

# CutBank

---

Volume 1  
Issue 13 *CutBank* 13

Article 17

---

Fall 1979

## Constraint

Julia Mishkin

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

### Recommended Citation

Mishkin, Julia (1979) "Constraint," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 13 , Article 17.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss13/17>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

## CONSTRAINT

*"I hate constraint. It's like the sight of blood."*

—Luis Bunuel

It's like this: New York  
murder victims always fall face up  
and they always wear  
pearl gray hats.

When you try to write a letter  
you spend hours  
on the date, Thursday of Jealousy,  
Tuesday of No Regrets:  
they're still the same.

(You're standing at the top  
of a staircase. There's a woman hanging  
wash in the courtyard. The plants  
weave like sea anemones in the garden.

*No: you have the hands of a musician.  
You are chopping wood. If the tree  
were to fall in the wrong direction  
you'd lay yourself down  
like a worn carpet.)*

It's this Trojan gift of summer, perfectly  
groomed but full of lies. It brings  
out the worst in you, and like a fig  
rotting from the inside the sun

only makes matters worse, coming  
up, going down, whispering  
about the wilting ivy and lack of light.

As if by following a man you **could**  
learn everything, how he breaks

the necks of cigarettes, drinks his whiskey  
neat, relies too much on luck

when crossing the street. By the time  
you round the corner  
you find him face up and fallen,  
a letter clutched in his left hand.  
This is everything.  
It's addressed to you.