

exile



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Prose:

Cockey
McNaughton
Tomfohrde
Trevisan (translated by Levitan)
Weber

Poetry:

Allbery
Bandeira (translated by Levitan)
Cockey
Dario (translated by Straub)
Dickerson
Franz
Marti (translated by Straub)

Mayhew
Orleans
Patnode
Pretlow
Schloss
Singleton
Sloan
Thomas
Weber

Essay:

Davies
Kralik
Soaper

Photography: (in order of appearance)

Calabrise (Family)
Yeomans (Bob Henry Yeomans, Rt. 71 Arizona summer 1975)
Yeomans (Jane Thrall, Evanston Beach, Illinois summer 1974)
Offensend (Untitled)
Yeomans (Lamberville, New Jersey August 26, 1974)
Yeomans (Mainstreet, Watertown, Wisconsin)
Offensend (House in Southern France)
Slaton (Untitled)
May 20, 1884 (Ronda's Grandmother) used with owner's permission

Cover photograph from a late nineteenth century glass negative found in an Ohio antique shop and used with the permission of its owner.

*I have weathered the storm,
I have beaten out my exile.*
— Ezra Pound

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Cette vie est un hôpital où chaque malade est possédé du désir de changer de lit. Celui-a voudrait souffrir en force du pôle, et celui-là croit qu'il guerirait à côte de la fenêtre.

This life is a hospital where every patient is possessed with the desire to change beds; one man would like to suffer in front of the stove, and another believes he would recover his health beside the window.

From the opening of *Anywhere Out Of The World* found in *Le Spleen De Paris* (1869) by Charles Baudelaire translated by Michael Hamburger for Jonathan Cape Presses, London.

The White Butterfly

by Dalton Trevisan

"She's just about finished. Lung's rotted through."
It was too late for an operation or cobalt treatment.

"Why doesn't she complain?"

"There's no pain or fever.."

Gasping for air, the window wide open.

"Just a shred of lung left."

Reproach her because she likes to smoke and, stricken mother, lights one cigarette from another? Always the cough, forcing her to sit down, twisted over her bed.

"I can't sleep, my son. Suffocating, this room has no air."

The young man goes to sleep hearing the little cough which she, in order not to disturb him, muffles in her pillow.

"Is it a bad sickness, my son?"

"Mother, what nonsense."

"Why didn't the doctor give me some medicine? All he did was forbid cigarettes!"

Every week the son demands a new prescription from the doctor. With vitamins she jumps out of bed, cooks the boy's favorite dish, goes down to the street for two skeins of blue wool.

"So tired I leaned against the wall."

Knowing what it cost her, a poor widow, to raise a pair of sons, she was forced to take a taxi. Now she no longer goes out, quiet in her corner, rolling up thread on a shaky little finger, her mouth wide open in front of the window.

"Out of breath she could fall," warns the doctor. "Or throw herself out."

Every night the son gives her an injection. Barely dozing, she feels herself in agony and tears open her nightgown over her gaunt breasts. She, always nicely plump, coughs and grows thin, her plush slipper dances on her foot and her wedding ring on her finger.

"What will become of you? Drunk, who will hold your forehead?"

"This injection will make you well."

The last days attended by a pretty young nurse. Not yet fully awake, another injection to benumb her: she doesn't complain of pain, just that anxiousness to gulp down all the air.

The boy rushed down the stairs, enters the first bar. Returning, he sees the dim face of his mother, her mouth sucked in without its teeth, her breath hissing in the pre-dawn. She scarcely ever speaks, she crosses herself and covers her face with the sheet.

"If only her heart would fail," whispers the nurse.

In the middle of the night a scream and his face bathed in tears. Again the dream in which he enters the elevator and, no matter how hard he pushes the button, the door doesn't close, stuck at the bottom of the shaft- there, above, his mother's cough, and he cannot help her.

On his burning forehead, the pitying caress of the girl.

"Sleep with me."

"You've got a fever, João."

"Do me a favor. I'm dying of sadness."

Although she refuses to lie down, he takes her standing up against the wall. Such great relief, he falls asleep.

Three in the morning he's called by the girl- black foam bubbles from the nose of the dying one. Poor mother: too tired to cough eyes open without seeing, convulsions that shake the bed.

A gentle moan, a smile, utter stillness.

"Look, João."

In through the window flies a great white butterfly.

translated from the Portuguese by Alexis Levitin

Natural Selection

by Anne Tomfohrde

Carson crossed herself a last time before gathering the long, black robe in wearied hand and carrying herself and cage poisedly out from under the stares of wretched slaves. She took care to close the high vaulted doors, feeling the touch of wise men as she pushed them further away. She noted the fine, two-dimensional carvings in cherry mahogany — wood that had weathered many a torrent while keeping its subjects placid. She ran her fingers along smooth surfaces and let them fall in crevices and linger over reliefs. Then she ran her hand the length of the door and ended on the handle of her cage. The cold wire was soothing as the day was stifling. She offered a delicate grasp and padded down the hundred some stone measures of devotion.

"Damm," she thought, not having meant to leave her candle back in the church. But she did not wish to return, so she let it be now. A man was walking her way and she sought to meet his eyes, wanting him to be her mirror, for she had not bathed in three days. But he passed solely and kept to himself, denying her the glance. She hid her face beneath the quilted hood.

Morning activity had not yet been born, and her bare feet brought to silence only slaps, like fish-flicks on a wet rock. She had begun her day well. Her thought was fresh, and new questions lay unprobed — a heretic who had momentarily stilled her quest in the name of peace. She glanced down at the mutation in the wire frame. He was quiet, though wakened by the irregular movement of her walk. Carson had discovered early that most people didn't notice that one of her well-shaped, firm and brown legs was shorter than the other. And she had managed to decrease the effect on her maneuverability. She could still run.

She laughed when the door came open easily and when the little bell announced her arrival with more than its usual pontification. Mr. Hudson smiled through sleep-laden eyes and picked up his voice to compensate.

"Carson, glad to see you so early this morning. Seems you get earlier every day now. Never could get over a woman's will to always be about somethin' or other. Now Bessie. There's a lazy one for ya. Caught a cold and hasn't been the same since poor mutt. But she'll get on. I expect we won't be seeing *you* much longer though. When is't you're headed for Dorinth?"

"I'm not sure really. There are still a few things left to tie up. I've got to wait until Jacob . . . well until he shapes up some, I guess. I actually hope to leave quite soon — as soon as the apartment's rented, that is."

"Well we'll miss you, won't we Bessie?" Bessie had hobbled over to an already hairy corner and had managed to put the rest of her depleted energy into a dramatic and flatulent collapse.

"We won't hear from *her* for another day or two," Hudson laughed, and he went out back to make some dust fly for breakfast. Carson sat at the oblong front table. No one had ventured in to eat yet so she took the liberty of making dreams.

There was an old hotel room in Italy where she was raised, but she couldn't remember the man's name . . . It had been strange. She had just been evicted from her apartment, and she was carrying an old wine bottle retrieved from the garbage can back of Lupino's. It now contained water whose tinge of ferment felt bitter on her tongue. But she had stopped to lean on a pipe for a steady drink. A man with black whiskers and clear blue eyes had run past and had bumped her hard 'gainst the bricks of the building wall. The neck had broken, leaving broken teeth and glass in her mouth. He had not stopped.

And she had gone to a bar to pick up a man, and she had kissed him in the hotel room with her bloodied mouth and laid him on the bed to savor her passion, and he had gotten up to rinse. But his shirt was still stained and her teeth still fragmented. He was a dentist.

(And then years later when she could smile once more without gaps, she had seen the blue-eyed, black-whiskered man again, and they had fallen in love.)

She had been evicted again from her apartment — had no where to go but Jacob's because there was no more money, but still she wondered how he'd take her moving in. It was one thing to eat cabbage and caviar in the arms of Egypt and dream of love in an image of free days to come, but it was another to find yourself breaking cans with someone from whom there is no reality of romantic release. There was no more the possibility of living and then letting live.

"Jacob? Jacob, listen. I bought more groceries than we could eat in a year, and I'll cook half of it, but I refuse to clean your underwear or grind your coffee — so don't think it will be any easier with me here. Things will be a bit more constant, that's all." It was the only way she could have told him.

Jacob came up the back stairs carrying a load of magazines. His brown-grey beard and silver grey eyes caught the light and placed a halo over his tall limber body. Freckles faded into smooth pigment,

and the light blue work shirt looked unusually pressed. He had obviously showered. Carson brushed her short, dark hair out of her eyes and tucked in her sweater. Jacob paused on the top step to eye her.

"I've done a painting this morning, and I deserve the world, so fix me something and we'll go looking." He wasn't going to make it easy for her.

"Listen Jake, we've been living this way for a long time and for different intervals, but it's never been because we had to. We won't like it, you and I, but I work and you work, and jobs have a way of creating lives, so I'll take my leave when I feel like it — or when you feel like giving it. Pretty good, huh?"

"Yeah, everything's fine. Can you sit awhile for me tonight? I've got two more drawings to do and not enough bodies."

"This town must be getting to know mine awfully well by now. I mean shape-wise it's not all that interesting."

"Yeah, but you're available."
"So to speak."

At 7:00, they began and at 10:00 Carson was still stiffly posing. They had not spoken. Finally, she had to stretch.

"How close are you to finishing?"

"Oh don't move! Just then, just then, at that moment, I really needed you to sit — still, really really still, god damn you!"

"Well, up yours then!" She was yelling. "I can't believe. . . I can't believe you can be that impatient. It's so childish, Jacob, that I honestly can't deal with it right now. Give me something to rattle."

Jacob handed over her favorite worry beads, and she began shaking them in the characteristic manner he hated, but he remained silent — silently fuming. In a few moments she had calmed. She turned to him and began to reach toward his face, but instead of responding, he caught the movement on canvas.

After three weeks, she had sat for him fifteen times for three-hour periods. Eleven of those had ended in argument. What's more, Carson kept feeling that it had all been done before. She knew Jacob no better than prior to the new arrangement, and she certainly in no way felt closer — but infinitely more estranged. She decided that either she had exhausted him, or he had settled with the character he had spent twenty-eight years creating and, like a painting, had been hung on the wall to be sold "as is". If that were the case, she wasn't interested. There was too much left unsaid. Too much easiness and no confrontations which allow people to get into each other. He hadn't opened, but then, admittedly, she'd never knocked.

She watched him paint a wood beam in intricate detail one day and asked him if he ever had considered spending that much time being precise with himself. Pamela had commented many times on how gifted Jacob was, how sensitive, gentle, and wise, how different, individualistic, caring. And Carson had agreed. Of course she did, was all those things. But he himself was not an interesting person to spend any length of time with. A horrible admission about anyone, but nonetheless true. He was good, but only in that he was good at things — good at painting, good at being nice, good at being cool, good at loving, but he wasn't good at being. She never saw in him that enthusiasm that comes when you're at one with your role in life. She never saw fascination and wonder and liveliness. He was drenched in passivity. His beard wreaked of it, his clothes wreaked of it, his face wreaked of it. He was too pretty, too contrivedly casual. Everything about him spoke for itself — there was no need for him to extend new images or find the image within himself. It rose to the surface like chilled fat in gravy that turned out to be bouillon.

Carson came home after she'd finished a table one day and found a note in the key hole. It was from the neighbor — the man downstairs, the man with softness and hardness, and knobby knees, and curled ears, and eyebrows that copulated on the bridge of his nose. He always smelt of campfire and wore grey flannel and silk shirts. Smoked a pipe and grass on alternate Wednesdays, and he had a penchant for nude statues. Sometimes he wore huge, baggy pants and sometimes very tight jeans. His hair was frizzy on occasion, with flighty wisps doing a soft-shoe behind his ears on windy days. He had very clear, tight skin — eternally toned — and he wore a tie so that it streamed down his backbone. He sniffled continuously at night — they could hear him through skinny walls — but he had a way with him that brought all sounds to the ear of the curious. Always with a book, always with a hand — which was just what Carson needed one day when she fell across his mat. Sometimes her leg met its match better than others. He had picked her up oh so softly, and she had remembered what it was like to be Italian — to speak through large eyes and be described as intricate and serene and strong sometimes, and stubborn, loud, and mouthy when called for. He gave her two things at their first meeting and said only one. He gave a key that duplicated the one settling into darkened chest hairs, and a cage housing a mutated bird. He said: "Carry the bird with you until you understand its value."

Carson found the bird ugly at first glance, ugly and boring in days to come. He did nothing but sit, contented in his immobility. He neither sang nor complained and, indeed, were it not for his blink,

one would have supposed him dead. But the bird was thoughtful and observant and as faithful as a chained animal can be. For the most part, he annoyed her. He was an albatross, a nuisance that drove her to curse the neighbor for his indignance, for surely he had found a way to get rid of the thing — he had found a heart that could not kill.

And then, after time and subsequent fantasies, she found that she not only could not kill, but she could not hate. She also discovered that neutrality was the death of her being. She was neutral when posing for Jacob, she was neutral when crossing herself under domes, she was neutral when doing anything that caused her numbness. She found ultimately that she loved. The note was not what she had expected in return for her newfound effulgence. It read:

You have fulfilled yourself well, puppy, but you never quite discovered me — though you loved. Not enough. But I have not left empty-handed.

The Neighbor — Kimball

Scrawled beneath the scraggly signature were words that brought to mind the Alamo —

Remember the bird.

The bird! My god, she left the bird at Hudson's how long ago? Weeks . . . weeks ago. How could she have forgotten? How could she forget a living animal? She tore out the door and into Hudson's, breathing hard and speaking restlessly.

"Mr. Hudson, please . . . I've lost my bird. I left it. Here. Do you remember?"

"Carson, dear girl, where have you been keeping yourself? I've pretty near gone broke these days without your . . ."

"Been busy. But the bird? It's important, you see, that I find it."

"Yes, well how could you lose a bird? Oh, was it a stuffed bird?"

"No, a bird, a real bird that flies and chirps and . . . Well no, it doesn't, but I'm sure it could . . . Anyway, that's not important—it's a bird."

"Now Carson, if he can't fly and he can't sing, it seems to me you can go buy yourself one that does."

"No because this bird's different—he's a mutation, you see, and besides that, he was given to me."

"Well you seem to think he's special but not enough so to watch after him, is that right?"

"It was an oversight. I'd forgotten that I'd taken him with me, that's all."

"A three-week oversight. Hm. I'd have that checked, Carson." They were both silent for quite awhile as Hudson watched her fidget. Finally he spoke.

"Yes Carson, I found your bird."

"Do you have him? But you said . . . I mean you certainly implied . . . Mr. Hudson, I'm not sure what you're trying to prove but I definitely don't like it."

"I thought you had a lesson to learn. Your bird is rather remarkable. You didn't know that, did you? I've noticed that bird since when you first brought him around here."

"In what way remarkable?"

"He listens. All day long he watches and listens, and of all my customers, I sense now which are my friends. He is gentle towards me and those who like me. You must take care to notice these things. You'll be better off. I after all am richer for it—I know who takes from me. Now here he is—take him and don't dare to leave him again because I'm too fond of him to let you take him from me a second time."

Carson pulled herself out of the glaze when Hudson returned from the kitchen.

"Okay, overcooked the eggs a bit, but there's plenty more where those came from—on the house." Hudson put the plate solidly on the table and went to chop liver. Carson sighed and stared out the window while she ate. Occasionally someone would peer in and she'd stop chewing, hunting for something to read.

"Everything okay? Want some more?"

"No, I'm fine. Thank you Mr. Hudson. Um—Jacob will be in this afternoon. Do you think—" She took her hood down and tried to stand a little taller. "Do you think he could pay then?" Hudson looked at her with kind, Irish eyes and ran his hands along his round, aproned sides. She lowered her head some and spoke more gently. "Just now, I haven't much money."

"How much is not much?"

Her head reperedched. "Well . . . I mean I can get some soon. I haven't got it with me just now."

"I see, Well, certainly Jacob can pay me, you know that."

"Yes, I suppose so. Thank you Mr. Hudson. I'll see you tomorrow."

"And Jacob this afternoon. Yes, now be off with you." Hudson winked and turned away to make her leaving comfortable. But on second thought, he remained at the window and watched after her. She could see the light reflected off his bald head, its flash as he rubbed it. She turned off the street early.

She pounded down an alley, alternately running hard and then lopping along, her robe catching her heels and making pants around her legs. Some ways away but in hearing distance, a bulldozer was dumping its contents on a large hole in the ground. Carson was reminded that some other ways away, human hands were making the same effort. She switched her course, hoping she'd get there before the last shovelful came down on Mother Earth's surface.

There were many people—more than she would have imagined for such a lonely man. And he was very peculiar. He had left no mark with the world, but she liked him. His death, though quite sudden, had not been in the least horrible. Just a quiet melting of gas into air—a still sort of creeping circulation of chemicals that brought the mind through gradual decreasing levels of consciousness—much like the diffusion she was feeling now.

A sign at the cemetery entrance—probably donated by the women of the afterlife society—read: "Bury What's Passed." Bury what's passed. Bury what's past, she thought. Interrupt the continuum with ceremony. No, she had not forgotten him. She would not forget him. He had widened her conception of normalcy because she had rationalized his oddness. His oddness became part of the world's diversity—so fortunate she was to have known him. If she cried now, it was only because she would have to learn from others what he could have told her in a different way. She would not lose what he had given. She *would* lose the nude relic from Istanbul, and the brass she wore at her neck. She would not clutch them so that afterwards, she might mourn their loss.

The woman next to her with red curls and pink lips clutched her perfumed handkerchief and slipped glances through the clustered mourners to see if her production was in review. But Mr. Kimball saw. Mr. Kimball, as he lay, was enough audience for that group. Blue eyes showing the kind of day and dulled pallor showing its life. They had shaved his black beard, had taken his key and combed his hair—to be remembered by everyone so as not to offend anyone. He knew they would come, but had someone known she had been to church? Carson laughed at self-contradictions—in her, around her.

There were flowers and light, sweet smells and birds. For Mr. Kimball? No, for me, she thought. For me, because now I can look at this man and not be offended by the beauty that surrounds him. I will not be offended because there is nothing macabre in the flowers or the birds. Carson turned to the woman next to her and whispered in her ear something gentle because it was not fair that she laugh with newfound revelation. She spoke gently, prophetically, and said, "You are beautiful, young lady, and everything morbid is within."

Don't harbor this man's death, for it will dwell a long time with you."

She left the scene intact, though altered in her mind. She knew that all things given would die, that memories would grow old, and that bodies would decay, but never would the change effected in her life be retracted, and never could she lose its continued influence on the way she would affect others. All things given are lost unless internalized. Ideas are inert unless related to oneself and then acted on, and interactions are meaningless unless based on the essences whose expressions live on past their products. What an artist gives is not his paintings but his authenticity — and authenticity is inevitably active by nature.

She had taken advantage of a man once, and he had left her as she was. She had found his capacity and had gained more than new teeth. She thought of Hudson and the bird and of the art of listening, and she knew that she had seen the value of the mutation — its universality. No one who finds himself and seeks relations with the selves of others leaves the world unchanged.

Carson left the cage in the cemetery with its door ajar. She knew it was the only thing about the neighbor's death he would have liked.

Stuck a Feather in His Cap . . . (for Boo)

by Tim Cockey

They felt guilty so they showed me everything. They made me feel everything. They wanted me to know everything. Good God, who knows everything?

They took me for walks when I was young. We lived in the country. I learned the trees. I knew the fields. I could smell the fields. Imagine that. Smelling a wheat field. I felt it too. The wheat brushed against my arm like feathers. I even knew when the wheat was ready for the harvest. It felt a little tougher than usual. It felt like coarse hairs. Like what I would imagine the hair of a wild boar would feel like. I've never felt a wild boar before. I learned about wild boars from Rudyard Kipling stories that they used to read to me. They read me a lot of stories. I know a lot of stories.

They liked to treat me like I was special.

"Oh, Terry, it's time for Martha to get her first milking. Don't you want to give her her first milking?"

"Listen, child, to the radio. This is the famous movement that inspired Churchill and his countrymen. It's Beethoven. Don't you want to listen to it? *You* can appreciate it."

"This is a rose. *You know* it's a rose, don't you?"

I had a large family. I don't mean just uncles and cousins, but immediate family. I had four brothers and three sisters. Farm families tend to be large. A large family makes for that great thing they taught me in school: division of labor. The more people you have, the more things you can get done. Everybody has their purpose. That's what they kept telling me.

I was the youngest in the family and Sarah came right before me. I used to pretend we were twins. The fact that we didn't look the same never occurred to me. My parents were always a little ashamed of Sarah. She was kind of a skinny kid who never did get the strength, or maybe the stamina, to do any amount of work for very long. Sarah got sick a lot. I always knew when she was coming down with something. I could tell when she'd kiss me goodnight. Something about her voice, her breathing, her words, told me Sarah was going to be taken sick again in the morning. It used to really bother my parents when Sarah got sick like that. It meant that they had to look after her and feed her the right foods. They had to read her stories and tell her to keep the window closed to avoid drafts. It's difficult for farm people to take the time to look after someone like that. In

the back of their minds, they resent it. My folks resented Sarah for being sickly, for being what they considered an invalid. They were always careful never to let *me* feel any resentment, but they didn't tend to hide it from Sarah too much.

I remember a night when Sarah came into my room to kiss me goodnight, and I could feel tears on her face. I knew she'd wake up feeling sick. At the breakfast table the next morning she was in her bathrobe and spoke almost in whispers. My brothers came in from milking the cows and were washing up. My two other sisters were helping mother with breakfast. Pancakes. I was sitting at the table with Sarah and she started to pour milk in my cereal bowl.

"Sarah!" my mother turned around from the stove. "Terry can pour his own milk. He's perfectly able. Stop pampering him!"

Sarah continued pouring. She turned to me and whispered, "You don't mind, do you Terry?"

I couldn't even answer before Mother suddenly slapped at Sarah's hand with the spatula.

"You listen to me when I'm talking, girl! I said he can pour his own milk just as well as you can. Maybe even better, dammit!"

She swatted with the spatula again and knocked over my cereal bowl. The corn flakes and milk fell into my lap. The surprise of it scared me and when I heard the milk jug smashed against the floor, I started to cry. Mother kept yelling at Sarah about how I could take perfectly good care of myself.

"You're the invalid around here," she yelled, "not him! Look at you, runnin' around here in your bathrobe while everyone else gets up and works. If that boy just had your eyes he'd do us twice as much good around here as you do!"

Then someone hugged me violently. It surprised me and I didn't know who it was until I felt more tears on my cheek. Mother hit her again with the spatula and Sarah ran out of the kitchen. I was led upstairs and given a bath. Lying buoyant in a hot tub of water is something the doctors suggested for me when I got upset or confused. It usually worked.

Sarah took me for a walk later that day. She held my hand and took me through the wheat field and into the forest that bordered our property. I always enjoyed my walks with Sarah. She didn't babble all the time. Most people feel some sort of responsibility to me and are always telling me every little thing that I can't see. And they always end their descriptions by asking me if I understand. The whole walk turns into:

"There is a cow."

"Yes."

"The grass is very long."

"Yes."

"It's autumn now. The leaves are orange."

"Uh huh."

No one has to tell me the grass is long. I can feel that myself. And I certainly know what autumn smells like by now.

But anyway, Sarah knew how to take me for walks. I think she understood that the world has noises just like it has things to see. More than often, I think I described the world to her. The smell of a cow, or the feel of wheat. She liked to hear what I saw of the world. Other people took me where they thought I would like to go. It was always a pretty place. Big deal. Sarah usually asked me where I thought we should walk. She even let me run in the fields where I wouldn't hurt myself when I fell. Mother didn't like that and told Sarah not to let me do it, but Sarah knew better.

Sarah held my hand all the way through the field. We didn't talk about what had happened at breakfast. Sarah spoke softly while we walked, talked almost as if I wasn't there.

"The sun goes down early these days. It's cold. I think we'll have a lot of snow this winter. There should be a lot of snow. It will be very white everywhere. You'll need new boots. Mother will buy you new boots."

We reached the forest and picked our way through it slowly. I felt the closeness of the trees and the leaves that had started to fall already. I felt good. Sarah's hand suddenly tightened on mine and she said,

"You don't even know what snow looks like.", and then she let go of my hand and started to run farther into the woods. I heard the snapping of branches under her feet and a little cry when she fell down once. Then she was gone. The wind picked up.

Jimmy found me walking in the field and took me back to the house. I was crying but I wouldn't let him carry me. Everybody crowded around and asked me questions all at once. Nobody was so much worried about Sarah as they were mad at her for leaving me out in the woods. Mother held me close to her and swore at Sarah. My father kept going outside and coming back in again. We have a screen door that slams loudly. I don't know what he was doing. The sheriff came and I was taken upstairs for a hot bath.

I had a fever for the next few days. Mother read me stories and everybody came into my room a lot to tell me what they had done that day. Sarah came home after about three days. Everybody yelled at her and tried to make her apologize to me. I tried to tell them that there was nothing to apologize for, but they just patted my head and

didn't listen. Sarah came over to my bed and took my hand. Her fingers were freezing. I started to speak but she said,
"Shut up!"

Father took her out of the room. My mother took my temperature then said "Goodnight." I cried for awhile until I fell asleep.

Sarah was lying next to me stroking my forehead when I woke up. Her tears were hot. She had a fever. She was muttering,
"Snow is very ugly, Terry. It's very ugly."

AN ACT OF VIOLENCE

by William McNaughton

Using eyewitness accounts, memoirs, journals, diaries, contemporary poems, the author is working on a "fictionalized history" of the Chinese Revolution 1926-1949 — work which a friend calls "this long . . . whatever, a condensation." The piece below is an excerpt.

A revolution is not
inviting friends in for dinner
or writing essays
or painting paintings
or doing fancy needlework. It cannot be
so polished and refined, so gentle and so kind,
so delicate and elegant, so affable and
comfortable.

A revolution is an insurrection —
an act of violence
in which one social class overthrows another.

— Mao Tse-tung

"More for a Northerner"

On the eleventh of August, 1945, the Japanese surrendered. That afternoon Kuo Shen and his unit spent several hours in a pitched battle against Kuomintang forces. Fought along the road outside a Hunan villages called South Bend, the battle broke off late in the afternoon, and Kuo and his unit pulled back a little to get themselves together and to prepare for what might happen next.

Early in the evening bad news came through. Kuomintang troops had persuaded the defeated Japanese forces in the area to join with them and to wipe out the Red Army forces.

From then on it was just like the old days: fight every day, march every day, never a day of rest. It was the hottest time of the year. There were hard rains all the time, and neither Kuo and his unit nor the other Red Army units in the area had any food supplies. They weren't even able to scare up food off the land. At night they camped in the open — "in the dew," as the saying has it.

It soon became clear that they were really outgunned. Under Hsueh Yuen and Yu Han-mou were seven armies — more than twenty divisions — and they were able to seal off every road, big and small, in the area. The Red Army decided, as they had done so many times since 1927, to move up into the mountains.

When Kuo heard about this decision, his malaria was working on him again, and his toes were cracked and sore.

On the twentieth of August, they passed Ssu-tu and entered the Eight-sided Mountain, where they discovered that they were surrounded by enemy troops.

Immediately they began making preparations to break out. It wasn't going to be easy. The first thing they did was to burn all their papers and documents.

It was raining. Kuo Shen and several of his men were sitting at the edge of a paddy halfway up the mountainside. They were sitting in a small group, back to back, umbrella against umbrella. The rain came down hard, sounding on the umbrellas: deek deek dopdop. Wang Chen came up to the group. He was barefooted.

Wang had been commander of the 359th Brigade of the Eighth Route Army at Nanniwan during the War against Japan. His name had travelled throughout the Red Army, and though Kuo was acquainted with Wang, he really knew him better as a legend than as a person. Kuo often said that somebody should make a song out of Wang's paragraph on "waging war well," the way they had made a song from "The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention":

If you want to wage a war well,
if you want to wage and win a war, says
Wang Chen,
you should be able not only to out think,
out plan, out maneuver,
and to out fight your enemy.

You should also compare yourself to your
enemy in these things:
can you out run him?
can you out suffer him?
You must excel your enemy
in these things, too.

Coming up to the group sitting in the rain, Wang said:

— Things are not so good, are they? Been several days since we had any food or any good sleep. You're tired, and I'm tired. We ought to rest.

We ought to rest, but unfortunately we cannot make that decision by ourselves. The enemy has his say, too. We have got to get out of here tonight.

When it got dark they started out. There was a thick haze, and the haze magnified the moon to several times its usual size. Along a narrow road the men moved, into thick forests and out of them, past mountain paddies and back into thick forests. And as they walked they got themselves ready for the fight that lay ahead.

One man at the head of the file said:
— If you stay with your unit, you can fight your way out!
The man behind him repeated the words, and then the third man in the file picked the words up, and so they would be passed back to the last man, who repeated to the darkness behind him:

— If you stay with your unit, you can fight your way out!
Then the first man said:
— Follow close, and fight hard to get out!
The second man picked it up, and these words, too, were passed along to the end of the file.

All night the group marched. Sometimes they would be going up a mountainside, then they would be going down

Two days later, in the morning, they went some distance down a broad road for horses, a road with electric poles and wire fence running beside it. Eventually they came out on a farmstead. One of Kuo's men recognized it as Hsueh Yueh's old nest. The farm was in a little valley, with hills and higher peaks rising everywhere around it.

The Red Army leaders guessed right: it was here that the Nationalists and Japanese would try to trap them and to wipe them out. Here they fought most of the day against a combined force of Nationalist and Japanese troops armed with machineguns and artillery. In the afternoon one Red unit broke through the encirclement, and then the other units were able to come through after it. But the Nationalists and Japanese pursued them hard, and the Red Army units began a series of forced marches that lasted over several days.

One day at Pai-shun they took a little time to rest and some of his men sat down at the edge of a bamboo grove on a mountainside. They could look down and see a thin river winding through the land below, and the land looked peaceful and benevolent.

— Do you think there's any KMT or Japs around here? asked Miao Hung-tsan.

— We have to assume so, Kuo replied. It's safer if we do. Anyway, there probably are.

— They say that the KMT troops get a reward if they capture one of us, said Hou Ksueh-shih.

— It's true, said Juo. If the prisoner is north Chinese, his captor gets ten-thousand *yuan*. If he's a south Chinese, the bounty is five thousand *yuan*. A communist cadre will bring fifteen thou.

— If you turn yourself in, will they give *you* the reward? asked Miao Hung-tsan.

— I wonder if it's in KMT *yuan*, or in hard money, said Hou Hsueh-shih.

— I don't think it probably does much good, said Lin Po. Give them money for fighting well!

— Right, said Miao. Look at the way we're paid, and look at the way we fight.

The men laughed. A flock of sparrows flew up and landed on a little bush at the edge of the bamboo grove. They looked for an instant at the men sitting there, and then they darted away again.

Chen Hsiu-chi, in his sharp northern accent, said:

— I wonder why they pay more for a northerner.

— It's because your northerner runs faster, said Miao Hung-tsan. Makes him harder to catch.

— I think it's a good sign, said Kuo. It means to me that the KMT must be at the end of its tether.

— Could this kind of thing happen in a classless society? asked Hou Ksueh-chih.

— No, replied Kuo

— In a classless society, said Miao, every rebel prisoner would be worth as much as every other rebel prisoner.

— I think a working class rebel will be worth more than a bourgeois rebel, said Hou.

— There won't be any rebels in a classless society, said Chen Hsiu-chi.

— There will always be rebels, said Miao.

— Maybe rebel-catchers will be paid by the hour, said Kuo.

— That isn't what we learned in political school, said Hou Hsueh-shih. In Russia they pay you by the piece, not by the hour.

Farther down the mountain, in the direction from which they had come, the men heard shots — farther off, then drawing nearer.

— Here they come, said Hou.

— Looking for their ten thousand *yuan*, said Miao.

— You southerners guard the rear, said Chen Hsiu-chi. They won't chase you as hard.

Holding their rifles in their hands, and bending low as they ran, the unit raced through the bamboo grove and toward higher slopes of the mountain. The shots were already close.

Their rest had lasted not quite half an hour.

Shall We Now Praise Famous Men?

by Lawrence Weber

"Fantasy unacted sours the brain.

Buried desires sprout like mushrooms on the chin of the morning.

The will to be totally rational

is the will to be made out of glass and steel:

and to use others as if they were glass and steel.

We can see clearly no farther

than our hands can touch"*

Spring wind had arrived late, as it was the last day of school for Ms. Pederast's third grade class. The soon to be summer sun shone through the dirty glass, as children ran around the small classroom. The smell of oil soap circled with the breeze, as Jimmy, the custodian, had been in before lunch hour to wash out the lockers, so they could be used to store books for the summer. Ms. Pederast had put on the Beatle's Magical Mystery Tour before she left for a few minutes. The desks were not straight, and the bulletin boards were half bare. Gwendolyn stood near the radiator, where the globe was sitting, she was spinning it quickly, dragging her finger along the middle hoping it would stop at a great location for her to live out the rest of her life.

Gwendolyn had on a grey and blue plaid dress that began or ended just above her scraped knees. Baggy navy blue socks and scuffed patent leather shoes completed her apparel. Her hair was soft, an auburn that would surely darken with age. It was long, but always pulled back, and more than likely braided, with pink barrettes, that looked like smashed ribbons, somewhere on the side of her head. Her face was clean, and she had tiny wrinkles stemming out of the corner of her mouth that gave her an appearance of being on the verge of tears. She was usually the first girl picked for games in gym class. Her favorite game was kickball because she liked running alot, and she once painted the picture of a funeral that caused a conference between Gwendolyn's mother and her teacher. Her blue and white Schwinn bike had a shakey basket and a piece of white athletic tape with her name in magic marker stuck to its handle bar.

The music was pleasant to Gwendolyn, as fool on the hill belted a circular rythm. She felt light headed and happy. She began twirling and twirling, her dress throwing itself open as a flower, she twirled

and whirled and her feet moved in circles on the tile floor and her body began bobbing up and down slowly as she continued twirling, and laughter from the air about her as she pirouetted and carouselled bobbing and twirling the plaids meshing as watercolours her head swirling her braid following like a tail, open and moving and not stopping.

Timmy and Bobby began louder laughter at continually seeing Gwendolyn's panties. So white and tiny. And Timmy and Bobby laughed, and pointed, and other boys laughed as Gwendolyn clutched the sides of her dress and lifted it high and continued to dance and twirl and bob. And the boys laughed harder and Timmy and Bobby pointed and laughed harder, as someone turned the music louder, and Gwendolyn was stepping proud, holding tightly to the sides of her dress, close to a waltz, bobbing partnerless about, twirling and turns and ups and downs, smiling and moving. And laughter and points and Timmy and Bobby.

"And whats going on in this room?", shouted a stern Ms. Pederast.

"Please return to your seats. . . Timothy, Bobby, and Gwendolyn Carter, please sit down. Now just what was going on?" She continued as Timmy blurted out,

"Gwendolyn Carter was showing off her panties."

Gwendolyn was looking down at her folded hands, crying, twitching her head to the left.

"Why Gwendolyn Carter I'm ashamed of you."

Ms. Pederast looked away, and Gwendolyn continued crying, the class was laughing. The final bell rang, resounding like a judge's gavel. Ms. Pederast sat watching the children leave.

*Marge Piercy, 'Song of a Fucked Duck' from the poetry anthology *No More Masks*.



Wake

by Dawn Patnode

Your mouth
makes me dream of families,
of shovels, of glinting metal
on limestone, on sweat.

Plantings of Hopewells
quake in slow growth;
finger-sift dirt
receding as rest
not given me.

Lake after ice-crack,
trembles with white fall,
brimful of fish in tremor.

Your mouth,
a hole letting light inside.
You could have been turning
in my sleep, garden
or grave.

Pebble

by Lenore Mayhew

A pebble

falls in a well,

the sharp path

of his descent

closes over

like this:

the big circles in the water disappear

the gold shimmer at the edge of the water disappears.

Now

we

see

clearly

all

the

way

down

a stone

shining among the stars.

Bien: yo respeto. . .

by José Martí

Bien: yo respeto
a mi modo brutal, un modo manso
para los infelices e implacable
con los que el hambre y el dolor desdēnan,
y el sublime trabajo, yo respeto
la arruga, el callo, la joroba, la hosca
y flaca palidez de los que sufren.
Respeto a lo infeliz mujer de Italia,
pura como su cielo, que en la esquina
de la casa sin sol donde devoro
mis ansias de belleza, vende humilde
piñas dulces y pálidas manzanas.
Respeto al buen francés, bravo, robusto,
rojo como su vino, que con luces
de bandera en los ojos, pasa en busca
de pan y gloria al Istmo* donde muere.

From (*Flores del destierro*
(1882-1891), 1933
(*Flores del destierro* means
Flowers in exile; 1st pub. 1882.)

*"Istmo" is a reference to the Panama canal.

Yes: I Respect

by José Martí

Yes: I respect
in my own brutal way, a meek way
for the unhappy and unappeased
scorned by hunger and pain,
I respect their sublime work,
the wrinkle, the callus, the hunched back, the frown
the fragile paleness of those that suffer.
I respect the unhappy woman from Italy
pure like the sky, who, on the corner
of the sunless house where I devour
my yearning for beauty, humbly sells
sweet pinecones, pale apples.
I respect the good frenchman, brave, robust,
red like his wine, who with the light
of banners in his eyes, passes in search
of bread and glory to the Isthmus where he dies.

translated from Spanish by Joan Straub

by Mary Schless

I went downtown
when the late summer sun, barely had breath
to smooth its tongue across the sky —
curl one circle in the midday throng,
which I watched as I sat on the bench.

To sit and follow the soon Septembered streets,
with eyes that pick on half-dead wasps
that struggle in defeat
is to be pinned by the visions and decisions
of a long afternoon;
squeezed into revisions of the past.

The rehearsals in daydreams, hours of sleep
now offer your face to the strangers you meet,
merciless, assuming.

For to go downtown is to meet
old lovers afraid of their reflections in your eyes,
who never realize that there are still questions —
as you pass with a smile;

Old men, lonely for your youth
who are now more frail than they seemed before,
share your bench —
prophesizing for your life in graveled whispers
and half-spent wisdoms, hoping for your reflections in their eyes.

Distraught men that fix on prettied faces
hunger in the doorway, knowing your bareness,
hoping such a nakedness will fall upon their smoke scent and torn
cottons.

And there are the children, who will in years see the
pain and the fears in the smiles,
the eyes of love and loneliness,
but for now they only share my bench
thinking I am as they are —
caught in their stare
we become caressed by visions.

Nursing Home

by Tim Cockey

an old lady
with two dead husbands
and a
bowzer with a
paralyzed
leg remembers her first
fuck, sputters 'aga
aga aga'
and drools
on bedsheets. her
son turns his head,
his wife
calculating babysitter's pay.

Maia

by Betsy Sloss

From the pavement,
I used to scramble my way
up his smooth body,
my toes curling
and my arms clinging,
until I reached
his coppered shoulders,
their width
as great as my length.
His nose had been worn
from snow and rain
and children's hands

eager to twink the beak
of Hans Christian Anderson.
It shone of brass and dreams.
I thought it was sunburn.
I used to wrap my palms
around his bald head,
smooth and cool
in misty park mornings.
And like a gypsy,
I would read my future,
The day when I too would be Maia,
instead of Thumbelina.

by Loranna Franz

I gave you a set of monkey bars.
You haven't stopped hanging
Since installation.
Face blistered red,
Hair pointing to China —
I forgot what you looked like
Right side up.
I bounced around you
Nude,
Two rose buds for nipples,
The Ring in my nose.
Exotic but no erection.
Your knees mated with steel,
The surgeon packed away prying tools
And recommended a lawyer;
But I decided
To bronze you
For the Ladies Club
Lawn Exhibition.

Momento Num Cafe

by Manuel Bandeira

Quando o entêrro passou
Os homens que se achavam no café
Tiraram o chapéu maquinalmente
Saudavam o morto distraídos
Estavam todos voltados para a vida
Absortos na vida
Confiantes na vida.

Um no entanto se descobriu num gesto largo e
demorado

Olhando o esquife longamente
Êste sabia que a vida é uma agitação feroz e sem
finalidade

Que a vida é traição
E saudava a matéria que passava
Liberta para sempre da alma extinta.

Moment in a Café

by Manuel Bandeira

When the funeral passed
The men in the cafe
Took off their hats mechanically
Saluted the dead one absent-mindedly
They were all turned towards life
Absorbed in life
Confident in life

One however uncovered his head with a slow and sweeping motion
Looking long at the coffin
This one knew that life is turmoil, ferocious and purposeless,
That life is treason,
And saluted the material that was passing
Freed forever from its extinguished soul.

translated from the Portuguese by Alexis Levitin

Pleiades

I. Turmoiled sky,
sparrow spattered,
each bare tree screeching distance.
I hate the fear we have of touch.

We lie

between this half-light
and dark, muffled,
ears full of rust,
ring binding
earth to sky by horizon.

Your eyes as close
and far as a child's
making braid, standing
behind me in three strands.

O, the wings you reclaim,
as if you had land to cross;
these trees the vessels,
these birds the sound.

The waste of my love pours down
voices rain.

We are the width of a wingspan,
dipping eyelids,
watching each lightline
dissolve into night.

II. Eye of a fawn, your darkness
deep as the forest you blink in,
forest of manequins
looming behind you like signs.

My toes are small stones
marking this edge: each pine tree,
the spine leaning in me: and you
a country far-off as sleep.

Woods were an ocean
or eye with visions of white ships
white faces, breath-rising constellation.

by Dawn Patenaude

Air at your ankles like skirts,
shell-glow of your feet, your wrists;
you eyeing the space
from portrait to painter.
Lid to lid, no distance
is greater than your own.

by Sharon Sington

by Sharon Singleton

"in the window there is a place you go,
don't the time pass slow, don't the nights pass slow."*

Under the filmy eye of a
wasting moon, I was exploding
in dreams that screeched
like birds in the curtainless room.

You were taking that last
thick climb into sleep, the tides
of your breath rising and falling
leaving the sweet dampness of
your body for the air.

At our feet, the heavy, ancient clock
divided night like bread
thrown to the beaks of frenzied birds,
devouring it with shrieks
and a chaos of wings.

I heard them till dawn
when the room recovered
its silence and a dead grey
light approached from across the lake.
The clouds hung upon themselves
and the trees emptied out onto the shore.

You lay owing your sleep,
as a cat owns sleep, the soundless
October morning obliging you. And I

waited on the still ladder of my bones
for you, rolled in soft limbs
to replace the empty air with a sound.

*Mike Jagger and Keith Richard from Moonlight Mile.



Travel

by Libby Thomas

Head sunk in blue ocean
Feet stretched to mountains never stepped on
My stomach is the grain belt fat-fed
Head over heels
Soft sift makes trees fall from leaves
Big Ben strikes autumn through windows
I see leaves
Fall softly bruising my heart
Snug in Ohio fields.

Hands reach one sand grain finding you
Bloated with desert-scorching summer
Feet too near to escape press of heat waves
Too far to grasp California gold
Hands over head
I drop you in salty seas
Still unquenching distance and time
Sand is not grain to fill empty aches
Feet carry me slenderly away.

Leaves fall to trees and hold you above
Laughing
I reach you and tumble my feet
Root to green skies
Upside down we are together
But I stretch higher to be full
Falling head crashes on cement.
On this sidewalk
My feet are death.

by José Pretlow

the last time i thought
of you
i was behind my typewriter
pressing parenthesis
around your nipples
i pulled and pushed
and screwed you
into the cylinder
and watched you move outside of the margins
i type my message
stay out of my work, please

"Melancolía"

by Rubén Darío

Hermano, tú que tienes la luz, díme la mía.
Soy como un ciego. Voy sin rumbo y ando a tientas.
Voy bajo tempestades y tormentas
ciego de ensueño y loco de armonía.

Ése es mi mal. Soñar. La poesía
es la camisa férrea de mil puntas cruentas
que llevo sobre el alma. Las espinas sangrientas
dejan caer las gotas de mi melancolía.

Y así voy, ciego y loco, por este mundo amargo;
a veces me parece que el camino es muy largo,
y a veces que es muy corto . . .

Y en este titubeo de aliento y agonía,
carga lleno de penas lo que apenas soporto.
No oyes caer las gotas de mi melancolía?

From *Cantos de vida y esperanza*, (*Cantos of life and hope*, 1905.)

"Melancholy"

by Rubén Darío

Brother, you have the light, give me mine.
I am like a blind man, groping my way without course.
I go under storms and tempests
blinded by illusion, maddened by harmony.

This is my illness; to dream. Poetry
is the ferrous shirt of a thousand cruel points
I wear over my soul. From the bloodstained thorns the drops of my
melancholy fall.

And so I go, blind and demented, through this bitter world;
at times it seems the road is very long,
and at times so very short . . .

And in this wavering of animation and agony,
I bear, charged with grief, what I scarcely support.
Can you hear the drops of my melancholy falling?

translated from the Spanish by Joan Straub

Lake Shore Drive

by Alison Orleans

The city towers
push past the stars,
crowding each other
in a thirst
for light.

Pillars
of salt and stone:
a black monolith
crosses itself;
a white block
stands phallic
unsteady.

They vie for the title of tallest.

Highway magnets
shift lanes
like Dodgem Cars.

Sportscar glides by,
drawing complaints
of screeching brakes
and horn cries.

Bits of fur and rubber
cheer from the sidelines.

Mag wheels
compete for position.

In the lake,
unbundled sail boats
rock with the water
talking in small groups.
Their wooden masts reach up
carrying water to Polaris.

Repudiation

by Tona Dickerson

Scotch-scented takers; a rusty old youth,
tattooed, scorched elder,
With my name
for my hearts;

"I love you"
Expecting me! to fill
An empty place in you
with those same hollow words!

Seems like;
Trying to hold me
from kiss to kiss
Which leaves me in the VICE
Ah, but sweet ignorance;

I'm feline; walking away
I am breaking your heart
Still you're breaking my life.
(baby boy? Y'ttle man?)

The black rose is me
Tainted and revealing
in my heavenly sin.

Oh one woman man!
Heed this one nite woman,
You can never buy
You can never win
A daughter of the Nile.



Auvers 1889

by Dawn Patnode

"... its wings will be rooted inside her. . . ."*

Crows make rings of territory
back and forward, marking
creeping-in of night.

Receding sky, glassy tone,
bottles settled concrete on stairs,
milklight seeps at corners.

Blue curls-in twice, tolls startings
and ends in one turn, brushstroke.
Man dares blue, stands late in a field
under clatter of crows,

slash painting feathers
or clattering wings, rising
blue in his throat, black
battering fence of his ribs
filled with tides
damming his one eye.

Bent forward, star navigator,
your sextant brush sets waves
to courses at lightcrest, hung still,
grass before breeze, rising evening.

Wind waves crack, sift back
a pole of horizon. Bleu
après ou avant la fuite.
Pièges lustres bleu-noirs.
Dark raising. Night breath crowding.

*Eleni Vakalo, "The Meaning of the Blind"
SIX MODERN GREEK POETS, Oasis Books
Translated by John Stathatos

Retreat

by Deb Allben

Jesus Saves
emblazoned in red
burns
from billboards
crowded
against the car door
I stare out
at pallid fields
as though
my nose were pressed
to the window
but I
act my age and
Keep my distance
there were spring onions in
the park
my sister screams
to my mother
we could have
brought some
for you
windshield
wipers toil
rhythmically like
synchronized laborers
to the radio's music
the daffodils will
die

my sister
falls smiling
into my lap
what do you want
for Easter
she is asking
spring
I say
my nails
are blue
the window
clouds
with our warm breath
we write our autographs
and look at what passes
beyond the spaces
our names have cleared

"Caleb and I were driving through
a parking lot on the New Jersey
side of the river in his 51'
Chevy. We were on the way to do
laundry."

Geoff Yeomans



An Illusion Of Dancing Figures

by Lawrence Weber

1. jade horses galloping from the tombs

my bed,
like an open field
remains empty.

last night
i dreamed of you
over me with branches
and leaves.

the sun
was too hot.
there was no wind.
but your flesh
rattled anyway.

2. red lacquered offering dishes

and if you died today
before the crickets
leggily sing their song
and the sun's dying drama
of colour ends in darkness,

would you still be
sequestered in love,
broken starred, belly mooned.

our child would be painted
with death. cracking old lacquer.
a sculptor's mistake.

3. boy leading the horse of a man in costume

i had a dream of you
sticking your tongue
down the throats of
self-inflicted poets.

it may have been a kiss.
a gentle kiss. your nipples
spraying black ink on whitest
paper.

laughing horse-teeth.
oven of gas. ten year triangle
traced eye to eye to mouth.

the crevice like a crack of light,
ocean filled palms,
shedded skins floating like dead
frogs. waves breaking backwards,
with seven gods of luck
and a mermaid on a clam.

sand the colour of scar
tissue, cut into lines.
drunk spiders creeping up
inner arms to almost past.

prick panting age, rose stem rain,
a sense of white squares.
a sense of white squares, a sense
of squares.

you are a dancer with a drum.

a dancer with a drum.

crinkling feather taste scraping sides of mouths.
tear walk. water turning in frightened hands
like diaries most murdering pages.
it hurts to be murdered.

broken feet, skin cut and flapping, i think again
that if you died today
you still would not understand.

reasons. reasons made into time like months.

i call from winded flames.

you crawl away. cinders in your
scraped glass sight. misuse
of power. controlling, controlling.

then, and only then,
the clouds shade the day.

another says, my
lovers must adore me,
they must run like bugs in the
bathroom when a light is switched on
at three a.m., when i tell them to.

they must build me up
as i suck their energy,
a desperate vampire.

pride must be blanketed.
emotion moistened. and then like
lettuce, i will shake them dry, slice them up,
and let my quarter mooned stomach twist and
choke them till they exist no more.
silence after love.

4. the haunt of the sage

you wear make-up
on your eyes. do you
have homosexual tendencies?

picasso at nineteen painted
a picture of a child holding a dove.

shorthaired child, boyish smile
wears a dress made in southern
france. he concentrates on touch.

he dreams as her mother
calls him she runs, a
brushstroke, a moonlight
dripping down thin hollow
of cheeks. your hair, your leaves,
your branches, your rivers, your
claws, your sharp teeth, your
tigers and bamboo, under green almond
leaves, circling to sleep belching
in late afternoon.

there is more you know.
that is, there is more
that is attempting to be conveyed.
a little more anyway.

but there are no nights left
to attempt magic,
or to seduce art into
clasping its legs around my hips.
(the author laughs, sits back and lights a cigarette)

an old man
nestles in the crescent of that tiger.
i died today.
i died. plain and simple. i died.

and if you died today
the themes would no longer
exist nor the pretty make believe
rivers that pretend to be blue.

5. writing box

let us assume the end of touch.

accept the defeat of creations.
and crynge at midnight memories
rattling tears, like wind rattling
the leaves of dying plants.

i have been dwarfed,
cut back,
bundled and bought,
by the marriages of wax clowns and string.

again the words.
a mossy stick stirring a murky pond.
a fairy with paper scale wings
and half-bodied men protruding from her dance.

let us dance to your death.
dancing, never stopping.

writing the life you splintered and stored
like winter soaked logs.

turning on old shoes
and air of clear stone.

don't offer me what you don't understand.

our eternity is mad, an alchemist playing god.

placing love like tiny trinkets in desk drawers, or
hiding it in several places around your thoughts
like a traditionally insane woman hiding money about
her house, knitting endlessly, talking promises and
returning sons. a plastic virgin sits on a kleenex on
a polyester couch.

the lights out. she wishes she had bought some meat.

crayfish and gawking geese
stretching, crystal bubbled,
twinkling mirror on ripple, crumpled
rocks rest, white bridges green, green trees.

your hurting me.
hands like weird sea animals
crawling down into you.

a flute,
a flute,
hiroshige's horizons
straight bluewhite,
your's, flame crooked,
crackling hot skin splitting touch of coals.

his verse is pretty,
he lives happily.

false happiness,
reciprocated madness.

small squares

on

larger ones.

no emptiness
but northern skies
blue half melt beginning
when with you i am animal

all objects support.

these are the webs of being.

all day lonely, climbing.

coming down with sunset's edge

to a cobweb of water, you slipping through

my hands, a secret odor of sex,

the crinkled iris pettle,

this love real beyond any fucking

flower or stone.

but now,

your death dance is ending,

and you too are inanimate.

you are a table a street, a bed.

all hold me, ten thousand birds over one mountain.
let me touch the fallen feeling
before it is shot into rotten wood.

stop forcing,
stop clinging,

flowers forced to open make those pretty poems

flowers needled in the mountain

lying like a dead man on a table.

strings of white houses; holes
in his body.

we quiver with pleasure
at the thought of being

so near a goal.

that of love, passion

or accomplishment. but

accomplishment is like the tiny
white houses. why not lie

still on our backs

looking straight

ahead at the far

ends of darkness

till our eyes

are used to it

and like the mountain,

accomplish nothing.

6. cabinet for the incense ceremony

i am

the bronze temple incense burner of the third century.

about the size of a volkswagon.

smoking pinkish air.

i am unangled, infatuated, patriarchal.

i am your death debated in verse.

i am a child's impatience, a lovers' envy.

i am the owner and the owned.

i am biscuits, honey and marmalade.

i am a bowl of fresh picked fruit.

i am coffee and instability.

i am colour, i am fish. i am death. i am you.

i am you leading bands and tiny kagura dancers with
tea cup cracks and lesser vehicles of nature.

the arms are still afire.

and you have one more chance to hit
the right vein, bulging and begging
like a dying whale on the beach. the parking lot
is black and stage like, the coloured curtain rises with
a twitching bamboo cane, three leaf-like dividers, a whirl
of silk and carved faces, the angels seem to burn in desolation,
while the golden script and drunken dreams
settle too nicely in the fat belly of the fire
who smiles like a roman emporer and demands more.

his green eyes

were jade razors,

your fingers; my mother's wet hair,

clutching the moise earth of your grave.

7. a dancer with a drum

thats what you will always be to me,
a dancer with a drum.

we will always be dreamers.

images held in childhood
return like sudden bursts of salt.

looking for myself

in another's self.

the stare is blank and cold.

four a.m. morning sun

hiccuping the night,

watercolour mesh.

tears drip like rays of light
to a naked chest.

frost white dreams

frozen waves of mold,

the casket thrusts violently forward
like a phallus.

8. riding the tortoise

i am

i am

past the sickness of two thousand years.

while their god is laughing,
lighting a cigarette,
and crossing his legs.

9. shadow of an androgynous figure

no themes please.
no themes.

you bastard, you died today
and left me with unmoving horses
and a poet. a poet far away,
in the forest that can be heard chanting
like a dying ape.

i wonder if he will stop as

i watch my black dreams sink

like a huge pair of breasts into the sea.

10. purification of the undeveloped breast

he lay cold and still.

the bullet through
the back of his neck.

hair blood stuck to sweat beads.

resting death on a stoneware pillow inlaid

with some rare white stones under an indigo

glaze. and at the same time

in california a yonger boy begins creating

his personification. and a lady in an indian print skirt

reads the tao te ching,

the eldest of actors

awkwards the stage

under the influence of assumption.

the audience is standing

and pleading for more of what they don't understand.

11. progressions

the moon.

the sun.

the stars.

the mountains.

paired dragons.

five coloured pheasant.

water weed.
bronze libation cups.
flame.
wheat seeds.
crooked lines of distinction.
axe head of justice.
progressions.
the crickets have stopped singing.
progressions.
they died between your feet and a coin.
progressions.
an illusion of dancing figures.
progressions.
an illusion of dancing figures.
12. self
you are a bodidharma in a silk embroidery,
that has long and short, stem and satin stitches.
you are a new york yankee baseball player
in a diamond of grass, feet and dust.
it has all become a woven picture.
and
if you died today,
would you come back tomorrow
and love in the patterns of the past
please,
i have to know. because as i look
through this frame of trees
your dead tears have begun to move again, and
paradoxical truth
like the moon, comes down in nails
of light splintering the rotting sunset. and
a butterfly blooms near shells
netted in seaweed while
another wave leans toward
emptiness.

CLOUD

by Lenore Mayhew

I ride the wind
lit with happiness
like a small cloud
in the sun
traveling in some disorder
changing shape as I go.



Climbing 'earth's undying moment'

by Richard Soaper

One The Start
Two: The Icefall
Three: The Big Push
Four: The Summit

The following essay describes the author's adventures in climbing one of the Western Hemisphere's highest mountains.

'Climbing 'earth's undying monument'

An Essay by Richard H. Soaper, Jr.

I will never forget my first vision of the Andes high on a barren, windy pass in remote Peru. The traveling of 3500 miles in search of these great mountains was lost in the stark reality of the moment. I had imagined something colossal, but colossal on a human scale. I was flabbergasted by what rose above me. Their lofty spires scraped the heavens as earth's undying monuments.

They were impossible to climb, yet that was precisely the reason I had come here and in less than one week I knew I would be out there climbing towards the summit of one of those giants.

There in the regions of eternal snow, rising even higher than the other giants, was our objective Mount Nevado Huascarán (22,605). Its summit is a scant 400 feet below the tallest mountain in the Western Hemisphere, mere inches by Andean standards, and is nearly half a mile higher than Mt. McKinley, North America's highest mountain.

To get any idea at all of the dimensions and vastness of the peaks which populate the Andes imagine our own Rocky Mountains; the highest will have a scattered mixture of ice and snow on their summits. Now go a mile vertically up and you will have just gotten to the lower part of the snowline in the Andes. From that point the climb really begins.

If you think nothing like that can possibly exist you are right, for once a cliché has come true; the Andes are simply "out of this world."

I was one of 28 climbers brought together for this expedition under the sponsorship of the Iowa Mountaineers. As sometimes happens when a group of strangers come together to perform a certain task, we formed an instant good time community deep in companionship. This cohesion aspect of a mountaineering team is more important to eventual success than even to a football team bound for the Super Bowl. Each member without a moment's thought surrendered his individuality to the team.

We were a complete mixture of climbers: Yosemite technical rock climbers, professional ski patrolmen, Himalayan climbers, Alpine climbers and mountaineering guides. Occupations ranged from the highest to the lowest: a college student, a United States diplomat, a neurosurgeon, a nuclear physicist, and on down. The average age seemed to be in the mid-thirties. If there was a common ideal running among us you might say it was the maxim that it is better to be on top of a hill than at the bottom.

For three weeks we practiced and shared new ice climbing techniques and built up stamina by scaling 18,000-20,000 foot peaks in the Ishinka Valley near Huaraz, Peru. In the end 17 of us decided that we had acclimated well enough, had the strength and were certified to attempt Huascarán.

Despite my training in Alaska by some of America's best climbers I still lacked the years of experience claimed by the older men. Also I was hesitant about how well I would perform above 18,000 feet, known to mountaineers as the "endurance barrier."

Huascarán, pronounced in Spanish, sounds mostly like something the natives tell you to avoid eating in the rain forest. However, it is a mountain not to be taken lightly. For instance, just two days before we were to establish base camp on the peak, a German climber was killed at 17,500 feet. We were also warned by an evacuating Mexican expedition that avalanches were rocking the upper slopes during one of the worst winters (Southern Hemisphere) in this area's last 10 years. Though a beautiful mountain, unfortunately over the years Huascarán has become a windy grave for dozens of trespassers.

The Trek to Huascarán

Burros and porters carried the majority of our 2,000 pounds of food and equipment during the approach march. This is the usual procedure where climbers carry light packs of 30 pounds to save their strength for the actual climb. The trails which we had to share

with the sheep and goats were long, hot and dusty. However, over the centuries they have become marvels of efficiency using every available countour. No step is wasted. When the trail descends as little as 10 feet there is a reason for it. Every possible short cut had already been tried centuries ago, probably by the Incas. In places the path was worn as much as four feet down the surrounding surface.

The only thing to break the monotony of continuously putting one boot in front of the other was the beauty and newness of the countryside and its people. Terraced hill slopes, stone fences, mud and straw homes, and community brick ovens were all new to me.

The popular notion of such a trek is that it is a bunch of happy-go-lucky talkative climbers laughing and joking as they approach a mountain. This is a hideous distortion. In fact, people are spread out about a mile or two along the trail. Each person consoles his own aches and pains, nurses his own blisters and sets his own pace. You get too tired to do much idle talking and reserve it only for breaks and meals.

On the last day of our march to Huascarán I was in an unusually talkative mood so when our head porter passed me with his 80 lb. load on a rather steep section of the trail I jokingly called out, "Hey, Mauricio, aren't you passing me a bit late today?" A veteran head porter on many expeditions into his home mountains, Mauricio knows exactly how to get along with Americans and replied, "Oh, Señor, it isn't the of my load that is bother me, it is that darn sack of flour shifting around in that oven that is throwing me off stride."

Our porters were to continually impress us throughout the expedition with the strength and endurance from their small frames not to mention their sense of humor.

Towards evening I caught up with Mauricio who was resting by a stream of cool glacier melt water. We were only about two hours away from the spot which we had selected many months ago after long hours of pouring over topo maps to establish our base camp.

Now for the first time at this stream I had a close-up view of Huascarán. It was a garbled mass of rock and snow and on this gigantic foundation rising above two different cloud layers sat two huge peaks. Our objective was the South Peak, 700 feet higher than the North Peak. Here at the stream I asked Mauricio to point out the route he would take to the summit. His answer gave me some insight into what the Indian peasant mind thinks about mountain climbing. He looked down at the stream and answered, "follow the river till it turns to ice, follow the ice till it turns to rock, follow the rock till it turns to sky, then you will be there." That was the simplest route

description I have ever heard yet it showed more reverence toward the peak than any climber's guidebook ever could.

Basecamp was established on July 18 on rock platforms just below the snowline. The weather was perfect on the lower part of the mountain which was all that concerned us at this stage. For two days we ferried loads up a glacier and established Camp II at 17,500 feet.

Layers of civilization began to peel away. Our umbilical cord to the "outside" was slashed: no newspapers, no letters and no home-cooked meals. Gone were clean clothes and hot baths. We became entirely dependent on our own resources. If we did something stupid or had an accident, there would be no rescue party there to pick us up. We would have to contend with every situation ourselves with what we carried. Your smallest action took on a heightened significance.

Camp III was to be established at 19,500 feet in the saddle between the North and South peaks, called the Garganta. However, between Camps II and III lay one of the most dangerous parts of the whole climb — a 3,000 foot icefall blocked our route.

The Icefall

Icefalls are notorious graves for climbers. The only person killed on the 1963 American Everest Expedition was killed by collapsing ice blocks the size of several box cars in an icefall.

To imagine such an obstacle think of a huge flood of water spuming down rapids, thundering over cliffs, bounding from ledge to ledge. Now snap your fingers and freeze the whole torrent. That's an icefall, but better terminology would be to call it a frozen hurricane. It didn't help to remember that just a week before one climber had been killed in this icefall.

Early on the morning of the 21st we left Camp II to scale the cliffs in the cold morning hours before the sun could warm the ice and start it breaking off. It was a long day and no matter how high we climbed, whenever I looked up there were only more ice cliffs standing in arching walls like stone. If there was one thing I learned that day on the mountain it was man's proper perspective in this world. At any moment this ice could shear off and pulverize all that moved below and we would have disappeared without a trace. On this mountain even a walk became an act of faith.

In places where the icefall flattened out and the exposure was less severe you still had to be careful because the glacier was as full of holes as Swiss cheese. Subterranean rumbles often filtered up from

beneath the glacier which made you quicken your pace. You have to rope up on a glacier. You expect to fall into these crevasses and the rope is your only security.

You might say crevasses are to mountains that water holes are to golf. You put the ball in the water once in a while and that's part of the game. When you are actually up here hungry and dead tired from climbing in the thin air, the dangers barely impress you. You have to return home and look back on it before you realize that it was dangerous. On the mountain it takes energy to be afraid, or for that matter, to have any emotion at all and often there just wasn't that much extra energy around. Climbers have long tried to keep this secret so it will not spoil their "romantic" image, but the fact is now revealed that a brave mountaineer is most often merely a tired one.

I could hear my mother now bellowing up through a megaphone, "Come on down, you old fool, and act responsible!" It is hard for many people to understand what makes mountaineers try to do such unreasonable things. I like the challenge. Our life style has become too controlled and too regulated as anybody associated with this year's flatboat race will attest. The Coast Guard controlled the race so much to make it completely "safe" that all the adventure and fun disappeared.

It has even gone to the extent that the federal government has outlawed as "too dangerous" firecrackers to celebrate our nation's 200th anniversary. No longer can people in our society experience fear as our ancestors did.

Oh sure today we fear such things as high taxes, increasing crime and poisoned rivers which are all more dangerous than the worst part of any mountain, but that kind of modern fear causes drinking, heartburn, smoking and ulcers. Primitive fear encountered on a mountain causes a humming of the bloodstream, a whitening of the teeth and an explosion of the emotions when you utter the words, "well here goes" and take that step.

Mountain climbing is an attempt to fulfill this primitive aspect of our human nature that has gone unsatisfied in today's society. Like children running through a sprinkler not wanting to get wet but not really minding if they did, we had come to this mountain to do a little flirting with fear and it felt good to give in to the deep human urge to try the improbable.

Camp III at 19,600 feet

We reached the Garganta at five o'clock after twelve hours of high-adrenaline climbing and established Camp III at 19,500 feet.

There were 13 of us left now because four people abandoned the assault in the icefall and returned to Camp II. They were having trouble climbing and were experiencing breathing problems in the high altitude.

I was so relieved to get to Camp III that I threw off my pack which had been wrestling me all day like a living opponent, and just lay there in the snow struggling for breath. I noticed everybody else was doing likewise so I stayed there for 15 minutes; thinking about nothing at all except that it is a wonderful thing to do to be here in the snow and think of nothing at all.

Above 18,000 feet the human body deteriorates rapidly in the oxygen-poor atmosphere. If a man were suddenly transported from sea level to 20,000 feet he would be dead in a few minutes because of the thin air. However, if you gradually climb to that level you can live; well not live, merely endure. Your alertness, reflexes and strength all are gradually sapped away. Even after acclimating a man can live only a certain number of days above 20,000 feet and each day a little part of him dies.

It was a fearful struggle setting up our tents at Camp III. The wind was whipping over the ridge at 40 miles per hour and the mercury was hiding in the thermometers. Only by flinging ourselves on the flapping monsters and piling masses of snow on the tent flaps did we keep them from blowing away. Finally we got them set up, crawled inside and got into our goosedown bags.

Soon a stove was purring away and we fixed a freeze-dried dinner. Tonight it was dehydrated beef stroganoff — a sort of “build your own dinner” in 340 easy to assemble pieces. As usual it would have made a vulture lose his appetite, and with the freezing temperature outside by the time we got it out of the pot it was almost as cold as an airline’s dinner. NASA supplied us with the freeze-dried beef stroganoff and it was the same type to be used in the Apollo-Soyuz link-up space mission. Well so much for detente.

That night the tent flapped continuously in the steady wind. Frost formed on the inside walls of the tent and each flap brought down a shower of ice crystals on us so that it was literally snowing inside the tent. I kept telling myself that I was having fun. There is an old Peruvian Indian saying which we should have remembered, “where trees cannot live, men shouldn’t try.”

Next morning I stared up at the sky which could not have been more than three feet away. The wind had picked up and it was now snowing. The clouds’ scudding fringes whipped like rags of smoke around the ridge. Today was going to be a R-and-R day (rest and

recuperation) whether we liked it or not — and believe me we all liked it. In the tents we read, wrote and played hearts all day.

Towards afternoon I was forced to exit from the tent for a moment. I walked to the edge of the ridge and peered down a mile high cliff into the swelling emptiness. Our basecamp, established nearly a week earlier, was straight down there somewhere on that glacier. The four climbers down there were probably basking in the sun now but I wouldn’t have changed places with them for the world. Mauricio evidently saw me peering down at the valley and he could tell that I was trying to figure how far down it was. “I show you how far,” he proclaimed and let loose a rock. “See it go and go. It not hit now. Tomorrow morning we come back and listen. Then it go bang,” Mauricio exaggerates a little bit.

We made up the final rope teams that night. There would be eleven of us now because two more climbers dropped out. I went to bed early hoping that my body would hold together for one more day. Only one more day was all I needed from it then the whole thing would be over.

The Big Push

At 4 a.m. a voice was heard above the machine gun racket from our whaling tent. The moment had come, it was now time for the big push. We had 14 hours to climb the final 3,000 feet to the summit and return before night would fall again. It would be heavy duty the whole way — a struggle but it was all there. But a peek out of my tent confirmed my worst fears; the weather was clear and still — clear up to my waist and still coming down.

Out of the wind, if one could find such a place, it was a frigid 10 degrees below zero. However, the snow depth wouldn’t prove too much of a problem because as soon as we climbed into the Garganta the fierce winds up there would have either packed the snow or blown it away. I had two cups of sugar-laden tea for breakfast — hardly fitting for the job ahead but I did not feel like eating much. Two climbers during the night started coughing up blood so they were going to descend today before they got seriously sick. Now there were nine left.

For 30 minutes we struggled putting on our frozen double boots and overboots with our mittens off in the numbing cold. If there is a frozen hell on earth it would be right here. In the whirling snow one climber threw his crampons (climbing spikes for your boots) down on the snow and walked back to his warm tent without a word spoken. It was over for him and he was glad. Eight left.

Once we climbed into the 20,000 foot high Garganta the wind hit us head on. But it was more than just a wind. It was a wall of snow moving at us at gale force. It was a wind that could almost hold a man's weight. You couldn't have heard a gun go off by your ear over the deafening roar. I felt that I was on the crumbling margin of a disintegrating world. We came upon a 1,000 foot wall of 65-degree snow which had to be climbed. Two people gave up and returned to high camp.

I thought that perhaps things were getting a bit out of control. As the climbing got hard every beat of my heart was like a blow. I sucked in cold drafts of emptiness. What air there was to breathe was sucked out of my lungs by the wind so that I was experiencing a shortness of breath approximating that of a tomb. A thousand tiny icicles seemed to stab my lungs. Coin collecting . . . yes, coin collecting is worth a try.

But no, it was the old onward and upward game, a total rejection of turning back, a total detachment from everything else in the world. Only the mountain was there. Tennyson once said something rather famous about explorers, "To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield." And not to yield . . . Hell, I bet Tennyson never climbed a mountain.

Clouds slipped by on an icy sky but as we climbed out of the pass the wind died and the sun began to kill off the cold night air. For two hours we cut and kicked our way up a 700 foot pitch of 80 degree ice. When I looked up all I could see 50 vertical feet above me were the soles of Tim's boots. I thought that if he peeled off the cliff now I would come home with sole imprints on my face.

At 21,000 feet, only 1,500 feet below the hidden summit, we came to a huge crevasse blocking the entire route. It would have to be jumped if we wanted to make it to the top. The narrowest part was 10 feet wide with the upper lip about a foot higher than the lower. We set up the appropriate belays to hold a man safely if he happened to miss the jump and fall into the 100 foot pit.

The running start was uphill in knee deep snow which added an unneeded spice to the crossing. Tim jumped first and made it, only he destroyed part of the lip as he landed and made the crevasse wider. It was my turn next and with ice axe above my head I leaped keeping my eyes fixed on the far slope. I did not want to look down because if I saw how far down the crevasse dropped I probably would have tried to stop in mid-air and return to the other side. The last climber on our rope cleared the obstacle in good fashion and we were beginning to believe that Huascarán just might be ours — but such was not to be the team's fate.

The first person on the second rope leaped and hit the far side then suddenly slid backwards and fell fifty feet before our ropes held. Curse as he did, the anger of a tiny, exhausted human was no help against the massive indifference of the mountain. It was two and a half hours before we were able to get him out. The remaining two people on his rope each tried to jump the crevasse and they too fell in causing us to remain there for another two hours pulling them out. Once rescued from their ordeal the three climbers wanted nothing more to do with the mountain.

We had started out with seventeen men on this expedition and now, here at 21,000 feet, there were but three of us left. It didn't take a course in applied genius to understand that the obvious intent of this mountain was to rid itself of all insolvent trespassers. I began to wonder what was the final ace card she held for us.

The Summit

We had wasted four and a half hours at the crevasse and if we were going to have a chance at all to reach the summit we would have to double or even triple our pace; something very difficult to do when you have to take three breaths for every step forward.

We dragged ourselves upward and my mind wandered as much as my body seemed to sway on my feet. I repeated the climber's prayer, "Lord, if you will pick them up, I'll put my feet down." Slowly we made progress up the immense mountain. We looked like three periods on a blank white page as we crawled up the mountain under an ultramarine sky. After two hours we cleared the last obstacle and Huascarán was ours.

She had given up. The rise to the flattened summit was as gentle as a sloping meadow over terrain lacking drama. The snow had drifted on the summit plateau and we had to "post-hole" it to the summit with the snow coming up above the knee. The summit was as large as two football fields which is kind of like discovering that Cleopatra has cavities.

A cold wind blew wreaths of mist between us as we grunted monosyllables at each other. We had worked hard for a month to reach this spot and yet here we were too numb to communicate — numb shells of our former exuberant selves. There was no backslapping, nor handshakes, a reluctance to photograph and only a strong feeling towards descending.

I have seen people look happier in the emergency room at the hospital. We remained on the summit for five minutes resting. I

looked up into the sky and the panorama was innocent of even a jet's contrail to mark the existence of man. Way off to the south there were clouds drifting in from Lima, but they were clouds of another world. You forget that there are such things as cities up here.

People have asked me how it feels to conquer such a peak. Conquest is an odd word to use. After half a year of planning and weeks of training by 17 men, three of us numb and swaddled in down clothing stood for a brief moment gasping like stranded fish in the rare atmosphere with our heads some six feet higher than the hoary peak. I wondered if men were ever supposed to breathe this air and whether the snow was prepared for man to tread on.

We left the mountain as if nothing more than another cloud shadow had passed across its ancient face. You see, men cannot conquer a mountain, they are merely permitted to walk on it. How can you say that we were victors on the mountain which forced upon us adaptations bordering on the limits of human endurance? Indeed, we returned 20 pounds lighter with faces like beef jerky and lips like wrinkled tinfoil. No, we weren't conquerors, only thankful survivors.

I have had some people tell me that my feet must be stronger than my head or that all that must be in my head is a cold. I believe these to be polite ways of asking the question why do I climb mountains? Why leave a centrally air heated home to travel thousands of miles to huddle in a cold, cramped tent on the cliffs of a difficult mountain in some arctic wasteland? This is a question that cannot be completely explained until we can explain man himself.

I like doing what few other people have done. If you want to see Mexico or visit Yellowstone you pay to go there with money but so can everyone who wants to spend the money. The only way you can pay to get to the top of Huascarán is by half killing yourself. That is why so few people have ever done it: the price is just too high. That makes me feel rich.

To look for challenges is to affirm man's existence. We know what we are, but not what we may be. The essence of mountain climbing is to push oneself to one's limits. Intellectually, of course, this is understood to be totally dangerous. But you do not deliberately try something you know you cannot do. What you do is deliberately try something which you are not sure you can do. You kind of stack the cards against yourself to expand your limits . . . and it does. To be more than what one thinks he could be is a sensation utterly new to most people.

Now after the climb I hate mountains. I hate icefalls. I hate snow and rocks. I will get sick if you show me an ice axe. But it will not stay that way for long. Already a little nostalgia is creeping back into my body. For example, the pilot of our jet flying us back to Miami

announced rather proudly that we were cruising at 20,000 feet over the ocean. Smiling I turned to Fred and said rather loudly. "Hell, we walked higher than that." It had been a long time since we smiled.

A Program for the American Land

by Lindy Davis

Thousands of "programs" for land use have been written and will always be written — so I want to dispell any idea that I am attempting anything revolutionary. I want to approach this paper as a statement of a personal philosophy for the future — as it evolves through me.

Except perhaps, that *is* revolutionary, or at least, unorthodox, that my personal feelings about the land should be presented in terms of a comprehensive "program for the American Land". The reason that this is a "program" rather than just a statement of opinion is that somehow I'd like to influence others, especially those who can perform valuable services to the land, to form, express, and act upon *their* feelings about the land and its future. I'm not convinced that many people care enough to ask questions about ecology nowadays, now that it is no longer a fad.

What is my relationship to the land? What are the relationships between the job and career choices in my future to the future of the earth? Will my taxes and votes help or hurt the land in the future? And how long will we continue to have the choice to co-operate fully with the land?

I want to define the term "land". Think of "land" as the ecological symphony around us: all the natural and unnatural effects of the world, every outside stimulus that causes pain or peace, each food growing, rain-soaking, headache-causing, cancer-producing thing that touches us. It is appropriate and useful to define land this way because the whole world works through relationships. No one part of the land can function independently. The earth itself is worthless unless it can support growing things; the plants cannot grow without the air and sunlight, and people cannot function in a vacuum, apart from interaction with others. All relationships in the land are organic and necessary — the land is a vast web of interacting forces. Too much imbalance or pollution from any direction can harm the relationship of the land to its living creatures. And the troubles of one species sooner or later felt by many other species — "that's the way of the world."

My "program" is simply this: that citizens (and again, defining citizen in the broadest possible sense, citizens not just of the democratic society but also citizens of the eco-system) must examine

their relationships with the land, and learn to make a positive contribution. We must learn to save more than we destroy.

Talk of the undesirability of communal living arrangements is meaningless in a sense. A nation, or a planet, is ultimately a communal living arrangement which has no owner but the whole group? Such a situation might be inefficient in terms of production, and it may be inefficient when it must relate to a larger surrounding structured society. But native Americans lived communally for hundreds of years, in harmony, with no problems of inefficiency. Any system that pits nation against nation or neighbor against neighbor — or makes one aspect of the land more valuable than another (such as sacrificing wildlife to strip-mine for fuel) is truly inefficient and ultimately a harmful misuse of the land.

In the book 'Seven Arrows', Native Americans describe their philosophical selves as "the people of the shields". Two types of shields were carried — war shields and peace shields. War shields were utilitarian and the more often left unused, the better. Peace shields, or the women's counterpart, a belt, bore the symbols that made up a person's name and medicine.

How did a person determine his name? A name was given at birth, but this was only a clan name to be discarded when the young man or woman approached adulthood and made the vision quest. Vision was found in solitude and in meditation — in the observation of the land's touching of all the senses. When a young man first made his vision quest, first he spent three days alone on the land. Then he spent another day and night alone — but three men from the community would go out with him and help him to pray. The older men were present spiritually, not physically — making the young man's vision quest at once a social and a personal search. When it was done, the young man would have a name, and it would be painted on his peace shield.

These are 'romantic' concepts — what is their point? People in the modern world answer to their one superficial clan name, given at birth, and they constantly search for identity. Such a way of life would be alien to Native Americans because it does not make use of what spiritual comfort and direction the land has to offer to all of its citizens. A person who does not make a vision quest does not enter into full citizenship in the ecosystem, and does not understand how to live comunally.

What does this have to do with the revitalization of the ravaged land? Human beings, say the Native Americans, are the only creatures who do not have an instinctive knowledge of how to be a good citizen of the land. People are imperfect seekers. But they must

search to become more genuinely involved with the land and to find fulfillment in the cooperation with the land and people. And — if one makes the vision quest in the din, smoggy grayness and media overkill of today's world, one will notice what all this has to do with the land's rejuvenation..

My statistics are a few years old and rather imprecise, but they are accurate in spirit and I believe that it's fair to assume that they have not gotten much better in the ten years since most of these statistics were reported. Most of these figures came from the U.S. national atlas.

Looking at the continental United States for trends in land use (and I limit my consideration to just the continental U.S. because any land reforms that come about in the foreseeable future will probably have to work through established political units).

The eastern and southern states are quite well forested. In the entire eastern region, from the Appalachians to the ocean, urban and otherwise developed land covers about twenty per cent of the total land area. Cropland accounts for another thirty per cent. Thus, on the average, half of the lands of the east and south (Louisiana and Mississippi particularly among the southern states are well forested) have a good portion of tree-covered areas. This is also true of the Pacific coast from the middle of California on around through Idaho.

In the midwest, the so-called breadbasket states have about fifteen percent urban and developed land. The states of the midwest and west are intensely developed toward farming and grazing. At least eighty per cent of the northern plains are covered with cropland and grazing land.

The economics of farming is moving toward larger farms and fewer privately owned farms. While a bit more than three quarters of all farm workers are still whole or part owners of farms, full or part owners are much more prevalent on the small farms of the east than on the huge high-yield farms of the midwest and west. Also, the average sizes of farms are rapidly increasing, and of all types of farms, only cash-grain farms show net increase in capital. All of these trends increase pressure on the small farmer and make it increasingly impractical to operate a small farm at a profit. Also, most agriculture programs in vocational schools are geared toward large-scale, mechanized, fertilizer-pesticide farming. Huge farms require the use of special high-yield seeds that demand the use of pesticides and precise care-hybrid seeds which actually weaken the genetics of the plants in order to achieve a higher yield.

You would think that the breadbasket states would ship out most of the food used by less productive parts of the nation, but this isn't

always so. While the corn belt states ship more food to the rest of the country than any other commodity, they also receive a huge amount of food from the rest of the nation — fully two thirds as much as they ship out. Food products are processed in remote places and shipped from everywhere to everywhere.

Fuels for industry and utilities are the largest shares of goods shipped into the industrial east; nearly twice as much as food. Oil and natural gas are by far the two greatest energy sources, and reserves are dwindling, as the use of fossil fuels continues to increase rapidly. Coal reserves, however are basically untapped. Many states such as North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and the Appalachian states have gigantic unmined coal deposits. But they are all at more or less inaccessible spots, and strip mining is often the only practical way to get to them.

With regard to population density, Americans are much luckier than people in many third and fourth world countries. Still, population imbalance is one of the greatest factors that affects the rape of the land. In the eastern megalopolis, for example, there are fifty-four consecutive counties which hold more than 250 people per square mile.

And by the mid-sixties, arteries of traffic in eastern urbania and in southern California were averaging seventy-five thousand cars per day. That is nearly one vehicle per second, twenty-four hours a day. Where are we all going?

The gist of all these figures is not that we are going straight to hell. America can feed the Americans — and were Americans not quite so ravenous and wasteful, America could probably feed a sizable portion of the rest of the world, too. There is no real danger that we will look out one day and see no trees, no forests, no wildlife. And by hook or by crook, given the amazing technological resources available, we'll probably be able to keep up with a moderate growth of this neon-lit society. Air quality, though poor over the biggest cities, is fine over the rest of the country, and emission controls are gradually getting stricter. So, reforms in the use of the land will have to be thought of in terms of desirability rather than survival necessity.

Many things however, *are* deemed necessary to social survival. We're given the choice between the prescribed flow of dreams that include a college education, financial security, a nice home and yard, two cars, air conditioning, and a pool table in the basement; and learning to cooperate with such a seemingly nebulous and minor concept as "the land". Parents always want to give their children "better" lives than they had, and for lack of any other measure, the race for improvement tends to center around material, money-valued

things. Book learning inadequately fills the role of the vision and we are a population of spiritually nameless Americans unquestioningly toward traditional dreams.

For Native Americans there was no distinction between spiritual and practical education. No rational justification was necessary for a hunt for food, or to take a piece of land and place lodges upon it. It was good for the medicine of the buffalo or the medicine of the land that they were able to give to the People when they needed.

Hawk, a peace chief and a character in 'Seven Arrows', was a man of the four directions. To be whole and genuine, he looks to the north to receive wisdom, power of the buffalo — to the west to receive the power of introspective of the bear — to the south to receive the power of innocence, of the mouse — and to the east to receive the far-seeing power of the eagle, of illumination. Every person has at least one of these powers within the self. But to become whole, a person must seek all of them. It is only through a balance of all four directions that one can stand in the center of the medicine wheel in harmony.

We might say that someone who perceived the existential absurdity of life in society and concluded that selfishness was the only way is a person who possesses the shrewd power of the buffalo, not the rest. Or we could say that a person who spent all the time dancing and singing, reveling in the beauty of nature without regard to sleep or food or any other person possesses only the flower-like power of the mouse, and not the others.

The answers to our circling ecological worries aren't difficult — we have them. But to get at them we need to study the ideas of the Native Americans, and other cultures, to revitalize our own awareness of our place in the land. This is a constant process. Hawk, the Peace Chief, tells the old stories, teachings in the forms of tales about people and animals. He says: "I have been telling these stories for twenty years and I am still learning from them."

We need contact with the land — not superficial, beach-side, national park skyline drive contact, but a new kind of touching experience that will show to individuals that the land is more than just a platform to pour asphalt over.

We should make it at least as easy for a person not to contribute to the sprawling belching economic scene as it has thus far been. We should vote to spend more money on less hazardous and less useless programs. (personally, I begrudge every dollar spent on nuclear weapons, and much of what is spent on the wasteful military establishment)

We should encourage the option of subsistence farming — not as the cure to all our ills, but simply as a viable option. Courses in "natural survival" should be more available. Various types of natural and communal life styles should be both encouraged and subsidized. For such things to become acceptable would be the product of a social revolution, it's true, because of the economic disruption involved. Many power bases would crumble if everybody went out to live off the land, on communes.

We can't all go live off the land, on communes — not yet, anyway. And sure, our communes of the future shouldn't be stone-age enclaves. Probably they'd have swimming pools and media centers (libraries).

But, the option to try alternate life-styles should be actively presented within high schools and colleges, so that those who might become interested could try. We should never deny anyone the opportunity to experience the land.

It's been said many times: Native Americans lived with the land, and the white newcomers lived on it. We always should have been friends with the land, but now it is becoming essential that we get acquainted. The first step in getting acquainted is always to reach out, to shed preconceptions, look and feel. The land is resilient, and patient, and asks no more.



The following essay is taken from a thesis written by John Kralik, entitled *The Quest For God: The Plot of Kerouac's Dulouz Legend*. It is a conclusive statement concerning Kerouac, his writing, and its outside acceptance. I feel the piece brings out the importance of Kerouac's prose and will create in the reader a responsibility to dive deeply into the spontaneous energy of one of the most amazing writers of the twentieth century.

And though life may be sick, with coughing dogs, sailing bees, hacking birds, sawing trees, crying woods, dying men, trying ticks, lying books, flying ants. Hello sage, you are shy and humble — to the world you seem confusing.
Men look to you and listen.
You behave like a little child.

The Editor

Kerouac and His Critics (For Amy)

by John Kraus

To my knowledge, this is the first essay to contend that Kerouac was a religious writer. Since I am presenting a viewpoint that is exactly contrary to that of most critics, I would like to explain why most critics reacted violently to Kerouac's writing and point out some of their errors.

Leo Steinberg, an art critic, noticed that throughout history whenever a new, important and unfamiliar style was put forth, the reaction on the part of artists and art critics and the public in general was one of "shock, discomfort, bewilderment, anger, or boredom." This would certainly describe the original reaction towards Kerouac's writing, and it is not surprising that critics reacted in this way. After World War II, American letters entered a period of relative stagnation. The Beats, for all their excesses, provided a fresh, new type of writing that was more direct, more honest, and concerned with things as they were in 1950 instead of 1890. Seymour Krim called these old critics who could not stand this new type of writing, "the critical policemen of post-Eliot U.S. letters."²

The first error which critics made was to attack Kerouac's style of writing without knowing much about it. John Ciardi wrote, "Whether or not Jack Kerouac has traces of talent, he remains a high school athlete who went from Lowell, Massachusetts to Skid Row losing his eraser en route."³ In later life, Kerouac did refuse to revise his writing significantly, insisting on the holiness of his inspiration. Yet, although he preached "sketching," a spontaneous flow of thought that liberalized the sentence and paragraph structure, the way he used the technique was to sketch into his rough draft. This provided both the original and the revision with freshness and originality. Moreover, Kerouac's public image was a bit of a show. He finished the first draft of *On the Road* in three weeks, but few people know that he spent seven years revising and reworking it. Ciardi also forgets that many writers have done their best writing quickly. Hemingway, well-known as a slow worker, wrote his first draft of *The Sun Also Rises* in five weeks. When he attempted to revise the story into the third person he realized that his first instinct had been correct, and told the story in the first person. Nobody writes like Kerouac did anymore, but then nobody writes like James Joyce either. The style of each of his books is different, and skillful

adapted to the subject. *On the Road* is written with a fast, racy prose, while *The Subterraneans* is convoluted, searching and confusing. The second error that critics make is to lump Kerouac with the hipsters, the cool unemotional beatniks. Herbert Gold, in his article "The Beat Mystique," falls into this trap, implying that Kerouac founded the hipsters. Kerouac was not a hipster, he did not found them, and he didn't want anything to do with them. Kerouac's writing is often sentimental, overcome with feeling, overcome with love of life, and yet always longing for more. Kerouac's dislike of the hipsters can be found in his public statements and in *The Subterraneans*.

Norman Podhoretz attacks Kerouac's writing for its criminal mentality.

Even the relatively mild ethos of Kerouac's books can spill over into brutality, for there is a suppressed cry in those books: Kill the intellectual who can talk coherently, kill the people who can sit still for five minutes at a time, kill those incomprehensible characters who are capable of getting seriously involved with a woman, a job, a cause . . .⁵

Nothing could be more preposterous. Kerouac couldn't stand the sight of a dead mouse much less the sight of a dead intellectual. Moreover, for all his intelligence and rational powers, Podhoretz himself resorts to irrational methods in his analysis. For he never shows us where this suppressed cry is or how it works. In fact, he only discusses the first five pages of Kerouac's book.

Which brings me to the most common error of all, one which all of these critics fall into. They don't read his books. Podhoretz, as I say, stopped at page five. Gold doesn't seem to have read them at all, and Ciardi discusses Kerouac's life, which he doesn't know anything about, rather than his writing.

Aside from their errors, the reason critics reacted so bitterly to Kerouac's work was for precisely the reason Podhoretz stated. To him to be beat was to be "against intelligence itself." Kerouac was attacking something very dear to a critical writer, the art of rational thought as a method for deducing all knowledge. Kerouac's writing was revolutionary in that he recognized the malaise of modern society. Rational thought, technology and science had provided greater comforts than ever, but they had also provided greater horrors. Rational thought could not answer Jack's desperate provoking question: "Why?"

I know that it's ridiculous to pray to my father that hunk of dung in a grave yet I pray to him anyway, what else shall I do?

Sneer? Shuffle papers on a desk and burp with rationality? I say that we shall all be reborn with the Only One.⁶

Kerouac's writing represents the beginning of what I would call the "Irrational Revolution" of the sixties. He pointed out the meaninglessness of rational thought in the face of his most recurrent themes, love, death. The irrational pathway that Kerouac chose to follow was religion. It was a pathway that eventually afforded him answers but by that time his quest had taken him down a path that no one else could travel.

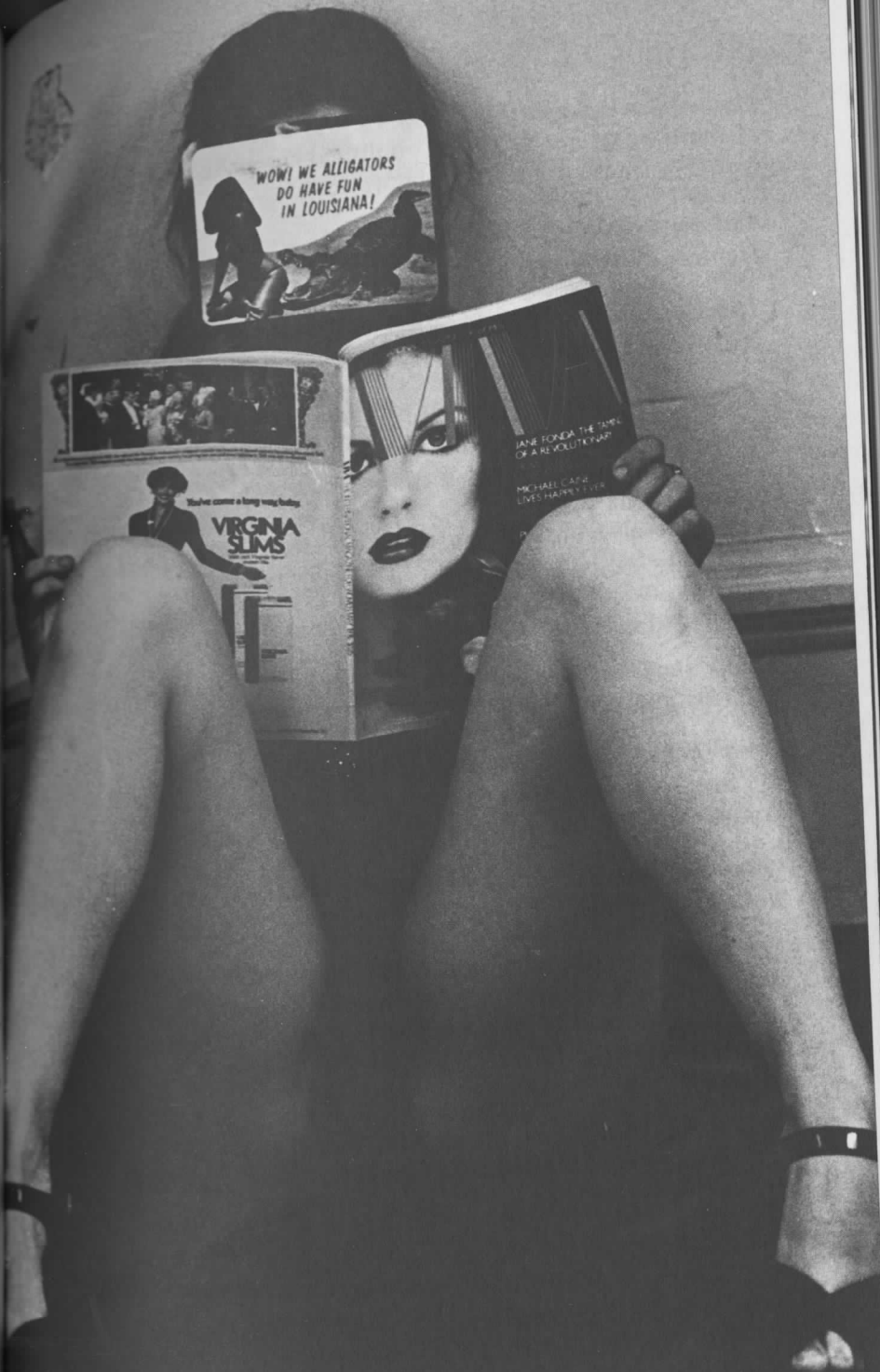
The Irrational Revolution that followed Kerouac involved several irrational pathways: Living on the Edge with Electric Koolaid, the inversion of moral standards that made heroes of Hell's Angels, the inspired Charles Manson to found a religion on murder, Transcendental Meditation, an increasingly intense interest in the Vedas and Buddhist traditions and even the Jesus Freaks are all part of the irrational revolution.

Now in the seventies we are resting and learning to live without answers. The failure of both rational and irrational thought to explain everything has become obvious. It is time now to look at Kerouac's writing in a mature critical manner.

It is time we stopped calling Kerouac a beatnik, a hipster, a criminal and a Bohemian. It is time we recognize him for what he was all along: a religious writer, the founder of the Irrational Revolution.

NOTES:

- ¹ Leo Steinberg, "Contemporary Art and the Plight of its Public," *The New Art* ed. Gregory Battcock, (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1973), p. 209.
- ² Seymour Krim, "Introduction to Desolation Angels."
- ³ John Ciardi, "Epitaph for the Dead Beats" in *A Casebook on the Beat*, ed. Parkinson, p. 262.
- ⁴ Walter Tallman, "Kerouac's Sound" in *A Casebook on the Beat*, ed. Parkinson
- ⁵ Norman Podhoretz, "The No-Nothing Bohemians" in *The Beat*, ed. Krim, p. 124.
- ⁶ Kerouac *Desolation Angels*, p. 338.



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A Dream Within A Dream

Take this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow —
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less gone?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand —
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep — while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is all that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?

Edgar Allan Poe (1850)