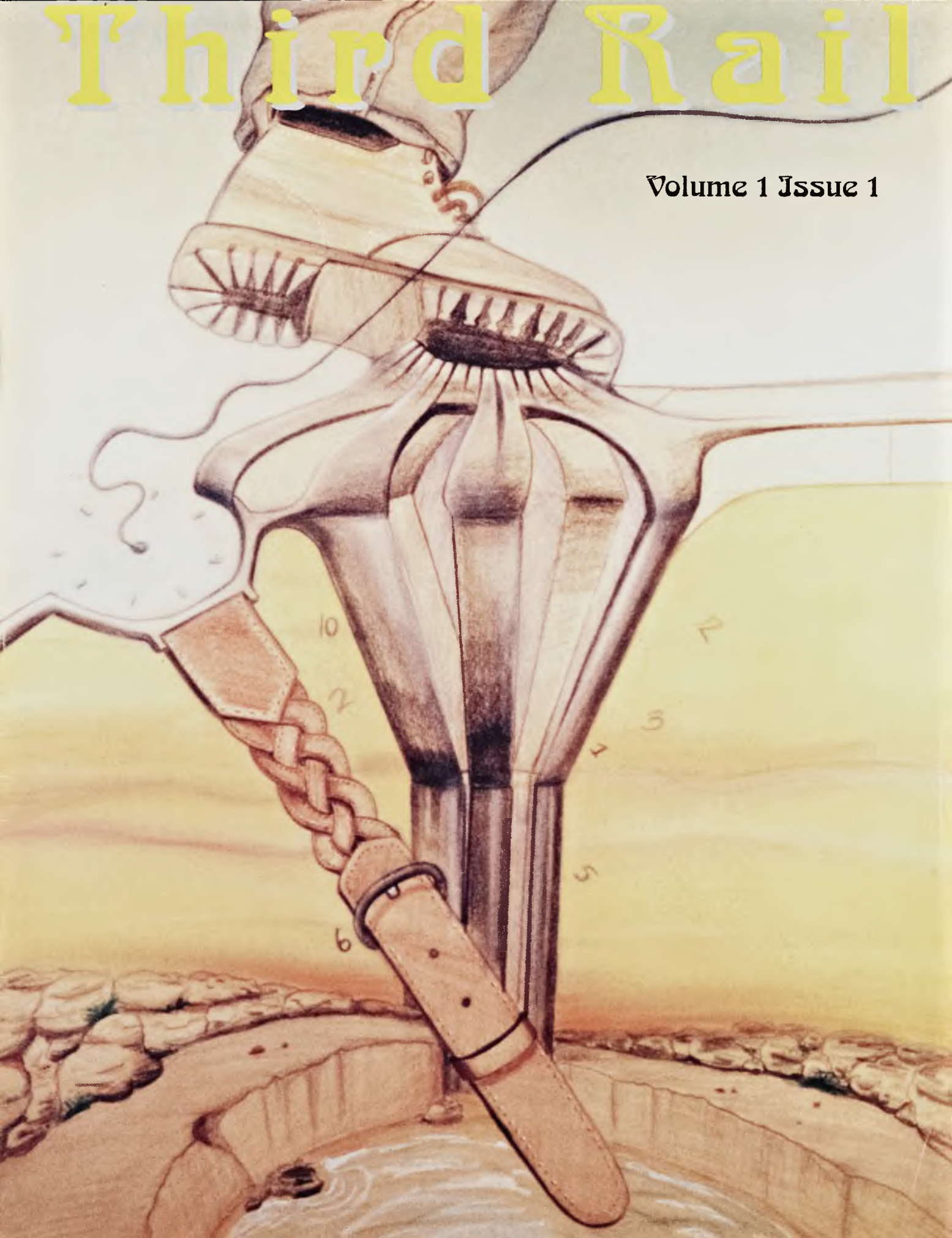


Third Rail

Volume 1 Issue 1





HUNTERS US

GENE FENTON

Third Rail

Words

Dark Montana Night	5	Soaking	32
Niles Elliot Goldstein		Dillion T. DeWaters	
Hamlet in New York	6	Night Reaps Another	33
Vincent Vok		Niles Elliot Goldstein	
Why Write?	9	Mom's Got A New Husband	34
Andrew Winters		Tom Deignan	
Sonogram	10	Doldrums	37
Victoria Seretis		William Teague	
OF Art After 40 Years	12	Answer To Silence	37
Diane Miller		James Bigham	
Geese	13	the Dive	38
William Teague		Adam Tamarkin	
Gallery	14	What if they Knew	40
Scott Cauchiamani		L. DeFino	
The Going	16	Pickax Harmony	40
Sean Dwyer		Brian Belulovich	
Fault	18	Continuum	41
Andrew Winters		Kerri Deitch	
A Walk Through City Streets	20	Smoke	42
Tom Henry		Vincent Vok	
The Ghosts of Boston	22	In Beat Spirit	44
Christopher Mari		Andrew Winters	
The Contemplation & Parts	27	Everyday's Reign	44
Victoria Seretis		John Kotsay	
My Best Friend	28	The Painting	47
Julie Tulip-Walsh		Diane Miller	
Burrito	31	I Am	47
Jeanie Kwak		Vera Saverino	

Images

Jeffrey Kitchen.	Cover, Inside Back	Rob Realmuto	19, 25, 32
Jules Allen	3, 8, 15	Ed Davin	21, 31, 46
Eugene Grubbs	4	Dean DeCaprio	36
Colleen McGraham	11, 39	Anthony Gargiso	26, 43, 45
Alona Popov	12, 30, 41	Henry Lewis	Back Cover
Gene Fenton.	Inside Front Cover		

Third Rail

The College of Staten Island
2800 Victory Blvd. 1C-231
Staten Island NY 10314
Voice (718) 982-3105
Fax (718) 982-3104

Editor

Colleen McGraham

Fiction/Non-Fiction Editor

Kerri Deitch

Associate Editor

Vincent Vok

Poetry Editor

Brian Belulovich

Fiction/Non-Fiction Editor

Jason Turetsky

Art Editor

John Kotsay

All works contained in this publication are the property of their creator, and are protected under copyright law. Future use of any article, poetry or artwork must receive permission from the creator. Funding for this publication was provided by the College of Staten Island Student Government.



JULES ALLEN



Dark

Montana

Night

Niles Elliot Goldstein

The leg to Butte from Bozeman lasts for half an hour. The flight arrives near midnight, and jolts its weary travellers, now home from distant burdens on the Rockies' other flank. Loved ones offer kisses, and lead them on to beds. Years ago, when

I was nearly a man, I took that quiet flight. I left behind the girl I loved—and half my soul. For me the mountains meant not lips, but the welcome hope of sleep. A single pane of glass kept out the dark Montana

night. The berth was as vacant as the husk of my heart, but more comforting. In it at least I heard a drone, and felt discarded gusts of sky: my cradle rocked with each ascent. A skull

pressed the portal, yet till I gazed past my relief and towards receding earth, I forgot the face was mine. Beneath the wing were stars, pyres of crackling fire clumped on blackened hills. Not

thousands, but handfuls, pockets, distinct constellations. Stars bursting from soil, leaping for heaven like leopards for prey. And I thought of lips, kisses, and the warmth

between sheets. I knew each star encased a world, but I also knew my halfway realm, hovering alone in

the dark and distant midnight sky.

Hamlet in New York

VINCENT VOK

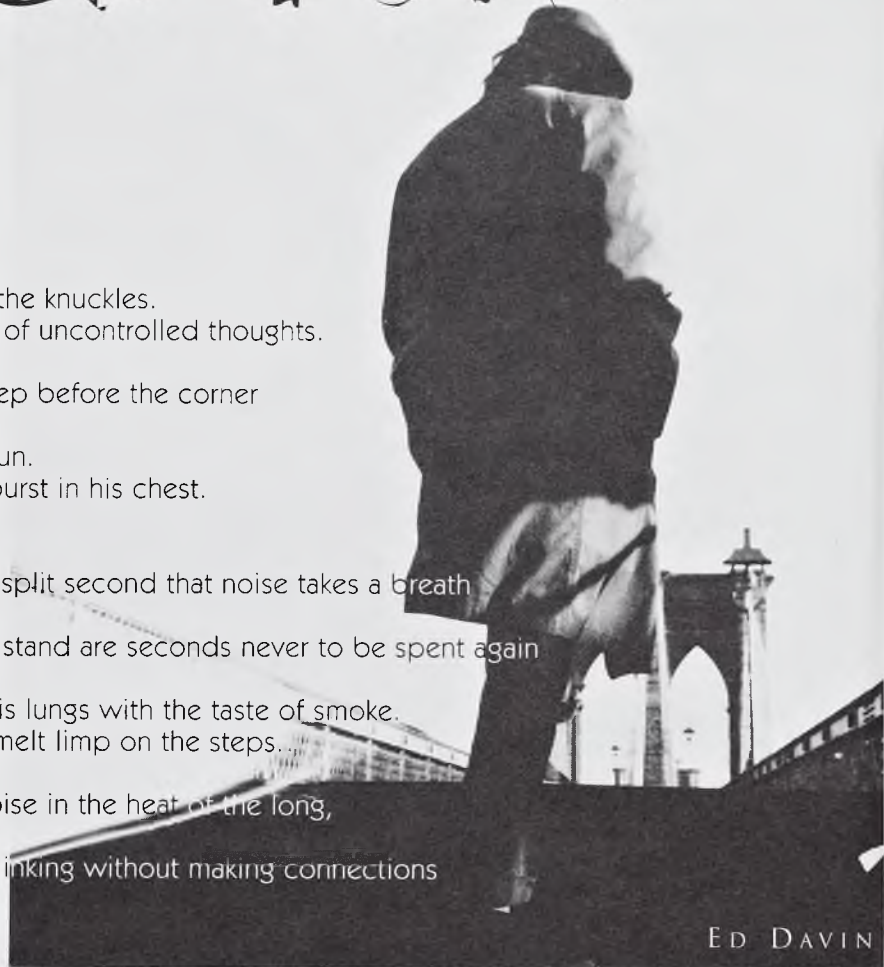
In the end he was a model of desperation.
His fingers controlled the layer of sweat around the knuckles.
The white light in his head attracted mosquitoes of uncontrolled thoughts.
Here then, is how it ends, he thought.
He walked down the sidewalk to the last doorstep before the corner
and sat down in the doorway
Long coat heavy with the heat of the afternoon sun.
The rain poured down his spine and the cloud burst in his chest.
He was alone.

The traffic paused, and things were quiet in that split second that noise takes a breath
and he heard his throat scratch.
The time it takes he thought to sit down and not stand are seconds never to be spent again
sent away to wait with the flood till the end.
The memory of a cigarette bit his lip and filled his lungs with the taste of smoke.
He wanted to take off his coat, leave it there to melt limp on the steps.

Soon he was on his feet again swearing at the noise in the heat of the long,
slow, hard afternoon.
The Spanish on the air filled his head kept him thinking without making connections
Rhythm and mood
Keep talking I walk
Keep talking I walk
Keep talking andando no chabo aqui

The park rose up to his feet and floated like an island
City and chaos breaking on its calm edge.
The statues stood in shades waiting for a sign.
He was alone.

I swear to God I'd do it right this time!!
God turned his head like a statue aware/
On and off.
Off.
The bagel in his pocket from the sidewalk crunched
between the spaces between his teeth and gums.



He sniffed hard to wash it down.

ONCE WHEN CALM STRAYED TOO FAR AWAY, IT WAS CAUGHT UP AND TAKEN TO ANOTHER PLACE TO EVAPORATE. SOMETimes that's all he carried with him and he hugs it tight destroying its purpose. The strings across his forehead get tighter, and he shook them off as his neck hurt.

When I die today it'll be different, Goddammit!

The pigeon hobbled on a deformed claw, melted like plastic in a flame. Hungry.
He blew a puff of stagnant breath and the bird changed his direction anyway.
Get off my shit get off my shit he mumbled then yelled.
He stretched his arms across the splintered wooden bench and stretched his long legs into the cobblestone path.
Smiling for the breeze across his chest, admiring his wiggling, filthy toes.

The pigeon didn't know about the battle ripping upon his face.
A dreadful dread of arms and explosions
marching soldiers
conflicting regrets of defeat. Retreat.

I'd do it different you bastard he addressed the pigeon
He threw the bagel at the pigeon
a nurturing, hostile gesture.
The pigeon jumped with open wings landed and limped toward it
A crowd of crippled pigeons mobbed the crumb
Pulled over to it
Birds fight in flight
might is right
Give me that crumb, you fucking bird

What would it be to touch your own skull
which would be colder, the finger or the bone?
The skin is too thin, but its tight and sturdy
My head is cold my shirt is dirty
He scratches in the air with his finger
he touches his forehead
In his pocket he scratches his balls.

AN ARMY OF NOISE INVADED BRIEFLY,
WITHDRAWING IN THE VICTORY OF DISTRACTION.

He nodded looking at the sidewalk vision bouncing back, inward.

"You smell that?"
"Smells like shit, man"
"Looks like shit, man"
The soldiers were here.
The quiet dignity of insanity twists in a holographic wind.
Thoughts flatten, spring. Exit wounds through the skull and out into the light
They disturb the pigeons who abandon the crumb.
"You smell that shit?"
"Where's your shoes, man You need shoes, want Mine?"
He leaned back and crossed his legs You boys missing school?
he said in a totally fatherly form

THE PIPE GOT HIM GOOD ON THE SIDE OF THE HEAD
HE LOOKED DOWN AT HIS FEET AND SAW THE PARK , SINK DOWN THE DRAIN, SPIN LIKE LITTER IN THE
RAIN

He was in the sky, and the wind pulled back his hair. His coat hung from his neck, like a flag, like a cape. His lungs filled with ecstasy. His thoughts rested, cooled, and he was pulled through the sky and the buildings in among the clouds. He circled the trees with the pigeons, looked out over the picket-fence buildings, saw the sun in its true, dispersed form of a million diamonds on the breathing water, saw the clouds as close, short breaths of a cold, smoking God, saw the sky as the pale bottom of a dark, thick universe.

He crashed into the grass, the blades crossed his eyes sideways, a green jungle of gravity and dirt. they pulled off his coat and threw it over his head and got way the hell away from there.

His moans meant something to the pigeons, who gathered to answer in like tongue. The calm returned and crystalized in the widening evening.

What was warm, got cold.
Light, dark.
Off, on.
Breathing, not.

They honored the spot with blue police barricades and yellow tape
Something shifted somewhere.
Some cold air sprung out of a wire trash can
Some wasted breath lurked almost lingered in the dark city trees,
then rolled over and spilled away.

J
U
L
E
S

A
L
L
E
N



"Why do you write?" I have often asked myself this question since I've read your letter. My thoughts blink between the words and my response pauses. "Why write?" you ask. The reason has something to do with travelling; I'm carrying with me impressions like postcards. The places and people I've touched have been cast into settings and characters. Today's plot lines are attempts to map the roads I've walked when the little of myself was scrawled on the backs of postcards.

Remember how I used to bitch about writing those postcards home? I'd 'stay in touch' on the tube or in the pubs, with my greasy fingertips staining the faces of landmarks I passed during my run around London. How I loved chasing the double decker buses and hopping on in the back, climbing the stairs while a wheezing, blue uniformed man collected all of sixty pence. But it was before London when I began getting involved with writing.

It was the summer of '92 when I decided not to go back to college in the fall for Architecture. I handed in my letter of resignation at work; ended a relationship with a girlfriend in the mall's picnic area, and bought a round trip ticket to Miami. I had been worshipping the passing of time for too long, waiting for some Greek god to grant me good fortune. What I decided was to go on vacation by myself. I packed plenty of sun screen, a pair of sandals, and a copy of *Moby Dick*.

Why Write?

ANDREW WINTERS

I was in Miami Beach for two nights when I met Vicky. She was reading Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in the Clay Motel's TV room. I thought there was nothing more poetic than her seated there with her sun tanned feet resting on the tile floor while her thoughts remained buried in Russian war. I said something like, "Good read?" We started talking and didn't stop until we said good-bye. She was a British girl who studied French Literature in a small college in south London. Her summer break was being spent touring America's east coast. Imagine a woman travelling alone in America! We discussed books in the surf and drank tea from a couple of tin cups we bought at an 'Everything in the Store's 99 cents' shop. I rented a Mirage, and we drove down to Key West. There, we pedaled around on bicycles with baskets on the front. She inspired the space around her. "Can you imagine Hemingway punching away on his typewriter down here?" she said.

"Let's open up a bed and breakfast," I replied, pointing to a white house with a second floor balcony. We had a great time without having sex. It was like a spiritual revival. Unfortunately, I had a plane to catch back home. I waited to the last minute to say good-bye before I hurried off to the airport. In my rush, I left her address on the back seat of my rented Mirage. The letters I promised to send her would never arrive. This thought would haunt me for weeks until I finally boarded a plane for London.

I hadn't done much writing in my life until then. I periodically started and stopped writing in a journal, there was an occasional poem, but mostly I wrote when I had to: a shopping list or a college paper. Vicky, however, changed the way I looked at the world. To her it was pure experience, splashing around salt water and digging her toes in the sand. But sometimes she would stop, hold a pen and silently write pages of what I imagined to be either pure mystery or answers to what life meant. I remember after we went snorkeling around some old pilings, she just had to return to the motel room and get it down on paper. I can only guess what she discovered there underwater or on that sheet of paper. She probably sounds like a gypsy to you, but still to this day, she is a delicate part of why I started writing. She is my 'what could have been,' and the face of a daydream where I like to imagine that we'll meet again at a book signing tour (hers or mine). I could be her gypsy who has come home, a writer.

When I arrived in London, I wandered around the streets for weeks. I don't believe I was looking for Vicky so much as I was longing to redefine myself outside of where I was brought up. (Staten Island, New York, America, a middle class, white, Christian family.) I wore the soles of my shoes thin and felt loneliness so acutely that silence sounded like a demented scream, but I was gaining a sense of freedom, I told myself. By the time I found the job at Pret-A-Manger restaurant, the insecurity I felt about being alone had nearly vanished and so had my money.

It was then that I wrote my first postcards home. I told my family and friends that I was working at a French restaurant, received my first paycheck, and met a French girl at the company's anniversary party. I didn't tell them I went back to your apartment that night, or that we had breakfast in bed that next morning. I was still too self-conscious about writing to allow myself to express what I was fully experiencing and how it affected me.

The first thing I noticed about your apartment was the stacks of books you had all over the floors, the kitchen table, and

next to the toilet. "What is a French girl doing with all these English books?" I thought to myself. I can only guess that those books were like trophies to you; testament to how hard you worked to learn English. I had for so long neglected my native language, merely tossing out words that approximated my thoughts and feelings. The French you taught was slowly beginning to take root when I realized that through language I could begin sorting out some of the mysteries about my life. The words could help explain, like you were attempting to do when your father came to pick us up, all your books packed in boxes, your father cursing in French as his car sank lower and lower under the weight of paper. I thought I'd have to take the bus to Paris after all, but I managed to squeeze myself into the back seat. I was on the road again, months after that first step into your apartment.

By this time, I had been writing religiously. I was attempting to transmute my daily experiences into readable pages, or I would pace the room trying to capture rhythm in poetic verse. I don't know if it was the solitude of being far from home that pinched me and focused my attention to saying something with ink, but I no longer cared to live my life like a painted horse on a carousel. I could write anything. I imagined time slowed down and boundaries vanished. I began writing from a new perspective, and the words spread me out in new directions.

Do you remember how child-like excited I was when we vacationed in the Lake District, the land of William Wordsworth? Imagine, our daily treks were made over the same hills Wordsworth wrote about! I'm afraid I didn't find the countryside terribly inspiring. I did write some interesting postcards from the experience, however, and a poem in the bed and breakfast's guest book about how we were sorry that a bit of the mountains were always left in the lobby. I should have also written a note of thanks for allow-

ing us to line our socks up along the radiator. That landlady was awfully kind to hold her tongue considering those woolens came from American and French feet. Maybe she understood that we were a couple of daydreamers, far from home, trying to resurrect poetry from where it was born.

It's been two years since I left those mountains to return home. I have little doubt that these weekly letters, sent across the Atlantic, have helped clear away some of the mist that still clouds my mind. Our relationship is no more than words. But how deep an appreciation for each other have we touched? These letters have helped me express myself and experience an understanding that I previously didn't know existed. It has been like traveling alone with some sort of sexless religion to which I've found I have a voice.

I don't want to be like my grandfather, curled up in his sun room vicariously traveling the world with his National Geographic on his lap. As a child, I often wondered what he knew but I was too afraid to ask. I laid awake at night believing his silence would come out of the closet and swallow me. I need to write for myself, but I also want someone to hear. I wish my grandfather could read this.

I have reservations about writing sometimes. As an American, I can't escape the need to make a living. I haven't earned a single penny from my hours writing and the results show: I'm wearing last year's fashion with a belt I just punched a couple extra holes in. I don't let it get me down, though. And when it does, I am grateful to the professors who have nudged me along when I thought that maybe I could be happy selling life insurance. The answer to why I write simply appears to be that I am incapable of not writing. The question I find myself asking now is, "How do I write more effectively?" because I want to be understood and what I have to say will no longer fit on the back of a postcard.

Love Andrew

Sonogram

these hands pummel
in small fistic
movements
infantlike
an atom against
infinity

VICTORIA SERETIS



COLLEEN MCGRAHAM



ALONA POPOV

OF ART AFTER 40 YEARS

DIANE MILLER

Within this lifestyle,
the separation of logic
and emotion,

and the conflict of whether to expend
any energy at all.

Thrown loosely into the conversation,
the positive and negative
and of course, beyond that
Fatigue.

Thrown loosely into the conversation,
the diffusion,
subtle, in an endless effort to somehow
neutralize
enough to not fear
Fatigue.

The reasoning, interpretation,
the crush of all energy
so the conflict becomes the focus,
the focus - the conflict.

Clearly, in the moments of self recognition
Order is.

The Life Style is
not wasted.

G E E S E

Upon tombstones geese did alight, an
Eery glow lit up the night.
They came to fetch good souls departed,
To bring them forth to God awaiting.

The geese arose their wings still tucked,
I watched them rise and cursed my luck,
For in them flew the souls so odd
To have lived inspired by God.

Am I the only witness to the Rapture
That was overdue?
All think I'm mad because because I stammer,
"They've gone to join our God awaiting."

We are damned left here on Earth,
The other half have found their berth.
We'll never know just who has left,
Those having escaped the final death.

Within our memories will be void of
loved ones gone to serve the Lord,
Plucked from the bed and from the field,
The righteous snatched to God awaiting.

All left are doomed but still don't know
Of fulfilled prophecies spoken long ago.
The Kingdom's come and yet we stay to live in
Death eternal days.

If we had lived by divine decree
And made ourselves with the light agree,
We could enjoy exquisite grace
With those who've gone to God awaiting.

WILLIAM TEAGUE

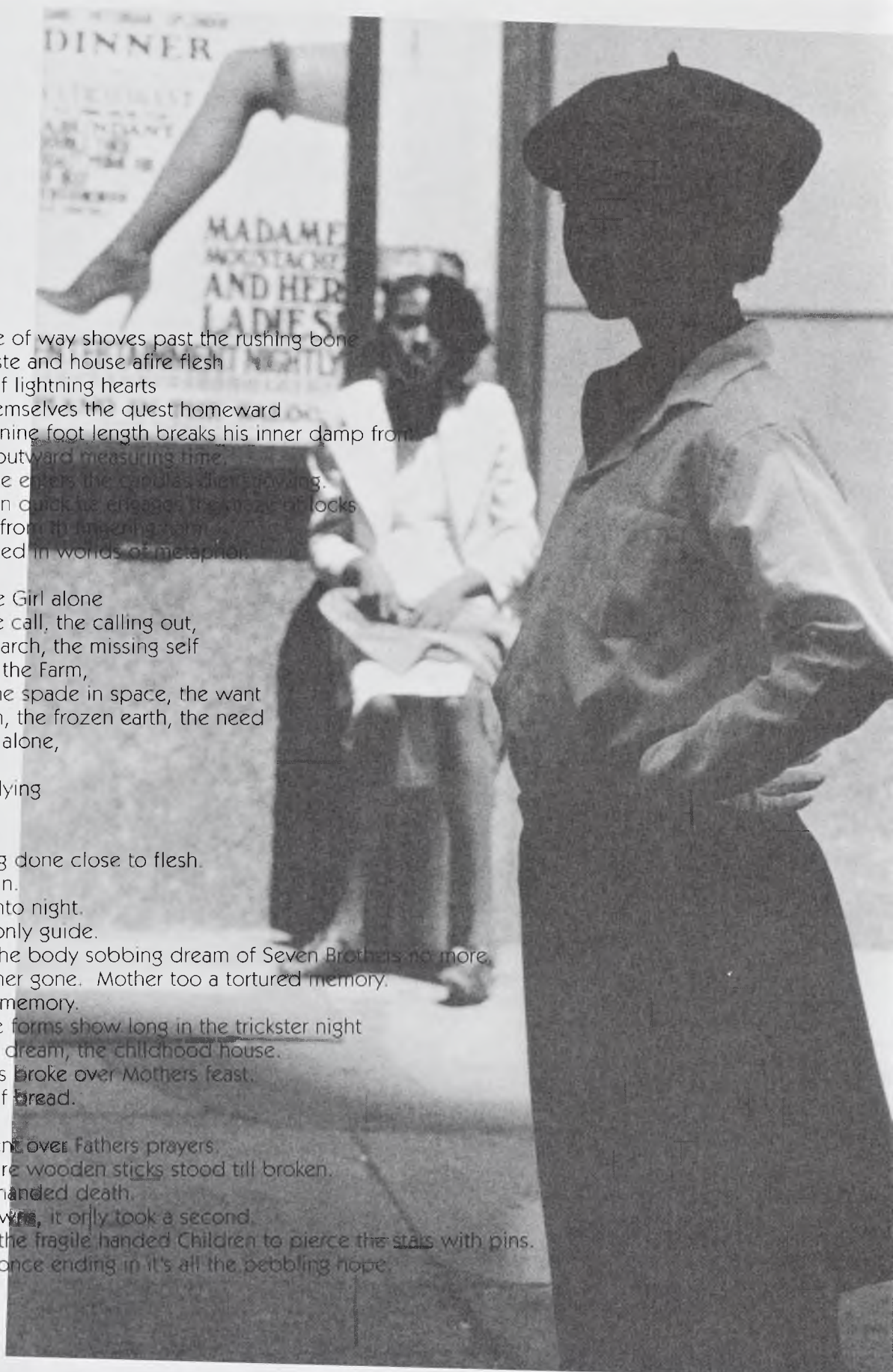
Gallery

SCOTT CACCIAMANI

The Old Woman drew the curtain closed
Fierce day, end of all day, done
Olden Day House, hiding in oldest Fathers night
In his sack of seeds, In his suffering self
In his hopeless want of man
Olden Day House singing of its winter fire warmth
I doubt She drew cold before it fell
I doubt She knew
No one was there to watch

She hides so he might seek. In past he peaks-in pots of pain.
Cracks the penthouse door, She in her green new year's eve dress.
Her green angle light. She is grief yes, but hard to resist.
Jacket bent over her bed. It is winter.
He the watcher, inside.
The dying man behind the door you do not see.
He waits the coming of guests in glaze and party armor.
He waits the new year. For lights beyond.
He waits the edge of protest.
Party strong, a well, a chatter.-He is unheard.
Conversation clones and clothing.
She loud-drunk. He-Unheard-does not speak.
Gone from them.
The Birds are watching Him. Trees die here but are potted, painted white.
A fever here. Heat escapes the face, feeling it scorched, a little finished,
Volcanic river. Earth blood rushing broken hearted.
Tears still steam stealing breath, flacks of skin fly, ash covers this plantation house.
Creatures dance in little lit corners.
He bids himself low a hovering goodnight.
The Mothers moan hovers low, a mist
The dead Sons hum escapes the small earth
The Priest calling bundled all in his black
The welcome rescinded
He who broke the bag of dust
Cut the core from rock
Is coming cruel in his way
Begging cruel favors
Bleeding Mother no more for the giant faith

Bleeding full the moon in his passing
The raving man bit dull the goodnight greeting
As the Child of wonder ran between his legs,
Down the yellow lit street, past
The bench sitters boring their winter tongues,
And into the God great I love you arms of father.
Do not ask of me, Do not ask of me, I must not
He spites to the fat woman sweeping her dreams
Through the cleaves of the malicestone street



His nimbling haste of way shoves past the rushing bone
 The practicing haste and house afire flesh
 The ready quick of lightning hearts
 Canals beating themselves the quest homeward
 Doors of oak and nine foot length breaks his inner damp from
 The always all of outward measuring time
 Eyes open, alert he enters the chrysalis die showing.
 Closing the door in quick he engages the maze of locks
 Keeping him safe from the incoming rain
 He is alone, trapped in worlds of metaphor.

The Girl home, the Girl alone
 The cold here, the call, the calling out,
 The search, the search, the missing self
 The passion lost, the Farm,
 The Farm alone, the spade in space, the want
 The dig, the death, the frozen earth, the need
 The Farm, the Girl alone,
 The Poem,
 The Poem too is dying

Gentle it Fellow
 The poems forging done close to flesh.
 Daylight closes thin.
 Shadows gather into night.
 Furnace light the only guide.
 This night brings the body sobbing dream of Seven Brothers no more.
 The Family of Father gone. Mother too a tortured memory.
 Cuddle close the memory.
 Their broken bone forms show long in the trickster night
 Long in the falling dream, the childhood house.
 The Brothers backs broke over Mothers feast.
 The fresh loaves of bread.
 The holiday wine.
 Seven Brothers bent over Fathers prayers.
 Tall in the nightmare wooden sticks stood till broken.
 Dark opened, demanded death.
 Broke the small towns, it only took a second.
 Asked like candy the fragile handed Children to pierce the stairs with pins.
 For close of eyes once ending in it's all the pebbling hope.

The Going

SEAN DWYER

K'turu walked deftly across the ice. Snow fell lightly around him but he paid no attention, he was angry. He should be in the south pulling salmon from the river, instead he was running a fool's errand. He pulled a piece of meat from a sack and threw it to the ground. Aput, his only companion, raced up to snatch it.

K'turu turned to watch the dog eat; there was nothing to hunt here so he had to be provided for. Aput chewed quickly just to keep the meat in his mouth.

"Stupid dog, do you want to choke?" K'turu cursed him in the language of the Innuik.

The man sat and ate his own meal of dried meat. There was a rip on his outer parka he would have to mend himself, there was no woman with him. This sparked his anger and he cursed his Elders more passionately than he had the dog. Old men whose claim to wisdom was that they had lived long enough to burden the young. They had been unable to save his brother, and they'd told him Aput wouldn't live six weeks; why was he listening to them now?

Aput was born sickly, small and completely devoid of color. Such creatures were usually killed, but K'turu (then only a boy) had taken a liking to the thing. In those days Aput needed to be fed like a baby, and he was slow to see and walk, but now he was the biggest dog in the village, strong and healthy. His fur was still as white as the packed snow he was named for, but his eyes had taken on some blue pigment. Aput was living proof of the Elder's foolishness.

K'turu and the other men of the village were four, soon to be five days journey from the river. The Elders sent them away, while the salmon were running, because of a fairy tale. The hunters were traveling to the Western Mountains, to defend the Inuit from a legend, when they should be catching salmon and defending the village from foolish elders. K'turu cursed the Elders out loud, picked up his spear and his sack, and resumed his march.

When night fell the hunter prepared his bed. He checked the ice carefully before building a fire. Not knowing whether he was over land or water, K'turu slept away from the fire. Aput couldn't be persuaded to do likewise.

K'turu slept longer than he intended, there was no sun to wake him, and his lazy dog was still sleeping. When his seal skin blankets were packed away, K'turu made breakfast. He bothered to make a new fire and cook the meat, but even this didn't arouse Aput. Before breakfast was done, K'turu lost his patience. He walked over to kick the dog.

As he approached the ice creaked loudly. He called Aput's name and forced his weight back. The dog shrieked as he fell into the frozen water. K'turu was flat on his back on solid ice. Only his legs, from the knee down were in the water. Staring up at the gray sky K'turu slowly slid himself along the ice. His feet were almost out of the water when Aput latched onto them.

"Let go of me Aput, or I'll drown you myself." K'turu kicked the dog loose.

Now his legs were in the water up to his thighs. He took a chance lifting himself out, and

rolled along the ice until he was sure it would hold. Behind him Aput splashed and paddled violently.

K'turu grabbed his stone ax and chopped at the fringes of the ice to remove the weakened sections. He thought about setting a spike into the ice and tie himself to it, but Aput seemed to be tiring. He grabbed his spear, holding the point near to him, and extended the shaft to Aput. Aput caught it in his mouth, and let himself be guided to the strong ice K'turu had cleared. K'turu tried to lift the husky out of the water, his spear broke, but Aput was able to grasp the ice. He clawed at the ice until K'turu grabbed him behind his neck, and pulled him out.

K'turu raced to build a fire for himself and the dog, his clothes needed to be dried and Aput could barely stand. There was wood left over from the breakfast fire, K'turu kindled it and dragged the dog close. As he searched for more wood his pants froze, walking became difficult and his legs burned. He returned with only a few frosted twigs and threw them on the fire.

It was mid-afternoon before Aput seemed ready to travel. K'turu's pants were dry, and he had mended his caribou parkas. Both layers had torn, but there was no sign of frostbite. K'turu looked up, the bleak sky was already growing darker. The fifth day of his journey was more than half spent, and he was falling behind. The Elders had been very specific about the time, but not the place; dawn of the seventh day, at an open cave in the western ridge of the mountains. The legends offered no clue as to which mountain, so every man in the village was given an area to check. K'turu's was the farthest north. If he found the cave he would challenge the bane of the Inuit. If he won, the village would live happily ever after, if he lost this creature would devour every Innuk in the world. Sealshit.

"Come on Aput, let's go."

K'turu and his dog continued walking. They stopped at the edge of the foothills so K'turu could fasten his snowshoes. Aput seemed to be doing all right so they continued. That night K'turu dug out a campsite, and built a much bigger fire now that he was sure he was on land. Wood was plentiful, but none was suitable for a spear shaft. Aput ate well and went to sleep, K'turu was glad to join him.

In his dreams a river raged, women and old men waded into the water, their steps uncertain, poking sharpened sticks at the running salmon. Their harpoons were poorly crafted and clumsily handled, the meager yield would not feed the Innuk while they waited for the caribou moon. The hunters would return to find their dogs butchered and their children hungry.

Early the next evening K'turu was still walking through the foothills, with Aput treading snow behind him. He would never reach the mountains on time, but he felt no urgency. He was lucky enough to find a spear shaft. Before he went to sleep he would have to smooth it down, and attach his copper spear tip.

A jackrabbit crossed his path some distance ahead. K'turu became elated, fresh meat.

"Aput, hunt", the dog seemed confused.

K'turu pointed at the jackrabbit, but Aput didn't comprehend. K'turu whacked him with the spear shaft. Aput circled and sat in the snow.

"Now you've lost him stupid ass, that was your dinner I hope you enjoyed it."

Aput's ears straightened, and his gaze became intent.

K'turu turned to follow it, and saw the jackrabbit approaching them.

"What?", His elation returned; in his mind the fire was already lit and the jackrabbit was slowly roasting. Why is the jackrabbit approaching us?.

Aput moved slowly to engage the jackrabbit. K'turu noticed it had foam on its lips, and bloody red eyes.

"No Aput, get away!"

The jackrabbit leapt at Aput, K'turu swatted it with his spear shaft. One of its forelegs was broken, but this hardly slowed it. K'turu pulled his dog away as the 'rabbit followed. Aput growled and K'turu could no longer hold him. The snow white dog showed his teeth and snarled, as the jackrabbit closed. K'turu reached for his ax, and brought it down on the jackrabbit's head. The creature lay in the snow, twitching sporadically, K'turu hit it again. Aput's curiosity was sparked, he moved closer to the dead animal. K'turu kicked him several times to keep him from chomping at the rabid jackrabbit.

"Stupid dog, do you have a death wish?"

K'turu buried the animal in the snow, and moved on. That night after his meal he fashioned his spear. Tomorrow was the seventh day, and the mountains were only dim towers on the horizon. Nightfall of the seventh day K'turu made camp in the shadow of the mountains. It had grown colder and the wind whipped through the valley, making it hard to build a fire. K'turu sat with his back to a rock, and his seal skin blanket pulled tightly around him. He held his head between his knees, and wiggled his toes to keep the blood in them. It was too cold for him to sleep without catching frostbite. Aput slept soundly, and K'turu envied him.

He broke camp just before dawn, Aput grudgingly went with him. A lack of supplies forced them to skip breakfast, perhaps they would catch something for lunch.

K'turu knew this area fairly well, in the spring he came here to hunt, but it was the last place he should be while the salmon were running. With heavy steps he circled the mountains looking for open caves. He found three, but none showed signs of being the cave. No giant footprints, no rancid odors from hell, and no demonic flesh-eaters anywhere. K'turu was not surprised.

Of course he was more than a day late, but this didn't diminish his certainty that there was no demon, or that the Elders were old fools. He slept in one of the caves, after checking for bears, and spent the early evening hunting. Aput caught two rabbits, neither of which was rabid. K'turu thanked the gods and roasted them. The next morning he finished his rabbit, and started back to the village. His spirits were renewed, the Elders had been proven wrong, and now no one would listen to them.

He kept an eye out for game, and took down a sapling to make a fishing pole. They marched briskly to ward off the cold, down through the valley, and back into the foothills. K'turu was not at all dismayed by his empty food sack, nothing could shake his new found optimism. He even told Aput of his ambition to be chief.

His mood changed when he sprained his ankle. K'turu pulled his ankle out of the rabbit hole and packed it in snow. He bit his lip as he tore strips from his blanket to wrap it. After a short rest he tried to travel using his spear as a crutch. The going was painful and slow. K'turu refused to succumb to pain, and forced himself to continue well into the night.

Morning came and he redressed his ankle, it was swollen and black. K'turu cut it with his knife to let the bad blood out, but he didn't know any chants that would help. Aput found no game that morning, so they went hungry. K'turu resumed his forced march, dripping blood as he went.

They shared an owl for lunch, its wing was broken. Aput had to battle a fox for the rights to it; the fox got away. While they ate, flocks of snow birds flew overhead. K'turu was concerned, these creatures were usually nocturnal. The roars they heard offered a partial explanation.

The roars grew louder and more frequent. K'turu's ankle worsened, but he did not stop. He began to entertain troubling thoughts. What if the Elder's legends were true, then the creature roaring in the distance would be a demon following him. With his ankle he could never hope to defeat it.

K'turu dressed his ankle again, but couldn't stop the bleeding. He kept moving, though he was sure he was going to die that night. He no longer had to listen to hear the creature's roar. The sound of it haunted him, and drove him like a sledman's whip drove his dogs. He climbed a hill, his ankle flopping to either side with each step. He moved so slow, but Aput stayed with him, despite the imminent danger.

"Aput you stupid dog, the demon is after me!"

At the top of the hill he stumbled. He tried to steady himself with the wrong foot, and went rolling down the hillside. Aput barked down to him, but he did not respond.

When K'turu woke up, it was the middle of the night. He crawled back up the hill to look for Aput. The hilltop was a good vantage point, he looked out over miles of stark and unchanging snowscape. The moon shone down in icy fullness, bathing the hills in its glow. Aput sat staring at the opposite hill. His clear blue eyes surveyed the peak, as he waited alone in the eerie stillness.

Something climbed the hill, the Aput's fore rippled with tension. He bared his teeth, then returned to his placid pose. A large silhouette filled the sky beyond the hill. A demon. The solid shadow made its way down the hill. Aput barked a warning, and a challenge. The great shadow charged, its fangs glistening with froth. Aput ripped its flesh, but a swipe took his ear. The bear was larger than any K'turu had seen. It stood more than two spears high, and its mouth was filled with fangs any predator would envy, but what frightened K'turu about the creature was the gleam in its

eyes. They shown like a man's eyes, like Sebbu's eyes had shone when he murdered his wife and son. The monster licked the blood from its too-big paw and grew lustful. It rose on its hinds and filled the valley with a tremendous roar, as Aput circled. The dog's powerful lunge gained the throat, spoiling the pristine snow with boiling blood. The creature savagely embraced Aput, crushing his ribs. Both strained to tighten their grips and push the other to death. Soaked with blood they fell to the ground.

Sebbu had been hard to kill. He killed his son with two spears sticking out of him, and still had the strength to wrestle three hunters before K'turu snapped his neck. K'turu remembered that night well. He remembered Sebbu biting his arm as he carried him, and two other hunters around the tents, and he remembered pulling back on his brother's head until he stopped biting, stopped fighting and stopped killing.

When the demon started to move around, K'turu was not surprised. He watched as the thing gorged itself on Aput's flesh and his stomach turned. K'turu slowly slid himself down the hill. He hobbled to the giant polar bear and drove his spear into the back of its head as it finished eating. He felt the tip of his spear slide through the soft spot at the base of the skull and into the demon's brain. This was death to any creature, man or beast, but K'turu could not resist the urge to drive the spear deeper and scrape the edges of the demon's skull. For a long time he stood over the creature's body, staring down at the carnage. K'turu withdrew the spear, but still he stared.

Finally the hunter sat and redressed his ankle with strips of his empty food sack. K'turu faced a journey he was not likely to complete with a bad ankle and no food. K'turu's thoughts turned to demons, not the rotting mass before him; but hunger, disease, and the unrelenting cold. K'turu pictured himself face down in the snow. Beneath his frost covered parka his body was gaunt and weak, numbly waiting for either the cold or hunger to kill him. When no frightful demon attacked the village, perhaps he would be credited with the kill. He'd be remembered as a hero; a champion fallen in battle, yet victorious in that he was able to save the people. Honor he did not deserve, honor that belonged to a sled dog. He resolved to return to the village, if only to prevent them from mocking his spirit with false praise.

FAULT

I will say, I m sorry my sperm stained your coffee table.
Though I pledged to restore its luster,
I was half-hearted, half-honest.
I never spilled my tea nor cared to shine your furniture.
We just never understood each other
and it's not solely my fault.

ANDREW WINTERS



ROB REALMUTO

A Walk Through

TOM HENRY

Loneliness provoked my hardened soles to march upon the cold city pavement.
I listened to the music street sweepers made, as they washed away yesterday's debris.

As I walked with my head bowed down to the ground
I noticed how the recycled chips of glass, mixed together with the tar
reflected all the constellations of the sky.

When my limbs began to feel like rubber, I laid my weary bones upon the waffle iron-
windows of the subway- welcoming the touch of steam to whistle through my pores
and rise above my decaying shell.

Touching the frosty iron cage with my numb ear- I listened to the sound of subway-
wheels-turning-twisting-and crushing-

the rat like weary eyes that endlessly search for tomorrow's hidden doors.

Standing next to silence, I pushed forward with footsteps like heartbeats.

Upon Focusing my bloodshot eyes through the hazy fog,

I saw a weary traveler sitting next to an empty milk crate.

After sharing some poison and listening to stories about lost love and war,

I prayed for the empty milk crate next to the invisible body to become occupied.

Climbing up miles of dusty concrete stairs- I searched for the final step to free me.

Upon reaching the top- I stood alone- as I stretched my arms up to the sky-

Trying to catch the stars that were battling to rip through the smog.

As I looked down like the birds that rest upon mountain peaks,

I heard alley cats-

scratching through brick walls to reach a world they've never seen before sober.

I sang to the notes of raindrops, as they bounced off the-

Hudson River

I saw lady bugs crawling through liquid streams, trying to catch up with the-
roaring Giants that were gliding towards the destination of silence.

I saw ants in matchbox cars, racing around in circles, making my heart bleed like an
oil can and my mind scramble like a broken down TV.

I saw the same soul- separating into a million pieces.

Traveling home, I walked down a trail of silent stones, which lay sleeping in a pool of
tears, until all I could see was the raging tides rushing over me.

Through the separation of waves, the city lights revealed the most beautiful and
obscure images, dancing in the moonlight- spitting a universal language throughout-

The Sky.

I saw a Goddess diving through a rainbow that ended at the palm of my hands.
She was holding a book of prayers, a book of rhymes, and a book of recipes to wake
and shake the silent graveyard soil.

The lights reminded me of the assortments of gumballs I've seen in machines when I
was a child.

Other images reminded me of the ones I've seen flying out of John Coltrane's horn
and Martin Luther Jr's soul- much too beautiful for words.

Near the Ferry, I saw two children wandering off on a raft made of wood-

Bringing myself back to the time I read The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn,
only now, the water was much more polluted, and the air was much colder.

The feeling of freedom the book gave me when I was a child changed to a feeling of
fear that these children could be in some sort of danger.

As I continued to travel on to my resting place, I tripped through doorways that

City Streets



ED DAVIN

slammed upon my skull so violently, my intoxicated blood dripped down from my temples- infecting the next child with my last name.

It's not simply my body or mind that tries to communicate.

I am like that

one light

on the twin towers that refuses to fizzle out and travel with the
silent current.

The Ghosts of Boston

CHRISTOPHER MARI

I got the call in the late afternoon on a Saturday. I had just finished painting my living room and my arms were numb from the wrists to the shoulders. I was laying on the couch with my legs draped over the arm, the cordless on my chest, a book on the table, my hair still wet from my recent shower and Liz Phair playing on the radio. She was complaining as usual about all the sex things that she is so good at complaining about, all the things that give her that edge and make her infinitely attractive to me. She's some kind of bitch, the kind of bitch I love, moaning and pouting and telling stories with witticisms in every song. Liz babe, who rules more than you? Anyway, from this prone position I got the call from my friend Natalie who wanted me to go to some party she was throwing at her place in Chelsea.

Natalie lived with Joe, my best friend, and they were always throwing parties where something was always happening to someone; every get-together had this sort of wild magic quality to them, every one made you feel happy you were there and lucky to be alive. Their party scenes were where the wild people met the other wild people and gave each other a little hope in knowing there were still some prizes around. In essence, everyone went to these things in order to bond for a while with someone and then hopefully get laid afterwards. It turned out this time I was the lucky contestant. So, there I was at this party just after I got back from England and I wound up spending all night under a blanket on the kitchen floor with some broad who had my keys and wouldn't give them back. Being both a gentleman and a little horny I didn't try to force them or anything from her, but just sat back in my fate smoking and talking to her and trying to fight my natural pervert inclinations.

The girl's name was Eve and she had practically translucent skin. She was Irish and had that weathered look that many of the Irish seem to have, something not really in the face, but behind the eyes. She smoked in a smooth way, very nonchalant and very cool, but the rest of her was very obvious and wanting. She gave Joe and Nat a big hello, since they were all good friends, and then went into the other room looking for a drink. She came back out shaking the empty bottle of tequila Joe and I had finished way before the other guests arrived. She looked at us with big blue almost-girl eyes and asked bewildered and honestly, "You didn't wait for me," as if we were supposed to have waited until she arrived when I didn't even know who she was or if she was coming. Joe and I looked at one another and smirked.

"We didn't know if you were coming." I explained after taking a long drag from my cigarette.

She looked at me as an individual for the first time. "And who the hell are you?"

"Sal Mundi. I went to high school with Joe. I'm his oldest friend. Who the fuck are you?"

"Eve."

"Eve? No last name?"

"Not yet."

She went into what seemed to be a pair of endless coat pockets and pulled out two cheap bottles of port. Just then, everyone called Natalie in from the kitchen and asked her to sing a song for them on her guitar. Natalie's a folk singer, a good one, someone who has the "it". One of the other guys there pulled out a harmonica and they went into this low bluesy jam as Eve and I watched from the door frame where we had settled in close and quiet. Joe was hamming it up with Nat singing along and they made up all sorts of crazy fucking words about nothing that were funny as hell and then they both turned to me smiling as if to say, "Oh come on try and top that." Not wanting to be upstaged, I made my way through the crowd and pulled some sort of insanity out of my asshole as we passed verse and verse again like that, one more offensive than the next. Then I returned to the doorway and to Eve as Joe and Nat returned to the party still singing like mad. I was

ready to be entertained now. It seemed that Eve had come in ready to lay Joe but it was Eve who was watching me cross the room to her long after Joe was playing.

"Let's drink the port," she suggested, tugging at my arm. I was all sweaty and wild happy and in no condition to decline such an offer. All the kitchen chairs were in the living room so we sat on the floor and drank the wine from one bottle and then the next, passing them back and forth. It got kind of cold so I ducked inside quick, not wanting to miss a second of Eve. I pulled the blanket from the back of the couch and disturbed everyone who was sitting there before returning to the kitchen. Joe and Nat were still playing but watched me with one eye. I was getting all transfixed by this girl and how great and natural she looked as she took a slug out of a bottle. Then, just as suddenly, I was thinking about Helena- the missing Helena somewhere the hell out in Europe who I had no word from in months. I thought of Helena so much while looking at Eve that I got pissed thinking about her and all that unfinished garbage out there like some big shrug of the gods fucking me over and over. Then I thought about my lousy job since I seemed to be on a roll depressing myself. I had wanted to spend my night exhausting myself because my job was robbing me of a personality, and I could only sit there and not scream, waiting for night so I could be myself again. I had spent most of that evening getting drunk and exhausted. I was just too inner restless for too long a time and I was forever dragging myself to and from work on the haunted subways, vainly hoping that I stood out in a crowd somehow—as if there were a special light that could slink up those cold metal rails and single me out of this ordinary sitcom existence. Then I looked back to Eve with the weathered face behind the eyes thinking she must have all these bullshit problems too. But I really liked the way she took hits out of the bottle, so I opted to pay attention to her.

"What the hell are you looking at?"

"Nothing. I didn't mean to stare."

"Stop looking at me." She playfully cupped her face with her hands.

"I really didn't mean to stare at you, Eve."

"You didn't stare really, you just have this look..."

She took the bottle from me and took another hit. "Man, this port is shitty."

"Nothing like a shitty wine drunk."

Eve smirked. "Said like a wise man, Sal."

We kept looking at one another—almost on the verge of recognizing something in each other or within ourselves, but instead we decided to talk.

"What should we do now, play truth or dare?"

"Let's try truth." She smiled at me not with her mouth alone, but also with her eyes. She reminded me of Helena and that pissed the shit out of me also. I wanted to think of Eve as Eve.

"So Joe's told me all about you. You're his legendary friend, the one he always talks about—Salvatore Mundi, the writer."

I shook my head and rubbed the back of my neck with my free hand. With my other hand I held the bottle of port between my knees as I sat against a wall. Eve sat cross-legged in front of me and reached between my knees in a seductive way taking the bottle—not much, I thought, won't take much at all. She drank it, looking at me over the neck. I laughed at how mesmerized I must have appeared to her.

She noticed that I was laughing and laughed a bit herself, spilling some port on her sweater. She was wearing a bally old black sweater with a beat pair of jeans, making her look kind of earthy and natural—just my type. Yeah, she was my type of girl, blue-eyed and dark-haired, with that bit of crunch that meant she worked hard at not working hard on her appearance. She was attractively unmade-up in that old sweater and those blue jeans. I was going to make damn sure she wasn't going to pull any bullshit over me. When a girl looks that good to a guy in my condition she can get away with anything, including walking away and leaving me flat.

"So before we get started talking all night, which is where this seems to be leading, can I ask for my keys back?"

She smiled, genuinely surprised, and asked, "How did you know?"

"When you reached into my pants pocket to rub me in the doorway, I felt the keys slip out." We smiled at one another. "I'm not that drunk. And at least you gave me something in return."

"A hard-on?"

"Yeah."

"I'm glad," she responded, with the most evil little grin.

"So can I ask for them back?"

"You could ask."

"Never mind."

She started thumbing her way through Joe's copy of Shakespeare's Sonnets which he had left on the kitchen table. I was good and drunk enough to tell her to stop doing it.

"Why?" she asked all blink-blink innocent.

"Because it won't impress me."

"But I thought you were a writer."

"Yeah I am, but I don't plan on spending all night being pretentious on the kitchen floor while there's a wild party going on in the next room! All I'm saying is that I want to talk to you all right, more than anything, but not like a pair of nodding nine-to-five New Yorker reading freaks, okay?"

"So then you want to sit with me and get drunk talking about all the bullshit that's filled my life?"

"Bingo." I pointed at her over my cigarette smoke. "But spare me the melodrama."

"Okay." She took a long last lip sucking drag on her cigarette. "So what made you as fucked up as you so obviously are?"

I went to light another cigarette and she took another sip. The bottle was getting dangerously close to empty and we had only one more. We both looked at that other one knowing we really had to acquire some more if we were going to keep talking like this.

"Wait," I asked. "I thought we were talking about you and all of your bullshit."

"Why don't you answer my question first?"

"What was the question again?"

She shot me a look, a squinty eyed, wrinkle nosed look which let me know that she knew I was shoveling it. I shrugged as if to say I tried. We were getting good at talking without speaking.

"Well, lots of things, Eve. Ask a direct question and I'll give you a straight answer."

"No joke?" Eve asked inhaling her newly lit smoke.

"No shit."

"Surprise, surprise," she answered with a low sarcastic chuckle.

She sat for a second and smoked long on that new butt, and I kept watching her, thinking, "Yeah, yeah- come on, give

me something good.”

She asked, “What was your biggest disappointment in life?”

I thought of Helena. “That’s your question?”

“Yup.” I couldn’t quite see it but I could swear she licked her lips.

“Oh that’s easy, that stupid question.”

“Come on, you bastard!” She snatched the last drab from the first bottle and downed it.

“Really?” I asked, really surprised, figuring she wanted a lie because most people want lies even though they say they want the truth. She nodded in a way that let me know that she really wanted the truth.

“Yes really.”

“Well, my father.”

“Really?” She took a second to respond. “So do I get to ask a follow-up question?”

“Nope.” I answered dryly then shivered a little. Somewhere in Joe’s apartment a window was open. I gathered the blanket around my shoulders and she draped the thing around her legs.

“It is cold in here,” she explained with a put-on matter-of-factness. Suddenly I felt her foot reach over and rub gentle toes against my thigh. This was my signal, the girl wanted me, I was surprised. And I wanted Eve.

She was so sexual in a beaten innocent sort of way. But the innocence was bothering me a little. Maybe she was too innocent or too abused. I needed to ask her more questions in order to find out what she was all about, but there was that foot going brush-brush against my khakis. I just kept thinking a lot of dirty crap about things I wanted to do to her, how I wanted to hear that low, cigarette-husky whiskey soaked voice in my ear, how I wanted that dry crack-ridden mouth all nicotine tasting and stained rubbing up against my lips.

Instead, like a jerk, I only asked her what her biggest loss was, thinking that it was some kind of vague sexual innuendo.

“I had a brother who died,” she commented with wide pained fathoms in her eyes that I couldn’t even begin to take possession of.

“Christ, Eve, I’m so sorry...”

“Tomorrow’s my twenty-first birthday,” she added with a lilt in her voice. I had no idea where she was going with this because she averted those eyes from me and I was strangely thankful. She was busy dabbing out her cigarette carefully on the side of the ceramic mug we were using for an ash-tray.

“Oh really?” I replied with a cigarette dragging smirk. “All street legal and everything.”

“He never made twenty-one.” She looked at me again, her eyes, Helena. I looked away.

I was quiet and then realized we were still in the game, ask a question, get an answer. “How’d he die?”

“He was killed crossing the street at Boston University.”

I had unknowingly peeked into this girl’s medicine cabinet and had opened one of the bottles and some spirits flew out. There were other big bottles in there like that one, too, with lots of warnings and child-proof caps. I wasn’t about to touch them because I had done this sort of thing before with Helena, who wasn’t much better about controlling her own spirits. The eyes, those old eyes.

“Did you know that I went to B.U.?”

“Yeah.”

“It’s...”

“It’s a lousy, cold place, Boston.”

“Sure.” I thought of the years there at school with Helena.

“Lots of ghosts up there, eh?” Eve looked at me and seemed to see what I was thinking about, even though she didn’t know exactly what it was all about. I didn’t want to get into it. This was one night completely separate from all others, it was our time, and our meeting. I tried to forget everything else.

“Yeah. Lots of ghosts up there.”

“Do you want to tell me about her?”

I smiled. “What do you want to know? How we sat around drinking cheap wine or how she tried to get me to read Dostoyevski?”

She smiled. “Yeah.”

“Well, she read it in the original.”

“Impressive.” She opened the bottle and drank some more port. “She must have been impressive, to have such an effect on you still.”

“She was, still is, I guess.”

“Did you love her?”

“Not enough, really.”

“Where is she now?”

“Off traveling through eastern Europe before she goes back to Boston for graduate school.”

“Are you going to go up there with her?”

“Am I?” I asked smirking. “I guess that depends.”

I was trying to avoid depth in this conversation. I wanted to bed this girl and never call her, but she was tempting, damn tempting to be more. Sometimes the way she would tilt her head reminded me of Helena. Something in the chin, in the Irish, behind the eyes. It was something Helena said before she left, something in Eve’s voice reflected it. Helena had said two significant things to me at a time when we were looking for every word to be significant, just moments before everything was to change between us. We were at the airport in the early morning and she had gathered up her backpack when they called her flight—she looked so young even with those old weathered bright eyes of hers. And me looking back at her with my beat-up old sweater looking all college boy and stupid—first she said that she never understood any of this between us and had given up trying long ago. She also told me to keep writing, writing all the time and so much and especially to her, writing so much that I’d be lost in it. I wanted so much to get lost in that way again, but was only lost in that other way of late nights and hangovers and smoke. I did write a lot in the months after she left. I wrote to her and she to me but then she stopped and I never really knew why.

“So was this girl wild?”

“No, she was very quiet, real reflective,” I answered shaking my head through cigarette smoke. I took the port from her and swallowed a big gulp.

“So I guess it wasn’t a passionate relationship,” she smiled as if to say “I’ll show you passion you son of a bitch, I’ll fuck you till your eyes bleed.”

I thought of Helena, her old dorm room, how shy we were at first even though we wanted each other. We both had tremendous pasts. “It started out shy, I guess, but it was passionate, really. I guess we were afraid of each other for a while.”

Eve looked puzzled. “Afraid?” She took another hit.

“We were afraid of getting inside one another’s head and fucking with each other.”



ROB REALMUTO

"So it was the commitment factor."

"No, it was gentle fear. We were afraid of hurting one another because we had both been hurt in the past, I guess."

"Yeah," she said real husky and reflective. "Most people need to do that more nowadays."

"What? Hurt each other?"

"No. Be afraid to the point of respectful."

"Got a story to tell, Eve?"

"Is that what you call a direct question?" She smiled.

"I guess not," I replied also smiling. I wanted her. She knew it. She was fresh in a little bratty girl way; you wanted to pull her hair because you knew that she'd absolutely love it.

So we kept talking like that, way into the night and then we watched the sun start to poke its way up along the edge of Joe and Nat's kitchen window. All night we watched people leave, start to make it with one another, and watch more people go home. But we didn't mess around, it was too pure a moment, so we sat there huddled

under the blanket rubbing our feet together. At eight or so, I got up, having finally decided to leave.

"Just like that, Sal?" she asked quietly.

I smiled and crouched down. "What do you mean, just like that? We were up all night, weren't we?"

"So this was just one of those random, meaningless things?"

"Life without meaning or purpose, is that what you believe?"

"Yeah, don't you?" She said it real innocent and looked up at me with big eyes that could almost cry if they had any more to give. But she didn't and I kept thinking "Oh broken doll, do you know how many of you have come to me before you? I can't fix you, sweetie, I can only let it go away for a while. Don't be angry or cry, or even want to. Don't go crazy, don't be bitter, its just the way things are, don't love me, don't leave me—"

She walked me downstairs to lock the front door behind me. Suddenly as I bent down to kiss her on the cheek with my hands encircling her knowing beautiful head, she grabbed me by the

collar of my leather jacket and kissed me hard and desperate as if to say, "Oh Christ please don't leave me now alone." I kissed her back for a bit thinking how she didn't kiss at all like Helena. Finally I pulled back.

"Everything's meaningless, eh?" I smirked ironically. "What a crock of shit."

And so I left that morning, left her in the doorway with my spittle drying on her sweet mouth and the remnants of our desperate kiss on our minds. She stared at me blankly from the doorway and I smiled at her, rubbing my hand against her cheek affectionately. I left feeling as if I had not broken another promise to myself. Helena was still out there and the questions between us were also still out there. I had finally done something honorable.

Then I got her number from Joe a couple of days later and after a long debate called her, then fucked the hell out of her. We were lonely people and couldn't resist throwing more mud on each other's soul.



ANTHONY GARGISO

today is the day, that day we wait for
on soap operas, when the girl wears the white when the
girl
gets the boy, when they kiss
and all is bliss, today is the day but
this is not love, today is the day
that they all assemble to witness the union
to witness the union, it is white,
the dress, white as white
snowing skies as white as a blank
page and this is not love
the chanting of priests
drone like tractor trailers (gotta get where they're going)
but my mind's talking thoughts like,
will I be a good mother or
will I be a good wife or
what do I do after this is all over
and the guests go home to their happy
homes to their happy lives waiting
for another wedding what do I do when
I wake up in the morning to white sheets
and every other morning after
and does my mother know what I'm feeling
and how do I live like this and continue to be myself
and write and this is not love
my Mac cost me three thousand dollars
and I owe another ten
and I want my own home & joint checking account
I do want to be this woman that can and will and does,
so I do, I do and when the rice hits
I'll feel it sting cause
I'm clean and this is all very white and it has to be love

P
S
S
T
S

the contemplation

VICTORIA SERETIS

This lump of
flesh
excites and sometimes
it is just
covered and propped
like a porcelain
doll
smiling,
with satin
and lace
and wire
metal
holsters
to hold it, to
hold them
in place
smiling,
compliant
instruments for
entertainment purposes
only.

My Best Friend

JULIE TULIP-WALSH

"The dog has to go," my mother said for a third time and adamantly.

"Has to go?" I asked curiously. "He doesn't look like he has to go," I said, examining Nicholas as he lay sleeping on the settee on his back, his legs all asunder, snoring loudly (as he often did after a satisfying meal).

My mother put her hand over her eyes and sighed crossly.

"He usually barks if he needs to go," I said in defense of Nicholas.

For the fourth time my mother said, and loudly, "The dog has to go!"

I scratched my head.

"Nicholas, do you have to go outside?"

He didn't answer. One ear lifted slightly, along with an eyebrow.

"He chewed your father's slippers," my mother screamed in exasperation.

"What has that got to do with him going to the toilet?" I asked.

"He's going for good," and with that my mother slapped down an unrecognizable slipper on the kitchen table. I don't think she noticed but a piece of the salivated slipper leapt up and fell into her cup of tea. I watched it sink to the bottom, and waited for it to surface, but it didn't.

"We're a slipperless family," my mother shouted with the same despair you would expect to hear in one who has just lost their home to a fire. "I'm sick of this. Your father is sick of this. Rosalind's sick of this," and with each statement the pitch of my mother's voice rose. "The only person's slippers he hasn't chewed are nanny's!"

"I don't blame him," I said shocked. "They stink."

Nicholas woke up with a loud woof. Too much talk of slippers excited him.

"It's a disgrace," my mother said as she sunk into her chair beside the table and buried her head in her hands. "We all have to walk around the house in our outdoor shoes. Whatever will the neighbors think?"

I thought she sounded on the verge of tears. I brought her over the box of kleenex and patted her on the back. "There, there," I said, mimicking my father, unsure of what else to do. My mother cried very easily. Last Sunday my father said that the roast beef was as tough as an old leather coat, and my mother cried for about two hours. I just wondered what desperate situation had occurred in my father's life that had forced him to have eaten an old leather coat.

My mother managed to restrain the tears and picked up her cup of tea and took a sip as if to console herself. Tea was

very soothing for my mother. The art of making it was as comforting as the actual drinking of it. I realized the importance of this only a year ago when my mother ran over the next door neighbors' rose bush - their only child, as they had repeated over and over again for about a month - and while George and June alternated between clutching at one another and shaking their fists and screaming in agonized wails, "Our baby, our baby," my mother came inside and calmly made herself a cup of tea, even giving it the customary ten minutes to stew. Meanwhile the car was still running, while looking like Daphne, stuck in some partial metamorphic stage, and ruby red rose petals floated over the front garden, looking pretty for a minute and then looking sadly finished. The police came and I locked the door, out of a certain loyalty to my mother, and talked to them through the letter box. I had to explain that my mother couldn't speak at present because she was having a cup of tea.

I quickly realized that my mother was sipping from the tea that had the piece of soggy slipper at its bottom. I turned to look at Nicholas who was languidly grooming himself, quite innocent, and unaware of his approaching removal from his home. Right now Nicholas' safety was far more important than my mother contracting any terrible, even incurable, disease from the chewed slipper. It was best not to tell her, I decided.

"Nicholas receives weekly pocket money," I said hopefully. "He can save it until he has enough to buy everyone slippers."

"It's no good," my mother said gravely, shaking her head back and forth. "He's beyond help. This fetish has gone on too long. Your father said he's a podiphiliac."

I did not have a clue what that meant, and I'm quite sure my mother didn't either, but I denied it anyway.

We were interrupted by the bad language coming from my sister, Rosalind, who was upstairs in the bathroom. I knew this meant trouble, but I was glad of the distraction. My mother got up from her chair and walked over to the bottom of the stairs, better to hear the bad language of my sister. I turned to Nicholas and gave him the thumbs up. He cocked his head and smiled with his tongue hanging out over the side. He was very clever, Nicholas. He was even telepathic. Sometimes he misconstrued the message. I tried to speak without words to tell him to keep a low profile, but he misunderstood and must have thought I said a high profile, and so he thumped his tail on the couch rather madly. I froze, fearing that the attention would be returned to him. But meanwhile my sister repeated over and over again, as if she lacked the ability to think of anything else to say, "I hate him, he's a bastard." Unfortunately, or fortunately, however you wish to look at it, she was referring to my father. We went through this every Sunday. My mother was attempting to placate my sister by saying:

"Your father is not a bastard. He's annoying and potty, but he's not a bastard. I happen to know his parents very well, and they bear a strong resemblance to him."

My father was up in the attic, where he retreated every Sunday afternoon after his occupation of the bathroom the entire morning. He was working on building a model aeroplane. None of us had seen this aeroplane and yet he had been building it for the past two years. My mother said it truly existed. It was just that our father was slow at accomplishing things. She said it had taken him six years to make my sister. He was a little faster with me; it only took him

three. I suppose because I'm a lot less complicated than my sister.

If my father ever heard my sister's blasphemies he never said that he did. But if he did he probably wouldn't have anything to say about it. He never said much. Once Rosalind was caught stealing in Marks and Spencers. She was brought home in a police car. Her eyes were puffy. She must have been crying a lot. She later told me that she had been crying because they had taken away things from her pockets that she hadn't even stolen at Marks and Spencers. She had stolen them from Woolworths, and thought they had a cheek confiscating them. We were all at the tea table when the police man walked in with my sister, holding her by the ear. When he had finished telling us what my sister had done, my mother blew her nose into her hanky and sobbed. My father got up from the table and said, "The prawn sandwiches are good in Marks and Spencers, but other than that I don't think much of the shop." The policeman nodded his head. I suppose he liked the prawn sandwiches too. My sister went up to her room and threw all her belongings around for about an hour, making a hell of a racket. My mother made herself a cup of tea. I went around to the neighbors, who I found outside peering over the garden fence, and told them that my sister had been brought home in a police car because she had uncovered some espionage and was now a heroine. They asked for details but I said it was top secret. Unfortunately my sister's criminal act was reported in the local newspaper. At school I was snubbed for a week. I took to denying that I had a sister. A few months later people forgot.

My sister continued to scream about there being no hot water. She said that her whole teenage life was ruined because there was no hot water to wash her hair with. My mother turned to me and said, "She's at that age." I nodded my head in agreement and made a mental note to skip that age then.

Things would be easier in our house if my father went to church every Sunday instead of the bathroom. But he didn't believe in God. He stayed in the bath tub from 8 until noon, singing Vera Lyn songs. It wouldn't be so bad if he could actually sing, but he couldn't. My grandfather said that the only difference between my father and a braying donkey was that if you took a stick to a donkey he would shut up. There was nothing that could shut my father up, but then he locked the bathroom door, and no one could get in, so we wouldn't know if in deed a beating with a stick would make a difference.

A few months ago a lady down our road offered to take me to church every Sunday, and even though I couldn't get excited about singing songs of praise to someone who was so old, and quite uninteresting, it was an opportunity to escape the Sunday scenes at home. It didn't last long however. I was asked by the vicar not to come back. The lady down the street, however used the word "banished" when explaining to my parents why she would not be coming for me anymore, and it sounded a lot worse. When she left, my father just said that I was lucky that I at least wasn't sent home naked with a only fig leaf to cover my private parts. In that respect the whole incident didn't seem so bad; it could have been a lot worse. My father then asked if it had anything to do with me eating something I shouldn't have. I had denied it but felt a little guilty because I had once eaten the bread which was supposed to be the flesh of

Christ and I wasn't really a Christian, but most of all I was a vegetarian. I told him that it was because one Sunday I couldn't stop coughing, the next I couldn't stop hiccuping, the next I couldn't stop laughing, but as I was explaining he had already lost interest, and was singing "...Bee Bop Alula...."

"I hate my whole family," my sister was now shouting, which made a nice break from, "I hate him, he's a bastard."

Once I had asked her why she hated me and my mother, when it was my father that used up all the hot water and not us. She had said that she hated my mother because she made apple crumble for the tramp that lived on the bench outside the post office, and had conversations with him about the rise in the cost of living. And me, because I talked to the mental patients from the mental hospital by our house. They were allowed out on weekends. She had said that she particularly hated me because I even held one patient's hand in public, who she had said wore tennis shoes at least three sizes too big, with a mini skirt, and varicose veins. I had defended this mental patient by explaining that the tennis shoes were a gift from a boyfriend who had never met her, and said that my sister would have varicose veins too if she was 70 years old. I supposed this wasn't convincing enough for my sister, because she put her fingers in her ears and looked up at the ceiling, and began humming the death march.

Nicholas brought over his leash. My mother was now standing at the top of the stairs, outside the bathroom door crying, and my sister was still shouting. But there was something different about this scene from other Sundays. My father had come down from the attic, and was standing in

the shadows. He was wearing his overcoat.

"It's the slippers," I heard him say. "If it wasn't for the slippers..." his voice trailed off.

I think that my father was convinced that if we all had slippers everything that was wrong with our family would be right. My father came down the stairs and left out the front door. Nicholas looked anxious.

"It's ok, boy," I said, but I knew it wasn't okay this time. We left quietly out the back door.

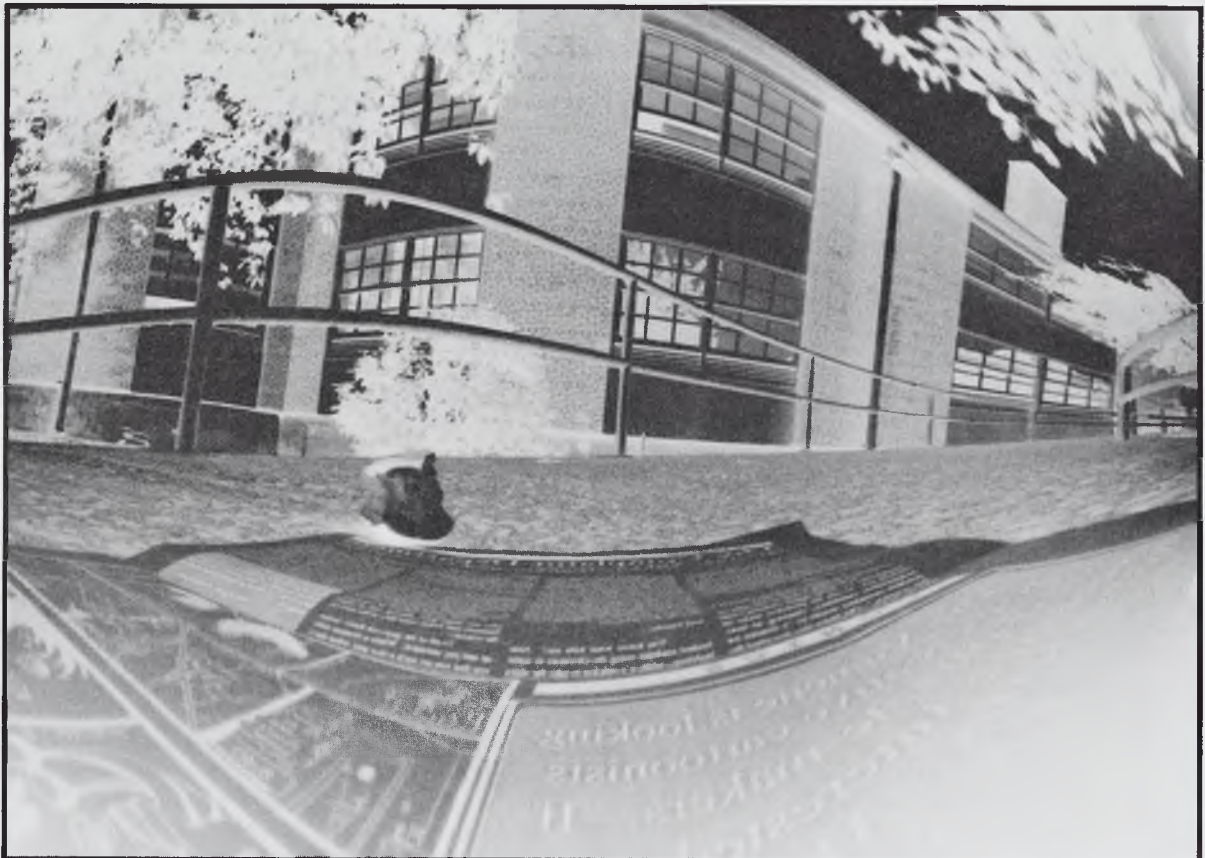
Before my father had taken to spending his Sundays in the manner that he did, he used to take me and my sister to football matches, buy us a bag of chips in newspaper, and a cup of tea. We didn't think much of the game, but we liked being with our father. But that was a long time ago.

Nicholas and I stayed at the park until night time. Bedtime had become our favorite time. I would tuck Nicholas up in my bed and climb in beside him. I would read him a story or simply make one up. The stories were always about dogs or cats, because he liked that. Our favorite story was The Incredible Journey. We had plans to go on one ourselves as soon as I had saved enough pocket money and the weather was warmer. Nicholas couldn't stand getting his feet wet, nor did he like sleeping rough. I promised him that we would stay in the finest places only. Sometimes I found it hard falling asleep because I'd worry about my sister finding my piggy bank and stealing the money. And also Nicholas snored a lot, but I really didn't mind because I loved him.

When we got home my mother was still crying. She had all the slippers that Nicholas had ever chewed lined up on the kitchen table. I went up to my room. I didn't feel like telling Nicholas a story. I just held onto him and wept.

A
L
O
N
A

P
O
P
O
V





ED DAVIN

BURRITO

In a dream
my mother has an abortion.
Wearing furry sweaters
we visit friends in Alabama
to sleep underneath blankets
and friendship.
Before then
we had driven around Hylan Blvd
eating Taco Bell and making fun
of humble houses with tall front buttresses
walls and spears high like serious soldiers.
We return.
I am lost inside a dark cave.
Burrito entrails cover me - sticky and warm.
What do I wear?
She hands me a black sweater and I cover
the front with brown rice, beans that drip from
my fingers.
We mourn.
Our limbs are soft and runny
trying to push past thin skin of crust
We know we cannot help but eat ourselves out.

JEANIE KWAK

Should I go
retrieve your dentures
misconceive your ramble
A long agreement
I think I might need them
blue angel
how would I feast
whisking through the bodies
burning my vision
sharpening the eyes of a madman
washing between their toes
back in this hole
again
soaking
the fury of your dreams
defeating your person
how do I relieve this weight
our great
emancipator
gave the word
this monstrous deed
a mass hanging
of forty native men
tormented images
stuck
back in this hole
with my pride
again
when business is good
soaking
speechless.

SOAKING SOAKING

DILLON T. DE WATERS



ROB REALMUTO

Man am I
beat.
So damn
spent
I hardly
feel
the floor.
A skull
crammed
with sky.
So light.
So damn
tired.
Dead

tired

Can't

keep

from

Night
Reaps
Another

fall

NILES ELLIOT GOLDSTEIN
EVANSTON 1991

Mom's got a new husband.

TOM DEIGNAN

But she don't see it that way. She sees it that she's had the same husband—and I've had the same Daddy—all along. But it ain't the case. And it's goin' to be some time, I think, before there's anything I can do about it.

The drive to the prison takes about 30 minutes, first past the rolling open fields of sugar cane, and then over the Pontchartrain Causeway, with Lake Pontchartrain on either side of the car. Our home, where it's just me and Mom now, is only a few seconds ride from the highway, and late at night, in the dark, I can hear them rumblin' trucks goin' cross the country, delivering something or other somewhere—most likely New Orleans—and in that deep part of the night—there ain't no streetlights where we are—I wish I could be one of those truck drivers. Drivin' ain't hard. Before my Daddy disappeared, he'd let me take the wheel of our Chevy and drive it around our house where there's a lot of dirt and open spaces and nothin' to hit but the three Collie dogs we got runnin' around. I drove good I think, and Daddy said so. What made it easy is that we got a good amount of open space on our land. It ain't a farm or nothin', but Dad's job paid well enough. Mom kept the house so-so, but there weren't another house next to it to compare to anyway. You'd have to ride maybe five minutes of dirt road 'fore you came to some streets, where the houses are plopped next to one another real close and family-like. Another twenty minutes more and you'd come to town, with the Wal-Mart and the bar and the gas station and the new 7-11 which just opened up.

Dad even left me alone on his motorcycle once. And I rode it clean too.

"Ain't too many fourteen year-olds can ride a cycle like you," he said to me. This was two years and four months ago, a wet, warm Spring day, before the hot summer bugs come swarmin' at you off Ponchartrain like rocks.

'Bout a month after that ride, Dad took his cycle into town "for some cigarettes," he said, "and to fill the cycle with gas." His exact words. He told me and me only. "Mom," I said, comin' down from upstairs and entering the kitchen. I stood and looked at her, and all I could say is, "Dad don't smoke cigarettes." I heard him drive away.

"Maybe he's taken 'em up," she said straight, after I explained to her what Dad had said to me. "Maybe he's taken 'em up cause I nag him too much." She was washing dishes at the sink, and I didn't know quite what to make of what she said. But she did nag him a lot. She was scrubbin' and scrubbin' and scrubbin' those dishes, and the steamy water was makin' her forehead sweat.

They fought about dumb things and Mom was always naggin' him about never bein' home. It's the work I do, he'd always reply, and that's the truth. I stand by him on that. He's on the road three weeks at a time, but I'm OK with that. But Mom never seemed to be.

"Maybe," Mom continued from the sink, "maybe, he ain't comin' back."

Then she crouched down and grabbed my shoulders and looked into my eyes, like she was wantin' to see what was behind 'em, and she said, "Your Daddy's a hard man to live with. I don't know what you got cookin' up in that head of yours, but you better know I'm tryin' my dammedest to raise you right." She tightened her grip, and her throat seemed to shut, and a tear fell out of her eye. "Damn it. Damn it I'm tryin'," she said.

Mom cried a lot but she had never spoken like that before. He ain't comin' back, she had said. They'd never talked

divorce talk before, and best as I can recollect things was OK recently. Dad had been home for almost a week, and was planning on takin' off on another haul before the week was over.

But dinner was quiet that night, and in my room I heard them talkin' and Dad yelled once. Only once. Few minutes later he knocked on my door and said he was goin' "for some cigarettes, and to fill the cycle with gas." His words exactly, as he looked right at me.

Mom was right. My Daddy never came back that night, or any other night. They found his bike a week later, but no sign of him. I ain't seen him since. But Mom has. That's the basic problem 'tween me and her now. They found some matchin' I.D., the police did, 'bout a year after my Dad went for cigarettes and gas. A guy had it on him down in New Orleans, when the police busted him for pickin' up a whore. Mom thinks the guy is my Dad. He looks like him a little, but when Mom drags me to the prison to visit him, like today, I see it ain't him more and more. And I don't mean it ain't him because my Dad ain't the type to run out on his family and take to sleepin' round with whores. That ain't it. It just flat ain't him.

This guy's fatter to begin with. Dad had a little bit of a stomach, but he had a broad chest too, broad and hard. This guy's all belly. Hair's darker than my Dad's, and his voice is different too. But they're the same height, and they got the same green eyes, ones that are clear and light, and open up a face, rather than make it more solid, like dark eyes.

But on this—our fourth trip—I can't see how Mom thinks this is the man she was married to for some twenty years. It ain't him. And I've told her this. She should never have gotten involved with this guy in the first place. She even said so herself a couple of times.

"I wish you wouldn't put your father through this," she said this time though, the fat, steamy air rushin' through the windows of our Chevy.

I just mumbled, as we drove onto the causeway.

"It ain't him Mom. He's a guy who probably robbed Dad's I.D., who looks a little like him, too. But it ain't him."

She smiled, which was weird because at this point she usually got angry. She must've been in a good mood because of the visit. Then Mom stopped the car right there, right on the causeway, with the lake all around us, and looked at me, and let the cars behind her honk, and pass her up.

"Jimmy. He loves us. He's said so. He's said he's sorry, that he's payin' his price, that his past has caught up with him, and that when he gets out we're gonna...well, we're gonna try again. He'll probably be out in under a year."

She went on, more serious.

"Jimmy, your Daddy and I had our share of problems. He was away a lot and frankly I didn't trust him. I didn't trust what he was doing on the road all that time. It's crazy, but things are better the way they are now. Things worked out for the best. So, when your father gets out," and she stopped there. She took a deep breath. "I still can't believe the son of a bitch is in prison...I can really pick 'em can't I?" She was quiet for another second. "Well when he gets out we'll have done a whole circle. When he gets out, he can start from a new beginning. We can all use a new beginning I think."

"It ain't him though."

She drove on, and I went on talkin'.

"Momma, they got him—they got this guy—for at least two years already on the prostitution and burglary charges

he's admitted to..."

"Jimmy, let's face it. Your father went off the deep end. It happens when you get older, believe me."

"Mom."

"Yes, Jimmy."

"They gonna put him up on murder."

I said it as if she didn't know. But she knew. She just stared out over Pontchartrain and went on driving, mumblin' about how young I was.

The guard at the gate of the prison remembered us from a couple weeks back, a big, fat white woman with too much make up. She smiled at us with pity. Everybody at the prison seems to know 'bout us. About the woman who's stickin' by her husband in jail. About that damn crook who's playin' along, pretendin' he's my Dad, probably because he's got nothin' better to do. I wasn't too angry with the guy, but I didn't like him neither. He took my Daddy's I.D., stole it from him, maybe even knocked him on the head once or twice. Well, that's OK. For runnin' out Dad deserved some-thin'. And I think he did run out. The question is, was he ever gonna come back.

Two cops had come to our house one day, and Mom let me sit and listen while they explained that they had arrested this guy who wouldn't give his name but they traced the address in his wallet to our house.

The cops were the same ones we had dealt with when we filed the missing persons report on Dad. Mom started cryin' and these cops had an endless supply of pink tissues with pocket lint. They said they had arrested this guy in the French Quarter, eight blocks from where they had recovered my Dad's bike, abandoned a second time, but this time, stolen from our yard by this guy, this thief. Police said the son of a bitch probably joy-rided it all over town, before he went whorin' and God knows what else. The bike pissed me off back then when I heard about it, and saw the damage. Damn bike's all but useless now. But it's in the backyard now, and I may take a wrench to it someday yet.

From what the cops were sayin' that day I saw the whole thing comin' together already. They had found Dad's bike and this guy who took it. Dad—my Daddy—wasn't found nowhere yet. The cops looked at each other and the white one—they were both thin men, one black and one white—solemnly alerted us that this might be a murder, or at least an abduction. Once they confirmed an identification on the criminal—which is what they were here for—they'd know more. Locating my Dad, or his body if that was the case, well, I guess that may come up later. They were more concerned about the whore's body now, though I don't know why.

They spoke coldly, the cops did, but it didn't hurt me too much, 'cause it wasn't hurtful the way they was talkin'. It was real. This was necessary. These cops knew this had to be told to us, and we had to hear it.

Mom had been cryin' hard, just like when we reported to these two that Dad had not come back from his cigarettes and gas trip. Hurts to see her cry like that. It hurts me a lot. The black cop, while the other was talkin', casually reached into a folder and placed a photo of this bastard on the table. The other cop saw this and mentioned that people sometimes like to know what the mug shot looked like.

"That's my husband," Mom said calmly, of the photo. I saw immediately that it wasn't my Daddy, and the cops were silent.

"Ma'am?"

She shook her head again, and brought her hand up to her mouth. I couldn't tell what she was feelin'. What was she seein' in this guy?

The cops remained silent and Mom picked up the slick photo and stared at it.

"Oh my God," she said aloud, quietly. "It's him...it's really him..."

"Jimmy is still angry about the motorcycle I think," Mom was saying to him. There he was. This guy who was supposed to be my Dad. I looked at him and thought he might not only be an impostor but a murderer too. He may have taken my Dad's life—I don't know for sure yet, but if anyone did, he'd be the one.

"I think it still works," he said, through the glass, clothed in a gray, rumped body suit. He looked only at Mom the whole time, speaking very rapidly, unlike Dad, who spoke smoothly and softly. In the past we'd seen him face to face, and they even kissed once. This son of a bitch kissed my Mom, kissed another man's woman, my Dad's woman. But today he was behind the glass.

"Well," she replied, "I've heard Jimmy say more than once he's thinkin' of takin' a wrench to the thing."

They went on—this guy just rolls right along with everything, slick as a damned fish—and he never looked at me. He was gettin' the hint I didn't like him though, that I saw. Trouble is, Mom never saw through him. Mom really wanted us to be a family again. She got away by sayin' that it was her right to visit anyone she wanted. She told the police she was talkin' to this guy so that he'd eventually confess to her whatever it was he did. But in truth, they all knew she really thought that he was just some innocent victim in all this. They wondered—like me I guess—why on earth she kept on comin'.

"Come over and talk to your father," she said to me, standin' and lettin' me sit face to face to this...this...crook, I guess. I don't know what. What do you call a man low enough to pretend he's your Dad? Crook I guess. A god-damn crook and thief and murderer and bastard.

"I'm sorry about all this," he said to me, like he was apologizin' for spillin' a little coffee on my shirt or somethin'.

"What's my name?" I asked him.

The son of a bitch laughed, and Mom was appalled.

"Didn't I tell you not to put your father through this?"

"Mom said it before. All you'd be doin' is repeatin' it. What's my name?"

"Jimmy!" Mom said to me in anger, and I looked at her and then, like a mirror, into this guy with the same eyes as my Dad, who had the same eyes as me.

"Jimmy" he said, "Why's you doin' this to me."

More proof, I thought to myself. Dad never said nothin' as stupid as "Why's."

It was all silence in the car on the way home. Mom said nothin', comin' out of the prison, over the causeway, or, with the sun setting, as we passed the cane fields. I let my mind wander, out over the hot lake and into the air blowin' through those fields. The way I see it, they should put this guy up for murderin' Dad. But I hope he didn't do it, only because I think Dad's still out there somewhere for me and Mom. I'm only 16, so I'll finish out high school, but once I'm done there, I'm clearin' out. I don't know what exactly I'll do. I ain't goin' to college. We never had that much money. I'll join the army, if they'll take me with all the cut-backs, or maybe I'll look for a job out of town. Look for a truck driver's job maybe. That'd be great. That'd be so great it'd make me cry. Maybe I'll even take a wrench to that bike and take off. I just can't be stayin' here with Mom if she's gonna be like this though. That's for damn sure. She's blind. She can't even see.

I guess I'll set out and find my Dad and make a life on my own. It's too damn early to do it just now, and I couldn't anyway. I'd get harassed first of all. But also, I just don't think I could actually do it. I don't think I could live without my Mom just yet. It's hurtin' me seein' her like this. It's hurtin' me wild. But I can't live without my Dad either. I feel split in two. So I'll go find him. Out there. And when I do, his cycle will have a full tank a gas, and I'll place in my Dad's hand one pack of goddamn cigarettes. And I'll put it to him straight, I'll scold him, and I'll ask him, "Where'd you go? You know what you done?" And I'll hope in my head that he and Mom can settle their differences. Whatever they are.



DEAN
DECAPRIO

Not many, if any people I know can relate
To having slept on a puny ship that lay
Becalmed on a glassy smooth summer sea.

You feel faint as you look aloft with a million
Worlds surrounding the gentle swells that lift
Up your flimsy barque of security.

The sky pulls at you so don't let go, hold
Tightly to a grommet as the stars beckon
Coily for you to join their infinite domain.

Hostility lies above and below the fragile deck
You rest upon.
Fathoms of sea, fathomless skies each claiming
its own part.

You lie suspended between the two in that thin
Layer friendly to man.
To find death look no further than a few feet
Starboard or a few feet port.

The vapors reclaim their own in this realm
Absent land.
Drift on and succumb to the sweet depths of sleep
For your dreams will become your savior.

Answer to Silence

JAMES BIGHAM

Doldrums

WILLIAM TEAGUE

The typical sigh of slow drafts
Over the corpses of dead roses
Stirs not the inertia long since accepted
As a way of unlife in the land of unliving
Involuntary gestures become cryptogram seance
Speak to the dead about lost love of language
What was never said, never was
Though the eyes of ghosts will forever witness
They will merely play as shadows at the corners
Of our tongues, sending inflective nuance
Hints and lips and stuttering waltz
They lend doubts among the unceasing intercourse
As to the nature of eternity
Instill the fear of ending despite
All the evidence to the contrary
Or, worse still
In those whose tongues hide in utter dark
Where curtained lips dare not part
And shed light through yellowed boards
Dare not strike the pimpled heart of speech
They become corporealized sound companion
Affirming ever on as long as speech is stilled
They exist as answers to silence

t
h
e

D
i
v
e

he often stands on sun-bleached shelves
and looks upon still pools,
gathering calm reflected leaves
and bloated insects, preserved and dead
while screams enhance the silence in his head,
and dreams of breaking the surface
with an explosive gulp -

He leaves the cries at the threshold
and all is underwater zen of nothing,
he is underwater.

Thin films of bubble white on his legs,
like sparkles in the night air,
rise to meet the last of the sounds above
whose echoes still ring and string
and beat the drums of numbed ears.

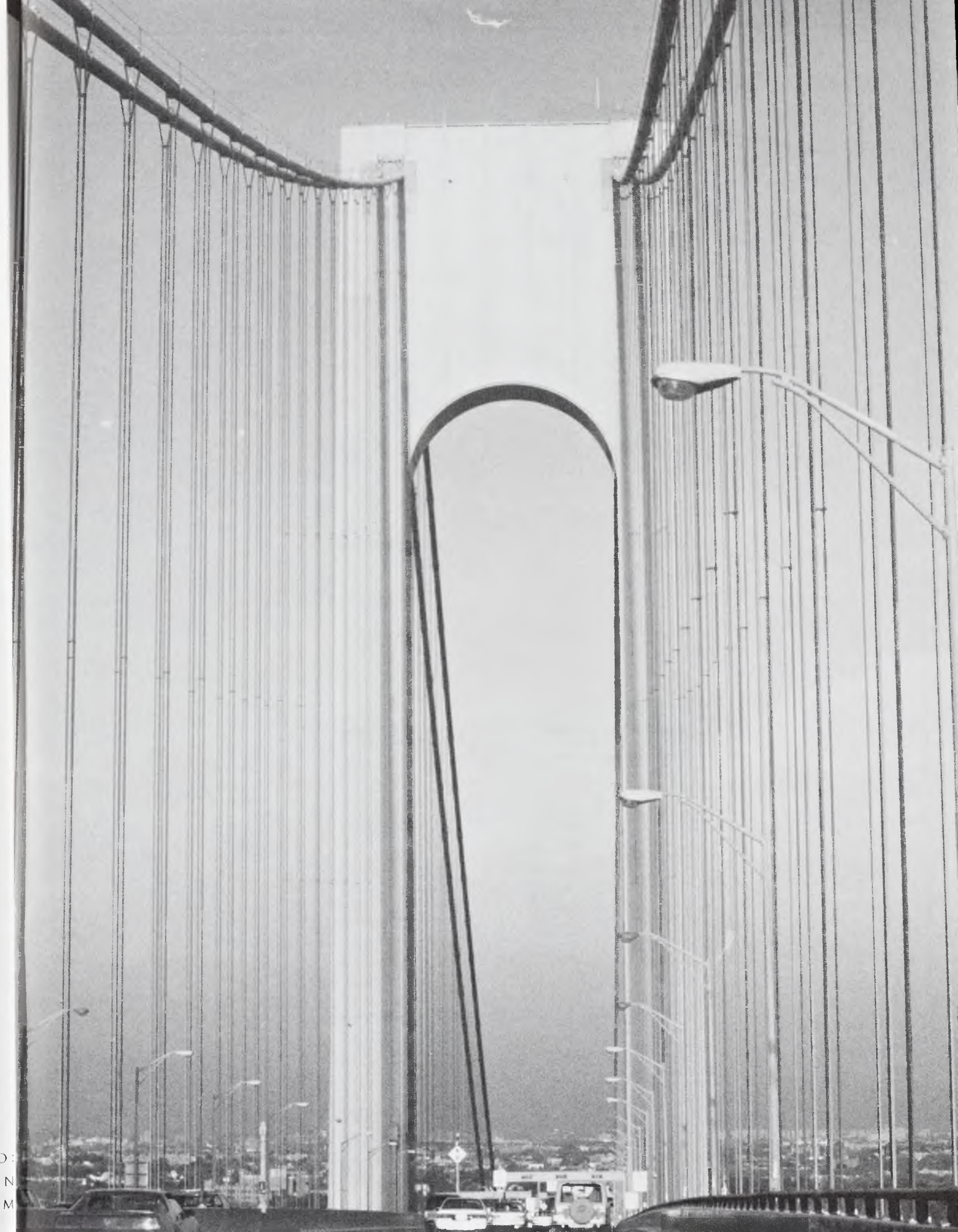
He wishes them away and they leave
like strangers shunned from a quiet doorstep.
he's watching them in slow-motion float,
allowing angelic lines of white sun
to filter through to his squinted eyes
from their curved path after the break
on the lid of his aquatic chamber,
this beautiful walled pool of things.
The draw of his high cheeks are visible,
white clay on either side of hid nose
as he comes to a full lotus at the bottom.

all is as it should be,
save the strain of his lungs -
he curses the end to all good things
the evanescent nature of man
the lost womb
the inevitable tomb
and in between, the stifling twists
of halls and floors and rooms.

And pushing off in resignation,
chin straight up, arms at his sides,
the last oxygen coursing from his nostrils,

he bursts the invisible line of water
into a deluge of sound and clear sight.,
already in preparation
for a second submerge,
for he knows the air is death,
and only water is breath.

ADAM TAMARKIN



What if they knew, these

sun-skinned
chaps?

What pleasure 'waits
these
lads of mine...
when
eager mouths do long
to taste
smooth, salty
skin
of summertime.

Then tenderly would
hearts unfurl
to
simple pleasures
now
at hand...
in sunsets, where
two bodies
melt
into each other
on
the sand.

L. DELFINO

Pickax Harmony

BRIAN
BELULOVICH

I go along filled,
easy and unassuming I ride;
Stretching a leg if I feel to
Wiping a sweat
if I have to
taking small drink before returning
to chip these perspirous walls-
Working, I don't remember not loving
though sure of lapses I recall
some persistent lampblackened groan
frightening its way along the dirt here;
now adversary now
cohort soaring coalrock
tunnels into a vault deposit-
Diamond lined garnet and light
Uncovering
I sit in your crevices
you in mine.

Until We Climax...
to ourselves.
Making love
with oneself.
Finding oneself intertwined
for its own right.
Feeding,
Hunting,
becomes more difficult.
each painstaking step
Carefully,
Slowly,
as we begin our ascent.
Twisting and writhing in agony
up the fragmented edges.
trying to slither its way
In a turbulent frenzy
as we do
the jump rope oscillates
Untainted,
Innocence,
Watching them jump rope.
Motionless,
Standing,

and
eventually
dissipate
into
nothingness...

CONTINUUM

KERRI DEITCH



A
L
O
N
A

P
O
P
O
V

On the Christmas Eve right after John Lennon's life was taken, it was cold; an oblivious darkness jimmied around the edges of the street lights and street life. There was a haunting in every superficial sparkle of good cheer. I was in a room on Stranded Island, top floor, no heat. I dreaded going back there. The Ferry ride is 20 minutes of non-direction; a conforming journey across the Styx. The New York Post was scattered everywhere with pictures of a dead, murdered John Lennon resting I hope in peace on a morgue slab. This is what the litter in Hell looks like. These holidays suck because misery is forbidden. I forced the issue of Christmas on everybody, insisting we pull names and buy presents. We had a party at the club. A little Christmas tree on the piano, some food on a plate. We were a family. Michael didn't show up, so the pint of Johnny Walker Red which I bought for him fell right at home into the pocket of my peacoat. Soon everybody got to go home, and I'd be on my own. Not a good thing. I already spent yesterday's pay on a room at the Y for a hot shower and warm sleep and to avoid that fucking boat ride. All I had was the Johnny Walker and a poor sense of dis-

S m o k e

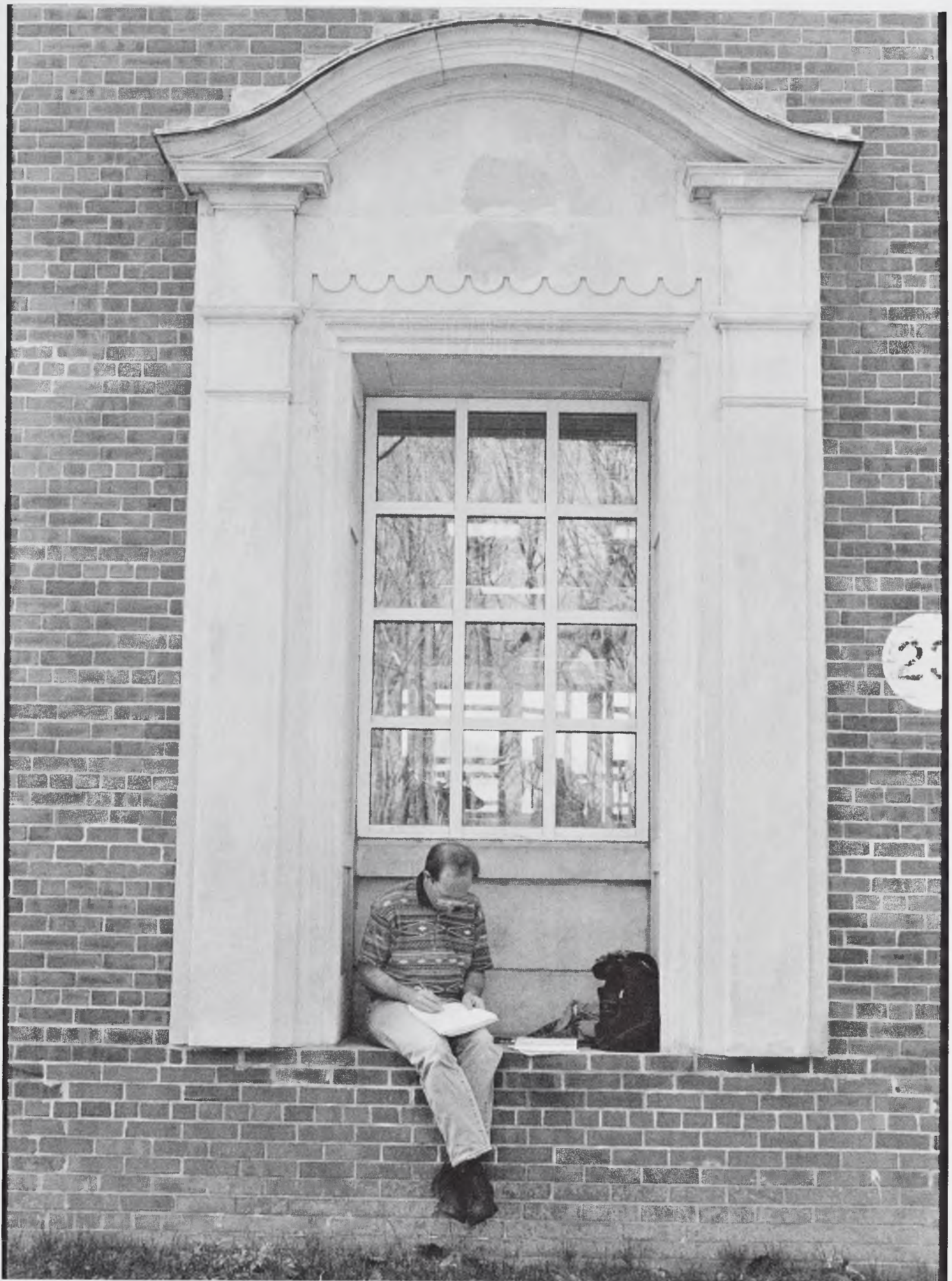
VINCENT VOK

torted direction. I would walk down Macdougal and make a left on Bleecker on down to the edge of the world. Death had already pulled us over, and I was tired. It was in my coat and around my collar. It was in my pocket. It scared me to think about. I thought along that edge. I was leaning over looking down.

As we were leaving, I went into the kitchen and on impulse shoved all the silverware that would fit into my sleeve. I shook Joe's hand, wished him Merry Christmas and let the forks and knives and spoons fall out, a classic Harpo Marx routine. We were all on the floor hysterical.

Soon I was alone in front of the club, their laughter fading off towards their homes. I cracked open the JW and took a good long drink. The warmth and good cheer soaked every fiber and nerve. I shivered and started walking. I walked in circles around the blocks, stopping in doorways to lean and watch. I think I saw Michael Mann that night - some mangled elf of Santa's fired long ago for laughing at the wrong thing. I was writing something on some peice of paper. Backwards I wrote something called "the Blade will Dance". It was a suicide note. Michael always could read my mind. We threw his doublespeak back and forth for a while and he disappeared through some crack in my memory. I was numb by then, and drinking hard, waiting to fall, and stay there till morning or death. I walked up Sullivan to Washington Square Park. Kathleen entered my mind briefly, because of it. My head was down and it was snowing. I heard a voice call out "Smoke. Smoke." Walk through any park in New York City and you hear that same call; the same guy, everywhere at the same time. I didn't want to smoke. I had no money, and the stuff you buy in the park sometimes wasn't real. "Smoke. Smoke." it said again. Working on Christmas Eve, is what I thought. Then I felt people running around, and my vision got hazier. When I heard the sirens, I looked up, and saw the flames shooting out of the windows. Smoke for real, I thought. I watched for a while, hoping everyone was doing their job. My face, my eyes, my stomach, my thoughts. Everything was burning. The flames screamed on their own terms, the snow was falling gently. I turned away and walked into the snow. I was cold again, and needed to see somebody. I was running out. I walked into Kenny's Castaways. They were a real club and stayed open. I forget who was playing. Somebody was always playing. At that time, if you were playing the Village, I knew you, and you knew me. We were a family. I sat down at the bar, and the bartender gave me a drink, from one downtrodden club employee to another. I smiled and thanked him. Swallowing it, I choked. I remember how it burned, going down crooked like that. Eliot saw me. It was he that might have been playing that night. He had an apartment with his brother Greg in Brooklyn. He saw me for what I was then. He pulled me home with him. We drank some more, watched some TV and crashed. Christmas morning I cooked everyone breakfast, out of good cheer, friendship, and a secret gratitude for this man who saved my life.

Life runs wide, and all the way through. It takes a deep, sharp effort to end it. Pure levels of thought must first disintegrate. It happens.



ANTHONY GARGISO

She didn't keep up with shaving her arm pits.
It is no wonder, why should she care
15,000 kilometers from home, what's a little hair?
Instead her sand speckled feet rest
on the carpet of my rented mirage as I sped
past waving palms on the road to Key West.

Between two bodies of water with just enough space
for us to slip by, unnoticed - a breath- steering
a straight line I saw no less than a sleeping woman
her hair fell in the fashion of that moment
her body stretched careless across the front seat
when her sight lent harmony to my eye.
Within the blur of that scene, I chased that road's beat
until the measure of miles composed a woman
whose breath seemed to need, know more than salt air.
i, I could not have dreamed of her presence there
for unlike so many seconds she came to me first
with a touch deeper than any space, I am aware.

In Beat Spirit

ANDREW WINTERS

Everyday's Reign

JOHN KOTSAY

Tomorrow's gathering hasn't been planned,
And the lights have stopped before the Sun.
The morning frost has yet to be seen
And the streets are slick with unwarmed cold.
The grass and trees sleep seasons away,
And the birds still fly the pleasant airs
Where a brilliant day waits for dinner-time rain
And the green waters wash the white shores clean
Where a lone rose grows through time and wind,
Defying nature and the natural way
Like a lone bird singing louder than a passing flock.
I know her and talk to her
And carry her through the back of my mind.
Because I know that the lonely flower gathers moss most
And the beautiful song settles falsely on the deaf.
So I invent and urge some promise me way
As everyday stops to fathom the possibilities.



ANTHONY GARGISO



E
D
D
A
V
I
N

Third Rail

The Painting

DIANE MILLER

Safe ground constitutes the way
in the open line, the open idea.

There should be no wall.

There should be no fear.

He held on to the moment

it felt good to hold someone's hand,

and the crowd wore spectacles

low down on the nose,

reviewing

the soft sculpture

pastels

acid rain

and the rose.

He took a seagull.

He took a stand

moving in and out of

what they said he should have planned

and the choice of the rose

fell into what he came to know.

He was not a fighter

so he took two strokes on the canvas

in blue,

and said, "The interpretation of the Painting's in you."

I am not my mother.

I am a woman

who loves men, but no man

as I have been

parted and drowned

in the same wine-blue sea.

I am not your baby—

only my mother's...

Neither of you will cradle

my soul or undress my skin

that pours me

into these comfortable shoes.

I am not your mouth

that drags in dirt

for the loosening of a laugh

or a stretch, for your oversized tongue.

I am too big to be carried.

I am

VERA SAVERINO



Third Rail

Rent	\$25.
If 2 R.R.'s are owned	50.
If 3 " " "	100.
If 4 " " "	200.
Mortgage Value	\$100.

Take A Ride on the Reading

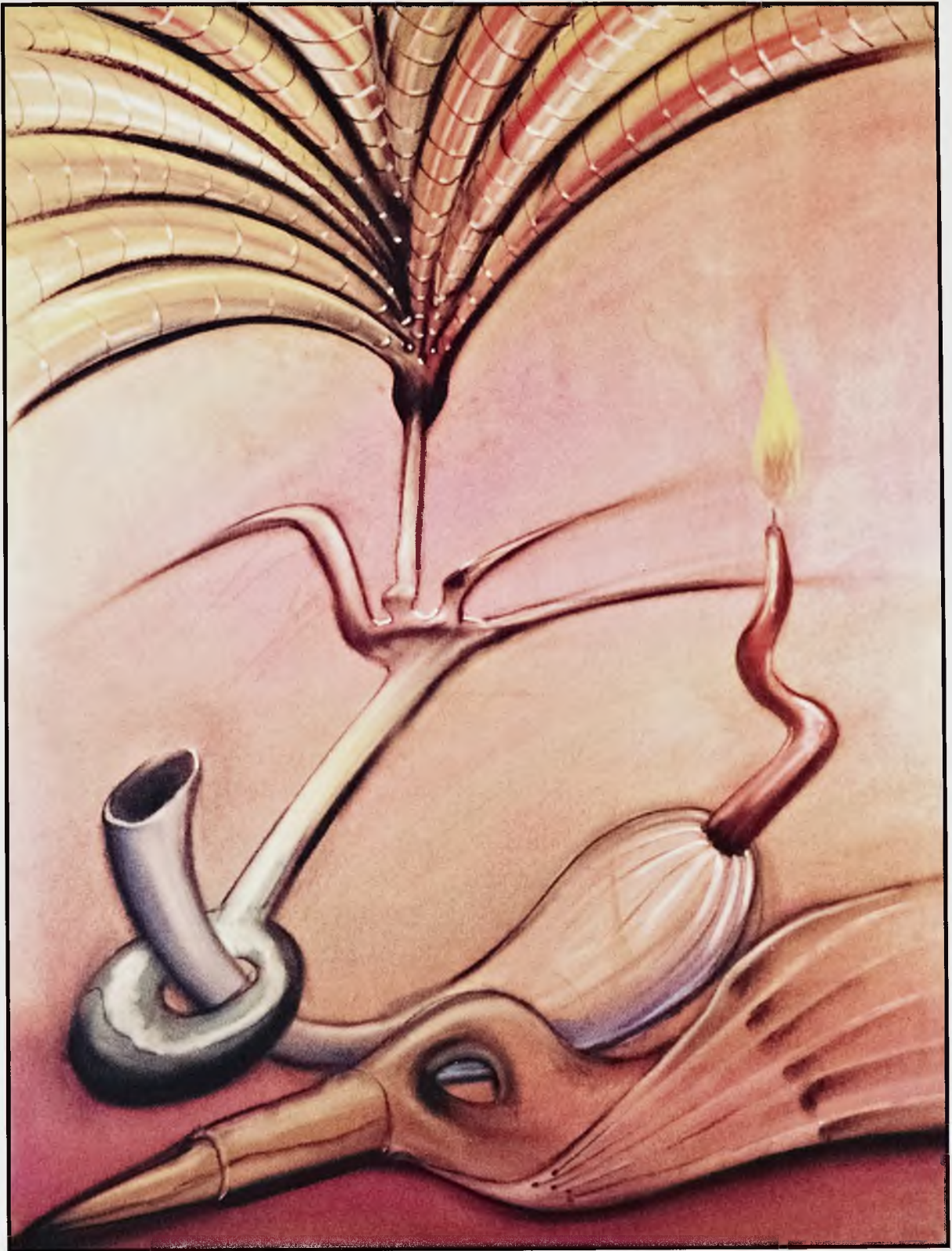
*Contribute to
Third Rail*

Submit your visual art, your written word or your typography to:

Third Rail

2800 Victory Blvd. Bldg 1-C Room-231

Staten Island, NY 10314



JEFFREY KITCHEN

