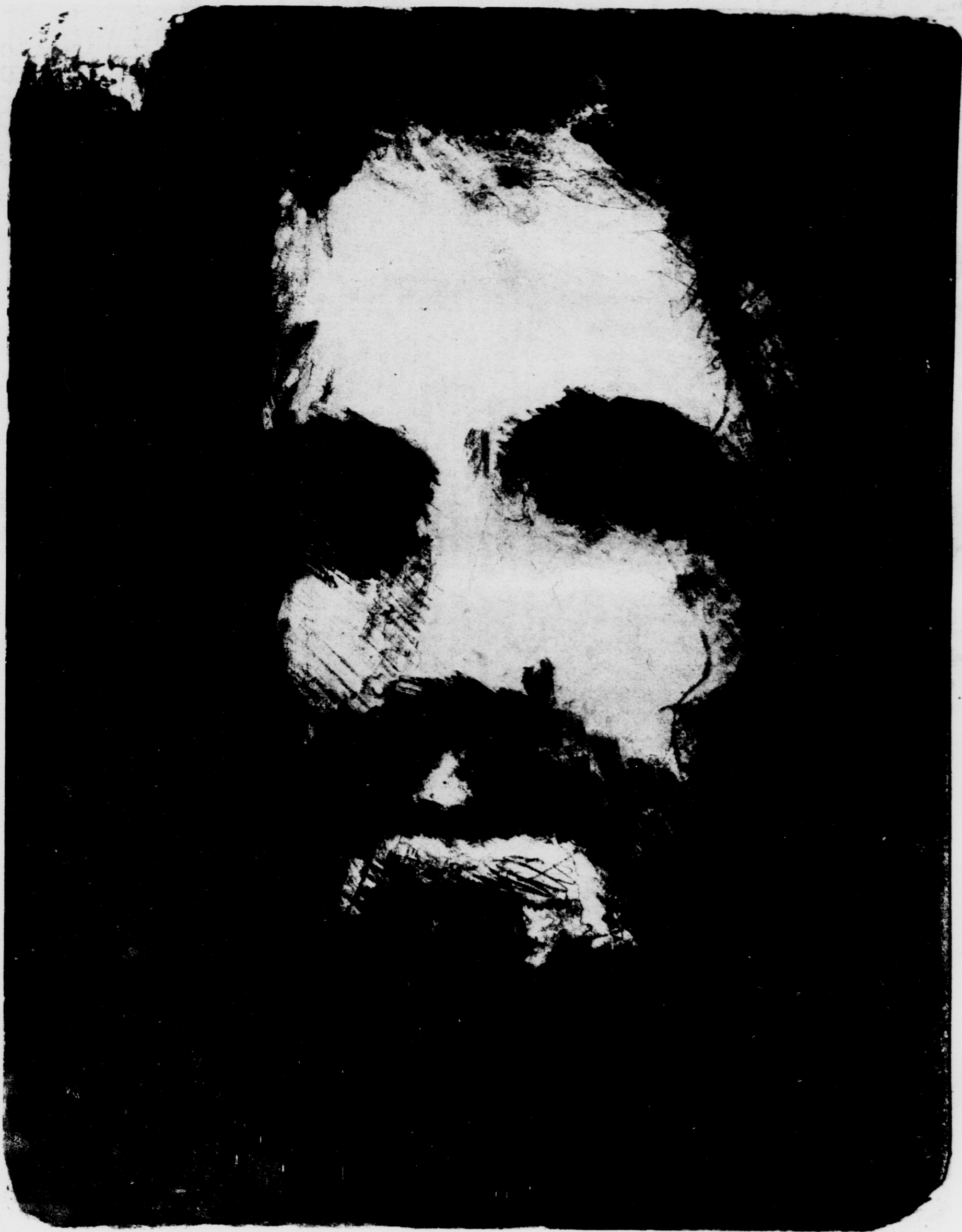


TUESDAY

May 4, 1971



Blind Lament

lithograph/Doug Huston



Maiyunahu'ta-

*who are guardian spirits, Spirit Who
Told Me In Sleep*

Settled
Into the shoulder of Pyramid Peak,
Looking,

the only trails here are
the ones you've left
behind you

After supper sun setting
Over ridges and ranges-
Horizons away-
Last warmth soaking
Into highline tangles,
Wind twisted timber, gnarled, bent;
Fingers
Of an old god's folded hands.

Oxheheom-

*which is the Dance for the
Renewal of Life*

Wake up early and reach out and
Tap the air;
You can hear it ring.
Hawk's early hunting cry
Glances off the lake,
Carries you against far cliffs and
Drifting . . . circling . . .
Back again.

Draughts of pine steeped
Spring water needles;
Deep bites of morning
Bracing against any soft waking
In the smoke.



Along Ekutsihimmiyo

by Jim Ofelt

Ekutsihimmiyo is the hanging road in the sky – embodied as the Milky Way – it spans the space from earth to the Heammaioihio – the Cheyenne's concept of home after death. Ekutsihimmiyo is the road the spirit travels upon being freed from the body.



Tasoom-

which means the essence

I saw, I thought
Is it an eagle's nest?
And went to look, and found.
Buckskin wrapped and lashed into branches.
Armored with age, beyond armor,
Beads and fine horn bow,
Favorite horse's bones beneath.
All these years the ravens and jays
Still hadn't got through to the eyes.

Later, back down
Out of the mountains
I wondered what they'd think
Of him, of his dust,
Those museum officials in Laramie
And drove home quiet,
Laughing-
What would he think of them?

Footlog

Bark lost,
Greasy from spray,
Spans a meltwater
Flood;
Within the loud rush
Grind boulder
Teeth.
Crossing,
Premeditation done,
Dignity back below
In the car
With my books,
Embrace the slippery
Whore
And belly-squirm.

Along Ekutsihimmiyo-

*which is the Hanging Road From Earth
To Sky*

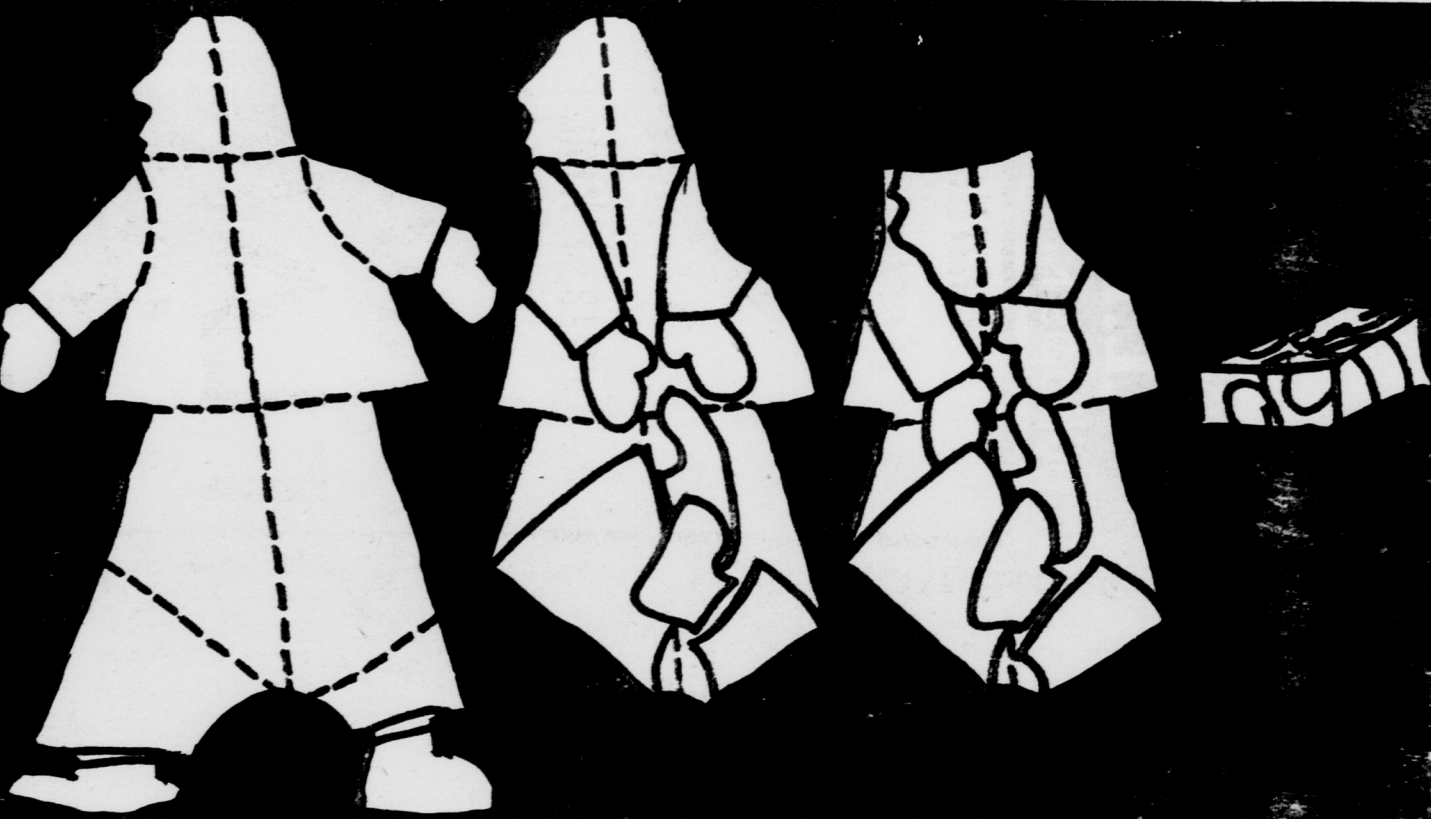
She came down the trail with another
Party as I was going up.
Young doe,
All legs and eyes and
Quick flash
Mountain mornings in her smile.
Meeting at Washakie crossing we
Shared trail crackers and talk,
Fed a Rocky Mountain jay,
Watched three trout in the stream.
And then,
Rested,
She turned and started down again and,
Rested,
I turned and headed on up.



photography/Kirby Milton

ASHES

for Lorraine Sigle



The screen door slipped from Carrie's hand and slammed against the sleeping silence of the house. Throbbing against the wooden shell of the Clay ancestry. Throbbing against her temples, a nerve vibrated and vibrated and then stopped abruptly. She listened. No one called to her from within — Mother and Father up from Boston — son home from college. She stood outside their deep breathing. She could have gone in and with a word or a touch peeled away their cocoon of sleep and brought them with her.

Instead, she turned and started across the field alone. She looked gratefully at the full moon and then apprehensively across the field to the trees.

In the morning, she thought, she would tell them what she had done. It would be a simple recounting of events. No hysteria. No theatrics. She would be matter of fact and simply say that this was what Jay wanted and she had carried out his wish.

Carrie stopped and looked at the case in her hand. The moonlight caught on the silver lettering, "Gerald Emmet Clay, January 3, 1928 to April 21, 1971." And on the back of the case, "I'm filling up with ashes, love." Ashes! Hoar frost of years, of Irish black hair and blue eyes all melted down, condensed into what mysterious elements? Helen held the case to her ear and shook it. But the ashes whispered so softly against the black leather sides that she could scarcely hear. Just voices on velvet and slipped feet. The sound would not catch on anything as solid as words. It was a secret sound that she sometimes felt was not really wind at all. Carrie looked across the diminished field to the trees and slowed her pace.

It was after Lisa was stillborn that she first felt the mystery of the trees.

Sunlight slid through the crack in the center of the drape and sat upon the mahogany bureau. She felt it as a Presence, a sentient being bringing the secrets of stellar space into her room. She, too, had been journeying through space, through the mysterious subterrain of sleep. She wanted to call to it and say, "Surely after coming so far we should know, should understand something." But it sat, a golden orb of silence on her bureau. It occurred to her that she alone in the world might be alive. Jay and Jerry had crossed the field to the woods early this morning while the house was still in shadow. Perhaps they too were only shadows. She felt the house descend upon her, press her thin, shutting out all sound. She was a leaf preserved in rock. Some geologist

milleniums from now would find her and tell the world how it was back then. She thought of Lisa who was with her DNA all coded and ready, but forbidden. Forbidden to speak or write her name. She edged her leg over the side of the bed. At least she could still move. She threw back the covers like shale. Sandstone and quartz she heaped at the foot. She picked her way through the rubble of rock to the window and pulled the drape. When she opened the window she felt the cold air press her back into the warmth behind her. She could see across the field to the wall of evergreen, birch and jack pine. There her eyes were denied entrance. Even in the sunlight the woods kept its secrets. "The trees are carnivorous," she said to the silence. That sound they make, that sighing, isn't the wind. It's the spirits of lost men moaning as they slip through those thick arms, trying to find their way out.

Carrie stopped suddenly, breathless from the walk and the remembered terror. The edge of the woods was less than 20 yards ahead. She contemplated throwing the case into its dark center and running back across the field to the house that breathed and was warm. "Oh, darling, I'm sorry. I really wouldn't have done that. It's just that I was so scared. You knew I'd be scared. You must have believed I could do it. I know that you loved these woods. That you tracked deer and never shot. That you knew you were the master here."

As she approached the edge of the woods, the trees seemed to be huddled together like primitive spirits protecting themselves. Beneath her feet she could feel the cushion of decay. The damp, dark odor of pine invaded her pores and there was the smell of another world, of a time before words. The shadows pressed close about her. She thought she must not let them go over her head. She had to rise above them. For Jay. "This is for Jay," she said to the trees. The sound of her voice surprised her. She felt a strange power over the inarticulate darkness. "For Jay, for Jay. This is for Jay," she repeated as she leaned against the knotty whiteness of a birch.

The words, "I am filling up with ashes, love." flashed in front of her eyes like the temperature and time on the bank building. They puzzled her. They were familiar, but they had no sharp corners to cling to. They were smooth like pebbles ground down by the years of sea washing. She forced herself to close her eyes against the darkness — to remember.

She saw a road all rutted and muddy from the spring thaw. And woods much like the one she was in. Then a cabin. A one - room, tarpaper shack. Of course, the old man on Hunter Road! He was one of Jay's first calls as a young country doctor. She pictured Jay stooping his six-foot frame to enter. The stagnant air clings to the unpainted plank floor and walls. The bed dominates the end of the room. Its dirty quilt half hides the slop jar beneath. The old man is sitting on the rocker he proudly tells Jay he made with some barrel staves. His feet are planted on the box he kept beside the stove for wood. He eyes Jay suspiciously. Says he was never to a doctor in his life and didn't need one now, just because his daughter thinks he looks poorly. Jay chuckles at that and says he probably doesn't need him, but if he didn't mind he would just have a look at him anyway. The man is old and tubercular and there is nothing really that he could do except spend some time listening to a lonely man try his voice on a human ear. Just before Jay leaves the old man grips his arm and says, "Doc, I'm gittin' old. Ya see that there burner." He spits on the stove and watches his tobacco juice sizzle on the hot surface. "It's near full up with ashes. I'm like that. I'm just fillin' up with ashes." When Jay came home he told her about it. "Isn't that some metaphor, honey?" He repeated it with a slight alteration, "I'm filling up with ashes, love."

She removed the lid and looked in disbelief at the ashes. Just ashes. No blue eyes, no deep - throated chuckle, no slender fingers. Just flat, faceless ashes. They have nothing to do with Jay, she thought. She sprinkled them at the base of the tree like a priest sprinkling holy water. They swirled up in a cloud, in a brief pantomime of form and then settled at the base of the birch.

She turned and glared fiercely into the silence. Then her taut muscles relaxed. She thrust a thin smile into the dark center and left.

As she started back across the field, she felt Jay's face close to hers as it was that last night together. He was tender. He touched her cheek a thousand times and said that she was his Braille tablet. That he was a blind man memorizing her. She held him in her little house, and then he slipped away from her. Fell down the centuries, past the sun and all galaxies. Left only traces of himself embedded within. Webbing of fern that would fossilize in her mind. "It was not like carrying a child," she thought. "There would be no coming out, no relief." Yet she was proud to carry him. To be his monument.