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Fall 1991

### The Vehicle, Fall 1991

Amy Schmitzer

Anthony Smith

Angie L. Gallion

Victoria Bennett

Laura Durnell

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#### Recommended Citation

Schmitzer, Amy; Smith, Anthony; Gallion, Angie L.; Bennett, Victoria; Durnell, Laura; James, Nancy; Koonce, Dan; Hayward, John; Moro, Jennifer; Randall, Mark; Evangelista, Brett; McDade, Travis; Rosenstock, Chris; Schnarre, Thomas D.; Roy, Christina; Culloton, Tim; Burke, Liam; and Taylor, Sheila, "The Vehicle, Fall 1991" (1991). *The Vehicle*. 57.

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## **Authors**

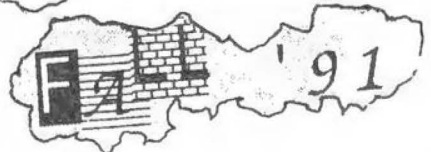
Amy Schmitzer, Anthony Smith, Angie L. Gallion, Victoria Bennett, Laura Durnell, Nancy James, Dan Koonce, John Hayward, Jennifer Moro, Mark Randall, Brett Evangelista, Travis McDade, Chris Rosenstock, Thomas D. Schnarre, Christina Roy, Tim Culloton, Liam Burke, and Sheila Taylor



The  
Vehicle

ve-(h)ik-el

a medium through which something  
is expressed, achieved, or displayed.



Fall '91

# The Vehle

ve-(h)ik-el  
a medium through which something  
is expressed, achieved, or displayed.

4 '91

**Produced by Sigma Tau Delta  
Honorary English Organization**

**Eastern Illinois University**



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(kän-tents) all that is f

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## Improvisation

"What is it?"

"I don't know; how would I know?"

"You're the one who dragged me here, aren't you?"

"Yeah, so. That doesn't mean I *know* anything."

"I feel stupid here. Let's go."

"Can't you just experience something new? Aren't you at *all* interested?"

"Oh, God. Here comes someone. Look like we're looking at it or something."

"We *are* looking at it. Would you relax?!"

"He wants to know what we think! Didn't you hear him? Say something! Say something quick!"

"I like it. It's really great."

"Oh wow. I can't believe you just said that. He just walked away! Don't you feel stupid?"

"Why the hell should I feel stupid? I didn't hear you say anything insightful about it! What was I supposed to say to the guy, anyway?"

"Well, can't you see anything about the thing? I mean, it looks like a cricket in there, doesn't it?"

"No...no, I think it's more like a half-person kinda thing. Don'tcha see the embryo-like face in there? Don'tcha?"

"I don't know; well, I guess so. Yeah. But look at all the different colors in there. Maybe it's just a blurry dream or somethin', ya know?"

"Yeah, maybe. Or *maybe* it's even like a reincarnation thing! Ya think? You know, like a human that was a cricket in a former life!"

"Yeah! Or a cricket that was a human! Wow."

"Do ya think that it's a happy cricket-thing? 'Cuz of all the neat colors? Don't you think that means happiness?"

"Or maybe it's sad because of all the fun colors being around it but it's just sad and the colors make it even more sad, ya know?"



"Oh wow! Look at those things over in that one corner! Don't those look like those one face carvings in that one mountain? Remember those?"

"Hey yeah! And look at those house-like things and that fish head down there and th—"

"—And that *watermelon!*"

"*What?!*"

"See? That thing down there? Doesn't it look like a slice of a watermelon?"

"Are you hungry or something?"

"Ha ha. You see it though, don't you?"

"Yeah, I do. I was just teasin' ya."

"Wow. So maybe it all means—maybe what it's tryin' to say—is that we have evolved through time from other animals, like that fish and the cricket, into humans and the world used to be happy and colorful and simple but—"

"—But now we are all superficial and materialistic and we buy houses and leave our mark everywhere—even on nature's biggest and most beautiful and solitude creations and we only see things in everything for ourselves—"

"—Like food! And so that's how come the world is *really* grey. The colors are fading and we are sad because we've only ourselves to blame!"

"Wow. Pretty deep. Pretty damn deep."

"Yep. Insightful. Pretty damn deep and insightful."

"What's that?"

"Wha?—oh. Looks like the gallery guy is putting up its name. It must be a new piece or something."

"What does it say?"

"It says...it says 'Improvisation'; that's what it says."

"Improvisation? What does *that* mean?"

"I think it means that it doesn't mean anything."

"Oh."

"Yeah."

"Let's go eat."

"Yeah, I'm hungry."

—Amy Schmitzer

## Courthouse Clock

### I. House Hunting

I want to live in the courthouse clock,  
Crouching there under the gnashing gears  
That crank the days, blowing hours  
Past the world with four slow fans.

### II. The Lease Signed

I grow thin, trapped, nibbling on day's dimness,  
Filtered through those faces with backward smiles  
And each night's drink, black as ink, dizzies but  
Does not quench, slowing me numbly to sleep.

I wake and wonder who is screaming; time dies  
Louder here, thrashing, chewed in bigger bites.  
This is a hunger machine, a box of soundless  
Breathless mouths of bloodrusty teeth,

Grinning me to death.

-Anthony Smith

## The Painting

On my wall there is a painting  
That she asked me to paint.  
Flowers, trees, and mountains  
Swimming flections in a lake.

One day, we framed it.  
Her hands old, mine new.  
Above her bed, to be seen  
By amblers in the hall.

Then, one day she called to me  
I leaned close to hear,  
"Promise you'll take it, when I'm gone,  
And hang it, for you."

I nodded, I held her hand,  
Sitting close on her bed.  
Then, one day, the room was empty  
She left, early morning, they said.

I sat, on her naked bed,  
Where I'd seen her melt away.  
On my lips, no promise died  
And the painting went home that day.

-Angie Gallion

## Empty Moon

You've been pricked,  
fat friend, and the slow  
leak shows. You're  
half the girth since  
last I looked, tomorrow  
to shrink smaller still.

You've been jostled,  
sloshing light. Your  
illuminated sphere  
deflates as if sipped  
dry by a thirsty god.

Dusk quickens, snapping  
off days like brittle  
bones. Have I but  
dark to dream in?

Shouldn't I hurl back  
light in hot  
round flares?

Tell me, your hollowed  
highness, what can we do  
with an empty moon?

-Victoria Bennett

## Clarissa

Beneath his tar-stained feet she cries,  
"i Love You."

She tries to forget the loneliness,  
the excavated babies,  
the missing hymen she wants to find.

She tries to forget the self-hate.  
self-blame  
from masculine ego.

As tears plop down Cover Girl stained cheeks,  
and abandoned shadow scowls.

The bruised skin fades  
while the scarred soul is infected.

"i Love You."

With a paroled smile,  
he speaks.

"I know you love Me too."

-Laura Durnell

It's 7:00 PM  
And your breath is 80 proof.  
"Murder, She Wrote,"  
Your after-work oasis,  
Blares from the television  
Spilling color over your blank face.  
    The numb silence  
    In the living room is more deafening  
    Than your ugly flashes of temper.  
And I cringe inside,  
Blocking out the tears threatening  
In my eyes,  
As you tenderly cradle  
The yellow, plastic mug  
That has cheated me  
Of a mother.

**ancy James**



## I Hit Mother Nature with My Ten Speed

I don't think She even noticed, but  
I hit Mother Nature with my ten-speed.

I was riding along a country road, blind to the reality about  
me

when  
IT HIT.

I was so stunned I had to stop.

Such a sudden realization of things bright, clear and beautiful.  
She bled in autumn colors of brown, green, maroon and gold.  
The sky was clouded, like a dusty-blue canvas on the easel  
of the universe.

I scanned my surroundings slowly, and again, and again.  
The only sound to be heard was the whistling of the leaves  
and my own heavy breathing.

I rode in a different manner than I had before.

I no longer stared at the ground in search of a way to go.  
I looked to the sky and to the horizon for a sense of  
inspiration.

It was at this moment I realized,  
for something unknown I had thirst.

'Twas not the ten-speed that hit Mother Nature,  
the fool on the bike she'd hit first.

-John Hayward



## The Realm of Mother

Ten years ago he would hold her hand when no one else was looking. Sometimes she would smile and ask if he was happy. When he'd say no, she'd frown and shake her head at him pretending not to understand, although he knew that she did. Those times he wanted to kiss her, but he never would. He'd say to himself that he was either too drunk or the timing was bad, and besides, he was already with Laura then. But when he took her hand and told her in those college days that he was unhappy, he could never explain why it was so, and it was strange how she never asked him why, but today at the breakfast table watching his chubby little wife in her billowy orange robe fix a second pot of coffee, he realized that he still had no answer to that question. Yet, he was living, and after all, it wasn't a bad existence. He pushed his untouched plate away and took up the paper again. Laura, his wife, turned sharply around glaring at him mistrustfully.

"Alan, you're going to miss the train if you don't hurry up. All this time and you didn't even eat anything. Your boss warned you last week again, didn't he? You can read the damn paper on the way there. I can't understand why you have to put me through this every morning."

She threw her dish rag into the cloudy water where it sank and left the room calling for their two sons who were also running late for their bus. Alan stood up to put on his overcoat, but first, gently tore out her page, folded it into a neat square, and hid it in his pocket. He left the house without a kiss or a kind word from his wife who was too occupied with both searching for Sean's left shoe and nagging Joey to brush his teeth. He hadn't noticed that she had forgotten any sort of goodbye. She often did in her busy way, but she'd apologize when he came home and without giving it any thought,

he'd forgive her. Sometimes he still thought she was pretty.

Alan worked for a small publishing company downtown. It wasn't quite the job he dreamed of having while in school, but it supported his family and gave him security. Lately, though, he had been finding it rather difficult to wake up to another day in his tiny corner office, not because anything unpleasant was going on at work, but because the same things had been going on there year after year. Alan was in a rut, but most days he could cope with that. Sooner or later he'd start writing again. He always had hope.

Arriving late, Alan missed his train. He walked through the nearly empty station towards the platform, his hands in his pockets, the one clutching the small square residing there. He sat down on an old bench staring at the graffiti next to him. "You suck" in fluorescent orange paint jeered up at him from the seat and next to that "Bob loves Amy" was etched in a large lopsided heart. Alan ignored the slogans and began to think. She always said that it didn't matter whether she became a writer or not. She wanted a family of her own and she wanted to be happy. Writing was secondary with her and living came first. Still, she had long since been published, but had recently come back from the coast to settle down at home. A mutual friend had told Alan that she had finally married some New York architect about two years ago, but had very recently divorced him. Supposedly, she was still happy. She was pregnant.

Alan boarded the late train and took a seat in the corner of the car munching on the bag of pretzels his wife had stuffed in his coat pocket the day before. The car was relatively empty, but a few seats ahead of him an elderly couple sat carrying bags of groceries on their laps. He listened to them arguing over what he couldn't understand, but he heard their brittle voices cracking as their eyes fixed angrily upon each other. The old woman looked very short and frail, and her face was a chalky white with a texture resembling paste. Her lips were light orange, but lighter where the color bled onto the skin around them. The train was hot, and the moisture in

the stuffy air caused gray strands of her hair to taper around and frame her small face, causing her lips to look even bigger than they actually were. The old man said little. He sunk down in his seat and avoided looking at his wife while she spoke. Sometimes when she paused to catch her breath, he would spread his shoulders and lean slightly forward with all his features tensing, and then mumble incoherently as if he were too overwhelmed with emotion to articulate correctly. He'd slump back down directly once she began her angry harangue again. Alan stopped paying attention to them after a few minutes and refused even to glance towards them. His mouth tasted salty.

Two other passengers came aboard just as the train was about to leave. It was a mother with her young son. She was an attractive woman, Alan thought, but on the short side, in a neat coral suit with her hair pinned up away from her face, though he avoided making eye contact with her. The child looked as if he was in the midst of one of his growing stages, because he looked fit to burst out of his little suit. He seemed a happy enough child peeking back over his seat and smiling at Alan. In an apparent fit of mischief, the little boy ventured out of his seat into the aisle where he proceeded towards Alan. He made it only a few short steps, when Alan noticed a taut leash or cord fastened about his waist which tugged the playful child back into the realm of mother.

Alan turned nervously around and began to stare out the window as the train moved into the city passing the broken down tenements and slums which it passed every morning. It otherwise might have been a wonderful day, because it was the kind of day that makes you think and notice everything around. The autumn wind blowing hard and cool stirs the leaves and awakens your mind. But for the dim sky promising the arrival of winter, the day would have been perfect as far as she was concerned, Alan thought, although she would have been scanning for a few rays of sun, though she wouldn't have found any.

The train halted on schedule and Alan got off at his usual

stop. Instead of walking a few blocks to his office, he headed for a nearby coffee shop down the street. Once there, he called one of the new secretaries to say that he was sick and would be out for the day. He decided that it wouldn't matter much to anyone whether he went or not. He sat down at a booth and a little blond took his order and smiled at him with her crooked teeth. She came back with a large cup of coffee and two doughnuts smothered in goopy pink icing which he didn't eat, but mashed with his fork as he drank his coffee. Then while he was thinking he made some childish designs in the frosting of hearts and then mashed them some more.

He had never read anything she had written. The truth was, he had even seen an article once with her by-line, but he never read it, telling himself that he was too busy for the time being and would get to it later. He always knew how good she was anyway. At school they took English classes together and he would never let anyone but her read his work because she understood it so well, except for once. She pushed his paper away and called him a misogynist and then refused to smile until he vehemently denied it, or rather, clarified that she was an exception. She laughed claiming that she knew it all along.

Most likely Alan wouldn't have been able to say what he did the rest of the day. He wandered around the city holding her little square of paper in his hand which was smeared with the ink. He memorized each line so that he could recite it to himself as he walked through stores and little shops.

"Beloved by mother Sara and father David...Beloved by brother Michael...beloved by grandmother...beloved...beloved...beloved..." repeated over and over again in Alan's mind as he touched the soft material of women's dresses in the stores or smelled the sweet perfume floating up from cosmetic counters where ladies with pointy noses and fashionable glasses gave him strange stares until he wandered away.

When Alan came home he was still holding the paper. Tripping on his son's shoe, he fell onto the couch where he

read the lines again: "...died in childbirth Mon. at 2:08 AM in Sisters of the Sacred Blood Hospital...the baby girl lived." Yet he could see her still, flipping the pages of some old classic, asking him questions, listening with those intent eyes to his answers, and never ever doubting him. He crumbled the paper letting it fall on his wife's clean coffee table and stared blankly at his ink-smearred hands. Though as her image filled his head, Alan could no longer envision her face, and his head ached as he tried. He saw her tall figure in a long skirt sitting outside with the wind blowing her tangled hair across her face, so that he simply could not see it. Was she smiling, he wondered, and had no way of knowing.

Then his wife wearing her robe walked into the room where she sat next to Alan and began to stroke his hair.

"I didn't even hear you come in. What are you doing in here all alone and how come you're so late? Do you want some dinner?"

Alan made no answer.

"Oh, c'mon Alan, did you have a bad day?" She almost purred. Again he didn't reply, possibly because he couldn't.

"Now I know it wasn't that bad. Hey, the kids are at your mother's for the night. There's no school tomorrow, so cheer up. We're all alone for a change. Are you hungry?"

"No."

She was still stroking his hair while he stared at the crumbled piece of paper lying out of place.

"Alan, look at me and tell me what's wrong. You know, you're worse than the boys and look at the mess you're making in here," she simpered at him as she cuddled against him more closely. "What is that," she asked, pointing towards the table.

"It's nothing."

She went to pick it up, but he stopped her which was something he seldom did.

"So do you want to fool around," she grinned, tousling his hair.

"There's no school tomorrow," he said, although his wife

didn't hear the incredulous disbelief in his voice as he said it. She grabbed his hand and lead him up the stairs to their bedroom. The crumbled obituary of her was left alone untouched in his wife's living room. He almost turned back to snatch it up, but Laura pulled him along and he followed watching the orange waves of her robe sway back and forth up the steps.

Upstairs his wife made love to him, and when her glistening pink face smiled at him from the pillow, his head felt dizzy and sick. It wasn't his wife he was seeing. Instead he saw her, with her dark curls massed around her pathetically pale face trying to tell him something. And he heard it, though he'd never believe that it came from his wife's lips. He saw the painfully cracked lips open slightly and then it all blurred and seemed crooked. Shutting his eyes he was there with her, wiping the sweat away from her forehead and stroking her black hair, while he swimming in his own agony, heard "I love you" echoing throughout his mind like the voice of angels singing her away. Then as the last echo faded, he closed her unhappy eyes, bent down and would have kissed her were it not for the delirium that suddenly attacked him in the form of orange furies laughing shrilly in his ears as he lay in the protective arms of his little wife.

**-Jennifer Moro**



Randall-91

## With Purity and Perversion

Simplicity has nothing to do with it  
Nor does an abundance of  
extravagant ideas.  
It is one thought,  
in careful words.  
It is only you.

**-Bret Evangelista**

### O'Hare Airport

You  
bellow goodbye  
in slow motion  
like a blast from a  
ship's main horn  
I  
smash my bottle of  
thoughts of you  
on what I think of  
as your prow  
champagne running  
out my eyes  
blurring you into  
waves before you  
ever reach that  
cold black  
water

**-Anthony Smith**



## morgen, my desolation

64 is a parking lot and when it's not  
it's like nascar  
but you're next to me all dripping sweet  
and softly dark and happiness

sometimes i dream this when i think  
how very far away you are  
sometimes i dream nothing  
that i haven't already lived

me in my j crews and LLBeans and you  
in your lands end  
(material girl and her boy) set to go  
off into the very young virginia sunset

but i'm still here in the boohick ville  
and you still laugh in the mythical land  
of oceans and and mountains and forests and lovers  
forever frolicking forever hiding

sometimes i dream myself next to you  
and we walk holding hands into  
an unbelievable darkness  
without time without hope without place

i've heard them call us fags  
way back when we used to walk  
and i told you you looked like a boy  
before you convinced me otherwise

but now our school is falling  
and happiness bows to the whims of money

and the cure sounds less and less important  
and your voice has grown cold and distant

often i think of a less hopeless time  
when we sat by my green pool and watched  
as the sun fell in the forest  
and the sky died pink and happy with you in my arms

sometimes i dream  
that we are taken by the darkness  
and at these times i understand at long last  
that i am, only your boy

**-travis mcdade**

## Ever Green

If you were here,  
I'd tell you about this pine tree,  
the green needles  
shooting out in all directions,  
long soft needles  
blending away from the stem,  
just as fireworks explode outward  
on a dark summer night.  
The bench we used to sit on to talk  
is cold now, and as I sit  
winter pierces my skin  
clots my blood.  
I can not tell you of this tree, or myself,  
you are as removed as summer.  
But I would like to tell you  
here, by the bench,  
this tree is as green as your memory  
alone in the winter woods  
cold as your slab of stone.

**-Chris Rosenstock**

## Jigsaw

It is a jigsaw, my life  
jagged, jumbled, juttled out  
disassembled at my feet.  
Broken long ago by  
clumsy hands  
too careless to care,  
circumstances  
"beyond our control,"  
another broken jigsaw  
who resented my being.

It is an art, reassembling  
this twisted panorama  
continually playing in my head.  
Decades pass, I sit  
nightly attempting  
order in disarray  
searching for  
missing pieces.  
Black holes needing  
filled for wholeness.  
Tedious hours spent  
working for questionable  
results. Sight fails  
in dim light. Toppling table,  
I shatter the cursed thing  
on the floor  
broken again, but

by my hand.  
The power was exhilarating,  
the consequence immense.  
Years spent reconstructing  
working into wee hours  
avoiding unpleasant alternatives,

death or madness. My life's  
framework assembled,  
I come to you for  
ink blots and analysis.  
Hours of recollecting  
the known, relocating  
the unknown until  
I am whole.  
It is my life, this jigsaw  
jagged, jumbled, juttred out,  
and worth the effort  
at last.

**-Thomas D. Schnarre**

## Notes on the Egyptian Exhibit

No one cried  
when they unwound you,  
strip by strip: Bare:  
your seven years, centuries  
old, the withered brown  
stick of flesh and bone.

What were eyes, lidded  
now, devoured colors,  
skies. Hands, idle  
on velvet, a morbid  
sculpture, threw a ball,  
sifted sand, clutched

the coarse cotton  
of a blanket—another hand.  
The mother who cried  
when sickness stole your  
early soul and they swathed  
you, strip by strip, in grief

and gave you back.

-Victoria Bennett

## Moving On

I had to erase your lips tonight, then  
Redraw them with my ruler. My protractor  
Felt your last soothing touch.

I had to erase your eyes tonight, then  
Redraw them with my ruler. My compass  
Held you in its grasp for the last time.

As I erased your cheeks tonight,  
My eraser was a chameleon  
Tasting its last ripened peach.

I laid my tools to rest and  
Piled my work on top of them. I turned  
Off the lights and left your face behind.

-Christina Roy

## weep my inquisitive heart

snow white footsteps  
mock my path  
a lonely troubled  
descent  
way too conscious  
way too desperate

to meet you there  
halfway beneath me  
dreary moonbeam  
stole your eyes  
in black and white  
your lovely eyes so blue

to be kissed  
wholly magnificent  
to be loved  
sweet like apples  
to be known  
for once, forever

those lips so delicate  
so soft as roses  
like blood is red  
i died for you  
your arms so cruel  
intwined white around my throat



i would do for you  
anything, i said  
lingering dead in the rain  
it must have been this rain  
that pushed you gone  
that washed us away

you smothered me  
your gorgeous lies  
left me shallow in my self  
i dreamed and wept and hungered  
for us  
for all we ever were

and now i plead to one  
as this black and white  
stares down to me  
and sleep comes so easily,  
give me back my innocence  
it's all i ever had

**-travis mcdade**

Dance



-Tim Culloton

## Roots of the Oak

Memories of you, storm clouds  
threatening my days,  
obscuring my view, blocking my path.  
Lightning flashes as your limb  
crashes into me.  
I the acorn, you my oak.

Your roots are in me  
traveling my veins long  
and red, from toe to head.  
Flashes of you lifting me toward stars.  
Flashes of you dropping me drunkenly,  
then laughing at your broken seed.

Tiny sapling dancing in your shadow.  
Paternal water torture done with a smile.  
You change the dance  
as I master the step.  
Gloating as I stumble  
you grumble to keep me in tow.

Your voice pounds into me  
like a one-note symphony,  
Sawing away my harmony,  
leaving me bisected.  
Clumsy roots poke my essence  
until I will it to die.

Those damn roots of yours!  
My scarred wood, visible sign  
of vain attempts to carve them out.

Their tyranny resides in me  
sapping my will to live.  
I let your roots devour me.

Slowly your reflection appears  
in my mirror. I am undone,  
my youth and innocence gone.  
Your eyes stare back at me, hauntingly,  
their wooden gaze whispers  
messages I cannot decode.

Many years I run from you.  
Your roots stir in me,  
I push them down deep.  
In sleep they beckon me  
back to you, like a villain  
to the scene of his crime.

Now, for the first time, I see you,  
Old, weathered, and small,  
long past your prime, powerless.  
Your message at last clear,  
your roots are always here,  
but their present power is of my design.

**-Thomas D. Schnarre**

## god's suicide

new worlds are left uncreated  
philosophies go undebated  
(murky gyres smolder deep inside)

imagination gives painful birth  
to a sterile, breathless, sunless earth  
(pain you can no longer abide)

no voice to say "let there be light"  
lifeless wanders in seamless night  
(swallowed by the rising gloom tide)

no cosmos exist of garden chapels  
only edens of snakes and apples  
(a bullet bangs, a razor slides)

genesis would have been salvation  
instead you chose revelations  
(the loneliness of god's suicide)

-Liam Burke

## The Poa Tree

Emily Dicken's son went into the  
pastoral field to plant flowered words on paper.  
He wore a sonnet on his head  
to refrain from inspiration of the sun  
His skin was Browning smoothly and it made  
his personification look metaphysical.  
His-attire was an epic of beauty and his  
image was of many Hughes.  
He began to plant connotations and interpretations of his  
long lost love.  
They were a heroic couplet; somewhere between a  
ballad and a tragedy.  
He dealt often in that stanza of his life when planting,  
for she lived far away in the Updike country now.  
He carefully planted each word as if he were a sculptor  
or a painter in the arts.  
Sometimes he felt anonymous and would sit back to watch a  
pair of dox flying in a free verse in the sky.  
He loved to hear their lyrics.  
Then the sky started to turn Gray and heavy stresses fell on  
his words.  
The sounds of the sky crashed like symbols in a dream.  
He watched the river iamb its way above the Sandberg.  
As night came upon him, he protected the words from Frost.  
Then he looked at what he had done. No, it was not a story.  
Many would say his job takes no talent at all. But the  
rhythm was within him. The ode knew that these were  
Wordsworth a thousand pictures.  
He felt content now and was tired from alliteration.  
So he stepped off the Plath to rest and sat down under  
the Poa tree.

-Sheila Taylor

*no more*

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