Camas

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Article 1

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Camas, Summer-Fall 1993

Free

Camas

an environmental journal

Summer-Fall 1993

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Photo: John Mangiamelli

Dear Readers,

Hello again.

I went walking in the mountains yesterday, and saw when I got there that I had been too long inside. There were flowers—flakes of color—everywhere, and I had not known. As I crawled higher on Waterworks Hill, the names came to me slowly: *lupine, delphinium, arnica.* A yellowish umbel that must be kin to parsley. I wondered where I had been while spring was painting the hillsides.

Here is *Camas*. Thank you to the many wonderful writers, artists, and photographers whose work appears in this second issue. Some of the voices in the following pages will be familiar to those of you who saw the first issue; others are new to the journal. We look forward to more from you.

A few comments:

Utah author Terry Tempest Williams came to Missoula in February for a writing workshop sponsored by the Environmental Studies Department at the University of Montana. In the course of three days, participants worked with Terry and each other; several essays written during that workshop are printed in this issue. Jenny Flynn, *Camas* editor and workshop participant, has more words on the workshop and the writing.

As yet, we have no "letters to the editor" section, mostly because we have no letters. But we'd like to, and we need your help. Please write to us. Tell us what you think of the journal. We'd love to hear your outrage, angst, and joy.

Specific submissions guidelines are printed here. As always, we encourage you to send us your stuff. We are planning *Camas* as a twice-yearly entity. If you are in the Missoula area, look for notices announcing submission deadlines; otherwise, hold late fall and early spring in your mind as publication dates. We look to have all submissions a month prior to publication date.

Our continued existence is largely attributable to the generous support of *Freddy's Feed & Read. Freddy's* has made a pledge to continue with its involvement in the journal. Thank you. And we extend gratitude to the many others who have helped provide a financial framework for *Camas*. Ron and Nancy Erickson, and Tom and Sue Roy have been especially kind.

When I was walking, yesterday, I thought of Gary Snyder's poem "For the Children": *Stay together, learn the flowers, go light.* With that, I leave you to *Camas*.

And go outside. There are flowers singing in the hills.

Christian Sarver, for *Camas* Editors.

Submissions

Camas seeks work that focuses on nature and the environment. We favor local, lesser-known writers and artists.

Prose and Poetry: double-spaced, clean copy. If your piece is selected for publication, we will ask you for a computer disk copy, if you have one. Because of space limitations, longer works are more likely to be published if they are no more than 25 double-spaced pages.

Photographs: black-and-white prints *only* (no slides, contact sheets, or color prints). Photos at least seven by nine inches are preferred.

Other media We encourage submissions of cartoons, pen-and-ink drawings, or unconventional types of work that we can't even think of.

SASE: Because of our low budget, we can't return your work or even contact you by mail without a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Please expect to wait about two months from our submission deadline before you hear from us about publication.

Camas
c/o EVST
Jeannette Rankin Hall
Missoula, MT 59812

Camas Staff

Editorial Board: *Jenny Flynn, Christian Sarver, Jeffery Smith, & Jim Barilla*
Layout, Design & Production: *Kurt Menning*
Business Details: *Christian Sarver*
Printing Details: *John Dillon*
Distribution: *All of the above!*

Contributions

Camas is a free publication; production costs are met soley by donations. The journal is organized as a non-profit group under the umbrella of the Associated Students of the University of Montana. If you would like to support this forum for new artists please send a check payable to *Camas, John Dillon, Treasurer* to the address listed above.

Cover Drawing: Bryony Schwan

Photo: Leslie Droege

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Language and Landscape with Terry Tempest Williams ¶ *She anointed herself with smoke. "We've come far in three days," she said. She handed the burning wand of sage around the circle of writers.* ¶ *We had. We started a roomful of acquaintances, politely murmuring about school, work, publishing. Nothing to do with soul, of course. Skepticism held my hope down like a clamp. What could we learn about writing in three days?* ¶ *A lot. She asked us to tell the story of a childhood experience in nature. Then we were to go home and write it down. Goofy, right? No. That night I hammered at my keyboard as if I were building my own house. Like I needed the shelter. Terry's words crowned my sleep. ("Language and landscape," she said. "Isn't that why we're all here?")* ¶ *The second day we talked about gender. Writing as anger. Writing as birth. Pen as weapon. Paper as body. My printer smoked.* ¶ *The last day, we read our stories, one after another, without pause or comment, for three hours. When it was over, we embraced, soul to soul.* ¶ *Camas is pleased to bring to you three of those stories, raw and unedited, the products of just three-days' work by Kristin Bloomer, Leslie Ryan and Matt Houghton.* ¶ Jenny Flynn

Kristin Bloomer

Riding the Birch

One summer in Connecticut, the birch tree leaned so far west it threatened to cast the front of our house into shade. Its leaves scratched the shingles and fell into the drainpipe, forcing rainwater over the family room windows and carving a trench in the grass. Damp snuck into the house and mildewed the rose-colored window seat cushion between the two bookshelves. The books grew a light fungus. The rhododendrons outside nearly drowned. As the trench deepened and extended through the flower beds along the house's east side, my father became worried that the entire front yard would turn into mud. He decided to tether the tree.

A staunch Roman Catholic, he believed that life held two paths—one, straight and narrow, the other, wandering and wide—and that the narrower one led to heaven. Our path, being Catholic and charismatic and therefore less travelled, required more bush-whacking and disciplined maintenance than that of our Protestant neighbors, who hired lawn doctors in white coats to come sprinkle the fertilizer. We dragged the sprinkler over our lawn at timed intervals and watched their grass grow more green.

The birch had two trunks that grew in a "V." Dad pulled them both east by running a steel wire around the two tops, pulling the wire away from the house, and tying the wire to a stake near the road. Karin and I watched from the yard's west side while he hauled the line over his shoulder and leaned into the weight, his forehead forty-five degrees to the ground, his eyes on the road. His shoulders scooped forward; a muscle pulled in his jaw. When he turned and noticed us propped next to the house, he asked us to give our old father a hand. We did as he asked. We were seven and ten.

Standing on each side of the wire, Karin and I dug our heels into the ground while he hammered the stake with his axe. The axe rang the stake until it hit stone and fell dead. We tried to hang onto the wire while he pulled out the stake and hammered again.

The tree weighed a lot—more than I would have guessed—and the wire was slipping. Karin's face was bright red, pulled tight into a grimace. I wouldn't let go for anything, but I wanted to. I imagined riding the wire, whipped up, and flung—over the tops of the houses, over the trees, into somebody's yard. We'd ride for miles, our hair flapping in wind.

We rode over the Saugatuck River, Glendenning and the Long Island Sound. We rode over Kikini and Montauk, made a quick stop on Nantucket. At that point, the wind shifted, so we rode the westerly back to Connecticut and kept going. We covered lots of ground, fast: New York, Pennsylvania, Lakes Erie and Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota.... We kept on till the wind died down and we slept. We woke up in South Dakota, on the Missouri River's wide banks. There, we parted ways. Karin went east, to become a dancer, live a good life. I went west to find gold.

This much is true. The "V" of the birch—the place where both boughs converged—formed a porthole that begged to be stepped through, a slim door to our make-believe worlds. We grabbed the trunks with both hands and stepped into the crotch. White bark stuck to our palms. If we stood long enough in the crotch, resting one foot on top of the other, the birch pinched the sides of our sneakers and left our

Photo: Ed Blankman

feet black and blue.

To stand in that "V" was to exist between worlds, to fold ourselves up in time. We were safe in the crotch of that tree; we felt powerful there.

We didn't push or vie for the right to stand in the tree—we took turns. To jump out was something like being re-birthed, or taking flight. We threw our arms back over our heads and pretended to fall miles, or hung in mid-air while the ground shifted beneath us, like water.

Once we had walked through the tree, we played different make-believe roles. We stalked adults behind the azaleas; we cocked our revolvers close to our chins and peered through living room windows in search of the Enemy. Transitory, amorphous, it could be anything we imagined.

God was on our side. As long as no one lost an eye, we could kill several-times-over; we could steal, covet, and honor no one. All this, with a catch: if our father stepped round the corner with his shears or a hose, we had to get him before he got us, or the spell would be broken. If we agreed he was a Russian spy, or a hit man who posed as a gardener, we were safe—the trick was to name him before he named us; own the story; evade his recognition. Sometimes, we let him in on our game, and he played along. Sometimes, we played in secret.

The first spring we lived in the house, my father invited his friend Father John Borgo, a Jesuit, to come bless the land's boundaries. My father had met Father John at a Catholic charismatic renewal retreat at the New Jersey shore; I knew him from my parents' Friday night prayer groups. Later, he would give me my first communion in the shade of the birch tree; I would wear a white dress with a daisy embroidered on front and play my guitar with the folk guitarists.

We'd just moved in when he came for the blessing, and the house echoed with spaces. Father John asked me to go get the holy water, which we kept in a Hellman's mayonnaise jar in the kitchen cabinet, next to the pasta and Cream of Wheat. To reach it, I had to stand on a stool.

It was full—my mother and I had just been to church with it earlier that week. Washed, peeled, and sterilized, the jar had still felt warm on my lap when we drove into town.

The front lobby of the church was particularly cold. The font stood in the corner of the lobby, like a shiny, well-polished bulk coffee-maker. The pastor held the button for me while I held the jar. The font made a glugging noise and the water streamed in. I had a strong urge to drink it.

In the yard, my mother and sister and I stood in the shade of the birch while Dad poured some of the water into Father John's hands. We stood very close. Three times, Father John flicked his fingers over our heads, praying for protection from Satan. My mother and father closed their eyes. When Father John finished, they opened their eyes, and

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Photo: Ed Blankman

Photo: Ed Blankman

Leslie Ryan

Untitled

On the porch, five yards from the creek, I can hear it freeze. Water doesn't like to be shut under ice, you can tell; it blurts out choppy burying sounds. Water's like anything else that way: it wants to move.

The ice is gaining on my watering spot. Yesterday it held the bank pebbles in a shiny white clutch; today it's moved all the way out to the gathering rock. It's cuffing the gathering stone, bleached and stiff as one of those Renaissance accordion collars that made a man's head look like it was being served for dinner. I stand on the flat head of the stone and kick down at the collar with my boot. It doesn't give. I have to put the water jugs down behind me, where they clink, and get my full weight on the cuff. When I kick it that way, it breaks off, and when I bend with the jugs again, the wet boot tread seals to the gathering stone with ice.

As I walk back to the shack the snow is using its real cold voice, the one that sounds like a squeal. I've had the fire going for two hours and there's still not a cup in the house I can drink from. I was careless today, and left tea or water in all three mugs before going to town. Now they're choked with dense white plugs, and they crackle whenever I walk by. Even the candles are reluctant to take flame, as if there weren't a whole universe-load of cold for them to burn out there, and they had to be frugal with it. This house has to be tended like a fire or a heart, or it'll go out.

The main problem is not that the porcelain dog dish has cracked with its water getting big; the problem, again, is the piss pot.

That's not what I want to call it—piss is not what women do. Piss is something men do off a porch, while laughing and gesticulating toward the price of beef with one hand, and spraying down the snow with the other.

For women it's more like lifting a dam from a stream that's constantly flowing downhill—an alchemy of excretion that combines release and gravity to make gold. So I'll call it instead the *pee chalice*, and the pee chalice is frozen again.

I run into this a lot, but what can I do? Leave the chalice in the corner by the dictionary 'til spring? Whack it on a rock out back, 'til the yellow disc pops out on the snow like a sun? It's really not a chalice, I guess; it's a 2-quart stainless steel bowl, which means it could easily be thawed on the

wood stove and the golden brew simmered like potpourri.

I know when I lie down to sleep every night I should deal with it then while it's warm, but there are the stars to get through if I do. All their talk starts sounding loudmouthed to me, saying, girl, you think winter is bad—once you get a few miles up out of your little place, everything happens at absolute zero, unless it's on fire. Most nights, I don't feel like hearing about the rarity and transience of warmth in the universe.

I remember a famous man saying why we should write now, and not wait 'til it's time. He was pressing his face as he spoke, with two trembling fingers on the bonerise beneath his eye sockets. "You should do it now," he said, "because at any moment you can touch your face and feel the skull just beneath your skin."

"You should do it now," he said, "because at any moment you can touch your face and feel the skull just beneath your skin."

Winter's a father, I know. It takes a whetstone to the stars. It grinds down the crowns of the pines to a gleaming edge, and even the water outside gets sharp in the stream.

There's nothing of mother in winter. On a night like tonight, even the does feel the antlers buckle and rise from their skulls. If the shebear has cubs coming on in her womb, night turns them to fistfuls of stones. Her body will have to swallow them hard, and they'll jab at her guts when she moves. Sometimes I think, well, the marmots at least are clustering deep in the warmth of their grassmats and kin, but I know that in truth the cold whittles their teeth into shards that would slice at their lips if they smiled.

So shortly ago this liquid came out of me steaming; now it's a rock in the pot. I could wrap it in words and send it through windows, if there were something that urgent to say. But in wintertime all things can wait and are best said in pieces, like glass falling out from a frame.

What's most remarkable to me about winter is not its duration or even its nerve; it's the ubiquity of coldness. Even here inside, after hours of fire, balls of fruit clank in the ball when I walk, and there's snow on the wood yet to burn.

I feel it inside my own hands, which hold the pen gently, in fear that the spiny blood will puncture their veins from within. Sometimes I walk the ten steps to the creek with my face turned away from the sky. I kneel on the gathering stone in the dark and plunge my hands in, to feel the bones shrinking downward inside.

I don't know what it is that causes a man to harden his heart from his kin. I don't know why he'd curse them and say that his children have ruined his life. I don't know why he'd hit them and leave them alone in a house with no food and no heat. I don't know why he'd leave his own heart untended for so long that it goes out, unless he was turning away—first, from the bones in his face, and then from the nighttalking stars.

Today I walked upstream to a spot where the ice has bridged the creek over. I swept the snow off it and watched. A spine of wavering bubbles pressed up on the ice from below. As varied in size as the dark stones beneath them, they stayed in one place. They can only go one way—up—and they'll stay there 'til the thaw when they can rise.

Memories come up that way, like breaths under ice. Their outsides stay as slick and inert as glass balls, but at the green, moving core of them these kin and these places live their one moment again without cease.

Hearts are not born hard. They get that way, like anything left out in the cold. In one backlooking crystal ball, his heart was cool but not frozen. Its center was warm still, I know, because he had taken us out to the woods. I was young, maybe five, and in the enthusiasm of summer I'd made a pact with the world not to kill.

I remember that fall in the Blue Ridge where he took us, and the fire of going under in the oaks. I was barefoot, crossing the stream on a log. I walked the sunsplats and the bark furrow ridges. As the ball of my foot came down, I felt something round underneath. It resisted, then wetly gave. When I lifted my foot, I saw a shiny lump—a mosaic of broken snail shell inlaid in a flat tongue of snail.

I don't know why a snail with no hands grabbed my promise to the world like two hands on a page and tore it; I don't know how long I cried or why we had to all go home mad. But I remember the chill on my father that day: enough snail nonsense was enough.

The truth of the matter was you hurt the things you love, whether you want to or not. He said that, and then he turned his face away.

I wish I could say that tonight, a new night, I went out beneath the stars with my chalice of gold. I wish I could say I built a fire on the forthcoming rock collar, set the chalice on top, and thawed both things at once—where the water comes from and where it goes—while yapping with the stars.

But it's not true.

All I did was tend the stove; the pee went soft of its own accord. The snow came tonight and blanked out the stars, raised the air up to zero, and laid down a hush on the creekside.

It's said that water in dreams represents the subconscious, but I know that it's really the soul. Why else would

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Matt Houghton

Incidental Catch

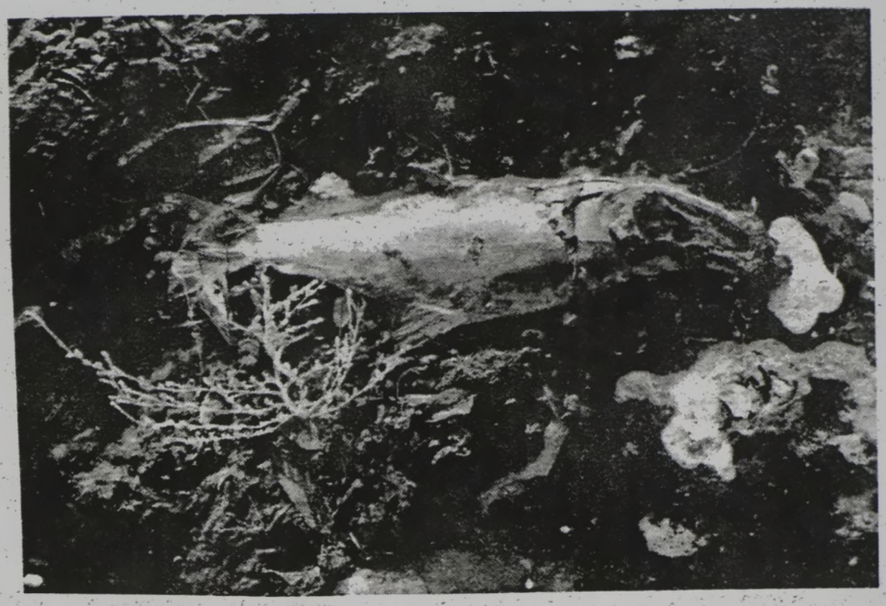


Photo: Diane Krabe

If you'd spit you'd cause more wave than was on the ocean that day. Flying over this sheet of light, every bird was two. We caught an orca that afternoon. She was as big as the deck. Except for the wound in her blowhole where they had pulled her from the net, she was unscathed. I placed my hand carefully on her side, then approached her mouth and put my hand around one tooth. We had actually caught an orca. We stood about in our bloodied rubber outfits and hardhats.

My official title was Fisheries Observer. I was employed by the National Marine Fisheries Service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the Department of Commerce and Trade. It was popular to speak the acronyms: I was a FO for Nymphs in NOAH of the DICT. I was placed on board a Japanese stern trawler to monitor its catch while it fished within American waters of the Bering Sea.

My first day aboard, I climbed off the pilot boat from Dutch Harbor, clamored up the rope ladder, and plunked myself onto the deck among smiling eyes and nodding heads. At five feet, nine inches, I was the tallest person there. They ushered me below deck, showed me my berth, and brought me to the mess hall to eat. I was faced with my first culture crisis—a bowl of soup and a pair of chopsticks.

I had serious doubts about my "authority." If I found that this ship was indeed engaged in illegal activities, what could I do, and what would prevent me becoming an accident at sea if I did? Nymphs had provided for this by requiring weekly radio contact when I would report the catch. Since we weren't trained in radio communications, the reports were handed to the radio operator. Nymphs had given us secret code words that would alert the Coast Guard of any wrongdoing. For example, "I would like you to say hello to my mother" meant you suspected the boat of overfishing. "I am homesick, but I like the food" meant one's life was in danger and the Coast Guard should arrive immediately. After lunch, I was given a full tour of the boat. The first place we stopped was the radio operator's room. There, posted on the wall among dials and gadgetry, was the list of secret codes.

Next I was taken above to the pilot house. This is where I would spend much of my time; it was the only place inside, besides my room, where I could stand up straight. Here I was introduced to the Fishing Master. He immediately offered many boxes of gifts. Unlike American fishing operations, the captains of most Japanese fishing boats are not in charge. The Fishing Master is delegated ultimate authority by his corporation. I had been warned not to accept gifts from any crew member, especially officers. It was feared that these could be considered bribes should the crew be brought to court for fishing violations. Having seen my only possible escape pinned to the radio operator's wall, I was not about to risk retribution for ungraciousness. I accepted every gift with untoward glee.

Astern the pilot house one could easily overlook the main deck. On the very stern of the ship is a huge ramp that enters the sea. Above this stands the scaffolding for the crane. The crane pulls the net up from the ocean bottom and slides the catch up onto the deck, up to forty tons at a time. This boat was rigged for bottom fish, mostly turbot and grey cod. Of course, anything in front of the net came up, but it was all "incidental catch" if not the "target species." Halibut, shrimp, king and tanner crab, and salmon were all incidental catch and were thrown back dead or alive, mostly dead. Other species had small quotas; for example, this boat could keep nine tons of black cod. After this amount was taken, all black cod were also thrown back. Nymphs reasoned that if this weren't the rule then the Japanese might target these more desirable species by "mistake." It was compensatory legislation enacted to keep American fishermen appeased.

Land was fast disappearing. A flock of pelagic birds had taken up our quest, awaiting tons of entrails that would

soon spew forth, their wings beating like fingers on a table top. The net was readied, laid flat on the deck. The Fishing Master sat in front of his Shinto shrine and chanted through the incense smoke. He clapped his hands a number of times, holding them in prayer after each clap. One last genuflection, and he reached behind the shrine for a bottle of blessed saké. He strode out to the deck and poured the saké back and forth over the net, then heaved the empty bottle into the ocean. Thus prepared, the net was lowered into the water.

When I was young, I managed a number of aquaria. I often wondered what those lifeforms experienced being surrounded on all sides by the suffocating terrestrial landscape—what would it be like to be trapped, knowing escape would bring death. I remembered this as I watched the ocean become my entire peripheral horizon for the next two months.

A huge door in the rear deck would open up into the hold and it was here that the net would dump the catch. The fish would schlosh out into a multi-ton pile, many colors and shapes and degrees of slime, as many as thirty-four species of fish and invertebrates. Two conveyor belts ran from the bottom of the pile up toward the bow carrying the fish past a line of men who would gut and behead the targeted species. The entrails, heads and incidental catch would continue to another, perpendicular conveyor that would spill the latter out the sides of the ship.

My job was to randomly sample the catch to determine its composition. I would identify each species in the baskets, determine how many of each there were, and extrapolate the composition of the entire catch based on a total volume estimate. Mostly, though, I was fascinated just to see what lived 400 meters below the ocean. I would often skew my sample by pulling out the most rare and unusual species just to have a look at them. I wasn't really much into extrapolation.

I imagined Thomas Nuttall, the first naturalist to follow Lewis and Clark's path west. He would be lost for days wandering blissfully over the Montana prairie amongst hordes of plant species never before recorded. At first, I felt such bliss. Forty percent of all vertebrate species are fish. Sculpins, Irish lords, lumpsuckers, sablefish, rockfish, eelpouts, blennys. Many invertebrates graced the catch—tanner and king crabs, occasionally octopus and schools of small white squid, which later would end up stuffed for dinner.

Once an impossibly huge dark eye glared up at me. I cleared away fish until I had uncovered a brick-red squid four feet long. Its longest tentacles were fully four times longer. Although used to carrying its boneless hulk in weightlessness it still found strength to writhe a tentacle or two. Its beak opened and closed slowly, big enough to snip off a finger.

There was a fish called the rattail that was longer than I. Its body tapers away from its head into a long sinuous point. To have eyes as big, you'd need grapefruit eye sockets. A round nose extends out from its full upper lip, and a sneering set of teeth square in a row. These last features give the rattail a disturbing human-like appearance; it reminded me of some frozen jack-in-the-box. Its taper seemed to come out of a place it could jump out of.

Of course, these are examples of incidental catch. Twenty- to forty-percent of the catch went back over the side with the head and guts of the targeted species. This was the blessed moment for the birds. The black-footed albatross and fulmars would descend on the head and air-bladder filled guts, grunting and wailing like a band of gnomes. Fork-tailed petrels would flutter in, dabbling their feet on the sea while picking at bits ("petrel" from "Peter" who walked on the water with Jesus). Shearwaters would fly underwater to get sunken parts (one time I saw a shearwater fly up out of a wave without breaking a stride in its wingbeat). Alcids would be so engorged they would bounce off each wave as they attempted to fly.

"Dah-may," I said—the only word I knew in Japanese. "No good." He knew what I had meant all along but he had a boring job and liked to agitate me when he could.

Sometimes as the guts and fish poured out, an orca would wait below with its mouth agape. An orca's mouth is almost as humbling as the ocean itself. They travel in packs and it was always the females or young males that came in close to the boat. The larger adult males would stay way out, their triangular dorsal fins as tall as a child.

Each orca pack has distinct behaviors. There are resident packs that frequent specific coastal areas and tend to be picsivorous. There are nomadic packs, like this open-ocean group, that roam about feeding on anything, including much larger whales. They are called packs because they coordinate their hunting like wolves. In one account orcas were seen jumping into the mouth of a gray whale to bite its tongue while other orcas held the whale by its flippers. Near Vancouver Island people watched a pack chase a minke whale into a cove and surround it. Bits of flesh floated to the surface. The next day the minke was found adrift, intact except its skin

was stripped off down to its white blubber, "like a peeled orange," said one observer. Interestingly, baleen whales and orcas are often seen peacefully feeding side by side. Recently in the Antarctic people watched minkes and orcas intermingle; at one point the largest orca and a large minke breached clear out of the water at the same time, collided loudly mid-air and splashed back down, both apparently nonplussed. It's thought the baleen whales can determine whether a pack is either resident or nomadic though there appears to be no morphologic difference. Perhaps the whales can hear the full bellies of the orcas with their sonar.

It was probably no coincidence that the three highest officers aboard had the last name Takehashi. Kudzo was the first mate. Tetuo was the captain. The Fishing Master was simply Mr. Takehashi. Tetuo and Kudzo were the only two who attempted to call me by my first name—Mott. To everyone else I was Obsehva-san.

Tetuo had many gold teeth. We would sit in the pilot house drinking Kirin beer, speaking in phrases and broken sentences. Though he couldn't tell me, Tet confided in me that the Fishing Master was a jerk. He would try to describe how the sonar worked, the sonic fish finder, and the Furuno unit. Our conversations were punctuated by long silences, staring at the endless, monochromatic Bering Sea summer day. We understood little of what was said, but from our proximity and concurring opinion about the Fishing Master, a companionship grew. He missed his wife and children; he was at sea for six to eight months a year. For many days confusion stemmed from a repeated question of his.

"Gul fen?"

Finally, I got it.

"No," I said, "I'm single."

More confusing was trying to explain what the word "something" meant. His crew had been presorting the catch so that I wouldn't get certain species in my sample which would otherwise affect the quota they were allotted for that species.

"Tetuo, something has to be done about this," I told him.

"Sumteen??" he inquired. "What is?"

"Something," I said emphatically. "You know . . . something," my eyes searching for an example. "Uh . . . this," pointing to a pencil. "That," pointing to the map. "Uh . . . something . . . you know . . . anything." I finally drew him a picture of men standing in the hold throwing black cod onto the conveyor opposite the one I sampled from.

"Dah-may," I said—the only word I knew in Japanese. "No good." He knew what I had meant all along but he had a boring job and liked to agitate me when he could.

"Ah," he said. Then he held his hands behind his back as if he had handcuffs on. "If Coas-god come, baby get no milk."

Kudzo had the peach-faced easy smile of a boy and forearms like anchor ropes. He was given the special job of making sure my needs were met. He would often sort some of my sample by species so I could estimate the weight that each fish species represented of the total catch. Undoubtedly this allowed him to report my findings to the Fishing Master. When I got bored with my job, Kudzo patiently taught me how to sew up netting that had been ripped open by some sea-floor rock. He showed me how sharpen the single bevelled knives so I would work with the rest of the processing line. Every evening he would ask me, "Mott, you showa?" He would pantomime scrubbing his neck with a shower brush.

I asked a Nymph official of lesser standing how much of this important data went into policy decisions. He replied wryly, "About forty percent of our fisheries policy is biologically based, and sixty percent is political."

There was a very hot soaking tub in the shower room that four naked men could cram into with their knees pulled up pressing against each other. Every crew member soaked and showered every day and they usually invited me to soak with them. I was given a great deal of scrutiny if I refused, especially if I had the slightest bit of whisker shadow. I found this close contact daunting at first. This waned after a few administrations of shiatsu to my chronically bent neck. It was certainly novel to be with men who gained comfort from physical contact. I'm not sure if this was a function of culture or lack of space.

These hot soaks would keep me flushed red hours after. I would crawl into my berth sweating, my feet propped up vertically against one corner and my head mushed into the corner diagonal to it. My legs would sweat together, and consequently after six weeks, I developed crotch rot. Unable to treat it, I developed a staph infection as well. Thinking this some strange venereal contagion I'd received from a drunken episode before I'd left Seattle, I was afraid it would spread to others in the tub. This became problematic with the hyper-

hygenic crew. A few days before I was to get off the ship, I snuck into the tub to take a spigot shower. Two men in the tub beckoned me to join them. Dull with fever and naked, I pointed to my crotch and shook my head slowly. "Dah-may," I said. They looked at each other quizzically, whispered to each other, got up and left the room. I'll never know what they thought I meant.

Part of the incidental catch was treated special. Halibut is an important fishery to Americans; consequently, each halibut was measured, weighed, and recorded. They are what might be considered flat fish, like the better known sole or flounder. During their development, their eyes shift to one side of their body and the other side becomes the "belly," the part that rests on the bottom. The mouth stays askew, opening, as it were, sideways. No one is sure why but Pacific halibut retain their mouths on the right side, and Atlantic halibut on their left side. Halibut wait on their belly side on the tops of undersea ridges, their green-black mottled backs hidden. From here they dart out into passing schools of fish that migrate by in the valleys. Their favorite food is salmon and they will move along ridgelines to follow seasonal salmonid migrations.

A halibut pulled on board can stand suddenly straight on its tail before whacking its body to the deck. There is the story of the lone halibut fisherman found dead in his boat with a punctured lung and a gaffed, mattress-sized halibut atop him. The fish, hauled in, had used its body to bludgeon the man to death.

After recording the halibut, we thew them over the side with the rest of the incidental catch.

While shoveling fish onto the conveyors, what appeared to be a large mottled surface under the rest of the catch turned out to be the back of a huge halibut, its head larger than my torso, its body as thick as the length of my arm. Kudzo wished to winch the beast back out the hold door with the deck crane. To do so would cause its back to dislocate under its own weight. I convinced him that we could lift it up on deck and then slide it off the stern ramp. Five of us slipped our arms underneath its mass and hoisted. At chest level, the fish gave one arching snap of its body, flinging us all into the corners of the writhing fish pile, our hardhats hitting the hold walls. I rose laughing, extruding a lumpsucker that had slid down my neck. The others were less jovial. Our next attempt got the fish onto the deck. With a running push the fish slid off the stern ramp into the water.

Fish cannot blink. It seemed silly to feel morbid, especially when the crew was busy chopping and slicing. (Tons of dying, staring fish.) I undertook their duties (grab the cod by its lips) to add variety to my own. (Slice around its neck from the top of gill to top of gill—it's still flopping) Watching to make sure I didn't cut off a finger (hack through its neck behind the gills) kept me from looking into their eyes (pull the head off and the guts come out attached to it) as I eviscerated them. Could their eyes still see, reeling around in the wake of the boat as the birds pecked and pulled?

I recalled one day in training at NOAH headquarters in Seattle. "The richest sea in the world," the visiting DICT official was saying. He was describing how the continental shelf of the Bering Sea was larger than any in the world, how it produced the greatest fishery resource in the world. He spoke to the forty FOs in training. He was telling us how important our job was, how all of the copious reams of data we collected was collated into various probability charts to determine population fluctuations in every fish species hauled. The DICT knew more as a result of this data than ever before, and the data we were about to collect would further the proper

Continued on page 24

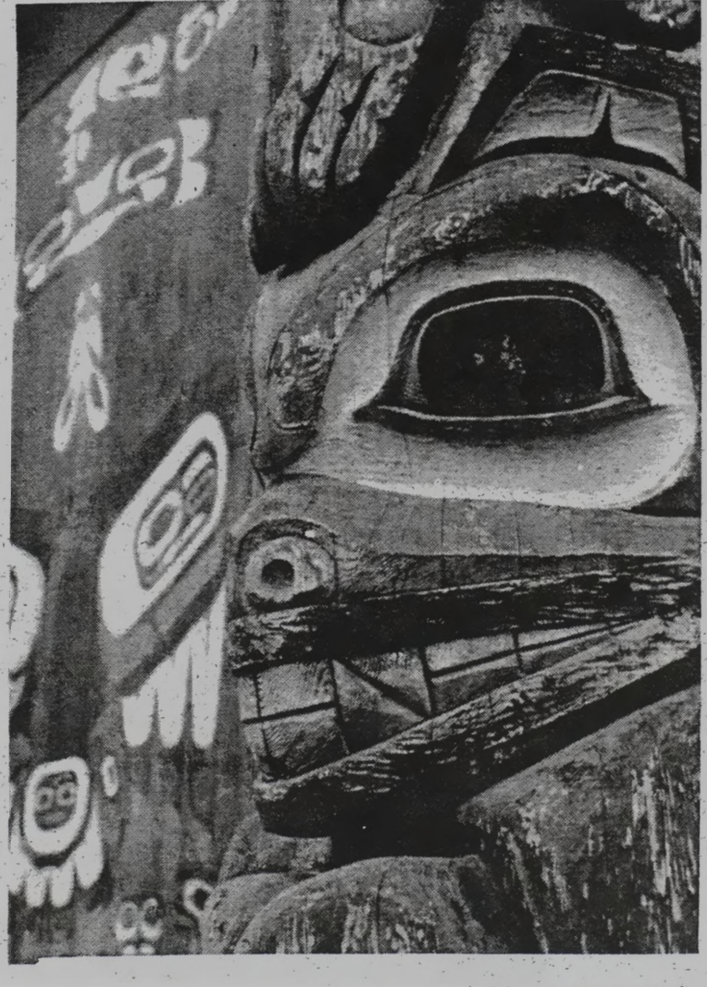


Photo: Diane Krahe

Photo: Ted Wood

The Camas All-Time All-Green Baseball Team

First Base

Edward 'Boog' Abbey. Big bat, slow feet, Ed was born to play first base. Like Lou Gehrig, this tragic player died at the height of his career.

Second Base

Rachel 'Bird' Carson. The only player to hit the bigs without playing a single day in the minors, The Bird is known best for her 1962 homer against Ortho/Chevron. The consummate pivot and a fan favorite, Rachel could liven up the rites of spring.

Shortstop

Annie 'Scooter' Dillard. With great range, and a proven ability to go deep in the hole, Annie Dillard is the inspiration of the old saw, "Dillard to Carson to Abbey, the double play that ain't too shabby."

Third Base

Paul 'Shep' Watson. One of first free agents, Paul left the Greenpeace Warriors to form his own team. Playing the game with wild abandon and a great arm, nobody handles the hot corner quite like the Shep.

Catcher

Aldo Leopold. The ultimate backstop and a quick bat for a big man. This rangy Wisconsite defined the modern game.

Left Field

Dave Foreman. Dave, originally a first! baseman, soon proved that left field was his home.

Center Field

Bob 'Crazy Legs' Marshall. The heart of the defense, a center fielder needs to be able to go to the wall, and nobody ever did it better than Bob Marshall. Playing out his career in the Big Sky Dome, Bob will be remembered best for his hustle.

Right Field

E.O. Wilson/Michael Soule. The Gemini Twins, these platoon fielders proved once and for all that the slide rule set can play in the big leagues.

Right Handed Pitcher

David Brower. The first pitcher ever to throw the Reclamation Curve, David's junkballing style is the bane and frustration of opposing batters. With a lifetime 2.56 ERA, David's release by Sierra in the seventies shocked the baseball world. In a sport ever more dominated by the bottom line, David is one of those rare players who would play the game for free.

Left-Handed Pitcher

Adolph Murie. Adolph, also known as the 'Wolfman', was the eldest of the famous Murie family of pitchers. With a lifetime ERA of 2.33, Murie's only failing was in never winning a world series game.

Bullpen

Teddy 'Boom Boom' Roosevelt. Morally bankrupt, Boom Boom nonetheless had the best fastball of all time. The Babe Ruth of the eco-leagues, the park system is the house that Teddy built.

Manager

John Muir. The unredeemed old man of the game, John Muir managed more with heart than with style. Boog Abbey once said of him, "He hated rain outs. He'd stand in the field and it'd be pouring and he'd say 'let's play two'. He was that kind of guy."

Tom Watts

Photo: Ted Wood

rescue

But to encapsulate these partial relationships is to entrap and condemn them in their partiality; it is to endanger them and to make them dangerous.

—Wendell Berry

No lone survivor shook
the crows out of the fields—
the inward female shudder,
the nervous heft of weapons
on the wall—
to be taken in, heard out,
healed and avenged.

But one flake of ash
in workaday light,
this polite greeting
to a distant friend:

Thank you for your letter.
We are fine.
Our house is shattered
and we live lost
from one another
in the ruins.
The fall here
seems unfamiliar.
All my best.

My friend,
I would send
a bloodied shirt,
broken glass,
a photograph for burning,
a yawning room
with shuttered eyes,
a conflagration on the hillside
that they would come at once
and do what any friends
anywhere would do—

But who healed and who avenged,
driven out and taken in?
Who would sound the warning?

Who would tear my tongue
out of my mouth
to stop these words
from forming?

Joel Thomas-Adams

Photo: Ted Wood

Hania

As plain as day you sit
one sock curled like
furling earth around my tulips
pushing up too early this year

an habitation seeded
and forgotten, passing through,
gone to sea, these warm days
of winter deferred,

a day set down
among detritus abstract
as chips and shavings of loss
about my doorway
the artisan abandoned

the smell of water fresh
flowing dreams to daylight
brine to sweet
that stays and flings down
light as plain as day
as radical as this
one insistent thrusting
green in front of me

nightbound, winter wave worn,
Nausica, warm clay-streaked
ankles and matted careless hair
before me, Nausica, cast
bruised up on your shore
and greening fields of care,
coruscating plains of day,
I'll stay

I'll stay.

Joel Thomas-Adams

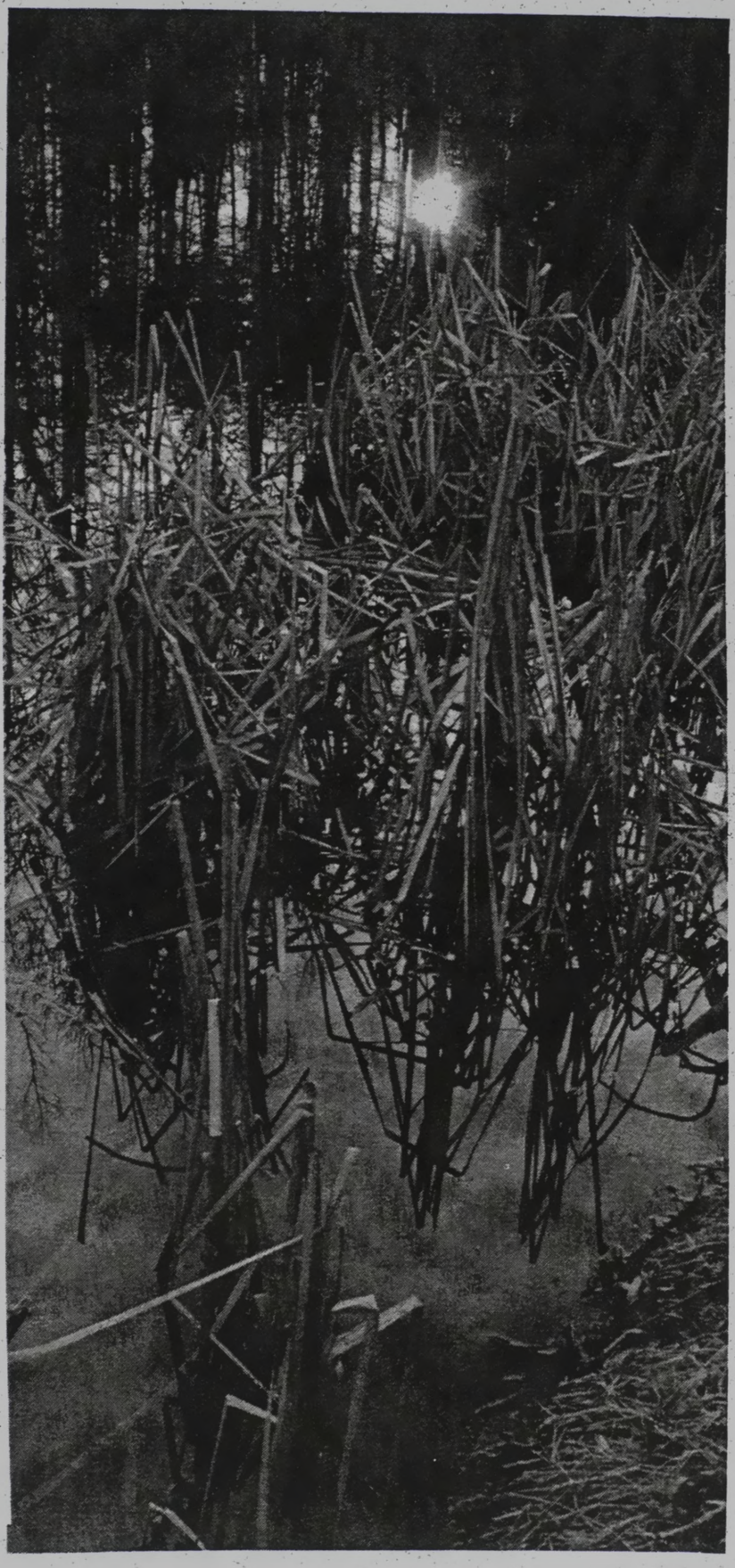


Photo: Diane Krahe

Tom Watts

Barking Dog

It's seven-thirty in the morning, and I stand in the drive between the house and the barn, nursing the day's first cigarette. It's a Saturday. It's eighteen below zero. A weak sun is trying to paw its way through to us. It will try all day and go down with a whimper, overmatched, overtired, early to bed.

This is the warmest it's been in three days, here on the St. Lawrence floodplain of upstate New York. It snowed last night, just a touch, just enough to put a cap of white fluff on the dead tomato vines in the garden tucked up by the house. Beyond that lie the fields, dead fields under a heavy burden of winter. The fields are lined with hedgerows of bare-branched maple and ash, their skinny branches lifted to the sky.

A few chickadees are here and there. The only thing that moves, they flit from tomato vine to skewed and twisted cornstalk. Always, I'm on the lookout for things that move. These flat somber lands are full of deer, rabbits, hawks, everything that is missing down where I live. But it's like they're gone. You never see them. They are like ghosts that move on a different plane and leave nothing in their wake but telltale footprints in the snow. Maybe, I think to myself, they're only invisible to me.

It's a gray day. Not just the sky. It's a Poe kind of day.

I watch a snowplow cruise the main road, stub my cigarette out, turn and walk up to the barn.

There are three men on the Torborg farm, a father and two sons, Dave and Bob. They are sons of Denmark, long boned, long nosed, full bearded, and in dead of winter, sunburned. They are the stringy, skinny type of men who don't look as strong as they are. The three lean on their shovels by the silage pile and watch me as I walk. With their long arms and gaunt bodies, and faces obscured by sweatshirt hoods, they look like birds of prey hunched together on a fence. They have been up since five.

I give them my best suburban stroll.

"How's it goin'?" I say. Dave gives me a friendly chuck on the shoulder. He is wearing the uniform of the dairyman: mustard brown canvas, both coat and pants. On his feet are black rubber boots. I am wearing a ski jacket.

"Been waitin'," Dave says. Bob and Old Man Torborg stare into the steaming exposed center of the silage, lost in thought. Dave hands me a shovel and a pair of canvas gloves.

"Sure," I say. I love this, playing farmer. The old man and Bob go into the barn, leaving me and Dave to attack the pile. The old man doesn't like me, never has and never will.

I bend down and shovel out a hunk, followed by Dave, then me, then Dave, in smooth order. Even in the icy air, the silage reeks, smelling like, well, silage. There is no other smell like it in the world. It smells like fermented corn, which of course, it is.

Anytime a dairyman walks into a store or a restaurant, the first thing people notice is the smell of cowshit. It's all-pervasive. It gets into the clothes that he hung next to the clothes that he worked in. It gets on his wife, gets on his dog. It's everywhere. No dairyman goes anywhere without it. But the dairyman doesn't smell it. If you sniff the air and go "What's that smell?" the dairyman will look over at the car, as if maybe there's gas leaking. The dairyman ignores the smell of cowshit. It's only fertilizer.

What the dairyman smells is silage. And clover. And fresh cut hay. These things are life, these things are milk, waiting to be processed. These things are money. Silage is the smell of the wintertime. It's the sweet smell of life on the floodplain in winter

What the dairyman smells is silage. And clover. And fresh cut hay. These things are life, these things are milk, waiting to be processed. These things are money. Silage is the smell of the wintertime. It's the sweet smell of life on the floodplain in winter.

Dave and I breathe deep, bend our backs. We are starting to sweat, rimes of ice forming on the backs of our collars.

There are forty-one Holsteins in the barn, thirty-nine milkers and two rambunctious baby bulls being raised for burger.

The milkers spend their days encased in metal collars, chained to metal stanchions. They low softly and rattle their chains. The groaning and creaking make the barn sound like an ancient trireme.

Also in the barn is a yearling Hereford, who will be next year's steaks, and a horse called "the horse," who is not an object of affection. Bob is prone to joke that the horse will be next year's steak, and he'll saddle the Hereford. Dave's attitude is less subtle. He keeps a rubber hammer on a shelf in the barn for "disciplining" the cows. I've seen him lay it across the horse's bony muzzle with enough force to make you wince. The horse belongs to the Torborg's only daughter, Caroline. She never comes out to the barn.

Digging silage. Bend, push, grunt. Dave and I fill a little cart while the lactose slaves groan and rattle.

Breakfast in the Torborg house is at nine, after the cows have been milked and fed and bedded.

Nearly everything at the table lived and breathed and died within a circumference of a hundred yards. The sausage spent its short life snuffling around a pen just the other side of the garden. The eggs were laid yesterday. The pancakes I'm sure though, are Aunt Jemima. There is milk. Two big pitchers. They are warm to the touch. And the milk smells and tastes of silage. I gagged on it the first time I tried it. The kitchen is hot, and smells of cowshit. The dog lies on cracked linoleum by the stove. The radio is a constant theme. It goes on at five a.m. and stays on till noon. Weather and farm reports, with sausage and eggs. There is precious little conversation.

Dave is my friend, the reason that I come to visit. I come every January; January being the slowest month of the year for the Torborgs, and therefore the best time for visiting. Nonetheless, there is little time for talk.

The Torborgs take off Sundays and Christmas. On Sundays and Christmas, there are three hours of milking in the morning, starting at five, and three hours of milking in the evening, ending at nine-thirty. The time between is free. The rest of their days, they work straight through. It goes without saying, that to visit with Dave is to work with Dave. Otherwise you don't see him at all.

After breakfast, I trade in my hiking boots for the standard black issue and trail the Torborgs out to the barn. We spend the day building stanchions for yet-to-arrive milkers, sweating in the cow-heated barn while the weather outside drops to tree-cracking cold. The old man supervises the work, swearing softly under his breath, and looking at his watch. I get dropped twice by the baby bulls while trying to feed them.

Dinner is last year's Hereford, and potatoes and beans that grew beside the house.

Milking begins anew at seven under the yellow glow of free-swinging lights. I sit it out, bone tired, hands blistered, on a couple of hay bales. The horse shies woefully as Dave swings a load of hay into its stall. In the back of the barn, the Hereford lows, its neck stretched between the slats of its pen. Mrs. Torborg, in canvas and black boots, fires up the silvery spaceship that is the pasteurizing machine. The milk is handled carefully, lovingly, as if every drop is precious. The meaning and existence of these people and these animals is poured into the pasteurizer in a slow white stream, Old Man

Photo: Ted Wood

Torborg counting every molecule. Bob mucks cowshit, then leans on his hoe and stretches, his hand on the small of his back. The day is drawing to a close.

It is ten o'clock before everyone is back in the house, showered and changed, dangling arms off of couches in the living room, watching a precious hour of T.V. before the station goes off the air. The men lie semi-prone, as if about to fall right on the floor. Mrs. Torborg knits, sitting in the only proper chair, and provides the only conversation, a one-sided affair consisting of half-spoken comments that drift off into minutes of silence. I am wedged on a couch between Dave and Bob, my feet stretched out over the floor grate which sends up thermonuclear heat from the wood furnace. The dog lies with its nose over my left ankle, eyes closed, feet twitching, chasing elusive ghost rabbits in its sleep. Dirty boots and pants and gloves and coats lie like victims on the linoleum by the kitchen door. A rug is stuffed up against the doorjamb to keep out the cold. I will be asleep in minutes, I'm sure.

The dog is the first to notice that something isn't right, that the hum of the tired evening is subtly going askew. Her eyes open and her head pops up and she takes on the quizzical head-cocked pose of a dog listening for mice in the attic.

Dave lifts a foot and pokes it in her direction. "What's the matter?" he asks her as if he couldn't care less.

But in a second he is sitting upright on the couch, as is Bob, and the dog is in the kitchen, feet scratching on the linoleum, headed for the door.

"What," I say. I look from Dave to Bob and back again. I have no idea what is going on.

Bob and Dave are reaching under the couch, the dog is up against the kitchen door, barking like hell.

"What," I say again. Dave and Bob are off the couch, headed for the door. I catch a glimpse of dark oily steel crooked in Bob's arm. Gunmetal. The old man is off his couch and into the kitchen too, collaring the dog and reaching for the light switch that will flood the yard. Mrs. Torborg has put her knitting down, and is looking on with casual interest. She gives me the feeling that this is no big deal.

Eventually, finally, my ears bring me a clue as to what's going on. A train is coming, a little train, a train with a miniature high-pitched timbre. It's coming down the lane that winds out of the outermost fields and past the Torborg's house and barn, rolling on phantom rails, nonstop service. As I get up off the couch I can hear its staccato rhythm, not the chug and groan and click of a normal train. As each car rolls over a joint in the track it goes 'yip-yap, yip-yap.' Yip-yap, one hundred times a second, a hundred yards away and closing fast, the noise is filling the house. It seems that it will jump the track, miss the lane and, in seconds, come crashing through the wall right behind where Mrs. Torborg is sitting. I'm tempted to save her, but she doesn't look the least bit worried.

'Yip-yap, yip-yap,' it's a high-pitched clatter, and above the din I can hear the Torborg's struggling dog and the sound of lever-action rifles chambering rounds. The door flies open, intensifying the sound, and as I head for the kitchen, I can see the two boys stepping out into the floodlit night, stocking footed in the snow.

'Yip-yap, yip-yap.' Now I can hear the skitter of feet on the ice of the drive, and in a second, the bark and lever, bark and lever, of the two guns. Brass cascades with a tinkling sound. I step past Old Man Torborg and the dog, who has now turned her howling nose to the ceiling, and into the light and cold of the kitchen door, I can see right over Bob's shoulder. He is apparently tracking something at the edge of the light, levering and firing in a slow arc down the lane. Dave is fully out in the drive, stepping and firing, stepping and

Continued on page 19

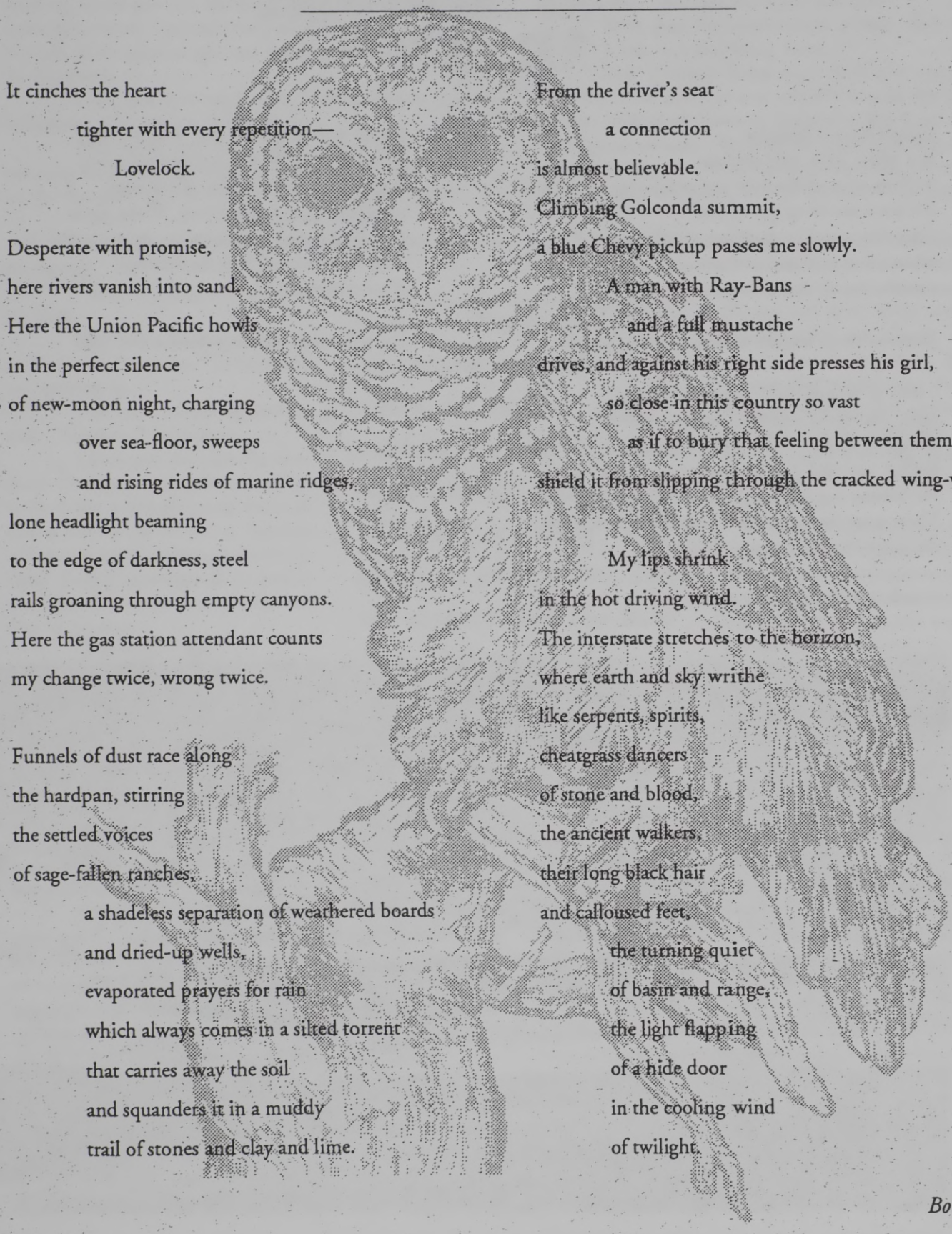
Red Bird

for Gerald Stern

I push two sticks into the ground
and wait for them to blossom.
A red bird hovers above me,
carrying honey from the orchard
to my window. She sings a language
I can't decipher. I must be impatient
because my mother is dying.
I have prescriptions to refill,
Top Ramen to buy at the grocers.
I must keep the washcloth close
and sponge her hot forehead.
Each time I hold her fingers
I see them blossoming into roses.
The red bird is burning
from inside her own belly.
Let me say Poland, or Schubert,
and have it be all over.
Let me say the red bird flew away,
and the flowers turned to honey
without her. Let me change this story
and learn a bird's language.

Karin Schalm

Meditation at Golconda



It cinches the heart
tighter with every repetition—
Lovelock.

Desperate with promise,
here rivers vanish into sand.
Here the Union Pacific howls
in the perfect silence
of new-moon night, charging
over sea-floor, sweeps
and rising rides of marine ridges,
lone headlight beaming
to the edge of darkness, steel
rails groaning through empty canyons.
Here the gas station attendant counts
my change twice, wrong twice.

Funnels of dust race along
the hardpan, stirring
the settled voices
of sage-fallen ranches,
a shadeless separation of weathered boards
and dried-up wells,
evaporated prayers for rain
which always comes in a silted torrent
that carries away the soil
and squanders it in a muddy
trail of stones and clay and lime.

From the driver's seat
a connection
is almost believable.
Climbing Golconda summit,
a blue Chevy pickup passes me slowly.
A man with Ray-Bans
and a full mustache
drives, and against his right side presses his girl,
so close in this country so vast
as if to bury that feeling between them,
shield it from slipping through the cracked wing-window

My lips shrink
in the hot driving wind.
The interstate stretches to the horizon,
where earth and sky writhe
like serpents, spirits,
cheatgrass dancers
of stone and blood,
the ancient walkers,
their long black hair
and calloused feet,
the turning quiet
of basin and range,
the light flapping
of a hide door
in the cooling wind
of twilight.

Bob Hackett

In a Time of War

I want something difficult and translucent,
like birdsong in a time of war.
—Odysseus Elytis

Ginger Rogers beckons
in a white dress with ostrich
feathers around the hem and across her shoulders.
It's not a wedding gown, just
a dancing gown, something to believe
when a future that could test
a vow's duration is uncertain.

feathered dress, sculptured curls, limbs of powder

I used to wonder how she could dance
when the world suffered. Today I walked
along the river, saw the stream smooth
the ice, and and heard cooing among the trees.
No robins, just pigeons who are always with us.
There were nests up high, abandoned and ready
for migrating strangers in the spring.

nest, let me curl my body in your cell

A man walked behind me, with his dog,
"Hey, your pretty white shoes are going
to get dirty." I was afraid of his need
to tell me what was obvious. Water birds
and all of their generations are dying in this war.
They leave behind their knowledge
of extravagance.

hair of feathers, feet dirty from a river path

Bette Tomlinson

Photo: Ed Rinehart

firing, working his way down towards the state road, dangerously close to Bob's line of fire. Sparks are flying, shells are plinking to the ground, the sickly sharp smell of gunpowder drifts by my nose. The train has past, subdued now, and lower in pitch, it has taken a right and is going over the hill and into the blackness.

Dave and Bob send a few farewell rounds into the hedgerows, and the place falls silent.

Bob turns and finds me in the doorway. He is beaming, breathless, his hands are shaking. He claps me hard on the shoulder, as if we've just scored a touchdown.

"What," I say. I am dazed by it all.

Bob pushes past me and starts stomping his cold feet on the rug.

"What's going on?" I say to his back.

Old Man Torborg is puling on his boots. "Coyotes," he says without looking up.

Bob leans his rifle against the wall. "Coyotes," he repeats.

I look out through the open door. Dave is hopping from one foot to the other, still staring into the darkness at the end of the drive. Sparkles of frost are settling through the floodlight. Empty cartridges shine gold in the light. The echoes of gunfire still ring in my ears.

"No way," I say.

Bob moves over and puts his arm across my shoulder in the doorway. "Sure," he says. "They come through all the time. They mate with dogs, so they're big. And really fearless. It's the dog part that makes them not scared of people," he says in my ear.

"No way," I say again.

"Yup," he says. "They'll come right through the kitchen door if you leave it open."

This sounds like a farm yarn to me. "No way," I say one more time.

Old Man Torborg is back in his working clothes. He addresses me before he steps through the door, one of the few times I'll ever hear him speak in my direction. "In the spring, when the cows are out roamin', they'll grab a calf while its still coming out of it's mother. They'll kill the calf and heifer too." He says this with a strange earnestness, looking me right in the eye, as if this information is a deadly serious matter.

"Yup," says Bob. "Kill 'em deader than shit."

I pick up his rifle and lever the empty chamber. "No kidding," I say. I'm amazed at this. I've never seen a coyote in my life. "How many cows have you lost?"

Bob, who has never seemed to be able to find a thing to say to me before tonight, suddenly loses his tongue again. His hands slide into the pockets of his jeans. "We never lost one yet," he says taking the rifle out of my hands. Then as an afterthought: "Because we shoot 'em first."

With that, the conversation is over. Bob turns and carries his rifle into the living room.

Mrs. Torborg loans me a flashlight and a pair of boots for Dave, and I go out and join him in the drive. We go for a little stroll down to the end of the lane, scattering cartridges as we walk. We look for tracks and drops of blood with the flashlight. On the hard-beaten snow, there are none. They've come and gone, and its like they were never there.

It seems that it will jump the track, miss the lane and, in seconds, come crashing through the wall right behind where Mrs. Torborg is sitting. I'm tempted to save her, but she doesn't look the least bit worried.

"Coyote." It comes from the Aztec word coyotl. The Aztecs it seems had no beef with coyote. Many of their dieties had coyotl in their names. The Navajo call him "little brother," or "dawn child" or "God's dog," depending on the situation. The Crow believe that coyote was the creator. The Hopi believe that coyote released the stars into the night sky. As many peoples as there were in coyote country, there were as many names, as many stories.

"Coyote." Coyote, coyotl, cojote, cayeute, chiota. Those who felt the need to spell it could never get it right.

And those who felt the need to describe it had little more luck. Bernando de Sahagun, in 1560, relayed this information back to Spain. "The animal of this country called coyotl is very sagacious in waylaying. When he wishes to attack, he first casts his breath over the victim to infect and stupefy it. Diabolical indeed, is the creature." Sahagun went on to relate the great coyote dichotomy. He told of a traveler who liberated one from a snake that was wrapped round its neck. Coyote, grateful, brought that traveler a fresh-killed chicken every evening for several days.

In 1780, Clavijero took his whack at describing the curious beast. "The coyotl is one of the most common quadrupeds of Mexico, in form like the dog, voracious like the Lobo, astute like the fox, in some qualities like the jackal." In short, cosmo-dog.

"Coyote." Brush wolf, prairie wolf, cased wolf, burrowing dog, wolf of the plains, Indian fox. The Anglos were not to be outdone. Lewis and Clark said of the prairie wolf, "It is of an intermediate size between the fox and dog, very delicately formed, fleet and active...They live and rear their young in burrows, which they fix near some pass or spot much frequented by game, and sally out in a body against any animal which they think they can overpower; but on the slightest alarm retreat to their burrows, making a noise exactly

like that of a small dog."

"Coyote." Barking Wolf, Charlie Chaplin of the plains, heul wolf, steppen wolf, bush wolf. In 1823, Thomas Say christened coyote with a Latin name, *Canis latrans*, barking dog. Two years later, Missouri put a bounty on coyote's scalp.

"Coyote." Bounty, trapper, denning, aerial hunting, coyote-getter, leghold trap, compound 1080. Stanley Young wrote of coyote in 1951, "A parasite on civilization, he lives a life of baseness, snooping about in search of plunder, or skulking away from his victim with his offtime mangy tail between his thin legs. When at last Nemesis overtakes him, he snarls at his captor with an evil leer which arouses a loathing disgust in place of pity."

"Coyote." Prairie tenor, laughing philosopher, cayeute, kayiut, American jackal, cayutah, cayoti, kiyot, dawn child. How could you ever understand an animal with so many names?

"Coyote." Thallium, snare, gunning, hounding, strychnine. Between 1937 and 1981, the federal government killed three point six million coyotes.

"Coyote." Not every white man hates coyote. Of coyote, Ernest Thompson Seton once wrote, "If the day should come when one may camp in the West, and hear not a note of the coyote's joyous stirring evening song, I hope that I shall long before have passed away."

"Coyote." Prairie tenor, laughing philosopher, cayeute, kayiut, American jackal, cayutah, cayoti, kiyot, dawn child. How could you ever understand an animal with so many names?

On Sunday I get up at five and stalk through the cold and dark to the barn with the Torborgs. There, under lights again, the timeless ritual goes on . Amid the clinking of chain and the clumping of hoof, a living is extracted while the sky turns pink in the east.

By nine I am weary and blistered, but I have earned my breakfast, and when the old man calls a quit to the work, he says it to me. "Let's quit," he says.

I lean on my shovel. "Okay," I say.

After breakfast, because it's a day off, Dave and I jump in his pickup and take a spin to the nearest neighbors, the Tripps, about two miles down the road.

We find the Tripp's eldest, Chris, mucking after the cows in the barn. As tall and fair as the sons of Denmark are, the Tripps are squat and dark, betraying a heritage that comes from across the river, Quebecois.

Chris leans on his rake and Dave and I pick a post each to lean against, and hands in pockets, we shoot the breeze. I have on canvas and black rubber from the morning. I am specked with cowshit. Leaning against a stanchion, eyeing the fieldstone foundation of a barn that is two hundred years old, I feel right at home.

Dave wants Chris to come out for beers with us after milking. Chris declines. Chris is still in high school, though twenty-two, and tomorrow he has to make the three-hour round trip into Watertown for school. School and hangovers don't mix.

The conversation wanders. Dave and Chris start talking Allis Chalmers and Furodan, the tools they use to wring a life from their land. I have cowshit on my boots, but I might as well be the ambassador from Burma for all I understand of this. I lean over and scratch a Holstein between the ears.

Dave mentions last night's coyote raid. Chris shifts his lean a little. They'd come by the Tripp's too, he tells us.

Dave and Chris trade information. Neither farm killed a coyote.

"Slippery bastards," Chris says.

"You're tellin' me," says Dave.

Chris turns to me. "They breed with dogs, you know. They get big as German shepherds." He shakes his head. "They're not afraid of people. That's why they're so dangerous. They'll kill a heifer right in the field, right in front of your eyes." He looks to Dave for backup. Dave nods his head. "Deader'n shit," he says.

"How many do you think there were?" I say. This has been on my mind all morning. I've been picturing a sea of coyotes washing down the drive.

Dave shrugs his shoulders and looks at Chris. Chris

shrugs his shoulders and looks at me. He scratches the back of his neck. "Five or six, I guess."

I'm disappointed.

"Did you ever lose a heifer?" I ask.

Chris looks over at Dave, then down at his shoes. Sometimes its not what you say, but how you say it that does the damage. Dave folds his arms and scuffs his toe in the dirt. I look at the two men, and I get this funny feeling. I become aware that the ground I'm standing on is not mine. I don't eat what comes from my own soil, I don't drink from my cows. I don't think with dirt under my fingernails and sweat drying on my back. There are things that I'm never going to understand. The cows clink and clump and chew their cuds in the silence.

"Don't matter if they've ever killed one," Chris says finally.

I look to Dave. He shrugs his shoulders.

When the Pilgrims first set foot on Plymouth rock, there wasn't a coyote within fifteen hundred miles, probably never had been. There were plenty of wolves though. The forests of the East were prime wolf ground, with moose and caribou wandering around hardwood stands that were millennia old. In 1647, New Hampshire posted its first wolf bounty. By 1875, the wolves were gone.

Curiously though, by 1900 coyote had moved into southern Ontario. In 1912, coyote was first sighted in New York. In 1938, one was shot in New Jersey. In 1944 and 1946, New Hampshire and Vermont pegged their first hides. Today, there are 1500 in Connecticut alone, proof that coyote can go suburban.

Where exactly did these animals come from, and what exactly are they? And why are they here?

In 1949, Frank Dobie wrote, "Most of the occurrences east of the Mississippi have been traceable to escapees from zoos and private owners. Where the escapees have not been able to find their own kind to breed with, they have frequently cross-bred with half-wild dogs."

That would explain a lot. The eastern coyote is big, much bigger than his western cousin. And he is not afraid. The eastern coyote is also inordinately fond of eating cat.

The coy-dog hypothesis has become legend in the East, written in stone, a spawning ground for a new sometimes feared beast. But is it true? Scientists don't think so. Scientists can't find an ounce of dog in the eastern coyote, and dog, to a scientist, is easy to spot. What scientists think they can see, if they roll coyote over just the right way, and look at him under just the right light, is wolf. Algonquin wolf. That would explain a lot.

If coyote packed up and moved out of the West, and showed up in the East a bigger, darker, stronger beast, something had to happen along the way. As it just so happens, if coyote was pushing east along Lake Superior in 1900, he

Continued on page 22

Nothing That I Believe In

When I close my eyes I see a red crown on an animal

with webbed feet. I see the underwater of a pond,

and the white island of a hand floating, then the rest

is gray. Once I recover from my last fears of leaving

another kingdom, I will go as a poet or a musician

to the web-footed king and sing for days and days.

Nothing, no nothing that I believe in, can stop me.

I will go without money because there is no need

for money in a pond, or even a lake. I will want a friend

when I return, to show me the path to the garden,

to my bed, or a good cafe. In fact, I am already hungry

for the blooming sticks I planted last winter. I can

already smell the biscuits and tea. Bring me a bucket

to wash in, and I will sing.

Karin Schalm

was running into the domain of the harried and breathless Algonquin wolf of Ontario, a small, dark breed of timber wolf barely hanging on in its native forests. Well, if coyote was inclined towards sleeping over for a couple of years, he might have resumed his journey with a brand new set of genes packed in his bag. Big, dark, wolf genes.

If so, the big mystery remains. Why is coyote here, snooping the pastures on New York and Vermont, licking barbecue forks in the backyards of Connecticut, strolling the divider on the Jersey Turnpike?

No one but coyote will ever know. But think of this. Thallium, strychnine, gunning, denning, aerial hunting. What would you do? Move, right? In most parts of the East, coyote is thought of as cute and exotic, and feels no hunting pressure. Unless, of course, coyote makes his home in dairy country.

I dream of a short sharp yelp, a desperate skittering of toenails on ice, and a soft thump as coyote goes down. I dream of a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach.

Eleven o'clock Sunday night, Dave and I sit in his pickup in the parking lot behind the hospital in Alexandria Bay. Feet up on the dash, heat on, we sip Utica Clubs and snap Marlboros out of cracked widows into the night. Before us lies the St. Lawrence, half frozen, its open channel steaming in the moonlight. The frozen half is covered with an even blanket of snow, peppered with the aimless tracks of wandering dogs. The tracks are curiously sharp and stark in the moonlight, as if highlighted for the scene.

Dave does most of the talking. I'm so tired that I'm content to let him ramble. And I can understand his need to talk.

Dave and I met when we both worked in the same gas station in Connecticut. Dave's girlfriend was the boss' daughter. Then the boss' daughter became my girlfriend. Now neither of us know where she is, and we're better friends for it.

Dave stayed for a year, pumping gas and fixing cars, and apparently loving it. Then haying season came, and Dave left for home. He never came back.

Dave talks of summer, of the grueling hours, which I can't imagine since winter is exhausting enough. Dave assures me that winter is a cake walk. Summer is the time of work, and the time of stress. The Torborgs and the Tripps team up for the haying, six men in total. They cut at a frantic rate, then bending their backs, they buck bales, sometimes clean through the night. Old Man Torborg pushes hard, one eye on the sky. Dave goes on and on, talking of cornborers and exploding silage, just quietly letting off steam.

The empty beers get tossed in the truck's bed; we pee standing next to the truck.

It's Sunday night in upstate New York. Another Utica Club bites the dust, another Marlboro spirals off into the night, and Dave drapes his hands over the wheel, gesturing while he talks, reaching for something that isn't quite there.

I slump a little lower, and pop another beer. "Why do you do it, huh? Why don't you just come back to Connecticut?"

This slows Dave down a little, but he doesn't get defensive. He lifts his palms and gestures out the windshield as if the answer is lying out there on the ice of the St. Lawrence.

"I don't know," he says. He opens another beer. We sit and watch the river for a while.

"If Bob and I left, there'd be no way..." he says. He shrugs his shoulders while staring out the windshield. "I don't know," he says. "It's hard to describe." He looks at me. "It's kind of a family thing." He works his calloused hands some more. "I don't know. It's what we do." Enough said. It's not my ground. I'll never understand.

We pull out of the parking lot at one-thirty, beer cans jingling in the back, fuzz on our brains. Dave takes on the state road doing about seventy, hands white knuckle on the wheel. We are shit-faced, two talking idiots, zooming through the black and cold and starry night in our warm cocoon, laughing.

A pair of eyes shine on the side of the road, then duck into some weeds, a stray housecat.

I point. "Coyote," I say.

"Oh, yeah." Dave swerves into the left lane as he struggles to pull the ubiquitous thirty-thirty out from under the seat. Holding the wheel with one hand, he rolls down the window and takes a shot at the blackness. He hands the gun to me. "Coyote my ass," he says, laughing. Black fields of snow-drifted cornstalk are going by on my side. I've got nothing better to do. I roll down the window and let the gun bark into the night.

There's a box of shells in the glove compartment. I reload under the glow of the dome light, and taking the wheel, hand the gun to Dave.

"Yoooouuuuuuuuuuu!" he shouts as he knocks down stars. "Yooooooooouuuuuuu!" We are filling our brains with cold air, emptying our minds into the night, spitting fire and making noise.

While I'm reloading, Dave turns to me. "You know," he shouts over the noise of the wind, "I've never killed a single one."

"What?" I say.

He leans over a little, keeping one eye on the road. "Coyotes," he shouts. "I've never really killed one." He laughs. "Not a one."

"No shit," I say. I lean out the window and take on a speed limit 55 sign. Dave punches me on the arm. "Good shot," he shouts.

We pull into the drive out of shells, freezing cold, and infinitely more sober. We sneak into the house, our shoes in our hands. Milking starts in three hours. No excuses.

In the night I dream of the thirty-thirty. I dream of hearing one hundred yip-yaps, like a train, roaring down the drive. I dream of a short sharp yelp, a desperate skittering of toenails on ice, and a soft thump as coyote goes down. I dream of a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. It's that dream that wakes me, in the dark, at five.

What does coyote eat? It's maybe the only question that's ever really been answered about coyote. The government has opened thousands of stomachs over the years, and found some interesting things.

Like watermelon. Coyote, it seems, is fond of watermelon. Snail, beetle, frog, cat, skunk, armadillo, egg, turkey, turtle, grasshopper, moose, rat, grapes. Sheep. Date, peach, tomato, pumpkin, canteloupe, fly, human (oh, no!), crayfish, snake, centipede, acorn, porcupine, ant, coyote, peanut, deer, antelope, grass, corn, beef.

Cattle. In North Dakota, in 1944, in flagrant disregard of the war effort, coyote killed 5800 calves.

Stanley Youn, in *The Clever Coyote*, relates this: "Ivan E. Morgareidge and Clarence Jenks of Buffalo, Wyoming, reported on October 14, 1935, that in the spring of that year a heifer was killed by coyotes while she was calving. The coyotes, in attacking, ate on the rear quarters of the young heifer so deeply that it was necessary to shoot her as well as the calf for the front legs and head of the latter were likewise badly mutilated."

Killer coyotes. The myth, it seems, is real.

Killer coyotes are not just well-fed though. With a little luck, they can become famous. There was once a coyote called "Old Three Toes, Super Coyote of Caddo County, Oklahoma."

Three Toes, it seems, was the leader of a band of super coyotes, the swift and smart and cocky coyotes that were left over when their weaker or stupider brethren had all been trapped or shot. There was speculation that Three Toes himself was a coy-dog, or maybe a pure wolf, but it was feared in Caddo County that "a race of Super-Coyotes was being produced." And these desperados were playing havoc, on sheep and calves alike. Big coyote, big appetite.

Three Toes and his band were chased over hill and dale in Caddo County for six years, and every means available was used to snuff them. Slowly but surely, the pack was whittled down, nineteen lean and extra large coyotes killed, and finally only Three Toes himself was left to slaver on the ridges overlooking the peaceful herds.

The strychnine would not get Three Toes. The thousand-dollar hounds wouldn't get him. And no rancher ever got him in his sights. A government trapper finally got Three Toes. Ironically, after six years of outwitting the best, he stepped in two traps at once, surely an embarrassing end.

Three Toes, though, would get in the last laugh. When the government trapper brought his body into town and the people gathered round to see, they saw that their worst fears had come true. Three Toes was not a coy-dog, not a wolf, he was all coyote, super-coyote, weighing in at forty-five pounds. Somewhere out on those plains the townfolk feared, fifty-pound pups were being whelped.

Even an anonymous coyote can add to the legend. In 1943, in the Utah desert, four men in a car chased a male coyote for 47 minutes at speeds of up to 43 miles an hour. The coyote finally got the Goodrich treatment. They said he took to dodging at the end.

Another coyote was once released in a big field to give sport to some hounds. While the huntsmen looked on in amazement, the coyote took a quick lap around the field and, no dummy, ran right back in the box. They let him out again. One more lap. Back in the box.

...the coyote took a quick lap around the field and, no dummy, ran right back in the box. They let him out again. One more lap. Back in the box.

Frank Dobie related another anonymous coyote story in 1949. "A Montana coyote learned the trick of digging traps out and turning them over. Evidently he derived satisfaction from this procedure. Finally, a trapper buried a trap upside down. When the coyote tried to turn it over, he caught himself."

You could go on and on. Vicious killer. Song dog. Trickster. Coyote over the years has inspired a lot of hate, a lot of admiration a lot of fiction, in short, he has done a lot of inspiring. Charles Cadieux, I believe, sums it all up.

> *It is my personal belief that when the last human has fallen, and the last skull lies on the irradiated earth, a coyote will come trotting out of some safe place. Don't ask me where he'll come from; but I believe that he will survive as he has always survived. The coyote will trot in his furtive, skulking manner, to the skull. He will approach it carefully with the caution borne of millennia of avoiding steel traps and snares and pitfalls. He will cau-*

tiously sniff it. His educated nose will tell him that he no longer has anything to fear from this bleached remnant of a once great civilization. Taking a few short steps to get in the exact position, he will lift his leg.

On Monday, Dave and I get excused from the evening milking. I can't tell if its a trace of friendliness on the old man's part, of if we look that bad. It's precious time though, and we make the most of it.

Dave fires up his mechanical pony, a 1975 Ski-doo, and together we take it up the lane away from the barn and out towards the back fields. Dave in front, me in back, we overwork the machine on the slick roadway, turning it sideways around the bends, keeping it between the trees, laughing and hanging on tight. We get to the end of the Torborg property and Dave takes it through a cut in the stone walls and out into the fields. Square fields, lined with stone and naked maples, fields rented out for hay, fields lying heavy with drifts.

We plow across three or four of them, the machine grinding in the drifts, skimming on the hardpack. Squinting in the sun, breathing deep, putting on distance, we are making noise.

Eventually we hit the drift too deep. The machine slows, grumbles, starts to founder, then with a pop, quits. We get off and sink in up to our waists. Silence settles in around us.

"Shit," Dave says.

I look around. We are square in the middle of a field, surrounded by a horizon of stone and bare branches. It is a good three miles back to the house. And the sun is going down.

"Shit," I say.

We hunker down and try to push the machine out. Standing deep in the snow we wrestle it with our shoulders. In ten minutes, I am soaked with sweat, coated with snow. We have gone about twenty feet.

We climb on the seat, and sitting side-by-side, light up a couple of smokes. Sweat is growing cold on my spine.

"We're gonna have to walk it," says Dave.

"Yeah," I say. The sun has pulled its collar up tight. With a nod, it goes down. The snow turns light blue, the trees, coal black. We sit there and smoke for a minute. There is no hurry. We are walking out in the dark no matter what. I pull my hat down a little tighter.

I'm not the least bit surprised when coyote spooks us up. It's a long, thing tenor oooh, that rises out of the trees and hangs in the air over our heads for a good ten seconds before the cold pinches it off.

It's payback. We kept coyote up last night. I lean over and elbow Dave in the ribs. "Well," I say, "They're coming to git us."

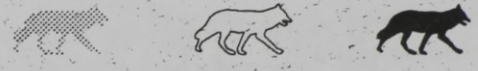
This brings a smile to his face. "And me without my gun," he says.

We stub out our cigarettes and jump off the machine, and start wading our way back across the fields. Coyote doesn't wish us goodbye. I pull my collar up and put my head down and concentrate on putting my feet in Dave's tracks.

I don't know what Dave is thinking of as we walk, but I know what I am thinking as I flounder through the snow in the congealing dark.

I'm thinking about coyotes, super coyotes, prowling the hedgerows, testing the air, taking in the hot-oil reek of the downed snow machine, burying their noses in our tracks, smelling our sweat and cowshit in the silvery silence.

I don't know what Dave is thinking, but I know what I'm thinking. I'm thinking that walking through this January night, neither of us are walking our ground. It belongs to someone else.



Incidental Catch, continued from page 9

management of the world's largest and most prosperous continental shelf. Later, I asked a Nymph official of lesser standing how much of this important data went into policy decisions. He replied wryly, "About forty percent of our fisheries policy is biologically based, and sixty percent is political."

I stood gripping her tooth. The crew regarded the situation quietly, perhaps reflecting upon what this great net was doing, perhaps waiting for me to record this on a data sheet so they could get on with their work. It was the first time there was no activity on deck. The only sounds were the omniscient engine and complaining fulmars. I moved my hand to her cheek. "Dah-may," I said. I walked to the upper deck. They pushed her down the ramp. The sheet of light roiled up and swallowed her, her white belly disappearing into the green-black. Soon waves appeared, and cumulus glided along the horizon on legs of driving rain.

Tetuo and the Fishing Master were talking with quiet anxiety. Tet told me later that every year the catch decreased. The crew worked as diligently as before. No one mentioned the whale again. No one mentioned that the next two hauls were thirty percent heads and guts of processed fish, crawling with sea lice and stench. The crew had difficulty separating the fish to filet from those decomposing parts. I couldn't tell how distressing this was for these men who had fished here for years, some for decades. Kudzo caught my eye as I strained out whole fish from the decomposing goo with rubber gloves. What reaction was he looking for— was it my disgust or was it the knowledge of the stern trawler's toll? I didn't know how to address the degree of destruction we were all witness to. We simply went on to see what the next part of the continental shelf would offer up.

Untitled, continued from page 3

Dipper come curtsying to it, and Heron bow down his blue head, as they did today? Heron flies up the creek like he's carving the banks with his wings, and tonight the sound of the water is colored like him: bluegrey and stately.

It is said that feelings can freeze like water, and that dreams in your nights never lie. A moment ago I dreamed that water was running all under the shack. The heron sound of the water shushed in from all sides, and the house lifted off its foundations, carried downstream like a leaf, with me like a spider inside it. Hands grasping the threshold and window, I curled the leafedge around me and spun in the eddies, knocking things loose, with my ear to the night like a shell.

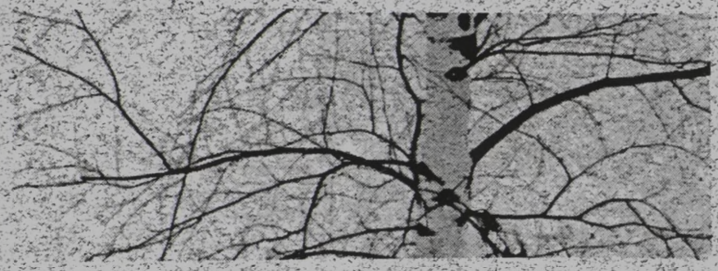


Photo: Ed Blankman

Riding the Birch, continued from page 5

we followed him around the yard's borders: by my father's vegetable garden, by the field and the tall grove of pines, back to the birch tree, where we stood again in a circle. My father held one firm hand on my shoulder, one on my sister's. My mother held the jar. We said one "Our Father," one "Hail Mary," and one "Glory Be."

Karin and I often crossed the edges of yard that Father John blessed—especially the back edge, which bordered the woods and felt wild. My father called that place "overgrown"—forsythia and ragweed grew there, with tall grasses, shrubs, a few pines. We bushwhacked through the back woods, carrying fluorescent pink safety flags which we took off our bikes and sunk on the bank of the stream separating our property from that of the neighbors. We piled stones in a circle around us, and set up strict rules for our club: "No boys allowed, especially not Doug Berger who lives across the stream and is mean." We played until our mother called us to dinner, when the woods began to grow dark.

I'm not sure we ever stepped back through the birch when our mother called us to dinner. We just washed our hands and sat down. I'd like to think we kept stepping through fictions, that each time we left and came back, we were new.

The birch finally outgrew its wire and pulled the stake out of the ground. We never found it—I imagine it flung through the "V," like a sling.

Still Time

(a response to Gary Snyder's "Front Lines")

Shaded damp and encompassed by green
the stillness
beneath a ceiling of fir
is saturated time.
Ancient keepers wriggle
long toes in cool soil
with open arms to the sun.

Two percent of old-growth forests exist today.

The Cat scratches on
spewing gray, raking metal teeth
across the soft face.
Men sharpen blades
in a hurry
slobbering, for something green.

By the year 2000,
seven percent of all
plant species will be gone.

The stats are easy,
Amerika the beautiful
fat cat at five
is gobbling up forty
percent
and lighting a greasy cigar.

Shouldn't we have drawn the line—
at 'dominion', 'enlightenment', industrial 'revolution'—
long ago?

This moment
the stillness cries
surrendering
as sliced giants come
crashing
on our face.

John Dillon

Photo: Ted Wood

Corral Pass Road

Two miles up the five-mile road
and I can't go further.
No two ways to look at it.

The cold northern sleep
is still on the mountain,
through the hills to the south
are bare. The flourish
of rhododendrons and
gaeity of azaleas mean
nothing here.

Black-headed juncos
bounce blue snow,
the patience
of spruce seedlings.

Bob Hackett