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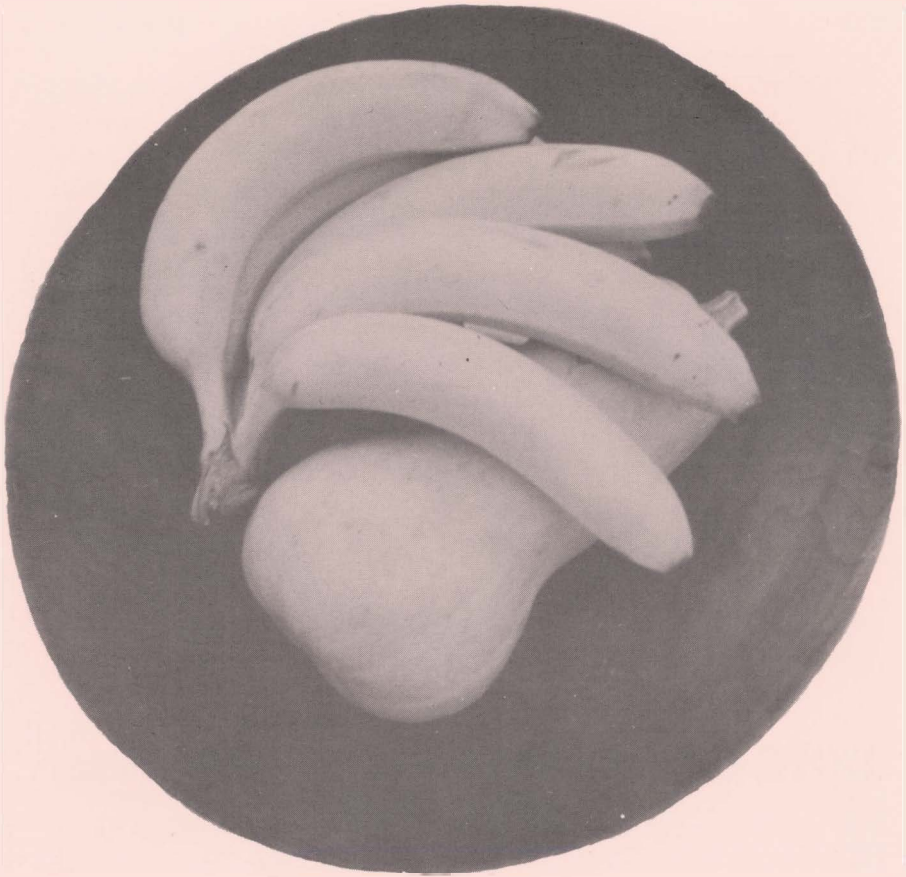
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OPUS



SPRING 1988

**HOPE COLLEGE - HOLLAND, MICHIGAN
APRIL 1988**

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Thanksgiving

My uncle
praying with his eyes
open
looked at his plate
and the silverware
and the yams
and nothing

Bowls went bumping by
the empty chair
where his wife sat
used to sit
and giggle with her finger
on top of her lip
holding it in
the hyena
the hyena inside her
holding it in
while her careful boo-fon
jiggled and jiggled over the relish tray
over the pumpkin pie
and now a silence
where she stifled
the giggle
underneath the boo-fon
hair doo

Her children cry
and cry
from the ashes at their feet
at the ashes on their hands
and the ashes unswept
in the corner
of their kitchen
where dad told them
they weren't
where they bowed their heads
to take the hand
where they snorted cocaine
to ease the day
where dad threw the dog
at the kitchen wall

They were a family
a family who loved to eat
baked watermelon seeds
after picnics
round midnight

They were a family
who laquered bee hives
to hang from the ceiling
for decoration

They were a family
who would lie in fresh grass
under a clear lemon sky

They were a family
in a kitchen
at a table
with relatives
that prayed and prayed
for another
empty chair

Matt DeGooyer

-The lobster eating people, drink, wave,
clinking their vodka tumblers, smiling
in their deck chairs-

It is the S.S. Colacco
with big sails blowing down on them

The old man
with a knarl of grey hair
on his chest
re arranges
his testicles
trapped in his too tight
lavender speedo

His chihuahua
clipped and white
lounges by a glass table
She sniffs towards the setting sun
and lays her head
gently on the cushion of her chair

A lap of cool water slides on the deck
tickling the cuticle of Marci
in her tight tennis shorts
raising her calves
arcing her spine
flinging her hair
she giggles
and murmurs a something to her man
in the speedo
he smiles stiffling a hard on

They hold hands
and look at the setting sun
a moment

They giggle some more
They drink a fresh vodka
They share a sardine

Matt DeGooyer

Out aback

Of my uncle's farm
where dogs talk at cats
flashing between groves
my cousins fit
in velvet outfits
and crimson bows
bow round the table metal
topped with ground beef
beef that the cows gave
for the sweat of my grandpa
who raised that farm in one
only one day he raised
his daddy's farm in one day
in the hot sun
chickens pecking at bits
of shattered shell corn
crushed by the wheels
of machines too expensive
for my uncle
and his family
and the shed where he parks them
next to the garage next
to the slop pile
where the cans pile high
bringing to the air
wet tin corn juice

The bushes which lined
the far edge
of my uncle's daddy's
daddy's farm
have since been pulled
by a tractor diesel
engine blaring
to make room for alfalfa to feed
a cow

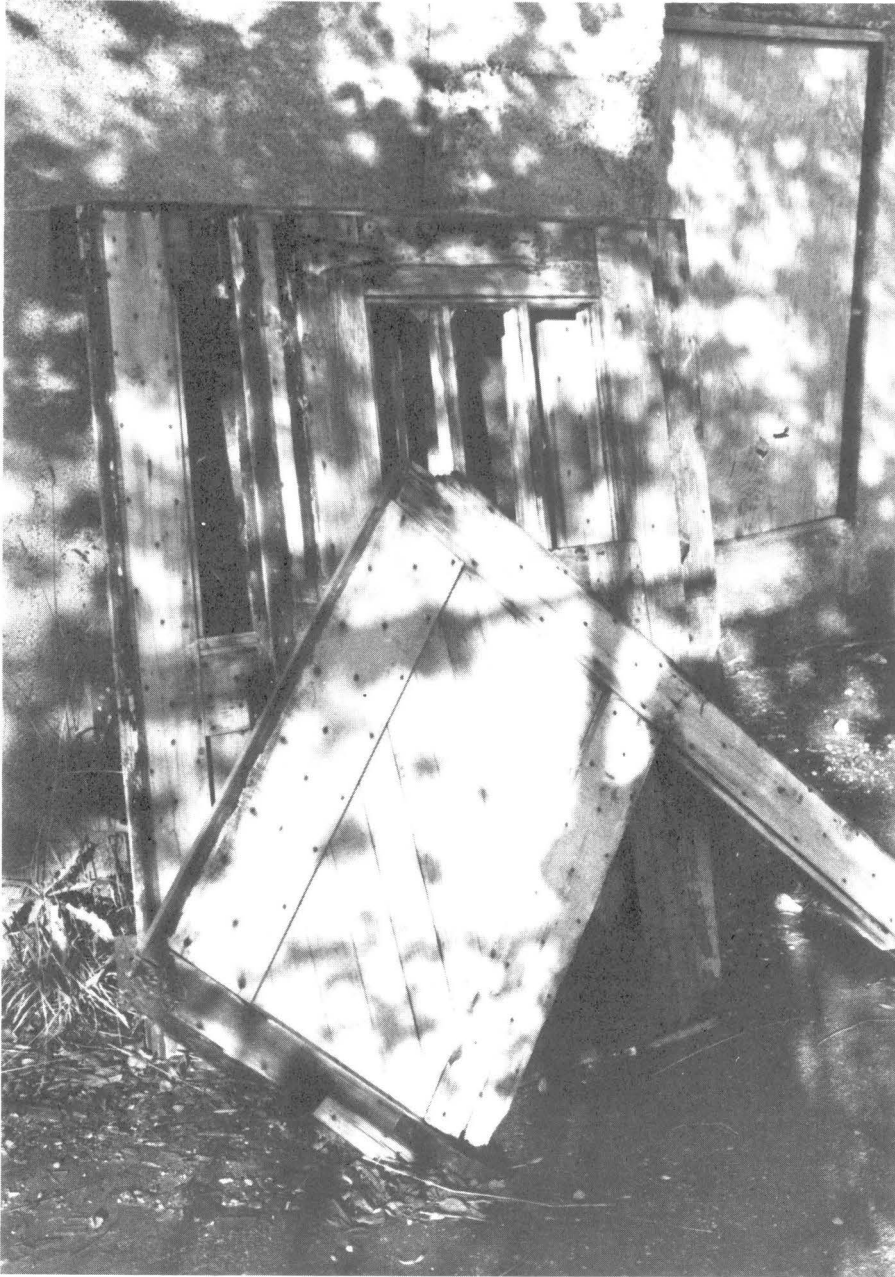
Grandpa's army green pickup
and its clunky old shape
has a myri-clops of attachments
pin-clipped to its top
to spray herbicide this a side
and that a side
on the wheat
and the corn
and the oats
which will spring in the spring
of next year
to provide cash
for the family to go
to town and buy
electronic wares

to make life easier
for communication like
the satellite dish sitting in the yard aback
from a burned tilled grated
once green grove
of indian grass
and walnut limbs

Grandma's strawberries
used to grow out there back
of the outhouse strung over
with the red net
to frustrate
squawking crows who came
to eat

In her cotton dustcap
like Betsy Ross that woman
would pick damn strawberries
in the damn hot sun
with the damn mosquitoes
to make preserves dear god
preserves

And I never realised
that the pines by the road
had grown so high
and the garden outback
has fewer and fewer
peas each year



Susan Macicak

just Water

Tracing the lineage of
the drop
in your eye- last year
the snow
flake that turned to
ice under your spinning
tires-
the dew drop that made
your feet cold, when you were camping
and had to go
at dawn.
The crumb of moisture
you would have killed for
after baling.
The steam from the
breath of the horse
that had icicles on
its belly. . .

Matt Vonk

baklava

used to wear any boots i could find
they'd hold onto my feet just in case
the ground planned on opening up into sky
taking bigger steps than usual across the driveway today
the vineyard has decided to be gates
so my sweater keeps an eye-out for the vines
and the wires--too close too close
(on the vineyard grass
these boots always pretend to be bare feet
sponging along) in the field
my knee hears a Daisy pop up brush my jeans
and run away--even when i whistle
to her big clumsy paws batting at the weeds
pungent with summer she keeps grazing
her pup jaws can't wait to curl with
the first sweet mouthful of green and green and green

(later she'll come with me
i'll knock the mud off dad's boots
pull the seeds from my jeans maybe
stitch my sweater) now muzzle to the ground
still tugging at her lazy crop
Daisy's ears flop forward like grape leaves
and the soft downy hair behind them
is silly in the wind

Pamela Schuen

dear Saint Brubeck
bless this jazz and make it
swingkiss--drums
like a city park tree in a B&W snapshot
(sometimes you have to whisper to be heard) ah-haa
laughin' cool cat on the sax
prowling smokey toward (it scurried
under the priceless Cheshire piano
grinning like whiskers) swear by your father's goatee:
lyrics?! only a bass
could ask a question that dumb d'mb dmb
dmb dmb dmb

must be the knavery of a
full tune

Pamela Schuen

she scrubbed me as
if I itched just after the lice
epidemic was announced at school
and I slipped up at the dinner table and
hadda open my big mouth just
before I filled it with
rice (which reminded me because it rhymed)
and said Mrs. Krajewski told us
there's a lice epidemic goin' around
and we're all gonna catch it if we
keep sharing each other's
combs and hair brushes and stuff then
my father the doctor told
me you don't catch lice
like a disease you get infected with their eggs (I think
but I'll never be sure
because he never bothered to stop talking
like a doctor even
at the table) which I'll never forget
because that was
the grossest and most disgusting thing
I had ever heard and that's all
I thought about
the whole hour my mom spent
scouring me like a pan

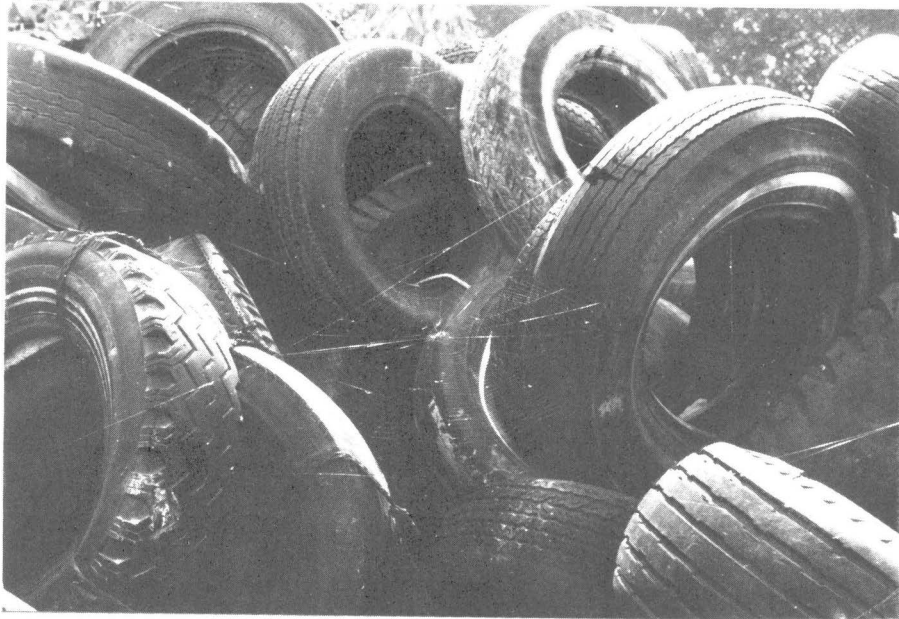
Pamela Schuen

sometimes I stay up all night cracking eggs
in the kitchen in the living room
even in my bedroom--dozens and dozens of eggs
worrying in bowls they wake me up
thinking I am my mother
teaching cold child hands to hold the whole shell
was my precious little task (and I knew
there was never an egg inside until the shell broke)

if the corner of my eye can find
the edge of the bowl in time
then it will be ok for a few pieces to fall in
and rest on top like solid feathers because
if the recipe forgets, the dough will remind you

like a mother--separate the yolk from the white
otherwise you'll be awake
all night breaking cookies into a bowl
worrying about the crumbs
and the beaks

Pamela Schuen



Susan Macicak

Mr. Gymteacher

I saw your son
today, a gross genetic
splotch on the microscope
slide of life-
he reminds me of what you are,
or were-
standing there with
peanut oil skin
and a state-trooper stance,
wearing shorts on a
forty degree day
preparing us to do violence,
to hit each other so hard
puberty would be delayed for years,
we couldn't knock the desire out-
the need
for paternal support
and budding breasts
thirteen year old men walking
with words in our egos
hump blow fuck
fearing excitement in the shower,
and not quite knowing why
I know-
and like a def-con five zit
am near bursting.
this boy is tired,
reel tired
too tired of sucking in my gut
like ol' coach
a defence of form
a defence of self
it just don't cut . . .

faggot

Michael Will

Pickleshoe Summer

Those hours of loud humidity
and high hormonal
imbalance hold
my heart like
super-glue from hell, and
touch me like rose petals from
Tesque, in moments
when March travels over
my head as a regiment
of cossacks who know little
of love or mercy
when the furnace
doesn't run, and neither does
my heart, , ,
the times when
weeks would be spent
weaving airplanes of silk,
only to see them melt
in the mustard wind while my
thoughts burned for a woman
I would not touch
today and could not then
moments when life was so high
that I didn't notice
he was higher,
almost killing us both
in that damn blue pontiac
with New York plates
and more stains appeared
on my ceiling
than on my sheets
when rain came
and I discovered
that the roof leaked,
on the day those shoes
which were linked with glory
were tied to a tree
reeking of vinegar and dill
to stay, only vanishing
after a year and a

Michael Will

GAETAN DUGAS

I

I am the prettiest one.
No one here
with their clothes
or cologne
or pre-constructed dialogue
could even hope to lay claim
to my unique deed.
Doubt in your mind?
No nets needed for this rope of charisma
Images conjured, fleeting, lucid, peripheral
imagine us together at night
we'll enter
we'll flirt; We'll Work
provocative like erotica
as effusive as the printed word.
Conversations alter with moods
you'll watch the prettiest one
manipulate charm
distortedly direct
blatantly discreet
here's your consolation, my friend
a wink of my
departing eye.

II

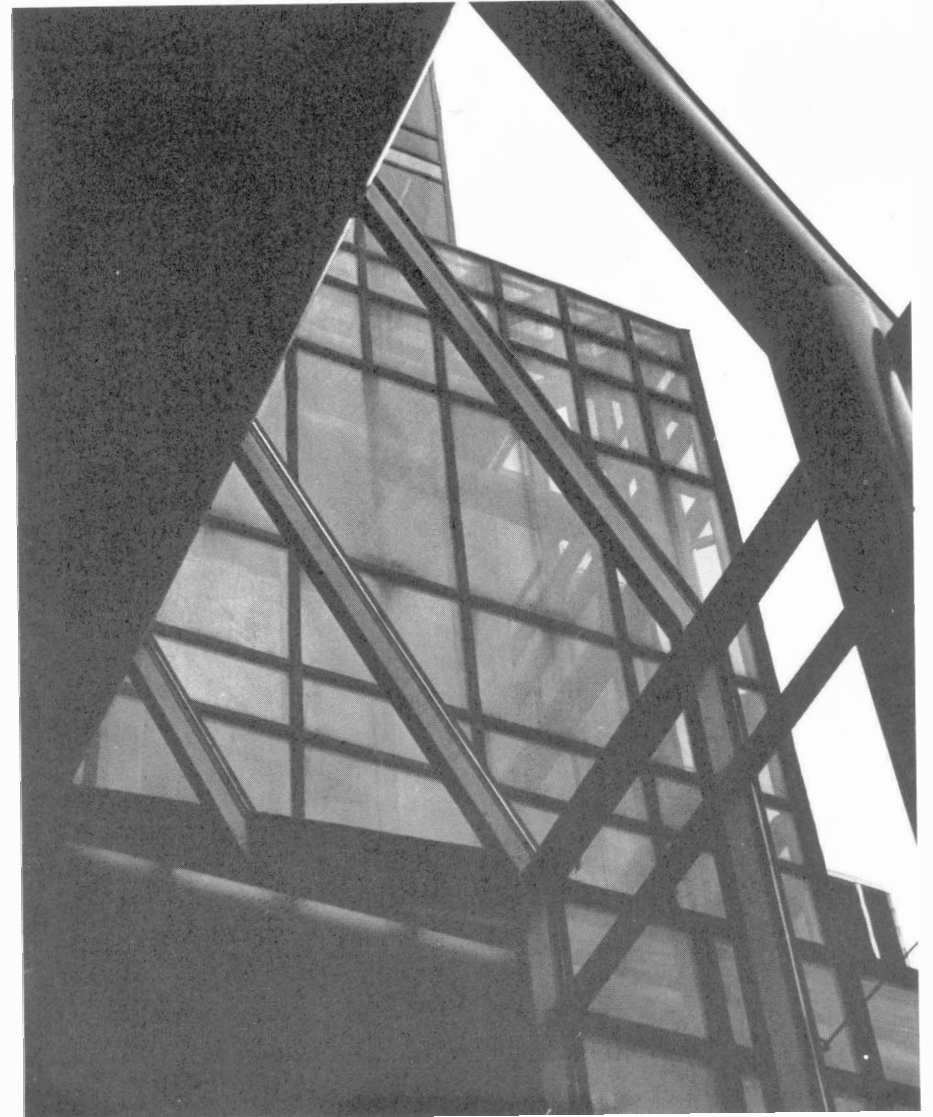
Well, friend
turn up these lights
we'll view one another
with horrific clarity (like a spot on my neck)
such flaring anger (reminds me of my own)
harsh, cruel words won't affect me (I'll fight this cancer)
your temper--it's a common thing (yes, I could stop)
something I can handle (but why?)
something palpable (you've no proof)
chart it on a graph (nothing empirical)
measure it audibly (someone gave this to me)

oh yes scream louder
growl
better to be confronted
by yet another deceived boy
than a speechless enigma (this is a lie)
a sublime pervasion (impressive calculations, doctor, but
a collected nothing (you've
a composed abstraction (got
a cool triple-negative (no
a patient zero I harbor (proof.)

Chris deMaagd

ON GAETAN DUGAS

Gaetan Dugas was an homosexual French-Canadian air steward who, due to his incessant whoring, was directly or indirectly responsible for the first two-hundred-and-forty reported cases of AIDS on the North American continent.



Jennifer Peck

Glory of Rome

Alone, I walk into
your garden, hidden
behind forgotten monuments
important only to the
child.

L'Arc de Constantin stands
but you remain
broken, feet locked
to a stump, your name
vanished down the road
of lost alphabets
long ago.

Legs, crushed by time,
form a pebbled path--
closing the distance
between feet and torso

Your head lies cradled
between flower pot and
cypress. The cherry tree
drops its fragrant blooms.
Your ear, severed,
never head
the cadence of vanishing.

David Angus

MAIDEN FLIGHT

Pop used to smoke apple flavored tobacco
in every room of our house.

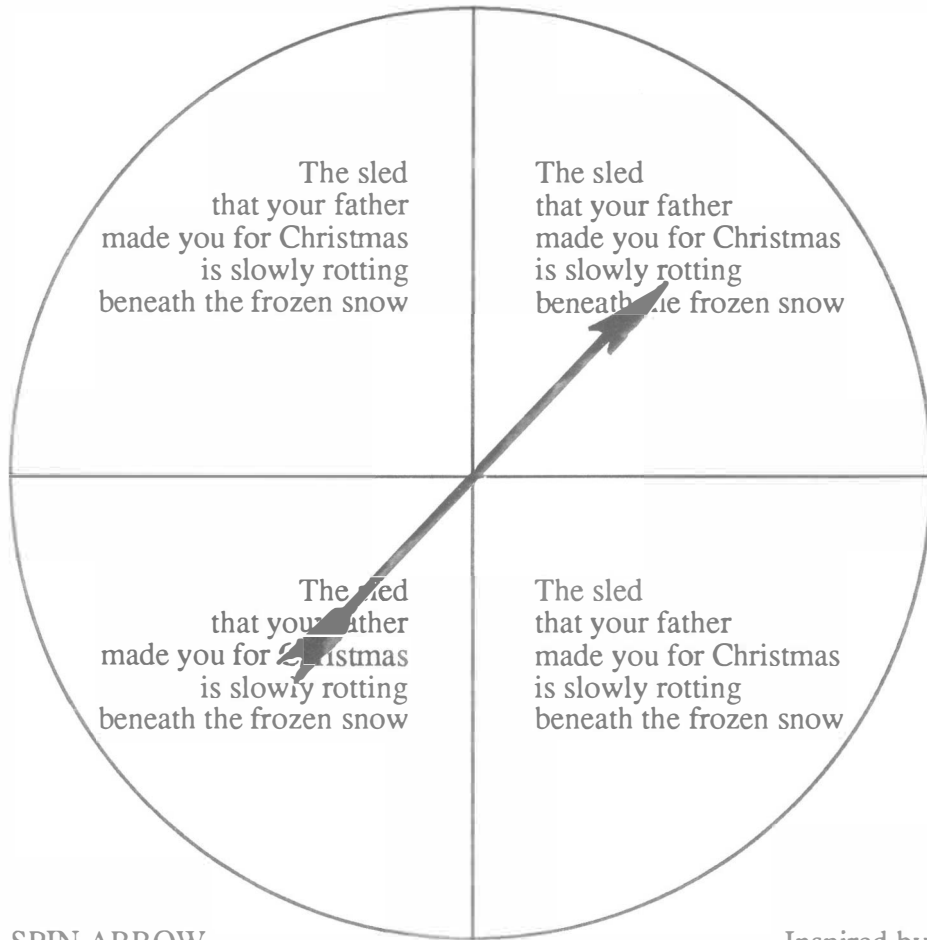
He told me never to use the lawnmower
until I was old enough to know.

So he built me an airplane,
a Sopwith Tabloid
of yellow and silver.
And with the aid of airplane glue,
he told me it would fly.
The sky had its own ideas,
and smashed it onto the dirt.
Balsa wood and tissue paper
mingled with windy grass.

Pop exploded with apple breath.
"God. . . that was beautiful!"

Barry W.

GUILT



SPIN ARROW
READ THE SPACE IT STOPS ON
REPEAT
QUIT WHEN YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH

Inspired by
Bob Heman
"GUILT"

Barry W.

Sitting on the porch roof, the girl lights a cigarette with steady hands.

The pop of her match
reflects tears.
Through the open window
jogs the jazz of
Live at Charlie's.
Slouching her body to the roof
she stretches,
angled,
and looks at the stars,
even though it is beginning to rain.
A calculated flip of her wrist
arcs the match,
falling like a dying planet

Gail Van Genderen

A poem for Nori

must start with a word
that is smaller than her fingernail
but bigger than her mother's.
The word must open church doors
and coffins.
It must create
storms that destroy everything--
house, bed, Jazz Dog--
except her parents and Emma.
The word must answer
"Where do fireflies go to die?"
and ignore
"i before e except after c."
The word, a kiss, should brush
the ear of everyone who hears,
lightly like a sigh.
The word, a slap, should startle
and tingle red.
When you are dying,
the word will not save
but steal your breath and give
what is left to your daughter.
So . . .

Gail Van Genderen

Gray

Her hand grasps
the glass doornob.
A wrist turns:
she enters the house.

She doesn't stay . . . never does.

The sound of thirty four
panes of glass
dancing in a door frame
moves the dust
cornered in the attic.

Outside hangs a hammock
empty and wet.

Gail Van Genderen

Birds Out Back

Just
beyond the porch
underneath and scattered
about the feeder
lie the seeds
I've placed above,
before.

Unruly birds, the wind,
both
caused seeds to fall
upon the ground
snow covered
locked deep,
unfound, till now.

Warm breezes
overnight
bared the treats.

A female collects. . . .
While her bill fills,
her bright mate
watches
from a grove
of thorny locust.

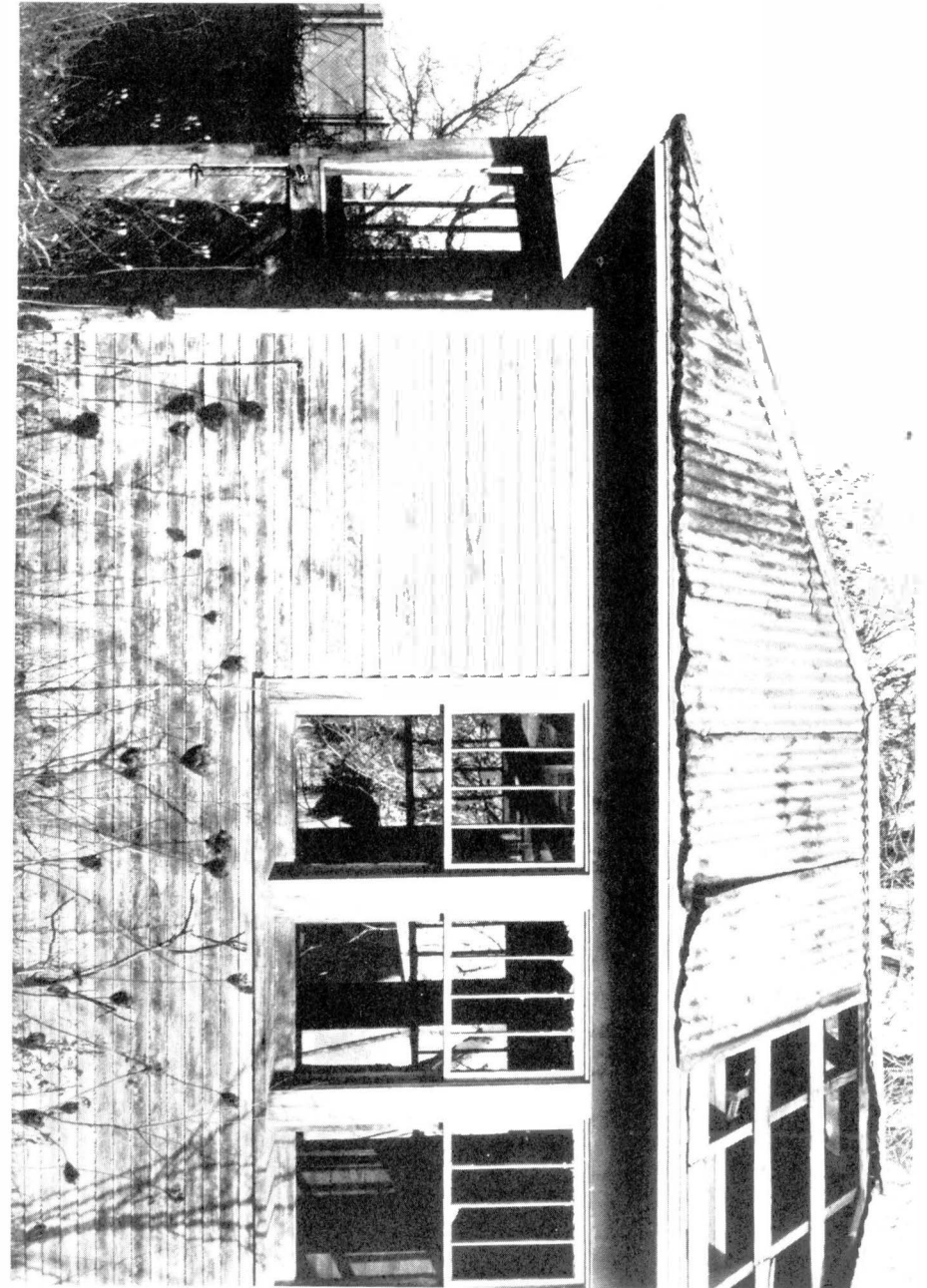
The dog house
is silent,
the wind is noise.

Feeling the urge
to make a gesture
I head
to the garage
where I store the seeds.

Before I reach them
I remember
the forecast,
more snow, more clouds. . . .

Wild berries
are merely
beyond
the locusts full of wind.

Christopher Brown



Susan Macicak

Spring Cleaning Happens

(or, freshly washed yellow curtains
dust the floor with sunlight)

Everything in the cupboards--Out!
Mom brings the garbage bag closer.
Standing on a rocking chair she hands
me the dishes from the top shelf, saying
Throw it away, or, put it
on the table for now.

The wood of the table vibrates
colors (depression glass from both
grandmothers) pink and green and
golden orange. In the heavy light
the bowls don't need
the wax fruit you remember,
Dad, but I wish they were
there (framed by two empty candle-
sticks) on the piano

Having missed the apple
with a boy's teeth marks
and the orange that
smelled of cinnamon

I keep close watch for
spring cleaning days.

Kate Miller

Jake

In his kitchen the stove was always warm
and the smell of soybeans and vinegar
sat in the wood slat chairs waiting
to shake your hand

Kate Miller

(of plums)

wind swingswirls
tree branches
dizzy plums
flirting

Rock in the up-
per branches
till the sky gasps
Enough

a worm crawls
in your palm
new Lover
(of plums)

Form another limb
strong and taut
wooden knarls molded
by the wind

plum pits silent
in your mouth bell
calls grandma's
voice
dinner is ready

Kate Miller

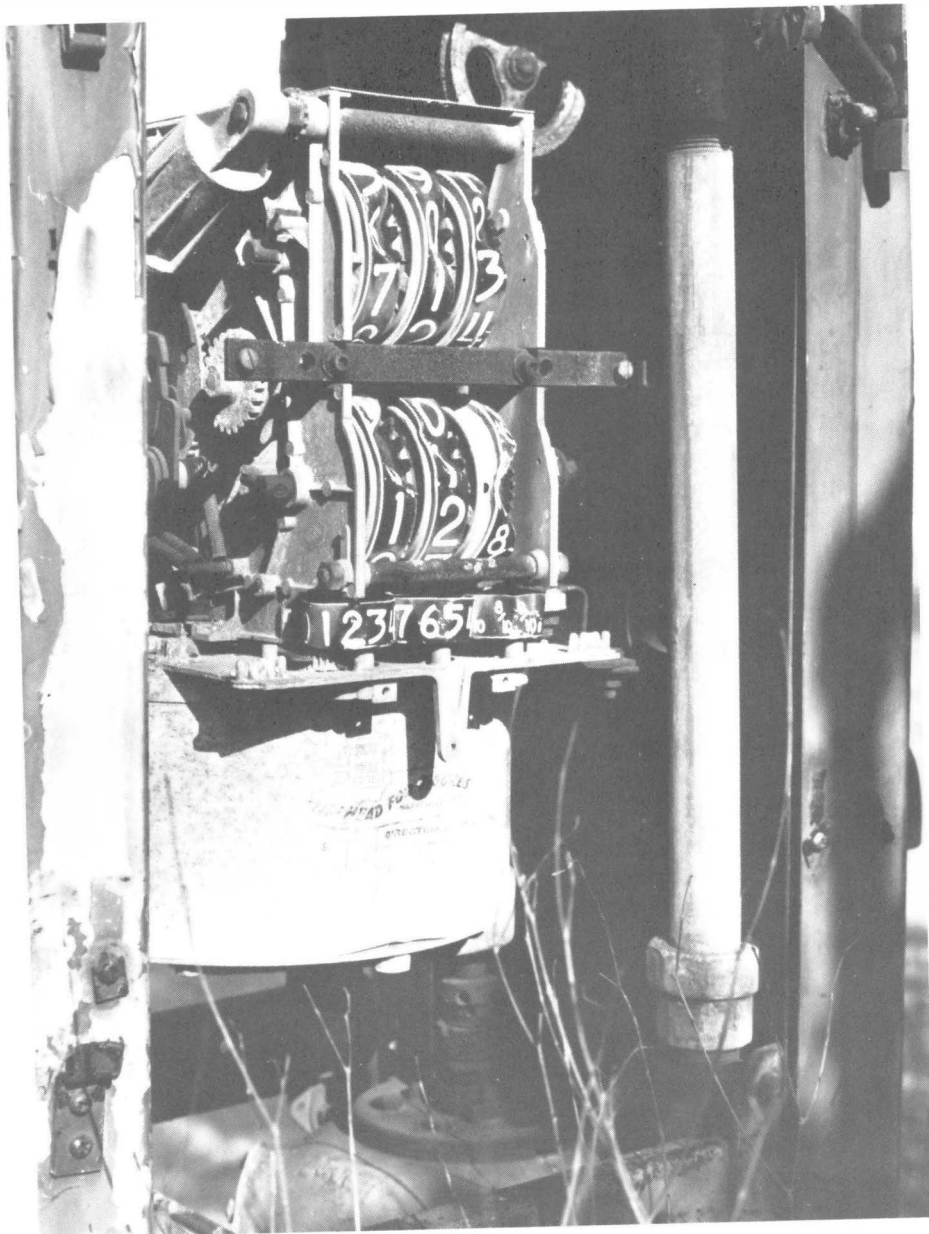
Addis Ababa, 1973
(nightmare of a rich white girl)

The street is where there are the most people.
Children turn on both sides of the jeep
and their eyes burn with the heat of the sun.
The king may be a lion, but these are the greyhounds
once kept in cages on the palace grounds barking
for the touring white visitors and hungry.

In the north the girl's white hair had spun
between fingers and her pockets were filled
with the smell of roasted corn, barley, and wheat - -
gifts of *kola* when she ran from home.

The city gives handfuls of mud
to hide indecent hair and skin:
Cover yourself.
The windshield's glass catches
and holds a rock though its hands crack.
Feringe - - white foreigner,
get out of our land.

Kate Miller



Susan Macicak

U

Just like when you stare in the mirror intently
Trying to connect your name with the stare

I hit myself hard in the dark for not knowing.

THE SEARCH IS ON

Within the huge bamboo forest of my toothbrush -
Nothing.

Who says there's nothing, on the other side of darkness?
I found my bathroom sponge, and crawled into its passages
When I should have been taking a shower, FUN, but still
Nothing.

Look in the edge of this mirror, there's a whole world in here
It is not too comfortable, no place to stand, so still
Nothing.

I love the smell of a new shower curtain, as good any day
as a new pair of tennis shoes, but. . .

Yes that's whose stare I see, It's a diplomat not me
A prized representative in my bathroom,

WITH REALISTIC IMMUNITY

Wesley Ceeley

LARRY THE GRADUATE

Larry the king, had his head strip mined in college
De humanization: 101, 202, 303, 404, Dead

Larry, now twenty-five, his life vacant of pride for anything-
except a full glass of wine

He was found one day ripping love out of the dictionary
His mommy said he obviously did not know what they were to be used for

Larry passed out whispers to the streets "A dream is when it's
a snowy night and you wake up having everything you think you
Should have earned "

" A nightmare is not the opposite, it's just more real because
You actually care that you did not earn anything you have "

Larry now fifty-six, witness to his own crucifix
It keeps snowing from everywhere, from where Larry was at,
He had no choice in what to do

Young morning school-breathe pulls the snow from Larry's face
Worn like a spring Icicle

Screaming children's mothers summon the police, who turn around
With a stagger of pride, and say:

" That's just Larry the king, he hasn't been anything
since the age of twenty-five, sure is funny how it
can snow when it has just turned spring,
isn't it."

Wesley Ceeley

TODAY, ONE MILLION YEARS FROM TODAY, OR THE PAST

Nelson Freebur and Carl Abacus in an abandoned Hospital
They are sword fighting with dried out Vena Cava stalks, in the hall
Carl's broke, and he was found on the floor, some forty years later -
His head for numbers was still in good shape

Rusty stethoscope stay where you are, Carl's head lives, but no heart
All our alarm clocks wrung us from sleep, and grew into Microwaves
If we didn't abandon Technology, how Carl died would have been known,
Now without it People are dying all around me, quite naturally
And they can all it the neo dark ages

No it's not the Apocolypse, this is just another world revolution
Poor Nelson and Carl, they died to keep Technology on its side
Now it's aimed at the moon, and nobody who knows what's right
Only people who write history books, and sponge it all down
I don't know what it's like to die, I absorb it every day
Human road kills and head-off collisions

WE ARE JUST THIS WAY
WE WANT A WAR,, OOPS
A design is only as strong as its numbers, and people as their brothers
YES, words to burn a country with, you complain because messy doves
force you to clean the car, a rusted out malibu-but it runs fine.

Black veins hold the snow down from the moon
And everything spins round yet look it's all held down
And everyone stands on their front lawns
Look at how the market makes Dad cry
Where are numbers and Carl Abacus, DEAD
Hey closet door, let my toys go
Ha Ha, shadow of the sun, with nothing around
Nothing but the shadow of the ground and no moon

There it is, the front door, Mailbox freshly tongued frost
Old mister Jones cigar letters are grabbed by funny fingers
Dad in the back yard pushes trans-planted seedlings toward another day
And here we are one million years later,

Wesley Ceeley

SUNSET ON THE HILL

Shadow of tapping branches, The wind pushes the attic around
Ancient veins, full moon shook the wall
One night she stopped cold.

You at 729 must wonder
About the mighty Oak's tap on the peeling gutter,
When you look there's nothing, for
You cut her down over my childhood

So when your foreign eyes wonder
Why I stand out in the cold,
Trying to see my thumbnail dents
In the window frame my grandma used to bang

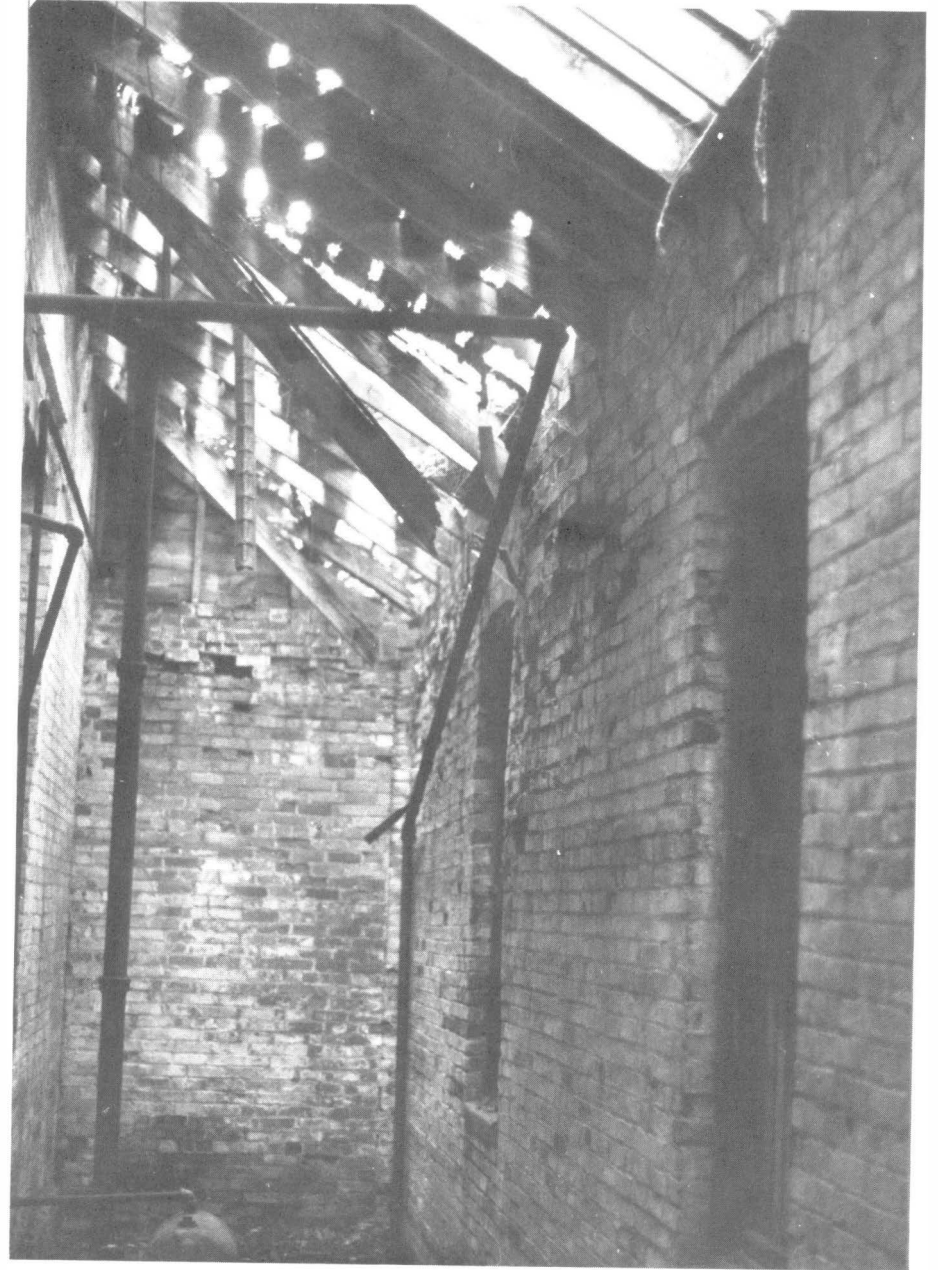
There! it was, the captured goose fountain
A backdrop to generations and their friends
Before and after, the second world war
Buried forever in scrapbooks cover to cover

Sunset on the hill
Fledglings in the trees still, but
Rotten stiff from a clear night's winter chill
Sweet frozen roses and grandma's fading poses
A new garage where they stood.

Curse that one night when
The latch string fell limp with
A slam of the front door

I looked into the stained glass casket
I'm still with sunset on the hill

Wesley Ceeley



Susan Macicak

Pretend you are nine years old and the clover in your
sideyard is in full bloom. You are in Mississippi.
Mom walks out of the house and suggests you make a clover
chain for Dad's bed. Your brother's not around
so you convince a friend to help you wrap long green stems
just under the white head.
Your friend has to go home for lunch but you can't stop, the smell
is so sweet and you keep finding perfect white flowers
with long enough stems, even in the shade of the house.

Elizabeth Cross

Pretend you are a Baptist staging a Passover feast
in a plain building with 23 other Baptists
in a small town in Michigan.

(You won't be walking anywhere in this weather.)

On a hill far away

The back door slams open and two men come in,
drag a sheep down the aisle; push it into
a waiting crate in front of the alter and sing
stood an old rugged cross.

The sheep stamps on a slat; you shift your feet
and balance the worn hymnal on the pew
waiting for the end--it comes soon.

All the hymnals close; the pew regathers you.

The quiet lies in a circle around the animal
until Pastor says Father,

Father (this sheep has never been washed before).

Everyone's breathing shallows. The animal begins
to pant. Amen. Four men lift the crate

as it was in the beginning and wind up the baptismal.

The panting stops. *world without end Amen, Amen.*

When you look again the sheep is hanging upside down
with its back to you but you can hear thick liquid
hitting a metal pan:

forgiveness atonement sacrifice blessing.

A blessing says the Pastor, upon the reading of the Word.

You look again, but it's gone and you know there is a red ring
on the floor seeping in as the warm smell that's beginning
to seep into the room from the kitchen.

Elizabeth Cross

A Ceremony

(a one-act play)

Large white modern refrigerator center stage.

Middle aged man walks up to refrigerator, opens door. Refrigerator is full of different sized vials, he put a vial he is carrying on the door, closes it and walks offstage.

A very young girl does the same.

An elderly woman does the same.

A teenage boy does the same.

Stage left soft light comes up on elderly woman leaning over a crib with vial in one hand, does something indiscernible with crying infant and vial, then labels the vial and walks to refrigerator, puts the vial in then walks offstage.

A pregnant woman comes on, opens door searches vials and picks one out. Closes door, examines vial and contents thoroughly pulls up her shirt to expose her stomach, holds shirt up while she unstops the vial and pours its contents over her stomach, stands; quietly drops vial so it shatters and leaves. An old man comes and pours a vial on his head smearing it on his face and through his hair. Drops vial so it shatters and leaves. Light comes up on woman rear of stage right sitting beside a table with her back to audience. She is bent over weeping. She turns sideways to put a vial on the table, picks up stopper from table and stops the vial. She rises and exits stage right.

Lights stay up.

Elizabeth Cross

Juniper

(Striking silence and words together for warmth.)

Please,
come back into the sun,
you must be hungry for
homemade chairs; blueberries
with milk, both by the
morning window.
The sun misses your shadows;
shirts lay folded still
not sure you are gone
with pine beneath them.

in memory of Robert Francis

Elizabeth Cross

At Noon

We put our lines in water
Bluegills, Perch, Sunfish came
to see what rain had brought. I rested
on our jackets, snuck caramels
from your pocket, waited.
You manned three spinning rods, I
one cane bamboo pole, my book.
Your thick stained fingers solved
knots in my line, found
well-jerked hooks, baited, cast,
released at one o'clock.

At two o'clock the rain came. Drops
in spreading circles fell, harder, faster.
You licked your finger, touched
the wind, reeled lines in
bobbers bobbing. I wondered
at your hurry. Showed concern
for wasted fishing lunches.
I ate my orange
with the rhythm of your rowing
the wind, the rain, the blowing.

At three o'clock you tied the boat, gathered
four poles, two tackle boxes, and a brown lunch bag
heavy with water, caramels, oranges.

Heather Raak

The Snack Shop

Like a sheep nuzzling its way to the front of
the herd, a man with an old face inched his way
up to the counter and asked the blemished teen
for an order of melba toast.

The afflicted girl replied in what verged on a
giggle I'm sorry sir we don't have that.

What he cried, how am I supposed to watch people
killing each other for two hours without melba
toast to wash it down.

Maybe you'd like some popcorn, we have that. And
milk duds. Most people eat popcorn at the movies.

He looked the girl squarely in the place where her
eyes should have been and replied well of course
they eat popcorn if that's all you give 'em.

Ann Reeg



Jennifer Peck

Of Aztec Women and Their Pottery

The wetness of the spinning elements;
slick greyness rotating within cupped hands.
Encircled by finger-rods, it bends my palm
from the outside.

Eyes weave walls into a creation of
humanandstonepotpulse
that will sit on my mother's kitchen table
when she makes her phone calls to Aunt Reese
about sickness, clothing sales,
the weightiness of a thousand handkerchiefs,
lost trinkets at pyramid ruins.

Rising ancient walls and thinning rims of
darkened women pounding; naked breasts and
sculpted sand dry in sun heat.
Soft stone heartbeat under my
mudwashed fingerprints.

Read my palm and be that voice on a
mother's kitchen wood table;
orange-rise, tribes of women uncovered,
strong-handed faces.

Allow breath through your lost airholes.
I bend closely to smell the
roundnesswhispering in the cracks
of curved hands, carved.
Shake off wetness and cover kitchen tables
in a wash of time-voice and the
simplicity of clay skeletons in the sun.

Sue Christian

Wyeths, three generations, canvases
 framed, boxed in spanning three rooms
 on three levels of the gallery.
 you live where you look.
 here are the myths of america.

Golgatha

Upon the body
 female
 (soil-soft, October dusk)
 history has wrapped tangy,
 cauterized strips;
 a plowing straight of seedlings.
 Acres of squaw-corn, wheat buds, mellow-gold;
 a canvas of nurturing renewal-color.
 Annual autumn hoarfrost: chronicle of lifecolor unpeeled.
 Time-sifted tempera, age-ripened thirst,
 becoming a colorwash of extinction
 Loosened palette of the
 body female, travellers returning
 to the dust of the earth, themselves
 Bloodletting of native soils.
 She-Country tills herself inward,
 gestating within,
 returning to be unborn, withering dull-grey.

Sue Christian

i the room he lied
 and breathed in--Garret Room--
 is here, and so the drifter is still
 stretched out on a patchwork
 quilt with visions
 of americana--
 an old myth.

his skin parched and clinging to the bones--bones
 of whale, long bleached
 and dried.

ii around a ring road,
 the last of the snow.
 she is naked,
 his sister. alone on a curve
 of gravel and stone.
 poised, like deer,
 for flight. in sleep, the braid
 along her pear
 of breast
 is a night shadow.

smoke rises from a metal drum
 anywhere.
 he thaws out of his patch
 of snow.

iii this uniformed patriot
 has a native american slant
 to his nose. weeds got trodden
 under foot.

he finds out on may day.
 finds out in a corner,
 in a bungalo,
 surrounded by snow,
 and almost alone; the moon is a lonely wolf.

iv squat and silent, three native
american brothers wait in the tall grass
for wind to stir a spirit.
above them, three gulls, arcing
overhead in a sky with no telephone pole.
their vision,
the indian,
in solitude.

v the drifter slants
his slow eyes to the hole
in his boot, an old man adrift
on the open sea, stiff
in the bottom of the white skiff,

or in another place,
somewhere
animals empty their shells and die,
still as the fern, alive,
yet quiet as the space between the trees.

E. Reka Jellema

Wake

We sleep under the turning of the earth.
Grass sways up there where eyes are open.
Blades drink our air while we cry out.
Here water drips on our closed lids.
We hear the tin of shovels
Forcing stones among the dirt.
There are no elders in this place where
We waken into hunger.
We wonder if it is day
Or if it is night,
And where.

We wake.

And we are lost in the tangle
Of limbs that do not dance,
And eyes without light.
What we could do to fill
Us up again, we did.
We pull
Ourselves down,
And anchor
To the earth.

E. Reka Jellema

Hunger--A Scene

Exterior of Eli's Diner. Five-thirty a.m. Fall is heading into winter, and it is very cold outside. ELI paces outside of the diner. He is forty-six years old. He wears a turtleneck under a St. John's Bay wool shirt, and sweat pants, but no coat. He wears a cap, and a scarf is tossed back over his shoulder. He has forgotten his keys to the diner, but he is enjoying the clear morning. He watches the stars. He watches the warm steam his breath makes. It is the day of the garage sale and the diner has the "closed" sign hanging in the window. Approaching ELI is the slight figure of MARTHA, a waitress at the diner, nineteen. She is dressed in street clothes; a pair of faded jeans and a light-weight sweater. Her brown hair, usually pulled back for waitressing, is loose around her face. She wears brown leather gloves and an enormous green army coat, and sneakers. ELI does not see her at once. His head is tilted back as he gazes at the sky, picking out constellations one by one. After studying him a moment, MARTHA walks on past him. As she swings past, his head turns slowly after the shape in the dark, as if following a scent he cannot deny.

ELI Martha? (MARTHA begins to turn before her name is out of his mouth. She is already saying--)

MARTHA Eli. (She looks him up and down.) It's cold. Why aren't you wearing a coat?

ELI (Fingering the buttons on his shirt.) Hmmm?

MARTHA For god's sake. A coat. You had a bad cold already this year. Doesn't she take care of you? You--

ELI Who?

MARTHA --You're always having headaches--(Exasperated.) Edie.

ELI Do you have your keys?

MARTHA (Digging into the pockets of her coat, and, finding keys, opening the door.) No, but I have yours. Don't you remember giving them to me yesterday? (She switches on the light. ELI takes off his cap, and smooths his rumpled hair. MARTHA is standing right under the light, and he scrutinizes her, squinting a little.)

ELI You look pale.

MARTHA (Touching her hair.) It's early. (Scrutinizing him.) You look cold. (Pause.) Your face looks cold. Like Iceland. (ELI nods.) He looks around the dining area. It is messy.)

ELI I was going to clean up a little. . .

MARTHA The garage sale, it's today.

ELI Yes. There's a lot to do today. Jack was supposed to help me clean up. . .

MARTHA I'll help. (Eli gestures.)

ELI Is everything all right? You look tired. . . .

MARTHA It's very early, and I can't sleep. . . .

ELI Maybe you should sit down for a few minutes, you look like you're about to fall down.

MARTHA I doubt that will happen. (Walks pointedly away from ELI to where a broom leans up against the wall. She grasps the broom and vigorously begins to sweep the floor. ELI puts chairs up on the tables loudly, then looks up to see if she notices. She studiously avoids eye-contact.)

ELI I guess I'll wipe down some tables. (He crosses to a flap door leading to the kitchen and returns with a bucket of soapy water, a rag, and some window cleaner. He wipes down tables. Suddenly he sneezes.)

MARTHA Eli, how much effort does it take to slip into a coat before coming over here? Probably you're getting pneumonia. Come down out of the clouds and take care of yourself. (ELI stares at her.)

ELI I'm fine.

MARTHA Listen. (Reaching into the pocket of her army jacket and pulling out a beautiful red apple. She extends the apple out to him and sighs.) Here.

ELI (Awkwardly.) Hmmm. An apple.

MARTHA (To herself.) Teeth. Snapping the skin of an apple. (Pause.) "Strange violin, why are you following me?"

ELI What?

MARTHA Nothing. Just a poem I loved once. Listen. . . .

ELI What?

MARTHA Oh, nothing. It's just, . . . whenever I'm sweeping I hear Chopin

waltzes, . . . in my head, though, so you couldn't hear them too.

ELI (After a pause.) Was it you who once pointed out the Smetana piece?

MARTHA I don't remember, and frankly, I don't care. Eli, look. My soul is sick. Appetite has overtaken and diminished Spirit and Reason. My soul is in a state of chaos,

ELI (Crossing to her.) Why don't you sit down. (He reaches his hand out to place it on her shoulder, to ease her into a booth.)

MARTHA Don't touch me. You have caused chaos in my soul. (ELI fingers the buttons on his shirt, smiling tightly.) And don't do that, not unless you really want them unbuttoned.

ELI Martha???

MARTHA And don't, don't look at me like that.

ELI Look at you how? How do I look? (He scrutinizes her.)

MARTHA Like that godammit. Just like that. (Pause.) I'm in love with your *wrist*, Eli. Among other things. *Your wrist*. I want to devour it. (Pause. ELI listens, blank-faced.) Can't you tell me what to do? (ELI remains silent.) Don't you ever get expressions on your face? You're so sentimental, talking about that chair of yours I could swoon. About the lines of a *chair*! How sensuous they are! Don't you ever think about going home, and finding a new inch of Edie's skin? (ELI is staring at MARTHA. He runs his fingers through his hair. MARTHA is close to tears. ELI stands up, and crosses to the flap door. There he turns to look at her again.)

ELI Martha? (Pause.) It is all right. (Pause.) I'll get you a cup of tea. Do you like Earl Grey, Lipton, or Darjeeling?

MARTHA (Getting herself together.) Darjeeling is something I've never tasted.

ELI (From the kitchen.) Have you felt so strongly, since we first met?

MARTHA Not *this* strongly, no I guess first of all I just wanted to see what your life was like outside of the diner. I wanted to know if when you were sick, Edie would make you tea, and bring you apples, and draw a big comforter up to your neck, . . . (ELI comes back carrying mugs of tea, he hands her one and then takes a step back from her and looks at her, his chin resting in his hand.) But then I'd start to think, I could arrange it so I could be around the diner at closing time, and well, . . . I don't know. You could give me a ride home, and I could invite you in for a cup of tea, and I could

give you apples. (Pause.) Is it true you have an elaborate train set in your basement?

ELI How did you know that?

MARTHA Jack told me. I asked Jack a lot of things about you. You know Jack, once you get him started on a subject, you can't shut him up. Which can be advantageous.

ELI Umm hmm. So Martha, after you wanted to take care of me, then what? (ELI is smiling, more relaxed now.)

MARTHA I don't know. Every time I saw you, you just started to look so good. So appetising. (She exhales audibly, maybe absent-mindedly rubbing her lower abdomen slowly.) You started to make me hungry. Every time we were together at the diner, I'd be ravenous, watching your hands wash dishes, hold a broom, your fingers, brushing crumbs from a table, your wrists, . . . (MARTHA leans against a table, and plays with a strand of her hair. ELI comes over and leans on the table next to hers. He takes the strand of hair from her fingers and holds it between his.) The things you do to fill yourself up, each lungful of smoke, each drink, (She leans over and rests her head on ELI's shoulder.) I am so hungry, so hungry. (ELI tangles MARTHA's hair with his fingers. Then from his pocket he takes the apple, and he brings it to her mouth. He feeds her the apple until it is gone, then he wipes the juice off her mouth with his hand. Lights down. A beat. Lights up, hot, and whitening the skin of MARTHA. It is a week later. MARTHA is sitting backwards on a kitchen chair in the diner. There is another kitchen chair facing backwards a little way away, but it is altogether emersed in shadows. If ELI is sitting in it, he can not be made out. MARTHA's head is tilted back on her neck so her hair pours down her back, and her breastbone is visible. Her monologue is addressed to the chair.) Eli, look at me. My skin. (She brings her head back upright to look at the chair.) Did you look? Only your fingers can read my skin, your square, thick fingers. I need to get my hands dirty. I touched your hand once, a little by accident. Don't look away, when I could lick up and down your back like a paint brush, my tongue between each vertebrae. Eli, I could touch you and make you feel the strength of love and fear. (Softly, to herself.) The hollow split in half my ribs because what I expected did not come. (Caressing his name.) Eli. (Slowly.) Eli, the feel of you name on my lips. To just find your face in the dark. The memory of your chest under your light-weight, button-down shirt, lingering like the taste of licorice on my tongue. Slow and thick on my tongue. Tasting like the smell of burning rubber, stretching through the afternoon. (Pause.) Yes. Lean toward me a little in your chair. In the garden, the tomatoes burst, seeds everywhere. A tree branch inclined. Your cheek bristles scrape my hand, scrape my hand. (Pause.) When you are alone, do you hear me whisper your name? (She whispers,) Eli.

Does a drop of sweat hiss down along your spine? In the quiet of your house, your fingers, finding their way around the red surface of the skin of the apple do they tremble slightly, make sudden movements? We share the same ghost, you know, the same ghost. (Pause.) I am almost there. From where I sit, I can taste your mouth.

E. Reka Jellema

EERDMANS AWARDS 1987-88

Selected by Jim Perkins

PROSE

Carla Vissers *Acting Out*

POETRY

Elizabeth Cross *Ohio and Spring*

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Gail Van Genderen *Gray*

Pamela Schuen *(sometimes I stay up all night
cracking eggs)*

Barry W. *Maiden Flight*

Kate Miller *Spring Cleaning Happens*

The Eerdmans Award recognizes the authors of the most outstanding poem and prose piece of the academic year. All works published in both the Fall and Spring *OPUS* magazine are considered for the award. This year's judge was writer Jim Perkins who teaches at Westminster College in Pennsylvania. Mr. Perkins is first a poet, but has written scripts for radio, television and film. He has published essays, a book of short stories and written a one-man play portraying Ezra Pound. For this work he has earned several National Endowment for the Humanities grants, and many literary prizes. Mr. Perkins charmed us with his reading in the fall here at Hope College, which in addition to his time and consideration in choosing the awards we are grateful.

OPUS EDITORIAL STAFF

Elizabeth Cross - Editor
Kate Miller - Editor
Jack Ridl - Advisor
Wesley Ceeley
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