

**Pulse**

# pulse

Vol. XVI NO. 2 Spring 1974

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## Grand Island



Lame again:

Being here with one who's promised  
to him I've never seen or known  
(While promises are strange to me  
Since she's with me and bound to him.)  
Yet she never talks to me it seems  
Or secs, but only hears muted  
My screams to reach her. And inside  
She surely dreams of New York snow  
And the form she loves. We lie here,  
And watch the sun ignite  
Her shining ring.

Grand Island's green splits the river'  
The water empties to the deafening falls,  
Here I see you talking and alive,  
I see you feel comfortable;  
Here is where you usually are, yes  
With me, yet more and still with him.  
My old retreat once cold and blunt  
More real and painful now —  
Like the island I am touched in flow  
But only feel your life before the fall.

*George W. W. Frissell*

## The Museum at Nagasaki

Like those Miocene ants trapped in resin,  
the metacarpals of a hand lay gloved in  
green glass; they say that the critical mass  
multiplied by the speed of light, squared, would  
in one over ten to the seventh seconds have  
fused hand and beer; that the thermonuclear  
flash, in a fraction of 11:04 a.m., August 9,  
1945, blew down the concrete Christ of  
St. Xavier, which is rubble now, left  
where the sun descended, in memoriam,  
fifteen hundred feet below the second coming.

*Bob Gaskin*

## Release

I stood facing the blue norther.  
It stung my face like a thousand bees;  
it drew its fingers through my long hair  
like a tormented lover.  
Spreading my arms, I felt the undulating wind  
caress my body as I trembled at its touch.  
The fickle wind diminished,  
leaving me purged and peaceful.

*Joan Letulle*

## Returning Home

The shell road curved into the leaf-strewn lane,  
my jeep leaped forward, shuddered to a halt.  
Gone was the white clapboard house;  
flattened were the old cane fields.  
And the shroud of silence screamed  
as the jeep backed away.

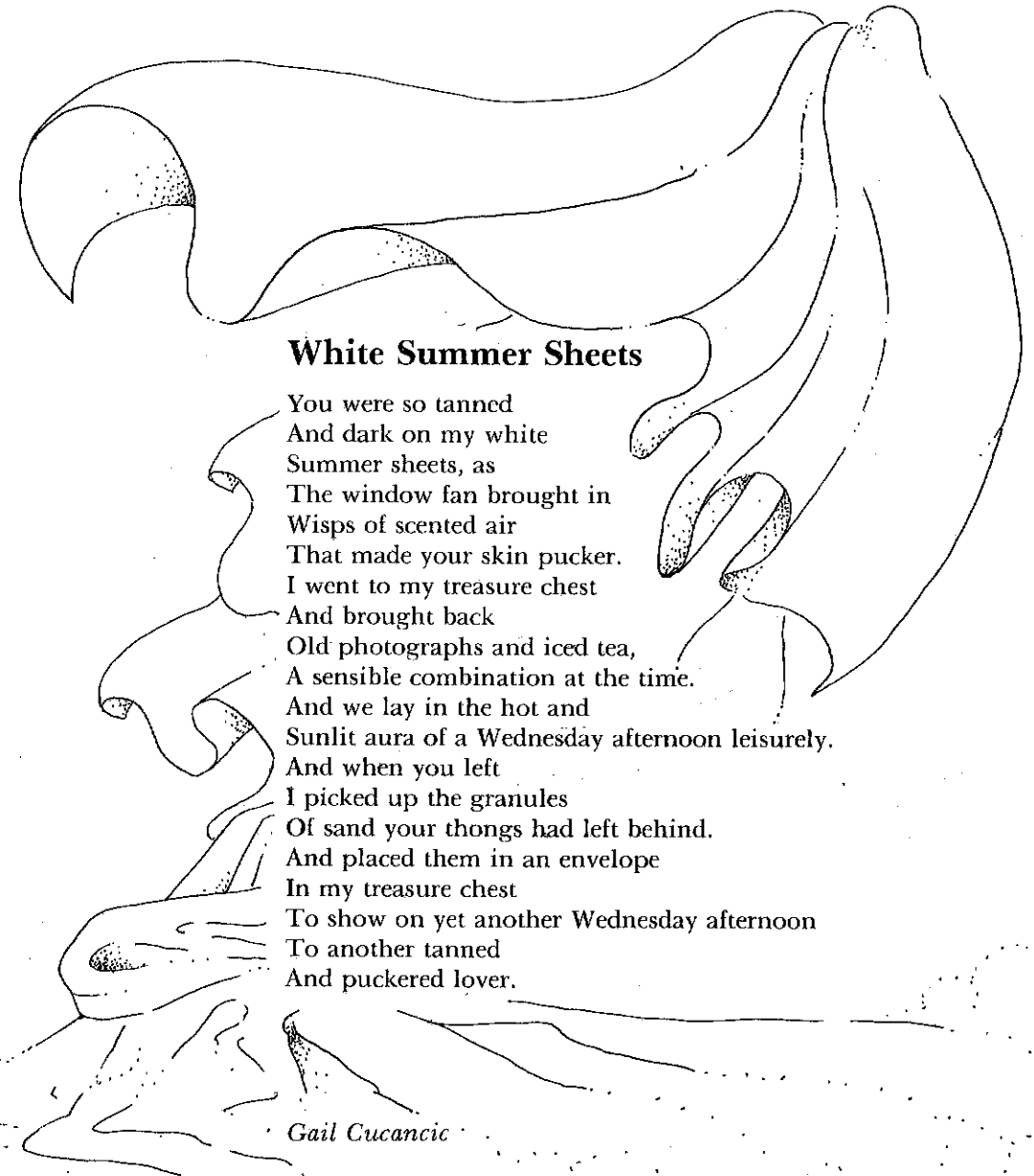
*Joan Letulle*

## Steppenwolf to Music

Listening to  
Tchaikovsky can  
be so  
Steppenwolf —  
Like January lonely



Or a gray peep through  
window  
shades into a hollow courtyard  
that asks  
to catch you  
hurtling.



## White Summer Sheets

You were so tanned  
And dark on my white  
Summer sheets, as  
The window fan brought in  
Wisps of scented air  
That made your skin pucker.  
I went to my treasure chest  
And brought back  
Old photographs and iced tea,  
A sensible combination at the time.  
And we lay in the hot and  
Sunlit aura of a Wednesday afternoon leisurely.  
And when you left  
I picked up the granules  
Of sand your thongs had left behind.  
And placed them in an envelope  
In my treasure chest  
To show on yet another Wednesday afternoon  
To another tanned  
And puckered lover.

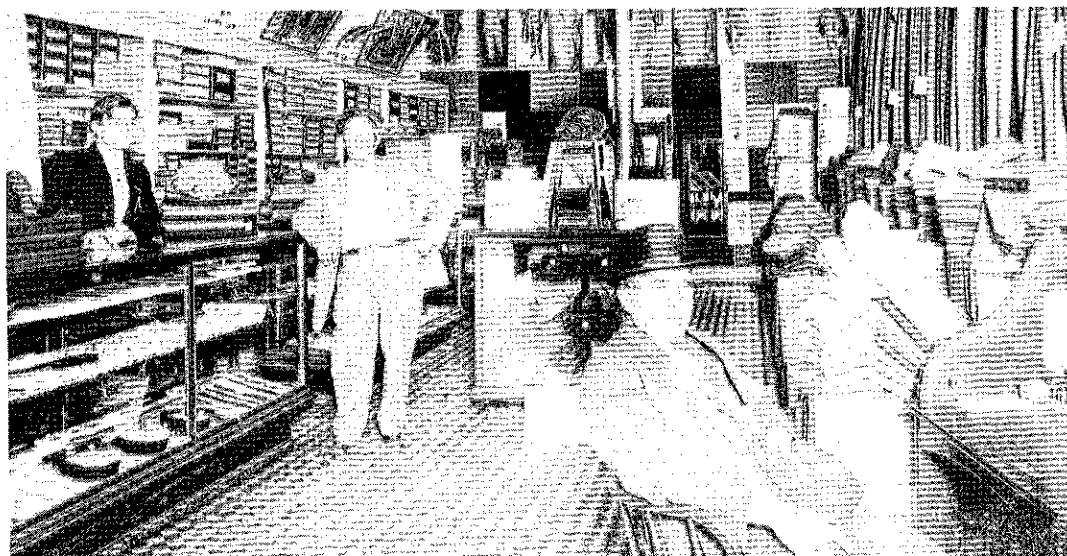
*Gail Cucancic*

## Salesman

Selling cameras and wearing ties  
At twenty-two, his mind is far away  
From strangling ties and lenses,  
Perhaps a face he saw today  
Reminds him of the Academy,  
Reminds him of a girl in Colorado.  
Two years ago he lay beside her,  
Uttered desperate departing words  
About not ever understanding why,  
And as he turned in his other uniform  
A quick calm acceptance entered.

His thoughts burst back to Wards:  
And he welcomes ends of days,  
Ends of weeks, ends of winters,  
Yet while he pours wax in molds  
Or straps canoes to tops of cars  
Meaning wanders back into his life.

*George W. W. Frissell*



## Unnamed

What once was  
And nevermore returns —  
Blind guitar players  
Sedately dance and call  
On down the floor.  
They do not wander  
But silently shuffle  
In the silver shimmer  
Of the long, bright hall.

Mistaken chords in  
Swift progression fall  
Out of tune, wherein  
This silly situation  
Containing groups  
Of singer-strummers  
Dancing madly in our minds  
Calls forth our sympathies  
And nevermore returns.

Does anybody ever,  
Really ever turn back  
To hear and stare at  
The unrelated clink  
Of silver syncopation —  
Inducing flashes of  
Grateful indifference  
From the blind guitar players  
Who nevermore return?

*John Fears*



## The Trees Moan

The trees moan.  
They speak your language rather well.  
The rain reminds me of  
Sitting on the porch last spring  
And swinging our feet in a pendulum exposure,  
Just so the drops would dampen our toes  
With tempting petals. And you said  
That was life, a steady rhythm of  
Temptations and refusals.  
I thought you sounded like a minister then.  
And later when the thunder shook  
Our bodies in a double tremor  
I thought you were wrong.  
The lightning brought no enlightenment,  
Nor does it now, only striking  
My memory on nights like this.  
Illumination is not awareness,  
Nor are swaying trees treated as threats.  
And philosophical lovers are not prophets.

*Gail Cucancic*

## Teething

She called, we talked  
said nothing  
just hurting things.  
Tatters of glory  
hung on the phone.  
Compassion, understanding  
absent without leave  
remembered  
the good times, things  
gone.

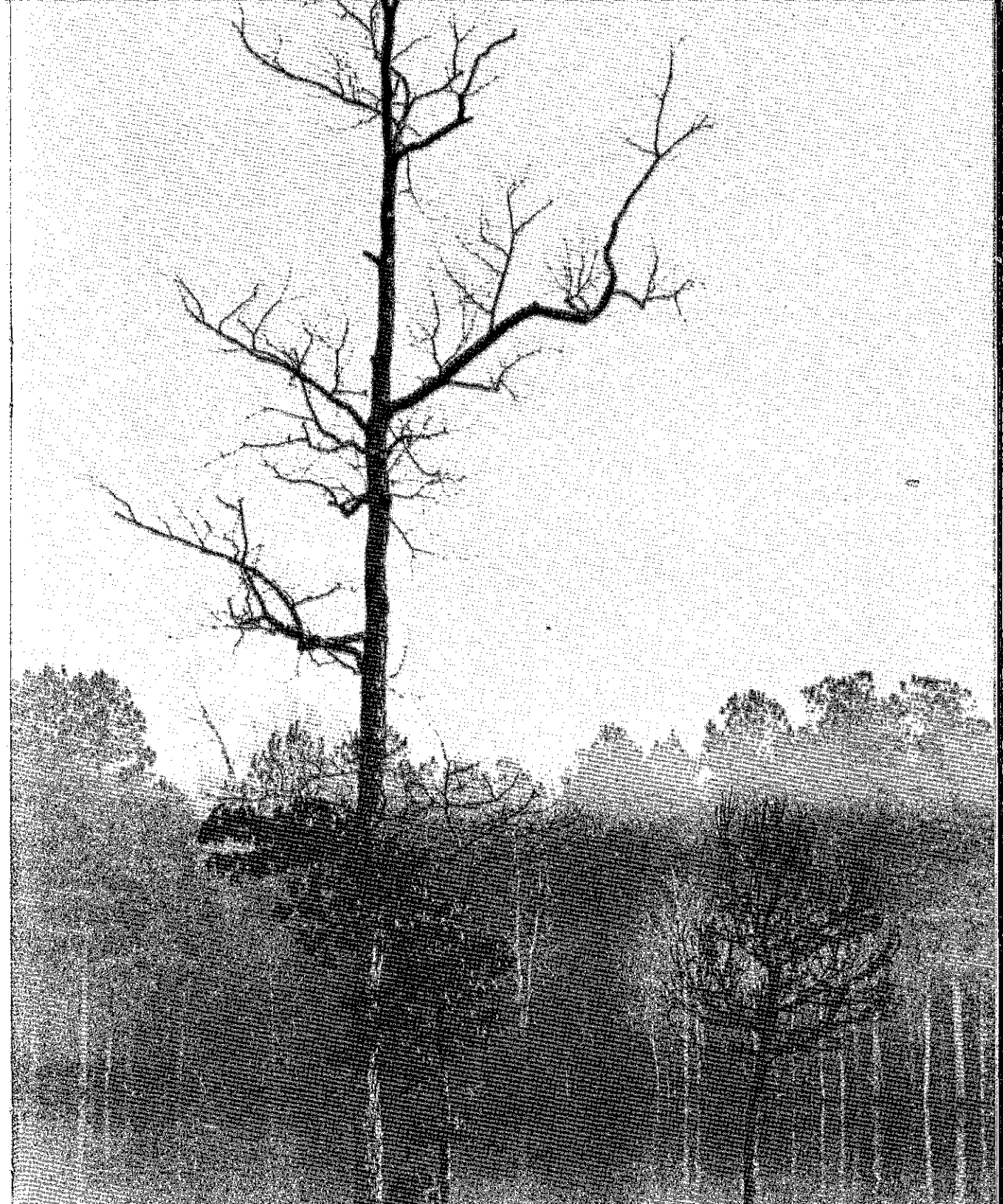
Why?  
To where?  
So short ago  
it was all fine.  
People grow, become  
others.  
And I, the same?  
Surely. But my daughter  
is sharper.

## Winters in Kirbyville, Texas

The words were inevitable.  
For days we had all lingered in the chasm.  
But now, twenty miles away from the hospital,  
I felt safe and secure in the boiler-warmed  
eighth-grade math class.  
The rattle of the uneven door, simultaneously with a draft  
sweeping my legs,  
Then the tap on My shoulder  
And the usually cordial secretary greasing my lungs with hatred,  
Whispering, “. . . sorry, he passed on . . . your grandmother  
needs you . . .”  
And making my way down the aisle,  
Despising all those unknowing,  
I walked almost silently across the creaky board hall,  
Hoping for a caring teacher to share my emotions.  
But there was none,  
Only the stuffy heat that poor ventilation rends.  
The now sober secretary stabbed at condolences,  
Offering to drive me home.  
I told her I needed time to think,  
While I really needed time not to think.

On those ten blocks home I cannot remember a single thought,  
Except longing for the warmth of cradling arms.  
On the lawn I thought of what I should say to my grandmother,  
Whom heretofore I had never seen cry.  
I think I expected a breakdown, but she sat in the rocker,  
straight-backed and composed,  
Only a trace of dampness in those fierce blue eyes.  
And I knew we could not comfort each other.  
No one can in November

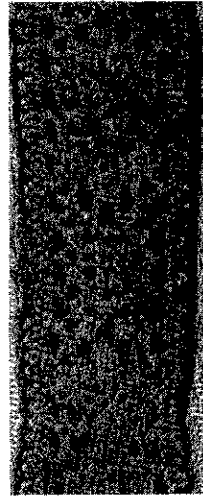
*Gail Cucancic*



## The Lame and the Bright

When I read poems by the lame and the bright,  
I see my father once more in the cleanest place of all,  
an unused reservoir, freshly cemented, his work.  
From the top I see him, as always, more on one leg  
than the other, wounded in a bridge accident — labor troubles  
— when he tried to be a peace-maker. Now he turns slowly  
in the reservoir. There of all places his might shines,  
shines in the pupil of my eye and in the sun.  
And while he looks at the docile cement  
and I see him in his look-around, he becomes this portrait.  
I become his painter. And the things that aren't docile  
have to wait before they begin their intense anonymous operation.

*George W. de Schweinitz*



## Noman Again

Staff in hand I crawl  
through white-clothed nothing  
where no-one is able to stand still  
but only kick against the light  
air as if it were his own loss, till  
the long night hours are left with  
only tracks, and I am borne off in  
the dark corner of my sight, to be  
inspired by the naked body now crossing  
the same mirror you see here, appearing  
to be as lonely or moreso than the  
typewriter you cannot see, but which  
is there also, deep inside my breast  
as I begin to feel no margin to release,  
not yet given one key to write by, my  
mind unable (though it must try) to  
backspace quickly or kiteglide off the  
page edge. Because this tab is already  
set to my single-spaced fist as the  
tall body comes clambering down, finally  
falling on the wrinkled sheet, naked,  
free, casting lies off onto the vast  
blank floor, a waste where my pencil lies,  
free at last of me, and I rub this  
oily eraser of memory into my shadowy  
palmprints, feeling the inky unguent  
of need surfacing as tonight again, I  
wordlessly begin to set my own type



## Shoot low sheriff; they're ridin' Shetlands and this one's for Slim

When i was 4 chubby fingers old, Cousin Judy go to be  
on the Don Mahoney Show and sit on his knee  
and gosh i wanted to be a cowboy so bad.  
I'd saddle up my rocky horse, half-my-dog Spot and me,  
and before i could whip out my 16-shooter  
i was Annie Oakley in danger at Diablo again.  
But brother said they're wasn't any bathrooms on the range  
and mother said besides, i wanted to go to college and be pretty.  
And that was many bathrooms and colleges ago  
as i smile at the face that never got pretty  
in the window of this train headed west.

*mona brittain*



## Brief Spring Jubilee

Might she bring him flowers in her skirt  
a kiss-me  
an opera girl  
a columbine  
And spread them out within his hands unhurt  
a painted lady  
clinging  
to this vine

And she, the child  
of hill  
and sky  
and tree  
Stood in the wind and joyful viewed the prize  
the painted lady  
fluttered on his knee  
That gem, that gold, reflected in his eyes

*Melanie Bandy*



## The Monogram

Some sights prick a universal curiosity. Like a sleek, smart woman with a stinking, stodgy man. Or a woman with a moustache. Or a beautiful child produced by pimply, thick-lensed parents. Or a sight like Lurline Ashworth, a straight-haired, hulking blob in gunny-sack clothing with bulging, glaring eyes that would stop a clock, stalking through a great train station and clutching along with her artons and satchels a college catalog. This girl looked as if she'd do pretty well behind a plow, or managing a pack of mules, or maybe as a mill foreman of some sort. But as a co-ed, never, unless at a county agricultural college.

Not that Lurline was a total pig — no acne pits, no glasses, no braces, nothing wrong with her eyes that a little make-up wouldn't have fixed. And on the collar of her blouse was a delicately hand-wrought monogram, LA, in pure silk thread. But these were just details, and no one noticed them. It was the general picture that people noticed, and they could hardly help noticing, for this lumbering form appeared unaware that anyone else was in the station, and people had to step aside for her or collide. She didn't have so much as a "How do you do" or an "excuse me" for those she jostled or forced to yield the path, though she did make a couple of sidesteps for one poor soul who happened to be on crutches. No one noticed this detail either. People just saw the general picture, and wondered how on earth such a sight ever came to be headed toward the campus of a big state U.

Until this day, this moment, this walk across Madison station, nobody had ever before looked at Lurline Ashworth much at all, and until a few weeks earlier, nobody, including the two old maid great aunts who were her guardians, had ever intended that she should head anyplace, much less for a college campus. These great aunts had become Lurline's guardians the summer she turned thirteen, just after her father committed suicide, and her mother, on the same day, finally became totally deranged. The old ladies hadn't for years before that day even remembered that their nephew Charles was grown, much less that he had a wife or child. But when word came about what had happened and they finally got matters straight in their minds and realized that they were their niece's only surviving kin, the old ladies immediately rejoiced, seeing the whole situation as a divine provision for the perpetuation of their work. These ladies worked as highly specialized seamstresses, stitching shrouds, altar cloths and a few other such items for carefully selected customers. The fame of their work was such that even with their exclusiveness, they were hard-put to keep up with their orders, much less to keep the dresses and undergarments for their own burial in perfect repair. When they realized that their niece was to be their ward, they perceived that God was sending them an apprentice, thus giving them a final sign of divine approbation for their work.

Within the hour the old ladies dispatched two hearses, one for the father and one for the mother, for though they remembered that Stella Ashworth hadn't been a fully modest woman, she was an Ashworth, and hence not to be subjected to the



own, opened into the room, once the dining room, where they sewed. As they prepared a place for her, they wondered if ever a girl had been offered so much, and foresaw that after she finished the obligation of public schooling — for Ashworths were obligated to serve as examples to the community — there would be less and less reason for her ever to set foot out of the house again. Such were their plans.

Lurline made the trip from Lakeport to her aunts in Ashlea in the hearse with the sedated, straight-jacketed form of her mother, knowing as she saw the waxen, brown-clad body of her father slid into its place that all chance for helping him had passed, but hoping that she might yet be able to do something for her mother. Maybe she could blot up the perspiration that poured across her face or smooth back the matting tendrils of hair, maybe even sooth her with soft words or sounds, for Lurline seemed to feel sounds rushing up in her throat even though she had hardly said a hundred words in her life, had just never gone to words since from earliest times she had known that her mother screamed and threw things at slight provocation, and that her father cried easily, one time at nothing more than the gardener's "It's a nice day isn't it, Mr. Ashworth?" By the time she had started to school, her voice had sounded hoarse from disuse. At first, drawn to the air and sound and color of the classroom, she had tried to laugh with the group, but everyone had turned to look at her strangely, even the teacher, and no more words had come, no more sound at all, then or after. School had become merely a grudging recess away from the quiet watch in the dark corners of the house where she sought to ward off those things which she could foresee would provoke violence, such as the occasional salesman who made his way to their door, even though she knew the neighbors said "Skip that house." But in spite of her silent watch, the ultimate violence had come, the telephone calls had been made, and Lurline and her mother were on their way to a new home. And though the mother resisted with terrified moaning Lurline's efforts to comfort her, Lurline was sure that their new life in Ashlea would soon make things all right.

The whispering voices that had come into the house right after it had happened had said that she and her mother would have to be separated. But they hadn't realized that she had family, that her grandfather had been a very important man, that he had left a great pillared house, and that her aunts still lived there and had their own business and would want to make a place for her and her mother. Now, this very moment, she knew that those aunts were moving furniture and rearranging the whole house to prepare a place for her, and after she got there and learned to do pretty handwork like they did, she would be able to make pretty things for her mother and dress her up pretty for company, and everything would be all right.

Lurline stepped into the place that was prepared for her on a July afternoon. Her mother was immediately committed to the hands of the manservant Clyde and his wife Lura, and by bedtime of the first night, Lurline had been given the instructions for her routine. There would be occasional errands, and in the fall, school, of course. But central to her life was the handwork, hallmark on earth and in heaven of the Ashworth women.

That very first night her aunts started her on the cross stitch border of an altar cloth, and while conceding some hours for sleep and a few minutes at ten o'clock the next morning for her father's graveside rites — this is what the faltering young Presbyterian minister had arranged when the undertaker told him that the ladies wanted him to attend to details — expected a specific length of stitching accomplished by the next night.

And by the next, and by the next, as the stream of summer days immediately

and to make time to be near her mother and to make something pretty for her. But by the end of the first weeks, it became apparent that her mother would wear no pretty things in any event, and that the sight of Lurline, glimpsed from the caged upstairs landing, more than any other stimulant provoked the mother's violence.

Lurline began using only the back hall since there was no upstairs landing there from which her mother might see her. She knew that Clyde and Lura did all that could be done upstairs, but now she worked toward making time for a regular watch from behind one of the big trees in the side of the yard, where it was possible that she might sometime have a glimpse of her mother in an upstairs window. Even finding time for that was difficult, though, for the orders were endless, even with her aunts' rigorous mode of selectivity, which caused them, for example, to insist, as if called to spare heavenly modesty, on making petticoats for scarlet Bessie Blennerhasset to be buried in, while refusing at any price to make a shirt for an oversized late mayor because they recalled that he had once turned down a petition to put bird baths in city park.

The only time allowed Lurline away from the needlework as the warm summer passed was the time for her to plod once a week to the Ashworth cotton gin, last active enterprise of her late grandfather's empire, with a plate of cookies, a gesture of the Ashworth concept of *noblesse oblige*. Each week she took the cookies, which went unacknowledged as she laid them on the superintendent's desk, and made no stop coming or going unless her aunts, inconvenienced by an overdue mail order, instructed her to stop on the way home to purchase a certain shade of thread or size of button at the dry goods store, where at first old salesladies stopped in mid-sentence telling her about their grandchildren when someone stepped over and whispered that she was the Ashworth girl, and where gradually it got so that she just slipped in, picked up her thread and laid down her nickel unacknowledged when she had to stop by.

This was how it had been back in Lakeport, and though she had thought it would be different in Ashlea, she gradually became so enthralled with her pretty colored threads and with the spender that colors and textures could create that she hardly noticed anything else, and on the first day of school she didn't even think to wonder why they didn't at least taunt her like they did the hairlipped boy.

Soon the crispness of autumn began to punctuate the days, and Ashlea's great mapels turned red and gold. Their colors drew Lurline's eyes from the ground, and when she looked up she found the spender of color and texture all around her. Everywhere, even in the halls at school there was shade, proportion and form. Her eyes kept glancing up, seeing things, woolly trousers, embroidered daisies on girls' blouses, seeing boys' hands, measuring things, sheets of paper, cloth, even her own waist, in terms of boys' handspans, and seeing the brushing bodies in the halls and knowing they didn't just brush by accident, for if they did, she would have been brushed once in a while, too.

She saw more than before, and smelled more and felt more and thought more, even in class, but the price she had paid for coloring her rabbits pink in the second grade kept her writing dull, safe answers, not risking a teacher's call to say she was giving trouble. Still her eyes would not stay down.

Day after day in the hours of confinement to the dark gloominess of the sewing room, her needles slipped to prick her fingers and faulty stitches marred her work as her mind wandered from the business of her world to the sights and sounds outside it. But something familiar in the shrill edge of her aunts' voices and in the inexplicable darting of their eyes and in the trembling of their fingers on the scissors in

saw only handwork stitches and patterns wherever she looked, even in the halls at school.

And though her daily watch yielded no glimpse of her mother, as she worked out her designs for handwork, she felt herself a part of beauty, and that feeling was what the sight of her mother had always given her. By early spring, a time or two somebody who handed instructions to Lura at the back door said, "I'd just as soon the girl do it if the Misses Ashworth can't get to it."

Then that very spring, just as things had begun to go right again, she was caught by dusk one Tuesday as she was walking home from the gin after taking the cookies. In the sudden darkness she saw carnival lights, half a mile away, on a usually vacant stretch of land, and in amazement that their existence could have been unsuspected as she walked to the gin twenty minutes before but now colored the whole earth and sky, she walked straight toward them without a thought of anything else, and getting there, gravitated directly toward a highly congested spot where people were hurrying back and forth from one attraction to another, stopping to watch the wildly whirling rides, laughing and pointing at the little compartments from which hysterical wails and exhibitionistic bellows emerged in a vigorous chorale. She was absorbed into the rhythmic stimulation of the inevitable collisions with the mob — the loose warm tremolo of resonating flab and the glancing staccato of unimbedded joints. She shoved her sleeves up to be closer to the brushes and punches and jabs and bumps, and hoped there would be bruised places to last a long time.

There was hairiness, wooliness, slick cotton on tall men's arms that slid by with such fierce movement that it made her cheek sting, belt buckle prongs pricking her exposed forearm. And the smells of tobacco, of drying body moistures, of strong, cheap perfume, of varied sour breaths and reeking hair pomades.

With her eyes open there was that bursting light outside and inside herself like the indescribable moment behind the eyelids after one stares at direct light and then closes his eyes quickly, tightly. Soon Lurline was deliberately bumping into people so that she could feel more, clumsily getting in people's paths in hopes that someone would be forced to notice her, to speak, to say perhaps "Excuse me" or "Hi, kid."

She would have said yes to anything that anybody had proposed in that suspended interval of time. Yes, let's set fire to the tent. Yes, let's see what happens if we lie down together in the grass behind the tent. Yes, let's hit the old man who sells kewpie dolls over the head when he steps behind the tent for a drink, and let's steal his whiskey and his money and run and scream and throw rocks and knives at all who chase. Yes, let's join the Salvation Army. Of course, I'll play the tuba. She would have said yes to anything, but she didn't know it, and of course, nobody asked.

And soon the crowd thinned so that she had to try so deliberately to make contact that the lingering sensations were impinged upon by the thought of her schedule and by her sense of the bare restraint that kept her aunts from impelling the scissors that were always poised in their pockets. And she knew that this bare restraint was what made a world for her and her mother. Some things were just not the same for Ashworths as for others. This she knew with leaden intuition at the same moment that the ecstasies of sensation were telling her that she could fly.

In this dread moment she turned and ran with all her strength, though the pain of turning her back on this night and its glimpses, and running from its light and all its great imponderables was such that she thought she had to scream, and though no sound came, she heard in her mind the scream she would make.

But even worse than leaving this night was the thought of her aunts gone to fren-

not for more, and scaring off any man who came along while convincing them that they were too good for any man on earth and pressing them into a life of days spent in preparation for the only man they were allowed to conceive as being worthy of them. But they had turned those days to making beautiful things, and had kept the name of Ashworth standing for something special for miles around. And they were giving her the chance to do the same.

And so she ran. And not until the last few steps took her into the yard and she felt the normal rhythm still pervading the house and grounds did her agony subside. She had run in time. By some miracle the Ashworth world still stood, and that was her world. Its only irregularities were her sweating pores and her gasping breath, and those she could amend. Lurline stood against the porch rail to let the night air dry her, and took deep slow breaths. Inside the house there waited a request from the Methodist ladies for a gift for their bishop's church, a tablecloth twenty feet long to be appliqued with grape clusters along the border. Lurline stood there in the night and enumerated the number of shades of lavender and purple velvet she would use to get the right effect. And she named the stitches she would use, said them again and again until there was no other thought, and no sensation.

Lurline straightened herself and went in to that world where satisfaction and accomplishment and beauty were measured in terms of handwork, where wooliness and furriness were qualities of fabrics to be thought of in terms of serviceability and appropriateness, where smells were symptoms of environment to be identified for reasons of safety, with no connection with anything that had ever been or might ever have been imagined to be, where her own hands were the only hands that had any reality, something five spans of which always equalled a yard.

And only once in a while, when defenseless in near sleep, did she still imagine such things as combing her mother's hair, making her a smock-yoked dress of green georgette, her aunts allowing the draperies and shades to be drawn, people coming by, glimpsing her mother's great and delicate beauty, talking about her father when he was young, asking what she thought about the weather or if she had read any good books lately. And only then did she know the inevitable longing for human touch, for human warmth when there were good blankets and hot water bottles available, in abundance. And only then did she know that kissing, which she had never seen except for the two rock-lipped cheekpecks which her aunts had directed toward her when she arrived, went on in the way the magazine covers lying on the sidewalks as she walked through town suggested, that kissing and the inconceivable rest of it went on by consent, not just by force.

Thus it evolved that during Lurline's high school years, while her mother roamed the second floor of the great house in uncharted fluctuation between ominous silence and violent sadism, and her aunts sat below preparing their own and others' deaddresses, Lurline stitched through endless skeins of thread, wrote out sheaves of dull, exact answers, plodded once a week to the cotton gin with a piled-up plate of cookies, and watched whenever she could from behind a tree in the yard, though only in the spring, the very late spring of the year when the salmon-throated wrens and the downy gray thrushes swarmed singing in the century-old magnolias and sycamores, did she ever see her mother. But during that time, she always had a long, safe look as her mother stood at the upstairs window, an arm extended through the bars.

Her mother would be so, perfectly still, for long periods of time during those warm spring days when the birds were swarming, and Lurline could see the ivory skin, taut over delicate bones, its incandescence seeming to grow more radiant as deterioration progressed. Lurline could also see the cavernous black rings that

Lurline looked at her mother for long periods on those pleasant, warm spring days, and saw the beautiful skin still glowing, the steady arm and hand, so tranquil that of the teeming birds, one would now and then light on a fingertip, then be pulled into the house through a gesture quicker than the eye. Lurline saw this awesome attraction of her mother's perfect tranquility, knowing, after the first year set the pattern, that within the next few days Lura would bring her mother's bedclothes down to the laundry matted with feathers and entrails that had dried to them in puddling smears of blood, knowing that it was the birds that brought her mother to the window, and that only at the birds' convenience might she ever see her mother again.

But all that she had ever hoped to see there, and all that she had ever hoped to show the world of what was there had resolved itself into beautiful patterns of cross-stitch, appliques and lace-work, and she went back in to her work, confident of the day, maybe not until her own funeral, but sure to come, when the whole town would acknowledge that Charles and Stella Ashworth must have been special people. "Yes," they might say, "he's the one. She's the one. But they had a fine daughter, a credit to them all. She saw her aunts through just like they saw her mother through. A credit to the name of Ashworth. And her handwork was peerless."

Then came the spring of her last year in school and the unexpected intrusion which put her on a train to Wisconsin. Lurline's teachers had always forgotten about her for long periods of time, but every machine-graded test showed her to be excellent college material, and chances were rare for Ashlea schools to send this forth. And when word got around during the spring of her senior year that the aunts did not intend to send the girl to college, a few oldtimers remembered what her grandfather had done to Lydia and Myra, the aunts, and some of these oldtimers said the girls should have the chance to get out.

In any event, steps were taken. The superintendent and principal of the school, the president of the school board, and the county judge called on the aunts and patiently endured the ladies' grim pleasantries before getting around to the subject of the girl's future. In response to the eventual queries, the aunts simply pointed out the obvious answer, that Lurline's calling was right there with them. The men reasoned that Lurline had the right to further education before deciding on her life's work, and the aunts gave them haughty stares. The men threatened, saying they'd see that Lurline's interests in the Ashworth estate were pursued in court if funds for her education were withheld, and would get a court order for her to go to college.

The aunts stiffened, and their hands moved in their apron pockets. But then the county judge, in whom a secret pre-visit bracer of scotch was breeding eloquence, plunged into a portrait of Lurline as teacher, or as social worker, or best of all, as librarian, pasting little pockets in books and circulating the gospel while weeding out lasciviousness — in one of these ways busying other hands as well as her own with the activities of the good life. He was a man of rare gifts, and by the time the men left, the old ladies were convinced that Lurline was meant to go to college, and that the whole thing had been their idea, through divine inspiration.

During the next few days, the only flicker in their new dispensation of light was their perplexity about where to send her. Recalling rumors of the evils of their own state university, where Charles had gone, they dismissed it as a choice, but didn't know the name of any other college. But Aunt Lydia soon had a recollection that provided a solution. She remembered their brother Thedford's son's visit with them long years before. (Brother Thedford had gone to Wisconsin when the rest of the family came to Texas from Virginia.) Of Thedford's three sons, two had become

The choice of college thus revealed to them, the aunts ordered cloth from the catalog, busily went about digging patterns from a trunk in the cellar which hadn't been opened since they left Virginia forty years before, and set about preparing Lurline's wardrobe.

As for Lurline, when she realized that her aunts' chattering "She'll learn every language known to man," meant her, Lurline, and saw that their flickering scissors were cutting threads to stitch clothes related to her size, she began to get her handwork orders filled as far ahead as she could foresee, and, as time permitted, to help with the elaborate monogramming which her aunts divined as necessary on every piece of her clothing to insure her proper identification.

And when the time came for her to be on her way, she filled her sewing bag with handwork, packed the drab clothes God willed a lady to wear, and departed to board the morning chair car from the Santa Fe depot. The closest acknowledgement of her departure was that her aunts, bent over their work, chanted a nasal, school-girl "Frere Jacques" as she went out the door.

Clyde pushed her trunk to the station on the wheel-barrow and pointed to her car when they got there. Boarding the car, she found it not over half full of passengers and sat down by a window, her bundles sprawling on her lap. Then she got up and laid her scattering parcels on the little overhead racks as she saw that others were doing. Then she reached into her satchel to be sure that she had the ticket Clyde had handed her to show for her trunk in Wisconsin. As she was doing this, the train made a great jerk, and she was on her way to Wisconsin.

After several lunges, the motion soon became regular, but even then there was still restless movement in the aisle as people moved back and forth, slow to get settled. It occurred to Lurline that she should arrange her skirt and fold her coat carefully so that they would not lap onto the seat next to her, for somebody might need to sit by her. After all, her ticket was just for one seat. Anybody had the right to sit by her.

Soon she realized that her parcels were sliding about noisily overhead, and stood up and rewedged them within the rim of the luggage trough. Then she reached in her satchel and checked on her trunk stub again, smoothed her hair, smoothed her skirt and her coat, and, as the train made the various stops on its schedule before entering the long prairie stretch, repeatedly sprang up and down to rewedged her parcels. But with all her shuffling movement, nobody sat by her or even looked at her. She knew that she was neat and clean, and was sure that if she was invisible, somebody would surely sit on her, since she was in a nice seat by a window.

But she soon realized, of course, that she could actually be a lot more comfortable like this, with plenty of room. And there were lots of things to do. That gold upholstery on the vacant seat beside her, for instance she'd find out about it. Stiff. That meant it was cheap. But it had a tight weave, and would last. If she slapped it, she bet a smell would come out. Yes, there it was. Partly like the men's shirts at the gin and partly like Lura's apron the day after she made custard.

There was a lot more to be felt and smelled, and after she had catalogued all the textures and odors, she would begin on sounds, though hearing wasn't nearly so much fun as smelling and feeling. Challenge succeeded challenge in the pungency of unseen lunches being smacked from time to time and in the smells, disguised and undisguised, of bodies fanning past her in the aisles. She made satisfactory identification of each. But the long prairie stretch of the trip began to outlast these diversions; and darkness precluded even the counting of telephone poles.

No homework. No handwork, because the motion of the train would mar her stitches, and not even on her own drawers could she tolerate a rough stitch. Not even the chance of a question for which her answer must confirm preconception, nod

Plan extra patterns? Decide how to make dresser scarves from the linen scraps in her sewing bag? Such was her intention. But instead of seeing a dresser scarf pattern, she saw her aunts working over a dress pattern, and Effie Mayfield dying happy, knowing she'd be buried in a dress of peach-colored voile with hand-tatted lace inserts in the yoke.

Then, no pattern, but only her aunts' gaunt forms bent over nondescript yardage, bolt on bolt alike, chirping without meaning, as oblivious of the fact that they had a niece on the way to Wisconsin as if they had never had one at all. They had put her into God's hands and had no further need to think of her. Clyde and Lura would turn away at the back door that share of the work that was beyond their capacity, and they'd never know the difference. Clyde and Lura and the birds were all that were needed now.

And nobody would miss her at school, unless maybe for the better, for all at once she realized that she had always made the teachers uncomfortable. And she lingered pleasantly over the sudden realization that she had been able to do so without even trying.

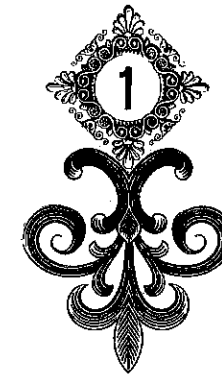
But where would she be missed? At the cotton gin? Surely the men would miss their cookies. But that was it, they'd miss their cookies, and her only as the handle on the end of a cookie plate. A stupid, zombie cookie-dispenser! A few men missing their cookies! That's all her life meant. She could fall off the face of the earth this very instant without there being the slightest difference anyplace. In Ashlea she had left her handwork orders filled in advance, and that's all that mattered of her back there. That and the cookies. And ahead, in Wisconsin, she was nothing but a name on a card, standing for nothing nearly as specific as an insect's droppings. And here, on this train, nothing. Nobody would even look at her. She knew she was neat and clean, and even if her hair was straight, it had a nice chestnut color, and her clothes were all handsewn. Her clothes had stitches so fine nobody else in the world could match them. The monogram on her collar, alone would bring a fortune around Ashlea, and it was her own work. She stroked it fervently, sure that people would like it if only they would look. She sprang up, grabbed her sewing bag off the shelf and pulled out her handwork. She took out her scissors and snipped great lengths of colored thread. Then, her scissors on her lap, she flourished her handwork, made great exaggerated motions of stitches, though not even now could she bring herself to mar her work with a stitch made in motion. But nobody looked at her, nobody looked at her work. The dark of night out the window had become a confusion of light which meant Madison. Time was about up. Quickly she flung her handwork into the aisle but nobody looked at it. Nobody accorded it even the curious glance they would have given a bag of laundry. Instead they were collecting themselves, and would soon be trampling her work in their exit if she didn't pick it up.

Well people would look. Sooner or later they would look, and they and the whole wide world in all six directions would know that there was a Lurline Ashworth, and that she was the daughter of Charles Ashworth, suicide and Stella Ashworth, madwoman, and all the rest. And that they had not lived for no purpose, but to produce Lurline Ashworth, a person of consequence. Some day there would be people waving her off when she left, and waiting for her when she arrived, and if everything weren't just right for her perfect honor and comfort, heads would topple. She didn't know just how it would come about, but she'd find a way. In fact, she was suddenly so sure of that that a little smile crossed her face. After all, hadn't she gotten herself out of Ashlea and on a train to Wisconsin without even trying?

By now she had picked up her embroidery, and had stuffed the work into her bag. She closed the bag with a loud clack of its wooden handles, and one last time looked

gold upholstery on the seat beside her own, and then just slipped them into her pocket, where they'd be handy. She slung her coat across her arm, pulled her parcels off the shelf, looped them over her wrists by the twine that tied them, gripped her bags and catalog, lunged through to the front of the car, and was the first one off the train.

*Marilyn Georgas*



## The Man on the Bridge Mr. Paterson has gone away

I.

It's winter now, this afternoon in Houston.  
Downtown, a low bridge bends in the rain.  
The man on the bridge in his black raincoat is trying  
to open a small black umbrella which doesn't work.  
His dark hair unfurls to the thick flow of cold breezes.  
The drizzle mist laces his mustache with pain.  
Looking at him I know I am looking at myself.

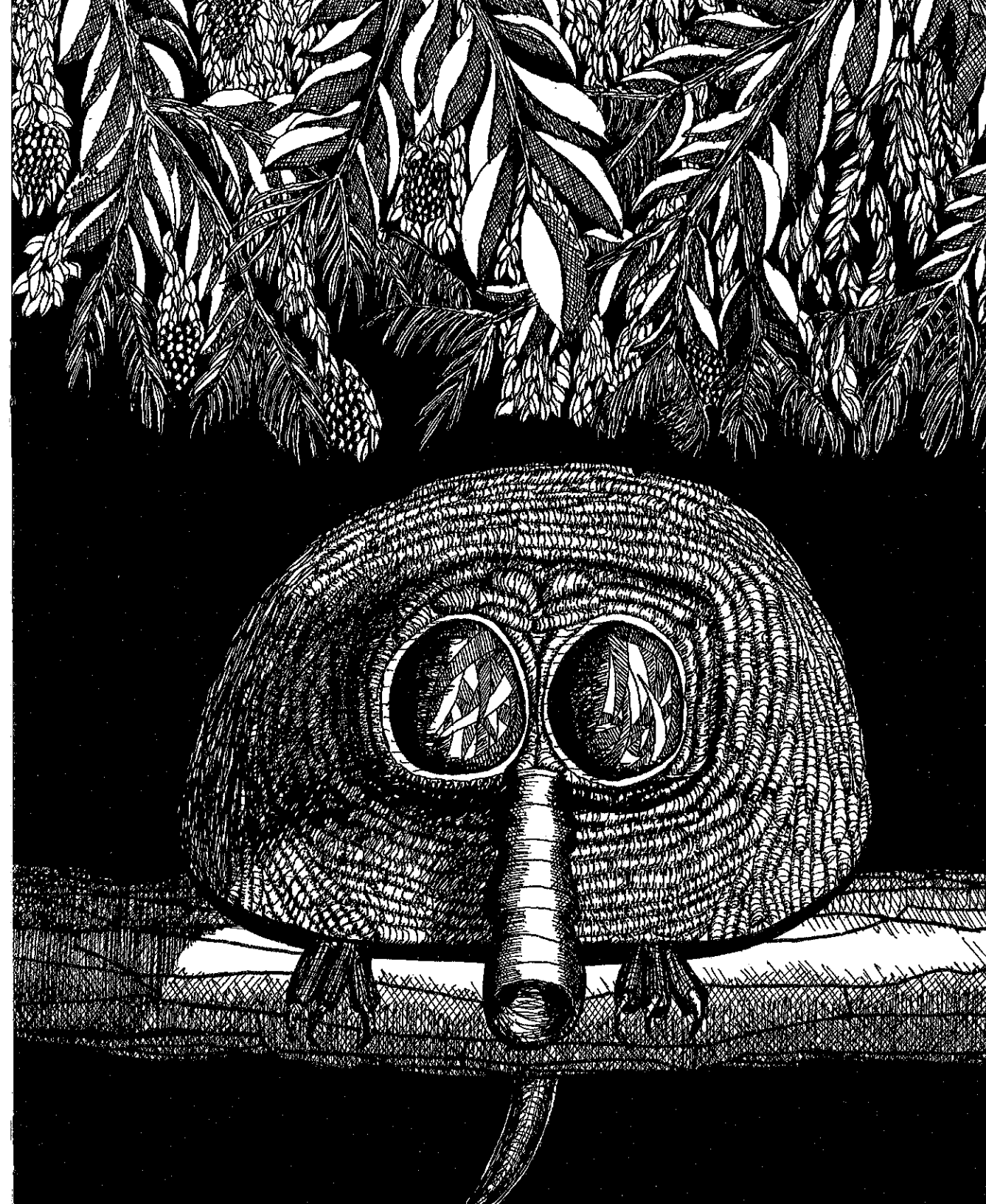
II.

I walk to the edge of the bridge  
and stare at the water below.  
My thoughts climb away from this scene  
like pigeons rise over the slow  
trough of the green Passaic River  
under an overpass near Paterson, New Jersey.  
It's almost twelve years since I sat,  
furtive, afraid, like a mad  
animal among the pylons there  
stoning some petrified muskrat  
for stealing a wild bird's eggs,  
in love with the ladylike willows  
whose roots dangle over those banks  
like wooden legs . . .

III.

Standing on the bridge  
just wondering what I am doing.  
Is it still raining and why  
can't I open this effeminate umbrella?  
Tell me,  
whatever happened to  
mama's little man.

*Michael Cannito*



## Confinement

The ironing-board bed rotates  
leaving her on her stomach,  
eyes focused on tiles.

One, two, three, four, five tiles;  
five, four, three, two, one tile.

Seconds slide into minutes  
minutes creep into an hour.

Pain clamps down on both temples traverses  
to the neck settles in the shoulders lodging  
there like a permanent boarder never to move on  
into unfeeling limbs.

The ironing-board bed rotates  
leaving her on her back,  
eyes focused on three paint lumps.

*Joan Letulle*

“1917 to 1974, Hurrah”

The army was cancelled due to rain  
falling plainly on South Main,  
the enemy demands a rematch,  
and the war will be held tomorrow.

Tune in again next week  
for your hour of pity and sorrow,  
but please be sure and catch the war  
to be held here tomorrow.

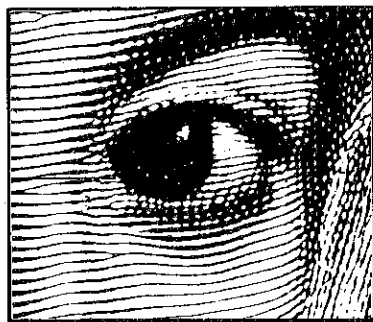
Boost your team with a patriotic gleam,  
and a huzzah or two for those remaining few  
who lay the victors' claim on the war held here,  
tomorrow.

Then read the “strongest nations' prose”  
of the vanguishment of foes,  
by the use of repeated blows,  
and selections of matches  
guaranteed to hold the crown  
in their own home town,  
barring that sad session,  
leading to concession,

if

it

rains



## A Living Off The Change Of Other Lives

He's a scrawny little man  
on hush puppy oxfords, brown  
little man with a dirty white  
band around his hat.

You don't see his face because  
he never reveals — only from behind  
as his lithe hand sweeps the nooks  
and crannies of the vending machine  
slots.

A nickel, a dime, occasionally a  
jackpot — but it keeps him where  
he is — a scrawny little man, brown,  
living off the change of other lives.

We're not so different — this scrawny  
little man and I —  
I, too, plan to make a living off the  
change in others' lives.

The difference, if any, is that I hope  
to inspire and guide those changing lives

## Reply to Corinna

In my eyes corner I can see a  
Celery-slender gamine, pigtails flying  
As she whirls a merry-go-round around;  
No pistons made could stroke the fluid drive  
of those wild legs. And I, stout I, run on.  
No full-blown gourd, but melonish I push  
And wish that mind could discipline its body,  
Rouse the slumbering form that curls up for a  
winter's sleep upon an April morning  
While his brother is but limbering up his  
lucubrating legs. So when the intellect  
Has hit his loping stride, he runs alone.  
A stiffening body shuffles at a distance;  
Vacant eyes confess that will is not enough;  
The sobbing throat confesses that Prince  
Jonathan relinquishes his throne to  
Upstart David. Loosening his tunic  
Scratching young but white and hairless ankles;  
He concedes. And, oh, how brief a reign.

*Tim Summerlin*





1

### Summer in Fairbanks

is like a dull dream. From time to time  
 the paper boy comes grinning with proof that  
 something has happened after all. Here  
 where the highways end. To go north  
 from here, you must be a bird or wealthy.  
 The prospectors have each been starved and strained  
 away down southward and to old folks homes.  
 Here is where the nights end too. Never  
 to sense the dark for days is strange, and not  
 so hot as one might think. It is strange  
 always to be able to see, and say:  
 that is there and that is there and that  
 is over there, always. Strange, not to tell  
 the end of days by any other way  
 than clocks, and meals; televisions turning off.  
 Different, for things to seem  
 to the eyes like one day, that somehow  
 has slowed down to months, years, icebergs  
 of minutes so separated by an absence  
 from anything that ever came before,  
 that the anxious people find themselves  
 waiting for the swish on their lime lawns  
 of the dirty tennis shoes of  
 the grinning paper boy who brings them yesterday.

*Leon Stokesbury*

### Written in November

I have come to the window seat  
 in the farthest room of the house,  
 dragging a quilt made by someone's aunt  
 in Saginaw, Oklahoma.  
 The days are longer here, the nights  
 a file of cool, thin shadows  
 that uncover me before the morning.  
 My thoughts have passed these panes before,  
 like a doe running through a morning mist  
 in early autumn, seeking answers  
 to the forced pounding of her clean-cut hoofs.  
 She is the color of the used-up leaves  
 that fall before me, cover the yard, and bring me out

### Of Poets and Poetics: A Parody

Expectoration in the wind  
 Is reading poems like this,  
 or even good ones,  
 Aflame with — no, pregnant with —  
 the seed and fire of impotent genius . . .  
 Void and virgin versifiers vying to conceive  
 (metaphorically of course)  
 the sweating depths, the orgiastic agony, the . . .  
 Oh you quasi-dupes of dark despair,  
 It is fortune who should be outraged!  
 Words and lapses, lines and woes,  
 sorrows, sighs and similes  
 Taxied across the page by literary hacks,  
 Searching the gutters for gems,  
 the garbage cans for Holy Grails,  
 the bars and carnivals and midnight streets  
 For lost elusive Eleanors.  
 All tranquil thoughts and thunderings,  
 varied and de-versified,  
 Fertilize the unwilling earthiness  
 Of unweeded garden-books of rhyme  
 (but careful to unrhyme it first) —  
 The cautious cultivation of tares  
 demands a dext-rous thumb . . .  
 Exacting disregard  
 of meter, reader, taste and tune  
 Is necessary to produce a peach,  
 a priceless, poignant peach.  
 Oh you amusing modern muses,  
 You pimps of sacred poesy  
 who prostitute Calliope  
 in epic-like cacography:  
 "I think that I shall never see  
 A poet cleverer than me . . ."  
 But that were fine and right;  
 Such depths are plumbable, at least.

And now, you oft-despised spirits of a now-forgotten age,  
 When poetry was honor to the gods,  
 the noblest voice of man,  
 Look kindly down upon your insufferable servants.  
 Brave Keats and noble More,  
 Marlowe, Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope,  
 Gentle Wordsworth and brazen Burns,  
 O Rare Ben Jonson and Byron bold-  
 You bards of beauty canonized  
 For truth, and reverence for rhyme . . .  
 Forgive them for they know not what they do,

### C. Browne: an occurrence

C. Browne left this earth lying flat on his back in the emergency room of a hospital. He looked around, through a searing, clammy sweat, at the white tiled walls, and the row of black upholstered and chrome stretchers, each bisected laterally by a narrow white sheet. Struggling, he tried to explain to the three women hovering over him that they couldn't put a tube up his nostril and down into his throat because his nose had been broken. But they did, and he gagged when the tube began to go down his esophagus. An enormous, grey haired, round woman kept telling him to swallow. He gulped and gulped at the tube as she pushed it into his nose. When she was satisfied that the tube had gone down into his stomach, she poured water into it until his stomach was filled, and the water ran back up into his esophagus, and into his trachea. Feeling himself drowning, he cursed and tried to sit up. They pushed him down and tied him to the stretcher with a strap. Putting a pillow under his head, they left. He watched the water and then the blood run out of his stomach by closing one eye, and looking over the bridge of his nose at the flow through the tube.

Another woman, a nurse, he supposed, and a man came into the room and pulled his pants down. "Stupid," he thought, "take off my shoes." But all they did was roll him on his side and give a shot. The nurse left, but the man stayed and completed the undressing. When he was naked, the man helped him into a hospital gown, and put a sheet over his legs. He said something that C. Browne didn't understand. He kept saying it, until Browne suddenly realized that the man wanted a urine sample, and that there was a pot between his legs. He tried to concentrate, but he kept going to sleep.

"We'll have to catheterize you, if you can't help us Mr. Browne."

"Goddam it, I can't pee laying down."

"Do you want me to get the catheter, then?"

But the pot got warm, and he was saved the ignominy of the orderly's ministrations. He went to sleep. Then a lady in a suit, with a gold brooch on the lapel, was standing next to him. She had a clipboard with a sheaf of papers on it.

"Do you have health insurance, Mr. Browne?"

"Yes, we have a group policy with Gargantuan National."

"Do you have any other coverage, Blue Cross, Blue Shield, or any sort of daily benefit plan?"

"No."

"I see. This is an assignment of benefits, and this is an admission form; would you sign in the places indicated?"

"I can't see without my glasses," Browne thought he said. The woman repeated her request, then asked him if he needed any help.

Not giving him a chance to reply she said, "would you help your husband, please, Mrs. Browne?"

"Here's your glasses, honey. Can you sign the forms, or do you want me to do it?"

"I'll do it," Browne said, glad that his wife was there, and wondering where she had been. The woman held the clipboard up for him and he tried to find the places for his signature. He scrawled his name once, but couldn't control the pen.

"I'll sign for him," his wife said, taking the pen and the clipboard. Browne lay back on the pillow and watched the lights on the ceiling, then tried to turn on his side. The strap held him down, and the tube pulled against the cartilage in his nose. He asked for a cigarette, directing the question to no one in particular. "The doctor said that you shouldn't smoke, honey, it will make you sick," came his wife's reply.

Browne rolled his head on the pillow and saw his wife looking up at him from below the edge of the stretcher. "She must be sitting down" he thought.

"Let me have a cigarette, puddin'."

"I just told you that you can't smoke, it will make you sick."

"You dumbass bitch, I already am sick, goddam it," Browne shouted. He shouted because his wife was so far away. He had tunnel vision and his wife's head seemed to be much larger than it should have been to fit her body. "It must be the drug," he thought. He looked for the woman with the clipboard, but she was no longer there. "Just let me have a cigarette, if it makes me sick I won't smoke it." Silently, his wife put a cigarette between his lips and held a match to it. Nauseated, he took two short puffs, then indicated that she should take it away. When she leaned over to take it out of his mouth, one of her hands touched his. He caught it, and held it. Turning it over, he traced, "I love you," in her palm with his finger. She leaned back over him and kissed him on the side of the mouth. When she did, he realized that the fluid in the tube was all a dark, muddy-looking color. Then he went to sleep.

He woke again, briefly, to the touch of a cold, wet sponge on his belly. An orderly was washing his abdomen. Seeing that he was awake, the man said, "I'm going to prepare you for surgery, Mr. Browne. You're going to get a free shave."

Browne watched as the man finished washing his belly and groin, then began gently shaving him.

"You be careful down there."

The orderly grinned, and Browne went back to sleep again before the man was done. He woke one other time, and thought that he was alone, then died.

*Jesse Green*





### “About My Own Dark Lady Leaving”

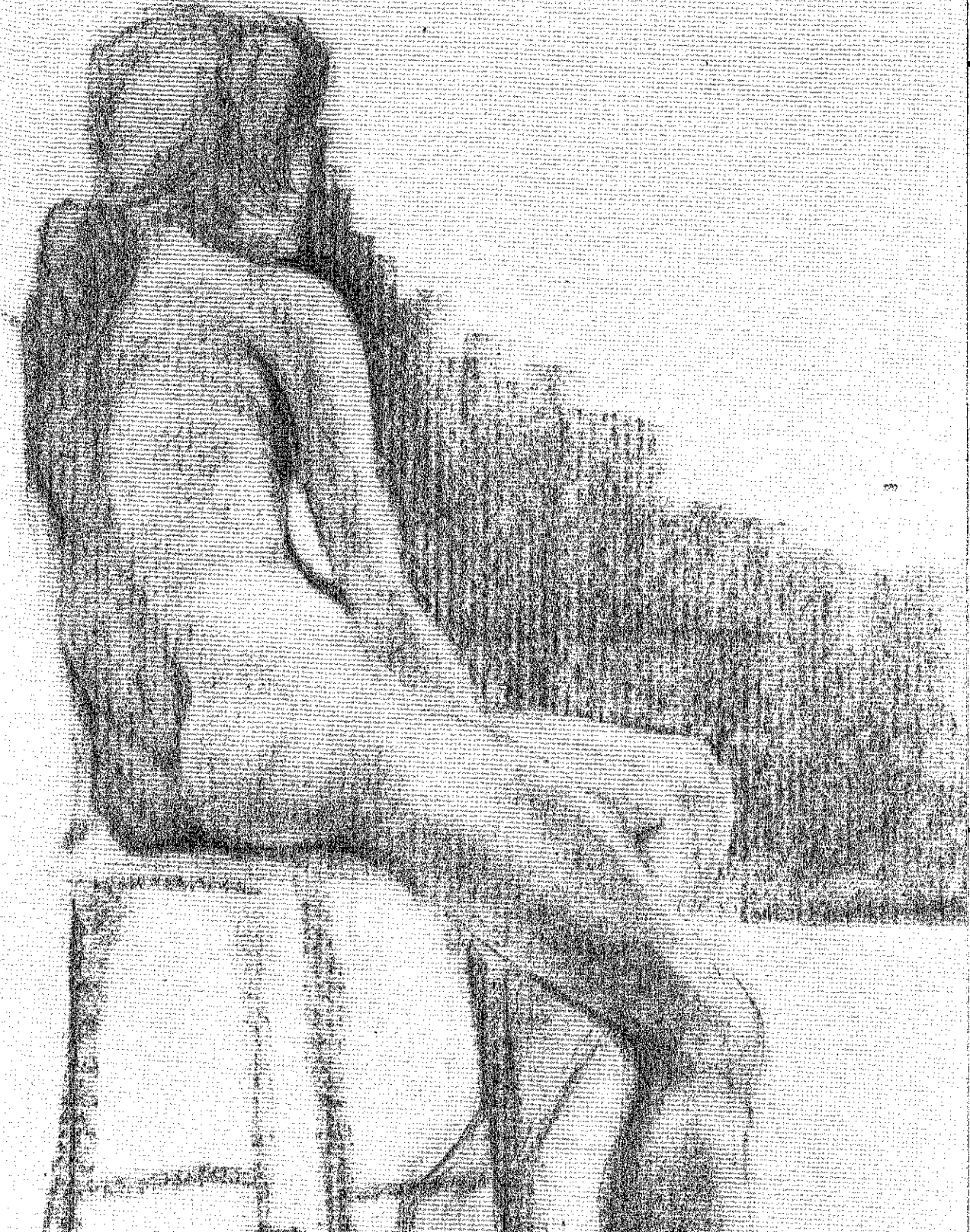
If I could look behind her eyes  
I'd find the joy, perhaps the pain,  
That makes her speak in terms of rain  
When she means sun. I fantasize  
To think that she means me  
In saying that she'd like to stay,  
But I am sure it's not that way,  
For she believes in mystery.

It's something else, that has to do  
With why she's younger than her years,  
And why she sleeps with quiet fears  
That Alph runs dry in Xanadu,  
That love is just an old man's song  
Sung to the tune of broken strings,  
A painful flight on broken wings  
To places where she won't belong.

No wonder that she sits and sighs,  
And asks me why I tell such lies.

*Dale Priest*





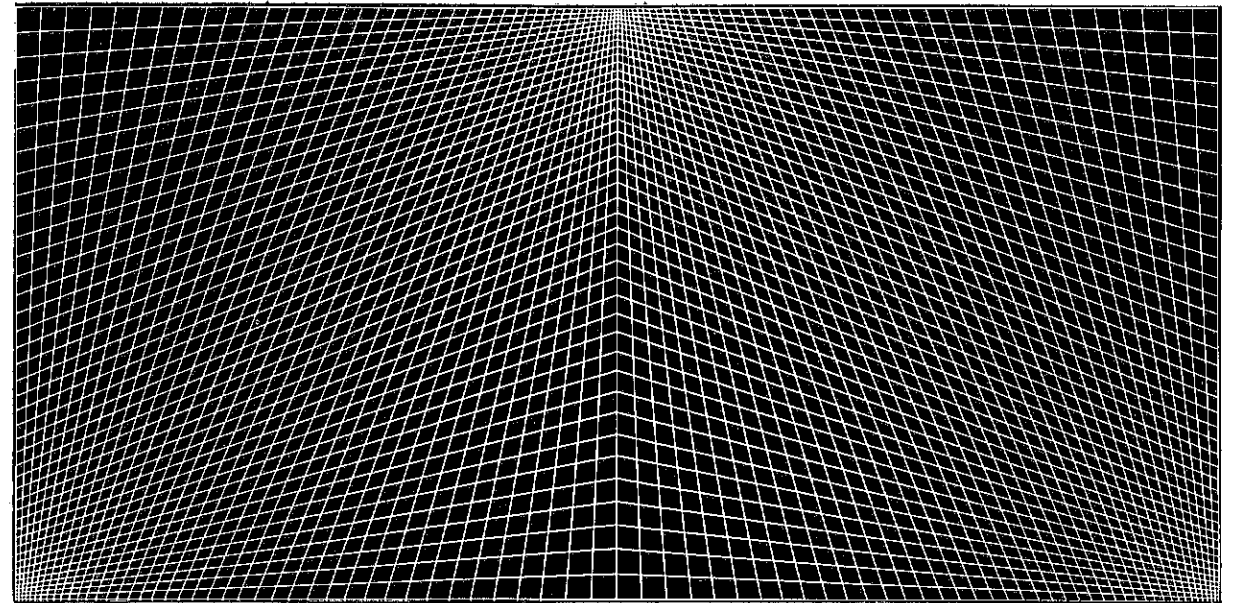
## The Nothing of Infinity

I have always remembered a cartoon I once read in a magazine. Two prehistoric lungfish were cautiously crawling out of the sea onto a beach. They were destined to be the first vertebrates to walk or crawl on land. One lungfish turned to his companion and said, "Well, here goes nothing". His odd statement about their momentous undertaking caused me to ponder its meaning. At first, I considered two possible reasons for the statement; the cartoonist wanted to amuse the reader or the speaking lungfish was unaware of the importance of the deed he and his companion were doing. Success would have meant the continuance of Earth's evolutionary process while failure would have caused a delay in the process or set it off on an entirely different tangent. Nevertheless, the lungfishes could not have realized that and were, therefore, skeptical about the significance of their emergence from the sea. Having finished reading the cartoon, I then proceeded to smother my questions with easy, apathetic answers.

Eventually, though, the answers I had provided were not enough. Not even the traditional Christian assurances were sufficient. I needed explanations for the nagging curiosities about the universe as a whole the lungfish's statement had spawned within my mind. Two thousand years of tradition melted away under the heat of contemplation as I gazed into the Milky Way, walked along a beach, or sauntered through a quiet forest. It soon became necessary to re-examine my reasoning about the meaning of the lungfish's words and see if I would come up with another view of the universe.

In one way, "nothing" was an appropriate word for the lungfish to use in describing its venture. I do not mean that the whole process of creation, evolution, and intelligence is so unimportant as to justify labeling it "nothing". Still the word raises speculation about the relative nature of life and the universe. However, speculation of this sort often places me in opposition with traditional philosophies. Nonetheless, if I accept traditional philosophies without questioning, I will become an ancient relic as time and knowledge leaves me behind.

The most widely-accepted theory of the Universe's creation is the Implosion-Explosion theory. Implosion is the bursting inward of matter while Explosion is its bursting outward. Implosion constitutes the annihilation of the universe; Explosion means the creation and sustainment of the universe with all its components, whatever they may all be. Consider the proposition that the nature of life and other

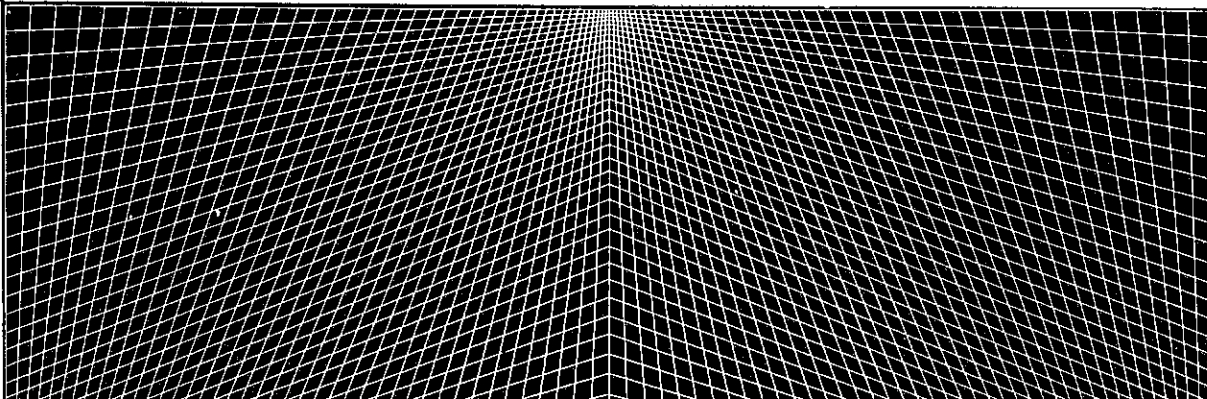


characteristics of the universe evolves only during the explosion cycles and is destroyed during the Implosion cycles. Add to this the possibility that the Implosion-Explosion cycles alternate throughout all infinity. There would be no reason to completely discount the thought that, during the Explosion cycles, universes, maybe similar universes, were produced in the past and will continue to be produced in the future. Each universe would have an indeterminate time of existence and, within this time, the entire processes of creation, evolution, and intelligence occur, ending in the Implosion cycle.

For this reason, the lungfish's use of the term "nothing" is appropriate. The act of emerging from the sea to the land is insignificant, having occurred an infinite number of times in the past and will continue to occur an infinite number of times in the future. Perhaps the lungfishes had little comprehension of infinity when they crawled forth, but they were following a continuing pattern beyond their total understanding. Their deed, in relationship to the endless tapestry of time, was insignificant and the lungfishes had a feeling of its insignificance.

The word "nothing" may not be considered fairly if one fails to realize what the significance of the lungfishes' emergence from the sea is to their particular explosion cycle within which the act takes place. Without their endeavor, the evolutionary process upon their particular planet and within their explosion cycle would be disrupted with unimaginable results. The deed is, therefore, necessary to keep evolution intact and complete the process within the cycle. This realization gives their walk on land its importance. The significance of their action is realized by those of their descendants who will inherit the consequences of their deed.

So tradition has been challenged in the above paragraphs. Whether the speculation is correct or not may not be within our present ability to ascertain. Imprisoned within the excapist walls of religion and tradition, man was unprepared for a confrontation with infinity. When he finally came face-to-face with infinity, he fled back within the prison walls from which he had ventured forth. His need for a finite awareness of the universe did not correlate with the infinite universe and the infinity, being beyond his comprehension, filled him with terror. I, therefore, expect cold rejection of the above speculations by the traditionalists. However, new questions about divine guidance and the immortal soul can be raised; questions man will have to answer as his time goes on.





## Now the Brass Monkey

Huge ears of corn  
drive down the highway  
on motorcycles.  
The armadillos  
are getting out of hand.  
And eight miles under  
the Plain of Jarres  
old women gnaw the roots  
of family trees.  
Still we lament  
for such melees  
shall never come again.

Now the brass monkey  
climbs down from the dresser.  
He goes into the bathroom  
for toothpaste and remains.

The brass monkey is scrawling  
brief memos for me  
in toothpaste on the walls,  
like "Dust off that radio."  
And, "Pick up the clock."  
"I have lived in this pig pen  
"long enough."  
Or, "Have you no pride?"  
And, "Where is your feeling for me?"

The messages continue but  
I cannot see.  
The brass monkey has laid toothpaste  
on my eyes.  
I hear him smashing dishes  
in the kitchen.  
I think I am blind.  
I hear him setting fire  
to the parlor.  
"Let's purge this styl!"  
He cackles in the dark.

*Michael Cannito*

## My Regards

You are one  
with the trees  
and old music.

You smile from  
between the shingles  
of the big house  
that everybody wants.

You are the optimism  
of just-born leaves  
on the branches.

*April Adams*

Days are assembled on the sheets  
like so many roaches about their  
natural business, **30x12x30**  
or ladybugs perhaps, lady bird beetles  
with a hunger for mosquitoes.

Thirty years would be an eternity —  
Barbara Striesand throating "I should live so long?"

Perspective is the impossible dream,  
particularly at its conclusion.  
The axe at the door fades and grows like a heartbeat  
in a play without resolution.

A blade of grass between my toes,  
a lost world in the bit of dandruff under my fingernail —  
Damn, are those cats bringing in fleas again?  
I should have children —  
doors opening violently  
doors closing softly  
and there is a soundtrack . . .

I retire to the study to play my electric violin.  
How far can the music be heard? If there is music in the air,  
does it depend on neighborhood harmonies?  
How old is it, how familiar?  
If I were a child  
I'd want a bottle-full of those fireflies.

*Carl Terwilliger*

## Sonnet

I thank you for the offer of your all,  
Presented on such a very gorgeous platter;  
Venus herself would feel a trifle small,  
Not having what you've got, and somewhat flatter.  
You make the pent steam whistle in my gauge  
As the banked fires leap to life again;  
It has to put all Nature in a rage  
To see a senior citizen in such pain.

Your butt would startle birds, your lovely legs!  
Your face, your toothsome tits denote a winner;  
But how could you arrange to fry my eggs,  
And could we ever manage Sunday dinner?

You're a real piece of cake, as I have said,  
But dammit Baby, I must live by bread



**November 11, 1973**

The scratching of my pen on this paper.  
Dead leaves that scratched the roof  
of a train car at Compiègne.  
The scratching of another pen: guilt.

Grandfather  
you were there when the world went sad,  
there as another war began  
the minute that the ink dried.  
Did you hear tree limbs  
clacking in the cold wind,  
clacking like the engine that idled  
on the track, clacking like the big guns  
at Verdun. Did you hear the late birds  
from their trees call down?

(Hitler remembered the dining car,  
the clearing in the French woods.  
I wonder did the birds bicker then  
on their shaky branches.)

And all this so long forgotten  
that I must go to books now.

Today I will study German,  
will read a few lines of a Soviet novel,  
will write this poem.

*Jo Ann Thrash*



**Awards**

Spring 1974

**Eleanor Poetry Award\***

- I. "White Summer Sheets"
- II. "Salesman"
- III. (tie) "Release"  
"The Trees Moan"

**Pulse Poetry Award**

- I. "The Man On The Bridge"
- II. (tie) "Grand Island"  
"Winters in Kirbyville"
- III. (tie) "Now the Brass Monkey"  
"Of Poets and Poetics"

**Professor's Poetry Award**

- I. "About my own Dark Lady Leaving"  
honorable mention:  
"Sonnet of Fire"  
"At Beaver Dam, Ark."

**Pulse Short Fiction Award**

- "C. Browne: an occurrence"  
honorable mention:  
"One Level Below"  
"The Day It Rained Down Peas"

**Pulse Essay Award**

- I. "The Nothing of Infinity"
- II. "A Recognition"
- III. "The 'Goodman' of Watergate"

**Rowe Scholarship for Belle Lettres**

April Adams

\*Sponsored by Mrs. Eleanor Weinbaum