"Don't you know how hard this all is?"
Ted Williams, on batting in particular and baseball in general.
(Quoted as epigraph to Roger Angell's Season Ticket: A Baseball Companion, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988.)

Fantasy Camp

The Sugar River surged out of the low eastern mountains and flowed past the textile mills down to the flood plain where it formed a perfect ninety degree angle defining the outfield of the Newport baseball diamond.

Jimmy Campbell, in tattered tan sweatshirt, flannel baseball pants, and steel-cleated shoes, sweated his twelve-year-old's sweat as he stood on the pitcher's mound and glared down at the batter:

"It was the City League. It was a time before Little League. It was a game of men, some forty years old, some twelve. It was the time of Ted Williams and Johnny Mize and the New York Yankees and the Real Bosox. It was a game played across the country in old parks with old-looking men and baggy uniforms.

It was the eighth inning and Jimmy Campbell had a no-hitter.

"I had a no-hitter in the eighth," Jimmy, 57, was telling the boys who gathered around the meat counter at the general store, "and three batters to go. The boys nodded and waited. They had heard it before. And I got'em. All three. Oh, of course, this one. His fourth the game all told. Scared the hell out of the next fella. Took three swings and left. No-hitter."

Winter squeezes at the crotch of New England and leaves it shriveled and inactive. Winter leaves men to escape into their minds, to bask in yesterdays, and dream green dreams of tomorrow.

Jimmy was sipping at his coffee. The talk turned to winter and then died, the bitching done.

"I bet I can still throw a few innings," Jimmy said.

"Behind the meat counter the saw was whining as Jake cut pork chops. He looked at Jimmy. "Then, why the hell don't you play and stop talking about it every winter."

"Where'd I play? Who'd I play?"

Jake pulled a newspaper out and the gathered men waited. "Says here, in the Boston Globe, that they got a camp in Florida for them still want to play ball. Two weeks, uniforms, everything. Says Ted Williams, Bobby Doerr, Elston Howard, and a bunch of them will be there."

"Florida." Jimmy waved Jake off. "How'd I get there?"

"Drive."
“Fly.”

“Dangit, Jake, you know I don’t fly.”

“Alright then, train... out of Boston.”

“How am I supposed to get to Boston!”

Jimmy stroked his old Rawling Lomme Frey Model baseball glove as the train pulled out of South Station. It hummed west toward Springfield before turning south to Hartford and New Haven and New York City.

From the windows of the train the landscape changed from trees and open fields to junkyards and tired neighborhoods with sad-faced buildings and flat sagging warehouses with the art of angry pasted on their walls. The buildings, the walls, the wasted yards suddenly eclipsed as the train dove under New York into Penn Station.

“You'll change trains at Penn,” the conductor said. “Go to track 24.”

There were no big signs saying Track 24. Jimmy left the train and alighted on the platform. He stood, bag in one hand, Lomme Frey glove in the other, when a small black man approached him.

He took Jimmy's glove.

“Let me help you. Changing trains?”

“Hey, where you going with my glove?”

“Ah, man,” the black man said, “I just helping you. Where you going!”

“Florida.”

“Shit, man, no. What track?”

“24.”

“Okay then, train. Tr’ck’s so ol’. . . ."...

“24.”

“Who got a dollar for me, man!”

He take Jimmy's glove.

“Shit, man, no. What track?”

“24, 24.”

“Alright then, train. Tr’ck’s so ol’.”...

“Alright then, train. Tr’ck’s so ol’.”...

Jimmy was now running behind the junkyards and a tired backshrunken and you never knew where it was going.”

“Remember. You never had nothing but a fastball and you never knew where it was going.”

“Yeah, but you an old somebody,” Jimmy watched him continue across the floor and disappear into the crowd.

Somedays between Washington, D.C. and the North Carolina border winter ceased to be white and, instead, turned bleak-brown with stern fields ruled and unmantled. But then, the South putted up warm and sensual, poking palm trees at the border, white egrets in the fields.

Jimmy Campbell missed the tobacco fields and the peach trees and the Vidalia onions as the train raced across the south. He slept and then awoke to white sun, scrub pine and a sign outside his window that said, WINTER HAVEN.

Other men with oil-soft gloves gathered under the last Florida sun. They boarded a van for Baseball Camp. And finally, for Jimmy, from the winter of New England, here it was. Acres of baseball diamonds. Infilled pruned to perfection. The hard red clay raked and combed, postage-stamp clean. Leather-colored men with Red Sox uniforms prowled the grass with ancient grace.

“Uniforms in the clubhouse!” someone shouted.

So they lined up, those eager men for the trappings of the grand old game.

“Here y’go hat. Here y’go pants. Here y’go pants.”

Jimmy stood there. “What size?”

“Pants, 34.”

“Yeah. Well they got elastic bands. One size fit-a-em-all.”

“Ain’t funny,” Jimmy said.

They spread out on the field. Young men with gold chains, old men with gold teeth. All men with golden dreams.

They worked all day under the sun. They divided by position: pitchers, infielders, outfielders. Later they ate catfish and okra and hushpuppies. They slurped at wilted turnip greens across the table from the stars of their youth.

Jimmy looked up from a spoonful of grits.

“Ain’t you Johnny Pesky? I want to pitch against you.”

“You well.”

“Will I pitch against Ted too?”

“Not if you’re smart,” Pesky answered.

The baseball camp, with it’s palm trees just beyond the outfield fences and fan-filled stands, stopped time for the men who came to play. Ted looked strong and slender and young, and Dick Radatz, The Monster, was cheered although he threw only memories of his fastball.

In a fenced-in section toward left field, Jimmy sat in the bullpen waiting to be called. He was his turn to pitch.

An old man leaned on the fence. He watched the field for a long time. Then he looked at Jimmy.

“Hi, Jimmy, remember me?”

Jimmy saw an old man with tan skin and sunken eyes. He saw gnarled hands and a tired back shrunk almost into an orange and black windbreaker that said, Tigers.

“I’m Robert Yetman. I caught you in high school.”

“You can’t be,” Jimmy seemed confused. “I mean, well, you’re so old.”

“You ain’t so young, Jimmy.”

“I can still pitch. Well, maybe an inning or two.”

“And I can still catch you,” Yetman said. “You never had nothing but a fastball and you never knew where it was going.”

Late afternoon in Florida hangs forever, before finally sinking into the pinks and purples of twilight. At the bat, the two men clinked their glasses.

“You never should have hit Williams,” Yetman said.

“Didn’t mean to,” Jimmy answered.

“And Doerr.”

“I got Doerr and Pesky.”

“Doerr didn’t want to get beaned and Pesky’s seventy years old.”

“But I got ’em.”

“You got ’em.”

“I no-hit ’em,” Jimmy looked at his catcher. “We ain’t so old are we, Bobbie, we ain’t so old.”

Don Watson

Hallowell
Gone

Dark clours over water
like a steady hand,
water breaks against hidden rocks.
When I turn to speak
my words fall into empty hours.

My heart learns to collect:
your last place scraped in the sink,
a film of dust your fingertips felt,
the chair still warm in dreaming sun—
these I gather against the quiet.
Stray hairs in the comb I save,
and your voice, the shape of your shadow,
the sense of you, sleeping,
in another room.

Leslie E. Palmer
Gunnison, CO
in a UMO graduate

An Associate Professor Speaks of Love

He had lectured on the ironies of love, as he had for many semesters before.
But today he had surprised himself with an exceptional verve. His finger had
seemed to lift the words from his faded notes like flights of doves. It had been a
 triumph, he felt sure. Even the row of lacrosse players in back had sat up in
attention throughout.
For the last several weeks he had felt sluggish, acutely aware of the contrasting
energy of his students, who were now as old as his children. The collar of his shirt
had seemed ill-fitting, too large. Yet at the same time his neck seemed somehow
more corpulent. He had complained to his wife that they should change

He spoke with great eloquence of love's delusions and its traps, drawing
analogies from contemporary literature and film. This morning he had noticed
how his wife's ankles had thickened, the skin there lumpy and veined. He had

and his wife's ankles had thickened, the skin there lumpy and veined. He had

already been running again.
He spoke with great eloquence of love's delusions and its traps, drawing
analogies from contemporary literature and film. This morning he had noticed
how his wife's ankles had thickened, the skin there lumpy and veined. He had

strange, as if he had been running again.
He spoke with great eloquence of love's delusions and its traps, drawing
analogies from contemporary literature and film. This morning he had noticed
how his wife's ankles had thickened, the skin there lumpy and veined. He had

Reeny’s Mom

My friend Reeny and I spent that whole summer in racerback swimsuits and Red Tag Levi’s, and we jumped off Coombs’ what four or five times a day just to cool off. Sometimes we'd remember and leave our jeans accommodated like slouched skins on the wharf; sometimes we'd forget and jump in with them on.

It was one of those rare seventh summers there on the coast, that one summer in every decade when the July fog forgot to come in. It was hot, deliciously hot, and the air carried the smells of baked seapines and low tide in waves, like an oven. Reeny and I hurried briefly through that fragrant air before landing in the frigid water with a huge splash and millions of deafening underwater bubbles. The harbor water tasted like Greek olives, fiercely salt and slightly meaty, and it could taste all the fish swimming in the sea.

“How’s your Mom?” I asked Reeny one day, gasping and streaming sea water; I’d forgotten to take my jeans off again.

Reeny shrugged, busy gazing her next leap. She didn’t look at me. “I dunno. She’s my Mom, like always.”

“How’s her hair?”

“Comin’ back,” Reeny said, and launched herself into the air.

It seemed that no one in Finch’s Harbor would be nice to Reeny’s Mom any more, and I didn’t know why. Reeny professed not to know, either, but she seemed unwilling to puzzle it over for long. She blamed her innumerable brothers, who were all heffons and scallawags of one sort or another. The last time Reeny’s Mom had gone up to Teddy’s to have her hair done they’d cooked her perm too long, surely on purpose. A lot of her fine, ash-grey hair had broken right off, and what was left drifted about her head like salt clown fuzz. Reeny said it was because her brother Wayne had knocked up one of the hairdressers there and then skipped out, but I never heard that from anyone else. Handsome Wayne still carried up and down the road in his red and silver pickup, smiling with white teeth. Reeny’s Mom hardly ever went out any more.

Reeny hauled herself up onto the wharf’s hot grey planks and lay there, steaming and puddling like melting ice. “Let’s walk up to Stinson’s store for an ice cream,” she gasped.

“Okay,” I said. I could put it on my Dad’s tab.

We wined our way off the burning wharf and crossed the tighter-filled packing lot to the road, our pantcoats collecting glittering quartz grit.

The Harbor road was a 3-mile stretch of steeply-crowned asphalt that ran the length of the neck, through pine woods and ledge, past saltwater farms and bungalows with heaps of lobster traps in their front yards. The road wound a little and dipped up and down, but ultimately it descended a brief hill and ended there, just beyond Coombs’ wharf, on low sandy ground. During the worst winter storms, freezing, debris-laden sheets of water would burst over the Harbor road and freeze into dirty glass; that day, though, the road was a hot, peaceful causeway between the chilly blue harbor on one side and the warm green lagoon on the other. Beyond the lagoon, the deeper water of Gun Point twinkled.

When the tide came in, thick, jade-green water, still as glass, welled up in the lagoon for as long as I could remember, its history obscure. At high tide the long sweeping hull seemed to incline itself toward the water, and the road, swinging and dodging, making for the beginning of the neck, through pine woods and ledge, past saltwater farms and bungalows with heaps of lobster traps in their front yards. The road wound a little and dipped up and down, but ultimately it descended a brief hill and ended there, just beyond Coombs’ wharf, on low sandy ground. During the worst winter storms, freezing, debris-laden sheets of water would burst over the Harbor road and freeze into dirty glass; that day, though, the road was a hot, peaceful causeway between the chilly blue harbor on one side and the warm green lagoon on the other. Beyond the lagoon, the deeper water of Gun Point twinkled.

When the road came in, thick, jade-green water, still as glass, welled up in the little lagoon. It looked then like any fine pond. I always expected frogs to sing in the depths of the marsh grass there; I looked for them to leap out from the bank, put into the silty water and scull away as I passed on the road. But of course the lagoon was barren, a foul grey trench at low tide and briny when full, too difficult a home for anything. A decaying boat, shadowed by trees, had lain on one side of the road, staring at the boy, our wet jeans beginning to stick in the muck, quivering fiercely. Midges rose up in clouds and pursued us, and the ground, squishy and uneven, full of invisible hammocks and drowned marsh stubble, hindered our progress.

Ahead of me, partially obscured but bright as a flag, went Reeny’s determined back, her swimsuit cleverly harnessing her freckled shoulder blades.

I followed her grimly, faithfully.

The boy was waiting for us. He had climbed to the other side of the tilted wreck, and now he squatted there above us like some sour-faced little king, his chin on his scarred knees, separated from us by a short mose of green water.

“Troy,” Reeny said in a voice I had never heard before, “what are you doing here?”

The kid inclined his head slowly and studied us. His eyes were strange, yellow and slit-pupiled like a goat’s. “None of your friggin’ business,” he said.

Reeny’s face was flushed and intent. She stood stiffly in the muck, quivering, frozen like a good hunting dog.

The kid looked at me. “You see me, too?”

“Well, sure,” I said loudly. “You’re right there, aren’t you?”

He grinned at some secret joke, his gaze an illegible yellow scrawl between us. “I guess I am, aren’t I?”

Reeny just stared.

I nudged her. “Who is this kid, Reeny?”

“He’s my brother,” she said, staring at the boy who sat folded like a jackknife on the rotten hull. “He’s my brother Troy.”

Reeny had a lot of brothers, enough to be their own softball team at all the local fairs, but I knew all her brothers by sight. They came and went from the big grey family house at all hours, all of them blond and dangerously handsome, roaring up and down the Harbor road in their pickups. I’d never seen that kid before.

Reeny’s brothers were all older than her, too, some much older, with the beginnings of crow’s feet and greying hair. But this boy wasn’t any older than Reeny or me.

“Well,” I hissed, “what’s he doing here?”

“I dunno,” said Reeny, shielding her eyes from the sun, which had packed just behind the boy’s left ear. “He’s supposed to be dead.”

“Dead?”

“Yeah.”

And with that, Reeny seemed to make a decision. “I’m going to get Mom,” she announced. She lifted her sunken feet from the mud with a brisk treading sound, and struck off through the reeds, back to the boy, our wet jeans beginning to stick in the muck, quivering fiercely. “Are you gonna stay here?” she asked him.

The kid unfolded himself, swinging his thin legs over the side of the boat, settling himself more comfortably. He smiled, slow and chilly, like summer fog.

“Prob’ly.”

“You better,” Reeny said, “or I’ll pound you.”

The kid titpered and chumped his feet against the rotten hull, but Reeny ignored him. His tennis shoes, I saw, were stupid Red Ball Jets, the kind we wouldn’t be caught dead in, and they were unnaturally clean. “You better stay here and watch him,” Reeny whispered to me. “Make sure he doesn’t leave.”

But the lagoon had grown fearsome, its waters and shadows darker in spite of the white sun, the hot blue sky. I wasn’t going to stay there alone, not with Reeny’s dead brother. “No way, Reeny,” I said. “I’m coming with you.”

“Watch from the road, then,” she said, and struck off through the reeds, back the way we had come, without looking to see if I followed. But I pursued that bright-striped back as if my life depended on it.

“How do you know he’s your brother, Reeny?” I hollered, splashing and struggling, hoping to slow her down a little. The tide had risen since our first passage; I couldn’t tell where I was putting my feet.

“I’ve seen his picture,” Reeny called back. She wore expertly through the marsh, stepping high, black fleckles of mud dotting her bare back. “I was just a baby then.”

“What happened to him?”

“I dunno.” Reeny negotiated a tangle of debris from some ancient storm, her voice muffled. “There was an accident.”

Suddenly, I wanted to go home. It had to be lunchtime. “Well,” I shouted. “How do you know it’s really him? He must have changed a lot since you were a baby.”

Reeny stopped abruptly and swung around to face me. A cloud of midges settled over her shoulders like a cloak. “No, stupid,” she said, blinking grime from her eyes. “He looks just like he does in his picture. He hasn’t grown up at all since
he died." And she turned and splashed away.

When we finally reached the bright, hot comfort of the Harbor road, Reeny headed up the hill toward her house without a word, gripping thick lagoon water. The kid had moved around to his original place on the wreck, and now he sat there, perfectly still, as if he had never moved, as if we had never entered the marsh to talk to him. I stood there on the side of the softening road and watched him, and he watched me. At least I think he did; I know I grew increasingly anxious in the face of his terrible stillness, even at that distance. It was so unlike a boy his age. I was glad when Mr. Hatch's big old Buick came slowly down the hill, weaving slightly.

Mr. Hatch had bought his Buick long ago, with the money he'd made from installing the Harbor's first gas pump on his lobster wharf. I walked out into the road to meet him on the driver's side, and the tinted window slid down soundlessly. Mr. Hatch's old eyes were blue and resilient as the harbor itself.

There in the showroom-clean interior of his car, Mr. Hatch himself looked a little rumpled and dented. He smiled, a brief kind smile, before jerking his head in the direction of the lagoon. "Who is that out there, young lady?" he asked in his whispery voice.

"I don't know, Mr. Hatch," I said. "Some kid Reeny knows." I couldn't very well have told him that it was Reeny's dead brother.

"Well, he needs to come off there. That'll be his safe. We don't need another accident out there."

"[There was one already.]"

Mr. Hatch watched a loaded dragger, pursued by a cloud of screaming gulls, roll away, its tires sticking a little to the melting road. Out in the lagoon, an old lady. Reeny danced about her, under her feet, tugging her arm and

"This isn't funny," Reeny finally appeared, her Mom trotting stiffly down the hill beside her like a regular haymaker that sent Reeny sprawling onto the hot road.

Reeny's Mom reached the bottom of the hill. She lifted to me uncertainly, losing momentum, still staring out into the lagoon, shading her eyes from the sun.

"There! There he is!" Reeny was pointing, hopping up and down. The kid was standing on the bleak concrete deck now, perched effortlessly on its steep incline.

Reeny's Mom headed back up the hill. She turned to me uncertainly, losing momentum, still staring out into the lagoon, shading her eyes from the sun.

"Where?"

"He's right there, Mom!" Reeny wailed, pointing and pointing. "Right there on the boat!"

Reeny's Mom stared hard, squinting, one thin arm flung up to block the sun, but I saw that her eyes were skipping. The kid was gawking hugely, bright as metal under the lunchtime sun, his fists punched into his skinny hips. "Hey, Mom!" I called, his voice screeching shrill and clear over the dead lagoon. "Mom! Watch this!"

And incredibly, he began a grotesque dance out there on the slumbering, keening up and crouching low, hobbling and laughing, shouting and singing in a high voice, saying things we were never meant to hear out of our mouths.

"I don't see anything, Reeny," her Mom said, her voice hard.

But Reeny wasn't listening, thunderstruck, riveted to his squat, she gasped at the kid's monstrous talents.

"Do you see him?" she asked me breathlessly, her eyes never leaving the boat.

"Did you hear what he said?"

"Reeny's Mom turned away from the lagoon and fixed Reeny with a terrible glare. "This isn't funny," she said. "I don't think this is funny at all." Behind her,
Ghosts

My wife's sister once saw
the man who built this house.
Canoing in the bay
she looked back—
she stared out
of our bedroom window

century dead, tall as a
doorway, hair
a rough clump of salt hay,
duck mast-straight,
window-frame-square shoulders

"Tears run down the chimney.

Rain. He weeps
for the roof's need
of repair. Like a tree
in wind wrings useless hand.
But guides my hands—I saw a slate
with no skill I own, cut
tears as a coyote bites the
head off a pet cat.

And the stove lights for me
like the belly of the woman
who loved his attentions, warmed
him with her easily
kindled passion,
gone within which
he found home
when one in the world ice
varnished twigs
and each grass blade
stood to attention
in its uniform
of frost.

Houseproud she was, is, her
paintwork white as
appleblossom, eyes
busy as pondskaters.

Frets at the cobwebs
like am@\nhair in
the comers, her

quick hummingbirds
swarming away dust
with feathery agitation.

Whispers "just look
at the flies gathered in
Blueberry clusters on windows!

"Tsk tsk! Ant-swarms of crumbs
on the kitchen table!"

Teaks freezing in her
head like wax:

Life was
lean.
Sweetness
honey salvaged from
scavenging bears.

We keep turning them up—
mouthful of rusty nails,
china earlobe—

exhume from drawers
mutilated annual
sopha photographs.

They touch our lives
like the oak leaf caught
between window and screen,
its wrinkled fingers
creaking as I
try to hold it.

* * *

Her dust, and his, still
filters down out of the waves
with ours shed nightly
while we dream,

shaken later of life,
the untidy passage
of time, as we too age

following the common
human grain,
putting on the years
like rings.

Mark Rutter
Surry
is a transplant from England
Thoreau and Martin Manor

It was during my second year of teaching at Schwartzbottom College the summer of 1947 that I decided to take the Maine trip. It was no use for my wife to object that the children could not be properly cared for in the wilderness, no use for my mother to remind me of my weakness in the face of that fever; my mind was made up. Besides, a certain amount of writing was expected from a man in my position, and my work in hand, a treatise on the probable effects on Thoreau's digestion of his trip into the Maine woods, was not progressing so rapidly as it should. The publishers were not clamoring, but the head of the English department had developed a way of asking more and more pointedly the present status of my work. He usually mentioned that what the nature of the work was, and frequently confused it with the work that Carl Streeter said he was doing on Frenau. I felt that I could get closer to my subject and gain new inspiration by going to Maine and taking the same trip that Thoreau took. When I had talked about it with my colleague, Thaddeus Martin, he had, with a candid grace, offered me the use of a house in Maine which I could use as headquarters.

To be sure, Thaddeus had said, we should not find the house so comfortable as a home in Schwartzbottomtown, not even so comfortable as our three and three-quarter room apartment in the Baddelower Acres development; but it would, he assured me, be better than actually camping on the cold ground in some secluded forest dell, where moth and mosquito both corrupt and break through and steal, as Thaddeus put it. (Tad is a real joke, with a real Yankee sense of humor.)

I did not know at the time how it happened that Thaddeus had the house in Maine. I knew that he hadn't been there for a long time, although he had once told me that he was born and raised in Maine. Later I came to know that the house was the very one where the Martin family had lived for generations. It was Thaddeus's ancestral hall, in a manner of speaking. I have always had a weakness for ancestral halls of my sort, and although I was not related to the Martins in any way, I felt that I was adopting this old place, and thrusting down new roots to embrace old ones, or something of that sort. The Martin family, Tad told me, did not say that they could not come over in the Mayflower and indeed did not want to. I believe he said that they looked upon the invasion of the Mayflower as positively "owenous arrwfs", and although I did not catch this at once I later came to see what he meant. It seems to me that the Martins, Thaddeus's ancestors, arrived considerably before the Mayflower, in 1618, as a matter of fact, from France, on a small ship entitled Le Preneur. It gave me quite a thrill to think that I was going to spend the summer in their very New World cottage. I had some thought of an analogy between their coming from Europe to a new world, and my going to Maine for the first time, but I couldn't seem to develop it. I didn't say so to Thaddeus, but it would have given me an even greater thrill if his ancestors had come on the Mayflower, even if we did arrive later. I suppose I am sentimental, but coming from merry old England and all, establishing the first inchoate roots of a new country just as the Mayflower did.

Of course Thaddeus informed me that, to be strictly veracious about it, the house he was lending Gladys and me was not more than two hundred years old. It stood on the same land that his ancestors had inhabited, he said, but they had spent the first winter in what one branch of his family interpreted (from a diary kept by an ancestor) to be a cave, but which the more cultured branches of the family interpreted as a cabin built partly of logs. Five of the eleven children had perished in that bleak winter, four from unknown causes, and one just from the cold.

It was late in June when we finally headed north in our old Kaiser, proudly displaying the "Vacationland" which he was now offering to Gladys and me for the summer, rent free. I told her that when I arrived in Maine and took the same trip that Thoreau had taken, she was not to bat an eye, she was to write her book on the spot, in the seclusion of the Maine wilderness.

Gladys dropped the wet cloth with which she had been bathing George and Jackie while I was getting ready. She said she was going to Maine and I can write my book on the spot, in the seclusion of the Maine wilderness.

"Why, Precious," I expostulated, "don't you see the benefits of writing a book on Thoreau's digestion while traversing the Maine woods? I can really experiment. I'll make my book scientific as well as literary. I'll test Thoreau's digestion by truce."

"How do you know that Thoreau's pancreas was the same as yours?" Gladys asked.

"That is a minor point," I said. But my heart was not in the remark, for even then there was drowning in my mind. The idea. "Look, Gladys," I said, "we can live like Thoreau this summer! We'll make two experiments. We'll make Martin Manor our Walden."

"Thaddeus didn't have a G.B. Shaw and J. J. Rousseau," Gladys said, which only goes to show you how unimaginative and mundane even the best of women can be. But then Gladys reminded me that she didn't know what or where Martin Manor was, and I proceeded to tell her the whole story in all its lovely details.

It was late in June when we finally headed north in our old Kaiser, proudly carrying the key to Martin Manor. When I asked Thaddeus for the key, he said what I thought was a funny thing. He had said, "Shut, Maxim, you probably won't need a key. The chipmunks and woodchucks will probably be running in and out and you can run with them. That's the key anyway." It was a very rusty old key. When I told Gladys about this she didn't laugh so much as I thought she would. She just asked me if I knew anything about shooting woodchucks. I told her that I didn't, but that I would learn if I needed to, for I certainly didn't want any woodchucks interfering with my writing on Thoreau. Students were bad enough, but woodchucks! Thaddeus had also given me a map and detailed instructions for getting to the farm. "Of course," he added when I was leaving, "it's been thirty years since there, things may have changed."

I had that map in my pocket as we rolled along Route 1.

Now, there are many people who will tell you that they have seen Maine when they have only been to Portland; but the truth is that when you have reached Portland you have only begun to fight, in a manner of speaking. Of course we were not going to the state as tourists, but we had picked up some tourist folders anyway. It was so hot all through Massachusetts that we kept remembering the happy pictures about cool sea breezes and the pictures of staring bays dotted with hundreds of islands. When we reached Portland, we had passed through miles of flat, monotonous country, caught two fleeting glimpses of water, and the temperature was ninety-two. It was late afternoon, and Georgie and Jackie were beginning to protest. "Let's find a place to stay for the night." Gladys said. "It's too hot to travel any further." But I reminded her that we were in Maine and that surely we would strike cooler regions if we pushed just a bit further north. I pointed out to her what I had never known before: that all the Maine license plates are marked "Vacationland". I made a mental note that people of Maine are not so backward as we had supposed.

We finally stopped for the night at a group of tourist cabins thirty or forty miles up the coast from Portland. They were modest looking cabins, home-like, called Far View Cottages, surrounded by woods and older swamp and Route 1. Right underneath the sign was "Your home away from home," which I thought was delightful and original. The woods and the swamp with Route 1 piercing right through it made quite an impression on me and I tried to think of a fitting simile for it. All I could think of was a boxer going through corn, but Gladys had been brought up in Iowa and she said she didn't think it was very appropriate.
The camps were owned and operated by a genuine old-fashioned Maine lady. When I asked her for a cabin she had said, "Land sakes, yes. Just come right this way." And when she saw the twins she said, "Why my stars and garters! You didn't tell me about them." But then her grandmotherly instincts overcame her and she began to chuck George Bernard Shaw beneath the chin and said, "Well, young man! What do you want on a road bed? Oh my goodness." I thought that her first remark coupling stars and garters was particularly colorful and carefully made a note of it, just in case I should be asked to lecture when we returned to Schwartzbottom on the customs, language, and habits of the natives.

The next day we pushed on farther and farther into the Maine woods. Actually the phrase is misleading, and people who use it and who make remarks about dog sleds and that sort of thing in Maine are just joking. Route 1 is a very clearly defined highway that goes right up the coast, between two walls of signboards, billboards, moors,_course cabins, antique shops, and filling stations. I told Gladys that it was like passing through an endless hall with very colorful wallpaper. Here and there we passed through a little town, and once not long after we left Portland we passed a college and an airport. I pointed this out to Gladys as sure proof that the people of Maine were trying to elevate themselves in both mind and body, but I don't think that she got the joke.

Thaddeus had told us to turn off Route 1 at a town called Teuton, which was the next town after Frenchville. You'll see what I mean about just beginning at Fortland when I tell you that we left the Far View Cabins at seven o'clock in the morning and by noon we had still not reached Teuton. We didn't mind particularly as the scenery began to improve when we reached Newcastle and the "wallpaper" began to thin out. By the time we reached Searsport we knew that Maine was all that the tourist folders had said that it was, and that there was even more of it than they intimated. We stopped for lunch at a restaurant in Searsport, and when we asked about the town of Teuton, the proprietor had said, "Teuton—oh, that's way down east." I did not have the temerity to ask if we were not already pretty far down east, and neither did I have an opportunity for this pertinent proposition, although Yankee, was noted among our friends.

We finally reached Teuton at about three in the afternoon. Thaddeus had told us to turn off to the Teuton Tavern. We thought at first that the road must be the same that Thaddeus had taken down the chimney and nested on the mantel. The dampness had caused the ceiling to fall, and the wallpaper to peel off in large strips. The room was empty of furniture except one horsehair sofa, a delightful Victorian piece once, no doubt, which squirrels or some other animals had chewed and pulled apart. To my amusement Gladys did something that I never seen her do before in the three years I had known her. She began to cry.

"Why, darling," I said, "what is the matter?"

For some time she did not stop. Her tears flowed unchecked, in a manner of speaking. Finally she said, "Oh, I just wanted to go to the bathroom!" in a most exasperated tone of voice.

To make a long story short, Gladys refused to stay there that night. I told her that we could clean up that one bare room and we would make nice beds of fir boughs for us and the twins. She reminded me that I didn't know fir from pine and said that she would rather stay at the Teuton Tavern than here. I pointed out to her that at least I would have a roof over my head here while working on my book, but this made no impression. Finally we went back to some tourist cabins that we had seen in Frenchville.

I determined to stay in the cabins until I could get Martin Manor in habitable condition. I borrowed an ax from the owner of the New Vista Cabins and set out. It was not the Walden experience that I had originally intended to write about, but since fate had thrown me into a situation that demanded parallel action, I decided to take notes on my feelings and reactions as I went along. Thus equipped with my borrowed ax and a notebook, I started. I had decided to walk to make the parallel closer, but Gladys was extremely impatient about this and insisted that, since it was eighteen miles, I would get there only in time to come back. I compromised and took the car.

I felt that first things should come first, so I began by cutting down some of the small trees that had choked the fields so that I could plant a garden. I doubted that George and Jackie could live on corn meal mush, but Gladys and I could have the experience at least. I found, however, that this took longer than I had expected. Apparently Thoreau did not include all the details of land clearing in Walden. It was ten-thirty by the time I had cut three trees. I could hardly believe this, but there it was, and my watch was a seventeen jewl Swiss and never wrong. Knowing that I could not maintain Gladys and the twins at the New Vista Cabins forever, I abandoned the garden project (Gladys later offered the counseling information that the corn would not have time to grow before September anyway) and turned my attention to the Manor itself.

It was undeniably a rather long process. First I uncovered all the doors and windows and found that there were seven windows totally without sashes, five more needed new glass, and two were perfectly all right—except that they were shaky when pushed up or down. I got into the car and went back to Frenchville and got the windows. Those I installed with some difficulty, and most of them fitted tolerably. The next day I began on the inside of the house. It seemed logical to begin with that corner of the home, the hearth, so I went into the kitchen. There was nothing there but a rusty old iron sink, some empty cupboards, and a rusty wood-burning stove. It was not burning wood at the time, but I meant that it was meant to burn wood. Gladys knew I would insist upon an electric range, and I decided to make a list. The windows had cost nearly half of what I had with me, and it suddenly seemed expedient to make a list of what I would need and the approximate cost. I summarised that I could get a sink, refrigerator, and stove second hand. I began to imagine where I should place them in the room. Think of my embarrassment and frustration when the realization came over me that there was no electricity! I secured a larger piece of paper from my notebook and began again. The list was finished by late afternoon of the next day. Gladys helped me with some items, and the entire report looked like this:

- Kitchen equipment: $300.00
- Windows: $100.00
- Wiring house for electricity and cost of materials for light fixtures: $400.00
- Drilling a well: $600.00
- Installation of a bathroom: $1000.00
- Furniture: $500.00
- Cost of maintaining family at New Vista: $500.00
- House being renovated: $3000.00

There was no denying it. We must abandon Martin Manor, allow the woods to creep up still further and engulf it, allow the birds to nest on the mantels, and the squirrels to chew the woodwork. After the expense for the windows and for New Vista, we couldn't even afford to motor up to Penobscot to Moosehead. As for my book, I can shift the subject to some other ways in which Thoreau's philosophy would have been influenced by a wife and twin sons.

Donald F. Mortland

United College
The Worms of Walden

It started simply with ordering red worms for the compost heap. When they arrived, stamped on the white plastic containers in bold black letters, were the words, Concord, Massachusetts. The night they arrived was moonlit, damp and warm, so I left the three containers outside near the compost pile which their occupants would eventually call home.

Around eleven o'clock I heard something inside of me go off like an alarm clock telling me to go outside, which I promptly did, and there they were—the Concord red worms—escaping out of the breathing holes in their plastic containers.

I could hear those worms singing a jovial song of civil disobedience. I knew right away that this was possibly going to be a difficult compost pile. Probably the compost would be drilled by these worms to recall its nutrients from the aid of the plants and I would have a general revolution going on in the garden.

Anyway, as I began picking the worms up and putting them back into the white containers with the holes in the top, I heard them talking about their past home which was beside Walden Pond. It was then that the penny dropped and I realized that these were not ordinary worms—these were Thoreau worms.

I had heard once from a woman who lived near Walden that Thoreau had spent a great deal of his two years at the pond talking with the animals and other creatures. Today, this would be taken as sure sign that the person had lost it, but, back then, this was considered reasonably normal behavior.

First of all, I should tell those of you who have no concept of this sort of thing, that nature hears and communicates everything as a sort of humming vibration—similar to the sound of your refrigerator—but lower. Some Tibetans understand this and, less developed minds, have named it telepathic communication. Through this medium we can communicate with everything in the universe and, conversely, everything in the universe can communicate with us. I won't spend any time telling you of experiments with plants in Scotland but, for those of you who are interested, you should read more on the subject of Findhorn.

Anyway, as I was saying, once I realized that these worms were from Walden, I became more interested in their conversation and, after putting them back into their containers and placing the three containers in a large, deeper container, I sat down to listen.

After their general complaints about the failed escape and debates over who was talking too loudly (everything in nature thinks everything is listening all of the time), I asked them about their lives at Walden and, in particular, if their ancestors had any connection with Henry David Thoreau. At this, the worms became quite excited and promised to tell me an interesting story if I would grant them four requests which were:

1. To only use a fork to turn the compost pile and, then, only after 24 hr. advance notice.
2. To be fed with a mixture of table scraps to include fruit and vegetables at least once a week.
3. To be given a gallon of pond water during the months of July and August.
4. To listen to the pile once each month for any special requests.

Naturally, I agreed to their requests and sat down on the steps to listen to their story.

It seems, according to the worms, that Thoreau was a constant hummer. He used to sit on his door stoop for hours and hum. Sometimes he hummed popular tunes of the day but, more often than not, he would hum his own compositions. It was one of these original compositions that so impressed the ancestors of the Worms of Walden that they requested Thoreau to teach them the melody. He hesitantly obliged because he did not think that composing tunes was his forte.

Anyway, that’s another story.

Louis Sinclair
Waterville
“I love a life whose plot is simple, 
And does not thicken with every pimple.”

Thoreau, Collected Poems, 42

How to Talk to Thoreau

Spare down on your hands and pick up a pen with care and wait breathing.

If you have seen something in the dire deadly stream or an era bloody war tell it.

If you've seen nothing but your shoes dead wear kick them and roll in the dust.

Virginia Nees-Hatlen Bangor teaches at UMO

A Note to Thoreau

"Thoreau, stranger, unknown friend, I followed, at last, the new ridge-path to your old house site, the site of wisdom I am sixty-three have yet to reach. The path was covered with leaves and hard to follow. It did not, like your mind to your contemporaries, reveal its turns in the cluster of nature's facts to a wayward informant, for it was just December and the season was closed, like Emerson's, Alcott's, and Hawthorne's houses. Your house is closed to visitors although open in the air. There are several signs pointing to where you had been once. When you were there eyes looked away and could not see where you pointed. For a long time we could not see where you pointed, if indeed we do see even yet. We carry burdens that blind us and look away from your pages.

It's odd, Henry, but it was harder stumbling back than getting to where you were, back to this heavy century. Your leaves became my story, as well you knew.

Richard Lyons Gardner

is a professor emeritus, No. Dakota State U.

Woodshed on the Moon:

Thoreau Poems/Robert M. Chute

Nightshade Press (PO Box 76, Troy, ME 04987), $9.95, 1991

Review

It isn't the back-to-the-boondocks theme in Thoreau, nor his several journeys here resulting in The Maine Woods, that most attracts Maine writers to him with such astonishing frequency. It's something sweeter (in his soul). I can think of a dozen Mainer from Eliot Porter to William Carpenter who have turned to H.D. ("I leave Detergent," one calls him) as a subject, a source, to render homage, or to come to terms with the matter.

Mainers of his title refers to how he accumulated poems, akin to Thoreau's account in the Journal, makes a tight roof; the poems, themselves often cryptic, lie loosely together and let the drying breezes blow through the book. The poems often take off from a passage or idea in Walden, or A week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers, or the Journal, or a letter by or to H.D., or Chute's own trip to Walden Pond after which he stops at a Burger King. Aware of the irony, he drinks coffee in a "white plastic cup" and "breathes apologies to Henry." Typically, most of the seminal passages have Thoreau's transcendental sens. Chute implies that Henry may not accept the apology.

Sometimes Chute speaks in H.D.'s voice, sometimes in his own. Sometimes he recreates for himself events Thoreau describes. Sometimes it is unclear which of the two is speaking, describer or subject. The effect is wonderful. One feels the merging is necessary to Chute, as he suggests in describing a bus trip to New Jersey: those moments of "the past" which impinge on the present he calls "ghosts of dreamless nights, the carnal of sense that slowly cloud the eye with mist..." And yet, he seems half-afraid of too-complete an identification: "...when we've seen enough! I think we will be blind and die." But the experience is not new to Chute, the learning another's life, then the identification with it, then the entering into it—and most scary and exhilarating, letting the dead hero enter into his own—for he did something similar a few years ago in his volume of poems on the coastal explorer, Samuel Sewall. But Thoreau seems closer to him. He dedicates this book not to relatives or friends, but "for Henry," as if (almost) to himself of the last three decades. The "obituary" he is writing, he says in the Introduction, "is mourning when the corpse chooses reincarnation over oblivion." H.D. just won't go away. After this fine meditative book, lit by wit, it seems as if Chute is saying "Don't go, Thoreau" when he concludes, "I realize I have only begun the work."

T.P.
"What is it, what is it, But a direction one there, And the bare possibility Of going somewhere!"

Thoreau, Collected Poems, 17

"Clothes paid for, and no rent In your shoes——..."

Thoreau, Collected Poems, 166

"I have a great deal of company in my house, especially in the morning, when nobody calls, ... I am naturally so hermit, but might possibly sit out the two hours of the two-room, if my business called me thither. I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society, ..."

Thoreau, Walden (NY: Houghton-Mifflin, 95)

"The cold is merely superficial, it is summer still at the core, far, far within."

Thoreau, Journal, 1/12/1855

"Thoreau discovered ... that a leaven of wildness is necessary for the health of the human spirit ..."

Eliot Porter, from In Wildness is the Preservation of the World (Sierra Books), photos by Porter, text by Thoreau

E.B. White on Thoreau

(EBW wrote two essays on Thoreau, both in One Man's Meat. He kept a copy of Walden in his glove compartment and his suitcase.)

... I remembered something (probably the oddest comment on Thoreau ever made) that a Cornell professor told me twenty-five years ago. He said that Thoreau was all right, but I wish he had more get up and go. I treasure that remark, and when the pain in my neck is bad I comfort myself with it, and go round muttering "The god damn son of a bitch had no get up and go." —EBW, Letter to brother Stanley, 7/11/45, p. 169

Henry Thoreau has probably been more wildly misconstrued than any other person of comparable literary stature. He got a reputation for being a naturalist, and he was not much of a naturalist. He got a reputation for being a hermit, and he was no hermit. He was a writer, is what he was.

EBW NYer, 5/7/49, q. Elledge bpg, 314

Walden is the only book I own. ... It is not the best book I ever encountered, perhaps, but it is me the handiest, and I keep it about me in much the same way one carries a handkerchief—for relief in moments of defluxion or despair.

EBW, NYer, 5/23/53, q. Elledge bpg, 314

Ed. Note: An excerpt from an essay by E.B. White follows. Although there are many "Maine dialects" and EBW was most familiar with downeast Brooklyn and the Belgrade Lakes region, it is amazing in a time of rapid linguistic change how accurate his observations remain after 52 years. See the full delight, seek out One Man's Meat: A Personal Record of Life on a Maine Coast Salt Water Farm (NY: Harper & Row).

Maine Speech (1940)

I find that, whether I will or no, my speech is gradually changing, to conform to the language of the country. The tongue spoken here in Maine is as different from the tongue spoken in New York as Dutch is from German. Part of this difference is in the meaning of words, not in the pronunciation, part in the grammar. But the difference is very great. Sometimes when a child is talking it is all one can do to translate until one has mastered the language. But boy came home from school the first day and said the school was peachy but he couldn't understand what anybody was saying. This lasted only a couple of days.

For the word "all" you use the phrase "the whole of." You ask, "Is that the whole of it?" And whole is pronounced hull. Is that the hull of it? It sounds as though you might mean a ship.

For lift, the word is bike. You heft a thing to see how much it weighs. It is always tunk.

Buster (pronounced byester) is a popular word with kids. All the kids use it. He's an old bastard, they say, when they pull an end out of an end trap. It probably derives from bastard, but it sounds quite proper and innocent when you hear it, and rather descriptive. I regard lots of things now (and some people) as old basters.

A person who is sensitive to cold is called snuggle. We have never put a heater in our car, for fear we might get snuggly. When a pasture is sparse and isn't providing enough food for the stock, you say the pasture is snugged. And a man who walks slowly or lastly is called moderate. He's a powerful moderate man, you say.

People get born, but lambs and calves get dropped. This is literally true of course. The lamb actually does get dropped. It doesn't hurt any—or at any rate it never complains.) When a sow has little ones, she "pigs." Mine pigged on a Sunday morning, the ol' bastard.

The word dear is pronounced dee-ah. Yet the word deer is pronounced deer. All children are called deah, by men and women alike.

The final "y" of a word becomes "ay." Our boy used to call our dog Freddie. Now he calls him Fredday. Sometimes he calls him Fredday-deah, other times he calls him Freeyay. But the little ol' bastard.

EBW NYer, 6/21/47, q. Elledge bpg, 314

(Ed. Note: Each year KENNEBEC reviews a Maine writer from an earlier generation. Previous subjects include Robert F. Travers Coffin, Walburg Snow, E.A. Robinson, Longfellow, and Milly.)

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My favorite New Yorker cartoon shows a mother and child at dinner. The child glowers at the plate. The mother says, "It's broccoli, dear." The child responds, "I say it's spinach and I say the hell with it." E.B. White wrote those lines. Over a fifty year association with the magazine, he wrote a great deal more that was witty, irreverent, urbane and insightful that went unsigned in the "Talk of the Town" and "Notes and Comment" sections, in captions for cartoons, in obituaries, and in the humorously funny one-liners that comment on short pieces of boxed prose from the nation’s newspapers and magazines that the NYer used as filler. One account, undoubtedly true, has such material posted around the water cooler, and staffers, H.0. In one hand, pencil in the other, voying to write in the crappiest caption or comment.

He shared a tiny office with increasingly alcoholic and increasingly blind James Thurber, "a sort of elongated closet." In a building off Times Square, Dorothy Parker shared a similar office with her buddy Robert Benchley: "an inch smaller," she quipped, "and it would have been adulatory." Nonetheless, EBW's friendship with the famous Thurber flourished and they became right friends. Thurber says he learned "discipline" from EBW and his "precision and clarity...slowed me down from the drott of newspaper tempo and made me realize a writer turns on his mind, not a faucet...everybody has in a sense imitated him" (Elledge, 133).

So have two generations of college students, required to read The Elements of Style in English 101. That brief book, a 1957 rewrite of a pamphlet of tips distributed in 1919 by his Cornell professor William Strunk, perfectly describes in a man; "later, they said, "the style is the subject." One sometimes feels this with EBW, especially when he turns to insubstantial subjects. Perhaps compact prose is best written in a compact office.

EBW makes it look easy. So silken is his syntax, so free of strain, so graceful his grammar, his diction diaphanous, one does not "read" him, one inhales him. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter told him, "If angels can write, they do not wield a better pen than you do" (Elledge, 272). But his effortlessness was not without enormous effort. Of his hero Thoreau, EBW wrote that he was "a writer trying not to act like a writer." That's exactly EBW's effect. Behind it, a lot of trying. Rod Smith, who with EBW's own stepson, baseball writer Roger Angell, was one of America's greatest writers about sports, once said, "Writing? Writing is easy. You just sit down at a typewriter and open a vein." (Sportswriters and writers-about-sports are not the same. For the former, emphasize the first syllable.) Perhaps "opening a vein" is a bit dramatic and romantic to describe classically severe EBW, but he frequently suffered attacks of nervous, losses of confidence when his abilities seemed to flow away from him like a tide going out. Pondering which was worse, writing or being unable to write, he concluded, "Both are bad" (Letters, 432). But his nerve always returned, his sense of the fun in the doing of it, his mock-shy mock-firm persona restored itself, allowing him to tear down the "barriers of silence and distance" between himself and his readers. A writer could experience, as he put it in a letter (5/19/50), "the exquisite thrill of putting his finger on a little capsule of truth and beating it the faint squawk of mortality under his pressure—an antic sound."

EBW gives the lie to the familiar admonition to "find your own voice"—reading him, you want to find his voice. Some writers are so good you imitate them at your peril, but can hardly help but do so. Just writing about White is embarrassing—alas I am finding out and as I am sure his biographer Scott Elledge found out—because prose plunked down next to his plods. Maybe that is why Elledge quotes him so frequently and at such length. His prose doesn't paraphrase. If his subjects aren't said the way he says them, they evaporate.

So why isn't he a "major American writer?" Partly because of the relatively low esteem in which the essay form is held, as opposed to fiction, poetry and drama. The first has characters and plot; the second rhythmy and imagery; and drama dialogue, tension, depth and denouement. The Essay feels flatter, shorter—"minor." As Philip Lopate, a NY Times essayist writing on the genre says, "Nobody much cares. Commercially, essay volumes rank even lower than poetry.

We also worry because Journalism is Essay's mistress. They climb out of the same bed every morning, and we're not always sure that when the Essayist slips into his tuxedo, replete in soup-and-fish, that he's not all that differently attired than the tattered tux and Charlie Chaplin bowler of that "littleEMP Journalism. We want them to be different, but each lives partly in the other's territory, and sometimes we're not sure they're not the same. Gertrude Stein, advising Hemingway in Paris said "Erstes, remarks are not literature." To journalists, we want to say (with Lloyd Bentsen), "I know, George, sir, and you are to
Francis Bacon. "Bombeck, you're no Baldwin. Tom Wolfe, you're good, but you're no Tom Wolfe. Barbara Ehrenreich, no Edmund Wilson. Russell Baker? Buchwald! bracing, but not art. Dave Barry, X weekly, welcome enough, but no Bacon. It's the difference between a columnist and an essayist. But White is White. As Lopate says, EBW is "in a class of his own." True, he sits among the master, in this cross-over context, true, like them he "cross-overshort" and worried about meeting weekly deadlines, but most of the time when his keys rose and struck ribbon, easy came out they. Last within a paragraph you know you can trust the words to be around tomorrow, next year, after the newspaper yellows and eats more journalists.

Arguably, he was the best. One of his obituarists says, "he made his voice carry without raising it." William Shaw, who followed Harold Ross as NYer editor, mentions his "gift of inspiring affection in the reader." He is amusing, not funny like his friend Thurber. He is contemplative, not ironic like his fine but unread contemporary S. J. Perelman, who wrote Marx Brothers scripts and the broad satire on 1950s life and its favorite downer drug, The Road To Minktown, or Under The Spreading Atrophy. EBW's forte was finesse, not force. He had "touch." Unlike EBW, Dorothy Parker wrote light verse and heavy fiction; she never seemed to know who she wanted to be, as the title of a recent biography of her suggests: What Fresh Hell Is That? EBW knew from the beginning what he wanted to be-himself. That sureness comes through on every page. Perhaps that is why we trust him to take us into real literature, even though he is writing about pigs or trailer parks or compost. Addison and Peter Matthiesen, these we trust. Steves and Pauline Kael, we trust them too. Montaigne and Maitre and McPhee, we're usually okay.

The form was born in Greece and Rome. But about 1580 in French "father" Montaigne finally named it essay, or "little attempt." In English, Bacon birthed it; then in the 17th C. Bunton burnished it a bit, patina. With the emergence of the magazine in the 18th C. the form found its natural home, and in The Spectator and The Tatler was lifted to a new level of literary urbanity. Addison and Steele, who found thousands of readers in the new coffee-house culture of London. The real giants lumbered forward in the 19th C. with longer, discursive "attempts" that could be warm and homely (Charles Lamb) or theological (Newman) or aesthetic (Ruskin, Pater) or cultural (Arnold). Macaulay wrote the History of England, Carlyle The French Revolution, and John Stuart Mill On Liberty. Set against hunters of major meat like these, EBW looks like a little Stuart Little, working his objects like country living, dog training, and raising chickens. Late in life he quipped, "One more bornyard story from me and the magazine will have to change its name to the Rural New Yorker." (Letters, 623).

While Arnold saw himself as a poet too, most thought themselves first and only essayists. EBW, only a part-time poet, wrote "Talk of the Town." His "essays" are sermons. Emerson thought himself a poet, but earned his keep as a lecture platform lecturer and his essays, oral, oracular in flavor, read like superb platform prose. Twain's, the same. EBW, then, is more or less alone in wresting a living entirely from the form. And most amazing, he did a good part of it writing anonymously.

That his pieces in the NYer's "Talk of the Town" and "Notes and Comment" columns were unsigned became a sore point between him and Ross. EBW wanted credit, he wanted his name to personalize the already personal material; Ross wanted the impersonal authority of the magazine's collective "voice" to give dignity to the sometimes quaint, certainly transvestite observations of the pacing of week-by-week life. White.chafed. Ross resisted. I think Ross was right. He loved EBW's "newbreaks" (maybe a dozen each week) and his four-five paragraphs of "Notes and Comment"—his "casuals," as they were known around the office. Ross trusted him completely, left alone to do his work, rarely edited him, and published almost everything he produced. So did the boulevardier Franklin P. Adams in his daily "Conning Tower" column for NY World. What a wonderful situation for a writer, to know that what you write will be published and that you will be paid for it. John Updike and few others enjoy such a setup, but at least Updike sees his name at the bottom. EBW hated the Editorial "we" (sometimes called "the papal we"). He complained he found it "almost impossible to write anything decent using the editorial we," unless you are the Dionne family. (Letters, 121). But of course he did.

Yet, "anonymity, plus the we," gives a writer a look of dishonesty, and he finds himself going around, like a masked reveler at a ball, kissing all the pretty girls. Little wonder that he leaped at the offer to write the signed monthly columns called "One Man's Meat" for Harper's Magazine. He hated being edited, although he was married to an editor. And no wonder, just look at his roughs and mangled early typescripts. To him, editing was something painful to do to yourself. If you are a professional, "An editor is a person who knows more about writing than writers do but has escaped the terrible desire to write," he noted generously. Then added, "I have been writing since 1906 and it is high time I got over it." (391).

It follows that he deployed the sermon-and-snipe castigation typical of The Reader's Digest and its editor, DeWitt Wallace. "I regard each chapter of a book as a composition not to be disturbed in the classic design of the Reader's Digest, where sometimes the first four words of Sentence One are joined up with the last ten words of Sentence Twelve, omitting everything that came between. This may be great for a publisher, but for a writing man it is sudden death." (576). EBW might have appreciated an awful but irresistible joke making the rounds in the 1990s. A ravenous bear encounters in a campsite two people, one reading a book, the other writing in a journal. Which one does the bear eat? Answer: the reader.

The latest Reader's Digest says that people should actually express their love for one another, otherwise it withers. So I will just mention that I love you. Always do everything the Digest tells me to do! (425). And in the same tone, he sent to the hands-off, keeps-his-distance Ross this complaint and compliments: "Last week DeWitt Wallace sent me a great hunk of dough and a small proof sheet of a Harper's paragraph he said he had scheduled for his next issue, but I found where his digestive staff had lopped off one of my sentences and frigged around in their curious manner, so I sent everything back and said that unlike a vanilla bean, I did not wish to be extracts. Hell, some day I may toss off a really good sentence two, and wouldn't it be a hoot if my head touched. The truth about the Digest is that they approach every manuscript with the hope of gaining a line or two before reaching the middle of the third sentence. This is no way to approach a manuscript. (The way to approach a manuscript is on all fours. In utter amazement.)" (242).

EBW did not read much great literature, felt he was poorly educated, and that he wasted his time in college. "I majored in English partly because I didn't know what else to do" (Letters, 510). To a college student, he wrote, "If you have no deep feeling for literature, and no burning desire to express yourself in writing, you are probably in the same boat with about seventy-five percent of all the English majors in America, so I wouldn't let it worry you too much." (510). But it would be wrong to leave the impression that EBW spent his life indexing with the trivial or placed himself apart from politics. He fought loyalty oaths and the House Un-American Activities Committee. Amazingly, One Man's Meat was banned by the Army and Navy: "I am beginning to feel a little more like an author now that I have had a book banned. The literary life, in this country, begins in jail..." (259). His two great crusades were for freedom of speech, and for a world government—no mean themes, and comparable to the subjects of the great Victorians. To explain to the nation what we were fighting WWII for, President Roosevelt asked EBW to write on freedom of expression, one of the four sections of a pamphlet called The Four Freedoms. Reinhold Niebuhr contributed an essay about freedom of religion, Max Lerner on freedom from fear, and Malcolm Cowley on freedom from want. White revised and edited the entire project. Yet he was not a nationalist, but an internationalist. During the war he used his NYer column to crusade for World Government, and supported the founding of the United Nations, eventually publishing a serious book on the subject, The Wild Flag. He was disturbed, however, when member nations decreed that the UN flag was to be hung under, not above, their own nations' flags. "Apparently, if you believe in world government, you stand on your head to salute it."

Critics noted, and EBW agreed, his true subject was himself, especially in his informal encounters with daily life. Yet the reader, skimming along his surfaces,
All poets who, when reading from their own works, experience a choked feeling, are major. For that matter, all poets who read from their own works are major, whether they choke or not.

EBW, "How to tell a major poet from a minor poet"

sometimes worried whether he contained enough depth to go on writing. In 1954, he said, "At my age... a writer repeats like an onion." What readers relish, yet what remains maddeningly tantalizing, is that he does not approach the Self like a Romantic poet, all roiled and moiled. During his childhood, college days, and twenties he seemed distressingly normal for one who would be a writer; later, this same "normalcy" allowed him to function, meeting tough deadlines for fifty years. Profundity, in the Germanic, French or Irish sense of the word, seemed to escape both Whites. They resist plunging their depths, at least in public. Elledge, his biographer, can't get at it; Linda Davis, hers, doesn't either. The Whites were as quicksilver.

This reviewer turned to the Letters for clues, hoping to find in the rough and shag of the unprepared, the first-and-only-draft, what might be going behind those scenes. No surprise. He wrote a lucid letter, published by his nature rather than being polished—quick, witty, suave, the same voice heard in his essays, "little attempts" to "break down the wall," as he said earlier—in short, the same person. Material—more personal, surely, presentation, the same. Essayist and epistolariest, consistent.

EBW admits his discomfort at the project to collect and publish his letters in 1975. "A man who publishes his letters becomes a nudist—nothing shields him from the world's gaze except his bare skin. A writer writing away, can hide things up, who has written a letter is stuck with it for all time—unless he is dishonest" (655). EBW was a reserved man, a discreet man, a bit courtly and old-fashioned in the sense of its acceptance, its inevitability of disclosure. [italics mine] This finds worriesome. When freedom of expression is abused, and things become disgusting, then freedom of expression is endangered. People will stand just so much, then they want the clamps put down. I think we are getting perilously close to the clamps down... (552).

When most people strike a pose, it is more outrageous, outré or flamboyant than the sensitivity, insecurity or secret it masks. EBW thought a lot about poses. He posed up, not away-from, up to an ideal, of conduct, performance, civility. It helped him live up to, or at least grow toward, his highest conception of himself. I am convinced that in his attention to pose he was hiding nothing about himself, however romantic or voyeuristic it might be to wish that he was. In this sense, his biographer showed admirable restraint, refusing to suggest darknesses and evasions that probably were not there. (Contrast Athanassios Stasinopoulos' disgusting recent biography of Picasso.) Nevertheless, EBW wrote wittily to Scott Elledge: "I was interested in your remarks about the writer as pose; because of course, all writing is both a mask and an unveiling, and the question of honesty is uppermost, particularly in the case of the essayist, who must take his trousers off without showing his genitals. (I got my training in the upper berths of Pullman cars long ago.)" (516). His two great influences were H.L. Mencken, clearly a poseur, and Sinclair Lewis, more an expositor. Beyond both, he revered Thoreau, writing two essays on the Concord fox. But note how he approaches Thoreau in a third piece in the NYer (5/7/49). "He was a writer, is what he was. Many regarded him as a poseur. He was a poseur, all right, but the pose was struck not for other people to study but for him to study—a brave and ingenious device for a creative person to adopt." Here EBW practically describes himself. "Thoreau posed for himself and was both artist and model, examining his own position in relation to nature and society with the most patient and appreciative care." In his early days in Greenwich Village EBW kept clear of the radical ferment of his famous neighbors, the revolution in arts and politics and manners going on just around the corner. He was neither bohemian nor public man. He wanted to be known as the voice heard in his prose, not as a public speaker, a "personality," a man with the megaphone. Years later he would write of his childhood, "I never dreamed of getting in touch with [an author]. . . . The book is the thing, not the man behind the book. I'm not at all sure that this separation of author and reader isn't a sound idea... . . . " (121). However, White examining his pose is neither a whiteout nor a whitewash. It is a man watching a man who is trying to be more decent than he fears he is able to be.

John Updike, a prodigy-pup in his twenties wandering the halls of the NYer, recalls how EBW had much more "fun" than others—"Not loud or obvious fun, but contained, intriguing fun, shaped like a main spring" (q. Elledge, 130). Sometimes the main spring springs. He and Katharine were certifiable hypochondriacs, as well as sufferers from diagnosed organic ailments. Katharine's biographer writes, after talking with her son Roger Angell, that they "engaged in an unconscious contest as to which of them was the more ill" (Davis, 194). Another relative spoke for others: "You'd never find both of them sick at the same time. One was down, the other was up." In this, as in other areas of their life together, each needed both space and support, and magically, they managed to offer both to each other—at the same time.

Nonetheless, behind his pose, possibly because of it and its demands on him, EBW jumped the rails recurrently from mid-life on. Getting off a train in Sarasota in 1963, he suffered "a total collapse... what in happier days we used to call a
weren't much help, but I found that old phonograph records are miraculous. If odd, but they are. They are the oddest part of the small amounts, spend most records till there is no wax left in the grooves" (246-7). In 1953, he wrote his nervous eighteen months to meeting."

For Columbus, Ohw.

Katharine and distributed psychoanalysts. Nevertheless, EBW consulted them. In 1943, to a friend, he remained typically witty, keeping his trouble at arm's length: "I am recovering from a nervous crack-up which visited me last summer and which has given me a merry chase. I never realized nerves were so odd, but they are. They are the oddest part of the body, no exceptions. Doctors weren't much help, but I found that old phonograph records are miraculous. If you ever bust up from nerves, take frequent shower baths, drink dry sherry in small amounts, spend most of your time with hand tools at a bench, and play old records till there is no wax left in the grooves" (246-7). In 1953, he wrote his shrink in NYC: "I sound about as good in German as I feel in English. But there isn't anything the matter with me that a guillotine couldn't cure. My only trouble is in my head, and even that is improving. By the time I'm 91 I'll be sound and the dollar will be completely gone to pieces" (374). We're watching a tougher, prouder, kind of American. Where is our generation's whining self-pity! Absent. Instead of angst, alarm: Instead of self-dramatized horror, hope. At age 64, he wrote his brother: "By the time the ulcer was discovered, it was no longer bothering me much, and I laced my bland diet with generous dollops of gin, on my private theory that ulcers are caused by anxiety and the way to avoid anxiety is to drink" (494). This attitude comes through in the prose, this understated stylish jibing jauntiness in the face of trouble makes us love him. As he put it in 1954—resigned, still whimsical—"A writer... writes as long as he lives. It is the same as breathing except that it is bad for one's health" (391).
Katharine Sergeant White (1892-1977)

1880 Marriage of Charles Spencer Sergeant, chief clerk and auditor for Boston's Eastern Railroad, to Elizabeth (Bessie) Blake Shepley of Naples, ME.
1892 Birth of Katharine, last of three daughters.
1899 Death of Bessie. Aunt Cruly moves into her brother's house in Brookline, MA to care for the girls.
1904 Katharine meets Ernest Angell during annual summer vacation on Lake Chocooras, NH.
1910 Katharine and Ernest, a 21-year old senior at Harvard, become engaged.
1910-14 K. attends Bryn Mawr, majors in English and Philosophy.
1912-14 Becomes co-editor of *Tjän O'Bob* (Welsh for "a bit of everything"), the college weekly, and editor of *The Lantern*, the school's literary annual. Writes several short stories.
1914 Graduates #4 in a class of 79.
1915 Marries Ernest, moves to Cleveland where he is practicing law. With eight other people, they establish the Cleveland Playhouse.
1916 Charles Sergeant's managerial practices investigated, his salary cut by 70%. Birth of Nancy Angell.
1917 Ernest enlists in Army, is sent to France. K. works on a survey of disabled people in Cleveland, later as inspector of factory conditions.
1918 Moves to Brookline, MA , into her father's home. Volunteer work for Boston's Children's Hospital.
1919 Ernest, now a captain, is discharged from army. The Angells move to NYC. K. works for the Bryn Mawr Alumnae Endowment Fund.
1920 The Angells settle in Selden, n. of NYC. Birth of Roger Angell.
1921 Charles, retired since 1918, sells family home in Brookline, and moves in with three of his sisters in ancestral home in Northampton.
1922-25 K. writes articles for the *New Republic*, *Atlantic*, and *Saturday Review of Literature*.
1925 February: first issue of *The New Yorker* appears on the stands.
1926 K.'s essay, "Home and Office" published by Survey. In it, she defends her life as a working wife and mother.

E.B. White (1899-1985)

1880 Marriage of Samuel Tilly White to Jessie Hart.
1881-95 Samuel becomes general manager and VP of the Horace Waters Piano Co. Family moves to Mount Vernon, NY.
1899 Birth of Elwyn (En) Brooks White (later, "Andy"), last of six children.
1905 Family spends August on Great Pond, Belgrade, ME. They return to Belgrade every August but one, until 1916. Samuel is sued by heirs of Horace Waters.
1907 En keeps Journal, continues for next 20 years.
1909-12 Wins prize for a poem about a mouse, and two medals for prose pieces.
1911 Supreme Court dismisses suit against Samuel.
1913-17 Attends Mount Vernon (NY) HS. Publishes poems, short stories and essays in school's *Oracle*. Becomes assistant editor senior year.
1917 Graduates, two scholarships. America enters WW I. Enrolls at Cornell, alma mater of his two brothers. Editorial board of the Cornell Daily Sun, one of two college dailies in USA. Nicknamed "Andy," after Andrew D. White, Cornell's first president.
1918 Registers "with 13 million other Americans" for draft. Enlists in Student Army Training Corps.
1919 Takes English 8 with Professor William Strunk.
1920 Summer: works as counselor at Camp Otter in Dorset, Ontario. Fall: elected editor-in-chief of *Daily Sun* and president of his fraternity.
1921 Graduates from Cornell. Returns to work at Camp Otter. Fall: Mount Vernon, NY, lives with parents. Works briefly at U.P., hates job. Writes two satirical poems about cheap journalism, which are printed in Christopher Morley's column, "The Bowling Green," in *NY Evening Post*.
1922 Writes press releases for the American Legion News Service. March: takes off with Howard Cushman on a cross-country trip in his Model T, "Hotspur."
1923-24 Works as layout man in the production department of the Frank Seaman advertising agency, holds job for two years. Poetry published in Franklin P. Adams' column, "The Conning Tower," in *NY World*.
1926 Early summer: K. suggests to Ross that he offer EBW a job as staff writer. July: EBW and roommate Bob Adams, who works for the Cunard Line, receive free passage on a tour of Europe in exchange for writing advertising. August: begins writing "newspaper pieces" for NYer, a task he will perform until 1982.
1927 James Thurber joins NYer and shares tiny office with EBW. Both write "Talk of Town" pieces, "Notes and Comment," and cartoon captions. EBW also writes light verse, theater reviews, and advertisement parodies.
1928 K., now Head of Fiction, becomes John O'Hara's editor. Both are credited with having developed "the NYer's short story style." Summer: K., Ernest and children sail for France. EBW and friend Gus Lobreno also sail for France. K. and EBW meet in Paris and travel together to Corsica and St. Tropez. Agree not to see each other once back in NYC.
fall. November: Harper publishes Is Sex Necessary? Or Why You Feel the Way You Do. EBW and Thurber each wrote half the chapters. Book is huge success, going through 11 printings in the first five months. November 13: K. and EBW decide to marry, and do so the same day without telling anyone. Only the dog, Daisy, is present. After the wedding, EBW moves in with K.

1930


1931

July: Whites rent summer home in E. Blue Hill, ME.

1933

K. reviews children's books for NYer (through 1948).

1934

Whites buy salt water farm in N. Brooklin, ME. EBW suffers from various illnesses. August: Fortune publishes article by Ralph Ingersoll, critical of NYer for failing to take a stance on social issues. Describes White as "sly, frightened of life, often melancholy, always hypochondriac. . . ."

1935

Deaths of Samuel White. K. suffers miscarriage in Maine.

1936

Death of Jessie White. EBW has dizzy spells.

1937

EBW decides to take off, to be by himself, travelling and writing. K. stays in NYC, and is unhappy. He manages only to get to Maine, where he moans about, "is miserable," and gets no writing done. October: EBW returns to NYC having decided he made "an unholy mess" out of everything. Later, White calls period EBW's "five-month year" off.

1938

Whites decide to move to Maine permanently. Gus Lobrano, EBW's college friend, takes over K.'s job as Head of Fiction. K. will be a half-time editor from Maine. EBW resigns as staff writer, but retains the Newsweek dept. Begins monthly column for Harper's entitled "One Man's Meat," The Fox of Peapack, EBW's light verse.

1939

Charles Sergeant dies. Whites fix up the Brooklin, ME house with K.'s inheritance. EBW's Quo Vadimus? Or the Case for the Bicycle

1940

EBW begins writing frequently about WWII. Anne Morrow Lindbergh's The Wave of the Future presents case against America's entry into the war. EBW writes devastating review, urging entry.

1941

A Subtreanrry of American Humor, edited by both Whites. EBW goes to Washington to work on pamphlet called The Four Freedoms for FDR's Office of Facts and Figures, to explain what Americans are fighting for. Responsible for explaining freedom of expression, and revising of others' essays.

1942

EBW contributes weekly comment to NYer while still writing "One Man's Meat" for Harper's.

1943

Whites return to NYC. K. becomes full-time ass. ed. Lobrano remains Head of Fiction: "an awkward situation." K. has hysterectomy. EBW gives up Harper's column, becomes full-time NYer staff writer again. Severely depressed, consults psychiatrist about "a mouse in my head." K. mistrusts analysts. EBW begins championing World Government ideas. For next four years a third of his work contains at least a paragraph on the issue. Later collected in The Wild Flag (1946).

1945


1947

EBW enters period of depression. Stops writing and sees psychiatrist.
friendly, eccentric or wildly she produce some delightfully quirky traces mostly in hearsay and memory."

**KSW: A Formidable Lady**

In the summer of 1925, a 32-year-old mother of two was hired as a part-time reader of manuscripts by Harold Ross, founding editor of a fledgling magazine called The New Yorker. By fall, this girl had been promoted to assistant editor. By the time she died, 52 years later, she had been called "the best woman editor in the world" and was recognized as having "exercised a profoundly creative influence on contemporary American fiction."

Mining Maine's literary past brings up more than a few surprises. Who would have thought that Maine had much to do with the urbane New Yorker? Yet here it is. Not only did contributors such as Jean Stafford and Mary McCarthy call the state home at some point of their lives but, for magazine writers more importantly, the Whites, Katharine and E.B., took up residence. Most of us are familiar with E.B. Fewer may know that most of his work appeared in the NYer. Yet, might be aware that his wife is an important literary figure in her own right.

Katharine Sergeant White's literary output is slight: a few stories, written in college; a couple of articles, some inconsequential light verse; a series of children's books reviews written between 1933 and 1948 for the NYer; and 14 garden seed catalogue reviews, written for the same magazine between 1958 and 1970. Only the latter are easily accessible. They were collected, after her death, in Onward and Upward in the Garden. One would be hard pressed to say she was prolific. Yet, it is amazing that she managed to get that much in print. To her, writing was plain agony. Unlike her husband, who once wrote: "I always write a thing first and think about it afterward, which is not a bad procedure because the easiest way to have consecutive thoughts is to put them down!" (Letters, 255), Katharine fought her thoughts all the way. "She would write eight or ten words," EBW said, "then draw her gun and shoot them down. This made for slow and tortuous going." (Onward, viii,ix). Writing was so difficult for her, at least in formal form for she was a formidable letter writer, that near the end of her career it took her nearly a year to complete one essay. A year filled with despair at her inability to compose worthwhile prose. When one reads the pieces, so painfully put together from small bursts of words, one is impressed with the seemingly confident prose with which they are written. No blood stains the pages, no awkward turn of phrase mars the pace. One gets the sense that these informal, informative essays were dashed off, between tea and martini, by one's favorite crotchety aunt who just happens to be a perfect grammarian: "As I write, snow is falling outside my Maine window, and indoors all around me half a hundred garden catalogues are in bloom. I am an addict of this form of literature and a student of the strange personalities of the authors who laed me on. Gentle and friendly, eccentric or slyly sardonic, occasionally contemptuous and even angry, every one of them can persuade me, because he knows what he is saying and says it with enthusiasm. Reading this literature is unlike any other reading experience. Too much goes on at once. I read for news, for insights of knowledge, for aesthetic pleasure, and at the same time I am planning the future, and I read in dreams." (Onward, 21).

**Why would a woman who could write so well have such a hell of a time putting words down on paper?**

EBW, in his introduction to Katharine's book, blamed her difficulties not on ordinary writer's block (she always knew what she wanted to say) but on the fact that "by temperament and profession" she was an editor. "The editor in her fought the writer every inch of the way . . . it was simply warfare: the editor ready to nip the writer before she could commit all the sins and errors the editor clearly foresaw" (viii,ix). She persevered in battling both sides of the brain because she strongly felt that every editor should know first-hand the pain of creation. Her battles, which "were felt all through the house," were not in vain: not only did she produce some delightfully quirky essays, but her understanding of the creative process made her a much-admired editor. Her editing style was maternal and her "open-ended" stroke light. She "codified" her writer's work with "blue opossums." She protected them against the NYer fact-finding department, at times overzealous in checking and rechecking facts in fiction. She became, in the words of May Sarton, "the mother superior," and was, in the eyes of Edmund Wilson, "the least interfering" of the magazine's editors. She seems to have expanded her editor's fancy on self-expression and taken the battered writer soul with her to the office where it ran interference, nurtured, and consoled, the other unfortunate.

Lifting lives out of their generational fabric in order to highlight individual achievements is always a hazardous task. One tends to look for agency, for attributable results, for clear cut statements of fact: "He did, then she said . . ." Satisfying the singular usually stirs up a hornet's nest of counterclaims: "You're wrong! She did, and then he said . . . that's how that went." Few of us live in such a way as to create biographical clarity. Even if we did, that would not end controversy. Truth would still be in the eye of the beholder. Record keepers and readers do not necessarily agree.

Thinking about Katharine and EBW has made me acutely aware of biographical difficulties. 48 years of married life tends to erode the individuality of each's achievement. Did EBW begin to write children's books because his wife reviewed up to 50 often twice yearly for 15 years and the house was strewn with kid lit? (Hey, I can do that!) Did Katharine feel compelled to write even when illness made it nearly impossible to stay "even" with EBW? What role did Katharine's love for precise prose, punctuation and Fowler's Usage play in EBW's decision to write a revision of Strunk? Who knows? Too much gets borrowed over coffee, shared with martinis, and lost in midnight talks to ever be able to retrieve with certainty whose passions were whose.

Much has been written about the early years at the NYer. All articles and books stirred controversy. As with right-knit families, how difficult to ascertain who thought of what when, or whose job was more influential. Memories, though shared, are selective and singular. Each memoir explores cobwebes and opens up a can of worms. Thurber's The Years with Ross spelled the end of his friendship with the Whites. Katharine, especially, was upset about the "malicious" depiction of Ross (He "was not an illiterate boor") and the "unfaçtual" account of who did what when. Later, Brendan Gill's Here At the New Yorker made her think of suing. When finally persuaded not to, Katharine spent years annotating the offending book, quitting only when EBW (concerned for her health) hid it away. She was hurt by Gill's description of her as being "as stubborn—and sometimes, as humorless—in pushing for her opinions as some weighty glacier working its way down a narrow Alpine pass" (225), and the suggestion that she used EBW, who was nearly indispensable, to gain advantage over other editors. She was furious at the rumor, almost certainly untrue, that she had been ready to lead a police revolution against Ross and was concerned that "thousands of people I don't know will be pitying Andy for having such a horrifying, glacial and power hungry wife" (Davis, 238,9). What a pity that her version of Gill's book never appeared in print. Between the anger, the desire to shine and to protect Andy, her editor's passion for facts and precision, we certainly would have learned a valuable piece of NYer truth.

Katharine joined the magazine soon after its inception. She and Rose, the founding editor, worked well together. Thurber said Ross told him: "She knows the Bible and literature, and foreign languages and she has taste." (Years, 38). She had all Ross lacked, just as he complemented her. Ross: loud, gregarious, energetic, a genius who had the good sense and humility to recognize brilliance, slightly awkward with strangers, a bit insecure about his lack of formal education and a softly at heart. Katharine: supremely self-confident, calm and reticent, well educated (4th in her class at Bryn Mawr) and willing to do dirty work, that is to say, Ross frequently assigned her the unenviable task of working with the most difficult contributor and of firing writers. They were intensely loyal to each other and shared a love for Fowler's English Usage and Webster's. Ross and Katharine: both perfectionists. Missing in NYer lore is a good description of their relationship. Why did these opposites get along so well? EBW once said, "they met at one point (they both found the same things funny), and the collision at this point sent up sparks" (Davis, 136). It may be as simple as that: humor and respect do make for great workmates.

As an editor of one of the most important magazines printing fiction, Katharine's influence was great. How great is difficult to assess. Elledge, EBW's biographer, states that "in the course of development of 20th century American literature, Katharine may have exercised more influence than any other editor of a literary magazine" (182). That may be open to debate. However, a list of "her" writers, even a partial one, is impressive indeed: O'Hara, Woolcott, Wilson, Nabokov, Stafford, McCarthy, Flanere, Bishop, Sarton, Updike, the last.
Writing rather than speech. Elsie was six when her mother died of misdiagnosed appendicitis. Her life-long obsession with ill-health, undoubtedly stem from her mother's early demise.

Katharine was six when her mother died of misdiagnosed appendicitis. Her life-long obsession with ill-health, of which she had her share, can probably be traced to that traumatic event, even though it was fanned by imaginary ills (Davis, 190). She coaxed, advanced money, asked about their private lives, occasionally suggested story lines, fought about grammar and punctuation, disputed English usages, suggested changes, congratulated them and occasionally rejected them. Some found her difficult to work with and tried to get re-assigned. Virtually all found her "formidable." Katharine intimidated people by her self-assurance, her manner ("New England austere") and her manner (always precise in all she did and said with an occasional touch of hauteur.) Yet, EBW, when he first met her, thought she had "a knack of making young contributors feel at ease" (Davis, 77), and her letters do not present an imposing personality, instead, they sound as though they were written by an older sister, family friend, or aunt. An intensely private person, she found it easier to deal with people by call than in person, in writing rather than speech.

Katharine was six when her mother died of misdiagnosed appendicitis. Her life-long obsession with ill-health, undoubtedly stem from her mother's early demise.
used profanities and I do to this day—ones that are unsuitable for a proper New England old lady," she said in a 1970 interview with Elledge. She argued freely with him about literary points and soon became, in the words of Gill, his "intellectual conscience" (Here, 289).

Shortly after she began working at The NYer, Katharine wrote two essays which catch the tenor of her life. The first appeared anonymously in the 12/25 issue of Harper's. "Going on the Flagged: Edgy Family Income vs. Family Expenses" describes the financial difficulties she and Ernest (Tom in the essay) were having and the strain it placed on their marriage. Though both worked, their salaries did not quite cover their needs: a nurse for the children, a housekeeper, good clothes, a spot to get away from it all, and an occasional night out. (Sound familiar?) The second essay, "Home and Office," appeared six months later under her own name in Saturday magazine. It describes her life as a working mother and wife. She admits that it is not always easy to juggle the demands but sounds optimistic and satisfied: "I live a very full family life, and I hold an editorial position that is exacting a full-time job in any I see about me" (Elledge, 112).

Davis uses these essays to take Katharine to task. She criticizes her "copulent" life-style, her predilection for quality clothes, and her reliance on nannies and servants ("she simply disliked housework") and "was nearly inceivable in the kitchen"). Davis views her decision to work as selfish and dismisses her "attempts at self justification" as "self-delusionary." Even if K. had not lived above her means and had a happy marriage she still would have found a way to go to work. Worse, Davis claims "Katharine was essentially maternal; paradoxically she was unable to mother her own children" (the kids might not agree) while she could work. These censorious notes are jarring.

EBW began sending long verse and sketches to the NYer within weeks after the first issue hit the stands. K. admired his work. His essays

Flanner was the best editor's job in the world, and what does

K., by all accounts and photographs, was a striking lady: short (five feet), regal bearing, her waist-length dark hair (never cut and professionally cared for) tied in a bun which rested at the nape of her neck, thus off-setting her Roman profile and giving full play to her large, discerning eyes. She was poised, humorous, intelligent and she treated every writer as important as any other, even thought they were young and inexperienced (Davis, 161). Andy, a boyishly-looking shy man felt at ease with her, and, though he did not immediately jump at the offer of a job as staff-writer, eventually agreed to join the NYer and thus K. became "his boss" (Elledge, 115).

It is impossible to ascertain the precise moment they fell in love, but by the summer of 1928, they had a date to meet in France. Ernest was off to see an old mistress when Katharine and Andy had their romantic holiday. At the end of their stay they decided that, once back in New York, they would be "just friends." A few weeks after their return, Andy wrote "Soho-ho at Times Square," a poem in which he describes his sense of loss. It starts: "The time for little words is past/ We no longer speak the broad intimacies/ Take your hand / Merely to help you cross the street (We are such friends), and continues: "Support I should forget, good enough/ Andy, I love her/ What if I said: I love you/ Something as simple/ And as easy to the tongue as that—/Something as true as..."

Both were miserable. Andy contemplated leaving the magazine. Then, one day in February, after a fight with Ernest, K. had enough. She left. She left. K. was unhappy, but he could accept.

Divorce was not easy to obtain in New York State so Katharine moved to Nevada. The Reno months were difficult: the kids stayed with Ernest, no work offer him a job. When EBW took...
animals, whimsical children and condescending adults" (109). EBW concurred: "Much of our adult immaturity, in books and out, has its stuffiness untruly of childhood," and echoes her: "A large amount of published material is dull, prosy stuff, by writers who mistake oddity for fantasy..." (Meat, 24-25). K.'s books, which were pulled up all through the house, gave EBW the idea that "...it must be a lot of fun to write for children—reasonably easy work, perhaps even important work..." (21-22). Some 15 years later, EBW tried his hand as "juveniles" (as they are called in the trade) and produced Stuart Little.

Besides editing NYer manuscripts, writing her reviews, and turning to gardening, K. helped EBW edit A Subversary of American Flamingo: a personal selection from 200 years of humorous writing. Many NYer writers were richly represented, which is no surprise because K. had already gone once for their stuff. EBW wrote the introductory essays, K. blue-pencilled them. This was the only time Andy actually asked his wife to edit him. Usually he refused to show her his work until it was ready to appear in print. He hated being edited, especially by her, for through she would try to remain silent, her demeanor would show what she thought, which then would send him back to the drawing board. He was more unamenable to having her take care of his career. In Maine she became his agent and protectress (Davis, 140). One senses that K., accustomed to working under deadlines, found life in Maine too quiet too soon. EBW himself seemed to have found semi-retirement a bit too much to handle. He got depressed. She fell ill. In the spring of 1943, K. has a hysterectomy. It was war time. The NYer was struggling: lack of paper, loss of writers and a diminished editorial staff. Ross bought more than a hundred of his poems and stories and argued about his punctuation. Davis prints a fascinating exchange between the two (291-292). K. had just undergone a spinal fusion operation and was wearing an aluminum ear and soon she had again all the "literary writers..." (293) She bought the first "juveniles" (344). K. rebounded. She wrote eight more garden pieces and entered a period of relative good health. Andy blossomed. Then, in 1969, a return of the dermatomus. She would suffer terribly from this, and its medications, to the end of her life. K. spent nine weeks in the hospital unable to wear clothes, she lost her malaras and a lot of hair, which (still never out) had always been a source of pride. She also lost her belief in her ability to write anything, let alone "worth while" prose. A year before, EBW wrote Roger, "Both of us, of course are suffering from the onset of professional inactivity, or inadequacy, or both, and in her case it is greatly aggravated by her almost-lost dream of writing another garden piece or two, so as to put a book together..." (208). In spite of their problems and increasing age the Whites' gamble still paid. K. did not retire. At the end of her life, K. died on 7/1/77. Andy was incredulous. He never recovered from his "KSW: the formidable lady" of yore. He made sure that her garden pieces were collected and wrote a loving introductory essay on his "opulent" wife who never "dressed down" to garden. "Her" writers were quoted: nothing but praise. The editor. Numberless writers, including me, cared for her, for though K. did not retire, the NYer stayed with him. His final work was "Katherine, I love you..." (Davis, 172). K. did not retire. At the end of her life, K. died on 7/1/77. Andy was incredulous. He never recovered from his "KSW: the formidable lady" of yore. He made sure that her garden pieces were collected and wrote a loving introductory essay on his "opulent" wife who never "dressed down" to garden. "Her" writers were quoted: nothing but praise. The editor. Numberless writers, including me, cared for her, for though K. did not retire, the NYer stayed with him. His final work was "Katherine, I love you..." (Davis, 172). K. was asked to become "Head of Fiction" once more until someone could be found to replace her. She stayed 18 months. During this time, Andy was ill a lot, she overworked. In may of 1957 the Whites moved back to Maine for good. Still, they were not totally cut, EBW contributed funny phrases, K. read (as a 1/3 editor) manuscripts.

Once back in North Brooklin, EBW wrote "K. has reduced her job on the magazine to a six-months-a-year stint..." Her flower gardening life is at a high pitch now, and her perennial borders are a work of art—cars slows down as they go by, to see the wonders Katherine has wrought. We need to employ one man on the place, but now that K. has learned the Latin names of plants, it takes three. But it is a nice way to go broke, surrounded by such beauty" (Letters, 470). She also began reading garden seed catalogues—who in Maine's mid-winter hasn't marvelled at the seductive promises they hold? Out of poetic passion, luscious last and violet fervor a new project was born: reviews of catalogs as a jumping ground for a gardener's gorgeous recollections. The first in 1958 surprised everyone, including EBW. Retirement from editing came on 1/1/61. The next day, K. had her first "mini stroke." Her illness was misdiagnosed as a brain tumor. Months later, she underwent an operation for a blockage in the carotid artery. The months in between left her feeling morbid. She began keeping her "Victorian will"—keeping being the operative word. Andy suffered as well. Thurer died, K. wrote, "we are crumbling badly" (Davis, 208). She was almost 70. For that birthday Andy wrote: "A compass for Katherine: I turn to the East, I turn to the West/I turn to the one that I love best" (208). In spite of their problems and increasing age the Whites' gamble still paid. 1964 was an awful year: K. developed a rare disease called subaortic postural dermatomus. She would suffer terribly from this, and its medications, to the end of her life. K. spent nine weeks in the hospital unable to wear clothes, she lost her malaras and a lot of hair, which (still never out) had always been a source of pride. She also lost her belief in her ability to write anything, let alone "worth while" prose. A year before, EBW wrote Roger, "Both of us, of course are suffering from the onset of professional inactivity, or inadequacy, or both, and in her case it is greatly aggravated by her almost-lost dream of writing another garden piece or two, so as to put a book together..." (208). In spite of their problems and increasing age the Whites' gamble still paid. K. turned to gardening. Her "literary writers" under her wing. In this second part of her career, K. became the editor to a new generation of writers. She bought the first NYer pieces by Vladimir Nabokov and became the only editor from whom he would take "occasional emendations." In 1948, when K. had just undergone a spinal fusion operation and was wearing a aluminum brace, Jean Stafford (herself a pain she about to divorce Lowell) became one of "hers" and remained a friend throughout life. By 1954, John Updike, then 22 years old, was added to the fold. During the years they worked together, K. bought more than a hundred of his poems and stories and argued frequently about his punctuation. Davis prints a fascinating exchange between the two about the finer points of Fowler's Usage (164-166). In his review of Updike's biography, Updike states: "The attentive editor shapes, or at least, the writers" (NYer, 9/10/87). He should know.

In 1951 Ross died. The end of an era. Both Whites lost a very good friend. Both were indebted to him for their careers, especially K. She called him "one of the few really great men I have known" (Davis, 159). Andy wrote the NYer obituary, and added: J.D. Salinger, "felt worried, as well as sick, attempting to say anything about Ross in his own magazine (Letters, 347). To another, "I was so damn glad to get your letter to my beautiful piece about Ross didn't seem beautiful at all to me after the third reading and I was quite worried about it" (348). Then both got ill. Andy had "head trouble," K. contracted infectious hepatitis. The years following were not much kinder. Rosamond died. Then Aunt Crully, whom K. cared for during her final months. K. got the news, Andy broke a toe and had shingles. In 1955, they traveled to England: a dismal failure, they cut it short. In Europe, K. decided to retire. She was tired, more importantly so was EBW who stopped contributing sketches. Back in NY he wrote "her" writers of other plans she would give up editing but remain in some advisory capacity.

The reactions were strong. Mary McCarthy wrote "You will leave the fiction department with this contributor's love firmly attached to you," Nabokov: "Your kindness, your gentleness and understanding have always meant so much to me," and the literary agent Bernice Baumgarten: "I know that it is selfish to regret this move of years..." (21-22). Some 15 years later, EBW tried his hand at juveniles" (as they are called in the trade) and produced Stuart Little.
The Elements of Taste: a demurrr

E.B. White’s succinct manual, The Elements of Style, is justly praised, and remains useful today. However (uh-oh, EBW advises against beginning sentences with “however”), given that it was written 35 years ago in 1957, and based on William Strunk Jr.’s pamphlet of 1918, it is up for de-canonizing. Both EBW and his editor wife Katharine learned their language when it was comparatively stable, before immigration swelled again and the population exploded. They saw their role as holding the line, fighting the good fight, beating back the barbarians. To be sure, by 1958 EBW guessed that he was out-of-step with modern linguists who, in their words, sought to “describe, not prescribe.” He wrote of “maybe even selling some copies to English Departments that collect oddities and curios” (Letters, 455). He mistook linguists’ views for those typical of faculties of universities English departments, who labored for the same lucid prose he espoused, and who soon began selling his book for him by the millions.

Against the winds of change—some of them Gale Force Nine, some not—he wrapped himself in the cloak of Virtue, and told his editor who had suggested a little modernizing, “I have never been edited for wind direction, and will not be now.” He expressed contempt for the “Happiness Boys, or as you like to call them, the descripтивists.” EBW located the enemy as “the modern liberal of the English Department, the anything-goes fellow. . . I am against him, temperamentally and because I have seen the work of his disciples, and I say the hell with him.” EBW confused those who taught writing with those who advised publishers of dictionaries. Not that he was stuffy. Listen to George Bernard Shaw reduce to rubbish the “rule” prohibiting a preposition at the end of a sentence. “That is a preposition up with which I will not put.” “Now listen to EBW ending one with five: a father, intent on reading to his son in bed, brings the wrong book. The boy says, “What did you bring that book that I don’t want to be read to out of up for?” (Letters, 492). EBW tolerated the modern tendency to cut “that” from a sentence, and advised using one’s ear. However, in showing when to keep that he seems willful, or pretend-dumb. Example: “He felt that the girl had not played fair.” Omit that, says EBW, and you’re left with “he felt the girl.” Oh no, you’re not, as the rest of the sentence makes perfectly clear.

EBW’s impact has been so powerful that, when combined with Hemingway’s example, a lot of American prose has become anorexic, its near-starvation point seen in Minimalist fiction writers of the last fifteen years like Anne Beattie and Raymond Carver. Lean becomes gaunt. Journalistic sentence length is already telegraphic enough. Readers sometimes feel that they are being pecked to death by small birds.

Language can be as rich and various as its users. EBW, not much of a reader himself, has a bias against the long, lifting sentences of the Victorians, sentences strung along a page, line after line, phrases festooned, long delicious chains of subordination requiring patience in the reader—and a little intelligence too, to discern the ever-finer discriminations being made. EBW’s bias devalues the Germanic tradition, and its rolling “periods.” Imagine a meeting of EBW and Thomas Mann. Or Hermann Hesse. Elements, and EBW’s own style, if taken as the only models, narrow taste rather than open it up. The Southern prose of Faulkner, or Robert Penn Warren, or Thomas Wolfe would be “overwritten,” in EBW’s view. Consider the fine opening to Look Homeward, Angel: “A destiny that leads the English to the Dutch is strange enough; but one that leads from Epictetus into Pennsylvania, and thence into the hills that shut in Allamont over the proud coral cry of the cock, and the soft stone smile of an angel, is touched by that dark miracle of chance which makes new magic in a dusty world.

Each of us is all the same he has not counted: subtract us into nakedness and night again and you shall see begin in Crete four thousand years ago the love that ended yesterday in Texas. “Overdone? Ora writer reaching for the lyrical? By what starvation of culture, by what New England severity, can this come to appear prolix?

Some of the distinctions EBW sought to maintain have been blurred, others eclipsed entirely. You can still get a sneer for finalize, but consider these: all right vs. alright (virtually lost), like as (going, going, gone!), because of: due to (gone), farther: farther (under severe stress), hopefully (game is over), that which (which sank a decade ago), shall: will (you might hear shall now and then on the East Coast), contact (as in “I’ll contact you” feels standard by now), flammable: inflammable (I’ve even seen in—). Kind of and sort of both now sub for rather.

When it comes to his dicta, let’s reconsider. I too prefer the active voice, but do find the passive useful at times. I see no reason to always “put statements in positive form,” and have no qualms about using nouns as verbs. To “place emphatic words of a sentence at the end” seems unnecessarily rigid, and underestimates the reader. When he says “do not affect a breezy manner,” his examples work, but we have entered a deeply subjective area. “Avoid fancy words!” strikes me as anti-intellectual (and again subjective), as does “avoid foreign languages” (down-home N.E. populism!). I don’t want my students to be told to “use figures of speech sparingly.” Oh, for a figure of speech! And two suggestions near the very end make me simply wilt: “Do not inject opinion,” and “Prefer the standard to the offbeat.” Oh, at this dreary late-date in our civilization, what I would give for a clear opinion, any opinion, the offbeat preferred. Fortunately, in at least these two respects, EBW ignored his own advice.

T.P.
Friendships and a Talking Pig

February in Maine has its ups and downs, sunnier days seduce feelings of spring but this season can extinguish any desire for outside activity. Two years ago during winter vacation all four of my children and myself had blue-y—one would improve just as another one or two would get sick. On one of my trips to the store for more soda and tylenol I picked up the video of Charlotte’s Web. I thought it would entertain them—it did much more.

The Maine I knew as a child was rural, farm country, two-room school houses, we lived near places like Zuckerman’s. But my children are almost urban-living in a “neighborhood” on acre plots within shouting distance of their friends. As new parents we all want to give our children what we never had. After the second or third child comes along, we realize that we can only give them a sense of where we came from. Sharing Charlotte’s Web brought that into our lives.

There are many profound things to say about reading classics such as E.B. White’s children’s stories to your own kids. My fourth grade teacher read us the book and my children have read or have had all three of White’s books read to them by the fifth grade. When listening to their reactions and critical analysis I am amazed at their sophistication. The fascination of combining two worlds together never ends with each advancing generation. Kids see the magic lessons to be learned but all I recall of Charlotte’s Web was an icy spider and a rotten egg. White’s stories bring back the country to children who are more informed than their parents were at their ages. The characters and plots never change but my children remember more of the finer points than I ever did. My daughter Mariah who is now ten reminds me that, after all, “Fern had to grow up too.” Charlotte’s Web is about letting go and learning to go on despite all the “stuff” that is in between.

Plu dazed, we watched the animals in Wilbur’s barnyard come to life. “Templton’s so funny,” Then, “Charlotte’s too busy.” Then, “So’s the goose.” Amid the enchantment all too soon they noticed Wilbur’s loneliness and the other animals’ snobbishness. Even as young as four, children at their best identify with isolation as much as they do jubilation. Ignoring the big words like “saturations,” they focus on the interaction within the story. In each story they see an element of faith and hope in the most unlikely places—a pig sty, a tipsy canoe, a spider’s heart.

Some children are born with the ability to communicate with animals as Fern could. Call it imagination, maybe, but when you live with such a child, White’s characters do not seem unreal. For my youngest, Charlotte was a teacher, Wilbur a friend, and the mother goose a nag. At four, when she first saw the video, she believed animals could talk. She probably still does. For my youngest, Charlotte was a teacher, Wilbur a friend, and the mother goose a nag. At four, when she first saw the video, she believed animals could talk. She probably still does. And I may be inclined to react to Wilbur’s loss of Charlotte and Fern and are relieved that three of the 300+ babies decide to stay. For, after all, Wilbur can’t leave his home that he was born with.

Perhaps most children relate to the devotion that intertwines White’s stories. Practical, homegrown, and unconditional. Maybe everyone needs a spider or two to weave a story from. Whatever the case, White must have believed in the power of friendship as well as the pen.

This year’s first snowstorm of the season saddled us a little. My youngest daughter and I watched our thirteen year old Lab wander around the yard stuffing the air but limping slightly, her grey face made whiter by the minute. “Poor old doggie,” I said.

“Why?” Vanessa asked.

“Because she’s too old and may die soon.”

“Oh . . . like Charlotte?”

“Yes, like Charlotte.” Innocence and knowledge, an interesting combination. Perhaps that is why E.B. White’s stories have such great appeal to everyone. The right mixture makes classics.

Peggy Clark Contreras
E. Winthrop
isa UMA English major

With a few exceptions, the critics of children’s books are remarkably lenient souls. They seem to regard books for children with the same tolerant tenderness with which nearly any adult regards a child. Most of us assume there is something good in every child; the critics go on from this to assume there is something good in every book written for a child. It is not a sound theory.

K. S. W.
(Onward and Upward, 106)
Excerpt from a letter by a Maine haikuist . . .

... at the turn of the century, Japanese poets began eliminating the traditional obligatory "season" (spring/fall/etc.) word from haiku, as well as breaking up their familiar 5/7/5 meter. And even now, at century's close, the debate still continues between the two camps. Same stateside. (Alas, English doesn't lend itself easily to 5/7/5). Haiku is still considered more "poetic," more refined (hence, more respected, if you will) than the more confrontational senryu form. This is certainly true on both sides of the Pacific. Japanese artists of every stripe seem preoccupied with the element of time in their works and it does seem to deepen the verse. The Time element is less frequently employed in Senryu. HAIKU reflects mankind's link with nature. SENRYU depicts man's link with human nature. Most North American haiku poets call both haiku and senryu simply "haiku" in their informal speech.

Senryu looks the same but is much more rough-hewn in execution, often outrageous, a knife of truth to the heart, rib-tickling. You'll find occasional dry humor surfacing in haiku, but hardly will it ever be as rambunctious as you will find in haiku's little sister, senryu. (A classic vol. is published by the HoHacseido Press, 1949, SENRYU, JAPANESE SATIRICAL VERSES, R.H. Blyth, trans., Tokyo).

Senryu evolved many decades after Basho's haiku movement begins. And from the outset, they were caustic traces of the bipeds' daily foibles. A famous early example from an anonymous Japanese poet:

The masterless samurai
has eaten all
but his family tree.¹

And even more recently by Tota Kaneko (1919-):

After a heated argument
I go out to the street
and become a motorcycle²

It appears that in the early part of the 20th c., the soon-to-be-political, Mexican novelist, Romero, also experimented with Senryu:

Looking for eggs
In the barn
I found the breasts of my cousin.³

The difference between senryu and, say, today's stand-up comic is that the poet has experienced something, and been duly moved by it somehow and passes on his rath of enlightenment to us. True, the "Steven Wrights" also see things, but, more often than not, they dream up a situation to help shape their gags. Their stand-ups have experienced humor infused in their lives, however. Senryu trots the tragicomic tightrope of "Life as it is."

By contrast, Basho's sense of humor tinted and enhanced the image as part of the everyday life, he then, and we now, may and do experience.

With every gust of wind
the butterfly changes its place
on the willow.¹

The much later senryu is more spare and far less delicate about presenting its point of view.

Regards,
Arizona Zipper

¹ A Blyth transl., 2 Ueda, 3 Cardona-Hines

Old Man Martin's Farm
7:05 AM

Cows chase an old Ford
Over vast fields of dried dung
To feast on pumpkins

Christian Bousquet
Orono
is a student at UMO.

Haiku

too cold to sleep,
the frogs stare at the stars

spring rainbow;
poetman whistling house to house

the bungee jumper


eats a big breakfast
after the jump

too soft on the lawn
the widow moans around it

the maid's birthday;
she celebrates it
with a new vibrator

in the yellow leaved
black horse
and a wet woodpecker

Mapplethorpe exhibit;
the lady in fur didn't stop
at the flat-fucking porno

woodshed;
a snowblow
gives me the shivers

riding shotgun tonight
he blows away
a deer crossing sign

candlelit cave;
voces rise and fall
below the bats

dee high diver
hangs up her cape
in the stars

Arizona Zipper
Fryeburg
is a painter/photographer

Fryeburg

a flatul of brown
marmisc leaves, dun moth wings

tenacious on trees

winds of marcelled nose
beneath an argentine moon
abundance deep underground

Briefcase woman strides
past mothers in the sandbox.
Children, beam, play.

Lisa Holbrook
Ann Arbor, MI

graduated from Bowdoin;
studying for MFA.
What does
the speedy river
Have to do with the war?
Deadly singing subway rails
Reaching deep below
Like a child screaming.
Cut my finger on quartz
drops of dark blood
on pure crusted snow.
A flock of crows passes overhead,
I hear strong wings
beating against plump bodies.
Open ice.
Black waters slipping
beneath white blankets.
Rusted coffee pot
resting on cut granite.
Soiled ashes.

Jonathan Lindsay
Hallowell
works at Dean's

Suet Ball Earrings
She was a jewelry designer
who loved birds
Silence
(for John Cage)
The conductor
carried
no
bassoon

Voices of whales
Ancient premonitions
of land,
sea,
and
air

Origami
Losing
lottery ticket
folded
six different ways
looks like
a frog

Meditation
Cats close their eyes
more than
sleep
Pat Murphy
So. Portland
operates Yes Books

The orange sun
pauses at mountain rim
one final look
at the day.
They stand in quiet vigil
gathered around a fallen friend
recalling how they stood together
A leaf falls
from its home of height
to visit the lowly ferns
never to return
A bird sings a solo song of praise
to the broken branches on forest floor
for a resting place remembered
The sun spot climbs slowly
up the forest hill
weakening in afternoon weariness
The smoke from the blown out candle
even reaches where I sit
halfway out the church
With the sun overhead
and my feet along the earth
I am free, walking
In its birth
the boat groans with rising tide
restless for the open sea


Writing Haiku has become popular throughout the US, and Maine is no exception. A late 1991 call for haiku by Richard Lederer elicited a large number of submissions and the subsequent publication of selections by sixteen Maine haikuists in his Maine Sunday Telegram column.

We should not be surprised, then, to find Maine well represented in the recently reissued and widely respected Haiku Anthology. The editor, Cor Van Den Heuvel, himself an accomplished haikuist, was born in Biddeford, and three other poets included in the book have Maine connections. Marjory Bates Pratt was born in Waterville, Gary Hotham comes from Presque Isle, and Arizona Zippers lives in Fryeburg. They form a cast that reads almost like a hall of fame of American and Canadian haikuists. The editor has chosen well.

The Haiku Anthology is an excellent introduction to haiku, but it also contains several selections that will challenge the reader to reflect on each haiku. The book, of course, is the heart of this book, but there are also prefaces to the first and second editions, published in 1974 and 1986, offering valuable information on the growth in popularity of English-language haiku; appendices that include a selection of haiku-related definitions of terms, and biographical notes; and a helpful bibliography of books on haiku.
Leaching Pond

At his interview fifteen years ago, Mr. Ashby marveled how the new consolidated high school had been intentionally secluded beside a beaver pond. The superintendent laughed and said what Virgil had seen was a leaching pond, a man-made basin in which waste water is somehow filtered into the ground. 

"They say the water is in it to drink," Rockwell chuckled behind his cigar smoke. "Don't know's I'd try it though." Last year, a second heart attack forced Frank to retire, and the news this morning in the teacher's room is that he died last night at the age of fifty-six. Mr. Ashby has twelve more years.

He stands balanced over a column that's beginning to look like a jungle of mildewed hearts. Although beige cinderblocks limit much of his view, he can still see beyond the school parking lot to the leaching pond, glittering in the May morning sun. He sighs, turns away, and inspects C-10 before the onset of Period 3. Usually Mr. Ashby is proud of his classroom for he knows this is the room the principal shows visitors, but as he checks the new bulletin board he prepared last weekend, the yellow rectangles of construction paper look like flypaper, and the poems he worked so hard to find and copy lie dead bugs. He knows that behind him, sixty-four British authors look down on his mediocrity, so instead of turning to them, he turns again to the window, to Bunter riding his lawnmower, his skin bronzing in the sunshine, and over his shoulder the mysterious flicker of the empty corridor. Another metal door. But he needs the rimless glasses in his chest and rises. He tries to comb his hair, but as usual all he does is slick himself slide along like sentries in an army of dead.

"You have any idea how lucky you are?" Rocky's chuckle behind his cigar. "When you think of the rest of the staff, they're termites."

He walks to the oblong metal door of his classroom, swings the door open, and confronts the empty corridor to the water fountain. The English wing, but there is nothing about it to suggest flight, only a sign of warm indulgence until it cascaded back upon him. And yet he is sure these students know more than he does. One or two make more money fishing, even if they have nothing to show for it. Nothing but a good time. What are they to Hecuba or Hebe to them? What is Hecuba to anybody?

He turns to the students who are only smarter than he, not wiser, the children for whom he's risen through the pecking order of public education in order to be able to teach. And if he can't teach them, at least he can surprise them. He slams the door.

[Fanfare—enter enthusiastically, center stage]: "We need some inspiration. Let's go outside."

[Electric current passes through the class. Nocks snap, eyes clear, a hum heads for a year]. "Well, all right, Mr. Ashby."

He smiles patronally at Allan who knows Mr. Ashby does not often take classes out of doors. Before they can get too loose, he sets the ground rules in his best speak-softly-but-carry-the-gradebook voice. They will walk around the leaching pond. When they return, they will write a poem. They will bring notebooks and jot down details of sight, sound, touch, smell, and even taste.

[Speak softly]: "They say that the water's fit to drink. Don't know's I'd try it though."

As he walks water trickle over three pieces of dried gum lying pink amebas in the drinking fountain and decides to use the bathroom around the corner. Another metal door. But he needs the mirror. At a time when teachers are dressing more and more informally, he spends more and more time on his wardrobe respect does not come easily. He pulls down the toilet cover, tears off a foot of paper, lifts first his right and then his left foot, and gently polishes his nibbled wing-tips. He straightens and looks into the clouded clarity of the mirror. The royal blue sports coat, light blue shirt, blue and white tie, and pinstriped slacks go together, but he feels mismatched. His wife is right; his head is too small and he does look like a turtle. He has a sudden vision in the mirror of Stephanie's face—gray, solid, square—her mouth set in division. Another lump of gas forms in his chest and rises. He tries to comb his hair, but as usual all he does is slick down the salt and pepper hair around his bald spot. His skin is pasty, and behind rimless glasses, his dark eyes burn. He must look sixty-five. As he brushes lint from his shoulders, he feels brittle, as if he will break if hit too hard. He feels seventy. He chokes down more gas and wishes he'd remembered looking into glass. Everything is two-dimensional and just slightly distorted.

"Do you have any idea what your country is? You're chokewhite."

Leaching Pond

"What does he want? Does he want this?"

Students stampede out the door into a world which, as he stands in the doorway, seems encased in a robin's egg. The newly mowed grass smells sweet, like his great-grandfather's barn. Like innocence. He stumbles down the steps into the sunlight. While his eyes adjust and students sense their heads like colts, he listens to the radio and voices from the shop area of the school. Paul Charron throws open his door at the first sign of warm weather as the sun rises higher in the sky, more and more students bring their projects beneath it. Being in the outside world is no big deal for their teacher; it's the faculty meetings he avoids, as if the rest of the staff were termites. Meanwhile, Megan, whose blond hair must be a yard long, sails into his room, followed by Wendy, who looks as if she is drugged or under hypnosis. A week ago, braces appeared on Wendy's teeth, and now when she talks—which has never been often—she shields her face with her hand like a criminal afraid of being photographed. Ordinarily, Mr. Ashby picks her because she is dull and overweight, and because her parents are pushing her to apply to Yale and certain rejection. Today, however, as she walks in front of him without any notice of his good morning, he wants to grab her by the shoulders and shake her.

[Another time]: "Don't know if you can do for your country."

[An electric current passes through the class. Nocks snap, eyes clear, a hum heads for a year]. "Well, all right, Mr. Ashby."

He smiles patronally at Allan who knows Mr. Ashby does not often take classes out of doors. Before they can get too loose, he sets the ground rules in his best speak-softly-but-carry-the-gradebook voice. They will walk around the leaching pond. When they return, they will write a poem. They will bring notebooks and jot down details of sight, sound, touch, smell, and even taste.
his feet; he remembers the care he took earlier with his shoes. What are these
skinny trees all along here with limbs that look like bones? He thinks they may
be gray birch, but he really doesn’t know. All he wants is to go back to his room.
Allan’s voice cuts through the sunshine in alarm: “Something has killed a little
bird—Oh, Yuck!” Mr. Ashby has completely forgotten about his students. They
have scattered around the pond, and moaning as tombs, they, like him, seem subdued, depressed by what they are seeing. But he isn’t sure; again, he is
encased in glass, one of those old desk paper weights, but instead of snow, yellow
pollen has settled on the algae that grows in venuity patches along the water’s
edge. He waits for other comments, but paupers remain frozen in the heat. Only
the black flies buzz.
The path becomes a narrow brinek between illusion and reality, between safety
and disaster. From his window the water appeared blue; he now sees the brown,
except for where slime and pollen have streaked it to pea soup. Water bugs attack
an empty bag of Bachman’s Taco Chips bobbing defensively near his feet. Just
ahead, off the path, a skeleton of leg lies gray and pokemarked in the mud.
At his head, like some kind of half-eaten brain, a fetid smell: a mix of glass.

Silvia Bika

The path rises slightly so than when—poised now at the verge of the abyss
—sees Wendy, she is crouched below him peering intently down into the mud
and reeds at the edge of the pond. As he leans nearer, Mr. Ashby sees that
he has emerged. Her feet are dangling above the water, and he feels as if she is
about to fall into the pond. He rushes to her aid, but she turns away from him, while somehow he knows it, fears it, and would bow down before it.

On the other hand, she's changed too much. They don’t listen to the same music
and read the same books. Although they live as close friends, their lives are in different orbits. Is he happy in his work? Have he and Stephanie given up on
their relationship?

Befor Virgil was born his father had broken a hole through the ceiling wall of
their house in order to build some steps to the outside. On a bench just to the
right of that entry was a washboard probably left by the previous owner of
the house. His mother never used the washboard, but Virgil remembers as a kid
running its fingertips back and forth along the slimy metal ridges, listening to
the rhythm of Mr. Ashby’s pulse.

The frog springs forward into the pond, the pen shoots into the reeds, and
Wendy kicks at the cement and watches mud and reeds shatter into thousands of polished pieces of glass. The sound of the explosion echoes through his head. He feels himself following the rock as it drives
straight and true toward bottom.

He has no idea how long it takes for his eyes to focus. It is as if he is coming
up for air, but as he does, his insides seem to percolate down through his feet into
the water in which he stands. Before any wise-ass can get the upper hand, he tries
to resurrect his senses. “Just trying to make some of you sleepheads wake up
and I slipped, that’s all. Nothing hurt but my pride and my shoes. Make sure you come
up with some good imagery to describe how the rock affected the water. Now we’d
better head back.”

He thinks he hears a snicker, but he doesn’t care: he’s tired of pretending. He
turns and his eyes meet Wendy’s. As if threaded by the same needle, teacher and
student are pulled together by compassion, until Wendy’s blink cuts the cord and
he is looking once more at the familiar vapid stare. She closes her mouth and
covers it with pudgy, hot-pink fingers. His stomach rips in a spasm of pain.

Lurching back to the path, he finds breathing difficult, and his skin feels cold
under its coat of perspiration. Finishing the circle of the pond, he stops at the
quaking almost as soon as he arrives. He feels the previous static of disaster
stares at the rust running between corrugated tin ridges: bloody bones of a giant’s
rib-cage preyed upon by vultures. A splash behind him startles some air into his
lungs, and he turns in time to see a second bird attack the pond, like some crazed
Kamikaze following its leader.

Wendy, crouched in the cool shade by the pond, the large, uneven, smoke-colored stones, like those in some ruined Roman temple. He can see his mother feeling dirty clothes to a wringer
washing machine as if it were one more hungry child. He watches her duck
down into the hole in the wall as she takes the laundry to the clothesline, leaving
him staring at the clothesline, trying to keep time to the tinny sounds from the
black plastic Bendix radio on the dusty ledge over his head.

He can’t remember when he has last considered what his mother used to look
like. These days, any thought of her turns into a cacophony of longing, guilt,
frustration, and betrayal. Although they live barely a hundred miles apart, visits
are few; he spends several days anticipating each trip or last minute looking forward
to leaving almost. On one hand, the house has been changed: she still
pries into his life. Is he happy in his work? Have he and Stephanie given up on
having children? (Where did you go after the dance? Did you have a good time?)

On the other hand, she’s changed too much. They don’t listen to the same music
anymore, or like the same TV shows. Worse, after his father died, Virgil
wished his mother to go back to school, become more active in the church, do more
charity work. Instead, she’s joined some singing group which ends its meetings
at midnight.

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Rich Wolfe
Yarmouth
hatchets at Brunswick H.S.
Sick in an Unfamiliar City

The blank hush of this hospital room emanates from the sanitized whiteness of the sheets. I am being bleached with estranged, antiseptic quiet that reduces everything to noiseless white, even leaching pigment from my lips and fingers. It wears on, whitening whole days into vaguely achingly absent of something I could use to brush away some of the vagueness, falling like hot snow, obscuring the floor, the bed, and muffling my body in drabs of soundless.

Each fading shape is one less feature I see of an anonymous city in a landscape that is dissolving in the whiteness of the sheets.

---

Chicken House

We feel the old excitement as we cipher, sketch and reckon board feet, pitch of roof to allow the snow to slide.

We're building again, and, of an evening, we study catalogs—drums of glistening tails and flaxen combs, the strut of woolier, fluff of hen.

It's time to invest in chickens, in their cheek and haste, their fierce preoccupation with perch and pecking order—and their perfect oval yellow-yolked from ranging, rich with fruit of the earth.

Later we fell the cedars, strip their bark to saffron, we notch and plate, frame dreams and plumb them. In the long light of Maine mornings—our hammers sing nails home.

Carolyn Page Troy

In a book illustrator & co-editor of Potato Eyes

Outlaw Mothers

In our family it’s always the women, first to recognize the character of our boys, who cleanse strange words and gesture rosary after wooden rosary.

“Blessed art thou among women,” we pray.

“And blessed be the fruit of thy womb,” yet ours is more human life, unconstructed except by epithets and sometimes blows, bruises, texts and words like bitch, shit or whore.

Even our children, from whom we attempt to keep the bloody secrets of their births and the deaths of other things, are not our own but communal, the order and place of conception sealed like the lips of the long dead. We pass them hand to hand, love them, try not to live too close, for fear of love. We never let them know who their parents are, expecting them to hold against us the sins of their fathers, whose spiritual integrity is now nonexistent.

But more, a question of surrendering, a fear of exposure keeps us hidden from each other, women who are family: we share no sense of continuity.

We know things that feel so comfortable are often the things that are most dangerous. We don’t meet each other’s eyes, or our own.

---

Matreshka

Silly doll with your bright, dead eyes,
The others shut inside you,
Each painted smile, public cheek;
Red dollops—sad marks,
Dead trellises of wood:
How many live inside
Dead trollops of wood:
I twist off my head to see
Arms, legs reversed,
Faces floating free,
Then give the next doll a spin
And touch a just bloodied mouth,
Blood grin at the sin of losing oneself

Until out I crawl,
The last tiny one
Simple and clean,
Glass red and green,
Black spots for eyes,
A lifeless mirth—
No sip to pop off
And me at the core,
A thin sheath of wood
Wound round a soul
Limless and smooth,
The last little doll
small and mute and free,
Changing into me.

Sheri Foley Allen
South Portland

is an English teacher

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Serial Wife

I'm a rag of memory
A bore embowed from pain
I walk to the mirror in a dirge
Waiting for her bones to erupt beneath my skin
Filling me with her presence
Changing me into her vision
We fight across time.

Waging war with ghosts
Is an unholy occupation

Her letters still arrive
Her voice plays beside me at night
And I read and listen

Waiting to become her.

Ellen A. Endres
North Yarmouth

is a freelance writer

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North Yarmouth

is a freelance writer

South Portland

teacher

Foley Allen

writer

Troy

naik

co-editor of

Eyes

is a book illustrator & co-editor of Potato Eyes

Anne Britting Oleson

Dieumont

is a teacher
Reunion on a Porch

As lilacs whiten and purple,
Sarah's two old friends wonder
at her silence,
why she keeps her eyes
fixed
on knitting
in her lap,
something for a child, in black or midnight blue.

Talk turns to the silence of fathers.
Julie Ann, camouflaged in pastel deference and grace,
confesses her father ruined his life
drinking undermining mountains for Anaconda.
When he died, she felt
nothing:
Xavarin, who cannot bear to smile,
whose father read her Lucretius
at bedtime,
defends such nothingness as deep inside
the nature of things; and
monk,
sits zazen
days on end
to
"Loss and gain make one game."

At this, Sarah, lips royal, skin pale,
brakes silence, announcing it's a sweater
she's knitting for the child who quickened
before her lover took his sip of Sauvignon and said,
"No more talk about this child."

She turns to Xaveria to say,
"I've bled and wept three weeks.
If loss is an illusion,
than I am; and you are
watching no one
knit the sweater
no one will wear."

To Jen: Turning Sixteen

"A noiseless patient spider,
launch'd forth filament,
filament, filament out of
itself . . . ."

Walt Whitman

The princess
I made you out to be
for all these years
was merely a father's
dear child, of which
I do not apologize
Yet celebrating you
on this day—
now rider on the rhythm
of the moon—
I must also mourn
my own passing
before your eyes
And take what little comfort
I can
as a father
and as a man
exposed in this bittersweet
dance
of you spinning
out
the gossamer threads
of a woman becoming
the light
in another man's eyes

Peter Harris
Waterville

The Exchange

The princess
I made you out to be
for all these years
was merely a father's
dear child, of which
I do not apologize
Yet celebrating you
on this day—
now rider on the rhythm
of the moon—
I must also mourn
my own passing
before your eyes
And take what little comfort
I can
as a father
and as a man
exposed in this bittersweet
dance
of you spinning
out
the gossamer threads
of a woman becoming
the light
in another man's eyes

Doug Rawlings
Mt. Vernon

You carried your death
closer to the heart
than most of us do
I've been told
so I guess it wasn't much
of a surprise to some
when they finally collided
But it was to me
And then a card
from your wife
she wrote
how the poem
to my daughter
made you cry
how you sent it off
to your own Elizabeth
And I thought
I've got to meet
this guy
And then you died
So now I am left with this;
I imagine
your daughter reading
my poem aloud
the moment
of your last breath
knowing
through my words
what a father's love
can mean
And you
in exchange
sent forth
filaments of your own
exploding heart
deep into my daughter's dreams
fashioning them
into a vision
of my death
so intense
that she came downstairs
the next morning
offered me a smile;
the first we've shared
in days.

Doug Rawlings
Mt. Vernon

Teaches at UMFF
The Day We Shot Us
Out of the Sky
(Part of a memoir)

All we had to do that day was hop on a Huey, fly up Happy Valley, "spec out" a village for an air assault the next morning, and come home. Piece of cake. The weather was perfect, too—clear skies as far as you could see. It was hot as hell, but if you're flying, who cares?

I grabbed my rifle, helmet, web gear, and map, and hustled to the perimeter line to catch our flight. As soon as I reached the perimeter, I turned right, heading south, and spotted our Company Commander, Captain Joel Sugdinis, a couple hundred meters down the line. He was standing in the open, talking on the radio, with Denny Wilson (his radioman), the First Sergeant, and our four platoon leaders clustered around him.

You could do that on the perimeter—stand around in a group. You didn't have to worry about a sniper taking a pot shot at you, or a burst of machine gun fire sending you scurrying behind a rock. The perimeter line was our turf, carefully cleared and mined and cross-crossed with barbed wire, and if any Victor Charlie was dumb enough to take a shot at us, we'd have his blood all over in a flash. We had artillery concentrations pre-registered around the perimeter, and watchtowers with M-60 machine guns every two or three hundred meters along the line, and during the day, I would venture to guess that our perimeter line was about as safe a place as you could find in Vietnam.

I was half-way to the group when a 105 round KARRUMPED into the jungle on the far side of the wire. I ducked, as usual, but kept walking. We were either registering additional defensive fire, I thought, or keeping the tree-line clear of Charlie.

When I joined the group, the Captain was still on the horn. Denny Wilson looked exhauster, but he didn't have to go with us this trip. Jim Kelly, nicknamed "Lurch" because he looked like Frankenstein, and the First Sergeant, who reminded me of a balding Rasputin, were talking quietly. Gordo Grove was stretched out on his back now, his hands clasped behind his head, his eyes blissfully closed. Jack Hibbard, our mortar man, was staring morosely over the wire. And Sergeant Espadrille, his bloody eyes bloodshot, as usual, was smoking, and I wondered feebly if his cigarette was really filled with vodka and orange juice, as everyone suspected, or just plain water. Still, there wasn't a better field man in the battalion.

I nodded to Lurch, who smiled, and the First Sergeant, who grunted a "Sir."

"Chopper on the way," the Captain said.

Gordo sat bolt upright, his eyes wide open now, his hands clutching his rifle. Sergeant Espadrille took one more drag on his cigarette and flicked it into the jungle. I looked up. There was no way to prove it, after what we'd been through. I still couldn't believe how far we'd gone, or how high we'd climbed, when the ship made a gentle 180-degree turn to the right, a "Lazy 180," and headed back along the wire towards where we'd started. As we roared past the road from the perimeter back to Battalion, I could see Wilson and the First Sergeant far below us. They stopped for a moment and waved.

KABOOM!

Something bounced us high in the air. The chopper veered wildly to the right, then back to the left, and we began shaking and shimmerring and losing altitude fast, and right away I knew something awful had happened. The ship was careening so crazily I had to grab hold of the cargo bay pole in back of Lurch. He'd grabbed it, too. The ship was bucking now like a machine gone awry, and we were dropping even faster. The turbines seemed to be screaming in agony, not at all like they normally sounded, and I suddenly realized we were going to crash.

As we lurched in and flexed its nose for a landing, Joel staggered jogging towards the ship. I turned, flushed a thumbs up at the First Sergeant, and followed. The Huey landed heading due north, back up the line from where I'd come. The pilot and co-pilot were talking to each other. The crew chief was sitting in his jump seat behind the cargo bay, his face deadpan, his door-guns pointing downward into the dirt.

We scrambled aboard and settled in on the Huey's stuffed floor—Gordo, Joel, and Espadrille up front, with their backs to the cockpit; Hibbard, me and Lurch in back, facing forward. We'd beaded choppers hundreds of times, and this was just a reconnaissance flight, so we were wise-cracking and joking with each other, not worried about much of anything. As the chopper's turbines picked up torque, and the bird began to rise, I glanced out the open bay. Wilson and the First Sergeant were already striding back to Battalion. Another day, another dollar.

I turned back and glanced at my companions, feeling the cool air whoosh through the bay as the chopper lifted off and gathered speed. I always liked lift-offs, rising from the ground in a great whirling roar, the chopper's engine thrumming with the strain. As we rose above the tree-tops, I looked out the door again, at our base camp falling away beneath us, and beyond it, the Division's giant help—"the Golf Course" as we called it. A dozen Chinooks—big cargo ships—were nestled in the grass like sleeping hippos. Two long rows of unmanned Hueys sat waiting for the word to crank up. And farther away, on the repair line, a jumble of sweaty mechanics labored over their busted aircraft, patching them up so they could fly into battle once again.

We gained altitude slowly, heading north to clear the wire and pick up speed. I don't know how far we'd gone, or how high we'd climbed, when the ship made a gentle 180-degree turn to the right, a "Lazy 180," and headed back along the wire towards where we'd started. As we roared past the road from the perimeter back to Battalion, I could see Wilson and the First Sergeant far below us. They stopped for a moment and waved.

I looked at Joel. His eyes were wide with shock and disbelief. Everyone was wild-eyed, frozen in their seats, but nobody said a word. God knows what was going on in their minds, because I don't remember anything that was going on in mine, except a kaleidoscope of confusion and fear, and a sudden rush of sadness that this was the way it was going to end for us after all these months together, and how ironic it was after what we'd been through. I still couldn't believe how badly the chopper was careening around in this sky, with its turbines shrieking, and the ground roving up at us. There was nowhere in Hell we were going to walk away from this one.

Joel swirled around toward the cockpit. I could see the pilot struggling with the controls. His back and neck were rigid. The ship began to rattle and shake and groan so hard I was sure it was going to break up in the air, and the ground was coming up fast. I could see the rolls of triple concertina wire, and the barbed wire stakes, and the same rocky outcrop where Sergeant Espadrille had flicked his cigarette. We were dropping fast. Much too fast. We were "goners."
Joel turned back to us. "Look ahead!" he screamed. "We're going down!"

We tried, but the chopper kept looking and shaking, with its turbines screeching, and the mainframe groaning as if it were being ripped apart, and God started screaming something I couldn't understand, and I started praying we wouldn't explode on impact, and the ground was rushing up to us so fast you just had to grip your teeth and hold on tight. And then we hit, and the nose dipped, hurling Lurch and me into Joel. And then we were all trying desperately to unhang ourselves from each other, and clawing our way out of the ship before it blew, and scrambling out the door as fast as we could, yelling "GO! GO! GO!" and "MOVE! MOVE! MOVE!" and I was cut and spitting as fast as I could to get as far away from it as I could before it blew, and everyone was yelling "Move cut!" or "Go out!" or "这片 is a bitch!", but now I think about it I believe if anyone was yelling anything understandable because we all had the same simple thought on our minds, and that was to get the Hell away from that ship before it exploded, so we wouldn't be boiled alive or end up with a back full of burning shrapnel, and then, all of a sudden, through the gapping dry-mouthed fear, the mind-numbing terror, and the chaos of it all, I suddenly knew I was safe, that the chopper wouldn't blow up, and that even if it did, everyone had gotten off okay, and was out of danger. So I slowed down, and finally stopped, bent over and gasping for air. Then I looked back and saw the pilot and co-pilot, casual and casual as could be, getting slowly out of the ship, calmly shaking their heads, and the crew-chief, his face still deadpan, checking out the cargo bay as if nothing had happened. The Huey was a mess. It looked like a broken-legged dragonfly with a busted wing. Both landing struts had crumpled on impact, and the main rotor blade was listing at its side. The plexi-glass windshield was shattered, too. What a shamrock! My heart was still pounding, but I was beginning to catch my breath. Everyone who had been on the ship suddenly started chanting like a bunch of wild monkeys—talking and swearing, hooting and hollering, shaking each other's hand and asking

"That's what he said, and I'll never forget it."

"Dear Aunt Lorie and Uncle George, Thank you for the book about the galaxy and the hermit recipe. Here, the news of the war is sad. Yet, there are bright green apples in the pale brown bowl on a yellow cloth. There is new snow. The sun is out. The children went sliding and I made cookies. We look forward to your visit. Love."

"Dear Ellen and Howard, The snow is deep here and we went skiing; the dark green pine trees on the wood road cast long blue shadows over the snow. We watched the war news at dinner. Do you remember the march to Boston? We were young; it all seemed so clear. The children are fine. Love to Heidi-dog."

"Dear Mom, The news of the war is frightening. Do you remember when he was in Viet Nam? How you saw him on the evening news, staring blankly from a truck next to a rice paddy under a hot yellow sky? You see a face for hours. I remember. Anyhow, the children send love; it is bitterly cold today. Much love."

"Dear Chris, Robert is flying over there now, I know. How are you and the children getting along? I got the picture; NIK is so tall now! I made soup the way Mom makes it: garlic instead of onions and lots of carrots in the golden broth. I wish you were closer so that I could bring you dinner and help you with the kids. Maybe it will be over soon; we'll come home. Love to all."

"Dear Monica, How is Chris—do you know? She does not write often. I know she is busy with the children; the nights must be so long with fear and worry. I think of her there in that grey rain and mist against the wet sienna mountains and the smell of deadwood everywhere. How are you, anyhow? I hope the new job and what is up with you and Joe? The news is on... go to go. Love."

"Dear Dad, The children made a snow fort and came in, soaking wet and cold; I put them in the tub to relax. We were happy and giggling in the warm, steamy bathroom with rub toys and soft towels. Their bodies are perfect; smooth and healthy, isn't human life a wonder? It is hard to believe that people's children are dying. I know you are upset by the war, too. Hey!... take your pills, remember! Love and stuff."

"Dear Mr. Peterson, My daughter brought home an excellent picture of a green and brown turtle that she drew in Mrs. Wilson's class today. We talked to her about it: she says all the children made them to send to the soldiers. It is true that her tank did have bright yellow and purple flowers blooming out of it but we are still upset. I would rather not discuss this with Mrs. Wilson because of her recent loss. Please call me."

Jennifer Craig Picley Orono studies at UM

Practicing for Eden

"There's that fox again in the red field. They all seem to like the

flowers."

I looked at the crumpled chopper. The round's concussion had mangled the rotor blade, or bent the shaft, or screwed up the turbines, or something, and we hadn't gained enough altitude to auto-rotate to the ground. Without the pilot holding on to the controls like he had, we would have flipped over, crashed, and burned.

I was suddenly conscious of the Captain again. He was walking towards us. His face was pale, his eyes grim. He'd gone back to the chopper and talked briefly to the pilot, and after he'd learned what had happened, he didn't want to think about it any more. He did have something to say, though.

"Another Huey's on the way," he said, looking each of us in the eye. "It'll be here in fifteen minutes."

"That's what he said, and I'll never forget it."

We got on that Huey, too, and we made that leader's recon. We even survived our mission the very next day. But it was the crash I remember—getting shot out of the sky by our own artillery.

I remember something else about that day—my hands started to shake as I tried to light a cigarette. Deep inside, I'm still shaking.

Larry Cavin S. Hamilton MA. Written at Gellatly Hill
### The Limits of Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Channels</th>
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<td>ON/OFF</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>PLAY</td>
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<td>RECORD</td>
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<td>REWIND</td>
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<td>STOP</td>
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<td>remote control</td>
<td>bolted to the bedside stand in this 1960s motel room</td>
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<td>tasks &amp; no more.</td>
<td>Play with it all I like,</td>
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<td>or call back from oblivion</td>
<td>the tenderness of a saint.</td>
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<td>rubber-like</td>
<td>line up like dumb little</td>
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<td>&amp; bolted for the outdoors</td>
<td>tombstones of obedient soldiers</td>
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<td>if I unscrewed it</td>
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<td>&amp; no fire to warn me</td>
<td>it would open no gates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; something else</td>
<td>it would be as useless as a Roman coin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or comfort me</td>
<td>for it to do so.</td>
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<tr>
<td>or comfort me</td>
<td>though I might scream all night long</td>
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<tr>
<td>or comfort me</td>
<td>it cannot hold</td>
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<tr>
<td>or comfort me</td>
<td>with nothing to eat</td>
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<tr>
<td>or comfort me</td>
<td>it would be as useless as a Roman coin.</td>
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### Fallout

High in the closet of my brother's room
Is a mask.
I like to put it on.
Eye goggles.
I like to wear them to see the darkness
To stare straight at the naked bulb
And see a pin prick
Of life.

My father tells me
When he wore those out in Nevada
And the bomb went off
Everything seemed like a bright summer day
The kind for the beach and your best tanning lotion.

My mother says
I probably shouldn't play with those goggles
Who knows what power that dark rubber strap
That strips round my head might carry
To send shooting stars through my skull forever.

But my father says goggles are for protection.
And with them the human eye stays safe.
Free to always expand and contract
While the desert's grains of sand
Melt into newly made glass
That slips in the spaces between your toes.

### Shape

Photographs
may brother takes as art
often
hide a face
and if you're caught
by his feel
for light
and line
you'll often see
a face
made from other shapes
from other lines.

Today the news
my brother tried himself
to slip
between
his shapes
and failed
the pills
or not just right
yes his face
in the wind
from which they will not allow him leave
is shrouded
still we could read
no shape
we knew
gentle laughs and smiles
he ventured into smoke.

From my walls
the wash and dance
of guys
that are his prisms
are mute.

Peter
you have no right
to leave
until the faces that you shape alone speak.

---

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Dresden
is editor-in-chief at Tilbury House Publishers, Gardiner

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Springfield
enjoys bees and computers.

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West Buxton
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Cloudburst in Göttingen

It was as if that other Germany were sending over yet another abomination. Not only were the rivers dirty that flowed across the border into the Bundesrepublik, but the air stank. And now thunderheads, thick and dark, were boiling into Göttingen.

This is what struck Frau Spitzweg as she made her way down the Großer Strasse, her neck muscles encouraged by the counterweight effect of the two bulging shopping bags which hung from her hands. "Schmutzig," she said to herself as she watched the clouds. The experts said they were dark merely because they were so full of water, but she would have none of it. "Schmutzig."

Despite the warmth of the late spring afternoon, Frau Spitzweg had a fear of drafts and was wearing her wool overcoat which flared out below her knees, making her look rather bell-like. She tried to walk more quickly, but the street was so crowded. With every second step her rheumatoid leg, the left one, ached, reconfirming, the imminence of heavy rains. As she passed Herr Kleeck’s bakery she did no more than shift her eyes. Herr Kleeck must have sensed the proximity of one of his steady customers, for he looked up from the crowd of women bustling before his counter just long enough to meet Frau Spitzweg’s glance. Herr Kleeck’s eyeglasses took flight, as if anticipating the four eye Brötchen and loaf of white bread that was Frau Spitzweg’s regular want. But Frau Spitzweg passed on, fearful of being caught in the rain.

Thunder sounded. It must have been very near, for it made the pavement rumble beneath Frau Spitzweg’s feet. She looked up for a moment but nobody else seemed to have noticed. "Was es bitter," she said to herself, "When there is lightning. Then they’ll notice." "Ja."

Frau Spitzweg entered from the crowded Großer Strasse onto the Kurze Geismar Strasse, where there was more room to maneuver. As soon as she did she spied Frau Huhn out on the sidewalk in front of the building she cleaned, washing a vacuum cleaner. The whole thing was in pieces, and Frau Huhn was furiously scrubbing each one with a hard bristle brush, working up lathers that obscured her flabby hands.

It occurred to Frau Spitzweg that Frau Huhn would never get the vacuum cleaner back together before the storm. And then the first drops of rain began to fall. Frau Spitzweg greeted her friend, who looked up from her work, the tails of her babushka bobbing like antennae. Her face was still knotted with the deliberation of her labor, but upon seeing Frau Spitzweg her expression brightened to one of recognition.

"A cloud bursts is coming," said Frau Spitzweg as she scanned the skies, still holding her shopping bags, the preliminary drops of rain tapping at the still-dry paper. She realized that it was now too late to make it home before the storm. Frau Huhn immediately perceived her friend’s look of supplication. "Let’s go into the vestibule," she said. "Until it passes."

Frau Huhn’s consciousness that a storm was indeed about to break upon them gave Frau Spitzweg a sense of vindication. She felt perked, as if a fever had broken.

Frau Huhn folded her knees and began to gather up the still-wet pieces of the vacuum cleaner in her cleaning cart. Then the two old women tucked themselves into the shallow vestibule of Frau Huhn’s building as the rain began to fall in earnest.

Thunder sounded. The two women looked at one another and nodded. Then they looked at the passersby on their ways home from work and shook their heads. They were so separate, no match for the storm, each scurrying along his or her own particular route. Frau Huhn, who had been born and raised in Stockton before the war, giggled like a schoolgirl at their flight. But Frau Spitzweg only smiled benignly, flexing her fingers at her sides to alleviate the muscle fatigue induced by the heavy bags.

Frau Spitzweg began to recollect water disasters, from the biblical deluge to the time when the little Leine of Göttingen had overflowed its banks, swept over the flood plain, and risen to street level, until children were chasing duckslings from their doorways. Frau Spitzweg’s rheumatoid legs had forewarned her that time, too, but nobody had listened. In any case, she had been high and dry in her little house up on the Berg, looking down upon the ribbonlike torrents which had carved the city into islands, cutting people apart from one another.

Frau Huhn paid closest attention to her friend’s recollections and nodded assent, although she had borne witness to none of these events. "Es stimmt," said Frau Spitzweg darkly, as if Frau Huhn’s understanding required prodding.

Lightning flacked, outlining the various strata of clouds. It flickered again, and trees stepped out in front of hills. The pedestrians stepped livelier, their little white bundles of warm Brötchen tucked neatly under their arms. Now they were beginning to understand how powerful a force water is, thought Frau Spitzweg, and all of a sudden, it was as if the fabric of the heavens had been rent. The drops fell like dark slugs, burrowing against pavement and buildings. The two women stood and watched as the gray curtain of rain swept between them and the world.

Two well-dressed men seeing shelter said bitte and quickly stepped into the vestibule. Frau Spitzweg smiled politely, dragging her shopping bags out of the way. By the time she had released them again a young mother and her small child had entered the vestibule. The little boy was fairly soaked, his blond hair plastered down upon his head like a cap.

Thunder rolled. Lightning flashed and the boy pulled himself against his mother. The two men looked at their watches. The rain fell with tremendous vigor, washing down the streets in twisting rivers, rising against the curbs. Suddenly, Frau Spitzweg felt as if these were her people in the vestibule. If only she had stepped at Herr Kleeck’s bakery, she would have had some bread to share with them. But as it was she only stood fast while they shrank back with every thunderclap. She watched as the boy stared out at the city of water with enormous blue eyes. The torrents began to lap over the curbs. Frau Spitzweg stood in the vestibule with her hands folded in front of herself, realizing that it was good simply to understand something so completely that verbalizations were useless and unnecessary. She wasn’t exactly hoping that the water would continue to rise, but for a moment her mind let go and there entered a vision of it lifting them, all of them in that vestibule, up, up, until the tremendous volume of water had nestled above and beyond the border, covering both Germany, obscuring more geography, uniting rather than dividing. And she was at the crest of that wave, leaning out, like a figurehead, her wool overcoat opened to the wind.

Frau Spitzweg felt herself being pushed aside as a thickest, smoking man squeezed past her from somewhere deeper inside the building. Her first impulse was to reach out to him, to restrain him from going out into the storm which had fallen upon them like a sledgehammer from the societisie east. The man paused on the threshold and then flicked his cigarette out into the current. It darkened immediately and was swept away towards the Rathaus. As soon as he stepped down onto the pavement Frau Spitzweg realized that the rain had let up. Her group began to loosen and one-by-one they broke away, their faces raised toward the clearing sky. With every loss Frau Spitzweg felt slightly heartsick, until both the vestibule and she were emptied. "Verboten," pronounced Frau Spitzweg as she stepped down onto the sidewalk and spread her vacuum cleaner parts out again.

Frau Spitzweg moved onto the threshold and inhaled deeply. She had forgotten how clean things smelled after a good rain. Now quiet a city could become before getting on its feet again. She decided that this was a moment she could enjoy, for it was sometimes hard to tell whether such a storm was really over. And so, stepping down from the threshold like a fledgling, she took up her shopping bags and resumed her steps to Herr Kleeck’s bakery. She wanted to have bread, in case it should rain again.

—Robert Klose

Bangor

teaches biology at University College

Over the Chasm

To follow with shorted breath the impulsion,
avoiding felt separate threads wind to rope,
to pull myself hand over hand across the chasm,
dizzy and exhilarated,
knowing the rope’s thickness but not how it is anchored.

Shirley Glubka

Stockton Springs
Sponging with Marian

The mercilessly long line of coarse grain shore is like our friendship. We walk across seaweed, our feet all leathery.

Today we are sponging again, with Marian insisting that the best are to be found around the next bend. "Don't pick those up. They stink. Those really stink."

I hold the nearly rancid sponge at the furthestmost tips of my hand. If I release the little dead creature, then Marian will in. Keeping it, means she will be disgusted with me and for the entire day will rant that they stink and we should wait until we go around the bend. And so she will win then, too.

Out on shore the bends come one after another, distinguished only by a rock or grassy clumps. The bend looks near but our steps seem far.

The sponges do stink. The vile whiffs from them hit like rotting flesh. They are rotting flesh of course.

I put the sponge into my net bag.

Coral twigs litter the blackish strip of sand between water and seaweed line. I want to collect them all. But there is no profit in coral twigs.

Marian is confident, as always, that she will find the best sponges today, see it in her stance. Like any good opponent she prey me psychologically for failure. She believes the superlatives of her language and declares herself the champion.

But we are very, very good friends and the contest has just begun.

"I don't want to walk that far today Marian. They stink here, they stink there." I wish she would listen to me today. Today was important. I've decided today I will have my own way.

I have collected five little sponges. Rusty green and brown with irregular knobs and bumps. They need a good bleaching. Marian has one sponge about the size of my five together. The sponges tumble up on shore, clinging to the seaweed dumped there.

We watch the same piece of shoreline. I try to walk ahead or fall behind. More efficient, I think, cover more sand, collect more sponges. But we continue to walk the same strip. Within a foot or two. Within Marian's peripheral vision.

She dismisses my sponges, "Those stink."

We stop to reapply suntan lotion. Marian takes her glob first. It melts over her face and neck, then balms her arms. The mole on Marian's chin bothers her face and neck, then balms her arms. The mole on Marian's chin bothers her face and neck, then balms her arms. The mole on Marian's chin bothers her face and neck, then balms her arms.

"Put me back in my skull," it replies.

"If you help me find my skull, I'll always split," it replies.

"Stinks," I would declare. I might find a stick and impale the brain-sponge there for a while or I might dismiss it and look for better brain-sponges. It would be up to me. I could look around the bend. I could do anything I wanted. Marian's brain-sponge was on the beach. It might try to speak to me.

"Put me back in my skull," the brain calls.

"I don't know where your stupid skull is."

"It's around the bend. Take me around the next bend to find it."

"No, you stink brain."

"Please," begs the brain. "I'll do anything you say." "I'm collecting coral twigs today, I don't like brains." "If you help me find my skull, I'll always split," it replies.

I pick up the brain-sponge with the outermost tips of my thumbnail and forefinger and place it in my net bag. Then with a slow start the bag is swung around at arms' length. The centrifugal force gathers and soon the net bag with the brain and other little sponges is whirling in an elliptical pink blur. When the spin winds down and the bag hangs limp, the brain is quiet. I walk around the next bend to what we call Coconut Grove Point. There, laying in the sand just inches from the shade of the grove, is Marian's body.

The plumpness of her body is starting to dry up. She has been without a brain for a long time. The head is bent to one side and the mouth hangs open. The skull is hinged Mommy Python style and hangs open too. Bones in the face are starting to show through. The heat pulls the flesh back making the head look like a conch. I would like a conch head for my shelf at home. But this one would have to rot a lot more before it looked right. There's no time to wait for that, Marian's brain has started to moan. It sees its skull.

All the freedom in the world is mine now. And every sponge on the beach. I could walk to Martello Island sponging or stay here and wait for them to come to me. All the power in the world is mine now. I can give Marian back her brain or sell it with my sponges. I might get $3 for the brain if Rodrico, the sponge buyer, doesn't look too closely at it. I never had this much control before. I'm not sure what to do.

"I don't want to be a sponger any more Marianbrain," I say, and the brain moans. "Maybe I should pick something else for a while. Go up north and pick oranges. Or way, way up north and pick apples. Apples don't stink. Maybe when I sell these sponges today I'll buy a bus ticket. Sponging with Marian isn't all I can do."

The coconut grove shade is stretching farther from us. It is time to decide. The brain's murmur can hardly be heard. The sea is close by and I take the net bag to the water to dip it in.

"Just like saline solution, just like brain juice. You'll feel better in no time," I empty the sloshing brain into the conch head. A couple of little sponges slide in too, but I don't bother to pick them out. I don't like poking around in peoples' brains.

The beach feels cool and we hurry to get back to the road before the sun goes down. We need to get a ride to market before Rodrico leaves at seven o'clock.

The sand always feels cooler on the walk back, even on our leathered soles. "I didn't want to walk that far today, Marian. We found plenty of sponges anyway. This is plenty of sponges for one day. We're going to split, right Marian?"

"I don't know, I didn't think about it yet. Let's decide when we get around the next bend," she says.

I spit at my friend as we walk along in the low light of the setting sun. The mole on her chin looks like a sponge is growing there. It is taking over her whole face.

Mary H. Lawrence
Sorrento

The sponges slide in too, but I don't bother to pick them out. I don't like poking around in peoples' brains. They need a good bleaching.
A Large Man And A Small Woman

A large man walked into a small store. "I need a new pair of boots," he announced to anyone who would listen. A smallish, frizzy-haired woman, perhaps in her thirties, confronted the large man. "Why do you need a new pair of boots?" she asked. "The ones you're wearing seem quite sufficient to me."

The large man retreated. He grew smaller as he backed away. "I know," he said. "But I want a new pair of boots." The woman sneered again. "And you need them, too?" She drew closer and asked, "But I need them, too!" She drew closer and larger.

At this point, the man and the woman were approximately the same size. Nearby, a balloonish man in a white shirt and a bow-tie, obviously the store manager, watched in dismay. "I want them and I need them," said the man. He was pouting, and he stamped his foot.

The woman began to laugh. She had shrunk considerably, but so had the man. They were the size of children, a little larger, perhaps. "I need something," said the man softly. "I want something." The woman's smile softened. "Will you take me instead of the boots?" she asked.

Ogling like children, they left the store.

Behind them, the store manager aged visibly. The embroidery on his shirtfront shrivelled, became illegible, like lettering on a deflating balloon.

New Year's Eve, Augusta, ME

My sinuses are stuffed, and there's a fog in my brain.

Oh, how I wish the asprrin would work, and my cavities drain.

Josh Nadel
Augusta
teaches at UMA
Raised on Margarine

At Sacred Heart School, lunch was served in the basement, in a dim cafeteria with long tables and wooden benches, in a room that smelled like canned green beans and sourdough milk. As the nun sat, watching the lunchroom, the children either waited in line or sat hunched over their lunches, eating and talking in low voices to each other.

Janine and Shannon were usually first in line. Since they brought their own lunches, all they had to do was buy milk.

"What do you have for lunch today?" Shannon asked as they sat down.

Janine opened her blue lunch box, pulled out her sandwich, and peeked inside. Then she sighed. "Spam."

"Me, too," Shannon said.

"No," Janine would answer, shuddering at the thought of eating those stringy little footlogs and that smelly fish. "No."

And so Spam it was, with an occasional peanut butter and jelly, but mostly Spam. With a shugh, both girls took out their sandwiches and began to eat.

"We could get hot lunch," Shannon said but then Eddie Bourgoins sat down next to them and they looked at his tray.

"Dried fish sticks," Janine said later.

"Roast beef," Shannon added.

"And watery chocolate pudding." Janine shook her head.

"I guess we better stick with Spam. At least we get chocolate chip cookies once in awhile."

Across the table from them, Linda Davidson, the new girl in their class, sat down and opened her lunch box. The sandwich she took out didn't look like Spam. With a shrug, both girls took out their sandwiches and began to eat.

"What's the matter?" Linda asked.

"What kind of sandwich is that?" Janine asked.

"Pastrami and cheese on rye. Why?"

Janine shrugged. "Okay." She took a small bite and the spices from the meat and bread tingled her tongue in a way it had never been tingled before. She reluctantly passed the sandwich back to Linda.

"Do you like it?" Linda asked.

"Yes," Janine answered. "It's good."

"How about you?" Linda asked Shannon. "Do you want a bite?"

Shannon shook her head. "No, thanks."

"She's a picky eater," Janine explained and Linda nodded. "Would you like to play with us at recess?"

"Linda answered. "Sure."

That afternoon, when Janine came home from school, her mother was scrubbing the woodwork. "I like to do it once a week," she would say. "I want a clean house. You never know when Memere Bourque is coming over to play."

Memere Bourque lived just next door, in a gray ranch that was even smaller than theirs. She came over once, sometimes twice a day. "To inspect the house," Janine's mother said, although Memere always said it was for coffee. Whenever Janine looked out the window and saw Memere, stout and small, coming across the lawn, she would yell, "Memere's coming!" And Janine's mother would rush around the house, for a last minute check, to make sure it was clean enough for Memere Bourque.

It always was, but just barely and her mother spent most of her days polishing, scrubbing and dusting. "You don't have to keep up with my mother," Janine's father would say, stepping carefully across a newly waxed floor.

"Oh, yes I do," her mother would answer. "Just think what she'd say if the house was dirty. My God, she's clean." And that, Janine knew, was the highest compliment her mother could give.

"Mom?" Janine called as she came into the house. The television in the living room was on and the volume was loud, so that her mother could hear "As the World Turns," even if she couldn't always see it from where she was cleaning.

"What?" Her mother was scrubbing the woodwork in the bathroom.

Janine came over to her. "The next time you go shopping could you buy some pastrami and rye?"

"What the hell is that?" her mother asked.

"It's a kind of sandwich. Linda Davidson had one. She let me have a bite and it was so good," Janine jiggled up and down. "Please."

"We'll see," her mothers said. "But I bet Vielleux's Market doesn't even have that stuff. And who is Linda Davidson?"

"She's the new kid in class. She played with us at recess and we both liked her. Before it was Shannon and Debbie and me somebody always left out."

"Well, there is a crowd."

Janine nodded. "What are we having for supper tonight?"

"A casserole."

"What kind?"

"Noodles, Veg-all and hamburger," her mother answered.

"Oh."

Her mother stopped scrubbing to frown at her. "And what's wrong with that?"

"Nothing," Janine said quickly. Her mother was touchy about her cooking and Janine didn't want to start an argument. She went into her room, trying to imagine what someone who had pastrami and rye for lunch would have for supper.

"Where does that Linda Davidson live?" her mother called from the hallway.

"I don't know," Janine answered.

"14 Roosevelt Avenue," Linda said the next day at recess, when Janine asked her. They were waiting in line to jump rope.

"That's a pretty street," Janine said, thinking of the elm trees and the large, brick houses. "What church do you go to, Sacred Heart or Saint Francis?"

"I don't go to either one," Linda said. "I'm not Catholic."

"Not Catholic!" Janine heard herself say and Shannon, who was in front of Linda, turned and stared at her. "Not Catholic!" Janine said again. She couldn't imagine it. Everyone she knew was Catholic.

"Nope," Linda answered. "We're Protestants. We go to the Congregational Church."

"Well, why are you coming here?" Shannon asked.

"Because Daddy thinks it's the best school in town," Linda answered, looking from Shannon to Janine. "And he should know, he's a professor at Colby College."

"Come on, Shannon!" Debbie yelled. "It's your turn to jump."

Shannon bounded away. Linda smiled at Janine and Janine tried to smile back.

"Poor thing," Janine said to Shannon as they walked home from school.

"Imagine not being Catholic."

"I can't," Shannon answered and for the rest of the way home, they talked about Linda Davidson.

"Mom?" Janine called as she burst through the door. Then she stopped short. Her mother and Memere Bourque were sitting at the kitchen table. "Geez what?" Janine asked.

"Who?" her mother answered.

"Linda Davidson is a Protestant!"

"Who's Linda Davidson?"

"Memere Bourque asked, dipping a piece of doughnut into her coffee.

"A new kid in my class."

Janine dropped her doughnut and coffee splattered onto the grey Formica table. "Ah, but not all!" she said. "They're letting them into Sacred Heart, now!"

Janine's mother lit a cigarette. "Memere, it's 1965. With Pope John, things are changing."

"And why does this Linda Davidson go to Sacred Heart?"

"Because her father said it's the best school in town," Janine answered. "And he should know, he's a professor at Colby College."

"Lo, " Memere snuffed. "He may be a Protestant but at least he has good taste. Now come here and give Memere a kiss." She held out her arms and Janine tried to smile back. Janine kissed her cheeks, once, twice, three times, making a loud smacking sound after each kiss. Janine thought about Linda Davidson who ate pastrami and rye and was a Protestant.

"She's the most interesting person I know," Janine said solemnly to her father as he tucked her into bed that night.

"She sounds like quite a kid," her father agreed, stroking her cheek with an unsmiling finger.
“Do Protestants go to heaven or do they wind up in limbo, like the little pagan babies?”

“Oh, they go to heaven, too.”

With a frown, Janine sat in bed and her father sat down next to her. “I wonder what it’s like to be a Protestant?” Janine asked.

Her father just shook his head. “I don’t know. But I do know that it’s time for you to go to sleep.” He kissed her forehead. “Good-night, Janine.”

“Good-night,” she answered.

Janine’s father left, leaving the door open wide enough so that the light from the hall shone into her room. As Janine fell asleep, she snuggled up to her brown teddy bear and thought about Linda Davidson.

As the weeks went by, Linda brought different sandwiches to school, sometimes roast beef on a bulky roll with sesame seeds, sometimes smoked turkey with cranberry sauce, and once even something she called pisté. “But I don’t like it very much,” she said. “My mother made it for a dinner party and there was tons left over.”

Janine liked them all, even the pisté, and she stared so longingly at Linda’s sandwiches that it wasn’t long before Linda was sharing her sandwiches with Janine. In return, Janine would give Linda half of her sandwich, even though she knew it wasn’t a fair trade and that Linda didn’t even like Spam and margarine sandwiches. But Linda would just shrug and say, “We’re friends.”

“Friends with a Protestant,” Memere Bourque said, shaking her head. She was in her usual seat at the head of the table. “When I was young, I wasn’t even allowed to talk to one.”

“Friends with a Protestant,” Memere Bourque said, shaking her head. She was in her usual seat at the head of the table. “When I was young, I wasn’t even allowed to talk to one.”

It’s all right,” Janine’s mother said, rubbing Janine on the back. “In the new church group that Father Bolduc started, we’ve been going to different churches, attending their services, and they’re coming to ours. Next week, we’re even going to the Synagogue.”

“Well,” Memere said, helping herself to another cookie. “I’d be careful, Alphonsine, if I was you. The next thing you know, she’ll be marrying one.”

Janine’s mother didn’t like about her friendship with Linda was the way Janine just picked at her food. “I don’t think my Mom will let me go,” Janine said in a low voice.

“Because she’s mad that I like your food better than hers.”

“Humph!” her father said. “I don’t think I’m going to drink that.”

“My mother cooks such lousy meals,” Janine said bitterly as they started walking again.

“They’re not that bad,” Shannon said. “They’re terrible!”

As they turned the corner, and went past Mather Donut, they could see Linda waiting for them on the edge of the play ground. She was jumping up and down, waving to them.

“Janine!” she called. “Shannon!” Janine and Shannon ran to meet her.

“Guess what! Mummy said I could have you guys over for dinner. You this Friday,” she said to Janine. “And you next Friday.” This was to Shannon. “I don’t think my Mom will let me go,” Janine said in a low voice.

“Why not?”

“No. Alphonsine’s head was high. “Your cooking,” she said, “is nothing like Linda’s mother’s cooking. Don’t forget, Linda’s father is a mechanic.”

“Humph!” Memere said.

“Please can I go?” Janine asked softly.

“No!” Janine’s mother said. “No!”

“Yes, Janine thought as she trudged to her room and scuffed the shiny floor with her shoes. “Yes!”

“You’re coming!” said Linda, the next day at school. “That’s great! Maybe you can ride home on the bus with me.”

“No!” Janine said quickly. “I have to go home first. But I’ll be over later. What time do you eat?”

“Or around 6:30 or 7:00. But I was hoping you could come over earlier, so we could play.”

“I’ll be over as soon as I can, on Friday,” Janine said, even though she wasn’t sure how she was going to manage it.

But on Thursday, Janine’s mother said, “Our church group is having a pot luck supper tomorrow and your father and I are going. I’m making a molded jello with fruit cocktail in it.”

“I’d like it,” Janine thought.

“You’ll have to eat with Memere Bourque,” her mother said. “That should
please you. You'll get a night off from my cooking."

Janine didn't dare say anything she just nodded. She did like Memere Bourque's cooking. The food was plain, but somehow it tasted better than her mother's.

"We'll be out late, so you'll have to spend the night there."

"Tomorrow's Friday, isn't it?" Janine asked suddenly.

"It is," her mother answered.

Janine looked away from her mother and smiled.

"Shannon, wouldn't you like to have me over for supper tonight?" Janine asked, as they sat on the stools at Mister Donut. On Fridays, their mothers gave them doughnut money and they always left a little earlier, so they'd have plenty of time to eat their doughnuts.

"Sure, but you're going to Linda's."

"But if I can't, wouldn't you like to?" Janine persisted.

"What are you planning?" Shannon asked. There was sugar around her mouth and a spot of jelly on her nose.

"I'm planning on going to Linda's house for dinner," Janine said. "And I was wondering if you would call me at Memere's house at five."

"Just remember what happened the last time you tried to trick your mother. Your hair turned orange.

"Nothing is going to happen to my hair this time," Janine said. "And besides, I'm going to trick my memere, not my mother. Will you call me?"

Shannon sighed. "All right."

That afternoon, as Janine sat in her memere's small, shining kitchen, the phone rang. Memere jumped. "Now who could that be?"

She answered the phone and turned to Janine. "Lo, it's Shannon from just the street," she said, as though Janine didn't know where Shannon lived. "She wants to talk to you.

Janine picked up the phone. "Hello?"

"Hi," Shannon said. "I'm calling just like I said I would. I hope you're happy.

Even though Memere was standing by the stove and stirring soup, Janine knew she was listening. "Yes," Janine said. "And thank-yoo, you'll call me if I can't come. Okay??"


Janine hung up the phone. "Shannon would like to have me over for supper tonight."

Memere frowned. "But I was looking forward to eating with you.

Janine cocked her head to one side and batted her eyes. "Please, Memere? I'll still be spending the night.

The frown on Memere's face gave way to a smile, as Janine said, "Would all right, you. Come give me a kiss. Will somebody bring you home? It's just up the street but I don't want you walking home in the dark."

Janine kissed her Memere. "Oh, yes," she said, even though she wasn't sure who it would be.

Janine slipped out of her memere's house. The sun was setting and there was a low bank of dark clouds on the horizon. The air was cold and as Janine ran up the side walk, fall leaves swished beneath her feet. Roosevelt Avenue was about two miles from her house, and if she hurried, she could make it there before dark.

As she ran up the street, past Shannon's house and around the corner, she began to feel guilty. Poor Memere had been so easy to trick. But I didn't tell any lies, Janine thought somewhat desperately. She had been careful about that. But, she had deliberately misled Memere, and Janine was sure that must be a sin.

"Mortal or venial?" And she thought.

Margarine was what they ate at home, on their Wonderbread, on their popcorn, on their Spam. Why they ever had quiche or mousse or French bread. Janine spread butter thick on her bread. "I know when I'll get butter again, Janine thought.

Although she felt guilty, she didn't feel guilty enough to turn around. They'll never know, Janine thought.

But God will, a voice said.

Why would God care if I eat at the Davidson's? He doesn't care about that, the voice said. He cares about you disobeying your mother.

"Shut-up," Janine said crossly and the voice went away.

It was starting to get dark, and Janine cut through backyards, dodging stiff laundry, picnic tables, and dog poop. By the time she reached Roosevelt Avenue, her hands were cold and she was out of breath, but she marched up to number 14, a large brick house, and rang the doorbell.

Linda's mother answered the door. For a moment she just stared at Janine.

"Well, my goodness," she finally said. "We had just about given up on you. Linda's been calling your house but there's no answer."

"It sure is," her mother answered.

Linda's mother stepped aside. "Come in. You look cold. Did you walk all that way?"

"Yes," Janine said and then added quickly, "But I like to walk. I walk all the time."

Linda's mother raised an eyebrow.

Janine shifted from one foot to the other. "Linda's sandwiches are so good. I just had to come over and see what supper was like."

Linda's mother shook her head and laughed. "Well, come this way. Linda's in the kitchen helping me get things ready. We'll make you some hot cocoa to warm you up."

As Janine followed Linda's mother through the living room and into the kitchen, she could see right away that this was not what her mother would call a "clean house." There were books and newspapers everywhere, in book cases, on the floor, on coffee tables. Linda's shoes and book bag lay in a heap by the door and Janine had to step over them. "Mom would have it if I left mine like that, Janine thought.

Coffee cups and glasses, some still half full, sat on top of the papers and a large black dog lay on the couch. He thumped his tail at Janine as she went by.

The kitchen was even worse, with a sink full of dirty dishes and pots and bowls from one end of the counter to the other. In the middle of this mess, on a stool, stood Linda, calmly tearing lettuce into a bowl.

"Look who's here," Linda's mother said.

"Janine! Linda squeaked, jumping off from the stool.

"Sorry the place is such a mess," Linda's mother said. "But I've been cooking all day. I write cook books and I'm always testing some crazy recipe. My poor family! The things they've had to eat. "Linda and her mother laughed. "Now, I'll make you some hot cocoa and you can help Linda with the salad."

And the next thing Janine knew, she was standing on the stool beside Linda and chopping vegetables for the salad. At home, Janine was never allowed to help in the kitchen. Her mother was afraid she'd make a mess. Here it didn't matter. Linda dropped a whole tomato on the floor and her mother didn't say a word. She just stood by the stove and stirred the hot cocoa as Linda scooped the tomato up with a paper towel.


"Sure," Linda answered.

"How's the salad coming?"

"Almost done."

Linda's mother brought them each a steaming mug of cocoa. It was richer and smoother than anything Janine had ever tasted. "It's the Dutch chocolate," Linda's mother said. Janine just sipped it and sighed.

Dinner was even better than Janine had imagined it would be. She hadn't really known what to expect and nothing in her eating experience at home could have prepared her for crusty French bread, still warm, a mushroom quiche, thick with cream and cheese, a salad with a home made vinaigrette, and for dessert chocolate mousse and crisp butter cookies.

Janine had never had quiche or mousse or French bread. She had never even had butter. "Would you please pass the margarine?" she asked, reaching for a piece of bread.

"Butter, Linda corrected.

"Butter," she repeated.

Linda's mother smiled at Janine. "Butter or margarine. It doesn't really matter what you call it."

But Janine knew it did matter. Especially since before tonight, she hadn't known there was anything else. Margarine was what they ate at home, on their Wonderbread, on their Spam sandwiches. Janine spread the butter thick on her bread. "Who knows when I'll get butter again, Janine thought.

Probably not until I come over here again. Or I leave home.

Janine ate and ate and ate. She had seconds on everything, even dessert.

"Someone likes your cooking," Linda's father said.

"Maybe I should have you over more often," Linda's mother said, with her elbows on the table as she sipped her coffee. "You could help test my new recipes."

"That would be great!" Janine said. "My mother never cooks anything like this. All we ever get is some disgusting casserole or a dried piece of meat. I wish my mom could cook like you do!"

Linda's mother and father looked at each other. "Well, Linda's mother said. "Not everybody is in to cooking the way I am. Which is probably just as well. I'm sure is," her mother thought.
room had a canopy bed, a window seat, and book shelves crammed with books. She had Barbie, Midge, Skipper and Ken and a complete kitchen set for them. As Linda and Janine had Barbie and Ken cook supper, Janine's stomach felt worse and worse.

When, from the bottom of the stairs, Linda's mother finally called them, Janine was almost relieved. Although she liked playing with Linda, all she really wanted was to lie down. Why did I learn so much? Janine thought as she sat in the back seat with Linda. She had one hand pressed to her head and one hand on her stomach.

"What's the matter?" Linda asked.

"I don't feel good," Janine whispered.

She pressed her warm cheek against the cool window and could just barely tell Linda's mother where her Memere's house was when they turned onto her street.

"Thank you," Janine said weakly, getting out of the car. "Supper was wonderful."

"You're welcome," Linda's mother said. "Come any time."

As the car pulled out of the drive way, Janine looked toward her memere's house and she could see a familiar face peering out the window at her. -Well, Janine thought. -What am I going to say to her?

"Did Shannon's mother drive you home?" Memere asked as soon as Janine was in the house. "Lo, they live just down the street."

"I just had to see what they ate for supper. Linda's sandwiches are so good." Memere's mother didn't drive me home." Linda asked. Janine gulped. "I know.

"Mon Dieu!" Memere shrieked as vomit his the floor and spattered her apron, "Memere's house turns all the lights on at once."

Janine was almost relieved. Although she liked playing with Linda, all she really wanted was to lie down.

"Memere?" Janine called.

"What's the matter?" Linda asked.

Janine shook her head, pressed her face against her memere's shining floor. -Poor Memere, Janine thought. -What am I saying?"

The sound of running water and of her nose was running. She hobbled to the couch in the living room and sat down, patting the spot beside her. Janine sat down next to her and snuggled up to her memere's warm body. "Lay down, memere."

"I'm sick, gloriously sick, all over her."

Janine thought. "Anyway, I'm going to bed."

"All right. All right." She grunted as she struggled to her feet. "Memere?"

"Yes, Memere." Janine nodded, carefully holding the rosary in cupped hands. As she rose slowly from the couch, Memere patted her back.

"When you're done, put the rosary on the night stand by the bed. I wouldn't want anything to happen to that rosary."

"Yes, Memere." Janine was taking small baby steps across the living room floor.

"And Janine?" Memere said. Janine stopped and turned her head slightly.

"Next time, don't eat so much.

Laurie Graves

Winthrop operates a Daycare center

The Fairest of them All

I didn't mean to cause trouble but it's a little boring just hanging on the wall day after day, people coming up and peering into you but all they ever see is themselves -get the picture?

And that woman, honestly! She used to glare so hard at herself I thought it would make me crack. So finally, I had to say something—she was asking for it, wasn't she?

I didn't mean any harm, really. This is the truth, my fonction after all, or that's what she insisted am believing. I don't exactly remember how Snow White came into the picture. Well, if it hadn't been her, it would have been someone else, and things turned out all right in the end, didn't they? It was an adventure for her, all of those nights in the woods with seven tiny white-bearded men.

They adored her, and she was so sweet! Doesn't it give you the creeps? As for the apple, everyone tried to warn her, but you know the old story—

the one about innocence and apples!

It's clear that I'm blamed. Who am I to change a myth?

But the bit about the kiss at the end, the prince pulling the poison piece of fruit right from her mouth with his lips—I don't buy it myself. But I'm just a mirror after all.

My reflections only go skin deep.

Nancy Devine

Waldoboro

teaches Adult Ed. courses
Rapture

And there were bears,
Angry bears
that missed MacDonald's—
Hungry bears
who watched the dumps run dry—
Puzzled bears
who walked the streets of Bangor
wondering where the orange jackets
and the firesticks had gone.

They started walking down the highways,
Never saw a brother
mangled and splattered on the roadside
anywhere.

Soon they broke out windows,
entered houses,
licked clean the bones
they found therein.

The world was theirs.
They marched on Portland
No one stopped them.

They invaded Boston,
didn't like it,
ambled down the Pike,
met a gang who'd wandered northward
never scoring up a like
all along the Appalachian Trail.

They held a council
(without fire), decided that,
together, they could take Detroit.
Sitting in the silent darkness,
they thanked the Bear Lord,
for answering prayers
offered by their grandparents
moons and moons ago.

Erleen J. Christensen
S. Unity
is building a house

Shaman's Love Song

you're a
deer
when you're
bear

Sylvester Pollet
E. Holden
teaches at UMO

We've had it with these aggressive women. That's why we've formed this men's group, URSUS, and revised this leaping field.

For 25 years, the Earth Mother had us fooled. We sat around castrating ourselves with these neat little Swiss Army knives:
a scissors, tweezers, magnifying glass, everything you need.
We did this until this bear came by, whose tongue was on fire
with real masculine poems and the legend of Iron Dick, who recovered his lost testicle from the bottom of the lake.

We're not ashamed of our penises, large or small!
What the heck! Whatever they say is just sour grapes.

Maybe our bodies are imperfect, but we join our hands in the great chant of self-forgiveness, the joy of being male among men.

Often our only problem is just finding a bear.
Sometimes we'll sit around chanting, and the bear will arrive,
shuffling, out of the forest and we can begin. If not, one of our elders, Robert from Minnesota, a poet,
will put on the bearskin over his street clothes.
As the light fades into evening, and he starts a story,
and we're passing the jug of whiskey from the deep hairy source, who'd ever guess it wasn't the real thing.

William Carpenter
Stockton Springs
teaches at College of the Atlantic
The Light on the Porch

"...the door to men's feelings is grief..."

Robert Bly

[Mincemeat]

Was it the black Labrador whose eyes drifted from the socket, that I lifted from the key road in front of our house. His limp body draped over my arms, blood from his gaping mouth leaving, when I returned the next morning a thick trail on the road where I carried him. The traffic of emotions had slowed or veered down other lanes on other days in my middle age life.

Finally this one vehicle accelerated on an unsanded road when he leaped, as he always did, off the embankment to cross the road as he always did and toss up to the light on the porch. He heard tires muted by snow and felt his nose rub on ice as he stopped, one foot after another, from the tires. He had time to leap. We all do. We quick ones are seen in its light beams.

This is the way we go.

The way we always go.

Home to our family.

[II]

I placed the still warm body in the wheelbarrow. Inside were the children, with the killer, a teenager, who likes the feel of speed in the dark.

We told the driver, "It is all right. There was nothing you could do. He was a runner. We left him run." In an hour I went out again, bundled and scarred from sub zero winds, to put him in a box to protect his grotesque remains from the raw light of day. His bloody skull froze to the metal. I kicked him off. He skittered, still flaccid, into the box, only his head and legs stiff and protruding. I shoved them down, his crushed skull, but he kept propping up as if there was still life in the bones.

Desperate, I wanted him down and dead.

[III]

It was then I felt the hard press of the high school coach, Duchereau's hand on my helmet taunting, "Come on, come on. Spang. Try. Try and hit me..."

Each time I lunged at him, my face flinched and ducked into dirt. I tasted it on my lips.

He laughed, "Come on, come on. You say get up..." Showed down I would break up as if by instinct to the older man's hand until I was so trained as a hitter that in a big game I steered my fuzzy frame toward a fast back and sidestepped, full backed, into him, straight on, my helmet crushed into his chest. He lied immobile, unable to lift his head, breathless, I pressed to myself a secret of a linebacker.

"Do not, God, let him get up."

Duchereau rested his large palm on my shoulder, when I jogged back to the bench to rest. "Nice job. Nice job." The lovely runner never ran in that game again. He was carried off the field, draped in the open arms of two older men. I can now feel his slack skin in my arms. I am one of those older men who test him gently on the ground. His eyes see on mine. My face is bloodless... Cold. He tells me, "My legs are stone." I touch them. They are warm.

"No." I reassure him, "They are fine muscular, lean and sinewy, the legs of a runner who will run again."

He informs me, "My heart has stopped."

I put my hand on his chest. His heart beats on, although he cannot hear with his helmet on. I remove his helmet and brush back his thick black hair. "What have you done?"

He asks me. The rusty hinges of my closed lips crack.

Who am I? The linebacker who hit him?

The stranger who comes to the door to confess, "I have killed something!" I admit, "I broke you in your full stride."

He smiled and put his hand which was young and warm on my cold face and wiped away the blood which is his blood.

The muscles of an ancient drum go slack in my hands. He wants to run the length of the field. I let him go. He is a runner. He must run.

[IV]

We carried the box with the body to a dog hole and buried it, covered it with earth and snow, leaving no stone to mark the spot because we know where it lies and know where to find the bones and blood. Grief has its own map, its own soil.

Bly

Michael Groeg Michaud
Los Angeles, CA
is an Augustan native

In The Ditch

On Sunday morning a jogger paced and jumped puddles on his back route.

On the side of the road car tracks were pressed into what was left of ice crease and sand (a quick in and out, Saturday's parking place). In the ditch recklessly pitched into the mud, snow, and new water—three books, the remainder of last night's teenage last. Patty's Party line, a pretty production taped 900 members over eyes that energized. Another title unreadable.

The third—Group Grope—forced him hard like envy. "Animals! What do they know?"

But curiosity of the groin gets no heft. He listened, no cars.

Looked around, only himself and those eyes! He tucked the books into his front pocket and jogged on.

Peggy Clark Contreras
East Winthrop
is a joggerpost

In My Mind

I had a vision
Of deer in my mind.
Dare I tell you?
I saw an antler in my eye
And, here in the branches
Where I thought I saw it
I fired at his creamy ass.
Two mitered feathers up.
Dreamy and white.
I had a vision
Of deer in my mind.
I begged her not to die.

Glenn Frankenfield
E. Wilton
Burlington at UMF

Bruce Spang
Readfield
works in the Sunflower School system

Mincemeat

One last does
hangs by the boots
from a beam
in Nan's barn,
it's eyes wide open
and dull like marbles.
Oh, Durnhall proudly
next to it,
it grins at
Cranny an ik a picture.
Nana wipes her hands
on her apron
and they push me
next to the carcass,
but I can't smile,
it stinks
and blood drops
near my feet.
Dad laughs and
tells of his kill,
and Nana plucks
her mincemeat pies.

This is the way we go.

The way we always go.

Home to our family.

Mincemeat

It was then I felt the hard press of the high school coach, Duchereau's hand on my helmet taunting, "Come on, come on. Spang. Try. Try and hit me..."

Each time I lunged at him, my face flinched and ducked into dirt. I tasted it on my lips. He laughed, "Come on, come on, you say get up..." Showed down I would break up as if by instinct to the older man's hand until I was so trained as a hitter that in a big game I steered my fuzzy frame toward a fast back and sidestepped, full backed, into him, straight on, my helmet crushed into his chest. He lied immobile, unable to lift his head, breathless, I pressed to myself a secret of a linebacker.
Stompt

I haven't got a thing against poets. Live and let live has always been my way of looking at life. Poets can rhyme and recite all they want as long as they go about their own business in peace. But when one of them walks up your driveway with a knapsack on his back, and he's your wife's only nephew, it becomes the kind of rotten luck that shouldn't happen to anyone. After the hitchhiker had been fed enough to calm a colony of starving tapeworms and he was safely upstairs streaming in the tub and using all of Betty's bubble bath, I let her know that I wasn't planning on selling my cement contractor's business and opening a boardinghouse.

"You can fuss all you want, Virgil Harrison," Betty replied, "but Jonathan can stay as long as he likes!"

I make most of the decisions in our marriage, and Betty prefers it this way since she can never make up her own mind about things, but it's an entirely different matter when it comes to her relatives. The trouble with Betty is that she can never do enough for them.

"If he decides how long to stay," I said, "It will be until the food runs out.

"Since when have we begrudged a little hospitality to friends and family?" asked Betty with her bright button of a smile. "You can be so amusing when you're being a grouchly grump!"

She was just trying to get me off balance and to shut me up. You live long enough with a woman like Betty and all that female maneuvering is better understood.

"I haven't a thing against June's son," I told her, "even if he is a thirty-two-year-old phony without a penny and has a matted beard and ties long pigtail of his with bits of ribbon.

Betty didn't mind my mentioning the beard and pigtail, but the word phony really set her on fire.

"You don't have to worry your head about him eating you out of house and home," she said trying to keep her voice down. "Four days from now he's got the same monotonous talk about his PhD and the university readings."

"That was wonderful!" cried Betty when he was finally through.

"Did you like it, Betty?"

"Oh yes, I thought it was very moving."

"That too," I told her.

Then I tried to make her see things as they were right up from.

"The fact remains, Betty, your nephew, Jonathan Stompt, American poet and freeloader, gutted half of what we had in the refrigerator, and he arrived only two days and three nights. Because of the adding machine running. Stompt read his poems slowly and he never raised his voice."

"What's that?" I asked.

"Oh, those are the longest two days and three nights. Because of the adding machine running. Stompt read his poems slowly and he never raised his voice."

I glanced up and saw Betty's puzzled look.

"You're just jealous because of all the national attention Jonathan is getting from his poems."

"I can't think of one," I admitted. "As a rule, we Harrisons are careful about the company we keep.

"You're just jealous because of all the national attention Jonathan is getting and because he is twenty years younger than you."

Betty was being unfair and she knew it. My cement contracting had paid our bills for more than thirty years, not to mention two vacations in Hawaii and several business conventions around the country.

"I don't need whiskers and a pigtail and the Robert Creeleys to measure success in this life."

"It's Creeley, The Robert Creeleys.""

"That too," I told her.

Then I tried to make her see things as they were right up from.

"The fact remains, Betty, your nephew, Jonathan Stompt, American poet and freeloader, gutted half of what we had in the refrigerator, and he arrived only two hours ago!"

"And it won't hurt your waistline one little bit," replied Betty.

"When you took him upstairs, did he say how long is long when it comes to staying? Tell me fair and square."

"Unfortunately, only two days and three nights. Because of the poetry readings," she replied.

"At leading universities," I added.

With the exception of when I had my hemorrhoid operation, those three nights and two days were the longest of my life. I'm out of the house much of the time during the daylight hours, but this was the week my crew of four was laying a sidewalk on the other side of town, and there was no need for me to supervise the job. Had four estimates to get out for possible contracts, and if figured it would be best if I also caught up on a backlog of paperwork.

My office is a desk and a couple of filing cabinets in a corner of the dining room.

The dining area is located between the kitchen and living room, so I not only caught the traffic of Betty and young Stompt traipsing back and forth but I overhead and saw much of what went on.

Betty belongs to a literary club, called, "The Two O'Clock Authors." It's really nothing but a bunch of old heirs who meet and read to each other every third Thursday of the month in one of the homes of the two or fourteen members.

Betty writes weird things she calls poems, and sometimes she puts together juvenile stories that make no sense to me. If we had kids, Betty probably would have found something else to do, something more sensible to use up her spare time.

"I wish you would read some of those new poems you were telling me about," I heard Betty say from the living room.

I could see them out of the corner of my eye as I tried to make the adding machine chatter more of its own crazy sounds.

"I suppose you mean my new sequence," said Stompt coming out of his long-legged sprawl on the sofa. "I feel these are technically closer to what I have been trying to achieve within line structure."

"Knowing your genius for line," gushed Betty, "I'm sure these poems are terribly innovative!"

Stompt made a sound somewhere between a chuckle and a sigh.

I don't pretend to know much about poetry, but when I heard him say sequence I knew in my bones that I was in for the long haul.

"These are closer to the central concerns of good old WCW," said Stompt.

"Then I tried to make her see things as they were right up from.

"When Cal was still with us," he would begin, taking for granted that Aunt Betty once knew this person better than the back of her hand, "I said to him..."

"Then Betty would interrupt: "Cal who?"

And Stompt's bald head would tremble a few times to show his surprise. "Why Robert Lowell, of course," he would explain. "All his friends called him Cal."

I didn't once let myself fall into that trap. If Timothy was a stranger to me, it was no great loss. I said nothing as I kind of looked through Stompt as he went on talking. The bored look on my face stayed stuck enough to suggest that I thought Timothy was better forgotten than mentioned.

Betty was too much under her nephew's spell not to get sucked in whenever he spoke of his poet friends. She must have asked the same kind of question a hundred times during the visit until a whole crate of Dick's, Joes, Bob's, Val's, and Peters was unpacked.

I don't know if Stompt reads poems the way other poets do, and I'm not going to waste time finding out, but it kind of puzzled me how he acted just before he started in.

He would cock his head to one side, lick his lips, tug at his beard, and finally his shaggy blond head would slump between his rounded shoulders as he looked down at his lap. Then he would frown, like someone who had been given a bad grade on a concrete job, before slowly looking up. At that moment, his eyebrows seemed to get mixed up with several important blinks of his half-closed eyelids.

Betty was impressed, but I wasn't being taken in by these acrobatics one iota.

His poems were a lot like Betty's—they made no sense and seemed to wander all over the place. If I've got to hear poems, I want something solid and understandable like Kipling's "If" or a Robert Service poem about men lusting after women.

"You don't have to ask me if I'm tired," said Betty. "You can be so amusing when you're being a grouchly grump!"

"They were the longest two days and three nights. Because of the adding machine running. Stompt read his poems slowly and he never raised his voice."

I'm not fond of reading poems aloud for meetings, parties, or gatherings, and I'm not fond of sitting through them either. It seemed as if Stompt always used the same monotone voice of a worn-out baseball announcer on the radio.

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His poems were a lot like Betty's—they made no sense and seemed to wander all over the place. If I've got to hear poems, I want something solid and understandable like Kipling's "If" or a Robert Service poem about men lusting after gold. Betty's poem about dewdrops on the sunflowers in our garden and two from Stompt's sequence about some smoky mirror in a fun house in San Francisco and a fat lady who died in a sugar mill, New York, are as boring to me as the fine print in a purchase agreement for a cement mixer.

Listening to Stompt read his poems wasn't the ordeal I thought it would be. Of course it was no outing with a loaded picnic hamper, but I was able to keep the adding machine running. Stompt read his poems slowly and he never raised his voice. They came out in the same monotone way from beginning to end. It was a lot like hearing a woman with a tired voice reading names from the yellow pages of a telephone book.

"That was wonderful!" cried Betty when he was finally through.

"Did you really like them?" asked Stompt, trying to milk another squeal of delight from his audience of one.

"Oh yes, Jonathan," she replied. "It's a real noir de force!"
Virgil (70–19 B.C.), *The Aeneid*

"You should have been a teacher," I smiled, "instead of dropping out of Reed College after only two semesters?"

"Academia deadens the voice," he replied. 

"And boys' groceries," I reminded him.

"Money isn't everything," said Betty, repeating her favorite expression and defending her nephew at the same time.

I ignored her and turned back to Stompt.

"You may be right," I admitted. "Like most jobs, teaching probably has its limitations, though the thought of becoming an educator did cross my mind the year I flunked from Princeton."

I said it in the same la-di-da way: some people do when they sip tea and stick out their little fingers while holding the cups.

Stompt's mouth fell open as his eyes widened.

But my success was short-lived.

I left Betty to spill every bean in the pot. She never did have appreciation for poetry.

"Virgil grew up in Princeton, Maine, and he graduated from their grammar school."

The surprise went out of Stompt's eyes, and he was once again himself. He immediately launched into stories about literary people.

After my bacon and eggs, toast and extra gulp of coffee, I left them. They didn't notice me leaving the kitchen, and they probably didn't hear the telephone ringing. I went to the bathroom to rinse my dentures. By the time I got to the dining room, the caller was off the line, but Stompt was still gossiping. He was pulling another poet from his crate, and Betty was saying "oh, yes, of course, why naturally"—as if she knew what her nephew was talking about.

I had lunch with my crew at Slow Mama's because it was near our sidewalk construction site. Eating out was my idea. When I called Betty, I lied and said we had just mixed a bad load of cement and had to go ahead without me. To tell the truth, Stompt was really getting on my nerves by this time, more than my even disposition could handle, and for Betty's sake I was making myself as scarce as possible.

As the saying goes, I had one of those big cards up the frayed cuff of my shirt sleeve. My favorite poker pal, Ed Sharpe, and his wife, Laura, were scheduled to have dinner with us that night. Betty had forgotten about the engagement because of Stompt's visit, and she wanted me to call it off.

"I can't do that!" I shouted into the telephone. This followed after I had lied about the cement. "It's too late!"

Laura always cooks like a demon before coming to our house for dinner. She's one of those plump, giggling housewives with a genius for remembering recipes. A good soul but squawky as the hinges of hell. "Surely you're right," said Betty sadly. "Only this is Jonathan's last night with us."

I had all I could do to keep my voice steady. Joy has always been hard for me to suppress.

"Just try to make the best of it," I replied with sweetness and understanding.

Then I had a vision of big Laura Sharpe cornering young Stompt and reciting her encyclopedia of recipes from apple strudel to zucchini.

Ed behaved the way I expected Ed to behave when coming face to face with the likes of a poet. He reached out and held Stompt's limp hand for a moment before pulling his own back for keeps. Ed was more amused than disgusted that a grown man should have a pigtail with more ribbons than a winnowing picker maker at a county fair.

While our two wives brought in a smorgasbord of goodies prepared in Laura's kitchen, Stompt held the door open for the girls. I could tell by the smile on his face that he thought he had another good thing going like when he unloaded his Virgil trivia on me.

After the platters had been set up in the kitchen, buffet style, we all went into the living room and I served cocktails.

Ed and I talked shop—cement for me, he wire fencing. I was spared most of Stompt's big ball of words about poets and their drinking problems. He dragged a dozen of his own kind through the mud while Betty oohed and Laura giggled.

Stompt had a mind that was rigged for only one direction. If he saw a bird, he saw a look on Betty's face that I didn't much fancy. She was holding a folder...
of Stompt’s poems and waiting for a lull in the conversation.

“Come on everybody,” I shouted as I exploded from my chair, “let’s get after Laura’s grub!”

Betty was furious with me, and I knew she would squirrel away some choice words for later.

Let Rome burn, I thought, as I heard Laura giggle and say that Betty was one of the cooks too.

I knew Ed wanted to talk more about wire fencing, but he also liked the sound of a dinner bell.

If people were cattle and frightened into eating, the fastest steer in the stampede would be Stompt. He was well into the dining area with arms pumping and pigtail bouncing before the others were out of their chairs.

“Sweepen your drink,” I told Ed, “and bring it along.”

Buffet style at our house is loose. We sit where we like, and we eat what we want. I don’t play host among friends; we all dish in and say little until we’re full. I was wrong about Stompt’s mind. Stick food in front of him and the poetry is forgotten. He ate as if tomorrow was going to be busted. From our chairs. Betty is a good cook, but add an inspired one like Laura, and the dinner bell.

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To look for clams dig paradoxx

Flocking at un steady hand,

Of falling cards with a three heart stake

To upward seep.

My partner sure must think it queer

I've missed my bid with it so near

And mumbled a trick that he should take

This longest evening of the year.

She gives her head a little shake

And smiles as if she's on the make.

The only other sound's the sweep

Of falling cards with a three heart stake

Her eyes are lovely dark and deep,

And though I have a promise to keep,

My wife's not here to watch the sheep.

Arnold Perrin

Union

works at the State Prison

From the kitchen came the depressing sound of more rats rummaging the plaster.

“You've got rodents,” said Ed.

“No,” I replied. “It's only our visiting poet.”

Betty suddenly lost all her sluggishness and couldn't say enough to Laura about her nephew's new poems.

“You must be so proud,” Laura added.

An insane rodent was now scurrying and chomping its way through some casserole or meat dish.

“He's going to bust a gut,” Ed commented.

“No such luck,” I replied.

Betty didn't hear me. She was now telling Laura what a tragedy it was for The Two O’Clock Authors that Stompt didn't have time to read his poems locally. Because of commitments at leading universities.

Ed and I knew the evening was over about the same time.

“It’s been great V.H.,” said Ed.

“All my poker friends call me that.

“Early to bed, etc.,” I said getting to my feet.

Betty and Laura went into the kitchen to clear the table. I could hear Stompt negotiating with Laura for leftovers and Betty stacking the dirty dishes.

“God, V.H.,” said Ed, “where do they ever come from?”

I knew what he meant.

“Poets aren’t born,” I told him. “People who don’t like people lift stones and find them.”

Laura's got a few weird ones in her family too,” grinned Ed, “but nothing like that!”

The three came into the hallway where Ed and I were standing. The women were carrying Laura’s dishes.

“Here you go, Ed,” said Betty balancing a half dozen platters.

“Poets aren’t born,” I told him. “People who don’t like people lift stones and find them.”

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“Here you go, Ed,” said Betty balancing a half dozen platters.

“I must have that mushroom recipe,” said Betty to Laura.

“Since we all felt stuffed, the conversation lagged.

That noise.

It was a mistake, and I knew Betty realized it the moment she closed her mouth.

Laura immediately listed all the ingredients, the twists and turns of opening tins and buttering pans, what spices to use, what temperatures to keep. It wasn't as bad as one of Stompt's poems, but on a full stomach Laura was coming in a close second.

Since we all felt stuffed, the conversation lagged. Ed wasn't even interested in telling me more about a new chain fence that had just come on the market.

I sighed.

Then Ed cocked his head, puzzled.

“What on earth is that?”

“What?” I said.

“That noise.”

C.J. Stevens

Weld

prospects for gold on Maine rivers

Playing Bridge

on a Stormy Evening

(With apologies to Robert Frost.)

Whose foot this is I think I know

Her husband's in Chicago though;

He can't see me pausing here

To 'footsie' her toes like this below.

My partner sure must think it queer

I've missed my bid with it so near

And mumbled a trick that he should take

This longest evening of the year.

She gives her head a little shake

And smiles as if she's on the make.

The only other sound's the sweep

Of falling cards with a three heart stake

Her eyes are lovely dark and deep,

And though I have a promise to keep,

My wife's not here to watch the sheep.

Ahron Perrin

Union

works at the State Prison

Light Verse

Clam Dig Paradoxx

With feet splayed-out and set for strength,

With clamhoe held in steady hand,

I place the tongs at full arm's length,

To start my first search in the sand.

Once a hole, about two-foot wide,

Is dug in about two-foot deep,

I slice more off the forward side

To look for juice to upward seep.

For clams dig-in with necks alert

And filled with their last taste of brine,

So, when they sense my hoe, they squirm,

Which seen, allows them to be mine.

Bob Bartlett

Biddeford

is a part-time philosophy

major at USM

I'm sorry about that Titanic incident

But I wasn't sure where to put my iceberg

And the North Atlantic seemed as good a place

As any other. I didn't mean to level Tokyo

But my pet Godzilla got out of his cage

And there was just no stopping him.

My sincerest apologies for the San Francisco

Earthquake but when I taught the Jolly

Green Giant clog dancing I didn't

Realize that the results would be so disastrous.

Gavin Healy

Bangor

is a writer and a student

Woman Killed

by White Tornado

"Clears like a white tornado."

—Mr. Clean ed

Her kitchen was impeccably clean.

The murderer had left the scene.

Wind can drive straw through steel girders.

'Twas the moth handle that skewed her.

Douglas Woodsom

Ann Arbor, MI & Cape Elizabeth

is working on an MFA
Sin-tax: what writers know about love

Grammar is sexy.
Words: love’s language, it’s true, the formations, the positioning, the body speaks right up.
Try love without prepositions—no in and out, no on, under, above. Alone, we’d each be without. Nouns are lovable things—ah, a, she, a thing.
Think about adjectives, and how they make us sweaty:
Verbs denote action, description, and things—usually followed by something solid you didn’t expect. Of all the parts of speech, the most ahead of them all is the Supple Adverb.
Slowly, harder, Go lower, baby, quickly! The ly-way makes an action better. Again and again and again.
Grammar is a tool for sweeter interactions: Our relationship is so conditional—don’t be so interpretative around my colon, you might respond. You’re a semi-colon! And she: You’re the half-ass, you fool. Let me billabong it for you. I’m leaving, period. And you will stammer: loc. cit. i.e. e.g.!
Grammar? downright sexy Until you’re left alone, as these lips sex, in your own ellipses...

Duff Plunkett
Washington, D.C.
graduated from UMO

Man Dies While Trying to Start
New Toilet Paper Roll

He was known to have a temper
And a heart condition. He tried,
They estimate, to find the paper’s end
For twenty minutes, then he died.

Would science ever catch up
With the mortality rate?
The "easy start" roll was inserted,
But for him it was too late.

Would a lack of toilet paper
Have been, to him, as cruel?
Would the heart condition have kicked in
As he raged at the empty spool?

We do not go to the rest room
Seeking our final rest. Don’t frown
Little boys. When death comes for us,
We’ll not be caught with our pants down.

Douglas Woodsum
Ann Arbor, MI & Cape Elizabeth
is working on an MFA

One morning a man decides to become a dictionary of synonyms so that he may be connected into a unified whole.
"But by being connected like that," says his wife, "you’ll reduce yourself to one meaning."
"That’s my point," says the man. "Everything will become one."
"But you’ll reduce thousands of words to mere signs and symbols," says the wife. "You’ll become nothing."
"I suppose you’re right," says the man. "This could be quite dangerous."
But it is too late. The man sinks into his mattress and becomes nothing but a few scribbles and scratch marks. His wife begins to cry over his unnecessary foolishness.

J.F. Knowles
Kittery
Souk-El Arba-du-Rharb

Several months after I'd met Richard Dunwoody on the road between Rabat and Tangier, I still find myself puzzling over our encounter and his dream. You see, Richard had experienced a dream that he was beginning to believe. And I became a part of that dream from the moment our paths had crossed in Souk-El Arba-du-Rharb.

We were both trying to reach Tangier. I'd been hitchhiking rides from Rabat the entire morning. He'd been traveling by thumb and foot for months—originally from Tansia, more recently from Algeria. We each had been having a tough time. No one seemed to be heading for Tangier. That is, when there was anyone on the road at all. As soon as I saw Richard I got mad. One person could always hitch a ride easier than two. Besides, he looked so awful. Who would stop for someone looking that way? His long, blonde hair was oily and stringy and, well, he was just dirty. Not that I was any prize. But I had a chance to clean up in Rabat after my foray down to Marrakech. Then I noticed that even though his clothes were filthy, they were expensive. A brown suede jacket, well-made leather boots. I spotted him for a so-called hippie immediately. The kind who come to North Africa, then in the late 1960s, to fail about and smoke qif.

My ride dumped me almost at Richard's feet, so I had no choice but to say hello and gab with a yellow hitcher—particularly since he spoke English. He was tall and lean, so much that his bones seemed to protrude across his elbows and knees, nearly popping through the rich material of his fancy jacket and tan, corduroy pants. As we talked, I observed that his face was puck-marked and sallow—yellow around the eyes, a wasted look about him.

We exchanged the usual traveler's remarks. Names, countries, where coming from and where going. He was Dutch, ultimate destination Sweden. When I revealed that I was returning to Spain and had been living there temporarily, his expression became sour and disgusted.

"All you women are crazy for the Spaniards, yes?" he asked but intoned his question as if stating a historical fact.

I laughed and, not wanting to argue with someone whom I might have to rely on within the next few hours, answered, "It depends. Right now I have no choice but to be in Spain. Personally, I prefer the Irish."

He grinned and asked if I'd had difficulties hitching in Morocco.

"Yeah, especially this morning. Eight rides to get me here."

"You're lucky," he advised. "I've been on the road, it seems years. The cars are so few. And I scare most people who stop to give me a ride. You think it's my hair?"

"I could not keep from laughing, and he began to laugh too."

"You should have seen what these Moroccan police in Tangier did to me because of my hair," he continued without laughing any more but in a voice of似乎 earnest. "They would not let me in the country. My hair was too long and dirty, they said. Back to Spain they sent me. So I had to take a ferry to Melilla. There I stay with Hell and Morocco and go to Tangier. But now look, here I am right back in that damn country."

We had been chatting by the roadside for about 15 minutes. Not a car had passed, the sky was blackening to the southwest, and the wind had picked up. The village, a place with a name bigger than itself, remained quite lifeless. But, after all, its name, Souk-El Arba-du-Rharb, meant Wednesday's market, and it was Thursday.

"Maybe we get lucky, and a car comes before it's dark," said Richard gesturing toward the sky. "Maybe we walk to Tangier, eh? Too bad, you know. I walked half the way here. Those mountains near the Algerian border—lascivious, I tell you..."

And Richard began to talk rapidly, one word falling after another, nothing as if he might never speak again. His eyes glowed, and he waved his arms. He paced, stood still, paced. At times his voice seemed self-pitying, calming then and whipping him into a frenzy. I moved away, frightened at first, praying for a car to appear. But then my curiosity overcame my fear, and I edged closer to hear.

He was describing his journey across northern Algeria: from the coast, over the foothills and finally into the Tlemcen Mountains near the Algerian-Moroccan border.

"So tired," he tried to explain, "I was moving in a haze. I continued walking as if I was asleep. But you see, I couldn't sleep. Someone was following me. Ever since I'd stopped at that village. Then I thought I heard dogs barking—hounds—bloodhounds. But I decided that I must have been so tired I was hallucinating. Whenever I stopped for a rest, I'd sleep or pretend to sleep, then wake up quickly in a cold sweat. I started running. I couldn't remember anything, what I'd done the day before. In that village I'd smoked some qif. I always smoke qif when I can get it. That's all. Remembering nothing more. Going nowhere. Stopped, Sleep. But I'd wake up. Those voices and the dogs, always the dogs barking."

"Richard, Richard," I tried to interrupt. But he looked at me with a vacant stare and said, "You must listen, you must come with me..."

I said nothing. And I quickly decided that I'd remain silent until he finished speaking or a car came.

He continued about the voices.
common bond with him, I very well could have been in his place. But I wasn't.

So, I took a deep breath, swung my pack to my back and began to walk toward Tangier.

"Come back you yellow, howling dog," he bellowed after me.

I kept walking. "Come back, or I'll come get you!"

I turned around. He was standing in the same place, still shuffling his feet.

Walking. Quiet. Then rain. Hard rain finally in from the coast. I turned around once more. He was walking too. But he'd left his pack behind.

Walking faster. If I had to run, I'd be forced to pitch my pack.

I heard a car. Speeding. Gone before I could see it.

I turned around. He was standing in the same place, still shuffling his feet.

I kept walking. Painting his silhouette that at the end of the game.

"Come back you yellow, howling dog," he bellowed after me. "Let go of the air"

Then something. Was he yelling something that I couldn't understand.

Richard was yelling something that I couldn't understand.

Another car. Slower. A black Mercedes. I stood in the middle of the road. It stopped.

Yes, Tangier. What about the middle of the road. It stopped.

Then he was yelling something that I couldn't understand.

"Randolph Woman Remains in Cheese Coma." Yes, Tangier. What about the middle of the road. It stopped.

I turned around. He was standing in the same place, still shuffling his feet.

To continue...

C. Walker Matson
Troy
A free-lance writer

Odds and Ends
Already burnished
a ceremonial bronze,
the tardy oak leaf,
cured by the gale's
ending nudge, abandons
its roots to spiral
one last whimsical
heavenward tack until,
succumbing to gravity,
returns its finite
to the teeming
debris below.

Farrell Davison
Bar Harbor

The Cousin
No One Can Touch
And so the rubella baby
turns forty, still
in the room where
his mother lay him at two

with telescope eyes.
When the cancer marched
through her, he stood
at the door in his own
private night, watched her
let go of the air
he moves in his hands.
Now he tends to the cows

in the cold, wrapped
in wool, breaking hay
over the herd, watches
the steam rise in its
own fermented magic.

Charles Safford
Atlanta, GA
was a long-time resident of Falmouth.

The Big Blue Cheese Breakup
My lover moved out after almost a decade of off and on hell and happiness. I stay up now to watch late night horror movies, envisioning every pickax murderer making swiss cheese out of his face.

I eat all his favorite foods, too. White cheddar "cheesy" popcorn with grilled cheese sandwiches, Planter's cheese balls and broccoli with cheese sauce. I must experience his cheesiness, daydream revenge.

I picture myself deathly ill, he's at an I.Q.A. buying Velveeta and notices newspaper headlines screaming: "Randolph Woman Remains in Cheese Coma."

Or maybe he'd feel guilty if I was raped by a madman named Monterey Jack. A hospital spokesperson might state: "Doctors are puzzled by hair, semen, and cheese samples taken from the victim."

Perhaps he'll call up and beg to come back. I like to think I'd tell him to go to cheese fetish hell, but I'd probably be cute and say, "Cheesecake lane—at your disposal," then shower the cheddar out of my hair, rinse mozzarella out of my mouth and make pretzels sprinkled with parmesan.

Gretchen L. Patrick
Randolph

Death's Season
Maple blood on evergreen drops
leaf by leaf
to mossy ground,
as mothers lay children
in graves once more.

Year after year,
we mourn their passing,
grateful we cannot
foresee death
in the spring
of life.

Carolyn Locke
Troy
teaches at Mount View High School
Grandpa Scarecrow

I stood grandpa in the back of his blue pickup.

Me and my wife Molly had covered him with his favorite gray wool blanket, the one he always wrapped around his knees Sunday nights when we'd sit by the Kilkoe and listen to Jack Benny.

Molly'd stitched up a new pillow for him and put it under his head. With his white, bushy hair spread out over it, she said it reminded her of the angel hair we wound around our Christmas tree each year. Molly was awful good to my Grandpa.

Funny, but when he showed up at our place in Pittsboro, Maine over nineteen years ago, Molly said he couldn't stay but a little while. We was waiting our first baby then, and Molly lost her.

Seems Grandma Effie'd kicked Grandpa out of the farmhouse they'd lived in for thirty-seven years. Told him she didn't want to share her bed no more. Just like that. Grandpa told me he was brushing his teeth with baking soda when she said it, and that just up and left. Grabbed his billfold, jumped into his pickup and drove straight from Caribou to our place in Pittsboro in his nightshirt. Said he didn't have no place else to go.

Effie sent him his clothes a week later. They was packed in torn up boxes. Work clothes, mostly. Plus his one good black suit, all shiny and rolled up. And the plaid shirt he and Molly'd bought him years before at L.L. Bean. The twin Effie'd used on the boxes was unravelled and all knotted up. Looked like she'd packed it in a hurry.

Grandpa stayed on. Helped Molly with the heavy chores when I was on the road selling and later, when I went off to Europe to fight the war. He grew a big garden out back of the house and in the summers ran a farm stand. Turned every cent it took in over to Molly. Said a man had to earn his keep.

Anyway, there was Grandpa in his pickup. Been dead since morning. Molly was the one he found lying there peacefullike in bed, the grey wool blanket folded nice over his rocker like he knew he wasn't going to use it anymore.

It'd taken Grandpa longer and longer to get up his last few years, so Molly'd bring him his breakfast on a tray with a flower propped up in one of her jelly jars. She'd walk into his room and Grandpa would pull the blanket up to his chin, look to the ceiling and say, "Lord! You placed this sweet woman on earth to tend an old man? Seems to me you could've found better for her to do." Molly would shake her head and smile and tell Grandpa she thought the Lord knew exactly what He was doing.

When Molly found him dead, she noticed a small metal box sticking out from under his bed. She opened it. The twine Effie'd used nineteen years before to box his letters. She was there five years ago when I'd stopped by on a selling trip up north. Greeted me at the door at three in the afternoon wearing a blanket over Grandpa's face. The leaves was falling outside but atat she couldn't see him if they looked in back. Then we was off.

Effie is a chicken and homemade coleslaw. Even tried in a couple of beers, though she don't think much of drinking.

I decided to go down and take a look-see. Snuck to the side and peeked in the window. Caught sight of Grandpa's farm below us. I doused the lights and coasted a little downhill. It was a cool, late October morning in Maine. The kind me and Molly favor. But we didn't much like it that day. Around 1:30 in the afternoon we was on Route 2 near Bangor when Molly announced she was hungry, so I pulled into a rest stop off the road. We ate sitting on a red blanket Molly'd tucked into the back of the pickup. It was so quiet we could hear the leaves rustle, and the dark pines looked grand in between the white biff and colorful maple that was around us.

Molly started to cry about halfway through a chicken leg. Said she guessed she wasn't hungry after all. I reached over and hugged her hard. Held tight on. "Don't worry, Molly," I said. "We'll bring Grandpa back to Reverend Bush for a rightful burial."

Molly stiffened when a green Dodge slowed down and pulled in a few yards away. Two boys jumped out the back and stood to the rear of the car staring at us. "You mind your manners, boys," a woman yelled out the passenger side. A hefty man pushed himself out the driver's seat, grumbling about how the boys was taking up.

"The younger of the two boys sided over. He looked to be about seven. "Whatcha got there?" he asked Molly. "Chicken," she said. "Want some?" She held out a crisp chicken wing.

He grabbed it and snipped it clean. Then he glanced over to the pickup. Before I could stop him, he run around to the back and hopped up. Started jumping up and down on the crates.

"Wait up," I yelled, scrambling after him. The older boy run over and was right behind me. I turned, grabbed his coat collar, and gave him a yank. Not so his folks could see, mind you. He ran offfast. But when I turned back, the younger boy was bellying over the crates just above Grandpa's head. He looked down. I lunged for him but tripped over a crate. Molly let out a whimper.

I got up and limbed toward the boy. Too late. He'd already reached down and lifted the blanket. He jerked back and stared up at me, his eyes big and wide. Then he looked quick back to Grandpa.

"What's that, Mister?" he asked.

I swear I don't know where it come from, but I heard myself say like in the distance, "It's a scarecrow."

He stood up. "Sure looks real," he said slow. I couldn't say nothing. Just nodded. He vaulted off the side of the pickup and made tracks for his folks, who was sitting at a picnic table.

Molly had to help me get down. "Let's get out of here, Joe," she pleaded.

I figured we'd get to Caribou around seven. It'd be dark by then. Molly put her head back and dozed off after a while.

I started to chew on how we was going to get Grandpa into Effie's bed. Wasn't sure if that woman still lived in Caribou, but figured she must. She would've let Grandpa know if she'd moved so she could collect what little money he still sent her. She was there five years ago when I'd stopped by on a selling trip up north. Glared me at the door at three in the afternoon wearing a dirty bathtub crawling with embroidered butterflies. Looked like a fat blowfly that'd just had its fill.

I asked her how she was. "I could use some money," she whined. "Your Grandpa don't send me enough."

"Grandpa don't havemuch," I said. But my tongue to stop from telling her how miserable he'd been all those years. Couldn't resist one parting shot, though.

"You ever find anyone else to share your bed, Effie?" I asked. "A few," she sniffed, and then slammed the door.

Never did tell Grandpa about the visit. Waited a month, then sent Effie twenty dollars. Figured Grandpa would've if he'd had it.

We got into Caribou at seven. I left the main road that went out by the farm and took the cut off to a narrow dirt road that climbed up and around the back. Molly woke up soon's she felt the bumps. Took ten minutes to reach the farm. Molly wouldn't talk to me. Just kept plucking at the wool of her skirt.

Caught sight of Grandpa's barn below us. I lowered the lights and coasted a couple hundred feet till we was over looking the back. There was a bright spotlight on in front. Stone like a beacon over the leaves heaped high on the roof. What use to be white paint chipped dirty gray off the house. A couple of frights hung from the corner porch rail, and a crooked tub with claw feet leaned on its side in front. Glad Grandpa couldn't see it.

Molly was talking to him like he was still alive. Told him she was sorry for what we was doing. Said, "You know your granddad, Grandpa. No use trying to change his mind."

I didn't say nothing. Told Molly the dead ain't for talking to. I decided to go down and take a look-see. Stuck to the side and peeked through a streaked living room window. Hard as it was to see, couldn't miss Effie's butterfly bathtub. She sat slumped on the couch, her head rolled back and her mouth open. Heard radio music. All of a sudden, her body jerked like she was having a bad dream. Heard her savor after that.

I walked up to the slope to Molly. "Now?" I whispered. I moved some crates and pulled Grandpa out. Molly grabbed onto his ankles. I held him under the arms. It was harder'n I thought it'd be, getting him down the winding path that led to...
the back of the house. The gray wool blanket kept slipping off, and we had to put him down twice to fix it. Molly was breathing real heavy. She stumbled over some brush and muttered a swear word. Surprised me.

We finally reached the bottom and went around front. Stopped and listened at the corner and heard Effie’s snores. Could’ve heard ‘em in the next county. We stuck ‘round to the porch. Figured Effie hadn’t locked the door. People in Caribou don’t.

We had trouble carrying Grandpa up the steps without making noise. The screen door creaked when I opened it. We stopped where we was. Molly looked 

"Who’s there?" Effie shouted from downstairs.

Me and Molly stood shock-still. Seemed like a long time ‘fore we heard Effie scream again.

We carried Grandpa into the bedroom and placed him on the unrumpled side of the bed. Had to move some of Effie’s clothes off to the other side. Molly took the gray wool blanket off Grandpa and folded it under her arm. I slid him under the sheet. Molly pulled a spread up over him from the foot of the bed.

I wiped the sweat off my forehead with my jacket sleeve. Molly was calm. She looked like she wished it was me she was lagging instead of Grandpa.

We passed by the living room, or “parlor” as Effie called it. She was slumped on the couch, her head drooped to her chest. Saw some ripped-up magazine ads and candy wrappers scattered over the braided rug.

We got Grandpa up the stairs to the front bedroom, the one he’d shared with Effie. Molly’s arms was shaking. The bedroom door wasajar and opened easy when I pushed it with my knee.

"Who’s there?" Effie shouted from downstairs.

"They’re for you, Grandpa."

"Thought you didn’t talk to the dead," Molly muttered.

"We climbed down the stairs and tiptoed past the living room. Heard the Lone Ranger shooting ‘em up on the radio. We run back to the pickup and waited.

A half hour later, the spotlight went off in front. Then silence.

Effie’s screams sure sounded shrill in the quiet night. Just kept coming and coming like a broken alarm.

We finally reached the bottom and went around front. Stopped and listened for no account. Marsh beat on her hands with his fists. Effie’s screams sure sounded shrill in the quiet night. Just kept coming and coming like a broken alarm.

We run back down the road to Grandpa’s pickup. Molly got in the driver’s side and wouldn’t let go of the key. She’d locked the doors. Looked like she was there for the night.

We passed by the living room, or “parlor” as Effie called it. She was slumped on the couch, her head drooped to her chest. Saw some ripped-up magazine ads and candy wrappers scattered over the braided rug.

I was not thinking of you.

You would walk up and down the street, shouting, “I’m closing my eyes, come out!”

You would shout, “I’m closing my eyes, come out!”

I would run to another spot and approach you, jumping and laughing.

Now it was your turn to hide —

Me and Molly made it back to Pittston at 3:30 in the morning. Waited till G.A.M. to call Reverend Bush.

He rushed out to see us and didn’t much like it when he saw Grandpa.

"Why didn’t you call me sooner, Joe?" he asked. My mouth opened and closed like a fresh caught fish. Then Molly, who to my knowledge ain’t never told a lie, stretched a truth, looked Reverend Bush bold in the face and said, "Well, Reverend, it’s like this. We been gone. Joe had to deliver a scarecrow up north and it took us a bit longer than we expected. Grandpa was dead when we got back. Reverend Bush lowered his head. Molly put his arm, offered him a cup of coffee, and took him into the kitchen.

We was saying goodbyes when the Reverend turned to me and said, “By the way, Joe. Did the scarecrow work?”

“Sure did, Reverend,” I said. “Sure did. Scared an old crow half to death.”

Susan E. Winslow
So. Portland
in a secretary in a Portland law firm

Waking

Leigh Pout
t was an empty garbage can.

I would lower the lid to just a crack and wait and watch for you.

You would walk up and down the street, peering into alley ways, looking where to find me.

You would shout, “I’m closing my eyes, come out!”

I would run to another spot and approach you, jumping and laughing.

Now it was your turn to hide —

an alley way, a car, someone’s hallway. But that one time, at the funeral home, in Smith and Smith’s garage, you hid in a coffin in storage.

The floor was painted glossy grey and there were big, black cars lined up against the wall. The floor was painted glossy grey and there were big, black cars lined up against the wall.

The funeral director had set you up in a casket and you were covered with a gray cloth. The floor was painted glossy grey and there were big, black cars lined up against the wall.

Waking was like a fresh caught fish. Then Molly, who to my knowledge ain’t never told a lie, stretched a truth, looked Reverend Bush bold in the face and said, "Well, Reverend, it’s like this. We been gone. Joe had to deliver a scarecrow up north and it took us a bit longer than we expected. Grandpa was dead when we got back. Reverend Bush lowered his head. Molly put his arm, offered him a cup of coffee, and took him into the kitchen.

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Susan E. Winslow
So. Portland
in a secretary in a Portland law firm

Waking

We loved most of all hide and seek. I would go first and you would seek me.

You hardly ever found me.

My favorite hiding place was an empty garbage can.

I would lower the lid to just a crack and wait and watch for you.

You would walk up and down the street, peering into alley ways, looking where to find me.

You would shout, “I’m closing my eyes, come out!”

I would run to another spot and approach you, jumping and laughing.

Now it was your turn to hide —

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Delacroix's Blood

Large drops of blood, bright and wet, two horses shying from the scene, a hand both pointing and pulling back, perhaps frightened by some overwhelming truth. But above all the blood on the body hanging on the cross.

A self-portrait, I imagine, this painting of the Crucifixion. The painter feeling blood in his veins burning forth, the lance stirring in himself, penis searching his short life.

"The horses know. They sense the awful moment that has fallen. They pull and, off-canvas, smart and buck against their riders. Their strong bodies feel the futility of muscle and of bone.

That hand bothers me. How at the moment of identification, as in saying "That man is dead!" the consequence had happened. It pulls back. Yes, I cannot see it withdrawing, but I know. It is impossible to miss that horror, and my hand clenches where it hangs.

The painter's hand paints with power strokes, his brush alive and sweeping. It is all motion and might. But he knows. The blood betrays his secret. He knows what dies eventually.

Edward J. Rielly
Westbrook
in charge, Department of English
Saint-Joseph's College

Two Pines

The distant river flows beneath its bridge, Making a pretty scene. The camera sees The view from a high point on a ridge. A stream, surely in her seventies, Stands in the foreground, stiffly, as if pain Comes with each movement. Resolute and severe, She validates her presence, though a vain Effort at ease is obvious. She can hear The camera work, whining its little whine. At once she winces—what has been portrayed? "I wasn't ready yet." As by design, She changes for the phonograph remake: Her entire body droops; she's smiling then, She cocks her head and is a girl again.

Thomas Carper
Comish
Reachcs USM

At the Lake

Eveything changed underwater. Voices the air, the sky the horizon—its mountain silhouette vanished as soon as you ducked your head.

Gravity counted less. Stones sank, but people could float. Even short hair formed one like a mermaid's. Coming back up toward the light after diving deep was close to flying.

I wore a vest near shore, slowly hand under, eyes open in the mild stretch of lake between the shallows where minnows whisked in and out down at once and the dropoff this side of the mud.

Misselshells, twigs, lucky stones on the lake's bottom glowed green as October in the late July sun. Frowning sunfish watched as I paddled, and drifted one with Cousteau and the ocean floor.

I touched a dead leaf and it rose in silence so unlike a sidewalk's dry leaves. "That underwatered birch—when had its bark last been pinched?" At least it was firm underfoot. At the lake's other end you could push an arm down through weeds and mud to the hilt and beyond without even trying.

Deborah Nicklas
Falmouth
Lester

(In Memoriam: Larry Richardson)

At nine already he had a foxed look as if accosted to being hanged,
and his droll blonde hair was scuffed up dungarees.

a fox’s face or rat’s, nose swept back
toward lashless eyes
in sharp contrast to the color of a muddy road.

His dull blonde hair hung down in chumps and his mouth pulled
back like a trap,
showing teeth. Undernourished and scrawny as a chicken wing, he
wore the same plaid shirt
every day, pulled outside scuffed up daggers.
I was new in class; I didn’t know his history
or why the others
and the teacher hated him. Her name was Miss Thomton;
she was fat but very neat.

Her metal braces clanged as she wrote across our papers, sharp nose
sniffing everywhere,

black eyes excited as a terrier’s.
Miss Thomton was Superintendent of the Sunday School
that I attended; one Sunday that same year, she gave out
new Bibles to all the fourth grade class
I was very proud.
Lester missed a lot of school
and when he came.

his nose was always running.
“Lester! Use your handkerchief!”
Miss Thomton knew even though we knew

and Miss Thomton knew
He didn’t have a handkerchief.
Lester was in the slowest reading group so I never
heard him read but sometimes
Miss Thomton called on him
in math or social studies, always so it seemed,

the hardest questions.
“Come on, Lester, think!”
Miss Thomton said, and
her voice was edged
with something hidden,
like a sharpened knife working toward the surface.
The cold white walls
of winter closed us in,
and Lester, when he came to school, snuffled
all the time. “Lester,
“your eyes!”
Miss Thomton said and Lester
wiped his nose across
his sleeve, flat eyes

watching her.
She called on him more frequently. “Lester, you’re not stupid, are you?”

and the knife scraped closer to the surface.
At home I began to dream about Lester
and Miss Thomton. Once in class
I raised my hand when Miss Thomton
called on Lester
even though I didn’t know the answer but she
ignored me and nearly
I just pencilled endless circles
on the desktop, glad that those bright eyes
hadn’t focused on me.
In the spring we heard
that Lester hadn’t passed,
that he would repeat
the year, but when we
gathered in the schoolyard the following September, Lester wasn’t there.

I sometimes wondered later
what became of him. When I was twenty, I saw
the movie, “Midnight Cowboy”
and thought that Ratzo Rizzo was Lester growing old
but now I think that Lester
grew up tall and thin

and that when he was eighteen,
he cheated a little girl
who he shouldn’t have
and went to jail
and the prison doctors
thought he might be suicidal
so they put him
in a cell that measured
6’ by 8’
in maximum security
with a cellmate
who had beaten his retarded girlfriend
with a hammer while
another tortured her.

And I think that Lester
and his cellmate stayed together
in that space
for twenty-three hours
every day until
the other prisoners
heard what Lester did
and began to call him
skinhead and other names
like terriers at
a rat hole
and that they tried him
in accordance with
their rules and
sentenced him
to die and for
three nights
they barred out
their instructions
while Lester’s cellmate
smashed his head
against the toilet
and ripped him
with a toothbrush
and kicked him
in the stomach until
Lester was so black
and blue down there
that even his cellmate
couldn’t bring himself
to kick him anymore.
And I think that
on the fourth night
Lester hung himself
and that the guards
who were kennelled
thirty feet away
and who checked
the prisoners every hour
of those four nights,
heard the shouts.
the howling songs,
the clanging on the bars,
the yelps of pain,
and backed their chairs
against the wall
and stared into
white coffee cups
and into one another’s
eyes, glad
it wasn’t them.
Then the cries were quiet
and silence crept
along the cell block
and pressed upon
the steel plates of the floor
and pushed against the bars
and swelled against the cold
gray walls and grew
and grew until it bulged
along the mental ceiling
and beat upon the iron rivets
of every tiny cell,
silence beating
like a giant sobbing heart
that belonged to nobody.

K.J. MacLeod
Bethel
recently returned home after
20 years exile in N.J.
"There's someone coming over the way," said Mary Fagan to her husband James.

"And who might that be?" James Fagan asked, stubbing tobacco into the bowl of his pipe with his thumb.

"It might be just anybody," Mary Fagan answered, "except someone we know."

"Well step back from the window then before you scare him off," James said.

"Her," Mary said as the someone rapped at the door.

"Not much of a knocker then, is she?" James commented.

"Wsssht," Mary answered him and cracked the door. "Yes?" she said to the someone who was not much of a knocker. "What are you after?"

Mary Fagan studied the young woman in the blue suit from her pointed patent leather toes to the red cap cocked over her right eye. "You might or you might not," Mary said, "once you tell me what you're about here."

"I'm Daniel Fagan's granddaughter, from America," the young woman said.

"I asked the postmistress in Rathpeacon the way to your farm," Mary closed the door. "She says she's Daniel Fagan's granddaughter," Mary whispered to James.

James waved his pipe and shook his head as if the weight of the two burdens might cause him to cave in with weariness. "Well then you'll have to let her in, I guess," he said and sighed.

Mary opened the door enough to admit Daniel Fagan's granddaughter but no further. "So you're Daniel Fagan's granddaughter?" she asked. When the woman nodded, Mary said, "Well, Daniel Fagan's granddaughter, come on in and sit you down."

Daniel Fagan's granddaughter walked into the room and hesitated. Only two straightback chairs furnished the common room, and the man, James Fagan, tilted back in one of them.

"Go on," Mary said. "Sit down." And Daniel Fagan's granddaughter obeyed, sitting down stiffly, directly across from James. She glanced quickly to her side as if she were looking for a spot to set down her purse, but, finding no table, she folded her hands over the patent leather clutch in her lap.

"My name's Ruth," she introduced herself, "Ruth Fagan."

Mary smoothed her white hair back from her temples. "Good morning to you, Ruth Fagan," she said. "That's James Fagan; he'd be your great-uncle, I guess. And I'm your Aunt Mary."

James pulled a long draw on his pipe and nodded in the direction of Ruth.

I'm an exchange student," Ruth said, "From the States. We're on vacation.

"Are you going to be a teacher then?" Mary asked.

"No," Ruth answered. "A writer, I hope. Like Yeats, she added helpfully. "Oh, you're a poet then, Mary said.

"No. Oh no," Ruth said. "I write prose."

"Just what Ireland needs, another American writer living tax free," James grumbled.

"No," Ruth said. "I don't intend to settle here."

"Wsssht," Mary hissed. "Pay him no mind. He's just playing at the grump. Would you like to see the farm then?" she asked.

"I don't know why you want to tromp through the muck," James said tugged at the tuft of his right brow. "Just some sunken old stones."

Ruth Fagan followed Mary over the wet, hilly ground to the rise just above the house. Boulders humped from the ground like stony shoulders, or old headstones whose epitaphs, time, or the soil, had eradged or buried. The ground had claimed the old farmhouse so slowly, so imperceptibly that the progress of the boulders was indeterminable; they might be rising from the field or sinking into it. Mary Fagan nodded toward the stones. "It used to stand a head and shoulders above James. Now he'd have to stoop to go inside."

Ruth ran her palm over a stone window ledge, bending her head forward as if posed to pray.

"James says he isn't sure if the ground is rising or the house is falling," Mary said and laughed.

"Is this where Grampa would have lived?" Ruth asked.

"Sure and it is where all the Fagan boys lived when they were young. It was a sheep farm, you know. They grazed them over there." Mary waved her hand at some unspecified distance. "Daniel, your grandfather, built the house we're in now before he went over. James has lived there ever since. We sold the sheep some years back now. We just couldn't keep on top of the work. And the other brothers, your grandfather Daniel, Joseph, Martin, and young Charles, they all went over to the States, one after another."

Ruth poked her head into the darkness of the hewn window and inhaled the air as if she were trying to memorize its scent, its dampness. "It feels as old as Stonehenge," she said withdrawing her head.

"Well the fairies and the roses have the place now, the lost souls," Mary said. She poked her toe into the snarl of thorny ramblers creeping from the door.

"Nobody else wants it to be sure. Our son, Jackie, won't have ought of it. He's in the forestry. God bless him. He helps us keep body and soul together."

"Thank you for showing it to me," Ruth said.

"Not much to show," Mary said with a glance at Ruth's feet. "Mind the muck," she said, "and watch your feet in this muck, dear. You'd have to lose the shine."

When Mary and Ruth entered the house, James was sitting in his chair by the fireplace. A glassful of amber, balanced on his knee, winked in the light of the
James opened the door. "You saw it then; did you?" he asked.

"Oh yes," Ruth said. "Thank you very much. It was lovely."

"Lovely," James repeated. "Well, help yourself to a tot."

Ruth lifted her refracted gaze carefully and again tossed the whisky off in a single shot. She smiled at James and lowered her hand to the second chair— gingerly, deliberately, as if she were seating an invalid. If the room had been brighter, or if Mary had been nearer, she might have seen the gleeful gleam of drunkenness glassing over the green of Ruth's eyes. But the room was dark and Mary was busy glaring at James who was glaring back at her as she collected the empty glasses in an enamel basin. James fetched two more stout from the cupboard, the one to anesthetize himself to the bum of Mary's glare, the other, to thunk if Mary had been nearer, she might have seen the gleeful gleam of drunkenness.

"Outside?" Ruth asked, then giggled and said, "how quaint.

"Ladies' room?" James echoed.

"It's the door and off to your left," Mary said, crooking her thumb.

"Outside?" Ruth asked, then giggled and said, "how quaint.

Mary sighed as Ruth stood, wobbling on her patent leather boots. "Will you need a hand, dear?"

"Oh no. I'm fine. Really I am," Ruth said, and scurried off.

Mary paused a moment and then scolded James in a whisper, "Aren't you the fine one offering the girl whisky at ten o'clock in the morning?"

James held a lit match to the bowl of his pipe. "The girl came for a bit of Irish."

"Oh dearie, sure I was afraid of that," Mary fumed. "Maybe we can tackle it back on you.

Ruth laughed. "Don't bother. Really I'll make a great souse. I'll be easier to walk on now anyway. Maybe I can crack the other one off," and she flexed her skinny palm back and forth in her hands.

"Oh don't go and do that now," Mary said, guiding Ruth back to her chair.

"Why don't you sit down a bit and put on your shoes," she coaxed, "and Aunt Mary will fix you a nice cup of tea.

Ruth slumped into the chair like a rag doll, flopping her legs up in the air. "So," she said.

James drew on his pipe, then said, "Daniel never reproached me. I stayed as long as I could bear it, helping Daniel tend the roses. But the smell of the roses made me long for the old farm here in Cork. I took my earnings, and bought my passage back, and Daniel never said a word.

"Well," Mary said, "who's ready for a bit of nice, hot tea?"

Ruth Fagan left after tea. Mary watched her hobble off the way to town on her uneven legs.

"Why did she come, do you think?" she asked half to herself.

"The same as all the other nieces and nephews who've come poking around from America," James said. "Looking for the Irish soul they fear their great grandmothers might have left behind."

"And weren't you laying it on a bit thick with the breakfast whisky, and 'Oh, we don't bother with the Brits down here in Cork?' Mary asked.

James laughed. "And aren't you the one to talk now, Mary Jane Fagan," he said. "I suppose you weren't towing it on with your 'Oh is Oxford a school now?' His voice rose in falsetto to the question mark.

Mary laughed and made a brooding motion with her hands. "Well, you'll be the character in her Irish story when she goes home now for certain, drinking whisky in the morning and getting the girl half fuddled.

Mary smiled. "She did favor Daniel a bit; don't you think?"

Mary squinted as if she were trying to see through the darkness into the past. "I barely recollect the man," she said. The two fell quiet. Then Mary broke the silence. "They all died so close together," she said, "God rest their souls, almost as if Daniel led them off."

"He always was the brave one," James said, "always the first."

James Fagan's voice drew Mary to his chair to where she bent over him and pressed her palms lightly against his cheeks. "There's all kinds of bravery. James Fagan," she said, "and don't you forget it! 'She kissed his forehead. 'It's no small thing to be a man who knows himself and where he belongs, it's a courageous man who finds his own way home.' "

In the village of Rathpeacon an American woman climbed into her rented motor car. The car drove off into the Irish countryside. And the woman inside whisked to herself as she went trotting down the wrong side of the road.

Joan C. Connor
Chebeague Island
Is writing her first novel.
turtle god

He rides north on Chase Pond Road.
The temperature pushes ninety-five,
but he bikes on past Conrad Small's farm.

When there before him,
smack dab in the middle of the road,
is a painted turtle.

No cars in sight
as he turns back.
He lays his bike down
on the gravelly shoulder.

Stepping midroad
he grabs the little fella
by its sides.

It kicks and flails.
He sets it gently into
the roadside leaves.

Once righted
the turtle looks back
and winks
so that's what He looks like
I thought he'd be taller.

Dan Rothermel
York
Teaches at Fitchburg Middle School

What He Kept

records though he didn't have
a record player; his daughter's
paintings, his potteries,
the cactus painting like a finger
(phallic and admonitory) in the living room,
rocks from Presidential birthplaces,
the painting of a seagull he found
at the dump, his great-great-grandfather's
grapes and bell buckle from
the Civil War, a lamp of low-fire
clay—"true Maine clay," he called it
that he had fired at stoneware
in maine with temperatures until the clay had melted
and glazed itself half-brown,
half green, and fused into the kiln shelf
which he smoothed and saved as well;
many woven baskets with leather handles,
a 1903 dictionary, two volumes,
heavy, leather-bound; the carcass
of a rat that had been
shoes the rats
had dragged behind the rafters,
and saved as well;
many woven baskets with leather handles,
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had dragged behind the rafters,

K.J. MacLeod
Bethel
Recently returned home
after 20 yrs. exile in N.J.

Geist

I seem to be leaving the houses of friends and lovers these days
without saying anything; I just get up and walk out the door, that's
it. What used to irritate me was how much I talked, lingered over
goodbyes like the last mouthful of a particularly satisfying cup of
coffee, to have—for inexplicable reasons—the final word in the
exchange. In exchange for? Now I turn the lock and slip away. Now I
put on my clothes and make outside another point on the linear
progression from bed to banister to foyer, completed in silence.
Now I turn my back on the gestures and the words usually in place
there, at the door, and go. And that does disturb me.

Deborah Stiles
Enfield

...is a graduate student in history at UMO

Coin

stacked up by clouds
to glide down a pipe in the path
so we drink at six,

Frances Downing Vaughan
North Marshfield, MA
is a retired textbook editor
who summers on Monhegan

Stacking Wood

September, and the bite
of autumn. That air, scented
by the smoke of any stranger's stove,
and I think of stacking wood.

I spend all day in the cellar, where
spiders spin white traps
and the stink of wet earth is
heavy as a lie.
And I love it, the way I love
being in a forest with the sun going down.
Sometimes I stand there
among the pulpy debris
and watch the pile swell
with every lichen-filled log tossed
from the bulkhead above.
But I know the feel of gnarled,
knotty wood, aged
and reckless as time, and it always
starts me stacking again.

Stacking, the weight of the chords
putting a fine sweat on my brow.
Stacking, the smell of earth
forcing itself in and out of my lungs.
Stacking, and thinking
we are so much of this earth,
that, and
our attachment to it,
we can come down anytime
helpless as the tree
stacking down the cellar stairs in pieces.

Allison Childs Wells
Ithaca, NY
is a Wennerbom native, UMO grad.
Eben's Fling

When Eben came into the library to return Flora's book, the first thing he noticed was the new librarian, Opal Teasdale. Eben's friend, Tommy White, had said that she was a "looker," but Eben had no idea how pretty she was until he saw her there in the library. Her blond hair was piled on the top of her head in a beehive hairstyle. She wore wire-framed glasses perched on the end of her long, straight nose. Her prominent teeth pushed her lips forward into a perpetual pucker.

Tommy White had been trying to take Opal out ever since she had come to town, but she wouldn't go with him. "I bet she'd go out with me if I wasn't married," Eben had said.

Despite his prominent nose and Adam's apple, his weak chin, his thin gray hair plastered to the top of his skull, Eben was under the illusion that he was an uncommonly good-looking fellow.

"Women can hardly resist a good-looking man like me," he would say.

And there he was, staring at Opal across her desk, and she looking back at him. As he told Tommy White later, "It was like something passed between us."

Eben knew right away, despite his marriage vows, his heart had been pierced by Cupid's golden arrow.

Opal took the book that he handed her without looking at it. She never took her eyes from his face for a second.

"Can I help you find another book?" she asked.

Then she had to repeat her question. Eben was so intent on gazing into Opal's deep blue eyes that her question didn't register in his mind. He hadn't intended to get a book at all. He was merely returning Flora's book. But the words, inspired by the feelings in his freshly pierced heart, tumbled out unplanned.

"Ayuh," he said. "I'd like a book of poems, love poems."

"Ah," she smiled, displaying her buck teeth, "I could tell as soon as I saw you that you were a man of sensitivity."

She took him to the stacks of the almost deserted library, and he stood next to her while she searched the shelves for an appropriate book. She was standing so close that he could smell her hair. He could feel the warmth radiating from her body just a fraction of an inch from him.

Then she found the book, Poems for Lovers, and handed it to him. As he took the volume from her, their fingers touched briefly.

Two evenings later Flora was getting ready to watch "The Gathering Storm" on TV. Eben said he was going to the library.

"How come you started going to the library all of a sudden!" Flora asked.

Two evenings later Flora was getting ready to watch "The Gathering Storm" on TV. Eben said he was going to the library.

When love swept in on bended wing,
It touched my lips before I knew it;
When I beheld thee that first time,
I knew with thee I'd taste delight.

I waited breathless for the night
And made it sing.

As he drove his old pick-up to the library, he thought about the differences between Flora and Opal. Opal was quiet and refined, where Flora was loud and crude. Opal was so thin that her bones were almost visible, whereas Flora was heavy. Opal seemed so gentle, but Flora was always complaining about something.

Even as he thought those things, Eben had no intention of starting anything with Opal. Yet, if he hadn't been married, he knew something would develop between them.

After he got to the library, he looked at Opal and felt that spark leap across the room between them. They were the only ones in the library, and in a few minutes they were in the stacks where the poetry books were shelved.

Opal pulled a book from the shelf and thumbed through it until she found the page she wanted.

"Here's a poem I've always loved," she said, and she started reading it aloud to Eben.

When love swept in on bended wing,
It touched my heart and made it sing.

When I beheld thee that first time,
I felt I'd drunk the sweetest wine.

And when our souls began to twine,
I knew our love would be so fine.

Opal's eyes as she read were not on the page. She knew the poem by heart, and she gazed into Eben's eyes as she spoke the words, oh so softly.

They moved closer together, the book of poetry the only thing that separated them now. She continued speaking the lines of the poem as she dropped the book to the floor.

I knew with thee I'd taste delight
I waited breathless for the night . . .

She stopped speaking the lines of the poem, and they closed their eyes as they moved their faces close to each other. They puckered their lips.

Actually it was just Eben who puckered up since Opal's prominent teeth forced her lips into that perpetual pucker.

Just as Eben felt the warmth of Opal's lips, though they were not yet touching his, the front door of the library opened, and several children scampered in.

As Eben drove home, he thought about what had almost happened. He had never intended for things to go as far as they had. He had never intended anything. What had almost happened had come about unplanned. He decided that he would not go back to the library anymore because he did not think he would be able to resist temptation when it came his way again. Having made that decision, he rested his hand on the book of poems that lay on the seat beside him. It was the book that Opal had been reading from.

"I'll have to go back at least one more time," he said aloud. He'd have to go back to return the book.

He was back in the library on Saturday morning. He chose Saturday because he knew there would be kids in the library, and he would be less likely to fall into temptation.

He had planned to return the book and leave immediately, but before he could get away, Opal said to him, "I have some poems that I wrote myself, some love poems. Maybe you could come to my house and read them sometime."

Eben was not prepared for that particular temptation. If he had been prepared, he might have been able to plan a defense, but as it was, the temptation took him by surprise and overwhelmed him.

"Are you doing anything Thursday night?" Opal insisted.

"No," he said, "I ain't got nothing planned for Thursday night."

Not only did he not have anything planned for Thursday, but it was the second Thursday of the month. That was the night that Flora went to her meeting of the Daughters of Demeter.

Although Eben suffered pangs of guilt all week, on Thursday night as soon as Flora left for her meeting, Eben started to get ready. He put on some of that sweet-smelling after shave that his sister-in-law had given him for Christmas. He put on his suit, the one with the bold brown and blue checks. He put on his favorite tie, the one with the large pink and green flowers. He put on his favorite tie, the one with the large pink and green flowers.

Then he thought about writing a poem. He had written poetry once. That was before he had married Flora. He got a piece of paper and pencil and sat down at the kitchen table. He thought for a few minutes, and then he started writing.

When he finished, he folded the paper and put it in his pocket. He drove to the library and stopped. He pulled the paper out of his pocket and read it over before he dropped it into the book return slot.

When Opal opened the library the next day, she would find the note which read:

Dear Opal,
If we would of met before I was married, we would of got on something wicked, but as it is, you deserve something better. Someone who ain't already married.

I ain't planning on coming to the library no more, but I want you to know, when you was reading that poem to me, it was some elegant.

Carl Perrin
Portland
Teaches English at Casco Bay College
Why Artists Give Up

By the age of 29 Carol wanted to get her teeth fixed. "I'm buying my dentist a boat," she complained to a friend. The friend laughed and said that sounded like the first line of a song if ever there was one. So Carol wrote one, a spoof of Country & Western ditties that was swallowed whole at one bar on the south side of town. The rest of that winter she sang that song down there and the cowboy element of east central Pennsylvania took her to heart, all those grandsons of Lithuanian coal miners and German farmers. Carol began to fear that she might succeed as a country singer. Indeed it did change her life.

She hated country music after her spoof that they didn't get, she had nothing but ballads and blues, a good sprinkling from oldies of King Cole and naturally her own stuff. A couple thousand she figured, but very very little Country. All night long they dwell our forgotten country number or another and she'd try to keep them satisfied--with City of New Orleans, some Joni Mitchell, some Bonnie Raitte. It helped that she had her own following of friends—they helped set up her equipment, set up the sound board and adjusted it as the crowd grew. These would always gather around her in the front tables, fending her away from the drunks—at least they always could, at the other clubs where she sang. Those were small places.

The Lazy G—owned by Pat Gallagher—had its platform/ stage against a wall, with tables on all three sides. Carol had always worked out of a corner but at the Lazy G she saw right away that if the crowd grew too tight and too much beer started flowing she could be trouble. She'd have drunks insisting on playing a duet with her. The Lazy G crowd wanted to yell EE-HAH and drink like fish out behind her with each awkward and when she came in the doors she looked like a refugee from Woodstock. She wore a ragged denim jacket thick with patches, ragged denim pants, and a ragged unattractive mop of hair. Beneath the open jacket she appeared to be wearing a black shapeless leotard with wide green suspenders. No bra. Small nipples poked through the leotard atop small breasts. She was tall; he had noticed this about her at how she watched her playing at that other place. He called her to her face and searched for his face in the inside dimness. She loomed down the aisle toward him with long bushy strides, her hair bobbing out behind her with each awkward and forward lunge. When she removed her denim jacket and put on a pair of black elbow-length gloves with the fingertips cut off, she would be in her stage outfit. A Punk refinement of a sex object to me," he said.

"So you said it but you didn't say it," he sighed. "Listen," he said, "I want you in here because I want to build my business in a different direction. I don't like the kind of people it attracts. I want to make it a little more like a coffee house, except you can't have a coffee house in Ashton. So I'll go for better grade of entertainment." She didn't seem to take the compliment so he spoke more directly. "I'm saying I want you to play here, understand? You play blues, blue; you're a good blues player."

"On the other hand I'm not going to throw all the bucks away either. So I'm going to stay with the country rock bands on Saturday nights. If you make it out on Thursdays I'll start giving you some Fridays— and if we get the Friday crowd it's a hundred fifty for these nights. Other nights, there's not much business. Seventy-five or a hundred."

"I want Fridays. I'm not going to play Wednesday and Thursday."

"You have to play Thursday. I thought I told you that.

"I'll play Thursday but I want Friday too."

He hesitated a second. She doesn't want to play here, he thought. "It's not a matter of whether I [like you or not, you know, personally like you. If people aren't in here though I can't pay you."

"In other words, I'm going to get a part of the door."

"In other words, your success is tied to how much business you can bring in."

"He couldn't help smiling, in response to her directness, her toughness. He always found strength in a woman; very attractive. As she considered his offer, he was looking into her eyes, those midnight eyes he had watched singing into her microphone. Those wonderful eyes sometimes closed and she would become transported, a soul singing out, angels and completely beautiful."

"Now about the music—listen, understand your problem. I know that late at night some guy will say after anyone or say anything. I swear," he added quickly, "not that you're not good-looking—you're up there on stage with lights on you and some guy, they have a few drinks, they think any woman looks great— I mean they'll say things, regret later—I mean they'll say anything you know to make time—listen why the hell are you taking everything I say the wrong way?"

"I didn't say anything," she said insolently. "What in particular did you say that you feel you should apologize for?"

"I don't if you don't want to work here, say so. Let's stop the jerkin' around."

"I'm not playing games with you," she said.

"And one thing about what you're going to wear—what you have on now isn't going to get anybody to cross the street to hear you. You gave good looks so why the hell don't you just admit it. But if you want to dress like this, UK. Only I gotta say it wouldn't hurt anything to get your hair done."

She was cold now. "I had it done last week," she said.

"So you said it but you didn't say it."

"I'm not asking you to do that," he said. "I'm hiring you to come in and do your thing."

"You look like too much of a sex object to me," he said.

"She showed him up straight.

"No, you know what I mean: you're not here to wear shirts open down to your waist and miniskirts and that stuff."

"I won't do that.

"I'm not asking you to do that," he said. "I'm hiring you to come in and do your music, and I want people to come in here and listen because you're here, and drink up and have sandwiches."

"What do you mean you're hiring me? I thought we were just talking."

"He was surprised that he'd put that badly already but there it was. "Do you want the job?"

"She chewed on her upper lip. "You said you'd give me a hundred fifty a night?"

"I said if everything went right, you could make maybe that much."

""You're hiring me? I thought we were just talking."

"Every time she walked by him he noticed her; if he was doing the books, deep in his problems down at the end of the bar, when she walked in, he'd know she'd entered his presence. They shot glances off each other that dodged the other's reality.

"I understand you, he wanted to say, I understand being young, being alone, having ambition, struggling for higher achievement. I know the whole long business of whittling your dreams down to shapes that make reality. Living in the normal world of tarts and acrobats every day set having a trip with better world, where everything is truer than those things that happen.

"After three weeks he gave her the $150 a night on Fridays. People started asking when she would play again. "Next week, same time," he started answering without hesitation. She played steadily for eight weeks, Thursday and Friday. Last April she had a crowd done on a mosaic, over canal a few weeks later—before the end of May a different "do" for her hair.

"The changes had taken place before he'd realized they really were changes.
People started to come while Gallagher and Carol were still doing this. The door opened and seemed not to shut for ten minutes. They came by twos and threes and small knots of single young men. Some wore black leather jackets, some wore cowboy hats, some I am not sure about and work shoes, some canteens shaker mugs with short hair and dress pants—and there were enough good looking women to keep a hundred single men drinking all night. Gallagher's spirits spiraled up as he watched them walk in; he greeted them by name, struck up short conversations.

It's hard not to like people who are pouring money into your pockets. The dollar signs were already jangling in Gallagher's head and just like Carol he couldn't tell if he believed that or not. "Um, I want to apologize for my appearance—'one catcall, two whistles'—but I came right from work so didn't have time to go home and get filthy. Anyway I'm sorry to interrupt your conversation but I want to share with everybody sort of a personal tragedy that happened to me recently."

Gallagher's stomach tightened. "What?"

"When I went back inside Carol was there at the mike trying to get people to listen to her. 'Hey you there in the checked shirt—you anybody could you get the attention of these people at this table here. Yeah there I your sorry to interrupt your conversation but I want to share with everybody sort of a personal tragedy that happened to me recently.'"

"Gallagher's stomach tightened. What?"

"She looked around the room. 'Wow isn't this something, standing around in here tonight. Sweating.' Gallagher winced. "But it's fun too."

"Carol wondered if she believed that or not. "Um, I want to say... I want to apologize for my appearance—'one catcall, two whistles'—but I came right from work so didn't have time to go home and get filthy. Anyway I'm sorry to interrupt your conversation but I want to share with everybody sort of a personal tragedy that happened to me recently.'"

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"Gallagher's stomach tightened. What?"
She stayed at the Lazy Gancho another two months. Gallagher had started shopping around for another singer right after that night. Found one pretty quick, too, quicker than he’d expected. He planned to tell Carol he wanted to change things around a little, maybe have Carol do some Saturday nights if she just agreed to do more blues, at least things people could move to. If he could move this new girl into Wednesdays and Thursdays and balance things off between her and Carol, hey... the Hollywood fantasies...

Instead Carol said she really didn’t want to play here any more. “I’m really not that interested in the idea. I’ll play on for another month or so if you want me to—I’m not just going to walk out and let you empty Pat you’ve been a pretty good guy—but don’t include me in any more of your plans.”

“I don’t believe it! You, jealous of another performer!”

“It’s not jealousy—we’ll yeah there’d always be that, but I wouldn’t let jealousy interfere with playing.”

“So what is it?”

She sighed. “I’m just tired. I’ve been thinking a lot, just don’t want to play here any more.”

“So where are you going to play? Back where you used to? You can’t move backwards—you know that.”

“Yes,” she said, “I know that. You’re right, I was thinking about going back there but no, I guess I can’t.”

“So? What then?”

“Maybe it’s time for me to give it up. I’m tired.”

“Oh come on Carol. What do you expect me to do—sit here and talk you out of it? You mean you’re going to give up music? You can’t!”

“I got an offer for a regular job.”

“Secretary?” he scoffed.

“Manager,” she corrected. “I have a friend with a couple music stores down in Philly and he wants me to manage one. I could still play. I wouldn’t have to teach. It’s something I could make a whole living at.”

“So you’d be leaving town anyway.”

She thought it over a few seconds and stood up. “Yep, I just decided, face and now.”

“You cried!” he said as she turned away. “I want you here.”

She turned back. “You know what I just picked up on—what made me decide just this minute! Cause I’d been thinking it over a couple of weeks—I got the offer a couple weeks ago.”

“OK then I won’t hire this other girl—”

“That wasn’t it either.” She turned fully toward him and leaned over slightly.

“Do you realize,” she said, “that it never occurred to you for even a second that I might have had a better gig somewhere else! That’s what did it.”

And with that she walked slowly away, while Gallagher wordlessly watched.

Licking it Clean

She likes the slenderness of words,
I, the few—
the endless ways of using them
in rich sauces, fondues, mappings;
She opens them up
like hams on their ribs, their organs
knows the 206 bones of a word.
Doctor and dreamer—

And with that she walked slowly away, while Gallagher wordlessly watched.

Blues Healing

I spit feelings into you
vinegar-branched soulmate
I scratch pain into your mouth
as you kiss me patiently in return
I shake you like Hione korkp
showing the blues into you
when youELY in
until you take on my suffering
and pay dearly with your own life
and when you are dead and departed
I do the same thing to your brother.

Conversation

Overheard on the Train

... okay, so,
there was this bum on the street, see,
and he was standing right in front of me, see,
and then there in front of my very eyes,
he spit, spit right on my fancy jacket
well you can imagine my disgust.
I just looked down at it
not quite knowing what to do.
there it was on my jacket dripping down,
and I didn’t want to wipe it off,
cause that would just be like
boiling down in front of him.
so I stood there like that,
his spit dripping down my jacket,
and he grinned at me.
big stupid grin with one tooth missing.
and there’s a steady drip
of barbiturates
...
Hand Stories

My brother taught me to shake hands.
Take a fistful of metacarpal
lock eyes like you shouldn’t
with strange dogs, then lightly crush.

I have been told never to walk
with my hands in my pockets.
I might need them for balance.
I might need them for defense.

My hand was a family
each finger a member:
Father, in the middle, stood tallest.
Grandfather, the thumb, bent
low in a wheelchair.
Grandmother pointed between her husband and son,
and Momma wore the ring
pressing in my side.

Who hasn’t, with a lover,
compared hand size
as an excuse for touching?

Once we traced our hands with crayons
to make turkeys,
colored them like poecocks.
Each finger waved, a vibrant feather.

In kindergarten I cast my hands in plaster.
Today I pressed my hand
into that shape of childhood.
Final as a gloveful of fishbone,
my hand reaches out.

Lisa Holbrook
Ann Arbor, MI
grad. Bowdoin, taught at UMF

Withdrawal

I pulled her off like shoes
left on for too long,
crammed eyes rejecting
at registered freedom,
compressed flesh expanding
into liberatized sponge,

my next step
the punishment
of tendering broken glass

Glen McKee
Waterville
write, write, cogitate

Winter Pearl

This earth, this pearl
in essence glazed around us, ice and snow,
swell and season of wind, rattle of brittle twig
no sign of life, bare polish of moonlight—

In this vast indescent shell of sky
are we the irritant speck of sand,
something to smooth over, to encase
so we leave, rolling in a stranger’s hand?

Inlay of wintertide, chasing of silverflow
jeweler’s dream egg, pearl round,
mother-of-pearl earth, ice ground.

Catharine S. Baker
Spruce Head
is a free-lance writer

Sex Education

My seventh-grade sister
still wore a double A bra
when my fourth-grade body
decided to announce itself
to family, friends and classmates.
I felt like an engraved invitation
that advertised desire in braille.
The A cup spelled out double D.
Domined if I did, the support lifting me
unnatural heights
that angled this alien flesh
in the direction of everyone’s face.

In school I held my history book
straight up and stamped my shoulders
cupping the saucers that rested
on pages telling me for the first time
about Puritans and Salem Witch Trials.
I stared at Mrs. Blake’s passionate serrin
by refusing to sit beside Danny.
The dark hair outlining his upper lip
witched in sinful insight.
If he brushed my body
it might mean I liked it.

I was not like Lois
who had already kissed two boys.
Her breasts were in the fourth row
third seat from the front.
I religiously measured them each time
I patrolled to the pencil sharpener.
Did she notice mine the way I noticed hers?
We had bras in common, but that was all
except for our single mothers.
Hers slept around.
Mine had a sleep-over boyfriend.
I wanted to press my breasts back in
and be like everyone else.
Not like Lois.

At night I undressed quickly
in the room I shared with my sister.
We pretended to be asleep
as we listened to bedroom sounds
squeezing through our wall.
Sadness separated so
so I couldn’t ask
if she hated me.

Annice Cameron
Camden
teaches English

Socks

I awake cold, my shirt
Damp, and I remember
You would wear socks
To bed, all cotton
And yellow, rolled down
From soft, porcelain
Cylves and a faint, blue vein,
Pure and ethereal,
Like the sky in the eyes
Of Fra Angelico’s saints,
Rolled down over
Ankle.
Then with covers,
Tight, you’d shed
Each sock in a bunch, at
The bottom of the bed.
Sometimes, it’s always
The cold of night,
That causes words
To rattle from sleep
And conjure images,
Once warm

M.H. Walsh
Brunswick
teaches at Lincoln Academy
The three of them had been on the road an entire night and day. Once they finished, they couldn't keep their hands on the steering wheel when their eyes finally stopped moving. Once again, she thought about throwing out the wide wedding band clutched into her fingers. That would be foolish, though, wasteful. She could always sell the ring if their money ran out, the money she'd stolen from Murray's supposedly-secret poker stash.

Emily's attention snapped back to the present when Jalacy jangled another cacophonous tape into the deck. Jalacy's long thin fingers with their black lacquered nails kept the beat, drumming soundlessly against her fishnetted stockings. In the rearview mirror, Damon's profile was edged in flickering light. His eyes were closed; his head moved in time as he played air guitar. Emily had known for some time she'd end up having to leave Murray, but she'd thought it would be a simple matter, the end tied up nice and neat by lawyers. Now this flight down the east coast and across the whole country to Arizona, so far from a distance for a country mouse like herself that she wondered if the money would last. Or the car. Or her determination.

They'd have a good headstart, although they'd been in Boston before she stopped panicking at every set of headlights looming in the murky twilight; they hadn't had much chance to get acclimated. Emily had known for some time she'd end up having to leave Murray, but she'd thought it would be a simple matter, the end tied up nice and neat by lawyers. Now this flight down the east coast and across the whole country to Arizona, so far from a distance for a country mouse like herself that she wondered if the money would last. Or the car. Or her determination.

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Damon hunched closer to the black guitar and went on picking. Blood rose in Murray's stubby face, and one workbooted foot swung forward and crashed into the grill of the small Cortina amp. Electronic feedback became crackling static became silence.

"You bastard," said Damon softly, cold as ice.

Murray turned. "What did you say, boy?"

Damon dropped the guitar on the bed and sprang at his father. Murray pushed him away with one muscular forearm. His other hand grabbed the guitar by its slender neck and brought it down against the cabinet of the raised amp. The sound of splintering wood rose in the air, and then the moan of strings like a creature in pain.

"The guitar descended again, and Damon with the strength of the berserk tore it from his father's hands. His chest rose and fell unevenly as he gulped down ragged breaths, the guitar behind him, hidden, protected.

"You're our fool, you son of a bitch," said Murray. He grabbed Emily by the elbow and pulled her from the room.

---

A golden afternoon two days later found them in Austin, Texas. Emily was starting to feel hopeful. Arizona was getting close.

"You're going to make it, you old country gal," said Emily to her. Murray, she told herself when Jalacy said, "Take the next exit."

She'd changed lanes automatically at the time the words sank in. "Where are we going?"

"It's a surprise."

Howard's" murmured Damon, but Jalacy didn't answer. They made so many turns Emily was sure they'd never find their way back to the interstate.

"Pull it here," said Jalacy, "and wait." She was up the apartment-house steps and gone in a flash.

"You going to tell me about this?" Emily asked Damon.

"We lived here once. Ma was with us."

They made so many turns Emily was sure they'd never find their way back to the interstate.

"Write me. Mother won't."

Jalacy said, "Take it from your father's hands. His chest rose and fell unevenly as he gulped down ragged breaths, the guitar behind him, hidden, protected."

"You're out of luck, you son of a bitch," said Murray. He grabbed Emily's wrist. "I'll explain what she did when I get back."

Jalacy's lips trembled, but her angular chin didn't. She held the torn camisole right across her chest. Big kohl-tinted teardrops rolled down her cheeks and dripped on her hands like a slow rain.

---

Two more days brought Emily and Damon to Phoenix, where they took 17 north to Sedona. Since the departure of his sister, Damon had barely spoken; silence reigned down upon them like the Clarkdale blues. He had resurrected the broken guitar from its case in the trunk, and sat holding it in his lap, staring at its muteness.

They entered the grounds of the ashram. This was it, then. Here she was, alone, thousands of miles from Maine, without a single friend or even acquaintance. The cash stash she'd taken from Murray's gun cabinet had grown slender as a thread; she'd probably be best off to sell the tattered old Torino and take the Greyhound home.

Home. A shock to realize she didn't have one any more, not with brutal, once-desirable Murray, nor with her stalling parents, who had never forgiven her for marrying and leaving them. Was this drifting, empty feeling what Damon and Jalacy had felt, strangers in Maine on a spring afternoon?

The slender, white-clad man who greeted Emily and Damon laid his hands together and gracefully shook his head. Starr's Hutchinson had left three weeks ago with a young sculptor from Wyoming. The ashram had no forwarding address.

Back in the car, Emily laid her hands on the steering wheel and studied them. The white stripe where her wedding band had been seen around the trees, and the three of them stood face to face on the crumbling sidewalk.

"I know you hate goodbyes, little brother," said Jalacy, giving Damon a quick hug. "Write me. Mother won't. See you on TV, when we're famous."

He mumbled something, planted a quick kiss on her cheek, and retreated to the car.

"Well," said Emily.

"Well," said Jalacy. She touched Emily's shoulder. "You've been awful good to us. Thanks. —I like you a lot."

"You'll be okay!"

Jalacy nodded. "Howie said to live with Mother. He's a good guy. Never touched me once."

"What will you do?"

"Go to the University. Howie's in the art department. Jill, too."

"Good luck," said Emily. What was she there to say to this girl who had already survived more chaos than Emily ever expected to face? They hugged each other, hard.

"Here," said Jalacy. "This'll take you back to 35. You look after Damon, okay?"

"Okay," Emily studied the pen-and-ink map. Chugging along the interstate was a tiny Torino with three outboard likenesses—here, Jalacy's, and Damon's—leaping through the windows and waving. And laughing. They were all laughing.

Emily had been fifteen minutes from home when she remembered she'd forgotten the brochures for the Friends of the Library June Fair and Tea. It was a hassle going back, but she was so proud of the drawings Jalacy had done that she didn't care. She pushed open the front door, aware at once that something was wrong, some kind of cracking malevolence in the still June air.

She ran up the stairs. Murray must be after Damon again, she thought, but he won't get away with it this time. I won't let him. But Damon's room was empty. She pushed open the half-closed door to Jalacy's room, unprepared for the rush of images that greeted her. Murray, dark blood welling sluggishly from a line that ran down the left side of his face from cheekbone to jaw, was reaching with one hand for the old-fashioned straight razor Jalacy held at arm's length behind her. Her red satin camisole was ripped open; the fingers of Murray's other hand twisted deeply into the creamy flesh of one of her high young breasts.

"Cut me again, you little bitch," he said. Drops of blood spattered star-shaped against Jalacy's face as he spoke.

Jalacy stood motionless, trust, her back arched like a bow, her knuckles white as she grabbed the razor. "I'll fucking cut it off," she said, and Emily saw that Murray's jaws were undone. "This is the last time."

"Oh," cried Emily. Her voice cracked loud and sudden into the silent room. How many times? How many times? Murray and Jalacy turned towards her like a pair of sleepwalkers.

Murray pulled a handkerchief from his pocket, and held it to his cheek. His eyes widened at the dark blood that spread across the white cotton. "I'm gonna go get patched up," he said, hitching at his jeans. He grabbed Emily's wrist. "I'll explain what she did when I get back."

Jalacy's lips trembled, but her angular chin didn't. She held the torn camisole right across her chest. Big kohl-tinted teardrops rolled down her cheeks and dripped on her hands like a slow rain.

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In revising her first novel

Catherine J.S. Lee

Eastport
Tenants Harbor

In the twilight silence
on the quiet sea
only the clack, clack
spondees of the rigging
measures the rocking
irregular rise of waves
on the flat water.

Richard Lyons

The Logger

He steps into the snow—
hair and beard
spotted with white flakes,
wood snow from the
chain saw.
Shirt, layered plaid on green,
tread rips in sleeves,
small of sharp resin.
Rolled jeans, knees worn
expose brown, sap-glued
bark chips on once
white leggings.

His thick tongue
rolls between tobacco teeth,
searing in broken
French-English, "cigarettes."
I reach for the
carton of Pall Mall his
dirt-packed fingernail
nudges towards.
From red socks
he draws out Queen Elizabeth,
but I shake my head
and point to the sign,
"American Only."

Breath exhaled,
he searches breast, jean,
cost pockets, drawing more
crest-stamped bills.
Shaking a storm of white
onto the wooden counter
he turns for the screened door,
I push the canons into
called hands;
his rosy,
bows thick lashes.

The logging truck,
grows from the soft shoulder,
slatted wagon box
from the shifting weight
of naked trees.
I watch dust clouds
rise on the Rumford road;
I can smell the mill,
sick and egg-rotten, forty
miles to the south.
He'll be back later for
food to stoke the furnace.

Stephanie M. Eleftheriou

Bar Harbor

is a Senior from

College, Northampton, MA.
The World Above the Sky

Even in death Peter-Paul was envious. His ghost always appeared to Truman in the shape of a rabbit or as a flock of crows never in human form. Thirty years of life inside the bones and muscles of a man had been more than enough for Peter-Paul.

When I died, his ghost told Truman, I peeped off my skin like a corn husk. You were always an ugly bastard,” his brother agreed.

Peter-Paul’s nightly visits were preceded by a flurry of dead leaves from the maple tree which bent over his grave. Spectral winds blew the leaves three hundred and fifty miles from Lennox Island, Canada to Portland, Maine where they settled like a brittle blanket over his brother’s sleeping body. Inevitably Peter-Paul arrived behind them, wrapped in some new pelts, to whisper portents and dance at the edge of Truman’s sleep.

At first Truman couldn’t understand his words. They sounded so much like nonsense he assumed they belonged to an old Micmac dialect. He thought his brother had chosen particular language as a reproach for leaving the reservation. As the years passed, however, Truman slowly began to recognize certain phrases until, one night, he understood that the reason he couldn’t see Peter-Paul was because he couldn’t conceive the language before was because it was the tongue of the dead which is universal among the departed but unknown among the living. He remembered an old man he had once met, a mother transient, who was so ancient he had forgotten human speech and could only talk the gibberish of ghosts.

This was the first presentiment Truman Berry had of his own death.

Truman remembered his home, the reservation, as an island of red clay and sugar maples. In the spring, after the thaw, hearty rains cut the packed soil, and the earth bled into Malpeque Bay. Whenever Truman was visited by Peter-Paul, he thought of Lennox Island and the ditches crossing it—like wounds torn open in the land.

It had been twenty-five years since Truman last saw the reserve. At that time, Peter-Paul was a skinny boy with hair falling in his eyes and a perpetual smirk. He was only nine years old but already he was sniffing gasoline and slathering tar. When Truman left to pick blueberries in Maine, Peter-Paul stayed on the island to take care of their mother and sisters. After that, they lost touch.

I didn’t even know you were dead,” Truman told the voice in his skull.

Do you know the embarrassment behind St. Anne’s Church?

Yes,”

I was out drinking one night and I fell down and broke a leg.

“How could you be so clumsy?”

What do you want? I was drunk.

Truman had built himself a lean-to of sorts under the Million Dollar Bridge. Vandals kept knocking it down, but Truman kept building it back up. He collected aluminum cans for deposit and drank quart bottles of malt liquor. He took most of his meals at the 24-Hour Club, a local mission, but never spoke to anyone. He was afraid that if he opened his mouth nothing but gibberish would come out.

With every passing day Truman felt loneliness in the world of men. His skin no longer fit him; it hung loose on his bones, like an overdose suit, and he wondered whether he was getting ready to shed it. He pictured himself entering the World Above the Sky, a naked ghost.

Sometimes he had to tell himself: I am not dead.

Lately Peter-Paul had begun to drop hints that Truman was himself about to die. At first Truman refused to listen, but Peter-Paul turned himself into a cricket and crawled inside his brother’s ear when he was asleep.

You will be killed tomorrow, Peter-Paul said.

Truman shook his head sluggishly; he was hungover. That’s what you said yesterday, and before."

I was wrong.

The police arrived soon. They gathered around his head where the patrolman had hit him.

“Who will kill me then?”

How the hell should I know?

“Get out of my ear,” Truman said.

Except for the occasional trip to the Department of Human Services and the more frequent trips to the variety store for cigarettes and wine, Shoebottom stayed in his nest, watching the upstairs window for signs of Tracy. She was rarely home. He suspected that she had taken a new boyfriend, a non-drinker probably. When he thought of it, his nerves burned like frayed wires. Try as he might, he couldn’t stop picturing Tracy on her back, legs up, and some bastard pronging her for hours on end. The image made him sick to his stomach.

Every morning for the next week he awoke to a new dish: a ham and cheese sandwich, still warm, wrapped in wax paper.

Jefferson in the cold March air, Shoebottom smoked cigarettes and drank bottles of Wild Irish Rose which he stashed, empty, behind a dumpster. He had made a nest in the alley out of newspapers and strips of insulation torn from a condemned church. On the wall beside the dumpster he kept a calendar using an old man he had once met, mother transient, who was so ancient he had forgotten human speech and could only talk the gibberish of ghosts.

For the occasional trip to the supermarket, across from the cathedral, he spent his last few dollars on wine. He bought a quart of Night Train and took it to a cemetery and drank it in five minutes. Immediately he felt as though he had put on a pair of human sight.

In the cold his thoughts became diamonds. He saw the world as clear and see through circles.

And before.

Every morning he thought of it, his eyes glaring upwards. So far, the will of the dead was not listening to him.

Once in a while he fought back tears and hissed at his skull. Sometimes he wished he had never found those boys together. I wished I never had to throw them out.” Now he was looking straight at Shoebottom. His eyes were full of tears. The way she was looking at him, as though he were her lost son.

I’m so lonely without my Calvin,” the old woman wailed.

Shoebottom staggered to his feet. Inside his skull, a lead ball rolled against the tongue of the dead which is universal among the departed but unknown among the living. He remembered an old man he had once met, a mother transient, who was so ancient he had forgotten human speech and could only talk the gibberish of ghosts.

I’m so lonely without my Calvin,” Shoebottom said suddenly in the old woman’s wheedling voice.

The police arrived soon. They gathered around his head where the patrolman had hit him.

“We’re nothing but an animal,” he remembered Tracy screaming. It was the point he flung the plate against the wall and unzipped his skull.

Truman shook his head sluggishly; he was hungover. That’s what you said yesterday, and before.

I was wrong.

How the hell should I know?

“Get out of my ear,” Truman said.

Shoebottom surrendered to it and saw the world as clear and see through circles.

Shoebottom’s heart seemed to stop.

Every morning he thought of it, his eyes glaring upwards. So far, the will of the dead was not listening to him.

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“Get out of my ear,” Truman said.

Shoebottom surrendered to it and saw the world as clear and see through circles.
without anyone and without God too; to listen in the dark and hear nothing, not even your own heartbeat; to watch people3embracing and hate them so much it hurt—that was true loneliness. It was like a cancer that ate you from within. You could feel it devouring the walls of your stomach and you knew there was no cure.

Loner helped, but not for long, and when you awoke it was always worse than before.

A metallic clatter brought Shoebottom back to the cemetery.

Beyond the fence and across the street, a dog had gotten into a trash barrel. Shoebottom watched the wolfish-looking animal, which had deep furrows between its ribs, nose the garbage. It was trying to pin one edge of a paper bag beneath its paw so it could insert its muzzle and get at what was inside. The dog was making a pained, whining noise.

"Shut up," he said, "I'm thinking."

The dog paid no attention to him. It began to tear at the bag with its teeth. Shoebottom squeezed his hands into fists and roared. He began to advance on the dog.

"You hungry, doggy? You hungry, huh? I'11 give you something. Come here you little bitch."

When he was a yard away and the dog still hadn't acknowledged him, Shoebottom lashed out with his boot. The blow caught the animal in the ribs. Again he kicked, but this time the dog skittered aside, and Shoebottom lost his balance. He fell hard on his back, knocking his skull on the pavement. In an instant the dog was upon him. It lunged, quick as a snake, and bit him in the palm when he raised it to protect his face. Shoebottom gave a howl of pain. He tried to jerk his hand away, but only aggravated the wound. The dog let go and ran.

Shoebottom lay for a long time with his eyes open, staring up into the bruised-colored sky. When he rose finally, he saw the dog loping off across the street, the bag in its teeth. He began to suck the blood from his hand.

"Great," he said. "Now I've got rabies."

Truman was at the 24-Hour Club eating chicken à la king when the stranger appeared. He was a lean young man with grayed eyes and greasy strands of hair pasted across his forehead. He had not shaved in many days and there was a stranger had staggered down a paper napkin. He could feel the cricket-itch inside his ear.

"I don't want to die," Truman said.

"I'm saying?" he asked Shoebottom suspiciously.

"Are you going to shut up or don't you?"

"No," Shoebottom said. "I'm saying."

"What happened to your hand?"

"Dog bite," he said thickly.

The stranger looked at him, his eyes baleful beneath their heavy lids, but did not say a word.

"Send it where?"

"Dog's mouth," Shoebottom said, "You understand everything I'm saying?"

"What?"

"Your hand."

Shoebottom looked down at the stained bandage. The hand lying in his lap seemed to belong to someone else; he could move the fingers, but they were not his.

"Dog bite," he said thickly.

"You got to find that dog," Truman said. "You got to find it and cut off its head and send it to Charlottesville for tests."

The earth shivered under Shoebottom's legs as a big truck rumbled over the bridge.

"Send it to what?"

"We can't have a dog like that running loose on the island."

"I don't know what the hell you're talking about," Shoebottom said. He tried to take another drink from the wine bottle Truman had given him, but in his drunkenness he had forgotten it was empty. He hurled it across the ditch. It smashed a long time before the sound of breaking glass returned to him.

"D'you have another bottle or don't you?" he demanded.

Truman began to sing, in his sweetest, throat-cancer voice:

I walk the streets day in, day out
My thoughts working a one-truck mind.
I'll stop and push up daisies
For the sake of wine, wine, wine—
"Are you going to shut up—or what?" Shoebottom said sharply.

"Do you think they'll print it?" Truman asked.

"Who?"

"The people who print poetry."

"I think it's dogshit," Shoebottom said and laughed. Suddenly, in his mind,
he saw shirts flying out the window and heard Tracy screaming. You’re nothing but an animal. He saw two shapes, one tall, one small, embracing upon a lighted curtain. It was all he could do to blink back the tears.

He had never felt more alone. The solitude before he met Tracy was nothing compared to his present solitude. She had ruined his life for him forever. For a brief period she had fooled him into thinking there was such a thing as love. He had given it into his head that you could actually trust another person with your secret self. What a sick joke it was she played on him. By lifting him out of the abyss, Tracy had only made it seem all the blacker when she hurled him back in.

Losing her was like losing a home or even a friend. It was like losing salvation.

When he thought of her, happy without him, his blood quickened. He pictured her with her new lover, laughing, embracing, and he clenched his fists until the fingernails dug into the skin. He would show her what an animal he was. A dog that had been kicked and beaten was capable of nothing but an animal.

There was a pause, full of strange sounds and whispers. Overhead, traffic pounded the bridge with a heavy, drum-like rhythm. It occurred to Shoebottom that the old man was mocking him. It made him think of Tracy suddenly. You’re nothing but an animal.

“Do you shut the hell up?” Shoebottom said.

“I don’t think he’s the one,” Truman whispered.

“What?”

“I’m not talking to you.”

Shoebottom shrugged across the space between them. The old man, he now saw, was squatting on his heels, facing down into the ditch. His attention seemed focused, absolutely fixed, on something below.

“Are you going to shut up?” Shoebottom said.

“I don’t think he’s the one,” Truman whispered.

“What?”

“Stop laughing!”

Shoebottom closed his hands tight around the other’s neck and dug his fingernails into the throat. Snarl Truman laughed. Shoebottom couldn’t control his rage. The old man didn’t seem to feel pain; it was as though he had separated himself from his body and had no further use for it. Shoebottom felt anger, shame, impotence. He wanted to hurt, hurt. He lifted Truman’s head and brought it down sharply. “Feel this?” he said. “Do you?”

“Stop laughing!”

Shoebottom stopped, this time louder.

Truman kicked the blood from his lips as though it were honey. “Peter-Paul was right,” he croaked, eyes full of tears. He threw back his head and gave a hoarse laugh.

“Stop laughing!”

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Shoebottom rode the corpse until its tongue, swollen and purple, lolled from one corner of its mouth. Only then did he throw himself off. Free of his weight, the body rolled like a log down the slope and came to rest in the ditch atop a bed of leaves. Shoebottom stared after it, but he couldn’t see a thing beyond himself. Out of nothing the wind had risen to a roar. He clung to the slope, panting, digging his fingers into the soft earth, fearful that if he let go, he too would slide to the bottom.

During the fight his bandage had come loose. There was blood on his hand, he didn’t know whose.
The Right Voice

What follows is an excerpt from the novel of the same name. The Right Voice is also the name of a student journal published at Old Goreham College in Vermont. The editor is Junior, Jr., the Dean of Faculty is Frank Loess, nicknamed Total by everyone who knows him. Total Loess is here deeply involved in certain allegations set forth in The Right Voice and in a palpable display of concern by some other students in the matter of sex.

There is you know, an annual award for the college newspaper displaying the largest number and highest quality of typographical errors. It is the coveted Dipso Award, sponsored by an international conglomerate with interests in exhaust systems, baby bloopers, lawn rakes, test tubes and turkey loaf. One knows why they sponsor the Dipso Prize, no one in journalism and no one in the conglomerate, which seems to have inherited it as part of an acquisition with ties to the outsize producing those blow-in subscription forms that fall out of your magazines between the mailbox and the kitchen table. The emphasis is really on quality, since the common garden variety of errors mounts to exponential proportions in even the worst of the entrances, worst meaning in this context the newspapers having the fewest errors. We've got inverse ratios in another way, which is that the techniques for producing and editing a newspaper have become so simple any fool could... well, no, let's measure our words here. Point is, all you have to do nowadays is look at your VDT and correct the damned thing before you pipe it along to the photo-offset guys for final grooming and pictures. If you can read, you can proofread and get it right.

Did we isolate the problem there? Possibly.

The RIGHT VOICE has retired the Dipso trophy. It's in the Hall of Fame for Typos and ineligible for further competitions. We discover, preserved under a placard in the foyer of the library, a magnified reproduction of the line that catapulted them into this celebrity. In an article condemning the very fact of the Iran-Contra hearings, an article using such terms as Star Chamber, Kangaroo Court, Witch Hunt, Vigilantism, Mob Rule, Shame, and Disgrace—and these were just the headlines—in a paragraph deplored the "ine-too-ism" of conservative members of the committees, there appeared this line: "Even the views of Hyde and Rudman were subject to some shitting around." Is it to wonder that VOICE swept away the competition, this in the category of In Typo Vertas? a veritable chantelet of typos or that rare vintage one seeks longingly, thirstily, in the chateaux of

Further out, near Modesto, Bakersfield, Fresno... Jr., suspected a mole, a saboteur, an intentional "error" to make him and VOICE look bad, these suspicions part of the larger paranoia that encompassed, finally, much of the active life of the planet and a share of what appears—appears—to be as well. Let the others have their celebration and raise the trophy high. Junior, Jr., hoped for more measurable accomplishments, journalistic "bets" and important think pieces. He wanted to be the Woodstein of the Right.

So one understands why, when the VOICE expose of sexual improprieties in FizzEd came out, Junior, Jr., was not thrilled with the headline, which read, in blaring caps, GAGS RAMPANT IN GYM. The casual reader might have wondered why, after a paragraph or two on the techniques for producing and editing a newspaper have become so simple any fool could..., no one in journalism and no one in the conglomerate, which seems to have inherited it as part of an acquisition with ties to the outsize producing those blow-in subscription forms that fall out of your magazines between the mailbox and the kitchen table. The emphasis is really on quality, since the common garden variety of errors mounts to exponential proportions in even the worst of the entrances, worst meaning in this context the newspapers having the fewest errors. We've got inverse ratios in another way, which is that the techniques for producing and editing a newspaper have become so simple any fool could... well, no, let's measure our words here. Point is, all you have to do nowadays is look at your VDT and correct the damned thing before you pipe it along to the photo-offset guys for final grooming and pictures. If you can read, you can proofread and get it right.

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Old Gonch College has its values clear, sir, its head on straight, emphasis on the word 'straight'. No, sir, this place is just the way you remember it, sir. Still have to take a cold bath in the morning, oh yes. Dirt roads, horse-drawn all about, compulsory chapel, compulsory prayer in the chapel, required courses in The Bible and Business: The Real Story, pledge of allegiance under God, yes sir, and I agree with you, sir, it was only the most urgent need that saw girls administered there. Barefoot and pregnant, Ah, ha ha ha, yes sir. And how IS Mrs. Big? I see. Handicap what? Well well well. Barefoot and out on the links, then, eh? Ah, ha ha ha.

Mollyfying everyone, that’s what Frank must plan on. What are the moves he must make to that when called upon to explain the college, he may do it with only a modicum of unawakened falsehood?

Frank Loess, Total Dean, leaned up from his swivel and put a thoughtful knuckle to his lips. He paced. He planned. He paused. He paused in front of the window looking out upon Central Quadrangle. He peered. And after the pacing and the planning and the pausing, what should he behold but . . . pensises, yes, pensises a-building, a couple of them already a-built, in full rampancy across the street in front of his office. Big penises, peno homo sapien, at least those that were completed. Two finished and five more being assembled from pre-fab sections while three women moved, dance-like, Maypole-like, around the first of the completed ones, applying strips of Saran-wrap up and up and up and oh-oh-oh-oh the very glass of it so that when they finished putting down the wrapping, the penis, fully sheathed and thereforeestopped from careless distribution of the life-giving sperm—impenetrable, too, to any impertinent microbe, be it friendly or bogy—glistered there in the October sunlight looking like, well, like it was supposed to look; Matty Moon’s design, as flawless as her powers of observation, thus projecting in this dramatic way the aspirations of her organization, AHCFO (Ad Hoc Committee Hoping to Overcome Ovulation), not affiliated with Parenthood but hooked up for the current crisis with Gee-PERS (Gay Persons Energetically Rallying for Safer Sex).

Tall and pink and glistening it stood there, ten feet of its wrapped and rigid pinkness like some embarrassed mushroom. (Think proportions, if unlike Total Loess you have a moment: from such penises, sperm the size of rainbow trout; and on the attack, microbes like—oh, no, no! Soldier ants! Killer bees! Put a condom on the WORLD!) Now the three women, like the three graces, giggling gaily, were on their way to the next penis as the assembling continued.

Frank Loess beheld all of this. He hesitated in the existence of the scene now before him but nevertheless began to experience symptoms ordinarily related to shock: accelerated pulse, a cold perspiration, dryness of mouth, a partial hard-on—but that went away as fast as it partially arose and we shouldn’t think it medically significant. Symptoms of what? we don’t know. Anyhow, here’s Dean Frank with this little secret, at least it was a secret the last time he had sought solace in the Grand Marnier was a year ago when he was now acquainted with its existence. He did so now, pretty good, forty-five years to retirement without taking off his shoes and socks. He did so now, and we shouldn’t think it medically significant. Symptoms of what? we don’t know. Anyhow, here’s Dean Frank with this little secret, at least it was a secret the last time he had sought solace in the Grand Marnier was a year ago when he was now acquainted with its existence. He did so now, pretty good.

Total Loess had, it is true, addressed the student body assembled in the chapel, a building fallen into disuse and disrepair in the last decade and used only for the rare gatherings and a couple of rock concerts that threatened the collapse of the bell tower. Total had spoken of the blessing of freedom of expression and illustrated his conviction by asserting that Adolph Hitler and Albert Schweitzer should be equally welcome to offer their views on a college campus, the students thus being enabled to consider the respective views and come to an educated judgement. Reluctantly, he had entertained questions from the floor after his remarks and the subtly interested students wanted to fetch his response to such questions as: Did Dean Loess consider Buchenwald an exercise of Hitler’s freedom of expression? Wouldn’t he agree that knocking down shanties was as expressive as putting them up in the first place, especially as students sang and danced the while they were wielding the sledge hammer? Did he know that Albert Schweitzer had had a large organ? Was he aware that Hitler had had no organ at all but enjoyed tinkling on the piano? Did freedom of expression mean that a person could tinkle anywhere he or she wanted to?

When he had had so much of this as he felt his salary and benefits package demanded of him, Frank closed with a renewed plea for tolerance of everything and everybody and left.

But what was he to do with giant phalluses, apparently a revelation by spiteful students of the secret and in any event just inutilely private little sort of interest, hobby, avocation—God! what to CALL it! He didn’t have enough to worry about with this RIGHT VOICE piece of garbage. Now people are putting up penises practically on the porch. For this job, I left a quiet little sixacre of a teaching job at Muntz Military Academy, he lamented. All the goddamn saluting, though. Salute your fucking arm off.

He reached for the telephone and punched Iris Knodler’s number. Both of these matters seemed appropriately addressed to the Dean of Students. These were students, after all, erecting penises on the quid and writing stories in newspapers about deviates in the locker room (GAS! he said to himself and shook his head). Iris’s secretary said Iris was “away from her desk” just now; she’d return his call.

"Mmph!" Total grunted as he hung up the phone. Away from his desk sounded pretty good right now, about two continents away. He could count the years to retirement without taking off his shoes and socks. He did so now, breathing heavily.
Hortense Fiquet

Mme. Paul Cezanne

The roses dream that sunlight is the stone warmed by a yellow wash, a cream indifferent as her eyelids' color that almost turns to clay, her black hair like a stocking cap atop a statue as she poses, her hands folded, wearing silk fingerless gloves. The wall she leans against is like a frozen garden's every way, forever closed. Whatever thrusts song there is silent, whatever tone of light's too pure. The panic in her eyes, the little cluck of feeling in her mouth, have their own reason in this austere finality, composition.

Aphrodite is after all a whore. Her eyes beg, "Make me respectable." All the more excited he stitches like a needle that expression of her mouth, compresses her eyes' anxiety, sketches a haughty bore, reveals a Venus classical and procuress, a modern woman.

He is like a surgeon, better than human, exciting the irrelevant, so 'one devoted, the precise, perishable stone. He paints her in moments of dry sunlight, sketches her quickly and fingers on the colors—stiff as Giano's figures—memorialized, forever waiting, forever to be tasted, said her father says, "Marry her!"

He turns to painting Mt. St. Victoire.

P. B. Newman
Charlotte N.C.
Professor of Queens College
Charlotte, N.C.

Recurring Dream

Nearly once a week
I go at night
To this red house—

Red like a tulip's

I can walk it eyes closed.

The chairs never move. Old, black dog

That almost

Omnipotent, a modern woman.

Stiff as

His own

The roses dream that sunlight is the stone warmed by a yellow wash, a cream indifferent as her eyelids' color that almost turns to clay, her black hair like a stocking cap atop a statue as she poses, her hands folded, wearing silk fingerless gloves. The wall she leans against is like a frozen garden's every way, forever closed. Whatever thrusts song there is silent, whatever tone of light's too pure. The panic in her eyes, the little cluck of feeling in her mouth, have their own reason in this austere finality, composition.

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Figu et Madame Cezanne in the Conservatory, c. 1890

KD Nelson
Portland
is a freelance writer & dreamer

I hate String Quartets, but they're long, so they play them a lot just to fill up time. Maybe because they're so tuneless they consider them neutral and harmless. You turn on the radio to Classics and there it is—another String Quartet. Who ever took the time to write so many? They're so much the same. They could just say 'Number 5,' and that would mean any String Quartet in the whole world.

Like we do with things we say over and over at home. Instead of moaning about how bad the Patriots are, we just say 'Number 13.' And if it's about someone fooling with the remote all the time, instead of getting all bent out of shape, we just say 'Number 6.' When a LOT OF THINGS annoy us, we sometimes forget what the numbers are—but THAT has its own number. I forget what it is. When someone starts to tell a too-old joke (never funny in the first place) we all mumble 'Number 18.'

It leaves people who come to our house thinking they should have brought along a Bingo card because we all do call out numbers. When someone has a NEW thing to tell, or a NEW joke, it makes everyone in the family uneasy—because of course it doesn't have a number yet.

When the same people keep calling on the phone and the phone rings, everybody says 'Number 86' or 'Number 57' (pickle lover) or even up in the 100's, if it's a new caller. Remembering all this makes one forget the actual NAMES of these people, so at the dinner table it's 'I saw 35 today and he said 87 is going to the dance with 43' so call them about going along.'

Of course by now, no one can look up anyone's phone number since they don't have a name. Just a number.

Louise Pieper
Prout's Neck
is an Interior Designer
The Boy in the Forest

He read the half-page of hauntingly familiar swirling but rigidly linear handwriting for the third time. It was, he realized, her mother's hand he remembered, not the daughter's. He folded Millicent's letter and returned it to the square blue envelope with its psychedelic swirling borders. So—he really was a grandfather, had been for ten years. He had known—known abstractly—because the father, an anonymous person named Mike, had written: "Dear Professor, I thought you ought to know..." Not a word from Millicent.

This letter, signed Millicent, was, ten years later, evidence. Now he knew, concretely, that the conceptual, imaginary grandchild was a real boy. He re-read the letter in his mind: "I would like him to visit with you for a few weeks this summer. My therapist, really only an advisor on temporal affairs, (he appreciated that bit of considerate reassurance) feels Galen should know his origins, and so do I. He'll be little trouble but you should be forewarned. He is an old ten years and quite sophisticated—your friend, and I think I remember him named Mike, had written..."

"Maine standards!" What did she remember of Maine standards, and what right had she to assume her mad mother's version of her first four years in Maine corresponded to reality? He touched the postmark with his finger tip. Berkeley, CA. Well, it had been a long time, and a pretty lively time in Berkeley in the sixties, and a long way from Brunswick, Maine to Berkeley, CA. Berkeley—that would be pronounced "Barly" in England. He reached for the 3rd volume of The Britannica from the shelf beside his desk—NO! He had to face the immediate problem of how to deal with the boy arriving tomorrow. No escape allowed into the warm, familiar world of book. He opened the volume.

The conversation during the first fifteen minutes of the ride from the airport had been halting and difficult: the usual questions about school, the family's health, and brief flat answers. The waitress at The Brookside Diner greeted them warmly. The professor frequently stopped here on trips to Augusta and he touched the postmark with his finger tip. Berkeley, CA. Well, it had been a long time, and a pretty lively time in Berkeley in the sixties, and a long way from Brunswick, Maine to Berkeley, CA. Berkeley—that would be pronounced "Barly" in England. He reached for the 3rd volume of The Britannica from the shelf beside his desk—NO! He had to face the immediate problem of how to deal with the boy arriving tomorrow. No escape allowed into the warm, familiar world of book. He opened the volume.

"Good. The Indians have always needed all the help they can get. Those Trojans... you know I don't think I'd like to play for a team named after a condom."

"Jeez, Grampa! You're gross!"

"I like you too, Galen. Now finish your chocolate and we'll go home. I've got an old candy and if we wash it this afternoon we can have it in the water tomorrow."
Sonata

I have heard the argument for an early spring. The hummingbird, like an insect on beat wings, slavemans its soul deep into the purple rhododendron's core.

The chestnut tree holds out blossoms before its leaves, a many-handed acolyte.

A white-crowned sparrow calls from the scented light of spruce, furnishing in the sun outside the door.

A swallow hangs into my window, struggles and flings a wing from a hollow shoulder and gains an edge of frail air on which it clings to vector above reflection and its pains.

Though after its collision, the swallow sings, its feathered imprint on the glass remains.

H.R. Coursen
Brunswick

Songs and Sonnets by H.R. Coursen.
Magic Circle Press. 34 pp. $5.00, 1991.

Such Stuff as Dreams are Made on

The magical lines from The Tempest provide, for me, the best entry to this difficult and remarkable book of poems. These poems enumerate dreams and wishes—chief among them an understanding of what it means to love—that help define our existence and passage through the natural world. Prospero's words, laden with hope and caution, poignantly summarize our endless attempts to use love to define what is real. Daunting and noble work for any artist.

Herb Coursen has long been an extraordinarily eclectic poet; his work has touched subjects ranging from baseball to war memories, from childhood epiphanies to the daily tracks of nature across the human soul, and explorations of love's labyrinths.

By my count, Songs and Sonnets is Coursen's twelfth collection of poems. It seems by far his most focused formal (most of these poems are sonnets—how odd for a Shakespearean scholar to write almost exclusively Petrarchan sonnets, doted with "sprung rhythm"); anchored in the present; salted with images and portents of the natural world; and thematic—taken together these poems seems a tract upon romantic love. Yet it is a tract so spiked with thorns of mortality that it seems inside each sonnet is an elegy.

I had meant to say that, in these poems, the poet moves balanced between hope and despair, but that's not it exactly. I think it more accurate to say that he balances hope and despair with stunning grace and skill. Driving in the West Virginia hills, seeing the lives that fiercely cling to the steep inclines, thinking of your pillow-woven hair, moved on to ease an ocean from its work at shore . . .

Here the restraint builds to the power of a lightning strike. Sadly, in the love poems that work less well, the constraints of form and the effort of having wrought emotion into form sometimes produce a milky and diffuse effect, one that seems to miss its target. Yet this is less weakness than the outcome of chances that a real poet takes and sometimes loses on.

The poems about love seem the most powerful in the book, serving as marques in which the images and portents of the natural world dance their meanings into the hearts of those who are open to understand. Here I single out "Skyscape: After Rain," "Going South: Route 79: 7 Dec. '90," "23 March, 1991," "31 March, 1991," and "Sonata," which I could not imagine being written any other way.

The collection closes with the poem "Elegy." It is written in the poet's own voice and seems the perfect epilogue to the book, recalling the music of love that has ended:

As I sat down from the drift of dreaming, keeping time with me in the pulse of your voice as I nursed the fractions of the shower, she wandered away to ease an ocean from its work at shore . . .

One thinks of Lorca's Verde que se quema verde. Songs and Sonnets may not repay casual reading. But those who spend time with these poems will learn a thing or three. As winner of the 1991 Percy Bysshe Shelley Lifetime Achievement Award, Herb Coursen might have it said about him, "The man hath seen some love and should know."

*David J. Adams
Trumansburg, NY*
Red Horses/ Kathleen Lignell

In this long-awaited first major collection of her poems, Kathleen Lignell chooses some from her Calamity Jane chapbook (1979) but mostly assembles material composed since that time. A stunning group, Red Horses refers to the painting by Franz Marc; illustrator Majo Keleshian's striking cover shows two red horses against a white ground, their tails bent over the binding and flicking on the back. The poems must be read carefully, slowly, for they are wonderfully subtle, poems of paradox, reaching back to Lignell's childhood with a real and imagined father, and forward to a scarcely imagined future: "after hearing a hangman's noose, I begin to think I will never go to sleep; / the girl to be clear, to be close, / / the girl to know, too close, / I am still coming and going."

The reader spends most of the book out-of-doors, appropriately, as this is no tearooms poet, and the controlling image is light: one of the three sections refers to a painting, the other two are "The Sighing" and "The Range of Light." We encounter photographs and photographers Paul Strand and Adams. Yet, she is concerned about being caught in the moment, frozen forever like an image on film: "It must be that the hardest forms of life broke off like a blade of rock." Of Jane, she comments: "She spoke every word with the words tight like a hangman's noose until nothing could open her knots." On the other hand, the image of possibility suffuses the poems, latency, quick liquid transformations into either the other or another, melting, "She is old, old, factories, the brevity of males. / What is most volatile is the water itself. / The poetry itself is crisp, without being brittle: cool, without being serene; tough, yet terribly tender.

Fiddle Lane/ Thomas Carper

Robert Frost's famous warning that writing free verse is "like playing tennis with the net down" does not apply to the poet of these 65 poems, as the free free of rhyme sits in strong syntax and are controlled by fresh rhythms. Two more are rhymed, and the remaining 58 constitute some of the strongest sonnets ever written in Maine, this side of Robinson and Milay. What Thomas Carper is, is a sonneter. He writes them in all kinds of shapes, 4 + 4 + 4 = 2, seven 8s, but favors the 14 line block ending with a fresh couplet (odd: God, for example, or witty, amuse: lazarus). A superb technician, Carper manages the demanding form with ease, a late-20th c. naturalness, that can cause a reader to forget that the flowing, witty experience he is enjoying is happening in a tight formal structure that dates from the late-Middle Ages. Carper rhymes exactly, usually in alternating lines (role: control), sometimes on two syllables (sight: stuck it). But best is his imaginative off-rhyming (bought: house; hell: small; walls: shelves; late; chest). A professor of literature at USM, he has been working on these poems for years, and his dedication shows: he knows when to end-stop his lines with punctuation, releasing the reader directly into the next line. These sonnets flow, so well in fact that once inside the poems readers must slow themselves down to catch the comedy, feel the lightness, the pathos, the wit. The poet won't do it for you, and that is the mark of his skill.

A major literary event, this book joins 15 others in the prestigious Johns Hopkins series. Dedicated to Carson McCullers, in his backyards: photographed flowers that appear on the cover, the inspiration for a moving nightwatch poem (see below). The title refers to a small street next to their house.

In four sections, the book begins with "Beginnings," cosmological poems about man's place in time and the universe, then turns to poems about his father and coming to terms with childhood. "Observations" and domestic poems, "At Home," conclude the book. Readers need to know a bit, recognize references, but nothing unusual. Narcissus, Treblinka, Basho, Babylon, Daedalus, Aida, Dante. Carper doesn't talk down. He walks clearly. Least successful are poems on art (Corot, Van Gogh, Rashi chrons) as the reader should see the inspiration for full effect. But no matter, a tour de force. As poets mature (see review of H.R. Cohen, printed here), some writers the sonnet, shake it up, and show that the tennis ball's split Frost feared in free verse need not be feared. Feeding with form, yes. Carper is copacetic.

T.P.

Roses
During the night of fever, as she lay Between an exhausted wakefulness and sleep, I sat beside her fearfully, in dismay When her low breathing would become so deep, It seemed that she might slip beyond recall. When I would touch her, then she would revive; Then Janet went among our roses where With morning, the ordeal was over. Gone Were every line of illness. A soft rain Fled sweat across the countryside at dawn, So even our garden was made fresh again. Then Janet went among our roses where She and the roses stole in luminous air.

Thomas Carper
Cornish
Hot, misty mid-summer Maine. Katherine hurries across the wet grass and quietly enters the kitchen, closes the door and stands back against it. The old woman struck at her with the heavy end of the crank and cursed her. The girl jumped away and ran to the other side of the kitchen.

The room was wet and mid-summer misty. There were little balls of water in the dusty spiderweb under the table legs to the floor.

"Go pick me some berries," the old woman cried at her. "GO PICK ME SOME BERRIES!" she shouted. "Do you hear? You damned little milk! Bring me a pail of berries before I take this crank and kick you!"

"All right," Katherine whimpered. "I'm going."

"Well, why don't you run? I'll break your head if you don't get out of here after those berries!"

I'd chosen "The Lonely Day" to commence my reading of this collection of Erskine Caldwell's Maine tales. The opening scene amazed me. Not that my grandmother had abused me (though I sometimes caught her looking at me in a funny way) but because this opening scene had a familiar ring. I tracked this down to a parody, written in 1922 by Robert Benchley. Fed up with naturalism/realism in American literature, Benchley's "Family Life in America" opens with the same sharp delineation of character and scene.

The living room of the Twilly's house was so damp that thick soppys moss grew all over the walls. It dripped on the picture of Grandfather Twilly that hung over the bedboard, making streaks down the dirty glass like tears on the old man's face. It was a mean face. Grandfather Twilly had been a mean man and had little spots of soap on his coat label. All his children were mean and had soap spots on their clothes.

Grandma Twilly sat in a rocker by the window, and as she rocked the chair snapped. It sounded like Grandma Twilly's knees snapping whenever she stooped over to pull the wings off a fly. She was a mean old thing. Her knuckles were grimy and she chewed her lying. It was a mean old thing. Her knuckles were grimy and she chewed her lying.

She had so wanted a melodeon, but the mist of her pail is full. Now they had talked this over before and Max did not approve. There was always the possibility Elan would not return. Max knew he could never get over Elan's bringing home somebody with him. It would upset Max's carefully planned living. Max can do nothing when Elan is away. He was used to seeing Elan about almost any time of day. Without Elan at home Max has difficulty continuing his work. He could never get over Elan's bringing home somebody with him.

Here Caldwell's problem is not only with an improbable ending but the subject of homosexuality itself. His attempt at humor goes away, ill-suited to his characters. It is in his attempt to present Maine characters that Erskine Caldwell falls.

Erskine Caldwell, his wife and two children, arrived in Maine in 1928. In his autobiography, With All My Might, he states..."he felt the need to get as far away as possible in order to gain a revealing perspective of the scene and circumstances of life in the South." Mr. Vernon was chosen because of an offer of free rent, a chance to grow their own fruit, cut their own wood, in exchange for custodial care.

So, on a Vermont farm for about five years Erskine Caldwell wrote the tales contained in Midsummer Passion. They offer valuable insight into the development of Cawdell's writing because it was during the exact time that he wrote his two finest novels, Tobacco Road and God's Little Acre. These stories are seminal in every sense of the word.

I disagree with Upton Brady who in his introduction to Midsummer Passion wrote of these as "Maine stories." Written in Maine, yes, but Caldwell came here for the perspective just quoted. He brought with him almost all the characters he lets loose on a vaguely realized Maine landscape. Actually Caldwell doesn't concern himself much with landscapes. In only one story, "Country Full of Swedes," do we get a real sense of place. Here we know 'sure' nuts we ain't in the land of grits and boiled peanuts. Here it isn't the landscape but a group of Swedes on the loose from Lewiston after a year in the mills that provides the momentum for this hilarious classic.

Generally speaking, Caldwell's characters could come from anywhere, are merely lightly frosted with stereotyped Yankee characteristics. For example, Brady claims the denizens of Maine are noted for their right-fistedness. I find little in these stories to support this. There is the character who lets his house and barn burn rather than admit he shouldn't have started a grass fire on a windy day. In "The Windfall," a couple give away their inheritance to their hired girl so she can marry.

Upton Brady writes that there is "...little if any, either overt or...the sort usually referred to as soft-core." I find, counting the stories already described, nine of the two are overtly sexual. Take, for example, "The Matting of the floor. "He couldn't figure out what it was, yet he knew it was something women wore pretty close to them. It was pinkish, silky, pretty, and there was very little of it. Ben fings the drawers, looks inside, smells them. Suddenly he realizes - "It's a female thing all right!"

Getting back on his haywreck he drives the two horses down the lane to the high road. He can think of nothing but the drawers and is filled with an urge to do something but can't figure out what. Passing his neighbor Williams place he sees Fred's wife bent over in her garden picking peas for supper. With one hand he stroking the drawers Ben calls out to her. Where before Ben had wanted to kill somebody he now has an urge to do something else but still isn't quite sure what it is.

Leaving the haywreck, Ben circles Fred's wife, then does on her. They struggle, tearing up most of the peas patch as Ben attempts to pull the drawers up over her feet, while at the same time thinking that Fred will come home and find the pea patch torn up.

The struggle ends with Fred's wife and Ben sitting against a fence staring at one another. Fred's wife asks Ben what he was trying to do. Ben has no answer. Fred's wife pulls the drawers up under her skirt and goes off, returning with a towel and a basin of water. She helps Ben clean up until he's halfway fit to go home. "Good day," Ben says. "Good day," says Fred's wife.

Caldwell has trouble with the endings to several of these tales. Here Fred's wife's unique way of handling sexual harassment, taking over the story from Ben, seems forced.

Still, if all this could happen in a pea patch I wondered what Caldwell would have gone on in "A Woman in the House." Here Max and Elam, two young farmers live alone on farms across the road from one another in an interval, Elam's farm on the western slope where for some reason the sun sets an hour later than on Max's on the eastern slope. This struck me as rather odd but I let it go, at least for a few paragraphs.

The situation is that Max is upset because Elam has gone off to Lewiston without saying a word to him. This has happened before, in fact seems to be the normal mode. If you can marry. Generally speaking, Caldwell's realism in American literature, Benchley's "Family Life in America" opens with the same sharp delineation of character and scene. He could never get over Elan's bringing home somebody he now has an urge to do something else but still isn't quite sure what it is.

Upton Brady who in his introduction to Midsummer Passion wrote of these as "Maine stories." Written in Maine, yes, but Caldwell came here for the perspective just quoted. He brought with him almost all the characters he lets loose on a vaguely realized Maine landscape. Actually Caldwell doesn't concern himself much with landscapes. In only one story, "Country Full of Swedes," do we get a real sense of place. Here we know 'sure' nuts we ain't in the land of grits and boiled peanuts. Here it isn't the landscape but a group of Swedes on the loose from Lewiston after a year in the mills that provides the momentum for this hilarious classic.

Generally speaking, Caldwell's characters could come from anywhere, are merely lightly frosted with stereotyped Yankee characteristics. For example, Brady claims the denizens of Maine are noted for their right-fistedness. I find little in these stories to support this. There is the character who lets his house and barn burn rather than admit he shouldn't have started a grass fire on a windy day. In "The Windfall," a couple give away their inheritance to their hired girl so she can marry.

Upton Brady writes that there is "...little if any, either overt or...the sort usually referred to as soft-core." I find, counting the stories already described, nine of the two are overtly sexual. Take, for example, "The Matting of..."
Old Nate Birge sat on a rusted wreck of an ancient sewing machine in front of Hell Fire, which was what his shack was known as among the neighbors and to the police. He was chiseling on a splinter of wood and watching the moon come up lazily out of the old cemetery in which nine of his daughters were lying, only two of whom were dead.

The tales of Midsummer Passion are most rewarding when read as a series of sketches in which Caldwell is searching for a voice, a direction, a particular emphasis. As he stated in his autobiography, he knew what he wanted to write about—"...the scenes and circumstances of life in the South." What he needed was a "revealing perspective." He obviously found this perspective, though evidenced in the two novels rather than these tales. In these it isn't so much a clash of cultures as a beginning writer (Caldwell arrived in Maine still unpublished) sending his Southern characters off on fictional escapades in an unfurlined milieu.

Midsummer Passion reveals Caldwell searching for a voice, a direction, a particular emphasis. These tales are in a real sense his notebook. Read the opening of "The Lonely Day," then glance over Tobacco Road. Caldwell brought his characters with him. He brought his subject matter. But here in Maine he found his voice and his emphases. These tales hint of Caldwell's sense of the absurd in human existence and the comic voice with which he so expounds it. It will be Erskine Caldwell's ironic sense of humor by which he will be remembered.

G.B. Clark
Inverness, Fla.
A retired professor & founder of Kentbooks

Few realize that Erskine Caldwell wrote Tobacco Road and God's Little Acre in Mt. Vernon, Maine

Ed. A Note: Caldwell's autobiography, With All My Might, contains much interesting material about his years in Maine in the early 1930's (Peachtree Publishers, LTD, 494 Armour Circle, N.E., Adana, GA 30324, 1987). He cut his own wood, tried to grow his own food, and opened a bookstore on Longfellow Square in Portland that was run by his wife, Helen. Excerpts follow.

One of the principal reasons for favoring the state of Maine as a suitable place to live for several years was that I felt I needed to go as far away as possible in order to gain a revealing perspective of the scenes and circumstances of life in the South. Other than obvious differences in social customs and economic traditions, there were certain to be more subtle contrasts to be found in family life and public institutions in Maine. Whatever I was to discover in the North, whether it would be of a startling nature or merely a tedious repetition of the commonplace, I was confident I could make good use of my findings.

Another reason, and it was an important one, for the decision to leave Georgia for Maine was the offer made to me to become the custodian and caretaker of the house and grounds in Mount Vernon where, for our own use, I would be able to grow potatoes and rutabagas for food and cut wood for warmth. At the time, being able to live off our own food was a highly opportune event in our lives when our only source of income was from the sale of a review copy of a book for twenty-five cents. (90-91)

My income from writing being as scanty as it was, and nonexistent in intervals, I was unable to provide means to keep the Longfellow Square Bookshop from closing its doors. The inevitable failure of the business was hastened by the actions of the Portland Police Department and the Cumberland County Attorney. Acting on a complaint of obscenity made by a citizen, it was ordered that sales of The Hazards were prohibited immediately and that all copies of the book were to be shipped out of the state of Maine within forty-eight hours. (131)
Review

Pick A Card/

Betsy Sholl

Winner of 1991 Maine Arts Commission's annual Chapbook Competition.
A Coyote/Bark Publication, available from MWPA, 12 Pleasant St., Brunswick, ME 04011, $6.95

Pick A Card is not light read, but a fast one. The 15 poems grab your attention and hold it—forcing you to go on, to submerge yourself in their dark urban universe. Angry, powerful, and painful, the poems search for, and expose the chaos which lies at the root of our late 20th c. life. They have "engagement" in the true meaning of the word. Sholl shows suffering in our faces, but with an ironic smile and a great sense of rhythm and style. She needles us, lures us out of complacency, makes us feel uncomfortable, yet manages to make us want to ask for more.

In an essay in The Elephant Edge: 15 Maine Women Writers she relates how once, when she was reading a book of poetry, a murder occurred on her street. When the commotion died down, she returned to the volume but found a "trivial and self-absorbed." Since then she has been looking for "poetry that does not require us to block out the suffering of others in order to read of the poet's." Her work achieves just that. Sholl deftly travels from the intensely personal to the political in her poems. In "Real Foul Earth," she moves from childhood memory to her grandmother's life, to coal miners, "thin longlegged men, never as old as they look," back to her own present despair. In "Thinking of you, Hiroshima," her 40th birthday bashes becomes an embrace of "a shadowy girl" born the same year whose "lids were fused to her eyes." A nightmare recalling rape (the title poem) ends at a community center where the poet plays with "the boy with the low IQ" who makes her "want everything inside me that's been speeding on anger/to slow down and fall away."

Sholl's subjects are not pretty: death, insanity, suicide, deformity, racial violence and fear, and the misfortunes of families. Her treatment is honest—thus far from sentimental. Those looking for dainty ditties about nature, do well to pass these poems by. Those who expect pat phrases about Politically Correct notions (see poem below) may be disappointed: this poet is her own guide. However, all who can stand a tickling of the touchy tender parts of the soul should read Sholl (but bring a magnifying glass—the poems are in distressingly small type). They will probably agree with Donald Hall, the competition's judge—who sadly did NOT write as he had been the custom a short essay elucidating his choice—that this is "a book of adult experience and strong feeling, in which the ironies eximines and protests while narrative presents and corrodes."

C.S.

Drifting Through this Pious Town

Look at this sweet drooling young man,
his by no means idiot face at the soap kitchen
emitting the most beafiful smile
waiting to see what ring-strung head will lift a spoon
to his face—his face which he'll muzzle into your side
as a way of loving since his arms don't work.
I'm telling you, don't fix him.

Myself, I don't ask to be relieved
of the way things misfire, the way you have to go as jally
to get warm and it's not as easy as it looks.
I do want to be loved, Lord, you know I do,
but if was this dyslexic kid
filling out forms and mieread Dog for God,
I'd want it up too
and stamp out before some divine infestation
got into my clothes.

Everywhere I go,
from breakfast in the dark room under the sanctuary,
to the wharf if it's nice,
or the library on bad days where they let you
stay between reference and fiction with a newspaper
spread over your face—I meet people who think they are right
about everything that's wrong with the world.

Betsy Sholl
Portland

Reprints: Part II of a Long Poem/

David Porter and His Time Machine

Review

Robert Chute

Poland Spring

Robert Chute teaches Biology at Bates...
Anthologies:
The Most That Money Can Buy

Dear Terry,

When you asked me a few weeks ago to write an article about putting together an anthology, I hesitated only because I wasn't sure I'd have the time. After a year and a half of working on a revised edition of An Anthology of Maine Literature (University of Maine Press, 1982), I had reached the final stages of getting the manuscript ready to go to press, and don't have to tell you how precious every hour becomes at that point. Now, however, I have the time; it's the anthology I'm not sure of. The Press, inevitably affected by the State's financial woes, has put all of its projects on hold while its Board decides which of its projects to fund—and which not.

Of course, when I started all this, budgets were far from my mind. All I knew was that the 1982 edition of An Anthology of Maine Literature, edited by Robert Lecker and Kathleen Brown, had really outlived its usefulness: in just the few years since Lecker and Brown had put together the first edition, Maine literature had grown exponentially.

During the year that I'd read hundreds and hundreds of pages of Maine prose and fiction for Maine Speaks, as a member of the Maine Literature Project, I'd begun to realize that An Anthology had too many gaps to make it very valuable in the classroom: it included none of the new Maine fiction, overlooked some important new and old poets, and certainly didn't begin to reflect the diversity of Maine's people.

So when the University of Maine Press offered me a contract to do the revision, I looked forward to working on a book that would be a kind of "Maine Speaks for Growups." I spent the summer of '90 working in Fogler Library's Special Collections, arriving early, and setting myself up in between an open window and a large fan. For at least the first month, I was convinced I'd never be able even to take a look at all the material I'd have to consider; everywhere I turned, I saw a name I'd never seen before, a title I'd never heard of. And my list got longer and longer.

Compared to most anthologies, though, I was lucky; I had something to start with. Much of the work that Lecker and Brown had done was good in '82, still good in '90, and will be good, I'm convinced, well into the next century (are those scary words, Terry, or what?). So although I decided to eliminate some stuff from the first table of contents, I was still left with a core of classic Maine literature. The first edition, for example, included a segment of Roster's Relation of Waymouth's Voyage; Thoreau's description of climbing "Ktaadn"; an E.B. White essay; humor by Bill Nye and John Gould; "A White Heron" and a story by Edward M. Holmes; and poetry by your favorite, Longfellow, as well as by Robinson, Hartley, Millay; finally, it had several poems by some of Maine's newer—or at least living—poets, Phillip Booth, John Taggabus, Ted Enslin, and Constance Huntington.

No, I knew that I wanted to fill in some spaces with nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century writers; I also knew that I wanted to include as many contemporary writers as possible; and finally, I wanted the table of contents to represent more cultural diversity. In general, I was looking for good writing with something of an "edge," something particularly engaging: I've never been over two or three poems by Maine's most canonical writers, but only one poem by writers perhaps unknown to some readers. Moreover, that later. So there I sat in Orono, culling. I came close to getting rid of "A White Heron" and replacing it with a less-known and less-anthologized story, but same heads than mine prevailed (as it happens, I left it in, but decided to include "The Hilton's Holiday" as well). I finally felt as though I were accomplishing something, and moved on to what I knew would be the major portion of my job selecting.

It wasn't, though, before I confronted THE QUESTION: who is, and who is not, a Maine writer? What is, and what is not, the real Maine? I read, and re-read, what Sandy Pippen and others had written on this debate (even I, to my regret, had contributed to it in an article about Clifford Reynolds for DownEast some years ago). Extra-sensitive, as someone from away, I dreaded guessing wrong and calling someone a Maine writer who'd been born in, say, New Jersey or, God forbid, Massachusetts. But then two things happened almost simultaneously: first, I carefully examined the titles of the first edition and noticed that nowhere did it say "Maine Writer" but just "Maine Literature"; and secondly, I started to apply this criterion of native-Maineness to some writers even Sandy Pippen might grant resident status. Most noticeably, of course, Henry David Thoreau. Now if ever Maine has had an out-of-state, surely, surely, Henry was it. Having spent, all in all, less than one month in Maine, he went on to write The Maine Woods and to secure his place in Maine Literature. But he never lived here during the winter; he didn't consider hard work the eleventh commandment; and, as you well know, had plenty of ideas that even today are... let's say quirky.

In short, I solved the problem of who's a real Maine writer very handily. I ignored it.

This decision, of course, gave me a lot of freedom and immediately opened the book cover to some very exciting literature, notably in the poetry section. With Bill Carpenter's help, I found Wallace Stevens's poem, "Variations on a Summer Day," written after he'd spent a summer at Christmas Cove; and "Henry's Understanding" by John Berryman, one of The Dream Songs that refers to his stay with R.P. Blackmur in Harrington. When I stopped worrying about where one was born, and about: how long one had lived in Maine, and about what seasons one lived in Maine (winter, of course, being far more authentic than summer), I could include, without qualm, the poetry of summer people (Robert Lowell, Elizabeth Bishop, Heather McHugh) as well as people who had lived in Maine for relatively short periods, and then left—which means you'll find two poems by Denise Levertov in the table of contents. At the same time, I thought I'd like to include something of John McPhee's (in this case, an excerpt from "The Keed of Lake Dickey"); a Princeton writer who spends a good deal of time in Maine and has written about him exceedingly; in fact, one of his books, The Survival of the Bark Canoe, re-traces Thoreau's path in the Allagash. McPhee's work has been included by now in Maine Speaks and also in The Maine Reader; but for all that, someone at Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance told me recently that when they reviewed one of his books in Maine in Print, some purists screamed foul because, I don't know, maybe he doesn't pay his taxes there (Thoreau would have loved it!).

Anyway, on with the selection process. I had known right from the beginning that the first edition just didn't accurately reflect the many cultures that co-exist, sometimes comfortably, sometimes not, in Maine. [In fact, I was supported in my work as editor by a grant from UMaine's Women in the Curriculum Program and by a grant to pay for permissions from then-President Lick's office: both contributing to what they understood would be a book reflecting Maine's cultural diversity.]

The '82 edition had no writing either by or about Maine's American Indians; the revised edition will fill in this gap, first with a tale told by Newell Lion and translated by Frank G. Speck: "Giskwabe Causes His Uncle, Turtle, to Lose His Member, and Recovers it for Him." Aside from two essays by Robert P.T. Coffin that I included in this section, filled in the rest with the work of two writers whose retold legends I think you'll find faithful to the originals, as well as extremely well-writers: Joseph Bruchac; and Howard Norman.

Several other of Maine's minorities are represented by a story of Denis Ledoux; A. Poulin, Jr.'s essay "Poetry and the Landscape of Epiphany" and his poem "Figures in a Stranger's Dream"; Willis Johnson's "Sarasaw," about the Maine's Russian emigres; a story about the Finns by Rebecca Cummings; and poems about the Irish and about the Jews, by Leo Connell and Roberta Chester, respectively.

You may have noticed that I've been citing Maine's cultural, as opposed to ethnic, diversity; in fact, it's what I like best about living here. All states, of course, have different cultures within their borders, but in Maine we have different cultures often side by side on any rural road. Whereas most readers and most writers are middle-class folks, and have traditionally written about other middle-class folks, Maine has been right in the forefront of what Susan Kenney calls K-Mart Realism—a movement represented in the anthology by three of Maine's most famous contemporary writers, Ciltie Pelletier, Carolyn Chute, and Elaine...
Ford. By the way, don't look for Chute's fiction; I decided on an essay instead, one that appeared originally in Minihell.

So anyway, here I am in Special Collections, reading, reading. It got so bad that I'd read every issue of Maine in Print, because it usually means I'd have to take a look at another two or three books. But the revised table of contents was getting to look pretty good: it included my favorite Susan Hand Sherry, essay, "The Shadow World of l'Isle Sainte Croix"; essays by Mary Ellen Chase, Virginia Chase, and Alice Bloom; and the poetry of Ruth Moore (instead of a chapter or two from a novel)—I hate taking bits out of big pieces, Abbie Huston Evans, May Sarton, Mitchell Goodman, and a host of Maine's newer poets: Burton Hatlen, Sylvester Pollet, William Carpenter, Ken Rosen, Stephen Dobyns, Kathleen Lignell, David Walker, Lee Shockey, Barrett Wormer, and Paul Corrigan. And last but not least your very own "From the Knees Down."

And that's when the sun ended.

Now, all along, understand, I'd been learning that Art is Long and Money is Short. From the beginning, for example, we'd known that we couldn't afford a very big book, nor one replete with as many illustrations and graphics as we might have liked. But penningpraching started in earnest with the permissions.

Perhaps you've never had to cope with this end of putting a book together. One needs written permission to reprint anything copyrighted less than seventy-five years old; in most cases, one applies directly to the publisher of the book or periodical from which one wants to take an excerpt. In some cases the writer himself has to give permission; in some cases, no one quite knows who has that power. All told, I wrote about 100 letters and spent almost a year finally getting all the requisite signatures. But even though my letters had stated that the University of Maine Press is not-for-profit, that the book wouldn't sell for a great deal of money, and that our funds were limited, still the permission costs added up. And up.

The Press had allotted $3000 (really a very small amount, as any anthologist could tell you), and the President's office had contributed another $1500; when I finally added all the fees together, though, the total was almost $6000. At this point, one makes very difficult decisions—and they're likely to be decisions based not on the quality of the piece, nor on its reader-appeal, nor on its importance to any kind of canon; instead, one decides how to include the most literature for the least amount of money. Romantic, huh? Casing about for a new title for this revised edition, I've begun to think that An anthology of All the Maine Literature We Could Afford would be most appropriate.

So what had to go? A chapter from Susan Kenney's book, Sailing, for example: a wonderful book by one of Maine's finest writers. But besides being a long chapter, it costs (according to Viking Penguin) $500. John McNeph's piece: by not including it, we can save $250. Lew Dietz, another very fine writer: $300. Most recently, I've received a permission form for an excerpt from Henry Beston's Northern Farm, included in the first edition: $300. Who goes in order for Beston to stay? Or does Beston go? One less poem by Louise Bogan, perhaps, or by Robert Lowell? Eliminate Mary Ellen Chase's description of "My Grandmother's Honeymoon"—shipweek and all! A. Poulin Jr. shows up twice on the table of contents: should we make it once? Do we publish his important essay about growing up French in Biddeford, or do we opt for his poem? It's not that I begrudge any of these writers, or their publishers, a single penny. They deserve it. If I live long enough, I may actually make some royalties from something myself. But I never thought as I sat between window and fan all summer long that something as prosaic as finding words would end up shaping my book.

So that brings me to . . . right now. And right now, I'll take just about any table of contents at all, and be thankful. As the Governor and the legislature play tug of war, the state's budget gets frayed and pulled out of shape. Will the University lose a little money? A lot? And where will the cuts come? How many deficits can our students be expected to make up for before we price ourselves out of the market?

That's what I meant about having a book in limbo. I'm just the editor, after all; persons with official-sounding, bureaucractic titles will determine whether a revised Anthology ever makes it to your neighborhood bookstore. Somehow it doesn't seem quite right for poets, and essayists, and novelists to be silenced by a weak economy; on the other hand, what makes us different from anyone else? I guess I've become a revised editor, while working on this revised edition.

In short, then, I'd love to write an article about being an anthologist—as long as you think your readers wouldn't mind reading about a book they may never see in their neighborhood bookstores. I'll wait to hear from you.

Fondly,

Margery Wilson

Detroit, ME

Teaches English at UMO

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Review

Rockwell Kent:
The Stranger Within Your Gates

"Don't you suppose that God put the animals on Earth for man to eat?" said the lobsterman to the young vegetarian Kent.

And don't you suppose," said the painter, "that maybe God put people here only for tiger's eat?"

That March day in 1971, when Rockwell Kent was about to die, of a stroke as he leaned over from his chair to seize imaginary flowers woven into the carpet, the ancient artist may have briefly thought he was once again in Cathedral Woods, on Monhegan Island, teased by the ferns and ladyslippers and white starflowers of that fairyland.

This piously-bald partisan man with the constant silver flute once said: "It was I—a Maine resident winter and summer for many, many years—who established Monhegan as an important art community."

His claim is valid. Peter W. Cox, author and former Maine Times editor, wrote of him: "It is pertinent to talk about Kent as a Maine artist since he did paint here. And he understood the state. His Monhegan Island is lush in the glowing summer sunset. . . . He does not glorify Maine in the winter but captures its beautiful starkness when the snow is not quite white and the trees are more brown than green. . . . His cranberry pickers are dwarfed by the sweeping firs and overhead the heavy grey clouds seem to threaten them with annihilation. It is as if Kent looked inside the soul of Maine to catch its spirit. And in this sense he is definitely a realist. Noone has ever caught Maine better which makes it all the sadder that Maine once rebuffed Rockwell Kent."

Not as well known about Kent is that he authored a number of books, inside and out of Maine. Perhaps to thwart prospective biographers, he double-tuned portevity with two lengthy volumes on himself. All of his works are perfectly executed, and a little costly; they should be read with his immaculate graphics in mind. In fact, they may be purchased more for their artwork than for their literary content. The nonplussed adventurer often rambles on about the three-hundred-ring circus of his life, much to the reader's expense. But even the severest of critics would admit that he had his moment more often than not.

Wilderness: A Journal of Quiet Adventure in Alaska, a travelogue escapade written when Kent was in his mid-sixties, was hailed by London's New Statesman as the most remarkable book to come out of America since Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass, in 1855. This is patently untrue; the memoir is likeable but amateurish, though such adangerously positive review is indicative of the Kent Cult which would follow him to his grave, and way beyond. Despite this, it should be allowed that there were some terrific sentences: "These are the times in life—when nothing happens—but in quietness the soul expands." And young Rocky telling his father, "You know I want to be a sailor so I'll learn not to be afraid." And Kent, snowwasting in the dawn, reflecting: "Out-of-doors to us is perfect."

Voyaging Southward from the Strait of Magellan is much more fascinating, as it recounts the farthest south launching of an American ship to that date (1922). Kent writes that wise men do not rely on the wind, and wonders: "Is bravery the cloak of cowardice?"

Nby E, an initial relating of his near-disastrous voyage to Greenland, the roof
of the world, was published in 1930. "The tide ran east and the gale blew west." It is a lovely book, checkacklock with black-and-white woodcuts. Kent was shipwrecked in the willow silver mist, but he picked up enough pieces to say of his life: "All things in nature seemed to have united there, that morning after days of storm, to achieve tranquility so perfect that one might say that there was neither sound nor movement beyond the sound and movements of the sunlight. When suddenly that water silence was shattered by a prolonged, wild, screaming yodel. It filled the valleys, leapt the hills, and beat against the mountains, its scream rolling to the sea, tumbling in prolonged, disordered tumult over its calm plain. And I stood on a pinnacle of rock waving my arms like a madman."

Salmonon was his best, and by a pretty margin. This volume about his time in Greenland, beginning with the dear frontispiece of his spinning food lover hanging out some wash, was published in New York two years after his return from that palace of wood. "Greenland is different," wrote Kent. "It is the sort to Greenlanders. Wecome there as mightly visitors from Mars, come there, and say awhile, get loved, get needed there, and go—as though to Mars again—forever.

His two ambitious autobiographies were published in 1940 and 1955, respectively. One may only guess what a pure memoir, written in the very last days of his life, would have revealed. What we have however are chronologies in which Kent rambles, geats, tells stories, colors himself up, colors himself down, like some mad child cryoataarcha architect quite satisfied. Ask him what time it is, Gentle Reader (he vainly addresses his public just a whicket short of nausea), and he builds you not merely a watch but an absolute cosmos. Collectively, nevertheless, the sum of the parts is somehow greater than the whole. As with his other books, his autobiographies (This Is My Own and It's Me O Lord!) are distinct despite the amphetamine onslaught of the surrounding words: "The painter may not be a casual tourist letting his work be just a record of his train or motor car for Maine." But sometimes art lost out. Despite Kent's romance with the running seas and towing headlands and elfin woodland paths of Monhegan Island, the Farnsworth Museum of Rockland refused a major collection of his paintings in late 1953, apparently on political grounds. From then on, he hesitated "to board a plane or train or motor car for Maine."

But sometimes art lost out. Despite Kent's romance with the running seas and towing headlands and elfin woodland paths of Monhegan Island, the Farnsworth Museum of Rockland refused a major collection of his paintings in late 1953, apparently on political grounds. From then on, he hesitated "to board a plane or train or motor car for Maine."

Kent wrote: "I became an artist because of an awareness so poignant of the beauty in the world around me that I could hardly bear it and wanted to weep."

Kent wrote: "I believe in peace and, as a child never-failing voice for peace, in art."

Kent wrote of the war-lovers in Congress: "Deeply and from my heart, in utter reverence I pray: God damn them all."

Frozen Mystic
(Kent on Art and other Artists)

He had some absolute opinions. In a letter to New York Times Magazine he wrote: "The current generally incomprehensible aberrations appear as the inevitable and perfect expression of a smitten culture. Their acceptance by the patronage of our galleries and the masters of our press is less to be interpreted as a surrender to fashion than as further evidence of that renunciation of humanity implicit in our purposes and evidenced by our acts. Abstraction is the cultural counterpart of the atomic bomb."

In a letter to his supposed own genre of painting, he said: "Realism, in the unreal post-war world, was hard beset to hold its feet amid the disintegration of cultural standards which paralleled the general abandonment of long established principles of life and government."

But was Kent, the thin soldier who squeezed out his colors beneath immense turquoise icebergs, who followed the course of the stars, who revelled in days when fogs made mystery mysterious, ever a Realist in the first place? Certainly his work is better associated with the designs of poet and engraver William Blake, a mystic in a category of his own. Kent the architectural genius must also have had more than a passing familiarity with the ancient and arcane Masonic drawings, and the symbols used to illustrate the sacred order's books of rites. His decorative etchings are fraternal with those of the unknown early members. He thought any suggestion of mysticism in his work was nonsense, but the impression persists. He may not have been able to see himself clearly. About other artists, however, he was most precise: "Marsden Hartley—"One of the most sensitive minds I have ever encountered . . . as at times unutterably sad.""Michelangelo Buonarroti—"Painting in terms of sculpture.""Anatomy Van Dyck—"Worn out by overwork, he died at forty-two.""Leonardo da Vinci—"What splendid things have been said about Leonardo the painter, things we have had to doubt for lack of proof.""Peter Paul Rubens—"Loving life so, his brush caressed it.""Jan Vermeer—"His works, small in number, are as precious as jewels . . . No other painter has so beautifully and correctly organized colors in terms of light.""Jean-Francois Miller—"Great dignity."

Paul Cezanne—"He wanted to reduce form to simple and clear existence through the architectural use of color.

Auguste Renoir—"A born painter . . . Of him it may truly be said that he died painting."

Vincent Van Gogh—"Neither understanding the world, nor understood by it."

Pablo Picasso—"Silly, ivory-tower self-expressionism."

His views on Picasso may have moderated in later life. Kent, as a socialist, was denied a passport to exit the United States: Picasso, as a communist, was denied an entry visa. The two exchanged consoling telegrams.

Making Love on Ice
(Job 38.22, Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?)

"Artists' hearts are good," wrote Rockwell Kent in 1939. But it does not necessarily follow that they are always true. He was wedded three times: Kathleen Whiting (1908-1926), Frances Lee (1926-1940), Sally Johnstone (1940-1971). It's safe to say that the narrow freedom between his marriages indicated he could not tolerate loneliness. His love-making does not begin and end with them however; Kent—athlete, muscular painter, pacifist, vegetarian—could have been a saint, were it not for women. "I had been raised in the Romantic school," he once wrote. "I believed that love and life and dynamite could not be trifled with." He nevertheless does his hardest to test the sad mixture.

Nude females twirl brilliantly in his thoughts from an early age. At thirteen, while on a trip to Germany with his aunt, he wanders into the courtyard and surpises three young streetgirls, "one of whom had at that instant pulled her dress far above her waist. The impact of her lovely nakedness . . . sent me rushing past them in a state of wild confusion and furious desire." But he was to write in an autobiography: "I discovered sea lids, and spent the rest of my life making up for lost time."

Whatever, Kent had a full 88 years of mischief.

He met Janet on Monhegan in 1907. A singer: tall, plain, impulsive, sensitive. They were just friends, at the beginning. A year after he married Kathleen, Kent and Janet became lovers in the Cathedal Woods. By 1910, Janet was pregnant; that next year, Kent attempted to form a household with her and the infant and the newly-pregnant Kathleen, in New Hampshire. This scheme failed miserably. Kent wrote his sister: "I tried to do what Shelley would have done." Kent and Kathleen eventually sold their home on Monhegan, to escape the scandal of Janet. The proceeds, as well as various stocks and bonds, went to the unwed mother. She later married a Portland dentist; the child (Karl) died at the age of four.

Kathleen, his first wife, was a mere eighteen: she was quiet, shy, perfect at the piano. She was his green cool arbor for the next two decades.

There was Hildegard, a soft blonde blue-eyed dancer from the New York Folies, a woman who loved him on Monhegan in 1916. For her he wrote and illustrated a fable, which began: "Once upon a time when the world was age younger, when fary godmothers sponsored all the babies, when Princesses were beautiful and good . . ."

Then there was an independent young madcap named Lydia for a while, when
Kent was in his mid-thirties and a constant patron of the New York speakeasies. One wet November afternoon, he was strolling with another man and her in the woods of a Long Island estate. "Only a witch," said the artist, "could lure two men to walk with her on a day like this. Is this an enchanted wood where you are leading us? What ordeal do we have to face?" Upon arriving at a small body of water, Lydia announced: "I'm going to run around the pond. And wherever you swing across to meete on the other side, I will be his." Kent, stripped down to his underwear, won the remarkable Lydia (she presented him with a golden key to her apartment), but the relationship was stormy. His marriage with Kathleen, too, was fading, and he soon sailed to Tierra del Fuego, in a puritan attempt to find the worst place in the world in which to repair the anarchy of his heart.

Little is known about Maureen. Upon Kent's return from South America, Kathleen and the children traveled to the Riviera, the beginning of a separation that would lead to divorce. Maureen, a young out-of-work showgirl, immediately moved in with him, on the New York farm he called Egypt. She typed his Tierra del Fuego manuscript, and remained one year.

Oh, there was Mary, the lascivious young daughter of a Kent wanted to live with her in Paris, but she was frightened by his brown-eyed intensity.

Along came Frances Lee, who was to be his second wife. She was a sophisticated 26-year-old divorcee when Kent met her at a New York luncheon in the spring of 1926. He proposed that very first night, then besieged for the next two weeks. He sent her a lifetime supply of stationery printed with the woodcut monogram: "Two nights ago the rumor got about that I was to meet Frances Lee at 9 o'clock. There was, it seems, wild excitement, and people raced to tell the catechist. The catechist was outraged at the proposed desecration of the church. He blocked the door at once. Through Salamina, immediately satisfied, came running home. What she expected to find there, of me, I can't guess. For it was about nine when she came in. Doubtless to await my charmed and creptfallen homcoming. But, while the catechist and immemnnable men, women, and children gathered about in every nook and hiding place that the sun too dark night afforded, to watch the revengence, there sat I quietly at home reading. Nor did I sit me-kyn-swaneted prey. The whole story of the planned try was completely false. The heat for it was 8 o'clock—yet 9: we'd met and passed a happy while together, and, with Cornelia pocketing a package of cigarettes, parted mutually gratified. But the church is now locked at night—which is certainly more bother for the catechist than for me."

Then there was a nameless mystic lover in northern Greenland. Kent was off on a painting adventure, with his canvases and bag of colors. "I climbed a hill and stood there looking over the blue ocean. 'Here am, at land's end,' I thought, 'and the ocean is the absolute. Therefore, here by the ocean, one could live forever and desire nothing more.' Then suddenly in a depression of the land below me, I saw a tiny moving figure, bright vermilion. And I knew what that was. I forgot the sea and the mountains and the sunshine and the absolute and stood there watching how the little figure crept along. Then, all at once, it stopped. So far apart that they appeared to each other as the tiniest speck on the vast landscape, a woman and a man stood looking at each other. And both knew it. Then, at the very same moment, they moved a little bit; they waved their arms in greeting. We walked towards each other, sometimes in view, sometimes hidden in the hollows. Our meeting came as though unexpectedly, so near and sudden was our last emergence from the cover. Yet we were not embarrasmed. We walked together to a sheltered spot where the sun was warm; there we sat, down side by side, and she began to talk to me. I had little idea of what she said; but by such noddings and shakings of the head as I thought appropriate she came to believe that I understood her words. And soon we were laughing together. We kissed each other, and I made love to her. I saw her laugh face shadowed against the blue zenith. After a while I awoke. I opened my eyes and saw her there, sitting up straight beside me. Her hard restasted affectionately on my knee; her eyes were on the horizon of the ocean—but as though not seeing it. And in a low, sweet voice she sang a song. I shall never know what the words of that song were."

Frances soon moved to Greenland, and she promptly put her husband's house in order, at least for a while. Of adultery, Kent wrote: "Law with us is coloured and dressed in blue broadcloth and brass buttons. What we are not apt to realize is that such haphazard majesty of law is only a corrupted or perverted form of public opinion."

In a more reflective moment, Kent wrote: "If I may liken marriage to a piece of cabinet work, I was a stick of raw, unseasoned wood that had been built into it; and I had warped and cracked and sprung to such an extent that the piece was at last coming apart in its joints."

He was beginning to temper himself as Sally entered his life, in 1940. She was an English secretaries, and by the time she finished typing his first autobiography she became his final wife.

One of her favorite lines was from William Blake's 'Proverbs of Hell': "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom." He was also fond of the Greenland tambourine-song which lamented:

From the north and from the south
When I was young
I began to long for women

In his most furious illuminated mood, he once wrote: "Isn't it fortunate that no man or woman may ever live who has not for a time been loved by someone?"

Rockwell Kent was a solitary artist, though his bed, sometimes blue but never absolutely, was seldom unmade. It can accurately be said that females were crucial to him, to a fault.

Frank Johnson
Tenants Harbor
& A difference writer
1862 Born June 21, in a house called Solitude in Tarrytown Heights, NY, to Rockwell Kent and Sara Holgate Kent.

1882 Attends various boarding schools in the Northeast, "seasonal orphanages" with a military framework and religious overtones. Excel in English, history and calligraphy; noted for illuminated Spenserian penmanship.

1892 Launches professional art career, selling sets of dinner cards to Tarrytown Woman's Exchange, and produces family heraldry and pastoral china paintings.

1900-02 Enrolls at Columbia University, after graduating from Horace Mann preparatory school as the only student in his class not to receive recommendation for college. A high-spirited discipline problem, wants to become an artist or a carpenter or a conductor of a railway engine. Studies art under reactionary William Merrit Chase, a Realist who has little patience with self-expression; paints one hundred oils every summer.

1903 At top of his class in architecture, gives up his degree in order to study painting at the NY School of Art, under progressives Robert Henri and Kenneth Hayes Miller; apprentices to eccentric colorist Abbott H. Thayer.

1904 Attends first Socialist party meeting in Pocantico Hills, NY, to support "full employment, child labor laws, the eight-hour day, the right to organize." Sells first paintings, after exhibit at the National Academy.

1905 On advice of Robert Henri, moves to Monhegan Island, spends the better part of the next five years, "It was enough to start me off to such feverish activity in painting as I had ever known." Also works as a well-driller, for one dollar per day, and a privy-cleaner ($10); often returns to architecture, as a draughtsman, to support himself.

1906 Builds own house on Horn's Hill, Monhegan. Spends the next year constructing several other houses, painting nights.


1910 With George Bellows, Walter Kuhn, and Maurice Prendergast, takes part in the Exhibition of Independent Artists Show in NYC—a protest against the "sterile" National Academy, which Kent considered pandering and sentimental. Opens Monhegan Summer School of Art, with thirty students. Takes initial trip to Newfoundland, by train and steamer.

1911 Second NYC independent exhibit, along with Prendergast, Marsden Hartley and nine others. Kent shows fifteen paintings, mostly of Monhegan. On tour, one drawing (Men And Mountains) is banned in Columbus, Ohio, because of backside nudity. Kent and Kathleen move to New Hampshire, then to Greenwich Village.

1912 Moves to Winona, Minnesota, for architectural job "in order of the United States Company." But he is broadcasting to Russia via a shortwave radio in his cellar, and he is devil-worshipping Joseph Stalin in front of a handmade altar. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations Of The Committee Of Government Operations is primarily concerned about two of Kent's books, Wilderness and N By E, appearing on the shelves of subversive libraries overseas. He attempts to make a statement for the record, but Senator McCarthy interrupts, "I'm not going to listen to a lecture from you." Kent, before leaving the chambers, coolly replies: "You're not going to get one. I get paid for my lectures." His passport is revoked by the State Department, though the document is later reinstated in a landmark Supreme Court case. The Farnsworth Museum in Rockland, ME, declines to accept Kent Collection of oil paintings. Many of his books are burned, by order of the United States government.

1913 Moves back to NYC, claiming: "Architecture is a waste of time, for me, a waste of life."

1914 Sails to Newfoundland, finds dilapidated house on Conception Bay, sends for family. Paintings take on a dark tone, perhaps because of the War: Man The Abyss, Man And Permanency, Newfoundland Ding, The House Of Dread, Man On A Mist.

1915 Accused of being a German spy, unconventional Kent is asked to leave Newfoundland. Moves to NYC, then New London, then to Staten Island. "Art is a hazardous career." Does light illustrations for Vanity Fair and Pack.

1916-17 Sells paintings for $600, payable in monied installments. Peddles humorous drawings, nouveau wallpaper, delicately executed decorations on mirrors.

1918 Moves with nine-year-old son Rocky to Fox Island, off the Kenai Peninsula of Alaska. Asks Kathleen to leave them, she refuses. Writes Wildemen: A Journal Of Quiet Adventures In Alaska, published in 1920 by Putnam's.

1919 Sells Alaskan paintings buys farm on the high southern spur of Mount Equinox, in Vermont.

1922-23 Sails to Tierra del Fuego. Writes Voyaging Southward From The Strait Of Magellan, which is issued in 1924 by Halcyon House.

1926 Divorce from Kathleen meets Frances Lee in Manhattan; proposes immediately. They marry in April, move to the Adirondacks. Spends four months painting in Donegal, Ireland; back in the States, edits short-lived magazine called Creative Art.

1927 Cancels art exhibit at Worcester Museums, MA, in protest of the electric-chair executions of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two impoverished Italians he believes falsely accused of murder in a South Braintree heist. He and Frances buy a 300-acre farm in Au Sable Forks, NY.

1928 Shipwrecked off coast of Greenland. Lives in Godthahs, gathers material for bluewater adventure, N By E.

1933 Reaches fame as illustrator: The Canterbury Tales, Beowulf, Malory Dick.

1933-36 Revolutionizes politics, from Alaska to Puerto Rico to Brazil. Returns to Greenland, with a 1-year-old son Gordon.

1937 Lectures, Maine to Oregon. 49 speeches in 22 states. Receives National Academy of Design Award ($600), which he promptly transfers to the Spanish Republic, for medical aid during the Civil War.


1940 Divorce from Frances. Writes first autobiography, This Is My Own. Hires Sally Johnstone (26, English, Canadian educated) as secretary. She becomes his third and final wife.

1947 Repurchases original house on Monhegan Island, lives there off and on for next six years.

1948 Runs for Senate on the progressive American Labor Party ticket in New York; loses by a landslide. His paintings fall back in fashion.


1953, June, McCarthy Hearings, 80 charges against Rockwell Kent. There are rumors he is broadcasting to Russia via a shortwave radio in his cellar, and he is devil-worshipping Joseph Stalin in front of a handmade altar. Senate Permanent Subcommittee On Investigations Of The Committee Of Government Operations is primarily concerned about two of Kent's books, Wilderness and N By E, appearing on the shelves of subversive libraries overseas. He attempts to make a statement for the record, but Senator McCarthy interrupts, "I'm not going to listen to a lecture from you." Kent, before leaving the chambers, coolly replies: "You're not going to get one. I get paid for my lectures." His passport is revoked by the State Department, though the document is later reinstated in a landmark Supreme Court case. The Farnsworth Museum in Rockland, ME, declines to accept Kent Collection of oil paintings. Many of his books are burned, by order of the United States government.

1953-54 Finishes second autobiography, It's Me O Land. On Monhegan, then quits Maine. For the remainder of his life, his primary residence is the Adirondacks.

1958-60 Concerned that his art might "go up in smoke in America," visits Soviet Union; donates 82 paintings, 800 drawings, and handwritten illustrated manuscripts of his books and journals to the people of Russia. He writes later: "It meant a great deal to me to get my work into a country where it would be safe.""Greenland Journal published by Ivan Obolensky, Inc.

1962 Awarded Lenin Peace Prize, the Russian equivalent to the Nobel. Donates nearly half the money for medical supplies to the citizens of Vietnam. "I have great pity for those poor people who are suffering from what we are doing to them."

1964 Stroke in late winter, Dies eleven days afterward, March 13th, in Champlain Valley, NY.
"Vers à vendre" is the message on hand-printed signs seen fairly often in rural Quebec. Although my limited French left me wondering what these little signs meant, I conjectured that verses were being offered for sale at a lot of curious poetic farm houses. Finally, I thought to look up the words in my French-English dictionary. "Vers," it turned out, could mean "verres." But it more likely is the plural of "verre," which means "wine." So the signs are probably nothing more than the equivalent of those humble placards seen in front of so many Maine homes, reading, "Worms for sale."

Still, I wondered about the possibility that one of these homes might really have verses to sell. Would anyone stop to browse? Would anyone buy the nursery offerings of some desperate starving poet?

Having decided what the signs must mean, I remained curious. So on my way through St. Charlemagne Sud, one fine day, I stopped when I saw one of these notices posted in front of a small red house. Knocking on the front door, I was greeted by a charming older woman, her face wrinkled and tanned from working in the surrounding fields, her hair improbably red. I recited my custom meter line: "Je me pars pas trop bien le Français." Unfortunately, I've said this line so often that I have it down pretty pat. People assume that I'm only being modest in saying that I don't speak French very well. They immediately respond with a volley of rapid gobbledygook that leaves my senses buzzing. That's what this lady did.

The only defense I could think of was to point at the sign stuck in her front lawn and repeat its message: "Vers à vendre!" Finally figuring out what I was trying to ask, she pointed to the barn just as a large white-bearded gentleman emerged from its open door. He was as unskilled in the use of English as was with French, but he understood my question more quickly than his wife why I had stopped at their home. He led me behind the barn to show me several raised beds, full of worms.

I sure blanket the worm beds. Finally, working up my courage and guessing at the words, I asked, "Avez-vous des vers—des poèmes?" The man's eyes, already bright and laughing, lit up even more. He brought me into his barn and switched on a light.

These folks apparently operated a sort of flea market. There were tables and bins overflowing with curious objects, all for sale and marked with price tags. I was absorbed in rummaging through some of this interesting collection when I realized that the owner was no longer by my side. He must have understood my question, after all.

But then he returned. Carrying a large three-ring binder, he plucked it down on one of the tables and said, "Vers."

Sure enough. Centered on each loose-leaf page was a calligraphic poem, written in a bold hand with a black pencil. After shuffling through the album, I picked one of the shorter poems, pointed at it and asked, "Comptine?" "D'un Pére," he answered as he ripped the page out of the binder and signed his name at the bottom.

I started to protest his signature, since I have just enough French to know that "Père Noël" is the French version of Santa Claus. But he eventually got me to understand that while his name is really Noël Tremblay, he is called Père Noël by everyone in St. Charlemagne Sud. It certainly fit his beard and twinkling eyes.

Père Noël's poem now hangs in a cheap department store frame over my kitchen table. After puzzling over Noël's handwriting for some time, I think that is what he wrote:

Une femme charmante,
Qui m'a demandé
Charme pièce avec des fleurs
A mes petits coeur.

After further pondering, I think that a loose translation into a kind of Haiku form could be:

A lovely woman,
Placing flowers in each room,
Occupies my heart.

Not bad for two bucks. And I know where there's a fat notebook full of beaucoup more "vers à vendre."

J.D. Aiguier
Jackman
is le Docteur American,
U.S. Custom Inspector at T.B. R19

KENNEBEC: A Portfolio of Maine Writing, Vol. XVI, 1992
Published by the University of Maine-Augusta

Annually we try to publish the best Maine writing we can find, subject to considerations of length, balance in content, and variety of tone. These 83 poems, fiction writers, reviewers and reviewed are but a sampling of the creative surge going on in this state. Typically, about half have not appeared in these pages before. Neither writers nor editors are compensated financially. 5,000 copies are distributed free throughout the state as a service to the community in an effort to bring new as well as established writers to the attention of a wide public, and to extend into the present this state's literary heritage. We are supported by the UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT AUGUSTA. Deadline for submissions for next year: 9/1/92—12/1/92. Send SASE. Copyright held by writers.

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The Image of Their Greatness

Casting

You sit drawing on an upstream rock;
I stand fishing in a downstream pool.

I cast to catch your smile,
The curves of my fly-line through the air
Are the curves on your face.

The red bend,
I've caught a nice one.

Jean Pinchune
Tenants Harbor
is a landscape gardener

He Planted Carefully

trees for the shade
they would have,
and the birds,
in many years,
and then moved away,
leaving a larger
to strangers,
strangers who ripped
out the green
to make room
for cars.

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