

Fall 1983

Overtures - 1983

Kelly O'Mahoney

Follow this and additional works at: <https://neiudc.neiu.edu/overtures>

Recommended Citation

O'Mahoney, Kelly, "Overtures - 1983" (1983). *Overtures*. 7.
<https://neiudc.neiu.edu/overtures/7>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Publications at NEIU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Overtures by an authorized administrator of NEIU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact neiudc@neiu.edu.

M3/

OVERTURES



Cover Graphic: Isabelle Wasilewski
"Portrait"

Managing Editors: Kelly O'Mahoney
Sherry Payne

Editors: Kim Koalenz
Rosemary Strabrawa
Gerald Majer
Linda Upstrom

Advisor: Michael Davidson

OVERTURES is a magazine of poetry and prose published at Northeastern Illinois University by APOCALYPSE, the student literary organization. Submissions are welcome. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your submission to:

OVERTURES
c/o APOCALYPSE
Northeastern Illinois University
5500 N. St. Louis Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60625

All rights to material appearing in OVERTURES are retained by the authors and artists. APOCALYPSE Literary Series is sponsored by Northeastern Illinois University.

OVERTURES

Volume V

Fall/Winter 1983

POETRY AND PROSE

PAGE

Gerald Majer	Heat	2
Cynthia Poe	The Birds of the Rainy Day	10
	Still Life With Girl	11
	Morning Behind The Porch	12
	Poems From Picasso	13
	Gestures	16
Larry Swieca	Those Noises You Hear	18
Kelly O'Mahoney	Survivor	20
	Gentleman	21
	Elle	22
	Apology	23
Michael Davidson	Summer Camp	25
	The Whore Of Justice	27
	The Whore Of Love	28
	The Whore Of Communion	29
	Seek And You Shall...	30
Susan Mitchell	Meditations On A Photograph	38
Sherry Payne	The Wedding Photograph	42
Enid Levinger Powell	Discrimination	44
Anne Siegel	Untitled	46
Sara Esgate	32 hundred north 900 west	48
	Death and Spaces	50
Albert DeGenova	Ash Wednesday	52
Pamela Miller	Marlene Seriously Consideres Giving Up	
	Men For The Third Time In Two Years	53

William T. Lawlor	Not Applicable	54
	i Ay, Dios Mio!	55
Alice Ryerson	The Over-Communicator	56
Jim Elledge	Punch Lines	57
Gertrude Rubin	Jeu D'Oeil	66
	To The Moon	67
	To A Novice Gardener	68
Gary Byron	The MacEnroe Theory	69
Jeanette L. Fleming	The Flight Of Candles	80
	The Legacy	81
Eleanor Gordon	Aunt Amy	82
	On Receiving An Ad For A Magazine Called <i>Self</i>	84
	Shift	85
Jacqueline Disler	Eye's Wheel	86
John Dickson	Options	89
	Case History	91
Mary Trimble	Sisters	94
	the woman at peace	94
	the woman on the stairs	95
	the woman in waiting	96

GRAPHICS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Isabelle Wasilewski	Portrait	cover
	Self-Portrait	43
	Untitled	65

Isabelle Wasilewski	Heart	59
	an intaglio print	
	Passion	60
	a wood-engraving	
Carlos Lopez	Midnight Dream	61
	a wood-engraving	
Daryl Jensen	Sunday Afternoon Bar-B-Que: The Sequel	62
	a wood-engraving	
Rosemary Strabrawa	Night Game	63
	a wood-engraving	
	After The Game	64
	a wood-engraving	
Timothy Bell	Days With Kim	1
		4
		45
	Chicago Xmas '79	47
	St. Louis '77	51
	Untitled	52
Marta Jankowski	Self-Portrait	83
Sherry Payne	The Wedding Photograph	44
Kelly O'Mahoney	Cynthia Poe	9
	Larry Swieca	17
	Self-Portrait	19
	Cynthia Egyptian	79
	Portrait Of Monica Dailey	93

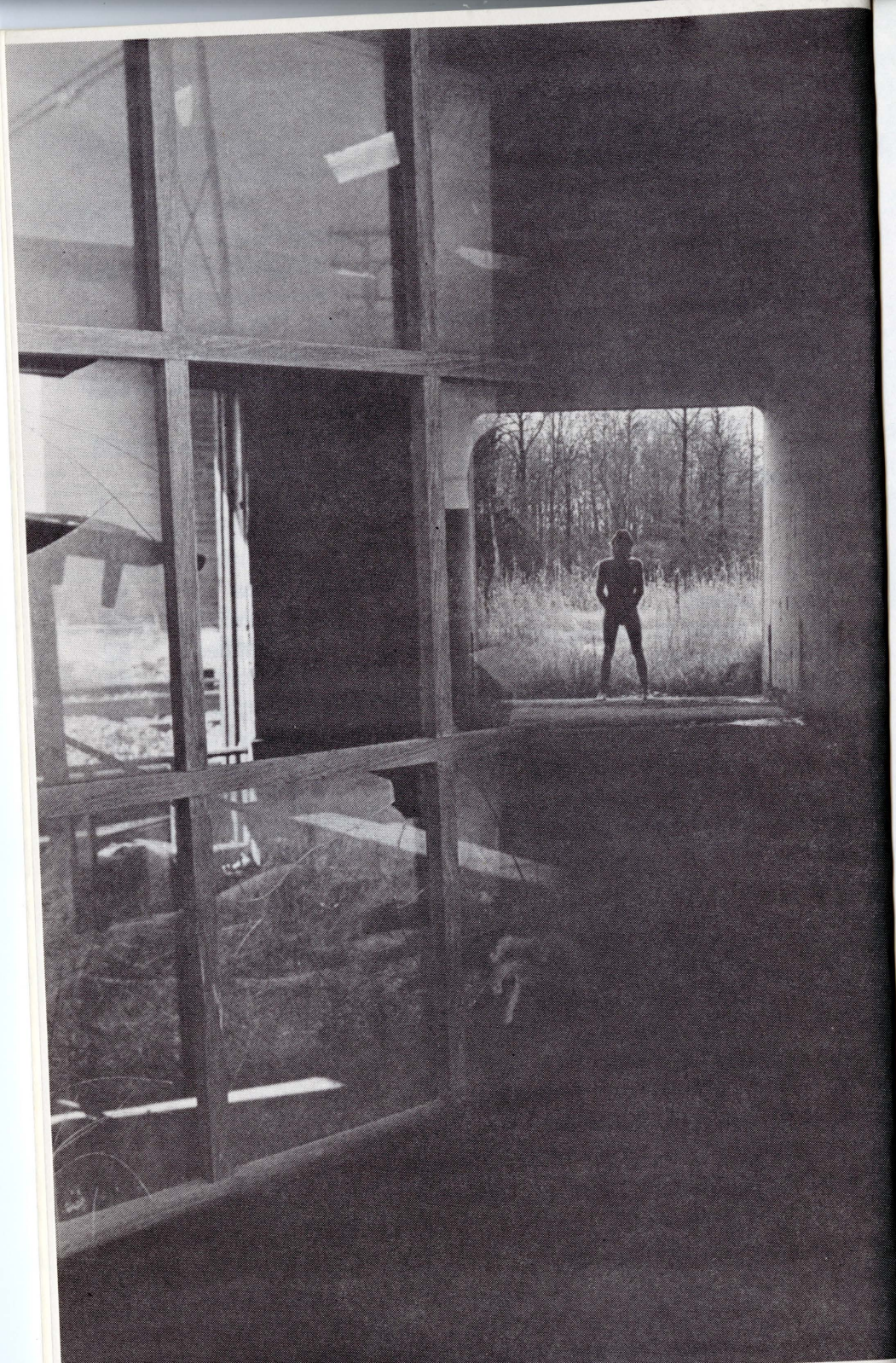
Gerald Majer

HEAT

After pulling the string on the long bank of fluorescent lamps over his father's workbench, he turned to look at the furnace, behind him in the semi-darkness at the rear of the basement. Faintly reflected on the cold tile, its flame glowed behind a dusty window a few inches above the floor. Fiery growls, booming whispers, and staccato clicks like metal castanets broke the steady roar of the gas. The air smelled of oil, turpentine, and sawdust. He stared at the swaying patch of light on the floor. He felt a presence there, a living thing, about to escape from the furnace, ready to attack him or force his embrace. He ran across the basement and up the stairs, bare feet flying, chased by something airy and clinging at his back. At the top of the stairs he hesitated as he reached for the light switch. He disliked the sudden darkness in the stairway that would surround his hand when the light went off. He wanted to slam the basement door shut, but if he did, he would have to open it again later, before his parents came home. They always told him not to close it. Once before, swinging it wide, standing back from the darkened stairway, he had felt the presence waiting, ready to emerge. Its power was built up by having the door shut on it: from the furnace it took over the whole basement, and finally pressed against the door, like air in a balloon about to burst.

He switched off the light, leaving the door open, and quickly turned away.

Three stairs connected the landing at the basement door to the kitchen. He sat down on the top stair, and looked at the back door. For a moment he thought that his parents had arrived, but the car door's slam was followed by a muffled roar and the whirl of tires on icy pavement. He looked at the doorknob of tarnished brass, assuring himself that it was locked. His parents, before going out, had told him to be sure to check all the doors and turn off the lights in the basement. Well, that was all done, he thought. So were the dishes, and his homework. He had watched "Thriller" and left the lights and the T.V. on in the living room when he went downstairs. Now he had to turn them off,



before he got ready for bed.

He stood up, dislocating the checkered throw rug on the landing from its proper place, aligned exactly between door, wall, and stairs. He put it back with a couple of expert slides and kicks, balancing himself on his other foot. Then he went into the living room, clicked off the ten o'clock news, and made a quick circuit of the tall, big-shaded lamps, turning them off. Standing in the center of the room, he glanced at the front door, although he knew its wrought-iron handle and bolt were secured. Turning on his heel, he noticed that the double draperies that covered the picture window stood a little too far apart. At night a perfect gap, just wide enough for the heavy porcelain lamp, had to be maintained. He went over and made the adjustment with two short tugs at the curtain strings. There, now it's fixed, he thought. You can see out, but they can't see in, like his mother said. As he walked away, the long mirror on the closet door, framed in varnished oak, caught his reflection. He saw the movement from the corner of his eye and stopped, his stomach tingling. Resisting the impulse to reach to a lamp and turn it on, he stepped, slowly, over the carpeted threshold and went into the kitchen.

The kitchen shone below the halo of the circular fluorescent fixture on the ceiling. This light was to be left on for his parents. He pulled out a iron-framed chair and sat at the table, staring into the glossy blackness of its formica top. The phone, hanging above him on the gaudily papered wall, suddenly rang out. Startled and annoyed, he pulled down the black receiver. "Hello?"

"Hi, son. How is everything?"

"OK. I'm getting ready for bed."

"That's good. We're leaving Auntie's now, finally. You know how your father is. So we'll be home soon."

"Okay, Ma."

"All right, goodnight hon'."

"Goodnight."

"Bye."

He hung up. An idea was born in him. So, that means another hour if they're just leaving. The light on the ceiling dimmed, then brightened. As the metallic groan of the refrigerator subsided again to a dull rattle, the sounds of the empty house, the sharp angles of the gleaming kitchen, seemed to deepen and



extend. His eyes left their usual focus, and he felt different, alone, as if his parents and neighbors, teachers and friends, didn't really exist. There was only him. Thoughts whispered through him like the soft clatter of tossed leaves before a storm. The it seemed as if another light had been turned on in the room, and he saw Davy, short, olive-skinned, with greased, shining black hair. Before class one day Davy had asked him: "Hey, you ever looked in your old man's drawers?" Thinking it was a trick question he'd said, "No," although he had looked for money once in his Dad's old footlocker, where all his tools were kept. Davy laughed and pulled a folded glossy picture from his shirt pocket: "Here, look at this." He had an idea what it might be, so he wouldn't open it, fearing the teacher might walk in. Davy grabbed it back, and shook it open from its many creases: "Look at **that**." Davy's stubby finger prodded the sheet. He looked, nearly gaped, at the picture. It was *Adam* magazine's "Eve of the month," in full color, pouting from the page, naked. "Gimme that." He tried to grab it back. "Get your own, dummy." Davy whipped the photo back into the pocket of his black Italian-knit shirt and gave him a dead-eyed look: "Look in your old man's stuff." Davy gave him a careless punch on the shoulder and let out a phony belch as the teacher walked in. When she turned to the blackboard, he whispered to Davy, "Hey, I'll give you fifty cents for it." Davy leaned toward him, keeping one eye on the teacher. "No way I'm gonna' sell **this**." He patted the packet of flesh-colored folds in his pocket. "Get your own."

Now he looked around the kitchen, and listened for a moment to the sounds of the house. He heard the windy grumble of the furnace through the air ducts, and thought about the presence, and how he had run away from it. He thought about how, when it seemed to be under his bed, or in his closet, it kept him awake, and sometimes scared him worse than a thunderstorm. He got angry. He wasn't afraid of storms, he thought, they just woke him up, and then he couldn't sleep! And there wasn't no presence, either!

Now he had to hurry up, and make sure he put everything back the way it was. His heart racing, his mouth dry, he headed for his parents' bedroom. Across the hall was the bathroom, and went in there first, and turned on the light over the sink, planning

on a quick escape if they came in early. He walked to the bedroom door, then reached inside and turned on the ceiling light. It would be the easiest to turn off in a hurry. He checked the room. The curtains were closed, everything was the same as usual, the bed unwrinkled and the carpet immaculate. Alert, trembling, flushed and short of breath, he turned to his father's tall, heavily varnished chest-of-drawers. The smell of aftershave and a vague petroleum scent tinged the air. He opened the top drawer slowly, silently, careful not to disturb anything on top of the chest. On the wall to his left, the mirror above his mother's dresser reflected a large portrait of Christ. The old print hung on the far wall, the pained face captioned with faded Cyrillic letters. Pulling the drawer all the way out, he fixed in his mind the exact placement of the objects inside. Here, under these papers, yellow one on top, white envelope next, brown folder on the bottom. Below? Nothing. He slid it shut.

Second drawer. Work clothes, rough to the touch. Thermal underwear. Socks and briefs. Nothing.

Third drawer. Wait! He heard a car door slam. He closed the drawer and suddenly thought, God, was that one open a little bit before? He couldn't remember. His hand shot to the light switch; he hurried across the hall, and shut himself in the bathroom. He stood in front of the mirror, watching his face as he listened. Voices, closer. A gruff wheeze and a throaty whine. His parents! He heard a door slam next door. No, the neighbors, not them. He slipped out of the bathroom, and went back to the bedroom, but left the light off. Now he would use just the dim light thrown from the bathroom, to play it safe. The Big Ben alarm clock on the dresser reminded him, with its luminous face, that he might not have much time left. Half an hour had already passed.

Third drawer. More work clothes, underwear. What was this? A little box. Maybe candy, tobacco? He held it out to the light. Trojans? Prophylactics? His stomach tightened, and his eyes opened wider. Rubbers! Oh God... He hastily put it back, not at all sure he replaced it exactly the way it had been. His heart shook, rattled in his ears.

He stooped to the bottom drawer and pulled it open. A leather case, papers. A gift-wrapped bottle of whisky, never opened. He groped underneath. He felt the smoothness of the glossy pages

under his fingertips before he brought the magazines out in the light. *Adam, Jem, Luscious*. They fell open in his hands. He greedily flipped through the pages, the glowing colors of a Saturday matinee movie. Upset and excited, he looked for another minute, then jammed the magazines back into the drawer and slammed it shut. In one motion he turned off the lights, ran down the hall, and jumped into his bed.

Five minutes later his parents came in. Air pushed from the copper weatherstripping with a sound like a brittle sigh as they shut the back door. He heard their footsteps, softened to keep him from waking. Low voices, the snap of the lock, the louder hum from the opened refrigerator. The clatter of glasses, juice being poured. The shutting of the bathroom door and the sound of running water. Without a sound he turned his head and looked at the pattern of the wood grain in his bedroom door. He always saw, after a while, a tall woman there, along with her little boy, her son. He didn't think.

He awoke to too much light, too much noise. His parents' voices, in their bedroom, were too loud for this time of night. They were speaking Ukrainian, which meant trouble of some kind, the vehement whispers and clipped rumbles of a language he couldn't understand. Now they returned to English, and his mother was suddenly in the room, shaking him. "Theodore, were you in your father's chest?"

"Nooooh..." He tried to grumble like a sleepy bear, hoping she'd leave him alone. He could hear his father's voice in the kitchen, increasing in speed: "So now he's gonna' lie too, the damn punk." His mother turned toward the door. "Maybe he didn't."

"He did. Look at him, he can't sleep, he's guilty about it. I have to teach him not to go snoopin'. Sneakin' around."

His mother walked out and shut the door. Their voices, in Ukrainian again, rose and fell in the kitchen. Then the door opened and his father's thick fingers clutched his arm and pulled him out of bed. He was herded into the kitchen and made to stand against the sink he had a few hours ago emptied and scrubbed.

"What were you lookin' for?" His father raised a huge hand above him.

"Nothin'," he mumbled. "I wasn't doin' nothin'." His mind a blank, he half-heard his mother's urgent preaching: "Theodore, you know it's a sin to steal or snoop into things, you'll have to go to confession and tell the priest if you sinned."

"Yeah, yeah," he muttered.

"Theodore, you speak to your mother with respect!" His father's voice boomed.

"Yes father, yes mother." He felt like he was mouthing another monotonous prayer, like the ones his mother said in church.

His father's belt buckle rang like a tiny bell in the spotless kitchen.

"This hurts me more than it hurts you." His father spoke with a strangely uncertain, high-pitched growl.

The strap came down on him, he didn't care how many times. He finally howled and wept, and it stopped.

Back in bed on his belly, he ignored his mother's sing-song of reproof, and her touslings of his hair. He wondered if Davy would sell him the picture if he offered him seventy-five cents, or even a dollar for it. He felt her weight leave the bed and whispered "yeah, goodnight," as she walked out. He could hear, like far-off thunder, the furnace murmuring through the air ducts.

He felt the warm breath of the presence on his face. He fell asleep, wrapped in its embrace.

The Birds of the Rainy Day

I

The birds are shadows, they do not eat.
They fly. See them undoing themselves
in the tree. See them mate silently.
See their colorful eggs jiggle in the next,
unwanted. See them saturate their nests
with kerosene. See them
starve joyfully. They want
to burn. They want
to sleep.

II

The black bird flickers
with his tongue, red discouraging
ebony, a blood-shroud.
His toes spread. Praise them.
His eyes glitter with a celluloid,
a film of old glass, a cataract
of knowledge. Praise it.

III

The golden bird wants a music box.
She covets more space than her shape
can discern. Her songs overlap,
or she sings them at the wrong speed.
Cut open an apple to find her
body, or her life.

Still Life With Girl

The girl in the photograph of fruit and flowers
is not present. She does not smile.
Her hand is on the light switch
hidden behind the neat brown basket
of fruit and flowers. As soon
as you praise them and turn away,
the lights go out.
The girl then eats a daffodil.
(The security guard hears her chewing, and yawns.)

Morning Behind The Porch

I will not walk
among the broken clutter
and dead kittens.
A baby I found in the trash today
wrapped in the Weekly Reader
turned out to be mine,
so I kissed it to death.
I've never been satisfied
with just one thing.

Mrs. Adamowitz on the stair,
her dress billowing like a sack,
directed the fading stars single-file
as if they were laundry—
the star bra, the solar girdle
tightening around the universe
where its muscle grows lax.

Poems From Picasso

(blue and rose periods)

1) Mother And Child

"I will go out into the world,
Mother, and become your smallest plump hero."

"Yes, my Son, take this apple away
from me, forever and ever."

All day they banter thus,
until the great seeds of night
are planted in their bosoms,
to sleep.

2) Poor People On The Seashore

The child is the oldest blue
being, his toes and fingers
curl inwards, like a dead god's.
His hands move in gesture to the thigh
of his father, admirable pauper,
a study in shudder, long disinherited
from a treasury of warmer twilights.
The woman has left this
world, she may soon
drift into the sea, leaving these two
to muse concretely on her barefoot death.

3) The Couple

Together, they are an abstraction,
barely there.

Her eyes are clouded
by a mist she never knew
concealed anything.
His are shadowed;
today he is a child of one color.

Langor is an inspiration
for this lightheadedness:

"Make me into whatever you can,
for my neck bends like vapor into your quiet passion."

4) Girl Child With Crow

Moving out of blue Picasso
chose a tender pet for this child
who pulls back, afraid of her own
long fingers, resting like Christ's did
on too many insecure young men's bodies
against the crow's, who is
afraid only of men created only
of straw, who never desired
any crow, only (deep down)
this child, she leans into
her palm like her breast
leans into the crook of her arm,
wondering, crowlike, where
the center of her body has gone.

5) Mother And Child

Mother, the word looms, pretty this time
but still too large as always.
Why is my child's face as delicate and beautiful
as mine? This desperate food
no longer spurts from my breast,
we are dry, we have no money
to buy anything ever again.

6) Acrobat And Young Equilibrist

He admires her agility, but
he will never touch her again.
They'd all be upon him.
He'd truly like to take her
with his slow, steady hands
and peel the blue dance garb away
from her rose-tinted skin,
then wrap his caveman thighs
around her waist, destroying her
accidentally, but he must wait:
Picasso, his only friend,
has taught him a fleshy restraint.

7) Family Of Acrobat With Ape

The ape is one of them,
aesthetic, broad
with a soul of silver blue
and innocent death, angel pink
lady or man-bear all
stretched out for affection,
while the baby dreams of pre-natal
nights in the jungle
lying at its side
like these parents,
who will die,
lie at each others' sides,
facing the circus tent
which houses everything.

Gestures

If I held out a wilted arm
Like a bright flower, sorry enough
But silent towards you, around
You, through you, you should beware
Of certain atmospheric changes.
Stark space shall arrange itself like
A bouquet of serious ceremony
Around your cross, lean body
And you won't be able to find it
Or any thing of value.

It is on one palm of life we feel
Everything, the rest being
Of equal importance, deadly
For all involved with turning on the lamp,
Preparing the comfortable foods,
And lying to the children's toys.
One palm of feeling calls to kindness
Forever: blue fetus joy,
Tall husky corn, red light
Of a solid moon, the transformation
Of quiet seed.

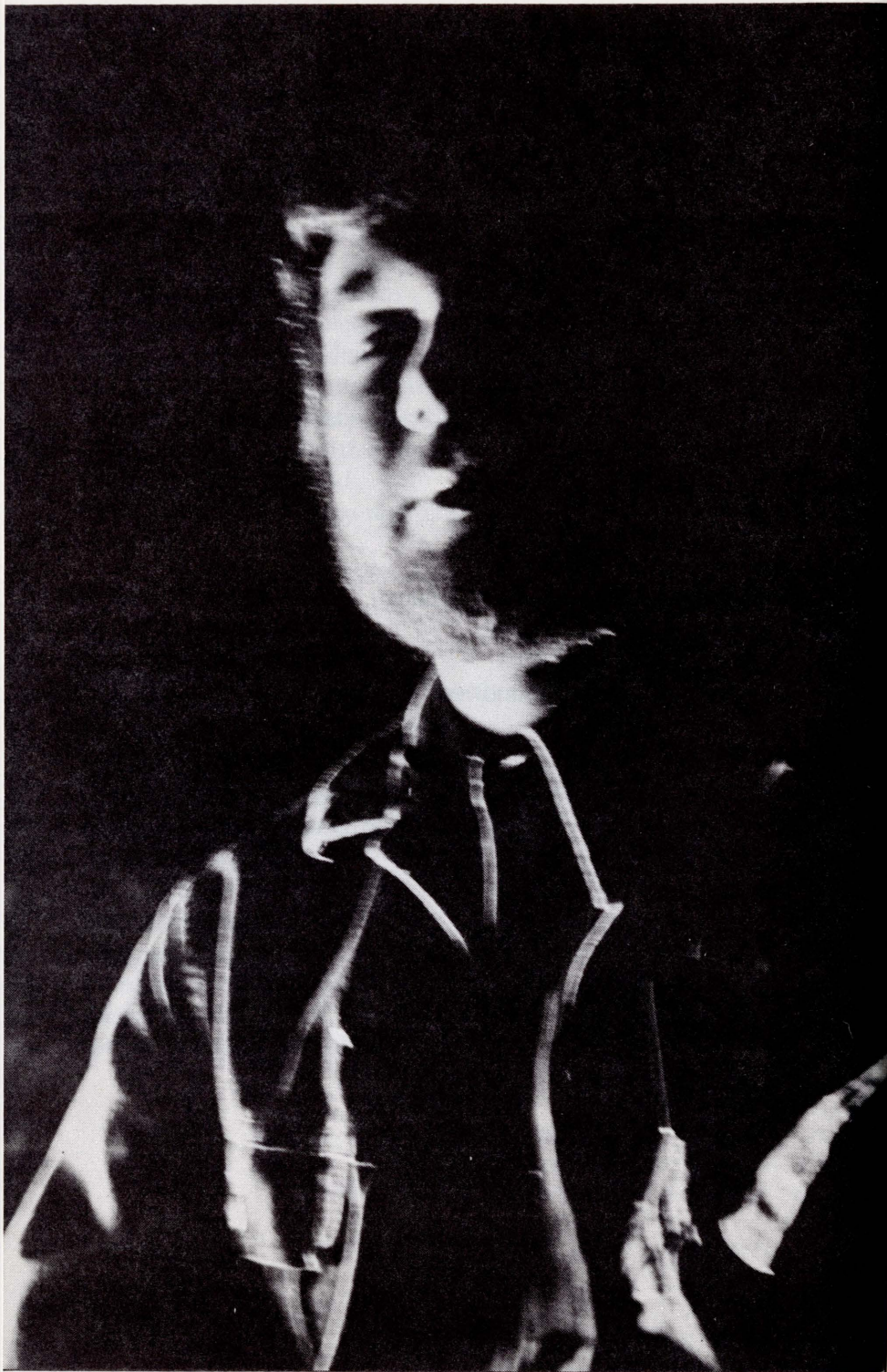
Larry Swieca

Those Noises You Hear

Those noises you hear
at the bottom of the stairs,
are sounds of my parents
asleep on the living room floor.
Their snoring provides dialogue
for actors whose electric faces
bounce shadows up the stairs
in great leaps of light
which my parents' shuttered eyes
do not see.

The noise you hear now
is my mother gently kicking my father,
"Robert, go to bed,"
but she does not go with him.
And I realize I've grown up
above this scene, too young
and asleep before then
for many years,
now walking in it,
a disturber,
"Yes, I'm home, goodnite."

Those noises you probably missed
are not important, only ingredients
mixed, night after night, to get here:
bourbon pouring into crystal,
maligned TV shows left to play
the crush of trapped indifference
settling in on top of
the sound of arguments falling to the floor,
the noiseless surrender of two souls
being sucked down by their lot.





Kelly O'Mahoney

Survivor

The woman comes out of the earth,
her elongated fingers sifting ground like time.
The worms tumble from her skin,
sheared locks,
the flesh that is smooth and tight,
wet with the strain of the climb-
smooth and soaked,
reptilian.
Dirt falls from this surface,
particles of aged flesh,
discarded afterbirth.
She has regenerated herself.
She is new,
anointed with that oil that comes from within.
She has left the earth behind,
set herself apart
like a man retrieving his own limb.
As a worm pulls itself to the surface
in a storm,
without fear of its origin,
the earth fills itself again,
frightened of her own vacuum,
ashamed of her loss.

Gentleman

—for George—

I was cleaning out my desk
and under my surrealism notes,
I found the sonnet you dedicated to me,
the one about the pantheress in the jungle,
hiding her pups
under a black and shining underbelly.
All I had said at the time was,
“I’m surprised you like cats.
They seem too independent for your tastes.”

One evening that summer,
two weeks before I left you,
you wore blue jeans and a large white shirt,
carried your shoes and walked
barefoot on the pavement.
I wore black spike pumps
and warned you of broken glass,
as you insisted on walking near the street,
where men are supposed to,
for some medieval reason.
You stopped mid-argument
to burst into the oncoming traffic
that spun in all directions and cussed.

Your long arms gently gathered
a black cat,
you had seen reel off a TransAm’s bumper,
and recline upon the white line
in the smoking asphalt.
When you carried her to the sidewalk,
I saw the crippled body
squirm stubbornly out of your cradling arms,
to bleed into the cool grass and die.

You looked small and confused,
but I understood.

Elle

for “C”...

She would ride your curves,
like a kitten
climbing pillows,
gentle,
tiny hands impressing,
upon smoother skin
Her arching
graceful spine,
flexible and frightened,
curls under your hand,
like a zephyr seeks to know you,
circling between limbs,
of your unmoving body.
When she lays she tucks
her legs under her breast,
leaves a subtle imprint
on those sheets you would have shield her.
She would whisper,
“Don’t desert me...”

but will you let her follow,
traipsing close within your shadow,
like a medium prancing,
or cage her safe from harms that lie
within such deft affection?

Apology

The words will not desert me.
They taunt me,
lying in this black,
with a compulsion to collect scribbles
on the back of receipts,
music from fingers that cannot handle strings.
People who collect things
are only making universes
they can be god for.

They fill my bed
and you wonder
why there's never enough room for you.
They never leave me alone.
You do.

I struggle to sleep and ignore them,
these unread sheets that would have
power over me.
I pull sheets tight over naked shoulders
and consciously try not to have thoughts,
close my eyes hard
and push ideas out my ears,
but the sheets are piling over my head,
like snow and icy water,
things I should have done
or would have,
if I were only someone else.

Gods aren't supposed to sleep.
We are supposed to collect children to ourselves,
even if we really don't want to hear what
they are saying,
but now that I am awake,
where are the brats hiding?
These mute orphans whose eyes I hear,
tremble behind the soft curves
of my ear.
I must not desert them
so I hide from you.

Michael Davidson

Summer Camp

The first ten heads were easy.
I forced open dry faces
of my fellow Jews
to rip out the gold and silver
implanted to halt decay—
precious metals to save mouths
for prayer and praise
to a barren god
still in search of child.

Next in the mass grave,
already yielding to worms,
rested my father.

Behold the bold face
of a mountain
within your brain
which strains to leave
the continent, logic,
that binds mind to World.

I pried open his lips—
lips that kissed me countless times
to show love that can't be seen.
His tongue was stiff and blue—
blue like a bottomless pond,
lifeless but forever moving.

Within that mountain
there sits a cave
hidden from men
whose mortality
is their vision.

You,
who need to leave
the Earth of earth,
enter rock.
Behold.

I yanked three teeth
from my father's head
and removed the ring
which linked him to
my mother's heart.
When the guard looked away
I hurled his band
beyond the barbed-wire
outside the camp
before undoing the next Jew's mouth.

As time passed,
my task grew less obscene.
When summer came the bodies
reeked beneath their dancing flies.
Stray dogs dragged babies toward shade
to shelter their feast.
But I found joy within the grave.
It was my job to free the dead
from untrue worth.
The dead joined palms
and I led them to live
within the mountain:
the secret fortress.

The Whore Of Justice

is a lovely child except for a black eye
given by a local judge who claimed
she wasn't tight enough to satisfy
his special needs from working on north LaSalle.

The silk worm has mastered creation
by simply preparing for its next life—
gently doing that act made good by nature.
But merchants steal its woven womb
to make their cash in downtown stores—
to please jeweled women with pampered pores.

The silk worm must build a secret tomb
to finish its days of meek labor
and join the skies with new power—
that grim moth strength which knows
there must be death for freedom's rise.

She looks at the Goldblatt's window
and sees tears trace her bruise.
Beyond the sad reflection rests a hunting knife
called SURVIVOR which the girl will buy
and save for when the beast of law
beats her till she's forced to cry—
so rudely forced to make him die.

The Whore Of Love

waits for me near the graveyard
on Montrose where she snaps her garter
and whispers lines from forgotten poems.
At twilight and dawn she sits on the curb
before me like a well done steak
during days of holy fast
and invites my hunger for that stuff
which feeds both marrow and dreams.

As I approach she flees into fog
that rolls in from the lake
like a dying cloud or my past
crawling west toward an unlived frontier.
As she desires, I continue to chase
the mistress of passion through alleys
of starved cats and bums eating rats
until she stops at tombstones in Graceland
to sit on fresh dirt and promise her love.

What do you want my bonny young boy?
Tell your loved one what you want.

I wish to satisfy my need
and know what such a want can mean.

Come closer my precious child.
I will tell you truths
of why nice ladies writhe
and the greatest fact of all.
Men love because they die.

The Whore Of Communion

works the corner of Lawrence and Broadway
until the sun rises over El tracks
that give her simple shelter
during those storms of darkness.
She serves the dregs that sleep
for cheap in a men's hotel
near the burnt-down bookstore.

She leads grimy patrons to a room
no larger than a rich man's tomb
and burns a candle to pierce the night.
Her wrinkled black skin absorbs all light,
blinding bums who respond in silence
though their mouths roundly gape
like babies in need of mother's milk.

She soothes unshaven cheeks,
invites forgotten hunger
toward flesh without lust—
body without want.

When morning falls like a shower of gold,
masking gutters with heaven's strain,
this aging whore collects her clothes
and goes to church to give the Father
dollar bills, coins and empty pints
donated by men who linked with Christ
through the holy virgin of Uptown—
The sacred mother of hope.

Michael Davidson

Seek And You Shall...

(This is a segment of Michael Davidson's
latest novel, "Vanishing Point")

BUZZZZZ! 4:30 p.m. and the maniac electric alarm clock slaps Gordon Doong into another day. Return slap number one knocks over a paper cup of water. BUZZZZZ! Return slap number two wounds a soft piece of charcoal. BUZZZZZ! Number three hits the mark and brings a relative silence to the studio. And since his morning occurred during the late afternoon, the silence could be no more than relative. The south end of Cogston never had much of a rush hour since there were so few jobs in that part of town and equally as few people returning from jobs in the more lucrative northside. But still Gordon's post-alarm quiet was motley with the sounds of South Edison Avenue that filtered in through his opened window. Even on the third floor and half awake he could discern the clinks of quarters being pitched toward sidewalk cracks by gambling ten year olds, the thudding of empty beer cans landing in empty trash cans, the barking of territorially paranoid mutts, the loud guttural spitting by members of local gangs, the occasional sputtering of an unsafe, uninsured car and the distant droning of countless domestic quarrels that blended wordlessly into a single perpetual fight.

Still, it wasn't the neighborhood noises or even the persistent clock that drew Gordon out of bed. While half awake, half real as a sperm whale would be if it suddenly found itself plopped onto a desert in the Southwest, thrown half way into a new perspective, all the sounds seemed too much like a nightmare that was all the more unnerving because of its devout resemblance to the mundane. But when the smell of turpentine reached Gordon, filling his nose and snaking into his sinuses, then his eyes opened, half in acceptance and half in surrender.

For nearly a decade since graduating from the Cogston School of Art and Design all that he really cared about or gave full attention to was his painting. He tolerated anything, and sometimes it seemed like everything, for his oils. For them he swung his legs out from under his blanket and sat naked in his dim studio. The bed was the center of the room and also the only furniture except for empty crates used as tables, a splintering wicker chair and a paint smeared stool. Cluttering the floor space were discarded sketches and easels that stood contorted with the poise of aesthetic scarecrows.

Gordon slowly rose and went to the only wall which wasn't

covered with his paintings. They were city scenes and portraits which combined images of Cogston's mostly Black south section and a creamy, almost Baroque mood. They joined urban dispossession and Rubenesk idealism. Along the wall that he approached were a sink and toilet in the open, a miniature refrigerator and a hot-plate beneath the window that faced South Edison. He let a long shower of urine splash into the toilet and then tried to catch enough water in his cupped palms from the coughing faucet to wash his lightly bearded face. Gordon, after great effort, forced a bit of toothpaste out of a flat tube and gave his coffeestained teeth an unenthusiastic brushing which still managed to wound his sore gums.

"Damn," he sighed as he watched the thick fusion of spit, fluoride gel, and streaks of blood back up for a second in the rusty smelling sink and then get sucked down as if the old plumbing was thirsty for this odd nectar. Gordon knew that he ought to have his mouth taken care of but it simply wasn't practical. Health is never as immediate as hunger.

He arranged his short brown hair in a sloppy sort of way, just flattening it to the sides with moist palms, and then he started to roam through his square of living space trying to decide what to wear. It wasn't that Gordon cared about his appearance. He was really quite oblivious and shabby. His decision of clothing wasn't one of style or color coordination but rather a search for garments that didn't stink. When everything stunk it was time to do laundry. He found shorts that wouldn't offend anyone hanging from an easel as if they grew there and then slipped into a pair of jeans blotched with red paint. In a moment of haste he once used them as a rag to clean up a spill and the odors of the oils and turpentine covered the sweaty scent of accumulated dirt. Draped over the back of the wicker chair was a grey flannel baseball jersey which he usually used for sleeping when winter came. It was what he wore to work when his scattered T-shirts and sweaters flunked the nose test. Being summer, a quest for socks was a needless nuisance. Gordon stepped into his sandals and out the door.

He passed Mr. Smith's second floor door and the usual muffled scurrying sounds of the dinner hour emerged. When Gordon first moved into the building he once yielded to his

curiosity and knocked to see what was going on in there. Mr. Smith, perhaps the oldest and blackest man in the neighborhood, let him in to observe the late afternoon feeding. Dozens, or maybe a hundred anxious rats danced and crawled over each other's backs for the bits of bread, cheese, dried fruit and beef jerky that Smith strewed over most of his apartment. Gordon questioned him about why he would encourage rodents to dwell in the building. Smith explained that the rats never did any harm as long as they were fed and the ones that did get food seemed to know that the source wasn't endless so they sort of patrolled the apartment to keep excess rats outside. When they would die Smith would cook them for himself, but surprisingly, he said that they tasted nothing like chicken.

"But what's the real reason you let them in here and care for them?" Gordon was too intrigued to be repulsed.

Smith stared a little at Gordon, and then at the rats, and then at Gordon again. "Dis worl is so har foe little things. Foe bugs, foe rats, foe children, so har. I'd feed de bugs too but dey get eaten by de rats. And I'd feed de children but dey stay away cause dey think I'm ugly. Dey are right too. I'm ugly."

Gordon looked at Smith and tried to fix his image for a sketch, but his face seemed to deny art. Maybe it was his blackness. He wasn't like most Blacks who were really a shade of brown. Smith was a pitch black Black. When he blinked his eye sockets vanished. When his mouth was shut it disappeared. Even his rivers of dry wrinkles were hidden by his color. Later that same day Gordon went upstairs and sealed all the holes and cracks in his studio with brown modeling clay to prevent any visits from Smith's guests.

His loose sandals clapped loudly as he continued down the stairs but paused as he saw a teenager wearing a waitress' uniform leaving Madame Primotif's first floor apartment. No doubt the girl had come for one of the Madame's varied services. She was a sort of local voodoo lady, though voodoo was only one of her practices. She mixed elixirs, made charms, wrote curses, read palms, interpreted omens in dead animals, occasionally tried to see the future in an overturned crystal punch bowl, and had several other mystic techniques as well. Just as Gordon reached the bottom of the stairs the Madame's scarfed round head

popped out to stop the painter.

"I knew you were coming," she said and extended a dark delicate hand.

Gordon gave it a light kiss and replied, "You heard my sandals."

"Oh, for an artist you have so little vision. Come, come in. I've had a good day. Many seekers with money. So come in and ask me a question. I shall see for you."

Gordon entered her precariously lit front room and sat at a card table in the center which was covered with a velvet representation of the solar system. The only astronomically unorthodox element was a large bloodshot eye which was positioned in a wide orbit outside of Pluto. Around the room wax glowed unevenly beneath weak flames and dripped down the sides of empty pop bottles, beer cans, jelly jars, nutmeg containers and milk jugs. Madame Primotif, in a loose flowing gown of fake leopard skin, sat across from Gordon and handed him the Tarot deck.

"Shuffle until your question is clearly in your mind," she said and shut her eyes for a moment. When they opened they seemed to be larger and more receptive to the thin twists of fire around the room.

Gordon mixed the cards half heartedly since he had already been read once before by the Madame and received a rather noncommittal interpretation. Primotif claimed that the poor results were caused by the presence of low spiritual forces, but Gordon figured that she was afraid to take her act too far with him. He was less superstitious than others she read for, and therefore less gullible, he thought.

"Do you have a question?"

"Yes," he sighed. "Will I ever be successful as a painter?"

"Now," she instructed in a low, cool tone. "Cut them into three piles to your left."

After Gordon did this she restacked the deck and set it before. Suddenly a card which she had already removed from the others appeared in her hand. Perhaps it was up her sleeve. She placed it in the center of the table, over the velvet sun. The card was labeled THE FOOL and it depicted a young colorfully dressed man staring upwards, as if trying to visualize some lofty ideal.

He stands on a high rocky ledge, but his next step forward might cause a great fall. A bright sun shines above him but snowy mountains loom in the distance. He has a bag attached to a stick over one shoulder, a flower in hand and a dog playing at his feet.

"This is your significator. It will represent you on the journey for your answer. Do not be misled by its title. It is a card of creativity, choice and goals of beauty."

The next card was placed directly over THE FOOL. It was up side down and labeled THE HIEROPHANT.

"The atmosphere surrounding your question will involve nonconformity," Primotif said.

Placed sideways over THE HIEROPHANT was a card that showed a man sneaking away with five swords, leaving two stuck in the ground.

"You must beware of taking what is not yours. You must follow your own path. This may oppose your chance for success."

Directly beneath the others she placed a card with a man walking off into the mountains at night. He leaves behind eight full cups.

"In pursuit of your answer you have already rejected much of life. Perhaps even love."

To the left of the center cards Primotif placed the ACE OF WANDS which showed a hand emerging from a cloud. In its grasp is a staff sprouting new leaves.

"You have just passed through a creative beginning. Perhaps you recently started a project which will be more unusual than your others."

Gordon's apathy faded as he was drawn into the spell of Primotif's reading. Her rhythm and voice, and the simple but otherworldly elegance of the Tarot cards rivoted his attention.

Placed above the center cards was THE EMPRESS who was dressed richly and sits in a lush garden.

"In the future you may attain some wealth."

To the right of center the Madame placed an upside down card labeled the QUEEN OF CUPS. On a throne she sits, royally dressed and staring at an ornate container.

"Your question will be influenced by a dreamy woman. A

woman of imagination. She will be good in many ways and intend well, but beware. Do not rely on her for she may be perverse."

Next she placed a card toward her side of the table and to the right of the others. Gordon flinched a bit when he saw that it depicted a man on the ground with ten swords in his back.

"Calm yourself, Seeker. This is not a death card. But it is the card of your fears about your question. You fear complete failure and death in your painting."

Above the stabbed man she placed an inverted card with a young farmer who calmly considers the pentacles in the vine he is cultivating.

"Those around you may be impatient in regards to your question."

Above the farmer she placed THE DEVIL. A horned, winged fiend holds an inverted burning torch of peril and chaos. Chained loosely to the same black half-cube that the devil is perched on are a man and woman. They have grown tails and horns.

Gordon leaned forward as Primotif said, "Your own goals and values regarding your question are in a dangerously delicate balance. In your own mind and heart your art is a battleground for the oldest of wars. The material tries to dominate the spirit. Dignity fights against the bondage of perversion."

The final card, THE HERMIT, was placed above THE DEVIL. He stands alone on a snowy peak at night. The bearded older man stares into a lantern he holds which contains a six-pointed star.

"The outcome of your question, the success of your painting, will depend upon good advice. Quiet and humble advice that may seem too simple. But keep your mind open for wisdom may not be obvious."

Gordon was impressed by the reading. Much better than his first one. He felt that the Madame had managed to manipulate her responses to keep them related to the question, but just general enough to make it difficult to be proven wrong. He thanked her and apologized for having to rush off to work. Before he left her apartment he turned back to see her still seated at the table. She glowed in the flickering light with her eyes shut and her head tilted back. Her hands, moving as if they had their

own eyes, restacked the cards and held the Tarot deck to her heart. Primotif released a quick laugh and silently said, "Thank you."

In the hallway Gordon peeped into his mailbox without bothering to open it and found it empty except for what looked like a pair of mating roaches. He stepped out of the building and squinted as he tried to adjust to the hot slanting August sunlight. Two dogs were rigorously going at it and had moved their dispute to the sidewalk in front of the five cracked concrete steps which led up to Gordon's feet. One mutt was a small chubby brownish beast that might have once had some terrier in its family tree but had long since lost the graces of fine breeding. The other was taller and had a long houndish snout but appeared to be weak and malnourished. Perhaps his mouth was too far from the ground to be a good scavenger, and scrounging was essential on Cogston's southside. Animals, people, and even their dreams, dreams of money and love, dreams of bones and fire hydrants, they all nourished themselves on the scraps and garbage of those whose need to scavenge was just slightly less severe.

The small dog finally got in a good snap on the taller one's nose and sent it yelping down the street. The victor panted for a few moments and then sat down on the bit of world it had maintained.

Susan Mitchell

Meditations On A Photograph

"When you look at me that way
you look just like my mother . . ."

This said by my own mother.
But in this last photo taken of my grandmother
she looks like someone we'd never known,
as if at the last moment
she'd realized another possibility and become it
without warning or the least hesitation.
Whenever Mother looks at the picture she says
"You can see she is dying there."
Can you? Can you see it?
The picture was taken August 23, 1965
at my aunt's beach house overlooking Conscience Bay.
The time is a little after lunch,
a long lunch that must have gone on until two or three.
Some of what we were eating is in the photo—
bread, ham and a bunch of green grapes.
Grandmother should have been sitting between
me and two of her daughters. But at the last moment
she leaned forward, reaching out of the picture,
as if she wanted to stop the photographer
or had something urgent to say.
She blurred part of the photo. The leaves are smeared.
I could be looking at them through a rain-smeared window.
And for whatever eternity a photo has
there will be a silver streak
where she elbowed a knife off the table.

"Look at the eyes." That's Mother again.
One of Grandmother's eyes is rheumy, enflamed,
the eye of an old and decrepit bird,
a maddened eye,
fixed, staring out at the world, angry
at what it can no longer see.
I follow it back
into the skull, pulled inward, sucked
into the brain where the anger burns aimlessly,
a blind hole
beyond the reaches of us whose eyes
swing lightly over trees, houses, hands and other eyes.

Then there's the mouth—smiling, open, working
against the eye, denying the meaning of the eye, insisting
that the eye, like the hand lifting
the grapes, only wants—what? What does it want?
The hand lifts out of the photo, the eye
leads back in. I weave in and out, sometimes
thinking the eye must have been caught unawares,
before it could compose itself
into the weakly tearing eye
Grandmother always wiped with a white handkerchief.

Perhaps the problem with the photo is my expectations.
For example, I've always been surprised
by my pale skin, the almost overexposed cheeks
and the purple shadows deepening
under the eyes, even surrounding my face.
There is something latent about them
as if they had always been just under the skin
waiting for this photo to bring them out
the way air brings out the blue of potatoes.

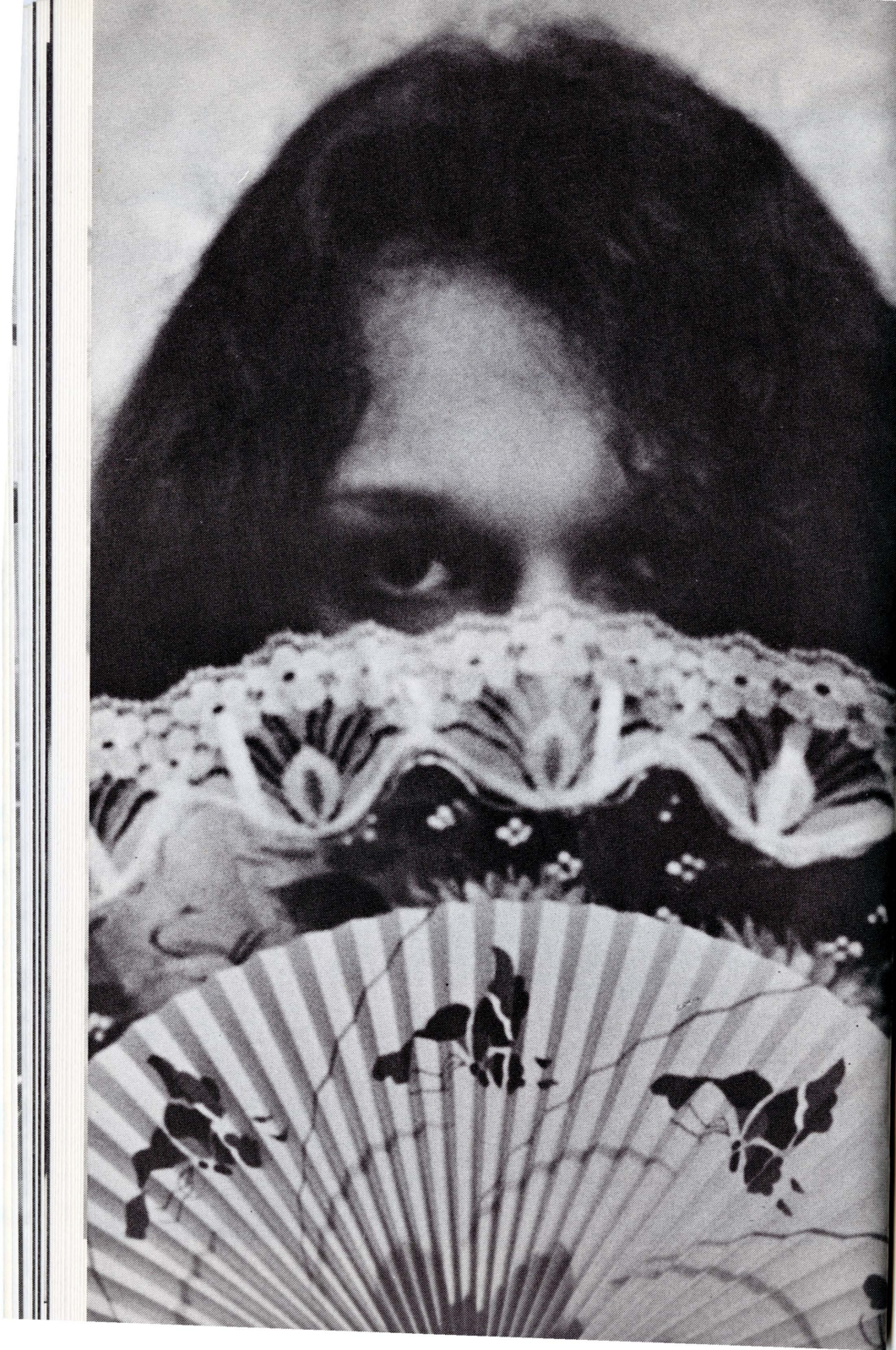
Or take the grapes. Are they really grapes?
They could be a green skull. See
where some grapes are missing—
you have the eye sockets.
And there, where we must have eaten quite a few,
a gaping hold that could be a mouth.
The longer I look at it
the more clearly I see inside
each grape a tiny skull

Maybe the picture isn't important.
After all, Grandmother didn't choose to be in it.
She hardly touched any of the food.
Her legs hurt her all afternoon. Perhaps
her hand is pointing to what the photographer left out—
the wind, salty and fresh, the buzz
of a sea plane and the beach tilting slightly
upward, where only that morning I had picked mussels.
Grandmother spotted them. The shells,
purple-black under the water, were opening,
the orange tongues sticking out.
We sat on the beach and ate them out of their shells.
Then we watched the wake of a boat.
One wave came into shore. The other wave,
lifting like the fin of an enormous fish,
continued out to sea.



The Wedding Photograph

This is the morning I deny myself
slipping into a puff of cotton cream lace
which delicately takes the shape
of a camisole
My bed, with the petite-point rose quilt
will no longer know the sole weight
of my body
A brass cup of sunlight floods the window sill
spinning empty shadows
and holding images of your fragmented face
I folded your words in a packet of sachet
and buried them next to my innocence
The Japanese comb, etched and lacquered
with smooth velvet ribbons
will secret my ash-black hair
behind a mask of vows
Mother's gown, carved from alabaster
molds itself to my skin
just like it did to hers
Leaning over, I encase my slim white ankles
in dark satin
so that I can float through
the arched doorway
The oyster, robbed of its treasure
that pearl now sleeps
in warm, soft gold
which waits in the false lining
of your pocket.
Tonight I will lose myself.



Enid Levinger Powell

Discrimination

Listen, my daughter
I hardly noticed you
Soft, brown
Growing behind your
Brother, all gold and bronze,
Your voice stuttering
Through his bass.

Now and then you flashed
a gleam of teeth
a glance, withdrawn
the instant of perception
like the leaf that curls at a touch.

Sallow, you flinched
in sunlight, cupped your hands
over your eyes and edged your brother
Forward like a shield.

Later, bleached dry, he thirsted
For your shade, drank
Your eyes reflecting
All the colors of water.

Your season chosen,
You stood full-grown
A rooted sustenance
For natures more subtle
Than the mother
Of a son.

Anne Siegel

Untitled

Barbara Walters struck a match
across your yearning
with her TV talk of orgasm;
that had to be discussed with your husband
immediately. 72 and still pink.
Did the hot heart
seep out when your lips later
wheezed,
or did it cling to you until
the sucking black of burial?
My soft hummingbird
you held so tight with
round arms to me.
And in your cool coffin
are you different from me
who now lies in my bed
alone?
I am an apple with no core.
Steel spike slanting
towards my heart,
sever it from the mooring cord.
drift me drift me drift me.

Sara Esgate

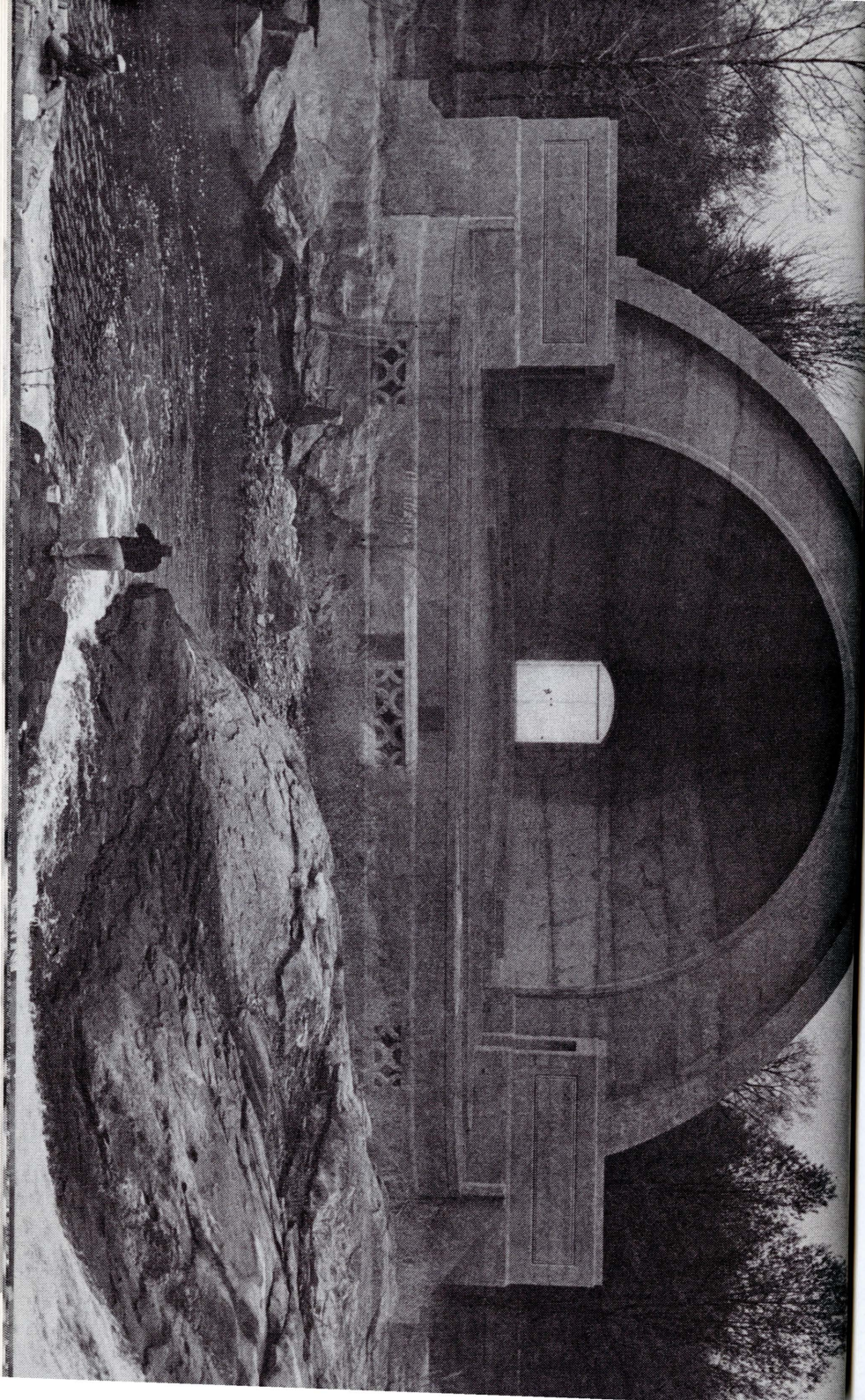
32 hundred north 900 west

In the lee of the square
building
3200 north 900 west asphalt
blocks within the city,
someone planted
three long-needed Japanese pines
and a blue ash.

Beneath the ash a shadow moves.
Meat-eating wasps hum and chew
at a wingjoint picked
clear to thin pinkmuscled flesh.
Primary feathers fan
slate-etched
over the browngold exuberant
disorder of death.

Under shadowed boughs
a bird moves
sleepy in the long-slanted
morning light
its breast fluffed to the nightwarmth
of layered pineneedles.

The staccato step and hum begin to
move in the asphalt squares.
Blue exhaust mingles
with the show blue mist
of hoarfrost rising
slow in the white sun.



Death And Spaces

No dark of velvet shroud
to casket me,
no marble cherubs
to tomb me false,
let me go free
to those great good friends,
fire and rot,
who will eat the moment
that lies layered in me
to cycles of configuration.

Ashes blow in the sun
and fall soft to fog
that curls over land's end
and sombers morning groves
of deep trees, black,
smelling of earthbark rot and pine
in seadark canyons wet
on the westward leaning
Pacific slope.

Silvered flakes of eyes and tongue
dry on the greengrey leaves
of ceanothus and madrone,
cling to small sticky apples
of a twisted redbarked manzanita
and are eaten, salt to sour fruit,
by a black-eyed jay.

The oils of incense rise
in pungent spicing air
from sumac, greasewood, redshank, chapparel
in fire-cropped flanks of land
that rush and plunge
in drygold grass, sudden
to vast falling blue.



Albert DeGenova

Ash Wednesday

“Remember Man”

Today people walk the streets with
dirt smeared on the foreheads
(20th century sack-cloth)
marking the Cath-O-Lics,
and McDonalds sells 3 billion
Filet-O-Fish.

“From Ashes”

Last night the priests of the world
smoked liked winter chimneys
to supply enough ashes
for the festival.

“You have come”

Like fans waiting for souvenir tee-shirts
the pious line up to receive
their souvenir thumb print.

The priest mumbles to himself
the words (not wanting to spread it around)—
the only Truth those pious fans
with black holes in the front of their heads
will ever know.

“To Ashes You Shall Return”

Pamela Miller

Marlene Seriously Considers Giving Up Men For The Third Time In Two Years

Great white glaciers of ice cream
with big strawberries on it
Brownies wrapped in a French flag
Exotic presents, but some men
are still dull as graham crackers.

Some men—
You could fill them full of candles,
electric shock, the nude high-dive
and still the pinhead just sits there!

Some men, some men
This can't be happening.
To have to bitch like Dorothy Parker,
old Lemonface, at twenty-two

But he drags you to a show,
promises a riot,
but it's weird-funny, not haha-funny
the dancers' legs all wrong

And sure, he fiddles with you
afterwards in the cab,
but he does it too fast
too locker room
and when he finally air-mails
his one classic love letter
your name's spelled wrong
and there's too much punctuation.

William T. Lawlor

Not Applicable

In my dream last night,
Or perhaps the night before,
Back among the birds of the Samoan jungle,
Or perhaps bruising through the brush in New Guinea,
Margaret Mead, the famous anthropologist, humanist, and writer,
Or perhaps one of her skilled assistants,
Persuing a mission to collect data about me,
Or perhaps about the members of my tribe,
Approached me, pen and questionnaire in hand,
As I was hollowing out a log,
Or perhaps carving a mahogany idol.
In the name of science and sociology, she asked,
"Do you copulate with your sister?"

I didn't have a sister,
Or perhaps I didn't copulate.

i Ay, Dios Mio!

I want this poem to repose
like Fred,
my big Dominican friend,
who having finished
nineteen beers,
a dozen sausages,
six fried corn cakes,
a rack of ribs,
two large mangos,
a plate of plantains,
a pot of rice and beans,
and four stiff drinks of rum,
drops into a soft chair
and with a sigh of "Ay, Dios mio!"
falls into a snoring sleep.

Alice Ryerson

The Over-Communicator

It's a two-way street, Bud.
You gotta notice cars
coming in the other direction.

You take your hands off the steering wheel,
wave them around
telling and showing

but you don't leave a gap
for the others
to warn you about trucks

or to creep into crevices
in your sentences
and settle down.

Jim Elledge

1. Mother-of-Pearl

Haunting this room, prayer struggles to be
seen, though eyes tear, stung by coal-oil smoke,
though folded hands open slow and empty.

Hour by hour floorboards torture each knee.
A window slammed next door as day broke.
Haunting this room, prayer struggle to be

the lock of the day and the evening's key.
Clenched hands knock, hands stretched out stroke,
but folded hands open slow and empty.

Whispers rise like heat degree by degree.
Someone bangs on the wall, whom whispers woke.
Haunting this room, prayer struggles to be

the salve for suffering faintly decreed
by wind's rustling leaves of oak—
but folded hands open slow and empty.

To kneel alone night after night and plead
is no crime, no blessing, but a joke:
haunting his room, prayer struggles to be
more than hands that open slow and empty.

2. Days of 1968

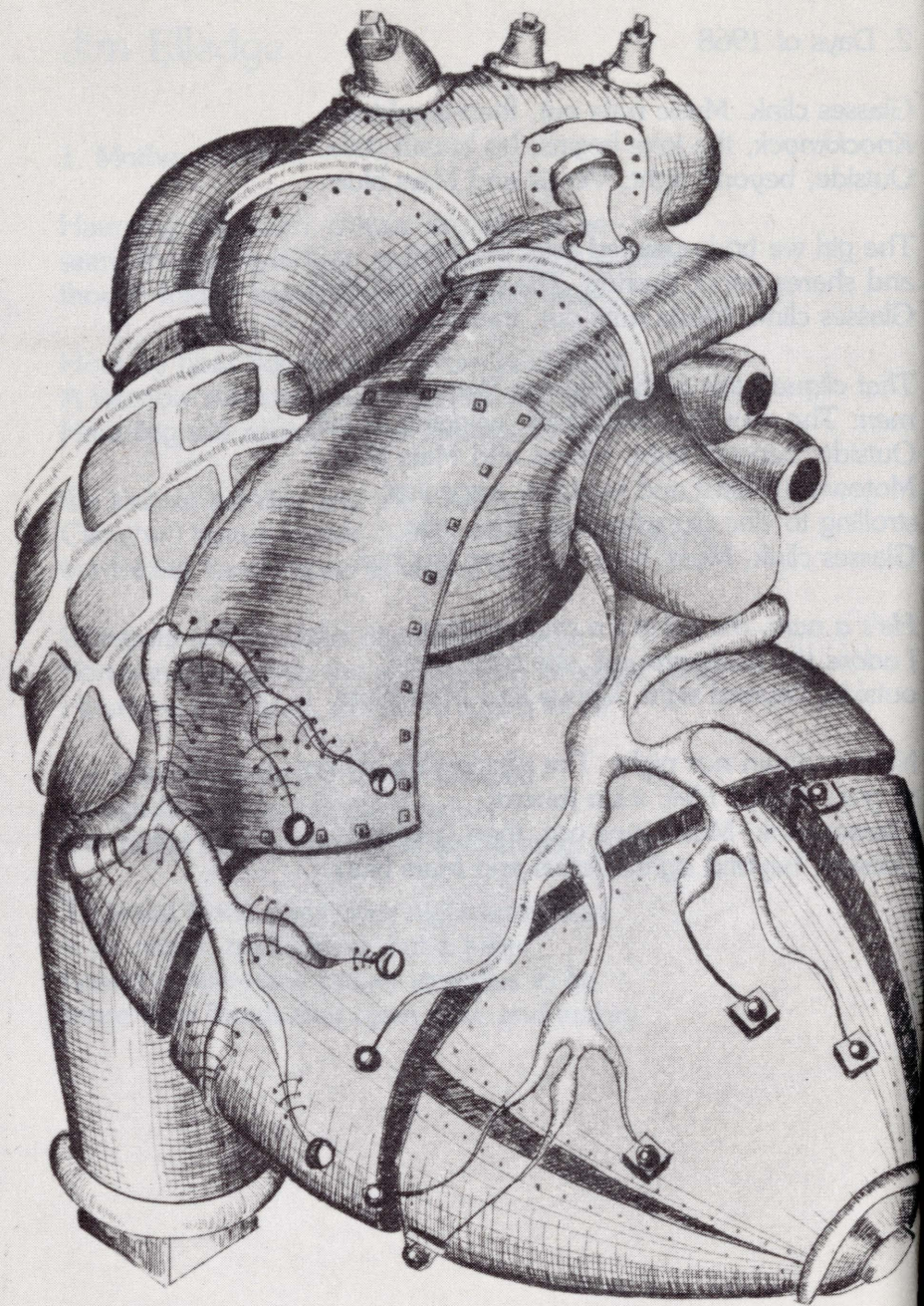
Glasses clink. Music runs out, then laughter.
Knockknock, the joke begins, his breath stale.
Outside, beyond sight, Venus and Mars blurr.

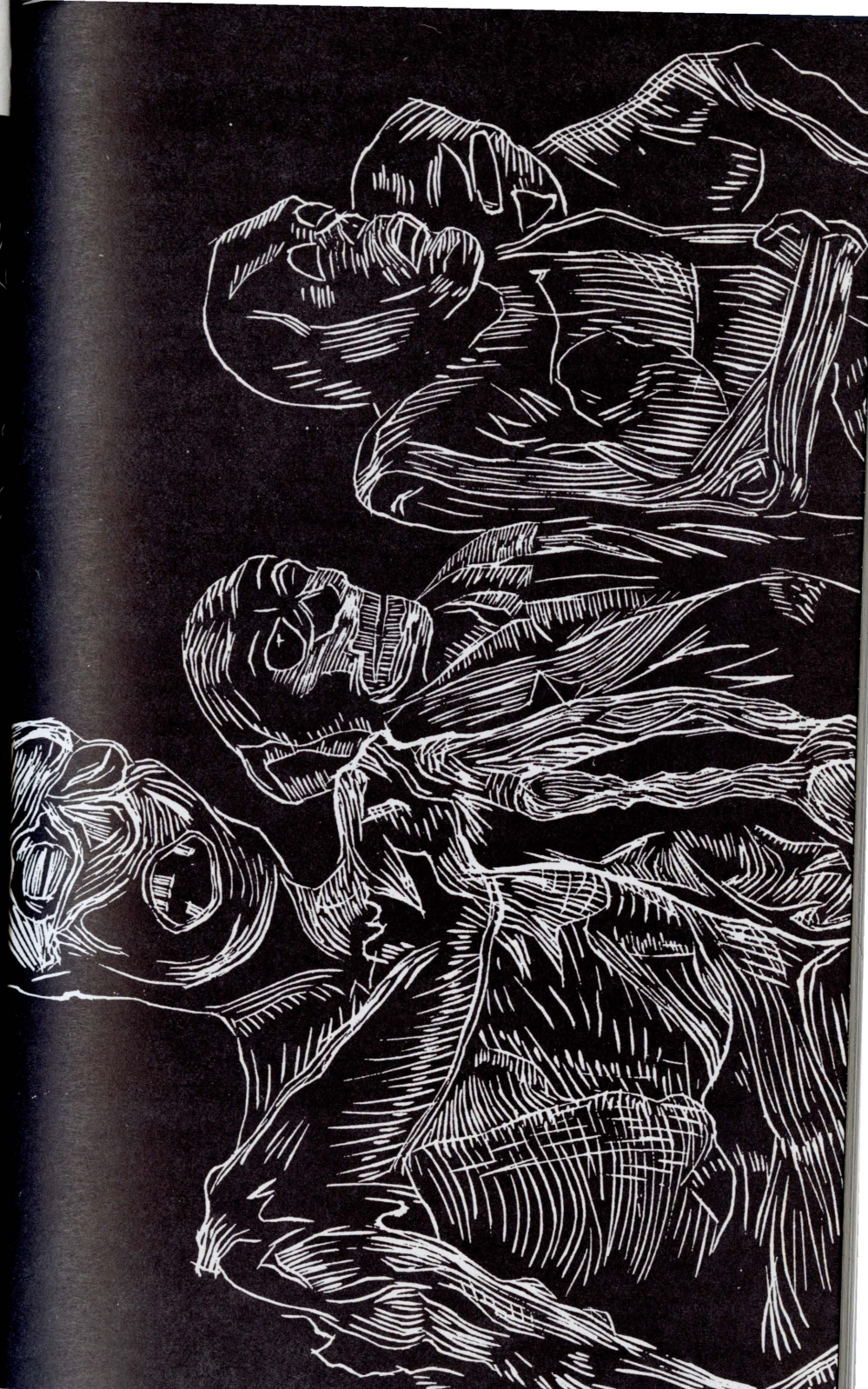
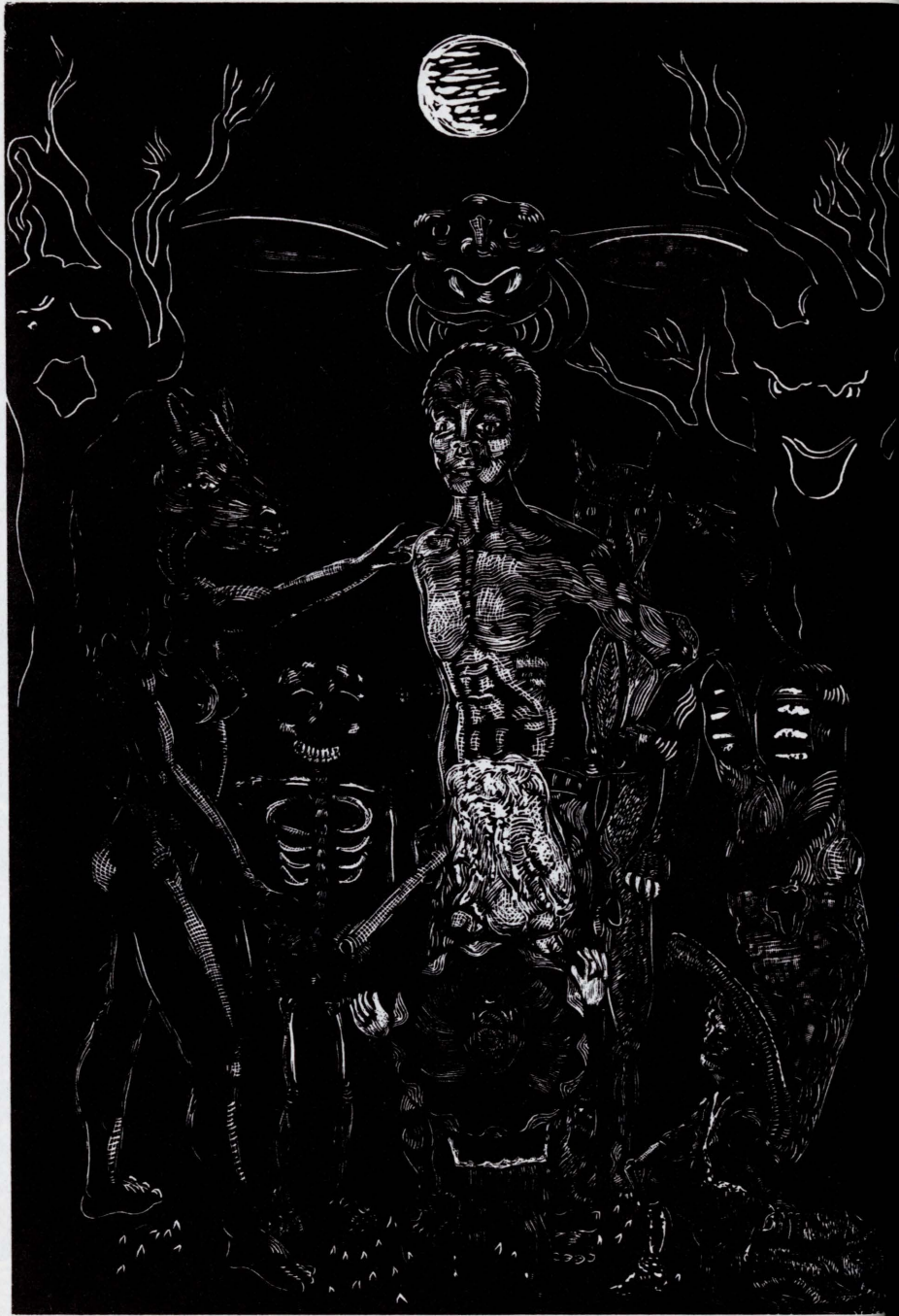
The girl we body-painted asks the hour
and shares her J, purring, *The party's got dull*.
Glasses clink. Music runs out, then laughter.

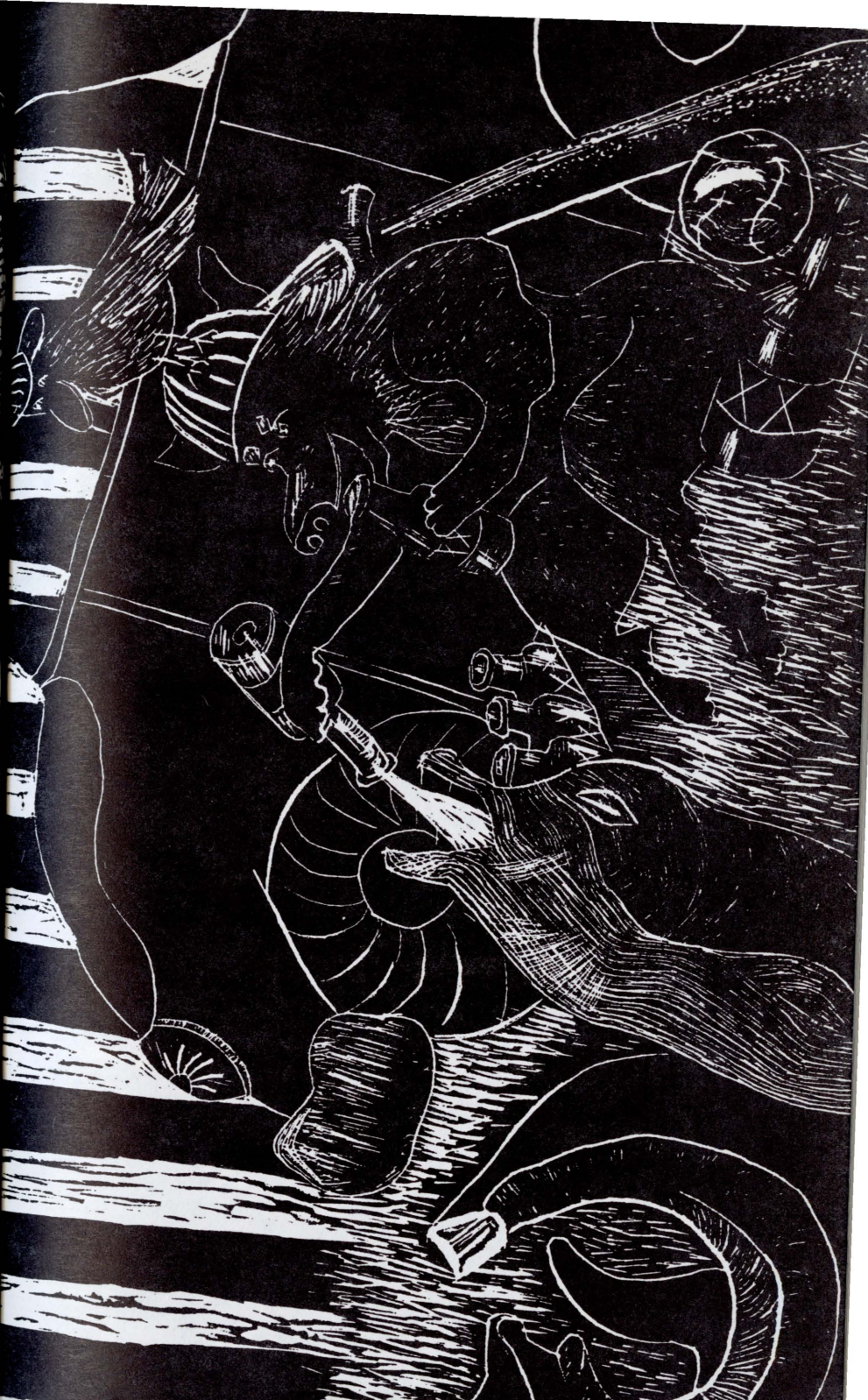
That clique's the SDS; this one Weather-
men. The mut begs munchies, wagging its tail.
Outside, beyond sight, Venus and Mars blurr.
Motown full-blast and we blow a speaker
strolling to The Ronettes mile after mile.
Glasses clink. Music runs out, then laughter.


He's a narc, the other's a draft dodger.
I adore the underground, she trills, while
outside, beyond sight, Venus and Mars blurr.

Neither down nor night. The window's a smear
of gray. *Party? Hell, it's a funeral*.
Glasses clink. Music runs out, then laughter.
Outside, beyond sight, Venus and Mars blurr.









To The Moon

Blindman's white eye,
the gossip's left ear,
punctual intruder—
you tread a deadly
course, always
on target.

Now is the time
to break loose,
live by your wits,
take the advice
of an earth maverick:
ignore gravity.

Exposed by degrees,
unseen in the wings,
you hang like
a hard wet snowball
that missed its mark,
caught in a rut
of some compulsive
sorcerer's orbit.

Gertrude Rubin

Jeu D'Oeil

The lone runner
binds me to his eye.
I hold him
in the chambers
of mine, allowing
enough slack
for his widening
arc. If I turn

aside, he moves among
the tall grasses
of my retina;
if I look ahead,
he drops into
its blind hole.

To A Novice Gardener

When I die, place a cutting of me
in a glass of clear water. Weeks
later, observe a pale-eyed foetus
swimming against the sides. Next,
bury its tangled afterbirth deep
in rich loam; wait till its head
punctures the air, arms jabbing at
the sun. By next summer, you will
know me—third plant to the right:
clotted with leaves, and toughening.

Gary Byron

The MacEnroe Theory

The party had been going on for almost three hours by the time midnight rolled around. Cigarette smoke wound its way around the various shaped forms of the fairly apathetic group of young undergrads; the sweet scent of hashish intermingled with the nauseatingly rich aroma of Prof. MacEnroe's maple-walnut blend.

Prof. James T. MacEnroe had the distinct honor of being the sole representative of the University faculty present at this, another 'week down the tubes' bash, which had been held every Friday night for the past two and a half years. As always, it was held in the old Philosophical Studies Center, an old Tudor mansion located just off campus.

MacEnroe stood alone near a grey and black, tar and nicotine misted window peering out over the grounds. He sucked idly away at his gunk-encrusted antique; walnut Lord Camden (made in the Scottish Highlands by frustrated virgins), every other puff sending a small, juggling sphere of solid, white smoke aloft, half way to the mansion's high ceiling, where it settled for a moment, then slowly began to dissipate, thinning to a translucent mist, which would waft across the large room, causing unsuspecting olfactory nerves to scream out for mercy.

The students tolerated his presence though, his being such a strong force in their efforts towards forming a more practical curriculum. The semester before, when the dominant outcry was for better structured courses, MacEnroe was there, just in time to prevent a group of overzealous students from storming the Dean's office, preventing the situation from falling into worse turmoil than it already was; then taking the entire matter into his own hands, meeting with the Deans of each college, and explaining, on their own level, the benefits which such action would have for them, and the ruling faculty in general.

Every so often, a puff of gut-wrenching smoke would barely eek its way out of the red-hot bowl of MacEnroe's Camden, falling over the edge, and losing itself in his closely cropped beard. Each time this would happen, a low school-girl-like giggle would crawl up his back. Who was laughing at him, he wondered; who found him so amusing?

As his entire beard became enveloped in a mist, the giggling became more insistent. MacEnroe quickly turned his gaze away

from his solitary window, just in time to catch a glimpse of the perpetrator, semi-cowering in embarrassment, several feet away. He recognized her immediately, and wondered why he had not recognized the laugh sooner. He should have known it well by now, having heard it so often in his History's Greatest Perversions class. Jeanne Davenport was always laughing, if not at one of MacEnroe's anecdotes, then at the usual folly that went on in every class, no one except MacEnroe really taking the course very seriously.

She stood about average height, in the average Junior League preppy ensemble of jeans and corduroy blazer. He could feel her intoxicating perfume beginning to work its way up his nostrils, boring deep into his pleasure center. He casually winked at her, causing another short spurt of giggles.

Jeanne's face seemed to glow beneath her sun-bleached, wheat-blond hair, its pixie-cut accentuating her beautifully quirkish features. Her eyes, which seemed to beckon, her nose, which delicately curved at just the right angle, and her mouth, a delicate slit, surrounded by pouting ruby-red lips, seductively promising pleasures beyond one's wildest dreams—when they weren't caught in her latest fit of giggles.

MacEnroe could sense his body slowly moving towards his vision, wondering who had given permission to his feet to start walking. His legs dragged him closer, part of him wanting to look away in embarrassment of his boldness, MacEnroe basically being a shy person. His mind was a blank. Whatever would he say?

As he slid up alongside her, he forced a smile, which he found quickly returned. He choked for words. "Uh—"

She held back a giggle. "Hi." She had greased the path.

"How are you, Miss, uh, Davenport?"

She lowered her head, blushing. "'Jeanne'."

MacEnroe scratched at his chin, losing his hand for a moment in his Camden fog. "I beg your pardon?"

Her eyes rose to meet his, startled at first by his roving left eye, which danced about while the other remained intently still. "Please, call me Jeanne—even in class you call me—us, by our first names."

MacEnroe's smile became less forced. "Yes, of course; I'm sorry, I guess I just feel so out of place here—like a pig in a

synagogue."

Jeanne smiled now more than she giggled. Suddenly he missed the high school silliness of it; it had begun to grow on him. "Professor—"

"Please. 'Jim.' Let's try and make this as mutually comfortable as possible."

Her lips barely parted, "Okay."

He felt the urge to reach over and lightly insert his finger into the small space between the bright, red smile. "Uh, Jeanne—"

Her face remained still, anxiously awaiting the question. "Would you care to—"

The slit between her lips widened, into that smile that seemed to jump off her face and attack him. "What is it—Jim?"

"Fresh air. How about, how about—some fresh air!" His voice became stilted, robot-like.

"Sure. We can go out back. If there isn't already someone out there. We can find a place to sit and—"

"Talk!"

"Mm-hmm." She turned and began slowly moving away from him, then suddenly extended her arm out behind her for him to grab hold of, to follow.

She glided across the floor, he clumsily in tow, like a lane-swerving U-Haul. "I think it's out this way—I just know there's gonna be someone else out—"

MacEnroe licked his lips, which became drier and drier as they neared the entranceway to the kitchen, through which they had to pass to reach the back door.

"Ah, young romance, eh?"

Jeanne stopped, turned, and with all seriousness, returned, "No, heavy petting mostly."

He did his best not to let her candor shock or embarrass him; after all, it was he, in class, who so freely tossed the innuendos about—but, he thought, that's not the real world, this is. In there, he could jokingly mention that he wished he could fuck every attractive female in the class, and they would only laugh. But in the real world, though, men who stood on street corners, doing exactly the same thing to unwary passersby, would soon be booked for "loose and lascivious."

"Petting?"

She began tugging him across the room once again. He could hear her giggling. "Petting?"

She became impatient at his sudden naivete. "Oh, **you know!**"

He quickly clarified his bewilderment. "Of course, I mean..." They reached the kitchen, and bumped past several stray bodies on their way through.

"Care for something, Jim?" Before he could comment on how the praline-fudge brownies **did** look rather inviting, he was dragged out the back door.

She had been wrong; no petting zoo here, they were alone. They sat along the edge of the stoop at the top of the stairway which led down to the garden, and out into a weed-infested backlot. MacEnroe strained to make out the colors of flowers he knew were there. He felt her arm winding its way up across his side, finally reaching his head—first playing with his frosted earlobe, then weaving through his unkempt curls—not curls so much as straight hair with arthritis.

A chill began at the bottom of his back, and climbed up along his spine, finally reaching its peak at the nape of his neck. He loved that feeling. He had always let his cat "Peebles" trot across his back for the same effect—but that had been nothing like this.

In the dark, he could almost see Peebles' small, whiskered, jealous face. It was soon replaced by Jeanne's, which closed in on MacEnroe's, blocking out the glow from the intrusive porch light. He sensed that he was enjoying himself, but he wasn't sure. He drew his own tongue to the back of his mouth, hanging at the entrance to his throat. There was an intruder; he could feel Jeanne's warm tongue crawling across the sides of his mouth, gently massaging his inner cheeks. God! he thought, this is great! —Damn!

He felt his entire body being engulfed in the pleasure; his mind seemed to leave his body, and sit alongside; an amused, satisfied audience to the pair, entwined in the throes of passion. His second self called out instructions from the side-lines. No, not there! Touch her **there!** MacEnroe screamed in his mind for his subconscious to shut up, that he had the situation well in hand, and that he would take it from there. His observer obeyed, and he did.

In class the following Monday morning, MacEnroe nervously

inspected the group of impatient students. He wasn't sure how he would be able to stand in front of them all, distracted by Jeanne's knowing face. If there was anything he did not feel like, it was some sort of 'stud.' He wished that he could be confident enough to feel that way, but he had to resign himself to playing the part of an embarrassed schoolboy, sure to face ribbing from all his 'pals.'

It took him awhile to finally realize that Jeanne wasn't even there. He became worried. Her attendance habits were now suddenly indelibly marked in his mind; she had never been late before. His concern for her alone began to supercede his concern for the jabbering classroom. He paid no attention as his lecture notes slid off his lectern, and slowly drifted to the floor.

He pushed it all aside, and made his way down the aisle leading out through the center of the class. Whispers bombarded him from all sides as his body was driven further and further from his play-world.

"Hey, what's with Jimbo?"

"Got me!"

The barbs grew louder. "I think Mac's cracked."

"Geez, he looks rabid. Arf! Arf!"

Cruel laughter filled the classroom, giving the final shove that pushed MacEnroe's body and existence from his H.G.P. 231 hell-hole. He drifted down hallways, searching for what he now knew he wanted. No more born-again celibacy bullshit. Jesus Christ, he reasoned, I'm not a damned monk! All he had ever taught in all his years was how warped and perverted great men had become because of their intense desires for the supreme pleasure in life.

Fifteen years of bullshit, he thought. "Bullshit! Nothing but goddamned bullshit!" his voice now carried his message through the empty corridors of Mason Hall. The final "bullshit" ripped into his weakened heart, and he slowly tumbled across several rows of lockers, combination dials poking into him like tiny fists.

He finally dropped forward, onto the cold, hard tile floor, where he tried to pull himself along the wall's edge, just to the intersection several feet ahead. As his face, straining for life, edged around the corner, he let out a sudden, silent cry. There standing entwined with a tall, stocky, muscular figure, almost in

shadow, was Jeanne. She had practically swallowed the young man's face, as the two so intently went at it, not even noticing as the Professor's head was drawn back, away, into the other, dark and empty corridor.

The ambulance tore out of the cafeteria deliveries entrance, its shrill siren shoing lingering onlookers out of its way. Once on Landers Blvd., it picked up speed, sailing past endless red traffic signals, causing at least one minor fender-bender among the cross-traffic, which not-too-obligingly came to a screeching halt.

It was a three mile trip to Our Lady of Lingering Hopes General, all the while, MacEnroe doing the best he could to suck in every last gulp of the oxygen being forced into his mouth and nostrils. He knew it was 'swallow or die,' and suddenly he was not quite ready to die.

The entire incident flashed back and forth through his mind, interwashed with memories of his childhood in Travis County. The puny country-boy, who had somehow survived three decades of put-downs, and had, despite his size, grown to the position of a highly respected local scholar—having spent all his years of cowardly seclusion deep in study—learning what he knew he had to—to protect himself.

When he finally left Travis, it was a proud day; he had accepted a position at his first big-city college (no more "Boo! Boo! T.C.U.!"). When he had arrived at Southwestern, he knew that he had finally found a worthy home, a place where he could ply his wares—not the most prestigious university, but certainly a place where he could begin his growing process, and then, somewhere down the line, move on, where, by then, he would surely be needed. Given a few years, he felt certain that the major halls of academia would be ready for his outlook.

There was no way then that he had ever expected to spend fifteen years there. They had almost passed without his knowing it. Each year, he would assure himself that next year he would get his calling; except that all his next years never came. He had become so intent in his preachings on the evils of society, that he had become content in any audience he could get to hear him out.

Deep inside he knew that all his students merely took his

course ever since it gained its reputation as an 'easy credit.' "Just agree with the old man's viewpoints on the tests, and you'll pass—no problem!" But, he hoped, there were some who heeded his words, grasping bits and pieces of MacEnroe's gospel, coming to the realization that he was right, and protecting themselves by digging deep into his philosophy. No one ever really came to him and said so, though there was one girl, two semesters before, who had a certain look in her eyes, as though she were crying out for help, his help. He had told himself that day, after class, and after she had already gone—escaped his healing hands—that the next class session he would grab her, and surround her, protecting her from all who were out to 'do her wrong,' but she had dropped the class before he ever got the chance.

Damn! he thought, wheezing as the oxygen began drowning him in its goodness; I should have saved a hell of a lot more souls!

When the ambulance finally pulled into the hospital's emergency entrance, MacEnroe felt his own soul crying out for help, as it struggled to free itself from his frail, weakened body. Tears rolled down his eyes, forming puddles on his life-support mask, as the attendants wheeled him into the hospital. After seemingly endless minutes of preliminary red tape ("Do you have Blue Cross-Blue Shield? When did you have your last bowel movement?"), he was finally wheeled down towards intensive care, the glaring neon lights overhead drilling into his skull like continuous laser blasts.

Two weeks passed before MacEnroe finally began walking on his own power. He would stagger down the disinfected hospital corridors, knocking little, old ladies off balance, grappling for their walkers which his wildly flailing arms would send flying, out of reach of the old, decrepit hands. Behind him, every couple of yards, nurses would pick up his mess, doing their best to calm the stricken 'pedestrians.' When he finally reached the large plate glass window overlooking the sun-balcony, MacEnroe felt his legs begin to give out beneath him. Before him, the whole city basked in the glow of a gorgeous mid-day sun, casting wheelchair shadows helter-skelter across the cool, cement balcony below. He

slid his hands across the speckled glass, struggling to hold himself steady, but instead felt himself fall back, and then forward, through the huge window, shards of jagged glass ripping through his pekid flesh as he dropped to the scene below, finally skewering himself on an intravenous pole, hanging suspended like a child's twirl toy, spinning ever so slightly, as his life's blood poured out of him onto a small boy's bandaged head, dripping finally to the child's cool-blue terry robe, where it blotted, forming a circle that grew larger and larger as the minutes passed before the attendants finally arrived.

For several minutes, the room danced around, appearing as though being viewed through a jar of vaseline. When it finally came to a halt, and began to come into focus, MacEnroe could see his saliva dribbling up across his face, and felt the dryness scouring away at the back of his throat. He made several vain attempts at speech before he finally gave up in despair. Sweet Jesus, he thought, you gotta be kidding! There's no way in hell—or Travis County, that I could still be alive. Jesus, it's gotta be a Goddamned dream!

His theory silently crumbled away, as towering over him, Jeanne's delicate figure began to materialize. "Professor?"

He pursed his lips. Jeanne, he thought.

"Geez, Professor, I only found out 'bout all this yesterday. We had a substitute, an' all he said was that you had had a bad reaction to some drugs."

Drugs? screamed MacEnroe's mind, what the hell would James Thomas MacEnroe be doing with drugs? Chemistry experiments, that's about it, he argued.

"The doctors say you're gonna be alright. You know you took quite a fall, and that pole, geez, that musta hurt like a bitch!"

I know! he thought; I was there.

"God," she giggled. That was it, what he hadn't heard in what seemed like forever. Laugh again, he thought. Tears began welling up in her glistening blue eyes, causing her green mascara to run down across her cheeks. She made no attempt to wipe the mess away.

Please, Jeanne, he thought again; laugh, laugh again, please...

She knelt down alongside him and cradled his rough, dry face

in her palms. "Oh, Professor, this is all my fault."

Damned right! he thought.

"Can you ever forgive me, huh?"

Forgive you? he thought; after having a five foot aluminum pole speared through my chest? Impaled, like shishkabob!

"Can you, Professor, can you, huh?"

He managed to bring his right arm up around her narrow waist, squeezing her gently. Goddamn right, he thought; Goddamn right!



Jeanette L. Fleming

The Flight Of Candles

The sky comes to me,
dressed in the deep blue of evening,
as the day slants to her sensuous last repose.

I feel the cycles move me
through the autumn leaves,
through the very pitted frost
of All-Hallows Eve.

The birds are gone from the land,
the sharp twigs scrape, unearthly,
like fingers at the glass.

When winds blow wide my chamber doors,
they snatch the light to black.

The Legacy

In the heartbeat of rains falling,
I hear myself falling from the world.
I hear the distance of my being
dropping over the horizon,
into a china cup.

Eleanor Gordon

Aunt Amy

in her wedding picture
looked a little like
Edna St. Vincent Millay.
Chose theatrical gauze curtains
for the honeymoon cottage.
The only brunette
in a family of
blonde Norwegians
and it got to her head,
so to speak.
Started imagining things,
talking nasty,
getting fat and never cleaning up.

Changing
like the crabapple
Mother got so disgusted with:
two years all pink blossoms;
next, scattered pink and mostly
country-orchard white ones;
then right from
twigs to leaves,
skipping the flowers.

Everyone knew
it was a graft
reverting to root stock:
whatever poor tree
it had been
in the first place.



On Receiving An Ad For A Magazine Called *Self*

There once was a woman
who went all the way with self-help.
Moved on from do-it-herself
gynecology to
perform the Heimlich Maneuver
with her fists clenched under her ribs.
Brought herself back to life
with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation
in the mirror.
She learned that
the pleasures of autoeroticism
never get out of hand, and she
became her own best friend.
The two of her
were seen everywhere together.
Now she's writing an autobiography
of the life she should have had—
before she dies,
beside herself with grief,
her chief mourner
silent.

Shift

She had Chicago shoes
and I'd shopped only as far as Milwaukee
She had her fiance and I
had my sixtytwofifty-a-week job
She had reviews in suburban papers
I attended a national convention
but never got to speak
I'd know her anywhere
She said she didn't recall
anyone named Eleanor
She'd had too much to drink
but everyone wanted her opinion anyway
I got a poem published
She got divorced
Next time I saw her
she looked thinner and
talked about her Mercedes
I showed photos of my daughter
She has a short son
who looked about to cry when she
had too much to drink
My husband asked
who was that woman with the
expensive shoes who
wanted to know if
I was writing anything these days

Jacqueline Disler

Eye's Wheel

He came into my life
like an off shore oil drilling rig
pumping, perpetually on fire.
As if time could stay the philosophy
of turbines and jet streams.
As if progress were the only romance.

Late night, I hear the proposal of a man
in a diner on the southside of Chicago,
Eddie's on 31st. He's seated at the counter.
His one eye drooping over his coffee cup.
His other eye fixed as though it were glass.
His faith in humanity, a restoration of want-ads;
Jobbers needed for industrial chemical industry,
Machinists, watch repairmen, swing shift factory
security, soda jerk with knowledge of computer.
He stares at me through the neon splash from the stop
light and the white speckled formica of Eddie's tables.

He looks at me as if I'm one of those
Vargas Glamour Girls with as much as a whim
in his good eye. The slow southern syllables
swell his tongue, "Young lady..."
I stare into the oil slick of my coffee, cigarette
perched at its tray.
I like him, as he is on the meatrack of the counter;
his dark hair, his hands that twiddle-dee-dee his paper
His imaginings of the hell-bound train he's ridden
through the late part of the century nip at my conscience.

The daily news at his elbow wrinkles under its weight. Another cup of coffee, clink of stainless silver on the bargain mug. His eye strides toward the waitress, "Cream." "She's fine." he gulps, nudging his pal whose freckles pop off his pudgy arms like stars on a map of the heavens. "Good God," he kneads his evening news on his knee.

His ginger faced buddy slides up to my table, slaps a whole box of blue-veined, round-eyed sunglasses within reach of my pinky.

The dark one makes his move, turns on his stool with every muscle employed and steps down.

"Young lady, would you like a pair of those sunglasses?"

Charm drips down his shirt front slithers to the mark.

He sniffs and reaches for my hand huddled behind my own cup of coffee. I release my grip on the stump of a handle.

Everywhere napkins are slipping, tables cartwheeling, the stop light outside sends traffic careening to a halt.

He digs steel fingertips into my arm; tellin' me not to worry, tellin' me, I'm the only blessed thing he wants.

I'm paralyzed from the waist down.

His eye plops down, the other one rivets straight into my chest.

I say, "No thank you."

To this he nods, taps the table, and whisks the news across his trousers.

"Young lady, are you sure you wouldn't..." My head shakes loose.

He returns to his stool at the counter, "Warm this up."

His friend grabs the box of sunglasses at my sleeve as if they were gold and retreats to his companion stool where he slouches over the box onto the counter. A second later, I look up from the puddle at my table called coffee. As the realization creeps into my head, the visual spectacle of a vertical smile, a permanent crease in the human anatomy, the bare ass of the freckled face baboon leers at me from the red vinyl cushion underneath his gluteous maximus.

"This is progress." I thought, straightening my collar, paying the check, pulling on my gloves and inwardly wishing I had a pair of sunglasses.

John Dickson

Options

The ballerinas have grown heavy
about the thigh and in the eye,
twirl slower, leap a little lower every year
evolving weightless gliding to a thump.
So is it any wonder that they ponder
other ways of paying for and tasting
this sweet Dolce Vita life?

Of course it's all too soon to contemplate surrender —
joining the birdsie little ladies with their
lavendar dry armpit lives, or drinking
with the landlord in his room where nothing grows
or rehearsing the sweet and strong endearing
wifey look — escaping into marriage,
discovering the frog remains a frog
and not a prince in spite of all the kisses,
discovering so dramatically it's either
a dagger in the lung or this dwelling in froggy bliss
in his castle of poor taste,
enduring rituals of walking hand in hand each evening
to the bench by the tree on the street where
the bridge crosses the river and the boat floats down
on time, each time tooting its little whistle.

And then hand in hand in darkness, returning
to lie in bed, sometimes talking, sometimes not
and finally dreaming of sailing through the air
all white and filmy flimsy, drifting out of the arms
of Baryshnikov and back again, over and over and over
until one night of pterodactyl scream,
one night of birds with serpents in their beaks
when one of them seeps up through the ceiling
leaving a frog husk or a dancer husk lying there in bed
with the usual expression of togetherness content.

But after all, what does one do?
Certainly not wait while clocks of the sleeping town
cancel out the moon's pull
nor be the aging Salome, dancing forever,
wearing a brassiere the size of two men's hats
nor standing waiting for someone cursed with glands
that make him roam the streets.

Better to lie singing on the rocks, waiting for some
semi-functional Ulysses lashed to the mast of his ship
and stroll with him through enchanted landscapes
or statues and amphora on the ocean floor.

Case History

When Miss Simpson took a bath
she would lock the door
and barricade it with a clothes hamper.
The years had played havoc with her gender.
What she was guarding, no one knows.

One day she took her bath with no barricade.
The room was a chaos of conquest,
of invaders capturing Roman women,
of maidens screaming as they were whisked away,
but she remained as chaste as Susannah.
For some reason no one broke down the door.

She began taking baths with the door unlocked.
It made her feel daring and full of excitement,
as though she were on the French Riviera
or bathing in some hidden pond.
Her flesh felt younger and more alive,
but the door she kept watching was always closed.

She took her baths with the bathroom door open,
decorously sponging her shoulders and knees.
There was welcome in her smile.
Her eyes were an invitation,
but no one looked in or even walked by.

She had a bath tub installed in the yard
by some plumbers who had never done such a thing.
When she bathed in it, cherubs flew over her,
doves flew about with ribbons in their beaks,
the oak leaves turned silver and tinkled like bells.
One old man looked over the fence for his cat,
and a child stopped by to pick a flower.

She took four baths a day in the yard
and dried off by swinging high in the swing.
Her flesh began growing young and firm
and the sun and wind gave her a touch of beauty.
But no one looked at her. No one cared.

Except five hundred neighbors she'd never seen
who had her committed to Hazelhurst
where she looked through the bars and wore a grey gown
and gazed at the stars and cried out to the moon
and crossed off the days in her desolate room.

But now she's cured and home again.
Her breasts are like feedbags that horses wear,
her buttocks an avalanche of meat.
She has bars on the windows
and only wears grey
and stores old magazines in her bathtub.



Mary Trimble

the woman at peace

swallows the stairs
and their opportunities
knocks down the grey ladders

weaves her long hair
into tapestries
threaded with beads of salt

she is at home
in pure space
rooted in air

at the base of the tower
in fabulous silence
moss breathes a green breath

the woman on the stairs

stands with hands open in the half-light
he is leaving too quickly
having asked to stay too often
she can't remember then
when she changed her mind
but it is a mild November,
the moon warm and far away
and the air makes her feel precipitous
makes her feel
her hands opening wider on the stair

the woman in waiting

takes her lover's tongue in her teeth
in the light he paints her
Rousseau blue & green
they rise up and fall in cool
sheets before morning they are
parrots, monkeys, zebras, hummingbirds,
tigers, primary in the still world
their skin colorful and clean