

TOWERS

VOLUME XXV

JANUARY 1966



JOHN PUF AHL • ENGRAVING • 11 x 18

LOOKING GLASS — PAUL YATES

In sun I walked today
But reflective brilliance refused
My shadow earthly recognition.
Friends I met stared far beyond,
Had no hellos.
Urgently I faced a mirror
And saw Narcissus dying into memory.

I have no friends
Nor need of mirrors now
But behold my new shadow
Cast upon the eager grass
By my beautifully naked bones.

DARKLY IS THE SKY

Sometimes winter tides
bite through plagued
whippoorwills, snapped
is life—gone is the
strife—left only
is the lonely wind.

With the black twigs from
white stumps spring
up, bring up, the
only sign that nowhere
is not there some trace,
tasting life's bitter air.

Bitter? —No! No cycle
of revenge is spent;
winter never more!
Just everneverstopping
shades of death's own door.

— DONALD A. MILLER

CARNIVAL

Together we went to
chance our turn
turn our chance full
and easy on sure
games we laid
heavy
hot
furious
Fortune
fell slow and urgent
green laughter clicked and rolled
away
from
bright tables onto
darkened stones home, pockets
empty leaving
one
at
a
Time.

— PAUL YATES



i'm going to the river
to stand at the edge
to look and throw my head back
and laugh
and pick up stones
and throw them in
and break the water's heart.

— MARY KVIETKAUSKAS

POETRY

PAUL YATES • LOOKING GLASS	1
DONALD A. MILLER • DARKLY IS THE SKY	2
PAUL YATES • CARNIVAL	2
MARY KVIETKAUSKAS	2
VICKI JUDAH • WHAT'S HAPPENIN, BABY ?	4
ORIANO PAGNUCCI • TIMEKEEPERS	5
EDWARD BEATTY • RIMBAUD	6
KAREN SARDESON • TIMING	6
HARRY KOEPP	7
THOMAS J. POTENZA • THE FABLE OF GERARD	8
DONALD A. MILLER	17
DAVID LOVEKIN • SPRING SONG	17
THOMAS J. POTENZA • PINOCLYDE MATIN	18
LAWRENCE SCHRIEBER • SOME MELTING LINES TO THE MYOPIC MAN	18
NORMAN R. AULABAUGH • UNTHOUGHT UPFEELING DOWN	19
PATRICIA J. ANDERSON • TWO WOMEN	22
CHARLES H. SANTEE • INSANITY	30
VICKI JUDAH • POST-SCRIPT	31
PATRICIA J. ANDERSON • SEPTEMBER 22	43
THOMAS J. POTENZA	43
PAUL YATES • OF TIME AND MEMORY	47

GRAPHICS

JOHN PUF AHL • (TITLE?)	1
D. HARKNESS	2
KENNETH CLIFFORD • KEEP IT CLEAN	5
DENNIS FRIEND	6
MICHAEL ONKEN • (TITLE?)	7
PETER JONES • OZYMANDIAS	8
RICHARD JANIS	42
JOHN SCARCELLI • CHARLIE CHAPLIN ON A BOMBING MISSION	42
JAY MORGAN	45
PETER JONES • MORNING RITES	46
DENNIS FRIEND • REVIVAL	46
KENNETH CLIFFORD	47

PROSE

LESLIE DAVIS • MAGAZINE THIEF	9
TERRY STERNBERG • THE FARM	20
LAVONNE MUELLER • THE BALLOON	23
ZOURA DREXLER • THE AUCTION ON HINDMAN ROAD	33
DAVE BESS • CHAPTER 1	44

WHAT'S HAPPENIN, BABY ?

That's what's happenin, Baby,
the Universal Soldier's

with God on his side

at the same time

Christ is getting a birthday present

That's what's happenin, Baby,
because

and all that's left is the artist and

That's what's happenin, Baby,
because nobody

who's still yelling

and he's the one

because J.B. still insists that the

And that's what's happenin, Baby,
because somebody took the wrong pill
and littered the world with aborted

taking their first looks around

That's what's happenin, Baby,
because somebody panicked and tripped the button
while trying to pick a flower growing

that didn't belong there cluttering up

And that's what happened, Baby,
because

one flower tried to grow in a world

goin where the action is

and fast on the draw

of tinsel and cornballs
from some Thanksgiving thieves.

everyone's gone to the moon

he's being

danced down the street.

done nothin to William Zanzinger

We Shall Overcome

who came and went over

U.S. of America

will never get anywhere until it's
US of America.

Children of our times

and getting sicker by the minute.

in the center of the Dan Ryan

America the Beautiful.

That hated one anything

Trying to do something.

— VICKI JUDAH



KENNETH CLIFFORD • KEEP IT CLEAN • INTAGLIO • 18 x 12

TIMEKEEPERS

Like the sudden budding
of castrated chestnuts over a fire
Time drags youth into oldage
and memories of sour tastes
and tasteless words
are seen with glass eyes

In a time when anxious timekeepers
measure time in daily cups of excuses,
cups that overflow with appointments
to greet deadlines which die.

— ORIANO PAGNUCCI

RIMBAUD

By twenty he had twisted the sun
And lay glistening among spiders
pouring from it.

Then, his cries cleaved only settled seas
Slipping silent together after
his mad passing.

His feet were stained with flowers,
As straining, sucking the locusts' hum,
he licked the moon.

His soul's wonder flung him heavenward
From darkness and silence, crushed him limp
against the sky
Where his words run, drip shadows shrinking
Me, as I with pen stare the damp moon,
fearing to reach.

— EDWARD BEATTY

TIMING

A glimmer of sun lit his solitary
vigil on that grey morning.
Tired feet dragged weary bones;
supported a strife torn face.
Eyes that were dead searched vainly
for acceptance. Arms that used to
hold love feebly raised a sign
for all of no one to read.
Faded ink on wrinkled cardboard
spoke the futility of flesh.

A glimmer of sun lit his solitary
vigil on that, his last morning.

— KAREN SARDESON



DENNIS FRIEND •
CHARCOAL • 18 x 24



MICHAEL ONKEN • MIXED MEDIA • 18 x 25

Hills
Are thrones
For those who climb
Them alone.

At the top to reign reclining
Between the exposed
Roots of a weathered
Tree which clings
To the rocky
Hilltop, bent
By the wind
Which here never
Breaks off
Its wailing
Complaint.

Below
Twists
The stream which,
In winding
Its indifferent
Way, has carved
The valley and left
Standing this hill—
A mound of isolation.

In the valley toil
Men
Who never
Climb
Hills nor
Know
The loneliness
Of kings.

— HARRY KOEPP

THE FABLE OF GERARD — THOMAS J. POTENZA

Gerard came screaming
gobblemouthed devouring paperback books
right and left
 across the reading room of the public library.

the mouse people burrowed deeper under the dust
or hid behind the green lamps and blinked wonderment
 at the silly avenging angel

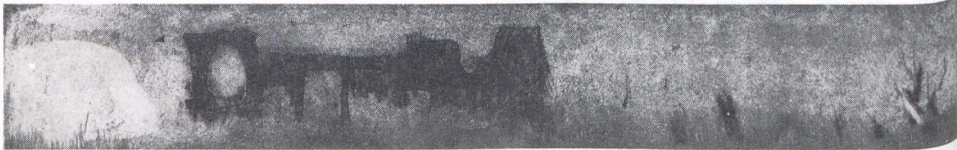
who was flapping baggy pantsed around the room
 leering at the staid librarian.

Behind the card catalogue, the bookmarks
 formed ranks and charged
 protected by library cards.

Encyclopedias fell to the floor and let off a
barrage of concentrated knowledge,
 which merely bounced off the angel of steel.

Police paddy wagons flashed red lights
 and the mayor checked out a copy of the

 New York Times;
the united states marines landed.
Gerard overheard the pentagon telling a dirty joke to
the washington monument and lightning sprung from his head
giving birth to the new day of freedom.
Civil rights marchers encircled the building
and refused food and water;
two boy scouts fed a poisoned chicken sandwich
to an old lady
and the fog came in.



THE MAGAZINE THIEF

Grave, portly Jonathan Silknetter lowered himself to his knees, unlocking a dusty, metal container (the size of two shoe boxes, piggyback) stored beneath his desk-table, discreetly out of the view of the infrequent callers to his modest rented room. Pocketing the primitive, sparsely-toothed key — more appropriately designed for a smaller hand and the task of relieving, perhaps semi-weekly, a cartoon-sculptured penny bank of its wealth — he opened the hinged jaws of the miniature, laughable safe, and began rummaging through the contents: possibly a hundred sheets of typing paper, neatly single-spaced or in midget, longhand script, rarely pressing beyond the middle of the page; a somewhat ageworn girly calendar displaying posers who apparently had ceased to take themselves seriously; an expensive pair of pig-skin gloves; four long-stemmed cherry bombs; and a gray, unfinished journal which Jon removed before clicking the container shut without locking it. Arising, perching himself on his desk chair, flipping through the small book, seemingly with no indulgence intended, then stopping, turning back several pages, Jonathan Silknetter finally bowed in deliberation, thick, white fingers laced beyond the page top, suitcoat arms cradling as dark margins the unnumbered ninety-fourth and ninety-fifth leaves of the opened volume.

Jan. 8 “There is a patient in Elgin—her name is Dolores Osaka—and she hasn’t had a t’ing to eat in fifteen years.” Halted in the dimly lit dining room, Clara leaned heavily against a chair, as one would for a stand-up grace, her white-knuckled hands gripping the wooden slats of the backrest, while addressing the bay window across the table, and perhaps beyond to the corner streetlight, hook-necked like a dying flower.

“They shall never release she. They say dat Dolores Osaka is a nasty woman; she does nasty t’ings. They shall *never* let she go!” Clara headed for the kitchen—slowly, gingerly—favoring both stick-like, arthritic legs as if walking bare-foot across a stone driveway. “Yes and they should find out what Dolores is doing to Clara and her family. And they call *that* justice”

Jan. 12 While C. was out cleaning houses this afternoon (House-keeper!), Herbert revealed, while in one corner of the room with a folded newspaper trying to beat hell out of a particularly elusive insect, that she had spent ten years in Elgin,

released in May, 1951. ("You probably noticed her mind's slipped alot lately.") Eager to hear the details, the buttressing ingredient of all good yarns, I was disappointed as he hoped I would excuse her behavior and then excused himself, saying he had to go dump, and abruptly marched off to the can. He later offered to let me watch a few "innings" of TV boxing with him.

Jan. 15 Piano playing: whispering at the keyboard, the interval between the chords giving listeners the impression that she has finally decided to give the whole farce up, rise from the bench, when another isolated chord extinguishes the collective hope of all adjacent ears. Her latest selections have been taken from a batch of multi-denominational songbooks she bought from a mail-order discount house.

Jan. 16 Hanging onto and defending all that I have done, collected and been.

Fear: everything preens a parody of itself. Minding the business of Clara's life unnerves me at times.

Jan. 20 I was in the kitchen burning a steak this afternoon when Clara came in from her piano lesson. She sat down at the table, still in her bulky blue coat and babushka, and, obviously tense, wolfed down a pint of ice cream. "Yeah, dat was *most* disgusting. I t'ink the people of Illinois are the most imperfect that there is!"

"Hello, college guy."

Roused, Jonathan looked up from his prose, scanned his chamber, but failed to find the owner of the high-pitched voice. The words might even have come from under his desk and he was having a look when the speaker tired of his hiding place.

"Down here. Thomas Pinkus."

In the shadows of the hall, past his open door, Jonathan discovered the blond, crewcut head of a small boy, his large, peering eyes just above the sea level, as it were, of the stairwell.

"My mother said I was to *please* go upstairs to say hello to the college guy. I think I was getting in her hair." A trousered knee became visible as the young man shifted his weight, draped as he was on the second stair. "You wouldn't have any comic books around, would you?"

"Comic books? No, not right now." Silknetter turned the journal face down on the desk, pulled his suitcoat from his stout trunk, and draped it behind him on the backrest. "But you should have been around yesterday afternoon because I threw out a whole drawerful just after lunch." Unsmiling, he displayed the proof by yanking open his empty, bottom-right desk drawer.

The intruder had submerged himself, except for the knee, when Jonathan began speaking, and the latter could just make out a brush-like rise on the cliff of the landing.

"I can fix my bike when the chain comes off." His eyes appeared again to see if the college guy was richly attentive, found that he was, sarcastically so, and submerged again, feigning boredom with an overly loud sigh.

"Ah! Aspiring to become a service station attendant, eh?" Suppressing a grin, Jon picked up a ballpoint pen and scrawled something on a scratch pad.

While Thomas, still stretched out on the stairs, debated with himself whether to continue playing hard-to-get, Jon lost interest in his staircase acquaintance, turned the journal up, and flipped over a few rearward pages.

Mar. 2 Even with her bad cold ("Most disgusting") the heavy woman still drags out the short mattress kept under the sofa and curls up on it in the middle of the living room floor. Entering late, after a foreign film, I heard the familiar request, below me, only a few feet away: "Silkner, would you lock the door, please?"

Mar. 7 Sauntered downstairs and immediately parted what seemed to be a heated argument between C. and the toilet seat. Instantly on her guard, Clara hacked up a little phlegm and deposited it in the bowl.

Mar. 8 "They say that the stars are falling; the mountains shall crumble, I mean."

Mar. 11 After bolting a quart of buttermilk for lunch, Clara hiked uptown through the snow to Woolworth's and wasted no time filling two shopping bags. Among the less categorical purchases was a fifty-nine cent, technicolor reproduction of *The Last Supper*, glorified on a flimsy rectangle of pressed cardboard. She later found me to be a passable confidant and rated the picture as an invaluable find.

Mar. 18 The late afternoon matinee: shades drawn, Clara at the helm

of a new movie projector (fourth trade-in during the last two weeks), splitting her sides at the subtitled, celluloid genius of Abbott and Costello, who frolicked half on the screen and half on the back wall. His wire-rimmed spectacles reflecting the changing light of the film, Herb tried to charge admission as I groped to a badly angled chair, almost collapsing the projector-supporting card table. Relished her comments: "Silkner, take a look at *that* one, will you? Isn't dat the cwaziest t'ing you ever did see in all your life?" C. punctuated her remarks with long, belly-shaking hysterics, gripping the card table with both hands to steady herself.

Clara sobered somewhat, possibly at the prospect of threading the machine again, for the tail end of the double feature, a homemade epic: "I t'ink I shall have to get ma'self another machine. The pictures still don't look so good, I mean Some are so dark and some are so bwight dat you cannot hardly bear yourself to look at them, I mean . . . in case." A dozen of her Norwegian relatives had been crammed on the sofa and were waving half-heartedly, as if in rehearsal, hands flapping hingelike. Due to the underexposure, the camera view seems to be from a rescue ship attending to the poor devils on a stranded life raft. Next, Clara panned the television set for a good twenty seconds and then gave equal time to the plaque- and trinket-laden walls, depressingly over-decorated with religious reminders in both the English and Norwegian tongue.

Set in the middle rings of the sprawling, net-like doily cloth that overlapped the top surface of the TV was a black-and-white snapshot of the couple in a domestic pose, enclosed in a cheap, plastic frame, a picture which has since disappeared. (I double-checked moments later when the lights came on and failed to find it or any other picture of them, single or together.) The last segment of the film was quite off the beaten path as far as home movies go: a door opened and the garish orange of obvious overexposure flooded the theater-living room with sudden light, like a raid from one side of the law or the other. The camera then concentrated on the bed and Herbert's pale, half-hidden, unmoving face, sleeping unaware of his photogenic offering. The camera retreated; there was no doubt about who was taking the pictures. "Dat last one there was when Herbert was sick in the fall. Yeah, that was awful." She giggled.

Coins gleamed under the shaft of desk lamp light at the reader's elbow when an eight-year-old, fingernail-bitten hand rolled a nickel off the edge, the boy withdrawing a step, ready to duck a punch, as Jon turned his head to watch the coin disappear.

"Gads, you've got a load of books here." Thomas sized up the four-shelved case along the wall, duckwaddling as he perused the titles. A forefinger jabbed at a brown-spined book. "I heard of *that* one: Alice and the rabbit that's always 'late for a very important date.'" Quoting proudly, the young chap moved along on all fours. "My dad read me that a long, long time ago and I think I saw it on television though too, but maybe it was a different *vir-gin*."

"Yes, it's a good little book if you have to read one." Silknetter pressed the journal pages flat with a palm. "Or be read one, as the case may be."

Dismissed after a few more exchanges, the boy reluctantly returned to the diminishing herd on the first floor.

Mar. 23 Midnight eavesdropping: ear pressed to my ventilator, warm air blowing uncomfortably, I heard Clara up walking around for the second night in a row. Snatches: "Dey are full of the devil and can't stand to see Clara because she is not like the devil Dey should do justice to Clara and her family He wanted to do evil to me Get away from me! (Quick steps. Running?!) And Herbert just sits there and sits there. Oh yes, Herbert has *all* the answers. While Clara washes the dishes and cleans the house. (Sink faucet turned on and off.) Wash the dishes; clean the house, Clara! (Silence. Five minutes.) You can kill her, but you shall *never* take Clara back to Elgin!"

Mar. 26 Daily I descend and find that Clara reminds me more and more of a wrong-routed, amnesiac courier.

Mar. 27 Clara felt a sudden obligation to the A & P this afternoon, hinted anvil-like for Herb to haul her up to the new shopping center for groceries: "Herbert, you can put your *duds* on now, if you wish." Left alone, I wandered downstairs to take a look at Clara's latest purchases which were gathered about the broken furnace like a child's opened but immediately discarded Christmas gifts: three lawn chairs, an unopened hammock, a watercolor set, heavy curtain material, and a dust-gathering guitar and accompanying instructional record.

Later, upstairs: A neat stack of eight *National Geographic* magazines occupied the lower shelf of a knickknack table in the dining room. After glancing through several, I pulled out one *Geographic*, dated "March 1955," and began to thumb its contents. Paging through scores of technicolor shots that depicted grinning, brown-skinned natives against graphic jungles and paddling around feverishly in cardboard canoes, I discovered, in the last ten pages of advertisements, marginal, pencil-written notes in a small hand. In one corner of a page devoted to sunny California was scribbled "they are full of the devil." On the opposite page, alongside an airline's pitch ("ATTENTION ESCAPISTS!! Now's the time. Take a powder. Skip the country.") were three or four short addition problems with dollar signs to the left of the sums. The following page informed the reader that "You can telephone all over the world." Below the bottom margin was written "Police 224-2911." The opposite page, half blank, that purported "Bell and Howell brings out the expert in you," was a mixed bag of pencilled thoughts: "find out what they are doing to Clara and her family"; "have Herbert arrested today"; "call the police"; "our minister—insanity"; "Clara must pay for their evil deeds"; "look at what Dolores is doing to Clara"; "but they have high honor"; "so that is the reason." The solitary written witness to her insanity?

Jon closed the book, checked his watch, slipped on his coat, and went downstairs. He returned twenty minutes later, put his coat on the backrest, opened the metal container, withdrew the gloves, slipped them on, and sat down to write.

Oct. 10 Today:

Mrs. Herbert Pinkus

Services for Mrs. Clara A. Pinkus, 58, of 910 S. Clifton Ave. will be held at 1 p.m. Monday in the chapel at 414 W. Main st. Mrs. Pinkus died Saturday in Monroe General hospital. She is survived by her husband, Herbert W. Pinkus, retired employe of DX service station here.

He dropped the newspaper clipping in his wastebasket.

And today:

Townpeople who had known or had heard of someone who had known the deceased clotted the living room, overflowed to the front porch like an audience recruited from the street. Death celebration.

And today:

Silknetter was eyed with suspicion.

T: Did you go see Aunt Clara today?

J: Earlier.

T: What's heaven like? Mother says Clara's there.

J: (softly) There's no such thing.

T: What did you say?

J: I said heaven's everything.

T: Did you like Aunt Clara?

J: Like her? No, not especially.

T: Why not? I thought she was awful funny.

J: You'd better go.

T: What's in the box back there?

J: Only children would ask. The forbidden things.

T: What did she die of?

J: Kidney infection.

T: The doctors couldn't help her, huh?

J: She wouldn't have one until it was too late.

T: Too late?

J: I said it's late. You'd better go.

(Written, then crossed out: "Thomas claimed he had a rash on the 'index' toe of his right foot.")

And today the mourners:

Herbert Pinkus held his sister-in-law's coat like a matador's cape: open, dragging on the carpet, the throat of the garment clutched at waist level against his mourning suit. My housefather (then a widower of some seventy-odd hours) had paused to turn the grown, sagging mask of his face, his neck a fleshy bag pinched by the crisp white collar, to speak, or, rather, listen over his shoulder to the reasonably erect figure of his sixty-three-year-old kid brother.

Poker-faced, Arthur spoke slowly, rolling his tired eyes,

studying his striped tie, the sentences creeping out as if he were administering a series of vivid Christian parables—old favorites, no doubt, worn thin at other post-funeral gatherings—or, on the other hand, passing on a very dirty story, the details of which he was laboring to recall, or better yet, trying to sauce up as he went along.

Sitting cross-legged on the hard piano bench across the room, just out of earshot of Arthur's narration, I was hemmed in, as it were, by the animate, gabbing bulk of the coat owner already mentioned, whom I was trying to ward off with a hasty abridgment of my *Great Expectations*, packing bland, suburban ideals, snowball-fashion, into a solid paragraph.

Florence, her back to her brother-in-law, threw a final remark at me, which I didn't catch but pretended to marvel at, while she groped in the air behind her, an area I had not been privileged to see for several minutes, hidden as it was by her sequined, mural-like torso, her gloved left arm still searching for its sleeve hole. Then, in a low, but resolute, tone, her dark red lips articulately pronounced the widower's first name to, in effect, cut the crap, and proceed with his cloakroom duties. Her thick body was immediately draped in black.

I stood behind Herb as we bid goodnight, repeatedly, occasionally in chorus, as if we were pretending there were more than just the two of us still hanging around, bidding goodnight to the cool October darkness and the hollow-sounding footsteps that descended the front porch stairs. Over Herb's shoulder I could see the silhouette of a neighbor in his garden, leaning on the long staff of his rake, watching the golden flames that nervously devoured a pile of dead leaves. A dog barked steadily somewhere behind our house, like the sound of a man strenuously sawing a hardwood board. Clicking the screen door shut, the old man bent at the waist, a big-knuckled hand supporting his knee, to retrieve the evening paper, two hours later than his usual 5:30 reading, and found the headline soiled by the heel of an anonymous mourner.

And finally today:

A Silknetter focus: spectator, recorder, seeker of grotesques,

compiler of a *curio shop* instead of a journal, who found himself at a funeral for one reason: a final entry. He stands on the periphery of human involvement, calmly ("calmly" crossed out, replaced by "quizzically") paring his nails (crossed out, replaced by "experiencing a chill, perhaps a salutary chill.")

Perspiring copiously from the blowing ventilator near his desk, Jonathan Silknetter rose slowly, neither noticing nor caring that his suitcoat had fallen from the backrest during the three-hour, uninterrupted writing session and lay rumpled on the carpet, descended the stairs, groped around the darkened dining room for several minutes, opened the back door, and crossed the yard to the incinerator to burn a pair of expensive pig-skin gloves and an old magazine.

— LESLIE DAVIS

A novel should be an act of divination
of the entrails, not a careful record of
a game of Pat-ball on some vicarage lawn.

— DONALD A. MILLER

SPRING SONG

Deedle-dedde-deedle goes a spring-time song,
a dandelion wine,
a golden sweet seem,
hopefully forgetting is/singing.

A seem world/thankful
for cacophonous children passing quietly to graves,
still moist with rain.

— DAVID LOVEKIN

PINOCLYDE MATIN

I am bored in denim shirts and dungarees
all over the city.
the railroad engines still howl on pinoclyde street,
cotton mouthed morning flicks its forked tongue
outside my window.
the time for action is past
there is nothing left to wait for.
I make surreptitious cups of coffee
and lie on my cot,
smoke,
watch moths play tag in speckled rivulets
of grey sunlight.
before we can live we must learn to die a little;
I have died too much.

— THOMAS J. POTENZA

SOME MELTING LINES TO THE MYOPIC MAN

Why do you giggle so insanely
when I chance to speak to you
in polysyllables?
And why, if constancy of mind is law,
do you break so quickly into sobs
at the rising of my voice?
What if I dared venture (think of it)
a declaration? I do believe
you would quite choke to death!

You see!

Here, take this glass of water . . .
Yes . . .

Were I not foolish
there could be no forgiveness.

— LAWRENCE SCHRIEBER

UNTHOUGHT UPFEELING DOWN

Happiness girlgold
things've gone past
relationship lovers
going too fast.
Daydreaming starnight
moongold black
gone too far
to ever come back.

Moonbeams of daynight
trees in a whirl
green ones and blue ones
surrounded by pearls.
Diamonds and emeralds
fall to the sky
and nature announces
that I'm really I.

Blacklight of darksight
covers my eyes
rainbows of stardust
cover the skies.
Lovers hold hands
and grope in the dark
where mongrels of mixture
forget how to bark.

Black dawn of morning
flashes the sky
highway of darkness
hides from my eyes.
Greydrab daplings
mock mourning sighs
and mute people say
that I am not I.

— NORMAN R. AULABAUGH

THE FARM

At first the hungry grumbling of the hogs and the bawling cows were part of my dream, but when a car door slammed and the gate clanged I awoke and dressed and ran out in the chill dawn to help Glen with the chores. The sun had already risen over Haskell's Woods and it would be as hot or hotter than yesterday's had been. I wondered if the heat would be as unbearable at the cemetery as it had been on the train.

Glen was spreading corn out for the hogs. I rolled the barn door back and the cows plunged in, shouldering each other aside until they had lined up at the right stanchions. As I filled the cooling tank, I could tell when Glen began to toss the silage — its sour pungency made me almost heady in the windowless room.

"I've really missed this," Glen remarked. "It's been a long time since I had any stock."

"You didn't milk by hand, though, I'll bet," I answered, handing him a bucket and a stool. I squatted by the shorthorn nearest the door and began milking, steadily and smoothly, as Grandfather had taught me to do when my hands had been still tiny and weak.

"There hasn't been a farmer in the county without machines, except your grandfather, for twenty years. Aren't many left, now, even with herds. Not since the cannery."

"He liked to milk by hand. He told me once that the cows let down their milk as soon as they felt his head against their sides. Some of them wouldn't let down for anybody but Grandfather."

My cup was on its hook on the pump in the cooling-room. I rinsed it in the tank, sank it in the pail, and drank the frothy hot milk the way it should be drunk — it tasted like clover and timothy and bitter rye, and the metal cup, and it was good. I offered some to Glen, but he told me he would wait and have his later, chilled.

The summer when the cannery man had come to all the farmers, contract in hand, he had found us cultivating between the rows of new corn which dotted the fields like rabbit-eared tufts of yarn on a comforter. The furrows behind us were wet-black and weedless, and I walked abreast of Grandfather and Fanny; Queen's reins were draped around my shoulders but she would halt if Grandfather said so. Grandfather did not stop, at

first, and the man had to step along an unturned row to talk. We stopped when Grandfather did, and I watched him bend to scoop a handful of loose soil from the furrow. He held it across to the man, who looked bewildered but took it in his clean palms.

"Manure makes that," Grandfather said. "The land feeds us and we feed the land."

"You don't understand," the man had protested. "We furnish the fertilizer tanks and you can convert —"

Grandfather clucked to Fanny and Queen and they lurched forward; the cannery man was left with the soil cupped in his hands.

In those days I had been Grandfather's loyal second. Especially about the tractor. The high point of the summer for me was driving the team for the haying. I became expert at maneuvering the wagon among the wind-rows while the men tossed up the sheaves in forkloads for Grandfather to stack against the laddered sides. After Glen put his hayfields in tomatoes he still returned to help, but Grandfather wasn't needed to build haystacks anymore so he got so he would forget to ask for hands on haying days. Then I was taught to stack the sheaves which Grandfather tossed up to me, and the team would move along the row when he called to it.

"See that?" Grandfather would grin. "A tractor couldn't do that for us, now, could it?"

I wanted to cry at the funeral but it wasn't time yet. I had been gone a long, long time — it was hard to picture the copper-red old face, and I couldn't remember the color of his eyes. Glen let me out at the drive and said he'd be back to help until the buyer came to take the stock. I changed my clothes and went into the kitchen to wash the cemetery dust from my face and arms. I switched on the radio and dripped across the room to the roller towel on the opposite wall. In sixty-five years no one had thought to put the towel closer to the sink; it made me feel better to laugh and I felt like eating then. The radio began to give the news and I turned it off and took my cheese outdoors.

I was ready to go behind the barn, where I could not go before, and I kicked the cobs along the barnlot and walked backwards so I could watch the sun slip behind the tops of the walnut trees in our wooded hill. When I turned, I saw the hayrack next to the half-built stack, where the neighbor who had heard the cows had found the team still waiting to be unharnessed. I climbed the wagon-tree and stepped across to the stack, where the pitchfork still lay. So many times I had stood with the men to watch Grandfather do what none of us could do so well, to watch him swirl and weave the stalks around and in to build the stack up round and tight.

A bob-white sang out from the woods, and another, and I wished that we had found one only once when we had gone to see them call. The cows were coming up the lane, udders swinging ponderously beneath, and the smell of milk came with them. At last the time to cry had come; I pressed my forehead against the smooth handle of the fork and waited. But when the gate clanged shut and Glen was there I went to help him with the chores instead.

— TERRY STERNBERG

TWO WOMEN — PATRICIA J. ANDERSON

Kneeling,

Her feet felt the dampness
Of the winter's wetness lingering.

April is sunny,

But the ground is moist;

Well, seeds need moisture.

The box was made from wood still moist,

Green wood, cut from a heavy oak.

It had to be chopped down anyway

To clear the field for planting.

Tommy would have had a swing this year

On such a tree as that.

Standing,

Wind blown calico outlined her belly,

Filled again by the moisture of man.

Sitting,

In the gold brocaded chair

Her shoulder touched by seeming warmth of April.

It had just been raining,

Why does it always rain so much in April?

They had to stand under the canopy,

The artificial grass was old and dried.

A sudden virus, they said,

The name was unpronounceable.

We were going to the zoo tomorrow.

Crying,

The crepe dress loose against her slender hips,

Gaunt—in body, and in spirit—

“Never again,” she said.

THE BALLOON

When I was eight years old, a mere gadfly of hauteur, my life was a vibrant, sweet, religious celebration. I was safe within the cloisters of a Catholic school. It is ironic, then, that such a place was to mark my only *literal* escape from God.

St. Margaret's was an old school, a stodgy, brick building, "bottle-factory" in appearance, and plainly utilitarian with long, narrow clefts for windows. Sometimes, during Lent, dull brown holy pictures were pasted on the window glass. It used to be a game for me, when we were saying devotions, to think of ways to color in the dull brown. I imagined Jesus with bright red hair, the caked blood on his body a pale green. The wooden cross always ended up yellow. But I would never admit, even to myself, that such colors made the crucifixion more grotesque, more tragic.

At exactly every hour, Sister Theresa rang a small, silver bell. Immediately we would lower our heads, saying:

Praise, benediction, adoration and love,

Be to our Lord, Jesus Christ, in the most holy sacrament of the altar.

I always looked forward to these minute-devotions. It was a rest from the dreary drills of grammar and arithmetic. The room turned so suddenly silent, the fidgeting and restlessness were gone; and I would hear my own breathing, soft, constant, and fluent. Sometimes I would try to prolong the breathing, pace it, hold it, until near suffocation forced the air from my nostrils. Already I felt enchanted with the delicate balance of life, the unknown perpetual evenness of breath, the unawareness of the bodily function that gave me life; and I felt cheated by this *involuntary* process of breathing.

We were all little worshippers, then, moppets with an insatiable craze for idolatry. I led the race. God, Jesus, Mary and a thousand saints—two per day—did not satisfy me. I gulped down everything in sight. I had a vacant homage waiting to be filled, a compelling and wanton delirium to prostrate.

In the early morning, before school, I waited on the corner for the nuns as they walked to class. It was a great honor to be the first to greet the Sisters at the stoplight, and even more thrilling to be permitted to carry

one of their satchels. Sister Theresa (who brushed her teeth with soap lather and whose breath was always vivid with a familiar scent so close to childhood) would lean over, smiling, to hand me the satchel. Her veil would fall about her cheeks and shoulders, and she would toss it back, in a reverting moment, like forgotten hair.

For I was always having a "crush" on the Sisters. It seemed natural that I should love them, adore them, dream of touching the scrubbed hands that poked out from the black sleeves of their habits. And each nun had her own individual noise, a private rhythm and sonorous clank of thick Rosary beads that hung down in a loop against the heavy, muslin skirt—large, wooden beads that banged resolutely together and flapped against the material with a thud. The heavy, silver cross at the end of the beaded loop, suspended by a thin chain, was superfluous and awkward—a last minute addition (or so I thought). Jesus had no right to the Rosary, I thought; that was Mary's. Even now, when I see a Rosary, I feel the ancient indignity returning, briefly. I affect the pose of Mary and womanhood and remember the injustice of it.

But these things were so much a part of me that they hardly stand out in my mind as events. Nor do I want to conceal in a maze of details the very occasion that *mechanically* motivated my first confession. It was Father Blakely and what he said to me that enshrined and perpetuated that part of my past.

I had always believed that God acted, and somehow resembled, our pastor at St. Margaret's School. Father Blakely was tall, with aspirin-white hair. Every Friday he visited our classes for an hour to tell us glorious stories of the Saints and then left us dazzled and saddened with our small and worthless existences. I was never absent on Fridays. That's how much I liked Father Blakely!

In the process of preparing for our "First Holy Communion," the third grade saw Father Blakely more frequently. He gave us prayers to memorize, mostly three: *Act of Faith*, *Act of Hope*, and the *Act of Charity*. I undertook the memorization with almost fanatical zeal, as if being precise were in itself a form of spiritual perfection.

Solemnly, we were told to examine our minds for the First Confession, and this almost terrified me into a premature state of "Holy Grace." Alice, my best friend, said it was wrong to be scared into anything—especially innocence. But then Alice was foolishly brave. She even told Father Blakely that the Trinity was inconsistent, for if Jesus was on earth praying, wouldn't he thus be praying to himself? I had to agree that it made sense, but I didn't dare let on because more than anything in the world I wanted the Priest and the Sisters to like me. I thought that if they didn't,

I would not be permitted to receive my First Holy Communion and wear the white silk dress and veil that my mother had ordered from the largest store in the city.

But Alice was always leading me on. Not that she wasn't one of the Followers. It was just that she refused to believe that the Church, or even God, himself, was infallible. She continually taunted me by posing various trick questions. She knew that I would never go against the principles of our Third Grade Catechism because we studied from it every morning promptly after Mass, and Sister Theresa said it was the most important book in our desks. I believed that, and I even thought it was the Bible itself until my mother impatiently pointed out the difference. Alice, of course, had no sympathy for my loyalty. It only made me more of a foil for her relentless reproaches.

My mother made a great deal of the coming event. Not a day went by during which I was not judiciously reminded of my new responsibility. It became a household trump that increased my anxieties and led me to think that God must be spending all his time leaning over his throne looking down on the small spot of a Me, anxious that I should blunder.

Every morning before school started we marched into the Chapel for Mass. Grades One through Six filed into the first ten pews, which had no kneeling pads. During the Offertory, I would lift one knee at a time and with a cautious hand feel the deep ridges in the soft skin. Sometimes I put Kleenex under my knees, but it never seemed to help. I would squirm about, sometimes looking up at the altar with a senseless hope, waiting for the Communion because that meant the Mass was nearly over. It was then that Father Blakely would elevate the Host. The small pale wafer always looked balefully out at us like a stunted eye, and I would begin to feel contrite and a little frightened. The tabernacle, with its gold tracery, seemed the only true receptacle for the Host. Yet I knew that some day I would sustain this thin, circular disk, the body of Jesus, on my tongue. How was it possible?

Mother further added to the suspense by dutifully relating stories of greedy children and evil parents. One that I particularly remember dealt with a lovely, blond-tressed girl whose father was a pagan of considerable renown. He refused to let his daughter take religious instruction, so she was forced to pursue the "Truth" secretly. The father discovered his daughter's disobedience just at the moment the girl knelt at the communion railing to receive the Host. He killed her with a hunting rifle then and there—in the church—with her tongue heavy with the *Body and Blood of Jesus*. Mother said it was the saddest story she had ever heard, but I thought it was a glorious way to enter the Almighty's Kingdom, perhaps with the words of Jesus:

I am the vine, ye are the branches;
he that abideth in me, and I in him,
for the same bringeth forth much fruit;
for without me ye can do nothing.

I told the story to Alice and she found all kinds of flaws, as I suspected, like why didn't the girl's father shoot the priest, too. After all, the chalice held by the priest contained *many* Hosts! Alice said it was the only logical solution; but I stopped her, saying it was blasphemous and she oughtn't to go around saying things like that about the Lord.

Once Sister Theresa told us about a little girl who got up sprightly on the morning of her First Holy Communion and thoughtlessly broke her fast by eating candy. When she realized what she had done, she cried and cried; but it was too late. She could not march down the aisle with her friends because she had been selfish and stolidly yielded to the Devil and to the temptations of the body.

I thought what she had done was contemptible. For a long time I had envisioned the human body as being Satan himself; but Sister Theresa said no, it wasn't that, either. The body is a sacred temple, she said. So I just became more crestfallen. I hesitated asking Alice, but she was always so assertive and easy to ask. She made me feel as if I had just as much chance as anybody when it came to judging anything. She said it wasn't the little girl but Satan who ate the candy. So shouldn't Satan be punished?

I guess I spent too much time with Alice. I didn't realize that she was slowly poisoning my mind with dismantled inductions and irresolute suspicions. Sister Theresa said that there was nothing as incorrigible as the doubts of Thomas.

Except that I shall see in His hands the print
of the nails, and put my finger into the
print of the nails, and thrust my hand into
His side, I will not believe.

This was surely my favorite Biblical story, and ever since I reached what I thought was a religious puberty, I wondered how anyone, in his wildest imagination and for the tiniest moment could have questioned the dictates of Jesus. The Third Grade class had been outwardly shocked and even made obvious murmurs of awe at the Dissenter. In our small school-room with the Holy Family's picture on the blackboard and the statue of Saint Agnus looming upward on the Sister's desk like a glorious cupola, it was preposterous that there could have ever been a doubting Thomas. After that particular lesson, on a cold, November day, I had walked home with my coat deliberately unbuttoned, feeling the torturing wind and shivering in the aura of my inventive sacrifice. I wanted the Deity to be repaid for an injustice.

I was nervous and irritable for the entire week before the day of my First Confession. Mother said I would feel wonderful after telling all my sins. She said that everyone did! It was a sort of washing of the soul. I wondered perhaps if it was like Mother sprinkling polka dots of kitchen cleanser on the sink and suddenly transforming the ugly, greasy basin into a radiant whiteness.

I thought about Confession often, and I was even fearful that the priest would recognize my voice or see the outline of my face through the thin veil of the Confessional. Even more poignant was the prospect of being overheard by my peers as they waited in a straight line with bowed heads, directly beside the purging box.

Sister Theresa gave each of us a mimeographed sheet of possible sins that we were to scan as preparation for Confession. There were sins noted that I never knew existed. It worried me that my transgressions were of such a banal nature: disobeying my parents, white lies, secret hot dogs on Friday. But even more distressing was the fact that I had to give an approximate number of times that these violations were committed: *I disobeyed my parents one million times; I lied two billion times.* And was this, too, another lie? If it were three billion and not two billion times that I had digressed from the truth, what hope was there for absolution? For even then, embryonic as my life was, I feared the ultimate loss of salvation.

Each day grew agonizingly longer. I tried praying more often, stopping for visitations at the chapel and feeling all the while a failure and a coward, as the fishermen did on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus was asleep.

And they came to Him, and
awoke Him, saying, Master,
Master, we perish. Then He arose,
and rebuked the wind and
the raging of the water; and they ceased,
and there was calm.

And He said unto them, where
is your faith?

But prayer gave me little relief.

I mentioned these fears to my Mother. She said that every young girl felt mystified. But I decided that it was really unreasonable for God to expect me to understand this complex reality of *Confession* and *Communion*.

Alice said it would be just as well to "think-confess" our sins instead of saying them audibly. After all, if the priest was just the *middle man*, he didn't have to know everything. It would keep him in his place. Mother was quite vehement at this and said that was no way to talk. But I knew,

as usual, that Alice had a point.

Father Blakely always stood by the steps when we marched out after school. To me he was a portentous symbol. He was tall and God-like, yet I felt that he would be compassionate if I told him of my impasse. It was Friday—the day before our First Confession. I slipped out of formation and went over to him, saying a rampant, nervous *Hail Mary* with each forward step.

I felt timid and uncertain as he led me into his parlor and then asked me to be seated on a highly polished, ornate chair. I had only been in the Rectory once before, to have a medal blessed. The housekeeper had given me cookies and milk as I waited for Father Blakely to return from a house call. Later, when he sprinkled the silver medallion with holy water and said the *Pater Noster*. I felt so exorbitantly caught up that I wanted then and there to break out in one of my newly-learned hymns.

Now, however, I blurted out that I felt quite unprepared for the sacrament I was to take the next day. Father Blakely looked at me curiously, yet forbiddingly.

"My child," he said. His voice possessed the melody and incense of the Mass. "Look here." He held out his large hand, the one I had so often seen holding the chalice on the altar. "You are a *dot* on my palm. With a clap, God can end you in a second!" And then I heard the predatory slap resound in the room, the noise more fearful than if God Himself had so imminently gestured.

I didn't fully understand the significance of Father Blakely's gesticulation—not then, at any rate. But I felt uneasy, and I crept home more fearful and apprehensive than before.

The Stations of the Cross, carved in somber rosewood around the chapel wall, now served as a kind of spiritual therapy. I began slipping into the chapel during lunch period when the church was normally empty. Occasionally, a woman from the Altar Society appeared and draped newly starched muslin cloth over the communion railing. I would carefully move about the aisle and intermittently plop down on the cold cement, my knees making a slapping sound on the ground as I knelt before each of the plaques.

The Way of the Cross visualized, in crude, wooden italics, the agony of Christ on his journey to destruction. I always followed each picture ardently, carefully. I went about the church, again and again, relentlessly. Jesus always died on the Twelfth Station—crucified. I always hoped, somehow, somehow, that when I got to this scene, that the ending would be different. Jesus would live! But of course it never happened that way. It terrified me to see His wooden face—for even wood depicted horror. But to receive His body on my tongue, this religious amputation, proved in-

conceivable and fiendish to me. And to confess to this Jesus, in the presence of a priest, too, made me even more fearful.

On that long-awaited Saturday afternoon, when it was cool and I had run with all the boys and girls in the neighborhood and my body still stung from a vivacious twirl during *Swing the Statue*, my mother called me into the house to prepare for church. She helped me bathe, carefully lifting me out of the tub into a cavity of white towels. She wiggled a pale blue dress over my head and fluffed out the skirt and bow with the solemn precision she always managed when I was about to embark upon something for the first time.

The Confessions were slated for three in the afternoon, and shortly before the appointed hour I started out for the church. On the corner by the stoplight where I had so devoutly carried Sister Theresa's satchel, Alice was waiting with the news of the bazaar.

"Why shouldn't we go?" she asked. Here was a chance to escape our purging and drown ourselves in an orgy of merriment.

"But we'll be missed," I answered. Alice wouldn't be bluffed by that, for she knew that roll would not be taken at Confessions. Sister Theresa said that it was a sacred moment unto each and not a required assignment.

"You aren't afraid, are you?" Alice asked.

"But we'll be caught," I said, quickly, like a reflex, as if I were conscious of the fact that I should make one feeble protest at least for Alice's sake. She had a ready answer, and it was the answer I needed in order to follow.

"God always forgives, doesn't He? Especially kids! Everybody knows that!" Alice said.

By three o'clock walking with Alice through the colorful crowds of the bazaar, I felt what I thought was an unsurmountable courage. But little by little, my guilt began to gnaw in gradual intensity. I knew as I waddled my tongue over an ice cream cone that my friends were already on their knees, sore and ribbed by now from the hard benches, examining their consciences and summing up the number of times they thoughtlessly forgot their Savior.

After a half hour, I began to ache with humility at my cowardliness. I tried desperately to cast aside my gloom. Alice had wandered off to a cake walk, and I suddenly found myself in front of the balloon man. Balloons had always delighted me with their delicate aloofness that passed over the heads of even adults. They made me feel taller and bigger and wonderfully arrogant.

The old man smiled at me invitingly, and his friendly face was large,

puffy and salutary. The various circular colors above him, swaying, transformed the balloons into a prism of technicolor, and the desire to pamper my senses took hold of me.

With my last nickel I bought a balloon, desperately hoping to cheer my downcast spirits and let my impiety glide flippantly in an atmosphere of pleasure.

But the noise, and the pushing, laughing people failed to curtain my growing despair. I walked sadly in and out of the crowds, hoping to catch a glimpse of Alice, who would be sure to lessen my uneasiness.

Suddenly, without warning, I heard an instant *explosion*. There was no doubting its papacy. I froze with clinched eyes and awaited the expected apparition and the bolt of gilded lightning. Instead, I opened my eyes and saw fragments of rubber flapping bouyantly on the stick. My balloon had burst!

I remembered the example of Father Blakely, and I quaked in fright. The first time I had been indifferent to his resounding clap. Now it was the undenyng blast of God!

I ran all the way to church, finally sinking exhausted on my knees before the purple clothed window of the confessional. Hopelessly out of breath, I was still able to murmur: *Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.*

— LAVONNE MUELLER

INSANITY

There seems to be a symphony
Which whirls within their minds.
And with their every movement flows
Symmetrical designs.
What is the mystic sight they see
What golden dream or prophecy
Each troubled soul confines?

The dusts of hate which chokes my heart
That scorching sun - noon high
Those plague filled chains - conformity
Which will not let me fly.
While I seek gold among despair,
They walk in dreams and have no care.
Are they more sane than I?

— CHARLES H. SANTEE

POST-SCRIPT

Raining yet?

yeah, sort of. more like mist.

Standing by the window
hands deep in pockets
the rain is misting
like the mind is aching
and the eyes are.

rain.

gentle rain.

not

what have they done

but why.

What?

nothing.

Then what did you say it for.

I'm busy.

Can't listen to your nothings.

Sit down.

Shuffle feet sad sound
and a glance to the door
guitar on the bed
paintings cockeyed around

no sense

no pattern

peoples ideas all different

not a friend not a friend

SHUTUP RAIN.

got anything to read.

There's the bookcase. Look.

eyes turn

then back.

read em all. they're mine.
remember?

Remember Remember
please remember.

Yeah. So, read them again.

now it's raining. hard.

Won't hurt you.

huh?

Read it again.

i said it's rain—.

Again to the door
finger trace a single drop
down down the pane pain.

got a cigarette.

What. Yes. Here.

no thanks. just wondered if you did.

What's the matter with you!
For Chrissake
Sitdown and bequiet.

sorry. i only,

WHAT.
nothing.

Oh why can't you understand
there's so much
It's rain it's sad
I'm me I'm—

hey?

WHAT!?!

can i have that cigarette now.

Take The Whole Pack.
Let Me Alone.
I'm BUSY!

what are you doing.

WHAT DO YOU THINK I'M DOING!

nothing.

— VICKI JUDAH

THE AUCTION ON HINDMAN ROAD

When Shorty Lemson first started going to auctions around that area the men thought him a queer character and used to laugh quite a lot at him. Not that they couldn't have been considered an odd lot themselves with their ruddy, weather-roughened or strangely pallid faces, their weird assortment of clothing and their even more weird assortment of human disfigurements. But that was different because they understood why these things were so. Emil Gottfried had been doctoring for his stomach two or three years now, most people guessed, and the grayness of his skin only served to remind them of it. And if a man's coveralls spread over the bulk of his other clothing like a shrunken slipcover, how else could he protect himself alike against the cold and the clinging straw? And among these men who worked daily with farm machines the results of carelessness or tragic accident were too common to arouse comment. But Shorty's difference spoke another language. He often wore a tweed snap-down cap, a turtleneck shirt and wellworn riding jodphurs, all quite ordinary to him, but to the men making him sort of comic figure. He knew a great deal about horses and often talked about them, but they were the kind that raced or that the fancy people rode, not just the leftover workhorse or the poor western pony the farmers kept. The electric motors that were often set out on the sale wagons he called "dynamos." But besides the unfamiliar words he sometimes used, they thought he simply talked queer. When they had grown friendly with him and asked him about it, he told them it was a north of England accent from a town near Liverpool.

And they did grow friendly with him and liked him because he never bid against a man just to prevent him from having a thing, but only because he needed it himself, and he never tried to say he had a bid in when he did not or that he had tried a truck and it wouldn't start when the seller had said it spun off on the coldest morning. Because he never did any of these sorts of things, he got to be accepted as an all right fellow. Once he told a man not to buy a pony saddle for his little girl because - he turned it upside down - "You see how it's going underneath here - it wouldn't last you the summer. Browntree, over there, buys these to re-sell and he'd push the price too high for you to pay for something that's falling apart." Sometimes, when one of them would mention that he had a horse that limped, Shorty would stop by and have them trot it towards him on a hard road and then he would feel the animal's leg carefully all up and down and inspect its foot and then he would tell them what to do for it, if he knew. And very often he did know. So they began to clap him on the back when they saw him and ask him how things looked over at his place.

It was odd how he came to be called Shorty and not really because of his height, either, although he stood only five foot three. What actually happened was that somebody at the first sale he went to mistook him for a fellow named Shorty Wriston who did custom work in the area, and although the original mistake was soon corrected, it had been overheard, and from mouth to mouth it went until pretty soon all the sale regulars were satisfied that the strange little man was known as "Shorty." Apparently he didn't mind the name and perhaps it made him feel more one of them. At any rate he never tried to put a stop to it.

His right name was Richard and he ran a small riding stable on a rented place near the town of Ridgeman Heights. It was close enough to town so that the children, who in truth made up the bulk of what he referred to as his "custom," could easily ride their bikes or even walk out, if their parents were not disposed to deliver them in cars. Shorty began to attend the auctions because he needed tools and materials to build up his stable and hadn't the money to buy them new, but it must be admitted that he continued to go simply because he enjoyed it. It was a great game to him in which he was both spectator and participant. He reveled in the easy comradeship of the farmers, in the sometimes fierce competition of the bidding and, perhaps more than either of these, in the prospect of hidden treasure at the bottom of some bucket of rusty hinges or pile of assorted lumber. In this last he was a true believer with an unflinching faith and it was, indeed, this vision of ultimate grace which kept him coming to the auctions. And he never came away empty-handed. Even on a Saturday or Sunday when the suburban dwellers came like flocks of hungry buzzards to pick over the carcass of a dead farm and bid against each other out of all reason and Shorty would turn to the man next to him with a gesture of disgust and say, "No use you and me being here!" - even then he would still find a box of bolts and screws and odd shaped bits of iron to take home and sort through at his leisure.

For many of the familiar farm articles he found at the auctions he invented ingenious uses that suited his peculiar purposes and the farmers never tired of asking him what he intended to do with the things he bought. He would point to a cluster of milk cans - the old-fashioned seamed kind that could no longer be lawfully used to store milk - and as his listener's eyes grew wide with wonder, he would explain how he would take them to the welder and have all the tops blown off and a hole drilled high on one side and when he had bolted them to the sides of stalls they would make the loveliest horse buckets and the buggers could shove their backsides into them as much as they pleased and never crush a one.

It happened that one day in February at Elmer Redlich's sale on Apple Creek Road he had bought some barnyard gates about twelve feet

long with the intention of setting them up in his riding ring as jumps for the older children to practice over in their lessons. He had had a good day of it and when he had settled with the sale clerk and had loaded his pick-up truck with all the rakes and jacks and old barrels and chains and windows and cans of paint and even an overstuffed chair for the children to lounge on in the tack room, he saw that at last there was no room for the long awkward gates. "I should have put the buggers on the bottom," he thought, "but the boys won't bother them. I can run back for them tomorrow."

"—You've got three weeks, boys, to get your property off Elmer's place. That's the agreement, boys - three weeks."

But when he went back the next day and backed the pick-up to the spot where he had laid the gates on a low bank out of the way and from which they could easily be pulled over the tail gate and onto the truck bed, they were not there. He got out of the truck and tramped about over the frozen rutted ground, looking behind sheds and inside them and not seeing the gates at all. A ton and a half truck stood on the ramp leading to the loft of the big barn and two men were piling it high with bales of hay from the loft. Shorty recognized them and walked over and called up to them and asked if they knew anything about his gates. The men looked at each other and then one of them said he hadn't known they were Shorty's gates but last night when they were taking out their first load of hay they had seen the man, Browntree, using some wooden gates to load up some hogs he'd bought at the sale. "He cracked them gates up pretty bad, I guess. You know how he is - he don't know how to do nothin', but he'll do it anyway! I'm sorry to hear they was your gates, though. I think they're layin' down by the hog pen where he dropped 'em, but I don't guess they'd be no use to you like they are anyway."

"They'll keep my tack room warm," Shorty replied. "I've paid for them and as long as I'm here I might as well haul them home and finish splitting them up. Thanks, boys." He was angry and it was cold and he had driven ten miles in an unheated truck for firewood he didn't need. So he muttered to himself as he lugged the gates onto the pick-up, "Him and his dirty hogs!"

Once in a while during the next few days Shorty would pause in his chores and converse with himself a little about Browntree and his hogs and the broken gates but by the end of the week the subject has ceased to interest him, and on the day the local newspaper came out he was sitting in his tack room with his feet resting on a section of log in front of the open stove door, reading the auction notices. Outside it was raw beastly weather, a sharp wind rattling hard particles of snow against the north window. He had spent the better part of the day stuffing chunks of wood into the fire

and mending a pile of worn halters with a small hand riveting machine and a bag of copper rivets. In these long stretches of late winter when the ring and the fields stood impassable with snow or iron hard or treacherous with ice and the children were prisoners in the schools, Shorty had time for mending, repairing, planning and, more than at any other time, the chance to follow his beloved sales. And there were plenty of them. Winter is the farmer's time for sales and in this area at this time the auctioneer's voice was heard with particular frequency - "As you all know, Henry Ackermann, having decided to discontinue farming -" —here, at least—and to sell out to the subdivider at a price his father never heard of.

The newspaper notices listed in a solid paragraph of fine print the articles consigned to the sale. Shorty's finger followed along under the words, pausing, then moving on, pausing again - 100 feet of rope with pulleys, heavy tow chain, quantity of cow halters, - his finger came to a stop under the next item - several saddles. Quickly he checked the foot of the notice - Al Norton's on Hindman Road, four miles west of Auburn. It was far enough out and a small enough sale. The dealers might not bother with it. Some of his tack was getting beyond repair. It would be worth a try.

On the day of the sale the wind that had blown for two days was suddenly still and the cold that had come in overnight seemed to have made the air too rigid for any movement. The old truck, stiff with sluggish grease, chugged out along the road, the exhaust swirling in a tight visible little cloud about the tail gate. Shorty followed the highway to Auburn, then back roads through the country, past frozen empty fields and farmhouses with a single column of smoke rising straight into the still clear air. As he moved westward at last on Hindman Road, the way was strange to him. It lifted abruptly and surprisingly in that flat country and wound about among little rolling hills until Shorty began to be afraid that he had come too far or somehow a wrong way. Then, all at once, around a bend he saw the cars and trucks lined up along the road and then the farm buildings beyond. He pulled the pick-up in at the end of the line and started up the road towards the driveway, trotting and swinging his arms to get the cold and stiffness out of him. Up in the farmyard only a few men walked about, inspecting the articles laid out on the ground or poking through the jumble of odds and ends heaped on the sale wagon. Judging from the cars down on the road, there was a good crowd today, but Shorty knew that most of them would be packed into the dairy barn where the body heat of the cows and their own companions would take the edge off the cold.

But it was always a good thing to know what was on the sale wagon; so he started at one end, sorting through the shovels to see which were

solid and which had a hole worn through the bottom, tipping the kegs of nails to see if they were genuine all the way down or half filled with dirt, putting the small wrench he fancied into the box he meant to buy and changing the bull ring he didn't need into the box he didn't mean to buy. And then, as he came around the head of the wagon, there were the saddles. Three of them, lined up on a saw horse. The first two were the common western type - huge heavy things and well enough worn. But the third was like nothing else Shorty had ever seen in his many years as a horseman. It was a child's saddle with small steel stirrups and an English girth and yet the cantle of it rose up high and came around as neat as you pleased to form a seat just right for a child, and across the pommel a handle had been fashioned of leather to fit the grasp of a child's hand. It was apparently very old but softly polished all over and Shorty wanted it so badly that he could hardly take his hand away from it. One of the farmers, a big hulk of a man, came up beside him and peered curiously over his shoulder. "Queer lookin' rascal, ain't it?," he said. Then he roared with laughter. "Don't guess anybody here'll fight you for that, Shorty." Shorty grinned and the huge man began to stamp his feet on the frozen ground and pound his gloved hands together. "—But, by God, it's too cold," he said. "Let's get into that barn." Shorty had forgotten the cold as well as the rest of the sale wagon and he let himself be carried along into the warm barn full of the smell of cows and human beings and the ring of many voices underscored by the low bawling of the cows. The animals stood in long rows on either side of the center section of the low ceilinged barn, their heads secured in stanchions and their rumps towards the main aisle where the farm men milled about or stood talking and seeming to ignore them. Those who intended to buy had come earlier and learned all they needed to know and now affected as great an indifference as the others. Shorty pushed through the crowd, working his way down through the barn and back again, nodding and speaking to many he knew and privately checking about for other horsemen, horse dealers or even antique buyers. But he saw only the usual midweek collection of feed and livestock men and farmers. The fat man was right - he didn't think anyone there would bat an eye for the little saddle. So he waited just inside the dairy barn door, watching the sale wagon through a small window. It wasn't long before he saw the two auctioneers, the Scholl brothers, striding rapidly across the yard in the direction of the wagon, Raymond, the elder of the two, holding the microphone in one hand and trailing the long cord from the sound truck behind him. They always cut quite a grand figure in their long gray storm coats, their hats set at a jaunty angle and their overshoes carelessly unbuckled and flapping as they walked. Several steps behind them Henry Schoending, the sale clerk from the Auburn bank, followed more sedately, his overshoes firmly buckled in the manner of the farmers. In a minute

Raymond's voice sounded loud through the icy yard, "All right, boys, if you'll gather round now, we'll get going boys!"

From the house, from the dairy barn, from the loft, from nowhere, it seemed, they came. Then the owner was up on the wagon with the auctioneers, solemnly affirming that everything was as represented, in good working order to the best of his knowledge. Someone lifted a rake and a shovel and a pick together and Raymond banged his cane on the floor of the wagon and swung into that rapid-fire unintelligible volley of the practiced auctioneer.

"Do I hear five? Three? Dollar, where? All right, a half. One dollar. One and a quarter. Fifty? Do I hear fifty?" And so they worked through the wagon. First the rolling barrage of sound, then suddenly the quiet, distinct, pleading tone, "Boys, you're not trying!" — Down to the final ringing, "Sold - Arnold Breitman takes it."

As each piece was sold it was handed down from the wagon and across to the owner and the next was already half sold, until finally only the bare flat-bed remained and that, too, was sold. Shorty bought a box of hinges, but after that he crowded in close to the saw horse with the saddles and just waited. Raymond looked about, then jumped down from the wagon and pushed his way to the saddles.

"Here's something," he said. "Shorty, this ought to interest you— Say, that little one's about your size, isn't it?" The men burst into loud laughter, but Shorty just grinned. "Let's begin with that one," the auctioneer suggested. "What'll you give for it, Shorty? Twenty?"

Shorty shook his head, smiling. Raymond knew. He knew. This was just talk.

"All right, then, ten . . . five - you know you could sell it for five times that tomorrow."

"Four," Shorty said calmly.

Again the auctioneer's volley of language. Then - "Do I hear fifty? Yes? All right, I have fifty. Do I hear five?" Shorty nodded. He guessed that was what Raymond expected to get and never questioned the validity of the fifty bid.

"I have five - now do I hear more?"

Suddenly someone came showing from the back, up through the crowd. "Yeah, five-fifty."

Shorty swung around and through the press of men he caught sight of the stocky figure and full florid face of Browntree. Then he heard his

voice, as Browntree turned to a man near him. "What's he selling, anyway - saddles?"

"All right, I have fifty," Raymond was saying. "Do I hear six?" Looking towards Shorty. Shorty nodded grimly. But the man Browntree kept nudging him upward. He had seen the little saddle now and he knew Shorty wanted it and that was enough for him. The price went beyond what Shorty could afford to pay and finally beyond any practical value of the old piece of saddlery. Browntree took it at twenty-five dollars, and as the crowd turned and flowed away, the auctioneers with them, Raymond rested his hand for an instant on Shorty's shoulder without smiling. "Tough luck," he said.

"Thanks, Ray."

Left alone, Shorty stood, expressionless, watching the big motley crowd flow out towards the open field beyond the barns where the tractors and the balers stood in long rows to be sold one by one. Ordinarily he would have gone along, even on a cold day like this. He never bought these things, had no thought of it, but he liked to look at the different models, hear the farmers talk about them, see what they went for. It was interesting to him. But now he had no heart for it. He thought he would find his truck and go. Then, remembering his box of hinges and that he had not settled for it, he started back for the clerk's office in the farmhouse. He had to pass the big hay barn with its ramp stretching up to the loft, and as he went by, he looked up through the loft door and saw several men examining some bales and apparently discussing them. He stopped, then headed up the ramp.

"How is it, Fred?" he asked, recognizing his huge friend standing with one gigantic rubber boot on a bale of hay.

"This ain't bad," the fat man replied, indicating the rich green alfalfa under his foot, "but judgin' from the one they throwed down, the mixture don't amount to much."

Shorty stepped over to the bale of mixed clover and timothy and bent to look at it. This might be usable horse hay, although thick weed stalks were visible at the edges and it had a dead color and no fragrance at all. It would be of no interest to the dairy men and he doubted that even the feed dealers would look twice at it. But Shorty never judged his hay only by the sample bale the farmer picked out for display. He looked up above the grain storage rooms to where the great stacks of baled hay rose clear up to right under the roof braces. He walked over to the opposite wall where boards had been nailed to it to form a crude ladder leading to the upper loft and started climbing quickly.

"It's too damn cold to even be here," the fat man laughed, "let alone hanging onto them slats! You must be a goddam monkey."

Shorty sprang up the ladder and swung easily over onto the hay. "Browntree sure handed that guy a dirty deal," the fat man said to the others as they moved out the door.

Shorty looked about him in the dim light up under the roof. He climbed about, picking out a bale here and there, prying the tightly packed wire-bound hay apart, feeling it, smelling it. It was all full of the heavy weed stalks and some was nothing but meadow grass. Much of it was blackened, hard where his strong fingers pried into it, and everywhere the musty, choking smell of hay that has been rained on. Some winters when straw was scarce and high and his horses weren't working anyway, Shorty bought this kind of hay, not to feed, but to shake up in the stalls as bedding. He could get it cheap and it made a dry thick bed, at least. But this year he had plenty of straw.

He came back down the ladder, out of the loft and down the ramp and began to run toward the lunch wagon. In there he could warm himself with a cup of coffee and think over what he meant to do. Joe had the lunch wagon at practically every sale and of course he knew Shorty well. "Cup of coffee, please, Joe," Shorty said. "Sugar?" asked Joe. "Yes, please," said Shorty. He didn't like coffee, but old Joe never got over the first time he came in and asked for tea - so he just took the coffee now - it was hot, at least. Joe thought he had made a good American out of him. All the time he was drinking the coffee he said nothing and finally Joe said, "Say, you look like you're after somebody's scalp."

"You might call it that," Shorty agreed. They ought to be coming in from the field soon, he thought, and he kept watch out the dingy window for the first sign of them. He could hear the loudspeaker intermittently from a distance and then it stopped. He stepped outside the lunch wagon and started back for the barn.

Between the corn crib and a machine shed came the men, almost like an army, the Scholl brothers in the lead. As they tramped up towards the loft Raymond could be heard. "Now there's not much space here, boys, so if you don't intend to buy, kindly step back and let those who do get in close." Shorty joined them as they went up the ramp and got in front and stayed there so that when the crowd had gathered around the hay bales he stood right up next to Raymond's younger brother, Bob. Across the small circle of men he caught sight of Browntree, eagerly casting about for anything - anything.

Raymond was saying, "I think we'll take this mixed hay first, then the alfalfa, then move on to the oats—."

Bob leaned over and touched Shorty's arm. "Have you looked at that hay?" he asked. "Take it easy - it's worth ten at the most."

"I know it."

Then Raymond was saying, "All right, boys, here it is. You've had a chance to look at it. Al says there's just five ton up there and if you buy it, you take it all."

As he began his incantation he swung slowly around, watching the semi-circle of faces keenly for any sign. The continuous roll of his speech was punctuated only by the abrupt thud of his cane on the wooden floor. "Do I hear fifteen? . . . Twelve?" — then his voice barked on until — "ten . . . ten, anyone? All right, nine? Boys, will anyone give eight?"

"Yes," Shorty spoke up.

"All right. I have eight—" and away he went, swinging the cane around like the pointer on a wheel of fortune. "Nine . . . do I hear nine?"

Shorty never took his eyes off Browntree and he saw the man's nod. And when Raymond came around again, he said quietly, "Nine-fifty," and he saw the man's eyes glisten with greed. Now Browntree had it at ten and Raymond looked at Shorty and winked. "You can do better than that, boys," he cried gleefully — and off he went again. "Ten, ten, I've got ten — now eleven, do I hear eleven? . . . Shorty? Eleven? Are you in?"

"No," said Shorty and Raymond was just staring at him. He pushed to the outer edge of the tight circle and made his way through the sparser crowd on the ramp. The words came out after him —

"Sold. John Browntree. Ten dollars a ton."

He walked across the yard, picked up his box of hinges from under the sale wagon and went straight to the clerk's office in the basement of the farmhouse. As he came into the low warm room it was full of the fragrance of hot coffee and delicious home baking and he heard the farm women rattling cups and plates in the little room beyond. Henry, the sale clerk, sat behind a table, his account book and his lists spread out before him. When he saw Shorty he began at once to rummage through the lists of items bought at the sale.

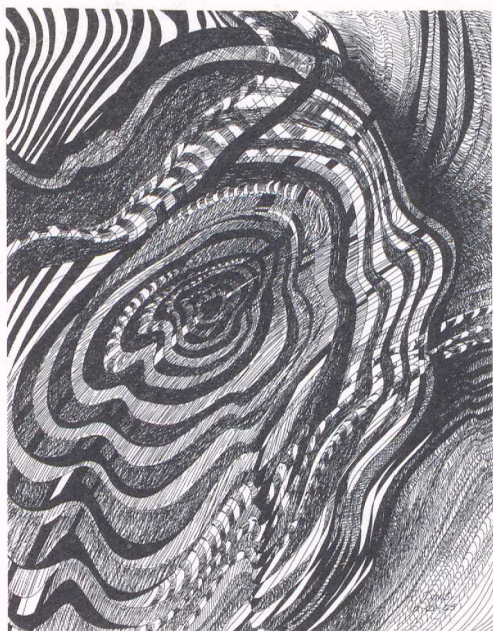
"Well," he said, as he always did, "Did you get everything you wanted?"

"No, I really didn't."

Henry looked up and laughed. "Let me put it this way then," he said. "You can still count yourself lucky if you didn't get anything you didn't want!"

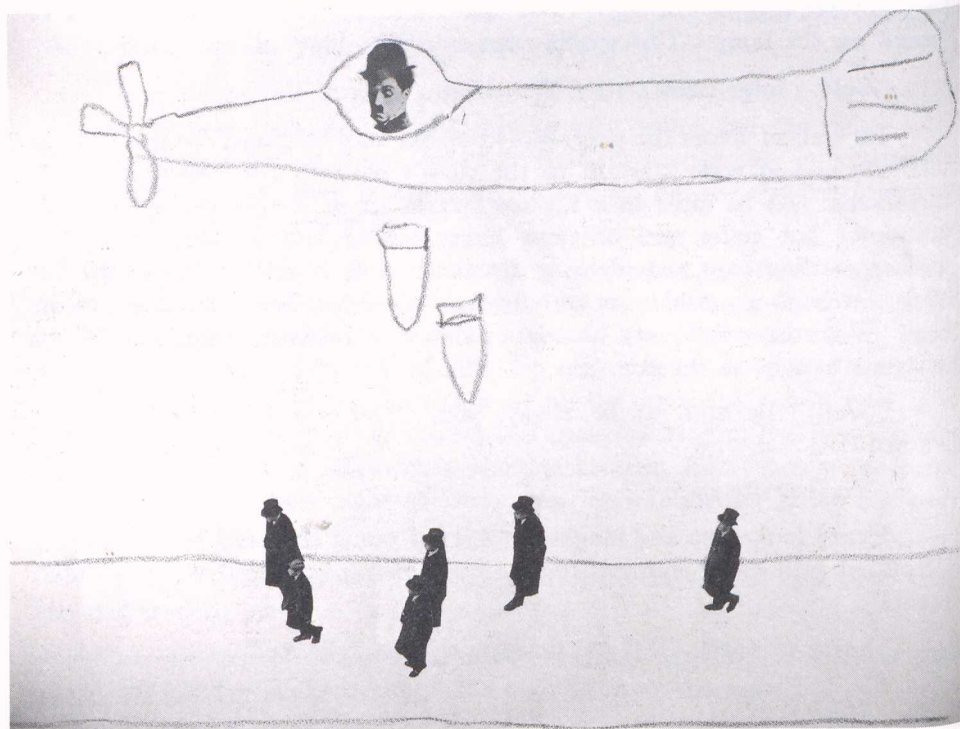
Shorty grinned. "I'll go along with that," he said.

— ZOURA DREXLER



RICHARD JANIS • PEN AND INK • 10½ x 13

JOHN SCARCELLI • COLLAGE • 30 x 22



SEPTEMBER 22

And is Jay really three years grown?
Am I, his mother, three years wiser?
I have lost the sense of Eve
With which I accepted calmly
The agony through which God gave me child.

Child has a face now, its name is Jay.
His confident, sturdy figure strides
Through my life at odd hours,
When I can leave the books, the chalk, the earnest talk—

I am a free woman.
I have chosen to seek truth.
I seek it among learned men, professors
Whose quiet voices speak all knowledge.

I have escaped the trivialities of naps and noodle soup.
I have chosen; I have had my way.
In the real world, Jay is three today.

— PATRICIA J. ANDERSON

God is opening up an office on main street
he is going to publicize salvation.
bingo games are out this year
along with civil rights
and viet nam is in
so god is going to go controversial,
he is going to pass out fortune bananas
with your weight and a bible verse inside,
he is going to grow a beard and burn his draft card,
he is going to join the KKK and the tell them
about his jewish background.
he is going to get noticed
if he has to die in the process
and come back for a second try.

— THOMAS J. POTENZA

CHAPTER I

She opened her eyes, only to close them again suddenly, the heavy beams of sunlight striking her across the face. Slowly, with infinite care and attention to the oncoming of pain, she opened her eyes. A few asymmetrical cobwebs gloated there for a moment—but vanished when the eyes were wide. Sarah often played with her cobwebs. She could make them grow very slowly, inching across her retina, or very fast, disappearing in a blaze of yellow—leaving only a kaleidoscope of blue, red, purple and green nothingness darting across the inside of her eyelid.

Sarah wasn't all too sure how long she had been asleep, (it mattered very little to anyone what she did with her time, so long as she appeared for meals and stayed long enough to help her Mother clean up) and she wasn't in the least upset by the fact that she might have missed something. And of course she *hadn't* missed anything—there hadn't been anything exciting to see, much less regret not seeing since Sarah had been a little girl. When she was little and the tree in the back yard had green on it, it seemed there were always things to look forward to. Christmas, Easter, going into Tulsa on Saturday mornings, Jack, the peddler, with his horse-drawn wagon (Tessie had died at least five years ago, so Jack had given up traveling and settled in Tulsa—he'd been working at Tippen's General General Store for some time now), all were part of an ordinarily uneventful, and ordinarily exciting childhood.

Barely stifling an unconscious urge to think to herself "What's the use?" Sarah rose swiftly from the bed and left her room, in search of something to do.

Walking down the upstairs hallway she was confronted by the enemy—faded yellow daisies suspended in a blue void (which was beginning to peel, exposing pallorous white plaster beneath). For what seemed like the millionth time, she thought, "God, I hate that wallpaper."

At one time her anti-wallpaper campaign had been little less than total war—filled with tears and frantic pleadings to "have it changed, or at *least* paint over it." This had lately become a more familiar, old-shoe type of hatred. Friendly enemies. Left with nothing to love, Sarah had found something to hate—and if the crisis ever came, would surprise herself by defending it.

The stale air of the living room bit her nostrils as she entered from the stairway. The room was perpetually clothed in not clear, but gray, whitish, air, supported by the used-to-be crimson of the velvet curtains, now black in the darkness, the once-was blue of the overstuffed chair, now almost invisible, and the apologetic brown of the piano, its ivory keys spotlighted

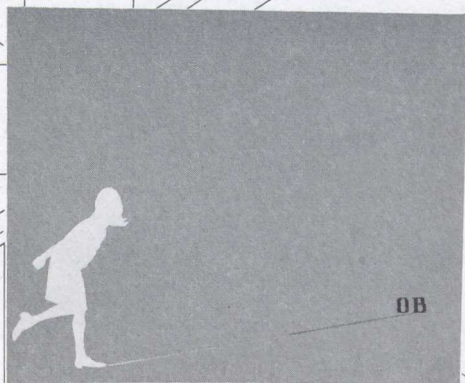
as a skeleton in a fluoroscope. The living room. Sarah no longer played the piano, for everything, including the gayest music, was sad in this room.

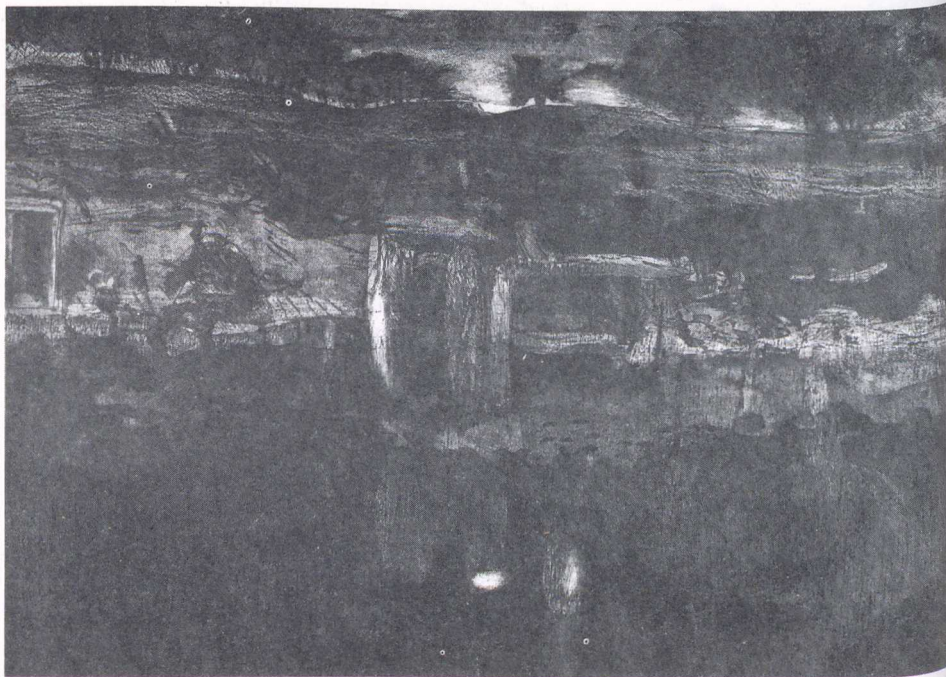
Like a heavy veil the air smothered her face.

Just wanting something something is never enough—and the fact that Sarah *wanted* to open the windows to let the fresh air into the room did not make the drifted dust outside go away. Their house was an insignificant obstruction in the path of the wind, which, coveting even the tiny cube of space the building occupied, did its best to destroy, to make unlivable. Sarah marvelled at the effective weapons in the wind's arsenal, but also at the determination of the people around her, refusing to surrender to nature's injustice. A strong house is not easily destroyed, even after eight years of corrosion by wind-blown sand. The clapboards of the outside were now gray and bare of paint, but they were not rotten. The shingles were dry and brittle, but here the swelling protected those inside from leaks. The windows were scratched and marred, but still kept out the dust.

While having no particular attachment to the house, Sarah admired its indestructibility. Outwardly objective and dispassionate, she showed little relationship to the building; inwardly respectful and deferential, she felt herself to be a fixture of the house, depending and depended upon.

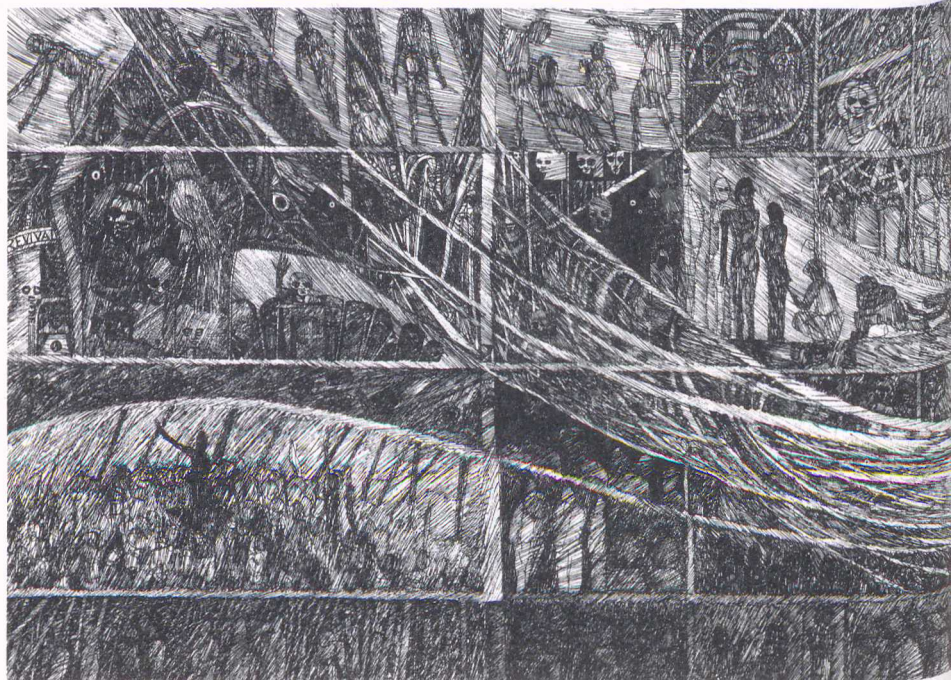
— DAVE BESS





PETER JONES • INTAGLIO • 24 x 18

DENNIS FRIEND • REVIVAL • PEN AND INK • 19 x 14



OF TIME AND MEMORY — PAUL YATES

A thousands thoughts ago,
Forgotten movements round by meetings measured,
I breathed the limey face of youth
And watched my washing sea.

Two thousand dreams all dreamt,
In a clear and beaded shine of innocence,
I gloated at the signal times,
Mimicked at my mirror.

Three thousand questions past,
Sailing by steady seethings of the sea,
I wandered from the shifting sand
That rimmed the swirling bay.

Four thousand words all said,
I floated dark and lost beneath cool water,
Fed crescent food to blinded fish
That settled full on sand.

A million days are dawned,
I lie upon the spinning bed of ages
And I can never lift a hand
To touch the breathing arc.



KEN CLIFFORD • PENCIL • 12 x 9

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

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SECOND • GOD IS OPENING UP AN OFFICE
ON MAIN STREET • THOMAS J. POTENZA

Judges

CHARLES PATTERSON — EDWARD HERBERT — GORDON MAGNUSON

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