


Spring 1979

et cetera

Marshall University

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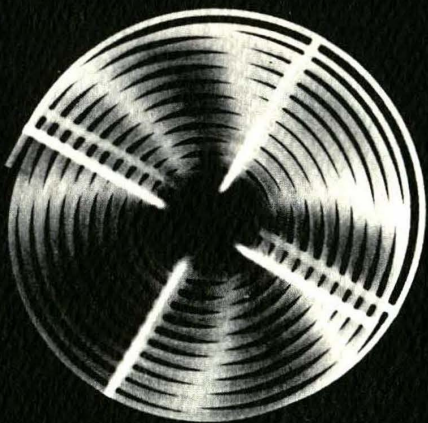
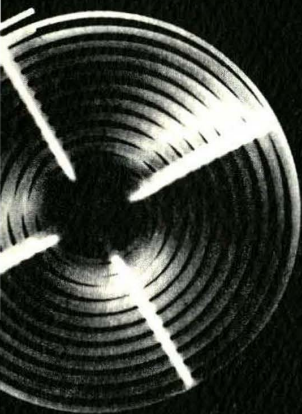
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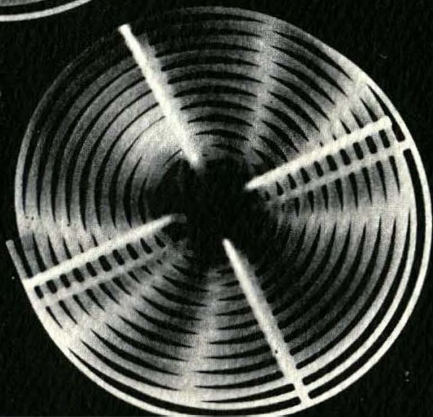
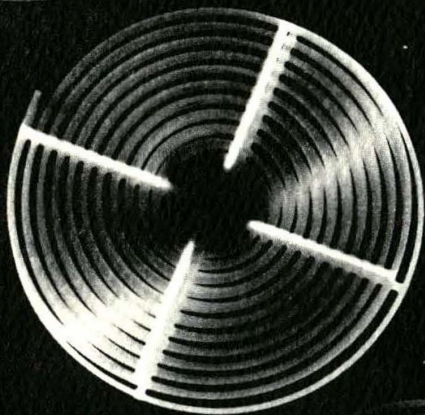
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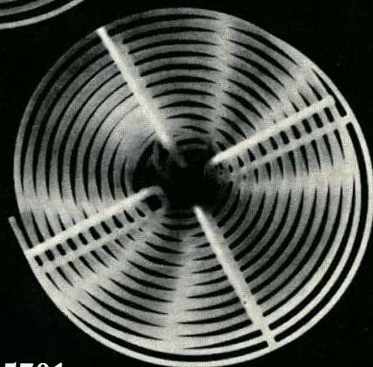
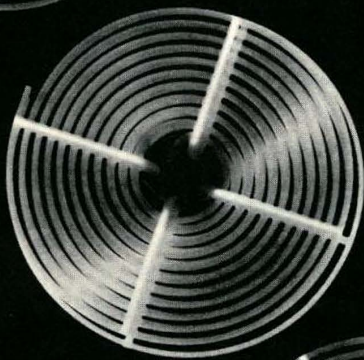


et cetera





*et cetera*



**Spring 1979  
Marshall University  
Morgantown, West Virginia 25701**

## Editor's Foreword

The et cetera is published annually through the efforts of an unpaid, not-so-organized student staff and is financed solely by the twenty-five cents taken from each student's activity fee. It is a child of the English department, but students of any major who are interested in some aspect of the magazine's production can work on the staff. The nature of the publication results usually in a predominance of English, journalism, and theatre majors.

The purpose of et cetera is to enable talented student writers and artists to share their work with the university community. Students involved in the arts do not, unfortunately, communicate their efforts to thousands of fans and alumni in huge arenas, and writers have particularly limited opportunity to "perform" in the public eye and thereby to grow as artists with something to express. Poems and short stories are not lived out before one of Mr. Greenwood's vivid worlds, nor hung in a gallery for congenial if perhaps benighted onlookers; they do not float balanced above satin slipcovers, nor come passionately from uplifted horns. This is it: flat white page, those same black letters that explained photosynthesis in Biology 101 and tell you what's in the granola every morning. Words-like color, sound, movement, light, emotion-are so ordinary that every day they are an integral part of normal human life, yet the touch of a gifted personality twills them into something exceptional, new, revealing.

Because of the minimal attention given to the realm of letters, the et cetera has tried to define its role broadly to fill in gaps for Marshall writers. It has tried to become, in its limited way, a little more than a magazine, through sponsoring activities that promote the kind of atmosphere needed to help a writer get his place. This year we had two workshops, one given by Don Hatfield of The Huntington Advertiser on getting published (something he has accomplished in various publications with both fiction and nonfiction), and the other given by poet Stanley Plumly, who discussed original poetry submitted to him by Marshall students. Mr. Plumly, who has published several books of poetry, also gave a reading of his work. This kind of activity is very important, not only for the nurturing of budding writers, but I believe for the fulfillment of Marshall's role as a university.

The first concern of et cetera, however, is encouraging and recognizing quality writing. This year monetary awards were given. Awards were made from the material chosen by the editorial staff for publication. Work by the staff, except for that by the editor and poetry

editor, was eligible to win, and hence the editorial staff did not vote on the awards themselves.

Other cash awards for writing, the Teel and Jesse Stuart Awards, are given by the English department, but *et cetera* has emphases these do not. The Teel Awards were originally created for excellence in freshman composition, and the addition of the special category Upper Division came about only recently. The Jesse Stuart Awards, while open to all students and genres, are strictly limited to what is called "Appalachian." Both awards are judged by teachers. For *etcetera's* awards students are included as judges to give voice to the newness and immediacy of student values; professors are the learned voice of mature standards.

The awards categories were originally poetry, short fiction, art, photography, nonfiction, and cover art, but in two areas there was surprisingly scant interest and no work was published. All first prizes are \$50.00; second prizes, \$25.00

The writings in this magazine should not all be regarded as finished products, and the idea of *student* should be kept in mind. The work of each student is probably best regarded as representative of a phase in his or her continuing development as craftsman or artist. We hope *et cetera* has contributed to that development, and to the development of literary "awareness" for Marshall students as a whole.

#### staff

editor/Cynthia Wolfe

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editorial staff/Cinda Stiltner Altizer

Beverly Childers

Teresa Lockhart

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Mark Paxton

media coordinator/Lee Staley

faculty advisory committee/Betty McClellan

John McKeman

Marilyn Putz

Elinore Taylor, chairman

*Thanks also to Mrs. McCaleb in the office, Sarah Burgess, and The Pantheon.*

## AWARDS

poetry judges-John McKeman, assistant professor of English and author of two books of poetry, *Walking Along the Missouri River* and *Erasing the Blackboard*

Dr. William Sullivan, professor of English

Cynthia Wolfe, et cetera editor and English and Classical Studies majtt

1st prize - Brenda Bond, for "Elation" (p. 8) and "The Ballerina" (p. 9)

2nd prize (tie) - Beverly G. Merrick Childers, for "The Spoon" (p. 50), "From the Highway," and "On the Trail" (p. 52)

Ruth E. Napier, for "To My Ex-Love" (p. 22)

prose judges-Oreg Norris, graduate assistant in English

Dr. William Ramsey, associate professor of English

Judy Stennett, graduate assistant in English

1st prize - "The Drunk in the Pet Shop," by Chris Clark (p. 23)

2nd prize - "A Force Outside," by Mark Paxton (p. 35)

photography judges-Earl Benton, chief photographer for The Charleston Daily Mail

Beverly Twitchell, assistant professor of art

1st prize - "First the Christian Dead," by Kay Irvin (p. 44)

2nd prize - "Empty Rockers," by Jane Murphy (p. 11)

Apologia pro vita sua

*Aul Lego vel scribo, doceo scrutorve sophiam:  
obsecro celsithronum nocte dieque meum.  
Vescor, poto libens, rithmizans invoco Musas,  
dormisco stertens: oro deum vigilans.  
Conscia mens scelerum deft.et peccamina vitae:  
parcite vos misero, Christe Maria, viro.*

*-Sedulius Scottus,  
9th century*

Apology for his life

*Reading, writing, I profess or search after knowing,  
supplicant to Heaven by night and day.  
I feed, I drink freely, beg inspiration with rhyming;  
I sleep snoring; waking, I call upon God.  
A knowing mind deploras the enormities of life-  
Lord have mercy on a miserable man.*

*-translated by  
Cynthia Wolfe*

## CONTENTS

### cover

Mark Paxton      Reels

### poetry

- Brenda Bond 8 Elation  
9 The Ballerina
- John M. Perdue 10 Uncle Ed on Annistice Day
- Frank Alan Dilatush 12 My Tally  
13 Mud Rocks and Carnival Balloons  
A Friend Described
- Matt Morris 18 While Falling Off a Bridge  
19 untitled  
20 untitled
- Ruth E. Napier 22 To My Ex-Love
- Cynthia Wolfe 27 untitled  
28 Aeneas, landed  
29 A Bridal Shower Gift from Judy
- Helen Gardner 30 Nutcracker Suite
- Sarah Burgess 31 Cousin George's Bedroom
- Teresa Lockhart 33 Suicide  
2:15 Sunday Afternoon  
34 An Alternative
- Kirk Judd 39 My Young Man Died at Evening  
41 The Peace Which Passeth  
Understanding:  
Cemetery  
Road  
To Celebrate  
Rain
- Joseph Marohl 46 Elijah  
47 Caiapha  
49 The Fooled Sparrow
- Beverly G. Merrick Childers 50 The Spoon  
52 From the Highway *and*  
On the Trail



## prose

- Bobby Miller 14 Newton's Law  
Chris Clark 23 The Drunk in the Pet Shop  
Sarah Burgess 32 untitled  
Mark Paxton 35 A Force Outside  
Cynthia Wolfe 54 The Double-Trunked Poplar  
71 *note on the setting*

## photography

- John Sadler 9 untitled  
Jane Murphy 11 Empty Rockers  
Barb Boyer 17 Head First  
Jim Turner 21 Evening Tracks  
Mark Paxton 38 Kneel at the Cross  
Kay Irvin 44 from *Revelations*: First the  
Christian Dead  
45 And Whosoever Was Not Found  
Barb Boyer 53 McClintic Pond  
Mark Paxton 66 *The Double-Trunked Poplar*  
series: The Graveyard Up the  
Road  
71 Small White Stones  
73 The Double-Trunked Poplar

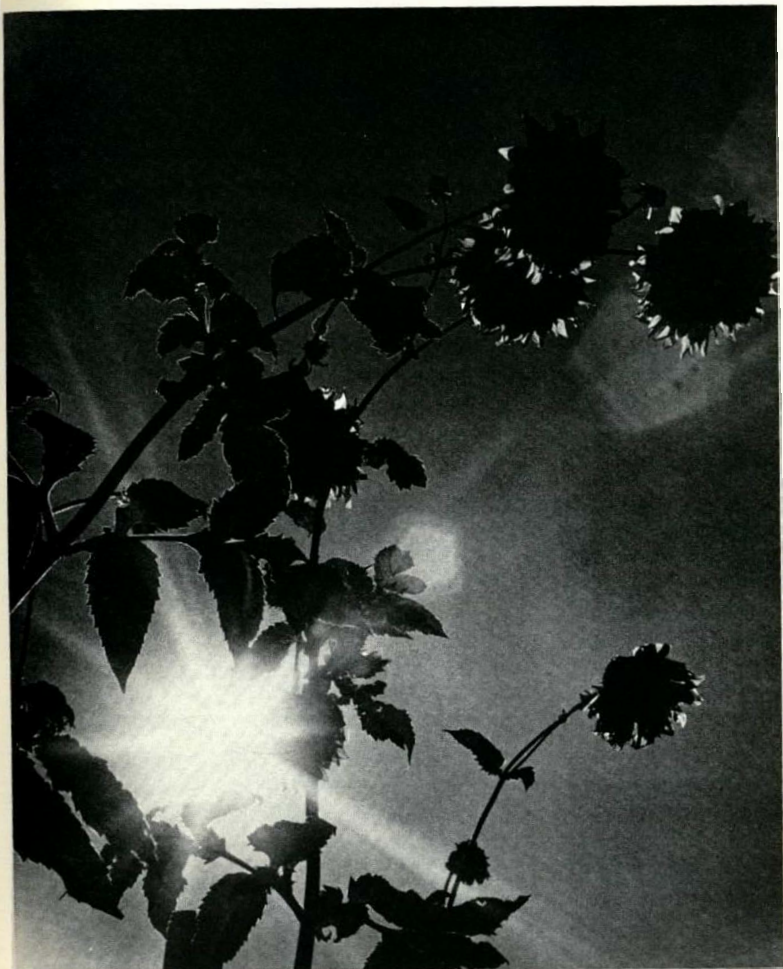
## Elation

I am deserting my body  
Tonight,  
Floating to the ceiling  
And spinning about,  
Air-light and free.  
Flesh is the very least  
Of me.

The owls, the soft  
Night callers  
Beckon me,  
And I propel myself  
Through closed door.  
I wear the night  
With ease.

Slow breathes the breeze  
Cool with dew,  
Blowing and stirring me  
High into the trees.  
I stun the leaves  
Into noise.  
Night eyes blink slowly,  
Uncaring that I disturb  
Their secrets.

I slide on the silvery path  
Of the snail  
And fill the dirt  
Lonesome for grass.  
I listen to the sighs  
Around me  
And sing the night softly  
To sleep.



*photo by John Sadler*

## The Ballerina

Slender dancer,  
Butterfly on wing,  
Your movement  
defies gravity.

Satin toes,  
Dandelioo seed  
Caught in a soft breeze,  
Hummingbini,  
of a thousand dances.

JOHN M. PERDUE

## Uncle Ed On Armistice Day

It was the eleventh hour of the eleventh day  
of the eleventh month in nineteen-eighteen.

The oblong card from the shoe-box album  
turns in my fingers. The glossy shine speaks of  
mud, brown grass, brown trucks and boots and fatigues,  
bare trees. Apples on the cheeks. Beneath the stares and half grins  
hang their field bags, puffing with tins of corned beef  
or tobacco and cartridges, inside the U.S. logo.

Uncle Ed: farm boy, railroader, World War One veteran.  
About five kilometers north of Bar-le-Due he ate some biscuits  
touched by gas. The gas ate his stomach.  
For forty years he coughed and spat out parts of himself,  
drank and ran a farm. He was only twenty; wanted to stay  
on the N&W. But he got shelled and lived with lice and bodies.  
He never shot anyone-said he never fired his rifle.  
Just got shelled and did watch and moved with the flow.  
All his buddies got plugged and mauled in their camps and trucks.  
"Jus' kep' on movin', no stops in that last push" past the Mame.

He told me so on a tractor ride on his lap. He was only sixty-three,  
with a chew of Mail Pouch in his cheek. "The Argonne: Hell,  
we dropped the Krauts like flies." Then he told me how the holes  
got in his chimney: the Indians would practice their bow skills  
on it. He spat-blood or juice? "Hell, you can still find  
arrowheads in there." He really didn't raise much, really.  
No kids. When he died, all that was left when his family  
pilfered his watches and guns, all was left was his field bags  
with the U.S. logo.

*second prize photo, "Empty Rockers," by Jane Murphy*



...

FRANK ALAN DILATUSH

### My Tally

Yes I've killed,  
One man I think,  
Two squirrels I'm sure,  
Four dogs possibly more,  
And a multitude of birds, butterflies, ants, fleas,  
Etc. etc etc up to my neck so deep in fact  
That their corpse! volume  
Would probably equal that of a small tollbooth  
Filled with withered cadavers  
And I would certainly apologize to each and every one  
For my clumsiness, yet their motion is gone  
And my sorrow is as all life,  
Temporary.

## Mud Rocks and Carnival Balloons

Should a heart stop quickly  
Like a rock thrown into mud?  
Or slowly in stages  
Drying as a summer stream?  
Perhaps best when the heart, angry,  
Holds its breath and puffs like a carnival balloon  
Away from the child's tired hand,  
Skating breathlessly  
Through the warm summer night.

## A Friend Described

Nancy Dahill is a perky young dictatress  
Who teaches special kids, like 200 pound adolescent mongoloids  
How to pay attention when their natural tendency is to drool.  
Standing five foot even at ninety-four pounds  
She is often tested by her charges,  
I.E. spit at and bit upon but she's firm and in fact  
Bites back, never drawing blood of course  
But hard enough to implant in these special minds  
The concepts of authority, social responsibility,  
And retaliation.

## Newton's Law

I think I've made a mistake. Forget the \$45. I want down. How did Mother talk me into this?

I had no idea I was scared of heights. Heights? I can't even see the ground!

"Get your nose out of a book," she said. "Try something exciting," she said. "Act like you're in college."

Mother. Of all people. Mother who is afraid of spiders. Teeny-tiny eensy weensy little bugs. Ha!

Oh no. Why did they open that door. I know why. Oh no, not me. Jurling off that little platform onto those mats was bad enough. "Stay loose and bend your knees." Well I fell on my rear anyway. Wonder if I got a bruise?

Nope.

I don't believe it. That jerk actually jumped out-backwards! Like I used to lunge towards Grandma's featherbed. Dummy.

Well he can grab his gusto, and for all I care, mine too. But I'm not letting loose of this rail until I'm back on the old terra firma. Latin stinks.

Hmmmm. Wonder where he's at now?

I didn't expect the plane to be so small. Feels like I'm in a toy. There goes another idiot. Geronimo!

Maybe if I slid a little closer to the door I could see his Union Jack open. A little closer-ugh-look down there! It's enough to make your guts churn.

An inch closer and surely my rings and shoes will be sucked right out the door.

The air is too thin.

Another one. Bonsi!

It's almost like they fall until they come to the end of some string and then are snapped upwards... changing from an A-bomb into a floating feather. Neat.

That Union Jack looks cool. Sorta reminds me of a Bud commercial or something.

Maybe I shouldn't have told them I knew how. Jumped before?

Sure.

Freefall?



Of course.

Two or five thousand feet?

What! No ten thousand?

Advanced jwnp at 2 p.m.?

Cake.

Forty-five dollars please.

It's Mother's fault. Mother, of all people.

I feel like Quasimodo with this thing on my back. Or maybe G.I. Joe going out on maneuvers. I don't know.

Another. Cowabunga! That's got to be the stupidest word in the world. Ooooooo, just like on the Wide World of Sports. Maybe if I get a little closer.

I gotta pee.

I wonder if that's Portsmouth down there?

"O.K. Bob."

"Huh?"

"You're the last one and we'll soon be over the Ohio. It's your tum."

"Good. Just a few more seconds."

"O.K. Bob. Now!"

"You know fellas, I've been thinking and... Noooooo!"

My chute pull! Where's my ring? There it is. Stay cool. Oh yea-two, three, four, five. I can't pull this dumb thing... it won't work and I'll have a heart attack and probably die on the spot. I pass out easy. Six, seven.

I bet I got a bruise now. About a size nine.

Eight, nine... nine... nine...

It's a boiyd... it's a plane. No. It's Suuuper Bob.

Five thousand feet. Let's see there's about 5280 feet in a mile or is that yards no I think that's feet so that means I've got about a mile and I'm falling at about 60 m:p.h. that means about a mile a minute SO I've got about sixty seconds a little less than a minute.

Ha! And they said count to ten.

Look Ma no hands! Wheeee.

Wonder how long it's been?

Gosh, I gotta pee. I once knew a guy with two hearts. I wonder if I got two bladders? Why does this always happen every time I get excited? Ob, why not?

That's so warm. Hrnmmm-not as gross as I thought.

I'M FREE!

Wonder how long I've been falling? Falling? I'm not falling. Nothing is moving except for the flapping convulsions of my jumpsuit.

I can start to see buildings now.

Look!

Just like the old Matchbox city I used to have. I bet Mom still has it in the attic. The clouds... the land. Kinda reminds me of the 360 degree movie I saw in Disney World. Or which ever that one is in Florida. I think it was the T.W.A. exhibit.

I can see dots of people now. It's about time. Where's my ring? It's still there.

O.K.

What a dream this would make. What a book this would make. Guess I'll just wait for the movie.

I'M FREE!!

For the first time in my life I'm accomplishing nothing... going nowhere... a nobody suspended in nothing. I'm in a swirling whirlpool of air. This feeling-can it be real?

It's.. .it's.. .it's just like on Wide World of Sports. Just sailing, soaring, drifting, floating.

Wandering through the skies.

The seconds!!!!!!

Oh no.

It's all coming towards me.

The buildings, the cars, the people. I can see their eyeballs. Are they real?

Where's my chute pull!!!!

Where's my blasted



*"Head First," by Barb Boyer*

MATT MORRIS  
*special mention in poetry*

## While Falling Off A Bridge

1

This thought will not be known.  
My mouth shall make no utterance.  
Let the picture be as it is:  
An empty frame.

Words will not express it;  
My tongue is broken in ten different places.  
These hollow words are just that,  
Ill-spoken, meaningless, implements  
Of nonsense. Let this be my folly.

2

Paint the whole town red,  
Red as a rose, red as the sky,  
Mercury red, brick red, blood red,  
Red, red, red-these walls are killing me.

On the white walls, I hung no pictures.

I sat by the bay and played guitar, singing, "lonely, lonely, lonely."

I have quit calling her. She is never here.

Margie says she has turned to clay.

It is noon, the whistles blow.

I will fo<sub>r</sub>get her number.

I will frequent the post office with magazine subscriptions.

I will drink with Jack and John behind these white walls of glass, take prescription medicine indiscriminately, and recite Byron over and over, mischeivously,

Until my mother finally gives up on me, forgets to return my calls, and sends me no allowance to buy groceries.

On the seventh day, I played Chopin. I held a kitchen knife to my chest and momentarily contemplated death. I did not slice tomatoes for weeks after. I had someone else carve the roast. I spread butter with my fork.

Given to nonsense as I was in my bedroom, I gave my cigarettes each a name and smoked them alphabetically, starting with Aaron and ending with 2.elma.

I lit a single candle and thought of her that night among the stars and counted them as one might his blessings, one at a time.

I would find notes attached to my door, "I came by earlier with two strippers, some fantastic aphrodisiacs, and a cure for cancer. Sorry I missed you."

*The next time I go to the supermarket, I'll ask about darkness, but they will not know what to tell me. There will be a state of confusion in the store. If I asked about light, they would probably ask me what kind, and direct me to the beer coolers. But if I ask about darkness, they will only have the empty spaces on the shelves to refer me to. They will say, "We are all out" or "Come back after we close." But I will have outfoxed them: I stole the last ounce of darkness when everybody had their backs turned and I walked out into the night.*

*"Evening Tracks," by Jim Turner*



RLITH E. NAPIER  
*2nd prize (tie) in poetry*

### To My Ex-Love

I want full custody of the gold fish  
love, and the tie I gave for Christmas.  
I've found someone else to wear it,  
not as you did in defiance, but an  
acquiescent sort who carries out the garbage,  
even in the rain and is never late for dinner.

I want my Mickey Mouse sweat shirt  
you haven't seen fit to take off in six weeks,  
and please, love, wash it in warm with Cheer.  
Oh, and the striped football socks,  
don't forget to send them over along with  
my omelet pan which also makes crepes.

My Harry Chapin Albums and also, love,  
if you don't mind, *The Complete Works of Poe*.  
The Royal typewriter, all my carbon paper,  
the Correlware, the juice glasses,  
and a dozen Grade-A large eggs.

Enclosed you will find the one and only  
thing I ever took from you.  
This sheet of paper.



## The Drunk in the Pet Shop

All that drew his attention to the street was the sound of impact. Nothing spectacular, it was a slow crushing slide into the front of the pet shop next door. It was *only* a short harmony to the country vocal playing on the jukebox. No one seemed to notice at first. He wouldn't have gone out to observe, but the evening was becoming long. Boredom and insufficient alcohol accounted for temporary reversion to the accident watching syndrome.

Jackson rose from the bar and moved out of the pink neon glare, a wake of blue smoke curling behind him as he went out the door. The street shimmered in front of him glazing the wet reflections of store fronts. His breath billowed from his nose as he exhaled the cold air. The car sat unbalanced protruding from the pet shop. A white scratch on the gray pavement trailed from under the car and into the street. Melted rubber rose in a warm wave toward Jackson's nose. He stared at the crumpled steel extending from the masonry. Steam curled out of the dark depression made in the pet shop. The car hissed and ticked. The drunk was moaning, but he sounded *h\_a\_p\_p\_y*, then he went silent. Red flashers blinked continuously as Jackson watched. Reflections appeared and disappeared around the car. The neon "beer on tap" glowed steadily in the wet haze to Jackson's left. He was enjoying the image. Jackson smiled. The drunk moaned again. Puppies whimpered from the dark store. What was the proper thing for a citizen to do in this situation? Jackson was thinking hard about this. Give first-aid? He was in a good position to do it since he was the first one there. But to who or what? The drunk, the car, or what if one of the puppies was hurt worse. This was getting a bit ridiculous.

Jackson peered in through the car window. A black man stared blankly back at him. He lay face up with his head resting on the driver's side, cane with a wolf's head upon his leg. He moaned again. What was a reasonable response? Jackson wondered.

"Are you hurt?" That would do.

"Huh, . . . no," he was gurgling.

"Think you can get out?"

"Wha', yeah. . . ." His eyes glazed over and nodded back under the lids. The scent of whiskey drifted up into his face. Communication was difficult these days. Jackson wondered if they had anything

in common. Just a thought. He was getting cold. People spoke in low muttering tones around him. More concerned citizenry? Where were his cigarettes? The drunk moaned.

"You don't have a smoke do you?"

Moan.

"Nice car, how'd it happen?"

Two moans, cough.

Conversations kept going down hill these days. Jackson started to think of a deep explanation of this but the ambulance, fire engine, and four squad cars diverted him. They were bright and their activities required his intense concentration. The engine made rumbling electronic noises and a metallic voice gave instructions. More revolving red lights circled the blinking flashers on the car. Medics pressed past Jackson into the car. They were polite. The police only told him to move. He did, even though it ruined all hope of continuing the conversation and ruined his view. Well, the caretakers had to take care of the citizen in most immediate need first. Jackson held off from asking them for a smoke.

They now had the drunk out of the unbalanced car. He drooped between two policemen like a suspension bridge between two blue pillars. Jackson began thinking about bridges for no particular reason. Bridges were probably a good invention. He turned and stepped through the people toward the bright haze of the bar. Walking back into the stale heat, he went back to his nest of cellophane wrappers and beer bottles at the bar. His head felt cloudy, he must be coming back to reality. Where had he been a minute ago? More questions. For just one evening it would be nice to be able to quit buffeting himself with questions that he really didn't care about answering. This line of thought, he realized, would simply lead to more questions. Stop; have another beer.

The bartender swept away his nest and placed a wet bottle on the clean plastic woodgrain. Jackson caught himself meditating on the trickle of moisture running down the bottle's brown side. He gulped, felt the cold tingle on the back of his throat. That was comfortable, another would be comfortable, a third comfortablest, a fourth... comfortablester? "Stop that!"

Other people looked at Jackson, he looked back. He had their attention at last. Should he tell them his theories about polite medics and overzealous policemen? By the time he answered himself they weren't looking at him anymore.

"Did anyone see what happened out there?" The voice of a blue uniformed realtor. A call to good citizens. Jackson decided not to reply. Had they taken the black man away already or would they

wait for opinions of his peers sitting at the bar?

"You were out there weren't you sir?"

Jackson looked up at the young patrolman.

••Possibly a contradiction to my theory. ••

"What was that, sir?"

"Nothing."

"Weren't you out there at the scene of the accident?"

"Yes, you win."

"Would you make a statement?"

"Does it have to be profound?"

"What are you talking about, all I want is a statement from you as a witness, concerning the accident."

"Alright, but I only saw the thing after it happened and I've used all of my profound, highly philosophic comments already."

"Well, sir, if you choose to refuse to make a statement, it's your business."

"Father always said I'd have an interesting career." This was getting old fast.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Nothing, dismissed!" Jackson went to the restroom before it registered with the officer. A yellow glare and wann stale odors greeted him. He said "Hi" in return. Jackson stared back at his reflection in the mirror. Inane thoughts started returning.

"Did you know that in Philadelphia in 1920 almost half of the married population was made up of women?" He was giggling. Someone knocked on the door, he flushed like a good citizen. Out the door, a gruff "excuse me" and back to the bar's padded "leatherette" stool. More thinking.

"Schiz.ophrenia can only go so far and then it's not fun anymore." Jackson was wondering if he had said that aloud or *only* thought it. No one was looking at him. He concluded he still had control. To be certain, he moved each finger slightly. While he concentrated on this, he missed seeing the woman take a seat beside him. She observed him. He kept looking at his fingers on the bar. When Jackson looked up, the woman was staring. He looked at himself, found nothing outrageous about his appearance, looked back at his fingers. She said hello.

"Did you see the drunk in the pet shop?"

"What?"

"Did you see the drunk in the pet shop?"

"No... that's a strange thing to say. What are you talking about?" She smiled faintly.

"It is not strange. It would be strange if I said something like

'My mother's a fish' or if I asked you to buy me a Labrador retriever since I've always wanted one."

"You are strange, and... "

"That's possible, and I admit you have an unbiased opinion, but will you?"

"Will I what?"

"Buy me a Labrador retriever?"

CYNTILIA WOLFE

Your nakedness  
is what deceived me.

Apparent. The urgency  
of revelation.

The skew edge  
of jagged glass gives

refraction of your trueness.  
The transparency

(birds are beguiled  
to false suicides

and fall to the foot  
of the wall) defines

limitations, just like  
the welcome cruelty

of dreams.  
We slept in our clothes

- n o t frun purity but because  
our emotions made

light of themselves

## Aeneas, landed

He was tired, no patient weaving  
arms  
took him in, his son

was proud of his father but  
he was a little old-fashioned and oddly  
(yet no old romantic, befriended by wind  
and guile) driven, past destiny, past choice  
now, grieving for some wild half-wit

prince noody remembered, poor  
man. Watching the tide. The vacuity  
extending into horizon. Forgetting

& ignoring that inanimate woman his wife  
his trophy and cursing that  
suicidal bitch who tore his heart out  
like a lion in a cave

Oh for a good sea storm.  
Dad always said it'd be like this  
whose claim to fame was Venus in his bed  
and only got old in the end

## A Bridal Shower Gift from Judy

close as an alter ego  
and that delusive

you reappear for me, bringing  
a gift you say you never got  
and had to buy for yourself  
The cut glass

is wonderful ice in my hands, and outside  
the winter has moved in, from coat sleeves are bared

numb gift-sharing hands. Cold and alive  
I am venturing in the dark over leaden land  
where silent mare-drawn sleds glide by, the wolves

disguised as forests. And the hard clearness  
in my hands. The top of the butter dish  
to fit neatly onto its plate, the bright  
music made of glass

- so that I am not *now* suspicious of you,  
have no memory of your nights by ponds  
eager for man-flesh, too far removed  
for fear, now we are more

womanly. Music  
was what you had loved. Your father  
forbade it. It was like being exiled.  
Hillsides and rock seats, in tool sheds,  
you would polish the air with  
sounds: clear sharp and cold silver  
flute sounds I think you must have

forgotten. You have a husband named Mike  
and an apartment in Eleanor. I have forgotten  
who I was when I knew you. It is still

and the night-trees harbor strangely  
stirring winds

HELEN GARDNER

## Nutcracker Suite

The setting for the one  
    precious to another  
        housed a multitude of things  
Smelling thickly of wood:  
    Seventeen sylvan clocks  
        toll'd the hour,  
chimed the half,  
    cooed the quarter,  
        to the watchmaker's child  
lost and long forgotten  
    deep in the care-tangled forest  
        of grim adulthood.  
Against the farthest wall  
    an oaken cabinet  
        where silent sentinds stood guard.  
Their smooth, tinted thighs  
    delicately carved  
        warmed quickly to the touch,  
but their frozen stare, unliving,  
    forewarned the intruder;  
        they would tolerate  
no unholy intrusion  
    however well intentioned  
        in the sacred sanctuary.



SARAH BURGESS

### Cousin George's Bedroom

Secretly

Sometimes I would sneak  
into Cousin George's bedroom  
and explore his drawers  
especially

~~the~~ one filled with

V0-5

Aqua Vitalis  
and Brylcreem

Later

he & I would count  
the faded horses on the wallpaper

I am standing in the small lobby waiting with my overnight suitcase, remembering his words, "We'd like to keep you a few days for observation, a chance for you to rest."

A woman about my size greets me. She is pretty and knows my name. Inscribed in white ink on the black plaque above her left breast is Miss Davis. She walks quietly her white shoes occasionally squeak on the shiny green linoleum floor. She smiles frequently as her eyes scan me, she has no smell. Her mind seems programmed. Her questions come forth like IBM cards, fragmented bits of information with no meaning.

She examines my bags, removes the razor, spray deodorant, and pencil. We pause in front of the "No Admittance" sign bolted on the green metal doors. I stare through the small glass window. The view is orderly. The fluorescent lights merge together in a vanishing point far down the hallway. In the distance I can see a cluster of women as my eyes focus on the nurse's station.

As Nurse Davis and I enter through the doors, they close automatically behind us. She maneuvers me down the empty hallway to the left corridor, the psychiatric wing. We arrive at Room 219. I have no roommate.

I sit on the bed. She places the suitcase beside me, then opens the metal drawer of the overnight chest as she suggests that I should change into my pajamas. She leaves.

I slowly undress. On the opposite side of the room a vertical crack has dissected sections of the wall into a primitive face that watches me.

I begin to count the squares of the linoleum floor. There are 15 blocks from my bed to the wall with the window. The window is near the ceiling. The sun shines through the steel wire attached to the glass, casting diamond shaped shadows on my bed.

Miss Davis enters my room. She holds an olive colored plastic tray filled with tiny cups. Inside the cups are two or three colored pills that look like flower seeds waiting to be watered.

They make me dormant as I swallow them. I lean against the pillow and close my eyes. I see myself wandering barefooted in a country field. I am tired and want to lie down on the warm ground. My feet are cold, I want to get under a blanket of earth. A farmer appears and offers to shovel the dirt over me. I agree. Underneath the ground, I am warm. The limbs of my body become anchored roots. I sleep.

Suicide

After jumping from watery confines  
of aquarium life  
to depths below,  
the tiny tropical fish  
the man at the pet shop  
said would grow to six inches  
lay stiff  
on the plush carpet  
shimmering in the light  
raining from underneath the pleated lampshade  
until scooped up  
for his burial-  
whirling into oblivion,  
waves lapping  
the toilet bowl coffin.

2:15 Sunday Afternoon

steal across the kitchen carpeting  
open the oiled cabinet,  
glancing furtively.  
clutch escape  
in the screw-on-top glass  
Bottle.  
pour clear acrid liquid  
into Dad's sugar-free root beer.  
quickly-  
before anyone comes.  
slide open the silverware drawer  
silently.  
stir the concoction.  
hide the evidence  
greet Pastor Miller at the door  
filled with the  
Spirit.

## An Alternative

Would you prefer formality  
In crystal goblets  
And china  
Balanced by silver cocktail forks and soup spoons  
Resting on freshly laundered linen and lace napkins  
In white tuxedos  
Drenched with white wine  
Of an old vintage  
From my private stock?  
I have the \$500 chiffon and crepe dress  
In subdued lime swirled on white  
With color-coordinated wallpaper  
And, in starched frilly aprons,  
Maids who only speak Portuguese  
But own poodles named Gigi and Fritz.  
Shall I invite only social elite  
With greenbacks  
to complement our costumes and wallpaper and wine  
Sipped to pompous classical marches?  
I know a funeral director  
Who lets me pick from leftover flowers  
flooding the dusty hearse  
So a centerpiece for the feast  
Is no problem.

## A Force Outside

*It was the sultry, steamy kind of August evening that the South is famous for, the kind that makes a man's shirt stick to his sides, the kind that makes barefoot girls in polyester haltertops sit in fluorescent Laundromats reading True Confessions while young James Deans cruise phallically down narrow streets, the kind that makes dozens of sweaty blacks sway to revival spirituals in the basement of a small Baptist church.*

Paul watched the mosquito buzz along the ceiling, performing an erotic dance among the fly specks. His naked back dampened the motel sheets while at his feet a mute Billy Graham invoked prayers for unhearing Hungarians. Paul's left hand absently traced tiny figures along the back of the girl lying next to him, his other hand reaching for the bottle on the table. Without looking, he tipped the bottle into the sanitized plastic motel glass, the last drops draining out. Clumsily, he tried to bring the bottle to his face to inspect its emptiness, his elbow hitting the glass, knocking it to the floor. With an oath, he dropped the bottle on the glass.

The mosquito flew lazy figure eights through the humid nighttime air, spiraling slowly toward the bed. Paul watched as it circled, stalked, then landed on the sleeping girl's smooth, naked back. With a thoughtless motion, he took his right hand and slapped at the insect.

"Aaaaaaaajjjjia," she screamed, jumping from her sleep, tossing aside the sweaty sheet. "Huh? What happened? What the hell is going on?"

Paul watched her breasts swing pendulously back and forth, while her head pivoted left and right. Her eyes had the look of a deer, he thought, flushed from its concealment—a wide-eyed, vulnerable look of betrayal.

"Hey, I'm sorry," staring into her round brown eyes. "I didn't mean to... I mean it was, I uh... there was this mosq... it was flying..."

"Jesus Christ," the girl sighed. "You scared me half to death."

"Yeah, uh, like I said..."

"I know, I know, you're sorry." The girl lay back on the bed, her arms extended perpendicular to her body. Her right hand was

open, and in the middle of her palm Paul saw a tiny freckle.

I'm lying in bed with Jesus Christ, he thought, staring at the human cross beside him.

*Outside, the humid night air had turned yet, rain beating down on aluminum awnings and red tricycles left out to rust, forming tiny rivers and lakes on black pavement, dripping, droning, drizzling without end on the wann Georgia soil.*

Billy Graham flickered light blue shadows on the shrouded figure spread-eagle on the bed.

Jesus Christ here in my room, Paul thought, right here in my room. Reaching for his bottle, his hand grasped air. His head pivoted, and he saw his glass's ghost—a round, wet ring on the cover of the Gideon Bible. With his fingers, he tried to brush away the water, smearing it across the gold letters.

He sat straight now, his back as rigid as the wall, the Bible in his naked lap. Like a child encountering an object for the first time, he stared at the title, twined the book over, then over again, then on its side, searching for some secret, some unknown puzzle.

The girl opened an eye and watched as he examined his find, twining it over and over..

"Good Lord," she said, sitting up. "What the hell are you doing?"

With his same mosquito-swatting swing, he sent the Bible flying across the room and smashing through a lamp. His eyes stared at the girl, peered at her, past her, a thin grin spread across his face.

Clutching the damp, white sheet to her breasts, holding it close to her neck, she straightened, then slowly began to edge toward the side of the bed. "Listen, I don't know who you are or what you're trying to do, but I'm getting out of here." On the edge. "I thought we'd have a good time and that would be it." One foot on the floor. "I don't care what your name is or where you came from," two feet, "but I'm going to get up, put on my clothes," twining, her back facing him, "and leave."

His eyes had that same contained sort of fear, he thought, as the deer that his father had killed that time for Thanksgiving dinner. The red flashing tear of the bullet through flesh, the jerk and seizure of the body as it convulsed, thrusting through the air, the twitching of the tense, tight muscles as it lay on the ground, bleeding among the leaves, that horrible brown venison lying on his plate, dead, while his father said grace.

The girl faced him as she pulled up her pants, and he watched her graceful, easy motions.

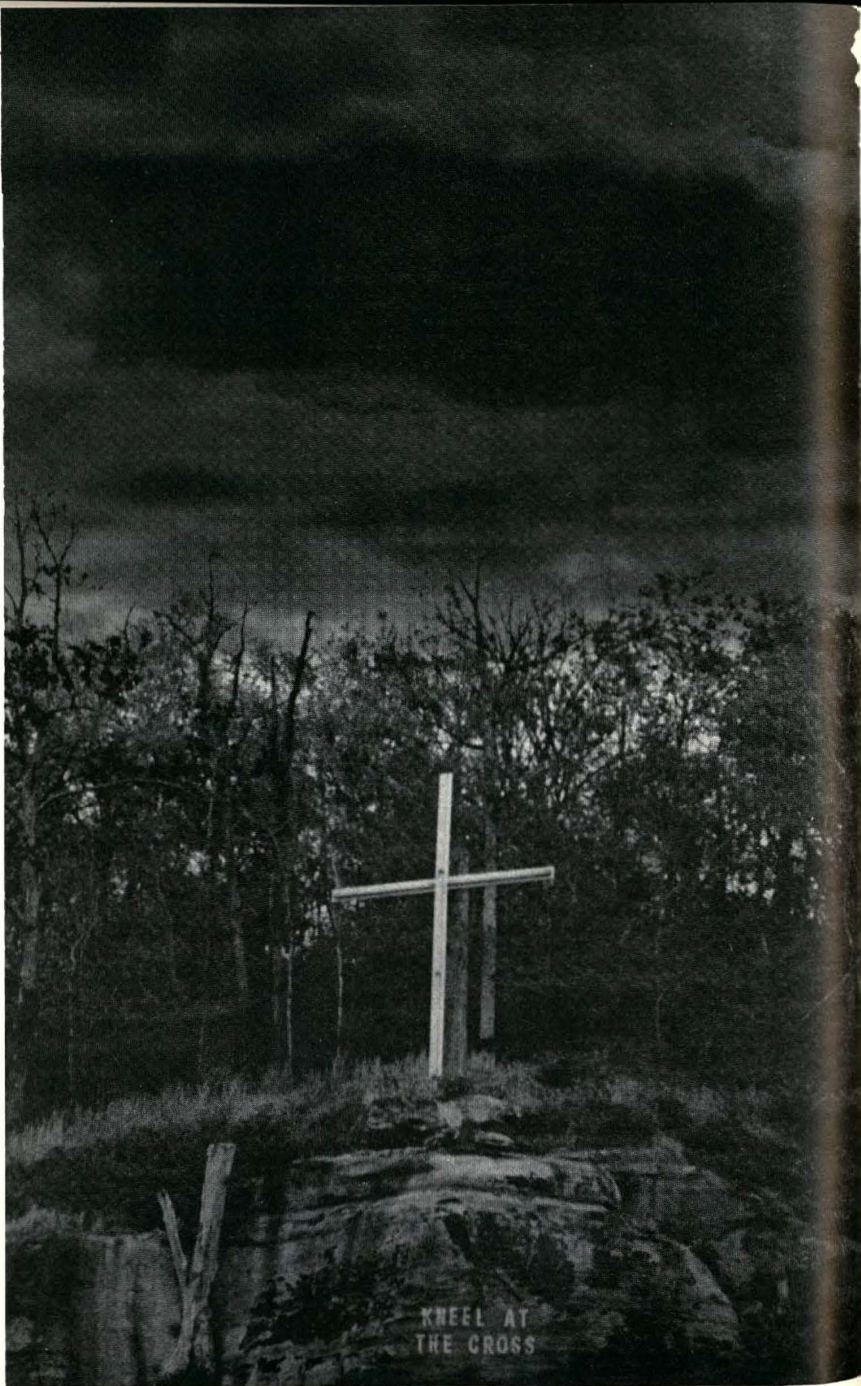
"Don't leave," Paul said as he glared at the clean white feet slide into her sandals. 'T m not going to hurt you."

"Uh, yeah, but I've got to go anyway," she said, searching quickly through the heap of blankets for her blouse. "I'd better go anyway. You see I've got. . ."

Like a stealthy, stalking hunter, he had eased from the bed and started toward her. With one motion, he reached down, grasped the base of the broken lamp, and raised it.

"Don't worry... " she backed away"... I'm not. . ." the terror spilled from her eyes ". . .going to. . ." she pressed against the wall behind her, her arms crossed over her breasts "... hurt... " with a grunt, he swung "... you... "

*The warm, wet air hung on trees as the rain ended, Leaving the smell of flowers and fresh-cut grass, red-yellow-green Lights reflecting in pools on empty back streets, freshly washed cars sported and streaked. A slow silver fog rose from the ground, weaving its way through the steamy night air.*



*"Kneel at the Cross," by Mark Paxton*



## My Young Man Died at Evening

### I

I have spent my evenings in the shadows under bridges.  
 I helped my young man die.  
 Winter sits on the tree outside my window.  
 He laughs at the sun,  
 Pokes through cracks and chills the comers  
 Where my pencils sit, waiting,  
 To be broken, or ground out on empty page.  
 They shiver.  
 They slip from my hand.  
     He is not alone there.

### II

Will they call me when the deed is done?  
 They will call me, and tell me that the deed is done.  
 That the day is done.  
 I may light my lamps.

### III

Wind licks out at branches bare,  
 And rattles through my folding chair.  
 Slender tongues of silver tap on the roof,  
 Slicing the night in all directions,  
 Throwing the moon from my window  
 To the street to the stars and back again.  
 Dancing, dancing...  
     And the music on the wind  
     Dances out on branches bare,  
     And the echoes all within  
     Sound out from my folding chair.

### IV

I have spent my evenings under bridges.  
 I have spent my evenings and my money under bridges.  
 I have spent my time under shadows.  
 I grow weary.  
 I grow cold.  
     . . .at branches bare...  
     He is QO alone.

## V

My young man died under Winter's heavy breath.  
 There was the moon, and silver branches,  
 And the wind danced to music  
 Death slapped out on my young man's breast  
 As he lay there under that bridge.  
 Under that heavy, wintry bridge that spanned our times.  
 One glorious gouge in Earth's side  
 So easily capped by that One.  
 He is not alone there.  
 He is not alone.  
 Tap tap tap  
 Dancing, dancing  
 And the music on the wind  
 Dances out on branches bare,  
 And the echoes in my head  
 Burst out from my folded chair.

## VI

The call has come.  
 The deed is done.  
 Just a call to let me know that day is done.  
 I may light my lamps.  
 Moon, show my pitted face to the window.  
 It dances to the lamps.  
 It sweats and dances.  
 It sweats and bleeds and dances to the lamps.  
 . . .at branches bare. . .  
 Bare!  
 He is come!  
 I may light my lamps and go,  
 He is come not alone.  
 I am come with him.

# The Peace Which Passeth Understanding

## Cemetery

There is a new name engraved upon this white stone  
That is pushed mockingly up toward the sealed sky  
Separating grass blade from blade  
Beneath the flowered hands of wicker nets.

"Sing to the sky and the dance of the moon.

"Sing to the setting sun.

"Sing...

Sing paradise to those stones in their rows of seven.  
Pour blood until my eyes run red with the crackling leaves.  
Take your mouthful of grass  
And regurgitate your gods all over the back seat.  
I am stabbed with a two-edged sword,  
Spilling my guts over your hands.  
My spine is shattered, splinters of bone pierce my brain.  
Searing holes rip through my aims  
And I push my thumbs through my legs.

## Road

It's cold on the road tonight.  
The sidewalk's wet and I'm very tired.  
Cool grass slides my face along.  
The back of my eyes hurt,  
And the light from the lamp looks strange.  
And I'm very tired very  
Cold too yes I'm cold too and tired too yes and.  
Slow down.  
It's too cold and I have no coat.  
I have no coat to wear.  
I would like a nice coat.  
I can't hear me.  
I think I'm talking very slow.  
Just a shiver.  
It really is cold.  
I'm sony.  
I'm so, so sorry.  
I don't like to cry.  
I would like to have a nice coat.

"Sing to the sky and the dance of the moon.

"Sing to the setting sun.

"Sing...

### To Celebrate

I've never been to Sinai  
Nor have I seen the Palestinian sun  
Reach golden fingers down to pluck sweet dates  
From the mouth of the Jordan.  
But I have sweated under the fire of my sky,  
And ripped the flesh from my feet and hands  
Climbing the mountains of my life.  
And the sweat and blood of my brothers has nourished me  
As my sweat and blood has fed five times five thousand.  
But Sunday's bells never cease  
And stained glass never cracks  
And I never rest in peace.

"Sing to the sky and the dance of the moon.

"I said, sing to the setting sun.

"I said sing, brothers...

### Rain

There's the rain again.  
It washes a river through my head so deep and cold.  
Those raindrops are mine.  
My tears.  
Somebody come with me.  
I'm fading out through this rain  
Like a pebble sinking in the sea  
Trailing voices on the sun behind me.  
Run! Run!  
Where are you?  
Your hair is on the wind.  
I see your shadow in a space and time. . .  
No one is there.  
My love dwells on an Elban plain,  
In Olympian cataracts and riverbeds cold with the wind.  
Wash in the cool rain.  
Drink of the Jordan and dine in the valleys of EIDorado.

And die in bed with your socks on.  
Send me the fountains of Greek wine  
To mix with the Nile waters of my age.  
I'm missing the best part.

Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua

Hosanna in excelsis

Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus

Dominus Dominus

Deus Sabbath

Reach me! Reach me!

I'm getting on!

See! See!

Krishna!

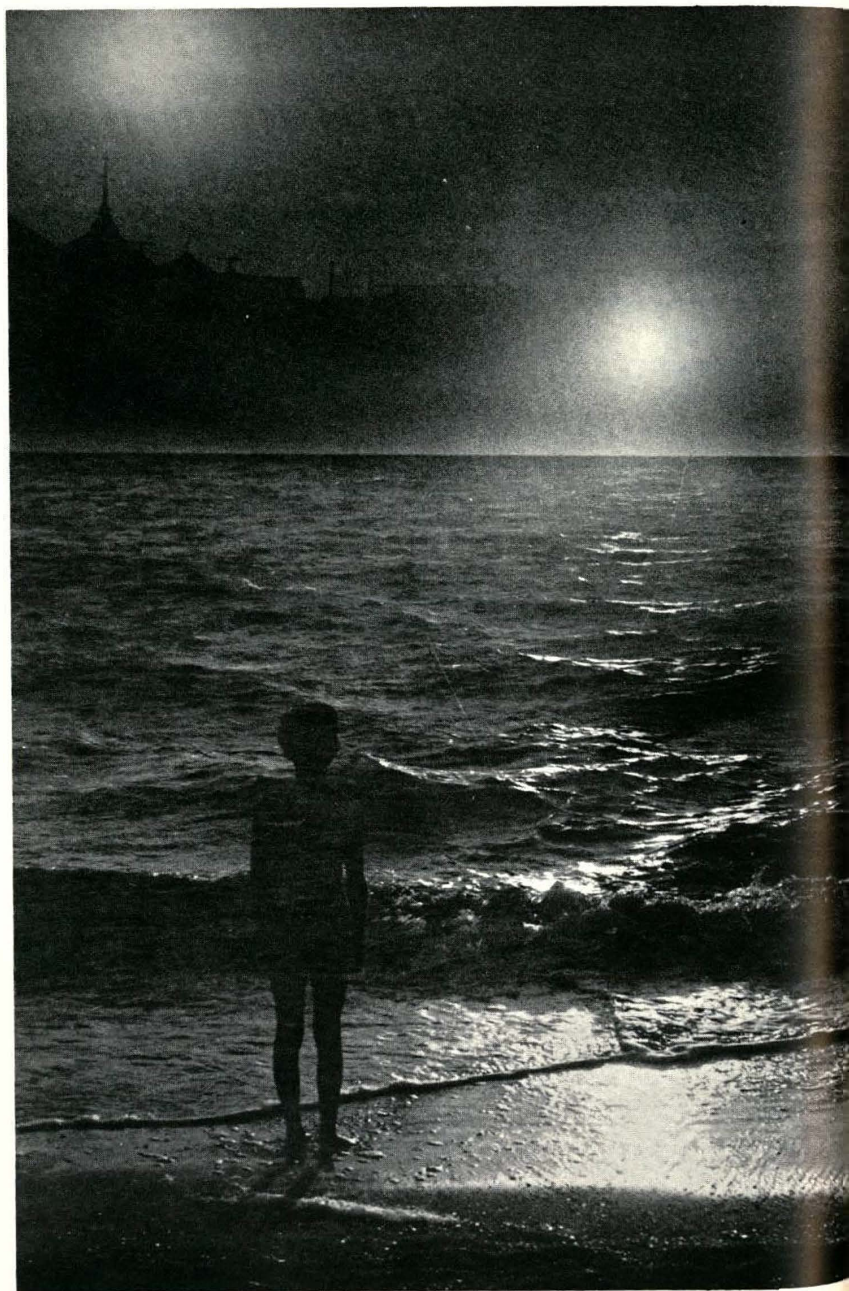
Sanctus!

God!

God?

Do you know me, God?

Do you know me?





**above:** *'And whosoever was not found written in the book  
<math>\diamond</math> life was cast illfo the lake offire.'* **Revelation 20:15.**

**first prize photograph by Kay Irvin:** *'First the Christian  
dead will rise. then we who are left alive shall join them.  
caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air... I Thessa-  
lonians 4:16,17.*

*(from the photo series **Revelations**, depicting life on earth  
after the Second Coming of Christ through eleven photo-  
graphs hased on verses <dscripture)*

JOSEPH MAROHL.

## Elijah

My hour has not yet come.  
My words are dull, green words.  
I have inspired no symphonies, no suicides.  
My words are dull and green.  
They cannot soar.

My midflight wrestlings and high tumbings  
are not territorial,  
Not reproductive, and not new.  
They are an entertainment for the manless wilderness.  
We are man-shy and live in the wildernesses.  
My hour has not yet come.

(If I am still enough, I can hear God.  
If I hear enough, I can raise the dead.)  
My hour has not yet come.

I alone believe, I once said;  
But I say now that I alone  
Believe as I believe alone.  
My solitude cannot be plagiarized.

Not yet  
Can I my verse turn into bread.  
I am fed instead by ravenous beaks.

I am raven,  
Man-shy in the wildernesses,  
And safe in crags, my words are dull and green.



## Caiapha

The sun has landed in Ohio.  
Time has dimmed the day with one more  
    silver filter on the sky.  
The ladies in the house behind  
In gospel station voices  
Sing, Please release me let me go...  
    on radio-tied microphones.  
The storm-washed and asphalt nerved neighborhood  
Has a gray descent begun to swaddling night.

Clouded like a glass of film off dirty  
    watercolor brushes, my room  
Squats dull, grim in piebald gloom;  
And flecks of clotted lights in comers  
    cow with the dust and lint.

I sigh  
(O for the delyt of som siker passioun),  
Caught in despair of mediocrity.  
The dusk, not night, just now prevails,  
I fondle my doubts like children-  
Gray, raceless babies,  
Pouting and refusing all relief.  
I nudged one, and he squawked indignantly  
Infantile.

I have, I said, myself not seen  
    the unfurled banner on Judean hills  
When Truth and Love and Holiness pressed  
    footprints in the earth.  
I have been told (I cannot speak  
    of ultimates with unposed expertise)  
That where he walked all agreed  
He had as human shape as we  
And that above his head no aureate  
    crown would gleam  
But only tangled locks of black and  
    oriental curls.

I am led to think his scars were no  
more beautiful than mine-  
Pink, jagged, half-healed and depressed;  
Nothing, it would seem, for us to love at all.  
But nasty mementos of our own mortal tenderness.  
Just the same a faith was easier back then:  
When fingers could trace the pattern of a wounded side  
And ear could hear the voice of one who said  
that he is God.  
Blessed are they that have not seen.  
And yet for the pleasure of a conscientious disbelief,  
But even shadows smell spoiled with the blood of a  
guiltless Christ.  
I would cry against the light but for the light itself  
(I would gnash against the dark but for the dark)--  
Instead, the gloom consumes.

A dozen flies click against the window scree[]-  
Sparrows *insectae*: dumb and windswept,  
Drab and nuisant devotees of sweetnesses.  
Can it be you dance a truth without a tongue?  
Are even my blind motions hieroglyphs  
I will only later see for truth?  
We, sensuous beings too,  
Hungry, craving creatures full of nerves,  
Stand apart in spirituous immortality.  
But here, here we are unwinged,  
Sensitive as bruises, on a stony world.  
Who knows but we must worship  
Mindlessly as you,  
Mindlessly and feelingly as you,  
Before we will become that which we will call  
truly spiritual.  
The mind invents the manacles of the heart.

The sun heaves hard against Ohio.  
Ohio bends and the sun recedes into her plastic hills.  
At last the night is here.  
The radiance is enclosed.  
The night sky molds a solid tomb;  
The stars pierce wounds onto its cloudy dome;  
Gentle rain bursts out and bathes the neighborhood,  
Rinsing the white bulbs of hot street\_lamps--

There lights fall in tiny droplets  
and rise in steamy ghosts.  
At last the night is here.  
The wet sky glows with covered radiance.  
Night spills across my bed  
And presses to my gooseflesh like a stain.

### The Fooled Sparrow

Reflected in the window that divides  
My porch and living room, a sparrow hopped  
Between the steps and comer, bobbing head  
Like a stumped pedestrian. Having spied  
His future stretched before him, in a kind  
Of tiny sparrow glee (which is much less  
Than that a human feels) he charged at it,  
Fell folded on the ledge then sidewise to  
The ground. By vision cheated, the sparrow  
A few steps staggered, cocked his head and, with  
A quick sniff of new wind, flew off into  
The chartless blue where futures are less clear.

## The Spoon

Back

on the ridge of the mountain  
a half hour's walk into the woods  
from a country cousin's house

Past

twisted grape vines  
honeysuckle twining on grey cliffs  
yellow leaves in crevices  
sunlight screened by half-leafed trees  
and the sound of squirrel rustlings,

Deep

In nature's handicrafts,  
I found a spoon.

Half-buried

and I dug it out-

A sugar spoon

Tarnished,

one could hardly make out  
the ancient design  
of grapes curving down the handle,  
pendulous,  
ready to drop into the round-part  
now full of dirt  
which covered someone's handiwork

The spoon,

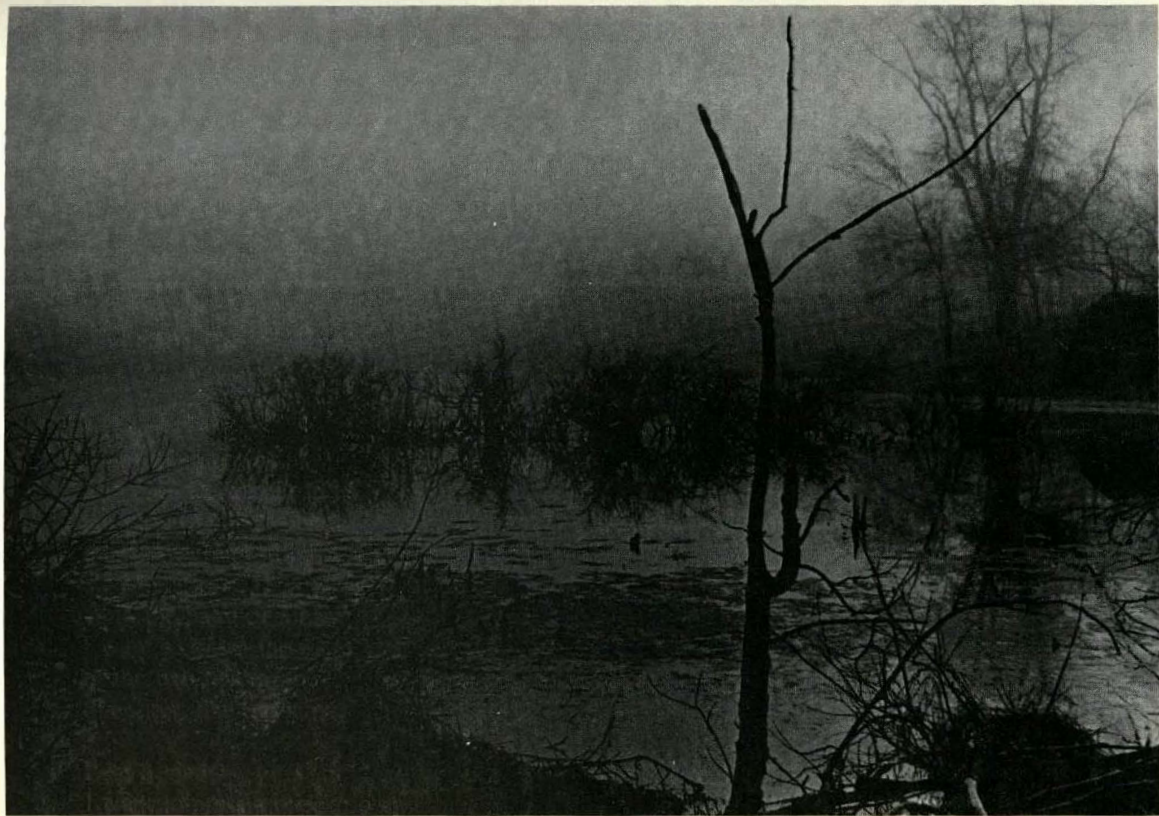
nothing more ♦

was the sole remaining occupant  
of an apparent cabin  
-eight by eight-  
which logs now lay jumbled  
on the ground,  
sounding hollow to the kick,  
old mud caulked to loosened bark,  
crumbling in the leaves.

I had stumbled across  
another life,  
As I looked through  
that ghost-door  
into the solitude of the mountain woods,  
only  
time  
separated him and me,  
A hand had held that spoon before.

*Ms. Childers has also been awarded second prize in the 1978  
Jesse Stuart awards.*

*"McCliflic Pond," by Barb Boyer*



## From the Highway

From the highway-  
The cool December hills  
are grey mottled velvet  
interwoven with fog.

With the palm of a hand  
I want to brush the nap  
of the tree-tips in one  
direction, like the wind.

Like a giant-  
I want to press a cheek down  
on that soft nap, and snuggle  
my length in the folds  
of some distant hollow.

I want to close my eyes and  
breathe deeply of wooded aroma.

## On the Trail

On the trail--  
The cold December hills  
are spiked, worried branches  
intertwined with windings.

With bruised, calloused flesh,  
I grasp hard and cling  
to the nettled moss of  
an iced, rearing rock,  
Scrambling over, I'm winded.

Like a beast wounded--  
I drop sweated bones  
to the frosted ground,  
to the slickness of  
dead muddy leaves.

I close my eyes and catch  
a breath of the rotted dampness.

## The Double-Trunked Poplar

### I

The first thing seen of the town was a gleam of white in the sun. It was that day painfully brilliant. The cluster of houses gave whiteness clearer than the lucent light of a moon; the longer Malaney looked, the greater it shone in her eyes.

The family stopped to look, squinting against the sun. The foliage that fringed it, the fields that cradled the place, were not apparently green, but beaten out to goldenness. Then Lark, the sister aged sixteen, said to Melaney, "Lean over the side if you're about to get sick," she looked so stiff and heat-stricken, and the moment seemed no longer portentous.

They went down the hill and into the town, where Aunt Cecilia greeted her brother-in-law Wilbur and the three young Keefers with blackbeny pie and inquiries on family matters. Melaney's belongings were taken up to a room on the second floor, clean and full of light like the other upstairs rooms, and her clothes were hung in the great dark wardrobe. She had a position as a sort of assistant teacher at the town's Academy, and Kem was to get his schooling there. Aunt Cecilia had Kem put downstairs next to her and Uncle Bob, in a small room that had been used for storage when there had been no babies to make it a nursery.

After they had carried in all the things and the horses had been taken to the stable, there were oozing wedges of the still-warm pie placed on the big dinner table for them. "I hope that crust didn't turn out soggy," Aunt Cecilia fussed. It was, of course, golden and tender. "Don't eat the point end first, Kem dear, it's bad luck."

She served Wilbur and Uncle Bob coffee and the young people milk, then noticed, not necessarily pleasantly, that Melaney had become womanly and ought to have coffee, too. But Melaney refused it, saying it made her nervous, and at last Aunt Cecilia sat down with them at the table. "How are Velma and Mother?" she asked.

Melaney kept her attention on the pie and milk, her mind inward. She would not hear her mother discussed, she would not have Granny appearing before her ailing and complaining. She had learned, away at school, to think vaguely of the family in her absence as happy and prospering. But sometimes the overwrought voice of her mother as she fought with life over Rectitude would not go away, nor the scarecrow form of her grandmother, sly eyes in the untelling



face, tough withered hands everywhere she went clutching the old quilt around her, always cold. Granny was not healthy in her mind. For days at a time she would refuse to get out of bed and would throw her food out the window when no one was in the room. She would not control her bladder and bowel movements and often did not want to be washed. Sometimes, when an afternoon silence held the farmhouse and yard, a chilling, unnatural wail rose up from the foul bed, and Melaney felt afraid. She loved Granny.

Her mother was not even Granny's oldest child, and it was unfair that she was the one to care for her, when Uncle Mick was a doctor and Aunt Cecilia had a big house and no children. Perhaps Aunt Cecilia was aware of this; at any rate, she usually charged an Academy student \$2.00 a week for board, but was boarding both Melaney and Kem for \$2.50, providing Kem would mind her and do chores.

Melaney was relieved and grateful when Lark wanted to see the Academy, and the two took a walk through the town. It was only a small community, about 300 people, a few shops, but it was a busy stop on the river, with daily boats to Gallipolis on the Ohio, and commerce from having the only gristmill between Charleston and Point Pleasant.

It pleased Melaney that the townspeople would not be satisfied with the small log school which had taught only reading, writing, and figuring and which had stood in a low field where high water from nearby Cross Creek too often kept the children from school. A parcel of land had been granted, bricks had been fired of clay from the surrounding fields, local stone quarried and brought to the site by the slaves, and the Academy built. Now there was higher math, music, Latin, Greek, and art, and the principal had a Master's degree. Students came from up and down the Kanawha Valley for schooling there.

Lark was not especially impressed with the building, and Melaney, even though she did not think it grand, was a little disappointed. Melaney had hoped that Lark, who had taken to carrying a sketch pad around with her and drawing this and that, might want to do a sketch of the Academy. This interest in drawing seemed to her a good thing, more edifying than the tending of chickens and ducks.

"Why don't you come here next fall," Melaney had asked her a couple of times before, "and go to school while Kem does? You would be able to take art." She was always afraid that Lark would never get what good things she wanted, not take opportunities, yet she was equally afraid of upsetting some strange balance she felt between them by trying to make her understand.

Now the heat was making Lark cross, and it was not long until Melaney anxiously suggested that they go back to Aunt Cecilia's. If Lark never found anything interesting, perhaps it still was not worth her interfering, Melaney thought, to point out possibilities; let orphaned ducklings bob along after her the rest of her life. It was the kind of dismissal she always made, later to reproach herself for it.

Back at Aunt Cecilia's, two young men, brothers, were getting one of her herbal preparations for their father. She had them stay for supper, making them appear impossibly rude if they declined. They afterward had conversation with Mr. Keefer and the seldom speaking Uncle Bob, addressing the older men as "sir". Melaney did not particularly enjoy the visit; it was uncomfortably hot in the sitting room for hospitality, and the younger of the two brothers kept playing up to Lark, who granted him condescending but beguiling looks. There had to be better rewards for beauty, Melaney thought, and Lark was certainly beautiful. They had always know that.

She herself would let the earnest speaking and restrained shrewdness of the older brother divert her. Unlike her father, who loved talk and was wanning up to this congenial pair, conversation was not her art; it was nice simply to be silent and let wandering imagination feed the situation. "What do you raise, Mr. Keefer?" Jason was saying, curiously intent.

"Com, mostly, some tobacco, vegetables for the family and to sell around. And hogs."

"We have lots of chickens and ducks, too," Lark said. Her father nodded indulgently at her pride, forgetting that Velma had constantly to prod Lark toward her duties.

"Do you have slaves?"

"No." Mr. Keefer shook his head genteelly. "No, I can't justify it to myself. I use paid help. And you?"

"Yes, sir, but Jason works hard as any of them," Lucas said. "They spread good words about him." He was charming, pretty-faced; Melaney found him distasteful.

"Are there many of them?" Lark asked.

"Oh, we've only a handful, but Joab Early, he's got about as many slaves as anybody in the valley," Lucas declared. "He has so many it takes one nigger all day to shuck com for making their com pone. And one Saturday night every month, he gives a big party for them. and niggers from up and down the river come." Melaney, who had been thinking how strong Jason would be from all that labor, remarked to herself that it must be quite an affair, and noted that Lark was deporting herself admirably.

"Is that what most folks around here do? Farm?" Mr. Keefer asked.

"There are many people who make a living by the river," Jason said, "working on the boats, and some who have stores and shops. The Pitrat mill does a lot of business. The local farmers bring in their grain to be ground, and there's a track that runs down to the river for hauling in grain from farther up and down the Kanawha and hauling out the meal, flour, feed, whatever." He was prepared to deliver an economic discourse; Lucas, as Melaney expected, managed to spend the rest of the evening on some excuse sitting with Lark on the front porch.

It made Melaney indignant. Their parents did not know at all what Lark did when she disappeared and were only angry because she was not dutiful. Melaney herself only vaguely suspected and resented that Lark met boys, and thought wishfully of the apparent freedom, accused equally of shirking her tasks when she spirited herself away with her books.

The heat, stifling, had not subsided, and Melaney became increasingly aware that she did not feel well, that things were shimmering before her eyes and Jason's masterful voice came from farther away. It was the trip and the pie and the gravy, she thought, Aunt Cecilia's heavy cooking, it would be nice to lie down. But she did not go to bed until the Blankenship brothers left and Lark came upstairs with her, staying the night in Melaney's bed because she was uneasy in strange places. She did not say anything at all about Lucas.

Once in the night Melaney woke up, still dizzy and uncomfortable even after she got out the chamber pot. She could not go back to sleep for a while; the conversations swarmed in her head, and remembered faces bothered her like harsh lights. Then, within a single moment, calm came to her. Lark was sleeping peacefully by her, and she kissed the delicate cheek under the fringe of lashes and went finally to sleep.

Lark did not wake her when she rose very early the next morning, knowing she had been ill, and Melaney still slept when her sister got into the wagon with their father and left. Aunt Cecilia said she had been a Little out of sorts and curt with them, but when Melaney **awoke**, there was a sketch of the Academy lying at the foot of the bed and a note signed *love, your sister Lark*.

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The dingy mop water arched out from Velma's bucket and hit the ground with that satisfying wet smack. The job was done. She hurried back inside, jerking the door shut, but not quickly enough

to keep Tiger-cat from scuttling past her feet inside. Lark knew he would crouch under a chair or cabinet to be dragged out with accustomed grating of claws on the floor, complacent in his trespass.

Velma deposited him on the porch. "Have you all still been feeding him milk in the kitchen?" she called to Lark. She was aggravated. "He's going to keep wanting in as long as you do."

"He gets cold, and so pitiful when he's wet," Lark said. "Just to get warm, it won't hurt."

"Animals are meant to be outside. They're used to it. They have fur." She disliked having animals in the house. They were dirty, she always told the children. "Besides, it isn't cold now, it's spring."

Lark called *Here kitty kitty kitty* and Tiger-cat came looking for the scraps that usually meant. It gave Velma time to get back inside.

You couldn't explain to a cat; Lark stroked his sides to compensate. Tiger-cat hindered her a few moments winding around her legs, and she had to kick free gently to go on to feeding the poultry. She got the pan of com out of the building and sought out the nearest ducks. The other fowl soon gathered around at the sound of the handfuls of kernels hitting the ground. The ducks were quite friendly, but the chickens Lark did not like so much, they were so flighty. As a child they had piqued her so much that she would chase after baby chicks as playthings to disquiet the mother hen. The old hen would threaten to flog the child, and Wilbur often had stepped in to offer the protection of his tall legs and an amused warning that a flogging would hurt. Lark had been very small, delicate and not always healthy, but neighbors affectionately called her a little spitfire.

The ducks crowded around very close, and if she dropped a few grains on her shoe, they would even peck it off there. That delighted Lark. The eggs would have good yellow yolks if they got plenty of com. Mclaney had complained *that* the eggs at school were not as yellow as those at home and had been told that it had to do with feed. Lark supposed that was why she seemed not to mind and even to find satisfaction in shelling com. Lark did not like the rough rubbing up and down the coarse cob and wondered when Mclaney would object to the damage done to her hands, with the task passed on to Kem. He would have to do it, anyway, when Mclaney took her position at Buffalo Academy that fall, and it was only nonsense that he thought he should also go.

Mclaney was just then walking up from the house toward her. She did not speak until she had stopped, her arms folded, next to Lark. "Do you remember," she said, "the time I pulled you out of the creek?"

"No," Lark said. "What are you doing?" She looked odd about the eyes, as if tears had been there.

"Oh, surely you do. But you were just a little thing, and might not. I was reading and I happened to think of it."

"When was this?"

"Oh, I don't know, you were little. It was still early in spring and Mother had told us as usual not to play around the creek yet. But we did, down at that deep hole at the willow tree roots. We were floating little wood chips for boats and you got out in the water and fell in."

"I remember now, or at least I remember the story."

"Yes, you were very small and the water was up, and you would've drowned. I was afraid to go in after you because I'd been warned not to get that dress wet, so I got this big stick and had you grab hold of it and pulled you-out. You cried all the way home and were so pitiable and pretty that we didn't get in trouble for it at all." She paused.

"What made you think of that?"

"I don't know, really; it came to mind. I've been thinking on things lately, too much . . . ."

"Are you troubled?"

"No, but you know, I've been sleeping poorly. Too many dreams. Once I dreamed," she continued, "that I was asleep on Grandpa Hesch's porch, and Indians came and shot me in the back. For the longest time I laid with my back up against the wall, afraid-" She had followed Lark as she put away the pan and followed her back toward the house.

"Isn't that a strange thing to dream about?" Lark asked.

"It isn't really bad, just this dead thud in your flesh-in a dream, that is. But then, my dreams have too much effect on me anyway. Sometimes they seem as real as anything else that happens to me. Well, what are you going to do now?"

"Oh, I don't know." She felt very tender toward her sister, but somewhere within her a resistance was welling up, like a distant but approaching mob, and she might say something to leave a hurt look on Melaney's face. I am not treated like a guest; there are things I have to do-not fair, not correct to say. "I do about the same things every day, I don't even have to think what I'm about to do."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, one day's about the same as another."

Melaney shrugged in deference. "Maybe that's true." Her voice changed. "Lark, doesn't Granny ever have better days? Ever since I've been back home . . . ."

"Sometimes." Some dread always kept Lark from saying things about the grandmother, or even having feelings toward her while she was this way. "It's not so bad."

"It's too hard on mother."

"It upsets Kem, too, I think. And he ought not have to stay in our same room, he's ten years old. He always acts as if he's trying to see something." She hardened suddenly. "But long as Granny's here, there has to be a place for her. I'm going out to the field."

Lark spent too much time simply being "gone." Kem, who did not admire her as he did Melaney for her education, harped constantly on it; he thought her behavior laziness, her absences attempts to force him to do her work. So she kept away more, to avoid family squabbles, passing the months hastening through her chores and drawing pictures of flowers, trees, and animals.

Casual letters sporadically traveled between her and Melaney after she went to Buffalo. "You probably never think of me when I'm gone," Melaney wrote once, but Lark answered that certainly she missed her, and left it at that. The mulberry cobbler that Lark invented would have been delicious to Melaney; the new length of fabric for a Sunday dress, tiny blue flowers on white, Melaney would've thought dear; and sometimes things would happen that Lark knew she and Melaney would have laughed at together till they were breathless and silly. But there were things, Lark thought, that Melaney would not understand. Drawing and such was not life; life was rough, unreliable. Lark's drawings Melaney approved of, her life she would not understand, nor about the feelings and Tom.

She sat on the creek bank finishing a drawing of the willow tree the gnarled roots of which grew out of the dirt bank and hung into the creek in a mass of root fibers. Melaney had always said it all looked like seaweed, she who had never seen the sea. Lark put her signature to the corner of the page, a tiny bird in flight with the letters L-A-R-K in his claws.

Just then two hands grabbed her sides from behind, and she jumped. "What are you doing?" Tom grinned.

"Nothing." She closed the tablet, too quickly, but he was not interested. "Are you on your way home?"

"It's about supper time. Aren't you going home to eat supper?" he asked, somehow suggestive.

"Of course." But she wasn't home helping her mother with the supper; she would be in trouble again. "I just needed to get away for a while."

"Then I'm probably bothering you -"

She looked up at him as he moved to stand. "No." She simply wanted to get away. Tom sat down, close to her, squinting at the low sun behind her. Then he touched her wrist, near the small round bone-knob, ran his fingers up her arm. She laughed pleasingly, flashing her eyes into his. "Are your eyes green, or blue?" she asked.

"Hazel, my ma tells me. Changeable like Daddy's."

"Oh, don't talk about them."

"I won't. What do you want to talk about?"

"Nothing. I don't care, something-fun." She laughed again.

"Something we can do sometime. We'll go someday."

"Right now. Where do you want to go? I mean it."

"I know you do. You'd just run off. And your family'd act like it was nothing, just something to do."

"They know a body needs to have fun. Do you want to?"

"I'd like to."

"Let's. Where do you want to go?"

"Nowhere, really. What's anywhere else? Some city or somewhere-that's nothing but a mess of troubles."

"And now you sound like Velma. Full of good-for-nothings, full of sin -"

"Ma never talks about sin."

"That's what she means."

"No it isn't."

"What is it, then?"

"I don't know. You go tell her what you think sins are and see what she says. I'm sure she'd be interested in hearing your sins."

"She's not pleased with me hanging around you."

"Or with my father having you work for him. None of us pleases her, I don't think." But she was at once guilty, for her mother was a loving, giving woman. She was not mean.

Lark looked at Tom. He was skinny, hair the color of the sand along the creek. He asked nothing of her, she thought. He did not give too much. Lucas would have. Melaney did not know, when she wrote gaily suggesting an interest for him. He would ask of her. Thin-lipped, sure-handed Tom was there, pulling closer to her. The Weeds made dry brush strokes on the air. No, no, it's all right. . .

Scores of birds flew overhead, a path of birds winding for miles. "There are times," she spoke softly, "when things that happened yesterday feel years away, and what took place years ago comes to me recent as my last thought. Is time that tenuous?"

"By the time we think of a moment as the present, it's past. Everything's the future," he said positively.

"A future we never get to," she intoned. "A past we never leave."

They considered a moment; he tossed a few walnuts into the creek. "All these walnuts are rotten, I think. Would it be any use to try more?"

"They're not much good this year. Jason, I should get back to my books." They touched hands for a moment.

"You spend a great amount of time with them. More than I ever did, or anyone I know. What are you learning?" He was not quite glib about it, and she could answer him.

"Everything, I think sometimes, that I could know. Or maybe nothing, but it doesn't matter. I have a place with them where I feel most comfortable."

"If you get comfortable, you never want to get up and move on to anywhere better."

"Is that a saying?" she smiled.

"Probably not."

"I don't mean comfortable. I mean-happy."

"Don't you feel happy any other time?"

"Of course. What are you pestering me about happiness for? You're one of the happiest people I know."

"That's because I look forward to good things."

"And you make people happy to be around you. Telling stories, getting Mr. McCoy to give up his grudge against Mr. Bronaugh, flattering aunts..."

"... getting into fights."

"No one got seriously hurt. Everyone, almost, was for you and Lucas. Those other fellows didn't really know when a war might start or any of that; they were just belligerents. People think of you as a sort of hero, able to handle any situation."

"Oh, I'm a real Hector."

McLaney was gazing at the sky. "I've never seen so many birds."

He reached out for her arm. "Do you really think I'm looked up to at all?" he asked.

"Yes, I do," she answered, a little surprised he could wonder.

"I want to determine things. Things are moving forward all the time, changing, and a person has to know how to use that." He smiled; his smile was brilliant.

"Jason... I'm not able to talk to everyone like this."

"I know."

"Sometimes I think of things I'd like to tell, a little story of something I saw or did, and I just tell them to myself, very carefully, as if I had to make someone else see it clearly. This morning I was



looking at the wooden box I have for keepsakes. My Grandpa Hescht carved it for me when I was twelve-I just wanted to say something about it, that the animals look like vines twining around, that it was always a magical thing to me... "

"You should show it to me."

"Do you want to see it?"

"My grandfather used to woodcarve, made me tops and such. Let's go look at it." She looked at him, testing his meaning. "I intend for us to share things," he said almost lightly.

### III

Kem had crawled under the front steps and dug in the dirt with intensity and a spade from Uncle Bob's tool shed. His playmate, a quiet, fawn-like girl named Mary, kneeled close to him, arms around a yellowish dog. It panted happily and nipped at her cheeks as she watched Kern's work. She had not asked what he was doing.

When he had finished, he had taken the pup from her and ceremoniously pulled three hairs from the tip of its tail. Then he had buried them in the hole he had made. This, he assured Mary, would work to keep Jove home.

So far it had. Aunt Cecilia had been helping by feeding the greedy animal choice scraps from her kitchen and not threatening him with her broom as she often did neighborhood dogs. But still Kem did not love the dog the way he thought he should and did not always like having it around.

Kem studied his lessons with fervor. He recited well and took to numbers better than many of the children. Every week he wrote to his mother about his progress, always mentioning that Melaney was not spending much time with him. He expected a certain amount of respect from her. He had sacrificed his percentage of the money from the poultry raising to come down here and after all was her brother. Velma wrote back to say how well the chickens were doing, that his sister was a teacher and couldn't show favoritism, and that she and Daddy missed him very much.

Kem did not often have to miss home. Ordinarily he was doing lessons or helping Aunt Cecilia-Mother never made him work in the house-and didn't think much about it. Yet sometimes he became fretful with all this and wanted Melaney to sit and talk to him as she had at home, lingering on their front porch with the sun dying behind the hills, her voice curling around him like the favorable winds on the knob above the house. He never remembered what she would say, but the feelings from those visions clung about him like subtle odors.

Here Melaney always was gone, tutoring some homebound or slow-to-learn child, reading Latin and Greek with Mr. Rossetter. She took walks alone, and Kern did not know whether she wanted to be by herself or looked for something to do.

At these times Kern would slip away upstairs and stand in the doorway of her room, looking at Lark's drawing above the washstand, the dried up flowers from a bouquet he had brought her, the wooden box Grandpa Hescht had carved. He missed home then; he remembered the flunying movements of chickens that made his heart feel like fluttering wings as he opened the door to the coop, the softness of decay and manure under his feet. Sometimes at night he dreamed about gathering eggs, and Lark was there feeding the ducks, and the buckets he took in to Mother were full of rooster claws and rot and feathers.

Kern at first had even been a little afraid of Aunt Cecilia, with her herb concoctions and her way of reading "signs," and he convinced Mary that his aunt was a witch. "Lacey Allen's baby's looked in a mirror before it's a year old-she'll never raise that one to manhood," she predicted, or "That ornery Harvey boy's been killing toads, their cows'll give bloody milk," and Kern and Mary would eye each other knowingly. But Kern came to believe that these hints on the forthcoming were actually quite practical and helpful in averting misfortune, and Mary was faithfully credulous.

She was his companion. They played marbles together, searched for Indian arrowheads around Joab Early's farm, pretended to study plants as older students would. The boys were either too mewling or too rambunctious to suit him. Mary was not silly, and he found her praiseworthy.

Kern was most of all pleased by the texture and sheen of her two long braids. They looked like ropes twined of some uncommonly soft animal hair. One late afternoon, when he had caught Melaney sitting on Aunt Cecilia's porch, he asked what color Mary's hair was:

Melaney playfully replied that it was *fulvus*. "What color is that?" he asked, eager for conversation with her.

"It's reddish-gold," she said. "Yellow like a lion's mane."

Kern had never seen a real lion, but could not imagine that Melaney had not. "rs that a Latin word?"

"Yes, it is." She smiled at him and returned to looking off somewhere down the road. She watched nothing in particular, but he hopefully followed her gaze, imagining the time when he would learn Latin and be considered educated. Maybe he would be a doctor like Uncle Mick, or better yet, a lawyer.

He wanted Melaney to talk more; then Aunt Cecilia interrupted by

appearing at the front door with a small package to give to her.

"Here's that joy-pye tea. Tell Mr. Blankenship I hope he gets over his ailing. Though I suppose after almost five years that isn't likely." She as usual vexed herself into thinking that Mr. Blankenship was somehow perverse in resisting her remedies.

Kem wa-; on his feet. "May I go to the Blankenships'? Are we taking the buggy?"

"No, Jason is at Bronaugh's store getting some things, and I'm just takin' this to him. I won't even be gone half an hour." But Kem put on a wet kitten look, and she told him to come along.

Jason was loading his wagon when they got to the store. He greeted them with his usual flourish, not slacking the sinuous rhythm of lifting the sacks onto the wagon. Kem and Melaney watched the surge of his shoulders beneath the dark green of his jacket.

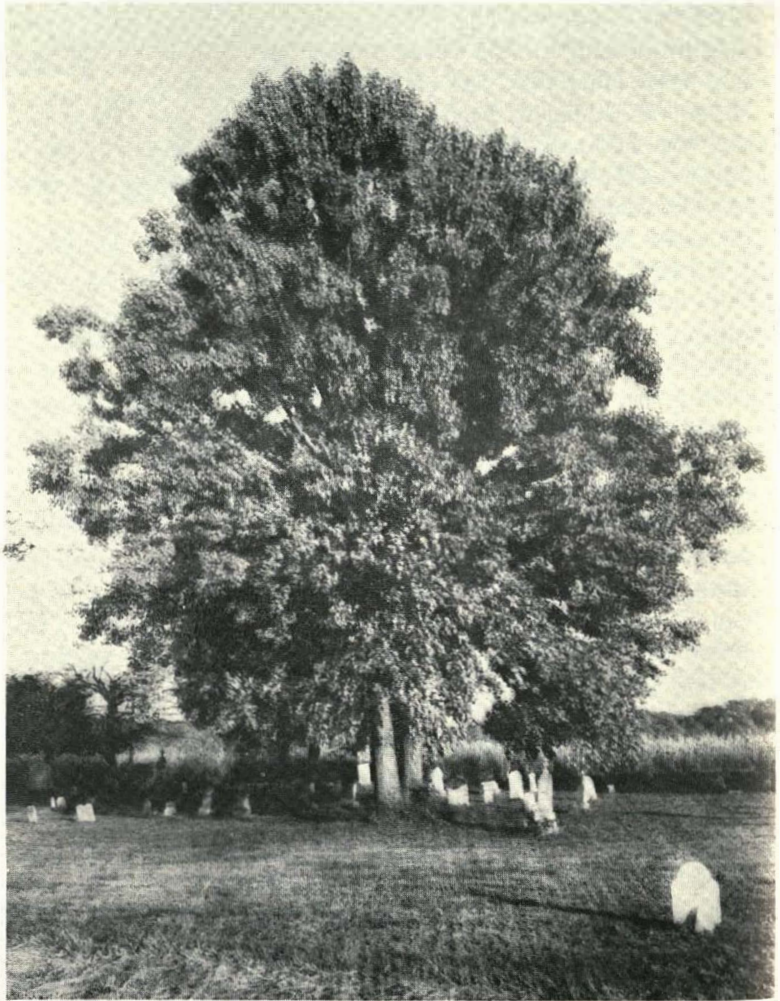
When he finished, he thanked Melaney for the joe-pye and offered to give them a ride to Aunt Cecilia's. Kem felt wise about not asking why it wouldn't have been simpler for him to have stopped by for the parcel anyway. There was something about the way Jason's lips parted caressingly to show his teeth when he smiled and talked to Melaney, and on the way to the house, the ease of their conversation bothered Kem. He did not think they knew each other that well.

He did remember Jason bringing Melaney home once. There had been August weather well into September that year, and the day was uneasily hot. Melaney had stepped down from the wagon with her cheeks bright and her anns full of tree twigs; Kem had mentioned wanting to make a leaf collection, and she had gathered him a variety in an effort to do something for him. She had not been able to find an elm, she explained, until Jason had come upon her and suggested that they go to the graveyard up the road. He knew a young elm grew there.

Kem had been wary of accepting something taken from a graveyard, but he was pleased by the attention. He admired Jason; everyone liked him. Although Mr. Blankenship worked hard as he always had, he got less work accomplished with his bad health, and Jason had learned to fill in and keep the farm running on its level. His father, then, never realized how he had slowed up, but Jason's reputation grew.

Kern kept silent as they rode to Aunt Cecilia's, listening to Jason tell how he settled a dispute between Mr. Ehrlich, the baker, and one of the French Pitrat brothers over who was more essential for the utilization of wheat. Kem did not quite understand what was funny, but he laughed with them a little anyway.

After supper, when Melaney had gone to read with Mr. Rossetter, he crept upstairs and sat in her room, forgetting he had told Mary that they would go over their spelling words. He picked up a book his sister had left on the chair by the window and wanted to read it, but the words were too hard, and he gently closed it. His cheek rested against the cool window. The damp evening was gathering. Jove was in the yard; Kem thought he looked lonely.



*"The Graveyard Up the Road," by Mark Paxton*

#### IV

Their feet crackled and swished through the papery leaves, the creek giving its liquid notes, Kern's yellow dog padding along with them. Sometimes, as if by accident, they would touch, a shoulder, a carelessness of the fingertips.

Here the creek swelled deep, and Melaney thought of the creek by her home, how she and Lark would wade in it, the time when they were sweating and peevish in the July sun and had stripped to their pantaloons to play in the cool water. Their mother had come in search of the basket of eggs which sat on the bank between the wilted dresses. She found them, splashing in the water happy as children, their white breasts bare in the sun, fourteen and eighteen years old then. "Don't you have any pride about yourselves?" she had admonished as they scampered onto the bank, tousled black hair like a wet spaniel's around one excited face, delicate honey-colored hair dripping around the other. "Don't you think somebody could see you?" But they had not seen what was wrong and laughed to her retreating back.

Aunt Cecilia's house was in sight. The walk was almost over, and Melaney sucked sharp fall air into her lungs. The face beside her stood out against the white-feathered sky, brown hair touched by the wind. Jason looked at her as he had the day they stood by the elm tree, and then, as now, she wanted to feel her body delicate and supple as a bird's within the span of his arms.

She had been telling him about Grandpa Hesch's woodcarving, and they were going to look at the little box. They approached the house from the back and went without thinking up the outside steps to the second floor, leaving Jove sniffing around the bottom. The impropriety did not seem to occur to them till they had stepped into the austere hall, the mirror at the end taking them in blankly as Melaney opened the door to her room. But they again felt the stirring of their presences, the vague smell of the rustled leaves.

Next to the box was lying the last letter she had received from home. She would not think of it. It had come the day after the Academy had held the literary, a flat, stem messenger from somewhere unfamiliar, trying to disrupt her happiness.

For the literary had been such a success to her. She had helped Kern choose and learn a poem that he recited, and everyone exclaimed how the little fellow brought such spirit to the rendering. There had been refreshments afterward, and good conversation, since the gathering felt disposed to doing the occasion honor. Melaney, feeling warmed and animated, kept thinking that Lark should be there to see her social grace.

She and Jason gradually had come to lead the talk of their companions, and Melaney saw their remarks falling into place like beautiful fitted pieces even when the other stuck in bits. He had read books, books she had read, and seemed to have been a good student. She did not like ignorant men; they made her uncomfortable. They had drawn away to themselves, and he had taken her home.

Jason had been in fine form that night, in a mood to talk of promising, growing things. Buffalo, he said, was going to grow, the river would make it an important city, and they could all be proud of their part in it. The Academy would become one of the best known schools in the state. There were things to be had.

He had halted the horses to talk, and Melaney, gazing at the new moon through the baring branches, had been so absorbed by his beautiful voice that she had not even heard the words, nor noticed the November chilliness until Jason said they should be getting out of the cold. She had remembered then that it would be a bad winter, that when Uncle Bob had butchered the hog, the excrement in its bowels was too thick.

The next day the letter had come. Lark was getting married to one of the young men who worked on the farm. The wedding would be a small and quick one; there was no reason for Melaney to come home.

She turned to Jason with the wooden box in her hand. He saw the expression of loss in her face and understood it as need; they kissed, sinking onto the edge of the bed, saved from the harshness of saying or doing anything next by a small frightened figure who burst from the wardrobe and ran down the hallway bawling.

They had known what would happen, Kern wailing that they were doing what married people did and Aunt Cecilia being very grim. She had gone righteously to Mr. Blankenship, a Baptist notorious for uprightness, and now Jason was removed to the farm's old homestead cabin, banished at least partly by choice from the family's comforts, but not from their obligations to the farm. He kept at the demands of the land with an energy that would not exhaust itself, as if even the slumberous fall soil could receive life.

Melaney read and studied feverishly by day and went to sleep every night by going over and over the ways one could touch and look at a man. Jason was everywhere in her mind as she tried to rest. She felt too much. The cabin was not that far, and the moon was bright. He was sleeping alone in the old cabin. She would cover herself in her black shawl and sweep out like a fleet shadow, too moved to be afraid. The dark shapes in the room pressed in on her. A candle—

but there must be no light. She must not be seen. Always at last a dream-filled sleep had come; that sleep would come. It was safe in the dark. She would be with Jason. In one motion she was up. There could be no sound. The moon gave light for the way.

He was sitting awake, a small light burning within the single room of the place. She had been so silent on the way that now she did not know what to say. "I'm scared, I couldn't sleep." He was always ready with soothing words. The cabin was old and sparse-furnished. It seemed from a strange, wild land. "I've done some wrong, I can't find peace." She didn't know what to say.

"Melaney—what are you doing—?"

She was compelled. "Things are unbearable, Jason, I can't rest, they all. . ."

"What? Is it because of me?"

"No; that isn't why I came." She wanted to be with him. "It's me. I've never been able—to be like other people, I've brought you into something—" He would not know what to think. "I want your father to forgive you. I don't know what. . ."

"You know you shouldn't have come. You'll make it worse. I don't understand you—" He had not been in bed, and it was late; he had stayed awake to think and could not. His limbs felt as full of life-flow and tension as a young tree's, but he moved toward the door. "Let me just take you home, and you'll rest. It'll be worked out of you now, having run out into the night like this crazy—" They were telling themselves to consider. Melaney was calming down, more vaguely disappointed.

"When will you see me?" She touched his shoulder. He put his hands to her waist. "Please—" she whispered.

"I don't want to make you unhappy." He was sad, apologizing.

"Then—" she hesitated.

"Then what?"

"Then don't." They were becoming too careful.

"Let me take you home."

She slid her arms around his body, and he hugged her and stroked her. She would not move her cheek from his chest, her hands would not stop smoothing the thin layer of cloth over the mysterious skin. He would not be able to send her home. He allowed himself to kiss her, and to kiss her again as before he had not. His hands could not rest. Her hair was wild and the buttons on her dress small and neat. She was whispering something that made faint stirrings near his ear.

It was almost pain, Melaney kept thinking; this man's body. Let them love each other and be alive.

They were married a few weeks later. Then it was not long until the war began and Colonel McCausland mustered the men for the Confederacy. During the war soldiers alternately of the gray and blue came to the town, and the Academy became their barracks and infirmary. By the end of the fighting it was a shambles inside, and the town was part of a new state of the Union.

The men went back to making a living in much the same ways as they had before. Jason again would work the farm, without the freed slaves, who nearly all left that area, and without his brother Lucas, a casualty. Melaney during the war had rolled bandages more vigorously than anyone, chased cows out of fields, taught in homes, until everyone praised her as a model of womanhood. Then she realized she had hated it, and it was worse when Jason seemed to resent this new respect from the community for his wife.

They could not seem to love each other for a while. Jason did not want things to happen anymore and kept silent and dismal. He would stand watching the endless movement of the river, time vague in his mind, and at last, when Melaney had approached him there with the wind in her hair and her hands gentle and reminding, he had broken down and cried for healing.

For a decade or so the town progressed, but somehow past that it never grew, no new important businesses, its place on the river less and less significant, never again the words of the ancients filling the rebuilt schoolroom with ideals. Jason and Melaney tended their farm, the fine vibrant feeling of searching for something passing away from them. To them children were born, and near the old elm tree, where a double-trunked poplar grows, small white stones lined up, reading *Stephen B. 1869, Dove 1870-71, Penn 1873, Ora 1875, Virgil 1878-79, Holman 1867-81, Infant Son 1881.*



*On the setting: Buffalo is a real town in Putnam County (my home town, population less than 1000), but Melaney's family and the Blankenships are fictional, as are their personal situations. The minor names and occupations, however, are taken from the real lives of the town's inhabitants, and the "real world" of the story is based on local history as told to me by Miss Caroline Frazier and on trips my husband Mark Paxton and I made to the old cemeteries around town.*

*The Academy in its prime was considered superior to what was then Marshall Academy at Guyandotte. Miss Caroline, who lives in the brick house built by one of the Pitrats next to the now-gone mill, is at eighty-seven actively interested in the restoration of the Academy as an historical site. My interest in it was awakened when I learned of what a sophisticated curriculum these rural Appalachians considered necessary for an education even below the college level. One wonders how they could consider Latin, Greek, and the fine arts "relevant" to their everyday lives as farmers and river workers, when today languages, the arts, and even the humanities are seen as frills rather than integral parts of an education, even by most of the college educated.*



*"Small White Stones," by Mark Paxton*

*But the central matters of the story lie in the characters and their varied awareness of the movement and impulse of life and the displacement of time. Except for Part V and childhood reminiscences, the story takes place within one year in the late 1850's: Part I occurs in the early fall; Part II begins by going back to the previous spring, then jumps, through Lark's "passing the months," to that November; Part III is a general account of this autumn in Buffalo through Kern's eyes; and Part IV picks up the scene between Jason and Melaney left off at the end of Part II.*



*"The Double-Trunked Poplar," by Marl: Paxton*





