



BACHY

ONE
JULY 1972

A READING EDITION



BACHY

ONE · JULY 1972



Papa Bach Bookstore
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A READING EDITION

THE MAGAZINE

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Bachy is a semi-annual journal dedicated to the discovery of previously unpublished arti[sts] of worth. We are interested in all literary and graphic art easily reproducible in black a[nd] white (no color). Poetry, prose, cartoons, music compositions, plays, costume and set des[igns] for theatre, photographs, line drawings-all are acceptable. Payment is \$2 per page p[er] author's copies. Reporting date is 8 weeks. Single copy price: \$2; subscription price: \$3.[50] Please address all manuscripts and artwork to the appropriate editor. Do include a stamp[ed,] self-addressed envelope with all submissions as no responsibility can be accepted for ret[urn] of any work sent in without a return envelope.

ABOUT THIS EDITION

— This is a complete reading text of the first issue of *Bachy*, published in July 1972 by the Papa Bach Bookstore on Santa Monica Boulevard in West Los Angeles. It was made from a scan of the copy held by the UCLA Library, transcribed page by page from the page images. The page follows the magazine's own arrangement — the contents set as Papa Bach set it, the heavy display face of its section titles, its habit of spelling page numbers out in words, and its Bach device, lifted from the masthead of this very copy. The reading text departs from the original in one respect: *Bachy* was composed in Helvetica, and this edition is set in a serif, which carries verse better over a long sitting. Each poem begins on its own page.

The original folios appear as small gray numerals in the outer margin, so any passage here can be found in the object. All 31,470 words of the issue are present.

Words in teal brackets are editorial reconstructions — a character or word that could not be read from the scan and has been inferred from context, from the facing page, or from the magazine's own back matter. There are 425 of them. [?] marks something illegible that could not responsibly be guessed. Everything in black was read directly off the page.

Most reconstructions fall in one place. The UCLA copy is tightly rebound and will not open flat, so through Robert Aber's *Unsettled Accounts* (pages 24–55) the last characters of nearly every line on a left-hand page disappear into the gutter. Those letters are not faint; they are outside the photograph. They can only be recovered from another copy.

Bachy was a magazine of pictures as much as poems — portfolios by Lisa Rose, Roger Penney, Ron Snider and others ran through it. The artwork is not reproduced here. In its place, each image is described in an [editorial note set like this], so a reader knows what stood on the page.

Six leaves are missing from the scan this edition was made from. Printed pages 171–175 carried Deborah Eddy's portfolio of artwork, and page 176 the opening of "A Note and Review". Apart from that single page of prose, what is lost is the Eddy portfolio; the review picks up in mid-sentence, at the words "cop in Fish".

Printed typos, eccentric spellings and compositor's errors are kept as they were set. Beyond the bracketed reconstructions, no editorial matter appears once the text begins.

This edition was set from the UCLA Library copy in TeX Gyre Pagella, with contributors' names in Bonum after the magazine's own display type. The Bach device is the magazine's own, taken from the masthead page of this copy.

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THE ARTWORK

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

Front cover	<i>The magazine's device, a woodcut-style portrait head of J. S. Bach in full wig, printed as a repeating grid over a dark ground and alternating with short vertical bars, with BACHY lettered large in Art Nouveau display caps at the right.</i>
Inside front cover	<i>Nothing but plain dark board, the library's rebinding cloth and its repeating University of California, Los Angeles stamp running down the spine edge. The tiled Bach heads do not carry through to this side.</i>
Title page	<i>One Bach head on its own, the woodcut portrait scratchy with hatching, wig curled to the shoulders, with BACHY lettered beside it in tall display caps. A librarian's pencilled call number sits in the upper right corner.</i>
Copyright page	<i>The Bach head again, unframed and centred in the white space between the bookstore's address and the copyright line, the same scratchboard portrait used on the cover, here about an inch and a half high.</i>
Masthead page	<i>Below the list of editors the Bach head returns, this time boxed in a heavy black rule, a small square vignette sitting alone in the middle of the page above the typesetting and printing credits.</i>
Page 8	<i>Section title page for the first portfolio of drawings: the name Lisa Rose set alone at the head of an otherwise empty page, in the same swelling Art Nouveau display face used for the contributors' names throughout.</i>
Page 9	<i>Full-page pen drawing by Lisa Rose: a shaggy camel standing on a rug, its four legs ending in bare human feet, a nude woman with raised arms crowded against its flank, a grand piano behind. Signed in a small hand at the bottom.</i>
Page 10	<i>Lisa Rose again, working in unbroken contour line: a tumbling heap of nude figures and sail-like draperies, some no bigger than a thumb, tangled across the lower two-thirds of the page. Initialled at lower left, signed in full at lower right.</i>
Page 13	<i>Under Susan Schaeffer's poem, an outline drawing by Electra Bunche: two big humpbacked horse-creatures standing nose to nose, each with a second, smaller horse's head growing out of its chest so that four muzzles meet. Nothing shaded, all pure line.</i>

Page 16	Barbara Cornwell's circular silhouette fills the lower half of the page below "Coal Bin": a shaggy crested beast and a kneeling naked figure crouched nose to nose inside a black roundel, bare twigs and leaf sprigs cut out of the darkness around them.
Page 19	Halftone photograph by Kim Gottlieb beneath the poem: a long-haired girl in a pale smock kneeling on a bare floor, palms flat in front of her, looking past the camera; a second, cropped figure stands in the shadow behind.
Page 59	Blair Allen's ink drawing occupies the lower two-thirds: a solid black umbrella, opened, with rain falling from its rim in dashed vertical strokes, and beneath it the stippled ghost of a standing nude. Signed B.H. Allen at bottom left.
Page 61	A spare contour drawing by Sylvia Roth sits under "Choosing": a woman's torso seen from the side, one breast, a folded arm, the swell of a hip, done in a few unhesitating lines. Signed and dated 67 at lower left.
Page 68	William Blakeley's drawing takes the lower half of the page: a nude woman sitting cross-legged, her body washed in grey and hatched at the edges, set against a ruled diamond lattice. His signature runs across her thigh.
Page 76	A very dark halftone by Kim Gottlieb below John Hall's poem: a curly-haired figure sprawled in an unlit room with hands raised near the chest, the only light a barred, many-paned window burning in the upper right corner.
Page 86	Jack Behrens's graphic score for John Cage: four staves headed Instrument in C, A, G and E-flat, laid out as a square to be read from all four sides, HAPPY BIRTHDAY and JOHN running down the margins, 1912 across the top.
Page 88	Two systems of hand-copied violin notation, headed HAPPY BIRTHDAY JOHN CAGE, with separate staves for what the violin plays and what sounds, the letters C-A-G-E spelled out under the notes. Signed Jack Behrens , Bakersfield, March 22, 1972.
Page 94	Peter Braluer's pen study of a torn plant fragment fills the page below the poem, a ragged fan-like leaf built entirely from fine parallel strokes. Hand-lettered beside it: "Study of a fragment of a plant", with his boxed monogram and the date 8.64.
Page 100	The second portfolio opens here: Roger Penney's name alone at the top of a blank page, in the magazine's curling display type, standing in for the four full-page drawings that follow.

Page 101	<i>Full-page pen drawing by Roger Penney, dated 72: a woman's head with a third eye between the brows, star-and-flower marks stamped on her cheek, a beaded band across her hair, and behind her flights of stepped stairways and a small rayed sun.</i>
Page 102	<i>Penney turns a horse's head into a building: brick-scaled cheeks, rose windows for eyes, a Gothic arch where the muzzle should be, and a crenellated tower growing from the crown. Rolling hills behind. Full page, unsigned.</i>
Page 103	<i>Another full-page Penney, dated 72: a colossal long-haired woman built out of tenement blocks, windows for her ribs, a spiked halo behind her head, sitting in the middle of a hatched city with her bare feet planted on the rooftops.</i>
Page 104	<i>Last of the Penney plates, dated 2/72: a squat cat-eared head the size of a hill, its stippled hide inlaid with rectangular panels and a Greek-key band, ringed by a heavy chain of beads, with a rayed sun at upper left. Full page.</i>
Page 110	<i>A sparse line drawing by Peter Braluer sits under the Hemingway squib: a bare arching dome with a shaggy, long-snouted anteater at its left, nosing along a row of four smooth mounds that have grown tiny legs.</i>
Page 112	Peter Braluer , 1964: a dense crosshatched drawing of a newborn lying on its back, head turned, fists up beside its face, the whole cot and floor worked over in the same black shorthand. Landscape format, filling the page below the poem.
Page 118	W. H. Braun, Jr. 's cartoon strip "The Private Life of Herbert Twiddle", copyright 1972, runs four pages from here, printed sideways: some forty ragged pen panels in which a bald, bespectacled boss confesses a dream to his long-haired secretary — a stick figure bounding over clouds and mountains, a whip, a flying dragon-woman, a lone walker on an empty horizon — before Twiddle returns to his desk and the strip promises another adventure. Drawings and hand-lettered dialogue are inseparable, so the strip is not transcribed here.
Page 123	<i>Beneath Keith Brown's poem, an outline drawing by Peter Braluer: a long-snouted grinning reptile sprawled in a bank of billowing cloud, a naked woman standing on the same cloud with her head tipped back, a plain disc of sun behind.</i>
Page 126	Blair Allen in one unbroken stroke: a flat spiral at the lower left runs up a long diagonal stem, coils twice, and resolves into a drowsing closed-eyed face at the upper right. Initialled BHA. Sits low on the page, well below the poem.

Page 128	Sylvia Roth's outline nude below "After the Fact": a woman seen from behind, thighs to fingertips, both arms lifted over her head, drawn in a single unshaded contour. Small, set right of centre in the lower third of the page.
Page 136	Another single-line Blair Allen , this one below "Drowning Hat": a profile tipped back with eye closed and lips pursed, two long spidery hands rising past it, the body tapering to a teardrop. BHA lettered along the arm at upper left.
Page 138	Barbara Cornwell's unicorn foal stands in the lower half of the page: a leggy young horse in clean outline, spiral horn, shaggy mane and tail, hooves in tufts of grass, head turned toward the reader. Signed " Barby Cornwell 72".
Page 143	First of three Lon Spigelman pieces: a black rectangular panel at mid-left carrying a fine white contour, profile inside profile, three pinprick eyes, a long white stem trailing off the bottom. A black oval beside it reads "Originate the copy".
Page 144	Spigelman again, white on black: a stalk rising through the centre of a dark panel, topped by a mottled pod with a pale teardrop hanging from it, two triangles pinned to thin diagonal stems either side. The oval below reads "Read the unwritten book".
Page 145	The last Spigelman: a black panel cut into wedges by thin white rays, with a pale mottled shape like a leaf or a fish standing upright at the centre on a small disc. Its black oval, at lower left, reads "Logic is no excuse for ignorance".
Page 147	A boxed, high-contrast drawing by Sylvia Roth under "Arrangements": two heavy nude figures seated with knees drawn up and heads bowed, left blank white, while everything between and behind them is filled with solid black and busy stipple.
Page 156	Peter Braluer's pen drawing under Doug King's prose piece: a gaunt shrouded figure standing in a round-arched niche, its fish-like head thrown back on a long neck, bulging round eyes, ragged pinions at the shoulders, the niche ruled with close horizontal lines.
Page 158	Ron Snider's name heads an otherwise blank page, the last of the section titles. The five photographs that follow are his; he was, the contributors' notes say, an unpublished seventeen-year-old at Culver High School.
Page 159	Printed sideways and running nearly to the page edges, a Ron Snider photograph: a bare forked tree in fog with the low sun burning white between its trunks, two small figures and a post on the horizon at the right. Everything else is near-black.

Page 160	<i>Snider at his most abstract: two solid black fields, also printed sideways, divided by a hairline of white light with a single small bump sitting on it. No other detail survives the printing; the page is essentially a black rectangle split in two.</i>
Page 161	<i>A Snider photograph bleeding off the left edge, upper half of the page: a wall of backlit brush and branches with the sun broken up in the leaves, and in a bright gap near the top a standing figure with a smaller one below.</i>
Page 162	<i>Snider indoors: a bare mattress on the floor with the sheet thrown back, a portable television on a folding stand beside it, a slot of light on the dark wall and a doorway flaring white at the right. Set square in the middle of the page.</i>
Page 163	<i>The last Snider plate, close up and shallow-focused: a heavily lined old hand laid over a knee or a second hand, everything else falling away into darkness and out-of-focus hexagons of light. It fills most of the page.</i>
Back cover	<i>The Bach heads and vertical bars again, tiled across the right-hand half of a dark ground, the left half left plain. The library has stamped it "Nov 26 73" and numbered it 0032.</i>
Pages 171–175	Deborah Eddy's portfolio, five pages. These leaves were not captured in the scan this edition was made from, so the work cannot be described; the contents page is the only record of it.

Gruberg

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

Dear Bachy:

I once heard the rumor
that until they found out,
Merrill, Lynch, Pierce, Fenner,
and Smith's phone number in
New York City spelled out
FUCKYOU.

Now that I've found
out that your number spells
out GRUBERG, I'll believe
there are assassins everywhere.

Is nothing sacred?

Ubiquitously yours,

Gruberg

Jack Hirschman

ZThS

Where is my mouth again the music commences again the
reverences burst from within the blossom of beginnings
and all smile behind my great fool of majesty the lady
behind me imagine in Europe in here the great lady
driving me imagine in China in love the deep ocean
shaping in tears and wide waters in hills and low levels
in this face and that broken hunched sore and scabby O
crazy hands raised to crush this music out of this organ
this wind of the joke high state let him be the man on
the infinite telephone of the synagogue of the night and
I one key one false move one perfect diminuendo in the
great chamber of the trebling and thundering great emulsion
of birth pangs O gossipaceous fingers of the tongues of
the almighty Bach

NPD

The time when I was eternal and you walked upon the waves of my
flaming breath when I was not time and this double broken jaw
within the broken jaw of my mouth consoled by the photography of
space healed by the telephonic mouths when I could hear music when
I was married to music when I was a note that was thrown across the
stave of the sea and the body black and the body rosy and the
body whole with light not splintered or nailed like the heel in the
skull that drives the night

And when there were dreams not the lack or some act I had to put
on or some threat I had to wear the octaval tones of to get by with
the least encounter to buy a container of milk in Chinese or a
douche of a pack of cigarettes in an English accent

What pun now what double is tender what double in fact is double when
the trouble stands on its head upsidedown in the quarterdeck of
the pack of fools and the levers drowning of conspiracies

I make my peace with teeth I break my neck upon the trance illumination
of an old method of dying canine by canine and tender the
rot in my mouth made of quivers sublime the long cheekbones of our
tumbled brains the second by second earth

John Haines

Becoming a Crow

The beak will grow
from your mouth and chin,
and your eyes slip away,
to the sides of your head;

your fingertips long and feathery,
unable to hold,
your feet naked and grasping.

And all the great words
will stick in your throat,
mere caws and whistles.

You'll be alone in the air,
with the world always
sliding and upside down—
see the continents askew,
all the tilted nations.

And someone standing in a field
below, waving arms of straw—

"Look at the crow!"

Black tatters in a world of sticks.

Dennis M. Ellman

Initiation

We were made to crawl around like insects
eating dust,
becoming preoccupied with our limbs.

We asked no questions, but functioned out of hunger
for plants and the underbarks of trees.
We bathed in places where lights appeared
in obscure designs
that made them seem like something other than lights.

We acquired a practiced sincerity. Men with answers
gave us bottles to piss in.
Men with answers showed us moons immense as heads
with dried-up river beds.
In the morning we were alone, afraid of our paleness,
afraid of the absence of vegetation
or its presence, afraid of what was standing over us
or under us.
Our fear made us run, made us walk,
made us piss openly where we were, frozen
in the golden springs of our excrement.

This is where we came to understand our purpose.
This was an exquisite fear after all.

Gleaning Walnuts

Some have fallen green forever.
Others have turned a deep obsidian
and hang on branches
like frightened families of monkeys.

I take a stick and knock them off.
Heads with faces blank with terror
or blank with boredom
spread themselves before me.

I get a sack collecting
all that's gold and large.
I pick up one that's cracked
and look inside.

Something is emerging
almost white, almost solid.
I hold it in my hand, this skull
that will never ripen into eyes,
whose mouth is the invisible organ
of fear.

What if this
is the only brain I ever have?

Nudes in a Restaurant

Through the aisles, slowly
I pass the nudes
seated at their tables, their hands inserted
between their legs.

They are posing for fashion magazines;
the models, the beautiful ones,
the timeless nudes of dreams.

Today I retire to the company
of their bodies, naked
regarding my clothes as visitors
at an empty house.

I pretend something good
will come of this,
sitting with my brothers and sisters
in the blue front
of this old restaurant
at a table laid with silver and crystal,
my hands inserted
between my legs, waiting to be handled
gently, without motive.

Susan Schaeffer

What I Always Said

I tell you,
People here are stepping out of the walls.
No, they won't go back in.

They leave great jagged gaps in the plaster.
At night, they pick up their baskets
Gathering nightmares, and curses

Like mushrooms from the forest,
Its fungusy floor.
I am taking a certain satisfaction in this

In my slimy gray suit
In my gray scaly tail
Grinding my two pointed teeth.

Before the moon and the sun
In the dark caverns of time
I said how it was.

Dead Letter Box

What do I remember?

The accidents, the skids,
The houses picking up their skirts,
Starting to run fast,
The trees in their arms,

The detached curiousness,
Where will it end,
The lamppost raising its hand
Like the best of police.
It held us fast. I remember, the way we recall
Somebody had to. The rack and the screw,
The stocks and the belts
Locked over groins,
All slightly comic,
The people having gone,

Reality having gone
Like the drug from a drink
Left on a table too long.

I remember the white rats you killed,
How little you learned.
It is all under glass,
A scene like a slide,
The prognosis, bad. I remember falling for days
With a kind of calm
As if someone had stood all the street[s]
On their ends, vertical,
And this was the way it was,
And how it would be.

Time is a kind of a bleach.
It has eaten holes in your face,
And mine.

If we were to touch,
We would be two sleeves,
Two cloths from a trunk,
Above,
Clouds,
Above,
A canopy of moths.

Late Afternoon

There are winds all around this house!
They hold hands, they dance!
The house doesn't know which way to look first,
It opens its square eyes amazed.

A gold tree keeps shaking its spangles
In a green light,
The purple clover is accommodating the bee
Yellow moths solidify
Like butter in the great field of corn

The cricket is sleeping on his pillow of brown
And the winds dance with the trees
Who follow expertly, bending way backwards,
And the house
Spins on its basement in a frenzy of joy

And the three robins walk down the road
In a gold light, and the mole
Turns over in his burrow like a rich man
On silk, having dreamed of it all.

Harry Northup

Coal Bin

I tilt lamp & beg air, wonder
how could I begin to tell only only?

when it is a wonder
that fat Mary Lou fit in the coal bin

& while her mother made out money orders,
I pulled down her panties.

at night, I dreamt she was a bull snake
that I chopped in half with a hoe

& watched it wiggle at sunset, why
should I call her a bull snake?

or dress her in fatigues? how could
I begin to tell only?

when the other only is a lie?

Dancer

the tower got you ricky, number nine
no boiled chicken on your plate
from aunt doris, or gin, or marlboros

you got nervous facing the tire lug
& how could you be a dancer in palo alto?

you hustled sixty bucks a night at arthur's
& while grandmama worked twelve hour shift
feeding peanut butter to crazy hours,
you stole her only bandage, her tv

the closest you ever got to b'way
was ironing clothes for faye emerson
& i lied for you said you were equity

you are the best dancer in the tower,
you spot & call the attendant faye
& accuse her of stealing your capezio shoes
& the tower is nine, nine years ago

i met you painting flats in lake whalom
where the apprentice mimicked gogi grant

ricky, you are crazy as a failure
but you don't have to pay rent
in the tower, or at my house

before this, the gate locks
beef rocks machine metal
lock, rap, the head is pinched like the body
the horns are long, the long pincher
is held with two hands
as dust blows, the metal reliever of cuts
slides down, quick, cut, blood spurts
sky red
animal cry covered by powder over stumped horn

28

metallic hungers of tear
it will not move
eunuch of bull is torn from
one sex to another

bloody dripping balls fill quart bottle

soon to be french fried
& washed down with cold beer.

Anthony Russo

Icy Lady

spike-souled woman
 with your somber butter
your Cuban iris and your purple surgical grin
 your tranquil stones and sliding teeth

out of the fallen restaurant of this poem
 an inextinguishable valentine for you
 and gigantic America!

Jack W. Thomas

Arntson Shows (the Scars on) His Ass to the VFW

Home from war, he cried,
"The headlines of the world are written
on my cheekbones." We'd read
his life story in newspapers and seen
his picture on TV. He was
crazy as a jaybird.

We showed him
the metal shoes of new children.
He had to do something, so we
showed the frozen hands
of old clocks, and told him how
the scissors had rusted shut,
unable to open or cut.

He grew disturbed. He sat
in the chair we had fixed-up for him
and sat. And then he said,
"I am the signature of old wounds."
He was crazy as a doornail.
He took his clothes off, too!

We put a blanket over him
and tucked it under his chin.
But he jumped up, and got away.
No one could catch him to tie him up.
After a while, he came back.
He said, "I tried to vanish,
but only went
somewhere else and was
not even invisible."

He sat there, making everyone think

of straightjackets and hydrotherapy,
scaring the children when he
occasionally complained
he had a small star
of bone growing through each cheek.

Arntson Dreams of a Glass Coffin

In all his dreams skull-faced Arntson remembers
the people he never sees
when he's awake:

For three months, each Sunday, a woman
in a red dress has been planting
the beads of her rosary on his grave.
Nothing grows there but dry grass.

(Arntson loves these people more than heaven):

The boy who parts the dry grass to gaze
wistfully into his eyes like a lover;
the fat man with the black cigar who comes
each day at noon to shake
his fist and say, "It's all a fake, a stunt
to undermine the morals of the Youth."

A girl shakes out her smoke-colored hair
and says, "No no no." She walks
around and around the belly of his grave
holding her arms crossed over her chest
as if she feared she might fly
out of herself.

There is also a small boy
who drops clods on the coffin
to see if the body will blink.

They came to him sleeping all the days
and they come all the nights.
Like faggots to the burning post
they come to the nightmare no waking
dare enter. How deep
is it? Very, and black.

You Are Wise

I give you a river
as a bribe. You have dreamed
its flowing; and in that dream
the water tastes of flesh.
Clarity distorts
the depth, and something unseen yet
pulses there, waiting.

I float you little moons.
You want them,
but you are afraid.
Someone has told you they fatten
at a touch, swell
to a crushing weight.
The moons are no longer beautiful;
they starve and sink
through the river untouched.

How can I reach you?
I abandon even my clothes
to swim toward you, naked,
till I tire.

Huge domes of pearl
begin to surface
all around. Along the river's bed
there is a swirl of sand
where something churns
and disappears.

A. G. Sobin

The Traveling American Scholar Lecture Series
No. 6 Painting Workshop Lecture

"Transcendence"

In all the history of art
there is no painting
of the martyred Saint Sebastian
with more than seventeen arrows.

I want you to attack your assignment
with relish. Remember to retain
the integrity of your subject matter.
I'll be back in an hour so

remain true to the medium,
work with reds, yellows
and flesh tones and strive
strive for twenty-three

Robert Aber

Chapter One

[A]aron Kramer woke up smiling, fresh, and terrified, hearing the clattering [g]littery tray of barber tools being wheeled down the hall and into his room. [H]e returned the good morning of Coco, the marzipan handsome orderly who [w]ould shave Aaron's skull before the surgery. Did Aaron wish to be shaved electric or old-fashioned? Coco's smile was [g]apped with blue-brown teeth, and he answered his own question by breaking [a] fresh egg into the shaving mug. Whipping the froth furiously, Coco advised [t]hat Aaron have the straight razor and eschew electric clippers whatever the [c]ost. Aaron's face, he went on, had an utterly medieval cast: touching electric [c]lippers to such a medieval skull would almost certainly play havoc with Aaron's [k]arma. While Coco soaped his head, Aaron thanked him for his concern, and ex[p]lained that once a medium in Hollywood had told him that his cerebral palsy [s]tumblings were themselves karmic consequences, that he was atoning for a pre[v]ious incarnation in which he had looted and burned churches and convents in [f]ifteenth century Germany, or maybe France. The story slowed Coco's strop[p]ing to the tempo of a langorous rhumba. He clicked the straight razor like an [i]mpatient mugger, and Aaron realized the anecdote had run too long. Over the scraping noises against his skull, Coco's soft moaning sounded like [a] Gregorian chant. When the final Agnus Dei had sounded and the scraping [c]eased, Aaron know without looking that his skull gleamed like the most dis-[g]raced informer's. Coco pushed a mirror into Aaron's hands, and he smiled first at his Post-[n]uclear Pariah's image, then at Coco's fingers frantically signaling horns-of-the[d]evil. Suddenly huffy, Coco clattered his tray of tools past the entering anaes[t]hesiologist, and Aaron sat up, wondering if he had expected a barber and [s]haman's fee. Dr. Cloud dropped the first two of the great needles intended for spinal [a]naesthesia, breaking them. Handing a third syringe to his nurse, he assured [A]aron that rainy weather always made him shake like a Hindu and that Aaron [m]ust not mistake Bernard Cloud for a spastic. Aaron began to protest, but [g]asped at the surge of agony that plunged hip deep into his tail-bone. Open-[m]outhed, he pantomimed his confusion, but Cloud only chuckled

and con[g]ratulated the Easter Bunny Bandit nurse on surprising Aaron's coccyx as the [N]ips had Pearl Harbor.

For some months, Aaron Kramer had been seeking corrective neurosurger[y] from Professor Brainard Bucher, M.D., Ph.D. Using his new B.A. and his o[wn] neuroanatomy like a Maypole around which to wind a tissue of lies, Aaron ha[d] secured a university assistantship in Bucher's Cranial Technology Laboratory. H[e] was assigned to Project II: Changes in Feline Theta Wave Functioning Durin[g] Induced Survival Training. Daily Aaron counted Theta wave peaks from scrolls of EEG paper, and min[ed] feces from the cages of terminated cats. His photograph was taken by a ma[n] from the Cranial Quarterly as, white-smocked, he scratched the ear of a soon-t[o-] be-terminated Siamese named Pope John, next to the cat's Chronic Electrode[e] Implant. The story appeared under "Cerebral Squibs": ATHETOID ASSIST[S] ANATOMISTS PROBING CAT MYSTERIES. He was outraged by the story aftermath ("Hi, Aaron—probed any good cat mysteries lately?") but resiste[d] his urge to quit the lab, and waited for Dr. Bucher to review him as a fittin[g] Neuro-surgery Teaching Candidate. One day he found a note from Bucher ordering him to report that mornin[g] before the Anatomy Review Board. The hasty scrawl looked a great deal lik[e] the recording of Petit Mal epilepsy. Dr. Brainard Bucher was the only board member present. Otherwise th[e] examination proceeded as Aaron had known it would. Avoiding too man[y] glances into Aaron's gleaming amphetaminated eyes, Bucher spat quiet footnote[s] into the microphone around his neck. He measured the angle of Aaron's l[ist] to the left, elicited the lifelong Babinski reflex which should have disappeare[d] in infancy, and asked Aaron to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to hear his wor[ds] clot and garble like the edges of a fresh, dirty wound. Bucher described two minimally reported cases of cryothalamotomy [to] Aaron, who tried to look as if he had not read them half a dozen times each i[n] the months he had scoured the Bio-Medical library stacks.

CRYOTHALAMOTOMY

A surgical procedure designed to eliminate or reduce the tremor and rigidity associated with Parkinson's Disease and Cerebral Palsy. The symptoms of these disorders—tremor of the extremities, drooling, shuffling gait, faulty motor coordination, impairment of speech—result from damage

to the thalamus, an associative center located deep within the brain, underneath the cortical surfaces. Complete destruction of thi[s] partially damaged tissue sometimes allows a transfer of function to the surrounding healthy tissue.

Cryothalamotomy is performed with the patient under local anaesthesia. This permits immediate communication between surgeon and patient to assess directly the effects of the procedure. The patient's head is locked into a stereotaxic vice [sic] and thus immobilized for the full duration of surgery. The surgeon drills into the cranium and, referring to X-Rays of the patient's brain, calibrates to a few micrometers the angle and depth required. Then he introduces a probe to precisely that angle and depth, and sends a brief flow of liquid nitrogen to the tip of the probe. This freezes the area of contact temporarily inducing cessation of tissue function. If the correct area has been reached, the patient shows immediate motor improvement. In this case, the surgeon introduces more liquid nitrogen into the probe, freezing the tissue until it is permanently destroyed.

Cryothalamotomy requires as little as 45 minutes or as long as four hours to complete.

DISADVANTAGES

While the patient shows immediately improved motor ability, this improvement is sometimes transient. The reasons for this are currently under investigation.

Post-surgical sequelae may include memory loss for immediate events. This usually disappears during the six weeks of convalescence.

The procedure itself is, of course, arduous, and not without hazard.

Some normal tissue is perforce destroyed by the introduction of the probe itself; several probes may be required before the correct motor area is determined. Furthermore, the corpus pallidus, the thalamic area most often involved, lies directly adjacent to the caudate nucleus, that body which governs such vital autonomic functions as metabolism and respiration. Since accidents are rare, the danger of fatal damage to the caudate nucleus should not be exaggerated. Still, such a possibility must not be overlooked.

These incursions into the cortical mass suggest the possibility of an induced life-long impairment of intellectual function, and the resultant necessity of permanent custodial care.

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This, however, was not the way Brainard Bucher explained it. Aaron smiled [p]ast the surgeon's austere Mr. Science-Captain Marvel-out of Bethlehem Steel [f]ace during his obligatory, expertly deadened summary of the surgery: "First we make a lesion deep in your forebrain under the thalamus but over [t]he optic tract and pituitary gland. "We will destroy your damaged neural tissue with a freezing brain probe. You [w]ill have a local anaesthetic so you can tell me how you are doing.

"Our goal will be to reduce your tremor and your rigidity," he continue[d] pointing vaguely at Aaron. "The name of what you have is Choreoform Ath[e]toid Cerebral Palsy. We will try to transfer your motor functions from th[e] damaged tissue to some undamaged tissue." Bucher paused to risk a smile. "Do you understand?" "Yes," said Aaron. "The reason that your hand is wriggling right now is that you have Chore[o]form Athetoid Cerebral Palsy." "Oh, God," said Aaron, risking a tight, mute smile of his own while mappin[g] Bucher's skull for the first transorbital lobotomy performed by palsied finge[rs] with a rusty beer can opener. . . . He lowered his eyes. A show of humility during the doctor's polished co[n]struction of a contrived suspense. Yes, Bucher said, Aaron's resources woul[d] make him an adequate teaching case. And it was time to start truncating h[is] hours at the lab. Then came weeks of

interviews
pneumoencephalography
more tests.

Wheelchaired to a photographic stage in the bowels of the Medical Cente[r,] Aaron walked back and forth on cue, in his shorts, while the cameraman, [a] Theatre Arts major, recited his dissertation proposal: "King Vidor, the Hollywood Ten, and the Impact of Socialist Realism." Twice in one week, Aaron was tested by two different doctoral candidat[es] in Psychology. He did not tell the second about the first, and carefully dup[li]cated the errors he had made, in order to satisfy Bucher's lust for reliabilit[y.] On the same day Aaron discovered that Bucher's request that he trunca[te] his hours had not been passed to his supervisor, and that his paycheck w[as] being (or had been) docked accordingly, this note arrived from Dr. Bucher['s] secretary:

Congratulations. Your case, being of superior instructional value to the school of Neurosurgery, has been transferred to Dr. Bucher's Research Grant No. CD 2399. All charges from this point forth will be underwritten and charged to the grant

However, as your visit to Dr. Bucher took place several days prior to transfer approval, and as Dr. Bucher's consultation fee is \$75.00, it will be necessary for you to underwrite this charge.

Good luck and blessings from His Holy Mother.

Sincerely,

(Miss) Ikentina Cleft

Secretary to Brainard Bucher, M.D., Ph.D.

P.S. Delaying remittance can only make transfer to federal subsidy more arduous.

Aaron showed the letter to his supervisor, Walther Liefendorfer, in order to get his missing salary. Walther reminded Aaron of the number of people at the University "trying to slip a hot hard one to your Uncle Sam and mine." It had to stop somewhere, and while Walther would not have Aaron's docked pay restored he would personally lend Aaron the seventy-five dollars. Twice he assured Aaron that there was no need to thank him. One Monday morning at the lab, Aaron received an envelope marked URGENT ARDOR!!, underlined with slashes of green and red pencil. It was from Miss Cleft. The note was dated "FRIDAY, 1:11 pee-yem," and ordered Aaron to report to the Neurosurgery ward "at and sooner than possible." On the Friday preceeding, Aaron had stayed at the lab well past closing time in order that beloved Pope John's cerebral remains might be deposited in the forty-eight hour centrifuge for chromosomal analysis. No note had been delivered. He went to Miss Cleft, explaining that Friday's URGENT ARDOR communication had not arrived until Monday. Miss Cleft reported that Dr. Bucher's towering fury had resulted in Aaron's now lapsed status as a Neurosurgery Teaching Case Candidate. Suspension from the rolls was for a minimum of thirty days, in order to elicit adaptive-corrective-behavioral-changes in Teaching Case Candidates. It was for the best, counseled Ikentina Cleft. Liefendorfer was waiting when he returned. Complaining that laboratory business was slowing down because of Aaron's Freebee Federalized Surgery, and that Aaron's data records looked like Chinese laundry lists, he fired Aaron from the Cranial Tech Lab. Aaron petitioned the University Labor Relations Board, alleging that Walther Liefendorfer:

Tainted the moral atmosphere with smut and quips too crude to quote. Was prejudiced by Aaron's physical impairment Used racial slurs Muttered in German

7:05 A.M. Six chromium calipers clamped his skull into one calibrated position and would easily withstand both the hours of experimental neurosurgical monotony and Aaron's desperation for any movement at all. He tried to pretend that if he wrinkled his forehead he could thereby move his head. But the tongs at his temples each found tiny skeletal imperfections on which to chisel a copyright in pain that would last as long as Aaron lived. He knew the head movement wa[s] a phantom, and that he had been still much longer than he realized. He looked up into an attending surgeon's mid-eastern Savanarola smile[.] "First time in my life I'm not a moving target . . ." he said, and at onc[e] wondered if the man had said it to him. Or was this the first time it had bee[n] said? The fanatic's smile vanished and Aaron was unsure whether his face wa[s] still there. He started to cry out. The anaesthetic was wearing off and he was certai[n] his skull, turned to parchment, would collapse. He ground his teeth against[t] the pressure of the chromium pincers to keep his agony secret from Dr. Bucher[,] so that Bucher would not see Aaron forming the word "enough"; so that h[e] would order the vise loosened and end the experiment, unplug his lesionin[g] probes in surgical disgust, leave the new ditches and punctures inside Aaron['s] skull unfilled and unsealed testimony to Bucher's wasted efforts; so that h[e] would not leave Aaron's body forever spectacular. He blinked frantically, making an undecipherable code: It will end when it does and whenever the final Ah! of neurosurgical ecstas[y] greets the luminous cranial X-Ray on the wall and the last probe kisses th[e] ultimate sounding picking and plucking of my brain and sounds the lost chor[d] of a sequin pasty spangled RKO Radio Pictures transformation of Aaro[n] Kramer's body from spactis Pinocchio Polish Gothic into that of a real bo[y.] Amen. . . . HOW DO YOU FEEL, KRAMER? Pleased as Isaac on Abraham's altar, Dr. Bucher. ARE YOU IN PAIN, KRAMER? He squeezed his eyes shut and fought his lips from forming the truth: ye[s] enough. KRAMER! YOU ARE WOOLGATHERING! I WANT A SNAPPY, FULL-THROATED AFFIRMATIVE OR NEGATIVE! If Bucher would loosen the clamps and allow Aaron's head to shake NO[,] Aaron would offer up unto him half-a-cupful of whichever vital fluid the docto[r] might choose. He ground his teeth in silence and the vise continued to crush h[is] temples. Then his mouth opened in the pantomime of a scream: his flesh, thin [as] spray paint,

had been punctured by an icy pool-cue. From Aaron's tailbon[e] the new, buttery dollop of Procaine traveled up his spine like slow freigh[t.] Before it arrived, Aaron had fainted.

1945 His seasick lurching and his warped and hobbled speech made everyone Aaro[n] encountered look as if they had inadvertently entered a wax museum. The othe[r] children Aaron passed on the street craned their necks until he was out of sight. Even if their tightlipped mothers chose not to notice, the children performed instant burlesques of Aaron's gait so unvarying they might have been pupils of a single mandarin choreographer. And if a mother hissed her mortified disapproval of the parody, Aaron would be treated that much more savagely on his next encounter with the child. Children too timid to make fun of him just stared, or pointed, or pointedly did not stare. Aaron wondered if they thought of him as a member of some exotic species which insisted on imperfectly imitating human behavior. Did the children who mocked Aaron mock out of fear that it was Aaron who was mocking them? His friendly attempts to explain foundered on his thickening tongue, and were dashed to bits on his abruptly worsening tremor. Pretending that no difference existed made his constant tumbles to the sidewalk spectacular and nearly inevitable. Enraged by his own clumsiness, Aaron's saliva-spattering furies frightened parents, who took them for spells or contagious dangers, and forbade their children to have anything to do with him. Aaron's rage focused on his refractory, bucking, writhing right arm and hand, which were possessed of a separate and malevolent will. Once in a while his glance fell on the bad arm, as if to surprise it in the act. It would lie unsuspecting and still beside him, as tame as his good left arm. Fingers straight rather than clenched and writhing, his forearm unmoving instead of churning under its skin like a sideshow muscle dancer. For a moment Aaron would dream of being ordinary, until the evil energy surged and his arm bucked wildly as if it might break loose from the shoulder tether and drag him on a careening migration like so much unwilling baggage. Maddened, he would strike back at the arm, wrestling it to the ground. Once he pinned it to his knee and held it down for half an hour, until it had turned numb and then begun to throb. Aaron relented, and the arm leaped away, free and unrepenting. He seized two writhing fingers and thrust them into his mouth to bite them off. Weeping, his mouth full of blood, he acknowledged his defeat and let the fingers go. Over and over he would wish the hand into invisibility, until he had learned to ignore its being a part of his body. The success of this magic over the bad

hand was the first step only; zealously he worked out a pattern of ritual and incantation which would in time allow him to ignore the remainder of his body as he attained perfect invisibility. 8:40 A.M. There was a noise like a steady tidal roar which vibrated as through a heavy funeral convoy were passing in the far distance. For a moment Aaron thought the sterotaxic skewers had been removed from his temples, but feeling th[e] salted abscess above his rump made him realize that a new spinal had deadene[d] his scalp and cushioned the tongs. The tidal noise was coming from a strainin[g] electric drill. THIS WILL BE THE SECOND APERTURE IN YOUR SKULL, KRAMER[!] Brainard Bucher fairly hummed with his drill. HOW DO YOU FEEL? Sharp as a dog's dick, sir. WE'RE GOING TO NAIL THAT BOOGER BEAR IN YOUR BRAIN B[Y] THE SHORT HAIRS, KRAMER! NOW START COUNTING! This booger bear went to market and this booger bear stayed home. ONE HUNDRED. KRAMER! ONE HUNDRED! YOU CAN'T POOP OU[T] ON ME NOW! ONE HUNDRED! Aaron picked up the count, droning languidly with the hum of the electri[c] drill which was coming from his hairline. Bucher grunted in annoyance becaus[e] the drill was filling up with smoking chips—chips which concealed the trac[k] of the Abominable Booger Bear from intrepid Doctor Bucher, stalking th[e] beast with but a simple electric drill and a few shorthair nails. Still counting, Aaron surrendered to panic as his brain reached a clearin[g] to find not the Booger Bear but a greedy octet of preying mantises whic[h] clutched the sides of Aaron's skull until he choked on phantom vomit and san[k.]

* * * * *

He got his job back by demonstrating his sympathy with the Boar[d] Chairman's concept that Tactless Airing of Dirty Linen in the Universit[y] Marketplace Impairs the Knowledge Transaction Essential to the University['s] Continuing Stockpile of Public Confidence. He was smiling at scowling Walth[er] Liefendorfer when a messenger arrived with the second URGENT ARDOR lett[er] of admission to the Neurosurgery ward. He went there immediately from the hearing room, ate splendidly, bantere[d] with the lower-echelon staff about his impending Brain Drain, and, finall[y] telephoned his mother and father. Minutes later, in his room, Rose reproached him for not letting them kno[w] before he went to the hospital. Murray scolded him for putting Rose throug[h] this. How many of Aaron's lunatic friends knew before his parents did th[at] he was in the hospital? Aaron groaned. Rose reminded Aaron that this was a hospital. Aaron sa[id]

that he had lost his head. Rose asked why Aaron always had so much more to say to his charact[er] friends than to them, his parents. Aaron suggested the generation gap. Ro[se] suggested that Doctor Bucher ought to operate first on Aaron's big mout[h.] Murray suggested that Aaron ought to be ashamed of himself. Aaron agreed. Murray offered to leave. No, said Rose. Aaron could tell them to leave if that was what he wanted. Silence. Had Aaron spoken with Doctor Bucher? No, he had not seen him in weeks. Was Aaron such a weakling that he'd let this doctor dictate his every move? Yes. Would Aaron come home now so the three of them could discuss this thing rationally? Why didn't Aaron try saying no to Doctor Bucher instead of to his parents? Did Aaron know how proud of him his parents were? What was Aaron waiting for? Would Aaron get dressed now so they could all arrive Would Aaron come home now so the three of them could discuss this thing rationally? Why didn't Aaron try saying no to Doctor Bucher instead of to his parents? Did Aaron know how proud of him his parents were? What was Aaron waiting for? Would Aaron get dressed now so they could all arrive home at a decent hour? Visiting Time was nearly over; would Aaron please make it snappy? Rose and Murray were very rule-conscious about visiting hours, but not at all about Aaron's leaving the ward, he said. Did Aaron know what a big mouth he had? Oh, yes. Doctor Raga arrived to thump Aaron like an obstinate tinkertoy. "How's my boy's plumbing tonight, Doctor?" Rose reminded Murray that the doctor had better things to do than clown. Name one, said smiling Aaron. Doctor Raga frowned, and Rose clapped a hand over her imitation of Aaron's big mouth. Murray inquired whether Aaron would always do this to his mother. Wouldn't Aaron please come home with them now?

* * * * *

9:45 A.M.

Discomfort de haidache de sonnah de bettah Cause ol' Massa Bucha's a-probin' an a-freezin' Messin' wid de messin' of mah brain's Booger Bear.

KRAMER, YOU'RE WOOLGATHERING! ARE YOU IN PAIN? Aaron ground his teeth in embarrassment and tried to say no. The Uncle Remus riff meant he must have been conscious for awhile. ARE YOU IN PAIN, KRAMER? He opened his eyes and tried again to say no, but the klieg-lit glare tunneled through his dark irises and his eyes flooded more tears than the nurse could ever blot away. Pain times the hypotenuse of time passing equals weakened will and consequen[t] desperation and nothing short of

immediate substitution of Superwill can preclude Doctor Bucher's forcing me to scream ENOUGH so he won't have t[o] finish stalking Booger Bear through the hills and twisty rills of my cortex and DOCTOR RAGA, YOU CRETIN! THIS IS A FINELY CALIBRATE[d] STEREOTAXIC PROBE, NOT A PLUMBER'S FRIEND! Aaron listened to something tinkly shattering, and the nurse blotting hi[s] face stopped to muffle a shriek. WE ARE LESIONING THE GODDAM GLOBUS PALLIDUS OF TH[E] LIMBIC SECTOR OF THE BRAIN! WE ARE NOT LANCING HEMORRHOIDS! Aaron heard the shattering of more instruments, and closed his eyes i[n] prayer. "Are you calling me a shthead, sir?" said Dr. Raga. SURELY THE ELEVATOR DIDN'T STOP AT THE PROCTO WING[!] IRRIGATE THE APERTURE, MISS LYNCH! IRRIGATE! GET YOU[R] GODDAM HEADS OUT OF YOUR SLINGS AND LET'S NAIL THAT LAS[T] PLOT OF TWITCHY CELLS, NOW! OH, CRIMINALTIES! A wash of stinging sweat poured into Aaron's eyes during Brainard Bucher'[s] howling certainty that Radindranath Raga was the visitation of all seve[n] plagues upon an innocent chief neurosurgeon, and that he, the chief, woul[d] demand the AMA censure Buddha, Jahveh, or whatever the hell the crumm[y] Hindus worshipped. Aaron prayed, fainting once more, to his only god, sovereign protecto[r] of the caudate nucleus, more powerful, he hoped, than the rage of governmen[t] inspected meat cutters.

1945 Well-intentioned Uncle Victor took six-year-old Aaron to the Mid-Cit[y] Carnival, where he lifted him atop his shoulders for a clear view of the knobb[y] hairless midget who folded all four arms across his chest, a defiant gargoyl[e.] Aaron shrieked and twisted frantically, but Uncle Victor would not set hi[m] down. The midget stared balefully out of blue embryonic eyes, wagging a[ll] twenty webbed fingers to amuse himself. Uncle Victor returned writhing Aaron to his mother. "I just wanted to show him that someone with a worse physical handica[p] can still make a living."

10:30 A.M. At Bucher's command, Aaron raised his lifelong bad arm above his head, fascinated at the perfect feathery arc it traveled. So effortless it could not be his. Doctor Bucher had fooled him into months of neurosurgical trivia while building him a perfect double of his arm in the Disneyland catacombs. Aaron gaped in wonder that its calm had not turned into chaos, and he rotated the brand-new hand at its brandnew wrist. The

hand bowed in graceful surrender and relinquished its claim to a life separate from his own. KRAMER! I WANT ANOTHER COUNTDOWN FROM ONE HUNDRED. FLEX YOUR FINGERS AS FAST AS YOU CAN! Aaron chanted the count as if it were a sacrament, watching his magic new thumb brush soft greetings to its four neighboring fingers, one at a time. HOW DO YOU FEEL, KRAMER? "I'm a real boy," he said. 11:15 A.M. When Aaron's eyes opened, he turned his head instantly away from the glare. The tongs were still crushing his skull, but now he could turn his head. He looked at the Easter Bunny Bandit nurse. She was unmasked. Doctor Raga asked him how he felt, and Aaron could hardly follow the words that flitted across Raga's musical lips. Answering was hopeless; his tongue and brain were totally out of cadence. He glanced down to his bad arm flopping on the gurney like an exhausted blowfish. It was spastic and unchanged. Aaron accepted the Easter Bunny Bandit's assurance that his headache was only from the extra, icky cerebrospinal fluid, and that he was sealed up all safe with silly putty. Noon Ikentina Cleft was perched on Aaron's bed when they wheeled him back to his room. She had brought a "get well" card that was a tangle of scribbled signatures: "Nice try, Aaron, From the Entire Cranial Tech Lab Family." Miss Cleft focused Aaron's indifference on a tiny "BB/ic" in the corner of the card. Aaron must realize how busy the doctor was. After all, Zeit ist gelt. And Aaron must not interpret the signature as other than a platonic, neurosurgeon/executive-secretary relationship. Next came a transparent plastic Visible Man statuette, to which Miss Cleft had added a papier mache figleaf, and a crown of thorns. "To Aaron always, from Ikentina and His Holy Family," read the card. Finally, Miss Cleft closed her eyes, and kissed Aaron's forehead once for each lesion the surgery had left in his brain.

Chapter Two

To Claim that Aaron Kramer was truly walking by the day of his fift[h] birthday would have been wistful optimism. Rose Kramer simply bit her lip[s] bloody at Aaron's spectacular patchwork of lurchings and harmless tumbling[s.] Murray Kramer ardently ignored Capitalistic geneticists who scorned Lysenk[o] and the Soviet doctrine of Acquired Characteristics. Murray was consumed wit[h] determination that his son, Aaron Kramer, by sheer practice and force of wil[1] would overcome the teetering stigmata of his Cerebral Palsy. Murray first browbeat sullen Rose into cooperation with his mission of simultaneously improvin[g] Aaron's balance and exposing the anti-Soviet bias of Capitalist Science. Up th[e] twilight block every night after work they would lead Aaron in his "walkin[g] practice," each parent holding him up by an armpit, Aaron's shoulders possibl[y] preceding his uncooperating legs by half a sidewalk square. On the hundredt[h] of these adventures, Rose verbalized at last what she had been thinking fro[m] the first: "Why are we doing this? He's almost walking on his own." "If you kept that damn tricycle away from him during the day," snappe[d] Murray, "this would never be an issue at night." Murray believed truly th[e] Gospel of Acquired Characteristics; it was only logic that walking should com[e] before tricycle riding. This was the human condition. The tricycle in question had been innocently given to Aaron by Saul, th[e] upstairs neighbor, after his own children had outgrown the racy, battere[d] conveyance. Saul had even troubled to outfit the tricycle with pedal strap[s] custom made for Aaron's unsure legs. Expecting thanks, Saul got only Murray'[s] fist-pounding earnestness on Lysenko Genetics. "You see Rose and I walking him up and down the streets every night, don'[t] you? He's got to walk before he rides." "Ya both draggin 'im half da way, fer Chrissake." Astonished, Saul drew back[.] "Don't you understand the tricycle will only hold Aaron back!" Murra[y] shook an accusing finger at Saul. Saul gaped back: "Look Murray, I din' meanta screw up da kid's progress. . . [.]"

"You don't understand the human condition!" Murray called after Saul who was fleeing upstairs. Aaron was forbidden to ride his new tricycle out-of-doors. After three months, during which time Saul would not speak to Murray, Murray was himself astonished to learn that Saul felt insulted. Rose Kramer relented and let Aaron escape down the street astride the new

tricycle. Given grudgingly, still Aaron would not nag her for it throughout the day, Murray's faith in "Acquired Character" would not collapse suddenly in a supper-table-banging tantrum; good neighbor Saul would see that the tricycle had indeed been a gift, not unforgivable sin. Best of all reasons, Rose Kramer gave her son the tricycle because she felt a respite was due her and, for the moment, did not care whether walking, tricycling, or Australian Crawling came first for Aaron.

Murray did not pound on the supper table; perhaps he was tired on this night for he only shrugged and went upstairs to apologize to Saul. Rose bit her lips bloody as she overheard Murray's last, best try at explaining to Saul that crawling precedes walking which thus precedes tricycling. She listened as Saul asked what all that had to do with Aaron; Murray replying that Saul was an imbecile who refused to understand human nature. Matters between Murray and Saul would deteriorate from bad to the unspeakably hopeless. Aaron would henceforth be forbidden to use his gift tricycle until "walking practice" was concluded. The nightly ritual obliged the Kramers to pass before the reviewing stand front porch of another neighbor, Mac, ponderously cheerful overripe mush-melon of a retired auctioneer. "HOW'S THE LAD DOIN' T'NIGHT, CORPORAL STALEEN!" Mac's cheerful bellow chilled Murray and made Rose bite her lips and walk faster. Mac had a misty military past that began at some mysterious academy and ended with his kneecaps having been shot off (by the Huns at the Argonne or the Jigaboos in West Africa—Mac's account varied with the listener). Mac chain-sucked sour balls and told chuckling and bloody soldier stories to the neighborhood youngsters in return for knowing how their parents had voted. Above Mac's mantle-piece, reportedly, was his GI rifle flanked by two framed photographs—one was gray and blurry and lettered underneath "Kraut Hacked Into Dog Food"; the other was a flattering portrait of J. Edgar Hoover signed simply, "Ever Yours, J.E.H." "I SAY, HOW'S THE LAD DOIN' T'NIGHT, FOLKS!!" Mac refused to be ignored. His remaining gray hairs were swept grandly across his forehead as if to distract attention from his great paunch that waggled with each genial bellow. "Just fine, Mac, how are you." Always Rose replied, as if the frigid disinterest in her voice might somehow communicate itself to Mac and he might leave them in peace.

"HOLDIN' OUT, FOLKS. JUST HOLDIN' OUT A WEENCEY BIT." Mac'[s] response never varied and they always continued dragging Aaron past the porc[h] in stony silence. Once Rose had mused aloud, wondering

exactly what weence[y] bit Mac was holding out for. "Oh, probably some weency bit of a boy whose parents haven't warned hi[m] about that slobbering moron," blurted Murray and he and Rose giggled. Murray'[s] flashes of spontaneous, unselfconscious humor were rare and quickly enough[h] gone. "Damn fascist ignoramus!!" was the more typical muttering from Murray[,] convulsing Aaron as he flexed an angry forefinger into his armpit, assisting mut[e] whitefaced Rose in dragging Aaron home, walking practice completed fo[r] the day.

Aaron pedalled joyously up and down the endless sidewalks, rapturous a[t] the new mobility the tricycle gave him, giving a yelp of delight each time th[e] tricycle's front wheel carried his previously imprecise legs into yet anothe[r] precise circular revolution. "WELL! HEY NOW! LOOK AT THAT AARON KRAMER BOY ON HIS NEW TRICYCLE!! HOW YOU DOIN' THERE, AARON, BOY?" Mac'[s] practiced auctioneer's call brought Aaron to a shuddering halt and he stared a[t] the sidewalk, counting the cracks in it over and over. Four children, toting to[y] rifles stopped their drilling on Mac's front lawn. Aaron could feel their parade-resting eyes upon him. One-crack-HUP . . . Two-cracks-HUP-HUP . . . Three-cracks-HUP-HUP-HUP. . . [.] Aaron prayed they might go away if he thought loudly to himself. Nightly Ma[c] supervised military maneuvers on his front lawn, rewarding the place-marchin[g] shoulder-arming seven-year-olds drilling on his lawn with sour balls and sensua[1] accounts of his own military exploits where Jigaboos and Huns were properl[y] savaged. He could no longer include the anti-christ Kikes in his stories. Th[e] neighborhood suddenly had gone Hebe; now his audiences were themself[s] descendants of the Saviour's killer. Mac was left, the Final Christian Soldier[,] sadly training the young "Yiddeshee" Elite Corps. "HEY AARON!!" Mac would not disappear and Aaron shuddered. "CAN'[T] SAY NOTHIN'? I KNOW YOUR MOTHER 'N' FATHER TAUGHT YO[U] BETTER THAN THAT!!" Go-away-go-away-go-away . . . Aaron pushed the pedal wheel to and fro[,] hoping the voice inside his head would grow so loud that it might drown th[e] dread and discomfort he felt. "My fadda said Aaron's fadda's uh Bullshevicky, Mac," piped red-haire[d] Phillip, sergeant major of Mac's Elite Corps. Go-away-go-away-go-away. . . The voice inside Aaron was not loud enough[h] to drown the sounds and now he rocked as if he might urinate over his new tricycle. "Le's push 'im out inna street, Mac!" offered another. "Lettum pway in twaffic!" Aaron caught his breath and shut his eyes. "TENN-HUPP, MEN!!" Mac's voice cracked like a whip. "THERE'LL

BE NONE OF THAT!! YOU MEN ARE AMERICAN SOLDIERS!! AMERICAN SOLDIERS HAVE NEVER PICKED A FIGHT UNTIL PROVOKED. AMERICAN SOLDIERS DEFEND THE CRIPPLED!" "Uh ain'd gribbuld!" Aaron forced the words and found strength in using "ain't," a word his parents forever corrected and forbade him. "Hey, Mac! He said he ain't crippled!!" Sergeant-Major Phillip broke ranks to lead the hooting laughter. "Aaron's uh stupid dumkopf!!" "Hey Mac. Le's stick eart'worms up 'is nose 'n' lettum eat duh boogahs!!" Aaron gagged at the fearful words and felt like throwing up. Paralyzed on his tricycle, he was surrounded by four dancing dervishes. Round and round. Moaning, screeching, pulling their eyes down or making them slanty-jap. Yawning or gaping their elastic mouths with index fingers. Showing their teeth, or slobbering, foaming, and spitting out children's dread of deformity. RUN-AWAY-FLY-AWAY-MAKE-THEM-DISAPPEAR, RUN-AWAY-FLY-AWAY-MAKE-THEM-DISAPPEAR, RUN-AWAY . . . Aaron could hear Mac as the first of their hands clawed at his precarious perch. "I THOUGHT THAT THERE WERE SOLDIERS HERE!! AMERICAN SOLDIERS!! ARE YOU SOLDIERS OR ARE YOU GIRLS?? IF YOU'RE SOLDIERS YOU ARE IMMEDIATELY AT A-TENNN-HUPPPPP!!" Aaron opened his eyes to stare at the dervishes snuffling, shuffling reluctantly to resume formation and seven-year-old docility. Except for the snuffling, all Aaron heard was the to-and-fro noise of his rubber tricycle tires on the gritty sidewalk. "NOW THEN," Mac's voice sounded pleased and Aaron watched strawberry spots glowing on each side of Mac's quivery jello jowls. "AMERICAN SOLDIERS HAVE NEVER PICKED ON CRIPPLED BOYS!!" "Nod gribbuld, ol sdtink podt!" The whispered words passed Aaron's lips easily. "Wha'd 'e say, Mac? Make 'im say it louder." Aaron shuddered in spite of himself. "He ain't sayin' nothin', Mac!" crowed Phillip. "He's jus' slobbrin' there like uh idjit, dat's what!!" Mac's troops broke rank in hilarity, rolling over each other on the lawn, whooping and clapping one another across the shoulder blades. The sob that began inside Aaron turned itself to rage and spilled over: "DIN' SAY NUTHIN, YUH OL' SDTINKK PODT!!" Aaron screeched.

"UUUUMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!" The chorus turned to shocked silenc[e] and all eyes were on Mac. At first Aaron could see no change in the flesh-jell[o] face except that Mac's glass-shielded eyes lost their twinkle and softened int[o] a rheumy glaze. Jaw muscles pulsing to discipline the rest of him, Aaron stare[d] into suddenly cleared eyes glaring onto him like headlights onto a small highwa[y] night animal. "MEN," Mac paused to

clear his throat, hawk and spit. "I THINK WE HAV[E] A STRATEGIC PROBLEM BEFORE US." Aaron looked about to see if anyon[e] else knew the meaning of "strategic"; it seemed not. "HERE IS A CIVILIA[N] USING ABUSIVE LANGUAGE IN A MILITARY SITUATION DURING TIME[S] OF DECLARED WAR!!" Aaron's fear rose far beyond the point where mere magic words might eithe[r] quell the fright or transport him hundreds of thousands of millions of mile[s] from Mac's fearsome glare. He moaned so faintly that no one else heard it an[d] rocked sideways in rhythm with the repetitious, autistic travels of his tricycl[e.] He could scarcely breathe and even his trouble-making bladder was locked tight[.] The Elite Corps stirred expectantly while Mac rumbled on. "YOU MEN KNOW THAT AMERICAN SOLDIERS NEVER ATTACK [A] DISABLED OR CRIPPLED ADVERSARY AND EVEN THEN ABSOLUTEL[Y] NEVER WITHOUT PROVOCATION." Mac caught himself in wheezy snort[s] and looked down the line of blank, childish expressions. No, they would no[t] understand him unless he went through the catachism sentence by sentenc[e.] "DID YOU HEAR THIS CIVILIAN SPEAK DISRESPECTFULLY TO US?["] "YEEEEAAAAAYYYYY!" The answering whoop was deadened, short, an[d] ugly sounding. "IS THIS MAN A CRIPPLE?" "YEEAAAAAY!" Eagerly they answered, impatient for Mac to pronounc[e] sentence, staring at Aaron while he erected a word-hedge of NOT-ME-NOT-M[E-] NOT-ME's to shield himself. An incandescent twinkle glittered from behind Mac's glasses. "BUT, THI[S] MAN SAYS HE'S NOT A CRIPPLE!!" "He uh dumkopp shtunkpuss, Mac!" declared the lowliest corps membe[r.] Mac ignored him, and looked down from the veranda. "IF AARON SAYS HE'S NOT A CRIPPLE, HE MUST HAVE A CHANC[E] TO PROVE HE'S NOT A CRIPPLE." "Whaddabout da name he called ya, Mac!!" demanded Sergeant-Major Philli[p.] "MILITARY JUSTICE TELLS US," declared now grinning Mac, "THAT I[F] AARON IS REALLY A CRIPPLE, THEN HE MUST BE EXCUSED FRO[M] PUNISHMENT." Mac's grin widened and his pink wrinkles began swallowin[g] the corners of his eyes. He slowly tapped the side of his pink melon hea[d.] "HE ESCAPES BECAUSE HE'S TOUCHED IN THE HEAD. AMERICAN SOLDIERS NEVER ATTACK THE CRAZY AND THE DEMENTED!!" "Ya mean Aaron's uh loony?" Mac only grinned and tapped at his temple while tiny, choked wheezings bubbled and escaped from his flesh jello mouth. "OL' SDTINGK PODT!!" Aaron shrieked but no one seemed to hear. "WE CAN'T HOLD MILITARY TRIBUNAL ON A CRIPPLED, CRAZY CIVVIE, NOW CAN WE, MEN?" Aaron risked a glance

at the Elite Corps. They looked impatient and he saw one yawning. "He called yuh uh name," insisted Phillip. "Yeah, Mac," piped Stanley the foot soldier, "Whadda yuh care 'f Aaron's crippled 'r uh looney-bird?" "THERE'S ALL THE DIFFERENCE, PRIVATE PERLMAN!" Mac was shaking with tearful, hysterical mirth and little wheezing noises seemed to boil up from his great underpaunch. "IF HE'S CRIPPLED, HE CAN'T BE TRIED FOR INSUBORDINATION. IF HE ISN'T A CRIPPLE, THEN HE'S GOT TO TAKE HIS PUNISHMENT LIKE A SOLDIER!!" "I'm uh hyumunn bean, ol' stingk podt." Aaron put out his tongue at Mac who looked through Aaron as though he were not there. Instantly four hands waved in front of Mac, asking permission to beat up Aaron and avenge the insult. "NO, SOLDIERS, PUNISHMENT!! PROPER CHRISTIAN PUNISHMENT." Mac stopped as if realizing suddenly that the quiet, August air carried word of the game to the nosey Jew neighborhood encamped beyond his shrubbery. "I ain't no Chriss-junn," smirked Phillip. "I'm Hebrew." The others chortled and nodded proudly. "AN EYE FOR AN EYE AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH!! THAT'S IN THE JEWISH BIBLE AND THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE, MEN!!" He had their quizzical attention. "HOW DO WE TEST THIS MAN TO SEE IF HE'S A CRIPPLE? HOW DO WE SEE IF HE'S FIT FOR COURT MARTIAL?" Phillip screeched, "Stick worms up Aaron's nose 'n' see if dey eat duh boogahs 'n' duh snot!" He added a great slurping, sucking sound and crystallized Aaron's horror of wet earthworms exploring his mouth and clambering into his nostrils to snuggle against his nasal passages. Now the Elite Corps dissolved in a huge mirth and were seven-year-olds clubbing one another across the shoulders in congratulations and hilarity. "NONONONONONONO." Aaron shrieked and turned to take mad, panicky tricycle flight home. He dared not turn around even at the sounds of Phillip dashing after him down the sidewalk, whooping and shrieking. Aaron felt Phillip grab his neck and shoulders, topple him, bulldog him to his sidewalk, singing "Old Cowhand From The Rio Grande" as he mashed the wind from Aaron's lungs.

"YAAAAAAHHOOOOOOOOO!" Far away, Aaron could hear Mac bellow: "SERGEANT PHILLIP GROFSKY, YOU ARE A MILITARY DISGRACE!!" "Sheee! Mac. Whaddaya wan me da do wid 'im?" "BRING THE PRISONER BACK HERE AT ONCE FOR MILITARY TRIBUNAL!!" Phillip was dragging Aaron upright, underneath his arms into precarious an[d] miraculous standing position. "Giddap, li'l dogie!" But Phillip led Aaron wit[h] gentle, shy care with one child's intuitive assessment of the abilities of another[,]

and Aaron stood shakily on wobbly new legs before Mac's porch. The dayligh[t] was fading quickly and soon mothers would be filling the warm, breezeles[s] evening with cattle calls to summon the troops home. "THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BURTON AND SKOLNICK WILL SUPPOR[T] THE PRISONER!" Stanley and Stewart stood on each side of Aaron, puzzled at what to d[o] next. "Hey grab 'is left arm and 'is right arm, ya stupes!!" snarled Phillip[.] Stanley took Aaron's arm even more gently than had Phillip. "Hey, Mac said fe[r] ya ta shuddup." It was more pleading than threat. "THE MILITARY TRIBUNAL WILL STAND AT ORDER!" Mac squinte[d] through the shadows and Aaron watched his lips move silently as if Mac wer[e] quarreling with the night or with himself. "ARE YOU A CRIPPLE?" Silence and the four-worded trial was finished[.] "Make 'im play Mumbley-peg, Mac!" Mac's jello mouth widened into a[n] inspired grin. A spectacle which punished but would not maim, bruise, bite, o[r] pinch. "AMEN! THE CODE OF MILITARY JUSTICE AND THE SENTENCE O[F] THIS COURT IS THAT THE PRISONER SHALL PULL A MATCH STICK OU[T] OF THE GROUND WITH HIS TEETH AND ONLY WITH HIS TEETH SO B[E] IT!!" "NO!" Aaron tried to struggle away. He'd watched mumbley peg at a distanc[e] since Rose forbade Aaron to go near where knives were played with. Aaro[n] stayed away and was invisible; avoiding the pen-knife slipping and stabbing himself in the foot, watching the loser (usually Stewart the baby) pull the peg ou[t] of the ground with his teeth and stand up with the matchstick in his teeth an[d] mud sticking his eyes shut and causing the others to laugh. Aaron heard Ma[c] wheezing delightedly as the matchstick was pounded gently into the dark, loam[y] geranium bed. "SINCE NONE OF MY SOLDIERS ARE CRIPPLES AND ALL OF THE[M] CAN PULL THE PEG OUT OF THE GROUND WITH THEIR TEETH," Ma[c] paused for breath, "IF YOU'RE NO CRIPPLE, AARON, YOU PULL IT OU[T] WITH YOUR TEETH."

"Ain'n uh gorppul, yuh ol' peesher!" Aaron's lunge at Mac was so easily stopped by Stanley and Stewart that there was no way of knowing if Mac noticed. "IF YOU AREN'T A CRIPPLE, AARON, AND PERSONALLY I THINK YOU ARE ONE," Mac flashed a luminescent gelatin smile, "YOU'LL PULL UP THE PEG WITH YOUR TEETH!!" Fear made a sour taste in Aaron's mouth while Aaron stared at the nearly invisible peg tip. Aaron shook his head NO-NO-NO . . . "COMPANY DISMISSED, MEN. AARON'S A CRIPPLE . . . " "EADT DOG DOO " Aaron wrenched loose from Stanley and Stewart, then toppled heavily. There was a cacaphony of jeers . . . HE'S

UH BABY . . . MY SISTER'D BEATUM UP WID ONE HAN'. . . . Aaron swung awkwardly at prancing, leering Phillip Grofsky, lost his balance and fell full length on his side. Breathing heavily, a sob started a quick rising in his chest. "AARON HITS LIKE AH GIRL! LOOKY!!!" Aaron rolled over to look up at Phillip's grotesque mimicry of his hopeless swing. His eyes fell on the hated peg-tip and the sob vanished in a bluster of a scream of rage. He crawled to the geranium bed like some furious, mutant infant and plunged his face into the soft composted soil, teeth seeking the matchstick, as a trained dog might root for buried truffles. "PUT YOUR HANDS IN BACK OF YOU LIKE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO." Aaron heard Mac directly overhead and shuddered, imagining Mac hawking a bolus of yellow oyster spit onto the back of his neck. Faintly he heard someone's mother call. It wasn't Rose. The shouting around and above him was gone and without looking he knew that they were surrounding him. "Put yer han's backa ya!" No longer taunting, it was simply instruction. Aaron spread his knees slightly. His eyes stuck fast with mud, he lunged blindly downward, lost his balance and fell onto one side, feeling, hearing the snapping of geranium plants. He groped wildly with his mouth for the peg. "GODDAM YOU HEBREW EPILEPTIC, GET THE HELL OUT OF MY FLOWERBED." Aaron's mouth was filled with compost. Gagging, he tried to spit it out. He could hear the air filling with the sounds of calling mothers. Maddened and blind, Aaron lunged toward the hated peg again. "Hey, Mac! Aaron upchucked in da flars!" "GET THAT PIECE OF SPASTIC SHIT AWAY FROM MY FLOWERS!!!" "What are you moronic goons doing to my child!!!" It was Rose's voice and Aaron felt her arms pulling at him. He turned his face into the soil and found the peg. Opening his mouth half filled with compost he bit hard, then heard a dull tearing noise as he was lifted.

Rose was shaking him like a terrier, tore the wood from his mouth. A geranium, not the peg. "SLOBBRIN' IDJIT GOT DIRT 'N SHIT 'N 'IS MOUTH!!!" "What kind of demented mindlessness is this?" Rose was brushing dirt fro[m] his face and Aaron could open his eyes. "KEEP YOUR DROOLING, GODLESS LITTLE MORON OFF MY PROPERTY" "If I ever see my boy on your property, I'll have you locked up for molestin[g] children." He opened his eyes to watch his mother quivering and glowering at Ma[c] while she continued brushing Aaron. The neighborhood mothers had arrived t[o] bring in their youngsters. Too embarrassed to meet Rose Kramer's outrage[d] glare, they would find Aaron's handicap a pity, Mac too foolish to be pitied[.] While Aaron screeched his pain and

disappointment, the gossipy compiled th[e] first dispatches and dummy roughs of the following day's news.

Chapter Five

Aaron Discovered that assemblies at the Oswald Spengler School for the Exceptional clustered closely together at Christmastime. He found that the well-groomed ladies in smocks who swept from child to child asking what each wanted most for Christmas were from the Boosters of America (Las Putitas Auxiliary); shock troops and advance scouting parties for the Boosters. The Boosters and the Shriners put on separate Christmas parties, and were locked in earnest yearly combat for Fondest-Spot-in-the-Hearts-of-the-Hat. The more determined Boosters would deliver a live baby musk-ox if requested. Aaron gravely asked the toothy matron for a Palomino-Sawhorse-With-Nickel-SilverSaddle-Buckles. "REALLY, dear? Your parents will have to sign consent forms . . ." Assured by Miss Toddy that Aaron was being silly, the teacher and several of the Las Putitas Auxiliary conferred nervously before agreeing that Aaron's repeated second request, a \$24.95 Photoelectric Baseball set, bordered on extortion, but nonetheless existed. No matter that Miss Toddy would later cluck Weren't-we-greedy? As though some truce decreed the sequence, the Shriner's Christmas Party always preceeded that of the Boosters by a few days. The Shriners were older and larger than the Boosters. They were more restrained and assured no matter the funny hats they wore. After the Shriner President proudly proclaimed to the assembly that "You handicapped children are as American as Christmas itself," Shriner-Santa bounded onstage to bewildered, smattered applause. Shriner Christmas was orderly and predetermined. Shriner-Santas were huge and obliviously cheerful. Shriner-Santas dispensed transparent Christmas stockings to each pupil that were crammed with perishables and sharp-edged gizmos of diabolical utility. Shriner-Santas insisted that all wheelchair pupils sit on their laps regardless of size, age, or degree of disability. "WANT DOWN!!!" An occasional shriek rose above the boredom from some terrified paralyzed youngster. "HO! HO!" Shriner-Santa continued dandling them on his knee as though some Rosicrucian healing miracle might be invoked by his relentlessly lascivious laughter.

The Boosters disdained a Santasuit. Their Master of Ceremonies was a pale[,] blue-bearded, angular agony of horn-rimmed, shirt-sleeved middle-age. Screaming i[n] himself in a gravelly howl, he exploded back and forth across the stage i[n] an unconscious parody of spastic lurching. Chugging

grunts flecked his angr[y] mouth with fine white foam and from the armpits outward his business shir[t] turned wet and clinging. His name was Mashed Potatoes. Mashed Potatoes' only prop was a shapeless fedora that apparently talked t[o] him whenever he crushed it to his ear. The hat whispered derisions into Mashe[d] Potatoes' ear while he stared popeyed and gasped for fresh breath. Infuriated[,] Mashed Potatoes hit it, shaking it between his teeth as though it were [a] miscreant rat. Stray giggles seeped from the audience. He jammed the hat agains[t] his ear again while it whispered more scorn. Slamming it to the floor and screaming, Mashed Potatoes jumped up and down on it a half-dozen times. Snatching i[t] up, Mashed Potatoes jammed the hat over his eyes and cocked an ear toward th[e] assembly. "WHAT DOES MASHED POTATOES ALWAYS SAY?!!" "BE FAIR!" The rehearsed answer came only from the less-mortified firs[t] graders. Mashed Potatoes careened and caromed into new ecstasies and antagonisms against his hat. So often did Mashed Potatoes ask the gathering to tell hi[m] what he always said that even the littlest ones stopped answering. "WHAT DOES MASHED POTATOES ALWAYS SAY?? HUH?" HUH?!! "Poo-poo," someone said. His grovelling and screaming suddenly stopped and Mashed Potatoes looke[d] about dumbfounded. Red-faced, Miss Toddy strode onstage clapping and aske[d] for a-fine-hand-for-our-very-own-Mashed-Potatoes. "MISS TODDY KNOWS WHAT MASHED POTATOES ALWAYS SAYS[,] DOESN'T SHE, AUDIENCE!!!" "BE FAIR!!!" came the delighted shout and Miss Toddy recoiled. Triumphant, furious, Mashed Potatoes dropped to his knees jabbering and pushing th[e] hat all about the stage with his forehead. For a moment it was quiet enough fo[r] Aaron to hear the sounds of felt-on-floorboard, and only six-foot-five-inch Bi[g] Sherman laughed uncomprehendingly as he rolled his eyes so far upward tha[t] only the defiant whites would show for the rest of the day. Gatherings at William Burroughs Junior High met in a cavernous auditoriu[m] lit to gloomy yellow by ponderous chandeliers. Aaron could never glance a[t] them without thinking that perhaps the lights were really incandescent urin[e] specimens. The school motto, TRUE INDUSTRIAL FREEDOM UNDER TH[E] LAW! was mock chisled on the proscenium arch above the yawning maw of th[e] stage and served to keynote each Address of Welcome to New Burroughsonian[s] by the Principal, Mr. Franklin Fairchild:

"It may help to think of each day here at Burroughs as a penny. Invest each penny wisely. Think of your three years here as a prime capital

investment. Think of your teachers as investment brokers. They know the knowledge market well. They will help your prime capital investment of pennies grow into your personal impregnable fortress of knowledge dollars. If each day is one penny, you can squander that penny. You can misread the marketplace and let those pennies slide down the learning drain. You can earn detention. You can earn reform school. You can earn nothing at all. Well, Burroughs is a Free Marketplace. William Burroughs is indifferent to your free choice. The choice is yours. Slow and steady wins the race. Don't miff it." Franklin Fairchild led a moment of silence for 1929, lolling his bowed head so that it seemed an inept puppeteer was fumbling at his drawstrings. A small lip fart broke the mood. Franklin Fairchild's right arm and forefinger snapped out, identifying the alleged miscreant to the auditorium safeties who rushed him away to the vice-principal's office. "At your peril, men," sneered Franklin Fairchild before leading his cowed audience in the Alma Mater:

" . . . In honor and service,
Our watchwords now to thee,
loyal and loving our hearts will ever be,
So, suck in your gut,
And tighten your thigh,
Gladly,
Not badly,
William Burroughs Junior High!"

Ever weary of smartass Jewboys who wouldn't work with their hands, Franklin Fairchild introduced the Supreme Lord High Commissioner, Mordred Babitz, and tentatively shook his outstretched hand like a thing not quite dead. Speeches by candidates for Supreme Lord High Commissioner and Girl's League Keeper-of-the-Muff were met by more lip farts and groans of apathy until angry Mordred Babitz warned Burroughsonians to "Keep uh cool tool! D'mockersy's fragile." Aaron absently groaned at another girl candidate presenting her credentials with training-bra pride, then felt a wrench of fear upon glimpsing a safety crooking a Bum's Rush finger at him. A sudden flurry of lip farting distracted the safety who darted this way and that like a starved hawk bewildered by a cloud of sparrows. Aaron exhaled silently and heard his temples pounding. Cadaverous, crazy-eyed Fabian Quimchuck was a certain Supreme Lord High Commissioner from the moment six pure notes pealed from his dazzling bugle:

"To the American soldier, those six notes are the call to the defense o[f] liberty and enterprise!" Aaron was Br'er Rabbit in an instant bramble of galvanized ex-smirkers. H[e] winced while Fabian Quimchuck blew six new notes from the bugle and shre[d-] ded the pall of gray boredom to dancing cnofetti: "To the North Korean Communist, those notes call him to athiestic dea[th] and anarchistic defeat." Aaron watched fever blotches taking root in each of Fabian Quimchuck[s] concave cheeks and he snapped to wax-works attention: "Indeed, Old Soldiers like Douglas MacArthur shall never die so long a[s] Americans and the William Burroughs student body take the high ground o[f] dedicated vigilance and refuse to seek the false safety of superannuated idealis[m,] avoid fellow-traveling helter-skelter down primrose paths of newspeak, atheis[m] and foolishness lest America careen over the precipice of One Worldism an[d] obliterate itself on the shoals of iron-clad collectivism. I am Fabian Quimchuc[k] and I bring a straight 'A' average to the task before all of us . . . " Fabian Quimchuck led snappier pledges of allegiance than Mordred Babit[z.] He accepted Bank of America Citizenship Awards weekly as his natural du[e.] Humorless, hypnotic, infuriating, Aaron felt unutterable relief watching S[u-] preme Lord High Commissioner Fabian Quimchuck grapple with the problem o[f] a serious introduction for the World's Fastest Typist, Senor Juan Inamorat[o] Maricon of Argentina. Tiny, pomaded, his hands fluttering like tethere[d] hummingbirds, 'Pica' Maricon had been clocked at 223 words per minut[e] (Spanish). The International Typewriting Champion, Juan Inamorato Marico[n] was on world tour, promoting international unity through typing. Wonde[r] settled over the assembly while 'Pica' Maricon unrolled a life-size poster an[d] handed it to speechless Fabian Quimchuck: "Don' let it touch floor[!"] Pictured was 'Pica' Maricon, muscles rippling, wearing a black leotard and hol[d-] ing the earth overhead with each foot firmly planted on a desk model typ[e-] writer. Florid self-approval slithered from 'Pica' Maricon's lips while he de[s-] cribed winning the world's title under a broiling Port-Au-Prince sun. In a thre[e-] out-of-five "Type-Off" against a 290-pound Bedouin male executive secretar[y,] 'Pica' had lost the first two matches. Juan Inamorato Maricon wept in his dre[ss-] ing room, in despair beyond the ministrations of even his personal masseu[r's] normally bracing savagery. An old woman, crying that she must see 'Pica', w[as] finally allowed in the dressing room and handed him a note, written in the han[d] of Juan Inamorato Maricon's deceased mother. The old lady had brought a p[o-] tion in a bota bag which, claimed the note, 'Pica' must drink for

victory, h[is] mother, and his saint. It was miraculous. He had vomited horribly, but ob[li-] terated the Bedouin and afterwards spoke with his mother and his saint f[or] sixteen hours.

Sadly, there was not enough time in this assembly for Juan Inamorato Maricon to relate more legend and lore of International Speed Typewriting. For instance, of the three-armed Andrean dirt-farmer who, though barred from sanctioned two-handed competition, had so poetic a style as to be called the "Jose Iturbi of Contrapuntal Typewriting. Juan Inamorato Maricon pulled his personal portable typewriter from its case like a rabbit from a hat. "Dis have travel more dan 66 and 2/3 persen than what this audience will." His hummingbird hands worked the keyboard until the clatter was so fast it became a drum roll and Aaron and the rest of the stupefied assembly applauded Juan Inamorato Maricon. Frequently, he looked up, flashed his smile, and claimed to have just duplicated the samba, the tango, the national anthem, and the heartbeat of a lovesick jungle tiger. His performance of "Onward Christian Soldiers" revived the stunned assembly and "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" galvanized them to action, driving Juan Inamorato Maricon from the stage, unable to comprehend rude, chanting request for an American Negro song entitled "Annie Had a Baby." Franklin Fairchild scattered the assembly like chaff. Reprisal would fall upon darkness-loving, sniveling smut-makers. "You know who you are!!" In the following week, William Burroughs was delicious with rumors that an anonymous telephoner's plague had fallen upon Franklin Fairchild's household. Plumbers converged on his home at midnight to insult him for calling in false information that the Fairchild basement was flooded. Daily, there were porchfuls of unwanted house painters, spiritualists, caterers, chinchilla salesmen, and bust development consultants. C.O.D.'s arrived for looms, trusses, turnstiles, steel wool, sacred figurines, waxed fruit, and zinc wall siding. A Croatian screeched Six-Weeks-To-A-Steel-Shutter-Memory at Mrs. Fairchild until the police were summoned. Insurance salesmen arrived, numberless as fog droplets and as unflappable as the equally numberless religious pariahs whose smiling forgiveness rose to meet each new level of the Fairchild's apoplectic fury. There was a man who, though skeptical, was willing to estimate the cost of bronzing an entire livingroom. It was rumored, on the morning of the assembly called to discover the culprit, that Mrs. Fairchild phoned her husband with threats of scandal and divorce unless he left that Jew school. When Aaron sat down in the auditorium with every male student at William Burroughs, it was rumored that three

emergency ambulances had been summoned and the God's Eye African Methodist-Episcopal Blind Boy Choir was at this moment carolling "Porgy and Bess" highlights on the Fairchild's front lawn. "You can blame Sick Mister Smartpants sitting somewhere among you for being here." Franklin Fairchild had shut down the school switchboard and sent home all the girl students. "It's MISTER Smartpants. We know that much already." Sick Mister Smartpants must confess. They would stay in the auditorium until the confession came. All night if necessary. The attendance office staff was now telephoning each mother to explain the extraordinary measures taken. The cafeteria crew was thanked for staying late to cook dinner for 600. Special "bladder and bowel" sign-up sheets would be circulated among those students feeling the urge. A teacher would accompany every signee to the lavatory and return with him to the auditorium. Faking merely to gain moments outside the mass detention center would be strongly dealt with. "Sick Mr. Smartypants has misread this learning marketplace, Sick Mr. Smartypants will now injure you as well as me. We're going to be here together until he admits who he is. Look at the person on your right. Could that be Sick Mister Smartpants?" Aaron glanced at twitchy, thick-lensed Fred Fisch. No-No-No! Not Fred Fisch. "SMS" would not possibly pick his own porridge pizza face until the inflammation disguised all expression except for embarrassment. Five arm-fart perforated minutes of silence passed. "Look at the person on your left. . . . Is that SMS?" No one sat to Aaron's left and now Fred Fisch obediently scrutinized Aaron. "Fucking-dumb-fisch-face." But Aaron could not look away and perversely memorized Fred Fisch's patina of hairbumps and whiteheads as though he was responsible for naming a newly discovered galaxy. The learning marketplace would remain shut until "SMS" confessed his mischief, said Franklin Fairchild, minutes before a fire-marshal, summoned by an outraged mother, had the wit to allow the principal himself to disperse the afterschool gathering, now officially declared a fire hazard. Sick Phantom Smartpants, never found, remained revealed gospel to Franklin Fairchild. The next morning another assembly was convened to announce Mr. Fairchild's administrative sabbatical, introduce his successor, and cancel future assemblies until further notice. Extended study hall, a kind of benign detention, spawned its own quiet chaos. Vaporized student gatherings regrouped quickly as beards of liquid mercury. Boys and girls petted to wordless climaxes that never disturbed the boredom above flyspeckled desktops. A method was discovered for showing stick figures in unspeakable acts. Drawings of "SMS" had elephantine

erogenous zones. A tacit "Draw Mister Fairchild" contest was won by a student who included the principal, an unpopular female teacher, and an anthropomorphic steamshovel together in preposterous frolic. Nameless, nodding substitute teachers took study hall roll and one older male teacher gathered waste pornography from the floor at each day's end while wearing a beatific smile. New principal Oliver Harding Slyne used this time to prowls about school on some unguessable mission. Scribbling endless flowcharts on yellow legal pads, he flung open doors of classrooms as though he were surprising opium dens. Nodding opaque, wordless thanks to the startled teacher his charts were drawn in pencils of several colors and grew gradually more tangled and spider-webby as the week passed. A complex, clause-filled bulletin outlined, at last, method to Slyne's census. Assisted by teachers volunteering for duty on the "Clique Squad," a master roster had been compiled, listing:

- (a) Observed Friendship Pairs
- (b) Isolates
- (c) Carnal Sophisticates
- (d) Pachucos
- (e) Others

Weeks of field work and sociograms had resulted in three master seating charts for all assemblies: boys alone; girls alone; boys and girls together. Assembly disruptions in the past were caused by cliques. Now each Burroughsonian would have a seat far from his or her clique. Further, the auditorium was now officially divided into sectors. Sectors would vie with one another for "Quiet Points." Members of the quietest sector would receive free admission to the first three pay assemblies of the coming semester. Mr. Slyne, concluded the bulletin, was married, father of three, a former bandleader, and winner of "Occam's Razor," the highest award of the American Society of Contingency Planning. Seating for Mr. Slyne's inaugural assembly was exhaustingly intricate. In Aaron's sector of the auditorium the supervising "Clique Squadder" hectored and shepherded and looked ill with age and straining efforts. Frustrated that seats were swapped wholesale whenever he turned, the entire square-dance neat seating arrangement collapsed when the old teacher ostentatiously turned away, allowing the local experiment to founder his purposeful, defiant neglect, and the sector regrouped itself into the familiar, smirking, lunchtime clumps. Ramrod-stiff Fabian Quimchuck bugled a patriotic medley before confessing to the assembly his chocked pride at introducing "William

Burroughs' new Commander-in-Chief," as Oliver Harding Slyne strode onstage, stopping at the portable blackboard to scrawl "PAL" in mysterious 12-inch, blue-chalk letters. Aaron watched the horn-rim glasses riding Mr. Slyne's puffy blue-biscuit cheeks and a yellow grin broke across his face like a jack-o-lantern rash. "I want you to let me put the accent on the PAL in principal!!" He whined oddly. "I try to accent the PAL in principal, but that's up to you." His grin disappeared abruptly. "You may not laugh at my jokes but I'm still your principal!" There were no lip farts to break the bewildered hush. "You might be interested to know that I've been called a nice guy in 27 nations of this globe." He paused and seemed proud of the confusion he had made. "I wonder how many of you, right now, are saying to yourselves: 'How can he be a nice guy and be a principal too?' Well, fact of the matter, I am a nice guy. But I've called you together today to put you on notice. I can get pretty nasty with boys who insist on remaining in Cliques." He scrawled CLIQUE immediately beneath PAL and drew a savage line between the two words. Oliver Slyne paused, then cleared his throat to break the accumulating silence. "You men might not get that joke either." He raised his arm in a sign of absolution. "That's all right! Maybe you don't laugh at my jokes, but I'm still your principal." Still quivering, he stopped, then turned wistful. "Perhaps that's one more sign of the times. Boys don't laugh without first consulting the clique. Some of you don't breathe without the clique's approval. Well, the war on cliques starts today with our special guest who's a great personal friend of mine and one of the city's great basketball coaches and leading authorities on sex hygiene. I can hear you asking yourselves 'What's a rock-'em-sock-'em talk on sex have to do with cliques? Mr Slyne's blown his cookie!' Well, I'll answer that by saying that one of our guest's main theories is that where you find cliques you find sexual Mongolian Idiots smearing walls with smut, disrupting assemblies, cracking smart remarks about sex! Our guest has been there and back and he's here to talk sex from A to Z. Coach Chuck Stark knows boys from A to Z. You boys know Chuck Stark as head basketball coach of the Hawthorne High Scarlet A's. Settle back and let's have a size-12 Burroughsonian welcome for Coach Chuck Stark! HEY! HEY!!" Applauding, stomping, whistling, and shrieking around him, Aaron stared in fascinated disbelief as the din made Oliver Slyne's cheerleading a pantomime. Coach Chuck Stark bounded onstage, only a police whistle flying round his neck spoiled the illusion of dreamy slow motion. Chuck Stark's grin was embedded in tan, leatherette flesh as he grabbed Oliver Slyne's hand, thrusting it upward to signal the assembly that

some unknown and momentary championship had been won. "LOKA DA KINGA DA JACKOFFS!" A scream made safe in the thunderous abandon let Aaron know the demonstration was a mockery. He turned to watch Chuck Stark's foolish grin, and the police whistle that was an amulet guarding the coach from whatever unpleasantness might be too great to bear. Behind them, Chuck Stark's easel was being wheeled into place by a fat boy who hid his unhappiness with proficiency on the stage crew. The pandemonium evaporated into whispered astonishment. Portrayed was a fully colored cross-section of an erect, four-foot-long penis. The fat stagehand waddled off, preoccupied with exit and a return to safe obscurity. Each footfall was heard but not noticed by the transfixed audience.

THWWWAAAACK!! Chuck Stark's swagger stick cracked into his leathery palm and Oliver Crofchek had disappeared. Coach spoke easily, with a businessman's drawl that edged into mannered lethargy. "Here t'day to draw the lines. These are times for line-drawing. T'day's line is between sex and sexual bullcorn. Thin line. But boys, I talk to you so you'll grow up with clean minds and zipped pants. I like young men. Young men who hear Chuck Stark don't ever need to worry 'bout drugstore smutsters, peddlin' sexual bullcorn. We're gonna learn the right names and draw the line. Looka this here penis . . ." Chuck Stark struck the easel savagely with his swagger stick. "It ain't a 'hard-on' and it ain't a 'boner.' That's sexual bullcorn! You're lookin' at a diagram of a man's penis in a state of Tonic Quiescence. I want ya to repeat it after me." Three times Coach Chuck conducted the audience assembly through the two words and five syllables, using his swagger stick like an orchestra maestro's baton. "Good! Proper name ah the whole shootin' match pictured here's the Glans Penis. Thass Glaannns Peeeenuss! Les' hear it. Roll it off your tongue!" Obediently, flabbergasted, the assembly permitted Coach Chuck Stark whatever he asked. Puffing and chuckling, the coach asked whether ladies were present. Assured the audience was entirely male, he confided the tale of the Negro and the Greek who concealed stolen watermelons in their rectums, but the Greek was caught when his watermelon fell out. Such was the 'sexual bullcorn' that drugstore smutmen told boys ignorant of proper names, dimensions, and functions. Lingering fears that masturbation grew hair on palms were scuttled by Coach. Sexual bullcorn. Hair follicles on the human palm were about as common as male calico cats. Masturbation made moral muscle slack and flabby. No hands raised when Chuck Stark asked to see how many were willing to trade shame and slimy palms for a few moments of gully relief. Hoarse and

confessional, Coach told of the year his 'Scarlet A' quintet had gone to the city basketball final. He had caught his star forward in the shower room, drawing off pre-championship jitters, and threw the masturbator off the team. Masturbation had cost Hawthorne High the basketball championship. The masturbator had withdrawn from school in disgrace. Burroughsonians might ponder that if tempted to fondle their privates. Leadен silence filled the auditorium and Chuck Stark tried to lighten the burden with another example of sexual bullcorn—being the story of two drunks at a football game who spent the first half debating whether the darkness inside a girl's dress seated several rows above them revealed black panties or hair. Wagering heavily and inspecting more closely, the drunks found her darkness to be caused neither by black panties or hair, but flies.

Chuck Stark's guffaw echoed alone, then withered on meeting the uncomprehending silence of his audience. He attempted to explain by diagramming the joke's corrupt physiology on the blackboard but was interrupted by an anonymous screech that the drawing was of Chuck Stark's mother. Oliver Slyne needed a full minute to hush Chuck Stark's bellowing challenge to the masculinity of his tormentor. No, the anonymous, acne-maculated masturbator need not disclose his identity, nor was it necessary for Coach Stark to know whether his underpants held kotex-and-baby-crap-instead-of-redblooded-balls. After a show of hands from Burroughsonians unafraid of continuing the physiological terrain, Coach Chuck Stark made a final, bored beginning. He spat a gatling-gun catchism of colorless Latin nomenclature from the Index Medicus and seemed transformed into a streetcar conductor, responsible for a great haul of feeble-minded sightseers. Aaron grew confused, watching the swaggerstick stabbing at the full-color map of sectioned penis, his own boredom equalling, then exceeding, Coach Chuck Stark's . . . winding-away-from-the-seminiferous-Tubules-we-pause-for-snapshot-taking-of-the-Semi-Histori[c] -Epididymus-Alleys-before-turning-onto-the-Seminiferous-Speedway-we-exit-a[t-] the-Pampiniform-Turnoff-to-pause-briefly-at-the-Temple-of-Rugae-to-marvel-theDartos-Frescoes-we-leave-through-the-Scrotal-Underpass-to-board-the-Prostat[e-] bound-Fibros-Capsule-Ferry-at-the-fabled-Urethral-Orifice-past-the-Prostate-Na[r-] rows-and-the-Bulbo-Urethral-Spillways-we-sail-toward-the-setting-sun-bound-fo[r-] the-distant-prepuce-Archipelago-where-live-a-people-joyous-and-carefree-amon[g-] limitless-mounds-of-Mons-Pubis. . . . Chuck Stark's guffaw was lonely and interrupted by frantic applause from

grim, whitefaced Oliver Harding Slyne who ended the presentation with a frantic dismissal of the gathering to free play.

William Davis

Hiroshima Half-Man

I see you in your burnt director's chair
being an organ pipe for the wind.

Your cheeks lie broken there
where the cement has become ashes

I touch your slithered skull
where the moon shines through
like a third eye-socket

I see a crack in your brain
looking like a smile of fire.

Your black arms try to lift themselves up
like the pincers of a wooden crab.

One-half caterpillar prances by you
with a dagger in his teeth.

I know that the sky came up
from inside the ground today
with a religious name.

I know why you keep your mouth open like that
the teeth welded into your ear
singing sometimes a little song of sadness
without a tongue or throat

Sometimes quietly gaping at the dead ants
who never made you supper.

I sit down with a heavy pain in my stomach
and for your P-shaped heart pray

for one merciful orange worm to see us here.

Only your three-foot mass of shoulder
lies like an empty meteor
on the planet's back.

I hear someone come behind me like a rifle.
I close my arms around a piece of neck.

I make a gesture to the earth with my teeth.

Night's Monk Trappist, Ky.

The falling face
that falls in the trees first,
the crickets rub their transparent meat.

the black foot
riding the locust,
maternal tongue of the field
milking the insect-light
with a kiss
on the cheek of a dirt road,

jasmine butterflies drying 'round
turtlestone
in the rare kingdom of the rain's bell:

the lusted vomit is not caught
going in a cat's mouth
by a pigeon with a camera.

Roberta Spear

First Rain

When it began to thunder
his children ran from the porch
to stand with him
he gathered their hands
and buried them
in his own, like leaves
pulled into the mud.

He had said, "this ache . . . ,"
"this twinge . . . ,"
he said, "that heavy scent . . . ,"
he saw the crooked signs on rocks
and felt the clear bubbles
rising on bone
his face opened
a tooth sunk into the darkest cloud.
From a distance they heard
a duck mourning
through its splintered throat
his mate washed down
in tall grass, the rain
gnawing her feathers.

Their eyes lifted
and saw a thousand other eyes
falling softly back to earth:
the blue iris,
the abandoned egg,
their mother's nails clipped
like old blossoms,
a bruised apple flung
into a clearing,
the mantis wings folding

into husks of corn.
It clung to the short bush
of his beard
to the smooth broad leaves of cactus.

His hands fell to his sides,
the palms stiff from pushing
rain back into the sky

drops of water rolled
towards a knuckle and stopped
like sleeping breasts
releasing the weight of air.

The children wound their arms
around his waist
rolled their heads inward
and rubbed off the moisture—
he smiled, like a thief
muffling the small cries
under his jacket.

B.H. Allen

Robert Kunt[z]

For G. D.

Not that we believed it, but it lasted so long
we started thinking he was insane. "I'm insane, Kuntz," he'd
say, pulling his eyebrows close together. "Look at this poem,
'The red hair of the poppy. . . .'" We believed he was in his
Hart Crane stage, somewhere between discovery and climax.
"Baudelaire's cousin is in my class. An incredible chick with a
wild imagination." "Synaesthesia?" "Yes, I love synaesthesia."
"Kuntz, do you see in this poem how the girl awakes to find she's
an airport and twenty men are landing?"

Choosing

Marsha, I've had to make a choice.
To leave you or settle into this chair
and wait for the bones in your face to ripen.
Your ears have taken lies, secrets, and abuse
into them until they've stopped learning.
Their skin is the skin of animals
and hot tallow covers them like wet leaves.
If your hair is really inlaid
with flaxen, let it lift us up with the wind.
Because above the ground the view is perfect
and waxen features can be molded
into shapes other than eyes and ears.

sylvia Roth -67

Ritual

Once, hand on hand, we stopped
and leaned against a vacant hay barn
and like the hinges on the door
we hung tight to the rotting wood.
Purple on white, the sky's wound expanded
as we lay out of reach of the sun
in some field, while around us
the hay was moving like the sound
of brass grating against the air.
And there we floated across three summers.
We were imbedded in a grain of wheat,
cut down each harvest
and planted each spring.
Holding out for a mild wind or rain.

Michael Bacon

the cold man

a man got out of bed smiling
went to the faucet
and wrapped
his mouth around it
he sucked ice
the cold called to him
he said he was born cold
beyond imagination
cold in the legs
they could not catch fire

he rented a room
above the ice factory
installed air conditioning
to bring the temperature down
out of view
from those who knew him
his bones froze
cracked wide open
his body became thin
and fed only on the frost
he could scratch
off the floor

at night when the black
cold appeared
he would open his window
and call for the birds
night after night he would
call for the birds
that never came

this didn't surprise him he said

the wings of a bird
burn like matches
when struck against the wind
he said the wind wuold come
anywhere
if given the chance

so he gave up
his dream of birds
just to breathe
the cold
just to rub the ice
tapering from his ears

Paul Vangelisti

Ensenada, B.C.

Among ourselves, readers and poets, we negotiate reality
as if it were a simple desire. Now I am writing this
middleman between our guilt and the trembling world.

The following are the habitual notations:

I wear my shoulders like an expensive sweater into the Mexican bar;
jukebox like a huge glowing brain generates
all motivation and gesture, controlling the level of conversation,
customers' thirst, movement of the "bar girls," etc.;
the Mexican men sit at the bar;
the tables are crowded with Americans getting drunk enough
to bargain with the girls;
like a housewife in a supermarket every whore pretends to be
the only woman in the bar;
and the one illusive detail: weak voltage, the lights
coat everything with a harsh metallic gray.

My hotel room looks out on the east wall of the jailhouse.

I stand at the window confused by my conception of this poem
and listen to the shouting of the prisoners.

A guard patrols the wall below me; he stops occasionally
to piss away a few insults into the prison yard.

His voice is flat, methodical, as it meets the prisoners' shouts
striking the night like small hysterical birds.

I move away from the window and soon thoughts are coming to me
familiar and reassuring as pushups—

Aquinas allowing property to be only a provisional right—
the latest gossip about a friend floundering introspectively
across Europe ignorant reviews of Godard's *Sympathy for the Devil* . . .

I pour a whiskey and return to the window fascinated by the guard's
presence.

I imagine him nude his strut along the prison wall
ass belly and cock bouncing swinging freely
above the prisoner's faces.

My fascination like a familiar object transformed to terror in a dream
is fear and hate it screams
through my flesh until one thought remains:
for these people and for us revolution cannot come too soon.

Parade

Came a heritage on horseback
as we watched from here
watched from here
California vision
begotten in roses
by waving suneaten girls
begot seven laughing dwarves
nailed to a waterfall
begot a Corvette convertible
bearing the heavyweight champion
of the world
begot a detachment of Mexican streetcleaners
sweeping up after any possible horses
begot three smiling candidates for mayor
dressed as Indian chiefs
begot a flock of teenage squaws
distributing election leaflets
begot a Chinese drum and bugle corps
begot a bright orange garbage truck
hung with carnations
begot a platoon of the most clear-eyed
young Marines
begot a four-year-old majorette
begot Irish and Italian stuffed
Cadillacs
became a Negro judge in a black
Lincoln
became our righteousness the governor
who wrinkled a grin and
the baptismal perspiration of fifty states
as we watched from here
watched from here

Sam Pereira

The Wrong Side

Doldrums swish up a good one
In this room
Heads bob to an ugly music

I'm a sharecropper BA
Playing a saw
I hold my audience by bells

And they play the game well
They ooh to my logic
Swoon to my love affair with words

And refuse to mean it
I am teacher
Molder of minorities

Slick shaper of thoughts
They will be powder by June
Fertilizer for the incurable growth

Of the heads of things

Photogray

for Elizabeth after Brautigan

these fine new wires are
the only way to see
look at my eyes
shaded from the heat
shaded from the rays of your skin

read your magazines and wait
soon i will go a slow gray
all you will see will be
the gold around my glance
it's a mine
when i blink at your beauty

it's a cave-in
all the precious metal inside
safe from your prospector's grip

On the Eisenhower Stamp

It's good to do battle with your back
Lick you into some obscure place
And slam you down

I've never defeated a general before
It was easy Almost fun
A body hitting the beach permanently
Without noise

And your edges—
Perforated—
Many holes-in-one, sport

Your name emblazoned beneath
Makes it come alive
A gaudy headstone that makes
All my correspondence

Quiet cemeteries

Sam Hamill

Pilgrimage to Zion

Driving back
all night in the Colorado rain
driving back to Utah, Zion
the country spread out in two bleary eyes
on the thin road passing
wooden stores with one dim light
over a wooden bench near a coalstove.

Storm warnings out
flood warnings in lower valleys
and the all-night men
in woolen shirts slumped
over beer bottles at unsteady tables
or early morning men
in denim lighting fires filling pipes
pouring coffee into tin cups.

And in the great sopping pastures
barns yawn in their own immensity, cathedrals
of the west, temples of dung
and animal sweat sweetening in the rain.

Elliot Fried

Tract

In the tract at midnight
the lush lawns breathe.
Sprinklers circle themselves,
while slowly with a steady hiss
the ropes of mist
unravel.

In the tract at midnight
the roofs slope
like dead wings.
Bedsprings squeak like crickets
as houses undulate
their owners.

Ovens clean themselves
with shocking white arms.
Garage doors yawn open and shut,
Cars copulate profusely
while the erect waterheater gurgles and flames.

In the tract at midnight
Lawnmowers thunder.
Housewives with pitchers pour concrete patios,
Spinning like sprinklers, nipples aimed,
their milk waters the lawns.

In the tract at midnight
the fertilizer-flavored tract,
the hung walls cling like fingers
locked in a lover's back.

Restaurant

The menu is greasy. Yellow
around the edges.
Black lines cut
through some choices.
They are dead.
A pie oozes on the counter
dandruff crust.
Eater
Steak chunk hangs from his mouth—
gray flap. Catsup coagulates
on his chin. A plate is placed:
Food. Gravy circulates
through the peas, pumps
from mashed potatoes.
Veal twitches
on my fork.

We eaters simmer in the heat
in the pressure of closed doors.
The waitress is food eaten.
She knows being a meal.
We eat her pick her clean belch her
back in her face. She smiles, eaten.
Breasts waffle fluffy, pads to the kitchen
for the final check.
I get up.
The walls drip syrup.
Stuck to the floor I watch
the kitchen door swing open
toward me.
I see myself on the menu—
\$1.75.
It comes toward me from the kitchen
cleaver high, knuckles white, crusted,
Clutching the menu I wait

and let it come.

Death by Smorg

As a protest against commercialism
John Henry decided
to eat himself to death
at Sir George's Smorgasborg.
Sitting there eating plate after plate.
They threatened to remove him
but he pointed to the sign saying
TAKE ALL YOU WANT BUT EAT ALL YOU TAKE
and I'm doing just that, ain't I?
He threatened to sue
so they left him alone
and he sat there eating.
Gradually his stomach intervened
pushed him back from the table
but he kept right on
Knowing on the outskirts of town
beyond the dump they kept it
first the convalescent hospital
a block later the mortuary
run by the same family.
He ate fluorescence, plastic.
Images stuck in his throat.
People awed, watching him
dissolve fried chicken legs
and lima beans
into paste,
suck it like a vacuum cleaner
sucking at deep lint.

As John increased
the maximum occupancy diminished
so finally it had to stop.
They planted a bomb in the enchiladas
He belched and ate on.

He's still there—immovable at the table.

A conveyer belt brings him trays.

They wrote him up in Ripley's.

He's still there—you can see him

but it costs five bucks to get in.

Sandy Dorbin

THEVIEWFROMWILLIAMBURROUGHSHIGHSCHOOL

The tasseled fist the
music held us in relaxed then opened,
set us back into the room again.

Roger's eyes vacuum the floor.
Outside the window the Mediterranean glitters like the movies.
I expect Bob Hope forthwith.

Absalom's teeth, the tinsel on his fez
reflect sunlight

Well sirs you like?

I nod.

Watt ease eat they smock? Roger asks.

O sir that's kif sir.

We wait in the pension
doorway. A kid sits on the curb
below us, jacket over his head, pipe
two feet into the street.

From the hallway
we can hear the blond mouth puling again:
In der schweiz es gibt nur ein preis!

Europe: Homage to Otto Mueller

I blundered out of my patronym
into the figures of girls
Soft places, brittle
grasses, ponds

Without precision a hand
dusts mist on leaves
green pigment high
on lips, water
An offering

Another way (Spain, 1936:
This road bombed into pockets. Thatchroof
houses, women with haystacks on their heads
blasted out of the world for things
they know nothing about, nor wish to

I'm dry now. No customs stamps, no
purses into the Waldteich, no
buses crammed with roadmaps

Fingers are to paint with
eye cheek cup of the chin
This is the reason
to be gentle among the reeds

John Hall

A toe pushed through a hole in the pier,
the boy to see his face in the sea.

The pier and its dead fish
the heat declining
mercurial approach to night.

A dance on a slow axis
to the beat of the universe
from a boy and his toe.

Nothing stops a wave,
somehow it finds the shore.

Lyn Shoemaker

Crazy Eddy

Goddamn idiot, I hear
your guts your eyes your
fingernails.

I know you've come from some
asylum or other.

Filth. Vision from
wine and the center of skulls.
You take your life in your hands
and break it into seeds
webs wings leaves echoes all
to pile of a nose.

King rat, you
resurrect yourself and
give the wind the finger
of spines.

You bastard of dirt, if
you ever ask I'll give
stare to stare. Down
into your tunnel-house never
more than a nickel.

Goat-foot.
Dionysus-of-the-idiots.
In another world I'll
touch your hair.

Jack Hagar

[W]hen I arrived at the Ranger Station in Big Sur there were already forty [p]eople waiting to apply for the Samurai jobs. Most of them were wearing [b]usiness suits, I guess they were trying to create a good impression. But some

[o]f the applicants looked like they had just come off the road, and a few [s]howed up in full armor.

I filled out a job application form and stood in the long interview line, [c]leaning my long-sword while I waited. Although we were in the midst of a

[s]tand of forest, it was very hot—sunlight came streaming in between the red[w]ood trees. I could hear the river somewhere off to my left.

It took three hours to get to the front of the line. When I was finally [a]llowed into the interview office, I puffed my chest up and strode in as if I [o]wned the place. The little room was empty except for a desk, chairs, water-[c]ooler, and two Rangers. The crew-cutted Ranger sitting behind the desk

[m]otioned for me to sit down. He flashed me an official smile.

"How are you today?" he asked. "Pretty warm out, isn't it?"

"Yes it is," I agreed. I smiled at the other Ranger, an older, rather fat fellow who was sweating profusely and drinking water from the cooler.

"Have you filled out an application?"

"Yes, I have," I said, and I handed it to him. The Ranger near the cooler went to stand behind the desk and they both read my application.

"Well," the young Ranger said. "This seems very good. Although you aren't very old, it seems you've had extensive Samurai experience. You list quite a number of employers here; for how long have you been self-supporting?"

"Since I was twenty. I've worked all over the West Coast and, in fact, did some unofficial work while in Samurai school in Japan. As you probably know,

over there Americans are not allowed Samurai licenses. We can study, but we can't work there."

"Yes, I've heard of that law."

"What kind of unofficial work did you do over in Japan?" asked the older Ranger. He was grinning at me.

"Nothing big; some classmates and I helped out a few girls from one of the local bars; seems they were having some problems with a strong-arm protection racket. I enjoyed the women over there and the school, but after a year

I grew homesick for the States."

The younger Ranger stared at me for a minute, then continued.

"Yes . . . ah humm, well, let me outline the duties of the job. As part of the new administration's 'Youth Support Bill,' all the State Parks in California have been designated 'Free Areas.'" Anyone can stay here free, as long as they don't stay for more than four weeks a year, and as long as they follow the park rules.

"Now we've kept rules at a minimum, but we're still having problem[s] With the large number of young people on the road nowadays, we find many

kids slipping into the park to sleep illegally, or they use the bathrooms and showers without paying."

I started to object but the Ranger cut me off with a wave of his hand.

"I know, I know, these kids cause remarkably few problems. And I admit that the whole concept of 'illegally sleeping' . . . is ridiculous. Most of these kids

are from good homes, trying to find themselves in the time-honored method of hitting the road. But there are always dregs in any good movement.

"We've got bums here that you wouldn't believe. Perverts hiding behind beards and long hair. We have fire problems. We have theft and wanton destruction of nature. And we have to make the park acceptable to our older,

straighter campers. I mean, sometimes it gets out of hand. We're hard-pressed

even keeping up appearances! For example, we've got to keep the freaks from

smoking dope right out in the open. If they pretend and smoke it in their tents,

we'll pretend we don't smell it. Do you see what I mean?"

I nodded yes and we all smiled at each other.

"We thought about using cops to patrol the park, but they'd cause too much trouble. We decided upon a force of irregular lawmen, someone who'll use his head more than his weapon."

"I see what you mean," I said. "You're looking for Samurai to sort of patrol this whole area. Keep the bums out and act as a buffer between the hippies and the straights. The only part that is unclear to me is how far I can go to enforce the law."

"Listen," said the older Ranger, "we expect you to take a lot of abuse on this job; in fact, you'll probably act as a silly fire-warden most of the time. But if some asshole is stupid enough to mess with you—well, that's tough shit for him!"

"Of course," he added with a grin, "this will all be unofficial."

"I understand," I said solemnly.

"We intend to employ a force of six Samurai. Four will always be on duty while two sleep. You'll be given a cabin and firewood; your food and other necessities will have to come out of your pay. If selected, you'll be asked to work all year round; however, the maximum length of service is two years."

"Those terms sound fine."

"Good . . . now, frankly, we've had many fine applicants and we still have two more days to interview. Why don't you take advantage of the beauty of Big

Sur? Stick around for a few days. I can arrange for you to take your meals at one of our Ranger's homes. On Friday we plan to post a list of the six men,

plus two alternates, whom we have chosen. With your qualifications I would think you've got a fairly good chance, but I don't want to instill any false hopes.

We've had many fine applicants."

I agreed to his suggestion and spent the next three days at Big Sur State Park. I rented a tent site, but slept on the open ground in my mummy bag, the stars for my ceiling. As is our tradition, I slept with my sword by my side.

There were many young people in the park, but I had great difficulty talking to them. I had made my decision two years ago to live as a Samurai and there was no way for me to go home again.

Early Friday morning I went over to the Ranger Station to see if I had been hired. My name wasn't on the list. I walked back to my campsite and rolled up my sleeping bag. Assembling my pack, I slung my sword over my shoulder and hiked out of the park. I decided to get out on the highway early,

hope to hitch a ride north before the others awoke. I figured the roads would be filled with hitch-hiking Samurai as soon as everyone read the list. Maybe there would be a watchmans job in Santa Cruz, or maybe the students up in Berkeley would be needing some hired help this fall.

But it was funny, during the whole trip up the coast I couldn't help thinking about how great it would have been to be a Samurai at Big Sur. I could just see those dudes, standing crouched behind some Redwoods in the

rain, looking like a tough old character out of a Japanese movie. Sword hidden beneath a cloak, ready to leap out from behind a tree and drive some bums out

of the park, or maybe getting stoned with some freaks by the river.

Joseph Hansen

From the New Cave

they are deceiving you there is an answer
to every question when you swallow blood
suspect the moon thirst is not normal time
depends on appetite eat every hour
not much but something small raw fish not eggs
there is a little man inside look out
define cheese ask yourself when you last saw
the hand beneath the door when you last heard
the dried rose reminisce when you last tested
cardboard when you grew an inch at night
say nothing but observe what they have done
removing mother rain need not be wet
distrust the sun change your socks regularly
make lists of books that have more than one author
sleep on a north-south axis only report
black dogs note changes in the wallpaper
save whatever comes out of your body
they are deceiving you there is an answer
read the telephone directory
say nothing to your friends find Mr. Shin

John Harris

Poem

is a matador trying
to avoid death
as gracefully as possible

the testicles of the bull
two swollen peppers
in a burlap sack

an India boy
hustled from the ring

the bloody rag you
never quite
got your horn into

after the corrida
the bull cut up for charity
the bones still smoking

a meat cutter
wiping his knuckles

Miriam Levine

Casting From the Edge

Out on the island's tip
the fishermen work their reels
casting into the surf.

Beyond the channel
the currents bang together.
The sea's alive under the burnt-down sky.

Two mutts shuffle along the shore;
the horizon dips—
I can't see them anymore.

Your evil-looking incandescent lure hooks on.
We stand and cast until my arm is sore
and the sky is black, but I can't stop.

I still see the popper soar and drop,
still see the shy, sharp-toothed blues.
My sweet meat razors take the lure, bite deep;
come fighting in against my killing arm.

I see you all, your waiting school,
and I could stand here all night,
casting into the blackness from the edge,
waiting for you until the sun burns up.

Jack Behrens

Begin with four simultaneous chords (durations a comfortable breath) as the performers

play (in conventional order) C, A, G, E. After a pause, each player returns to his

starting point and plays C, A, G, E repeatedly (at his own tempo) as long as he is able

to find his next required note (A, C, E, G as the case may be---octave transpositions

may be utilized) by making any of the moves permitted in chess.

The performance might continue

(a) until one (or all) of the performers is (are) checkmated (unable to make a move
which would land on a required note.

(b) until each player had performed C, A, G, E sixty times.

(c) for a mutually agreeable length of time.

Many variations/restrictions/adaptations can be devised. Possibilities:

I. Restrict the permitted moves to those of the Knight and the Pawn.

II. If a player lands in a "square" with two notes, require him to return to (or
stay in) that "square" in order to use the other note---this may require the
use of retrograde (E, G, A, C).

Jack Behrens

March 22, 1972

Bakersfield, California

Larry Leier

from The Savior

The wind blows through October;
and the snow in November.
He throws glowing embers
from the bowl
of a briar pipe,
while cut crystal sparkles
in dull fire-glow.

Black her hair,
clear her eyes
in firelight.
Slender her fingers
around the glass.
Around her throat,
as a necklace,
she has strung
bright chips
of colored glass;
on silver wire
she has hung
them from her neck.
She places
plum-blue
peacock plumes
in vases,
as though they
were flowers.
(On the vase,
under her hand,
the azure water
splits
two brown strips
of earth.)

This is an evening
when bees die,
and in the morning
we find them crushed
on our porch steps.

Martin Levy

14th Round

The girls arrived in limousines
photographs of legs,
breasts, hair

At night, the house-mother
remade them
the skin difficult
fingers stiffened often

The pageant was brilliant
a summer tapestry
of yellow, black and green,
seen naked through the window
by a harmless masher
the mother kneeling
like a musk-ox below her creation

Before the semis
the girls gave interviews
the sanctity of sex
and hairspray
a candle would light
the entire building
like a rained out carnival
in August
in the poor section
of Okaland

Marianne Johnson

The White Line

I stand
sideways.
A stalk
of white wheat,
a nail,
a blue line
of notebook paper.
An annelid,
a baleen of whale—
an unblubbed
white mammal
with eye
on my foot.
I am
a tendon,
a spider leg,
a piece
of broomstraw.

Whatever I am
let me be:
a skinny whale
that lives
under rocks
and eats its
insides to
turn right
side out.

Call me

splinter
of wood,

pencil,

white line,

willow fly.

Summer

What I remember
is pulling the crabs.
Slowly, up from the bay,
the string knotted
in three or four places,
and tenuous.

Sometimes,
they would slip through
a hole in the net,
and topple back into the bay,
their shrill blue claws
clacking nervously.
I would lower the net again,
singularly, into the gray water.

I would sit on the pier
and dangle my feet,
waiting.
The lines in my knuckles were dirty,
my hands sticky.
My legs stuck to the wood,
and the imprint of the slats dampened
the underside of my pants.

Once,
there was a giant gar,
arched on its back.
It was like warped wood,
with a thick hole under its gill.
There were worms there.

But it was the dry, cotton
taste on my tongue,
the sun, ripening like a hot peach,

and the sharp snap of flies,
waiting.

William Matthews

The Turtle

One day outside Chapel Hill,
North Carolina, when
I was fishing
a thick pond, a turtle
pushed the prow, the wedge
of its head into the path
around the pond.

All afternoon my toes
had stiffened in muck, in
eroding pondshore
while I was staring
into the thin skin
a biologist
shaves from pondscum to cover
the clear bone of a slide
he stares at for hours
through a microscope.
His good eye
drills
to the first city
built on this site.

The turtle lurched into the path.
I turned away,
just as the fish had spurned
my lure.
I turned away
from the sludge
in my blood, from
the silt
rising to brain-flower up the stem
of my spine.

I turned away
from the turtle to honor it.

When my fishing
line like a tame bolt
of lightning unwound
through a snarl of gnats,

and then when nothing happened—,
I was happy.
Now to give the lurking
turtle freedom
from fear I turn away
and let the time knit
in my shoulders
until I hear the thrash
of thistle and teazle
and everything else that's there
that means he's gone.

[[PJB]] 8.64
Study of a
fragment
of a plant

Pedro Montez

Pigeons

Even a skinny girl has beads
and rolls of fat somewhere, a rubber
tube just above the hips when she sits,
a fold behind the knee
or carrying a hard pea, a pearl
of it like perfume behind the ear hidden
by the ways he combs her hair.
they contain her pictures
microfilm and maps
of her life tightly rolled.

walking in the park
the pigeons are scattered
among the corn by a pool, and
the sailors catching themselves
turn to watch her, the birds
shoot off over the water, circle.
they see the claws on their wings, see
them settle on her leather lips, feed
on them, peck at the marble skin
that has grown where her eyes were.

Termite Man

At times there are other kingdoms
kingdoms that rise out of the sea
 gardens and castles
that remain suspended in the sky
before our eyes like scaffolding
almost invisible

he comes down the walk
limping in both arms
and places the machines
like hives, each to a room.
in the closets he goes to his knees
knocking the holes out
that seal us from the dead spaces.
I see the heels of his cowboy's boots.

tells me how he once drove a rig
from Fayetteville to Illinois
with chrome stacks, white sidewalls,
everything, the toothpick bouncing
through the hole in his teeth
that he's not afraid of guns
after I've removed them with my
wife's hair piece in their shiny vinyl cases
how he too once bought a wig
and coming in his wife screamed, the dog
almost bit him

today, surviving
I sat behind a man who blinked
and twitched and nodded
his hands clawed the seat
dazed in the bright fluorescence,
as if his whole body were applauding
the beneficence of plenitude,

everything that happened

by now he is shouting in my ear
above the machines pumping
their juices, waving his windmills
how somewhere in Kansas drinking coffee an oil

man paid him on the spot for it, pipe
and all, peeling off fifty one-thousand dollar bills,
that he must have really needed it
and three days after woke up broke. I

try to be polite. and closer
how you can tell them, bodies all white
with two blades atop their heads.
they can bore through steel and
eat concrete and come out
only in their own night, smaller
than a seed, a piece of corn. he
holds his finger.

later in my silence
I watch his back go down the walk,
head bent, between his two machines. in
this noon the house feels solid.
but at night I feel the corn
growing in the green soil
racing in the dead spaces
lifting the house as the leaves
sprout and flourish
lifting the house and me
in it out of the skeleton of itself, suspended
in a sky so dark only the stars
can breathe; they weep as I sleep, as
my beard grows on my chest
like a king's.

Salvation

My wife has bought an old Navaho rug
for fifty dollars from the daughter-in-law
of a man dying of tuberculosis.
getting away from the party L. D. and I, an expert
go over it on our knees like blind men feeling
the rough wool between our hands,
feeling across those sandy desert mountains
as if they breathed.
much later laid out I see
the five elongated men with board
wings and bent corn plumes
dancing on board feet across the peaks, their
border, with brooms and turtles,
their little mouths open facing
me, words all the same.
and in this light see once only the hidden
line the weaver put in, leading out
through the thick fiber, lightning
behind their knees
like this poem straight to heaven.
they breathe. they dance, they sing.

Sylvia Rosen

Glass Lobster

of course I look strange
to you on the other side
of my tank I have no
gills and you see through my
claws

never seen a glass lobster
before astonishing
even smaller than a
prawn yet so much like my
Maine cousin scratching
the bottom of the trap for
sustenance

what shall I be
next to amuse you
Main Shrink as you cast your
eyeballs from me to the
others reeling in the ward's
net

today I am
transparent a few skeletal lines
hold me together as print
holds a poem to paper

tomorrow
shall I pin on my ponytail and be
a seahorse no—
more likely an oyster
with the grit pearling
truth locked
inside me

Sherril Hogarth

Africa

Your mottled soil
has grown rare fruit
delicate, fragile, elegant Mangbetu
hearty, forceful petals of the Songhai
voluptuous Banda
gnome-like Ulua.

Your mottled soil
has raised strong bodies, cultured feet,
and beauteous hands
with fingers shaped to carve and scrape
till broken stump-like
from the draught
and pestilence
contracted in the
fields where cotton
grew.

Your mottled soil
gave birth to sculpture, metal working, weaving
till winter came
and song and dance and play
made dormant, crafts.

Your mottled soil gave birth
to flowers—rigid set and disciplined
in somber hues kept subtle for occasion's song
till winter came
and tears and jubilation gave
succor to the leaves
outstretched for peace
in search of light
in search of

summer's balm.

Ann Christie

No. 2 From the "Oklahoma Sequence"

A Spell to Destroy Life

Careful: my knife drills your soul
listen, whatever-your-name-is
One of the wolf people
listen I'll grind your saliva into the earth
listen I'll cover your bones with black flint
listen I'll cover your bones with black feathers
listen I'll cover your bones with black rocks
Because you're going where it's empty
Black coffin out on the hill
listen the black earth will hide you, will
find you a black hut
Out where it's dark, in that country
listen I'm bringing a box for your bones
A black box
A grave with black pebbles
listen your soul's spilling out
listen it's blue

—Cherokee Indian*

1 We drove half a hot July day
to see the Cherokee Sacred Fire Ceremony.
I wanted to see an Indian powwow.
My parents wanted to see great-grandmother
before she died.

I thought she'd be red
but I found a sunbleached hag
rocking herself solemnly
on Uncle Jim's front porch.
Dust devils swirled around the house
but she sat unblinking

as I squinted up at her.

"Come here, child!"
she commanded
and I came
blurting out
"Why's your name Geraldine?
I thought you'd have an Indian name."
She stared past me, stopped rocking,

*From *Technicians of the Sacred*, Jerome Rothenberg (ed.), p. 70.

"Don't ever give your true name to strangers.
It gives 'em power over you."
They let me sit next to her at the ceremony.
They called upon her to give the invocation.
She was the oldest of her clan.
She rose straight-backed saying,
"This is my last fire ceremony.
From where the sun stands now,
I have nothing more to say."

2 From my pallet in the dining room
that night
I heard them arguing.
"I will be laid out on a hill,
head pointing west.
The carrion birds will pick at my bones
as they picked at the bones of my ancestors
before me."
Uncle Jim was insisting on a Christian burial,
a plot
in the family cemetery.
"My God may be your god
but my ways are older."
They were still fighting
when I fell asleep.

3 We went to the funeral.

The services were held
in a one-room freewill baptist church,
the only house of God
in the town of Wewoka, Oklahoma.
I walked by her casket,
scared,
first dead person I'd ever seen.
But I didn't cry, remembering her distance.
The preacher used her real name.

"Running Stream is laid to rest."

I recognized her as water, then.

We all went to the cemetery,
watched her being buried in the earth.
Uncle Jim caught my eye across the grave,
tried to smile at me.
I thought of a buzzard pecking at her heart
as she lay on an open hill.

Charles Bukowski

Purple and Black

a girl in purple pants and black sweater
crossing the street
with a camper and high-rise background
a saturday afternoon graveyard hollywood
background,
it is quite interesting:
something moving in purple and black,
her hair waves in the wind as she turns,
the sun is the eye of the frog and
winter is where it's at
here, and the street is insipid and vapid,
I could pound myself against that asphalt until
I bled mad
and it wouldn't care;
the girl is purple and black
gives the street destination and direction
until she is out of range of my window,
and now it is again
what it was, and a small spider
almost like something made out of lost hairs
eyelid hairs,
and it crawls along the wall to my left
and I don't even have the desire to
kill it. outside my window
it is ghost-shivered
it stinks of the malice of men.
I wait for new arrangements
but meanwhile endure
as the phone rings
and I leap from my chair
like a man shot in the
back . . .

My Brother, Ernest Hemingway

Page 254

"In the spring he left Cuba
with thirty-two pieces of
luggage and
quietly headed for
Idaho."

now that took
genius.

Measurements From the Creation Coffin:

the ability to suffer and endure—
that's nobility, friend—
the ability to suffer and endure
for an idea, a feeling, a way—
that's art, my friend—
the ability to suffer and endure
when a love ends—
that's hell, old friend . . .
nobility, art and hell,
let's talk about art a while:

promulgation of my attitudes
like stilts walking centuries
beeswax for brains
destiny is my crippled daughter
look here, it's difficult
me against them
with them
Kafka let me in
Hemingway beware
Hegel you're funny
Cervantes you mean you wrote that
novel at the age of
80?

writers are indecent people
they live unfairly
saving the main part for paper

jesus christ would have been
a duller writer than Theodore Dreiser
jesus christ would have been a
very lousy writer

the beard and hair fit

but he was too good at
conversations and
miracles

a good human being may save the world
so the bastards can keep creating art
if you read this after I am long dead
it means I made it

and
it's your turn now
to misuse your wife
abuse your children
love thyself
live off the funds of others
dislike all art created before and
during your time,
and dislike or even hate humanity
singly or en mass.

bastard, if you read this after I am long dead
shove me out of here. I
probably wasn't that
good.

Leslie Simon

Venice Breakfast

German sliced,
potatoes with
onion's cheese;
jukebox cruise,
sea golden: with
newly dried grass
green shirt.
 old hang-out
 hung out for
 friends to eat.

Dessert

sweet chocolate chips
buried in dough:
warmed with raisin's wine,
moistened by coffee grind.

Souper's Delight

thick green
crushed and
golden brown
pork chunks
wheat wafer
peas split,
eaten:
pleasured
treasure of taste.

Nourishment

melted marble yellow
butter in cream
brown sugar bubble
splashed: omelet flushed
green with
 spinach creamed;
the comfort
 of warmed well woman love.

B.H. Allen

Twilight At the Library

Surely
All the books will leap off the shelves
If I refuse to breathe
The words
Rearranging themselves
 into scrambles
The best-seller showcase glittering
 the sleep
 that hardens into permanence
No screams
 only ceiling lights
Someone has placed enormous dark glasses
 over the windows
It cannot be long
The icy feel
 of plumed carpets
 under my shoes
No one around to see
 the 38 chairs all crouched for flight
The paled ceiling pulling away
The hands vanish from the clock
 turned into a furious face of snow

Beau Beausoleil

Night Time

I write the strategy
of dreams

I wait up
around you body

I small bite
your apple

I tattoo for you
anywhere your coat
falls off

Finally I get part of the moon
to drop away

stars start coming down
like parachutists

The night is our shoe
in the ground

It is the black bicycle
moving between houses

It is the air darkening
until it is layer after layer
of glass against our throats

Luis Campos

UN TIT LED

She was a love story
in search
of a water bed
a leather fetishist
naked to boot . . .

abandoned children cried less . . .
she never sang me morning strawberries
or any other habit forming
persuasions . . .

treated my tenderness
as just another form
of cunnilingus . . .
once, at a funeral
I felt her lascivious smile
disrobing me . . .
she even raided
my surplus depot
and made off with some
of my own aberrations . . .

her last mistake
for realizing what was coming
I allowed some wisdom
to filter
into her brain,
thereby creating
a short circuit . . .

post-fiasco
in need of reassurance
I machine gunned

every promise in sight . . .

desperate reaction

but

Lonesome Cowboys notwithstanding

I didn't want this X-rated life

to be directed

by Andy Warhol.

Michele Murray

Hunger

To move from sleep into the screen of awakeness,

each finger stirring to renewal of blood,
is abandonment. Mind silk no more unreeling.
Absence of body foreclosed; a lumpish skin to dress.
Gone concentrated seeings unworded, the fire that screams
through wood, brick & glass. High ancient houses lost,
the skin-prickling rustle, ox carts down the Via Appia
creaking over ten centuries of bone & dust,
music in the gardens of Mirabell amid gross roses.

Here this handful: day.

Dust. Things to say words.

A choking back. What's to prevent?

Struggle: this forwarding, thrust.

A knife through clouds.

A sound through mountains.

A cry past childhood.

Is hunger to know the not returning.

Keith Brown

The Change

I blame this on you
witness an opening flower
needs more light each day
the edges turn brown

witness
the cat opens its throat
and night comes out
you see the one-eyed moon
rise through closed lips like blood

behind the blinds the changing light
takes orders from no one
dies at leisure
moving towards god on a white pillow

William Stafford

The Fanatic

He molded clay while he talked,
and held out a doll: "This is you."
As he broke off the head, I saw
it was biting his hand.

For an hour he screamed the wrongs
we had done. I listened, relieved:
he had not found out everything.

Triumphant, we left him:
he thought us good enough
to regret, at least, what
he was superior enough to abhor.

I could ask him, but I'll ask you:
what world-hurts are we all
committing, and failing to see?

Anna Hernandez

MAKE WAY FOR THE KING'S PROCESSION!!

he's dragging in thru the kitchen
clutching some moist crumbled cookies
in one hand and a dagger in the other.
think twice before you shake hands with
him

MAKE WAY FOR THE QUEEN'S PROCESSION!!

she's flying in thru the keyhole.
she's wearing green polaroid shades.
her eyes lick your skin off.

picture two dogs playing chinese canasta.
one is losing badly. he watches the other
in quiet anger, then realizing he's being
cheated, leaps madly across the table.
dog 1 rips dog 2's throat open and pulls
out a bloody princess.

MAKE WAY FOR THE PHOENIX PRINCESS' PROCESSION!!

John Bennett

Birds on the Patio

Birds on the patio, many birds,
an eagle flopping past the window,
she is on the floor, can't make
love to her, wife due home,
birdshit in the air stains
on the bathroom wall
butts in the sink
a pounding on the door

William V. Davis

The Wife of Many Men

I am grown thin
With the children
I've never had.
Fathers I've had
Too many of.
They call it love.
I clutch my empty guts
While my sister sluts
Grind them out year
After year and wear
Respectable names on
Their faces. Their sons
and daughters play
In the sun. I lay,
At night, with their
Fathers who share
Secrets with me
Wives never will see
Or know. Grow fat,
Ghostly children, grow fat.

After the Fact

We committed sex.
When it was done
We wondered what was next,
What left undone.

I took her hand
To lift her up.
Rising, she changed the landScape of her hips

And her breasts filled
With heavy fullness.
She stood. She turned. She walked
Away without caress

Or word. I saw her go
In silence. I was still.
I came at last to know
The way love kills.

Harold Witt

The Projectionist

from Winesburg By the Sea

That little room got hot
but cool on the beaded screen
Astaire and Ginger Rogers
in sets like whipped cream
flew on down to Rio,
danced on a shining wing—
the ice-pale face of Garbo
kept gasping "Armand—"

When the circle flicked in the corner
he clicked on the second machine
and Cooper in "The Plainsman"
or Grant in "Gunga Din"
grinned their perfect teeth
without a missing frame—
the tears continued to drip
down Shirley Temple's cheeks.

Over and over and over
seven nights in a row—
Mae West teased W. C. Fields,
Grace Moore hit the note,
and at matinees the same
reel after unreal reel—
while he flipped magazines
shirtless in the heat.

But sometimes the big boss winked
"I'll need you after the show—"
slipped him some different cans

and bills in an envelope,
and for the boss's friends
with erections in the loge
he projected what our town and MGM
never brought to focus.

Eleanor Zimmerman

It was a childhood of usual things, mother father, sister, no dogs which was
a
shame because she loved to see dogs making shit & horses dropping dung
from
their big holes & she & her sister & her friend used to go behind the garage
&
make what they called poop for each other, & hers was not the same color as
theirs & they said her pale poop was not as good as theirs & she felt bad that
hers was not a good color. She had a dream she liked to dream of filling a
whole
room full of shit, starting in the corner & she imagined how yards & yards
would
come out without a break. That was in the grandmother's house because the
grandmother was interested in such things & would always ask "Have you
moved your bowels today?"
She & her sister used to talk about making number one & number two &
when they smelled gas one would say "you made a bomb" & the other
would
say "no, you made it" & they would laugh together. When she was eight she
liked to play bathroom with the boy across the street. She made him take
down his pants & show her his anus. He always wanted to show her his
penis
but she only wanted to see his anus so they were not very satisfied with each
other. One day she was constipated & sitting on the toilet worried that it
would be too big to come out. Her sister was there brushing her teeth & she
said "Don't worry, if that happens I will reach in & pull it out." That was the
true love declaration of the childhood.
When they were small her sister was always throwing up & making her
feel
sick. She did not like to throw up & always tried not to. Once they went to a
place where they sold Coca Cola & she asked for one but couldn't finish it.
Her nurse said she had to drink it & as soon as it was all down she threw up
pink chunks on the sidewalk in front of the booth. The next day they drove
by
& she saw the stain on the sidewalk. All summer she looked for the spot she
had made with her vomit.

One day their other grandmother bought a quart of vanilla ice cream & they ate ice cream & played solitaire all afternoon & that night she was very sick & threw up many times. The next day that grandmother came with a bag of tangerines to make her feel better & after that she never liked vanilla ice cream or tangerines but she liked that grandmother who would take them to Macy's for lunch & let them have whatever they wanted, like tea with milk & sugar & that grandmother was very interested in what went into the body & the other grandmother was very interested in what came out & later on, without her sister to help her, she had a baby which she pushed out like an enormous turd & he started on his own normal childhood & she fed him tangerines & ice cream & threw away his shit.

Philip Taylor

The Model

First

 You get the lighting correct—
 always fix the lighting
on her face.

Make-up people gather 'round her
like typewriter keys struck at once,
the feel of commerce in their fingertips,
spreading glycerin over tight skin.

The girl's profile in chiffon,
quarter-view in Dior,
 the calculus of bone and body
on velvet.

I pay you to be this way but
I want to marry you without make-up
in the street, wipe off sweat with fingers,
raise a family in the park
 even if it's November Sundays
 with football and brown sugar.

But if she smiles a bit
and they take her under the lights
and dab her skin with cotton
and shave away the eyebrows
paint around the eyes with blue
and streak her forehead twist the hair
 and it's all done for the sake of Art—
clip part of the nose
pierce the ears
reduce the breasts,
what's left?
 To spend herself through the nostrils,

through the pores?

It's getting late.

I turn off the flood lights.

The studio closes.

The Interloper

I. Does it want my bread?

I stand and stay before the mirror
praying it will dissolve into silver mist.
Can I forget the knife on the floor?
How to explain it?
It makes hollow,
then takes the core.
The ripe center is gone,
seeds and sinews cut out.
There is only a mask,
a sulfur smell.
My bone is air—it won't carve.
There is no place to hide in the hollows.
Flesh will yield if you paint, stretch,
cut the face,
but bone is not to touch.

II. I live here on River Road

past the Enco station,
the busstop caked with dirty snow,
at the edge where the town beats itself
into gravel.
The coal truck's wheels throw slush
on my cork boots.

How it gets inside I don't know.
I seldom leave the house.
My doors and windows are locked.
I bolt the garage door, the roof
is water-tight.
Does it want only bread?
Or will I wake up some day
to find its wheat sprouting
natural through the engine block?
Here there is nothing left whole.

It takes a small bite—just that—
from each thing it touches,
chocolate bars
corn meal
flour
leaves bits of shredded wrapping

and cardboard with wet
tooth-marks.
Nothing consumed whole.
In the morning I find a mouse—
its perfectly picked skeleton
on the front lawn.

III. The telephone rings these days
but clicks when I lift it.
While I'm awake the thing
keeps itself where I can't get at it—
beneath the swelling ice of the Wolff River or
behind stone
or lost in pine scent.
Once through the kitchen window:
a sight of hooves beating—
a fanning of wings in the bushes
behind the stone brick fireplace
where I run, trip, find
broken pine needles set in circle grooves.
Crumbs in the snow lead to the
river orchard where in summer
apples grow to half the size of melons.
Now there is nakedness across the field.

I track through backyards
over frosted branches, droppings,
only to find the house of the blind whore
boarded since the last spring.
Ice hanging from the faucet in dumb laughter.

IV. On the garage floor

lies the old mirror splintered in a rage
to twenty knives covered with
sawdust, oil, and hair.
The shattered face so resembles me.
It says "What you have to give me
I can get elsewhere—
or else, yes—use me, use these blades
on yourself
so I can break into free air."

I turn away.

Across the river a soft blue
meets the tops of evergreens.

Unstoppable wintergreen and musk in the breeze.
The snow begins to fall.
Wind cuts through wool.
I grab a revolver from the wall,
go inside, snuff the kerosene lamp
and cover myself.

V. The iron gate clangs.

The hour before the sun
when metal cuts its coldest.
The dream demands to be heard,
takes over the voice of the body puppet,
gives birth to art in a will
to wake from stone and ether.
A fear of hollow groin—
the hand snakes down to meet its mate
that should know its own name by now
and stand by itself.

VI. The iron gate clangs again.

Waiting in wetness and darkness
for its coming,
naked with my hand

around the gun barrel,
I feel the bullets pulsing
in their chambers.
I hear the shaking of the wires
and fear the storm.

Then comes silence.
Hair is fair and air-drawn.
Eye-mirrors return me from
some other center.
It sets a trap—rounds its hips,
softer blades that make an exact cut.
There is no pulling away.
I ask myself "Why knock? Pull apart?
Set a blade against the heart?
I didn't choose it. It chose me."
And it lays a heavy, white down
over you, over your head,
and you settle back
perfectly alone.

Allan Weisblott

Drowning Hat

much water
has passed
the paper
boat
fills
the
folds of
my hands
creased
not three times

Paul Hunter

Now I Lay Me

1 Somewhere men express
no longing to make poems
to replace what is lost

somewhere machines still
take up the hum after men
in weariness have laid it down

somewhere this too is being
taken down as is and stored
quarantined for the time being

a cat-whiskered television
preening itself and purring
stares me asleep one eye open

2 Today machines
showed me films
of old men making brooms

what pocket were they drawn from
change shown for nothing
I ask the blinking thing

they spun wound and trimmed
on jigs the simple tools
singing themselves
to speed the labor

I thought beginning machines
beater bow spinning wheel
still close at hand
could be played upon

why not their straw stick and wiring

3 I find myself placed here
with no more care than a broom

its head turned useless
from long standing
idle to one side

such care makes us good
lefthanded at one thing

such care makes plenty
without a broom's understanding

4 The broom drags toward the bed
its daily lost and found

rags curl up at its foot

by its head a heap of dirt
still not my full peck
begs to be eaten

I lean over the day's work
to pick a coin
heads old man tails building

only to find again
I topple face down
my jaws already working

Leslie Zablen

Wheat Germ

yogurt to yogurt
soy beans to soy beans
the rhythms of love are akin to the rhythms of politics
scribbled the drunken journalist
polymorphous anaemic army marching on its knee patches

yogurt to yogurt
soy beans to soy beans
pumped up his bicycle tire, practiced yoga, watched the
President in China and went to sleep with two girls

vitamin C to vitamin E
macramé, Oh macramé
incense stick burning at both ends in a cheap accommodation
with death

yogurt to yogurt
sorrows an excuse for privacy, joys as common as the morning edition
Priest performing granola communion

Tarot card to Tarot card
Libra to Pisces
all the ones who were any good are dead, so it seems
accumulated not as gold but as guilt

gunshot to gunshot
"I'm revealing the sources of my campaign funds," said the
Senator as he pulled down his pants.

Roger Widmeyer

Being As I Am

Only the convenience
keeps me as I am. Keeping
my scarred body fed and clothed
could amount to nothing
but a few simple stitches,
kills. Only an ease
of walking keeps me here,
knowledge I have both legs.
Only the convenience of it.
With the matter-of-fact
act of seeing, I make my way;
my eyes do not unhook
and tinkle before me, broken.
My arms move; I grasp.
Just the sureness of it all.
Of waking. Of feeling my penis
harden. The quickness of noise.
Only the convenience.

Sandra Gilbert

A Dream of Pearls

Oyster-like, fixed upright
in the cold rills and ripples

of my bed, mother-of-pearl,
I meditate on pearls—

snake-thick strings of pearls.
Seed pearls. Fake pearls. Baroque

pearls. Lucent toes
of a saint? Faint

eggs of oblivion? Fish
fruit? Tumors of ice?

Bubbles of extragalactic breath?
Teeth of the moon? I shiver

with the joke of them.
I roll, I bathe in them! I secrete them.

The night wears on.
The stars tread out their distances like wine.

The gulp and spit of the sea
annihilates me.

O pearls—O multiplied fanciful
eyes of the assassin,

I am not amused,
not amused.

Benjamin Saltman

To the Animals: Goat

A goat's head so solid makes you dream
he has no secret he lives with everyone with
every day on his back and the moon under the shed
so I'd walk I'd hope for something new
frosted wood transparent winter's horn

He stood behind a fence pushing my cold fingers
as if to let me make him talk for grass
his black barred irises seemed blind
but he hung up his twin-toed hooves and moved his lips
the hothouse pigeons cooed the dogs were barking
at my dull head O trees I wanted
something new to creak the cartilage into you

And came and raised the barriers
who wouldn't want a world not his own
I'd left a socket to each yard
and on each house a hinge to turn the sky
I'd gone to feed a goat brown winter grass
and look and slowly rise behind his barred eyes

Eugenie Yaryan

Arrangements

Would it be of any use to extract
from the bath
evidence of the ground

Or of a woman
Or of ferns
Or as she saw it disappear, this
is what she thought

I could think this cigarette
connects me and the ashtray,
but I am willing to admit
a certain amount
of nonsense

Still the woman who pours
from the ground
ferns
for her bath which disappear
is something to consider.

Story

Last bite and furry rime,
the old woman spits at her finger
to hold words on the page.
A pint of milk.
A pint of milk should last three days.

The pepper tree is twenty years older
and still grows. The lawn died two years ago.
She cannot understand: the tree is already
taller than the house.

My legs needle when I stand too long.
After my walk today, my blood started popping.
I either sit or not;
I can't do both.

The cards she can hardly read
smell like the cedar chest. The poems of Rupert Brooke
she can feel across her legs.
I am vain, she thinks, but if comforts me.
I am sad, she says to the cat,
and find I have grown used to it.

Geoffrey Pope

Nihilivore

I go over your eyes
As if they were the only braille notes
With which to rock on
To the music of myself.
Th-i-i-i-i-t Click. Bang.

Nothing is raw in the United States
Nothing I'd like to ingest
Or swap for basic bread.
In the vendomat of women I see
My hands in its plastic panels,
Its belly wants my coins
As much as it wants to open.

Yet once, broken down in snow,
I had the vision of Donner Pass,
Saw the crazy-making legs of snow,
Nerving up to eat strange pork.

Snowblinded,
Come down cold from a mountain someday.
I'll leave you there myself.

Elliot Fried

He sat next to the Exit Sortie the part of the body that if necessary was supposed to fall away when you push the handle, a stubby aluminum handle with a red tip. The stewardess demonstrated the oxygen mask that was supposed to fall in front of you if necessary all of them falling at the same moment, dangling there if necessary on white umbilical cords. She demonstrated reading light, air nozzle, and hostess call button to be used if necessary. She called attention to the no smoking and fasten seat belt sign all in 10 seconds. She told of the instruction card to be found in seat pocket to be read if necessary. The plane chimed. Nothing happened. Then it fell into the air through clouds the texture of Karo Syrup hiding the hot pancake of the city. Dinner was served on beige liferafts. Fishsticks. For this he was last off his block, sinking daily at the rate of 1 foot per hour per hour. The experts didn't help, no one could stop the sinking. When the tops of the houses disappeared, the city fathers gave up hope and sealed the street to avoid panic. Surplus balloons held for awhile, then collapsed. His aunt had been right about buying into the tract, said it would sink. "But tracts don't sink anymore. Roosevelt changed all that." And yet each day it sank a little more. Because all of the houses sank at the same rate, few of the neighbors realized what was happening. They still watered their sunken gardens, watched TV in their sunken living rooms. When the driveways buckled, the husbands parked their cars on the next block and walked the remaining distance, jauntily leaping down onto their sidewalks. Life went on. "Like hell he did. That man didn't change shit." And she was right. Every day showed how right she was. It was too late to sell. The agents wouldn't touch it. The market fell 30 points. A sudden crunch. A red light went on. He knew what it was. A red light. He knew. It could only mean one thing. Already they were losing altitude. The cabin had grown dark. He had seen the hair growing under the wing roots, thick and black, when he had boarded. In fact he had remarked to the stewardess who was standing on the ramp, "There's hair under the wing roots." "Where?" "The wing roots. Actually root. I don't know if it's under the other wing." "I can't. My nylons will drip." "I painted them." The hair had grown even as he watched, an inch maybe two. It was only a matter of time. "Please get on," She said. "I feel good vibrations." She smiled. She had faith.

And now it was obvious what had happened. The hair had grown out and clogged the engines. He felt them straining to cut through it. It spewed out thick strands of black root hair all over the sky. Hair fell and grew where it stuck. His ears popped. The passengers were singing. The plane chimed. A stewardess gave him a ham and cheese sandwich and a bible. She smiled. He un-wrapped the cellophane. Gideon. Above the chomping he heard Mancini on the 12-track stereo playing "Nearer my God to Thee." Screens dropped from the ceiling and in the G-section an animated Visconti played, in the X-section Johnny Vibrator. A stewardess pushed a small chrome-plated cart down the aisle selling parachutes. He bought a double. Evenings the husbands reached their tract houses via rented ladders. The rented ladder business was booming. The market went up 5. When they reached the bottom they pulled their ladders down with them and placed them neatly upon the cement patios so as not to dent the grass. Sprinklers played far into the night. In gas log fireplaces home fires were burning. "This is the pilot speaking. I'm afraid we rammed an iceberg. There's no hope. Yes there is. One." He gave instructions. They began scraping wallpaper off the fuselage in long strips to be woven by elderly women into long underwear for those who had not. And so it went far into the night. He sat strapped into his seat. The woman two seats to his right had a tiny rear view mirror bolted onto the left side of her head. He remembered the Great Swap Meets at the La Mirada Drive-In next to the Granny Goose Factory, the bargaining for televisions wives refrigerators far into the night. The night he swapped his Hotpoint for Glenda but it wasn't any good, she saw things in the old way. He remembered the Great Garage Sale of '48, noodles, typewriters, glass teats, even the Garage itself for sale, but that was the last of the good, things went downhill after that, the years fading into one giant menage au trois as it were. So it went. And then to make matters worse Glenda got the clap. She began taking antihistamines. Passengers tore out the seat-cushions, wrote extended anecdotes on the bathroom wall. A child exposed himself. And still they sank through clouds which no longer resembled Karo Syrup but now tuna sandwiches although he couldn't say why. Truth is like that. Life wasn't bad in the tract—he wrote poetry, "The spatter of your breath dawn face on my chest/makes me know I love you best . . ." left it under her Tupperware plate where it mouldered until Glenda found it eventually when she did the dishes at which time she would say, "What's this piece of shit under my plate?" But that was all over now she would sell the stock except maybe TWA kept for sentimental value. The ground rose to meet him.

Windows were broken and suitcases and small children jettisoned. An oxygen mask dropped out of the upper compartment and flopped in front of his face, breathing regularly. Fields/streetcars all fell up. The seat belt sign blinked red. Parachutes billowed in the nozzles, were sucked through the broken windows pulling people still grasping the shroud lines behind them. A hijacker waved a gun but was overpowered by Mastercharge agents for being behind in his statements. He sobbed against his seat as they stripped him of his card. Bicycles hubcaps dogshit all fell up. He saw pebbles for the first time. The screen was thrown open to reveal the first-class section. It had wider seats. He was impressed. Now he would never quit his job at the Pentagon and join a rock group. The stewardess glowed like a shopping center, her skin pale as smog. She had cojones, served them with coffee. It was good. In the tract deliveries ceased. Mothers threw up their Blue Chip Stamp Books to the survivors above. Confetti reigned. The mains broke. With what they managed to save, neighbors watered on sunken lawns. Cold thick hair grew through the windows, wrapped around wrists and necks. The pilot was sober. He understood the situation. Over the radio he sold his stock. He ordered the wholesale distribution of magazines. Everybody reads—it was a very literary group. The engineer reported that the tanks were dry and the ocean not yet in sight. Perfect strangers held hands and swayed in the aisles. No one reformed. Grogs of rum were passed from the barrel.

* * * * *

The plane sank faster than the tract and that which it left behind rose up to meet the plane. His aunt was right. The snow was general all over Iceland. He had an epiphany, then another, and swooned.

David St. John

Water

Water gone,
and the road locked
between sea-cliff
and mountain;
the night
pinned to the windshield.

Pull our truck
onto the gravel shoulder,
poking its fender
into the soft, wild brush.
A slicing ravine,
fresh water; a stream
hidden
beneath matted grass
and reeds.

* * *

Through dark
razor-lipped stalks,
stiff quills, and sage,
I lower
the glass jug.

Under the black
vegetable blanket,
the stream's clear tongue
rings across the stones.

* * *

My son

puts his mouth
on the frosted windows,
dreaming
of fresh water
laced with sweet grass.

I walk into
into his dreams,
wash his lips with the icy,
silver water.

Moonset

The moon,
pulling its white ropes
home; darkening
the worn courtyards
of the wallpaper
the shivering
curtain.

Sarah takes
the porcelain vase,
and blows dust
off a blue fist of wildflowers.
She touches her side;
the bars of shadow
below each rib
quiver, and braid
through her fingers
like vines.

Her face
a clear moon,
broken
over cheekbone.

Doug King

Deux ex Machina

The gangster placed his bets around the table wrapping each bill around the inside of a corner pocket. Then, with two cocky steps to the right, he lined up his shot after relieving his viola case of its weighty contents.

Amazingly smooth was his pull on the trigger, so delicate his use of the three-cushion bank, such tasteful assistance in guiding all fifteen thinning balls into pockets of widening gaps; the eight-ball, of course, dropping last.

John Rissman

Stone Poem

1 are these the facts? I mean,
trees grow up fast here, they
split and die.
two white geese eat a field of snow.
are these the facts of our lives?
I palm the stone,
and feel its coldness flow
up my inside vein.

2 there are moths everywhere,
eating the asphodel.
everywhere you step, rocks
crack open with candles inside them,
candles you can cut with a fingernail,
or a flower,
or crush with a rock.

3 it is snowing again,
the subways are filling with rotting mice.
spring is everywhere.
underneath this stone blind bugs churn
bugs the color of snow.
I see nothing, but
these are the facts:
water's forming on the backs of rocks,
birds are rising from the smoke of birds.
all night we sit waiting,
our wings tucked around us,
listening for the silence
of a match.

Henry Roth

GAME PLAN

Hey, wow. The leash is easy to find this time. The dog, of course, is always there at the front door panting. It has always been that kind of life.

The
dog tugs, yanks, and chokes nervously.

TOSS OF THE COIN

It really makes no specific diff whether it's night or day or sunny and raining
or even snowing. The dog has got to go. I do have this one commitment to responsibility. Still, I'm not crazy, I do check outside. It's night and feels like rain.

KICK OFF

I put on a faded, torn burberry. Above and around and under there are TVs,
radio, and pages turning, turning. Look, it's definitely evening, it may very well
rain. My dog has got to go and the leash was hanging right where it should.

RUNBACK

There is no rain yet. My dog is named Dynamite. After all revolutionaries. Despite added leash length, she is immediately tied up. I set her free, we are
at
the first corner.

PENALTIES

Dynamite hallucinates squirrels racing up and down massive trees. My
dog
whines, runs, even snarls. Soon her chaotic vision passes. She licks me, begs forgiveness, but is still watching the trees.

TIME OUT

Hey, Dynamite, you are the only thing salvaged from a busted marriage. Don't ever get mad at me. Remember the street belongs to everyone. Just don't

yank and you can smell and lunge everywhere. I mean it.

SCREEN PASS

Now I remember, it's Friday night and teenagers in souped-up cars drag
race
by. One car slows down, tosses a coke at me. Jersey plates. I forgive because
all
children from New Jersey were conceived behind the billboards of their ugly
highways. Dynamite nudges the can. I'm thankful they didn't stay to stomp
me.

POWER UP MIDDLE

The dog could walk forever. Dynamite could tug forever. These streets are
fronted by charming homes and gay lights, there are songs of happiness. My
nose is running and I've no tissue.

DRAW

Up lovers lanes and down them, across main street and its terrifying glare
of
yellow anti-crime, anti-human lighting. We trudge on. A cop car passes by
but he
knows we are not foreigners.

LOOK IN PASS

Dynamite and I are wrinkled figures from Bill Maudlin's World War II
infantry. We are lost in a civilization without lovers. Too nippy out for bare
titty. Going past new development. The same eerie main street lighting plus
the
roar of chained-up dogs that flattens Dynamite's tail.

QUICK KICK

Past the very old stately homes, broken up into apartments. Even older
homes trimmed into seedy boarding houses. Soon the town limits and our
park.

FUMBLE

I pick out the trick card a Jester gave me a few days ago. It has my name
an[d]

and below it instructor and the title of the course which is SEXUAL
INTERCOURSE for the old and handicapped. That card is me.

SIDELINE PASS

My cigar is the only feeble light. There is no moon, no stars, just heavy
clouds and a pink haze.

END RUN

Dynamite runs free in wide eccentric circles, the circles grow smaller; she
is
getting tired. She flops down while I finish the Tiparillo. She's getting thirsty.
It's practically all over now.

QUARTERBACK KEEP

Our path is reversed, now the rain does come, hard cold and hard. My face
hurts from the raw weather.

OFF TACKLE

My feet are numb, I look down. Schmuck, Sandals!
Dynamite is exhausted. Back to our small house. Frail but able to hold its
own against nature.

INCOMPLETE

The walk is over. We do it four times a day. Each time it's spookier when
we
get back. To the still house. Dynamite doesn't like it either. Where is
everybody?

INTERCEPTION

Dynamite shakes the wet off. Goes into a very small room sniffing but
finding nothing. She finally drinks her water. I'm turning off house lights.
And the
nightlight.

PUNT

Walking my dog is it. That is how I know time passes. How I am sure of it.
Our needs have been reshaped and this is now my house. All the lights are
out.

NO RUN BACK

No run back.

Jim Hawks

From Stanzas on Alcohol, Women, and Light

Dawn

I'm eating a soft buttery cheese
drinking fermented grains

hoping for the unforgettable
female icon

to present herself again
while I linger on the glass rim

I recall
a dream of my mate
moving & balancing

while I listen
into the light

on the asexual cheeks
of a row of telephone operators

they manipulate my voice

they make me tell myself
my wife's now a blond

she appears
unhappy
my eyes move away
from her face to a flaw

a scar on her leg
becomes a run in the nylon sheathing

her type ab blood submerged

in the bronze

phallic leg

David Francis

Collecting

God do I have rocks.
Scoop them up like manna
everywhere I go.
Down on my hands and knees
in Jade Cove
racing eyeballs quivering fingers
groaning
like Holly G. zapped by Tiffany's.

Evaluating.
The blue-green or
black-striped white?
Red and brown or ashen?
Like a smack on the head: "I
dare to choose?"

Many have been gifts.
"Here," I say. "A stone. A gift."
"Ahhhh."

Once my father gave me a rock
as we stood on an Ozark gravel bar.
A heavy sandstone rock
with a darker brown exclamation point
perfect down its center.

Salvation rock. Still with me.
My fingers blue with the grip.

Stuart Friebert

How Grampa Survived: One Version

For a short time, he taught subtraction in Berlin,
it was quicker and easier than inventing
electric motors that would work underwater.
But he got slapped, there was suspicion and distrust,
the first inch of his small intestine went bad,
when he looked down there were thirty people
sitting on the shoulder of the head he was unveiling,
there was talk of capturing Belgrade, pressing on,
we ought to kill you, isn't it true? they said.

Yes yes, you make me happy, you make me terribly tired,
please the weather is fine, I don't mean a word of it,
I'm all to blame calm down!

The boxcar waits in the field, cows are there,
the men come, start the steam hammers:
carbon hydrogen oxygen
trade in their long arms until there is balance.

So he pretends to fall, but as far as we know
he's still walking, he may get another slap,
lose his hands, they might even remove
the glands at the base of his teeth
but he sleeps, wakes up, eats the straw.

<!--GAP printed pages 171-176 not present in this scan-->

cop in Fish, Earl the Chicken Farmer, the workers in Visible Gears, and the fat [m]an in Bus Ride. Bat Angels and the Magician Poems show the influence of Le[v]ine's phrasing: "I called out / like a blind man drifting on the drifting ice." The voice of his experience, however, is distinctive. His imagery is precise and [m]oves with the ease of convincing dreams.

Here is the fist of the president falling onto what he imagines

is a table full of multicolored lizards
And here is a multicolored lizard quickly fading into grass
leaving his strange tattoo in the colors of your eyes

Unfinished Poem

Once I thought my mouth was a scar
that disappeared
like spittle being wiped off of a plate.
So I shut up
and sulked
like last year's inner tube that hangs
in a noose all winter
through the rain.

The Magician at His Own Revival

Almost a fourth of the poems are only six or seven lines long and most of them never pick up enough momentum to make it off the page. But the few short ones which work show that Levis is a poet with many tones and situations at his imaginative disposal. He is more than a poet capable of excellent character poems. He meditates with joy.

I've loved you
as a man loves an old wound
picked up in a razor fight
on a street nobody remembers.
Look at him:
even in the dark he touches it gently.

Wound

They Feed, They Lion shows that Levine is continuing to combine his solid and quiet rhythms with a tremendous eye for detail. As in Not This Pig, some of the best poems are "angel" poems. "Angel Butcher" builds to a terrifying ending so quietly and matter-of-factly that it goes beyond the visionary and becomes as real as any slaughterhouse.

. . . . When I hit
him he comes apart like a
perfect puzzle or an
old flower.

And my legs
dance and twitch for hours.

The title poem is the most lyrical in the book. The imagery is condensed and accumulates emotion all the way. Here is the last stanza:

From my five arms and all my hands,
From all my white sins forgiven, they feed,
From my car passing under the stars,
They Lion, from my children inherit,
From the oak turned to a wall, they Lion,
From they sack and they belly opened
and all that was hidden burning on the oil-stained earth
They feed they Lion and he comes.

Levine has not received anywhere near the critical attention which he deserves. But if he continues to write such excellent poems as *The Cutting Edge*, *Breath*, and *To a Fish Head Found on the Beach Near Malanga*, he will soon be recognized as one of our very best poets.

I throw the fish head to the sea.
Let it be fish once more.

I sniff my fingers
and catch the burned essential oil
seeping out of death. Out of beginning,
I hear, under the sea roar, the bone words
of teeth tearing earth and sea,
annointing the tongues with stone and sand,
water eating fish, fish water,
head eating head to let us be.

To a Fish Head Found on the
Beach Near Malanga

—William Mohr, Poetry Editor—

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