


1986

et cetera

Marshall University

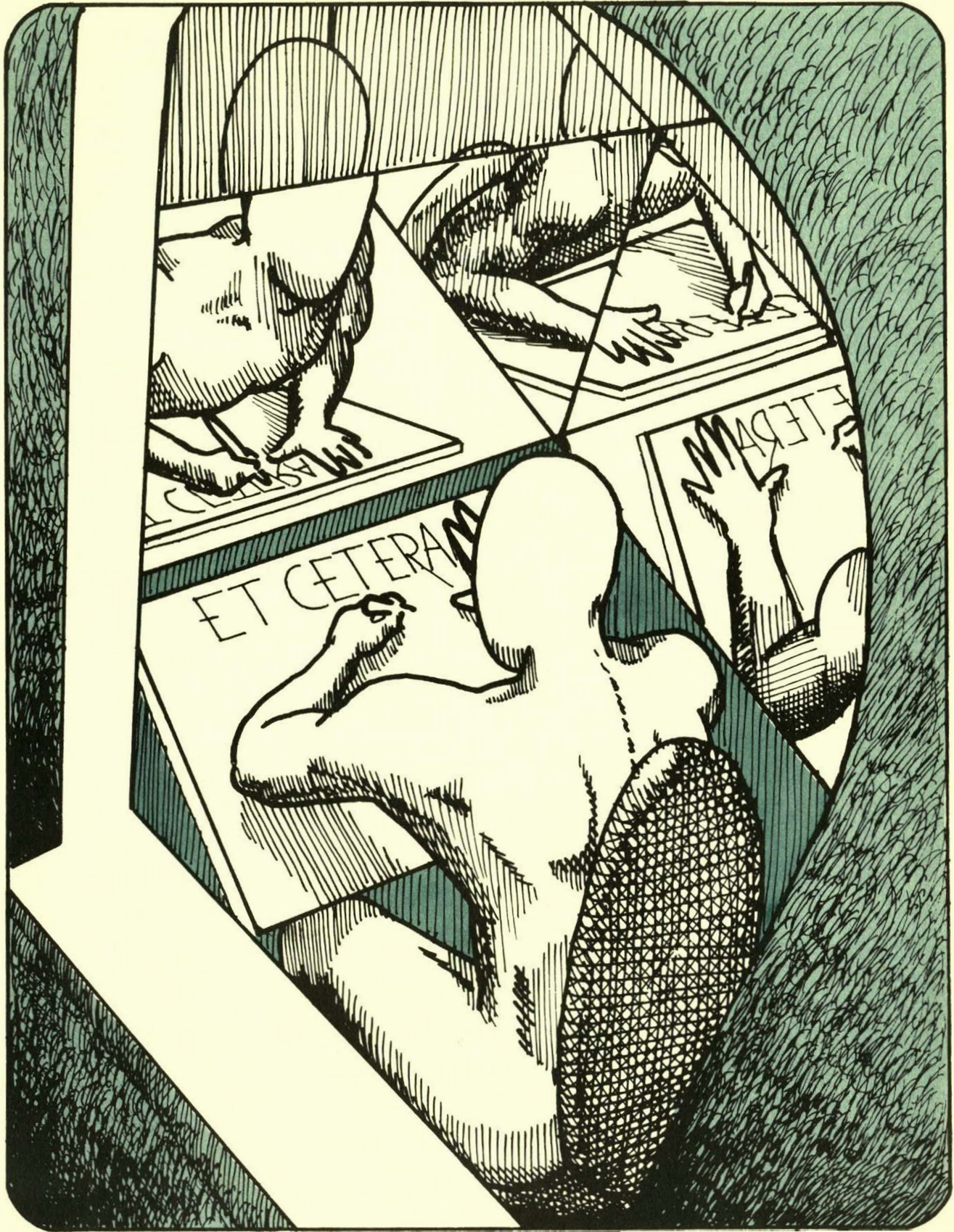
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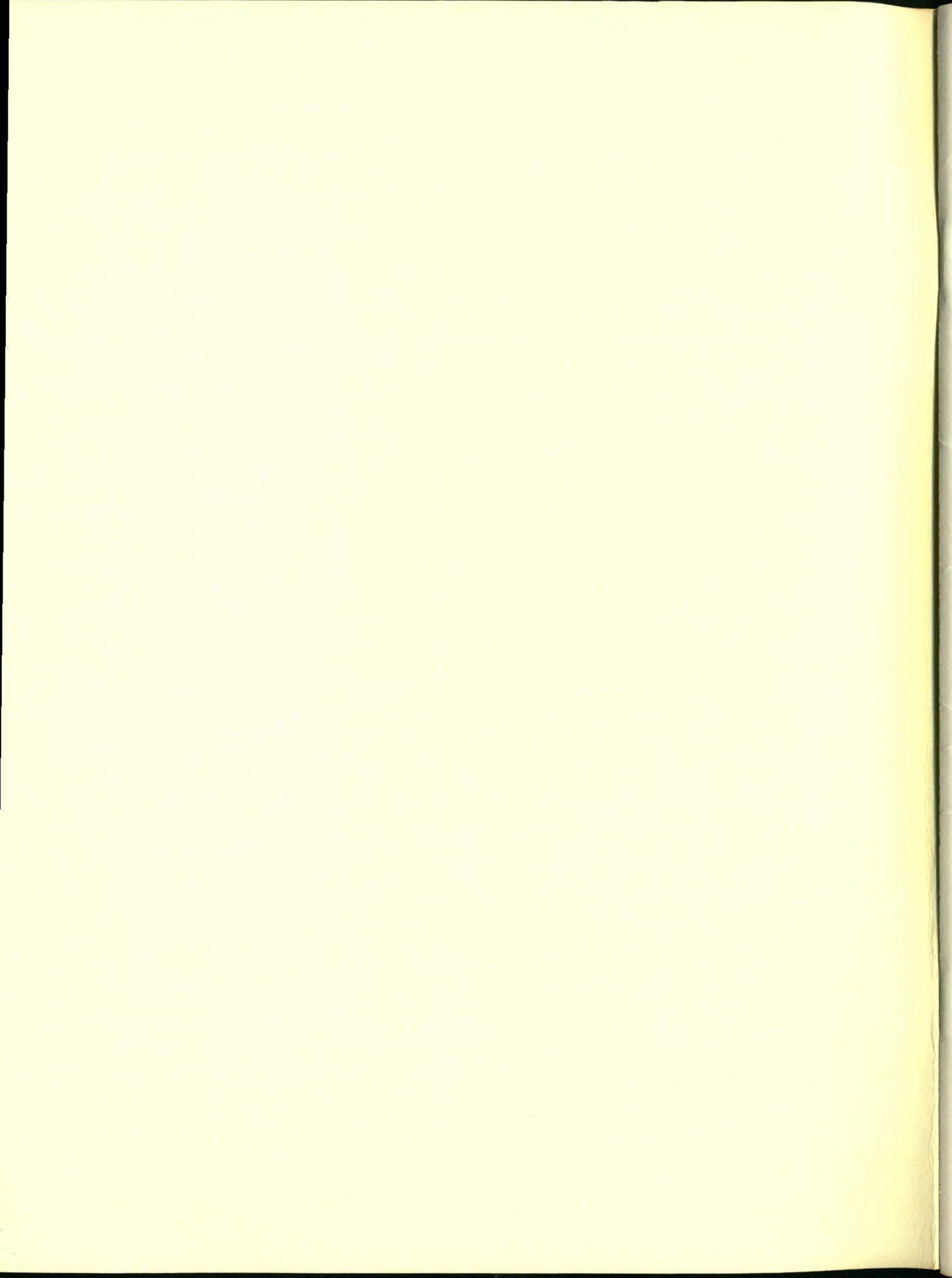
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The Marshall Literary Magazine



Et Cetera
The Marshall Literary Magazine

1985-86
Marshall University
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Et Cetera

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I was just told not to thank anybody in this blurb, but I can't help myself: too many kindnesses to forget. Dr. Richard Spilman and Dr. John McKernan both helped tremendously. Student interest was high all year, and I owe a debt even to those who could care less, but listened to my excited ramblings anyway. Finally--who else?--as front man for the English Dept. Dr. Leonard Deutsch made a few good blocks. Thanks to all.

John Harvey,
editor

Ee Cecera

1st Place Art, Fred Hightower	iv
1st Place Poetry By A Dim Light , Lisa Graley	1
1st Place Fiction Silent Drop , Pamela Steed	2
1st Place Photography, Elaine Whitely	6
2nd Place Poetry Nacht Und Fernes Fahren , Timothy Wellman	7
2nd Place Art, Billy Conley	8
2nd Place Fiction Reddy Creek , Elgin Ward	9
2nd Place Photography, Lynn Dinsmore	13
Little Red: A Modern Stage Adaptation , Timothy Wellman	14
Forgotten Graveyard , Timothy Wellman	15
Landfill , Elgin Ward	15
Chance Meeting , Elgin Ward	15
I Can't Keep Laughing , Pamela Sreej.	16
Mae West's Bedroom , Steve Holley	20
The Woman Is At Her Best , Steve Holley	20
Halloween My Birth I Wept , Steve Holley	20
Go Left, Young Lady, into Prehistory , Mary Sansom	21
Was This How Chaucer Began? , Lee Wood	22
Driving to Lexington, KY , Lee Wood	22
"The end of splendor comes", Mary South	23
"Found Poem", Samuel Bauserman	23
The Accomplice, L.E. Welch	24
01' Squacky Breaks Bad, Phyllis A. Kirk	25
Photo, Joel Cook	26
Alliteration , Zen 13	27
Conditioned Response , Zen 13	27
Sade C'est , Zen 13	28
Mother , Zen 13	28
Or Lack There Of , Zen 13	28
Harmless , Irene Orrick	29
October Dawn , Irene Orrick	30
Photo, Kim Aaron	31
Boys , John Williams	32
A Community Affair , John Williams	32
White Hat , Tonya Adkins	32
"Notice", Marc Crutchfield	32
After the Summer , Beth Payne	33
The Ideal , Chris Quackenbush	33
Janitress , Taube Cyrus	33
Art, Chris Quackenbush	34
Fantasy II , Alan Scott	35
Lenora's Poem , Alan Scott	35
"Three Poems," Tim R. Massey	36
Revival , Richard Sullivan	36
Go Ye Into All The World , Suzanne Callihan	37
Tornado , Suzanne Callihan	37
Passage , Gina Johnson	37
Arr, Vicki Boatright	38
Bummed Out , Bruce Hollis	39
The Show , John Harvey	40



1st Place Art, Fred Hightower

By A Dim Light

Lisa Graley

Well, kid, the romanticist in me came out
again tonight.
You should have been here
it was raining outside
with the slight happenings of a storm
I was crazy in love with the weather
so I held a minor celebration in its honor
I turned the lights out
and lit my kerosene lantern
I always liked to take a bath by candlelight
so I thought I'd try it by lantern
So, there I was sitting in a tub of hot water
by the light of a lantern.

The rain was coming down outside with
an occasional flash of lightning
and I enjoyed myself tremendously.
Things could have been perfect if I could have
had homemade soap
and a whiskey bottle full of lemonade.
Seriously, things were so great
that I just had to write and tell you about them
I came to my room with the lantern
--not wanting to break the mood
and hunted for my pen (which will probably
run out of ink before I finish)
and some yellow paper, or faded paper
Eventually, I had to tear a blank page
from an old history book
I don't know if it's yellow or not.
It looks yellow in the light of the lantern.
Anyway, here I am stooped over a wooden stool
writing this letter beside the lantern
The rain is still coming down
and I hardly want to sleep because
I'm enjoying this mood so much.
I hope it is still raining when I wake up
in the morning--it's the sweetest music, I think.
I forgot to mention that I'm wearing
my green doctor uniform...

I have clean sheets on the bed
The lantern light makes them look cool and soft
--nice, I like that
The whole world seems dark outside my circle
of lantern light
and the rain is coming down harder.

Silent Drop

Pamela Steed

The coffee cup rattles in its saucer until Eliot stops touching it. Some mornings he can get it all the way to his lips without spotting his tie, this is not one of those mornings. Eliot has thoughts, nasty little thoughts that make his fingers twitch and his head throb, and he's altogether a miserable sight in the mornings, that's what his wife would say if he had one but he doesn't. Women are frightening creatures because they expect men to be presentable in the mornings even if they themselves are not and Eliot never feels presentable. He drinks his coffee with lots of cream because it doesn't reflect his acne when he bows his head over the cup. Sometimes he faces his blotchy complexion in the bathroom mirror and asks God why his mother and father had to be so damn ugly even though he's never seen them and wishes that they'd get killed or paralyzed or something, anything that would slow them down long enough for Eliot to get one good long look at his homely makers. He knows where they are, one thousand, eight hundred, thirty-seven miles west, and he knows where they used to be, but once when he went there to find them, he found only that they had moved, and he has since vowed not to play chase with two sixty-five-year-old people. He dumps another spoonful of powdered cream into the coffee and decides to stop thinking about his parents. After all, he is too old now to be concerned with such petty disturbances as whore mothers and bastard fathers and middle-aged men and women who worship trash compactors and garbage disposals because they make elimination so easy.

Eliot's fingers toy with the spoon, tap it against the side of the saucer and fill his ears with delightful, unrhythmic noise. Noise is consolation, it doesn't require listening, and Eliot is a good nonlistener. He doesn't hear the thump thump of the stereo in number seven nor the shrieks and yells of the troubled newlyweds in number nine, no, his ears are quite well-trained. But his feet are another matter. They are neither insensitive nor closed, but can *feel* the girl in number three. Her ceiling meets his floor, and he sometimes stands perfectly still in the middle of the living room, feeling the vibration of her movement below. It is not a graceful movement, he knows because he's seen her awkward motions as she waddles across the parking lot in front of the apartment building, one hand clutching a baby carriage, the other grasping the jerking arm of a boy barely old enough to walk. Eliot watches her paunchy figure, jeans stuffed tight, sweater stretched across a broad back, as she disappears down the street with her children, and he knows she will return just before dark as she does every evening when it's not snowing or raining. He finds one reason or another to be standing on the balcony when the girl comes back, and she always looks up at him and lets go of the carriage long enough to give a quick wave and say, "Hey, Eliot, nice evening, ain't it?" and Eliot never fails to nod nervously and answer, "Oh, yes, very nice."

He spends most of his morning sitting at the breakfast table, sipping coffee and wondering if he should say

something different this evening to the girl in number three. The girl, Francis, once invited Eliot down to her apartment for drinks and she got drunk and called her boys little broken-rubber mistakes, and Eliot had not known whether to laugh or frown, so he did neither. That was the only evening he'd spent alone with her and had since worried that he had done something wrong or stupid to make her drink so much and lose control of her tongue. But now he wants to go back. He wants to strike up a conversation, an intelligent one, one in which they tell each other their dark, little secrets, confess their deep little desires, and maybe even exchange a slight touch. In all his thirty-three years, Eliot has never had a companion he could touch or who would touch him. He pushes the saucer to the center of the table and decides this will be the night he gets touched.

2.

The evening is slow in coming. Eliot tries to spend the day away from his apartment to make the time go faster. He takes his unemployment check to the bank and keeps moving to the backs of the longest lines until he notices a guard eyeing him curiously, and he leaves without cashing the check. He falls into the same pattern with the lines in a fast food restaurant and manages to spend thirty-five minutes buying a hamburger. Eliot gradually makes his way home by driving in larger and larger circles until he winds down to circling the block around his apartment building. Once inside, he sits on the couch, places his feet firmly on the floor and waits for the warm and comforting feel of vibration downstairs. It comes, and Eliot relaxes. He knows now that Francis will welcome him, he can tell by her deliberate movement below.

Two hours later, Eliot stands on the balcony, feeling a bit less welcomed than before. He spots the slow-moving trio off in the distance and stands perfectly still. Waiting, but trying not to look like it.

"Hey there, Eliot," Francis shouts up at him as she nears the parking lot. "Sure is nice out, ain't it?"

"Yes, wonderful," he calls down to her and wants to say something more, but before he can speak, the girl disappears underneath the balcony with her baby carriage and toddler in tow. Eliot hears her door close and thinks he should give her a few moments to settle the children before he makes his intrusion. He worries that that's what she'll consider it - an intrusion, a blatant display of ill manners, the nerve of someone who knocks on a door with full intention of barging in and making himself at home. For several sweaty minutes, Eliot chides himself for even considering doing such a thing and thanks God that he hadn't had the nerve to say anything else to the girl. He slings the perspiration from his forehead and curses God for not giving him a father who could've taught him how to be assertive, to be gutsy, to be ballsy, to stomp down the stairs, fling open the girl's door, and tell her

exactly what he wants. To be a man. Eliot knows his father must've been a man because he'd had the courage to let go of something he didn't want.

"Hey, Eliot," her voice says suddenly, and he is slow to react like one dazed by the unexpected. "Hey, Eliot," she says again, and he looks over the balcony at her squat little figure, face upturned and shielded from the fading light by a bare arm. "Whar'er ya doin'?" she asks, obviously noticing his surprise.

"Oh. Well. . . nothing," he tells her, "just getting some fresh air."

"Well, if you're not busy, could I bother ya for a minute? Do ya know anything about TV's? Mine's on the blink."

Eliot doesn't know anything about televisions, he doesn't even own one but can't tell her that. "Of course," he says. "Would you like me to look at your's?"

Francis smiles, nods her head rapidly, and Eliot walks to the stairway looking very calm and feeling very sick. The girl's door is standing open and she leaves it that way once she and Eliot are inside. At once, he notices the soft, sickly odor of baby food and baby vomit and baby shit that permeates the air in her apartment and makes his stomach feel suddenly very full. The boys are nowhere to be seen but they can be smelled, and Francis makes no mention of their obvious existence, neither does Eliot.

"Well, there it is," she says, pointing to a new, twenty-five inch, expensive-looking Japanese television set. "Don't know what's wrong with the damn thing, it's not more than a couple of months old."

Eliot stares at it, not knowing whether to walk around behind it or play with the knobs on the front, so he stands back and sizes it up for a few long moments. Finally, in a very serious tone, he asks, "What does it do?"

"It gets loud," she tells him.

"Gets loud?"

"Yeah, you know. It just goes up all by itself. I'll be sittin' here watchin' it and all of a sudden it just blares out, so loud it hurts your ears, wakes the babies up every time."

"Well. Maybe we should turn it on and see how it acts now."

Francis pushes a button and the screen lights up immediately in brilliant color. The volume is low and sounds perfectly normal to Eliot. The two of them stand in the middle of the living room staring at the picture, waiting for the sound to change. It doesn't. Francis steps back a few paces, lifts the remote control from the couch, and pushes more buttons. The screen flashes from sitcom to football to cop show to preacher and so on until it goes through twenty-three channels and turns to snow. The girl switches it back to football and says they may as well leave it there until the sound does what it's supposed to do. She tells Eliot to sit down and he does so on one end of the couch. She takes the other.

"It usually doesn't take very long," she assures him, and he nods his head, still staring at the picture as though he is terribly interested in the game.

"Who's playin'?" she asks, and he freezes. How the hell should I know, he thinks, and squirms to a new position on the couch.

"Uh, I'm not sure," he tells her. "Probably college, I usually follow the pro's."

"Oh. Do ya want a beer?"

Yes," he says, relieved. His nose has gotten used to the baby smells and now he picks up a different scent, something stale

or spoiled. Francis crosses the room in front of him on her way to the kitchen, and his nostrils automatically flare to rake a whiff of her, to discover if she is what is stale, but before he can make a decision on the odor, he feels something press against his crossed ankles and looks down to find a large cat rubbing against him. He is repulsed, he hates animals, especially cats, and uncrosses his legs quickly to scare the big white furry thing away. It doesn't scare easily. The cat slides its head back and forth against the side of his shoe, and he shakes his foot to make it stop. It doesn't. Francis returns with two cans of beer, kicks the front door shut, and spots the cat at Eliot's feet.

"Oh, Honeydew," she cries, "you've never met Eliot!" The cat continues to rub Eliot's shoe and Francis hands him a beer. She plops down on the couch and smiles fondly at the animal. "That's my baby," she tells Eliot, "my other baby. That's Honeydew. [believe she was at the vet's the last time you were here. I had her fixed." Honeydew continues to rub and Francis keeps smiling. "She must like you," the girl tells Eliot.

Francis sips from the beer can and Eliot wishes she would pour it into a glass. How much more ladylike it would be. Gazing at her from the corner of his eye, Eliot realizes that there isn't much at all ladylike about the girl. She's not fat enough to be called fat but certainly plump would fit, and her make-up is spread unevenly across her plump cheeks. Her dark, almost black hair, is oily and uncombed, and Eliot frowns unintentionally at the overall dirtiness of her. He sips from his own can but not without first noticing if the rim has been wiped clean.

"I don't usually watch sports myself," Francis says suddenly and Eliot feels as though he should apologize for the football game.

"We can watch another channel if you'd like," he tells her.

"Oh no, I didn't mean that, I know men like their ball."

Eliot shifts uneasily on the couch and wishes to God the sound from the TV would blare out and scare the damn cat shitless.

"Arc your children napping?" he asks, trying to avoid an awkward lull in the conversation.

"Yeah. The little goofs, they wear me out." She stretches across the couch and scoops up the cat from Eliot's feet. "Now Honeydew here, she never wears me out. She's a good girl, ain't she?" Francis coos into the side of the cat's head and presses its body snugly against her large, cushiony breasts. Eliot doesn't like the sight but is glad to have the animal away from his own body. He takes another drink to avoid watching them, and it suddenly occurs to him that he has never seen the girl cuddle her babies like that or coo into their ears or speak soft, sweet words to them. What the hell, he decides, the boys probably smell worse than the cat.

"Francis," he speaks lower than ever, not sure he wants her to hear. "Francis, I thought the cat was who I wanted to be. At least if I were Honeydew, you would've touched me."

The girl looks at Eliot for a long time without blinking. She moves her lips as though about to speak, then shakes her head and looks away.

"Are you alright?" he asks, and Francis begins to cry again. Eliot shurs out the sounds of her pain and the whimpering from another room and the steady, low voices of sports announcers. He places his palms on the floor, longing for a vibration, a movement, anything he can feel. Then he

remembers he's downstairs and sighs. It is a long sigh, coming up from somewhere inside that Eliot can't quite place.

3.

Two hours later, the game is in the fourth quarter and Francis is finishing her fifth beer. Eliot still sips on his third and wonders when the endless supply of the cheap, weak shit is going to run out. The television has remained at a steady low volume and the girl seems to have forgotten that they've been waiting for it to do something. Still holding the cat, a bit more loosely now, Francis speaks slowly and softly as though not to disturb the sleeping animal. Every time she has gotten up to fetch another beer, she has whispered sweet apologies into Honeydew's ear and held the can at arm's length when opening it to keep from frightening the animal or spraying it, Eliot doesn't know which. He watches the girl pour out her affection all over Honeydew and tries to repress a twinge of jealousy toward the cat. This is ridiculous, he thinks, my mother didn't raise an idiot. My mother didn't raise anything.

"Those boys take long naps, don't they?" Eliot asks, trying to draw her attention away from the animal.

"Yeah, thank goodness. They wear me out."

"Do you want me to leave so you can rest?"

"Oh no, no. I'm not too tired to keep talkin' to you, Eliot. Do ya want me to tell ya more about the two good-for-nothin's who left me with those two babies in there?"

So far Eliot has not been able to bring the conversation around to anything even remotely intellectual or stimulating. He hasn't gotten one little dream out of her. Rather, she has filled the two hours with the unmerciful backstabbing of previous lovers and uppity sisters who disowned her during the first pregnancy and a younger no-good brother who's doing time in the state penitentiary for some unspeakable act, something she just can't talk about. Eliot has remained respectfully attentive, nodding his head at the appropriate times and sighing with sympathy when Francis stops long enough to catch her breath. And now she wants to know if he wants to hear more.

"Oh, I don't want you to talk about unpleasant times for my sake," Eliot tells her. "Tell me what you plan to do now, do you think you'll live in this apartment for long?"

"Well, hell, Eliot, it's kinda hard to find any place cheaper and my unemployment's about to run out. I guess as long as that no-good son of a bitch Henry Wall keeps sendin' me money every month, I'll just try to keep this place."

Eliot remembers the name Henry attached to the second no-good son of a bitch who's felt guilty enough to send part of his paychecks to Francis in monthly allotments. But Eliot doesn't want to hear more about lover number two and tries to steer the conversation away from him.

"I can understand that," he tells her. "My unemployment checks are just barely enough to keep me living here. But don't you ever dream of going some ptaace else?"

"Well, like where?"

"Oh, anywhere. Venice, what about Venice? I've always wanted to go there."

"Why do you wanna go to Venice? Do you speak French?"

"Uh, no. What about New York? Now there's a city. Have you ever been there?"

"No. And frankly, I ain't got no desire to be robbed, raped, or beaten to death. You can have New York."

Francis sets her beer can down heavily on the end table and the sharp crack of the empty tin tells Eliot that the girl is through talking about dreams and distant places. It also startles Honeydew who springs from Francis's lap and darts behind the couch. The girl peers over the back of the couch, tells the cat she's sorry, and smiles sheepishly at Eliot.

"I should be more careful," she says, then asks, "Do you have any family around here, Eliot?"

Eliot feels his checks instantly redden. He coughs and runs his finger around the rim of his can.

"No," he says, trying to sound nonchalant. "They all live out west."

"Do you ever see 'em? Have you got any brothers or sisters?"

"Uh, no. That is, I don't know. About the brothers or sisters."

"How come you don't know that, Eliot?"

"Well, you see, I didn't grow up with my parents. My father had a distant cousin who took me in. I lived with him and his wife until I was twenty-one."

"How come you didn't live with your mom and dad?"

Eliot grows more uncomfortable and shifts uneasily on the couch.

"I don't really know why," he tells Francis. "No one ever seemed to want to talk about it." He bows his head and stares at the top of the can, cursing himself for sounding so hurt and weak. Francis watches him closely, feeling terribly sorry for him and wondering how she can comfort him. He's kind; i cute when he's sad, she thinks, that face ain't so bad when ya get used to it. Partly because of the beer and partly because of her suddenly aroused sympathy, Francis slides awkwardly toward Eliot and stops just short of touching him. He keeps his head lowered and doesn't move, waiting tensely for the girl to do something. She pats his knee.

"There, there, now, Eliot," she says softly, "don't get upset. That mean mommy and daddy ain't worth gettin' upset over."

Eliot is flustered. Mean mommy and daddy? After thirty-three years of pain and tears and anger, this girl can resolve everything, sum up everything as just that mean ol' mommy and daddy? And they're not worth getting upset over. But what the hell. If mean ol' mommy and daddy can arouse some loving tenderness out of dear, sweet Francis, why knock it? Enjoy it, Eliot decides, just enjoy it. But Francis seems content patting his knee.

"Lord knows I've had my share of worries, too," she says, still patting.

Eliot feels a sudden surge of bravery well up inside him and he knows he must act now or else be trapped in another deluge of the girl's troubled tales and self-pity. Right now he wants all the pity for himself. Mustering all the courage within him, Eliot places a hand on top of Francis's, and they sit quietly, two hands on Eliot's knee. With even more courage, he squeezes her chubby, damp fingers, lifts his head and looks her squarely in the eye. She looks back, a hint of confusion and uncertainty peering through the make-up. Eliot raises his other hand to her face and awkwardly strokes

her cheek. He sees her eyes grow wide and hopes to God it's because of excitement and not shock.

"Why, Eliot, I'm shocked," she says suddenly and pulls her hand away from his but not too quickly. "I've never seen that look in your eyes before. Are you alright?"

"Ycs, Francis, I'm alright. It's just that I feel carried away. Do you understand?" His question is almost a plea, and the girl softens a little. She wonders if her sudden weakness is real compassion or just the beer gone to her head.

"Well, yeah," she says slowly, "I understand, but... well. .. Eliot, will ya stop rubbin' my face like that?"

"Oh, I'm sorry." He feels his own face blush again. "Am I being too rough? I can be gentle, I promise. Very gentle."

He lightens his touch and Francis reaches up to push his hand away. He doesn't let her. Instead, Eliot places his hands on her shoulders and shoves her back on the couch.

"For God's sake, Eliot!" she cries, and he tries to muffle her voice with a sloppy kiss. She jerks her head sideways and screams, "Eliot, you goddamn idiot! What's the matter with you?"

Eliot doesn't know what's the matter with him. Somewhere along the way his nervousness was replaced by desperation, and being desperate felt better than being nervous because at least there was some action in it. He can't put his finger on it, but something inside him, something strange and compelling, has taken over his senses and all he knows is that it's frightening and wonderful.

"Stop it, Eliot!" Francis says through gritted teeth. "You'll wake up the boys! Get off me!"

"Oh, don't say that, Francis," Eliot begs and tries to kiss her again. She dodges his mouth and pushes up with all her strength, using her hands, chest, pelvis, and thighs to thrust him off. It works. Eliot tumbles off Francis and onto the floor. He lies perfectly still, a ball of brown carpet fuzz stuck to his lip. Francis remains on the couch, breathing heavily and staring up at the ceiling. For several minutes, the two neither speak nor move. Francis stews in her anger, Eliot in his embarrassment. He is about to decide that he a fool, a man... no, a half-man who has tripped over his own stupidity for the last time. But just as he is about to rise and slink through the door with mumbled apologies, he feels the light step of four furry paws on his back. He wipes his lip and glances back over his shoulder at Honeydew who stands in some sort of mocking triumph across Eliot's spine. He wants to leap to his feet and strangle the animal, but Francis hates him enough and he doesn't want to give her one more reason.

"Oh, Honeydew," Francis says quietly, turning her head to stare at the cat. "Come to mama." The cat obeys, leaping from Eliot's back to the couch where it lands on the girl's stomach and sits down. Francis strokes its back. Eliot rises

slowly to his feet, keeping his head lowered and feeling the presence of something strange within him. Something bigger, something more awful than before.

"Now I know why your mommy and daddy gave you up, Eliot," he hears Francis saying softly, so low that he barely understands. "You're an ugly man." The girl continues to gently stroke the cat's back, and Eliot watches its eyes, mocking eyes he knows too well. It loves to be touched. "An ugly man," she says again, and Eliot sees Honeydew smile. With one quick and deadly swipe, Eliot grasps the neck of the animal in his fist and hurls it blindly across the room. "Oh, God!" he hears and then the sound of a thud against glass and another scream and the almost silent drop of a small body on carpet.

4.

Somewhere far away, he doesn't know where, Eliot hears the frightened whimpering of babies. He stands in the middle of the living room, staring blankly at the motionless scene in front of the television, wanting it to move and afraid that it will. The girl, sitting on her knees, holds the quiet animal against her breast and is silent. They're silhouettes, Eliot thinks, just two dark figures against the bright background of a post-game wrap-up. To say he's sorry is out of place, one doesn't kill and say I'm sorry, so Eliot says nothing. He's much too afraid of being out of place to risk uttering the words. He walks slowly toward the two figures, stepping carefully as if in respect for the dead.

"Francis," he says quietly, looking down on the back of her head. "Francis, I don't know what to say." Eliot realizes it's the first honest thing he's said all evening and prays she believes him this time. He hears her sniff, a pitiful sound that drains what little bit of strength he has left. He drops to the floor beside her, not daring to sit close enough to touch. Francis sniffs again and mumbles something that Eliot can't understand.

"What?" he asks her gently. "Francis, what did you say?"

"This is me you killed. I said this is me." Francis holds the cat away from her and looks at it. She sobs and stares at the animal as though her look can bring it back. "This is me," she says again, and Eliot is confused by her words.

"What do you mean, Francis?" he asks, and is frightened when she looks directly at him.

"I mean this is me. This little cat is all I ever wanted to be. Small and sweet and always somebody to take care of me. Now she's gone. I'm gone."

Eliot stares at her, scared of her reasoning, angry that she never said those words before, and angry that he knows exactly what she means. He never said the words before either.



1st Place Photography, Elaine Whitely

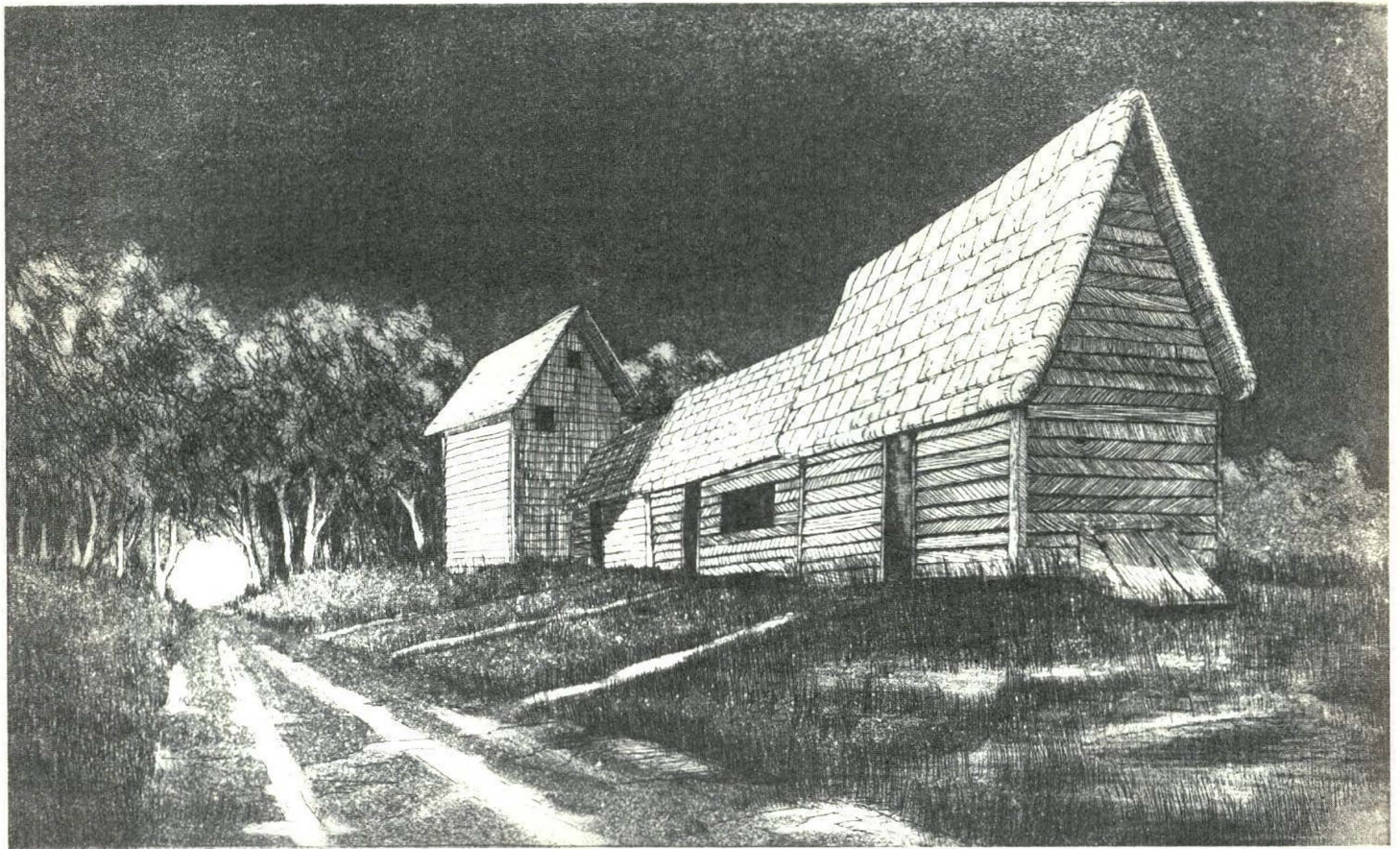
NACHT UND FERNES FAHREN*

-in the scyle of Rilke

Timothy Wellman

*In dream's eye, she walks astray,
bright to brightness, fold on fold;
blue skirt, silk pleat
catching the wind, revealing
here and there, flashes of soft
flesh. Captured for a moment in a mind
(a landscape she doesn't recognise,
she becomes a leopard, caged,
pacing, testing the bars. She comes to rest
by the door, again a woman, unclothed;
no less the animal, no,
no less she imagined.
The cage becomes a bed; she,
gently turning to face the sky,
dissolves to velvet.*

><"NIGHT AND DISTANT TRAVEL," from
Rilke's poem, «LETZTER ABEND."



2nd Place Art' Bill Conley

Reddy Creek

Elgin Ward

"Jeremy, you'd better come in now. It's time to get ready for the meetin'." The female voice was nearly lost to the breeze as it drifted across the small field of blackberry bushes and honeysuckle vines. Jeremy only faintly heard his mother calling as he lay on the creek bank with his head close to the surface of the mud-brown water. He slipped his left hand slowly into the water and turned over a small, flat rock. He waited patiently for the swirl of the disturbed silt to settle back to the bottom, peering intently at the oval depression his careful movement had created. Suddenly his right hand shot down into the water and out again, dripping fingers holding an ugly, struggling captive.

"O.K., Mom, I'm on my way," Jeremy answered in a voice that changed pitch in mid-sentence. Still holding his catch, he got to his feet and walked over to a red and white, three pound coffee can which was setting on the ground a few feet away. The can was half full of crayfish and creek water and Jeremy added this last victim to his cache. As he walked quickly through the field he hardly noticed the tug of the blackberry thorns on his mud-caked corduroy jeans. He was thinking about later in the evening, after the Revival, when he and his grandfather would walk back down to Reddy Creek and catch, with the help of the "crawdads" and a little luck, a stringer full of small mouth bass.

Reddy Creek flowed right by Sycamore, the small West Virginia town where Jeremy Raymond Hayes had spent all thirteen years of his young life. He lived, along with his mother, grandmother, grandfather and eight year old brother, in a six room, white, frame house that sat only a few yards from S.R. #627, the only way into and out of Sycamore. His father had been killed in a Dearborn, Michigan automobile factory when Jeremy was five years old and just two months before his brother, Paul Michael, was born. He and four other men from the area had gone to Michigan in search of work when Bowman's Saw Mill, Sycamore's only industry, had suffered a business slump after the war ended. Jeremy and his mother had moved in with his father's parents until they could join him in Dearborn and after his father's death this arrangement became permanent. Jeremy didn't remember much about his father, but he kept a picture of him in the bedroom he and Paul shared and sometimes, when he was alone in the room, he would sit on his bed and look at the tall, black-haired man in the snapshot and wonder what he had been like.

Jeremy's mother, Elizabeth, worked at Conley's Dry Goods, a store that sold just about everything the twenty or so families that made up Sycamore usually required to maintain their modest standard of living. Any desired items not available at Conley's could be purchased in Point Pleasant or Ripley, two larger towns, each about thirty-five miles away in opposite directions. His grandmother, Ida, his father's mother, took care of the house while his mother worked and his grandfather, Paul, farmed their five acres of land growing both vegetables and what tobacco the government's allot-

ment program allowed. As Jeremy became older he began to help his grandfather in the garden and with the chores around the house more and more, and this constant contact, plus their mutual love for fishing, had made them fast friends. He found it easier to talk to his grandfather than to the other members of his family, especially about personal things. They were a particular contrast as they worked in the garden together; the older man in his bib overalls, flannel shirt rolled up to the elbows, rough work boots, or "clod-hoppers" as he called them, and Jeremy in a striped polo shirt, faded jeans and black sneakers. The man wore a gray, weather strained, felt hat pulled low over his eyes while the boy worked bare-headed, his freckled, slightly effeminate face and dark brown hair exposed to the warm, April sun. Jeremy and his grandfather shared a love for Sycamore and the surrounding land; low, wooded hills, the small, well-tended gardens, grassy meadows spotted with cattle, and Reddy Creek, as it flowed slowly by Sycamore like molasses, on its way to join the Ohio River at Point Pleasant. They loved the sounds of Sycamore as well; the faint voices of the men and harsh, rasping buzz of the saw at Bowman's, the crackle of the hens as they pecked at the ground, and the crunch of rubber tires against the gravel of the road as the old trucks hauled the lumber away to Ripley. As day changed to evening, the sounds changed as well; the buzz of the saw to the throaty croak of the frogs down in the creek, the cackle of hens to the hooting of a horned owl on one of the hillsides, and the crunch of the trucks to the swish of the breeze as it passed through the trees of the valley.

Jeremy loved his home, although on this particular evening his thoughts were not of home and family, but of getting through the Revival meeting and back to the creek with his grandfather and their fishing. These times the two of them spent at the creek together were very special to Jeremy and he had hardly thought of anything else all day. He sat his bait can down by the first step of the back porch, climbed the remaining six steps and entered the kitchen.

The descending sun had just touched the tree tops west of Sycamore when Jeremy and his family left their house and began the half mile walk to the Revival. Jeremy had come in from the creek and took a quick bath in the water his grandmother had waiting for him, then put on a slightly faded but freshly washed change of clothes. Streamers of sunlight pierced the tree branches and formed patch-quilt patterns on the chalky road as they walked along, Jeremy and his grandfather a few feet in front of his brother and the two women. His grandfather rarely attended church with the rest of the family, so Jeremy was pleasantly surprised when he learned he was coming along on this occasion.

"How come you decided to go with us tonight, Grampa?" Jeremy asked as he kicked a chunk of gravel along the road in front of him. "I thought you didn't like goin' to church."

"We ain't goin' to church, son," his grandfather answered, "we're gain' to a tent revival and they ain't nowhere near bcin'

the same. This'll be the first one they've had around here since you was a baby. We took you with us to that one, 'course you was too young to remember much about it. It was back in the spring of '46, maybe '47; can't rightly remember the exact year now, but I know Roosevelt had passed on and Truman was president. It was sure a good'n though boy, I do remember that much. Yessir, one humdinger of a revival."

"Ain't it just like church only with a tent and a lot more people?" Jeremy asked. He had been only four or five years old when the last Revival had been held around Sycamore, if his grandfather's recollection of the time period was correct, and he could remember nothing about it.

"Well, yes, in a way I guess you could say that." The man seemed to be searching for words to describe the event. "It's more than just a service though; more like a carnival and a three ring circus throw'd in together. You just wait boy, we'll be there in a few minutes and you can see for yourself."

Jeremy was thinking over his grandfather's words as he glanced up at the man's face and noticed he was smiling. Encouraged by the old man's pleasant mood, he decided to ask a question he had start'd to ask many times, but had never found the proper moment. "Why is it you don't go to church with us, Grampa, don't you believe in God?"

The old man glanced down at Jeremy and then back over his shoulder to see how close the women were before he answered. "Sure I do son, its religion I don't believe in. Take all that hymn singin', praisin' of the Lord and catter-wallin' out of the church and I'd be more than glad to go and talk to my Maker." They made a turn off the road and were approaching the tent before he continued. "It's the land I believe in mostly, son. If a man takes care of his land, the land'll take care of him. It was that way for a long time before we came in to this world and it'll be that way a long time after we're gone. Remember that, boy." Jeremy was more than sure that he would.

He had been listening so intently to his grandfather, Jeremy had not noticed the activity going on around the huge tent that had been set up in a field just west of Sycamore. There were people everywhere, both inside and outside the large, olive-drab, wood and canvas structure. At the tent door stood the pastors of most of the churches within a fifty mile radius of Sycamore speaking to and shaking hands with every person that entered the tent. As the Hayes family approached the opened flaps of the mobile church, their pastor, the Reverend William P. Curry of the Free Will Baptist Church, stepped forward to greet them, followed by a large, almost fat, middle aged man in a navy blue, shark-skin suit.

"Evenin' Ida; Elizabeth," their pastor said as he shook hands with the two women. "I see you brought Paul and the youngsters with you. Praise the Lord, but it's goin' to be a great Revival." He paused then turned to the man behind him and, taking his elbow, escorted him forward to meet the newcomers. "Ladies, may I present the Reverend Wilfred Postalwaite. He's from the First Church of God in Charleston and he'll be conducting the Revival. Praise the Lord."

The Reverend Postalwaite greeted each member of the Hayes family and when he shook hands with Jeremy, the boy noticed the man's hand was limp and damp to the touch; also, the man was not merely losing his hair, as he appeared to be at first glance, but, in fact, had already lost most of it,

with only a ring of dark hair remaining just above his ear lobes. The reason this was not immediately noticed by the casual observer was that the man allowed one side of the ring to grow extremely long, then combed it across the crown of his head and down to meet the line of hair on the other side. This thin strip of hair was held in place by a generous amount of hair oil which gave the impression the man was constantly perspiring. As the Reverend turned from Jeremy to shake hands with his grandfather, he noticed something else peculiar about the man. When he was not talking, his tongue protruded an inch or two from his lips, but the moment he began to speak, the instrument disappeared into the depths of the man's jowls as if it were non-existent.

Jeremy took an instant dislike to the Reverend Postalwaite and glanced at his grandfather to see if he shared the feeling. If he did, his face didn't show it and he was shaking hands with the man as if he had known him all his life. "You set your fine family up as close to the front as you can get them, Mr. Hayes," the Reverend said as he slapped the man on the back. "I want to see these smiling and friendly faces looking back at me when I bring the Lord's message to the fine people of this community." They all nodded and smiled at the man. Jeremy noticed his grandfather chuckling to himself as they entered the tent.

Jeremy was not prepared for the sight that greeted him as he walked through the tent flaps which were held open by two pieces of rough, stageline rope. The tent looked much larger from the inside and it was almost completely filled with wooden folding chairs borrowed from the area churches and schools; every other one with a brown, cardboard fan in the seat. At one end of the tent two platforms had been erected from one rough lumber, donated by Bowman's Saw Mill, and these, too, were almost filled with the drab wooden chairs.

One platform was slightly higher, larger, and in back of the other, and was rapidly being filled with the area pastors and their wives. The other platform contained the entire forty-three member Chadsey High School Band, complete with uniforms, instruments and pom-pon bearing cheerleaders; the latter sitting Indian fashion at the edge of the rough platform. As the large crowd began to choose their seats for the evening, the band started playing "Shall We Gather At The River" and the cheerleaders kept time with slow, deliberate shakes of their maroon and gold pom-poms. The Hayes family found a half empty row of seats and filed in from the aisle with Jeremy leading the way.

The scene seemed a little bigger than life to the boy as he picked up the fan and sat down in the last empty seat of the row. He glanced at the fan as he settled into his seat and read the words "compliments of Parley Funeral Home, Point Pleasant, West Virginia - trusted friends in your time of sorrow" printed in a flowing script on one side. His eyes swept the interior of the temporary cathedral and he thought of the difficulty his grandfather suffered in finding words to describe this event earlier; he could now understand why.

The seeming hundreds of milling people had nearly all found seats and most of them were looking toward the two platforms with a sense of expectation the young boy could almost detect in the air. He could feel the damp heat from the bodies around him and smell the collective odor of perfume

from the women in the crowd. The dull roar which had become almost deafening by this time gradually began to soften. Jeremy glanced at the flushed face of his grandfather beside him and sat back in his seat. The Revival was about to begin.

After a few minutes of semi-organized confusion, each of the pastors came to the podium and spoke a few words of welcome to the gathering and as they talked, Jeremy began to detect the distinct odor of roses in the air. He turned toward the occupied seat on his left and discovered the origin of the pleasant aroma; Rebecca Cummings. Rebecca attended Chadsey Junior High with Jeremy, although she was a year older and a grade higher. He had known the dark haired girl since he started elementary school, but had not paid much attention to her until the last few weeks. It seemed no matter where he was, inside or outside the school building, she was somewhere around. At first he thought it was just coincidence, but later became sure she was following him. She was always with several other girls and seldom spoke to Jeremy but once or twice he noticed that, as she stood talking to her friends, her eyes were fixed directly on him. She was a very pretty girl, although Jeremy could not be sure when he first became aware of that fact. Just a few days ago she had brushed against him in the hallway of the school, and this slight touching of their bodies had made him feel so strange he found it almost impossible to concentrate on his school work the rest of the day.

As he looked at her sitting next to him there in the tent, she spoke his name and smiled a greeting, and Jeremy felt his face begin to grow hot and damp. His eyes moved quickly back to the platform where the last pastor to speak was calling for a hymn to be sung by the congregation. As the boy mouthed the words to the song, he glanced back at Rebecca, only to find her pretty blue eyes and toothy smile had not changed their positions; Jeremy's palms began to sweat profusely.

On the platform, one of the pastors had introduced the Reverend Wilfred Postalwaite and he began speaking, his head gleaming wetly in the lights of the tent's interior. Beside him, Rebecca turned to speak to someone on her left and as she did so, a lock of soft, brown hair brushed against Jeremy's cheek. He felt a jolt run through his entire body, then exit through the soles of his feet, leaving them numb and tingling.

Jeremy forced his attention to the platform and noticed, at once, something strange about the actions of the good reverend. He would start talking very loud and then keep talking until both his voice and his supply of air became completely exhausted. At that crucial moment, he would slam his right fist into the Bible he was holding in his left hand, suck a hissing stream of air back into his deflated lungs and then repeat the pattern. Jeremy watched the man intensely, fascinated by his performance. He felt Rebecca stir in the seat beside him, but could not make himself look at her face.

"And I say to you here tonight," said the voice from the platform, "that Jesus despises the vain man and the vain woman and will damn their souls to hell." "Slam," went his fist against the Bible. "Unnnssssshhh" back went the air into the lungs. The Reverend's slick strip of oiled hair had shifted forward and was hanging loosely over his left ear.

To keep from looking at Rebecca's face, Jeremy stared down at her dress and noticed, for the first time, the soft, round

protrusion of her small breasts. He caught his breath and tried to concentrate on the gyrations of the man on the platform.

"And God will curse the lustful man and the lustful woman," the voice boomed from the podium. "He will send their sinning souls to Hell's fire and brimstone." -Slam- "Unnnssssshhh". Jeremy felt the girl's hand brush against his own, hesitate for a split second, then curl around his fingers.

"God hates the man who makes a show of his faith; but loves those who keep their worship simple and sincere." -Slam- "Unnnssssshhh." One of the porn-porns accidentally fell from the platform and settled to the ground in a plastic hiss.

Jeremy knew he had to get out of the tent as fast as possible. His heart was trying to beat its way through his chest and the girl's hand felt as though it were in flames, burning the skin from his own. He couldn't decide whether to leap from his seat and run or attempt to rise up slowly, uncurl his hand from Rebecca's, and stroll from the tent as if nothing were wrong. It was a decision he would not have to make. For at that very moment, right there in front of his Lord and the good people of Jackson County and along with a huge intake of air, The Reverend Wilfred Postalwaite conveniently swallowed his tongue.

At first, no one in the tent realized exactly what had happened. The Reverend had finished a long sentence, slammed his Bible, and inhaled as usual; but this time he did not continue speaking. Instead, his hands clawed at his throat, his body stiffened, and a look of complete panic swept across his face. He pitched slowly backwards; so slowly that it seemed, to Jeremy, that time itself had been suspended. His tailbone struck the platform with a dull thud and his head flopped back into the unwilling but ample lap of the Reverend Harold Porter's wife.

In the noisy confusion that followed, Jeremy could barely make out his grandfather's words as he shouted at him to get his brother and the women outside. Tearing his frightened eyes from the platform, the boy located the rest of his family and ushered them toward the exit. As they passed the open tent flaps, Jeremy glanced over his shoulder and saw his grandfather and several other people trying to fight their way to the podium through the now panic-stricken crowd. Jeremy sensed by the expression he saw on his grandfather's face, that the man was enjoying every minute of this terrible turn of events.

Most of the people had gathered in small clusters outside the tent, the evening's bizarre event the topic of every conversation. Jeremy and his family, except for his grandfather, were sitting under an ancient elm tree about fifty yards from the scene of the catastrophe. The two women were talking excitedly while Paul nodded in his mother's lap. Jeremy was still feeling a little ill, even though it had been over an hour since they had left the tent. They had heard rumors that the man was alright, but no one really knew anything for certain.

Jeremy watched a group of men emerge through the tent flaps, laughing softly and passing a fruit jar half full of clear liquid. One of the men was his grandfather. Jeremy was old enough to know what "moonshine" was but he had never

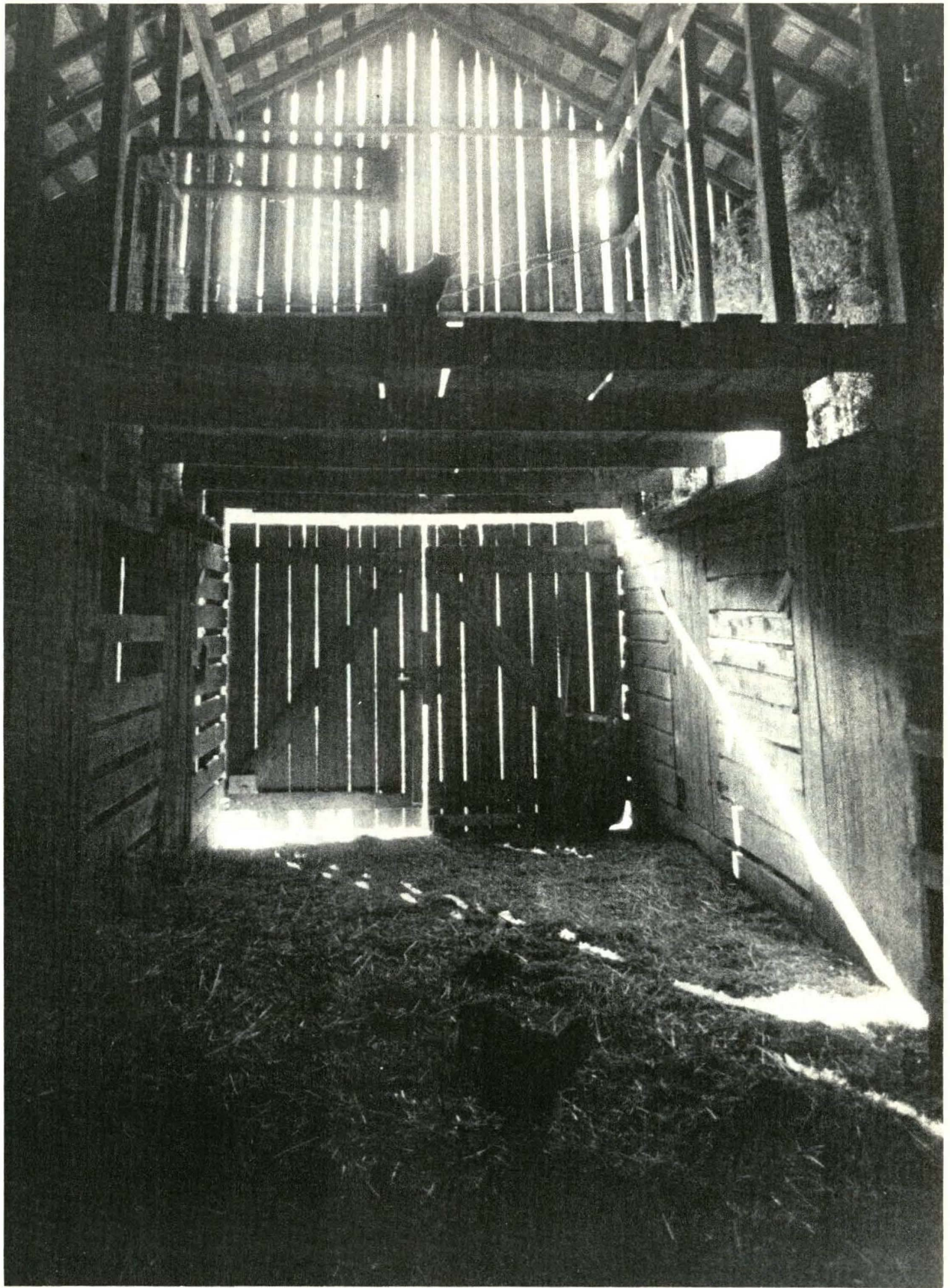
been aware that his grandfather used alcohol. When he saw the boy looking anxiously his way, the old man broke away from the group and walked over to the tree.

"The man's gonna be fine," he was addressing his family but looking at Jeremy. "He's on his way back to Charleston." He sat down on the ground near the boy and Jeremy could smell the medicine odor of the alcohol on the man's breath. "Swallowed his goddamn tongue," the old man said to no one in particular. "What in the hell do you think about that?" Either the evening's events or the alcohol had loosened the man's language. It was the first time Jeremy had ever heard his grandfather swear. They got up from the ground and

started walking toward home; the two older males leading the way.

"Grampa, do you mind if we don't go fishin' tonight?" I ain't feelm' so good and I think I'll just go on to bed." Jeremy never lifted his gaze from the gravel road as he spoke. His desire for fishing had been replaced by a need to be completely alone.

A puzzled look passed across the old man's face, then quickly disappeared. "Course not, boy. The creek'll still be there tomorrow. You go on to bed and get yourself some rest." He sensed a difference in Jeremy, but was wise enough to keep it to himself. They walked the rest of the way home in silence.



2nd Place Photography, Lynn Dinsmore

LIT LE RED: A MODERN STAGE ADAPTATION

Timothy Wellman

*Enter: young girl, tripping
through deep green woods,
a path she knows well.
Around her shoulders a red cape,
blonde curls jut out from under a
hood,
also red.*

*Carrying: one basket of food.
Chicken? Beef?
The audience can't tell,
but there's a delicious smell,
which brings us to the*

*Wolf: enter stage left,
from behind a rotted stump.
He jumps out and says,
"Whatcha got in the basket?"
Red doesn't answer,
but Wolf knows food when he smells
it.
knows food when he sees it -
Red's got nice plump legs and tender
breasts...*

*Dream sequence: Wolfs got
Red's stuffed head on the wall,
various body parts in the freezer,
and he's dunking her left buttock
into a dish of A-1 sauce.
End dream sequence.*

*Red, in a fright,
disappears from sight,
but Wolf knows where she's going
to Grandmother's house, to Grand-
mother's house...
he'll go too.
Knowing a shortcut,
he runs ahead.*

*Scene change: Grandmother's house.
He gets there before Red,
but Grandmother's a shrewd old lady,
and she's not buying any bullshit
lines from a no-account wolf.*

*But Wolf finally convinces Grand-
mother
he has her best interests at heart,
and knows better than she
what she really needs.
"You need to be around people
your own age."
She, being fond of gin,
has been very fond of gin
on this particular day;
she is easily swayed.*

*Exit Grandmother: to Sunnydale
Home for the Aged.*

*Enter Red: panting profusely
from her run through the woods.
Wolf, in the meantime,
has decked himself out in
Grandmother's favorite dress,
and is lying-in-wait for Red to
get closer.*

*But Red, who took some classes
at junior college, is smart enough
to know that Grandmother's
ears, eyes, and teeth have either
grown,
or something terrible has happened.
She runs to the phone (a tragic
flaw),
instead of running away,
and calls the police,
thinking Grandmother has been
eaten.
(a face the audience knows will
soon be hers).*

*Enter police: twenty minutes
(and two cups of coffee) later.
Wolf, picking bits of Red from
his better-to-eat-you-with teeth,
slips out the front door unnoticed.
Police: "Another false alarm."*

Violins; curtain.

FORGOTTEN GRAVEYARD a sestina

Timothy Wellman

No lilies or roses in this grave_eyard,
No gimcrack stones, shiny marble, new names.
The only foot prints are from animals -
Raccoons, rabbits, wild dogs; but no mourners
Visit the worm-picked bones of memories,
There are no mourners left to care or cry.

One lonely bluebird seems to cry
In this weedy, forgotten grave_eyard -
He replaces all the memories,
C_ry_ying the long forgotten names
For the long forgotten mourners,
And no one hears but the animals.

The dead are used to the animals
Who visit often, but never cry;
Only a fool would call them mourners.
They only come to play in the graveyard
And they never stop to read the names
On the stones of the rotting memories.

For surely those bones are someone's memories;
A long time ago-before the animals
Came to play near the neglected names,
Surely someone, sometime must have stopped to cry
A tear for the rot that lies in the graveyard.
But now it seems there were never mourners,

How could there have ever been mourners?
Could anyone have brought flowers to the memories
Here in this dirty, overgrown grave_eyard,
Where the only visitors are animals,
Animals that have never learned to cry
Over any gimcrack gravestone names.

No one remembers the buried names
That one time passed the lips of mourners
Who soon, too soon, forgot to cry
For their rotting memories,
Visited now only by the animals
Who never learned the meaning of "grave_eyard."

The grave_eyard elements have erased the names;
Time brings animals and erases the mourners,
And now no memories, no one to cry.

Landfill

Elgin Ward

A paint chipped dozer
plows through the muck
and the slime of yesterday
carving a rancid cause-way
of rusted cans and busted bottles
stirring a stench that permeates
everything and scattering
slick-tailed rats, blue-green flies
and remnants of hope-filled lifetimes.

Chance Meeting

Elgin Ward

Walking in the evening,
Watching the failing sun gather
Its last errant rays back
into its yellowing circle,
I spy a movement.

There, in the leathery brush
At the edge of the darkening trees
There again! I stand stark still,
not in fear, but in the hope of
Seeing this welcome intruder.

"Come out", I want to shout and
As if ob_ey_ying my silent command
A tawny, antlered head appears
through the twigs. It blinks,
Then snorts, then steps into the open.

The deer stands and stares
My way. A rippling shudder
Runs along its sun and shadow
spattered coat. The sun's angle turns
Its black_ey_es momentarily transparent.

At this instant I feel an exchange
Take place between us; an exchange
Of souls. I feel the power and
swiftness of his legs and he the
Power and immorality of my brain

The angle changes and the moment
Passes; lost forever. He paws the
Ground and moves away, as if he knew
that in such a trade he would always
Be the worse for the bargain.

I Can't Keep Laughing

Pamela Steed

When I was a kid, around eight or nine, I decided I wanted to be an anthropologist. Then I grew up and realized I was afraid of people so I decided to become more or less nothing because it's hard to be anything without being it with other people. Perhaps afraid is too weak a word, maybe repulsed would be better, or maybe just disappointed. Disappointed that a shy little kid who believed in the Brady Bunch and Jimi Hendrix had to get old and become even shier and believe in, well, not much of anything. My husband believes in racquetball and the stock exchange, and I think I have an affair. Not that it would be easy of course, it's just some little gnawing thing, something somewhere that isn't quite fulfilled. I'm not sure what or where. I'm not sure about much of anything except fear, and I'm afraid of being unfulfilled. But disappointment, that's easy because I don't have to stretch or strive or grasp for it, I don't want to grasp for anything. And love, if I may use the word, is forever elusive, marriage is a matter of resignation. My husband and I have resigned ourselves to a long series of next-best-things. He's the next best thing to something completely satisfying and I'm the next best thing to whatever it is he thinks a woman should be. Something is missing. I'm afraid I'll never find it.

What do you want from me, David asks, and I want to tell him that I want him to be serious, to stop joking, stop punching my arm and saying hey kiddo, wanna go to bed? God, if he says that one more time. We both pretend that it's cute, and he doesn't stop. I don't tell him to. Every other day I hear him ask, what's the matter? and I always hear myself say, nothing, because I don't know the words to tell him what the matter is. Hell, I don't know what the matter is. David is tall and young and too dependent upon me. His need for me is scary, it makes me feel like I have to be strong and I don't think I want to be. Don't need me so much, I tell him, go somewhere and do something by yourself. And always the same answer, I'd rather do it with you. His words leave me short of breath, I can't breathe, my head screams, but my mouth smiles and David pulls me against him, happy in the illusion of my contentment.

At breakfast I am far away. Across the table, David is like a blurry image of something I can't quite comprehend. I see the fork move from the plate to his mouth and I suppose mine does the same, the eggs are tasteless. We must be the quietest chewers in the world, I can't even hear my own jaw, and for a few blank moments I forget that I'm eating. Don't we have any salt, I hear from somewhere and my voice automatically replies, you don't like salt. It needs it, he says, and I get up to get it. Walking back into the kitchen, I feel a very sudden and clear awareness shove its way into my thoughts and lay there like something heavy and permanent. I know now that there are two feelings, that there have always been two feelings, so separate, so distant from one another that whenever I had experienced one, I must've forgotten about the existence of the other. I don't know which one is real, if either. Is one love, the other infatuation, or both just different degrees of shyness or inhibition or whatever the hell it is that strangles the

words I want to shout to my lover long before they reach my lips. I can't talk to the man who knows all the right words. He leaves nothing for me to say. I can't laugh too loudly or lose my temper or let him see me with my hair uncombed. I can't even think about using the bathroom next to the room he's in. He must never watch me eat, whoever he is. David has seen, heard, and felt me do just about everything, he's so easy to be with. Too easy. I carry the salt shaker back to the table, waiting for him to ask what took me so long and feeling enlightened and confused at the same time. David doesn't ask anything. I sit down and try to resume breakfast normally, afraid that my discovery in the kitchen will show on my face.

I guess you're feeling better this morning than you did last night, I say to my husband who wipes his mouth and grins broadly.

Nothing that a healthy shit couldn't take care of, he announces proudly, and I blush not because he embarrasses me but because I try to imagine the same words coming from my lover.

Well, whatever it takes, I tell him, not wanting to continue this conversation.

What's the matter? he asks, and I know I'm lousy at hiding guilt.

Nothing.

Why are you so quiet this morning?

I didn't know I was.

David shrugs his shoulders and picks up the **Wall Street Journal** that lays on the floor next to his chair. While he reads I try to decide whether he knows I had a self-revelation in the kitchen and I choose no. It's just my conscience working overtime, how dare I find something out and not tell him. With the paper comfortably dividing our faces, I also have a chance to think about, no, to fantasize about Michael. He scares me, and that's exciting. That's something to get the blood flowing, to make the nerves wake up, to prick the skin. I shudder and turn red and pray to God I didn't make a noise. Michael is twice my age and doesn't understand Led Zepelin. I just can't figure out what they're saying, he muses and gives me a condescending smile because he thinks anyone who grew up in the sixties and seventies is innately capable of understanding rock music. He enjoys teaching me about our differences, his favorite line is: you were probably spitting up your crushed peas when I was writing my first column for this paper. Michael is the editor now, and he's gone through two divorces and a daughter who killed herself and years of smoking a pack and a half a day. I see him twice a month to discuss my own little movie-review column, and when I sit across from him at his large oak desk, I feel like a kid in the principal's office. He didn't become angry, just contemplative, when I turned down his offer for a full-time staff position. I like being a free-lancer, I told him, and he didn't pursue the issue. I couldn't tell him that the other writers, the real journalists, intimidate me, make me feel inferior, and I'd rather stay from them. Maybe he would understand, but he may just

be amused, which wouldn't be so terrible but at the time I wasn't in the mood to be patronized.

I stare at the back of the **Wall Street Journal** and picture David's face on the other side. A smooth, almost flawless complexion with the soft outline of a shadowy beard that would be black and thick if he would let it grow. I'm glad he doesn't. It is a vulnerable face, and I feel like telling him I'm sorry about it. We should cook out more often, he says, dropping the paper to his lap and noticing me flinch. Did I scare you? he asks, and I tell him no, I was just thinking about my column.

When's the next one due?

Day after tomorrow.

Is that when you go see Sanders?

Yes.

Hearing Michael's last name brings a wave of guilt over me and I try to tell myself that it's nonsense, I haven't done anything wrong. I'm only planning on doing something wrong, and that's probably what makes me feel worst of all. Planning it.

Have you finished writing it?

Almost.

You don't seem very happy about it.

It's coming along alright.

So how about a cook-out? Friday maybe? I'll pick up some steaks.

Sure, okay. I'll have the grill ready when you come home from work.

Speaking of which, he says and gets up from the table to go brush his teeth. I remain at the table, sipping cold coffee and wondering if I've got the guts to be so deceitful. David returns, leans over to kiss me goodbye, and says I love you. I say it back and wonder if we mean the same thing, if he knows what he means at all.

2.

As usual, I arrive early for my appointment with Michael and his secretary tells me to have a seat in the office, his meeting will be over soon. I like getting there early because it gives me time to think about what I'm going to say, which won't be much. In my head I rehearse the scene that will occur when he walks in. He'll walk to my chair from behind me, put one arm around my shoulders, and say, Angela, it's good to see you. His hug will seem more than casual and I'll wonder if it's just my imagination reading too much into it. Michael will half-lean, half-sit on the corner of his desk and tower over me while we discuss my article, and I'll be forced to look up at him the entire time with feelings of fear and excitement and lust running crisscross through my mind and body. The vivid picture has me frozen in place but I shiver when I hear the door open behind me. His footsteps, light, then his arm around me, strong, and his voice so sincere that I can't meet his gaze for very long. I could hate myself for being so damn intimidated if I didn't enjoy it so much. The only time his eyes leave mine are while he's reading the article and I grab the opportunity to try to compose my thoughts. I know there's no way to carry out my plan to approach him, to lure him, to seduce... God, how absurd that sounds coming from me. Me, the bashful teen-ager who called her mother at one

o'clock in the morning to pick her up at the drive-in because a group of boys kept hanging around the car and the other girls didn't seem to mind. And me, who blushed and wanted to cry when my first boyfriend told me we'd been dating three months and I could stop clinging to the door handle of his car whenever we went for a drive. Me, who had once believed in chastity and purity and virginity and a man in a three-piece suit who would one day appear and tell me that it was time to become a woman, and I would be his forever. What a bunch of shit.

Vaguely, I see a hand moving back and forth in front of my face and hear a voice saying hey, where are you? I blink and turn red, embarrassed that he saw me thinking. He smiles, takes my chin in his hand, and lifts my face till our eyes meet. What were you thinking about? he asks, and I say, oh nothing, not anything. Must've been pretty good to deny it twice, he jokes and brushes away a strand of hair that has fallen against my cheek.

I was just wondering if you like the column, I lie.

Yes, I do. But I wonder what the readers will think when they see that eight of the ten local movies are trash. If they take your word for it, I know of several theatre managers who'll be making nasty phone calls down here.

If you'd like me to be less critical, I suppose I could change the...

No, no, don't change anything. I want you to be honest. You know, give the public the truth.

Okay. Well, I guess that's what I did.

Michael watches me closely and I wish to God I could stop fidgeting. I feel as though he's looking right through my head and is going to confront me with the lecherous thoughts he finds there. Instead, he leans back on the desk, folds his arms, and becomes quite serious. Does being completely honest bother you? he asks, and I think oh boy this may be my chance - I'll shout, hell no, it doesn't bother me, then leap from my chair and into his lap and tell him I'm ready to be so honest that he'll never misunderstand me again. But all I hear myself saying, is no, I don't guess it bothers me.

You don't seem very sure, he says, and I'm afraid he'll trick me into saying something I don't want to say, something I *do* want to say.

I just don't want to offend anyone, I tell him and he smiles again.

That's the chance you take when you're candid. Some people may vary well be offended, others may like it.

My heart pounds out are-you-one-of-the-others in a hard and steady rhythm and I catch myself looking down to see if the front of my blouse is moving in and out. Have you had lunch? he asks and I want to die. Don't ask, don't ask, I can't possibly eat lunch with you. I shake my head no, and say I'm not hungry.

Oh, surely you can eat something. Come on, Angie, I'm starved and I'd like you to join me.

How can he be so fucking casual? My nerves are tight ropes, one more step and I'll snap, and he's concerned about food. Five minutes later, I'm getting into his car not because I said yes but because I didn't say no. I simply got up like a good little girl when he took my hand and guided me out the door. Lunch is one disaster after another but Michael doesn't seem to notice any of them. He has a good time, I order iced tea, he

laughs, no food? no thanks, I nearly choke on the first drink. Take it easy, he tells me, and the glass sets in front of me till the ice melts and the sugar drifts to the bottom, I'll be damned if I give it another chance to kill me.

We should do this more often, Michael says over his salad fork and I think, you've got to be kidding, my nerves are shot and my heart's ready to arrest.

Yes, that'd be nice, I tell him.

But the next time, you have to promise to actually eat.

This time, I smile because I don't know what else to do. Michael fills the rest of our lunch together with pleasant conversation, conversation that *would* be pleasant if I could relax and pay attention to it. My ears try to listen politely but my mind drifts away to David who doesn't really know me any better than the stranger who sits across from me talking about current events and seeming genuinely interested in my opinion of all of them. David rarely asks for my opinion, he doesn't have to because I usually give it before he has a chance. What I don't willingly give, he doesn't ask for, and I don't know if I respect that or resent it. Why can't he make me feel like this, I wonder, and then wonder even more why the hell I'd want anybody else to make me feel as though I'm going to crack apart at any moment.

I seem to be losing you again, Michael says. I say, no, I'm listening.

Do you have plans for tomorrow afternoon? he asks and I can't think of what tomorrow will be. Friday, he says, and I know he's telepathic.

Oh. No, I don't believe so. Well, except David and I are cooking out tomorrow evening.

Cooking out, huh? I love cook-outs.

Michael grins mischievously and I'd rather choke again than take the bait. But he looks directly at me, waiting, and I ask, would you like to come?

Thought you'd never ask. Actually, I'd like to come a bit early. To discuss a new feature I'm interested in. You may be interested, too. I can leave the office around three.

The matter seems to be settled, I prefer to think that I don't have a choice. What I've done doesn't hit me until I'm back in my own car driving home cursing myself for being so easy. For getting myself into a situation I never dreamed could happen. Alone with that man in my own home? The three of us having dinner? I don't believe what I've done. I push the thoughts out of my mind, but keep one to remind me to tell David to pick up an extra steak. For whom? I don't know, for the hell of it.

3.

For the hell of it, I wake up in a bad mood on Friday. I have a headache, thank God, and can use that as an excuse to be irritable. If I'm irritable, maybe both of them will leave me alone. Better still, maybe I'll leave myself alone, I don't think my soul can stand any more damning, my head can't take another kick. David senses my foul mood and is quiet all morning. Before leaving for work, he asks if Michael will be bringing a guest and I realize I hadn't even considered asking Michael if he would be bringing a guest. No, I tell David, he wants to discuss a business interest. That seems to satisfy him, and he leaves, closing the door quietly behind him. I spend a

long time in the shower, relishing in the pain that each spray beats down upon my head. The ache makes me calm, I hurt too much to be nervous. Lurking somewhere in the corner of a disquieting thought, another resignation makes itself known. Before long, I'll be resigned to the fact that I'm an unfaithful person. If not in body, at least in spirit, a far worse offense because I can't give my spirit a bath and wash away the stains of a welcomed intruder. I giggle at the thought of chasing something invisible around the bathroom, a scrubbrush in one hand, a cross in the other, and a string of righteous damnations pouring like fire and brimstone from my mouth. If only Michael would walk in right now. If only he would slip quietly into the room, slide back the shower door, and catch me laughing. I don't think I'd stop. I don't think I'd stop anything, I'm so damn tired of stopping. I want to go on. I can hear Michael say, you've got a beautiful laugh, why don't you laugh more often, for me, and I hear myself answer, yes, I think I can do that, I think I can laugh for you. He steps under the water with me and I laugh again, telling him his suit will be soaked. I don't care, he says, and I think, oh God, if only I didn't care either, if only I didn't care.

By the time Michael does arrive, my headache is gone (fantasies work every time) and the potatoes are baking in the oven. Smells great, he says as I take his jacket and hang it in the guest closet. He waits for me to be seated on the couch before he sits down, and when he does, it's quite close to me. He turns to face me and I sit looking straight ahead. It's too early to offer him a drink and I'd feel silly offering him a snack, so I offer nothing. I say nothing but can feel his stare on the side of my face and wish he would look somewhere else. A sudden shudder goes through my body and he asks me if I'm cold. Cold! I want to shout, my God, no, I'm not cold! but all I can manage to say is there's a bit of a draft with the window open. I'll close it, he says, and does just that. Now about that business interest, he says, sitting down again and placing his arm on the top of the couch behind my shoulders. I tell myself I'm ready for this, I'm ready, I swear I'm ready, and I won't tell him to stop, to quit, to go away, nobody's going away right now. I force my head to turn toward him and my eyes to look directly into his. I think I see something wonderful in them, something magical, something warm and disarming. I wait. Ready, so ready, and I see his lips part.

Do you like sports? he asks.

Huh? I mean, what? I stammer, caught completely off guard.

Sports. You know, baseball, football, golf, do you know anything about them?

Well, a little I guess. Why do you ask?

His face is five inches away from mine and he wants to know if I know how to play golf. Has he misread my signals? Have I misread him?

Because I'm thinking about a new column for the sports section. We could call it "From a Woman's Point of View." The writer, a woman of course, could talk about what it's like to be married to a sports lover or what she thinks about the players themselves. She could travel to some games and actually do a review of them, from a woman's point of view, of course. What do you think?

I don't know. It sounds sexist to me.

Sexist? No, no, just the opposite. We could get more women interested in sports.

What you'd get is a column in the sports section that men would read as a joke.

I feel my face heat up, not with embarrassment but anger, and I'm not sure why I'm angry. I want to believe it's in defense of my gender, my sisters out there suffering under the oppression of sexist pricks like this, but I'm not even remotely worthy of being their martyr. After all, I've always enjoyed the patronization of this particular sexist prick, and I think I'm just angry because he changed the subject. The subject he didn't even know existed, my subject, my coming out, my loosening up, my daring to not care.

Well, I didn't expect such a negative reaction from you, he says. Is it that bad an ideal

I want to scream, I don't care! I don't give a fuck about your goddamn idea! Why did you do this to me?

I just don't think it would go over, I tell him.

Well, at least let me tell you more about it.

For the next two hours, Michael lays out his plan to integrate women into sports, along with many other journalistic endeavors that would have held my attention yesterday. Today, I don't hear him. I sit on the couch beside him, nodding when I'm supposed to, and thinking about the time that I got so excited because my parents were taking me to Hollywood and I couldn't sit still in the back seat just thinking about seeing Bobby Sherman and Jack Wild and the guy who played Jason on Room 222, and then when we got there, I saw an old man drag a piece of blue-green bread out of a garbage can and a girl not much older than me wearing bright red lipstick and nearly tripping over her high heels to get to a man who motioned to her from a Cadillac. I didn't see Bobby or Jack or anybody famous but I kept seeing that old man and that girl and they made me angry because they hadn't been a part of my dream and shouldn't have been there. They intruded on my fantasy and I hated them for it.

Thank God, David arrives home early. He looks so good to me when he walks through the door and I want to freeze that image into place, preserve it just as it is, and pull it out every time my mind wanders to another frame. Michael and David get along splendidly and I feel like an outsider. I drift through dinner in a haze of unrealness, nothing seems like it's really there. I don't even worry about eating in front of Michael. Who gives a damn? I want to linger in my who-gives-a-damn attitude but know it's only a temporary refuge, only a momentary shield. After dinner, Michael thanks us and tells me he'll be looking forward to my next movie review. He smiles warmly and says he wants me to give more thought to

his new idea, he'd like me to be the woman with the point of view.

4.

The coals are still hot and I sit on the patio staring at them. They glow soft and red and the wave of the heat above them blurs the picture of everything beyond it. I pretend that I'm beyond it in a crowd of other beings and I can't figure out which one I am. I can vaguely make out the shape of a man in a three-piece suit and a white stallion and a bridal suite but I can't see anyone on the threshold. More wine? I hear and realize David is standing beside my chair with two glasses and a bottle. Sure, I say, and he pours the wine, telling me I look as though I were dreaming. No, I'm not dreaming, I tell him, just admiring the fire. I reach my hand toward the burning coals and almost touch one before he says, don't do that, you'll burn yourself. I sit back and he asks me why I wanted to do something foolish like touch a hot coal.

Because it's beautiful, I tell him.

Pain isn't beautiful, he says.

It's painful only up close. In the distance it's beautiful. It's the distance that makes it beautiful.

So why get close to it?

Because sometimes the distance is too much. Or maybe not enough. I don't know, let's talk about something else.

Okay. Dinner was great, as usual.

Thanks.

We both fall into silence and I see from the corner of my eye that David is staring at the coals too. He probably wonders what I see in them and I wonder the same thing myself. I think perhaps I don't see anything in them, only what lies between them and me, the distance. I suddenly laugh out loud and my husband looks at me curiously. What's so funny? he asks, and I tell him I just caught a glimpse of my soul leaping through the bathroom window. How much wine have you had? he asks, and I say, my second glass.

Are you sure?

Quite.

You alright?

Certainly.

I smile broadly to keep another laugh from escaping, but it's no use. Through the blur of the heat above the coals, I spot the hazy outline of a curious shape leaping over the neighbor's fence, a scrubbrush crawling over after it. I let loose with a hell of a good laugh and David shakes his head. What is it with you? he asks, and through gulps of air, I say, it's not even dirty, David. There's not a stain on it.

THE WOMAN IS AT HER BEST

Steve Holley

at
night
in
the
back
seat
of
a
subtle
chevy
in
the
restrained
context
of
her
own
sacred
dream

MAE WEST'S BEDROOM

Steve Holley

i walk up a long
sultry sidewalk to an
obscene
uncertain door her house
is as beautiful as she is.
she told me to
come up and see her
some time the doorknob
like a tit is sticky
and wet the door opens
perfume (cheap like telephone
poles in green rain) filters
up my nostrils mingles
with my mind i walk
into a living room it
is her face the carpet under
my nervous feet is like
her pink skin i walk
up a double chinned staircase
sit in a chair fat and
sexy like her lips watch
her eyes framed portraits abooe
a fireplace like her
nose it is hot in here i feel
pregnant her voice echoes like
glass as i fall far
below to where animals paint
stars with their claws she stands
like a tall boat on the
stairway her cavern mouth forms
the steamy words:

"hello big boy"

HALLOWEEN MY BIRTH I WEPT

Steve Holley

we had dinner it
was fun i take you to
my house to my bedroom
put on some screwing
music you give me a box
its my birthday i open
it a finger cooered in blood
on a cotton swab by god
its your finger in
ketchup you look at me
with your long hot eyes tell
me its all right you puc
your lips on mine suck
out 22 teeth like after dinner
mines you stick refrigerators in
my ears replace my tongue
with a long highway
puc blue monkeys in my
eyes laugh like an angry
building i sic on
the floor you take off your
dress throw it out the
window oer the mountains with
my thoughts i knew you
wouldn't be an ordinary
dace

Go Left, Young Lady, into Prehistory: Thumbnail Sketch of World History Done Up in Pink

Mary Sansom

By third grade I was on the way to my decline and downfall. It started with Spin the Globe. The globe itself was a mild blue, and seemingly innocent as the babe inside his mother. Where will I go on my honeymoon? I would ask, giving the globe a spin, eyes squeezed shut, finger tracing its rotating belly, when BAM, if I didn't end up in the middle of the ocean off the coast of some country I'd never heard of, and no islands around for two inches, and BAM, don't you just get the feeling the world's a cruel place, and come lunch, I'm so worried about honeymooning with the sharks, my Sloppy Jo and creamed com will hardly go down.

Being stranded on my honeymoon was bad enough; it never got better. I tried, honest injun, to master the globe and its bawdy past. Unsuccessfully. Finally, I was forced to cheat my way through Remedial History 100. I did so by writing a thumbnail sketch of world history in erasable ink on my fingernails after painting them Naked Pink. I included these rudiments of history, along with some of the finer points, ignoring tedious specifics. Sometimes, I didn't use nail polish at all.

Cheat Notes and Commentary Done Up In Pink

"To the far, far left of the number line, one encounters prehistory (a concept I readily embraced as a lifestyle). No epic poems were written extolling the virtues of war, or diaries

personalizing the horrors. Amazingly, people, albeit somewhat furry people, were born and buried without letters or numbers. The dates one does have to remember are approximate, so there is plenty of room for divinity should one err by a couple of zeroes, which is really no problem, since basically, they're just bench warmers.

"After this pathetic stint of ignorance, one of the first peoples to get their act together and get civilized was the Egyptians and their cat society. Which brings us to the year zero and the Romans. The year zero can be multiplied by any number and still equal zero, but to divide by the year zero is undefineable. The Romans were everywhere, especially where the Italians are now, therefore almost everybody in the world is Italian.

"Later, the Angles, Saxons, and Vanderbilts invaded Britain and became English Italians. Men quit wearing dresses. Eventually, they sailed over to America. There was a Revolutionary War and a Civil War, one of which came before the other. The Revolutionary War wasn't very innovative. In fact, according to some New York film critics, was downright uninspiring, for a war. The Civil War often ignored the rules of etiquette, lynching people without a mock trial, mismatched costumes, and all that."

"When the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth, World War I came and went, and the next war to drag on was that copy cat of a war, World War II. Hitler wore a false moustache. His dog, Eva, committed suicide and was refused permission to be buried on hallowed ground. The 1960's happened between 1959 and 1970. The End."

Unfortunately, my attempts at cheating were foiled due to my habit of nail biting. The erasable ink turned my tongue and teeth blue. The honeymoon was officially over.

Was this how Chaucer began?

Lee Wood

*Jeannette's little people
stand in a wooden row
on the kitchen table,
their painted heads smile
and hold plastic hats
and hair,
she mooes them in a
straight line
across a playing card highway,
one at a time
like checkers,
farmers and housewives,
soldiers and sailors
and an oddball bear
from another game,
the lose!,
t ufhly one,
cnmna,
remooed early in the pilgrimage
and left on the side of the road
to watch,
forbidden to tell his tale this time,
one finishes its journ_ey,
she picks it up
and whispers to it,
offering it some
three year old wisdom,
is it the Prioress--
the Knight ? or
is Harry Bail_ey
scolding the Miller
for his ribald humor ?*

Driving to Lexington, KY

Lee Wood

*along a freeway that cuts
limestone hills
and exposes their
white bone,*

*gray plank wooden houses
with green tar shingles
abandoned for splitlevels,
now house hay
and field mice,*

*rolls of hay
side by side
like brown
cake doughnuts,*

*fence post shadows
and cow shadows
and miles of pylons
like pencils*

*crows pepper a
burnt-orange evening sky,*

*and the almost moon
looking like Eisenhower.*

Ma_ry South

The end of splendor comes
with a chilled drizde
coaxing bright shrouds from the trees
Black and rain-soaked sentinels
sadly shrug their wraps of gold and green and brown
onto the forest's floor
(It is cold... my breath plumes)
The rhythm of rain striking sodden leaves
creates a symphony of **dulled** sounds
The brown month will soon arrive
canopied by blue
clarified by ice
But today the colors are brilliant without the sun
Baptized and dying in tears from the sky

Found Poem

THE PARANORMAL MICROWAVE OVEN THE SKEPTICAL INQUIRER, Fall 1983, p39.40

Samuel Bauserman

While being tested by another believer,
Professor Otto H. Schmitt of
the University of Minnesota,
the b_oy_s had an inspiration.

Schmitt had supplied them with a few
tiny, cheap digital watches -
the type that are
permanently sealed.

He'd asked them to alter them paranormally.

Mike sneaked out of the lab and,
while **having lunch in a**
self-service restaurant
during a **noon break in the tests,**
he placed it inside his sandwich and
stuck it **in the microwave oven.**

As expected, the watch went crazy,
displaying gibberish on its
liquid-crystal readout.

Professor Schmitt
considered this to be a wonderful
example of psychic force and
maroeled **over it in the press.**

THE ACCOMPLICE

L. E. Welch

Every day he carried a heavy load
of years through the floodwall
gate and down the cement walk
past the boy's house His
feet seemed reluctant to disobey
gravity anxious to return
to earth
Melanomas clung to his face white
blood cells
multiplied
geometrically in his veins
Even in July the Mackinaw hung slackly
from his shoulders
a wool scarf circled his throat
and mouth
rose to the cop of his head and fell down
the opposite side tucked in the Mackinaw
He walked without name
gave no address
appeared and disappeared
each day The boy
judged him as just an old man waiting
for death

From behind a comic
book one day the boy watched
Mackinaw and scarf
enter a grocery store The old
man
picked a loaf of white bread from the rack
asked the butcher
to cut three slices of bologna
opened
the refrigerator
door for a bottle of milk
walked to the front of the store
placed the milk beside
the door walked to the check out
counter
handed the clerk coins from a
stained leather change purse
returned to the door where he
stooped to pick up the milk
As he rose
the scarf fell from his mouth
his eyes met and searched
the boy
The boy
mooed to him placed the scarf
around the old man's
mouth opened the door.

01' Squacky Break's Bad

By Phyllis A. Kirk

01' Squacky, he weren't just your ever day kinda "coon." No sir, why he could even out smart Hank Talbert's best blue ribbon Walker hounds; and I seen him do it too last Saturday night.

The frost was laid on real thick Saturday night, so me and some of the boy's figured we'd pack up and go "coon" huntin' for a spell. The moon was full so we only took us a couple lanterns and some grub. I told Lil' Bob, my brother, to keep 01' Squacky locked up in the house with him tonight 'cause it seems like that darn racoon always knew when I was a plan-nin' on agoin' huntin' for some of his cousins 'cause ever darn time he'd slip off and raise hell with our dogs - and just mess up our whole trip.

01' Squacky looked like he was sound asleep over by the fireplace so I tip-toed over real sneaky like so as to get my gun without wakin' up the rascal. I slowly reached up over the mantle-piece and had my hand on my shotgun, but I swear that coon beats anything I ever seen. He jumped up, took a flyin' leap, and landed with his claws stuck in my pants leg! I jumped around dancin' a jig as I tried to sling 01' Squack off but he was stuck fast. He just kept a hangin' on. I tell you the truth - he always knows when I'm a fix'in to sneak off.

I laid down on the floor; over on my back like a June bug, and yelled for Lil' Bob to jerk my pants off so I could get away from the crazy racoon. Lil' Bob was kinda afraid of 01' Squack but he was more afraid of me so he gave a big tug and quick as a flash that ol' coon found hisself all tangled up in an empty pair of pants. I hurried up and got dressed while Squack was a fightin' his way out of them pants; broke out in a dead run, slammed out the front door, and headed over to Hank's place.

Hank and the other feller's were already gathered around his pack of Walker's. As usual Hank was a braggin' on how no coon was ever goin' to out smart his dogs, all the blue ribbons they had won, and how many times fellers had begged him for a chance to buy one of them dogs. I was kinda sick of Hank's braggin' all the time but he's a good ol' boy and his dogs was supposed to be good to tree them "coons."

I never did tell the boys that I had a "coon" for a pet 'cause they'd laughed themselves silly at the thought and I'd never lived it down. Good as I liked to coon hunt I'd be the last one they'd think would do a trick like I did. I'd be ruined in these parts - for good.

What happened was one night about a year ago we was all out on a coon hunt and our ol' dogs was a bayin' real loud (the tree signal you know). We all come a runin' up the hill when all of a sudden like my feet flew out from under me, and I landed on my face! I raised up on my all fours and thought I seen somethin' run in a clump of bushes to my left. I poked

my gun around at the critter but it was too dark to see if it had run out or not. I lit up my lantern and lo' an' behold there under the bush just to my left I seen somethin' move around a little. I scooted up a little and could see that curled up in a tight brown ball was a baby "coon." He was a lookin' at me out of a pair of the meanest firey eyes I ever seen. I aimed to yell at the boys to come an have a look see but they was somethin' about that Lil' feller that just got to me. I felt sorry for him. There he was a shakin' all over, teeth chatterin', and ready to fight to the death for his life. I kinda went to soothin' him down and started to feed him lii' chunks of bread outa my pocket. Before long 01' Squack was coaxed right inside the pocket of my coat along with the bread and a havin' a good ol' time. Anyway that's how he came to live with me and he's been too onery to leave ever since.

This particular night, though, me and the boys loaded the Walkers onto the back of Wess Prince's pick up truck and headed for Butcher Ridge. Some of us boys climbed in the truck along side of the dogs. We was all a havin' a good ol' time a telling one big tale after another. After about twenty minutes, we pulled into our camp site. We all jumped off the truck, unloaded the dogs, and built us up a big fire.

It wasn't long until we heard Hank's dogs give the signal. Off we went runnin' toward the sound. We all heard one of the hounds let out a sharp "yelp" and we speeded up 'cause that sound always ment trouble. Sure enough one of the hounds was tangled up in a barbed wire fence and no sign of the other three. We untangled the hound an' he shot off north just like a bullet.

We darn near got run to death that night and Hank's 01' Walkers sure enough did. We picked them poor ol' hounds out of fences and water holes all night. I bet we must'a walked twelve miles that night but worst of all whatever had been tormenting Hank's hounds had led us in a full circle - - - we ended up at my place! We had to pack them ol' hounds back to Hank's place 'cause they was too tuckered out to walk. Their tongues was a hangin' out and their ol' chests was a heavin' like winded horses.

Poor ol' Hank he was a sorry sight. He couldn't figure out what in tarnation had happened to his dogs. I figured I knew but I kept my mouth shut. Although it sure would have been a good one on ol' Hank to have it rubbed in on him that a "coon" could and did outsmart his blue ribbon Walker hounds - - the whole darn pack.

Sure enough when I got back home from Hank's place, 01' Squacky was a layin' on the front porch swing, just a takin' it easy, a waitin' up on me. I picked the ol' boy up and packed him inside the house. Boy, 01' Squack you sure was somethin' tonight - - you didn't let up until ever one of Hank's ol' hounds was plum down!

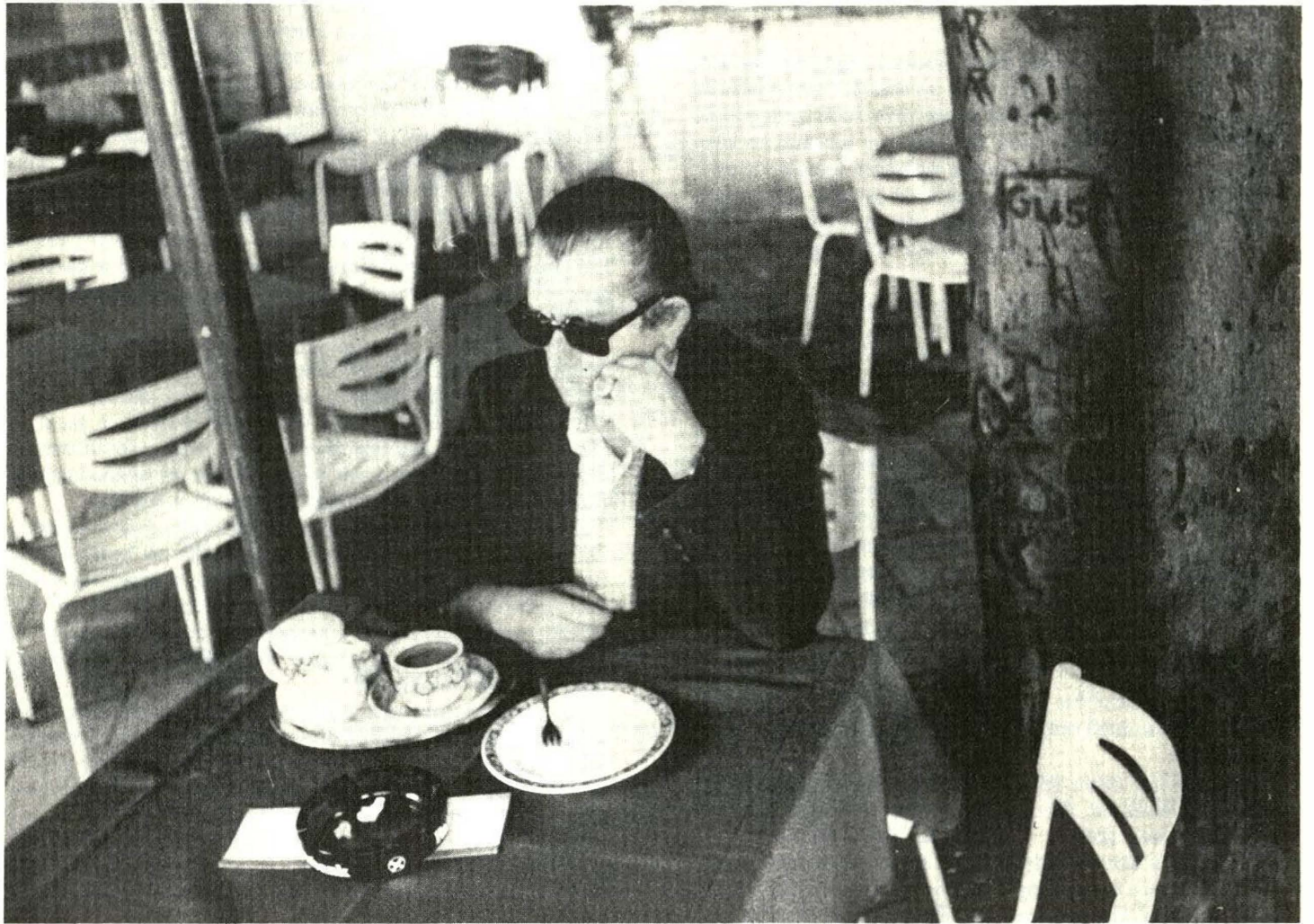


Photo by Joel Cook

CONDITIONED RESPONSE

Zen 13

Right after I shot mine off

her mouth said something I couldn't understand

"Don't fall, I can't."

Water-falls, sunsets, and other pastoral

visions engulfed me.

I had nothing yet vested.

The thought circled just as many times necessary to

Tran/ix me slumber.

"Don't fall I can't."

Wake up Sit up Stare at wall

Where? Here in her bed.

The unicorn stares at me, knowing

I have been taken.

She lies.

Pretend sleep. Mother-of-pearl guarded

serenity.

I lie back down beside her breath.

Accelerated toward surrealism.

"Don't fall, I can't"

I wake her

She nods "I love you."

And strokes my thigh in perfect sleep-ryth_ym

ALLITERATION

Zen 13

May in the key of suspension

Powder and Necklace and Night-Control

Two worlds converge to cast a

Moment Three, no

Plastic Four, no

Procrastinate Three chords revolve

Power around you.

Protrusion

Keep it simple; less than a wage

Divide trust by two and you lease deception

Multiply love by you and you change the world.

But those impossible chords;

Plenty to many more, increasing

the problem we have become-

Two universes of Plastic,

pettiness, pleasure,

And Power.

Trust not in a trillion,

Impossible.

*--wl]oel Cook
5185*

SADE C'EST

Zen 13

*Pain is passion
And Passion drops from her like a grey bath towel
Discarded.*

*Naked she stands
In the pre-dawn light caressing the espresso-maker,*

*She contemplates whether or not her bullets were
well placed.*

*She doesn't want him
She doesn't want him dead*

*She wants him
Bleeding. . .
Dying for her.*

MOTHER

Zen 13

*There are few people who are able to keep
Above the confusion of water. Their heads*

*With the print of your buckle on my cheek
And your non-control
On my development:
I adjust.*

Oedipus is confused

We're side-cracked and taking on water.

*Feeling for Depth
and
Almost Touching.*

OR LACK THERE OF

Zen 13

*Morbid
The black of your edges grows more toward your center
each day.*

*The moon is a powerful tool
But so are your eyes.
You bum holes through honesty
You tempt like a coward.
I respond like a bell-dog.*

*I fuck you I cry
You carefully wash between your legs
And spend the rest of the night on your side.*

Alarm rings.

You say "See ya"

Harmless

Irene Orrick

Harmless, a misnomer more than half the time. It was a little more fitting when we shortened it to Harm – yes, Harm was more fitting.

Names usually get shortened with the using. Mama especially had a way of doing it.

But Harmless is not the name given my brother at birth. He gave that name to himself.

Harm, dark and lanky, was older than me by about ten years. And the most I remember about him was good. He would get down the old scarred-up shotgun from the wall by the kitchen stove. Then he'd holler, "Tunis, little brother, let's go hunting!" Then we'd stop to call the old shepherd dog from under the porch, and off we'd set for the fields and woods.

Harm never would let me carry the gun. He said I might hurt myself or somebody else. And I don't know why he ever took it along for he never shot anything. We just mostly tramped through the woods and fields looking at things.

He told me that mayapples can be eaten; most folks think they're poison. He showed me that wild touch-me-not seeds are tasty. He said the paw paws and persimmons are best after the first hard frost. And he knew the best places in the creek for turtle noodling.

"Tunis," he's say, "I like to take you along on these hunting trips because you're the only one likes things like I do."

From what the rest of the family and most of the neighbors say, Harm wasn't any different from any other country boy growing up. Oh, you know how some people are though. Some of them said they could detect a mean streak in him from the start. But those who said that had boys who did the same things Harm did. And they didn't think *their* boys were unusually mean.

Nobody thought a whole lot about it when a bunch of boys, on Saturday night, would steal two or three of somebody's old hens and take them to the cliffs to cook, laying out the rest of the night, carrying on. Then, next morning, the whole gang, drunk, would go to a church somewhere and ride their horses all around the building and maybe in it, hollering and yelling till they broke up the meeting.

Of course that would upset folks some. But everyone knew those boys would marry in a year or two and get their wings clipped mighty quick.

Maybe marrying would have been good for Harm, settled him down, I don't know. But for some reason, Harm never did quit sowing wild oats.

He got to laying out drunk more than he was sober. And the older he got, the more he drank. When he was drunk, he changed into another man. That's what was so hard on us. For there wasn't a sweeter, sunnier, more likeable man alive than Harm was when he was sober. Wasn't anybody who didn't like him then.

But soon as he got drunk, he'd go down to the store where everybody hung around and pick a fight with any man there.

Harm never won a fight in his life, but that never stopped him.

Sometimes he came home after several days of drinking and laying out, smelling of stale liquor and his own vomit. He'd be dirty, beard grown, his black hair standing straight up, caked with mud.

The most horrible thing I ever experienced was the Friday afternoon I was walking home from school, and for the first time, saw my brother lying in a ditch beside the road. He was unconscious from drinking all afternoon. But his eyes were open, staring blankly, and he was moaning. His jeans were wet from his own urine. I didn't know him at first, then when I recognized him, I started running, scared. It was the most awful sight I ever saw. *Ever.*

Often as soon as he would come in the house, he'd start threatening to whip everybody at home. When I had grown a little, I could whup him when he was drunk. And I had to about once a week. But he would just keep on and never stop until we called the law and had him dragged to jail.

One time when I was still just a little fellow, Harm was carrying on so, we had to call the law on him. Well, the sheriff got there and got him handcuffed. But for a second, the sheriff turned his back, and when he did, Harm whumped him a good one on the back of the head with his cuffed fists, knocking him down. Quickly the sheriff got up hollering, "Here! Here! Harmless, stop acting that way or I'm going to blow a hole in you big enough for a dog to jump through!" I could just see that big hole right through the middle of Harm with our old shepherd disappearing through to the other side.

Usually, after a day or two in jail, Harm would sober up and they would let him out. He'd come home and wouldn't remember a thing he'd done. We'd tell him how he'd been acting and he wouldn't believe it. "Oh! I didn't hit that good old man," he'd say. "I'm harmless." He'd say it so many times, we started calling him Harmless.

Then he'd say, "I'm going to apologize to that old feller." And he'd do it. Being as likeable as he was, there wasn't anybody that didn't forgive him that I know of.

But we all knew, and Mama said, that whiskey would kill him someday.

Finally, one Saturday night, Harm got tanked up as usual. He'd been down to the store picking fights. Three men managed to get him home and leave him there.

Right off, Harm started hollering at Mama. Next to me, he loved Mama better than anybody in the whole world.

He commenced swinging his fist at her, but she kept out of his way, pleading. All at once, he reached down and picked up a piece of stovewood from the box. Quicker than a cat, before I could grab him, he hit Mama with the stick of wood. She made just a quiet sound as she went down, with the blood spilling from her forehead.

I must have gone out of my mind when I saw Mama lying there and Harm about to hit her still again. I *must* have gone

out of my mind, for, from the wall, I grabbed that old shotgun. (Even when I was grown, Harm had never wanted me to carry it.)

Then, blurry, I saw Harm lying on the floor with a hole through his middle. . .

The shepherd was whining at the door.

In the woods, on top of the hill behind the house, Harm is

at home. The little wild things run there in the touch-me-nots. After the first frost, persimmons drop softly above him. I wouldn't let them put a fence around his grave to keep the wild things out. Harm couldn't stand a fence around him.

One one word is chisled on his rough tombstone
---Harmless.

OCTOBER DAWN

Irene Orrick

*Like a gray lamb
Caught in the coils
Of a giant boa,
This late October dawn
Struggles to free itself of
Dark, low clouds, fog and
Cold rain.*

*I pull my chair
Up closer to the kitchen table
Where I can prop my elbows comfortably,
Drink hot cinnamon tea,
And watch the combat.*

*I know which will win,
For I've been in
Forty-nine of these Octobers.
Dawn has always survived.*



Photo by Kim Aaron

BOYS

John Williams

Remember when we were ten.
We watched a Saturday Matinee
about a wild motorcycle gang.
We left the theater
on our bicycles.
We jumped curbs,
rode through yards,
down sidewalks and alleys,
until we came to the big hill
where we would sleigh ride every winter.
The tree trunk we used for a sled jump
challenged you.
You rode faster and faster **down** the hill.
Your blue jacket,
open in the front,
flapped in the wind.
When you went over the jump
you and your bicycle flew high
and turned upsidedown.
Your feet were on the pedals,
your hands on the handle bars.
You bounced twice on your back when you crashed.
You stopped moving.

I ran to you so fast water streamed from my eyes.

I got you standing.
We were quiet.
We walked home,
pushing our bicycles.

A COMMUNITY AFFAIR

John Williams

Even *the worst* isn't so bad.
What if the meat is rancid?
There's something enchanting
about the glowing
blue green Thallophytes.

And, who cares if something peanut size
with enough legs to walk three people
had guests
far dinner
on it
last night.

White Hat

Tonya Adkins

On the day of my uncle's funeral
my cousin and I went upstairs
at Grandmother's house
and opened the old black chest
full of yellow mernaries
with the dust covered sailor's hat
and a smile from overseas
and we wondered who wore
the white silk hat
with the faded silk flowers

Notice that I have spelled all the words in this sentence correctly.

Mark Crutchfield
Marshall student

"I have nothing but contempt for anyone who can spell a word only one way."

Thomas Jefferson
President of the United States

After the Summer

Beth Payne

*Solitary rooftops
Beneath the failing rain
Echo still the teardrops
of the lonely who remain*

*No more the birds are singing;
No longer flows the thread
of life full solemn ringing--
Its somber words unsaid.
Nor gentle sephyr sighing
Across the withered plain,
Yet not a soul is crying--
No one left to feel the pain.*

*There is no more tomorrow,
Only misery and dread
In the silence and the sorrow
Of the caverns of the dead.*

The Ideal

Chris Quackenbush

*The fusing of the certain
with the changeable.
Low tide.
In a shanty made of driftwood
sprouting from the sand like
a big brom weed.
Gold-white
sand
A narrow oasis.
Swaying in a jute hammock.
Sucking on an ice-cube.
Fuzzy at the edges.
Knowing there is
God.*

At land's end.

Janitress

Taube Cyrus

*Foam-lathered from the floor of the dullards' stage,
Circling a soapy titer into the shoals of Duz,
Fat Melba grubs a towel through the radio hall-
A blowZ)' ballyhoo that scours the boards to glisten.
Beer-smirched, she yawps her hymns to empty aisles
Hacking the jabberwock-tunes to smithereens.*

*At six, the cocktail troupe comes waltzing in,
Fawning oer the cuffs of their neon garb-
Demigods who smirk at Melba's basilisk-breath,
Lemon-laced from the fritz of Lysol.
"What lard-sick cretin wastes this place?"
The gewgaws his beyond her back.*

*And Melba, marked madcap by her dumpling-rage,
Forsook the suds which slathered in her pail
To seroe the boorish fods her wet wallop.
The brazen tarts huffed off in well-soaked silk
When Melba's spigots spawned the tidal shove.*



Etching by Chns Quackenbush

FANTASY II

Alan Scott

*The unicorn selling flowers from the cracked clay pot
is on Welfare, and he goes home at night
to a weatherbeaten, Gola Rush-vintage stable
rented out by a withered old Faerie couple on Valium,
and they all sit in front of the tube
drinking Meisterbrau and
watching All-Star Wrestling.
The unicorn, in the center stall,
with a worn U-Haul blanket oer iridescent hair,
sighs a little and, thinking of all those virgins,
lets a saltless tear
slip into the sparse suds.*

LENORA'S POEM

Alan Scott

*Happy clownface oer the sky,
s-miles wide in the sunny daze
of this most perfect
of worlds, where the only problem
is what to do with so much
god-damned jay; there just ain't
enough muscles in my face
to smile you the way I feel,
and if there were only
one grin in the world
I'd have to take it, so I could
give it to you
from under my red
rubber nose.*

Tim R. Massey

*If my dog fetches
Only what he wishes to chew,
Then what is the definition
Of ambition?
If my cat comes
Only when he is hungry,
Then what is the definition
Of love?
And if my bird sings
Only when I am away,
Then what is the meaning
Of life?*

*Up, down, up, down.
Hot iron pumps
Weakness into strength.
Lifting hurts,
But pain purifies the system.*

*My fingers grip
A slender thing,
That is dead until picked up.
It's a magical item,
That takes on every person's personality
Like a mindless inmate.
As soon as I grasp it
It is filled with my thoughts
And it transforms meaningless
Pieces of electricity
Into something for everyone to share.
It flows unrealed marks
Inca words,
And my pen
Could be all the help I need.*

Revival

Richard Sullivan

*Hellfire
Bodacious
Words from the Lord
Panting
Sweating
"Damnation!" he roared*

*Jesus
Salvation
A delil of hate
Forgiveness
Looe
Collection plate*

Tornado

Suzanne Callihan

*In the corner of a bedroom
a little girl plays with a dollhouse,
front walls missing,
and places a plastic couple on a miniature bed
against a flowered wall in the second story.*

*Once I drove through a Kentucky town:
in a second-floor bedroom of a white siding house,
front walls missing,
tennis shoes lay on the carpet beside a made-up bed.
But the people were gone,
frightened away by the white lightning
and the train-like roar
that ripped away the curtain.*

Go Ye Into All the World

Suzanne Callihan

*Near the corner of Rich and High
in downtown Columbus
a balding man in blue trousers
an open Bible in one hand
points to bus stop crowd with the other
and preaches,
"If you don't cum from your wicked ways"*

*a teenager in cropped shirt and blue jeans
walks a couple of hundred yards and
stops in front of a dime store*

"and believe in the living God"

*women in tailored suits,
grasping briefcases,
shoppers and more teenagers
join the teen at the dime store
but even here the voice is clear*

"you will bum in the flames of hell"

*the people look away,
for even if the voice be true
this is not the place or the way.*

PASSAGE

Gina Johnson

*Looking back onto memory's blur
I see how I deceived myself
Innocence so ignorant-
You are beautiful
But only when viewed by a detached audience
Ignorant innocence
I remember you with a cringe
And an embarrassed smile*

*Looking back at this actor
who once played my life,
I see another*

*Change so inevitable
You are painful
But necessary for progression
Inevitable change
I don't see you until you're gone
and have done your work*



Etching by Vicki Boatwright

Bummed Out

Bruce Hollis

He sat there sleeping
on a bench
at the corner of High Street and Broad.
The Sunday shine covered him
like the grime
and
at a certain angle shimmered
off his scraggly beard.
His plaid tweed coat
looked heavy for the day
and slightly out of style,
though it may have been his forte.
His brown wool pants were baggy
and didn't match his coat
but
the hole in the knee
went with the holes in his shoes
that looked as old as the coat.
He shifted cheeks
and
fingered his nose
with a hand leathered by years
but
he didn't wake up.
The light turned green
and I wen on,
watching him in my rear view mirror
sleeping
on a bench
at the corner of High Street and Broad.

The Show

John Harvey

*A charming soubrette
until they locked her in the closet:
no! her hair is red,
the paints are vivid,
and she wears a cinematic fedora.
Was her mother always a Texan,
with winters that come
"On Wednesday." and smoking
long thin dark cigarettes?
Is her photo-snapping brother
truly a genius in banker's clothing?
The gallery is crowded with
with people walking backward,
as if they had just unframed
themselves. "4. **transf. a.** The
occupants of the gallery portion
of a theatre, the 'gods.' "
She has painted doors, chairs,
tables, lamps; there are
drawings in "mixed media."
Soon we will think
of bedsheets as canvas,
we men. On one wall
she quotes Shakespeare; but
here is Epictetus: "Remember
that you are an actor in a play,
and the Playwright chooses
the manner of it." I did.*

