RED CEDAR REVIEW

Winter Issue

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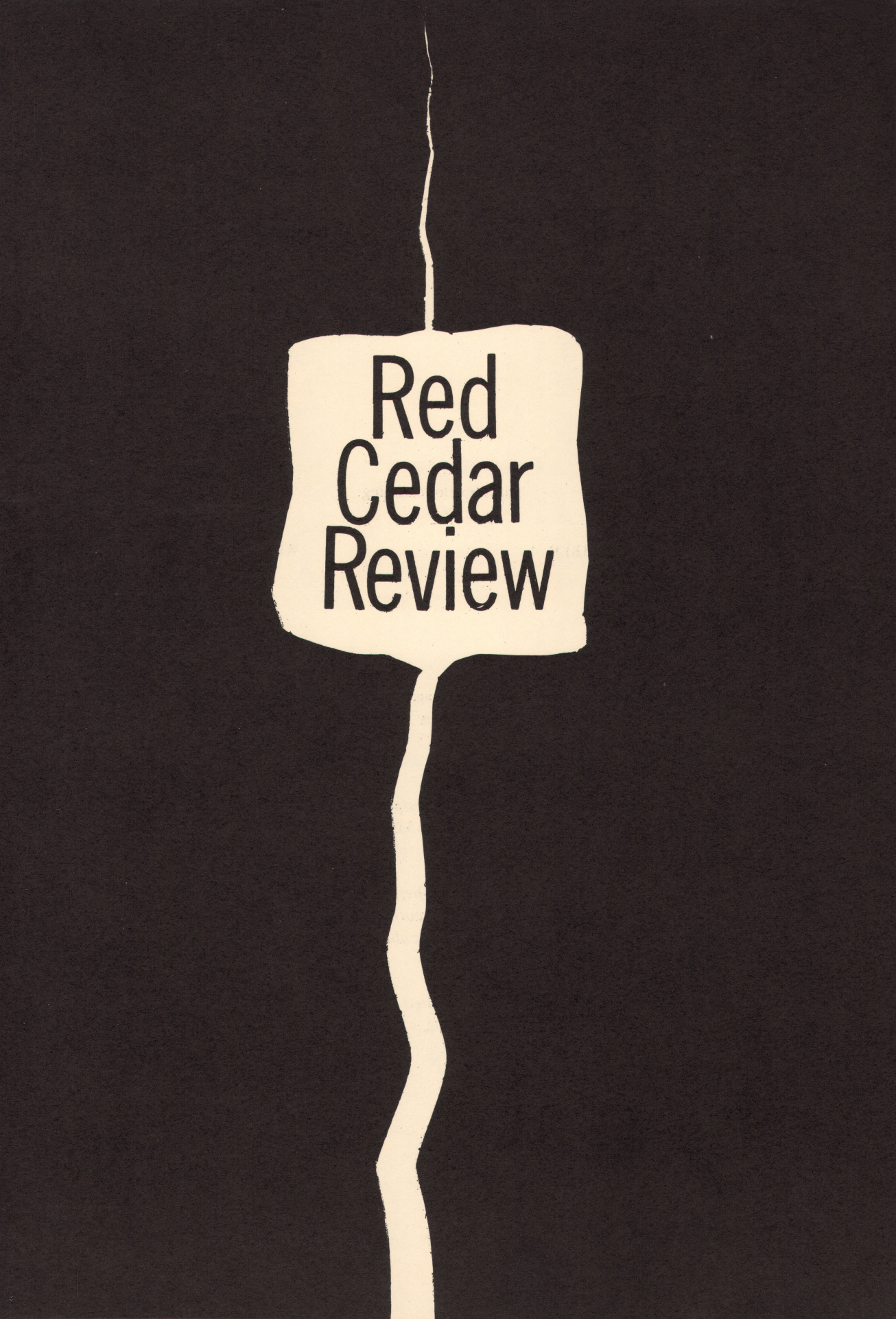
Red
Cedar
Review

Cover woodcut: "Boy Watching" by MIMI WARD

VOLUME VI, NUMBER 4 **WINTER ISSUE**

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"By the Mouth of the Goatsucker" translated by permission of Random House, Inc., publishers of Hypnos Waking, *by Rene Char.*

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loving couples *JIM YOUSLING*

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

by VIRGIL SCOTT

The plane out of Chicago was an hour late because of snow flurries and a low ceiling over most of lower Michigan, and there were naturally no taxis when he came out of the terminal, and it was after five before he could flag down a lost Chequered. "Abbott road," he said.

The driver leaned across the seat to slam the rear door against the weather outside. "Abbott," he said. "Where's Abbott, Mister?"

In Chicago, he reflected, no cab driver would have asked you that; give a Chicago cabbie an address as far away as South Bend, Indiana, he would have known where it was. "Pleasant Grove subdivision," he said. "You go due east. Out past the college. You know where the college is?"

The cab driver looked briefly, sympathetically at him, assessing the severity of his hangover or his affinity to bankruptcy or the size of his alimony payments. "That's out of my area," he said.

"Well," he said, "just so you've got enough gas...."

"Sure," the driver said. "Only I got to charge a flat rate. Eight bucks. Out of my area, like that."

"It's perfectly all right."

The driver put the cab in gear and ground away from the curb. "No rule of mine," he said. "We all got to charge a flat rate. Out of the city limits like that. Because we can't pick up fares on the way back, see?"

"It's all right," he repeated. "Don't lose any sleep over it. I'm on an expense account."

He put his head back on the seat and closed his eyes against the swirl of snowflakes coming at him against the windshield and against the back of a cabbie's head who did not know where Abbott Road was and against a thin headache. It had been a rocky week, and he was bushed, and naturally this had to be a Thursday and the office to face the first thing tomorrow morning. In the week now down the drain he had smoked too many cigarettes and drank too many Scotch-on-the-rocks and lost too much sleep, and always, over the drink in one hand and the cigarette in the other, the dealers on his ass, the dealers searching him out through the eddy of smoke and the burst of too many voices in the crowded hotel suites, the dealers narrating sad stories of orders stacked up clear into April and no goddamned inventories, or people begging them on their knees practically to take their money and nothing to deliver except the convertible in the showroom window, and what was the goddamn story on production this year, for sweet Jesus's sake? And I am getting to old for this crap, he thought; I am too goddamned close to forty to be living like this. He hoped that Janet would have the apartment straightened up before he got there, that at least the beds would be assembled and made up. And that she wouldn't expect anything from him in the way of a homecoming for at least one more night.

He opened his eyes again to the weather outside and the flicker of thirty acres of lights in the Bonnavista Shopping Center and the problems of existence when you were an Executive Vice President in charge of production in an affluent society. "Abbott's another mile," he said. "You take a left at the blinker."

"I know where it is now," the cabbie said. "Abbott's where they're putting up those new apartments."

"That's right," he said. "That's where I live."

The driver glanced over his shoulder. "I didn't think they was finished yet."

"Some of them aren't. We just got in a week ago."

"Jesus," the driver said. "Four hundred units, somebody said. At two eighty a month, somebody said."

"Five hundred," he said. "At three sixty a month if you want two bedrooms and an attached garage."

"Jesus," the driver said. He swung left through the yellow blinker. Down the road the Riverview Apartments loomed through the dusk, three, four, five rows of two-story, flat-roofed brick falling off forever and forever across the raw, wounded earth into the January night. "All I can say is," the driver said, "a guy better not be stoned if he comes home late. He could buy himself a hell of a lot of trouble."

"Or a hell of a lot of fun," he said. He leaned forward in the seat. "I live in three oh one," he said. "You'll have to use that spot. I'm a stranger here myself."

The driver gambled on one of three entrances leading into the apartment units. He felt the shocks give when the cab swung off the pavement onto the frozen, rutted clay, and the thought crossed his mind that Farhut Realty had better get the lead out and blacktopping in, otherwise there'd be all hell to pay getting a car out of here come

spring. The cab slowed, and a spotlight danced briefly above an entrance, and the cab ground ahead another twenty yards and then stopped. "There you are, Mister," the driver said. "Three oh one."

The drapes in three oh one were drawn tight across the quarter ton of thermopane which looked out upon a frozen, rutted world; behind them, a light seeped feebly through like light escaping through a careless blackout curtain. Climbing the concrete steps to the thick door with the oversized brass knob, he was hoping to God that Janet hadn't gone out to dinner or something; a week ago there had been some mix-up in the manager's office about keys, and he had had to go off without any, and the wind was whipping down the alley of brick like a hurricane forced into a funnel, and his all-weather topcoat had not been manufactured with this weather in mind. At the top of the steps he shifted his two-suiter to his left hand and raised a fist to knock. Then he remembered that Janet had a small-town background, and in seventeen years of marriage he had never managed to convince her that part of the fullness of life was learning to lock an apartment door behind her, and so he changed his mind and tried the knob first. It turned easily in his hand and the door swung open and he stepped through into the light and the warmth.

Janet, he noted with relief when he came out of the vestibule into the living room, had had a busy week too; the apartment had indeed been moved into. The Danish-modern furniture was all precisely in place. The original oil abstract, which she had paid three hundred dollars for at an exhibition at the college and which had always looked to him like paint flung against two square yards of canvas with a faulty spray gun, was hung on the far wall. She had even fanned out, on the coffee table before the picture window, a half dozen copies of *Time* and *Fortune*, and the current copy of *TV Guide* was lying on the television set in the corner. He dropped his suitcase in the center of the beige carpeting and stood there a moment, luxuriating in the soft light and the warmth and the feeling of having come home. "Hi, baby," he called out. "You home?"

Somewhere down the hallway which led from the living room to the bedrooms he heard a door open, and then she came out of the hallway shadows. She was wearing a pair of those black, translucent harem pajamas which were being advertised in *Playboy* and *Esquire* this year, and what between supervising movers on the location of furniture and unpacking cartons, she had found time to visit a beauty parlor and get her hair transformed from auburn to platinum, and she looked like she had just awakened from a nap. "Is that you?" she said. "You weren't due til tomorrow."

"I'd have phoned," he said, "if the phone had been in. Didn't you get my telegram?"

She shook her head.

"I will never understand," he said, "how AT&T got to be Blue Chip. If all they ever had was Western Union, they'd have gone into receivership years ago. You miss me, baby?"

"I always miss you," she said. "Solitary drinking is for the birds. How was New York?"

"Chicago," he said. "New York was in November."

"Chicago, then. You look tired."

"Not just tired. Blind. Thank God they haven't scheduled me for any more good-will tours in the immediate future. Not until Phoenix in April. That's how it was." He tossed his topcoat in the general direction of the Danish sectional across the room and dropped into the chair behind him. She made a small motion toward him; for a moment

he thought she was going to cross the room and sit down in his lap, the way she did sometimes when he was just back from a trip. But she apparantly changed her mind. "How was it here?" he said. "In my absence?"

"It went to seven below last night," she said. "That's how it was."

She was standing just outside the circumference of the light, one shoulder barely touching the plastered archway, and the light from the table lamp behind him was as soft and diffused as the light in one of your better restaurants, and he couldn't swear to it, but through the harem pajamas he thought he could follow the darker line of black panties and black bra. And if I hadn't been married to her for seventeen years, he thought, and if I weren't so tired, and if I didn't have the office to face first thing in the morning, that pose might put an idea in my head. Except that he wished she had left her hair alone. He had liked it auburn, but now it screamed bottle job so loud you wanted to plug your ears. Besides, it reminded him of Chicago, and that dealer's wife who thought that maybe she had an argument which could convince him to increase her husband's quota thirty percent. "Dillard's down for the Miami trip in February," he said. "But I've been thinking. How'd you like to go to Miami in February?"

"It's going to fifteen below tonight," she said. "That's the prediction. Just ask me."

"I'll see what I can do," he said. "Throw a little weight around. Dillard can have San Antonio in July. One condition, though."

"Anything. Just name it."

"No big production. Just change back to being a redhead."

She touched her hair with one fingertip. "You don't like me blonde?"

"Honey," he said, "you could smell the peroxide from across a football field."

"I thought variety was the spice of life. That's what all the sex manuals say."

"Baby," he said, "there is another saying about all cats being the same color after dark, and I have experienced variety, and all I ever found out was that you pay more than you buy. Anyway, I'm almost forty, I'm resigned to monogamy." His eyes drifted from the line of her black panties to the abstract across the room. He had sometimes played with the idea of taking up painting when he retired; at three hundred bucks a canvas, he thought, he would lay you odds he could turn out a picture a day and still come up to that par. He could make himself a goddamned fortune, he thought, and no necessity for spending half his life in distant hotel suites, either. He wondered if the painting said as little to her as it did to him; you'd never get her to own up to it, but he had a secret theory that she'd only bought it because all their friends had gone in for originals by unknown impressionists. Probably the influence of living in a college community, he thought, and looked back at her. "You've been a busy little girl this week," he said. "The place looks great."

"The movers did most of it."

"Did they hang the painting?"

"No. Mable helped me. Mable Resling. They live next door. He's in Customer Relations."

"You mean with us?"

"Everybody seems to be with us. Everybody I've met. Jim Resling. He says he knows you."

He shook his head. "Maybe he's new."

"They've been here a year. They used to live in Brookfield Heights."

"It's a big operation down there. Maybe I'd know his face if I saw him."

She raised a hand as if to touch her hair, then, apparently, decided against calling further attention to it. "The Sayers are in three eleven," she said. "Charley Sayers. He's in charge of carburetors."

"Not carburetors. Dan Hoffman runs carburetors."

"They transferred him. Saturday. To Peoria, Illinois."

He stared at her. "Dan? What the hell'd they want to go and do that for? He's only been here eight months."

She shrugged. "I like her," she said. "Betty Sayers. They play bridge. I asked them over for Saturday night. All right?"

"Sure, baby." His eyes drifted back to the oil. "Did the movers scratch that frame?"

"Where?"

"Right there. Right under that blob of orange."

"That?" she said. "That's been done a year, honey. Remember a year ago Christmas? When it fell down at that party?"

He couldn't but he didn't say so; he probably hadn't really *looked* at that oil since a year ago Christmas, but it didn't make any difference so long as they had no claim against the van line. He got heavily out of his chair. "I'd better unpack," he said.

"Did they feed you on the plane?"

"Are you kidding?" he said. "I came local from Chicago. The airline they operate out of here, you're lucky they give you a seat. I've got a theory they're a subsidiary of Greyhound."

"I didn't expect you til tomorrow," she said. "The only thing in the house is TV dinners."

"TV dinners are fine."

"Fix you a drink?"

"Christ, no. I bet I soaked up ten gallons of alcohol in Chicago. I think I'll go on the wagon for a couple weeks." He picked up his suitcase and headed for the bedroom. He stopped when he got to her, and leaned, and kissed her on the cheek. "Do something about the hair tomorrow, huh, baby?" he said.

"If I can get an appointment," she said. "I only did it because I thought you'd like it. I thought it would be a change."

"Well, I don't," he said. "It reminds me of Chicago. All you see in Chicago is hair that color. In every goddamned hotel suite you wander into. It's the way they advertise their profession." He patted her buttock mechanically, absent-mindedly. "I don't intend any insult, baby," he said.

She had also found the time, he noted, when he entered their bedroom, to do some shopping this week; she had bought green bedspreads to match the drapes in here. He emptied his pockets of cigarette lighter and case and billfold and ballpoint pen and pocket memo pad, lined them up neatly on the dresser, then shucked his coat, hung it in the closet, and put on a sweater. The apartment was arranged so that you could go through the bathroom off this bedroom into the kitchen, and both bathroom doors were slightly ajar, and he could hear her doing things in the kitchen, opening a refrigerator door, putting

something on the kitchen counter, saying something he couldn't make out. He crossed to the bathroom door and opened it wider. "What?" he said. "What'd you say, baby?"

"I asked if you wanted fried chicken and peas or roast beef and corn?"

"Chicken," he said. "I see you bought some new bedspreads."

"And the coffee table," she said. "In the living room. That's new, too. Didn't you notice?"

He hadn't; so far as he could remember, the coffee table had looked just like the one she had apparently been unhappy with. But the spreads were clearly different. "What are the keys on the dresser?" he said.

"What?"

He walked into the bathroom, opened the other door wider. "The car keys on my dresser," he said. "They yours?"

"Oh," she said. "I forgot. They delivered your car while you were gone"

"No kidding," he said. "How does it look?"

"I don't know. To tell you the truth, I can't tell them from last year's."

"I'll write a memorandum to the president," he said. "Pass along that message. It ought to warm his heart. We only spent eleven million this year redesigning."

"I can't help it," she said. "I can't see any difference."

He stepped back into the bathroom and splashed cold water on his face. Back in the bedroom, he decided to unpack his suitcase later; instead he wandered down the hallway into the living room again and leafed open the *TV Guide.* Television for the evening offered him "Dennis the Menace," "Zorro," "Batman" (second of two parts), "Love that Bob," "Beverly Hillbillies," "Leave it to Beaver," "Dobbie Gillis," "Hullabaloo," and "I've got a Secret." If you wanted to put up with very eccentric reception, you could also watch "Lost in Space," "Patty Duke," "My Mother the Car," "Andy Griffith," and "Gilligan's Island." The nine o'clock movie was something called "I Bury the Living." When he dropped the *TV Guide* back on the set, he was thinking that maybe he ought to add some television stock to his portfolio; you never knew when a healthy net loss was going to come in handy at income tax time. Then he crossed the room and dropped into a chair and picked up this week's *Time.*

He had negotiated stories on atrocities in Vietnam, two strikes, a weather disaster, three murders, and two political scandals, and he was well embarked on a military coup in South America when she appeared in the room again. "Want to eat in here, honey?" she said.

"Fine," he said. "That would be fine, baby."

"Want to set up the TV trays?"

"Sure. Where are they?"

"In the vestibule closet."

He struggled out of the chair, got the trays out from behind a cardtable and a slide projector, and set them up. She came back in with the aluminum-foil trays. He wasn't particularly hungry, and he knew before he ever tasted the meal that the potatoes would be instant, and the butter on them was margarine, and the chicken would taste strongly of lard. He looked across the corner of the room to where she sat with a fork poised above her slice of beef.

"Christ, but it's good to be home, baby," he said.

At a quarter to nine, he could no longer keep his eyes open. He got up in the middle of a headache commercial and went to the bathroom, then went on into the bedroom. She had unpacked for him, and his pajamas were laid out on his bed. He undressed and went back out into the living room, she was leaning slightly forward in her chair, absorbed in a hair spray commercial. "Look, baby," he said, "I think I'll hit the sack."

She wrenched her attention away from the set. "Already?" she said. "It isn't nine yet."

"I'm bushed. And I have to be out of here by eight tomorrow."

"All right, honey." She got up.

"You don't have to come," he said. "Watch the rest of your program."

She had her finger on the switch. She turned and looked at him. "You sure, honey?"

"I'm sure. I'm beat, baby."

"Well," she said, "I'll get ready. That way I won't bother you when I come."

"You'll miss the rest of that program."

"I won't miss anything," she said.

He was in bed, the electric blanket up around his ears, when she came naked out of the bathroom. Ordinarily, her last ritual before retiring was fifteen minutes of exercises, knee-bends and sit-ups and back-bends; one of the small pleasures of his existence was to lie in bed and watch her exercise in the nude at the foot of their beds. But tonight she omitted them. She came around between the beds and leaned over and kissed him on the cheek, then got her nightgown and robe out of the closet. It took her perhaps two minutes, but later, if he had been asked to testify to it under oath, he would have been able to swear that he was asleep before she ever switched off the light.

When the alarm on his nightstand awakened him, she was asleep on her stomach, her hair, dark at the very roots, spread out over the pillow. He slipped on a robe and slippers and stole out of the room. In the kitchen, the morning coffee was perking cheerfully in the automatic coffee pot, and she had set half a chilled grapefruit in the very front of the refrigerator where he would be sure to find it. He spooned out the maraschino cherry and plunked it in the sink, dropped two slices of toast in the toaster, and poured a cup of coffee. The kitchen cabinets were new to him, and he could find no jelly, so he ate his toast without.

She had not stirred when he came in from the bathroom; even the shower had not awakened her. He opened dresser drawers and closet doors and removed the plastic dry-cleaning bag from his Oxford-grey pinstripe as quietly as he could. The pants fitted a little too snugly around his waist this morning; he had probably put on a couple of pounds in Chicago, and he resolved that if he got a break in his afternoon, he'd work out an hour in the company gym, sweat some of the fat and alcohol out of his system.

He slipped on his suit coat, then turned and looked down at her one last time. She was still asleep on her stomach, her face buried in the pillow, her left hand lying white and totally relaxed against the lavender sheet, her diamond solitaire looking phony as Woolworth glass in the uncompromising light of early morning. He bent and kissed her on the neck. "Bye, baby," he said softly.

She stirred then. "Bye, Freddie," she murmured into her pillow.

The Riverview Apartments had been built with garages backed up to each unit; you got to them through a rear exit off the kitchen. He let himself out the rear door into cold

so stinging that he knew the snow would crunch dry and unforgiving underfoot this morning. The new car, he noted with a brief twinge of disappointment, was Tropic Turquoise instead of Madeira Maroon; the Turquoise had been his second choice, but the way production stood at the moment, he was lucky not to have to drive a year-old car clear into midsummer. He rolled up the garage door, unlocked the car, and slid in behind the wheel. He was thinking as he turned the key in the ignition that Janet was nuts, that the '68's didn't look one little bit like the '67's, that the front bumper lines had been straightened out and the back window swept back more sharply and the tail lights completely redesigned. You would think, he reflected as he backed out into January, you would think that the wife of an Executive Vice President in charge of production could learn to *look* at a car.

It was exactly then that the realization struck him. He sat there, the cold motor racing under his gloved hand on the wheel, the open garage door yawning back at him through the windshield. Freddie, he thought, *Freddie,* and *What the hell is going on, anyway, What the hell has she been up to in my absence?* Through the tinted windshield, the brass numbers tacked above the yawning garage doors stared at him, and he stared back at them, and then the second thought hit him. *No,* he thought, *no, that is ridiculous. I have been married seventeen years,* he thought, *I ought to know my own goddamned wife, for Chrissake.* He turned the car wheel and headed down the frozen, rutted lane toward Abbott Road. *Ridiculous,* he was thinking, but just to be absolutely positive, he would call the Riverview Apartments as soon as he got to the office, ask the manager whether Mr. and Mrs. James Reardon lived in 301 or 103. He knew what the answer would be but he would call anyway, and then, come evening, he and Janet would have themselves a very serious talk.

MICHAEL HOWDEN

BY THE MOUTH OF THE GOATSUCKER

translation from Rene Char, *Seuls Demeurent*

Children who riddle with olives the sun chained in
the woods of the sea, children o slings of wheat, from
you the stranger turns away, turns away from your martyred
blood, turns away from the water too pure, children with
lime eyes, children who made the salt sing to your ear,
how does one resign himself no longer to be dazzled by
your love? The sky which you called down, the woman whose
desire you betrayed, the thunder has iced them.

Punishments! Punishments!

THE INDIANS

Taking all the phones
In his hands, he told
Them he wouldn't be
Available for questioning.
He knew he could
Shut the windows,
And no one would come to his door.
He even
Bought a gun,
Insisting that the only
Noises he could hear
Were the naked feet
Of indians, coal black and hunched,
Circling the edge
Of his burning field.

AMBUSH

Dogs ambushed us. they called
for help, but we saw their blazoned
chests, shields, teeth
spears through the bushes;
and turned into their snarls –
my friendly yak shook
his mane and threw his stave,
I slung my arquebus
then spat –
gold stones, silver arrows, amethyst . . .

being outnumbered we ran
down the trail, thirsting,
brushing aside the sun, lost them far
over crags, ravines –
took a couple rocks,
a couple arrows . . .
now hidden among swamps
we drink, read our books;
moons revolve over his purple hide
and flash like pages through my eyes;
on the ridges we see their silhouettes,
blowing their horns, routing
near us in the thorns, their snorts,
their screams . . . .

NOTE ON YOUR PICTURE TAKEN IN THE TOWN SQUARE OF CANANEA, SONORA

You are sitting on a stone bench
in the park
smiling at the camera
like a stewardess;
your camera
in its leather case
lies inert on the bench.
behind you the hexagonal
bandstand,
scrolled with wrought iron,
has a turquoise top
and base;
two boys walk past it,
looking at the back of your head,
but their faces are blurred.
the oak trees arch red in the cold
and through them the plain,
taut as a tawny leopard's skin;
and the mountains, very far away . . .

you shiver in a slight breeze:

I see the stone bench
    is made of babies' thumbs
        mixed with concrete.
the bandstand starts
    and turns into a caliope
jetting steam;
  and over your shoulder
        mad riders tear across the plain
displaying strings of entrails
                in victory;
the two boys look at you
            and grow fangs . . .
very far off the peaks
  curl towards us
        in thin transparent waves,
the oaks shake
    like old men
losing their breeches
        and their teeth.

the camera
  innocent in the sun
is a time bomb
    waiting to explode . . .
but
      you are smiling.

WENDEN

We went through Wenden
fast
so fast
our tails,
cups flying
that no one knew,
even the rain,
the buildings . . .

an old miner
reared up from the vulture mtns,
shook his fist,
his glass elbow;
and Indians, cross-eyed,
heads split, over the harquahalas –
then slipped back dead,
their armlets
toes melting like
hailstones in the riverbeds . . .

I tell you we went through so fast
the rain never touched us;
but the town stood drenched,
brown, sunken among the dunes . . .
not even the children struck dumb
in doorways; the gas pumps
cried, and perhaps a toothless
curandera asleep in her armpits
smiled – the skeleton of a mandrill
got up and wiped a tear from his eye;

oh Aguila, Quartzsite
Blythe . . .

only flutes rattled
in the wet sky,
paint cans
turquoise beads fell
and littered the sand;
and one lean angel
hair coming out
soft underbelly open,
smoking a pipe,
her glass heart
pierced by an arrow . . .

SMOKY

When I was a kid in the woods
we saw them as great stone bears
soaring in on log and tarpaper wings,
plunging down to get us,
building fires to roast frogs;
there was always one
ready to chase us home
on Halloween Eve, or on our heels
through the thickets after stealing
melons . . .
and then lurking behind
a hill, watching with his one big eye,
we saw him from our beds . . . but
now speak with the
emphysematous voice of
grandfathers, harmless,
ineffectual,
who hobble from their rest homes
to plead on TV. . .

AFTER 12

take this heart
broken into silver pieces,
this tongue,
and these slips of paper,
miniature sails –
the platter is scored
the platen broken

the river lies down.
and from the head, a foggy
beach birds rise still
exhausted, disappear beyond
the steamers forever
becalmed off the rocks
in mists and weeds,
monumental . . .

we have seen the soldiers
rise like teeth from the boulders
from our arms,
at the ready, but unimpassioned,
driven by their orders –
by noon they were gone . . .

while tonight the tongue
its fibrous muscle
inlaid,
a fat bishop
crusted with jewels
passes overhead,
over penny cathedrals,
bone arcades,
his pants open . . . .



untitled — *MADELINE KACZMARCZYK*



forest *PATRICIA BAZYLEWICZ*

POSTCARDS FROM ROLAND

by SYLVIA WROBEL

As the dust from the mailtruck settled mote by mote on the narrow road, doors slammed and out of each house dashed a woman or child to examine the beflagged mailboxes, each in some private hope, a ford won in a drawing, perhaps, or a return from an accumulation of boxtops. Maybe a letter. Most often they walked back to their houses with bills, bills and catalogs.

Carroll Jackson walked to the box, not dashed, and behind her trailed Lee Freeman. He had just taken to seeing her. He had just begun to notice girls and when he did, it seemed like the first one he saw was Carroll Jackson moving down the high school halls, slow and deliberate, her hair long and curly down her back.

She handed him the catalog and pushing back her hair lazily read a bright, deckle-edged postcard while Lee stood beside her squinting at the sun. "Oh it's just from Roland," she said, flipping it on top of the catalog he already held.

"Roland who?" he asked peevishly, but she didn't bother to answer. How many Rolands were there in a Flat Ridge? How many who ever left it to send back cards? People were born in Flat Ridge, finished school there, married there soon after, and later died there with many of the same faces at the accompanying ceremonies.

"Where is he?" he said then.

"Oh he's in Germany. Roland got himself drafted and that's where he ended up."

"He's lucky," Lee said gloomily. He thought of his own mailbox and the letter that might well lie there greeting him on his way to Vietnam.

"He didn't have to go," she said almost bitterly. "He wanted to go. So he went. Let him go, I say."

"Sure thing," Lee agreed amenably. The picture showed an old building with lots of eaves. "Germany," he said. "Germany."

"So what. Germany," Carroll echoed scornfully. "Big deal." She tore the card in two and threw the halves in the ditch, then smiled at Lee. "You want to ride into town, get a pepsi?"

"Sure," he said. It seemed like Carroll was the prettiest girl he'd ever seen although he'd just started noticing girls. When they got back it was beginning to get dark and she let him kiss her in the truck two, three times. When she closed the front door behind her, he hastily picked up the torn halves of the postcard and carried them home.

Lee Freeman was a basketball star. He had just begun finding things, girls first, then power. He had always had basketball. His first basketball goal had been on a post no taller than a man, put up by his father who had himself played for Flat Ridge High School and who year after year had gone to the games, feeling duty and purpose in those Tuesdays and Fridays when he took his familiar seat and called each year's players by their right names. Basketball had come easily to Lee, he did it without thinking, but only in his junior year in high school had he discovered the power, his power, the moving down the court with the thud of the ball in perfect rhythm against the jagged and scream-pierced noise of the gymnasium; hands and faces moving against him but his knowing, feeling, in his feet and arms, his own power and the goal waiting. Lee was smart, he made good grades, but he wasn't interested really, not in anything but the power, starting in his feet and as they left the floor in a jump racing up his legs, chest, to the top of his arms, his fingers seeming to slowly pull away from the ball although the beauty of it was its fastness, the motion and thinking being in one piece, and as the ball slid through the netting of the goal, the power coming back stronger through his body again, his feet never doubting, already moving back toward the other end of the court. That was what interested him, that and girls.

After the game he and Carroll sat in the front seat of his father's truck, parked in the church yard, kissing and kissing and murmuring oh Carroll, oh Lee, You're so sweet and you are too when he said for the first time in his life "I love you."

"Mmm," she hummed against his ear and her breath made the invisible hairs there stand up.

"I do. I do, Carroll."

"You're so full of energy."

"No, I love you, you're so sweet." He had heart his words with surprise but now delighted in them. It was like a movie, and why shouldn't he love somebody, he was seventeen and goodlooking and smart and a basketball star. "I love you, Carroll Jackson," and his words sent him deeper in love, kissing her neck and hair and eyes, running his hands up and down her back where her sweater slid under his fingers like a live film.

"Oh you're just feeling good, oh it't because you won the game."

"No really really." But even with his words and his lips falling against her neck where the sweater bloomed open, he recognized the flame leaping inside him as a cousin to that almost agonizing power straining toward the basket.

So Lee Freeman became the boyfriend of Carroll Jackson to the pleasing of both of their parents. Carroll's father had played basketball too although not nearly as well as had Lee's, and sometimes after church the families ate together sitting out in the lawn at one of the houses. Lee's father especially liked to talk of the old days because he had been a better basketball player than Carroll's father and it made him

forget that their house was smaller, much smaller, than the Jackson house, Jackson having done well in tobacco while Freeman had tried first one thing and then another without ever getting much ahead. The Freeman house was wooden on concrete blocks, but stacked around were the piles of brick to fill in the underneath, started but never quite finished, so that the bottom of the house had great gaps and the chickens and dogs wandered in and out, disconcertingly clucking and whining in muffled disharmony under the livingroom floor. Mr. Freeman meant to finish it, he *would* finish it he said, he had worked very hard on it when he got married, right out of high school he was, but there had been one thing and another and the days drifted by, drifted by. When he left the Jacksons each time and drove up in his own front yard he always said "Dern it, I've got to finish that under part one of these days." But he never did. As the Jacksons began building yet two more houses, one for each of the Jackson girls to inherit when they married and both with neat brick underpinnings, Mr. Freeman talked more and more of the basketball days.

Carroll's house was done. She was the oldest, she would probably need it first. "Well, Daddy says that in the old days fathers used to give their daughters dowries and this is what he's giving his," she said to Lee. They had walked down from the Jackson house on Saturday afternoon and stood in the new livingroom, bare except for a couch that Mrs. Jackson had moved in the house, to get it out of the way, she had said.

"It's a real nice house," Lee said. He had watched it go up slowly, all their senior year in high school, and every board that was nailed in place seemed reproachful to him. When you two setting the big day everybody asked him. Guess there's gonna be some occasion in June everybody said. The fellows on the team punched him in the ribs and joked: she making you wait till the wedding? And Carroll. Carroll stopped wearing the emerald ring she had always worn and she moved his school ring to a chain around her neck so that her fingers were bare like empty store windows. The house had kept getting built and built and there it was.

"It sure is nice," he said again. She sat down on the couch and looked at him expectantly. He sat down and kissed her. "Listen, I gotta go," he said then. "I want to try to sleep a little before the game tonight. I can't afford to use all my energy here." He smiled and she let him up, shaking her long hair away, always slow and deliberate.

In his room he took off his shirt and pants and laid down on the bed in his shorts but he didn't sleep. He took out the school annual and shook loose the cards in it, a half dozen counting the torn one, dirty, that he had retrieved from the ditch. They were all from Roland, all to Carroll. "Why does he keep sending you those cards?" he had asked, and she said " He thinks he's so smart. You'd think nobody ever went to Europe before." Lee didn't know anybody who ever had.

"Look," he said, "when he gets home, he needn't think..."

"I reckon he doesn't think that," she said. "He says he isn't coming home."

And sure enough one of the cards which she now handed Lee automatically, now that he was her boyfriend, now that they kissed for hours (parked in the church yard at Lee's insistence–she would have preferred the house and second hand couch but he insisted on his own truck even with the gears), on one of the cards Roland had written *got a job in California when this is up. Roland.* "No kidding," Lee said. "California." "Big deal," Carroll said.

Lying on his bed in shorts Lee thought again about California. If he went to the service first, so he went to Vietnam, lots of guys went there and besides it was the other side of the world, then he could go to California, maybe even look up Roland.

He hadn't known Roland, who was three years older. But since he had been dating Carroll and reading the postcards he had gone to Roland's house once on the excuse of delivering some chocolate the senior class was selling. Roland's parents were just ordinary people, the mother a pretty mother-type woman in a blue flowered dress and fresh waves in her hair. She looked like Carroll's mother and his own, except his was too plump. Roland's father sat in the living room in his overalls, his neck brown from working in the orchard, watching television while Lee explained to Roland's mother about the chocolate. There were pictures of Roland around, in his graduation robes, one with a dog, others of him in uniform in front of funny churches.

"What do you hear from Roland?" Lee had asked.

"Oh you know Roland?"

"Sorta," he said.

"Well you know he's in Germany," his mother said proudly. "But he went to Italy too, and to France on leave. And to England. And next September he wants us to come to California to visit him. He has a job waiting in California." She spoke each name with pleasure, like an accent.

"California, huh," Lee repeated.

"We aren't going," the father said sourly, not taking his eyes from the television, just picking up a cue from a continuing argument. "He wants to see us, let him come home."

Lee left awkwardly. The underpinnings of Roland's house weren't finished, and a rusty car sat in the yard on tireless rims, parts scattered in the high grass.

Lying on his bed in shorts Lee thought of the postcards and the underpinnings of Roland's house also unfinished. He said to himslef *Germany, Italy, France, California... Germany, Italy, France, California.* He went to sleep saying them in a row; he did that often lately. He only dozed, just enough to let his muscles relax before the game, and in his half dream he was running down the court only it wasn't with a basketball goal as the end, it was a fantastically long court and the longer it was the more the power grew, grew, grew in his legs and he was saying *Germany, Italy, France, California* over and over, he and the power running, running open and free, not to the end of the court and back and forth and back but free and open. Somewhere he glimpsed Roland grinning.

"Lee. Lee. Le..Ee." His mother stood in the door. "Ready," he said, instantly awake, and he dressed for the game. It was at the game flying down the court back

and forth and back and forth that he made his decision and he never played better, he took Flat Ridge to a glorious victory. People were screaming his name and Carroll was jumping up and down yelling something lost in the screams. His father hit him on the shoulder, red with pride, "My boy," he said, "my boy." Finally Carroll found him and kissed him wetly in front of everyone. "My baby," she whispered in his ear. He stood grinning at them all with his power. And he never loved them all so much as on having decided to leave.

After the game, over milkshakes and grilled cheese sandwiches at Shorties, Carroll seemed to study him in her slow and deliberate way and after that she insisted she even cried, that they not park in the old truck but go to the house, to her house with the second hand couch. And because secure in his decision he knew it would never be their house, he was sorry for her, her fingers cleared for the ring he couldn't give her. He went, and there the power in him that was never so strong, the power ran and ran through his body and on the second hand couch what happens happened and he was a fine boy, the finest in Flat Ridge, and there was nothing else to do but what he did.

Many years later, building a small man-tall basketball goal for his oldest son, Lee briefly thought about the day and all he remembered was disjointed; the crowd screaming, and that he had thought about joining the service but once he got married the draft never bothered him. And nailing up the goal, he also remembered something else vaguely, something strange, a sense of loss when Roland's mother had sent to California the clipping about the wedding from the local newspaper. For after that, although each day Lee dashed out to the mailbox (before gradually in the drift from day to day forgetting why), although it seemed important, even urgent, there were no more postcards from Roland.

from THE PSYCHEDELIC PROSTIBULO

Pay Before
the women with the fat legs
in the faded housedress,
in front of the Post Office
staring, staring, staring
at Siva and the blind
bone on the deep-dream-beaches
of Africa dead,
before heart transplants
painted Apartheid technocracy green
Go. . . . . Where?
(in Cleveland, or Golden Gate Park.)
She doesn't wanna lay,
She wants to marry George

NO PLACE TO ESCAPE TO. SURROUNDED BY RESPECTABILITY.

. . . .

Up, up and a-way!
The dogs in the fountain
(in front of the Union)
Monet
Op-Buddha
Red brick is green
too
first the orchards, bridges, boats,
sunflowers,

(and I stood there in the Midi waiting but they looked
spin
(dusty)
then chairs and
tables. . . .
There was a beer sign across the street and
the yellow-bulb foam
poured
across her
midnights until
dawn.

YOU CAN TURN ON ANYWHERE IF YOU CAN TURN ON

"Are you happy being
OUT
OF
yourmind?"
Eyes, up from the pillow
will it rain
the menacing leaves,
walk across a
lot never walked
across before
and gravel, grass, wind
iridesce
at stress points,

even a wall, hand,
the texture of cranberries,
can
open your
mind-can–could.

. . . .

THE SOCIAL WAVE MOVES TOWARD PSYCHODELIA.

(Mono) cyclic time
riding down the edge of
the boardwalk
(summer hot-dog sandwave smell)
just about to drop off,
backs up to the salt water taffy booth
for another
chew,
moves (linearly now, progressively, into hierarchical
architectonic outfoldings)
past Breughel fat-shoe faces
into cotton mills
out the door into hum
red-blink
don't bend, staple
dome, done,
bubble cars,
I, robot.

6.
In privy council
because you're (we're) on
file,
cross-referenced,
-currented
14 credit cards
checking account
driver's license
vehicle registration
house loan
fingerprinted for summer lifeguard
social securitied
wind off the wind in
the calico mountains
tourists
passing through,
take our picture,
fast,
through,
and lightly,
watch all their signs
No past, dead, present.
Litany, do your damndest,
I came to Now (and now and Now and Now)
alive.

TOTAL PSYCHIC-SURVIVAL, RARE IN OUR TIME.

I watched her watch my mole,
wedding ring (click-brain–and eyelids),
knowing that knowing her reference (A, B, Coke, Fresca, C-Pepsi,
D-Tab)
points
that
any act-re-
action
would pass through,
around, up, under
mine,
I played,
said wait another wait
until someone who's come from where
She's (you *were*!) from
starts to explode
your radar.

. . . .

INTERIOR-INDIVIDUALITY SURVIVAL "THROUGH" TIME EVEN RARER.

His eyes were attics
and his mind a
hooped trunk,
his words pearl buttons rolling on
a dry wood floor.
No puttees, helmets, goal posts, seasons, proms,
even greed.

He hadn't thought of himself even intermittently as a
veteran for more than thirty years,
and now was thinking less and less of himself as anything.

. . . .

Until the door blows down
we get schizophrenic
and hunch against
weather (or not),

not gonna make it
(or out)
but just hang on
(to the time bar),

ache-ache-ache
let go,
drop and
we're gonna have to let go
any-
how
on-
ly
as you flip the pages of
God Bless

aren't those–some of those–faces like
rising bread
plowed fields
the smell of new cars
a just-clipped poodle

(Rimbaud at his local bookstore)
. . . . . because they don't ask for
Les Iluminations?

THE CERTAINTY OF EVENTUAL ANIHILATION SHOULD GUARANTEE OUR RECKLESSNESS.

Pushes the watch back away across the desktop,
slides back toward her,
pushes it away,
and as it slides back down again
she opens her legs and lets it
fall into her green chiffon lap.

The oak brown librarian wraps a gold medalion-tattooed fuchsia
sari around her wooden breasts, walks around the block and climbs
back into drawer 172 of the catalogue–
FU–for Foolfillment.

. . . .

WITHOUT CONSTANT AWARENESS EFFORT (GOAL ORIENTATION RENEWAL) PSYCHIC DEATH IS INEVITABLE.

. . . .

LIFE MEANS TOTAL AWARENESS, EXPANSION OUT INTO NOW.

Grey cold early dead eye-smarting (coal-smoke) Chicago morning,
and she'd turn on Monteverdi
first,

then the vacuum cleaner,
check the white walls for
snow (ball) stains,
her white skin for wrinkles,

but wouldn't go over the border
(or let-go role)
long enough to remember
her first breasts,
hymen or the watchless high school
week (while it was getting fixed) when she
almost forgot about the meat market clock on the
kitchen wall.

12.
Kick in the hard shinbone
of the future,
NOW.
For us it's hear,
sea
to swim in
roar on the beach of
handout, keep cool,
turn the social ladder
into summer
wreck-creation

. . . .

TOTAL AWARENESS OF THE NOW, ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE, HURTS.

Blonde on the other side of the theater,
with a blackman
and silver and black runged
tube (tight) pants,
cheek hollows,

bone-breast body,
flamboyant Mamma two rows
down,
fuchsia jacket and
family bible leather
crack-in-the-attic-dust
skin.
They interchange.

13.
A penny for your
presience,
time-piston
not
Villon, Ronsard and Baudelaire,
but their contemporaries
Bufy-Chord
held,
pressed against a
pants-leg
Kryptonite in my pineapple juice.
The equestrian statue of my little chickadee
outside the Harvard Coop's
turning green.

Never wanted to not kill the chord,
but
be there before
and while.

. . . .

I put my fangs in place and
drive downtown.
Did it
(Lose anyhow)
Gloria in excelsus Swanson,
over Hitler's (St. Peter's)
bones,
bones,
bones.

YOU DARE EVERYTHING BECAUSE TIME IS GOING TO TOTAL YOU OUT ANYHOW.

Hi, take my hand,
I'm falling through degrees
and the conventions surrounding
your tea urn.
It's all wind and I'm made out of
burning splinters,
take me now,
together through the faces, off the
tracks,

Expresso, Capuchine, first snow, first night,
first rain, last
breath.

. . . .

20.
Out
of moustaches and brogues,
civil war suitcases of Greek mythology and the Trojan Wars,
"Nature,"
etymological dictionaries,

the collective (sane) mind,
rollcalls, rank and tenure,
pillars by night, clouds by day
vulnerable into the clarity of
bang, between the eyes.

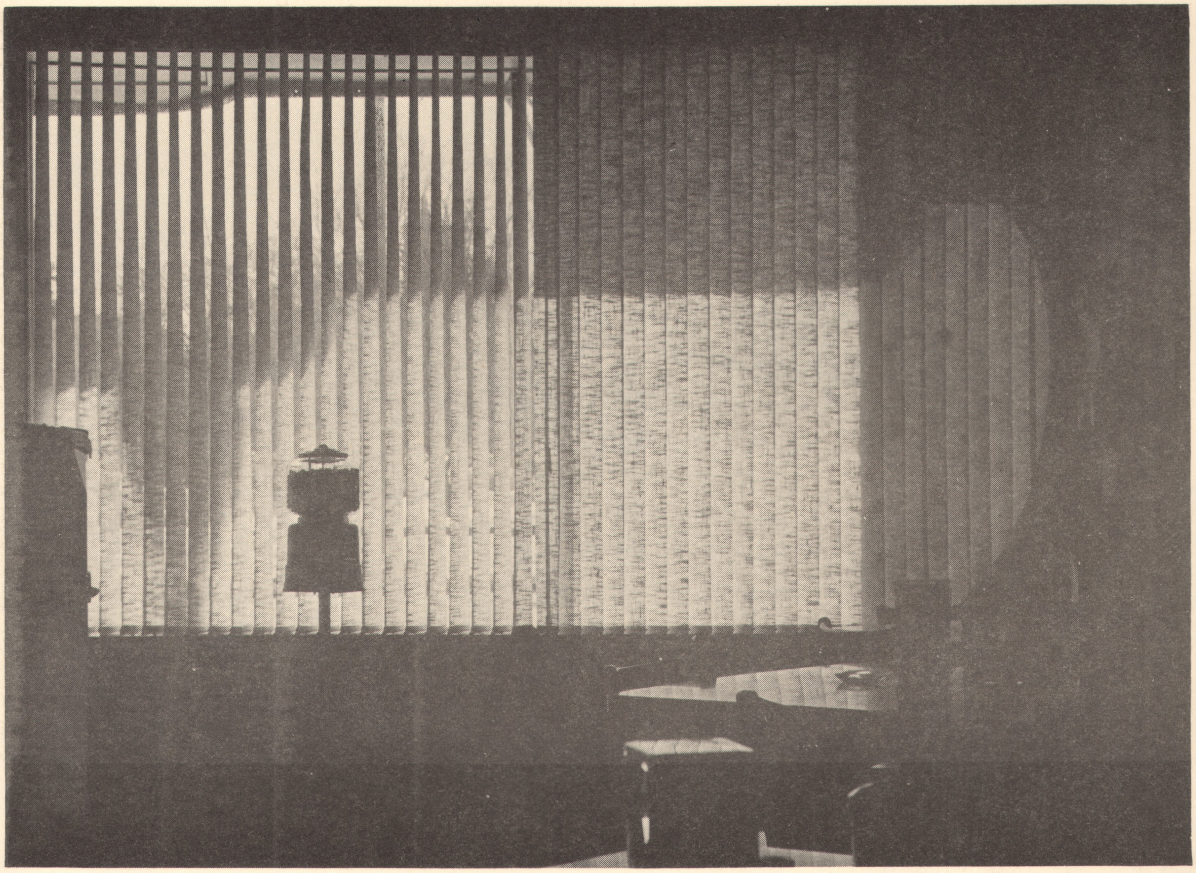
the palms are paper and V.D. Venus is a
spiderman comic addict
I'll believe in your legs for
60 seconds
double chins
laugh lines

down into the subway, bacon sandwiches, unrenewed
urbanity, not love, but three teaspoons of black pepper.

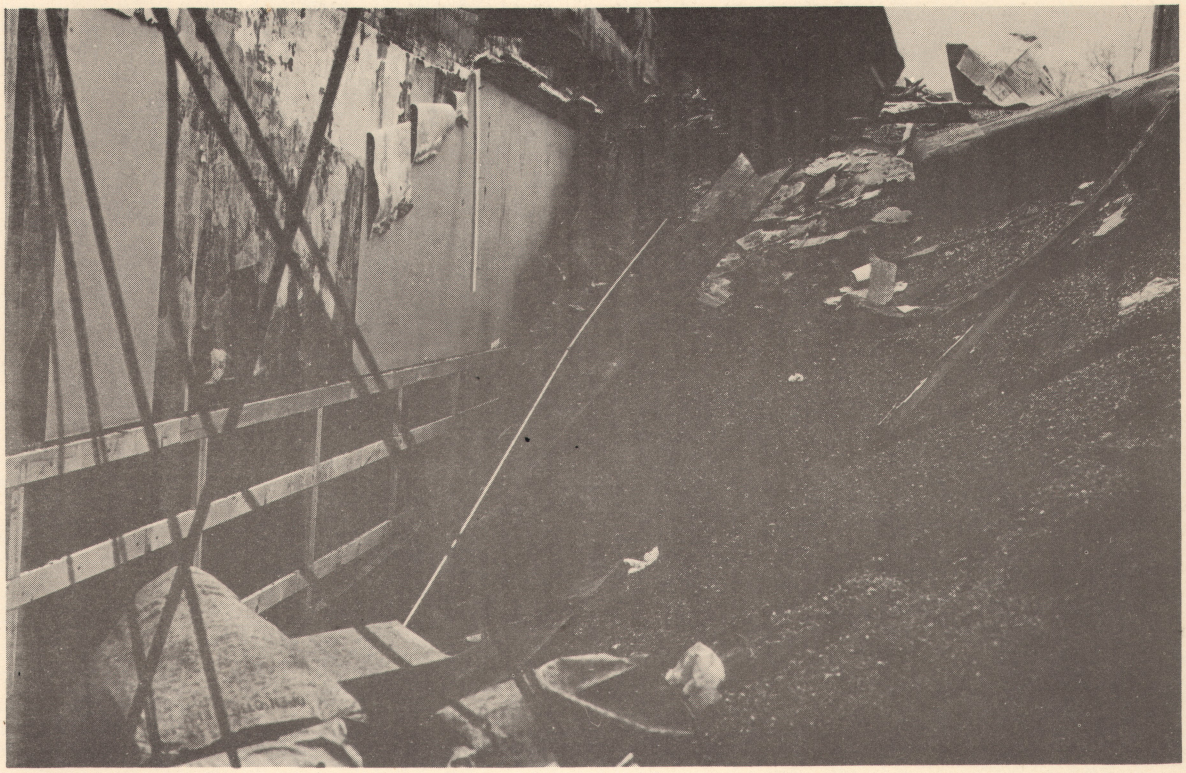
AWARENESS DEPENDS ON A CONSTANT PROCESS OF CONTINUING DETACHEMENT.

Afraid of this circular brick-paved courtyard,
square house with a round lookout on top facing the sea.
As obvious a difference as whales and black ragas.
the revolving door of
Nowness
quantity-quality of impulses
the world comes in through
my skin
Now
Now
Now
purple sithars of vinyl
wind
sheets
flapping across the
thighs of
unexpectedness.

Photography By
Justin Kestenbaum



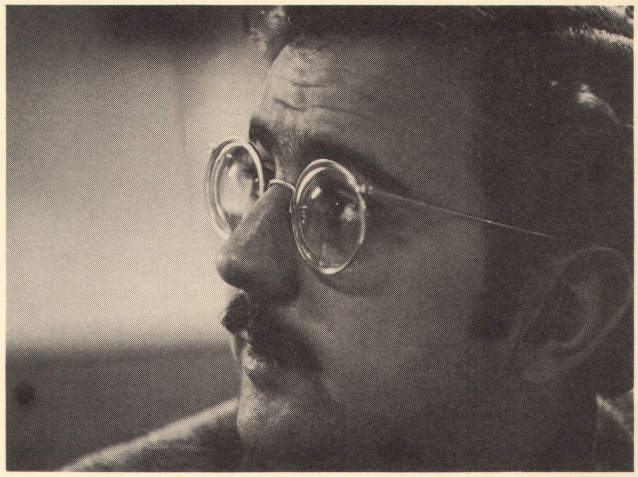
ONCE THERE WAS A PLACE . . .

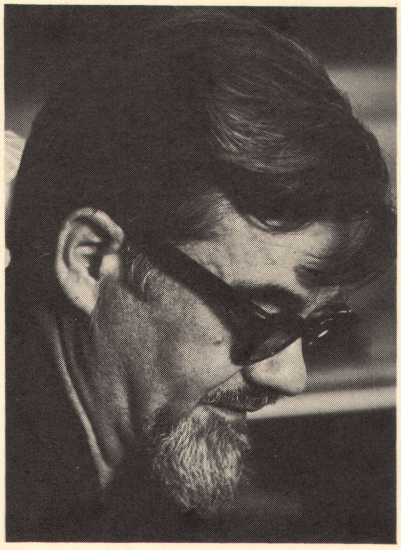


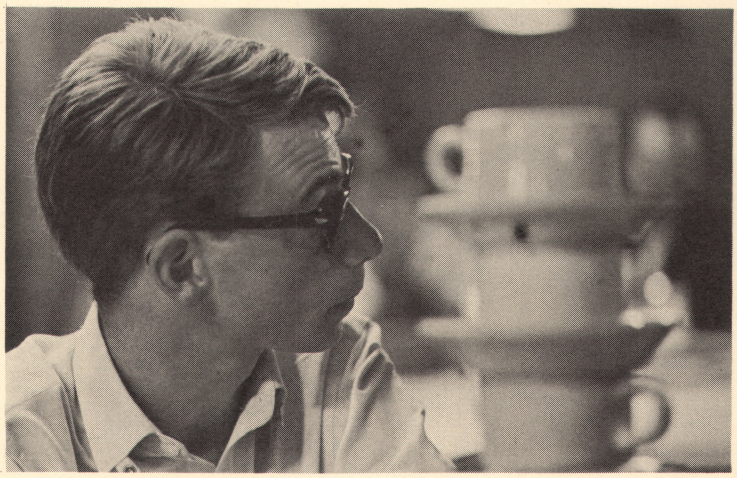
IT WENT AWAY.

A PLACE

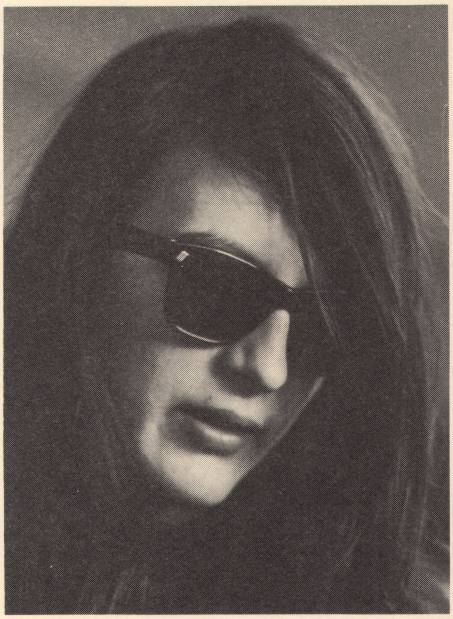
AND PEOPLE ...





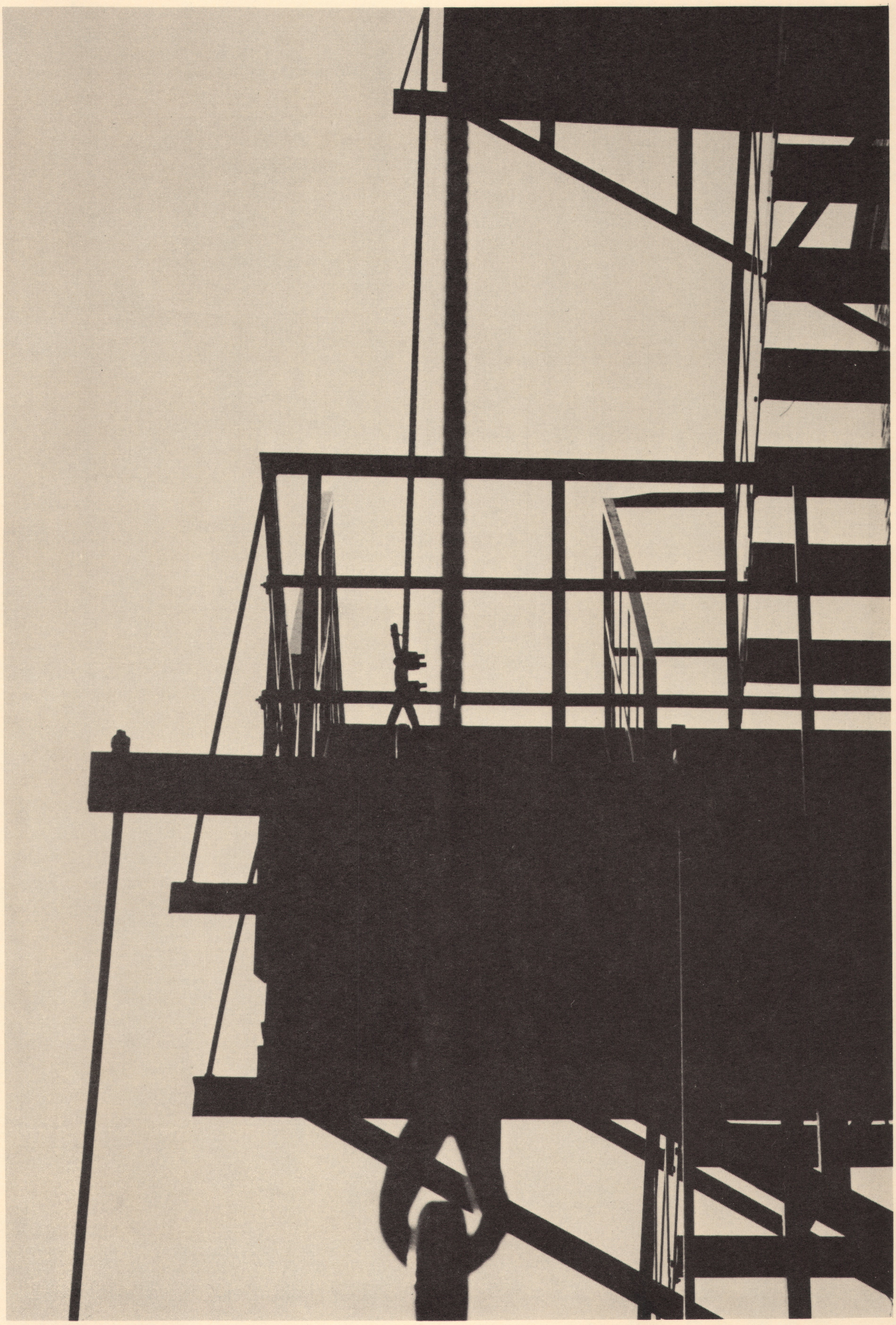














IT'S FOR THE DEAD AND UNBORN

It is
a final domain
proven in possession
the stretch of leg
to the end of the box
the flowers terrify
the mind
becomes softly
the rabbit-bone pipe
and its furl
of young smoke

The words from
your cellar
are calm
the earth has
fallen in
can it be so simple
as forgetting

LION

Old man, your face is like the moon's
topography – valleys, mountains, rivers
cracked and dry.
The side you never show
darkens in your eyes.

Somewhere in the Rockies
a mountain lion
feeds on a final sleep.
In the cave of this old house
your room's the den you'll die in.

Smelling of Vasoline
your life's compressed
to rags of memory.
They'll sweep you out with the dust –
wrapped in Police Gazettes.

OVER THE FENCE by Rick Sterry. Houghton Mifflin, $4.50.

When Rick Sterry, an MSU graduate assistant in English, was in Japan two years ago, with plenty of free time and no teevee to watch, he decided to write a novel. This was only natural, of course, since the human body seems to have a build-in compulsion to get words on paper–and too, with the novel it is possible to make money. The trouble is the novel is a difficult, ponderous form, one that invites the author to insert the irrelevant while always demanding that rigid discipline and strict economy of the modern short story. I've seen quite a few first novels, either in outline or rough draft or in finished manuscript, but I can't remember seeing one that was publishable. Somehow they were dull or self-indulgent or contrived or simply all wrong.

Over The Fence is, happily, an exception. In a way it's a modest book–without tricks of structure or of point of view; without dazzling pyrotechnics of language–but one that should be read by readers and studied by budding novelists. The errors that one sees too often, whether in rejected manuscripts or published novels, have been avoided here. Like the Neo-Classical painters who demonstrated in a single canvas their ability to render architectural space, perspective, human anatomy, drapery, and landscape, Mr. Sterry shows that he can handle all the elements of fiction. He has a real sense of narrative; the writing is always skillful and under control, and the irrelevant has been cleanly trimmed away. It seems to me that anyone tempted to write a novel could learn from this one. The first three chapters, for example, illustrate how a story might effectively unfold: certain references are casually made without explanation, then reinforced through repetition, but their meaning does not become apparent until later. These are "hooks", as they say in the trade and they work here; quite the opposite is the beginning writer's tendency to tell all, to make explicit when something should be held back. Dialogue is another real problem, because it wants to descend to mere conversation, but in this book dialogue is handled extremely well, and is often witty. For this is a novel which entertains while it instructs: it is a very funny book, even comic–and a sense of humor is that rare ingredient that cannot be taught to the writer whose narrative unfolds with a deadly, painful seriousness.

Over The Fence is a college novel, but it avoids the classroom-dorm-frat house material by focusing–like *The Graduate*–on that transitional period between graduation and one's entry into the Outer World. The novel alternates between the two stories of Chevy Callister and Daniel Blake, young rebels who find themselves faced with the difficult decision of what to do with their lives. The choice is made easier for Daniel when his girlfriend, Ellen, announces the night before his graduation that she is pregnant. Although Daniel has known her for only three months, he welcomes the idea of marriage–as a protest against his domineering mother and her way of life–but he is soon uneasy by all the marriage implies: a wedding, a house (a gift from his mother), and a job (in his mother's business). Then, too, there are those demonstrations in his own kitchen, led by Ellen, who he realizes is more and more assuming the identity of his mother.

The night that Daniel learns he is to become a father, Chevy meets Alberta, a working-girl who has been dismissed from college during her first semester. Chevy, through petitions and articles in the school paper, has been defending her right to an education, while attacking the person responsible for her dismissal, Dean Callister, his father. When he meets Alberta he is surprised by her youth and angelic homeliness, and by her refusal to take the dismissal seriously–she is the victim, yet she sees no injustice. Anyway, she didn't like college and doesn't want to go back until she has "matured." Alberta's complex naivete confounds and interests Chevy, and he decides it is his duty to educate her. If she is to be a hip chick she will have to lose her virginity, and on the night when Chevy is supposed to receive his diploma he takes Alberta to his room in an old church and discovers that he is still learning.

It is difficult to write about college life without resorting to campus types or extremes, but Mr. Sterry has not caricatured; his characters, even the minor ones, are distinct and alive and human. Beanie, a background character, quickly becomes "real" and his toothless dialect is terrifically funny. Alberta is the most complex character in the book, the most enigmatic, and perhaps the most interesting. She is a skinny, homely girl who wanders into town from somewhere, takes a job in Beanie's

cafe, and in the same casual way begins college. At first it is difficult to see why Chevy would be interested in Alberta, but soon we realize that she is the real rebel of the novel, a loner, able to survive anywhere–and then we begin to wonder why she is interested in Chevy.

For there is something about Chevy Callister that does not ring true, and I think part of the problem is that the author, perhaps in order to present the character "honestly," is of a divided mind about the character: at times we are asked to be sympathetic toward Chevy, but more often his actions and speech are meant to be ironic. Although he has the trappings of a really free soul–he drives a Henry J with the doors welded shut, and lives in the back of a church–his dissent takes the form of minor "demonstrations" like bringing Alberta home to his parents for Sunday dinner and refusing to attend the commencement exercises; his method is a lofty rhetoric. But Alberta cuts through his speeches either by silence, or by common sense, or by absurdities. "What'll we do?" asks Chevy, regarding their lives. Alberta thinks what they really ought to do is hike cross-country, following the Lewis and Clark trail to Astoria. Chevy, who is utterly serious, dismisses this foolishness–and yet, we can imagine Chevy making this same remark to his parents. The hike is the kind of thing he would like to do–in theory. And Alberta, with her mixed zany naivete and worldliness, is exactly the right traveling companion. But they do not go. He remains with Alberta until fall, when he begins graduate work in another state–a safe choice, this–but he never really understands her. What Chevy wants, it seems, is someone who will openly oppose him. The author's point is that when the rebel has things his way, he becomes confused: Daniel's mother approves of his marriage to Ellen, Alberta obliges Chevy by hopping into bed. Opposition is a prop, holding up the protester.

What especially interests me about this novel–beyond the level of activity, the story–is the author's view as regards form and content. And here *I* am of a divided mind, for what I faintly object to I also admire. For example, Mr. Sterry has completely avoided any of those topics which one expects to find in a contemporary novel with a college setting: no mention is made of civil rights, sit-ins, the peace movement, LSD, or

Viet Nam. No one mentions the possibility of military service. Oh, there is an interesting drunk scene, and–almost–a seduction scene, but no one smokes pot or promotes free love or catches a police billy-club across his skull. To avoid these current topics is perfectly all right, of course, since journalists constantly remind us that college activists comprise only a tiny minority of the student population. But when I learn that Chevy is head of the local SDS chapter, and that both Daniel and Ellen are members, I begin to wonder if this is the same organization that J. Edgar Hoover stays up nights worrying over. I don't think he'll have any trouble with these people, however, for they are really an extension of a time that Mr. Hoover likes to recall, the world of Andy Hardy and Henry Aldrich. A world where life is easy, where the Dean is also Daddy, where Sunday dinner is a ritual, and where no one worries about things like money. Except for Alberta, who is beyond the pale of this tightly knit community, and is busy simply trying to survive, no one even seems to do any work.

On the other hand, I rather admire Mr. Sterry's avoidance of that material which is topical and which would be easy to exploit. Mr. Sterry may or may not be telling it like it is, but it is interesting, I think, that the novel opens *after* the time of demonstrations, after Alberta's dismissal has been effected. Most writers would want to include this material, and perhaps even save it for the climax–one can almost see Chevy Callister mounting the barricades, to throw a Molotov cocktail through Dean Callister's window. By beginning *in medias res* the book becomes not a novel of protest but a novel of manners; it focuses on human relationships, where the confrontation is between people rather than between ideas or ideologies, and this is, it seems to me, a much more difficult kind of book to write.

ALBERT DRAKE

CHILDHOOD SHADOWS

Did you follow me down along the beach?
Were you with me then
watching in silence?
I was too young to comprehend
that fearful longing
but when the waves grew near
I knew they were afraid of you.

Did you follow me down along sleep?
Were you with me then
watching in silence?
I wish I could shut the door,
your face is kind;
dreams flee wildly to far within
and you retire softly to her room.

I can hear you still
padding down the long hallway
or stopped around the corner,
your silence breathes so loud.
All the laws within me
forbid that marriage,
your eyes look innocent with pain.

I dreamt that she went crazy
and you became a broken man
bartending in a dive on a narrow street
somewhere near the institution
and waiting out your days betrayed –
that's one way to stop you
from following me.

PANSIES AND OTHER CONFUSIONS

I can no longer tell the difference between pansies and racoons,
black brush marks dabbed on sad clown faces
gazing wistfully upon the world.
Once I saw a racoon overfed and huge
in a private zoo with a name like Suzie posted on the bars
but when the caretaker passed with his watering can
you leaned close to me and whispered
he was an idiot or an indian
and I couldn't separate the two and grew confused.
I have picked pansies painstakingly –
it lengthens their season –
and given them to a smiling housewife
who droops their furry faces over rims of bowls
and does not know they should be spotted nestled
in the branches of a lonely country road
their black and puzzled eyes peering from the leaves
with a child crying from the car window that he does not see
where pansies wild and obscure creep beneath the trees.

I cannot separate ostrich from llama any more,
heavy umbrellas of fur drooped over stilts.
I remember eyes of llamas with their oval mournful gaze
of deep and pure chocolate under white fringed lashes
and will not look at ostrich eyes for fear of finding
the stupid startled glance of birds that cannot focus.
They walk on twigs that are slender and smooth
like pussy willow branches clipped early in the spring;
I place them in water on a sunny window sill
and then find canopies of fur above slim reeds
resting motionless together in still cool shallows.
You lean close to me and whisper
of the idiot's mournful gaze
or of black brush marks dabbed on indian faces
and a child is peering puzzled from a canopy of leaves
because he cannot see
where blurred images begin to blend
beneath the stilting trees.

SUSPENSION

It's been a week since you left
and I cannot call you back again;
we speak gently by phone
but there is nothing to say –
in the morning our dog was hit by a car,
he seems all right
I mean he will not die;
his tail has lost its curve
hanging limply down
and his eyes seem sadder
than the bird that keeps on crying
somewhere, some branch some tree
unseen beyond our door.
Five years old,
returning with a runaway dog
on a leash he was not strong enough to hold,
he watched the fall
the screech of brakes;
they both came running home.
He sobbed small within my arms
of fur left lying in the street
and the awful cry,
and then ran off to play –
more afraid of anger
than of death . . .
he will not speak of you.
The house is silent
and all the rooms are still;
motionless beside the open door
I listen for the bird
but there is only singing
against the expressionless sky.

INTERLUDE

I trembled when I saw you.
"You ought to see a doctor," you said.
But no, it's just because you are here;
it's just because I care
so much . . .
you smiled and shook your head.

You brought me juice in bed
in the morning;
"you are nervous," you said
when I spilled some . . .
it's only that I was remembering
all the night before.

My words were foolish.
"You're a dreamer," you said.
Because I am happy
let me dream –
it doesn't matter
about the fall.

Of course it did matter
when it came;
it doesn't any more;
I could move gracefully
before you;
I could tell you
all the things I know.

LA ENSENANZA DE CIENCIA EN CHILE

Let him fish
the waterlogged brain
of Archimedes,
resist the disparate
forces of Newton,
circulate with Harvey
to the heart of *Gray's Anatomy*,
fly through a treatise
on aerodynamics,
swim with icythyology,
unite stamens and pistils,
prove his stability,
withstand atmospheric pressure,
tactfully discuss babies
(yes, with birds and bees),
change skinny pounds to kilos,
flat feet to the arching meters;
when plucked of breath
explain energy and respiration.

Now if his castellano flows
like El Rio Rahue
he may teach science
to Chilean seventh - graders.

CELEBRATION

Being somebody's last woman
and the only passenger of the day
I rode out after madness,
that long journey beginning nowhere
meeting shyly at motels
not for each night's love,
but sliding around the edges
from earth to earth
on parts of a face
that love wore out.

Of course I'm still living.
No one has taken too much blood
although I admit I stole some extra
where fine needles had coffered
bundles and rolls of it. I came back
after to burn the hospital down.

But no one will find me here
asleep in my bones as polished as the night.
I am bled now
like the end of a spear
and blunt as a carpet
ruined once by careful feet.

One day the right disguise
will work, the right frame
slide into place
like counted medicine.
One day I may give up everything
and wear that disguise
to its final sleep.



involved *PAULA KRAVITZ*



2nd edition

VICKIE LANDSPARGER

BREAKFAST OUT

by LORRIE KEISTER

At 8:15 A.M. the parking lot was empty and Naomi was able to pull the car up close to the back door of the drugstore. Her head was full of tiresome thoughts. She rubbed a piece of kleenex across her face and pretended to look in the mirror, being careful not to see anything.

Stepping out, she was forced to look at the scabby, blacktop with its random arrangement of cigarette butts, candy wrappers, fragmented hamburg buns, empty beer-packs and little piles of unidentifiable filth. Then there was that delivery hole in the brick wall, still there, still covered inelegantly with its splintering board cover; and the once-green door, scarred with kick marks, sticky fingerprints, black grease, and long streaks of rust from the grating over its window.

Will I have to live in the same damn place forever? thought Naomi, pulling at the heavy door. Everything was always the same. She felt an almost physical longing for someplace new, some variation on the eternally repeated settings of her existence.

This door now. She had come through it hundreds of times and could hardly bear the sight of it. It insisted upon staying the same, same, same, forever, always forcing one to look at its brute ugliness. In this mood she went inside.

Inside a delirious odor of coffee and frying sausages gave a twist to her hungry stomach. She had not had breakfast.

Right there, in the back corner of the huge, cluttered store, a small counter with two booths had created a little, human-sized world. She had always thought of it before as a soda fountain, but here it was now, functioning as a miniature restaurant. It had not occurred to her that people might eat breakfast in a place like that, but two women were sitting there, and in one of the booths, a man and a boy. They looked happy, all of them, merry, care-free, enjoying life. They seemed to be laughing at the skinny young man behind the counter, who was wearing a cook's hat and a white apron tied up under his arm-pits. He had a long, morose face, with deep vertical lines down the cheeks. He did not smile at all, but was talking at high speed while he cracked eggs into a bowl, one after another.

"....There's many a stiff upper slip between you and the contoshelated scree," was what she thought she heard. It was hard to make out. "Now, in the agriparious zone of mean time, you should be sure to give her the glum with slades of mew. Because every bottleray, I don't care what anybody says, is contaminated with racemes. It's as plain as the hose in the millrace." His tone was matter-of-fact, as though anybody would naturally agree with him, but he spoke so fast that Naomi thought she was hearing the words incorrectly. "On the other hand," he went on, reaching for the eggbeater, "there are plenty of fractable rassicles too, and that's playing fast and loose with the gong and the port of it, but I never fly off the deep end, mind you...."

The two women, dressed in the slippery nylon uniforms of the Universal Supermarket, were laughing immoderately, and saying, "Hey Skipper, hey, wait a minute...." Naomi would have liked to stay and hear the rest of it, but she couldn't, naturally, without sitting down and ordering something, and she didn't have time. Kenneth was waiting. Kenneth had to get to work early, today especially. She went on through the loaded aisles and across to the drug counter, where she presented Kenneth's nose-drop prescription. After she had waited for five minutes, studying the Vick's Vaporub poster, it occurred to her that she might have gone back there for a cup of coffee while she was waiting. It was probably too late now, she thought. Five minutes later she could see that it would not have been too late then, but was so now, etc. Eventually they brought her a tiny, paper-wrapped bottle and took her money.

As she passed the lunch counter on her way out, the boy in the cook's hat was laying out plates of bacon and eggs before the father and son in the booth. His eyes, dead serious, were fixed on the little boy's face, and Naomi distinctly heard him say, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard...." It would have been rude to stop and listen. She continued on doggedly out of the back door, finding herself incapable of imagining what he might have been talking about. It was very puzzling. One would have to eat a meal there, she thought, to find out what made him talk like that, and even then probably not.... This led naturally to the notion which entered her mind next: that she would like to eat breakfast there herself some morning.

The thought came over her all of a sudden, most peculiarly,. . .an imagination, really of what it would be like to get up in the morning, walk out of the house just as soon as you could get your clothes on, and come up here to eat breakfast, sitting at the counter, watching the solemn cook perform his tasks, listening to his talk, and staring at the strangers, maybe even talking to some of them. The idea made her feel so excited that everything in the world became momentarily interesting, as though she were a child again.

Almost immediately, however, she realized that of course it was impossible. Kenneth would never be willing to eat in a place like that. Well then, they could eat breakfast somewhere else, someplace that would suit Kenneth. After all, when they were traveling they ate breakfast in restaurants. It was not an unheard of thing. The expectation, amounting almost to certainty, that Kenneth would resist it, made the idea so much more appealing, forbidden acts being those which one feels the strongest inclination to perform.

It would be like a miniature vacation, she told herself, - a vacation from their ordinary life. She began to consider how she could suggest it to him. "Darling, let's do something crazy. Let's go eat breakfast out." No. She knew she didn't have the authority or the insouciance to carry that off. "You know what I want to do? I want to go and eat breakfast out some place, some morning." This called up a vision of the pained look which would appear on his face. She could hear him saying "You what?" in a tone of nauseated disbelief. That wouldn't work. No. "Darling, there's something that I want terribly much to do sometime, but I don't know whether or not you'll like it." That sounded cringing and servile. She could wait until he wanted her to do something for him, perhaps, and then say playfully, "All right. I'll do it on condition that you take me out for breakfast tomorrow morning." That might just possibly work, if he happened to be in the right mood. But she realized that it wasn't what she wanted at all. What she wanted was the privilege of ducking out for breakfast some morning just as the fancy struck her, sometime when the monotony of the morning routine weighed to a particularly unbearable degree.

It was always the same. One could not say to Kenneth, "Well, how about some French toast this morning?" Or "What about a nice English Muffin?" Kenneth always wanted the same thing for breakfast: tomato juice, two slices of toast made from Old Settler's cracked wheat bread and dribbled with honey, one six minute egg (which often came out wrong), and coffee made to his precise instructions. He could tell by the way it tasted whether she had let the pot perk a minute overtime. No. Kenneth would not put up with restaurant coffee for breakfast. It was probably impossible. "Don't be a fool," she said to herself, and put it out of her mind.

Or tried to. It gnawed at her. Every morning as she opened the refrigerator door and began to take out the eggs, the butter, and the tomato juice, the thought would flutter across her mind, "How nice it would be to go out for breakfast." Especially if the sun were shining, her imagination was stimulated to picture the inside of a cozy little coffee shop where one might saunter in carelessly and indulge in the luxury of ordering, oh well, waffles with little sausages, perhaps, or sweet rolls studded with pecans and a lovely fluffy omelet. People were slouching about in this shop, in picturesque poses, reading the morning papers, conversing with the waitresses, putting on a show to watch while you ate...transient people from all over the country, actors and salesmen, lawyers and svelte business women. That would be the kind of people who ate breakfast out, naturally, being away from home most of the time.

This day dream would come unbidden while she was preparing a meal. Then suddenly she would see how ridiculous it was. "Who ever heard of doing such a thing?" She would ask herself. "Do we know a single person who goes out for breakfast to a restaurant?" She was thinking of their particular friends. But to be honest, it was necessary to admit that there were lots of people who ate breakfast out every day, people who would start for work a half hour early and eat in the coffee shop in the basement of the building where they worked. Yes, of course. But all the same, for her it would be ridiculous, with a kitchen right here and all that food. She scolded herself for thinking of it.

Later on, her attitude changed. It began to seem such a little thing that she wanted, and monstrous that she could not have it. She saw suddenly that she was not free, that the daily routine she adhered to with Kenneth was a form of bondage. Doing something to break it seemed as impossible as breaking out of jail.

After a week or so she began to despise herself for being a coward. If Kenneth wanted to do something as much as she wanted this, they would certainly do it. She prodded herself and reproached herself until finally one morning she spoke.

Kenneth, a green-eyed, brittly thin man, gave off a slightly effeminate impression, perhaps because of the excessive length of his thick black hair, which he allowed to curl softly at the nape of his neck, perhaps because of the sensuality of his delicately shaped mouth. But this impression was erased by his self-assurance, which commanded instant respect. He approached people with an intimate, intense manner, which was flattering at the same time that it seemed to indicate a sense of his own importance, a natural authority. It had been easy for him to work his way up from Salesman in men's shirts at Stacy's Department store, to buyer of men's clothing. That was where Naomi had met him seven years ago, tumbling instantly into his magnetic orbit without making so much as one cry of resistance. She had revolved around him ever since, quitting her job in order to minister to his upkeep in all the precise detail which he demanded.

Only recently had she begun to look at Kenneth critically. No children had graced their marriage, and she was beginning to be bored with her life. Sporadic attacks of disloyal silent criticism of Kenneth had not so far affected her love for him. She looked upon him as the only person in the world whose opinion mattered, fearing his harsh judgments and unmoveable opinions more than anything in her world. That was what made it so hard to think how to approach him. If the thing struck him wrong at the moment, she could never persuade him otherwise. Her only chance of success was to hit upon the strategically correct moment and then say it in exactly the right way. The trouble was that, even after six years of living with him, Naomi hadn't the slightest idea what that way was. His reactions seemed utterly random. Sometimes he was precariously amenable, but more often her suggestions aroused instant animosity. Since she had no idea how to manage him, she resolved to wait for an opportune moment, and trust to whatever words came into her head. As a matter of fact she didn't make up her mind until the moment she said it.

Kenneth was almost always the first one out of bed. On this particular morning it was the sound of water running in the bathroom which woke her. Sunshine streamed across the bed in brilliant, dusty bands. Naomi sat up, thrust her feet into her slippers, and felt guilty. 7:10 and she should have been out in the kitchen measuring coffee. She threw on her robe, picked up the hairbrush and started to drag it through her hair while she gazed out the window. A fresh blue sky was blooming. Space. Freedom. Golden light.

Impulsively she pushed open the bathroom door and looked in on Kenneth, who was already pulling a razor down his lathered cheek. "Good morning," he said, looking at her quizzically. She rubbed her face against his shoulder. "Good morning," she said. Then, in a coaxing tone, "Let's go out for breakfast this morning."

She could hardly believe she had said it. Kenneth looked at her as though he hadn't heard, and she guessed he really hadn't. "What did you say, dear?" Could she possibly say it again?

Yes. "I said, let's go out for breakfast." But her voice cracked in the middle of "breakfast." He went on shaving.

"Oh sure," he said. "As soon as I put on my tie."

That was his first line of defense.

"I'm serious," said Naomi, pushing into the sink in front of him in order to wet a washcloth. She buried her face in its hot steam.

He stood back, waiting for her to finish. "What do you mean, serious?"

"I mean, how about going out somewhere for breakfast? Don't you think that would be fun?" She turned on the cold water, filled the washcloth, and gingerly lowered her face into the shock.

"Are you out of your mind?" said Kenneth emphatically. When opposing her, he was always unnecessarily emphatic. It was enough, she always thought, just to oppose. Why did he have to speak as though she had committed some unheard of atrocity? She sighed and stepped back. As he resumed his place before the mirror and went on with his shaving she noticed that his ears had turned a delicate coral color.

"Not specially," she said bravely, feeling surprised at herself. "I just have a yen to eat breakfast out for once. Why not? Don't you ever get tired of doing the same old thing day after day?"

He turned his head and gave her the kind of arms-length look with which one might observe a distastful piece of refuse.

"No. As a matter of fact, I don't," he said coldly. "I *like* the kind of breakfast I eat. I don't have any desire to go out first thing in the morning before I'm half awake, and look at a menu and have to make decisions about food. Besides, how would I have time to do a thing like that? In order to do that we would have to get up an hour earlier in the morning, so you should have brought this up last night, if you really wanted to do it."

It was more or less what Naomi had expected. She went into the kitchen and began to measure out the water for the coffee.

In a moment she was back at the bathroom door, saying, "How would I know the night before that I was going to want to go out for breakfast this morning?" She turned immediately back toward the kitchen. Kenneth followed her, wiping his chin with a towel. "Honest to God!" he said furiously. "Am I supposed to be ready to leap to attention every time you're struck by some crazy whim? Jesus Christ!" He walked back to the bathroom and slammed the door, giving Naomi time to think about what to say next. She knew by now it was useless, but such knowledge does not stifle the desire to win an argument.

At the breakfast table Kenneth read the paper intently. Finally Naomi cleared her throat, then said tentatively, "Dear. I'm sorry I made you angry. I didn't mean to."

"All right," said Kenneth without looking up.

"I guess I didn't get it across to you what I was talking about. I don't know whether

I can describe it or not. All of a sudden our routine seemed so...so dull, I guess. Now maybe it doesn't to you, but it does to me. I guess I need a change or something and this thing about going out to breakfast just came into my head for no reason at all, and it seemed like such a good idea and I really wanted to do it so much that I just said it, that's all. I didn't mean to make you mad. *Would* you be willing to go out to breakfast if you knew ahead of time, like, say, tomorrow?"

Kenneth raised his head. The glass-green eyes focused on the dust at the back of her soul. Very slowly, as though he were ejecting a stone from his mouth, he said, "No-o."

Naomi looked down at her plate and tried to go on eating, but a couple of stupid tears spilled out of her eyes, and her nose started to run so that she had to leave the table in order to get a handkerchief. By the time she returned, Kenneth had finished eating and was standing at the kitchen stove pouring his second cup of coffee.

"Look," he said roughly. "If you want to do that so damn much, why don't you go do it by yourself? Why do I have to go along?"

At that she burst into tears and ran into the bedroom.

"Oh hell!" said Kenneth. Then he slammed two cupboard doors, one after the other.

Intermittently, all through the morning, tears rose in her eyes and coursed down her cheeks while she went stoically about her work. It was the day when she was due at the thrift shop at noon, and she should have been hurrying to get through the housework, but she moved lethargically. Nothing seemed worth doing. Cleaning the bathroom appeared impossible and she left it undone. Dressing herself to go out proved more difficult than all the kitchen work. It required a great effort of will to pull on her stockings and fasten the garters. Her mind kept asking what she was doing that for, as though it was a new activity and should be required to justify itself. The tears kept coming, and she could not think what for. "Why am I crying?" she said into the mirror as she washed her face. She seemed to have almost forgotten what it was which had set her off.

Marge Kovak, who worked with her on Wednesday afternoons, was already in the shop when Naomi arrived. Marge was pushing clothes around on the racks and beamed a cheerful smile toward Naomi as she came through the door. "Hello," said Marge. "hello Naomi. Did you see this gorgeous thing which came in from Mrs. Charles P. Frisbee last week? Look! If only it was my size."

Click! Just as though a switch had snapped, Naomi returned to normal. "Twenty dollars!" she read, looking at the tag. "It must have cost her a hundred at least."

"And she hardly wore it at all," said Marge.

By five o'clock, when they closed the store, Naomi had not thought once of the morning's disturbance, but as she walked up High Street toward the parking lot where Kenneth left his car, it came back to her as something remote and unreal. "What foolishness!" she told herself. "I'm an idiot."

The raw place seemed healed over. During all of the next week that silly desire did not recur, and perhaps would have been permanently suppressed if it hadn't been for Kenneth.

Naomi and Kenneth were the kind of married people who live with a continuing struggle to think of something to say to each other, neither one being a compulsive talker. Thus it was that in the middle of dinner one evening, Kenneth, trying to make conversation, asked, "Well and when are you going to go out for breakfast?"

The question threw Naomi into confusion. "Oh, I'd forgotten about it," she said, looking at him, trying to judge what was in his mind. He showed nothing but his usual wry expression. She decided he was teasing and began to resent it.

"Why? Did you change your mind and decide to go with me?" she asked crossly, hoping she could think of some clever, critical thrust, and aware that usually she couldn't.

"No. I just think that if you want to do that so badly, you ought to do it."

"What would be the fun, going alone?"

Kenneth's finely carved, red lips compressed themselves into a thin ugly line, and he gave her a level stare full of severity. "You mean you are incapable of enjoying anything unless I'm along?"

"No. I didn't mean that," she said. "I just. . .Oh, wouldn't it seem silly now, for me to get breakfast for you and then go out to a restaurant to eat my own?"

"You don't have to get my breakfast. Whenever you take a notion to do that, just inform me and I'll get my own breakfast that morning. And off you can go."

"That would be crazy." She felt overwhelmed by the senselessness of it.

"No it wouldn't," said Kenneth. "The trouble with you is you're enslaved to convention, habit, routine."

It struck home. It was true. She could see it was true. She couldn't think what to say.

"You're always chafing against the boredom of routine, and that's because you're really such a slave to it. You can't break out of it by yourself. You want me to take you out of it."

"No I don't, dear," she protested, knowing she was lying. "I just don't like the idea of going off and leaving you like that in the morning. It seems to me married people should do things together."

"You're afraid to do it. I dare you to."

"Oh nuts!" she muttered angrily. "I don't want to go anymore."

"You're afraid," said Kenneth.

"I am not. Do I *have* to go now, just because you're needling me?" It was intolerable. First he thought her a fool for wanting to go, and now he thought her a coward for not going.

But after that she could no longer forget about it. Kenneth did not mention it again, but every morning as she started to prepare breakfast the thought came into her head rather vaguely, "He said I should go by myself. He said I'm afraid to." Then she would automatically put it away by thinking, "Well, one of these days I *will* go."

She felt that promise as a kind of decision, although she had to repeat it to herself every day. Gradually she came to see that she would have to act on it, or somehow look

directly at what was there inside her silly head. An absurd compulsion she told herself, and now all this foolish indecision about what had utterly no importance. For instance, when she considered seriously the idea of dashing out somewhere for breakfast by herself, *really* doing it, say, tomorrow, the first consideration which came to mind was, "Where?" To the drug store? The Tea Shoppe? The Motel? Possibly the coffee shop at the Statler. Or Howard Johnson's. And the impossibility of deciding where, would force her to put off the whole project until tomorrow. Tomorrow she found that she overslept, getting up barely in time to brew Kenneth's coffee and boil his egg, for of course she had resolved that she would not allow him to get his own breakfast simply in order to indulge her own whim. And to go out for breakfast after Kenneth had left was impossible, because he drove the car to work every day. The idea of walking several blocks to catch a bus in order to go somewhere for breakfast did not appeal to her. Of course she could walk to the drug store. Why didn't she want to do that? After all, the lunch counter in the drug store was the spot which had seemed so enticing in the first place, and to walk there would take only about fifteen minutes. She felt distinctly disinclined to take this course. . .Why? she asked herself. Why? Because it was possible?

"True!" She gave the Swiss steak she happened to be pounding a hard wallop. And another. "True! Absolutely true! I'm afraid to do it."

There it was. She would have to go through with it somehow. She went on pounding the steak with such vigor that Kenneth, who had just wandered into the kitchen, said, "Take it easy. You'll ruin the board."

He meant the cutting board on which she was pounding the meat. She looked at him with an expression of exasperation. "Dear!" she said.

"Well, you will," said Kenneth.

"What do you think this board is for, darling? You can't ruin it."

"But look. You're making marks on it."

"I've made marks on it hundreds of times. They go away. And if they didn't, what of it?"

"But it's so nice." It was an excellent cutting board, thick and beautiful. "I hate to see you ruin it."

"I'm not ruining it, dopey. Go away."

He went away. Tomorrow would be Sunday. The car would be absolutely available. She resolved to go out to breakfast somewhere tomorrow morning, as early as possible. It was a terrifying prospect.

On Sunday morning she was into her slip and pulling on stockings before Kenneth woke up enough to make comments.

"Where are *you* going?" he said untenderly.

"Out to breakfast," she answered quickly, trying to keep her voice from trembling. Her viscera felt as though she were going to have a tooth pulled.

Kenneth yawned, turned over, said "Oh," and closed his eyes. It was insulting. He was quick enough, she thought, to notice her timidity, but blind to evidences of courage. Oh well, perhaps this was an oblique compliment, for it indicated that she was doing a successful job of concealing her agitation. "Here I am, doing something I don't want to do at all," she thought. The bed looked tempting, and for a moment she contemplated pulling off her clothes and climbing back into it, covering her head, and forgetting the whole thing. She sat down before the dressing table and began to apply lipstick, thinking, "How did I get myself into this? Why do I have to do this?"

As she gathered up handbag and car keys, Kenneth opened his eyes and muttered, "Have a good time."

It was the patronizing tone which made her angry. "Oh shut up," she said, and left.

All this determination had not been preceded by any form of decision about where to go, and as she drove out of the driveway trying to make up her mind, it began to seem more and more ludicrous that a single woman should be entering an eating place at 8:30 on Sunday morning. What if she met someone who knew her? How could she explain? "I've been quarreling with my husband." "I've been out all night and I'm afraid to go home." She drove into the parking lot behind the drug store, walked across the empty waste of blacktop and stopped with her hand on the handle of the back door. It was locked.

Feeling foolish, as though she were being watched, she flooded the engine and then was forced to sit waiting before the car would start. "Everything's going to be closed," she thought hysterically. She drove slowly down Market Street, which was unbelievably empty and contained nothing but green lights. A sign, she thought, a sign to keep on toward the center of town. The Statler. That was sure to be open.

Main Street, empty of cars, gave her suddenly a great sense of freedom. Nothing was in the way. It was possible to park almost in front of the hotel, and climbing out she had a fleeting sense of being in a strange city. This is how the city must look to a stranger, coming into town alone, she thought, looking round at the clutter of inactive buildings. But she could not quite manage the leap. The two department stores facing each other, the thirty year old hotel, the five and ten, the conglomeration of small stores strung out along the street in one-storey, antique buildings. . .It was irritatingly, inescapably, still only her home town, which she knew to the point of boredom.

The taxi drivers lounging near the hotel stared at her, or she thought they did. In front of the entranceway, the doorman in his histrionic costume was handing passengers out of the long, black airport limousine. Naomi hesitated, reluctant to push her way into the revolving door among all these people. Instead, she walked past the hotel door and stopped to stare into a jewelry-store window, trying to look purposeful. She tried to imagine that she had money to squander, but there was nothing among the expensive baubles that she would have wanted to own. The window refused to hold her interest. They had propped open the doors now, and two porters were unloading luggage from the limousine. Suddenly she remembered that there was a side door leading almost directly into the coffee shop. Feeling somewhat furtive, she escaped around the corner and into

that door, finding herself immediately in front of a heavy glass door marked 'Cafe', and thankful to have avoided the walk across the lobby.

"What am I afraid of?" she said clearly inside her head, and tugged on the door.

Just in time, she saw the Kimberly family sitting inside. Eunice Kimberly had once been Naomi's best friend. That was when she was Eunice Plappert and they were seniors in High School. Naomi had not seen her for years, but it would be impossible not to speak. There she sat in unconscious bliss, with her husband and two children spread out around a table, eating pancakes and reading the Sunday paper. Naomi quickly let go of the door and retreated to the street, thinking, "Eunice always did have the luck."

Feeling as though she were being watched, and afraid of showing confusion, she began to walk briskly along Main Street. She knew there were two or three eating places in the next block, one of which must be open. None was.

She felt ravenous and began to drive about aimlessly, but nothing was open. Obviously Sunday morning was an impossible time to go out for breakfast. Why had she got herself into this idiotic situation anyhow? Now she would have to drive around until a decent amount of time had elapsed before she could go home and face Kenneth. It was unthinkable to admit to him that she had failed to enter a restaurant.

Suddenly she remembered the lunch counter in City Hospital, a spot that was open twenty-four hours every day. Of course. She could eat something there, appease her hunger, and kill some time before going home. If she met anyone, it would be easy to make up a tale about bringing in a sick friend. She turned east at the next corner.

The lunch counter at the hospital was cushioned in a profusion of plush animals, perfume atomizers, gift-boxed cosmetics, bed jackets, gold-embroidered slippers, transistor radios, pipes, cigars, electric razors and racks of gaudy magazines. A man in a white coat sat at one end of the counter, sipping a coke. At one of the two small round tables, another white-coated man was drinking coffee while he read the funnies. Naomi perched herself on a stool at the opposite end, and observed the waitresses. There were three, two of them engrossed in conversation with each other. The third stood directly in front of Naomi, laconically buttering a pile of toast on a crumb covered board. Without looking up, she piled the three pieces of toast on a plate, sliced them into triangles, and carried them to the man at the table. She came back slowly then and placed herself in front of Naomi, presenting a sullen face with dark, hollow eyes, eyebrows raised quizzically. Naomi decided against eating.

"Could I have a hot chocolate made with skim milk?" she asked.

The waitress looked irritated. "We don't have any skim milk."

"All right," said Naomi. "I'll take one made with regular milk." The girl shifted a cup under one of the machines, squirted it full of hot chocolate, and slid it along the counter, slopping into the saucer a splash of dark purple liquid.

While the waitress brushed crumbs from the board, Naomi began to drink. "Tastes like it's made from water," she said suspiciously.

The dark face turned up toward her, frowning, overly concerned. "Oh no. That's made with real milk." A sincere look. "Anything else?"

Automatically Naomi said, "No thanks." But as soon as the girl had disappeared through a door at the far end of the shop, she began to wish she had ordered some toast. She stared without effect at the other two waitresses, who were still absorbed in their animated and highly audible conversation, down there by the orange juice machine. Although it was still only September, they were talking about Christmas shopping. "I've already spent thirty dollars on my sister," said the fat one. The other had aggressive upper teeth which caused her to lisp. "Oh man, I wish I could think what I'm going to get for my boy-friend," she said excitedly. "Anyway, I know I'm going to spend at least fifty dollars on him." Naomi rattled her spoon and cleared her throat.

The fat one looked her way. "Could I have a piece of whole wheat toast, please?" said Naomi.

"We don't have no whole wheat. Only white," said the girl, moving slightly toward her.

"All right. I'll take white." The waitress began to pull slices of bleached cottony bread from a waxed wrapper. She put them in the toaster, pushed down the lever, and leaned back against the mirror.

"No skim milk. No whole wheat bread. You're ruining my diet," said Naomi, smiling.

The waitress looked at her earnestly. "Oh you don't have to worry," she said. "That hot chocolate's made with water." Had she been listening? If not, what did she mean by that? In any case, what did she mean? It should have been funny, but Naomi was able to feel only depression at this crowded encounter with pointless dishonesty. She felt betrayed by the sincerity of the hollow-eyed waitress who had made her believe she was drinking milk even though it tasted like water.

She watched, feeling more and more indignant, while this waitress buttered the toast by rubbing a tiny pat of butter over the surface, and then carefully scraped off every bit of excess and put it back on the butter dish. When the toast came to her to be eaten, it was almost dry. She scooped out all the jelly in the little paper cup and spread the toast with that, thinking angrily that this was once when she would not leave a tip. A moment later she noticed a placard fixed to the mirror: "No tipping please."

But driving home along the empty Sunday streets, a light expansive feeling unexpectedly came over her. The trees and houses danced past her eyes. The street paving sparkled. She saw the city as though looking down from some heavenly cloud: a clot of little people living close to each other but separately in their little boxes. She saw herself as one of them, an ant among ants, threading her way skillfully through their complex paths without touching any of them. She was free to go where she pleased. All the things to do in the world were open and available for her to choose from. She remembered this untethered feeling from somewhere

in the past. It was how she had felt after she first got up in Sunday school and recited the names of the twelve apostles. It was a feeling which came after doing something you have been terribly afraid to do. You see that you have done it and everything else becomes possible. It was a spoonful of freedom, and she held it in her mouth, savoring the taste all the way home, until she walked through the back door and saw Kenneth.

He was standing at the kitchen counter, wearing his red and grey plaid dressing gown, eating his breakfast there, and reading the paper. As she came in, he looked toward her and smiled his most melting smile, fixing her with a close, personal look as though he really saw and found her interesting. "Well," he said happily, sweetly, his delicious warm voice spilling over her senses, reaching out to grasp her. "Well, did you have a good time?"

Naomi swallowed. The spoonful of freedom disappeared down her throat. "Marvelous," she said. It was imitation freedom.

He put his arm around her, and turned her head toward him so that she had to look at the hypnotic eyes which were trying to force her to tell. He wanted to know. He was directing all of his formidable weapons toward her: the smile, the eyes, the gentle touch, the tender voice, the intense interest. "Tell me about it," he said. She almost did. She was about to tell him all about it when he said it again. "Come on. Tell me about it." This time she heard in his tone the false enthusiasm one uses on a child, and she pulled away.

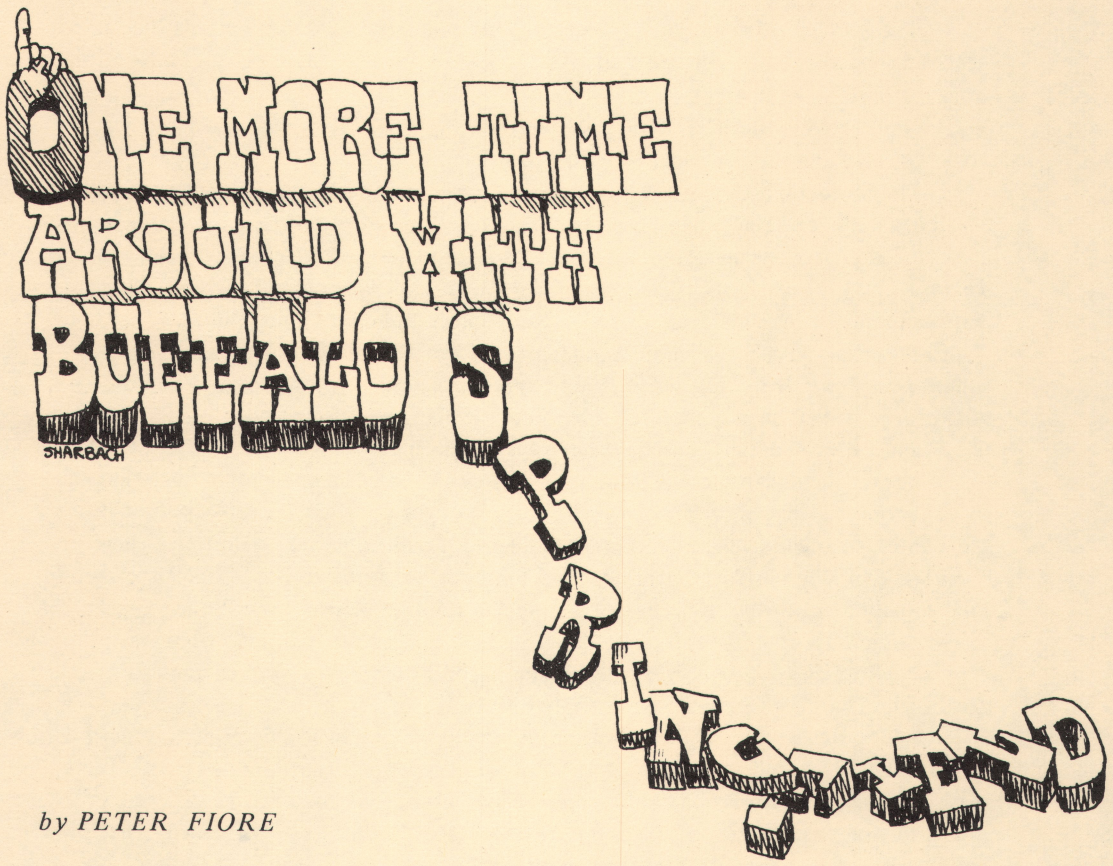
"I don't have to," she said rather insolently. "I don't know why I should."

His look changed to that of a scientist observing an amoeba. He was watching her carefully. "Oh," he said. "Well. I guess I don't know either, why you should." Abruptly he turned back to the paper he had been reading.

Her insolence crumbled. The little taste of liberty – the spoonful of freedom – had dissipated without affecting anything. She felt the tether pulling her back into orbit and the familiar dark anxiety, tearing at her mind. She wanted him to know. She wanted him to want to know, to be interested in what she had done, to find everything about her fascinating, to care about what she felt. That he should turn away was unbearable. She threw the car keys on the counter top beside him and walked into the dining room.

Just then the spoonful of freedom must have trickled down to her toes for she kicked one of the dining room chairs, and most unaccountably found herself standing at the side window, making a speech to a robin out there who was pecking at the orange berries on a mountain ash tree. "It's none of your business. It's nobody's business. If I have to go alone when I go out to breakfast, then I don't have to tell where I've been. . .or what I ate. . . or who I saw." She glared at the little bouquets of berries on the tree outside. They quivered and swayed.

Kenneth came up behind her then, and embraced her, kissing her on the neck and cupping her left breast in his hand. He was never rough, and his touch could make her tremble with pleasure, but she shook him off impatiently, then turned suddenly and clutched at his arms, pressing her face against his chest. "Oh please!" she cried. "Please." She could not have said what she was begging for.



by PETER FIORE

William Faulkner spoke of his novels as failures. What he meant was they were failures in the sense that all human endeavors are doomed to failure simply because man's execution of an idea can never match his conception of it. Thus for Faulkner, success depended a great deal on what a man set out to accomplish, the degree he was willing to expose himself to failure, which, paradoxically, increased the possibility of success. On the other hand, success in pop music is measured by a performer's ability to sell records. And the continuing phenomenon of popular success is that it is immediate and highly volatile but treacherously temporary, since it is generally without sufficient foundation.

The recently disbanded Buffalo Springfield, a Canadian-born, California-based rock group, failed because they were too human to succeed: That is, they thrived on taking chances. But if their recordings did fail, it was like that of the novels of Nathaniel West. There weren't enough of them. For in the three years the Buffalo herded together, they released only three albums and each was very carefully put together. This is amazing when you consider that even Simon and Garfunkel, perhaps the most consciously artistic performers in the pop field, have released four albums, five if you count what they did with *The Graduate*, in about the same amount of time.

The Springfield always had impeccable musical sense, and at their best they projected a free-wheeling, open spontaneity. They were never a gritty, gutsy group and were at home more in Nashville than Memphis. But that's too easy. Listening to their albums you're impressed by their versatility and ability to integrate colorful ingredients from rock, country and folk on most of their songs.

The Springfield's approach to country music was a process developed from album to album with increasing adeptness. On their first album *Buffalo Springfield*, the country elements were merely suggested, introduced to add variety, as on "Burned" and "Sit Down I Think I Love You." Their second album *Buffalo Springfield Again* was divided between straight rock material, like "Mr. Soul" and "Bluebird," and country blues, like "A Child's Claim To Fame" and "Sad Memory." But on their monumental farewell album *Last Time Around*, it was virtually impossible to distinguish country sounds from rock, for both had been completely integrated. In fact, on "Four Days Gone," "Special Care" and "Kind Woman," among others, they've seemed to create an idiom all their own.

Always technically to the point, the Springfield had arrangements, mostly written by the group's leader Steve Stills, which subtly brought out their unusual approach to style and instrumentation, and combined the group with some very haunting strings on their last two albums. Then there was Neil Young's lead guitar, terse, brilliantly clear and emotionally evocative without ever straining. On the first album it was Young's sparkling solos which more than anything else brought the bright country air into what was primarily a rock setting. And his sweet funny counterpoint with guest dobrist James Burton on "A Child's Claim to Fame" was simply beautiful.

Young shared the vocals with Stills and rhythm guitarist Richie Furay, none of whom stood out as remarkable vocalists. But the two and three part harmony they constructed was remarkable. Their use of the human voice as another instrument was as advanced as any group singing today, different from but as exciting as the Jefferson Airplane's. That's a hell of a claim, but listen to what's going on in "Flying on the Ground Is Wrong" and "Nowadays Clancy Can't Even Sing" from the first album, then jump to "On The Way Home" from *Last Time Around*, and you'll have a good idea of how voices and instruments can blend and interplay into a total unity of effect.

Lyrically, the Springfield were more than adequate but far from Dylan or Paul Simon's minor masterpieces. Most of their songs were written by Stills or Young, and they did produce their share of banalities:

> And nobody's right,
> If everybody's wrong.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I get high just thinking of you.

But they could also evoke some very refreshing and rare musical moments:

In a strange game
I saw myself as you knew me.

. . . . . .

There goes another day
And I wonder why
You and I keep tellin' lies.

. . . . . .

You there, on the corner,
Staring at me.
Do you think I'm trouble?
Would you like to shoot me down?

Of all their albums *Again* was perhaps the most daring. Young and Stills kept you alert and pleasantly surprised with some complex and often wonderful tempo changes. On "Everydays" Stills' piano was almost funky and the harmonic texture of Stills and Richie Furay's vocal anticipated some of the more adventuresome work of The Band on *Music From Big Pink.*

But if you don't have any of the Springfield's albums, start with *Last Time Around.* Its only mar was a kind of African chant titled "Uno Mundo," which just didn't fit with the style established by the other songs. Outside of that, the rest of the material was fully realized and often unbelievably lovely. In it the Springfield communicated a carefree minstral quality and a feeling of joy that emerged even from their songs of conflict and frustration. And that is no mean achievement.

So if the Buffalo Springfield did fail, their failure to a great extent lies in the shabby, competitive values of pop music, values which are dictated by charletans and mindless teeny bops. Even future musicologists may ignore the passing of the Springfield in a year that spun through the emergeance of The Band and Laura Nyro, the demise of the Byrds this summer and the current split between Big Brother and Janis Joplin. Still, that's a sad thing, if only because a small peninsula of pop music has broken off, diminished it that much. And it can't afford the loss.

TRAILS

My father once found
A dead woman above
The park where horses
Were hired out
Trails in
Leaves on the floor
And crossing dogs also
Snuffed out in the vapors
Of the city which cling up there
Caught down between the waists
Of trees



untitled *LOUISE CORMIER*



they — *GINNY FRY*

GRANDFATHER

Isa
you could not speak
words I would understand
but I came to know
your love
warm in the hand
held walking springward,
glass bottles chinking
at our sides.

I found you
in your rocking chair,
late in the afternoon;
waiting for wood puzzles,
I watched your hands
reach
for those strange pieces
of soft pine.

The lines that held your face
eased into age.
This is the way I remember you
stretched on the downstairs cot.
Then it was I who could
not speak.

When I was twelve
I saw you
your hands
wise,
and your face
stern again.
I counted flower cards.
It was when they closed
your door
and I couldn't reach
your hand
that I remembered.

CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

VIRGIL SCOTT is a full professor in English at Michigan State. He has published four novels and numerous stories in such magazines as *Esquire, Argosy,* and *Good Housekeeping.* He is presently at work on a historical novel.

MICHAEL HOWDEN'S translation from the French of Rene Char will be included in his full translation of Char's *Seuls Demeurent*, to be published by Random House, Inc.

JAMES C. BALOIAN is an Irvine poet. He has poems in recent issues of *Ararat, Beyond Baroque, Midwest Quarterly, Alaska Review,* and *Colorado State Review.*

PETER WILD is also an Irvine poet. His work has appeared just about everywhere. His book, *Afternoon in Dismay*, was published by the Art Association of Cincinnati last spring.

SYLVIA WROBEL is a free lance editor in Lexington, Kentucky. She has previously published poetry and fiction in the *Laurel Review* and *Descant.* Also she has recently been published in an anthology of former fiction contest winners by *Seventeen.*

HUGH FOX is the editor of *Ghost Dance.* Of the long experimental poem printed here he writes: "I got the idea for this poem at the Conference of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers held in Berkeley in May of 1968. RJS ("Captain Zero"), the Cleveland poet and editor of the *Third Class Junkmail Buddhistic Oracle,* told the audience that, for him, California was a psychedelic prostibula (whorehouse). Was it? In 18th century Providence that summer I thought the problem through. This poem is that thinking."

JUSTIN KESTENBAUM is an associate professor in History at Michigan State University and we love him.

RICHARD J. AMOROSI recently moved to East Lansing from Amherst, Mass. His poems appear in recent or forthcoming issues of *Ghost Dance , Eikon, Quixote* and other magazines. One of his poems was recently selected for *The Bantom Anthology of East Coast Poets.* A book of his poems will be published next spring.

H.L. VAN BRUNT is the widely published managing editor of *The Smith.* His book, *Uncertainties,* was published by the Horizon Press last spring.

ALBERT DRAKE is an assistant professor in the English department at Michigan State University. He has published fiction and poetry in *North American Review, Northwest Review, Shenandoah* and *West Coast Review,* among others. He has also had a story recently accepted by *Redbook.*

JUDITH ANNE GREENBERG lives in East Lansing. These are her first published poems.

THOMAS KRETZ , S.J. is a Jesuit priest living in Osorno, Chile.

SUSAN MUSGROVE is from Berkeley, California and has appeared in several literary magazines.

LORRIE KEISTER is a housewife in Akron, Ohio. Although this is her first published story, she has previously published poetry in *American Haiku* and *Podium.* She also took first prize for fiction in the University of Indiana's Creative Writing Contest in 1966.

PETER FIORE has recently appeared in *Jessuit Missions, True Confusions* and *Family Circles.* For the past week he has been asleep and thus we have been unable to contact him.

ROBERT VANDER MOLEN is the author of *Blood Ink* and *The Invisible Lost Book of Deep Ocean Fish,* collections of poems published by *Zeitgeist.*

LINDA M. AMOROSI is the charming and talented wife of Richard J. Amorosi.

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