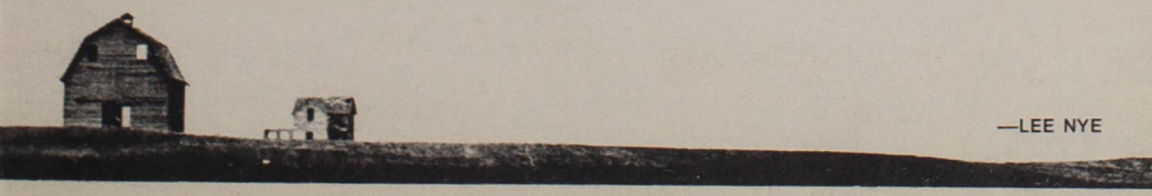

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GARRET 1970

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REPORT FROM A FAR PLACE

Making these word things to
step on across the world, I
could call them snowshoes.

They creak, sag, bend, but
hold, over the great deep cold,
and they turn up at the toes.

In war or city or camp
they could save your life;
you can muse them by the fire.

Be careful, though: they
burn, or don't burn, in their own
strange way, when you say them.

William Stafford

A REPORT FROM OVER THE MOUNTAINS

News that reaches a cliff and is answered
is answered with no further trouble
to the country. Channels begin their course
by chance, then continue by their nature.
When a breeze in the evening starts down
the slope, its hands begin to document
the whole world; what it finds, it
mentions again and again to itself,
a song too various for any tune.
In the morning the wind wanders back
slapping empty pockets.

That dry country does not grow sullen
when it rains: every rock or stick
has a raincoat and rejoices. Clods
drink and are happy. Grass begins to plot.
Cows get up and gaze their solid,
chewing approval.

Any time, the sun may exercise
its right of eminent domain and strike
its blinding shadow across its well-marked
bombing range. Stars at night
study the layout; they take turns
at their own end of a telescope:
a patient, steady, calm inspection
before they go down.

William Stafford

Nadine Huffman

LOTTY

Old lady Meyers trudged into the four o'clock gloom with the perception of a corpse, her lumpy, brown stockings wrapped around her legs like undone winding sheets. Almost home — mission accomplished. The chicken was brained, defeathered, and cellophaned peacefully in the brown paper bag, right next to the muffins. Just a few more blocks to go now — one more crossing at Kelly's Bar, avoiding weaving cars and drunken pedestrians; left turn at Finian's Pawn Shop — look over new junk; and then down Patcher's Street, never mind the stares — kids were rude, grown-ups stupid. The fifth chalky apartment building with the missing step was home — shared with an aggregate of unknowns, allied by their hostile tendencies. Hate, the tie that binds. But old lady Meyers was tired of being of service.

Years of initiation and she still wasn't in. Rejected by one generation after another. Perhaps something was innately repulsive about her. Old lady Meyers scratched her birthmark. It was brown and ugly over three fourths of her left hand, some of it scar tissue. As a child she had taken her mother's paring knife and had tried to cut the hideous growth out, but she had fainted shortly after the first incision. Fear of blood and mother had prevented further eradication of the mark.

Old lady Meyers walked distractedly into her kitchen and put on the tea. Her hip was acting up again. Maybe some aspirin and a hot-water bottle. She went back to the living room and turned on the radio to Sammy's station. He played all the old tunes, which were nice to rock to . . . and listen to when there was nothing else to do, which there wasn't. Old Lady Meyers lowered herself into the uneasy rocker and contemplated the room. Not much, piece of needlework hanging on the wall: "Home Sweet Home" in red thread against a background of white linen gabled house. Picture of a flock of children of all ages, crowded in front of an institution-type building and all looking alike in their old-fashioned clothes. Couple of Readers' Digest condensed stories stacked on the shelf below it. Care-worn sofa smashed against the wall. A window. Fat cat curled on sill.

"Here, Angel, come to Lotty. And what have you been doing since I've been gone? Been a good kitty?" Lotty's hands sank into the deep white fur that was sitting on her lap. It was all warm and soft like a muff. "Tea's boiling, Angel. Come along now," and Angel padded after her into the kitchen, purring contentedly.

Every day Angel got fat on cream and muffins, wise on Lotty's anecdotes of the past. Angel couldn't reciprocate the chatter, but her ear

was easily bent. She was a good listener to everyone, including the Richters, Stevensons, and anyone else who gave her a bite to eat, never mind the insinuations and implications that were made concerning her main provider. All in all, Angel was a very philosophical cat.

Just the other day when Angel was making her rounds, the talk started all over again. "What do you suppose the old lady was running from, coming here all secret and peculiar like? Yeah, I bet she's got something to hide — like maybe a past!" after which there was always an incredulous giggle. "Maybe the cops were after her?"

"For what? Being a public nuisance? She's too weak to do much of anything worthwhile."

"I think she's rich — you know, an eccentric. Read about them all the time passing themselves off as ordinary people and trying to live the way ordinary people do. Yeah, I think she's nuts. Best to stay away from her."

"I bet she had a lover and he died in the war. She first came here in 1945 you know, her and her little green bag. All wild-eyed and fearsome like. We knew there was something strange about her from the start. It wasn't natural for a youngish woman to come all alone with hardly any belongings. And you know she's never got any mail — ever. Not even a note from a record club. How's that for getting lost? And that stupid fat cat of hers wandering about the neighborhood from one handout to another. And then after it has stuffed its belly good, it gives you a look, shows you his backside, and burps."

"That cat's her familiar you know. Sure, old lady Meyers is a witch! Didn't you hear?"

Lotty tucked the chicken in the pot and lingered over the stew. Bloody business this. "Angel, do you think chickens know that that guy's coming after them with an axe and so try to fight it, or do they know and get so scared that they just give up their heads and then run around mad without them? And then do you suppose they still feel pain and are grateful for death . . . If they could see themselves now, Angel, I'm sure they'd be quite content, laid out all comfy and cozy in the dumplings and vegetables. What do you think? Angel?" Angel licked his whiskers and looked quite bored, finally nodding undecisively. Perhaps.

Lotty gently covered the chickens with the lid and threw out the month-old cookies. She just couldn't eat them all by herself. She didn't like girl scout cookies anyway. Lotty took a parting nibble and quickly lashed away a tear. It had been a horrible experience. First, the doorbell had rung. . . .

"Angel, is that ringing for me? Coming! Coming! Don't leave! I'm coming!" In a frenzy of puffs, Lotty flung the door wide.

"Do you want to buy some girl scout cookies chocolate mints and vanilla wafers real good only fifty cents a box." Two fawn-faced tots stood seriously at the door, their wares thrust automatically in Lotty's gut. They couldn't have been from this neighborhood.

"You want me to have some of your cookies?" Lotty's mouth quivered into an unsteady smile, revealing the gaping rows of yellow enamel spikes. "Come in, come in, children, and I'll buy some. But first," and she stopped fumbling through her change purse, "come into

the kitchen and I'll get you both a big glass of milk and a jelly roll." The wrinkled skin around her eyes and mouth twitched uncontrollably, and her voice became wavered and crackled. "Cold milk and a strawberry jelly roll," she smacked, and she worked her bad hip furiously into the kitchen, coming back shortly with a fistful of crumbs. "Here, have some, you sweet girls," and she put a palsied hand on the youngest one's shoulder, the birthmark brushing the pink of her cheek.

"No, we'll be late for supper," and the girl backed away.

"But you can eat here," and Lotty thought of the chicken stew and forced the girl onto the sofa, cramming her hands with cake.

Suddenly, "You leave me alone, you witch! Don't touch me!" Then hysterical screams louder and louder. Mad clutches for the safety of one another's arms. Pell-mell activity towards the door. Futile flurries with the knob. Success. Escape. Disbelief. Lotty Meyers stood mute and trembling in the middle of the room, staring incredulously at the dropped green beany through desperate pink-rimmed eyes. She was still transfixed when the men came. Then accusations. Denials. And talk. Talk . . . talk . . . talk. . . .

Clutching her shawl about her shoulders, Lotty sat upright in bed staring into the dark with her pink rabbit eyes. The street lantern cast furtive rays about the room, isolating its objects with its unnatural shaft of light. At the end of the room opposite the foot of the bed was a tangled heart-shaped locket and beside it a small picture encased in a dusty gold frame. A pretty young woman in Sunday dress and a foppish young man were standing under a weeping willow holding hands, and the woman's gloved free hand was clasping a locket that hung about her neck. The picture was worn and faded, but strangely alive and animated in spite of its age — for a grateful while a piece out of time. Outside, the stillness was broken by garbled voices smacking of Kelly's Bar. There was a few minutes of riotous, rummy laughter, and then more silence.

Lotty's pink eyes glistened and blinked in the dark as she cried for a short spell. "Angel, I can't stand it anymore." As Lotty hoisted her legs out of bed she stepped on the cat's tail, causing a hiss and a scratch down her leg. Lotty turned on the light and could see the blood oozing down her leg from beneath her nightgown. She quickly blotted it with the hem of her shawl, all the while staring at the cat stupidly. "Oh, Angel," she said, "you didn't have to do that. I didn't do it on purpose. Not on purpose. It was dark, you see, and I couldn't see you in the dark. Not in the dark." Lotty reached out to stroke its tail, but Angel lit out and was gone. Hurriedly, Lotty got into her coat, her fingers stiffly struggling with the buttons that were too big for the holes, and jerked out the door. "Good-bye, Angel. No use waiting up for me." No answer. Slam.

It was after one in the morning, and the streets were deserted, even the corners. Here and there a stray lamppost, maybe a forgotten porchlight lighting some obscure door. Everything else melted into the shades. But Lotty didn't stop to look at the scene around her, just kept going down the street and away from town. The stir of moving water got faintly louder and around the corner the bridge loomed up black in the distance. Not too many cars. Lotty stepped onto the pedestrian's walk and started across. The water appeared thick and languid over

the side, viscous like black molasses syrup. Lotty touched the cold stone of the rail with her finger tips. Never before had the rail felt like that — each grain in double relief. Cautiously, she put her foot on the lower rung and felt her weight. The height made her dizzy, so she stood there staring down at the water, waiting for her balance. Finally, with a sudden suck of her breath, she heaved her other leg up, and with one swing her bad hip was over, and she was seated on the rail top, perched like a fowl on a wooden fence. Suddenly somebody's arms were about her and Lotty felt a sudden sickness as she started slipping over the edge. It was like getting beaten up and she gasped for breath. Death grasp on her bun. Hairpins flying. Knot in scarf digging into her throat. Pulled sockets. And all the while her body was being painfully dragged over the rough, grainy rail to the side of some assailant.

"Got you, old girl. You just rest now and catch your breath — don't mind me." A big hulk of an old man heaved and puffed at the rail, bobbing over now and then as if to throw up. "Now then what did you think you were going to do before I came along?"

Lotty was sprawled out on the walk, leaning against the rail post. She was still breathless and frenzied. "I was . . . I was just looking at the water. You pushed me off."

"I should call the cops, you know. Can't just leave you here. No telling what you'll try next." The old man paced up and down nervously, rubbing the back of his neck. "The cops — somebody's got to be told. The cops . . ." The old man's voice trailed off in peculiar dismay.

"No need to tell anybody anything. I can look after myself. I've been doing it for forty some years, and I 'spect I can do it now."

The old man looked at Lotty thoughtfully and with relief. "Look after yourself you say. Well, I'll make a deal with you. You let me take you home and I promise not to tell anybody about your accident. But I won't leave you here to leap over the bridge like a cheap circus performer. Besides, the water's polluted. Miserable way to go. Miserable. What do you say, old girl? Do I take you home?"

Lotty reluctantly grasped his out-stretched hand and studied him curiously. "I live on Patcher's Street," she said.

Lotty sipped her tea timidly, peering at Mr. Ryan over the edge of her cup.

"Well, Miss Meyers, you make a decent cup of tea. I'll say that for you."

"You just drop a tea bag into a pot of hot water, Mr. Ryan." He looked at her, and it made Lotty blush more than ever. "Oh my! The muffins — I'm going to burn the muffins!" In her panic, Lotty knocked her chair down with her bad hip and rushed shamefacedly into the kitchen. Hidden behind the door, she scratched the back of her hand self-consciously. Oh for a bolt on the door.

"Those muffins sure smell good!"

The muffins! With renewed purpose, Lotty dashed them out of the oven and slowly and serenely walked back into the living room and offered the steaming plate to her guest.

"They're delicious, Miss Meyers." Mr. Ryan took two more and downed them with fervor. Lotty didn't bother to tell him that they were boughten. Instead, "You may call me Loretta," she said, and she blushed and looked down at the floor.

That night, Dan and Loretta ate the rest of the cat's muffins and got acquainted over a fast game of Scrabble, amazed at one another's obvious skill at the game — come to find out they both loved to work crossword puzzles — and later Lotty danced: "Any music?" "Just Sammy's Station." Click . . . We interrupt this program for a special news bulletin. A man was found murdered late this evening on Dike's Bridge — Click. Nervous silence, darting eyes. Click — I was waltzing . . . with my darling. . . . "May I have this dance? Now, Lotty, don't be afraid." "What was that Sammy was saying?" "Come, I insist." Dan slipped Lotty's hand quietly into his and gently stepped her about the room. Reluctantly, Lotty let her head drop against his shoulder, then gratefully let it stay there. It had been a while, but it still felt good. Dan was a marvellous dancer.

"I tell you there's something wrong about that old man. I wonder where on earth she met him. Can't say I trust him at all. Looks like the type of guy you'd find in a lineup. And they're always together. Always! I think he's living with her. I'm going to look into the situation — something's very strange."

"Look at them hanging on one another — like they shared a common liver or something."

"Naw, they're just helping one another down the street."

"Really, look at that! I wonder where they've been today."

"Maybe they had a special on bicarbonate of soda."

"Anyway, there's something very weird about that old man."

The conversation politely lulled as Lotty and Dan walked warmly by down the sidewalk. Dandelions were sticking ridiculously out of their buttonholes, and a daisy was smashed between their clasped hands, looking like an afterthought. Lotty wallowed in her golden bauble and saw through golden shades. Walking in the park, feeding pigeons, taking buggy rides down Hampton Square — whole new worlds she discovered, and old ones too. Lotty smiled dumbly through her cataract eyes and proudly tightened her grip around Dan's hand. The Patcher populace set their grins at her, then let their mouths relax when she wasn't looking. But today Lotty didn't notice. Dan had made this day special, something she would never forget and something nobody would ever take away. Lotty was engaged to be married.

Dan had been very quiet and moody for several weeks, and his bouts with Angel worried Lotty. "But, Dan, Angel has never done anything to you."

"She annoys me."

Whereupon Lotty would start to tear. "She ignores you, Dan. Why can't you just do the same to her?"

"She's pompous and puffed up and I won't take it from anybody, let alone a fat cat."

But Angel took his kicks with calm dispassion — they being but rumblings in her fatty depths — and merely stayed out of his way. But

Dan could feel her presence. Two weeks ago there was Dan livid and uncontrollable brushing cat furs off the sofa in which he had been sitting and shaking his coat in wild, exaggerated slaps. Ever since then, Lotty had been attending to the cat's hairs with microscopic precision, and Angel was kept out of doors whenever Dan was in. But invariably Dan would see the cat lying on the outside sill next to the stoop, switching its tail annoyingly. In vain, Lotty reassured him that tail-swishing was a very catly thing to do. Dan was personally offended. So Lotty worried more.

Did Dan really need her? Had he been as lonely as she had been before they met? He did go off sometimes, maybe to get away. Perhaps, he preferred his solititude or his old way of life, whatever it had been before. But questions were out concerning both their lives by mutual agreement. Then something lovely. Just sitting on the park bench overlooking the duck pond. Last of the breadcrumbs used up. Watching a squirrel feeding from the hands of a little boy, stuffing its cheeks, vanishing into the leaves of a tree, coming back for more. The green filling up with people and blankets and picnic baskets. Running youngsters. Chasing dogs. And then it happened. Dan had simply turned to her and said with those haunted, pleading eyes of his, "Marry me, Lotty."

Lotty rested her gray head on Dan's shoulder and closed her eyes, letting him lead her where he may.

"When, Dan?"

"Next week! Why, Dan, that's only one week away!"

Dan laughed at her thought, one of the few times he had laughed in a long time. "Yes, I thought we'd elope." And then as if to hush her, "Might as well do it up good. Can't ever do it over again, Lotty."

Lotty pressed his hand. "That would be lovely, Dan. Elope. And honeymoon — where?"

"Anywhere." Whereupon Dan kissed her abruptly on the doorstep and departed.

"Dan, wait! Where are you going?" But he was already gone.

Lotty slowly made her way up the stairs to her apartment and shut the door behind her. Angel was lying on the sill. "Angel, I'm getting married. Me. Next week. Me. Lotty Ryan . . . Lotty Ryan . . . Angel? Sleeping, baby? I love you, Dan." But Angel got up and shuffled into the kitchen. Time for muffins.

Lotty's stomach ached, her head pounded, and aspirin didn't help. What was keeping him? Today was the day, wasn't it? No, she couldn't be mistaking the day. They had even talked about it late last night before he left again somewhere. He would come pick her up at nine o'clock in the best cab the city had, and after depositing Angel at a reputable pound (to be sent for as soon as things were settled) they would then proceed directly to the train station. Get on train at 10:00. Breakfast at leisure, taking in beautiful country. Switch trains once — forget where. Two more hours of more beautiful country. Destination. This was definitely the day.

Lotty stared tearfully out the window overlooking the street, even

ignoring Angel asleep on the sill. Dan should have arrived three hours ago. Lotty pressed her head against the pane.

"Oh, Dan, you promised! You said you'd never leave me. Not ever, Dan. And look, Dan, look what I went and did for you. Just look at me, Dan. Brand new white dress and hair done up just the way you like it. No hairpins, Dan, but pretty new silver combs. And patent leather pumps, shiny new. Dan, everything for you! Where are you? Where are you!" Lotty stumbled agitatedly into the bedroom, trying to see through the tears, and grabbed her green bag. He had to come. "I'm ready, Dan—." Lotty stopped short and froze in front of the mirror. What was that being? It was immobile like a statue and all white and colorless like one, but with pinky-gray stains down the sides of its face. Chalky. But it wasn't smooth and marbly like the graceful classics in all those art museums, and it didn't have that high, awesome gaze. No, this one was pallid and ugly and grotesque. Two red splotches were on each sunken fleshy cheek like somebody took and minced red berries there, and the lips were gaudy and purple-red. It was as if the body's entire blood supply had ebbed away to three primeval sources and clotted there — soon to become stagnant and dried up. But most of all that look — a lifeless, nothing look — the original expression lost in a miserable mass of wrinkles.

Lotty stood staring with disgust at the figure in the glass as if it were an apparition, and touched a strand of matted hair behind her ear. The figure moved. "O my God, No!" Lotty's hip buckled, and she gave way to the floor, shrieking. Her comb fell out of her bun, and she grabbed it, scraping her birthmark. Scraping until it became raw and crossed and bloody. More blood, but Lotty couldn't get enough. "My God, help me. Help me!"

A knock on the door and a shout. Already aroused by Lotty's cries, Angel stretched on the sill and prepared herself for her customary eviction. But Lotty didn't hear. Louder knocks on the door until they became bangs, and then shouts. "Who . . . who is it?" Lotty finally answered in a trembly, thrilled voice.

"Lotty, open up. It's me, Dan." He shook at the lock on the door. "Is anything the matter? For God's sake, Lotty, let me in!"

"Dan, it's really you?" Lotty fumbled in her purse and quickly blotted her wound, wrapping her hand with her white lace hanky. Then pushing her hand painfully into her glove, she waited a second. Still no red showing. "Coming, Dan," and she jerked open the door. "Oh, Dan, you're here. You really came, just like you said you would. You're really here, you're really here," Lotty repeated over and over again, trying to lose herself in his chest.

Dan hugged Lotty's shoulders and patted her back to comfort her. "Of course I'm here, old girl. Don't be ridiculous. Now go get your things before we miss our train. Lotty, why are you crying?"

"Just let's sit a minute, Dan. Sit here and look out the window a spell. Tell me again all about how it's going to be, Dan. How beautiful and all."

Dan led Lotty to the sofa and Lotty nestled her old head comfortably on his shoulder. "Well, Lotty, we'll plan everything. Everything'll be just so — like it was meant to be. No nosy people to talk and pry and wonder and investigate into things they know nothing about, and—"

"What do you mean, Dan? Is somebody bothering you?" Lotty went stiff against his shoulder and stopped breathing.

"There just won't be any of those kind of people, that's all." He patted her arm. "They'll all be the good kind."

Lotty nestled closed to the strong, reassuring shoulder and forced out slowly, "You know something, Dan. There was a murder. I heard it on the radio. Happened that very same night that you came along and saved me. Dan . . ."

"Somebody not worth thinking about, Lotty. Vile and selfish and dishonest — not human, not even an animal. I knew him once upon a time. But we'll start our lives all over again, and we'll make it beautiful. And calm. I suspect that we'll live in the country someplace. Lots of open space and lots of green and sunshine and little animals and you can have your own garden and give tea parties—"

"And the house will be white as linen and gabled with a picket fence around it and there'll be a yard and a tree and you can work in the garden and when you get tired I'll have some hot tea and muffins waiting for you. And on Sundays . . . Sundays . . ." Dan let Lotty fall asleep in his arms, and he sat and waited, watching the cat flick its tail.

Finally came the knock on the door, and "Police. Open up."

Lotty looked up at the old man's face and started to cry. "I have to go now, Lotty. You understand, don't you. But someday, someday, Lotty . . . someday . . . someday . . .

Lotty sat still on the sofa, looking into the gray and silent room. "And on Sundays we'll just rest and be happy for ever more. Together." Lotty sighed and tore off the sticky hanky from her hand, scrutinizing her birthmark closely for several minutes. It was still there and it throbbed so much it almost pulsated with movement. "Angel, do chickens hurt this much do you think or . . ." Lotty's words slowed to a falter. "Why just look at the time!" Lotty put on her old coat and slowly buttoned it and tied her old shawl around her head. She glanced at the clock ticking idiotically on the shelf. The ticks echoed loudly in the room. It was already four o'clock and she was late. "You'll get your cream and muffins shortly, Angel. I'm sorry I've been neglecting you so," and Lotty went out and left the apartment looking like it always had — everything the same save for an old man's hat lying pinched on the sofa. Piece of needlework hanging on the wall. Group picture of children standing in front of a two-storied building. Dull gray window. Fat cat lying on sill, dangling its tail down like a tassle.

TENDER LOVE POEM No. 7

I can't be outraged at images
as a goatman possesses her

better to have loved on the hoof
than never.

Ken Norton

POEM WRITTEN OUT OF LOVE

1.

In November, gasoline cans erupt over burning leaves,
I am going under with the roots, beyond your skin,
grass that grew to stiff points and stopped growing.
Bent grass on a rock wall rising like water
blowing past, we drop to the tunnel. Fluorescent
fixtures wink in the forward cars, the jolt advances,
lights here flicker and fail. Sap-channels
are cracking, the veins tight as straw, winter
drives us here, say the passengers
elbowing in. Doors suck closed,
half-grinning runners slow and fall
back, tunnels branch and turn,
roots articulate themselves.
    I'm here alone, grass
lost above and burning,
    the root ends in a blind nub. In December, water freezes
just below my skin, its crystals surround me. Come in.

2.

I could never prepare for you. Tonight,
the first October midnight I forgot you, after
I had cleaned my desk, stacked papers
and books, your fury danced
on raw wood, arched
across blank paper.
I am still awake.

3.

Calendars accused us,
buses left from asphalt fields.
In August the words
of bodies we loved from
are silk fictions in a diary.
Your eyes snap cold and stop reading,
seeing my body is not the same you held
in certain rooms. He is a ghost
I could slip into like a glove.
On facing sidewalks, parades of you and me,
each self beside a fawning ghost who dies
across the huge curve of the page.
August is ending,

my shoulder sees
your gesture
reach in the dark, my palm
becomes your odor, your ear speaks
with my tongue.
All that we forgot
flames through two bodies
in burning glass focus,

the ant's caught in a tangle of grass,
they gaze into that lucid cloud to find
the world all arcing sun –

their form the vanishing point
of a Renaissance courtyard, diminished
beyond the cold stares of courtiers,
embedded in paint that crumbles
from the moment the brush
takes it to make this painting.

David Slabaugh

INDIAN KILLER'S RAG: THE WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

The West is like a photograph
You wish to forget.
Forego the time and place
Without space or timely footnotes –
West was an Indian grave
Raided after school, West being
A complaint for security;
Mountains can only do so much
As well as a mother's hand
You say, with quiet infinity.
West being a retake on Highway 93,
A junction with Highway 2
Pathetic, you say in memory,
Complete with an engraving:
The Ten Commandments, this
Being silent assurance,
Don't kid yourself, boy.
Just as poor as you or rich as he,
Plain people don't have delusions
Nor the good luck of television;
West again being a second chance
For those city farmers
The great plain of history
come up against hard drinking,
Cowboy pickups and the gun-rack snob
Outside the bar.
93 South, 2 East –
They're only highways, stretched tight
Without a centre, already tired as rot;
Childhood's Indian relics tell too much,
For all the West purports at giving,
I wish it back to the hands of the Blackfeet.

Jim Hilgemann

George Venn

THE PLUMB BOB MAN

"Stay here. I'll be back in a minute."

Karl watched his grandfather crawling, bobcat stalking bluegrouse, mouth opening and closing silently, toward the surveyors who stood talking beside their transit, its conical lead weight pointing perfectly downward among the three wooden legs. Sitting down on a boulder, he picked the leaves off a swordfern, always watching the rippling tan length sliding through the bracken below. If they hear him, they'll run. Then leaping from the ferns, pouncing on the transit, breaking its neck with a dull snap, men throwing up their blueprints at the unsheathed claws. Whirling, threatening the surveyors stumbling away through the brush, god damn sons a bitches stay off my land or else. Distant sound of an engine, a yellow jacket buzzing away, erratic zigzagging against a mountain. His grandfather climbed back to him, swaying through the bracken slapping heavily at his legs, redfaced, puffing, bluegrouse in his mouth, warm salt taste of fresh blood spattered on his jaws, in his eyes, feathers and down strewn in the grass by Nisqually.

"Here! I got another one for you." He pushed the perfect, pointed lead cone into Karl's hand — cold, smooth, heavy, a weight in a boy's pocket, flopping against his leg, walking away joking about the City of Tacoma dam.

Fresh from Vietnam, Karl stood in the greying dusk looking at the flat, riverless reservoir, the symmetrical sign and square lettering: CITY OF TACOMA POWER CO. ALDER LAKE. A MULTIPURPOSE FACILITY. RECREATION, POWER, FLOOD CONTROL. Beyond the black and white label lay the four cement piers of the hilltop school, now a schoolless island. On the other side of the valley, the old highway curved DEADEND into the water. Half a mile down, the trail to Old Crazy Dick's cabin. Go up there and throw rocks on his roof at night. Watch him come out, shoot up the huckleberry and salal and let out a blue streak and go back inside muttering. He's got a silver plate in his head. Hey Dick! Let's see your plate. Boys catcalling from a tree, just out of reach of the old soldier's flailing cane. Karl shifted his feet in the gravel and tried to reconstruct Alder before the war and reservoir by going down the highway or by going down the trail from the school, remembering to the right and left, fixing on the black fir snag — lightning struck it, burned all alone on Stall Mountain until rain put it out, sizzling, steaming, smoking like a roman candle on the fourth of July down at Nisqually.

He'd planted the charges easily, something he'd learned in the Marines. No, it didn't build MEN, but where else could he have gone and still have been taught so much: sniper, tunnel rat, demolition, you name it. Night after night tying the fuses, biting in the cap, brass or copper hurting his teeth, hoping it wouldn't blow his head off, hissing fuse, pulling the trigger for Company D. Then running and hiding, the flash and thunder signifying an end of tunnels or bridges or supplies or . . . You name it and it's as good as done! So rent a rowboat at the Alder Reservoir Boathouse, load it and make as many trips as you like. It would work. It had to, alone at night, unsuspected, unseen, the dam unguarded. How easy! At dusk now, the echoing bonk of frogs, a high fine trill of crickets, or a random splash of a heartless hatchery kokanee, the circle of little waves flowing out like an undulating labyrinth. The bastards hardly fight — no flavor either. Listening, Karl walked down to the water to undress. But as he started to take off his coat, he heard his father and grandfather talking down in the house where he knew they were, where they had to be, where he had to be too.

"Tell that son of a bitch to get out and take his checkbook with him!" Bristling whiskers and profanity, the old porcupine scratched a quill on the wood stove and sucked flames into his pipe, warm cloud in his mouth, staring through it with fat red eyes at his son and Harry Wright.

"We never homesteaded this place so we could sell it. You know that, Ernie. We come out here to stay, and if you'd stayed as long as I have, you wouldn't sell either, check or no check."

"But sir —" Harry Wright protested.

"Don't sir me. I work for a livin'. Now. This place still isn't for sale, and even if it were, I wouldn't sell to people who don't know what the hell they're doing."

Wind ruffled the water, blurring Karl's vision of the house on the bottom, russet barn, russet-white cattle, russet chickens scratching and pecking under trees in the orchard, Rhode Island dust bathing on a hot summer afternoon. He shook off his coat and sat down to start on his boots, scuffed toes wanting a spitshine in the Portland bus depot, the fast cloth popping like a sail filling in the wind. Rifles fire. Karl hugging the ground, flat belly down hard. That instinct. Driving along, hear a sonic boom and you're out of the car and in the ditch before you think, civvies and all. Where am I anyway? Can't hunt any more. Firecrackers put him back in the hospital at Ft. Lewis. Are you sure you're all right now? Behind a cedar stump, Karl listened: their voices sounded faint but clear, like shouting at Gramp from up on the mountain.

"Whaaaaaaaaaat?" Gramp's voice wavered back in the wind.

"Take another shot at the son of a bitch, Ernie. Right there behind the barn."

"You shoot him. If they got dams on the Skagit and the Skokomish, the Deschutes and the Nookachamps, then they'll get one here too. Let 'em."

"I must not have brung you up right. Pass me a biscuit and a chop, will you Ernie? Can't expect a man to fight on an empty belly." Ernie crawled to the stove and brought the porcupine his food.

"Where's Karl?" As he ate, the porcupine looked at Ernie, making Ernie water around his tongue, making him swallow.

"I sent him down cellar."

Press your cheek close to light between logs, hear dragging and guns firing overhead, Ernie and Gramp talking. Holding your weights in one hand, slingshot in the other, watching yellow monsters ripping skin off your back, clanking of steel tracks, burning brushpiles, ground shaking. Wonder where your mother's gone. If your house will float like Gramp says — cedar is the most floating wood you ever saw.

"How long you think they'll stay out there?" Cabin fever was driving Ernie up the wall. He wanted to get out, but the siege and the porcupine kept him in, and Ernie had no choice but to obey his parents in all things, for this was well-pleasing unto the Lord. Right? They were down to salt pork and sourdough, but even that would be something he could stand — man shall not live by bread alone, right — if the boy downstairs didn't look so much like his mother. And if she were here, if she hadn't decided she liked herself more as a little girl than as a wife in bed, it wouldn't be so bad. But loggers can't stand everything. Now, Ernie was hungry for some fresh eggs and butter, and a woman, a can of Ole and a powersaw.

"Maybe a minute, maybe longer. Can't ever tell what folks who don't know where they belong will do." The porcupine checked the safety on his quill, squirmed on his soft vulnerable belly to get a better look out the window past his straw barricade. Outside, he heard the miniature voice on the bull horn exhorting him to consider this seriously, cajoling him with rotund promises, commanding him to give up and get out! Now! While the crackling little voice — the still small voice — carried on, Ernie and the porcupine listened and ate, and when it stopped talking, the porcupine raised himself, exposing his belly.

"Bullshit," splattered incontrovertibly on the barn floor, a forkful mixed with bedding flying back at the silent funnel. The porcupine ducked, uncupped his hand and stared at Ernie dying, his mouthful of pork choking him as the bullets drifted in the window again, like curious horseflies.

"I must not have brung him up right. He shoulda known better than to stand up and look right out. I taught him better."

Karl laughed to himself as he took off his shoes and socks, picking the lint and crud from between his toes, thinking about his weights, looking at the steep-black-green mountains above the border of scrub alder and maple around the reservoir. Can you still bite your big toe? He would swim to the island and wait there for the sudden fall and rush of water toward the destroyed dam. It would be easy to make it back after that. Just follow the deertrail along the ridge, cut down past the water tank, jump the creek behind Hedborgs, picking blackberries along the way, turning his tongue purple. And he might even see A.R., if she was out riding after school. She was good in the woods at night. But that was before the war and the reservoir, before he got all jumpy being tailey charley, always watching both ways. Something moves behind you, shoot the son of a bitch. Burn him off. He'd probably kill her now if she walked up behind him. But she was home in bed someplace with a preacher and three kids. Her sister might be around. He wanted A.R. He'd always wanted her, his mouth on her sweet, soft

nipples at night in the woods, rising, getting hard, hot — A.R. I love you I know it Karl please let me — then her mare broke loose and they had to go home; her father would come looking if her horse came back riderless, trailing reins into the dusty yard. Karl even wrote her, telling about the overgrown monkeys and war disease, telling her to remember the night in the woods. But he was cured, those massive doses of penicillin. Karl picked at his big toenail and smiled. He might even bring her back here so she could listen to the river again. All the blacktails and blackbears, crows and bald-faced hornets boiling out of the ground. Karl rubbed his crotch in anticipation. Then he listened again into the motionless water as voices broke the surface, floating chunks of soggy driftwood, or a bluebutt hemlock, or a turtle, or a fish playing with a bobber.

"Where's Harry?"

"Over getting his ass checked by the engineers. I wouldn't go over there, if I were you."

"There's some guy from the Fish and Game on the phone."

"Tell him to call back. Did you see my five eighths socket?"

"Hell no! What's Harry catching it for? That house again?"

"You know what I'd do? Take one of those D-9's over there and set the throttle wide open and let 'er go."

"What's wrong with a B-25? God dammit! I can't ever find anything around this fucking shop."

Bare feet sinking into the duff as he stood up, Karl unbuckling his belt and looking around to see anyone watching, his white shape almost merging with the silver of dry barkless stumps. Not much light, now and then a moon disc cutting through scudding clouds, slicing the uneven ridges of thunderheads rolling at Mt. Rainier. Dropping his trousers heavily, stepping out of them, then folding the creases together, like Ernie taught him, like the Sergeant told him. Keep your hair combed, your face washed, your teeth brushed, your nails cleaned, and you'll always have a job. Remember that Karl! Do what you're told and you won't get into trouble! Yes sir. Karl heard the whine of choppers hovering for a landing on his bare legs, skids touching in the black grass, settling to probe the jungle. Get that son of a bitch. Goddam mosquitoes anyway! Karl, poised, ready for the kill, thinking of napalm, when the water opened its mouth, distracting him.

Thud of a canister upstairs, Gramp shouting and shooting, acrid burning fog, tears hot in his eyes, sneaking out the door, terrible choke and cough behind, the weight of his sack in his hands, the cool and dark rootcellar, dank vegetable smell and voices outside yelling where did he go, did you see that kid.

"What happened?" Harry Wright leaned over several Tacoma shoulders with his flashlight held high.

"He's dead."

"What from? Suicide?"

"Tear gas, Harry. Probably had bad lungs. You know how old men are."

"Any sign of the boy?"

"Nope. Smells like there's something dead around here."

"He must have got away. Tell the engineers they can drop the gates."

Karl crept back to the house, rat running up a mooring, strong smell still in Gramp's room, in Gramp's pillow. Waking to water sloshing in and out the front door in the dark, then up to the windows, flowing over the mantle? Will it float? I don't know. Upstairs shouting into the morning fog, a boat coming, afraid to jump but jumping. Hurry up kid, we haven't got all day. Sack carrying him down colder and colder down, hand grabbing in his hair. Floating drowned mice and rats and snakes and everything swimming, water alive and ashes everywhere, chickencoop suddenly bursting to the surface full of drowned Rhode Islanders, tilting and sinking slightly, oarlocks squeaking, driftwood knocking against the bow, huddling cold and wet in the thwarts, fog thick above rising water.

"Whatta we do with him?"

"Oh, leave him for now. He won't go anyplace, will you kid?"

Karl alone running into the woods with his sack, a weight flopping against a boy's back. Behind him, men's voices like hammers pounding huge nails into planks, hiding from the searchers and spotlights until morning and sneaking away toward the N.P. tracks. Behind him, a house of hewn cedar listing, full of tables and chairs and beds and pictures and trunks and a wooden leg, a house drifting with the flood, derelict black eye in a fleshless socket.

Then run at the front of a rolling boxcar, ride the rods around the country like Ernie. Be sleeping by the tracks outside a little town in Georgia. Wake up, have a couple of little kids come up when you're thirsty and hot, thinking of Nisqually.

"Hey, you kids want to make some money?"

"What you want, mister?"

"Here's a dollar. You keep the change and bring us back two bottles of Pepsi. O.K.?"

"You got a mother someplace?"

Karl and his friend lay back in long rustling Georgia grass and looked at the inscrutable Georgia sky, waiting for a drink. A car skidding on gravel, gunsfire, whizzing overhead, and come out with your hands high. Some cops thought they were somebody else. How much money you got on you? $1. Vagrancy. Out after three days. And in. And out. On the rods again, hearing about the days when bindle stiff meant a way of life, the rails and wheels smacking triplemeter in your head, Nisqually, Puyallup, Kapowsin, in your head in your head.

So wash dishes in New York and live in a YMCA and take a shower, your body hot and soapy, water beating like little hammers on your back, raining on a roof. Close your eyes and put your face up to the water slapping on your skin like Nisqually under the upper falls with A.R., deep clear pool with native cutthroat darting, A.R. diving so nude. Then hear the door open and turn around and wipe your eyes clear in time to see a huge, red cock with a hand pumping it, two red eyes staring at your crotch, the wraith saying would you like to come down to my room buddy, just before he comes all over and you're sick and want to kill him — a weight between his eyes.

Then a toilet paper factory in Pennsylvania where you inspect

eighteen rolls every second, where a girl won't leave you alone, who tantalizes, who wants a husband, or a father for her little boy, who cuts you off and makes you want her more. But she lacks the calm, the smooth voice, the easy movements of A.R. walking up behind you in the woods, her finger in your ribs saying guess who.

So join the MEN, old enough now to lie successfully, no longer wrapping yourself in newspapers in boxcars or bumming on Christmas Day in Walla Walla, no longer singing an hour for a cup of coffee and a doughnut in the rescue mission with its expensive blinking sign: ETERNITY WHERE? blink off, blink on JESUS SAVES! blink off. A fat, smooth-faced preacher telling you about your sins and John Barleycorn, your stomach growling and cramping, empty for a week. So sign and swear and shave for three squares a day and a bunk, pulling the trigger singing this is my rifle, this is my gun, this is for pleasure, this is for . . .

Running his fingers up the small plastic buttons, then throwing his arms back and shaking, Karl caught the heavy shirt by the cuffs and folded it neatly. Several miles away, the high Alder Dam stood solidly in the dark, arching and curving against the reservoir, cement bone in the throat of the Nisqually. Water sliding in gleaming sheets down the spillway, three hundred feet down where Nisqually began again, a glacier river thick with silt in a bed of boulders. Pulling off his teeshirt, Karl dug the lint and hair from his navel and held it up to smell it; sometimes important things came back that way. But not now. Then he took his shorts by their thin elastic and pulled them down. Naked now. Ready. In front of him the water ran thick with words, like smelt running silver, flashing at the mouth of the river in the fall.

He dove deep into the reservoir, water cold and murky, his feet fluttering, arms reaching in front, hands pointed together, gliding from the momentum. Staying under with his eyes open, he searched the bottom for his weights, for toys he might have lost or a treehouse he might have built, searching for anything he could reach down and pull out of the muck before he had to breathe. How long can you stay under, Karl? A.R. dove with him into the pool. Finally Karl broke the surface, a rainbow throwing the hook, water splashing chaotically, his body muscular and writhing as he fell back and looked around, treading water. You lost, Karl. Didn't you? Smooth blackness broken by his head, buoyant but heavy. Clearing his throat with a scraping gutteral spit, he turned on his back, deadman floating until he caught his breath. Arms outspread, feet apart, head back, listening to the voices lapping in his ears, their pressure on his drums.

Raucous cawing of crows, firboughs bending, one sitting sentinel, ready to caw and fly when Karl shoots lead from his slingshot. Or a bell ringing on Sunday morning, Gramp pulling the rope, rasping it through the hole drilled in the church ceiling, cane tapping with the shuffle of feet in squeaking black leather toward the sanctuary. Or a cougar screaming far away at night like a mother dying in the woods. Or a grouse exploding beside the trail, slap and whir of feathers and then dead quiet and where did she go Karl, did you see where she lit, heart thudding in your ears. Gramp snoring, Ernie rattling the stove, snapping kindling, chicken flopping around, gurgling and squirting blood, the corporal's artery, head on a chopping block. Makes you

want to eat fish, doesn't it. Karl turned back on his belly, looking ahead for white blotches of the old schoolhouse piers as he started again for the island.

Rolling from side to side, laying white arms in front, pulling himself through the water, his ventral fin shriveled and cold, feet still fluttering, heavy swash of watery voices in his ears, A.R.'s probing love tongue at night. Winded, he stopped and lay over on his back for the deadman float, but as his feet sank, he touched something. Instinctively, he pulled his feet back and tried to look into the water. Black wake. So he dove, a harlequin feeding on Nisqually, his bill in thick mud and grass, clutching two handfuls, springing for the surface, losing the mud from the ridge below the island. Swimming again toward the white schoolhouse blotches, he touched in the mud and weeds and stood up, dripping body half out of the water. The trail along the top where A.R. rode after school, a place they had been in the grass, a place where no one could find them. If you take your clothes off, I'll take off mine, and promise you won't tell anybody. A secret. A.R. I love you I know it Karl but don't tell anybody. A loud voice from the bottom saying this is my son with whom I am well pleased. And a kingfisher whisking down over the water saying it over and over, perched on his lobe, hammering like a woodpecker in his ear, driving a hot spike, a stake through a grommet, grinding into the ground.

Feeling with his feet for something familiar he could pick up. What's that one, A.R.? He bobbed under and loosened a boulder and lifted it, back bent with a weight twice heavy on the surface, a weight to roll down a hill, a muskrat breaking water. Roll it! Watch it bound and crash and careen, then the noise stops and Karl and A.R. laughing and looking for another boulder. Here's a big one. You push it. I pushed the last one. Let's get our clothes on. No. Swimming? What if? I know a place where they won't, past the upper falls. Karl slid the rock off his knees and tried to hear it rolling downhill underwater, tried to see the little breaks in the surface. Then he rested, drunk against a streetlight, singing to himself the first song of hundreds he knew, but hundreds he had not remembered for years. Yet another song, splashing, trying to squeeze a handful of water. And another, playing, turning the water white around him, his hands and arms wanting to flow smoothly, gracefully legato, like a conductor who held the notes in his hands and let them out like birds being set free, a flock of tree sparrows rising, spreading, shifting, reforming, emptying the winter sky into a blue spruce, rusty-capped notes resting on rigid limbs.

Then he heard the river again. Just hold on boy. Don't let go of that branch or you're a gonner. Fast white water roiling under his feet, then smashing at his face, tumbling end over end downstream. He thought he could walk that windfall, but slipping on the spray, dangling over Nisqually. Sure I can swim Gramp. Well, don't fall in anyway! Faster over rounded boulders thumping in his back, Ernie and Gramp racing the current, saplings in hand, red mouths open, Karl carried away with the turbulent roar of rapids ahead and shifting river. White water cold around him, silt in his nose, floating silverbellied away. I can swim, can't I. Bobbing downriver, appearing and disappearing, crash and mist of falls ahead, green thick water tearing through broken cement, a disintegrating hole. We just about lost you that time boy.

Violently head over heels, topsy-turvy, the falling swimming singing soldier thrashed at the suck of the current, behind him dank popping dead grass and waterlogged weeds, square outlines of apparent foundations sliding away. But I was senior lifesaving. But I can't hold on to this! My arms ache. Listen to the river, Karl. Hear the rocks pounding together, hollow bonk of rocks against each other under water every night in the canyon. Look at the mountain, Karl. Watch the glacier working. Thick water thickens, pouring down and away, swirling wild toward Tacoma, chunks of Alder Dam riding the crest. Put some sinkers on your line, boy. You'll never catch anything that way. You've got to get down where the fish are. Karl floating, arcing clear, falling, cascading free, so far, so quiet, so easy, so light, so cold, so smooth, so heavy. But still light as a neat pile of clothes beside an empty reservoir, the trouser pockets and shirt pockets full of pointed lead weights, lead weapons, permanent collection of plumb bobs waiting to be dangled from strings, testing for depth and straightness. Deadly splash in a pool thick with sockeye wondering where to go now.

A COLD MORNING IN NOVEMBER

They found him
cold in the morning
before the sun,
before bells threw cold mournings
into a chilled wind
from black mountains over Livingston.

Where is Montana?
A bit place marked by degrees of cold,
and people,
giant shadows across mountain faces
looking South to a sun
that promises light.

I've come to see an old friend
left in dusty years, in a room of dust,
the only color
a calendar from home.
I see him in the mirror,
he knows I've lied.

Tomorrow they'll hold what happened yesterday,
a line of faces flushed with whisky red.
I'll sit, hoping to catch a bell
and preach my sermons over 25c beer.
They're collecting money for flowers,—
me, without a goddamned dime.

Bill Waters

SHARON O'.

The new Arachne sits,
Spinning
In the center of her web.
She weaves
Tangled deceits and perfidies;
Catches friends
Bumbling lovingly through her lair,
Ensnares,
Anesthetizes,
Drains,
And leaves behind the husks of love,
Cluttering corners,
Indistinguishable from shells
Of enemies.

M. F. Hutchinson

A SUICIDE POEM INCOMPLETE

I grew up here,
a middle man of middle ends
something in the middle of nothing,
(to them a means of keeping clocks)
held hands and smiled
like all those years were lies,
and still I come,
Only the road changes,
leading me in broken lines
toward this factory town of middledom.
No gold watch or pension plan
that promised flowers in the Spring.
She deserved better,
I always told her to myself
until the wind blew in my face
and froze those lies against the mountains.
Maybe I'll go to warmer places,
wait for weather permits
that give this its only excuse,–
but I'm not a middle man,
I can't go to an end
meeting somewhere between
this marble and a cold barrel.

Tonight brought wind for a dying candle,
closing both ends of this middle valley
and rumors reached from high in mountains,
look for me before tomorrow,
before you turn the light to die,
I grew up here.

Bill Waters

4 DAYS IN MOURNING

November came in a grey sky,
sad forms beating toward some end,
the great circle grew taut
and I didn't know those cries
or years of lieing that ended Summer.
There will be no Spring to sing my songs
my tears fall dry in November's wind –
already the storm mounts my stairs.

Drums are beating cadence
that count flights to my door,
21 up, the drums keep drowning,
and hiding for days behind a wooden mask,
I take my only thing for sorrow,
no lies,
no tears,
only what those years gave
and break the circle
bringing both ends to bear.

Distance has reached me through a weathered line
they're raising monuments to you,
but foundations were always your own.
I have no plaster on my hands,
they are the red of living.
You always made a fool of me
and now I wear those clothes.

Bill Waters

SUNDAY MEAT

Father blew on the hardwood charcoal
to make it red as iron for Sunday meat.
He shrugged the prospector on Whiskey Creek
a blunt edge for his broad axe. A short blow
over the blade, his red wrist trimmed aspen hearts,
punched mites into notched logs. Minutes later
I pulled one out by its dry white head,
touched the yellow whorls wet with frost,
skimpy dampness of this morning's sweat.

Leggerini's square barn danced in his breath.
An ancient ponderosa stump, troubled by laws
for wind and heat, tempted a young boy
to push his sandy arm shoulder-deep
in any man-channeled spring.
The west wind, uncle with the hard hand,
pinched lawless heat in an egg of air.
Charcoal burned itself out, he said.
Ice-cold gravel is as edible as smoke.

Tom Madden

THE LEGACY OF A WOULD-BE ASSASSIN

"for me, the best swan song
is the death rattle before
the firing squad of a tyranny."
—Alexandros Panaghoulis, 1968

The snow is falling. It is falling
the way snow falls, deadly white,
heavy as iron. Trees are bending.
Saplings are confused and will snap
no doubt. Birds have simply frozen.
Light fumbles at the window, brittle,
finished like frost. Acquired glass
shifts in the sink. —All is in balance
as if some great weight were coming
or as if what is common has suddenly
paused for one last and final look.
The look is cold, the look of an old leaf
left crazed, done by the wind.
It is not for you. It is for me.

In the comfort of my home I reach
for a new hold. To my wife I said
"Let and let live, the son-of-a-bitch
has it coming." A parting shot?
Front page for a purpose?
Table talk over breakfast cups?
Our dreams are never careful.
They've broken us before. There,
a puppet lies in the corner, our room,
a rag doll with brass eyes and a mouth
full of mold. We took him in.
He was crucial enough. Something
to rush us through our coffee, the crust
of our wedding raked upon us. The gifts.

It is no matter. We will survive.
Our children will grow to know us,
ignore our grief and die.
So few remember we abuse ourselves
in better moods: ambivalent hero
amusing, self-inflicted wound.
It is nothing. History can bury
its nose. The grave are dead to the world,
dead wood for a box, a flag perhaps,
a nation on its knees running the wind.
It's quite Greek to us, Alexandros —
I mean your attempted aim at a prevailing arm
of state, a Prince in Rome protesting
your execution, and you, protesting this:
a stay of execution, a pat gift,
your life. What is it, death?
Who are you? Where men pray,

do they lean to move the bullet,
learn to kneel pressing the sod?
And the families of women, always
themselves in black holding back
everything til then, is this it?
And me, am I to sit here spinning
a wheel, fortune-misfortune,
miles away from it – as if it
were mine to wield with impunity
on sofas, without fear of fear
and too much sugar in my coffee?

Behind the sapling and the neck,
the wedding knife and ice,
the cream and spoon, powder, shot,
blindfold, bad grape and rush,
the magician in our women, metal
in our men, the birds that can't sing,
the tag end and the cup –
all we hold dear to life or near to death
–who will know the tangle of assassins
at our feet, our arms in the wind
and wrists at the wall, the beds of roses
and blankets of brass, the deep seeds
we salute, and who, who will gag
the molting swan, rattles in a throat?

John Holbrook

THE CLASSIC EGGNOG IS MADE OF RUM

I feel like I'm getting fucked.
The honey in this hive is too green.
A home is made of good skin.
Bees pick on my watch.
The lines in my pencil forget.

My sensitive end's a tip-off.
A corkscrew on the bottle,
I go up your pipe like smoke.
This is breath, my boat
in your sail, air underwater.

Remember the way, all in the dark?
(So I blackout with flowers,
bright beads, up a skirt to my hip!
Her skin is for keeps!)
The sky lights up like a match.

You're back. It's been tough
Jumping off the top of my head.
O, I've had it with good behavior –
now all I want to get is fucked over
and over and over and over.

John Holbrook

PERIPLUM III: GOING HOME THE 2nd TIME: HAS IT CHANGED SINCE YOU'VE BEEN GONE?

1.
She turned again to the wind,
more bitter now that night was approaching,
and picked her way among rocks and lichens,
moved against the slopes, and up
toward the place where water rills
cold and sweet, a fog threads
in the morning chill.

There were seven of us there
the day he began to laugh.
At least three of us, I know,
formed the question in our minds;
and when one of us asked it
he only answered with more laughter.

When he could finally speak
he told us he had laughed at us,
carrying our things around, packed,
as for a trip,
and reminded us of what the girl had guessed, that
"home is where the suitcase is."

against the slopes,
past trees and the remains of snow to find
"the long gorge choked with scree and boulders"

"I found a stream that mirrored my face perfectly,
in the darker hues of the water;
Its taste was cold and clear.
But to bend to drink
was to see that reflection."

2.
She sensed the question was wrong,
but asked anyway
"How did you get there,"

and I answered
"did you see the rocks thrown up in the mouth of the canyon?
or the trees there, leaning East and stripped on one side by the wind?
The trick is to be happy anywhere
once you've seen that desolation."

The circle again,
what's in it and how it got there.
And the questions I, in turn asked her,
"do you like it? can you
live there? is that
enough?"

can you live in an empty house
but, she answered, I haven't got that far yet
but no, I answered, yes you have,
you started there.

Charles Hall

TRESTLES BY THE BLACKFOOT

Fools by chance, we travelled
cavalier toward death. Fish ran up
to break the black pools
we could not reach. Evening
and the rattle train shook trestles
one quiet inch behind our eyes.

Why not this sentimental stance?
You, me, the shaggy manes
we chose to disappear, inky caps
so spurious we clapped
our hands for calm. You see
the danger in your pose? One foot
between the ties, the other
in your mouth? Inky does

as inky do. It just won't do.
Funky jokes can't separate
that beggar from his meal.
Let's be nice, pretend we sail
twelve feet out and down,

perfect cats returning from their night,
sunrise, knives between
their teeth, lies as clean as foam
we leave behind our toes.
Sliced and faded, those fish
will know us by the noise we chose –
cool train rattle, steel on steel.

James Welch

THE SPY

My previous connections, Staffel Horst Wessel
and the rest, were unsuspected. Barker liked me,
the Captain thought me cultured. Yes, I believed
in evil in those days. Massed troops, the calibre
of cannon – these lay scattered in my charts.
My wireless sang stiff the lists of death.

Mission after mission, I dropped
in moonless air, the parachute
exploding open overhead to land me
in some sooty lane, eventually
to pry positions from a general's wife,
rendezvous the sub, and change the war.

Then one night, floating down, I felt the end.
There had been signs – plague
gone wild in Cadiz, the Dutchman seen
off Malta, duplicity as painful now as love.
It should have been poetic, a letter
signed Don Thanatos, perhaps

a frightful dream. But only this – stars
gone cold in blackness and the rushing sky.
Then I stood shaking in a field amid the silk,
bawling in a country that was mine.

Dave Foy

MOVING TO A TOWN

He waits the empty street like a book.
Follows his hand left to right
the slant of tire tracks, their curves
indenting into one line, some twenty miles west,
the better end of his plot. The land he left
for the right kind of living.

When you left, loneliness was real.
That window you watch the street through
interests you more than the street, or the bird
still on your front porch
you thought was you. I watch you
watch the window, this repetition
from verse to verse, chapter

to chapter and the appalling snow,
offers more from door to door.
A ghost who snapped your rusted latch
and lost the cattle three days, drifts away
beyond my pen. I herd iambs into puns, watch
across the open snow, you in your window yawning the ghost.
Down the block in any direction, along walks
nobody mends, neon hisses off fences of wind.

Hal Spencer

UNTITLED

I find every so often
empty lots to wobble over,
elbow and shoulder about. I face that
should Vietnam be transmutable
and apparent as half a worm
squirming in a half eaten apple is,
and was hopefully the only half,
that then I could return,

My pack of no returns wholly off
my back and into the dirt. Now after
a slow glance through a red window pane,
I need to hear you hear
what you are saying about war.
Can you smell it's exterior calm?
and spell it backwards even. Yah
it hits here, and there is no red badge.

Hal Spencer

SORRY YOU'RE SICK

Chicago-tough Sally you must
get out of that hospital
and back to your best bad house
in Livingston County,

Last summer you nibbled
a friend's ear while he
drank in his waders,
you giggled, prom-struck,

and Sally, I hope you're
better, now. It's winter
cowboys need something more
than lanolin on their chaps,

need warm whiskey, jukebox
and your girls,
like in Kansas City, chosen
on the hoof.

Get well old dear.
I'm driving to you,
the car heater blowing
across some divide I found.

J. D. Reed

A CRYING SHAME

Sneezing was her only hang-up.
Tender moments in the lilacs
always ended with a Kleenex,
and twenty-two of her best years
were spent indoors
hating spring.

Bruce Kenison

COTTONWOODS

When I sleep, trees flex
muscles, break my sidewalk
with their toes. I carved hearts
on a trunk. They put a fist
through my roof. With floodlight
and buzz-saw, I cut him off
at the ankles, but the others
got mad, spit leaves on my lawn.
That spring, I hammered a house
from a pile of bones. At night
it jerked, shook, groaned,
and outside by the window,
the trees were holding hands.

Bruce G. Kenison

DIARIES OF HANNAH FORD

November 6, 1589

I return to the ordered tomb and fall
stumbling fall in the garden, kneel
beside your rock and wait for the sea.
Thy will be done. My long October ought
to be forgiven. Here your law is worms.
What gain to me who ran? My still-born Christ,
if I grow out of hell I die. Your love
won't be the violet scent of automatic
writing. You are no thing and I must touch
all wind. Before your touch was leaves, I ran –

I will be finding, found unfertile, you.

Why do you claw and crack the whip that drove
my love to hang on that other tree? O force
you are not honey, flute, or nettles or the grief
of the Avignon Pieta, but being, leave
a room of apprehension. Born, desire
unsatisfied, I, like Daphne, cried for change.
I warm my trunk with a dead bird. My dove,
explode inside my budding arm. Descent
to fall is imminent. I was in flight
the stubbled mile beyond Gethsemane.

Austin Grey

THE RIVER BESIDE THE DEPOT

This river turned to stone late November.
A warm wind cracked epitaphs
on its face. Only rivers never die.
Under five feet of black
rocks run-on like good poems
or screams of children, fading.
Morning left with the sparrows.

A bird with a crooked look
passed once, headed North,
his wild flight beating at your eyes.
That gray form made this river
an ocean. He's a crow
or a child counting each ripple,
a day; each wave, a year.

I know this silence brought by wind
can't keep bells from their sullen
sound, the organ from its player.
Look. The river isn't lonely anymore.
The crow and his eyes are gone, sweat
and heavy breathing on your hand.
Look, your child, arm and fingers
buried in the sand.

John Kenley

A PINK HOUSE

Wind took rumors in November,
women from church bazaars,
mechanic with family photos,
a boy who whistled
her summer away.

She stayed by her stove
til the month froze
solid around her doors.
The sun died in a corner
far from dying flowers.

She willed the estate to no-one.
The boarder won't go
south for the winter. What holds
this hollow prisoner,
and laughs with the voice of wind?

John Kenley

FLOWER PYRE: WHEN ROETHKE DIED

On the backside of this cemetery,
unplotted land beyond grave stones,
concealed behind a wall of spruce
and hemlock, smolders this heap
of worn-out greens and blossoms.

The fetor, stinging stink, smacks
me across the eyes, makes water.

As if the flower flesh inside his father's
greenhouse – earth's clerestory, vast
cocoon of glass where green worms
butterfly – fumed like a city dump;

or that citadel in the sky,
centuries of cantilevering by
our ablest architects of the abstract,
exhausted to rubbish.

Wire backbones of wreaths and sprays
survive, snakes in an ashpit.

John Wheatcroft

REACHING HOME

They take big bulls like themselves,
by the teeth, small ones to keep me common
and young. They say the sun on the Swan
makes their mornings the want of a sack
filled with fish. The craft of my tin coat
and strong air sends them up the river.

Other men come to an end.
    Contemporary, like vegetables,
they do not care for the sun
unless it meets them half way,
through a window or facing a road.
What they fear is never spent, always a river.

Should age move me to that bank
with a twist in my arm like wire,
the slack on my line just right, my eye
on the run, I'll take my cues from those
with the sun slung over their backs,
one foot on the sand, one in the river.

And, like you, father, should my line
drift off the water, alone, half way
to the sun, I'll stand on bone, a bull's jaw.
And for any child at hand, yours, mine,
I'll thank your stars, set the hook, my teeth,
and thrive like the sky, my song a blue hum.

John Holbrook

Edmund R. Apffel

SEAGREEN INCORRUPTIBLE

. . . and this lady cartoonist drew pictures of a political nature. A very good one that I saw showed a group of North American Indians in traditional dress smoking a peace pipe with the white men—dressed as astronauts and scientists and scholars —and the smoke from the pipe rose in the shape of an atomic explosion mushroom towering over them, though they did not see it. The message behind it was a little vague (I was fourteen then); what attracted me most was the texture of the drawing. She told me that she had never quite been able to make up her mind about that one and had been 'working' it for some time. She said she used to erase the parts she wished to change but that now the paper was becoming too weak to withstand the pressure of her eraser. Now she drew over and shaded out to make changes so that her drawing was a vast palimpsest of revision and second ideas. The group of people was still clear, but looking closely I saw lines and shapes that were intended once but had now been replaced. I liked her drawing very much because it reminded me of those puzzles in cartoon books: "find the sailor in the treetops"; "in this drawing there are two steeples"; "can you see the beautiful lady in this picture; can you see the trees, the stars?" (E.R.A. Notes, Aug. '69).

"I see you fog of springtime still/kept by a trick of rooftops and roses/in subtle connivance . . ." (the hedge becomes clearer growing in its planned place not only for symmetry — not only for whim, but also for me — for whatever I may decide to do, the hedge will always be there, offering its silent providential support, even if I never through my whole life see it). In subtle connivance . . . a trick of roofs and roses, and from there? H. suggests a more oblique way:

And approaching the glittering stone rim one sees clearly that it will be burning to the touch, but one (the poet, **that** poet!) is (was) always tempted to experiment with the senses. The tarpits far below give rise to their distinct thousand-year-old stench and the oily eucalyptus (conceal!) make their offering, all pitch and fossil together . . . an exhalation of appropriate lamentation. On very hot days (like September 10) the fumes are especially pungent, past Jewish "highrises," past the first warnings of this civic-approved verdure ("Welcome to Labrea — avoid the laburnum" — oddly, in this eschatological showplace that surrounds the complex one is invited to stroll off the streets of humdrum into ideal bliss not by chummy signs or arrows, but random breaks in a hedge of roses — that you had seen, acknowledged, and forgotten — through which you suddenly see a winding concrete walkpath shaded by trees leading . . . where?) the leaves glisten in ephemeral bursts while the pools below them reflect through their branches an obsidian sheen that hurts the eyes. Until, that is, you approach on the wing the top levels of the really important part of the park . . . the really lasting thing (not the elegant, frightful remains of some careless pterodactyl

that was already there, honored and avoided, when the idea first entered the city fathers' hearts and couldn't very conscionably be ignored).

Modern concepts (such as "despair," "alienation," "revolution," "death"; your friend — and at St. Catherine's he's still known as the boy who made it big — supplies us with a wonderful catalogue via the interpretation of his clever blurbists, who, if they only knew, are the better part of his work) insinuating themselves into its architectural design inspired a desire for the greatest amount of natural light possible and the largest allowable (or illusionable) open space. Peter Segal in a sentimental — some say silly — mood conceived the notion of the sun illuminating the vast metropolitan collections and the wind tossing and playing about the hair of their sundry worshippers — so natural ("too late!" I often shout out to them, ha, ha!) At least it has no roof, save between six p.m. and seven a.m. when a really ingenious metal scalled baldachin emerges smoothly from a crevice in the concrete top of North wall and slowly creeps across the huge gulf to fasten itself securely on South wall locks — automatically, noiselessly. On gloomy days (like today, which is the only reason why I should be here writing sentimental memoirs, that is all!) the canopy is never opened at all and man-made light is humbly recalled (Segal, so H, who is a terrible romantic himself, tells me, wanted to design $50,000 worth of rococo Chinese lanterns to use during days of inclement weather to illuminate the galleries, but everybody laughed. The point was, of course, that the paintings would appear distorted in colored light. Segal, no one seemed to realize, had created an important immense art work of his own and wanted to wire it with as much imagination as he was allowed before . . . if people wanted to hang paintings in **his** building, fine, but . . . the whole thing was very funny, very sad). Segal — in glass cage or withered forest — please know that a certain amount of wind does whip merrily down through your playhouse in unpredictable gusts.

The walls are completely transparent and, as far as the newspapers are willing to report, "virtually impregnable" (this charming assertion is qualified parenthetically with the observation that they are actually only as tough as steel). Four terraces are built one above the other into each wall and fine art faces the light and view available through these enchanted sides behind the backs of tourists watching them. (It's such a simple structure, see, and it can't be ignored; I couldn't write merely that I saw your friend there in the "New Metropolitan Museum" and expect all that significant glass and stone to appear before reader's eye.) These ramparts are enclosed on the inner side by glass partitions again that allow the curious (the most curious, I find, are on the fourth level; lower levels seem to tempt less) to see into the other three sides and, most tempting of all, **down** into the miraculous garden laid in the central area enclosed by the museum "proper" (likeable word).

They do manage some lovely things there! A few minutes before six in the wind one night (as I waited on the sparkling warmed concrete of North-West wall for the secret, scarce audible armored hiss) I saw a gaggle of nursing nuns clutching and cavorting laughingly in the whirlwind of one of those animated blasts of innocuous breeze which, well-behaved and isolated flies along far above so artlessly until it reaches Segal's wind trap and dips helplessly down, shunted and teased while

it swells convivially into a two-second gale, jarring the frail trees and delicate water jets in the tiny make-believe garden below, boisterously tumbling ahead some visitor opening a door to disappear again into the park, silly confused and misdirected. Imagine Segal's pleasure if he could have seen what he and God had wrought there in the orange dusk and shadows: that picture of fluttering white veils and snapping skirts among his mandarin saplings and sprays and the rising ringing melodies of unsuppressed spinsterish mirth!

The whole atmosphere there is a little giddying. I understand (and applaud the subterfuge) the murmured injunction one hears so often in the higher levels, "Let's get some air!" One has a vertiginous sensation of suffocation and vulnerability in so much light and space. One walks in the center of the rampart finally indifferent to the fearful view to the right and the menacing sinister spectacle. Of course, after a number of visits one grows lax and assured, especially if one has been fortunate enough to witness one of the official demonstrations staged about every two weeks (usually for special visiting groups) when, after speaking casually and dryly about the incredible strength of the material of which the walls are made, a guardian or police lackey, at a signal from a beaming white-haired curator (many of these groups refuse to understand English), will abruptly hurl himself full into the invisible wall . . . no one is unimpressed.

On particularly hot afternoons (like that day's 'September surprise') the timeless fumes of tar and resin wax ruefully through the park and down into the court. It heightens my response to many works there — many otherwise mute effigies. It gives Konsmertz's "Sleeping Women," for instance, a texture of presence — one is more easily aware of the significant camel dung picturesquely scattered about the foot of the white, dusty well with the pungent reminder, and its black fire compliments one especially dolorous Palestinian's remarkable tear-creased face as she is caught with her mouth open in a toothless dark oval, "ai-ai-ai . . ."

Well, then, it was there that I saw your late Rockwell, poet, songster, minutes before his death. He was struck, they say, by an industrial truck of some kind (trying to find its way home, too, you know, reminds considerate H.) It was in the early evening of September 10 (my birthday) of this year.

Setting here now as accurately as I can my thoughts and impressions of Rockwell and the whole of life (let me approach this dreary task with the buoyancy I need, little miss) as I experienced them in the few moments I watched him and Nelly Adams in the new Metropolitan Museum of "fine" art (at last), H. says I should demonstrate not only a feat of memory but the validity of Holman Robert's theory (as he wrote it in the unpublished **Alice and Wonderland)** of the so-called "fatal transmission" (though I hesitate to concur with H's really silly assertion that Rockwell's sudden physical death was a direct result of some quasi-mystical fate impulse of mine to his happy, if uninspired life — that my own perhaps too frank meditations on sudden death make me a sort of tragic emissary allowing luck to strike me down only vicariously, my own death having been planned with much more cunning, mystery, and deliberateness):

> . . . not only are the creative forces spiritually transmitted to the less imaginative, but all their attendant torments. The inspiration thus communicated (usually via

> reading) more often repels the recipient with its retributive agonies rather than impelling him to some aesthetic enlightenment. The idea arbitrarily grasped is poisonous. . . . The artist remains incomprehensible to a large number of people (larger than most artists allow) because annihilation is in his countenance.

(My friend, H., bases his own theories on a far too literal reading of Robert and though they are amusing in dim light, are quite impossible out of parenthesis.)

In the first place, it is unlikely that Rockwell remembered me after some fifteen years, though he seemed to return my stare with curiosity to which I am not accustomed and Nelly Adams actually considered me, if furtively (I wonder how long this pretense must continue). And if a burdensome, if light weight, dislike I felt for him momentarily (before an almost overwhelming compassion flooded my eyes) in the least influenced the course of his fortune, I cannot be to blame: I suffered too silently his schoolboy thrusts to the detriment of my own happiness and forgave him as tacitly very soon after the publication of his first book . . . there are few in my position who could possibly have felt less than a shade of annoyance at seeing him suddenly in flesh and blood. If anything, I hardly wished him sickness or death; less popularity, perhaps.

He folded his arms over his chest backing away from a tiny Durer, smiling vacantly down the length of the wall, ignoring the view of the central court (fountains, trees — she raises her eyebrows at me here, index finger stirring the air, but let me just hastily remind the reader of the beauty and symmetry in the thought of those massed artifices: strategic nature amid all that contrivance in oil and stone, and the beckoning black pools without) at a painting past my shoulder (which he couldn't possibly have recognized at that distance — it was the portrait of a nineteenth-century poetess and scholaress, peerless-mirrorless, oh what fun! — by a remarkable young artist called Lephpa Jadur, "Mad Swedey" or "Sweety"; dead now, Jadur painted his "Miss Bardimir" not from photographs but from the recollection of a dream in which he claimed the authoress appeared to him. It was commissioned by a philosophical society of sorts who curiously refused to accept it once it was completed. This was all of fifty years ago when the club elders furiously professed their being able to recognize nothing of their spectral muse — as they had imagined her from photographs, anyway, they had so expressly provided their commissionee — except the eyes, which were merely human "and could be anybody's." This wiser age has seen fit to place it honorably in a stained walnut frame on the third level with "American Impressionism"). Turning, then, I recognized him (I had originally backed away from my favorite "Miss Bardimir" to see if I could read some comprehensible significance in their Durer, distorted by distance and a subtle swerve somewhere in my pupil: all that was available, incidentally, was a disappointingly indecipherable winddow of random light and shadows) and Nelly Adams, the solemn, sightless guitarist who "accompanies the young poet seemingly everywhere; this writer can hear wedding bells!" (Oh Edith! What nonsense! As journalist one could ignore you: slanderer of the stars; panderer to the public. But your little book on my Lynda is too cruel and you are cruel to me too. And you are cruel to two families you have never seen as well. But I understand you died shortly after you finished that book.) Rockwell was really not quite so famous as Nelly (who sang and played

her guitar beautifully as everyone knows; after all, who remembers a librettist?) and it was amusing to think, while his gaze slid over me for a moment, wondering, hesitating, that, like all celebrities, Nelly had absolutely no reality for me (and is, hence, much easier to write about) and Rockwell existed as best he could only insofar as I recalled certain silent, immobile attitudes in a memory snapshot (forgiving him, to do this, all his ill-gotten fame) and that with the phantom star at his side, seemed less the published poetaster than a photograph from St. Catherine's dimmed by the pale shadow of his own success and hers.

"The poems deal with love, loneliness, the alienation of our present era" (this laughable motto appears on the jacket — with its comic representation of a strip of Pacific ocean tenderized by a very unnatural sunset — of "Standing in the Street") all the things with which bright, talented, young Rockwell could not have been less concerned. There is much the literary vivandieres could be taught about "present era" and alienation and loneliness and love . . . these lessons are unfortunately very abstract and require . . . well, I can't begin to describe just what they require. All was lost, anyway, after the tender pamperings of a few eunuch critics and a fabulously docile public received with moist eyes and wagging tails the **Listless and Warm** affair (all was lost long before, if I can but tell).

I recall my eagerness reading about this new joke (no one was more impressed with a passage of unexpected familiar ringing, sparkling through a more or less usual, passionate jeremiad on warring which a collegiate Rockwell published in an otherwise forgettable literary quarterly that came my way hundreds of miles and some years removed from its originator before his undoubtedly more lucrative success. Nothing precise or very complete, but a sudden sensitive warning:

> . . . part of the general conspiracy being a sentimental quasi-idealism rendering all combatants less sensitive to their mutual humanity. . . . The general reaction becomes an even more worthless compassion based on anxiety, blind faith, and crypto-patriotism. True compassion is a deadly, deteriorating luxury which depreciates in genuineness in the hands of any but real children who have a commensurate capacity for cruelty.)

and my unutterable disgust reading the awful thing. Rockwell, now laboring under the delusion that talking to cats was poetic or worthwhile or even very cute (no one can possibly think it all three) seemed to have forgotten what real people think or say. All he seemed to have done was expose what he considered the majority of men's daydreams — which actually encompass loneliness, love, and alienation, all primitively stylized and counterfeit, of course.

I have, I am told, the leisure, the width and breath of a generous spirit. We must start again. There was his father's abrupt and undoubtedly unpleasant death — much of his schoolboy glamour depended upon the common knowledge that he had a rich and dangerous father and no mother — and the short-lived but glittering university career. . . . He folds his arms (each hand grasps the opposite shoulder lending his stance an attitude both picturesque and slightly uncomfortable) and turns his back on a tiny Durer finding a resting place for his foreign smile (one does not see that kind of smile here; most of the people are much too selfconscious to laugh outright at Richard Pauley's hasty looking, "American Impressionistic" "Metropolitan Holocaust" — I have before, but of course the joke has grown a bit

stale and it is not, I have found, to the enlightenment of my shy, intense neighbors to take too lightly such formidable prophecy . . . H, who never comes anymore, said that Pauley painted a prediction of his own doom, if he could but have known it: the poor man, he says, died in flame in a Warsaw hotel some months after the picture's completion, trapped in his room and ignored by fire fighters more intent on saving some precious crystal decorations in the lobby) in the dim, warm Jadur beyond my shoulder. I am for an instant startled by the shock of recognition (I had been trying to see their Durer; I knew it very well; I was looking for something else in the allegory). He is interrupted by the famous buck-skinned girl at his side laughing into her guide and resting a hand gently on his corduroy sleeve. He comes farther back from his etching, now ignoring the treetops and sparrows outside and his eyes meet mine with still the vacant smile on his lips. Naturally I recognize him and naturally he doesn't recognize me (he may be considering at a better angle my Jadur — one appreciates it more approaching slowly from the end of the rampart and watching the glowing strokes twist and writhe into a face, a chin, a beautiful creamy throat).

Of course, even without the hat (and as I think of it, I might have left it home that unseasonably warm September day — my birthday, my birthday, how horrible! — it sat a little high on my hair which had grown thick and somewhat stiff) and coat (it, at least, was fairly new and had an interesting sharp smell — part of my morning's disguise) he wouldn't have recognized me. I remembered him much before (so to speak) the misinformed opened sympathetic eyes to a complete misrepresentation whom they named Rockwell and followed munificent pictures and reviews (mostly pictures) in incredible magazines.

My life had grown so obscure since St. Catherine days that I all but gave up trying to renew old acquaintanceships with former allies and classmates as I occasionally caught sight of them (many of whom, I fear, I had known even earlier than that ancient school and, therefore, can't be blamed too much) in sundry libraries and cafeterias all with new lives of which I was completely ignorant, each with their faded, familiar characteristics, now surrounded by new faces and concerns.

Rockwell was not the first, by any means, of old friends who pretended not to recognize me, or actually failed to discern my once familiar childish features through the new ones (which some have told me are quite handsome) I had acquired in the next few years. I saw a once dreadfully supercilious Latin professor eating a gloomy breakfast alone in a restaurant and could not resist a playful attempt to revitalize those once scornful, haughty features with a cheery, nostalgic greeting.

"Ubinam gentium sumus?" I inquired gravely, imitating as best I could recall his melancholy rhetoric and the disgusted glance through the frowning eyebrows ("If **I've** forgotten the place **you** little idiots will certainly not know where it is.") Then I stood for a few seconds in blank silence (for a moment a shred of the nightmarish headache which poleaxed me all the previous evening and which I was unable to elude until that dawn, appeared in front of my eyes in a blood-hot blanket) while he stared first at my elegant belt buckle, then lifted his eyes closing to squints slowly till they at last met mine (I felt an instantaneous embarrassment; he would not speak).

"Aha," I ventured dramatically, a little nervously, perhaps, for it suddenly occurred to me. . . . "Then you do remember me, Mr. L?"

"I have never seen you before in my life; please leave me alone." (Much of the spontaneous quality of his artless expression is lost in my too tasteful translation.) I would not belabor the point because it was obvious he did not remember me. He was a terribly absent-minded sort anyway and sometimes made a ridiculous fool of himself in class. There is, in fact, a good deal that I remember about him (if I can calm myself again), a good deal that is comic and not a little pitiful. For instance, he often told us that his wife was very sick when it was perfectly clear to everybody that she was simply a drunkard. (The tactless truth, far more than adolescent misrepresentation is the rumor-volat of private schools and small towns.) She actually divorced him about a year after I had to leave.

Rockwell couldn't have been expected to remember me that day, though he seemed to be trying to place me for a few seconds as he stared at me (noticing H's birthday present to me of a light green pair of tennis shoes — we are really as quite caught up in clothing and things as you are, after all) and even made a sort of gesture with one of his hands in my direction, turning as he did so to his companion (she continued laughing at some cartoon in her guide book and appeared not to hear him). He had a famous memory when we were at school (photogenic, or something) and I expected that even with everything that must have happened in the meantime to dull and shade his faculties (his poetry, let me reiterate, is lavishly sentimental and embarrassing and one fool has written happily that "Rockwell is riding the tide of his fully developed rich poetic talents") he would still recall me in his submerged poetic heart of hearts no matter how slight my resemblance to the youth with which he was once so closely involved (in the book I am "cousin Everett" whom Edith describes as: ". . . a shy moody boy. Everett seemed to miss the affection from his mother which proves so vital to growing boys and girls and influences their lives, and ours with them, so greatly much. .....(indecipherable half line.) His mother, Nelly recalled during an interview with our singer, was always running off somewhere and leaving the little one in schools or in the homes of friends during the holidays — his father had passed on some time before. Tis tragic. . . ." etc. Ms. p 56. This is for you Edith, wherever you are. Your manuscript is being rejected wherever H with his very strange sense of humor thinks of taking it). That is to say, Rockwell and I were hardly close, if even casual friends; there was, I say, only one incident in which the two of us were intimately involved; it affected the rest of my life (never mind, never mind — rewrite the whole thing if you like). I hear an occasional oblique echo of it in isolated lines of his verses but it is there for only a more informed world to behold. (Please be a little considerate of my task and quit rushing me. I'll be finished for the day, though I expect to be allowed to continue tomorrow.) It is as if — and right here I can only make fleeting reference to it — he is trying unconsciously to unburden himself of a terrific artistic truth within an innocuous-looking barrage of mediocrity. . . . I know what happened; it is an incredible device he has chosen (Oh, I have a request, Mr. Reader, bear with me. "L died in '63, wife — cancer — '59; never divorced." There). To continue then:

I feigned peering at their Durer and began walking toward them. I

could not reach them in time. Nelly suddenly burst into tiny merry shrieks and Rockwell, with an odd, unexplainable apologetic nod to me (definitely, this time) caught her arm and walked quickly away toward the stairwell (quartz). For appearance's sake I spent several minutes in front of the embellished trio, which, because it reminded me of a very revealing passage in Rockwell's poetry, I had studied already on several occasions.

This exercise in caution also provided me time to recall that inventing and recalling Rockwell's lightning memory a moment before had opened the way to a parenthesis (which may already have been removed for all I know) that very nearly tripped me up. Writing this is difficult enough; Trumble trips me too. She observes with amazing casualness (and "sincerity," no doubt) that ". . . when they returned late that afternoon from their romp in the woods, the school was in an uproar. Little Everett had apparently fallen from the lovely gothic bell tower where he was probably playing — something very naughty and forbidden by the school, others have been expelled for less. Some people maliciously hinted of suicide — he was often quite depressed and suffered dizzy spells, and sometimes spent hours shut away in his room reading. .....replaced the tiles..... completely ruined some roses(?) Mrs. Acheson was very upset and Nelly accompanied the terrified woman home, not forgetting to wish a special goodbye to her new friend, young Rockwell, the future poet in whose life she would play . . ." Ms. p 63. Ah Trumble! Neither H. nor heaven itself will ever succeed in having your little lies in Lino laid!

The etching simply reminds me of one of those fragments out of an otherwise useless ballad that suggests an esoteric reading to the informed (in this case, alas!, only three):

> A knight, I in the tower trysting place
> Waited for your secret whisper.
> None but the devil to watch over us —
> To dash to death the enemies of our night!
> (sic!)

It suggests a bed-time story but I won't tell you unless you close your eyes now and try to sleep. . . . Long ago a certain cousin of mine, who must, I'm afraid, live here under disguise, and I were very close; this was in those Rockwell-school days and it was mainly because of her that Rockwell first became aware of my existence and I had my first (and last) opportunity to praise him to his face. Vestiges of her once upon a time beauty are apparent through the older features available in photographs to readers of popular periodicals if they are only willing to see them. Lynda Lemas is not noted for any special fairness of face today. Now she is a nameless sort of performer and exists as a graceful image of lost time only on rare occasions when I have the breadth of critical faculty to see past her defacing success. Before dropping off to sleep, now, I shall shut my eyes. Yes. A long time ago there were green and yellow shadows on the lawn and they were made because the sun shone through the trees whose branches were moving, as yet without sound, in the wind. See? There is Lynda's lovely hand moving across the pattern toward me, closer, closer (see the tiny golden hairs glistening on her arm?) to snatch my book . . . in slow motion. I look up and there is her face looking, smiling, a little worried, perhaps? . . . she says . . . wake . . . wake up!

"Wake up! You're a million miles away! Come back down to earth." She looked around, confident now that I was paying attention . . . not really caring anymore.

"Look, let's walk around. It's dumb just sitting here like this."

We rise, oh fluidly, softly. The sun, the sun, making translucent green patches on her light dress and face. And then there we are with heads bowed walking in light and laughter over some forgotten joke, swinging gait, up the hill to the school. And here for the first time I see how Rockwell must have seen the two of us. Rockwell from his lonely battlement atop the stairs of the administration building. Now I see her too: her blond hair straight and luxuriously flapping in a heavy sheet — stray wisps in the wind, of course — back and forth on her face as she moves her head and body to adjust to the steep incline — so steep that climbing it, one's hands invariably touch the ground in bending toward the hill to keep from falling. And Rockwell saw us and started toward us . . . I was so honored.

"This is Rockwell, Lynda," I said, "He is the most intelligent man in school. This is my cousin, Lynda Lemas, up for the afternoon with my mother."

Nothing. I can only surmise that the introduction went smoothly. The wind caught in my throat every time I opened my mouth; it was suddenly so strong. Silently, the three of us started toward what we school boys called "Boston Commons."

Did she change at the instant she saw Rockwell? Why then (for the question seems impossible to answer definitely) did she act so silent and strange with him? Rockwell talking so inexplicably unintelligently; in conversation now, so unlike I had imagined him. Lynda hardly speaking at all but giving, every now and then, a vulgar little laugh. It is vague — perhaps the disappointment I felt in seeing the two people upon whom I had lavished so much private thought and praise behave in so alien a fashion (and it struck me for a moment that I had created them both, but separately — mixed together they now produced an unexpected and unwanted congruity, a pattern for which the artist had made no provision but which was now irrevocably, unpleasantly mixed and inseparable — an **insidious** pattern at which the artist could only stare, speechless) together produced a soporific effect on my senses. His conversation was fast and nonchalant and she responded in slangy sympathy, but it is all forgotten . . . it was never heard.

And then we were sneaking up to the tower. Quietly, quietly — I was dimly excited turning round and round up the spiral staircase following in the dark their floating eerie whispering. All is brooding and few and then hitting the light at the top, in the enclosure full of pigeon dung and nests; Lynda gasps out her disgust at the smell and tiptoes lightly, ladylike, then, without warning, gives a small shriek of delight spinning excitedly around to take in an unbelievable view. We are all startled; a high note shred of her gladness echoes dreamily above us in the bell. Rockwell cautions her; the mnemosyn records fearlessly clearly, unforgettably.

"We would be expelled if they caught us here."

"I can't see how it could really bother you . . . expelled and all, except, I mean, if your family . . ."

"It would be unpleasant for all of us if anything like that happened."

Rockwell pulled out a package of cigarettes and offered her one. To my amazement they smoked. The two islands not far from the mainland but usually shrouded in fog and haze were plainly visible in the distance making oblong green and blue bowls in the water. From far away a buoybell tolled thinly.

Softly, coaxingly: "What's the worst thing you ever did? The most wicked, the worst?"

"You first."

A long pause. The worst thing, perhaps the most awful thing — I speculated; it rose in my mind and stayed there in front of me showing its ugly mouth. . . .

". . . all right," said Lynda, arriving at some impasse with mysterious Rockwell, "we'll each tell the worst thing we ever did . . . you start." And they both looked at me smiling, waiting. Above us the wind made a low whistling sound in the huge iron bell.

I had once burned an animal to death and told them so. I watched a cloud slip through the view behind the tops of their heads. Lynda demanded in a disappointed voice to know how. Well, I said, I came across a large, ugly tom cat stalking field mice in a big pasture near our home. I reached out to stroke his fur (he allowed me to come quite near readily enough) and suddenly it latched onto my arm with his front claws and teeth, kicking me with the claws of his back legs. It was a terrible pain and the wounds were quite deep. I raised my arm and flung him down against a large rock. I turned away from them; was it a sail I saw so far away? Fog was slyly rising over and covering my islands. He seemed stunned and lay very still for a moment. So I picked him up by the back legs and brought him to a clearing behind the tool shed at the far east end of our property.

"And you burned it; how exciting!" sneered Rockwell.

What made me trust them so, overestimate his judgment, her sympathy? Oh, not just like that, I said pleasantly, watching the fog slide over the islands, the sail suddenly vanishing; nothing lasts, I thought a little sadly. First I tied his legs together. He roused as I was doing it and he made choking gurgling noises . . . then he stopped. Then I dug a shallow grave and buried him up to his neck. Now he became enraged and terror made the exposed fur stand out like pine needles. Blood began to creep from his nostrils and with a supreme effort he actually managed to loosen the earth around him. A rush of wings echoed hauntingly above us. We all looked up musing. The clapper moved slightly and a dropping splattered faintly somewhere near. You see, I continued, I like cats above all animals. Dogs are whining and fawning; birds are stupid. The two of them looked at me a little sullenly. When I packed the dirt down again, he began to moan very low in his throat . . . not angrily, but despairingly, horribly. I took a can of gasoline and poured some over his head and he screamed. Have you ever heard cats scream? My God what a sound! Hellish. I literally froze for an instant with revulsion at the noise. I lit the awful thing and ran away.

It was becoming chilly and I watched droplets of spittle fall from my mouth and vanish in the vast distance. My back was to them and Lynda made an impatient noise in her throat.

"That's about the stupidest thing I've ever heard." Rockwell said.

"Jesus Christ!" echoed sophisticated Lynda.

Several drops fell in rapid succession ending in a fine thread that finally broke and disappeared dreamily with the rest. A great rush of many wings now sounded over us and a flock of pigeons streamed noisily out from the bell gable in a spray of tiny feathers and dust down past me where I leaned lazily over the rail.

"That's the worst thing you've ever done, all right, you little fairy! I'll bet you even drown birds 'cause they're so stupid." Rockwell was quite close behind me now though I chose to try to ignore him; everything was fast becoming insanely uncontrollable. I heard Lynda give a small incredulous gasp that made me turn toward her and suddenly I remembered what it was that made the birds fly away at this particular moment. Long habitation in the bell tower had accustomed them to the two sole times the bell was used. "It must be nearly five." . . I began and then the roaring toll drowned my voice. At the same time I felt my self describing a slow, so slow! tumble over the rail: jerk, heartstop, and I even noticed a tiny blue flower growing in a crevice.

Good morning, no I did not. I had a fearful dream, in fact, and I shall tell you what it was if you'd care to hear. I wrote it down here in the form of a movie scenario while I was waiting for you (you're late, by the way) and I think it's a good way to start the morning's session . . . yes, yes, you may delete the entire thing if it doesn't meet your specifications (I know that you are in some way passing notes to him, even now in some way laughing together; a running commentary of mockery . . . these are **my** poems — remember that!)

Well then, the little prince is sitting at his window in the castle moodily surveying the winter scene without. Pan out with whistling winds in the twilit background to an icy forest's edge and across the bleak, pale horizon; back again across the snow-covered court to the window sill. Close on the little prince's sensitive looking white fingers lazily drumming against the glass. Close on his face. Sweep back out again. A voice drones dully on behind the prince, probably a tutor or valet or the king trying to start a fight. Suddenly the prince spots a long blue dim shape moving twitchingly in the snow. "What's that?" the little prince's lips ask silently. The voice drones on unceasingly, the prince peers closely, intently. Slow zoom to the moving blue shape . . . retake on boy's face, he begins to frown in disbelief. The form moves writhingly in the snow nearer and nearer. Abrupt fast zoom on the naked body of one of the royal subjects crawling painfully with minute purplish sores and he leaves a moist, glistening dark trail behind him. Speechless with aversion and fright the prince rises tremblingly, backing awkwardly away from the window. The voice murmurs on behind him. Blue frozen hand appears reaching clumsily in view and lightly tapping at the window. A head moves jerkily into the window: sunken nightmarish eyes, shapeless nose, yawning, screaming mouth. The voice stops. Rising pitch of whistling wind. The little prince, blood drained from his frail face stammers and points at the window, finally turns and sees . . . and sees. . . .

I didn't have the heart to write what happens then; I would suggest a

symbolic blackout, maybe with an epigram flashed on the screen — something to calm and elevate: "Murder will out, dum-de-dum of most miraculous organ" . . . "the murdered never die" — you think of something.

Anyway, that's the way I slept, revolting, isn't it? By the way, have you seen this? H. was here this morning with grand news and the proofs. Seems Trumble's book's being published after all. Yes yes! This next spring by Hume and Shudder. Rocky's agent railroaded it through for old times' sake a gesture to the grieving girl friend (oh how they wish it was widow). I rather think you might compose a little sketch yourself — some intimate view that you weren't able to trick even Trumble into believing — It'd be great fun!

But back to my intro. Today I am to write about Rockwell's relation to the vast subject of poetic inclination? Trace his psychological development. Listen, aren't I just a little bit more interesting to you — why him?

And so. We approach through the treetops and settle down on the hot stone wall top and look down at the strange, beautiful little garden an unhappy architect hurled down in the middle of his weird wind trap one day. Yes, I woke up with a whole new outlook on things today; today, I remembered, is the day we do him in.

So after my quick change act in the sleek, polished lavatory I find myself recognizing who, but of all people, my old friend Rockwell. And with him is Nelly Adams. . . . In what great battles may a poet engage, please? Is it a wrangling over boundaries of flight (ending in often uninteresting compromise)? Not the mere indecision over choosing either the black word or the white word (whatever that is), let us hope. But the chants of devils, seductions of friends, the jeers of enemies and choirs of unidentified advisors of indeterminate motive — all of your own soul and fashioning? This, I think, is what makes the prophet mad: the prophet who cannot hide his poetic soul (which delight in simplicity and deception alike). It is the constant indecision over what is to be truthfully written or affected that in some renders them one morning mumbling or calling, seeming a new and successful character when actually they are deaf, blind and unmoved, nothing, gone past forever . . . oh it is horrible to think of lunacy! Rockwell somehow remained sane — Rockwell was up in pluck to what is demanded of those experimenting with gratuitous acts. In fact, when he saw me he may have recognized me but seen me as part of that inspired life he was unable to enjoy. He had made his choice: he chose to forget.

I once saw a woman in a department store with a pile of parcels on a counter staring vacantly over the head of the insolent sales clerk who first snickered, then panicked when the woman finally slowly opened her handbag (after several seconds of seeming to dreamily consider her position) then looked up at the clerk and silently, with strange solemn triumph, extended her empty wallet to her. She had lost all her money (either because she had absently thrown it all away or had one day last week come to the familiar conclusion that it was all quite unnecessary) and as I watched her for the few seconds that she lasted (these apparitions flare only briefly in the furthest nether lonelytudes and are quietly erased by unctous store managers before they have time to spread) I could sense the foggy apathy enveloping her and abruptly

transforming her slightly troubled directionless stare to one of complete luminous transcendant peace. I know that's the sort of thing that might have once attracted Rockwell; now, for much different reasons than it might once have livened his sensibilities. Much that is futile and beautiful filters down to us from untroubled artists in those heights (and not as exemplified in the sham ennui celebrated — for all its worth — in that collection **Standing in the Street and Other Sorrows**), at a good deal of which the now sentimental and patronizing Rockwell would only smile.

He has, I say again (let us not hate him too much . . . in spite of their lurid lies, their ugly love — that part of Edith's book which some revisionist has headed, "The Romantic Years, 1955-60." You seem to imply, Trumble, that after '60, things were grim. Was she unhappy with Rockwell? Has she suffered — your little book says nothing about the next five years . . . wouldn't she tell you?) made his choice and in bad minoxial moments his more lucid lunacy must rant and stamp to his torment all its twenty feet. What he is able to drag up from those one-dimensional doldrums that suggest themselves to the merely displeased and bored would have skyrocketed the young, angellically cold Rockwell into flames of streaming, annihilating scorn. Some say (fear not; none there) he merely has no talent but that he might write admirable snow flurries of prose (in book reviews, for instance) if he chose. My very private consolation is that in Rockwell's peculiar case he might have gone whole heartedly simpleminded, but decided, instead, to develop a basic spiral of slow banal cliches and feed it piece by piece to a wealthy, tolerant public (I feel further that this cynical Rockwell wrote all four of his books at one sitting).

But what does it matter, after all; what could have appeared more unlikely fifteen years ago to us three than that he'd be dead, I'd be trying to explain his poetry, and you would be nagging me (with an enlightened lack of grief) after pretending for years that I didn't exist.

He was unimpressed several weeks ago when I called to his attention (via the scarce adequate channels through which such communications are possible) my interpretation of that department store woman's dream. He actually asked me, with a trace of annoyance appearing on his face as he seemed to spot something doubtful about his wrist watch (he regarded it off and on and finally became so upset with it that he was forced to leave before I'd finished) if I'd been suffering from dizzy spells in department stores. (I had fainted once in the kitchen when H or someone imitated your voice and called me one terrible night, now here, now nowhere, "where now?" I sobbed and you whispered slyly, "in the cellar," "in the closet," in the caving ceiling where I finally glimpsed you in white light diamond lightbulb and only you were left lingering in an oval surrounded by black clouds behind which flashed calendar, sink, lightswitch, clockwork flies, tipping and finally spinning away as I fell backwards.)

But no, I answered carefully (it was exciting — and I could not afford to take offense — to be sharing these thoughts with someone, even if only in spirit: I disciplined myself with a cranky Rockwell much more thoroughly and realistically than, say, H. did when he had those hilarious discussions with D. Slavitt). I watched my reflection in the bureau mirror smile and feel behind its back for a chair.

But have you ever had the awesome, complicated feeling, when in your sadness and meditation, the color of some cloth against the wall or stain on a piece of furniture looked so dark and suddenly so completely absorbed you that for a moment you thought you could see the shaded opening of an exit, the small nearly invisible escape hatch to heaven, all there in a shadow on the floor or the blue plaid of a curtain . . . only to have a nervous laugh overtake you in your leaping and stare you back in your seat, humiliated . . . miserable . . . and conscious that **you** could have rushed and been engulfed in that colored spot if you had only more time in the impulse? Aware that even so inadequate a heartbeat was a privilege; that you were especially designed to perceive the hidden doors because you were . . . because you were. . . .

I stopped and my reflection smiled again — a little sadly this time, eh? Come on, handsome, buck up. . . . In a funny unknown ballad of sorts he describes the mistaken execution of a semi-literate gardener by frightened police officers who mistook him in the night for a notorious fugitive. He said (in a voice from the past, true; in that prohibited dialect — the poem was never published, thank heaven; H. copied it a little freely as he heard it at a reading) that the mistake was compounded in woe because of the blunder made not only in mere mistaken identity and exacting an innocent man's life for it, but in destroying one of the few inhabitants of this planet requiring next to nothing for contentment. Rockwell said that the poor man's very limited ambition and requirement, this very minuteness of his desire, rendered him especially susceptible to extermination. Watching my smile, I congratulated Rockwell on that wisdom. At least it struck me as wisdom.

Academically, at least, it strikes me as an elegant, if pessimistic, paradox. The ambitious and dynamic seem more prone to be cut down and crushed; a semi-literate gardener is only dust in the wind of fate roaring and thundering down the valley seeking the late burning candle (the police chief, for example, whose reputation was permanently scarred by the incident). What struck Rockwell as tragic, however, was that his small man was struck down sharply and silently, but was not as inevitably prone to annihilation as to historic neglect.

I recall him for a moment. I say to him: Of what use is the chronicle of the obscure, thoughtless life? He flares angrily, true to his disguise and snaps out that no life is thoughtless. Every life has meaning and resolution. And he storms out again.

A point then before I continue at last: Rockwell is ignoring a similarity between his poetic incident and an incident far removed in sensibility from his recreation. He has a mask against the latter, but no philosophy to guard his art. One, certainly, cannot expect an artist involved in the chain-forging of words and sentences to catch all the philosophical implications of his final work. One could not expect a mere Rockwell . . . **Please do not like me more than him!** I have, in spite of both their interference, one exhilarating advantage which I dare not press.

So here we are again. She is constantly editing so I need not continue in this vein. Their Durer, so tedious now, scarcely kept my attention for the few minutes I watched it and forced myself to speculate and recollect. I listened to their crystalline echoing footsteps and a constantly repeated silibant interjection in Nelly's high excited voice,

"hoo wussy, hoo wussy, howussy!" (you hussy?). And then with a tremor of foresight I knew what would happen (now sit down little Nell. This is what Edith calls "the horrible accident . . . humanity's great loss," and various other comforting things), I did not know before, I was not glad, nor did I in any way encourage that visiting spirit pausing on his sword-drawn way to brush my ear as he followed them clapping confusedly, whisperingly back down the stairs. I did not even go out to look. I heard a loud screeching sound and Nelly's screaming, her crying. (No I am not pouting.) I left by a different exit. I walked home in a daze, the lights wiggling and a hum sawing in my ears, nearly being struck myself. (No, that is not necessary; no coffee, thank you. I'm just fine, thank you.)

Some clever soul, the delight of his family (magic tricks at the dinner table — see the carrot disappear, mummy smirks to the wary dinner guest), may reach a white fountain around which I have been describing scolopendrine tracks, may, and you have my permission, but not **my** admiration, extemporize here on the ever after, with psychotheory knowhow snigger on the once before. (What do you mean sullen? For God's sake go back and sit down!) You may call me, clever soul, lunatic, murderer; you may drown in your white fountain. . . .

The evening editions had everything ridiculously messed up. Inexplicable misspellings, numerous garbled facts; it took not a little free interpretive reading to decipher that they were trying to tell us as gently as possible that Rockwell was dead. Dead, dead, dead!

I lay down, now. The enchanted lightbulb erases the gloomy reflection, the really impossible one — yours and mine. There is no joy. O miserable. To sleep . . . sleep. Poet slain. Celebrity killed in truck accident or something. You're still here? I've done it — I'm finished. A little midnight correcting to do? You know your boy friend's dead now, I've out done him. . . .? I may even run into him now, vis-a-vis, spectrally speaking . . . it'll be much easier to forgive him . . . and you. Oh, yes, then, I forgive you. You.

We ought to make interesting reading — Trumble and I, but then you've probably changed that all around, right?

Why don't you read it out loud? I think I know what you're up to . . . make it a sort of insane appendix to the unpublished notebooks, or something. Science fiction, then. Isn't that what he first tried in those Romantic Years? Until you helped him discover poetry. And now you will take my poem. . . . Science fiction, then, and I'm in it, nameless, faceless. Well move; say something! Suddenly there it was: the **monster;** panic-stricken citizens shrieking, streaming through the streets, the hideous creature shredding rooftops and slobbering hundreds of feet over them. The military with their ineffectual bombs and things. One man stumbles. He wears an old long coat, his pathetic little hat rolls frantically out of reach (you may not even say that much about him — just a man, an expendable cast to demonstrate the force of your monster). The huge green scaled claw reaches down and picks him up fiercely. That's me, isn't it? Legs kicking, arms beating futilely

against the tremendous knuckles. Will I get a shout of pain? Not even a last word? One famous phrase to define my life, my love? Or am I so inconspicuous an extra; will a harmless line distract your reader? "Oh Nelly, I love you; I always have!" . . . Please come to bed, then.

LAST NIGHT AT NINEPIPES

Father, his face a lie in August, spoke
of geese on mornings colored red. His eyes
said how we'd hunt them in a blind, flush
them out and kill them as they rose. Their wingtips
closing to embrace the shot as both dogs bolted
to the spraying blood. Whiskey would warm us,
the wind bring its own weather report.

Last night at Ninepipes I watched that flock come in.
They ran before the weather. It shattered snow
against the mountain tops. I sat silent till the last
was down, fired a single shell at: nothing.
Their rising was a startled sea of gray, a crying
tidal wave of wing and neck that purged itself
against a dying sun.

Ronald Luchau

THE GULLS

One eye gone and couldn't
move her legs, your mother

watched the Packers on TV.
In Thjohild they salvaged Lief Ericson's

skull, bones of his kin,
icebergs, unseen battles,

distance green to the edge.
That's it, Mama,

all that cold real estate
and nothing but the game.

Warren Carrier

THE MAP

The old man talks to the sea.
Moss hangs on the north wall.
He waits for the west wind
to bring the tide. He remembers
when pebbles mingled with the sand.
Gold, the color of all skin.
Broken glass tells of high waves.
The bamboo throne is gone.
He holds some cards and old bottle caps.
Screams to the night for his map.
And again, he moves the empty chest,
to the north wall,
and waits for the fire
to die with the night.

Lance Bourquin

FLIGHT 109

Pines, then final surface.
Stars stuck through like icicles.
Lovers dead in their cars

on scapes where the earth curves.
Numbed by engines, I fall
through blizzards like waking dreams.

My hands bank over peaks.
In my fiftieth year I blow it.
The field comes up like doom.

Let's make it till the sky goes out
and Montana lies down in snow
from here to Saskatoon.

Warren Carrier

CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

WILLIAM STAFFORD is a famous American poet. NADINE HUFFMAN majors in English here. KEN NORTON is also an undergraduate in English. DAVID SLABAUGH will receive his MFA in poetry this spring. JIM HILGEMANN is an English major. GEORGE VENN also completes his MFA this spring. BILL WATERS is an undergraduate. M. F. HUTCHINSON is a rather mysterious person to us: we know that **she** is a Montanan. TOM MADDEN recently successfully defended his MFA thesis here. JOHN HOLBROOK has published widely, is in the MFA program. CHARLES HALL is from Wyoming, teaches English. JAMES WELCH recently received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, has a book (RIDING THE EARTH BOY 40, World Pub.) to be released soon, is leaving soon for an extensive reading tour in the East, and is getting his MFA here. DAVE FOY, a senior in English, recently returned from the Peace Corps. HAL SPENCER, erstwhile undergraduate in Creative Writing, is from Salt Lake City; when last seen was enroute to the South Pacific for an extended sailing adventure. J. D. REED recently received a Guggenheim award for 1970, he will receive his MFA this spring. BRUCE KENISON is an undergraduate in English. AUSTIN GREY is a drama student. JOHN KENLEY is your authentic Montana poet, an undergraduate here. JOHN WHEATCROFT, award-winning dramatist and poet, teaches at Bucknell. EDMUND R. APFFEL is a freshman! In Latin! RONALD LUCHAU is a senior in English. WARREN CARRIER, former chairman of the English Department, is now at San Diego State, has published poetry extensively, including three books. LEE NYE is a student, teacher, poet, photographer, bartender, etc.