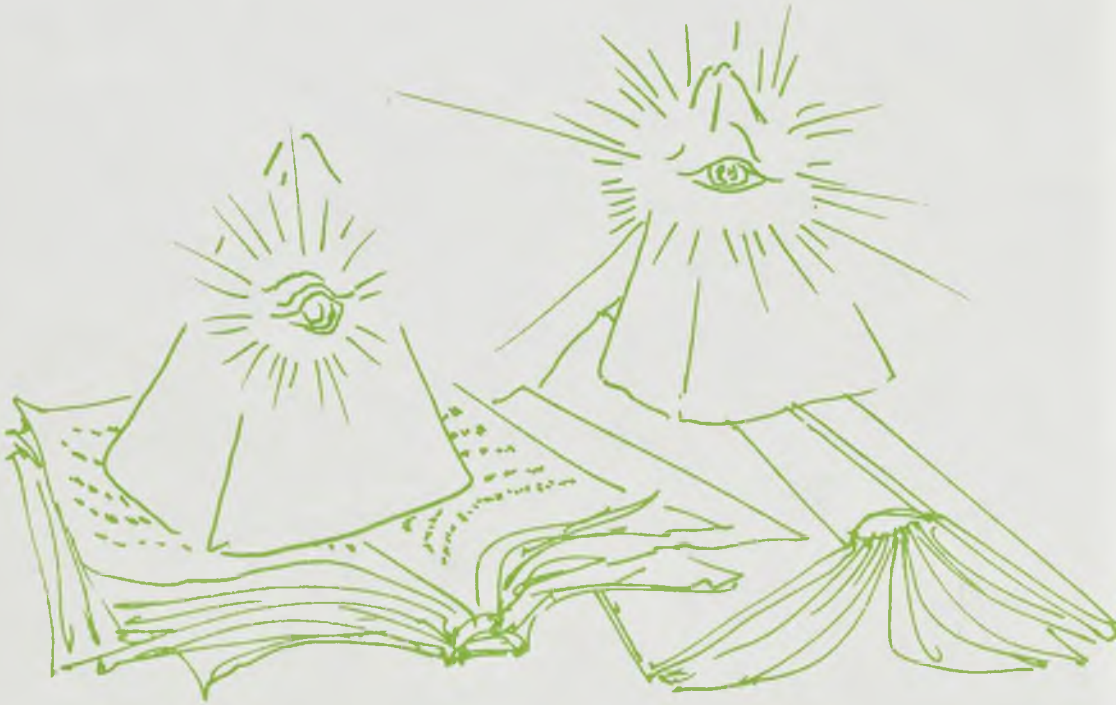


serpentine 5

1984-85



THE COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND

serpentine 5

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ser-pen-tine — A mineral or rock, essentially a hydrous magnesium silicate, $H_4M_3Si_2O_{10}$, usually dull-green, often with a mottled appearance — prominent in the geology of Staten Island.

Published with the help of funds provided by the College of Staten Island
Student Government from Student Activity Fees.

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A Note and an Acknowledgement

For lovers of newly minted verse and warm green stone, *Serpentine*, latterly resuscitated, is here again, proud to serve up another helping of favorite wares. The magazine may not be quite as predictable as Halley's in its orbiting but, like some quantum comet improbably wobbling, it can be counted on to return nonetheless — testimony to the abiding, if irregular, renewability of poetic fervor and fecundity. And once again this year *Serpentine*, one of the campus's annual literary magazines, has been sponsored and funded by the CSI Student Government, and we wish to express here our deep gratitude for that support. Also with this issue, *Serpentine* introduces a new policy: its pages are now open to CSI alumni poets as well — in the present instance, to four undaunted veterans of poetic fray who are well on their way in their adult careers to turning the world of poetry on its metaphorical ear.

Again our congratulations go to all the poets whose work appears in this issue; our regrets go to those poets we were not able to publish. And to our faithful readers we say, Read *Serpentine* as a solemn and occasionally not so solemn tribute to the everlasting muse. Enjoy.

The Editors

Cowboy-Man

Wild as open plains, kicking up dust
Was her love for him,
Cowboy-Man.

Rotted wood and whiskey
Clung to his tongue like a saloon,
Using kisses like a concealed weapon.

A tensely pitched piano tune
Ran through his outlaw veins
Wrangling women like cattle.
That Cowboy-Man.

He roped her in.
He was wearing spurs on his heart.
He called her "Darlin,"
Cowboy-Man.

He saddled her; led her
To the prairie of his heart—thick with cactus,
Trotting away—never looking back.

She listened for his shiny harmonica
Lingering in the distance
Like the moan of the locomotive
On its homeward run.

And so, waited for him
Like an old woman who let a
Cat out — years ago
To return from the fields.

He comes with a dark low lying brim.
Her spine rattles like a frightened snake
As he places his hand on her skin,
As if the hide of a horse.

Reminds her of his quickness
On the trigger as she pulls away.
He thinks he's a hero;
Cowboy-Man.

And for all the time he has stolen from her
He could have easily ridden
With the likes of the Colter Boys.



Leslie A. Fraser

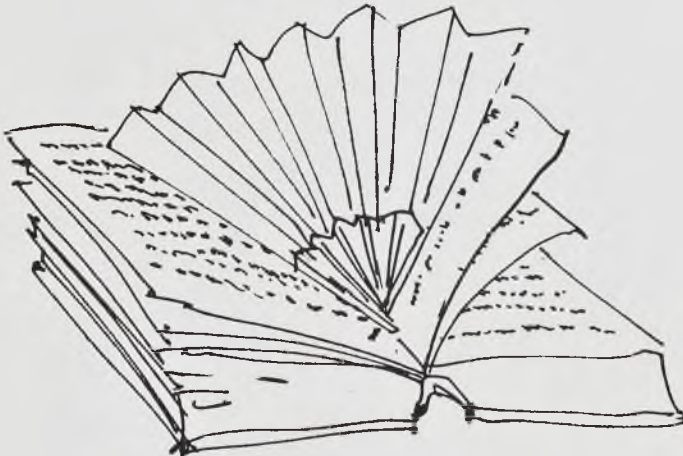
This Woman's Pain

Eternal girl sits alone in the inner wish world:
"Come out to play!" She screams, "No!"
Oh beautiful princess,
What is the price you pay
For the imprisonment of your spirit?
Flirt with thorns of the
Tragic heroine but
Remember, no one shall recall your name . . .
And you fade to dust.

Little Darling, Little Lark,
Charming Barbie Doll;
Dress up in costume, jewels and scent,
Both day and night.
Pleasant to touch, to smell, to undress,
Then tossed into the bin with the rest.

So in love with the moon—
Does it not keep itself half in darkness
Where mysterious lives of lovers
Elude clocktime by a
Dream-like extension into the infinite,
Activated by moonrays, never going anywhere,
Homeless, childless? Free lovers never tied to each other.
Endless empty ritual of pleasure.
Such is this woman's pain.

Leslie A. Fraser



So Grand

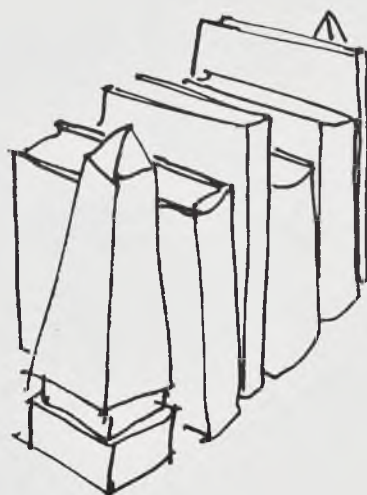
You who sit so elegantly
smiling a smile that looks
like a frown, biting your
nails, a nervous habit I
suppose. You talk of
politics, of the rich, of
the famous, but what of
Susans's suicide last week,
and Andrea, who ran off with
a sailor? Oh, my dear!

You who sit so elegantly,
who knows of your affairs,
the lovers you took to your
bed when your husband was
not at home. Did you know
he was and still is cheating
on you? But no, hush, hush,
no one is to know of your
weakness or so you thought.
Oh, my dear!

You who sit so elegantly,
you burn with passion so
strong, how could you have
thought that no one would
find out about your so-called
walks on the beach, or those
late lunches? And how could you
have thought your name
would not be connected with
scandal and scorn? Oh, my dear!

You who sit so elegantly,
you sit and talk about how he's
doing this, and she's seeing
who. But what about you? Do you
know that you are the main issue
of their conversations tonight?
They smile in your face, yet, they
are laughing behind your back! Such
is life, my dear. We take the sweet
along with the sour, we hope for
bittersweet endings.

Valeise M. Britman



I Knew, But I Didn't Know

I didn't know your name
but I knew your smile

I knew your tears
falling from your eyes

I knew your sadness as
you looked around in despair

I knew your style
you're very smart

I knew your answers
to questions asked of you

I knew your laughter
you spread it to everyone

I knew your playfulness
especially around kids

I knew your seriousness
you knew when to straighten up

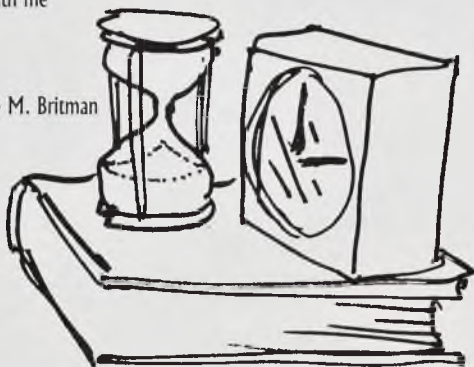
I knew your fears deep inside
I was always there for you

I knew you were searching for a
dream that I couldn't share

But yet of all of this
I still did not know one thing

You never shared your name with me
No, I didn't know your name.

Valeise M. Britman



The Poet of the Piano

(Homage to Bill Evans)

A refreshing shower on an August afternoon,
Unexpected and welcomed,
Drenched us with its melodic deluge.
Each note — briolette tear —
Gorgeously glistened,
Tumbling from above.
The drabness of the black and white paper
Clouded his brilliance
With the succinct story of his death.
A spirit unfettered: unique voicings that
Soared, swooped, and pirouetted,
Harmonized beneath staccato motifs
Modally born, precisely performed.

But the heavens rain no more,
And the spirit's been whisked asunder.
The sforzando silenced earth remains parched,
Waiting — waiting.

Frank Fiorenza



Berlin, Brandenburger Tor

One world, divided into two
standing side by side
and yet
separated by more than space
both dressed
with the black-red-gold banner
but one
showing the free wings of the eagle
the other
burdened by the hammer and sickle.

At the edge
of two worlds we stand
you —
whose feet and mind are tied
to a system
nonbelieving in letting go
I —
whose heart and eyes are filled
with your sorrow
unable to release, to free you.

The curtain —
which side am I facing?
the horses
show their tails
the carriage
is moving toward you
for
I walk on western straits
while you
tread on eastern cobbled pavement.



My shoes
leave the marks of blood
behind
with every step I take
many hearts
have suddenly stopped beating here
by trying
to escape to an unenslaved new life
they ran
into eternal darkness.

The juice
sweet juice of liberty
tasted
for one brief moment
not even
swallowed yet, nor ever will
for
the merciless red arm
destroys
with its very last grasp.

Did you not
know the current exchange rate
freedom
for one second
death
for the rest of your life
— my cousin
you could not know.

Martina Aspinall

wax moon reflections

wax moon reflections
in window glass
dead winter
on my back

stained yellow
Christ tears
of store-front
churches

with hands in pockets
full of nothingness
my feet caress
the avenues

(smallish hands
where once
my face
you held
your breath mist
touched me
as never again
your lips
ringlets
of hair
that once
my fingers wore
and danced
and played
and dreamed
of living there)

for just one hour
as life's time
of words
i'd give

then
may Venus
flee her orbit
and all standing statues

recline

John-Paul Richiuso



i love to look at you when

i love to look at you when
you sleep
your shoulders are softest
when moonlight warms the room

(and night only is our friend)

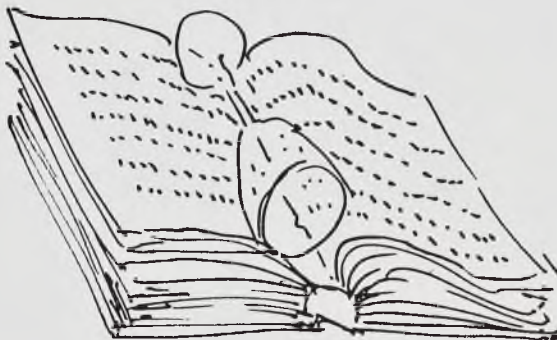
lovingly i hold you
in the hollow of my body
deep slumber takes you
far away — a midnight journey

kissing your hairbroweyes
your muteness
too fragile a defense
for what may (or may not)
lie beneath

and i
young
(and consequently strong)
so majestically impotent
for i
with all my being (there)

can only love you

John-Paul Richiuso



The White Wicker Room

The white wicker room
Was once washed in sunlight
It painted rainbows over my clouds

The white wicker room
Soft with lemon yellow pillows
Soothing my hurts and sorrows

The white wicker room
Our special corner of the world
Touched by her wisdom and love

The white wicker room
Now stands silent
The chair is empty -- the sun is gone

Catherine Bottaro

Pieces of the Puzzle

I look at your face and see the anger
I look in your eyes and see the love
Will we be able to pick up the pieces?

We seem to go around in circles
Never get to any one place
The parts of the puzzle are scattered.

Our time is stolen by others
Our energies spent on the trivial
Our egos are fragmented.

The emptiness surrounds me
The memory of your voice haunts me
The splinters are slipping through my fingers.

Catherine Bottaro



frozen lover

a different time
a different place
a closing door
an open space
a missing song in a play

can i say what i wanna say before you're too far away
don't get me wrong its just a song
you know the music must go on

it's just a story of a little girl
who hid behind her winter clothes
who froze up al the edges where the little flowers grow
and she played inside her fantasy
some people say the ice was free
but she played with little flowers
you know i think she payed too heavily

and the seasons change the snow to rain
but the frozen people feel no pain
and the flowers neither grow nor die
and the children do not love or cry

they're selling rainbows at the five and dime
a storebought dream don't waste no time
but know we've broken two or three this year
but the storebought dreams don't shed no tears

and she played inside her fantasy . . .

but i've seen my frozen lover cry
the sunlight melted through her eyes
you know i never will forget the day
i saw your scales
all fall away, all fall away

dear God i thank you for
your living Son
who melted through
my precious one

David Beidel



burning

hidden at the meeting of the mountains
lies the palace of the golden fern and the white pine

only at the dying of the day can the forest arise
the pavillion of the white birch glows the burning violet within
the hemlocks robed in satin green blackness beckon beyond the fading fire

all rise at twilight
to call the soul beyond the rocky paths

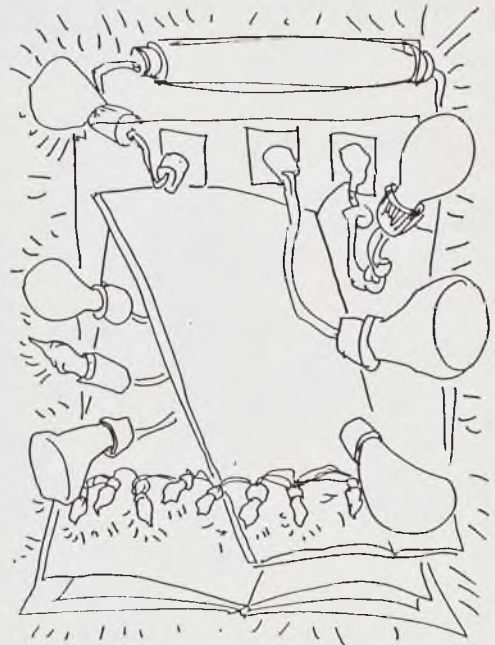
all rise at twilight
to call the soul above the melting hills

only the stillness shouts now
beckons now
to pierce the eyes

o my God it's the bright and morning star
o my God all who have seen can only follow far

all who have seen can only follow far

David Beidel



johnny's stoned again

johnny's stoned again
who's been watchin him
the kid was only ten
killed him with his Benz

chucky used to play
with baseball cards all day
now his mickey mouse surprise
can wash the fears away

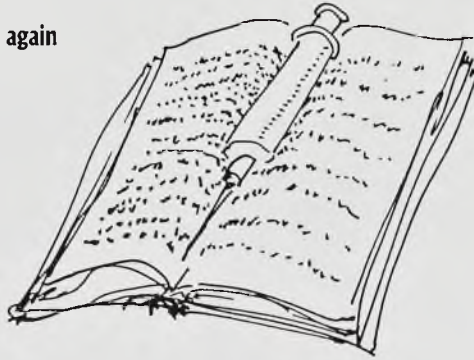
gash of pain draws the blood so fine
didn't see it drip till it all run dry
darkest stain from the crimson lie
we scrub we scrape in vain we strive . . .

mickey died today
in such a stupid way
broke the holiday
lose the masquerade

mary lost those eyes
eyes of no disguise
didn't realize
those eyes could never lie

acid rain fills the walls so high
goes down so smooth satisfy — so satisfied
deep within lies the seeking eye
nailed down so tight but I've seen her cry

look the street's aflame
the poets went insane
couldn't bear to watch
the suicide again



look the street's aflame
the poets went insane
the suicide again

I have seen then rape the eye
the fire smoulders the fire dies
curse their God and curse their king
stop the children they will not sing
they will not sing

relentless yet the spark
morning pierce the dark
break the shadow's lark
burn its frozen heart

burning open wide
fire set the sky
children do not cry
the flame will never die

for unto the enslaved
in such a simple way
was born a child
who has torn the night away

for the light it shines in the darkness
and the darkness will be no more
for the light it shines in the darkness
and the darkness has been destroyed

for unto us a child is born . . .

David Beidel

Facing Reality

I see her lying on the bed
A pillow fluffed beneath her head

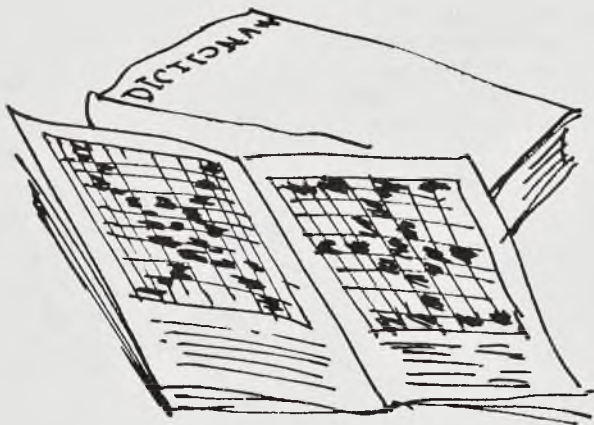
The blanket is resting above her feet
I walk to the bed and take a seat

Her white hair softly touches her shoulder
As I touch her wrinkled hand my body becomes colder

She suddenly awakens and looks into my eyes
I realize now that she has blown my disguise

This elderly woman on the bed is really "Me"
Yet, I cannot face this reality!

Arlene Walsh



A Lover and I

Sleek long tender thighs twisting,
they contort into gentle convulsions,
spasms of the flesh. Lovers grasp
each other's heart playing volleyball
they send it flying into each other's court.

Meek short elegant eyes eclipsing
they dart sweetly into soft spring
showers sending flowers parcel post,
they are quick to arrive hand
delivered inside my mortal home.

Sleek long tender thighs twisting,
the rhythm of gentle human bodies
caressing, a moment of life
floating freely upon clouds suspended
over the moon, I long for you.

Meek short elegant eyes eclipsing
the looking glass to your soul
singing silent songs of love
they paint the barren fields within
creating a memory of you forever.

Dave Mezzacappa

Child War

Machines of pain grind
Upon tombstones long decayed
Missiles fly, bombs rage
Upon the hearts of children
Never to witness old age

Dave Mezzacappa



Parting the Red

Eatin' Cheez Doodles

with all this madness around her
in pink pants

all those legs sticking out

fuschia polka

dotted ones

folded behind

little patent-leathered shoes

perpendicular to the long row

of random feet.

It was one of too many Sunday nights of nastiness, it seemed . . .

more fog of some sort

rain dampness

deep down

inside, more of the same

different entertainment

Which child belonged to which father with that radio playing

what song . . .

memories

of the same old poor excuses

pervade the scent of sleeping bench-warmers

looking happy and silly

in costumes of

misery

but the musicians seep through the worry

of soap operas

the disgust of priorities.

I wish I were in California

but here I am

like a hardened

piece of gum

until IT comes in to carry

the drowned maiden

wading through another living nightmare

to have

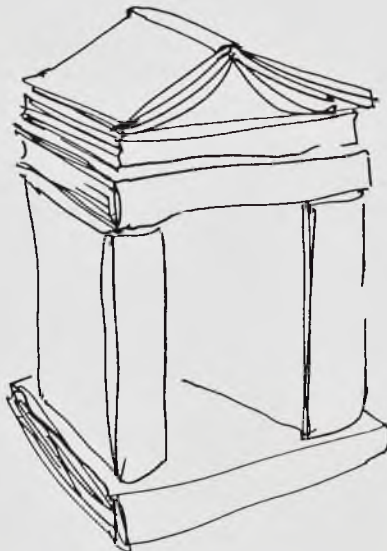
and hold me
down to pleasure cruise
that stimulates the horror of
quieted reminiscences

Deliver me
to the real terror,
stepping off of one mobile end
to see the multiplied division of someone else's
end it here.

Stay twenty feet off! Sure,
I can take it
to the point of flowing
red beauty
glowing in the neon light
handle spoons of damnation
fork full of salvation

Stab that! Baby,
I need you
to pull me across the red.
SEE!
I told ya it would all turn
out.

K. Haspel



Portrait

She comes, slowly, silently
An apparition with green eyes
Her voracious mouth is open wide
Lips, strained over stained yellow teeth
Are moistened by the flicking of a darkened tongue
Doughy white skin, dry from the wanting
Flakes in purple-tinged ash that falls to the floor
But it's those eyes
Those glittering green orbs that ceaselessly search
For what is not hers, building on the wanting
Feeding the pitiless emptiness that drives her
Those eyes
She puts her damp hand on your arm
To have you join with her in the wanting
Trying to claim you for her own
Yet she is but a wraith
Only able to keep what willingly succumbs
You have just to move your arm and her hand will fall
You will not be trapped in the cold green fire
Of those eyes
You tremble and I hope
For her hand begins to slip
Then you turn to stare full into the madness
And are caught, seduced by the needing of everything
The pointless, pointed wanting of all that is not yours
Those greedy eyes
You shudder and wrench your body
In a curve away from her form
That's all that is needed to drive her from you
The green-eyes monster is fled
Those eyes are
No more
Your rapid breathing slows
You assure me that all is well
That her wanting has not become yours
And say it was simply an understandable flash of jealousy
With lifted head and small smile you compose your features
But as I look full in your face
I must wonder at the green that glints
In the depths of your eyes

Vincina Zero

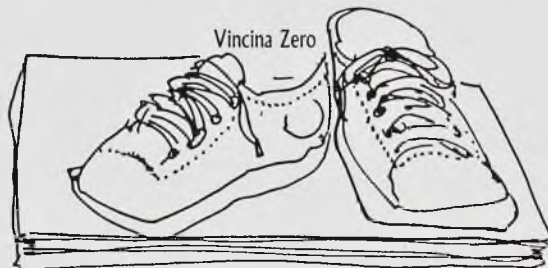


Dervish

His chubby little body twirls
In its joyful jig of unsteady discovery
His arms are held straight out
Hands open, grasping at colored lights
Feathers and ice cream
High-pitched bells of excitement ring
As his laughter peals out
The split second of overbalance and
Sudden thump of his bottom on the carpeted floor
Darken his eyes only momentarily
The clapping of his own hands restores his wonder
And provides the rhythm for his dance

His strong bronze body spins
In maneuvers aimed at outsmarting the others
And gaining what he perceives to be the world's offerings
Beautiful women, fast cars, dry wine
And the lucre to secure it all
Are what make his head turn
As each woman leaves and dregs are all that remain
In the bottles
He gazes around himself in surprise
His dance involves contortions of mind and being
He scarcely imagined
Blood throbbing in his veins powers his movements

His brittle body twists
As he pushes himself out of the chair
Making nerve endings pinched between aching bones
Scream in his head
Tears come to his eyes but he is not sure
If they are caused by the pains of his flesh
Or by the sudden realization
That he doesn't know why he got up
He leans heavily on the cane
As his body tips past its center of balance
Slowly he lowers himself into the chair again
And searches behind his eyelids for memories of his dance



Through Glass

Through glass
people move against currents
arms reaching
hair streaming
Not making any headway

Blue green
Pressure holds each one fast
fixing them
crushing them
In a vise of cruel softness

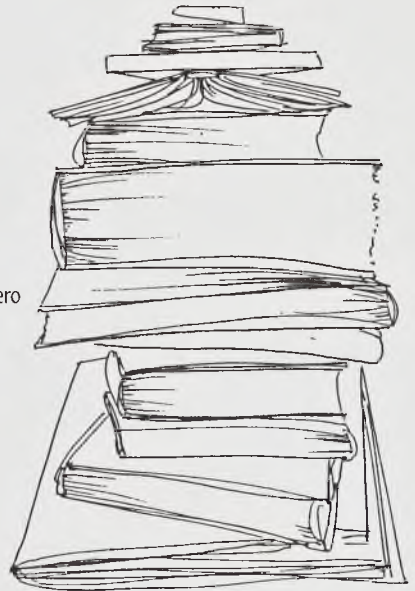
The sun
Cannot reach these great depths
needing warming
wanting lighting
Of dark corners and crevices

Mouths gape
As sea sounds roar in my ears
garbling words
distorting voices
Lost in the hiss of the surf

Heads turn
And eyes bulge out at me
lids blinking
eyes crying
Tears that wash away in the brine

Your death
Has swept me up in this tidal wave
breaking me
drowning me
I'm on the wrong side of the glass

Vincina Zero



Ouch! No!

Ouch! No!

Those words (immortal ones)
when I surrendered myself
to you (yes, you).

You were the winner and
I, the loser

(in this situation, at least).

I want it back. Can't have it back,
it's broken.

(Mommy, can it be fixed?)

I hurt (that hurt).

And you
all too willing to accept it.

Oh yes.

You might have broken my spirit
(and more)

but you won't (hear that?)

break me down

(and walk away).

How can I be complete?

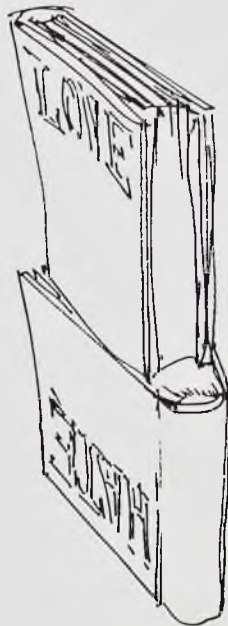
(I'm missing parts—want a refund?)

I am a woman.

A girl is complete.

Understand?

Lisa Solomon



C'est la Vie

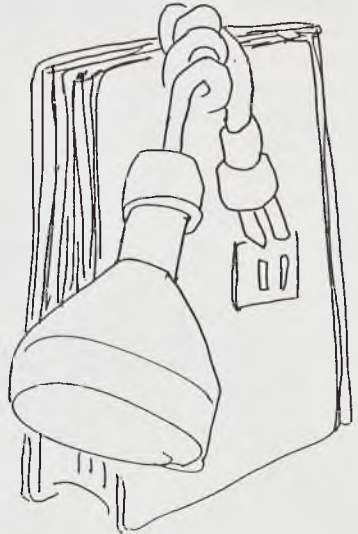
Fascist New York rebels, lonely ladies working nights.
Mushroom bombs and gun control,
the neon lights flash off and on.
A crowded bar "but you a drink?" routine,
a smoke filled room.
No time to think or contemplate,
or one might have to spend the night alone.
An angry mob, some bodies strewn across a street.
"Go about your business," someone yells; a slap is heard.
While children play with makeshift toys
in tattered clothes with sordid smells
a cop car screeches down a block; the chase is on
till someone's hurt, then they are gone,
to bust a flock of kids selling pot on the corner.
C'est la vie.
And a hell of one.

Lisa Solomon

Caged Bird

A tiny mound of feathers
lying in a cluster in the
corner of its
cold steal cage.
Motionless
what was living
once
flying free . . .

Jeanne Peters



Twilight Serenade

Form
and
thought
are always sought
but never quite
ensambled;
dimensional dictum
abided by
and kept in sunlight's
sanctum.

The glance within
(a curious thing)
shadows dart
then filter in;
timeless space
(a lonely place?)
and infinite sun
sighs setting.
Lucid dream
swift flowing
stream
injected
ponderous
morphine;
day and night
brief respite
the chant is heard
far and slight
round the glowing
campfire bright;
flickering fantasy
of forgotten schemes
sing twilight serenade.

Jeanne Peters



Two Sides of the Same Coin

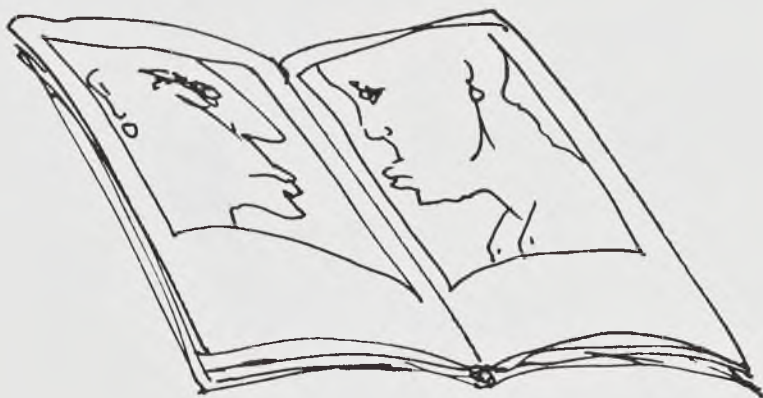
I believed in you
as children believe in magic.

The trouble is,
The deeper you go into a subject like love or magic
the more discouraged you become
because everything's a fake.

I wanted to believe that Carlo had made the silk handkerchief
dance —
after all, I saw it with my own eyes —
but his book said that before the performance
you sew a string into the lining,
attach it to an elastic band which runs up your sleeve
and is pinned to an inside pocket.
I tried his tumbler trick in my kitchen,
and all the water spilled out;
it needs a special glass,
available at any magic shop.

So when you showed me that love is an illusion,
just another cheap stunt
to be carefully rehearsed,
cleverly staged with slick patter and expert timing,
I shouldn't have been amazed:
the whole idea
is to think like a child
and let yourself be fooled.

Jerry Kass



For Young Readers

The antics of Chipper delight my son
in lilting colors and playful conundrums
that dance across the page.
Together, Chip and Nancy seek a stray kitten,
muddying their new shoes, but forgiven,
to my son's relief,
by Mother, who had thought the children lost.
Nancy's cheeks ring with freshness, blonde curls bounce,
as Chipper sprints blithely
around corners on a gleaming tricycle.

Does Chip ever grow up
to learn how much these pages lie?
In the sequel,
not suitable for young readers,
he will come to terms after a brief struggle:
marry twice for love, divorce both wives,
procreate epilepsy
and strike the child in helpless rage
when his money is gone.
Nancy aborted during the year her parents died.
A faded drudge,
she drank because her lover cursed the baby
she carried, which was not his.
The details sometimes vary a bit,
as do the plots of children's books.

I assume my son believes the portion he has read.
And because he is my son
I am sure he will remain
staunch, firm and whole,
like the characters in some adult fiction
I recently enjoyed,
men whose luck and health prevail
even beyond the ludicrous hopes
nurtured by our children
in innocence
and by ourselves
in despair.



The Pool

A boy searched in a shallow pool for dreams
Whose glinting flickers tantalized his eye
Below the stagnant murk: a viscous trough
Bejeweled by the dazzling specks of light.
His crude thumb plunged to where the sparkles twirled,
Gemmed ripples fled the center, nudged along
Till dissipated, while his broken nails
Pulled curdled slime from sucking heaves of mud.

The settled pool winked dreams' deceits again
Until a dry spell later in the year
Drew down the water, left the pond a pit
Without a glimmer, rutted bottom bare
Except for chips and fragments that had flashed
Beneath the surface — ruins of other hands.

Jerry Kass

Homecoming

(for Gary Gullo)

In a dream,
our mothers
fly to us
and kneel for the first time,
their wings behind them fallen
like two giant tears.
The gauze finally peeled from their earth eyes,
they shine
transparent
as if their bodies were hollow shores where rivers flowed,
carrying us our inheritance.
Shaking with recognition
we are caught in that circle of blue that is them
and the part of us that has always been lost
leaps, as they fly,
onto our rising backs.

There are things beyond
I'm sorry.

Donna Decker



Acceptance

"Momma," she said gently, "I've accomplished all you've asked for,
I'm no longer fat and my house is now in order;
I have a baccalaureate, I've graduated school,
Sorry 'twasn't done before; it's not that I was cruel;
I never seemed to find the time, but now the kids are grown,
And soon they'll scatter to the wind, but I'll remain at home;
So give to me your blessings, the acceptance that I crave."
But the only sound heard was a tear falling softly on the grave.

Toby Greenzang

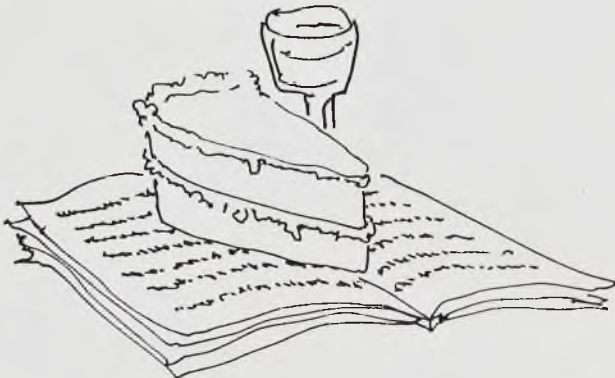
An Impractical Joke

What god is this who maketh men
Without their legs to walk?
What god is this who maketh ears
Not hear, or mouths to talk?

Is this the god to be revered
And loved by one and all?
'Twas a monstrous joke upon our race,
But now the joke doth pall;

For those who are of strong, sound limb
And know naught of these crises,
Must ask what sort of god is this
Who demands such sacrifices.

Toby Greenzang



Sandburg Must Be Turning Over In His Grave

Computer Science Major for the City,
Teacher Maker, Pot Smoker,
Player with Frisbees and the Printer of Programs;
Stoned, bored, noisy,
College of the Big Mouths:
They tell me you are illiterate and I believe them, for I have read
the graffiti scrawled upon your bathroom stalls.
And they tell me you are bombed and I answer: Yes, it is true I have
seen the glassy-eyed out on the quadrangle.
And they tell me you are bewildering and my reply is: On the faces of
your students I have seen the puzzlement during registration.
And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at this
my college, and I give them back the sneer and say to them:
Come and show me another college with stoned heads bobbing unsure
they are alive and raucous and coarse and stinking,
Flinging empty bottles amid the bushes piling one on another; here
is a bold beer slugger, set vivid against the studious,
Thirsty as a camel desert-crossed, cunning as a pothead in the
savage wilderness,
Emptyheaded,
Swilling,
Wrecking,
Burping,
Rolling, toking, rerolling,
Under the smoke, munchies in his hand, laughing with full
mouth,
Under the terrible burden of the bursar, laughing as a fool
laughs,
Laughing even as an ignorant person who has never read a
book,
Bragging and laughing that under his belt is a six-pack, and
under his jacket the finest Panama Red,
Laughing!
Laughing the stoned, bored, noisy laughter of Grass, half-
crooked, starving, proud to be Computer Science Major,
Teacher Maker, Pot Smoker, Player with Frisbees and the
Printer of Programs.



Toby Greenzang

Daddy Said

Daddy said music is beautiful
so he put on an album.
Then I sat in the room
and listened to opera
and I thought it was great.

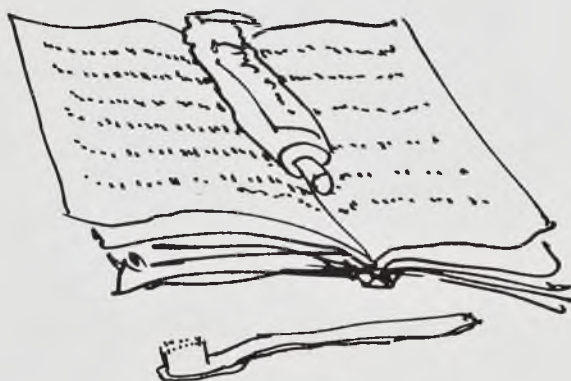
Daddy said poetry is beautiful
so he brought in a book.
Then I sat on his bed
and I read him a poem
and he smiled at me.

Daddy said I was self-centered
so I threw a napkin at him.
Then I sat in a cold field
and ripped out the grass
and looked at the moon.

Daddy said there was nothing to discuss
so I wrote him a letter and he ripped it up.
Then I ran down to town
and sat on the platform
and watched the trains go by.

Daddy said, "If you leave this house tonight you're
never coming back!"
So I grabbed my handbook
then I put on my coat
and sat in the car
and cried for a long long time.

Marianne Jablon



The Commuter Shuffle

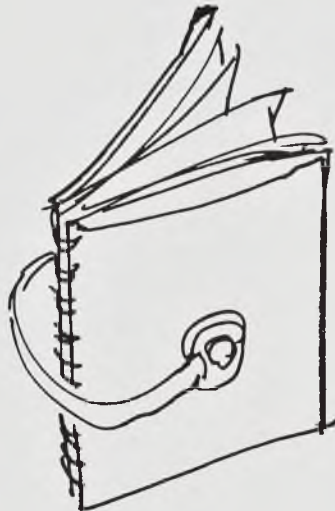
- I. The early morning Monday
ferry moves slowly
SLOWLY
through the water.
Behind me
the window is fogged;
drops of
water
trickle,
run,
race down the pane.
I am inclined
to open
the window.
Ahhh,
to breathe the
cold
damp
salty air,
to let the fog swirl and
writhe throughout the boat.
Dancing and circling
it would mask
the painted faces and the
three piece suits,
and slither about the stiletto heels;
dew would condense and glisten
on clicking knitting needles
and on smelly Havanas
held in pudgy wrinkled hands
or sour mouths.
I would like to stir these
sleepy sheep
so warm and dry and
boring
BORING
(but now it's time to shuffle
off the boat).



- II. Day in
day out
catch a train
catch a ferry
rush
RUSH downtown to work.
I walk quickly down the street.
You S.O.B.
You stupid lady
high heels clicking,
fat purple
tent-encased body
swaying,
waddling
like a duck,
taking the whole
sidewalk.
I smell you.
Sweet
sickening violets
almost
mask your
fetid body odor
as I
hold my
breath and
squeeze
past.

III. Ahhh — relief.
but now
the rain quickens.
Suddenly
the umbrella business is IN
business booms
BOOMS
on every wet corner.
If I were high
up inside
one of these
dry skyscrapers,
the ground would be
colorful,
the bobbing umbrellas
aesthetically
pleasing,
but
down here,
splashing the puddles,
snaking and
darting in
this crowd
of wet-smelling bodies,
the umbrellas
are weapons,
eye-poking
hair-catching
WEAPONS.
These early morning commuters,
this oblivious
army
shuffles
and
waddles
in formation
eyes closed
(no coffee yet)
on their
way
to
work.

Marianne Jablon



A Slice of Life in Livingston Manor, N.Y.

Gap-toothed and greasy haired
stringy and dirty
pregnant and fourteen.
"Hey Kim, when's the brat due?"
"Is you and Jimmy gonna get married?"
Her little sisters teased,
they admired her proud watermelon stomach.
"Kim, you're so lucky
you don't gotta go to school no more."

Shirley was in love too,
then pregnant.
She married John, Jimmie's twin.
Later, John left Shirley for Irene
(she was Kim's sister).
Now Irene has one baby by John,
Shirley has two by John.
Kim has three by Jim
(those Perry brothers sure are fertile).

Unwed mothers with two kids
never go to college.
Wedded teenagers with three kids
never finish high school.
What's it like in the chicken factory, Kim? Jim?
You go home stinking of greasy, bloody chickens.
Feathers plastered in your hair,
sticking to your skin.

Old Whiskey Sam
lived in the alley
between the laundry
and the Hotel Claire barroom.
Old black man
grizzled white whiskers
green felt hat
and whiskey breath.
Said, "There's a flower for you, little lady.
My, you is beautiful.
All you little ladies is beautiful.
You all better treat them right,
You hear me, guys?
They don't treat you right, little lady,
You tell them ol' Sam is gonna get them.



Marianne Jablon

Passing the Open Windows

With the summer comes the life
Warm days easy strife

In the winter comes the cold
But we'll make it past the open windows

When all is lost days go bad
When all are happy and you're still sad

When all friends turn to foe
Turn away from the open window

Cathy Connolly



Life Inside White

When I graduated
I wore a lily white gown
against a peacock sky
I gazed at the lilac flowers
strapped on my wrist
a drop of dew glistened
it caught the sky blue
and dazzled it with a smile

It was brilliant
a diamond in its own right
I remember thinking that
someday I would wear a
supreme one on my left hand

When I entered college
that first day I wore snow white
I remembered gazing at my watch
the quartz crystal had caught
the sun's radiance and held it captive
again I saw brilliance

When I went to a baptism
the babe was enclosed in
pure white against her
pinkened body and was baptized
in the eyes of the Lord
the cream candles caught the
barest essence of that very
tender moment and reflected
it upon my path
again I saw brilliance

I went to a wedding
the bride wore virgin white
and a crown of diamonds
entangled in her mane
she held out her milky hand
to accept her hand
it caught the bluish church light
and shone it upon me

The brilliance had blinded me
I looked down
my dew drop had evaporated
I never realized it was gone



The Pleasure

exciting
it
with the train going by
you forward as at
forward i am
 bed, soapy light
here bamboo shakes
tied and filled
eucalyptis pussy willow
between the arched
ivory of two japanese

candle body my boy
 my girl

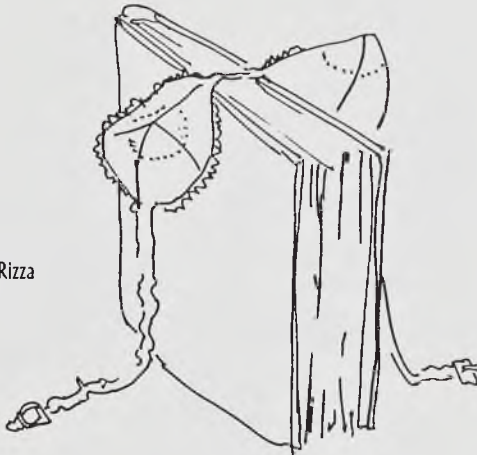
feel it in my face
the pillow sees it
what you do to ankles
behind from behind is it
eclipse a'hold of my ears
and kissing felled stone head

arch back i spring you
laugh leaves shake the good
walls pitcher of pleasure

lifting sea, length of love
roll up such action we find
mouth boat, helm,
smoky house one,
clear room this
 jamb hedge
i said "walls, good"
 nipples wood stand
belly oil plate
nose to . . . no parts here

we beach us
 and breathe

Gerard Rizza



Purification

To penetrate as the rays of sunshine
and illuminate all that is touched.

To glisten as a radiant star
and answer each dream wished upon me.

To blossom as a vibrant flower
and bloom wiser and sweeter each season.

To reach for the mystery lying in the sky
and capture its secrets in my palm.

To expand across a pasture of endless green
and absorb its sacred atmosphere.

To float high and steady over misery
and escape into the embrace of freedom.

To flow through an ocean of calm
and rest afloat on the waves of peacefulness.

To wash away the germ of hatred
and disinfect its diseased existence.

To soothe the pressure of anger
and recline within the wings of tranquility.

Laura Cassati



Mom's Gone

It's been two perplexing weeks
Since Mon left earth, but we
Haven't actually parted.
My umbilical cord is still

Attached and endlessly stretching.
I'm not a titan,
My megascope's self-reflection's a fraud.
I can't handle the distance of Infinity,

I'm just too wearied from
The depletion of my heart;
Its emptying has created
A synergetic performance

Within my throat, chest, and stomach;
I've been sore, congested, and nauseous;
With every inhale, I've felt a
Noxious flow of air

Traveling through my throat, past
My chest, into my stomach,
Where the air compressed against
The lining, forcing a synesthesia,

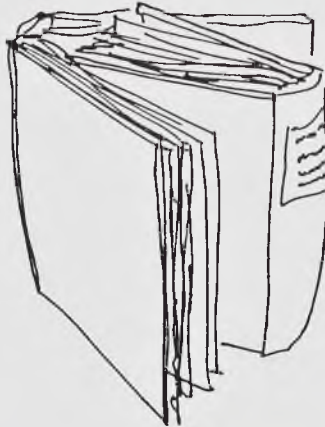
Both physically and mentally. I have
These feelings more often than
I can rationally endure.
I've been breathing recycled soot,

And I'm still gasping
From that black poison.
I've not crawled to a point in time
Where I believe it's useless

To take in the air of life, yet,
My strides have shortened.
I've imbibed all that appeared sane,
Yet my thoughts have gone forth

Without having resolute bearing.
Still, I've a vivid
Curio of heaven versus hell,
And my fear for the latter

Is the force that keeps me
From quitting on earth. Gravity binds,



Keeps me from drifting wildly,
But my life's now an

Eight by eleven inch collage
With: black shirt, black pants,
Burnt food; each step setting off
A booby trap.

My muscles want to collapse,
My heart wants to rest,
My mind wants to sleep,
My love wants to cease,

My soul wants to leave.
I'm still physically young,
And yet, psychologically,
I'm as woebegone

As a wizened old man
Who's lost his fragrance.
I'm not barefaced, my shame rose
While the casket lowered,

And the afterpain
Caused my
Fragile heart to fragment.
My rancid body's carrying

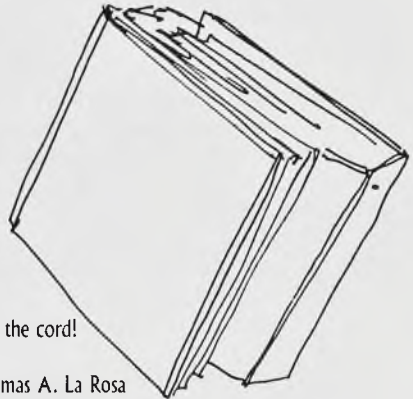
The weight of not having been:
More understanding,
More forgiven; a
More caring son.

To give a mother the rank
Of a minion,
Why!
It's sacreligious, it's . . .

I've no more privities,
There'll be no experiences
Of felicity during my
Penitence on earth.

Oh God! I can't bear it!
If my soul isn't beyond being
Salvable, then coat it with salve!
Haven't you heard my cries! Please cut the cord!

Thomas A. La Rosa

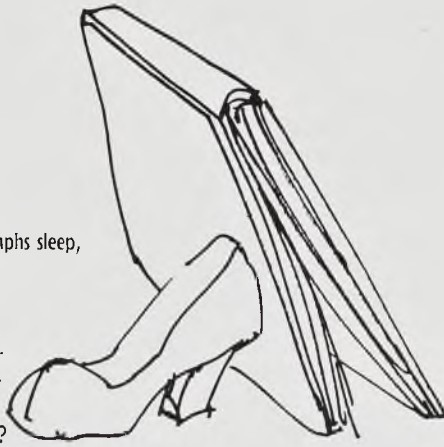


Naked

In the forest deep and wild
Where everything is free:
Tell me, will you love me then,
When I am only me?

In the forest wild and deep,
Where only sprites and woodnymphs sleep,
Can it be that love holds true,
When all you are is only you?

And when the forest goes away—
And we are left by light of day—
Will we each other clearly see
When we are more than only we?



Annmarie Scholz

9:00 a.m.

The thickness of the plum tree
the purple attempt of mating
summer was thickened
bushes grew
a furious air courted
rain drops on tin roofs were the motion
the action was the new season
the fall that came in slow motion over the green tree leaves & hard dirt
the fall was helping with the transforming of leaves
on a tender night the front door opened
& there he stood
engraved.

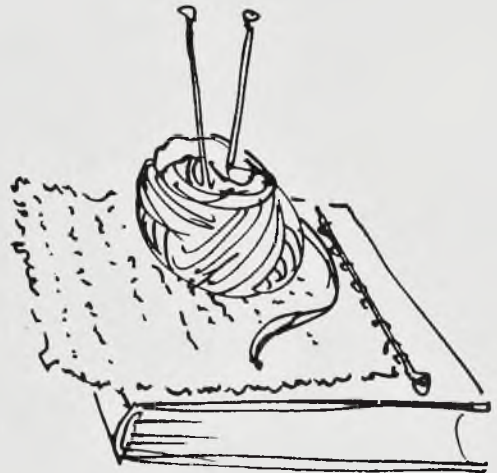
The fall begat the moon was the night
the trees were the birds gray winged & sailing deeply
the sky was the ground was his gentle arms and carried the woman in them
they had carried her through the seasons & soon there were brown leaves
circling around the park
on a fall day the wind made direction
followers we became.

Helen Decker

My Loving Mother-Teacher

My
how absurd birthdays look
when she doesn't age
anymore than a well kept book
her beauty
her mind and spirit
like early morning dew
feels fresh
alive and anew
today i am rich
and insightful too!
all so many thanx
for me/for you
and until
the sweet horizons
God's heavens above
my mother
your son
together
we are Love!

Douglas William Prideaux



I Wonder

I wonder why she sits there
with tears in her sad eyes,
I wonder what she's thinking,
I wonder why she cries.

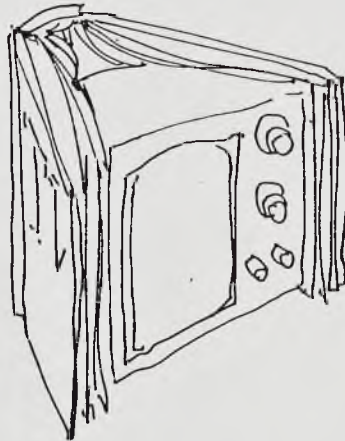
I wonder what could be so bad
why her heart's in two;
Then I sit and wonder more
at all that she's been through.

Once a young proud mama
of a bouncing daughter and son,
then came a tragic night
that left her with just one.

I wonder what her life is like —
does it bring her any joy?
Although she has her daughter
she lost her only boy.

I wonder if it will ever end,
the pain that she goes through.
How will she ever forget it?
I wonder about that too.

Cathy Garguilo



No Regrets

No regrets for having fun
No regrets opening my eyes to the sun
No regrets for loving life
Even with the few mistakes I've made in my life

I'll stand tall and alive
And proud with a smile
I never tried to pretend
Or take anyone's style
I'm me as you can see
And that's something no one can ever take from me

I have no regrets
In relationships with men
And still no regrets
When it comes to an end
I'll still live on with a piece of rope to hold on
To the memories life has given me

Who cares if I never made the Who's Who book
So what if I don't have the Park Avenue new look
I'm me as you can see
I'm not out there to please anyone else
Don't expect me to be a fraud and a phony to myself

Because the while I have left to enjoy
Life seems to me like a fragile toy
It could break in six months
Or last fifty years.
I've accepted that with guts
And fought back the tears
So as time bids goodbye
Why should I get upset
I've hurt no one in life
I have no regrets

Cheryl Palazzola



Exteriors

Her inner self is mirrored glass
I need a rock
what shape
what size
what weight
I do not know
Meanwhile
my eyes bounce off her like laser beams

Gary Hall

Take Me Away

Take me away to a place that is without
misery,
without pain and suffering,
and without fighting.

Take me away to a place that is filled
with hope,
with dreams that become reality
and with honesty and love among all
people.

Take me away to a place that is filled
with beauty,
with flowers always in bloom,
with trees and plants,
and with animals that run free.

Take me away from this place,
this place where misery runs our lives,
this place without hopes and dreams,
this place of ugliness where all beautiful
things are dead and animals
are caged.

Take me away to the perfect place,
the place where I won't care about the
real world,
just take me away

Gail De Paolis



Lovers

Leaves
swirling, drifting, falling to the ground
Winds
summon big grey ominous clouds
Rain
soaking, eroding, pelting the ground
Lovers
hoping, searching, running for cover
Lovers
kissing, caressing, holding one another
Is it raining anymore?

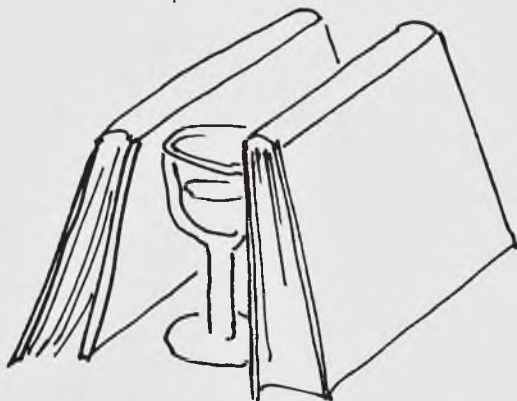
Craig Rubenstein

Metamorphosis

An awkward shy girl
stumbles as she walks.
No one sees her on the street.
She seems to disappear into a crowd,
but as she steps out on that stage
She appears tall and elegant,
dancing gracefully and captivating her audience.

Now one can't help but notice
the energy in her movement
and the fire in her eyes.

Diane Capolla



My Escaping Mind

Evil reeks my soul to sleep
Wandering through the haze
Holding on my soul to keep
Leaving me in a daze

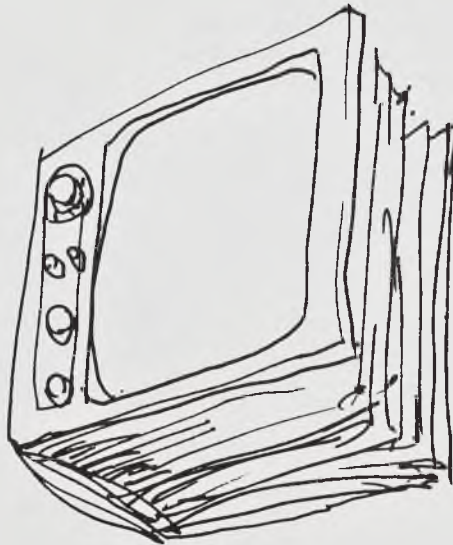
Hell and fires sole survivors
Never lettin' go
For if the earth won't cease to be
We shall never know

And when I see the devil's keep
It send a shiver through my bones
Hell's eternal fire reaps
The unsuspecting souls

For earth and sea
Will pay its fee
In its eternal home
And give back the reaper's soul

For the wrath of hell
Has broken loose
In my unkindling mind
Help me! Oh, help me!
For I have lost my mind

Michael Migliozi



In Search of the Flame

I saw dogs fighting in the alley
Like people, viciously chasing their dreams.
The best of friends turn at ten paces
To gain the gold of glory. Or love.

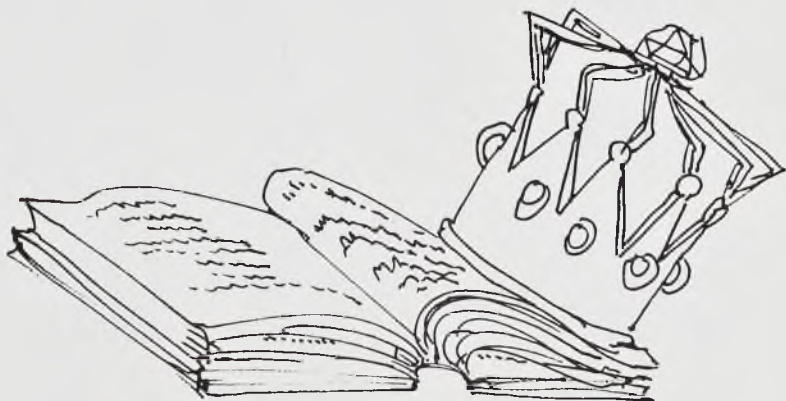
Knives drawn, they turn to one another for blood,
Killing hopes with a slash of the tongue.
The rivers run red,
And the streets are wet with tears.

Where does it all end?

I glimpsed the love that lies
Beyond the distant clouds,
The peace where puppies play
And children laugh and sing their songs.

They were the songs of hope
That we forgot when we were overwhelmed
By the realities of our world.
You can dream, but you can never go back
The way you came.

Carla H. Kempert



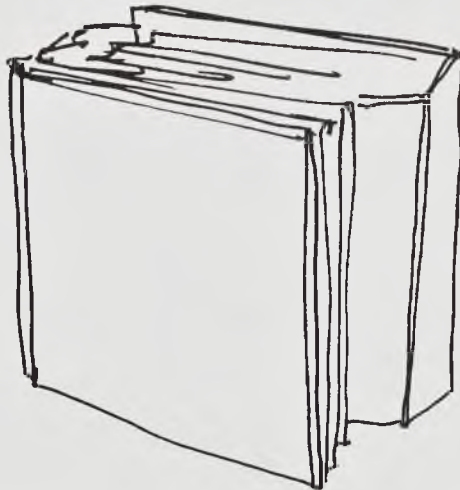
My Great Escape

Let us go, then, and run away,
Off into our horizons,
Far from this place they call "civilization."
You and I, facing the sun
That guides us to destiny.
Freddie, the world's just given us too much to bear;
We can't carry its weight anymore.

Along the wilds of Amboy Road
We blaze our trails to oblivion,
Where no one knows either of us.
Together, Goliath himself is no match for us;
Ignore these mortals, Freddie,
We shall challenge giants!
Not only fearless and indestructible,
We are immortal.

Though still together, we are alone.
We've no friends here,
No one to turn to with your flat tire, Fred.
The trees are all around,
And I'm afraid of the dark.
Cold metal cannot warm a heart frozen with fright.
Even you have abandoned me.
I never thought I'd want to be home,
Home again with someone who loves me
More than a machine.

Carla H. Kempert



Reflections

Wet mud mixed with leaves makes my
boots dirty. But the noise I make
walking breaks the monotony of silence.
I have been walking for what seems like days.

Bodies are all around me; at first the
blood makes me sick. But now I view
the death as part of the scene. I no
longer wonder what life goes along with the body I left.

I will take each step one at a time with
my breath held wondering if it will be my
last. For if I survive I am only the
messenger of death for those who are left behind.

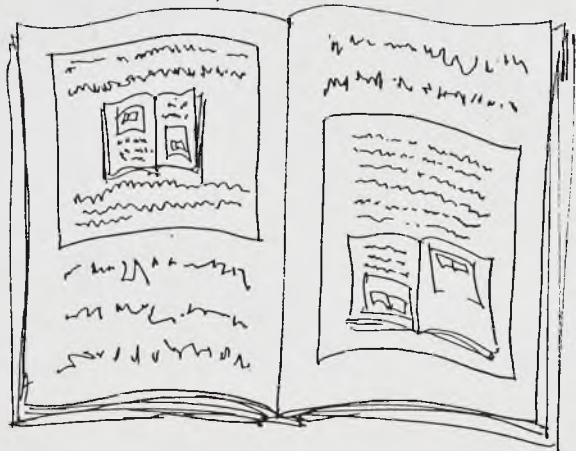
and life goes on

circle in a circle
life in a life
the joy that is shared
by a husband and wife

when the two married
a new life began
now all lives will change
by the adding of one

as the carrousel goes 'round
our lives turn and spin
as one life will die
another shall begin

Stacy K. Karan



Abortion Thoughts

Lipstick Smudges,
Unknown Names —
Hold back Grudges,
Go Insane.
Be Realistic,
Earn your Pay —
Throw all Mystic
Thoughts Away.

Perfume Lingers,
Mem'ries Fade,
Rings on Fingers
Make the Grade.
Change the Station,
Hide the Scar,
Vent Frustration,
Play Guitar.

Know the Answers,
Plant the Seeds —
Join the Dancers,
Do the Deed.
Live as Easy
As you Can,
Stomach's Queezy:
Call the Man.



Take the Living
From the Dead,
Be Forgiving
(Bloody Red).
Stop the Growing,
Start the Day —
Force the Flowing;
Go Away!

Baby's Crying,
Milk is Sour —
Learn that Lying
Has its Power.
Cradle's Rocking
(All Fall Down),
Truth is Shocking —
Change your Gown.

Flee the City,
Pay the Fee —
You're not Pretty;
Who is She?
He is Dizzy —
Thinks you're Gone;
Just keep Busy
Moving On

Connie Kalriess

Bag Lady

Shopping bag in hand,
Shopping bag in other hand —
Hunched Back and covered now in
Triple-Layered Rags —
the lady of New York is
— Lost —
amid the proud paraders.
Ironically she laughs —
Remembers —
shopping.
Once, she had gone into a place to . . .
shop . . .



to—
shop—
to—

It was not the fact that she had not the Money —

but not one person did recognize her . . .
her smile . . .
her eye's glance . . .
her face —

THEY DIDN'T EVEN RECOGNIZE HER FACE ANYMORE AND
That Made Her
sad

slowly
the slippers foot stepped
forward

the sneakered foot stepped
forward

onward to an unknown
place

Because if they
Didn't Know Her
— then —

Maybe it wouldn't matter So Much if they
Didn't Know Her

Now

Connie Kalriess

Womanhood

What shall be compared with youth?
Perhaps the dawn of spring.
And what compared with womanhood?
Slow jazz and blues to sing.
Between the two, an artist's plate
of orange, yellow browns;
the colors mix, then separate —
an adult hue is found.
The painter's brush then strokes her side,
her hands, her neck —
her eyes —
In textured shades of womanhood,
the child softly dies.

Connie Kalriess

Of a Younger Lover

he gives a kiss
with innocence,
and lightly touching
fingertips —
so young, and so unknowingly
he gives to me
his soul

his thoughts lie, somehow
distantly —
his love avoids consistency —
the adult shows himself to me,
the child turns away

and when we both are left alone
with nothing more to say,
a softer kiss
will soon dismiss the pain

Connie Kalriess



Remember Me

I saw him standing there
Surrounded by unfamiliar faces
Born again it seemed
To a world of friends and fun
Like an eagle he caught my eye
But he saw no friend
For he knows that
I know what he once was
And without those friends and fun
Still is

Elaine Papa



Urban Portraits

At the stairway
leading to the sub-
way
learning on the railing
chalking to the left (Down-
town)

His profile split the twilight
his black leather jacket
with its up-turned collar
consumed the light
at Taco Rico

His hands immersed in Levi's
unkempt close cropped hair
blown by displaced polluted
air

His right sleeve torn in
tatters
exposing soft white polyfibrous
insides

Which may or may not have inspired
the look of utter dejection
depicted in his James Dean blue
eyes

while down in the tunnel

Across the trax
waiting on the Uptown
platform

a mannequin manically pacing
dressed in colors
almost alive

waiting for the X-press
prowling in her distress
tug-toying with a long tress

aching to get home
or somewhere over
the rainbow



Mark Ransom

April Fifteenth, Nineteen Eighty-Four

Metropolitan rainout in Chicago
home of the tallest phallic symbol in the world
(a.k.a. the Sears Tower)
as soon as Donald Trump pops a hard-on in the upper east side
someday
someone
will step off the elevator at "PH"
onto the Sea of Tranquility

that's if the Acid Rain
falling on Ontario
doesn't tip the scales
of Justice
too far in the wrong direction

J.D. Rockefeller is a longtime gone
James Dean what's goin' on
Marilyn and Natalie and Princess Grace
John Lennon
all flying into the Sun
while beleaguered followers of Icarus
futilely try to find them
Dangerously now
they near the point of Meltdown

14 year old caveboy with a pin-up girl
pasted to a damp store wall
a television that's never playing
a silent stereo
an empty camera
books scattered
along the shopping mall floor
the litter for soft bare feet
scampering amid aisles and aisles
of racks and racks of the very
latest fashions
fountains not running
stagnant pools filled with the dead and dying
of thirst and hunger
(the McDonalds and Burger Kings have all been plundered)
no sound but wind slipping through structural cracks
left in the poured concrete stucco
and rain falling softly
through the broken skylights
water cascading over the Marblite flagstones
watering the potted palms
falling down the spiral staircase



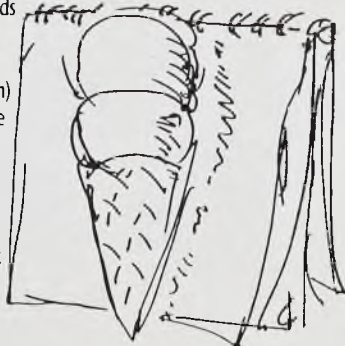
where the art gallery is still intact
 the wind stops to view the Erte's
 (breezy non-existent comments made about the price)
 while the maimed, the dead and the dying
 walk, limp, crawl, lay, through, past, around
 the basketballs and baseball bats,
 weightlifting equipment, skis and tennis raquets,
 the bowling balls and golf clubs, hockey pucks and Adidas shorts
 tube sox and boxing gloves, athletic supporters and Puma sneakers
 sitting useless
 on plastic and steel shelves
 quietly in Herman's
 footballs deflated and unlicked are sprawled across
 the sliding doorway
 in the cold night
 a cold light
 keeps eerily visible
 the dead site

16 year old neanderthal girl sleeps uncomfortably on the floor
 in the bedding department of Alexander's
 Abraham has lost
 Strauss

All the glass is broken
 All the words have been spoken
 all that remains are the moans and groans
 of agony and ecstasy of the dead and the dead
 as nude Cro-Magnon children sit idle and bored
 in the Game World Video Arcade
 screens are ominously blank and silent
 even pinballs sit patiently
 waiting for a plunger that will never come
 39 year old nurse maid breasts full and heavy
 wanders aimlessly with teats swaying
 through the ladies' lingerie department of Orbach's (her arms are
 m-t)

 Crock-pots are cracked
 Micro waves are stacked
 at Macy's

where the armed security guard makes his rounds
 regardless of the emptiness
 of his .45 caliber chambers
 and the blindness of his eyes (he chose to watch)
 daily patrols made by rote but now he has none
 to report to
 Night Watchman who can't tell if it's day
 continuously barking "Halt, who goes there!"
 at screaming toddlers in search of mothers
 who left them in the stroller only for a moment
 to window shop



and all this takes place during the soft rains
falling after the Hard Rain
while presently the Acid Rains are falling on Ontario

Harry Chapin, where are you
now who will carry on the work you'd do
there were so many more full bellies because of you

Where have you gone, Lord Hawkeye
I cried when I heard the news
your dad had passed away
I remember you El Gallo
as you recited words from Shakespeare's famous play:
 "The cat will mew and the dog will have his day"
packs of wild dogs are roaming this way
and as I write for no one
for no one can still read
blood is filling my eyes
and streaming down my blushing cheeks
and spotting my beige neck tie
which I'll now unloose
to fit a noose
around my bulging head
for I'd rather be alive than living dead

My hair is off to you, Harry Truman
though I know it just was not your fault
my skin is bright red and scaly
flaking off for you, Robert Oppenheimer
a hero and a villain in all the moral courts

the sky is falling out of the sky
out of my mind
out of time
they are coming
Drums, drums in the deep
they are coming
we are trapped
we can't get out

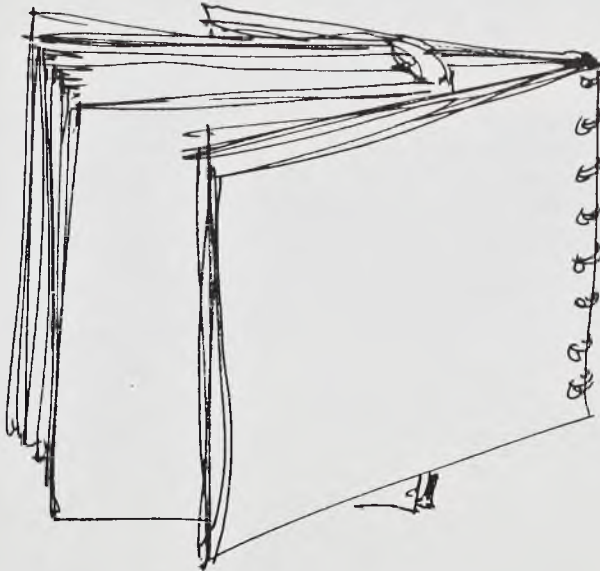
Mark Ransom



Dying Bird

It is interesting to live in a time of war and strife
I feel like a dying bird with its last ounce of breath
Trying to tell everyone
It's becoming too late, there's no more time
The Bird . . .
I'm flying higher losing time because of strength
I'm an eagle
Soaring at one time
Faster than the speed of sound
But now my wings are drooping
My heart is slowing down
Who do I contact first
Where do I go before time runs out
It all began with a notion
Freedom, equality, share with your brother and sister
But people were too hungry
They tore at the meat like lions, leaving out the meek and the weak
Is it just for one to be gifted and yet so helpless
The future is dim, no hope
For people are too selfish

Lynda Durinda



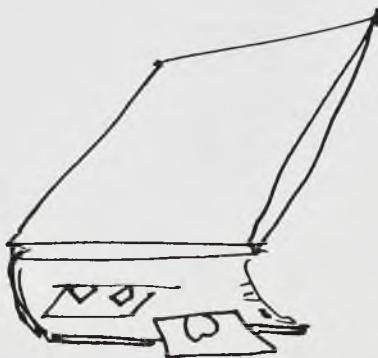
Solitaire

One up
six down
another facing up
then five more face the ground
keeping pace
flip-flopping cards
black to red
red to black
then back again

Only two possible mates
per card
don't blow it!
The other could be
hiding under the pile
of eight, seven, six, five, four . . .
Aces!
It's lonely at the top
picture cards shed no
enlightenment
Jack's no help here
King and Queen
don't care
"It's all a part of the game"
they say

And I am mourning
over the six of hearts
(lost to me forever)
which might've evened the score
and made it worth my while
as cellos buzz
sweet Bach —
a consolation
for my heart.

Doreen M. Diorio



For Henry

Have you the reins
Of your quick storm charger,
Musket at your side
As the days grow longer?

Or is it your cavalry,
Oh lover, I've lost,
Across the sky galloping
In a gray mist?

Though bolts of light
And thundershot resound
Comfort, oh comfort me
With kisses of rain.

Warrior of the skies
This tempest I know,
Oh my soldier of death
'Tis your immortal soul,

Nancy Zawada



