BOX 749

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editors

associate editors

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contents

su-li sloat

walton van winkle

SILENT SEA

I

A gull soaring silently slipped through the gloom, grabbed the bread he had thrown into the water, and flew away, its gray body melting back into the gray mist. He was alone again.

The clams were scattered over the small deck. He rose slowly from the cabin, one hand holding a sandwich and the other gripped tightly on the beam over the door. His back ached. He stood by the clams while he bit into his sandwich. It was stale. He threw it as far out as he could and spat what was in his mouth into the water. He knew he would not make much money if he did not catch more than he had that morning. No, he would never be able to leave; his wife had told him that.

He was away when she died. They sent him a telegram but he didn't come in time. She had been dead three days when he stood over her grave with his gray felt hat resting against his leg and the bald spot in the middle of his hair shining brightly. He couldn't believe it was her but the stone had her name on it: April. And his name: Wife of Alfred Freeman.

He looked up from her grave and noticed the monotonous rows of white stones, all of them plain and undecorated. Then he called one of the attendants and asked him why there wasn't a space left next to his wife's grave: he was to have been buried next to her. The attendant told him that he knew nothing about it and stood there wheezing quietly. Freeman wasn't sure, but he thought the attendant was laughing.

When he got home that day he remembered the mask he had bought when she was still alive and how he had put it on before entering the house and how, when he walked in, his wife was sitting in her chair by the lamp reading one of her books, wearing a pair of reading glasses. She put her book down and looked over the rims of her glasses at him and smiled.

He sat in her chair now and thought of how quiet the house was, had always been, and how, sometimes, it had seemed like no one lived there at all--the two of them sitting in the room together not saying a word. Then, sometimes, he would look at her and she would smile and he would reach over and touch her hand and wonder why he had never heard her laugh.

He rose slowly from the chair and walked up the stairs to her bedroom. When he opened the door he noticed that the room hadn't changed much. The shelves were cluttered with books and magazines and her desk was in the corner with its back to the window. There was a book by Proust on the desk. He thought his wife might have mentioned the name to him once but he wasn't sure. He picked up the book and placed it carefully on one of the shelves. He stood by the shelf with his hand still on the book thinking that he should have never gone, thinking that he could never get away no matter how far he ran because it would be the same everywhere he went and that maybe that was what she had meant. When he turned around he saw her nightgown on the floor by her bed. He picked it up and brushed off the dust with his hand and thought of April and how he had never called her by name. Then he wrapped the gown up in his hands and pressed it to his face.

II

The bucket fell into the water and he cursed

loudly as he tried to get it back but it drifted out of reach. By the time he got a pole the bucket had sunk.

A gull was laughing in the grayness somewhere. Freeman sat amid his clams and knew that he would never make enough money. Then, suddenly, without warning, the gull grew out of the mist, its gray body like ashes over Freeman's head. It landed on the bow. Freeman ran to the bow waving his arms over his head, screaming gull-like. The gull flew away with a clam hanging from its bill. Damn bird! Goddamn bird!

Freeman took his clamming tong from the deck and dropped it into the water. It seemed heavier than usual. Sometimes he could hear the moaning sound of another clam boat passing hidden in the mist and he would think how, on a clear day, they would pass by his boat and wave, then he would wave back and yell out the name of the passing boat and they would each look over at the other's catch. "Ya goin' to be rich!" they would shout to one another. They always talked that way.

He only had three dollars left after paying for the dinner, then she took him to her apartment and she asked him in so he smiled slightly, almost invisibly, because he wasn't sure what to do because no woman ever asked him before and because there was April in his mind still lying under the stone with the space next to hers taken as if he had never been or as if she had never known him.

He picked the tong slowly out of the water, but he could see right away that there weren't any clams in it. The mud was seeping through the teeth when he dropped the tong back into the water.

She kissed him after he closed the apartment door and her lips were warm and moist on his dry lips and April in his mind like spring but she was winter now and she was undoing his shirt, steady fingers on his hot chest sweating, and he wanting to feel her body close to his so he loosened her blouse, fingers shaking, stumbling on the buttons, and she walking him to her room with her hot breath in his ear and the blood rushing in his head and her voice seeming strange now, different, like someone else's but he didn't care only wanting to crush his head into hers.

He opened the tong and three clams fell on the deck with a knocking sound like someone at a door trying to get in. Without putting them through the screen he could tell that only one was big enough and that he would have to throw the other two back. He kicked the three of them with his bare foot and watched them splash and fade away.

Freeman laid his tong on the deck. He cursed himself for not bringing his boots: even his bones felt the dampness and chill. He walked to the cabin and leaned against it. He wore the bottoms of his trousers rolled but they were still soaked with the salt water he had splashed on the deck to wash off the mud. There was still some mud but he didn't have another bucket.

The afternoon didn't seem much different from the morning. There was the grayness melting everything together, the water and the air, so that he wasn't even sure if he was on the water except that he could hear it quietly rubbing against his small boat.

He looked in the cabin but there was nothing there he could wear. Then he saw the clock. It was getting late. He walked out of the cabin and shut the door but it wouldn't close all the way because it was off one of its hinges. Then he saw the deck and thought that he should sand it down and paint it some day but he wasn't sure when.

He wasn't sure when but he knew he had to leave that he couldn't stay there with her that he couldn't love her because it was winter now and it was cold and maybe he forgot how and he was afraid of being the old fool.

He hit the side of the cabin, chipping the pale blue paint.

Don't go she said in her pale blue voice but he said it was late his eyes on her naked breast swelling and spring on his mind and now it was winter and such an icy pale blue.

He stood bent over his tong thinking that maybe he wouldn't be able to lift it.

The clock was ticking though he wasn't sure what time it was but he said it was late so he sat on the chair putting on his shoes trying to cover the hole in his sock when she said O and laughed and rubbed the bald spot in the middle of his head thinning more and graying and she said he should learn to sew.

He decided to rest a while longer so he sat down next to the tong and the few clams on the deck.

He could see the gull on the water fading

in and out of the mist. The gull disgusted him. Then he remembered how beautiful they once seemed, all white; but this one seemed to have been born full-grown from earth; full-grown from sea mud. Its features stuck out of its body in all directions and its eyes were hard, cold. It stared at him, waiting.

It was senseless. He knew he wouldn't work anymore that day. The clams...the money to escape; it was senseless.

III

She had come into his room when he was packing. He told her that it wasn't because he didn't love her, it was because he wasn't sure how he felt. His wife watched him quietly as he packed. When he was done she walked out of the room. He sat on his bed, staring at a reproduction of Degas' "Absinthe" that his wife had hung on the wall, and wondered why it was so difficult for him to leave. He stood up, took his suitcase from the bed, and shuffled slowly out of the room. He left the door open.

When he reached the bottom of the steps he saw his wife sitting in her chair reading one of her books. She didn't look at him. He said good-bye and told her that he would call but she didn't answer, so he walked out the door to the cab that was waiting in his driveway and the cabby yelling at him to hurry or he'd never get to the train on time.

In the train he wondered if that sense of emptiness he felt then, while watching the small town that had become so familiar to him rush by and fade into the distance, was not the feeling of escape, of freedom. He had wanted to leave for a long time, ever since he first started losing his hair, but his wife told him he would never be able to leave. Now he was on the train alone and she was back at the house. He was leaving her.

They were in love at first but with the passage of time they became more and more concerned with other things: she with her books and translations and he with his balding head and sense of doom. But now that he was free, on the train watching the town of his childhood rush past, he might be able to recapture some of what he had lost.

Those six months he spent in New York before her death brought him no closer to the truth, no closer to finding out exactly what it was he sought, than he had been before he left. For six months he sat in his small hotel room, sat in the dark bar drinking Bloody Marys, sat in the park feeding pigeons; and for six months he thought of her, of what she had said; and even then, after those six long months, nothing was clear in his mind. If anything he was even more confused, more uncertain of what it was he wanted, what it was that kept nagging at him from the back of his mind, from the back of that mist. . All he knew, all he was certain of, was that he was getting old.

Then when he read the telegram he wanted to cry but couldn't. Instead he sat on his bed staring at a plastic bird he had bought from an old man on Forty-second Street, thinking that he wouldn't go back. He sent a telegram telling them to bury her as soon as possible. Three days later he realized what he had done, but when he got there it was too late. She was gone.

IV

When he was a child he had a bird. She had no name; he could not think of one. The bird never sang. She died when he was in school. He buried her quietly in his mother's little garden behind the house.

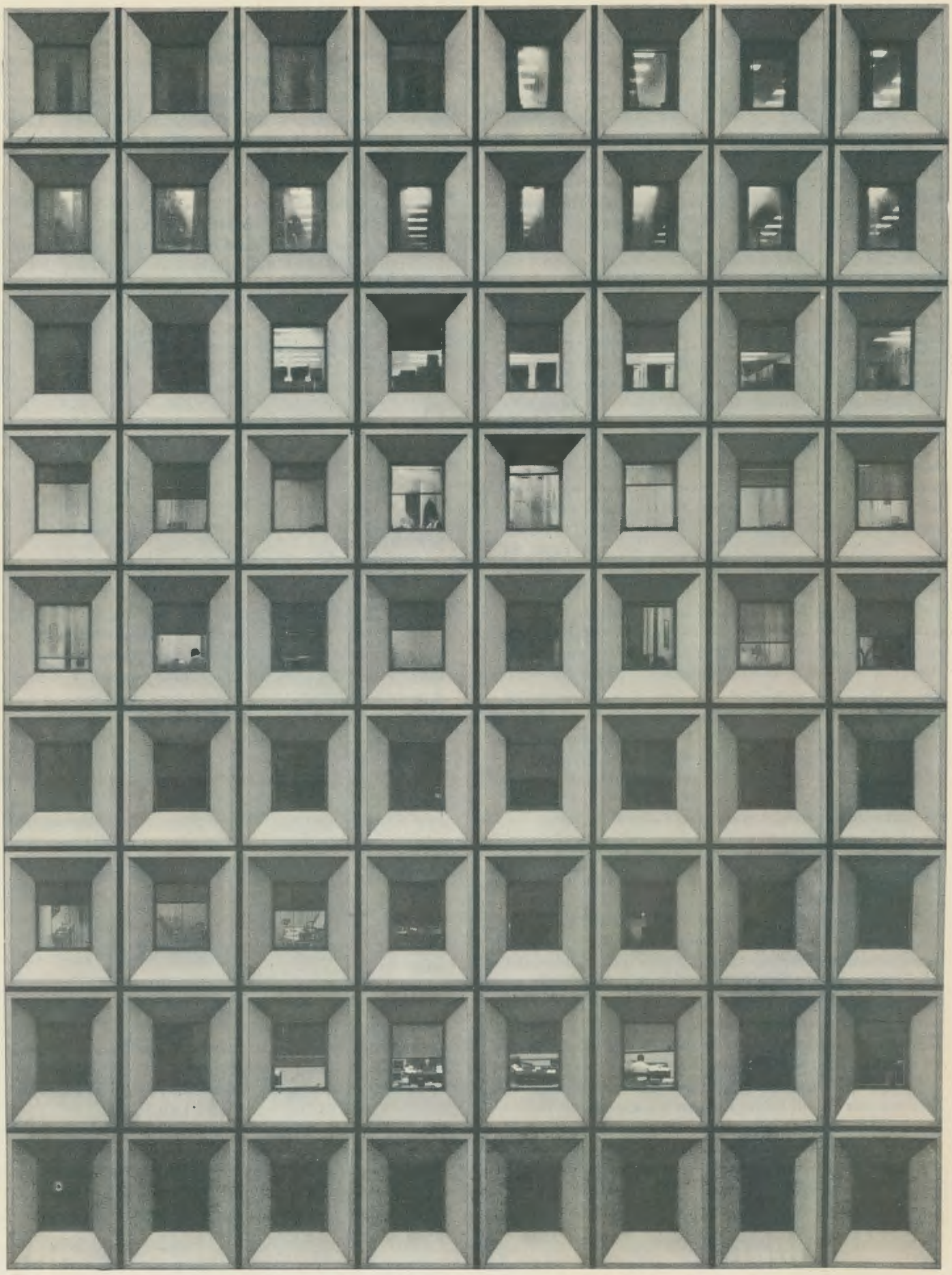
One day he heard the rain quietly on the window. He looked through the silver drops. It came harder and he could hear it slapping the walkway. He ran out the back door. He could hear his mother calling. Then he knelt in the little garden. He stuck his hands in the mud but it was gone. He could smell his house and the rain crackling on the walkway like eggs in a frying pan.

The gull was laughing somewhere inside the gray.

Then a strange image flashed in Freeman's mind: a pair of giant white claws reaching, shooting across a great black space then disappearing.

He thought when he buried her that maybe she would grow out of the mud like the other plants in his mother's garden.

He walked to the back of the boat where the motor was. It wouldn't start. He tried again but it was dead. And the gull was on the bow with a clam in its bill and there was the distant moan of a boat reverberating within the misty air growing hard and cold from the silent sea, then he remembered a line from a poem his wife had read him once in some forgotten time and he thought of how he didn't understand it then but maybe he did now and he thought if he heard another human voice he would drown. □



robert walch

WINDOWS

david ferguson

WALKING

The wrong was marvelous.

I walked to the rhythm
of a stranger
whistling at my back.

The claim, at first, came of itself,
a light arrived
from the other day
informing everything
the casual eye takes in.

She talked of Spain
not to explain
the distance that she kept.

Who bothers to imagine
what there is to lose
when any day
the sun may break
like color coming,
to the summer gray
as a photograph.

I have since seen
someone closer
die of such a dream.

We moved as characters,
each in the other's play,
overheard
by a world of dreamers,
wronged and wronging,
no less marvelous,
a world of many, spoiled
by those who dream for others
with tyrannical generosity.

Sometimes even now I stopping hear
oceans crashing in the ear
from a beach somewhere at sea.

Between my room
and the multitude of homes
I walk to work.
The pleasure I take
in walking
changes everything.
There is no other Ithaca.

I SHOULD LIVE SO LONG

If I could live
to write my own obituary
I would fix the Fates.
Why let them cut me out?
There's always an alternative
mythical hags can't calculate.
Let them diagnose my home
or trace it to my chromosomes,
I'll stumble on
a way to free myself
from their archaic symmetry.
Should I succeed,
they'll call themselves
historians
and come up with a remedy
to find me at the new design,
the place they meant my effort to define.
And so at last
I am part of their embroidery,
the struggle of the unicorn
in ancient tapestry,
dancing to the ritual of the past.

IDENTIFIED

Pillowed by the curb, a man,
red in slashes down his chest.

A handcart, unattended,
piled with salable refuse,
unmolested
sporting sprigs
of gladiolas, red,

what, from a distance
looked like blood.

THE TERMINAL

No crystal palace
but a place
so large
a man
could stand
and not feel small.
I couldn't help
taking it in,
it's coming down.
I caught sunlight
muffled in dust,
billowing up
the ribs, picked clean
to sky. Birds
never flew
from afternoon illumined
rusty rafters,
not till after
the shutter closed.
I wasn't there
when they took
the eagle down
but I remember it
from photographs.
Stones are not as shy.

The lens looked up
an entrance,
as elaborate
and high
as a temple,
in silver scaffolding;
an arch through which to see
a garden
of geometry.
Ragged canvas
snapped
in the wings
of the recent
ruin. I caught
the workman
on a beam
undoing it.
Sparks struck
the set in sprays
of whitehot rain
daylight erased.

Coming up the stair
I caught the very top of it,
the iron pattern
shattered by light
bursting through
the sweep of steel.
Underneath,
a darkened segment
of the coming roof,
signed, Bethlehem.
The eye can't fix
what it takes in.

I caught the clock,
stopping outside,
but failed
in the interior.
Picture it:
that circumscribed
infinity
above the rush
of men, seemingly
unmindful
of this departure.
Commuters
in a certain light,
gray and powdery,
set off two men
down at the center,
a little to the right,
their helmets gleaming
less in the richer
insufficiency--two men,
the value of Caravaggio,
form,
with the column to their right,
a heavy L
the composure of paint.

Two figures
at a transit,
sighting...

A tableau
imposed upon
the disappearing
room...

But it didn't print.
Nothing there
but the gloss black
negative.
The easy
radical
transformation
could not take place
without more light.
The scene
so nicely placed
upon the scene
is lost and the loss
is placed
upon the scene
for my development.
Contrast makes for art
as we find our way
in the basement
of the onetime day.
The Garden
is under
construction.
Boxes harvest
more efficiently.
There's nothing like
the architecture
of despair
to fill
unnecessary
space.

paul de john

THE CELL

for joe

(A cell--sink, toilet, bunk bed. Two young convicts are lying in bunks)

JOE: Drip...drip...drip drip...etc.

VINNIE: Talking to yourself again?

JOE: No...just listening...drip...drip... Vinnie?

VINNIE: You know what I miss most?

JOE: Drip...drip....

VINNIE: Television.

JOE: You hear that dripping?

VINNIE: I used to like to watch it....

JOE: Drip...drip....

VINNIE: Spent hours watching it....

JOE: Listen...drip drip...hear it....

VINNIE: It was just a black-and-white set...a Philco...color hadn't come out yet....

JOE: That dripping's driving me crazy....

VINNIE: Think about something else.

JOE: Think (Pause)...Ever been in city jail? I only spent one night there...for something.... They brought a guy in and put him in the next cell....I couldn't see his face but I said "Hi, my name's Joe"...He started yelling "Let me at him! Let me at him!" all night long....Wasn't long before everybody in that place was yelling ....(Pause) In city jail they keep a light, a single light bulb burning in front of your cell twenty-four hours....I used to watch it...spent hours watching it.

VINNIE: I got drunk one night and kicked the screen in.

JOE: Huh?

VINNIE: The TV....The picture wouldn't stay still so I kicked it in.

JOE: Never had a TV. This place smells like piss....

VINNIE: I'd stop beatin' off for a week for a cold beer.

JOE: Never liked beer....

VINNIE: My car broke down in the desert once in Arizona and there was this stack a' beer cans near the side of the road....I started putting 'em under all the gas leaks, oil leaks and water leaks under the car....I got up to thirty-two cans and this semi come along and blew all the cans away....

JOE: Piss'n disinfectant....

VINNIE: Yeah...a cold Miller's....

JOE: (Goes to sink) The faucet's busted again ....I saw a cop kick a black man away from a

fountain marked "white only," and then he let his dog drink from the fountain. (Pause) We could die a' thirst and they wouldn't give a shit.... You ever seen an uglier wall? Goddamned cock-roach! Jesus all-fucking-mighty!! Did you see the size of that bastard?

VINNIE: (Turns over on bunk) Didn't see it... don't wanna see it....

JOE: It went under your mattress....

VINNIE: (Jumps up) Goddamned fucking roach! I hate 'em! It's gone.... Where'd it go?

JOE: It's gone....

VINNIE: God, I'm thirsty....

JOE: Think about something else....

VINNIE: It could be worse huh? Like the junkies on Fourteenth Street.... I heard one of 'em say one night that a buddy OD'd in Brooklyn .... Then they all started saying it over and over again like a bunch a' kids and they all wanted to know where the guy got his stuff cause if he OD'd it musta been good....

JOE: I heard the Germans used to put people in boxes... then just leave 'em there without food or water... first they'd eat their shoes and then they'd drink their own piss....

VINNIE: Hey... think about something else....

JOE: Fuck you.... I had a girl once.... She didn't like me to kill roaches.... I'd kill 'em anyway....

VINNIE: Hate 'em....

JOE: One time she said she really believed in me....

VINNIE: Before or after you stabbed that guy?

JOE: We were in the car one night.... She just said it.... Did you cut one?

VINNIE: No.

JOE: I told you not to do that....

VINNIE: I didn't.... (Pause)

JOE: Water's supposed to be bad for you anyway....

VINNIE: Women are all the same.... All they want is a stiff prick....

JOE: She meant it, I think... about believing in me.... I saw her a coupla years later in a laundromat.... She wasn't wearing no socks so I knew she was pregnant....

VINNIE: Was she pretty?

JOE: Yeah.... She was a year older'n me.... She was gonna give me a book to read.... (Picks up paper. Reads) "A man's body was found floating in the East River six a.m. Thursday morning. The dead man's hands were wired behind his back and there ware two small-caliber bullet holes in the back of his head.... Police suspect foul play...." (Laughs)

VINNIE: Why do you keep reading that? You've read it a thousand times.... (Long pause) What are we gonna talk about when there ain't nothing left to talk about?

JOE: I been meaning to ask you something. What's it like to rob a bank? I been thinking about it....

VINNIE: I told you a thousand times....

JOE: Is that when you hurt your leg?

VINNIE: I don't want to talk about that.... (Long pause) I had a girl once too....

JOE: You know what I miss most? Just being able to go out.... Anytime you want to.

VINNIE: Looks like a nickel in the toilet....

JOE: With a nickel in my pocket I'd feel like a king....

VINNIE: With a nickel bag in my pocket I was a king....

JOE: Hey.... You seen my comb?

VINNIE: Anytime--anyplace....

JOE: Did you take my comb?

VINNIE: Don't start....

JOE: Did you hide the comb again?

VINNIE: You're worse than my old man.

JOE: It's not here....

VINNIE: It's silly....

JOE: You're silly....

VINNIE: You're stupid....

JOE: Don't call me stupid! (Pause)

VINNIE: It's just a spot...looks like a nickel. (Continues to look in toilet) Hey Joe....

JOE: I suppose the roach ate the comb....

VINNIE: Hey Joe, what do I look like?

JOE: What do you mean?

VINNIE: What do I look like?

JOE: Do you mean....What do you mean?

VINNIE: I mean....It's like a mirror.... (Still looking in toilet)

JOE: Wish we had a mirror....

VINNIE: Do I look funny, Joe? Joe...do I look funny?

JOE: You look the same....

VINNIE: How old do I look?

JOE: You always look the same....

VINNIE: How old do I look?

JOE: You look like a guy....

VINNIE: I didn't take your fucking comb....

JOE: It's OK.... (Pause) It's OK.

VINNIE: OK.... (Long pause)

JOE: What do I look like....

VINNIE: Huh?

JOE: Do I look OK?

VINNIE: How do I look? Really....

JOE: You look young....

VINNIE: Yeah....

JOE: Yeah....That girl...was she pretty?

VINNIE: Huh?

JOE: That girl you started to talk about. You never finished....Was she pretty?

VINNIE: No...but I loved her....She was young ...really young....Did you ever love someone and you were scared shit to let her know? When she was around I'd--I'd--I can't breathe....It's hard to breathe....I gotta get outta here....

JOE: (Controlling him) Easy...easy....Where would you go...where the hell is there to go?

VINNIE: Someplace where I could sleep....I can't sleep anymore....

JOE: (Sings) My baby loves me...I know she loves me....

VINNIE: When I was a kid and couldn't sleep Mom would rub my legs....

JOE: We'll ask the warden to give her a cell.

VINNIE: She's dead.... (Pause) She's dead.... She died when I was eleven....I was on a Pop Warner football team and we were going to L. A. to play a team called the Crusaders....We stopped at one of those places where you get all the chicken you can eat and the team said I ate forty pieces....My nickname was Superman.... We beat the Crusaders....I got in for one play ....That night on the bus we smoked cigars and I told everybody I had a rough day ahead of me ....When I got home the relatives were there and my Uncle Jim had bought me a blue suede suit...then we got in the car and went to the funeral home....It was a beautiful sunny day ....I don't remember what I was thinking....I hadn't seen her in two weeks, before she went to the hospital...It started to hit me as Jim and Dad took my elbows and we started to walk up the aisle....The moment I saw Mom's face I started to scream....I screamed through the whole funeral and didn't stop....The Reverend's wife tried to tell me that Mom was in a better place but I didn't stop screaming...until Dad held me over her so I could kiss her goodbye ....It was like kissing ice...and that's the day I went back to our garage and took a hatchet and told God I'd chop off my arm if he'd give her back...and that's the same day I told God to get fucked.... (Long pause)

JOE: Play some gin....

VINNIE: You flushed the queen of spades down the toilet.... Remember?

JOE: Rotten whore.... I knew a guy once--when he lost, he'd stick the whole deck in the freezer.

VINNIE: Can't play without the queen.

JOE: (Reaches under mattress) Look...a Camel...we'll split it...uh...guess I'll have to break it....Here....Here, take the big half.... Forgot I had it...a treat huh? (Looks perplexed) Shit....We don't got a light.... You got a light?

(VINNIE throws his half in the toilet)

VINNIE: It floats....

JOE: So did the queen...for awhile... (Throws his half in the toilet. Pause) I'm gonna ask 'em to put a light out there....

VINNIE: Want a leg rub?

JOE: We ain't run outta things to say yet. (Pause) Look, a match....

VINNIE: It's this place....How long we been here?

JOE: Ever been in Vegas at night? You can smell the neon burning...and the money.... (Lies down)

VINNIE: Hey...I can hear it...the drips.... (Reaches into shirt and takes out comb)

JOE: There's no lonelier feeling than being broke in Vegas....

VINNIE: Sounds like a leaky faucet someplace....

JOE: God, I'm thirsty....

VINNIE: Drip...drip...yeah....

JOE: I'm glad we don't got a mirror....

VINNIE: Drip....

JOE: Think I'll get some sleep....

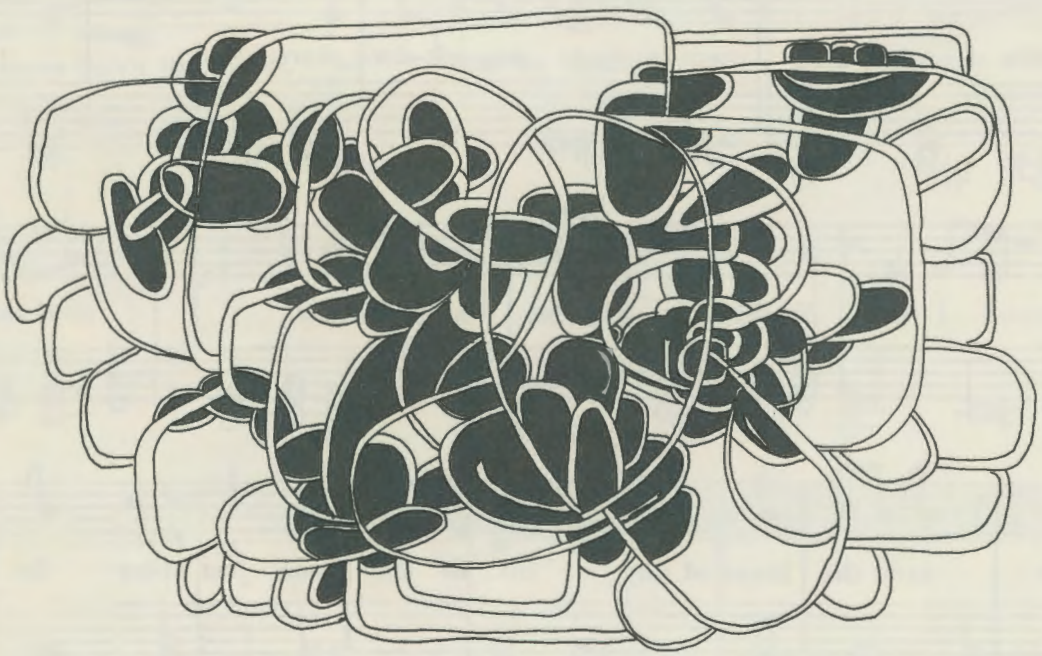
VINNIE: Hey Joe....Do you believe in mankind?

JOE: Some of it.... (Pause) I feel that parole coming....I'm gonna get me a color TV with a big screen....I'll have you over for a few beers ....Hell...a whole case a' beer....

VINNIE: Drip...drip....What time you figure it is?

JOE: Doesn't matter....

VINNIE: (Combing hair) Maybe the roach'll come back....Think about something...think... drip...drip....Hey Joe? Doesn't matter.... □

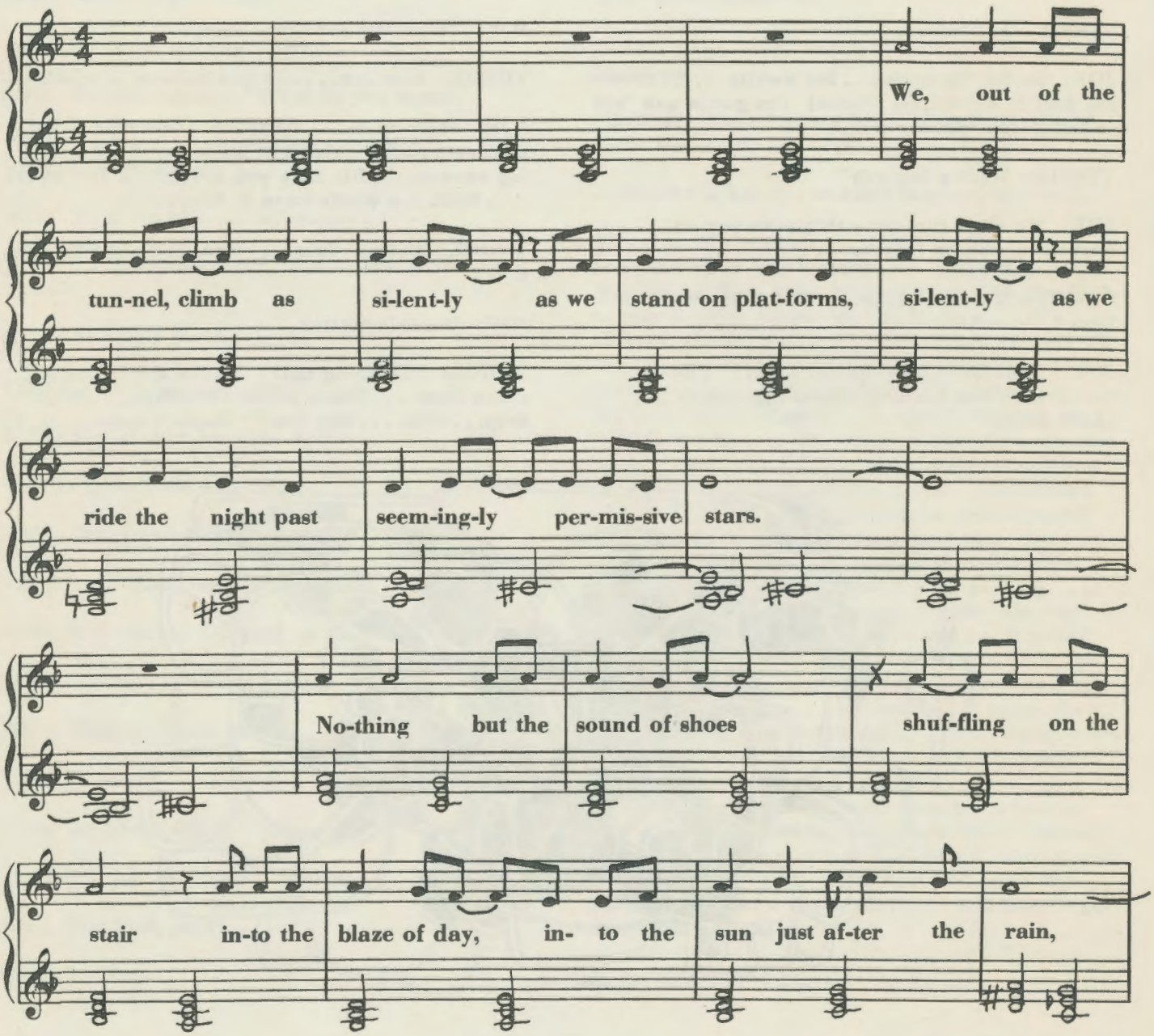


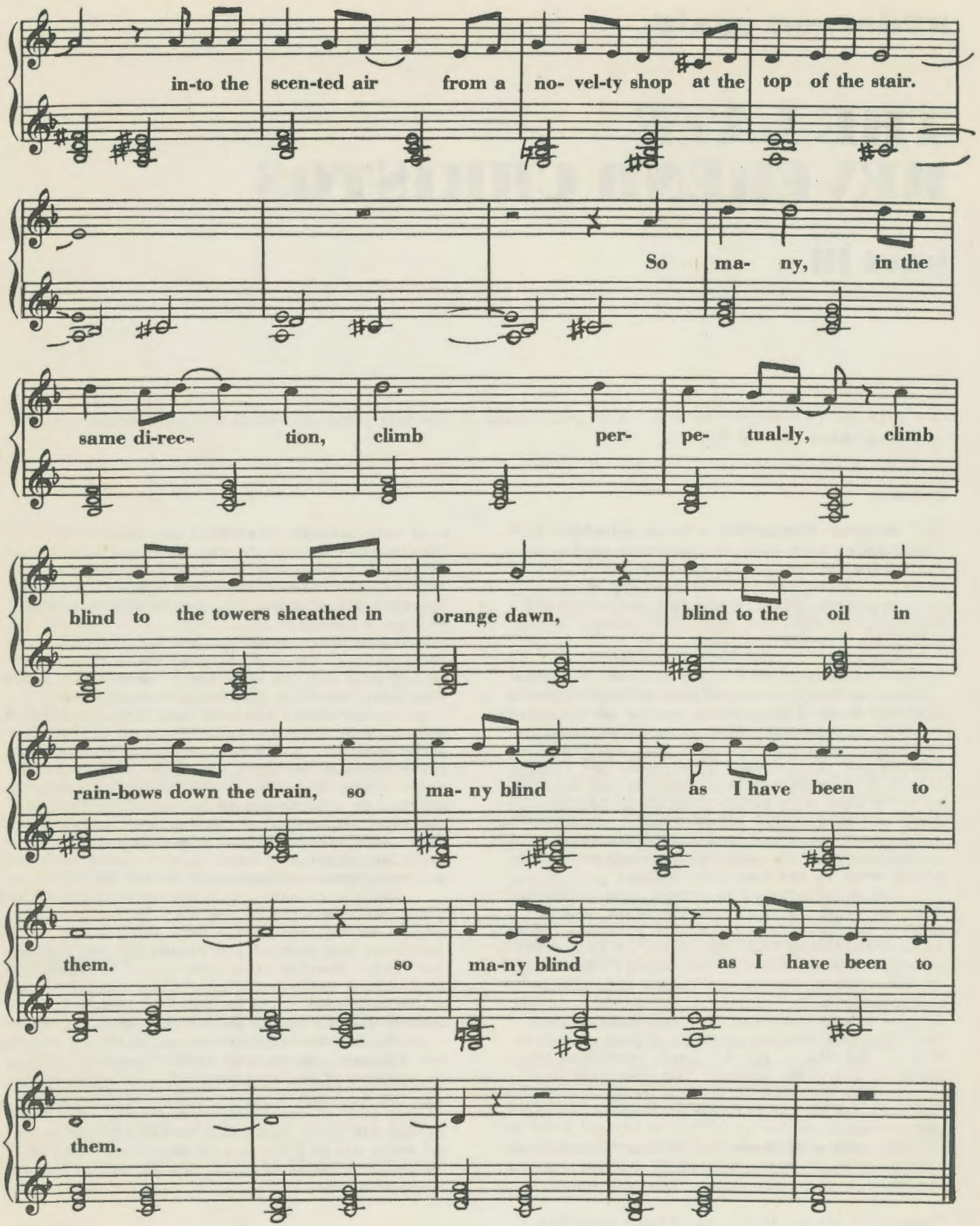
vincent gormley

daniel jahn, music

david ferguson, words

MORNING




in-to the scen-ted air from a no- vel-ty shop at the top of the stair.
So ma- ny, in the
same di-rec- tion, climb per- pe- tual-ly, climb
blind to the towers sheathed in orange dawn, blind to the oil in
rain-bows down the drain, so ma- ny blind as I have been to
them. so ma-ny blind as I have been to
them.

anderson craig

THE LATE REVEREND CHRISTOS

part iii

Our four-part serialization is the first publication of this full-length novel; it will be concluded in the following issue of BOX 749.

SYNOPSIS:

Christos Andreas was a Greek priest of a Roman church in a dying Pennsylvania mining town. The coal mines of Dunham, abandoned with the coming of petroleum, had not been filled in. They collapsed often, destroying buildings and endangering lives, and dark fires burned in old shafts far beneath the town.

One night in the Corner Bar, Christos' adopted mission-post, Nikolas the Nut, a psychological casualty, revealed that all his winter's coal had dropped through the bottom of his cellar into where the civic rhinoceros had declared no old mines could possibly be. Christos installed Nikolas and his pregnant wife Irena, and their little girl Maria, in some rooms in the rectory while he went down to the city to do battle with Edam,"the Marshmallow Rhinoceros." (Christos had invented the name and even the commissioner's political peers now used it, although none knew how or when it had come into being.)

The Rhino stormed in from a late lunch that day. He dimmed a little at the sight of the priest, but rose as usual to the occasion, beaming and bellowing that "Of course it is a grave problem...houses falling into mines! THE HOMES OF THE PEOPLE! But we can't rush into things willy-nilly...."

As always, talking with the commissioner left Christos feeling as if he'd been in a fire drill. The Rhino, for his part, unable to conceive of altruism, assumed that Christos' angry visits were designed to get the city to make some free repairs of the mine-induced cracks in the rectory walls.

So, while Christos was in Edam's office on this particular foray, a crew of workmen sent by the Rhino was in the rectory patching up the wall with thin cement. That this was unknown to Christos was unknown to the Rhino. ("What does he want? A whole new stinking rectory?") Annoyed, the Rhino sent some thugs who left a battered Christos and his jeep stuck in a snowbank on a lonely road.

Harry Riker found him and took him back to the rectory. Christos noticed the mushy cement on his wall and his rug, and it made him laugh to know what the Rhino thought his goals were.

It made Harry edgy the way Christos laughed. Being ill at ease was Harry's normal state. Never a miner, his father never a miner, he was accepted in Dunham even though he could never quite understand when it was his turn to buy the beers. He sold dreams of higher education that the townspeople couldn't afford for their children, who left anyway for Newark and the armed services or for New York. But no other town had an encyclopedia salesman and he was theirs.

There were also other town characters waging their own campaigns of one sort or another... Oliver Borden, nee Willie Szpak, abandoned at thirteen, had hustled and conned his way through his teens. Hearing about the values of education, he invented one--including college, degrees, and a new WASP name. Now he lived in Dunham to remind himself of the people he was better than.

One of the brightest spots in Oliver's life was his ward, Bunny, the sixteen-year-old niece he thought of as "the sweetest little slice of jail-bait in the country!" She feasted on the violet airs of true-romance magazines, for which Oliver was glad, since his verbal appropriation of their style ("You are my thrilliest torrid torment") made it easy for him to seduce the unwitting Bunny.

Other characters include the feuding neighbors, Janowski and Frawley; Mrs. Chairman, Christos' housekeeper; Weltschmertz, his basset hound; the Pangolin, Commissioner Edam's secretary; Dan, the proprietor of the Corner Bar; and the bar's habitués, among them the Prime Minister, a whiskered, voiceless ex-mine foreman who speaks through a voice buzzer; and Jawar, Kossak and many others.

When Nikolas' wife lay dying from a complicated pregnancy, Christos was forced to decide who should be allowed to live, the unborn child or Irena. His calling tells him that "The baby must be born....The mother has already had the blessing of baptism."

Neither Christos' friend, Father Heaume, nor his dioscesan supervisor, Monsignor Maugham, was able to reassure the priest against his growing doubts. No one, it seemed, could help him retrieve the faith he weekly continued to defend to his congregation.

chapter xv

Still the days passed and Irena lay quietly, waiting for the angels. Christos and Nikolas were by now acting more and more alike. But only up to a point; beyond that point Nikolas could withdraw into his cocoon while Christos could only rage about his study and wish to God that he could pray. Sometimes he would even pray for it.

"Dear Lord," he prayed, "if you're there... and if You can hear me...and if you Listen... and if You Care...and if You will...and if You can...grant me this prayer...that I may pray to You." Then he would stop short with a feeling of revulsion.

Still, of course, if there was a God listening one had jolly well better pray and if there wasn't it wouldn't hurt to try. This idea made Christos' soul vomit. At such times he had scant difficulty believing in Hell and understanding the nature of the place. From personal experience he could write a guidebook.

He felt that he was damned, but to what he didn't know. In one of his ungiven sermons he had described Hell as, above all, a lonesome landscape. Not black and red with fire. Colors like that were luxuries of Earth and Purgatory. Hell was a grey place of doubt, hung with the last aching shreds of belief.

He had written that you can't get from here to there in that country. There gets up and walks off before you can come near. And you often dissolves before whatever it was gets wherever. A map of Hell would have only one point. And that point wouldn't be on the map.

After a week of talking with Christos, Harry, too, was nearly distraught. Not that Harry's chances of developing a religious penchant ever got farther than a hair this side of bare logical possibility, but their desperate talks and Christos' periods of holy swearing had had an effect. Harry found old misgivings about his sales activities reawakening--misgivings

that had been laid uneasily away for many long nights. Fine points of blunted ethics presented themselves unlooked-for, re-honed.

"Of course I never use the word 'free,'" he had announced righteously, thumping Christos' desk.

"And if I just up and leave, what kind of shambles can the next priest expect to find?" Christos replied.

"Advertising premiums are advertising premiums!" More thumps.

"Anyway, I can't get out of here while that fat stiff down in the city is still holding out on filling in the mines. I grew up here. If I give up now..."

"Besides, every other encyclopedia in the country--every major set--is sold with just the same gimmick."

"...if I give up now he'll never do anything till the whole damn town falls into the ground."

Harry paused in his thumps. "I mean: 'is sold in just the same way.'" They paused for a moment, caught up on what the other had been saying, and began again.

"But Father, you can't keep it up too much longer if that's the way you really feel. In fairness to yourself. You'll pop."

"If I thought those books of yours weren't doing some good for the kids around here, I would've told everybody I thought you were a crook long ago."

"If you were a layman you could even go into politics, maybe."

"I know what those things cost. Your books aren't even overpriced."

There came another pause. They were compelled to laugh; if nothing else, they had demonstrated that a conversation of sorts can be conducted 180 degrees out of phase.

Along with everyone else in town, both had had a miserable week.

"I never cease to be amazed," Christos took to musing aloud. "People pay us--priests, ministers, rabbis--to tell them what they want to hear about their God. We tell them, and so help me, they believe us!"

Harry learned to say nothing when this particular point was up.

"In any other human situation, proof that a man has been paid to say a thing is impeaching evidence of the worst kind."

Harry would keep mum.

"Even your customers take what you say with a grain of salt. They wouldn't be surprised if you told them your books were solid gold. They'd say, 'Well of course he says that. He's a salesman. He's supposed to say that.'"

Harry would drink his beer.

"They'd be disappointed if you didn't make some preposterous claims."

Christos tried to comfort Harry when he could spare the energy, urging him to look into himself and find what was worthwhile, find comfort in that. He even told him the Parable of the Talents, pointing out that there was (as Harry put it) a flip side to the parable: if you do use your talents, you're crazy to be ashamed.

Harry had taken to driving out alone into the countryside. He often parked on a long ridge, high over the city. From there he could see most of Dunham, all of the city and a few other towns that lay strewn through the valley and salted into the hills. He could see the scars on the earth and black man-made mountains of low-grade coal, smouldering reject of the poor few mines that were still worked. At night he could see blue low-oxygen flames that licked up and down the slopes like hundreds of little ghosts. Their vapors rose against the stars for a little while and then flew off horizontally, warm in the cold wind, to blanket the valley and hills in a veil of soot.

The hills beyond, covered with snow, dotted with dark odd shapes of trees, had from a distance an arctic tranquility. If only for this, Harry could see why the older generation refused to leave their homes to seek work in distant cities.

Backing his car jerkily down the lane from the top of the ridge to the road one night, he swung it around and headed it, coughing, out the road to Nanticoke. The car, a riddled old Nash with the roar and the horsepower of a lion, had been sold to him for fifty dollars and the cancellation of a five-dollar debt by a friend named Bob C., an old-time bookman from the South with red hair and a ready smile. Like most bookmen, Bob C. made hundreds each week and infallibly was broke by payday.

Harry had suggested once: "Bob, why don't you spend five a week for a personal accountant? Then you'll know at least, at the end of the week, where it all went."

"Harry, my friend, I am cut to the quick by such a suggestion," had been the reply. "I refuse to hear of such an extravagance!"

Bob C. had then piled his whole family and Harry into the car and taken them all down to the best restaurant in the city for dinner. At a cost of about fifty dollars.

"I've never been able to decide," Harry had confided to Bob C., "whether people who sell books become big-hearted and oblivious to the value of money, or whether people who are big-

hearted and oblivious to the value of money generally take up selling books."

Harry crossed a bridge and pulled up before a solitary house a mile short of Nanticoke; evening was the time for business. He girded himself for the brief overwhelming he was going to have to do of the unassuming personalities within. His conscience twanged. He knocked.

"Who's there?" came a woman's voice from the inside. The light from the window shone warm on the cold, planked porch floor. Harry often envied the lives of the people whose homes he whizzed in and out of, a euphoria fountain, an articulating whirlwind, picking up three-hundred-dollar contracts as he went. How these people managed to scrape together their payments he had never figured out, but unfailingly they did.

"Well, who is it?" a man's voice called from farther inside.

"Weston Newman," Harry called out.

"Oh," said a fortyish woman, mildly pleased, to her husband, "it's Western Union."

"Hope it's nothing wrong," her husband said with some concern.

The ostensible reason for which most people bought encyclopedias was to brighten the academic prospects of their children. Harry often returned to visit families after the books had been in the home for a year, pretending to make a service call, "Just to see that everything is fine." The real purpose of the return call was that families often rationalized their purchase by selling a friend or neighbor on the value of having an encyclopedia. They would mention the fact to Harry and such hot leads were as good as money in the bank.

"Coming," came the woman's voice from behind the door. (Harry had gotten her name as just such a lead from just such an old customer.)

Harry needed something to do with his hands and eyes when making these "service-calls." He had taken to pulling the index volume from the bookshelf, opening it and regarding it sagely, while the people gushed that the children used it all the time and that Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so were just dying to have a set. They lied about the value they got from the set. As Harry opened the index volume it nearly always crackled freshly--the books hadn't been used.

"Western Union?" the woman said in a puzzled tone as she opened the door to find Harry standing there in a lordly pose, dressed to the teeth. These poor people hardly ever got to speak with anyone robed and acting like Harry, and here was such a person calling on them in their home! But they had worked all their lives for bosses who in turn worked for people who dressed and acted like Harry. When he told them to "sign here," they signed. And it tore Harry's guts.

"Weston Newman!" sang Harry. "My district manager, Weston Newman, has asked me to call on you tonight and not the other night, whichever night is tonight is better. I'd like to see your husband. Is he in?" Whoever answered the door, Harry always asked for the other spouse. That way the one at the door couldn't ask, "Well, can't you tell me what it's about right here?"

"Ah...ah..." she faltered. "Why, yes, he is ...I..."

"Fine," said Harry taking a step forward, handing her his hat and striding in. "May I see him?"

"Who is it, dear?" the husband called from the living room, providing Harry with his straight line.

"Why, I'm Harry Riker," answered Harry. Waving for the woman to follow him, he strode past her into the living room and grabbed the man by the hand. "You're Mr. Gwardowski?" Harry had double-checked the name on the mailbox on his way in.

"Well...yes," Mr. Gwardowski confessed.

"We're engaged in advertising-educational work in the area and we've been asked to drop in on a few families in the neighborhood just to ask a few questions. That's all right, isn't it?"

The man and woman and two of their children looked around Harry for the other person or persons the "we" might refer to.

"Promotional. Advertising-educational, advertising-educational-promotional." He kept up the verbal deluge with little care for syntax and, probably, little need for any.

"Huh?" said man and wife together.

Harry whipped out a black notebook and a pen. He looked very serious. "Aha!" he said. "And how old are the children?" Anyone in a suit who had a black notebook triggered responses of compliance.

"Uh...four, seven and...twelve," the woman answered, nearly mesmerized.

"Er...what is this about, please, if you don't mind?" the husband managed as a last futile gesture to the mastery of his own home.

"About twenty minutes to a half hour, to the minute," Harry sailed on. "There's nothing wrong with that, is there?"

They stood there in a trance. Nothing like this had ever happened to their minds before. Not being able to think of anything intrinsically wrong with twenty minutes or a half hour, they shook their heads "no."

"Fine," Harry said and invited them to sit

down together. "Just like when you were first married," he said, beaming. They smiled unsurely. In three minutes, having sat them down side-by-side on their sofa, turned off their old television set, sent the children from the room, cleared their coffee table, covered their floor with brightly colored posters and broadsides from his briefcase, practically rearranged their living room and talking a blue streak, he had disoriented them completely. By the time they had dimly understood any one thing that he said, he was a few sentences and more than a few jumps ahead. But it all sounded so right! They felt privileged and happy to be there.

Euphoria flowed and the fountain spun. "And we are authorized," Harry proclaimed as if authorized by all mankind, "to place a few sets--a few of these NEW REFERENCE LIBRARIES--in each neighborhood. As AN ADVERTISING PREMIUM. (To those families who can qualify for the program.)"

They sat stunned, their eyes slightly out of focus. One of their little daughters came curious into the room.

"Exactly," Harry proclaimed to the little girl. "Do you know how to go into the kitchen and bring out a Pepsi-Cola?" The little girl looked wonderingly to her parents who turned, dazed, to Harry. "Of course you do," he awarded her grandly with a wave of his hand in the general direction of the kitchen. She left bewildered. Harry knew how to handle a potential upstager.

He turned to the parents again. "Now we must ask you: do you feel the slightest doubt that this magnificent Home Reference Library would be of use and value to you here in your home if we were able to place one here?" This was the crucial point. If they came to at this juncture, it was all up. If not, they were ninety-nine percent doomed.

"If you feel any slightest question, any doubt anywhere in you, the answer must be no. Do you feel any doubt anywhere in you?"

They felt dutifully around inside themselves and found nothing they could identify, without doubt, as doubt.

Their eyes careened from poster to poster, full color gigantic display to full color gigantic display, all festooned about their living room by Harry the Wizard. Everything their glances lit on sang out rapturously, "BOOKS! BEEYOOTIFUL BOOOOKS!"

"Why," they gasped, "why, who wouldn't?" They were done for. "Why," Mrs. Gwardowski breathed, hopping to defend the position they newly found themselves in, "why, for the children. For school."

Now changing his field, Harry tore a prospectus from his briefcase--a distillate volume, bound to look like each volume in the set but containing the best of the whole twenty-two volumes. It contained only exciting articles on easy subjects and most of the entire set's color pictures.

"The prospectus is representative," he revealed to them in reverent tones, "of what you'll find in the Reference Library." It was representative of the whole twenty-two volume set, all right, but certainly not of any one ordinary volume. A fine point to be sure, and if the Gwardowskis missed it...well, there were so many other wonderful points crying out to be made.

Harry had the sample volume spread-eagle on the floor and was jumping up and down on the binding and pouring coffee on it to show what it could take. "There's an actual steel plate in the binding," he crowed, puffing. The Gwardowskis looked on, thunderstruck. Surely so awesomely made a thing must be educational indeed.

Harry sat down and grabbed the beleagured book by one page, whirled it about. Miraculously the page didn't rip out.

"Sewn into packets!" he exulted over the pages.

"And a steel plate in the back," Mrs. Gwardowski murmered.

"Waterproof and scuff-proof." Harry ran a handkerchief down the cover and wiped the coffee clean away.

"Four-color color pictures and maps that don't get lost in the binding," Mrs. Gwardowski exhaled, repeating one of Harry's psalms.

"Educational, promotional."

"Promotional, advertisinal," the Gwardowskis replied.

"Promotional-Educational-Librarial." Harry led.

"Advertisinal-Librarial-Referential," they chanted together.

"HOME-REFERENTIAL," Harry cheered, practically in orgasm.

They paused. Mr. Gwardowski found himself struggling with an urge to say "Amen."

The Gwardowskis' young daughter crept in wide-eyed from the kitchen. "There isn't any coke," she said, barely audible. "There's six cans of Daddy's beer...."

They looked to Harry for forgiveness. "Would you care for a beer?" Harry offered. They began to nod and sway indecisively. "When we're done then," he supplied.

They grasped at it gratefully, "Yes." Their eyes shone with relief. "When we're done."

Harry knew he could start counting his chickens. He told them of the ten-year program they were about to enter into. The set would be placed with no charge. Not "free." That was a bad word. (Local Better Business Bureaus tended to think so too when they heard about its being used.) But as an ADVERTISING PREMIUM. Only the absolutely gratis yearbooks and Reference-Research Service cost a thing.

"Two-ninety-eight a year. For mailing and handling. You know, 'Lickin' and stickin' charges,'" Harry lied. The yearbooks cost two-ninety-eight a year. Postage paid. Plain and simple.

And the wonderful Reference-Research. As long as the program was in effect the company would use its vast research facilities to answer the Gwardowskis' questions, would send genuine research reports on how to lay a brick fireplace through college or get ahead in the world or remove unsightly facial hair or those horrid age spots. And it would cost the Gwardowskis nothing. Only thirty dollars a year, fifty-seven cents a week. For ten years. If it would be any hardship, if it would take any bread off the table (a mere fifty-seven cents?), or milk out of the icebox, they shouldn't.

"No, no, it wouldn't be a hardship." Mr. Gwardowski was very conscious of his role as provider.

"Coin bank?" Mrs. Gwardowski asked as Harry held one up.

"Absolutely. Each nickel you put in here in the slot...here...moves the date up on the little calendar on the front...See?" Harry put in a nickel. His long-outraged insides began to boil over.

"Oh, yes," agreed Mrs. Gwardowski, full of hopeless savvy, "coin bank."

They got to pay for all ten years in only two years if they were very, very good.

"And the company will let us take care of it all in only two years?" Mrs. Gwardowski chanted, enraptured.

"And the bookkeeping costs are credited back to us?" Mr. Gwardowski echoed Harry worshipfully.

"Only if you qualify," Harry pontificated. (A straight three-hundred-dollar conditional sales contract, two-year term. Nobody ever got to take it over ten years. If a family insisted on it and couldn't be "converted" to a two-year basis, they were telephoned the next day "from the Home Office" and told that they didn't qualify for the program.)

"Dammit, No!" Harry stood up, not knowing quite why. "You can't have it!" This could have been the most effective sales technique in the history of bookmen. But Harry meant it.

"But, Mr. Riker, we'll do anything to qualify."

"We'll be a wonderful advertising family."

"Advertisinal-promotional," they pleaded.

Harry grabbed all his posters in a few sweeps of his left hand, stood up and tore his full-color displays with his right. "It's all hokum!"

"No..." they protested. "Educational!" Their minds and hearts nearly burst.

"It's a gyp."

"No!"

Harry stuffed all his paraphernalia into his bulging bag. "A crooked, shyster gyp!" he cried. "The ads I showed you from the New York Times are even crooked. The books don't really sell normally for five hundred dollars. That's only with leather bindings! Look at the small print under the books in the ad."

"No..." they persisted. "You're testing us to see if we're a good advertising family."

"It's a fraud!" Harry screamed.

"No!" they wept in crescendo. "No!" If it had never been clear to Harry that no one can be had who has no larceny in his own heart, it was clear now.

"Free Books, eh? Is that what you want? FREE BOOKS?"

"GET OUT," Mr. Gwardowski screamed back desperately. He was shattered. Harry grabbed his accouterments and stamped to a righteous threshold.

"Free? HA!" He slammed the door behind him.

Tears stood bright on Mr. and Mrs. Gwardowski's faces. Timidly, their daughter came over to them from behind the cold television set and helped them cry. Mr. Gwardowski put an arm around his child and they stood there, betrayed, looking at the absence of Harry. "You're no Advertisinal-Promotional-Educational," Mrs. Gwardowski sobbed to the slammed door.

chapter xvi

Irena died in an ecstatic agony that would have delighted her conscience had there been room in her mind for anything but sheer, screeching pain.

The hospital halls slowly fell silent when it was over. Little sounds that ticked and clinked

found themselves out alone. Then, movement by movement, the bustle of the late afternoon began again, hesitantly as it does when a well-meaning but over-stayed caller has finally gone. After the baptism, Christos, for all the deaths he had seen, hurried down the hallway to the x-ray development room and lost his stomach into a four-foot stainless steel sink. Irena's stillborn was wrapped up neatly.

Jawor and Kossak found Nikolas in the back seat of an old faint-blue car in the hospital lot; he was playing with cigarette butts in a dirty ashtray and saying nothing. It had stopped snowing and grey evening flakes lay on things, cold and dry. Kossak's hand stuck to the door handle for a moment as he got in with Jawor behind him. He sat turned-around behind the steering wheel. Jawor, wool shirt buttoned up over nose and mouth, leaned his elbows on the seat back. They watched Nikolas play.

Nikolas looked up at them for a moment, friendly still, despite their betrayal. Their betrayal and that of everyone else who was simply supposed to see to it that everything like this did not happen.

"She's gone, Nikolas," Kossak told him, making it official.

Nikolas looked inquisitively to Jawor who said nothing, then to Kossak again.

"The baby too. They didn't save either one of them." They didn't have to say they were sorry. Nikolas seemed to absorb the outcome of things. They watched him as he took his fingers out of the ashtray, folded his hands in his lap as he sat back, looked pleasantly ahead and went quietly, perfectly insane. There passed over Kossak and Jawor the impulse to wave good-by. Jawor, who practically never talked, seemed nevertheless to want to do something to help. With hesitation, he stuck a calloused thumb in the ashtray and took over Nikolas' job of stirring up the cigarette butts. Looking down past the ashtray as he sat there like that, one arm over the seat back, he could see Nikolas' heavy-shod feet, thick with mud. He began to wonder where on the frozen hospital grounds Nikolas had found mud to track in, then let the thought go.

Ancient Kossak, only partly present, began to talk of the mines, of days when a strong man could earn his self-respect. When poverty was a sign of unwillingness to work and a man could earn his daily pride with his back. He talked of the days when they had all been younger. When they had crawled deep in the black rock and delivered the coal from its beds. When beams and shorings had broken at times and men had the privilege of dying from the outside in. Jawor's powerful old hand, wrinkled and rough, dug in the ashtray and Nikolas looked pleasantly ahead. A rim of water stood on his lower eyelid, none falling.

An hour later, in the last light of evening, a slight, strawberry blond young man in cordovan shoes took a taxi home. He had just finished his day's duties as an intern and he hadn't even tried asking them to get out of his car. They sat on all the seats and door sills, shivering in the cold. The intern had recognized a voice buzzer in one man's hand and noted that he wasn't bothering to hold it to his throat as he talked. The form of a priest had held a crucifix in one hand and, in his other, the hand of a man who sat absolutely still. A granite-complected figure looked up for a moment, then lowered its snowy head to watch the ground. It seemed to the intern as if eight or nine figures of funerary statuary had assembled themselves in the growing dark. He was very glad not to be one of them.

Inside the monument, a few low voices tolled.

"...trading the present for God knows what. Selling today for what can't even be called tomorrow. Trading it off for 'eternal life'--a tenuous thing that draws on living life for its existense and sucks it dry."

"...then your father---rest his soul---and Ostrowski--they knew that section of the level was going to collapse--they fed that canary dried-out seed and water. So the bird bloated up inside and fell over dead. So the company had to take us all out for coal gas. They thought! And truth was, near the whole end of that section did fall in!"

The dark was complete by the time Christos had finished delivering his last ungiven sermon --his first ever delivered--in a low voice to his crucifix. The Prime Minister continued to explain without sound to Nikolas why Irena and the new baby were gone and yet everything was the way it was supposed to be. And Jawor told them of their days in the mines. They knew it all by heart, but he wasn't supposed to stop on that account. Of what Christos said, no one understood a word. Most of them thought he was praying.

chapter xvii

Dear Father Andreas,

A word with you, if I may, about your duties. That is, about those duties which you

have taken on yourself and those which are yours already but which you seem disposed to forget. Am I right in understanding that there was a morning recently on which no Mass was offered in Dunham while Dunham's priest spent the night and morning in a bar? I hear it was a wake. Is this so? This kind of neglect or contempt for responsibility cannot be tolerated, as I am sure you can understand. There was a considerable number of novenas interrupted that day, as I am more than amply informed.

As to the state of your own conscience concerning the matter, I am sure that you will take or have taken that up with your confessor.

On the administrative side of things, I am afraid that I shall be compelled to take decisive action should such performance be repeated.

I understand further that you are airing, publicly, dissatisfaction with various points of Church Doctrine. May I ask what you are about? Don't you realize that your people need to be able to look to you as a constant touchstone to spiritual stability? They are not equipped to handle such abstruse philosophical niceties as might be generating the problems you seem to be wrestling with now. Are you sure that your fond hyperaesthesia does not mask an indulgence in spiritual pride? Do remember that you are not up there to conduct a seminar with those people.

From what I can gather from Monsignor Maugham, you see death and squalor there and say to yourself that this is real and hence Our Lord cannot care. Then you see the joy of a wedding or birth and lament that it is all so transitory. Pardon me, Father, but are you in a state of theological doubt or in a funk?

You wrote Monsignor Maugham asking, I believe (under the circumstances it cannot be considered that he broke any trust with you), whether it is proper to entertain doubts. What is going on in your mind? Our Lord entertained doubts and overcame them. If doubt and temptation arise that are beyond you, let us know, in Our Lord's Name. We are here to help you. Come to us. (This is not a directive--yet.) If you feel you need a retreat, say so. We'll try to work something out in early spring.

You are there to minister to your people's spiritual needs. There is no question that you will inevitably become involved in their lives to an important extent. But you are not to become so involved as to become part of their problems. Are you giving strength to those people--or drawing it from them? As you may imagine, I have heard from the director of the hospital there, as well as from the civic authorities, concerning your political and other activities. It sounds as if your behavior borders on a breach of the peace.

Try to remember that you are not running for office.

Administer the Holy Sacraments, give your people comfort and let it go at that. You're not to be Apostle to the Coal Fields at the expense of your daily mission.

Yours in Our Savior,
Edward Harrigan, Bishop

chapter xviii

The year turned dark as it died. For days after Irena's extinction, the air in Dunham had for miles around had been hot and grisly, churning slowly and settling out in grime. It reeked of sulphur as if a peeved Hell had lifted its scut and farted out its internal vapors as liberated souls winged their ways upwards. It was the year of the black snow.

A thermal inversion had trapped whole atmospheres of floating filth beneath a high, dense layer of cold air. Daytime visibility dwindled to a few dozen yards, and hundreds lay sweating and gasping for breath. Food spoiled and mouths tasted bitter. Irena had to be buried a day early.

Then the cold came. The termal inversion re-inverted; warm bitter gases parted and high hard arctic air poured down into the valley, mixing like the flush of a pot from an igloo. Harry and his car coughed and choked as he egged it on to its uphill limit of forty miles per hour.

He peered through a frosted windshield, clawing at the knobs of his radio as he drove. What came across as music sounded like a regiment of dying mice; a rhythm undercurrent, cattle having their brains clubbed out. Gratefully, he found a news broadcast. Hands back on the wheel, working at keeping the whole business on the slippery road, he grimaced.

Icy fumes, drifting above the ground at about lung-level, corrupted the snow, making it black, poisonous, sour. Harry thought he had never seen anything so vile.

Harry's car threatened to curl up in a snowbank till Spring. "Oil," Harry promised it. "Oil and antifreeze." Tempted, perhaps, it kept going.

Harry's upper part was warmed in the blast of his new thirty-five-dollar special experimental model car heater, which would ordinarily sell for one hundred forty-five dollars but which he had gotten at that amazingly low price as an advertising premium. His feet grew numb.

Harry ate his liver over his newly re-awakened sense of the unsavory in his operations. He recalled Christos' views on the subject. "Look, Harry," Christos had said, "I told you if you use your talents, you're crazy to be ashamed. If you want to worry about something, help me worry about the mines and the rotten state the people in this poor damn town are in. Or how I'm going to face Nikolas upstairs. I've been dodging him for days." Christos had lit a cigarette which already had a light. "Ever since Irena died, I sneak in and out of here like a frigging thief."

Harry had said nothing.

"Or stand on that chair and read me the phone book while I worry about the Man Upstairs. Look, I'd buy one of your damn sets if the rectory didn't already come with an old set."

"Oh, it's worth the money," Harry conceded. "I might have bought one myself. If they hadn't given me a repossessed set as a prize for selling eight sets in a week."

"Placing," Christos had corrected.

"Huh?"

"Placing eight sets. As advertising premiums. Remember?"

"See? Even you."

Harry had been supposed to laugh. "A joke...ho, ho?"

Harry didn't see it. "If I sell this way, I'm acting a lie."

"Listen, Anus-Eyes, you think you've got hornets in your head! If you can't take it, get out of it. Don't puke your psyche out on me."

Harry took the opening. "If you can't take it, why don't you get out of it and stop puking out your psyche on you?"

Christos plucked an ouzo bottle from his desk and started for Harry. Harry picked up Weltschmerz from the floor and held him against his chest.

A moment passed. "I can't strike a dumb animal," Christos averred, looking past the dog and directly at Harry.

"You shouldn't throw your booze around like that," Harry handed back, pointedly remarking with his glance the half-emptiness of the bottle.

"Only a coward would hide behind a skirt."

The dog, unaccustomed to being heaved around by his middle, broke wind.

"What skirt?" Harry looked at Weltschmerz. "What skirt?"

Christos began to circle.

"Take it easy," Harry suggested edgily.

Christos continued to circle. "Come out from behind that dog."

They stood facing each other for a moment. Christos' arm went slack and he laughed. The bottle hung down at his side. Face straight up, eyes closed, he stood on the floor and howled at the ceiling. Harry began to chuckle, too. He put the dog down and chuckled, looking at Christos whose face had come down from the ceiling. His eyes were open, wet and black, crying and laughing. He tossed the bottle into the magazine rack.

"I've got to get out of here, Harry."

Harry had stopped chuckling. He stood alone and then made his way down to the telephone at the Corner Bar to call an old flame who was never in.

Harry's talents lay in the plausible impossible. The disadvantageous, not the deadly. Peanuts to anteaters, sandwiches to tigers. Benevolent illusions, even if the index volumes did crack freshly when he examined them. Therefore he was crazy to be ashamed. Christos was right, Harry realized. He was not crazy, but he was ashamed.

Now he drove and chewed his animadversions slowly. Among other things to be ashamed of, he was ashamed of not selling a set to the Gwardowskis. He had walked out on his duty. So he ate his liver over that. Reaching the top of the hill he saw the horizon throw up. Down and away before him, a dung hole fit for dung hole rats. Populated by people.

Harry applied the brakes and skidded into the snowbank at the entrance to Nikolas' driveway.

"You sound like Heaume," Christos had said.

"Who?"

"A friend. He told me to get out of it too."

"I didn't say that."

"You did."

"All right, I did. But I didn't mean it."

"You're both right. I should."

Harry regarded Christos newly. "You're going to quit? As a priest? I didn't know they could."

"Not very well. But I'm not. I can't."

Harry wasn't so sure he believed Christos. Though having no faith of his own, Harry had seen what it was. He could see Christos' plight. Stuck protecting others' grip on a faith he had lost himself. A perfect fraud produced by an attempt at perfect honesty. Harry shuddered. At least if he ever got fed up, really fed up, he could always sell shoes.

Light was going from the sky but no lamps were lit in Nikolas' house when Harry got there. Snow blew into drifts against the unwarmed porch and walls the way it does against a shack or

woodshed. Rattles on the door and window panes echoing through the house as Harry pounded brought no response. Still, he had an idea that Nikolas was in there.

"Nikolas," he called. Nothing. "Nikolas." Still nothing. More pounding and rattling on the door. "Nikolas, I know you're in there. Let me in."

There was a pause. Then a voice croaked from the inside, "Mister Nikolas."

Harry went along with it. "All right, Mister Nikolas." No one had seen Nikolas for days.

Another pause. "Mister Riker," the voice answered. When Nikolas hadn't shown up for Irena's funeral, early though it was, there had been a search for him. Bundled up forms by the dozens had tramped cold sidestreets of the town and crossed hills and fields of slush. Dunham had looked like a disturbed anthill as great wooly grubs poked slowly about.

Till now, no one had thought to look for Nikolas in his house. After all, it was miles away and empty, with no coal for heat. No one in his right mind would have gone there. "No, I'm Mister Riker," Harry yelled.

"I'm Mister Riker," the voice mimicked. Wind began to get to Harry through his topcoat.

"All right," Harry yelled. "You're Mister Riker."

There was another long wait. Then, "Let me in," called the voice from the inside. Harry began to know how people he sold books to felt.

"You let me in," Harry replied.

"I won't let you in till you stop hitting my door."

Harry stopped pounding. The minutes went by. It became clear to Harry slowly that he had been had. Nikolas was not going to let him in. He had effectively silenced Harry's pounding without giving away anything in return. But Harry was conversant with cant. "Weston Newman!" he called. His toes started to change color.

"Weston Newman," Nikolas answered imitating Harry perfectly but horribly. Moving things onto the territory of the plausible absurd didn't work this time. Nikolas insane was a native there.

Nikolas came to the door and began pounding, pleading to be let in. "You are in," Harry called, called, nearing exasperation. "Come out!" Nikolas pounded and pled. "Nikolas, you'll die in there if you stay. You'll freeze."

"Please let me in," Nikolas begged.

Harry tried another tack. "Let me out!" he cried. It didn't work.

"Let us in," Nikolas wept. "Let us both in."

"You'll die if you stay in there," Harry repeated. "You'll freeze!" Harry wasn't kidding; he wondered that Nikolas hadn't frozen already.

Then Harry grew. Just a little, but just enough. "You'll catch cold," he warned. There was a long pause with complete silence from the inside. Then the latch clicked and, wrapped and encumbered in blankets, Nikolas came out.

chapter xix

"Well, I've got him," Harry announced, poking his head inside the front of the Corner Bar.

"Where was he?" Dan asked from behind the taps.

"At home." Harry paused for a moment and looked at the old wooden floor. "He says he's been in bed with his wife." The men in the barroom were very silent.

"Well, bring him in."

"I can't."

"You can't?"

"He's stuck." And so he was. Swaddled in all his blankets, Nikolas was wedged into Harry's right front seat.

"Stuck?" Dan asked. All eyes rested on Harry who began to let go his hold on coherent speech.

"In car stuck," Harry explained. "Blankets. Car blankets stuck. Nikolas." Nothing unraveled Harry more than being suddenly called on to explain something to more people than he could look in the eye at one time to judge how he was doing. The eyes on Harry waited patiently for him to reassemble himself.

The Prime Minister put his voice buzzer to his throat. "Well, if he's stuck, let's unstick him," he ground out. Several others rose and followed him to the door, moving around Harry. Janowski began rolling up his sleeves as he went. Seeing that he had gotten his message across in as much detail as he was going to, Harry turned and followed them out.

At Harry's car it all became clear. Nikolas was jammed into the front seat like a great morose pupa. He was nearly prostrate from heat. Harry's new heater had only two settings: Off and Full. Nikolas looked pleasantly at the men who tried to pry him out. For months Harry had propped his front seat up with lumber. The bolts had rusted out of the floorboards and anyone sitting in the front seat was dumped without warning into the back. So they knocked out the lumber, then retrieved Nikolas from Harry's back seat, having to roll him, practically, from the car. Nikolas remained placid. Once he mentioned the name "Maria."

With Nikolas jimmied out and established

at his table in the back, Harry and Dan found time a few moments later to pass a word. Most of the others were still.

"No, I don't have any idea how he got out there," Harry said. "I couldn't get much out of him on the way back. He started screaming at one point."

"Did he tell you anything?" Dan asked. "I mean, can he hear and see you?"

"He didn't say much, but he talks to me. And he looks at me, too. I think it's mostly Father who disappeared. Say, where is Father? I ought to go tell him to stop hunting."

"Way ahead of you," Dan told him, filling his glass. "He must have gotten there right after you left. He telephoned while you were all busting the wood out of the back of your car." Harry picked up an egg and began shelling it. "He's back at the rectory," Dan continued. "Funny you didn't see him on the road."

"Oh, I don't know. I went the long way round and got pulled over by a cop."

"Ya don't say? What for? Speeding?" Dan flashed a broad grin. "I always thought the only speed limit your car could break was a red light."

"No. Jaywalking."

"What? Yeah, sure."

"No, really. Jaywalking."

The light snow was completely gone from the sky outside. Dan reached over to a switch and flicked on the strings of Christmas lights. With the black funeral bunting, they hung over the length of the bar. Responding to several sets of raised eyebrows, Dan moved down the bar and refilled a few glasses, made change and returned to where Harry sat. He picked up a beer pretzel and bit into it, leaning his elbows on the bar.

"That's right," Harry repeated. "Jaywalking."

Dan regarded him, waiting for more.

"What I really got stopped for was running a red light," Harry admitted. "Or a stop sign anyway. But before you know it the cop was grilling me on jaywalking."

"Jaywalking?"

"Jaywalking."

"Where was this again?"

"Down in the city. I came the long way. Didn't want to risk the Long Hill Road. Father must have come up the Long Hill with his jeep. He's got some pretty good snow tires on that thing."

"So how about jaywalking? In your car?"

"No, that's all there is," Harry shrugged. "He hates jaywalkers."

"What?"

"Really. He hates jaywalkers. After I told him my car skidded on the snow he didn't seem to mind me going through the stop sign. He said it could happen to anyone. He just wanted to know if I was a jaywalker. He hates jaywalkers."

"Was he kidding?" Dan finished his pretzel.

"I don't know. I don't think so. He says they're filthy. Maybe it's a problem down in the city."

"Mmmmm."

"I've seen this guy before. When Father got beat up a while back. Maybe you know him. He's got a partner who talks funny. Like he has a mouthful of mush."

"No, I don't know him, but I'll watch out for him if I'm down there."

"You can probably do anything you like so long as you're not a jaywalker. He hates jaywalkers."

"Yeah," Dan replied. "So you said. How'd you convince him you weren't one?"

"I didn't. Well, I did and I didn't. Just when he really got going on it, that was when Nikolas started screaming. I think Nikolas scared him. So I told him Nikolas was screaming because he hated jaywalkers."

"Oh?"

"He seemed to like that a lot. He said he was glad to see citizens aware like that."

"Oh," said Dan, looking thoughtful. "I wonder what will happen to Maria."

"I don't know. She's doing all right for now out at Curley's. Besides, Nikolas isn't that crazy. He was out there alone, sure, but he was wrapped in every blanket in the house when I found him--remember that. He may be crazy, but he's not stupid." Harry's thought changed. "Did Father say if he was coming over?"

"No, I think he is going to stay over at the rectory. He's at the rectory, you know."

"Yeah, you said that."

"He saw your fresh tire tracks and footprints out there in the snow and figured out what must have happened. You want to call him?"

"Mmmmmm," Harry agreed noncommittally.

"He sounded like he was stewing over things --you know, Nikolas, Irena, the fires and cave-ins in the mines and all. He mentioned that Rhinoceros guy down in the city. You know... everything."

"I know."

"That's all I could get, except--I don't get this--he says No Man is hurting him."

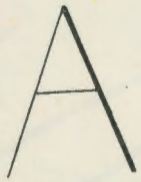
"No man?"

"No, he said it more like it was a name: 'No Man.'" □

With the day and night houses, exaltation and dejection,

This is the way I live now.

No Micronesians committed suicide here,
or sacrificed children



dot

extends, becomes a piece

of white flannel, peach chiffon, or a
gleam of a diamond

in the morning I awake and my head and ears

begin to pound.

My past life is, among other things, a record of various coffeemakers, Packed with smooth muscle, everywhere

This is the season of

PLANETARY CONFIGURATIONS and Crisp romaine

but she eats differ-
ently from anyone else.

magic was accomplished at night, IN ROOFTOP OBSERVATORY

She dreamed as soon as she went to sleep that

no saws were allowed to touch
the wood.

Sherry Miller

richard sloat

NEW YORK

beverlee hughes

IN MY DREAM

In my dream the dead wake.
They open their eyes
to the sound of loss,
to the broken touch
of ones they have loved in life,
to the sad personal splendour
of flowers and prayers.
They smile to test
this fragile resurrection.
Never have they known a thing
so sweet, so beautiful.
They ease themselves out of their
caskets, surprised at their bodies
covered in solemn black.
Then they dance around the room
inches above the floor and because
they have died they know the value
of space and the suddenness of silence.
They move to their loved ones and embrace.
In my dream I am the only one afraid.

michael b. williams

ASSURANCE

"The bathroom light is on the left!"

richard hoffman

FEELING ESPECIALLY: FORM FOR AN EPITAPH

One day NAME was feeling especially
confused, probably because he was quite
concerned about his SITUATION with regard to
his SOMETHING OR OTHER which he
loved more than anything else. The thing

he hated was when EVENT time after time,

making him feel, like today, especially
confused, probably because he was quite
concerned about his SITUATION with regard to
his SOMETHING OR OTHER which he
loved more than anything else.

Gradually, valiantly,
he imagined sense of it,
making a death he could die into
slowly. That was his style.

leroy v. quintana

THE MASONIC CEMETERY

the masonic cemetary
is a special cemetary
where only masons
can be buried

but i assure you
that those lying there
are quite dead,
nevertheless

THE RAIN

the rain
a thousand cats
walking by
together

emilie glen

PROPERLY

Tyranny of tea,
Myra's tea,
American gone British,
She scolds me for the desecration
Of arriving ten minutes early,
Four is to tea
As midnight to Cinderella,

In out of Do your own thing,
Street of sun scraps
I dilate my pupils to tealight
About bibelots
From her lost Devonshire estate,
Tunnel back thirty years or more
To Mary Janes not quite touching the rug,

Before steeping she passed
The Lapsang Souchong around for its bouquet,
A bit like creosote and old rubber tires,
Brew worthy of her Meissen,
Sherry and cheese straws on the side table,
My wrist is slapped with a fan
When I make an unstructured move
Toward the cheese straws,
No no the petit fours with tea come first

Tea served at four yet outside time,
Enter into tea
As into the blooming of a cactus flower,
But you're scattering crumbs,
Spread your napkin instead of rolling it into a ball,
Think yourself into a Chinese print
Like this fisherman sleeping under the moon
In his boat among bamboo shoots,
I slip into the little green boat of child,
And curl asleep among the tea leaves,
Touched by the golden wand of cheese straws

PONYTAIL

Her ponytail swings
It swings
From the stretcher
Borne bier along the boardwalk
Lifeguards in sun orange
Cortege of the curious
Body blue dead
Ponytail
in iridescent strands
Swinging as if she were running along
Who is with her
To catch up her hair
Swinging swinging
A bell on the breeze

stephen dixon

THE KILLER

Falling feet first in the air I get the feeling if I wanted to save myself I could simply flap my arms and fly back to the bridge. Fly in loops and all kinds of stunts around the bridge, in fact. In fact, if I could fly like that I don't think I'd want to die that fast. I'd first fly to wherever in whatever way I wanted to and then die by flying someplace I could only die by flying to. I flap my arms. I start to fly. I fall in the river. But I'm not dead yet. I'm zipping further down in the water like a heavy spear but more like a sleek fish. I don't mind drowning but I wouldn't want to drown that fast if I could swim for a while like a fish. I'd swim to the ocean's floor and see its strangest sea creatures and rock formations and flora and then when I'd seen enough I'd kill myself some way like swimming deep when I knew I didn't have the breath to get back to the top in time. Or else off a huge waterfall to jagged rocks below or I don't know but somehow like a fish when I no longer wanted to swim.

I try to swim and start but stop because I can't and give myself up to drowning, but pop out of the water like a stick and onto my back. Somehow I made it to the top, though I didn't want to. I didn't even want to hit the water alive from the bridge. I wanted to die in the air as I thought people did when they jump from so high a height, as I was sure if the free fall didn't kill me the impact of my body against water would. Maybe the way I fell stopped me from being suffocated in the jump, and the way I landed--there was barely a splash--stopped me from being smashed. But I survived and I'm now unable to sink. This river is near the ocean and this ocean might be depositing a lot of its salt in this part of the river, and that salt bed, if it's called that, might be keeping me afloat. But I could be wrong as I know as much about oceanography, if that is the science that deals with ocean salts accumulating in the river's delta or basin or whatever the right term is for that river area the ocean flows into making it even saltier than the ocean, as I do about aerophysics, if that is the science that deals with the speed of sixteen feet per second or is it thirty-two that an object falls at once it reaches its maximum speed if there are no obstacles hampering its fall.

I let myself go all over as I do when I want to completely relax myself, but I still can't sink. It would be nice, though not as nice as swimming like a fish or flying with my arms as my wings, to float around like this for as long as I want, though only if I was able to navigate myself and at a considerably faster speed. But I am able to float, as I wasn't able to swim or fly, so maybe I should float out to the ocean and somehow across it and then after a long journey down all those foreign coastlines but more realistically down our domestic ones, to find some way to kill myself by floating, such as floating up a river to where the ocean's salt line ends but

making sure when I start sinking that I'm right in the middle of this very wide river so there'd be no chance the current could carry me alive to land.

I try to float faster by kicking my feet but really can't get up sufficient speed to make floating interesting enough to want to stay alive for, so I turn over on my stomach with my head in the water to drown. But by some natural means or I don't know what I'm immediately flipped over on my back. I turn over and try to swim, thinking maybe the force of my strokes and kicks will keep me on my belly long enough to swallow enough water to drown, but I'm flipped right over and floating on my back. Now what animal or insect do I remind myself of and in what environment does this animal or insect's automatic flipping-over movement take place? The closest recollection I can think of is that of a dead fish in stagnant water being prodded onto its stomach by a hand-held stick but once the stick's removed flips right back over to one of its sides. And what science would deal with the phenomenon of my being flipped over involuntarily and when I in fact fight hard as I can against being flipped? Probably oceanography again, if that science I thought dealt with accumulated sea salts and deltas happens to actually be oceanography.

I turn over on my stomach and while I'm being flipped back I gulp a mouthful of water, thinking if I do this enough times I'll have swallowed enough water to drown. But the moment I'm on my back again I cough the water up. I try this maneuver again and again but not even a small portion of water will stay past my throat.

It seems I'll never have my way in this water and I'll have to float like this till one of the river's many boats picks me up or I'm washed to shore. And either way if I'm found I'll be pampered with warm drinks and blankets and eventually word will get back to some newsroom and I'll be made into this dumb folk hero who nature kept alive despite his strongest wishes and actions to take his life, making it even tougher for me in the future to find a quiet solitary way to die. What I should do is backstroke to some remote shore before daybreak comes, get back to the bridge and my car and find some way to kill myself where there'd be no chance I'd survive.

But which way is shore? It's either east or west, if I'm still in the river, or north if the current's carried me past the river points into the ocean. And if I'm in the ocean and swim to shore as if I'm in the river, I'll be on my back all evening without reaching land, always parallel to shore though perhaps progressively further away from it if the tide pulls me that way, and so tired by daybreak that I won't have the strength to backstroke to shore once I sight it or out of range of a would-be rescue boat. And if I'm still in the river and backstroke to shore as if I'm in the ocean, I'll be swimming all night up the river, also too tired to swim to shore once I see it or away from a passing boat. The best thing is to float till daylight comes, conserving my energy for the time when I'm able to see where I am.

I close my eyes. Sleep would strengthen me further and even seems possible. But if I'm now in the ocean I might float too far out to swim back to land. I'll wind up floating along till a boat discovers me or I starve to death. Starving to death seems the better of those two possibilities, but how can I be sure I won't be rescued hours before I'm about to die? Then I'll be rushed to shore and hospitalized till I recover and hounded by reporters and a hero-hungry public and the police who'll want to know what I was doing in the ocean in the first place and how come my car was found by the bridge and several types of scientists who'll want to know all the scientific reasons why I was able to survive my jump and stay so many hours if not days afloat, making it even more unlikely I'll find for the present the necessary privacy to end my life.

I decide to swim to shore as if I'm now in the ocean. That way, if I'm actually in the river and found there before I reached shore, I'll probably be considered no more than another ordinary man saved from a routine drowning, rather than the celebrity I could easily be turned into if I was found floating and dying way out in the ocean. And if I'm really in the ocean, then by backstroking to shore I'll either reach shore, by daybreak be closer to shore than if I didn't swim to it, or somewhere in the river between two shores if I now by some luck happen to be in the ocean at the river's mouth.

To find land, which is north of the ocean, I have to find the North Star. And to find that star I'll have to first find the Big Dipper, as one of the few things I know about the science of astrology is that the top front ladle star of the Big Dipper points directly to the bright North Star. And to find the Big Dipper I'll have to find both Dippers to see which is the larger of the two, because for all I know the Little Dipper might also have a bright star off its top front ladle star.

I float several complete circles, but all I can come up with is a single Dipper. And it

isn't a very large Dipper either, as I remember the Big Dipper seasonally getting, and though I forget if the Big Dipper gets as large as I remember it getting in the summer or winter, I am sure it's one of those two seasons. If the Big Dipper gets very large in the summer, then the Dipper I'm looking at and which does have a bright star off its top front ladle star would be the Little Dipper, which I know gets proportionally larger during the season the Big Dipper does. And if that medium-sized Dipper up there is the Little Dipper in its large summer size, then the bright star off the ladle star isn't the North Star at all.

Instead of swimming to this bright star, and I figure it's a fifty-fifty chance that's the North Star, I take what I consider a sixty-forty chance to reach land and that's to conserve my energy till morning by floating to wherever the tide takes me. By my not swimming I realize I might be reducing my chances of drowning, since if I swim all night I might get so tired that the automatic reflex or survival instinct or whatever it is physiological that's keeping me afloat and preventing me from keeping the sea water inside, might stop functioning. But I float, all the time trying to compensate for the possible decrease in my drowning chances by keeping a sharp eye on the sky for that second Dipper. If I find it I'll be able to make a positive identification of the North Star, follow it to land, if I'm in the ocean, or up the river and then to land, if I'm now in the river or that part of the ocean in front of the river's mouth, and eventually get to my car, if it hasn't been hauled away for my illegal parking by the bridge, and drive it off a cliff somewhere or better yet into an air-tight garage where I'd keep the motor running and asphyxiate myself, something I would have done instead of jumping if I hadn't concluded beforehand that the surest way of successfully killing myself was to jump from the middle off the south side of that particular bridge.

I float all night without locating the second Dipper. The sun rises and I don't see land, but now knowing where west is I backstroke till I'm exhausted in the direction of what, because of the moving sun, is growing to be less of a chance of being north or south.

I hear a boat. I see it, swim towards it, thinking if I get on it I'll pretend to my rescuers that I fell off my own small boat, ask them to let me rest in a private room as I'm feeling ill and extremely tired, and in that room find some means to kill myself--a knife, scissors, piece of glass which if it isn't broken I'll break soundlessly, a sheet to hang myself with from a pipe or a sturdy hook overhead if they have one.

I get within a few yards of the boat and yell for help. A man sees me and runs to the front of the boat. The boat slows down, turns around, a rope is thrown to me and I climb onto the deck. The men who help me up speak a foreign language I've never heard. They pat my back, rub my hair, kiss my cheeks, crowd around me. A man who wears what looks like a captain's hat runs to me from the front of the boat and throws his arms around me, lifts me into the air and grunts and smiles this tremendous joy at having rescued me. I thank him and place my hands under my chin in a way which in my country means I'm sleepy. The captain nods and speaks to one of his crew. The young man goes below deck and returns with a trayful of food. "No no," I say. I yawn and close my eyes dreamily and snore, which have to be international sounds and signs. The captain says "Ah oh" and sends the young man below deck again. The man returns with bottles of whiskey and glasses for us all. The captain raises his glass to me and says something and they all slug their drinks down. He puts his hand over my lips to stop me from drinking to the first toast, but to the second, fourth and sixth I'm allowed to drink. Then he escorts me to the pilothouse, points to his wallet and gestures he'd like to see mine, and begins speaking into a radio set, the only words I understand being my three names roundly mispronounced.

I yawn and stretch my arms and mime a man lying down and plumping a pillow and sticking the pillow under his head and pulling a blanket up to his shoulders and falling asleep, and the captain at the end of my act says "Ah oh" and sends the young man out of the room. The man returns with dry clothes and sandals. I put them on and sit in a chair and feign dozing off, hoping they'll be as nice as they've been and carry me to a room so I might sleep more peacefully. A blanket is tucked around my body. I hear shushing sounds from the men in the room. After about a half hour of this I stand and beat my chest to show I'm fully awake and inhale very deeply as if I'd like some fresh air and open the door so I can perhaps find some way of killing myself outside this room. The captain shakes his head and finger as if he understands what I want and I'm going about getting it in the wrong way. He walks me to a water closet and then to a sink to wash my face and hands and next to a table where he orders breakfast served.

After breakfast the captain takes me to his cabin. He points proudly to many photos on a wall. One is of the captain and a very handsome woman in a wedding dress arm in arm. Another

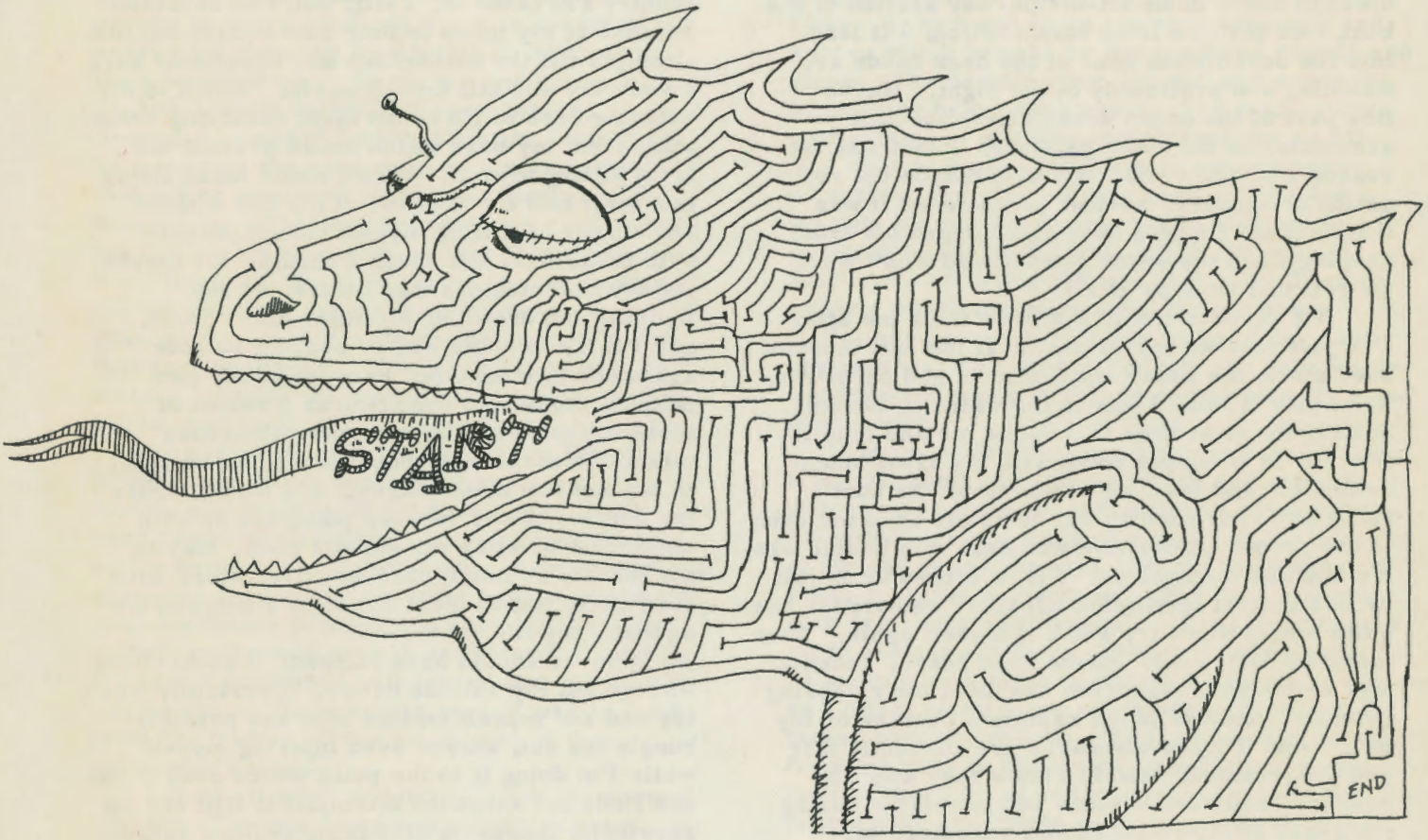
of four beaming children sitting on the grass with the captain and handsome woman hugging one another behind them. Another inside a frame bordered with black ribbon of the captain and pretty woman and four children sitting on the grass in front of an elderly couple who are kissing one another's hands.

The captain offers me the top bunk, a brandy, pulls curtains over the portholes, gets into pajamas and bed. In the dark he says something in his language which I suppose means goodnight or pleasant dreams. I say "Goodnight and pleasant dreams" and the room is silent. Only the boat's motor can be heard. For now I'll just have to think and then sleep. Later in the day I'll try and find some way to take my life. A sharp fishing knife to slash my wrists and slowly bleed to death in an out-of-the-way section of the boat. Or if there is no such section, I'll leap into the ocean when none of the deck hands are watching and preferably in the night. Maybe this part of the ocean doesn't have the salt accumulation the other part had, if that was the reason I couldn't sink. Or else maybe the reflex action or survival instinct or whatever it was that kept me flipping over and stopped me from keeping down the water I swallowed won't work so well this time or at all.

But suppose one of the crew finds me after I've just slashed my wrists or at the last moment sees me in the water and jumps in and saves me. Then they'll know I was in the water to commit suicide the first time they found me and they'll lock me in an empty room with my arms bound behind me and take me to wherever the boat's going or to my country but certainly hand me over to the proper authorities who deal with people who try and kill themselves. I'll be locked up in jail or in a mental institution till those authorities are quite sure I won't try and kill myself again. That might be for weeks, maybe even years, because who knows what standards are used for releasing potential suicides in the captain's country or my own. And if these standards are currently fair and progressive, how do I know they won't be reversed and even become retrogressive during the years of my confinement, meaning, for example, that what would release me today if let's say I was interned for the same reasons five years ago, might in the future because of the increasing harsher standards get me ten years, fifteen, maybe life.

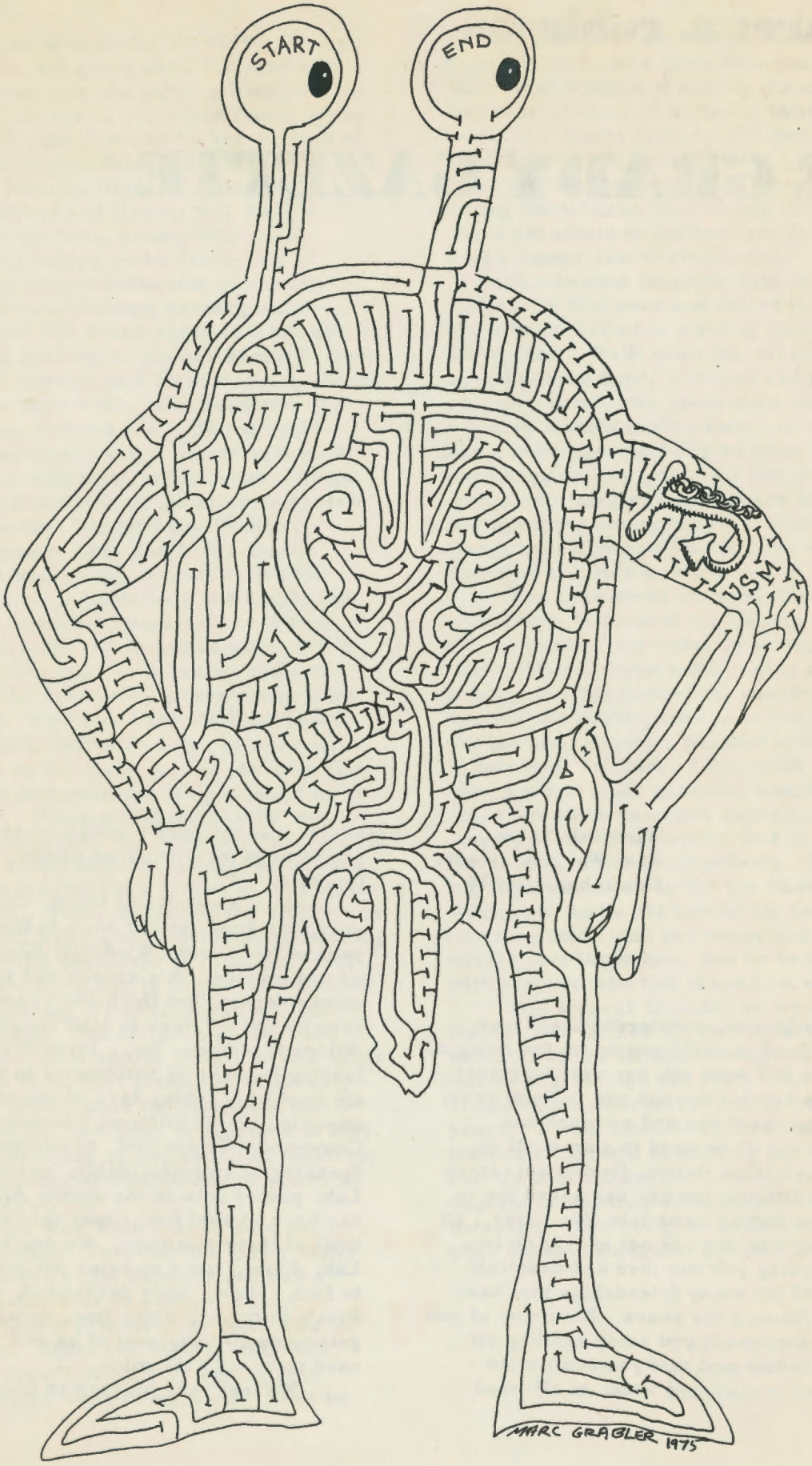
Or suppose I manage to get away in the water without anyone seeing me and another boat comes along and rescues me no matter how I try and avoid it, or else I get so sick from starving to death or frightened of being mauled by sharks I see or irrationally fearful of sharks I think I see because of the hallucinations that come to someone starving to death, that I signal that boat and it rescues me and the new captain learns I jumped off another boat and possibly a bridge and I'm locked up and later handed over to the proper authorities. Or else this new captain might not learn of my previous attempts and I again try to commit suicide by slicing my wrists or jumping overboard and I'm discovered with my wrists bleeding or saved a third time from the ocean or else they don't see me in the water but for the same reasons of sickness, sharks or good seamanship I'm rescued and locked in a cell till I'm handed over to the proper authorities who deal with people who repeatedly try and kill themselves. No matter how liberal the standards are in whatever country I'm taken to, I still won't be released because of my three to four consecutive suicide attempts till the authorities are absolutely sure I won't try and kill myself again. Which in my extreme case might mean them removing something from my head which would prevent me from killing myself. Which would mean living in a total hell for the rest of my life without any chance of killing myself though perhaps with occasional dim ideas I should. Or maybe the brain operations won't work, as my jumping and drowning attempts didn't work, and I'll try in some way to commit suicide again and this time fail because of my own panic or weakened condition as a result of those operations. Or else the authorities might detect through their tests that I'm going to try and kill myself again, and they'll order the doctors to cut deeper, pump me up with chemicals or alter my genetic code, leaving me for life as much dead as alive, more dead than alive, but at least not alive enough to try and take my life.

I never should have jumped. I should have worked out my suicide better. I certainly won't try and kill myself on this boat and possibly bungle the act, maybe even injuring myself while I'm doing it to the point where even if no one finds out about the attempt I'll still end up physically incapable of making another suicide try. What I have to do first off is contrive some foolproof excuse as to what I was doing in the ocean. Another as to why my car was left near the bridge. Others to cover the possibility of my footprints being found there or my being seen on the bridge. And once the press, public and authorities and scientists are done with me after I get to land, I must resign myself to living a quiet, modest though noticeably content life until the next time I try.□



marc grabler

MAN AND BEAST


START
END
USM
MARC GRAGLER 1975

margaret a. robinson

THE GRADY GAZETTE

Windyhill Farm
East Wapping, Mass.
December 1, 1975

Dear Friends,

It seems like only yesterday that I was taking pen in hand to catch you up on the doing of all the Gradys and send you our very warmest wishes for the holiday season and the new year. As usual, time has flown and so much has happened that it will be hard to sum it all up, especially since Miss Burns, Herb's secretary who types the Gazette for us, has asked me to squeeze all the family news into five pages. Of course sharing our news is not nearly so important as sending you our love and heartfelt appreciation of the many friendships that have sustained us through the years. But many of you have told me how much you enjoy reading all about our activities and that you don't mind receiving a mimeographed letter at all--and really it is the only solution since our list has grown to several hundred names. So I will do my best.

After a wonderful family Christmas last year, the year settled down to the more usual pace of life around Windyhill Farm during the winter months. It's always sad to have the chicks depart, but Herb and I have plenty to keep us busy. Herb is still Chief Designer for Wilcox Machines, Inc., loves his job and is looking forward to retirement in two years. I am kept busy taking care of the house, the animals, the Fulfillment Committee at the Community Center and, of course, Herb. Speaking of animals, Sahib, our five-year-old Lab, placed fifth in the spring AKC show and has been to stud four times this year, siring a total of forty-two pups. We don't show our other Lab, Flora, but a sweeter pet you couldn't hope to find. Hund, Ian's dachshund, and Ruffles, Rita's kitty, are doing fine, though Ruffles is getting on like the rest of us and isn't what she used to be with the mice.

We feel very blessed to have gotten

through the year with no family deaths, though Auntie Boo, Herb's great aunt, his mother's sister, is failing and in a nursing home now in Concordville. If any of you would like to write to her there, I know it would do her a world of good. The address is Miss Elizabeth J. Hooey, Concordville Nursing Home, Concordville, Mass. My mother and Granny P., Herb's mother, are both doing wonderfully well. Granny P. still enjoys scuba diving and is making an impressive collection of abalone shells. The Miami College oceanographers have been out to see it and say it is most unusual. Living next door, Mother keeps in close touch with our family, and we have her to dinner several nights each week. Her favorites are hash and creamed dried beef. She is active with the Golden Agers and recently went on a shopping spree with them to Cranlotte Village, where they took the tour of the historic church and lunched at the Olde Moo and Whistle.

Last summer Herb and I went on our annual trip to Ishpeming, Mich., to see his brother Al, who continues hale and hearty and still runs his own mink ranch with only two hired hands to help. Herb and Al got in some good trout fishing and I took twelve rolls of color film. The black flies weren't nearly as bad this year. We came back via Canada and Mackinac Island, where Dad was so nervous about parking on the ferry that he let the clutch out in reverse and caused a little damage to the car behind us. Nothing that their $500 deductible wouldn't take care of. A wonderful trip. If you're in our area, stop by and see our slides.

And now for our little pieces of immortality. Our oldest, Pris, is busy being a full-time mother to Dirk, Alice and baby Mikey and caring for their beautiful new home in Medford. Her husband Steve's specialty is Digestive Diseases and he is increasing his practice as well as teaching at Tufts. The children are an ever increasing joy. Dirk enjoys Kung Foo and Little League, Alice is in first grade and is already taking ballet, Mikey uses the potty just like a little man, and the new baby is expected in May. In addition to bringing up her beautiful children, Pris writes a gourmet column and is active in the Junior League.

Ian and his wife Ruth will be here for Christmas as well. They left the girls, Buffy and Joanne, with us this summer and had a wonderful ten-day tour of Europe, partly business and partly pleasure, as Ruth took in Paris, London, Rome and Madrid while Ian inspected his firm's factories, seeing just exactly how things were being done. Then he applied a little of the design sense he inherited from his Dad and a little American know-how to their weak spots and usually managed to increase production by ten to thirty percent. Buffy is a fourth grader, tall like her Dad and a good reader. It looks like she got her mother's teeth and will need braces. Joanne earned her Guppy Certificate, and in only three weeks. She's not afraid to put her face in the water and really knows how to stay under.

Our second daughter Rita is a senior at the University this year and called last night to say she's been invited to a young man's home for Christmas. We'll miss her terribly, but as Kahlil Gibran says, children are arrows and the parents, bows. We shoot them out into the air and they come down we know not where. Rita had a hard time deciding whether to major in psychology or religion, but has compromised with elementary ed and a minor in comp lit. She spent the summer as a counselor at Camp Okeynopohoh in New Hampshire, where she had plenty of valuable experience.

For reasons of his own, Christopher has asked to be left out of the Gazette this year.

Freddie, our baby, is taking the year off from Beloit College and is doing a "Bob Dylan trip," traveling around the country with his kazoo. We don't know where you are this Christmas, Freddie, but God is with you and so is our love. Freddie's last work rotation (they have a work-study program where the youngsters get some practical experience instead of staying in the ivory tower) was in a hospital where he worked as an orderly. Freddie is a big boy, was a tackle for the East Wapping Warriors, so he did lots of the heavy work, turning people with bed sores and the like. The nurses just loved him, and he became expert with patients who had passed on.

And so dear friends, as we gather around the oak fire (a tree we lost in last winter's ice storm; Dad cut fireplace lengths), we send warmest greetings for 1976, America's bicentennial anniversary, from our hearth to yours. I wish I could respond individually to all the notes that will be coming in, but be assured that we look forward to hearing from you with eagerness and that we treasure every card and message. May the glow of Christmas shine in your hearts throughout the year.

Yours very truly,
for the whole Grady family,
Marge

rick smith

OLD MAN IN EXILE
(apologies to baudelaire)

The sun sweetened your yellow hair
and before your decorated shoulders,
the people froze
in the position of prayer.
You are an old man now;
the wings of madness brush close
at your neck.

The time was April.
Flags slipped in and out of the wind
like the faces of your dictators.
You were young then,
you believed each in turn.
From within the thickness of your brochade,
questions of balance arose
like wild northern geese
and left you
light as air.

Only now do you follow yourself
down to the coast where you sit
and watch Argentina grow pale.
The cold moon is edging
across the Southern sky
in a revolution
you can count on.

LENORE'S POOL
(LM)

To an antique child,
sky gazer,
reaching through creases.

When you bathed your old body,
your arms came from nowhere;
you gathered yourself
toward other systems.
You invented other sides
and lay in the sun.

You were a waterfall.

karl krolow

EMPTINESS
translated by david neal miller

To cast your glance
upon a green or red chair.

Cat smell of the eucalyptus.

Two eyes already see
too much in four corners.

Slanting light: graphic
of a surviving wall.

Silent film with
stuffed birds
stalked by a
stuffed marten.

No end after death.

The draped mirror
tries unsuccessfully
to call me back.

d. f. petteys

LIKE THAT ROBIN

Like that Robin cantering everywhere
over the grass
on two legs,
quartering the lawn
and questing the damp
for worms
driven by rain
to surface,
I scurry too--
head cocked
and popping eyes aglitter,
helter-skelter after you!

HEXAGRAM FOR BOXING THE I CHING

H E X A G R A M
H E X A G R A M H
H E X A G R A M H E
H E X A G R A M H E X
H E X A H E X A
H E X A E X A G
H E X A X A G R
H E X A A G R A
E X A G A G R A
X A G R A G R A
A G R A A G R A
G R A M H E X A G R A
R A M H E X A G R A
A M H E X A G R A
M H E X A G R A

john r. hall

A FINE DISORDER

Tonight he rides on windows
watching lovers
collect arms and heads.
He draws dirty pictures
on the face of leaves,
cold air turns his skin light blue.
At times
you can hear him scratching notes
on white chunks of breath,
notes like tiny branches in a woman's eye.

TONIGHT HE RIDES ON WINDOWS

This is the summer
discussed oddly
between the earth and sun,
punctuated of birds.
The fine disorder
of piles of leaves
piebald with a kick.
And a neighbor
who had brain surgery
and studied birds all his life
walks to his car backwards
because he's moving furniture.
Only the broken coffee cup
and the cracker crumbs on the floor
seem right
in this odd summer of me.

HOW COULD THE WIND

How could the wind,
on occasion to traveling,
make such a nuisance of leaves?

In my yard
according to the joy
of washed windows
a million parades
of nature
prepare for rain.

alan britt

I HOLD THIS MOMENT

I hold in my hands this moment
of crushed oak seed;
knowing it can never dig
its future roots
into the black voice
under my flesh
before the heron flies
from dead oaks,
and all forever lost
having never seen
the thin-legged star that shivers
on November's forehead.

ONLY DARKNESS

I do not own a shape
only darkness
on my fingers
as I watch the outline
of ferns
crawl
up the bottom of a white wall
and twist seeds
from my dead language

SOMETIMES....

I have heard you say

A jar of water on the table
where a pelican stands:
a bent shadow

What no one desires

Sometimes your body a flower twig
behind an opened window

That is why cranes fly
through the bones
sometimes a poem appears
sometimes I am on the verge
of poems...

paul roth

THE STRAGGLER

The obedient teachers will come,

will pull away from his hands
the solution to the pollen in a rose;

one by one
will pluck the thorns become of his fingernails,

and pull away from his hands
whatever death there is to answer for his name.

silvia scheibli

JUNE

The sun makes everything invisible.

By afternoon my eyes are grey stones.

Nothing remains except the smoke
surrounding the fig trees. There are

blisters on the bark -
summer's teeth marks.

I hear strange humming; either

flames in the sand are spreading rapidly,
or the jimsonweed flowers

ignited.

david kastin

THE BHIKKU'S FIRE

The fire makes a hole in the night
and blows the leaves above in storm
-- all around it is still.

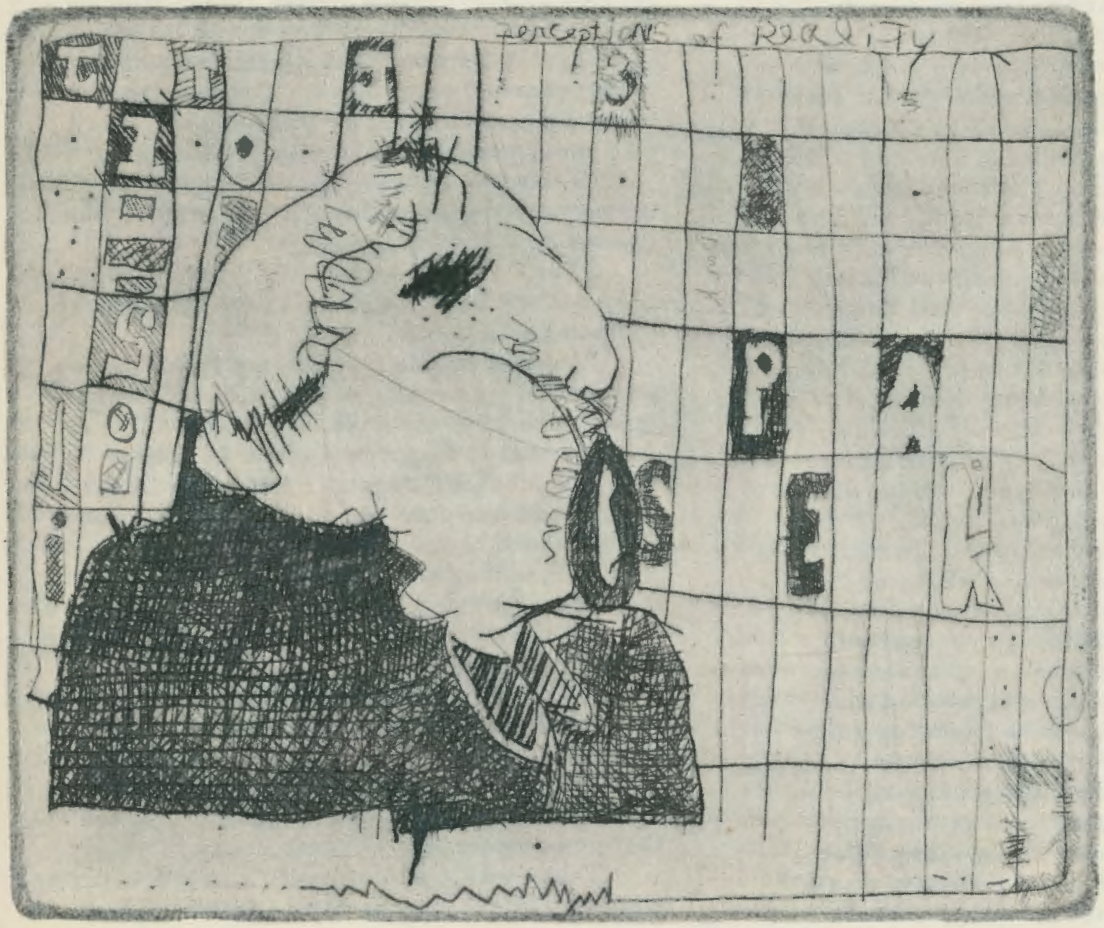
HYDRA

on this island
streets are set
hard and straight
as a fish skeleton
combing back the sea waves
curling the surf
from its pale neck. Greece, 1973

julie gaskill

CAROLINA AVENUE

A child, and handlebars held like a shield
against this summer roadside scene:
both of the broken cars gone,
some curious people lingering.
Through the night this chipped glass formed
like an extraordinary lichen on the oily street,
and the thin little pools are blood-red springs
that sprouted before the morning's heat--
the child looks up as though for rain
(the air sweet and heavy as old burst fruit)
and winds his bicycle through glass grains
either he or birds lightly whistling.



jay de voe

janet campbell hale

WAPATO

Lilli Lee hated the city, hated the apartment, hated the junior high school she was forced to attend. It was the third school she'd gone to since last January; the other two were in Oregon and she'd liked one--the big one with all the Italians in Portland. She wasn't sure exactly why they moved around so much. It seemed they were just drifting around all the time from place to place like they had no real roots, no real place that was home, but that was not true. Their roots were very old and deep. Their roots were on the reservation back in Idaho. Idaho was their real home.

No place was ever right, ever, no matter how much it seemed like it would be. There were always things very wrong with every place they lit. Lilli sat watching the rain outside hitting the pavement, not listening to her mother's ranting and raving which was so usual it was hard to pay attention to.

"By God," her mother vowed, pacing back and forth with heavy steps and wringing her hands, "I wish I could leave. Just up and leave. Right now." Although her parents were well into their fifties and married for thirty years still they often separated and threatened to divorce. This had been going on all of Lilli's life as far back as she could remember and seemed a normal occurrence. Her mother was saying now how if she had the money she would go get on the bus and go to Wapato. Wapato was a small town just over the mountains where Lilli's married sister lived. Wapato, Lilli thought, was a very pleasant little place, located on the Yakima Indian reservation. If they went there then they would be out of the city. Lilli would have friends again, a place where she belonged. There were other Indians in Wapato, lots of them, not like the white-black place they lived now.

"I have some money, Ma," she said. The money was meant to buy her a new coat when the weather got bad.

"You? You have money?" her mother asked suspiciously. "And where might I ask did you get this money?"

"I saved it, Ma. From my lunch money, you know I've been on a diet and not eating lunch. And I thought we might need the money, that it might just come in handy!"

"Oh?" Lilli's mother fell quiet in her pacing and her puffy face looked thoughtful. "How much?"

"Oh, about twenty-five dollars and thirty-two cents."

"Well, Lilli, I just don't know. I wonder how it would work out?"

"Just fine, I'm sure." Lilli's father was gone at the time, out drinking again which was the reason her mother felt like leaving.

"Okay. Let's get packed up and leave. Phone the bus depot, will you, and find out when the next bus leaves."

There was a pan of baked chicken being kept warm for dinner in the oven. Lilli wrapped

several pieces in aluminum foil and put them in a brown paper bag to take along. She was going to be glad to see the last of this place.

"What are you doing?" her mother asked accusingly, nearly shouting.

"Wrapping some chicken to take along. You know, in case we get hungry later."

"Always thinking of eating," her mother said tiredly, disgustedly, in an I-give-up tone of voice, "always thinking of stuffing your face." She shook her head sadly. But later, on the bus that night, as they were crossing over the mountains, Mrs. Lee ate heartily of the chicken her daughter had brought along.

It was daylight when they reached Wapato and already the day was hot, almost uncomfortably so. They didn't know exactly where to begin looking for Andrea. Mrs. Lee sighed. "First let's have breakfast," she said and they went looking for a place that was open, Lilli carrying two shopping bags filled with belongings, her mother a large, battered, brown suitcase that was secured with a belt fastened around it because it would stay closed no other way.

It was in the cafe that they found Andrea, waiting on tables. She was surprised to see them. "What are you guys doing here?"

"We left again," Lilli answered. Her mother glared contemptuously at her and she was sorry for having answered. They ordered breakfast and when it was ready Andrea came and sat with them in their booth and drank a cup of coffee.

"So, what are you going to do?" she asked her mother slowly.

"Oh, I don't rightly know, Andrea. Get a job I guess," Mrs. Lee said, looking into her dark steaming coffee.

"I see," Andrea said. Her mother was in her mid-fifties now and the only work she had ever done was the scrubwoman and chambermaid sort. That was years and years ago, though, before her back and knees got so bad. Andrea didn't look well. She'd just started her shift an hour or so before but she seemed tired and worn-out already.

"Why did you leave, Ma? What was it this time?"

"Oh, you know, the same old stuff. Only worse now that he doesn't work steady any more. He has more time on his hands these days--more time to think up insulting things to say, more time to drink and perform around. No more of that for me. I am through. I have had it!"

"I see," Andrea said quietly. "Well, Ma, I've got to get back to work now." She looked up to the big electric clock on the wall above the door. Almost eight. Andrea gave directions how to reach her place: down across the tracks, turn left at the crossroads market, down the graveled road there to the cabin court at the edge of town. The baby was at the babysitter's cabin, the first one as you turn into the court.

"It must get high, paying a babysitter," Mrs. Lee commented.

"Yes."

"Well, now I'm here. I can help out and watch her for you."

"Yes."

"Dear, are you alright?" Andrea's face seemed pale to her.

"Yes, mother."

"You don't look well at all," she looked worriedly, searchingly across the table.

"Truly, Ma, I'm fine, really. Now, go on, you two. I've got to run. See you around four, okay?" She smiled and stood up from the booth, ending the conversation.

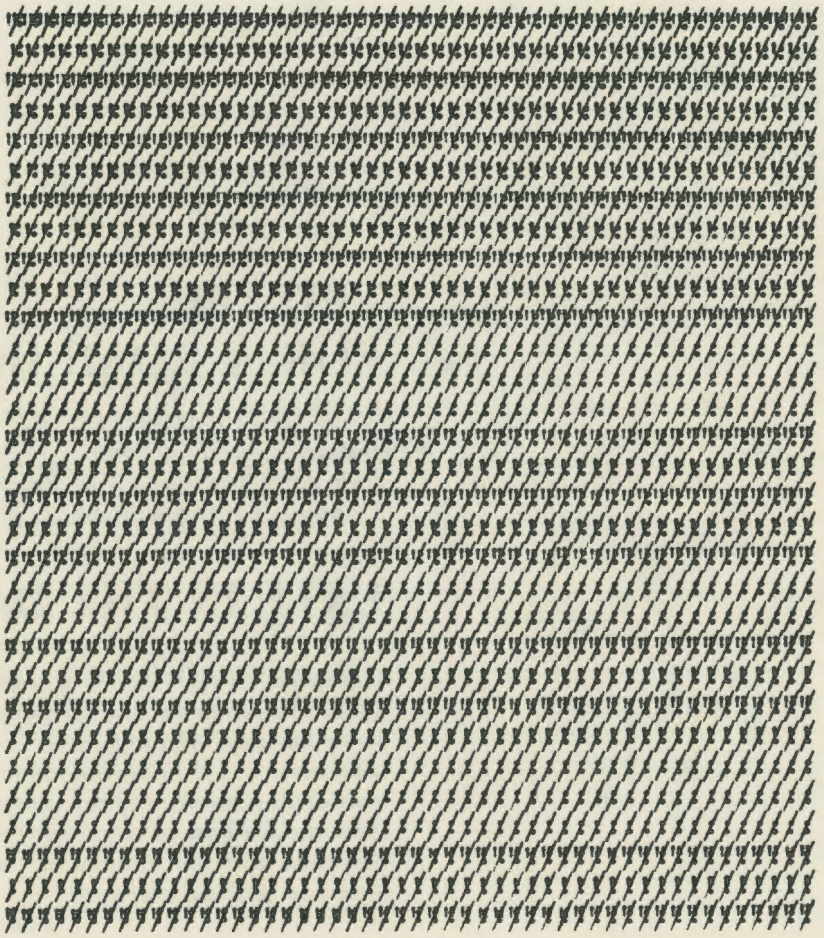
It was a long walk from the cafe to the cabin court and very hot; the shopping bags became heavy and the handles cut into the palms of Lilli's hands. After they crossed the tracks and passed the potato packing shed, open fields could be seen--brown, plowed, empty fields stretching two miles or more to the new highway, orchards of peach and cherry on the other side; and beyond them rose the high, yellow-red velvet hills. The valley was a big produce center, irrigated former desert land of fertile volcanic ash. The air was still and dry and hot and fresh. Lilli Lee put down the bags and breathed deeply. The air smelled good.

"Hurry up!" her mother called, not stopping, not turning around, but continuing on. Her mother walked fast and Lilli could tell it was with a great deal of effort. Lilli picked up the two bags again. She was sweating by now. The sun was really beginning to beat down hard. She hurried to catch up with her mother.

The cabin court came into view now, about half a mile more on down the road. That would have to be it. The court consisted of six small, recently whitewashed cabins looking to be probably one-room affairs, with tarpapered roofs and small porches. Tall trees rose up around the circle of cabins offering a lot of shade. There was no grass anywhere nearby, only dust, thick and dry and white. Several dogs lay sleeping near one of the cabins. Lilli wondered how much hotter the day would become.□

betty bressi

ALHAMBRA



jerome clifford nathanson

PENGUINS IN SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
did heretofore declare
that pompous, pedantic penguins,
in pompous, pedantic air
would have the right
to cluck all night:
this I swear.

Moravian mobs
in sweaty underwear
imparted their views
& heard the bad news:
no franchise for them -
Central Europe was in deep despair.

Be a penguin, be a man:
that I can foresee.
But a penguin's not a man
not thee, not me,
not for all Saskatoonians in the world!
I'm pompous & pedantic,
& I swear,
that, penguins there
have more in common with posterity
than Moravians in obloquy,
lions in their lair -
to this, you might agree,
& find a tune or two,
a zephyr,
in Saskatchewan, cozy, there.

tom hansen

ANOTHER END

The rising sap runs down.
Summer's gaudy girls are gone.

Winter's first white
Breaks light and dies.

Windy footprints.

The peace of ice,
Peace of the frozen thirst.
The benign indifference
Of the mute brooding earth.

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

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e     s     e
  d   u   d
    i i i
s u i c i u s
    i i i
  d   u   d
e     s     e
```

EPITAPH FOR A ROAD HOG

Walt, you mouthy old coot,
Button up and be done.
I've got a few poems of my own
I wouldn't mind writing.

LATE IN THE DAY

O gentle foreign queen wrapped in paper,
I am sitting here slightly drunk and
very hungry, hoping I can let it be but
wondering if this is the moment to do
something I will regret tomorrow.
The mouth end of my cigar is almost
obscene and the bottom of the orange
juice is getting chewy.
The sincere
radio lady sings to me, "I could live
without love if I never knew your name,"
and I think I'm finding out.

norman moser

ANTHEM TO ITCHIE

So we jus kept on goin,
payin no mind to d fish-scales
broken glass, broken hearts
ear-scratching noises
miles & miles & miles
of concrete strips,
steel buildings,
when
all
the
dancing
globules
turned,
at once
consumed
the dancing elephants
the burning gnats

Then
the toothpaste tubes in town rose up,
filled all the billboards
hereabouts:

NO FAIR EATING PRESIDENTS!

harland ristau

IN A MENU OF DARKNESS

now he could twist himself to that one shape
mattering in the void.
a circle, and in soliloquies, he would ask
Do zeros need light, love or gods?

only the echo of words hung
on the roof of his mind
and he remembered the words of Jesus
Feed my zeros.
so he went out collecting dreams
from primitive ancestors
and tamed himself to an uneasy silence.

dennis romeo

WERE I BUT ONE MEASURE CALMER

Were I but one measure calmer
I would call myself field,
low, through a loon's throat,
and that unmeasurable
parallel, abstract, would
stick as light as winter
willow sap
sticks to the wind.

LAST NIGHT I SEDUCED THE OPERATOR

Last night i seduced the operator
she called me from a long distance
to ask for my number
of lovers i said hand over
the parts you took from my body
i miss them i got to make a call
my heart is rotten from desire
i need a doctoress some information
a pizza the time forget it
this is an emergency honey
give me anesthesia
give me amnesia
hang me up

guy r. beining

ONE-TIME FIGURE

he was to me
to be
wisdom,
great-boned earth wonder.
now a star gazer
I sit perched on some crowsnest
pretending to love meteors
because they fall with power
& no disgrace.

CONCRETE DREAM 410

universe taken from stolen dictionaries
across the street
from no liberty
I wearing someone elses hands
the skull reminds me of
my grandmothers resting place;
keep a little more ointment in the corner
for the flies to honor death.

CONCRETE DREAM 269: HONED THING

women like you have
religious order,
bordering on ice pick witchery,
and so kindled on your bed,
the young, lean, meat, fissures,
fusions, blaring, ball-eyed truckers
looking for muck and gardens of mud fields
to get obsessed with, letting the splintering,
bamboo click of your heels spike
between their ribs, gouting out
a mad assemblage of bones.
the carnal hunt is on as your taste
reams them of their souls;
pages burning in their flat ears.

NUANCE 1

Fall accosts
the spokes of sunlight
and sour skies.
a fortune in
loose leaves
Open letters
smeared words
in trout light
distant rains
pocketing qualm.

UNHEALTHY KNOWLEDGE

i'm ta king the
machine apart
eased out of the brain
onto ta ble
a black box
the worlds confusions
having eaten enormous vowels
& the porridge of victorian verse.
all hemmed in/
the plastic flowers wave
in their extra health
of todays cursed weed.

LOST IN DISCOVERY 26

the worms said
no to me
that day
i between
the cold tracks
of lies
& puddles
from the night before.
they wanted clean toes
& a better smell.

ernest larsen

BAKUNIN AT THE BEACH

1 The twilight trans-Switz express rolled slowly into motion. Glancing up from his mug of coffee where the flat circle of steaming brown liquid swirled incessantly under the pressure of his gaze, still Bakunin waited for it to gather sufficient speed. The station began to spin away from his attention as his body focused intensively on the train. He swung his leather bag under his arm, grazed his chest pocket to assure his fingers of the safety of his Italian passport-- F. Culpa, wine merchant--and trotted out, dropping en route a few bits of soiled linen before the jaded eyes of Inspector Dupin. As a gust of his unfaithful wife's favorite perfume lunged at his wide Russian nose he leaped the car's steps to her outstretched arms. Their lips met, their long hair merging in the windstream. The station retreated. Locarno was but 100 kilometers distant; the Bakunins were on vacation.

Inspector Dupin extended his cane, speared the items and after a moment's examination tossed them gingerly into the wastebasket. His cane rejoined the crook of his elbow and he drew out a small notebook and a pen to scribble some new bits of information, just in case.

2 From X's diary:

12 August. Before my very eyes Bakunin in walking shorts, purchasing saltwater taffy at a stall.

18 August. A sound sleep at last! S. confides in me more and more. Asked me into w. c to view through the open garret window B. in walking shorts, devouring steamers.

19 Aug. Our paths cross on Vida Street. I north B. south. His beard trimmed.

22 Aug. The mosquitoes! Bakunin.

23 Aug. S. at last! I bear in my waistcoat pocket--the one without the hole--a tiny pair of tangerine underdrawers! Bakunin at Versailles Cafe, hands flying, at table with small woman, evidently his wife, her posture that of a seated mannequin.

26 Aug. All right I couldn't resist the temptation. But this much was unexpected: he repeated to me, a complete stranger, his secret plans for an extended period--I couldn't quite tell how long.

29 Aug. S. has suddenly become very cold. My searching looks produce an indifferent response. On my way I met B. in the street. He was alone again so I asked him more about his group. He told me its name but I've forgotten it.

30 Aug. I sat outside, not my habit, in case he passed. I waited all afternoon till very late.

3 A manservant opened the door and they led B. ceremoniously through an arched marble entry to a monstrous table laden with food, and politely begged him to choose. Outside Louis Philippe was already banging his sword on the gold-embossed door of the banquet hall. Don't anybody let Louis in--he makes an awful mess every time. Unperturbed, B. said I want everything, in a voice loud enough to startle the footman. After dining he sat on the veranda over a fresh copy of Jules Verne's Android Attack:

> Bursting through the steel-plated doors of the outer world which gave way like ice cubes in a fire we hacked

our way toward the city with our automatic scythes and cudgels. In a mass the populace quit their gruesome tasks driven to a frenzy by the electrical shock of the metropolitan broadcasts and fled to closets and cellars. Stripped, the city fell and we caught it and squeezed its entrails until the populace spurted out and lay steaming on the frozen turf. The sight set us retching.

4 The sun sits on Echo Lake, a hole filled with water. Bakunin, shading his eyes, is in his study sitting on a pile of the Encyclopedia Britannica, waiting. Tina walks through the house shutting doors behind her, thinking of her child and whether the marketplace is still open.

In particular I remember everything that could have happened. I was aware as no one else of the potential for imminent revolt, cycling and recycling my capabilities for collusion, interference, conspiracy, resistance. Functioning the while as a local synapse for the propagation of spectacle. After all that thirty years, animation has resulted in leisure, the motion of individuals precipitated to an underequipped sensory apparatus.

5 With a tentative glance Cafiero showed me a recent English review after breakfast yesterday --cheese Danish and café au lait. Red ink hemmed one long article. I discover someone's produced a novel in the tissues of which I am embedded. Big cheese. Self-deceiving con artist. The book structures Russia with blankness, dread and snow. A land strewn with fanatical student bombtossers on the low walls of whose tiny garrets appear ikons fervently lit in homage to Saint B. The damage I inflict on far-off youth held comparable to the manipulation of good pornography. So the article draws out the story. Stalked into Locarno by a double whom no one who knows me could recognize-- I'll now be recognized by all who don't know me once the novel makes its expected wave. Thinly disguised. The novelist who, it says, writes English with the most painstaking slowness, evidently possesses the talent to glean the lies from a field of golden rumor. An alternative me washes on shore to soak up my dissonances like an acoustical sponge. While I live at least it eases my conscience. It makes a case for me without my effort. Enriches my leisure. When I die maybe it becomes more dangerous. But I'll outlive it.

6 Everyone in Locarno sleeps. Bakunin puffing a little is climbing Beech Mountain in dead of night, stumbling through darkness, tripping over timberbrush. His hands reach to grip a jutting rock. Feet hurting, lederhosen torn, he is aiming for a view of Echo Lake at dawn.

7 Moving with gravity the cat took his moment calmly, interrupting my view of the words. I arrested my hand--raised to shoo--for the sight of my black fingertips. The cat sat, his fur brushing the fresh ink, awaiting the moment to lay. His tail curled this side of my coffee cup. When my other arm dropped the paper relaxed and the cat flattened out. The waiter set the blue-plate before the man at the table across who started to part the peas from the carrots with his knife and fork. The cat blinked his eyes and fell asleep, blocking most of the page.

It says that the Czar has closed the Sunday schools again. The notice sieves B.'s memory and butts against the long hiatus in his career occasioned by his years of imprisonment. The Peter and Paul Fortress.

No other torture was so _____ as the strappado. My gloves are courteous enough to hide the scars. Once each night if I am able to fall asleep a creeping sweat bathes the hulk of my body. I take the attitude of a suppliant, fingers pointed to the heavens. My head spears itself on my sharpened spinal cord. The Tsar asks only for a complete _____, Michael. Grant him renewed belief in Tzardom.

8 Cafiero came in out of the sun holding before him a bad-smelling fish that he'd found. I murmured something about my allergies, my lack of appetite, my aversion to most seafood. He insisted. I took his hand which smelled powerfully of fish, but my senses betrayed me. All at once I didn't remember what I'd intended --how my impulsive gesture was to give shape to my lack of emotion. For the first time in my life I thought of the problem that gifts represent. He said Tina was waiting for him so I let him go. The greenish-gold fish lying on the wicker rocker was decidedly anomalous.

9 Panslavism is no longer as popular as it once was but in days gone by nearly everyone of a real "political" spirit was in some sense a self-acknowledged panslavist. Bakunin, the most ardent panslavist of his time, overflowed its boundaries early on. Bakunin's panslavism subsumes spontaneous offer of Panslavian leadership to benevolent torturer Czar Nicholas. Anarchism rising to the surface, still disguised and disquieted, still bubbling.

10 Bakunin in his wicker rocker the weight of reverie in his stomach the occasion for escape from the present moment to the exhilaration of the past once provisionally felt present. Burning again, the city sent yellow smoke to the sky and the streets were dense with it. Herzen fingered the unsigned appeal, waves of nausea at the fried eggs detached on the plate. The undersigned respectfully. Overcooked and adorned with grease the eggs bore a contingent relationship to food. From an aerial balloon they were rice paddies in China. The smoke clung to our clothes our flesh tasted acrid and gritty. The smell hit Bakunin as he stood waiting his turn to descend the gangplank. Three months now from the mouth of the Amur, from West Siberia. We here-by dis-associate ourselves from all programs of random terror.

Still steaming Minister Plehve's sledge a blackened rubble and the sooty snow melted about it left a horizon perfectly circular. Melting from the heat aboard the transcontinental express from San Francisco expecting to be encircled by Sioux. A shopwoman nearby tearing yardgoods with her teeth was startled by the sound of my boot striking the cobbles. After stooping for a handful of snow I gripped the charred door the snow sizzled and the door slid off smacking to the ground. Keep off there you. Actions of this sort are sheer self-willed fantasy, Herzen says, picking up his pen. Lead article.

As I descended the gangplank and the city stretched out before me the darkness gathered and flung torches the size of courthouses into the air. The firebombed official buildings facing each other's flames at the end of the street lit my way toward Herzen's office. A raw youth elbowing stacked copies nodded out and sagged into a dream and the firebomb cover sketches stretched across the floor sliding

THETHEBBELLTHEBELLTHEBELLBELLLLLL.

And in Italy.
All quiet.
And in Austria.
All quiet.
And in Turkey.
All quiet everywhere, and nothing in prospect.
And what of the fires in the street.

These bombings spell nothing but repression, disaster.

I walked ten thousand miles through the streets to get here. There is fear in everyone's face and they are all wondering what the future will bring.

Things are going to get much worse now.

I don't believe it. These bombings wash away the grayness in the streets. Everyone's pushed themselves closer to the verge of living. They can use their fear. They all long in their hearts to set up the barricades.

11 He'd find his goggles and his snorkel and his old black bathing suit with all the holes in an old trunk and go down to the lake. He'd take off his clothes and forgetting the goggles and snorkel and old suit paddle out further and further until the dark swallowed him up.

12 In throes of despair--legs crossed--he catches himself in absent stares--his haggard wife big with child in a corner sleeping fitfully --the Swiss innkeeper athwart a chair propped tight against the wood door--but he sits scribbling long pleading exhortatory letters under the gaslight. Any short-term loan. His strength flickers as he regards the innkeeper's stiff cucumber fingers. He glances enviously at Tina. The swollen sac breathes with a life of its own. He loves her feverishly. The red sign above the door flares briefly. Various little stratagems suggest themselves but they all require assistance and there is no one else in the room.

13 Bakunin writing a letter in a code of his own invention, the handwriting a broad scrawl.

I've been following the cure faithfully--off to the baths every morning--lost more than two kilos--but my fretfulness only increases as time slips away. Many friends have shifted into town and I have made contacts among the workers but all hands concede that the possibilities for meaningful action are at the moment exceedingly slim. Nevertheless I have divined certain frail stirrings that discontent may be more widespread than those closest to the source are able to perceive. The air is fraught with portents. In the last four months a severe inflation has sliced real wages to a tenth of normal. Half a loaf decimates a day's pay. My senses inform me that any extra burden will topple the bridges of "rationalism" over the blue lakes of desire. I am convinced that a revolt is in the wind and my confederates are ready for a swim. Write me of my comrades in Geneva.

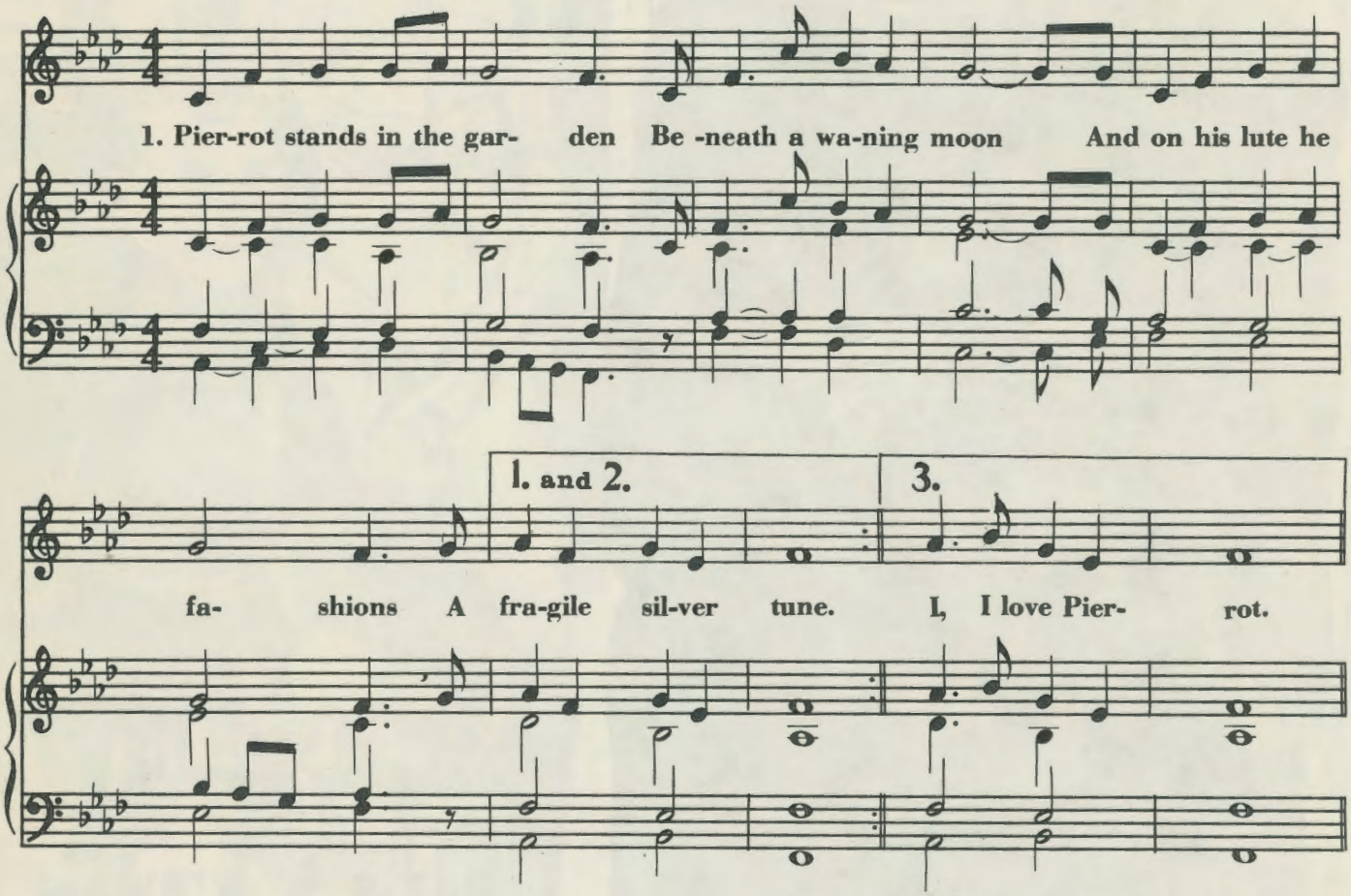
This new code substitutes a color for a noun. Replace friends with greens, town with blue, contacts with reds, workers with browns, etc. Bakunin writes the code out and encloses it with letter in the envelope, seals it with a slap of his tongue. Yours.□

patricia eakins, melody

sara teasdale, words

PIERROT

arranged by melvin derwis



2. Pierrot plays in the garden,
He thinks he plays for me,
But I am quite forgotten
Under the cherry tree.

3. Pierrot plays in the garden,
And all the roses know
That Pierrot loves his music
But I, I love Pierrot.

nicholas sperakis

THANATOS

per olov enquist

THE ANXIETY OF THE LOYAL SOULS

translated by jan ring

Many of these loyal souls are gripped with anxiety when they think they are abandoned by their masters and protectors. They happily imagine that the hand of the powerful will also follow them in the kingdom of death. Their confusion when they see themselves alone is as touching as it is comic.

--Bismarck

I

Persistently Herr Bachmann was rescued back to life.

The first time he had tried the wrists. Afterward he had curled up on the bed with his back to the door to hide what had happened, but the blood had run down onto the floor and someone had looked through the small window in the door and thus had exposed him. Herr Bachmann, they had said when they found him, we can do nothing but reproach you for this. This is intolerable, you must consider what you have done. While they hastily put temporary bandages on his wrists, he lay very still and gazed at the ceiling. They were very efficient. He had the feeling that the guards liked him and wished him well though they now had a reason to reproach him. He liked hearing their voices; they mumbled to each other while they took care of him, a woolly gray mumble which was nice to hear because he was freezing.

They had always been very friendly. At first they were friendly because he was a sort of celebrity and had been in all the papers and because the event had caused edginess and political rumbling. Then, too, he had the feeling they liked him just because he had fired those three shots at Herr D and nearly killed him. Herr D was, to say the least, hated by all who were not communists. After the first indignation had calmed down and it turned out that Herr D had survived and that consequently Herr Bachmann could not be considered a murderer, everyone was much relieved. Also, he thought, they liked him because he behaved well in prison, had never been any bother. This of course was before the period when they had to keep saving his life, often under difficult conditions.

In the beginning, during the first months after the shooting, everything had for the most

part gone well. The air had been full of voices which were somehow friendly. Although out there, in the so-called freedom, everything had been chaotic, inside himself he had been calm. Indeed everyone had said to him that to shoot Herr D had been very stupid, but they had said it in a friendly way and he wasn't quite sure whether the criticism had been seriously meant. At night he had been given sleeping pills and had slept heavily. In general he had no complaints. All of the newspapers in West Berlin except Spandauer Volksblatt, which was more vindictive than the others, but nothing to reckon with, had, to be sure, taken exception to his "desperation born out of the wrath of despair," but had done so in a cultured and understanding manner.

A lot of letters also had come to hand. Many complimented him for his direct, albeit altogether too desperate, demonstration of opposition to those who were trying to undermine the resistance of West Berlin--the free city--to communism from within. They wrote this straight out. To stand up against a rascal like D, who without any consideration for the divided city's exposed political situation shamelessly propagated his ideology and would certainly be willing to do service as a Trojan horse, meant that Herr Bachmann's actions were at bottom an expression of civil courage--or so many letters seemed to indicate. If D and his ilk wanted to live under the benevolence of communism, then they could very well flee over the wall of shame, that wall which was called with unveiled cynicism by those living on the other side "the anti-fascist rampart."

The letters had been friendly and very encouraging. Then there had been the trial and the sentence. About that there was nothing to say. The guards had continued to behave amicably and correctly, though now at perhaps more of a distance. Also, time had passed quickly. After about half a year the encouraging letters had ceased. It became relatively quiet.

After chaos, silence--that was only natural.

Then the leftist letters had begun.

This was an altogether new type of letter. Young academics in West Berlin's leftist organizations had started to write to him. They had got hold of his address somehow and had somehow got the idea to write to him. Presumably they had received further instructions from Moscow--or so one of the guards had humorously suggested to him.

One couldn't help being curious about what they wrote, so he had read the letters. In the beginning he had read these leftist letters with a certain amused attention, since he was interested in what these West Berlin Stalinists (he would not put it otherwise) had in their hearts. After about ten letters he comprehended the situation clearly, and then in a way he had had enough. They were only interested in waving their own flag, though he had to admit he was surprised at the mild tone in the letters. They did not lay the blame for the attack on him alone. In various ways they tried to blame the

invisible forces and factors of power which were to be found behind him. That in itself was nice enough of them, though he had seen through their tactics: apparently they were making ridiculous attempts to win proselytes even here in prison.

The most interesting letter was doubtless that which came from D himself. When he saw who the sender was, Herr Bachmann could not help feeling slightly upset. It was not conscience or regret or anything like that. It was simply nervousness. He let the letter lie unopened a whole day; then at last he read it.

D of course had a special view of the event. One relief was that he didn't seem to feel any personal rancour against Herr Bachmann--not in this letter nor in any that followed. His reasoning was otherwise rather difficult to follow; it was thoroughly academic in a manner typical of dreamers of this type. In the first letter he had gone in for a very particular and involved argument which had its origins in a newspaper article containing biographical information about Herr Bachmann. This article claimed that Herr Bachmann had lived his whole life on a one-sided spiritual diet, that he was so to speak nourished and brought up on the Springer Press, Bild-Zeitung and anticommunism, and that in his room had been found pictures not only of Napoleon but also of German leaders from the recent historically controversial period. In an interview his mother had intimated that anticommunism had become for him a matter of conscience. In itself all this might contain certain truthful elements that could not be completely denied. But it was certainly a mistake to draw such extensive conclusions from it. To be sure, from that side the world was usually seen in terms of black and white, and quite without regard for the human element. However, he had quite independently made the decision to shoot D and had been wholly conscious of the sacrificial nature of the act. It was necessary at some point to put a stop to the activities of these groups.

He had nevertheless answered Herr D with a shorter and much more balanced letter, but had then of course received an even longer epistle back. This one also was written in a very friendly manner and had contained many lines of thought but was naturally of little factual value. After only a few months Herr Bachmann was desperately tired of these leftist letters, their analyses, their attempts to explain his actions. They gave him insomnia--he just lay and mumbled to himself and stared at the ceiling, stared and stared and heard how quiet it was starting to become. He then stopped reading the letters but it was too late. It was as if a heavy resounding silence were spreading out even more inside him, taking increasingly more room. It was so strange. He just lay and listened inwardly. Utterly dead silent words and sentences rotated like a wheel of fire within him and he became more and more nervous.

And so the months passed.

Thus it was not until fifteen months after the attack on Herr D on Kurfürstendamm that Josef Bachmann began his persistent suicide attempts. Just as persistently he was rescued back to life.

The second time he had tried to cause inner bleeding: he broke a razor blade in pieces and swallowed them. He did it while he stood in the shower. It had been unbelievably painful. He had begun to hemorrhage, but they got him immediately into the hospital and there was never any danger to his life. Unfortunately the only tangible result of this act was that the wound in his throat developed into a very painful ulcer which took a long time to heal. Using a razor blade, he realized later, had been completely worthless. Also, the guards had time after time criticized him sharply for it.

He had hardly recovered before he made a third attempt. He had made a rope, twined and braided from a pillow case, and tied it securely to the window. Under the window he had placed a chair and had got up on it with his throat in the noose. He had then kicked the chair away, but unfortunately he had misjudged the height. His feet reached the floor so that he half hung, half stood. When they came rushing in a quarter of an hour later he was, however, unconscious. He was a pitiful sight--half strangled, shrunk up like a gunny sack. They rushed in and cut him loose; he lay, eyes shut, as his face slowly became pale again while they blew the breath of life between his lips.

Then he came to. He didn't even need medical treatment. Despite this they were very critical. Herr Bachmann, this must stop, they said sternly to him. This will not do.

When death was no longer so close, had withdrawn and left him alone, something like peace was resurrected within him and he became very weak and still. Then he was like a child. For several days he was cared for attentively. He seemed calm and apathetic. Then everything became as before. By the eighth day he had made a new attempt, which was extremely primitive and seemed to have

been made under the influence of an altogether uncontrolled despair. Late in the evening he got abruptly out of bed and rushed at the wall headfirst. This was done with great force and he fell deeply unconscious to the floor. He managed to give himself a concussion but came round. Several of the guards tried to talk sense to him but neither friendly words nor reproaches seemed to have any effect on his melancholy for more than a few minutes.

And then a week later a letter arrived for him. At the time he was being kept strapped down to avoid new incidents, to give his bed-bound body a chance to return to a healthier condition and to give his shocked and injured head a few days of rest. The prison authorities --who were now obliged to check his mail to prevent any more destructive, psychologically disturbing political letters from reaching him--found that this letter was completely different from the others, was harmless and could perhaps even be useful.

The writer was an elderly woman living in Kreuzberg, one of the poorer working-class suburbs of West Berlin. She had enclosed a photograph of herself. In the picture she was smiling, almost captivatingly, and her hair was put up in a bun. It seemed to be gray. In the beginning of the letter she claimed to have read in a newspaper an article touching upon Herr Bachmann's melancholy and his repeatedly demonstrated wish to curtail his own life. She therefore expressed a desire to involve herself, to clasp this opportunity (the language of the letter was good but not entirely correct) to address him as a fellow sufferer in distress. The hand of God stretched even to those who found themselves inside prison walls, and she was determined to come in contact with Herr Bachmann and to bid him listen to the voice of love in the midst of darkness. Though she did not consider herself to be a conventional believer, the commandment of love was important. She herself, she wrote, had suffered in many ways and understood the meaning of suffering. And, she added in passing, "not until in what is probably the evening of my life have I rightly understood that suffering is not laid upon my shoulders to expiate my guilt but to punish my innocence. Punishment befalls the innocent; suffering therefore feels just--in this way do I bear my burdens."

The letter was thoroughly read. Despite repeated analyses the prison authorities could find nothing in it which could be considered harmful. The letter was given to Herr Bachmann. He read it and answered it the following day. Thus began the long correspondence between Josef Bachmann and Hildegard Meckel.

II

They brought Frau Meckel to the madhouse on November 22, 1969 and only five days later she wrote her first letter to Herr Bachmann.

She wrote it by hand, sitting in the common room. The letter was written in her usual round open schoolgirl handwriting; she had written in this style her whole life and it had never changed. This she knew with certainty. She had kept her earliest diary--the one with the brown cover with a label from a jam jar pasted on it--which was written in exactly the same style despite the fact that it was more than thirty years old. The letter to Herr Bachmann, written in that same handwriting, breathed consideration, optimism and empathy. The term "madhouse" she herself used in the letter understanding full well that the term was misleading. She went voluntarily to the mental sanitarium in order to gain time for contemplation. Just before Christmas of 1969 she was released.

Frau Meckel's need for peace and contemplation was fitful.

On the twenty-second of February, 1970, she went in again, this time for two weeks. In May, in again, out the twenty-second of June. So variable could be the warp of life. The shuttle of destiny wove the thread of life. In her letters she found words for both resignation and hope, but the term "madhouse" she used only in the first letter to Herr Bachmann. From then on she went over to the word "home." Actually she experienced the "madhouse," or "home," as a "free city," a refuge during those short periods when life's swells sent her there ("and when the waves of life carry me to this shore...."). She often used metaphorical expressions of this sort in her letters--for example, "my oasis, my little island in time's bubbling current."

Frau Meckel, born in 1910 in Breslau, was sixty years old that winter. West Berlin she had found to be an asylum whose center contained an even more protected retreat called "The Home" or "The Madhouse." From the innermost of these asylums she sent letters to friends in the outer asylum. Letters were her way of expressing her reflections. So it was that Josef Bachmann received her letter in the wake of his suicide attempt: carefully he read her reflections, heard in the bare cell how

silence thundered within him; her words and the way she put them together sounded foreign and mysterious, as if she spoke from another world. Nevertheless he sat down, he answered and thus it began.

The dog's nose touched her cheek lightly, almost imperceptibly. Half asleep she lifted her hand in the dark and groped for his back, fumblingly stroked his fur, turned her face toward him, opened her eyes; she knew rather than saw how he slowly turned around, crossed the floor and stopped, his heavy head and hanging ears like a black shadow against the filmy gray half-light of the window. She found the clock and turned heavily in the bed: it was only 4:30. That was good. She had time.

Frau Meckel always awakened early.

To wake early meant having access to time. Then she could prepare herself for the day. Then she could drink her milk, feed the dog, sit down awhile, think, take down the brown notebook with the jar label from 1938 and read a bit. If she could begin the day like this it was much better. The brown notebook contained her diary from her pregnancy with letters to the child. For her it contained the warmth of life. She had wanted to move around inside life's warmth as a child moves in foetal water. Softly, with a love which was painfully unprotected, gently rocking in security. That was what she had wanted her life to be.

After she had read the day could begin. If she had time she could walk to work. Since the flats she cleaned were in the center of the city, she had to go in toward the center. She used to take the dog--a basset born with a slightly defective left leg who had limped through all his ten years--and go out in the still, silent gray winter night that hung there steadfastly till sunrise, and walk from Kreuzberg to the center.

Frau Meckel actually didn't like the city; but certain early winter mornings were at least bearable. Then she could walk and walk and suddenly forget she was in West Berlin.

Then it was as it had been in Breslau.

Winter and snow had come to West Berlin with full force by December of that year, 1969. For the first time in decades winter maintained its grip long into April. Thus the colors were different from what they used to be--no longer just black and gray, at any rate not in Kreuzberg. Often snow fell during the night, a clean white fluffy snow which slowly melted away during the day. Then it became as before: dirty dun gray, flecked with white. But the mornings were quite different that winter. She went out while it was still dark, but the dark was white and glistened with freshness. Almost no footprints on the pavement, every step on that waterlogged snow had a sound--she was utterly alone with the snow, the cleanliness. When the sun rose the light became more and more intense until, almost imperceptibly, the cleanliness diminished, became soiled and suddenly it was full daylight and the dun gray was visible again. But by that time she was already at Kurfurstendamm and the blackbirds in the trees on Meinekestrasse sang with clear defiant voices.

Oh, how she wished that the whiteness would never end. Snow muffled all sound; the city seemed enveloped in a white woolly dream which smothered the aggressiveness and hardness that otherwise frightened her so in West Berlin.

A white woolly silence under the blackbird's song--that was the kind of winter she liked in West Berlin.

Frau Meckel was not alone, however, not even in the mornings. The whiteness was not entirely white but was spotted with innumerable small mounds of dog droppings. The dog droppings mirrored the political conditions in this city. Because West Berlin in 1970 was a circumscribed city its population had aged--the younger ones having disappeared to the west because the future lay there. Those who were left were the elderly and the restricted imported workers. And because those who were old and alone chose to keep dogs for protection against loneliness, West Berlin was the most densely dog-populated city in the world and, therefore, those small black heaps of shit in front of Frau Meckel reflected a political reality and a bit of history; the excrement reflected the Seventies more clearly than the rebuilt Kempinski did the Thirties.

Frau Meckel had had a dog once before--that was in 1943 during the war--a shafer called Bodi. But finally he had been requisitioned and they had come and taken him. A dog was not a person, yet even now she couldn't help but think about the terrible destiny he might have had on the eastern front. Sometimes she got tears in her eyes when she thought of what had happened. These days Frau Meckel cried often. Her tears came easily and abruptly as if sorrow were a sudden cloud which wafted over her face and drew forth tears. The tears came quickly and equally quickly went away, as if sorrow were as natural and painless as a breeze.

Herr Bachmann, she wrote in her first letter after leaving the home the day before

Christmas Eve, I wish that you too could cry. That you could let the tears stream forth from the well of pain.

She looked at the words, "from the well of pain," for a long time--the well of pain. Down in the yard someone emptied something into the garbage cans. Deep down there a person moved, perhaps it was one of the Turks. She stood at the window and observed him; he moved soundlessly down there at the bottom of the narrow yard.

Like a rat trap, she thought suddenly, one of the open ones where they fall down into a pitfall.

III

On January 28 he made a new attempt. Every day for a month he had saved the daily ration of sleeping pills. That evening he took all of them. Unfortunately the overdose caused not only the intended deep, perhaps in time lethal, unconsciousness, but also as a side effect a strange attack of cramps which drew the guards' attention to his plight.

Thus he was once again brought back to life. In the aftermath of his temporary despair he felt somewhat calmer and wrote a long encouraging letter to Frau Meckel in which he invited her to tell about life in this so tragically divided city and about herself. She received the letter the same evening, when she returned from her work. She sat down and answered immediately.

She was twenty-five years old when she saw from her lookout behind the tool shed how her father was taken by the authorities. That was in 1935. It was the new authorities who took him. Between 1928 and 1935 he had been politically active in several communist organizations in Breslau and had been vice-chairman of the ironworkers' union.

It had happened in the summer. He went off between them, hadn't even been able to put on a jacket. She never saw him again.

At the time he had been sitting alone in the kitchen drinking coffee, and then they had come and she had become terribly frightened and had hidden behind the tool shed. They discovered later that he had tried with a pencil to write a message to his family but had failed. Of the scrawled words could be read only, "They are fetching me now and I. . . ."

That event, wrote Frau Meckel, had made an indelible impression on her. "It was," she said in the letter, "on that occasion that I understood how important it would be to find a way out of the jungle of pain and evil and to realize my ideals of goodness and forgiveness." At that time they had lived in a suburb of Breslau. The suburb lay in the western part of Breslau and according to her was called "Nikolaivorstadt" (it is possible that combining the words is a mistake and that it should read "the suburb of Nikolai"). They had lived there until 1938 when the general situation and certain setbacks forced her to move to Gera. Thus she and her husband (who afterward disappeared during the battles and vicissitudes of war) had become to an extent rootless. "Herr Bachmann," she wrote, "I want to admit to you that today just the word politics fills me with tribulation. Oh, these senseless children who are so trapped by politics. How I wish that they could find the need to experience the nature of love, love's great amplitude in people's hearts!"

Herr Bachmann read her letters with extreme--and, to the guards, surprising--thoroughness, but without comment. He was now, after the repeated suicide attempts, quite weak and in an unsatisfactory physical condition. He ate next to nothing. He lay practically the whole day with his head against the wall and pretended to sleep, but when they went in to check that he had not made another undue attempt to discontinue his life's adventure, they saw that his eyes were open and that he was staring continuously at the wall.

Herr Bachmann, they said seriously to him, you must eat. You must stop feeling this anxiety, you must make yourself strong, strengthen your defenses. These obstructions to your will to live are simply childish. You must get yourself together, you must strengthen yourself. You must now be reasonable.

However, no harsh words were ever exchanged between him and the guards, not even during the period when he refused to eat. They came with their bowls, sat by his headrest, lifted his head and moved the spoons with warm and nourishing soup toward his tightly pressed-together lips. They touched the lips carefully, talking to him. Now you must swallow, Herr Bachmann, they said. You are still young. You must be reasonable.

They sat there a long time and finally his lips parted, he swallowed, he ate; they supported his head and he took into himself life's nourishment. He ate slowly, with his eyes steeled straight ahead: yes, Herr Bachmann

had recovered his reason.

She tried to make the letters as lively and detailed as possible since she imagined herself to be his eyes in the free world.

Luckily enough, the nervousness which had attacked her before Christmas was now subdued and during January and February she tried not only to do her work but also to share with Herr Bachmann her impressions of life in the free part of the city. In January much snow fell. She reported that. Details of the singing blackbirds on Meinekestrasse were repeated three times. She tried also to describe certain remarkable political events of that winter: for example she described in one of the letters how one Monday morning in January she had tried to get into the courthouse gallery to witness one of the great political trials in West Berlin, the so-called Mahler Process, which was the legal termination of the student demonstrations of Easter, 1968.

Windows had been broken in a newspaper office, someone had been agitating for the storming of the Springer offices. The trial had been put off for two years and therefore occurred simultaneously with the end of the uproar, the gradual splitting and disintegration of the Berlin left, and the entrance of certain groups into armed anarchism.

However, Frau Meckel made no attempt to report these things. She told how she froze. She had stood on the street outside the courthouse together with about fifty politically active students. She felt frightened. She had forgotten her ID card in Moabit and so was not let in. She wrote in passing about her feelings of relief: "And I can assure you that on that cold Monday morning it was with relief and joy that I saw the gates close in front of me, even though my heart beat with an anguish and anxiety I could not explain."

IV

She read the lines over again. "And you, my beloved Torilein, I bear a secret. I bear the knowledge that deep deep within your heart a light will be preserved which will light the way to love and to communion and that sometime you...."

Frau Meckel once had a dream about good people being together in a womb of warmth and love. Every time she was wrenched out of the dream she wept copiously. The letters to Herr Bachmann were for that reason tormenting and to lighten the torment during this time she took to reading, every morning without exception, a bit from the diary of 1938. It didn't help.

Frau Meckel was thrown off balance.

Political demonstrations always upset her, tore her apart, and consequently she had tried up to now to avoid coming anywhere near them. Flags made her sick with worry. The shouting frightened her. But now she felt herself drawn to them, as if the letters to Herr Bachmann had displaced the barriers of resistance she had maintained to events like these. It was as if she were drawn by a magnet.

On the second of February she describes a fearful and agonizing experience.

She had found herself in the center, had stood on Kranzlerecke at the corner of Kurfurstendamm and Joachimstalerstrasse. There were police everywhere--hundreds, maybe thousands, of policemen, heavily armed. Panzer tanks stood by along Kurfürstendamm, and in the side streets the air was full of anxiety and malevolence. She had her yellow handbag with her and, confined among the spectators, she had stood on the pavement peering anxiously down the street.

Even when they were still quite far away she could, much to her horror, hear the shouts. The shouting came closer, synchronized at a regular pace--it was like distant, muffled thunder--chanting which was about freeing political prisoners. She couldn't always catch the slogans but the main message was clear enough: it spoke of violence, agitation, perhaps also of wholly malevolent actions. Certain refrains were easy to understand. A-O-E...Springer in der Spree! or the short ones like Mao...Tse-tung!

And so the well-organized, militant marching columns rolled up from Olivaeplatz, up along Kurfürstendamm and ever closer to Frau Hildegard Meckel. There was a kind of merciless precision in the way the two enemy forces, the demonstrators and the police, neared each other. For in the two years that had passed since Herr Bachmann had initiated with his three shots the first really clear and violent confrontations, during these two years Berlin's Left had gotten over its first innocence and learned the importance of organizing everything perfectly and with a minimum of unplanned improvisation.

It was a campaign that was now rolling ahead.

Every demonstrator was in exactly the right place, every part of the action was

directed by the appropriately placed officer-in-charge with a walkie-talkie, every minute was calculated, every spontaneous diversion prepared, every bit of timing checked beforehand. On the side streets the provisional ambulances were placed and properly supplied: the demonstrators' ambulance corps had its bottles of blood plasma at hand because no one any longer trusted the police to take care of injured demonstrators. Everything flowed perfectly; and while this political student demonstration, well organized in every detail, flowed the usual route up Kurfürstendamm toward the waiting host of heavily armed police with panzers and water cannons and masks of plexiglass and light asbestos shields and tear gas bombs, while the climax of the confrontation approached calmly and gravely, Hildegard Meckel stood there on the pavement in her tight, well-worn coat and with her warm green woolen cap on her head.

She clasped her hands anxiously together. Through the openings in the police lines she saw how the marchers got closer and how the conflict would be altogether unavoidable, and even before the first tear gas bombs exploded the tears ran down her cheeks; she shivered and wept with despair and prayed with dumb lips that the spirit of love might illuminate all hearts so that nothing would happen to these, God's children, so deeply caught in the lethal maelstrom of politics.

All this she described in letters to Herr Bachmann.

Frau Meckel had a terrible fear of politics. "Politics" was a word that made her disintegrate with anxiety. At the same time she suspected that resolution would follow the moment she understood her anxiety. Consequently she often wept on those occasions when politics touched her.

The letter of February 2 is long and contains a concluding section of reminiscences which only partly hangs together with the rest of the letter. She describes her recollection of one First of May during the Thirties. She writes:

"This afternoon--again the dense driving snow storm--what a heavy winter, just think that this is Berlin! Herr Bachmann, I sorely hope that I do not tire you, but thoughts fly about in my head like anxious birds and one cannot always control their flight! I have in memory all the First of Mays I have experienced, the different shapes they all took. As a child I experienced that day, mainly because of my father's involvement, as the greatest of festive days. I remember even now with great clarity the First of May, 1924. I was only fourteen years old. After the customary demonstration we went out to the Karten Wald. I had just learned to cycle. My parents played ball there with some friends. I recall that I wore a windproof jacket with a Schiller collar. Oh, how proud I was of that jacket! It seemed as if that piece of clothing removed me from the superficialities of life... I wanted even then to wander ideal ways--which I also came to do, too--though how many times have I not lacked sufficient strength!

"Ah, amongst the memories of the First of May there is also the one from 1933. Today when I stood in the sharp wind on the pavement at Kurfürstendamm and prayed for those young people--how well did I not remember that demonstration, for, oh! that was 37 years ago!

"We had assembled in good time at the meeting place. It was at Neumarkt in Breslau. I was then 23 years old and belonged to a youth group in the workers' Sports Association which called itself 'The Free Swimmers.' At last the place was full of people. Then suddenly came the news, like an avalanche for all of us, that the new Chief of Police, appointed by the new regime, had forbidden the First of May parades. The news awakened rebellion, but also a feeling of helplessness amongst many of us. We young people had become so used to the First of May parade that it was for us a part of our lives. What a hue and cry one heard now, with such rebelliousness and agitation among so many! But suddenly, as if we had all been part of one single will, the demonstration began to move. A surging movement began when all at once everyone started to weave from one side of the street to the other. We never left the block though we were moving all the time. So we went side by side for hours, singing. Even today I feel that communion of people as a pulsating heartbeat.

"I remember that First of May best of all those I have experienced. Unfortunately that was the last time my young heart was inflamed by politics."

V

On the walls in the inner room, the one that was used as a workroom and where the typewriter sat on the table which stood in the middle of the floor, hung a number of sloppily tacked and taped-up posters and placards. Nearly all contained political messages. One

obviously represented Marx: the face was composed of small birds' wings and feathers, drawn with superficial thoroughness and precision--the bodies and beaks had been ingeniously joined together so that the picture resembled a portrait. Further, there among the other usual political illustrations was the poster most common in West Berlin's leftist circles--the heads of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao, and under them the text, Alle reden von Wetter, Wir Nicht!

The flat was one of the six that Frau Meckel cleaned. This flat like the other five was owned by a West German landlord living in Frankfurt. He possessed the title of Prince, he rented out flats, and Frau Meckel was included in the rental contract along with certain other incidentals. The tenants bound themselves to accept the owner's assumption of responsibility for something which was diffusely called a "Gesundheitsgarantie"--which meant in practice that one paid 112 marks for housekeeping services to the Prince in Frankfurt, who then paid Frau Meckel 84 marks per unit. According to the contract she worked six "units of soundness," or flats, and for this consequently received 504 marks per month.

One could live on that if one was alone with a dog in the suburb of Kreuzberg in West Berlin, winter and spring, 1970.

E came back to the flat in the afternoon of February 7 after having bought two loaves of bread, half a pound of meat, two bottles of beer and some papers. When he closed the door on the landing he heard at once from the inner room a low murmuring which confused him. He knew that Frau Meckel did her weekly cleaning, that she was in the flat, but what did that low mumbling voice mean? It was as if someone were reading to himself. He took off his shoes, in stocking feet went quietly to the sliding doors. He looked through the crack straight into the room.

Frau Meckel was caught in a moment of meditation.

She had put the vacuum cleaner in a corner and had fallen on her knees in the middle of the floor. Her face was turned toward the four-headed illustration which proclaimed Alle reden von Wetter, Wir Nicht! Her eyes were shut and she seemed to be praying or, anyway, to have found herself in a state of intensive contemplation. The words were sometimes possible to understand, though the voice was low: "and then shall the light of love stream into this young heart so that he will be free from temptation and not allow himself to be seduced by foreign ideologies and all the promises of politics and so that...."

The face was uplifted, the eyes shut. The tears had run over her face and it had an expression of great intensity and gravity. Her gray hair was held fast in a knot and she wore a blue sweater with a braided pattern. After her prayer seemed to be over she got up with dignity, stood still a moment, and looked at the vacuum cleaner in the corner with an altogether neutral yet thoughtful expression. Then she turned and saw him. He stood in the doorway and didn't know what to say.

It was as if she hesitated a second. Then her face lit up with a marvelous smile and she came toward him with arms outstretched. She took both his hands in hers and gazed at him long and silently, with an expression that reflected great joy and friendliness.

Ah, Herr E, you have just now come, she said in a low, warm, vibrating voice. I have prayed for you--you heard it surely. I have prayed that you might not be driven into evil ways and that you might be protected from politics.

She pressed his hands hard. For a moment he found himself idiotically moved and didn't know what to do. They sat on the sofa, she continued to hold his hands in hers and looked at him searchingly, anxiously. I am so worried, she said. Yesterday I tied the dog to a post outside the flat where I was cleaning and when I came back.... Yes, he said, what happened? It was gone, someone had let him loose. Is he still...? No, she said shaking her head, he came home. But now he is back there, I.... But why don't you take him into the flat? The Prince, she said with an utterly expressionless voice, would certainly not.... What does he know about it? Well, he would come to know about it anyway....

Why did you pray for me? What do you mean, she said and looked inquisitively at him, don't you understand? No. In your country, she began expectantly, is there politics also.... Then she fell silent; he waited a long time for her to continue but she seemed to be imprisoned by a thought and did not come out.

So they sat for a long time while the afternoon sank into dusk and it became evening. She told about the letters to Herr Bachmann and what anxiety she felt for him. He was born in Niedersachsen, and, when she had read that, there had been a tug in her heart which had given her pain. In Peine, in Niedersachsen, Herr Bachmann was born. He could have been my child, she said, but the winds of time drove us west.

She now spoke quietly and calmly. She continued to hold his hands in hers and the tears came and went in her eyes. Her eyes had secret and invisible interlocking channels, and the movements of the waters of time in the sea of suffering had made Frau Meckel's tears rise and fall.

VI

The letter of February 17 is the most detailed and the most remarkable of all Frau Meckel's letters to Herr Bachmann.

There she describes exhaustively the break-in that happened one night in her little flat in Kreuzberg. She had awakened about two a.m. and thought she heard a noise. She had then got up, gone out to the little hall--and suddenly saw that her outer door which faced the landing stood slightly ajar. She saw something else, which terrified her: someone's hand had gotten through the opening and was groping for the chain. The hand made a determined effort to lift the chain off but failed. She had then come closer to the door and asked who was there ("as if I found myself still in a dream, I approached the door and asked with, I am certain, a shaking voice full of anguish...").

The hand had immediately drawn back and she had heard steps withdrawing. When she opened the door and looked out she had seen a man disappear down the stairs. He wore a yellow ulster; he turned and smiled a friendly and polite smile and nodded to her. He had made a sympathetic impression, and then he was gone.

Frau Meckel had closed the door but couldn't go back to sleep. In the morning her worry and anxiety had not diminished and later that day she had asked one of the decent and respectable people she cleaned for what she should do.

She had been advised to go to the police.

At the police station they had listened to her rather long story and with great reluctance noted down parts of it, and had advised her to go through the register of criminals herself to identify the one she had seen. They had taken her down to the cellar where a large archive was stored and she had to say how tall the suspected man could have been, what age, what color hair, what weight. Later they had placed on a large bench in front of her boxes which contained all West Berlin's registered criminals between 174 and 178 centimeters tall, weighing between 70-76 kilos, age between 20 and 32 and with light hair. There were about 300.

Frau Meckel began to go through the register, but after a few minutes fell into tears.

The police clerk who was working nearby saw that she was crying and came at once to her and asked what was the matter. She pointed to the cards which lay spread out in front of her and said with a thick voice, "These young people, these poor children, look at their faces." The clerk leaned forward uncertainly and looked at the pictures but found nothing of interest and asked, yes? See their young faces, continued Frau Meckel, sniffing, what suffering, these once pure faces, so much pain they are forced to suffer through, why? Why? The clerk supported her now from the side and put his arm around her shoulder while he continued to fix his eyes unhappily on the cards on the table. She leaned lightly against him, still crying, and he didn't know what to do. Tell me, she stammered on, are all these young people in prison? Unfortunately not all, the clerk mumbled.

Oh, you must forgive me, whispered Frau Meckel, and dried her face with a bit of her sweater, oh, but I get so upset. Forgive me.

Suddenly much calmer, she looked again at the cards. The pictures were all taken either from the front or from the side. In order to hinder future attempts at identification many had distorted their faces in deliberate parodies of insidious grimaces and, because a clear cold light had beamed on them when they were photographed, the end result was rather terrifying. No, said Frau Meckel in an utterly factual voice, I actually cannot recognize him. None of these is the one I saw. Oh really, said the clerk, now confused by her sudden calmness, too bad, but then there's nothing to be done, is there? No, said Frau Meckel in a clear, light, almost girlish tone, there is nothing to be done.

The police clerk looked inquisitively at her. Where do you live? he asked. In Kreuzberg. Oh yes, out there there are a lot of this sort, he remarked thoughtfully. Of what sort? Of this sort here, and he waved his hand in an eloquent gesture at the outspread cards. Foreigners and felons, he added in explanation, guest workers and such. Frau Meckel looked with consternation at the cards. Perhaps he was right. Out there in Kreuzberg there were many such faces. Though she hadn't ever really seen it that way before.

Never seen it that way.

Frau Meckel? His questioning, almost reproachful voice awakened her out of her thoughts. She looked up at him and smiled apologetically. You live and work in West

Berlin? She nodded, mute. Husband and children? She shook her head--now for once it was easy to answer; the words came to her with complete certainty and without pain. No, neither. My husband died at the front. And my only child, she added with a voice that was clear as glass and free of suffering, I had already lost, in 1938. Oh, said the police clerk in a moderate formal tone--which he must have learned in the police academy's basic course in citizen psychology, to be used on occasions of tragic incidents--so sad, so tragic. And how old? Still in the womb, she said, equally succinct and factual. I understand, he said. Even before... I received a shock, she explained with her eyes fixed on his round embarrassed face. Someone came and told me that my father had died in a concentration camp. And in my sensitive condition.... I understand, he said quickly, so sad, so tragic. He had been involved in politics, she added in explanation.

They both looked now at the cards spread out on the table. So many destinies, she said quietly, so many. If only the light of love could enter in. She heard him move at her side; there was a lengthy silence. He had now removed the protective arm from her shoulders and held his hands behind his back. She heard that he snapped his fingers.

But God is love, he said in anticipation.

She looked quickly up at him, not smiling any longer. She herself had been on the way to saying just that, but he was ahead of her, and when the words came from his mouth they didn't sound right. There was something wrong with them. She examined his face very attentively and he seemed embarrassed or afraid--perhaps he was only bothered by her? The light in the archives was very clear, almost blue-white clear, and a weak echo was heard from the iron stairs, sounds of hard metallic footsteps which were on their way down and would soon reach them.

Frau Meckel continued to brood over where the fault lay. The police clerk was her age, he was almost bald and had nice steel-rimmed, lightly-silvered glasses with heavily corrective lenses. He chewed rhythmically on his cheeks as if he had decided to say something but hadn't quite reached the point of executing his decision. At last came the beginning of a sentence that he had obviously long thought over. We must understand, he began, rather formally as if he were speaking to several people, that in this most controversial and historically meaningful period... then he saw how intensively Frau Meckel took him in and was silenced in the middle of the sentence.

The sound of the footsteps came nearer. Frau Meckel was now certain that she was about to scream. The footsteps mean that a person is approaching, she thought, while the scream slowly climbed up inside her. If they only manage to get here in time, perhaps I am saved.

VII

A poison has crept into me, thought Herr Bachmann. I got their innocent letters and read, but a poison sneaked into me. Words are poison, knowledge is poison, they poisoned me and made me uncertain. They were shrewd and now it is too late. Now I am poisoned, my whole organism is poisoned, now all that is left is to die. What good does it do that they write to me that I am innocent, that I was an instrument, that they forgive me. Forgive me! What cynicism.

They must have understood, of course, that I had already gone to pieces.

At this point he almost never thought about the shots. He had stood outside the undertaker's in that house where the Socialist Student Association also had its quarters. It was Maundy Thursday and then D came out and took his red, girl's bicycle and Josef Bachmann fired his three shots and D fell prone. So simple. Later the chaos began and he himself was shot. Unfortunately not lethally. And then the hospital.

If only I hadn't started to read the letters, he thought. And the books they sent. If I had held the poison off.

In Peine, he thought, in Peine in Niedersachsen, there one learned to hold the poison off. There we learned to hold the words away from us so the damaging particles might not penetrate and burst our shells and fill us with their deadly poison.

Deceived, he thought, I was not deceived, exactly. But it is damned unjust. When he thought like this he became numb and at the same time anxious inside himself; he felt nervous. Then he couldn't do anything--not talk, not read. Nothing. At last it got to the point where Frau Meckel's letters were the only things he could read. "Unfortunately that was the last time my young heart was inflamed by politics."

Why, actually, had she written "Unfortunately"?

They dropped the poison in. A poison, a

suspicion. Deceived, no, perhaps not. But it was damned unjust.

On the way to the shower he made the fifth attempt. He struck both hands right through a window and, while moaning almost soundlessly, he hacked through his wrists. The right wrist got a large, very effective gash which in minutes drained him of a good deal of blood. To everyone's amazement, this attempt was almost successful. However, Herr Bachmann was again restored to life, and was after only a week returned to his cell and his prison sentence of seven years.

There was a new letter from Frau Meckel waiting for him. He read it with a feeling of impotent, perplexing rage which was incomprehensible even to himself. This Frau Hildegard Meckel, in her self-appointed ambition to describe the divided city's condition for him (who had, anyway, fallen apart), had taken the bus out to the border at Checkpoint Charlie, gone into the little souvenir shop, gone up to the top floor and parked herself in front of the little local TV set which, via a TV camera with a powerful range, sent direct pictures of the street life on the East German side of Friedrichstrasse.

She couldn't go over herself (she would of course be taken as a West Berliner), but there she had sat and watched and watched and then tried to remember it all when she wrote to him. It became utterly meaningless, and grotesquely empty, information. The only thing she offered was her recollection that there moved figures which were gray and unclear and incomprehensible and that the distance foreshortened the objects. Later came the obligatory tirades about sympathy and love and all that. What did that serve? What in God's name did that serve?

In the letter were enclosed two souvenir cards that she had bought in the shop. One showed a watch tower by the wall, the other was the classic picture of a fleeing volkspolizist, poised in the air above a barbed-wire gate with a machine gun in his hand. Herr Bachmann sat awhile and looked at the two cards and tried to calm down. Then as an experiment he put them over the bed. They refused to be fastened with a thumbtack. He then asked the guard for a couple of pieces of tape, and received them.

The next day he took down the cards himself. Once again he was refusing food. He began a letter--in part very aggressive--to Frau Meckel but tore it up. At this time he weighed 11.3 kilos less than when he came in. They were worried about him. He showed no lust for life. He only sat and stared at the walls. It was inexplicable.

VIII

On Monday morning, February 21, 1970, Frau Meckel received in a registered letter sent from Frankfurt the news that she was relieved from her job until further notice. The reason given was that her sick leave for nervous trouble had seriously disrupted the cleaning cycle for the various dwellings (so it actually said in the letter). In other words, she was fired.

It was signed by the Prince himself. She got the letter in the early morning post and became very nervous. Mostly she sat and stared at the signature. Never in all her years of service had she said one single bad word about the Prince, though there were many opportunities, and when she saw the words "seriously disrupted the cleaning cycle" she felt vaguely duped, abandoned, and then anxious. After crying a little while she decided to do something but couldn't hit upon what. Anyway, she must have work. What work?

She went down to the janitor of the house. She knew him slightly. She asked whether he could give her references for suitable cleaning jobs. The result of this application was that after a short discussion he kindly but determinedly advised her to contact the tenants herself on her own initiative. Ask them, he said; he seemed to be very tired and was very brief with her--perhaps he had been drinking the night before--and closed the door.

She began at the bottom. The first door was not opened. The second door was opened after a certain hesitation and the person who opened it looked frightened and confused. Suddenly Frau Meckel felt utterly dumb, without words. I come with an inquiry, she began--and heard that she sounded stiff and strange--it is about the cleaning. Yes? said the man in the doorway, who looked like one of the foreign workers (was he a Turk?). Do you need a cleaning woman? she asked with a sort of desperate uncertainty, and the door opened wider and she could see into the flat.

There was only one room. On the floor lay mattresses and she could see six, seven people there. They had all been caught in various positions and looked directly and fearfully at her from their sleeping places. One man was shaving and the others sat and

lay in strange attitudes. Cleaning, said Frau Meckel in a low voice, but the man in the doorway only shook his head, not understand your speech. Why are you so many? asked Frau Meckel helplessly, do you all live here? Turkey, the man in the doorway answered with great solemnity, and she saw that several of the men behind him nodded vehemently and chimed in, yes, Turkey. They now began to whisper among themselves, now and then casting a worried glance at her. Are you legitimate? one of them asked finally, authorities?

Frau Meckel shook her head. Not inspection? No.

When they had shut the door she stood almost a minute and felt her heart thump violently. They were afraid of me. They were afraid of me!

Then she went straight back up to her flat.

She read over the letter about her dismissal. It was utterly clear. Apart from what the phrase "disrupted cleaning cycle" actually meant, the fact of the matter was plain: she had been fired. She felt completely destroyed and thought: why should it be like this?

Strangely enough she didn't cry anymore. It is certainly well and justly deserved, she thought after she had read through the letter for the fifth time--well deserved, well deserved, well deserved. The tears were still in abeyance and she felt different from the way she was used to feeling. She thought: I must write a letter to Herr Bachmann and tell him about this.

A letter to Herr Bachmann. Immediately.

But when she did sit down, pen in hand and an empty sheet of paper in front of her, she felt only empty. She couldn't find one word. She knew at once what it was: she felt herself entirely without love. And when this feeling did not dissipate and when she couldn't even cry, she went to the bureau and took out the notebook. At those times when she felt completely without love it usually helped to read a passage from the diary of 1938. She did this when she felt upset in an uncharitable way or was near to feeling rage.

The notebook was brown and on the outside sat the neat little jar label. There it stood:

A QUIET WEB OF THOUGHTS ABOUT TORILEIN
by Hildegard Meckel
(1938)

It was the diary from the time of her pregnancy. The first page began with words she had read so many times that she almost knew them by heart: "The day of my great longing shall soon arrive. In me, under my heart, a new life is beginning to rise. How clearly the sun shines suddenly, how joyfully the sunbeams laugh from every corner of the house! Oh, it must be a girl! So my lines shall be dedicated to a girl, my girl. And if it is a boy--who knows?--so shall I lay this notebook in a box so that later in quiet hours I may be reminded of these wonderful days when I experienced the greatest and highest of all wonders--the wonder of love, an emerging life!"

The diary's dun-colored paper had paled with the years; the handwritten pages were quite large and she had folded them across in order to get them in the stiff brown notebook with the jam jar label. She read on with concentration, trying to avoid thinking about anything else, especially the letter of dismissal. "Ah Torilein, so strange life can be sometimes --I often compare it to the sea. Oh! the sea! I have still not seen it but I have often felt it--the sea must be like that! Today it happened again. I was daydreaming and let myself be driven by the waves. It was a cradling, a rocking--completely without aim, I let myself be wafted about and suddenly the ocean waves carried me in among a lot of old houses. Oh, Torilein, you too will sometime experience these feelings! I recognized the houses--what I saw was my childhood! I was back in Nikolaivorstadt, I saw the house where I was born, with the garden, the outhouse, the trees! How wonderful had not...."

She suddenly halted in her reading and began to turn over the pages, nervously, intensively. She was now very upset. Finally she found a passage she recalled better. She read it and immediately felt calmer. Perhaps she should send the whole little diary to Herr Bachmann? In his last letter he had been so short, so impersonal. Perhaps these old diary entries could be of some help to him also?

It was raining outside. The dog slept with short sniffling breaths and with one large ear flopped like a blanket over his nose. What shall become of him now? She looked out of the window: the back yard was a cramped narrow well, the houses flaked dull and gray in the streaming rain, most of the windows had their curtains drawn. She knew so few of these people. Practically no one. A deep narrow gray well where they crowded together without the light of love being able to reach down to them.

Like a rat trap. One of those that you fall down into.

What a strange winter it had been. So uncharitable. What cold gray rain. So still

everything had become.

The letters were round--that was her handwriting as a young woman. She had written in ink. The handwriting was easy to read, but reading became more and more sluggish. It went so slowly, it was so difficult. Had she really felt like that?

Like a soft secure cradling sleep--so had she wanted to see her life.

Had it become so? She read now very slowly. "What a beautiful time I have experienced. I lay a little tired in both body and soul in a lounge chair. The May sun warmed my face and I heard the birds singing. How long I lay there, between waking and dreaming, I don't know. So sweet is such a rest for me. The blanket covered my body and without the eyes of strangers seeing us, I could touch the place where you slumber on toward life. Out of sight of human eyes my hand could caress you and I talked quietly to you while we were both enveloped by this sweet rest. Was it not bitter, oh my Torilein, to be roused out of this slumber by human voices? by strange people who spoke to us? How much we both would have rather slumbered on in this life's sweet warmth."

There she stopped reading. Her glance had fastened on the last lines and they held her stubbornly. Life's warmth. Life's sweet warmth. It continued to rain. She didn't look up. Thus she sat utterly still and waited for the meaning of the words to be restored while it became full day in Kreuzberg, West Berlin.

Herr Bachmann slept and in his dream he was back in Peine in Niedersachsen. He was home among his own again and it was just like both before and after the episode in West Berlin.

He dreamed that he sat again in his schoolroom with his classmates. He was again a pupil behind a desk and everything was very familiar. They all sat silently reading about German history. There was an atmosphere of quiet expectation in the air. Suddenly the teacher tapped on the floor with the pointer and all the children looked up. Would Josef please come forward? she said. He got up and went to the front. The teacher, whom he liked very much, had tears in her eyes, but she was smiling. Josef, she said in front of the whole class, we only want to thank you for what you have done. We only want to tell you that you belong to us, that we will never forget you. She held out her arms and came toward him, still smiling. He blinked, didn't feel at all shy. And then he felt how she threw her arms around him.

When he awoke it was still early morning.

He lay in the cell and the dream thinned out slowly and disappeared. After it had completely gone he felt empty and there was nothing else to do but lie still and look at the ceiling. That is what he did. Later he sat up. The floor was cold and he put on a pair of socks. He put the blanket over his shoulders. He looked around. Everything he saw was very familiar now. Everything was exactly as it should be. It was as it was. On the table--two books that he still hadn't opened though they had been there several days. Over the books--a plastic bag which had contained almond cakes; but the cakes were gone and only crumbs were left.

It was silent. He couldn't hear a sound. It was totally silent.

He sat half an hour and didn't move. Then he slowly shook off the blanket, leaned forward and took the bag. It was plastic. He tugged carefully along the bottom edge but it was strong and held. So he took the bag and slipped it over his head.

He now saw everything in less clear shades: the gray had another grayness, the dark another darkness. Inside it was calm. As a test he held the opening, pressed together the corners and pressed all the harder against his throat. The plastic bag immediately began to heave in rhythm with his breathing, pressed itself against his face, inflated itself like a balloon. He let go his grip, took off the bag and regarded it thoughtfully. After awhile he put it on his head again, lay on the bed with his head on the pillow, breathed deeply--both hands holding fast the bottom of the bag.

He breathed calmly and evenly and with distended eyes looked right through the plastic up to the ceiling. After about ten seconds his breathing quickened, the bag clung to his face more tightly with every breath, the plastic became foggier and more opaque. His hands gripped tighter and tighter around the opening, his body contracted and, just on the brink of unconsciousness, his hands slowly, reluctantly, opened.

Half unconscious, he rolled over to one side, the plastic bag still on but now open. The blue-red color of his face paled slowly and became normal again. His chest pumped hard and almost convulsively; he began to sniffle and at last he wept openly and with despair.

Later he sat up again. Herr Bachmann was back to life.

When they came in with the breakfast he had returned to normal. He was silent and didn't answer, but to their great astonishment he ate without resistance. In the middle of the day he tried to read awhile but could not. Then

he sat on the bed.

The plastic bag continued to lie on the table.

Suddenly he began to think about something, he turned and started searching the wall behind him. Yes, it was still there, the tape that had held fast Frau Meckel's cards.

He pulled the plastic bag over his head again and lay down on the bed. For awhile he listened for the sound of steps but none came. Then he took the tape, closed the bag's open end, wound the tape around it and with his fingers pressed hard the bunched-together plastic and tape against his throat.

He now breathed slowly with both hands clenched against his throat. His eyes stared large, black, and terror-stricken, straight up through the plastic, his mouth compressed as if in extreme determination. He breathed. He breathed. With every inhalation the plastic cleaved more and more rhythmically and tightly against his face--the eyes wildly distended, the hands clamped rigidly around the bag's taped opening. His mouth then opened.

He kicked hard with his legs. One sock fell off, he hit the bed post with his foot but didn't seem to notice. The mouth bulged more violently and painfully, the tongue groped thicker and more desperately for the wrinkles in the plastic mask which buckled hard inwards, the hands clenched and relaxed but the opening remained closed, the head went back, the chest heaved and so it was over.

At last Frau Meckel had decided. She took the brown notebook with the jar label, found a large envelope and put the notebook in it. On the outside of the envelope she wrote Josef Bachmann's name and address. For a moment she thought of enclosing a letter or an explanation but decided the notebook would be enough.

It was now afternoon. She put on her coat and went out. She said to the dog: I am coming back.

It had stopped raining. She carried the envelope under her arm, finally found a newspaper stand and bought stamps there. I have a friend who is ill, she said in explanation to the man in the kiosk. I am sending a book as encouragement. The man grunted something indecipherable and gave her the change. Are you also an unhappy person? she asked kindly. No, he said curtly and turned away. She retired a few meters from the kiosk and counted her money. Twelve marks and sixty pfennig. The rain had stopped but a heavy sour fog had replaced it.

She stood on the pavement with the envelope in her hand and suddenly everything collapsed in on her and she fell to pieces.

What should she do?

She went very slowly along the street and found herself in the vicinity of Hàsenheide. Here were beer halls and bingo halls--it was not here she had thought of going.

It isn't right, she said loudly to herself. It isn't right that I should need to fall apart now. Not right. Not right. When dusk fell she was still on her way. She held the envelope under her arm. Sometimes she thought she could see herself going up to a mailbox and putting in the envelope to Herr Bachmann. Nevertheless it remained under her arm the whole time. At last she became very tired and tried to find somewhere to sit.

A street went under the elevated S-track and just inside the arch she found a bench. It was actually only a plank laid across two stones. The train thundered overhead every five minutes, but it wouldn't rain there anyway. There she sat. She held the envelope with the diary hard against her breast, but she had long ago forgotten that she should send it to Herr Bachmann. She felt completely dumb and uncharitable and she thought: soon I will also feel rage. What kind of life is this? Soon I will be one of those who feels rage. What kind of life is that?

There she sat and there on the bench they found her much later, after it had gotten dark and someone who had seen her there began to wonder. She still held the envelope with the diary close to her breast. She could not explain what had happened but was very calm and collected. She left her address, asked them to take care of the dog, and went by herself without help into the waiting car.

Herr Bachmann lay on his back, his legs drawn up and his arms pressed to his breast. One foot was bare and there was blood from a scratch on the sole of his foot. On the inside of the plastic bag the breath had become misty, but later the moisture had collected into small drops of water and one could see his face clearly. He lay with his eyes open, stonily fixed on the gray ceiling. His mouth was open, his tongue still pressed against the plastic.

Like a thin clear sheet of ice the plastic lay over his face. There inside was Herr Bachmann and his now terminated life, for so cleverly had he sealed his bag that the injurious air was not able to break through and fill him with its poison.□

nicholas papayanis

hale chatfield

IN OHIO: A.M., NOVEMBER

Gunslaps in the frosty morning
in the valley a train
clicking (its wide
cry surrounding it, carrying it
away)
    silences:
between this remote
sound (and that)

    one silence

    (and another):

glass beads on a string.

IN OHIO: SUNLIGHT ON AUTUMN FOLIAGE

The sunlight
does these colors
beyond memory or expectation:
there is no telling
these rages of red and orange

--except, here and there
in the countryside, a quietness
arises more articulate
than calendars.

But then those
damnable meanings
scattered among the trees:

    those formerly useful
    things--

    those histories.

elizabeth culbert

MOORINGS

The slackened lengths of hempen halyard measuring
distances' shores

snarl, twist, knot in tangles:
clumsily the slow rope worms
about barnacled pilings the fishes infest
to come caught, clasp in wreath-

like circlings, haltering
firm the careen-
ing sea yearn.

O bent to leeward, my life line went beleaguering
thoroughfares, wharves,

ways stay-weights anchor angles
taut, tied, posted to boat down storms!
Harbouring the belaboured wave, coves of rest
- crest-flung heaviness beneath -

imaged masted fastenings
to moor more keen
my return.

ONCE ON SO FRAGILE

Once on so fragile
    a windy hour
        came an Angel

Chorus to sing the
    names all things take
        on only once upon

being named for us
    to so deflower the
        myths they were before

Angels came on
    once so fragile
        a windy hour.

marlene gerberick

A WINDING SONG

singing through deep winter
sigrid came to rip carpet rags
balls of yellows, purples
oranges grew and grew until
the circles of glowing colors
from old robes and dresses
became the tales of a finland
none of us had ever seen
but all of us knew was as
miraculous as the rounds
of greens and blues
larger and larger
rounder and rounder
till the whole room
was spinning with
midnight suns
and the reds multiplied
as i wound and wound
my way through all remembers
yesterday and tomorrow
went round and round
and often i slept long
long sleeps with
sigrid's enveloping color
surrounding me
rounding me
round

ONE HUNDRED PROOF DAY

the world is
reeling hillsides
rolling into gullies

old barns
hiccup
grey boards and rusted nails
shake loose with each spasm

a deer
impales himself on the fence

swallows
falter in mid-air

reeling, rolling
the day continues

vaughn koumjian

CHARLES IVES

He shrewdly waits
And sings songs
Shrouded in a
Voice the hills know:
Sometimes the circuits
Of the ethos jangle
Noisily or break
Into echo of echo
Of march or hymn;
From deep in the woods
It springs into being
And a spirit that
Does not encumber
Or wish to be encumbered
Glows in New England

john milisenda

FAMILY ALBUM

lyn lifshin

THE MAD GIRL THINKS OF HERSELF AS MILKWEED BUT IT'S SOMEONE ELSE WHO STICKS TO THE PILLOWS UNDER HER SKIN LIKE A CAT UNTOUCHED TOO LONG

the leaves change each day here
when i stayed in your house
it was always the
end of summer david

even your name is some
one else you dissolve in the
suburbs of night pulling
the sloped ceiling down

after you where we
waited our mouths frost
bitten even
in july

snow in your mother's voice
listening in those tall
rooms for what
we'd never do even the

bourbon was hard to
swallow black leaves blew
under the bed where i
kept those white

cotton pants on making
love cold beer
in the toilet. you might
wonder why you're in this

poem after so long last
night someone came from your
city said in yr house it seemed
that everything was

breaking broken held in a
light like a room in some
museum i wrote the first poems
to find out what i

missed sent them to you
i could have been breathing to
a stone he went back he
said he didn't know you but

your mother could hardly
remember his sister's
name the poet
who lived there was some

place she couldn't under
stand why anyone
would care said something
about his depression now

yr father doesn't leave the
house if i saw you i couldn't
tell you stopped i wonder
you must still touch

women the way you touched
that guitar making wood
that didn't know it could
sing want to

POTATOES

a stone or root,
that 's what I'd
like to be today
burrowing deep
down and quiet
You go for a walk
if you like, I'd
rather stay numb
and dusty, like
potatoes, tho I'm
wondering if they
should be in this
poem, lately they
seem to be in so
many others

richard greene

THE WINDOW

CHARACTERS
(in order of appearance)

alice cellner, age 37
jim mc millan, age 38
mort cellner, age 39

(The Cellners' apartment, a tenement apartment on Second Avenue at Twenty-fifth Street in Manhattan. It has two rooms: a living room-dining room-kitchen and an offstage bedroom. A partially successful effort has been made to transform the tenement into a cheerful apartment. Travel posters hang on the walls. The room's window faces an air shaft and the window contains about fifteen plants, some hanging and others sitting on the sill. The coffee table overflows with travel folders. It is 11:30 a.m., a weekday morning.

ALICE CELLNER and JIM McMILLAN are on the couch, half clothed; they are into the early stages of lovemaking. THEY undress each other as they kiss. One of his shoes is off. ALICE keeps trying to speak to him as they get more passionate)

ALICE:
(Breaking away from his embrace)

One week or two?

(HE pulls her back. SHE breaks away)

St. Thomas or Martinique?

(HE pulls her back. SHE breaks away again)

Then how about the chateau country package?

(THEY embrace. Someone is heard in the hall, fumbling with packages and trying to unlock the door)

Dammit, why is he coming home now? Hide in the closet. Quick.

(SHE helps him gather his clothes. JIM runs off into the bedroom. SHE closes the bedroom

asking you to take me away if you come in. (Calling) Jim, be a man. Help.

(JIM, who is half-dressed and carries his jacket, bolts across the room, picks up his shoe, and dashes out the door)

(To Jim) For God sakes, maybe you've never met him; but he's a person. I hear your feet running down those stairs. You go down those stairs, forget about seeing your other shoe again. Coward.

(To Mort) Last week, Dr. Gilles said it seems I only love you when you're down--stop and listen--from now on, I'll only love you when you're up. That means up here. Right now. Up means up. Get in here.

(MORT has climbed out and is inching his way along the ledge)

The apartment feels empty already. Think of me for once. Being in an empty apartment all day. Cringing every time I pass this window. Your life insurance doesn't cover suicides. I'll eventually have to work. I hate typing letters. You still have a career. Why, if I were you, I'd come right in just because I have an interesting career, if no job.

Get in here. Oh God, get in. I know. You're doing this to spite me. Taking your own life. That's some way to get back at me. What would Dr. Gilles say? Mort, he wouldn't be pleased. So come in, come in. I'm going to panic.

(His arm appears and HE hands her his watch)

Even if you're only jumping for yourself, get in. Hurry up.

(HE hands her his wallet)

Morton Cellner... I'll do anything for you.

(HE hands her his wedding band)

You could take the gold out of your teeth and I'd still know you're not being practical. Being practical is in here. It's coming inside.

All right then. All right. All right. Don't be so self-righteous. So smug. So noble. I saw you coming out of the Americana Hotel with a young woman on March nineteenth. A blue coat. Yellow shoes. No hat. Your right arm was around her. Fifty-two fifty for that afternoon, I found the bill. Did I ever say a word to you? Did I ever make a scene? Did I ever commit suicide? No. Because I wanted to save the marriage. So come right in. Now that you know I know, who are you trying to kid out there? (Leaning out and looking at him for a long time. SHE then leans back in) I can't blame you, I drove you to it. Mort, I have to level with you. The truth is this: I'm the one who belongs out there, because, now get a good grip on the bricks, because I did a terrible thing. I married you and I never loved you. Don't take it personally. I never loved anyone. When you proposed, I wasn't crazy about you. I thought a young law student would make a lot of money. Right now you're making zero. Nothing. Mort, you married a case. There's no reason to be out there. Nothing in our marriage has changed. It's always been rotten. You've lasted eighteen years. Don't give up now. Mort, this time I'm telling the truth.

Those travel posters I put up, they were for Jim. I've been saving money out of my food budget since we've been married. To run away with some man. None of them would go with me. I wanted revenge for spending eighteen years of vacations at your mother's house in Boston.

But Mort, forgive me. Forgive me for everything. I know I'm a bitch. Don't you think I hate myself? Why do you think I dress like this? Smoke? Bite my nails?

Come inside, we'll start new. I've saved over four thousand dollars. Half of it's yours. You're not broke now, you can come in.

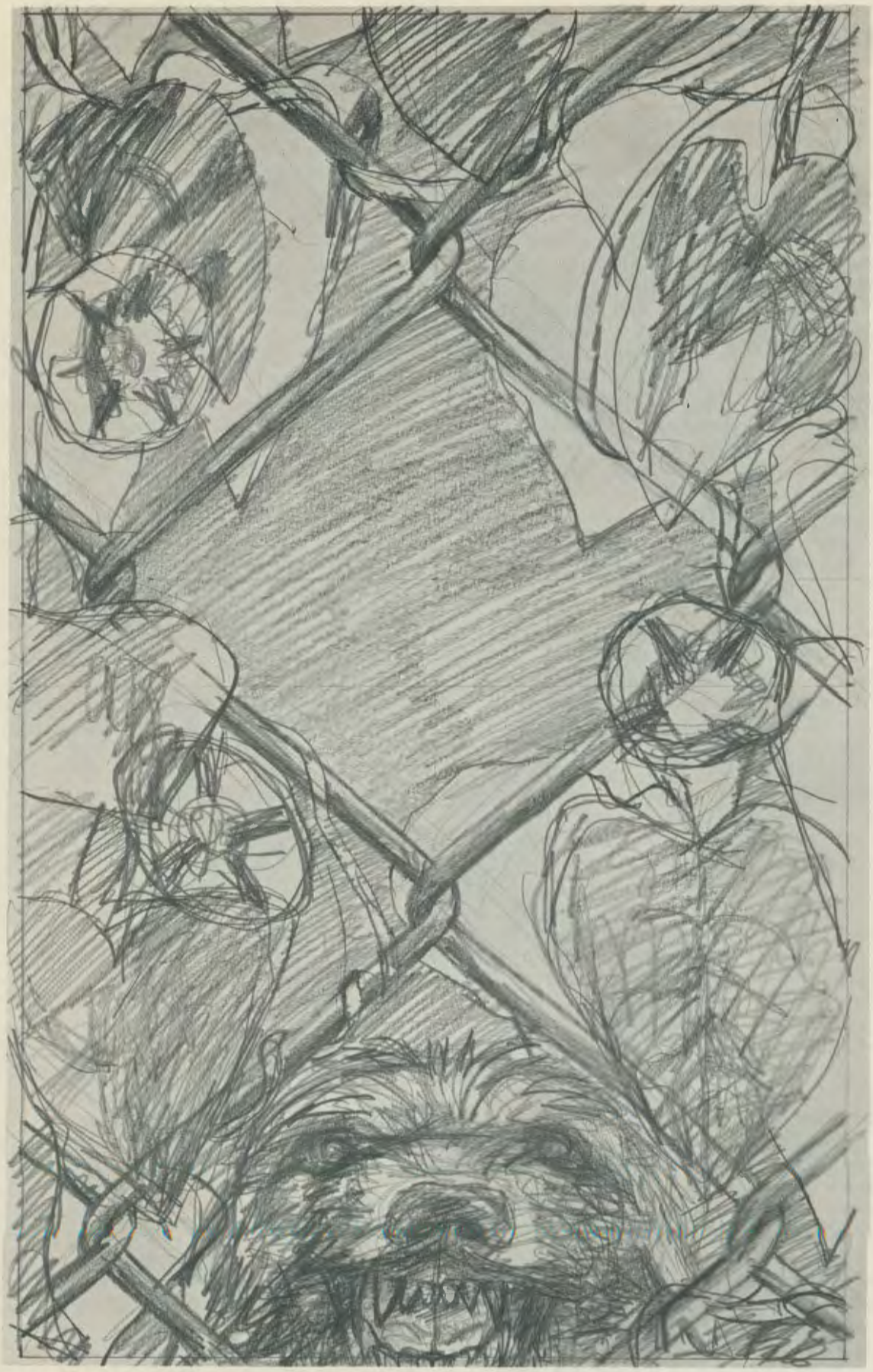
I'll give you three thousand. OK, Mort, all four thousand is yours. Aren't you coming in?

Mort, come in. Mort, you'll find another job. We'll move to a new apartment in a building that isn't on its last legs. We'll be just like we were when we first met. Maybe I'll even get a part-time job to help out. Everything's going to be wonderful.

(Pause. Climbing out)

Mort, move over, I'm coming out.

THE CURTAIN FALLS



fred gutzeit

contributors

GUY R. BEINING has had 600 poems in 200 magazines in the past three years. His work will be included in the California Review's anthology, Death and Suicide, and Screen Door will do a chapbook with introduction by Richard Neva.

BETTY BRESSI had two drawings exhibited at Ball State University (Muncie, Indiana); her drawings and grids have appeared in Gegenschein Quarterly and Fifth Assembling and her poems in Little Review, Small Pond and Jam To-Day.

ALAN BRITT's poems are widely published in magazines, and he has completed a collection entitled Incarnation for the Water Lily. He has been teaching at Bay College of Maryland, and has worked in the Poets in the Schools program.

HALE CHATFIELD received a 1974-5 grant for writing from the National Endowment for the Arts. An associate professor of English at Ohio's Hiram College, and founder of the Hiram Poetry Review, he has published three volumes of poetry.

ANDERSON CRAIG showed us how to put a magazine together. He has sculpted and has written many short stories and poems as well as a non-fiction book, Welfare Wasteland.

ELIZABETH CULBERT contributed three poems to our last issue. She has translated a book of Puerto Rican folk tales (Three Wishes by Ricardo Alegría; Harcourt), has had poems in several journals, including Chelsea, and is the poetry conscience of this magazine.

PAUL DE JOHN is a poet who makes his living as an actor and writes plays as a hobby.

JAY DE VOE is a free-lance graphics designer from Brooklyn.

STEPHEN DIXON's stories are in North American Review, Transatlantic Review, and eighteen other magazines, and he has received an NEA grant for fiction. Five stories are appearing in Making a Break (Latitudes Press).

MELVIN DERWIS, an architect and administrator, studies piano and music theory with Eugene Seaman.

PATRICIA EAKINS has had poems in journals including U-T Review, The Bitter Oleander and Ghost Dance; a short story in Bachy; and an essay in this magazine. A founder of BOX 749, she also studies music with Eugene Seaman, to whom both she and Melvin Derwis are grateful for his help with the setting of "Pierrot."

PER OLOV ENQUIST is a Swedish writer whose novel, The Legionnaires (1968), won Sweden's most important literary prizes, the Literary Award of the Nordic Council and the Swedish Literary State Award. His most recent novel is The Coach (1971). A play of his was premiered in Stockholm in September (1975) and his oeuvre has been translated into several languages. The Legionnaires is published in English by Delacorte.

DAVID FERGUSON, Editor in Chief of BOX 749, has had work published in a college-text anthology, The Now Voices, and in Walter Lowenfels' Where Is Vietnam? His play, "The Widows' House," was recently performed off-off-Broadway by the Hamm & Clov Stage Company.

JULIE GASKILL has been studying at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

MARLENE GERBERICK, whose art has appeared in several one-woman shows, is on the staff of Gravida and runs a prison art workshop.

EMILIE GLEN's poems and short stories have been widely anthologized and published in journals around the world. She acts off-Broadway; a poem of hers has won the Stephen Vincent Benét award.

VINCENT GORMLEY works as an orderly at a hospital in Yonkers and is a member of the all-volunteer Yonkers Ambulance Service.

MARC GRABLER cannot stop cartooning.

RICHARD GREENE, Literary Director of the Triad Playwrights Company, has studied at the H-B Studio and is now with Milan Stitt.

FRED GUTZEIT has had one-man shows at the Cooper School of Art (Cleveland), the Paul Kessler Gallery (Provincetown), and Paley and Lowe, Inc. (New York); his work has been exhibited in group shows throughout the country.

JANET CAMPBELL HALE, a Coeur d'Alene Indian, is studying law at Cal Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law. Her novel, The Owl's Song, was published by Doubleday in 1974, and her poems and short stories have appeared in magazines and anthologies.

JOHN R. HALL has studied with Robert Peters at the University of California at Irvine and has had work chosen for a journal of UCI poets. He is also an engineering draftsman.

TOM HANSEN, Michigander, has been teaching at Northern State College for seven years. His writing has appeared in Bleb, Some and other journals.

RICHARD HOFFMAN has had poems in American Review, Carleton Miscellany and other magazines and in a Prentice-Hall anthology. He edits Glyph and is working on a theater-piece about Aztec-Maya civilization.

BEVERLEE HUGHES co-edits Yes and has had poems in Epos, Minnesota Review and other magazines, and prose in Center and Tuvoti. She recently wrote in Provincetown through the Fine

Arts Work Center.

DANIEL JAHN's Noon Afternoon, a program of songs set to American poetry, was broadcast over Boston's Radio WGBH in April. This issue's "Morning" will be part of a similar program.

DAVID KASTIN was a co-founder and fiction editor of Junction, a Brooklyn College review. His poetry has appeared in several magazines; his writing on music, in The Village Voice.

VAUGHN KOUMJIAN's poetry and fiction have appeared in The Remington Review, Vagabond and Tri-Quarterly, among journals. He is on the staff of Ararat, has worked as a police reporter and studies at the Art Students' League.

KARL KROLOW, born in 1915, is one of postwar Germany's leading poets (he refused to let his work be published during the Nazi years). He is a recipient of the Georg Buechner prize.

ERNEST LARSEN is an anarchist at work on a book about Ravachol, the great French criminal anarchist.

LYN LIFSHIN is the author of Upstate Madonna, Black Apples, Old House Poems and several other books. She is widely published in magazines and has read at the Whitney Museum.

TIM McDONOUGH works with visual and aural language elements.

JOHN MILISENDA has been photographing his parents for the last seven years. Our selection is a small cross-section of that work.

DAVID NEAL MILLER is a doctoral candidate in comparative literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz; his translations have appeared in Bitterroot, Occident and elsewhere.

SHERRY MILLNER is a feminist artist living in a desert in California.

NORMAN MOSER's Jumpsongs was recently issued by Gar Press; other collections of poems and tales are coming from Thorp Springs and Desert Review presses. His work has been in The Living Underground among anthologies; he occasionally prints Illuminations books/magazines.

JEROME CLIFFORD NATHANSON, a BA in Greek, is working on a doctorate in English at the University of Cincinnati. His work has been published in The New York Times, Partisan Review, Antaeus and other magazines.

NICHOLAS PAPAYANIS is an assistant professor of history at Brooklyn College and has published several books on modern French social history. He has appeared in the off-Broadway production "Moonchildren."

D. F. PETTEYS, Poet-in-Residence at C. W. Post College of Long Island University, had poems in the third issue of BOX 749.

LEROY V. QUINTANA, lifelong resident of New Mexico, served in the infantry in Vietnam and is an MA in English (New Mexico State U).

JAN RING, from Montana, has been a literature teacher as well as unofficial therapist/social worker. Described by the Swedish art magazine, Paletten, as a "litteraturhistoriker," she lives in Göteborg doing a variety of jobs.

HARLAND RISTAU writes, "my verse has appeared in The Nation, Christian Century Today, and abt 400 other mags useless to mention. in another yr i hope to become a myth."

MARGARET A. ROBINSON's work has been published in Redbook and Aphra.

DENNIS ROMEO lives in New York State and has poems in anthologies and little magazines including Hawk and Whippoorwill Recalled.

PAUL ROTH edits The Bitter Oleander and lives in Syracuse, New York,where he translates the poetry of Yves Bonnefoy, Andre du Bouchet and Jacques Dupin. His two books are After the Grape (Flashing Eye Press, 1969) and Basements of Tears (Ann Arbor Review Press, 1973).

SILVIA SCHEIBLI, a graduate of the University of Tampa who studied under Duane Locke, is a co-founder of Immanentism. She has had two books published: Silent Feet on Boarded Fountains and The Moon Rises in the Rattlesnake's Mouth. She lives in the Mojave Desert.

WARREN SILVERMAN, since 1967 a free-lance photographer in New York, has had work published in such magazines as Ms., Redbook and The New York Times.

RICK SMITH's "Lenore's Pool" eulogizes Lenore Marshall, a poet who lived in Pennsylvania. He has run a writing workshop of women junkies at Chino (California), co-edits Stonecloud and does rehabilitation with neurology patients.

NICHOLAS SPERAKIS was awarded a 1970 Guggenheim Fellowship in graphics. His work is in the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum and the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Art, and he has had 38 one-man exhibitions.

WALTON VAN WINKLE, occasional student at Fordham University at Lincoln Center, works part-time in a bank. Two of his stories have appeared in the Fordham Humanities Journal.

ROBERT WALCH is a free-lance photographer living in Brooklyn. A 1973 NEA grant supplied the impetus he needed to begin a documentation of contemporary American architecture.

MICHAEL B. WILLIAMS, a journalism student at Ball State University, worked for two years in a newsroom and is now at Human Aid (crisis intervention center) in Indiana.