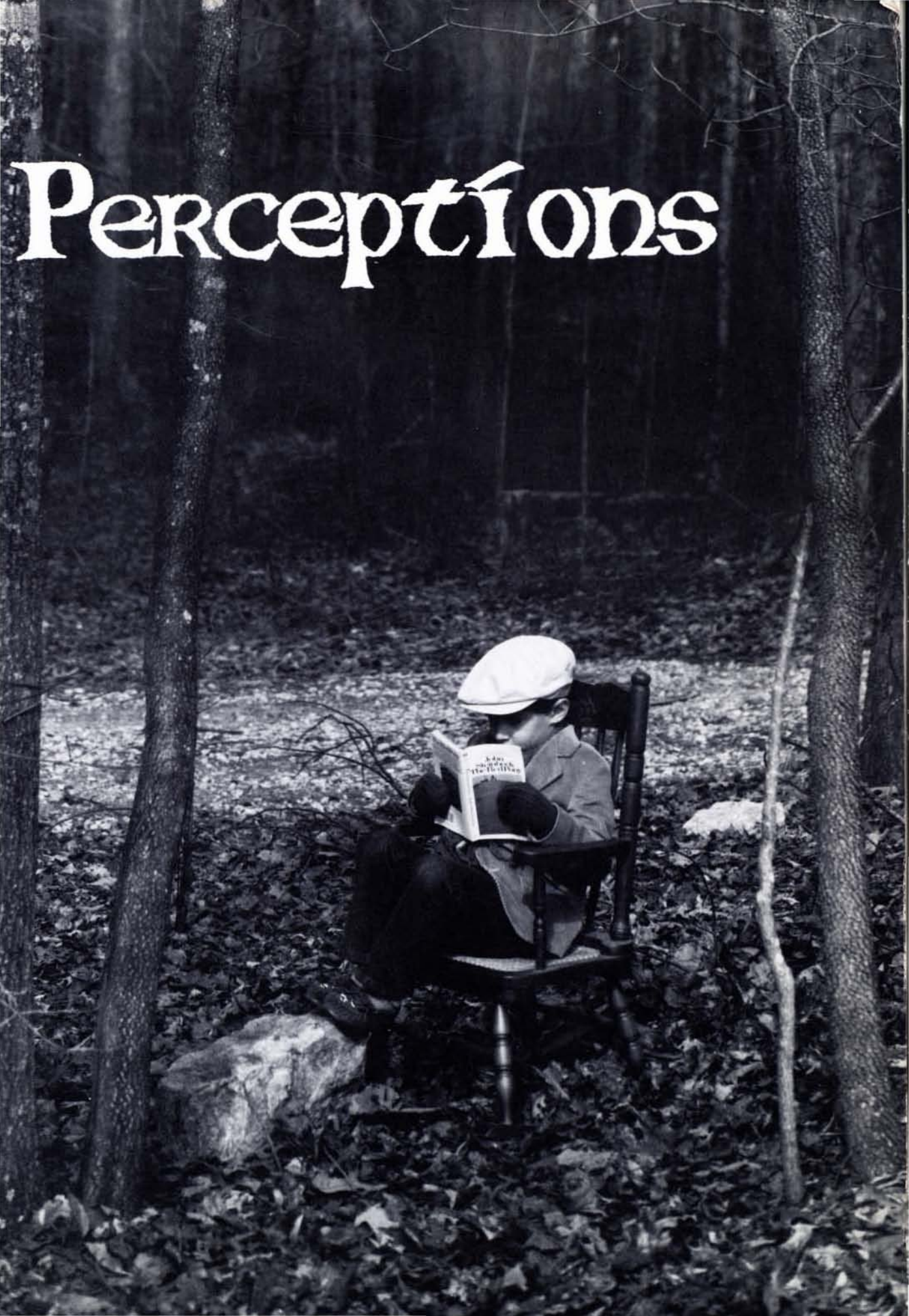


Perceptions



Perceptions

Editor: Chris McMichael

Associate Editor: Kevin Heumaneus

Staff: Marilyn Bedsworth, Tammy Buchanan,
Shirly Miller Jones

Faculty Advisor: Sally Russell

"If the doors of perception were
cleansed every thing would appear
to man as it is, infinite."

William Blake

We wish to express SPECIAL THANKS to Frankie Abercrombie for use of the Anchor Office and to Barbara McMichael for professional proofreading. We also appreciate Dr. Jim Kline of the Humanities Division and Dr. Jack Jones of Student Activities who found the necessary funds to finance this expanded edition.

EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS are due Barbara Thomas who word-processed this entire book cheerfully and efficiently.

COVER: Barby Shaw



Ann Magruder Bowen

VOL. V

1986

GAINESVILLE JUNIOR COLLEGE

HUMANITIES DIVISION

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

A UNIT OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

Perceptions is a creative arts magazine published by the Humanities Division and Student Activities of Gainesville Junior College to encourage the arts among students, faculty, and friends of the college. Some of the works published herein are the creative products of art and writing classes; others are contributions from friends of the creative arts.

All unsolicited manuscripts and art work should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. While care will be exercised in the handling of these materials the editorial staff cannot assume responsibility for them in the event of damage or loss. Submissions will be accepted for consideration during fall and winter quarters for publication each spring. Submit all materials to Sally Russell, Humanities Division, Gainesville Junior College, Box 1358, Gainesville, Georgia 30503.

CONTENTS

PROSE

Andros, Nagib	5	A Sniper
Charamond, Ilse	37	My Father
Heumaneus, Kevin	10	Caster of the First Stone
Jones, Shirley Miller	18	Beth
McMichael, Chris	45	Epitaph for an Aviator
Spriggs, Robby	25	Come Hell or High Water

POETRY

Bedsworth, Marilyn	13	!Es la Mia!
	13	It's All Mine!
Brady, Roger	21	Sleeping Tree
Braswell, Janet	39	Fragments
	35	pearls
	1	Post Graduate Class
	24	The Children: an Eclipse
Buchanan, T. K.	14	Christmas '85
	2	Spanky
	7	I Have a Rainbow for You
	47	Empty Skies
	39	Webbed into a Sonant Stage
Chandler, Christa	30	The Rhinestone Cat
	6	Who Is More Foolish
Clements, Emily	7	Innocence - Lost and Found
Cockrel, Don	6	A Sky that Knew No Grace
Danchetz, Dot	4	One Woman's Fate
Gilbert, J. Miller	48	Ballad
	16	Sonnets
Hall, Thelma	1	The Locksmith
Heumaneus, Kevin	18	Sonnet
Jones, Shirley Miller	29	October
	4	We Are Womon
Kitchens, Kimberly	14	ROSE or ESOR
	16	Untitled
Kline, Jim	17	Hoggerel
Lathem, Robbie	35	Resolution
MacWade, Mary Musulin	21	Blank
	42	The River of My Mind
McMichael, Barbara	41	Dragon Dance
	32	I Have a Longing
	15	On Karma

Denise Murphy

McMichael, Chris	18	For the Klan's Men at E.H.H.
	9	Outlaw Hero
	15	Sonnet
	36	The Edge
	9	Wind Voices
McNeilly, Steven	49	Prefrontal Lobotomy
Maine, Betty	39	Ninevah Revisited
	33	The Cooing of the Turtle Dove...
	8	When I Was One and Six
Nichelson, Mary Jane	13	Epiphany
Niles, Wade	43	Earth Mother
	1	I Am
Pinson, Donna	2	Casey's Second Chance
	31	Playing Life
	44	Prostitute
Russell, Sally	22	Autumn Song
	35	Insomnia
	43	Pilgrimage
	32	Unexpected
	22	We Have Been Visited by the Hawk
Spriggs, Robby	34	Status Alpha
	14	To a Diapason
T., Barbara	20	Come Again
Terrell, Bob	23	Autumn
	30	Love Potion?
	16	Why Do We?
Waller, Ed and Chris McMichael	40	Four A.M.

ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Bowen, Ann Magruder	I, 23, 24, 33, 42
Daughtry, Lisa	40, 47
McKenzie, Michelle	8
McMichael, Chris	36, 46
Murphy, Denise	II, 22
Pardue, Suzan	III, 12, 30
Phillips, Tracey	20
Shaw, Barby	cover
Stanley, James	38
Terrell, Bob	3, 9, 30
Traylor, Rhonda	25, 31

Suzan Pardue

THE LOCKSMITH

He walks or sits
folded inside himself,
a self-seal envelope
marked return to sender.
The tiny shop smells of metal,
a scent his hands will carry
to his grave.
He is a dead-bolt lock
without a key.
In his dreams he hears tumblers
trying to align,
sees wings sprouting
from his in-grown shoulders,
feels ideas spreading bright
as peacock feathers
from his opened mind.
But always, he awakes
before the key is turned.

Thelma R. Hall

I AM

I Am many things
I Am only me
Humble
Free
A single glance
Touch the Sky
The Universe
Beyond
A Tree
Behold
A Community
Eons old
A field of Goldenrod
Not for man
Just there
Forever
A Bird's song
For tomorrow
Brings a mate
Time goes on
I will not
Today is mine!

Wade Niles

POST GRADUATE CLASS

When I lived just
down the road, this
was wooded land,
tall pines,
and underbush,

where now a brick
and glass building stands.

I look up from my
desk, on a bird's-eye
level with a tree
branch; Six, no seven
years later, still
doing homework.

Janet Thomas Braswell

CASEY'S SECOND CHANCE

Spring training time was close at hand
for Mudville's hapless nine
And all the players had agreed
on contract terms they'd signed
Except for good ol' Casey,
who was holding out for more
Despite his batting slump that cost
his team the year before.

The Mudville owner met with Casey
on an April day
to learn how much his fallen star
expected him to pay
The owner told the press, "There won't
be much to talk about.
I can't believe that man expects
a raise for striking out!"

Yet who could doubt that Casey held
the key to Mudville's fate
As he walked grandly through the door
to re-negotiate?
Unsmiling Casey spoke his piece
He said, "I've got it planned
To stay at home this year unless
I'm paid nine hundred grand."

The owner smiled and said, "I've
got some news that just won't keep.
We've signed a rookie from Spokane
who plays both good and cheap.
He seldom blunders when at bat
so, Casey, my advice
Is practice hard at home this year
'cause you've just struck out twice!"

Donna Pinson

FOR SPANKY

I may grow up and out someday
I may even just grow old
But never will I grow to plant
The seed that youth has sewn.

These are my cardboard boxes
And my big aluminum pans
My closet door to write upon
And puppet shows with hands.

So race to fight your blazing fire
Go be that circus clown
Operate upon your dog
And run a big touchdown.
Then place in mine your little hand
Let me introduce to you
A dreamer dreaming dreams as big
As liquid sky is blue

For I still sail the stormy seas
On Spelling homework boats.
I fold and lick until it sticks
And "Hippopotomous" floats.
" Hippopotomous...h-i-p..." sink.

T. K. Buchanan



WE ARE WOMON

Thank you Doris D.
I heard you
You touched me.
Opened my senses
Let them free.
I know you.
You know me.
Our souls have yearned
And learned
And lived to see.
As I dig my way out
You're leading me.
I know about hostility
My man wants to Preach.
Not me!
I want to write and laugh
talk dirty, if need be.
Bring the world to its knees
If that's what it needs.
Yea! I heard you Doris D.
You shared with me
Taught me to see.

Shirley Miller Jones

ONE WOMAN'S FATE

The daydreamer writes and the story unfolds-
A fairytale of daydreams, all too realistically told.
What are their meanings? Only Freud could relate-
As the saga unending continues to date.

Once upon a time, a woman - a person unknown -
Walked through a garden she didn't own.
There was life all around her; pure, clean, loving and kind -
And that's where she lost everything - including her mind.
She tended the garden, watched it flourish and grow,
While she became wrinkled and ugly - much like a troll.
That's when it happened and she left the estate,
Thinking the garden would always be safe.
She left the tending to others and searched for the lost,
But never bothered to weigh all the cost.
As chance would have it, she did make a find,
But could never come back, being now captive of time.

And so this endless tale continues for those who dare
To stay in the garden and tend it with care.
But, if they too should decide to escape -
Down the road not taken - to meet their fate -
At least they go now with one factor known:
You can never return to a garden not owned.

Dot Danchetz

A SNIPER

It was November of the year 1976 when the Israeli Army invaded Southern Lebanon. The Lebanese people were divided between the ones who helped Israel because they were paid lots of money, and the republicans who remained loyal to their country; thus, many families were grievously divided.

This is a story of an incident that happened to a friend of mine who was a republican sniper. I caught sight of him two years ago in a street in Beirut, the capital, as I was walking to my father's work place. We sat down in a cafe and began to chat about the situation there when he told me a story which made me know war and its cruelty. He began like this:

"Although I was only 17 years old I was already a sniper; and on a cold November night, I was stationed on the roof of a building on the frontier. All day had passed without my eating anything; so I reached out for a sandwich that I had kept in my pocket since that same morning. I could feel the cold wind that caressed my face while I was eating my sandwich. When I finished, I felt the need of a cigarette. I knew that lighting a cigarette at night was too dangerous, but I couldn't resist. I reached for the cigarettes in my pocket and lit one.

"I could hear the roaring of the bombs in the distance, and I could also see their flashes on the horizon. Suddenly, a bullet whizzed near my head. I lay down and looked from a little hole in the wall that I was hiding behind. I saw the shadow of an enemy sniper who was hiding in the opposite building. I immediately put out my cigarette and stood still behind the wall.

"Half an hour passed when I heard a truck coming in my direction. The truck was an Israeli truck with soldiers inside. It came to a stop in a little park below the building I was in; then an old lady came out of a house and began speaking to an officer in the truck. Motioning, she pointed in my direction. Suddenly, I knew that she was an informer who was betraying her country. I didn't wait any longer, but took out the last hand-grenade in my pocket, opened it, stood up, and threw it into the truck, making it explode with its soldiers and the informer woman. I was looking to see if anyone was still alive when the other sniper shot me in my right arm, and my gun fell down to the street.

"I sat still behind the wall, my arm bleeding so much that I didn't know whether I should stay or leave; since if I stood up the enemy sniper would shoot me, I stayed. My arm was hurting me like a thousand devils, so I took a piece of cloth from my pants and tied it above the wound. After an hour had passed, my arm was numb. I decided to take the bullet out myself. I took out a pocket knife which was rusty and old, and I stuck the blade below the bullet. Bleeding all over myself, I thought my bone was cracking when I was forcing the bullet out. After several attempts, I finally managed to take it out and stood still for a moment, which made me think about the people I had killed who were lying down below in pools of blood. I also thought about myself and the trouble I was in and the red thick liquid that was all over me. At that moment, disgusted with life and war, I swore to stop fighting and killing more people. One must enjoy life in peaceful and quiet ways. But I had to kill this enemy sniper any way I could.

"My right arm was bleeding and I had only a pocket gun which I held in my left hand. I raised my helmet above the wall making it look like the figure of a man. The enemy sniper fired at it and made it fall to the street below. Thinking that he had killed me, he stood up on the other roof. In this moment, I stood up and fired at him and made him fall to the street. I had a strange feeling. I didn't know if it was happiness, disgust, fear, or pain. I had killed men before, but I had never had that feeling in my life. I was going to walk away, but something in my heart dragged me down to see the man I killed. He was facing down, so I reached out with my left arm, turned him over, and saw my brother's face."

Nagib Andros

"A SKY THAT KNEW NO GRACE"

A seemingly routine expedition
we have seen them before
Often taking them for granted
along with the need to explore

To delve into the last frontier
so we might win the race
but instead there was a tear
that streaked a nation's face

It started out as usual
with a chanted countdown
Lift-off was wonderful
until smiles turned into frowns

A major malfunction occurred
something was very wrong
a flash of horror then blurred
the hopeful wishes of everyone

Who came to watch the triumph
of scientific technology
Never thinking they would see
the worst of this tragedy

A catastrophe for those who fell
from a sky that knew no grace
May God keep them safe and well
as they travel to a heavenly place

Don Cockrel

WHO IS MORE FOOLISH?

Who is more foolish, the moth or I
for flying at the flame?
She at the candle,
I at the sky,
Will our fates be the same?

She has flown too near
and burned her wings.
Now helpless,
the poor moth expires.
Will I be drawn to where
the cosmos sings,
To perish in heavenly fires?

Christa Chandler

INNOCENCE. . . LOST AND FOUND

E. to Gary

A poet and a young man sat on the grass in a land out of time.
Over the careful horizon loomed
stone by stone, cathedral by cathedral,
a quiet castle- silent but for the chiming of the winds
carelessly molding its surface.
The poet watched as the young man gently captured a star
from the heavens; then, with the firey light briefly
illuminating his features, he let it float freely back.
Elves shyly sat away from them, strumming melodies
on flower stems- singing to accompany the mushrooms and
the waterfall, liltng and healing.
The poet plucked a flying phrase, and had it lie quietly
upon the page- again observing the young man, who now
sketched pictures with moonbeams lying about.
Here there were many happy lifetimes spent.
One sunlit morn the poet opened her eyes
to find Camelot missing.
Accepting, she shrugged and turned to find her friend,
who smiled at her
with starlit eyes.

Emily Clements

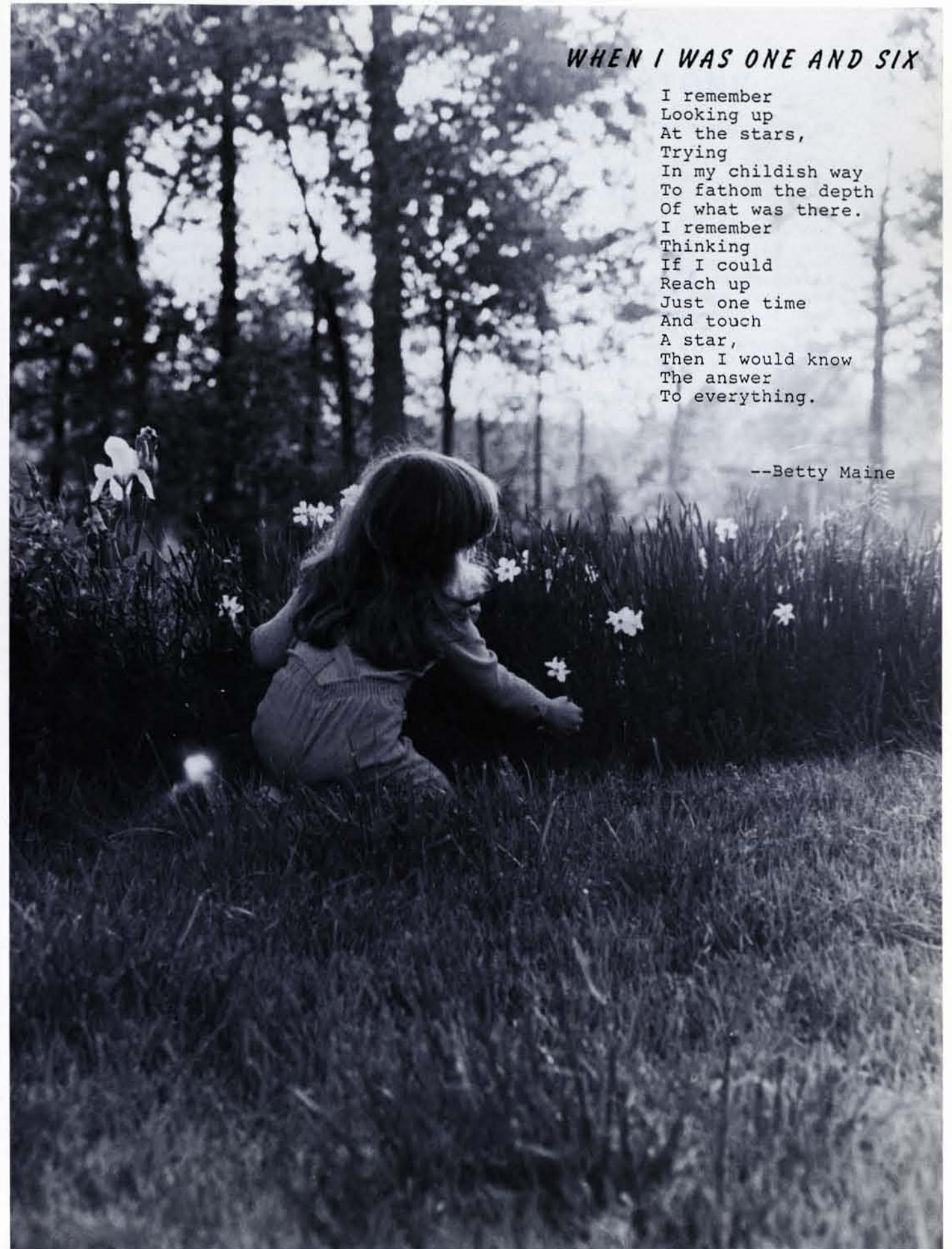
I HAVE A RAINBOW

I have a rainbow for you.
You looked like you needed one, so I stretched to
the sky and bargained something precious for it.
Here it is.

Colors O.K. for you? You have the softest smile and
the most kind eyes, I just had to get it for you.
It will go with what you're wearing and pretty much
everything you have. See... it's all I have that you
need...all that I can give you. Unless, of course...
you'd accept my heart.

I saved it for you. Well, I didn't exactly save it for
you. O.K., It's a little used, and it's not in the
best of shape. It breaks at the drop of a hat, but
it's a good heart, and it's dying to be yours.

T. K. Buchanan



WHEN I WAS ONE AND SIX

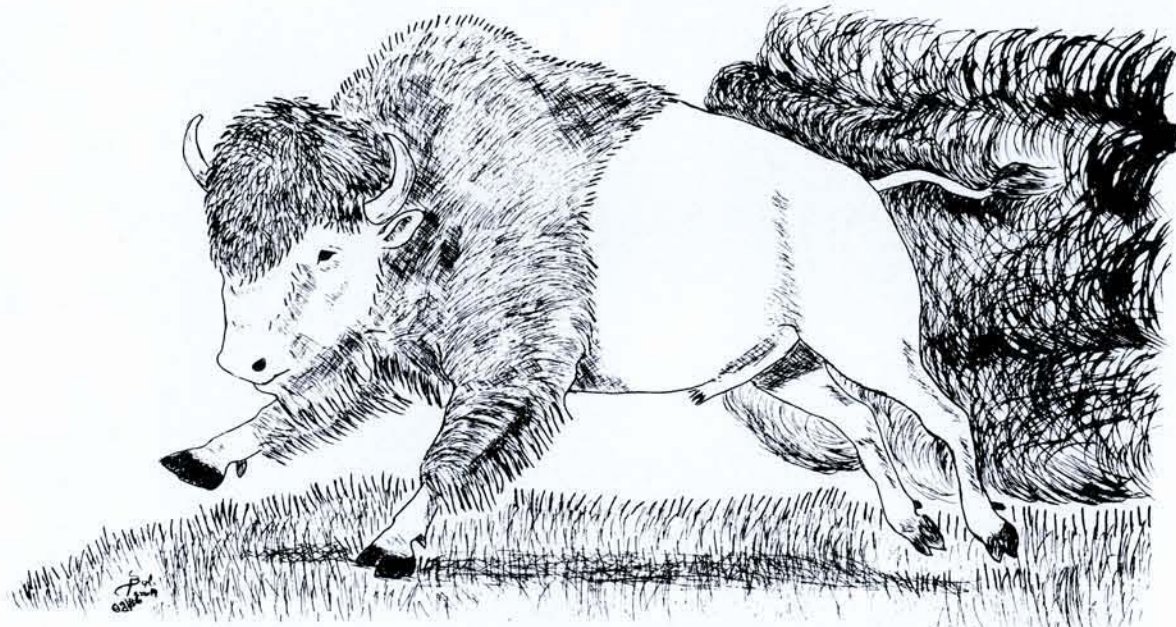
I remember
Looking up
At the stars,
Trying
In my childish way
To fathom the depth
Of what was there.
I remember
Thinking
If I could
Reach up
Just one time
And touch
A star,
Then I would know
The answer
To everything.

--Betty Maine

WIND VOICES

Can you hear the voices my son?
What voices old man?
The voices of your ancestors
The warriors that rode the plains
With courage and confidence
The ancestors that hunted
The great buffalo
And worshipped
The natural aspects of the world
The people that lived by
Hand and skill,
And, once upon a time,
Followed the seasons
Where they willed.
Now their voices
Only echo
Down the mountainsides
On the breath
Of the wind
That whispers
Through the trees.

Chris McMichael



Bob Terrell

OUTLAW HERO

Outlaw-Hero.
Slinger of guns.
Lover, wanderer.
Killer, preserver.
Ride your fast horse
far and wide
Across the desert
of late-night TV.

Chris McMichael

CASTER OF THE FIRST STONE

Commander Martin Terrance dreamed often of the early days on Canusin, in the days before godhood.

He dreamt often of the days when he and Shelna had first begun to swim in the pool behind Shelna's hunt. Its cool, inviting waters had more than once freed him from the bounds of Canusin's oppressive gravity. There, he was free. He was Shelna's equal in the water, just as he would later be her superior on land. They would sometimes romp and play in the water for hours. When they emerged, the tiny beads of water--interspersed with the syrupy-like secretion which coated her skin--glistened in the radiation of Canusin's two suns, and he forgot all about gravity that was two times earth-normal, and missions uncompleted. Those were his happiest days on Canusin, in the days before godhood. He sometimes, often, wished he could regain them, but that was far beyond his means. Even a god has his limits.

His elevation to god was something which he, like all truly conscientious members of the Interplanetary Development League, had tried his damndest to avoid. But this newly discovered planet, with its lush, tropical climate and strangely intoxicating women, had broken down all resistance almost immediately. He had been on so many other worlds, and had resisted temptation so many times that he was surprised at his susceptibility to this planet's charms. As always, his original mission objectives had been clearly outlined: scout the planet's natural resources, develop an alliance with the native inhabitants, teach them to exploit their world's wealth, and, most importantly, introduce them to the Religion. The only religion. Surprisingly, though, Canusin had very little in the way of natural resources. It was more mineral-poor than any inhabited planet he had ever been on. There were none of the heavy metals that the Interplanetary League so desperately needed, and only enough food to support the native population. This world had a rigidly balanced ecosystem, one which the slightest shock could throw out of kilter. Thus, he was left with a seven-year mission, no radio contact with the rest of the League (and this far out, not even ore freighters dared to venture), and a native population that practically worshipped him.

Small wonder that he decided to become a god.

Any member of the development team found it easy to become worshipped as a god on these little backwater planets. After all, to someone who still hunted with wooden spears and clubs, the technology of the League must surely seem like magic. A well-armed native--well-armed meaning carrying a heavy club--might occasionally kill enough to feed his family for a few days. But a man armed with one of the League's blasters could wipe out an entire herd of animals in less than a second. With his arrival on Canusin had come a new bounty. The people, now growing fat and satiated, had every reason to look upon him as their god. And he, having nothing better to do with his time, was willing to play the role to the hilt, if only for a little while. But he soon discovered that such power was addictive.

Godhood definitely had its advantages.

Shelna was made his consort (though, of course, he could have any woman he deigned worthy to make love to him). He lived a life of luxury. And soon, when he became completely acclimated to the atmosphere and used to its gravity, he no longer needed the survival suit he had worn in the early days. For 15 years he served as god of the people, basking in the glow of their worship. He never made contact with the survey ships which passed by every five years or so. He never thought of mineral wealth, or exploitation of resources, or missions abandoned. He never thought of the Grand Inquisitor.

But the Grand Inquisitor thought often of him.

His job was to deal with those who took the responsibility of godhood upon themselves. He had seen many good men go astray, and Commander Martin Terrance was no different from any of the rest. He had had his eye on this one for some time, in fact. He could detect weakness through the strongest facade, and he knew Martin to be the type to give in to temptation. However, he never pressed for his resignation or forced removal from the League. He even recommended him for several promotions. Martin had risen quickly through the ranks until he was given that most honored of posts, a planetary surveyor. Even then, he had resisted temptation for a while. But the Grand Inquisitor knew he could not resist forever. He felt it better to let sin reveal itself rather than squelch it before it got started. So Martin had enjoyed unprecedented freedom in his dealings with native populations.

The Grand Inquisitor had given him just enough rope, and he had hung himself.

Thus it was that on the morning of June 24, 2485, he found himself in orbit around Canusin. He could imagine basking in the glory of his godhood, secure in the knowledge that he had his followers to protect him, content that he was out of range of the League's peculiar brand of justice. His delusion of power would be his downfall, of course. That's the way it always worked. The Inquisitor could imagine Martin's once pudgy little body having grown firm and muscular because of this planet's high gravity. After all, fat men made lousy gods. Martin would not have to be merely defeated; he must be humiliated in front of his worshippers, killed and strung up for all to see. Only then would these natives see that there was no god other than the one and only true god. Only then would they be saved.

He teleported down to the most likely spot, the village where he had detected the highest population concentration on the planet. He immediately noticed several huge statues, all with faces strangely reminiscent of Martin's. Being careful to remain out of sight, he scouted the village until he came to a hut standing beside a pool of crystal-clear water. In the pool was a man with conspicuously pale skin swimming with one of the native women. Their nude forms romped and played, paying him no heed. He switched off the device which warped light rays around his body, making himself visible once more. Then he spoke, and the god turned to see his conqueror.

How could he have forgotten the Grand Inquisitor. He felt the same fear, mixed with awe and respect, that he had always felt in his presence on earth. For a moment he panicked. The Inquisitor's long, red robe flowed in the brisk wind, and beneath the hood gleamed two piercing red eyes. Then Martin remembered his own godhood, and he commanded his followers to come to his aid, to protect the glory of their god. In an instant, his worshippers were arrayed around him, armed to the teeth. He stepped boldly from the water, secure in his omnipotence.

The Inquisitor's eyes seemed to burn right through him, laying open his soul and revealing all the shame and sin that lay therein. "Commander Martin Terrence, you have been found guilty of heresy," he said with no hint of emotion in his voice, "and sentenced to summary execution. Have you anything to say in your defense."

The god did not deign the Inquisitor worthy of being spoken to by him. Instead he ordered his worshippers to attack the intruder and slay him in the name of their god. In the ensuing melee, twenty of the natives were killed. Martin began to feel fear. He ran toward the village, and the remaining natives attempted to keep the Inquisitor from reaching him. He brushed them aside with ease and walked up to the man, who had stumbled and fallen. He abandoned the tactic of running in favor of prayer. He looked up into the Inquisitor's face, and said, "Dear father, please forgive me, for I have sinned. I have held myself to be a false god . . ." Martin disappeared in a flash of brilliantly hot light which emerged from somewhere beneath the Inquisitor's robe.

The god was dead.

The Inquisitor felt a white-hot knife of light slice into his body, destroying the teleporter. He turned to see Shelna, who held Martin's blaster, pointing it at him. With a speed which belied his great size, he lurched forward, snatching the gun from her and crushing it with his prodigious strength. She knelt before him, as did the other natives, and began to chant the name they had once reserved for Martin.

The Inquisitor's injuries were not to be immediately fatal, for his physically enhanced body could withstand much. In time, however, they might kill him. And he could not return to a League planet, because the remnants of his teleporter lay in pieces on the ground before him. He was trapped here, for no ship would come for quite some time. Inquisitors were given their own sweet time to take care of things. So he looked at the planet, and at his worshippers, and made the inevitable decision.

He could remain, here in luxury, for a long time.

Perhaps forever.

Or until a rescue ship arrived.

Or until he died.

It did not matter.

Kevin Heumanus



Suzan Pardue

IT'S ALL MINE!

I alone
am responsible
for my well-being:
for all of my feelings,
and my reactions,
for all of my joys and sorrows,
for whatsoever I may meet
from day to day.
I alone
am sovereign
of all of my life;
there is no one else
who has this responsibility.
It's all mine !

Marilyn Bedsworth

¡ES LA MÍA!

Yo solo
tengo la responsabilidad
para mi bienestar:
de todos los sentimientos,
y las reacciones,
de todas las gozas y tristezas,
de cualquier cosa que me encuentro
de día en día
Yo solo
soy soberana
de toda mi vida;
no hay ninguna otra persona
que tiene esta responsabilidad.
Es la mía !

Marilyn Bedsworth

EPIPHANY

Rush of wind,
Bending trees,
Blooming boughs,
New green leaves.

Overhead an arch of blue--
Once again the world is new!

Mary Jane Nickelson

TO A DIAPASON

Ivory fingers, upon ivory keys,
Fall softly like the snow upon the ground,
And play a silent melody, a sound
That only hearts can hear and dreams can seize.
It is an ageless rhapsody, composed
Upon a moment's frenzied reverie,
Whose origin can ne'er be traced by me,
Whose mysteries no sage has yet disclosed.
Though timeless it may be in its refrain,
It sings a different name to ev'ry heart.
And the name I find within my heart's domain
Lives musically and never shall depart--
A lyric that arises from within--
A melody whose name is Carolyn.

Robby J. Spriggs

ROSE OR ESOR

An animated extended feature
A life-long cartoon
Walking upside down continually
While the world watches
Laughing

I try to right things
And a rock falls from above
Crushing the inspiration
I almost felt
Or I slip
And fall from a cliff
Or see my confidence
Slapped into
The side of a wall

But I continue
Looking for a real
Life-long sweet smelling
Soft-feeling
Right-side-up
Rose

Kimberly Kitchens

CHRISTMAS '85

Here, in a sleepless breath of night
By a pasteled blinking light
With the home-fire's crackling sound
And the family all bedded down...

Now it's even later still
As tempest sleep clashes with will
As I lay counting minute's blinks
Excitement builds and stomach sinks...

Inasmuch as I love the life I live
Inasmuch as I choose this most ripe gift
I live to give You something in return.
I have waited all night for a miracle
A cleansing of my soul by Your relived birth
I stand here unafraid... and not alone.

Here, before my eyes this spiritual
Man changed from beast to beautiful
And I forgot I could not fly
And soulfull, silvered, took to sky.

T. K. Buchanan

ON KARMA

Have I loved you long enough,
Hard enough?
Probably not.
But I tried,
Through years of dullness,
Days of brightness,
Months of anger,
Lifetimes of joy,
Over and over.
Again, the trying,
Striving for perfection
Through a thousand incarnations
Doomed to the trying
Karma-tied until it's perfect,
And keeping secret
From the cosmic order
The individual hidden wish:
So long as imperfection means
Ourselves
Doomed to repeat
Our loving,
I hope
That I never do really
Get it right.

Barbara McMichael

ASCENSION

Come with me now to the end of our days
Through sunshine's warmth and winter's cold, hard hail,
Together we shall penetrate the haze
That clouds the unknown shadows of our trail.
Upwards through the windswept mountains of life
Among foothills of youth, just you and I
Will now follow our trail, husband and wife
And soon make camp beneath a starlit sky.
A new day dawns, we mount the trail as one,
And others join us now in upward climb
To walk with us 'till other trails beckon;
In high alpine meadows we leave our prime.
On up the steep slopes of old age we go
At last to stand atop the peak...and know.

Chris McMichael

UNTITLED

As the wind and rain
Whipped about
The water churned
Black with doubt

A hidden scream
Swelled and died
Amongst the turmoil
A lonely frightened soul
Hidden from light
By dark and evil clouds

With energy fading fast
The small white hands
Grasped for substance
To fight the dark waters
Holding to the broken boat
Begging for life

A beam of light
From above the clouds
The hands are lifted
Slowly the lost soul
Lifted from the water
Above the clouds
Leaving the sin to churn
In evil turmoil
Alone for eternity

Kimberly Kitchens

SONNETS

Sonnets, so simple, and easy to write--
That's what I thought when I sat down to start.
A quatrain? A couplet? That's all the parts?
I'm ready to go, 3 a.m. last night.
Russell, I'll kill you, if ever again
You force me to write like that old Shakespeare.
I realize his style was valued as dear,
Half asleep on the floor, here in my den.
An epic, an ode, much simpler for me:
This sonnet, it seems as tough as shoe leather!
Ideas flown, no source from the weather.
I think my classmates will surely agree,
Sonnet, to you I will be no puppet!
Three quatrains and a silly old couplet.

J. Miller Gilbert

WHY DO WE?

We talk,
But nothing is said;

We look,
But nothing is seen;

We reach out,
But nothing is found;

We cry,
But nothing is
changed;

We scream,
But nothing is heard;

We give,
But nothing is
returned;

We receive,
But nothing is given;

We write,
But nothing is read;

We read,
But nothing is learned;

We hear,
But nothing is
remembered;

We feel,
But nothing is felt;

We hate,
But nothing is hateful;

We love,
But nothing is loved;

We die,
But nothing is buried;

So why do we ... WHY
DO WE ?

Bob Terrell

hoggerel

A cross-eyed cat and a three-legged dog
Sat in a back yard talkin' to a spotted hog.
Said the cross-eyed cat, "I'm in a mess, you see
'Cause my eyes're so crossed, can't even climb a tree.
I see some things here and some things there
I know which is which, but I can't tell where."

Now the dog spoke up and said, "What about me!
With only one back leg, can't even mark a tree.
I used to run rabbits and an occasional cat
but with these three legs, I can't even do that!"

The hog had listened to all their woe
And thought it was time to let them know
That it ain't all bad for a cross-eyed kitty,
And a three-legged dog can be sittin' kinda pretty.

When you take a good look at the woe all around,
You better count your blessing anywhere they're found.

Hog asked the cat, "When a dog chases you
And you look for a tree, do you see one or two?"
Cat answered back, "Why Hog, I see three!
So how'm I gonna know which is the real tree?"

Hog turned to the dog, and said "Dog can you run?"
And Dog answered, "Yes, but it ain't much fun!
I run so slow I can't even catch a cold."

Hog answered back in a voice loud and bold,
"If the truth were known and the tale well-told,
That you can run at all is worth pure gold.
For a three-legged dog, it's not how fast--
It's that he runs at all that makes him first class.
Now quit your bitchin' and say 'By God,
I'm the fastest dog alive with the name Tripod!'"

Then Hog said, "Go and have some fun!
Let the cat and the dog have a damm good run!
When you both tire out like a worn-out fiddle
Let the kitty make a jump for the tree in the middle."

Jim Kline

INTROSPECTION

In the background of many lives,
Always demanding your will be done,
Seven children, but a single wife,
Though she tells me of other ones.
This fog of years clouds my view;
I don't see with very clear eyes.
Dear father, who in Hell were you,
To arouse hatred in one such as I.
In fact, your name becomes mine,
And so fervently I may hope
To not cross the crooked line,
And hang myself on your knotted rope.
In death, at least, you nourish life,
As you never did with child and wife.

Kevin Heumaneus

FOR THE KLAN'S MEN AT E.H.H. 11/85

Ghosts in white sheets
Haunt the dark
During the day.
Flying a flag of
Blood, white, and blue.
They turn unseeing eyes
Upon those souls
Who try to escape
From graves of ignorance.

Chris McMichael

BETH

At the age of eight, Beth followed her mother outside on a cool spring morning. They walked over to a cardboard box behind the wash shed. Her mother started to take out of the box paper and junk that needed to be thrown away. Beth could see that some of the paper was in tiny strips and wads. As her mother lifted some old newspapers, Beth saw them: they were all curled up into a small cluster looking like miniature piglets. They were the cutest little things Beth had ever seen. Beth's mother was disgusted and appalled; to her they were nasty baby mice. Beth wanted to keep them. Her mother ordered Maggie, Beth's older sister, to fetch the shovel. Beth knew what was coming and began to beg and plead with her mother.

"Oh please, please, mamma; I'll take good care of them, please." Her mother refused the compromise, as she pushed the dull blade of the shovel towards the tiny pink bundles. Beth began to sob louder.

"Please mamma, don't; they're just babies." She screamed as she ran over and grabbed at her mother's right arm. It was too late. The few tiny pink creatures that teetered on the edge of the spade had been tossed into the creek. Beth's mother was laughing at her, making it even harder for Beth to understand her mother's barbaric actions. By this time Beth was hysterical and screaming even louder.

"How can you do that? They're just little babies. They're so cute. When I was a little baby you wouldn't have gotten rid of me like that." Her mother couldn't stop laughing. Beth was confused and brokenhearted as she watched her mother take the shovel and mutilate the rest of the baby mice and throw them into the cold, cold deep.

Fifteen years later Beth had just given birth to her second child, a nine-pound, twelve ounce girl. Beth had followed the doctor's advice and had been fitted with a good protective intrauterine device, an I.U.D. the doctor had called it. She thought she was protected against pregnancy. She was totally baffled when she started waking up sick every morning. The morning sickness turned into a constant-never ending problem. Beth called her doctor made an appointment.

After a few tests, the doctor came in and said, "Beth, it's positive; you're pregnant."

"Frozen at first in shock, she began to cry. "How could this have happened?" she asked her doctor.

"You told me there was only a one percent chance in ninety-nine that I could get pregnant."

As Beth drove home, she could hardly see the road for the steady stream of tears. She was pregnant with her third child with a new baby and a three-year-old son at home, and she was sick. She was sick in her stomach and in her heart. Finally, unable to take care of her children, Beth called the doctor again and made another appointment. When he saw her weakened condition, he became concerned about a possible miscarriage. Beth was stunned but obliged to listen as the doctor spoke.

"You live so far from the hospital, Beth, that if you lose this baby, you'll probably bleed to death before you get here. Go home, talk to your husband about having an abortion, and let me know what you decide; I'll take it from there."

Beth's husband had been raised believing that a man worked from sun to sun, but a woman's work was never done.

"Beth you can't be serious," he said. "Something's wrong with a woman who doesn't want to have her husband's children."

Beth said, "Yes that's right. I'm sick and the doctor is also concerned with my state of mind."

Beth's husband began to argue. "I had to go through boot-camp preparing for the army when I didn't want to."

Beth said, "Yes, and you would've gotten out of it if you could have." Beth's husband finally agreed to the abortion, but he just couldn't understand.

The doctor and three nurses had been waiting at the clinic for Beth to arrive. She was led into a back room and given a paper gown to put on. She was told to lie down on the examining table and put her legs into the stirrups. Looking around the room, she saw a cart; on it were two jugs--one had a hose leading from it with a long nozzle at the end. A cold chill ran through her body. Somehow she knew what the apparatus was for. Although she was convinced she was doing the right thing, her fear couldn't be controlled.

The doctor came in and told her he had to scrub her out. No matter how much soap he used, the sponge felt rough inside her. The scrubbing seemed endless. Although Beth had been given shots of something to make her groggy, she could still feel what was going on below.

The nurses were called in; two of them stood on either side of Beth to keep her from falling off the table, or from trying anything. The third nurse assisted the doctor and wheeled over the cart holding the two bottles. Beth in her drunken state said, "Wait, I'm not asleep."

The nurses laughed. "You want to be asleep don't ya' honey? You'll be ok."

Beth felt the long nozzle go deep inside and press against the mouth of her womb. She closed her eyes tightly and felt her body tense with the loud noise of the vacuuming suction coming from the machine. She could feel a slow pulling deep inside her belly. The pulling became stronger and stronger, until finally something tore loose and she heard it plop into the cold, cold deep.

Shirley Miller Jones

COME AGAIN,

When I'll want to see you
Without hating your youth,
Beautiful eyes, and smooth, smooth skin.

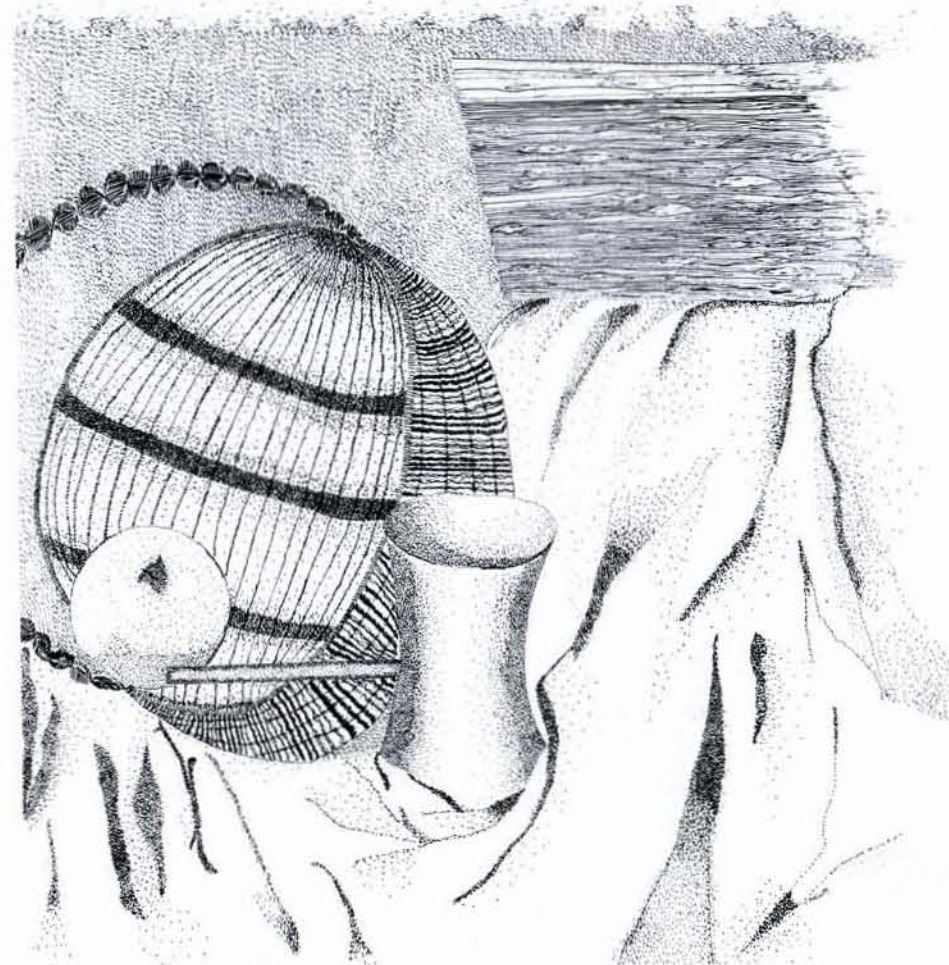
Come again,
When I won't mind listening
Without jealousy to your endearing thoughts of her--
With her youth, beauty and sexual liberality.

Come again,
When I can look at you
And believe instead of hate
Your kindness and your thoughtfulness.

Come again,
When I can see you and not wish for time long past
When I won't hate my age and my inhibitions
When I'll be at peace with self and life's dreariness.

Come again,
When I won't want you,
Time,
And all life might have been.

Barbara T.



Tracey Phillips

SLEEPING TREE

O Sleeping Tree, so calm,
so tall and straight,
in your Winter slumber
you so patiently wait.

For the first breath of Spring
to come and warm the air,
and to make you break forth
in rare beauty so fair.

Fret not, O Sleeping Tree,
that season is almost in sight
when warm air will be present
even through the long, dark night.

Tiny green leaves
will then soon appear
there will be no doubt
that your renewal is here.

Then in your full greenery
rustled by a gentle wind,
you catch my full attention and
I look at you and then,

I hear the pleasant song
sung by you and the breeze,
a song unknown and unequalled
by all the other trees.

The breeze then grows stronger,
and then very, very soon,
every twig, leaf and branch
in harmony sing the same tune.

The song continues on
and soon it will be heard,
by the small animals around,
and also by the birds.

You will then offer your branches
to all of those that come,
they will then look you over
and some will make you their home.

A Robin on one limb
there another supports a Jay,
when assured of your stability & strength
I'm sure that they will stay.

The Raccoon, the Squirrel,
the Owl with his 'hooting' call,
will come for an extended visit
because you befriend them all.

Thoughts of Winter's chill
the ice, the snow and strife,
will then soon be forgotten
as you so joyously teem with life,

Because the warm currents have come
and prompted you to sing,
the happiest song of all
sung only in the fullness of Spring.

Roger W. Brady

BLANK

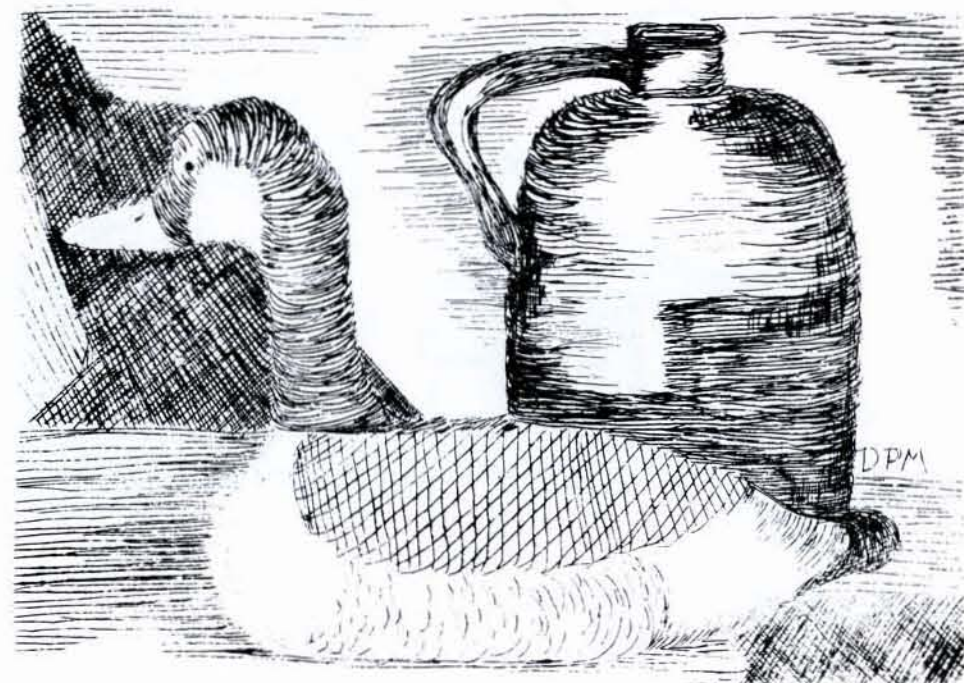
For you I had written a note not shown,
About a longing that now must not be known,
As somehow I have fear,
It would cause a tear.
And if given . . .
Not forgiven.

Mary Musulin MacWade

AUTUMN SONG

All day I have held something sorrowful
in my hands, trying to smooth misshapen
curves even while my hands worked
with other things than pain. The ache
pressed against my palms, warm as
tears, insistent, invisible, invading
veins until the blood despaired
into a heart that could not cleanse
the sadness. Grievs are always hardest
to evict. I tried to say, since ghosts
explained are vanquished, what sad thing
I held. It might have been a dead love,
or dying, or only the phantom of a summer
day when fruit was ripening, and bright
leaves brittle as the bones of changing
women did not yet mourn the chill caress
of blue October's winds.

Sally Russell



Denise Murphy

WE HAVE BEEN VISITED BY THE HAWK

And the sweeping grace of its flight concealed
at first the thunderbolt mission; we did not
suspect the agony, the life bleeding,
ripped in shreds. We stagger and moan. Oh
God, we can be told this is necessary, this
is the way that life revolves, but small
creatures huddling beneath the silent
deadly gliding find that explanation
no comfort at all.

Sally Russell



THE CHILDREN: AN ECLIPSE

My daughter runs in the dusk
among the pines, a faery child
her long hair flying
in the beckoning wind
At four, she who grew like a seed
in my body now shoots up tall
like a small sapling
too tall to easily hold

And what of the others
children I did not bear
their shadows play among the trees
they run after her in the fading light
laughter on their faces
as they pass me shouting
her voice calls and they answer

I would gather the children around me
my arms reach to hold them all safe
but the light shifts, I pause
and now never will I catch up

Janet Thomas Braswell

AUTUMN

Autumn breeze flows softly by,
Bringing scent of burning
leaves,
Memories of old and new drift
on wings of a sigh,
Harvest in celebration to
begin,
The end of old, the planting of
the new,
Warm hearths with cheerful
fires,
Time to share life's many gifts,
Time to grow happily together.

Bob Terrell

Ann Magruder Bowen



Rhonda Traylor

COME HELL OR HIGH WATER

The storm had been ceaseless. A thick, gray fog had settled heavily upon the region, seeming so vast and impenetrable that I imagined, for a moment, that it might have covered the whole earth. So importunate and lingering was the mist, that one in a less than rational mood might have argued that it was attempting to shield the earth from Heaven's view. The viscosity of this steamy shroud, as I peered through the living room window, greatly decreased my range of sight, making me doubt the existence of anything that lay beyond my vision.

An occasional bolt of lightning was all that interrupted the reality of the gray infinity; and it, too, an instant after its onslaught, was swallowed up by the all-devouring mist. Meanwhile, the sky which had rumbled so thunderously earlier in the day, now mumbled lowly and irritably, as if in sullen protest of a decree which he was powerless to alter.

I pulled the drapes together and went back to my armchair, where I waited for Carl Helmins to arrive. Helmins and I had been friends from the moment we had met as freshmen in college. I doubt whether we were drawn together by any particular affinity for each other, as much as by the certain kindred morbidity which separated us from others. At any rate, we had been friends some ten years, and had learned to tolerate in each other even the oddest of eccentricities. For the majority of those ten years, we had met with weekly ritual for the purpose of competing in a game that, for some reason, had become the purpose of our association. It was the high-witted and painfully time-consuming game of chess.

Neither of us particularly liked the game; but still we played it. It seemed to me (and whoever reads this account may find such a thing completely inconceivable) that we played the game for lack of an alternative. That is to say, we had no choice but to play the game.

Nonetheless, on this particular evening, Helmins was late. So, to pass the time, I sat and read sporadically through a volume of the collected poems of William Butler Yeats. One particular poem, "The Second Coming," especially intrigued me and sent my imagination reeling.

Just as I mused on the last lines of the poem, I again became aware of the thunder outside. Once again, as if in the throes of death, it bellowed in agonizing fury. I looked up and toward the window to see a crooked finger of blinding light poke probingly through the foggy gray pall outside. At that moment, the doorbell rang.

I opened the door and stood face-to-face with Helmins, who was drenched from head to toe and looked death-pale.

He stood there for a moment in the fury of the downpour, staring dumbly, yet somehow omnisciently into my eyes. Like a corpse whose eyes had failed to close in death, his glare was cold, eternal, and--I swallowed with difficulty--dreadfully familiar. His eyes were as cloudy and gray as the fog outside, and no less oppressive. They seemed wide with a knowledge unknown to me. I felt that if I watched a moment longer I would forever be lost to the coldness of those damned gray pools. Blinking, I looked away.

"Come in out of the rain, Helmins," I said, then stepped aside to let him enter.

He seemed not the least bit anxious to leave the storm, but slowly stepped inside. As I took his coat, I became aware of an unusual crook in Helmins' neck--a defect I had never noticed before. Perhaps it had always been there. Still, it is difficult to believe that I could have overlooked the slight, yet unnerving angle at which he now held his head. I almost mentioned the curious abnormality, but elected to keep to safer topics.

"I know it's raining outside, Helmins," I said, noticing that his clothes, too, were thoroughly saturated, "but how the devil did you get so wet? The driveway's not that far from the house."

"I ran into a little problem on the way over," he said, his voice gurgling as if submerged in water. "Glenn Bridge is out due to flooding; so I had to walk the last half-mile."

"You idiot! It's no wonder you're soaked. And your voice sounds horrible. You must be coming down with something already--probably pneumonia."

"Or worse," he gurgled.

After much insistence on my part, Helmins finally consented to change into dry clothes. When I returned from upstairs with a pair of my old sweats, I noticed on the game table a large black box. It was of rectangular shape and seemed so old that I could not even begin to estimate its antiquity.

I dropped the clothes inside the bathroom where Helmins was changing, then returned to the black box. In the dimly-lit room, it seemed to emit a darkness of its own--a black glow if possible. As if in a trance, I approached the black box and seated myself at the table. Closer scrutiny of the box revealed a rusty iron lock--and beside it on the table--a rusty, yet ornate key. Without conscious effort on my part, my hand seized the key, lifted it from the table, and inserted it into the lock.

Despite the ancient rust, the key turned easily--like a screw through soft wood. Then there was a click. It was brief and sounded almost like the beginning of an impish giggle. Slowly, I lifted the lid. The rusty hinges cracked like old bones rising from an ageless sleep, and sickly green light poured sluggishly, like congealing blood from the opening in the box. The pervasive odor issuing forth in the green light smelled like fragrant toxin. That is to say, it was sweet in the nostrils but burned the lungs like an all-consuming fire. When the black box was fully open, I could see, through the fading green cloud, the various pieces of a most archaic chess set.

I first removed the board, which consisted of alternating squares of ebony wood and authentic ivory. Then, one by one, I removed each fantastical character of the chess set. Invariably, each black piece I drew from the box was a phantasmal opposite to its white counterpart. Of the white characters, few were of exceptional design. The pawns all bore the visages of cherub-like children. The king was an old man, and his queen, a withered, emancipated woman. The rest were of the conventional Renaissance design.

The black characters, however, were demonic manifestations of primal realities--yawning phantoms of darkest origin who linger, still, in feverish nightmares. The pawns were unmistakably ghouls. They were short scaly creatures, tangled in their own tongues. The rooks resembled the ruins of Stonehenge rather than the turrets of some stately castle. Portraying the bishops were hooded monks with the heads of goats. And the knights were skeletons mounted on huge locusts with scorpion tails.

The last two characters I drew from the diminutive crypt were the most diabolical of all. The first, the queen--if one may justly call her that (for she looked more like the Harlot than the queen) was arrayed in a flowing gossamer gown and wore many gems and pearls. She was mounted, in a copulative posture, upon the back of a many-headed, scarlet beast and held a cup high above her head.

The last figurine I placed upon the board was a paradox of himself. On one side, he was a pleasant-looking, kingly sort. He wore a long robe, a modest crown, and a kind smile--all with equal dignity. His other side, however, was that of a Tiamatic fiend--an amalgam of dragon heads knotted together by an arabesque tangle of scaly necks. Every mouth, and there were seven if memory serves me correctly, was gaping as if preparing to devour something. And engraved upon the heads of the dragons were inscriptions too small to discern.

Having made my survey of the figurines and set up the game, I turned the chess board so that the white characters would be at my disposal. I chose white, not so much because I bore a fondness for the color, but because it was the color I had always used. Besides, it went without saying that black belonged solely to Helmins.

Suddenly, I was aware of a presence. I turned to see Helmins staring at me from the threshold of the bathroom. A thousand needles pierced my flesh. It was much like the feeling one gets from walking into a strange, dark room and turning on the light only to find himself staring directly into his own eyes in a mirror's reflection. Upon my seeing him, Helmins walked to the side of the table opposite me. He was staring at the board.

"Let's get this over with," I said jokingly as I had almost every week for ten years.

"Yes, let's," he gurgled in a sepulchral tone as he sat down.

The solemnity of his reply made my stomach writhe uneasily. Nonetheless, I made the initial move, and the contest was underway.

Almost immediately, I was on the defensive. I found myself playing the best game I had ever played. Unfortunately, Helmins was duplicating the feat. Never again, after the first few moves of the contest did I regain the initiative. The match went on for hours--hours that passed sluggishly, yet swiftly--like time in a nightmare. He spoke not a word as one by one he took my pieces. The more feverishly I struggled, the more I realized that I was resisting the inevitable. Several times he could have cut the game short by ending it in checkmate; but opted, instead, to take a lesser piece.

He glared at the board like a furious demon, lifting his head only sporadically to reveal his gelid eyes. So long did I, too, stare at the board, that I began to imagine that the pieces possessed a life of their own. It seemed that they were characters in a familiar play, hurrying towards a fixed end that they would have played alone, had I not been there to participate.

No matter how fixed the end, though, I felt that I might still alter it if only my intent were strong enough. But when I looked at Helmins I realized that my intent--my desire to win--had never been as strong as the fury and hate so visible on his face.

Just as I reached this realization, I found that only my aged king was left. I, in the meantime, had only taken six pieces from the black army; and all of those were merely the ghoulish pawns. A few moves later, and my withered king was checkmated--cornered by a goat-headed monk, a skeletal locust rider, and the Harlot on the scarlet beast.

When I lifted my eyes from the battle field, Helmins was already halfway to the front door. His gait was rigid and awkward. Every step seemed painfully strained. I caught him at the door and stared again into his cold gray eyes. I might have lost myself forever in the misty, ashen abysses, had it not been for a sudden crack of thunder that startled me out of my trance.

"At least let me drive you as far as Glenn Bridge," I said.

"If you must," he replied, his breath ice cold in my face.

Then we stepped into the foggy night--into the swirl of gray and black. The entire fifty acres of forest land encompassing the house seemed emptied of all inhabitants, save a lone whippoorwill which chanted a Paleolithic warning. As we walked towards my car, I noticed, with horror and fascination, that Helmins appeared to fade in and out of the mist as if he were becoming a part of it.

Inside the car, we rode on in utter silence. The dirt road had turned completely to mush and grabbed at the wheels like the hands of a thousand crowning fiends. Finally, a sound obliterated the awful silence. It was a menacing, hollow gurgle.

"Stop the car," Helmins slurred gravely.

"But we haven't reached the bridge yet."

Helmins looked at me. Even the whites of his eyes were now gray.

"Let me out," he snarled, the phlegm bubbling audibly in his throat.

I drove the car off onto the shoulder off the road. Helmins was out before I could reach a complete stop. He left the door open and was trudging into the foggy woods off the road.

For a moment I thought I would turn the car around and start home. For some reason, though, I felt I had to follow. I felt that there was something I had to see--something that would clarify the horrible obscurities that gnawed at my brain. Almost automatically, I found myself sloshing through the quagmire in search of Helmins.

After a few moments of wandering through the forest, I caught sight of him through a break in the foliage. He was standing at the edge of the lake, seemingly unaware of my presence. As I drew closer, he began to wade into the lake. By the time I reached the cove, he was waist-deep, staring morosely into the watery pitch. I opened my mouth to call him back as he sank deeper and deeper; but something held my tongue. Perhaps it was the realization that it was too late--far, far too late to ever turn back. I watched silently, aghast as Helmins' head was devoured by the black abysmal waters.

Just as he vanished forever beneath the surface, I became conscious of an array of flashing red and blue lights. They slashed insanely through the night fog like colorful swords.

Several emergency vehicles were congregated on Glenn Bridge just fifty feet away. The red and blue lights swirled together and blended with the fog in such a way as to cast a lurid purplish hue across the entire span of the bridge. Through the mist, I squinted to see that the guard rail on the side nearest me had been battered and split in two. Suspended high above the lake on a cable dangled a white, 1968 Plymouth Valiant. It was Helmins' car.

Below in the dark water, several men in a boat were reeling in a grapnel.

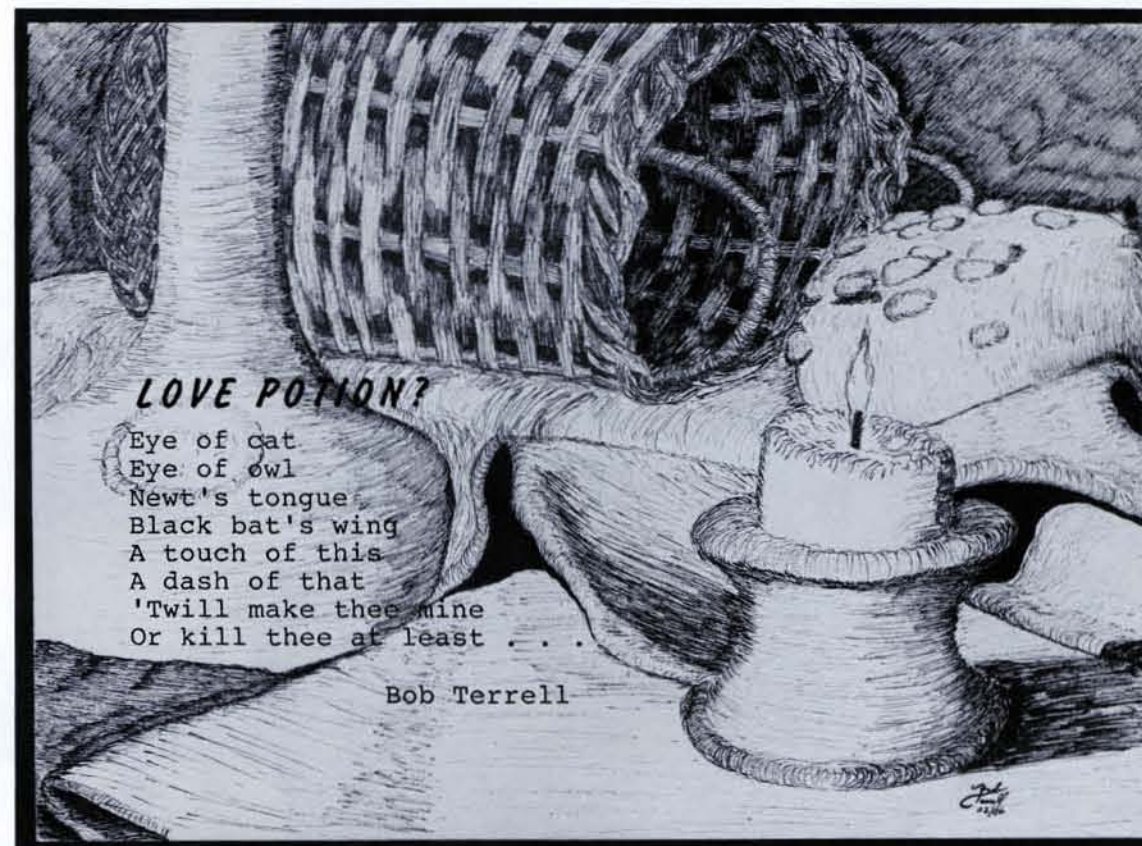
"What'cha got McNeilly?" an officer called from the bridge.

"Looks like another damn root!" the man answered. "It's gonna be a long night."

OCTOBER

I wish I loved again
The way I did in October
It was so new and wonderful.
It was all me and all for me
It was ok.
It was ok for once, for me to have
For me to take.
Just for me.
Now I'm different.
Life is different.
I'm too emotionally dependent
On my family
Not sure enough of me
To depend on myself.
I'm such a coward to hide
Behind my children's faces.
So afraid to reveal the real me.
And where does God go to get away
When I have these fits
Of abandonment?
I wish I cared for life again
The way I did in October.
In my far-away-places mind
There are dreams
I may not find.
Try? You know I will.
A new beginning
A new thrill.
Talent? I have plenty.
Confidence? I haven't any.
But what a chance!
A new creation
A new romance
With time and nature.
I believe in true adventure.
I want to love life again
The way I did in October.
To run with you and
Play with you is something
I can imagine.
Most people our age
Would think it old fashioned.
Who are they to judge me
And pass on to me their actions.
For I am young at heart.
And you, life, are my
Burning passion.

Shirley Miller Jones



LOVE POTION?

Eye of cat
Eye of owl
Newt's tongue
Black bat's wing
A touch of this
A dash of that
'Twill make thee mine
Or kill thee at least . . .

Bob Terrell

Bob Terrell



THE RHINESTONE CAT

The Rhinestone Cat
with gleaming emerald eye,
Would wonder at,
and question why?
Are all of us
afraid to die?
I don't know.

The Rhinestone Cat
who shines like ice,
Would ask if life
is worth the price?
Will all we do and
say suffice?
I couldn't say.

The Rhinestone Cat
wears a smug little grin,
It seems to sit
and gloat.
The Rhinestone Cat
is just a pin
that Aunt wears
on her coat.

Christa Chandler

Suzan Pardue
30



Rhonda Traylor

PLAYING LIFE

Life games are complicated
 And good partners
 Are hard to come by
 I've been shoved between
 Red Rover and
 Principles on the board of time
 And I've passed go without a dime
 It seems I'm always waiting.

I want to make a bid one day
 But I get tired of trying
 To find out who is holding trumps
 And making points with scabbled words
 That only good players decipher.
 If I could be the dealer once
 I'm sure that I could deal
 A good hand when the ante's up
 To someone else who's waiting.

Donna Pinson

UNEXPECTED

Lying in bed, without sleep, without you,
 I hear old age creeping near me in the dark.
 I try for bravado but
 I am unprepared for this Other Woman

who's always there. Turning on lights
 can't make her go away. My arm and my flesh
 in the lamplight fail me. God
 is strong, and Jesus loves me but, Jesus,
 will other men? Sleep

snows at last drive back the hag
 and in the morning I can't see where
 she is hiding, patient in the mirror,
 waiting fearfully for love.

Sally Russell

I HAVE A LONGING

I have a longing for perfection,
 Sweet order that will not slide again to chaos
 Of home or heart or head.
 In mad disorder I pursue it,
 Sorting the aspects of my life like Psyche's grain
 Into their neat and lovely piles,
 Yet feeling through my flesh's fingertips
 The piles repile and move themselves
 Quick with some life that will not obey my touch.

Nor will my touch obey my hunger.
 My hands are clumsy: smoothing out your soul,
 Fraying the fabric of love like cloth
 Against the grain of even your sweet gentleness.
 And still I will not let it be.
 Except sometimes when your kisses or your laughter
 Calm my soul, and I can for an instant
 Let imperfect order or ordered imperfection
 Rush like water falling through my self,
 And joy and fear quiver into a rainbow on the rock.

Barbara McMichael

**THE COOING OF THE TURTLE DOVE
IS HEARD IN OUR LAND**

Delicate white- petaled blossoms
Gently cupping the stamen
And inviting the bee.
Bright clustres of daffodils
Joyously welcoming spring.
Faint beginnings of buds
Up and down the branch
Hesitant heralds of life.
Scattered purple flowers
Creeping along the ground.
Returning robins.
All messages of hope
Sent forth to stir the soul.

How can we take such loveliness
And hold it in our hand,
And fill the heart's deep longing place
With the sure knowing that You are
Creator God of all the earth,
Who fashioned all of us
And proclaimed it good,
How can we consider spring
And life upon this earth,
And thrust out all the hope
The weary heart enfolds,
To consider instead
The work our hands have wrought?

Dark clusters of missiles
Up and down the land,
Faint beginnings of hate
Planted in secret places,
Stirring messages of doom
That earth and we are damned,
How can we then, creator Man
Who fashioned all of this,
Look upon our work
And proclaim it good?

Betty Maine

STATUS ALPHA

Night so sly and stealthily slinking
Cast its spell upon my thinking.
Down to darkness I am damned--
Without a panic,
Sinking sinking.

Down Cocytus I am sailing
With tainted souls that are wailing.
Demons laugh on every side,
And close behind are
Trailing trailing.

All about me fires are flaming;
Brimstones, all my friends, are maiming.
Orcus feeds on my dismay,
And on the souls he's
Claiming claiming.

On Phlegathon the flames are reeling
And seem to me somehow appealing,
As I sink beneath their gyre
Towards the fate they're
Sealing sealing.

Down Ach'ron I find Charon rowing;
And it is I that he is towing
With others who are surely dead.
Our tears of woe are
Flowing flowing.

Melodies so madly ringing:
Damned dirges, incubi singing.
O eternal, horrid night!
It is my doom you're
Bringing bringing.

Loathesome lyrics I am learning
While towards the music slowly turning.
Singing now with blood-red eyes
While my friends are
Burning burning.

Upon the Styx I am swearing
Allegiance to the flames a'flaring.
The pact is signed; the book is closed.
All rationale is
Tearing tearing.

Symbols sealed in words of rhyiming.
My psyche screams at Death's bell chiming.
The sun lies just beyond the banks,
And over the hills is
Climbing climbing.

One river left so swiftly streaming.
Things are not what they are seeming;
Lethe has delivered me...
I was only
Dreaming dreaming.

Robby J. Spriggs

pearls

Pearls the price of my pain
lie reflected in a velveteed compartment.

Outside, the world is slowly
dying to umber before my eyes;

And, as surely as brown leaves fall
and the flash of the sun fades

to the soft luster of the moon, I know
this will be your last gift to me.

Pearls the silence of your smile
these are the tears I will not cry.

Janet Thomas Braswell

INSOMNIA

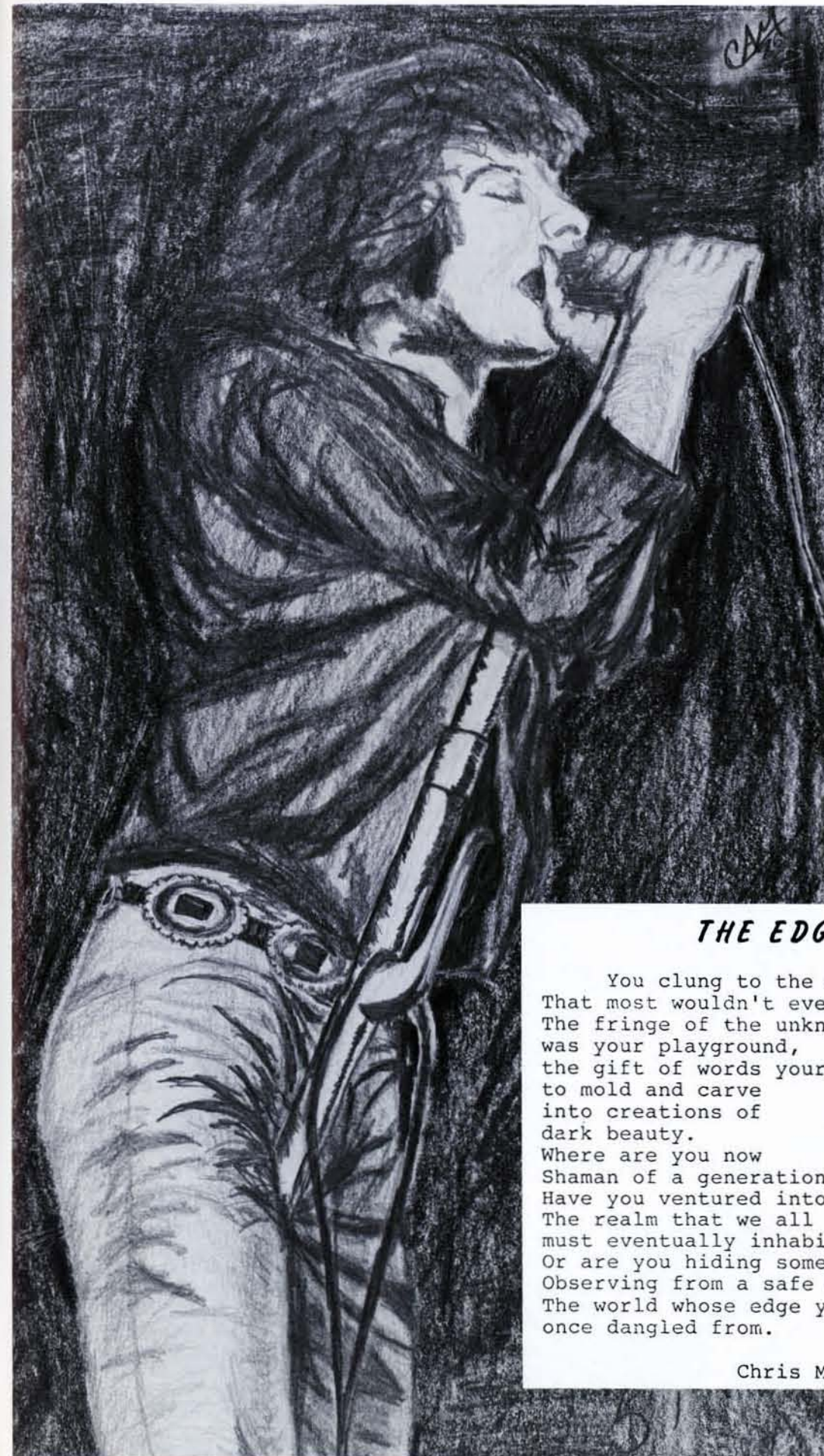
My head aches this morning
in hangover proportions,
though not from too much drinking.
Intemperate night-time thinking
spawned this pain,
too much dreaming,
too much scheming,
and forgetting in the dark again
the sphere will always roll,
thank God,
out of my control.

Sally Russell

RESOLUTION

She spits words out like nails
Hard, sharp, pointed, piercing
Cringing, I brace not wanting to be hurt again
Nervously I await the next onslaught
They come and I am slaughtered again
Punctured in a hundred thousand ways
But then I stop and realize the choice is mine
To act or react
Do I take these words attaching them to my being
And thus be wiped out, wounded
Attaching her rejection of my sense of self worth
Feeling like an unlisted number in the telephone book
A zero, a nothing, a nobody
Yet I know my worth
Created in the image of my Maker, my God
His child, precious, esteemed, valuable
Remembering who I am and that she too is His creation
I choose to view her words as verbal vomiting
And rather than cringing, afraid
Go forward with towel and pail to serve
To care for her as one who is ill
And as I serve her
Am I not healed.

Robbie A. Lathem



THE EDGE

You clung to the edge
That most wouldn't even peer over.
The fringe of the unknown
was your playground,
the gift of words yours
to mold and carve
into creations of
dark beauty.
Where are you now
Shaman of a generation past?
Have you ventured into
The realm that we all
must eventually inhabit?
Or are you hiding somewhere in our midst?
Observing from a safe distance,
The world whose edge you
once dangled from.

Chris McMichael

MY FATHER

My father was born in 1902 in a small town in southern Germany. My father's father worked for the railroad and railroading was in their blood. When father was barely 10 years old, grandfather thought he was old enough to wield a shovel and help the fireman keep the stoker filled with coal so that the train could punctually pull into the station. It was hard work, the pay negligible, and father would have blisters all over his hands, and he looked like a chimney sweep all covered with black, greasy soot, but he was happy doing a man's job.

There was no question in the family's mind that when father was done with schooling, he would work for the railroad. Grandfather didn't want him to be a stoker, so father was apprenticed to a station master working the signals. Long, hard hours and studying in the evenings was the daily routine, until one day father passed the test and became station master in a small depot. Working up the bureaucratic ladder, he became manager for a large station in my hometown.

Once father was established, grandfather felt it was time for him to be married. My mother had lost her fiancée on the Western Front in the First World War, and since the families were acquainted, father and mother got married in 1927. My brother was born in 1929 and I made my appearance in 1936.

The early years of my childhood were happy ones. When father didn't have to work, we would take walks in the countryside and pick wild flowers for mother. Rationing had started in Germany for food and cigarettes. Father loved to smoke, but he would barter his much loved cigarette rations for wood, paints and sometimes candies, barricade himself in the woodshed, and oh my what beautiful things would magically appear under the Christmas tree! Sundays were family outings and on those Sundays that father would have to work, mother would fix a basket and we'd visit him in his office where we'd have a wonderful time. What wonderful, blissful days those were! Sometimes a train was shifted to a standby track, and I clambered aboard with the engineer and helped him switch the train.

The tentacles of the war machine had not yet invaded my world.

One day in early 1942 father put on his railroader's uniform with the red stripes down the sides of his trousers, and he had to go to the Eastern Front. Father was sent to a large railroad station in Poland which had an unpronounceable name. But for the rest of the family it meant that the war had landed squarely on our doorsteps.

I remember on my way to school passing houses with black drapes on the windows which meant only one thing: a husband, brother or son had been killed on the Eastern or Western Front. Each time I saw another of these dreaded drapes, I prayed silently, "Please let the day never come when we have to hang these awful shrouds on the window." Father wrote as often as he could and hoped this nightmare would soon end. The weeks turned to months, and every day longer lines formed in front of the stores, and there was less food to buy and less coal to keep the houses warm. The radio told us to be patient, that the food and supplies were going first to the front; and I knew father would do his best to get them there. Father returned to us in 1943, but he was a changed man.

Deep lines had formed on his forehead, the ready smile was seen less often, and our walks and picnics were no more. What had father seen on the Eastern Front to make him change so much?

The year was 1945; allied bombing raids had become a daily occurrence. The Americans made their bombing runs during the daylight hours, the French and English devastated and terrified us at night. The Eastern Front was no more, the allied forces were holding across the Rhine, and yet the political fanatics within Germany were still urging and threatening for the people to make greater sacrifices. What more could we do? Air raids were now around the clock and we tried to survive this insanity in basements and root cellars.

When I had passed my 9th birthday, I could hardly remember when I had been warm or when I had had a full belly. Father had been an air raid warden for several months, and it was his duty to stay outside and summon help if a building collapsed. The siren with its dreaded, soul-twisting sound would barely finish wailing its message of doom, when the bombs would fall from the sky. Many nights, I tried to sleep curled up in a chair. Some nights the sound and fury of the exploding bombs would not let up. Mother and some of the other tenants would be praying in the corner. Fat, double-chinned Mrs. W., 76 years old, kept muttering, "Please; I don't want to die down here; let me die in peace in bed." Mrs. F. and her six-month-old baby were huddled in another corner of the cellar. All were trying to escape the fury that rained death and destruction from the skies. So far we had been lucky--only broken windows and damaged tiles on the roof. Some of our neighbors had not been this lucky. Their possessions had gone up in an inferno of intense heat and flame, or they had been killed or buried alive in the rubble.

The gates of hell opened up on one of the coldest nights in January of 1945. My world such as it was and I had known, came to an abrupt end. This night on the 28th of January the reaper found his prey. It was one of the coldest nights and supper was cold--potatoes left over from lunch. The electricity was shut off early that evening, and the candles had been lit for hours. We sat silent, morose in the living room, our coats and blankets piled in the corner, ready to grab them and run down to the cellar at the first sound of the dreaded siren. Father acted rather strange that night. He gave me a hug and told me to be good. Then he bundled up warmly to make the rounds of the neighborhood. That was the last time I saw my father alive. Within seconds of his going outside, the sirens began howling their dreaded melody of doom, and the planes began dropping their deadly rain on the ground below. Luck was not with father that night. As he was standing under an old apple tree watching the sky, one of the bombs exploded in the top of the tree and the hot deadly shrapnel found its mark. Father died instantly still clutching his field glasses.

The war ended 3 months later, but everything was anticlimatic by then. My world, my secure place in a father's arms, had collapsed earlier.

Ilse Charamond



NINEVAH REVISITED

How painful
To walk
Into worlds
Where we don't
" belong"
Forgetting
That He walks
In all
The places
Of His world,
Which is to say,
In all of life.

---Betty Maine

SONANT STAGE

Webbed into a sonant stage
I wove me here myself
Fighting time, embracing age
Emotion neatly shelved

When this life comes together
I will tidy up my smile
My heart all clothed in leather
Out of pain... and out of style

I'll glance your way o'er freshend drink
Or take your hand to dance
You wanted me, once, you think
I never stood a chance

Weekend, wounded, awkward child
You'll find me in my grace
All mounted on your silver steed
And whisk me from this place.

T. K. Buchanan

FRAGMENTS

Fragments of poems trickle
through the mind, unbounded;
like the glinting of a gravelly stream,

thoughts ripple past. You may try
to freeze words like blocks of ice
in the mind, but they seep out

like moisture dripping from cracks in
the steep rockface beside the road:

Like water through a sieve,
words run through your fingers,
onto the page.

Janet Thomas Braswell

FOUR A.M.

The earth seems to be
the only questing being.
The deepest woods
are upon us now.
The shimmering light flows around us
as we sleep in our nests.
The moon now resides beneath
frosty waves,
and the ancient tree
grows to the heavens.

Alone.

The sparrow of life flutters gossamer wings
in a spider's web of night.

Ed Waller and Chris McMichael



Lisa Daughtry

THE DRAGON DANCE

I want to dance the dragon dance again,
Bold spear in hand among the summer flowers,
Hot smell of grass in nostrils tinged with dust.

He, sneezing flame to singe my heart again,
Our separate feet in motion, one, of six:
Backward and forward, side to side in unison,
The dragon's grace.
His head is huge; green scales, green leaves
That pattern slanting light and shadow, play.
And, oh, his eyes are fierce and hot.

Well, once they were. But now he sleeps,
Or rots,
Replaced.
Gray light is unreflected.
Gray metal cannot dance.
Tame enemy, created uncreates.
The guarded treasure turns to clay.

I want to dance the dragon dance again.
I wait for dragons rising, flesh and bone, and fire,
To burn the soul to gold, refined in that fierce heat,
To love the dragon while we slay him,
Resurrected,
Like comets going to the stars to come again
In eighty years or so, scattering the gifts of heaven
From their tails as dragons do, machines do not.
The bones within the dancing feet grow old in eighty
Or two thousand years;
Flesh softens, falls away.
Dear dragon, rise, slay pettiness in multigraph.

A fabled beast, banners streaming on the wind,
An enemy to cherish,
Unique,
Uncomplicated:
I want to dance the dragon dance again,
Bold spear in hand among the summer flowers,
Hot smell of grass in nostrils tinged with dust.

Barbara McMichael

THE RIVER OF MY MIND

No mere lifestream,
But too fast dream.

Blowing, flowing
Swirling, whirling

A forward surge,
A backward urge,

Stroking on my side,
Against a strong tide.

Oh, when may I just paddle,
Float lazily, diddle, daddle

Find an island
Beach on some sand.

Mary Musulin MacWade



Ann Magruder Bowen

EARTH MOTHER

Visit the Earth Mother:

When Life is uncertain,
Go see Her in the Spring,
She will teach you about Love.
It's time to take a mate,
And raise the next generation.

Visit the Earth Mother:

When Life is out of control,
Go see Her in the Summer,
She will teach you to set a pace.
It's time to take Life easy,
And play in the rain.

Visit the Earth Mother:

When Life is growing cold,
Go see Her in the Fall,
She will teach you how to save.
It's time to put away the harvest,
And enjoy Life's rewards.

Visit the Earth Mother:

When Life has gotten old,
Go see Her in the Winter,
She will teach you about memories.
It's time to reflect,
And know you are but part of Her.

Visit the Earth Mother:

For She is part of you.

Wade Niles

PILGRIMAGE

An afternoon summons.
The world is stirring
from winter's chill and fertile sleep.
A woman sheds house, husband, children,
seeking the woods and flowing river,
needing beneath bare arching branches.
the river-spirit of wind and song.
Far she wanders,
to where the bent bridge bowed long ago
to the river-god's seasonal rage.
Kneeling, she gathers from the shore
a graceful script of driftroot
and a shell-like stone, smooth and gray.
An abandoned roadbed leaves the river,
strays to crumbling chimneys,
and lonely daffodils, faithful yet.
She chooses a bright nest of flowers
and snaps a thin length of twig
from the quince's riches of thorns and rubies.
At twilight she is going home down the main road,
her hands shining with an afternoon's eternal gifts.

Sally Russell

PROSTITUTE

I am a prostitute
I sell myself short
of what I really am
and yet you love me
in spite of what
I appear to be
You protect me from
the pimps
and brutal beatings
I allowed to happen

I prostitute myself
because I can NOT sell
anybody else
I don't know why
I let the lousy pimp
use me for his needs
years after the fountain of youth
has been misplaced

It is not for men
I do it
It is not for money
Certainly not for show
Actually it's quite simple
I don't know
where else to go

I didn't plan
my life this way
Things happen
to make us veer
away from the road
and because of it
I know my way
around the streets
You saw me standing
on a corner
where I didn't belong

I'm glad you picked me up
You saw more than
make-up and long legs,
more than the lingerie
I fancy so much,
more than the silk and lace
I wear, longing to be touched
in my heart
It is ok to love you
because of what I am

Jesus loved a prostitute
He showed her
a way out
He would do no less for me
Jesus sent you
to my dim corner
I saw you from the window
of my red light district
revealing his heart
in your love

Donna Pinson

EPITAPH FOR AN AVIATOR

Something flew out of the darkness to collide with the windshield of my automobile this evening. A vague impression of feathered wings and small body flashed in front of my eyes, and then my ears heard a dull thump as aviator and safety glass briefly met. Then it was gone, swallowed back into the darkness from which it had come.

Relief flooded through me. My glass and metal bubble was unbroken. Then I realized that the mass of feathers that had just rebounded off my windshield like a basketball from a backboard had been a living creature, a co-inhabitor of the world in which I was driving.

It is not a good realization. In fact, it's heartbreaking. My only consolation was in the fact that I was traveling at a rate of speed sufficient to do more than merely injure the creature.

What had happened to me? Could my first reaction to this tragedy have actually been concern over my unliving steed instead of over the living being who crossed its path? Had the callous world at last hardened me to the plight of my animal brothers? I had to admit that my love for animals was one that had been ignored somewhat in the recent past.

Practically every day I see the evidence of the battle being waged along every roadway that mankind has plastered across the globe. Ribbons of gray and black smattered with the blood of innocents. It saddens me to see creatures once full of life scattered among roadside garbage. It is a sadness that I have denied for many years. I guess this has been my way of coping with this horror of the modern world.

An infinitely large portion of my childhood was devoted to animals. I spent endless hours pursuing any magazine, book, or other form of information that dealt with the inhabitants of land, sea, and air. My walls were literally covered with posters and pictures cut out of magazines of a multitude of mammals and birds. Everything from kingfishers to timber wolves to blue whales found a home pinned to the plaster of my room. Even a vast majority of the fictional literature I read (which was considerable) dealt with creatures of the wild. When asked the basic questions about a grown-up career, "naturalist" was my only answer.

Often I envied them in their oneness with the natural world. Their freedom was the stuff of which my dreams were formed. The only thing I couldn't, or maybe the word is wouldn't, understand was why the race I was born to was constantly at odds with my precious animals. Domination or extermination seemed to be the majority of mankind's ways of dealing with his animal neighbors. As time marched onward in my life, I sadly began to lose my intimate contact with the world of animals. The content of my books turned increasingly away from animal topics when I got around to reading at all. My future as the world's leading naturalist quickly faded to more unsure ideas about the future to come. My posters were replaced with everything from beer ads to automobiles. The freedom of the wilds was lost in the excitement of growing up.

The night I crossed paths with a hapless aviator was the point at which full realization of my loss at last became apparent to me. I had lost touch with something that will always have its fingertips on my life. The caring has to be there; it cannot be denied. I now know what has been missing in my life. I thank you, o winged messenger. In this clash between machine and nature, maybe nature was truly on the winning side.

Chris McMichael



Chris McMichael

EMPTY SKIES

Attacked by Irving's *Undertoad I flee
And stumble onto gracefilled still green eyes
They iced through mine and emptied out a voice
Crying to sell my soul for empty skies.

In the twilight I sing the stars to sleep
And just at dawn I sweep the clouds away
And look to the horizon where I know
I'll hold you without obstacle today.

At night if stars are restless I will wait
And conjure winds to blow day's clouds away
If the clouds bring rain I'll pray for rainbows
And meet you on the promised flawless day.

We'll love in empty skies where none sees
One day perhaps they'll notice breathless blue.

*A sign of danger, a feeling of inescapable doom
defined and described by John Irving in his
novel of biblical importance, The World According
To Garp.

T. K. Buchanan



Lisa Daughtry

BALLAD OF MT. QUAKER

The sea was calm, and all aboard
Were in their hammocks nestled.
I myself stood on the deck
And with my soul I wrestled.

On the curve, in the East, the clouds rolled in,
My arm began to ache.
A storm, my bones were telling me,
A storm my ship couldn't take.

"All hands on deck!" I yelled below
To rouse my fellow mates.
As they scrambled above none could know
The dealings of their fates.

The seas now swelled (to thirty feet!)
As we feebly batoned down
The hatches, which were none secure,
It looked as if we'd drown.

My boat did reel, and creak, and crash,
And rock both stern and bow.
The gale was blowing with all her might,
As Mother Nature'd allow.

Screams of anguish, screams of fear
Above the wind I heard.
A cold and senseless, untimely death
Was all we were assured.

"Man overboard!" The mate hollered out
As I ran to the edge of the rail.
I wondered what I'd tell his kids:
He was a good man, Edgar Hale.

Soon Solley, and Wilkins, and even ole Jake
Were awash in the cold clammy drink.
And the boat had a crack, from the front to the back,
We'll go down.....was all I could think.

6:15 on my watch, I marked the time well
As I bailed like a pump to no use.
The stern broke away at the close of this day
And I looked at my mate, Mr. Bruce.

"Mr. Bruce", I began, "I'll tell you I'm sorry,
For sailing us all to our maker."
A smile, a salute, as we sank to our end,
And the end of our vessel MT. QUAKER.

I awoke to the smell of those pancakes I love....
A dream! Thank God...just a dream!
I sprang to my feet, ran down to the galley
For my usual coffee, no cream.

"Mr. Bruce", I did ask, "how's the weather today?"
 As the sun beamed down on my feast.
 "O.K.", he replied, "save for one small detail,
 A Storm, 'round sundown, from the East."

I choked on my toast...A dream? NO! A warning.
 And I won't question from whom it came.
 "Hard about, Mr. Hale!" Back to port we did sail,
 While the weather was nothing but tame.

On my watch that night, in the dim harbour lights
 In my face rained that stormy dream maker.
 Here safe in the berth, I thanked God I'm on Earth
 And not drowned on my schooner MT. QUAKER.

J. Miller Gilbert

PREFRONTAL LOBOTOMY:

[anOdE tO A dYinG InJUN]

Helium, Hiliium, Dillium, Dumb*
 I fell off my bed and broke my thumb.
 It hurt real bad,
 and made me mad.
 Helium, Hiliium, Dillium, Dumb*

Quickery, Quackery, Quirkery, Quack*
 I fell off my bed and broke my back.
 The pain was supreme.
 I thought I would scream.
 Quickery, Quackery, Quirkery, Quack*

*Flinigan, Flinigan, Flinigan, Flinigan, Flinigan,
 I am blind.
 I mashed my mind;
 As you can see this poem is turned over.
 *Flinigan, Flinigan, Flinigan, Flinigan, Flinigan

Stevie Blemmins
 (East Wing, Room 253)
 Submitted to Dr. Spatula,
 In partial Fulfillment of
 rehabilitation therapy
 requirements.

Steven McNeilly

Perceptions 1986