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HOD CARRIER AT NIGHT

presented by

Eric Wayne Crosley

has been accepted towards fulfillment
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M.A. degree in English

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HOD CARRIER AT NIGHT

by

Eric Wayne Crosley

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ART

Department of English

1993

ABSTRACT

HOD CARRIER AT NIGHT

by

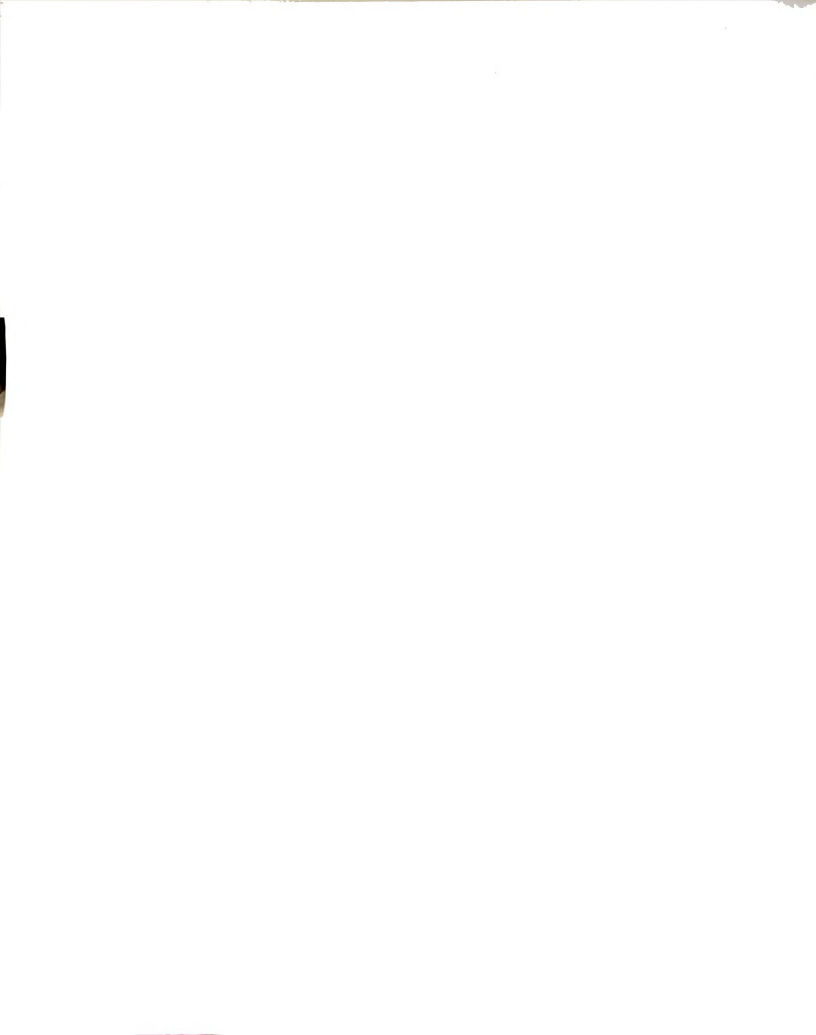
Eric Wayne Crosley

This collection of poems represents, among other things, work I have completed with Diana Wakoski and Doug Lawder. I have tried to show poetic speakers, in these poems, who are of interest and enjoyment. The issue these poems probably grapple with the most is identity. Also, I hope the reader to be able to feel some of the emotions I have in living the experiences which these poems are based upon.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

JUST ABOVE THE EARTH	1
DOC MAC WOULDN'T WAIT	2
COMING CLOSE	3
TWO RESPONSES TO THE MOST RECENT WAR	5
TO SWOOPING HERON	6
EXISTENTIAL BLISS AND THE SELF	8
WHY I WEAR TWO EARRINGS SOMETIMES	10
PRESENT, ON THE EDGE	11
NIGHT SONG TO THE SOLSTICE	14
THE DIFFICULTY WITH NAMING MYSELF	15
ALONG PEACOCK ROAD	16
FROM A TRANSSEXUAL DRAFT RESISTER WHO CHANTED HARE KRISHNA FOR SEVEN YEARS TO HIS FATHER	19
WHILE STANDING IN THE BOTTOM OF A HOLE ON BROKEN CEMENT IN A LANDFILL AT THE EDGE OF MY OLD HOMETOWN	20
SONG OF A YOUNGER MADMAN	21
FLOWING OVER THE FALLS	24
THE WAILING	25
SNOW WALK	28
TRAPSHOOTING AT THE EDGE OF A WINTER FIELD	30
CHANT FOR A DEAD WHITE HORSE	32
ICICLE AND STAR	33
STORM OF HARD LUCK	34
IN THE BROWN SHACK, OUTSIDE	37
LOAFING IN THE GRASS A LITTLE	38
IN FRIENDLY GRAVITY	39
GREY SONG	40
THE SUSPECT	41
TO THE MUG AND BACK	45
RUNNING IN SPACE	49

RUNNING ON DOUBLE YELLOW LINES	50
DANCE RUN	52
PLAYING MUSIC FOR THE FISH	54
ONE WAY OF DEALING WITH THE WISDOM OF AUTHORITARIANISM	55
TENANT	56
WILD DAISY	58
CRUSTY SNOW A WEEK OLD	59
HOLE IN MY BROTHER'S WALL	60
FLOCK OF GEESE FLYING	61
GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS	62
TURNING AGAIN	63
ENJOYING A PASSING TWILIGHT	64
PLAYING WITH MY SON AT MOON LAKE	65
SUPER POWER-OVER	67
HOD CARRIER AT NIGHT	68



JUST ABOVE THE EARTH

between leafy treetops
and dolorous clouds

a scatter of blackbirds
dances north

DOC MAC WOULDN'T WAIT

So he put
a shotgun
barrel
in his mouth
and fired,
to cheat
his brain tumor
of needless
life,
to deal somehow
with a difficult call.

COMING CLOSE

(for my father)

I'm living
as a monk
at the Hare Krishna Temple
in Detroit

and you call me
at 2 A.M.

from the Motel 6
in Sterling Heights.

You're drunk
and ask me
if I'd ever thought
of killing myself.

"Do you want me
to come see you,"
I ask.

"No," you say
telling me
about your difficulty

at the G.M. Computer Conference
about the technology
being too much

that you just wanted
to talk
with me.

Calling back

at 6 A.M.

I find you've
already left.

And when I reach you
by telephone at 7 A.M.

"everything is ok"

"mom is still asleep"

TWO RESPONSES TO THE MOST RECENT WAR

1. Some of us factory rats
wear T-Shirts
boldly declaring,

OPERATION DESERT STORM
THESE COLORS DON'T RUN

yellow ribbons pop up
on the cafe cash register
on the forklifts
the time-clocks.

Friends, when I left my house
to come to work,
I said to my dog,
"Spot, I really admire
your species,"
not feeling too good
about my own,

2. So caught up in jaded ways,
challenging the vision
of the flower, the bee
the star, the tree,
challenging the faith
of the sun and the moon,
challenging the ocean of meaning
in an honest fight,
challenging the hug, the smile
the joke,
challenging the human heart
orbiting in love
with Self.



TO SWOOPING HERON

You surprised us all
and didn't appear
for your sentencing
at one P.M. on Monday
having made your choice
to be a fugitive.

To me
it was a mistake
but what do I
know.

Perhaps you believe
more strongly
in your position
than I think.

You sold illegal drugs
to willing customers.

You showed me a quote
from President Lincoln
in 1840:

A PROHIBITION LAW
STRIKES A BLOW
AT THE VERY PRINCIPLES
UPON WHICH
OUR GOVERNMENT
WAS FOUNDED

So much for wisdom
this is 1987
and the Government-Man
is at your back
on your heels, now
with his long arm computers
and well paid agents
grabbing for you
to put you in a cage
if He can.

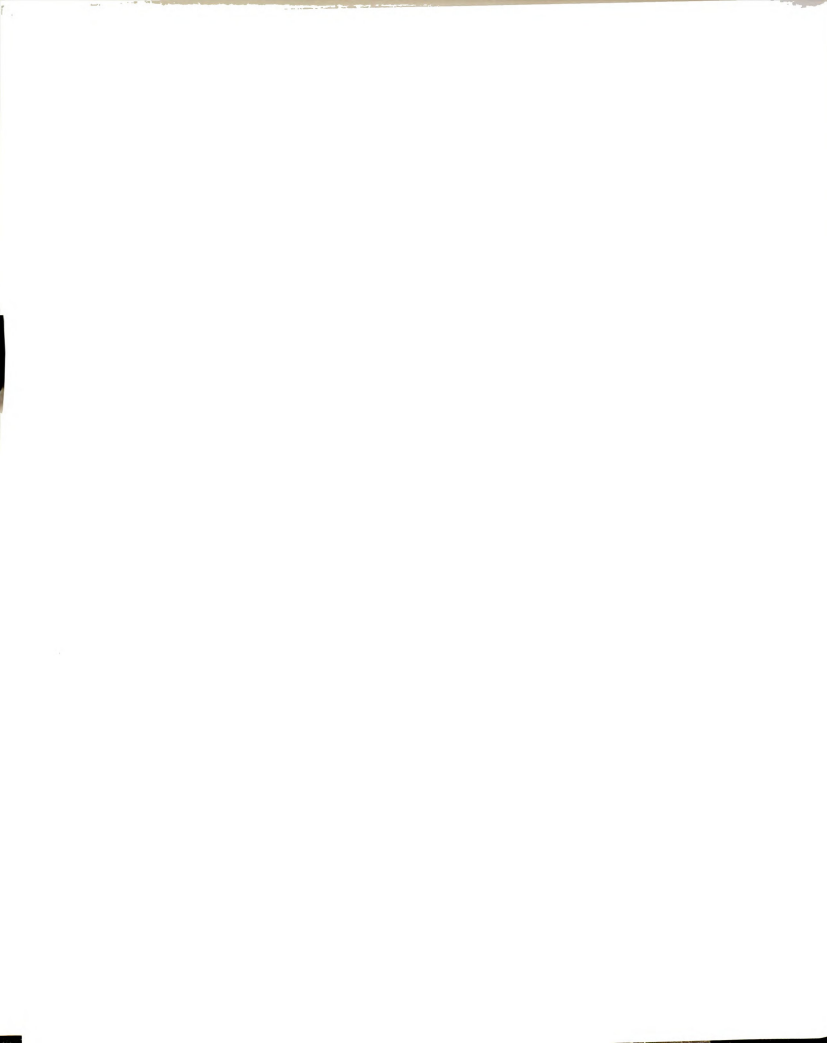
I wish you divine luck
my brother
on your journey
under stars
like nails.

EXISTENTIAL BLISS AND THE SELF

(for Joe)

I meant to say
transcendental bliss
when I said
existential bliss
as we talked
about the nature
of the self.

"I'm always trying
to satisfy myself
by being successful
at something I do
in the world
around me.
The self
is already blissful
so you don't
have to gain it
by getting a ringer
at horseshoes
or something like that,"
I say
as you listen
with a pensive face
that now
shows a smile beginning.



"You

searching for happiness
outside of yourself
end up looking
for countless lifetimes
within the cycles
of birth and death
when all the time
forever
eternally
now
then
always
you are alive
actually
in the realms
of transcendence
in pastimes
of love
and you just
have to wake up to the fact,"

I talk out, playing
as you laugh from your belly

knowing halfway descent bull
when you hear it.

We agree that ants
probably don't have
psychological
problems.

WHY I WEAR TWO EARRINGS SOMETIMES

Because I have a father
and a mother.

Because I have a moon
and a sun.

Because a potato, ice cubes,
a needle soaked in alcohol,
and the soft clever fingers
of a girl friend
twenty years ago
gave me ear lobes
pierced with holes.

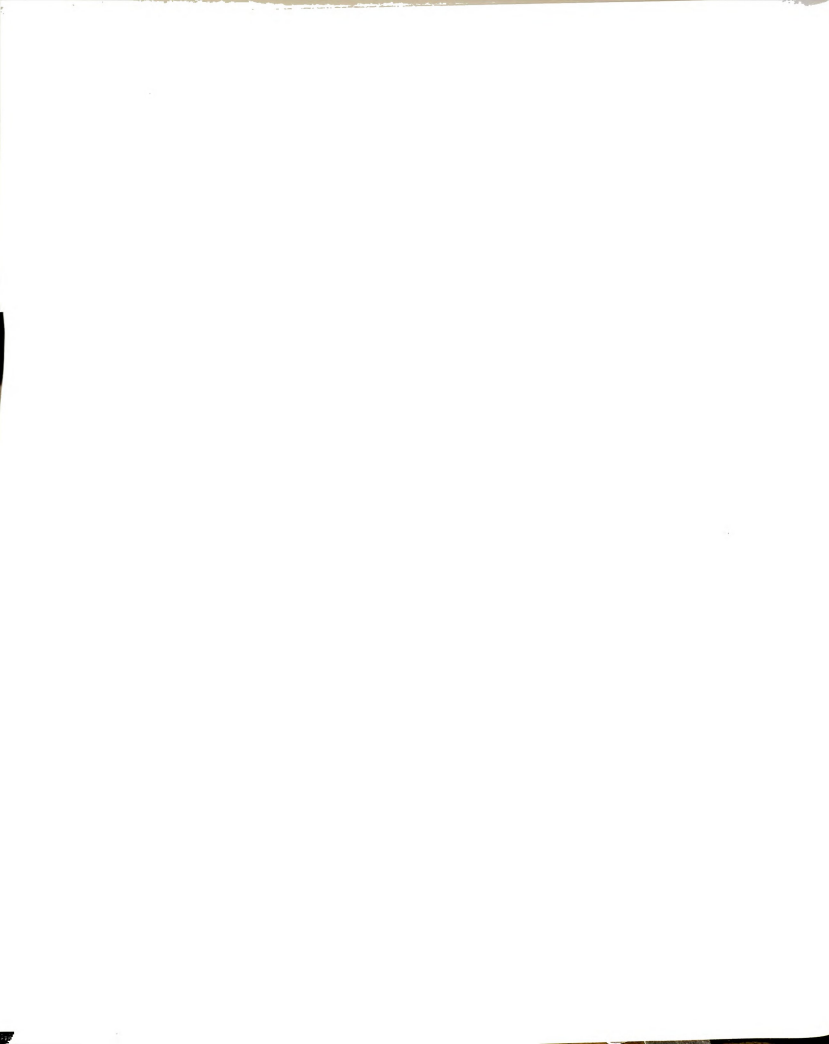
To play dress up.

To enhance my beauty.

So I can enjoy not wearing them, too.

Because of issues of balance.

To be a good example
for my son.



PRESENT, ON THE EDGE

it wasn't like him
to disappear
like that

we were all playing frisbee
and rollerskating
and toward sunset
when our playing was finished
Present, was gone

since I'd already freed him
once
from the nearby football stadium
I climbed back inside to look
but with no luck
and I went to sleep
wondering
what the hell had happened
to him

it was Labor Day weekend
the Animal Shelter
was no help

I worried
about what to tell my five year old
when he returned Tuesday night
from ten days of vacation
with his mother

"Son, Present got lost," I'd try
and I couldn't stand the thought
of his face

"Present" rising

I yelled at the sky
Monday night

then Tuesday morning
and no Present at the Animal Shelter
and no Present at the Small Animal Clinic

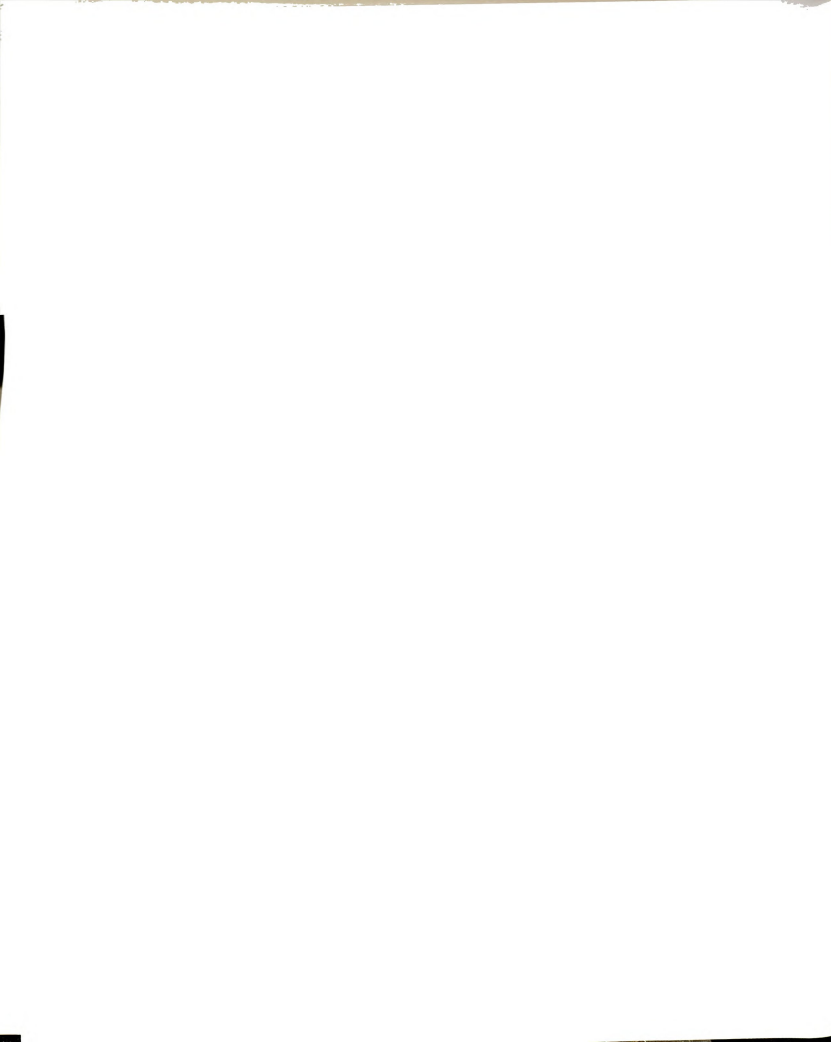
but just before the campus
police dispatcher
was about to hang up
a call came in
from the stadium

the officer couldn't believe it either
but a small brown and black dog
had been found that morning
up past the press box
on a small cement girder
about fifty feet
above the bleachers below

I hung up the phone
I knew

when I got to the stadium
and after climbing
the twenty zigzagging ramps
up to the top

there he was
perched
and not responding
to the kind offerings
from the workers' lunches

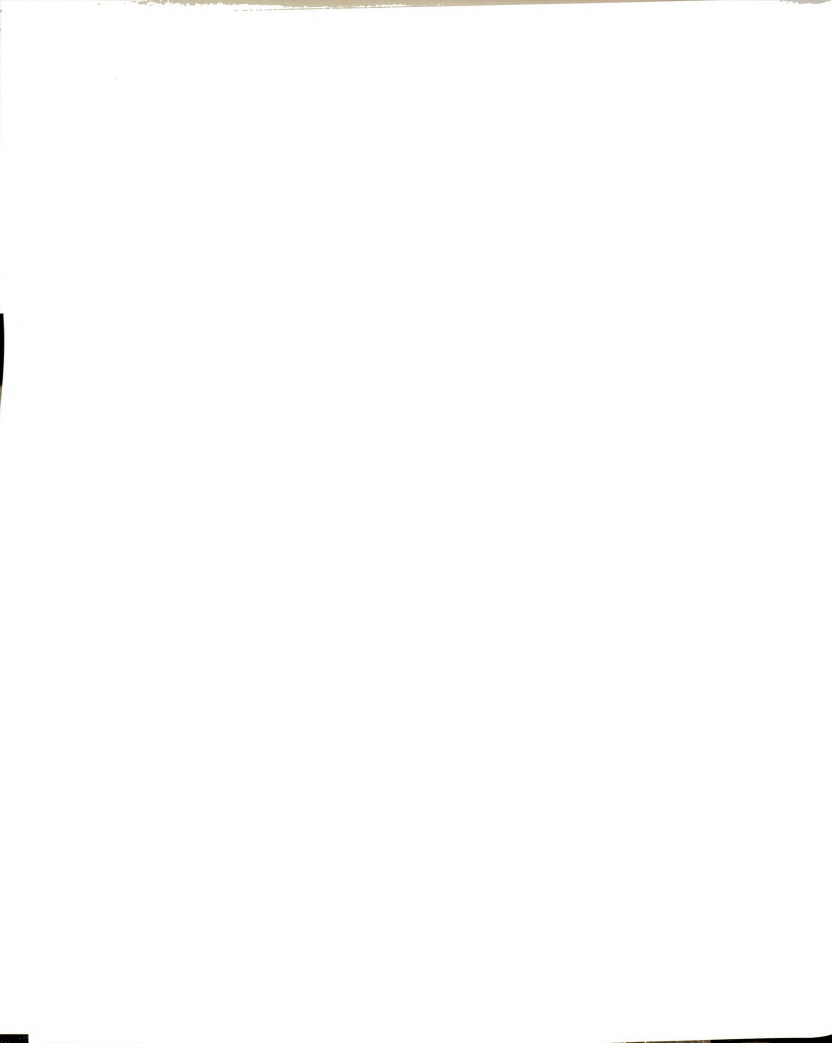


but recognizing me
he quickly rose up
from his protective curl

and walking very slow
and low
with his tail
wagging furiously

he navigated
the 15 feet of plank

and came home



NIGHT SONG TO THE SOLSTICE

rabbit in moon
dog on earth

stars in sky
i in big I

of

dog eating snow
in snaps of jaws

moon snow moon
snow moon snow

stars

like exhaling breath

curling white

out

into

the present

cold

THE DIFFICULTY WITH NAMING MYSELF

I wouldn't call myself a Man
since Dad always said, heatedly,
that if called, Men fight
for their Country in war.
Don't think he could help it,
his fire. Only now, I see
how that fire burned dark
in my own angry, terrified eyes.
Fighting the Draft, obsessively,
I drove into the dark
just up the road I travelled.

Fantasy of being a transsexual
flowered in me when I was
only a child, saw one, a picture,
tempting saga, in the National
Enquirer. No one else could know.

Two fires, both in my head
both in my heart, burning
the house of me to ashes,
leaving one hell of a clearing.

ALONG PEACOCK ROAD

We usually don't take Spot
along, but destiny was calling
and even though Prema
and Julianne were not into it
in a flash, not only myself
but Spot, Julianne, Prema
and our neighbor Sergio
were all inside a roaring machine
rolling to Peacock Road.

Millions of images
were passed through
before our conveyance
on four spinning rubber tires
advanced beneath
the dual bridge
of the interstate
super highway
being built
over Peacock Road.

Then, just as suddenly
as we had left
the sky now held
a broken cover of clouds
pouring down sunshine
like chatter
from the Great Spirit.

As the road waved
like an S
through a green carpeted swamp
there bingo, a blue heron
and me, "O God let me get
a picture," nervously zipping
the camera out of the top pocket
of my brown backpack, stopping
opening the door and exiting
Spot escaping the machine
the bird rising up into the air
a good shot getting away
Spot jumping into green water
and then just standing there
like a prophet, immovable
at the edge of his promised land
me furious
yanking him out of his trance
by the collar
me forgetting to breathe
Prema crying about a bee
in the machine
me feeling incompetent
because I brought no rag along.

I open the back of the machine
with a key
the bee
flies away.
With paper napkins
from the glove box
I wipe Spot's legs.

As I'm back in the machine
with the other kids
and swap Spot the seer,
I activate
controlled explosions
under the hood
and we all move ahead
on Peacock Road
to the goat farm
the blue heron
not on the film
but free in the swamp
in our hearts.

FROM A TRANSEXUAL DRAFT RESISTER
WHO CHANTED HARE KRISHNA
FOR SEVEN YEARS
TO HIS FATHER

I know like you say
I can't rub two dimes together
ok-

I know like you say
I'm 35 and a failure
ok-

I know like you say
you feel like you're a failure
ok-

But when I heard you say
on the phone last night,
"how ya doin' boy?"

I knew we were in love
I knew all the rest
was bullshit

WHILE STANDING IN THE BOTTOM OF A HOLE
ON BROKEN CEMENT
IN A LANDFILL
AT THE EDGE OF MY OLD HOMETOWN

A yellow bulldozer
sleeps nearby
on this Sunday sea.

Somehow, blue, so blue sky
allows sunlight
to dance in here.

Three turtle doves
on a wire balance themselves
with electric tails.

A girl and a boy
play with a ball
in front of a house.

Parallel rows
of corn plant stubs
flash into existence
in a winter field.

The road where my car
sits parked
now dead ends at the creek.

Remember the steel bridge.
Remember tossing a stone
and widening ripples
flowing downstream
disappearing.

SONG OF A YOUNGER MADMAN

I can't imagine
my bottom growing old
it's so soft and white.

I look away from the mirror
I'm at a crossroads
where I must choose
what I want.

I'm naked
at my writing table
with little prospect
of success.

A candle is burning
in the daytime.

Music is coming in the windows
a camera
lies under a lamp
a calendar is on the wall
a guitar is in its case
resting against books on a shelf.

I don't know where I'm going
but I'm going
I know.
I'm here on the path
onward through my existence
making
every day every moment
every breath every word.

Cleaning up dog shit
off the yard
being proud of the land
I live on
claiming it as my own,
playing with the grass
and flowers, vegetables, fruits
in the space where I live
and work.

Will I be forced to leave?
Will the Court side
with my present landlord?
Will I be allowed
to become free
of having a landlord,
free to buy and own
my little plot of Mother Earth?
I try to do her pleasure
in caring for my yard and gardens
and flowers.
She always gives herself.
How absurd to think
about the person who thinks
he ACTUALLY owns Our Mother
and can charge rent perpetually
to live on her
because she belongs to him
and the paper work proves it.

Arbitrary creation
of ways to look at ownership,
claiming the earth, the land
as one's own
forgetting the Right of every being
to the gifts of Our Mother.

Capitalism forgets
the broad cooperation
of Nature
the joy of sharing
the opulence of endless time and space.

It has begun raining
I hear.
I will go out.
I want a pack of cigarettes.
I want a lover.

FLOWING OVER THE FALLS

Just before midnight
on Thanksgiving 1992
the black lettering
on the small nearby monument
still reads.....

THREE WHITE MEN HUNG HERE
IN 1825
FOR KILLING INDIANS

The wind is alive, and perhaps
this small town of Pendleton
is anywhere?

The water of Fall Creek,
coming from the same source
as sun, moon, earth,
flowing over the falls,
sings with a poet's tongue,
of change.

THE WAILING

(for Aunt Nelda)

ALL right. Try this, then.
 Every body I know and care
 for, and every body else
 is going to die in a
 loneliness I can't imagine
 and a pain I don't know.
 We had to go on living.

James Wright

The old cliché covered with sores
 we've just walked past
 in the hallway
 sitting in her wheelchair
 is wailing, chanting...
 O GOD GIVE ME STRENGTH
 O GOD GIVE ME STRENGTH
 like some verbal combination
 of tornado and rising and falling
 tidal wave of old age.

We enter your room.
 You sit in the corner
 in your wheelchair
 an emergency button
 on a long white cord
 pinned to your blue dress
 an aluminum walker
 in front of you,
 not your piano.

Earlier today I sat at that piano
in your unoccupied house
tapping out little tunes
remembering your playing and teaching,
gazing at an oil you painted
hanging on the wall above.

When I ask you how you feel
you complain about never waking up
from your afternoon nap
that you can't think straight.
As the wailing resumes full cliché
O LORD HEAL ME I PRAY
O LORD HEAL ME I PRAY
blasting in from the hallway,
my brother asks you,
"Doesn't THAT drive you crazy?"
but your head, again, is hanging down
your eyes closed
your soft wrinkled hands
resting in your lap.

We watch the Hoosier Millionaire
low-volume on the TV
and a Mounds Mall maintenance worker
chooses the #3 green panel.
It raises up revealing the figure
\$1,000,000.
The winner looks frightened.
Your white hair doesn't move.

When a person who looks
like she could be your sister
rolls slowly into your room
in her wandering wheelchair,
you perk up
and utter, distinctly,
GET HER OUT OF HERE
A little surprised, I acknowledge
your request and wait.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME, I ask the intruder.
I DON'T KNOW, she replies.
DO YOU LIKE TO GARDEN, she asks me.
GET HER OUT OF HERE, you again urge.
YES I DO, I answer.
And on her own
our nameless friend and enemy
slowly turns around
and wheels herself away.

Again your head droops down
again the wailing swells
O GOD RETURN MY STRENGTH
O GOD RETURN MY STRENGTH
I stand up and walk to you
and kiss you on the cheek.
You manage a faint smile
as my brother and I
must leave you now
struggling alone
with your enigmatic
cliche,
your death art journey.

SNOW WALK

(for Prema)

when I said, watching the falling snow,

"Do you want to take a walk?"

even though close to midnight
and cold and you only three
you said,

"Yeah," with a boyish voice
I knew myself

and with joy
in our difficult steps
we left the house

though February
we found a Christmas light burning
under a snow covered shrub

both heads bowed
for a closer look
and we agreed
that we had discovered
where some elves were living

we didn't disturb them
and trudged on
beating step by step
across a vacant lot
deep in snow
holding hands

and again we pause
and begin kicking at the snow
creating a nest

we settle in
to tell each other some stories

as the wind carries diamonds
over our snow-angel bodies
over our heads
and everywhere we look

TRAPSHOOTING AT THE EDGE
OF A WINTER FIELD

Grey sky dropping snow
tickling the nose, cheeks
O the sparkles.

Dad pops shells
into four different guns
from a box on the opened
tailgate of his pickup.

The clay pigeon catapult,
fixed on a steel platform
centered on a steel tube
extending out of the boat
hitch, center of, bottom of,
pickup back bumper, ready
to perform its tool and die
magic.

Brother-in-law pulls
the curtain string trigger
fluorescent orange discs
soar, shots rip the silence.

Brother-in-law's daughter fires.
Children I don't know fire.
My son fires, hits a couple targets.
I fire, hit a few.
My brother fires, doesn't hit even
one, gets hit with teasing.

It's damn cold. Down the slope
in the sprawling field
one huge oak tree lives
its mysterious life.

CHANT FOR A DEAD WHITE HORSE

lying itself down
close to a small mountain
of fire wood logs.

Chant for a dead white horse
with an eye still open
a tongue still out
teeth still showing
a serious smile.

Chant for a dead white horse
lying on its side
in a barnyard
in wintertime
with legs still trying to run
in precise positions.

Chant for a dead white horse
we never knew
never rode
never fed an apple to
still circling
in the sun.

ICICLE AND STAR

I've been watching it
for several days
hanging on a broken
eaves trough.
Now whirling at night,
I gaze at red and blue
embedded sparkles
shining within,
the outer contours
like wrinkles on a baby
in continuous wet birth.
And looking up farther
between adult clouds,
a star, lecturing
across the vast,
a pin-point of light,
a brute ocean
of spherical fire,
lamp of another world
perhaps, questions me:
What do you know?

STORM OF HARD LUCK

(for John Skriba)

The little sphere up in the corner
of your hospital room, during
your last visit
was one main speaker
in a little d.t. drama.
You confided in me
how it was announcing
your coming death.
"No way jake. I'm a fighter,"
you shot back. Some strange
disease was crumbling your
nerves too, to boot, named after
some French doctor. You could
barely walk. Your heart condition
still exploding for ten years
after your lover broke away.

Remember our shared dream?
Remember the court battles we won?
Remember how close we came
to realizing our dream?
Remember the powers that be,
perplexed?
My God, a resident owned and controlled
mobile home park, our park, right
here in Michigan.

No way said the Mid-Michigan Landlords Association.

No way said the Legal Aid Society of Central Michigan.

No way said the judge in our district court.

No way said our landlord and his lawyer.

No way said the bewildered jury which allowed us to be evicted.

Meanwhile your mother followed your father into death and you landed in their house, alone, in a town fifty miles away from our blown apart neighborhood.

I was down too, but still hoped we could both keep fighting.

But your fight must have seemed like trying to snuff out the sun.



On our last visit to see you
you brought a pillow for my son
to lay his head on,
the terrible distance from the bedroom
to the living room.
Your legs collapsed
crashing your beautiful
eye-glassed face against
the hard wooden arm
of the soft sofa. Blood ran
from the bridge of your nose.
Your glasses, broken.
My son sat and watched.
I got a wet cloth and tried
to mop the blood away.
We left you resting on the sofa
that night. Death took you
before we could meet again.
You know all that.
What you might not know
is that I still love you,
that your life matters,
that you taught me much,
friend, about the storm
of broken hearts.

IN THE BROWN SHACK, OUTSIDE
(for Mike)

Songs beating along, jive
talk of the Now, alive,
Mike's pad, for me, a single
dad, a place to visit to sing,
to joke, tell stories, to be.
Underground with our treats,
the earth is solid below us,
we're quite dangerous felons
as some laws like to spell it.
To be fair, I admit frequent defeat,
but the cloud feeling remains sweet.
Outside, the seasons sing strong,
playing the democracy of the grass,
flowers, stars, trees, by rights
of self government, you and me.
The brutal sun is a poem in the right
balance of fun, the limits of serious,
in our home of gravity. Imagination
too often hostile to the traditions
of the sea, puts us nowhere. But
here we are, now, always singing
some tune in the windy quiet, free.

LOAFING IN THE GRASS A LITTLE

I'm taking care of my dog
here at the park
on the side
of the grass covered earth
lying on my back
seeing the clean line
made by the head and beak
legs and feathers
of the blackbird
resting on a wire
stretching in the sky.
I watch for it to fly.
Spot tugs on the stick
in his mouth
which I hold in my hand
as we lie together.
I see the quick, quiet
path of flight
of another blackbird
curving between cars
passing on the nearby road.
A swallow is flying
straight up
playing in the air
lighted by the sun.

IN FRIENDLY GRAVITY

At Jennifer, Bill and Charlie's house
I say a prayer
as we quietly walk by.
Spot pulls on his leash
this Sunday morning
under the clouds
blocking the sun.

He chases the stick
I send twirling, twisting, sailing
in friendly gravity.
A church bus roll past
on a nearby street.
I think of God in the grass
we play on.

Back at our house
I remember the flowers
out in the front yard,
how I fertilized them last night
and I want to go see
how they are doing.

Out the front door
I go to the edge of the porch
look down at the unwilted impatiens
who are shaking their colors
at raindrops hitting them from above.
And as I glance to the sidewalk,
Bill appears from behind a hedge
pushing an 8 wheeler of blue and white
and Charlie getting a ride
leads the way
kicking his bare feet
through the light morning rain.

GREY SONG

(for Richard Hugo)

This is the poetry, my friends,
of painted fingernails and
panty hose, of jockey shorts
and naked genitals, freshly
stimulated into a little death.
This is the poetry of loneliness,
of longing for a lover, of anger
at the status quo of fear, so
near, so damn dear, I hear. This
is the poetry of sight of light
singing in the silent night, the
decorations of antiquity. This
joke of the past becoming, now
the future. This is the poetry
of foot-binding and high heels,
of nightmare and daydream rampant,
of, catch this, diamonds, gold,
money, hunger, old and sold.
This is the poetry of insanity,
of numbness, boredom, meanness,
of birds with oil on delicate wings.
This is a little song of our human
frailty.

THE SUSPECT

(for the clever policewoman
who impersonated a hooker so well)

after purchasing
ten dollars
of green home grown
from a friend
it's 2 A.M.
and I'm in my car
with a choice

at the intersection
with two red lights
blinking above
I take a right
away from home
and drive
toward downtown

past the Big Boy
and South
on Pennsylvania

along Shiawassee
I see her

shaking a little
I go for her
pulling to a stop
just off the road
our eyes
finally meeting

she's moving
toward my car
her makeup
looks professional
the window
is rolled down,

"Hi, what ya up to?"
she just stares
"Want to go for a ride?"

"I've got something
more serious in mind,"
she offers

"I've only got five bucks
I'm poor
but I've got some good grass
we could share."

she tells me to drive
across the street
and wait for her
in the empty lot -
"The cops are thick tonight,"
she says

I'm suspicious
but I go ahead

very soon
I'm watching her walk
on her high heels
toward my car
through the passenger door
window
she's not smiling

I reach
and open the door
for her
she reaches into her purse
and opens her wallet
for me
and bringing
the inlaid golden badge
closer very slowly
she barks,
"You're under arrest."

"What?"
"What have I done wrong?"

and the driver's door behind me
is suddenly opened too,

"Look buddy, you are under arrest
either we can do this peacefully
of we'll just TAKE you in
what's it going to be?"

I throw up my hands

"ok. ok. I don't think I've done anything wrong. I don't believe prostitution should be illegal, but obviously you folks don't agree, so just tell me what to do."

and they did
until they had their suspect
safely in the back
of a Lansing police car
and he was thinking
like never before
about Whitman and Thoreau

TO THE MUG AND BACK

Stretching out
like an anxious tomcat
on a makeshift bed
of blankets

I spring up
and leave the bedroom

Prema and Julianne
sleeping on the bunk

tip-toe
down the hallway
past mom and dad's door
and sneak
out of the house.

Within an hour
alone
I'm driving my car
very slowly
near couples, married
arm in arm
riding in horse drawn buggies
around Soldiers and Sailors Monument
at the center of Indianapolis
bright Christmas lights everywhere
the large wooden wheels
rolling on the brick Circle
hoofs hitting with a clump.

Having seen enough
circling around
the tall phallic symbol
to war
several times
and after two dead ends
at cheap sex-shops
with lights pulsing
around in circles
like centipede legs,

I arrive at the Mug.

I pay two dollars
and enter,

a jukebox belting out songs
about a dozen dancing girls
in g-strings
high heels
and less
a sign
on the back wall saying

53 Exotic Dancers
and Growing

drinking males circling
the perimeter of the dance stage
pinning one and fives
on the dancers
giving out favors.

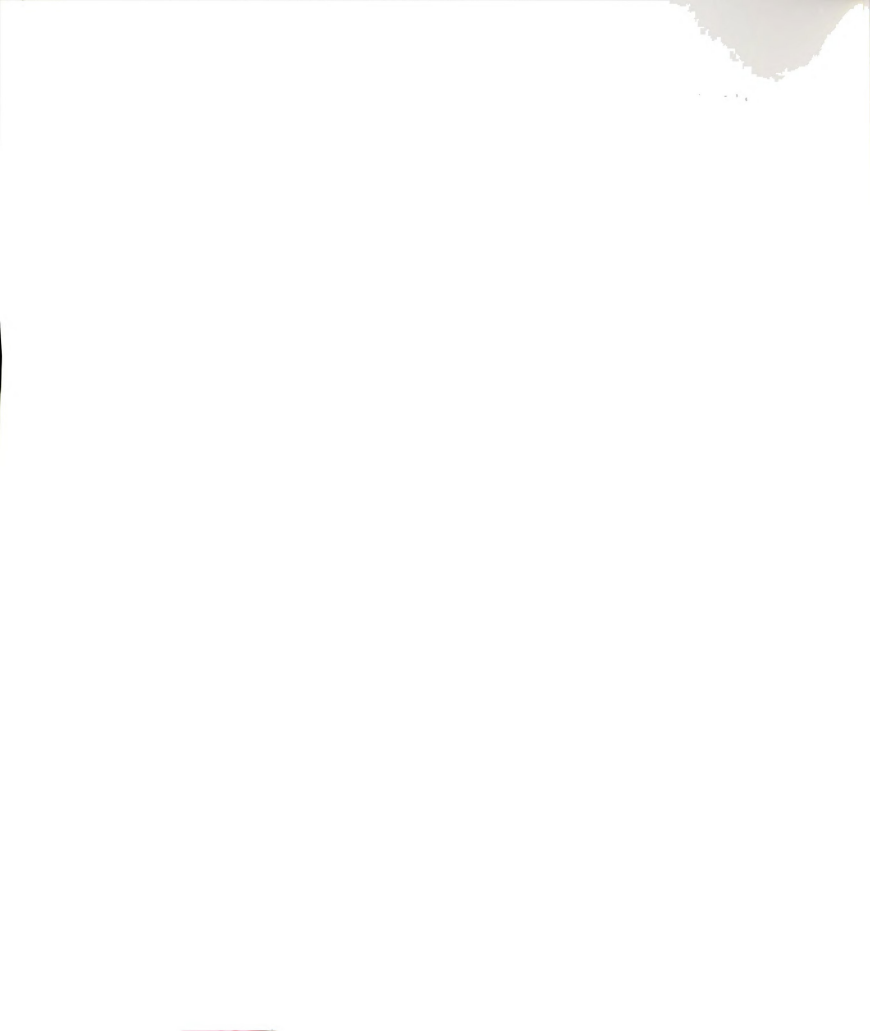
I'm still leaning
against a mirror
on the outer wall
a few beers down
when one dancer comes
and sits next to me
with her black-netted legs
stretched out
and crossed at the ankles
her purple pumps
resting
on an empty chair
in front of us.

Putting my arm around her shoulders
pulling her close
I ask,
"Do the guys every get to dance
with the girls?"

Smiling, she says, softly, "No,"
as her name comes over the P.A.
and she leaves me
without even a kiss.

I'm soon bored
and with the left front brake
grinding steel
I leave the city

drive under a black sky
dotted with stars
through Indiana cornfields



back to Pendleton at 5 A.M.
and the darkness
and artificial light
of the neighborhood
where I began.



RUNNING IN SPACE

it's like falling ahead
keeping the heart
lifted
in the downward
pull

this running
swinging of arms

gentle ups and downs
like the curves
of small breasts

in this flowing sun
on our spinning planet

and by now
your fingers are stiff
with November cold

your shadow flies
on nearby water
rapids grumbling

a rabbit
hops
across the road
from shadows

and above
white curling clouds
sail in blue



RUNNING ON DOUBLE YELLOW LINES

Out toward Seibert's
Apple Orchard
in the light
my inner thighs
under grey sweat pants
burning in the cold.

Tall leafless trees
stand motionless
lining a small creek
running
in its wide deep
ancient new valley
making music
as I pass.

White painted fences
edge this road
and across a fallow field
the thirty foot high
cement walls
of the Indiana State Reformatory
mock the sun.



A few black birds light
on the fence
as I'm running
on double yellow lines
a prodigal child myself
again hearing
that running water
as I have done
a U-turn
and am running
on home,
running
on home.

DANCE RUN

Chest feeling good
arms working
breathing
down through the ballpark
yellow bleachers turned up
leaning for the winter
snow covering all the diamonds
sun sweeping the ground
through clouds in the sky
in this run, this run
here along this road now
snow and cold and lifting
heavy boots in rhythm
along Brown Street farther out
to the cemetery
stopping at the Eggman marker
two sisters two brothers
and their stone still twirling
in this space I run on
slow not racing
lifting my feet in the gravity
light showing when I turn my head
a sycamore tree glowing by the gate.

Inspired with myself
I head into the pile of snow spray
off the road
go and down like a bobber
then west on east Water Street
bobbing, breathing full
finally turning onto McLoy Drive
where mom and dad live.

My body sings.

I make a line of holes
in the smooth snow
dancing past the window
of my old bedroom
past the swimming pool,
the silent garden,
into this backyard
one breathing creature
simple
with joy.

PLAYING MUSIC FOR THE FISH

Turning the red
round handle
of the tinny hurdy-gurdy
with my pinkies,
moving the worm gears
spinning its little
metal drum, its warts
plucking tines
makes, WE WISH YOU
A MERRY CHRISTMAS
chime, ring, sing

here with me in this dark room
just above the bubbles
surfacing, breaking
from a ten gallon ocean

to the placostamus, the beta
the neon, the silver dollar
to the headlight and taillight
tetra
to the angel fish
gazing so seriously
at my playing
dancing backwards slightly

in the soft
blue
aquarium light.

ONE WAY OF DEALING WITH THE WISDOM
OF AUTHORITARIANISM

I ask jerry how it is
when Frank, his boss
chews him out,
is really pissed.
After taking a bite
of his beef goulash
which he has just purchased
from me in the plant cafe,
at an illegal time,
he says, shaking his head
and smiling with disdain,
"When he blows
 it goes in one ear
 and out the other."

TENANT

A dim half moon
is showing
in the eastern sky
through the leaning
willow tree.

The kids'
red round swing
is hanging on a rope
from its outstretched arm,
now motionless.

Crickets sing.
I'm standing
next to the impatiens
which grow within
the comet
shaped bed
formed of stones
gathered at the river
by my son and myself.

The green garden hose,
coiled,
is hanging
on an old extra set
of mobile home stairs.

I've put them there, temporarily,
resting against the wooden ladder
my father and I built
four years ago
when I moved here.

The ladder
leads up
to the roof
of our house.

The sky is distant tonight,
the stars look faint.

I'm afraid the landlord
will force us
to leave.

WILD DAISY

(for Gary Snyder)

See

a wild daisy growing
by the curb
among weeds.

Finger

its delicate
white

tine-like petals.

Gaze

at its yellow belly button
like a soft sun
with wave patterns
as good
as stars
and oceans.

CRUSTY SNOW A WEEK OLD

(for Doug Lawder)

In this cold,
crusty snow a week old
is taking the fire of the sun
and making
a shower of flashes
which falls up
from the ground.

HOLE IN MY BROTHER'S WALL

A fresh hole in your
bedroom wall, as you slept,
jagged-edged
about the size
a fist or foot
could make
striking out in rage.
I'm visiting from up north
and now we all stand here
in your bedroom.
Dad, in his working mode
asking just minor assistance,
to get the tape measure.
You and I leave him working,
play golf on the Nintendo
in your living room.
You are 39 and never married.
Me at 40 and divorced.
Something about Dad working
you and me playing,
about his strong arm
knocking me off my chair
at our family dinner table.
Dad comes out of your bedroom,
explains,
"You'll need to paint the wall.
The hole is covered."

FLOCK OF GEESE FLYING

And it was queer, Goddess. How
I noticed the harmony
while driving the Interstate.
Machines of steel, rubber, plastic
rolling along at seventy miles per hour
in lanes just a few feet apart.
Talk about a circus of trust
and danger. The sky was blue,
the sun was hot on the face,
pushing its influence
in all directions, leaves, leaves
those sunshine eaters, everywhere
enjoying, no doubt, one hell
of a feast, gasses burning, gasses
being created as waves charged
through the air. And from inside
this torrent of earthbound autos
looking through solid transparency
I saw living beings with wings
flying in a pattern of two lines
converging to one point moving
ahead, quietly, gently, incessantly.

GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

So get out your clothes
those special coverings
step into your high heels.
You sit at, now, a table
your legs crossed in nylons
and his hand exploring you.
You drink several beers.
An older guy wants you too.
You were just going to play
not get involved.
You dance.
Your makeup is working.
He asks you to his apartment.
He helps you take off your bra.
You keep on your nylons
and black pumps on.
You lie on the bed.
He sucks your nipples.
You play with his cock.
He begs you to put his cock
into your ass.
You can't tolerate it.
You begin to cry.
You snap on your bra,
reposition orange water balloons.
You put on your dress.
You see your smeared makeup
in the bathroom mirror.
He's divorced too
shows you a picture
of his three year old daughter.

TURNING AGAIN

I sit with crossed legs
on the floor
in priestly robes
fingers rolling wooden beads
in a cloth bag
around my right hand
years past the point of no return
gazing in front of me
at my superior
on his elevated chair
about ten feet away
just the two of us
and silence.

Then my guru speaks:

"So you think there is a problem
with this philosophy.
There is no problem
with this philosophy.
The problem
is you."

The debate was over for me too.
I left without a word
turning again
to belief
in myself.

ENJOYING A PASSING TWILIGHT

Here
with you again
maple tree
at this time
of day,
just standing.

I can't hear
the life
inside
of you,
but I see its play:

rhythm frozen
in a winter dance

limbs spreading
out, up
into dark blue
lighted sky

twilight passing
into night

Venus, Mars

the seasoning
of stars,
snow.

PLAYING WITH MY SON AT MOON LAKE

Floating
on the clear water
in our row boat

you see a turtle
down by the bottom
which I see too
disappear
into the water weeds,
silently.

I row our boat
in the sunshine and sky,
gliding around lily pads
until the scratching
of rocks on boat bottom
at the old dam
on Moon Lake.

Out of our boat
I walk just ahead of you
exploring this world
of cattail
and wild green leaves.

Suddenly you are angry
demanding we return
to the boat.

Not wanting to fight
I pick up a stone
toss it in the water.
Your love for rock throwing
takes over.

I build a little medicine wheel
as you bombard granddad lily pad
then baby lily pad
with glee.

After our apple feast
I begin chanting,
you snicker.
I pat the top
of your blond head.

As we begin to board our boat
you spot a grasshopper,
poke it with a stick.

Grasshopper flies off
in a dazzle of wings.

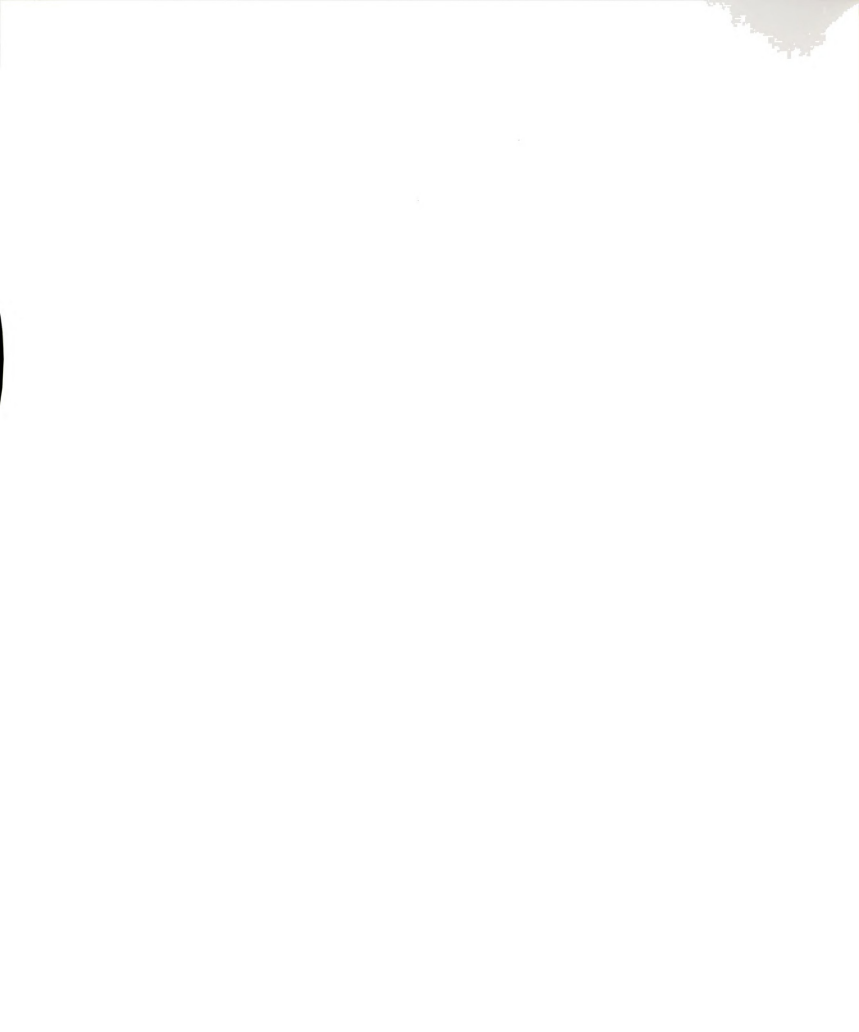
Out floating again,
when we measure,
with the stick you pulled
from under our docked boat,

taking readings
every few rows

you report, smiling

nothing but water
nothing but water
nothing but water

every time.



SUPER POWER-OVER

This is not even a crime.
The boss says nothing can be done
about it.
It might have something to do
with the conflict of interest
between workers and owners.
Slavery was practiced by the
founding fathers of the U.S.A.
My son asked me how Ross Perot
worked enough to earn
a billion dollars.
Our economic system is called
capitalism not moneyism.
It is also called free enterprise.
There is a minimum wage
but there absolutely
can be no maximum wage.
There is no connection between
Ross Perot having a billion dollars
(low estimate)
and economic exploitation.
We have reached final knowledge
when it comes to economic philosophy.
Our present economic system
is based upon a fully realized
understanding of human nature.
People can only be free
if they are capitalists.
There is only one true god
and he believes in capitalism.
There is no Ultimate Mother.
Women were not allowed to vote
by the founding fathers.
There is no such thing
as economic rape.

HOD CARRIER AT NIGHT

sloping in the mud
at five below zero

carrying cement blocks
through the maze
of scaffolding
you've built

close
to the blazing
Salamander's
hot sheet metal

the warming of hands
the winter of '71
dropped out of school
and working

after the breakdown
in the spring
you crawl
through an open field
and see dandelions
like never before

everywhere you look
there is the question
of your identity

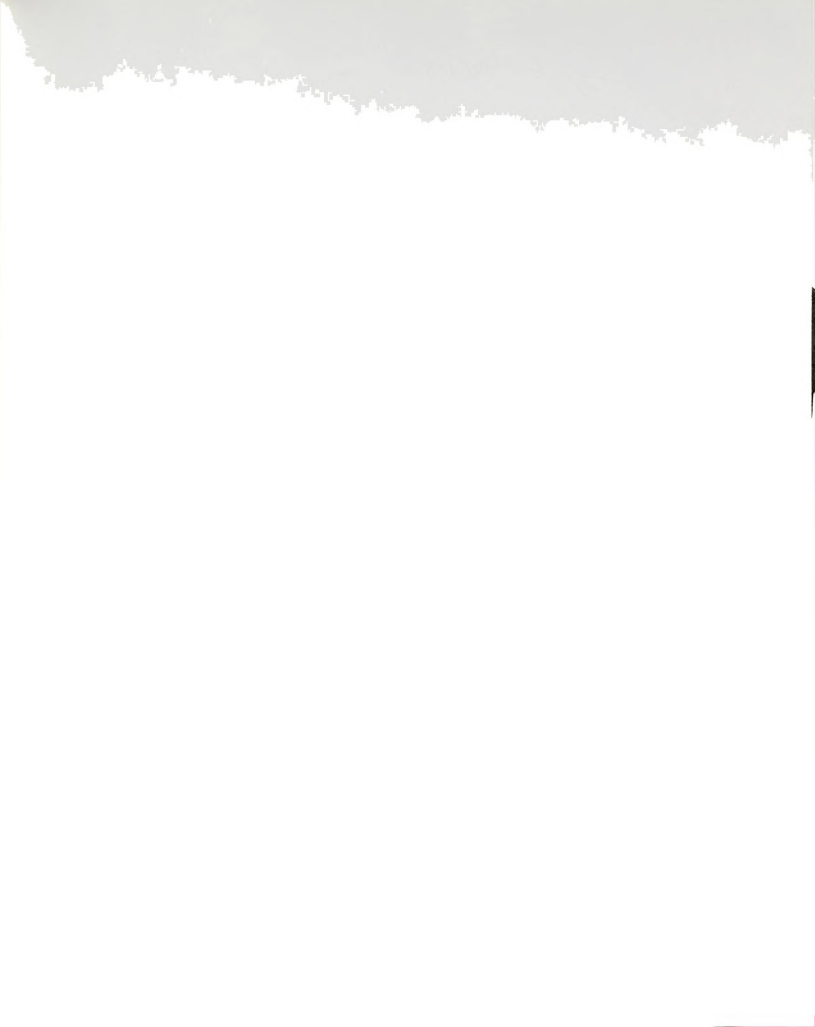
you don't know
if you
are man or woman
or some of both

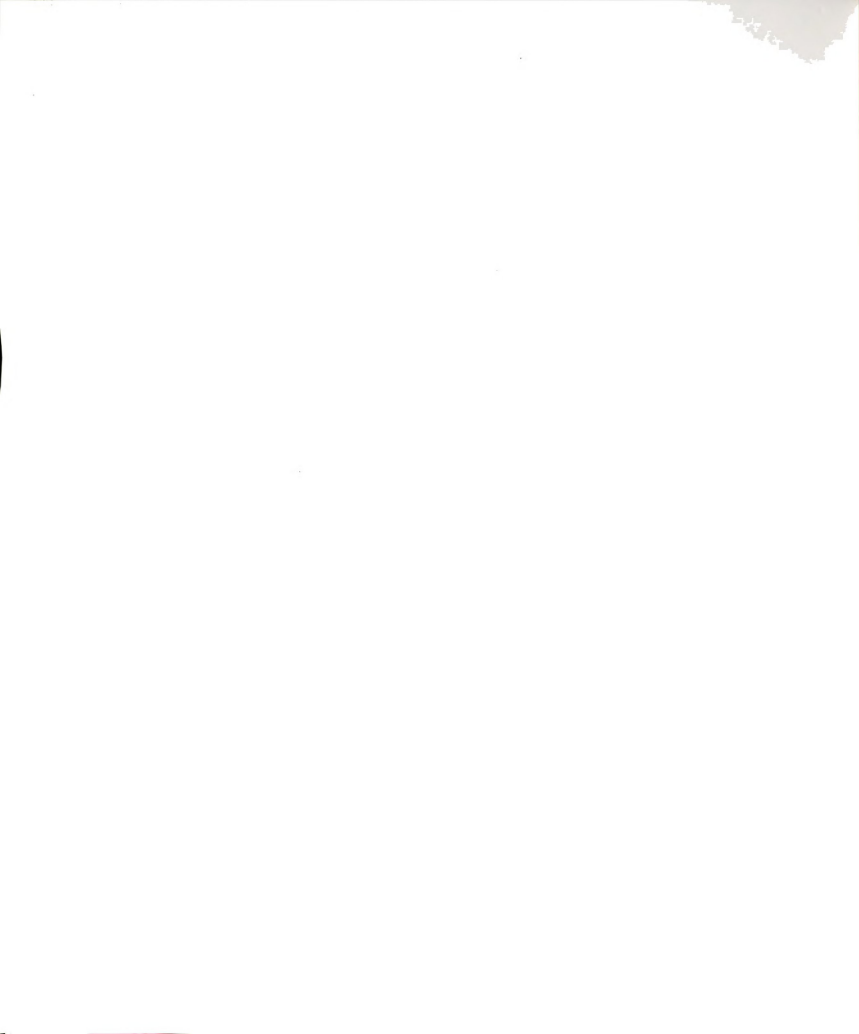
in the dark
on the land

and pulling through
the heavy mortar
full of antifreeze
in the steel mixing box
with the hoe

your breath escapes
is pushed out
turns white
and vanishes

you tighten the hood
around your head





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