


C O R A D D I



FINE ARTS MAGAZINE OF UNC-G

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CORADDI

FALL 1980

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The painting featured on the cover of this issue is *Cousin Caroline from Charleston* by Martha Gregory. Martha has taught in public schools for six years in Maryland and North Carolina, and is from Winston-Salem. She received her B.A. in Art from Meredith College in Raleigh, N.C., and is currently pursuing an MFA at UNC-G, with an emphasis on studio art. For biographical sketches of other contributors to this issue of *Coraddi*, see page 48.

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COMMENT

In the course of this semester I have learned a great deal about the task of publishing a fine arts magazine. Working for the *Coraddi* is a learning experience; quite often learning by making mistakes. The job is not easy, for myself or my staff, but I feel that this “hands on” experience is worth more than any classroom instruction.

For the individual who is sensitive, open-minded, and inquisitive, the arts can be an enlightening experience. In this spirit *Coraddi* serves the talented artists and writers of UNC-G by offering them public exposure. Most importantly, *Coraddi* gives everyone an opportunity to become acquainted with the work of these students.

I will not pretend, however, that I am an “editor,” or that all of the work in this magazine is “art.” Those terms are open to definition and interpretation. I will say, though, that I have done my utmost to publish the best work available. Submissions for this issue, courted with cash prizes, were encouraging. Still, many excellent artists and writers did not submit. We received art and photography from 35 individuals, poetry and prose from 39. We received 51 photographs, 74 art pieces, 140 poems and six short stories. I may point out that this represents about a 10 percent response from the Art and English departments. For the Spring Arts Contest there will be three cash prizes per category, and an additional category of three-dimensional art.

Having an arts contest was a necessary step to encourage student submissions. I did not foresee, however, the difficulties in staging a contest. Many students and faculty members have given me their thoughts — for which I am most grateful. The material in this issue was chosen by the *Coraddi* staff, with the editor having the final decision. The judges for the contest were chosen from the community. They were Anne Windhorst (art and photography), and Tom Heffernan (poetry and prose). Anne is a former student of UNC-G and a former staff member of *Coraddi* who is presently working as a professional photographer. Tom is poet-in-residence at Davidson County Community College. *Coraddi* wishes to thank these individuals for their assistance.

I am also pleased to announce that *Coraddi* will soon publish a book of poetry by the late Joel Jackson, a graduate of UNC-G. *News, Weather and Sports* was financed by Terry Jackson and designed by *Coraddi*.

Finally, I would like to thank the *Coraddi* staff and all those who contributed their time, effort, and work to this issue. I welcome constructive criticism and assistance, and am looking forward to increased cooperation with the Art and English departments. I hope that the faculty of these departments will help the growth of *Coraddi* by encouraging student submissions.

Tim Weiant



Outsiders in the Swamp

Signs appear on cypress trees:
ECONOMIC HEGEMONY FOR THE POOR!
IDEOLOGICAL MOBILIZATION OF THE MASSES!
Someone's in the swamp, Charles Tucker
Cauthen Culpepper mutters.
He follows some broken reeds.
BREAK THE LINKS OF AGRARIAN SERVITUDE!
Someone's puttin' up them signs,
Culpepper declares.
All day he tracks the intruder...
through nests of mating cottonmouths
he plunges,
winds back up at the plantation.
Two men with beards are posting a sign.
Yankee anarchists, Culpepper decides,
lets them have it with a squirrel rifle,
leaves them floating
face down in the sprinkler system.

J. W. Rivers

Baptism

Culpepper's being pissed on
from a great height.
He looks up.
The sky's clear.
Only clouds of mosquitos
and gnats
hover around him.
Inside the house
a toilet flushes.

J. W. Rivers

Culpepper's Dog

Lincoln's dead from heartworms.
Culpepper cuts them out,
puts them in swamp water
to study them.

Lincoln's no big loss...
couldn't tell a possum from a skunk,
couldn't fetch a duck
with both wings shot off,
wouldn't face a diamondback
shredded by the riding mower.
Any one of them worms
is worth more than Lincoln.

J. W. Rivers

Culpepper Is Politicized

Senator Ravenel Thurmond Legare's
giving a major speech
in front of the Winn Dixie store.
We must reverse the trend, he says,
of everything's that's going on! The state
needs a one-crop economy! Full employment
in the fields! Ship Jane Fonda
back to L.A.! A-rabs back to Suddy-Rabia!
Pecan pie and motherhood!

Culpepper's deeply moved.
Something stirs in his chest.
He's ready to march
to the thump of his tachycardia.

J. W. Rivers



The Doughnut Principle

by Sandra Redding

At the age of forty Maggie Jordan signed up for courses at the local university. Never having felt any particular urge *to be educated* she enrolled for less devious reasons. Maggie intended to go to France and taking French lessons was part of the positive-thinking approach she'd recently adopted to get her there. She'd previously tried other methods but all of them had failed. One evening she'd prepared coq au vin for her husband George and over chilled glasses of Pinot Chardonnay she'd informed him of an acquaintance's recent trip abroad. "Emily says that food preparation in France is a real art. You do know, George, that all the best restaurants are there." Maggie felt sure that gastronomic disclosure would take her straight to the Eiffel Tower but George never once made the connection. Then a month before her birthday Maggie started mentioning airfare specials advertised in the local newspaper, but instead of giving her airline tickets for her birthday, George, loudly joking that she was now over-the-hill, surprised Maggie with a mock wake. Their friends, all wearing black armbands, laughed as they presented gifts — a wreath of black carnations, Geritol, prune juice, ginseng. George, a cigar in one hand, a glass of bourbon in the other, kissed her wetly, confident that his little surprise had pleased her.

Maggie, never one to give up, devised a new strategy one Sunday morning as she watched a flamboyant minister on TV. Pointing to the glittering ceiling of his crystal cathedral he proclaimed dramatically, "To realize your dream, act as if it's already come true." Then he told how he'd

built, with the help of God, the enormous structure in which he stood by following his own philosophy. Maggie, concluding that if his words worked that spectacularly for him they certainly should get her a trip to France, made plans. The next day she bought tickets to the Simone Signoret Film Festival, watched Julia Child wring water from lettuce, and borrowed four books — *Penses* by Pascal, *Madame Bovary* by Flaubert, a history of Versailles, and a thin travelog entitled, *How to See Paris on \$5 a Day*. As she drove by the university on her way home Maggie decided to further reinforce her program by signing up for French 101.

The man seated behind the desk in Admissions suggested she might be interested in taking additional courses. Through a thick fog of cigarette smoke he informed her, "One course costs almost as much as two and if you take three, you don't have to pay for the third course at all." So while he flipped at the cigarette ashes on his desk, Maggie, deciding she'd have to fill out just as many papers to take one course as three, signed up not only for French but for English History and Literature as well.

Beginning with her first class she loved French. She loved the picture of the Arc de Triomphe as well as the Wine Map of France tacked to the opposite wall. Though Professor McDonald didn't look French (he had large feet that stuck out in opposite directions) the difficult words floated from his mouth as quickly and elegantly as graceful birds. Confused at first, Maggie soon learned that she could determine what he was

saying by watching his hands. Still, the thought of actually trying to pronounce guttural R's, as well as making gender determinations, petrified her. Yet despite a magnolia-nurtured tongue Maggie managed *Bonjour* and *Comment allez-vous* with flair. In fact all went well until Chapter Five containing eight new verb conjugations. Then she became disenchanted. Why, she wondered, did they call such gobbledygook the language of love?

At the same time Maggie's enthusiasm for French withered like a sick fleur-de-lis, her interest in English Literature blossomed. She listened intently as the red-bearded, rather beady-eyed professor, an obvious admirer of rosebud gatherers, discussed Herrick and Marvell. At every mention of *petit mort* or *hysterical virgins* he provided fervored explanations which actually brought blushes to the cheeks of one shy girl who sat at the back of the class. By the time the class progressed to *Canterbury Tales* Maggie, thoroughly hooked on the Middle Ages, took to wearing red stockings and smoking thin, brown cigarettes. After the Wife of Bath married her third, much younger husband, Maggie, her consciousness newly raised, joined the local chapter of N.O.W.

George couldn't understand what had happened. He wanted the old Maggie back — the Maggie who fixed brown beef gravy and entered contorted flower arrangements in local Garden Club Shows. One night as they sat eating *Big Macs* at the round dining table he told her how he felt. "Maggie," he said, "You've changed."

“Nonsense. I’m just busier. That’s all.”

Then, picking up a handful of french fries, he told her that even their son Michael, who’d left home to make pizzas and find himself, had commented that she’d acted strangely.

“That’s silly, George. I’m the same as I’ve always been.”

“No, you’re definitely different.” George finished his Budweiser before he continued. “If you’re the same why do you wear those God-awful red stockings?”

Maggie answered coolly, “The Wife of Bath wears red stockings.”

“Who the hell is the Wife of Bath? None of our neighbors wear them, none of our friends, not even the freaky blonde down at the office who paints her fingernails black. Just you, Maggie. Nobody else.”

She was furious. She couldn’t believe the way he was going on about a simple pair of hose. “If,” she told him, “you ever once had a poetic thought, you might understand.”

“I don’t know about poetic thought,” he answered, wagging a limp french fry in her face, “but I do know that either the red stockings go or I go.”

It wasn’t possible, Maggie thought, that he would keep such a drastic threat, so she continued to wear the stockings until runs spread down her legs forming white veins. She wore them until George, exasperated, met her at the door one afternoon, a suitcase in one hand, his golf bag in the other. “I’ve had it,” he said. “I’m leaving.”

Maggie couldn’t believe him. “Why?” she asked. “Certainly not the red stockings?”

“Yes, Maggie, the red stockings as well as everything else. I’m afraid I just don’t know you anymore.”

Maggie’s literature book slipped out of her arm and fell on the cement sidewalk. Since George made no move to help she retrieved the book herself. “You can’t leave, George. What will

you do about your job? What will Michael and I do without you?”

George smiled a cold smile, revealing the shallow dimple in his chin.

“Frankly, my dear,” he answered, “I don’t give a damn.”

As Maggie watched George drive away in his dented Mustang she loved him as she had never loved him before. For the first time she’d seen a George who was masterful, a George who meant business. Surely he’ll come to his senses, she told herself. He’ll come back and when he does I’ll make it up to him. I’ll fix brown beef gravy.

When, after a week, George still hadn’t returned, Maggie went to tell their son at the pizza parlor. With a sob in her voice she told Michael, “Your father’s left. I don’t know when or if he’ll be back.”

Michael, smelling of garlic and mozzarella, hugged Maggie warmly. “Don’t worry, Mom,” he told her. “It’s not that unusual for people in their forties to act a little crazy. Probably just an identity crisis.” Putting another pizza in the oven, he smiled, readjusted his chef’s hat and offered her an unclaimed pepperoni pizza free-of-charge.

As she chased cold pizza with warm beer Maggie pondered her financial situation. The house and car were paid for, and right after joining N.O.W. she’d opened a savings account in her own name. Still, if she planned to go to school next semester, she’d need a job.

Calling on the owner of Frederick’s Bar & Grill, Maggie explained how her many years spent as a housewife suited her perfectly for the waitress job he advertised. Frederick, an admirer of women who wore red stockings, hired her immediately and proceeded to teach her the meaning of BLT. Maggie turned out to be perfect for the job. She filled salt shakers, scrubbed away waterspots, reduced the cockroach population and comforted failing students with beer and sympathy.

With George gone Maggie lost all remaining enthusiasm for the Eiffel

Tower, so when signing up for spring semester she dropped French. After much indecision she decided to take two literature courses, one concerning Milton and the other, contemporary poetry, as well as introductory courses in philosophy and psychology.

Spring semester did not go well. By February she was tired of her job. The onion and chili smell of the grill permeated her clothes, filling salt shakers lacked challenge, her feet hurt, and she started worrying about varicose veins. Since the plumbing at the house had gone haywire she started spending more and more time at the school library.

One gray afternoon as she walked across campus, Maggie noticed for the first time how old the buildings were and how bare the tree limbs. Suddenly it began to sleet. As thin slivers of ice hit her in the face she started to cry. She missed George. She missed his softness in bed at night. She wanted to put her cold feet between his legs and get them warm. Everything seemed to be falling apart. Even school offered no solace. The pigeon necessary for the success of her psychology experiment had died of old age and her new English Literature professor seemed to lack enlightenment concerning hysterical virgins. Maggie tried hard to think of something hopeful she’d learned from school, but it was no use. She longed for the carefree *Carpe Diem* themes of the semester before, but frost had killed all the rosebuds. Suddenly Maggie remembered a poet she’d liked. He’d compared life to ice cream. Maggie shivered. Ice cream offered no protection against cold. What she needed was a coffee — coffee and perhaps a doughnut.

As if her brain had been waiting for the magic word the message flashed, pure and simple, in Maggie’s head. *LIFE IS A DOUGHNUT*. Those words made everything suddenly clear. Finally she understood, and understanding, she now felt she could

deal with anything. Desperately needing to talk to someone about her Doughnut Principle, she decided the logical person to tell was her philosophy professor.

The professor sat behind a desk strewn with papers. Directly behind him, halfway up the wall, hung a picture of a cave. Dr. Blom ran his hand through his curly hair, then adjusted his glasses. "What seems to be the problem?" he asked. "Are you having difficulty with the theory of possible worlds? Don't worry too much at this point. It's a complicated concept."

"But," Maggie interrupted, "it isn't possible worlds I've come to see you about."

"Not possible worlds? But all my students have difficulty with possible worlds." Dr. Blom thoughtfully stroked the pale yellow mustache that crept across his upper lip and spread sadly down the corners of his mouth. "Well, Mrs. Jordan, why then did you need to see me?"

"I have this philosophy—"

"But in 101 you aren't required to have a philosophy. 101 is simply a course to familiarize students with the principles of logic."

"I understand," Maggie said as she looked down at the chipped polish on her fingernails, "but I do have this philosophy which I must explain to someone." Dr. Blom blinked his eyes nervously as Maggie continued. "You see, it came out of the blue."

"What came out of the blue?"

"The Doughnut Principle."

"Ah, yes, the Doughnut Principle." Dr. Blom loosened his tie and blinked his eyes several more times.

Maggie thought he looked frightened, rather like a cornered rabbit. Stretching her arm across his desk she picked up a pencil and quickly sketched a doughnut on a yellow scratch pad. "It works like this," she said. "God is here in the center. He's like the middle of the doughnut. Sort of the nothing that holds everything

together." Dr. Blom blinked more rapidly as Maggie continued to talk.

"And we are on the doughnut. Actually, we are the doughnut — we, the bees and trees and, well, just everything. We all go in circles doing the same old things. What's worse, usually our endings run smack into our beginnings."

"I see," repeated Dr. Blom, "you think our endings run into our beginnings."

He didn't look as if he saw at all, Maggie thought, but she went on talking anyway. "Precisely, but it doesn't really matter. That, Dr. Blom, is the real beauty of the Doughnut Principle. We might run smack into our beginnings but we manage to get up and keep on going. We may be traveling in circles, nevertheless, we are getting somewhere. You see, Dr. Blom, each of us in our own way is helping to build a bigger, better doughnut." Maggie, her face flushed with excitement, drew a large doughnut in the air. "Isn't that amazing?" she asked.

"Yes, amazing," Dr. Blom answered. He shuffled papers around on his desk forming them into uneven stacks. "Mrs. Jordan," he said, looking directly at her, "perhaps you should stick to possible worlds."

Maggie worried about Dr. Blom's reaction to the Doughnut Principle. He acted, she thought, as though he believed she were crazy. She began to wonder if he were right. Perhaps the whole idea was preposterous. Imagining that Dr. Blom looked at her strangely in class she began sitting behind the tallest student in the room. Maggie tried hard to forget the Doughnut Principle, tried to put the afternoon she'd spoken to Dr. Blom out of her mind but, try as she might, she kept imagining herself whirling about on a glazed Dunkin' Delite with bees buzzing around her head.

February weather continued cold and wet. The first day of March brought more freezing rain and a

postcard from George. The card, postmarked Daytona Beach, Florida, had a basket of orange blossoms on the front. On the back George had sprawled a simple message:

Went to an Anita Bryant
Revival and a dog race.
Wishing you sunshine.

Love, George

Maggie cried when she first read the postcard. After reading it ten more times, she wondered what it meant. "Love, George," sounded promising but what did Anita Bryant have to do with anything? She showed the card to Frederick, who didn't attempt an interpretation. Instead, he pinched her on the backside and told her that if she were smart she'd go out and have herself some fun.

April brought sunshine accompanied by trauma. Maggie frantically tried to sort out Milton's fallen angels before her final exam. Frederick became abusive because now she waited tables in support stockings. Then her son Michael telephoned and, in one single sentence, announced that he had married and would soon be a father. Maggie, numb from the news that she was to be grandmother, answered a knock at the door late that evening. George, reeking of oranges and Budweiser, had finally returned home.

Tanned and several pounds thinner, he stood holding two paper bags. Maggie didn't like him thin. She preferred the old George, the soft George. He looked hollow-eyed, she thought, like a man who'd been eating too many TV dinners. She started to ask him in, but before she had a chance, he spoke. "Maggie, girl," he asked, "could you use some oranges?" Then he told her he'd missed her. "Hell, I got so lonely I even missed those God-awful red stockings."

She pulled up her skirt exposing thighs encased in support hose. "Look, no more red stockings." Maggie helped George carry the oranges to the kitch-

en, then fixed him brown beef gravy. As she rolled the biscuit dough George told her all about Florida. He said he'd picked oranges at sunrise, won a bundle on the dog races, and gotten himself saved at an Anita Bryant revival. "Anita's a great believer in the family," he said. As he peeled the skin of an orange back with his fingers, he continued, "According to her, the family's the very backbone of this country."

Maggie wasn't exactly certain what George was talking about. His current interest in religion as well as in Anita Bryant puzzled her, but his mention of family did remind her of Michael. Interrupting George's detailed account of his recent conversion she told him, "You're going to be a grandfather."

The next week Maggie quit her job at Frederick's and when exams were finished, she dropped out of school. Since George had returned she intended to devote all her time to him. Now that they had the common goal of planning for their grandchild they would work together.

George refinished a mahogany rocking chair and painted a cradle blue. Maggie protested, saying the color was inappropriate. Because her intuition told her the baby would be a girl, she spent an entire day cross-stitching "Woman Power" on a tiny pair of pink coveralls. As she stitched she thought of the granddaughter who would wear them. She would be an independent child — a child, Maggie imagined, who would write thin poems and ride horses bareback. She would have every opportunity and would be anything she chose. During all of June and July Maggie's fingers flew. She covered a baby blanket with cross-stitched dwarfs and formed miniature rosebuds on gauzy gowns as well as diapers.

One warm August evening, while stitching a green frog on a bib, Maggie watched TV as purple letters announced *Tutankhamen Treasures*. Maggie gazed, enthralled,

at the contents of King Tut's tomb — priceless statues of goddesses, masks studded with turquoise, alabaster heads, jeweled effigies of the Jackal god, golden bars and a chariot. Incredible, Maggie thought. In all her life she'd never seen anything quite so breathtaking. Near the conclusion of the program the enormous bulk of the overweight narrator filled the screen. "Tutankhamen was found," he said, "because Howard Carter persisted in spite of criticism. He would not quit; he knew the treasure was there. Still today, in Egypt, immeasurable wealth lies hidden, just waiting to be discovered."

That night Maggie dreamed she rode camel-back across the desert. She and her crew passed both the pyramids and the haughty Sphinx without once stopping from their quest. When they located the site, Maggie, wearing a pith helmet encircled with a red chiffon scarf, dug from dawn until dusk.

The next day she couldn't forget her dream. Though she tried to cross-stitch, thoughts of adventure in the desert kept getting in the way. By noon she gave up, put the tiny coveralls in a lilac-scented drawer and drove to the library where she checked out five books on archeology. Next she stopped

by the university where she signed up for courses in Anthropology as well as Ancient Civilizations.

By the time George arrived home from work, Maggie, totally immersed in the mystic of Egypt, had smeared kohl around her eyes and placed a new, serpent-shaped bracelet around her upper arm. George, noticing the books on the coffee table as well as Maggie's altered appearance, demanded, "Who the devil are you this time?"

Maggie, smiling wanly, avoided his question. "Wouldn't you like a Budweiser?" she asked.

"No, damn it, I wouldn't like a Budweiser. Just tell me, does the Wife of Bath have black circles around her eyes and are you planning to go back to school?"

Opening one of her books on Egypt Maggie showed the colored pictures to him. "The Wife of Bath doesn't have circles around her eyes but Cleopatra does, and yes, George, I'm going back to school."

Loosening his tie, George sat down on the sofa. Looking up at his wife, he pleaded, "Why, Maggie, why?"

Maggie pondered the question carefully before answering. "Because there's treasure out there, George, and I intend to find it."

Fall Arts Contest Winners

POETRY

First Prize Ann Shanabrook
Honorable Mention Gene Hayworth

PROSE

First Prize Sandra Redding
Honorable Mention Bill McIlwain

PHOTOGRAPHY

First Prize John Theilgard
Honorable Mention Gwyn Kellam

ART

First Prize Breck Smith
Honorable Mention William L. Rankin



The Geometry of Loss

Suffocating yet shivering
in our clumsy winter clothes,
we tramped out of the dark woods
& into a snowy field shouting with light.
We kept on,
a love without a past to uphold,
& came up over a rise
to find a slender silver birch
shattered & charred by lightning.
It was like stumbling on an evil design
or another couple groping each other:
my first impulse was to look away,
my very next to stare.
An hysteria of branches leaped,
& lunged, & lamented over the snow,
which shone all around us
like a slow vast incongruous smile.
I couldn't penetrate even now
the jagged geometry of loss,
the bitter lines, the discouraged half-circles.
But the thin chin-high stump
(really, more a stake than a stump)
seemed some fated part of us,
its once-white, once-tight core exploding
under the interrogation of air.

H. Good

First Blood

We climb over the rocks
to the end of the jetty,
& dangle our legs
above the sprawl & splash of the sea,
blind water from which we rose,
nameless & streaming,
more than a quarter of a century ago.
Out beyond the boats & even the seabirds,
the horizon, like a thin white scar,
curves on, & on the cold accusing wind,
I smell your midnight smell
of salt, & gasoline, & fish.
Kids on the rocks are casting
for blues & red snappers,
& their lines go screaming out,
screaming like sleepers awakening to fire.
Let's go back, you say,
suddenly scared of the drop
& desolation at the edge of our world.
Standing up, I remember how it feels
to snag a finger on a hook,
the shock as the barb breaks skin,
the chill as the first blood flows.

H. Good



Following the Sphinx

I.

With love of riddle
I walked the road to Thebes
and tried my life for threes.
Morning was the easiest—
on hands and knees
and in the age of five
I measured time by revolutions
of a plastic ballerina in my Mother's
Jewelry box:
A sudden dancer undulating
and reflected in three mirrors—
images of beckoning,
of turning dawn to noon to dusk—
of turning images
among my Mother's pearls.
Those were maternal afternoons
without concern.

II.

"Reflections are deceiving here,"
a fat man in the House of Glass
replied:
but it was only I
conversing with myself in triplicate.
(at twenty-five I had
no better entertainment.)
"To enter any door you have to stoop,"
the tall one moaned. "You
walk alone in crowds,
your fear reflected in the mirrors
of a million eyes grown dim
and heavy.
Let us wander now
two-legged through our ruins."
"I cannot find my way,"
the thin one chimed.
"I'm sorry...
sorry...
sorry..." Echoed every one.

III.

On the road to Thebes
with going in my bones
I paused to contemplate a puddle
in my path. I laid my cane aside
and stopped to scoop the muddy waters
to my lips. "Now is this three?"
I asked the face which floated
thinly in the water's wake.
No oracle could answer that.
I threw one pebble in
and did not stay
to count the finite rings, continuing,
continuing.

Gene Hayworth



October 5 and Every Other Day

People pass their cardboard faces
past me. I am numb
and do not feel the street
but for the jolt and thud up through my feet
that plod a tired beat, absurd.
A filthy bird alights alone, unheard
on the rusting, paint unpeeling railing.
“Ailing,” says the witch next door, the one who watches
as I climb my crooked steps. “He must be ailing.”

I feel the heartbeat of the city failing.
The day pales in the disappointing cool.
I sit on frayed and faded cushions of
my aqua sofa, straining to remember, but,
as a rule, drift out and wake to gritty sounds
of rats and dogs and children on their morning rounds.
My swollen morning forehead pounds
and I rise, affix myself to morning cardboard places.

L.A. Brown



route 66

she is albuquerque
and damp to the bones
this town and
 this rain
and I hear her say
my god it rains
so much here
 and I think maybe
there is not enough here for me
so I sit
while she draws
 I make myself draw a bunch
 of little straight lines
she says and then
 I can't put you on
 a piece of paper
but trails her right pinkie
 through the pencil
just the same
she is albuquerque
and it never
rains and that's where my
studio is and who said I
have to stay
this long anyway

Chuck Newman





No Stopper for the Drain

by Gene Hayworth

Meredith McKenzie hurried down the sidewalk, her eyes moving frantically as she searched the faces of oncoming pedestrians, hoping to catch a glimpse of a smile. After a few moments of watching the tops of heads bent low to avoid her eyes she stopped, and fixed her gaze on the “Don’t Walk” sign which began to blink as she neared the corner.

“So who’s walking?” Meredith mumbled. “We’re all like scraps of paper, tumbling over one another, pushing, shoving...being blown by the winds of city traffic.”

“The funny thing,” Meredith mused, “is that one of those scraps could be a sketch by Andrew Wyeth, accidentally tossed out of the window of his limousine...the rough draft of a poem by Nikki Giovanni...any one of those silly things that someone might cherish if they took the time to stop and pick it up...but nobody takes the time to notice...all these mechanical people, hurrying, scurrying, like dishwater down the drain.”

Beside Meredith a tall black youth switched on his transistor radio. As the light changed and they began crossing the street, she heard “He’ll notice you, with your Dolley’s on...” blaring from the radio.

Meredith turned to the boy and said, “My husband wrote that jingle. Isn’t it catchy? It’s for a new line of Dolley Madison nightwear that’s coming...” The boy pushed past her and turned the corner. Unshaken, Meredith slowly

made her way down another city block, occasionally glancing at her watch as she neared her destination.

1802, 1804.

“Ah, here it is, 1806,” she said as she approached the office building which loomed above. She stepped into the revolving door, pushed the glass forward, and again looked at her watch.

“Ten minutes...”

Meredith looked up from her watch and noticed that she had made a complete revolution. On her right, along the front of the building, were several benches, with “Bus Stop” painted in large black letters above them. The nearest was occupied by a man in his mid-forties, who sat, legs crossed, violently cracking peanuts open and tossing them to the sidewalk.

“Hello,” Meredith cooed, as much friendliness in her voice as she could manage.

The man threw three peanuts at her feet and continued gazing into the obscure horizon.

Meredith again entered the revolving door, and once again burst out of the building and into the bustling, sunlit street.

“HELLO!” she yelled, frantically waving her hands at the stranger to emphasize her presence.

There was no response.

“One more time,” Meredith seethed as she entered the building.

Upon exiting she hurried to catch the stranger who had jumped from his seat as the bus pulled into the curb. Before

she could reach him he was seated inside and the aluminum door snapped crisply in her face, the bus roaring as it dashed into the traffic.

Meredith dashed into the building and crossed the floor to the elevator, nudging her way into the crowd which waited impatiently for the elevator’s descent.

“Going up,” the operator sighed as the doors banged open.

“Now what floor do I want?” Meredith questioned as she slithered into the elevator. She began shuffling through her purse, pulling out bills, credit cards, and photographs, coming finally to the candy bar wrapper with her appointment written on it.

“Dr. Robert Powell, floor two.” Meredith gazed over the heads of the others and saw, to her dismay, that the elevator was now on the fourth floor. There were twelve more floors before they would reach the top.

“He’ll notice you, with your Dolley’s on...” she sang absent-mindedly, trying to keep her mind off the fact that she was late. Few people remained in the elevator, but none seemed to notice Meredith as she began to sing — they continued on their journey upward and clutched their briefcases to their sides, anxious only to continue the daily routine.

By the time the elevator reached the sixteenth floor, Meredith was impatiently pacing back and forth, anxious to begin her appointment with Dr. Powell. The few

remaining people filtered out and left her alone with the elevator operator.

“I’d like the second floor, please,” Meredith said.

“I’m sorry, but I’m off duty,” he said, stepping off the elevator.

The doors sliced into the end of his sentence as he disappeared behind the wall of iron. Meredith pressed the button for her floor, and the elevator slowly started its descent.

“If my days weren’t always spent like...here I am talking to an empty elevator...” Meredith sobbed, wringing her hands as she prepared herself for the psychiatrist.

The elevator stopped, and the doors opened onto a large, carpeted reception room. Meredith dried her eyes and stepped into the office, which contained three green sofas, two brown chairs, and a large mahogany desk. Behind a stack of papers and a typewriter a secretary sat, eating doughnuts and reading a magazine.

“Hello, I’m Meredith McKenzie, and I have an appointment with Dr. Powell.”

The receptionist continued reading.

Meredith walked up to the desk and cleared her throat, and the secretary peeped over a flutter of pages. “Oh, hello. You must be the McKenzie woman. Dr. Powell is expecting you.” She pointed to a door at her left and told Meredith to go right in.

“Thank you,” Meredith said, but the receptionist was already absorbed in her reading.

Everything in the office was white. Meredith felt blinded as she opened the door, light reflecting through large, plate-glass windows, illuminating the plush white carpet, and the white vinyl of the sparse office furniture. Directly across from the door Dr. Powell reclined, smoking a pipe, but when Meredith came in he arose to greet her at the door, offering a friendly hand and a warm smile.

“Sit here,” he told her, pointing to a

white reclining chair. “Make yourself comfortable.”

After Meredith was seated Dr. Powell said, “Now, Mrs. McKenzie, isn’t it?” Meredith nodded. “Because this is your first visit I’m going to let you do all the talking. I won’t ask you any questions, I just want you to relax and tell me whatever is on your mind.”

After a nervous moment words began to tumble from Meredith’s mouth as if she couldn’t control what she had to say. “Eh, well...it all started about two weeks ago. I’m a normal housewife, just like everyone else...I mean, I’m married. I dropped out of college so my husband could continue his education, we were married in college, you see...he has a job with an advertising firm, and I’m not jealous or anything, I’m happy and he loves me and...”

“Well, anyway, like I said, it happened about two weeks ago. My husband was at work, and my daughter was in school — I forgot to mention that I have a daughter — she’s six...anyway, I was getting ready to do the dishes, and I was angry. I was angry because that morning I’d been to the grocery store and, well, you know how grocery stores are, so typical. I mean, you have to push those ridiculous carts that always wobble and never go in the right direction, and you spend hours on a safari for the simplest things...like jelly, and you always run into a neighbor who wants to discuss her marital problems in the canned goods section. But the worst part, that’s the cute little check-out girls with sweet smiles and darling name tags that say, ‘Hi, I’m Cindy,’ and they practically throw your groceries into the bags as you stand there watching the dollar signs flash...Of course they’re always especially nice when your item doesn’t have a price on it...they have to call the manager so he can come and check it, and you know that the darling little things are ready to scream.

“Well, that day I was so mad that I spent three hours just looking for unmarked groceries, and the poor thing just gave up and guessed...and then you have the bag boys who always say, ‘Thank you, ma’am and have a good day,’ and you always have to say, ‘Thanks, and you too,’ as you start your motor and hurry home before your ice-cream melts.

“Anyway, that morning as the bag boy placed my groceries in the car he said something, and I automatically responded with ‘Thanks, and you too,’ and he looked so confused...He said, ‘Ma’am, I said I put your charcoal in the trunk.’ Well, I was so flustered that I didn’t know what to say, and then I realized that I was beginning to act just like everybody else...and then I shouted at him...I said ‘Don’t be so damn polite with me — I know that you’re hot and tired and that you wouldn’t even care if...’ but he kept backing away as if I was going to hit him or something, and then he turned around and was gone...”

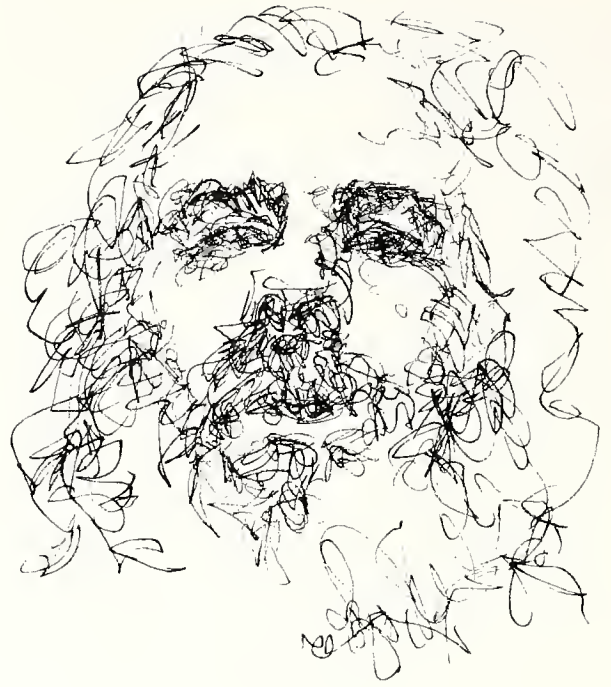
“Anyway, there I was, getting ready to wash the dishes, and I noticed that there was no stopper for the drain! I rushed to the hardware store to get one, and I couldn’t find the damn things, so I went to see the sales clerk. ‘Sir,’ I said, ‘there’s no stopper for the drain...’ Well, he gave me a queer look, and then the irony of it all hit me in the face. All of humanity is going down the drain and there’s no...”

“Yes,” the psychiatrist said, “no stopper for the drain. Mrs. McKenzie, I’m afraid our time is up. Why don’t you pay the secretary on your way out and she’ll make you another appointment.”

As Meredith turned to go she heard Dr. Powell ask the receptionist to send in the next patient.

“Doctor,” Meredith said as she began to open the door, “do you think I’m neurotic?”

“Thanks, and you too,” he answered absent-mindedly.



—T—



—T—

Eavesdropping in Eckerd's

I was eavesdropping in Eckerd's,
"A name you can trust,"
When I tripped over a tray of travel tumblers
Looking for a tooth brush
I picked up a broom to defend myself
But I realized I was no match
Not for the tried and true travel tumblers
And that's when the idea hatched
I'd caught a snatch of a conversation
Concerning the martial arts
"Why be attacked or threatened" the guy said
"Why let yourself be torn apart"
"Hell, nobody bothers me now" he said
The bully, he leaves me alone"
"I've got confidence and coordination
and self-discipline of my own"
I said to myself "Yeah, I could use some of that"
"Especially the coordination"
"Hell, you never know when a tall stack of Pampers
is gonna give you some insubordination
You could be raped by a warm-up LaCoste
Or bullied by some turtleneck
Humiliated by a Manhattan investment
Or threatened by another bounced check
You could be terrorized by a talking tuna
Or tortured by a tall men's flannel
Or frightened by inflation fighters
Or attacked by a TV channel
You could be peppered by Skirts Unlimited
Or run through by talking tongues
Or swallowed by a Family Dollar
Or stranded on the bottom rung
Yeah, the best defense is a good offense
I said as I was leaving the store
I improved the quality of my life that day
Hell, I opened a brand new door.

Bruce Piephoff



Another War Is Coming

Another war is coming
And I'm 10 years older and unemployed
And still don't know how to do anything
I sleep in the afternoons
And walk the streets at night
Drinking beer and telling jokes and stories
In a rented apartment
While the bills pile up
And they turn off the heat
And there's nothing to eat
But canned beans and V-8 juice
I bum a meal from Amelia
Or a dollar from Joe
Or a way out of a D.U.I. while running a red light
And the women don't stick around long
Once they see that I don't know anything
And the money's all gone
And they're tired of my songs
And my occasional deep blue blues
I smoke cigarettes
Drink coffee
Read newspapers,
Empty the garbage
Draw a picture of a house with crayons
Or put the needle to some Al Jarreau or Joan Armatrading
or Debussy or Townes Van Zandt,
Sit in the bathtub and sleep
Sleep, sleep, sleep and dream, dream-sleep
And occasionally the phone will ring
When someone else is lonely too
And wants to come over and spend some time
We get under the electric blanket, light candles
turn out the lights, smoke, drink wine, and talk about things yet to come.
And she brings her magic home to me
And I bring mine to her
She brings her magic home to me
I bring mine to her...

Bruce Piephoff



reminding, decatur street, 12:50 a.m.

the time is non-o'clock, no thank you.
no time, no massive truths, and as for God—
you'd better not try to wake him up.
this hour he gets mad, and charges double,
and won't forget, by God. you let him sleep.

but, dear sir, do sit and toast the blackness here with me.
you get accustomed to the lack of light, and yes it is quite cold.
such is night. soon it becomes familiar.

let us darken then, grow intricate and vague.

no hour less than to be now
so quite threadbare, cold, inside the sliced thin street
the thickness of to breathe and not to think
warm and light somewhere, certainly, far above, beyond this lowly curb—you see?

it is the edge of the world as we know it.
keep it under your hat.

—now, where was i? yes, yes, the curb
of nothing better than to sit, and drink perhaps
the richness of the darkness that does not leave, not yet, dear friend—
to yes drink, grow vague and gray, and unify
with pavement.

on some unlit street, on which you do not appear
and have never been—

Byron Woods

chimney rock

this is the edge.
i stand upon it as i speak to you.
i am on the edge.

chance has taken, thrown me, dropped me on this ledge
heads up.

i dare it flip the coin again.

there is a four-foot chain-link fence, and it is
the only thing that keeps tons of space out, with
its face pressed tight against the candy-store window,
so that it will not pick you up and crush you in a fall.

space presses against the fence.
the fence holds
for the moment.

i have a little time to talk. listen:

if you were to go over that edge
it really wouldn't matter
what anybody ever did
not if your mother died in childbirth, cried, was never quite the same
not if you were the richest man on earth closest to death
not if some defunct virgin who remembers and will not ever forget mutters
 a dust-prayer in some dirty stucco jukebox of a church
 you used to go to, somewhere
not even if you were god himself
could you or anyone else who gives a random damn keep you, for the smallest
 part of time
safe in mom's lap, sleeping, through the western world
fighting and not dead yet, somewhere above the thirty-ninth parallel
asleep after love, watching her as her breath slows, wondering, and not
 quite sure just why it is you do not give a damn

no one could catch, hug you tight enough at any point
to keep good time from yanking you by your thin strings away.

you'd fall: for there is nothing here to keep you
no pressing appointments
no prior engagements important enough
that you may be excused to go attend them.

Byron Woods



Riding Old Dirty Face

by Bill McIlwain

Nelson Winship lay flat on his belly in the weed patch, praying the man with the radio wouldn't see him there with his backpack, obviously waiting to hop the freight train that stood not ten feet away. The hissing of the radio and the sound of boots on gravel grew louder as the man approached. He passed by and continued on towards the head end of the train, twenty cars away.

It wasn't until the train crashed into motion that Nelson emerged from his hiding place. The cars were rolling slowly, barely moving, and he scanned the side of the train for an empty boxcar. Five cars back he spotted one, a dirty New York Central with its door wide open. Anxiously he waited until it drew abreast of him. Then he shoved his pack inside and scrambled in after it. Before he could get to his feet he was startled by a shout from the rear of the car. In turning he saw two men, both older than himself, seated against the back wall. Judging from the ragged clothes they wore he guessed them to be genuine men of the road.

"Howdy boy," the thin, grizzled one on the left shouted, raising his hand in a wave. He looked to be in his late fifties and he wore a filthy pair of coveralls. His gray hair was cut short in a flattop and there was a gallon jug of wine beside him.

"Howdy," Nelson said, not knowing whether to approach the men or to jump back off while there was still time. Knowing that if he jumped off he would surely miss the train, he decided to ride it out, for the sake of adventure.

"Come have a drink with us boy. We ain't gonna kill ya," the man with the flattop said, laughing. Nelson looked at the other man, a short chunky fellow of about the same age,

also in filthy clothes that hung from him like sacks. The man was wearing odd looking sunglasses despite the relative darkness of the car.

Nelson brushed off his jeans and propped his pack against the wall before he went over to where they were sitting. He wasn't a big guy. He had been a high jumper in his freshman year of college and his friend Curt sometimes called him Bones because of his slight build.

"Where you from?" the one with the glasses asked.

"North Carolina," Nelson said.

"North Carolina, eh. You got a cigarette on ya?"

"Nope, sure don't. I don't smoke."

"I thought everybody in North Carolina smoked," the short man said with a grin on his grizzled chops.

"They call me Chester," the short man said, extending his hand for Nelson to shake. "This here is my buddy Memphis Slim." The other man nodded.

"What do you do for a livin', boy?" the one called Slim asked.

"I'm a college student," Nelson replied.

"Is that right," the thin one said. "What have they got you studying?"

"I'm a sociology major," Nelson answered.

"Well have a belt of this wine," Slim said, handing the big jug up to him. Nelson took it from him and sat down crosslegged on the floor in front of the pair. He took a big slug to show the men he wasn't some ordinary college punk from back East. The wine kicked going down and, for a moment, threatened to come back up. But by force of will Nelson held it down and passed the jug back to Slim.

"You guys goin' to Denver?" he asked.

"If we ain't we're on the wrong train," the short one said. "You ever drunk any pink lady?" he asked.

"What is it?"

"It's liquor made from canned heat. You get a can of that shit and strain it through a loaf of bread. It gets you drunk as hell for next to nothing but let me tell you, it's dangerous." The short man removed his glasses, exposing a withered pair of eyes. "I'm blind as a bat," he said. "I got that way from drinking pink lady." The man put his glasses back on.

"When did it happen?" Nelson asked, impressed that the man was still riding trains.

"'Bout a year ago," the man said. "Down in New Mexico."

"It's pretty amazing that you can still jump trains," Nelson said.

"Yeah, I guess it is. But I sure as hell couldn't if it wasn't for Slim here. He's my eyes."

Slim nodded and tilted the big jug back. Nelson was surprised at how quickly the man could swallow the nasty stuff.

The noise inside the boxcar was like continuous thunder. The dirty steel walls of the car rocked from side to side and occasionally a great jerk would shake the car when the engines took up the slack in the couplings.

The wine passed around and around the circle, each time somehow easier to swallow. Nelson thought of his friend Curt whom he had left earlier that morning on the highway outside of North Platte. He remembered something Curt had said about the road being the great giver of experience and source of knowledge for those willing to accept the challenge. At the time, Nelson had scoffed at the

sublime conjecture, but having met two real men of the road, he could now see some truth in it. He wondered if Curt had thought it up on his own.

"I'll tell you something son," the blind man said. "The sickest I ever been was one time down in Texas. I was just sicker than hell and I probably would have died if these railroad men hadn't let me stay in a shanty. I stayed in there for five days and they brought me food and everything. I tell ya, what the world needs is more good people like that." Chester paused for a belt of wine. "The trouble with your generation is that you don't give a damn about anybody but yourselves. Why I bet if I went to visit that college of yours those people would have me arrested just as sure as hell." Well aware that the man spoke the truth, Nelson said nothing, playing idly with his bootlace.

"That's the honest truth," Slim said. "The working stiff in this country ain't never had a real piece of the pie. Shit, I used to be in one of them trade unions. I carried a red card and everything and all it got me was this." Slim pointed to a scar on his forehead. "Some Pinkerton thug hit me from behind with a blackjack. Put me in the hospital for a week."

"I bet you've seen some hard times," Nelson said, consciously playing along with the man to get on his good side.

"Yeah, I sure have. I been ridin' old dirty face damn near all my life. It ain't no hay ride, let me tell you. All that stuff you read in books about happy hobos is just a lot of bunk." Slim spat on the floor. "I only met one happy hobo in all my life and the only reason he was happy was 'cause he was crazy. They called him Smiley 'cause he was all the time grinnin' like this." Slim contorted his face into an idiotic grin. "He was an all right fella 'cept he was queer. That's what got him killed. He asked the wrong fella and the guy stove his head in, just like that." Slim

clapped his hands. "A man has to always cover his ass. You don't never know when somebody might try something." Slim drank and continued. "A man ought never ride in the same car with two strangers. They might try something. You're pretty lucky that me and Chester are good fellas."

"Have you ever had to kill someone, Slim?" Nelson asked.

"Shit yeah, more than once. But I ain't never killed a man without a reason. Yeah, I remember one time down in San Antone this guy followed me down an alley. He thought he had the drop on me but I had my equalizer with me." Slim reached into his pocket and brought out a stumpy black revolver. "He pulled a knife on me and you should have seen the look on his face when I shot him — a big surprise, let me tell ya." Slim laughed and slugged from the wine jug.

Guns had always scared Nelson, especially in the hands of a stranger, so when Slim brought out the pistol Nelson's whole attitude towards the two men shifted. No longer did they seem to be such nice guys. He wished he had gotten off when he had the chance. But it was too late now, the train was flying. He was at the mercy of this man named Slim and he didn't like it at all. It didn't take much thinking to realize that a man could get murdered way out on the prairie and no one would ever know who had done it. His mind tortured itself with the frightening details of such a murder. Never in his life had he felt so helpless and afraid.

"How long till Denver?" he asked.

"A long time yet," Slim said, putting the ugly revolver back into his pocket. Nelson looked at his watch — 10:30 a.m. He got to his feet and went and sat in the doorway of the car, his legs dangling out above the blur of the roadbed. Off in the distance he saw the grassy hills of Nebraska and he wondered where his friend Curt was.

Nelson was starting to wonder if he would live to tell him the story. It would be a hell of a good one if he did.

From the rear of the car came the sounds of an argument. It looked as though Chester had somehow knocked over the wine jug, spilling most of what was left in it.

"You goddamn blind idiot," Slim shouted above the roar. Nelson looked out the door and hoped Slim wouldn't start shooting. If he killed Chester he'd surely kill Nelson too, just so he wouldn't talk. The two old men shouted insults back and forth at one another for some time until Slim finally stomped off to the other end of the car with the remainder of the wine. Nelson averted his eyes, afraid that he might somehow incite Slim to shoot him if he looked him in the eye.

Had Chester been a sighted hobo the fierce round of insults would not have seemed extraordinary. But considering the man's obvious dependence on the one named Slim, the quarrel took on a bigger meaning. What would the blind man do if Slim just walked off and left him? This got Nelson to ponder the nature of the two men's relationship. What was it that kept Slim from leaving the blind one to fend for himself? Slim surely didn't look like a man who would care for a blind man purely out of the goodness of his heart. Perhaps the two men were homosexuals. He hoped not. The longer he thought about it, the stranger the two men became in his mind.

Then he was startled by the smashing of glass. Turning quickly he saw Slim with broken glass all around him. He had the pistol out again and was obviously quite drunk. Nelson looked down at the rushing gravel and wondered whether he would survive if he jumped. They had to be making at least sixty. There was no chance. He turned back to Slim. The man's head hung down on his chest, the ugly black

pistol in his hand. He seemed to be staring at it. Nelson felt a tremble start deep within him. His heart was pounding. Was he, Nelson Winship, destined to die in a speeding boxcar by the hand of man named Memphis Slim? It seemed too inappropriate somehow. College boys weren't supposed to die in boxcars.

Slim got to his feet and Nelson watched him bounce off the wall as he made his way towards him, his arms out like a scarecrow. The man's lips were moving, forming words; the glassy eyes stared blankly ahead. He stumbled to a spot in the middle of the car, behind Nelson and directly in front of the big door. Nelson turned. Should he jump? Should he charge the armed drunk man and disarm him? Incapable of action, he sat frozen in the doorway, the stilt-legged man weaving above him.

"God damn it boy, I'm tired of waitin'." Slim's red eyes narrowed. "I don't have to put up with this shit. I'm fifty-six years old and I can't even get it up anymore. I'm gonna show 'em and you ain't gonna stop me neither."

What happened next came as a total surprise to the young man in the doorway. Memphis Slim took a deep breath and walked right out of the doorway of the hurtling boxcar!

"Jesus Christ!" Nelson cried, instinctively thrusting his head out into the wind and looking back. But the track had curved and he saw no sign of Slim's body, only the dark red boxcars and the prairie.

"Jesus Christ!" he exclaimed again, still unable to accept what had just happened. For several moments he sat motionless, staring blankly, too shocked by Slim's abrupt exit from life to see it as just that. What stuck in his mind was the expression on Slim's face, which could only be described as unknowing.

Nelson wasn't sure how long he had been sitting there when he heard a voice from the rear of the car that

brought him out of his stupor. It was the voice of the blind man calling out to his companion.

"Hey Slim," the man shouted, "I didn't really mean what I said about you being a sonofabitch, really I didn't. I never even knew your mother. You know that. Come on back."

Nelson watched the blind man speak and knew in his heart that he could never tell him what had happened. What if the old guy couldn't take it? He might follow his friend out the door.

"Slim's asleep," Nelson shouted, not knowing what else to say. Chester quit talking.

It didn't take long for the shock of Slim's death to wear off. What surprised Nelson was how little the man's death moved him. Somehow he had expected the violent death of a human being to be an all-consuming emotional experience that would somehow change him inalterably. But it wasn't that at all and he felt almost disappointed with the ease with which he was able to accept the man's suicide.

What did move Nelson was the burden forced upon his conscience by the blind man. Obviously the man was helpless in his world of rolling metal without his friend to guide him. He looked over at Chester. He was smiling. Nelson turned away.

Far off in the distance, where the big sky met the earth, he could see a range of purple mountains with feathered clouds above them. For a moment he forgot about the blind man's predicament and lost himself in the mountains, imagining himself on the shore of an alpine lake, high above the prairie, playing a big trout on his fly rod. Why hadn't he listened to Curt and stayed with him there on the highway? They would have gotten a ride sooner or later. But something had driven him from the roadside. Something stronger than his fear that compelled him to strike out on his own and discover for himself what the road

was all about. But now, after what had happened, he felt foolish for having let the train whistle call him as it had and he vowed to never ride a train again.

The sun was down when the train reached Denver. For the first time since Slim's departure, he moved from his seat in the doorway to a position behind the wall of the car where he couldn't be seen from the highway that had picked up on the left. Chester, the blind man, appeared to be sleeping. He had been for several hours. Far ahead, Nelson could see skyscrapers rising up with the mountains behind them. He strapped his backpack on and relaced his boots. The train slowed a little and the freight cars crashed together. Nelson tried to put the blind man out of his mind by singing a verse of an old hobo song he had once heard.

"Hey I ain't got no home. I'm just a ramblin' man. A ramblin' man I go from town to town. The police make it hard, wherever I may go. I ain't got no home in this world anymore." He sang the same verse over and over until the train rolled into the freight yard. It was almost dark by then. Up ahead he could see the yard tower rising above the dark strings of boxcars. He crouched in the doorway with his pack on his back and waited until the train slowed to a jogging pace, then he took hold of the big iron door latch. The old blind hobo was kicking in his dreams when Nelson last saw him, there in the half light that filled the empty boxcar.

"Goddamn wino," he said before he jumped.

He hit running but the pack threw him off balance and pitched him forward into the gravel roadbed, cutting his face and hands. He cursed and got to his feet with the train rolling past. Following his instincts, he made his way to the edge of the yard without being seen. He climbed an

continued on page 47



Underwater Vision

In this cedar lake I submerge,
fin in water the color of Spanish moss
toward the center
where the man-made sand bottom gives way
to long-sunken, mud-slicked leaves.
I lose each extended arm,
swallowed in the murkiness
that makes my swimming sightless,
a fog I feel tangled in,
give up trying to blink my eyes clear.
Pausing in quick warm pockets
before kicking into the cold further out;
depth and darkness become indistinguishable
in the hard stroke to pull myself through.

Ann Shanabrook

Naked, with tambourines,
David danced for the Lord,
huzzahed and hosannahed,
beat the earth like rain
with mango-green rushes,
spun the sky like the wind.
And his skin was coppery rich with oils
that flashed in the hot light,
and his body sent up praises,
strummed, trilled out his joy
with leaps and swoops and swirls
in wheels of a rising pitch.
I watched in the crowd that lined the street,
pulled my robes together tightly, ashamed
of my own expressionless body.

Ann Shanabrook

Apology to Gerty MacDowell

Who am I to laugh at you
fantasizing about love
and flashing your panties
at some old man
you pretend is a prince?

I know it isn't easy
to maintain perspective
when what you seek
seems so close
or so far away.

Really, who can help the lies
they tell themselves?
Just this morning I caught myself
in make-up and a silk dress
trying to pass myself off
as a woman.

Ann Shanabrook

Cat Lover's Freezer

I know what happens
when you put them in the ground:
that rich, proud fur all
falling away from the bone,
each worm's nudge and root's embrace
an undoing of catness.

No one knows I put them here,
buried in this milk-white compartment
the long-legged gray Tabby
named Samson for my late husband;
the black one with alarming opal eyes
and one of her kittens born
dead in the space behind the furnace;
Bubba, the Siamese,
left ear lost in a fight;
and the one who sat in the sink
crying as water dripped down the drain.

I rest easy knowing they are wrapped
in this air that respects
the substance of things, leaves everything
unchanged but their casual softness.
And with my last breath
I will tell them, *Sleep on.*
Let your hair grow long with icicles,
hear my voice forever in the electric hum.

Ann Shanabrook



The Mothers of Neyok

by L.A. Brown

The dreams had returned — haunting, vivid, and more insistent than before. Mara twisted and moaned herself conscious, then lay still and let the rocking of the warm hydrobed soothe her as she remembered and tried to understand.

She had been underwater again, easily breathing in the green fluid streams of warmth. Rolling and languishing in the diffused light penetrating the water's surface from some short distance above, she listened to the strange slow sounds bubbling up from beings or objects not visible in the dim light. The low-pitched sounds, reaching and entering Mara's ears like molasses, began to assume the quality of voices. Yes, they *must* be voices, and she perceived that they asked her question after solemn question, though she didn't understand their subtle, melodious language.

She had turned and faced in every direction, now facing the surface, now the bottom, "Mar-Ma-Mar?" the voices whispered. The darkness of the bottom! The voices beckoned from there, so she made her way towards it, pushing water over her head in deliberate motions.

Mara had sensed Presences in the dimness, but they eluded her sight. The voices' faltering "Mar-Ma-Mar" ended abruptly. Mara, now panic-stricken by the darkness and the pressing water which numbed her with its weight, had risen rapidly towards the light, upsetting a herd of pink globular creatures. The large globes scattered gracefully at her passing. One

of them touched her for an instant, and for that instant she was suffused with a sense of fullness and well-being. "The water is within," a voice not-of-the-water had said as Mara broke through the surface and awoke.

The shuttle glided imperceptibly to a stop at station six; Mara flowed with a small crowd up the exit belt. Most of the crowd was male; many wore the uniforms of Neyok policemen. Stepping out onto the raw and filthy street, Mara walked intrepidly toward the Clinic of Motherhood two blocks away. She walked the last stretch to buy time, to be sure she wouldn't change her mind.

Teer, Mara's lover of two years, supported her decision wholeheartedly. Mara, delighted and encouraged by Teer's approval, nevertheless had some reservations of her own. What if something went wrong? But complications were rare to the point of insignificance, though every woman who went through the process took some miniscule chance. What if Mara found the responsibility oppressing? She would be obligated for at least three years.

Startled by a pup-like whimper, she turned to see a dirty, deformed baby flailing in the sewage ditch. It lacked nothing but hands, and its head was only slightly misshapen, Mara noted happily. As she turned away and walked briskly to her destination, a thin arm reached out of a doorway and snatched the baby, still wailing, into the darkness.

Farther down the stretch of cracked and buckled sidewalk, an adult male Frepole confronted Mara sheepishly, holding a portion of his chewed alfalfa stick out to her. When she shook her head and continued on her way, he smiled and mumbled something in Frepole, and opened his ragged coat to show her the large bundle of food he hoarded there. It was a common action of the more simple-minded of these creatures and passed unpunished by all but the cruelest policemen. Mara ignored the creature's friendly mumbblings; she had been conditioned as a child to acknowledge only those of her own language and cleanliness as human beings, no matter how human they might seem at times. Besides, the Frepoles didn't have a language Mara understood, or even a language that all Frepoles understood. They spoke, instead, in an infinite and impossible number of dialects, marking their territories and staying in close-knit groups. Living in famine and filth, almost all of them dirty, diseased, and stupid, the bred like rats in the city's nooks and recesses. Only the passing of the Great Compassion Act of 2170 kept the police from wiping out the whole lot of them; though they caused little trouble for others, they fought among themselves frequently, littering the sidewalks with bodies.

Mara forgot the Frepole soon after he was out of her sight. She stepped onto the entrance belt of the massive, luminescent building and was carried inside.

Mara C of Neyok," said the blonde, purple-tuniced nurse whose face now appeared on the reception screen. "Please meet Dr. Parin F in room 208 at this time." Mara smiled at the other nervous, silent young women and walked down an antiseptically green corridor to room 208. She paused at the door, breathing slowly to calm herself. Stepping hesitantly into the glowing white room, she saw a woman not much older than herself sitting on a plush blue hydrochair and relaxed immediately.

"It's good that you are not afraid, Mara," the woman said warmly. "This is not an interrogation. Please have a seat. I'm Parin."

Mara sat on a hydrochair close to the doctor's. "What do you need to know?"

"Let's start with what I know already, and please correct me if I am wrong. You are Mara C of Neyok, twenty-three years of age, a transcriber at the Library of Greater Neyok. What, exactly, does a transcriber do?"

"I am an etymologist; I typically translate paper books written in modern English and commit them to microfilm, adding footnotes where the meaning is obscure or dated."

"So you have undoubtedly heard of Julian Huxley, and perhaps Malthus?"

"I am vaguely familiar with Huxley, but Malthus?"

"Malthus predicted a population disaster in the nineteenth century and was laughed at, but his theory was uncannily accurate. By the latter part of the twentieth century, mankind schemed to accommodate its growing numbers by such incredible means as the colonization of planets — but, of course, even life in space stations couldn't be arranged fast enough to support the escalating births."

"Then why did the government not simply curb the birth rate?"

"Because, my dear," answered the doctor with an air that told Mara she'd been over this information countless

times, "the government had no control over the population until the twenty-first century, when it acted desperately to instate the War Games as a requirement for all young men. No matter what you've heard to the contrary, the games were not designed as practice for the impending event, but to reduce the birthrate drastically in one generation." Here the doctor stood and walked across the small room; Mara noticed that she was a tall woman of at least four feet. It was almost certain she'd been well-programmed, a rare thing in Mara's generation.

"But this method was virtually ineffective," the doctor continued, gazing out the large window and tossing her short black hair. "So sterilization was begun. At first, only the stupid and deformed were sterilized. Then, because this was not enough, universal sterilization was begun. The entire body of citizens then called the "middle class" rioted and rebelled, almost succeeding in their attempt to overthrow the government that was doing its utmost to make life pleasant for them."

"This will perhaps show an embarrassing ignorance," Mara said, "but why did so many women desire children?"

"They didn't always desire them. Is that not a paradox!! It was socially accepted, even expected, that every joined couple have two or three babies. Financially, children were often in those days an aging person's only means of security and insurance against starvation. Many religions condoned and encouraged couples to have large numbers of offspring. Of course, birth control methods were primitive and unreliable, so many children were born by accident."

"Do you mean to say," Mara almost shouted, "that *all* women were employed as mothers, against their will?"

The doctor tried to hide a smile. "Yes," she said. "And most enjoyed less sanitary conditions than you will.

Many were never paid or honored for their efforts."

"But what could possibly motivate them to accept such atrocities?"

"Custom. Religion. I now remember that some religions held that life was sacred and did not tolerate contraception. So human life flourished sacredly, and was miserable. It is, in fact, from these religious fanatics that the Frepoles evolved." She waited for Mara's reaction.

"I have always suspected that they were once human, and not merely humanoid beasts, as I was always told."

"Yes. When sterilization became the law, and the middle class revolted, they were banished as criminals and refused adequate food, shelter and health treatment. During the Great Compassion, when deformed babies were supposedly allowed to die, many were actually put out for the Frepoles to redeem as they might. This weakened the infirm Frepole stock even more, and the humans quickly became the vastly superior race. Mercifully, because of interbreeding, the Frepole life expectancy is decreasing and their infant mortality rate is thought to be increasing."

"I'm quite glad to hear that. No woman, even a sub-human one, should spend her whole life breeding like a cow. Unless she chooses to, and has proper care and pay."

"I agree," the doctor said emphatically. "But this human system of ours has several inadequacies. From this moment on, I must ask you to repeat nothing you hear to anyone outside this building."

"Of course," Mara said hastily. She knew she would be prosecuted immediately if she were foolish enough to tell secrets.

"All right. The Mead Marriage System was incorporated 110 years ago for those who still wished to marry. Predictably enough, many never made

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An Analogy of Love

Deliquescent giant, swollen to a copper bulb
That creeps from over the broad-limbed cradle,
Your pliant gold starts out in the umbrage
Of the garden's tempered sleep where warmed with
Sudden animus the daunted petals lift their withering
Orations to the opaque, now auricomous sky.

No; not for the light's bold revelation, which
Sweeps out across the acres to recall those colors
Sunk before from the world's sight and now set
Free to emboss the gild with chromatic metals
That blaze with purpled pride, do the wakened
Flowers send you their pure zealous praises;
Nor because ecstatic veins, strictured and by the
Timely heat propelled to bend to jealous command,
Wield piety in their systematic, staple duties.

Nor is your checked arrival so outworn that
Sepalous fibrils yawn in knowledge then sink back,
For your flecked entrance is each morning new,
And like some longed for revenant you break at dawn
Unexpected from the grave of the soil and send
Forth sudden rapture, rescuing all night's murdered
Hearts, your advent, like the primal wave
Of light, forever marvelous and unprepared.

But it is to feel the burning press of your
Exploded skin as it pours its godly diminution
Upon the black, lost soul of earth, to steal
One scalding spark from the thin certainty you
Offer distant loves, to be madly engulfed in the
Sublimating warmth of your embrace, to be destroyed,
Lost, sundered at the instant of the union, sunk
Forever in the molten depths of your core's place,
That the garden's ardent worship races out anew each day,
For all time spent in shadow is blind death,
And only your tapped source, sent throughout the
Dreaded slats of darkness, can offer a glorious
Worth to earthly hours spent amidst the sod.

Amy Stapleton

embankment up to the street and found a phone booth where he called his friend Oscar's house. He was surprised when Curt answered.

"Hey, hey, hey, it's the old hobo himself," Curt said. "I was starting to wonder if you'd run into trouble."

"No, there wasn't any trouble. I had a great ride."

"You sure missed a great ride. About ten minutes after you left these guys in a truck picked me up and drove me all the way here. It was really first-class."

"That's really great Curt. Can you guys pick me up? I'm at a phone booth on the corner of Dillard and Hernandez."

"Hey, you sound kind of depressed, man. Anything wrong?"

"No, I'm fine. Just tired, that's all."

"We'll be right down," Curt said. "See you in a minute."

Nelson stood at the edge of the embankment, looking down into the freight yard. A train was rolling slowly by and he wondered where the old blind guy was — probably groping around in the boxcar looking for Slim. Then he heard laughter from under a nearby bridge that traversed the freight yard. In the streetlight he could see two young boys playing by the moving train.

"Hey you kids," he shouted. "You shouldn't be playing here. It's dangerous."

"Go to hell you dumb wino," one of them shouted, hurling a stone that barely missed his head. He pounded down the embankment after them but the heavy pack slowed him and they outran him easily, laughing as they ran.

"You little brats!" he shouted, shaking his fist.

Returning to the telephone he frantically searched through the directory for the number of the Union Pacific railroad. He dialed the number and a tired voice answered.

"Hello, Union Pacific," Nelson said. "Put me through to the railroad police."

it to the second stage, and women abandoned their men for careers. Their social life was shifted from the home to work, and the neurosis rate in women went down considerably. This made the populationists and psychiatrists unhappy, however, because the birth rate for humans also decreased alarmingly. Births were illegal outside of marriage, and marriage was a dying institution. Sperm banks throughout the country lay inactive."

"So women had to be coerced into motherhood," Mara finished.

"You might say that," Parin continued, "or you might say that motherhood was elevated, through the Clinics, to the rewarding career that it can be. To use the amusing but prophetic words of Sigmund Freud, a twentieth-century psychiatrist, 'Theoretically, it would be one of the greatest triumphs of man...were it possible to raise the responsible act of procreation to a level of voluntary and intentional behavior, and to free this act from its entanglement with our indispensable satisfaction of a natural desire.'"

"Meaning, I suppose, its entanglement with sex. But that was accomplished with the sperm banks."

"Yes. But now procreation has been freed from its ties to a fallible human institution as well. And you, a free woman, have chosen procreation as your career. You have scored remarkably well on your Test of Readiness for Motherhood; if you still desire it, we are ready to impregnate you at your earliest convenience."

"I am ready immediately," Mara said.

"Very well." The doctor leaned forward to stress the importance of her final comment. "I must tell you that your child (or children) will be genetically designed for kindness, intelligence, cooperativeness, and determination. Upon the birth of your child, you are responsible for at least

three years' nurturing. If you wish, you may spend the three years conditioning your child and others psychologically and socially." Parin hesitated.

"It...will be necessary to...tell them small untruths at times."

"I understand." Mara rose to leave, eager to tell Teer of her acceptance.

"There is one more thing," Parin said, still solemn. "You are in love with Teer J of Neyok. This complicates your situation, as it is preferable that Motherhood candidates have no emotional ties. But, to put it bluntly, we are desperate for women so highly qualified as you. Please try to keep your relationship from inhibiting your career. Goodbye, Mara C. You are bright, and it has been a real pleasure talking to you. I'll see you on your impregnation date, which the nurse will assign as you leave."

Mara leaned on the rail of the ferry and enjoyed the breeze that played in her short auburn hair. Her belly was noticeably swollen, and people tried not to stare. It was not often that a pregnant human was seen in the open, and this one actually seemed to be enjoying herself as she leaned on the arm of her beautiful lover. Teer beamed at her often, beamed at her now.

"I love you, Mara," Teer said.

"I love you, Teer. And I wish this were your baby I'm carrying."

"What a fantastic idea! But you are one of the most beautiful, sane, and brave women I've ever chanced to meet." Teer thought for a moment. "And now you seem to be one of the happiest as well."

"I am most certainly happy, and anxious for the delivery," Mara said.

"Well, then, so am I. Let's see what we can see from the other side of this ancient vessel."

The two women turned from the rail and walked, arm in arm, to the far end of the ferry.

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Art

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CORADDI ARTS CONTEST

DEADLINE — February 7, 1981

Coraddi is pleased to invite your participation in the Spring Arts Contest. Cash prizes of \$40, \$25 and \$15 will be awarded in five categories: Poetry, Prose, Photography, Two-dimensional art, and Three-dimensional art. Judges will be chosen from the community at large by the *Coraddi*.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Submissions from the community at large are welcome, however, only graduate and undergraduate students of UNC-G are eligible for cash prizes.
2. Only submissions that have the contributor's name, complete address and telephone number will be considered.
3. Paid staff members of *Coraddi* are not eligible for cash prizes.

MANUSCRIPTS

1. Clean, first copies, doublespaced, typewritten, are preferred.
2. Verse of any length and prose pieces up to approximately 5,000 words are acceptable.
3. Manuscripts may be given to staff members or brought by Room 205 Elliott University Center.
4. Manuscripts will be returned only if a self-addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed.

ART WORK

1. 35mm slides are acceptable provided the original work is available for photographing.
2. Art work must be picked up from the *Coraddi* office. This is to protect the work from being damaged.

Works which have been published or are to be published will be considered. Notations should be made as to where the material was published. Works which have previously won a cash prize are not eligible for a cash prize from *Coraddi*. The contest winners will be announced in *the Carolinian*.

The winners of the *Coraddi* Fall Arts Contest are listed on page 12.

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