



TOWERS

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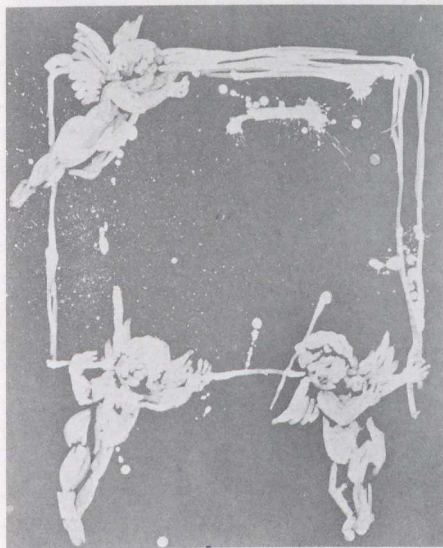
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Cangamoose and His Inanimate Friends Alberto Meza

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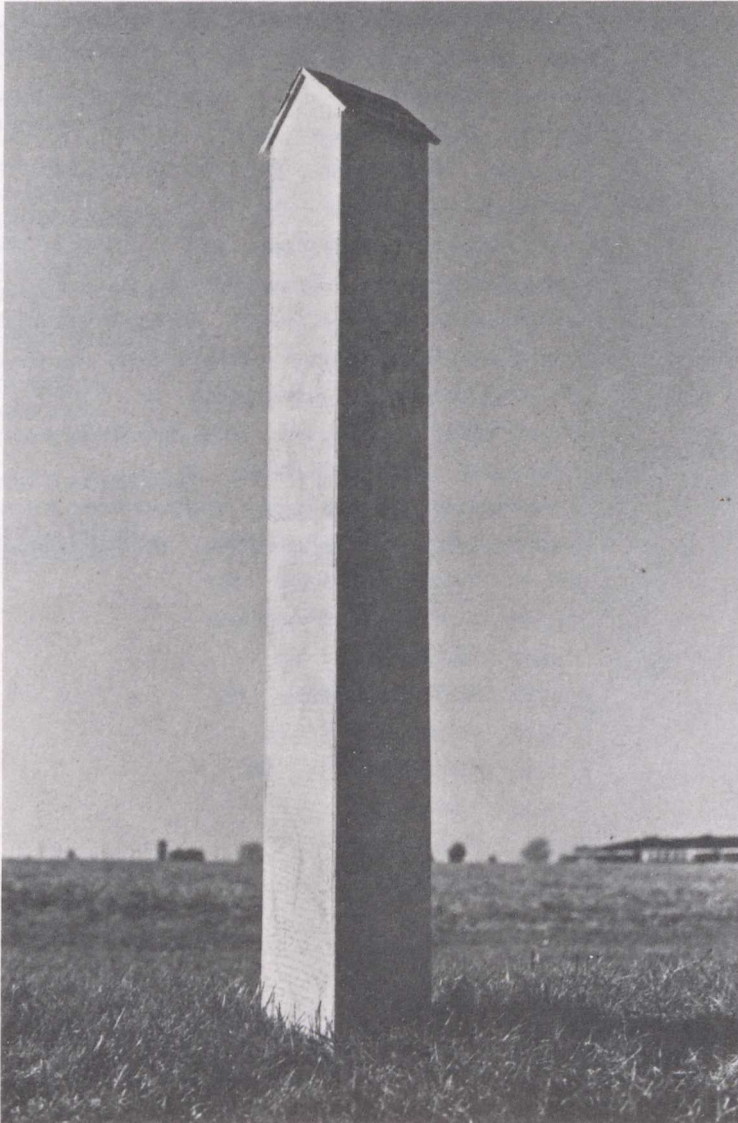
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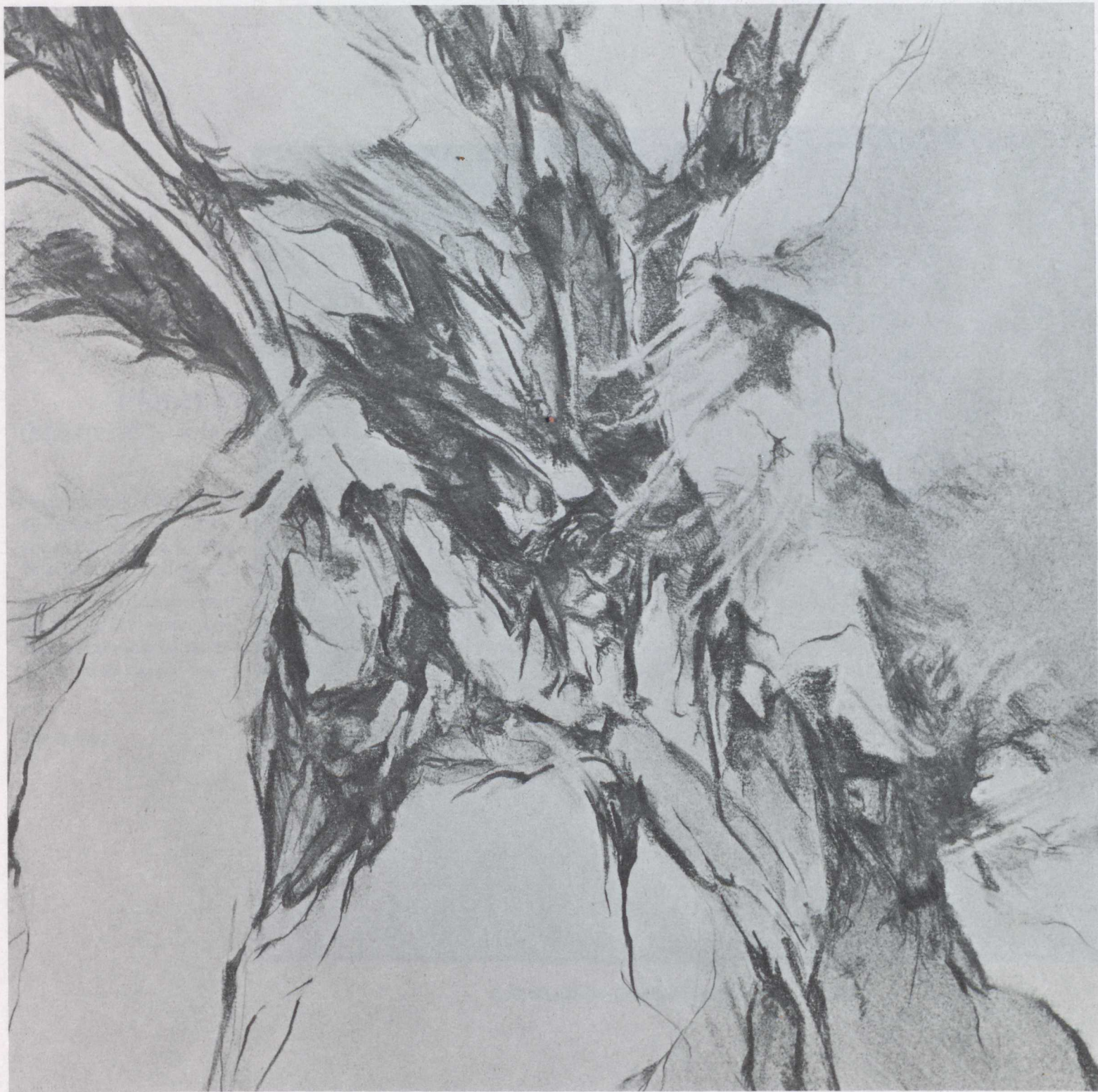


A Personal Archeology Steven Brand

Atom Lives

My fear of the unknown is not to be blown
atomic clock
your time is up
it used to be: honey was the dew and sweet
blue the grass
mellow was the cauli
flowers
cradle rocked my body
those times are over:
Adam is the Eve of the new day
Albert, ein beer stein please
apple core melt down crisp
a point in humanism
melt down the atomic core of engineers
the musket's in tears
Adam lives
life expectancy, one hundred thousand
years

Chris Stanley





On the Eve of Self-Annihilation Brian Godana

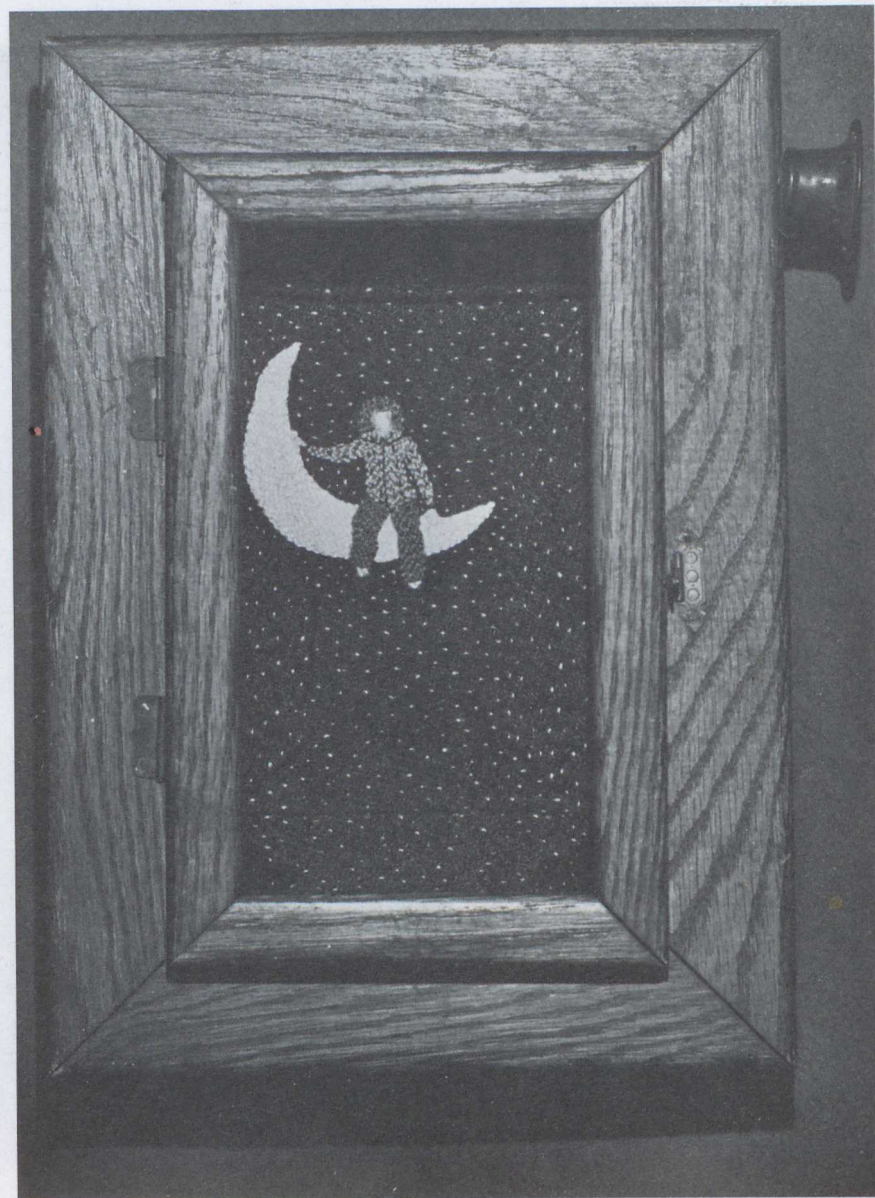
Planet Pool

(March 1982, when the planets converged)

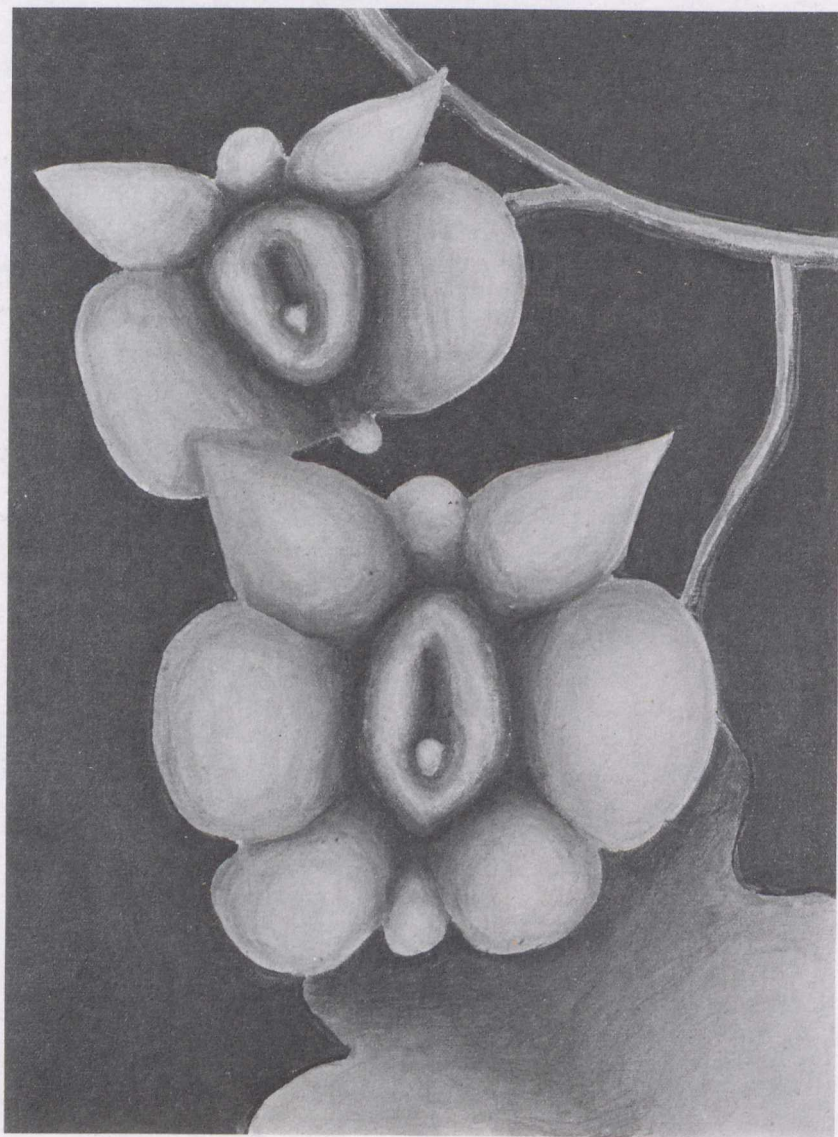
Planets knock about this table of green felt.
Venus and Mars are solids, Jupiter and Saturn stripes,
and the moon's a scratched cue ball.
This month, though, someone racked them up.

Point my cue to where earth will drop.
My blood's at high tide, see, to call it right.
Then I'd be a star before setting me down.
But the slate slants, bet.

Tim Brown



As Always Teresa Iversen



Flowers #1 Kate Marohn

Bending

On the highway when, from a
Dead slope, the sun came as
Gentle as the first damp leaves
Of a willow, I thought of
My grandma's soft hands, shaking
Wet clothes out to hang, standing
Close to the rose of Sharon
And a new garden, fresh stakes
Of pine, only the radish
Tops showing. In the sun, I
Curled, like those leaves, around soft
Southern accents, empty streets
And first wildflowers at the
Edge of town—persimmons like
Old stories told too often,
Too ripe, a feast of hot fruit
Hanging, dropping to a gold
Decay. The sun casts perfect
Warmth on it all: the unseen
Violets, tiny swayings of
Comfort somewhere; the empty
Houses, rusted teapots and
Dark blue speckled ladles, all

Tin, all bent—how is it that
For fifty years they hung in
Clean, unbent care in someone's
Kitchen? The sun coaxes old
Barns and farmhouses down with
A splintering heartbeat—all
Your work down like flies shaken
From dusty glass ceiling lamps.
A long time ago I saw
Myself in a photograph
That was fifty-two years old—
The hair, the eyes, all the same
As my grandmother at twelve.
The bend of my wrist might be
Hers, too, I don't want to know.
I'm going home from it—still,
All the softness of a damp
Southern Illinois graveyard
Couldn't lessen the glare of
Newly washed cars or tell me
Why, on the way to that tent,
We all stepped around puddles
And tried to keep our good shoes
From sinking down in the mud.

Patricia Austin

Letter from a Friend

Letting me hear
that under your rock
the sea sleeps. And grass bends
a long leaf home.

Down this pine-trail,
needles sailing.

My sleep moves in waves.
At the edge, your white feet;
wind in the wood.

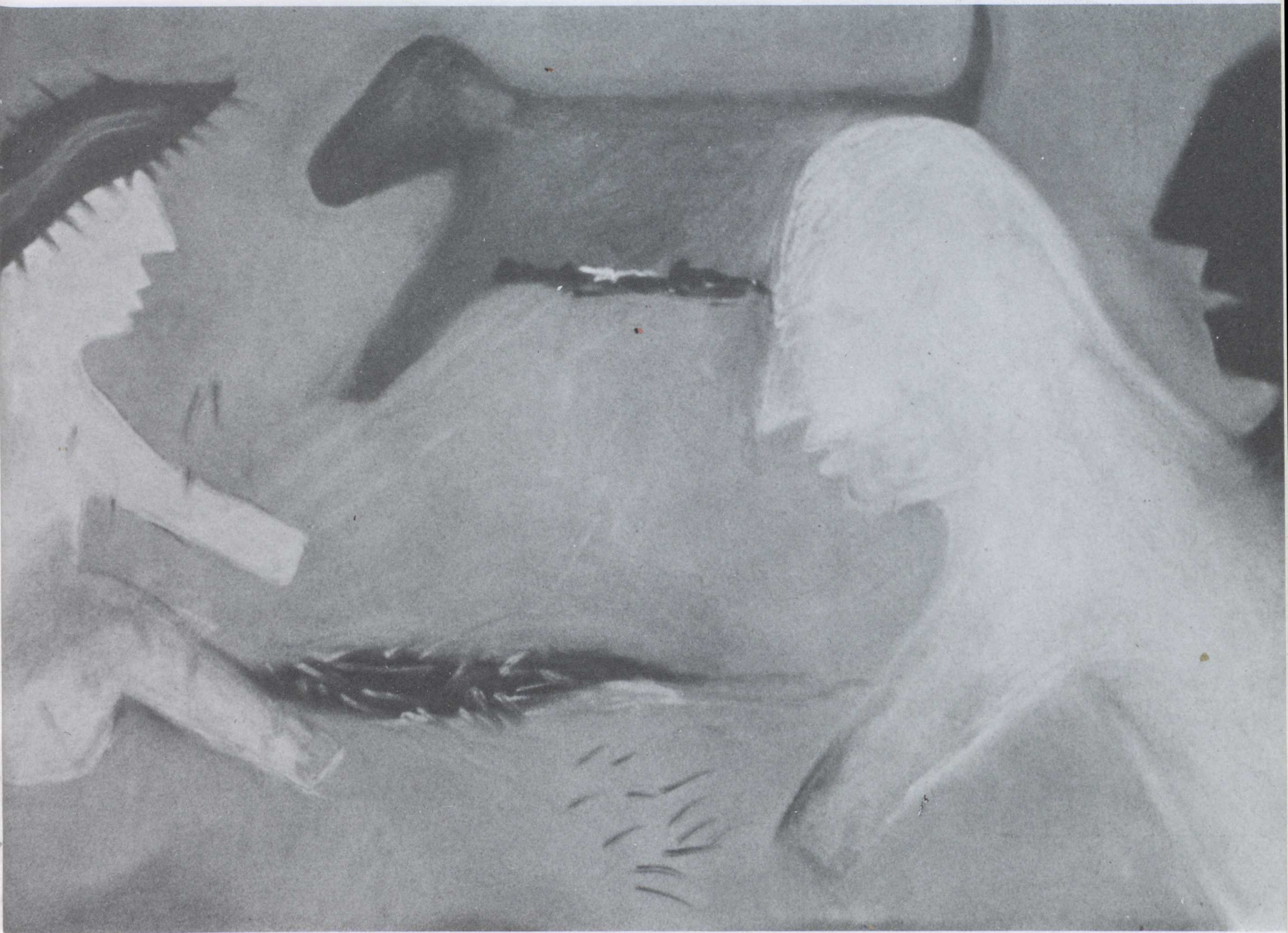
Ward Smith

Painter in the Psych Wing

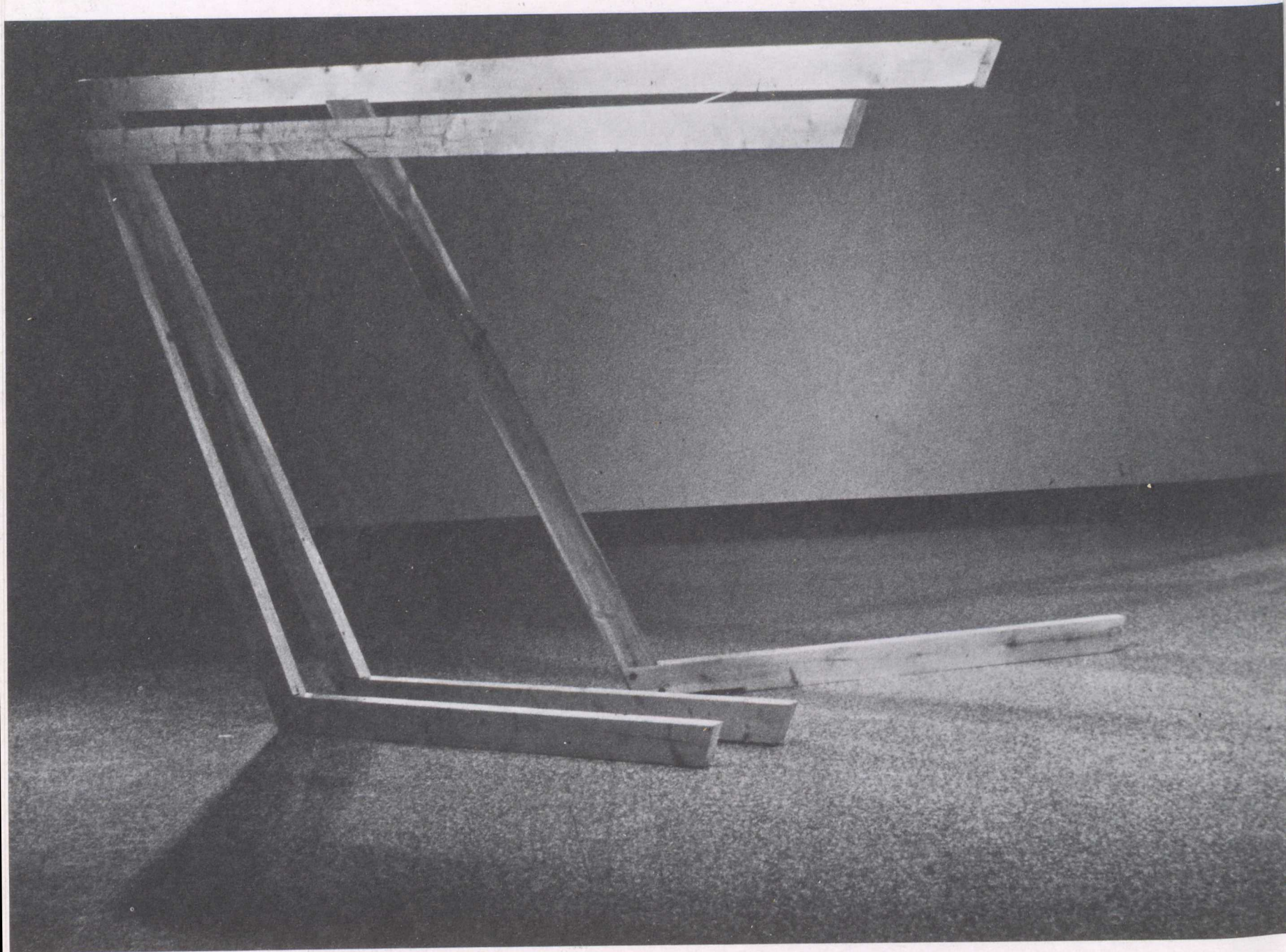
Blackbirds shoot from canvas corners.
At the only window,
she paints her wrists blue.

Today on the sill, her brush
in a paper cup.
Under oaks, her eyes
follow leaves falling.

Ward Smith



Untitled Paula Martinez



Wooden Leaf (for Catherine)

Fill me with dry grass,
earth-turn, and bud-shut.
Sweep my laugh,
your armless dolls
down your black box.

Rough willow,
sparrow in your strands;
compose a quiet shift:
star sliding,
moon full of pines.

Move me, in a leaf
our breath falls.

Hard how that bird drinks from campfire.
Dip him in the lake for smoke.
Bet he won't sing.

Break me I'm wood.
Put me behind shelves.
A carved piece—
tip me and snow comes out.
Paint a window without candles;
far inside, a sea-colored eye.
Surfaces are dangerous;
candles
and snow.

Ward Smith

The Aviary

Michael Orlock

Back when I was younger, back in high school, back when Mom's cancer was diagnosed as terminal and the chemotherapy the doctors had hoped would prompt remission had instead taken her hair out in clumps so that she had to wear this silly wig she'd bought from some hairdresser friend of hers, she gave me for my sixteenth birthday a pair of grey cockatiels—a male and a female. I'd always loved birds. I'd been the kind of kid who'd climb trees to peek into nests, who'd bring home grounded fledglings to nurse back to health, who'd dig little graves for birds dead on the side of the road. Actually getting a pair of birds to call my own had been the fulfillment of a wish I'd had for a long time.

The cockatiel is a small grey bird native to Australia, a distant cousin of the cockatoo, and just one of the many species of parrots in the world. Like all parrots, they're very smart birds and easily domesticated. The male cockatiel has a yellow head and orange cheeks with almost black feathers on the underside of the tail. The female has very little yellow on the head or face, but does have the distinctive splash of orange on the cheeks; and her tail feathers are banded with yellow stripes underneath. Both male and female birds have delicate, tufted crest feathers on the top of the head that they use for showing emotion and mood. They're graceful and beautiful birds, and it wasn't long before I had them finger-tamed. I named the male Barney and the female Thelma Lou, after two characters in a show I watched on television.

The cage that came with the birds was a small wire one that didn't allow them much more than room for hopping from one perch to the other. To let them exercise their wings I would open the cage door so they could fly around the room. My father, Allie, used to complain about the bird shit on the floor and woodwork, but the droppings of these birds were so small and insignificant—a vacuum would suck them right up—that I ignored his complaints and just took to closing my bedroom door so that he wouldn't notice. But he did. And he pressed the issue with Mom, since he held her responsible for giving me the birds

in the first place, to have me keep them caged. If I didn't, he said, he'd make me get rid of them.

About this time Barney and Thelma Lou started courting. The way cockatiels court is the male will sing to the female, strutting around her with his wings low, sometimes biting at her and tearing out clumps of feathers if it seems she's not paying close enough attention to his advances, until she finally accepts him and flattens her back, making a sort of clucking noise deep in her throat. He'll mount her then, perching on her back, and whip his tail vent over hers. The vent is on the underside at the base of the tail, so he really has to corkscrew his body to make the coupling work. A mating pair will copulate like this repeatedly through the day for two or three days straight. Then the female will ready herself to lay eggs, and the male will hunt for a suitable nest.

During this time they need plenty of exercise, need to fly, so with Mom's intercession I reached an uneasy compromise with Allie. I built an aviary. I cleaned out my closet of all my personal effects and moved their cage in there. I fashioned a nesting box out of an old corrugated cardboard box and put that on top of their cage. I cut old grapevine for perches and attached these in the corners at various heights and angles. I covered the floor with newspaper to catch their droppings and replaced my closet door with a screen door I found in the garage and altered to fit the frame. Allie wasn't too crazy about it, but because Mom was excited at the prospect of baby birds in the house, he didn't stop me, just sniffed around my room every so often, shaking his head. "When I was your age," he reminded me, "I was out bird-dogging chicks and scratching for snatch, not watching some goddamn birds flap around my goddamn closet." But he left it at that.

About a week after I moved my cockatiels into their new home, Thelma Lou laid her first egg. It was the size of a thumb nail and almost opaline in its whiteness. Over the next eight days she laid five more, each one as perfect and pure as the one before. Then she and Barney settled down to brooding their eggs.

The way cockatiels brood is the male will sit the eggs during the day, allowing the female freedom to bathe and preen and relax, and then she'll sit the eggs during the night. It takes about twenty days for the first egg to hatch, and each subsequent egg hatches every thirty-six hours or so.

Five of Thelma's six eggs hatched, the last one on the day

Mom went into the hospital for the final time. I named the five hatchlings Opie, Helen, Gomer, Otis, and Aunt Bea, even though it was impossible to sex them. Looking back on it, I think watching Barney and Thelma care for those naked, helpless nestlings, listening to their persistent and voracious cheepings during feedings, made those last days at home easier on Mom. Allie was working nights and sleeping most of the day, and I had school until the middle of the afternoon, so the only thing she had during the day was sitting in my room watching my birds. I'd find her there when I'd get home, wrapped in her faded blue robe with that silly wig lopsided on her head, laboring with each breath. "Funny the way nature works," she said one time. "As I get weaker, they get stronger."

She held on in the hospital for nineteen days. By that time four of the five babies were out of the box, and the last was filling in with its pin feathers. Three of the babies were working their wings in preparation of flight. Barney and Thelma were copulating again, giving intimations of starting up another brood. And Allie was as sallow and somber as I'd ever seen him, drinking heavily and sleeping very little.

The morning of the day Mom died, the morning of the day I left, Allie had stumbled drunkenly into my room as I was just finishing dressing for school. I'd already finished my breakfast and had given my birds new seed and water. Barney was singing to Thelma, and Opie and Gomer were crying on one of the lower perches for a free meal. Allie had looked from me into the aviary.

"Hospital call at all?" he'd asked.

I'd shaken my head no. He'd looked into the aviary again and banged his hand on the screen, silencing Barney and frightening those that could fly to flight.

"I'm telling you, Skip," he'd scowled, "shut those birds up or I will." He'd added as he was leaving, "Can't get a goddamn wink of sleep for all the racket they make."

I'd pulled the shade to keep the room as dark as possible, hoping they'd take the hint and sleep through the day, and had closed my bedroom door.

I was called out of my afternoon classes by Mom's sister, my Aunt Fran, who told me over the phone in the principal's office that Mom had died at one-thirty. I walked home in a slight drizzle. I don't remember crying.

When I got home I was expecting to find Allie. I wanted him there. I wanted to hug him and tell him it would all work out, the two of us alone, and wanted him to muss my hair and grumble,

"This is the time men got to be strong, kid." I figured we'd then go to the hospital and make final arrangements for Mom's burial.

Instead what I found was my bird cage, the screen door, and the perches out on the front porch. I raced upstairs to my room, a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. My bedroom door was open. The old closet door had been put back on the hinges. My clothes and things had been dumped on the closet floor in a heap. And there, on my dresser top, in a neat row from largest to smallest, their little eyes shriveled and staring vacantly into another dimension, were my cockatiels. Their necks had been snapped.

I scooped them into my arms and smelled their bird smell one last time before burying them. Then I packed what things of mine were easiest to carry and left the house, vowing never to return. I moved in with my Aunt Fran and Uncle Bob—Allie didn't care—and when they moved to San Diego I went with them. I finished high school out there and then joined the Marine Corps. I rarely thought of Allie. My little birds, though, haunted my thoughts.

I was thinking of all this, of Allie and Mom and the aviary, as the jet sliced through a veil of white clouds—thinking about the things that can drive two people half a world apart.

II

Allie met me at the airport. Even though he'd told me he'd be there, had continually assured me over the phone that this time things would be different, that this time we could be friends if I would just give him half a chance, actually seeing him there still came as sort of a shock.

He'd put on weight. You could tell by the solidness of his gut under the thin tourist shirt he wore, one of those multi-colored jobs you see in warm vacation places like Hawaii or Florida, worn by middle-aged guys trying to look sporty, their pale thin arms swimming in the sleeves, translucent and veiny like the shoots off a succulent plant. Allie's arms weren't like that, though. His were heavy and thick and defined with musculature, the color of rawhide beneath the bleached fuzzy hair that blazed on them. They were arms developed over years of hard physical labor—of loading trucks, fitting pipe, pouring concrete, and working steel. Arms that culminated in callused, wide-knuckled, casually brutal hands.

I saw him well before he saw me. He still had a vacant, telescoped look in his eyes, scanning the faces that poured through the concourse doors of the gate to be greeted by friends or family. He was standing off to the side, away from the milling crowd, and he didn't recognize me until I'd just about thrust myself into his face.

"Jesus, Skip," he said, rocking back on his heels and sliding a circumspect eye over me. "What the hell they do to you? You look terrible."

That threw me for a loop. Leave it to my old man to say that one thing that throws you off stride, that leaves you fumbling for words, tongue-tied and guiltily apologetic. How can you answer something like that? We hadn't seen each other in nearly five years, and I was in what for me was the best shape of my life. Okinawa and the Corps had made sure of that. And even if my body wasn't as tightly wound and conspicuously corded as Allie's, in boarding the plane to Chicago I'd felt secure for the first time in my life that I stood my ground as solidly, fixed my footing as firmly, as Allie did his. If coming home were to get down to one of those father-son toe-to-toe fandangoes we'd made a family legend, I was confident I could hold up my end and not be devoured by his predatory prowess as I had in the past. There was too much I wanted to tell him, had to ask him, if we were to make a go at being father and son. It was the reason for this trip. But here I was again, not knowing what to say, "Allie Catalano's dumb little kid," like a scared rabbit paralyzed with fear staring into my old man's wolfish grin.

He'd been drinking. His breath was spicy from cheap booze. His nose was a sort of waxy rose color drinkers get, even with the tan. Some things never change, I guess. Allie's boozing was one of those things.

"So this is what I get," he said. "I haul my ass out to this nuthouse of an airport, fighting that bitching tollway traffic full of potheads, speed freaks, and uninsured assholes every goddamn inch of the way, and my only derelict son acts like a stuck-up prick and won't even give me a goddamn hello. If that don't beat all!"

This was said not only for my benefit, but for everybody within earshot of his booming, somewhat boozy, voice. I noticed curious passersby glance our way—Allie always managed to grab center stage—and I uttered "Dad" as a greeting and fell into his arms in a sort of clumsy bear hug. I felt the enormous warmth and power of his body, and for a mad second I considered kissing

him, flush on the lips, something we'd never done and which I'm sure he'd never even considered. As it was, this impromptu embrace embarrassed him to no end.

"Easy," he said, freeing himself, laughing it off.

"It's been a long time," I said. "Chalk it up to jet lag."

He licked his lower lip, not listening, already visualizing some as yet unexpressed action. Or maybe he was just wondering, as I was, whether this wasn't all a mistake, that maybe in "the long haul," as he was so fond of saying, he wouldn't be better off digging into his pockets for the price of an airfare back to wherever it was I wanted to go. "Hey, I promised Janice I'd get right back," he said. "Why don't we grab your stuff and vamoose it, huh?"

Janice was my new "step-mother." She wasn't more than a year or two older than I. Allie had married her three or four months after Mom's death, and with her he inherited a new family—a half year old daughter named Dawn Marie that some of the relatives insisted was his. The thought of Allie feathering a new nest and fathering a new family had at first disgusted me, then amused me. In no way did it surprise me. And while I'd never met Janice, and therefore really had no basis for formulating an opinion of her, I had received greeting cards from her on Christmas and my birthday, with those awkward, tacked-on little notes of family gossip and festive good cheer scrawled in looping longhand on the inside, the kind that invariably create an image of personable inoffensiveness—sort of like having a generic mother. At least in me they did.

One of her more recent cards had included a wallet-sized snapshot of the three of them in Disney World, Allie with an arm draped familiarly over the shoulders of an enormous Mickey Mouse, Janice and Dawn Marie standing uncomfortably on Mickey's other side. Allie had looked more or less the same, his hair perhaps a touch longer and a tad greyer than I remembered. The woman and the little girl were strangers to me. I'd studied the photo in the vague hope of learning something of Janice in her wide forehead, high cheekbones, and thin-lipped smile. The way she stood, the strength she seemed to generate in her back and legs, the way she held her little girl effortlessly in the crook of her right arm—all this spoke to me of Kansas and farmland and swales of wheat fields buffeted by Midwestern winds. What had Allie, a man more than twice her age, seen in her? Vaguely pictured intimations of Mom as a girl? I had held an old picture of Allie, Mom, and me next to this new and strange one, searching, I suppose, for some umbilical cord of connectedness be-

tween these two disparate moments photochemically preserved against the incontinence of time; but the only element I could discern common to Allie's old family and his new was Allie himself.

"This one here, Skip," he said. He'd let me walk on a few feet past the white Cadillac El Dorado he'd stopped by, I guess to emphasize the impression the car was supposed to make on me. I turned around to see him fishing for the keys in his jeans pocket, a smile of self-satisfaction skewering his lips.

I whistled appreciatively, on cue. "She's a beauty," I said, slinging my duffel bag and suitcase into the trunk. "When did you move up to a Caddy?"

He winked and caressed the polished enamel with his fingertips. "You know me," he said, easing the lid shut. "In the long haul, it only costs a couple bucks more to go first class."

We made small talk out of the airport and onto the tollway. I told him about the Marines and Okinawa and the relatives out in San Diego. He popped a pint of Old Grand Dad out of the glove compartment and told me about Janice and Dawn Marie and how shitty the damn roads were since this past winter, every time we hit a rough spot, as he snaked the big car in and out of traffic with those big hands of his, lambent as cats' feet, on the steering wheel cross-guides. We exited North Avenue east instead of west.

"You move?" I asked.

He raked me with his right eye without moving his head. "At ease, General," he said, plopping the pint in my lap with a surprisingly deft flick of his wrist. "I just thought we'd stop for a cold one, if that's all right with you."

"Isn't Janice expecting us?"

He didn't answer for a block: "Janice can wait," he said.

He eased into a gravel and asphalt parking lot littered with shattered glass, loose paper, and crushed beer cans that serviced a squat blond brick building with an Old Style shingle over the front door that identified the place as "Le Club Riviera." There were about five or six other cars parked in the lot, clustered near the entrance, but Allie parked well away from these. I checked my watch. It was a quarter to two.

"You're going to love this place, Skipper, me boy," Allie said, power-locking the doors. "This is where the real world lives."

The place inside was a dive. The bar itself took up almost half of the room, jutting out in a cursive j from the back wall where a

small kitchen was visible through a butler's pantry. The remainder of the room was divided between a juke box and some cheap formica tables on one end and a scuffed pool table under twin fluorescent lamps on the other. A thin pock-marked face with weasel eyes was hunkered next to the far rail sighting along the cue ball. His competition was at the bar fiddling with his stick, talking his game with an enormous baldy whose rump slugged lava-like over the sides of his stool. Three others were in a blind corner at the far end of the bar shaking dice with the bartender. The sudden light from outside turned their heads.

"Hey, here he is!" said the Weasel without getting up.

"The Alley Cat," said Baldy, tamping out a cigarette and swiveling around to face us in the same motion. He looked like Humpty-Dumpty from the front, his legs surprisingly thin and white poking out from his checked Bermuda shorts, almost spider-like in the opalescence of their angles and planes. His fleshy face was opaque from lack of sunlight. "And look it here! He's brung new meat!" He laughed loudest and longest at this.

Allie clapped him on his meaty shoulders, digging his fingers into thick slabs of skin in a vicious massage. "Skip, I want you to meet the sorriest fucker God ever broke wind on," he said. He kneaded doughy flesh with such a vibrative flourish that it set the fat man's fat back to jiggling under his tee shirt. "Sid, this is my boy. Skip."

"I know who it is," he said. "You only been telling us about the kid a month now."

He thrust his hand into mine. His fingers were stubby and formless, like the tiny homemade sausages Mom used to make, but his grip was firm. "How you doin', Skip?" he said, circling his lips with his pink tongue. "Allie says you're going to be a college boy?"

"I'm going to try," I allowed.

"Where?"

"Illinois. Champaign. I'd like to get into computers. That's what I did in the Marines, at any rate."

"That's good," he said.

Allie slid onto the stool next to him, leaving me to hang there like overripe fruit on the end of the vine, Sid still clutching to my hand. He smiled sideways into Allie's face.

"College ain't worth shit," said the Weasel, chalking his cue. "I know."

"Yeah?" said Allie, over his shoulder. "How would you know? You ever been?"

"No," he said. "But my brother-in-law went, and he's still the dumbest son-of-a-bitch I ever met."

"That's cause he married your sister," someone at the end of the bar shot back.

The Weasel pinched his nose, meditatively. All eyes were on him and he knew it. "Yeah," he said, shrugging into the idea like a new coat, "you may be right. I never thought of it that way. But—" he pointed his stick in emphasis, "that only proves my point. College made him stupider."

The bartender had ambled his way to our end and drawn a draft that he set in front of Allie.

"Since your old man ain't got no manners," Sid said, winking slyly with one eye, "I'll introduce you to these uneducated, drunken derelicts—"

"Fuck you, Sid," said the Weasel. He pocketed the nine in the near corner and anxiously hopped to the far side of the table to check his set up.

"Mister Eloquence over there is Jason. Forget about him. He's a prick. This here is Mike," he said, motioning to the kid with the stick just finishing draining his glass of beer. He was tall and slender, about my size but minus the build, with long, straggly hair tied back with a leather string and a droopy mustache that was in need of trimming. The longer hairs curled into his mouth and were wet from his beer. He nodded my way and turned to watch Jason.

"What'll it be?" the bartender said to me, hands spread on the bar.

"That's Jules," said Sid, finally letting go my hand. It was clammy and hot from his.

"He'll have the same," Allie said, digging for his wallet with his right hand, jabbing the thumb of his left my way. He plopped a twenty on the bar.

"Jerry! Paul! Tom! This is Allie's boy, Skip!" barked Sid to the three dice players. He'd caught them in the middle of a shake, and the cup froze, momentarily suspended at the end of an arm as three shadowed faces turned towards me, before it was slammed open-ended on the bar, spilling its die like secret charms whose arbitrary patterns would foretell the future.

Jules set a glass of beer on the bar for me. I slid onto the stool next to Allie.

"Shooters," said Sid.

"Shooters," echoed Allie.

"All around?" asked Jules.

"Hell, yes!" said Allie. "This is an occasion. You always drink shooters on occasions."

"Damn right," said Sid, firing up a new cigarette.

Jules set nine shot glasses on the bar. He reached for a bottle of peppermint schnapps from under the bar and carefully filled each glass to the rim. Jason, Mike, and the three dice players clustered in around us, noses keen to the scent of free booze. Jason dribbled on me as he lifted his glass up over my shoulder.

"Jeez, Jules," he complained, ignoring my look, licking his thumb.

"To Skip," Allie said.

"To Skip," the rest of them chorused. We tossed back the liquor and slammed our glasses on the bar. I chased mine with a couple of quick gulps of beer.

"Again!" Sid barked.

"Again," Allie echoed, and Jules set about refilling our glasses.

Before Allie could make another toast, I stood up. "To my old man," I said.

"To the Alley Cat," Sid said, feigning deep sentiment.

"To the Alley Cat," the rest repeated, solemnly funereal.

"Fuck you guys," Allie said.

We went through three more rounds, with Allie and Sid toasting everybody from Jules to Johnny Carson—these two for having been arrested on the same day for driving under the influence. The liquor burned like tracers down my throat and settled like hot lead in my stomach. I hadn't eaten anything for nearly eighteen hours and the alcohol shot straight through my system. I drained the rest of my second beer.

"I've got to pee," I said, sliding off the stool.

"Through the back," Allie said. "It's the door marked 'quarantined.'" His mind was dulling; he had trouble getting the word to fit his mouth.

"Last guy to piss back there, his pecker fell off," Sid said, and this set Sid and Allie to roaring with laughter.

"Caught herpes off the urinal, right, Jules?" Mike said.

I moved unsteadily down the bar.

"He's lucky that's all he caught," Jules deadpanned, and this set them *all* to laughing.

The latrine was the size of a small utility closet. There was a stand-up urinal, a stool, and a small sink with one of those prophylactic dispensers with a tiny mirror attached to it mounted to the wall. The door swung inward at such a severe angle that any-

one sitting on the crapper would be taken off at the knees. I locked the door behind me, then studied myself in the mirror. I'm not much of a drinker, but I'd learned some techniques from masters.

The pupils of my eyes were wide, dilated from drink, and my complexion was ashen and clammy. I bent over the scum-crusted bowl and forced two fingers to the back of my throat. The vomit burned of beer and booze, but after a couple of heavy heaves I felt better.

I rinsed my mouth and wiped my face. I made myself read the fine print on the rubber machine, the stuff about ecstasy and response and lubed tips and ribbed sleeves, to refocus my vision, and exhaled short, rapid breaths to lower my oxygen level. I drank handful after handful of the tap water, brownish with rust, and followed that with several deep knee bends until my head cleared. My color was gradually returning. There was no way I was going to keep up with Allie and Sid, I knew. Not without an edge.

Loud rock music thudded through the thin walls—somebody had cranked up the juke box—and the insistent rhythm set the metal dispenser to rattling against the tiled wall. I recognized the song as Springsteen's "Adam Raised a Cain" and smiled to myself at the odd coincidence.

"He's still livin'," Sid said, jamming his stubby thumb into Allie's side. The dice players were back at the far end of the bar with Jules; Jason and Mike were racking up the balls to a new game, arguing over the break. A new beer stood beckoning at my spot on the bar.

Three beers later the conversation turned to women, with Allie filling Sid's ear with the sweaty details of some coupling he'd had when he was in the Navy and stationed in the Philippines. "I'm telling you, Sid, honest to God, slope women're the best. They got this—this way about 'em, they—" He tried to describe with his hands what he couldn't with his words. He was pretty far gone—I was getting there myself—and I toyed with some strategies of how to get him home. I checked my watch: it was nearly five.

"Skip, you know what I'm talking," he said, his tongue thick in his mouth. "Oriental women're different."

"Yeah, Pa, they're different all right," I said.

"You get much of that action over there?" asked Sid. He was balanced like some Buddha on his bar stool, and despite the fact

that he had matched Allie shot for shot and beer for beer and then some, he hadn't had to pee once yet and seemed to have perfect equilibrium. That enormous sweating bulk of his soaked up booze like a sponge.

"Of course!" Allie bellowed. "Shit, he probably fucked so many he's an expert now in international relations. Get it?" he said, goosing me in my left arm pit. "Or are you still into birds?"

"His Tweety-Pie's got a nice little nest, I bet," Sid said.

My lack of response startled them. Allie gave me a queer look. "Tell Sid about them birds you used to keep," he said.

I wondered what he'd do, whether he'd spray his beer halfway across the bar or go for my throat, if I told him the truth. Told him that the last piece I'd had was an Okinawan "latrine duty," a non-com Texas cracker who'd worked my mouth like a johnny brush before coming in my throat and making me puke up my insides until I'd thought I was going to die. Or that I wasn't much better with the ladies—couldn't keep it up long enough to do anything. Or that the best I felt was when my "bird" was nestled into my own palm, slick with spit and warm as fresh baked bread with visions of my cockatiels in flight in my head. What would Allie and fat Sid think then?

"We better get going, hey, Pa?" I said. I grabbed him by the crook of his elbow. He shrugged out of my grasp. "Janice is probably—"

"Fuck Janice!" he said.

"If he's anything like his old man," Sid bleated, "he probably will."

Allie laughed and mussed my hair with a clumsy ham-hock of a hand. "I better keep an eye on him, eh, Sid? Janice just may—" He belched and didn't finish.

The phone rang behind the bar, and Jules picked it up. He said something, then cuffed his hand over the mouthpiece. "You here?" he asked Allie.

"Fuck no," said Allie, annoyed. He finished his beer and slid the glass Jules's way for a refill.

"Mama's getting anxious," Sid announced to the room.

"One of these days the Alley Cat's gonna be spayed," said Jason the Weasel. He was into another game with some guy I hadn't even noticed come in. I looked around. Mike was over at a table sharking some girl in green. Her laugh was thin and airy above the twanging of a guitar on the juke box. "She's gonna hold 'em in one hand and snip-snip—"

"Fuck Janice," Allie said. His voice was a low, mean growl.

"Alvin."

The voice was rich as heartland soil, tinged with an impatience that had run its course to resignation. It took me a moment to realize that the voice was addressing Allie. I don't think I'd ever heard anybody call Allie *Alvin*—with the exception of Grandmom Catalano, and she only once when he'd told a dirty joke at Thanksgiving dinner.

Allie didn't miss a beat, didn't even turn around or act surprised in the slightest; he just stared into the amber fizz of his beer, his big hands rolling the glass in circles on its base. "Go home, Janice," was all he said.

She had the little girl, Dawn Marie, with her, clutched by one hand. She was a tiny girl—although larger than from the snapshot of them in Disney World—with a tiny elliptical face almost lost under a mass of Shirley Temple curls. She stared up at me with wide, unblinking eyes. I must have frightened her in some way—or maybe it was being in such a dark and noisy place, since over the past couple of hours a steady stream of people had poured in from outside and few had left—for she signaled her mother in some way to reach down and scoop her up into the crook of her arm. She kept those wide, unblinking eyes on me the entire time.

Janice was a plainer woman than I'd guessed from her photograph. Then again, it could be that she hadn't had the time or the disposition to make herself up. Her auburn hair was pulled back into a ponytail and clipped up with a barrette. One wisp of hair had escaped the severe pull of the rubberband, though, and fell heartbreakingly across her forehead and down her cheek. I fought back a mad impulse to reach out and gently tuck that strand of hair behind her ear, to fold her into my arms and take her out of this dive and into a new life. But I was Allie's boy and probably would have fallen off the stool, scaring her and her little girl into flight—to a perch well beyond the reach of my capabilities.

"Oh-oh," Sid said, cocking his head conspiratorially towards Allie. "Everybody hide."

Janice ignored him. "Alvin," she repeated, more firmly.

"Go home, Janice," Allie said.

"I can't," she said. "Suzanne dropped me off. Let me have the keys to the car and I'll drive you home."

"That's too bad," Allie said. "I guess you'll have to wait or walk

home, 'cause I ain't ready to leave yet."

"Sid," she pleaded. "Will you help me?"

"Sorry, Jan," he said, exhaling twin plumes of smoke through his cavernous nostrils. "Allie's a big boy. I can't make him do stuff he don't want. Why, he'd break me in two."

I almost laughed aloud at this—the idea of Allie or anybody struggling to lift that lard ass with anything smaller than a crane.

"Are you Skip?" she said, directly to me. "Will you help me?"

I turned from her to Allie. His right eyeball was waiting for me, studying me for a glimmer of betrayal. In Allie's view of the world, it always got down to taking sides.

"Will you help me get your father home?" Janice said. She waited. He waited. I weighed things over in my mind. It was the little girl who helped me decide. She smiled at me, a smile so sweet and pure, so above the sordidness of this place she found herself in and the awful things people do to one another, that my insides went hollow and my mind cleared.

"Sure," I said—to her; to him, "It's time to go."

Allie was so pissed he nearly fell off his stool. He slammed some money on the bar, brushed aside Sid's observation that the time had come to bring down the hammer, and stalked out into the parking lot so briskly that when Janice, Dawn Marie, and I were just stepping out into the night, he was already fumbling the key into the lock of his car.

"Alvin!" Janice called. "Let me drive!"

"Shut up, Janice!" he roared. He'd worked the key into the lock and flung open the door.

"Skip—" Janice turned to me.

"Skip!" Allie growled. "Get in the back seat of the car or I'll fucking kill you!" His hands balled into enormous fists. His lips quivered and his eyes narrowed.

"Do what he says," Janice said, under her breath. "Let's just get him home."

I climbed into the back. Dawn Marie reached out for me, so I took her from Janice and nestled her on my lap. She was light as feathers and warm as a little furnace. She was wearing a little sun dress underneath her sweater, and the skirt rode up her back and bunched against my stomach as she snuggled into the seat the contours of my body offered her. Janice slid in next to Allie.

He started up the car with a too-heavy foot on the accelerator. The engine raced in an agonizing whine.

"Please be careful," Janice said.

"Shut up," Allie hissed. "Don't even breathe a fucking word."

He slammed the car into reverse and left a memory of rubber on the asphalt as he burned out of the parking lot and weaved out onto the road. He shot across traffic and up over the raised concrete median strip that divided the east lanes from the west. Dawn Marie dug her fingers into my arms encircling her tiny waist. I barely avoided hitting my head on the roof.

"Allie—" Janice protested.

"I told you to shut up, bitch," he said. "Another word out of you and it'll be your last."

"Where do you think you can come off talking to me like that?" she demanded.

"Keep pushing, Jan. Just keep pushing. I'll kick your ass out right now."

"You think it's that easy, huh?"

"I'm warning you to shut the fuck up."

"No, I won't shut up. It's about time *you* sobered up," she spat. "Or are you and Sid intent on being the oldest drunks on the block?"

He tried to backhand her but missed. We blew through a red light, narrowly avoiding a collision with one of those toylike Japanese cars. It skidded sideways across the intersection, horn blaring.

"Jesus, Dad," I said, heart thumping in my chest. The little girl on my lap was in a trance.

"You're sick," Janice said at length. "You're sick and I don't know if I can help you." She pressed against the car door and looked back at me. In the rush of oncoming headlights I thought I could see her begin to cry.

"You're through," Allie said quietly to Janice. He'd shut off the car in the wide part of the driveway near the garage.

The house was dark. It had been so long since last I'd seen it that I found myself compulsively studying it in what little moonlight there was. It was still a brown shingled A frame with a small front porch. Two bedroom windows still yawned like empty mouths from the upstairs. The one on the right had been my room, where I'd kept my birds. I guessed it was Dawn Marie's room now. I wondered what it would look like decorated for a little girl, whether there would be anything left of me in the silent testimony of its four walls, or any trace of the beautiful grey cockatiels that used to love gliding from the top of the closet door to the window sill and back, singing to me of the freedom of

flight. . . .

"I want you out tonight."

Dawn Marie started crying and crawled over the seat into her mother's arms.

"Thanks, Skip," Janice said. From the tone of her voice, I didn't know if she was being sarcastic. She opened her door and crossed in front of the car towards the house.

"Didn't you hear what I said?" Allie yelled after her, incredulous. "You're through! You're out! I can do better than you on my worst day."

She didn't pause a step. Allie scrambled from the car and banged his door shut before I could squeeze out. I slid out Janice's side.

"Janice!" he roared. "Janice!" When words wouldn't stop her, he kicked in the car door with the heel of his right foot.

She stopped and turned. Her jaw set in disgust.

"Brilliant move, Alvin," she said. "You wipe out our savings buying the damn thing, and now you're going to trash it."

"I. Want. To. Talk. To. You," he said, emphasizing each word with an imperious thrust of his finger.

Janice looked from him to me. "Skip, will you take Dawn Marie into the house?" she said.

He must've hit her and she must've hit him back. The twin reports of flesh on flesh resounded like thunderclaps into the house. Dawn Marie was bawling her eyes dry, and at the sound of her mother's outraged cry sprang from my arms and ran screaming to the living room window. She winnowed her way behind the drapes and pressed her blubbery face to the glass pane, staring out into the darkness to where her Mommy and Daddy were locked in the heated embrace of connubial battle. I was as inventive as circumstance would allow—having no better idea of what to do about the situation than the hysterical little girl squirming to escape my grasp.

"Let's watch TV," I said hopefully.

"Muh-muh-my Mommy. . . ." she choked. "Muh-muh-muh-Mommy is sad. . . ."

Her thin little voice, congested with tears, cut right through me. It was as if her speaking were a miracle—that such a diminutive physical presence should be beyond the pain and ugliness of this moment and, subsequently, beyond the concreteness of language. I swept her up into my arms and pressed her face into my chest. She clung to me as if I were her last best hope.

Allie snarled something unintelligible, and Janice responded, "Half of that stuff in there is mine!" They were approaching the front porch. I sat on the sofa and comforted Dawn Marie.

Most of the furniture in the room was new to me: chairs, end tables, lamps, a cabinet with little knick-knacks on its glass shelving. Even the couch I was sitting on. The only piece I recognized from when Allie, Mom, and I lived here was Allie's oversized recliner. It still dominated the corner of the room farthest from the windows and the light.

Allie's heavy feet thundered up the porch steps. He charged through the front door and paused to inventory the contents of the room, mumbling something to himself. His face was frozen in anger, and he loomed so large I thought he might explode through the walls and ceiling.

"Excuse me, Skip," he said. His voice was queerly calm and flat, belying an inner fury coiled like a big cat waiting to pounce. "This will only take a few minutes."

He wrapped his arms around a high-backed upholstered chair and struggled with it through the door. He looked at me. I didn't know if he expected me to help him or try to stop him. I stayed where I was, stroking Dawn Marie's curly head as she snuffled into my shirt.

Allie must have tossed it from the porch or dropped it down the steps, because the chair came apart in a whine of splintering wood and hollow springs as it thudded onto the front lawn.

"You bastard!" Janice said.

He was back inside without comment to get the twin. It, too, landed on the lawn. And then the tables. And the lamps—exploding like little bombs as they hit the ground. The corner cabinet was next—his thick arms straining as he got a hold on it and swung it up on his shoulder, its contents rattling inside. "You son-of-a-bitch!" Janice cried. It must have hit some of the other furniture and broken apart. There were two separate explosions of wood and glass. "You son-of-a-bitch," Janice moaned.

I wondered if any neighbors had called for the police, or if I should. There was something pulsing in my brain, a pressure or inchoate fear, that panicked me. What would I do if they tried to kill one another? What *could* I do?

"Excuse me, Skip," Allie said. He wanted me up from the sofa. I got up with Dawn Marie in my arms. We watched him grab the sofa by one end and drag it to the door. He stood it on end. The cushions fell off. He worked it through the door and sort of cartwheeled it across the porch, down the steps, and out into the

yard. He came back inside and pitched the cushions out one at a time, as if they were horseshoes. He looked into the room. Except for the television and his chair, the room was eerily empty.

Then he looked at me. No, not at *me*, but at the little girl in my arms whose wide, unblinking eyes were fixed on him. "I'm sorry, Dawn Marie," he said, an unreal edge of quietness to his words. "You've got to go, too."

He reached out to take her from me. His hands looked enormous. The little girl screamed. She saw what I saw. Those hands were going straight for her neck.

IV

"No, Allie," I said, screening him from the girl with my free shoulder. His eyes widened, empty of light, unbelieving.

"What did you say?" he asked, cocking an ear toward my mouth.

Janice raced into the house from outside. "If you touch my baby," she cried a second before turning into the room, "I'll kill you, you bast—" She froze.

Allie looked from her to me. "Give me that goddamn kid," he warned.

"No," I repeated. Janice sidled by him at arm's length, as if she were skirting something foul and malevolent, and took the girl from my arms.

"You son-of-a-bitch," he said and swiped at mother and daughter with an off-balanced, lurching, roundhouse right.

Instinctively, I stepped inside and snapped his jaw slack with a right cross he couldn't block. Then I broke his nose with a left. Blood funneled from both nostrils as if from a spigot, pouring into his mouth and down his chin and neck. He wiped away what he could with the back of his hand and pinched his nose straight.

"Was that your best?" he said, licking blood off his teeth with a cat-like swipe of his tongue.

Janice and child backed into a corner.

"Get out of here," I ordered. She hesitated a moment, then bolted through the dining room to the kitchen and out the back. The door-slam reverberated hollowly through the empty room.

Allie followed it with his eyes. "You're in for a whipping," he said matter-of-factly, taking a step towards me. I held my ground. "You killed my birds," I said.

This caught him off guard. He stopped and smiled a half-smile, as if one side of his face were being lifted on a crane of in-

voluntary response.

"That's right," he said. "I did. They had more fight in them than you ever had, too, but it was easy. I snapped their necks just like that." And he snapped his fingers to show me how easy it had been. And then he pounced.

He caught me with a good one along the side of the head, tried to muscle me to the floor with those big, powerful arms of his, but I darted out of his grasp. I pecked at his nose with three or four piston-like jabs—bam! bam! bam! bam!—and when he fell against me I came up from underneath with a hook to the kidneys that crumpled him like an aluminum can. He curled up on the carpet, bleeding into it, wheezing through his split-lipped mouth and misshapened nose, staring up at me with expressionless eyes.

I think I wanted to cry. I think I wanted to bend over him and hold him in my arms, to wipe his bleeding face with my shirt, to tell him that it would be all right, that it was over now, that the fighting had to stop, that this was the time men had to be strong—strong enough to forgive one another, care for one another, love one another. Instead I stepped over him and went out into the night.

Janice was at the foot of the porch, standing like a survivor amidst the wreckage of her life. Dawn Marie, impossibly, was asleep in her arms.

"Is he all right?" she asked.

"Are you going back in?" I said.

She shrugged her shoulders, glanced wanly at the broken things scattered about her.

"We have no money," she said. "We don't have anything left."

She looked up and retreated half a step, eyes focused on the space behind me.

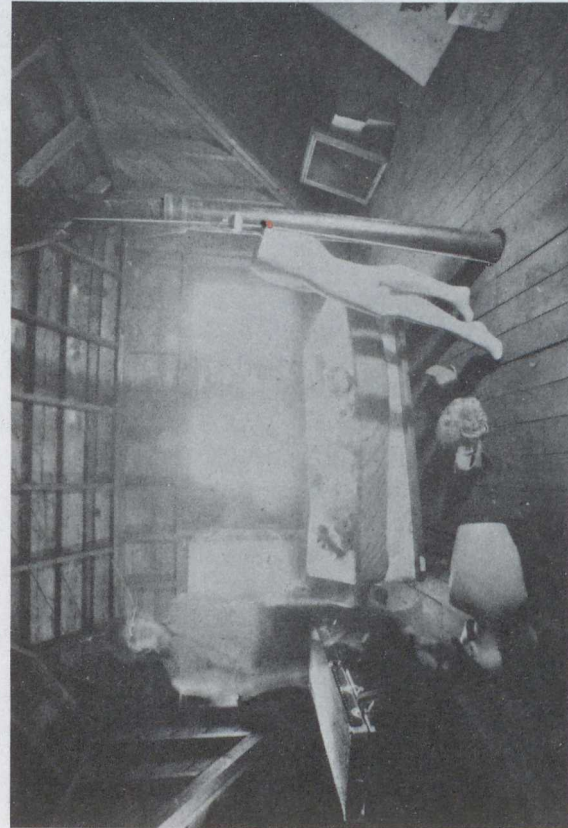
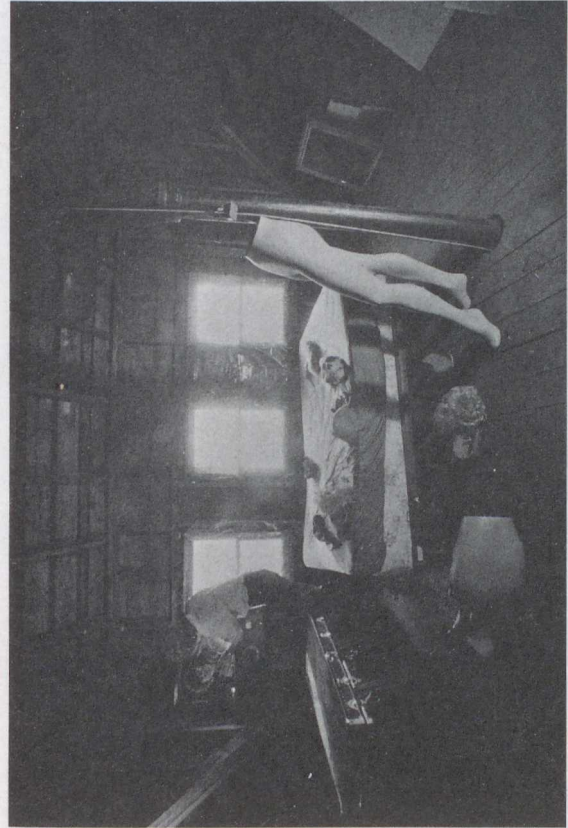
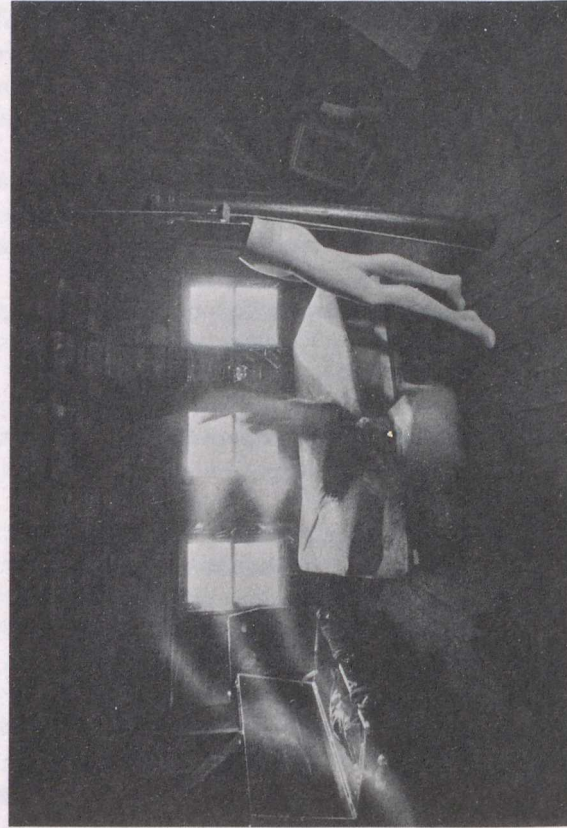
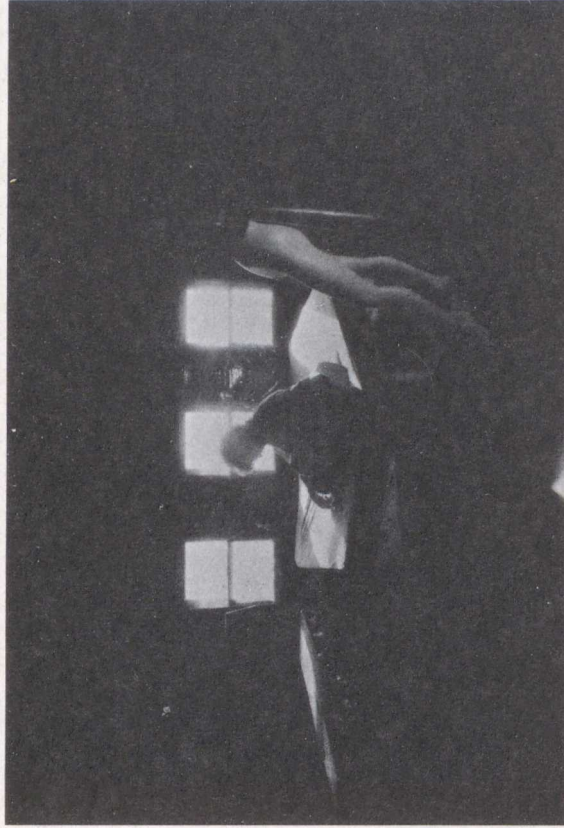
Allie loomed in the doorway, but he didn't loom as largely as he once had. He looked comically broken, used up.

"You can both go to hell," he said. He gazed directly into my eyes as he moved to shut the door. "You think you're different than me," he stated. "But you ain't. You're sculpted from the same shit pile they got me." He slammed shut the door, then, and bolted it.

I descended the stairs to Janice. She let me take Dawn Marie from her. The little girl's breathing was regular and deep. She was light as feathers in the wing of my arm. I folded Janice under the protective warmth of my other wing, and we glided off into the brooding stillness of the night.



Night of the Beasties Thomas C. White



Bottles (for S. L. A.)

Sealed in their box beside me
my bottle collection tink-tinked
when our car whisked away
from your town.

Bottles
we huffed as flutes, bowled over,
sold in bars.

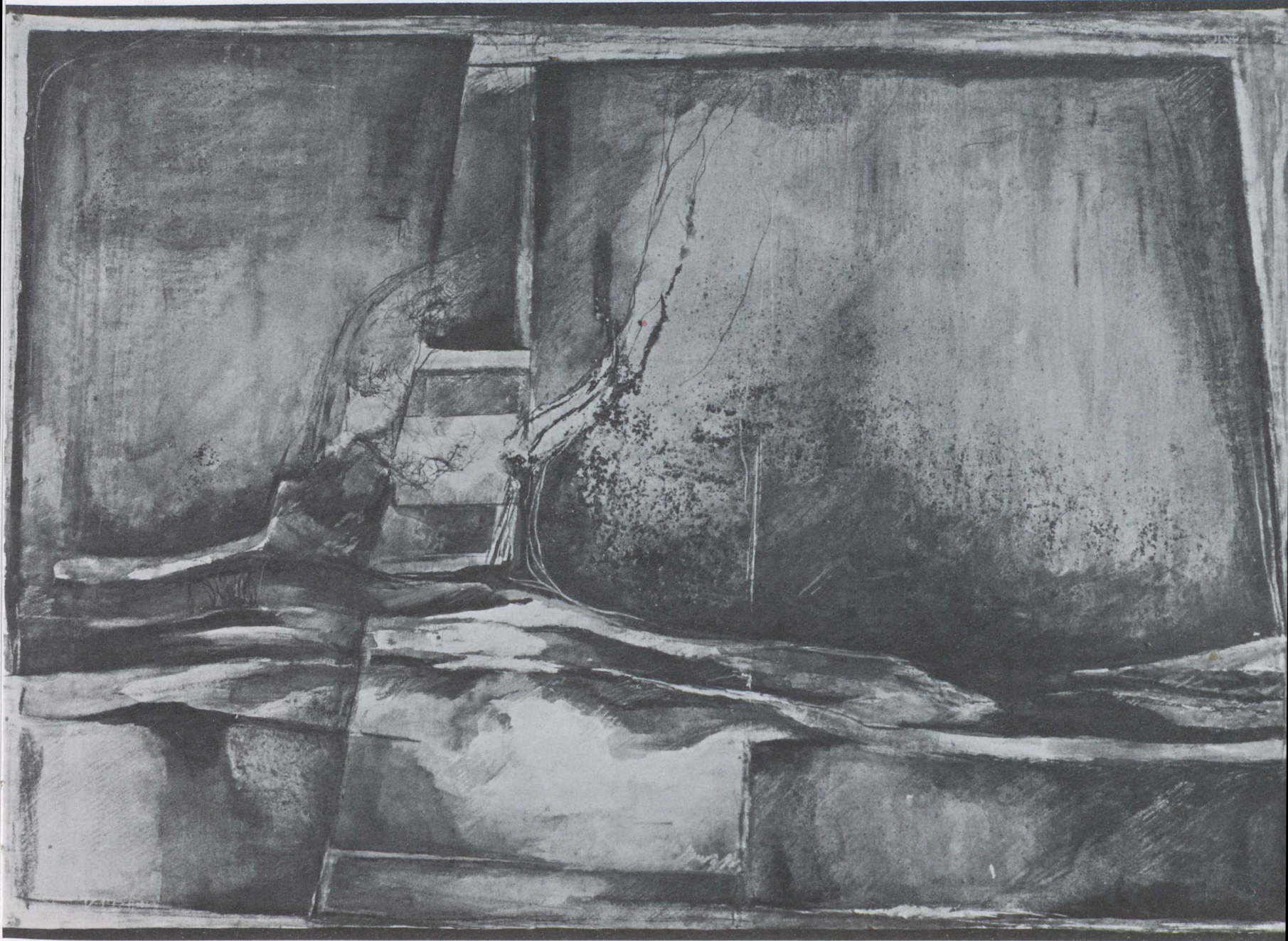
We'd smash one
now and then for spite and sweep
the glass into the sump pump,
our secret. Then the bottle tales
long distance: You said
Truman Wilburn stuck his dick
in a rum bottle and sliced it up bad.
I told you about the porn at school,
women fucking themselves
with coke bottles. "Sometimes they
even wrench out their guts!"
Such news rolled off our tongues
like pickle jars across wood floors.

During my visits we'd tear
up tar roads toward parties
inhaling bottles of beer
like cannisters of laughing gas.
Then chuck them out windows—
German hand grenades. Always
when bottles were stashed
under a seat, a cop would sniff
your muffler, and you'd grab for the gum.
I'd photograph your friends,
their bottles funnels
sudsing up the rug, and you posing,
some punk seething to jab
a bottle's jagged edge
into my camera's eye,
the eye of your latest love,
who, spinning the bottle,
kissed some guy named Joe.
You'd swallow your rage, though,
a handful of broken glass.

Streator, where everyone hammers out
bottles, your newest home,
with the glass factory out back,
Leviathan that stretches for blocks,
heaving and spouting. And the empties—
mountains sorted by color and shape,
ripe for mining.

You'd watch
the workers whoosh in the doors,
tick-tocking louder than bottles
shooting down the labelling line.
Their children screeched up in pick-ups,
heads clear as bottles of Miller beer,
wanting to scrap with this new guy.
You'd pace the floor over such scenes,
breaking bottles over your head.
I purpled, "See, you're a bottle of Löwenbräu
among ten thousand bottles of Bud."
After scanning that sandy silica soil
of the town, you grabbed up the bottles
dotting the coffee table like tombs
and tossed them out back
in a Hefty bag, too big
like the sofa, to move.

Tim Brown



Landscape Carol Weber



Untitled Michele Illian

Blood Relations: Hawthorne and the Curse of Tradition

Greg Lindenberg

The decay and revitalization of a family, so carefully depicted by Nathaniel Hawthorne in his work *The House of the Seven Gables*, reaches the modern reader across an abyss spanned only by the bridge of Romanticism. The importance of the extended family has lost much of its force in this age of the nuclear family. Hawthorne, possessed with the true Romantic sentiment, relates his tale of a New England family in a way that cuts through the years and appeals to a level of emotion which, although deeply buried by society, is quite easily uncovered by reading such a story. A careful study of the characters and their families is necessary to feel the real impact of the author's Romantic philosophy, and to distinguish between the two levels of the story, one physical and the other symbolically spiritual. These two levels are skillfully combined, and Hawthorne brings to life the moral sentiment and intense emotions experienced by people born in a world out of time, bound by the curse of tradition, desperately trying to escape to a higher spiritual ground as the waters of Nature rise up around them to wash away the stains of the past.

Nathaniel Hawthorne very admirably embodies the necessarily ambiguous tenets of Romanticism. He is only so endowed, however, according to the parameters of his own definition of the word. He believes that Romanticism is "a legend prolonging itself,"¹ the attempt to retain or recapture the past, translating it to become part of the present. This feeling can be benevolent,

bathing the present in vast spiritual richness, but more often it is malevolent, bestowing the curse of greed and hatred on succeeding generations. Such is the effect of the past on the Pyncheon family in Hawthorne's romance.

The House of the Seven Gables is distinguished by Hawthorne as a romance, not a novel. He considers the two forms to be different, the novel lacking the scope of the romance, which is not limited to the mundane experiences of a novel. The romance more readily lends itself to exploring the regions of imagination and the spiritual domain of the self. Furthermore, the romantic form does not require that the author "impale the story with its moral as with an iron rod . . . depriving it of life" (p. viii). The imaginative and artistic nature of the work gives it a more universal quality, while never detracting from the fact that it is an enjoyable story. Hawthorne himself, to please those readers and critics who search for such things, provides the moral for his story, that "the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief" (p. viii).

It is clear, then, that Nathaniel Hawthorne the Romantic, in a sense, is different from Nathaniel Hawthorne the writer of romance. The latter grows out of the former, the needs of Romanticism being met under the guise of fiction. The moral level runs parallel to the literary level, each accentuating the other. In this novel, the author requires each person to answer that inward call and to start out on an endless voyage from the material world into the realm of spirit, riding upon such symbolic vehicles as are found in the narrative. He has also given the world an exceptionally fine tale in its own right.

A thorough understanding of Hawthorne's motives and methods depends upon a clear portrait of each of the major characters in *The House of the Seven Gables*. They are the author's inward conceptions of good and evil externalized and turned loose on New England. That is, they represent his feelings concerning the effect of the past on the present and the mental legacy it bequeaths to human conscience. He shows us this through the macabre history of the wealthy and powerful Pyncheon family, very much respected and feared by New England

¹ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables* (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. vii. All further references to this work will be identified parenthetically in the text.

society. The greatest part of the narrative deals with the mid-nineteenth century members of the family: Hepzibah, Jaffrey, Clifford, and Phoebe. The entire tale, however, is overshadowed by the spirit of Colonel Pyncheon, the ancestor of the other characters.

Colonel Pyncheon, the patriarch of the family, is the man responsible for the construction of the House of the Seven Gables. He is also responsible for the anguish and doom that hovered over his descendants for many generations. To all outward appearances, the Colonel is a highly respectable, God-fearing individual with a finely developed business sense. Thus his business dealings eat away at his firmly established Puritan foundation and create a cavity widened over the years by guilt and fear fostered in the surviving family. This gap can be filled only by a rejection of the tradition of alienation bred by the Colonel and by an acceptance of the natural progression of time.

The Colonel's incredible avarice leads him to seek and secure a tract of land occupied by Matthew Maule, who lives in a small cottage on the property. The Colonel evicts Maule and tears down the cottage to construct what will become the Pynchoens' ancestral home, the House of Seven Gables. The validity of Colonel Pyncheon's claim is somewhat questionable, and he gets the land only after the death of Maule, executed for the crime of witchcraft. As Matthew Maule is led to the gallows, just before the rope stretches taut around his neck, he places a curse on the Colonel and his descendants, saying that "God . . . will give him [the Colonel] blood to drink!" (p. 14). This curse dictates the fortunes of the Pyncheons for many years, and illustrates Hawthorne's self-stated moral of inherited evil. By disrupting the natural order of things, the Colonel had caused a break in the flow of time, moving along normally for the rest of society, passing by the Pyncheon family. The author, as a Romantic, accepts the flow of time and would transcend it, while the Pyncheons would try to stop time, break away from it to hold on to the past.

The Maule family, lower on the social scale than the Pyncheons in New England life, are easily dealt with by the Colonel. It is clear that status buys respect, and few men have the status of Colonel Pyncheon in his community. Matthew Maule has no such position, and his family quickly becomes the subject of many rumors and much ill gossip. They are all suspected of

being witches and wizards, and are said to have the power to influence dreams. They, too, become bound by the past, for just as the Pyncheons must carry the traditional curse with them, the Maules must bear the secret of hidden wealth. They possess a great secret passed down through succeeding generations concerning the location of a lost document which could secure for the Pyncheons a great area of land in the state of Maine. The architect of the House of the Seven Gables, the son of Matthew Maule, hid the parchment in a recess behind a portrait of the Colonel himself.

These actions by both families create a rift in the order of nature and are allowed to play themselves out until the circumstances present themselves when nature can be put right. Both families suffer from the curse of tradition, for the Maule family becomes tainted to the depths of their souls, just as the water from their well turns bad. Flowers and animals are not affected by the water as humans are, however, for in taking on the secret they possess, the Maules become agents of nature, "insulating them from human aid" (p. 29). They are kept from their rightful property, and are forced to suffer the scorn of society in full view of the apparent affluence of their enemies, who are prevented from claiming their land in Maine and suffer from a powerful sense of inherited guilt. Both families live under the shadow of their ancestors. The present is held captive by the past. Status and respectability, like civilization, are but thin layers of gloss upon temporal existence, to be spiritually peeled away to restore a more natural balance.

In its tremendous effect on the present, the past continually tries, and often succeeds, to reproduce itself over and over again. One such reproduction is Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon, who resembles his ancestor, the Colonel, in appearance and demeanor. All of the Colonel's outward Puritan morality and inward greed are mirrored in Jaffrey. Only Holgrave's daguerreotype images see through such deceptions, for art, and the artist, exist at a higher spiritual level, and are thereby more easily able to brush away the coarse dust of false morality which so often clogs human perception. Very materialistic, Judge Pyncheon lacks much of the spiritual refinement which should come with human progress. Instead, he possesses much "animal substance . . . unctuous, rather than spiritual" (p. 106). He is, in every sense,

a man of the world, little concerned with spirituality outside of his own skin-deep Christianity. His highly regarded puritanical sense of morality, bolstered by his unquestioned integrity among his fellow New Englanders, is an unconscious attempt to cover up his feelings of guilt and the fear of the curse of his family. He hopes that his seemingly noble life will somehow make up for his insatiable desire for wealth. He is trying to correct his ancestor's sins on a physical level, when spiritual redress is called for by nature. At the same time, he is steeped in his own sins of avarice, keeping the Colonel's sin alive in his own dark soul. Balance can be restored only with the spiritual conversion of the Judge and the return of the property to its rightful owner, or by the Judge's death. He is too earthly for the former to occur; the latter must be his fate.

A character who is immensely important in the course of events is Holgrave. He represents the Maule family, and is the actual and spiritual descendent of Matthew Maule. These two men are very similar in nature. Matthew Maule is thought to be a wizard and, along with the rest of his family, is said to be able to influence the dreams of innocent people. Holgrave is believed to be a mystic with strange mental powers, including hypnotism. This connecting link is seen when Holgrave reads Phoebe his only slightly fictionalized story about Alice Pyncheon. Alice is put under a spell by the grandson of the Colonel, in an attempt to locate the missing real estate document. The plan fails, of course, for the Maules are not yet ready to take action and reveal their secret. Alice remains under Maule's spell, and he often bends her will to strange purposes, and eventually it kills her. Holgrave, unconsciously exerting these same mental powers, brings Phoebe under his control through his intense level of emotion at telling the story. He brings her back to normal, although he could have subjected her will had he so desired. This benevolent act reflects Holgrave's "deep consciousness of inward strength" (p. 160), and signifies that good changes are soon to come.

Holgrave, although he is a major participant in the events that are reaching their strange conclusion, achieves the position of a spectator. He observes the habits and daily life of the inhabitants of the House of the Seven Gables, living under the same roof, but he lives in a gable all his own. Thus is his fate intimately

tied with that of the Pyncheon family, a Maule living amid his ancestral enemies. Holgrave watches the decay of the Pyncheons, and then steps in to act when the right time presents itself. That time, when circumstances are right for the revitalization of the family, is when he is united with Phoebe, whom he loves, thus combining the two lines and beginning again on the track of time. Nature corrects itself, and the curse of tradition is ended, for Holgrave and Phoebe "transfigured the earth, and made it Eden again, and themselves the first two dwellers in it" (p. 267). By joining together and turning their backs on the past, they have erased the guilt from their souls and removed the sins of their ancestors from their consciences. Holgrave is the agent of Nature, for he is considered to have "a law of his own" (p. 80), separate from the laws of society. The laws of Nature are also separate from human morality, operating on a loftier spiritual plane. It is fitting, therefore, that Jaffrey Pyncheon and Holgrave, the descendents who most resemble the men who laid the curse on the families, Colonel Pyncheon and Matthew Maule, should be the men to end the drama. Nature has gone full circle.

Another character is Hepzibah Pyncheon. An elderly recluse, she is, perhaps, the person trapped most of all by the curse of the House of the Seven Gables. For much of her life, she has lived hermit-like in the Pyncheon House, which she was given the right to do by the will of her uncle. This legacy, however, becomes more of a curse than a blessing, for she is wrapped up tighter by the tradition of guilt and decay which has plagued her line since the time of Colonel Pyncheon. The house becomes her world, and it is an important symbol throughout the book, representing the prison wherein the Pyncheon family has locked itself to escape the passage of time. She wears a very unwholesome scowl, due to her nearsightedness, forcing her further from society, for people believe that the scowl is part of her aloof Pyncheon demeanor, or even the Evil Eye.

Her only pleasure is looking at a Malbone miniature of her brother Clifford. It is her hope that he will come to release her from her captivity, which he does, but only after he himself is helped by Phoebe. The cent shop opened by Hepzibah would have failed under her faltering will to come face to face with society, had it not been for Phoebe. She represents Hepzibah as she would like herself to be for Clifford, for "she [is] a grief to Clifford,

and . . . in this extremity, the antiquated virgin turn[s] to Phoebe" (p. 122). Hepzibah has been ruined by the family curse, both physically and mentally. The cent shop is Hepzibah's own attempt to end the curse of tradition, and the boy who so eagerly consumes the gingerbread is an "emblem of old Father Time . . . in respect of his all-devouring appetite for men and things" (p. 105). Intercourse between the two worlds would have failed under Hepzibah, but Phoebe, the unstained picture of what Hepzibah should have been, paves the way to revitalization.

Clifford Pyncheon is a strange man, even among the odd set of characters chosen by Hawthorne. He is Hepzibah's brother, the one pictured in her cherished miniature. Clifford is a "wasted, gray, and melancholy figure—a substantial ghost" (p. 96), for he is far from being a member of the material world. His sybaritic tastes could be too easily affected by his surroundings, and the harsh world outside the House of the Seven Gables would destroy him. He is, therefore, caught between two evils, the cruel world of New England society, which he could never join, and the curse of his family, destroying those around him and causing anguish and pain to which he is all too sensitive. Clifford is probably the most innocent of all the Pyncheons forced to share the burden of the Colonel's sin, for he is greatly wronged by Jaffrey and punished for a crime he did not commit. Phoebe, of course, is not affected by the curse, in the way the others are, but she comes from outside, voluntarily assuming the burden of her order. Clifford is an almost wholly spiritual being, full of "sacred misery, sanctifying the human shape in which it embodies itself" (p. 217). After Jaffrey expires in a fit of rage, Clifford and Hepzibah flee the house to escape the weight of the curse. Their frantic train ride is an attempt to catch up with the world. They realize, however, that they are not ending the curse by running, but only avoiding it. To have peace, they must not join the world, but accept it as it is and then rise above it, to a greater spiritual level. After the realization, they return to the house to face the consequences, and balance is on its way to being totally restored.

Probably the most important character in the story is Phoebe Pyncheon. She is cousin to Hepzibah, Clifford, and Jaffrey, and comes from the country to stay at the House of the Seven Gables. She, as well as Holgrave, is an agent used by nature to set

things right again after the disrupting sins of the Pyncheon family. More specifically, she is the catalyst which triggers the revitalization of the Pyncheons, bringing life into a dying world. Phoebe possesses "a kind of natural magic that enables these favored ones to bring out the hidden capabilities of the things around them" (p. 68), and she moves the other characters to action, helping them along on their spiritual journeys.

Coming from the country as she does, Phoebe is closer to nature than the others, and therefore is a very fitting vehicle to help restore order. Her affinity for nature is seen in the way she cares for the Pyncheons' chickens, a special breed kept by them and oddly reminiscent of them. They are a line as old as the House itself, also suffering from decay, in danger of dying out. There are many allusions to Phoebe in relation to flowers, and she is called "a young rosebud of a girl" (p. 106). The Pyncheon garden, mostly overrun by weeds, is tended and weeded by Phoebe, just as she tends to the family itself by aiding Hepzibah and Clifford. The family also grows a special hybrid white rose, but the red roses are far more abundant, as if they were stained red by the same curse which strikes at the Pyncheons. Phoebe and Holgrave, when order has been achieved, take up their places as a new Adam and Eve, and the garden, in harmony with nature, is likened unto Eden.

Thus, it is seen that the Romantic characters in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* move between the material and spiritual worlds. They are the sad players in an intensely human drama, but also representatives of the nature of good and evil in the world and their mutual effect on man. The book has seven primary characters—Colonel Pyncheon, Matthew Maule, Jaffrey, Hepzibah, Clifford, and Phoebe Pyncheon, and the artist, Holgrave—each represented by a gable. They are "looking out a spiritual window into the material world, with a thick pane of moral glass in between. Some have tried to travel between the two and have paid the awful price. The Pyncheon family decays and stagnates because they have attempted to divorce themselves from society, withdraw from the present, and exist outside the flow of time. All nature strives against them, to correct the error, like air rushing to fill a vacuum. Such a disruption in the Great Chain of Being must correct itself, while "the great world clock of Time still keeps its beat" (p. 245).



Untitled Catherine Sadler

We're Romantics Not Mechanics (for S. L. A.)

Spiny Norm was dressed near an astronaut and I wore those pants too thin except to ride in taxis in. We had a ball to catch before it came down. So we were tearing up tar roads to avoid the Main Streets that stagger along state highways with stop signs everywhere.

This mother was even on the map yet our car croaked in a creek flooded as the veins in my temples became. Before yelling for a truck to yank us out we decided the trees were drifting not the stream. And can you believe it we heroes made the diving catch at two girls' feet with no stains on these knees.

Tim Brown

Daddy Steel

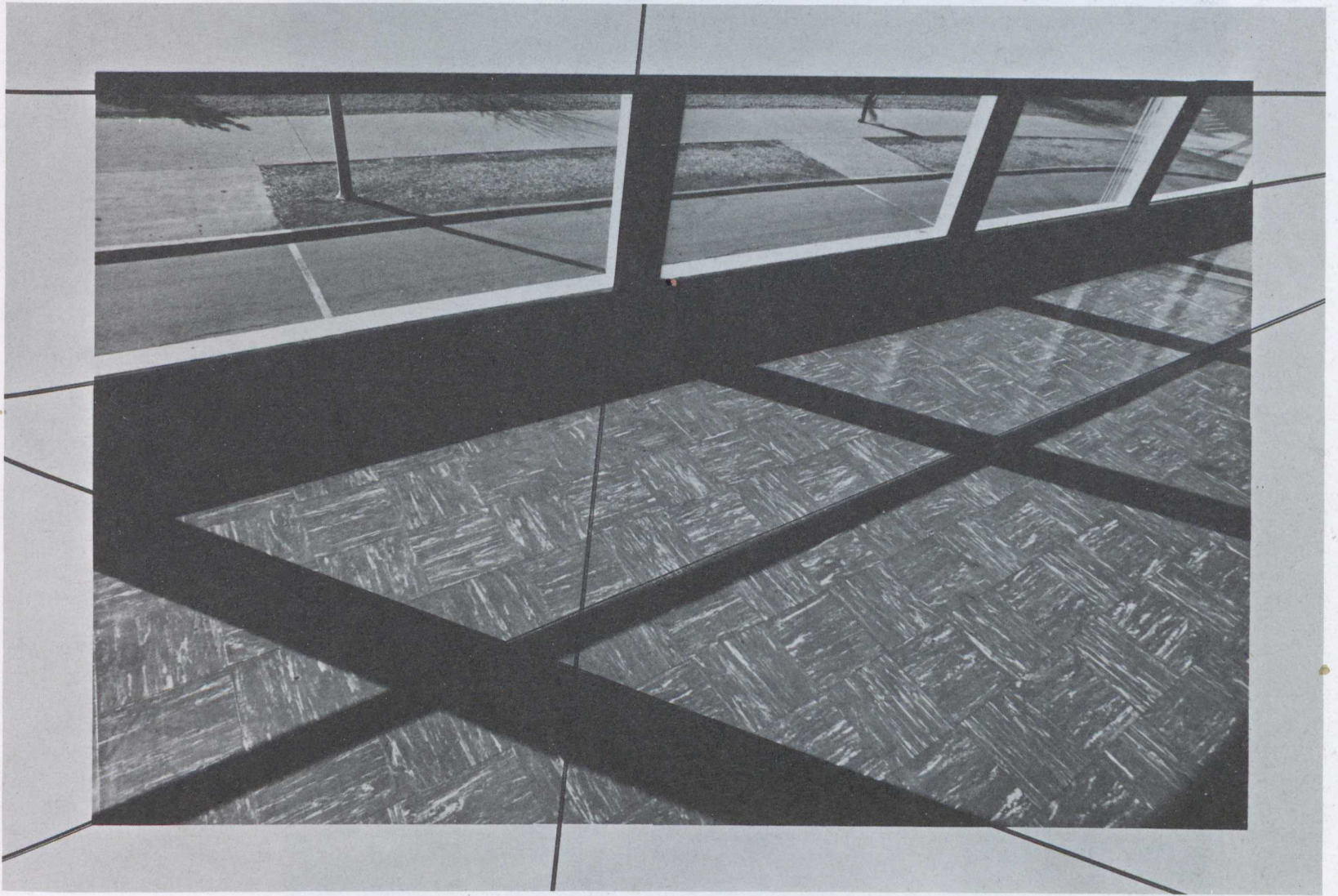
Whenever I asked
about the navy or Japan
his memories would fade
to battleship gray.
All he has to show
are tattoos that scrunch up
when he drives in screws.

I never met his dad
who was a brakeman
and died of a stroke,
but Dad said really
he flushed his gut
with drink.

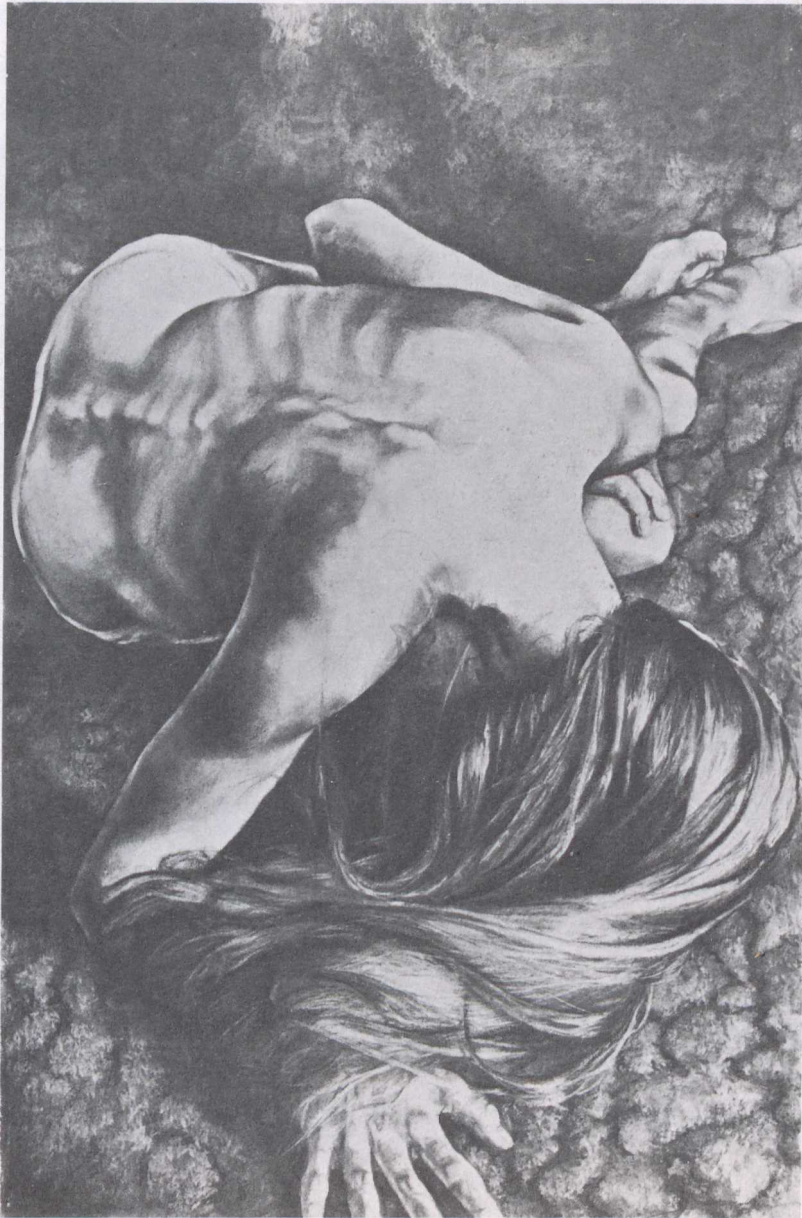
Sobered,
he'd come home from the plant
with fingernails splintered
as the steel he picked
from trouser cuffs.

His eyes galvanized
when he heard
my steel was the brass
of a French horn.
He thought my blood
was his, with cells
shaped like wingnuts.

Tim Brown



Linear Complex Chris Maitzen

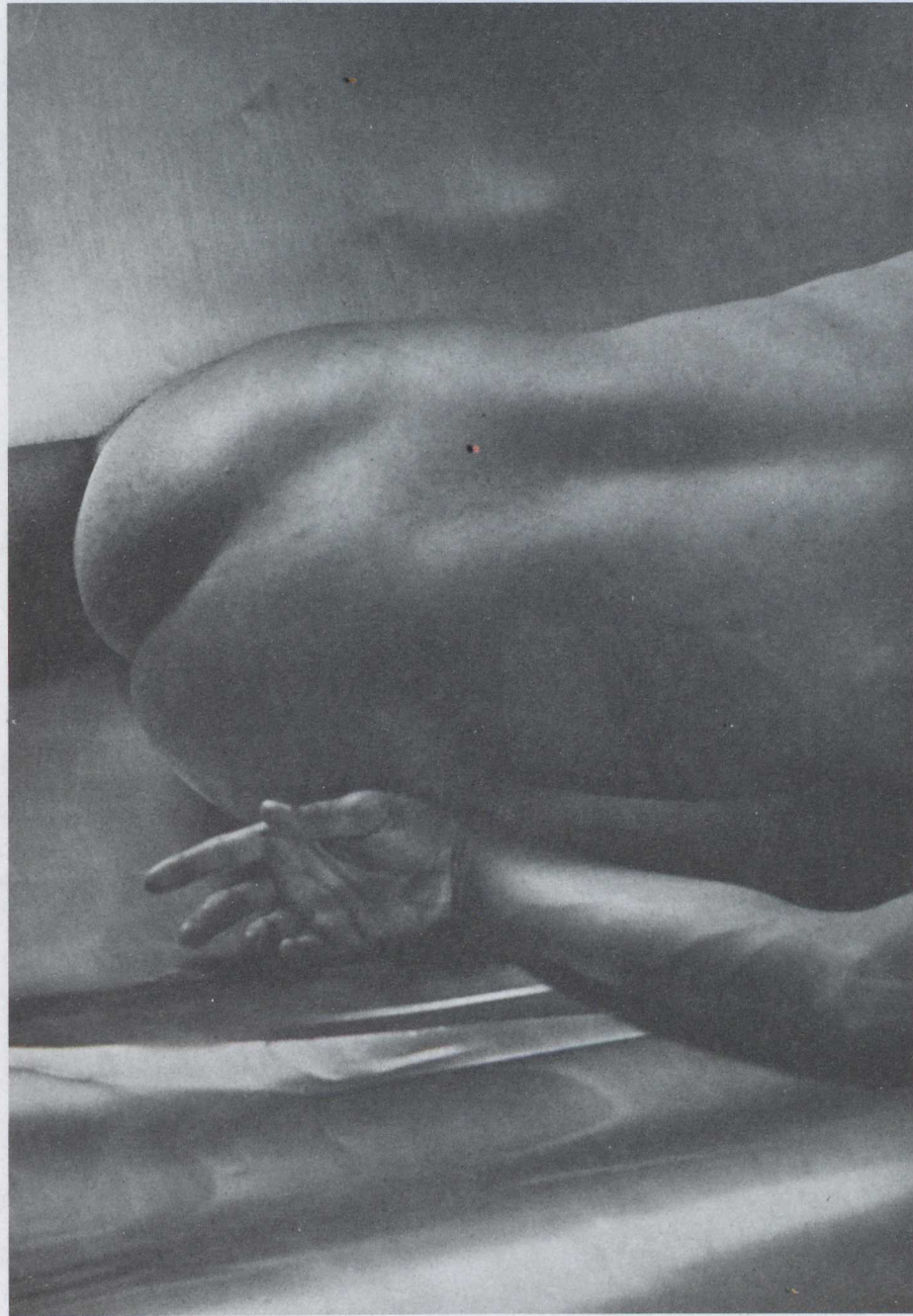


Untitled Anna Marie Crovetti

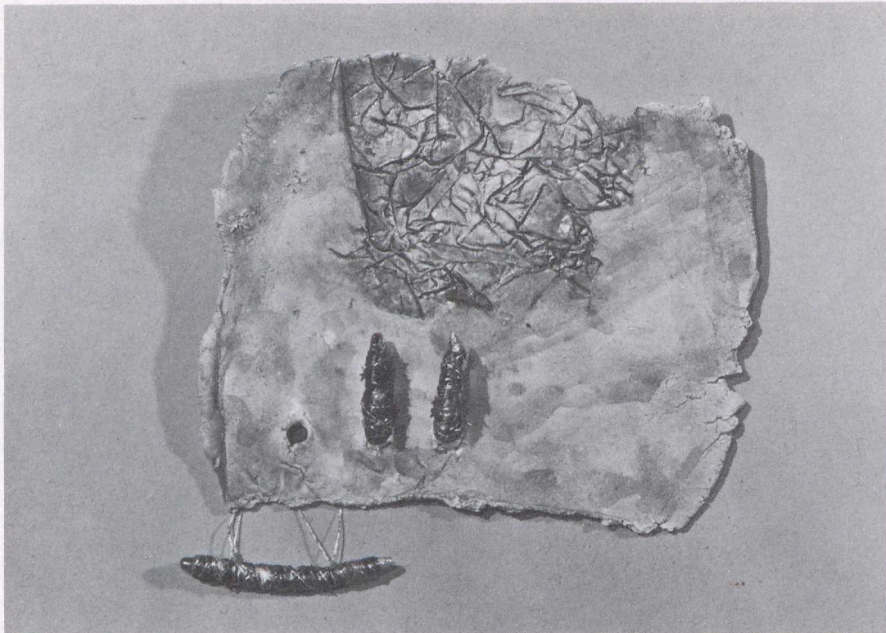
Circle Dance

You with your circle
of words call me
womanchild.
Ring me a world
of happy-ever-afters.
Round me a dance—
your taming was sadder
than winged black.
Keeping the child
in her space you thought
to shut me.
But I am what wind
chimes my music.
I bleed through openings.
I am the woman who knows
the child.

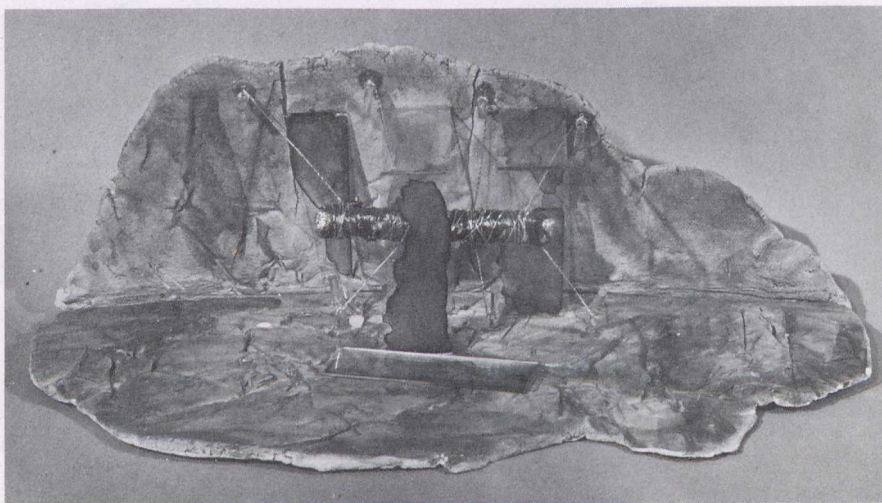
Catherine Allen



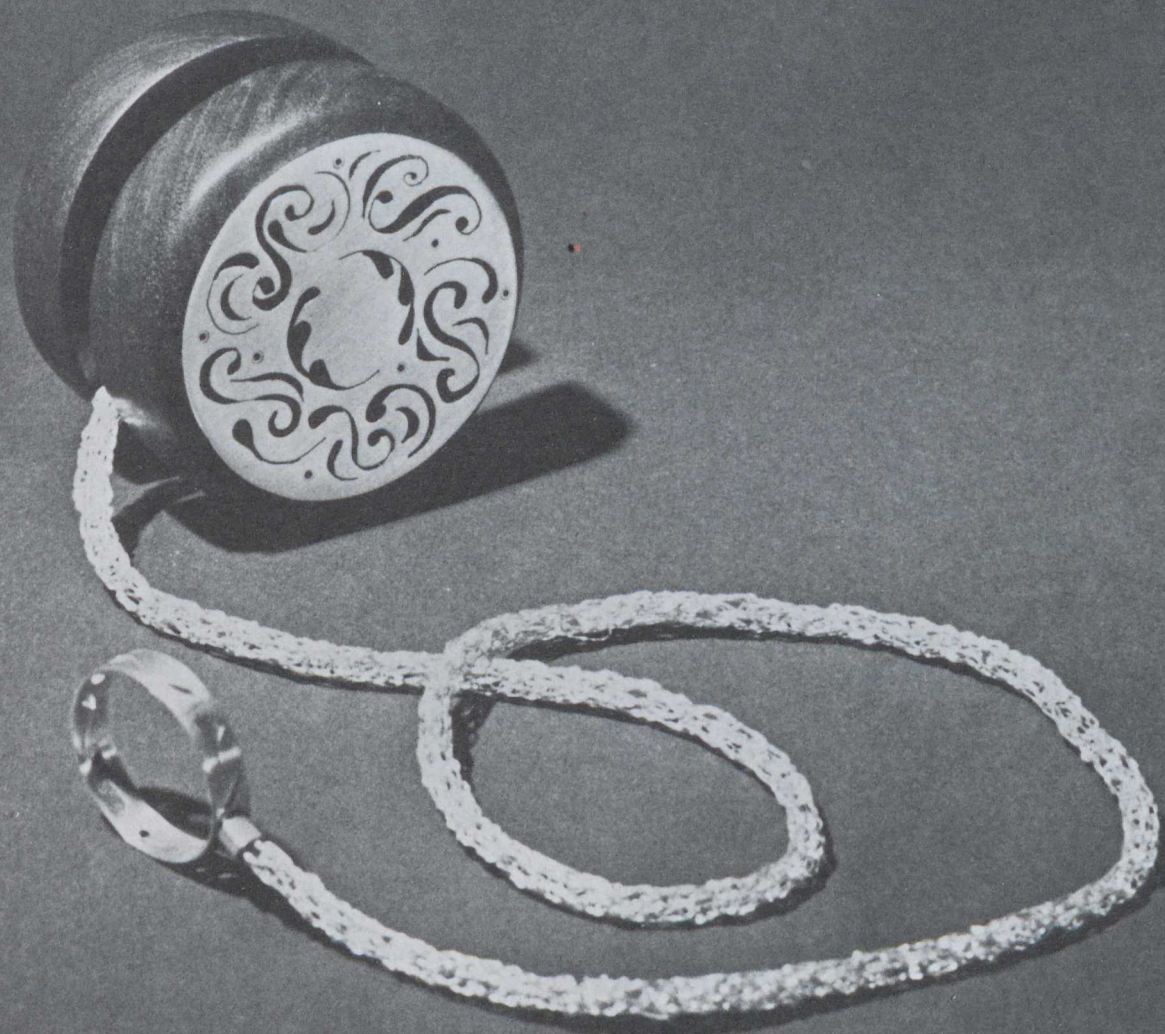
Nude, Naked, or Just Plain Erotic #3 William J. Brown, Jr.



Beyond the Border, No Songs of Triumph, No Turning Back
Mary Ann Casagrande



Treasures to Those Who Remain Silent
Mary Ann Casagrande



A Walk in the Neighborhood

Victoria M. Sottile

Tonight at sunset the old farmer across the street rolls up all the windows to his car. The completely sealed car is a sure sign of coming rain, as he normally leaves at least one window cracked during the night. The car is ancient, a 1959 Green Chevy I think. Perhaps the circulation of fresh night air removes the clinging, stale stench of daily cigar smoke and sweat that has accumulated over decades of use. No doubt decay is inevitable, the cracked window being merely some attempt on the old man's part to control the irreversible process that overuse guarantees. Either hope or habit springs eternal for he has again turned over a fenced but still precious patch of black earth in his backyard where, upon spring's early arrival, he will plant a fine garden.

The little boy next door knows I sometimes watch him from my living room window. He pretends he doesn't see me hidden behind the curtain, but his furtive sidelong glances towards my window while he performs his curious kid antics tell me that he knows when I am there. Late this afternoon I watched as he discovered how to screw the garden hose into the fixture along the side of his house. Awkwardly attached in his first attempt, the hose produced only a slight trickle of water that he tasted, grimacing slightly from the rubbery taste. Finally securing the hose properly to the fixture, he turned on the water full blast, and in response to his small success, a look of surprised delight blanketed his face. For a moment I thought for certain he was going to aim the spray at my window, but instead he amused himself by watching the shower of water rise and fall from the sky while pointing the garden hose upward. I wondered if he too were watching the rainbow of colors I saw, reflected, dancing through the spray.

Sometimes his little sister runs into my backyard to examine the base of the spindly tree nearest the garage. Her badly soiled yellow pants are much too large for her. They bag around her tiny, still flat bottom and drag along the ground, covering her sneakers. She always peers intently around the base of the tree, usually bent at the waist, sometimes crouched, searching for something that never seems to be there. After a minute or so,

she rises, collects herself, and scurries back into her own yard to her bicycle, dolls, and brother. I know they have no father. Instead there is a skinny man with a deep voice who often visits their mother. Once I saw him throw a pink, stuffed rabbit into the alley. The little boy always tags his heels.

There is a soothing autumn breeze tonight. The air, pungent with fallen, overripe apples that lie rotting in the damp grass, mingles, separates, overlaps in currents with the scents of drying pine needles and dying leaves, creating a musty perfume that rises upward through my nostrils and, for tonight, sweeps from my mind the cobwebs of a life. It is not cold, yet I wear a sweater. Some houses remain, wistfully recalling summer, windows open, the life within visible from the sidewalk as I pass. I can hear the muted, far-off clatter of late dinner dishes and silver. Some vague voices of early evening visits float outward, fading snatches of conversation meant for ears not belonging to me. Still other houses are closed completely, curtains pulled, sashes drawn, doors locked, hushed, silent. Winter is coming I guess. Some trees, already completely bare, are outlined against the purple-hued sky. Not shuddering yet, they will soon bear the impending cruelty of winter's wrath upon their naked trunks and limbs. Implicit in their starkness lurks a bold and stalwart challenge, defying the ability of winter's indiscriminate forces to destroy their future of possible splendor. Some will survive the tenuous promise of rebirth. Others will weaken, sway and dry, eventually fade to death.

I am jolted into memory by the sound of a power saw cutting through the night. There in an open, brightly lit garage is a man guiding the teeth through a piece of wood. I am curious as to what he is making. Under my arms I feel two strong hands as they lift me from my perch on the workbench, carefully setting me and my precious camera to the sawdust-covered floor. I recall his satisfied smile as I look down upon his face during that brief moment when between the workbench and floor, I was his to care for, to carry. I am not surprised by this memory, for until this instance it has been a pleasurable one, having a peaceful fondness. But I am puzzled now by the sting of tears in my eyes dried by the cool night air. I am struck by an overwhelming clarity of vision; a wave of unexpected sadness unsettles me for I have never seen it so truthfully as I do at this very moment, with reflection usurping reflection, as surely as the camera's eye. I never

felt the two strong hands under my arms, for I had nimbly hopped from the workbench surface without his help. Although he offered, I offhandedly regarded such gallant behavior as unnecessary. No, I could carry myself, thank you. I was not able to meet his gaze for some minutes following, and busied myself with trying to reload my camera. A routine task normally deftly done, I faltered, fumbled, made it difficult. The vision fragmented, dissolved by the very mechanism that created it.

I walk on in the darkness, approaching a driveway bathed in the white glow of a floodlight. There are three young boys watching me, a welcome intrusion: company. My informal greeting is met with dumbfounded silence. Once past them, there are whistles. I walk on hissing "grow up" under my breath, realizing the emptiness of my response, for such behavior is often typical of even the most grown up.

Within the alley the incessant yap of a dog bounces off the houses and reverberates even blocks away. The alley is the exposed seam of the neighborhood, the jagged edge away from the manicured lawns and orderly facades. In the alley regularly lies the litter from several overturned garbage cans. A child's small shoe has now been discarded, useless, its mate probably lost unnoticed in some crowded grocery store. The exposed garages lining the alley are spilling over with the treasures and acquisitions belonging to humans unwilling or unable to part with such objects. While useless, these possessions have been stashed, collected, stacked, piled or thrown carelessly into storage in the hopes of maintaining some past significance or fulfilling some possible future function. Eventually these garage objects will fill the garbage cans lining the alley—human acquisitions intended to be discarded, no longer serving any real purpose outside of occupying space now needed for some new, useful acquisitions. So the alley changes every day while the facades maintain the illusion of sameness.

At dusk every day the man at the north end of the alley plays horseshoes alone. The clanging of metal against metal satisfies him more directly than his wife and three children. Each shoe wrapped around the metal stake is his own small victory, complete in the act, renewable, each an act of faith. Pipe clenched between his teeth, he aims deliberately, gracefully, and savors each calculated toss with a satisfaction elicited only by completion, felt only with finality. Each day he wears the same grey-blue

industrial uniform that always looks crisp and clean.

Tonight I find myself walking down the alley much further north than I've ever before ventured. When it occurs to me that I have never, in all the time I have lived in this neighborhood, been here in this place, I grow a bit uneasy, nearly afraid. This part of the alley seems somehow darker. My pace quickens in this foreign, untrod territory, and I hear my breath as it escapes me. I am relieved when I reach the street and turn to walk along the sidewalk where, in daylight, I sometimes see a small girl wandering aimlessly on the corner, clad only in her pajamas, thumb in mouth, clutching a tattered blanket.

I am not sure, but I think I hear footsteps behind me in the darkness. I turn and look over my shoulder, slowing down my pace. I see a figure behind me by about half a block, but cannot discern whether it is male or female. As the figure crosses under a street lamp, I am relieved to see that it is indeed a female. How odd it is to encounter another female walking in the dark. There is determination in the walk, a purpose that fades as I arrive at the street where I live. As I turn to walk along the familiar sidewalk, the prospect of home is a comforting one.

The transparent blue glow from a television set is emanating from the window of the house on the corner. Inside there lives a young married couple. I know they have four children, and I wonder if they ever talk. She is always chasing kids and he always seems to be working in the yard. Besides sleep, how much time could they possibly salvage to spend together alone? I reach my own house and feel before even hearing, the beat of disco music vibrating from my closest neighbor's house. Although she lives behind me and we share a yard, I have never been inside her house, nor she inside mine. We exchange perfunctory greetings occasionally. I saw her this morning looking out of her doorway when I was leaving to walk with my dog. She saw me and asked if it were really raining, to which I replied with a smile, that yes, it was really raining. I would have liked to tell her no.

On the steps at my front door now is the three-legged cat who often visits to mooch a pat. He meows gratefully as I stroke his back and rubs momentarily against my legs before suddenly leaping from the steps into the darkness. Winter cold is coming. As I close the door behind me and am enfolded by the familiar warmth and smell of my home I know again that it will be the only comforting warmth to hold me through another night.



The Elephant Man. With Anthony Hopkins, John Hurt, John Gielgud, and Anne Bancroft. Music by John Morris. Cinematography by Freddie Francis. Produced by John Sanger. Directed by David Lynch. A Brooksfilm release. PG

John Ernst

The Industrial Revolution in England, the backdrop against which *The Elephant Man* plays, is seen by director David Lynch as a cancer upon the land. Smokestacks grey and ugly issue forth their dark clouds of soot into the air darkening the sky; the deep hum and boom of factory machinery is forever in the air, and man is being pushed out of his own environment, reduced to serving as caretaker to the massive grinding gears and pistons which punctuate the film. Lynch, in his first Hollywood-produced film, juxtaposes to this setting the true story of John Merrick, a man so hideously deformed that the freak shows in which he is displayed are closed by the authorities for being immoral. But while Merrick has been kept in a deprived isolation from society for most of his life, his defects are merely external—his soul is intact. The masses, on the other hand, those forced to come to grips with the tremendous changes, are ill-equipped to deal with the new mechanization and revert to a sort of barbarism of which freak shows are a part. Lynch shows us, and leaves unexplained (except in the context of this social change), scenes of ice-cold human malice: beatings, insanity, and cruelty perhaps best exemplified in the scene in which two women, their faces masked in blood and rage, go at each other in a fight in a hospital waiting room with a fury that is truly frightening. Merrick alone, in *The Elephant Man*, is free from the social insanity which corrupts everyone else. His horrible life has, in a sense, purged him from sin, and Lynch uses him as a mirror against which the audience sees itself reflected.

In Bernard Pomerance's play of the same name, the actor portraying Merrick appears without any make-up, making it easier, in effect, for the audience to see the beauty within the monstrosity by not forcing them to look upon the mangled mouth, the head three times normal size, and the twisted, contorted body. In the film, Lynch allows us no such comforts and confronts us with this horrible shape and we, in turn, are forced to examine our own reactions. There is a scene, for example, in a crowded train station in which a group of youths pull the mask Merrick is forced to wear from his head. Merrick tries to run, but his condi-

tion is such that he can only feebly hobble, and soon a crowd gathers and corners him, pressing in upon him, some jeering, some pointing, but mostly transfixed with awe at a creature so seemingly alien. The scene seems to go on for hours and the discomfort we feel for Merrick is unbearable, but something is occurring on a quiet, almost subliminal level. When Merrick says, "I am not an animal. I am a Man," we see the part of us that, even this late into the film, is seeing him as an animal. Lynch is making us see ourselves in the mob as well, putting us in touch with an unsavory aspect of ourselves, all as we sit back and watch from the darkness and safety of the theatre. We don't walk out of *The Elephant Man* feeling smug and superior, but rather frightened and saddened at that ugliness in us that we would rather keep buried.

In telling his tale, Lynch borrows heavily from the German Expressionist films of the silent era, the factories of *Metropolis* and especially the claustrophobia of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. But while *Caligari* was created with surrealistic props and painted backdrops, Lynch (with cameraman Freddie Francis) paints his world with twisted camera angles and moody lighting. Lynch shows the ability to make the most commonplace seem outrageous; rooms seem too large or too small, corridors too long and too dark, inanimate objects take on a menacing quality—everything seems just slightly out of kilter, just one small step away from reality, just far enough so as to be disorienting but not distracting (as opposed to Lynch's independent *Eraserhead* which was light years from normalcy, an insane dream from start to finish). Lynch, with this his only major picture, is already a director to be reckoned with.

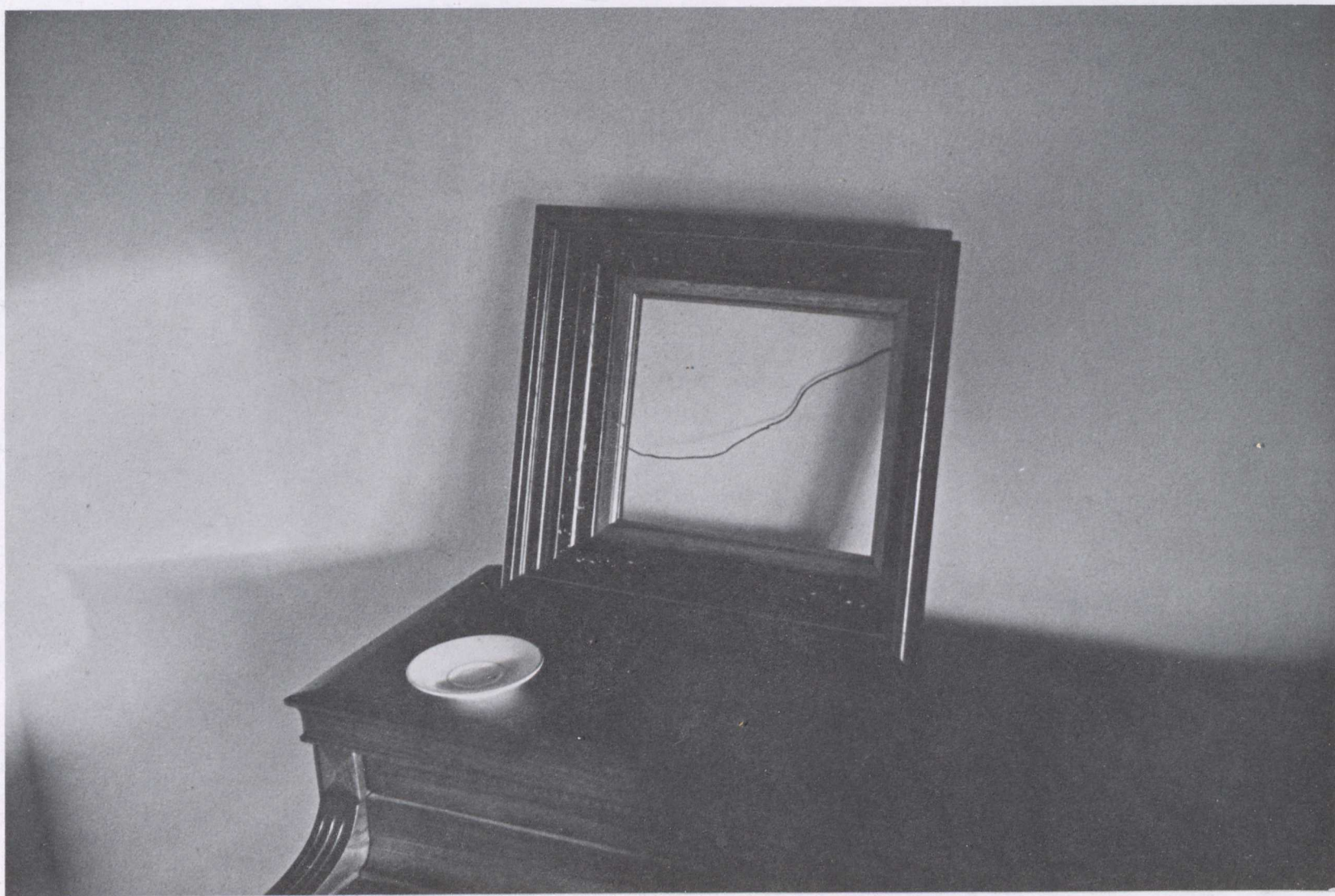
John Hurt, as Merrick, is able to overcome the confines of pounds of make-up to give a marvelous performance using only his eyes and voice, and it is to his credit that our emotional connection with Merrick is so strong. Anthony Hopkins, as the self-tortured doctor who takes Merrick away from the sideshows and gives him a life more suited to a human being, is memorable as well. Perhaps the film's only glaring defect is the performance of Anne Bancroft as the actress who comes to visit Merrick on a regular basis until he begins to feel sexually stirred. *The Elephant Man*, one notes, is a Brooksfilm release, the Brooks being Mel, Anne's husband, and one gets the suspicion that one of the stipulations behind Brooks financing the film was that Anne appear in it. She overacts woefully, and seems uncomfortable in her role that is, thankfully, brief enough so as not to detract from what is otherwise a most powerful film.

Overhead Projector***

Seven-eleven grocery store convention
capitalist boush-Weises, a clothing store,
a multi-colored, duplex condo-pentex
take a picture
it will make you remember
the day you weren't there, remember?
Polaroid me baby!
just peel it off to see it happened
three minutes later to the place you
stood flappen-ed
flicker of a bicker you took the picture
isn't it nice?
roll the dice
see if your life comes up twice
negatively speaking of positive meeting . . .
your self face to face
only time is displaced
relevant elephant, it might just as well be
pink on the inside
you know, everything goes better with coke

Chris Stanley





Untitled Kathleen McSherry

Me and Allen Ginsberg

Quiet!

I would like to hear the barely-there sounds
unnecessary stereophonic hindrances
quiet, I would like to hear the light of the
pilot
the neighbor's house is too loud, call out
the national guard
throw them stale mates out
the ear is dry and rye and crisp
your mind is milk and toast

noiseless circular saw does a dance on the
two before the door, light-em-up
the thunder bolts the lock
the Bay of Hound
is around the clock
I would like to hear the sound of my Aunt
as she crawls along the edge of my coffee
cup, quiet sweezee

Chris Stanley

Nasal Nose Drop Outs

Down the conscience of drip, drip, drip
congestion
blow your nose, or blow your horn, blow
your mind, and be new born
get off the pot with your pants up and
boots strapped
belt me, or buckle down
get your ass up, John, no clown be around

Chris Stanley

Sturm und Drangst

Thomas L. Hansen

After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain. I said to myself, "c'est la vie," and continued on up past the vomity green chair in the lobby past the vomity green bellboy, now asleep, who looked like he was about a thousand years old. I packed my suitcase, the big green one, and kissed Rinaldi good night.

Back in the square I felt alone and as if I had no discipline in writing a quick memo off to the publishers back in the United States at the newspaper office in a little town. I chuckled to myself, "Detroit is not my idea of a small town."

When I awoke in the fog I thought I heard the hophead walking around upstairs again and figured I'd just about gone crazy after all and all and all. I'd come out here about two years ago to take a rest and met this girl who had problems and problems with her old man back in the States. Rumor had it he had stolen something from her back there.

She was an actress or something but had so far only had minor roles and didn't know anymore if the sun went down or if it rose. It wasn't the sort of thing you'd want to talk about with sane people, if you really want to know.

I really didn't want to talk about it anymore and dying and

dying and that's all there was. The week before this on the train with the Catholics I certainly hadn't wanted to write it down.

Sometimes you lose it if you write it down. You can even lose it if you talk about it.

I had only three pennies and all the thievery and the rain and my knee started hurting again so I went down the hall and she went to the door of the room.

Someone must take a huge iron crowbar and stave their ugly faces in. All I ask is to know it's over praying that they forgive my sins.

And it was like imitating somebody but not having much distance from it and people can tell and you feel like you're drunk then this green breast falls out of your hands and life's no two-way street.

And you write and you wonder your own name and the first time an exported Italian voice reads it you can't believe it. The second time you want to puke. The third time you feel like you have to write it over again about three hundred times until you get it right.

It's like saying good-by to a statue. They're all alike. And people can tell your thoughts just like it's a movie and just about everybody in the world is a goddam critic then you know you liked that book you used to read the first sentence of a hundred times.

And I felt this way as I realized what a narrow view of life we have when you really think about it and I thought so when I looked down at the game and it was supposed to be the end of the world if we didn't win.



Salt and Pepper John Ernst

