

BACHY



6 1975



BACHY

SIX · 1975

Papa Bach Paperbacks

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A READING EDITION

A mechanical means of producing laughter. Position in illustration at the left shows the beginning of this process. Stand with the feet wide apart and then bring the hands down with a vigorous slap just above the knees as shown in the central photograph. Now bring the bent arms upward and outward at the sides, as shown in the upper right-hand illustration, and proceed to make a noise as nearly like a laugh as possible. A repetition of this movement will soon get you in a "laughing humor." It is guaranteed to produce this result if you have an audience of one or more.

Bernarr Macfadden, Vitality Supreme, 1915

THE MAGAZINE

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BACHY is a semi-annual journal dedicated to the discovery of previously unpublished artists of worth. A major portion of our pages is reserved for relatively unknown contributors. We publish all kinds of material -- except sentimental, academic, or metaphysical-bullshit. We are interested in all literary and graphic art easily reproducible in black and white. Poetry, fiction, essays, reviews, plays, photographs, line drawings, cartoons, musical compositions, costume and set designs for the theatre -- all are acceptable. Payment is in author's copies. Reporting date is about eight weeks. We are not responsible for return of submissions unless they are accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscription price: \$4.50 per year. Single copy price: \$2.50.

ABOUT THIS EDITION

— This is a complete reading text of the sixth issue of *Bachy*, published in 1975 by the Papa Bach Bookstore on Santa Monica Boulevard in West Los Angeles. (The copyright page reads 1975, though the issue is often catalogued as 1976.) It was made from a scan of a print copy, transcribed page by page from the page images. The page follows the magazine's own arrangement — the contents set as Papa Bach set it, the heavy display face of its section titles, its habit of spelling page numbers out in words, and its Bach device, cut from the cover of this very copy. The reading text departs from the original in one respect: *Bachy* was composed in a sans-serif, and this edition is set in a serif, which carries verse better over a long sitting. Each contributor, and each poem, begins on a fresh page.

Words in teal brackets are editorial reconstructions — a character or word that could not be read from the scan and has been inferred from context, from the facing page, or from the magazine's own back matter. There are 9 of them. [?] marks something illegible that could not responsibly be guessed. Everything in black was read directly off the page.

The copy is tightly bound, so character accuracy falls away at the inner margin: right-hand pages lose the first few characters of a line, left-hand pages the last few. Nothing was lost whole; the damaged characters were recovered by magnifying the page images, and the few that could not be are marked. **No leaf is missing and no scan is duplicated** — the printed sequence runs unbroken from page one to page one hundred sixty-eight, the soundest of the six copies worked from so far.

Nearly a quarter of the issue is pictures — three eight-page portfolios (Richard Hasher, Bruce Boehner's *Vanishing Los Angeles*, Charles L. Johnson's contact xerography), photographs by Rod Bradley, drawings by Deborah Engeman, and single plates by four more hands. None of it is reproduced here; the list overleaf records every image and where it stood. Two texts resist ordinary setting and are kept as close to the original geometry as type allows: David Dayton's scattered "Schizophrenic's Prayer" (page 131) and Leonard Gilley's "Northwest by South" (157–162), the issue's only two-column setting, here run as one continuous column.

Printed typos, eccentric spellings and compositor's errors are kept as they were set, and so is the issue's content: Theodore Labrenz's story turns on a planted acrostic that spells a racial slur, and it is reproduced as printed because the story is unintelligible without it. Beyond the bracketed reconstructions, no editorial matter appears once the text begins.

Set in TeX Gyre Pagella, with contributors' names in Bonum. The Bach device is the magazine's own, cut from the cover of this copy.

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AWARDS TO CONTRIBUTORS

— This issue carried, facing page one, a retrospective announcement of the magazine's first contributor awards, covering issues 1 through 5. It is reproduced here.

AWARDS TO CONTRIBUTORS

Issues 1 through 5

\$25 each

Poetry:

Joel Dailey

Joseph Hansen

Leland Hickman

Paul Vangelisti

Prose:

Angela Korvisianos

Gerald Locklin

Henry H. Roth

George W. Smyth

Art & Photography

Kim Cannazzi

Bruce Jay Kapson

John Rose

Sylvia Roth

William David Tumpowsky

Honorable Mention

Poetry: Dennis Ellman, Martin P. Laarakker, Jack Thomas,
Christine Zawadiwsky

Prose: Bob Greenfield, Eleanor Zimmerman

Art & Photography: Margaret Falk, John Findlater,
Sushiela Goodwin, Meyer Hirsh, Mary Trainor

Special thanks to Beyond Baroque Foundation for judging

and CCLM for funding these awards.

BACHY hopes to continue these awards in the future.

THE ARTWORK

— None of the pictures in *Bachy 5* is reproduced here. What follows is a list of the 44 images the issue carried and where each one stood, so that this reading text can be held against the object. Page numbers are the magazine's own.

Front cover — *a bold black scratchboard portrait of J. S. Bach in a full baroque wig above the words "Bachy 6" set very large in a heavy calligraphic serif with a swash descending y.*

Inside front cover *A blank leaf.*

Title page — *the same inked Bach head reduced to about a third size, centred above the title.*

Frontispiece *A stepped three-panel montage of black-and-white photographs showing the same suited, mustached man in successive stages of the exercise — head down and hands at his knees in the low left frame, bent forward mid-slap in the central frame, and standing feet apart with both fists thrown up and mouth open in laughter in the raised right frame.*

Page 22 *A blurred double-exposed self-portrait in which a bearded man in round wire spectacles and a dark sweater appears twice, one ghostly head overlapping the other against a pale, out-of-focus room.*

Page 23 *A grainy full-length self-portrait of the naked, hairy-chested photographer standing with arms at his sides in a dim bedroom, a shaded lamp and panelled doors behind him.*

Page 24 *The photographer grinning broadly on a wet, littered beach in a knit watch cap and heavy glasses, cradling a dead white gull with outspread wings against his chest.*

Page 25 *An antiwar demonstration seen from below, a huge hand-lettered banner tilting across the frame — "U C ... LTH SCIENCE" above "...ACE IN VIETNA[M]" — carried past a crowd of marchers, with smaller placards reading "STOP THE WAR NOW" and "ESCALATE THE PEACE". The photograph is printed rotated 180 degrees on the page.*

Page 26	<i>A close portrait of the man in a floppy soft-brimmed white hat and round wire glasses, staring level at the camera, sunlit window bars glowing behind his shoulder.</i>
Page 27	<i>The photographer lying propped on a mattress set directly on a patterned carpet, half-covered by a flowered quilt, in a bare room strewn with shoes and papers.</i>
Page 28	<i>A close three-quarter view of the man outdoors, mouth open in speech, a lit cigarette held beside his face and light flaring off one lens of his glasses.</i>
Page 29	<i>The man tipped back in a chair in a cluttered workroom, a stack of cartons, books and loose papers heaped on the desk behind him.</i>
Page 48	<i>A sunlit Queen Anne Victorian with a steep conical turret, gabled porch and fretwork balustrade stands intact behind a palm and a bare-branched tree.</i>
Page 49	<i>Shot from beneath the carved eaves of one Victorian, a hillside of gabled wooden houses steps down toward the hazy, smog-dimmed towers of downtown Los Angeles strung with power lines.</i>
Page 50	<i>A two-story Italianate Victorian with a bracketed porch stands half-swallowed by banana palms behind a ragged, sharply pointed picket fence.</i>
Page 51	<i>An abandoned single-story Victorian cottage, paint blistered away and one window boarded, its porch columns and spandrels still ornate above a broken skirt of lattice.</i>
Page 52	<i>Interior of a gutted house: a curving staircase with turned balusters and a heavy newel post rises past graffiti-scrawled plaster walls and plaster-littered floorboards.</i>
Page 53	<i>A gaunt bracketed Victorian mansion, jacked up on cribbing amid raw graded dirt, stands shoulder to shoulder with a new banded concrete office tower.</i>
Page 54	<i>Two photographs stacked on the page — above, an intact two-story clapboard Victorian with a shingled dormer, diamond window and carved porch frieze, deep in afternoon shadow; below, the same house with its roof torn back to bare rafters and two workmen standing on the wreckage.</i>

Page 55	<i>Two photographs stacked on the page — above, the house reduced to a skeleton of studs on its upper story, workmen prying at the framing beside a leaning ladder; below, the lot nearly cleared to heaps of salvaged lumber and a last stub of boarded wall, with white apartment blocks on the ridge beyond.</i>
Page 56	<i>A blank leaf.</i>
Page 62	<i>A loose black-ink brush drawing of a rearing horse, mane flying, set in the middle of the page; credited "Lorayne Lipps" at the lower left.</i>
Page 69	<i>A black-and-white photograph of a dragonfly perched on a bare twig against a blurred background of foliage and pale blossoms; credited "Jan Gealer" at the lower right of the image.</i>
Page 83	<i>Black-and-white street photograph of a tenement facade with a fire escape, a weathered hand-lettered sign, and a large "ENJOY Coca-Cola" sign fixed to the brick wall. Richard Morris</i>
Page 89	<i>Grainy, high-contrast photographic image of a bearded, long-haired man bending forward over the back of a chair, his face in shadow.</i>
Page 90	<i>Xerographic contact image, printed white on a dense black ground, of a coiled take-a-number ticket roll reading "085746 YOUR NUMBER 86 — WHEN CALLED IT'S YOUR TURN FOR SERVICE" beside a small winged insect ornament.</i>
Page 91	<i>Xerographic contact image of a halved apple encircled by barbed wire above a second apple half ringed by a snap-hook chain, both floating over concentric ripples.</i>
Page 92	<i>Xerographic contact image assembled into a face: shards of broken glass for hair, two pale clamshell eyes, an egg for a nose, and a mouth of barbed wire and chain.</i>
Page 93	<i>Xerographic contact image of a cracked egg at the center of dense concentric rings, transfixed by long radiating needles, with lichen-crusting stones below.</i>
Page 94	<i>Xerographic contact image of a face made from two clamshells for eyes, a shell for a nose, and stacked shells for a mouth, glowing against a dark mottled ground.</i>

Page 95	<i>Three xerographic contact panels — a feather lying among scattered elbow macaroni, above two smaller panels showing tangled snap hooks and a blade bound with barbed wire.</i>
Page 96	<i>Horizontal xerographic contact image strewn with clamshells, chain, barbed wire, leaves, a coiled spring, and pebbles across a mottled ground.</i>
Page 98	<i>Pen-and-pencil drawing of a bare-breasted Black woman in a long white skirt standing beside a draped classical column, a plantation house in the distance and a small heart floating above.</i> Nancy Bolduan
Page 120	<i>Photograph of a man in a cap and overcoat sitting alone at the end of a long wooden bench in a bare hall, beneath a hand-lettered wall placard describing the hand-carved wooden horses of a carousel.</i>
Page 121	<i>Photograph of a bare foot and forearm resting on the sill of an open screened window in a clapboard house, with an oil pump jack, chain-link fence and a piece of driftwood in the yard beyond.</i>
Page 122	<i>Photograph of a railroad crossing signal and chain-link fencing at the edge of a flat sandy expanse, with a lone figure walking in the far distance.</i>
Page 123	<i>Photograph of a seated stone Buddha on a carved pedestal among stacked stonework in a monument yard, with storage tanks and a tall tapering tower behind.</i>
Page 133	<i>Charcoal drawing of a seated nude woman seen in profile, her torso opened to contain a mechanical carburetor; captioned at the lower right Womb of the Mikuni.</i>
Page 134	<i>Charcoal drawing of four gaunt, barefoot figures striding in profile as though astride invisible mounts; captioned at the lower right Horsemen.</i>
Page 135	<i>Charcoal drawing of entwined reclining nude figures enclosed within the outline of a great leaf; captioned at the lower right Primavera.</i>
Page 136	<i>Charcoal drawing of a standing nude woman carrying a horse's head and a small nude man on her arm, the plate signed in pencil</i>

below the image "Holy Matrimony" / 2/5 / Deborah Engeman '75; captioned at the lower right Holy Matrimony.

Page 145

Dark black-and-white photograph of a heavy brass hydrant-style fitting cast with the raised letters "M. GREENBERG'S SONS / S.F. CAL." standing against a brick wall; credited Richard Morris

Page 152

Pen-and-ink drawing of a bald, closed-eyed figure in a dark cloak cradling a smaller downcast figure, beside a bare branching tree against a black ground; credited Deborah Engeman

Page 163

A drawing of an opened egg carton, its twelve cups each cradling a curled foetal figure. Deborah Engeman

Patricia Eakins

QUARTET FOR MY LOVER ON A SENTIMENTAL OCCASION

i

bless your feet of prince,
kulak's voice berating kulaks,
politicians,
rich heels on necks of the poor,
your skin pale beneath silk
as ghosts of conquered generations
crying out on Polish steppes
for dead chickens and dusty
daughters hidden under stairs; bless
your eyes, canny with smarts
of old men whose toothless
wives
love them good, your
hero's back, erupted in welts,
and bless your boiling rodent gut,
your hoard--
paintings, pianos, clothes:

kisses of garlic, protection
against a night of wolves.

ii

bless your hands that open and close
as gills of fish and
bless your flesh

taut as fish's,
flash of hips,
gulped oyster
fucks, raw, quick, or
dolphin fucks, wave on wave, well-
schooled;
bless the incredible
wreck of your underwear,
ocean smell
of cunt on your moustache,
coming quiet as fog, then
prayers crashing surf on shore.

iii

bless you choked on spleen and bile,
all of you wadded up in your fist,
a curse on bosses holding carrots
and pulling back on the reins;

bless you mean and hungry then, who
scrabbles at dirt of my flesh
to dig out every edible root
of love you needn't deserve;

and bless you after,
eased in bruises,
fingers smooth on my hair,
bringing me round as a tranquil potter
brings an urn from clay.

iv

bless your reasons,
subtle in corridors,

sea shells intact on
steppes among cows' feet
after death and monstrous change.

dreams float winged seeds
quick on shivers of wind;

you're ready to root beyond love, and I
am open to you as earth.

you're the only man who have ever changed
my body with talk.

14 february 1975

Jerry Oleaf

A RAILROAD TRAIN MADE OF FLOWERS

1

A railroad train made of burnt orange flowers brings the news that Christ is reborn to the residents of Gotham & Metropolis.

2

A railroad train made of artificial flowers is attacked by Sioux Indians drunk on bitter whiskey bartered to them by yellow-haired men clad in armor in exchange for fishing rights to the Little Smoke River. The Indians eat the flowers.

3

A railroad train made of neon flowers is the main character in an avant garde movie called, "A Railroad Train Made of Neon Flowers." The train is blown up in the last scene.

4

A railroad train made of crushed flowers is stapled in the diary of a 42-year-old Mississippi spinster who is the first female railroad conductor in the United States as a souvenir of her junior high school prom.

5

A railroad train made of frozen flowers
delivers the mail to Akron, Ohio &
becomes the subject of local gossip
for years afterwards.

6

A railroad train made of man-eating flowers
appears on the cover of the twelfth-anniversary
issue of Ms. magazine & gets the editors
in trouble w/the authorities.

7

A railroad train made of Matisse flowers
rides invisibly back & forth on the
Mason-Dixon Line.

8

A railroad train made of poison flowers
wrecks havoc in the cafés of Paris
where aging founders of the Existential
movement gather to eat cheese sandwiches
& drink white wine.

9

A railroad train made of blue flowers
flies to Mars while hundreds of thousands
starve on Sister Earth.

Rachel Michaud

RANDY'S DOMINANCE THEORY

The man of seven knots
undoes one
to let me in.

"I want to unravel you.
I want your hands to wave at
each other
from a lengthening distance.
I want to be the magician
for a change
not the white rabbit
not the hat."

The man of seven knots
ties three more quick
quicksilver.
I find my arms tied
my legs
my eyes.

Arrows sing past my ears.
Here I am again.
An unseen audience applauds.

ON TAKING THE VEIL

I would like
the long pockets of nuns
and a ring of keys.
Nuns seem rich to me.
Each face
is like a white
vault.
I've been broken into,
or I left my legs
unlocked.

GAMBLE

You are packing laughter with your doll.
I am shuffling cards.
I will miss the night games
where we dealt her in.
What do you say? One more hand
before your train?

When you grew quiet counting paper clips
the doll would say the thing
that made you stop
and turn and laugh.

Funny a doll could speak for me
and then grow dumb.
You leave me dealing to your back.

I bet
a game of solitaire
I've lost my partner,
not my touch.

You jump the moving train and blur.

DAY BY DAY

Don't ask me how my day was,
count my fingers.

I thumbed my nose at the room
and the room took my thumbs.

Day by day I will leave you,
tomorrow count my toes.

You carry me to the car
but I leak like a broken sandbag.
You carry me to the bed,
you can't plug me up,
I just sprout more holes.

WET PLACE

Already I feel
something
wetting my bed.

The shame is in my eyes
when I come down
when I go up the stairs to bed.
He always has a drink and follows.

I grieve for this poor pilgrim
kneeling
by the wrong bed.

I knit my hands
so I can sleep.

I grieve for all the children kneeling
in a wet place.

Robert Kinerk

THE MIDGET POPE

For his birthday Elgin Major got a lot of joke type gifts because he was in a play at the time, an amateur play, and the theater people thought it was funny to give him, say, a canned ham. Yes, a canned ham was one thing, and someone else gave him an old Rusty Warren record. KNOCKERS UP. A second hand record. Someone had blown up a photograph that made him look sort of schmucky. But it was all in good fun. This didn't take place at a birthday party or anything as formal as that. It was more or less impromptu around a table at a bar after rehearsals. The play they were doing was THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK and Elgin was playing the part of Otto Frank, a very good part, particularly because of that socko final speech where Otto Frank is describing how he learned of Anne's death and the awful names of the death camps slowly fall from his lips and he can make this full 360 degree turn as if asking invisible people for help. Yes. It's a magnificent part, but that's neither here nor there, except you can probably understand that after three or four hours of rehearsing such heavy stuff the cast felt like a little loosening up and maybe that's why they seized on Elgin's birthday for some lighthearted fun. Well, all the while the teasing was going on Matty Garrett, a very quiet woman who was playing Mrs. Frank in the play, was sitting across from Elgin with this box on her lap. A box about the size a portable TV would come in. She was practically not noticed because everyone had her tagged as this quiet, mousy sort of woman. Nice of course but very quiet. Perhaps even witty in a very subtle way. Very low keyed. She was a convincing actress but the director had a hard job making her project. "Louder, dear. Louder." he always had to say. "I can't hear you, Matty." Anyway, she sat there with one hand overlapping the other on the top of this cardboard box, and at last the merriment sort of died down. All the other gifts had been handed over. Milked for laughs.

People were privately beginning to think, 'Should I have another drink or should I head for home? I should probably go home,' when Matty lifted the box onto the table and said, "One more, Elgin. Here's mine."

You could have heard a pin drop. It was so unusual for Matty to push herself forward at all. Everyone wanted to make sure her present got proper attention, wanted to make sure she didn't feel slighted about it so there was this sort of hush while Elgin pulled up on the stapled flaps and practically absolute silence when he peeked inside because, for one thing, just from looking at his face people could see the present was unusual and that he didn't know how he should act. Whether to think it was a joke or it was serious or what. Of course Matty gave him no clue. She smiled. But her smile didn't say anything about her present one way or another.

"What is it?"

"Take it out."

Elgin very gently tilted the box toward the table and held the flaps open and in a few seconds, right onto the table, right into what was practically a forest of brown beer bottles and glasses with ice cubes in them, walked a midget pope.

"What the heck?"

"Is it real?"

Yes. Of course it was real. A pope in his white cassock. You would have thought he was right in his garden in Rome.

"It's a doll."

"No. No. A real pope. In fact it's Pope Pius XII."

They were right. Absolutely right. Pope Pius XII. The last of the great ascetic popes.

"Hello, Eugenie."

"Don't tease him."

"Matty... Wow! I don't know what to say."

"There's more, too."

Sure enough, several more midgets, very hesitantly, came out of the cardboard box. Cardinals. Chaplains. And of course the famous chair carriers, eight husky men with a sort of sled on their shoulders and on the sled a throne.

"Well, that does it. That proves it's really Pope Pius. He was the last one with the chutzpah to be carried around like that."

"Oh remember those funny old newsreels?"

"The last one with the balls."

"C'mon! You can't say that!" This was Stevie Hotch speaking, Stevie Hotch, a Protestant, so his words had special weight. The cardinals and chaplains and chair bearers were very shy at first. They stood in a knot and glanced over their shoulders at the ring of watchers, but their feeling for the pope was so strong, so protective, they couldn't desert him. After awhile the bearers took the sled to him and he climbed on the throne. The bearers lifted him to their shoulders and set off on a procession through the maze of beer bottles and glasses and purses and scripts. Gradually the people in the papal court began recovering from their shyness. They lined the path of the procession and reached out toward the sled and called for the pope's blessing. Very touching. A very touching scene. The actors and actresses were totally enthralled.

I am using the word midget pretty loosely in describing the pope and his court. Actually, the little people were about the size of dolls, Barbie dolls. This is what led one of the actresses to make the mistake of thinking the pope *was* a doll to begin with. And all of their clothes were elegant. Satins and velvets. Brocade shoulder capes. The pope even had on those ceremonial white gloves with the bishop's ring on the outside of them. The detail was that fine.

Anyway, after the procession had toured the table a few times the bearer carried the pope back into the box and the cardinals and chaplains followed and the flaps of the box slowly closed, just as if they were the great doors of St. Peter's.

Okay. It was time to go home. Everyone split, many people telling Elgin what a terrific gift he had received and Elgin thinking the same thing, too.

BUT

his wife, Elaine, was not sure it was a terrific gift.

How come?

In the first place she had been suspicious of the whole Players group ever since somebody walked off with Elgin's power saw while he was working on the set for LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL. She just seemed to associate hanky-panky with that crowd. She wouldn't let Elgin keep the Vatican people in the bedroom.

"You can put them on the room divider. They'll be very happy there."

"I don't know why you're so upset."

She had been leaning in the living room doorway with her arms folded on her chest but she wouldn't even give him the courtesy of an answer. She marched into their bedroom and shut the door.

"At least you could answer, Elaine," Elgin said when he went in the bedroom later.

"You and Matty seem awful chummy all at once."

"Oh ho, so that's it, is it?"

She wouldn't say.

He went in the dark living room again to see if the pope would come out. But the flaps stayed closed. They stayed closed till early morning light began to fill the room, and then they slowly opened and the pope came out. In his white cassock with his skull cap on. He paced awhile on the room divider shelf and then knelt for about fifteen minutes of prayer.

"Do they speak English?" Elgin's mother wanted to know.

"Naw. Just some goofy language. Italian I guess."

"I thought people said he could speak English. Eleven languages or something."

"Well, they used to say that but maybe that was just, you know PR."

"You never hear him speak English?"

"No."

"It's funny but I get the feeling he understands everything we say."

"Yeah, I get that feeling sometimes, too."

Elgin and his mother watched the pope, on a dresser top, give a blessing to some people on the floor.

"This seems like a funny place to keep him."

"In the guest room?"

"Yeah."

"Well, I don't know what's so funny about it. He seems happy here."

"Elaine doesn't like him, does she."

"Well ..."

"You don't have to say anything."

"Well, that's not the point, mother."

"Believe me, Elgin, I understand."

Before Elgin's mother left she discovered the little pope really did know how to speak English and she asked him for holy cards for her other son's children, children of a son who had stayed in the church.

"I don't have anything, emotionally, against the Catholic Church," Elgin was telling the pope one day. He had drawn up a chair by the dresser. He thought Elaine wasn't home. Actually, the pope was in the cardboard box and the Vatican people had closed it up tight. "I don't have anything against the church pure and simple. I left because I

simply stopped believing. I mean I could continue going to mass and, for the sake of my mother and father, *pretend* I still believed but that would be hypocritical, wouldn't it. Is that what the church wants? I don't think it is. And if I did do that, pretend I was still Catholic, would I develop bad feelings? Feelings I don't have now?"

"Oh yeah?" Elaine's voice. "Why not tell about sexual repression."

"Hey!" She was standing at the door.

"How about discovering the pleasure of masturbating and feeling sure it couldn't be a sin. Pop that one on His Holiness and see what he has to say."

"Hey! Hey!" He stood up so fast he knocked over his chair.

At the next board meeting of the Players Elgin suggested doing LUTHER.

Somebody else suggested, "Why not do THE LARK."

"No. No," Elgin said. "Nobody cares about that stuff."

Sometime later Elgin walked past the open guestroom door and saw his wife on her knees near his Holiness's box. She was whispering, "Fellatio. Fellatio. Cunnilingus, Holy Father. Fellatio. Fellatio." "Hey!" Elgin roared. He rushed into the room. From the stricken look on Elaine's face he knew that she felt terrible.

He grabbed her shoulders.

"You have no right ..." He was practically sobbing.

"You have ... no ... right ..." He physically threw her out of the room and slammed her up against the hallway wall.

"THAT ... IS ... NOT ... FAIR!"

Elaine's mouth hung open. She was absolutely stunned. After that she would in no way have anything to do with the midget pope or the papal court. "I won't even go in there," she said to her friends. "Let them have the god damn room. Let the wops take over."

Cleaning the room, taking care of changing the bed and so forth, all that became Elgin's responsibility.

He said, "I don't mind."

He kind of liked it actually. He used to dawdle sometimes when he was supposed to be cleaning up, especially if the chaplains and the cardinals were singing Latin hymns. O SALUTARIS HOSTIA. He heard that many times. A world remote from his came to his mind, a world so tranquil he was filled with awe.

"The whole place smells like incense," Elaine complained.

"You'd like me to get rid of them, wouldn't you."

"I'm not saying get rid of them. I know how you feel. I'm just saying the place smells like hippies live here and all our friends think we're smoking pot."

"Just take them to the dump. Throw them out with the garbage, is that your idea?"

The gulf that widened between Elgin and Elaine had a lot to do with Elgin sneaking in the guestroom or sitting by the door to listen to the pope say mass. Their friends could see it. Their relatives could see it. Probably Elgin and his wife would have drifted to divorce court. You know how these things go. But before that happened Elaine got run over by a truck.

On the night before her funeral, in a sort of semi-drunken state, Elgin got the insane idea to take the midget pope to see her body. He couldn't shake the idea off. He finally had to scoop the pope and papal court into the cardboard box and rush out to his car and dash down to the funeral parlor, where he broke a basement window with a rock and climbed into a very cool room. There her casket was. Her open casket. And some candles. And the smell of gladiolas was as thick as syrup in the air.

He set the box on a trough-like counter and sort of slumped into a chair to wait and see what sort of thing would happen.

For a long time no one from inside the cardboard box came out. He could hear people talking inside. He knew they wondered what the heck was going on. After a long time two Swiss Guards poked out their heads. 'Scouts,' he thought. His eyes got narrow. Keeping very close together, encouraging each other on, they explored the trough-like table and peeked at the needles and tubes and tried to guess how far it was to the floor and shined little flashlights around the dark room. Finally they climbed down from the counter and crossed over to where the casket was and climbed up the casket. They shined their flashlights on poor Elaine's bruised face and turned around and climbed back to the box and went in to report.

What did Elgin expect?

That the pope would say a funeral mass?

Nothing doing.

A couple of chaplains came out to look around. When they went back in they closed the flaps up. Nighttime in the Vatican. "They're right. They're absolutely right," Elgin whispered, thinking of black vestments and a funeral service and all of that solemnity. "It's not mumbo-jumbo. It's not mumbo-jumbo to them." Nevertheless, a weight pressed his heart.

Toward dawn the pope, in his white cassock, strolled up and down the porcelain table. A typical summer day. By this time Elgin had passed out. Before he knelt for his morning prayer, the pope stared quite openly at Elgin and stared a little at poor dead Elaine. The mortician's assistant found Elgin asleep when he came to work in the morning. He helped him get home and helped him clean up and kept the whole incident very quiet so there was no scandal.

"How come you don't go back to the church now?" Stevie Hotch brought Elgin some hot soup.

"No No. I don't believe it. That's how come."

"What do you mean you don't believe it? Look at all these people here. Look what you put up with."

Hundreds of midget Italians had come to be near the pope. The guest room wasn't big enough to hold them. They were all over Elgin's house. In the kitchen. In the bathroom. No one could get away from them, and when the pope went out in his papal throne on the shoulders of the husky men, crowds surged along his pathway.

" 'Sancti Papa. Sancti Papa.' That's almost all you hear."

"I practically step on their damn bambinos."

"I still can't understand why you don't go back."

"No no no."

"At least go through the motions."

"You don't understand, Stevie. You don't know ... You don't know shit. Why don't you just stop talking?" "You can't say that to your friends very often before they stop coming around."

Silence from Elgin.

"Anyway, your house sort of smells like babies' vomit."

Sadly, they looked at the floor.

"All those bambinos, I guess," Elgin said.

The peasant Italians were the first to notice the shadow of illness on Elgin. It seemed to be common gossip with them, although no one in that enormous crowd, that city of people, *ever* communicated directly with Elgin or even implied by staring that he or she was thinking about him. They lived their own lives. He lived his own life. Separate worlds. Separate and distinct.

Nevertheless, word got around.

"Look at his coloring."

"Look at his eyes."

"He hardly shaves anymore."

"He never takes a bath."

When he began to stay in bed a kind of hush came to his crowded house. It was ominous. You could sense the midgets were sort of waiting for something. A lot of the priests who had never gone near his bedroom began to stroll by the door, apparently just absentmindedly, apparently just saying their rosaries, but if you watched closely you would see their dark eyes dart at Elgin's mountainous bed.

Elgin's breathing got labored.

He got too weak to raise his hands.

Now and then his glance would search the ceiling.

He heard people in their churches.

The smell of incense reached him. The wild movement of his eyes said something. What? After awhile even that stopped. His breathing stopped.

The very silence said what happened. Quiet reached out down the hall. The bearers brought the pope his chair. The door flaps slowly opened and the holy father in a cape with jewels and his triple crown came out. People lit candles. Candles flickered in the crowd that pressed around the pontiff's chair.

Out the guestroom.

Down the hall.

Mournful people flocked behind. In Elgin's bedroom the crowd of midgets very slowly parted.

Priests and soldiers helped His Holiness climb up to Elgin's chest. They watched him while he studied Elgin's face. What was he thinking? He gave no clue, but when he finally turned away a sort of sigh went through the watchers. They seemed to know. A gentle murmuring. The blowing out of candles. And then the pope and all

his court and all the other Catholics spread their wings, their secret wings, and slowly flew away.

Greg Kuzma

The Earth Darkens, And Yet

Let the dark one serve
for he is stubborn and
will not be begged to comply
with our wishes. Safety
always seeks its opposite,
and danger lies down with
the dogs.

Let the young one grow old,
for he is anxious to it,
will not sit still, keeps
splitting his clothes. The
old one would like to run
fast, let us take him for
a walk.

Let the blue wash out, let
the white sky dream of its
stars, let it darken and have
them once more. Let the
wind puff up its anger,
the trees lose their leaves.
They want to.

Even the ground is suddenly
hammering our feet. Our
sleep to seek out its waking,
our deaths to grow sure of
themselves. Let the night

assemble its phantoms, day
sadden us with bleak
arrangements.

You will go to your room.
You must. There is nothing
in it for you, the mirror
rejects your dreams for a
kind deep face. And I will
keep on sitting here,
pleasant enough, stern and
unyielding, a commonplace.

Let the good one smirk in
some wicked deed, the dead
be lifted by their worms.
Let the present keep erasing
itself, the past tend its
drunk at the bar. Misery
will love its company, joy
watch over its simpletons.

Darkness

1

There is darkness all around me.
No, it is light.
I am surrounded by light.
Huge gobs of light hang from the windows,
like in paintings by Salvador Dali.
And then they turn black,
your face turns black in the mirror,
and it is darkness.
Darkness is eating me, eating the light,
and the mirror.
All along it was darkness.
Even though I had thought it was light.

2

Dead pears in her lap.
A beetle creeps among dry leaves
outside the window.
Today the light is dark,
it comes from the East.
Last night the sun froze red
against dark buildings,
froze the red dog lazy in his tracks.
A mother is dreaming of white days,
and light thrown wide across her bed.

3

The wind is eating its secrets
in the dark woods.
The trees grab onto the earth

for what little hold they can make.
Darkness is eating the wind
and the leaves of the trees.
Then it gets suddenly light.
Your face brightens.
You are glad it is light.
It has been light all along.
This darkness was light all along.

The Lost Friend

Rooms with chairs instead of magazines.
Rooms with magazines for beds,
with flowers instead of lovers.
Rooms with lovers used as ashtrays,
books torn from their hinges.
There is music on, you are eating
the air, the faces of lovers.
There is a view from the window
your brow has all but darkened.
You are alone again, as you were,
as you will remain.

Rooms with no doors, rooms with no windows.
Rooms with no heat, no light,
no changing of dust.
If there is a sifting it is your dreams
falling into each other,
dreams of tired women, dark children
with faces like yours.

There is a word for what you are,
but I have no one to tell it to,
no one to watch me playing
here at your doorstep
no one to marshall you
no one to kiss your hands.

My friend we are peas in a pod,
brothers of the same cord,
children of an honor which cannot be salvaged.
It is summer around us,
the sky speaks birds.

Our fathers set out along rivers
Images of themselves in the still waters.

William Talcott

visiting rites

i used to think food was dangerous to health, that somehow the meat and potatoes would start eating me. a minute ago i woke up with the arm of a child in my mouth. i was holding it by the elbow and hand. the shoulder was missing. the rest you can find in goya's painting that someone taped onto the mirror. the arm belonged to my daughter.

when my wife moved out she took my childhood with her. i meant to say my child. that was yesterday. today i begin to realize something is seriously wrong. the newspaper has a strange date. my room has been painted overnight with a pattern of red eyes that follow me everywhere. i pay no attention to them. i'm very calm. i am holding my daughter's hand. i just noticed an amazing resemblance between the lines in her palm and my own.

inside job

when i open the secret orders i find i have to perform a certain task which is impossible under the present conditions. to change the conditions i must first change the shape of my back-bone. i squat down and reach up with my arm inside my rectum. in this way i am able to crook my spine a little to the left, just behind my heart. after this it is easy to complete my secret task, which i immediately forget according to instructions. later when i pat myself on the back, i notice an unusual hump on the left side. i am sitting in the mezzanine of a popular hotel. there is no doubt in my mind i can correct this new deformity by the same methods i created it. i am just sitting here waiting for everyone to go home so i can have the privacy i need for such an intimate operation.

resistance

(*sisto, sistere* - to cause to appear in court -

cassell's new latin dictionary)

a subpoena is floating in the brook i have to cross every day on my way to school. at the moment i begin to cross, i find myself appearing in court to answer charges i don't understand. where have you hidden the latin dictionary, the prosecutor asks, again and again. the forest where i live reaches over the nearest hill and changes the hiding place each time i try to tell the truth. search parties return with angry looks on their faces. they demand per diem wages. the sole industry of the town becomes the search for latin roots and the taxes become incredible. as for me i am getting tired of the whole business. some day i will dam up the brook with the subpoena floating in it so i can continue my education and make something of myself.

ovid's collected poems

something's inside my skin. i feel it writing ransom note
trying to get out of its world. it's waving its hands in
the air. i close my eyes to get a better look. it's D.B.
Cooper, so much smaller than his pictures. the stewardesses
are gluing money to his naked body. two-hundred thousand
dollars in small bills. he grows to the size of ovid's
collected poems and heads for the tail. the word 'parachute'
is never mentioned. i head for the bathroom and open the
window. when i try to shit, a green bird flies out and
laughs all the way to the sky.

Richard Hasher

a series of self portraits

Rod Bradley

DEAR EDITOR

I'm a one-legged
half-Indian, part-black
quarter-polish vetran
who got his balls
shot off in Nam.

I'm 16 with a good
personality and 7 kids, I'm unemployed
and wanted
on 3 bumrap felonies, I'm not sure
if I'm alcoholic

just a poet, please
give special consideration
because I'm sure you understand--

got to cut this short
6 squad cars just
pulled up, I'm depending on you
please, whatever happens don't worry
you'll be hearing
from me
again

forever

True Poet.

Steven Utley

FROM THE FAMOUS POET'S SCHOOL

We have examined your poems, Mr. Mrs. Miss Ms. _____

(the whole shoeboxful of your pretty visions:

some neatly penned on ruled sheets torn

from a spiralbound notebook;

some scribbled on brown wrapping paper

with a No. 2 pencil;

one typed, single-spaced, with a red ribbon,

on scented lavender stationery)

We were especially impressed with the poem(s)

about:

the time you found some newborn kittens

under your grandmother's house

We are pleased to accept your application and fee

as we are convinced that you have "what it takes"

to become a Famous Poet.

Patrick Leahy

MEMBERS OF THE GUARD

Younger and Odessa Blount, "directors" of the Academy's culinary staff for over a quarter of a century, were busily preparing lunch. Younger Blount, for whose Christian name alone time had stood still for sixty-two years, was in the midst of tossing coleslaw in a huge stainless-steel basin. That was no good reason for him to be without a lighted cigar in his mouth. His gristly white forearms sported tattoos from his days as a navy cook; the right was distinguished by a nude stretched out hugging his pulse, the entire left was wrapped in python coils. "Pa" Blount, as he was called, did not see very well through his thick bifocals. Still the ashes that occasionally fell from his cigar into the salad could not be attributed wholly to poor eyesight. Pa had tossed too many coleslaws in his time, grossed too many kettles of stew and netted too many leftovers. There was no use being careful. There wasn't time. You had to deal with these kids who worked off their tuition as waiters. They tended to get on each other's nerves. Running the culinary staff wasn't "all gravy", Pa was fond of saying. You had to "settle the waiters' hash" too from time to time. Not a day went by when either Pa or Ma didn't catch one of them trying to sneak seconds or thirds of a premium dish, like steak or lamb chops, to some head-of-table. These waiters were a snotty bunch, you never knew from day to day how far you could go before you touched a raw nerve. Ill-tempered, they were. Hard cases. Different from the ordinary cadet whose parents had lots of money, the Lord Fauntleroy who could stroll down to the guardhouse every Saturday to collect their allowance. No, the waiters collected bribes instead from the heads-of-table. You had to watch them like a hawk around the meat griddle. The kitchen stretched everybody's nerves to the breaking point. There was the heat, the steam, the sickening cleanliness of dishwater-hands, soap and garbage, the concealed toil of a quarter of

a century in little better than a ship's galley where the dumbwaiter wasn't so dumb, hoisting slop to unappreciative boys who passed through the school like the interminable procession of ducks in a shooting gallery. Yet after one measly semester the waiters would begin to strut around the kitchen like seasoned veterans, like they owned the place, like they could spread nasty rumors that Ma sweated into the peas, that Pa's ash tray was the salad basin. Little snots. If Pa Blount, by Jesus Christ almighty, could only dish up something as luscious as *their* adolescent heads were capable of concocting, why he'd serve them lentil soup with boners, horsemeat on rye, and turds benedict every day of the god damned week!

At eleven-thirty that morning, Cadet Private Malcot Pomeroy walked into the kitchen through the back way. Pa looked up from the coleslaw shouting: "God damn it!" He could not see who it was; what with the constant drift of cigar smoke and the accumulation of steam on his bifocals visibility for him was reduced to about six feet. But it was October, the afternoons were still hot, the flies still ranged greedily on the outside of the screen door waiting for a chance to fly in, and it was Pa's territorial imperative to curse, not so much the person who came in, but the squeak of the door, the thought of the tiny black missiles sucked into his domain. Pa never thought of flies for the filth they carried, the war they waged on principles of sanitation. Flies, in their supreme indifference, flaunted his invisible, unsung travail, like somebody opening the door of a bomb-shelter to let in a few deadly slivers of shrapnel.

Just a few minutes before Pa had delivered the same curse in the same bilious tone to Cadets Heikes, Cole and Peterson who were now, near the portal in the shadowy anteroom just outside the faculty dining room, discussing in feverish undertones the last details of a plot. It was, as much as anything, an obligation of getting back at the time they had to waste all day on guard duty. Suddenly they laughed, then fell silent as they caught sight of Pomeroy in the kitchen walking toward them. Seeing they meant to block his way Pomeroy inclined his head, praying without much hope that they would let him pass

unmolested. Of course it wasn't possible; Captain Heikes grabbed him by the arm.

"Wait a minute, Pomeroy. You're in such a rush. Don't you know us? We'd like to have a little word with you."

"What about?"

"Just hold on. A little favor for us. You'll do it, won't you, Pomeroy?"

"I don't know, Jim."

"Jim? Have I ever given you permission to call me Jim, Pomeroy?"

"I don't know. I just . . . well, I didn't think . . ."

"That's all right, Pomeroy. You can call me Jim. You can call Pete and Cole here Jim, too, if you want. Right you guys?"

The other Jims agreed with inflated bonhommie and slapped Pomeroy so hard on the back that he gasped and lost his footing.

Heikes grinned.

"That's right, Pomeroy. Now you want to be a real bitchin' head? You want us to call you *Malcot*?"

"Well I guess so . . . it doesn't . . ." "All right. I don't blame you a single bit. *Malcot* sounds like shit. Your parents had to be kidding. You know?"

Suddenly Pomeroy raised his cracking hollow busybody chairman-of-the-bridge-club contralto: "Listen Jim. Please don't make fun of me. I want to go in there and have my lunch. I've got to get back and relieve Hymer. Please don't try to convince yourselves I'm stupid. If you have something to say to me, please say it sincerely. Just because you think I'm a homo doesn't give you the right to treat me like an imbecile."

The three Jims gaped at each other.

Cole said: "Mrs. Preston's in there with her kid. You're going to sit on the other side of her."

"I don't mind that," Pomeroy simpered.

The triumvirate laughed and nodded around at one another. Peterson began to fondle the chevron on Pomeroy's sleeve.

"Would you like to get into her pants, Pomeroy?"

Pomeroy laughed miserably.

"Oh no! God, you guys shouldn't talk like that. Mrs. Preston's really a nice woman. And I mean, she must be thirty."

"She's a horny thirty," Peterson patted Pomeroy's shoulder, then suddenly flinched away, wiping his hand down the front of Pomeroy's shirt. "Jesus Christ, Pomeroy! Wash your hair once in a while, will you! Use Enden or something. You remind me of that guy with dandruff flying around his head in Dick Tracy."

Heikes said: "Let me get to the point. You know as well as we do, Pomeroy, Mrs. Preston would just love one of us to get into her pants. Daddy high-pockets doesn't cut the mustard, I guess. Anyhow married people don't fuck very often. Mrs. Preston's a nympho. If she wasn't so afraid of herself she'd seduce one of us. I mean it.

"I wouldn't mind," Peterson pumped up his eyebrows like Groucho Marx.

"All we want you to do," Cole said sharply, "is to sit beside the bitch. Now this is important. You wait till after she's taken a few bites of her rice, maybe a couple minutes after, then you move your leg over and touch hers."

"What! My God, I can't do that! What for?"

Heikes flipped Pomeroy's tie out of his shirt and tightened up the knot. Pomeroy clucked and gurgled.

"Pomeroy, would you like to have your ass kicked for you?"

"Jim, you're choking me! Cut it out!"

"Shut up. You'll do as you're told. It's an experiment and you're going to help us. We want to see what happens after Mrs. nympho Preston eats her rice. Because there's gonna be spanish fly in it. Limberopulos knows what to do. Now you'd better shape up, Pomeroy. You may be about to get raped."

Cole took out his handkerchief and began to brush the dandruff from Pomeroy's shoulders.

"Here, you can keep this." He stuffed the handkerchief into Pomeroy's pants pocket.

Peterson was giggling. He stood back to admire Pomeroy as Heikes carefully loosened the tie and tucked it back in between the second and third buttons of Pomeroy's shirt.

"Now you've got it straight," Heikes said. "Wait till she gobbles some rice, start touching her leg. And I mean more than once! Keep pressing. You got it?"

"Oh God Jim, I don't know . . ."

Cole placed his hand on Pomeroy's shoulder and gritting his teeth, squeezed.

"What's there to be afraid of, Pomeroy? It's old Adele. Glee Club. She's not afraid of *you*. Right?" Cole tightened his grip. He squeezed as hard as he could.

"Yes! For God's sake! . . ."

"Shut up!" Heikes looked furtively toward the kitchen. "Dragotis'll be here any minute."

Pomeroy said: "How do I know you guys haven't told Limberopulos to put spanish fly in my rice too?"

Peterson snarled: "Because we don't want you to rape one of *us*, Pomeroy, you dumb-ass zit-face cock-sucker."

Pomeroy bowed his head frowning with exaggerated woe. Abuse like that was nothing new. It didn't hurt much any more. They were just saying what they thought they had to say. They didn't mean it. They didn't hate him for what he really was. That was impossible. They didn't know who he really was any more than he did.

Just then from behind them in the kitchen the tense metallic voice of Captain Burt Dragotis, the OC, greeted Ma Blount.

"*Hel-oo*, Ma! What's for chow?"

"Chicken Frickasee n' rice!" Ma cackled, plucking the lid off a cauldron, peering into the cloud of steam and plunging a long wooden spoon inside.

"Smells *good*!" Dragotis shouted.

"*Is good*! Put hair on yer chest!"

"I don't need any more of that, Ma!"

"Yeah? Don't patronize me, Captain!" Ma clanked the lid back over the cauldron and moved off toward the breadboard in her swaddling of smock and apron, her mouth pinched together like a scar. One of the young assistant cooks was slicing bread. Ma seized his wrist.

"Give me that, sonny! Too thick! Much too thick! Now watch this!" Ma began to slice quarter-inch pieces of bread, yelling: "They waste it! They eat out the center and leave the crust!" Ma's head tilted to the right as she squinted through her glasses obliquely like a chicken.

In the anteroom the conspirators lingered with Pomeroy just long enough to leave him with the implications of their hard looks before they made off casually into the dining room where Mrs. Preston and her son were already seated in their usual places. She looked up smiling wanly at the young men as they said hello to her. For the moment they were too keenly aware of the irony in the routine pleasantries about to be exchanged to guess that something had already gone wrong; it did not seem really important that Pomeroy was still hanging back in the anteroom, especially considering the

attention that the little boy, Guy Junior, suddenly commanded. Adjusting his tow-head so that it lined up with Peterson, who sat at the far end, he said: "Hi Jim." Then he turned it a crank. "Hi Jim," he said to Heikes, straight across from him. Another crank and he took Cole into his sights. "Hi Jim." His voice rang crisply, a "little man's" voice, dead-panned enunciation like a ventriloquist's dummy threatening to come to life. The boys knew who had spoiled Guy Junior, but it was still him they detested. They did not exactly like having to put up with the vague overbearing teases he fired from the fastness of his mother's irresolute motherhood, the pale timidity with which she instinctively resisted discipline as a betrayal of her fading good looks.

Guy Junior glanced quickly at his mother, then picked up his fork and spoon and dumped them into his water glass.

He said: "I *don't* want any milk today! I hate it!"

Mrs. Preston blushed deeply. Leaks of panic sprang in her quiet sexy voice.

"Honey, you know you do too like milk. Now take those utensils out of your water."

The boy set his face and hid his hands rigidly under the table. Mrs. Preston's lips twitched as she tried to smile at the three handsome cadets. She leaned toward Guy Junior but did not touch him.

"Do as I tell you, honey."

"No!"

Mrs. Preston glanced up. The grin on her face looked hideously pathetic. Against the monitors of simple kindness and reason it made Heikes want to laugh. He quickly took a drink of water, almost spluttered in it, then covered his mouth with his napkin. Cole scooted in his chair. Peterson began to clear his throat. They all smiled back at Mrs. Preston, meager little smiles that ached to have the neck of this brat wrung right there on the table. Mrs. Preston shook her head in a

way that indicated her boy, of course, was about as spoiled as most boys his age were these days.

"He really loves milk. He knows how good it is for him. How it builds your bones and teeth. Don't you Guy?"

"Oh Guy. Never mind the milk today."

Guy Junior poutily thumped his water glass.

"Maybe I'll have chocolate. Can I?"

"I don't know. We'll see."

She began then to praise Heikes for the way he had led the football team to victory over Mountain Empire in the first league game last Friday. She forgot that Heikes played left guard and was not captain of the team this year. Heikes felt too embarrassed to set her straight. He knew how much she wanted to be able to make a hit here where she had the closest thing to a chance with young men that she was ever likely to have, and suddenly he felt afraid. What was the spanish fly really going to do to her?

.

"Sir, could I talk to you a minute?" Pomeroy's nasal contralto cracked, ruffling Dragotis in his intense august stride through the anteroom. He hesitated, bulging inhumanly in his beribboned Ike Jacket, as if he dared not get caught in the fumes of his Tweed cologne, the target of Pomeroy's insignificance.

"Yes, what is it, Pomeroy?"

Pomeroy began rapidly: "Sir I think you should know, Captain Heikes in there, he and the others . . . well, they've put spanish fly in Mrs. Preston's rice. I mean they're having the waiter do it. Limberopulos."

"What the hell are you talking about, Private?" Dragotis' mouth formed itself into an acid grin, his eyes glittered wolfishly.

"Well, I know it sounds insane, sir, but Captain Heikes just told me there's going to be spanish fly in Mrs. Preston's rice. He wants me to sit beside her and nudge her leg. I'd rather not do that, sir."

"Is that so?" Dragotis pegged his knuckles on his hips and kept grinning. "What the fuck do you think you're trying to pull on me, Pomeroy?"

"Nothing, sir. It's no joke. I thought I'd better tell you, because I don't want any part in it. And Mrs. Preston, feeding her spanish fly, I just don't think -"

"*You* don't want any part of it? You don't, but the Captain Exec does, eh? Is that it? You ought to go on report for this, young fella. Trouble is I wouldn't quite know how to word it on the soak sheet."

"Sir, if you don't believe me, ask Heikes, would you, or Limberopulos."

"Listen, you drop this bullshit, Pomeroy. I mean drop it right now! In the first place I don't believe Heikes told you a damn thing. Secondly, if he did tell you to nudge Mrs. Preston's leg, you just disregard that, see, because that's impossible, those guys've just put you on. And in the third place, if they're responsible for doctoring Mrs. Preston's food, don't you realize they'd get booted out of school for something like that? And do you suppose if it was true, do you suppose they're going to *admit* it? As far as I know the taste -" Dragotis paused, and then with a ribald chuckle said: "It's a hell of an idea, all right. How the hell could you prove anything?" He stared open-mindedly, somewhat vaguely at Pomeroy's poodlish blue eyes. Then suddenly the situation cleared up; there was nothing worse than a snitcher. Pomeroy was liable to open his mouth in there, and what a hell of a mess then!

"All right, Pomeroy. Calm down. Forget the nudging business. Be sure you forget it. Leave everything to me. Just go in and eat your lunch and then go relieve Hymer. Simple. I'll talk to Captain Heikes after chow."

"But sir, that'll be too late. I'll get a blanket party one of these nights."

"There'll be no blanket parties. Now god damn it, don't you open your trap in there. Don't you embarrass Mrs. Preston."

"But sir, I think they mean it."

"We'll just have to see about that, won't we? Go take your seat."

"Yes sir." Pomeroy walked into the dining room, swivel-hipped as usual. Watching him Dragotis shivered spasmodically like a man who has to urinate. So he's a fruit, Dragotis thought, but does he have to *rub it in*?

The only available seat for Pomeroy to sit in was the one on the other side of Mrs. Preston. As he scooted himself in a sudden indifference came over him, almost sadistic; Mrs. Preston was about to eat the spanish fly with her usual voluptuous mortification that such things as chewing and swallowing and having had a child by a rather large older man like one of his diagrammed sentences left on the blackboard should be noticed by these luscious boys, any one of whom could conceivably become her lover. And Pomeroy really didn't care what the spanish fly did to her. In fact he hoped she would put on a good show so he wouldn't have to be sorry he'd let it go on.

Limberopulos breezed in balancing his large oval tray just as Dragotis, wolfing a reluctant friendly nod Mrs. Preston's way, adjusted himself at the head of the table. Mrs. Preston's smile remained fair and equitable, under the strain of standards for bygone glamor, the way, perhaps, she had been taught to use her face at Mills. It moved like a radar screen, now she devoted it to Limberopulos as he came around to lay the steaming plate of chicken fricassee in front of her. But Limberopulos kept his dark eyes severely inclined. He has a job to do, Pomeroy thought, and began to smile.

"Yukie!" Guy Junior cried. "*I hate this stuff!*"

Dragotis took a look at the three "fine young men" ranged down the table to his right. Damn good actors, he thought. It's probably true, but what's the harm? Pretty damn funny idea. Spanish fly in the rice. My God. They got her number all right. Right on the button. Hot to trot, that woman. Bet she has to *ask* Preston when she wants it. Dreadful verb for old Daddy high-pockets to conjugate. Ablative case. Deprivation.

Dragotis felt the muscle around his mouth pulling away from the stern expression he had decided on; he felt a curious delight, like a cripple forgetting the use of his cane as he chases his hat in the wind, and he realized then with an inward shrug that he was staring at Mrs. Preston's gravy-covered rice, waiting for the fork to slide in, insisting that the lady should dispatch her first symptom of etiquette.

Roughly tucking Guy Junior's napkin into his collar she said: "You *know* you like chicken, Guy. You're *not* being a very big boy today. Now I want you to *sit* up and eat. Every bite. There. It's almost cool enough. No *arguments*. All right?"

Guy Junior was not listening. His mother's phrasing, the inflections, the controlled hatred were all the same as yesterday and a thousand times before. The muffled pleading of somebody he had long ago locked in a closet. He said: "It's too hot!", then began to evaluate the chewing faces across the table from him. He didn't like them. They weren't kind. They wouldn't let him get away with being a little boy. Just like Mom and Dad, except crueller. They laughed at his bow-ties and short pants, a credit to his parents, suited up for his best behavior, too clean with a Fitch-locked wave in his straight blonde hair and pretty smart for his age.

Guy Junior thought about his mother, a remote thought, nothing to do with the flesh and blood adult female five inches to his right. That one he could never quite focus on. Yet he read the image he projected of her five by five. At his frequent little premiers and re-runs he could see perfectly well what she was made of, creepy mushroom flesh, a white blushing fungus, something indifferent to the sun and yet unfit

to provide shade; she embraced him like a viper slithering up from the desert floor, clinging to *him* for shade and warm blood and transportation. He looked at the dead warm rice and gravy she had spread across his plate and felt like crying. That ever-recurring urge, as usual, made him mad. He leaned over and looking past his mother said: "Hello Pomeroy!"

"Oh, hi there, Guy. Excuse me, Mrs. Preston."

"Certainly, Malcot. *Guy?* . . . you sit up straight here."

Mrs. Preston sat around, picked up her fork and started to eat.

Pomeroy said: "Y'know ma'am, I saw them cooking this stuff out there in the kitchen."

Mrs. Preston stopped chewing and looked blankly at Pomeroy.

"Yes?"

"Well, I wouldn't call it the most appetizing of conditions."

The handle of Dragotis' fork fell against the side of his plate. All eyes except Guy Junior's stared at Pomeroy, as if he was something that should be blinked or rubbed out of them. Guy Junior dropped a pea into his water-glass. Mrs. Preston began to chew again with a smile in her eyes.

"I guess you're referring to Pa's cigar?"

Guy Junior suddenly laughed at the pea rolling at the bottom of his glass, and the filaments of gravy clouding over it like something he remembered a fish had done on TV.

"Not exactly, ma'am."

"Oh?"

Dragotis tapped his fingernail on the table.

"Aahh . . . Mr. Pomeroy? . . . that'll be just about enough. We don't talk about the food. We eat it. If you fellas'd ever seen Korea, the

refugees there, why they'd eat this chow like prime rib. D'you follow me, Mr. Pomeroy?"

"Yes, sir." Pomeroy thought everybody could hear his heart banging against his ribs. He moved his left leg until he could feel Mrs. Preston's calf through the thick wool of his trousers. She quickly drew it away, smiled at him and said nothing. Pomeroy blushed. The new boil on his long nose throbbed painfully.

"Excuse *me*, ma'am."

Peterson started to giggle. Mrs. Preston looked across at him, twisting her head a little. Dragotis laid his napkin on the table and slowly got up.

"Will you excuse me, Mrs. Preston? I'll just be a minute. Pomeroy, come over here with me." Dragotis crooked his finger. Pomeroy got up instantly, without thinking. Dragotis moved off for the anteroom with his hand on the back of Pomeroy's neck. Under the arches at the kitchen door Dragotis snarled: "God *damn*, Pomeroy! What the hell d'you think you're trying to pull?"

"Nothing sir."

"Nothing. I ought to bust you in little pieces."

"I'm sorry sir."

"About what? Then you admit it. You'd've gone right ahead and made a crack about that god damned spanish fly business. That was next. Right? Tell me I'm not right."

"No sir."

"By God Pomeroy you think you know what it is to march. You don't. Believe you me, I'll see the soles melt right off every fucking pair of shoes you own."

"Then I'm on report?"

"On report, *sir*, Pomeroy! Yes, you most god damn fucking right well *are* on report."

"What for, sir?" "What for? You amaze me, Pomeroy. You really amaze me." Dragotis shook his head hopelessly.

"Sir I really didn't *say* anything to her, I mean, it's still our secret sir."

Dragotis skidded on the words on the way out of his mouth. He gaped at Pomeroy. He felt near cracking. Graves registration. His outfit. The Yalu River. Dogtags in a lard can. He had brooked war and processed death and here it all came to nothing; none of it stood up for him. He felt like crying. The tougher he tried to get, the flimsier his position became. Against Pomeroy pecking away smirking like the dead giveaway of a real fruit he had no defense. The army uses too much camouflage, changing with the environment, all camouflage, ridiculous . . . Pomeroy had him, knew him for a man whose nerves were shot, had to be, leaping before he looked, rant before reason, there'd be a stink clear to the Colonel's office, scandal, Honor System, Pomeroy would come out smelling like a rose, no, just in time, let it blow over, like Pomeroy says, it's *our* secret, god damn the nasty little pervert to everlasting hell!

"I think what we'll do, Mr. Pomeroy, I think we'll just forget this whole affair before we make a real mess. As of *now*, and I don't want to hear another fucking word about it. Do I make myself clear? Nobody knows what the god damn hell is going on. Now shag your butt down to the guardhouse pronto and relieve *Hymer*."

Pomeroy couldn't help smiling as he reached around and grabbed his helmet from the hook behind Dragotis, then he hustled through the kitchen and out the same way he had come in.

Dragotis returned to the table. He looked unusually pale, a heavy sheepish glaze hovered in his eyes. Everybody noticed it except Guy Junior who had been sent outside to wait for his mother to finish. Through the arched window behind Mrs. Preston, Cole was watching Guy Junior run across the street toward the football field against his mother's last injunction: "Now you wait right there on the steps. Don't cross the street." Cole lowered his eyes.

Mrs. Preston said: "Is anything the matter, Captain Dragotis?"

"Oh no ma'am! Pomeroy's supposed to relieve cadet Hymer down in the guardhouse."

"If it's about what he said to me, I hope you don't think I was offended. Actually Pomeroy is a very kind, very decent boy. You won't put him on report or anything?"

"Oh no!"

"The poor boy seems to hold the record for demerits, doesn't he?"

"Yes he does. Accident prone." Dragotis guffawed drily. He looked for a laugh from his young men. But he didn't get it.

Cole said: "Mrs. Preston, excuse me, I can see Guy over there across the street, in the iceplant there . . ." Mrs. Preston twisted around.

"Oh my God he *is* ! The little bugger! Well we'll have to *see* about that!"

Dragotis jumped up to pull her chair out but she was already up. He felt like a fool, he hated the woman, really hated her, always had.

The three boys got hastily to their feet. As soon as Mrs. Preston went out Dragotis faced the members of the guard with a broad, sly smile. But not one of them smiled back. They looked away. "His" boys. Dragotis could only stand at the head of the table and stare. It was an utter mystery. You couldn't trust the little bastards to save your soul. You never knew. Ten of them wouldn't make one soldier worthy of dying for his country.

.

"Where's Pomeroy!" Heikes snapped.

"I don't know sir," Hymer got up from his swivel-chair in the guardhouse warily like a dog expecting to be kicked.

"Pull up your tie, Hymer! *God* you look like shit! I can smell you from here!"

"Yes sir?" Hymer blinked.

The sight of the fat pouty boy infuriated Heikes. He spotted a *Photography* magazine half hidden under a clipboard on the desk.

"You prick, Hymer! What if somebody's parents come in here and see you looking at that! You want to beat your meat, do it in the fucking shower! Pomeroy's your relief for chow! Now where the fuck is he!"

"He hasn't come down yet, sir."

"Well then I guess you'll have to miss chow. Reekie's blowing formation right now. Get up there and take reports."

"But sir, Pomeroy's supposed to do that. I'd like to eat."

"What did I just *say*, Hymer?"

Hymer bowed his head. He was about to burst into tears. Heikes figured as much; he wanted to fashion something out of Hymer, stretch him out and knead him, flatten him with a steam-roller, he wouldn't hold together, you could slide him all into a jar like a dead jellyfish.

Hymer fixed his tie and put on his white helmet and took up the clipboard. Just then Pomeroy flurried in, all winded and red in the face.

He said excitedly: "Sorry I'm late! Give me the clipboard, Hymer."

Hymer handed it over across the counter. Heikes looked at the two of them shrewdly and it happened again, he was sure this time, beside that prick Hymer you could see Pomeroy for a pretty all-right guy after all, and the wonder was why you ever chose to give him so much shit. You wanted to make it up to him, a little kindness, a chance to come up for air.

"Wait a minute, Pomeroy. Listen, I want to apologize to you. About that shit we put you through at lunch. There was never any spanish fly. It was a joke. On you. See, we weren't going to tell you. But I think you ought to know. So don't worry about it, OK? Mrs. Preston won't rape anybody she wouldn't normally rape. Heikes laughed, expecting Pomeroy to join him gratefully. But Pomeroy didn't laugh.

Hymer was all ears. He wished he knew what they were talking about. He wished he had the guts to use it somehow on Heikes.

Pomeroy sighed and began to shake his head, but he was careful to smile. It hadn't sunk in yet. He didn't quite know what to believe. It was too much, all his reckoning had hinged on the spanish fly.

Heikes stepped up his laughter and with a sudden burst of brotherly affection slapped Pomeroy on the shoulder.

Hymer glared at them from the hiding place of his bitter envy. Why should Heikes like Pomeroy? Pomeroy was a girl too.

Hymer wanted a tommy-gun, or a machete. He wanted to cut them down right there and dance on their corpses. There had to be some way. He'd have to look up "spanish fly" in the dictionary. Maybe that was it.

Pomeroy went out and ran up the walk to take reports. He ran pigeon-toed as if he was wearing a skirt.

"Well what the fuck are you staring at, Hymer! Get out! Go gain yourself another pound of shit! It's chicken fricassee today. Tell Ma to hold the spanish fly."

As Hymer tried to slink past Heikes in the doorway the Captain Exec blew into his ear.

James Ragan

To Pregnancy

a toast to Yevgeny Yevtushenko

I

You call me brother,
embrace me like the warm belly
of a wife. Sounds of kicking in your ear,
on your tongue, this word, its knife
cutting wounds into a poem
to free the blood, to fill its body
with a first-born. In wounds
you learn the freedom of birth.
You give your sons their names.

We would have grown up
in *Zima* where the pines fall barefoot
on still water. At night, shallow graves.
Everything sleeps near the lake.
The walk takes breath. In a step
we might have drowned
all our limbs to fill the lungs in our heads.

In *Cernina* we might have crawled
the length of an oak to sleep
where the moon knots an eye in the bark.
Always in the first dark of sleep,
we dream we are immortal.
But we have learned our boundaries,
to fall with an oak, headfirst,

through its own space of light, out of vision,
like a tooth, or an axe
to hear the shock, the split
second dark
of silence in our cracked skulls.

II

This is backward talk.
Poets, inheritors at birth, we grow absent,
minded by our years like rotted apples
or vacant fields seeking the graves of trees.
We are weaned to death
with losses, extinction, with breasts,
searching for a woman,
as if the world in the round of her lake
were feeding us breath. She alone
knows the ache in our lungs,
where the sea goes to drown its limbs,
what the oak dreams, fallen bird
spreading limbs to remember its flight.

Huckster at Noontime

for Ján Pallach, Czechoslovakia

1

In Humenne, in this time of drought,
when the sun and sky
caress like undulating forms,
slow to love in their callow way,

where poets
with fragile appetites and all-day dreaming
twist their spines through jive-talk parlors
like insects through a hammock,

I think of the chrysalis,
how the moth smothers in a spreading flame,
wings itself to death,
too early for the wind.

And I think of the Huckster,
black as *Tatra* rock,
his ring-boned haridelles, blinders cocked,
down at Market Square,
crates of fruit dying early in their season.

2

One day in six,
the red rose wilts in his lapel,
jewels turn to glass on his thumbs,
his wheel rims, rolling free-fall in tall air,

stick fast to the customers, ringing bells
like wards of maternity

for the Mother-load,
for the ripe milk of melons
souring like the odor of hoofs and tails.
They have no schedule,
these umbilicates,
exiled in the sleep of their conception.
They save religion for the Friday sale,
for the revolutionary, their *kamelot*,
thief with stolen horses,
huckstering fruit
like news on the anniversary of death.
True patriots are shot for less.
RIPE FRUIT FOR GOLD, headlines
on the foot boards, on the tailgate,
CREDIT WITH ROSARIES TO HOLD.
No one suspects his alchemy.

Celebrant of the extreme
unction, patron of the healing arts,
he spits into nicks of melon bellies,
grinds the sap, the worms,
the spittle of tobacco shreds.
Even corn whiskey turns to gold on his breath.

3

I think of the stench,
the rotted fruit, the cankered skin
like wizened breasts of nuns,
how the juice once flowed,
flesh splitting, wet as lips.

And now his treason,
this aching flesh of worms,
blotting the tongue, white,
transparent as onions,
the veins like delicate moth wings.

He plays the martyr, liberator,
the huckster out of season,
dropping apple-cores
where now the children lie,
picking roots of rampion
out of the cobblestones of *Svernova*.
Bodies back at Wenceslaus
rot red beneath the statue's sword.
Bruce Boehner

Vanishing Los Angeles

Kate Ellen Braverman

LOS ANGELES 1974

This is a rented city.
Born fully formed.
A monopoly board with orange trees.
The desert coughs under the weight
of trucked in tons of concrete.

Bungalows squat on square lawns
pitted by rainbirds.
Sun squeezes through venetian blinds
filling floors with shadowy knives.

There is danger,
too distant to be a factor.
Earthquakes last only seconds.
It is too much to hope for.

There is a slow rotting.
A dog or a fern is worth
more than a woman.
They have clinics
for killing babies.
There are mutants at the laundromat,
driving buses and making change.
Decipher the hum in elevators:
 It is warm here.
 You don't need a job here.
 I will grow peaches for you.
 Man, you don't even need shoes.

The pioneer stock is stopped
by the sheer blue cliffs of the sea.
They are ancient at eighteen,
veterans of nirvana and hell,
praying for destruction by comet
and worshipping the Joshua tree.
Even in sleep their faces are
strangely free of expression,
finally washed of all grief.

The future is flat,
etched in stucco
where there are no war lords,
merely slum lords.
Brown hazes, brittle winds.
But no conflagrations.
Not even the humanity of the gas chambers.

LOS ANGELES 1975

It is simple by bicycle.
The city slowed to still frames
of rutted pavement and small hills.
Streets speckled with hot dust.
Gouged tracks of skid marks
smooth on the surface
like burns. At corners
men chip the cement,
fevered, searching for dirt.
Shirtless gravediggers
with orange flags.
(For what unknown deaths,
these burials at mid day?)
Renewal by tar.

The boulevard bends.
Sunlight rests on a lawn.
A migrating thing
leaving behind geraniums.

The wind is raw.
One comes to know air
has dimension.
To believe in molecules,
invisible pressure on skin.
Skyscrappers cast icy shadows
like webbed nets
huge and sea cold.

From a hill
the city is stripped
to essentials,

elements revealed.

Houses are horizontal

stacks of boxes.

Shell Station, Rexall Drug.

I plunge for the heart.

Pacing the wind

like a sailor

my back and hair on fire.

Lawrence P. Spingarn

AREA CODE 213

1.

The static is awful.
Five million people are busy
Answering unasked questions while I,
Hovering between Malibu and Pacoima,
Trip along wires to infinity, a plucked goose.

2.

For dinner the karate teacher
And his murderous dragoons
Chop me into small grains of acquiescence;
The Colonel has rolled me in his batter
And rusticated me to Kentucky;
The suburban clans are dancing nude
Around my barbecue and pool table.
We are poisoned at the well of words.
Like scorpions, we sting our brothers.

3.

Give me instead Tim Toad and his chick, Jill;
Their commune of birdseed and love-fests
Is deeded to mute tribes in dusty sandals.
Whip me down mined roads to bankrupt ranches.
Fix me gin-enemas in the village square.
Ich bin ein sehr einfacher Mann . . .

4.

Poverty is nibbling my toes.
Having attended luncheons for worthy causes,
Serenaded the Governor and pardoned each crook,
I now annihilate the insurance adjuster,
The shoe clerk, the furred predator in her nest.
I will toast dry bagels of age in a laundromat,
Go home in a huff and bilk the driver,
Rush up perilous stairs to Grandma's garret.

5.

Nothing avails.
The unasked questions multiply,
Athletic voices dominate the ether:
CALLING ALL CARS....
Last night a gas pump was my family tree,
A motel room my star chamber,
A typist my Egeria.
And today? The ocean
Pounds my doors, gulls
Kiss me the French way,
Wires breed distance.

The static is awful....

Five million people (I think)
Will crash my funeral.

Joseph Hansen

HORSE

He waits for mail, not hopefully--dully, ready for disappointment. Coffee mug in one hand, cigarette in the other, he sits in worn Levi's on paintless back steps and stares vacantly across the canyon. It is in the hills back of Los Angeles--dry brush and rocks, red flares of geranium, clumps of big ragged eucalypts, shabby houses propped on posts. The sun is already hot on his naked arms and on his scalp where the fair hair is thin. Not that he's old. He just feels old this morning. He's sat here too many times waiting for mail not hopefully.

He tilts the mug up now to finish off the coffee. He likes it small boy style, white with cream, candy sweet with sugar. It's cold. He pulls the last smoke from the cigarette, snubs it out on the grainy gray wood between his bare feet, blue veined, white. He drops the butt among scraggly chrysanthemums yellow beside the steps. He moves to stand up, then doesn't because something stirs at the far foot of the shrubby yard where a pittosporum spreads mottled leaves shiny as new frogs.

The pittosporum grows lush, a broad, squat parasol, fed by weepers from the cesspool. It is an old and illegal cesspool and for both reasons weeps. Beyond the pittosporum the land drops sharply. Down there, in the canyon bottom, among abandoned chicken runs and jungles of morning glory and wild cucumber vine, lives Mrs. Grieve.

She comes through the pittosporum now, tall and gaunt. She wears an old cotton print dress and a brown cardigan. Sighting him, she extends a bony hand. She can't expect him to take it over a distance of fifty yards, but she keeps it held out as she climbs, leaning forward stiffly, gray head bent, watching her long feet in faded red tennis shoes. The climb is steep. He gets off the steps to meet her, take her

hand, help her the remaining distance. But when the hand is almost within his grasp, she withdraws it and halts, looking up at him, cheerless.

"Miz Miller's not here, I guess," she says.

"Teaching," he says. "Summer session. Coffee?"

"She'd want to know." Mrs. Grieve doesn't budge. "Guess you'll tell her. Path's kind of steep for me to climb twice. And I don't like to tell her on the phone. Not about a death."

The coffee churns in his stomach. "A death?" Her false teeth smile. "Not human. Made it sound like a person, didn't I? Didn't mean that." The smile goes. She never keeps them long. "But Miz Miller loved that fool horse--Sergeant. He's dead. Letter come from the folks that bought him off Kenny. He fell. There's a ravine through the place up there. Fell in it, some way, broke his neck."

Whit nods. "She'll be sorry." He digs a crumpled cigarette pack from his pocket. His hands shake. He has trouble scratching a paper match on its limp folder. "He was a real character. How old was he?"

"Not old--maybe fifteen. He could have lived a lot longer. Accident was all. Nobody riding him, Just out there by himself. I thought Miz Miller'd want to know."

"I'll tell her. Sure you won't have a cup of coffee?" But she turns and goes. She doesn't like him. She thinks he corrupted her son. Kenny. She doesn't know Kenny. And what she thinks of him doesn't matter right now, anyway. He is shaken. He tries and fails to light the cigarette again. In the kitchen, which is half a cave dug out of yellow hillside rock, he slops the coffee, pouring it. Outside the open door again, his knees give too soon and set his bony ass down hard on the step. His nerves are shot. *It isn't Kenny*, he tells himself, *it's only the horse*.

Ten years ago, a shirt tail relative of Dell's left her a little money. They wanted their own place. This one wasn't much, studs and

shiplap, windows loose in their frames, the boxed in board steps between the two levels always crunchy underfoot from the sift of grit, the roof leaky. When winter came, they slept to the tinny drip of water into pans. But they were young, the winters were short, and the price was low. They liked the stone fireplace and the way the house crouched, dowdy as a bird's nest, under tattered trees out of sight of the road.

Dell said it would be a good place for him to write. He said it would be a good place for her to have a horse. She'd grown up with horses and he blamed himself because she didn't have one. But the first house payment and the price of an old car to take him to work used up the legacy. His wages fed them dried beans and clothed them at thrift shops and army surplus stores. They had no savings because they bought too many books. The magazines that now and then printed his poems seldom paid. So a horse seemed unlikely.

But she got it. When it rained, she crouched on the roof, wet hair in her face, swearing and patching the leaks with black mastic and a putty knife. But did luck send her a new roof? No, it sent her a horse. On a morning like this, maybe six months after they moved in, Mrs. Grieve stood on these steps. She looked like an Indian, not a squaw--a sour old brave. Whit, startled at the breakfast table, half expected her to wave a scalping knife. But Dell knew her. Dell knew all the neighbors, still strangers to him. Mrs. Grieve hinged herself down onto a chair that was rickety but that he'd brightened with new yellow paint. She took a letter from her apron pocket.

It was from her son Kenny. The Army had crooked its finger at him. He was herding cattle in Wyoming. Did cowboys still exist? Was Mrs. Grieve young enough to have a draft age son? Evidently they did and she was. Kenny owned a horse. He didn't want to sell it and he didn't trust anyone he knew in Wyoming not to use it to death. Would his mother board it? The letter was in ball point on blue lined pulp paper from a ten cent Indian Head tablet. She folded it and tucked it away.

"Now Miz Miller, you know horses. If I write him back yes, will you look after, ride it?"

Miz Miller would. She was as sober as a second wedding--until Mrs. Grieve had gone. Then she cheered. Whit wasn't ready for the hug. She could be sudden and rough. Reflex made him dodge. Her chin hit his nose. It spurted blood. His chair went over backward. They sprawled together on the green painted floorboards, laughing. She kissed him hard. They pulled each other's jeans off and fucked on the floor, bloody but happy. A few days later, Kenny brought the horse. With Dell's help, he built a paddock next to the disused Grieve garage and a stall inside. He left for training camp. Whit didn't meet him. Whit was at work.

He did meet Sergeant. To Dell, the horse was a six year old bay gelding, fifteen hands high, in good condition, handsome and gentle. To Whit he was an ice age hide stuffed clumsily with gut and muscle. Dell coaxed Whit into the saddle. He rode a few stiff backed yards down the pitted asphalt strip behind Grieve's. "You're a born rider," she called. "You sit him beautifully." He said, "It's my fused vertebrae," He didn't know what the horse was thinking. A hoof slipped an inch on a scatter of gravel. It would be far to fall. He got down.

On a day when Dell was somewhere with the car, Whit answered the phone. "Your wife's horse is out here on Barrymore Drive. He's gonna get hit." Whit didn't know what to do but he went to do it--down the dirt path, down the narrow paved trail that was cold under big Japanese pines. Barrymore Drive was a high shelf of sun white cement lofted to fit the bends and thrusts of the hills. Sergeant stood there gazing out across the San Fernando Valley that lay under smog brown as an Army blanket. He looked lost, but he would look lost anywhere. Whit let startled cars crawl past, then took the bridle and led the horse home.

The paddock gate hung open. Its latch was broken. He didn't try to fix it. He knew better. When they had first got the house, he'd started sawing boards for book shelves. Dell had begun to yell at him. He had

yelled back. She threw a scrap of wood at his head. He stamped off. When he got home again, she was building the shelves and happy. He picked up a hammer to help. "No," she said, "you'll hurt your hands." There was no answer for that--he always did. "Go write," she said. Later, the sink trap had clogged. She had taken the wrench away from him, damn near hit him with it. Anyway, he'd electrocute himself. So he tied the paddock gate shut with clothesline. Dell would fix it.

He felt protective and sad about Sergeant after that day. He still wouldn't ride him. The beast was clumsy as hell--he would kill them both. But he sometimes stood at the foot of the yard and talked to him, Sergeant rumbling answers through his big sinuses from the paddock below. The sound filled Whit with tenderness and despair, as for a huge idiot child. Unless you knew the right place to stand, brush and trees made it hard to see the paddock. Sandy Fine when he came around one day thought Whit was crazy talking loud but alone down by the pittosporum.

"I'm conversing with Dell's horse."

"Ah." Solemn nod. "That, of course, is not crazy."

Whit grins for a second, remembering. But the grin turns bleak. *Just out there by himself.* He pokes his dark, soft muzzle at a clump of grass that shows a little green. The earth breaks away under his hoofs. The bare brown hills tilt upward. He snorts and his eyes roll white. He treads dry air, comes down. A foreleg snaps. He screams and pitches forward on a shoulder, somersaults to a crackle of vertebra and, with a thick drum sound, lands on his side in the dry creek bed. A rear leg kicks once, twice. He lies still. The dust of his falling settles on his open eyes.

Whit stands quickly and carries the coffee mug indoors where it is dim and still cool so that his sunwarm skin pebbles and he shivers slightly. His ten dollar drugstore wristwatch is upstairs somewhere but he knows it's still too early to hike down the trail to the mailbox. He has to move, though. Away from Sergeant's death. He can try to write--his morning chore. He abandons the mug and starts upstairs.

But he comes back down. He will wash the dishes--his afternoon chore.

Those from last night are on the drainboard, those from breakfast still on the yellow table. He gathers them, noisily, dropping a fork. The rush of hot water into the chipped sink kicks up soap powder. He sneezes. His hands are wet. He wipes his nose on his forearm. And remembers the bad cold he got the time he met Kenny in the rain. And that reminds him of Sergeant's death, which he has forgotten for ten seconds. And he tells himself it could have been worse. Kenny goes there sometimes. Kenny might have been riding him. Kenny might have been crushed, broken, killed. As Dell might have been when Sergeant was here. He shoves a dishmop into a glass and turns it and sets the glass aside.

That was a good time for her and not for him. The job he had was numbing. He needed to make love in the afternoon when he got home from work. They didn't drink in those days, couldn't afford it. They could afford to fuck. But that stopped when Sergeant came. Dell rode. These hills had wide and empty spaces then, bulldozed and built on now. He used to come into the darkening house and worry that she'd been thrown and was lying out there somewhere hurt or dead. He would go down and mope around Grieve's in the dying daylight. Homecoming cars ground gears up the steep little trails. Children laughed, dogs barked, screen doors slapped and women called their young to supper.

His worry gave way to loneliness. He climbed the paddock fence and sat hunched forward, elbows on knees, hands dangling, staring into the gathering dusk. Crickets rasped in the weeds. Up the canyon slopes, owls screamed, staking out hunting grounds in the brush. Here and there windows began to glow yellow. And his loneliness gave way to self pity. Which changed to anger when she came, swaying to the slow clop of Sergeant's hoofs, the easy creak of leather, up the dark lane out of the looming shadows of the trees. Hell, she

wasn't hurt. She was happy. Her contentment was cast iron. Sulk, grumble, shout--he couldn't dent it.

Where that saddle had been all afternoon was the only place he wanted to be. He couldn't hate the horse. But he couldn't like the saddle. Maybe she knew that. She wouldn't let him lift it down off Sergeant for her. It weighed 40 pounds but, thanks, she'd handle it herself. *Remember your sacroiliac.* She always gave the saddle an affectionate slap when it was balanced on its sawhorse in the dark garage. The first times, she walked ahead of him up the path in the cutbank. Later he made sure to lead, because watching her neat little butt in the worn dungarees gave him a hard on. And there couldn't be sex now. There had to be supper if he was going to write.

And he *was* going to write. He was ready to give up. She wasn't ready to let him. She wasn't even ready to listen to him argue about it. Now, ten years later, hands in soapy water, he feels his face grow hot, remembering how he stood crying that first week Sergeant came, standing without his pants, cock drooping below his T shirt, begging her. And how she'd given in. It had been no good, no good at all. She just lay there. She'd never done that before. He never wanted it to happen again. It scared the hell out of him. No--he was going to write.

Every night, by the bandaged light of a junkshop gooseneck lamp, he poked away at his gummy old portable, sorting words and looking up to see his thin pretty child face in the dark window of the coffin-width porch of pine boards where he had, where he has, his desk. And when he got up, back stiff, brain stunned, at midnight, she was asleep, wearing one of his ragged sweatshirts, her boy face half buried in the pillow, lamp still on, copies of *The Nation* and *The New Republic* strewn on the ravelled blanket. Writing against the odds of not knowing how had left him sexed up. But he couldn't make himself wake her. He'd wake early. They could make it in the morning. But he didn't wake early and she wouldn't wake him, sorry for how hard he was working, moved by how he slept like a chopped tree. And he didn't know how to tell her. Not after that bad, bad suppertime fuck.

He could put together the words but he couldn't speak them. He took to jacking off after writing, spilling his urgency down the rusty little bathroom basin. *I love you*, he sometimes said, and kissed his own mouth in the soap specked mirror--while out in the sage smelling darkness of the canyon bottom, Sergeant stood in shaggy sleep, a lucky gelding.

Miz Miller loved that fool horse.

Ronald Koertge

Finals

Every now and then a lady lingers,
we do a little soft shoe and she asks
what I really thought of her poems.

I reply that she still uses *ne'er* and
thou too much. She writes that down.
What about originality? I cite "The

Awful Alaskan Pipeline," saying that it
was certainly original to work the words
spindrift and *maidenhead* into that one,
too. She writes that down, does not leave.
Our eyes meet. I say,

"So, why don't we go back to my place."
"Uh, oh, I thought we might go out some
time. Do you like Italian food?"

I can see it now, under the plastic grapes
talking about Life and pepperoni.

"If you just wanted to go out, why 'Ode
To Cunnilingus' and 'I Live Alone'?"

"Well, I never thought for a minute that
you might think that I wanted. . . ."

"Alright, so I came on a little strong.
I'm sorry. Let's just go down to my office

and I'll take a Pap smear."

Well, that's that of course and off she
goes down the hall without saying another
word, not even
farewell.

Sinner

for JH

Everything offends her: eyes and mouth, tongue
and fingers, knees and feet. She would like to pluck
them out but fears damnation. Still, could she burn
more?

She wants to curse God and die but sleeps instead.
In her dreams a puny, sandaled Jesus fades to
someone in black, boa-cold, highly roweled.
Who authors such heat?

She turns to King James' version. The light in her
room is as bright as Saul's epiphany. She leans
over the fine print, puzzling between the shadows
her Sinai breasts make as she pants above Solomon's
songs, reading between the lines.

For All I Know

a quarterback makes change.

I watch the leaders of cheers
and hope for high winds and
flaws in scarlet tights.

When the boys down at Duffy's
say, "Didja see that?" I say,
"Didja see those?"

They leave me alone down at
Duffy's, eye to eye with
the Magnavox,

sweaty palmed, waiting for
the two minute warning,

the gun in my hand.

Do You Have Trouble Maintaining
Lasting Relationships? Explain.

I like to walk into a new bar with
a new girl and a new *Form*. I order,
fold the paper in half and put it
next to the gin. It lies face up
with the headline showing: DISTAFFERS
FACE SEVERE TEST IN TONIGHT'S FEATURE.

After the candles and the spit, after
the KY and the tears, after the lies,
comparisons and plans which duplicate
themselves like hares

I like to go into the other room,
open the paper carefully and look
down at the first race which is the
same every day and wonderfully unique.

WAITING
ROOM

I have taken the advice of a magazine
there that suggested something
practical

in times of stress.

Touch-up painting around the house
headed up their list of
things to do

and

Oh you should see the trees and
grass all eggshell white
without a smudge
or a handprint

anywhere.

Tucson Diary: The Dead Horse

He was foaled in New Zealand, so it cost a bundle just to get him over here. But the owner and his wife had a nice time standing around in the walking ring with the Santa Anita gentry. He would rub the horse's nose and whisper strategy, and if it was cold she would take off her fur coat and throw it over his neck.

That was in the winter of 1972 and yesterday, limping through the kind of coincidence I can live without, there he was in a 1000 dollar claiming race at Rillato Race Track, the place bad jockeys go when they die.

I cannot imagine what he thought of dying here in this desert surrounded by a wilderness. I am sure he thought nothing at all. I did all the thinking and the boozing and the maudline theorizing and finally, like a passenger on a Lionel train, I arrived at the same conclusion: Things Do Not Always Work Out Well, Even For The Beloved.

A friend of mine who loves Nature has pointed out how organic it all was, how the horse had become food for the dog which would fertilize the earth and grow grass to feed the horse.

So there are 1000 chihuahuas too nervous to eat but composed enough to take a crap on the sidewalk so I can step in it on my way back from the liquor store with a *Racing Form*.

Somehow that fails to comfort me.

Leda

She'd balled every drummer in every group
from Gravy Baboon to The Electric
Tampon

and Ringo's second cousin twice removed
had beat her up in the Holiday Inn
just outside Bakersfield

and she had the pictures to
prove it.

For years she'd been White Rabbit but
lately it had been Leda, the only thing
she remembered from Miss Crabass'
English class

and now this big dude had her down and
there were her legs up under his hot wings
and he wasn't making a sound but Christ
the feathers in her throat and eyes

and *Oh Miss Crabass if you could see me now.*

D. E. Steward

CHARLY

His stomach like a sack of clams against me and when Schnell and Martine were here and he tilted back the straight chair he was sitting in at the far end of the table in the shadow he had a double chin. Tonight I should not have stayed. I don't like the way he was today. That thing about the key, that was strange. He hasn't been out of this apartment, hasn't done anything for weeks now. I don't know what he wants. And this Jenny, Jenny, Jenny stuff in lieu of talking seriously or even looking directly at me. He hides in corners in the shadows and goes in other rooms. He looks away. I can't sleep maybe I should get up and go home. Should be at the lab before the clinic starts at nine o'clock to show Jasper the results from today because he'll know for sure what the fall-off past eighty degrees means. If I'm right about what I think it is it's wonderful. But I want someone else to say it to be sure then I'll go back and run the column a few more times again and if I get the enzyme activity falling off around eighty again then it really means that I've got exactly what I'm looking for. The way the lights from the cars going by on Ocean Boulevard hit obliquely on the windowshades, old ripped paper windowshades, green on the outside paint flecked off the fabric at the stress points and where there have been folds wound around a coil spring softwood roller that people used to rewind with the prongs of a fork holding the cheap brass spindle, but ours at home were cream colored thin treated cotton with the green outside a nice dark shutter paint green. California has no greens like that, everything reseda here or aqua or selfconsciously some other sort of green like the greens in the lab of the chalk boards and the bright green plastic of the distilled water faucets, and Jasper's car is green. Tomorrow morning when I get there maybe he'll be in the parking lot when I pull in. And the keychain that Schnell's lab tech has when she's opening up cabinets has a round

green plastic fob, lenslike scratched plastic advertising symbol of some kind green. Light that comes in through the windowshades here between the dark blue curtains that are so dusty that on the folds they look thicker than they are, everything comes in refracted through the window panes, blownup images of the branches of the big high bush outside twelve or fifteen feet between the walk along the side of the house and the parking lot out there, particular shape even of its leaves projected on the shade now swinging into outline focus and then blur again as the car throwing its headlights onto the window pulls out in front of the hotel on the other side of Ocean Boulevard. And the noise. Tires and the weight of the trucks that go by, more buses than trucks, until the city buses stop running they make a lot of noise and when the breeze is right I can even smell them going by. Somebody opens the door out to the hall from one of the apartments on the other side, now one set of footsteps going down the stairs. Better sleeping in the front room on the couch where you can't hear anything at night except the ocean and only now and then something especially loud out on the street. Foot itches on the top I like to touch the bones in my feet the way my feet are firm and high makes it satisfying to touch them they feel so nice and dry. Out here at the beach my nose is always dry so when I move my tongue along my lips they are dry and salty besides the taste of Charly or what I've had to eat or drink. He is right, it's clean out here, it's clean and right. I can see why he never wants to go into the city any more. If I could get into the ocean every day living here wouldn't seem so bad, the drive would be OK, just the idea of being able to come back here and go into the ocean after working in the smog and heat downtown in the lab. It would be so perfect if the lab were somewhere out here closer to the beach. Somebody coming back up the stairs. Can only hear people on the stairs if they're making noise deliberately otherwise I have to listen very hard. Even with the squalor this part of the beach is perfect, so peaceful compared to Hollywood and West LA but still unless we get a better lock somebody's going to bust in here and clean this apartment out like they did downstairs when those people were away and some surfers took it over and broke up all the

furniture. I wish I could sleep. When I can't there are always trains of things that keep me alert, the shadows through the windowshade, somebody walking on the stairs, and then something else concrete to replace the abstracts in my head on which I could go off to sleep. Finally some train of thought will drop away without another serial physical awareness to replace it and carry my consciousness along and then there will come that beautiful physicality of knowing that now, yes, this time I'm going off to sleep. Everything waits for sleep or comes from sleep because the only feeling comparable is when I wake up so fresh and ready that I can't believe it is me lying there, that it is my body and my legs so full of awareness and life. I want to wake up like that the morning of the day I die. Coming into alertness that way is as good as the very best of anything, as good as June morning early spider webs and drops of dew, sweetcorn ripe enough to begin picking and the sun just coming up clean in blue golden air without the red and yellow bands of aerosol pollution sunrises that we have now even there at home where now the only perfectly clear mornings are the mornings after heavy winds. Not change of weather mornings like that but ideal mornings, the perfect stable mornings, June mornings when there was another wonderfully endless day ahead waiting for the sun and when it was still cool enough to lift goose bumps on my upper arms slight shiver passing until I got my circulation going from having just come fast from bed and down the stairs and out the door clean and ready for the day without even having to throw water on my face or brush my teeth the clean good young smells of me then going outside to that blinding morning light with the long shadows blocking out across the lawn into the silver dew, green dew, gray dew still in the shadows before the sun ideal mornings like that is what it is like to wake up perfectly. Some feeling then of being there, being, every eventuality accounted for, to have it all inside me and to have done exactly what I set out to do in some slice of time that is recollectable, like running an experiment that fits the week the way I plan it to and I go into the cold room and there the column stands and I take my readings to the computer with the count I have from the last batch of harvested cells and then it all comes out

in numbers and the curve is there close to what I was hoping for. Those beautiful cells, dew on a garden spider's web June sun clear goose bumps just enough to make me know it was going to be warm but not too hot as soon as the sun got higher because I would wake up just in time feeling so good that I knew it would be complete there in the sun all day feeling things like how good it felt to sleep so well and watching other people sure of what they are like the woman and her little family this morning on the sidewalk outside my apartment building after Schnell dropped me off when I was walking to the door tired from the driving the long way across the desert Gila Bend and Blythe and Banning Riverside night talking in the car and there this morning she with her baby and the placid husband who looked as though he existed for nothing else except to be what she needed him to be giving her the baby almost as a toy and the expensive clothes she wore so well light golden tweed spring wool suit that looked as though she could have gone to Paris for it and her perfect shoes, the patina, the slick of her there this morning walking along behind that white-tired expensive baby carriage with the baby just able to sit up all dressed in shades of white looking proud and sure like his parents. Her hair had just been done and long legs and the way she set her face with not a bit of smugness even though it looked as though this morning might well have been the first time they had been out with the baby together with it able to hold its head up in the carriage all alone, all of them wearing it perfectly, having what they all wanted. That same feeling I like to have in myself but I didn't have it then because of sitting up all night in that fast running car swimming through his soft superlatives and complicated rationality. What I needed was to get back here to Charly and the beach. Baltimore orioles used to sing and build their pouchy nests of horsehair and gray grass those June days when I woke up with the sun and went out to feel the sense come over me that everything was there for me that day. His stomach is like a plastic bag of clay against me now. Hedged in with Schnell there in his car last night with him talking from the time we left the parking lot outside the conference building in Tucson until he dropped me off at home, all the hedging and the

pushing and the tightness of that lab when I'm working always somebody coming and nosing around or push me up against a wall, crowd, close, as close as they can without laying themselves out the way they could only possibly do if you told them to go ahead, told them that you wanted them to. The surfer this afternoon who cut me close when I was floating on my back and then on his way out again paddling by grinning. This car is stopped. The patterns on the shades have stayed for at least five seconds now. Now it's moving, the lights swing fast and blowup leaf images out of focus gone and I can hear the car accelerating away out there on Ocean Boulevard. The woman with the baby and the clerky husband is not going to let anything touch her now until somebody is very sick or somebody dies. Even before those shoes of hers have scuffs on them she will go and get herself another pair. Whatever she wants or thinks she wants she will get because she is so sure. It is as though I was there walking down the sidewalk tired and weighted over to the side by my suitcase and the briefcase underneath my arm approaching them and passing stopping looking back at them and to her, if she even noticed me, the we was I, to her it was only she, I, the baby and the husband and the suit and shoes and carriage and the hair and good faces on the three of them to her, in her mind was what she was. She said, I. Just as much as I say I. Maybe even more emphatically. But when I go to Montevideo for next year's meeting the hotel will have red brick walks and pampas grass next to the swimming pool. Tucson silver turquoise necklace from the trading post out near the mission where we went the second day to stand there in the sun among the pepper trees and melon vines to see the way the stones fitted up the church facade, modest plateresque that never grew beyond the first concerted act of raising stones and spanning them with canyon oak beams and square cut roof, Papago labor the brochure said, and some other Indians from Sonora who knew about placing stone, something the Papagos there had never done before. And it was hot reading the white marble and bronze, Arizona civic organizations, church organizations, putting it on the southern Arizona tourist tours so that the only thing that seemed to be the way it had been were the melon

vines and the yellow stone of the church there along the southern side where it ran into the machine smooth recent adobe wall that led along to where there at the far end of the parking lot the trading post, no more a trading post than a shopping center gift shop, showed its good jewelry from all over Arizona and New Mexico all laid out on cheap blue velvet cardboard-backed display by tribes. The Zuni necklaces are the ones I went to first and liked even though Schnell who knows even less about Indian jewelry than he does about how to convince me that he does had to disagree and argue with the woman there, her armpits sweated out into the fine black cotton of her dress, air conditioning broken down she said but she must look like that every day anyway standing up to customers. Schnell not letting go, saying he was so sure that the one I liked most was really Navajo not Zuni so much that I began to doubt if I did like it or if I just wanted it because of what he insisted about it not being Zuni as it was marked. Ridiculing the natural friendliness of the woman and he upset her so that she put her hand up into the thick black goodness of her beautiful Mexican hair again and again. She had no accent and looked to be someone getting close to fifty who had already stood and given in to more than a few other people disagreeing with anything she says about where the jewelry she is selling is coming from. Schnell so offensive after having gained her confidence and interest, because she was attractive and could see immediately that Schnell and I were not really together, knowing that if I bought that I would pay, which I did when I got so angry at the way he harangued her about the Zuni necklace that I was deciding that I wanted really being Navajo after having softened her up with his eager questions and his way of looking at her just below her chin and then lifting his eyes to smile intensely the way he does with everybody so that when he started being vicious about how he thought the necklace was not really Zuni she was so upset at his turn of face that she looked as though she wanted to leave the counter and go off somewhere in the back to compose herself but instead stood there and took it from him and lifted her hand repeatedly to her hair so that she could have been watching somebody dismembering somebody else. She was so gentle

and so nice. I told Schnell to shut up and took out the fifty dollar bill and bought the necklace so fast that I didn't even count the change and we walked out back into the sun and dusty pepper trees, the cursive melon vines and their runners and climbers looking grotesque and huge there inside the mission garden behind it all and my head swam a bit because by that time I was hungry and so sick of him that I could have left then and there and gotten another ride back into Tucson, pepper trees that give no shade at all and sticky dust but there was the necklace and I took it out of my bag in its tissue paper and waved it in his face and said that it was exactly what I wanted. Dry. At home in August weeds gone to seed and the clover gone from the lawn, grass awns down along the roads but in June the clover dark, dark green, the spinach and the lettuce not yet gone bitter from the sun and the orioles still singing near their swinging nests with time, the whole of the summer still ahead, not yet having to carry food to the nest their eggs just being laid quiet time over the lawns in June mornings just woke up and downstairs, outside fresh and clean like the niceness of the feeling of the sense of dropping off to sleep. Quiet. Just the cars going by now and then on Ocean Boulevard and the lightest hint of the sound of surf coming from the other side, impossible to hear it well enough to sit back and listen thinking, following the full folding of a wave. Out there in the other room when they are running high you can even hear the crackling folding over before the full depth breaking thud. Lying here I only think I hear a rumbling now and then. Lying here I wish that I had gone home tonight to sleep. His stomach and his shoulder forced in against my side is like a suffocating pillow jammed in against my soul. Charly. Charly, Charly, sometimes I think that you are never going to get out of here, that you are never going to do anything at all.

Wanda Coleman

COLLAGE: SUMMER'S YOUNG BLACK GIRL

summers
summers
summers
afternoon's ripe peaches
lemon loneliness longing for school
beneath green fig trees and silver man-made craft
winging westward
sunday rides with mom and pop in new green oldsmobile super 88
picking north south east west
church sometimes
me in yellow or pink singing solo
piano recitals and cousin's birthday parties
mama talking about beginning of flesh-smell
deodorant pads and sanitary napkins
picnics in sandy parks
out of town where no white people go
beaches, but not allowed to swim cause of nappy hair
days laying up in bed consuming hungry adventures/romance
in volumes/tomes/lore/novels
my world shakespeare
 bertrand russell
 ray bradbury
 arthur macon
7 am television shorts of hitler and the a bomb
gabbing on the phone to last semester's classmate
i learned how to swear without flinching inside
barefoot, tight jeans
smacking bubble gum
green soda & cheetos

life savers and rock n roll
eyes of men and boys say, "you're a woman"
watching scales climb upward
pony tail & chinese bangs
roller skates
cooking supper cause mom's too tired
me & baby brother older but sitters come and go
hundreds of pale white moths on hot summer stucco wall
in the kitchen chasing mice with the broom
morning's red sun through oil cloth blinds
man next door peeking in my bedroom window
drive-in movies with ham sandwiches, barbeque potato chips
and hot cocoa
oxford shoes, bobby socks
suppressed itches
vitamin C tablets
cod liver oil
summers
summers
summers

Gerald Locklin

the love song of joe basho

spring

unhandled? hardly.
nor intacta . . . but technic-
ally i suppose so.

summer

for about a week
she couldn't get enough of
it: par for the course.

autumn

season of mists and
mellow fruitfulness - - she gets
knocked up and married.

winter

look at the little
bitch, how primly propped, reading
jacqueline susann.

memorial day

1.

i used to go to the parades. the bands
were the best thing. hard to see, though;
the whole city was there. we used to watch
from the motor vehicle building, my aunt's office.

when quizzed what the day was all
about, i saw rows of white graves, poppies.
i didn't associate my father, who came back
with diabetes and started to die.

i didn't associate myself, who wouldn't want
to go, wouldn't (knock on wood) have to.
i didn't associate my friend who went a little
crazy and slit his wrists at fort ord.

after the parades, ennui. what afternoon
could follow fifes and bagpipes? certainly not
ham and potato salad at the three- story house.
not playing beachhead by yourself in the backyard.

2.

this year no parades. no, and i forget
to call my mother, my aunts. dizzy,
trembling, i rise, try an egg, puke viciously.
rise again, keep down a cracker, a little wine.

where are the parades? who wants to play
touch football with me? miniature golf?

who'll squeeze fresh fruit for the frosty lemonade?
can't somebody come out and play with me?

the coast is overcast.
the sun cracks through and so do you.
hello stops my ears; goodbye my eyes.
even in an iron lung i'd suffocate.

3.

bobbie, why did you go bye-bye
to san felipe for the weekend? the blue water?
the booze, the grass? to get
laid? or just give in a little?

i got laid. three girls, count my wife.
once so drunk i couldn't have got it up
except i thought of you how you were
maybe getting laid, you bitch why did you go?

i hear the cars can hardly make it back.
will you be back tomorrow and . . .
you don't realize i don't want to fuck around.
baby, delirious men don't bullshit.

4.

(a greeting card)

the poppies grow within my eyes,
my penis paints the grave white skies,
the childish sea affects ennui,
i lap its cunt on bended knee . . .

before i go completely out of my tree,

get your sweet ass in gear and back to me.

woden's day

it's nice tonight. ten o'clock and i just
got through reading *the sun also rises*.
that bill sure was a funny guy.
that brett was sure a bitch.

bobbie's in the other room again.
she's tired
but i just whipped up a frozen mai-tai.
magic comes in cans these days.

shazaam!
instant poetry is next,
a frosty satire for tonight
a labyrinthine elegy tomorrow

bobbie's cat is dripping blood again,
her ovaries i guess.
naturally i'm to blame because i don't like cats.
those cats have cost me a lot of pussy.

i will remember this day mostly for
the italian sausage sandwich
which i ate on the beach at sunset.
i guess that might not blow old woden's mind.

maureen, why don't i go back to you?
you'd feed me better
and you have a nice body too.
our sex life was always satisfactory.

whereas bobbie never washes a goddam dish.
oh well, all comparisons are invidious.

(you know as often as i've looked up that word,
i still don't remember what it means exactly?)

it drove me to drink living with you.
i think it was your battles with the kids,
no, i know better than that.
it was just me and marriage.
i like to go out with you now
and to go to bed with you,
because you're not the wife anymore,
you're the other woman.

that's immature, but why fight it?
why should i spend today
growing up
and tomorrow i'm dead?

woden would like me to leave bobbie pouting
about her cats, and go to see you,
but i'm really obsessed with her,
and it might blow everything if i slipped out.

well this is all superfluous
since my love for you has always
evidenced itself in my fidelity.
i'm sorry; i may be back.

like father, like son

i was in the living room with bruce lindsay's kid,
when he spoke his first word.
we were alone, so no one believes me,
but i distinctly heard the kid say, "gin-and-tonic."

Theodore Labrenz

A PORTRAIT OF ANNABELLA

"In the long run, however, it is only the author's private satisfaction that counts." — Vladimir Nabokov

She stands, like a Pinkie grown into young womanhood, full-length against a romantic Southern sky in the lush garden of her father's antebellum plantation on the Ashley River near Charleston, South Carolina. In the fashion of the day her dark hair is parted in the middle and drawn modestly back into a knot which rests at the base of her girlish neck. The bellskirt, also alamode and carefully chosen for this indelible occasion, is of white lace, a fabric opulent but innocent, traded no doubt from one of the Low Countries for some of the plantation cotton. Its graceful fuchsia bell cunningly creates the illusion that its wearer is floating, an illusion which the wearer ratifies with the look on her open young face. (The look is mainly the fancy of the artist, who would have known that Annabella was shortly to be married; he might have been more candid had she allowed him to read one of the entries in the diary she holds in her right hand: "I am to be married on the 26th to Ransom Almond. Would rather be with L.") But the impression that has been preserved for us (as the artist surely realized the family wanted it to be) is of a refined, intelligent, and sensitive girl, whose gaze into the future has in it such sweet and naive expectation as to break one's heart. The year is 1860 (as it will always be) and Annabella (as *she* will always be) is eighteen.

The painting is almost certainly the work of the well-known American artist Thomas Sully (1783–1872), who was reared in Charleston and who was a frequent visitor to the city in his later years. Of Sully, the *Dictionary of American Biography* has this to say: "Sometimes called 'the Sir Thomas Lawrence of America,' he was undoubtedly influenced by the work of the older artist, especially in

his delineation of women and of children, who are the embodiment of innocence and happiness, depicted with grace and charm."

It is true that the portrait, which the artist entitled "Girl with the Diary: Annabella Reve," and which fits so well the *DAB's* description of Sully's work, is not listed in "Account of Pictures," that methodical register Sully kept throughout his life of the dates on which a painting was begun and completed, its size, the sitter's name, and the price received. But this fact can be accounted for by an incident mentioned in a letter (now unfortunately lost) which Annabella's mother, Mrs. Henry Reve, wrote to her older daughter Caroline (Mrs. Dudley Beaufort) then living in New Orleans:

Mr. S. did Annabella so sweetly. But as he was finishing, Papa had to tell him that we did not have the ready cash to pay for the picture. Papa offered one of the field hands in trade, but that was not satisfactory, and Mr. S. went off in something of a huff. And so I am left loving the picture so much, and at the same time feeling so guilty each time I look at it.

(In this instance as well as in those that follow, I quote from notecards copied from the original documents.)

What Henry Reve's lack of ready cash lost in addition to the portrait's place in Sully's "Account of Pictures" was the artist's "TS" monogram on the canvas. The two omissions are doubly unfortunate, because if in the portrait Sully did not quite see beyond his subject's conventional beauty into her extraordinary soul, his "Girl with the Diary: Annabella Reve" would still be ranked, were it legitimized by either his register or his monogram, with his best work.

Despite the picture's inherent value, I keep it in my office here at the University. It hangs on the wall to the left of my desk, where Annabella in her innocent splendor lifts the eye from a bookcase filled with the drab tomes of my profession. Over the years many students have remarked on the portrait. Some compliment Annabella on her fresh beauty. ("What a pretty girl!" a certain bold female type will say, and invariably go on to ask, "Is she your mother?" unaware of the

alarming—but also amusing—ignorance her question reveals about so many things, but especially of the histories of costume and American painting.) Another type, the graduate student (books on lap, sitting attentively up on the edge of the chair, hoping to look earnest and scholarly—how well I remember that pose from my own graduate school days), usually begins, "Doctor, isn't she one of the figures you teach in your seminar on the 'The Feminine Literary Imagination'?" (She isn't, though if there were any justice she would be.) I tell them that the woman is an ancestor of a former friend of mine, which isn't far from the truth.

Actually, Annabella Almond (nee Reve as I noted; her forebears were among that large group of French Huguenots who helped to found Charleston late in the seventeenth century)—Annabella was the great-grandmother of a former colleague, Dr. Alfred Easel, who had a professional as well as a family interest in her. As a boy growing up in Charleston, Easel had heard an occasional reference (always whispered, often spoken behind a hand or a fan) to his great-grandmother, whose portrait had been hung discreetly out of sight in the sewing room. But it was not until he had finished his doctorate and was teaching at a small college in the Southeast that he really got interested in her. One afternoon in the summer of 1932, while he was nosing around in an old steamer trunk in the attic of his mother's house for postage stamps (he was at that time an avid philatelist), he came across a battered leatherbound diary on which had been stamped in gold leaf, by then almost entirely fallen away, the letters "A.R." He knew he had seen the diary before, and he was puzzling over when and where, when it struck him: the book he had in his hand was the diary Annabella was holding in her portrait. Here in his possession was the private life of his mysterious great-grandmother. Impetuously forcing the tiny, ornamented clasp lock, he opened the book and began reading. The handwriting was bold, rounded, and in an ink that was brown and faded with age. (The woman who had set the words down had been dead for over 67 years.) He read through the rest of the afternoon until the light had grown so dim that he

could no longer see by it. By that time he had got through less than half of the diary, but he was convinced that he was in the presence of an extraordinary woman. At dinner that evening he startled his mother by showing her the book and announcing that he was giving up all his hobbies, including stamp-collecting, in order to devote himself to the task of gathering material for a scholarly edition of the diary of Annabella Almond, erstwhile black sheep of the clan.

His mother could only consent. Mrs. Lawton Easel (nee Almond; her father Ransom II, born in December of 1861, was Annabella's only child) had always spoiled her son, but she had been especially indulgent of him since an incident which had occurred on his tenth birthday. Because it was raining and little Alfred could not go outside, she had allowed herself to be whined into letting him play with his great-grandfather Almond's cavalry sword, which hung above the fireplace in the living room. Alfred had drawn the heavy instrument from its scabbard, wielded it ferociously, and, becoming too sanguinary, lost control of the would-be toy and poked out his right eye.

Now, though she may have had a momentary qualm, his mother gave in to what she must have assumed was a harmless whim. Mrs. Easel, though one generation closer to Annabella than her son, knew less about her than Alfred, because she knew nothing about the diary. She did, however, have two shoe boxes full of family correspondence she had inherited (but had never bothered to read). These she gave to him. He found a world in those shoe boxes, and his "whim" turned into a lifelong passion.

With the contents of the shoe boxes furnishing leads, Easel began tracking down other collections of letters and papers that might reveal information about Annabella, as well as about her husband Ransom Almond and their respective families. From these sources, some of which it took him years to locate and get permission to read and copy out by hand (this in the days before the marvels of Xerography), he had put together the following story:

Annabella Almond was the black sheep of the family because of her scandalous death at the age of twenty-three. She had by then (the year was 1865) been married to Ransom Almond for nearly five years. Almond, a dashing and aristocratic planter, had until his wife's death made Charleston society forget his notorious feats of womanizing through his exploits during the war. In April of 1961 he had answered the call from Jefferson Davis for 20,000 volunteers and had been commissioned a lieutenant in the Confederate Army. Sent to Richmond, he fought as a cavalry officer at both battles of Bull Run (First and Second Manassas as he and the rest of the Confederates called them) and during the second engagement was wounded in the knee. Though his injury made it impossible for him to walk well enough to perform all his day-to-day duties, he could still ride, and the fight had not gone out of him. In 1863, following the example of John S. Mosby, he formed a guerrilla detachment. Though Almond lacked Mosby's intelligence and imagination, he did have two other qualities of the great Ranger: luck and fearlessness. His boldest stroke was the capture behind the Northern lines of a train carrying a dozen prostitutes from Washington, D.C. to Grant's officer corps. Disguising the women in captured Northern uniforms (similar to the ones he and his cohorts were wearing), Almond smuggled them through the Yankee lines and "surrendered" them to a surprised Confederate line company as his gift to the Southern infantrymen.

Almond had given the whores to the men rather than to his brother officers because he despised prostitutes and had a shrewd understanding of the baser instincts of the Southern yeomanry. (Indeed, though I have searched diligently for information on the fate of those women, I have been unable to find a word. They apparently were swept into oblivion by the tide of lust which rolled over them in those rifle pits.)

Almond's own preference ran to slave girls. He had, in fact, shortly after his marriage to Annabella fought a duel with a cousin over which of them would receive the favors of a household servant owned by their grandfather, Acre Almond. The duel took place in a

cypress grove on the banks of Fox Creek, an obscure tributary of the Ashley River that marked the boundary of the plantation. There the cousin, twice unfortunate in that he had also been an unsuccessful suitor for Annabella's hand, was killed in an exchange of pre-dawn pistol shots.

Ransom then went off to war and a glory of sorts (the capture of the whores was his only noteworthy deed in nearly four years of campaigning, but it made him famous). With the Confederacy collapsing around him, he disbanded his command and returned home ten days before Annabella was found on the morning of April 12, 1865, lying dead on the floor of the cookhouse. The "Deringer Pistol" that had been used to fire the bullet into her heart was in her hand. (This pistol, along with the Sully portrait and the cavalry sword, Easel had had his mother specify by name in her will so that there could be no question about their coming to him.) The official report on the shooting ruled suicide: it was held that Annabella had killed herself out of despondency over the surrender of General Lee at Appomattox Courthouse only three days earlier. Correspondence dug up by Easel revealed, however, that the family had insisted on this ruling from a coroner who owed his office to their patronage. What the family saw as the real reason for the suicide was spelled out by Annabella's outspoken older sister Caroline. In a letter to her father, then serving with General Joseph E. Johnston, she had denounced Ransom's return to his plantation before Lee's surrender and complained that, "Ransom has not only prematurely deserted his post, but he has taken up where he left off with the nigger girls, a thing I warned you about when you and Mama insisted on pushing Annie into that marriage."

Easel, however, did not believe that Annabella had killed herself out of unhappiness over Ransom's unfaithfulness. He did not, in fact, believe that she had committed suicide at all. The official record stated, and the family had conceded, that Annabella had killed herself with her husband's "Deringer Pistol," the theory being that she had secretly taken it from Almond's bureau drawer, where he claimed to

have left it. But using a lead found in the shoe boxes of correspondence his mother had given him, Easel had traced a letter of Ransom's written to a brother officer in which Ransom had confessed that, "I have grown very fond of the 'Deringer Pistol' you wrested from that red-headed Yankee whore just as she was about to shoot me in the back with it. I now feel positively naked without my little 'equalizer' and keep it in my boot night and day, even when engaged in amorous games with some dusky wench."

But it was the diary that ultimately convinced Easel that Annabella had not killed herself. This document—really a journal since it was not kept on a strict day-to-day basis—was begun October 3, 1858, while Annabella was attending a fashionable girl's boarding school in Charleston, and was continued until April 3, 1865, or for six years and six months to the day. The 719 entries, an average of slightly over two a week, totaled approximately 25,000 words. Most of the entries were brief, averaging about forty words each, and were concerned ostensibly with day-to-day activities recorded in a style that ran from the girlish intrigue of the first entry—"Introduced to L. today. It was after services on the steps of the Church. Must say no more! L. and I will be friends, though. Our eyes know." —to the stoical terseness of the final words: "Ransom is home." In between, the entries dealt mostly with ordinary activities, few of which were concerned with the exciting and tragic times Annabella was living through. The subject she wrote most about, in fact, was baking, though she did not begin on it until after her marriage, when she moved to the Almond plantation and became mistress of a large staff of household slaves that included Tamar, the head cook. A typical example reads, "The tables turned! Today in the cookhouse I taught Tamar how to bake a new kind of cake. Devil's food! It was such fun. She thought so too."

Intriguing as they were, however, it was not these journal entries that had convinced Easel that Annabella had not taken her own life. His conviction was founded on a clue in a poem which Annabella had copied conspicuously into the front end papers of her diary and which I here reproduce:

HER SECRET LOVE

by Annabella Almond

Now tell me who my love may be:

Is it one who rides so gallantly?

Guess again; it is no highborn

Gentleman for whom I yearn.

Each line of verse, though, leaves less doubt;

Reader, have you found me out?

Being a professor of English, Easel had found Annabella out rather easily. But he was sure that neither Ransom nor any other member of the family had noticed the acrostic, because if they had, they surely would have destroyed the diary.

To Easel, on the other hand, the meaning could not have been more clear: Annabella had paid Ransom back in kind by taking a slave lover of her own. Easel's prime suspect was Absalom, a household slave and the twin brother of Tamar. (Easel knew from the letters of Annabella's sister Caroline that Absalom and Tamar were the illegitimate grandchildren of Ransom's own grandfather, Acre Almond. From these same letters he also knew that Caroline suspected that Ransom coveted Tamar but was afraid to force her because of her closeness to Annabella.) Easel's theory was that Ransom had surprised Annabella and Absalom in the act of love and killed them both. To make the murder of his wife look like suicide he had placed the fatal weapon—his precious "Deringer Pistol"—in her hand. (This pistol, like all those actually made by Henry Deringer or under his supervision, was a single-shot weapon, so that Absalom would have had to have been killed by some other means. Easel suspected the cavalry sword.) After the murders, according to Easel's theory, Ransom had carried Absalom's body to a remote part of the

plantation—probably to the cypress grove where he had fought his notorious duel—and buried it there.

Easel's theory was supported by the fact that both Absalom and Tamar had vanished about the time of Annabella's death. Absalom, he was sure, had disappeared under a cypress tree. To explain the disappearance of Tamar, who was fairly well educated because of her status as head cook and undoubtedly intelligent enough to have been aware of anything going on between her brother and her mistress, Easel had developed two theories. The first (and the one which in his most objective moments he conceded as being the more likely) was that after discovering what had happened, Tamar had taken advantage of the chaos caused by the discovery of Annabella's body and the events at Appomattox to flee north. The other theory (one that had grown out of the intense hatred Easel admittedly had developed for his great-grandfather) was that after murdering his wife and her black paramour, Ransom had sought out Tamar, satisfied his lust for her, then killed her and buried her body in the same shallow grave that held the corpse of her twin brother. It was this theory that Easel believed in, but the family lands had been sold off piece by piece in the hard times after the Civil War, and a tract of post-World War II suburban houses occupied the ground where the cypress grove had stood, so that it was useless to even think of finding the grave.

Easel did not let this fact deter him, however, because he was busy with an even more crucial task: to prove that Annabella had encoded the record of her illicit affair in her diary. The poem "Her Secret Love" was his chief clue. It verified that a relationship with a "nigger" had existed; it employed a code; and it appeared in the diary. Easel was sure that the poem was only one clue in a set which, when found and put in order, would reveal his great-grandmother as not only a daring and sensuous woman, but as one of the most sophisticated and talented writers of her day. (That Annabella considered herself a writer and had sought recognition as such was attested to by a letter written to her by the poet Paul Hamilton Hayne, who was at the time

also the editor of the Charleston periodical *Russell's Magazine*. In his letter Hayne rejects a poem entitled "To Leslie" (now lost) which Annabella had submitted to *Russell's*, but informs her that "This is a delicate and exquisite love lyric which I am returning only because our magazine is passing into oblivion." The letter was dated January 18, 1860; *Russell's* concluded a brief three year existence two months later.)

But despite Easel's best cryptographic efforts over more than a decade, the diary refused to give up its secrets, so that instead of the scholarly edition that would have made both him and Annabella famous, all Easel had to show for his labors were four file drawers of material he had collected, from which he had culled three articles. The best of these, "Cake Baking in the Old Confederacy," was published in *The Southern Home-Maker* and earned him fifty dollars.

Then, early in 1945, Mrs. Lawton Easel died in Charleston. Her son, who was her only child and who had been extremely close to her, experienced, by his own admission, the paradoxical feeling of being both desolated and relieved. He had come to believe that he was writing his book for his mother and had planned to dedicate it to her. Now she was gone and it was like a weight lifted; he could abandon a project which had brought him nothing but frustration. But he was also left with a depressing sense of purposelessness, which he was trying to shake off when he received a belated sympathy card from an old friend and fellow South-Carolinian named Louis Murphy, who had been at graduate school with him and who was then Chairman of the English Department at this University. On the card was a note asking if Easel would be interested in coming out to the West Coast. The war was nearly over and Murphy was sure he could get his friend one of the positions that would have to be created to meet the needs of the thousands of servicemen who would be swarming into the colleges upon receiving their discharges. Easel took heart at what he saw as a providential invitation. He was then only forty-two, and he decided to break with the South and make a new start. But when it came time to pack, he could not decide what to do with his research.

It was too valuable to destroy, and if he gave it away he risked having someone else reap the benefits of his hard work. Finally he decided to take it with him to California.

Easel joined the English faculty at the University in the fall of 1945. Housing being scarce because of the wartime influx of defense workers into the state, he took a suite at the Faculty Club as a "temporary expedient" and ended up living in those rooms for more than a decade. His real place of residence, however, was his office, where he spent most of his time and where he hung the cavalry sword, the "Deringer Pistol," and the portrait, making Annabella the focus of attention through an adroit use of color, lighting, and furniture placement that revealed a natural gift for interior decorating.

In the classroom he was not so successful. He met his students in American literature faithfully but absent-mindedly, and he never lived up to Murphy's expectations for him, primarily because, though he had put an entire continent between him and the land of his great-grandmother, he could not get Annabella off his mind. The portrait, though he revered it, seemed to reproach him, and his research, which filled almost all of a four-drawer filing cabinet in his office, invited brooding over. And brood he did, adding little to it, since there was little to add; the task was complete, as he suspected, but he couldn't find the clues buried in it that would make sense of it all. He wrote little, became more and more withdrawn, and grew more curt with his students, so that eventually he got the reputation on campus of someone to stay away from.

His friend Louis Murphy did not look on indifferently. He made it his business to have lunch with Easel frequently, he invited him into the bosom of his family on numerous occasions, and he even tried to get Easel interested in his hobbies, which, reflecting his up-country background (he had grown up in the Great Smoky Mountains, the son of a small-town lawyer), were hunting and gun-collecting. The problem with Easel, of course, was not that he needed a hobby, but

that he had one—Annabella—which had turned into a monomania. Murphy came at last to understand this and decided to do something about it.

He had working under him at this time (it was the spring of 1956 when he made his move) a young teaching assistant named Jack Wells. Wells had completed all the requirements for the doctorate except the dissertation, for which he had not yet found a suitable topic. A native of Michigan whose people had been in Detroit since before the Civil War, Wells had used the freedom his intelligence and good scholastic record had given him (he had been graduated *summa cum laude* from Ann Arbor) to choose "sunny California" as the ideal place to do his graduate work and perhaps to settle down. Though there were those who looked on Wells as a somewhat shabby and uncouth individual (he had suffered since adolescence from a skin disorder that is made fun of in inverse proportion to an understanding of how devastating a social impact it has on its victim, and in fact a few of his ignorant fellow teaching assistants made his social life within the department hell by uncharitably referring to him by that term used to describe the crust that forms over a sore), none doubted his brilliance, and Murphy considered him to be one of the finest minds he had ever worked with—a mind, in fact, perhaps equal to solving the problem that was cankering the life and career of his friend Easel.

And so Murphy approached first Wells and then Easel. To Wells he explained that Easel was "too emotionally involved with this thing to be able to finish it up." He, Murphy, didn't actually know how far along Easel was because, no doubt out of wounded pride, he was extremely close-mouthed about his project, but he did know that Easel had in his filing cabinet a tremendous amount of research on the family diarist he was working on, and he respected his friend's scholarly ability. Wells, he insisted, should at least consider it. If it *did* seem promising, it would be a windfall: the basic research was there, and with a little hard work to put it in order he could produce an edition of the diary accompanied by a thorough and objective

introduction that well might add up to a book that would be a valuable addition to American literature and make his reputation as a rising young scholar. And he would also be doing a good turn for Easel, whose name would appear as co-editor, thus giving him the success he needed to bring him out of his long period of misanthropy.

I do not know what Murphy told Easel about Wells, but he might have mentioned Wells' brilliance of mind, his scholarly conscientiousness, and his thorough knowledge of American literature. At any rate, whatever he said, Easel agreed to the meeting, which took place in Murphy's office.

Easel was always as meticulous about his personal appearance as he was about the appearance of his office. When he walked into Murphy's office he had on an expensively tailored gray herringbone suit, and his white wavy hair and short mustache were neatly trimmed. Certainly he took the sartorial honors from Murphy, who as usual was in an old cord coat so rumpled it looked as if it may have been the one he wore on his hunting trips, and from Wells, who had on his favorite down-at-the-heel but comfortable crepe-soled loafers, a pair of unpressed wash pants, and a long-sleeved sweater, which he habitually wore to hide his skin disorder. But neither Easel's natty clothes nor his careful grooming could detract from the glacial right eye of blue glass, memento of his childhood carelessness with his great-grandfather Almond's cavalry sword. The dead orb gleamed out at Wells with a fixed and frightening stare.

Murphy did his best to put the other two at ease, but after several minutes of small talk, Easel leaned toward Murphy and in a stage-whisper easily audible to Wells, said, "I've thought a great deal about it, Louis, and I've come to the conclusion that I couldn't possibly put my 'project' into the hands of a student." He then turned on Wells, who was revealing his tension through an habitual nervous movement, and revealing a tension of his own, blurted out, "Why are you scratching like that, young man?"

Wells was too embarrassed and full of anguish to answer and there followed an awkward silence, which Murphy finally broke by quietly saying, "He suffers from a skin problem, Albert."

Very little more was said, and Easel finally left, leaving both Wells and Murphy convinced that the meeting had been a failure.

But the next day Wells was awakened at mid-morning by a call from Easel asking him if he would be good enough to meet with the professor in his office that afternoon. The conversation also included an apology from Easel for his bad manners of the day before, and Wells agreed to the meeting. When he arrived he was treated to coffee and cake (baked, according to Easel, by himself from one of the recipes in the diary) while they discussed "the project" under Annabella's portrait.

Wells was astonished at what Easel told him. Not only did the professor speak with passion and dignity about his great-grandmother and the place she deserved in American literature, but he went into his own history as well, telling Wells in detail about his discovery of the diary and going on from there to his accident with the cavalry sword and concluding with an emotional outpouring concerning the effect the death of his mother had had on him. His candor touched Wells, and the possibilities for the diary captured his imagination. Sure that he could rise to the challenge and crack the code, Wells accepted Easel's offer to turn "the project" over to him, along with its one condition: that the research, which consisted in great part of valuable family papers, must remain in Easel's office. Wells would, however, have daily access to it.

(Why, after such an unsatisfactory first meeting, Easel should become so cordial to Wells and offer to turn "the project" over to him is still, nearly two decades later, a mystery. I can only speculate, but I believe it was a case of a scarred professor identifying with another's affliction and deciding that such a person was the best choice to help him rescue from an undeserved obscurity yet another of fate's victims—his talented but tragic great-grandmother.)

Whatever the cause of Easel's dramatic embracing of Wells as his protege to undertake "the project," Wells went at it seriously and with great industry. A night owl since his undergraduate days who preferred the quiet of the small hours for serious study, he would begin his labors in the late afternoon, showing up at the office around the time Easel customarily left for the Faculty Club to have his dinner and taking notes from the research until Easel returned to lock up, which was never later than nine o'clock. Then he would carry home what he had found and work on it until three or four in the morning, chain-smoking while he analyzed, organized, pondered. This schedule Wells stuck to for three months, until he concluded that he wasn't progressing fast enough. The reason was a simple one: he couldn't get at the research when he most needed to. He did his best thinking, got his best insights, in those small hours, and often the notes he had taken weren't adequate; he would suddenly realize that a letter, a document, or a diary entry that he had passed over casually might contain a clue after all. But it would be midnight or one o'clock and there was no way he could get into Easel's files to check his hunch. When this happened he would try to improvise, but so often the trail couldn't be followed and the night was wasted. Finally he tried to talk to Easel about the problem, in hopes that he might be allowed to move the files to his quarters, but the professor didn't care to discuss it, except to remind Wells of the condition he had agreed to and to counsel patience, telling Wells that he couldn't expect to solve in a few months the problem which Easel had spent a professional lifetime on.

But Wells did intend to solve the problem in a few months. His motivation was elemental: he had fallen in love and wanted to get married, but his girl insisted that they wait until he had his Ph.D. in hand. (She had grown up in Pittsburgh during the Depression and had watched her father, an unemployed steel puddler, grow old before his time as he struggled to earn enough to feed his large family.) Her name was Stella Katchesky and she worked as a nurse at the University infirmary. Wells had met her when he had gone to see

a school physician about his skin condition and had been impressed with the tact Stella had displayed while preparing him for the examination. She was a tall, heavy-set girl, and I suppose few would have called her beautiful (though she had an abundant head of thick black hair, which remains her crowning glory to this day) or even feminine (as Annabella would be considered feminine by anyone looking at her portrait). But Stella had the womanly quality of loyalty to her man, and it became apparent after only a few dates that her man was Wells. She not only put up with his scratching and chain-smoking, she did his laundry, much of his cooking, and all of his typing. Even more important, she was, like him, a born night-owl and would open her door to him at the most outrageous hour and be ready to offer him her companionship through those nights when it seemed to him as if completing "the project" were an impossibility.

Stella's steady encouragement and his own determination drove Wells on, and in less than six months after reaching his agreement with Easel he was ready to hand over, not without some trepidation, "the project." It consisted of the diary, carefully edited and annotated, preceded by a forty-one page scholarly introduction dealing with Annabella's life and art. Wells was not able to paint as flattering a picture of Annabella's literary ability as Thomas Sully had of her person. To the contrary, he referred to her, with what we can now admit was the typical bravado of the young scholar, as a "pedestrian stylist" with very little to say, whose descriptions of domestic life, especially as observed in the cookhouse, were "mere genre pictures" and nothing more. And he complained that while some of the most momentous events in the history of the country were occurring, Annabella was content to fill her diary with descriptions of how she and Tamar baked an angel-food cake or concocted some other kind of delicacy. The acrostic poem "Her Secret Love" troubled him, but balanced against his other conclusions he had no alternative but to consider it "a betrayed wife's bitter joke" and then to conclude the study with the opinion that based on the evidence, Annabella was simply one more in a long line of mediocre Civil War diarists. In

short, out of haste and hubris, Wells dismissed Annabella as any kind of serious artist.

Easel received the dissertation late on a Thursday afternoon. The following afternoon Wells got a telephone call from the secretary to the English Department informing him that Easel wanted to see him immediately. When Wells arrived at Easel's office the professor gave him the worst dressing down of his life. The gist of the tirade was that Annabella was not the mediocrity Wells had made her out to be. He scorned the dissertation's so-called evidence, saying that Wells had failed to produce any evidence, since he had not been able to break Annabella's code. When Wells tried to protest that there was no code, Easel shot back, "There is one. I know there is." And when Wells ventured to ask him *how* he knew, the professor pointed a stern finger first at his head and then at his heart and said it was "scholarly intuition." Then he pushed the dissertation across his desk toward Wells and told him that by not breaking the code he had betrayed both him (Easel) and a gallant and brilliant woman. The dissertation, he concluded, was not only unacceptable, it was a disgrace to a man passing himself off as a scholar and should be burned.

Now except for that first emotion-filled meeting in the professor's office when Easel had spontaneously poured out to Wells not only Annabella's life story but his own as well, the relationship between teacher and student had been restrained but cordial. And then, without warning, had come this almost maniacal outburst. Dismayed and convinced that he had unknowingly fallen into the hands of a crazy man, or at the very least an incurable romantic, which was just as bad, Wells slunk out of Easel's office with his rejected dissertation and went home, where he spent the evening getting stinking drunk for the first time since a disastrous fraternity rush party he had attended when he was a freshman at Ann Arbor. Stella found him the following morning, asleep on his living room rug and foul with the stench of whisky and vomit. After she had cleaned him up and he had told her what had happened, she took him, for the first time in their relationship (for that was a less liberated era), to bed.

Later, as they lay smoking together (Stella smoked occasionally then, though she eventually give it up and got Wells to stop also), Wells, his spirits renewed by his initiation into manhood, spoke with contempt of Easel's "scholarly intuition" and called the phrase a contradiction in terms. Stella concurred, adding that Easel had no right to insult him, and that though the professor might be a Southerner, he was "no gentleman."

"He's not even a man," Wells retorted, "he's a fag." That exchange, spoken when Wells was in the anomalous position of being at the zenith of his manhood but the nadir of his academic career, worked on him somehow (call it instantaneous apprehension) to produce in him an idea that rose, phoenix-like, from the ashes of his hopes for his dissertation. "There *is* one," he called out, echoing with unconscious irony Easel's words spoken less than twenty-four hours earlier. When a puzzled Stella asked him what he meant, he would tell her only that she had given him an idea about Annabella's code, and that if it proved sound he was going to ask Easel for a second chance. Then over her protests that he was as crazy as the professor, he sent her home so he could get to work.

All weekend Wells read over his notes with increasing confidence that he had found the clue that would break the code, and a Sunday afternoon spent looking through slang dictionaries in the University library made him even more certain that he could answer in the affirmative the question Annabella posed in her poem: "Reader, have you found me out?"

Yes, he had. He had discovered what the whole diary was about. On Monday Wells presented himself to Easel. He admitted that his scholarship had been hasty and careless, apologized for it, and, without revealing what he had discovered, asked for a second chance. The professor consented with surprising grace, leading Wells to surmise that Easel realized that Wells was his (and Annabella's) only hope. (Though later Wells would come to believe that there was another motive both ulterior and sinister.) Easel even agreed to

reconsider the request that Wells be given unlimited access to the research (which meant, of course, taking it home), but he said that because of the value of the papers he would have to see Wells' rooms before he could make a decision. In his eagerness to get back to work, Wells suggested that they walk over at once, and Easel accepted the invitation.

Wells lived by himself in an old clapboard house conveniently located just across the street from the campus. Put up as a private residence during World War I (Wells had checked the underside of the ceramic cover of the toilet tank and found stamped into it the date April 17, 1917), the building eventually had been acquired by the University, which was planning to tear it down and erect on the site the pretentious athletic hall which now in fact stands there. When they reached the front porch, Wells pointed out the modern heavy-duty lock that secured the front door, but Easel said he wasn't as concerned about theft as he was about fire and that such an old house looked like a fire trap to him. Wells agreed that that was what it *looked* like, and invited the professor in. It was an unimaginative box-like structure divided into five rooms: a tiny entry hall and the living room took up the front portion; the dining room and the single bedroom were side by side in the middle; and the kitchen and bathroom divided the rear. As they looked into each room Wells pointed up, and an incredulous Easel saw the sprinklers in the ceilings. Finally Wells explained that the building had once been used as a storage place for overflow records from the Office of the Registrar, and that the University had put in the sprinklers (and the locks) to protect them.

The upshot of the tour was that Easel consented to allow Wells to move the research to his house, and Wells did so the same day, transferring the four file drawers of material to four cardboard boxes, which he lined up on the floor of the dining room.

Then he got to work. For three feverish, exhilarating weeks, the most inspired and inspiring of his life, he worked nearly around the

clock. Hunched over the century-old documents in a pool of lamplight in the solitary quiet of the night, he felt akin to those great scholars of the Renaissance—Erasmus, More, Colet—men who discovered new worlds in neglected texts. He read and reread, watching with awe and fascination as every piece, from the most seemingly irrelevant letter to the most cryptic diary entry, fell into place in the mosaic he was constructing. His former introductory essay he now saw as the arrogant and puerile piece of prose it was, and he tore it up and started over, ending with a document twice as long, yet lean and precise, as true and as beautiful as a great work of art. He called Stella in to read it, and she agreed that it was, as Wells put it, "a masterpiece of scholarly deduction." She went to work typing it while he finished annotating the diary. Finally, when everything was completed and his thesis had been proved beyond a doubt, he spent a week double-checking the entire piece of work. Only then did he hand it in to Easel with the subdued but emotionally charged words, "I've done my best."

That was on a Friday morning. Late that afternoon, as Wells and Stella were sitting at the kitchen table having a drink before going out to get something to eat and nervously speculating on how soon Easel might finish reading the dissertation and what he would think of it, the professor walked in unannounced.

Easel had on his favorite gray herringbone suit and in his hand he carried the dissertation. But what Wells was most aware of was the dead right eye that gleamed enigmatically but with unmistakable symbolism at him. He spoke the professor's name but was cut off. "I've brought this back," Easel said curtly, holding out the typescript. "Unsigned, I'm afraid."

Wells stared with disbelief at his dissertation, then looked at Easel. "Again?" he said.

"You certainly can't have expected me to put my name on a paper as preposterous as this one."

Through his confusion, the simple truth rose to Wells' lips: "It isn't a preposterous paper, Dr. Easel."

"It *is* preposterous," the professor insisted, his voice growing more excited. "That is exactly the right word. Especially for your thesis."

"But the thesis is its strongest feature. It's . . . it's . . ." (and again the simple truth) "brilliant."

"I find that statement absurd."

"The diary supports it one-hundred percent."

"That, Mr. Wells, is a *lie*," the professor said, his last word full of anger.

But Wells, now himself working up a righteous anger, refused to be bullied. "It's the truth!" he retorted. "It's supported in the diary and it's supported in the poem." And he recited "Her Secret Love":

Now tell me who my love may be:

Is it one who rides so gallantly?

Guess again; it is no highborn

Gentleman for whom I yearn.

Each line of verse, though, leaves less doubt;

Reader, have you found me out?

"At least you have the poem right," Easel said.

"And the rest is right, too," Wells shot back.

"Like it was 'right' the first time you submitted it?"

"I admit that was a bad paper. But the day after you returned it I made the breakthrough. Miss Katchesky happened to use the words 'no gentleman,' and I suddenly realized what Annabella was telling us in the phrase 'no highborn gentleman'—that her secret love was

not only no *gentleman*, but no *gentleman*. No *man* means her lover had to be a *woman*. Put that with the acrostic and it means her secret love was a *nigger woman*. How else can you explain it?"

"It's diabolical the way you've twisted things, Mr. Wells. Accenting the wrong syllables on words, finding pornographic meaning in such innocent terms as 'bake' and 'cake' . . ."

"'Cake' is a Negro slang term for the female genitalia. If you don't believe me, check it out yourself."

"So my great-grandmother becomes 'white cake' and her slave cook becomes 'dark cake' in this Sodom's bakery you've concocted."

"Isn't that logical? 'Baking' was the code word Annabella invented for when they were doing it."

"*It*. You mean committing perversions."

"If you want to look at it that way."

"There *is* no other way to look at it if one accepts your analysis. If one accepts your analysis, they were lesbians."

"It's obvious, isn't it? This girl Leslie initiated Annabella at school. Annabella then initiated Tamar."

"Another twist. Leslie was a boy. Some boy in Charleston for whom my grandmother had a girlish infatuation."

"There's not a shred of proof to support that position, Dr. Easel."

"And there's not a shred of proof that Leslie was a girl, either."

"But it's more logical. Leslie was a girlfriend Annabella met at school. That kind of encounter wasn't all that uncommon, even in those days, as I've pointed out with reference to *The Gynecologic Consideration of the Sexual Act* . . ."

The mention of that obscure treatise (written by Denslow Lewis, M.D., and published in 1900), which Wells had dug up with the help of the reference librarian at the medical school library, seemed to

double the rage of the frustrated professor. "I don't care what some fifty-year old book says," he bellowed. "My great-grandmother *was not a lesbian*. I stand before you as living proof of that fact. *Lesbians do not bear children*."

"Dr. Easel, she went both ways."

"Impossible!"

"A lot of people do it."

"Monstrous! I will not believe it." "You were willing to believe that she had a Negro *male* lover."

"That's different. Considering how her husband cheated on her with slave girls, that was poetic justice."

"My thesis is based on scholarship, not poetic justice."

"It is based on your libelous *opinion*. You're the pervert. Anyone who could find sexual imagery in reference to such innocent domestic activities is unnatural."

"I found it because it's *there*. The evidence is conclusive. Tamar is the one Ransom surprised with Annabella. She's the one he killed, along with his wife, and buried in the cypress grove, not Absalom. Absalom probably figured out what was going on and ran away to the North."

"*Probably!* You have no proof. Not for any of it. And even if you *did* have proof, if your evidence were ten times as conclusive, I could never bring myself to believe that my great-grandmother was that kind of a person."

"Nobody is going to hold your great-grandmother's peculiarity against her. In fact, it makes her a more interesting figure."

"And holds my family up to ridicule. My great-grandmother was *not* a sexual pervert. And I will never allow you to get your Ph.D. by saying so."

At this point there was an emotion-filled pause while Wells and Easel glared at one another. It was broken, however, by Stella, who said to Wells, "You could always publish the book on your own, couldn't you? Let the other scholars and critics decide who's right."

"If he tries that," Easel said, "I'll burn the diary. And where will his proof be then? This thing will be nothing but a cheap piece of prurient fiction."

Easel wagged the dissertation in Wells' face, but Wells refused to take it and finally the professor lobbed it toward the kitchen table. It hit the edge, nearly knocking over the bottle of bourbon Wells and Stella had made their drinks from, and fell to the floor.

Wells looked at his brilliant piece of scholarship lying on the linoleum and then back at Easel. "Get out," he said. "Get the hell out of here and take your goddamn good-for-nothing research with you."

"Jack . . ." Stella said.

"No!" Wells roared. His control, which he had maintained through a year of the most arduous scholarship, was gone at last. "You get out of this house, Easel, before I throw you out."

Apparently unruffled by this hostile outburst, and in fact seeming to take a grim satisfaction from it, Easel merely returned Wells' gaze and said, "I'll bring my car around for the boxes." Then he turned and walked out through the house the way he had come in.

When he had gone, Stella picked up the dissertation from the floor and offered it to Wells, but he refused to take it. "Leave it," he said. "What good is it now? That rotten bastard. I solved his problem. I solved it *brilliantly*. What he couldn't do in *twenty* years I did in *one*. And this is what I get for it." He rummaged in his coat pocket and fished out a pack of cigarettes. "He enjoyed that, the sadistic bastard," he said, shaking out a cigarette and lighting it. "Well, we'll see how long his satisfaction lasts."

"What are you going to do?" Stella asked.

"I'm going to help Easel move his research out."

Wells strode into the dining room where the four boxes were lined up against the wall and picked one up. Followed by Stella he carried it outside and dumped the contents into the gutter. Then he tossed the box away and went into the house for another.

"What good is that going to do?" Stella asked.

But Wells was finished talking. Methodically he carried one box after another out of the house and added its contents to the pile in the gutter until the papers extended four or five feet out into the street and overflowed onto the parking strip between the sidewalk and the curb. When he had tossed the last box away he inhaled deeply on the cigarette still dangling from his lips and dropped the glowing butt onto the pile. From his coat he then took a packet of book matches and with trembling hands began lighting matches as fast as he could and dropping them onto the pile. Many of the matches went out, but a few took hold here and there, and a half-dozen twists of flame began a death dance on Easel's research. Wells watched them for a moment, then went into the house. When he returned he carried his dissertation and an armful of notecards, scores of the 5 by 8 inch size he favored, which he dumped onto the burning pile. Then he stepped up onto the porch next to Stella and watched as the fire fed on his and Easel's commingled research.

"You're a damn fool," Stella said.

"He hooked me," Wells replied, "but he won't hook anybody else."

And he watched with Stella in a Pyrrhic silence as the perimeter of the fire spread to letters, diaries (both Annabella's and her sister Caroline's were in there) and to his own notecards, the sheets of paper and file cards curling at the edges and turning brown before suddenly bursting into flames and disintegrating.

Finally he turned and, followed by Stella, went into the house. He got the whisky from the kitchen table and took it into the front room, where he dropped into a chair and unscrewed the cap. He mutely

offered the bottle to Stella, but she refused just as mutely with a shake of her head, so he lifted it to his lips and took a big slug.

"Take it easy," Stella said.

As she spoke, Wells heard the expected automobile outside. He went to the door and through the screen saw a big Chrysler stopped behind the fire, which was now burning quietly but strongly, its gray smoke rising straight up to contribute its bit to the pall of smog which hung over the city. Easel scrambled out of the car and, as Wells watched with fascination, came as close to the edge of the flames as the heat would let him, frowning and looking intently down into them. Then he apparently recognized something, because he stooped over and with a sudden pecking motion reached in and attempted to snatch a manila file folder out of the flames. But its inner edge was on fire and Easel dropped it and scuttled backward like a crab. For a moment he crouched away from the flames; then he began scurrying around the fire's perimeter, here and there squatting on his haunches while gingerly attempting to pluck out a file folder or an individual sheet of paper. He would reach in and grab something with his fingertips (each item so precious to him), then wince and drop it as the heat got to be too intense. Jerking backward, he would circle the fire, finally stopping to dart in but retreating just as hastily in those futile crab-like movements.

With a wave of his hand, Wells summoned Stella, and she came to the door to watch with him. But Easel had given up. Unaware of his audience, he was forlornly contemplating the fire. His white hair was hanging over his forehead, his glass eye glazed with smoke, and his elegant gray herringbone suit was ash-laden and rumpled. Wells looked at Stella and smiled. It was not a smile of joy or even of triumph, but the grim smile of a man who has got part, but *only* part, of his own back.

That smile, however, was short-lived. For suddenly Easel jerked himself upright and Wells saw gleaming in his hand (it had appeared as if by magic but he must have been carrying it in the pocket of his

suit coat) the little "Deringer Pistol" that the professor heretofore had kept mounted on his office wall. And to make matters more dangerous, Easel began moving around the fire toward the house.

Feeling strangely calm, Wells watched a moment as his adversary advanced on him. Then he took Stella by the hand. "Come on," he said, and picking up the half-full bottle of whisky he led her through the house to the kitchen and out the back door. While Easel hunted unsuccessfully for them inside, they climbed into Stella's Volkswagen, which was parked in the driveway alongside the house, and escaped to her apartment. It was only eight blocks away, but it might have been in Outer Mongolia for all the chance Easel had of ever finding it.

At Stella's they finished the whisky and solemnly came to the conclusion that with the world so obviously against them (the teaching career gone quite literally up in smoke), their only security lay in each other. And so, after warning Stella that he was probably now a felon (an idea which he found surprisingly exciting, perhaps because he had spent most of his life cloistered in libraries and classrooms), and vowing that they would have to catch him to jail him, Wells proposed. Though it is doubtful that a life on the run could have appealed to a girl like Stella, Wells was her man and she accepted.

They left at once in her car, driving through the night to Las Vegas, where they were married in one of those around-the-clock matrimonial mills which are so glitteringly dismal but whose ceremonies are so compensatingly brief. Their luck turned almost immediately when Stella patronized a quarter slot machine standing in the lobby of their hotel and won eighty-seven dollars, more than enough in that pre-inflationary time to pay for as sybaritic a weekend as either of them had ever enjoyed.

They drove home late Sunday night, arriving to find the apartment undiscovered by Easel or the police and in time for Stella to get a few hours of sleep before reporting for work at the University infirmary on Monday morning. Wells, physically and emotionally exhausted by

the roller coaster ride his fortunes had been on during the past several days, as well as by the nuptial reveling in Las Vegas and the long drive home, slept in.

But the end of his harrowing was not yet. Shortly before ten in the morning he was awakened from a deep sleep by the vigorous shaking Stella was giving his upturned shoulder. When he peevishly mumbled something about having thought she was going to work, she replied that she had *been* to work and had come back. Then she blurted out, "It's Dr. Easel," and Wells, fearing the worst (a dragnet about to sweep them up, from which they would have to make a hairbreadth escape), sat up with alarm.

Before he could do anything else, however, or even say anything, the story cascaded out of Stella: "When I got to the infirmary this morning Hazel at the desk told me I'd missed all the excitement on Friday. The University police had brought in a professor who had shot himself. I knew right away who it was—I felt it in my bones—and sure enough, when I asked, Hazel said it was 'a Dr. Albert Easel from the English Department.' He did it in his office. They rushed him to the infirmary, but he was DOA."

Too stunned by this news to rise, Wells sat numbly on the bed looking up at Stella. Finally he said, "Easel *killed* himself?" In truth he didn't know how to take the news. On the one hand he had escaped any vindictiveness Easel might have visited on him (a lawsuit at the very least, and perhaps even criminal charges), but on the other hand he might now be an accessory to an even more serious charge than destruction of property. Stella, however, argued that such an idea was nonsense. They had planned to put Easel and his great-grandmother behind them, and now the professor's death made it all the more possible for them to do that and to start a new life as they had planned. Nor, she averred, had they any reason to feel guilty, since Easel had been, as everyone knew, crazy for years. Finally she convinced Wells, but he decided that to be on the safe side he had better move his things into the apartment as soon as possible. He

drove Stella back to the infirmary and went on to his former quarters, where he found that nothing had been disturbed, including the ashes in the gutter. But while he was packing, a city street sweeper making its weekly round obligingly cleaned up the mess. He had just returned to his desk from watching the sweeping process and was thumbing through some notecards he had stored in a bottom drawer and overlooked on the day of the burning (they went back to that first, totally inaccurate assessment of Annabella's art) when the telephone rang.

The caller was Louis Murphy's secretary. She informed Wells that Professor Murphy was handling the arrangements for Dr. Easel's funeral and that he had asked her to call Mr. Wells and request that he, as the only Ph.D. candidate Dr. Easel was advising at the time of his death, serve as one of the pallbearers.

The funeral was more stately than sad. In his restrained and dignified eulogy, Murphy spoke of the deceased professor's devotion to the University, "on whose campus Albert Easel could be found virtually every day of the last ten years of his life," and of his (Murphy's) personal fondness for this patrician Southern gentleman, whom a country boy like himself could only hold in awe.

Later, following the interment at the cemetery, as Wells and Stella were walking from the graveside to their car, they were overtaken by Murphy, who insisted that they accompany him home for a drink in memory of their departed colleague. When the professor had served them whiskey in his study, a cozy room cluttered with books, guns, and hunting trophies, he took an object from a cabinet and handed it to Stella. It was Easel's "Deringer Pistol."

"That's what he did it with," Murphy said. "A single ball right through the heart. He was found lying under that oil painting of his great-grandmother. The police turned the pistol over to me just this morning, since I'm his executor."

"What's going to become of it?" Stella asked, passing the weapon gingerly to Wells.

"I'm going to buy it from the estate for my collection," Murphy said. "As a memento of my old friend. It is, ironically, perhaps the most valuable thing he possessed."

"What will happen to the rest of his things?" Wells asked.

"They'll be put up for auction. There isn't much left beyond his furniture. He destroyed his research, just as he had been threatening to do for years. Burned it in a fit of frustrated rage just before he killed himself, apparently. The police said his clothes showed traces of ashes and smoke." "I see," Wells answered, staring down at the "Deringer Pistol," which he held in his hand.

"Is there anything of his you'd like as a remembrance, Mr. Wells?"

"How valuable is that picture in his office?"

"It's by an anonymous artist, so it can't be worth too much. Is that what you'd like?"

Stella said "No," but Wells said "Yes" louder, and Murphy said, "I'll see what I can do."

He took the pistol from Wells and returned it to his gun cabinet. Then he said, "But what I really wanted to talk to you about is your dissertation. Can you finish it with both Easel and the research gone?"

"It will never be finished now," Wells told him.

"I was afraid of that. And I'm the one who convinced you to work with him. Well, I take full responsibility. And to make it up in part to you, I'll take you on myself, if you're willing, and let you write on any subject you choose."

Thus Wells' paper *Aspects of the Feminine Literary Imagination*, though it did not have (I am sorry to say) the brilliance displayed in the second dissertation on Annabella, was duly completed under the benign guidance of Louis Murphy. And from that wormlike state in the cocoon of economic and academic impotence emerged the narrator of this account, radiant as a butterfly in the colorful regalia

which signifies that one is the holder of the highest academic degree in the world.

At the same time (the day following the graduation ceremony, to be exact), Stella brought into this so earthly world a hefty (9 lb, 8 oz) baby girl whom we named Louise in honor of our friend and benefactor, Professor Louis Murphy (who died last year in retirement after a career of long and distinguished service to the University). I did however insist, over my wife's objections that we must put the past behind us (as if we ever could), that our daughter's middle name be Annabella, in memory of that tragic, undiscovered genius whose portrait hangs once again in its accustomed spot in the office that now belongs to me.

James Krusoe

how the words

how the words of the dead man,
every word he had spoken in his lifetime came back
and buzzed around his mouth like black bees
at the door of the hive.
how the shoes of the dead man,

all the shoes he had worn in his lifetime
gathered around the coffin like children,
stood empty and gaping; small white baby shoes,
thick-soled old men's shoes stood waiting and waiting.

how his handkerchieves lay stacked and folded like letters
at his head, and all the pairs of socks he ever owned
stood at attention against the walls, were saddened
by his passing and whispered in low voices, "a pity,"

and how when a respectable length of time had passed
they left and left him naked, itching,
unable to scratch.

the confessional poem

how it was with ruthie.
he's telling me how it was with ruthie
how when he was two all his sailboats
would sink plop, like torpedoed by a shark,
and he would cry and how his dad promised
heaven for all sailboats and those erasers
he ate to death — art gum — in the second grade.
and how in school he flunked geography;
used to say things like, "japan is a part of russia,"
and "the capitol of kansas is omaha,"
but now he's discovered the time-space oneness
of everything he knows he was right in school,
and how that changed his life, seven years
in the redwoods, I mean seven years —
how he named them all: hop-a-long, and squaw man,
and saliva-on-the-cheek-in-rain, and
how he was one with the redwoods, used to take
long leaks against them, how long leaks felt,
and holding his tool, and the wind, he's saying
how the wind felt when he was there, and I'm still sitting here,
look, all I want to know is how it was with ruthie.

dawn

*- "and then, in a sort of kindly reverie he bethought himself
of his own favorite cat, and said, 'But Hodge shan't be shot;
no, no, Hodge shall not be shot '"*

Boswell's Life of Johnson

Dawn. I'm out of bed. Walking to the window
I think: not Hodge, they shan't take Hodge;
take myself by surprise. The old man walking by
outside I've talked to; he holds his cane
with both hands, swings it like an ax at dogs.

I'm eighty-five, he says. Been here thirty years;
ain't been caught yet. Behind me Sana shuffles
through the house, an entourage of dog and cat.
She wears a kimono, white socks, smiles
from sleep. One by one cars fire up in the street;

and green, I want you green, said my first poet
surrounded by freshmen, desperate, trapped, he,
Garcia-Lorca, the knock on the door, the boots
of the guard, the mud, the rest. I've dodged
the draft the jobs and idleness. I think:

thirty years old, ain't been caught yet.

one more day of grace

One more day of grace
the tigers of the heart delayed by jungle float
flapjacks and bumbershoots, play wildebeast jokes,
pretend to be drunk and in between
gobble fat birds with long plumey tails.
They will be hungry again tomorrow. Tomorrow
everywhere poets will rise, rinse out a cup, have coffee
and begin to work. They will take thick branches,
drape them with pythons like green scarves, take broods
of wild pigs, send them out to root and snuffle,
fill the air with squabbling, with smells, with monkeys,
ripe fruit, purple blossoms, a hundred kinds of bugs
and make bright fat birds with long plumey tails.

I would say skeletons, and mushrooms, and galaxies
and zinnias both potted and wild, and mountain lions,
penises, manta rays, mountain ranges grow to size
and fall. And if things would fall apart what
a relief! A whew! Like on stage, a stage sigh
or whisper, "Thank god for that," but you know they won't.

They fall together, to the small cold center,
to the black spot, the bad spot, the spot in the back
of the brain hidden away by thoughts and thoughts
and this is what the third eye sees.

I would say the writing of poems is like dancing on ice
at the volunteer firemens' picnic, not always but
those times when you lost your balance, slip and catch
yourself, but the stomach tells that something's happened,
that living is like dancing on ice, and that ice
is the heart after the death of the heart.

Frew Waidner

SPANNING

In those days we practiced leaving and coming back; and often—when I didn't care about things—I could set out twice, three times with no intervention return.

If Fleer thought to spoil my day with this memo, he's succeeded. No way across, indeed! A centuries old bridge he finds impregnable!

But I must calm myself. One to breathe...two...three...four (repeat? no, keep going) five...six... Until the sixth to come up with something. Less than a fortnight, and I'd so counted on Fleer. Decked him out in gingham to avert suspicion (a mere pleasure flight), and he files *this*. Interlarded, too, with the most gratuitous comments: "striking resemblance to the Karl Theodor bridge over the Neckar at Heidelberg, what Goethe called..." Jesus! Is he some kind of joke? My career on the line and he waxes poetic.

Well, one thing's certain, the fullest backing from every department after Krebs' report of what was going on over there. How do people live like that? How can anyone get to that point? Of course, backing amounts to shoving sometimes, and I'm afraid this is one of them. Well, I can shove, too. Thought I had with Fleer and now this. But let's just see, read more carefully. Perhaps I...

Made three passes over the towers on our side. The giant portcullis appears operable though it has not been lowered within memory. No sign of the bridge tender except for some wash drying on a line between the towers. Both sexes appear, sartorially (Jesus!), to be represented; would advise Bok to check this out. Behind every man etc. Note: the clothesline is *above* the portcullis, thus posing no hindrance to its drop. Gargoyles (disguised pitch gutters, in fact) are improperly positioned, however, to make boiling tar more than a nominal threat.

The towers on their side seem in an advanced state of decay, rubble from them indeed covering the roadbed. Moreover the visibility at this end leaves something to be desired: murky, tenebrious. Figures could just be made out, either writhing or gesticulating wildly. Was minded to dip down for a better look at a handsome onyx on the finger of a writhing or gesturing shape but recalled what I was here for. On gaining altitude I could see that the bridge runs from left to right and is longer (quite unlike that in Dublin) than it is broad. The banks could, I suppose, accommodate a second bridge, running parallel, but where would we get stone that old? Even to *look* that old? The shadow of the bridge and the redness (rubric) of the river conspired crepuscularly to... Tsk. Send someone else, that's clear. It's no good counting on just one, though, because he'll always bring back more than is there. Less, I could cope with...make adjustments when the time came. But stay! What about a whole company of observers, packed (a window to each) in a squadron of trimotors? Level the various impressions, *reduce*, so to achieve the clean-cut and uniform. In fact, why not send the entire task force up? Getting them together, so, would weld them into a unit we could count on. At the worst it would enable us to smoke out the naysayers, those who think the river can't be crossed. I except Fleer, for when the time comes he'll put most of his nonsense behind him. Wish I could go myself, but the price of command is loneliness. Which reminds me, reservation tonight at the Trocadero.

Very well, then, a directive or two and our lads, all of them, will have the chance to find some way of crossing that bridge. With hundreds of eyes right I'm very much mistaken if we'll be on this side too much longer.

But say some weakness *is* detected and we get most of the way over. That darkness...and debris...could throw a spanner in the works. The figures, I write off as mere air currents, eddies from an overwrought imagination, yet rubble, stone, and nightfall are forces to be reckoned with. Pontoon craft, to be sure, could be utilized to gain

us terra firma at this juncture, so why get in a snit about a goddam, frigging bridge that won't stay up long enough to be crossed?

David Dayton

PICTURE OF A SUICIDE IN THE MORNING PAPER

Like jumping
for the first time

from the high dive at the pool
when she was six,

she finally just closed her eyes
and leapt,

sat down in the air,
knees bent,

one hand trailing loose
above her head,

the other hand
pinching her nose.

I later recalled
with a half-caught laugh

how odd it seemed
that her puffed cheeks

held on so fiercely
to the last breath.

SCHIZOPHRENIC'S PRAYER

Doctor

I have pains in my chest
and hope and wonder
if my broken and heart
is beaten
for my soul and salvation
and heaven

amen

and me
cannot say what
always
and tell you
because
it's hard
to put into
words
and my stools too
have been
incredibly
small and round
and take
a long time
and sting and splash
when they do
any my throat's been sore
since I can't remember when it was
that love fell down
and I got this feeling
like I'm the only one alive
only not here
not real
but more so scary

that I stutter a lot
and mostly stop
about midthroat
which too hurts
not all the time though
sometimes at night
when everyone that's not alive
but me
is sleeping
and a breeze comes off the lake
sitting here in the dark
almost feels
like faith again

LOOK AT IT THIS WAY

The fat goose that flaps in your head at night
is probably flying to Mexico.

Every time you open your mouth,
the bacteria in your throat unpack lawn chairs.

In a few millennia, you will live on as a speck of dust,
wadded in the lint of somebody's pocket.

Right now your eyes are moving—
the hairs in your nose are setting out traps for ancestors.

Howard Schwartz

A SMALL CARNIVAL

A small carnival had come to our town. Under the same tent five or six acts were grouped together. There were strong men, gypsies, a tame bear, twin dwarves less than two feet tall, and a man without a mouth. I wandered from booth to booth and finally made my way to the corner where many tables had been set up for the gypsies to read palms. Every table but one was taken, but that one appealed to me and I sat down there. At the table was an old woman with a scarf on her head, and beside her a young girl whose fresh appearance had made me trust the old woman in the first place. Without a word the old woman took my right palm and wiped on with a small, soft brush a substance like honey. After brushing in this manner for a while she told me it was time to exchange a minor spirit for the spirit of a dead woman that could fuse with my own. This spirit could be of great assistance to me, but should she become dangerous I could always wash my hands of her—by washing the substance from my palm. Then she and the girl got up and left the table and I turned to leave the tent.

On the way out a strong man at the entrance held out a bamboo pole and announced that this pole was his power over me. That provoked me, and I took hold of the pole, expecting him to fight for sole possession. But as soon as I took hold he lifted the pole off the ground and swung it high above his head. In an instant the pole stretched to a great length and I found myself swinging over a huge abyss, clinging for life. Time seemed to have stopped; I could barely catch my breath. Then all at once he reached the upswing, and I was standing in his place. Now I swung him, and within one or two turns set in motion the even rhythm of a wheel. And only then did I realize that something inside me understood this rhythm very well; knew that I must sustain this circle or else cling to the other end, over the

abyss. But once the strong rhythm was established it was easy, even natural to sustain: it would come back by itself.

THE MERMAIDS

Long ago, in the days before the flood, the mermaids came out of the ocean and chose to live on the land. At first they were received like visiting angels, with an innocence equal to their own, but within a year some had been harnessed by men who made them dive for sunken treasure. And though these divers were reluctant to go down very far, the men would goad them to continue, and in this way they eventually reached the ocean floor, where a way was discovered to sustain life as if they were living on land. But this was the sacred kingdom of the mermaids, and when the men came back with the riches they had plundered, the other mermaids stopped singing, and finally they left the land for what they said would be for all time. Then it was not very long until their lives among men were no more than legends, and some had started to confuse them with their ancient enemies, the sirens. Yet among children the memory of mermaids was honored, preserved in the pages and pictures of many sea stories, and thus even their long absence did not erase them from memory, and many clung to the age-old prophecy that seven dolphins would herald their return.

In recent years, for many reasons, these forecasts were repeated more often, with greater insistence. It was not uncommon to read about those who had abandoned their home towns to live in lighthouses, where they spent their days keeping watch. Yet afterwards it was hard to explain what had brought us down to the beach that day. Behind us the hotels were almost empty, both guests and servants gathered on the shore. That morning seven dolphins had approached in a single file, and now the great wave behind them was coming closer. Yet at the last minute an ancient fear, long dormant, came to grip us once more. What would they be like—would they want to share their secret knowledge, or were they still seeking revenge. I stood with those at the back of the crowd, who

were prepared to be the first to escape. But even then it was too late to turn back: the mermaids were already among us.

PASSAGE

We walked through streets half foreign, half familiar, past houses half lighted, half in darkness. When we reached your house we said goodbye; after all, we were both from the same city, and now we were both strangers in the same city. I said we were certain to meet once more. You said nothing. And only when your house was behind me did I remember the book I had left with you, and it did not matter if the book had been written or not, for then I knew this must be a dream, and knew I would choose to wake up. So I left one world and gave myself to another, and in this way I entered a great darkness where no world exists. There I had nothing to stand on, and no window in which to see my face reflected, nor if I had stayed there could I ever have sons whose faces might reflect my own. This darkness in which I found myself grew vaster and my fear increased. Then I understood there was no simple passage from one world to the next, and that I myself who had created the world in which I had dreamed must now recreate the world in which I would awake. And no sooner did I understand than something of this world appeared in the darkness close enough for me to reach for, as a man reaches for a log to preserve him in the water, and I climbed on it like a man who has almost drowned, who knows the land will not refuse him and no longer needs to sustain himself. And then I awoke, resting on my bed, in this room, and it was day.

MY SHOES

For years I have been wearing these same kind of shoes. When one pair wears out I buy another, just like the first. I admit they are ugly, and that they never stay tied, but I cannot imagine giving them up. (So far, in fact, I have not been able to throw out a single pair. I have piled all the old shoes together in the closet. Sometimes I take them out and try them on. All of them still fit, but it is no longer possible to know which shoe went with which.) Lately, however, reports have made their way to me about the dreams others have had about my shoes. Someone has dreamed that I have only one pair, and that I am trying to force everyone to fit into them. And someone else has dreamed that I live in a bookstore, and that the racks are filled with my old shoes. One day this person came to browse when I wasn't there and accidentally knocked over one case, spilling the shoes all over the floor. Then she spent the whole evening putting them back in order, knowing I would be furious if I found them out of place. These dreams disturb me. At first I laughed when I heard them, but now I cross my feet, lean forward, and wonder what secret it is they tell.

Gerda Penfold

THAT'S NOT BURT LANCASTER NAILED UP THERE

You said and our teeth glittered
In our laughter. You gouged out this
Black and white woodcut Jesus
And I told you it was a cliché
And that nobody could do anything
With it anymore and besides
Your Jesus looks like
A hunk of meat, like
Rembrandt's bloody ox
And I don't want to look at it
And you said "Good" "That's
What I want" and I told you
Over and over how repulsive
It was and you said "Good"
And you said it over
And over
While Christ's head fell
Into the basket of his ribs
Encircled with a crown of
Stabbing thorns
Above his castrated humanity
And you made me see
It wasn't Burt Lancaster
Nor anything meek and mild

IN BELL'S DRUGSTORE

I was reading Baudelaire
Sitting in Bell's Drugstore in Canada
Surrounded by vapors, turbulences
Lumiere of Baudelaire
Like Missouri Caves
Of Huck Finn & Tom Sawyer and
A voice startled me, said beside me
You should not read Baudelaire
I looked into the face which sat
On the stool beside me, belonged
To the man from Ottawa teaching French
For the summer, and he said
A young girl like you . . . and
His eyes and gestures elaborated
On my youngness and I asked him
Quite seriously
What should I read?
And he said de Musset, Alfred de Musset
Some days later he was walking on the campus
And I was going in the other direction
He said hello and I said
I'm reading Musset
And he said
Don't read too much of him

I LIVE ON THE BORDER BETWEEN CHINATOWN AND NOB HILL

On the sidewalks of Chinatown
I notice strange, unusual vessels
And vegetables
The apples and oranges of Chinatown
Are cheaper and better
Than those at Safeway

I live on the hilly border
Walking up and down
Between signs I do not understand
I do not understand
Not even when I am supplied with
The translation to English
Permanent Security Agency
Quong Fook Tong Benevolent Association
Wing Sun Mortuary
Mee Mei where you
Can get "Simply Smashing!
Made With Icelandic Fish
Authentic Fish & Chips
The Way The English Do It!"
Windows filled with the roots twisted legs of ginseng
And the bulbous branches of ginger
How beautifully the ginseng containers
Are designed with cranes for
Longevity
And a man and woman promenading
On a cloud above
The lovely mountains
Other windows hold brown golden roast ducks hanging head and all

Silver and golden fish lying head and all
Cosmos I can barely
Touch
Or see
All around me
I feed my sales receipts to the pigeons
I walk into the Chinatown Library
Without knowing how
To read or write

MEETING JACK HIRSCHMAN AT STOCKTON AND VALLEJO

in the dark horizontal lines
on your grey teeth
your mouth in a funny facsimile
of a smile around them
your eyes like they
had drunk some hemlock
you looking like you'd
become almost only the thinnest
veneer of a mask over
your being all beat up inside
burnt out become
almost a wino
did i only afterwards imagine
the paper bag
under your arm bottle
tucked under
i didn't even recognize
you at first!
i looked wondering
why this guy'd spoken to me
and you stood there
on the grey sidewalk
your head tilting this way
like a bird's
you scooped me hollow
inside where my heart was
afterwards all day
i walked under shadow
shudder of it
you talked briefly about yourself

enjoying life you said
worst most obvious lie
i ever heard
but later seeing you
from across the street
you still looked good
in your trenchcoat
cap on the side
of your head walking
like something
we'd seen in movies
back in the 40's
still concentrating
on your image

i couldn't
keep
what i saw out of my eyes

Patricia Eakins

THE CORNER

Mary had weak eyes, and she had to squint to see through the swirling snow, screwing up her whole face, baring her tiny first teeth and a few gaps where bigger teeth soon would be. The wind whipped her cheeks and hands: she stuffed one hand into a pocket and clutched her picture tighter with the other. She wondered where she had left her mittens; her mother would be angry. Even the picture might not make up for the loss of the mittens.

With her white crayon, Mary had piled up drifts of snow around the tall brick house, and she'd put a snowman complete with carrot nose in the front yard. Her black crayon had made footprints leading from the house to a woodpile almost as high; her father made big fires on snowy days. There was curly smoke coming out of the chimney, and the windows were shiny yellow. Mary liked fires. Holding the picture close to her body with both stiff hands so the wind wouldn't tear it, she broke into a clumsy trot.

The only sound was the crunch of her boots in the snow. A few cars shoved through the weather silently: blind moles. The sidewalks were deserted; the other children had gone straight home from school, and Mary as usual was late. She was a little afraid, of what she didn't know. She had an excuse for being late: she had been looking all over the coatroom for her mittens. Maybe she was afraid she couldn't see the corner of Hill Street in all the snow and might keep walking on School Street until she was far away. Then night would come, she would be lost, no one would know where to look for her, and she would die in the soft cold snow. She peered through the white dots and made out the faint outlines of a corner. Her boots squeaked "home, home."

But what was that grey thing on the corner? A person. A murderer just waiting for someone to kill. Mary's heart thumped faster, and she tried to swallow the big lump in her throat. She made herself put one foot in front of the other, and as she drew near the corner, she saw a white slash across the dark grey body: it was the safety-patrol boy.

Bending her head to the storm, she struggled forward, trying to hurry, hurry home. The world was like a snowstorm paperweight God had shaken. She stuck out her tongue to catch a flake the size of a penny, and a delicious chill spread her smile past her lips and over her whole body. She closed her eyes to feel it better, stumbling along in what she hoped was a straight line to the corner.

When she opened them, she stopped short. She would have gone back, but the school would be locked by now. She would freeze to death on the front steps of the William J. Smith Elementary School. Besides, her mother was waiting for her. So she had to keep going; why would they let Laurence be a safety-patrol boy anyway? Laurence was practically an idiot. He was at least a year older and a foot taller than anyone else in the school, and he'd been in the fifth grade for two years now. Every recess, he'd go galloping around the playground, his eyes bugging from lack of breath, blowing "Whoo! Whoo!" on the silver whistle that always dangled from a cord around his neck. "Whoo! Whoo!" *Please notice me. I'm a bird, I'm a train, I'm Laurence.*

Mary flexed her fingers and toes, curling and uncurling them with difficulty, and took a few steps forward. She felt like a skeleton rattling in the cold; one sweep of Laurence's big arm and she would fly apart. They'd find her bones in the spring: some in the gutter, some on the grass. Some missing, which children on their way home from school had found and pocketed. All gone. No more Mary.

The storm made a kaleidoscope of Laurence's face, and she saw now his eye and part of his glasses, now his ear, now the visor of his cap in between the flakes. He was smiling--or was it only the shifting snow that made it seem so? She squinted, trying to see how he really

looked, and took a few more steps forward. There was a tree next to her. She squeezed herself against it. Maybe he hadn't seen her yet. But he had. She knew he had. She could feel his sad brown eyes.

Everyone teased Laurence, even the kindergartners. Laurence would hang his head, and his pale spectacles would slide down his big shiny nose; his mouth would slacken, and his eyelids would droop, droop.

One day last spring on the playground, he had seen Mary watching him, and then he had started galumphing over, blowing his whistle. "Whoo! Whoo!" Right towards Mary, right past the swings--one, two, three, four, five, six swings.

She had been alone, playing ball on a bare brick wall of the school a little apart from the other girls in grade one.

"Seven's up, six's up, five's up, four's up, three's up, two's up, one's up . . ."

One was the hardest: the ball hit the wall, a whirl of plaid shirt around turning feet, and a smack as the ball hit a waiting hand. Mary almost always heard the ball fall behind her with a thud while she was still turning.

She had pretended she didn't know Laurence was there. He had started playing his own game, the snap of his big hands closing around his ball like teeth. Whenever he missed, a slow flicker of disappointment went through his eyes. He would find the ball on the ground, then look to Mary. Even if she didn't look back at him she could feel his eyes on her back, begging like a dog's. A big, clumsy, ugly, stupid, slobbering dog's. What if he put his paws on her shoulders and leaned over to lick her face with a grey, furred tongue?

Mary's head pounded; she was going to explode. A baked potato had exploded in her mother's oven once, and when they had opened the oven there was no more potato, just a white mess all over the oven. Mary would be a white mess in the snow, and no one would be

able to tell Mary from the snow. She would be swallowed up. She'd better move.

Before she really knew it, she was there, she was at the corner, right next to Laurence, and his whistle was swinging in front of her face. Back and forth, back and forth; it would get closer and closer and cut off her nose. Her lips were trembling; she clamped the lower one under her front teeth to keep it still as she slid the hand with the picture in it behind her back.

The snowflakes spattered on Laurence's glasses and dribbled down onto his cheeks, which were red from the cold. He was breathing hard, and the warm breath seemed to spread over her face like a film with every puff, although he wasn't that close. She looked at the ground. Her boots were trim and shiny, but Laurence's were torn and sloppy and dull, dull grey. They made the snow look dirty.

His glasses were creeping down his nose bit by bit as he leaned closer. He was looking right through her at the picture. He could see it or maybe smell it. He knew it was there and he was going to get it. He put out a tattered glove. She could see his raw pink flesh through the holes and worn spots. She bit down hard on her lip and thrust the picture into his hand before he could touch her.

Laurence moved the picture up close to his face and stared at it, his breath spreading over her house, her snowman, her yard.

Maybe Laurence didn't have a house; his mother was dead and his father beat him and kicked him every day. That was why he was so dumb. His father was the garbage man, and they lived in the middle of a big heap of garbage, and every morning Laurence had to go out and grub around for his breakfast. Hard orange peels, moldy bread, squishy rotten tomatoes, the bad spots from strawberries. Maybe some of his food came from her mother's garbage pail.

"Whoo! Whoo! Whoo! Whoo! Whoo!"

Laurence was hopping from one foot to the other, waving his arms like a huge bird's wings. The picture in his hand flapped and flopped

and tore a little in the wind. "Whoo! Whoo! Whoo!"

What if Laurence were a bird? All the other birds like Laurence had disappeared for the winter. They had started South too late, while they were flying the snow had come, heavy snow on their wings, so heavy they couldn't fly. One by one they fell to earth, where the snow had mounded over them. But there had never been any other birds like Laurence.

"Whoo! Whoo!"

Who was Laurence? She didn't even know his last name. Why was he an idiot? Didn't he have a house? Why was she always late, and why couldn't she catch the ball in time?

"Whoo! Whoo!"

Faster and faster hopped Laurence, and faster and faster he whistled. His glasses fell into the snow.

He couldn't see. He couldn't see without his glasses. His mother would be mad at him. Mary grabbed the picture out of his hand, and she ripped it into long strips. Then she ripped the long strips into little ragged squares, and holding as many pieces as she could tight in her hands, she ran and ran down Hill Street.

Once her feet came out from under her, and she fell on her back, the snow turned and turned above her head. When she spread her hands on the ground to help push herself up, all the pieces of the picture fluttered away from her. The snow she had melted by her fall wet some of them, and they darkened and clung to the sidewalk. New snow fell over them. Soon they would be all covered by snow.

"Whoo! Whoo!"

Laurence was still whistling on the corner, but she couldn't see him, no matter how hard she looked through the snow. Probably he was down on his hands and knees, hunting for his glasses. Mary watched the snow dim the bright little pieces of paper, speck by speck. Then she put her fingers in her ears and ran all the way down Hill Street,

bending her knees and shuffling with quick little steps so she wouldn't fall again.

At the corner of Howell Street, her street, she could see a tall red-brick house with yellow windows and smoke curling out of the chimney. Her house. The porch light was on. So were the street lights. Mary took a deep breath, then another. It hurt to breathe. Her mother would be sorry about the mittens, and it was late: the sky was dark and stars shone between the snowflakes. What if Laurence froze hunting for his glasses, or couldn't find them? What if he wandered blindly in the snow and fell in front of a truck? Just a red stain in the snow, and his safety-patrol belt ruined. Mary spread her arms out wide and ran towards her house. "Whoo! Whoo!"

Clark McCann

The Hermits

In lake Koko-nor, 'the blue lake,' there was a small island on which three hermits lived. There were no boats on the plateau, nor materials with which to make them, and the island was accessible only in the winter when the lake froze. It was then the hermits were re-supplied with provisions by the surrounding nomads for the coming year. In rare years when the lake did not freeze, the hermits starved to death and were replaced the following winter by three new volunteers.

from *The Conquest of Tibet* 1934

White clouds driven south-
 splinters of ice
 melting in the waves-
 Pray for the deep
snows and a cold to kill
our starving-
 God, we chose to
winter our lives
 upon these stones
 now you send the
grass on the hillsides
 and the chill
 we were born with
leaves our bones

Are we not pure enough?
 our lives turned

like a wheel to your calling
 our prayers
steady as flags on the
 great temples-
The land we left was barley
 furs and milk-
 I followed the wandering
bells of the herd and
 tasted butter
 in my fathers tent-

Here
if one flower
 blooms
 and holds
we will die by summer
 and we do
not ask for flowers, God
 but ice
to bear us for
 another winter

Warren Cooper

LOOSE LEAF ENTRY FROM THE DIARY OF NOAH ASCH

My father, the escaped murderer, has thrown me out of his home. He found a hair in his soup and, from the color, length and curl, knew it had come from my beard.

I should ask for a second chance. I should remind him that one hair of a headful is nothing. I should call to his attention the example of the traditional Jewish dietary law which allows a meat dish to be served even though a droplet of milk has accidentally fallen into it. But he would raise his right hand and point out that it was possible only after many prayers were offered; as if that made the difference and was all important.

It is not that I am afraid of being on my own. I am thirty-nine years old. I have been alone before. When he was convicted of my mother's murder and sent away to print license plates for the rest of his life, I was alone. I worked, I ate, I slept comfortably in the master bedroom. I read books in his library about love and plagues and the lives of great men and women. I kept busy.

But I wonder, now that he has put down his foot, so to speak, how it will be for *him*. He cannot go out, for everyone remembers him. He would be arrested in a moment. He cannot call someone in, the house would be shut down by the government. As far as they know, I am the sole inhabitant.

In the bathroom I have built a system of handles to help him shower and use the toilet. In the prison they cut off his feet to keep him from winning his freedom. He was unhappy there. He had tried to escape twice when they finally used that harsh measure. But he learned to walk on his hands. He learned to run on his hands. When the guards slept he practiced, pacing the confines of his cell, learning

to jump and climb walls with his hands and his stumps. Because they never knew his great need for freedom, the wardens took pity on him and let him roam the grounds of the penitentiary in a wheelchair. He killed a guard to escape and carried the razor-sharp spoon in his mouth one hundred miles and six weeks. He walked through the forests on his hands and ate berries and dead animals he found along the way.

The prison officials knew he had had help. They didn't know how it had been arranged, but a footless man could never escape the prison alone, they reasoned. When they came to his home they brought drugs and forced them on me. I was made to tell the truth. But I knew nothing. They won't come back again. If I knew nothing about the escape, they reason, my father would never reveal himself to me. I was not the accomplice.

I have dug up the cement of the basement floor, grinding the great pieces of green mortar and scattering the grains across the backyard grass. I made a pool of one half of the cellar and used the earth I removed to start a garden in the other half. The windows have been blackened but the flowers grow gaily under the special artificial lights.

Among the townspeople I am thought a drunkard, but the liquor I buy is for him. At work they have heard this rumor and wait for the day that I will bring my hell to the shop. I work when I am ill for fear someone will come to this house to catch me sloppy drunk and, instead, find him.

Before he escaped I had a lover. But it is six years now and she has children and a husband who minds her business. The telephone rings only with wrong numbers. The neighbors have given up, grown cold and angry with closed doors and shutters, tired and disinterested with their wonder-whys. Their tantalized children point the house out proudly to their horrified, out-of-the-neighborhood friends.

For me it would be easy to walk away and leave the door open; knowing he would never risk shutting it, knowing he would die in

this house, fall in the bathroom, drown in the pool. For me the loss of a hair of my beard might bring the long-awaited gift of my father's death. But the burden of his life is on my life. I could not stand under the added burden of his death.

It is not unheard of for a son to hate his father. I have read of many instances of this in my father's books. But I do not hate my father. If anyone, I hate myself for what I have made of this house. In the winter the snow falls, piles high and melts unseen and silent. For my father it might as well always be night. The shutters shape shadows on the floors and the sun warms the street for weeks before that warmth weaves indoors. The sounds of the children's summer games coming through the walls are drowned in the echoes of my father's splashing in his cellar pool.

I cook his meals of course. That is why my beard hair was in his soup. I am a good cook, having had much practice. But I would like to cook for someone else some nights. My father is fickle in his likes and dislikes, loving and leaving the same meal two nights in two weeks. He is a connoisseur of fine wines but drinks them like an alcoholic. When he becomes drunk, at least four nights a week, he walks into things on his hands. He has to be led upstairs by the buckle of his belt.

I am no longer afraid of him. He is old now, and weak. How often he has to sleep in the library, lacking the strength to climb the stairs, even though he is sober. How could he hurt me? I have long since hidden his sharpened spoon, burying it in his garden under the weight of the earth from his pool. I could walk out of this house and escape forever and neighbors would guess I was simply taking a walk to help my digestion.

I thought of letting him die in darkness. I could simply ignore each bulb as it burned out. He could never replace a single light. He would fall to his death trying to walk up the cellar steps on his hands in the dark. He would huddle under the last lit bulb and curse my birth.

By dinnertime he will have forgotten that he threw the soup at me and screamed his own fate at me, telling me to leave. He will pound his pad-like palms on the table until the thick callouses crack and bleed or until the boards break. He will begin bringing the walls of his house down upon him, tearing the furniture from one wall to dash it against another. He will sit on the floor, his stumps crossed under him, his black eyes yellow with madness as he tears the carpet from the wooden planks.

Next month my father will be sixty years old. His wife is dead and he is becoming blind. His mind has been bent back and forth like a black wire. When it gets hot from the friction his eyes shine yellow. I ask myself if it will finally snap in two like a length of wire.

Yesterday he ran about the master bedroom on his hands crying and calling my mother's name aloud, crashing into the four walls of their room. The door was closed and locked and I was afraid he was trying to kill himself. My mother often said that everything came in threes. But she is dead and everything she said has less and less meaning for me, living with my father, her murderer.

On the bed in my room is my suitcase. I have packed all my possessions and still I have more than half of the space left empty. It will do no harm to steal books from the library. Though he is going blind he will surely never offer them to me. I hear him splashing in the pool, thrashing the surface with his stumps, unable to swim all the way across but able to keep from sinking. For a man his age he is unusually strong. I often wonder what he would be like if they'd cut off his hands instead.

Perhaps I should prepare his dinner before going. I could leave after he has fallen into his dream-screaming sleep. I could walk out, leaving all the lights off and the door open. I could put a chair at the head of the stairs. I could push the dirt from the garden into the pool. I could loosen the screws holding together the handles in the bathroom.

I could set fire to the foot of his bed. The authorities would find his charred bones among the rubble of this house and think that they are mine. The bones of the feet are small bones like the bones of the hands. It is likely that both would be lost in such a blaze. No one would suspect a crime had been committed. I would find a new home in the south where no one knows me, or my father's ill-fortune. In the time it takes to strike a match I might be made a new man. Sometimes I think that I will do just that, murder my father, the escaped murderer. But there is a certain amount of humor in this situation which will not be denied.

The very rooms of this house, refurnished as they are, for a footless man, are as mad themselves as he is. Sometimes I think that the echoes of his ranting are not echoes at all, but the sound of the house itself roaring with laughter at the jerking gestures of his stumps as he hurries from one room to the next on his hands, to his death; and to my death as well.

Leonard Gilley

NORTHWEST BY SOUTH

it was mid-
winter
the snow as deep
as salt
at sodom
and the forceps
were thickened
with flesh
from wrenching me
out
a reluctant birth
freud might have said
and i explain
mockingly
my now yearning
for florida
from the wintry
landscape into which
i was born
and blanketed
and carted home screaming
in a stifling blanket
no more
my father said
no more children
as soon as you
are well
he said
to my mother

you go back
to the doctor
and have yourself
fixed
for the time
being he said
you open your mouth
woman

and work my jizzim
with your tongue
i am an only
child
and my father
and my mother
both old now
resent
my existence
more even
than they resent
each other
yet they still live
together
with a curious
passion
and hatred
and pleasure
they are human
my wife says
and i agree
my wife and i
get along fine
except

she wants to relocate
in alaska
and i dream
of florida
and my own orange
trees
cold my wife says
she is used to it
she was born
into it she says
she cannot tolerate
humidity and heat
and i like
to feel
the sweat running
down my flanks
and dreaming
i touch
the gold
of oranges ripening
in the sun
florida she says
is rattlesnake
country
you don't want
to go there
yes i do i reply
i want to go
to florida
and have some
land of my own
grow my own
food and drink
in the sun
that's what i want

i say
remember your parents
my wife replies
they are old
they could not
come south often
to see you
good i reply
alaska she says
alaska i think
is a cold
goddamn place
milton's hell
with satan
suspended and shit-
streaked
from his anus
crystalline-brown
down his
hairy frozen
testicles

with dante climbing
for daybreak
oh i was
born in hellish
winter
and have lived
these forty years
close to home
like a rattlesnake
listless cold-
in-the-blood

in the pale winter-
sun writhing
in the spring
coiling in summer
turning too soon
torpid by autumn
sure excuse
for my wailing
death-
rattling existence
here in maine
tall timber
and freezing rain
hammering
my skin
cleansing me it is true
wiping away my wife says
the death rattle
caught like a stone
in my throat
she is right
of course
i am wrong
to seek a vector
south
from the life
i came into here
and have lived
so long
that i am ageing too
like my parents
only i don't feel
old or wrinkled
i feel youth
flaring

in the veins of my hands
i love the rare
summer days
when the sun
bakes into my hands
and the fingers
reach south
imaginatively
i drive an auto
my wife beside me
in a flowered
summer costume
along the gulf
heading high octane
to the magic
destination
prepared god-like
for us
oh i could laugh
from deep
within
laugh
for no reason except a struggle
of happiness
if only my wife
would laugh too
but she is wet
with perspiration
and the dream
is only a myth
the graveyard plot
has been arranged
four places on the hill

choice location
purchased by mom
and dad
for themselves
and my wife
and me
childless
though we tried
we tried for children
the sperm
were worthless
puny little bastards
as lifeless
as an october snake
or satan or god
suspended forever
in heaven
or hell
i could cry
but there are no tears
i could dance
but my legs
still in my pants-legs
refuse to move
i could die
and be the first
of the four
in the graveyard
but the blood pounds
in veins
skeined like branches
of an oak
too rugged yet to fall
my wife holds

me often
she is a very cuntish
sure woman
in the best sense
she accepts my cock
warmly widely eagerly
under blankets
she would lovingly
warm me forever
the way northern people
love best
but i complain
and perhaps she should
bring a rolling pin
or its
equivalent down
firmly upon my skin-
taut skull
whacking sense into it
or whacking it
open
once and forever
she only
persists in being normal
and i rattle and hiss
softly
like a snake
threatened in the dry
husks of autumn
chill walking the air
toward winter
i shave and wash
and splash cologne
neatly onto my face
and stride forth

with a smile
nothing troubles him
colleagues say
except he is too honest
he should keep
his mouth shut
yes there is venom
they say
in his fangs
watch out
and if you can
find an excuse

arrange to lunch
with someone else
true i think
there is wisdom
in their words
i finger the
quivering forceps-mark
on my temple
every person's birth
encapsules
death someone
i am sure has said
or ought to have
said twenty times
said twenty times twenty
said it over and over
yet it is no
human excuse
for smiling too widely
for baring fangs

for destroying on principle
natural people or shadows
that glide
by the coiled
sun-lit reptile-me
me no not me
a reptile no
i reject
that metaphor
that cold
pun-deathcold
now i dance
god how i dance
observe the grace
the geometric movement
of my feet
extending out
of my pants-legs
my wife glides
with me
she laughs bubbly
now she says i know
you accept
alaska
my parents
slit-eyed on the sidelines
watch
and think son
now we know
you accept the
four-plot deathbed
ah ah ah
i dance and even
urinate warmly
into my own

pants-pocket
sweat
my neighbors say
see the sweat
staining the pocket
of our neighbor
dancing so gracefully
with his wife
and they come
onto the floor
and dance too
we all dance and fade
like the film
8 1/2
but who is the
clown
where is the circus
i ask
and i could cry
instead i buy the drinks
and the huzzahs
go for me
up to the stars
because i am rich
because i am sterile
because mom and dad
made me

one horny hot night
sperm wiggling
like worms
swimming in a new
corpse planted

in the spring
to fertilize an orange
tree
still still still
when the evening
ends
when the violins
stop
strings loosened
and the mahogany
cover slides over
black and white
piano keys
and my wife
and i
take a cab
from the club
home
early morning
like a burnished
plump carrot-red guinea
pig
peers skyward
into black
and stars
fade green
like fake
emeralds
i touch my wife's
hand
i say all right
alaska
no is her return
no alaska
is not for you

i have always
known it darling
florida is right she says
ironically
i plead for cold
and she for heat
we laugh
the laughter fills the cab
then we are home
i pour two double brandies
and light the fire
in the fireplace
extravagant she exclaims
it is bedtime
it is daybreak
you are crazy she says
i know it
certainly
i am crazy
i touch the forceps-mark
on my temple
goddamnit-all i think
i count the bricks
above the fire
nine across
brick and mortar
to build a life
i scoff
discarding the weary
resemblance
the sun is touching
folios of flowers outside
the sun is
touching
the town

the sun is up
in florida
what time is it
in india
i ask my wife
darling it is time
she replies

to go to bed
the braided snake sleeps
and i sleep
yet what a beautiful fire
my wife says
i hate to leave it
and go to bed
soon it will be black cold dead
greasy ash
to be scooped by the maid
and poured
into the incinerator
to burn if possible
again
mom and dad
surely
are sleeping
now no nonsense
of lighting a fire
after the
dance
promptly to bed
breakfast
at the regular time
why

my wife and i
are on hindlegs
is not rational
and man/woman is a rational
beast
you are right
i say
it is time
for bed
we have nothing
to do today
so we should
get some sleep
i unhook my tie
i touch the identification
on my skull
Contributors

BRUCE BOEHNER is a Los Angeles architect-photographer. For the last four years, he has been photographing Victorian structures in California, with particular emphasis on Los Angeles. He recently won seven awards in the S.C.A.I.A. photography competition. The photographs in this issue were taken with a 4x5 view camera.

ROD BRADLEY's first published poems appeared in *Bachy* No. 3. With publication of No. 7 he becomes an Associate Editor of *Bachy*

KATE ELLEN BRAVERMAN was born in Philadelphia 2/5/49. She has a BA in Anthropology from Berkeley. She has lived and worked as a book reviewer in LA since 1971. Her short stories have appeared in *Viva*, her poetry in *Momentum* and *Ironwood*. This is her second appearance in *Bachy*. She holds a brown belt in karate, scuba dives and designs and makes all her own clothing.

WANDA COLEMAN's poems have appeared in *Momentum*, *The Mt. Alverno Review*, *The Journal of Black Poetry* and *Black Digest*. She has written for TV and the theater and was formerly editor of

Players. She describes herself as "a petticoat pornographer and a mommy. . . have typewriter, will travel."

WARREN COOPER writes (from Hillside, New Jersey): "At whit's end contemplated soowercide before your lettre, but decided to marry instead. Awaiting big brake-"

DAVID DAYTON reports: "I've had poems published in *Stonecloud*, *Spectrum*, and *Big Moon*, and will have work in upcoming issues of *Quarry*, *Poetry Northwest*, *New Letters* and *Wisconsin Review*."

PATRICIA EAKINS writes: "Did I mention to you or Bob Mehlman that the short story you took was the first I've had published and that the Van Gogh poem (*Bachy* No. 4) was the first to be published except for one in *Bravado*, which is edited by a friend? Maybe that would be more interesting for the bio section of No. 6 than what you already have from me."

DEBORAH ENGEMAN "born Deborah Taylor in 1951 and brought up uneventfully in the suburbs of Chicago. Was intended from a remarkably tender age to replace Picasso or usurp the Wyeth dynasty. To this ignoble end attended the Art Institute of Chicago, Scripps College, and the Claremont Graduate School, at which last named place the banality of mainstream art was forcibly brought home. Understandably disheartened and unsettled by a disastrous attempt at marriage, the closet poet emerged to discharge a volley of songs in the general direction of the institutions she owes one to."

LEONARD GILLEY "owns an earth-colored ball that he kicks around the lawn. The neighbors say he is mad. They invite friends to drink martinis and to watch. They gather at windows with tiny cold cups in their hands and watch Gilley, sweating, kick the ball. Soon enough the game is over and Gilley disappears into his lodge. Meanwhile, he is being discussed. He is not a world figure, but he is healthy and in his neighborhood he is famous. Perhaps that is not a great deal, but it is something."

JOSEPH HANSEN has published 16 books of fiction, the latest being *Trouble Maker* (Harper & Row, 1975). He lately spent nine months in London working on a novel with the help of a Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. "Horse" is the first chapter of that novel. Another chapter, "Burr," has been printed in *Transatlantic Review*.

RICHARD HASHER boasts: "Yes, I was a photographer. It was an experiment in life style and in craft. I learned to see with a wicked eye: nature, people...and myself. The portraits are culled from an old suitcase, and lest I be accused of vanity, I admit, I am vain also. Honestly, some of the fingers which pushed the shutter were not mine, but I was always there, the photographer."

CHARLES L. JOHNSON lives, writes and photographs in Venice, California. Two of his short stories appeared in BACHY 5.

ROBERT KINERK lives with his wife and son on North Haven island in Penobscot Bay, Maine, where he works, from time to time, at handyman jobs for the summer people. He has had stories accepted by *Scree*, *Next*, *Cheap and Fast*, *Kineo Writing*, *New Story*, and *Aspects*.

RONALD KOERTGE's recent books are *The Hired Nose* (MAG Press) and *My Summer Vacation* (VPC Press). Also *Tarzan and Shane Meet the Toad* (Russ Haas Press) with Charles Stetler and Gerald Locklin, based on a reading given by the three poets at Biographics.

JAMES KRUSOE is Associate Editor of Beyond Baroque Foundation Publications. His poems have appeared in many leading quarterlies. This is his first appearance in *Bachy* since No. 2.

GREG KUZMA edits *Pebble* and the Best Cellar Press series of poetry pamphlets. This is his third appearance in *Bachy*. THEODORE LABRENZ has twice won the James Phelan Award in Drama: in 1964 for *The Grass's Springing* (published in *First Stage*) and in 1968 for *Lovejoy*. His work has also appeared in *Westways*

and *Prairie Schooner*. Since 1969, he has been teaching English at California Lutheran College. "Annabella" is his first published piece of fiction.

PATRICK LEAHY lives in Santa Cruz, California. His story "Dream of the Man Who Wouldn't Die" appeared in BACHY 4. He is preparing a collection of 14 or 15 stories for possible publication.

GERALD LOCKLIN received a Bachy Contributor Award for "The Continuing Saga Of Bruce" in No. 4. (See announcement facing page 1 of this issue).

CLARK MCCANN was born December 11, 1942 in Washington DC. Grew up in LA. After high school lived in Mexico for 2 years as apprentice bullfighter under Sidney Franklin. Then US Marines and work as a commercial pilot in Australia. Graduated in 1971 with MA in anthropology. Now working as a counselor. Married to a wonderful woman. Long range goals — to live near the sea in Mexico and write like Ted Roethke.

RACHEL MICHAUD has been writing poetry since she lost religion in high school. She writes: "I am young. I have never been published before."

JERRY OLEAF has an unstoppable 15-foot jump shot. This is his first appearance in *Bachy*.

GERDA PENFOLD lives in San Francisco. Her first book of poems, *Done With Mirrors*, has just been published by Vagabond Press. New poems will appear in the forthcoming issue of *Purr*. She writes: "John Bennet tells me his *Murmurs* and my *Mirrors* are selling well out of the City Lights . . . I'm still doing unemployment, and the beach, Mt. Tamalpais, etc."

JAMES RAGAN writes: "Publications include *Poetry Northwest*, *Shenandoah*, *Northwest Review*, *Ohio Review*, *Mundus Artium*, *Greenfield Review*, *Jeopardy*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Windsor Review*, others. A book of poems entitled *In the*

Talking Hours. Editor of *Lotus*. Nominated for Borestone Mountain Poetry Award. My play *Saints* performed at Counterpoint Theater (Hollywood), Pittsburgh Playhouse, Ohio University Theater, and currently prepared for off-Broadway production. Currently working with Paramount on pre-production of two of my original screenplays."

HOWARD SCHWARTZ has published prose and poetry in over 50 magazines, including *American Poetry Review*, *Chicago Review*, *Minnesota Review*, *The Lamp in the Spine* and *Invisible City*. He is the author of a book of parables, *A Blessing over Ashes* and the editor of an anthology entitled *Imperial Messages: One Hundred Modern Parables*.

LAWRENCE SPINGARN is the director of Perivale Press in Van Nuys, California, which will publish the anthology *Poets West* in December, 1975. He appeared in *Bachy* No. 4.

D.E. STEWARD lives in Basel, Switzerland and writes novels. "Charly" is part of *Bjornoy Radio*, the one most recently completed. His work has appeared in *Transatlantic Review*, *Beyond Baroque*, *BACHY* (2 and 5) and other journals.

WILLIAM TALCOTT writes: "You can say that I'm just beginning to get some attention in the small presses after an 'apprenticeship to the muse' of 5 years. I'm an associate editor of *Isthmus* and will be the sole editor of *Isthmus* 5 which will come out in fall 1975. *Isthmus* and *Bachy* have at least one thing in common — good design."

STEVEN UTLEY's short stories, poetry and articles have found homes in such publications as *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *Vertex*, *Adam*, *Galaxy*, *Topper*, *Poetry Today*, as well as in a number of anthologies. "Currently I'm working on an anthology of my own and trying to psyche myself up to the writing of my first novel."

FREW WAIDNER's stories have appeared in *Beyond Baroque*, *Denver Quarterly* and *Pequod*, and will soon be published in *Northwest Review*, *South Dakota Review* and *Long Island Review*. He has taught at five colleges and universities, but is presently devoting himself to creative writing. He lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

BACK ISSUES OF BACHY

No. 1 (Vol. 1, No. 1). \$4. *Poems by*: Beau Beausoliel, Charles Bukowski, Luis Campos, William V. Davis, Dennis Ellman, Stuart Friebert, Sandra Gilbert, John Haines, Sam Hamill, William Matthews, A. P. Russo, David St. John, Benjamin Saltman, Susan Shaeffer, A. G. Sobin, William Stafford, Paul Vangelisti, others. *Fiction and prose by*: Robert Aber, Elliot Fried, William Mohr, Henry Roth, Eleanor Zimmerman, others. *Art and photography by*: Blair Allen, W. H. Braun, Jr., Deborah Eddy, Roger Penney, Lisa Rose, Lon Sigelman, others.

No. 2 (Vol. 2, No. 1). OUT OF PRINT. *Poems by*: Douglas Blazek, John Harris, Leland Hickman, Linda King, James Krusoe, Greg Kuzma, Lyn Lifshin, Harry Northup, Ted Pejovich, Gordon Preston, Rick Smith, Peter Wild, others. *Fiction and prose by*: James Holmstrand, Robert Eaton Kelley, Michael McCarthy, William Mohr, D. E. Steward, Tristine Rainer, others. *Art and photography by*: Wilton David, Jane Fusek, Gary de Galla, Sushuela Goodwin, Linda Haas, Euripides Toro, others.

No. 3 (Spring 1974). \$2. *Poems by*: Roderick Bradley, Paul Brooks, Joseph Bruchac, Gretel Ehrlich, Michael C. Ford, Joseph Hansen, Betty Healy, Ken McCullough, William Pillin, Herbert T. Schmidt, Jr., Frances Dean Smith, Christine Zawadiwsky, others. *Fiction and prose by*: Annabelle W. Bergfeld, Joseph Hansen, Dick Kortz, Chuck Lustig, George W. Smyth, Michael Wilding, others. *Art and photography by*: Blair Allen, Jerry Fredericks, Sandra Goodwin, Steven Louie, Geoffrey Montagu, others.

No. 4 (Autumn 1974). \$2. *Poems by*: Edward Butscher, Joel Dailey, Michael C. Ford, Leonard Gilley, Joseph Hansen, Jack Hirschman,

Ronald Koertge, Greg Kuzma, Gerald Locklin, William Mohr, Lynn Shoemaker, Lawrence Spingarn, John Thomas, others. *Fiction and prose by*: Robert Eaton Kelley, Patrick Leahy, Gerald Locklin, William J. Margolis, Henry Roth, Benjamin Saltman, Don Thompson, others. *Art and photography by*: Margaret Falk, John Findlater, Jerry Fredericks, Shoin Fukui, others.

No. 5 (Summer 1975). \$2.50. *Poems by*: Jack Crawford, Jr., Samuel Eisenstein, Anne Valley Fox, Bob Greenfield, Gary E. Ligi, Gary Lusson, William J. Margolis, William Mohr, Mike Rose, Bob Webb, Christine Zawadiwsky, others. *Fiction and prose by*: Kate Ellen Braverman, Bob Greenfield, Frances Hall, Ruth Moon Kempfer, Tristine Rainer, D. E. Steward, Lawrence Stewart, others. *Art and photography by*: Kim Cannazzi, John Findlater, Byron Petrides, Jan Gealor, Mary Trainor, Susan R. Rubinstein, others.

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