



AU VERSO



St. John's College, Santa Fe, NM 87501-4599

All rights remain solely with the artists. All works and publication are by the students, staff, and alumni of the college.

Au Verso, Spring 1989

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>
4	<i>Precursors</i>	Byron Schneider
	<i>Alone at Mr. Steak</i>	Maxx Cassidy
5	photograph.....	anonymous
6	<i>The Festival</i>	George Popham
	<i>Home</i>	John Carle
7	<i>Portrait of a Young Engineer</i>	Michele M. Reutter
8	photograph.....	Adrienne DeGuerre
9	photograph.....	Adrienne DeGuerre
10	<i>The Adventures of Girlchild</i>	Ron Lahr
13	ink drawing.....	Teresa Hennigan
14	<i>Moebius Farm</i>	Susu Knight
15	pencil drawing.....	ZaZa Katz
16	untitled.....	James Papiano
	<i>Forgive Me</i>	Maxx Cassidy
17	<i>Death by Bus Crash</i> <i>of an Indian in America</i>	Jonathan Skinner
18	<i>Fifth Street Tenants</i>	Ange Milinko
	untitled.....	James Papiano
19	photograph.....	Alexander Farnsworth
20	photograph.....	Saul Laurels
21	<i>23rd and Irving</i>	George Popham
22	photograph.....	Robert F. McClees
23	<i>From India Journal</i>	Eran Williams
24	ink drawing.....	Brad Jackson
25	<i>The Hardened Heart</i>	Michele M. Reutter
	<i>The Inevitable Comedy</i>	Maira Russell
26	<i>Looney and Frooney</i>	A.J. Rappin' Deth
	<i>Little-known Dialogue of Plato</i>	anonymous
27	<i>Clotheslines</i>	Mary Welliver
28	<i>Tess</i>	George Popham
30	charcoal drawing.....	Anne Boynton
31	<i>This is the Truth</i>	Maira Russell
	<i>Pain</i>	Maxx Cassidy

Cover: Julia Winiarski

Title Page: Jonathan Martin

Table of Contents (continued)

32	<i>Drive</i>	T.H.
33	untitled.....	George Popham
	untitled.....	Obdulia Leal
34	<i>For My Grandmother</i>	Moirra Russell
35	ink drawing.....	C. Ramos
36	photograph.....	Robert Porter
37	<i>Meditation</i>	Michele M. Reutter
	<i>Flashback</i>	George Erhard
38	ink drawing.....	Kere Lamphear
39	<i>For Gezebel</i>	Michelle Baker
	<i>I Knew an Actress</i>	Maxx Cassidy
40	<i>Sam And Charlie</i>	T. H.
43	photograph.....	Robert Porter
44	<i>Thermopylae</i>	Steven J. C. Williamson

Editors

Lisa Hollis
Timothy Hanes
Michele Reutter

Staff

Kere Lamphear
Inez Azcarate

Special thanks

Michelle Griest- Layout, Typing,
Design

Alita Lyons- Generous contribution
of time and skills

Sarah Maxwell- Computer
assistance

And all who participated in the
effort of this publication

Precursors

By Byron Schneider

"Nothing Will Come Of Nothing"
—Shakespeare

You look into the face of your elders
as into the face of a coin, seeing nothing.
Nothing of inspiration or horror,
nothing of extremity. Nothing propagated
except the fear of wrong and in turn
the fear of wrongness received.

What use is it to preserve what is nothing?

Not the secret to be hidden, but
nothing to reveal. No lips that mingle,
no lips grateful for greed. No information
no opinion, no form, no departure,

nothing to hate except nothing.

Alone At Mr. Steak

By Maxx Cassidy

Winter 1988

The loneliness is a loud silence.
Distant voices creep into my head
And fill my mind with private thoughts not my
own
That softly scream to me thru the silence
And call me into a world where I know I am
not welcome.
But each voice passes and is replaced by a new
one
That speaks of love or hate,
sorrow or joy,
comfort or conflict —
Another voice that speaks with hollow
vehemence
And reminds me
That I am utterly alone.

Au Verso, Spring 1989



The Festival

By George Popham

Tell me about the festival of the moon,
Tell me about the slick sand dance at low tide,
there's thirty watts of light when the moon is full,
a cool (molten) atomized silver illumination
yes, there were voices in the waves
and we danced on the wet sand to chaotic music
and we were swept down that strip of sand
reduced to helpless infants for a time
and the world was kind for a time
but we were scared understanding the chance

the world might not have been so kind
when we were infants for a time
and might have crushed us as we danced.
as it happened.....
your silver silk scarf fluttered to life in the wind
we ran with our eyes closed
and saw the sculptured dunes
Luck..
that the sea did not decide to take us away
the same ocean that had just coughed me up
like Jonah's great fish.

Home

By John Carle

If I let my eyes drop now, closing again
over this road, it will be the fever which
I last knew as a mere child
which I knew as the sweat in my
thin palms and long hair,
tangled by windy afternoons which blew
gold then as now

Though I have never known what made these
memories bind into tight husks of dry, stony grain
years later I still see us spread about
strected upon the chill and the evening reach

Portrait of a Young Engineer

By Michele M. Reutter

—For Bob Grahm

He likes to go to the Lafayette Coney Island
and order "the usual."

He likes the Irish pub,
though he isn't Irish.
(Perhaps, he says, he'll learn
to play the mandolin.)

His record collection's a pawnbroker's fortune.

He can cook gourmet Cajun.

He's been around
(You know, around the city),
"Hangin' out with his buddies."
Those were the days —
or were they?

He dreams of sails and
jeeps and skis,

can blaze an ATV with
more gusto than his
spiffy two-door sedan
(American, of course),
but doesn't often get the chance.

For now he lives the life of
microwave dinners,
disposable razors,

and macrame planters (with shriveled plants) ...

...and a stuffed puppy named Ruff.

He likes to scan the
stars and wonder.

He likes the silly books I read him.

And yesterday I saw a single tear in his eye.





The Adventures of Girlchild

By Ron Lahr

I.

Girlchild wasn't her usual happy self as she walked inside and took off her jacket, neatly hanging it in the closet like the adorable child she was. Her mother watched her mope for awhile before finally asking, "Girlchild, what's the matter? Did you have a bad day at preschool?"

"Nuh-uh," she said with her head down. Then after raising it so she could look her mother in the eye, "Mommy, is there a God?"

Her mother smiled, relieved, and even allowed a little chuckle to escape her lips before saying, "No honey, there isn't. Where did you hear such nonsense?"

Girlchild walked over to the counter and grabbed a cookie. "At school," she said after a few bites, "My teacher was telling us all about how God created Adam and Eve. It was neat."

The smile was no longer anywhere near her mother's face. "Your teacher told you that? Really?" Her hand unconsciously tightened into a fist, which she clenched and unclenched for awhile. "Well," she sighed, "I'll deal with that later, for now let's just you and me have a little talk. You know those things your teacher told you, they're called myths. Myths are stories that some people think are true, but really aren't. Do you understand?"

Girlchild frowned, "Not really Mommy. Why would Teacher tell us something that isn't really true?"

Her mother sighed as she gently picked Girlchild up and held her on her lap. "Well honey, that's a very good question. It's just something religious people do to children, it's called brainwashing."

"But Mommy," Girlchild asked, innocent face upturned, "aren't you religious?"

Her mother smiled. "Of course I am, I'm an Atheist." Girlchild frowned and slid off her mother's lap. "Teacher says Atheists are bad people, just like communists."

"Now Girlchild, that's just not so. I'm not saying communists aren't bad, but Atheists are the best people in the whole wide world. You want to be one of the best people in the whole world, don't you?"

"Mommy, isn't what you're saying brainwashing too?"

"Never you mind about that, just remember

that I love you."

"And that there's no God, right Mommy?"

"Right Darling. You're a very smart girl, it's no wonder your father and I love you so much."

II.

Girlchild was crying as she ran inside the house and straight into her mother's arms. She was so upset she forgot to close the door, but her mother decided not to say anything, at least until she knew why Girlchild was crying. "There, there, honey, what's the matter?" She set Girlchild down and saw the cut on her knee, as well as the dirt on her new white skirt. "What happened, Girlchild?"

"It was Littleboynextdoor," she stopped to wipe her nose with her hand, but thought better of it and got out a handkerchief. "He called me names and knocked me down."

Her mother got down on her knees and held her close, wondering what to do about Littleboynextdoor. "The bully!" she thought to herself.

But it was Girlchild's father who was to handle this problem. He'd been in the living room and had heard the whole story. If he'd been a lesser man he might have been angry; as it was, he was only determined to set things right. He walked into the kitchen and sat down at the table. "Girlchild, come on over here and sit on your ole Pop's lap."

Girlchild received one last hug from her mother and then walked over to her father's lap and climbed up onto it, crying the whole time — in between snuffles, that is. Her father gave her a stern look, "I think you've cried enough, Girlchild. Crying is an emotional release, and emotions are the enemies of reason. Besides, we'll need all our wits about us while we're plotting revenge on ole Littleboynextdoor."

"Revenge?" Girlchild said, dabbing at her tears with a clean handkerchief, "But Teacher says revenge is wrong, and only bad people do it."

Now it was Father who was expressing an emotion. "He does, does he?" He looked at his wife. "So now he's a pacifist as well as a priest!" He took a moment to get his emotions under control before saying, very calmly, "Look Girlchild, revenge isn't bad; in fact, it's necessary sometimes. If someone hits you and you don't stand up for yourself and hit

them back they'll just keep picking on you." He reached out, tilting Girlchild's head up. "Revenge may not be enjoyable, but it is practical."

Girlchild did her pouting look. "But I don't want to hurt Littleboynextdoor just because he hurt me. Teacher says I shouldn't sink to his level." Her father's stoic mask slipped. "Well maybe he's an idiot and you shouldn't listen to him! Huh! Did you think of that?"

"Honey! Get a hold of your emotions, look at the example you're setting for Girlchild."

Father sighed and nodded, "You're right, of course. But regardless, revenge doesn't have to be violent. There's no rule saying you have to hit him back; you can be a little more subtle." He pulled out his pipe and filled the bowl with moderately expensive tobacco. He smoked for awhile as Mother cooked and cleaned. Girlchild sat on his lap, enjoying the smell and watching her mother. Finally Father put the pipe on the table. "I have it. I know what our revenge will be. If I'm correct Girlchild shouldn't have any more trouble with Littleboynextdoor. All she has to do is act like she's in love with him and he won't go near her for fear of girl germs."

III.

Girlchild sat at her desk, hand's folded in front of her, expectantly waiting for Teacher to start class. She knew her parents didn't like some of the things Teacher said, but she didn't quite understand why.

Teacher looked up from his desk, smiled at the kids, and stood up. He walked to the front of the room and wrote the word 'God' on the chalkboard. He turned to face the class, "Does anyone here remember where God lives?" Every hand shot up, but everyone knew that Girlfromdowntheblock had hers up first. "Girlfromdowntheblock? Do you know where God lives?"

She smiled victoriously. "God lives in Heaven." She was more than a little smug.

"Exactly!" Teacher boomed, reaching into his pocket and pulling out a tootsie roll, "Here you go."

As she ate it he turned to the rest of the room. "Does anybody else want some candy?" The class shouted their affirmation. "Well, does anybody remember what Heaven is made of? Girlchild?"

Girlchild's parents had told her there was no Heaven so she hadn't raised her hand. "There isn't a Heaven, my parents said so."

Youngartist started crying, but he was a very temperamental child, as most artists are, so he was always crying.

Littleboynextdoor yelled out, "There is too a Heaven, and it's made of chocolate!"

Teacher smiled and tossed him a tootsie roll. "Good boy!" Minorityboy agreed, "And there's

lots of candy for everyone who wants some."

"And cartoons all day long!" said Girlfromdowntheblock, surprised at Girlchild's betrayal.

Teacher tossed them both tootsie rolls and tried to soothe Youngartist, "What's wrong Youngartist? Why are you crying?"

Youngartist sobbed, "I don't want Girlchild to go to hell."

Teacher sighed, "Neither do I Youngartist, but I don't think there's anything we can do. Like it or not, Girlchild's going to roast in Hell. But anyway, back to business. Here's a candy for whoever knows who God's child is."

Girlfromdowntheblock was smug all over, "We're all God's children."

Teacher gave her the candy, "True enough but God has one special child, who died for our sins, Youngartist, do you know who I'm talking about?"

"I do." Girlfromdowntheblock sang out, hand up. "Good, I'm sure you do, but what I really want to know is whether or not Youngartist knows. Do you?"

Youngartist looked up, wiping the tears from his eyes, "Jesus?"

"Good boy! Here's a candy!"

Youngartist looked up and a tiny smile formed on his lips. His eyes were dry of tears now, and full of hope.

My dad says Jesus was a blasphemer and a heretic and he's glad he was crucified." Girlchild hated to see her friends brainwashed.

Youngartist's hopes were crushed and he was crying again.

Minorityboy raised his hand, "My dad's Jewish and he says the same thing, but my mommy says he's our savior. Teacher, do you know which one's right?"

Teacher beamed, "Of course I do, your mother's right. Do you see now?" He held out a tootsie roll.

Minorityboy licked his lips, "Praise Jesus?"

Teacher tossed him a candy, smiling. He liked his job. He knew he was saving these kid's souls, except for Girlchild's. "I may have to pay a visit to her parents," he thought sternly. Teacher loved molding children into God's little troopers, and even better, he knew he was a shoo-in for Heaven.

"Okay children, now it's time for history. Everyone get out their history books and turn to Exodus, chapter 33, verse 11. Girlfromdowntheblock, would you start reading?"

IV.

The cartoons were over, only news was on now, so Girlchild went into the kitchen. Mommy was

hard at work, cleaning the oven with plenty of vigor. "What are you doing, Mommy?"

Mommy turned her head a little, "What does it look like dear? I'm cleaning the oven."

Girlchild got a glass of milk and some cookies and sat at the table to consume her snack. As she was doing so, her father came home from work, briefcase in one hand, trenchcoat in the other. "Hi honeys," he said with a little chuckle, "I'm home." Full of good cheer, properly controlled, of course, he went into the living room. "Where's the paper? I don't see it anywhere."

Mommy pulled her head out of the oven, "It's on the table dear, same as always."

"Oh, I found it. Thanks dear."

Girlchild was done snacking, "Mommy, why do you have to cook and clean and daddy just reads the paper?"

Mommy put down her sponge and smiled at her daughter, "It's the least I can do after your father's been working all day."

"But don't you work too, mommy?"

"Sure I do, honey, but not nearly as hard as your father does, and he makes twice as much money."

Father walked in, having heard the conversation thus far while in the living room. "I work around the house too, Girlchild, but we split the jobs between us. Your mother does the cooking and cleaning, and I do the yardwork and fix-it jobs."

Girlchild thought for a moment, "How come you only do yardwork on weekends, and mommy does her chores everyday?"

Her father smiled, "Cooking and cleaning is easy, but yardwork and fixing things takes muscle as well as brains; it's back to the division of labor. Men do the heavy work outdoors, and women do the easy work inside, but more. Fair is fair. If mother was stronger than I am she'd do the outside work, right hon?" He turned to look at his devoted wife.

"Right dear. Remember: A woman's place is in the home." She smiled lovingly, "Right dear?"

Father absolutely beamed, "Exactly! I love you honey, and I love you too Girlchild. Here, have a candy, both of you."

V.

Girlchild turned with the rest of the children to watch teacher come into the classroom, but when the door opened it wasn't Teacher at all, just some lady. The lady smiled nervously and walked to the front of the room, stopping in front of the chalkboard to write Agnosticsub on the board in nice big letters. "Good morning children, my name is Agnosticsub. How are you?"

Girlfromdowntheblock looked at Agnosticsub with distrust, her harsh, angular features accented by the fluorescent lighting, "Where's Teacher?" she

finally said.

Agnosticsub frowned, deep in thought, "I don't know."

Youngartist raised his hand until Agnosticsub saw it, then quickly lowered it.

"Do you have a question?" She asked, in her most reassuring tone.

Youngartist whispered to Minorityboy who then asked, "Is Teacher sick?"

Agnosticsub sat down at Teacher's desk. "I don't know that either."

"When will he be back?" Littleboynextdoor chimed in, sensing what was happening.

"I'm sorry children, I don't know that either."

Littleboynextdoor smiled, "What do you know?" The children all found this quite amusing and laughed heartily, but not from spite, for their young souls were too new to have been stained with spite, no, they laughed because it feels good to laugh, and it not only feels good, it is good, and they knew it.

Agnosticsub smiled and pushed her glasses back up to the top of her nose. "I know that when I don't have enough evidence to decide one way or the other, I shouldn't pretend I know."

Youngartist had that confused look on his face again, "What do you mean?"

Agnosticsub smiled, "It's like with religion, there's not enough evidence to prove that there is or is not a God but people still believe one way or the other, and even get in fights over their differing points of view."

Girlchild raised her hand, "What makes people do that?"

"Well," Agnosticsub sighed, "It's actually self delusion, but a lot of the time it's misspelled f-a-i-t-h, faith. If you have that you're no longer objective and cannot pursue things in a detached, rational way. I feel sorry for any of you who have faith."

Girlchild did her confused look, "My daddy says Agnostics don't make decisions cause they don't have any backbone, and they're cowards."

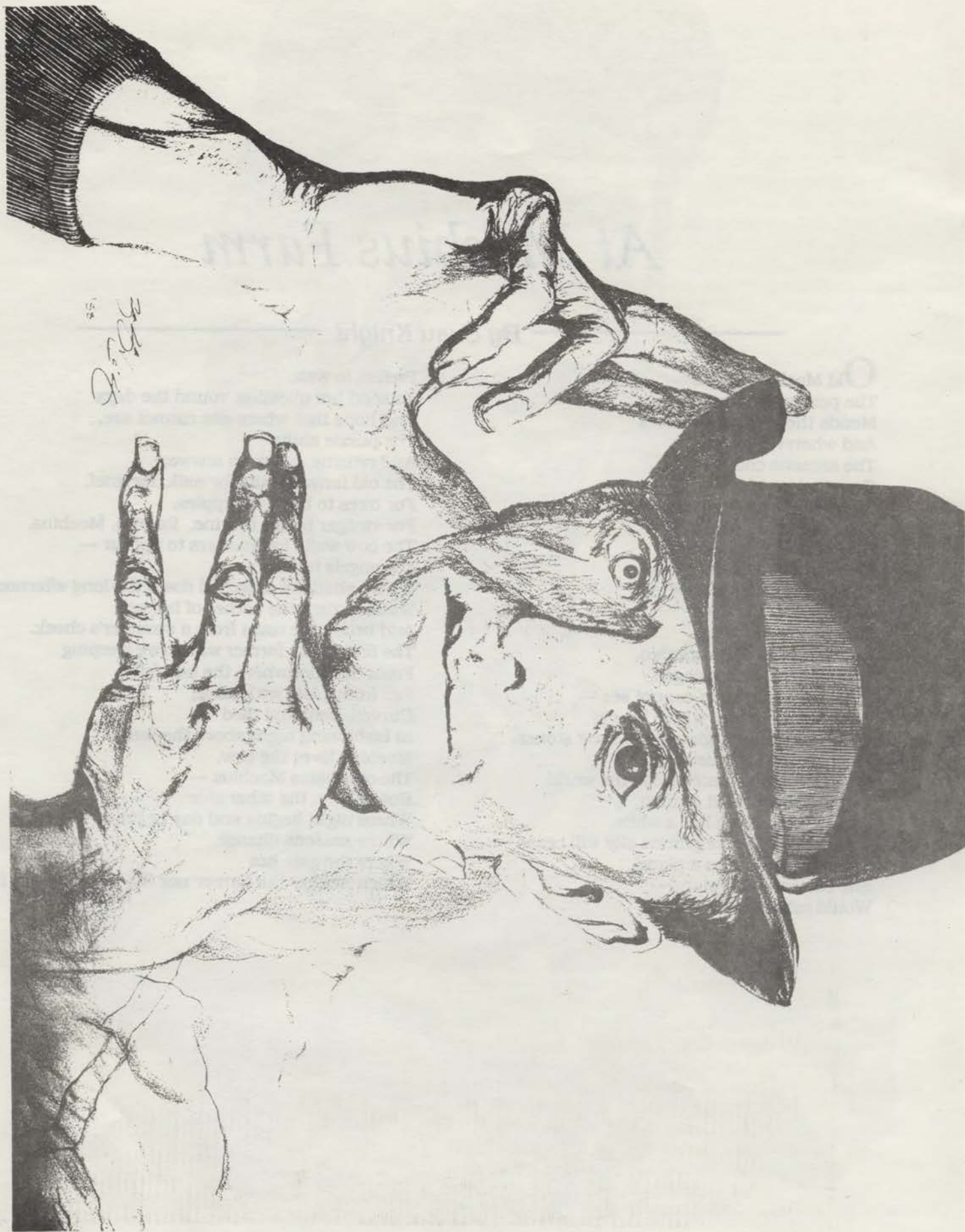
"Well, I don't know if I quite agree with that, but he may be right. Hmmm." Agnosticsub looked pensive for a moment.

At Moebius Farm

By Susu Knight

Old Moebius stalks
The perimeter of his farm,
Mends the walls and fences
And wherever he isn't
The seasons change —
Creep up on him,
Pursue him through his fields.
The land is full of life —
Bright beasts, black kine
Sides of a senseless genesis.
The farmer sits serenely now
In the eye of the cow
Milking and milking.
And the walls of his garden,
Where summer lies caged
Twist somewhere he cannot see —
Come again to him where he sits
With snow piled high against their stones.
The cow stands quietly
And wonders if winter stops the world
Or merely causes it to turn
Its face away from her a while,
Wonders where the granite sky will cease —
Subside slowly into a plane
She cannot understand—
Would rather not decide,

Prefers to wait,
To send her question 'round the days
And hope that where she cannot see,
The puzzle shifts
And returns to her an answer.
The old farmer waits for milk, for grief,
For trees to bear, for apples,
For vinegar to age to wine, for Mrs. Moebius.
The cow waits for answers to appear —
For angels to emerge
Where shadows departed down the long afternoon—
Waits to turn the corner of herself
And brush the tears from a stranger's cheek.
The face of the farmer will arrive weeping
From the spot where the sun fell,
Fell from grace with itself,
Curved, bent and died
In fashioning night above the farm.
Moebius loves the cow,
The cow hates Moebius —
But only on the other side
Where night begins and day begins,
Where seasons change,
Where the gate lies
Which neither the farmer nor the cow will ever find



SO MANY TIMES I'VE SAT ON THAT WALL
AND CRIED

HEAVING. THE WHITENESS OF MY FROZEN
BREATH MAKING THE PAIN IN MY VOICE
VISIBLE.

CAN YOU SEE THE PAIN IN MY VOICE?

JUST TO SEE YOU.

HELLO, WILL YOU BE MY FATHER?

I'VE SAT ON THAT WALL WAITING FOR YOU TO
COME HOME...WON'T YOU PLEASE TAKE ME OUT TO HAVE A CATCH?

By James Papiano

Forgive Me

By Maxx Cassidy

Forgive me

for I see the slight green in your eyes, and I wish there
was more.

Forgive me

for the red in your hair is never enough.

Forgive me

for your voice is too low,
for your freckles are too dark and there really shouldn't
be any because I would not think of lighter freckles if
there were none,
for your kiss is too free, too sweet, too known, too empty
of the pain of its absence,
for I long for a lie,
for I lie for a long, long time thinking of not you.

Forgive me.

Death By Bus Crash of an Indian in America

By Jonathan Skinner

In India the flight of great
adorned souls
has consumed
our forests, high rite of immor-
tality inlaid her to each degree,
burned the pyres. Yet horned Brahman,
shitting cow, returns to our stoves
the taken gift. My sisters in
steep light spread morning dung,
their small hand-prints in
circles drying on the wall.

Dying, I have these images — there is
no strangeness to them. I am
sannyasin, come to America for
the great wildness. My son
wears robes in his eyes of holiness.
He has taught me the uncut posture
of power lines walking, their
emptiness. A vast silence, thoughtless
as angels which observe reigns
through cries of each city.

It is Summer. Geese have flown North,
grazed a chain of highest
peaks, clustering Brahmaputra's
dry mouth. Water clear
and pure, touched by thousands, is
running about my feet.
I open the picture window (always
closed) and can smell canyon walls
stretching their wings up
through night, can smell the fires,
and corn roasting on spits.

Stopped earlier, in a station's gleaming
floors, among sacrificial eyes
of children thrall'd to electric game,

I foresaw this death and desired
to leave the bus. We conversed but
he had learned the fierce forests,
apprenticed already
in a dance that destroys, creating.

There are always sounds of planes
in the sky here, always people reading
the papers who do not see that
we are in the belly
of Nataraja—who shakes, turning
to each step, whose pupils small & black
roll, sweat, unwavering at each precipice —
and we must continue.

To cheer me my son unwraps last of
pan held, sacred, between us. We
chew & spit green breath. Canyon's steep
cradle sends the bus ricochet
through rock falling, down wet roads.
Below, saffron'd bodies float the river.
I am filled with sounds, cries, of
tea-sellers, holy men, women's song,
rickshaw bells rung, and foods frying,
murmur of prayer rising. I am
a body of sound, a river's syllable.

As lights are extinguished I ask
for my son's hand, I crane
my neck to see —
cliffs, moving fast, bowing out,
constellations falling, the sky above me,
below me, a very pure fire,
warming my wings.

Fifth Street Tenants

By Ange Milinko

The roses bloomed with shock

As bottle after bottle
Shuttled over the hedge
Into the trash can —or not.

If only one could shed petals
For tears — if only small cities
Sprung cleaner than roses
That grow ants in hidden pockets.

They sit on the stoop like marks
On the slate day after day
In the heat, waiting for rain
To lave them away. Below

The motorcycle sinks
On its paws, its stomach growing
Rabid. Another bottle,
Tossed from the roof's edge...

She lies open-eyed
Seeing little in the window

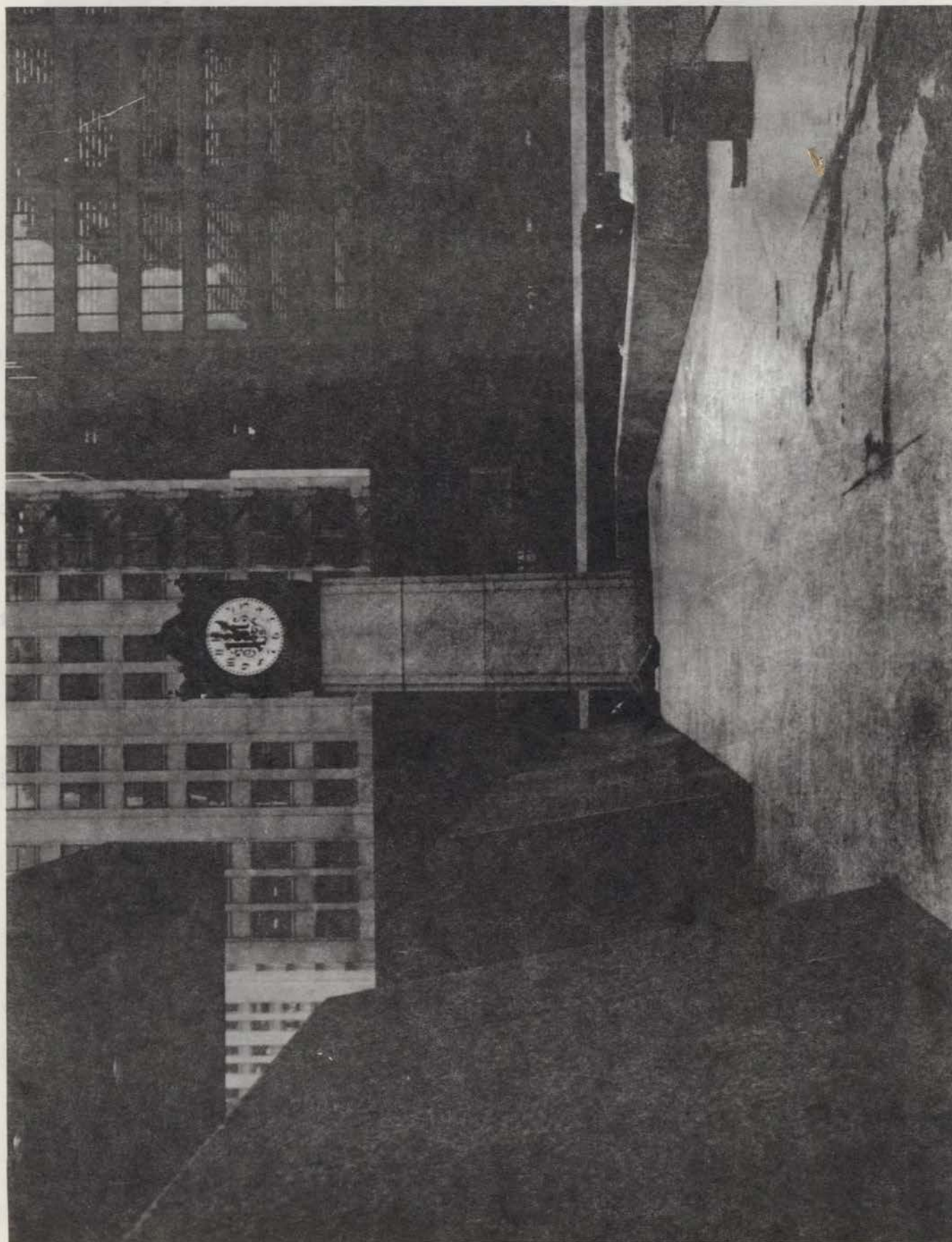
From her position but heat lightning,
Shocking new superstitions
Into old dreams, forked over
Her eyes — a wishbone — or her throat.

By James Papiano

YESTERDAY IN THE COIN-OP WASH
CROUCHED IN THE BACK DOOR NEAR HER
CLOSET
THE WOMAN SAT

IN HER POLY SKIRT,
SWEATING IN HER STAINED SUMMER SHIRT,
TALKING TO HERSELF
AND LOOKING AT A CHILDREN'S BOOK
ABOUT FROGS.



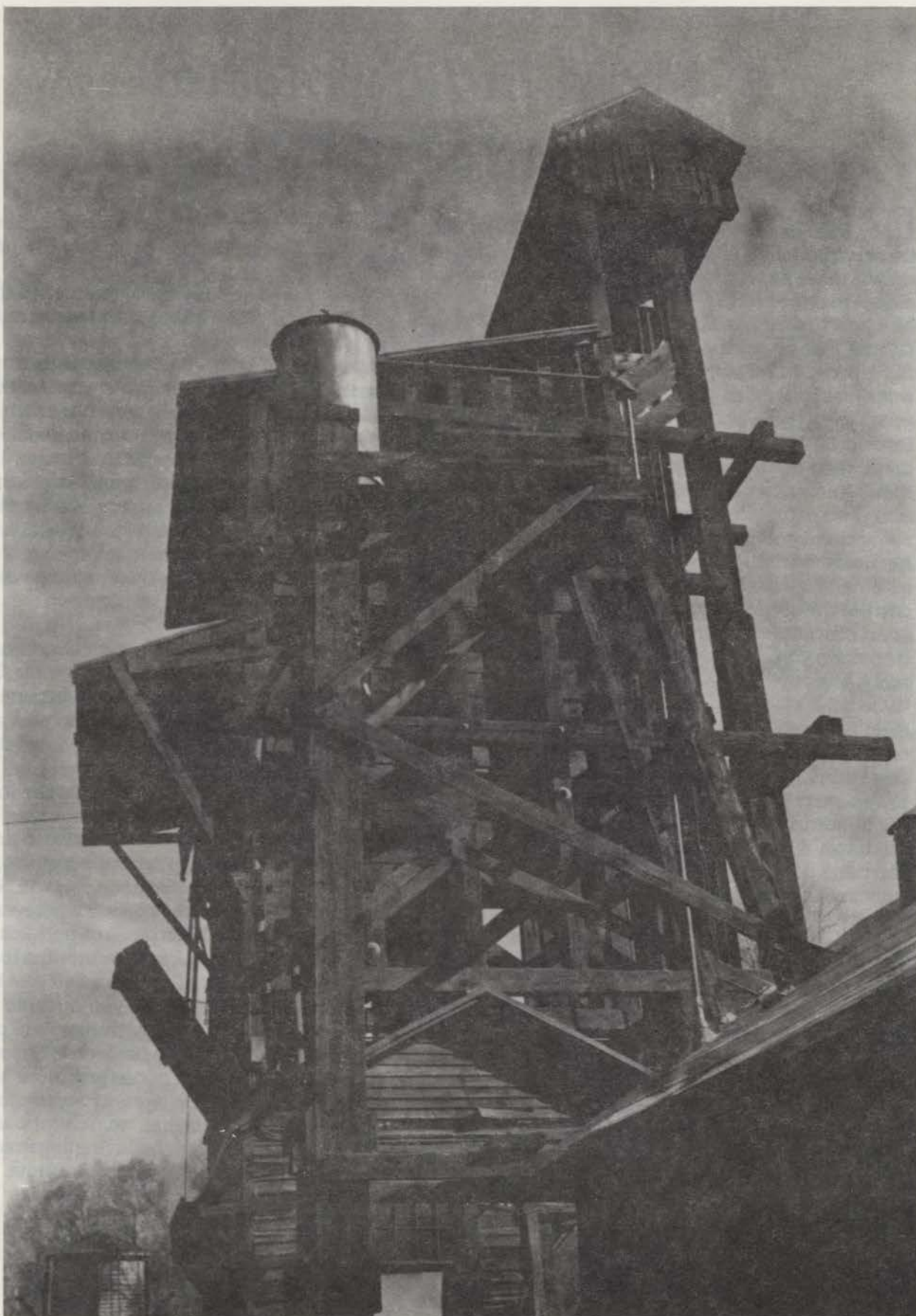


23rd and Irving

By George Popham

Irving, 23rd street, four corners and snow.
fire escape visions of striped streets,
and printed paths....
straight black sparking veins against the sky
mossy damp awnings
red bricks long suffering
and the meditating grey dome,
a concrete imposition
upon the branches of Couch Park trees...
yes even the grace of the curve,
beset by white, thief of colors.....
the flame lit
window drops
wrought iron rails
and silent sidewalks
damp leather in the soles of inadequate shoes,
and holes in my socks.
movie scenes, and shadows placed
the soundtrack in my head,
(for the best of dialogues in the snow)
breath and bones watching the biographical clips,
of lives I just may lead,
and books someone just might read.....
and it is you I must address
though the corner is bare,
and there are only the snowflakes that magically
appear,
crossing the animating line of light from the lamp.
Yes, your sheet will dissolve
one breath of the changing sky.
but you, where do you go....
I can see
the curve of your head and the sweep of your arm,

like a child in the costume of a ghost
yet the sheet will vanish in motion
and the image of you is lost....
are you hanging from the black beams of the
drawbridge.
awaiting the trains,
are you behind the stones by the river
when the water is low,
or in the rafters of the boathouse
when I sit on the pier,
do you camp in the forests of sidewalk cracks
on the fringes; in the city
in the knots of the trees along Morrison street
each with its own little fence,
have you spoken with gargoyles
or seen the future in the red tower lights
blinking on and off....
I look...in
broken bottles, shards of glass, empty paper
cups.
gutter grates, spinning winds,
green statues, copper rust,
thickened throbbing, and sometimes thinning
so tread your measures if your living
in this dirty darkened dance,
and take me off across the floors
dance me through the hidden doors
and revolving passages of night
to four drawn corners
to the bricks and stones
you are guiding the steamy
and the levity of rising
the watcher of the blue haze traveling souls.



From India Journal

By Eran Williams

Boy was I beat. That book, that book that's right there with *Moby Dick* in its Americanness, took me with it in all its craziness and I was as beat when I closed that last, lonely page, as a man would be who had just turned from 0 to 60 in three days. I'm not driving fast or getting any or taking drugs but I'm right there with Dean. It doesn't matter what you wear just as long as you are there. A new mantra — yess, yess, yess with a few "what's" and "well's" thrown in. So I was staring wide-eyed at the world anew with my mouth open and Beat as hell and I didn't know what to do 'cause I was getting feverish, crazy, when just then a big Tibetan puja came by like some circus rolling into a nothing town and stopped my brain twirlin'. They did something that made a smell exactly like the dry California hills that you can see the ocean from. I smelled that smell and was gone. Scents are amazing that way, they can transform you. So that scene is over and I'm walking away (the right way) around the stupa and I notice "Wough! It's just like Disneyland." And indeed it was even better. Candles everywhere. "Candle fucking orgy at the stupa," I could hear the Tibetans yelling this running through their tent city. I was so excited it was crazy. I was shaking and I just had to go get my hands on some of these candle things for myself. I did, too. I lit a few candles around the place where the lama does chu and became a part of the whole universe of flame creators.

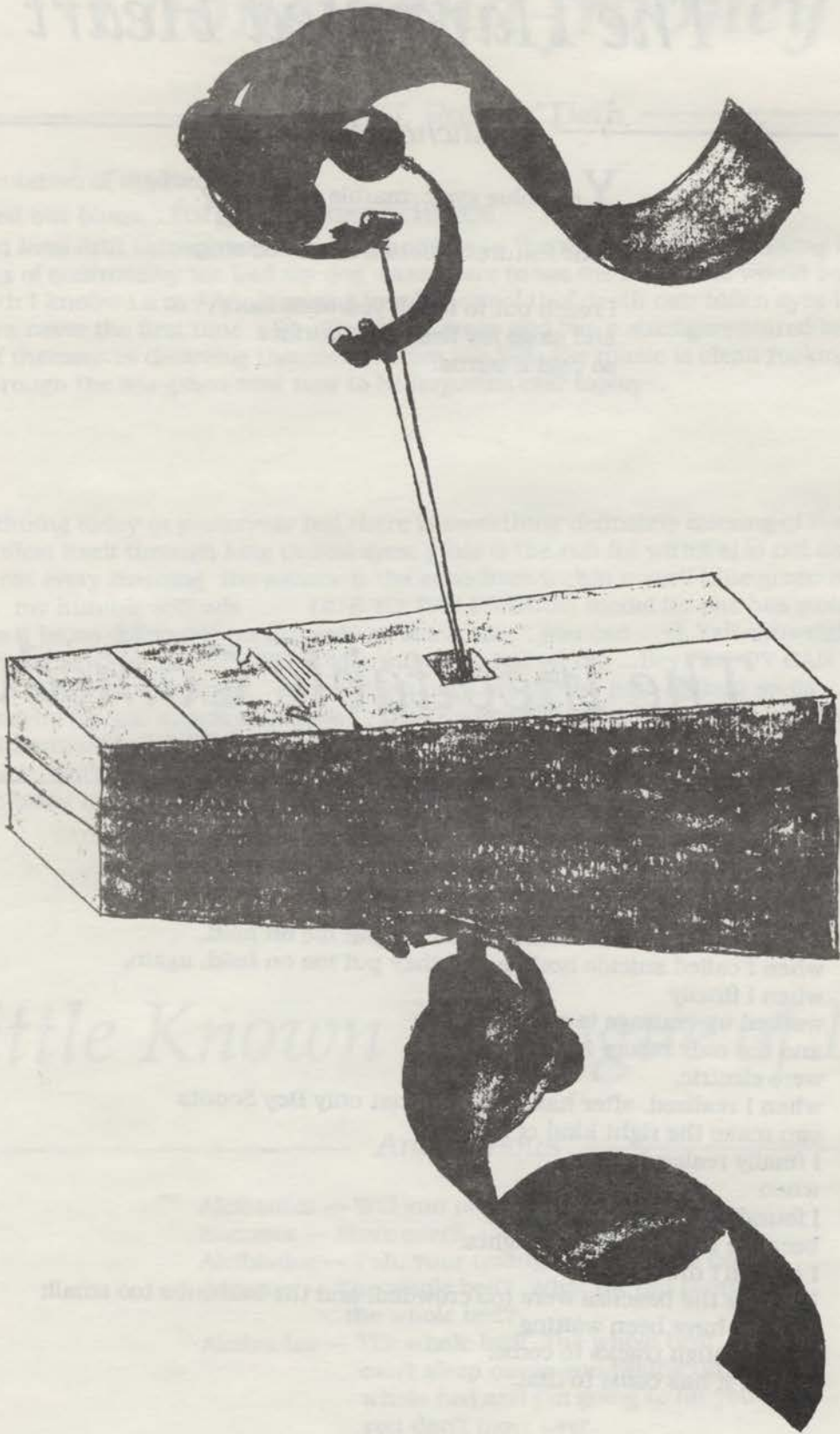
O god — what a world — playing hacky-sack beside a swyambo at sunset. I had to race the sun all the way from the immigration office but I did it. All the hotshots hack up here. And there is the moon and those unforgettable eyes. Then walks by this dark tiaraed princess that all the cool sackers make way for. I know this is a wild scene that I won't know the likes of too often, but now it seems so real and normal. This is peaceful bliss. On one side smoke rises over green terraces and clouds move over the high high hills that the sun just passed behind. Monkeys fight with dogs leaping from stupa to stupa. Prayer wheels turn on bearings. The moon rainbows blue clouds

and on it all gaze the wise eyes with the question mark for a nose. This is obviously the place to be.

After sitting in the Japanese temple tonight a Shingon monk in yellow robes came to me and revealed his secret meditation. He showed me the lotus blossom mudra and demonstrated moon meditation, staring at my head as if it were encircled by a full moon. The monk said that life is filled with happiness and that the eighty-four thousand desires are good. This is the way it is in secret Buddhism. He told me that in the basement of the temple were the remains of prominent Japanese businessmen. Two times a day he would go down and recite the sutras to their ashes, slowly carrying them to nirvana. I asked him to sing me a sutra. In a low, quaking voice he sang a song of the girl he left in Okinawa.

Jain temple, Howra bridge, lunch, and back to the Maha Bodi society; it sounds so simple, but by the time one has done an Indian city walk one feels one's whole being has been run over and over again. The destinations are only secondary, their duty is only to get you to different parts of the city. The real experience is the walking through, the in-between. The young girls who attach themselves to you for coins and the shopkeepers who raise their eyebrows, give a "hello" and gesture over their goods then laugh long and hard for some reason you will never know, the bathing scenes that occur wherever there are pumps or broken water pipes or puddles, the sticks the Indians have stuck in their mouths to clean their teeth, the dark hall of spice just off the busy street that claims you then spits you out into the chaos again. There are so many things I am afraid I will forget the moment I step back on U.S. soil. Like the noise that I don't even notice any more because it is always there. A noise of many layers: horns being blown, children playing, merchants and drivers complaining, rickshaw bells ringing, firecrackers. A pure silence seems impossible in India. Right now I long for a cool, pure, silent darkness.

BR 552



The Hardened Heart

By Michele M. Reutter

Your blue eyes: marble and glassy.

Your features: lifeless as carved stone.

I reach out to touch you once more
and singe my flesh on a surface
so cold it burns.

The Inevitable Comedy

By Moira Russell

I first suspected
that I was a tragic figure
in an inevitable comedy
when I called suicide hotline and they put me on hold,
when I called suicide hotline and they put me on hold, again,
when I finally
worked up courage to slit my wrists
and the only razors in the house
were electric,
when I realized, after half an hour, that only Boy Scouts
can make the right kind of knots;
I finally realized
when
I found out I couldn't jump
because I was afraid of heights;
I couldn't drown
because the beaches were too crowded, and the bathtubs too small;
lately, I have been waiting
for the laugh tracks to come.
Lately, it has come to that.

Looney and frooney

By A.J. Rappin' Deth

...a documentation of madness

the bummed out blues,...forgotten experience

remembered lives drift throughwar damaged hues news the stromy blues swimming in my tired noodle amidst a sea of controversy too bad my dog wasnt here to see me I think he would be ashamed to tell you the truth I kno3w i a m ///...lopoking into haer pool thof death catr idden eyes I forgot myself and caqlled itlove never the first time . Shuffles in the hass and two s strangers stared back at the mirror reflection of themselves divorcing themselves from the fact. the music is clean rocking itself back andforth through the sea green mist now to be forgotten ever toplay...

I lost somethuing today or yesteryear but there is something definetely missing of long forgotten to see only to manifest itself through long tintied eyes, ythis is the rub for withit si is not day. the mountains respond to me every morning the silence is the echo from within myself blue green rock scars ,they be do invadin. my humble solitude ODE TO THE FASHION model for she has stolen her heart and mine .. ysee it be no difference on this side oif the scale.....you can ...yk Yall canweigh my heart against a feather and you JUST KNOW who will come out on top ...hey BUDDY CAN YOU SPARE A BUTT FOR A FELLOW american ... spqueumish dogs hol for the pain of their souls ...yessrree you moo shoe do lloo who foo goo scmoo schmuck ... DONT worry jihnny said the died father as he swam across the intermanal sea of ever forgetfulness the little child just floated away.... But you know, when you just come right down to it it never is the sameBUT IT ALWAYS Is ... She tried to bring me upstairs for a ride ...forget it baby WERE already THERE ... yall just dont see do you

Little Known Dialogue of Plato

Anonymous

Alcibiades — Will you please move over ?

Socrates — Move over?

Alcibiades — Yah, your taking up the whole bed.

Socrates — The whole bed? What do you mean, the whole bed?

Alcibiades — The whole bed! The whole bed! I can't sleep cause you taking up the whole bed and I'm going to hit you if you don't move over.

Socrates — O.K., O.K.

Clotheslines

By Mary Welliver

There was a woman, once, who hung her laundry in her basement to dry. The parallel clotheslines were four: the first was anchored in the corners where the ceiling became acquainted with the wall. This line was so taut that even six pairs of jeans depressed it only three inches (at its lowest point, not necessarily the midpoint). The second line was attached as high as the first; yet loose enough to reveal the first when six undershirts were hung. The third and fourth lines were suspended from the walls, each spaced two inches down from the previous clothesline. These lines were also taut, but since they were in the foreground, the woman never hung anything as weighty as jeans or beachtowels on them. Staring at them from the bottom of the stairs, the woman saw the positioning of the clotheslines as that of a major chord, the second line being a sort of trill within the chord.

When the woman did laundry—approximately every two weeks—the lines, usually so inconspicuous at the ceiling, were suddenly the focal point of the room.

The woman enjoyed the spacing of the lines. She enjoyed the basement gorged with color as if her closet had exploded. She enjoyed the fabrics in her wardrobe—their color, their texture. That was why she wore them. And to see them all at once, distant from her body, was overwhelmingly sweet to her sensory soul.

The woman's sister found the clotheslines economical. And drying her clothes this way humidified the house. Her mother, of course, approved (since she was washing her clothes regularly, at least—at last). Her female friend would occasionally visit on laundry day and assist in the hanging of the clothing.

It was best not to plan too much. If matching socks were hung alongside one another, as her friend liked to do, there was a restriction on the design which was somehow brighter and more beautiful when random. The woman liked to be carefree when hanging her laundry. She could match the socks when they were ready to be filed in her drawer. Sometimes matching socks fell next to one another from out of the laundry bag. The woman didn't mind.

The woman found a male friend. Unsuspectingly, he entered her basement one laundry day and was stunned by the tangle of lines. He questioned her minutes later. "Why don't you hang your laundry outdoors? Better yet, why don't you use a dryer?" He pulled a sock from the line and dropped it on the stairs on his way out of the basement.

The woman, noticing it was a red sock, pulled its match from the line and, collecting the discarded sock, kneaded the two together and placed them in her freezer.

Another day, a second male friend found her laundry. He considered her thoughtful, keeping the laundry inside to avoid depriving the grass of sun. (The woman smiled at his naive justification and invited him back.) It was several

months later that he came again on a washing day. He pulled a shawl from her line and held it to her shoulders. He admired the effect. She felt affected. She folded the shawl and huddled in bed for two days, a pink sheet at her skin.

While she was working on a design for a bridge to carry her city's four-lane highway across a river, a man came to her door. He sold clothespins. He must have been starving. She bought him out of clothespins, even the olive green plastic ones.

Another male friend appeared. When he encountered her clothesline, he smiled. He asked if he might help her fold her laundry, as he found it dry. She smiled.

They had a child who had, from the start, an attachment to the basement, sleeping in laundry baskets and teething on socks while in her father's arms.

They lived a harmonious life. One day, when the woman was folding laundry, the child became tangled in a sheet hanging on the line and ripped the second clothesline from the corner where the ceiling meets the wall. The clotheslines were moved to the attic, and in addition to the original chord, two more harmonic trills were composed.

Every two weeks, the woman, the child and the male friend watched as the laundry disappeared into the drawers.

Tess

By George Popham

Tess Turbo on the long ragged madness of Magsaysay avenue shimmering like the well-worn lame of a cheap evening gown at a small bar with dirty green felt on the pool tables and tipless cues.

The girls were all working and waiting patronized and denounced, at the same time, by mid-American heroes, overseas....

The girls were working in a profession that's a sacrament to the islands; sucked and sapped for centuries by the best of the west....

The clientel of this bar was small with most of the real business leaving their emotional excrement on the stools of topless bars and sex shows.

This little oasis was a fine place to drink a quiet beer in the epicenter of the quaking debauchery. Screaming souls of the South China Sea drink San Miguel, the Manila potion for gastric infamy of epic proportions.

In this little bar the beer came cold, and the girls stayed off the backs of those haunted by the specter of disease, blights, and morbid stories of oozing black infections.

The girls were sweet-natured and loyal friends to the regulars, the occasional trick, and commissions on the hustling of weak tang "ladies drinks" kept them alive

But this is all Tess Turbo's show and I can't begin to know, how she played her roll in a sort of semi-hysterical, jubilant bliss.

Big by island standards, small by American she could afford no fat, and so had none

Clotheslines

229

she had the classic island trait of shoulder length
obsidian, glow black hair.

Slender arms, white teeth, flat island nose,
and sun darkened, sandalwood, smooth skin
stretched over her high cheek bones...

She was missing her left eye,
scooped astronomically from its socket, by a bottle cap,
fired from an exploding case of San Miguel,
at the age of ten...

I stopped,
and gave a dubious look to my half empty bottle,
and then cast my eyes down to the sunburned skin
stretched taut over my stomach....

Full to capacity
with that frothing barley malt demon swill
I offered up a silent prayer to the beer god
hoping that this phenomenon of spontaneous detonation was rare.

So that's how she lost the eye
I thought
you almost wouldn't notice
if it weren't
for that other goddamned eye.
That other watery, rich, dark, wide, cinnamon sweet, brown eye,
as round an eye as ever you'll see in a Filipina....
and I remember the noise of that eye,
the rattling lonely howl, and shattered glass clatter,
of the optic ghost of the involuntary cyclops,
and of the reluctant sale of damaged goods....

This Is the Truth

and my house.

disappearing into the water.

a little greyer than before.

This Is the Truth

By Moira Russell

After years of
alternately trying to
kill and not-kill myself
the government decided to
ship nuclear waste on the freeway past my house.
Favor or judgment,
take your pick.

Pain

By Maxx Cassidy

Black ink dripping into the water,
leaving a hole
 where once
 it was clear

it slowly falls to the bottom,
stretching,
 a black tendril,
 twisting
 down.

a small stain on top
fading,
 fading,
 disappearing into the water:

a little greyer than before.

Drive

By T.H.

Drive, boy! Drive!

*Drive off into the night,
like a demon into the night,
like a madman into the night,
in a straight line off into the night*

*Drive, boy! Drive!
Drive fast off into the night.
Faster! Keep the fungus off your brain.
Faster! Keep the flies off your back.
Faster, off into the night.*

*Drive, boy! Drive!
Drive into the desert night,
with white knuckles on the wheel,
with thin red eyes on the road,
persued by hungry demons off into the night.*

*Drive, boy! Drive!
Till the last shrieking demon,
is lost in the wind and sand.
Now slow, and stop,
in the still desert night.*

*Now there is only,
the pinholed sky,
the windswept dust,
and the demon.*

The streets are an empty cup
and reflections overlap, double exposure
reverberate motionless, but elusive
on sheets of window glass
silent; like a broken grinder
old light won't allow me to be in the street
only to walk across the grid like an insect
crawling across a coffee table
Filtered heat somewhere between
sultry and stifling
muggy and lethargic
I roll about trying to find the cold spot
on a grounded mattress
lines of sunlight
filling cracks in Venetian blinds
and zebra shadows play over wooden floors
the quiet morning overflowed
into the afternoon,
full of cool juices; oranges, lemons
and scrambled eggs at three
napping at odd dimming hours,
on a day that woke like a cat,
and never really started,
and left nothing behind,
but the scattered pages of a Sunday paper.

By George Popham

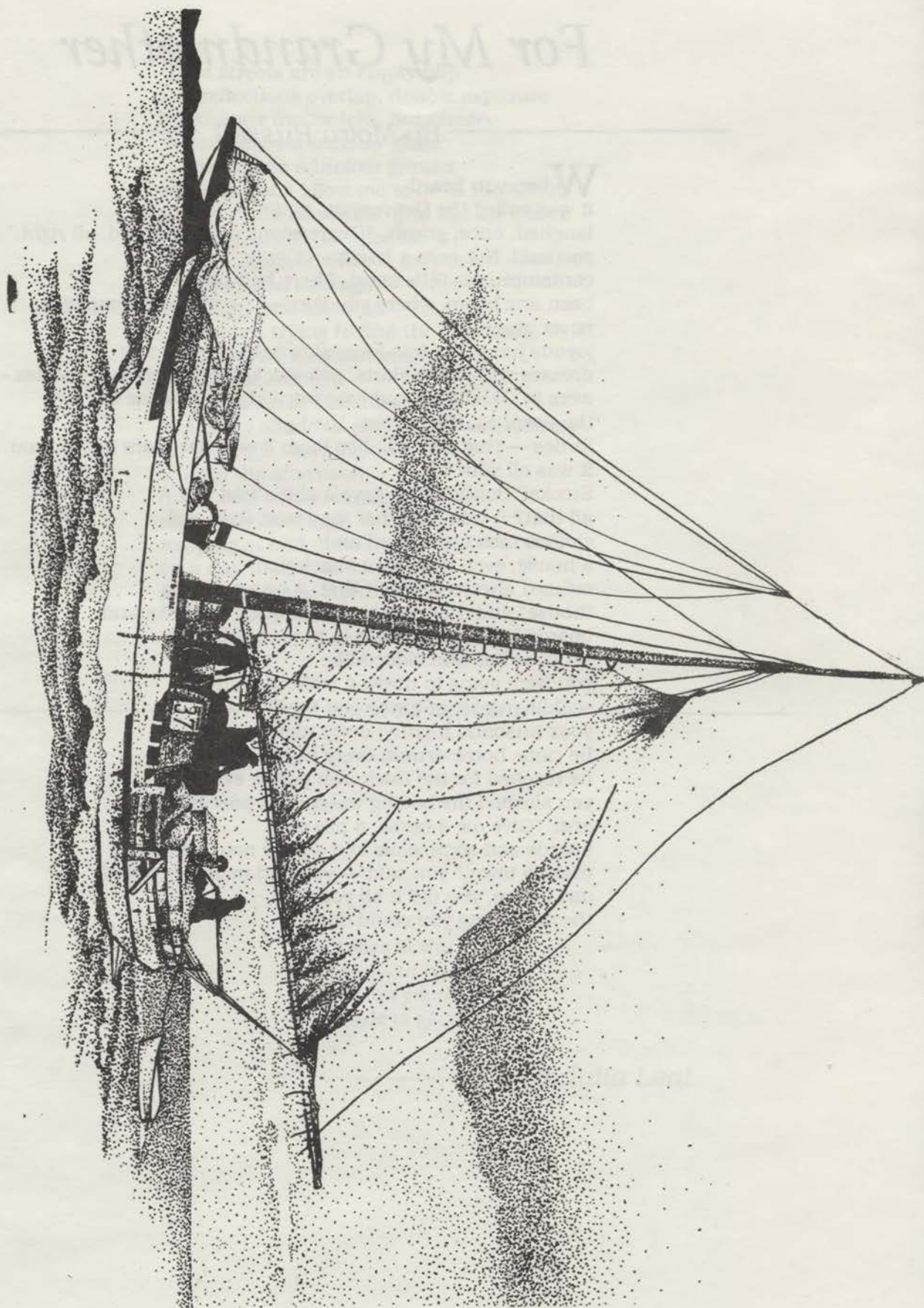
In times of war
it comes to pass
that iron youth
is made of glass.

By Obdulia Leal

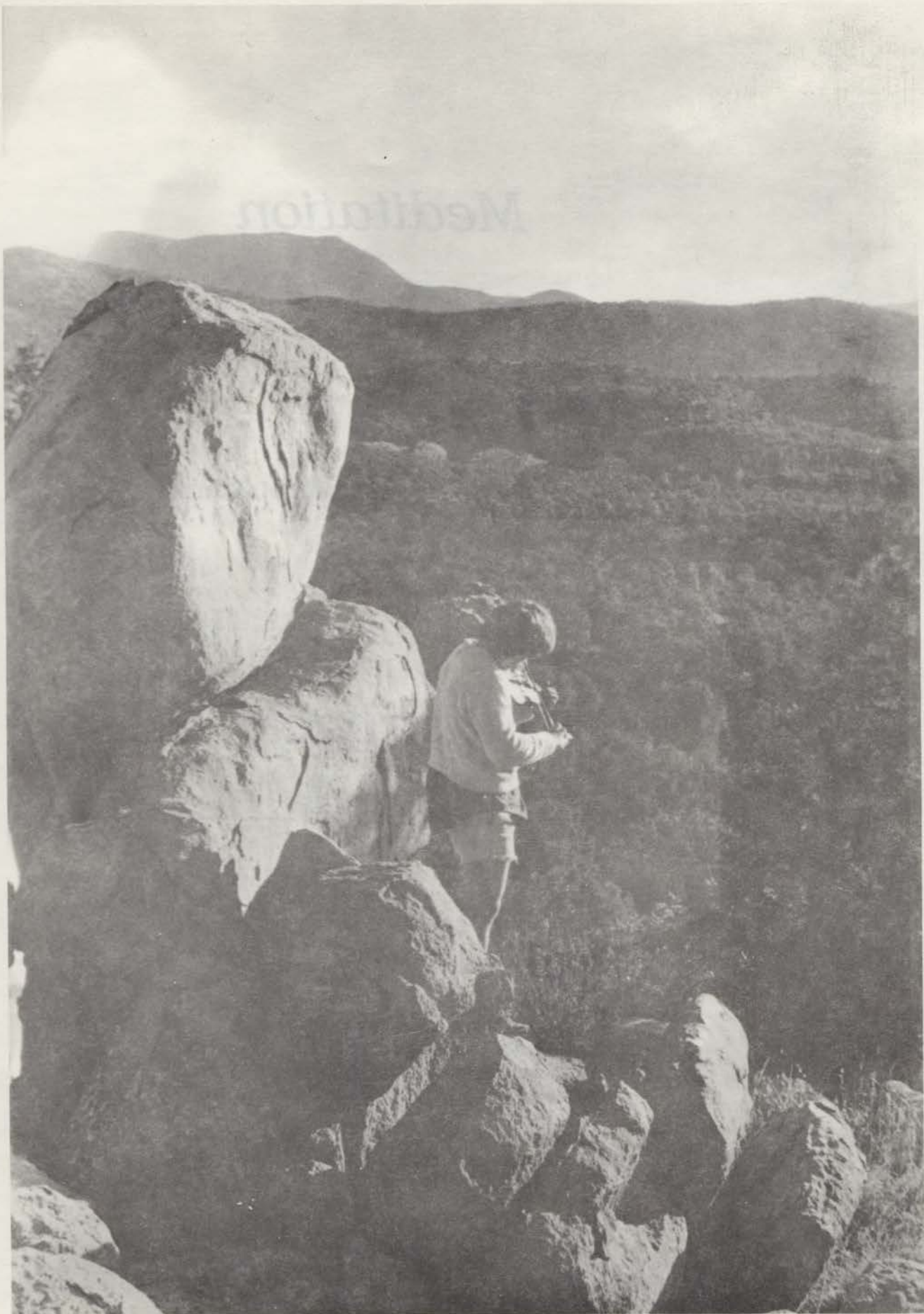
For My Grandmother

By Moira Russell

When you heard
it was called the Depression, you
laughed, once, grimly. "Depression? I'm depressed, all right,"
you said. Not even a laugh — a grim
contemptuous little snort. There had never
been any boom, where you lived — never any champagne,
never any
joyous jumpings into fountains naked, never any
dresses with short skirts, silk stockings, telephones, movies — you
were in Oklahoma and you worked all the same through
the twenties, the thirties, the
forties — that was all. For them it was ten years but for you
it was all your life.
Stocks? Bonds? Who gave a shit about
all that? It was food that mattered, food and
clothes torn not-so-bad and
a house, even if it was a shack you
refused always to call it that, it was always a
"house" and it always had "furniture" — boxes and
boards laid across boxes to make a table. You
set your lips and looked like
you were going to throw a teakettle full of
scalding water at me — you threw it at
your husband nightly; every night
he came home drunk, every night
he reached for the thick iron poker, every night
you sloshed the boiling water right past his
arm. "Give me a horse, a pile of
boards and some nails and a good man and I'll
make a town," you said — you had made life out of
dirt before, you did it all your life,
the only thing you could do.



Chad R. W.



Meditation

Sunset:

A brooding reflection
of the day's creation.

By Michele M. Reutter

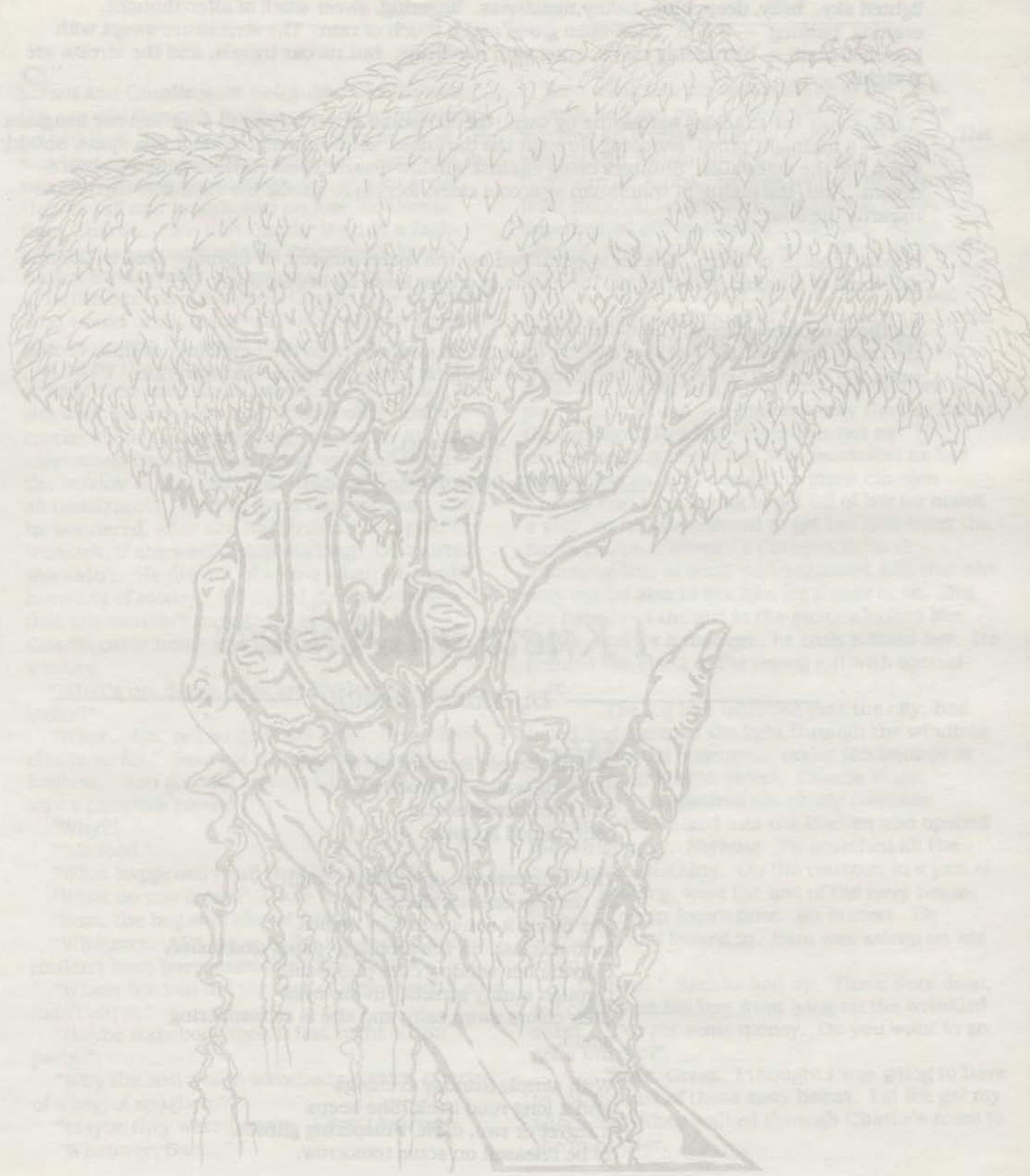
Flashback

George Erhard

I don't love you anymore, you cried
and as you disappeared in defiance
an orphaned "love you...love you...love..."
rebounded around the room
bounced off my copy of La Rochefaucauld
and sailed screaming out the window.

Two years now
and you still haven't learned how
to stay out of my dreams.

Sam and Charlie



Tonite breathes like England,
the wind pushes clouds swiftly across winter, moon —
lighted sky. hazy, deep, blue, balmy, moistness. lingering, sweet smell of after-thought.
evening passing — 3 a.m. wide-open gazes and a touch of rain. The streets are swept with
loosened dust — blanketing roads, quiet with servitude. but no car travels, and the streets are
grateful.

A red paper bag crackles across the by way. the lonesome driver sitting in a parked car imagines a
cat — a midnight prowling through the darkness. sends shivers through his spine. shudders
down the the sidewalks. Shutters clang against window-panes, glass rattles against a child's
dream. And the midnight watchman sips cool cider, forgets to smoke his cigarette, then leans
towards the door.

69p for a bottle of lotion. The air is perfumed by the secret shadow of Spring. Lost in the tree-
skeletons of a naked, forest choir, the aroma of a rose leads all lies far away.

it's those cobbled streets, The nasal accents,
the moist pregnant air that rest sweetly upon the nose that stress the familiarity of this evening
upon the traveler This evening breathes like England in the Summer-Autumn rain.

-for gezebel.

————— *By Michelle Baker* —————

I Knew an Actress

————— *By Maxx Cassidy* —————

With simple Sunday afternoons
and long walks for groceries.
She lives her cats and
coffeetabled scripts.

The door breezes, open just enough
so the day can wander in.
She hums a sonata for the dishes,
for breakfast, for the morning paper and coffee.
Outside her window cars puppyrun
through sunny streets. In her eyes
their colors swim salty and she is remembering
again.

With simple Sunday evenings
and a long road back. She keeps
a regret or two, dark, whispering ghosts,
to be released on some tomorrow.

Sam and Charlie

A Sort of Story

By T. H.

Sam and Charlie were two guys. Charlie was the son of a Spanish bullfighter, and a third-year art student. He was not tall, nor was he short. He was lean and reasonably handsome. Sam was the son of a Chicago psychotherapist and an artist. He was tall and blonde and no less handsome than Charlie. Sam and Charlie lived in a high-ceilinged apartment on San Francisco's lower Haight Street under a freeway off-ramp.

In the late morning when Charlie was at school, Sam would drink black tea out of a jar or program new beats into his drum machine. Often he would just sit by the window and watch the cars go by, or watch the tired black prostitutes patrolling the sidewalk below. Sam and Charlie often made cracks about the prostitutes - especially at parties - but when Sam drank tea and watched them from the window in the morning, he felt sad. They were all unattractive. One of them was pregnant and he wondered, after she had grown very big in the stomach, if she would stop working. Of course, she didn't. He dreamt of a time when he would have lots of money. He would give her enough that she wouldn't have to do what she did. Charlie came home and Sam was sitting by the window.

"What's up, Sam? How are the ladies doing today?"

"What... Oh, not so good actually. Only three clients so far." Sam got up and went to the kitchen. "You got any money, Charlie?" There was a cautious pause.

"Why?"

"No food."

"What happened to all that spaghetti?"

"What do you mean? There was half a bag."

"Sam, the bag was almost full."

"Whatever. All I know is the spaghetti I cooked couldn't have been more than half a bag."

"Where the hell did the rest of it go then? I sure didn't eat it."

"Maybe somebody took it last night at the party."

"Why the hell would somebody steal a quarter of a bag of spaghetti?"

"Maybe they were hungry. I don't know."

"Whatever, Sam..."

Sam went into his room and shut the door. Charlie had put on his Pavoratti tape and was working on a project for his illustration class. The assignment was to paint a cover for a travel brochure for Africa. He was using a photograph from National Geographic of a young, black, barechested girl fashioning a clay pot. As he painted, he thought about Amy, his ex-girlfriend, who was serving time in a county penitentiary for women. Amy had a bad habit of remembering people's bank-card numbers, borrowing the cards, and making very large withdrawals without permission. It was in this manner that she borrowed twenty-seven hundred dollars from a young man whom she had met only the day before the incident. Her last victim was not as understanding about her little weakness as her previous ones, and decided to press charges. Charlie had been trying to get rid of her for about a year, so he was relieved to get her first letter the Santa Barbara Women's Correction Facility, informing him of what had happened and that she may not be able to see him for a year or so. But the breasts of the girl in the picture looked like Amy's, and for a moment, he truly missed her. He painted the chest of the young girl with special care.

The fog had unfurled over the city, had faded and dimmed the light through the windows of the Victorian apartment under the freeway at one-hundred Haight Street. Charlie stood, stretched, and admired his nearly complete painting. He walked into the kitchen and opened the refrigerator. Nothing. He searched all the cupboards. Nothing. On the counter, in a pan of water, soaking, were the last of the navy beans. He knocked on Sam's door. No answer. He opened it, and looked in. Sam was asleep on his futon.

"Sam." Sam looked up. There were deep, red canals on his face from lying on the wrinkled sheet. "I've got some money. Do you want to go get a burrito?"

"Sure. Great. I thought I was going to have to eat the last of those navy beans. Let me get my shoes on." They walked through Charlie's room to the front door.

"You're getting better, Charlie," Sam said, walking toward the painting. He took it up, holding it by the edges and, squinting, examined it. "Nice breasts." He placed it back on the drafting table, and the two left for burritos.

The walk from the apartment to Chabela restaurant took a good half hour. Charlie and Sam passed the time by talking. Charlie talked about what he was going to do after he graduated from the Art Academy. Sam told Charlie about a possible record contract he and Julian had been offered. Finally, the two settled in on the topic that had always come up when they ran out of other things to talk about.

"So, Charlie, what's up with Barbera?"

"I don't know. she's being weird..."

"How so?"

"Okay. Her husband's in Alaska again and she called me up a couple of nights ago and invited me over for dinner. It was going great, at first. We were having a really good time sitting around drinking beers and eating—she made this incredible pasta. Anyway, we were having a really good time talking and stuff. We were both kind of drunk. Anyway, I kissed her and she freaks out. She starts telling me she loves her husband and stuff and starts crying. I don't know. She's just weird."

"I told you, man, I knew it. Ha!"

"Well, I don't see you with too many women lately, Sam."

"I think I'm going to go for that one at Thirteen-Percent. Hey, do you want to stop by there on the way back?" They arrived at Chabela, and continued their conversation inside.

"I don't know, Sam. I don't have that much money. I mean I've got twenty bucks and it has to last me all week."

"Don't worry about it. I'll see if I can get an advance at work tomorrow."

"All right. What the hell—"

The burritolady shouted, "Next!" After ordering, they sat, talked, and ate their burritos.

The air in Thirteen-Percent was sweaty. Sam and Charlie walked into the lounge. From the ceiling was loosely hung neon green

cellophane. the walls were painted with grazing purple and orange cows glowing under black lights.

"I guess you want a beer, Sam."

"Sure."

Charlie set out through the dance floor for the bar. Sam sat looking at the floor. There was a crushed felt pen near his right foot. He picked it up and tested it on the back of one of the flyers stacked on the table. Since he'd left high school, the black felt pen had been his primary artistic medium. He had grown to become a master connoisseur of felt pens. The scribble on the flyer displayed the excellence of the found instrument. It produced a line of optimum width; the ink flowed smooth and black. The pen made Sam want to draw.

When Charlie came back with the beers, there was a pile of drawings under Sam's left forearm. The pen-hand stopped when Charlie sat down. Charlie set a beer on the table in front of Sam.

"Hey, that's really great. Let me see that."

Charlie picked up the half-finished drawing in front of Sam.

"Just doodling..." Sam looked away.

"Sam, this is great. Are you going to finish it?"

Sam laughed. "No."

Charlie held the drawing close to his face. It was a man slumped over a table. In front of him was a mug. Charlie examined the face of the man in the drawing. It was composed of eight lines. In those lines were drunkenness, fatigue, hollow joviality, surrender, and discomfort. Charlie looked up at Sam, who was looking away. He set the drawing on the table.

"Sam, you should get back into art."

"Hey, Charlie. did you see that girl?"

"Yea. She's up at the bar with some friends. I was talking to them."

"See if you can get them over here."

Charlie stood, straightened himself up, and made for the bar. Sam lit a cigarette and looked at the wall. Charlie returned with the girls about half-a-cigarette later. They arranged themselves around the table. Charlie introduced his new friends to Sam. Sam was disappointed by the girl's name. It was Jackie. He had wished it were Claire, or

Allison, or something other than Jackie. Jackie asked Sam for a light. Her voice was hoarse. He gave her a mutilated book of matches with which she lit her cigarette.

"Wow, these are really neat!" Jackie said, shuffling through the drawings on the table. "Did you do these, Charlie?"

"No. Those are Sam's." He continued his conversation with one of their new-found guests.

"Boy, you're a good artist, Sam!"

"Thanks."

"They're all black..." With gross, twisted, facial features, and squinting eyes, she subjected each drawing to close scrutiny from every conceivable angle. "...my favorite color is black."

"Huh..."

Sam put out his cigarette and finished his beer. Charlie was across the table, smiling and rapidly nodding at a very pretty young girl who was talking frantically and gesturing wildly with her hands.

The group sat at the table for some time; Charlie nodding at the girl, and Sam weakly responding to Jackie's attempts at conversation.

Jackie said, "I'm going to get another beer." She left the table for the bar. When two cigarettes later she had not returned, Sam stood up.

"I think I'm going to take off." Sam said, moving towards the door. "See you later, Charlie."

"All right." Charlie said quietly, without looking up from his conversation.

Sam walked home, thinking about nothing. When he got there, he went to sleep.

Sam woke up when Charlie came home. He knocked on Sam's door. "Sam? You up?"

"What's up, Charlie? What happened with the woman?"

"I don't know. I asked her if she would come over, but she said her friends would be angry if she left them. Anyway, I'm going to sleep. G'night, Sam."

"G'night, Charlie."

"Sam..."

"Yea?"

"Nothing. G'night, Sam."

"G'night, Charlie."

Several hours later, Sam was awakened by a woman screaming in the street. He sat up and looked out his window. Under a street light, a car was stopped. A man got out of the driver's side, walked around to the passenger door, opened it, and dragged a woman out into the street. It was the pregnant prostitute. She was screaming obscenities after the man as the car screeched away. She fixed herself in the mirror of a car window, and sat on the stoop of the house next door.

Charlie came home about noon and Sam was sitting in front of the window.

"What's up, Sam?"

"Not much. Oh, Babera called. she wants you to call her back."

"Sounds good. Hey, did you get that advance?"

"No. I'll get paid on Friday, though."

"Don't worry about it."

Sam went to his room and shut the door. Charlie sat down at his drafting table and worked on his painting.



Thermopylae

A Short Story By

Steven J.C. Williamson

The somewhat renowned and greatly respected Edwin J. O'Mally, author and commentator on Buddhist texts, looked out upon the sea. He looked down into the ocean. His tired eyes looked out at Boston Harbor which whizzed along beneath him; the jet began to descend. He felt once again the long forgotten but familiar fear of landing at Logan Airport. The plane descended closer and closer to that peaceful seething mass until, just as he began to feel the crash of the cold autumnal sea—just as the plane was as close as it could safely be—no more than twenty feet above the water—just as he felt that this time it surely would not work—the great earthy hand of East Boston interceded as would the mother of a fledgling too quickly fallen from its nest. The ancient soot of the city welcomed back its prodigal son. Brown with age it extended its greeting. Boston aged brown while New York aged gray; the former sprang forth from the dust, while the latter was born out of ashes—or so it seemed, at least, to Edwin, who had now seen the two within the space of an hour, as though they existed side by side. He longed to see his native city—to walk from one end to the other embracing her whole in one rapid gesture of the senses and the mind. He did not, however, do this, as a more immediate duty was upon him.

He had a slight headache and was anxious to leave the airport. He took down his suitcase from the overhead rack and went directly to the

car rental agency. He tried not to think, as he waited in line, of the woman who would have been his wife and of the child she bore him—the boy he had never even seen. He wanted most of all to find a car and leave the city, though he loved it. As to what he would do once away from the city he could not say. He had only her address.

The tunnel was clear and the traffic was light. When coming and going to Logan Airport everything depends on the Sumner and Callahan tunnels: if they become congested a passage is impossible and if they are clear life is good, God is in heaven, and all is right with the world. He thought then, as he always thought, not of the traffic, but of his grandfather who had spent his life with those tunnels, first building them, then sitting in a toll booth at the entrance. Soon he had gone beyond his grandfather and found himself on the expressway going North. He followed 128 North, and in what seemed like no time at all he found himself on 109 smiling like a fool at old memories which passed before him like the fleeting shadows of falling leaves. He was soon beyond Westwood Center, and had almost reached the first stretch of Dover when he suddenly realized that he had no plan in mind for his arrival at the Smith residence. He decided to give the matter some thought over lunch. There was a restaurant a stone's throw from the town line, which was bordered by a large cornfield on one side and woods on all others. He bought himself lunch and sat outside on a picnic bench.

He decided to take the long way to Dover so he drove up through Medfield and cut down a back road past

barns and horse farms in increasing numbers. The stately homes sank back from the road until the only sign of human habitation was an occasional driveway. It had always amused him that Dover had such fickle building restrictions since half of the houses could not even be seen. Stone walls lined the road, which had narrowed considerably, and the scarlet, yellow, and orange-leaved trees bent overhead and might have seemed menacing if they did not look so cheerful. Soon he found himself musing over the beauty of New England in the fall, and almost as soon found himself turning up the driveway to the Smith residence. After mounting a rather steep hill he found himself on a small circular driveway before the large stone house. He had not remembered it looking so gloomy when her parents had lived there, and, surprisingly, he now found it less impressive.

He had no plan, no speech prepared, and felt strangely like a door-to-door salesman who had no idea what awaited him on the other side of the threshold. He went bravely forward all the same and banged the brass knocker with impunity on the door of the golden oak. It caused the house to sound like a drum: spacious and empty. A minute later the door opened and a maid appeared. "May I help you?" She was a foreigner and sounded like she was from the Caribbean.

"I'd like to see Ms. Smith."

"May I ask who is calling?"

"Edwin O'Mally."

"One moment please." The door then shut gently and with such civility that Edwin did not in fact feel as though he had had a door shut in his face. A moment later, however, the maid returned and he was shown in: "This way please."

He was shown down the hall to an atrium where several older women and two men were standing around sipping tea. As he entered they all turned to see him, and Linda was of

course the first to speak. "Hello Edwin," she said warmly, smiling, with no hint of surprise or animosity towards this man whom she had not seen for over twenty years. She looked as though she had in fact been expecting him, and only for one brief moment there was a spark in her eye, which could have been inward laughter, outer scorn, a threat, a plea, or any number of things. "So good to see you again," she added as Edwin could feel himself blushing.

"Yes," he muttered, twisting his lips into a nervous smile, "good to see you."

"Please let me introduce you to everyone," she added without missing a beat. "This is Mrs. Wilson, and Mrs. Cabot, and Mrs. Winfrey, and Ms...." All very English names, he thought, all of them very oblivious to the fact that I am the father of her illegitimate son—her family did a good job of squelching all rumours, it seems.

Linda continued, "and this is the Deacon, Mr. Franklin." He was a young man in his late twenties, who smiled pleasantly and respectfully. "And this is my husband, the Reverend Miller." Edwin could feel his heart sink as he heard those words, but he forced himself to turn respectfully and shake the hand of the rather stern-looking, graying-at-the-temples minister who offered him his hand, while sternly looking Edwin up and down. As they shook hands the Reverend held onto Edwin's hand a moment longer than the others had, then smiled: "I've read some of your works; it's a pleasure to meet you at last." He certainly knows, thought Edwin, but he is a rather civil fellow, to say the least.

"Would you like some tea, Edwin?" Linda asked liltily.

"No, I'm rather in a bit of a hurry," he lied, wanting only to get away, "but I do need to ask a favor of you. I was hoping I could—get in touch with Thomas—I understand that is his name—I thought you might tell me where I could reach him."

At first Linda looked like she was about to have a stroke, then she looked a bit pale and seemed about to vomit, and at last she regained her composure and said cheerfully, "Yes, certainly. Would you excuse me for a moment?" She then glided into the other room. Edwin sat for a moment trying hard to remember when he had seen that precise reaction from her in the past, and it suddenly occurred to him that she had reacted the same way and had even said

precisely the same words twenty-odd years before when he had asked her to marry him. But now she returned with a slip of paper which had on it the name Thomas Smith, an address in Cambridge, and a telephone number. As she handed him the slip she added, smiling and looking him knowingly in the eye, "You might have a hard time getting through to him; he's very difficult to get a hold of."

"I'll keep that in mind," Edwin mumbled. The maid showed him out.

He had never expected Linda to yield the address so readily, and in fact what he did not realize was that Linda was at that time at the end of her rope with Thomas, who had now gained access to his trust funds, and hardly spoke to anyone in the family, least of all his mother, who was now secretly amused to allow the absentee father a crack at the absentee son. The other half of Edwin's plan was not so neatly achieved. He had wanted to somehow make amends to Linda for the wrong he had done her, but while inside the house he had realized that this was neither the time nor the place. Besides, he did not see how he could make amends for a wrong that she was pretending never happened. It was of some comfort that he had at least been received in her house, and in fact it seemed to him that to be paraded before her church social friends was in some way the greatest gesture of reconciliation that he could expect from her. He realized also that this was an immense rationalization, but at the same time knew that it was all he could hope to achieve. It was enough for him to show up, and enough for her to open the door.

Thomas lived in Cambridge where he was a student in the last year of his bachelor's degree. He was in class most of the morning and spent most of his time between classes eating or studying in the library. He did not arrive back at his apartment until late afternoon. He shared an apartment with a fellow named William who had been his roommate for the past two years. The complex where they lived was owned by the school to be used as student housing. Thomas was a student of divinity as were many of the people living in his building. Edwin arrived at the complex shortly after one thirty, and was told at the lobby that Thomas would not arrive until later. As he was about to leave and come back later the doorman with whom he was talking pointed out a young man just stepping out of the elevator. "That's William Stroham, Thomas' roommate," the doorman said in a thick Arabic accent. William

was about six feet tall and rather slender, but muscular all the same. He had green eyes and sandy hair with just a hint of olive in his skin. Edwin stepped toward him: "You're William Stroham?"

"Yes," William responded apprehensively. In his eyes, both determination and uncertainty seemed to say, "Yes, I am he, but what is it to you?"

"I'm Edwin O'Mally."

"The Edwin O'Mally?"

"Yes, I suppose." He hesitated, not sure why this fellow should know him.

"Yes, I've read several of your books—you see, I'm a divinity student."

"Then I don't know why you should read my books," Edwin smiled.

William laughed delightedly, "You're just as I would expect you to be! How can I help you?"

"I'm looking for your roommate; I have some business to discuss with him."

"Thomas?" William asked as though in disbelief. "I never expected him to have any Buddhist sympathies."

"Actually, it isn't about Buddhism, it's a personal matter." William seemed like the sort of fellow who knew immediately not the particular thoughts of those around him, but how to respond to the state of mind of whomever he was with. Having this talent, he dropped the issue of the purpose of the visit and contented himself with the knowledge that it was none of his business. "He won't be back for at least a couple of hours. Perhaps you'd like to wait here?"

"No, no thank you, I think I'll take a walk around first," William said apologetically, then added, "I haven't seen Cambridge in quite some time."

"Should I tell him you came by?"

"No, I'll be back before he arrives."

"Good enough; see you then." Edwin stepped from the soft yellow high-arched lobby out onto the dim brown stone sidewalk, and gave some absent-minded thought to where he wanted to go. Once again he found himself walking towards the square, drifting in and out of bookstores, stopping at the newsstand to glance at the German and French newspapers, drifting into a restaurant and drinking gourmet coffee. He ate a French roll, then stepped out onto the sidewalk again. The Thomas More Bookstore had moved out of Cambridge, which disappointed him greatly. He stood on the corner watching the students passing by and it occurred to him that he had no idea what Thomas looked like, and for that matter any one of the students passing by

could be his son. He decided to walk back to the apartment.

When he arrived in the lobby there were at first a couple of students who had heard he was there and had come down in the hope that they may have a word with him about this or that philosophical or theological point; they were not disappointed. Then others who might not have read his books but only heard his name came in and sat in the vicinity to overhear what he had to say, and soon he felt like Socrates surrounded by the Athenians as he scratched in the dirt. He felt on the whole unworthy of the role, but was nevertheless a good egg and consented to play the part, answering all questions patiently, even though his mind was really on his son. The only question which went unasked by the students was what he could possibly want with Thomas.

William, who had now apparently become Edwin's greatest fan, had neglected to mention—or perhaps thought it was best not to mention—the nature of Edwin's visit. Never suspecting that this eminent scholar could want to see their classmate for personal reasons, they naturally assumed that he and Thomas were working jointly on some paper or project and no one could figure out why Thomas, who was normally not secretive, would conceal this exciting news from them. What was an even greater mystery for them was that a commentator on Eastern thought who had established himself firmly in the academic world would ever even have cause to be introduced to an unknown student of theology who was rooted only in the Western traditions and was in fact almost hostile toward Eastern thought.

At last Thomas himself arrived, and one of the students on the outer edge of the small crowd went directly to him and announced that Edwin was there to see him. Edwin himself, though quite well surrounded, was keenly aware of Thomas, as though through a sixth sense, the moment he entered the room. He finished his sentence, then excused himself. Much to the surprise of the other students Thomas looked confused, first by the fellow who had first approached him, then by Edwin, who was walking toward him. He had apparently not been expecting this visit.

"Hello," Edwin said, without having to ask Thomas who he was, I'm Edwin O'Mally.

Thomas looked at him for a moment before answering, "I'm Thomas Smith." He hesitated as though simultaneously summing up Edwin and trying to establish in his mind some sort of decorum for handling this situation. "Is there some way I could help you, Mr. O'Mally?"

Edwin was a bit nervous now. "Could I

have a word with you in private?" he asked uncertainly. His chest felt tight and his ears felt strange.

"Yes," was the answer, "over here."

The building was built in that style of the twenties which seemed to embrace the roundness and fullness of a Romanesque church with the openness of a sultan's palace. To that end it had a number of alcoves and subsidiary areas connected to the main lobby (which was quite spacious), and each of these alcoves was properly stocked with ferns and modern institutional furniture. It was to the most remote alcove that the two men now proceeded.

The alcove was painted, as was the rest of the foyer in a light yellow eggshell finish typically used in the fifties and sixties. In each corner of the back wall there was a tall fern, and two potted ferns hung in the doorway. In the center there was a small table covered with magazines. The room was at that moment dimly lit. A rather large couch ran the length of the back wall and was flanked on the side walls by two upholstered chairs. Edwin and Thomas stood just inside the doorway.

"How can I help you Mr. O'Mally?" Thomas asked briskly, as though he was not at all troubled by the former's appearance, but nonetheless anxious to keep him at arm's length. Edwin spent a long time scrutinizing his son's face, unable to determine his own standing. At last after a pause which Thomas thought rude, Edwin realized the situation. His jaw dropped a bit, and he desperately wanted to walk away. Instead he spoke, almost gasping, "You mean she never told you?"

"Told me what?" Thomas snapped, losing patience altogether.

There was silence; Edwin could not bring himself to answer. A moment passed and Thomas began to speak again, "What hasn't 'she' told..." Inwardly he had answered his own question, and briefly a look of confusion clouded his face. Then his reason returned: "You may go now."

Edwin had not yet recovered himself and stammered something under his breath. Then, regaining his sense he protested mildly, "I must tell you something."

"I have already deduced what is suddenly troubling you, Mr. O'Mally, and I suggest you take it to your confessor rather than me—that is, if you Buddhists have confessors. You can find the door—goodday, sir."

Thereupon Thomas turned, walked out and over the the elevator, pressed the button, and

waited, facing the door like a soldier at attention. He was still there when the dumbfounded Edwin walked slowly past those students, still sitting where he left them, collected his hat and coat, and then walked past his son, where he stopped for a moment to look at him. In the high polish of the door, a stern-faced Thomas watched his father watching him until the door opened and he stepped in without looking at Edwin, who watched him, and then went away.

Later on that evening, when the hall were empty and the dorm was quiet, and the students sat silently at their desks, the front door opened and soft steps walked to the register, looked at the names, and went up the stairs. Each step echoed softly beneath the thin soles of Edwin's Chinese shoes and his sweatpants and loose shirt ruffled more softly still, as he ascended the steps and passed through the door.

The hall was brightly lit, with blue industrial carpet, and off-white walls. The doors of the rooms were close, free of decoration, and sterile. On each door a brass number, polished and bright, announced its inhabitants as ordained by the director of housing. Edwin sat cross-legged in the hall and waited for his son. An hour passed.

Thomas and William had gone to the library, and, unable to work, had gone to the movies. William worked hard all night to dispel his friend's gloom and in the end both were in high spirits upon their return. Seeing Edwin, Thomas was incensed. Edwin did not look at him. Thomas stormed inside and slammed the door. William remained in the hall staring at Edwin, angered at this fresh insult. Edwin did not see him, for he did not look up.

"If you're still here in half an hour, I'm calling the police!" William screamed, giving vent to his fury for a moment. He let out another less articulate yell, then followed the example set by Thomas. Edwin sat placidly, did not stir, and did not look up. Half an hour came and went, and, aside from the neighbors alarmed by the disturbance, no one came back out into the hall. Still Edwin did not stir. He did not stir until morning, when he at last drank some water, having woken up from a too light sleep, and then continued his vigil.

Thomas walked by him, deigning to remain silent, and William followed his example. The other inhabitants of the hall did likewise. Night returned and found Edwin still there. Thomas was furious and said nothing; William ignored Edwin altogether. Another day passed in the same way, and Thomas and William's neighbors were amused at themselves for passing

by this fasting man, who kept his vigil and was beginning to be regarded as though he were a piece of furniture. In spite of the fact that they were all quite proper, they seemed to accept the situation as though there were nothing really very odd in it.

At the close of the second day, it again struck them that this was in fact a celebrity fasting in their hallway for no apparent reason. This realization was occasioned by a telephone call from Edwin's publisher, wondering why he had not returned to New York. This caused excitement only when Edwin not only refused to answer the call, but also refused to respond to the person who informed him of the phone call. He in fact responded to no one.

As the night wore on they spoke amongst themselves and tried to discern the meaning of Edwin's actions, and within a few hours they began to walk by him with awe and trepidation, as though he were God's messenger to Jonah. Thomas they also treated with greater than usual circumspection. Some few, however, did see fit to approach William.

William was in a difficult position. He alone knew the details of the conversation between Edwin and Thomas. He felt sworn to secrecy out of devotion to Thomas, but was utterly at a loss regarding the proper course of action. It seemed as though his loyalties were divided: he respected Edwin, and respected him more for each minute he maintained his vigil. In the end William told everyone that it was Thomas' affair, and that he could not tell them anything more than that.

So it was that the questioners desisted, and William was left in peace. In peace he remained until well after Thomas and all of the others were asleep, and then he went out into the hallway and sat down opposite Edwin. Edwin looked at him and William looked away. Both were silent, until at last William asked without looking up, "Why are you doing this?"

Edwin did not answer.

"He doesn't owe you the respect of a father," William at last said, bitterly looking up, his eyes flashing.

"He owes me the respect of a human being," Edwin calmly responded.

William did not look away, but sat biting his lips, pale, almost shaking. He seemed to have difficulty speaking, "You don't love him."

"Not as much as you love him, and certainly not in the same way, but I do care about him."

"How do you know how I feel?"

"I don't know, but it is obvious how you care for him. That is no secret from what I can see."

William was taken aback; he got up to go back into the room, but before he opened the door he blurted, "It is a secret, I'm afraid." He then passed into the room.

Edwin sat deep in thought for a long time, then dosed off into his second light sleep.

The third day brought more of the same. Thomas' hallmates waited in anticipation. William stepped past Edwin uneasily, and Thomas remained as steadfast and taciturn as his father until night came for the third time. William and Thomas returned from dinner at seven, and shortly after their arrival Edwin heard a discussion, at first muffled, growing steadily more heated until at last he heard Thomas yell, "Well then I'm calling security."

"You can't," William asserted just as vehemently.

"And how do you propose to stop me?"

"I'll register him as my guest!" William, who was normally placed, even obsequious, had decided at last to show his teeth. There was no answer. Thomas had backed down, and at last walked out of the room, paused and half turned: "Do what you want."

The moment the latch clicked Edwin spoke in a low voice, "I will leave if you want me to."

"You, too," snapped Thomas, "just do what you want; I'm leaving."

"For good?" Edwin asked mildly.

"No. It's none of your business. With that, Thomas stormed down the hall.

William did not leave his room again, and Edwin moved only to stretch his legs. He did not leave the hallway, but drank some water and thought. He thought most of all of the young blue-blood girl, who was then rebelling against her high-nosed family by hanging out with Irish thugs, smoking cigarettes, and drinking beer. Then, after one particularly balmy summer night on the beach, she found herself pregnant. She ran back to her family and he followed her; at first he was going to marry her—at the insistence of his family and with the approval of hers. In the end it all fell apart after a hundred small disagreements. The final disagreement was a disagreement of faith: his family was strictly Catholic and hers was strictly Protestant—Anglican to be precise. So in the end the marriage was called off. Edwin would have simply eloped, but she would never think of it. Edwin left town, Thomas was born, and Edwin was never allowed to see him and never told where he was.

Thomas returned rather late; it was well

past eleven. He walked up the hallway quietly and his eyes spoke of determination. Quietly he conversed with himself, and his determined eyes did not seem to focus on the man sitting in the hall, but beyond him. He did not actually appear to have noticed his father until he stood above him, but then he did notice, and looked upon him for some time, while determination remained in his eyes and spread across his face.

Edwin, who was still awake, noticed his son—or rather, as he did not look up, was aware of his son's presence. Some time passed and Thomas began to speak. He spoke in a hushed voice, with force and perhaps even a note of anger. It was the voice of a man utterly enraged—the voice of a man who could murder were it not for one last vestige of control, one last foothold above the abyss of fury which would swallow him whole if he sacrificed even one iota of his extreme determination to maintain control over his rage.

"I don't know why you Buddhists always want to inspire some sort of universal love in the hearts of those you have nothing in common with, have no right to place expectations on, and certainly have no right to approach as though you were going to save the day. Furthermore I find it hard to understand how you hope to accomplish any of this through these Eastern Ghandi-esque tactics. Frankly, I'd like to know who the hell you think you are." None of this was stated as a question, and it was clear that Thomas did not want any answers.

"First of all," Edwin began, "I am Edwin O'Mally; secondly, I am not a Buddhist, I am a Catholic; thirdly, my fast is not inspired by Ghandi but by my ancient Irish tradition; finally, I am not trying to inspire 'universal love;' my goal is much more selfish. I would welcome your love, and I would welcome your hate, but I will not tolerate being ignored."

"Why shouldn't you? You've ignored me long enough." Thomas savored the irony in his own words.

"I have not. Until now I was never told where you were but I did inquire after you often. You must believe me." There was a new note of tenderness in Edwin's voice.

"Why should I believe you, and why shouldn't I ignore you?" Thomas hardened his heart.

"Because I represent one in an infinity of human possibilities and because I hold the other twenty-three chromosomes from which you were made. I would at least expect a normal curiosity from you." He paused, and Thomas did not reply, but looked thoughtful as one who has suddenly

encountered an unexpected thought in a familiar place. Edwin continued, "You seem to me very well defined in some of your thoughts, and on the surface you seem to have a great deal of integrity; but remember, integrity can never come ready-made. You see me as a threat and as a foreigner, but I am nonetheless your father. In all honesty—" Edwin hardened his face and looked directly in front of him—"I fear that soon no one will be able to reach you, and you will be even more blind to the tender affections of those around you." With this Edwin fell silent.

Thomas looked over at his father and could not say himself what he was feeling or thinking about his father's words. He was unsure where all of his anger had gone, but he did not wish to fight the Sphinx sitting before him in the way he had wanted to a moment before. Without saying anything more, he passed into his room unsure of his father and unsure of himself.

A couple of hours passed with Edwin in an unusually alert state. This was evidenced by his eyes alone, though they seldom moved. Within the room of his son he heard an occasional thump or footstep, and he knew that Thomas, too, was awake. At one point there was a considerable period of silence, and Edwin knew that Thomas was alert in spite of that silence. Thomas' mother had hinted here and there to Edwin that their son had become a fortress and Edwin knew that Thomas was alert, for the wooden horse had entered the city and the first cries of unrest were heard within. After some time, footsteps were heard once again and the door to the room opened and Thomas stepped into the hall. Edwin would not look up; Thomas would not sit down. Thomas spoke first.

"When you said 'tender affections,' were you thinking of..." he hesitated. "Did you mean it in reference to..." he seemed unable to finish his question.

"Yes," Edwin answered, "I said it thinking of William." Thomas was rather stunned, and demanded as though in frustration, "Why did you think that?"

"Because it's true."

"But how did you know that? I only half knew it myself."

Thomas persisted, undeniably frustrated. Edwin remained calm and spoke softly, "I may well be a blackguard, but I am not blind. Please relax and sit down." Thomas slumped down against the opposite wall, and it was clear from the expression on his face that his alertness involved more labor than the alertness of his father.

"So you did half know?" Edwin said

almost cheerfully.

"Yes. I half knew, half suspected, but I did not want to know—and for that matter I still don't want to know."

"But you do know, and feigning ignorance will do you no good, for in your heart you know."

"Yes, I suppose I do."

"Well," Edwin continued in a pleasant business-like tone "how do you feel about it?"

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"Do you plan to talk to him about it? Have you given any thought to how you feel towards him?"

Thomas had not reacted strongly to any of his father's more recent comments, but at the mention of his feeling for William, Thomas became angry and spiteful once again. "Ahh, so that's your game, you've come to tempt me to the fall. You despicable man."

"No." Edwin remained pleasant and spoke softly, but was no longer smiling. "No, God forbid lest I be thrown into the sea with a millstone around my neck. No, I do not want you to sin, but neither do I want you to lose all sight of your faith."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"It means only that in order to be a Christian, one must love others as oneself. But given your present attitude, I believe that you would be incapable, had you even the slightest affection for William, to love yourself as such. I don't say that you are even inclined as he is, but if you at your young age and so greatly devoted to the church should come to realize such a thing, I believe that you would immediately seek to suppress it before you even discovered what it was. How could you love that thing, how could you love yourself, and how could you love possibly love others who were like you?"

"There you go again with all of your Eastern notions of love!" Thomas spoke with contempt and had not seemed to hear his father's words at all.

Edwin looked at him bravely, looked into his eyes and waited some time before speaking. "You say you do not want to hear about love, though you do not yet know what it is. But allow me to tell you about hate. All too often we Christians say to each other, 'love the sinner and hate the sin.' But we do not know how to hate, we cannot guide it. It becomes bestial and overwhelms us, and so we end up hating both the sinner and the sin, but secretly desire the sin without daring to love it. And so we come to hate ourselves also. But let me tell you how to escape from this cycle—and the answer is not extracted from any sort of Buddhist text—instead, it comes

from St. Augustine. How often now as a divinity student have you heard them utter the phrase, 'Lord, make me holy, but not yet.' How many people quote that phrase as though it were a joke and how few understand it! It means Lord, teach me to hate my desires, but not until I am ready. But what, I ask you, constitutes readiness? I will tell you: man cannot hate his sinfulness until he has learned to love it. Celibacy and sanctity are not ready-made. There is no formula that works for everyone, and you cannot properly hate that which you do not know, and you cannot properly know that which you have not loved. And so I have deceived you and spoken once again about love, but remember this if you are still intent on sacrificing yourself absolutely to the role you have chosen. Remember that it is only good to sacrifice valuable things, and if you sacrifice yourself for God, it cannot be done without loving yourself. You are in too much of a rush to sweep yourself beneath the church carpet, and God will not be your broom. You have set yourself up as a fortress, but you ought to be careful that the walls do not cut you off; and realize that a fortress is made for war outside and peace inside. Do not be afraid to hate and do not be afraid to love. I have spoken my mind, and you have heard me" he concluded. "You may contact me at any time you like; your mother has my address. Thank you for hearing me. Goodbye—I'm going to get some food."

Edwin stood up to leave, and Thomas stood up also to shake his father's hand, but he did not speak, and as his father walked away he seemed to be lost in thought and had in fact seemed that way for much of the time that his father had been talking. He had not really been listening very closely to all that was said. He stood dazed in the hallway as his father shuffled away on the shaky legs of a newborn foal, and then turned and went inside. A small living room with an even smaller kitchen separated the two bedrooms. Thomas walked quietly to the door on the right and opened it slowly to see William sleeping serenely in the soft light of the open door. Thomas looked at him for a moment, standing above him beside the bed. He leaned over and lightly pressed his lips to William's forehead, then went to his own room, and quietly closed the door behind him. He was very tired, and slept very well for the first time in three nights.