

The Mockingbird

1981

The Mockingbird

ETSU Department of Art

ETSU Department of English

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MOCKINGBIRD

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BARBARA SEVIER



KAKI C. BOOHER

Knowing

She wore youth
as a bunting that summer
and nonchalantly wiped sweat
from pale, cool skin.
Babbling, busy, manipulating trivia,
she frolicked in nature's playpen --
ignoring the diminishing square.

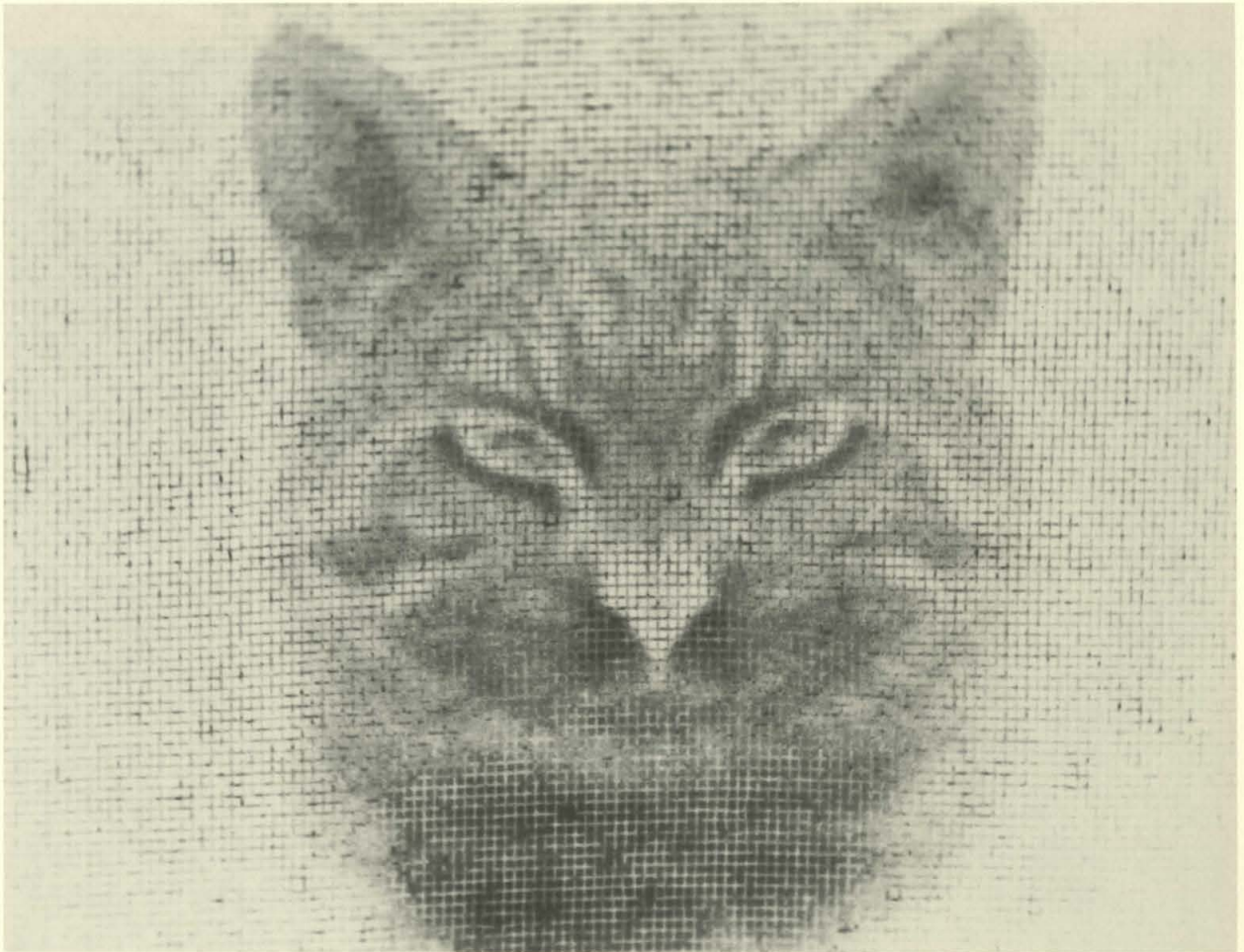
Before a wavy mirror
she tinted trembling lips
and braved common faces
as she brushed the ripples
from her hair.
Occasionally she winked
at the mocking stranger --
a safe, tentative, teasing invitation
designed to strengthen wobbly legs
and weak notions of the season's change.

Then one stormy, August night
she left her bed
and slipped noiselessly
down the dark, narrow passage
to the place from which the crying came.
She stood outside the closed door,
still and expressionless,
till sleep hushed the agony
on the other side.

Slowly she lowered herself
to the floor
and squatted there,
her fingers grasping the pole,
her face skewed in pain,
her lips mouthing silent screams --
one after the other --
the rhythms of the generations
convulsing her body,
ripping apart the slats,
and blowing them away.

Later, lying in bed
with her sick sister,
she pulled her knees
up under her gown
and rocked the bed gently
her sleepless eyes wide with knowing.

LINDA CLARK



PATRICK BENJAMIN

a red cat (an experimental punk poem)

a dark dark orange moon
i see no sky
houses are the depth
of night
silver eyes narrow
a red one runs
and before pulse shrinks up
with cold she
flies
to a roof
across the
moon ray then
she
groans

niyawawawaooooooooonnn
niyawawawaooooooooonnn

TARO TSUZUKI
Third Place, Poetry

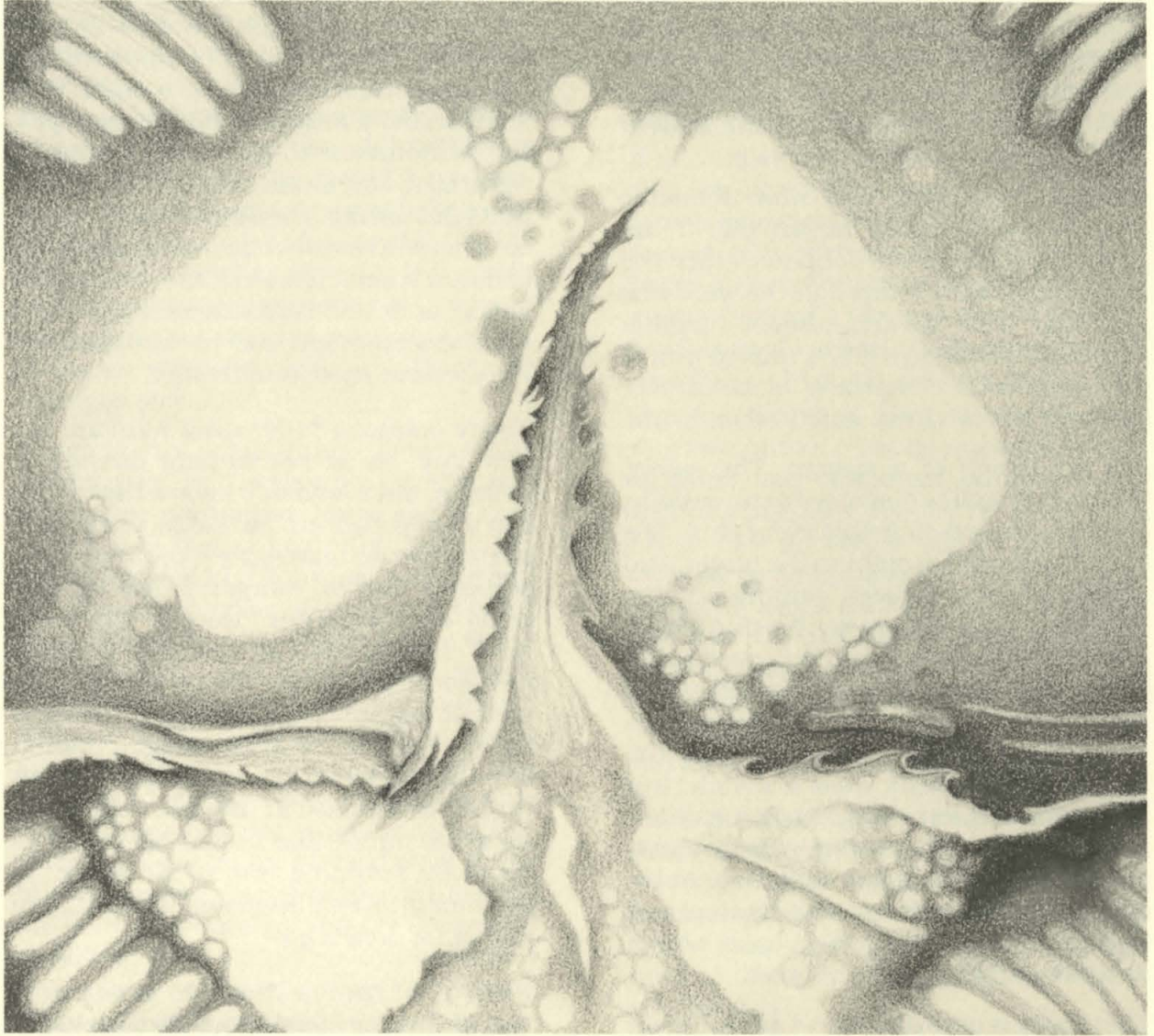
BEGINNING YEAR NUMBER NINE IN CHRONIC I A

BY DALLAS DENNY - *First Place, Short Fiction*

Every thirty seconds Johnson takes a deep breath. Then he does things: tugs at his left earlobe; touches his thumbs and forefingers together, making a triangle which he holds high in front of his face; puffs out his cheeks, expelling the air which he has been holding in with a rush and a flourish. Johnson has been doing these things with psychotic compulsive regularity all morning, about four hours now since breakfast. It makes me very sad to watch him. When first he came here, before the Thorazine, Johnson understood the causal relationships between his body movements and certain processes of the universe. He was wonderful to watch, running the cosmos, orchestrating the movements of planets around stars in galaxies near the even horizon, as well as taking care of business closer to home --choreographing the traffic lights of Cleveland, Ohio, for instance, or regulating the reproductive cycles of certain species of cyclid fish in the Caribbean -- all these things with precise swirls and dips of his wrists.

One night, in the therapeutic semi-darkness of the bedroom, while the attendant

dozed in the nursing station, Johnson, thinking I was asleep, explained it all to Parsons, who was choking to death and therefore unlikely to betray the confidence: how it was an intricate and subtle business, oiling the machinery of creation, how every slight action had to be carefully judged lest it produce intergalactic catastrophe, how it was once necessary to interfere slightly with the rumination of a particular Hereford in Colorado so that a particular diner in a particular restaurant would ingest a particular quantity of a particular enzyme in his steak on a certain preordained night, which would affect a minor but crucial decision he would make the next day at his Wall Street brokerage house. How this decision would effect the New York Stock Exchange, slightly at first, but then snowballing, reducing the value of the stock of a troublesome company in Georgia which poured too much effluvia into the atmosphere and into streams. How the decline in stock prices would anger stockholders and lead to changes in composition of the board of directors of the company -- changes which would send



DOUG RENFRO
Honorable Mention Drawing

a certain stockholder home in quiet fury to take it out on his wife and son, who would flee to the wife's mother's house. Consequently, the boy would walk an unaccustomed route to school the next day, and would therefore miss kicking a rock -- a rock which, Johnson assured Parsons, who was by now quite blue, contained the spirit of Booker T. Washington and would be better left undisturbed, lest it turn in wrath and wreak peanut havoc upon the land.

Critical work, this, and now Johnson, thanks to the bitter brown pill, in no shape to perform it -- Johnson, since the little doctor strode through the ward one day and with several almost illegible strokes in Johnson's chart, robbed him of his marvelous complexity of behaviors, reduced to only three: safety off, aim, fire.

It's not much of a system. The safety, which is of course disguised as an earlobe, must be clicked off before every shot. The fingers are used to sight in the target. And when Johnson exhales, puffing out his cheeks, he fires, always at a moving target. Johnson is a sportsman. He doesn't shoot at sitting ducks. But he also doesn't exhale until he fires. As time goes by and his face grows more red, he will settle for less and less of a movement, even a twitch. But sometimes, when nobody is moving, Johnson will jump from his chair, dash across the dayroom, and make somebody move, more often than not sending them sprawling on the floor. Then he exhales with a *whoosh* and returns to his seat.

Everybody is onto Johnson's game, except of course the aides -- they're called technicians now, but that doesn't make them any smarter or more perceptive. Sometimes when Johnson aims, everybody in the room will freeze, hanging in space like so many icicles, causing Johnson untold consternation, driving him in desperation to fire on the technicians. Johnson *hates* to shoot the technicians.

Johnson will keep up his shooting until six o'clock this evening. Then his relief, a quasi-mammalian tentacled sea-dweller from Aldebaran IV, will take over. Johnson sometimes wolfs his breakfast because the Aldebaranan dislikes being relieved late. Once it sulked, refusing to take over in the evening, which resulted in poor Johnson having to carry on for thirty-six straight hours. It was quite a night, with technicians about bearing syringes, yelling at Johnson to go to sleep, and he fighting to stay awake through a Dalmane and Librium fog. The Aldebaranan replaced a much more reasonable plantlike sentient from a planet in the Andromeda galaxy after Johnson's mental processes were vasectomized and he was assigned his present, repetitious duties.

Today Johnson is blasting Morgan, the new guy. He is not aiming directly at Morgan, but everybody knows that Johnson's projectiles are not subject to laws of normal Einsteinian space-time. Everytime Johnson shoots, Morgan leaps up and finds another chair. Morgan has been from chair to chair all morning, and this has not escaped the notice of the head technician, although she has no idea why he has been so restless. Morgan doesn't know it, but he is working towards receiving an intramuscular present -- one formulated to immobilize him as effectively as ropes by stripping him of all desire for movement, even if Johnson had a real gun and not a breath gun.

I am a Johnson-watcher by orientation rather than by inclination. My wheelchair is turned facing him, and the only one else in my line of sight besides, about half the time, Morgan, is Hewlitt. Hewlitt sits in one spot all day, unless told to move. It's as if he had a perpetual overdose of what Morgan is about to get. Nobody on the ward knows just where Hewlitt has gone, forsaking his body, but we all hope that one day soon his spirit will reappear,

hover like a hummingbird for a moment, and then descend, reanimating Hewlitt and telling us all about its mysterious journey.

I used to want to ask Johnson how to control things, how to control even my arms and legs, but he would have only laughed. Johnson is convinced that I have gone the same place as Hewlitt, that we have both surpassed the need for our bodies, that if he is dedicated enough he might someday be like us. Besides, he would have said, had I been able to ask, how was he to know I wasn't a spy, sitting immobile in my wheelchair for eight years in order to trick him into revealing his methods? Johnson thinks like that. Now his methods are lost, perhaps irretrievably, unless the Thorazine mines all play out.

Margaret has come in now. Margaret is very homely, but is very provocative and suggestive nonetheless, since she is convinced that she is beautiful. Today her hair is frazzled from too much teasing and she is wearing a pair of green shorts over pantyhose with a leg-length run in them, and ugly flat used-to-be-white hospital slippers. But I want her and she knows it, and she will probably manage to brush against me in a tantalizing way; she delights in my inability to initiate anything. But she is not stingy with herself. Once she brought me blessed relief in the linen room and then traipsed out, leaving me with my pants around my knees and unable to cover up my embarrassment. I was panic-stricken, knowing I would eventually be discovered by a technician. But Hewlitt, surprisingly enough, had come in and wheeled me to the bathroom, where my partial nudity was not conspicuously suggestive of sexual encounter but was, rather, rewarded, since staff thought I was attempting to toilet myself. Hewlitt operates entirely at a spinal-motor level. I later found out that it was Daisy, to whom Margaret often brags of her exploits, who had told Hewlitt to rescue me.

Daisy is the perpetual virgin, a Polyanna with a kind word or deed for everybody, but who about two or three times a year has a seizure that cuts out her cognitive mechanism and leaves her with the psyche of a remote aboriginal ancestor who has a taste for human flesh and a distrust of closed areas. At these times Daisy's body, driven by the spirit of Amanaga Io Managa, becomes so violent that even Jenkins, the three hundred pound technician, is afraid of her. Daisy will be here for a long, long time, I'm afraid, because in their efforts to banish Managa from Daisy's brain the doctors sent currents through her head, Reddy Kilowatt on safari. But the electricity, not finding it she was sent to exterminate, turned instead on the native fauna, marching through Daisy's brain like Sherman marched through Georgia. And neurons, unlike trees, do not send shoots up from their blackened stumps. Daisy cannot remember names or faces from day to day; persistent will be the suitor who can come to know her well enough to enjoy her favors. Daisy is a proper type of girl. But the aborigine, with wits and memory intact, still surfaces from time to time, hating and hurting, using the primitive weapons of tooth and toenail to bite and kick her way towards freedom.

Margaret, on the other hand, has muscles that periodically betray her, locking her in mid-stride into rigid catatonia, forcing her to stand like a bargain store mannekin for an hour or two before she begins to melt to the floor, wilting like a candle in the hot sun.

Johnson began shooting Margaret as soon as she entered the day room, but she is deflecting the bullets with her hand, causing them to arc gracefully right to Morgan, who is still getting hit, still switching chairs, still speeding obliviously towards IM oblivion. I would signal Margaret to come turn the cassette over, since it has long since reached the end, but it is too close to lunchtime, and it wouldn't be

finished before they come to get me for my tray or pureed pap. I listen to two or three tapes a day, when I can get them. They belong to Dr. Sellers, the psychologist, who is blind. Often the tapes are of articles from professional journals, but sometimes there will be a talking book, Mark Twain, perhaps, and once the Marquis de Sade's *Justine*. Today the tape is entitled "Endocrine status of 17 institutionalized chronic schizophrenic individuals: evidence of irregularity." Yesterday there was an article from a psychotherapy journal about James Joyce. A lot of the stuff on the tapes went over my head at first, but finally I learned what all the buzz words meant.

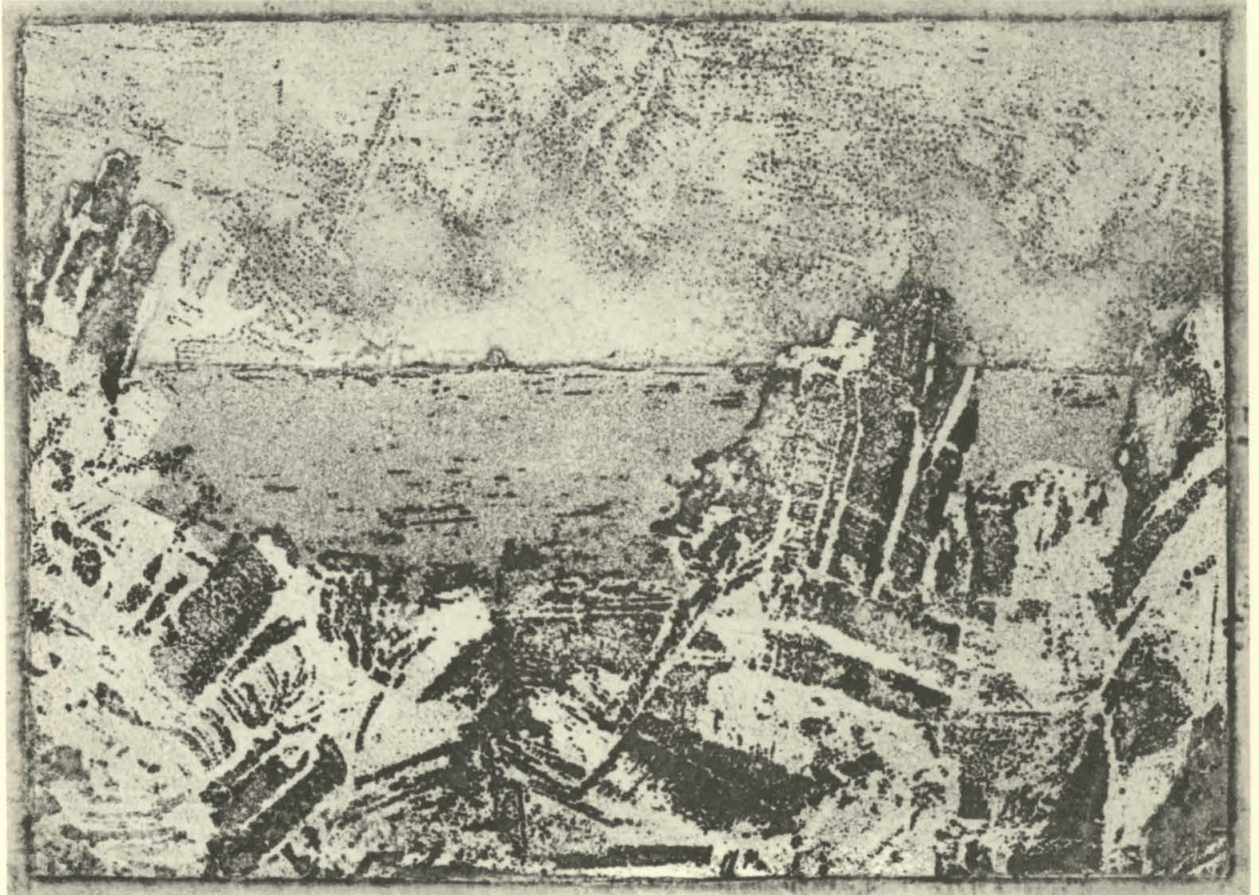
When I first came here, about a year after the Accident, everybody figured the kid had checked out, that there was no longer a driver for the car. It was Dr. Sellers who had insisted that a thorough evaluation of my intellectual functioning be done. She had excused herself on the grounds that since I couldn't talk much and she couldn't see me move, that Dr. Starks should test me. Starks had tested me, angry because he had to test a patient who was not from his unit, and had pinched me viciously on the legs. He should have known I couldn't feel it. And he had lied, reporting that I couldn't comprehend any of the test items and that I was not capable of rational thought. And when Starks was through with me and a technician had wheeled me back to the ward, Dr. Sellers had on hand an electric typewriter with a special mechanism on it which allowed me to poke a pencil into holes to strike the keys, and had waited patiently as I with my spastic but movable right arm had typed a document damning Starks. I'm not sure to this day how she knew that I would be able to type that letter, or how she knew that Starks would abuse me, but my letter, submitted with snapshots of my legs, which had felt nothing but had bruised beautifully, had been sufficient to cause Starks to lose his position and his professional license.

After that everybody was supposed to know that my brain is normal, but a lot of people don't believe it, or else forget. People talk to me a lot of times in baby talk, or worse yet, don't talk to me at all. I overhear a lot of things that I shouldn't because people forget.

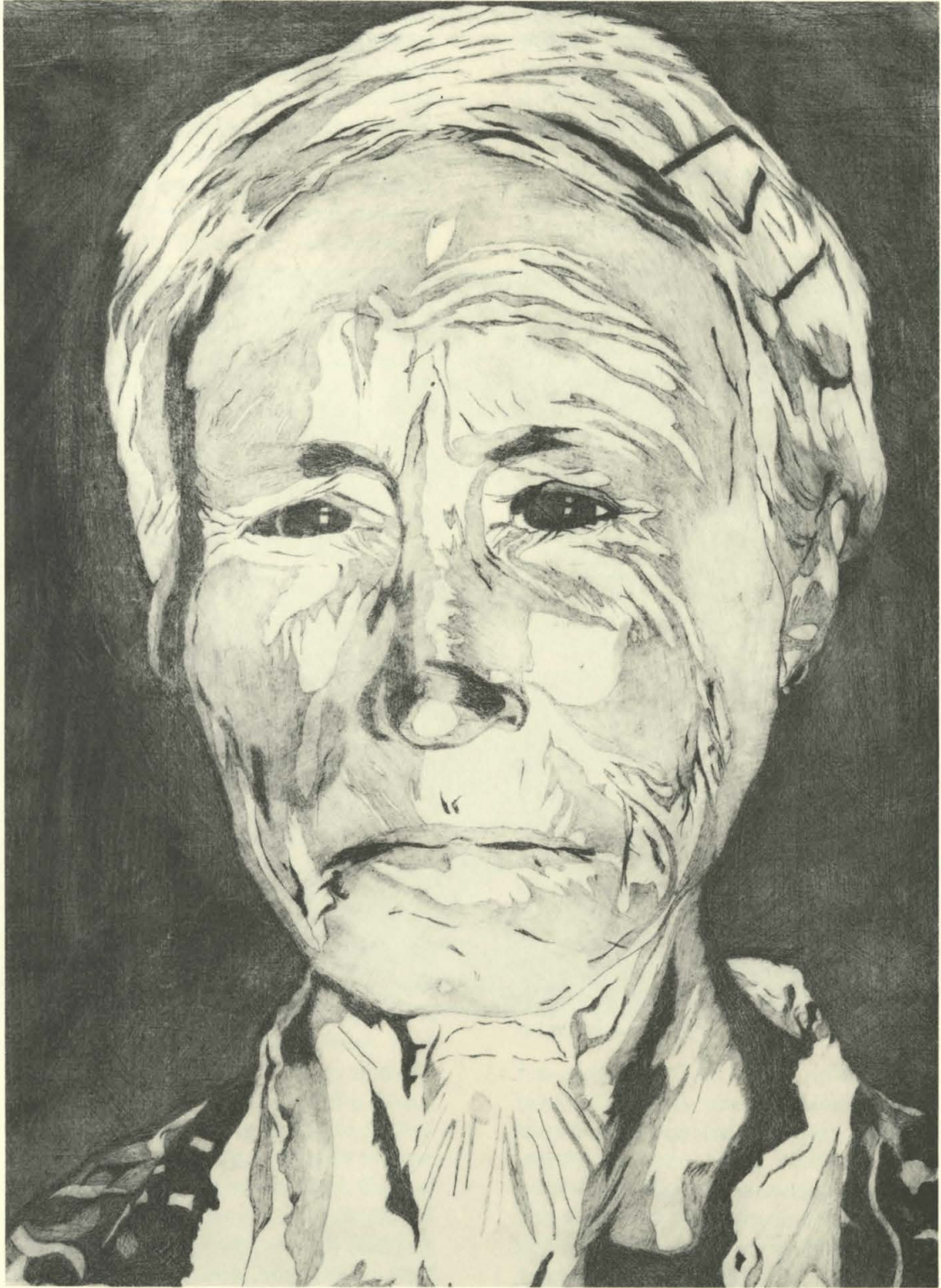
I used to get very angry, overcome with loneliness and frustration, and showed it by non-compliance, by soiling and wetting myself, by refusing to feed myself, and by howling and banging my arm on the arm of my wheelchair, but Dr. Sellers came by one day and quietly told me that if I continued I would be moved to Chronic III A. That's the unit where all the real space cadets live.

The residents of Chronic III A have had their brains replaced by electrical gadgets. Their limbs move stiffly and mechanically just like the creatures in the old movie "The Night of the Living Dead." The electric devices are not solid-state electronics, LEDs, microprocessors, circuit boards. No, they are Civil War surplus, Leyden jars, static-electricity generators, Crookes radiometers, obsolete and faulty, making the air of Chronic III A smell of ozone and machine oil and bristle with static electricity. Worn relays click with every bend of every elbow, and even the lights in the eyes of the patients spark and sputter because of loose connections. A transfer to Chronic III A is a one-way warp to electro-mechanico-robotic existence. Bad karma. I do less howling and banging of my arm on my wheelchair now.

I'm getting hit by a few Johnson-bullets now. Johnson won't shoot them until tomorrow, but he'll project them backwards in time until today. They don't really hurt; they're just annoying. Margaret, can you read my thoughts? Don't pretend you can't. Linen room, Margaret. Linen room. LINEN ROOM. L — I — N — E — N R — O — O — M. Yes. Yes, Margaret. Yes. Yes. Yesyesyesyesyesyesyesyesyes.



KIM GUINN



SANDY TRIVETT



KIM GUINN



REBECCA LANE

**The Smack, The Press, The Flame
For T. W.**

On a January afternoon in 1911
our grandmother lit a candle
in the pantry off her mother's kitchen
and saved the match in her hand
embroidered kerchief and was very careful
not to dirty the border of French lace.
That evening, after finishing the dinner dishes
she climbed the back stairs to the room
she shared with her sister, Aunt Helen,
and prepared herself for an evening with
our grandfather. She removed the match
from her handkerchief and in a forgotten way
applied the charcoal to her eyelashes and brows.
Then, she licked her lips and pressed them
to a bit of red tissue paper tasting bitter
dye as it washed her mouth in color. At last,
our grandmother smacked and pinched her cheeks
until her sister agreed that they looked
quite rosy enough.

Our grandfather came to call promptly at seven
and must have thought her very beautiful
because he asked her to marry him rather early
in the evening. With her new allowance in marriage,
she bought a tube of lipstick and Lady Ester
face powder but soon abandoned them for now
she had children and helped our grandfather run
his business. Years after his death, when she lit
the candles for my table and stared at the match
and into the flame, perhaps, wondered if
she owed our existence to something
as simple as that.

RUTH WALLER
Second Place, Poetry

her vase

when she speaks of flowers, she
is a dainty, light purple hydrangea
in the rain of june. she will never
make a vase out of a piece
of the earth, with her fingers.

i would buy flowers
just to keep filling it.
its thick body makes me feel
as if i were through supper
at her room in santa fe.

i drink two cups of coffee,
one for a cigarette, one for
the conversation to come. the
indian-coloured cup is a bomber.
i have to stop drinking it. no more.

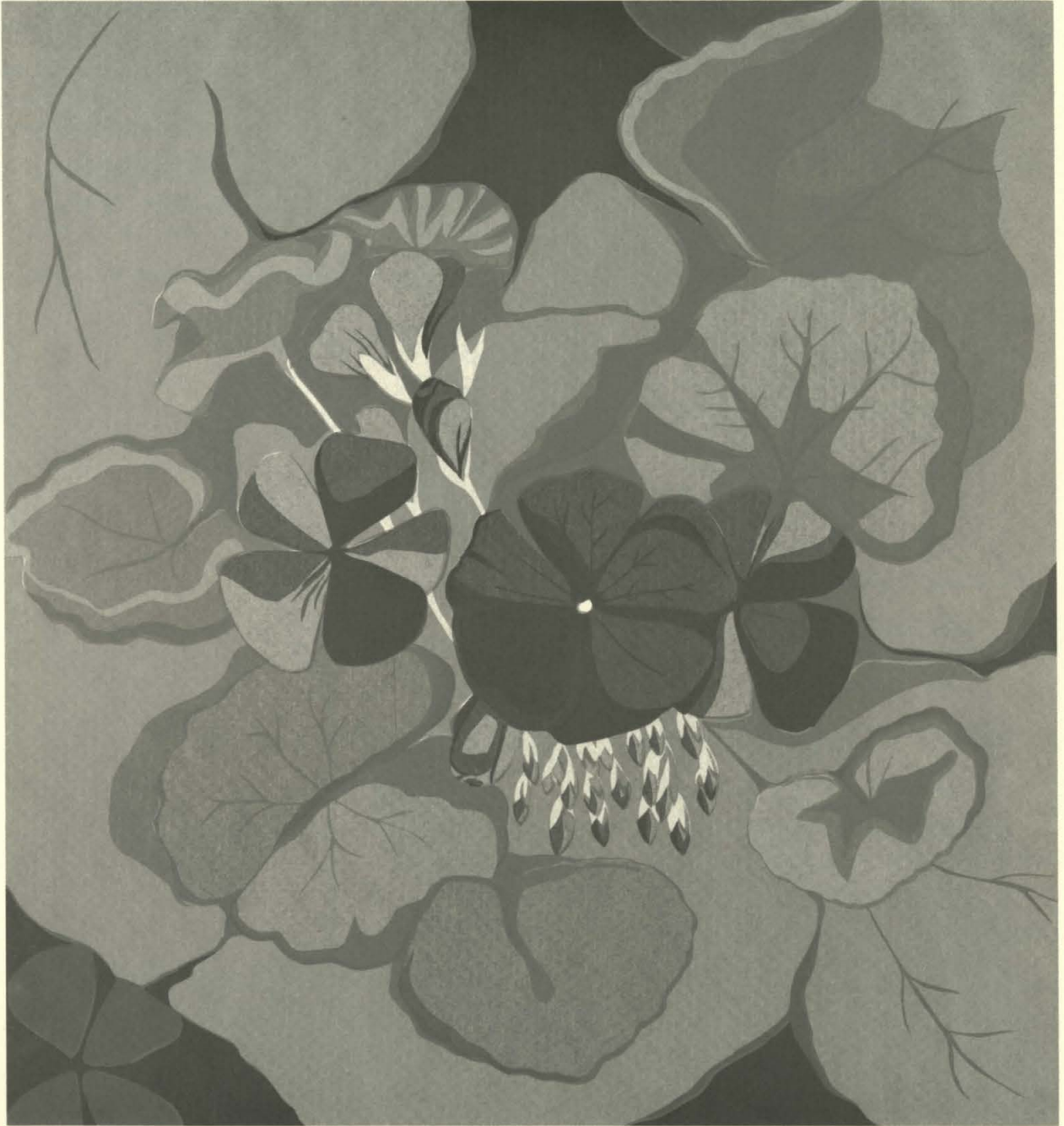
on the top of the vase, its firm curve,
there is a bra. tender brown silk.
the colour of the canyon.
it fits there perfectly to my
cruel eyes, but i cannot be a man.

she tends to be taciturn,
when she starts knitting at the corner,
the brightest spot. i am in an orange
sinful silence. i am fond of it.
i wish to have profane sunday, tomorrow.

but i know you want me to
say good night. maybe so long.
closing the door without any kiss, i
imagine i would see her vase in my room.
i know i will find only its shade.

flowers don't need one, you know,
she says. there are no beautiful flowers,
but there is their beauty,
she says. i must leave. oh. i must.
when her vase shadows my mind.

TARO TSUZUKI



BARBARA SEVIER
First Place Drawing



DANIEL TAGLIA

DADDY: SIX DAYS IN SEPTEMBER

Fall came to the mountains three nights ago
And settled on dogwood and maple, prints
In short, silent streaks of ancient gold

Beans and corn lie brown in a row
Next year will their seed writhe
Fall came to the mountains three nights ago

Today, rainy day, our sun is gone
Grandma tells Mother, "It will always rise
In short, silent streaks of ancient gold"

Hearts, minds, Junior's hands work long
Morn' and evening are pregnant with ice
Fall came to the mountains three nights ago

A southbound sparrow wings a brightening sky
Dips to sound, heads across a divide
In short, silent streaks of ancient gold

Disappeared, this day, which limb was he nesting on
Many leaves embody the rising light
Fall came to the mountains three night ago
In short, silent streaks of ancient gold

LEAH COMBS

I Stopped to Write a Villanelle

I stopped to write a villanelle,
Opened the door and peeped inside.
Blindly, I stumbled, and I fell.

What I found there is hard to tell.
I heard a sound and ran to hide,
But stopped to write a villanelle.

From some recess, I heard a yell,
"Watch out for steps off to one side!"
Blindly, I stumbled, and I fell.

He, who called to me, could not smell,
Or so he said. I think he lied.
I stopped to write a villanelle.

He asked me how I wrote as well.
"Like this," I said, and so he tried
Blindly. I stumbled, and I fell

Against an old sign that said HELL.
I tore my eyes out, as I cried,
"I stopped to write a villanelle,
Somehow I stumbled, and I fell!"

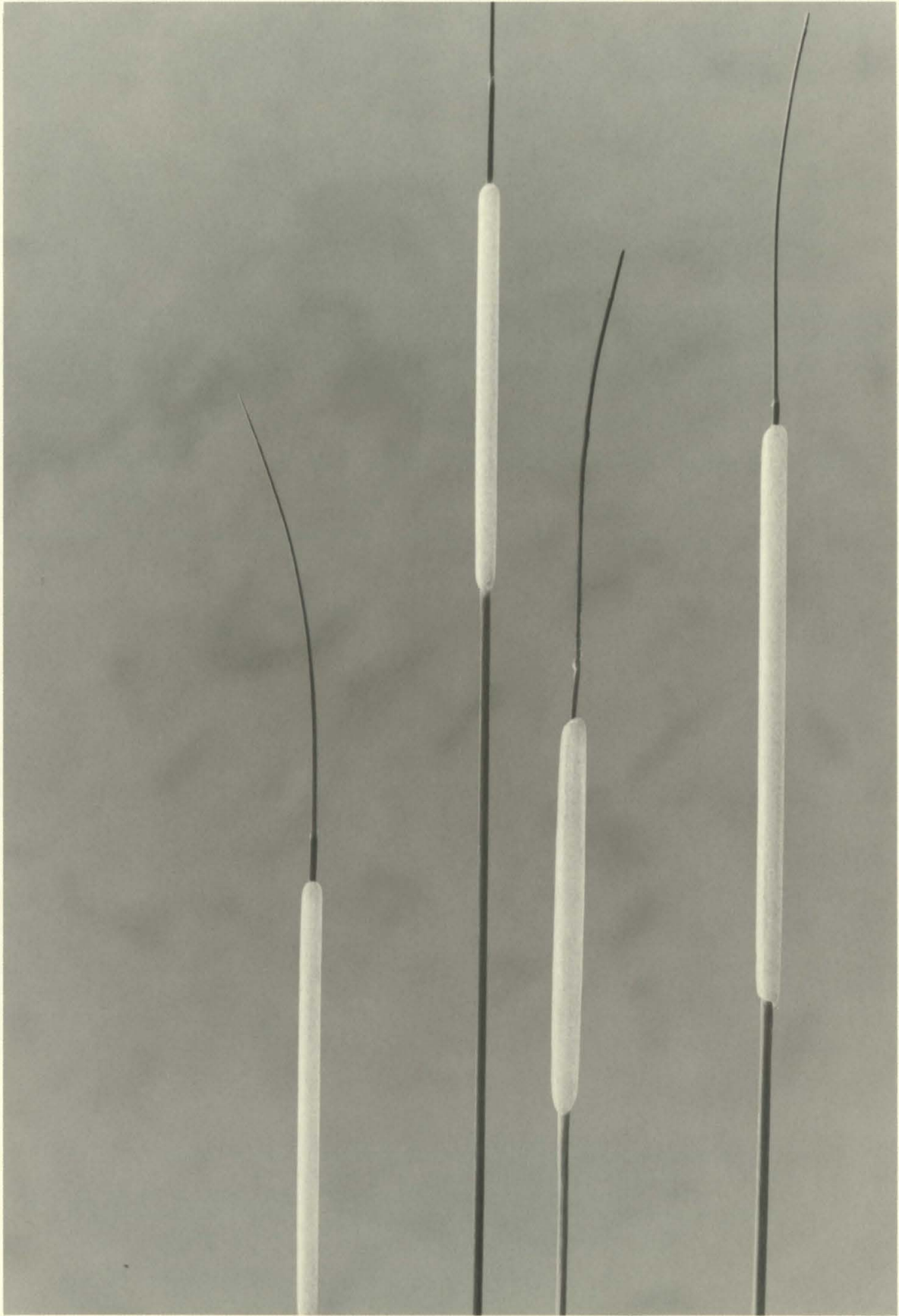
DONNIE COLLETTE



PHYLLIS SALLING



JAMES PRICE
Honorable Mention Photograph



DANIEL TAGLIA



ALICE ANTHONY



PATRICK BENJAMIN

guilt in a rear view mirror

the dead squirrel lay on his stomach
the way my dad does on sunday morning
the killer was unconcerned hurrying
i don't expect you to understand my guilt
i said, "damn it" quickly
without time to feel hurrying

DONNIE COLLETTE

First Place, Poetry

The Ghost of Hanson's Ridge

Through the years it was said,
each night of the new moon;
if you sit and wait on Hanson's Ridge,
a head will roll by soon.

This ghastly tale has been told,
by folks on Mason Creek;
it chills the bones of the bravest men,
leaving them shaking and weak.

There was no moon to light the path,
from church that mournful night;
but Sarah was not alone,
Cain was a brother of might.

Railroads had deserted the hollow,
leaving a depot along the way;
as Sarah and Cain approached,
a man began to pray.

Between prayers he groaned and cried,
as if each breath was pain;
Sarah listening, turned to speak,
but where in the world was Cain!

Wiping the tears from her eyes,
Sarah lifted her head high;
swallowing the lump in her throat,
she stepped forward and ventured inside.

The lantern cast a shadowy light,
striking two men against the wall;
they turned to her with piercing eyes,
surprised at what they saw.

Be calm she told herself,
fear they must not see;
then a moaning chilled the air,
"don't let them murder me."

At Sarah's feet lay a man,
body tossing about;
his throat was ripped from ear to ear,
with blood gushing out.

The air was strong from whisky,
jugs lying about;
Sarah shook with anger,
then began to shout.

"You filthy, no good murderers,
the whisky has taken control;
God in heaven only knows,
if the devil has your soul!

Take haste we should not tarry,
a doctor we must find;
this man is drowning in blood,
I'm not leaving him behind."

Hanson's Ridge was the shortest route,
to the nearest doctor they tread;
the drunks carried the body,
while Sarah supported his head.

They reached the top of Hanson's Ridge,
night air sobered the men;
dropping the body, they ran with fright,
remembering their horrid sin.

The head was torn from the body,
Sarah's hand let it slip;
down the ridge together,
to be their life time trip.

Through the years it was said,
each night of the new moon;
if you sit and wait on Hanson's Ridge,
a head will roll by soon.

Sarah running close behind,
together they were named;
"The Ghost of Hanson's Ridge,"
forever to be proclaimed.

PHYLLIS SALLING



THEODORE AGUIRRE

PRAYING FOR THE SAINTS

It was the smile
that first tricked me.
I fell in with the crowd
and praised her
innocence.

— People pass and smiles
become polished.

A year and a day seems short
to see changes,
but I did, from
behind those buttons and
keys and paper sacks folded and piled...ready.

She has been here and in a thousand places
laughing at all the believers.
With clear skin and bright eyes they call her
"SAINT."

But I once heard a saint whisper
shit!

CARLYLE BRUCE

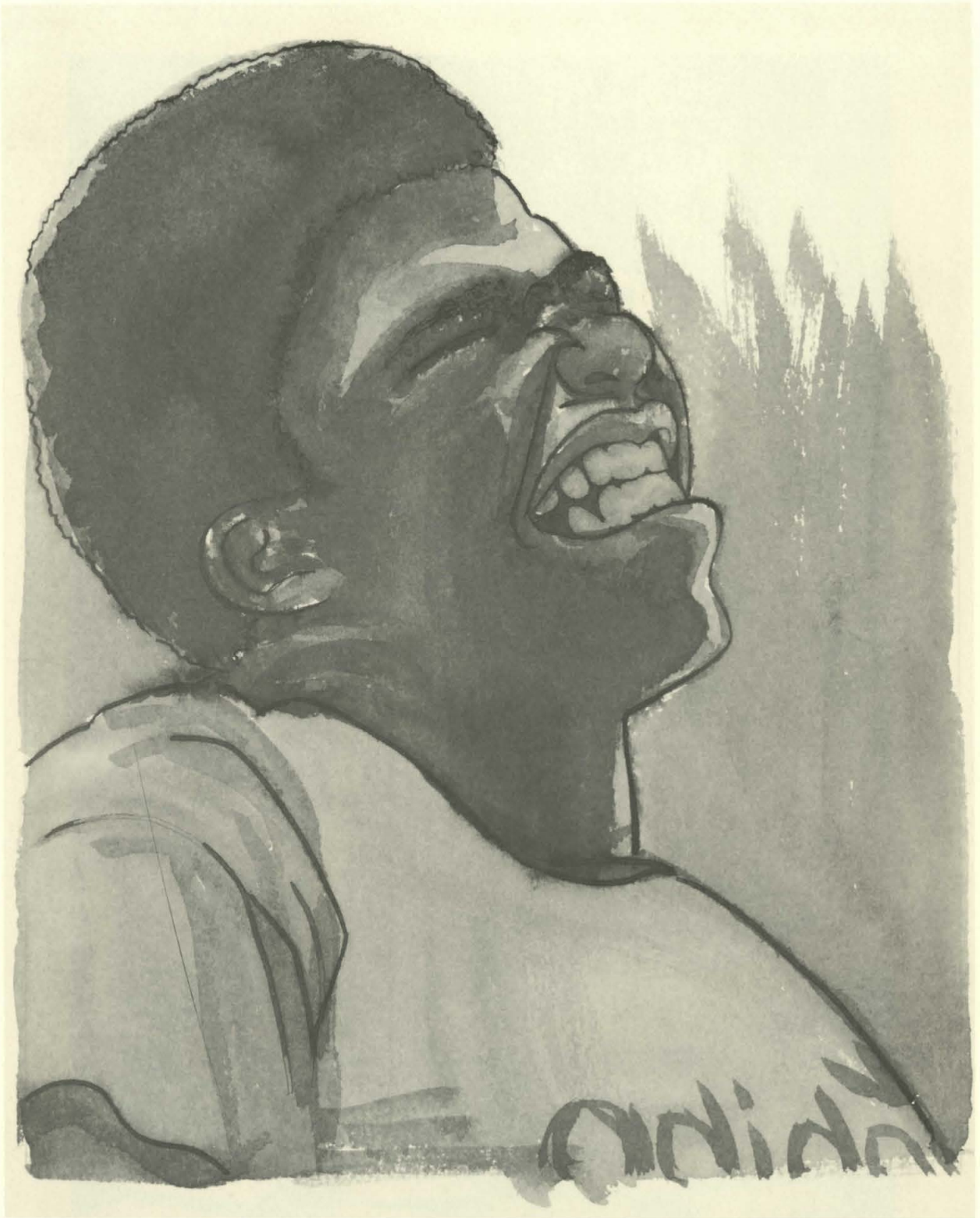


BARBARA SEVIER

Black and White

For one hour
I had been calling to the vodka
like a god
a cry forced through the density
of my body tissues until
the correct level of inebriation
had been achieved
enabling an offer,
then, attack of my lips
and suddenly
I was the heroine
in a black and white TV rerun
of any movie classic
having pushed my swollen body
into a simply cut black dress
with four dangling white limbs
and black pointed pumps.
Two crystals swing from my ears
reflecting the light from the vodka
glass almost like a prism
so that your tongue moving
quickly over mine
became a hall
with no doors and no light
except from the glass no longer
in my hand
until you pushed me away
and again I was surprised
that I had been kissed
for even as long as that.

RUTH WALLER



DANNY WILSON

SURVIVING

BY SANDRA ELDRIDGE SEAY - *Second Place, Short Fiction*

It is hot. I am tired and annoyed. Tired because I work. Annoyed because I have to go to Simms Funeral Home and pay my respects to a stranger. I need to go home and lose myself in a Nella Larsen novel but Mother would never understand if I didn't "look at Eddie Barnes." So, the debate is not whether I will do as she asked but rather when will I do it. I think I will get off the bus and go now. It's almost five o'clock. Maybe that way I will not chance meet too many people on Hull Street. Unlike my sister and my parents, I am not comfortable making idle chit-chat with seldom seen acquaintances who pass on the street. But then I have never been completely at ease with the social customs which define our lives here in Richmond. Once on this very block, I walked past Sister Lizzie Ames and didn't speak. Naturally she told my Aunt Gina (they despised each other) and half of our church. The fallout from that incident played games with my psyche for years. For it was then that I was branded "odd" by both family and neighbors. I must admit that growing up in a cocoon of social propriety has been a real trip. Well, Sister Ames died years ago and only three people are walking on the block. Since I don't know them I am required to simply say "hi" to the little boy, "hello" to the woman holding his hand, and "hey" to the man my age standing on the corner.

Into Simms I walk, inhaling instinctively as the door opens. No matter how well lit, the place always reminds me of the cave-man exhibit at the Smithsonian. Instead of coffins I expect to find ape-men peeking out into the night, anxiously searching for marauding dinosaurs.

I am not alone in Simms. There is a woman standing at the head of the casket and a man to her left arranging flowers. I assume the woman is the deceased's wife

because as I approach, I see her place a white rose inside the coffin. I don't want to intrude so I remain a respectable distance away and glance in the direction of the grey casket. Good, I've looked at Eddie Barnes, done my duty and now I can face Mother with a clear conscience.

I am less than two tiptoes away before a hand touches mine. I almost yell. I turn expecting to find the deceased beside me, instead I look into the china doll face of Anita Langley. I exhale in relief and tell her how much she frightened me.

"I didn't mean to do that, Grace," she says in her little girl voice. She was Cinderella one year in our class play and no one could have looked or sounded more like a princess. "Long red curls, light eyes...the prettiest Black child in all of Richmond," everybody agreed on that.

"Did you know him?" I ask Anita although I don't expect her to say yes. After all he was at least five years older than us which meant he wasn't in any of our classes and since he went to Mt. Olive Baptist and Anita and I belong to Calvary, there wasn't any reason for us to know him. Of course I had seen him before. But Mother and Sister knew him. That's why I am in Simms, paying my respects.

So it is a bit of a shock when Anita, in response to my question, says, "It's my duty."

"I know what you mean," I tell her. So grateful am I to have found a kindred spirit that I abandon the King's English and rush into the vernacular. "Girl, I get so tired of having to do things to please other people. I think about leaving but..."

I can't complete the sentence because the silly expression on Anita's face is giving

me momentary memory lapse. Before I can finish wondering if Anita has heard anything I have said, she drops my hand and walks back to the casket.

The man arranging the flowers walks into the chapel. Anita and I are alone.

Without turning to face me Anita says, "They go too soon."

"Yeah. Mother says he was only thirty-five. Look, Anita, did he marry one of the Claibornes?"

She doesn't answer. She seems engrossed in moving the rose first from atop the dead man's hands to rest beside his cheek and then back to his hands again.

A minute or more goes by before I realize that my mouth is open and I am staring at Anita. I softly call, "Bye," to her and leave. She never looks up.

I am puzzled and sad when I leave Simms. I can't understand why Anita was there. She couldn't have been involved with Eddie Barnes. For one thing he was too dark and number two, the Barnes don't have any money. Can you imagine Anita taking walnut colored Eddie Barnes to her house. I used to think Anita was different from her family. After all she did invite me to her pajama parties and let our class swim in their pool but then I did a lot of her homework too. She was never bright. I wonder if she graduated from Fisk? I don't think I have seen her since the Links spring ball of '70. Of course she was being rude just then. Could have answered me. But when you're the Langley's -- do what you want to do!

When something like this happens, I think I know how fleeing slaves felt when they

finally reached their refuge in Canada. My refuge is my bedroom. And to it I go immediately upon arriving home. I change clothes, go downstairs and talk to Sister while she prepares dinner. Mother hasn't returned from her club meeting. Within two seconds I regret coming into the kitchen because straight-a-way Sister launches into a spiel against Linda Fine. Linda lives next door.

"Grace, I couldn't believe it. There she was with no bra on, entertaining while Mrs. Fine is at work..." On and on Sister goes, fussing and condemning, condemning and fussing.

What can I say? It's the style to go braless and the girl has a right to flirt. She's young and cute. We never talk; still, I like her style.

Sister continues to rage. I wish she would shut up. I don't give a damn about this nonsense. And I know when Mother comes in she will add all the little details Sister omits. Knowing that I either must change this conversation or do something really unpardonable, I ask, "Any coffee?"

"Not fresh made. Here, use the instant. Make me some too. By the way, what did the mailman leave you?"

Thank God she's forgotten the Fines for a little while. "Just a print I ordered from Hampton," I tell her. "One of Charles O'Tanner's," hoping that she has exorcised all traces of the Fines out of her conversation.

It's almost peaceful now. I can hear the clock in the den hum and the squishy sound the dough makes as Sister pummels it into submission. I give Sister her



SHARON ANGLIN KUHNE

coffee, sit down opposite her and begin to read the *News Leader*. I mention to Sister that I saw Anita Langley in Simms today. "Isn't it odd," I say, "how you can live in a small place like Richmond and still not see some people for years at a time."

"Who did you say?" Sister asks me.

"Dr Langley's Anita." Why is it that I usually regret talking to Sister? All I did was mention Anita's name and already she's frowning. Like it or not I'm in for another one of Sister's tirades.

But Sister is silent. The only sounds I hear are the plop, plop, of her hands slapping the bread dough down, to the side, and down again.

I wait.

When she does speak I am surprised that words so soft can come from her: "Poor Anita is a little off, you know. I thought you knew about her but then when she was committed to Petersburg, you weren't feeling well yourself." Sister pauses in her recital and begins placing balls of dough into the muffin tin. Each ball completely spherical, evenly greased.

"She would remind me," I think while trying valiantly not to show my discomfort. Sister's words have hit me like sheathed darts, zapping painful jolts into an already burnt out body. She refers, of course, to my nervous breakdown. My family's sensibilities could not, rather would not allow them to put me in an institution. I was healed at home -- in the family residence and on the familiar streets of Richmond.

Succinctly put, someone I loved, didn't love me. All of it -- the nights of long, long rendezvous, the days of swallowed tears, was like being part of a maniac's com-

mercial. Me leaping in suspended action in a grassy field, arms reaching to someone, happy, then seeing with horror a car speeding toward me tires screeching a horn blaring and me hit, shooting up and beyond pain, hurled far beyond the realm of total consciousness. I split into two ids, identical in all respects except one's laugh was shriller; her eyes blinked a lot; her hands wrung constantly. And the other one? The quiet one? She went into the bedroom, shut the door, and bedded down for a long sleep.

My family and the Reverend Bell gathered in the living room and sensing the gravity of my disintegration, went beyond Jesus to Lord God Jehovah Himself and beseeched Him to heal me. While they prayed and God listened, the bubbly one dyed her hair red, made garlands with the flower children in Byrd Park, and dated men from lowly places like the projects and Tenth Street Bottom. She was unusually happy until one Friday night when, perhaps unfortunately so, she heard for the first time her date's incredibly stupid conversation.

"Didn't you know that Africans and Puerto Ricans was the same. They from the same place." He said it in such earnestness that the happy one swallowed the snicker stuck against her teeth. She turned her head away from him toward the bandstand, and mumbled, "No, I didn't know they the same."

His remark was the spiky ball that burst the balloon of natural highs that had held her aloft for over six months. The freed air shot out and she found herself falling rapidly. Her eyes were the zoom lens on a Nikon camera. Details, once vague, now

were clear. Hours earlier when she and he had entered the Coliseum, it was an enchanting nightclub, with nattily attired waiters and expensive parquet floors. But now beneath the magnified beam of her flashlight eyes, the waiters were tired old men in wrinkling suits and the floors were cluttered trash bins. The shattered balloon banged when it touched the earth.

He, her date, the man in the wide-brimmed hat and red suit, had seen her land. He drove her down Marshall Street, across Lee Bridge, and onto the Southside in silence. Obviously it was their last date. Not that it mattered much. She had never been his idea of a woman. For one thing she was stuck up. Yeah she had tried to boogey, to really get down. But she would always be a sidite bitch -- nice but Si Dit E.

They said good-night in the car. He was a block down the street before she reached the front gate. She was tired and after a quiet bath (so as not to disturb the nodding house) she went to sleep. She was in bed all weekend.

On Monday I came down the stairs and left her upstairs sleeping. I got a job at Thalhimers. On Sunday I went to church. The Baxters were pleased. God had awakened their youngest from a Lazarian sleep.

And so I smile as Sister weaves Anita's tapestry of woe for me. I look up just in time to see Sister sneak a quick look at me.

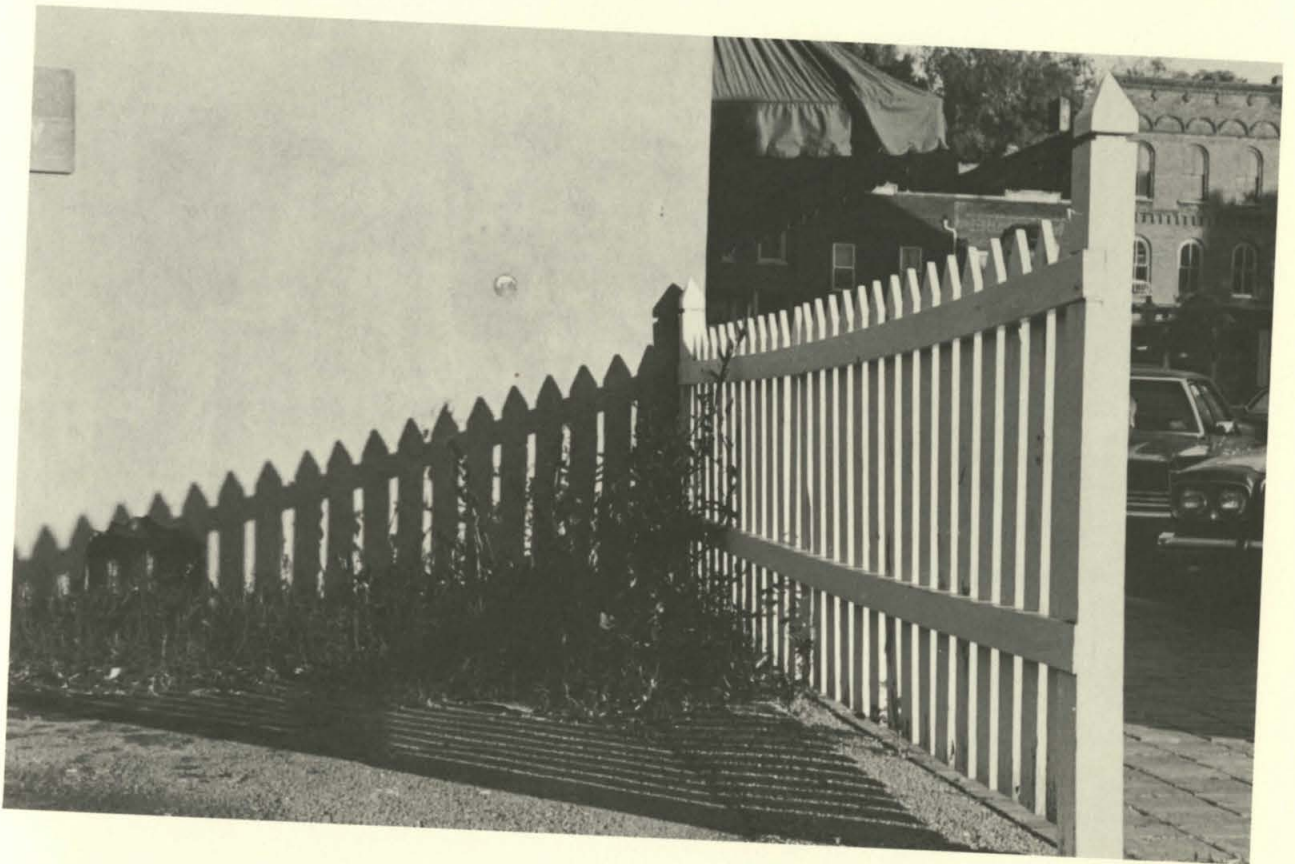
She continues, "Anita had bought her wedding dress and she and the Calloway boy were planning a June wedding. Then his plane went down. Crashed after leaving Kennedy Airport. Real sad. Anita took it pretty hard. Guess so. You know the Calloways got more money and prestige

than the Langleys will ever have. Anyway, everybody assumed Anita would be all right. But then she started doing odd things. I rode the Hull Street bus with her one time and she laughed to herself all the way from Broad Street to Southside. Then she got worse, started to go to Simms and all the other funeral homes whenever a young man's body was laid out. Mr. Simms says she comes and stands at the head of the coffin like she was guarding it. She always puts a flower inside the casket too. Anita doesn't bother anybody. So Dr. Langley didn't put her away for good, but it sure is a sad case. She's just pitiful." Sister groaned and shook her head. I can sense her thinking, "And if it hadn't been for the grace of God, you would have been like Anita too."

I smile and sip my coffee. For I find Anita Langley to be neither deranged nor pitiable. She is simply surviving. What do you do when the fairy tale ends? What can you do when disappointments, each day, each year of your life grow into a cement whirling Medusa? If you are Anita Langley and all your life you have lived in a Grimm fairy tale, then you make a piecemeal dream by darning together those pieces of reality that no matter how slight have some resemblance to a past which promised to be your utopia. Or, if you are Grace Baxter, and you have always lived between the alley and Park Avenue, you can do as I have done: Shove all your dreams deep between the padding of the quilt that lies at the foot of your bed and late at night when you are alone and the world isn't watching, lie down between the sheets, pull the quilt high over your head and sleep, basked in the heat of another time when you were naive and loved honestly



BARBARA SEVIER
Second Place Photograph



PHYLLIS SALLING



PHYLLIS SALLING



ALICE ANTHONY

Seasons of Toil

I rise to the light touch
of the aurora on my brow;
acres of corn to sow today,
I must find the time to plow.

With the spring came a son,
the first for me and my wife;
earth nourishing each grain
when it reaches the threshold of life.

Youth is only a covering of flesh,
which nature has molded like clay;
my soul was born within the earth,
I burgeon forth in May.

Pray be, let the sun go to sea,
this alpha of life to cover me.

Hoeing the fields
with stalks shading my head;
July has brought the smothering heat,
the soil is my eternal bed.

The night does not relieve
the offsprings of my task,
for sleep is all I ask.

Exhausted slumber to forget my toils,
I dream of a resting place;
where all is peaceful and serene,
no more droughts to face.

Pray be, let the sun go to sea,
this alpha of life to cover me.

Nature's sign of green over brown
to pick beans before the call;
one morning soon I will wake
to the chilling frost of fall.

Rushing about,
I do my humble best;
digging potatoes and storing them
before the inevitable rest.

Gathering the fruits of hard work,
just a few treasures I reap;
the earth goes in hibernation
for three short months of sleep.

Pray be, let the sun go to sea,
this alpha of life to cover me.

A blanket of white
covers the ground in protection;
like the soil, I cherish this time
seeing a touch of perfection.

Relaxing in degrees of idleness
of which there is no change;
I wish for a touch of spring,
my life in earth, I exchange.

The aurora is a light touch
against my face, a caress;
striking warm on sleepy white,
trees covered in green dress.

Pray be, let the sun go to sea,
this alpha of life to cover me.

In my eternal bed,
I have returned to the threshold of life;
no scorching sun to trample me,
relieved of worries and strife.

Caressed by nature
I have become a part of the earth;
my soul will always burgeon forth,
in May I have rebirth.

Time to enjoy the leaves and grass,
I rest beneath this gift;
content to sleep peacefully,
this is my eternal lift.

Pray be, let the sun go to sea,
this alpha of life to cover me.

PHYLLIS SALLING



LEE NUTTING



THEODORE AGUIRRE



DANNY WILSON
Second Place Drawing



KIM GUINN



CHARLES WARDEN

JUDGES

- Photography: Stephen Scheer is a professional photographer who lives in New York City.
- Drawing: Lester Pross is chairman of the Art Department at Berea College, at Berea, Kentucky.
- Poetry: Betsy Sholl, of Big Stone Gap, Virginia, is a poet, author of *Changing Faces*, and most recently, *Appalachian Winter* (Alice James Books, 1978).
- Fiction: Rob Truscott, poet and fiction writer, directs the Writing Center at Douglass College and the Joyce Kilmer Poetry Center, and is book review editor of *Stone Country*.

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