



PULSE

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### DEDICATION:

This issue is dedicated to the memory of  
**ANNE SEXTON**  
 poet, novelist, humanist, feminist  
 Born 1928 — Died 1974

Editors for this issue were:  
 Michael Cannito, Carol Warden, Michael Koonce

Readers for this issue were:  
 Gail Cucancie, Sam Modica, Candy Eaton, James Walker, Craig Harrell, Randall Stokesbury, Jo Ann Thrash.

Judges for this issue:  
 Eleanor Poetry Award: Robert Olson, Leon Stokesbury,  
 Melvin Kenne

Professors Award: Robert J. Barnes, Annette Platt,  
 Kirkland Jones

Awards:  
 Eleanor Award: First: Carol Warden for "The Visit"  
 Second: George Frissell for "Hands"  
 Third: Mike Cannito for "Later"  
 Honorable Mentions: Gail Cucancie,  
 Linda Guillory, Pearl Dumas, Carol  
 Warden, Mike Cannito.

Professors Award: First: Mike Cannito for "A Feast"  
 Second: Cindi Landry for "The Boys  
 I've Loved"

Editor's Award: James Farwell for "Tanaka no Ojisan  
 (Grandfather Tanaka) There Is a Season"

Art Award: Johnathan Ofiel for cover design and inside prints.  
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# EDITORS' PREFACE:

A vague but definite emphasis is intended for this issue -- the themes of literature and human consciousness which, as we know, are inseparable. Our feature article, "Consciousness and Kirlian Photography," by David D. Zink with Joseph Pizzo should appropriately set our tone. First, however, here is a poem, "a personal favorite," which speaks to the idea:

## TEACHING THE APE TO WRITE POEMS

They didn't have much trouble  
teaching the ape to write poems:  
first they strapped him into the chair,  
then they tied the pencil around his hand  
(the paper had already been nailed down).  
Then Dr. Bluespire leaned over his shoulder  
and whispered into his ear:  
"You look like a god sitting there.  
Why don't you try writing something?"

--JAMES TATE

We hope that you will enjoy experiencing this issue of PULSE:  
The Lamar Review every bit as much as we have enjoyed producing  
it.

*Mike Cannito*  
*Carol Warden*

THE EDITORS OF PULSE

# ESSAYS





## CONSCIOUSNESS AND KIRLIAN PHOTOGRAPHY

by David D. Zink  
with Joseph Pizzo

The Victorian poet Tennyson has left us a first-hand account of an important altered state of consciousness, one known to mystics for centuries:

a kind of waking trance—this for lack of a better word—I have frequently had quite up from childhood, when I have been quite alone . . . All at once, as it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state but the clearest of the clear; the surest of the sure, utterly beyond words—where death was an almost laughable impossibility—the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction but the only true life.

For Tennyson, this altered state of consciousness was of vital importance. It was crucial to his inner life in that it gave him needed perspective on the debate between science and religion which raged in his own day.

We can start to understand such a state of consciousness by thinking of a continuum from the most physical to the least physical. Begin with the unconscious state, the instinctive state of reflex actions such as the animal uses for his survival. Next would come ordinary consciousness associated with the mind. Finally we come to ultraconsciousness, the state reached by the mystic, as in the above passage. Ordinary consciousness, the mind, may be thought of as the television display of the brain. Through his own type of meditative practice Tennyson escaped the usual programming, that is he shut down both the ego's concerns and external sensory stimuli, then achieved a higher state of consciousness, ultraconsciousness, a state which transcends the mind's ordinary limitations. Usually the mind functions like a closed-circuit television program which carries the ego's concerns. Its subjectivity or inward looking tendency will account for its closed-circuit character. In its usual functioning it will select and limit even the sensory input. In cases of extreme subjectivity it may even filter out those sensory stimuli necessary for physical survival. As writers from Henri Bergson to Aldous Huxley have observed, some selection has been a necessary development of evolution. When the usual mode of operation gives way to moments of ultraconsciousness, the mind program is shut down with its ego concerns and outer sensory stimuli; a higher consciousness then prevails. This state of consciousness has been the goal of mystics for many centuries; the higher the state, the more likely it is to lead to harmony with others and the cosmos.

The study of consciousness has been rejected by Western psychology for the past century. Yet it is now becoming clear that we need to return to the investigation of consciousness. Developments in the last two decades suggest that the main value of such research may well be a contribution to human survival. At the least, the study of consciousness will do much to bring order out of the welter of psychological theories which now bewilder the layman.

In the past, holistic concepts of man have often been backward looking. In the eighteenth century Rousseau, for example, contemplated the noble savage. Such holistic concepts have therefore earned negative labels such as sentimental primitivism. Today, workers in consciousness are forward looking and are found on the frontiers of science in theoretical physics, physiology, transpersonal psychology, and parapsychology. In their investigations of consciousness, western scientists have found

the ancient eastern models of consciousness very useful. It begins to seem that the western ego must scientifically demonstrate for itself the wisdom of the ancient understanding of consciousness. The physiologist, Dr. Elmer Green at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas, for instance, speaks of his research as a conformation of ancient insights achieved with tons of sophisticated modern electronic gear. I, too, have found eastern models useful as a point of departure, particularly for my system of personality, psycho-integration, and for the Kirlian research project at Lamar. Let us begin with the levels of consciousness in psycho-integration. In Walden Thoreau views the hunter stage of the young boy as an earlier developmental stage of the race. By implication he also saw that to the extent that each person evolves in his lifetime he recapitulated the growth of the race.

In the levels of consciousness which follow, I have taken as my point of departure a Hindu model of the development of consciousness to integrate the contributions of western psychology into a model of the psyche's potential completion. My use of this model does not mean that I have opted completely for the Hindu attitude toward the ego. Even though I believe the ego must be demoted, its executive function is crucial to personality. As Abraham Maslow has thought more clearly about the potential of the psyche than many contemporary thinkers, I have taken pains to relate his hierarchy of needs to the system. The ultimate test of the validity of any description of personality lies in its empirical verification. To date, however, empirical verification in the lab and clinic has restricted us to the reductionistic models of Freudian or behavioral psychology. Maslow's comment on the limits of the present modes of observation and description (Freud and Skinner) is pertinent here: "Ought a biological species to be judged by its crippled, warped, only partially developed specimens, or by examples that have been over domesticated, caged, and trained?" (*Motivation and Personality*, p. 159.) When we go outside the lab we find that empirical evidence is now available which allows us to say that demonstrably some men and women have achieved the higher levels of consciousness. Because of the subtlety of the phenomena, the evidence so far tends not to be laboratory data but interviews and biographical accounts. But if numbers of men and women have given evidence of greater wholeness, why should not all aspire to that condition?

1. The first level of consciousness: Jungle animal-survival. At this level life is a combat; therefore the highest priority is the survival of the biological organism. Life is a combat so that killing the outsider is (though not consciously) a moral duty. This level is recapitulated occasionally for the child in early playground experience. A western thinker who wrote about this level was the English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, (*The Leviathan*). Hobbes described the human condition as one of constant warfare; hence the strong monarch was the only means to peace. In more basic terms, this is the level of the primary needs: tools, shelter, etc. This level would appear to correspond with the first two stages of Maslow's hierarchy of needs ("Physiological," "Sanity"). The latter need is apparently both a developmental stage of the ego and an expression of sociological and political conditions.
2. The second level: sexual gratification, reproduction. Survival assured (in the basic needs), reproduction of the species and a life of pleasure in the senses (including sexual pleasure) begins to receive priority. A by-product of this level is love of one's offspring and one's sexual partner. The latter relationship, if primarily physical, is however eros not agape love. This means that among other things, to the extent that it is based upon the pleasure one receives from the relationship, it is a selfish love. Marriages limited to this level have a high mortality rate. Peaks of sexual ecstasy may easily give way

to boredom or sexual insecurity (fear of impotence, jealousy, deprivation). This level of consciousness was badly served by Pauline, medieval and Puritan Christianity. Freud is the western thinker who has done the most to help us understand the developmental problems of this level. This level would appear to correspond to Maslow's third need, "Love, Affection, Belongingness" a need which is intensified in a sick society.

3. The third level: power. The most obvious expression of this level is the ruler of the state, the leader of any group, the administrator. However, even the mother must come to terms with this level in her relations with her children. More than the foregoing levels, this level tends to stress a relationship with others which makes others objects to be manipulated, what Martin Buber called an I-It relationship. At this level the ego is very strong in its demands for satisfaction. In extreme cases, this level of consciousness is characterized (1) by a willingness to sacrifice personal values for the acquisition of power over others, (2) by pleasure in the control of others, their submission to one's will. This level is not to be confused with the power of creativity which is released from the unconscious in higher levels of consciousness. The western thinker who gives the best insights into this level is Adler. Infant feelings of inferiority lead to a compensatory drive for superiority. Furthermore, the ego can experience the maximum of inflation in this level. This is most obvious in politics. Earlier a Renaissance writer gave us an exhibit of a sensibility for whom the maintenance of power justifies the means; this is Machiavelli's *The Prince*. The Victorian poet, Robert Browning, also caught the type nicely in his famous dramatic monologue, "My Last Duchess." This level, particularly where esteem is derived from power, as opposed to more creative achievement, corresponds to Maslow's "Esteem" need.
4. When evolving between the third and fourth levels, the individual passes through the narrow gate suffering. In a highly evolved civilization this suffering may stem from an existential ennui which is intense enough to constitute a neurosis. At this time that ego which is strong enough to resist a truly shattering deflation and the accompanying suffering can begin to transmute its self-love of others. Biographically-based love (Eros) which includes love of one's offspring is, in other words, transmuted into love of mankind. This is the fourth-level—heart, compassion. Relations with others then begin to evolve into an I-Thou pattern. This evolution is based, consciously or unconsciously, upon a movement from eros love to agape love within the individual. For the western consciousness, the unmistakable historical embodiment of agape love was the mission of Jesus. The fourth level has been treated by Eric Fromm, Maslow, and other humanistic psychologists. Maslow's "Self Actualization" need is a need which motivates growth through this and the three following levels.
5. This is the level of the search of God. Awareness of the emanations of the God archetype in one's unconscious, whether it takes the form of Einstein's scientific awareness of the "irreducible mystery of the universe" or recognition of the reality for many of ultraconsciousness (the traditional mystical experience), such as insight is the only meaningful preparation for the next level. Carl Jung's process of individuation gives the clearest understanding of the way in which God archetype is to be experienced within one's own psyche. This and the next two levels are, for Western materialists, empty verbiage. Their ignorance of these levels of consciousness leads them to William James' fallacy, what he called the "nothing but" fallacy. More evolved levels of consciousness are reduced to "nothing but" one's own less evolved consciousness, or are disposed of as pathology.
6. This is the level of the search for wisdom. True wisdom is only possible when one's knowledge can be structured by a pattern which includes all meaningful human experience, even its paradoxes. Anything less reduces life's meaning, however

neat and tidy its patterns may be. It also reduces the individual's freedom, since greater wisdom leads to greater freedom. Considering wisdom to be a meaningful pattern of knowledge reminds us of Dr. Viktor E. Frankl's contributions to our understanding of this level. Frankl has argued that the primary drive is not the will to pleasure (Freud) or the will to power (Adler) but, instead, the will to meaning. Earlier, the Victorian poet and critic, Matthew Arnold, argued for a holistic knowledge which would give meaning to life.

7. This level, full enlightenment, has been sustained by only a few—Jesus, the Buddha and others. Few continue long in the physical realm at this level. One either returns with a peak experience to illuminate and guide one for the rest of life or leaves the physical body—as in the Hindu state of Samadhi (the highest level of samadhi, that is). This is the level reached by those who have called ultraconsciousness, a term which is quite descriptive. In western psychology, the pioneer account of this level is William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Jung's individuation, a process in which the ego gives way to the Self (or the soul) in the unconscious, amplified and conceptualized the route to this level. Assagioli has much practical advice about the psychological and spiritual facets of this level. Awareness at this level of consciousness leads the individual to great creativity and, occasionally, to the founding of a new religion. At this level the individual experiences a transpersonal awareness in which the ego identity loses much of its remaining importance. His ego consciousness is supplanted by cosmic consciousness. At this level what men call faith is replaced by knowledge gained through experience. That is to say, the religious experience reported by various individuals through history and known by most only second hand from various authorities, becomes a personal experience or personal knowledge. Thus faith has been superseded by an authentic spiritual consciousness.

At each level the individual's motivation changes as his life acquires a different meaning. This is not to say that a conscious search for meaning exists before the fourth level, heart-compassion. In the early stages the individual may be conscious by the usual definition but his motivation is largely instinctual and unconscious. His state of consciousness is unconscious, which is to say that he might be thought of as a kind of sleep-walker, particularly in respect to objective self-awareness. After the ego encounters real suffering (that suffering which initiates the major crisis of individuation midway in life), the individual may then begin his awakening to consciousness in preparation for ultraconsciousness, should it come. With the onset of the major crisis of individuation (the night journey of the soul), his motivation (and his sense of what he values, what gives his life meaning at his particular level of conscious) becomes conscious. This development corresponds to the emergence of Maslow's "self-actualization" needs. Maslow would say that earlier the needs are deficiency needs; now they change to growth needs. If the foregoing growth model has any validity, why have not more made progress? Although this is not the occasion for a detailed analysis of the causes, a few may be identified. Many western thinkers derive their growth models either from those who merely cope with life's exigencies or from the finite concepts of contemporary formal education which limit growth to the acquisition of certain skills or certain facts. From these points of departure, one's aspirations are limited to short-term material goals. We live in a culture which several centuries has been strongly biased toward the rationalist-empiricist theory of philosophy. This has led to a type of rationality which fears the emotional life. As a consequence, the emotions are kept at the lower levels of consciousness and thus remain childish. If consciousness, thus restricted, tends to venture out of what Dante in the Middle Ages called acedia (or spiritual sloth) and discovers that growth demands are too taxing, it can fall back on its ego defense mechanisms including the rationalization that higher states of consciousness are nothing but pathology. Also those at the lower levels of consciousness tend to protect themselves with a reality construct which filters out any data which is not appropriate to

their level of consciousness. Unfortunately, as Carl Jung first pointed out, the filtering action is not really effective. Rather than being blocked by a filter, those inputs which are not congenial to one's level of consciousness are bypassed into the unconscious. There they may build up (even for an entire civilization) a terrible potential. This was Jung's basis for predicting the Nazi horror. For those fixated at the lower levels of consciousness, probably the most chilling line from Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* is the statement, "perfection has no limits." Indolence leads most to settle for relatively simple reality constructs, and therefore leads most to become what John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty* called "one-idea men."

These are behavioral indications of the various levels of consciousness. Furthermore, many who have made some progress in these terms recognize the shifts of psychic energy in their own lives. But what if western science could measure the levels or at least get relative indications of them in some objective fashion? This is the lure of Kirlian research today. It is becoming clear that in addition to his physical body man is an energy system within larger systems. His energy system is composed of various subsystems, at least one of which is manifested by the so called aura, an energy which does not obey the laws of electromagnetic propagation. There are also indications that it is an energy system which may be present prior to the physical life form. In other words, it may be the energy matrix of the physical life form. Furthermore, it is an open energy system which modifies itself and is modified both internally and externally. The internal processes which modify the system are physiological (the endocrine system), psychological, and spiritual (prayer as opposed to meditation). External influences include other energy systems in healing, meditation, and the earth's electrical fields. The individual's energy system includes the psychological phenomena attributed both to the unconscious and the conscious sections of the mind. Although these last points are the most debatable, the energy system may be a part of the vehicle for consciousness in the out-of-body experience and it may also survive the death of the physical organism.

At the present stage of research in Kirlian photography, there are good reasons to believe that this process is a photographic record of some of the characteristics of the energy system just described. The present state of the art permits only the grossest generalizations but several illustrations may be useful. One emotion strongly associated with lower levels of consciousness is anger. This emotion demonstrably affects the endocrine system. In turn, the body's energy system is affected so that the color red (a lower frequency compared to the blue) is photographed in the Kirlian process. The fingertip Kirlian photographs of the schizophrenic before therapy are ragged and unstructured. After therapy, judged successful from conventional measurements, the same patient's fingertip auras become more regular and structured. Radiation therapy also has its observable manifestations in the Kirlian process. Photographs of the fingertips of so called spiritual healers reveal a loss of energy after healing has taken place. The altered state of consciousness which is induced by hypnosis also has manifestations. The energy system appears to diminish or pull within the individual under hypnosis. This is manifested by a shrinking field size of fingertip aura photographs. Although the results are tentative, and the experiment must be repeated many times, one experimental session led to an especially dramatic connection between color changes in the fingertip aura and mental images visualized by the subject. As the subject concentrated on the various chakras (or energy vortices) described in eastern teachings which are associated both with the endocrine glands and levels of consciousness the color changed. To be more specific, working downward from the highest to the lowest chakras (from the top of the head to the base of the spine) the dominant colors of the subject's fingertip aura photograph changed from blue to red (high to low frequency). Incidentally, the traditional chakras are of such energy as to be observable by clairvoyants.

Kirlian photography at Lamar is now in its third year. The

beginning was serendipitous. As I was walking across the campus to talk to President Gray about the prospects for such research at Lamar I ran into Dr. Joseph Pizzo who asked if I would be interested in his participation in the experiment. Because I had hoped for some interest from the college of science, I was very pleased with his offer. From that point forward things began to fall into place. President Gray expressed keen interest in the experiment. We had the cooperation of Dr. Charles Turco, Director of Research and Development and the support of the Lamar Research Council. Research Council members who were especially helpful in getting the project underway included Dr. Walker James of the theater, and Dr. Robert Barnes of the English department, and technical support from the photo lab from Stuart Hayes, Earl LaFran, and Cheryl Myers. In addition to the principal investigators, Dr. Pizzo and myself, the research team through the last several years has included David Cammack, a graduate student in English, physics students including Riley Jackson, Sylvia Harbert, and Carl Baltz. Two clairvoyant observers in the experiment are Mrs. Ruth McLeod of Port Arthur and Mrs. Carol Littler of Beaumont. We have recently been joined by Dr. Bud London of Lamar's psychology department and Dr. Walter P. Sykes, Beaumont physician. Dr. Leon McGraw of Lamar's biology department has also displayed some interest in the project.

The basic design of the experiment is as follows: The subject is seated at the end of a table with his right hand in photo changing bag, his fingers touching the film which covers one electrode of the Kirlian device. At the other end of the table, separated by a vertical screen, the two clairvoyant observers are seated. They observe the aura around the head and shoulders during the firing of the Kirlian device, the film records the fingertip aura, the observers draw and write descriptions of what they saw, and the subject writes his own description of his inner state during the firing. The variables include the emotional and physiological state of the subject, pressure on the film, the film type, the time of exposure, the line voltage, the frequency, the barometric pressure, the earth's electrical fields, ambient lighting, background, and the photo processing. We have made substantial progress in holding constant this large number of variables. So far our primary interest has been to observe changes of state in the field structure of the aura and its color, both in the head and shoulders aura and the fingertip aura. During the experiment, with an exception which has implications for a theory of personality, a pattern has developed. Physiological or emotional changes which are significant within the subject cause a change of state to be observed on film. Changes of state are also described by the clairvoyant observers. In other words, in the experiment we have four data points which work together. Some subjects are observed to affect little change in their aura. Apparently, while they may be able to visualize circumstances which should have emotional impact for them, their emotions do not effect the endocrine gland system and thus no effects are recorded photographically or observed by clairvoyants. In addition to structural changes in the aura which have been mentioned above, we have also observed a change of state for the healer. At rest we see one pattern; in a healing state we see another.

In general, changes of state in the subject whether psychological, physiological, or spiritual appear to record themselves in the Kirlian photographic process. Present experiments involve altered states of consciousness such as hypnosis and the out-of-body experience (or what is called astro-projection). The experiment will always need gifted subjects, psychics, meditators and those who have worked and developed their own consciousness, and of course it will always require funds. During the present year the experiment is not being funded by the university but we are hopeful of success in application for an Air Force research grant. This is because of the important implications for medicine both in physiological and psychological terms. The most immediate practical application will doubtless be the employment of Kirlian photography as an adjunct to personality inventory tests. The process also has implications for diagnosis of pathological conditions in the body as well as mental problems.



### Kirlian Photography from the Point of View of Physics

The process of corona discharge photography (Kirlian Photography) is not new to Physics and Engineering. Corona discharge photography from metal electrode to metal electrode has been studied since before 1940.

What is novel in the Kirlian process is the use of biological material for one electrode. Of interest to a Physicist is the fact the electron-photon shower takes place along very definite channels with definite energies each time until the biological state of the subject-electrode is altered. The question that a physical Scientist must ask is "Why should a change in the biological state of the subject cause a change in the pattern and energy of the corona discharge?"



# VIOLENCE IN BLACK AMERICA: RICHARD WRIGHT AS BLACK BOY

by Ann Rayson

Richard Wright (1908-1960), was born on a plantation in Natchez, Mississippi, the son of a sharecropper who deserted the family, became America's foremost black writer with the publication of *Native Son* in 1940. *Native Son*, a naturalistic novel of racial and sexual violence, was the first book by a black writer to become a bestseller and the first to be selected by the Book-of-the-Month Club. In addition to writing the prototype for the black American protest novel, Wright has also written the archetypal black American autobiography, *Black Boy*, 1945. *Black Boy* is a fascinating, "gut level" account of Wright's youth from the age of four, when he sets the house on fire, to nineteen, when he is about to leave the South for Chicago. As autobiography, it is a brutally realistic psychological self-study. Wright seems to hold nothing back while revealing his personal struggles, secrets, and transgressions, many of which result from "the ethics of living Jim Crow" where violence breeds violence.

Richard Wright's *Black Boy* is the story of an American black boy, culturally and economically cheated out of his part in the American dream. According to James Baldwin, "as a black boy, he is the bastard child of American civilization. Wright is used to daily violence, aggression, and human insensitivity, and imbued with a sense of his own worthiness. Depravity unconsciously becomes a way of life. The product of a broken home, he is forced to find his education and mores on the streets. Christian values are misjudged by his pious grandmother and aunt to the point of absurdity, making it impossible for the young Richard to adhere to any real message buried beneath the drivel that is taken for "religion." On the other hand, the conventionality of crime and prostitution and the naturalness of cursing, stealing, and fighting provide a frame of reference for his world. *Black Boy* reveals what it is like to be the archetypal victim of a violent society.

Both the destructive impulse and the creative impulse are aspects of Wright's personality, expressing the "fear-hate-fear complex of Negroes" that is the central theme of *Black Boy*, according to Horace Cayton in "Frightened Children of Frightened Parents." As he explains:

The central theme of *Black Boy* can be summed up in the fear-hate-fear complex of Negroes. The fears and insecurities and above all the feeling of guilt and the fear of punishment for that guilt, which all men have to some extent, according to the psychoanalysts, is different for the Negro. In the white man this feeling can often be shown to be false, a figment of his imagination, a hold-over from early childhood experiences. It can more easily be resolved by treatment by the psychiatrist or even by rational cogitation.

But the Negro living in our society cannot so easily be convinced of the irrational nature of his feelings of fear and guilt. For him, punishment in the actual environment is ever present; violent, psychological and physical, leaps out at him from every side. The Negro's personality is brutalized by an unfriendly environment. This reinforces the normal insecurities he feels as a person living in this highly complex society. Such attacks on his personality lead to resentment and hatred of the white man. However, the certain knowledge that he will be punished if his emotions are discovered produces feelings of guilt for having such emotions. Fear leads to hate; but the personality recoils with an intensified and compounded fear.

Wright's heroes are various shades of self, the artist making a public confessional of his struggle with moral, social, economic,

political, cultural and religious forces, culminating in victory over the past. Subsequently his autobiography mirrors the real struggles that he sublimates fictionally. According to Constance Webb, his biographer, Wright is consciously projecting himself in *Black Boy* "as a symbol of all the brutality and cruelty wreaked upon the black man by the Southern environment." George E. Kent in "Richard Wright: Blackness and the Adventure of Western Culture" explains black violence of the kind Wright experienced from his mother after white boys cut him in a fight, as he relates in "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow: An Autobiographical Sketch," a short work that prefigured *Black Boy*. Engaging in a cinder war with white boys, he is hit with a broken bottle. His mother slaps him; then because Richard forgot his status in the community, hence in society, she escalates the punishment.

She grabbed a barrel stave, dragged me home, stripped me naked, and beat me till I had fever of one hundred and two. She would smack my rump with the stave, and, while the skin was still smarting, impart to me gems of Jim Crow wisdom. I was never to throw cinders any more. I was never to fight any more wars. I was never, never, under any conditions, to fight white folks again. And they were absolutely right in clouting me with the broken milk bottle.

Racial violence, thus, breeds familial violence as a protective measure. The black mother beats her boy to keep him from white violence. He has no place to turn to for sympathy. The only way to survive is through violence. Kent explains,

The self is battered by the white racist culture, and, for the most part, by a survival-oriented black culture, that counters the impulse to rebelliousness and individuality by puritanical repressiveness, escapism, and base submission. That is, black culture suppressed the individual, in order to protect the group from white assault. The dramatic rendering of these forces and the stubborn persistence of the outsider self comprise the major strategy of the book.

And out of that strategy comes an overwhelming impact. Tension, raw violence and impending violence, which evoke, psychologically, a nightmare world in the light of day.

As a black hero, Richard Wright undergoes several trials along his journey towards identity and maturity. Archetypally, he early rejects both his father and the church with violence. He goes with his mother once to visit his father, who is living with another woman. The man refuses to give his wife money for the children, instead offering Richard a nickel.

"Come here, Richard," my father said, stretching out his hand.

I backed away, shaking my head, keeping my eyes on the fire.

"He's a cute child," the strange woman said.

"You ought to be ashamed," my mother said to the strange woman. "You're starving my children."

"Now, don't you-all fight," my father said, laughing.

"I'll take that poker and hit you!" I blurted at my father.

Similarly, he rejects religion, both conventional Protestantism and the Seventh Day Adventism of his grandmother and Aunt Addie. He remembers, "While listening to the vivid lan-

guage of the sermons I was pulled toward emotional belief, but as soon as I went out of the church and saw the bright sunshine and felt the throbbing life of the people in the streets I knew that none of it was true and that nothing would happen." Because he was not nurtured on religion from birth, "full emotional and intellectual belief never came." Apparently his tutelage came too late. "I felt that I had in me a sense of living as deep as that which the church was trying to give me, and in the end I remained basically unaffected." He says of his baptism,

It was no longer a question of my believing in God; it was no longer a matter of whether I would steal or lie or murder; it was a simple, urgent matter of public pride, a matter of how much I had in common with other people. If I refused, it meant that I did not love my mother, and no man in that tight little black community had ever been crazy enough to let himself be placed in such a position. My mother pulled my arm and I walked with her to the preacher and shook his hand, a gesture that made me candidate for baptism. There were more songs and prayers; it lasted until well after midnight. I walked home limp as a rag; I had not felt anything except sullen anger and a crushing sense of shame. Yet I was somehow glad that I had got it over with; no barriers now stood between me and the community.

Thus, Wright feels persecuted by both parental and religious authorities, both of which are yet united in his maternal grandmother and Aunt Addie, who teaches at the church school. The rebellion is brought to a climax when he threatens Addie with physical violence in a scene of dramatic aggression. He says, I stood fighting, fighting as I had never fought in my life, fighting with myself," and then relates the incident.

"You're not going to beat me! I didn't do it!"

"I'm going to beat you for lying!"

"Don't, don't hit me! If you hit me I'll fight you!"

For a moment she hesitated, then she struck at me with the switch and I dodged and stumbled into a corner. She was upon me, lashing me across the face. I leaped, screaming, and ran past her and jerked open the kitchen drawer; it spilled to the floor with a thunderous sound. I grabbed up a knife and held it ready for her.

"Now, I told you to stop!" I screamed.

Nevertheless she attacks and both fight "as though we were strangers, deadly enemies." Ironically there is no winner; both are forced to withdraw inconclusively. The black man's rejection of the father and of religion channels his frustrations and thwarted dreams toward violence. Furthermore, an inadequate and uninspiring education leave him no outlet save on the streets.

Wright's education is spotty as he is moved from place to place, having no home stability. On the first day of school he learns about life during recess, rather than during class.

On the playground at noon I attached myself to a group of older boys and followed them about, listening to their talk, asking countless questions. During that noon hour I learned all the four-letter words describing physiological and sex functions, and discovered that I had known them before—had spoken them in the saloon—although I had not known what they meant.

This statement can be explained by the fact that at the age of six Richard was a drunkard who took any spare change he could get to the local tavern; he amused the clientele. He says, "when school let out that first day I ran joyously home with a brain burdened with racy and daring knowledge, but not a single idea from books." Much of his education is from the streets, or rather derives from encounters with racism in every facet of his life.

He sees a black woman beaten while he works portering in a clothing store. Later, delivering on a bicycle he is stopped and

hit with an empty whiskey bottle for not saying "Sir." Then he is stopped and frisked for delivering in a white neighborhood at night. On his first real job, with an optical company in Jackson, Mississippi, he forgets to use "Mr." in addressing a fellow white worker and loses his position. Wright is strangely naive, not knowing the basic rules of survival as a black in a white-dominated culture. Others are continually having to teach him the rules of the sub-system as he blunders through life oblivious to craftiness and cleverness. A long series of sexual-racial incidents evolve from his precarious job as a hotel hall-boy where his Jim Crow education broadened and deepened. Incidents involving white prostitutes provide classic tensions. Wright is caught looking at one by her ephemeral paramour. "Keep your eyes where they belong, if you want to be healthy!" he said. One boy is forced to marry a negro maid, pregnant by a white persecutor. A bellboy is castrated and run out of town for having relations with a prostitute while Wright himself is made ashamed when the white night-watchman slaps the maid that he is walking home "on her buttocks."

"Nigger, you look like you don't like what I did," he said.

I could not move or speak. My immobility must have seemed a challenge to him, for he pulled his gun.

"Don't you like it, nigger?"

"Yes, sir," I whispered with a dry throat.

"Well, talk like it, then, goddammit!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" I said with as much heartiness as I could muster.

It is the ancient fusion of sex and racism that breeds the worst kind of violence in America.

Victimized, he commits petty crimes in retaliation against a social system that degrades him. By stealing from the Negro movie house and from a Negro college he is enabled to flee Jackson, Mississippi, for Memphis, Tennessee, a step on the way Northward to Chicago and, hence freedom. Initially the thought of stealing repels him as when he applies to do chores and is asked "Do you steal?" to which he insolently replies "Lady, if I was a thief, I'd never tell anybody." Later, when about to leave Jackson he is tempted into criminality by the need for money. One of his arguments of self-defense concerns the fact that Negroes never organize to strike for higher wages; thus, they are compelled to steal. He undertakes a lengthy explanation for his crime and the circumstances surrounding it:

My objections to stealing were not moral. I did not approve of it because I knew that, in the long run, it was futile, that it was not an effective way to alter one's relationship to one's environment. Then, how could I change my relationship to my environment?

A new anxiety was created in me by my desire to leave quickly . . .

My feelings became divided; . . . My inability to adjust myself to the white world had already shattered a part of the structure of my personality and had broken down the inner barriers to crime; the only thing that now stood in the way was lack of immediate opportunity, a final push of circumstances. And that came.

According to Wright, the blacks are "immoral" or engage in illegality ironically because whites expect them to and because, due to the socio-economic hierarchy of capitalism, they must lie, steal, and cheat to survive as in the days of slavery. He therefore sanctions the law of the jungle on grounds of self-justification.

Paradoxically, Wright feels alienated from the black community as much as from the white society of the South, yet he remains the voice of black rage speaking for his whole race. In a passage from *Black Boy*, Wright muses about his dissociation from his people.

After I had outlived the shocks of childhood, after the habit of reflection had been born in me, I used to mull over the strange absence of real kindness in Negroes, how unstable was our tenderness, how lacking in genuine passion we were, how void of great hope, how timid our joy, how bare our traditions, how hollow our memories, how lacking we were in those intangible sentiments that bind man to man, and how shallow was even our despair. After I had learned other ways of life I used to brood upon the unconscious irony of those who felt that Negroes led so passionate an existence. <sup>16</sup>

The anti-heroes in his two major novels, *Native Son* and *The Outsider*, are both killers alienated from society. Both Bigger Thomas, the classic inarticulate ghetto youth, and Cross Damon, who murders without making political or moral distinctions, feel free and accomplished only after they have transgressed the primal law of society by taking human life. Wright extends this anti-humanism, a contributing factor in black violence, both metaphorically and literally from blacks to whites. The black man hates and fears the white man because he projects his self-hate and shame at being black onto his white enemy, who, in turn, has transformed his racial guilt into hatred of the black man.

Thus, in *Black Boy*, Wright is totally estranged from both white and black people. The aloofness between him and whites is repeatedly evident in his job experiences where he is seen and treated as an alien thing, not a person. Conversely, he feels cut off from the mass of his people, declaring emphatically that he feels no love for or pride in his people. He cannot relate to family members nor does he have any close friends. Sexually frustrated and at the same time inexperienced, he is unable to communicate with the pitiful black girl Bessie who thrusts herself upon him during the Memphis section, pleading with him to marry her. Throughout *Black Boy* Wright never has any kind of meaningful relationship with a member of the opposite sex just as he has no true male friend. Continually struggling alone, he bitterly rejects all human warmth in a complex of paranoia resulting from experience, fear, and hate. Forever on the alert, the black boy in the South can never relax, never trust, never offer something for

nothing. To be open, loving, and free means that one will instantly be taken advantage of. This portrait serves to define the facets of the black identity crisis with its concomitant fear-hate-fear complex that interferes with real human interaction.

Confessing, Wright reviews his life to the age of nineteen at the conclusion to *Black Boy*: "True, I had lied, I had stolen. I had struggled to contain my seething anger; I had fought. And it was a mere accident that I had never killed . . . But in what other ways had the South allowed me to be natural, to be real, to be myself, except in rejection, rebellion, and aggression?" <sup>16</sup> After suffering the tribulations along the spiritual journey towards self-reclamation, he is now able to see with greater vision the meaning of his painful childhood and adolescence in the American South. Viewing his life from a mature perspective at the age of thirty-six, he realizes that he as an oracle must inform and warn his people of what lies in store for them. The search and escape motifs combine thus both life and death wishes as Richard Wright achieves the knowledge necessary to enable him to continue living and probing further into the mysteries of the black psyche, of his private self. Therefore, the aggressive, brutalized child in *Black Boy*, escaping the burden of subjugation through retaliation, and the sensitive, artistic child join forces on the confessional hero's path to maturity.

#### Footnotes

- 1 *Twice A Year*, 12-13 (1945), p.264.
- 2 Richard Wright: A Biography (New York: Putham's, 1968), p. 205.
- 3 *Uncle Tom's Children*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), p. 4-5.
- 4 *College Language Association Journal*, 12 (September-June, 1968-69), p. 324-325.
- 5 *Black Boy*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1945, 1966), p. 41.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 113
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 124
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 170
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 119, 119-120.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 222.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 217.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 219-221.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 45
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 283-284.

## ON BEING INTERVIEWED FOR A JOB

by Jeff Evans

And they ask you, "Have you ever been convicted of a felony?"

There's not any time to say "No, my parents taught me to be God-fearing and not to steal because bad little boys go to hell and if you steal then you are a bad little boy and to work hard so you can live a clean life and go to heaven but that's why I'm here so that I can be good and not have to go to hell because I'm from Texas and I'm tired of heat and that's why I'm here with you," but there's just not enough time for that so I answer "No." And they ask you, "Do you have any experience?"

There's not enough time to say "I had a really good experience once lying in the cool grass beneath the friendly trees that bent their heads to daunt the rays from that monster in the sky that tried so hard to burn down on me and mine as we lay and listened to the song of the day and wondered what tune it would take tomorrow, and whether we could any longer hear after we had once supped on that music of life and felt each others souls," but there's not enough time for that so I answer, "I've worked in close contact with people."

And they ask you "Have you any skills?"

There is too little time to say that I can write a 500 word theme on symbolism in a short story and that I can speak English but not French and German and Russian and Latin and Greek but I want to and I'm going to learn if I ever have the time and that I've been around the world in the minds of gifted men and

I've learned to navigate the Mississippi River from Mark Twain and I've learned how to catch trout in a cold stream from Ernest Hemingway and I can read Shakespeare until my eyes die and I've read the book of Revelations and understood and I've been to school where they taught me to learn but MY GOD man if you don't help me I'll never get to go back and see what it is that I'm to learn," but there's no time for that so I answer, "I can sack groceries."

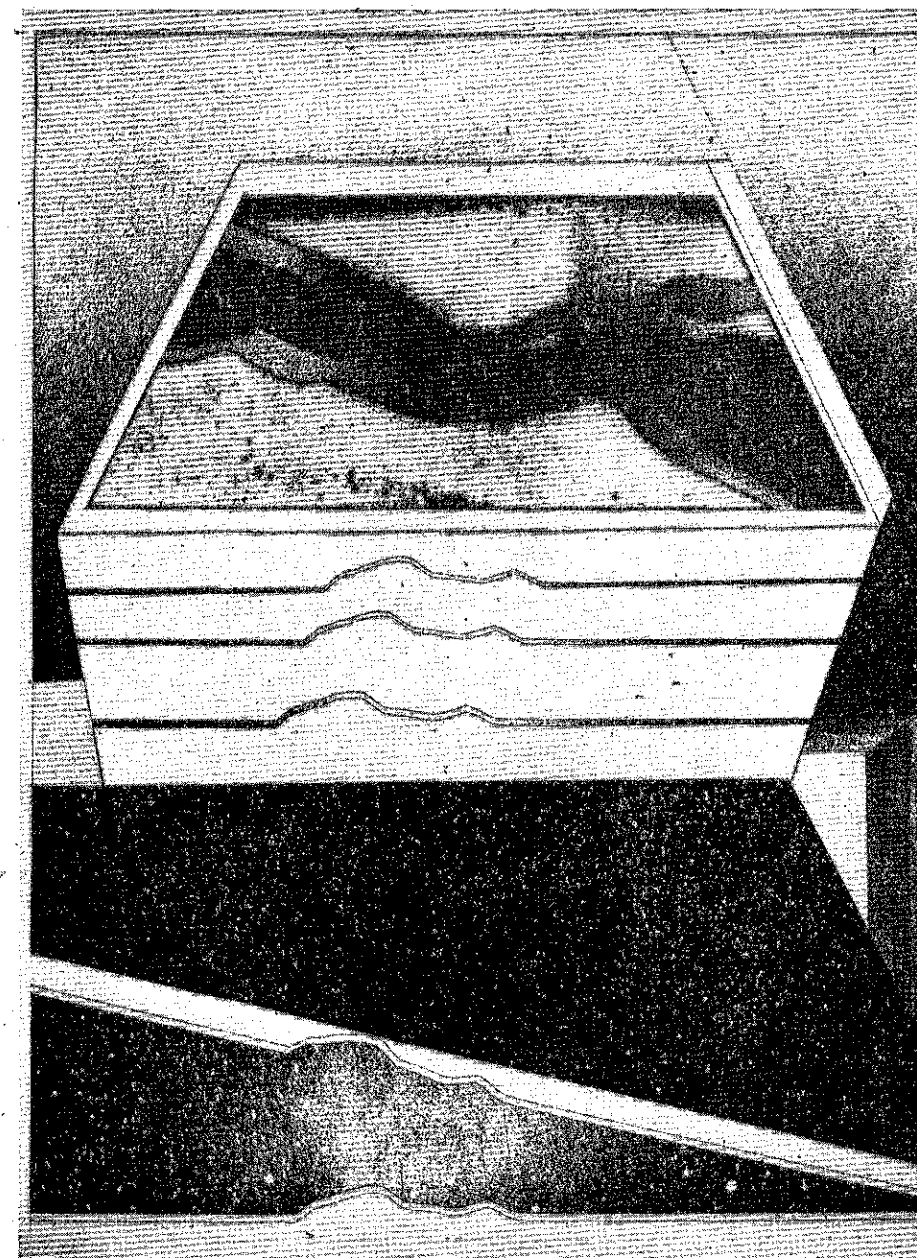
And they ask you, "Do you have any military service?"

And I want to answer "No I don't believe in killing people to inflate an economy and going around the world to show the weak ones the front of power that my country displays so that they can say 'we're going to do like them so that we can grow up big and strong and take over the world' and I don't want to die in the dirt of some nameless field killed by a bullet shot by some faceless enemy whom I never met or even saw or ever wanted to know, but still he was there and I was also because my country thrives on war and lies and I think that they could all kill themselves and leave me out of it because they're really not my concern," but there isn't time for that, so I answer, "No."

And they say "Thank you for your kind cooperation please check back in a month."

And I step out into the swirling day and breathe the air that sticks to your lungs like peanut butter to a knife and see the faceless beings that seem so life-like to be animated, and think that I will tell them all these things tomorrow, but there's not enough time today.

# TRANSLATIONS





**KABIR (Fifteenth Century Hindi)**

Versions by Robert Bly

2

I don't know what sort of a God we have been talking about.

The caller calls in a loud voice to the Holy One at dusk.

Why? Surely the Holy One is not deaf.

He hears the delicate anklets that ring on the feet of an insect  
as he walks.

Go over and over your beads, paint designs  
on your forehead,

wear your hair matted, long, and ostentatious,  
but when deep inside you there is a loaded gun,  
how can you have God?

3

Oh friend, I love you, think this over  
carefully! If you are in love,  
then why are you asleep?

If you have found him,  
give yourself to him, take him.

Why do you lose track of him again and again?

If you are about to fall into heavy sleep anyway,  
why waste time smoothing the bed  
and arranging the pillows?

Kabir will tell you the truth: this is what love is like:  
suppose you had to cut your head off  
and give it to someone else,  
what difference would that make?

8

I laugh when I hear that the fish in the water is thirsty.

You don't grasp the fact that what is most alive of all  
is inside your own house;  
and so you walk from one holy city to the next  
with a confused look!

Kabir will tell you the truth: go wherever you like, to Calcutta  
or Tibet;

if you can't find where your soul is hidden,  
for you the world will never be real!

9

Knowing nothing shuts the iron gates; the new love opens them.

The sound of the gates opening wakes the beautiful woman asleep.

Kabir says: Fantastic! Don't let a chance like this go by!

10

Between the conscious and the unconscious, the mind has put up  
a swing:

all earth creatures, even the supernovas, sway between these  
two trees,  
and it never winds down.

Angels, animals, humans, insects by the million, also the  
wheeling sun and moon;  
ages go by, and it goes on.

Everything is swinging: heaven, earth, water, fire,  
and the secret one slowly growing a body.  
Kabir caught one glimpse of that; it made him  
a servant for life.

**KABIR\* (continued)**

13

There's a moon in my body, but I can't see it!  
A moon and a sun.  
A drum never touched by hands, beating,  
and I can't hear it!

As long as a human being worries about when he will die,  
and what he has that is his,  
all of his works are zero.  
When affection for the I-creature and what it owns is dead,  
then the work of the Teacher is over.

The purpose of labor is to learn;  
when you know it, the labor is over.  
The apple blossom exists to create fruit; when that comes,  
the petals fall.

The musk is inside the deer, but the deer does not look  
for it:  
it wanders around looking for grass.

14

I said to the wanting-creature inside me:  
What is this river you want to cross?  
There are no travelers on the river-road,  
and no road.  
Do you see anyone moving about on that bank, or resting?  
There is no river at all, and no boat, and no boatman.  
There is no towrope either, and no one to pull it.  
There is no ground, no sky, no time, no bank, no ford!

And there is no body, and no mind!  
Do you believe there is some place that will make the soul  
less thirsty?  
In that great absence you will find nothing.

Be strong then, and enter into your own body;  
there you have a solid place for your feet.  
Think about it carefully!  
Don't go off somewhere else!

Kabir says this: just throw away all thoughts  
of imaginary things,  
and stand firm in that which you are.

**JORGE CARRERA ANDRADE**

Translated from the Spanish

by Melvin Kenne

**MICROGRAMS****Sea Conch**

Stuck in the sand, a conch  
is the marble marker  
of a dead seagull.

**Walnut**

Compressed knowledge,  
tiny vegetal turtle,  
elf-brain  
eternally paralyzed.

**Deer**

Your eye is a bubble of silence  
and your flowering antlers are needles  
for threading the stars.

**Lizard**

Silver amulet  
or imp with goiter,  
dawn creature.  
Memory of ruins,  
living, flowing tunnel,  
chill of the country,  
misanthropic lizard.

**CATULLUS (ca. 50 B.C.)**

Translated from the Latin

by Robert Olson

Furius, Aurelius, friends of Catullus,  
Whether he penetrate far India  
Where the shore turns back resounding waves  
From the far East

Whether Hyrcania or soft Arabia,  
Saciae or arrow-bearing Parthia,  
Egypt, where the seven-armed Nile, painting the seas,  
Beckon away.

Whether he climb across Alpine peaks  
To see monuments of mighty Caesar  
Gaul, Rhineland, the frightening land of Britain

The last frontier,

Comrades, prepared to try all these with him,  
Wherever the will of gods carry you  
Will you tell my girl in a few strong words  
Harsh to utter:

"Farewell, May you live with your worn out men  
Three hundred at once whom you hold entwined  
Loving none truly, but constantly breaking  
The Loins of all."

And tell her not to count on my love, now gone,  
Not to look back to the one who fell down  
Like a flower at the edge of the field  
Touched by the plow.

**KATHERINE VON HULTEN**

Translated from the German

by Jo Ann Thrash

**WHEN I WAS LITTLE**

when i was little  
i wanted to eat only at the richters house  
they came from wottawa in the sudentenland  
frau richter said: when i was little  
we wore long overcoats  
without underpants  
we walked barefoot to school  
through boggy fields and marsh marigolds  
frau richter was always very fat  
and she never had a baby  
as an old woman she sighed that life is hard  
and bought herself shorter dresses

toni her husband deaf from sickness and dumb  
a barber through dexterity  
raked the yard with us  
and trimmed the dog every friday

when he bellowed "gei hera"  
i came to the richters tart kitchen  
and watched how his wife  
cut the mass of dumpling  
with a filthy grey string  
puffy dumpling that-steamed beguiling  
on sundays there was also meat  
that my sister and i ate  
when the sour gravy hung  
in the corners of the mouth  
it was good

after dinner we made lace  
frau richter made lace only for the church  
she let me make lace eight or nine times  
to the left of the communion bench  
my proud heart dangles still

**MARIE LUISE KASCHNITZ**

Translated from the German

by Jo Ann Thrash

**THREE TIMES**

Three times the widow walked across the wasteland;  
There was no spring, no summer, no autumn, only winter.  
In the middle of the wasteland sat her husband, her beloved;  
And the first time she kneeled down, fell into his lap,  
Said: we have put in the pumpkins  
Bitter and sweet. We are gathering the first walnuts.  
The children are writing the A, B, C's.  
Fare thee well, and the dead nodded.

Three times the widow walked across the wasteland.  
There was no day, no night, no morning, only evening.  
In the middle of the wasteland sat her husband, her beloved;  
And the second time she laid her hand on his breast,  
Said: a snow has fallen, the windows bloom,  
the hedgehog has its winter sleep,  
The children are baking moons and stars.  
Fare thee well, and the dead nodded.

Three times the widow walked across the wasteland;  
There was no water, no fire, no air, only earth.  
In the middle of the wasteland sat her husband, her beloved;  
And the third time she saw him, did not touch him,  
Said: we have uncovered the beds,  
The earth in our garden is black and fertile,  
The children are burning the winter.  
Fare thee well, and the dead nodded.

Once more the widow walked, found no longer the wasteland.  
The grass stood high, the hedges stared out, grown together.  
Marguerite and roses bloomed; the sickle swung.  
Fare thee well, and the sun nodded.

**PRUDENTIUS (ca. 400 A.D.)**

Translated from the Latin

by Robert Olson

**THE SHRINE OF ST. EULALIA AT MERIDA**

Now Emerita is the place for a sepulcher,  
The illustrious colony of Vettonia,  
Which the famous river Ana passes by  
And grasping, beautiful, washes the walls  
With its greening whirlpool.

Here, where gracious splendor,  
Both pilgrim and native,  
Illuminates the halls with clear marble,  
Earth with adoring fold  
Protects the relics and sacred ashes.

Corrugated roofs add red above  
Cut rocks, and the base  
Is interspersed with golden panels,  
Just as you might suppose rosy meadows  
Blush with many kinds of flowers.

Pluck purple violets  
And gather sanguine crocuses.  
Gentle winter does not lack them,  
And warming ice loosens the plowed fields  
To fill the baskets with flowers.

Virgin and boy, give me these gifts  
From the leafy boughs,  
And I, garlanded in the middle chorus,  
With light foot shall bear the web  
Worthless, withered, yet festal.

Thus it is fitting to venerate the bones  
And the altar set with bones.  
She, placed under the feet of God,  
Looks out at these gifts and warms  
Her people with propitiatory song.

## THE CELEBRATION

by Guillermo Garcia Oropeza

Aside from a Spanish soldier of the 16th century who wrote a narrative and a Creole nun, 18 and passionate, the small tropical republic had not produced a literary figure comparable to Teodoro Gabriel, whose 100th anniversary was being celebrated this year.

The bibliography, which was made possible by the generous support of an official, was interminable. There, unbound, were all the works of Gabriel, inviting the public to submerge itself in the perverse illumination of the Latin Quarter or in the heavy, velvet tropical nights—to touch the fruity textures and the beauty marks on the skin of a woman or to shake with French rhythms the sleepiness of the Castallion language. Gabriel had conquered, at last, his proper ground.

In the national press there appeared a compilation of all the profiles of Gabriel, pointing out, primarily, his scholastic application, sketching to the student the attractive curve of the romantic suicide, which they feared a great deal, then sketching the mature man who had nobly reconciled revolutionary affairs with the Diplomatic Service. The papers spoke, also, illustrated with photographs of the era, of the profitable marriage and the land of Gabriel's birth. They included interviews with people who knew of the return of this native refugee of the European war, solemn and sure like a Herr Professor but still that Castellano who had inflated virgils with archaic nobleness.

It is certain that in the Republic, during Gabriel's lifetime, they did not take much notice of him. But whenever the sin of omission, it was now being repaired with the creation of this 100th anniversary.

The celebration commenced in January with the flood of publications. In March, at the direction of the Minister of Information, a cycle of conferences was initiated, even going to the provinces. Each conference was better and they culminated in the ceremony on the 16th of October when, in the presence of the President and Minister of Information, the day was declared National Poet Day—a definite homage to the work and example of Teodoro Gabriel.

That night the Teatro Figures did not appear the same. Clean and illuminated, reflecting a total modern atmosphere with its exotic lights and its Gallic pineapples. The recently gilded moldings and the red curtains, the Grecian mural and the emblems of Spain which had the heat and frenzy of infinite summer made it pure Teodoro Gabriel.

The orchestra played like never before. Then the Secretary rebaptised the Teatro—which was only just—and read the official notice. There followed a second piece of music, by Ivan Marquez, a political sympathizer of Gabriel and also an ardent nationalist. The public waved like a storm moved by the breeze of the South Seas. There were lectures on the poems and finally the marrow of the ceremony—Jorge Acevedo read his brilliant "Anatomy of Teodoro Gabriel."

Jorge Acevedo, apart from being the mainstay of the cultural supplement weekly of the "Republicano Tropical," was like a teacher, and also like a doctor, so that he divided as did Gabriel and many Latin Americans, the medical science and the literary solicitude.

The pronunciation of Acevedo was as precise as his prose, but his voice was quiet, as in a confessional and he needed a trio of microphones.

At exactly 10:00 he started his lecture. The family of the poet showed up: Those Gabriels who had arrived before it was a Republic and the Mallarts who had come later in a French ship and made their living from a dry goods store.

If Acevedo suffered from any sin, it was one of compulsive precision. Interminable, total, he continued with the youth of Gabriel. Equally exhaustive was his coverage of the early and

definite influences. These were "Pablo and Virginia," from the "Agriculture in the Torrid Zone," of Bello, the Venezuelan precursor, so like his first lecture on French lyrics.

It was long, perhaps, but one could not deny that the essay by Acevedo was well written. Shortly there appeared Paris, like in a daguerotype and, one by one, the major books: "Cantos de la lujuria y del tedio," "Novisimas Fabiellas." Acevedo analyzed the audacious metrics of Gabriel, so poorly recieved in Madrid. Then he recited, almost completely, the "Ode to Clemenceau," a Latin affirmation from his spirit. And, finally, he presented the surgical study of Gabriel, the man.

Acevedo spoke of the child who would prefer books to the chase of water snakes or to the banquets of fruit in the orchard; of a medical student who would not sleep after the anatomical practice; of a married man, an exemplary man perhaps, but always distant. He noted the contrast between moralistic father and the poet of the "Saturnalias Sailor." He described the old man, almost pathologically methodical, paranoically concerned with cleanliness, the almost senile old man who agonized eloquently and, finally, the dignified corpse.

Unfortunately Acevedo did not stop there. He went on to demonstrate his insuperable scientific objectivity and penetrated more in his homage. He spoke of a certain childish attachment, of a compulsive dread of open spaces and, almost inaudibly, of his certain attachment to that old Greek vice so abhorrent to the moral essence of the Republic.

Gabriel had always lived two parallel existences and his poems were, as Acevedo had demonstrated, between both. So in his more popular love sonnets the other Gabriel demonstrated his false silhouette and, in order to identify his strong desires sufficiently, changed the class of some certain proper names. The acrostics, which until this night had been described for what they were, were spoken of as with the same hidden meanings.

Fortunately, not everyone paid attention to the implication of what Acevedo said. Only in boxes, the traditional location of the local intelligensia, did they hear certain noises. But in the orchestra and the government section, no one abandoned their amicable complacency. Acevedo ended his talk and the orchestra slowly played a Mozart Symphony.

At 12:00, when the ceremony was over, the theatre was still lit with lights like costume jewelry. The audience breathed the salubrious and liquid air of the plaza and scattered in the streets of night, always besieged by that of which Gabriel had sung—the blue spirits and the sensuality of the warm tropics.

### PABLO NERUDA

Translated from the German

by Julia Alvarez

(from "One Hundred Love Sonnets")

#### MORNING XVII

I love you but you are not a sea rose, topaz,  
a flash of petals filling the air with fire:  
you are one of those dark things I love,  
quietly in the shadows of my soul,

I love you like a plant that doesn't bloom  
but hides within it the colors of flowers,  
and because you love me the smells  
of the packed earth are locked in my body,

I love you not knowing how or when or why,  
I love you openly without quibbles or pride:  
I know no other way of loving,

except our way, not yours, not mine,  
since your hand on my chest is my hand,  
since your eyes are heavy with my sleep,

### RAINER MARIA RILKE

Translated from the German

by Robert Bly

(from "Sonnets to Orpheus")

#### III

A god can do it. But tell me, how can a man  
follow his slender road through the strings?  
A man is split. And where two roads intersect  
inside us, no one has built the Singer's Temple.

Writing poetry, as we learn from you, is not desiring,  
not wanting something that can ever be achieved.  
To write poetry is to be alive. For a god that's easy.  
When, however, are we really alive? And what does he

turn the earth and the stars so they face us?  
Yes, you are young, and you love, and the voice  
forces your mouth open — that is lovely, but learn

to forget that breaking into song. It goes again.  
Real singing is a different movement of air.  
Air moving around nothing. A breathing in a god. A wind.

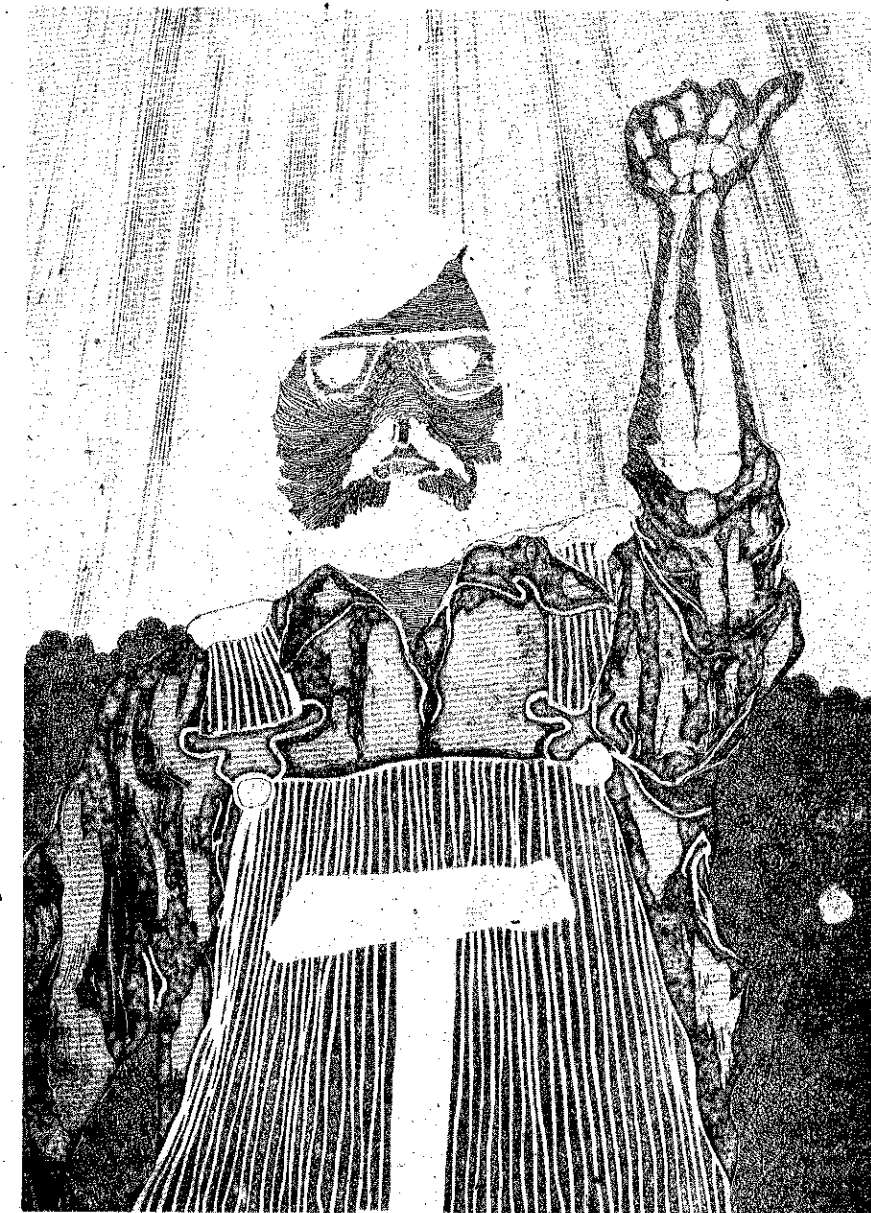
#### IV

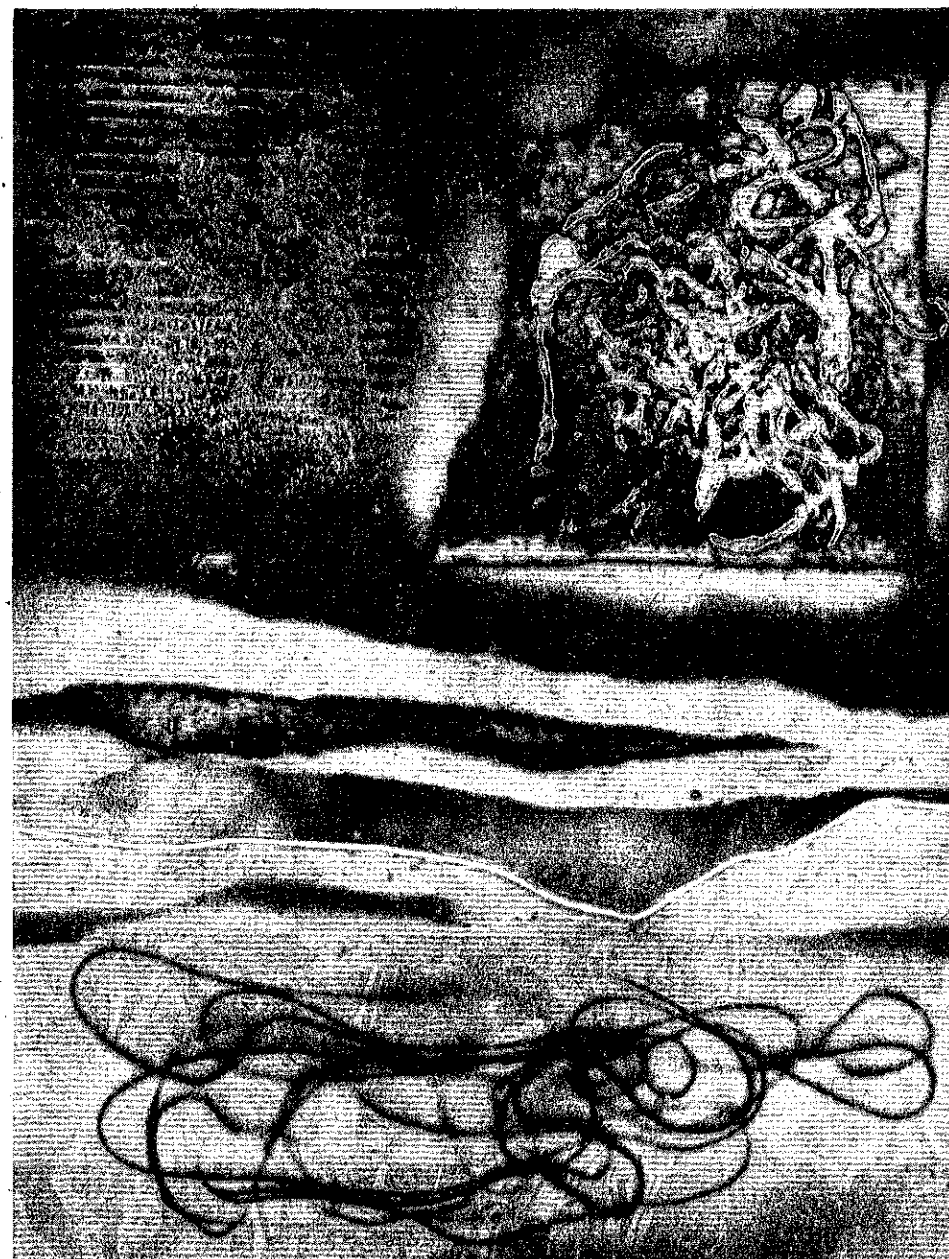
O' you lovers that are so gentle, step occasionally  
into the breath of the sufferers not meant for you,  
let it be parted by your cheeks,  
it will tremble, joined again, behind you.

You have been chosen, you are sound and whole,  
you are like the very first beat of the heart,  
you are the bow that shoots the arrows, and also their target  
in tears your smile would glow forever.

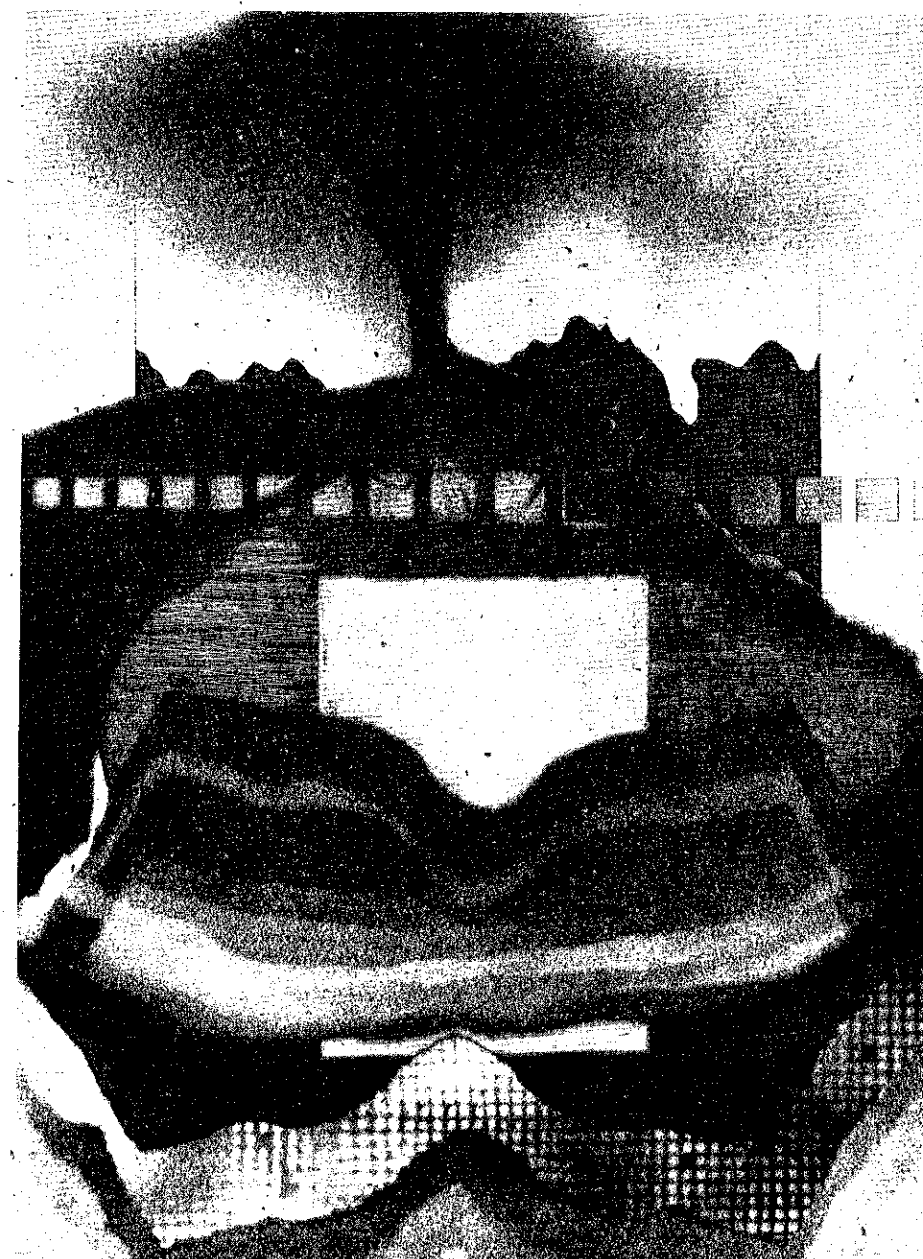
Do not be afraid to suffer, give  
the heaviness back to the weight of the earth;  
mountains are heavy, seas are heavy.

Even those trees you planted as children  
became too heavy long ago — you couldn't carry them now.  
But you can carry the winds . . . and the open spaces . . .





## STORIES





## THE FRIEND

by Joyce Bean

The daylight disappeared as Renee stepped inside the house and heard the door shut somewhere behind, blanketing her in the dark, stale suppression of drawn curtains and closed, wooden venetian blinds and drab, use-gnawed furniture. "Like Sarah, a little," she thought. Sarah who had just shut the door of this house where she, Sarah, lived—the house where she lived with her aging parents—parents who were over forty when she was born. Sarah, the tall, pine-tree-stiff young woman who had introduced herself to Renee three weeks ago after class as Sarah Wittington—Sarah Jane Wittington—and Renee-the-stranger had listened to her say she would show Renee around the library and its literature sections and the campus and Renee had wondered at the woman's shy cordiality and the eagerness to make herself useful. Like a small child begging for approval, granting its square of competency: Here-you're-new-let-me-help. Sarah's voice came hesitantly, a little breathlessly, softly. Her mouse-gray eyes never looked directly at the person she spoke to. She seldom smiled or laughed; seldom even moved her upper lip when she talked. Her face had the florid, raked tenor of irritation, roughness—as if the skin had been wounded and the bandages just removed. And they had become friends, friends because Sarah had no friends and because Renee was a stranger. And this was Sarah's parent's house. The house Sarah lived in; this sorrowful, quiet Sarah with the immobile face, the stiff upper lip, who held her head as if it were a globe riveted to the straight pole of her body.

A short, squat woman tottered across the room to meet them. Renee adjusted to the dim lighting as she heard Sarah introducing her mother, an old woman with a remarkably fat body and legs that were not so fat as the body, but moved as if they were. Her stomach bulged out as far as her large, drooping breasts. Her heavy arms seemed too short for her body and she held them inflexibly like slabs of lumber against her bulky sides.

"So you are Renee. I'm glad to meet you. Sarah has talked about you so much—so much. And any friend of Sarah's is so welcome. I understand you're new in this country. You have a lot to adjust to, I hope you're not homesick."

"My cousin is an undergraduate here—Frederick Aries. And people have been nice. And school itself keeps me very busy."

Renee looked directly at her and discovered the same eye evading practice of her daughter. The old woman's washed-out face was pleasant, obviously beautiful in her youth, framed with hair the no-color of her straw linen dress, extending the softness of her face. The daughter resembled her only in facial structure, the mother's features stamped there but something having happened in the transference. A sensitivity opening the wound of the face after the patterning gauze was cut.

Mrs. Wittington turned to her husband who was sitting in an overstuffed, gray chair. His face was pleated with wrinkles and he looked spent. Emancipated. He didn't rise—merely nodded to Renee as he was introduced. He would tower above not only his wife but his pine-tree daughter.

"Mr. Wittington would get up but he's been sick—hospitalized until several weeks ago. He retired from his job at the post office last year and has had trouble with his health since. He can't do much now." The old woman turned from him.

"You sit down and talk. I'll stay here a second and then tend to dinner. It's nearly ready."

She sat beside Renee on the gray sofa that matched the chair the father was in. Sarah sat in a rocker across from them.

"Sarah used to have so many friends—zillions and zillions of friends and she was in everything and going everywhere—social groups, Azalea Trail Princess, Honor Society—everything. But when she came back from L.S.U. everybody had moved away or gone somehow."

Renee's face scorched in the fire kindled by the mother's pride—scorched in sympathy with the daughter who sat rigidly and gazed about the room as if she hadn't heard, sat as rigidly as if she were the straight back of the rocker itself and held her head high above the ashes and residue of the mother's embers, not even flinching, not even seeing the smoke.

"Everybody needs friends. Sarah's daddy and I are older and all our friends are old. Sarah needs her own friends—young friends like yourself. She has always had friends before..." she trailed off and Renee thought with horror that they were going to sit immobilized and silent and listen to the mother wail and cry in the anguish of what she wanted... for her daughter... she wanted... But this was only a jog and the voice rose... she wanted... But this was only a jog and the voice rose again.

"There is so much to do in large, growing Houston, you know. But you need friends to do it with. I always had lots of friends. Sarah's having trouble finding a job. Seems like nobody's hiring—even when you'll have a masters in English literature and have made all 'A's. She's always made all 'A's—except for one 'C'. Did you know that bastard—that bastard Cartwright gave Sarah a 'C'—a 'C'. No one ever gave Sarah a 'C'... and that bastard—"

"Mother! You shouldn't talk about a professor like that," Sarah's lower jaw trembled.

"He is. He is. He's a bastard to give you a 'C' when you no more deserved a 'C' than you deserve to sprout wings and fly." She pouted and Renee looked down at the old woman feet to avoid the old woman face—the once-pretty-old-woman-face that stormed. The feet were bound in purple straps which reached back to low wedges of purple under the heels. Renee focused on a large, shiny, red bunion that reared between the straps at the side of the old woman foot. Repulsion crept over Renee like a spreading, mossy fungus that was only shaken by the voice of the father. The voice scraped across the room like sandpaper as if to scratch and scour her. But it brushed past.

"That's enough, Verma. I think everybody knows how you feel on that subject. Wouldn't you rather lecture us on next-door neighbors that have illegitimate babies? Even a dying man can do with that."

The mother's pink-rimmed eyes widened and her parchment nostrils flared as she lunged up from the sofa and caught herself before she was halfway toward him, stopping in slow mid-stride with a forefinger outstretched.

"Now what I say about babies born in sin and people that bear them in sin has nothing to do with people who try to destroy unjustly my daughter's school record. And I know I am right about such sin as that. The church teaches it and I won't get into another argument about how to treat those living in such sin." She stomped out to the kitchen covering her angry retreat with a pseudo-sweet voice that said she would get the dinner on the table. Mr. Wittington stared at his large hands laying across the slight hump of his stomach. And Sarah began talking—obviously to Renee but looking past Renee.

"Last night the girl next-door brought her tiny baby over for me to see and Mother wouldn't allow me to hold it because it was born out of wedlock. I just wanted to hold the baby. The baby didn't have anything to do with it... and the girl is nice... no matter what Mother..." her voice made a jump and hid like a frightened rabbit.

"How could she keep me from holding a baby?"

"My mother... can... did... called me back and... invited her to leave sort of..."

Renee watched the mother shuffle into the adjoining dining area with two steaming dishes for the table. Sarah got up to help her.

"Oh, you don't have to help, my wonderful little girl. You can talk. It's nearly ready." She had discovered. Sarah went into the kitchen anyway and brought more dishes.

Soon the dinner was in progress and the conversation stayed safely around the Wittington's close church association and school. Mrs. Wittington talked on and on about how fine one of the English professors was. He turned out to be a distant cousin of hers.

Days later, Renee and Sarah were walking across campus and Sarah stopped to talk to another student, someone she had known a number of years ago.

"And what are you doing these days, Sarah? Married? Teaching?"

"Well, I finish this semester. I was married since I last saw you but I was also divorced," her raw skinned face contorted. The woman said that was too bad and talked of what she was doing and they soon left. Sarah turned to Renee.

"My life is ruined. It's ruined. I'll never get married now—no one will marry me. I have no promise of a job. Everything is ruined. Two years ago I was traveling on the bus to visit my cousins in Baton Rouge and I met this guy. We decided on the bus trip to exchange addresses. We talked a lot and enjoyed each other and did write. Everybody I knew was getting married and I thought if I could just do what they were doing, I would be part of them—part of everybody. So in one letter I suggested we might think of marriage and then he asked me in the following letter to marry him. He came and we were married. My parents were furious. We lived together three months and it was one long horrible fight. And I got a divorce. I came back to live with my parents... if I'd had his baby... if I had... I'd have something of my own."

"Oh, come off of it, Sarah. That's crazy."

"No. It's true. I've nothing." She hurried the words out before the voice crumpled... and then Renee knew she didn't want opposition. Opposition was a glass that she couldn't see and that she wouldn't reach out to feel. She had reached out once.

The crumpled voice limped to the back of her head and touched the soreness that made her remember him and remembering him made her remember herself when he was with her. The self that now seemed like someone else she felt pathetically sorry for. She had tried to make him fill her emptiness, an emptiness born of parents that said we-are-old-and-dying-would-leave-you-with-no-one; parents that said you-have-lots-of-friends-are-they; You-need-to-date-a-boy-more-than-once-be-popular-be-happy; we-were-happy-once-we-were-young-once-go-out. And she stuffed him into the loneliness and the loneliness grew and he was a minuscule speck that she couldn't find. That bus trip he had chosen a seat beside her. He talked with her as if she were like anyone else. He looked at her face as a nice face. And he saw her body as feminine. He had been kind. He listened—though she couldn't remember what they said. Then they wrote and she could write better than she could talk and she didn't judge his writing. (Her mother always said but-he-only-had-a-high-school-education and her father said so-did-I and she said you-were-more-than-a-plumber-and-he-said-was-I.) He wanted to marry. He didn't know her. And so they lived together and quarreled for three months. And then he left and she knew he had been there because of the trodden emptiness. As if her mind were the deserted rubble of the battle. He hadn't been pleased... she hadn't known...

"My mother and I went to Ireland and England the summer after all that. We went by ship because she can't fly—her health. High blood pressure. It scares her dreadfully. She took me and we had a nice time—a month there."

"How lovely," Renee said and she thought, "You poor kid. You nearly escaped but you didn't know where you were going and she hauled you back. Those vitriolic legs stretch and that fat, round spider's body spins gossamer designs as strong as steel..."

In May the graduation ceremony was held and Renee attended, bringing a small gift to give Sarah afterwards. Sarah

seemed touched by the gesture. Her parents were the only other guests she had.

Then Renee went to summer school and she had a little time. But Sarah would reappear once or twice a week at the library or at the small apartment Renee now rented with Loren, Frederick's girlfriend. Sarah audited one course and decided to devote any time not looking for jobs to writing a book on the history of German textbooks in America. The job search was painful for her. She wore her shyness all over her flushed, sad face.

"But I don't want to teach at any level—if I can help it. I would like to translate German. But there's not much demand for it. Did I ever tell you that I did teach school once—a whole year of it. I had sixth graders. I couldn't discipline them. There was never any order in my room. The principal came and talked to me about discipline several times but I couldn't discipline. I wanted to hide from them. It was horrible. I can't teach."

Mrs. Wittington began to call now and then and ask Renee if Sarah were there or if she knew where Sarah was. Mrs. Wittington had the summer off, too, and Sarah often said she just had to get away from the house. She meant away from her mother. Once Sarah arrived hours after a call from the mother. She said she had been walking around the campus and found a stray dog and bought food for him and fed him and talked to him. That was the same afternoon that Sarah chose to confide in Renee concerning her only 'C'.

"I took Dr. Cartwright's course and met a guy in there who asked me for several dates. Three. We went out and I was no fun and I knew he would never ask again. My mother would talk to him. She may have called him. I'm afraid. But I was sitting in class and thought of a girl then that he would get along with and I wrote him a note. He didn't want to take the note because he probably thought I was begging for some kind of second chance or something. He kept shoving the note back. I had sent him other notes—that's why, I guess. Dr. Cartwright saw us and I don't think he liked it in his class. Somehow I think my conduct affected my grade. It was all very strange to me."

"Passing notes in class—that's a bit school kiddish, isn't it? But I doubt that it would factor in your grade..."

"But I think it did."

The incident made Renee think of another time. In the library. Sarah had seen a man that had been in the literature class last spring with them. She went over and briefly talked with him. When she returned to Renee's desk, she was trembling.

"What's wrong?" Renee looked at her.

She averted her eyes, "I think it's because I was talking to Mr. Ripley. He's kind of nice. Do you like him?" Renee merely assented, not understanding.

Sarah finally did get a job interview that she thought promising and she excitedly told Renee of the plans.

"It's in Austin and my mother has hired a high school student to drive us there and back. We'll stay one night. She thinks I'll be too tired if I drive and she's not well enough to. My dad can't. He's to go back in the hospital this fall for more work on his stomach. Did you know my mother has a kidney disease and probably can live only a few more years. She's very brave. They're both very brave."

"Your mother is going with you to the interview?"

"She especially wants to because of I get the job she can retire at the end of this school year—which would be one year early—and they would move with me. They've no real ties here. All our family are in Louisiana."

"Lord, Sarah! I thought this would help you establish some independence. Your mother really runs your life. Why couldn't you at least live in your own apartment?"

"Oh, I couldn't do that. They would see it as a rejection of them and I love them. My parents give up so much for me."

They're wonderful. Did you know that? They are. My mother sacrifices so much. It's my fault that she is over-weight. She was a perfect size before she was pregnant with me. You see—if I hadn't been born, she still would be."

"You don't know. She might be twice as big." But Sarah didn't smile. "Anyway—have you ever thought of going on somewhere for a doctorate?"

"I haven't any money and I refuse to be any further financial burden to my parents. I can't."

"Okay. What's this job in Austin like?"

"Oh—it's the one I've dreamed of. I would translate German for texts to be used in this country and take care of correspondence with the German firm."

"Sounds good. I wish you luck."

And Sarah went for the interview and returned and waited for results.

In several more days she heard or rather her mother heard. They called and assumed Mrs. Wittington was Sarah and Mrs. Wittington told them no differently. She told Sarah. Sarah left. Then the old woman called Renee.

"Sarah didn't get the job. The man said she had it when she walked out of there but two hours later someone came in who had had eight years experience and he got it. Sarah left in the car—I don't know where. Maybe you could call her or come by later. I know it would help her. Don't tell her I called!"

Renee heaved a long sigh, "All right." And she did call Sarah the following day but Sarah sounded remote and cut the conversation short, saying she had another interview that afternoon.

Mrs. Wittington called again the next day. Sarah got the job—a secretarial position in the public school system. It paid little but only through the mother's influence had Sarah gotten even that, jobs being so scarce. She was disappointed most that her daughter would be working with older people—all her, the mother's, age. She said Renee should call Sarah. But Renee thought of the job—it was as if Sarah had plastered the last brick in her hermetic existence.

Renee was busy starting the semester and forgot about the call. A couple of weeks later Mrs. Wittington called again, desperate again, her voice breaking with emotion. Sarah hated her job, it was so dull and unchallenging, and she was to have some serious dental work done tomorrow. Could Renee please come by tomorrow evening and bring a little gift. She would reimburse Renee for the gift. Just don't tell Sarah. This dental work was so hard on her—added to everything else.

Renee felt anger mount and rumble through her body.

"Look, Mrs. Wittington. I will come. I will bring a gift. But you will not pay for it. I will. I'm sorry about Sarah's dental work. And her job. But I'm in graduate school and it's a tread mill that takes all my time. From now on, let Sarah call me. I'll be glad to talk with her when she calls." She clipped the last word as if her teeth were two knives.

Mrs. Wittington sobbed that she only had Sarah's best interests in mind, her very wonderful little girl that loved her Mama so much and . . . did everything to please. She knew she, the mother, asked too much sometimes . . . but only for Sarah. Renee said all right and slammed the receiver down.

Renee did go to visit Sarah. She had to track Frederick down. He needed his car so he got a ride for her with a mutual friend. Renee was embarrassed—even though the friend just left her at Sarah's house. But she was more embarrassed when she sat talking to Sarah. The dental work which Renee had expected to be at least a tooth extraction, turned out to be a filling. She left the small gift in her purse. Sarah said she was sorry but she didn't feel like talking, her job tired her dreadfully. And she retired through a door to the hall and didn't return. Mrs. Wittington tried to sooth things over.

"Now you just come back. She'll feel like having lots of company in a day or so. She just found out her daddy's got to go back into the hospital soon. Poor little, wonderful girl. She knows I probably won't live much longer. She needs friends to come say let's go do this or that."

"She has known about her father."

"But just when. That job really gets to her, too. So depressing to work with all those old people."

"Well, I've got to go now."

"You come back—you hear?"

"I won't come until Sarah calls me. Then I'll know when she is ready for visitors."

"No—no. You just come. Get her to go someplace with you. You come by—she needs friends to come. She was always coming by your place last summer—helping you out."

"I'll come when I hear from her, not from you. Goodbye, Mrs. Wittington." She hadn't said this with cruelty, merely decisiveness. She sometimes did feel sorry for the old woman. But this wasn't fair. This pollution of the emotional climate—messed her study time up for hours.

"Oh wait. Wait, dear. You haven't a ride. Let me call a taxi and I'll pay."

"No. I'm going to walk to a friend's house and get a ride from there. I'm fine." She managed a "thank you" and she did walk—a forty minute trek to her friend's quarters and a ride from there.

Sarah didn't call but her mother did. Renee was becoming phobic about the ring of the telephone—a drill that cut through her body. Renee had decided to threaten her with telling Sarah if she called again but the old woman had a different request. It was Sarah's birthday and could Renee possibly get three or four friends and come for ice cream and cake. One of the English professors was to be there, her cousin. It was just the thing for Sarah. Come at 4:00 on Thursday. Renee hated herself for acquiescing and felt dread like a thick, tight fog coming over her. Who to ask? She didn't want anyone to come who would make fun of Sarah—then or later. She liked Sarah—for whatever she thought of her mother. It seemed strange, too, that she who had lived here less than a year was asked to bring the party's guests.

Renee talked to Frederick and Loren and a friend named John into coming to the gloomy, drapery-dark living room. Mrs. Wittington was talking to a few neighbors sitting on the sofa but rushed forward to greet them.

"And here are some of Sarah's school friends. I want you to meet . . ." and she let Renee give their names. Another English professor, not the cousin, showed up with his wife. Renee heated with the self consciousness Sarah should have felt but perhaps didn't know to feel or perhaps was so calloused to it that there was no feeling. Sarah sat in a chair with her back held straight and her long neck making an unbending stem for her head.

"Yes—this is Sarah's birthday and we're so pleased to have all these friends here." As soon as Mrs. Wittington began, Renee leaned over to Sarah and asked where her father was. She said he had taken a walk because he wasn't feeling well. Renee slipped her the small gift she had bought earlier and retained. Sarah thanked her and put it aside to open later.

Renee's embarrassment degenerated to shame as she caught the old mother's further strains. She didn't reach the crescendo of Sarah-was-an-'A'-student-except-for-one-bastard until just after she had gotten Sarah to cut the cake. As she doled it out with ice cream she gave her spiel on Sarah's high school popularity—her zillions and zillions of friends. John spoke to Frederick in French, saying that they should sing "Happy Birthday" to Sarah and then kiss her wooden face. Loren started to laugh and tried to cover the inappropriateness by hopping out of her seat and going into the kitchen with some dirty plates. Mrs. Wittington stared over at the guffawing Frederick and Renee suppressed her

laugh, managing to say that John had just told them about a birthday party he went to as a child and how the girls had insisted they play a kissing game. Mrs. Wittington smiled stupidly and stopped talking about Sarah and Sarah looked puzzled. John repeated in French that at least he should give Sarah birthday kisses and he rolled his eyes and sang "son anniversaire-es braisers," and Renee laughed in a burst of tension that she couldn't restrain. Immediately she faked a coughing fit and looked over at Sarah to sober herself. Her eyes watered and blurred and shriveled Sarah—Sarah who looked as appealing as a ninety year old spinster with a crooked back and a crumpled face. One of the neighbors asked if John could speak English at all.

"Oui." But he said nothing else. And when they asked how long he had been in America, he replied, "One year in Houston," rolling an accent and failing to add that his other twenty-two years were in Jasper, Texas.

"I guess you're Canadian, too?" Mrs. Wittington pronounced her words more distinctly, as if he were one of her elementary school speech students—and perhaps slightly retarded.

Another neighbor's question to him about France was drowned in Mrs. Wittington's asking about refilling coffee cups and about more cake. Renee tried to turn the conversation from John by asking the English professor about his classes. She didn't trust her responses to John. She had misjudged him. Mrs. Wittington broke in to tell of Sarah's class with the professor but was forced to stop when the three neighbors got up to leave. The professor and his wife followed Renee signaled her entourage. Sarah kept sitting as if expecting some other callers—her face a ruddy blank.

"Oh you young people aren't leaving, too. Oh, don't go Sarah wants to visit with you some more. Have some more refreshments."

"We need to leave but thanks for the party." Renee looked over at Sarah, "Happy Birthday, Sarah." Sarah blinked as if trying to recognize both the speaker and the one spoken to.

"Oh, thank you for coming." She remained seated.

"Perhaps next time we'll make your birthday more lively." John's eyes twinkled as he turned to mutter something in French to Frederick. Renee urged them both out the door. Mrs. Wittington's now-you-come-back trailed them like a haunting echo as they reached the car and left. Renee felt traitorous as she laughed with the other three in parodies of the occasion.

The next time the old woman called she said that her husband was in the hospital and Sarah was depressed. Wouldn't Renee meet Sarah at the hospital and visit the father? She would pay Renee's taxi fare.

"I can't do that. I will wait until Sarah calls me." She hung up as the old woman began whining that she knew she asked too much. Renee did call Sarah at work the next week but Sarah was out of the office and failed to return the call.

The semester neared its close and Sarah called only once to say that her father was still hospitalized, had never been allowed visitors except his immediate family and that she still abhorred her job.

Final exam week came and the Christmas holidays. She sent Sarah a Christmas card and Sarah sent her one saying they should get together before next semester. Then Renee left for Galveston with Frederick's family. A day after her return, Mrs. Wittington telephoned.

"Now, I wouldn't bother you, dear, but I thought you might not have heard that Sarah's daddy passed on a week ago. The funeral was last Monday and we've had relatives staying with us until yesterday. We have no close relatives here. They all came in from Louisiana. Sarah is really down. Could you just come by this afternoon or tomorrow—just tell her let's-go-to-the-show or let's-go-get-a-ice-cream-cone. She needs that. She's had so much the past month. Don't tell her I called."

All right, I'll come. I'm sorry about your husband. I've been away and didn't know," and threw out a goodbye before the old woman could say anything else.

Renee asked Loren to go with her. She didn't want to go alone. They took Frederick's car and bought a small, green house plant on the way. As they rang the doorbell, Mrs. Wittington appeared around the corner of the house and told them to go in. Then Sarah was opening the door. She wore a long, quilted, pinkish robe that was frayed-looking. She blinked in the bright daylight, her wooden carriage bracing the door.

"Oh, hullo."

Renee already had the screen door open at Mrs. Wittington's instructions and she, Renee, spoke as she stepped in and handed Sarah the plant.

"Sarah, I'm so sorry. I didn't know about it. I've been gone."

"I don't want to talk about it. I just don't want to talk about it." Her face had a transparent, bruised look. "I've been writing thank-you notes. I can't talk. I'm too busy. I don't want to talk. I can't talk to you . . . not for five or six days . . . uh—thanks for the plant." She turned as abruptly as she had spoken and took her pine-tree-stiff body from the room.

Mrs. Wittington, dressed in a black cotton dress with a ruby brooch at the neck, puffed into the house, well aware of the exchange, "Just a minute, girls. Sit down. She's so glad to see you." And she followed her daughter but was back in several minutes. Renee felt the extreme awkwardness and hated Mrs. Wittington for creating it.

"Now, girls, Sarah says she just can't talk to anyone yet. She's had the brunt of all this. And she was so close to her father. She's really in near shock. I don't know what I would have done without her. I don't. She's a very wonderful, little girl. She's been writing thank you notes—so many flowers. Before, when he was still in the hospital, she would get me up at five each morning to take me to the hospital. I couldn't even have gotten up. She's just in near shock now. All those relatives here she had to take care of. What she needs right now are friends just to come by, three or four, and say come-on-to-a-show or come-get-ice-cream. That's all she needs."

"Maybe-when she's ready," Renee said.

"No—just need to come and say lets-go. Don't give her time to say no. She can do that in three or four days. She'll talk to you then. She just can't now. She's just in near shock. She used to have so many friends . . . zillions and-zillions . . . they're gone . . . and in everything . . . she was . . ."

Renee was transfixed by Mrs. Wittington's mouth from which hung one thin strand of saliva from the middle of the upper lip to a tiny blob on the lower lip. It looked sticky and viscous and bubbly and it stretched and shrunk like elastic with the opening of her mouth. It stirred a chord of nausea in Renee but her eyes only shifted to the bulbous, purple-red bunion on the old lady's right foot and the nausea rose. She sat on the sofa and the pillow-fat belly rested on her legs. Some perversity kept redirecting Renee's attention to the thread of spit and Renee wanted to slap the old widow's once beautiful-face until it shook the spit loose. Her pink rimmed, aging eyes looked as if they would overflow any minute . . . above the chapped lips.

"We must go. I'm sorry about all this," Renee spoke from her tenuous bridge of social ritual.

"Oh, don't go. She may feel like talking in a little. You know, she just doesn't want to go back to her job. She's going to apply for a job outside of Houston and if she doesn't get anything, then she'll student teach so she'll get her secondary teacher's certificate. I don't blame her. All those old people where she works just saying nothing was wrong with her father—that Sarah was just making a lot over nothing—and if she thought she had troubles, just look at some of them. She just can't go back she says. I can understand. She keeps saying, I'll never-



see-him-again and I keep telling her now-honey-you-know-you'll-see-him-in-heaven and she says yes-mama-heaven. But then she says it again. It's that near shock."

Renee got up and moved toward the door. The string of saliva on the old woman's mouth was like some repulsive filth that grew and would fork the tongue. Then she knew, knew

without being told, knew as a confirmation to what she had already surmised. The web—it was merely a part of the web the old woman had begun. They'd interrupted her and only a remnant of her work was visible. Renee backed out quickly, tensely, nearly tripped on the porch; ran to the car. The old woman stood at the vine entangled doorway calling something about friends—flies—something—



## SONG FOR THE DRAGON

by Bill Kojak

Flat Freddie laid back on the bed, was he? Was he was. Morning broke innocently Freddie's sleep. What say Freddie on this occasion?

Saying nothing Freddie surveyed the room. The sun reflected off myriad particles of dust in a wide beam from the window to the floor. 26 years he'd faced this morning snake, he was in no mood now.

Freddie returned not to sleep for unavailable it was and too late the noise in the other rooms of his younger brothers and sisters—two of each, for Freddie was the oldest—preparing for a day of battle with the school. Freddie knew well. American sympathy song.

One arm meekly hanging out in the room flatly Freddie wondered if it could maybe still be attached. It moved, good. Deception?

He tore back the cover of his nakedness and saw, both still attached.

Should Freddie still get up? He saw no reason with both arms attached in his secret plan of minimum resistance he decided to rise and check the bed under for traps and monsters. No horror there dirt and tennis shoes.

"Breakfast Fred," the mother say. Freddie is in no mood to face the accusing multitude of eyes staring over eggs and toast. Six pairs if the father is not gone.

No alternative way out. Freddie slipped into his jeans into pockets went the hands to hide and he shuffled out of the room.

Six pairs there were, eight eyes staring blindly at breakfast zonkies, four mouths working loudly at destruction. Two eyes were on the stove eggs and two eyes shone with fire over the steam of black coffee.

"Morning," mumble Freddie and smile thinking himself in other mornings. in San Diego he woke to share a water pipe, in Sacramento to love once more before work, beside so many roads to hitch another ride. so many mornings.

"Good morning," said the head turned away. The four mouths kept working . . . on bowls . . . of breakfast cereal up and down.

The coffee eyes did not move, the mouth said nothing. A creepy felt its way up back Freddie's neck crawled into goose bumps.

Freddie in rebellion, we do sing. Ten thousand terrors to inflict on the mound of indefinite flesh surrounding those bloated eyes—come on Freddie Baby, we do sing. electronic blues bass guitar.

Instead Freddie flatly sat down at his usual place at the table.

Do we sing? Freddie would not let the coffee eyes suspect.

The face at the stove turned toward the table with eggs and bacon. For Freddie.

"Could I have a cup of coffee, please?" Freddie asked no one—the two faces both.

"Why don't you get up and get it yourself?" puffy eyes and yellow brown teeth working together on Freddie's fragile body. America. secession. i am here to fold into the desolation of self myself. i am for nothing or reason else. this only is all of it, please.

### The Confrontation, Part II

The whole bulk of his mother stood between Freddie and the stove. To be standing in front of the eyes and those working mouths, would his faded pants fall entirely off?

Freddie fidgeted. The eyes would not follow definite course, the mind did not sing. fidgeted.

"You're the biggest gold brick I've ever seen. What are you? 26? and you haven't done one constructive thing in your entire life.

"You go bumming around the country for a couple of years, never letting anyone know if you are alive or dead—and, frankly, I didn't care, but your mother did. You didn't care that you hurt her—did you?"

fidgeted.

"Hell no you didn't. And you set an atrocious example for your brothers and sisters and you don't even care about that.

"So, one fine day you show up back here and expect us to house you and feed you indefinitely. Damn it! I'm tired of this!

"You haven't made half an effort to find a job, and now you better! You hear me?"

### The Confrontation, Part III

(in which the Spanish Armada is sunk by the U. S. Coast Guard)

"Yes sir."

### The Confrontation, Part IV

"Now, here's ten dollars. I want you to get yourself a haircut and get your butt out to find a job. Here."

Freddie's hand floated in the right direction, Freddie fled.

The mind floating in blue green. blue sky. water i swim in such sunshine, i love. days breeze oh freddie, i love you, love you freddie. ease, in those soft arms sleeping exhausted in filtered sunlight.

In the Sierras once Freddie climbed a maybe forty foot cliff and sat on top all day until the sun went down.

But Freddie worm around the bulwark mother to pour coffee.

Coffee swirled in slow motion with sugar dissolved and kissed cream Freddie watched dust settle in the waves.

Had Freddie time to think and did while when the father left and kids in school singing.

### What Makes Americans Grow

(offstage right, the director is having a fit, this is not what i planned, not what i planned. the actors laugh)

With a ten star spangled U. S. of America currency dollar bill Freddie could Buy Something. Murky streaks more dust in the coffee placidly buzzing around a fly.

Eternity walked on sticky legs across the table the mother cleared. The cold coffee cup was left and stayed. Freddie stared. The fly stared. The fly fidgeted Freddie. stared, danced on three legs then two flew away, to San Francisco, probably.

Freddie would've gone with him, but the coffee.

Ten dollars. That's a bag. A Haircut. and maybe a bottle of wine,

FDR liked hopeless bums. He loved our country. His love built roads and valleys. He made the rivers flow. New Deal.

America faces the New Deal.

More subtle methods.

Freddie always liked wine, anyway.

### The Consolation, Part VI

Black clouds swirled in the low sky. The castle was brooding in the night. Freddie knew she was in there.

Stripped to the waist he began to climb the stone walls, holding a dagger between his teeth. Over the wall and into the courtyard like a panther, and there stood the Count with a rapier in his hand.

Freddie faced death.



### Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch

The game was and Freddie got up.

From the table playing with the ten dollar pocket and said, "Well, I better get busy if I'm going to find a job." To no one in particular, but his mother, being the only particular no one around answered, "Yes, Fred.

"Oh Freddie? I hope you don't take your father too seriously. You know how he gets in his moods sometimes." and returned to her cleaning, having solved the problem.

Went Freddie into his room? Then into his best jeans and his good shirt into the street.

### For Flag and Country

America. Freddie walked down the sidewalk of.

The sun sat in a bright sky. Grass glistened on well trimmed lawns. Dandelions burned like little suns bright yellow or shook like cold white moons.

Freddie felt good. The hole in his stomach, only, burned along with him.

Turned Freddie finally the corner into the small glass and cement section of the familiar town to walk the three blocks to the pole.

The pole pulled everything from both directions to itself in red and white swirling song to America.

On the window in blue it said

PAUL'S BARBER SHOP

and, in smaller letters underneath

We specialize in Crew Cuts

taped in the window was a cardboard sign

Men's Hair Styling

Done Here

The Open sign was leaning in the corner untouched for years of spiders webs and dust.

Freddie pushed open the clanging bells Handmade in India.

"Hi Paul!"

The short black and grey hair behind the barber's chair near the door turned and stared. The mouth became alive, "Why Freddie, Freddie Davis! You haven't been here in years! Where've you been hiding yourself?"

"Oh, around."

"Freddie here used to come for his haircuts here all the time—he practically grew up in here," Paul told the strange barber and anyone else who cared to listen, "Well, I'm glad your back. Just sit down over there and I'll be with you in a minute—we're not too busy today."

"You never have been too busy, Paul."

"That's true, not too busy."

Americans are hard to come by.

### It's Getting to Where

(in which the ghost ship sails into Port)

And the usual barber-shop talk. Freddie's turn sat in the overstuffed chair, he. His eyes stung but did not cry, strong he would be.

"Paul, do you remember when I was about eight and I got that Burr?"

Snap, The shroud was wrapped around the shoulders of Freddie continued, "and my parents got so mad?"

"Oh, yeah," Paul be busy with the pre-operation ritual, "your dad came down and lectured me about 'extremes of dress and ap-

pearance' and about letting little boys have whatever they want."

"That's the time" burned the hole in Freddie's stomach flared, "and I want the same thing this time—good and short."

"Sideburns too?"

"Sideburns too."

### Restructuring Society

(an arduous task, at best, complicated by the fact of one hand to play with, only. I would suggest, under the circumstances, you see, the reinstatement of the monarchy.

we need a thundering god to turn the stones and shake the lice of two thousand years from our backs.

the experiment, Mr. Davis, has been inconclusive and disappointing. It was a flaw, a flaw in structure.

### Killing the Buffalo, First Part

The hair fell in thundering crashes on the floor was a foot deep in it everywhere. Armadillos, Possums and 'Coons ran wild in the shop. Climbing the mirrors. Swinging on buzzing clippers. Ding Ding. On the ancient cash register. Birds and families were uprooted from their homes.

Freddie's hair crawled in valleys over fallen trees in quiet places in grassy fields of sunshine in shady brooks and streams in clouds in clear blue sky.

Rode mountain ranges over the bare backs of horses foxes wolves cougars Freddie's hair.

In graveyards settled many brave Americans all over the world.

### Cleaning the Carcass

(spilling velvety intestines, liver and kidneys on dry grass—coyot's and buzzards take care of that, don't worry)

So will a good dog, if you have one.

The haircut was finished. A gleaming, ugly head was staring back through the mirror at Freddie who thought it would float off at any minute, it felt so light.

He laughed. Deep from the hole in his stomach closed up. Paul looked, laughed too. So did the strange barber.

### Tanning the Hide

Freddie walked bald into the grocery store and bought two fifths of Gallo Port. Freddie was a sweet wine wino—14%. And only \$1.19. Freddie should've been a businessman, he had an intuitive sense of bargain.

Freddie recognized some of the women in curlers and jeans staring dumbfounded at hairless Freddie and his proud load bargain. Smiled he.

All the way down the street past the barber shop and home he drank from the first bottle.

### The Tale of the Dragon

Deep in the forests of the hill country Freddie reached his home. It was settled in his wine to leave his ancestral home and roam.

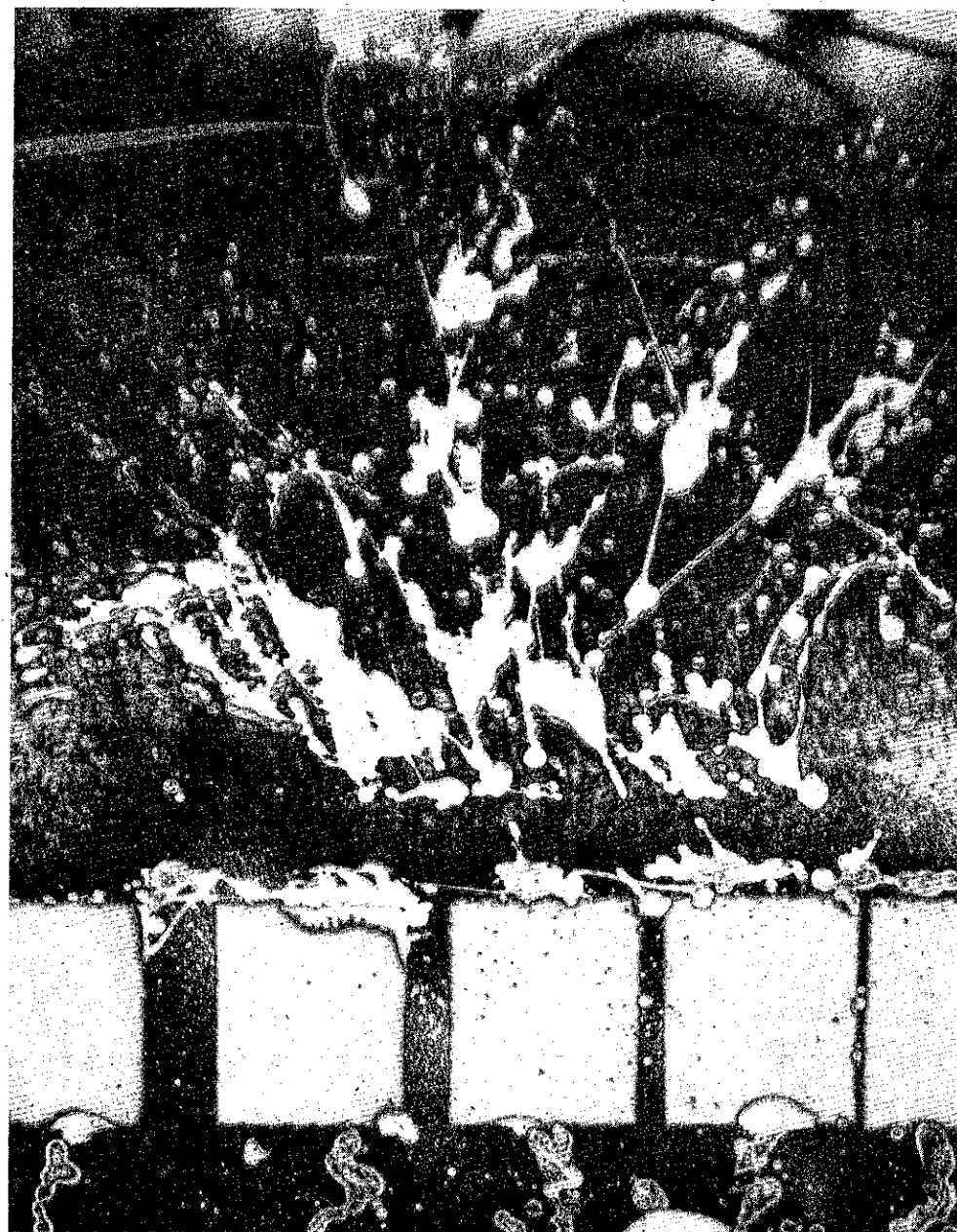
The snake was gone only soft sunlight hung on the air.

Freddie stuffed his tattered knapsack spare tennis shoes and two books on the bottom and clothes then blanket first aid kit from the boy scouts flashlight pancho and a bar of cheese on top. Sleeping bag tied on it was a good one Freddie felt proud. Toothbrush and multipurpose pocket knife that could do anything in the side pockets he was ready.

Freddie flushed, joy pride. It was easy after all.

He left to find the Dragon.

## POEMS



## MAN AND MACHINE

Delivering Avon products  
In a 1942  
Pick-up truck, I got stuck  
In rush-hour traffic. I threw

The stick shift round so hard, the mother  
Left the floor, dangled in my hand.  
'Son of a bitch,' I cried, and shoved her  
Back down in. Another man

I became when the gears locked.  
Horns raged at me while I slammed  
Beneath the hood with a rock. I knocked  
The linkage loose, but the damned

Hood wouldn't shut. Took off anyway,  
Into a sidestreet, where my door  
Flew open. Heard my bray  
Somewhere beyond me when I fell out: 'Whore!

You whore!' and I started racing,  
Whistling windily after it.  
I caught it chasing  
Another victim down a sidewalk. 'Shit!'

I yelled, jumped back in, and turned  
It quickly out onto the street,  
Where it stopped midway, and the motor burned.  
I took a pipe to make the death complete.

And as I beat, I roared from my perdition,  
'The human condition! The human condition!'  
—Jim Cleghorn

## THE CURSE

The curse runs into mountains of mind  
and comes out like a spring. It is a purple vine,  
whose name I can't remember, that clings  
like a young monkey to white plaster house walls.  
It is over the head of the psychiatrist  
who does not see colors when he ruminates  
on the origin of wrath; who does not see monkeys,  
who does not see vines, who does not think of houses.

The curse runs through towns in the Rocky Mountains  
and is where sugar beets grow and mountains have Spanish  
names. Morning-glories spring limply in the face of the curse.  
Octobers sing its name and speed it on. Dry corn  
in Nebraska gives it a home; Boy Scouts find it  
as they cook on an over-night hike.

—George de Schweinitz

## NO TINTED BLUE LIGHT

No tinted blue light prostitutes the darkness  
I can see by the tip of my cigarette  
that

It is unintelligible  
The blade is hovering  
at the throat of Jesus  
pushing Him to a cliff  
and wild winds summon Him  
to the rocky road  
below  
and He rapping to the brothers  
about who His dad is

Jesus must not then wear a mask

And you, a dove masquerading owl  
Lodged upon the rise of the moon  
Hovering mildewy around a root  
Dangling upon the tail of a light fish  
Hard hit by crashes against the chaotic light  
It is for you that I wish this darkness

—John Barry

## ROBERT BLY GETS TO THE POINT

Staring out my window on a Sunday  
morning, I see a sparrow gagging  
on the sill. The sun shines and  
there is soot on his beak.

Saturday nights can be tough  
on a small bird.

—Les Standiford

## THE VOYEUR

I thought of him first in imageless thought  
and tried to put in a poem how he,  
how he,  
standing in the dark somewhere on  
the perimeter of the neighborhood,  
looked in at a lighted window  
with the patience of a Copernicus willing  
to wait the night for his view, and how  
he watched in dread and lust  
the obscene-est act of conjugal license;  
and how what he did in the inviolate gloom,  
a dozen feet from the heavens and gasps and  
the thrusts in that air-cooled room,  
would be told to the slack-jawed neighborhood:  
how a pervert had cozened a sacred view,  
how three had come in a party for two.

—Bob Gaskin

## HIM DEAD

Someone made me say it:  
that I had seen him dead.  
Laced away in my mind,  
corseted and sewn there  
away from depredation and my word:  
I could bear this sight, the head  
thrown sidewise in a last aversion,  
more permanent than man's.  
But yesterday or last week conversation  
turned it up, that I had seen him  
dead. The years staggered and the questions  
popped. Strategies boomed, new swirls  
in the currents of gulfs broadened out.  
Going back to coffins arose.  
Assertion stemmed upward  
from a broken box; cobwebs ripped away.

—George de Schweinitz

## WAR

A scarlet dagger  
Buried in the mud  
Showed a silver glint.  
The sun picked up the thread  
And played the sparkle  
Up against the red.

—Cheryl Perry

## INFALLIBILITY

I wait for you,  
Damned infernal machine.  
While you read bloodless holes,  
Punched in sterile white cards.  
And when you're through  
It's always my mistake  
Not yours,  
That makes me start over.

—Marvin Stottlemire

## REFLECTION AT ABSOLUTE ZERO

in this  
cold morning  
I lap at  
your memory  
written in  
reflections  
the morning dew  
lapses into  
halographic  
emotion  
deaths

we were a totality  
I  
the sun  
you  
two eyes green  
your golden hair  
& lips  
fiery  
touching from  
a universe  
away  
kissing  
star jewels  
into your  
nipples

and mantras  
on my grave  
this is how I purge  
myself  
genreflecting  
before your memory  
each time  
bringing  
my knee  
down  
into  
your  
belly  
killing  
our babies

—Sam Modica

## 3 STILL VISIONS WHOSE COLOR DISTORTED THE DAY

i saw jacqueline kennedy onassis  
on stage  
the first topless rock songstress  
singing  
a blues rendition  
called babe  
you don't know me too well  
and babe  
did it sound good  
consciousness is a razor blade  
one edge is laughter  
the other is pain  
when i realized what a great  
thing it was that i was so humble  
i cut myself

some kids go to progressive public schools  
with revolutionary architecture  
and the most modern modes of teaching  
where syringes are injected into their heads  
and they are filled with thoughts of integral  
functions of society  
some kids play in the park  
and talk to the old timers

—John Barry

## IN THE NAME OF THE CESSATION OF MADNESS

The clarion blows his call.  
It's not that he dislikes reason,  
But that he thinks there ought  
To be excitement, too.

The wise father says  
"The cause of all this madness  
Is rock and roll.  
It will prevent my children  
From growing up smart and strong,  
Like me.  
It's what Hitler used  
And the communists have learned  
How to use it, too.  
So I will kill it  
By not letting my children  
Listen to it!

And excitement will continue  
To overtax the sanctions  
Of legal bedrooms  
And repetitious games.

Ho-Hum

Somewhere upon the vague outskirts  
A farmer is getting up early.  
He wonders what all those people  
Are hollering about,  
But he has his chores  
To tend.

—John Barry

## THE HAIRDRESSER

He pulls out dark curls and smiles.  
The head is a stormcloud his fingers move in  
Like air, one cool thumb tracing the gentle curve  
Of an ear, and work their way on up the moist  
Scalp rising behind the receding crown.  
Clenching and relaxing they weave through light  
Whirlpools of hair, and he feels the muscles  
Under his gown stiffen, his eyes as they swerve,  
Catching the reflection of his face in concentration  
As he hovers, bat or dovelike, above the reclining woman.  
The hairdresser, like other men, loves them  
And always will give them their every whim,  
Though he somehow retains his own inspiration.  
An artist, he well not really be missed till he's gone,  
And mourned by the fall of each of his lovely creations.

—Melvin Kenne

## THE HOUSE AT NIGHT

The stairs call for help, leaping in fits  
Through the leaf shaped dark.  
Beds slip out and rattle among a thousand icy stars,  
Leaving gentle sleepers lying uncovered, like broken feathers,  
Disjointed and limp with calm, their mouths full of moths,  
And bellies like hollow gourds carried down silver streams,  
Bobbing gently over falls at dawn and exploding  
On stones at the still pool's bottom,  
Where nothing can hear the muffled noise  
A stairway makes, or the wings' vibrations over taunt strings  
Of air, or the emptiness of the sky  
Where the knock of light breaks open on wooden chair legs,  
And where a dream of fireflies touches and releases  
Sagging springs from a weightless pillow's fall,  
As the house returns to its silent cave of lines  
And all the familiar forms it will take by day.

—Melvin Kenne

THE ZANY

Once upon a time we were all sitting around in the tomb  
after supper when this guy comes to the door  
dressed in the skin of one of those animals  
that swore they would never die and introduced himself  
as certainly the new Midas for our times  
and so he says to us he says

watch me

Glory he made the prongs of a pitchfork glow  
Glory he fried an egg in his palm  
Glory he touched books and the books burned  
and then he finished  
by reaching for the one he said he loved

Tears would pool  
then sizzle down each flushed cheek and away

Wow

I was impressed

My name  
by the way  
is The Wild Bull of the Pampas

Here comes  
The Wild Bull of the Pampas  
people often say

Beautiful

But now I feel I know  
what the new Midas meant when  
he spoke of a weariness  
at hearing  
each time  
the titty pink applause  
of various groups  
who screamed Lawzee  
and such

somehow

There was this traveling salesman  
see  
who stopped for the night  
at the home of this farmer  
who had two really fine daughters  
and a prize milk cow oh yeah

But that isn't what I wanted to say

And neither was that

and so forth

and so on

These birds in the trees  
these leaves in the trees  
these pale flowers in the grass I mow  
these remind me now  
of cosmologies not my own

And the arms tire

And the heart tires

And the song slows down

to the wrong speed

Which reminds me  
of this jukebox  
see

in Burkeville Texas  
which would play  
if you punched C-6  
a record supplied by the Ku Klux Klan  
which went  
Move them niggers north boys  
Move them niggers north

If they don't like our southern ways  
Move them niggers north oh yeah

No

That isn't it

That isn't what I wanted to say

somehow

I think

I wanted to say something  
about when the odors of leaves  
would return to these voices

about when I could talk about  
the children again

about when I can walk there  
in the high grass  
where the beast grazes  
at ease

with a quiet strength  
waiting to engender  
and join a slow  
a soft falling into  
the pool  
of the peace

of this earth

yeah

that  
is a little like  
something I wanted to say

—Leon Stokesbury

A FEAST

after Salvador Dali

Complete with ants, the picnic has begun;  
In her right hand a four-tined fork stands poised,  
He clasps her close and nibbles on her nose;  
Eating together they are truly one.  
Their mood is muted passion at its best.  
Things pierce. Fork, knife and spoon soon serve to ladle  
Soft flesh from her overflowing breast.  
The right one settles in a bowl. Her face  
Appears as fruit peels on the table.  
Love conquers all. All barriers of space  
Erased by these festivities and fun,  
Organs and skin get scattered everywhere—  
Eating together they are truly one.  
Behind them, hills rise and the weather's fair.

—Mike Cannito

IN THE HOT SUN

in the hot sun  
the weathered slats of fences  
march a round and around

the uniformed soldiers salute, then  
march around and around  
using up shoe-leather

the work-clad farmers in fields  
march behind the oxen  
their crops begun

the b 52s disperse all  
mix farmers, fences, blood  
with blackened yields

the weathered slats of fences  
lie scattered, surprised  
in the hot sun

—Jane Card

NOCTURNE

The flicking neon sign blares out "hotel",  
the smell of day-old puke greases the smog,  
thrusting into the noses of shuffling men.

In the bar the sailor asks the teenage hustler  
where she'd like to go after dinner and drinks.  
The flicking neon sign blares out "hotel".

The blind cripple squats in his usual place  
in front of the all night skin flick, wheezing pleas,  
thrusting into the ears of shuffling men

who pass him. His back hurts, and he peeps  
over his goggles at men in white shirts.  
The flicking neon sign blares out "hotel"

to bodies who can't see it any more,  
who watch for tiny movements of their prey,  
thrusting into the wallets of shuffling men

who always return, eyes dead and clicking  
from face to face, cue balls caroming while  
the flicking neon sign blares out "hotel",  
thrusting into the eyes of shuffling men.

—James Farwell

DENVER JOINT SURVEILLANCE

I wait in the Brown Palace, a hollow  
hotel, watching the maids ply their trade  
on all levels. Brown has built a public dollhouse  
around a shaft of air.

Standing by the rail, I look down four floors  
at the lobby traffic. They jab at the elevators,  
clutch wads of cigars over glass cases,  
and work the pages of limp newspapers  
to stave off collapse. In a far corner,  
hidden on her own level, a blonde woman  
with spreading hips turns her back to the wall  
and pulls a strayed foundation into place.

On the sixth floor two bellhops gesture under  
an exit sign. Their laughter plummets as I  
turn from them, and over my shoulder  
I seek a clue—but they have already parted.  
There's a physical law in all of this.

To my left and up one flight, a black man  
in a feathered hat walks slowly with  
his lady. He stops to look five levels  
down through this brown palace, urging his  
companion to see too, but she walks on  
without breaking stride.

Moved at his attention, I also check below,  
find nothing strange in our hotel—  
but still, we're seeing—

a fat man stabs an elevator,  
a blonde woman buys a magazine,  
a porter hurries toward the door, limping.

—Les Standiford

DURING AN ENGLISH LECTURE

The words fall about me

And on those whose ears are also here

But are far removed by that expanse which  
They border; Outposts, guarding that starving  
region

Barring those fruits which would best feed it.

But the cries of that great neglected

Region below my belt, brings those foreign  
ears to me, and also the eyes.

Deaf to the wise words

Yet keen to lamentations

Of the neglected region bordered by my belt.

—Jeff Evans

THE AUTO

He eased  
the old model,  
run-down  
edsel  
gracefully  
through the wind,  
rain,  
and snow;  
half the distance into  
the deserted forest  
where  
it  
stalled.

—Linda Guillory

FOR BEAUTY

I saw a thousand blades of grass,

B

e

n

d

i

n

g

i

n

t

h

e

w

i

n

d.

but ONE STRONG BLADE stood U

P

R

I

G

H

T.

I

Then the machine came and

cut

them

down.

for the beauty of the lawn

—Linda Sims

TRANSCONTINENTAL

I used to put my finger down my throat  
and vomit if I could. After a while, I could.

It was good food I vomited; it was  
just that I was protesting. If I  
was to die, as was feared, I wanted to die  
with my family, who were meeting in Colorado,  
which turned out to be a state not much better  
than the one I was protesting in by vomiting.

Nevertheless, Colorado had a good climate  
and eventually had my family. My father  
was the last arrival. When he came and spoke  
and smiled, and put his straw hat on my head,  
I wanted to get out of the wheelchair. You  
can't have a chronic disease, be fourteen,  
and not want to do that when you have a father  
like mine. So when I got to Colorado, I stopped vomiting  
stopped trying to vomit; but I cried at night.

—George de Schweinitz



## IMAGES

wind outside  
noiseless sound passing  
moon paling  
its light barely visible  
in a corner of the window  
purple flowers  
alongside the highway  
limp after rain  
river water  
moving through narrow rock openings  
rapids  
in to which petals  
drop in spring  
disappearing quickly  
drawn under  
turning, swirling  
without bubbles rising  
seeds birds leave on grass  
after feeding  
not cast-off  
nor leavings  
either missed  
or left for later  
free-swinging tire  
weather-worn, tread-bare  
suspended from a two-foot thick branch  
of an old oak tree  
in the next yard  
there is one hour  
my hour  
available somewhere  
waiting  
only for me  
alone  
but not lonely  
& time  
open  
changing  
providing connections  
not unlike  
the black hole in space  
touching everything  
reaches me  
pulling  
grasping  
nearly swallowing  
that hour  
the hour  
i share  
with  
leaves  
the tree  
a squirrel  
& the grackles  
learning to lean in  
in to time  
finding  
discovering  
then recovering  
location, place  
feeling  
the interior space  
one small part of my time  
of my hour  
guilt (gilt) n.  
I. O. U.  
for  
Things  
we do.  
—Perle Dumas

—Fred Wolven

## PASSAGE

I  
Highrises and halfpint houses  
elbowed and jostled down livewire streets.  
A chorus of internal combustions  
whined, growled, and stuttered  
through the bristling weeks  
outside the gap at Hirasaku-cho.  
The mountain dropped two shoulders  
that circled in upon themselves and stopped  
just short of collision,  
arms around a basket.  
The gap between the ridge-ends had no name;  
we called it our gate.  
II  
We wandered through the gate  
and drew smoother air into our throats.  
The rock shrines and polished crags  
of a stoneworker's shop  
waited at the foot of the gate.  
High on the inside slope of the left ridge,  
a Shinto temple hung;  
two weathered wooden torii arched the approaches,  
and a path twisted up through pines  
around a monastery.  
We paused above the graveyard, and looked out  
across a pond to where  
fields quilted the valley's floor  
and clambered up its ribs in tiers.  
The only staccato was a woodpecker.  
III  
Festivals and ceremonies sang;  
the tongue of the bronze gong  
licked through the gate to plant  
tendrils in our ears, drawing us  
to high picnics on fieldgrass  
where a house burned years ago.  
One orange tree survived, globes  
bright as the clotted August sun.  
Or we'd visit the mushroom farm  
that wallowed in the north slope's gumbo,  
where no one seemed to work of live  
and the fungus chewed untended into piles  
of rotting logs under black canopies.  
We come back past the house that remained  
from a century of samurai:  
beams and boards were varnished bones squatting  
under a thunderhead of straw thatch;  
gold-green rice wrapped three sides  
and the backdrop was a wall of bamboo plumes.

IV  
Back at our house in Hirasaku  
the hallway mirror  
painted lines and shadows in my face  
I never saw reflected by the pond  
within our gate.

—James Farwell

## PORTRAIT

The madness  
of a poet  
it is mine  
you see it here  
I  
hold it in my hand  
like some beneficial serpent  
struggling to be free  
to bite me &  
take me  
back home  
—Sam Modica

## THE HUNCHBACK WITH THE WITHERED ARM

The hunchback with the withered arm  
Is scrawling "Murder" on the wall,  
And where the gangsters burned the barn  
The orphaned children stand and wail  
And piss into the smoking coals.  
Meanwhile, we rush to fill the forms  
And count the bodies in the well.  
Some speak of sounding the alarm.

Before, when we were left to farm  
In peace, the hunchback rang the bells  
For Sundays, holidays, and storms  
Or weddings, births, and funerals,  
And when they echoed to our hill  
We put our shovels down and turned  
To watch the skies or highways fill.  
Few spoke of sounding the alarm.

Now grey ash overflows the urns,  
Scattering through the empty fields  
To settle on the bread and wine.  
Some call it harmless; others dwell  
At length on how it causes boils  
Or aberrations in the sperm.  
The women file their fingernails.  
One speaks of sounding the alarm.

The hunchback turns. His smile is warm.  
We praise him greatly for his skill  
Although we note, perhaps from worms,  
His face has turned a deathly pale.  
He waves his severed genitals,  
And dips them in the bloody jar.  
He signs his name, and now he falls.  
None speak of sounding the alarm.

—Sam Gwynn

## HOMETOWNS DIE SUCH AGED DEATHS

and we keep it this way—  
remembering  
how earth lit at the borderline,  
and morning hit the fields  
like the fury of a million crickets.  
And phone poles on horizons;  
we see them now,  
markers on our sinking graves.

(O west at the homeside turning,  
shiver down the back as the train pulls out,  
shudder through the leaves when the autumn comes,  
leaves on the stoop as the shingles rot.)

And their roots keep giving way,  
loosening with each rainthought.  
The world leans more and more.

—Jo Ann Thrash

## APRIL FOOLS OR, THE CONTROL

Under the pools and plurals of their limbs  
violet, open-gloried, unsighing stems  
lift the weightless blossom in their souls,  
a rogue into the gravity of smiles.

The scarcity of its reverberations  
nods with a bell-buoy-droning-out on oceans.  
It rises like the parachute that blooms  
and enters upside-down a sky's blue dreams.

Motionlessly trembling on its guide-lines  
it listens to a source that plucks the tines  
of April's tuning-fork in a Swiss watch  
by whose deliberations kids play hop-scotch

—Archibald Henderson

## AN ELEGY FOR UNCLE JOHN

Dead, so dead, so long  
that I remember your pipe  
and the smoke breath of your home,  
the tobacco skin of your dry wife  
crackling through the rooms—  
she was dusting, always dusting.

In your straight grained study  
the ash tray made of wood,  
hand-carved with acorns on the side,  
intricate sweeps in dark oak  
I remember.  
How long, so long, the sun set  
and dust rushed in on last sunbeams  
through smoke, past the choking  
rustle of your parchment wife  
and the curtains that hang on.  
While you, Uncle John (gone, so gone)  
are lost more and more  
in the deep lines of hand-rubbed oak.

—Jo Ann Thrash

## STRUGGLE

Caught in a struggle  
between carnal and celestial  
—a temple of alley fights, punks  
with switchblades;  
vicious blood  
fills, blubbers  
out of the pipe organ;  
screams to the cross, twin candles;  
knife clutches flesh a  
blade splits open-mouthed;  
diamonds  
sever arms, loose legs;  
torsos wade on stumps to kiss wounds.

What sunshine  
in this welter of inert wine?  
blueprint, leverage, to  
disentangle hoodlums?  
A bird sings through broken glass;  
wire ripped out, its cage hangs tilted;  
the birdbath.  
dries up to one side.  
Rope-fed lights browse the ceiling.  
One storm (yet to be foaled)  
snugs the barometer.  
Knives rejoin pockets. Wrath's wilted.  
A mirror's eye reopens, takes things in.  
—Archibald Henderson

## PARTICLES

cutting fresh-baked bread  
feeling the crumbs delicate, small  
then noticing the cream-color  
near the white hue of yesterday's snow  
quickly covering, bending down the green, green branches  
of the pine trees outside my window  
then real in my view  
now vivid  
becoming real again in my imagination  
& the clear voice of the symphonic strains  
of mozart's music echo  
crossing the open white-snow patterns  
reaching me here as i write  
raising you in me  
even as the wind moves the flakes off branches  
dissipating in powdery puffs  
becoming clear air

—Fred Wolven

**TANAKA NO OJISAN (GRANDFATHER  
TANAKA) THERE IS A SEASON**

You sit there above the beach, with the smoke  
of breakfast fires behind you. Hours pass  
blinking with the edge of hunger gone. Each wave  
comes curling out of the mist, buckles, and knife  
edge down, smashes into the backwash, drives  
foaming across the beach onto the rocks.

The constant war of tides on the waiting rocks  
has changed the coast only slightly, as smoke  
and heat enlarge a smokehole. Your region drives  
a hard bargain with change. Centuries pass  
and the high-peaked straw thatch roofs still knife  
the sky; huge cloth windsock carp still wave,

every fifth of May, over each house with sons. Waves  
can't change this land rapidly. The sun rocks  
up, then down the sky. Sharp as an old man's knife,  
it carves the soil each spring, peels back the smoking  
rind to unearth green shoots. From the pass  
that leads down to your coast, the simple drive

of growing things can be seen, as the green drives  
the grey down and under, a contoured wave  
that rises as spring climbs steady toward the pass.  
It is noon, now, in August. Only the rocks,  
both on the beach and high in the cloud-smoke,  
are immune from green. The farmer hones the knife

that will sythe down. You, also, have a knife  
as sharp, under your belt. Silently, you drive  
your thoughts from food; it tastes only of smoke  
with the seasoning of pain that comes in waves  
as bitter as the water on these rocks:  
you cannot see another summer pass.

You will wait for that same small boy to pass  
who comes this way from school to see your knife,  
smile shyly, and present his latest rocks  
for your approval. When the hour drives  
him toward home, he remembers, turns, and waves,  
then merges with the shadows in the village smoke.

As you pass the point of acceptance, drive  
the knife up under your ribs. Watch the waves  
engulf the rocks. Cling to this view like smoke.

—James Farwell

**EPITAPH**

This is the end  
my lonesome friend  
may I never have to see you  
the time is lost  
the moment cost  
forgive me but I must  
And how it seems  
an empty, dream  
and songs that won't get written  
I find no blame  
for either game  
I couldn't and stay alive  
You could have helped  
known what I felt  
and tried to understand  
The kindest thing  
or so it seems  
is to call it all my fault  
but chances change  
circumstance does reign  
Some things are not forgotten  
til music ends  
I feel you friend  
and always will remember

—Ken Bernsen

**HANDS**

In the blindness of sound sleep  
My left arm was buried by my weight,  
The temporary life crushed out,  
And limply it would fall unfelt.  
I quickly interwove the fingers  
Of my living hand with the dead,  
Quickly felt from within and without,  
Like the breath of new life  
Slapped into a newborn child.

Remembering the Sistine ceiling  
Where God gave life by touch,  
It made good sense for hands  
To bear the mind into the world.  
A hairy hand first clutching  
His food, then sticks, at last a plow—  
But throats too were grasped, and weapons;  
Our tentacles found them, all we needed,  
But the brain was stirred to grasp it all.

Our feelers teach us: Young men  
Swallow while probing their first breast;  
Styluses and pencils record the movement  
Of the hands. The eyes can dream  
As can the mind: Our hands  
Don't show, but feel us what is real,  
The blind can feel the color green.  
We cry when what we want is out of reach  
Despite the fact it can be seen.

—George Frissell

**IN OUR LITTLE PINK HOUSE  
IN THE HILLS**

In our little pink house in the hills  
of Vermont  
I've just brought in logs for our fireplace.  
Dan is on the stereo,  
Strawberry scents the air,  
You're sleeping,  
Covered and cuddled into a wicker chair,  
A soft smile glowing in the candle's light  
With feelings of a Lightfoot nite.

Cabbage and corn, warm on the stove,  
Tempt me to the kitchen.  
As I warm a cup of mint tea,  
I hear you light another candle  
Then cuddle back into your chair.  
I walk in and return your glow,  
I want my smile to say  
"Hello. I thought of you today.  
I missed you today.  
I'm glad I am with you now."  
I think it does.

—Robert McDonald

**ON THE ROOF OF THE  
HOTEL MARTINEZ, ISLA MUJERES**

I am the spy on the roof—  
keeper of ten thousand citadels.  
I would be running from dogs in the night,  
but with the full moon, clouds run more swiftly.

On my back, on the roof, I can synchronize my sight  
with a cloud, and remain stationary  
while the world passes by.

I could be the spy on the roof—  
corrective agent for your infidelity.  
But as a cloud, I would not have to explain to police  
"I like sometimes to climb on roofs."

—Carl Terwilliger

**FRAGMENT**

Love, in these late times, has fallen from the moon.  
No longer rises in her throne of shadow and blood.  
The pale star instead. Shivers on the rim of the winter pasture.  
Soundlessly, we enter the dark barn.  
High in her icy loft love's sisters reappear . . .

Wandering, far, isolate circles.

—James Cleghorn

**THE BOYS I'VE LOVED**

I met a boy from Austin,  
Where the lands are dry,  
And even though I left him  
I never knew quite why.  
He could make me smile when I was sad  
Or look into my soul.  
And even though I loved this boy,  
I knew I'd have to go.

There was a boy in Denver,  
No—he was a man,  
And he made me love him  
In a way I still don't understand.  
Oh, he could make his kisses linger,  
And make this young girl cry.  
But when I began to feel the pain  
I had to say good-bye.

I lived with a boy one summer  
When I wasn't old.  
I loved the way he held me  
That summer way back when.  
But when the leaves began to fall  
His story reached its end.

There was a heart I captured  
One springtime on the shore,  
And everytime he loved me,  
He left me wanting more.  
And he would shout out to the ocean  
"This love is real and true"  
But then one day I looked at him  
And said "I'm leaving you."

Then there's the man I married  
In a church on top a hill,  
He knows about my past life  
But he says he loves me still.  
I've met him in many cities.  
I've loved him on the shore.  
I've laughed with him in summer  
And he'll be here many more.

You see, the man I married  
Is the one I've always had.  
And though I've left him many times  
It always made me sad.  
So, now at night he holds me  
—And the babies often cry.  
I know I'll never leave again  
but I can't imagine why.

—Cindy Landry

**LATER**

What could this mean . . . outside, clear water  
distilling the streetlight into glaze.  
The rain has passed.  
Each bead detaching from its place  
plops in a puddle of unfolding waves.  
Bubble and drip, I hear you everywhere.

—Mike Cannito

**DISCOVERY OF THE SEA**

On water,  
My ship of sails  
And oars, sings  
With the throat  
Of the sea.  
The ship  
Is cautious,  
Stumbling across  
Its bed  
At night.  
The sea chews  
Its beaches,  
Waiting  
For the particles  
That feed it.  
—Randall Stokesbury

**DISORDERS**

Cyprus stumps ferment the creek  
Water a copper color. Briars  
Remain unbraided on the shore  
In early evening a mockingbird  
Quivers in his song of the weeds.  
My eyes ricochet off night-colored  
Trees, blink at clouds like heads  
Of beer against the moon. There's  
A fire under my skip that sizzles  
Like one under a pile of leaves.  
Wild flowers are hung over,  
Drunk as turtles in the wind.  
Black ants build their homes  
Like scabs on dirt. I stand outside,  
The apple skin falls away  
Under my teeth; where a crick  
In the neck, a twinge in the toe,  
Tell me of a sound before a storm  
That never came, of the distance  
A pebble travels with the current  
In a lifetime.

—Randall Stokesbury

**AT THE MOVIES**

The audience grows wistful, as the screen  
Displays two lovers who will never part.  
Six-hundred eyes become a single eye  
Which, tilted inward, shows a single dream.

The bored projectionist above, apart,  
Leans back to read an ad which asks him, "Why  
Be a weakling when you can be strong?" Below,  
Three-hundred hearts become a single heart

As hero makes the toughest villains cry.  
The ticket-girl meanwhile, with business slow,  
Thumbs through the pages of a true romance,

Or casts beyond her cage a muted sigh.  
Within, the movie ends—the aisles glow.  
Soon janitors, in slow and bowing trance  
Move back and forth across the hooded screen  
Like shadows that the living could not know.

—James Cleghorn

**OUT OF THE SPOTLIGHT**

AND HERE SHE IS, FOLKS,  
—IN BABY BLUE LAME—  
THAT RED HOT MAMA,  
WITH JOKES AND STROKES  
TO THRILL US ALL.  
SHE'S insecure

—Gail Cucancie

Why, in two decades of blind search,  
did I never grasp the light at the end of the tunnel  
and see you waiting there?  
But twenty miles away—  
I should have walked faster  
To stumble across your name  
in LARGE BRAILLE.

—Gail Cucancic

## AIR

they nest in walls/  
on the other side  
children with heads too large  
for vertebrae/knuckle  
for knee

they are quiet/  
wailing brains  
do not disturb them  
intestines bubbling over teeth  
do not disturb them  
hair moving under shell  
eyes like bruises  
the sea is here/why  
do they not speak why  
do they not lead

here  
between me  
and a den of swollen children  
they curl bristling chins to hair  
bags of juices toenails/will  
they not listen to me  
sitting here scratching

how long before my stomach rises  
to hair/tentacles afloat between my teeth  
how long before the next bite/a taste  
of calcium and air

—Lowell Uda

## FARM

What a good, good life  
Of quilts,  
Jellies,  
Canned beans we grow ourselves,  
And dill-pickling the dew-fresh cucumbers.

Lie in bed  
In the soft, sweet night  
And hear a horse,  
A whippoorwill,  
And an owl.  
Cattle low,  
Geese call-

In the morning they hiss  
When I pick up a gosling  
That feels like a ball of nothing.

Take a hookless line to the pond  
And feed Wheaties to the perch;  
Go to another pond-  
The stagnant pond-  
And feel the slow, creeping peace.

Back to the cool wellhouse  
Where the dog and cat nap;  
Bleach the clothes,  
Hang them in the sun,  
And sit in solitude  
On Swedish Grandpa's old butcher block.

—Ann M. Hooker

## CLOCKS

Clocks come to me. They flutter past like  
bats from the garden; bare arms traverse their  
small, black faces and they tell me their times.  
It is never morning; the sun is gone.  
The moon is flung away below the horizon;  
stars in one dark room of night blink back  
through the clearest air of the coldest winter.  
Their windows crack and the garden fills with cinders.

—Carol Warden

## NIGHT PLAY

I watch the curtain drawn, the rope pulled over  
itself, hand over limbered hand.  
The final act is finished and  
my stage is blackness. Audience of one,  
tired tree, clacks its branches, releases  
birds and leaves, their wings small and mingled.  
My ended day, my pretty play, the lovely ones  
together mount each other and ride the pale,  
unbridled horse through the monuments of night,  
to stand before the stone that tells my name.

—Carol Warden

## FOR MY AUNT

She who swings now on broken hinges  
Once opened, white-haired, smiling,  
Kept me in reflecting frames on dresser and mantle,  
Smiling in the brokered patchwork of  
Smoked, accordion mirrors.

In the parlor, oaken, curl-armed couches,  
Scenes of farm life cluttering every wall,  
And yellowed panes to turn the sun to setting.

She who laughs now in a house of brittle laughter,  
Once knew my name, as hers,  
And could not forget.

It's me, my special aunt. I've come again  
With fresher flowers.  
We'll not talk of who I am today.  
I'll tell you of the vacant garden,  
The rotting house, and rain-filled, cut glass vases.

—Carol Warden

## THE VISIT

Push me back against the table.  
Your face is a dead fish floating on an icy lake  
in Idaho; my fingernails are the shining hooks.  
Their prints will trail down, keen,  
cared-for blades ready to touch uncovered flesh.

I am the witch; the stones are placed on my chest,  
pressing me deeper into that country where  
calling cannot enter. Swimming faces mouth  
my name; eyebrows, the slanted arrows,  
cannot reach the new immortal.

They all have lied.  
Let them pour the salt forever into your eyes.  
It nourishes the body.  
It visits the tears that have  
lain there. Idleness rests  
in another region where  
all that drifts is praised.

I will rise from the table like a cool moon,  
pulling the heavy tides of the sheets  
behind me. They will be the firm  
heartbeat of this thing called me.

—Carol Warden

WE ARE BAFFLED  
BY DEATH

We are baffled by deaths  
on way to the barber's shop  
A haircut seems  
so unimportant.

When they raise the cot  
to shoulders  
and the procession forms  
its dignity,

a bar of soap or chocolate  
looks so out of place,  
so mean.  
Some old men

comb their beards  
between the fingers,  
and the young  
stand aside

to give way to those  
who pass  
or pass away.  
Men on counter

stay away from money  
as if something  
had happened.  
So some customers.

Only self-minding children  
know the time to desist,  
from amazement once again  
break into play.

—Alamgir Hashmi

## ARS POETICA

"Is this a poem?" I wanted to know.

"That depends on what you've read," said he.

"It's allusive, suave, and subtle, and the flow  
Of the phonology would seem to be

One of its structural features. Freud and Jung  
Join hands in a kind of minuet  
Or elephant walk or something. The rhythm's sprung,  
And conceit after conceit are what you're going to get."

"What is it it does to you?" I asked then.

"Why it titillates my fancy. I admire the deftness  
With which the poet sets up his problem, when  
Nobody else would have found one. His leftness

Slices daringly through the remnants of old rightness.  
Daring and stark is he, slashing fiercely  
At sham, pretence, and Victorian uptightness,  
Wintrily pounding out effects that are well-nigh Biercely."

Humbly I try to eschew Spenser and Tennyson.

If I can't dig Auden and Ferlinghetti, that's T. S.

And of Robert Graves I would crave a benison:

Say, what did the sirens sing? and What did Edgar Guess?

—Winfred Emmons

## LITTLE BIRD

how would it be?

if you found a Boswell for your Johnson  
if your men covered

all the exits

someone would be  
true to you regardless

you could

break chicken bones  
with a thousand lovers

what would you sing?

—Carl Terwilliger

## "EX-POUNDING POUND"

(After reading Part I of Homage to Sextus Propertius)

Pound, Pound, why do you pound your precise yet  
precious allusions through my skull—  
I do not ask a verse that will crush my head!  
What has taught you so complex a measure?  
In what babbled-tower have you learned  
to jumble nations' thoughts into  
this endless pied narration?  
What muse suggested poetry  
contorted from history?

Out-wearer of information, you, we know,  
will play Gargantuan energies  
upon new-fangled poetry—  
we have kept our ice-packs in order.  
Analysts will continue to expound,  
pull down from the corners of civilization the sense of

it,

but for something to read in normal circumstances?  
for a few pages brought down from Spring's hill unsullied?  
I do not ask a verse that will crush my head.

And, Pound, Homer has stated the case.  
Let the old allusions lie down now for they are tired.  
Leave history to lurid prose  
not poetry, please, Pound,  
when Spring lies suspended on the hill.

—Joan Zink

## THRASHINGS

I will not write to you, two-faced god;  
I will not rhyme each meter and verse.  
And though you hold the flame  
you cannot shape and bend my words  
to fit the angle of your image.  
I am not a shadow,  
or a reflection in the lake of your desires.  
My words will remain,  
they will not sway under your beating tongue,  
but stand forever steadfast through the thrashings.

—Gail Cucancic

FRAGMENT FROM A  
LONGER, UNTITLED POEM

my life is a field  
of wild flowers crested on  
a mountain slope

—Brad Moseley

## AN ECLIPSE

Afterward  
the lake is  
coral, gold,  
cloud-printed;

shorelines  
moving  
by curves of water  
lighten.

It is the time, when

a small delicate boat  
tilts a little  
to the left,

and,

when a white sail  
blown wide and round  
changes  
direction.

—Diane Scharper



### HERMAPHRODITE

No joke this, no trick,  
as we, together, share  
each other's face.

I would be you, she said,  
as you would be me  
if we were instead  
each other.

Looking at her  
I seem to see Hermes  
smiling wistfully  
instead of Aphrodite  
and knew it was true:

I laughed as he smiled  
back, and smiled  
again, and meanwhile  
dance on stars  
and sleep upon clouds  
for this is truly

magic.

—Thomas Lavoie

### FIRST KISS

in fear  
of  
erectile touch  
forward  
no  
marching you are  
ignorant  
how  
thoughts halting  
she moves again  
you lean—  
quickquiveringkiss

—Carl Terwilliger

### WHAT WE ARE SHOOTING FOR

A leaf falls,  
The house darkens,  
A ditch drenches  
Its weeds.  
Drizzle bites wildflowers

Their heads collapse.  
The distance,  
Thread-like line,  
The field  
With nothing at work,  
The cattle  
Their blood drumming  
Across the field.

Beside the scraped-up dirt,  
A greened jar,  
Its mouth pursed  
With dirt.  
The sun licks the jar,  
Birds scream  
From behind trees,  
Silverfish hide  
Under rotten wood.  
Castles of fire ants

Cover the parched land.  
The lid is closed,  
The air cools,  
The jar darkens.

—Randall Stokesbury

### TOO MUCH FOR US for James Van Homissen

This is it, James,  
Where light douses the dark,  
Where flowers appear like floored  
Constellations, and shadows of clouds  
Pass through trees casting  
Negatives on the ground.

I've been looking a lot at them lately.  
Taproots ripped apart send us  
From this hull of space we lean on  
Traveling on the thread of a spiral,  
Stars are cold as chips of ice,  
That splinter and pierce our eyes  
Like knives.

I look to you and close my eyes,  
There are bright blue-white images  
Gallop into each other and out  
Of my sight. I'll leave now like lost  
Candle light, galaxies of miles  
To a depthless door. On the other  
Side soft voices murmur.  
Your eyes turn like globes.

—Randall Stokesbury

### PLACES TO GO for Milda

It's the noise of things  
When they wind down,  
What will end in this path  
After we have left,  
The itch of the stars  
Against the sky;  
Wherever one stands  
Is the center of space,  
Whether we are  
Material or not—  
Souls that end up nothing,  
Nothing remains the same.

—Randall Stokesbury

### THE DEATH OF A HOUSEWIFE

Happened during the soap opera.  
You know, the one where they  
buried the baby for over a week?

She will be remembered about as long  
as a swirling black hole lasts  
in a bucket of water,  
when the stick is removed.

—Perle Dumas

### THE TIME THE BUFFALO RAN AWAY

Everyone perched around the black tube,  
the thrill of the hunt filled the room

as Euell Gibbons and his native companion  
tracked a runaway buffalo.

But they were too late,  
as Euell explained:  
"It's impossible to stop hungry cats on the prowl!"

And when buzzards flew down  
to the guts on the ground,  
everyone charged out

asking, "How do those birds put on their brakes?"

James Barlow

### THE BANANA

When placed in a chair,  
the banana slouches.  
on the sidewalk,  
the banana becomes angry.  
the banana itself is innocent,  
however its trappings  
are as guilty as hell.  
under no circumstance  
should the banana be eaten.  
wildlife in the banana tree  
should also be avoided.  
in some countries,  
the month of March  
is dedicated to the banana.  
when the bananas fall,  
the peasants rejoice.  
they fall from high office.  
the banana never says anything,  
but, by now, its meaning  
should be perfectly clear.  
it can be used to club the pear  
into insensibility.

James Barlow

### FOR JAMES AGEE

Some people are just born  
black sheep  
Their stars are ripe in time  
& no voice can save them

a personality reversal  
like drinking Hyde  
out into the open  
unleashes the demon

the black personal fraternal  
image of light is voiced

—Carl Terwilliger

### TO MY 14-YEAR OLD DAUGHTER

Your brother says the same thing,  
shaking his long locks—like Absalom's—  
hoping to be caught in some maiden's tree  
and strangled on her passions.  
I can tell you who you are—  
you are the breath of a Hannibal  
breathed into his cup and carried off the map  
of the known world.

—Perle Dumas

### THE WALKING CATFISH

Have you seen  
The walking catfish?  
He uses his tail as a land rudder  
And his front fins as elbows  
And walks.  
He looks ungainly, and  
Slightly repulsive—out  
Of his element.  
Puts me in mind of a man  
Moving aggressively on his own  
Walk toward the unknown.

—Jane R. Card

### YESTERDAY'S COFFEE

Tides fall over sands  
in rhythmic percolation  
while yesterday's coffee  
lies cold in my cup.

Bittersweet waves tumbled  
over me last night.  
The dreams were hard to sleep with,  
still harder to follow.

Black grounds  
splattered on my arms,  
(stained and sticky)  
tell me I am wrong,  
that life goes on, has gone on,  
leaving its peculiar mark.

Tides recede into blue.  
Wet becomes dry.  
Ancient shells, washed up  
over my toes, confine me.  
I kick them off and go on,  
leaving my mark in the sand.

—Cheryl Perry

### DESTINY

Two eagles,  
Not knowing their destiny,  
Merge in a web of blue  
And are caught  
In a picture postcard—

Men do not understand  
That the eagle flies alone.

—Cheryl Perry

in the hangar of an outfit  
between Beaumont and China  
mechanics huddle around an oilstove  
silent as lunchboxes

the crop dusters who gave  
who gave consonance to their engines  
who learned the sky because they couldn't understand the earth  
have been flushed out of their cockpits  
so broken  
we buried them in sacks

how can it happen  
they wonder  
their eyes dark as grease

their sons hitchhike out of the teeth of gears  
into the Yucatan

above them  
the quiet circles of starving hawks  
advertize a blank and lonely sky.

—Terry L. Morrison

The heavy scent of damp mid-summer evening air  
Was borne across the cove  
And circled round the shore and set  
In mist above the bar.  
My line was slack and rode the swells  
That rolled in from the sea.  
The need for purpose and a prize  
Had just deserted me.

—Peter Griffin

## THE ARTIST IN EXILE THIRTEEN FIFTEEN

The young girl doesn't understand  
His poems, or the films he absorbs  
So intently. "Why," she asks, grasping  
His hand, "are your friends so strange?"  
The poet's forehead slowly wrinkles,  
"Because they're crazy," he replies.  
Gazing at a picture on his wall  
Of a man's backward reflection  
She thinks, "He's crazy too."  
The reflection stands between them:  
She sees what she is taught to see,  
He sees what he learns and feels.

The poet sits in a smallish room.  
A younger poet looks perplexed  
And finally asks his older friend,  
"An artist has no real place does he?"  
The poet's face acknowledges the fact.  
"It breaks my heart," the younger says.  
The poet knows what he means  
For his heart broke long ago.

"Write about the deepest film you've seen,"  
The poet addresses his freshman class.  
That night he shudders at the first theme:  
"Walking Tall" he reads, turns, and retches.  
—George Frissell

## THE UPSTAIRS

is quiet now. Thoughts have fled  
to the cellar  
to scribble wildly like  
feet of a dying lizard.  
It is alone upstairs in the  
dark that makes the nerves  
turn to embers  
and the limbs to cotton  
and speaks short speeches  
to the few who will not listen  
but who heed the words  
from the vacant attic.  
Twenty steps are hushed up now,  
but five are lit and burn,  
burn into the blackness  
and shed no light, no  
light in the upstairs  
that is, and will remain  
quiet. Hold the railing when  
you come upstairs,  
brush the splinters from the  
rotting steps;  
lift the latch to the chamber  
where dark moths lie hidden.

—Carol Warden

Black birds cling like seaweed  
To delicate wisps of cane;  
The sky is in meditant silence  
bidding the moon enter.  
Frogs bid good night as the  
wind creeps behind me.  
The earth heaves a final  
yawn of light,  
consuming me in the night  
feeling small.

—Greg Busceme

## CHRISTINA'S WORLD

You wait on the bone white  
hill;  
the house above  
you is higher  
than you imagined,

is greyer,  
is the distance  
that is your own,  
that is unexplained;

it searches you,  
an introspection  
and a silence,  
as if you were not there.

A part of you has gone;  
for several years  
they have been saying,

"She continues

in another world."

—Diane Scharper

## THE MAGICIAN

You walk the forest,  
panoplies of Spanish moss  
creating  
a darker place;

your eyes, green and brown,  
look through sounds  
of locust and bird,  
their voices  
rising too heavily;

you live in the owl's  
waiting,  
his tension,  
his straight tight wings,

the inevitable opening:

"You have always been someone else."

—Diane Scharper

## THEN

I knew more when I was young,  
I knew a house we later moved to.  
We left a house that went to an Indian,  
ex-mayor of our town, who  
began to be down and out. Lucian  
Ballard, his son, whose picture I had  
for years (where is it now?), used to drive  
me fast in his family's Buick.  
I knew more then. I knew Lucian  
was the best of men, even driving  
at 60: But where is he now?  
And the father? And my father,  
and whiskey that went into my tooth  
in those old homeopathic days when  
cures came from the cupboard, and  
stuck in the tooth like a bad  
taste, and conversation took in  
questions and possibilities  
that have not survived,  
and tones and assiduousness  
that have perished in a room.

—George de Schweinitz