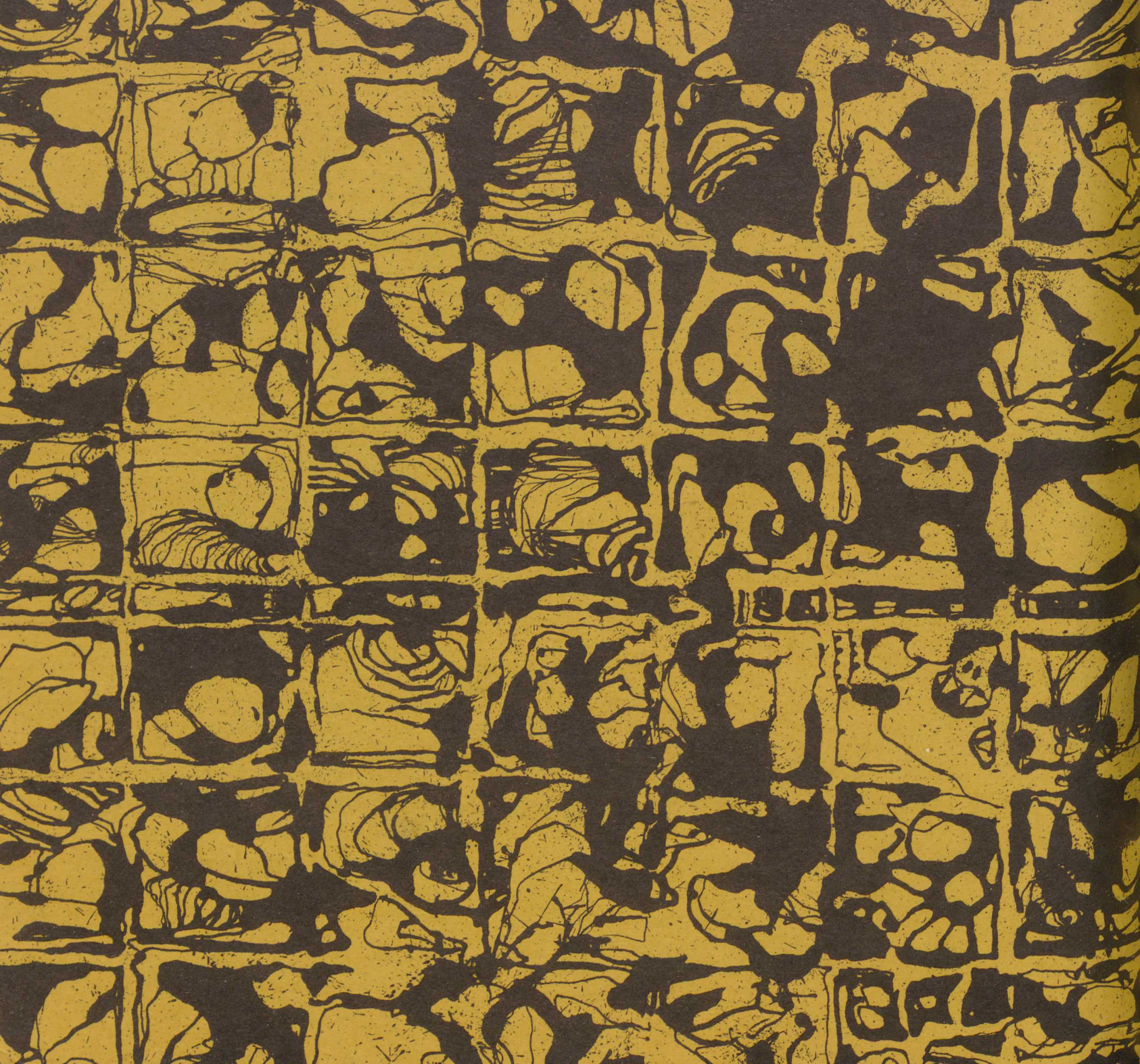




Towers Volume xxxviii Spring Nineteen Seventy-two









# TOWERS

Volume XXXVIII

Spring 1972

Northern Illinois University



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## Awards

### TOWERS AWARD FOR POETRY

Judge, Jay Paul, NIU

Graduate award

Flora Foss, Dream of the Daughter, page 18

Undergraduate award

William Hoagland, Flakes in Summer's Night, page 26

### J. HAL CONNOR AWARD FOR CREATIVE PROSE

Judge, Robert H. Wilson, NIU

Coordinator, Joanne Starzec

Graduate award

Dennis Dillow, He Would Have Given Us Wings, page 43

Undergraduate award

A.J. Niekrasz, Dear Reader, page 11

### E. RUTH TAYLOR AWARD FOR CRITICAL WRITING

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Coordinators, Mary L. Uhl, Ray Heilmann

Graduate award

nothing deemed worthy

Undergraduate award

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### MAUDE UHLAND AWARD FOR FRESHMAN WRITING

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Coordinators, Cathy Killian, Mary Hirt

Christine Okon, Prayer, page 41

### TOWERS ART AWARDS

Judge, Ed Syrek, NIU

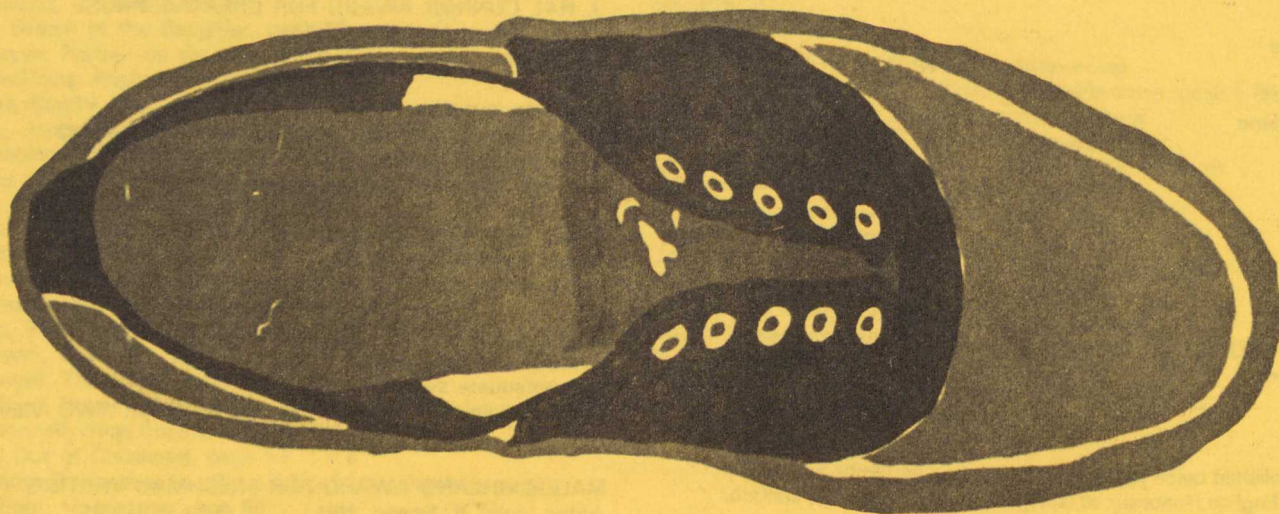
Graduate award

Jonathan O'Fiel, Autumn Calendar, print, cover

Undergraduate award

Susan Bowen, untitled, wall weaving, page 48





John Dzuryak



Carl Terwilliger

Oh Dear Polly Glass  
or McKuen Rod

You sit there— near, as if  
enveloped  
in one gigantic tear.  
I can't see your face  
it has grown dimmer these last days.  
I have come to your parlor  
and given you a straw—  
you put it in your cherry phosphate  
'n sipped it.  
but do not stir, you might break that tear— and  
flood the booth.  
This is not the time for me to get my feet wet,  
my non-slip sole would fail me— its true.  
and you tire, I'm sure, of the sight and sound of rubber slippage—  
need I explain?—  
It is but a bad dream of adolescence:  
the spin of wet wheels in spring  
to the tune of straight-through-mufflers and dual exhausts,  
the staccato of thunderdrops on the convertible top,  
on the backroads of your mind,  
or outside of one-night cheap motels  
your incredible mind:  
the eraser of all but the poetry of it. . .  
But there now, you have finished—  
I have come, now I must go  
into that next eternal moist valley of spring to grasp I know not what!

You stand there— near,  
almost as if you...fear...  
the feel of my  
white,  
somewhat-soiled  
tennis shoe on your face...  
my soul is wet with parting—  
do not look back in anger  
lest you catch the scent of fresh, wet rubber as I go.

A good year, oh dear Polly Glass!



# The Snow Shovelers

Larry Voves

you shoulda seen them snow-shovelers  
shovelin that snow.  
choppin and diggin like they was  
hopin to strike oil or gold  
when all they was doin  
was diggin their own graves.  
you shoulda seen us kids  
laughing at them snow-shovelers,  
throwin big oldeadly chunks of  
ice on their clean sidewalks  
tryin our hardest to make em mad.  
but they jus kep on shovelin  
that snow.  
never looked up,  
never smiled, never frowned...  
never even knew what snow was



## Poetry Reading

Norma Terpening

her palm wilts  
the violets tied  
with lavender yarn

men nod,  
puffing rhythms  
with pipes

the poet pauses  
for water  
& silent approval

I envy the poet  
or is it his water?

## A Few Last Words

Rich Schmidt

Don't turn me off just yet, at least  
Let me say in passing, a few words  
To you, all those in the beast  
Of suicide, dragging senseless herds  
In a Trojan trap, to a fiery grave.  
Earth may soon become a burning sun,  
Lighting the days of alien ones,  
Ignorant of our power to destroy.  
I strive to see one face brave  
Enough to attempt the final run.  
Instead, ignore me. I sense you will  
Never heed the pleas of the dying earth.  
Dump the unsanitary land-fill,  
Destroy the fading promise of rebirth.



# A Whole New Generation of Chicken-Eaters Coming Up, or What Chicagoland Wants, Chicagoland Gets

Dick Steele

The hollowed spot where Colonel Sanders stands  
Is where we drive our golden spike.

Gold is still the color of dreams.

Now I don't mean the veritable spot,  
Not like the two by two patch of  
Various herbs and spices growing  
In your kitchen window box.

I mean the mystic spot, you know,  
Like the one where Bhudda sat immovable.

He was tempted too.  
Not by golden chicken though.

It's what we have to be tempted by  
That makes the difference.

Each generation has to find  
The glint of gold somewhere.

That's the secret recipe,  
Don't you see.



and here I could have been sweating and  
grunting to deposit a teaspoonful of  
warm bluish milk within you

Let me say first of all  
that there will be no lightening images in this poem.  
Perhaps a swallow will glide by  
in the warm night air—  
and of him we will take note—  
but no orange weather or atomic nutcrackers,  
just you and I  
here in the moonlight.

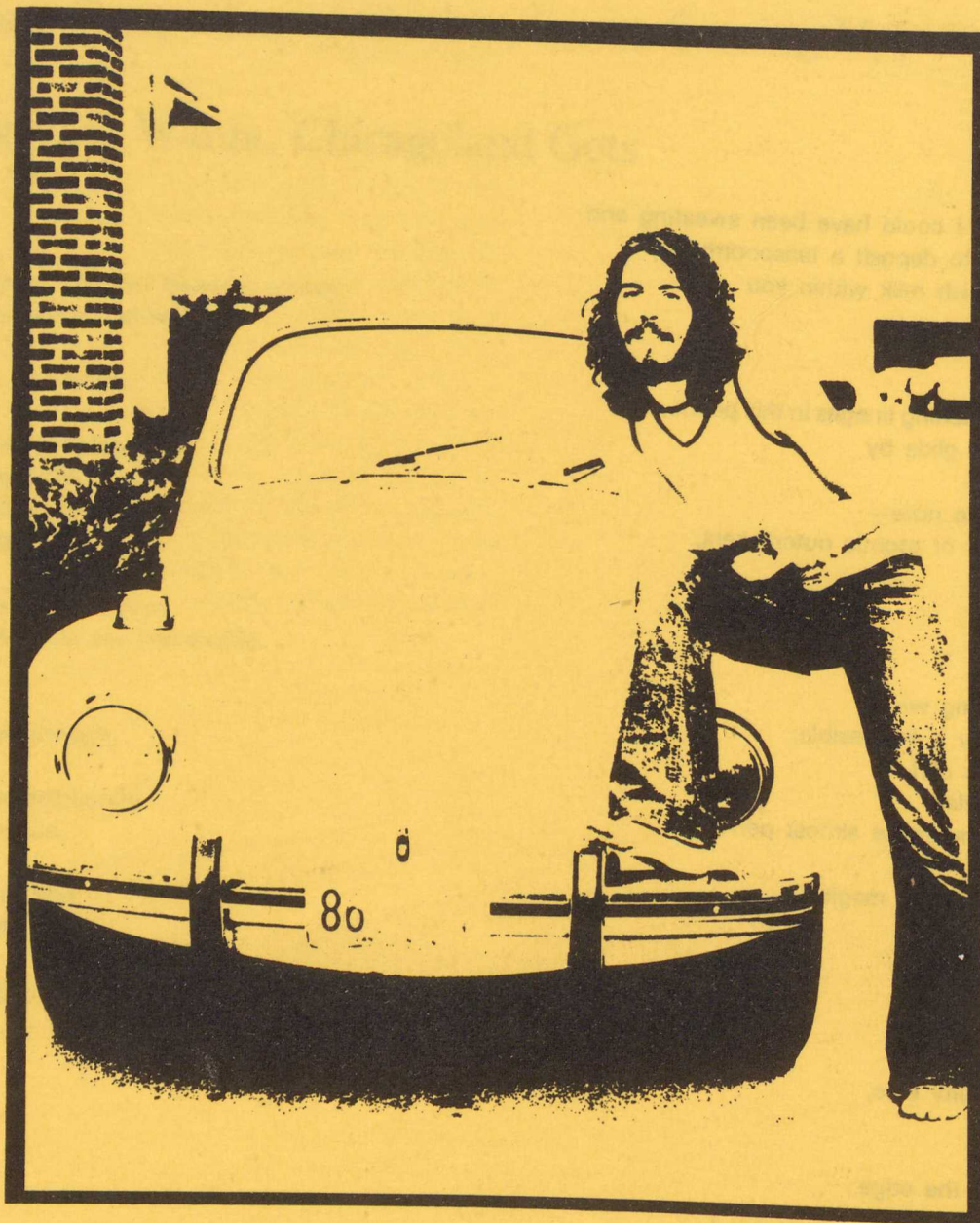
Drinking wine,  
let us not forget drinking wine,  
for without wine poetry is impossible;  
and let's place us on a cliff  
overlooking a pined valley,  
for that would make the scene almost perfect.

Moments, music like this are magic...  
if they have been sung  
by every poet from Pindar to  
P-321  
let us still sing them  
and yell them  
and whisper them in salty ears,

let us realize Beauty  
is never frayed around the edge.

Gary O. Holland





Kathy Stenman



For lack of anything better to do, I've decided to write a story. However, I'm going to let you, Dear Reader, participate in its development, in the sense that as the story progresses, we'll flip a coin — that is, I'll be doing the flipping since you obviously can't participate physically in the act, my presence being only in these words that you're reading — to see what developments take place.

For example, I have three plots in mind:

*PLOT A*

A young man goes to a beautiful, young woman's apartment and tries to put the make on her.

*PLOT B*

A young man waits in his hotel room for the hotel's beautiful, young cleaning woman in order to put the make on her as she changes his linen.

*PLOT C*

A young man walks into a bar, where he meets beautiful, young barmaid and tries to put the make on her.

Now it really doesn't make any difference to me which plot I should use since I have nothing profound to express, no great metaphysical problem to present to you, so, I'll let this coin decide whether we'll work with A, B, or C. Heads is YES while tails is NO.

*FIRST TOSS: A-tails, B-heads, C-heads*

*SECOND TOSS: B-heads, C-heads*

*THIRD TOSS: B-heads, C-tails*

*FINAL RESULT: Plot B to be used*

Well, as you can see from the FINAL RESULT, we are supposed to use Plot B (If you have already forgotten the contents of this plot, see above). Before we get the action under way, we have to have some idea of our main characters — the horny young man and the beautiful, young cleaning woman. For the former I have three types in mind:

A. J. Niekrasz

Dear Reader



### TYPE A

HECTOR is a handsome, well built graduate of U.C.L.A., where he lettered in every sport and was an honorary member of each fraternity. The opposite sex seems to have an affinity for our Hector's sheepish, country boy looks. His curly-wooly blond hair is an innocent tumble over a set of twinkling, light blue eyes which twinkle affably whenever he smiles (which is often), revealing two neat rows of sparkling white teeth. His personality and philosophy can be summed up by this, his favorite response towards Life: "It may not be a bowl of cheerries, but, *hot dawg*, it's downright *sweet*, it is!"

### TYPE B

LOTHAR is sinfully ugly. His face breaks out constantly—as if he were on a steady diet of grease balls—and his teeth are in a state of profound decay, lending his breath an evil, foul-smelling odor, like that which issues from the depths of a toilet wherein a 300 pound wrestler with a nervous stomach has just relieved himself while waiting for the start of a championship match. Needless to say, Lothar is hopelessly unsuccessful with the opposite sex. Whenever aroused, he endeavors to sublimate the sexual "instinct" by writing erotic poems. His outlook on Life is: "It's a shit sandwich—eat it, and be thankful."

### TYPE C

ERNEST is neither handsome nor ugly. In fact, he is about as stimulating as a bar of soap. One may always find him sitting alone in his room, staring at his hands, trying to come up with a reason for getting up out of bed. If asked for an opinion concerning some critical matter, his response tends to be: "I dunno...is it? Maybe it is...Then again, maybe not...I dunno..." Ernest has no outlook on Life.

Well, there you have three choices for the hero of this story.

Before I flip this coin, let me just say that if type C is the one fated to be the horny young man, we may have a problem on our hands. But, I assure you, Dear Reader, that this problem can be resolved, and in fact, it may lend another dimension to the dramatic element in the story (or lack of it).

*FIRST TOSS : A-tails, B-tails, C-heads*

*FINAL RESULT: Type C to be used*

What can I say? I assure you that I did not plan in advance to use type C and it is simply coincidental that the result came out that way. On the other hand, you may see the coincidence as something exciting — perhaps, some profound, mysterious Force has taken this story in hand and is leading it towards a conclusion laden with deep, dark, metaphysical insights. I doubt it. In any event, now type C has a motive for getting out of bed. Ernest is hot for the beautiful, young cleaning woman, and it is our job now to flip the coin and see which of the following three types will be the heroine:

### TYPE A

LINDA is five feet-five inches tall, has blue eyes and thick, blond hair which curls wantonly above her bosom. She measures 39-23-36, which is probably top heavy. She wears a white, cleaning woman's apron (the borders frilled and a chocolate brown mini-skirt which reveals a generous quantity of thigh area. She also wears black, knee-length dress boots. Her attitude is: "Everything is *so nice*: everyone seems to like me." (NOTE: I forgot to mention that Linda has no mental capacity whatsoever.)

### TYPE B

LYNDA is the same as type A, except that her breasts are artificial.



### TYPE C

ELFRIEDA is also similar to type A, except for an annoying habit that she has of qualifying what anyone may say with "*Das ist so schoen!*" This phrase, however, is consistent with the type A mentality.

*FIRST TOSS : A-tails, B-heads, C-heads*

*SECOND TOSS: B-heads, C-heads*

*THIRD TOSS: B-heads, C-heads*

*FOURTH TOSS: B-tails*

*FINAL RESULT: Type C to be used*

Since we now have a complete picture of the story's protagonist (Ernest) and antagonist (Elfrieda) and also an idea of what action should take place, it is now time for us to begin the story by describing the action's *setting* — that is, Ernest's hotel room (NOTE: Into the following three types of settings, I have cleverly incorporated the elements of action and sense of character so that the pace of this story can pick up a little.):

### TYPE A

Ernest got up out of his ordinary, single bed and walked two steps across the uncarpeted, wooden floor in order to sit down in the plain, upholstered couch which squatted beneath the window, now hidden by plain, gray-colored Sears Roebuck curtains. He sank down uncertainly into the couch and ran a weary hand through his dishwater-colored hair.

"Why have I gotten up out of bed today?" he wondered, his gray eyes scanning the four corners of his room rather thoughtfully. For a moment, his eyes rested on the little, characterless, wooden table upon which lay a box of unsalted crackers and his volumes of *GARDENING AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ENLIGHTENED ENGLAND* and *THE HA! HA! FENCE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE DEVELOPING LIBERAL SPIRIT OF THE LATE 1700's*. "Was it because, after all these years, I have finally decided to begin reading

those terribly dry books there, resting on that plain, wooden table which stands some five feet from the closet and the slate-colored sink upon which I have left unused a box of Arm and Hammer Baking Soda?...I dunno...was it? Maybe it was...Then again, maybe not...I dunno..."

It was only when his glance chanced to fall upon the disorder of his blankets on the ordinary, single bed that an insight stole cautiously through the gray matter of his brain. "Is it because Elfrieda, that beautiful, young maid, stimulates me, and I have a desire to share these blankets with her?...I dunno...Is it? Maybe it is...Then again, maybe not...I dunno..." He again ran a weary hand through his dishwater-colored hair and decided to wait for Elfrieda to come into his room and change his linen. Maybe she would have the answer.

### TYPE B

Ernest got up out of bed slowly, and, while absently examining the four bare walls of his unfurnished room, he sat down on the edge of the bed, running a weary hand through his slightly unkempt, dishwater-colored hair. His heart was pounding furiously, which was unusual for Ernest.

He had had a dream — and a most disturbing one at that. He dreamt that he was eating a box of unsalted crackers while sitting on the edge of the bed, trying to decide whether they had any taste, when suddenly, the door to his room opened and Elfrieda, the hotel's beautiful, young cleaning woman, walked in. She stood before him and, with a malicious look in her eyes, bared her breasts. Then, the dream dissolved, and he had found himself alone and strangely self-conscious.

Yes, it had been a most singular dream, he thought. Surely there had to be something significant about its content. Was it that he desired a coital relationship with Elfrieda? he wondered. His heart was pounding furiously, and he examined his hands, as if some answer lay hidden in the dirty crevices between his fingers.



### TYPE C

Ernest's room was neither the finest that the hotel had to offer, nor the worst. It was not the most spacious — yet, it was big enough for Ernest, for it was his room, and, if one would only look at the ordinary, single bed upon which this plain-looking young man sat, if one would only examine the tasteless curtains hanging from the windows or the insignificant, little table upon which were assembled a collection of the world's duller books and a box of unsalted Hi-Ho crackers or the gray-colored sink upon which a small box of baking soda stood, one would think that, in a way, the character of the room reflected that of its inhabitant.

But then, maybe one wouldn't, for, viewing the plain-looking young man more closely, one might notice a most singular light steal into his gray eyes, like the look of someone about to make some monumental decision which could influence the course of his life.

Perhaps this definitive light could be interpreted as a sudden recognition by Ernest of his amorous inclination towards the hotel's beautiful, young cleaning woman, Elfrieda. But then again, maybe not.

*FIRST TOSS: A-heads, B-tails, C-heads*

*SECOND TOSS: A-tails*

*FINAL RESULT: Type C to be used*

Dear Reader, we now have an expository setting for the beginning of our story. Keeping setting type C in mind, we must now bring Elfrieda into the story. I have three types of entrances in mind:

### TYPE A

The door to Ernest's room opened suddenly, and the plain-looking young man looked up from his hands and saw Elfrieda — all five feet-five inches, 39-23-36 of her — standing in the doorway, her thick, blond hair curling wantonly above

her bosom. She was dressed up in a white, cleaning woman's apron (the borders frilled) and a chocolate-brown mini-skirt, revealing a generous quantity of thigh area. She wore her usual black, knee-length dress boots.

"Guten Morgen — I am Elfrieda, the hotel's cleaning woman, come to change your linen. *Das ist shoen, ya?*"

### TYPE B

The door to Ernest's room opened suddenly, and the plain-looking young man looked up from his hands and saw Elfrieda — all five foot-five inches, 39-23-36 of her — standing in the doorway, naked as a peeled banana.

### TYPE C

The definitive light in Ernest's gray eyes increased in intensity as he heard a sudden knock on his door. The door blew open AND IN WALKED ELFRIEDA, THE HOTEL'S FANTASTICALLY BEAUTIFUL YOUNG MAID!!!

*FIRST TOSS: A-tails, B-heads, C-heads*

*SECOND TOSS: B-heads, C-heads*

*THIRD TOSS: B-heads*

*FOURTH TOSS: B-tails*

*FINAL RESULT: Type C to be used*

. . .

At this moment, I've decided to take a short break so that I can get myself a quick bite to eat, and maybe a smoke. So, while I'm gone, why don't you look over the story and see if you can make up some questions pertaining to what has developed so far.

For example: Is the story *relevant*? Does the protagonist's problem parallel that of the individual in modern society? (*Explain*) Does it have *universal* appeal? — *sex* appeal? Is



*crackers* an important symbol in the story? Why? How many times is *crackers* mentioned?

. . .

Okay, I'm back. Where were we?...We had just put Elfrieda into the story by way of type C entrance.

The drama of the story has now heightened considerably: Ernest and Elfrieda are alone in our hero's room. From this point on the pace of our story will pick up tremendously since *pace* is directly proportional to the *emotional intensity* of a story, as can be more readily seen in the following formula -- where, *P* equals *pace*, and *E.I.* equals *emotional intensity*:

$$\frac{P}{1} = \frac{E.I.}{1}$$

However, the *E.I.* of a story can be increased even further if one, paradoxically, can delay the action -- that is, the *pace* -- for a moment by employing various ingenious devices, such as a *flashback*. (NOTE: I have no idea at all what the resulting *P.E.I.* formula would be.) The following are three types of flashbacks that we can use:

#### TYPE A

Ernest suddenly remembered the unusually difficult final examination that he had struggled through in his freshman philosophy class. One of the questions asked for an explanation of how Kant differentiated *analytical* from *synthetical* judgements. Ernest had written:

"*Analytical* judgements are those in which the connection of the predicate with the subject is cogitated through identity; those in which this connection is cogitated without identity are called *synthetical* judgements. For example, an analytical judgement would be -- ALL BODIES ARE EXTENDED. A synthetic judgement, however, would be -- ALL BODIES ARE HEAVY. Judgements of experience are always synthetical."

Looking at Elfrieda's 39-23-36 body, Ernest realized that his judgement of it was analytic.

#### TYPE B

Ernest suddenly recalled how, as a little boy, he had once heard his father tell him about "the birds and the bees."

"Son," his father had said, "BIRDS are a class of warm-blooded vertebrates having a body more or less completely covered with feathers, and the forelimbs so modified as to form wings by means of which most species fly."

He had blushed terribly, avoiding his father's eyes. His father continued: "BEES are hymenopterous insects of the superfamily APOIDEA. Avoid their sting, son, or you'll itch like a bitch."

#### TYPE C

Suddenly, Ernest flashed back mentally into the past -- to the most intense moment of his life....

He was brought back to the present by the sound of Elfrieda's voice.

*FIRST TOSS: A-tails, B-tails, C-heads*

*FINAL RESULT: Type C to be used*

At this point of the story -- the meeting of Ernest and Elfrieda -- it is imperative that we introduce the element of *dialogue*. Ernest must talk to Elfrieda if he is to seduce her, and our heroine must respond in some way, preferably orally, if the reader is to enjoy their encounter. I have three types of dialogues in mind:

#### TYPE A [sweet]

"Love pie," Elfrieda whispered, breaking the silence. She approached Ernest's bed.



"Baby teeth," Ernest responded involuntarily, feeling something vital rise up inside of him.

"Christmas milk," cooed the shapely, young maid.

"Your little pink toes."

"Purple and fine linen."

Overwhelmed by the sweetness and gentleness of their conversation, Ernest got up finally and faced Elfrieda — all 39-23-36 of her.

They looked into each other's eyes, feeling the room begin to melt around them, like an ice cream sundae exposed to the sun on a warm spring day.

#### TYPE B [passionate]

"Sex," Elfrieda whispered, breaking the silence. She approached Ernest's bed.

"Spermatozoa," Ernest responded huskily, feeling something vital rise up inside of him.

"Vaginal lubricant," continued the shapely, young maid with a roguish smile.

"Bartholin glands."

"Fallopian tubes."

Overwhelmed by the sensuous overtone of their conversation, Ernest got up finally and faced Elfrieda — all 39-23-36 of her.

They looked into each other's eyes, feeling the room catch fire around them, like paper exposed to a lit match.

#### TYPE C [stichomythic]

Something rose up inside of Ernest, and he gestured obscenely at the comely young maid.

"Shall I be tempted of the Devil thus?" Elfrieda asked.

"Aye, if the Devil tempt thee to do good," he replied.

"Shall I forget that I am but a maid?"

"Aye, if yourself's a maid made to be made."

They looked into each other's eyes, realizing that something

significant was about to happen.

*FIRST TOSS: A-heads, B-tails, C-tails*

*FINAL RESULT: Type A to be used*

Okay, we can't hold it back much longer. The moment is too intense. The action of the story was picked up considerably since the flashback. Ernest and Elfrieda are looking into each other's eyes. Something *has* to happen. The *P* and *E.I.* of the story are too great to allow us to continue with the suspense. It is now time for the *climax*. I have three types in mind:

#### TYPE A [tragic]

It was at that very moment, while looking into the young maid's eyes, that Ernest realized something was expected of him. He felt everything drawing to some kind of conclusion. Outside, the traffic had stopped. Everything was so still that he could hear the pounding of his heart. He and Elfrieda were like two flies suspended in amber. Time and Motion depended on him. The universe balanced on a pin. He looked at Elfrieda's thick, blond hair hovering wantonly above her prodigious bosom and, extending his arms uncertainly towards the beautiful, young cleaning woman, his voice shattered the stillness of the room, breaking it up into little pieces:

"Gee, I dunno, Elfrieda...Maybe...Then again, maybe not...I dunno..."

The harsh blare of outside traffic came into the room. Time and Motion resumed their progress. The pin disappeared from beneath the universe. Elfrieda left the room, never to come back.

Hearing the door slam, Ernest sat down on the edge of his bed and stared at his hands.

#### TYPE B [comic]

It was at that very moment, while looking into the young



maid's eyes, that Ernest realized something was expected of him. He felt everything drawing to some kind of conclusion. Outside, the traffic had stopped. Everything was so still that he could hear the pounding of his heart. He and Elfrieda were like two flies suspended in amber. Time and Motion depended on him. The universe balanced on a pin. He looked at Elfrieda's thick, blond hair hovering wantonly above her prodigious bosom and, extending his arms uncertainly towards the beautiful, young cleaning woman, he broke the silence with an involuntary fart which thundered lustily about the room.

Outside, as if on some signal, the harsh blare of traffic resumed. Time and Motion continued. The pin disappeared from beneath the universe.

"You pig!" Elfrieda exclaimed, thoroughly disgusted, and left the room.

Ernest sat down on the edge of the bed and began to laugh heartily. At long last something unusual had happened to him. The spell was broken. He no longer needed to worry about leading an uneventful life. He could be certain of a flashback in store for him in some future situation similar to the one just past. He was free at last.

#### *TYPE C [unexpected]*

It was at that very moment, while looking into each other's eyes, that the pair sensed someone walk into the room. They turned towards the intruder.

The stranger was a handsome, well built blonde wearing a U.C.L.A. jacket. He smiled at Ernest, revealing two neat rows of sparkling white teeth, and walked up to the astonished Elfrieda.

"Elfrieda, it's me — Hector!" he exclaimed, his eyes twinkling affably while he stretched out his arms towards the young maid.

"Hector — *das ist so schoen!*" She ran towards his outstretched arms.

Ernest watched them embrace. Then, he sat down on the

edge of his bed and ran a weary hand through his hair.

He heard them leaving the room, heard Elfrieda mumble something to Hector and heard the handsome, well built young man reply in a laughing voice: "*Hot dawg!*"

*FIRST TOSS: A-tails, B-tails, C-tails*

[NOTE: Dear Reader, as you can see, all three choices came up tails. However, I cannot allow this to happen if I am to preserve the integrity of the short story. So, I will flip the coin again.]

*SECOND TOSS: A-tails, B-tails, C-heads*

*FINAL RESULT: Type C to be used*

Well, we've just completed a short story. We have yet to pick an appropriate title, though. The following are three titles which I consider pithy and clever enough to serve as the icing to our story — however, we are only allowed one:

#### *TITLE A*

*The Importance Of Being Ernest*

#### *TITLE B*

*Going To Meet The Maid*

#### *TITLE C*

*The A,B,C's Of Short Story Writing*

*FIRST TOSS: A-heads, B-tails, C-tails*

*FINAL RESULT: Title A to be used.*



## Dream of the Daughter

Flora Foss

In the dream  
she combed her daughter's hair  
urgently  
thinking her tenderness must not show.

First to make it lie even, softly  
then the curves, geometric  
just so many.

But someone slowed the action  
as they will in dreams  
and the thing ran backwards, jerking insanely.  
Because of the knots, she thought reasonably.

Knots  
hard as dreams to break, and endless  
kept thickening.  
Dark strands proliferate

stretching like young wire plants  
to the bobbing hands  
snarled puppets.  
She found the eyes,

what remained  
of the childface fading,  
spiders—the black, the white—  
skittering back into the pink landscape.

She, frozen—  
the mass grown like a raging sea goddess  
lashing in waves, wild flickering—  
watched as,

each hair distinct in the spiral forming  
and every tangle a queen bee  
heavy, buzzing, still,  
the maelstrom opened to her, sucking,

and woke a dead weight, white hands floating.





Lon Anderson



## A Portrait on the Wall

Virginia Shreve

Fixed in dust-laden frame  
on the wall above his bed,  
she stares out from behind tight-clasped hands.  
It is a memento of that summer he spent on the coast,  
a silly, posed photograph,  
yet disturbing.  
Pretentiously hazy,  
only the eyes are sharply in focus.  
They do not blink. They are following eyes.

They do not blink. They are following eyes.

Her eyes are grey  
like the sea,  
with that pretense of green  
masking the deeps,  
hollow and shining,  
gull's eyes on a hungry dawn  
hypnotic as the rhythm of the waves  
Listen Listen Listen  
"I have loved two poets," she says,  
"but not as much as they loved me."

It is not warmth her eyes promise,  
it is a secret submerged, it is a depth by drowning,  
a white-torn surf crashing against city walls—  
"I want you to feel my bones," she would say,  
murmuring, eternal, as the small green waves  
beckoned and beat that sad sand shore  
(a pebble a pebble, a small brown pebble,  
a treble of pebbles, no more no more)  
Her words stain memory  
indiscriminate, a salting spray,  
"Do you want to see what they wrote,  
how they were mad about me?"  
Oh, one would have to be mad,  
as a seahorse with dreams of conquest,  
as the long flight of the albatross,  
as love of the sea itself...

That portrait on his wall does not say,  
yet she who is caught there  
tries to tell us  
why he who once knew her  
keeps it still above his bed,  
and does not disturb  
that dust.



## Frightened

Timothy McShane

Tried to mainline  
Yeah, try to let the blood stains bleed  
And shoot off all those earth quakes.  
Fancy ass copper hips  
Cheshire eye of the storm, blotting sun blizzard.

Forgive me, Dear Lord,  
Because I'm frightened  
And I love my mother.

I see now, the holes in the fire  
Rush towards me and cup my brain  
In *your* hands.  
Suck in your breath  
And sing to me.

Forgive me, Dear Lord,  
Because there are no arms around me  
And I'm tripping, dripping tired

Explain, that the laboratories  
And not the scientists  
Have gone mad.  
This isn't my bed.  
My bed is peopled, with a quilt in it, and sleep.

## Carol's Brief

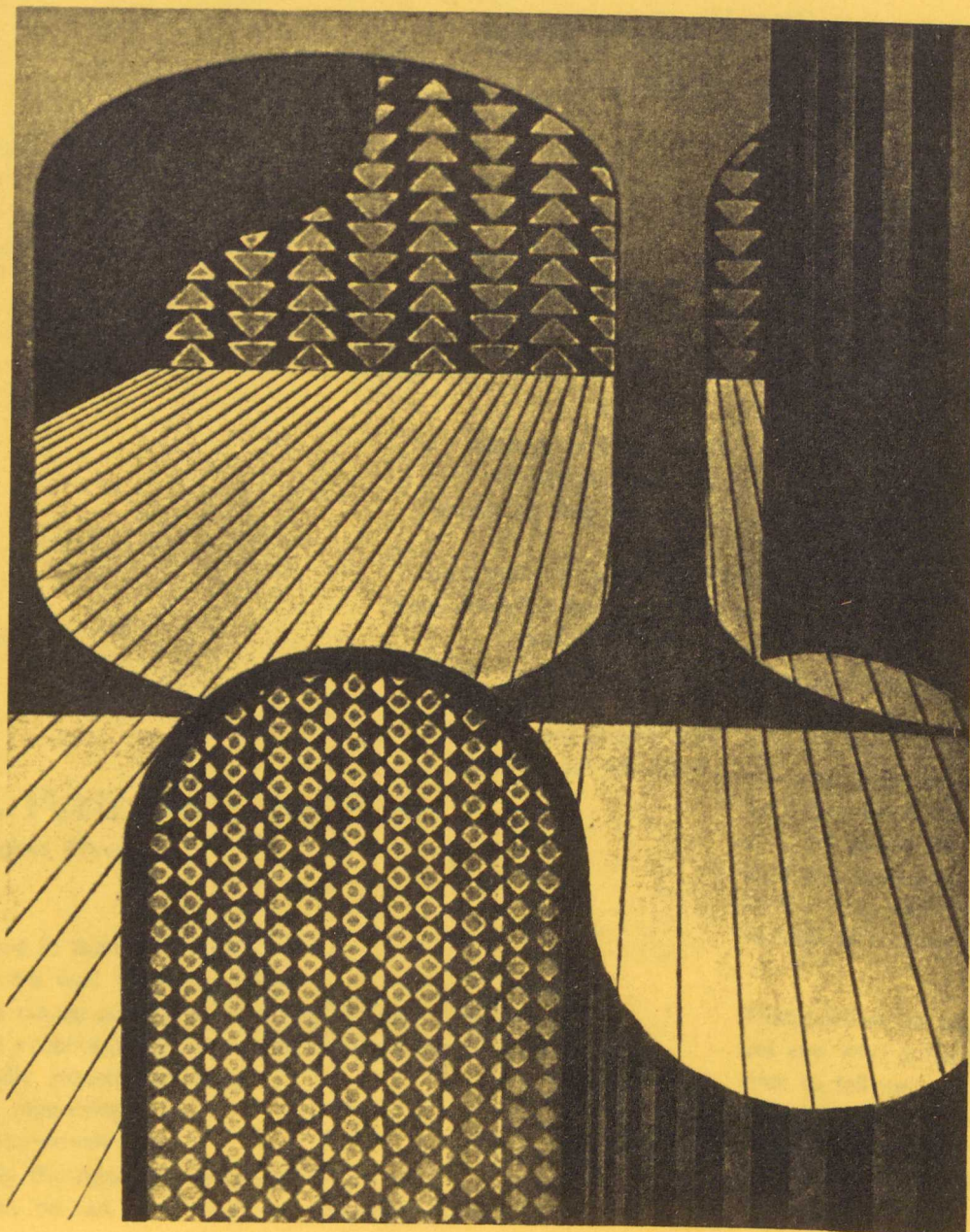
Joe Baukert

Carol, brief, is slim and fit  
She's blond...and fond of  
Shakespeare's name  
...has *les yeax bleux*, a double  
chin,

Plays the French horn  
And baseball to win.  
Puts other girls to shame.

Projecting into future days  
She organizes different ways  
to reach, to climb  
to walk, to step, to march  
To march ahead in step  
Exist among inept,  
...none the less, in step.





Frances Ross



Dick Steele

## Authentic Fire

The man in 1406.  
His name it was Sam Hall.

And he had, after all, little more to do  
Than he had had to do—last night  
And this for some several nights  
and days.

1:00 P.M.

"Excuse me, Mr. Hall, but they'd like  
to know. What should I tell them?"

"That I hate them one and all."

And more than that he had as far as  
Matter of consequence little to add,  
As far as manner of reply less which  
Might substantially temper or augment  
The general impression that he had  
Thus far been of a mind to give.

"Then there's no reply?"

"Not unless you'd like to make  
a memorandum of *this!*"

Blushing. "Yessir." Out the door  
On winged feet. He used to work  
For Western Union and he knew that  
Kind of thing. Knew it like years  
Could teach.

"I don't write them you know."

Another night. He sat in the  
Dusk by the open window and below  
Lights slowly flickered on like  
Bonfires all along the avenue.  
*Commonwealth Edison*. It had a name.  
Common wealth. With a wave of his hand  
A dozen more flickered below. And he had,  
Magnificently, more to give.



But soon it was black and the fires  
Had multiplied so that in the distance  
Even the black over the city-scape  
Was touched with red. His job done  
He slouched back, still sitting by the window,  
His face glistening from the exertion.  
There was a price-tag on it.  
Certain demands. Municipal taxes,  
You might say. A settlement to be made  
For so many hours service

from last night to this.

It fell on him. "Better," he thought,  
After it was over and the obligation  
Pressed him, "that they had remained  
In ignorance, that they should live  
In canyons of darkness than that it  
Should come to this."

"Mr. Hall?"

The knock. Sun streaming.  
Early afternoon by the look of things.

"They want to know."

"Tell them to go to hell."

"I told them before."

"Told them that?"

"That you'd have an answer."

Their strength was corporate.  
His in the manner of his defiance.

"Tell them to look out their windows  
tonight and tomorrow—I did that."

"They keep their shades down, sir."

"Tell them to look out their windows.  
They don't know how that's done."

"They want to know, sir."

"Damn their eyes!"

He sat at the window in the growing dark.  
It wasn't something you could do just once  
And then let alone and expect it to go on  
And on. Not a matter of history.  
Like tinkering with a clock and then  
Giving the fly-wheel a little shove  
For all time's sake.

He swayed like a pendulum over the  
Brightening city. And then, another  
Night's work, he fell back into the decor.  
The hotel was old but the decor was new—  
And then it was old again. Early American.  
With eagles everywhere.

He knew that he'd been handed the bill.  
As if by special express. And had to pay.  
The sound clanging in his apartment  
Was faintly chafing drapery. The whispers  
Seemed, against him, louder, grown to rasping,  
Brash, incipient and destructive murmur.

An eagle flew at him from a plaque.  
Another from the bedstead. In his dream  
He doubled. Coughing. Torn. . .

for the common wealth.

"Go away."

"Please, Mr. Hall, the board  
wants to know."

"They know."

"They want to know *how*."

Almost 2. Sun battering the  
Fluttering drapes. He limped  
To the mirror.



"Got to repair the ravages."

He could tell them to sit *alone* in front of  
Their open windows tonight and just watch.  
He could tell them. But he knew they would be  
Sitting *together*, the board, with their backs  
To the windows—shades drawn.

"Tell them to go to hell."

Night. Fire. Feathers. Sun.

"Mr. Hall?"

"Tell them. . ."

He had limped through these interchanges.  
Suffered. Died. Grown whole again through  
The agency of the remarkable afternoon sun.  
Not that he made a virtue of defiance nor  
That it had become the invisible chain of habit.

There high above the avenue he would be  
At some pains to teach this board  
Of Consolidated-Amalgamated-Incorporated (Ltd.)  
That they could not by snapping collective  
Fingers kindle even the smallest spark below.

It grew from defiance and not  
Defiance from it.

He was, after all, an original.  
This in spite of the fact that the Directory,  
Dog-eared those two pages where his finger  
Had traced something of a genealogy on the  
Various sunny afternoons, listed some 73  
Sam Halls: Samuel J. Hall, 18 Holy Cross Road;  
Samuel P. Hall, Mountain Drive; Samuel Hall Jr.,  
Gallowhill in the Western Suburbs; 7 Samuel Halls II;  
2 Samuel Halls III; etc.

His name, in spite of this, was not legion.  
An in-frequent man all the same.

"I think you'd better read this, Mr. Hall."

An ultimatum. He was amused. He smiled  
At the thunder and the darkness.

The memo read:

It has come to our attention that  
your account is remiss. Please forward  
the amount due— or darkness will fall  
on the face of the earth.

It was signed:

#### THE BOARD

He smiled. Outside, gathering clouds  
Threw phalanxes of shadow against the window.  
In the distance a low thundering.  
Streaked lightning against the sky.  
2:30 in the afternoon.

He began to laugh. The sky was dark  
And a rush of rain struck with, he sensed,  
malevolence.

He laughed.  
And with his laughter the street-lights below  
Began to flicker on. One after the other.  
Down the avenue. Singly. In 2's and 3's.  
Whole blocks burst into blaze.

Redoubled from the laughter,  
He laughed on:

Until the whole dark earth  
Was shimmering, flickering light.  
And this as far as his eye could see,  
His hand reach.

Until the ring of the horizon was iridescent.

"Tell them" he said, weary,  
"to go to hell."



# Flakes in Summer's Night

William Hoagland

The moon spreads its lathered legs over farm houses,  
Crisp brown lawns, one lane gravel roads.  
A silver southern breeze flows into darkened bedrooms  
Through flimsy curtains.  
Summer wives sew white sheets in their sleep.

White sheets are pulled over clotheslines  
Where backyard tents are filled with whispers  
About neighbor girls who did, and strange men who died.  
Later, when the stories are spent, we can hope for rain  
To save us and send us to our beds.

What is it summer wives whisper in their sleep?

A freight train slowly echos away from the Nelson switchyards  
And bends painfully along the Mississippi.  
Inside a boxcar a hobo laughs in the face of Iowa,  
Laughing with the locomotive's voice, with its echo,  
And beyond its echo until the only sound is blood  
Pumping softly in an ear against the pillow.

If only it would snow tonight!  
If it would snow with the windows open,  
With the flakes blowing and lighting and melting on the bed,  
We could listen to the flakes melting in our ears.

Edward J. Cunneen







# Thanatos

Guy Senese

A man found himself a gun  
lying hidden in a torn bramble.  
Shuddering, he picked it out;  
carried it to his house.

The house was white, small  
above the wide sea.  
It set as a cliff as the surf  
assaulted the rocks beneath.

Volley at night  
Single, booms by day.

Heavy footed body packed  
the way up  
to the house—booted, heeltoe steps.  
Careful. The rod could explode.

He and the sea swayed  
a rhythm out of time.  
Hummed music  
discordant.

He upped the step and creaked the  
door; lost presence  
of the rocking sea.  
Present passed—door dunked.

A sea rat pissed in the wall behind him.  
He sat the pipe on a rocker to test.

"Pointed it out the window he did,"  
said the old sailors.

"Tied a blasted cord to the trig he did."

I'll bet he did.  
And the sea sang once to him  
louder'n a siren, I'll wager.

Rusty rod sat, crusted sights  
to the sea it tottered  
with the leverage of the weight  
of the water banging the rock.

Reeling on his heels in a closet,  
cord in hand  
eyes shut tight against the sound;  
head bowed he pulled the tether steel shuddered  
drowned the sea sound  
the rent stock smashed through the door  
and plowed his hair in.



## ece Deor

Thomas Liszka

This solace-song sing I to me  
this low lamentation like those oft I sang  
as comfort-gifts for the care-betaken;  
I often for others gave shape to an ode  
gave faith through reminders for faithless and friendless  
of heroes who had much harder fortune.

Once Weland's woe-song wrote I  
for my gift-lord —how Nifad with fetters  
his legs belamed— and likewise Beaudhilda's  
ravish outrageous wrote I  
for my gift-lord and gave many greater  
—for his heavy spirit was often behindered—  
and sang sorrow ever •passes to nothing.

Now grieve I the gift-lord gave over my place  
to one sweeter singer of comforting solace,  
whose mind manufactures hero-songs milder,  
and left me a lone-man lorn and ay-lingering  
a doubter that ever I am a scop  
a doubter that ever dole passes to nought.

Now far from the mead-hall far from the gift-lord  
I think that this world throughout  
the wise Lord leaves soreful lots  
for many an earl and much of delusion  
and much of unsureness. Yet still I am scop  
still sing faith of heroes and pray for good favor  
and trust to Metode and trust ece Dryhten.







The founding fathers were not present at the ceremony for the destruction of the Percy-Byrd Building (as they had been seventy-eight years, twenty-two days and seventeen hours previously) nor were the children in their Sunday-wear, the barking dog that belonged to the man in the green sharkskin suit, the lady who got sick (it had been a sultry day and, after a large dinner, the excitement was too much for her) and was forced to throw up in a secluded corner of the foundations, or the man who sang the Star Spangled Banner as he accompanied himself on a portable organ. They are all dead now except one man living in an Obsolescents Home who is so senile he can't feed himself, let alone recall the ceremony or his father's name or how many brothers and sisters he had.

The removal of the cornerstone some seventy-plus years later was very simple: when the wrecking crew had razed the building to the level of the cement block with the year MC-MLXXX carved upon its weathered, eaten face a foreman called City Hall; an assistant city manager appeared and witnessed the opening of the block, putting the various artifacts in a cloth bag; and the crew finished off the rest of the building before dusk, not really caring what the cornerstone had held, which was the general opinion at City Hall, too.

In that grey cotton bag with a draw-string on the mouth, however, was a manuscript, written by an anonymous person and apparently secreted in the cornerstone by unauthorized means. It nestled among forty-one freshly-minted pennies placed there by sugar-stickied hands of the children, a copy of the Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible, a Polaroid picture of those present at the ceremony, a copy of that day's newspaper, a city map, and a list of historic events of the previous year.

The bag with all its contents was tossed on top of a filing cabinet by the assistant city manager who, for his dignity's sake, said he had more important things to do than look through the old trash. He was perhaps perturbed by the fact that whenever an old building was destroyed (and since reclamation and rezoning the numbers had soared) it was his duty to retrieve the cornerstone contents for posterity. He

Gary Blackmer

## Cornerstone



didn't really care about posterity and posterity would not probably care about the countless Bibles, pennies, and other useless trinkets from an already over-documented era. But in this newly-resurrected memory-trove was the manuscript written by an anonymous person and apparently secreted there by unauthorized means. If anyone, any one of the billions of furtive little inhabitants on the planet had read the words, perhaps the implications would have been different.

(Part of the first page was defaced by coffee stains, which caused the ink to run and obliterate the first nineteen lines. One can probably guess from the following material what was lost when the secretary to the assistant city manager spilled the coffee-pot onto the grey cloth bag atop the filing cabinet.) ...a man, therefore Socrates is mortal, all men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal, all men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal, all men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal, all men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal, all men are mortal

I had a brother at one time, or I would have had a brother if he hadn't died before I was born. Is he really my brother, am I his brother? I don't know. We had common parents but we never existed in the same period of time. Is co-existence a requisite of a relationship? He affected me I think. I know, indirectly through my parents, through my relatives who held a relationship with him at one time because they'll never forget my brother who had a cough and it got worse but the doctor gave him some medicine that didn't help and one day my cousin Jenny said he coughed real bad like he was trying to puke-spit out his lungs and after awhile blood came out and he turned white and died before they could get him to St. Vincents hospital and it took my parents a long time to have me because they couldn't get over Ben's death that's my brother's name Ben he must've been my brother since I had a great-grandfather though we never co-existed so I must have had a brother Benjamin in theory anyway.

My wife got the blender, I got the electric can-opener. My wife got the television, I got the washing machine and dryer. My wife got the bed and night stands, I got the sofa and coffee tables. My wife got the Matisse sketch, I got the Warhol litho. I got the car and bank account, my wife got all the rest of the furnishings. My wife got our son, Benjamin, too. Even Steven.

the outer skin on our body is actually dead (that seems reasonable—when I chew on my fingers it doesn't hurt, no that's illogical—that only means the nerves are not there, but how can I feel if the skin is dead? I don't know, it sounds possible, though.) and our whole life is spent shedding, peeling, scraping, flaking (chewing, too), scaling, molting, rotting off layer after layer after layer after layer after layer of this dead skin (What happens when we reach bottom? Do our muscles glisten with body juices as they twitch in the cold, dry air—like a skinned rabbit, its blue and red veins holding coagulated blood, the eyeballs staring from lidless grey sockets? No, that can't be. We must produce new skin, deep down inside.) which is constantly being regenerated through mitosis below the deepest layer of skin—below the epidermis, below the mesodermis, below the endodermis. These cells are similar to those cells at the base of the fingernail except that the fingernail is not living, rather it is protein, somewhat like the production of hair.

I wonder if lungs can regenerate, I wonder if brains can regenerate. After years of alcoholic stupors, after decades of carbon monoxide poisoning, after decades of artificial colorings, after mercury, lead, sulphur dioxide. Can the brain regenerate deep down inside, can the lungs patch up their holes and little pockets of poisons? Tubercular persons can get healthy if they breathe mountain air or Arizona air that's good for sinuses too if you smoke cigarettes in mountain air will you be less apt to die from cancer? Can you remember things that have been scorched out years before by a good drunk if you eat lots of protein (I heard somewhere that a



brain is mostly protein)? Sometimes I want to smoke cigarettes, I don't because I don't, to keep my hands from shaking, to look efficient, to distract my uncomfortable gazes.

Often my eyes rest on places they shouldn't and don't move until they're shooed away like persistent flies. The gaze crawls over the oozing wounds of people around me, those who possess characteristics divergent from the norm, and eventually alights on the eyes, trying to understand how that person thinks within his own peculiar world, only to meet defiance, anger, melancholy, self-pity, or helplessness. But if I smoked cigarettes, I could take a puff or watch the smoke ribbon rise or if there wasn't a cigarette in my hand I could go through the methodical little ritual of lighting one: pulling it out of the package, tamping it on a hard surface, placing it in the mouth (at just the right angle, just the right spot of the mouth), extracting a match, and with one stroke—lighting the match, then the cigarette behind cupped hands (under a furrowing, pensive brow) and finally blowing out the match with the first white breath. Or if I had nothing to do while waiting for someone I could lick my fingers and pinch the head of the burning match and allow it to be completely consumed so it hangs like a crisp little body that powders to nothing at the touch. I'd like to smoke cigarettes to carry the matches, I could light them when I wanted; people would think me crazy and-or dangerous if I just lit matches, mustn't let them think that, not if I try to be normal at other times, anyhow. And I'd like to see my breath go floating across a room, even aim at a particular person, watching it spread and fade and finally disappear. But if I smoke I might get cancer and die (cautioncautioncautioncaution) but I will anyway some people say. That's true.

What's true? Define true, please. No, let's not get into that, I'd rather not discuss it. It frightens me so. I have spent time, a good deal of time in fact (What's fact? Define fact, please.) upon the problem yet I feel uncomfortable bringing it to light, because of several reasons. With shaded eyes (to hide my desirous intent) I've interviewed all acquaintances, strangers

sages (where they will declare themselves—and how can I doubt their words?) at times that seem inappropriate to a search for enlightenment—but that is beyond my control, for that I cannot be held responsible. And when I hear the answers when I hear the inadequate words, deep down inside me something sinks a little lower, some set of inner shoulders slumps a bit more, I feel my hopes falter again (as always). Inductively, it's one more indication that I will not encounter the truth. But we all know induction is not foolproof when one thinks of statistics. The laws of probability have implied that somewhere right now (What is now? Define now, please.) orbiting one of the infinite stars is another planet, also collectively called Earth by its inhabitants, with a man by my name who, too, is writing gibberish. (What is gibberish? Define gibberish, please.) So statistics may save me they say. (Who is they? Define they, please.)

I had a tic tic tic tic tic in my eyelid and a pain in my stomach when the doctor's appointment came. I only wanted him to fix my pain but he insisted on staring at my eye (yet he said nothing.)

"My stomach's been troubling me. I think it's an ulcer. I've been worrying a lot lately on account of my wife, she's, well, we've entered a rather abrasive period in our relationship." He just nodded, motioned me to the examining table, intent on my eye, saying nothing.

"At night I can hear it gurgle and there's a burning in the spot where the acid or whatever settles, depending on which side I lay on." He probed my abdomen, waiting for a reaction—watching my tic tic tic.

"That hurts there. I've been especially careful to avoid fruits and vinegar and I drink a lot of milk. Is that good?" But he was silent, pretending to look into my eyes with understanding, compassion, concern—but really only studying the twitch, I knew.

He gave me a prescription for some white, chalky, mint-tasting pills. My eye stopped twitching but my stomach still hurt.



I'm looking in the mirror right now watching myself looking in the mirror watching myself looking in the mirror watching myself, looking, into, the mirror. Sometime I'd like to approach the glass and see someone else (instead of that lumpy head with its carelessly applied features) but the same face always appears. Actually, it has changed; I have seen other men there, peering at me with a soft, innocent visage or a thin, emaciated face or a death mask leering. Typically I see a man, as he appears right now watching me watch him, who stands slightly hunched with sagging features, a mouth that hangs like a worn-out flap, eyes glazed with an oily yellow color that seem to beg for something from deep within me. And I turn away, wounded.

I watched on the news the other night when they said the world was soon going to end, not that simply of course but almost as if it were the weather. A study had been commissioned to evaluate the various factors of increased population and consumption of natural resources, using computers to analyze the results the newscaster said. The findings indicated total consumption of all fuels, foods, space, clean water and air would occur within one hundred years one hundred years one hundred years one hundred years one hundred years one hundred years one hundred years one hundred years one hundred years one hundred years. Even considering scientific advances, the disappearance of these necessities could only be put off a century longer, at the most, he said.

The prophet has come to forewarn our doom—an absolute cessation, abrupt and lonely as the silence after the orchestra stops. Technicians minister the logic machines, carrying the message to the people—one hundred years one hundred years—then home to Wifey for a drink, dinner and loving. But the machine whirs on, recalculating, most likely until the very last, then perhaps it will murmur in electronic shivers This Is It, but that's improbable.

Will Newton and Einstein prevail, will eternity stop on that day. There will be a time when we can say There Will Be A

Time When We Can Say There Will Be No Posterity, All That We Have Tried To Preserve From Chaos Will Go Under, There Will Be No Heritage. All the men who have clutched at fame, who live in history, will die. All the dreams we might work toward in our lifetimes lose their purpose, simply falling away toward pure selfish hedonism. At the realization of its end, the human race will cease to be a dignified term, only an extinct species, in biological terms. And if the future is oblivion, could it be embraced and cherished as if our own son or daughter, since it's impossible to turn to the present for self respect. Why have I forsaken You.

How do you feel right now?

Oh—sort of...sort of peaceful.

Do you feel any pain?

No, not really: I don't feel anything at all.

Is your mind alert? Do you have trouble thinking?

Yes and No. Everything seems...I'm not having trouble thinking, it's just hard to verbalize it.

Take your time.

It's like being half-asleep. Sort of elevated to another level where everything I always worried about—my health my income my future my security—don't really matter.

There's no anxieties then, Right?

Yes, That's right.

Do you feel like talking some more?

It doesn't bother me any, one way or the other.

Do you remember any past experience that affected you this way? Things that made you feel like the state you just described?

Um. Yes. Yes there was one time during my thirties. I was exactly thirty-one, I was lying in bed, awake, listening to my wife. Such a long time ago. She had planned a surprise Birthday Party for me with many of my old friends. We all had a really good time. I had been uncomfortable about the age, you know, everything seemed downhill from there—I was no longer a striving young man. It was also the first time in a long time I had gotten that high. So anyway I was lying



there, thinking about my past and my dreams of the past, fulfilled and discarded, matching breaths with my wife, imagining what would be in store for me if I continued in the same course I had been following, extrapolation sort of, and then evaluating the findings. Can you follow that?

Yes, go on.

My wife started talking in her sleep. There weren't any distinct words, more like whines or the mewing of a kitten and occasionally you could hear a little giggle. Then, when I first recognized a giggle—that's what I feel like now.

Can you tell me why?

No. It's only a feeling, not anything substantial.

There must be some general impression that connects that past memory with the present.

Only that they are both pleasant.

Pleasant how?

Sort of resigned I guess, acceptant of everything that tried to run me down.

Like what things?

Um. Could we stop talking now?

Sure, if you want to.

Yes.

Maybe a little later we can talk some more?

Maybe.

The lady in the office said it would cost over \$2,000 to take out a full-page ad in her newspaper. The editors wanted to change it. I asked if they could print it in small type and only fill a half-page—she said no. They said it was too nonsensical. I asked her how much a three-thousand word personal would cost—too much. They called it unenlightening, too. What should I do? I could hide it among the pages of a library book (or write in the margins, snuggled close to Henry James or Thomas Mann. Or would Immanuel Kant be better? No, the idea is too presumptuous.) Just one person, one other human being, reading it would put me at rest. There is a duty, I have a duty to myself, to dignity. Can you measure a life can you touch another with violence sex

glamour diagrams gossip truth tables puns illustrations? Why do I do this? Why don't I just dissolve away like so many billions of others and rest in anonymity. I will. I'll burn my words and settle silently into the earth.

The manuscript was never found; it languished in a cardboard box in a heap of cardboard boxes (filled with remnants of other buildings' pasts) in the basement of the City Hall, only to be destroyed by the stagnant tides of a spring thaw. As to why the manuscript was preserved by the author—silence is preferable.



# The Light, The Learner

Lon Anderson

the cool nights bring madness  
now bring up the lights

the moon bleeds  
drunken sun.  
up the lights

Confronted by the liquid stars  
clowns, fools,  
the athletes  
sitting on brown stools  
teaching one to love.

a star runs down my face  
only to find it fatigued  
with open mouth  
bring up the lights

and the innocent arrived in classrooms.

don't mar the vinyl  
light.

a sunburst blonde,  
hidden in the collar  
of her raincoat,  
harmonizes  
ash-tray,  
coffee cup  
and blue, blue eyes

in graceful  
composition  
with my quiet sigh,  
tobacco smoke  
and dreams.

our simple tunes  
unfold, entwine  
against the concrete,  
urban loneliness  
that almost-lovers  
share.

Jerry Bernbom





Jonathan O'Fiel

The Tree is Green  
 Runaway Paradigms  
 The World Killed Her  
 The Self  
 The House Next Door  
 Prayer

## Freshman Poetry



# The Tree is Green

Mary A. Susmilch

Spurt.

A seed plants.

WOW

sexual attraction

we talk and like.

Branches Spring:

remember

The winter we didn't have a car and had to  
walk home at twelve o'clock and I fell in the middle of Ogden  
and cars

BEEPED and you picked me up.

It was your birthday and I made us matching  
tie-dyed shirts and that lopsided cake with  
the brown bananas.

We took your brothers and sisters trick or treating  
and the lady said ARETHEYALLYOURS and I said  
NAWWEHAVEMOREATHOME, and you smirked and slapped  
me on the butt.

You popped out of the closet with a bunch of red carnations and I cried.

Now we love

and it grows big, deep, roots.

I wonder

will a lumberjack come along and chop our tree

or

will it grow old, and yellow, and crunchy,  
and die peacefully.



## Runaway Paradigms

Michael Antman

I.

Trains sped past,  
and we were instructed to see  
phantasms, stick figures  
the whole of whose existence consisted of  
firing bullets out the caboose  
at imaginary airplanes,  
or dropping steel balls to the floor of the train,  
or running silently from one end to the other,  
indefatigable, trapped forever in their roles.

II.

The trains sped on into the night,  
and the phantasms continued their demonstrations  
for empty worlds empty universes  
condemned to an eternity of incomprehension  
as we, stranded at the station,  
struggled over our equations.

## The World Killed Her

John Valco

So hurtheavenly free  
Offering ecstasy.  
With visionary eyes  
She ruins me. She  
Has such vision  
She can't even see.

What'shisname!  
I saw him!  
Good God!

Lost him quickly:  
Was wonderful  
For a moment.

And, TOO

Gaylorious afterwards;  
Wham, bam, damn sappedawords.

My whore, My deadeyes, she offers,  
Sanity. But will have none of it.



## The Self

Jean Waltman

Grey eyes turn inward  
to the butterfly of the mind.  
The wings show bright with  
golden spots that flicker.

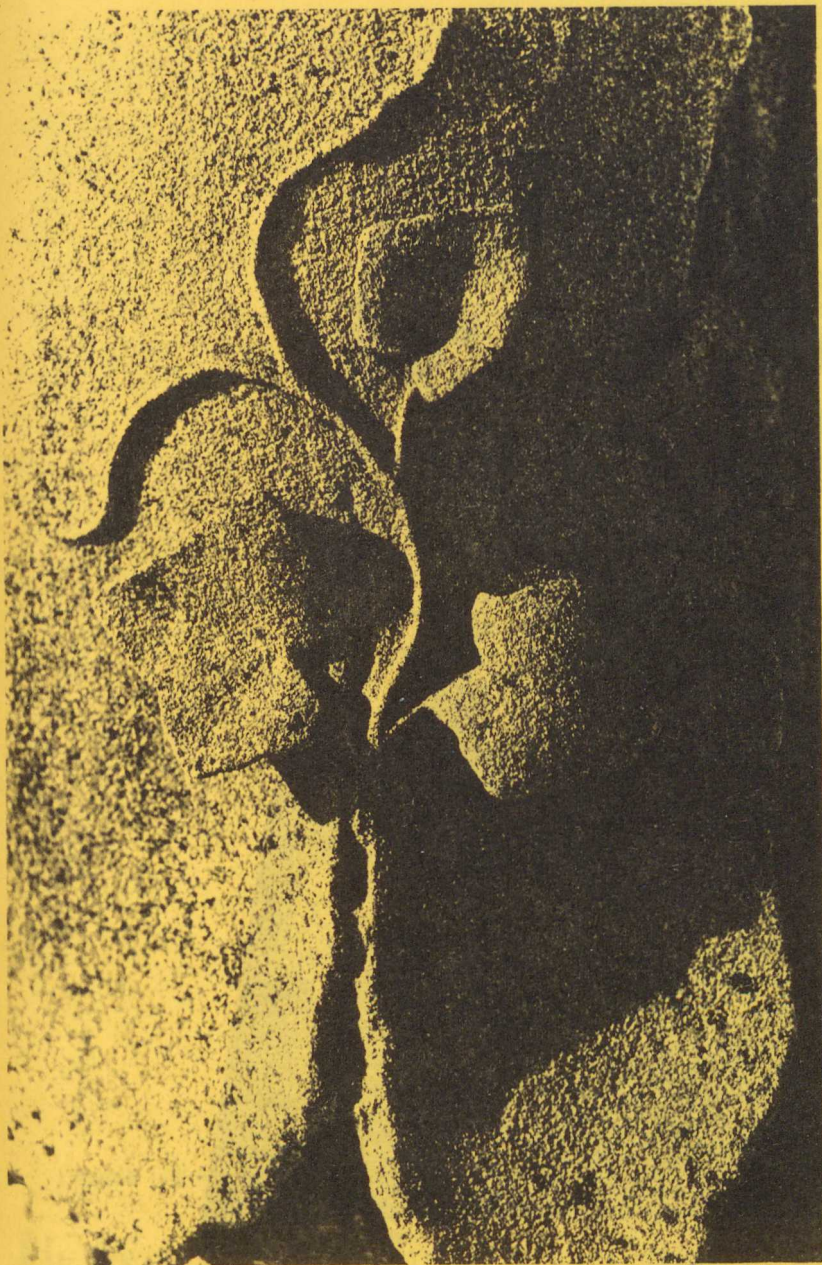
A shaft of light appears  
through the eye's shadow,  
consuming the tattered wings  
that fade from exposure.

## The House Next Door

David Cantwell

listening  
to the piercing  
angry ring  
of the saw  
screaming through the hot  
clear  
morning  
already growing thick  
in the yellow sunlight prickly on your back  
striding knowingly  
over the swamps of construction mud  
(unique found only in your childhood)  
with concrete  
gray brown  
on the bottom  
of the bubbly white froth and  
warm  
in the hot noon sun  
a rusty nail  
an iron earthworm clawing  
through the mud caked  
splintered  
scrap of two by four  
and you have found  
the treasure





Clay Johnson

## Prayer

Christine Okon

she sits and chats  
with her friend Jesus  
(the one always motioning to his bare heart flambeau)  
and imagines him  
on a watch face    crucified  
at quarter to three  
such a good friend have we in Jesus  
still ticking after all that





Michael Dal Fratello



Gluck strode past a queue of hunched syphilitic priests, pawnbrokers, barristers and bull fighters all wrapped in yellowed newspapers and threadbare vestments. They moaned and cursed, stamped and steamed in the chill of the early October morning, spat green slugs of phlegm on the back of each other's legs. The penicillin supply, of course, had never really existed and the young man behind the louvered window was giving out paper cups half full of camphor and lentil oils, and one assumed from the persistent smile on his thin lips that he was deriving a great deal of pleasure in duping the crazy old shits with the vile placebo. Gluck cast a wary glance to the young man framed in the window and noticed that he looked very much like a serpent—his eyes were blue to the point of opalescence and the lashless lids could have been hoods. These extraordinary eyes seemed to have the groaning clergymen mesmerized. Gluck shuddered. The chances were slim indeed that he would escape the ravages of the world's biggest killer, especially since any semblance to real treatment had vanished years before when the Living God had descended and declared prevention to be unnatural.

Hurrying past the doomed men at the Pus Station, Gluck marveled at the monumental reversal in things since the Living God had stepped in. Naturally most of the old laws had been disposed of. Homeostasis was outlawed to begin with, along with all formal institutions. Doctors were probably hardest hit: they were all squashed in one month of the first year of His assumption. Medical researchers were dealt with similarly, as was anyone else who might impede the new Natural Law espoused so fervently by the Living God. It was strictly forbidden, for another thing, to inter in any way any victim of any terminal disease such as tertiary syphilis (given here as an example because the abolition of treatment had allowed it to reach epidemic proportion and it was killing countless thousands each day) or to bury *any* corpse, for that matter. It was not natural, He decreed, to detain or hinder the cockroaches and worms in their natural pursuit, and to deprive vermin of its just desserts was

Dennis Dillow

## He Would Have Given Us Wings



punishable by death, no questions asked. The Living God *never* made an exception, and millions had been dropped from conveyors into roach nests for furtively attempting to bury the rancid remains of relatives. The old customs went down hard, but you were seeing less and less of them every day. The only convenience one was allowed was a free hand in steering the long-blind raving maniacal scum bags to an open space and then one just hoped to hell they died in the streets before they could find their way home. This was unethical and an unsavory practice to say the least but it was a lawful one. And that's what counts. If somebody died in bed, you simply tossed them out with the garbage—no trash containers or plastic bags, though, for that was as unnatural as a coffin. The stench was almost palpable in warm weather, but you can get used to anything. The point had at last been reached where overpopulation had ceased to be a worry; contagion had done a commendable job. The earth was an open charnel.

The Living God controlled the only pretense to medicine—the Pus Stations. They were operated by odd-looking young men of undelineable ancestry under His direct supervision and it was their job to parcel out the laughable facsimiles of penicillin, a foul panacea for the sundry stigmata of human frailty. Gluck had given this dubious procedure serious thought and opined that it had been inaugurated in an attempt to stave off the growing wave of hopelessness and despair which threatened to expunge the human race via suicides. The grubs and centipedes had been glutting themselves trying to keep up. These mock medical stations gave tenuous hope to the socially diseased, though offered nothing in the way of physical alleviation.

Gluck waded through a heap of refuse which blocked the walk and saw at least a squadron of huge sated rats go lumbering off to a hole in the street. To one side of the pile sprawled the corpse of a woman of indeterminate age, entirely naked with bracelets of black banana peels and empty milk carton bed partners. Fairly fresh, Gluck conjectured, for the only parts disturbed were the usual things which went

first—the breasts and lips were completely gnawed off. The eyes were gone too. Gluck was surprised to see that the flies were still active despite the lateness of the year.

It was still early in the day and not many people roamed the streets, but up ahead a small, milling crowd was forming around a towering ivy-covered church. Must be a Reward, Gluck thought, and not even nine o'clock yet. He strolled idly (there is no other way to stroll nowadays) toward the church and as its cobblestoned courtyard came into view, Gluck saw that he was right.

Every city was equipped with its own Rewarder (one for every ten thousand inhabitants was the ratio, Gluck believed) and they were all of the same general size and design. A Rewarder was a huge device made of heavy steel and was composed of two basic parts...the platform and the shoe. The platform was a ten foot square of flat, highly polished metal upon which the offender was tied with thick leather straps. Perhaps fifty feet above loomed the ponderous shoe which worked on the same principle as the pile driver. The machinery was set into motion by an unseen executioner who was housed in a blue metal box at the ankle. The box was rigged with several long spiral-spring shock absorbers so the executioner wouldn't go banging around inside when he set the shoe to stomping. Gluck had witnessed countless public Rewards. There was no ceremony and one had to be ready or the whole thing could be missed. Once the executioner pulled the switch the shoe descended slowly the first ten feet, then picked up speed and came crashing down onto the soft body of the offender. "Poyt-clomm!" went the first stomp. The shoe ascended and came down stomping again for good measure. "Clomm!" Up once more to the ready position and then *whooshing* down—"Clomm!" a third time because that was the law. Three stomps, no more, no less. Sometimes an entire lung or other organ would shoot out of the about-to-be pulp in the split second the mammoth sole first touched the offender to the time it mashed him parchment-thin against the platform. There had been numerous incidents in which spectators had been dealt



grievous blows to the face or groin by wildly flailing intestine expelled at the speed of sound. It took an adventurous soul to attend a Reward. Gluck stayed well to the rear of the crowd as its individuals jockeyed in wide-eyed anticipation.

Five executioner's assistants attired in black leather gloves and stiff brown uniforms mottled with dark stains made quick work of securing the naked offender—a young man in his twenties—to the platform. Splayed on his back, he trembled and whined. The five assistants retreated to their shelter behind a wall of the church, and it was then that the blanching offender, horribly aware of his station, unleashed a long hoarse howl of abandon. A puddle of urine began forming between his outstretched legs when the shoe came smashing down. "Poyt-clomm! Clomm! Clomm!" and in a moment the show was over. A ludicrous bloody gingerbread man lie on the playform and, flattened now, covered nearly its entire surface. The remains were thrown like a soiled rug onto an underground conveyor which transported them to a vast open pit at the outskirts of the city where billions of insects and worms were hard at work.

Gluck waited to see if anyone else was to be squashed, but no one was brought forth so he turned with the crowd and walked slowly off.

A short, squat old woman dressed in a shapeless blue sack was shaking her head disconsolately which Gluck mistook for disgust.

"What's wrong?" smiled Gluck.

"Pitiful," she snorted. "That piece of junk needs overhauled. Why, shit, did you see how slow them brains come squirting out? Like pus from a boil. Shit, that's pitiful."

Gluck's smile dissolved. He crossed the street and headed west toward Oleander where his brother had a farm and fifty acres of wheat. He had invited Gluck to come live and share the work and Gluck was jubilant at the thought of leaving the city.

Overhead, high in gray vaulted sky, wheeled half a dozen birds of prey, navigating in long and regular sweeping arcs through the dead smokey air. Gluck momentarily fancied he

heard the husking sound of their heavy wings and the low mournful rush of wind as it whistled through oily feathers, and he envisioned a pinpoint of wayward sunlight glinting off tiny vapid eyes like the flash of fire from a diamond facet. He stopped presently and studied the birds.

They glided in an oblong spiral, winding relentlessly downward until they were suspended no more than a stone's throw above an abandoned shipyard at the perimeter of the city. Suddenly they fell into a flapping and jagged course and disappeared into a hole in the deck of a destroyed Coast Guard cutter, an urgent fury in their callings.

Gluck was a romanticist; there was always adventure in discovering their quarry. He resumed his walk, careful to refrain from too quick a pace which could always be construed as running. Running was forbidden. The Living God had deemed running a sure indictment of guilt and anyone caught with more than foot off the ground would be Rewarded.

There arose a considerable clamor from within the hulk as the vultures flopped about in half a foot of stagnant bilge water and decayed rigging. Gluck pulled himself over the strake and gunwale and stepped gingerly along a moss-covered plank until he could peer into the cavity where the birds had dropped from sight. Instantly there rushed out a screaming whirlwind of feathers and talons clutching a piebald miniature human hand that seemed to be languidly waving as the bird vigorously winged upward. Once more Gluck ventured a look to the pit and then realized that the other marauders were industriously ripping apart a small emaciated baby who still stubbornly tried to ward them off. The birds were slick with blood. One was rooting savagely into a star-shaped wound in the child's flank, snapping at the pink muscle. Then, mercifully, the play went from the whimpering baby as one powerful bird claw dug out the white gristle of larynx and sent a great surge of blood gushing across the starkly defined human rib cage. The soft tissue on the tiny face was quickly peeled off as if it were the cellophane of a cigarette package. The eyes and ears were



expeditiously plucked like cherries. Suddenly the largest of the vultures, gone wild with greed, gave a violent tug and pulled the carcass from his comrades. They squawked angrily in protest and made a noisy, ostentatious show of flourishing their wings, but by then it was too late and the large bird emerged from the hole into the muted sunlight, its befouled ragdoll prize flashing a lipless sardonic smile. The four other birds scrambled into the air and began their pursuit which culminated when, far out over the sea, a murky mass from their grasp fell and went plummeting soundlessly into the water.

By the time Gluck arrived at Oleander it was nearly dark and the air had become raw with a shifting veil of rain. Far away through littered alleyways and mounds of festering human junk came the dull hollow "clomm-clomm-clomm."

Gluck hesitated in front of a bakery, looked through a lighted window. Someone was perched on a stool behind the display case reading a magazine with pictures of orange and black hardshelled bugs on its cover. Ordinarily Gluck shied away from stores of all kinds but he hadn't eaten all day and his brother's farm was another two hours' walk, so he stepped resolutely through the door. The woman behind the display case lowered her magazine at the sound of his footsteps. Gluck was immediately taken aback by the largeness of her breasts which bulged fleshily above the plunging neckline. She drew in a deep breath, beamed an uneven smile to him (Gluck saw lipstick on her teeth) and leaned tiredly over the countertop.

"A pound loaf of brown bread, please," said he, painfully conscious of his sinking gaze.

"Like them moons, big fella?" She pulled in another chestful of air and her bosom swelled and glistened in the stark lighting.

Gluck looked her dead into the eyes. "A pound loaf of brown bread." The groaning old men at the Pus Station wavered in his mind's eye.

"Bread?" She was abashed. "What's a matter, kid, you a sissy or something?"

"Just a little hungry. How much for a pound?"

She reached down and pulled out a crusty loaf and started around the end of the display case, her eyes steadily on him.

"How much you got, kid?"

"Not much," Gluck said.

The woman was standing right in front of him. Her shoulders swayed with staged seductiveness.

"How much is 'not much'?" She was looking him up and down, and her arms suddenly had him enmeshed and her wet lips were sucking at his. Gluck instinctively brought his knee up solidly into her groin—*pop*—and she buckled to the floor. He grabbed the bread and dashed out into the rain and was flying down the street, bounding over garbage and oblivious feeding dogs and partially clothed skeletons. He had run two blocks without thinking.

They apparently had felled him with a tranquilizer dart because the next thing Gluck recalled was being dragged down a dirty concrete corridor by two lean young men in brown uniforms. There was a dull throbbing in his head as he was hurtled into a dark room. It had a dirt floor, was dank and smelled of must. Gluck's eyes rolled back and he lapsed into a ringing unconsciousness.

Through a mosaic of subdued color flashes of pain and a roaring which probably would have sounded like a freight train (had freight trains or any other type of train or vehicle still existed) Gluck surfaced to semi-sensibility. He beheld a hulking bronze furnace-like figure sitting regally in a heavy squat oaken chair. The figure pulsed in Gluck's uncertain eyesight.

Then Gluck sighed and knew he must still be dreaming, for he realized that the bronze furnace had six legs, three on each side, and that what seemed to be a cape was actually a set of wings lying smooth and leathery along the sloping shoulders and below, stretching nearly to the floor, were the transparent hindwings. Two antennae long and stiff as horsewhips sprouted from a neckless head. The furnace was a cockroach.



Now this cockroach was indeed a wondrous thing. It was fully eight feet in length, though height is a better word because the Living God naturally could sit like a man. Once Gluck had looked into His eyes, so piercing and blue, he found it impossible to avert their penetration. The two antennae twitched and swayed, searching his thoughts. His leathery forewings husked and the membraneous hindwings crackled.

"Running," said a voice from behind Gluck.

"A thief, no doubt," said another.

"Exactly," said a third.

"Reward it," said the Living God in a perfectly human baritone with only a slight cockroach drawl.

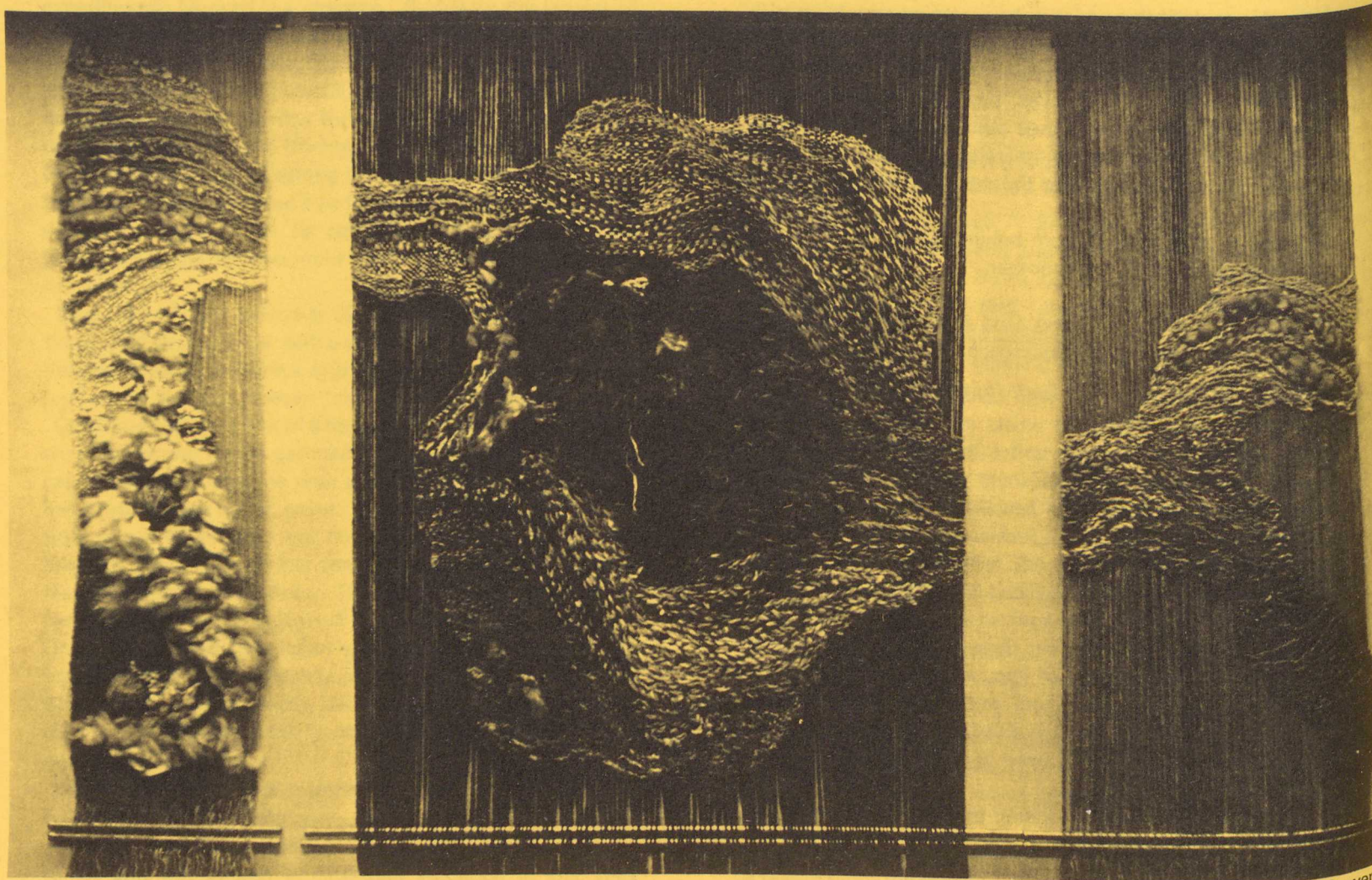
Five brown uniformed men with cold blue unfeeling insect eyes lashed Gluck about the wrists and ankles with heavy leather thongs stained stiff and black with blood. The executioner's assistants leaned over him and their breath came noisomely through thin, fleshless lips and Gluck then perceived the unmistakable insect parentage in their lean faces. Coleoptera-English stock without a doubt, Gluck speculated, the human still dominant though.

The steel platform was cold against Gluck's bare flesh. He felt a twinge of embarrassment through his confusion and fear as he became aware of the phalanx of spectators standing several yards off. There was something predatory about them that he had never noticed as a member of their ranks. Gluck saw those in front bring their forearms up protectively to eyelevel.

As Gluck lie spread-eagled beneath the immutable shoe, he found his mind quite effortlessly drifting back to his boyhood. How many times had he gone out of his way to step on those little crawling things? A hundred times? A thousand? Grind a heavy shoe on the scurrying bug. How many legions of ants and crickets and spiders had he obliterated in those shadowy years?

Gluck was disturbed. He couldn't actually remember stomping any fucking cockroaches.





Susan Bowen



# Three Dreams of Sannibel Island

Robert T. Donnell

1.

The metronome of falling waves  
scatters my thoughts  
like bits of shells  
across the Gulf of Mexico.

They steam  
in the shade of cypress  
or dry stiffly  
on white sand  
like driftwood strewn along the coast.

2.

The canal's surface  
divides the white heron:  
a bleached rock to me,  
a pair of reeds to fish.

He moves noiselessly  
as his reflection  
and leaves no motion  
in the water.

3.

Girls bask  
in the attention  
of my camera lens:  
they are young and move their hips too much.

They are as golden  
and as nervous  
as the chips of sunset  
jumping on whitecaps.



## Out of Childhood (to my brother)

"Beings. It's beings,"  
you'd laughed  
and I, not getting it,  
repeated "human beans,"  
outwardly resolute,  
fighting the chunks of gravel to keep pace.

It seldom snowed.  
Perhaps that's why now,  
crunching on, I can't feel  
the seeds shift, dormant with power.

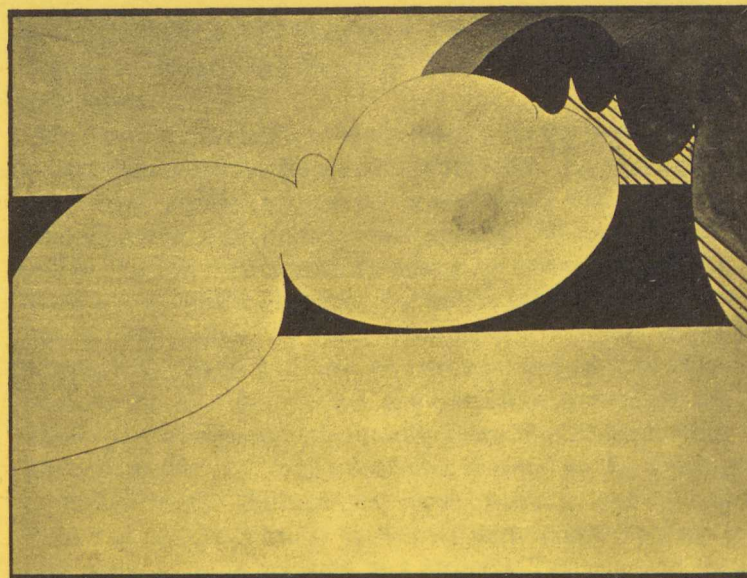
Oddly, it comes back—  
your sly look as you turned  
in the thick corn  
ready to let me in on  
"babies and all that"  
and I, too, became a fugitive  
curtained in nameless air,  
like a squirrel  
poking back each new kernel  
among the shabby leaves.

Now in the snow I grasp  
the fine strength of black limbs  
half covered, holding up scarlet berries  
like the final word,  
distilled.

If only seasons came between  
there might be, ending the long silence,  
easy greetings, a clean route  
and a clear bottle of wine.  
But stirring, clumsy,  
I put out a hand  
and something more.

Flora Foss





Elaine Ferlita

## On the Way to a Class in Romantic Literature

Jenny Sennott

Bicycling past my old friend Elm Tree today,  
I met a squirrel I hadn't seen before.  
But he must have been one of those stuffy East coast fellows,  
Didn't even nod a greeting.  
Such silence on this sun stained day disconcerted me,  
Dazed me,  
Until I swerved just in time  
To avoid hitting a couple of harried ants,  
And ran over an old lady's arthritic shoes instead.



Patricia Vidinich

## The American Self Concept: TWO VIEWPOINTS

The search for identity has been a universal quest found throughout history. From the Greek, "know thyself," through the twentieth century cry, "do your own thing," the question has been the same—Who am I? Every man has an inherent desire to be himself and to understand that entity; but the self concept has been most prominent in American history. This country's very existence is based on the promise of individual rights and this seed has been nurtured into an ideal cherished in the soul of every citizen. The distinction of self or individuality has become a quality Americans seek as their model. Unfortunately, ideals stem from perfection and therefore are seldom reached on this earth; but still they are sought. American writers therefore, are concerned with selfhood and deal with it in some form. Mark Twain and Walt Whitman, as true Americans, are no exception.

Perhaps it is easier to examine Mr. Twain's work first. In his greatest achievement, *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain develops the self concept in the personage of a thirteen year old boy. This proves to be an effective means for: 1) the adventure is constructed in first person; therefore the reader is always part of the action and all that influences Huck; 2) Huck is at the age of puberty, dangling between his childhood and adulthood, when the concern with self becomes prominent; and 3) Huck is virtually an orphan, which forces him to be more independent, thus more involved with himself. Following these steps in reverse order, the reader must first understand Huck's family life, or lack of it.

In the first few pages of the novel, the reader realizes Huck is searching, trying to find a place where he can rest comfortably and be himself. His mother dead, his father the town drunk, Huck is taken in by the Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson. They try to civilize him and though he respects their "dismal regular and decent ways," their life is not right for him. When they tell Huck about the bad place he wishes he was there, because "all I wanted was a change, I warn't particular." To remain in the Widow's home Huck has to conform and when one is trying to be an individual, conformity is not appealing.



Huck turns to his friend, Tom Sawyer, for a new outlook. Not only does Tom thrive on adventure, but he is a leader, a self-confident soul who knows about life, at least as it is presented in books. Huck joins Tom's gang and agrees to become a highwayman who robs, kills and ransoms people. The proposition looks exciting, but when Huck realizes that the caravan of Arabs is only a Sunday-school picnic, his confidence in Tom subsides. "So then I judged that all that stuff was only just one of Tom Sawyer's lies. I reckoned he believed in A-rabs and the elephants, but as for me, I think different." Again the urge for self-assertion comes to the fore and Huck resigns from the gang. He is tired of the childhood games and fantasies and wants to be part of something different, something real, which is why he turns toward nature so often.

When Pap arrives in town, Huck is terrified. Pap tries to bring Huck back into the conformity of his life. Huck shouldn't read or write because none of his kinfolk did and they managed all right. "You're educated too, they say—can read and write. You think you're better'n your father now don't you, because he can't?" Pap wants Huck to remain stagnant, which motivates Huck to progress all the more. He continues with his schooling to spite his father and to be the person he is, not the one Pap is looking for. Once more, the self-image becomes important. However, when Pap takes Huck away to the cabin, he resorts to the old routine of fishing and hunting and is satisfied, at least temporarily. This attitude is not uncommon at Huck's age. As stated before, Huck is torn between the security of childhood and what is familiar and the desire to become a self-sufficient adult. Americans, in general, face this dilemma. Though spiritually linked to their past, they are drawn to the unknown, to exploration. Huck finally gives in to this urge and develops the desire to "light out." The murder which Huck stages to escape is, on the conscious level, a scheme to discourage others from following him. However, on the subconscious level, he is freeing himself from the boy everyone knows as Huckleberry Finn. He can now move on to a new life where

he must create a new identity, his real self. Huck has the chance to develop the dream all desire; the chance to start over again.

The stage is now set for Huck's journey up the river and his experiences with the complexities of freedom. He encounters Jim, Miss Watson's runaway slave, who, like Huck, is retreating from a society he cannot endure. Jim and Huck are united by a common bond—the search for self identity. Jim's quest is less complex because it is on the physical level. The freedom he desires is a break from slavery, the right to live where, with whom and how he wishes. Jim admires Huck because he is a white man and therefore possesses the freedom he so desires. He doesn't realize that, though Huck is physically free, he, too, is enslaved; chained by the inability to find himself. Perhaps the most dramatic example of Huck's perplexity is found in chapter thirty-one, "You can't pray a lie." He is involved in a struggle Twain called the conflict of "a sound heart and a deformed conscience."<sup>1</sup> If played by society's rules, Huck has committed a crime in helping a runaway slave; if viewed through his own self concept, Huck has done nothing but help a friend. In a climatic outburst, "all right then, I'll go to hell," Huck's desire to act as an individual finally becomes victorious and he goes to shore in order to activate the new Huck he has discovered.

On shore he confronts the same restrictions which have bound him in the past. He must assume another role, this time as Tom Sawyer. Every encounter with the land has evoked this same reaction, that man is not himself, but what others want him to be. Americans claim to abhor this type of situation, but Huck shows them that it is a very real part of their society. Huck falls into the trap, he cannot retain his true identity when he is in the town and assumes the facade that all the others are living. However, when he realizes he is again becoming chained, he becomes restless and desires once more to light out to the territory where he is free. At the end of the novel, Huck is moving to continue the search for himself; this time attempting to keep his individuality in spite of the influences around him.



The inability to be a unique part within the whole is one of the aspects which distinguishes Twain's *Huck Finn* from the persona which Walt Whitman uses in "Song of Myself." Whitman is also concerned with the self image, however, through mystical experiences he passes the stage of exploration which enthralls Huck and advances into the discovery of self. Rather than despair in the game of life, he conquers it by encompassing all which is around him. The narrator recognizes his individuality as a most cherished possession. It is the beginning, the end and all which falls between. "I exist as I am, that is enough." However, he, too, recognizes the influences which surround him, that attempt to curtail his discovery of self. Rather than trying to escape these forces, as Huck does, the persona absorbs them, becoming not the "I" confined but the "I" unrestricted. "In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-cornless." His conception of self is both personal and universal which makes it immortal. These are contradictory terms but in Whitman's philosophy this is not a problem. If he is to be part of all, then he must be all of the extremes. He is both good and bad, both height and depth and both personal and universal. His outlook is one of acceptance. Rather than fight the forces which draw him into a role, he takes not the one mask assigned him, but all the masks of the universe. He finds the brotherhood which Americans claim to seek through faith in the cosmic unity, and the recognition that the "self" in every being is just as powerful and encompassing as the "self" he ascribes for his own. "I have said that the soul is not more than the body, and I have said that the body is not more than the soul, and nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is...."

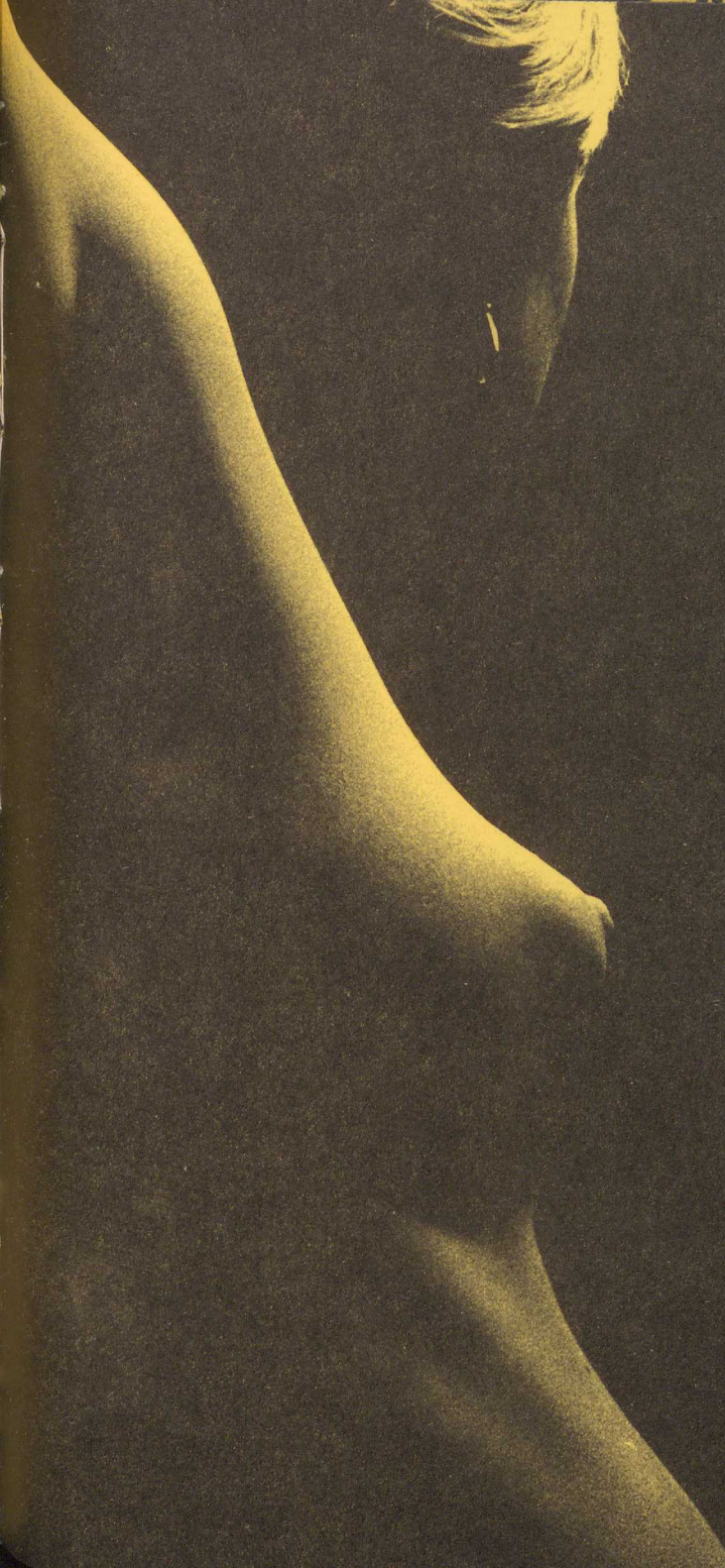
Whitman's ideal of acceptance and totality in "Song of Myself" is the philosophy on which America stands but it is not a reality. Sadly enough, America's beliefs and attitudes are not in accordance. Americans have not found a way of uniting individual freedom and national conformity. Like Huck, they continue to find new territories in which they can begin again, trying to make a better life. They lack Whitman's

ability to accept the paradoxes and transcend them. However, the routes of escape are closing. Americans have no place to turn but within. The American concept of self has to grow out of the exploration of Huck, which is the picture of American today, into the discovery of Whitman, which is a portrait of what America aspires to be.

#### Footnotes

- 1 Quoted in Walter Blair's *Mark Twain & Huck Finn*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962, p. 143.





## “Magdalene”

Jerry Bernbom

I.  
Reverently  
you held your love,  
passionately chaste—  
with holy tears  
you purged yourself,  
anointing his blistered feet.

exiled  
from his mother's womb,  
bent double  
with love's weight,  
he must've needed  
a woman's care  
before facing the world  
and ripping his soul—  
unleashing such precious life.

II.  
quietly  
I lace my boots  
so not to break  
Maria's dreams

I came last night  
without a name  
desperate,  
clinging in the dark

Bent double with sin  
I steal away  
before the sun—  
before she calls my name.



I.

We have not come we never came  
out of a deathless deep  
    for dying  
fell from the sea and grace and grasped  
    our own creation  
for casting shadow or for casting stone

I have not come nor ever came  
out of a brightless bread  
    for burning  
blind shining figment of some god's  
    imagination  
(if we are cast of figment then  
more likely of our own)

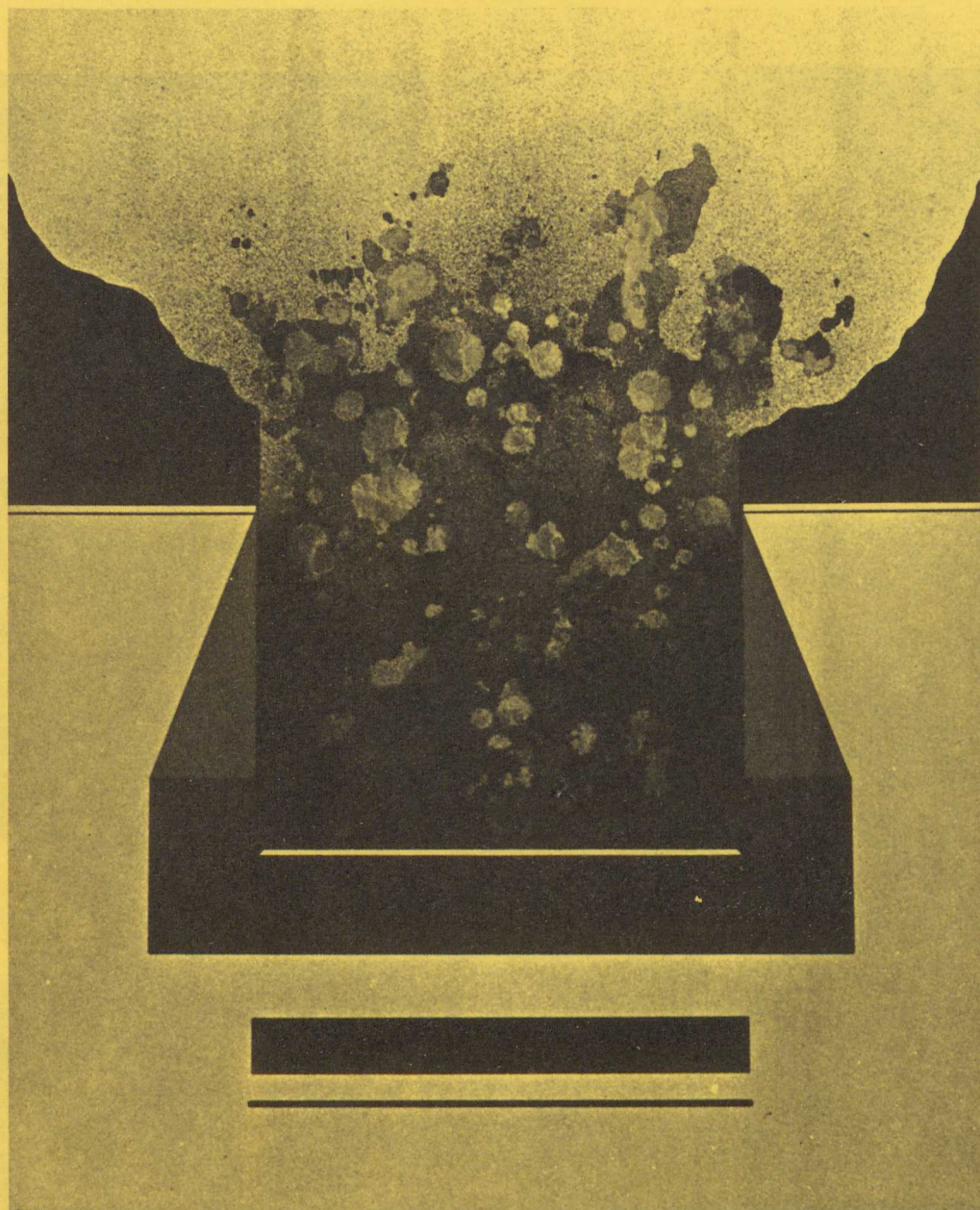
No slave no thief no master of creation  
though we of it or it of us  
and we are brothers  
    to the shadows  
        and the stones

II.

And stars and suns they  
run before me  
brothers they are touching eyes  
of mine of ours these  
    eyes that bare the fetal beam  
    though only by pursuing it  
    that wear the hue of nova burning  
    solely by enduring it  
    amend a hinted spit of spectrum  
    to familiarities of breath  
        are touching eyes  
my eyes my stars you long dead suns  
are touching brothers here alive  
    are burning holes  
    in time's dark fabric

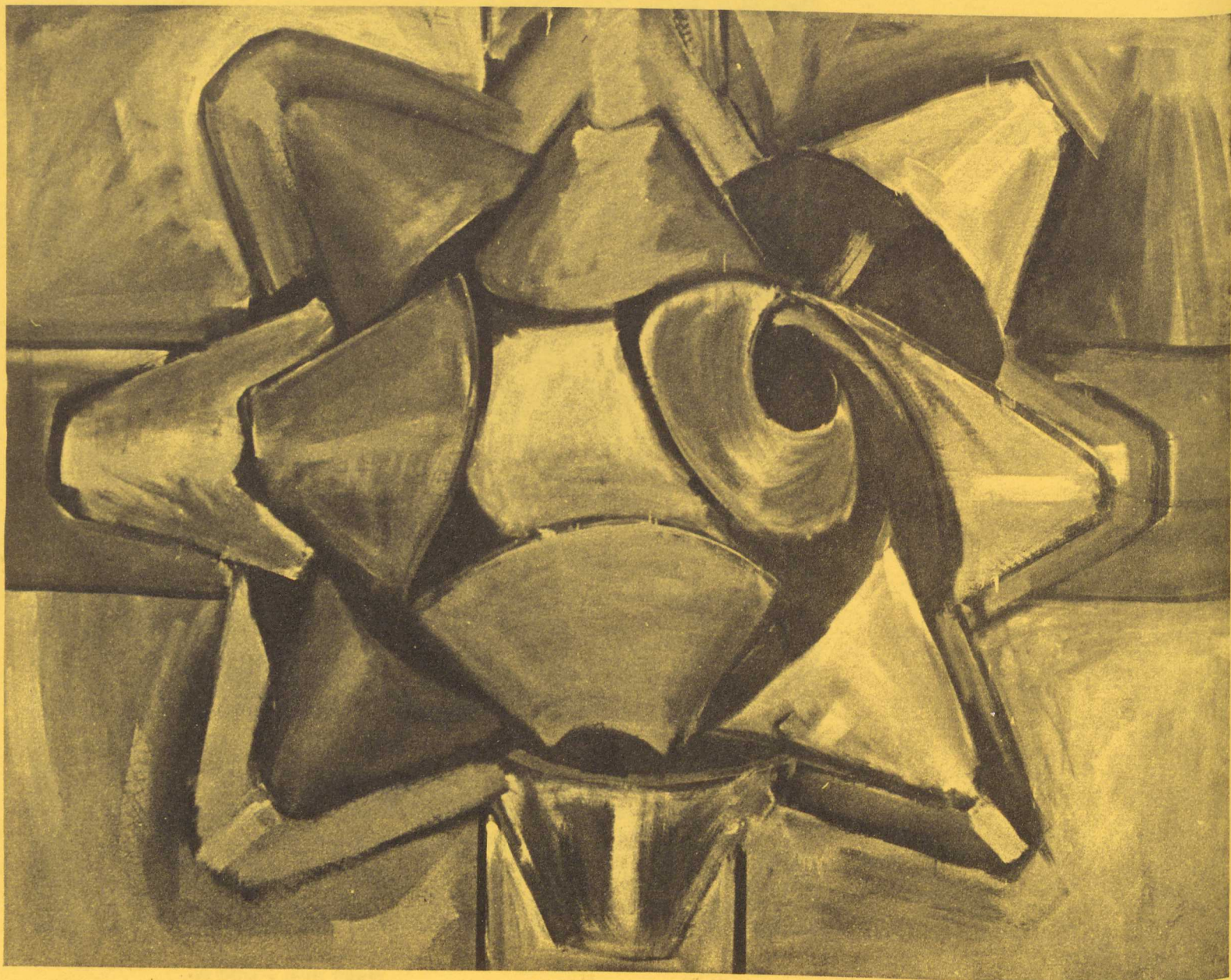
Richard Pate





Bruce N. Rigby





Colette Peters



## on her birthday

Jeanne Tessier Nash

there is nothing to be learned from resurrection,  
nothing to be gained by waking up and growing old,  
nothing, but the drying leaves  
and wind to drag rough curtains over graves.  
(but music! says the minstrel,  
and the way the curtains dance!)  
dirges only, and the scrape and catch of fabric  
on the stones: solid, ageless, shabby, non-alive.

i burn with the heat of unlit candles (now one more).  
there is nothing in a lack of celebration.  
i grow old  
and crumbling leaves do not sustain me anymore.



## Celery, dry bread

Deirdre Offen

My brother left a poem for me  
this morning by my bed

Crudely typed  
Mispelled words

With certain sections  
lovingly lassooed  
with coils of ink,  
as though pointing out  
Something Important.

His poems live on  
celery & dry bread,  
but they live.

Someday, I think,  
they will have meat.





