CutBank

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## CONTENTS

### FICTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laurel Bricher</td>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>The Way Home</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi Rand</td>
<td>44</td>
<td><em>Sweet Revenge</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David R. Young</td>
<td>81</td>
<td><em>I Think I'm Buddy Holly</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PRINTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dennis Kern Cover</td>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Leister's Excommunication</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Nevin Mercede</td>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Untitled</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margo Kren</td>
<td>25</td>
<td><em>Four Prints</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennis Kern</td>
<td>61</td>
<td><em>Four Prints</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Todd</td>
<td>80</td>
<td><em>Thelonius Monk</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### POETRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ruefle</td>
<td>17</td>
<td><em>At Cana</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Spence</td>
<td>18</td>
<td><em>Myopia</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Ewick</td>
<td>20</td>
<td><em>The Double</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie J. Nelson</td>
<td>21</td>
<td><em>The Dreamwalker</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleene West</td>
<td>22</td>
<td><em>Autumn Equinox, Northeast Nebraska</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisabeth Murawski</td>
<td>24</td>
<td><em>Goat Girl</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Allen</td>
<td>35</td>
<td><em>Young Poet's Lament</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennice Scanlon</td>
<td>36</td>
<td><em>Homestead</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Stein</td>
<td>37</td>
<td><em>On Fawn River</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neile Graham</td>
<td>38</td>
<td><em>Heart of Stone</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jerah Chadwick</td>
<td>41</td>
<td><em>Aleutian Stare</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Zarzyski</td>
<td>42</td>
<td><em>Cutting the Easter Colt</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td><em>Fish Story</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Davidson</td>
<td>52</td>
<td><em>The View from Cataldo Mission</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith Ratzlaff</td>
<td>54</td>
<td><em>The Proposal</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Lietz</td>
<td>55</td>
<td><em>Wyoming Entry</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Fogarty</td>
<td>56</td>
<td><em>The Calamity of Man</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Elton Glaser 57  Elegy for Professor Longhair
Terri McFerrin 58  Drawing a Breath
Ellen Wittlinger 60  Starting From Zero
LuAnn Keener 71  Carefully
John Daniel 72  The Longing
Stephen Haven 74  The Sense of Calm Hours
Nancy W. Prothro 76  All Night the Rain
Ardyth Bradley 77  The Testimony of Anne Hutchinson

REVIEWS

Lex Runciman 91  Western Poets, Western Presses
Leo M. Fitzpatrick 95  On David Long
Greg Glazner 98  On Harold Rhenisch

CONTRIBUTORS 104

The editors are pleased to note that a poem published recently in CutBank—"Dear Jeffers" by William Pitt Root—was included in Pushcart Prize VII.
THE WAY HOME

WARM, rugged, survivalist man (32)—enjoys skiing, sailing, nature, good books—longs to share rustic mountain home with slender, loving, earthy lady. Joe, Box 10, Casper, Wyoming.

My friend, Louise, says, “You haven’t got the brains of a bird, Ivy Mae,” when I tell her I’m going to Wyoming to meet Joe-the-Survivalist. “For Pete’s sake, you didn’t really send that letter, did you?” she asks. Louise is the only person besides my great-aunt Dora who says that. “For Pete’s sake, Ivy Mae, when are you ever going to learn there’s more to life than a man.”

“Maybe he’s a cowboy,” I say as I toss my jeans and pajamas into the red-flowered suitcase Mama gave me last year when I graduated from the Algona School of Beauty. “We’ll live under the pine trees and ski to town for groceries,” I say.

“You’re something else.”

Louise is my best friend, but there’s some things she just doesn’t understand. I’ve lived in West Bend forever. The houses, and the people who live in them, are as familiar to me as the taste of apple pie. Every year Mrs. Purdy plants three rows of crackerjack marigolds along the front of her house. Elmer Stryker has sold stamps behind the grilled window in Daly’s Grocery Store since I was five years old. I’ve gone up to the counter with a dozen eggs and said, “I need ten stamps, too, Elmer,” and he frowns and thrusts out his lower lip. “You know stamps come from the post office, Ivy Mae.” Then he goes to the other end of the counter, where the window is, pulls on this yellow visor, and says, “May I help you?”,

Years ago all of us kids would go in one at a time, pick out our jawbreakers and licorice, then ask Elmer for a stamp. And he would go back and forth, pulling his visor on and off like a blinking neon sign, while we laughed and thought we were smart.

It’s the sameness that gets me. Just once I’d like to hear Mama say, “No Sunday dinner today. You kids get what you want when you’re hungry.” But we always have roast beef, mashed potatoes, green beans, and carrot cake. Always.

So that’s why I want to go to Wyoming. It’ll be nice to wake up on Sunday and say to Joe, “Let’s have tacos for dinner.”
“What’s your Mama think about all this?” Louise asks.
“Well, she doesn’t exactly know. And if you tell her. . .”
“Then. . .”
“I told her I’m going to a workshop. ‘Color Me Right.’ When I get back I’ll be able to tell Edith Landryville that she should wear blue silk blouses to compliment her platinum hair, and peach foundation will make her look warmer.”
Louise laughs. “For Pete’s sake, Ivy Mae, where did you think that up?”

As the bus pulls out, I wave to Mama and Louise, glad that Clive Junior is still on the road. He drives for Garrett Freight in the summers. Clive plans to be an orthodontist in two years. We’ll get married (he thinks) and move to Mason City and I’ll be Clive’s first patient. He says he can’t wait to get me in braces. “Won’t it be nice to have straight teeth, Ivy Mae. Then you’ll be just as pretty as . . . as anybody,” he said to me once.

At least I’m the only passenger. I don’t have to sit and listen politely or explain to anyone why I’m going all the way to Wyoming to learn about make-up. LeeRoy drives the bus and I sit in the very last seat so I don’t have to talk to him. In the eighth grade, every time I walked past him, he’d ask me, “What planet did you come from?” Just once I wish I had said, “Saturn. And how about you, LeeRoy? What galaxy kicked you out?” But I never did.

I’ve been teased to death about my vampire teeth, my hair—dry and frazzled as a haystack—my thick glasses. It finally doesn’t matter anymore. I’m me and there’s no escaping it.

As the sun drops behind the fields at the horizon’s edge, I wonder how Columbus ever thought the earth was round. If he had lived here, the idea of roundness would never have entered his head. This place is as flat as a dinner plate. Surrounding the white houses are huge fields of young corn. Houses and fields—as far as you can see, that’s all there is.

At least the sky changes. The cloud shows are better than movies. In June thunderheads pile up like giant mushrooms and I see it raining somewhere else. One time my brother Sam and I drove the backroads watching tornados. Funnel-shaped clouds were spinning high above the cornfields. But before they touched down, those black clouds dissolved and floated away. The sun came out, leaving Sam
and me to wonder if we had made up the whole scene. What's the sky
like in Wyoming? Surely the stars shine there, too. Does Joe notice
them?

I know it's strange to set all my sights on a man I've never met.
What does he look like? Will he be funny or serious as Sunday Mass?
I don't let myself think what will happen if Joe doesn't like me. He has
to. I'll get a job in a beauty shop, fixing up ranchers' wives' hair, and
at night Joe and I will sit in front of a roaring fire and read books.

LeeRoy hollers, "How come you're acting so stuck up? Get on up
here and talk to me."

"LeeRoy, you just don't order people around like that," I say as I
move to the front seat.

"How's Clive these days?"

"The same."

What is there to say? And why is LeeRoy talking so nice to me
anyway? Clive and LeeRoy and I practically grew up together. In
junior high school Clive and LeeRoy poured gas on stray cats and lit
them on fire. Once we concocted a mixture with Clive's chemistry set
and gave it to old man Riley's chickens. They flapped their clipped
wings and cackled for hours until Mrs. Riley called the sheriff.

We know too much about each other, that's the trouble. I'm sure
LeeRoy knows Clive and I have made love twice. They both
remember the day I came to school in my first bra. I want to live in a
place where the mailman won't recognize me, where my neighbors
won't recall that time I let all of Pop's rabbits loose, where I can have
a secret or two.

At Ruthven I say good-bye to LeeRoy, change to the Greyhound
express, which will take me across South Dakota with only two stops.
A night journey with the blackness pressing in so that all I can see is
my face reflected in the window.

Two ladies sit across from me discussing Amelia and Stephen.
"Isn't it too bad everyone knows about it," one of them says.

"Stephen deserves more. He's given Amelia everything and look
how she thanks him," her friend replies.

I realize they are talking about Mama's favorite tv program. They
both remind me of Grandma Cutler with their soft sagging arms,
flower print dresses, thick black shoes.

"How far are you going, dear?"

"To Wyoming," I reply.

"My. You watch out now. I've heard those westerners are a wild
bunch."
Tiny globes over the seats give off just enough light for them to crochet. From the last row of seats comes the loud raspy sound of someone snoring.

We pass through Rock Valley, a town which seems deserted. The winking glow of neon signs lights the main streets, and the power company’s window displays two quilts, pillows, a butter churn. Beneath them a sign says, “In Celebration of Rock Valley’s 100th Year.”

At Sioux Falls the driver shouts back at us, “There’s time for a cup of coffee if you want it.”

A woman with two young children and a baby in her arms steps aboard. As they walk down the aisle, I notice the string around each child’s wrist and then the end of it looped around the woman’s belt. The little boy drags a tote bag with yellow ducks sequined on the side, and the girl holds a greasy brown paper sack in one hand and a Raggedy Ann doll in the other. The smell of French fries invades the bus. They settle in front of the grandmothers.

“Now, Mama?” asks the girl.

“I want catsup on mine. Not salt,” the boy says. He puts the packet between his teeth and yanks it; catsup splatters to the floor.

“Charlie! Be careful,” says his mother. She sits in front of me and I see only the top of her head.

Soon we are on our way. The two old ladies have put away their crochet, the person still snores from the back, the little boy’s head rests on his sister’s shoulder.

I can’t sleep, but sit with my nose pressed against the window wishing I could see something besides fluorescent-tipped posts flashing by. I try not to think about what I’m doing. Of course, I’m going to miss Clive. He fits me like my ratty old bathrobe with the hole under the right sleeve. Comfortable, easy, he’s more like a brother than a boyfriend. He comes over for Sunday dinner sometimes and has two pieces of Mama’s carrot cake.

I remember when Clive first moved to West Bend. His mother had her very own electric organ. She hung lace curtains and made us use the back door so we wouldn’t ruin her Persian carpets. Clive was an only child who had a room all to himself. He built model rockets and when he finished them, we all went out to the empty lot behind Daly’s and watched as he lit the fuse and the red-and-white spaceships shot up into the bright blue sky. Most of the time the parachutes that were supposed to open didn’t and the rockets crashed. How could Clive
spend so much time on something, knowing it was going to be wrecked, I used to wonder.

As the sky lightens to a pale lemon color, I see red hills, miles of sagebrush, and grazing cattle. Near a fence swallows turn in circles, the undersides of their wings catching the sunlight.

The boy stands in the aisle shaking his mother. "I have to pee," he says.

"Charlie! You have to use the restroom."

"I know, Mama."

The woman sighs. "Annabelle, come and sit here. Don't let your brother fall off."

Where is she going with her children? Where is their father? As she passes me, her jacket catches on the seat and I notice she is pregnant. For a second I see my mother, how she must have looked years ago when I came along, then Sam, then Alice and Andy, and Paul, and David, and, finally, Judy.

I remember a story Mama told me. She picked an ivy leaf off her mother's plant, put it in her pocket, believing the first man who spoke to her would be her future husband. All the girls did that. Mama said she was walking home when a car with Tennessee license plates stopped and a young man rolled down the window and asked her the way to the old Cutler homestead. That young man is my father and when I was born ten months later, Mama named me Ivy.

Annabelle turns around, giving me a wide grin, a black hole where her top front teeth should be. Her sandy hair is parted in the middle and tightly braided. "Where you goin'?" she asks.

"To Casper."

"What for?"

"To meet Joe."

"What for?"

"Annabelle. Sit down and stop pestering the lady," her mother says. "Go back over to your own seat." To me the woman says, "She asks that nine thousand times a day, I swear."

"She's just like my youngest sister, Judy," I say.

"They ought to make the Pope listen to a roomful of three-year-olds for a day. Then I bet we'd hear a different tune," she says. Her baby starts crying and she turns away before I can reply. I've heard Mama say that, too.

At Rapid City we all get off for breakfast. The snorer from the back of the bus is a man with bushy white hair and a face peppered with
Laurel Bricher

whiskers. He slumps over the counter and pulls a whiskey bottle from his jacket pocket and mixes it with his coffee. The woman and her children wave good-bye to me, and as the grandmothers gather their bags, they warn me not to talk to strangers.

Eating scrambled eggs, I almost cry. Maybe this wasn’t such a good idea. Everyone I see reminds me of who I’m leaving behind. Judy is over the “what for” stage. Now she sings “Jingle Bells” and colors on the walls.

I get off the bus in Casper, stiff from sitting so long. Of course, Joe is not here to pick me up. His postcard gave me a number to call. The pay phone takes two dimes. The phone rings and someone says, “Star Lounge.” I’m surprised and can’t reply. “Say, I haven’t got all day,” the voice says.

“Oh. Uh, is Joe there?”

“Lady, it’s nine a.m. If this Joe wasn’t with you last night, that’s your problem.” He hangs up. I drop in two more dimes.

“Listen,” I say quickly, “Joe gave me this number and told me to call when I got in town. Wait. It says here to ask for ZB.”

I hear a snort of laughter. “Well, why didn’t you say so. ZB’s at work, I imagine. He comes in around five.”

“Does he live there?”

“What? This is a bar, lady. He comes in to drink beer. Look, I got work to do. Call back later.”

I go over to the wooden benches in the waiting room and sit down. Something is wrong here. I thought ZB was Joe’s friend, but Joe is ZB. I read the postcard slowly. _Can’t wait to see you. Call 267-9191 and ask for ZB._ But the ad was signed _Joe._ Doesn’t he want me to know who he is?

I can’t sit in the bus depot all day. Maybe I can walk to the Star Lounge and meet Joe, I mean ZB, when he gets off work. The boy behind the counter draws a map for me. I check my bag in a locker and set off.

Casper isn’t West Bend, that’s for sure. The cars are backed up for blocks, a few inching through the stoplights which stand on every corner. The people walking are in a hurry; they don’t look at me when I smile hello, but stare at some point in the distance. It hits me that here are the strangers I’ve been wanting, the unfamiliar faces, and it’s not at all how I thought it would be. These people frown and rush.
They don’t stop to chat about baseball and gardens, blocking the
doorway to the Rexall Drug.

I pass a cafe with the words “The Cheese Barrel” carved on a big
wooden sign. There are round wooden tables and black iron chairs on
the sidewalk under an awning; marigolds bloom in apple baskets. The
place looks so homey, so inviting, I sit down. After all, I have seven
hours to fill.

At the table next to mine a couple weave their fingers together and I
think of Clive’s strong, work-hardened hands, his gentle touch that
could soothe a skittish colt, that could ease me into stillness.
Whenever I felt sad, Clive would take me over to watch Nickel’s latest
batch of puppies and it wouldn’t be long before I started smiling
again. What am I doing here? Louise was right: I haven’t got the
brains of a bird. But I can’t go back, not yet.

“Aren’t there any waitresses in this place?” I ask the couple.

“Oh. You have to go inside and order. They bring it to you when it’s
ready,” says the girl.

Inside a blackboard covers one wall, the menu printed with pink
and blue chalk. The rest of the walls are covered with a pattern of
chickens and baskets of eggs. A dairy case overflows with cheese. I
order and go back outside. Watching the constant stream of cars, I
am overwhelmed by the motion. How can there be so many cars and
people in one place? Where are they all going? In the distance, sirens
wail.

The waitress slams the plate on my table and flips the bill down.

“Thanks. Have a nice day,” she says, not seeing me, not smiling. She
doesn’t know me the way Irene does at West Bend’s Corner Cafe. If
she’s not busy, Irene will pour herself a cup of coffee and sit with her
customers, filling them in on her grandchildren’s latest accidents.
This girl seems stiff and mechanical, like my brother’s GI Joe doll.

I spend the rest of the afternoon drinking beer in the Star Lounge,
so that by the time they walk in I am quietly drunk, totally off-
balance. I hear one of them slap a burly guy on the back and say,
“You’re crazy, ZB. You know that?”

He’s not what I anticipated. But then, what did I expect? Red-
brown curly hair, bearded, it is hard to see his face. I think of a
massive bear as I see his barrel-shaped chest tapering to slim hips and
thighs. He wears glasses which hide the color and shape of his eyes.

Watching him with his friends, I feel myself drawn toward him. I
am struck by his hearty laugh and the way he is the focal point of the
group. His voice is loud and he speaks with a fast, clipped pace, cracking jokes. He says, "Things are tough when you're a kid," as he downs a Miller in one clean swallow.

I take five deep breaths and walk deliberately into their midst. "Hello, Joe. How's the rustic mountain home these days?"

They are as still as the air in West Bend before a tornado strikes. Then ZB laughs. "I'll be damned. You really came."

Perched on the bar stool, I am entertained by four fascinating men. Louise would just die if she saw me now. I've never been with anyone so funny. His name is Zacharias Bartholomew Kovnesky—ZB—and he's Irish. Winking at ZB, his friends leave. The two of us share a pizza and another pitcher of beer while he tells me crazy stories.

Why does most of this trip happen at night? As we go up Casper Mountain in his jeep, wind swooping in the windows that won't close, I can only sense what a mountain looks like. The bottoms of pine trees flash in the headlights' beam and the air smells cold and fresh. For a second my head feels full of water, and ZB asks, "Did your ears pop yet?" Right then, they do, and I laugh. ZB carries on an endless monologue, talking so fast that I lose the thread of meaning that must lie behind his words.

We stop and I see the darkened shape of a cabin nestled against fir trees. ZB comes around to let me out, but before I step down, he picks me up like I'm a new bride. "Hey! I can walk."

"The wolves might get you if we don't hurry."

In the morning, clear green eyes look back at me. We lie under a heavy quilt in a big wooden bed under the eaves.

"What happened?" I ask.

"You fell asleep on the couch. So I took certain liberties with your body," he says and grins. And before I can move or say anything, he rolls over onto me and I want to cry. What did I think would happen? Did I really believe he would be a gallant knight and rescue me from West Bend's monotony or that he would propose and I would wear a lacy white veil before we climbed these stairs to this bed?

He leaps up and pulls on his jeans. "I've got to get to work."

"What about me?" I ask.
"Just make yourself at home. I'll be back when I get off. There's a party on at Suzanne's." And then he's gone.

In the refrigerator is an opened Miller bottle and in a Kentucky Fried Chicken box, congealed gravy and one half-eaten wing. Rummaging through cupboards, I find some instant coffee.

I discover that I take things too literally. This cabin is not rustic (there's a shower, electric heaters along the baseboards, even a built-in dishwasher), ZB does not read (The Martian Chronicles and a magazine "Alternative Lifestyles" the only evidence of his literary pursuits), and I wonder if he wants to share his mountain home with me, permanently, the way it matters.

On a balcony outside the kitchen, I sit with my coffee. There is nothing to see but towering trees and a small blue patch of sky directly overhead. Not like home, where my vision is free to rove to the horizon and back, where I can watch the clouds march across the wide arc of the sky.

Perhaps when ZB comes home we can start over. I can explain that I was tired and drunk, that I don't hop in just anyone's bed. I feel cheated. Love is not supposed to be abrupt like a door banging open and shut.

Flipping through the magazine I see the letter I wrote in response to Joe's ad. I am startled by its frankness as I reread the lines: As to loving, I love many things—cats, wild sunflowers, the way the sky becomes mysterious when it is filled with clouds and a full moon. Loving people has been harder. What did ZB think when he read that?

That night ZB brings in three friends and they wear smug grins, as if they know something I don't. ZB wouldn't tell them about last night, or this morning, would he?

"How's my Nebraska farm girl? Come on. We'll eat and go to Suzanne's."

"ZB, I'm from Iowa. West Bend, Iowa." It is suddenly important that he understand.

"Iowa, Nebraska, whatever. They're all the same, aren't they?"

We go down the mountain, again in darkness, around and around the hairpin curves, while ZB keeps us laughing the whole way.

"Do you know all these people?" I ask ZB at Suzanne's as we thread our way through the crowded room to the keg in the bathroom.
“I’ve met Sonny before. Suzanne’s current boyfriend. Some of the others I’ve seen around,” he says. He wanders off and I stand on the edge listening in.

“Man, he hit that ball over the fence like there was no tomorrow.”

“You know, she’d be great if she just didn’t bitch all the time.”

Their words graze the surface, the way a dragonfly skitters over a creek. They don’t know each other but stop here in Casper on their way to somewhere else. I meet people from Wisconsin and Vermont and California, people with no ties, out to make a fast buck and split to finer places.

The next day is Saturday and ZB shows me his town. For awhile I am bewitched by his charm, his exuberance, his whimsical sense of humor. He is like a big delightful child. We wander through a shopping mall, eat corndogs and popcorn, drive through fancy neighborhoods with backyard swimming pools, and go to the tenth floor of a hotel where the flashing strobe lights turn the dancers into jerking puppets.

The week passes and we get to know each other better. ZB tells me stories about the people he met at Woodstock, the time he sailed his boat down the Atlantic coast to Florida. He sold the boat to buy acres of timber behind Casper Mountain so he can build a cabin and spend his life skiing and partying.

“Why do you want to build another cabin? This one seems nice enough,” I say.

“Yeah. But it’s not mine. I rent it and I have to move in a month anyway. The owners sold the place.”

“Is your other place ready then?”

“Are you kidding? I haven’t even bought a saw. One of these days . . .”

“But what about your furniture? Where will you live?” I ask.

“The furniture goes with this place. I’ve got a suitcase of clothes. And that’s the way I like it.”

Finally I see Casper Mountain, which is not a mountain, but a pine-covered ridge jutting up in a barren prairie. Looking down from Lookout Point, the town spreads east and west, the Platte River meanders in a lazy S-curve, and the refinery sends up plumes of smoke. Huge tanks filled with oil cluster on the outskirts of town, beyond which is a desolate wasteland. There is the effect of earth and
sky, of space and openness, but here the land is stark, empty, bleak. West Bend’s plains are tamed and fertile, a place where dairy cows graze and corn grows.

In spite of everything, I still feel drawn to ZB’s lighthearted approach to life, his irresponsible ways. Then he shares his ultimate goal—to be like two old men he met one time at Muscongus Bay, off the coast of Maine.

“Eighty years old, but they looked fifty. Here they were, sitting on the deck of this big yacht, sipping bourbon. They were in great physical shape, you know, and all they did was sail. Winters they went down to the Caribbean and did some deep-sea fishing. No women, no kids, no ties,” he says.

“That sounds nice, ZB. But don’t you think they had families and jobs before?”

“God. You’re missing the point. I want that sort of life. Now.”

Then one night he doesn’t come back up the mountain until very late. The cheese sauce for the cauliflower sticks to the pan, the baked chicken is cold.

ZB tells me he was at Suzanne’s. He looks at the ruined food and pulls me down to the couch.

“Look, Ivy. We’ve got to get something straight here. I don’t want a cozy little domestic scene with you. Or anybody, for that matter. It’s been a nice two weeks, but you’re cutting into my life. OK? Do you get my meaning?”

“But you said you wanted to share your . . .”

“Damn it! That whole thing was a joke. We were bored one Sunday and wrote that ad during half-time. Bryan mailed it in just to see what would happen.”

His words knock my breath away. I can see them, sitting around with their beer, laughing. “Put in loving. You want a loving woman,” one of them would have said.

“What gives you the right to trample on people’s feelings? So that’s why all your friends have been grinning like monkeys. How could you? God, how could you?” I scream.

Rushing around the room like a windstorm, I gather my clothes, jam them in my suitcase.

“Where are you going?” ZB asks, blocking the doorway.

“To the bus depot.”

“You can’t walk down the mountain in the middle of the night. Wait. Let’s both calm down.”
“If you don’t drive me to the bus depot this very second...”

After the long silent ride down the mountain, he says, “Look, Ivy...”

“Don’t say anything. I feel sorry for you, ZB. You don’t know what loving means. You’re going to wake up some morning and find the party’s over and everybody’s gone home.”

ZB cups my chin in his hand and says, “Maybe I will. Till then—we had a good time, Ivy, didn’t we?”

I have to drop my eyes. I don’t know what it is we’ve had.

“Remember that, OK?” he says. I get my suitcase, and he drives away.

The boy tells me the bus won’t be in for three hours. I ask him if we’ll cross South Dakota at night. “The sun comes up at five and the bus leaves at six. What do you think?” he asks in a sarcastic tone.

So I sit on the hard wooden bench, close my eyes, and imagine thunderheads that foam above the fields south of the Cutler place, while Mama pulls clothes off the line and Judy shoos the chickens into the shed. “For Pete’s sake, Ivy Mae, you always have to learn the hard way,” Louise will say as her pink Rambler bounces over the ruts in the road on the way home.
One by one we awoke
out of wine, an ordinary
absence we were prepared
to live through
when he took from his hand
a glass
something like the truth:
it appeared to be empty
when he took from his eyes
a thin film of oil
and anointed the rim continuously
until we heard music
filling air like fragrance
of sweet wine.
Then he took the still-beating
heart of a life that had been
recently joined and broke it
into syllables.
And our cups were filled.
Afraid to speak, we drank
until we were thirsty again.
We were given another set of
tears: even then,
we were not aware
our lives were becoming
a parable, alive:
we loved best how he failed
to show how it might be done
in the future.
MYOPIA

I

Somehow—poor light,
Faulty bloodline, bad luck—
The gems of your eyes
Flawed. Words on blackboards
Grew into tangles
Of blurred white snakes;
At twilight, any shrub
In town could become
The neighborhood bully.
The missiles of sports—
Baseballs most of all—
Scared you: they took shape
Sudden as demons,
Hurtling straight at your face.
Distance without glass
Hid its clearness
In a private fog.

II

But now—though ragged leaves
Of alders on the peak
Fray into nothing,
And power lines vanish
As they stretch away—
Rain falls louder,
The grit of sandstone
Sharpens at your touch.
Your world of bare eyes
Changes: streetlamps
Fracture, grow auras,
Issue spikes of light.
A man's face as he walks
By may gel strangely,
A friend's; that smeared woman
Might turn beautiful
As the light you now
Need more. You see patterns,
Connections: the forest
Those alders make, the range
Its peak is part of.
City lights string out
New constellations.
And you learn to love
That special fog as it
Mystifies far places.
Making what you care for
Draw near. At your feet
Chewed gum, squashed
Into disks, dapples
The sidewalk. Some of them
Could even be coins.
THE DOUBLE

In dreams you chase the man who has the same eyes as you, the same mouth, the same walk. You catch glimpses of him in mirrors. He passes you in a taxi, watches from the rear window, smiles. You begin to recognize his face in your childhood photographs. At the library he has checked out the books you want. At your parents' house he steps out the back as you walk in the front and your mother's hooked smile makes you wonder if you are the stranger. The cigarettes you light are his brand. Last week, in a hotel lobby in Baltimore, you had just checked in, ready to set up surveillance on the fourteenth floor when he caught you by surprise, winked from the gameroom, banked the eight off the long rail into the side then climbed in after it, and suddenly you were there, beside the table, cue in your hand, couldn't remember the shot you'd called, the combination you'd never missed before.
THE DREAMWALKER

As a child I heard of a boy who sleepwalked. Finding him gone, his father tracked him in snow to the barn where he slept deep in a warm hay mound.

For years, I feared for that boy, saying prayers for him before I slept, asking he never wander too far from his soft protecting bed.

Then I'd sleep and dream myself walking, lost in a snowless land, with ground too hard to leave a print & no one awake to come searching.
AUTUMN EQUINOX, NORTHEAST NEBRASKA

"A poem is the heart's last chance."
—Gene Frumkin

The old desires yeast up in this air
moist and nurturing as any morning breath in spring,
desires that roil and vex
like the sour fear in a child on her birthday
and mother flutters over the whimper with
"Hush. It's only the wanting
of your gifts."

Who speaks to quiet the trees?
Leaves, not yet reddened, ripple
as sap pushes at the places
where buds would form
and thin blades of grass pulsate
as grasshoppers rearrange their legs.
A farmer rubs the stubble on his chin
and sighs for one more cutting of hay.

We're all prepared for brittler days.
A season ago I watched a snake
draped in the lilac bush,
the feet of a nestling blackbird jutting from its mouth
in an aura of web and twigs
and mother attacked
with fluttering wings and small beak.
Hush!
I speak to quiet myself.
Some common instinct warns me
away from the wind's false promise
to breathe the private air of my house.
How heedless the heart,
disturbing and inconsiderate as this breeze
that can tease the iris into autumn bloom.
Even as I stretch to make full use of the bed
I remember feathering the hair over your temples
into fine black wings.
GOAT GIRL

Somebody else's lover has drowned.
If it were you
surging without meaning or desire,
green feather on a wave,
the search for enchantment
might end, respite from respite.

There is the position of our
bodies trod back to sweetness,
the imaginary moss on tongues.
The sky would fall open.

I would wash your linens until
my fingers shed their scabs.
I would be displaced, broken bottle
on the river's sand, shell
without belief in the sorrow
that an obligation brings.

Wings would coarsen on your clothes.
My heel would curse
the resilience of the loaf.
LITHOGRAPHS

MARGO KREN

(Master Printer: Michael Sims, Lawrence Lithography Workshop, Lawrence, Kansas)
1. STREET SCENE

2. THE DANCE

3. SUNDAY MORNING NEWSPAPERS

4. SCENE FROM CHILDHOOD
YOUNG POET'S LAMENT

To be charming in a world that's lost its charm,
To be delighted in a world that's lost delight
    I might
Speak about the freckles on her arm,
Her sweet face blushing in the morning light.

But other poets did that, did that well.
For other mistresses they pined and sighed
    And tried
By every strategem they knew to cast a spell
To turn them into creatures they could ride.

She didn't need such words. Almost
Before I could pronounce her name
    She came
Against me in my bed and tossed
The blankets back, embraced me without shame.

What then of mystery? How can
I practice praising when the one I'd praise
    Has raised
Her body to my own, has spoiled my plan
To woo her slowly and to leave her dazed?

Yet speak, she tells me, speak of soul and heart.
Tell me what they said, those silly men.
    And then
If love and lust prove somehow worlds apart
Slow down Time. Have at me with your pen.
Dog days in high country offer no relief. I hunker where trails climb to claims that turned the century rich, ore Cape-bound for Scotland like a dream of easy ways back. It must have paid panning the creek with stillwater eyes, snapdragons to flutter in spring. What words came after dredges tunneled through for greed? Did old ones linger for a nugget or Sunday lighting up the ridge?

Roots and stone. Reason for returning autumn nights. Pictures yellowed under glass, faces torn or buried by the gray waste heaped behind, nothing grows when you find the road to town. Cold sky deepens the winter slope. Love dies. You learn to flood the shaft that fails, dig for veins you have no stake in.

Aren't all claims ancient where we settle our remains? Do words come after flowers dry or white stoops sag in the rain? And life we drain from timbered drifts, will it still burn like the peacock rock it bubbles? There's little shelter in mines that work their own shift. No memory survives the short way home.
ON FAWN RIVER

He thinks to himself—
she’s in the shower, beads are falling
from her breasts into ankle-deep water,
the drain is slow, it is filled
with pieces of us.
He wades in shallows, small bits of crayfish
settle between his toes.

He knows what will happen, always
there is such silence.
The sassafras listens, its sweet roots
knuckle in the dirt. Calling to him
like a sister, her voice confuses the wind.
There is such silence, porchlight on the river,
the day reeling in from the east
as if on a line.
He comes from all directions.
First the wind is from the north;
the trees shudder under the weight
of the snow. He stumbles through your
doorway, shaking clumps of twigs
and snow. His eyes are ice-blue,
clear, the way the sky will be tomorrow.
His breath is cold
as the wind in your face.
His first words to you: This time
I stay. You are not ready
to believe, you offer him
a place by the fire
and not your bed, but
already his clothes melt
on your floor.
At the doorway, later, he swears
he’ll be back when the wind
changes. He hands you a stone
made of ice, which you throw
in the fire as he disappears,
only days later the stone
has not melted.

From the east the wind
brings him with the stink
and push of cities. Tossing smog
from his hair, he walks
down the hill to your house
and pushes the brush
from him as he would
strangers. He stares at you
through the open window,
saying he’s left it all behind.
He smells of too many other women, and climbing through the window he tells you that only your flesh will wash the scent from him. Though the smell sickens you, it is too hard to tell him to leave when you know he's already leaving. The wind turns and the stone he's left spreads the grime of cities all through your house.

And he's back again with the wind from the south moving slowly now as though the heat has drawn all the winter from him. He doesn't say a word and your clothes fall from you like birds. His eyes hold yours too closely; you aren't surprised when everything happens at once, but slowly, and it almost lasts forever in the languid night. In the morning you wake as slowly as you fell asleep. He's left one flower for your hair, and one stone. As you move through your house that day the new stone in your pocket rubs against your thighs warm and breathing like some small animal.
If the wind is from the west
you have pockets full
of shells and sand.
He asks who you are:
you tell him the wind's name
and he takes it for his own,
pockets it like a talisman.
He tells you he never had a name,
that he is come from the same
western wind, that he has pockets
of shells and names his fingers
sift through.
It is not that you have
something he wants, but that
you are his stranger: in place
of his hands he gives you pebbles
to weigh your pockets and hold
you there. He tells you
he will stay
until you are his lover
and already you are left
holding only a small stone
turning it over.
ALEUTIAN STARE

All night the cabin shook
repeating its refusal to a wind
that wanted everything. Now
birds circle the false calm,
squawk and squeal; ravens
among settling gulls like shadows.
Looking out I practice
the scavenger’s habit: trawlers
on the sheared sea, cliffs,
quonset ribs—reference points
in the merged scenery. I’ve heard
what these islands can do
to a man’s eyes. Stares of water and weather,
as if the barrenness
were echoing. Beside the hut
tires, stacked and brimmed
with soil, absorb enough sun
for heat. Within them seedlings:
beets, carrots, a single pea
still thriving in the storms’ interim.
I’ve known the land
by what it lacks, a kayaker
watching the shore, sky,
the wearing trail of a fishline’s wake.
Beneath this surface seeds
I’ve cast drift
baited and barbed with roots.
CUTTING THE EASTER COLT

for Earl Stewart

This saddlebag surgeon readies his tools like a Monsignor prepares for communion. Holyday or not, nothing's sacrilegious when the moon comes ripe, the disinfectant fumes stunning us hard as incense at high mass. We lead the stud, procession-like, into the corral, scotch-hobble and throw him fast with cotton ropes, then watch this wrangler/pastor/sawbones—all-arounder—move his 55 years of heart and savvy, lickety-split amid thrashing hooves to lash all 4 together at the pasterns. He swashes the scrotum, a glistening world globe, delicate and thin-veined—perfect contrast to his saddlemaker hands, fingers braided like rawhide bosals, his knuckles the thick heel knots. With knife honed to a featheredge, he makes the incision and probes until he hunts both down, an Easter egg apiece for the blue heeler pups, their anxious panting reflected in the gold chalice of the gelding’s eye.
FISH STORY

in memory of Andy Grossbardt

That day I cried "Andy! Andy! The net! Get the net!"
little did I know my voice
would carry above the pounding Bitterroot
West Fork rapids to you
far down stream. Like that miracle
rainbow surfacing out of the black
to vacuum up my Muddler,
you came busting ass through brush
and stumbling—net in hand—
down the rocky bank. For breakfast
you ate the whole two-pounder,
then held its skeleton up
glistening to your grin
for picture proof. I'm yelling,
yelling to tell you it happened again,
partner, Dick and me on Brown's Lake,
my Fenwick bent in half and the big 'bow
parting water like something straight
out of a Hemingway deep-sea
yarn—to tell you this whopper
snapped my line at the reel and had me
scrambling for nylon. Hand-to-hand
I fought and fought him
until my strangled fingers
finally coaxed the monster
in close. I'm telling you
I hollered all the while, "Andy!
Andy! Get the net!" telling you
I gave the fish to Dick,
whose quick sweep saved the day,
and made him swear
he'd keep the bones for proof.
Dora's father came to visit her a few weeks before he shot himself. He came to her after being thrown out of all manner of relations' homes. He had made them feel foolish by playing out a revitalized need to act the stud.

Nicholas lounged, unannounced, on her doorstep. He wore a tan suit and a gold medallion which swung the length of his chest as if he were a keeper of time. That evening her father entertained, playing music too loud, pulling her friends out of their chairs and dancing close to them, provoking them. 'Polyester pantsuit,' one of her friends called him behind his back. Dora tried to laugh.

"I can stay with you Dora, can't I?" he asked. "Nobody else will consider taking me in."

She had always permitted him to have his way. He crept back to Dora's mother countless times over the course of twenty years. Each time both of his women accepted him. Dora would run to her father, hopeful of his commitment; maybe this time he would stay intact, proper.

"Yes," Dora said. She couldn't look him in the eyes, this chameleon.

"Your friends need a little music," he said, playing it, dancing for them. His desperation made her wince.

Her father called whatever took possession of him 'The Force,' as if he could chain this demon in the basement. He used to lift Dora by both arms and swing her through the air until she cried out in pain. For a few years he had taken the prescribed lithium. It made him passive, aged him.

"Flaccid," he told her. "I couldn't get it up anymore." That was her father's explanation for the breakup of his marriage. "Any real woman would have left me."

Dora did not mention the dishes dropped on her mother's feet, the ten broken toes. She plucked at her dress as her father talked, searching for stray hairs. She meant to explain about his temper, she meant to tell him it was her mother's choice, not some chemical equation.
Stan, her father's oldest friend, relayed the message.
“I found him in his car,” Stan declared, biting the words, etching them into her ear. “The gun was lying on the seat. It was horrible.”

Stan blamed her, remembering Nick the prankster, stolen cars in the parking lot, the looting of local stores for tuxedos, finding girls and more girls as if he were netting fish off a floodbank.
Stan waited upon her father's passions. Once, a younger Dora had arrived home to find the two of them scheming like small children. Her father had sworn her to secrecy. Stan took her aside, pressing his hand, slick and cool, to her face, threatening her.
“Dora would never tell her mother I was here,” he said, smelling of aftershave. Nothing else. Whenever Dora felt afraid after that she tried to find his scent in the air.

Dora held the phone away from her ear as Stan repeated what he had first said, his incantation.
“The car. The gun. A note for you and your mother. Let me read it.”
She knew the words before he said them. It was her legacy. She could hum a tune to them. Weeks after the funeral she found herself pressing the coffin into the landscape in front of her, distractedly revving her car when there was no need to: her father to earth, soil to magnetized body.

“It's calling me,” Nicholas would say, standing on his chair. He would begin in elation, taking her to an amusement park, treating her to anything she wanted, but Dora, knowing what came next, refused to order. They would be on the ferris wheel when suddenly his face, plasticized with joy, would slump and cave in.
“My father,” she once said to her mother, “he wasn’t there. He isn’t here now. What father?”
Nicholas sat, erased by his chair, ignoring them both.
“My father went away,” Dora insisted to her mother. She was seven at the time. Her mother repeated the story to her later as an explanation for her divorce. Dora did not need that; she understood.
“I was surprised you loved him enough to stay with him that long,” Dora said.
"You loved him too," her mother assured her. Dora knew she had to agree. She was unclear on her mother's definition of love. What she felt for her father was a mixture of emotions. When she pulled it apart she could not reconnect the strands.

"Did I love him?" Dora asked herself in the weeks after his death. She felt uncomfortable. Was that the measure of her love, its pitch?

The first package arrived on Monday.

It was small and square. There was no return address, the label handwritten. Dora, tearing it open, thought it was a gift sent to her by a concerned relation. She had to stop and think for a minute when she discovered a maroon notebook under the newspaper and brown parcel paper, the notebook she had made for her father as a coming-home present. She pulled it out of the wrapper, stroking its leather cover, finding his name engraved in the corner; then she dropped it onto the floor. The paper fell with it, like confetti.

Inside were notes on Dora. Daughter Dora. She flipped through the pages at night alone in her apartment. She read it under a green light that she found in a junk store. Her eyes, following the slant of the handwriting, could pick up trends. Sometimes the pen was firm in his hand, sometimes liquid with sleep, sometimes frenzied.

_Nicholas Loves Dora_, he wrote on one otherwise blank page. A grade school poem. Dora closed the book, left it on her night table. Tried sleep. Failed. Found some sleeping pills in her cabinet and drank them down.

In the morning she sorted out the paper to find the postmark. It did not amuse or console her to find, in red ink, Stan's home town.

Her father stayed with her for two weeks. She brought home her boyfriend once and her father measured him with a sturdy, quizzical gaze.

"Do you want to marry her?" Nicholas asked.

"Who?" Bob looked at Dora, then at her father, unprepared for this assault. She had explained in the car that her father was a sick man, using that as a catchword; she had not explained that he was demeaning, impersonal, harsh.

"Marry Dora."

"Why do you want to know?" Bob asked.
“I’m her father, I have rights. You have to tell me first.” Nicholas moved closer, put one hand on Bob’s shoulder. “Is she good in bed?” he asked. Then Nicholas turned up the record player.
And this is my father, Dora thought, as she watched him swing around the room. He reached for her, pulling her onto the living room floor to dance with him. She had a feeling in her stomach, as if milk were curdling inside.

Her mother had insisted on Dora’s strength. “You’re incredible, you can take anything,” she would say as she scraped mercurochrome onto a cut while Dora sat, unblinking. Even as a child, Dora knew better. She contained things. Radioactive waste was contained in lead. What a blank exterior! Studying herself in the mirror she lifted a hand to press a hair back in place, to make her face, so peculiar, so dark, perfectly framed.

The second package came on Friday. Dora had just received her paycheck. She was thinking of calling Bob, of going out that night, of drinking and driving. She drank to forget, she drank with Bob because it created a bridge to making love and she could collapse on any bed, could pull him on top of her, could turn, burying him.
The package was large. Inside of it was a cardboard box; inside of that, her father’s dress suit. Dora, lifting the suit out of the box, studied it. Herringbone, padded shoulders, the vest with one button missing. As a child she had watched him leave the house wearing it to work, to interviews; he would return, sometimes days later, with his hair ruffled by an alien wind. His suit would fly off in pieces and his voice would rise.
“They never understand me,” he’d complain. Her mother covered Dora’s ears.
Dora asked her mother, “Why doesn’t he die?” Dora wanted the primness of a funeral, that relief; she, the proper daughter, standing above the grave as they lowered him. She did not like the movement from city to city, the apartments they clustered in together, waiting for someone to discover her father, for her father to announce his presence. We waited, Dora thought, for the ax to fall. She had a complete understanding of that phrase.
She put the cardboard box with the suit inside her closet, didn’t bother to study the postmark.
Dora's job required her to draw architectural blueprints. She was an expert in stress, searching out the defects in tall buildings that could topple them in earthquakes or leave them prey to fire.

At home, she avoided the book on her nighttable, could not lift it, imagined her fingers would fry off, imagined an electric chair, the criminal trapped inside. She thought she could smell the odor of singed hair.

Dora knew depression.

"It's normal," Bob said. "Your father died." He pulled her into his arms, ranging them around her. They offered no protection.

A call came for her one afternoon, the phone ringing as she hurried the key into the lock.

"A package for you at the post office," said some impersonal male voice. Dora put it off for days; finally she arrived at her branch, only to find that they had not called.

Punishment. She twitched at night, her fingers tightening around her knees. She pulled them in her half-sleep as if they offered a defense. She could not remember her dreams.

One night late she bit down on a cigarette and remembered her father in that room, dancing around. He danced a tango by himself.

"Without sex you're not really alive," he said.

She remembered a year when she and her mother had lived in a two-bedroom apartment in New York. They waited for her father to return from Italy, from some girl he had found. When he did come back, Dora hoped for some imperfect face, a cubist painting, one eye looping his forehead, a twisted nose; she hoped that some guardian of the law had gotten to him first, rearranging his features.

The night he danced that solitary tango in her living room, Dora sat in her red armchair, chain-smoking.

"I don't trust myself," he told her, a little boy's face.

"Trust yourself to do what?" she asked.

"I can't go on." He stopped the dance, stood in front of her dumbly, some show animal that had broken a leg, that would have to be destroyed.

"Go on where?" she asked, forcing herself not to understand.

"I don't want to be alive," he said.
There. It was out. Dora watched him, retreating inside herself until she was a squirrel, caught in her tree body, looking out of a peephole.

“Did you hear me?” Nicholas studied her, skeptically.

“I heard you.” It was a technical voice, they were diagramming some building to see how it would hold up in a hurricane, to see which windows would give out, floating over the metropolis like magic carpets.

“What should I do?” he asked.

“Father.” It was a difficult word for her. At younger times it had been all right to call him ‘father,’ but after he left them alone that entire year, after the phone calls, the letters promising his return, after her mother wandered through the apartment dazed and fragile, Dora had no excuses left. She called him Nicholas.

“Yes.” Nicholas eyed her and she saw all the spent hopes, all his promise. She would have cried but he had not allowed her to know how.

“Don’t talk to me like this, I don’t want you to die,” she said, with some conviction, and thought at least that came out all right.

Nicholas looked down at his hands, saying nothing. She wondered if he had studied them before, if during his numerous hospitalizations he had spent the time counting the veins in them as they thrust through the skin, roses breaking through their buds.

“I made such a fearful mess,” he said. Dora smiled.

“Not at all, I can clean up,” she said.

“No, no.”

But she worked around him, lifting ashtrays and dumping them out. She even swept the kitchen floor. In the living room she heard his body drop softly onto the couch, knew he would be asleep. She crept back to her bedroom, her own body tensed.

“Daughter,” he said. Spoken softly, unrecognizable. “I love you.”

She meant to thank him because it deserved thanks; instead she walked into her bedroom and closed the door. Her hand wrapped around the doorknob afterwards for a few minutes, as if in protest.

The next night he assaulted her friend Suzy, pulling her towards the bedroom. Dora, following her friend’s progress, saw Suzy’s knee moving expertly into his balls, saw her father down on the rug, another disaster. She could not sweep him up, couldn’t roll him into the rug and dump him out.

She evicted him. Nicholas didn’t argue. He kissed her goodbye shyly, on one cheek, and vanished onto a westbound train.
Why do I still believe in his power? she wondered. Dora had spent so many years dreaming of crumbling walls, tidal waves, earthquakes, years of nightly disasters, but none of it had matched the ferocious strength of her own father. Now, by force of will, he had achieved his own immortality.

Dora began to chain-smoke. She bought a bottle of Scotch. She settled in, as if for a long, northern winter. I can get through this, she thought, as long as there's nothing else. No more mementos I'm expected to cherish.

It was another payday and on her doorstep she found another package. Inside there were small things. Nicholas's watch, his ties, his underwear.

How am I supposed to care for this? she wondered.

"You're my inheritor," Nicholas had insisted once, caught up in a rush of Shakespearean fervor.

Damn him, she thought, damn his inheritance.

Then she remembered the chain he had worn the last time. It had almost hypnotized her, swinging to and fro, that sigh of Las Vegas sex.

Opening her father's address book she noted all the changes of address, her futile efforts to evade him. She skipped the pages until she reached Stan's name and number. She said it out loud as she dialed. Stan, who was so ominous and lean, his moustache scratching against her face as he pretended to kiss her. For Stan's amusement her father had lifted her by both arms, making himself into a windmill. Dora had been terrified. She believed she would crack against a wall, crumple up onto the floor, and lie there, forgotten.

"Hello."

Stan's voice resurrected her father. Nicholas stood in front of her, holding out both hands. Was she supposed to embrace him or punish him? Dora forgot what she had meant to say.

"What is this, a trick?" Stan asked.

"No trick," she said, and struggled to regain her voice. "Stan." Saying his name gave her confidence. "Stan," she said again, "if I receive one more package, one more letter, one more vicious call, I'll find a man who shoots people and I'll pay him as much money as he wants. I'll get you, or I'll sue you," she added, weakening. "I'll do something."
“Get me?” Stan said, “Sue me?” He laughed. “This must be Dora. You were always a great believer in justice.”

“Was I?” Dora asked.

“Your father told me to send his things to you,” he said. He laughed again as if it was a joke. Stan was lost in time, she decided. Maybe he still believed that Nicholas had not stepped over that line.

“When did Nicholas ask you?” Dora said. Her voice shook, but she had to go on. “Before or after he stuck the gun in his mouth?”

There was a long silence. “You’re nuts,” Stan said finally; then he slammed down the receiver.

“Not me,” she told the empty phone, “I refuse to be nuts, I just refuse.”

She smoked one last cigarette. Then she stood, moving efficiently. She threw out the notebook with the remains of her breakfast. Gathering the suit, ties, socks and underwear, she packed them into a collapsible cardboard box. She covered it in newspaper and brown paper, tying it with sturdy twine. She sealed the edges with tape and carried it downstairs.

In a shopping mall she found a bin marked Goodwill. Peace on earth, she thought, good will to all men. Even to you, Nicholas.

Opening the metal hatch, she dropped the box down, then turned smartly, as if she were saluting. The metal door clicked shut. She raised her eyes. She began to recognize the shapes of things: cars, trees, buildings. People’s voices carried back to her. Dora turned to go, then turned back again.

She surveyed the parking lot, full of its everyday logic. A couple with a small child were passing in front of her. The father lifted his daughter by the arms to set her on his shoulders. Dora winced and closed her eyes, but when she opened them the child was still there, tugging on his shirt. She smiled at them and they smiled back, the child squealing with pleasure. It’s true, Dora thought with a rush of elation, I do know them, I know them and this is all familiar.
THE VIEW FROM CATALDO MISSION

Stoo ped and sicken ed by the drive
I leave you at the coffee shop
and climb the slick groomed lawn
to Cataldo Mission. Three days
watching old friends dismantle
their marriage and I have run out
of steam. My boots grab
at nothing on the ground.

Nights, the windows blazed
in our borrowed home. All weekend we climbed
the flooded hillside with wood barely dry enough
to burn, looking on as friends mapped
the vacancy between them, the civilized exchange
of children. I think of your hands
curled, coffee steaming from the chipped cup
held between them. I climb to stay warm.

Maybe when priests had it built
and the town boomed, when miners
pulled themselves at dusk from the ground,
the mission didn’t need to be explained, its
vaulted windows burning like signal fires.
Today constant rain streaks the dark windows
blind. The bell tower points to gun-metal
clouds choking the hills.

Today all the mission gives me
is distance. From here the children
in the supermarket are no threat, children nodding weakly
in carts near the magazines, the slow fire of lead
in their blood. Stunted birch cling to the ridge,
scribbling, like a deaf boy’s fingers in the air,
their pleas for soil. Our maps mean nothing.
Without them, you wonder how long we can last.
Here, the storm's worst has passed. Heat escapes the ground like steam from a pond. What's left is ours, heat enough to follow the miners and their children east. Today another beaten family leaves, and the dust that rises from their tracks lights the road like a brushfire. From here we drive the valley wall into clouds. We have lasted this long. The children in the supermarket are not yet ours.
THE PROPOSAL

“I’ve built this house for a woman to be there,” he says. And I let him talk.
“Do you listen to Arlyss Miller sing in church? Do you? A lady with a voice like that could make my house hum all week.”

“Today after church,” he says.
“Today at dinner after the pie,” he says.
And his hands flutter the pages of his Bible, the stumps of two fingers closed in the book of Micah.
He hammers his way toward Arlyss’ Sunday school room, rehearsing:
“I have a house.
I have built a good house. Marry me.”
Somebody half-asleep knows this, a broken-field runner still dreaming of the Rose Bowl, understands this early fall, the crisp weather we've moved into rummaging our hedges, a last bee outside our mullioned panes rummaging the pale leaves and berries. My Eastern sense of foliage and stone is burdened by the full yellowing top of cottonwood, the issue of stone ranges, snow whitening stone and pine fire luring my dry hands. No matter how I force resemblances, these flat roofs, burnt orange or turquoise eaves and windows are not East, these winds channeled down off stone, broken where the high plains drop off into Nebraska. Wyoming then, dream risen up from sage, stirred up in this house raised a little after Statehood: I am at once and temporarily here by contract, taken by these sharp integral blues dreams rise to, this woman bearing flowers into the face of traffic, this plenty of subversions at the fringe of desert and tall peaks.
THE CALAMITY OF MAN

He'll try to do that, 
a man will, organize 
your life. He'll throw 
open your cupboards, strip 
all shelves clean, 
spill goods 
to the floor. The rattle 
of him at work 
will leave you 
heaped 
as never before. 
Barley, bran and your 
Aunt Fran's apple 
butter clap together 
with tuna, tomatoes, 
Delmonte beef stew. 

He'll hoist his sleeves, tell you 
how it really oughta be, 
then line up your cans 
according to size, 
small ones on bottom 
and to the back. 
He'll be amused 
with your stash 
of phrases and nouns, 
casually flip 
them aside, try to 
replace them with diapers, 
soufflés, or tell you 
to take up real 
estate instead.
ELEGY FOR PROFESSOR LONGHAIR

Over the low lope of the bass, the highhat's chatter,
I'll always hear that upright
Stutter and sway—the Professor's playing
His bareknuckle rhumba boogie on Rampart Street!
Stand back now, it's the crawfish love call,
It's the wild bell ringing for resurrection,
It's the ghost of hambones in Congo Square,
Voodoo by Jesus out of Jelly Roll!

I'll take my place in the second line,
Do the zulu strut
Where the brothers sweat through the streets,
Slow drag and blues—O the bottom
Done drop out the big drum and the horn's
All empty, but the tourists still
Step off the train, some hifi squalling
Get yo' ticket in yo' hand, you wanna go to New Orleans!

I've come back now and you've gone.
No gospel or gris-gris
Could keep you here, however much
You loved the jukejoints pouring out
Bourbon and a smoky beat, the palm trees
Lashing their green rhythm down Elysian Fields.
These words are for the wide river
That spreads forever south, and that black box

You rode like a raft into heaven.
I.

For twenty years, she slept
twenty hours a day. The hawk,
its gaze, woke her. An egg ached
incurably in her head. Daily,
she balanced the bun, the china
doll—she walked deliberately—
might fall. A son died

nevertheless and shone
the next morning, a faint
pink behind the clouds.
She felt no further
way to grieve.
She consulted a mirror
and all things receded
from her eyes; her feet
were far away.

II.

Grandma Layton perches her husband
in a tree, to draw a nest. A pad
of cheap paper in her fat lap. A fist
of pencils. She sighs so the leaves
flutter round the shape of that old
man. She draws without looking,
at the paper, away from him,
an honest line.
III.

The breasts, the checks in the old house dress press against the view. A delicate distortion enters the breeze, the tree in Kansas.

The jonquils loom, the limbs tremble, the face wrinkles, the wings fold, to fit the shell.

It is the air holds him up, the birds that gather her wisps of hair.
STARTING FROM ZERO

When the snow stopped
we stood together looking out the window.
Blind by then and eager
to raise my temperature, I
grabbed you, saying, “This is not
a test,” but you were happy
to be pale and cold,
did not appreciate my fingers
touring your face. “Like love
in tennis,” you said, “we lose.”

It was hell. Snowbound
and bound now to tell the truth,
we went to bed. “I hate you,”
I said, “and I hate the snow
and the dark and high places,
all of which you are.”
“I hate you,” you said. “I hate
the bitter taste. I don’t care
if you’re good for me: I hate you.”

We heard the ice crack on the roof.
We still had food, candles,
the foundations of life.
And I had you starting
from zero and you had me. Instinctively
we huddled in bed like bears.
“Peace,” you said to me.
“Luck,” I whispered. “You’ll never
shovel your way out.”
LITHOGRAPHS

DENNIS KERN
1. PET OWNER
2. LEISTER'S LIQUID LUNCH
3. MOTHER'S TERRIBLE ABSTRACTION
4. ARYAN MADONNA
CAREFULLY

Behind the door of an afternoon I sometimes sense someone waiting. Not the dead in their collapsing houses, not the ghost who has never left the room where one evening his veins turned to violin strings. Not the past that bunches round my limbs like yellowed cloth in the room where I lived my girlhood, in the house where my grandmother died, where my mother spends her days emptying boxes of her father's shoes, her mother's gloves, into other boxes.

Not these, but a shade of the future. Like a child who keeps walking back to the place where other children spat at him and his mother laughed. He watches from hedges, from the smogged windows of gables. I think he is waiting to judge me. Perhaps if I spread the cloth over the table with a certain gentleness, he will be comforted. Then I can coax him in, put him to sleep in a bed I have made ready. And begin a strange motherhood, where all that could undo me breathes softly in the next room.
THE LONGING

Death is the supple Suitor
That wins at last—
—Emily Dickinson

When he slipped on the mountain
I would have held him
but he chose the jolt of the rope

when the raft overturned in the canyon
he was confused    he went up
instead of down to my arms

I wait to the right    he turns left
I am on time    he is early or late
I whisper when he lies awake at night
he turns on a light    he pretends
he does not know me

I cannot forget his face
every day he becomes more beautiful
and my longing becomes harder to bear

but I wait
I know him better than he knows himself

I watch him walk in circles
lift his feet in the same worn tracks
all the time he comes to me
like a moth in love with the moon

I watch him read books
scratch words on paper
he will understand nothing
until he looks in my eyes
I watch him build his heap of things
find friends and lose them couple and part
I am the one
always beyond his reach

I was with him in the darkness of the womb
they took him out screaming he promised
to come back to me

when I step from behind that final tree
he will throw down everything even his name
and before we lie down together
he will hold out the handful of blood
that remains from his birth crying here

I carried it all the way for you
THE SENSE OF CALM HOURS

for Cathy

Once I wouldn’t have noticed
how years seem single moments
when strewn across
such vast mud plains
where winter’s turned over
its white belly
and pigs begin to roam again
for bits of stubble corn.

But my sister took
my hand and pointing
with her own hand
showed me Brueghel’s
Wedding Feast, the piece
an indoor scene of outdoor people
and lacking the landscape
of his many other paintings
though years of unseen field work
filled those meatless pies,
filled those pitchers with beer.

O.K., I said, I understand.
One day’s work at Coleco’s
wood shop and I end up
at Luba’s Tavern.

But no,
she said, no, you mustn’t
think of wood only
but forests with owls
hooting, black-winged
woodpeckers banging
their heads against
oaks and maples. And not
just fields but rivers
that feed them and us,
that empty to estuaries.
These, these are in your beer.

She thought I understood
the silent sea’s tearing
and mending the land.
Or why we returned each summer
and lay down on the shore
under the quiet stars
which she told me
were neither full nor empty of me,
neither like nor unlike
driftwood fires charring sand.

Now near monotonous fields
flocked waxwings fluttering
can make one bush
in its winter barrenness
more than alive, less
than green;
and yet,

today I heard my mother cry
across one thousand wired miles:

*your sister’s growing
unchangeably pale*
*they dye her feet blue*
*in the Philadelphia hospital*
*and her hair falls out*
*like permanent tears.*

I answered that dawn siren,
sunlight spilling through cracked blinds,
the neighborhood waking to coffee and work.
ALL NIGHT THE RAIN

I

All night the rain follows me, down black underground rivers, into caverns of sleeplessness. The rain swallows me down:

“Touch me. I’m sharp as ice. Touch me, the splinter in your eye.”

II

Swoop the chimney, swallow, my mother is dying. In her hair is the dew of kisses she never gave us. Her hands are young. She speaks harshly, as if we were children sullen at dinner.

How often I ran to the sea’s edge, stood on the shore washed by moonlight: tidepools of stars, caves urine-damp, marines by a bonfire drunk and singing.

III

Ash, ash. He stirs the smouldering flame. Ash. His daughter is not there, though the pigs still root the yard and here are the buttons from her blouse. Ash. He stirs and stirs, but she is gone.

Where are they now, who went to war, who left the war? Once soldiers marched. I followed a coffin, carrying the army blanket of one who would not return.

IV

Tonight the stars are teeth. The sky’s jaw hangs wide. Mother, your songs once whittled the dark, hummed me a kingdom, sucked from my ear the splinters of crying—

Oh, Johnny, marry me now; the moon fills with dust; it’s late.
The charges against Anne Hutchinson changed repeatedly during the course of her trials in Boston in 1637 and 1638. Her real crime was her belief that salvation was God's gift rather than the result of the Puritan way of life. Because she had a large following among women for whom she had been both midwife and teacher, and also among the men of Boston, this belief threatened the authority of that theocracy. She was imprisoned and then banished from the Boston colony. She eventually settled in the New York wilderness, where she and five of her 15 children were killed by Indians.

1.

"I did only ask a question."

Laying planks out of England
I came to this tangle
that is the face of a forest.
I read my window, the unstudied snow,
I begin to talk to my table—
fellow prisoner whose scars I will remember.
Dusk is a flood rising and swallowing everything
except my candle,
my white page with its knotted thread;
Boston's first apples under the eaves.
2.

"The elder women should instruct the younger."

In that loft where women finish what men began,
we greet one flower at a time,
the child we name Necessity,
the secret name of Joy.
We have chewed fear, swallowed its mineral content,
we know life trembles like the water in this glass.

I keep going back.
Send for me, I'll come.
We are searching the Word
as these gentlemen have not done.

3.

"This immortality is purchased."

Seeing the oaks without their leaves,
I see why the fence posts are cripples
in slow pilgrimage across the fields.
All things suffer, every stone
is dense with pain that has learned
to keep silent, hold still.

Without words, without cure,
the sunset rushes in and dumps gifts at my feet
and then departs,
dissolved in its own being.
Which of us failed?
Weren't my arms outstretched?

Over the leaves' small, choppy waves
I walk home and light my lamp.
In banana light, pineapple light
I write these words:
"The fire kept on lapping at Isaac's heart.
Not I but the sheep bleats to save my life."
4.

“I think the soul to be nothing but light.”

What touches you every day?
What busies itself among motes?
What walks on water?
What moves through the universe
with the speed of a god?
What is always someplace?
What teaches resurrection?

5.

“I am redeemed from my vain conversation.”

The trees are looking over our heads.
They wave to the ocean
which lands at our beach
without seeking church membership.
The trunks of trees are cracked lips
closed on threads of argument,
the whole world doctrine marched into an ark
striking bottom as an atlas of animals
which debouch into the rocky braille
of a foreign language.
I THINK I'M BUDDY HOLLY

I had a couple of hours in St. Louis before the bus left for Oklahoma, so I decided to go see the Arch. I was standing in line for what I thought was an elevator to the top when I noticed this guy standing in front of me. He was the same guy I'd seen on the bus from Indianapolis, asleep next to his guitar, taking up the whole seat. It didn't matter since other seats were empty. You'd expect the bus to be full at Christmas, but it wasn't a good year.

“So are you going up?” I asked him.
“Suppose I am,” he said.
“You know, I saw you on the bus back there. I'm Calvin Dee, from Caldwell. Caldwell, Indiana.” He seemed a little reluctant to shake my hand. “What'd you do with your guitar?”
“Locked her up. Sure as hell don't want anything to happen to Sarah.”

He looked something like Abe Lincoln. He was just as lanky, and the face was the same, with dark circles under the eyes and dark hollows under the cheekbones. A chewed-up face. The beard was too scraggly, though.

“My name's J.B. Scanlon,” he said, “but you can call me Buzz. I haven't outgrown it yet.”
“Okay, Buzz,” I said.
“You ever heard of Mel Bay?”

Well, the thing is, I had. I had heard of Mel Bay, but I hadn't heard of Mel Bay in maybe ten years. When I was eleven I took electric guitar lessons with this guy in Caldwell who taught the Mel Bay Method. It was on all the books and all the chord charts and everything. Mel Bay. The picture of this smiling, middle-aged guy stared out at you every time you sat down to play. It wasn't what I had in mind. I didn't want to sit there like some ukelele-playing fool. I wanted to rip it up with that electric guitar.

“He's the guy on all those music books,” I said.
“Yep, that's the one, and he lives right here in St. Louis,” Buzz said.
“If I only had another hour or so I'd go out and shake the man's hand. He's part of American music. Think of all the people who play guitar because of Mel Bay. The man's a legend, an American legend.”
“You really think so?” I asked.
Before Buzz could answer, five or six sliding doors opened up at once. I thought we'd be getting in an elevator, even though I'd been trying to figure out how an elevator could curve to the top of the Arch. It wasn't an elevator at all. The sliding doors opened to little tram cars. They stuffed two girls in with Buzz and me. He was the tallest, and he had to bend his neck and lean his head forward, putting his chin on his fist.

“Help, I need air,” I joked as the doors closed.

The two girls started to giggle as the tram car made its jerky little start.

“I hope it’s worth it,” I said. Then the ride smoothed out and I got my bearings. “So how are you ladies today?”

Buzz looked uncomfortable around them, being so close, the way Abe Lincoln probably wasn't a ladies’ man, but I thought the one was too pretty to ignore. The other, she was the wallflower type. The kind who never gets to dance to rock-and-roll music and has to tap her toe inside a world of her own.

“You tourists?” the pretty one laughed.

“You might say that,” I said, “or you might say we're just people.”

“I can always spot tourists,” she said. “Anyhow, it’s not too hard. Almost everybody who comes to the Arch is a tourist, but I come here anyway. It makes me proud to live in St. Louis.”

“It’s huge,” I said.

“Wait’ll you see the view.”

The little car climbed real smooth, and the pretty one, and the not-so-pretty one, and especially Buzz remained quiet. You could feel the cable pulling us up the big curve inside the Arch. It beat hell out of roller coasters because it was something new.

“Get ready,” the pretty one said. “We're coming to a stop.”

“I don’t think I'm going to like this,” her friend said, and the pretty girl took her hand.

Buzz looked green. His head was flat against the top of the cage, and he must have felt every vibration.

“You okay, buddy?” I said.

“Wish I'd gone to see Mel Bay.”

The car rocked to a stop. The sliding doors opened, and the girls got out first. I followed, and then Buzz managed to untangle himself. We climbed a short flight of stairs. At the top was a long, narrow room with a curved floor—the very top of the Arch—and on each side were little airplane windows. We followed the girls over the curved floor to the far end of the room.
I almost felt sick. You could feel the Arch swaying in the wind, and if you thought about it you knew you were suspended right up in the middle of nothing, with nothing underneath you but air. I never felt good about flying, either. The Arch was bad enough, but at least you could see something besides clouds, so you could get your balance if you didn’t panic.

To the east, you could see across the Mississippi River to where the bus came in, East St. Louis. When the bus went through in broad daylight, there wasn’t anybody on the street. Caldwell was like that, too—the jobs had dried up. Maybe there was work in Oklahoma. That was the rumor. Every man could find a job out in the gas fields or oil fields, and then maybe a year or two later you could land on a ranch.

“Well, what do you think?” I asked Buzz.

“Whoo-ee,” he said. “Makes you proud.” He pointed toward some rolling hills to the southeast. “That’s a big country out there, Cal.”

“I didn’t know they still had steamboats,” I said, finally getting the courage to look straight down at the river. The boats had Christmas lights that twinkled even in the daytime.

“Those steamboats are for tourists,” the pretty girl said. “Come on, you guys should look out the other side.”

We walked across the narrow room and looked down at the city. There was St. Louis as far as you could see. It made you wonder what New York was like.

“Did you guys ever see ‘Meet Me in St. Louis’?” she said. “That’s my favorite movie. Judy Garland sings about the World’s Fair in St. Louis and how much she loves the city. You know, it’s still a good place to be from, even if there is more violence.”

Buzz said, “I hear America singing!” He raised his right forefinger in the air. “That’s right, folks, I hear America singing.” I thought he might start reciting the Gettysburg Address. “Being up here is like being in a radio tower. You can just feel all the songs flowing through you. Look out there to the east, that’s where country music comes from. Down south you got the blues, and when you come over to this window you can see way past St. Louis. That’s where cowboy songs come from. Man, I wish I had Sarah with me now so I could play a song right up here in the ol’ St. Louis Arch.”

“Who’s Sarah?” the pretty girl said.
“You know, it’s about time we introduced ourselves,” I said. “I’m Calvin Dee, from Caldwell, Indiana, and this here’s J.B. ‘Buzz’ Scanlon. Sarah’s his guitar, and she’s back at the Greyhound station.”

“Where you from, J.B. ‘Buzz’?” she said.

“Just Buzz, ma’am. From all over the place, but mostly from Gas City, North Carolina. I’m heading back that way.”

“That’s where Woody Guthrie’s from,” Buzz said. “This land is your land, this land is my land.”

“I thought that was Will Rogers,” I said.

“No, man, he’s a fool. He’s the one who said, ‘I never met a man I didn’t like.’ Anybody who said that has got to be a fool.”

“Oh,” I said.

“Well, I’m Sylvie,” the pretty girl said. “Come here, Ruth.” She motioned to the girl who was still across the aisle, looking out the eastern windows. “She’s a bit shy,” Sylvie explained.

The plain girl walked over to us. She was too small for the camel-colored coat she wore, but it was the shiny red boots that made her look funny.

“This is my friend, Ruth Hatfield,” Sylvie said. “She’s just visiting from Tennessee. Knoxville, Tennessee.”

“‘The Beautiful Tennessee Waltz,’” Buzz said.

Ruth blushed.

“That’s a song,” he said.

“Why don’t you girls join us for a coke?” I said. “There’s a cafeteria downstairs.”

“I know there is,” Sylvie said. “I live here.”

“I’m headed for Tennessee,” Buzz said to Ruth. “Nashville, for the Grand Ol’ Opry. I want to stand in the same place that Hank Williams stood. Sometimes I think I am Hank Williams, in fact. Other times I think I’m Jimmie Rodgers, or even Muddy Waters. I really want to go the Opry.”

“That would be nice,” Ruth said quietly.

“I went to Memphis once,” I said, “to visit the King’s grave. Graceland was really something.”

“King who?” Ruth said.

“Tut,” I said.

“He means Elvis,” Sylvie said.

“That’s right,” I said. “How about that coke now?”
Buzz said to Ruth, “In fact, music is what makes America great. It’s our only native art form—”

“If Ruth wants a coke,” Sylvie said.

“I don’t reckon it’ll hurt anything,” Ruth said.

The ride down through the long curve was not so bad as coming up. We walked away from the tram cars into a huge open space, an underground room beneath the Arch. It was like the inside of a pyramid. A twinkling Christmas tree stood near the doorway to the cafeteria. I was hungry enough to eat a horse.

‘‘Hallelujah, I’m a bum,’’ ” Buzz said as he took a tray and started through the line. My stomach was grumbling as I followed Buzz. I took salisbury steak and mashed potatoes, a small dish of corn, and tapioca. I thought hard about the lemon meringue pie.

“Is that all you girls are having?” I said as I sat down. They had two cokes and an order of french fries between them.

“I didn’t know you were going to have Christmas dinner a week early,” Sylvie said.

“The Greyhound food gets pretty old,” I said. “What do you mean you’re a bum, Buzz?”

“That’s a song,” he said.

“Well, what do you do?” Sylvie said. “For a living?”

“I think of myself as a troubadour,” Buzz said. “I like to ramble around and sing songs and remind people what a great country this used to be, back when Hank and Jimmie and Woody were on the road. When there were trains and people helped each other out—”

“But what do you do?” Sylvie said.

“Give him a chance,” Ruth said.

“What I’m talking about is how America has lost its way,” Buzz said. “It’s still got mountains and rivers and—”

“Cities like St. Louis,” Sylvie said.

“Sure, great cities,” Buzz said, “but the spirit’s been lost. We don’t have people like Leadbelly anymore, or Sleepy John Estes, or Blind Lemon Jefferson—”

“What about Elvis?” I said.

“He’s dead, too,” Sylvie said.

“Yeah, but he just died a couple years ago.”

“The electric guitar ruined America,” Buzz said.

“I think he’s right,” Ruth said. “My momma played the dulcimer, my daddy played the banjo, but I don’t play anything, and my brother doesn’t play anything—”
"I like disco," Sylvie said. "But Elvis was okay."

The thing about Elvis, though, he never sang about anything you could relate to. He sang about hound dogs and crying in the chapel and things like that, but nothing you could relate to. That's why I think Buddy was the best. He knew what everybody was thinking. Like "True Love Ways," you can listen to that song over and over and you can relate it to any girl you ever cared about.

"Disco stinks," Buzz said. "I hate rock-and-roll. It's all for money."

"I like Fifties," I said. "I was born the same year Buddy Holly died in the plane crash, but he was still great. Did you ever hear 'Peggy Sue'?"

"I think so," Sylvie said.

I could hear the drums pounding away in my head. "That's when rock-and-roll started," I said. "It's still great today." Ruth was making noise with her straw. "You want another coke?" I asked.

"We've got to leave pretty soon," Sylvie said. "Some friends are coming over tonight."

"Who?" Ruth said.

"We're having a little party—"

"Oh," Ruth said.

"A little Christmas party."

"Well, one thing for sure," I said, "that Christmas music they pipe in everywhere is pure crap."

"That's not very nice," Ruth said.

"And another thing. All that talk about the old days—well, it's great right now. You can go to Oklahoma and get a job if you're willing to work. And rock-and-roll is here to stay—"

"Bzz," Buzz said.

"What?"

"I think I'm getting buzzed," he said.

"What are you talking about?"

"The buzzograph is going wild." He made a buzz sound, I think by putting his tongue directly behind his front teeth. He looked like Honest Abe making a face, but he sounded like an electric razor. "I get buzzed whenever I hear a lot of foolish talk. I wish you could hear yourself, Cal, you sound just like a teenager—"

"I'm twenty-three," I said, "but what the hell is a buzzograph?"

This J.B. "Buzz" Scanlon was just too weird for words.

"It's a chart I keep on the wall back at the library—"

"What library?" Sylvie said.
"In Gas City," Buzz said. "Gas City, North Carolina."

"Oh, so you do work after all," she said, "like a normal human being."

"I wish you'd let him explain himself," Ruth said.

"I keep this graph paper on the wall at the library," Buzz said, "and every day I mark my buzz level with a black dot. Then I connect the dots with a line. I can tell how buzzed I've been for the last week by whether the chart goes up or down. I've been keeping it for ten years."

"Whoo-ee," I said, trying to sound like Buzz.

"The rise in my buzz level all through the Seventies corresponds to the decline in American life. Pollution and crime and greed—it's all right there on the buzzograph. And the increase in noise pollution, like those tape decks that teenagers carry everywhere—that's on the buzzograph, too."

"Well, you listen to me a minute, Buzz Scanlon," Sylvie said. All the time we sat there listening to Buzz, she'd been tapping her orange fingernails on the table like she might explode. I tried to imagine her tongue inside my mouth. "You can criticize America all you want," she continued, "and live in a world of make-believe, but this is still the best place on earth. I'm not talking about the Arch or even St. Louis. I mean the whole country."

"Bzz," Buzz said.

"Where else can a girl like me, who might be a secretary anywhere in the world, go to college with the dream of becoming the first woman president of the United States?"

"You know, Sylvie," Ruth said, "it's easier if your daddy owns a meat-packing plant."

"The meat-packing plant doesn't have anything to do with it. I've worked every single summer. Just because I was smart enough to major in political science—"

"I started college," I said, "but it wasn't for me. I don't like those people."

"Maybe I'm too hard on America," Buzz said. "I love America, I really do. It's just that—"

"It's time for us to be going," Sylvie said. "The guests will be arriving."

"Let's have another coke," I said.

"No, we have to go. Come on, Ruth."

And Sylvie stood up. I felt my heart drop. It wasn't only her looks—I felt like I understood Sylvie. Maybe I was a dreamer, too, even though I had to work in a man's world. I couldn't be president of
the United States. I wasn't smart enough. But I'd get a little ranch someday, down in Oklahoma, and I'd get a pretty little girl like Sylvie to pass the time of day. Who knows? She might even educate me.

"We'd sure appreciate it if you ladies would accompany us to the station," I said. "It's only a couple of blocks. You know, it gets mighty lonely at Christmas when you haven't got anybody to put you on the bus."

I watched as Ruth gave Sylvie a pleading look, like she really wanted to help us out, but Sylvie looked as determined to go home. Maybe Sylvie was still mad about all the crazy talk Buzz had laid on us.

"Sylvie," Ruth said softly, "I'm going to accompany these gentlemen to the bus station. It's the least we can do after such a nice afternoon."

"What about our company?" Sylvie said.
"They can just wait," Ruth said.
"I'm not so sure they can," Sylvie said. "I'm not so sure they can wait, Ruth."

Buzz said, "I'd sure like to introduce you ladies to Sarah, maybe play a tune for you. Just one or two tunes." He smiled at Sylvie. "It would really make my day."

"Well, I don't know," Sylvie said.
"Just one or two tunes," Ruth said. "Please, Sylvie. After all, it's Christmas."

"We'll only stay a half hour," Sylvie said.

We climbed the stairs from the underground room, where the twinkling Christmas tree seemed as small as ever, and when we got outside it was cold and the snow was dirty and the sun was starting to go down. You could look straight up, and it was like the arch of heaven itself was over your head. It looked even bigger now that we'd been to the top and swayed in the wind. And the orange sun made all kinds of reflections on the shiny aluminum curve. The colors just kept shifting the way Sylvie's personality must have shifted when she took hold of my hand.

We walked right through the downtown. People were hurrying here and there to do their last-minute shopping, and I lost track of the time. When we got to the station, I had only twenty minutes before the bus left for Oklahoma City. Buzz had almost an hour for the Nashville bus. The four of us sat together on a bench while Buzz played a tune on Sarah. It was called "Blue Moon of Kentucky."
Sylvie looked antsy, but I could tell that Ruth really enjoyed the music. She didn't seem as nervous as before, and there was a little smile on her face. Buzz played another country song. Then we stood to go to separate lines, because if you don't get in line at Christmas you get the worst seats, back where you can hear the toilet slosh.

So Buzz was going to Nashville, to the Opry, to figure out if he was Hank or Jimmie or Lefty Frizzell. He held hands with Ruth. I shook his other hand and wished him a good life. I said I hoped he got the buzzograph under control.

"Okay, Cal," he said. "And you be good. Maybe someday you can go visit the place where Woody Guthrie was born, in the Oklahoma hills."

Ruth said goodbye, too. "I'm sorry we didn't get to talk more," she said. "I get so shy I can hardly say what I mean. It makes me mad, Cal. But I wanted to tell you that I think you're going to do okay in Oklahoma. You've got a good level head." She leaned over to give me a hug, and I put my arm around her shoulders. I thought she might blush. "Just between you and me," she said, "I think you could be right about rock-and-roll. It's the music of today."

"I'm not so sure about that," Buzz said. He was about as grumpy a guy as I'd ever met.

"You just go have a good time in Oklahoma," Ruth said. She kissed me on the cheek, and I stared at her shiny red boots as she walked away with Buzz. They found a place to sit on the floor, in line for the Nashville bus. It looked like Buzz was strumming a few chords on Sarah, but I was too far away to hear.

Sylvie stood in line with me. She was all pink and gold. The cold weather had put color in her cheeks, and I just looked at her. She began to talk, maybe to loosen things up.

"I've never seen Ruth kiss anybody," she said.

Then she talked about this sorority that she was in, and all the girls who were her closest friends. I began to drift off. I wondered what Oklahoma would be like. Did you need experience to work on the oil rigs, or were there so many jobs you could just pick and choose? Of course, the only way to find out was to get on the bus and go.

The driver told people to get their tickets ready. I took hold of Sylvie's hand and told her that I wished she was going with me. I was probably out of my mind. Then I pressed myself close and kissed her. She kept her eyes open the whole time, even when I pulled back. I kissed her again. This time she stuck her tongue in my mouth. I'd heard about fast sorority girls, but I'd been waiting my entire life to be frenched by a complete stranger.
“Merry Christmas, Cal,” she said.

I knew she’d done me a favor. When I walked through the gate with my suitcase, I didn’t even turn around because I knew Sylvie would be gone. But I decided that if she ever became president, I’d look her up.

I didn’t have to sit back by the toilet after all, and I had a good view from my window seat as we left St. Louis. The Arch was all lit up. And then we rolled off into darkness. All you could see were the twinkling colored lights in houses along the interstate. I wondered if folks had put them there for people like me who had to be on the road during the holidays. Still, I figured that if I got to Oklahoma before New Year’s I’d have the jump on everyone else. And if I got time off from the oil rigs, or gas fields, or the ranch, I might travel on down to Lubbock, Texas, and visit the grave of Buddy Holly. Those songs were real for me. Maybe a girl like Sylvie wasn’t all that much different than Peggy Sue. You know, I wish I hadn’t quit on that electric guitar. I really loved to lose myself inside the music, but that goddamn Mel Bay Method just wasn’t getting me where I wanted to go.
Widely separate in location and frequently diverse in style, Western writers often continue to feel in general isolated and ignored; the same may frequently enough be said of their small-scale publishers. This is hardly news, as the recent Western States Arts Foundation Literature Survey Report only confirms. The real “news” is that Western presses continue to issue carefully crafted, enlightened, provocative books—work which rewards readers’ attention several-fold.

Gary Young’s Greenhouse Review Press (3965 Bonny Doon Road, Santa Cruz, CA 95060) has produced, in Sherod Santos’ *Begin, Distance*, a book no commercial press could afford. A letterpress and limited edition printed on fine papers, its design is both elegant and muted, meant clearly to complement its contents.

As a National Poetry Series author this year (*Accidental Weather*, Doubleday), Santos’ work is certain to receive considerable and deserved attention. It is, above all, work carefully considered, the pacing in the poems most often deliberate, intricate. Santos is a meditative poet. As such, he shares with such diverse contemporaries as Robert Penn Warren and Charles Wright an approach which makes each poem an act of both inquiry and validation. It is an attempt to at once discover and understand, an attempt clear in this first section of “The Evening Light Along The Sound:”

I.

As if the sky could no longer hold its color,
that pale blue light sifts down onto the water
like talcum onto a tabletop, or like the fine powder
of memory settling again in the mind in that hour
toward sleep, in that season toward autumn
when the trees begin to fill with a sorrowing air.

Still, there’s a moment then when it all seems
so impersonal: no sign that something difficult
is reappearing in our lives, no image
of a feeling, but a feeling itself, like a mis-
directed letter from someone sad and faraway.

Also evident, even in a quotation as brief as the one above, is Santos’ sure musical control, particularly in the first sentence’s repetition and modulation of *r* sounds—*longer/color/water/powder/hour/sorrowing air*.

*Begin, Distance* is a book that asks to be read slowly, a book of complex resonance and depth, detachment and sudden emotion.
The most beautiful moments are beyond our reach.
And nothing is more ordinary
than a girl in brown shoes
walking down the street as it begins
to snow. Or love,
which comes mysteriously back to us.
And yet, as is always the case, it was
just so—and it asks the question
of what happened before all this time
we've been waiting, and drawn in so close
around ourselves, and at every moment
turning farther in with an enthusiasm
we have rarely known in the past.

(last stanza, "Winter Landscape With A Girl In Brown Shoes")

*     *     *

With its address still officially Amherst, Massachusetts (Box 800, Amherst, MA 01004), Lynx House Press may not appear to qualify as Western; and with its considerable backlist and obvious commitment to commercial-quality production, it may not seem to qualify as small scale. Still, many of Lynx's authors are Westerners, and Oregon poet Carlos Reyes' chapbook was printed at John Laursen's Press 22 in Portland.

Reyes' poems in *At Doolin Quay* are, for the most part, quiet, almost transparent revelations of Ireland. As one of the poems explicitly suggests, Reyes' technique is often designed to achieve a photographic effect; Reyes wants us to see this place, and in seeing it to locate (however briefly) our own places in it. True or not, Reyes' assertion is that the Irish live, or at least appear to live, not separate from their countryside, but of it, with the same naturalness as wind or tide:

Walking Along The Hills Above Cloonanaha At Dusk

The beauty of what once
was more than symmetry and form,
these stone walls
go with us, along roads
and sidehills, up mountains
and down into valleys,
holding in the lives
of cattle and sheep
and the man
in the worn grey wool suit
who comes to count
the animals or to drive them
home. And the woman
who comes with the tin pail
along this pathway to milk,
the dog with her
snapping at the heels
and dewlaps of the cows.

At dusk I pause and look back
over the meadow toward Mai Bay
listening hard for the story
of these walls, hearing only
the slightest whisper
as I pass on,
leaving them to settle
into the centuries
as sure as people settle into beds
at dark along these bogs.

As I clamber over this wall
one stone falls, complaining
with clattering song. Reaching for it
I start to replace
stories told well,
the stone that comes to my hand.

It is a seductive vision—it amounts to a statement of faith—and Reyes’ power is such that reading this book one feels little impulse to question such faith.

* * *

Located in Wyoming, in a town with the unlikely and lyric name of Story (Box 221, Story, Wyoming 82842), Tom and Barbara Rea’s Dooryard Press is one of the West’s newer letterpress publishers, though if the Reas are inexperienced printers, it does not show. Their third title, Ripley Schemm’s *Mapping My Father*, is a subdued, careful, two-color book printed, as the colophon indicates, “during a splendid October.”
That timing seems appropriate, as one finds a similar splendor in Ripley Schemm's poems. Part of one's pleasure here has to do with Schemm's steady accumulation of place names: Hound Creek, Gurney's Butte, Wind Mountain, Green Gulch. It is not simply the names that matter; it is an insistence that landscape matters, affecting, altering, in some ways uniting the people Schemm sees so clearly:

Today you greeted the ground owl
guarding her nest in the cutbank.
This same morning you took the wheel
in your hands to learn the gravel
and its grades. Tomorrow you will be
sixteen, will forget you once rode
snug on my hip. The creek floods,
chokecherry buds widen, we sleep,
we wake, to the same pleasant air.

(first stanza, "Lolly Du Dum Day With My Daughter")

Whether she is looking at her daughter, at fire fighters ("hopeless from 2nd Street South,/their burnt out lives just right/to save a canyon, a forest."), or at herself ("the map my face has become"), Schemm's eye is acute, consistently seeing past surfaces with an empathy and concern that is as quietly astonishing as it is humane.

Of the three books under discussion here, Mapping My Father is the most immediately intimate. And its title poem is an honest masterpiece of its kind.

Finally all three of these books testify to their publishers' awareness that small presses must, if they wish to survive, produce quality physical objects—books of tasteful and intelligent design. More importantly, each of these books, read once with interest and without haste, will work to call readers back, and repay their attention. That ability, that insistence, is one useful and basic criterion for what constitutes good literature.
In the title story of *Home Fires*, the man named Pack tells how his truck flipped off the mountain road, tumbled down a steep slope, and slammed into a granite slab. "I was headed home," he says. The woman listening replies, "It should be that easy."

David Long knows it's not easy; his characters struggle toward and with what they call home. These struggles create the tension by which the stories succeed. Although the eight stories cohere to the broad idea of home, Long avoids imposing a sense of redundancy on the reader by varying the meaning of home, the situations, characters, and narrative style.

The characters have been displaced by divorce; the death of a child, spouse or parent; or some ineffable emptiness. "Eclipse," the first story, begins:

> I came home on borrowed rides, east across the sunblinded distances of Nevada and Utah, north into the forests of Montana, slouched in the cracked seats of pickups, remembering indistinctly what had taken me away and more vividly what I had found. In the back of my mind was the idea that being home would put an end to it.

The expressed warning in "Life As We Know It" is "Terrible thing to get caught in the wilderness." This is also the implied warning throughout *Home Fires*. In these stories, wilderness is not only the indifferent landscape; it is the isolated areas of the soul. The danger of being stranded in a lonely, personal wilderness drives the characters homeward.

But home is not where the characters expect it to be. Their surprising journeys bring them to homes found in all-night wedding chapels, abandoned hot springs, dead-end bars, cello shops, and in the fleeting moments of a solar eclipse. Long plays unique variations on his theme.

He conceives his characters from only a few general molds, but his keen perception and precise details render individuals who are alive with diverse idiosyncratic personalities. In five of the stories, an old man influences the protagonist deeply. Through his fine characterizations, Long avoids the mistake of presenting old men as generic characters who act in a predictable way. The same is true of his middle-aged men and women. In the confines of his chosen molds, he creates much.

Long uses first person, partially omniscient and fully omniscient narrators; the stories are told in past, present, and successfully mixed tenses; and his narrators/protagonists are male and female. Stylistically, the most interesting story is "Other People's Stories." Hanna, the narrator, begins in the present tense. He tells the middle and largest part of the story in the past.
fifteen years earlier. He resumes the present tense at a time before the opening scene, then retells the opening. Reading his before-and-after description of the same scene, we see how telling the story changes Hanna’s perception of his present situation.

Long has a knack for capturing the texture of place. The stories are located in Massachusetts, California, Oklahoma, Montana, and the road space in between. The first six stories take place in the western United States. There is no concrete detail indicating that “Morning Practice” does not take place in the same area, but the opening pages create the atmosphere of New England and the mood of characters born and living there. Before Long’s reference to the Red Sox, I had recognized not only New England, but Massachusetts.

Long’s imagery is revealing and unique: “She had teeth like kernels of sweet corn allowed to overripen on the cob.” His imagery works most when it not only clarifies description, but when it also comments on the entire story. In “Morning Practice,” Gerhard’s wife has died recently. Kate, his daughter, has been divorced and come home to be with Gerhard. As they drive through the countryside, Gerhard remembers his younger years with his wife. When his memories move too close to the present, “His voice stilled, like the clotting of a wound.” Gerhard’s and Kate’s stories are about the painful process of healing, and this image dramatically highlights that pain.

The dialogue also works best when it not only moves the scene and reveals character, but comments on the entire story. In “Life As We Know It,” St. John tells Snowy that he is driving to Los Angeles. Their dialogue is interrupted by St. John’s thoughts about his job, which is transporting disassembled cabins, barns and houses to Recycled Interiors, an outfit that designs western-deco cocktail lounges and offices; St. John salvages the remains of people’s homes. Snowy, who is self-sufficient, replies, “I’ve never been to that state.” Long imparts authorial irony without stepping into the scene.

Long’s skill is founded in language. His prose rhythms underscore scene and description as a fine soundtrack supports a film.

Longer than anyone knows, fir and tamarack had clung to the sharp slopes of the canyon, ravaged by lightning fires and bark beetles and gravity, their tenacity witnessed only by the moody northwestern clouds, by birds of prey whose serrated wings bore them on the tricky thermals, by families of deer carefully following trails beside the fast gray water.

The recurring vowel sounds and long clauses recreate the movement of time, elements and animals that the paragraph describes.

In seven of the stories, the characters reach home. The successful exception is “Border Crossing.” Carver never knew his father, and his mother died when he was twelve; he was raised by an aunt who resented him. Carver takes flight with T.R., a fugitive. He is lured by T.R.’s decisiveness and confidence.
They murder an old man. Carver could have prevented the murder if he'd had the strength to make a decision. He hadn't. Through the cops, courts and jails that follow, Carver imagines the old man

standing up from the couch and shuffling past him to the door, squeezing him on the shoulder like a friendly old grandfather and saying, "You done right this time, boy."

Carver's chance for home died with the old man.

There are no sentimental endings in *Home Fires* because the victories are small and hard-earned; they are victories of endurance. In "Like Some Distant Crying," Celestia's husband left her after their son died. "Her choice was movement instead of bitterness." She succeeds not only in restarting her own life, but in reviving the spirit of an old man who has given up almost everything but food and breath.

Long does not fictionalize life; rather, he reveals the heroism in living. Endurance is the phoenix in *Home Fires*. The spirit of Long's collection is exemplified in this, one of the last paragraphs of the title story:

Another chance, she thought, sitting again. She studied the pills lying before her, the tears beginning to burn her eyes. She scraped her hand across the tabletop, scattering the pills across the kitchen, spilling back the chair as she stood and ran out into the darkness of the house, turning on lights, screaming *Goddamn it* at the tears, screaming *No* at the treads of the stairs. *Goddamn it. Goddamn it.* throwing open doors, flipping switches, every one she could lay a hand on, until the whole house was burning and raging with life.
Winter is Canadian poet Harold Rhenisch's first book. Like scores of other first books, Winter displays well-crafted, carefully controlled language. But Rhenisch's best poems convey his need to confront what he writes about, giving his work a sense of importance which is too often lacking in contemporary poetry. Winter is inventive, original, and enjoyable, but it sets itself apart from books which merely entertain by creatively addressing central human issues such as time, death, growth, and love.

Throughout the book, two impulses move the author—a sensuous love for the land, and a restless intelligence. “Dream,” the first poem, embodies both of these impulses. The first stanza places the persona in contact with the land, the second stanza withdraws into an abstract consideration of memory, and the third unifies these two impulses through metaphor:

I remember pruning apple trees,
frozen wood sharing
my descending sky;
a small, dark shape
plodding through drifted snow
and frozen earth.

Memory is not a matter
of knowing anything or nothing:
how much can I give up my words
for sky, trees and soil,
and choose the curve of this land,
when all are moving into vacancy?

Wood extends beyond wood, words
extend until something other
than words is left, a voice, a
channel pulling with the sea
into our rites of passage
where we never pass.
The closing stanzas of "I Wait" embody the poet's deep attachment to the land, his first and most natural impulse:

In these rift valleys,  
in the farthest direction, stars  
spin out

like leaves in endless wind.  
My hair tugs at my head—into the dark.  
As I walk I hear only  
a loud, warm rustling,

so loud I can hear  
only one word:  
in the grass,  
and that all about me, that word:

stay.

The muse figure, present in many of Rhenisch's poems, is linked to this love for the land, as these lines from "She Stands in Old Grass and Laughs" illustrate:

She stands in the heavy couchgrass  
beneath the old linden.  
She bends to smooth the grass.

Over the deep creek, the red-throated  
ring-necked pheasant  
creak at wind and the yellow fern.

...  
She stares, and cries into the darkness  
beneath the linden.  
*Do you hear the snow coming?*

*Hello?*

...  
Seeds burst into the wind  
from the thin pods. She laughs  
and bends to smooth the grass.
The poet’s rare ability to unify the sensuous world with the world of ideas is at work in the poem “The Mill”:

In a fluid darkness
bent by stars,
all direct lines
are curves of stone
cracking on the river bottom,
shudders of light
learning wetness, flesh,
stone turned inward
to learn the hardness inside stone.

I held this truth once.
Do you want truth?
Myself, I have stopped
asking for truth
but ask for simplicity
and it confounds me.

We fall, straight, hard,
into the sun of where we’ve been,
and come out flesh,
not space, but yielding stone, earth.
It is a flying leap.

The vastness of the first image (which sounds very much like Einstein’s space-time continuum), “a fluid darkness/bent by stars,” contrasts nicely with the final image of the first stanza, the hard inwardness which the poet has come to reject. The simplicity which Rhenisch now asks for is “hard knowledge,” the knowledge against which every person must weigh his existence:

How far have we come or gone?
It is cold.
I throw a stone into the current.
It drifts.
What is time to us?
We are time,
the most difficult answer.

The leaf falls; the body rots;
the moments end.
This is not a truth
but something every man
must stand against.
in his own time.
Hard knowledge:
only love brings life
to fallow flesh.
Such simplicity confounds me.

"We Live on the Edge," a central poem of the book, succeeds in unifying Rhenisch's love for the land and his need for ideas:

The August air swims outside my window and settles into the pale blades of grass nodding as the wind bends them down and is still.

I must acknowledge the winter in these hot stones, in the hillsides, in our eyes. The vineyard is gone. In these dead rows, only the valley remains, pushing, cracked and thick with weeds.

There is no name for what we are. Sure, we farm, we count off split vines shaggy with dead bark, but names? Gravel ridges spill in long arcs through the tan soil of the vineyard: burnt or icy, this summer's stones are death, are hard, are in me.

...

Maybe you do not want to talk about gods; maybe you think a blade of grass is not a stillness I give to you; maybe you say the land does not steam off from our skin, that we do not walk, in spirals of mind, back, and forward in our doing back, in heat, that heat is not stone, that we do not touch ourselves from stone to flesh. Maybe you do not want to talk about gods.
Rhenisch handles his different stylistic approaches well. In “Forgetting,” short lines are skillfully enjambed in a way which allows the rhyme pattern to enhance the poem’s musical quality without calling attention to itself:

All winds are skin
against the thin
edges of the mind;
all my dead speak;
al my days haze out;
and what I seek
I cannot find.

I walk through birch—
a bared, grey arch
beneath the stretched skin
of yellow dusk;
I walk, ruffled, cold,
the soil a husk,
the sky resin
and the thin whine
of blood, a line
of cold breath and sight,
the trees pushing
at wood for their leaves—
the old humming
collapse of night.

“Mill Road, 1930” is approached, stylistically, in a very different way. No punctuation stops the eye anywhere in the poem, except after the last line, but the use of lines which are broken at the end of short phrases stops the momentum which normally carries the reader from one line to the next. The result is that each line seems to float in place, suspended in time, like the gathering of people beside Mill Road:

The hour of breezes
In green orchards
Water smells
Laughter

Men track down cliffs
to women
in shallow water
A dog barks
at a shirt left
hanging over a branch

And he will bark all night

Water swilling the day's end
Closing eyes of men and women
around a fire

the barking
regular as a tolling bell
in another country

They have come
as far as they need to be
years a rustle in the reeds.

Rhenisch's impulses toward sensuous and intellectual experience are present throughout Winter. As he addresses, in poetry, the issues which are crucial to him, he brings these impulses together in many shapes. The result of this process is a fine book of poetry in which fresh imagery and inventive language speak through the force of ideas and the feel of the land.
CONTRIBUTORS

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NAOMI RAND was born in 1954. She will have a story published in summer 1983 by Spirit That Moves Us Press, and is working on a novel.

KEITH RATZLAFF studies and teaches in Bloomington, Indiana, where he is on the poetry staff of the *Indiana Review*. 
MARY RUEFLE lives in Shaftsbury, Vermont, and teaches at Bennington College. Her first book of poems, Memling’s Veil, was published this year by the University of Alabama Press.

LEX RUNCIMAN teaches in the Department of English at Oregon State University. He is a former editor of CutBank and was co-editor of Where We Are: The Montana Poets Anthology.

DENNICE SCANLON was born in Butte, Montana, and taught high school in Anaconda, Montana, for eight years. She is currently in the MFA program at the University of Montana. She has published poetry, fiction, and journalism at the local and national level.

MICHAEL SPENCE is driving a bus part-time while looking for work as a computer programmer. He lives in Seattle.

KEVIN STEIN teaches and studies at Indiana University, where he is doing dissertation work on James Wright.

JIM TODD, from Great Falls, Montana, taught in the humanities program at the University of Montana and is currently Chairman of the Art Department at U of M.

KATHLEENE WEST is in the doctoral program at the University of Nebraska/Lincoln, working toward a degree in English Literature and Icelandic Studies. Her latest book, The Garden Section, is just out from Yellow Barn Press, Omaha; Water Witching is due out from Copper Canyon Press next year.

ELLEN WITTLINGER lives in Swampscott, Massachusetts. She has poems forthcoming in Pequod, Ploughshares, and Antioch Review; her book, Breakers, was published by Sheep Meadow Press in 1979.

DAVID R. YOUNG is in the MFA program at Indiana University. Another of his stories will appear in The Indiana Review in January, and an article on baseball was in Women’s Sports in October of this year.

PAUL ZARZYSKI writes, rodeos, hunts, fishes, and trips timber out of Missoula, Montana. He is still in one piece after nearly ten years of bronc riding; his chapbook from Confluence Press is appropriately titled Call Me Lucky.
MAGAZINES RECEIVED

Abraxas (25/26), Ingrid Swanberg, ed., 2518 Gregory St., Madison, WI 53711. $4/copy.
The Agni Review, Sharon Dunn, ed., Box 229, Cambridge, MA 02138. $3.50/copy.
The Beloit Poetry Journal (Chapbook 17, Summer 82), Robert H. Glauber et al., eds., Box 2, Beloit, WI 53511. $1.50/copy.
Carolina Quarterly (Spring 82, Fall 82), Davis A. March, ed., Greenlaw Hall 066A, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27514. $4/copy.
Cassandra’s Third Generation Hardware, Columbia Basin College, 2600 N. 20th Ave., Pasco, WA 99301.
The Chariton Review (Spring 82), Jim Barnes, ed., Northeast Missouri State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. $2/copy.
The Connecticut Connection (Spring 82), Joan Somers, ed., 166 South Main Street, Cheshire, CT 06410. $2/copy.
The Greenfield Review (Summer/Fall 82), Joseph Bruchac III, ed., R.D. 1, Box 80, Greenfield Center, NY 12833. $4/copy.
Hawaii Review (Spring 82), Barbara Fulkerson, ed., c/o Dept. of English, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1733 Donagho Road, Honolulu, HI 96822. $3/copy.
The Iowa Review (Fall 81), David Hamilton, ed., 308 EPB, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242. $12/year.
Kayak (Nos. 59 & 60), George Hitchcock, ed., 325 Ocean View Ave., Santa Cruz, CA 95062. $2/copy.
Memphis State Review (Fall 82), William Page, faculty ed., Dept. of English, Memphis State University, Memphis, TN 38152. $2/copy.
The New Southern Literary Messenger (Summer/Fall 82), Charles Lohmann, ed., 302 S. Laurel St., Richmond, VA 23220.
The North American Review (June 82, September 82), Robley Wilson, Jr., ed., University of Northern Iowa, 1222 West 27th St., Cedar Falls, IA 50614. $2.50/copy.
Pekquod (No. 14), David Paradis, ed., 536 Hill Street, San Francisco, CA 94114. $4.50/copy.
Pikestaff Forum (Spring 82), James R. Scrimgeour and Robert D. Sutherland, eds., Box 127, Normal, IL 61761. $2/copy.
Poetry Now (Issues 34 & 35), E. V. Griffith, ed., 3118 K St., Eureka, CA 95501. $2/copy.
Puerto del Sol (Summer 82), New Mexico State University, Box 3E, Las Cruces, NM 88003.
Quarterly West (Spring/Summer 82), David Baker, ed., 317 Olpin Union, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84112. $5.50/year.
Santa Fe: Poetry and the Arts (Spring 82, Autumn 82), peggy s. alberhasky, ed., 115 Delgado St., Santa Fe, NM 87501.
Skywriting 10, 11, & 12 (Fall 82), Martin Grossman, ed., 511 Campbell Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49007. $5.50/copy.
The Small Press Review (Vol. 14, Nos. 8, 9, & 10), Len Fulton, ed., Box 100, Paradise, CA 95969.
Sou’wester (Winter 82), Diesel-Hamm, Hayes, & Nipper, eds., Dept. of English, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, IL 62026. $1.50/copy.
Books Received

Adirondacks, Greg Kuzma, poems, Bear Claw Press, $3.95.
Beyond the Straits, Marine Robert Warden, poems, Momentum Press, $3.50.
A Bird of Paper: Poems of Vicente Aleixandre, translated by Willis Barnstone &
David Garrison, Ohio University Press, $8.95.
Bitteroots, Peter Wild, poems, Blue Moon Press, Inc., $5.00.
Chinese Folk-Poetry, translated by Cecilia Liang, Beyond Baroque Foundation,
$4.00.
Cohoes Theater, Len Roberts, poems, Momentum Press, $3.95.
Cotton Nails: A Collection of 12 poems from Blue Begonia Press.
Enough the Great Running Chapel, Harry E. Northrup, poems, Momentum Press,
$7.95.
Fire in the Conservatory, Linda Gregerson, poems, Dragon Gate, Inc., $6.00.
Gauguin and Food, Lee Bassett, poems, Dooryard Press, $8.00.
Great Slave Lake Suite, Leland Hickman, poems, Momentum Press, $5.95.
Hidden Proofs, Bill Mohr, poems, Bombshelter Press, $4.95.
Home Fires, David Long, stories, University of Illinois Press, $4.95.
January Thaw, Bruce Guernsey, poems, Pitt Poetry Series, University of Pittsburgh
Press, $4.95.
A Lake on the Earth, Dick Barnes, poems, Momentum Press, $4.50.
The Lark and the Emperor, W. M. Aberg, poems, A Bits Chapbook.
The Mother/Child Papers, Alicia Suskin Ostriker, poems, Momentum Press, $3.95.
Nebraska, Greg Kuzma, poems, The Best Cellar Press.
Of Traps and Snares, John Haines, essays, Dragon Press, $3.50.
Other Days, John Haines, essays, Graywolf Press, $5.00.
Passages Toward the Dark, Thomas McGrath, poems, Copper Canyon Press, $10.00.
A Place Made Fast, Mark Halperin, poems, Copper Canyon Press, $6.00.
The Pushcart Prize VII: Best of the Small Presses, Bill Henderson, ed., Pushcart Press,
$22.00.
Small Pianos, James Kruse, poetry and prose, Momentum Press, $3.50.
Song Made Out of a Pale Smoke, Bruce Renner, L'Epervier Press.
To Make a Life, Dan Stryk, poems, A Confluence Chapbook, $3.50.
Turnmoil in Hungary: An Anthology of Twentieth Century Hungarian Poetry, edited
and translated by Nicholas Kolumban, New Rivers Press, $6.00.
Winter, Harold Rhenisch, poems, Sono Nis Press.
The World is a Suburb of Los Angeles, Michael C. Ford, poems, Momentum Press,
$4.00.
Back Issues


No. 2  NOT AVAILABLE

No. 3  Jane Bailey, Lee Blessing, Martha Evans, William Virgil Davis, Andrew Grossbardt, CarolAnn Russell, Paula Petrik, David Steingass, Paul Zimmer, and others. Photographs by Larry Hales. $1.50.

No. 4  Montana Artists Issue: Michelle Birch, Madeline DeFrees, John Haines, Richard Hugo, Pat Todd, and others. Photographs by Nick Baker. $1.50.


No. 6  Albert Goldbarth, James J. McAuley, W. M. Ranson, Gloria Sawai, Mary Swander, Sara Vogan, and others. Special section on John Haines, with an interview and portfolio of new work. $2.00.

No. 7  Jim Barnes, Madeline DeFrees, Norman Dubie, John Haines, Jay Meck, Carolyne Wright, and others. Translations of Akesson, Baudelaire and Cernuda. Calligraphy by Jacqueline Svaren. $2.00.

No. 8  Jane Bailey, Ralph Burns, Stuart Friebert, Carol Frost, Albert Goldbarth, Alvin Greenberg, David Ray, Kim Robert Stafford, Michael Strelow, Irene Wanner, and others. Feature article on Montana Poets-in-the-Schools. $2.00.

No. 9  Robert Hedin, Peter Wild, Meredith Steinbach, Robert Sims Reid, Madeline DeFrees, Sam Hamill, Christine Zawadiwsky, Mark Vinz, and others. $2.00.

No. 10  Peter Balakian, Marilyn Folkestad, Christopher Buckley, Stuart Friebert, Mary Swander. Jim Todd portfolio. $2.00.

No. 11  Elton Glaser, Edward Harkeness, Robert Hedin, CarolAnn Russell, Claude Stanush. $2.00.

No. 12  Marilyn Folkestad, Albert Goldbarth, William Kloefkorn, Sam Hamill, Steven Cramer, David Keller. $2.00.

No. 13  Stephen Dunn, Gary Thompson, Stuart Friebert, Naomi Lazard, Susan Davis. $2.50.

No. 14  Special Translation Issue: Milan Rufus, Octavio Paz, Rainer Maria Rilke, Bashō. $2.50.

No. 15  William Pitt Root, Bonnie ZoBell, Albert Goldbarth, Scott Hibbard, Lauri Cosca, Lex Runciman. $2.50.

No. 16  NOT AVAILABLE


No. 18  Greg Kuzma, Sam Hamill, Wendy Ranan, John Haislip, Laurie Lamon, Joan Colby, and others. Photography by Edna Bullock, Jerry Uelsmann, Richard Garrod, and others. $3.00.
CutBank 20 (Spring/Summer 1983) will be a memorial to the poet Richard Hugo. For that reason, we will not be accepting unsolicited manuscripts until July 1983.

Copies of the RICHARD HUGO MEMORIAL ISSUE may be reserved by sending a check or money order for $4.00 to CutBank 20, c/o English Department, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812. Subscribers to CutBank will receive the memorial issue as part of their subscription.

The Editors
CutBank 19 was printed at the University of Montana Print Shop. The editors wish to thank Al Madison, Don Kludt, Floyd Booth and Don Stefonowicz for their patience and generous assistance.

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Copies of the RICHARD-HUDD MEMORIAL ISSUE may be reserved by sending a check or money order for $10.00 to CurBray 20, c/o English Department, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812. Subscribers to CurBray will receive the memorial issue as part of their subscription.