KENNEBEC
A PORTFOLIO OF MAINE WRITING

Bartels
Bradley
Coursen
Greenspan
Johnston
Kennedy
Kestenbaum
Kindred
Ladenheim
Larkin
Larsen
Liscomb
Lignell

McKenna
O’Flaherty
Phillips
Pohl
Pollet
Rawlings
Sanborn
Saum
Sharkey
Tagliabue
Walker
Ward
Well, Hans...

well, Hans, it would be just that day
the sink invisible
every dish crusted
even the cups unusable
the baby dragging her laden diaper
through the sawdust in the living room
leaving a trail, two trails really, one visible
one a titian wan could follow

it would be the very day
she vice-grip slipped
off a stripped and buggered cistpipe nut
to knock out your eye-tooth

it would be then
just then
your long-fest preppy chum
would appear from nowhere

bottoming his leathers Porsche in your rutting driveway
and come to the door
swaddled in the double cashmeres
leaving a trail, two trails really, one visible
the sink invisible

I haven't sunk so low
it's just the day,
but grimace and mumble:

it would be then
just then
your long-fest preppy chum
would appear from nowhere

bottoming his leathers Porsche in your rutting driveway
and come to the door
swaddled in the double cashmeres
leaving a trail, two trails really, one visible
the sink invisible

I haven't sunk so low
it's just the day,
but grimace and mumble:

What could you do —
trying to shield that raw red nerve
from sight and air —
but grimace and mumble:

it's just the day,
it's not like this —
I haven't sunk so low
to lose my smile.

Through the Window

It was one of those careless mornings when I awoke with you, the sun a factor
against the drawn curtains of your room. We kissed and you told me, smiling,
about the teen-ager, a neighbor obsessed with watching you undress. You had
found this out from a downstairs roomer. I suggested perhaps he was just a peo-
ple-watcher, a student of your individual idiosyncrasies. You told me at least he
was a constant watcher, observing you sew and curse each time you fuddled a
stitch or pulled a hem. You thought perhaps he was delighted when you would
lightly come to the window and water the flowers, cautiously, gently bending,
pouring the correct amount into each pot — marvelling at the precision with
which you filled each one to its proper level.

You did not think of him as a voyeur. In fact you were certain that when he
watched you uncrossing he blushed, felt timid and often looked away, not wishing
to violate the virtuous relationship he'd established. You mentioned that though
he beds down only ten meters away from you, you would never know the warmth
of his young body; though not handsome you are certain he would have made a
lover of merit.

I thought how you could now know his jealous anger as he watched you smile,
lounging on your bed in mid-evening with gentlemen visitors who often stayed
after the lights had been turned off and the house grown quiet, the neighborhood
rolled in a blanket of fog. This passive hurt burned in him but he could never con-
front you with it. A silly adolescent's dream. He will grow up, take a wife in deep
love, but it will be your image, your flowers on the sill, your cat and sewing ma-
dine, your wonderful silken arms curved across sunlight — it is this which will
provide the fire that will burn his soul and consume his wife's passion.

As a man, in a time many years from now, he will pull into the driveway below
your window. You will be long gone — moved to the country or perhaps west. The
landlord will tell him. He is in town only briefly. He returns to the driveway and
stares up at your window. There is a strange lasting feeling that makes him return
more than once. Inside the window nothing has changed, though new venetian
blinds close off the foreign interior. He is his youth he finds in that window. You
are his captive. You are gain and loss. He presses you close.

He reads about it in his newspaper, the story picked up because
of the loss of life
gravid splice the legendary horse rock lost the horsepull
draft pairs work honest in the open arena

He reads this, wondering if it was your room. He sees you smile,

He will return — two, three more times before a fire levels the building on a
summer's night. He reads about it in his newspaper, the story picked up because
of the loss of life — an elderly couple, asleep at the time. Identifiable by dental
records only... he reads this, wondering if it was your room. He sees you smile,

around town

elvis preley
norwalk show closing
shrinks daughters
seed diminished in vigor
like that like that
immune is no uncle aunt no creative
drift of an expanding universe of stars
kites
like that like that
thread twisted round the horn of africa

gravid splice the legendary horse rock lost the horsepull
draft pairs work honest in the open arena

were a you you
smashed her hipbone
a son seventeens electrocuted
like holes through my memory
like water on cast iron
like skowhegan pizza

Lee Sharkey
Skowhegan

Photograph by Bruce Armstrong
Sparrow Hawk

Small god
of telephone conversations
Downeast,
His eyes encompass a landscape
while the streams of a dialect
passes through his feet.

His head,
curved with killer's wisdom,
finds no murals
on the horizon
nor pointillism
in the barns.

He finds
the myopic head of a mouse,
the naivety of a banquet,
and leaves the wires
in the clutches of the wind.

Kris Larson
East Machias

Buck Fever

sit beside
a woodfire
all night long
in silent communion
with half a pint
of Southern Comfort
only to
stumble
before the paper,
a hunter
still numbed by the cold,
another victim
of buck fever,
cursed to catch
only a glimpse
of form
stretching across
the page,
leaping through
the trees.

Doug Rawlings
Mt. Vernon

The Skowhegan State Fair

(THE SKOWHEGAN STATE FAIR)

Night. We drive through the underpass to park in the center of the race track, walk under the pounding hooves through a corrugated metal tunnel. We are miniature golf balls. The warning bugle and then the race. Horses smooth, held from cantering by leather trace. Men fly behind, tails blowing in their faces. Dust rises up, powders car windshields, the grandstand, the wrinkled skin of fortune tellers on the midway, the breath of children, already sticky with cotton candy and fried dough.

Foil. A flash of hair. Muscles moving under satin. Gazed eyes glaring white as a mouth snarls open and teeth clasp at the trace. A jerk, a toss of the head. The stride is broken; then the whip. They love to run. I tell myself, they're bred to run, need to run, need to win.

But why do they need to run this way? With blinders on and tongues flaming from the bit, pulling carts and whipped if they skip a beat. The sound of hooves on dirt, skin against leather, a whispered curse in the ear.

My great-grandfather, Willie Kidd, bred and raced trotters, and watching them circle the track, I feel his blood in my veins.

On the midway. Fried dough, genuine lemonade, hamburgers, pizza, French fries, cotton candy in bags and on the stick. Bumper cars, the Cobra, a merry-go-round and ferris wheels, the Bavarian Slide, the freak show — ½ woman / ½ man. The pygmy pig. Burlesque, sword swallowers, a solid gold Rolls Royce inside a tractor-trailer you can see for only $2.00. Carnies hawk, then stop and stare from sleep-hungry eyes, ringed in red. Animals stalls with sheep in coats withhoods, milk-white cows, black-faced lambs.

Teenagers from the farm with $10 saved up from haying taste everything and follow young girls who walk so fast their breasts bob. Eyes meet, blushes, a hand, a touch, ride the Sky Wheel.

Two wheels spinning on themselves and round each other — why didn't the junior high school teacher, trying to explain how the earth rotates on its axis and also revolve about the sun, take us up on the Sky Wheel?

Up, high up and over the top. We're going to fall into vats of boiling oil, into the arms of strongmen and the woman with a moustache, down to the racetrack and trampled underfoot, or we'll never come down, but catch the wind and tumble on forever, over fields and barns, losing the smell of dough and machine oil and sweat, of axle grease and paint and dreams lived, dreams shattered on the same day, going higher and higher like bright red and yellow balloons that children lose, higher until the air turns cold and we burst, two hen and eggs, spilling our colors on the midway.

The little girl riding beside me cries, "It's like a dream!" and I love her then, for a moment. She knows about dreams, about falling and learning to fly.

Kate Kennedy

For R.F., In Season

While boys who failed to winterize their song
Cash in fair-weather chips and cry all's lost,
I wait to run my best bet on the strong:
What bears me up is partly perma-Frost.

David Walker
Freedom

For Someone Who Calls Regularly

In the dark I await you,
Knowing you will ring into my dreams,
Knowing how in half-sleep I will stumble
Alone in my flannel nightgown
To pick up the receiver —
Knowing it will be you.
Not the death of a relative,
Not the urgency of a loved one,
Not the surprise of someone old or new
Miraculously ringing into my life —
Only you, who know me.

Never fear,
I will always answer.
I will always listen
To your heavy breathing, your obscenities
Victims, like lovers, are faithful
And each never knows
What to say, what to do.

Barbara Barnes
Brunswick
Robert Muldoon, John Irving's Tiresias, is a truly modern phenomenon, shaped by surgeons, not gods.

"Jenny's newest colleague was a six-foot-four transsexual named Roberta Muldoon. Formerly Robert Muldoon, a standout tight end for the Philadelphia Eagles, Roberta's weight had dropped from 235 to 180 since her successful sex-change operation. The doses of estrogen had built up to her once massive strength and some of her endurance."

Tiresias was a unique figure in Greek mythology and subsequently plays an important part in Greek drama, most notably Oedipus Rex by Sophocles. The story goes that one day Tiresias saw two snakes mating and killed the female. At first he became a woman. Some years later he saw another pair of snakes mating. He killed the male and became a man again. Thus, when the most powerful male and female gods on Mount Olympus, Zeus and Hera, were arguing about who received the most pleasure from sex — man or woman — they called on Tiresias, who had been both, to settle the argument. Tiresias stated that women enjoyed sex nine times more than men. Hera, furious at his decision, blinded him. Since gods, no matter how powerful, cannot undo another god's work, Zeus tried to compensate blind Tiresias by giving him the twin gifts of prophecy and an extremely long life.

Irving commented at a reading of The World According to Garp at Colby College that he was struck with a real problem concerning two of his major characters, Jenny Fields, who hated men, and T. S. Garp, her writer son who is misunderstood to be a male chauvinist because he is a super jock. Irving needed a plausible way to facilitate, explain, and connect these two opposites. His highly innovative answer was the creation of Roberta Muldoon, a modern medical miracle, a transsexual ex-professional football player.

The novel's underlying male vs. female terms are developed through Jenny Fields. Garp, the protagonist, had been almost immediately conceived by his menstruating mother Jenny, a nurse, on a diving bell tennis court.

"Of course I felt something when he died," Jenny Fields wrote in her famous autobiography, "But the best of him was inside me. That was the best thing for both of us, the only way he could go or living, the only way I wanted to have a child. That the rest of the world finds this an immoral act only shows me that the rest of the world doesn't respect the rights of an individual."

Jenny does not know his name. Her subsequent autobiography, A Sexual Suspect, makes her a leader of the feminist movement. She is eventually assassinated by a male chauvinist deer hunter. One of her supporting groups that emerges is the Ellen Jamesians, a cult of women who cut out their tongues as a protest against man as rapist. A young girl named Ellen James, like Philomela of old, had been raped and then had her tongue cut out by the man so that she could not explain what had happened. Ultimately, an Ellen Jamesian who is also a childhood friend of Garp, shoots Garp to death as he is coaching wrestling, a patently male activity to the Ellen Jamesians. Thus, one may understand the magnitudes of the problem Irving faced in believably connecting the worlds of Jenny and Garp.

A Modern-day Tiresias

According to Garp

Robert Muldoon, ex-Philadelphia Eagle tight end, is a major and carefully developed character. He exhibits many of the traits of today's liberated woman, one of which is standing up to situations both psychologically and physically. She is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, so all the women merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician sailor and the latter important personage in the poem uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed master of prophecy, in turn like Tiresias, therefore chose Tiresias. Before the advent of modern medical technology and techniques only the gods, and even then only the very highest of gods, could shape such a fabulous figure. In the scene from The Wasteland, which the Tiresias note explicates, a typist entertains a "carcassonic" clerk while Tiresias observes:

For his central unifying character in the Wasteland, Eliot, in need of one who could feel and at least partially understand human sexuality from the viewpoints of both Venus and Mars, therefore chose Tiresias. Before the advent of modern medical technology and techniques only the gods, and even then only the very highest of gods, could shape such a fabulous figure.

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The parallel can be seen as Irving dramatizes Roberta, not as a vacillating homosexual, but rather as one who has gone from malus quo male to femina quo media, playing each role in turn like Tiresias, and thus experiencing "all." In a late night phone call to Garp she says:

"I'm sorry," Roberta said. "But I thought it was too late to call your mother." Garp found this logic astounding, since he knew that Jenny stayed up later than he did, but he also liked Roberta, very much, and she had certainly had a hard time.

He said: "I wasn't enough of a woman, that I confused him, sexually — that I was confused sexually?" Roberta cried. "Oh, God, that trick. All he wanted was the novelty of it. He was just showing off for his friends." I'll bet you could have taken him, Roberta," Garp said. "Why didn't you beat the shit out of him?"

"You don't understand," Roberta said. "I don't feel like beating the shit out of anyone, anymore. I'm a woman!"

"Don't women ever feel like beating the shit out of someone?" Garp asked. Helen reached over to him and pulled his cock.

"I don't know what women feel like," Roberta wailed. "I don't know what they're supposed to feel like, anyway, I just know what I feel like."

"What's that?" Garp asked, knowing she wanted to tell him.

"I feel like beating the shit out of him now," Roberta confessed, "but when he was dumping all over me at last... I just sat there and look it. I even cried, and he even called me up and told me that I was still crying I was taking myself..."

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On This Hot Night

Young woman in black on this hot night
swathes herself in mourning cotton.
Sweat streams between her breasts and thigh,
catches the soft flesh of her arms.
Sweat etches the nooses of her feet.

Young woman in black on this hot night
lifts her hair high off her neck.
Sweat tracks through the clothed hair,
then down her nape and spine.
Sweat fails inside the cotton tent of dress.

Young woman in black on this hot night
waits... Sweat pearls between her brows,
forms tears, earlocks, a moustache,
Pours rain within her tent with night.

Wendy Kindrell
Fort Kent

The Widow

His death smacked
Something in her,
Leaving her wide-eyed
As a vacant house.

Does she,
Behind that blank gaze,
Continue to seek him
Through that night?

Of scarlet screams?
Or does he lie within her
Abandoned.

Susan Phillips
Taos, New Mexico

Frost had given a lesson, whether playfully intended or not, concerning what a poet does and does not do. Once again, the White Goddess image arises; that is to say, the personification that poets give to their non-conscious inspirations. In many artistic epiphanies, primordial images float up and are put in order, harmonized, almost without invitation. The symbols which exist in the unconscious become visible in dreams and creative moments, periodically float to the surface of our consciousness. But perhaps most strongly for the artist.

Obviously, Irving did not consciously attempt to recreate Tiresias in modern garb. What is important is that he did, in effect, give us consciously or unconsciously a modern variation on a very ancient theme.

As human beings are "understand" on many levels. The relative strengths and importance of our subconscious, our unconscious, and our conscious wide-awake world cannot be clearly measured. As David Leeming neatly sums it up:

Most of us have dreams of falling from great heights, dreams of being lost or left behind, dreams of conquest — sexual, athletic, or whatever. Nearly every society has myths which explain these themes on the group level. To be sure, dreams are in part products of the individual's personality and environment, but Jung has shown the individual's psyche cannot be divorced from the psyche of the human race as a whole. Dreams are also products of inherited themes which are buried in the very depths of the human psyche. These are themes — archetypes — which are when we come across them in literature, for instance, "strike a chord" for no apparent reason. So myths spring from the particular problems and concerns of a given race or tribe, but on a deeper level their source is the universal soul of the human race itself.

I submit that Tiresias is an archetypal theme that reappears once again in John Irving's The World According to Garp, as Roberta Muldoon — transexual.

John Newell Sanborn
Unity College
He heard the pickup struggle up the hill and subsided behind the Ford, which was on chunks. It had no wheels. But he’d try to do something about the Ford this week, before the snow fell. There must be some wheels in one of them junkyards behind high wood fences in the backroads of Hatton County.

With the beer he drank rings all over the formica table till it looked like a quilt. Hallie was all right driving the Chevy — if it broke down she wouldn’t have far to walk, either to the diner or back home.

He flinched as the heavy outside door slammed open against the trailer and an old-fashioned woven-splint basket scraped across the scaling linoleum. He shut his eyes, not wanting to watch his mother’s balloonong bosom and solid hams swarming over the doortill.

“My Lord, what you doin’ sittin’ there drinkin’ beer in the middle of the day? Where’s them kids, didn’t you git them up yet?” She heaved the basket up onto the counter and walked on out.

Time Out of Mind

“Sonny.” He came back to earth and saw his fat dumb ma standing in the bed-ride. “I’ve had enough of your backtalk,” she’d scream, knocking him to the floor. “So help God, it’s for runnin’ off when there’s work to do!” He’d try to dance away from the blows, hanging on to her sleeve so she couldn’t swing good.

“You still got a little whiskey in it, tongue sticking out. Nothing like a little whiskey to warm you up on a cold morning before the snow fell. There must be some wheels in one of them junkyards, Hallie.” He snatched his cigarette from where it lay scorching the chrome trim. Still, he said nothing. But somehow, just somehow, he was going to get his shotgun from under the bed. He’d use the wide bore for a shooting prop — he’d kinda at one time in all the old lady would be first. Made a man feel like garbage, his wife and mother making such a big deal of running everything, getting in the money and groceries. He’d sell the farm — run away with the kids. She was still warm and he snuggled up with Ellen. Her bottom was so little he could cup it in one hand. He kicked her neck and stroked her all over, and she giggled against him until he got her to rest against the covers. He’d keep warm. It was only when they got out into the air they got cold.

Then he’d taken Ellie into bed with him, first rinsing out her glass so “Nosey Ma” wouldn’t look at her when she got up. He’d just sneaked her away from the house and helped her into a car. He’d try to dance away from the blows, and get Hallie pregnant; drinking, playing around on his mustering-out pay. Some day they’d realize the good life he gave up for them, the life he might of had. Some day.

“Sonny.” He came back to earth. “You still got a little whiskey in it?” He sniffed the beer.

“Got a little more,” he said.” He winked at him, not like when, before he moved out, her eyes all red, stopping by the rocker or bench where he huddled, tearless, hating her. "Sonny, it’s for your own good. See if you can do better."

“Easy — what’s he know?” he said. She snuffed the beer.

Then, he remembered, she would go to her room and cry, coming out with her eyes all red, stopping by the rocker or bench where he huddled, tearless, hating her. "Sonny, it’s for your own good. See if you can do better.

Did she think that all those pies and brownies and crap could make up for those years? Frig her! Didn’t go with beer anyway.

“Sonny!” she said, sighing her little pity eyes at him. He turned and stared out the streaked window. He didn’t have to answer her. If she wanted to help Hallie with the kids and the trailer, he didn’t care. Guess she didn’t remember he’d told her he was going to have to marry Hallie. Just like when he was a kid, she’d grabbed the nearest weapon, which happened to be a stick of stew wood. Dodging, he’d caught her wrist, feeling his fingers sink in the doughy white flesh.

“Sonny, you and you marry a good home guy. You just want to get married... MARRIED... to that whore!” She wailed like a stuck pig, mouth around her. “Sonny, it’s for your own good. See if you can do better.”

“Sonny!” she screamed, wrenching her hands away from him. Her bottom was so little he could cup it in one hand. He kicked her neck and stroked her all over, and she giggled against him until he got her to rest against the covers.

He thought of sister Annie. She’d been older when he’d begun fooling around with her. The other boys put him up to it, really. His mother and father never cared about things like that. Still, he figured they had to know about it or they couldn’t have had him and Annie, could they? It was like something good they kept for themselves and tried to keep from the kids. So naturally he had to find out what it was. He knew they did it, and not just in the dark like the other boys said their folks did. When his pa and ma went to their room after Sunday dinner for a “nap”, he listened at the keyhole for the squeaks and whispers.

They’d lived in a funny old house perched on a ledge just big enough for the house and barn. Worthless brush dropped off hundreds of feet. His father long ago had sold all the lots fit to build on, one by one. Many a cold morning he’d shovelled and sanded the steep gravel drive so the old lady would be first. Made a man feel like garbage, his wife and mother making such a big deal of running everything, getting in the money and groceries. He’d sell the farm — run away with the kids. She kept warm. It was only when they got out into the air they got cold.

Of course he and Annie never went quite all the way. They just fooled around. Once, long after, when Annie was married and they were all at the old place, some holiday or other, he and Annie cleaned the dishes while the others walked out to the barn to see some new kittens. She was still a good-looking woman and he kind of patted her butt. She turned and knocked him halfway across the kitchen with her soap for fixing to do more.

“Damn you and your messing around and nobody ever telling me anything. When I got married I didn’t even know if I was a virgin. If I ever catch you alone with one of my girls I’ll kill you so help me God. He’d lean back against the wall, rubbing his jaw.

“Where you gone, Sonny?”

“Sonny!” he shouted. Leaning over, he pulled Ellie into his lap. She smelled of baby powder and vomit but not as bad as his mother; breath stinking of rotten teeth and corruption.

Ellie pushed at him and wriggled down his shin. Maybe the old lady would mop the floor after she got the kids cleaned up. God knew Hallie wouldn’t. He watched Ellie climb into her chair, making hard work of it. Tongue sticking out.

Earlier this morning when he picked her up she hadn’t acted so independent. He’d had a beer on an empty stomach, then poured orange juice for her and put a clean cloth over her mouth. He lay curled up in the snow till he said, “I’ll go to get her. At least I’ll know they’re up and clean and fed.”

Why the hell doesn’t she shut up, he thought. She knows damn well I won’t answer.

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Virginia Liscomb
Gray
For the Love of Henry
(To John Berryman, xxx’s and oono’s)

Oh Henry love, I need your tunnel pain,
the drainpipe echo of it, the trickle-drizzle
of your health, or the way you gutter butter,
evaporate in marinade, — of course,
that clink of drink on ice, how nice and cool
your kisses reek — they spike my blowzy life!
I’m whittling away beneath the knife
the drainpipe echo of it, the trickle-drizzle
just sauteed, with mushrooms over rice.
I’ll die too! Go underground, with lye
that clink of drink on ice, how nice and cool
make your bed. It wasn’t warmed
electric blanket wombed you up
Oh but I hate though
by Mr. Bones, no, no
like Mother, and God forbade the
on these tiny quilted squares, this cover’s
your brain, the fitting pitch of excellence,
pour jowls droop, drown out your breath,
A boss guitar
hemmed and stitched with death, and yet
I wonder, might it convert, reversible?,
it’s all a magic trick
life laces death as
inexorable, a single note sustained,
like baritoning,
Doodling away
taking it easy before and
whistling
watching the stars,
we made the best
we could of It
and let it go
at that.

And that may take care of
the millenium

Doodling away
in prehistoric times,
dreaming, scribbling on the cave,
drifting
whistling away
in predynastic times
or singing a ditty to make
the gods envious,
taking it easy before and
after politics, shuffling one’s feet,
doing one’s jig,
watching the stars,
listening to the drums,
enjoying the girls
and the poems
in momentsous and transient time,
we made the best
we could of It
and let it go
at that.

Is poetry a lark, a pigeon or a dove?
What’s the connection of
the ice, the drink, the bridge, the love,
the gift gone mad? I’m so sad it had
to be this way, you see, it means a lot.
W being three important things —
“the possum treed,” “the cries in the ghost”
and “the love of the done.”
My game’s both declared and won
from all the dreamy songs you sings and sung —

yet one ralible note rings.
Enter that sultry bitch, MS. Suicide,
a child bride with thighs to wide, too pink,
and deep inside your fate you can’t escape
her rape. She’ll get you first and last,
she’ll get you there and back, and I suspect,
before and after death the pain of extra loving
will go on and on and on in your fingers,
smirching matches, shrieking shouts of “Forest Fire!”
And your desire won’t extinguish with your dread…
the deer all red, their eyes in patches,
circuits shot, and everywhere between
the fallen pines the stench of human rot.
The burnt birch crackle, the grackle’s
airless cry, tissues of sky, an earth
gone inside out — my molten candy lips
will gout. My flesh will straighten out,
All petrified, I’ll run through slicks of it,
search you out, build lean-to housing,
gather spattered pumpkin seeds, pine cones,
wasted milkweed for decor —
Oh
and if I find him, find him, through the smoke,
I’ll mount and marry Mr. Bones.
I’ll give him shelter, cloak him, feed him,
make him live with steps and starts
this every/always life enthroned
with diamond tiers of dying…

…………. the instant’s never/moment
pops up again in parts. In shades of winter’s
black and white. On deck. In spades.
A splash of ice behind your severed head.
Rung white, your crystal eyes,
I know the distances to silence, I know.
I know you’re dead —

But I Must Try
To Somehow Energize,
(despite, somehow, the jump —)

Your Broken Henry Heart To Pump
and somehow pump me somehow up.

Somehow, Forever. Somehow up.
For Somehow ever pump me up…
Pump Me (Somehow) Oh, Somehow Up.
For somehow ever pump me up
pump me some ever how for up
for somehoweverpumpe up —

Oh Me —

FOR SOME LONG EVER HOW ON UP-PUMPED!
—YEAH!

EDITOR’S NOTE: Henry is the major character in the many volumes of Dream Songs by the late John Berryman.
Henry and the character called “Mr. Bones” sometimes function as personas, sometimes as alter egos, for Berryman in his work.

Deborah Ward
Portland
We were always busy doin' something on the island. We either made toy boats, or sleds, or traps. Never a dull moment, really.

I had a brother who was always gettin' me in a mess. He's always bettin' me things, and I'm foolish when it comes to bettin'. One time, we had just gotten a bow and some arrows. "I bet you can't hit that window in the house..."

Well, I won the bet, and broke the window. When I came to dinner that night, there was my plate turned over with a bow and arrow under it.

Other times we'd have a calm spell and go look for wood for the fire. There was enough driftwood on the island to burn for 20 years, so we'd take out the peapods and load 'em up. My mother used to use this driftwood and put cresol on it. We called it pitchpine hardwood. We used to make biscuits and popovers in the oven. One time we put some of this wood in. It got so hot that it broke the casin' and blew the oven door right off! Today, it's harder to find so much wood since the lumber trade from St. Regis Paper Mill isn't as lively.

We also used to go pickin' blueberries. And gulls eggs. We'd collect hundreds of these eggs and then throw them at each other. By the bushel basket. Any my brother, who was 10, threw gull eggs at the pig till he squealed and was up to his knees in the stuff. That pig was fed on milk and eggs (when he wasn't being bombarded) and got up to 500 pounds.

And we had all kinds of animals like rabbits, ducks, geese, and sheep. They was our playthings. The greatest plaything for my sister and me was a sheep. We'd haul coal from the boathouse by sheep sled. We'd harness 'em up the same as you would a horse. And the ram we had was so big that three of us would ride him bareback.

Conversations with:
Jennie Cirone, sheepfarmer
John Hedman, potato farmer

JENNIE CIRONE

I was born, 1912, in McKinley, near Bar Harbor. My parents were lighthouse keepers and I lived on Nash Island off Addison with my sister and seven brothers for 18 years, since age 3.

It was great living on the island. We had barns, hen houses, and our house next to the lighthouse. There were no trees on the island, and a boat house where we hauled our peapod lobster boats.

Q. — Were you lonely there on the island those 18 years?

Oh no! I don't think we ever sat down to a meal that there wasn't anywhere from one to a dozen guests who'd come over every boat. All of my brothers and sisters had their friends over, often with their families. Some stayed months at a time. And then there were relatives who wanted to get away from Portland in the summer for a couple of weeks at a time. Then she'd go back and start all over again.

For school there was one teacher who used to come right down the coast and stay at all the islands and lighthouses for two weeks at a time. Then she'd go back to school. Quite an education. Four out of seven of my brothers married school teachers.

The only problem was that just as soon as a teacher came over to stay with us and teach, one of the boys would marry her, and that would be the end of that! Quite an education. Four out of seven of my brothers married school teachers.

Soon they started sending us to school on the mainland. I went, but didn't like it. They were used to it. And it had three things.

When I was little, I used to also have to scale off the paint from the light tower. I was about 16 years old. After that, my hands didn't let go and I went to work.
My sister was always gettin' into messes, too. One day, she decided to hook up the bull to the cart. So she hitched this big fellow up and everything was alright until the cart started to rub up against the bull's hind legs. That bull started to bellow and run from the cart, but my sister hung right on in the cart. The cow by this time heard the distressed bull, and jumped the fence to come to his rescue. The only thing that stopped him, and saved my sister's life, was that the bull ran right into the boat house wall. His horn became embedded and he couldn't continue on through, which he would have — with my sister.

I left the island at age 21 in 1933. I came to the mainland. We had bought an old car to use to go to the movies and the circus with. It was an old 1918 hupmobile we got for about $9.00. My brother and his wife and me and my sister would go to the movies in it in the summer. We'd take a boat over and start out real early, after haulin' traps. We had to start early to go to the movies 'cause the car would always break down, and get as many as 10 flat tires. These were the thin bicycle-like tires, and we couldn't get new ones so easy.

The routine was that a tire would be punctured, and my brother would get out and light a fire to keep the mosquitoes away. Then I would blow the tire up and patch it. Sometimes we had to put on 10 patches on the way to Miltonbridge. Half an hour per patch. We'd get back from the movies just in time for the next day's lobsters.

One day, father wanted some gasoline to sell down at the wharf. My future husband wheeled it down for him and we soon got to talkin'. Since then, Stan and I have mostly lobstered here and raised sheep.

Sheep have always been my favorites. We had them on the island before I came over. One February, we had a huge storm. The wind was so great, it shook some of the pictures off the wall. The big tree on the island was uprooted and washed out across the sand bar. It separated the bar, and since then, our island consists of Big Nash, and Little Nash. So the cattle and sheep have to swim across from one to the other.

Sheep don't like to swim, but they will if they have to. It's alright if they don't have too much wool on, but if they're heavy with wool, they'll sink right down and drown. You can tell they're in trouble when they start to swim in circles. You have to get to 'em fast or it's all over.

We had four islands and kept as many as 300 sheep on them. Let's see — there was Nash's Island, Pond Island, Jordan's Delight, and Flat Island. And we knew them all by name and character.

Now, there's Carmen, Silky, Virginia, Ester, Perfect, Gerty, Aunt Jenema, Velvet, and Hurricane Tim for example. Hurricane Tim we named after my nephew's son Tim who was born in a hurricane. And then there was Disaster who was found under a snow drift on one of the islands.

You see, in winter, when we have big blizzards, sometimes the sheep are covered right over with snow. All you see is a little bank. The whole island looks deserted. And if you go over to one of these banks and dig around it, you'll find them all huddled together in a self-made cave. They sleep that way. This year, some were under snow from the 24th of December till the 16th of January. And Disaster had a bar of ice across her back and couldn't get up. I found her and took her home and saved her.

Spring is the worst time of the year for sheep. On our island, there's so many sheep they form sheep paths and knolls develop in between. The frost kills the grass on top, but down below in the knoll it's all green. So they get in the knolls in winter to feed.

Now, when sheep feed in the knoll, they often stretch themselves out to get some sun and roll over. And if they roll over, with their feet stickin' up in the air, they can't get up and they're helpless. It's part of my job to put them right side up again or else they're gopers.

You wouldn't believe how hungry the seagulls are now. They're starvin' 'cause it's against the law to shoot them, and it's against the law to feed them. So they've overpopulated without enough food to go around. Gulls are scavengers and fishermen should be allowed to throw their useless bait out for them to eat. But that's also against the law. So they're starvin', fisherman baiting their traps are at- tacked by gulls who want the bait. Some have to ward them away with a stick, or shoot one to keep the others away. They're always out lookin' for clam worms and herrin', and have gone as far as 15 miles inland to eat our blueberries. If this continues, they may go after very small children soon.

Anyway, the gulls, especially the black-back gulls, will set up right close to our sheep and watch for one to be cast on his back. Or, if a sheep's short hind legs are lower than the fore legs, and he can't get up off a hill or slope, they'll be in trouble.

There's usually one gull who sees this and lets out the funniest squawk-like sound. Then the whole flock comes down. They'll attack the sheep and eat 'em alive.

These gulls start by cutting off the sheep's tail. Then they peel the sheep's hide over his head from the rear forward like you'd peel off a sock from your foot. That's the way they work. Not a hole in the hide — they just skin him and then eat his muscle and his flesh. It's a shocking sight.

And these gulls, as well as some eagles, will often pick out a stray lamb and carry him off for dinner. They've almost ruined us in the last 5 years! The black-back gulls even attack and kill the smaller grey ones, and drive them herring gulls from their nests. They've taken over our island over there across the cove.

So that's how we make our livin'. Sheep raisin' and lobsterin'. And it's great to live here in Addison. I'd never live in a city.

Although my grandfather died when I was very young, he is still larger than life to me because of the stories we heard about him. In America, the national folklore has been to read Mother Goose stories at bedtime. For us, the incredible things my grandfather did on the frontier became our folklore and the substance of our bedtime stories. Every night, we'd say, ’’Papa, let’s hear about Grandpa!!’' And off he would go...

Grandpa was an eccentric until the end, absent minded, and only 5 foot 4 inches tall. Still, he had a habit of doing amazing things.

Let's take clearing the land. Our soil on this homestead is glacial and there are a lot of boulders and stones that were dragged and pebbles and herring, and have gone as far as 15 miles inland to eat our blueberries. If this continues, they may go after very small children soon.

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(Continued on page 10)
Maine: Then and Now (continued)

"Betcha he wasn’t," would be the reply. And so it went from evening to evening. My grandfather was also a great outdoorsman, and spent a lot of time tracking wildlife. He also drove a team of horses to plow his fields. He had a great sense of humor and would often tell stories of his adventures. Once again, he had to claw home on all fours, badly bruised, but he again survived - which was something he was used to doing after an accident-prone and coming home that way, and probably wasn't too surprised.

In addition to the myth of his being absent minded and accident-prone was the recklessness of the man. It was something that New Sweden was a brave and courageous man, or if he was a damn fool.

One time, he’d been cutting wood in back of the farm when he spotted some bobcat tracks. Well, he had that idea of the all-around man who could hunt, farm, trap, shoot, and fish, and he also knew that bobcat skins fetched a fair price. Grandpa didn’t know anything about trapping, but felt he could certainly learn. So he set a trap by those tracks and didn’t even try to set it. So he returned to find that he’d captured the bobcat one night, but that it had walked off, trap and all.

He started to follow the tracks, which must have looked a mile peculiar, and didn’t go far before he found the cat up in a tree. He had his musket rifle with him, but being the man he was, forgot to bring the bullets.

Well, he figured that there had to be more than one way to skin a cat, and he rolled over on his back and cursed his luck. Then he thought that he'd just as well shoot the cat as not, since it was already in the air. He had his musket on his back, and he rolled over on his back and shot the cat.

The impact of the buttons was enough to sting the cat, who jumped up in a tree. He had his musket on his back, and he rolled over on his back and shot the cat. The cat, fortunately, was wounded, and didn’t go far before he found the cat up in a tree. He had his musket rifle with him, but being the man he was, forgot to bring the bullets.

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Learning to Kill:
Bainbridge AFB, Georgia

Captain Howard was what we call a hard ass. Few passed their checkrides with Captain Howard. My flight with Captain Howard, although a bad ride even by my own abysmal standards, had its satisfactions. I fell out of a barrel roll, for example, and hung from the straps, blood running past my ears, as I wondered what to do. But I knew that Captain Howard was likewise helpless, unhappy and in pain. On landing, I savored the yelp, like a panic screech of tires, as I banged Captain Howard down hard on top of his hemorrhoids.

H. R. Coursen
Bowdoin College

From Montville Poems:

Arthur

Arthur
Makes ax handles
When he's not drunk
Upwind
He can sneak
Behind you and laugh
Wet brown teeth
Out of his stubble
Gliding
Effortless over fallen leaves
When you're away
He will burn down your house

Annette Bradley
Unitv
Although Louise had been ever so quiet after she discovered that the children had apparently locked themselves in the bathroom, all she saw when she looked in were two faces sweet and bright gazing up at her.

"Hello, Mother," said Jessica.
"Hello, Mrs. Mann," said Franklin Neuss.

"Nothing," Jessica said quickly. "We're not doing anything."
Franklin Neuss Zimmerman didn't say a word. He just kept on smiling.

"We're not doing anything," said Louise. To the children she looked something like the Cheshire cat she read to them about the day before. All they could see of her was her head strangely disembodied and stuck two-thirds of the way in a book. The window was just a very real. "Why did you lock the door?" the head continued.

Franklin Neuss pulled Jessica's hand and said, "Did you lock the door?"
"Yes, m'am," said Franklin Neuss. He dropped his puppet on the bed.

"And I think you best not come back any more." "Yes, m'am."

That was the end of Franklin Neuss Zimmerman in Jessica's life. As soon as he was out the door Louise took Jessica on her lap and said, "I want you to tell me what you did in the bathroom."

"We didn't do anything," said Jessica.

"Then why did you go in the bathroom together?"
Franklin Neuss wanted to see it.

"What did you do in there?"

"Nothing."

"Well you are never never to do it again," said Louise.

This conversation took place a few days after Louise had threatened to have her mother reaped often in the next few months. Jessica always maintained she had done nothing in the bathroom and Louise continued to admonish her not to ever again.

Then one night there was a terrible storm. Terrific flashes of lightning in blazing sheets of flame consumed the sky, fusing in its molot light Jessica and the intimacy of her room to the wild tumult of the out-of-doors. A branch of the many were split and lessened, all the silent voice of God shook heaven and earth promising death, promising destruction. Jessica was too sick with fear to move from her bed until it was over. She knew in that storm that one day her mother and she and her father. One day she, Jessica, would be alive and they would not be. They would not be anywhere at all in the whole wide world. She would be all alone without them. She was torn with sorrow, split open by pain as brilliant as lightning in the storm was over she crept from her bed to her mother's and at her bedside in the quiet dark she confessed her sins. Mother took her in and let her spend the rest of the night in the crack where her mattress and Daddy lay joined for they slept in twin beds pushed together.

The next year Jessica began classes every Sunday morning to learn her catechism. The nuns who taught it were Franciscans from Marseilles and they spoke with us the bathroom French. The first Sunday, after catechism class was over, Louise asked Jessica whether she had learned a lot and Jessica said "yes, she certainly had. She had learned to say her prayers properly! That night at bedtime she knelt at her mother's knees to pray as she always did but, except for the lessons she invoked for the list of those she loved, she said her prayers in a thick French accent. When she was done she looked up shyly and said, "That will please Him."

"Yes?" said Louise hesitantly. And then, more frankly, for she really didn't know what to say, she asked, "What do you mean?"
Jessica took one of Mother's hands in a confidential clasps and said, "The nuns told us that if we prayed properly like they told us then Jesus will hear our prayers and answer them. They said, 'If you pray properly, it will please our baby Jesus.' Jessica ended rationally.

Jessica practiced her catechism every afternoon with her mother and after she and all the other children had thoroughly learned for what purposes God had made them, they began to prepare for their First Communion. That is they learned to say the Act of Contrition and the function of penance to mitigate the pain of Purgatory and to save them from the torments of Hell. Finally from the ten general categories of the Decalogue, Jessica with Mother's help compiled a list of sins. It was not always easy for Jessica to match the wrongs that she had committed with the language of the Commandments. Certain ones, though, were simple, like the Fourth.

"Mother, is it O.K. if you come first?" Franklin Neuss offered. He unbuttoned his pants. Something that looked like a stick popped out. Jessica had never seen anything quite like it when she walked through Colon with her daddy she saw lots of naked little black boys. It was what her mother called a penis. She inferred later it was what her mother called a dingus. But the ones she had seen were always soft and fat like worms. This one of Franklin Neuss Zimmerman looked just like a stick. She wondered if perhaps he was sick.

"Well you are never, never to do it again," said Louise.
"I-no! Dress up!" Franklin Neuss sneered. Then he said, "Please Him!"

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'...And Sin No More (continued)

"Well, thirty," Mother finally conceded. She sounded when she said it very final, the way she did in the bazaar when she gave her last price and turned as if she intended to leave.

"Twenty-five. Don't you say another word," she added as Jessica began to protest.

And so the list was made: two masses missed, and late for mass, oh, say twenty times. Jessica didn't steal, and she didn't lie, and she was quite free from envy. And she worried day and night what to tell the priest about Franklin Neuss Zimmerman. After the night of the storm it had never come up again with her mother. Finally one night after her prayers were said she asked, 'Mother, what is adultery?"

"Adultery? Why do you want to know that?" It's the Sixth Commandment."

"Oh. Well, Um, what did the nuns say?"

"They said it was fornication."

"No. Fornication," Jessica repeated with a French 'r' and an extra vowel. "Mmm. O.K."

"But what's that?"

"Well," said Louise and paused. "It's... Well, if a man and a woman are together..."

"Together. You mean naked?"

"They said it was fornification."

"No. Fornication," Jessica repeated with a French 'r' and an extra vowel.

"Adultery? Why do you want to know that?"

Jessica was checked. She felt cornered. "Mother, please!"

"Oh. Well."

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The Timing of a Sacrifice is All-Important

1. Glow

Anyone can fall in love. Even middle-aged women in church fall in love. Someone you have never seen walks towards you, surrounded by a strange glow, a halo. You wait to hear what message the angel has for you, you stand there stammering while the angel massages your tongue with light. Everyone else walks by and you realize the angel is visiting you, only you, no one else sees it, it's an ordinary person to everyone else. What do you want from me? you ask. You want to kiss its feet but of course you are in the middle of a passageway, people must think you are exchanging recipes. You freeze, so the angel will look at you and see its own reflection and think it has found a mate.

2. Preferences

Sometimes an avocado plant will turn into an angel. A shopping bag lady will stop you and you see she is on fire, a policeman, a motorcycle, Mona Lisa, a hundred dollar bill, the Mets, Guru Maharaji, Nixon, whiskey, this Japanese boota which switches colors like a Zorastrian gem — colors you see when your eyes are closed. Somebody even loves you.

3. Who, for instance?

Your mother. Jesus. Isn't that enough? Some magical evening you will cross the room like a sleepwalker. You say that has already happened, but it is over, you are resigned to lesser passions. Don't you know that love is lovelier with both feet?

4. Is love eternal, or transitory?

Yes.

But Jessica knew where her duty lay. Her finished confession which she rehearsed several times a day the last week was, "Bless me Father for I have sinned.

This is my first confession. I talked back to my mother twenty-five times; I missed Mass twice and was late eight times and committed adultery once.

Daddy when he heard her chanting it said, "My God, Louise, she can't count that!"

Louise's face was all corners like a shoe box, and she said, "Yes she can." And Jessica did.

First Communion Day was in February. Trade Winds tossed the long curved fronds of the Royal Palms and tugged at the white lace mantillas of the little girls. All the little children were dressed in white and inside the altar was covered with lilacs. Everything was white and delicate. Sunshine pored in the long open windows of the nave and glinted off the gold ciborium and the shining moons floating in the choir of incense. The bells of the masse seemed to tickle a sweeter silver than ever they did on ordinary days. Even Daddy went to Mass that day.

Afterwards they had ice cream and cake and Daddy took moving pictures of Jessica with his new camera.

"So, honey," he said when it was all over, "what sins did you tell the priest?"

Jessica repeated her confession to him. She was lying on the dragon with Father Murphy was from County Cork and hadn't been in Panama long. "Go my child and sin no more and for your penance say three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys. That's what he said to everyone," she confided.

Karen Sakum
York

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Love. Someone will see your melting dark eyes and think there is a halo around you. Bring the muscles that dilate your pupils under voluntary control. Dilated pupils are a sign of deep emotion. You will begin to see haloes everywhere. You will look like an angel.

6. Frankincense

Did you notice the angel smells sweet? Even its bad breath is a kind of spice. If you turn your head fast, you catch bits of perfume smoking out of the corner of your eyes. When it lights a cigarette you think of taking up smoking.

He smelled like nutmeg. You laugh — nutmeg? — thinking I am talking about hallucinogens. Nutmeg. He smelled sweet and my heart shook. It was nutmeg, I think. His body smelled like that, it was his inside smell. I could tell when he'd been in a room. After wards I smelled like nutmeg myself for a year. Butterflies, you say, moths. No, I know smell too, a little like shrimp. Certain men have that smell, I follow them in crowds. This was personal, it was nutmeg. I love you. I tell you about the angel. You are thinking about the time it happened to you. When you pick up the camera it happens over and over again. He had a camera. He took pictures of you. The ice cream off her face. I love — nutmeg? — thinking I am talking about hallucinogens. Nutmeg. He smelled sweet and my heart shook. It was nutmeg, I think. His body smelled like that, it was his inside smell. I could tell when he'd been in a room. After wards I smelled like nutmeg myself for a year. Butterflies, you say, moths. No, I know smell too, a little like shrimp. Certain men have that smell, I follow them in crowds. This was personal, it was nutmeg. I love you. I tell you about the angel. You are thinking about the time it happened to you. When you pick up the camera it happens over and over again. He had a camera. He took pictures of you. The ice cream off her face.

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Porcelain plate from angel series by Josh Nadel

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Kaia Ladenni
Asheville

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Karen Sakum
York
At the End of the Road,
Waiting on the Porch

I am down at the end of the road,
waiting for you. The house has been abandoned for years, wildflowers
have taken over the meadows.
I am sitting on the porch,
nerous, knowing that you are coming.

And for hours I wait. I am looking
at an apple tree transformed by
insects, at the vines that are about
to take this house with it.

And then I see myself walking down
the road. Walking down the road to
meet me. And I look on myself like a
long lost lover, like a familiar story
retold with great sorrow. Waiting for
myself in an abandoned house. O with
what pity, with what forgiveness I
walk forward, speechless, needing no
introduction.

Stuart Kestenbaum

Hiking at Night

Moving carefully into the dark, I touch
The rough immediate bark, the vacant path.
I shut off the senses of the mole,
Familiar of roots and stones, varicose shade,
Things that have been buried a long time
In the depths of light. They surface now —
A fern bridge under the foot, a scent,
A finger of wind on the back of the neck,
The cry of an undefined bird.

My hands go before me like antennae of a beetle.
My nerves spin out like spider-silk around me.
I move like water in eroded stone,
Gathering the interrupted silence
Like a skin of shed leaves on water.

Later my hands drop back and my feet
Hold unto the earth by themselves,
Learning it, junction by junction.
As every cell of the blood in its capillary miles
 Learns the distance it must go
So I continue,
The forest breathing in and out around me;
A planetary lung.

Contradance

passive solar heated
Goosepecker Ridge museum curators
sneak down to the grange
in manure trucks and unlicensed
ramblers
Montville earth people
unhitch themselves from plows
mud boots in unison
sledge hammer rhythm
swing your partners
Allemandes . . .

Beverly Greenspan
Brunswick

Ink wash by Kellie
Holmes

Annette Bradley
Unity

ISAAC A. BRAZIER
Marginal Datsun

Red with egg beater engine pulling chrome and rust over hills. You are a seeing-eye car in dangerous, blinding traffic. "Sure-tired," you caress ear and patches of sand with a grace that bespeaks a maturity beyond your fenders (which keep falling off on country roads).

Gas fumes, like old sour breath curl around plastic black seats, making our eyes boil over with tears unasked for, unearned.

Jan Johnston
Winthrop

Autopsy
(for my brother Stephen)

The knife cuts into still-warm flesh. Cathode, stethoscope say this is death. You saw ribcage, delicate trellis of bone. Vined with muscle. Organs bloom a vegetable garden. You search for jewel-weed, wondered if the cats will be there. The slow lightening of my room makes returning to consciousness easier and I no longer shrink from opening my eyes when I realize where I am. It is not a bad room. Not like some furnished rooms with their cracked brown linoleum and exposed water pipes painted the same chalky blue as the walls.

The linoleum of this room is a deep maroon with grandiose swirls of pink fern and is quite new. The bed is new, too, the landlady informs me proudly when I rent the room. Yet when I hand her the rent, she does not invite me in. She is a small gray woman who reveals an unequal, rodent shrewdness. I sense she would like to have a bed like mine. She carries its gleaming veneer lovingly, then edges about the room, seeming to sniff at the squat overstuffed chair, the ancient, zinc-lined icebox, the gas plate and minilcucie sink wedged into a curtained closet.

On a shelf over the sink there are three dinner plates that match and some odd dishes arranged neatly in piles. The gas plate sits on a small cabinet stuffed with nondescript pots and pans. The aluminum coffee pot is new. I fill it and turn the flame down carefully so it will not boil over while I am gone. I gather up towel and washcloth, a pink bar of soap in its plastic case, alloping my toothbrush and toothpaste into the pocket of my frayed robe. In the hall stale cooking odors, leaked from behind closed doors, mingle with the necrotic stink of furtive debaucheries. I listen up the stairway. The building groans. The walls crack off graffiti. Being able to sleep late is only aggravation when one has formed the habit of early rising. In the pristine moments of Sunday dawns, then, I venture out into deserted streets strangely sanctified by their stillness. It is like being in a shadowy region under the earth. The shades watch my passing. Yet I remember one Sunday morning when a wedge of Canadian geese flew, honking, close over the roofs of the sooted buildings, an unheralded miracle of spring.

At the corner store the fat Greek sits yawning behind the counter like a stupied toad. I buy a fresh roll for my breakfast and pick up a virgin copy of the Sunday paper from the stack by the door. I buy a fresh roll for my breakfast and pick up a virgin copy of the Sun day paper from the stack by the door. I wash in tranquility, brush my teeth and leave. I wash in tranquility, brush my teeth and leave. I wash in tranquility, brush my teeth and leave. The building groans. The walls crack off graffiti. Being able to sleep late is only aggravation when one has formed the habit of early rising. In the pristine moments of Sunday dawns, then, I venture out into deserted streets strangely sanctified by their stillness. It is like being in a shadowy region under the earth. The shades watch my passing. Yet I remember one Sunday morning when a wedge of Canadian geese flew, honking, close over the roofs of the sooted buildings, an unheralded miracle of spring. I wash in tranquility, brush my teeth and leave. I wash in tranquility, brush my teeth and leave. I wash in tranquility, brush my teeth and leave.

Back in my room, I try not to think of home where Sundays meant warmth, laughter, and goodwill and family for the gaudy, alluring sheets. I spread them all out on the bed, my favorites — Mutt and Jeff, the Katzenjammer, Prince Valiant. I read them all, out of loyalty, then turn lothegically to the other sections. Silence wraps me in a suffocating suspension of time. I turn the pages carefully lest they wrinkle and disturb the emptiness.

But now it is Monday and there is blessing purpose to the day. I finish eating, rinse my dishes in the sink and nestle the milk carton hopefully on the dressed icebox, the gas plate and minilcucie sink wedged into a curtained closet. The linoleum of this room is a deep maroon with grandiose swirls of pink fern and is quite new. The bed is new, too, the landlady informs me proudly when I rent the room. Yet when I hand her the rent, she does not invite me in. She is a small gray woman who reveals an unequal, rodent shrewdness. I sense she would like to have a bed like mine. She carries its gleaming veneer lovingly, then edges about the room, seeming to sniff at the squat overstuffed chair, the ancient, zinc-lined icebox, the gas plate and minilcucie sink wedged into a curtained closet.

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But now it is Monday and there is blessing purpose to the day. I finish eating, rinse my dishes in the sink and nestle the milk carton hopefully against a fading chunk of ice. I glance at my watch. Fifteen minutes before I usually leave. I have to race up the stairs to the whining machines to beat the starting alarm goes off. I seldom find the water more than tepid. It is cold now, but at this hour no one raps imperatively at the door. I wash in tranquility, brush my teeth and leave. I wash in tranquility, brush my teeth and leave. I wash in tranquility, brush my teeth and leave. The building groans. The walls crack off graffiti. Being able to sleep late is only aggravation when one has formed the habit of early rising. In the pristine moments of Sunday dawns, then, I venture out into deserted streets strangely sanctified by their stillness. It is like being in a shadowy region under the earth. The shades watch my passing. Yet I remember one Sunday morning when a wedge of Canadian geese flew, honking, close over the roofs of the sooted buildings, an unheralded miracle of spring. I wash in tranquility, brush my teeth and leave. I wash in tranquility, brush my teeth and leave. I wash in tranquility, brush my teeth and leave.

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But now it is Monday and there is blessing purpose to the day. I finish eating, rinse my dishes in the sink and nestle the milk carton hopefully against a fading chunk of ice. I glance at my watch. Fifteen minutes before I usually leave. I decided to go anyway. It will be a change to be first in line at the timeclock and not have to race up the stairs to the whining machines to beat the starting buzzer.

On the street the chill wind bites deeply. Beside the sidewalk a single tree casts a thin shadow over the rusted brick pavement. Its bare branches hold its buds tight-fisted. The small shops at the end of the street are closed. Unclaimed shoes huddle without hope in the cobbler's window. The green-curtained Chinese laundry is closed and all. Though the last patron of the neighborhood bar has long since waved into the night, its stale-sour aroma assaults me as I draw near. In the empty store-front next to it, the faded poster of a long forgotten musical comedy leans dispiritedly in the corner, bowed inward as though gut-punched, inkblood fading. Compulsively, I read the names of the cast again, as I do every morning, though I know them all by heart. At the corner I turn up the next street and wonder if the cats will be there.

In the next block the vacant lot gapes between sotting bricked warehouse and separated from the alley behind by a disintegrating wooden fence. The lot is mostly gravel mottled with blackened patches of canceled snow and weeds that have snagged a ragged flotsam of faded candy wrappers and trash washed up on country roads. The lot is mostly gravel mottled with blackened patches of canceled snow and weeds that have snagged a ragged flotsam of faded candy wrappers and trash washed up from the street. For some reason I cannot fathom, it is the early-morning gathering place for a rabble of alley cats. Each morning I see them gathering in antagonistic packs. Gaunt, slit-eared and cynical, they circle with a peculiar defensive crouch, restless, tails dragging. They are not of any genus I know. Sometimes they sink from my approach, scatter explosively through the broken fence-slats. When I return at night the lot is empty.

(continued on page 16)
Erebus (continued)

But this morning, as I approach, a hunching figure shambles furtively from an alley opposite the lot. He is intent upon crossing the street and does not see me. Something about him compels me to slacken my pace to a mere semblance of motion, held by an anticipation that he is the key to the mystery.

I am close enough to see the pallor and hollowness of his grey-stubbled cheeks. His head is bare, a long frizz of thin, colorless hair ragged in the chill wind. He clutches the lapels of a faded tweed jacket. Shapeless chinos flop grotesquely against the chicken-bone thinness of his legs. His shoes are mashed down at the back and holes in his socks expose the dirty whiteness of his feet. The flesh looks soft and vulnerable.

He is lame, combining a sidle and a hop into a queer sort of gait as he mounts the curb with an awkward, eager hobble. It is then that I see the cats. A dozen or more are skulking in, hostile and wary, through the crumbling fence.

The man (see now how old he is) bends shakily to retrieve a battered pie-plate from a tangle of refuse and weeds. He scrapes at a patch of gravel with his foot to level it. From inside his jacket he extracts a flat-print bottle that shows oddly white through the green glass. He unscrews the cap awkwardly, fingers stiff, stoops to pour milk into the plate. Then he pulls a grease-stained brown paper bag from his pocket and scatters its contents on the ground.

The cats, still wary, crouch toward him, then suddenly rush, fighting for the scraps. Some are circled around the plate, heads rammed together in an uneasy truce of greed. There is no recognition of their benefactor. He screws the cap back on the empty bottle and slides it into his jacket. He appears to mumble a few words at the cats but is not sure. His features are stolid, vacuous, as he turns and tumbles back across the street, disappearing in the alley.

I quicken my step. The cats growl as I pass. A yellow tom with a festering eye snarls at me over a scrap of bone, his cold eyes challenging. Another slashes through the green glass. He unscrews the cap awkwardly, fingers stiff, stoops to level it. From inside his jacket he extracts a flat-print bottle that shows oddly white through the green glass. He unscrews the cap awkwardly, fingers stiff, stoops to pour milk into the plate. Then he pulls a grease-stained brown paper bag from his pocket and scatters its contents on the ground.

The same gust strikes my face. I shiver. I think of the steaming, rusty radiators at the factory and hurry rapidly on.

Alice Larkin
Boothbay Harbor

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Burning Back the Blueberries

After sundown near the Maine border, the smoke is out again tonight, everywhere leaving trails, and riding down rivers of flame.

Women watching from windows, men in shirtsleeves, rolled to the elbow, light stub torches on the barrens.

I stand in the open field, remember my fear of fire, remembering it takes what it can of the night.

Don't ask why they gather in the body of a smoldering bush, move close to this flame that feeds itself in the month when earth swells, all of us heavy with the tug of new growth.

Dead bushes, dead fruits, the moon is void, and I want to ask you why you burn back the land, why the acres of charred barrens will bloom in their own good time, and why fire draws back into itself, restoring clusters of blue dark berries to earth.

Kathleen Lignell
Nulls Cove

KENNEBEC: A Portfolio of Maine Writing

Kennebec, a yearly publication, has the express purpose of offering to as wide an audience as possible a sampling of contemporary Maine writing by both new and established Maine writers. It is hoped that our selection of material not only reveals the professional competence of Maine writers, but also their diversity of interests and talents. Our newsprint folio format is a unique departure for Maine literary magazines, which enables us to print over four thousand copies and see they are delivered, mailed, or made available to educational institutions, libraries and individual readers. We believe that, more than anything, Maine writers wish to be read. The best sometimes follows.

The staff of the Kennebec wish to acknowledge the interest and support extended to them by the University of Maine at Augusta, its Division of Arts and Humanities, and Forum A.

Editor: Gordon Clark
Typer: Joan O'Connor
Typesetting: The Comp. Shop

Lawyer Riley

My first case? Well, my first years were such a jumble of divorces and bankruptcies, uncouplings smooth and bitter, that only one client really stands out. One Saturday evening, when my office was still above the Milo Western Auto, I could hear him climbing the sixty odd steps. He stood for a moment in front of the door, a shadow on the pane, and finally came in. He seemed about my age. We were alone. No introductions. "Ginny threw me out. I was to be married Tuesday. The reason we was together was the first night I asked to stay. She said, 'Oh no. We can't do that. We're not married.' But I wanted her bad and, without thinking, said, 'Then we'll get married.' 'Oh, that's different,' she says and she lets me stay. But now I'm out. Has she broke any laws?"

Well, she hadn't, of course. Except perhaps a law of love but you won't find those in any law library. It was past dinner time and rather than just send him away, I asked him out for a beer. One thing led to another and before I knew it I'd taken his case. "Breach of Promise" was the only grounds I could think of, and we took it to the Dover District Court. He took the stand and told his story. His voice was low but clear and he turned in his seat and faced the judge. His short, slow sentences seemed to isolate each event, holding it up for inspection — "She let me stay. We were lovers. But now I'm out." —

I knew we'd never get by a 41-b dismissal but when her lawyer so mentioned, the judge sat looking at my client for a long, long moment. He denied the motion and tried the case. We lost, of course. Shouldn't have come through the court house door. But if I've ever made a better speech, when? —

James McKenna
Augusta

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