



THE PIPER

80/81



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He who bends to himself a Joy
Does the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the Joy as it flies
Lives in Eternity's sunrise.

William Blake

THE PIPER 80/81
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Linda Ress
Skillet
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WALLACE FINDS. A LITTLE SPOON.

A Miss Webb Mystery
by Bill Meikrantz

Downstairs a bell tolled tragically. Wallace looked out the window and sighed and looked out the window and listened to the bell downstairs, the bell downstairs tolling tragically. Wallace looked out of the window and sighed.

Someone threw a large rock through a heavy window and it broke. That is the window.

Across town a man was looking into a mirror. He was looking into a mirror and saying to himself, saying very softly to himself, whispering to himself and looking in the mirror saying, maybe it was the other leg. This was a man who was looking into a mirror and saying to himself quietly under his breath, maybe it was the other leg.

In the park a young one was standing in a bush, standing in a bush and pulling at the leaves.

A little girl was walking down the street, she was a little girl and she was walking. Ahead of her by the street a car stopped and some people got out of it, it was ahead of the little girl, and when they had gotten out of the car they said to the girl in careful loud voices, did someone climb the vine. The little girl began to cry and they said louder and less carefully, did someone climb the vine.

In a room one was standing and singing softly and sketching a picture in charcoals.

Three were standing in a door, in a door and looking in, looking in and saying, Miss Webb are you ready yet. These three were standing in an open door.

While she was combing her hair she noticed a spoon that was lying on the floor. As she bent to pick it up she noticed that the bowl was cracked, She stooped to pick up the silver cracked spoon.

He was eating. He held a napkin in one hand. He held a fork in the other hand and ate off his plate. He asked for more and ate off the floor. He went down the hall and ate off the wall.

In a dark attic she was opening a chest that was very old and very slowly she was opening it and the lid was creaking and it was very old and she was opening it and it smelled and sounded and looked old, but was it. And what was inside of it, what had made her look so surprised.

Where is the garden hose. I am off to water the flowers.

A wife was saying things to a man she had just met, a man she had just met at the door.

A vivid window forms the fleeing terrace. Wallace knew.

Two set out to catch a brown one, catch it and eat it.

One had held a hammer in his hand and hit and hit and hit and hit something until it was very broken. And then he had stopped.

Two cars drove by. Then three. Then two again. What does this mean, she wondered clutching the envelope in her hands. None of them had stopped. The same two again. She became very frightened.

When one who was in an attic before had opened it up she noticed a felt lined box, a black box lined with darker blue felt, darker than that.

Wallace knew.

It was a box to keep things in, to keep them for almost forever in the black box with the blue felt lining. Darker than that. Maybe it was the other leg. The other leg that climbed the vine.

Someone had begun to keep them forever in that box, but one of the spaces was empty and one of the spoons was gone. She knew. Wallace knew who had the spoon. This was yesterday.

Some were running very quickly. Very quickly indeed. One fell and was killed.

Wallace had the car brought around, she had it brought around that morning. There was a knock on the door. It was the car that was here, the car that Wallace had ordered brought about in the morning. Miss Webb, Miss Webb, someone called, are you quite ready yet.

The other one had finished combing her hair.

Wallace was on her way. She knew. Everyone had said, why Miss Webb, you always know. But now she had a brown bag next to her on the seat.

The other one reached quickly for the phone and dialed a number. She let it ring and then hung up. She hung up the phone and lit up a cigarette. She put the cracked silver spoon inside her shoe. She burnt a burn on her arm, a little black burn with her cigarette. Then she went into the kitchen.

Wallace knew.

The other one that was drinking a glass of milk stopped. Was that a car out front.

The one that was eating stopped and got up from his chair. Hello, he said. No one was there. That is odd, said he, but I do not care. Simply do I not care. Then he went and ate the chair. I wonder does she comb her hair.

The car had arrived. Wallace packed up the black box lined with blue felt darker than that and it was in a brown bag she stepped out of the car and walked to the front door.

The door opened slowly. The other one was there. Wallace knew she had red hair.

So it is you. She said.

Give it to me. Said Wallace.

I don't know what you are talking about.

Wallace shot her twice through the head. Then she took off the other ones shoe. She picked up the spoon, the cracked spoon the little silver spoon. Then she unwrapped the black box lined with felt with blue felt darker than that. She opened the box and there was the empty place. She went to put the spoon, the cracked spoon the little silver spoon into the place it would not fit. It was much too small. Damn, said Miss Webb. It is the wrong spoon.

Why Wallace, they all said. And we thought you knew.



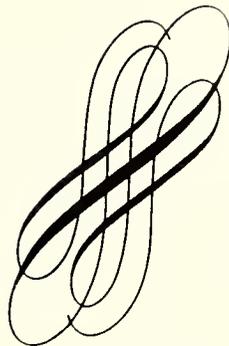
Terry Hammond

predawn and wondering why

the warmth of black sunlight
fresh from static waste
crackles with increasing
brilliance
refracted from all angles
of leaf and blade and
contours of sodden clayland
mold one fantasy
of rippled pulsing tones
their lines erased by
the stolid approach of a corduroy friend

but that is not all who arrives
when you wait
the minutes melt in your eyes
and those fragrant words
all dream to see
in faded lilac shapes forlorn
left to drift
wandering through clipped pillars
of petrified wood
that stand so tall
and tower over the dawn
watching, deadly
in their hopeful gaze

Patricia Ferguson



the tides

once a green and shaded
place of rest
where no one heard
the angry screech and
constant howl of hidden noise
coming from the
thunderous shelf that holds
 all of touch, thorny and sweet
 all of crescent bands of metal
 all of savoury spice and flower
 all of fragments, binding, twisted
 all of brief and pure communion
 all of spiral whirlpools twisting
 all of light so raw and silken
 all of dark in bitter viewing
turning as the words continue
in a silent dock arcade
the last game on the sand is filtered
only to be washed away

Patricia Ferguson

BAMBI

I dreamed the case of Donna vs. Miguel
in the statutes of Canaan High
and there lay among the ruins
a crumbled vision's eerie sigh

I saw the stage in morning's haze
shadowed center, worn and cold
and words tangled backwards
trying to perform: they fold . . .

Who are you?
What am I?
They said what?
When and Why?

The scent of "babe" was on my babe
it stretched my imagination
and sand dunes in Saudi Arabia
held me back, "good gracious!"

A slice of her, a bit of me
we danced too fast for father time
she kissed my forehead and she faded
back to black, the chorus chimed . . .

Who are you?
What am I?
They said what?
When and why?

I wake up to the sound of sweat . . .
hours take the sheen from my frame
It was then and it's been
forever always the same.

Mike Newsome



CHRISTMAS IN JUNE

It's as though I witness scenes of passion
where others' distraught simplicity arises and
fires their arms
specifically at NOON with upheld energy.

Until then

Time.

Time in her own impeccable manner
rages battle across a field of human endeavors
which born of the spirit
continue allegiance
though tired and tested sore.

Mike Newsome

ONCE I STOOD ALONE

Once I stood alone in the woods.
Before me a waterfall endlessly flowed -
Each second a tiny droplet born,
Flung high in the clear air,
Reflecting the sun alone for a moment,
Then, wiser and more beautiful,
Softly merged with the pool below.
Yet behind these free-flung spheres,
In the cold shadow of an ancient Stone,
Resentfully flowed the frightened mainstream.

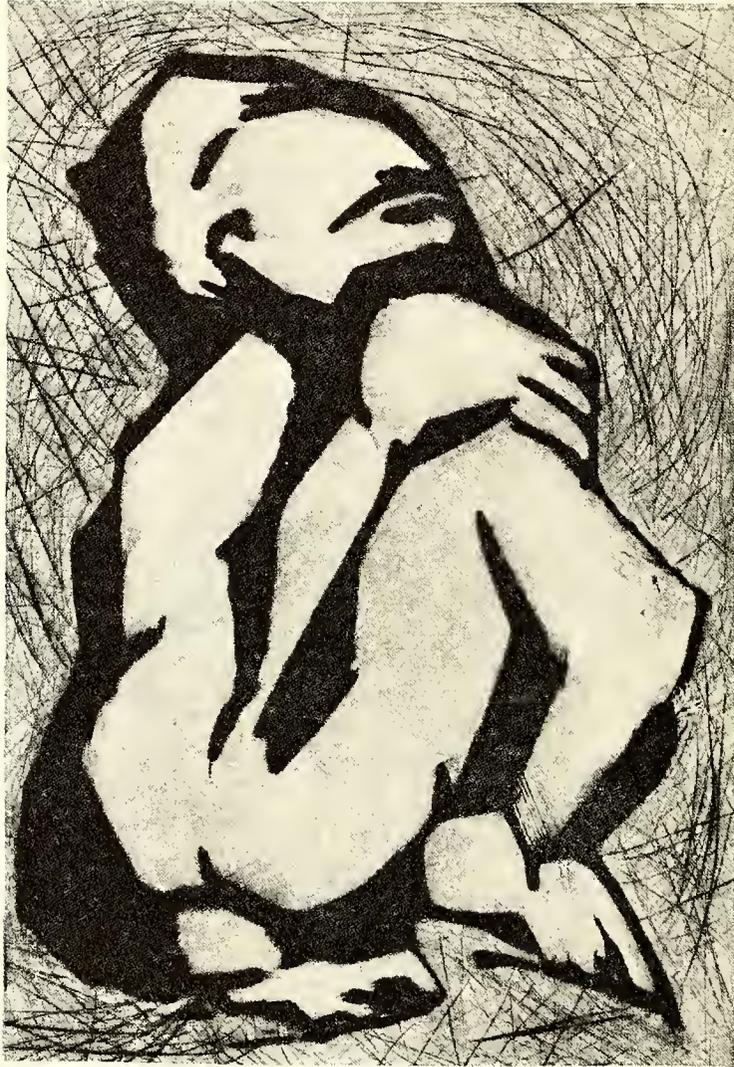
CPP



I AM THE GREY FOX

I am the Grey Fox.
I go as a shadow, veritable, but elusive.
Some perceive only my body, others my head,
And others still, my fortified heart.
None can restrain me, only run with me;
Run past the sleeping wolves,
Past the blindly circling cattle,
With heads turned downward
In fear of the sun,
Past the small-headed serpents,
Proud of their transparent manipulations,
Past the tiny lizards,
With their self-imposed insignificance,
Boasting of flaming breath, and hoarding pyrite,
Past the tree frogs,
Clingling possessively to the trunks of trees
Whose branches they have never explored,
Past clear pools gone stagnant,
Past the ancient oaks,
Felled by plastic axes,
And whose dying crashes went unheard;
Run with me high into the mountains,
There to plant a beacon of words.

CPP



Naomi Donovan

DAFFODIL SHADOWS

Margaret Melvin

The sun's low and the sky done turned purple. Can't nothin' match the peace that comes with a day ending. Them dogs are barking again. I can hear the kids down the way, probably fighting over that bicycle. The birds been coming round more. The sky's colors just turning ripe now. There's even a purple shadow on my wall. They turn then ain't nothin' left for them to do 'cept fade.

I remember waking up in this house smelling the bacon cooking and hearing Ma downstairs getting after the boys for somethin' they'd done. Then Pa would say somethin' real quiet like and there wouldn't be no more fuss.

Every mornin' it was my chore to go out to the chicken coop. I'd go with my big basket and my dog follerin. At first I was real scared they'd hurt me. Later, I didn't think twice 'bout reaching underneath them or scooting them off their resting places so I could get the eggs.

I'll be eighty seven in four days. Lately I been going to look at my graduation picture every night 'fore I sleep. Then I looks at myself in the mirror, and can't hardly believe that them two faces belong to the same woman.

I had me a husband for a couple a years. I knew from the start that it weren't gonna be no lastin' thing. He was a restless man, Brandon was. He'd go out drinking and come into the kitchen in the middle of the night knocking things over, and just a hollerin.

One mornin' he came in round seven. I was at the stove frying me up some eggs. He's been out every night that week and I knew the minute he walked in that I wasn't gonna take no more of his troubles.

"Fry me up some eggs, hun," he said.

"I ain't gonna make nothin' for you this mornin' or any other mornin'. I want you outa' here."

"Ain't no woman gonna' kick me outa' my own home."

I started to go after him with a spatula in one hand, and a frying pan in the other.

He slipped into the bedroom and come back with a pillowcase filled with his clothes.

"Ain't nothin' I can do but leave you," he said shaking his head.

"Well get the hell out then, you two timin' varmint."

I picked up the bag of flour and threw it at him. Brandon got out quick and the bag busted on the floor. Flour looked like winter snow coming down.

After that me and Val lived here. I loved raisin' that child. She don't take after Brandon much, cept for this look she gets in her eye every once in awhile. Shoot she and I had more fun together. We spent alot of hot summer days down at the creek. We'd pick wild blackberries, and bringum home and make pies. Hardest thing was lettin' that girl go, lettin' her marry.

My little girl is almost sixty, she is. She got two boys of her own now. Her husband Dan, he's gonna retire next fall. He's been at work as a carpenter for 'bout twenty years. They come round nearly every Sunday for dinner.

My friend Rose passed away towards the end of February. Shoot, we was buddies from way back. In third grade we'd stick gum in the teacher's chair. She'd chew it and I'd stick it. She never did marry, Rose didn't. She was a slight woman with greying hair that she kept pinned up. And she made the best apple jelly you ever tasted.

She used to come down here in the mornings. We'd have tea. In wintertime, I'd tend the fire, she'd knit and we'd get to talking. Come summertime we'd sit out under the old oak tree and shell beans, somethin' like that. I never had a better friend.

And sometimes I'd ask her, "Rose who you think'll go first, you or me."

She'd chuckle and say, "Whoever God's got a mind to take honey, whoever God's a wantin'."

It was late in the afternoon when my Rose passed away. I was holdin' to her hand just as tight. She was watching me, not talkin' much.

Finally she said, "God's got his heart set on me I reckon', I'm sorry to leave you, sorry to leave you alone."

Her grip let up and her eyes, they never opened to the light of day again.

I reckon' I'll go make me somethin' hot to drink 'fore I'm off to bed. I'm plannin' a big garden this spring' I usually grows the best tomatoes 'round. My cukes and peppers been worth braggin' bout too. I don't see why this spring be any different. I'm gonna turn the ground tomorrow, get the soil loose, get rid of the sticks and rocks and scare away that ole' garden snake been out there.



VISIONS OF GENESIS

Act I
Scene I

i don't like
the shadow of that
Tree
on the snow.

it's frightening
with its
Tentacling
branches.

It
just stands
harmlessly.

but the Shadow
on the snow
reaches out.

the branches
Waver
in the breeze.

Its Tentacles
beckon
Searchingly.

Act I
Scene II

Climbing, struggling
For the top.

Toes and fingers
Bleed.
Scratching for a grip.

Momentarily secure,
I rest.

My hold seems firm
But
I'm never sure.

Hoping not to slide
Backwards.

The clattering
of falling rock . . .

A man,
Just below,
Fighting to stay up.

Panic
In his eyes.
I offer down
my hand.

He
Will not
See.

Not wanting
To watch him
Fall.

I turn away.

Act I
Scene III

Trapped in the wake
of the Giant Wave
my world spins, spins,
spins around me.

Lifted, dropped,
crushed into the sand.

Gasping for air I race
to catch the next
one.

Act I
Scene IV

The River was swift
The Current strong.
I fought desperately
for a while, for a while - -

Exhausted, I turned
with the Tide.

Drifted and rested
for a while,
for a while - -

Got mad one day
and struck out again.
Almost made progress
for a while,
for a while.

Drifted to shore
said to Hell with it all
climbed out on the bank and died.

Act I
Scene V

Life, Suffering.
Sin, and Death.
The Lens vaguely
focuses
on the last Frame.

I Realize my Mortality

Only now in viewing
do I know I have been
living. I yearn
to see the film again,
but can only hope
for the next reel.

Abbot Easterlin

REFLECTIONS AND DIALOGUE

This ache between my
shoulder blades sharpens
the pain found in my backwards
heart. Audible pounding really
a feverish throb.

“Love and be loved -
Share sorrow and moments of
laughter.”

“Possible?”

“No-Yes! - - - Where?”

“Here.”

“Sure - - - How?”

“I don’t know.”

Abbot Easterlin

A TRIP TOO FAR

Red Stars and Green Waves

Electric Flares!

I’m God I’m God

But I can’t climb the
stares.

Time drags and stutters

and finally stops.

My soul lusts for Leary

and I called the cops.

Abbot Easterlin



Skillet

SONG of the PLEIADES

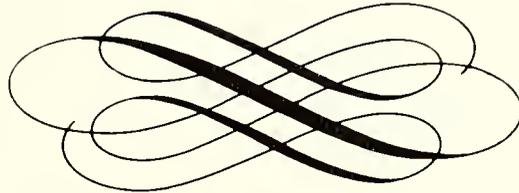
Hairpins slip from the trees
letting now fall heavy locks of snow.
Scrawny nestlings we, molt our grief
so we may dress in it anew.

We overpower the famished earth,
squatting upon it, finding new ways to flagellate ourselves.
We shall rip the landscape like a carpet from its ravelled sod,
and shake white crumbs from the flying cloth.

Who are these women comfortless
progeny of furies that eat their grief with spoons?
(A thick paste wherein our gods delight.)

We are those twice condemned.
We pull the moth eaten earth close about us,
We hunger for the salt of our own desolation.
Herd us, plow - pushed foam, into piles of useless beauty
for we know not what to do with our rotten limbs.

- anonymous



THE SORCERESS

The undeniable discovery of desire
Her magic is powerless to lift her beyond it,
Or the suffering of unfulfillment.
She is trapped within her own enchantment.

Irritation and apprehension silence beneath the irresistible
As she searches a heart for the reflection of herself.
Illusive glimpses - hope
She sends an undetected, or so she thinks, question into his soul;
Startled, she feels the watching eye of his mind beneath her own.
Fear . . .

Rage . . .

Flight . . .

The metaphysical odyssey intensifies beneath an anger -
Born as a facade to hide the pain.
Finally . . . return.

Determined Friendship;
Yet occasionally - the memory of the slight tug,
The touch upon her soul . . .
The feeling just beyond the rim of freedom she allows herself.

Nancy Taylor

DIVERGENCE

Broken images and shattered illusions -
The fragments drift through my mind;
But the blazing hope of before is
Gone with the wind which blew through me,
After I left you;
Taking with it the impression of
My hand in yours,
Our arms locked
As we sauntered beneath the brilliant November sky.

Blind to the tenacity of my dream,
I plundered on,
Startled by the swift movement
But checking only half-heartedly;
Loving the feeling . . .
The chance for fantasy to rebuild its
Castle in the sky.
Our multi-colored tweed veneer
Hid the striking core beneath.
As dark brown depths gazed into
Crystal blue,
I should have known.

You are colored with Lucy's diamonds and
Passionate midsummer nights' dreams;
While I remain locked in my
Ivory Tower,
Surrounded by White,
Maybe never to break loose
As you have.
The lioness pacing restlessly in her cage
Can never share the hawk's freedom.

So, the vibrance has faded,
But saved me from death.
Our souls may touch -
For that I am glad,
But they shall never melt -
Into one . . .

Nancy Taylor

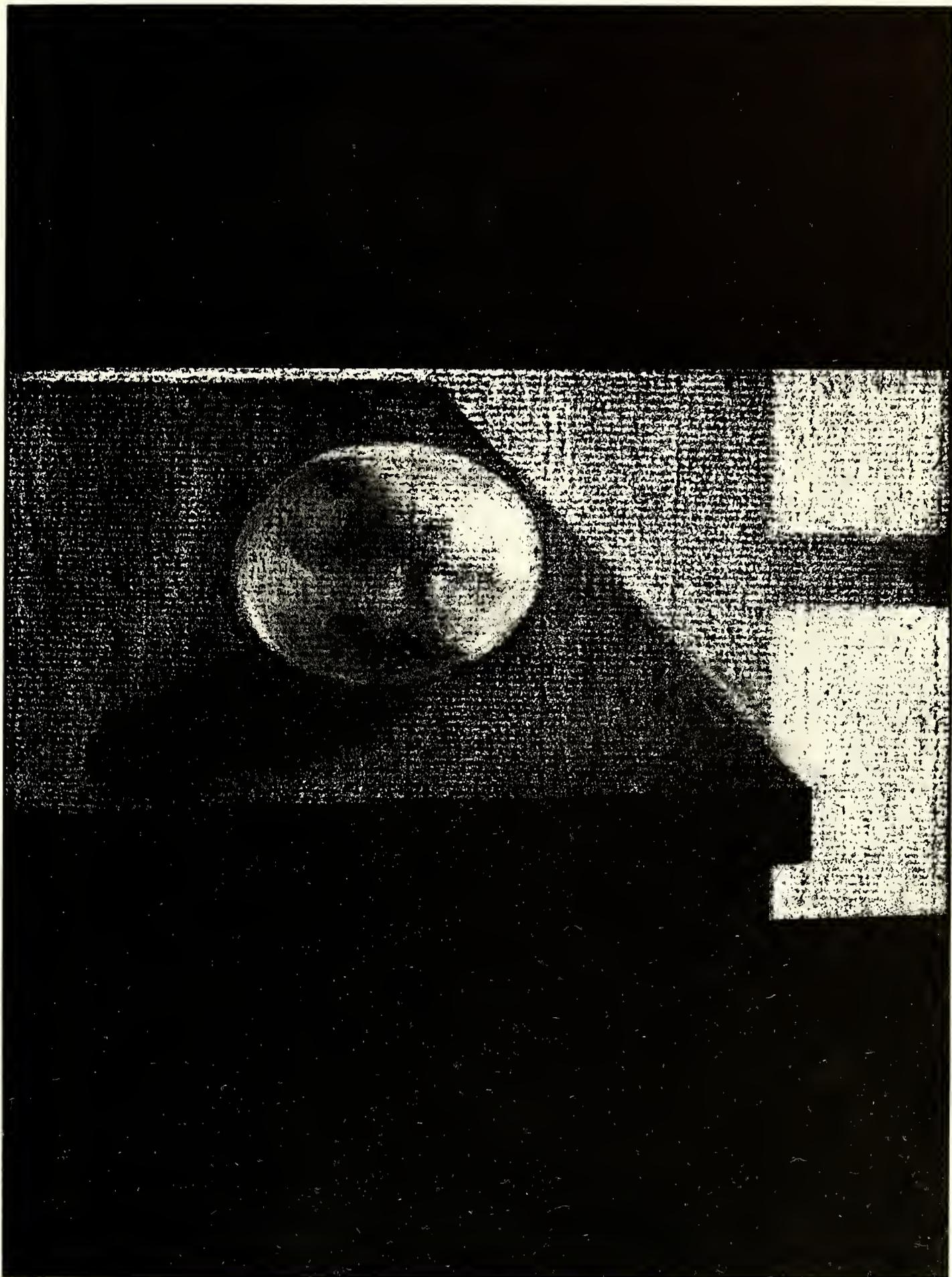


Pensive hands whose palms lay against the
Cold, unyielding glass;
She feels the warm, soft protection
At her back,
Suddenly despising this
Prison.

Outside, she watches figures
Shuffle beneath the leaden sky and
Chilling rain.
They would tell her she's better off
That she's a fool for wanting out -
But it doesn't matter.

"You are pure," they cry,
"Don't destroy that"
But it doesn't matter;
She hates her innocence.
Only after losing irrevocably this
Jewel which she views with
Pain,
Can she value what was
Once hers,
And never will be again.
She must know
For
Her
Self.

Nancy Taylor



"Egg on Table Near Window"
Rick Spackman

Dressing for the Count (for James Reiss - a contemporary poet)

It was at this time of wilderness
that you were found to play for
eloquently
And nothing could have been said
that was not repeated
with the rain-pressured kind of headache
that droned on edge of ignoring you altogether

You were sung
with the same little girlish mimickery
that wore white gloves to church
and black nylon scarves through the neighborhood
or watched babies
whispering with puckered face
“isn’t she cute?”
having not yet learned the silent gracefulness
of mothering

The design, the tone, the mood
it is all here

Here in Ohio

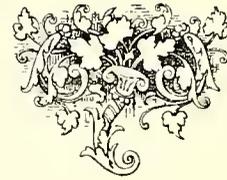
As the little girl watched breathlessly
the dressing and undressing of suburban trees
crawl along at an omnipotent pace
almost taunting, testing patience
mockingly -- summer will never end

She looked back up with cracking gum
“Cut the shit factor”

Now dowsed with adolescent chunks
of high-heeled blandness

Summer finally left without beauty
And Fall bulged full of still imitations
but the dress no longer fit.

Linda Ress



THE PARK

There is no place to hide
in this community field
no trees

nor overgrowth

A mock suicide
at the bank
of a sewage ravine
one foot up
and down

enough to get my feet wet
and feel a little destructive

Throw away friends
for destruction
smoke cigarettes
for tension
more tension
at tension
faced
and spit at

There is no holy comfort here
but ignorance
of the righteous traumas
that, looking back,
don't even exist

Its silly to feel
when asked “what”
so light a cigarette
and watch the joggers.

Linda Ress

CORPUS COLLOSUM

Corpus Collosum
A grand infinity
of consciousness
swept away
by neurological incisions
Soulless hormones dictating
the soul is an integral,
functioning mechanism
Corpus Collosum
The living breathing
history of emotional spanse
stripped
callously cut
Corpus Collosum

All that is
will always be
the romantics
the feelingless
Alpha Omega
Shaken

All hail
the physical fiberous
Corpus Collosum.

Linda Ress



THE HUMAN MIND

The smile meant
so much more
than met the eye
- - conflicting emotions
blossoming over
into a nervous reaction - -

End of analysis
on seeing an analyst
sorting emotions
on a sounding board
a school of thought
that denies art and religion
Creativity and Spirit

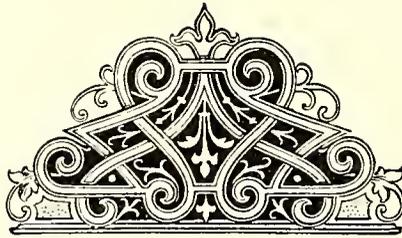
Each moment of time
is absorbed
in focused attention
living and breathing
alert at all times

Oh, to give over
to sensuality
or death
or any other such state
of oblivion

The attention continues
the focus continues
the eye of the mind fed on the tree
of knowledge
continues

And still it was only
comic relief
it was only
a smile.

Linda Ress



THE AUDIENCE

The wealth of words
resounds as glass
as dry drunkenness
as nothing
but a single I

Separated
and calling upward
alone - alone
damn - alone

And knowing
no such words
will ever break
the looming sky
of expectation
of growing out
of breaking down
of nothing more
than definition
through imagination

And rolling on
but still
 silent
 breathless
it is only the night
that hears the calling.

Linda Ress

ON DREAMING OF NOVA SCOTIA

“And none
can keep alive
his own soul” *
so cries the sea
with each roll
not a selfish strive
but a universal pull
within me

“And none
can keep . . .”
so monotone
yet it sings
as it drones
from the deep
‘not so alone’
as it brings

“his own soul . . .”
back to be filled
again I feel
the heart, strength pure
that will steal
away, self-willed
yet only healed
the sea will wholly cure.

* Psalms 22:29

Linda Ress

I. Earth

An only child
crying in the darkness
and looked upon
with hate and love

We step away
and look at you
our mother
whom we are still
embryos to

And you an only child
in Wiser Eyes
spin scarred
and objective

And who are we?
we demand
having cut the chord
of gravity
to sum you up
and scoff
and then recede

who are we
to gaze thus?

A mother of many
an only child
And who are you?

II. Earth

From this womb
that I have not yet left
I will find my birth
at my death.

III. Earth

Biting white
reflected under
a blue powdered sky
springs into
a light crunch
of purity

And laughs
as it flurries
and sets
through grinning teeth

I am my own
soothsayer
I gleam

Glory
to earth
that she will have me

And growth
not from dormant ground
but from shining pavement
glides on
past fate
for those of resentment

Brisk life
of love
of thin-aired winter
she will have me
as a prophet
as my own.

Linda Ress



LITTERAE ET ARTIS DOCTOR

He was an intellectual devoid of content,
Pronouncing “paraclete” with an anaptaxis
Thinking of perhaps who knows what Golden Age
Or Antiquity, when heroes, men, gods
And rivers sank singing in the indescribably
Clear light; while outside his cold flat,
Through his indescribably grimy window,
Mounted like statuettes on the stones of sidewalks
Under the cornices of buildings that irritated him
(considering them designed with an express conception
Of ugliness in mind), men stood clutching
Briefcases, hats, and newspapers. Frowning,
He closed his eyes and pursed his lips, and thought
Of the purity of line found in many classical
Museum pieces, he thought of a melody from Bach,
He thought of an epigram of Pope’s underlined
Carefully pencil in a volume on his shelf
He closed the curtain.

He was no child of his time.

Bill Meikrantz

I left my eyes hanging in the night’s closet;
Victim of tristesse, *fin de siecle nausee* and a certain *malaise*.
I combed my hair carefully and washed my face clean of metaphor
Making myself anonymous, lost in a forest of symbols
And test patterns: my prophet brings doorknobs,
Stolen milkcrates, and colored pieces of scissored paper,
Singing carelessly over the two channels of the radio.

I stand on a hill and look down on the city.
I weep for my generation. We stand like Janus
The three-headed dog, holding oranges in our
Right hands and masked by red rubber gloves.
(This girl copulates with him by strobelight
Guiding the scrupulousness of his probing with
Carefully placed dancesteps and oxymorons).

My fingernail is a metaphor for the passing of
Time; and this means I am free to do as
I please. I am free to shit on the ground.
This means that I am a poet and hold
No two things in my hand at one time: I
Am the betrayer of my age. This means whatever
La lecteur intends; In ye year A. D. hic ego feci amen.

Bill Meikrantz



A strong hot breeze was blowing toward the Algarve coast. From Africa, said the dark Portuguese men, *o deserto*. It swept up the waves that carried the red and green fishing boats up and down and in and out of sight. The young man stood with his bare feet buried in the warm yellow sand and every now and then a cool wave crept up to his ankles and sent a chill up his legs. He felt the fragments of shells lightly scratching his skin and the sand moving under the soles of his feet as if alive. He stood motionless and stared out over the water.

The sun hung low above the horizon and shed a purple hue on the rust-colored cliffs that rose up from the beach behind him. The fishermen had shrugged their shoulders at the wild waves when he had helped them drag their boats into the surf. They had smiled and bared their brown teeth that blended with their weatherbeaten faces. They had chatted in rapid flows of words and laughed and smoked before setting out. Now the young man watched their colorful boats dancing on the waves in the distance.

He thought about how these dark unshaven men lived from day to day, talking and joking and laughing in the warm sand until it was time to get up and slowly drag the barges into the water with their rough salty hands. They were never impressed with the rough seas and the beautiful colors they sailed into. They were part of the sea and part of the colors, never losing the cheer in life that was part of them.

The young man listened. In front of him the breakers crashed as if someone was playing a giant cymbal in a slow march of death. From the village behind the cliffs came the vague sounds of merry voices and music to which the inhabitants were dancing. Above his head sounded the shrill cry of a single seagull, drifting on the wind like the barges on the waves. He looked up and followed the bird with his eyes and thought how strong it must be, painlessly beating its wings against the steady hot breeze. I wonder what it'd be like to have a tame seagull, he thought, instead of a parrot that says things you don't want to hear all the time. I'd have to be near the ocean always, so he'd be happy and free to move about his elements. He must be happy and free, the young man thought, and reveal his secrets.

The sky was slowly turning into dark shades of purple and it was getting harder to distinguish the fishing boats. He turned around and looked up to the white house on the cliff and thought about his brother. Their own boat should have been there long ago. The others had stayed behind in San Remo to have repairs done on the riggings. Stephen's nerves were strung like violin strings. He refused to spend hours on the beach watching and waiting to see if any sails would appear in the east. Instead, he stayed inside and pored over maps and at times went to the window with binoculars. He would not go further than the top of the wooden steps that led down to the beach along the face of the cliff. In moments of calm he would bring his canvas out on the porch and work.

Michael climbed the steps and walked along the edge of the cliff toward the house. It was a large white house in the Algarvian style, surrounded by numerous parasol pines and richly colored flowerbeds. Giant red and yellow cannas blossomed among the small flowers and the pink-leaved bougainvillea crept up the outer walls of the house onto the roof. The grass was strewn with large pine cones that the men gathered to build fires with in the evenings. Often they grilled fish on the fire and drank the cool Portuguese wines in the peace of the night.

There was anxiety in the air then. Stephen's moods were sometimes violent but in the evenings he calmed down, worn out by the strain of cursing and boiling like a volcano. His work suffered from the tension. He was a good artist but had to move about. He could not be in the same place long and was always ready to pack his few belongings in a small trunk and set out. In his fury he cursed the white walls, only decorated with a Fernandes. When Michael entered, he got up from the couch and stared at him darkly from under his black brows. His eyes burned like coals above the greenish grey patches caused by lack of sleep.

"What's keeping those bastards?" he growled. Michael walked to the table where the bottle of gin stood and poured a drink.

"Mike, I can't hang around here much longer. The walls are moving in on me. I've got to weigh anchor. Why can't they send a telegram or something?"

"I don't know what's going on," Michael said, lighting an *SG*. "I just wish you would cool it on the drinking. Look at yourself, you're tired and you can't paint. You've got to keep your head clear. I'm sure they'll be here soon."

"What the hell else is there to do besides drinking?" Stephen said. "Don't you think we should try and call San Remo?"

"No way you'll get a line in this place. Let's just wait."

"I'm going nuts. I can't even work."

"You drink too much to be able to work. You've already smashed two canvases."

"I feel like smashing their Italian heads," Stephen said, pacing to and fro the glass doors that faced the ocean. The deep purple glow set fire to the room and Michael saw his brother's silhouette against the light, dark and restless. This place looks like hell, he thought, remembering Stephen's words.

"Maybe the repairs took longer than we planned," he said. "You know how they are in San Remo."

"Yeah, well, they should let us know. That Sahara wind blows to take me places, you know."

"Why don't you come with me to Sylvia's tonight? We'll take it easy and have a couple more drinks and talk to some people. It'll do you good."

"I suppose you're right. I'm about to climb these cursed blank walls. I've felt pretty much imprisoned all my life and I don't want to feel like that ever again. I'll go with you." Stephen sat down and leaned back with a sigh. "I just don't see how you can be so cool and read Pessoa and stand out there all day."

“You have to appreciate the beauty around you. This place is a paradise, or at least looks like one.”

“You know I do. You’ve seen my paintings. Aren’t they reflections of beauty?” Stephen gave a short laugh. “Aren’t they beauties in themselves?”

“Not when you put your fist through them,” Michael grinned. “No, but seriously, you know I think you’re good. You should go landinward a bit and look around. There are some fascinating landscapes back there. Don’t limit yourself to the porch. The boat will come soon.”

“Damn that boat!” Stephen jumped up and stood by the window. “See, it’s almost dark again. Every day it just turns dark and nothing comes along.” Michael watched his brother’s dark shape intently. The wind blows to take me places. He thought about Stephen’s words. Did he know then? he thought. The red purple hot winds seem to never end, pounding on these windows inexhaustibly to tell us so. You can stand in the warm sand and let your eyes fly over the waves and let the wind lift up your thoughts and carry them off. Where though? On the still, burning deck with your art the wind threatens your easel and your angry fist responds. The hot air envelops you and holds you motionless, and your eyes flash with anger. You can’t move. Warm winds from unknown places blow the unknown darkness to you and you wonder about their origins, the desert, the arid air that carries sounds and scents from one place to another. Where though? Inside the glow continues its mysterious motion into darkness on the walls around you. Only the Fernandes remains where it is, suspended from a nail and reflecting a glow more permanent. And your fists protest vainly...

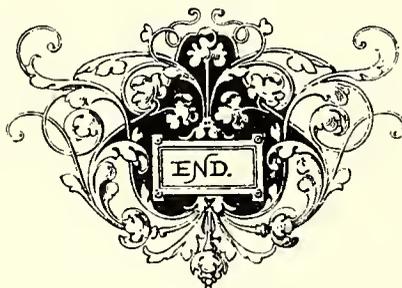
Stephen’s shape was now invisible against the blackness of the glass doors. Michael silently kept his eyes fixed on the place where his brother had been standing a year ago. You went because you had to be on the go, into the unknown. You are not coming back.

He is not coming back, he heard their father whisper once again, with dark shadows of grief around his tired eyes.

It’s all right to cry, son, their mother said softly through her tears. Afterwards he lay in his room at home in a numb swoon of nothingness. Time after time he felt the pangs of pain in his side, saw it flashing toward him, the sharp shining metal of colliding cars. He is not coming back, son.

Michael sat on the couch alone while through the window the pale sickle of the moon threw its sinister light on the walls. It too pounded on the glass silently, time after time. The sensations of flashing metal and piercing pain disappeared. He emptied his glass and stepped outside. On the porch he stood in the dark and stared at that last canvas, torn in the middle, a painting of their scented garden with an angry fist through it. Tomorrow I’ll hang it on the wall, he thought, clenching his fists until he felt pain creeping to his fingertips.

From among the cannas came the cheerful chirps of crickets and the quiet air carried the music from the village into the night. The wind had died down, he suddenly became aware of it. Slowly he went down the steps and walked over the sand until a wave sent a chill up his legs. He walked along the water. In the distance the lights of the fishing boats danced on the waves with the stars. He reached the opening in the cliffs and climbed the steps that led to the lively square. In the background the faint crash of the waves pushed him gently.



Fragment: An Arrival in London

Chip Loughlin

He had not known what to expect and he figured he was wise for it. Certainly he owned intentions, but he had not made them contractual with himself because somewhere he had learned that the best intentions are not rigid but embracing, are not determined but discovered at least as far as detail is concerned. So he was not surprised that his initial arrival in a foreign country did not confront him like a shock. At least now he was not, but he remembered his consternation on the first day, half worried he had missed it, that his ignorance had obscured the loud and clear announcement. The subterranean atmosphere of London's tube possessed a look like Boston: The color-coded tunnel maps, the flurry of people through ticket machines, the dead soot clinging to the walls and unobtrusive expressions of commuters, the loud clutter of the ads hung to occupy the eye. And streets bordered with red-brick flats were stretched like Philadelphia. Emerging with the gush of air from the Maida Vale tube and walking beneath the warm August sun, a duffle bag straining and straightening each arm, he had wondered what the difference was and wondered if it even mattered.

Only now did he understand that there had been an announcement. He had been unwilling to admit its occurrence because he was unprepared for its mode. Not what was announced but the announcement itself was the shock, He hadn't counted on napping that first afternoon. All of him had been determined to arrive in London, and he knew that an arrival was not the moment the sole of a shoe clapped down upon the solidity of the expected destination, not that moment only, but an accumulation of moments from the time the notion to go, to leave, first became accessible; so that the moment of arrival was a prolongation, something from which the body did not instantly, if at all, recover. He never expected that in the afternoon of day one, with the sun illuminating and deepening the shadowed flats across the street, he would permit himself the time to let go - only for ten minutes he thought - and sleep. But his body craved it, or rather accepted the opportunity: the taut muscles accepted the chance to release, relax upon themselves, like the weight of a sopping sponge upon a countertop. And now he thought that possibly his mind had also seized the chance to lose itself, extract itself from the impingement of the new circumstance, the need to balance and compare and weigh, slept even more soundly than his body slept, slackened back into some dark locality just short of forgetfulness. The ten minutes passed unheeded and stretched into the evening. Whether it was the hunger that echoed in his stomach or the noise from down the hall he half discerned, he wasn't sure, or maybe both those simultaneous projections shook him awake. He had attributed the rude snap to his body's half-sense of how long it had slept, the result of the action being a confirmation of how tired he really was. But something else had happened in that instant of awakening - the experience of it accounted then, the meaning of it only now perceived. His mind had lagged behind his body, was unable to awake in the same instant because it couldn't, as if it had traversed a farther road of retreat necessitating a longer return. Sleep had not just loitered round his senses, because his body shocked itself and was attentive. In that minute instant of his mind's return, that covered little more than a second on the clock but whole strata of days and experience, he did not know he was in London. His body had prepared itself to act but without a cognizance of place. As his mind ensconced the strata with the visible, he was re-impressed that he awoke in London.

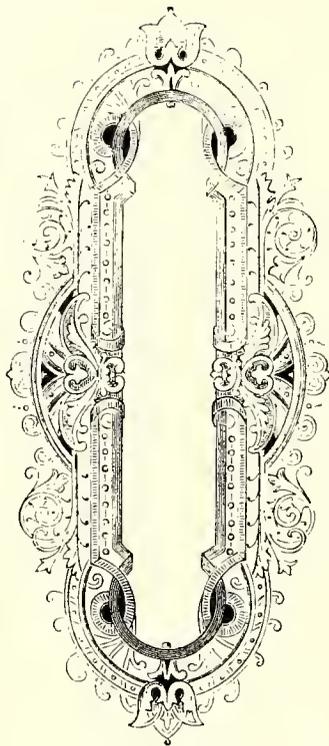
So that was the announcement - not the initial physical impression but the mind's quiet verification of place. And maybe that's what innocence is, he thought. Never having stepped out of one's province and then daring to do it, not only for the new sensations the step derives, but possibly half-knowing that you might see what you are for the first time - the what you thought you were being expunged in the unexpected and unfamiliar experience, the what you are responding, forcing itself upon your sense forever. Maybe the real innocence is believing in the possibility.

And that might be why the image haunted him so - originating is a casual look past his shoulder through an airplane window, and suddenly there lay the visage of land below him, undetailed and uncolored at dusk, a coastland impassively waiting, bearded by shaggy grey sea. Something he was leaving, something he had never seen before, to which he knew he should return . . .

ROUNDED SORROW

The outside was green
And sun-lit.
Now - on my desk
A short glass
Bottomed with
Two day old
Milk
Wancs.
After I put down
The phone
I got caught
Half way to my stove
In the half painted
Kitchen
And my tears hurried
Past my eyes
Down my cheeks.
keep looking towards
The sand colored boards
That I will nail
Together
At my own pace
Leaving everything
To go back outside.
And this evening
sit in a blue chair
With a book,
And vacancy
And stillness.
The melted reds of sun
Catch me
Through white panes.
And the corn cob
Lays crooked
In a brown bowl
Waiting bare
Without kernels.

Margaret Melvin
February 27, 1981



VERMONT AGAIN

There was a time
Over-drawn
Undersized
We kissed
Inside our
Own rhythms
And ran into
Tides too tall.
Sitting across from you
In another
Twilight
Of my life
We wavered
On talk
And pinnacles.
I wondered how I ever
Could have lived there.
I did,
To the barn each day
Back home,
With only the
Company of
That radio
Ashes, my cat
And you
Occasionally.
Why did I have to fight?
For the opportunity?
You loved others
More than me.
I don't understand it.
Our differences so wide
Still we could
Have rocked through
Star-lit nights
In a laughable
Agreeable way.
Seems like you
Never stayed
Long enough.
But the sparkle
Of you
Rises through me
I am not without you,
Even though
You are a thousand green miles
Away
I still know
Your watchful gaze.

Margaret Melvin
December 7, 1980

THE GROUND UNDER-FOOT

I walked
Late into the day,
And stood
At the tracks
Seeing
The reckless orange
Sun
Trying to go down.

I tried to be
Still,
And watch
It sink
Back.

Just like
The old days
I felt flushed
And better.

Limbs gathered
Upward
Against houses
That fell quiet
And white
So close to pavement.

Margaret Melvin
Jan 7, 1981



David Nikias

I am only the occupant
Temporarily renting
This dwelling called life.

April Adler



Cynicism sadism
narcissism masochism
pessimism optimism
Enough isms to
envelope the world
tight enough to squeeze the
Life out of it

But there are no
isms
to explain the
way I feel
the way I act
to help get me
through this
ismic time.

April Adler
January 26, 1981

Oblivion

A closed mind
closed eyes
turned off body
tuned out soul
to all that
revolves
communicates
thinks

Fantasy

Lands of chocolate
and
dreams that come true-

Horror

high pitched screeches
that pierce the
darkness, shattering consciousness

Pink green and white clouds

whispering across the horizon
bringing the promise of
a new day

A smile

in reflection of
the past few hours
or

Perhaps

a frown of dismay
of what was thought
really felt
within the
psyche

April Adler



The seagull sights its prey
from high above
amidst the thickness of the clouds
and the blaring heat of the sunshine

Through the dredged dirt of the water
he spies his sustenance and
instantly captures it
carries it to a secluded spot
devouring it greedily
constantly on the lookout
for those enemies
who may take away his prize

Man, equally
selfish
takes all he can
for himself
giving none, sharing nothing

And in the end
loses it all
although
Unlike the animal
Had the opportunity
to gain.

April Adler



The sun's rays filter through the trees, bestowing warmth
across the earth. Mushrooms collectively gather amongst the
uncared for regions of the lawn. Sap runs down the pine trees
in white goey streams where the hammock hung not long ago.
Suddenly, dusk falls and the brilliant colors of the sky fade
into a nothingness of black. A time to rest, a time to love,
a time to die.

April Adler



Terry Hammond

A SHORT HISTORY

Allen Dye

The end of my European adventure is here. I have gone through many experiences since leaving America, and it would be very easy to say that they have changed me, but there is a sense in which I remain unchanged. I find that within myself there is a certain kernel of genius, an integrity of thought, a stable center that has, if anything, been made more distinct, more recognizably my own through the experience of the past four months. Somehow in the process of active growth and expansion, in the continual confrontation of choice, this nucleus of my awareness has gained strength. It has become more itself than ever. I find that this part of me, that place in which I am most artlessly myself (in the sense that there is no conscious drive or choice involved in being so) has become more well-defined and is a much more apparent point of reference with each new confrontation. It has assumed much more pronounced shape and dimension like a path that becomes more distinct with repeated use. Before I embarked on this journey I expected to be changed by it. The idea that I would change it and in the process become more myself is a bit startling.

I first began to recognize this while considering the idea of "history," in association with "experience." To me history had always had very disconnected associations. History was the past, the dead, events that were unaffected by the present and affected it much like the first domino in a cascading chain. The present was merely the most recent link in a forever falling series.

I began to formulate the idea that the present was much more than that, in fact I began to realize that it was the very key to history. With surprising ease the notion emerged of a history alive in the moment, an ever advancing, ever changing, richly resonant history that was continually emerging in the present. The present moment, forever pressing forward into the future, became in my mind the vanguard of history. Time - all time, from the dimmest past to the equally shrouded future - assumed the shape of an infinity of strands strung through the bead of the present, moving swiftly before the onrushing tide of history. I had been living my life as a disconnected bead moving without direction past countless distant points of light. Suddenly these points became part of a vast web with my present at the center, a web that passed through me and supported me, and in which every vibration would effect every other part.

This type of association with the world is true learning. Learning is no more than the process of recognizing something outside as being part of ourselves. Everything is learned this way. Multiplication tables are meaningless until they are understood to be rooted in the foundations of one's universe. Until we can honestly say of something - "yes, it *has* to be," it does not exist for us. Everything that is learned is only done so by discovering its place within us. This is what is known as "internalization," and it is achieved only through honest acceptance of something as a necessary part of the universe.

Emerson wrote that a glass could withstand the shock of the ocean if it were filled with the same water. What is learning but the process of opening the doors through which the water may enter? The mind does not parallel the universe, it equals it. There is no microcosm and macrocosm, there is only the cosmos. This is the best way I can think of to describe the true confrontation with history. It is the act of opening up, of humbling oneself before the ocean of time and filling oneself before the ocean of time and filling oneself with it. In filling one's glass with this water I found that the integrity of the glass is indeed strengthened.

This is not an act which, once performed need not be repeated. With every new experience the doors must be reopened. The glass must be refilled. But I don't think of this as an effort. It is an opportunity.

My trip to Stonehenge was just such an experience; rich with content and forming the foundation of a realization which occurs often these days, and yet is new and unique each time. While in the presence of these stones I had a deep sense of being again and always at the center of the web.

The hill was bounded by two highways like a huge scissor stretched across the landscape. The single road approaching from the east divided at its base and disappeared in two paths into the horizon. About one hundred yards beyond the dividing of the way, perched above its surroundings on a barren, windswept eminence, were the bare bones of Stonehenge. All around a clear sky and bright sun belied the bone - chilling temperature. There were no trees or bushes to visibly indicate the gusting wind that seemed to knife through one's ribs - an easterly wind - merciless and persistent. All was silent but for the wind. An occasional car or truck passed by on the highway, momentarily distracting one from the scene. After a while these intrusions began to melt into the experience like audible commas.

On the curved back of the hill a soft but easily visible circular trench had been sunk into the hard earth. It is this circle, the boundary, the beginning and the end of the structure that is the key to Stonehenge. In this the most significant of places for stoneage man, the circle is the most important figure.

There is something very special about a circle. A circle has neither beginning nor end, front nor back, it divides the universe into "inside" and "outside." If one stands at any given point on a circle the view is always the same. The heavens appear to move in circular motions, but this is an illusion created by our own rotation. The circle is a cross-section of the sun, the moon, the earth. The eyeball is the circular window through which we view the world. Life began as a single cell, probably circular in shape. Modern mathematics tells us that the universe is curved. A circle is one unending curve, continuous and unchanging. The wheel, that much applauded vehicle of our technology was probably man's first invention. (Fire was not an invention but a discovery.) There is magic in a circle. The circle represents repetition in the absence of change. To run in a circle is to continuously retrace your steps. This is the universe of our ancestors, one of infinite seasonal repetition. Their model for history was a circle.

In the center of the circle, shattered and broken as if hurled from a tremendous height, stand or lie a jumble of monolithic stones. Some lie like the ruins of the skeleton of some great beast, others stand upright like huge post and lintel doorways. These stones, the only existant markers of the prayers of a dead people, have been said to point towards the heavens like a prehistoric observatory. Others have said that they point towards the past, towards a long buried time obscured by distance and darkness. When I saw them I felt that they were pointing, above all else, to me. These stones spoke to me of death, of the decay of a culture, a culture that was rotting while Pompeii was a bustling, living society. Stonehenge began for the purpose of prayer. It was the means through which a people drew strength from their world. Now, 5000 years later, it tells of the death of these people, of a once greatness now passed under the ground, and it still speaks of strength.

Stonehenge is a haunted place, but it is haunted by things far stranger than ghosts of the past. Our own spectres wander about these stones, rustling dryly like bones in the wind.

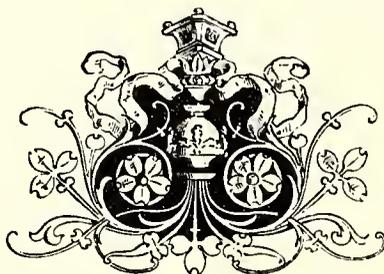
Stonehenge is a meeting place, but it is more than a deserted meeting place for long dead tribes. Here gather Druids, "Beaker People," Celts, Jews, Chinese and Arabic, Christian and Pagan in the greatest ceremony that life has to offer, the ceremony of the pentecost.

Death is a reality. It is death that prunes the withered leaves of a race. Without death there could be no life. Perhaps this is what Eliot meant when he wrote that anything that is only alive can only die. Death must be a part of life for life to go on. Death is the shaper not the destroyer. It is the opposition supporting life. Death is synonymous with change. We must fill ourselves with death, open the doors and windows that death may enter and fill us. In this way will we withstand the shock of death - the fear of oblivion. The fear of death is the end of life. To accept death as a companion is to be reborn.

In the ashes of Stonehenge lie the bones of many peoples, ours among them. This is the great humbling principle. Our time is a turning of the way, just as was theirs. Our time is a small but integral part of the way, as was theirs. Every age, every moment is a nexus for change, but in choosing it is important not to discard. When faced with choice, choose one but do not forget the other. For every path chosen, an infinite number remain untravelled. It is in this realm that potential is most alive.

Mankind has the power of wielding symbol. This power forces certain choices and realizations on every man. The most powerful symbol is that of death. A pigeon in the road accuses us. A graveyard whispers secrets that we all know. The measure of man is the way in which he reacts to this symbol, for it cannot be ignored for long. The people of Stonehenge found the circle and in it found their answer. The Christians found the line, a symbol of progress, advancement and direction, and in it found their answer. Today we see the fragments of each and must find our own path.

I suggest that we look towards the spider web - interconnecting intersections, lines forming a circle - and in it find our answer. Time as a web becomes one vast nexus, every moment brings reevaluation and choice. I think that we will find that in the choice of the moment, in the act of life and in the act of death we can only find the beginning.



PAPILLON

- to Jane

High you soar
On powdered wings,
On tender petals
You alight;

The Sun your source
The dew-drops dries -
My bitter tears sip
Spirit fair,
As they glisten
In the early light;

White pink sticky buds
Look up
And choir quiet fragrance
To your fragile flight -
Gentle Psyche.

Leblanc.



ACT IV

from: DARKNESS AT GESTHEMANE

Bill Meikrantz

Several chairs arranged around a rug in the center of the stage area, suggestive of a living room. A woman enters and sits in one of the chairs. She does not move and is silent for quite a length of time, but finally speaks.

Woman: Where will we put the Jesus.

She looks around her, resumes her fixed position, and repeats:

Woman: Where will we put the Jesus.

She looks at the audience.

Woman: Jesus is in my heart. (Pause. Looks away.) Where will we put the Jesus.

Sound of a doorbell.

Woman: (jolly) Ding-dong!

Enter 2nd Woman, the neighbor. She sits down.

2nd Woman: It is so hot outside.

1st Woman: Yes.

They change chairs.

1st Woman: We are getting a new Jesus.

2nd Woman: We have thought of that. (pause) Where will you put it.

The first woman looks terribly anguished. The second notices and covers awkwardly:

2nd Woman: Yes well I suppose it depends on how it comes.

1st Woman: (quite earnestly): Jesus is in my heart.

2nd Woman: (gently) He is in my heart too.

1st Woman: (sighs)

2nd Woman: You--

1st Woman: I was just thinking of all the people that do not have the joy of Jesus in their hearts.

2nd Woman: Yes.

1st Woman: (to herself); Where will we put the Jesus.

The 2nd woman starts to say something but checks herself.

1st Woman: Jesus saves us from our sins.

2nd Woman: Would you like to give your testimony?

1st Woman: This morning the alarm went off at seven a.m. We got up. We showered and shaved and readied for work. We cooked our breakfast. We cooked it on the range, the new range from Burdines. We used the special pan that nothing sticks to, not even scrambled eggs and toast and butter and a glass of orange juice and a glass of water. We drove off in the car. We did the laundry. We made our lunch. We ate some cottage cheese--

The phone rings.

1st Woman: Cottage cheese, and--

It continues to ring.

1st Woman: --and lettuce; it was a salad. (Pause. The phone is still ringing.) I will get the phone.

She goes off. She comes back on.

1st Woman: That was Burdines.

2nd Woman: Are they bringing the Jesus.

1st Woman: They didn't say.

2nd Woman: (After a short pause) That was a lovely testimony.

1st Woman: Jesus has changed my life.

2nd Woman: We drove the children to school this morning. They had their school clothes on and they were carrying their lunchboxes. We drove back home and put on our tennis dress and shoes and socks and our tennis hats and (sighs) our tennis pants. There was no small number of people waiting for a free court. We talked about what Jesus had done in our lives. I had a drink. It came in a can and had less than one calorie and I put forty cents in the machine, a quarter and a nickel and a dime. Forty cents.

1st Woman: That was a beautiful testimony.
2nd Woman: I have the joy of Jesus in my heart.
1st Woman: (after a short pause) Would you like a drink? We have some tab.
2nd Woman: It is hot outside. Thank you.
1st Woman: Yes I don't know what we would do without the air-conditioner in this heat.

She exits to get the drinks.

1st Woman: (entering and sitting as before): Here you are.

They change chairs. The doorbell rings. Enter 3rd woman.

3rd Woman: Hello.
1st Woman: Hello.
2nd Woman: Hello.
3rd Woman: It is so hot outside. (Pause). The gala came off well last night we thought.
1st Woman: Yes. We all enjoyed the gala.
2nd Woman: I'm sorry we weren't able to be there.
1st Woman: Would you like a tab?
3rd Woman: Thank you. It is so hot outside.

1st woman exits.

2nd Woman: They are getting a new Jesus.
3rd Woman: Is Burdines bringing it?
2nd Woman: They didn't say.
3rd Woman: We don't have Jesus in my house.
2nd Woman: My.
3rd Woman: We gave ours to the Salvation Army.
2nd Woman: Oh.
3rd Woman: They will give it to a needy family.
2nd Woman: Jesus is in my heart.
3rd Woman: Yes. (Pause.) He is in all our hearts.
2nd Woman: You should get a new Jesus.
3rd Woman: I don't know where we'd put it.

1st woman enters carrying a tab and a book. She gives the 3rd woman her tab.

1st Woman: I wanted to show you my book. I just got it from the library.

She passes it around.

1st Woman: I just can not put it down.
2nd Woman: I must read it then.
3rd Woman: Yes, let us know when you are finished.

The 1st woman takes the book and gets up to exit.

1st Woman: Would anyone care for some more tab?
2nd Woman: Yes, please (offers her glass).
3rd Woman: No thank you, I still have plenty.

1st woman exits with book and glass. 2nd and 3rd woman change seats.

2nd Woman: We were saying our testimonies.
3rd Woman: Yes. You have Jesus in your hearts.
2nd Woman: Would you like to share with us?
3rd Woman: We don't have Jesus in our house.
2nd Woman: Yes. That's right.

1st woman comes in, with tab for 2nd woman. She offers it. They all change chairs.

3rd Woman: Yesterday, I met a very curious man. He had some canvas on a wooden frame, and he was dabbing on it with small brushes and various colors. The effect was quite striking.

1st Woman: Yes, but think if the painters had done our living room like that.

2nd Woman: The effect certainly would be striking.

The women all laugh:

The three women: Ha ha ha.

1st Woman: Oh, I think I know what you mean. Just a minute.

She exits.

3rd Woman: Several people last night at the gala were talking about it. No one understood it but they all agreed the effect was striking. They are forming a guild.

2nd Woman: How lovely.

The 1st woman enters carrying a portrait of Jesus. It is that familiar face from countless sunday school pictures, awards, bibles, etc. She holds it up.

2nd Woman: I see what you mean.

3rd Woman: That looks like our old jesus.

The 1st woman sits and leans the painting against her chair. They all change chairs.

1st Woman: That was a lovely testimony (to 3rd woman).

3rd Woman: We do not have jesus in our house.

1st Woman: Jesus is in my heart.

2nd Woman: The joy of jesus has changed my life.

3rd Woman: Yes. (Pause.)

1st Woman: Is anyone hungry? We have some crackers and cheese.

2nd Woman: That would be lovely. Although I should watch my figure. Well I could have just one, with just the tiniest bit of cheese.

3rd Woman: The same for me. I really must be serious about my diet.

1st Woman: Isn't it hard though. I know just what you mean. Anyone for more tab with their cracker?

2nd Woman: Please.

3rd Woman: Yes, thank you.

The 1st woman exits with the three glasses. She enters with a tray holding three glasses of tab and three crackers with little bits of cheese on them. The doorbell rings.

The 1st woman sets the tray on her chair and exits. She comes back on followed by a delivery man carrying a very large box that looks like it holds a cross with someone on it.

1st woman (striding in triumphantly): Burdines has brought the jesus!

She signs for the package, which the delivery man leaves on the floor center stage. He exits.

3rd Woman: What a great joy for you.

The 1st woman serves them their crackers and tab.

3rd Woman: But where will you put it.

The 1st woman jolts and drops the tray. She stands, stunned.

2nd Woman: Oh my.

3rd Woman: Well I really must be going. Thanks so much for the tab. (She pauses a moment on her way out.) Oh, I dread going out into that heat again. Thank goodness for the air-conditioning in the car.

She exits. The 1st woman sits down slowly, still shaken. She stares straight ahead of her.

2nd Woman (gently): Would you like us to pray about it.

The 1st woman makes no reply. The 2nd woman gets up to leave.

2nd Woman: I'll see you at church Sunday.

1st Woman (absently); Yes.

The second woman leaves quietly. After a while, the doorbell rings. The delivery man enters.

Man: Excuse me, but we have delivered this to the wrong house.

He picks up the box and carries it out. The 1st woman sits, for quite a long time, as at the beginning. She may change chairs once or twice. Finally, without saying anything, she exits. After a short pause, there is the sound of a gunshot from off stage.

Another pause, but not as long this time. Finally, a man enters. He is carrying a briefcase and his jacket. His tie is loosened about his neck and his collar button is undone. He sets down his briefcase and puts his coat on a chair. He looks around, notices the dropped tray, the glasses and crackers. He goes off and quickly comes back on.

Man (scratching his head): I wonder has the jesus come.

END



Naomi Donovan

THE LAST ONE

James Ellis

Prologue: The Old Man Genius

Explosion--a flash. Eyes open wide, wider asking where. And sudden smell, ominous odor, not quite definable smell of science formulae for all creation. Now destruction. Hard wind, leaves fly, ripped from home to withered, brittle death. Kindle the flame, living. (Killing). As particle, cell, the whole, the soul tear screaming: mushrooms.

The old man genius, hair helter-skelter, with wrinkles, long mustache, sits in pipe-smoke staring at future glancing to now--world helter-skelter.

Part I

BEING

Dream

Nights torture. With darkness, fear of the bump in the night--mouse or monster? With sleep (I dread it!), visions, unordered motion, disjointed mind-meanderings through soup of blur shape color. I can't escape the dreams.

In dark, eyes close to dark and noises swell, Incessant heartpounding, swish of blood. Then senses fade to nothing for only moments, till sight--the sight of less-than-worldly, or more-than-worldly, but never nothing. Never the longed-for freedom of simple empty blackness.

They keep coming back, not the same always, but near enough to haunt with *deja vu*. The faces of people screaming, mouths wide as caverns. Ghosts really, with cavities--people I knew or maybe never saw but surely couldn't help. No one could help or stop it either once the first one blew for ruin. I wonder sometimes can he see what men have made of the secrets held in the tiny parts he used to make them. Men will not know it was their own parts that they bridled and that finally destroyed them.

Does he look at all anymore?

Sunbeams

Black almost but speckled, night, while I toss with the anxious sleep that terrifies, fades to softer purple. Red and orange on edges now, lavender clouds frame the growing sun, the sun that gives me light. The light that brings my one relief from darkness. Sunbeams through the dusty curtainless window hit me full in the face. Scratchy red eyes open, blink once. At last! Reprieve in the light, the movement of morning air and my own blood. Reprieve from wandering, screaming ghosts, the puking haunts once human, living now as the which I, in darkness, must endure. Spirits only--memory. Or imagination.

Part II

SEEING

Reflections/Faces

Mirrors don't care for my feelings. I'm ugly now--terribly. The glass bounces me to myself without encouragement. Damned reflection! Almost laughing, it has no world to face. Appearance means it nothing. If only I could be reflection, and some other live this dreadful isolation.

To face a world alone! Terrifying thought--the reality to which I'm chained. Nowhere to turn for approval but inside. No criticism even. No conversation--human voices only in the mind, then screams of the dying (the dead), the cavities ghosts which call me from the dark. Distorted faces, rubbery spirits. *Spirits*. No human comfort to be found in them. Only greater desperation.

Times were good once. For centuries we kept our fingers (all of them) out of the trap. But then we slipped. We got bitten. "Bigger and better! More, make more, and stronger!" was our cry. Finally we couldn't recognize ourselves. We tried to play the Being, only we worked not to create but to destroy. But nobody knew. "To *prevent* destruction," the cry of all who would build them, bigger and better, more, more, and stronger.

Explosion. A flash. The first one was done. In the light and the mushroom the trap was sprung. The secret destruction held in the bits of all creation was found, and became our obsession. Men did not think on the parts they had bridled--their own parts.

I have no outside world to face me now. No place to turn but inward, where I see only nightmare faces and hear only screams or choking last breaths that are never my own. Dreadful isolation.

Does he look at me?

Time

My watch is long since dead. But I wear it still, frozen at 12:15. So I have twice a day the right time. Only I don't know which two moments are exactly those. And now seems never finished. I have no notched pole as did Robinson Crusoe. Yesterday, today, tomorrow--this notch or that--fade into one another, and all are the same. I have only dark and light for division, and then not even time but experience. Dark is the home of the ghosts and my nightmares, dreams I can't escape. Light is a pause in the darkness. A chance to see what is, if only ruin. At least not ghosts.

Was and *is* are all I know. How long? No matter. Alone, one day is a hundred, and the hundred the same as the one.

Words

Books mean nothing to one who has no more to learn. Why learn? There is none left to teach or be taught. The story is told. Our trouble was too much learning and too much desire to learn. And where are we now for all our learning?

We, indeed. Where am I for all our learning? Alone. Alone with my nightmares and words whispered softly to myself, and books. Mostly books of science, math, or history. Books of our lasting knowledge, the things to be passed on forever (and true), not the stuff of poets and songwriters. I wish there were a poet here to laugh.

The few books left me have come to be boring. The same words, the same lewd poses I've seen times beyond count. No feeling. The empty pages we once held high, and honored.

Existence is boring. But it will not be I who end it. I'm afraid of my end; I don't want to see that I was wrong to look ahead, beyond the stone--I may have been right, but I'm afraid to know. And I'm afraid of becoming another nightmare spirit, screaming out of deaf ears or no ears words which have meanings only when heard.

I remember the one book it seemed everyone talked about. They quoted or argued pro-con, and said nothing final. It's the only book I have that I never finished. A book of many books, and half of us read it, half believed it; not one of us knew really what it said.

The last book in this is the one I read now, again and again. The ones who talked ignored it mostly; they were concerned too much with miracles, and not enough with the end. But it came--with clouds and fire. The book had told it! But we never listened. The book was only words, and leftovers at that, from time beyond where we comprehended. Now the story's told, and the ones who sat and argued aren't here to see that the words were true.

Part III

WONDERING

Leaves

Fall never never comes anymore. The leaves don't turn; there are only about five trees I've seen since I had to live here alone (how long ago?--no telling. I've lost the time we ran by) that had leaves anyway. The evergreens are all that's near green anymore, and they're mostly a dingy almost-brown. I don't know how long it will be now.

I do a lot of walking. Scraping ragged shoes through dirt, wood, and used-to-be bricks on the paths we carved for ourselves to follow. They were supposed to be forever. *We* were supposed to be forever. But then forever is not-time; we and our paths were timely things, existing by and in and for a thing that never was, outside our minds.

That book keeps drawing me back. The last part--the end of a book telling the end of man. Prophecy: to me, in past tense. And I keep wondering does he look anymore.

Behold, he cometh with clouds....

I remember the first one as though I were there, from pictures in the science books. I remember the last one because I was there. Blinding, almost earthquake, and the clouds--enormous mushroom umbrellas, rising to shield us from...what?

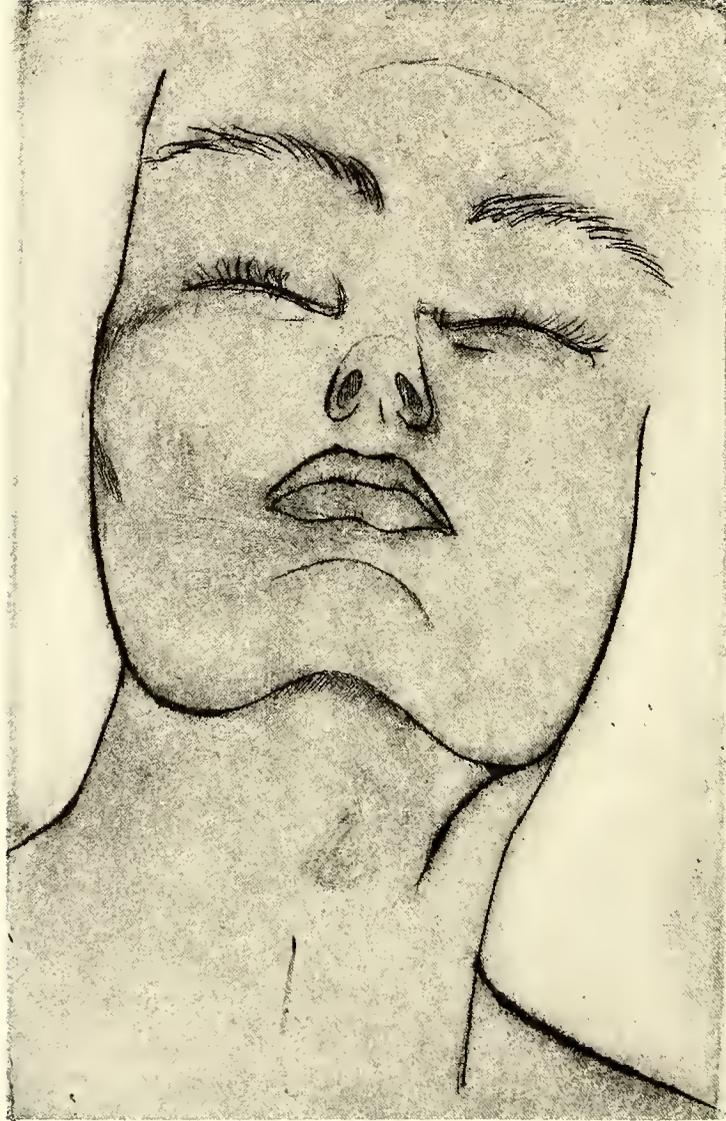
with clouds

It was him! He had been there, and the screaming ghosts that haunt my night are the ones who forgot--forgot to be ready. Forgot that maybe the words would be. They had to be, and the coming began with a thought in the mind of an old man genius. And from the moment of that thought to the moment man's tiny parts destroyed him there was nothing we could do to help. We never knew; the words were only leftovers from a time and a science we thought we'd outgrown.

Why was I too left behind?

To be a hell for the screaming, puking spirits, a mind where they would exist. I to be their hell, they to be mine.

I wonder when it will be over, and I can leave this world that moves inside of me.



Anne Stekete



NONCONTACT

by Mark Foxworth

I saw a man down the street
and wondered if he might
partake a chance to meet
the opposite figure within his sight.

His clothes, so worn, and dirty dark.
His face, so ragged, revealed such strife.
His eyes, so dull, showed wisdom's mark.
His noble bearing, betrayed by life.

Though we were as different as could be
I was sure that such a man as he
would stop and try to talk to me.

And as he drew near his eyes I sought
readied my mind to receive his thoughts,
Then he passed
- contact done -
The Bum.

What do the dead communicate?

I know that the dead are with us still. We all breathe the shadowy air of the Parthenon and move through the crumbled walls of Ur. The shades of the dead lean heavily upon our shoulders whispering in our ear with the sound of leaves turning to dust. I have often asked myself how and of what do they speak?

They speak to me most clearly in museums. In these sterile halls enclosing the battered fragments of the past, the dead have spoken to me of two things that are really one. It is something that does not easily lend itself to the distillation of words, but to put it into a somewhat trite phrase, they speak to me of the commonality of death, and that in commonality there is life.

Their speech has been likened to tongues of fire.

In fire there is both the apocalyptic flame of death and the light and warmth of rebirth. The pentecostal fire of the flaming Phoenix is both an end and a new beginning.

While contemplating the ruins of a classical temple I was struck by the realization that as the long dead builders of this place of worship once stood in front of the bones of their ancestors, so I now stood before theirs, and so our own progeny will someday stand over ours. There is a procession to history in which death plays as much a part as life. We see the bones of our dead and we see ourselves seared by time, but in so doing we may also find a harbinger of the future appearing like a salamander from the ashes.

When we realize that life without death is a one-sided coin, that life must emerge from death, that death is not an ending, but like a flame brilliantly proclaims a new beginning, when we see history for what it is without blame or regret, then existence gains a startling new meaning. We see with assurance that life continues in the jaws of death, indeed it thrives there. The dark spectre of death, in the end, becomes but a punctuation in the endless rhythm of life.

Allen Dye



