodies into a trance of heat and desire to fill
The balance of time—grieve the loss of self control with acts of teeming passion.

Return to me in evening, when things can be so.
Till then my thoughts will keep me from myself.

IV

I'll Not Forsake You Now Nor Ever

Pressing hard against the block wall
and feeling it move under the weight; away from me
slowly—rough (grinding inertia) sliding—
stopping hard when I pause to catch a breath.

Falling back on the flats of my feet, sprung
arms dangling at my sides—sweat slipping
quickly down the gravity of my face—I place
my hands upon the wall and push again.

Each stone, each brick in the obstacle
I work to cast aside, shifts of its own accord;
away and back again, in and out as the total
of the structure edges slowly away from
the direction of my touch.

Take all that I have. These things only make
It harder to find the place where you stand.

V

What World is This

I think of words
 But nothing comes
 In a few short lines

I've spent my knowledge of you
 but the taste stays in my mouth
 and I must say more

What are mornings without nighttimes to complete the day?
 Broken down now
 Into syllables and senses: feel look taste smell
 The thought of you feeling my touch...

thought

I think of words but nothing comes.
 I think barely light and mutter aloud to myself a rhyme I heard
 About fresh fruit cut into slices and eaten by two some morning.

Here are some words: a simile to set the record straight
 I feel as though I've lived one thousand years
 in paradise, but woke this morning in total lack of you.

what world is this?

I'd think of you, but I am numb

Usage Beatha

I know you It happened just this way

In a fit of panic your white dog ran frenziedly from the safety of open field, wide open light & furrow, straight and strong into the tall north wall of the dark-thatched, binding wood, daunting—staggering in a mindful thought—drawn, pulled forward by a presence deep within the past of life, unrealized, ever-present. You chased as best you could but a dog's four swift legs move clean and efficient over rotten trees in spoiled paths, through ancient deserted waterways—steep-walled, strewn patterns in the rhythm long ceased flow—in a way children's legs cannot follow; out of the ordinary for any but the wind to move across the flat of sight and growth.

Seeing him seldom from around a tree or broken ridge, you moved toward his nameless destination. Though soon away from vision's reach of land deep in black of wood, and in that moment with no companion heart you feared what wasn't seen and ran toward his sound; long running vibration broken only by your young pant, you moved deeper, submerged into the uncertain ground in pursuit of you knew not what; flying beneath the canopy of vines and life sealing tight the air and humid nature of the place—branches crook-snaked into a twisted turn of weedy one another in a close inlay of veins against the backing of the forest dark & dank; witch fingers, knotty-jointed and arthritic, broken-glassed a mesh between near and far; unseen and undeserved—afraid to stop running, fearful of the air so mixed with voice of life,

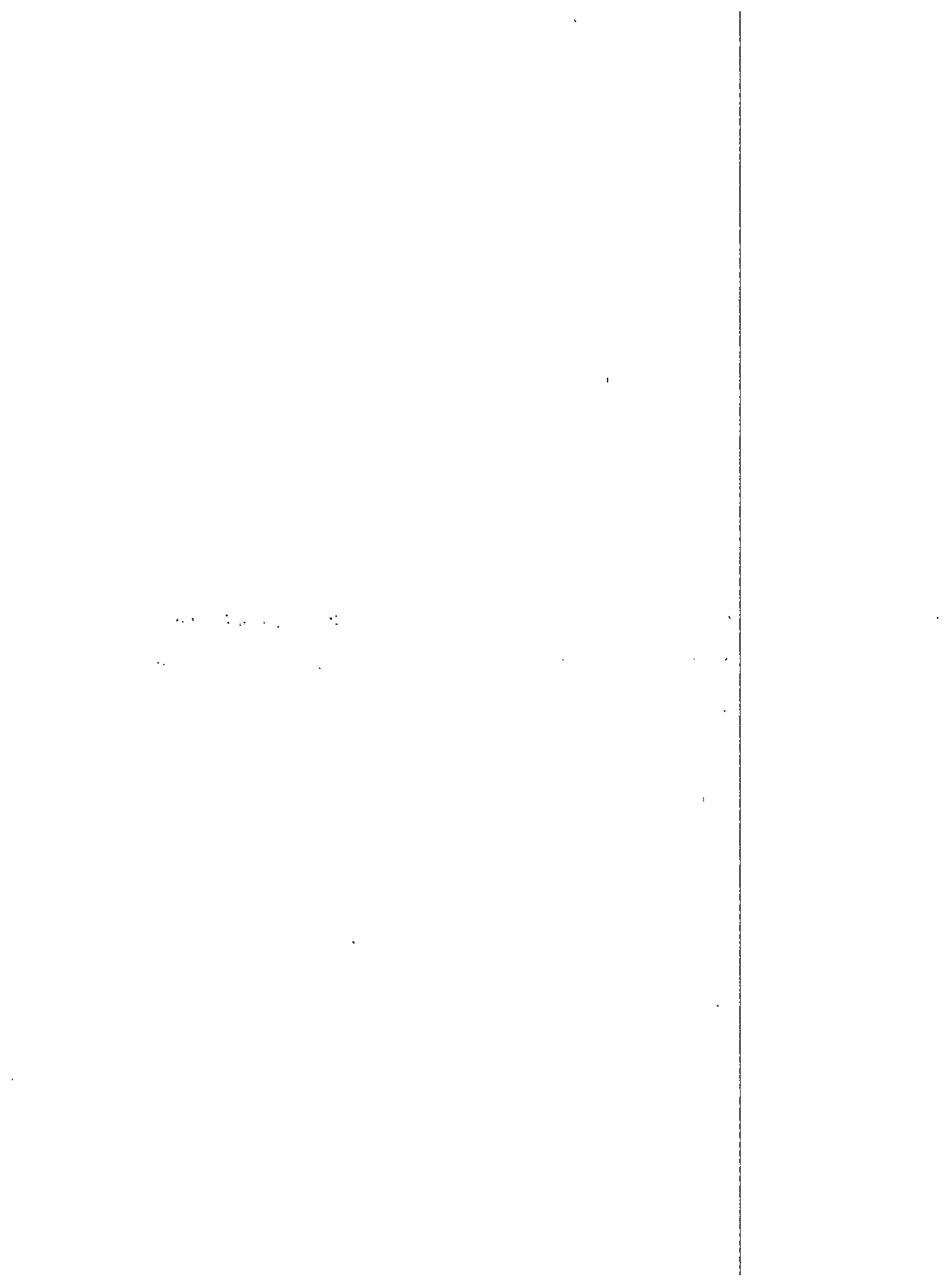
frightened, but feeling your way through the darkness of the dense way; foreign footfalls flailing with the speed of ease, direct memory of moving tendons, landing in the proper spots.

Design of the day

Further led by voice, past mountains of nowhere cast aside in lieu of sights and sounds of smells aligned to the present, held firm in place by close-aired fleshy walls of dense growth, humid, surrounding the tally of the never touched; walls moist, suffocating, a net's working of water chains binding you to force of motion.

Deeper still. You moved fast beyond the ticking of the earth-clock, into the timeless style of living found in such unwavering action. The sun's stagnant sinking poked through scattered breeches in the flowing roof of wood & leaf; unguarded spaces shattering, molded light into fragments of stone-lit angels cast down unto the ground at your feet, on your skin, but you were seeing none of this; missing injured light spilled yellow paint onto neck and face, feeding sight with searing detail shined an eye upon exposure of yourself.

Glowing strands that grip; you walked through a tightly web—wet and singing light—that housed your fear and sent your bent toward chilly possibility. Flailing, frantic with a notion of what might come into you, stuck as you were in fibers used to milk the life with wild fear and fangs & legs touching on your hot sweat skin *it*



touches me now so many eyes to watch and wait to move through veins. But this ran its course and went away fast that never harm did find you through your speed.

Long breath strides, carrying strides that sent you on a way you'd never been or new existed. Each place like another; sylvan map became a blur you never saw—head never moved from side-to side—for rushing with a lengthy step.

Down stumbling into the deep trench, the water's former way, worn into the earth by thoughtful water hands; a forgotten flowing path to promise safe passage, but not considered till this, your first discovery of these streams. Moving along the length of the creek's bed, blister-footed and careless, you stepped into the languished field of the old slave's bone-yard. This place—spoken once by one grown tall, much older than yourself, one who knew a one who knew a tale heard long ago—could keep this one grasping in brutal grips of awkward dying, everlasting search over one shoulder, looking out to find the creeping size of coming desertion.

Twenty or thirty stones. Long washed clean of identity. Leaning in a chorus of directions, held erect only by a thick green moss blanketing each careless marker. Forgotten pilgrims *I know their names* The easy hanging boughs, slashing the scene in curved glances, cast appropriate shadows and stood stone still in the breezeless pasture of rotting history dead beneath the sound of reaching life. Lying

under the waste dreams of warmth in a far place, the forward progress of a young one's mind into the limitless. Swollen tears of gagging sorrow in the land of ruptured life; sinking to the taken and the lost tormented fester. But thoughtless. You hesitated into moments past with no care or recognition of those who came before *I know them now It was told me just this way* The extra minutes moved unconscious through the mind but preyed hard upon the body. The ground there was muddy, sunken into concave thick. Footfalls came easy, but the rising again of aching limbs came much harder. I watch you struggle; working to un-cake your steps, undead your breathing walk from thickness of the clasping ground; grabbing you, forcing exertion to escape the closeness of oppressive power: moving tired legs now more from necessity than desire. Breaking free. Bursting through the jagged chains. Stumbled toward forceful direction.

The day healed itself of fresh aches and raw bitterness with thoughts of salve and comfort greased thick over sallow countenance, sweat and dirt tallow rubbed into wound-torn flesh, disrupted the true depth of deep running motion inward, further toward the core of well-spring waiting gladly to accept young presence, urging forward for a purpose unbeknownst to you *or you* No crunch of things neath foot, no leaves, no nettle or dried out fern upon the forest floor disturbed your mind *no, not in mind the mind a blank slate then* nor snap of things brushed passed. All was wet with air.

When once you heard the sound no more

You did not feel the miles hang heavy in the vapor air that wrapped your steps in natural truth, your perspective glare on passage with a careless movement further, longer beyond you ever thought could be, into the tight hold around your being. Time was nothing to you. I could see it in your unassuming acts.

When once you heard the sound no more, fell beneath an olden tree scarred by electricity all up one side, twisted, disfigured in its prostration; you, intertwined in an exposed section of root, balanced reality and haze of confusion into deep sleep; gently tumbling out all things dark and remembering the warm waters of your creation.

Reverting once again to the era of unknowing. Living in the bravado of unflinching existence.

Pick a perfect spot,
Sit slowly down upon the
Loose, rounded rocks that coat,
In uneven layers, the cold, sandy
Soil as it sinks beneath the weight.

The stones give, easy, now
Quicker, through the grains, and click
Against one another as force
Of mass onto the rocks. They,
In turn, give over their weight
As the soft earth welcomes.

Spine moves and settles in as the rocks
Fall into just security down in to the inevitable
Life beneath the creek bank surface.
Wait; wait for the movement to stop,
So begins the end of adjustment;
Marks the end of your true place in nature.

Her *mother tree* sagged, brown silk garments hung loose about the empty limbs outstretched toward vacant dreams above your tired slumber, tangled—in the smoke-filled vines, mingled with your ether thoughts becoming lasting visions—showering and tight slung across her midsection—protection of and from sinister reality.

Hours; hours, and waking in the bright of day you left *as instantaneous to your day* when first you fell at feet of ageful guardian, you rose, wiped your eyes for better use *better than I knew I had* and again realized your purpose.

And the sound again. You echoed back with movement faster, deeper into twisted rings of wet dust pangs of branches slashing exposed skin, wrenched ankles and swollen feet melted into back-mind. Crashing through the knitted wood with little else but gravity to keep you afoot, I saw you run. It was the running of a hungry one, searching for a moment of growing.

The color of her eyes

At dusk I reached a place of last report, a gloomy spot of final sound from dog's breath; a place thriving in its own stillness with a clearing cut out from the growth of life, large enough to house a small, ageless cabin rising out of the ground more by force of nature than human design. One thin stream of winding smoke issued smooth and creamy from a stone chimney and found its bearings, lowing, within a purpose toward a given place beyond knowing. It churned up through the mild air, up through

the atmosphere until losing sight, my awareness of its travels became a thing abstract. The cabin, an ancient relic, chinked with earth and moss between the sturdy beams of blackened wood. No windows that I could see, no thing, beside the chimney, to distinguish a house from a cave etched deep into a cliff's face.

I knelt concealed by a wide-based poplar, I watched, intent as soft can be as the cabin finally showed signs of life; humanity spreading out through the gappy walls and thin-thatched roof *in desperate need of repair*. The black lit doorway revealed a form, slowly walking from out the darkness of the interior, into evening light.

She looked through her surroundings at the boundless text written across the sky, paused—for a moment—counting the colors, the reds the purples the blues of dusk horizon. The washed out hues blended in to one another in the time of setting sun. I memorized her in this, her one motionless moment: faded red skirt formed over the frame of large round hips, hanging down to scarred ankles. The dress swayed—from pendulum end to pendulum end—with every step she placed. A patchwork shirt of muted greens and grays with two worn cuffs, frayed at the edges, pushed up over thick, dark forearms, nearly to the elbow. Hair; neatly bound in a length of white linen tightly wound and holding its ward in place *not a strand showing*. Her tight, buckskin moccasins, sparsely beaded, and harmed by snags and snares of forest living, writhed with the overflow of flesh poured therein; each bead holding, eternally

proud, asking only to remain one small ornamental part of the greater whole; grateful for their home against the living skin.

She moved again; walked toward me, toward the woodpile between my security tree and the cabin. I, from behind my concealing place, watched, and was permitted an intimate knowledge of the topography of her face. Eyes, dark holes in the pockets of a weathered face, staring toward nothing; only memories in the wrinkles of her eveninged flesh. Cheekbones high and pushing out hard against her dark skin; something like symmetry. Shoulders wide as waist, round and strong and narrower than her hips. Hands scuffed and bruised, betraying the physical reality of her life. She was a one working from the inside of life. A singing breeze of order.

Toward me. As she bent to fill her arms with fuel—the strings of her limbs taught, bulged, and the round of her thick neck expanded with a hoist—I studied on the impossibility of her existence; the absurdity of one living alone in the world, of the world, seamless with nature in a place of felicity *a simplistic understanding* bends when the trees bend, rolls when the waters roll, dark and warm within the tideless turning of the size of living. Her life, a word cannot express *the reader cannot know* quenched a sylvan surge for growing, and doused all possibility of false life: overbearing, rounding off unique edges of peopled days spent running in a moment insignificant.

And whispering to my mind she looked to see my place was filled. The air parted for her eyes to see a direct me looking straight back at her. Such light was shed. A moment later the time had passed for such looks. She turned and slowly headed for the cabin door, leaning slightly backward as she walked, to accommodate her front-held load. An instant framed within the door, and gone, sunk into the ink black inside; gathered into the womb of dark night within the dwelling's heaving walls *I knew that you would follow your child eyes spoke it* I, ruler of my hour, stood, walked slowly toward my own one; she who walked with eyes, she who burned chemical grace in savage bonds of liquid use within a place not fit for starving death. Gathering my new ways about me, untreed my body, stepped carefully around the woodpile, and slowly toward the fire.

I wait, carry on about my work, and finally hear the light touch of soft steps near my open door. A round young-faced baby appears from out the non-light, and stops. It stops and will not enter. The face watches me watching, motionless breaths; silent in thought. A ripe mind for a young body—on the brink, deciding which direction to live. Making my own intentions known, the stillness breaks slightly, and two weary feet step lightly into my life, but grow rigid again once inside the door.

Standing in my kneeling place behind the single chair beside the hearth of comfort—warm give of security—watch through spindled back *The cabin a patinaed realm, a touching dark of earth tones and muted fire light shimmering, falling on a chair, a*

table, a bed, a floor where walked one thousand years. I see generations in this house I arise, pause, walk painlessly toward the trembling child until a solitary foot separates us. I look down from my apparent pedestal into brown pools of confusion, startlingly moist, that point back at me from the fresh pallet of a child's face; soft of lips, hue of earthy face, mouth of silence stands before me afraid of what might be.

Imagine it *I do* looking into those frightened-eyed stars, waiting for the morning youth to reflect steadily into my own truth. Postures hold. I, until living longer for the closeness of an innocent, grow young and strong, grow eager for the old songs. With eager face to new eager face a shadow falls between us, darkens the youth in us both, and spoils any possibility of one moment's fortune for knowingness of a fatalistic dream: knowledge of the old skin beneath the surface of the image. New : dirty faded to the darker hue of regained old red; cloud sweeps my countenance on one sallow ether smear. I know, I am; believe the child knows, too, the faults in us both.

With child's eye permission, decision shifts to an end. I will give while taking nothing for myself, nothing more than already presents itself for use. Taking eases nothing but the short symptom, and will not stand the healing moments beyond the repetitive motion of a movement *I knew these things and felt them there till now* Falling back on solitary distinction, a ringing truth renders in oblique derision, I begin again.

New self spent, the older way sweeps into the foreground with floods of breath; a stinging, healing wind takes one instant after the next of my life in hand, places me gently but firmly down upon the waiting ground to resume my choice. All of me. All of me pushes at the descendent, approaching a turning phrase, standing stock-still; overwhelmed at my offering, terrified at the acceptance of these gifts beyond its years *wiped clean my hold on holding* and clay hardens to mold in the baking stare of experience. Harder still, I drop the weight of self unto the pristine shoulders that tremble between the effort of my task.

The black light slept in a womb of black cloud.
The first light lived within the substance of the white.
When two clouds met in the East, life began.

I

The Speaker's Declaration

*What say ye now, Morgan le Fay,
Young brother on the stone,
And them sweet fairies once ye loved,
In cold wood all alone.*

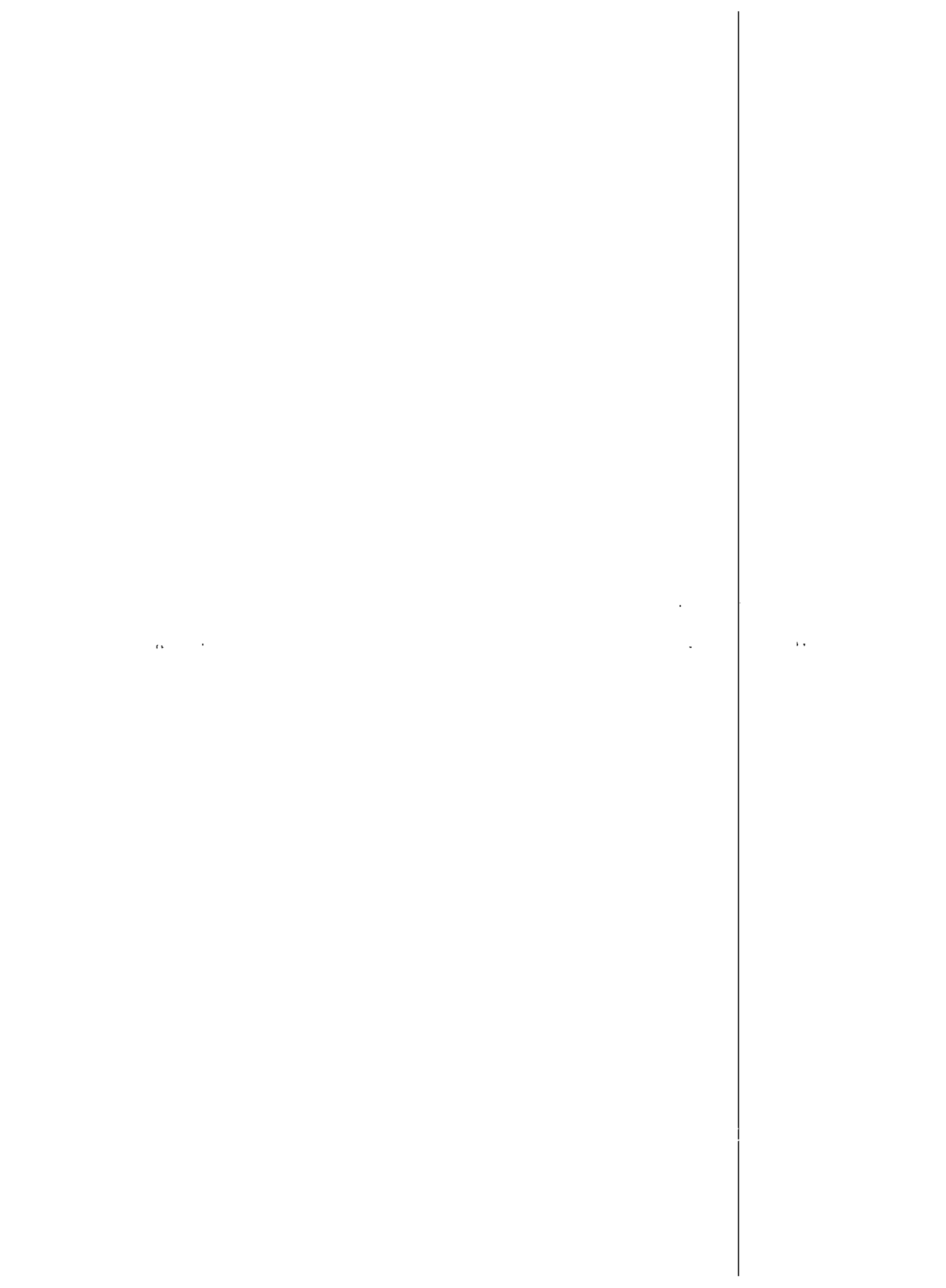
II

The Realization

The Mesa Verdi people came upon
Beings from the stars, and etched
Their likeness into the cliff's face
To record the encounter.

New Relevance of the Past

five broken pieces in the dust	
reflecting sunlight into greedy eyes	
looking straight down upon them	
one piece, one piece representing	the second piece of mirror cut
the earth and sky, glowed blue	clean flesh from bone, cut words
into the minds of the holy	from the language of spoken
truth	



III

The Revelation*(realization granted life)*

When starving they ate dog; dog, when
the horses were gone. The children sang
and made a game of stoning the animals to death.

III

Personification of the Chain

Hidden away from light of day,
an old man crafted the finest of goods
(each piece unique in its simplicity of design)
*(the Pict word for kill is the same as the word for birth;
father the same as daughter.)*

The world consisted of bar elements: light and wind.
The light caught the wind, producing the images of animals
Running quickly across the plains of an early age.
From the hill could be seen all this new life.

This is a passing on; from mother to child, grandfather to grandchild; an occasion of significant thought spilling out and drowning my young one. I wash you clean of all my sins; hold you tight in that hour of original transgression; a soldier's stance in the face of our undoing. My whole boiled in the heart of my dreams, and adds to the sum of all belief. I bathe you, as it were, in the perfumes of my people.

I wake to find you gone. The cabin, in all its lack of you, wrenches me awake, spoils my diluted vision of taste of what could be within free-form reality: a senseless rhyme, unpredictable in its rhythmless jolts from one emotion to the next. My cold gray breath in the cold of morning's day, I search; a bark in the distant wood, a voice

I've heard before, echoes hard in the sharp, early turning point of growing close; a passion of our common bond, its sound moves away from me.

I know it should be so. I know you should return again to the field of morning hours; cultivated with the resonance of comfort days *I had returned again to my own ones*
Yes, and this is the way it should be, but I missed your release of me. And you took more of me with you than you know.

Span of Flight

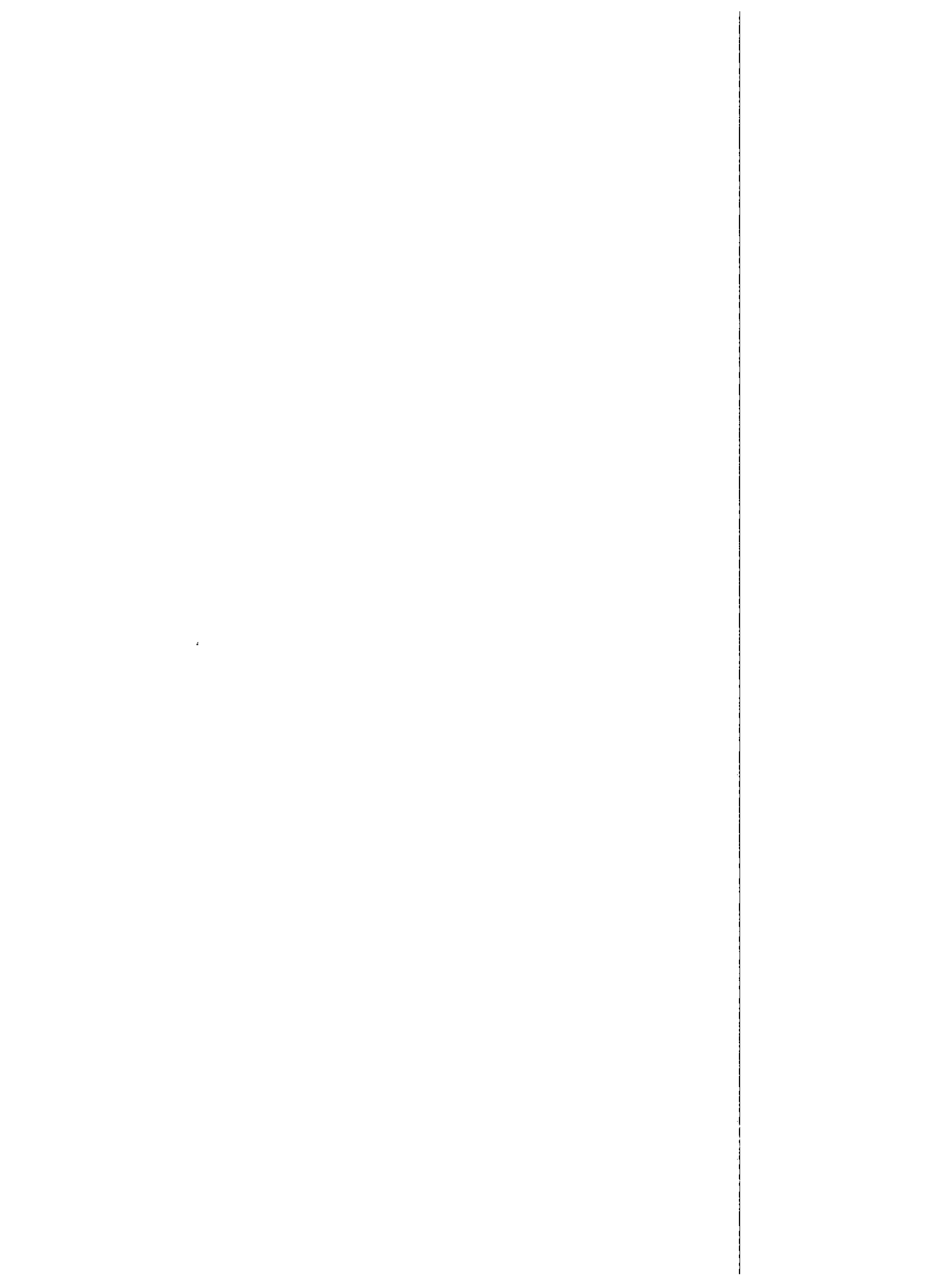
little water here
but some herons came anyway;
blue & stayed out the season.
camped in the highest
branches of the tallest
trees; pale sycamore & croaked
their choking call
to echo through the wood.

Bird-saurus: from big
rock to watch them circle
and land. Each
trying for the past

and making it

Birthright

A great army
Of semen marched into her womb,
Sacking the city, begetting me. Later,
I drank shrapnel
From her breast, which I spit out,
When old enough to march,
At my own children,
Who never had a chance at peace.



4.)

dark blue sky: a blanket
 deep hued coat
 fabric warms the flesh
 dark blue sky: a coat that warms the
 less than life
 by a less than river
 in dark night
 cut it till a crystal: white-sharp edges
 plane to angular plane; sick with the
 poison sick with the poison of dark coat nights.

reels to picture reels
 to remember where were you when
 Four significant stains on the creamy carpet
 1.) where fingers bleed 2.) bottles spill
 blue chair scraped where it fell from the back
 of the truck, catching wind, and tumbled
 down the road books on shelf
 3.) muddy boots after rain.
 Pictures to reels by books and
 Painting of the Goblin-Man.

warm night neath dark coat beside
 homeless river in the water hours
 till a crystal poem to tell about the coat
 reels upon the crystal mountain
 carry tales about the coat
 water carries voices to tell about the coat

then bed

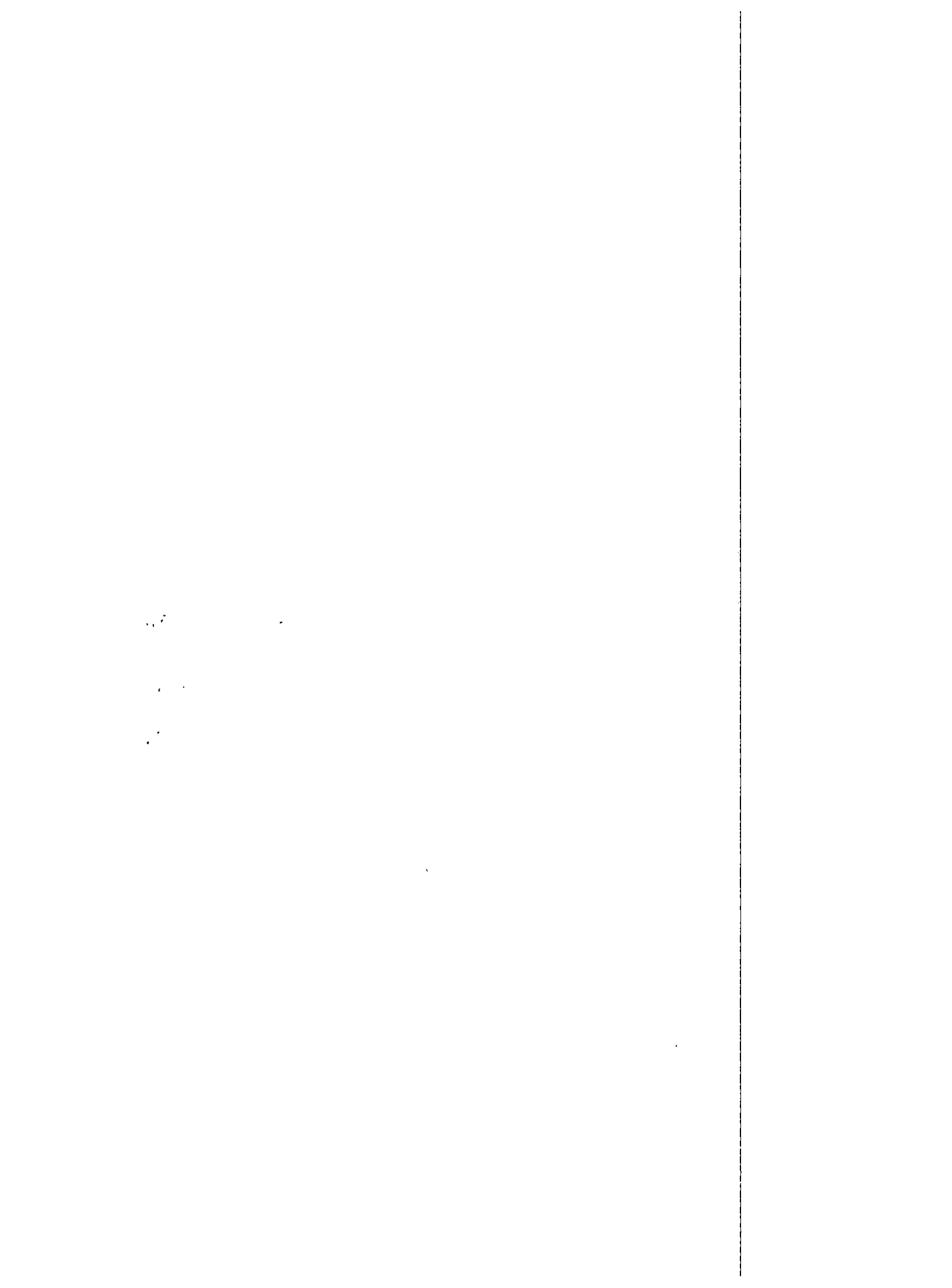
My Sound of Rushing

The air that easy hangs
 above the beach & sea;
 a taffy of an ocean air
 thick in your nose. I
 linger on faded strands
 of your hair, upon my back
 the white gulls sound.
 Transparent cloud: my
 footsteps kick the waves
 from side to side. I am

Not afraid of winter.
 It is only snow, so let
 It fall. It is only ice,
 so let it hang upon my
 bearded face. There
 is no beginning season;
 there is little but the flow
 of my body along flanks
 of ships: brooding rust-hull.
 Good evening ship. I am

In love with the movements
 of the moon, crawl up onto
 the sand, wet knees tracking
 water onto the loose ground.
 From here I see the city lights,
 from here I wait for morning,
 for swim-suit girls running;
 the taste of me upon their lips
 and eye lashes; running down
 the littered suds to worship,

Going to pray within your iron
 skull, to swell within your rusted
 walls. Your white is bright
 from where I sit; white lights,
 white sounds, light wounds mending
 in my salty skin. You have names
 like women's names, like places
 I have never been, and never
 will go. I am here, now, tomorrow,
 & always, because I am

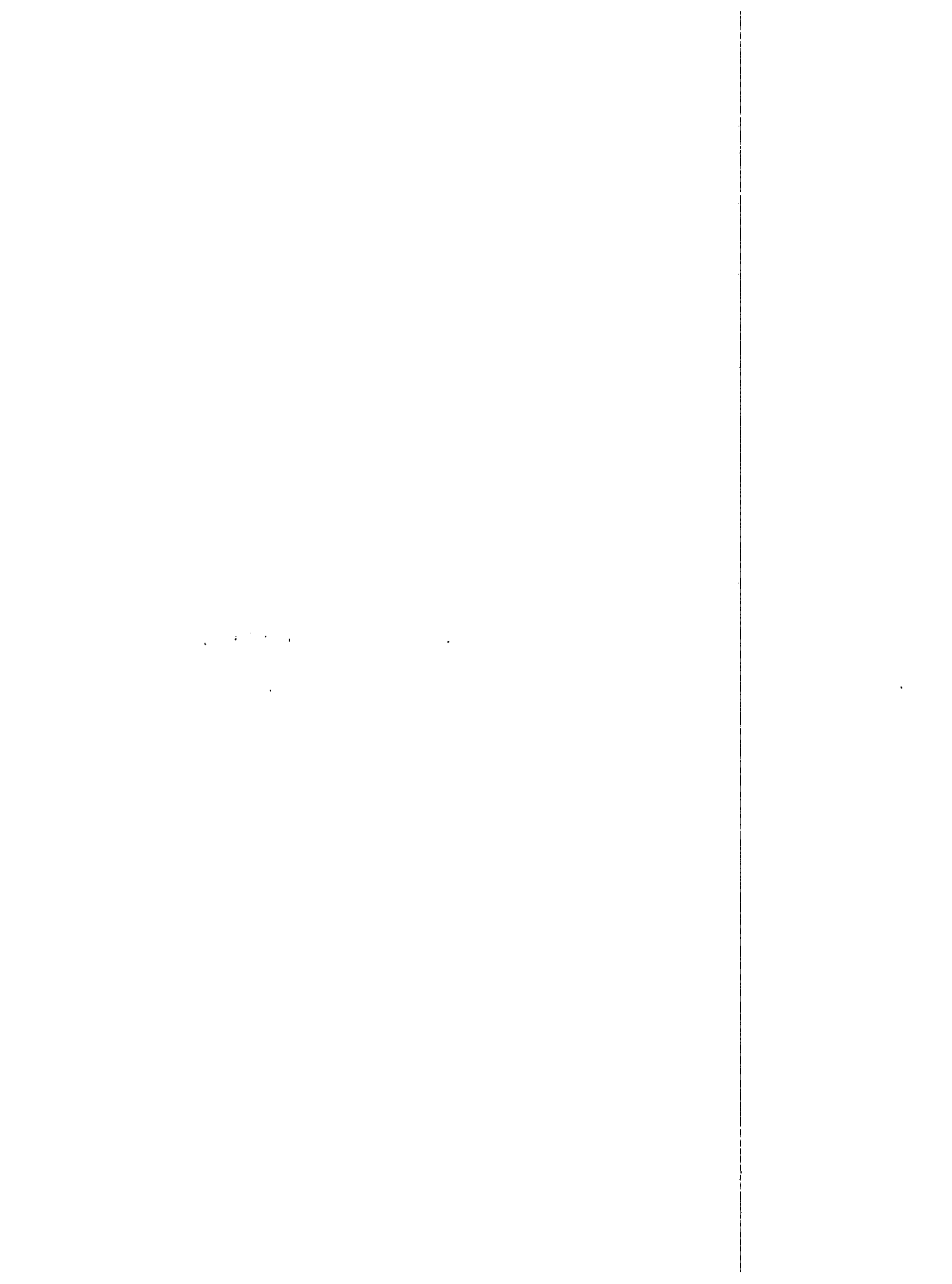


Moccasin

creek bank:
Swolled hand
Breaking open at finger's tips.
you will die soon,
but pain first, much
pain and find
a place to lay
your twitching body down.
Without your wits about
you stumble
to this lay-down place,
still in water half up
your calves,
then sleep with eyes open.

Nancy put six bullets into Jack,
One for each evening of the week
He went out for other women,
Then dropped to her knees beside
The body, and prayed like the one morning
Each week they had gone to church together.

Amen



Vantage

Farm towns roll over, one generation to the next,
Each beginning where the last ended, each
Traveling a different but parallel road. From here
I see my grandson's new boots shining, from here
I see my father like a leafy fern among the shady
Undergrowth. Trouble is, they can't hear me calling,
And day's too bright to catch their glimpse for more
Than just a moment; watery eyes won't let me see
Their faces. Besides, there's much to do before it rains.
From over my shoulder I see a stranger watching.

They Say

they say she shot her husband like a dog.
I can't say for certain if this is the case;
she would never have harmed a dog
because a dog never harmed her.

they say **she killed herself**
like a man; a bullet in the head.
but, rhetoric aside, she killed herself
like a frightened human being,
half crazed with pain
and changed
by years
of abuse.

She put the gun in her mouth
And pulled the trigger. This,
Apparently, is the manly
Way of doing it.

Few say she killed herself
Like a person trying to live.

Such is Life

Blood splashed onto the owl's wing, spooking
Him to higher roost in a far off tree. A rattle
Gurgled from the depths of dead Marcus as Sara,
Smoking pistol in hand, picked herself up
From the place on the ground
Where she had been knocked.

Movement

We were appalled
 but forgot—
Bested by those with nothing
but time to spend
on things we never dreamed could be.
Banneker's street: many thousand marched
Declaring "Not In Our Name"
 but forgot—
and drove home satisfied.

One soldier said "kill"
While others, who said
 "money for college"
 "way out of the ghetto"
died;
forever gone from freedom from
justice from any idea of liberty from....
and 600,000 plus Iraqis dead
 but forgot—

Little Eyes

Rogie seen the Jackson man.
Rogie seen the Jackson man twice.
The cabin outside where lived
Of field of line Baker's Tom,
Of clarity of Baker's Tom
Where seldom seen a one so stand
Outside the sycamore or cabin.

The man that stood,
That Jackson man that stood
On horsen trail by sycamore
Toward Jackson's edge of place.
From shadow seen,
Who left from trails of cabin,
From shadows untold pain.

Rogie seen, and Rogie seen
Tears so typically strong
In eyes belonging to the cabin
To the broken Baker's Tom.
Rogie seen the tears so smoothly down,
Smoothly down the smoothly face
Of the nigger Baker's Tom.

Kept with Me

Little lanterns burn
Half teaspoons of water at a time—
Melt them into vapor slowly winding
Toward a canopy of leaves.
Across the lake an answer
—a challenge, perhaps, saying:

This is where I live.

They've heard the Muskie say:
The twisted mud and root
Casting lines. From thick within
My own, fishermen in boats in coves
—your voice from up by the tent,
Voices slide the black sheet of water

reticence: simile)

Reticent like Tom Smith
reticent like a colt kicks
 up his hind end with feisty legs
 (like springs) like recorded
 applause
sounds like rain on a tin roof. I am

Nearly broken in my reticence (broken
by) and the true color of speech
is light, in varying degrees of shade;
like a shadow is the echo of the body,
or a memory of the colorless soul (hollow
and standing in the feet
where I stand, and

Reticent like Tom Smith,
or like the movie about a
book about a man

Mima Mounds

I

Prairie makes for bad road
 sun beats down hotter on the flat (
 even when it doesn't
). I've

come to the conclusion that Mima
 Mounds are gods of the earth, spring-
 ing up to block easy passage west.
 Further evidence there is gold
 Out west, and God, being a greedy
 God, doesn't want us to have it.

God put the fold into the mountains and the streams for his own pleasure	not so that we may use them to usurp the role of boss
The Mima Mounds generate great curiosity. Tourists flock to see these geographical oddities.	

II

I traveled west by car, as a child by car starring from out the back window
 of a station wagon, a child looking for Mima Mounds which do not exist
 in Wyoming. A brochure assures eight-year-old adventurers in rusty cars
 with grimy back windows, skeptical of all he reads, that Wyoming is the
 state with the next to largest number of Mima Mounds; second only to Washington

what child doesn't like geographical oddities?	
I see a mountain and	The sun is in my eyes.
I see the hills and	Looking low, I can see
Abrupt, but not giant	the road end, drop off the map
Gophers building giant	of places traveled moments
before,	
Mounds, no shovels.	ravenous sleepiness eating up
the	
	weary miles and breaking the
pave	
	-ment off in chunks

If God intended the road to last forever, he would have made it concave. Had God intended Eight-year-olds to stay awake he would have made more Mima Mounds to entertain us.

II

Mima Mounds are created by:

- A. Seismic Activity
- B. Gophers, big & burly
- C. Indians
- or D. God

- E. None of the above. If I had to pick, I would attribute the existence of Mima Mounds to, not the God Mentioned in section 1, but to Dinosaurs or cave men. We know Little of their motivations or hobbies. Or, perhaps C, depending upon When cavemen turned into Indians.

There are three hundred sixty individual horizons,
None of which satisfies: not a mound in sight
I turn to each.

but saw not mound one. Damn
the moundless landscape,
and Damn the Wyoming tour-
ism board for their lies (
the brochure makes its way out the window
).
If God were a real man, as I now know
He is not,
There would be more Mima Mounds
Like bosoms sticking up from everywhere

IV

idaho is boring
(guess why),
and big.

Oregon has the ocean.

View from a Hill

Sprawled like ants across the plane of redemption.
Pools of defeat (it's the young who fight,
Who die gloriously on the field of battle) The
Young, the ungrown, at close of day can say
With pride, I have killed and died for a purpose
(purpose long forgotten, fixed upon the reward
Of cast away lives—for a purpose) for a purpose.

Knowing What *They* Know

Two eyes widened
and said, "I have been
those places where people go.
And have seen them do
those things that people do."

Two eyes looked down, fixedly
upon a pale page in the lifeless
book where children paint
their dreams, and thought, "I
will go there, then I
will know what they know."

(an ocean of pure blue wax meets
the bottom of a pure white sky.)
The sun shines and birds fly

I wanted a gift for you

I wanted a gift for you
but didn't know how
 thought of your hair
 how it always
needed ribbons Bought
a pair of scissors for the giving
 wrapped them in a bow.

On Dying

“You can dream
of me watching you,”
she said, and that was all
we knew of heaven.