

KENNEBEC:

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*"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, I hit one. Hit four in the game all toll. 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."

"Truck's too old."

"Fly."

"Dammit, 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 Lonnie 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 sadfaced 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, Lonnie 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." Jimmy was now running behind the black man as they crossed the main floor of Penn Station.

"24, there you are." The black man pointed up to a sign. It said 24. He held Jimmy's glove. "You got a dollar for me, man?"

"For what?"

"I helped you. Give me the dollar."

"Didn't need no help. Leave me alone."

"Shit. I carried this glove all the way across the station. I helped your sorry ass find this track, and you can't help me with one lousy fucking dollar."

The dollar was no sooner out of Jimmy's pocket than the man had it and was running.

"Hey," Jimmy hollered.

The man turned back.

"Remember. You carried Jimmy Campbell's glove."

The man looked interested, "Was you somebody?"

"I am somebody."

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

Somewhere between Washington, D.C. and the North Carolina border winter ceased to be white and, instead, turned bleak-brown with shorn fields nudged and unmanteled. But then, the South purred 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 hot 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. Infields pruned to perfection. The hard red clay raked and combed, pebble free, bad-hop free. 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-al."

"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 will."

"Will I pitch against Ted too?"

"Not if you're smart," Pesky answered.

The baseball camp, with its 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 fastballs.

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

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



Bobby Doerr

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 shrunken 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 bar, 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 beamed 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**



Johnny Pesky

40 and 65

Just think,
in thirty years
you will be seventy
and experiencing mood swings;
I will be ninety-five
and tranquil as an old stone.

Nicholas Snow
Spruce Head
paints & lobsters

50

50 yrs. old
& on the boat

to starboard
two big words on transoms
"Courtship" and
"Destiny"

in the center
"Echo" rocking gently
in the falling tide and

to port
weathered pilings
hung with sea moss
barnacles, kelp

a white pigeon
under there
preening sleepily
and the darkness beyond

Sylvester Pollet
East Holden
teaches & edits at UMO

Gone

Dark closes 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 plate scraped in the sink,
a film of dust your fingertips felt,
the chair still warm in dimming 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
is a UMO graduate

Pigeon

We string minutes one by one on a string
of uncertain length . . .

At Leicester Square I take your arm
You disengage it after half a block.
We thread through crowds on parallel
tracks or single file. We meet at the
end of the block or at the cinema
as if by chance. We take bigger risks,
put countries, oceans, friends and
family in our path. We do not plan the
route from yesterday to tomorrow.

At Heathrow you hug me briefly before I
board the plane. Already you are practicing
detachment. I look back to see you wave
before I move beyond your line of vision.

From the kitchen window in Brooklyn I can
watch a man train pigeons on a nearby roof.
He waves a flag on a long pole to lead
the flock in enlarging circles. Little by
little they learn to trace a curve that
swings always wider, always back to him.

Wendy Kindred
Fort Kent
teaches Art at UMFK



Amor, by Etienne Maurice Falconet (1716-1791)

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 loft 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 laundries.

But today he had felt as crisp as the morning air, his muscles taut and slightly sore, 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 been riveted to this image as she bent down to give water to the poodle. That scene stayed in the very front of his mind and seemed to fire his speech with sermonic urgency.

To the older woman student he would eventually invite to lunch, his lecture propelled something new, a wave of surprising passion ingrained with wisdom. Her story, he had known, was not exceptional. An accumulation of distaste had driven her from marriage. Though unremarkable as he truly was, he possessed a buyer's shrewd ability to note the unused portions of another's soul.

For her part, she had understood in an entirely new way how childish and superficial had been her own expectations of love. The last minutes of his talk she heard not at all, but shifted in her desk as restless as a bear who has scented a honeycomb nearby.

Now they sit at a small table, having pushed aside the plates of a lunch lighter than either would have eaten alone. He has settled into a mode of ominous modesty, as though the knowing and articulate voice of his lecture had gone into another room to put on something more comfortable. Though listening, she is hardly in her chair as she leans across the table. It must be the air before her that sparks his offhand gesture; while speaking, he swiftly draws his fingers from the corner of his eye across his nose into the rust and silver brushes of his beard.

David J. Adams
Trumansburg, NY
teaches technical writing at Cornell,
& taught at UMO, UMF, & Unity

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' wharf four or five times a day just to cool off. Sometimes we'd remember and leave our jeans accorded like sloughed 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 fogs forget 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 hurled briefly through that fragrant air before landing in the frigid water with a huge ploosh and millions of deafening underwater bubbles. The harbor water tasted like Greek olives, fiercely salt and slightly meaty, as if one 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 gauging 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 over it for long. She blamed her innumerable brothers, who were all hellions 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 sad 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 careened 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 winced our way off the burning wharf and crossed the crater-filled parking lot to the road, our pantcuffs collecting glittering quartz grit.

The Harbor road was a 13-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 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, pat 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 its side at the far edge of 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, studying its own image gravely, intently.

Reeny and I saw the boy sitting on the rotten boat at the same moment, and probably with the same kick of surprise; no one ever went into the lagoon. The marshy ground was treacherous, and those reeds, tall as a man and crested with stiff bright manes, could cut like blades. There was nothing in the lagoon to risk passage for. Even if there was something there, no one would want to meet it—not in the opaque, confining screen of the marsh.

We stood in the middle of the road, staring at the boy, our wet jeans beginning to stiffen and itch. He sat on the boat's tilted deck near the bow, squatting like a monkey, his ropy arms clasping his knees. I couldn't tell if he was looking at us, too, but he was sitting very still.

"Let's go talk to him," Reeny said, and she started down the road's stony shoulder without looking to see if I would follow.

"But Reeny—" I called, hearing my voice come out high and tight.

"No, come on," she hollered back, disappearing into the reeds. "I gotta talk to this kid."

So I followed, because Reeny and I did everything together that summer, and

because she was my great good friend.

The reeds encircled us, crowding close and unwelcome, as Reeny wove unerringly toward the obscured boat. They crackled and tapped as we passed, and I worried briefly that their noise might alert something fierce and hidden, some great marsh spider holding the reeds delicately in its many arms, waiting for movement. Midges rose up in clouds and pursued us, and the ground, squashy and uneven, full of invisible hummocks 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 shoulderblades. 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 moat 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-pupilled 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 hulk. "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 this 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 parked 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 motion, still watching the boy. On a sudden thought, she narrowed her eyes, scowling 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 tittered and thumped 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-strapped 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 wove expertly through the marsh, stepping high, black freckles 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 gnats 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, dripping 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 that 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 down 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 restless as the harbor itself.

There in the showroom-clean interior of his car, Mr. Hatch himself looked a little rumped 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 hulk's not 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, wallow down the harbor toward the wharf. "It was a while ago, I guess. But such a terrible business."

"What happened?"

"Oh, some local boy climbed onto that hulk for a lark and somehow cut himself real bad. He walked all the way home, but then bled to death on the kitchen floor. Nobody was home. His Mom was out somewhere." Mr. Hatch shook his head. "Awful. Shouldn't have happened."

He put the Buick in gear, and the car seemed to take an easy step forward, like a good horse. "You tell that boy to get off there, you hear?" he said. But I could tell that he was thinking about his car again, about closing the thick window over the distant sounds of marine diesels and crying birds and gliding down the road in quiet.

"Okay," I said, and stepped back. The tinted window slid up, and the Buick rolled away, its tires sticking a little to the melting road. Out in the lagoon, Reeny's dead brother sat immobile on the derelict boat.

Reeny finally appeared, her Mom trotting stiffly down the hill beside her like an old lady. Reeny danced about her, under her feet, tugging her arm and gesturing. Her Mom ignored her; she was looking over toward the lagoon, her thin neck stretched as if her eyes were reaching to see. The faint, bakery-warm breezes lifted her ruined hair, and I saw her face shining frightened and hopeful, unnaturally white for a seventh summer.

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

Reeny's Mom reached the bottom of the hill. She drifted toward me uncertainly, losing momentum, still staring out into the lagoon, shading her eyes from the sun. When she reached me she stopped, as if I were a marker, a stake driven into the ground.

"Reeny!" she said sharply, still watching the lagoon. "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 grinning hugely, bright as metal under the lunchtime sun, his fists punched into his skinny hips. "Hey, Mom!" he called, his voice skimming shrill and clear over the dead lagoon. "Mom! Watch this!" And incredibly, he began a grotesque dance out there on the slanted deck, leaping up and crouching low, bobbing and twirling, shouting sing-song raunts in his high voice, saying things we would never let an adult hear come out of our mouths.

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

But Reeny wasn't listening; thunderstruck, incredulous, she gaped at the kid's monstrous antics.

"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,

the kid sang something unbelievably vulgar.

Reeny clapped a hand over her mouth, stopping her own shriek of laughter. "But Mom," she gasped, her hands still cupped in front of her mouth as if her laughter were vomit, "Can't you see him? He's dancing! He's right there on the boat, dancing and singing cusswords!" Eagerly, she turned to me. "You heard him, didn't you? Didn't you? You can see him out there, too, right?"

But I couldn't nod; I couldn't say yes. Reeny's Mom stood there, anxious, yearning, suspicious, aching, tugging her ratty cardigan over her narrow chest, seeing nothing. Her hands were shaking. But Reeny didn't seem to notice. She waved one stiff arm, windmill-like, toward me. "She can see him, too!" she cried gaily. "We can both see him!"

Reeny's Mom turned her uncertain gaze on me. I could see her trying to remember who I was. Beyond her, the kid leaped and kicked and jigged, singing tuneless obscenities at the top of his lungs. "Shame on you," Reeny's Mom said to me with terrible dignity. "Shame on you. You don't know anything about this."

I looked for Reeny to help, but she had stopped listening again. She was staring out into the lagoon, pointing, her eyes wide, her mouth opening and closing on nothing. Out there on the tipped, broken boat, the kid had begun wiggling his skinny bottom out over the green water, flapping his long arms and hooting. "Look, look!" Reeny cried. "Look what he's doing!" We stood for an instant, appalled, thrilled, watching the kid's distant, narrow backside bounce and shimmy. Reeny's Mom scanned the lagoon and its reeds wildly, seeing nothing.

"What?" she cried, sounding angry and frightened and hopeful all at once. "What's he doing?"

And suddenly Reeny rounded on her Mom, as if her blindness were her own fault. "He's *laughing* at you, Mom!" she cried, beginning to laugh herself, pointing at her white-faced mother. "He's laughing and shaking his bum at you! He's going like this—"

And Reeny whirled around there on the edge of the Harbor road and did her dead brother's dance, wagging her mud-spattered rear, lifting and stamping her bare feet, her drooping jeans scuffing the road.

Without a sound, Reeny's Mom fetched her dancing daughter an awful clout to the head, a regular haymaker that sent Reeny sprawling onto the hot road. Reeny's Mom stepped right over her dazed and weeping daughter and strode away over the crest of the hill without looking back, her fists still clenched.

I sat there in the road with Reeny until she stopped crying, careful not to say anything. When I finally thought to look back at the boat, the kid was sitting again, crouched like a monkey, immobile, as if he had never moved at all.

I don't think Reeny's Mom ever forgave her for what she thought had been a cruel hoax, a flagrant dance. For as long as I knew Reeny, until I grew up and left Finch's Harbor, Reeny and her Mom were carefully civil to each other, like strangers sharing a train compartment on a long trip, sharing no intimacies.

But then, the folks of Finch's Harbor never forgave Reeny's Mom either, and neither did Troy. When I left Finch's harbor for the last time, many years later, a thin, late winter snow was falling. The reeds of the lagoon were bone-colored, crushed and trampled by winter storms, and the lagoon itself was filled with jumbled chunks of filthy, salt-rotten ice. But the boy was still there, crouched on that snow-shrouded wreck at the far edge of the frozen lagoon, in his shorts and stupid Red Ball Jets, visible to everyone—except Reeny's Mom.

Margaret Bishop
Sicily, Italy

is a ME resident stationed overseas

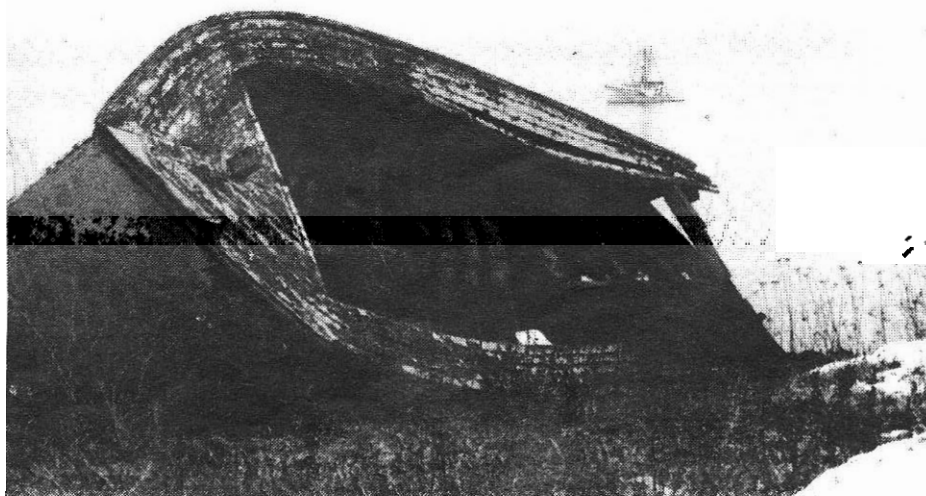


Photo: Anne Brining Oleson

Ghosts

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

a century dead, tall as a
doorway, hair
a rough clump of salt hay,
back mast-straight,
windowframe-square shoulders.

*

Tears run down the chimney.

Rain. He weeps
for the roof's need
of repair. Like a tree
in wind wrings useless hands.
But guides my hands—I saw a slat
with no skill I own, cut
clean 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,

glow within which
he found home
when out 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 armpit hair in
the corners, her hands

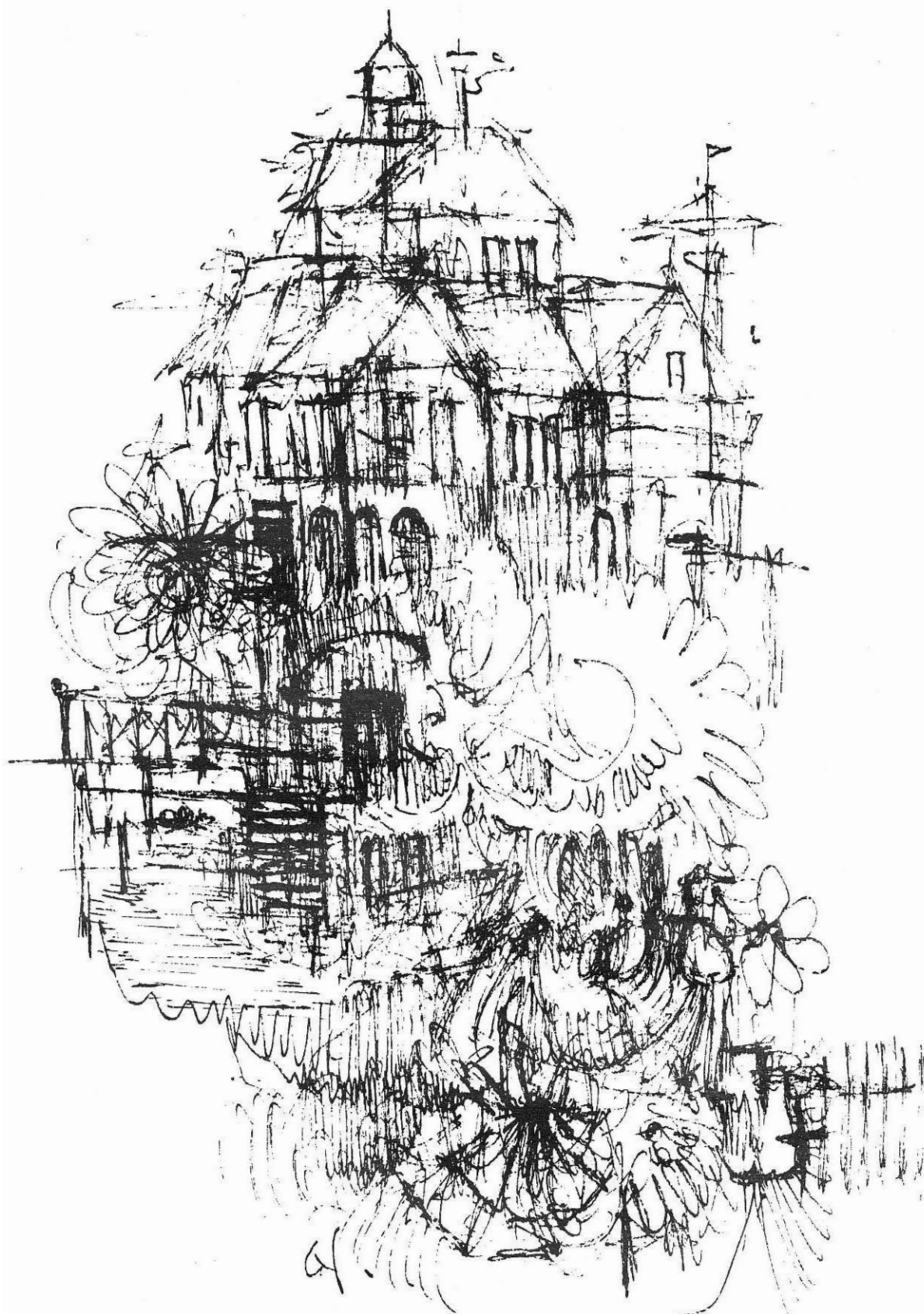
quick hummingbirds
sweeping away dust
with feathery agitation.

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

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

Tasks buzzing in her
head like wasps.

*



drawing by Nick Snow

Life was
lean.
Sweetness
honey salvaged from
scavenging bears.

*

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

exhume from drawers
mistily autumnal
sepia photographs.

They touch our lives
like the oak leaf caught
between window and screen,

its wrinkled fingers
crumbling as I
try to hold it.

*

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

shucked litter 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 hay 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 did not remember exactly what the nature of the work was, and frequently confused it with the work that Carl Streeter said he was doing on Freneau. 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 us 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 quarters room apartment in the Biddletown Acres development; but it would, he assured us, be better than actually camping on the cold ground in some secluded forest dell, where moth and mosquito doth corrupt and ants break through and steal, as Thaddeus put it. (Tad is a real joker, 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 it came out 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 any 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, could not say that they came over in the *Mayflower* and indeed did not want to. I believe he said that they looked upon the inmates of the *Mayflower* as positively "nouveaux arrivés," and although I did not catch this at once I later came to see what he meant. It seems 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 *L'Entrepreneur*. 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 it did arrive later. I suppose I am sentimental, but coming from merry old England and all, establishing the first inchoate roots of a New England, in a manner of speaking, appeals much more to my sense of romance than coming from France to Maine.

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 first 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 insisted was a cabin built partly of sods. Five of the eleven children had perished in that bleak winter, four from unknown causes, and one just simply vanished, swallowed up, in a manner of speaking, by the vast wilderness that surrounded them. All the trace they ever found of him was a little mitten, still clutching the piece of birch bark with a list of things on it that he was to get for his mother from the Indians whom they supposed to be friendly.

I did not mean to digress, however, from the subject of the house. After the year in this humble abode of whichever sort, they built what was undeniably a log cabin. Thaddeus showed me a log that had been preserved from the original. "Why, Tad," I exclaimed, "why didn't you ever show me this before?"

"You were never interested before," he said. It was a smooth, peeled log, and as I ran my hand over the white surface, my hand became sticky. When I mentioned this phenomenon to Thaddeus, he seemed disconcerted for a moment but finally explained, after swearing me to secrecy, that the log began to sweat, as he put it, every spring; and although he ordinarily laughed at superstitions, he really believed there must be something in the story, which his old grandma had told him, of this being the very log against which his great-great-great Uncle Pierreportmanteau had been throttled and scalped by an Indian on the 20th of May (a balmy evening, he said it was, about seven-thirty) in the year 1678.

After the log cabin had served the family for many years, the Martins had

reached a state of sufficient affluence to build a house. This was the very dwelling which he was now offering to Gladys and me for the summer, rent free. It stood, he said, on the shores of Frenchman's Bay, in the little town of Passagassawaukeag, within easy reach by canoe of Bangor, and Old Town, where Thoreau had employed his Indian guide. Thaddeus had inherited it from his father who had always lived in California, and had inherited it from his father. Tad was the last of the line, and while he had been meaning to return to Maine and Martin Manor, as he liked to call it, he had always had some work in hand that prevented him each summer from realizing his dream. "I shall experience it by proxy," he said, "if you and Gladys go up there, Maximilian, my boy." I reminded him that my friends all call me Maxim, and left his office in a state of high enthusiasm, eager to get home and announce the news of our good fortune to Gladys.

When I arrived, Gladys was bathing our twin sons, Jean Jacques Rousseau, whom we call Jackie, and George Bernard Shaw, whom we call Georgie. "Sweetikums," I said, "what do you think? We can really go to Maine and I can write my book on the spot, in the seclusion of the Maine wilderness."

Gladys dropped the wet cloth with which she had been bathing George Bernard Shaw and it landed with a disgusting "spat" on his head, which caused the little dear to indulge in what seemed to be infantile vituperation. "But, Max," she said, "why do you need to be on the spot?" It all goes to support my belief, which I expressed in an article last May, published by the Schwartzbottom Tales, that women by nature do not have the scholarly instinct.

"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 mine."

"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 dawning 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."

"Thoreau 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, "Shot, 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. But here's the key anyway." It was a huge 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 had told her that I didn't, but that I would learn if need be, 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 I was there, so things may have changed."

I had that map in my pocket as we rolled along up 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 phrases about cool sea breezes and the pictures of stunning 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 the 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 Cabins, surrounded by woods and alder 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 borer 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, tweedums. Was oo dus as seepy as oo tood be? Oh my doodness." 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 only joking. Route 1 is a very clearly defined highway that goes right up the coast, between two walls of signboards, billboards, motels, tourist 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 me 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 Portland 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 particular proprietor, although Yankee, was not a laconic Yankee.

We finally reached Teuton at about three in the afternoon. Thaddeus had told us to turn off at the Teuton Tavern. We thought at first that the road must have been changed since the town was established, for although the sign on the road said we were entering Teuton we couldn't find any town or village, only an old blacksmith shop, a filling station, and a new consolidated school that ran largely to gymnasium. Finally we stopped for gas at the filling station and asked where the town of Teuton was. "Teuton?" said the man. "You're settin' right in it now, Bub." We didn't have the heart to ask for the Teuton Tavern, but after we had hunted all up and down the road for it we decided that an old cellar at the crossroads with elms over it and lilacs clustered around it was the only remnant of the Teuton Tavern. We hurriedly took that road, for it was growing late, the twins were fussy, and the beautiful sky and all the landscape were becoming obscured by a thick, cold fog. I consulted the map that Thaddeus had drawn for me and tried to comfort Gladys by assuring her that in an hour or so we would all be having supper before a cheerful fireplace.

By using Thaddeus's map, we soon came upon what was unmistakably the Martin house, Thaddeus's ancestral hall. He had told me that it was approached by a long lane lined with maples that ran through spacious fields. This confused me at first, for I found the stone post marked M that stood at the entrance to the lane, but the lane was now a woodroad. Nature had been at work in the thirty years that Thaddeus had been away and the fields were now a forest and the maples were threatened by the onslaught of other smaller trees whose genus I didn't know. We passed through the lane, however, the trees brushing the car on either side, and I remembered that I had forgotten to consult any Emerson or Alcott about an ax.

At the end of the lane was the house. The barn lay flat on its face twenty yards away, but the house had been shingled not more than twenty years before and it stood upright with only a slight sag in the roof. It was not large, but neither was Thoreau's cabin, I reminded myself. Gladys was, I'm afraid, rather disappointed, but I reminded her that Thoreau had to *build* his house and all we had to do was to pull the boards off the windows and doors. Gladys still looked tired and so I suggested that she get out some of the Coke from the cooler that we had in the trunk, and we'd all have some Coke and peanut butter sandwiches and then see what our dwelling was like. But Gladys said that she couldn't eat until she knew the worst; so I got the handle of the car jack and began to pry boards off one of the windows. Imagine my surprise to find that very few of the windows had glass in them under those boards! When we looked into the living room of Martin Manor, I must admit that it probably did look somewhat dismal to Gladys. Birds had come 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 amazement 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 I 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 Georgie 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 jewel 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 consoling 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. These 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 heart 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 mean that it was meant to burn wood. Gladys I knew 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 surmised 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	\$500.00	Furniture	\$500.00
Windows	\$100.00	Cost of maintaining	
Wiring house for		family at New Vista	
electricity and cost		while house is being	
of light fixtures	\$400.00	renovated	\$500.00
Drilling a well	\$600.00		
Installation of a		Total	\$3600.00
bathroom	\$1000.00		

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 at New Vista, we couldn't even afford to motor up the Penobscot to Moosehead. As for my book, I can shift the subject slightly to discuss ways in which Thoreau's philosophy would have been influenced by a wife and twin sons.

Donald F. Mortland
Unity

teaches English at Unity 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.

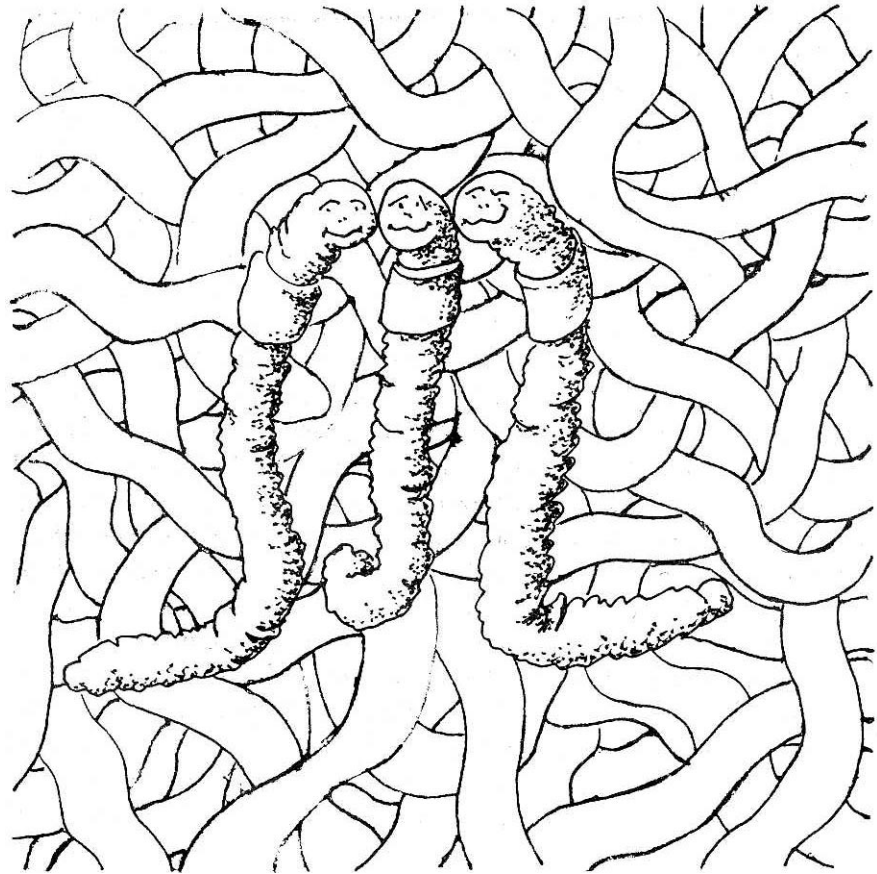
Naturally, I agreed to their requests and sat down on the steps to listen to their story.

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.

As it was now almost 3:00 am, I asked the worms if they required anything before continuing their story. They told me that they had been well fed before leaving Walden and would wait until tomorrow when I had assured them they would move into their new home.

They then proceeded to hum one of the most unusual melodies I have ever heard. Perhaps it was the way that the worms hummed (it sounded like a combination of musical saw and the squeaking brakes of a Mac truck) that I found particularly intriguing.

I admit that I had never heard worms hum before and I was captivated by the unusual quality of the sound which, they assured me, had been faithfully



passed on through generations of Walden Worms and carefully guarded as a family treasure. They told me that I was the first human to hear this unknown Thoreau composition.

Anyway, the tune sparked images (as many old, good tunes do) and the images were of a world where everything lived in harmony with itself and nothing, especially humans, took more or gave more to the earth than was their weighted share. The tune had a disobedient air that was, at the same time, passively conveyed through a simple, natural, arrangement of notes.

After the worms had finished, all we could do was to be silent. It was as though nature in its entirety was answering with a deep, silent, but definite, YES! This tune was an affirmation of life on the deepest level and it was so lovely, so endearing, that, unfortunately, it seemed totally out of place here in the year 1991.

As a matter of fact, my mind, through its cynical inbreeding due to years of harassment from modern monsters such as the Central Intelligence Agency (a misnomer if there ever was one) almost rejected the idealism and the purity expressed in the tune and the faithful rendition by these loyal American worms. I was saved only by a thin lingering shred of hope—the last threads of my patriotism.

What happened to me in the following hours until dawn broke I can only describe as a miracle in the truest sense. Years of bitterness and pain over CIA assassinations; phone taps; Central American death squads; FBI terrorism; the greed and corruption of public officials; the mafia; the injustice of war; the sale of weapons to countries where the poorest of the poor live and, the present growing disquiet over the stark similarity between Maine and Massachusetts (replete with political hoodlums)—all of this melted away and left me a changed man. It was possibly the closest thing to being “born again” that I am likely to ever experience in my lifetime.

At dawn I thanked the Worms of Walden from the bottom of my heart and came into the house, where the light was starting to shine through open windows, to relate this story to you.

The Worms are living happily in my compost pile and, on many evenings since the humming of Thoreau's tune, I have bundled up and sat there beside the pile listening to the most amusing stories, handed down through the Worms of Walden, that have succeeded in introducing me to a different history of America.

One such story involved a particular ancestor who, after hearing that there was a human organization named the “Daughters of the American Revolution”, decided that she should have the right to address that austere group because her grandmother had received the inside scoop from several participants in the Revolution.

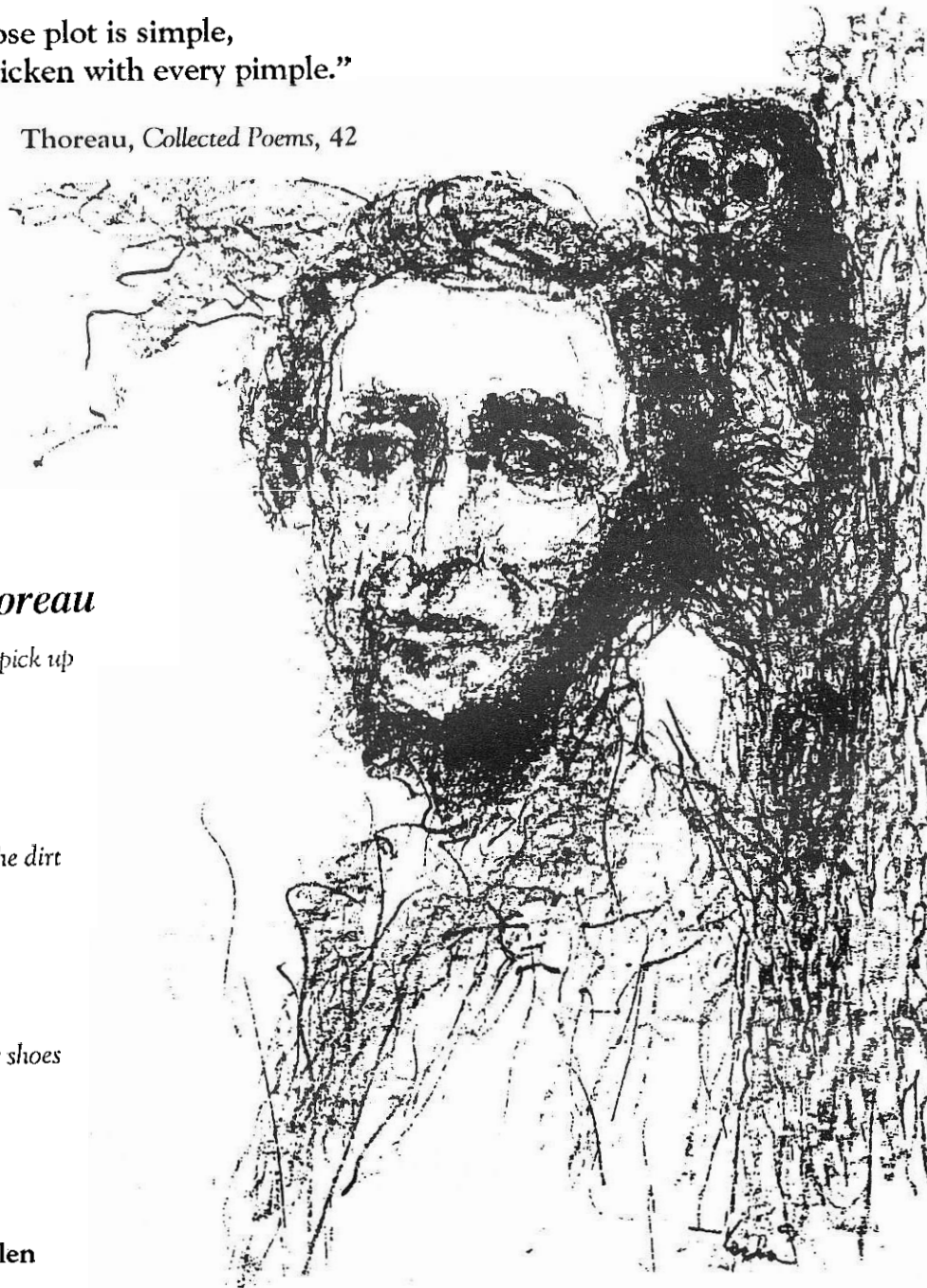
The experience of this matriarch had supported the prevailing belief among her community that the revolutionaries were essentially all the same—toes and noses, tongues and cheeks.

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



Cover illustration, by Tecla (Selnick)

How to Talk to Thoreau

Squat down on your hams and pick up
a twig
with care
and wait
breathing.

If you have seen something in the dirt
a holy stream
an ant
bloody war
tell it.

If you've seen nothing but your shoes
dead meat
lick 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 at 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 clutter of nature's facts
to a wayward urbanite,
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 to 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 betrayed my way,
as well you knew.

Richard Lyons
Gardiner
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 sassy in his soul. I can think of a dozen Mainers from Eliot Porter to William Carpenter who have turned to H.D. ("High Detergent," one calls him) as a subject, a source, to render homage, or to come to lovers' terms with. Odd power for one who lived only 44 years. And now, Robert Chute checks in, not with a passing nod at the god from Concord, but with an entire book of 34 witty, imaginative poems from his "time-transcendent friendship with the great journalist."

In his tightly-written, moving Introduction, Chute says that 29 years ago, in 1963, he opened Thoreau's *Journal* and the first entry he read had Thoreau asking, "What are you doing now? Do you keep a journal?" Chute began one immediately, and the poems piled up, the "friendship" deepened. The "Woodshed" of his title refers to how he accumulated poems, akin to Thoreau's account in *Walden* of how he gathered materials to build his cabin. Chute quotes Thoreau as he transforms them into spiritual facts and prepares to go transcendent: "The youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or perchance, a palace or temple on the earth, and at length the middle-aged man concludes to build a woodshed with them." A semi-retired biology professor from Bates, Chute reflects on nearly three decades as a Thoreauvian, and concludes, "It is time to build my woodshed."

The image for what he has done is perfect—an overarching canopy, the theme, makes a tight roof; the poems, themselves often airy, sometimes gnarled, lay 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 pilgrimage 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 sass. 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 *doppelgänger*. 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 cataracts/ 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 unending 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 out 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 no hermit, but might possibly sit out the sturdiest frequenter of the bar-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 prof 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 around muttering "The god damn son of a bitch had no get-up-and-go."

EBW, *Letter to brother Stanley*, 7/11/45, p. 168

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 biog*, 314

Walden is the only book I own. . . . It is not the best book I ever encountered, perhaps, but it is for 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 biog*, 313

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 Brooklin and the Belgrade Lakes regions, it is amazing in a time of rapid linguistic change how accurate his observations remain after 52 years. For 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, part 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. Our 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 heft. You heft a thing to see how much it weighs. When you are holding a wedge for somebody to tap with a hammer, you say: "Tunk it a little." I've never heard the word tap used. It is always tunk.

Baster (pronounced bayster) is a popular word with boys. All the kids use it. He's an old baster, they say, when they pull an eel out of an eel 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.

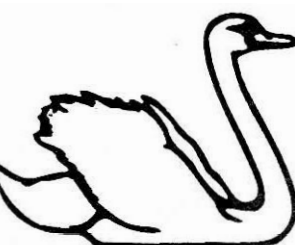
A person who is sensitive to cold is spleeny. We have never put a heater in our car, for fear we might get spleeny. When a pasture is sparse and isn't providing enough food for the stock, you say the pasture is pretty snug. And a man who walks and talks slowly or lazily is called mod'rate. He's a powerful mod'rate 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' baster.

The word dear is pronounced dee-ah. Yet the word deer is pronounced deer. All children are called dee-ah, 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 dee-ah; other times he calls him Fredday you ol' baster.

E.B. White



The Critic leaves at curtain fall
To find in starting to review it,
He scarcely saw the play at all
For watching his reaction to it.

EBW, *The New Yorker*, 10/17/25, 111

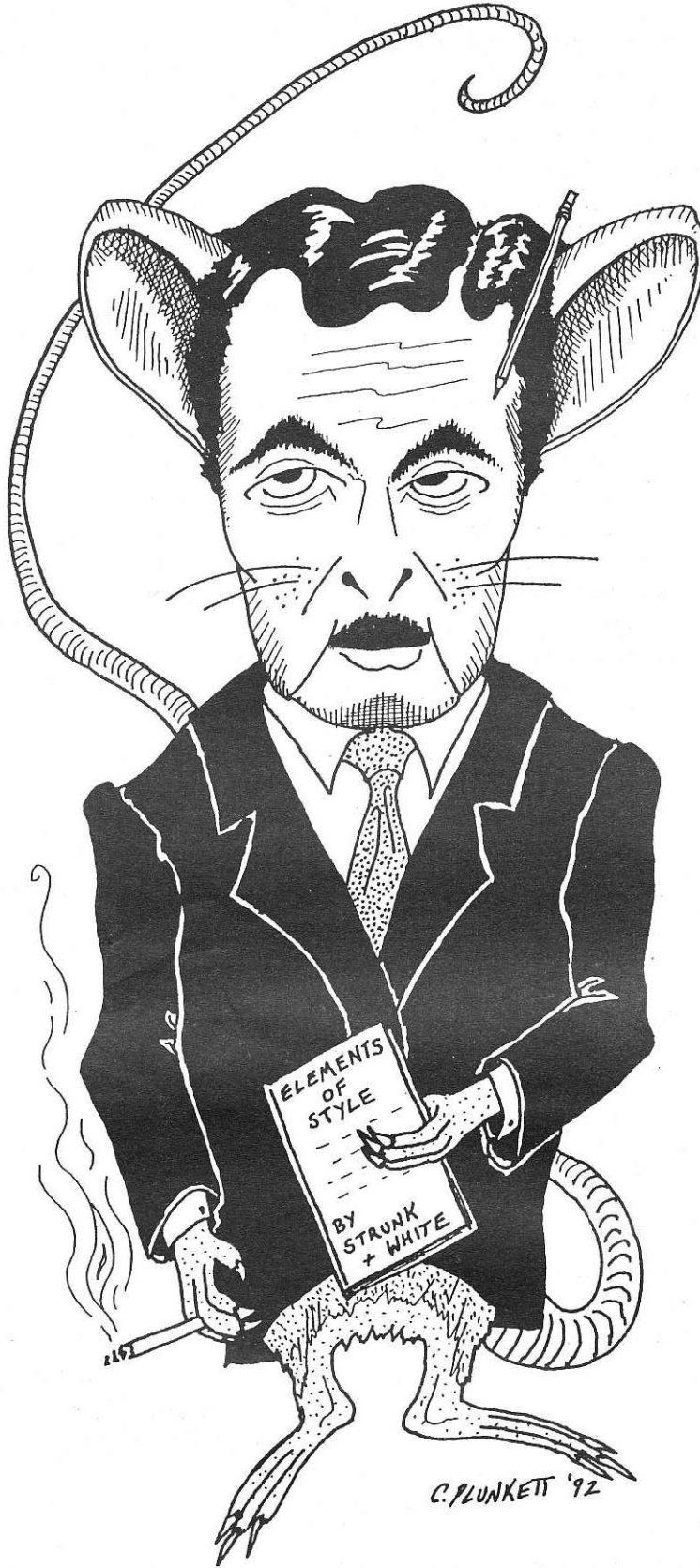
One Man's White

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 howlingly funny one-liners that comment on short pieces of botched 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, H₂O in one hand, pencil in the other, vying to write in the crispest 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 adultery." Nonetheless, EBW's friendship with the famous Thurber flourished and they became tight friends. Thurber says he learned "discipline" from EBW and his "precision and clarity . . . slowed me down from the dogtrot 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 theory and example White's own spare, civilized, elegant prose that leaves readers who would be writers gaping in admiration. But Strunk's influence has been exaggerated, most notably by EBW himself, who wished to pay homage to the man as well as to sell the book. Until he started the project, he didn't even own Strunk's pamphlet. EBW's touch is self-taught, almost instinctive. Writing "is something that raises up on you like a welt" (*NYer*, 12/20/30). His style seems to be part of the man himself, to flow effortlessly from some innate gentility in the person, from a reservoir of diffidence, deftness, mild irony, amusement, what his contemporaries used to call *savoir faire*. Of Hemingway, who received a Nobel for his style, reviewers said, "the style is the 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 signs of strain, so gossamer 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



"I had two things the matter with me—mice in the subconscious and spurs in the cervical spine. . . . It took me 18 months to find out how you get rid of mice and if you ever need to know I'll be glad to give you the instructions." (EBW to his brother Stanley, Jan., 1945, *Letters*, 261.) When only ten years old, he won a prize for a poem about a mouse; at 45, he wrote another, saying "Ever at home are the mice in hiding."

that he was "a writer trying not to act like a writer." That's exactly EBW's effect. Behind it, a lot of trying. Red 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 nerves, 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 hearing it give the faint squeak 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—as 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 rhythm 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 "little tramp" 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 "Ernest, remarks are not literature." To journalists, we want to say (with Lloyd Bentson), "I know Francis Bacon, sir, and you are no

Francis Bacon." Bombeck, you're no Baldwin. Tom Wicker, you're good, but you're no Tom Wolfe. Barbara Ehrenreich, no Edmund Wilson. Russell Baker? Buchwald? bracing, but not art. Dave Barry, 3 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 motley, in this cross-over context, true, like them he "wrote short" and worried about meeting weekly deadlines, but most of the time when his keys rose and struck ribbon, essays came out. They last. Within a paragraph you know you can trust the words to be around tomorrow, next year, after the newsprint yellows and eats mere journalists.

Arguably, he was the best. One of his obituarists says, "He made his voice carry without raising it." William Shawn, 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 cosmopolitan, not comic 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 Miltown, or Under the Spreading Atrophy*. EBW's forte was finesse, not farce. 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 This?* 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 Matthiessen, these we trust. Steele and Pauline Kael, we trust them too. Montaigne and Mailer and McPhee, we're usually okay.

The form was born in Greece and Rome. But about 1580 its French "father" Montaigne finally named it *essai*, or "little attempt." In English, Bacon birthed it, then in the 17th c. Burton burnished it to a bright 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 levity and urbanity by 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 as little as Stuart Little, working his subjects like country living, dog training, and raising chickens. Late in life he quipped, "One more barnyard story from me and the magazine will have to change its name to the *Rural New Yorker*" (*Letters*, 622).

While Arnold also saw himself as a poet too, most thought themselves first and only essayists. EBW, only a part-time poet, is in this tradition. He took a lifetime living out of it, mining the minor. By contrast, most major American essayists mainly do something else—novels, plays, poetry—and turn to the essay only on the side. American ancestors, the same. Jonathan Edwards: preacher; his "essays" are sermons. Emerson thought himself a poet, but earned his keep as a lyceum lecturer and his essays, oral, oracular in flavor, read like superb platform prose. Twain? 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 quotidian, certainly transient observations of the passing of week-by-week life. White chafed. Ross resisted. I think Ross was right. He loved EBW's "newsbreaks" (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 him 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*.

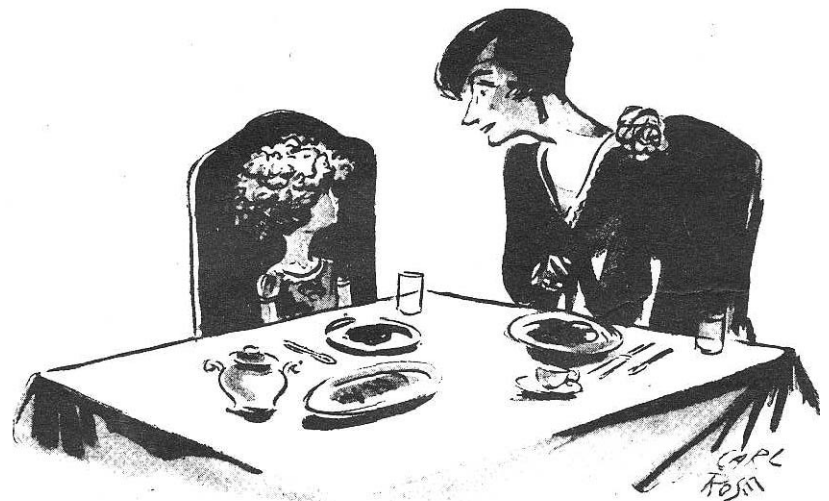
He hated being edited, although he was married to an editor. And no wonder, just look at his roughs and mangled early typescripts. To him, editing was

something painful you 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 deplored the scissors-and-snip castration 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. Writer's cramp, but *Reader's Digest*. EBW, usually playful, once wrote Katharine: "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. I 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 compliment: "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 friggged around in their curious manner, so I sent everything back and said that unlike a vanilla bean I did not wish to be extracted. Hell, some day I may toss off a really good sentence or two, and wouldn't want a hair of its head touched. The truth about the *Digest* is that they approach every manuscript with the hope of gaining a line of type before reaching the middle of the third sentence. That 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 tinkering with the trivial or placed himself apart from politics. He fought loyalty oaths and the House UnAmerican 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 . . ." (255). 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 on 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 distressed, 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,



"It's broccoli, dear."
"I say it's spinach, and I say the hell with it."

The New Yorker, 1927.



E.B. White

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"

seldom senses the "real" EBW. What you get is the "real" writer. It does not feel fake in any way, it feels prepared. Scrupulous about the self he sold to the world, and wonderfully fussy about every word, caring about every comma, EBW 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 plumbing their depths, at least in public. Elledge, his biographer, can't get at it; Linda Davis, hers, doesn't either. The Whites were people so adept at how they lived and wrote and edited that they end up elusive 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 on behind the scenes. No surprise. He wrote a lucid letter, polished 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 epistolarist, consistent.

EBW admits his discomfort at the project to collect and publish his letters; in 1975 he wrote, "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 always fix things up to make himself more presentable, but a man 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 believing that dignity is not inherent in character but a quality one creates in the Self, and should be counted as part of it. *Being amusing was dignified, being funny was not*: ". . . No humorist has ever won the Pulitzer Prize," he wrote, "there is something not quite first-rate about funny men" (488).

Many authors write autobiographies, controlling to an extent what the world will think of them, or at least throwing up barriers to be dismantled, or creating *cul-de-sacs* to be avoided. One thinks of Henry James burning his letters, editing his Notebooks, rewriting his Prefaces. To EBW, it must have been flattering, and yet an agony, to have his own biography prepared and published by another person during his lifetime. One can't say, "oh, to hell with it, I'll be dead anyway." Taste, impeccable and decent, always counted. To a friend he wrote, "My uneasiness about modern writing is not because of its being experimental but because of its abandonment of the responsibility of good taste and its acceptance of the inevitability of disclosure. [italics mine] This I find worrisome. 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 clampdown . . ." (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 darkneses and evasions that probably were not there. (Contrast Arianna Stassinopoulos' disgusting recent biography of Picasso.) Nevertheless, EBW wrote wittily to Scott Elledge: "I was interested in your remarks about the writer as poser, 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 poser, and Sinclair Lewis, more an exposé. 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, inturning fun, shaped like a main spring" (q. Elledge, 130). Sometimes the main spring sprung. 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. If 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



E.B. White

'nervous breakdown' " (Letters, 495-8). Years earlier, "I am recovering from a nervous crackup. . ." (246). The *Letters* are dotted with similar remarks, and indicate his pain, but refuse to dramatize it. The remarkable thing, the characteristic thing, is the jocularly with which he talks about the vague but real problem: he had "a kite caught in the branches somewhere" (250). To brother Stanley: "I had two things the matter with me—mice in the subconscious and spurs in the cervical spine. Of the two the spine trouble was less bothersome. It took me eighteen months to find out how you get rid of mice and if you ever need to know I'll be glad to give you the instructions. The whole key to the neurotic life is simple; in fact the simplicity of it is the greatest hurdle, because it tends to make it impossible or unacceptable to highly complex natures, who insist on meeting their troubles with suitably devious devices and cures" (261-2). It would appear that he is attributing "complex natures" to others, and to himself the opposite. Indeed, in his Introduction to the *Letters* he makes the point, "If an unhappy childhood is indispensable for a writer, I am ill-equipped. I missed out on all that and was neither deprived nor unloved" (1). In a way, our dealing with all of this, kites and mice, is a maddening dive to the surface. The Whites were invisible Victorians. Like Thoreau, EBW said he was "keeping the minutes of his own meeting."

Katharine hated and distrusted 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 90 I'll be sound as a dollar, 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, aplomb. Instead of self-dramatized horrors, 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).

**Terry Plunkett
Hallowell**
teaches at UMA

A Revelation

*groggy in Brooklyn
up 4:30 to get an early start
it comes to me:*

*in all literature
the character I feel closest to
is Stuart Little.*

*5:00 A.M., Stuart Little sets out
for Columbus, Ohio.*

*"Goodbye, Stuart"
"Goodbye, Stuart Little, Goodbye"*

*Then, turning away,
putting their handkerchiefs
back in their pockets,
"Well, there goes old Stuart Little."*

(1970)

**Sylvester Pollet
E. Holden**
teaches & edits at LIMO



Natural History

*The spider, dropping down from twig,
Unwinds a thread of his devising:
A thin, premeditated rig
To use in rising.*

*And all the journey down through space,
I cool descent, and loyal-hearted,
He builds a ladder to the place
From which he started.*

*Thus I, gone forth, as spiders do,
In spider's web a truth discerning,
Attach one silken strand to you
For my returning.*

EBW, *Letters*, 90-91



Katharine & E.B. White, early 1940s

Some Books By and About the Whites:

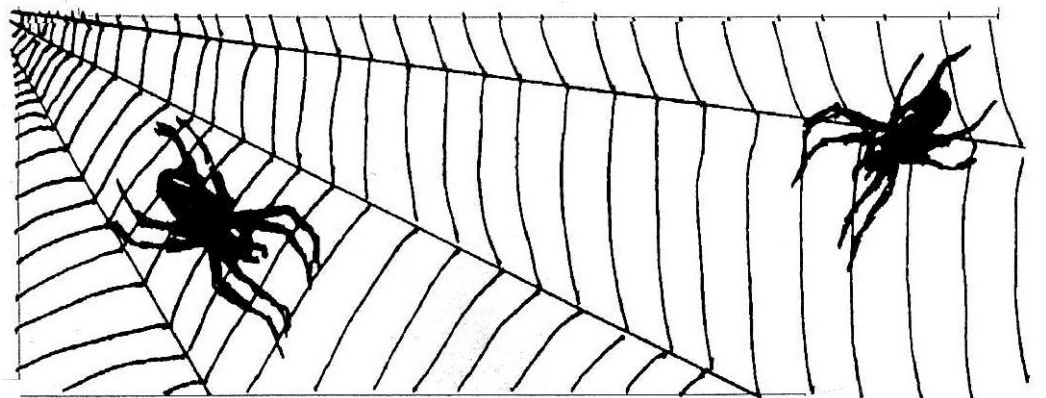
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Onward and Upward: A Biography of Katharine S. White, by Linda H. Davis.
 NY: Harper & Row, 1987.
Katharine & E.B. White: An Affectionate Memoir, by Isabel Russell. NY: W.W.
 Norton, 1987.
- One Man's Meat*, by EBW. NY: Harper & Brothers, 1944.
Stuart Little, by EBW. NY: Harper & Brothers, 1945.
The Wild Flag, by EBW. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946.
Charlotte's Web, by EBW. NY: Harper & Brothers, 1952.
The Second Tree from the Corner, by EBW. NY: Harper & Brothers, 1954.
The Elements of Style, by William Strunk, with revisions, introduction, and a new
 chapter on style, by EBW. NY: Macmillan, 1959.
A Subtreasury of American Humor, ed. EBW and Katharine S. White. NY:
 Coward-McCann, 1941.
The Trumpet of the Swan, by EBW. NY: Harper & Row, 1970.
Letters of EBW. NY: Harper & Row, 1970.
Essays of EBW. NY: Harper & Row, 1977.
Onward and Upward in the Garden, by Katharine S. White. NY: Farrar, Straus
 & Giroux, 1979.
Poems & Sketches of EBW. NY: Harper & Row, 1981.

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 counsellor 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."
- 1922-23 September-June: reporter and columnist for the *Seattle Times*. Summer: travels on the S.S. *Buford* to Alaska. Fall: returns to Mount Vernon.
- 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*.
- 1925 February: first issue of *The New Yorker* appears on the stands. Nine weeks later, magazine publishes EBW's first piece, a short essay on the coming of spring. Summer: EBW quits Frank Seaman agency. Moves into the Village with three Cornell friends, and for 18 months is "comparatively unemployed." Enjoys the "only genuinely creative period" in his life. October: lands part-time job writing copy for J.H. Newmark agency. Writes eight pieces, *NYer*. The last issue of 1925 contains "Child's Play: How I turned a glass of Buttermilk into a personal triumph." Charlie Chaplin called it "one of the best humor things" he had read.

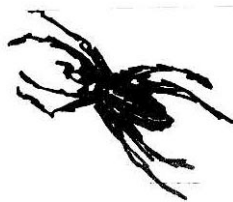
Katharine Sergeant White (1892-1977)

- 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 Crully 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 Chocurua, 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 *Typin 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 Sneden, 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 Northhampton.
- 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. Summer: K. is hired as part-time reader of manuscripts by Harold Ross, founding editor. Fall: becomes assistant editor. December: publishes, anonymously, "Living on the Ragged Edge: Family Income vs. Family Expenses," in *Harper's*.
- 1926 K.'s essay, "Home and Office" published by *Survey*. In it, she defends her life as a working wife and mother.



- 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 "newsbreaks" 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* short story style." Summer: K., Ernest and children sail for France. EBW and friend Gus Lobrano 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.
- 1929 January: EBW leaves on trip to Maine. February: K. and Ernest have a fight. K. moves in with the Thurbers. Later, she settles in Sneden. Children remain with Ernest. May: *The Lady is Cold*, poems by EBW. K. moves to Reno, Nevada for three months to get a divorce. EBW finds K. apartment in the Village. Summer: EBW returns to Camp Otter, acquires an interest in the camp. Returns to 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 Spring: delayed honeymoon to Bermuda. Summer: K. rents house in Bedford Village for her and the children. EBW goes to Camp Otter. December 21: Joel McCoun White is born, an emergency caesarean.
- 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 "shy, frightened of life, often melancholy, always hypochondriac. . . ."
- 1934 *Everyday is Saturday* (Harper), a selection of EBW's "Notes and Comments" paragraphs.
- 1935 Death 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 moons about, "is miserable," and gets no writing done. October: EBW returns to NYC having decided he made "an unholy mess" out of everything. Later, Whites call 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 Newsbreak 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 Subtreasury 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 asst. 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 *Stuart Little*, children's book about a mouse. Reports for *NYer* on the San Francisco Conference, which gives birth to the United Nations.
- 1947 EBW enters period of depression. Stops writing and sees psychiatrist.
- 1948 K. undergoes spinal fusion operation, after fall on ice in 1943. Wears aluminum brace for eight months.
- 1949 EBW gives up editorial page responsibility.
- 1950 *NYer* exists 25 years. EBW begins *Charlotte's Web*.
- 1951 Harold Ross dies of lung cancer; EBW writes *NYer* obit.
- 1952 William Shawn becomes managing editor. K. develops infectious hepatitis, EBW "head trouble."
- 1953 Whites become grandparents: Joel's son, Steven.
- 1954 *Second Tree from the Corner*, a collection of "One Man's Meat" pieces EBW called "a clip book." EBW, honorary degrees from Colby and Harvard.
- 1955 January: K.'s sister dies. Aunt Crully, 92, who lived with her, and helped raise K. from age seven, moves in with Whites. June: Aunt Crully dies. Whites take trip to England, which EBW cuts short. Fall: EBW stops regular contributions to *Notes and Comment*.
- 1956 Gus Lobrano dies. K. becomes Head of Fiction once more. EBW writes loving, ironic essay, "Call Me Ishmael, or, How I Feel About being Married to a Bryn Mawr Graduate."
- 1957 K. gives up job, becomes part-time editor. Whites move again to Maine. EBW begins work on *The Elements of Style*. Roger Angell becomes an editor for *NYer*. Thurber's "The Years With Ross" appears in the *Atlantic*. K. "distasteful, unfactual and malicious."
- 1958 The first of K.'s reviews of garden seed catalogues appears in *NYer*, "Onward and Upward in the Garden."
- 1959 *The Elements of Style*.
- 1961 1/1/61: K. officially retires. 1/2/61: starts having small strokes. 2/61: begins tests. 10/61: operated on for blocked carotid artery. 11/61: Thurber dies; EBW writes obit.
- 1962 K. begins working on long detailed will, continues for next 15 years.
- 1963 On advice of doctors, Whites begin spending winters in Florida. EBW has ulcer and ulcerated tooth. EBW awarded Presidential Medal of Freedom.
- 1964 K. diagnosed with subcorneal pustular dermatosis. Allergic reactions to medication. Cortisone eventually causes osteoporosis.
- 1965 Tom Wolfe's two part article on *NYer* in *Herald Tribune* denounces the "NYer style of editing and writing."
- 1969 K. fractures a vertebra. Severe case of shingles and dermatosis. After 13 weeks in hospital in NYC, returns to Maine. Requires around-the-clock nursing care. EBW begins *The Trumpet and the Swan* to raise money for his wife's care.
- 1970 K. writes her last garden piece. EBW has minor car accident. K. suffers from heart problems.
- 1972 EBW works with Dorothy Lobrano Guth on his *Letters*.
- 1975 Brendan Gill's *Here at the New Yorker* appears. K. terribly upset, thinks about suing. EBW persuades her not to. Until she dies, she works on annotating the book.
- 1976 *The Letters of E.B. White*. K. suffers from senile macular degeneration, which causes her increasing blindness.
- 1977 July 20 K. dies of congestive heart failure. Buried Brooklin, Me. EBW writes memorial service, did not attend funeral. *The essays of E.B. White*.
- 1978 EBW receives special Pulitzer Prize for the body of his work.
- 1979 *Onward and Upward in the Garden*, K.'s collected catalogue reviews, with loving introduction by EBW.
- 1981 EBW's *Poems and Sketches*.
- 1982 EBW stops writing Newsbreaks. Develops Alzheimer's.
- 1985 E.B. White dies at home in Brooklin, ME on October 1. Over 300 of his "closest friends" attend the funeral.



"... an editor is like an actor or actress in that the performance leaves its traces mostly in hearsay and memory."



Katharine Sergeant White

John Updike
(*The New Yorker*, 8/10/87)

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 gal 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 "exerted 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 ties more importantly, the Whites, Katharine and E.B., took up residency. Most of us are familiar with E.B. Fewer may know that most of his work appeared in the *NYer*. Fewer, 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 pure 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 torturous 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 ease 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 lead me on. Gentle and friendly, eccentric or wildly vivid, occasionally contentious 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 dribbles of knowledge, for aesthetic pleasure, and at the same time I am planning the future, and I read in dream." (*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, blames 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 blue pencil struck light. She "coddled" her writers who clung to her "like 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 expended her editor's fury on self-expression and taken the battered writer's soul with her to the office where it ran interference, nurtured and coaxed, the other unfortunates.

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 lives 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 tight-knit families, how difficult to ascertain who thought of what when, or whose job was more influential. Memories, though shared, are selective and singular. Every memoir exposes cobwebs 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 "unfactual" 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 E.B. (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" (228), 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 palace 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 Ross, 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 softy 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 contributors 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, Flanner, Bishop, Sarton, Updike, the list.

goes on and on. With many of these writers she established long-term relationships. (Her correspondence with Jean Stafford spans 30 years.) She encouraged, coaxed, advanced money, asked about their private lives, occasionally suggested story lines, fought about grammar and punctuation, disputed English usage, suggested changes, congratulated them and occasionally rejected them. Some found her difficult to work with and tried to get reassigned. Virtually all found her "formidable." Katharine intimidated people by her self-assurance, her appearance ("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 mail 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, of which she had her share, can probably be traced to that traumatic event, even though it was fanned by Andy who, when they married, was well along the hypochondriac's highway himself. Her self-assurance, the touch of hauteur, were a natural outgrowth of her well-beeled childhood: a sprawling house in Brookline, MA., prestigious Miss Winsor's school in Boston, father (a railroad executive) mentioned in the Boston Blue Book—hers a Brahmic upbringing. Always she remained "New England chic," precise and austere. Her independence, her belief in a woman's right to work (even a married one) came from her "New England Aunts" who "had strong opinions on the Rights of Women" (Davis, 15), opinions undoubtedly reinforced for four years at Bryn Mawr. Four of her father's five sisters remained single: strong female role models. Two, upon graduating from Smith, taught. One of these, Aunt Crully, a former headmistress, moved into her brother's house after the death of his wife to care for the girls. On her mother's side was Aunt Poo: an artist who at the age of 51 married a Japanese man 21 years her junior and then moved to Japan where she translated the work of Lady Murasaki and, with her husband, established a Settlement House in Tokyo. (During WWII, EBW wrote a lovely essay about "his" feisty Japanese aunt. See: *One Man's Meat*.)

K. had two sisters. Rosamond, two years older, was her friend and confidante. Elsie, nine years her senior, was a different story. Their relationship was ambiguous at best. Elsie preceded K. to Bryn Mawr and into the writing profession. She was a reporter for the *New Republic* during WWI and wrote, among other things, a biography of Willa Cather and a book on Robert Frost. K., whose literary career eclipsed that of her sister's, if not in creative output then in earnings and prestige, never thought much of Elsie's writing nor of her emotionality.

Emotionally guarded, K., brought up by Aunt Crully in the best of Victorian ways, never fully confided in anyone, not even Andy, and her tears were mostly "silent and lonely" (20), while Elsie was prone to lose control. Elsie had "head troubles" at least, a nervous breakdown, an analysis by Carl Jung, and remained in the Jungian fold all her life. Katharine, who once briefly worked for a psychoanalyst "who was more messed up than her patients" (54), distrusted psychiatrists and questioned their usefulness. Hers, not a self-analyzing mind. She regarded Elsie as "emotion gone awry": a woman unable to stand on her own feet either "emotionally or financially" (K. supported her sister financially at least for part of her life) because she was "paralyzed by indecision," a fearsome spectre for someone who prides herself on independence and strength of mind (188-189). Later in life, when K. suffered from a myriad of ailments, she worried that people might think them psychosomatic, as Brendan Gill intimated in his introductory essay to the *Paris Review* with EBW (1969) and later repeated in his book:

They have shared everything from professional association on the same magazine to preoccupation with a joint ill health that many of their friends have been inclined to regard as imaginary . . . it was always wonderful to behold the intuitive adjustments by which one of them got well in time for the other to get sick . . . Certainly they have been the strongest and most productive unhealthy couple that I have ever encountered . . . (293).

Gill's suggestion that both were hypochondriacs brought from K. an uncharacteristic response. She wrote friends that though Andy was neurotic, no doctor had ever accused her of suffering from imaginary ills (Davis, 190). She loathed the notion that she might, like Elsie and Andy, have "head troubles" and thus be less in control. EBW once said that K. "was more afraid of Elsie than of anyone in the world" (188). Davis suggests a fear of vulnerability: a distinct possibility. Reading K.'s essays in which she reminisces gives one a sense that hers was a charmed childhood: croquet on the lawn, lots of flowers, a large extended

family and delightful summers on a New Hampshire lake. Missing were a mother's love and understanding, a warm cuddly touch, and the emotional security those bring. Her need to be in control, her emotional reticence, her "inability to easily slip an arm around one of her children" (20)—those things which made her seem "formidable," which allowed a 1934 *Fortune* magazine article to call her "hard, suave and ambitious" (144), like her pre-occupation with ill-health, undoubtedly stem from her mother's early demise.

On her eighteenth birthday, Ernest Angell, a 21-year-old law student at Harvard, proposed to her. One fellow Bryn Mawrian upon hearing the news exclaimed "Oh, how perfectly awful!" (35): marriage was not encouraged. But well-liked K. threw herself into campus life: edited the weekly paper, the literary annual, wrote short stories, and directed plays, while keeping up with her academic work. One student remembered "her respect for any and all personalities," as well as "the quiet but definite way she would size us all up—not a bit patronizing, but very sure" (Elledge, 111): qualities which would stand her in good stead at the NYer.

Upon graduation, K. moved back to Brookline and worked as a volunteer at Mass General until she married in May of 1915 and moved to Cleveland where Ernest worked in his deceased father's large law firm. They helped establish the Cleveland Playhouse and she coedited a book of local poetry. Soon they were the proud parents of a daughter named Nancy. Then came the war. Ernest enlisted, was sent to France; K., lonely and restless, took a job surveying disabled people, and, later, became an inspector of factory conditions. Then she moved back to her father's house and volunteered at Boston's Children's Hospital. Linda Davis, her biographer, sounds a note of censure (the first of many) about her decision to work: "[her] maternal feelings did not require that she be with her child full time . . . It apparently never occurred to her that Nancy might have been better off in the care of her mother . . ." and "she put her own needs first" (50). An oddly old-fashioned note in a book written in the 1980s. Or maybe conversely, the tone is just slightly too contemporary: a modern mother's guilt blanketing the past?

"Your grandfather was overseas longer than almost anybody I knew," K. wrote a granddaughter (50). When he did return, after almost two years, things had changed as they do for so many couples separated by war. Ernest decided they should move to New York. K., accustomed to working, became a fundraiser for the Bryn Mawr Alumnae Endowment Fund, a job which occasionally took her far from home. Shortly after the birth of Roger, the marriage started to show signs of stress. Financial woes fueled fights; Ernest had returned from France with the notion "that a wife and a mistress was the way to live" (52), an idea K. did not share. Unhappy and unfulfilled she cast about for a career. Then, a neighbor suggested she see Ross about a job on his new humorous magazine. She did.

Harold Ross, like K., was 32 years old. He had been a journalist since the age of 15, quitting high school to support himself. When he founded *The NYer* he already had a great deal of professional experience: managing editor of *Stars and Stripes* during WWI, and later, editor on three different publications. He was a fascinating man. Most accounts of Ross, such as Thurber's, exaggerate his quirks and appearance (his first wife thought that he was the homeliest man she had ever met) (Elledge, 116) so that he appears as a caricature. He was a man with so many contradictions that he is difficult to capture. He was a perfectionist, "passionately dedicated to the achievement of clear, precise and grammatical English prose" (Davis, 61), and an idealist who dreamed of publishing a magazine that was good, funny and fair and succeeded, with incredible energy, in doing so (Elledge, 119). He was self-assured about his professional abilities yet insecure about his lack of formal education. Even though he "spent all his life reading to catch up . . ." and was "a natural literary man" (117), he often exaggerated his ignorance of literature. He was impatient with people—yet kind and loyal; had a terrible temper—but hated confrontations. Ross had a great sense of humor and a generosity of spirit which allowed him to recognize talent and give it a chance to develop, showing "complete respect for the work and ideas and opinions of others" (117). He was a man's man who loved to play poker and drink and used profane language. He was ill-at-ease with women whom he did not like very much (116). Yet, when K. inquired about a job he hired her on the spot. In an interview with Elledge, she said, "Ross and I got on perfectly from the very start but it's true that he did, in moments of frustration, put his hands over his head and exclaim: 'I'm surrounded by women and children.' I was 'the women,' I'm sure. Ross was furious that I was a woman but he soon came to depend on me and accept me" (117).

Ross taught her the ropes of magazine publishing: from pencil-editing to make-up, from art selection to advertising, and then began to delegate work. K. was a quick study, a "born editor." She had "good sense, good taste and good will" (119) and a remarkable ability to work well with writers who, according to EBW, she mothered like a "broody hen" (118). She was not afraid of Ross nor offended by his profanities, ("From Ross I picked up the habit of swearing occasionally. He

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*. “Living on the Ragged Edge: 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 *Survey* magazine. It describes her life as a working mother and wife. She admits that it is not always easy to juggle the dual demands but sounds optimistic and satisfied: “I live a very full family life, and I hold an editorial position that is as exacting a full-time job as any I see about me” (Elledge, 112).

Davis uses these essays to take Katharine to task. She criticizes her “opulent” life-style, her predilection for quality clothes, and her reliance on nursemaids and servants (“she simply disliked housework” and “was nearly incapable 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 expended her “abundant warmth and gregariousness” mainly at work. These censorious notes are jarring. They tempt one to take K.’s side, to protect her against her biographer, ask, as Updike did in his review, “So what? Nothing gets obtained for nothing” (*NYer*, 8/10/87). Working for the *NYer* was something indeed.

EBW began sending light verse and sketches to the *NYer* within weeks after the first issue hit the stands. K. admired his work. His essays were what she liked in fiction: precise, short and “without the burden of plot.” She suggested Ross offer him a job. When EBW took up the invitation to stop by the office he was met by Katharine Angell. 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 though they were young and inexperienced (Davis, 161). Andy, a boyish-looking shy young 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 made 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 “Soliloquy at Times Square,” a poem in which he describes his sense of loss. It starts: “*The time for little words is past;/ We now speak only the broad impertinences./ I take your hand/ Merely to help you cross the street/ (We are such friends),*” and continues: “*Suppose I should forget, grow thoughtless—/ What if the little words came back,/ . . . What if I said: ‘I love you’? Something as simple/ And as easy to the tongue as that—/ Something as true? . . .*” (157-158). Both were miserable. Andy contemplated leaving the magazine. Then, one day in February, after a fight with Ernest, K. had enough. She left.

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 to occupy her mind, no Andy. He split to Ontario, to a camp where he had been a counselor during his college years. The decree stipulated joint custody: an unusual arrangement but not too hard to understand. Ernest, by now a successful attorney (he eventually became president of the ACLU), swore he would never part with the children (Davis, 82): pushing it would mean a messy divorce. Then too, K. had grown up in a father-run household and was a believer in “quality time” (the modern equivalent of the Victorian “Children’s Hour”). She would have the kids on weekends and during holidays—times when she was free from work. Also, her future with Andy was far from secure.

When Andy returned to NYC, they were not certain they would marry. Both were acutely aware of “the terrible challenge” which lay ahead and the fact that everyone would wish them well “with their tongues in their cheeks” (*Letters*, 90). Andy was seven years younger, a “runner,” who predictably left all sticky situations post-haste. He did not deal well with pressure and never had had a long-term relationship. The kids and the respective families were opposed to a

union. The odds seemed daunting. But, on November 13, 1929, they decided to take a chance and got married the same day. Their gamble paid off. The kids got used to Andy, Andy to the kids, the families to both, and eventually the tongues came out of their well-wishers’ cheeks.

The *NYer* had already found the voice for which it is famous. EBW and Thurber, in their “Talk of the Town” pieces, set the tone for the magazine’s fare. K., Ross and John O’Hara had perfected “The New Yorker style” of short story: lightly plotted tales “devoted to the subtle development of character and situation” (Elledge, 182), which some people love and others despise as being “self-analytic pastel-stories-without-plot” (Corey Ford, *The Time of Laughter*, q.



Katharine Sergeant White

Davis, 219). At K.’s urging, they began to publish serious poetry as well as light verse. Their reputation soared. Katharine, by now “Head of Fiction,” had all the “literary writers” under her wing as well as all the difficult ones. Ross delegated to her Alexander Woolcott, the “Gila Monster,” and she handled this prickly pear with firm, humorous ease. “Her” writers were already beginning to depend on her for more than just her keen editorial eye. O’Hara once called and asked that she send the best lung specialist in town to his house because he was hemorrhaging to death. Not exactly your normal editorial request. She complied, and dispatched a doctor who found that O’Hara had vomited so much from a hangover that he ruptured blood vessels in his stomach and throat (Matthew J. Bruccoli: *The O’Hara Concern*, 64-65). Formidable K. inspired trust, and EBW took her devotion to her writers in delighted stride.

Joel was born in December of 1930 after an emergency caesarean. He was fine. But K. contracted a pelvic inflammation and required six weeks bed rest. In 1931, the Whites spent their first summer Down East. Both had strong Maine ties: her mother was born in Naples; Andy had spent 11 summers on Belgrade Lakes. In 1933, they bought a salt-water farm in North Brooklin. Andy dreamed. Restless in New York, dissatisfied with the limited scope the *NYer*’s format allowed his talents, his unease showed itself in various illnesses for which no one could discover a source. Pressure built. His parents died, K. miscarried and he found it difficult to write. He looked for a way out and found it in 1937: claiming “a year of his own,” a year to do whatever came to mind. K. was unhappy, but he could not help himself. His “year” lasted 5 months. It was a disaster. He grew depressed, she ill. In the spring of 1938, they decided to leave the city and move permanently to Maine.

Gill asserts that K. was reluctant to leave “the best job held by any woman in America” (*Here*, 199). She always denied that. I suspect Gill was right. It cannot have been easy to give up the job she helped create on the magazine she helped form. She loved her work and poured herself into her writers’ lives who, on the whole, returned her devotion. Flanner was flabbergasted: “I just can’t forgive Mrs. White for deserting the office. She is the best woman editor in the world, had the best editor’s job in the world, and what does she do, leave it all and retire to a farm in Maine. It’s just too awful!” (Davis, 127). Ross was loath to see them go. He offered K. a half-time editing position: mailing the manuscripts so she could work in Maine. K. accepted. EBW, though, gave up writing his weekly column in favor of writing a longer, personal monthly essay for *Harper’s* magazine but continued to contribute funny phrases and an occasional sketch. Andy’s college friend, Gus Lobrano, was hired to take over as “Head of Fiction.”

K., who had begun writing children’s books reviews in 1933, continued to do so. EBW describes the “inundation of juvenile literature” as an “annual emergency” to which he gradually got accustomed “—the way people in the Connecticut River valley get used to having the river coming into their parlor” (*One Man’s Meat*, 20). K. would review up to 50 books per essay, which meant that hundreds of books would arrive and be read. She had strong opinions, believed that “children can take subordinate clauses in their stride” (Davis, 105) and that one definitely should not write “down” to them. She blasted her fellow reviewers: “*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. This is not a sound theory.*” She lamented, “There are too many coy books full of talking

animals, whimsical children and condescending adults" (105). EBW concurred: "Much of our adult morality, in books and out of them, has a stuffiness unworthy 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 piled 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 years later, EBW tried his hand at "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 Subtreasury of American Humor*: 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 though 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 amenable 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. had a hysterectomy. It was war time. The *NYer* was struggling: lack of paper, loss of writers and a diminished editorial staff. Ross begged the Whites to return. They did.

Things had changed at the *NYer* at least for K. She was no longer "Head of Fiction." Gus Lobrano retained that job. As she later said, it was "a difficult, sticky situation calling for tact on both our parts. I had trained Lobrano to be an editor and now he was my boss" (142). Outwardly they worked well together but Gill asserts that "Lobrano would eventually come to tremble with rage at the very mention of [her] name . . . and [that] he suffered under the considerable shadow she cast" (291-292). K., though just one of the editors, still had Ross' trust and ear and soon she had again all the "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 an aluminum brace, Jean Stafford (herself in 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 K.'s biography, Updike states: "The attentive editor shapes, or at least pats, the writers" (*NYer*, 8/10/87). 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 said to J.D. Salinger, "I felt worried, as well as sick, attempting to say anything about Ross in his own magazine (*Letters*, 347). To another, "I was damned glad to get your letter as 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 mumps, 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 NYC she wrote all "her" writers of her plans: she would give up editing but retain 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 yours . . . but how I shall miss you" (Davis, 172).

K. did not retire. At the end of the year, Gus Lobrano fell seriously ill. He died a short time later. 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, ties 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 our perennial borders are a work of art—cars slow down as they go by, to see the wonders Katharine has wrought. We used 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 peony passion, lupine lust and violet fervor a new project was born: reviews of catalogues 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 mortal. She began keeping her "Victorian will"—keeping being the operative word. Andy suffered as well. Thurber died. K. wrote, "we are crumbling badly" (Davis, 208). She was almost 70. For that birthday Andy wrote "A compass for Katharine: 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 subcorneal pustular dermatosis. 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 molars and a lot of hair, which (still never cut) 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 . . . She hasn't quite given up but her spirit is badly cracked, and it is the saddest thing I have ever had to live with, to see her this way, after having done so much for so many, and now unable to do a thing for herself. I sometimes think I would give everything I own for one garden piece, one book, one restored lady" (*Letters*, 499).

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 dermatosis, followed by a diagnosis of osteoporosis, a diabetic condition, and congenital heart failure. An invalid now, she required round-the-clock care. Yet, her spirit was such that she kept in touch with many of "her" writers. Through all her illnesses she remained Andy's protectress, guarding him against unwanted intrusion, looking out for his fair share of recognition. Gill's book came at the critical moment, when "getting things right" was tied to her own fading light.

When K. died on 7/20/77 Andy was inconsolable. 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 obituaries acknowledged that with her death a major force in American literature had departed. A few years earlier, William Shawn, the managing editor of the *NYer*, wrote her, when she was worried about Tom Wolfe's attack on the "NYer style of short story" which she had helped to shape, nothing "can detract even minutely from what you have done for American letters, or for the world, in your great and unique work as editor. Numberless writers have written better because of what you were able to give them, and many editors, including me, have been able to be of more service to writers because of what you taught them" (Davis, 220).

Her writers and their biographers agree: this "formidable gal" influenced them all with her love of precision, her maternal touch, and "unfailingly perceptive" eye. K., leaving home to tend writers, achieved something few editors do: writer's recognition of her role in shaping their fiction.

In 1937, Katharine was invited to appear in a book entitled *Women of Achievement*. Her response: "I can't see any reason for such a book, other than to satisfy the vanity of the ladies described in it, and can't imagine that such a book would be of any value to students, or as a reference book. I am sure my own daughter would not receive any inspiration by reading about the successful careers of other women" (Davis, 119). She was wrong. The "formidable" Katharine lifted out of the anonymity of an editor's work, lifted out of the realm of "hearsay and memory," fleshed out into life by her biographer—though unfortunately not yet her "collected letters"—is inspiring indeed.

**Clara Schröder
Hallowell**

is asst. editor of Kennebec

The Elements of Taste: a demurrer

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 grasped 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 university 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 descriptivists." 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



William Strunk

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, lilting 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

"English usage is sometimes more than mere taste, judgement and education—sometimes it's sheer luck, like getting across the street."

(EBW, "English Usage," from *The Second Tree from the Corner*)

The next grammar book I bring out I want to tell how to end a sentence with five prepositions. A father of a little boy goes upstairs after supper to read to his son, but he 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?"

EBW, *Letters*, 492

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 Herman 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 Epsom into Pennsylvania, and thence into the hills that shut in Altamont 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 sums 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? Or a 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 fought 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*: *further* (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 *im*—). *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 off-beat 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 flu season can extinguish any desire for outside activity. Two years ago during winter vacation all four of my children and myself had the flu—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 icky 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.

Flu dazed, we watched the animals in Wilbur's barnyard come to life. "Templeton's so funny." Then: "Charlotte's too bossy." 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 "salutations," 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. And I may be inclined to believe it too. The magic of White's stories not only brings animals alive, they seem to explain life in an egg-shell: delicate, precious, but courageous and continuous, pecking to get out. Children do not need such big words, rather, they 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 Charlotte saved for him. Others can—security has its dues.

Perhaps most children relate to the devotion in friendship 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 saddened us a little. My youngest daughter and I watched our thirteen year old Lab wander around the yard sniffing the air but limping slightly, her grey face made whiter by the minute. "Poor old doggie," I said.

"Why?" Vanessa asked.

"Because she's so 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
is a UMA English major

"Anyone who writes for children successfully is probably writing for one child—namely 'the child that is himself.'"

Reviewer of Charlotte's Web,
quoted in Elledge biography, 300.



. . . there is no symbolism in "Charlotte's Web." And there is no political meaning in the story. It is a straight report from a barn cellar, which I dearly love, having spent so many fine hours there, winter and summer, spring and fall, good times and bad times, with the garrulous geese, the passage of swallows, the nearness of rats, and the sameness of sheep.

Letters, 614, 1/12/71, to Gene Deitch, Filmmaker of CW.

. . . It is all very well that "Charlotte's Web was a web of love which extended beyond her own lifespan." But you should never lose sight of the fact that it was a web spun by a true arachnid, not by a de facto person. One has eight legs and has been around for an unbelievably long time on this earth; the other has two legs and has been around just long enough to raise a lot of hell, drain the swamps, and bring the planet to the verge of extinction.

EBW, Letters, 615

I have encountered two taboos. One was death, the other was monstrosity. In "Charlotte's Web," the spider dies. My editor at Harper's was not very enthusiastic about this development. Apparently, children are not supposed to be exposed to death, but I did not pay any attention to this. In "Stuart Little" an American family has a two inch mouse. This is highly questionable and would be, I guess, bad if it were stated in any other than a matter-of-fact way. A librarian read "Stuart Little" in proof before it was published and strongly urged me not to have it published but I did not pay any attention to that, either.

EBW, Letters, 531/2

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, 105)

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, @ 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 Hokuseido 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 flash 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 time honored calling is to entertain us, to make us laugh, to keep their Neilson Ratings up. In fact, by his own admission, Wright's work is *surreal*. *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.⁴

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

Regards,
Arizona Zipper

1,4 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 peep,
the frogs
stare at the stars

spring rainbow;
postman whistling
house to house

the bungee jumper
eats a big breakfast
after the jump

wildflower in the lawn
the widow
mows around it

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

in the yellow leaves
black bones
and a wet woodpecker

Mapplethorpe exhibit;
the lady in furs didn't stop
at the fist-fucking photo

woodshed;
a skunk
gives me the fisheye

riding shotgun tonight
he blows away
a deer crossing sign

candlelit cave;
voices rise and fall
below the bats

the high diver
hangs up her cape
in the stars

Arizona Zipper
Fryeburg
is a painter/poet

a fistful of brown
marsecent leaves, dun moth wings
tenacious on trees

waves of marcelled snow
beneath an argentine moon
abundance sleeps underground

Briefcase woman strides
past mothers in the sandbox.
Children, bosses, 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.
Soaked ashes.

**Jonathan Lindsay
Hallowell**
works at Slate's

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 berth
the boat groans with rising tide
restless for the open sea

**W.F. Halpin
Camden**
consults Care and Learning

Suet Ball Earrings

She was a jewelry designer
who loved birds

Silence

(for John Cage)

The
conductor
carried
no
baton

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

Red sand dollars lie
on the golden ocean floor
. . . shimmering pennies!

Lumpfish. What a name
for so elegant a fish.
Gray and vermillion.

**Michael S. Brown
Winthrop**
works at Consumer Credit Protection



Photo, Clara Schröder

The Haiku Anthology, 2nd edition, edited by Cor Van Den Heuvel (reprinted as a Touchstone Book by Simon & Schuster, New York, 1991, 368 pp., \$12.00)

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 Zipper lives in Fryeburg. They join a cast that reads almost like a hall of fame of American and Canadian haikuists. The editor has chosen well.

Some haiku magazines cram a multitude of haiku onto a single page, but Cor Van Den Heuvel, recognizing the importance of white space, gives the reader time to reflect on each haiku. The haiku, of course, are the heart of this book, but there is a lot more: 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 poems, definitions of terms, and biographical notes; and a helpful bibliography of books on haiku. *The Haiku Anthology* is an excellent introduction to haiku, but it also is sure to please veteran readers of haiku, who will find selections by many of their favorite haiku poets.

**Edward J. Rielly
Westbrook**
teaches at St. Joseph's College

distant thunder
the dog's toenails click
against the linoleum

night comes—
picking up your shoes
still warm

sun & moon
in the same sky
the small hand of my wife

waiting room quiet
an apple core
in the ashtray

Gary Hotham

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 in it's fit 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 hunched over a coleus 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 like 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 Buster riding his lawnmower, his skin bronzing in the sunshine, and over his shoulder the mysterious flicker of water, first gold then blue then gold . . . World without end, Amen.

His lips feel charred. In the teacher's lounge this morning, his pipe clogged, turning the room into a steam bath of acrid tobacco. He pulls the pipe from the inside pocket of his sport coat and imagines heaving the damn thing through the plate glass, but he knows better. He bought this pipe on his honeymoon, and although after eighteen years, both marriage and pipe have soured and cracked, any thought of life without either makes him nervous, so he contents himself with slamming the bowl against the heel of his hand until pain shoots up his arm. There: he's punished.

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 hard, gray series of squares—floor tiles, lockers, signs, and more metal doors—behind which soft but foreboding rumbles beset him as he bobs down the corridor. He can imagine his colleagues. In C-12, Sal shows a filmstrip on *The Call of the Wild* for the second time today; in the next room, Pixie sits on her desk, displaying her legs—and more—for who knows how many times so far; then there is Dan Dulles, displaying both temper and ignorance.

A cold lump forms in Mr. Ashby's chest and rises to his throat, where it ignites and burns. His year as department head was a constant siege, everyone wanting answers he could never provide. The morning after Dan called at midnight to complain that stress was making it impossible for him to maintain an erection, Mr. Ashby resigned as department head and went back to Room C-10, where he knows that teachers respect him for his teaching even if they don't especially like him as a person. Which is OK as long as they don't dislike him. Anything is better than feeling naked and inadequate.

He watches water trickle over three pieces of dried gum lying like pink amoebas 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 about a foot of paper, lifts first his right and then his left foot, and gently polishes his oxblood wing-tips. He straightens and looks into the cold clarity of the mirror. The royal blue sport 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 derision. 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 loom large and frightened. He must look sixty-five. As he brushes lint from his shoulder, 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 to buy antacid.

He retreats for his room, but once again in the corridor, it is as if he is still looking into glass. Everything is two-dimensional and just slightly distorted. From some oblique angle above his head, he watches himself slide along the wall of gun-metal gray lockers which stand like sentries in an army of dead.

The bell rings.

A stab of cold opens his chest. He moves to the opened door of his room and

turns again to the hall, tilting back against the knob, feeling his throat contract and burn. Students flow down the corridor like water through a pipe. Mr. Ashby's next class, a mix of college-bound juniors and seniors with fair skins and white smiles, seep past the vocational bunch congealing outside Pixie's door across the hall. Certain truths are self-evident; one is the inherent inequality of high school students—the dark hair and the blackheads and the overbites that are the birthrights of kids named Gagne and Miro and St. Pierre. These aren't kids; they are men: working since they could carry bait-pails or monkey-wrenches; or women: waiting tables six to eight hours a day after school, and then going home to illegitimate children, alcoholic boyfriends, or abusive fathers. 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 pities 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.

—Do you have any idea how lucky you are? Laugh, for chrissakes!

The Me Generation. To Wendy, to most of them, he is like the water fountain down the hall. If they feel like it, they'll use him; if they don't, they'll use another. And Mr. Ashby, one of the progeny of Ask-not-what-your-country-can-do-for-you-ask-what-you-can-do-for-your-country, what does he want? Does he want to teach Guy Parent? Can he make a difference across the hall? Bullshit. He taught vocational English. All he remembers is day after day rolling his lesson plan up a mountain of indifference 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 Hecuba to them? What is Hecuba to him, for that matter? 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.

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

[Electric current passes through the class. Necks snap, eyes clear, a hum heads for a roar]: "Well, all right, Mr. Ashby!"

He smiles paternally 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.

[Straight line]: "They say that the water's fit to drink. [Pause.] Don't know's I'd try it though. [Through the motions]: Seriously, no excessive talking. Anyone fooling around will have to answer to me. Don't disturb other classes. Let's try to have fun in a responsible manner."

Students stampede out the door into a world which, as he stands in the doorway, seems encased in a robin's egg. The newly mown 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 shake their heads like colts, he listens to the radio and voices from the shop area of the school. Paul Charron throws open his doors at the first sign of warm weather and 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 a shop teacher; it's the faculty meetings he avoids, as if the rest of the staff were termites.

Mr. Ashby corrals the class, lines up bodies, and sends them down over the hill in front of the parking lot toward the leaching pond. He is last. Since he will undoubtedly be helping kids with their descriptions, he tries to pay attention to the images around him. The cut grass is brittle to walk on and he makes a hiss as he steps. Come to think of it, the class does slither down the hill like a disjointed snake. The music evaporates into waves of heat rising from the already yellowing lawn. A blackbird screeches like a rusty door-hinge as they drop to a path between two large fir trees. Mr. Ashby stops and looks up. One tree appears to live only in a single limb which points to the far side of the pond. On the other tree, just above his head, some kind of cancerous tumor drips sap like pus, and its bark crumbles in his fingers. These are not the images he wants. Looking back toward the brick school building, he remembers less than fifteen minutes ago standing at the windows of his room, beguiled by the beauty of the pond in the distance. He crushes another piece of bark from the diseased tree. So much for illusion.

The air smells vaguely of sulphur, and the path begins to decompose around

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: "Some *thing* has killed a little bird—Oh, Yuck!" Mr. Ashby has completely forgotten about his students. They have scattered around the pond, and motionless as tombstones, 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 vomity patches along the water's edge. He waits for other comments, but pupils remain frozen in the heat. Only the black flies buzz.

The path becomes a narrow brink between illusion and reality, between safety and disaster. From his window the water appeared blue; here it is molasses 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 defenselessly near his feet. Just ahead, off the path, a skeleton of log lies gray and pockmarked in the muck. At its head, like some kind of half-eaten brain, red, white, and blue paint spiral into three initials. Probably Sibyl's art class. Sweat has completely soaked his shirt and his glasses keep sliding down his nose. Is the day really that warm? Perhaps the air only smells hot: a fetid smell of decay; or is it birth? He is confused; there is too much going on that he doesn't understand.



Silvia Rike

The path rises slightly so than when—poised now at the verge of the abyss—he 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 beholds before her florescent feet the largest frog he has ever seen. It squats, shining and green-black in the shadow of some reeds, with its back to both of them, throbbing like a slimy, warted heart. It grows enormous in his sight until he feels as if it will devour him if it opens its mouth. Its glass eyes—indifferent and impassive—its lipless reptile smirk, its undulating relentlessness hold him suspended in a bubble. He smells the dampness of the demon's primordial ooze. It knows him and mocks him, while somehow he knows it, fears it, and would bow down before it.

Wendy kneels, not in fear but in curiosity. Slowly, her finger traces the frog's taut, glistening skin. He can feel the cold as surely as if the chubby finger were his. Silence beats in his ears like a drum. Carefully she takes a silver pen, one of those with two hearts on the clip, and softly prods a protuberance the color of wet bark just above one of those dull eyes which seems to dilate and contract to the rhythm of Mr. Ashby's pulse.

The frog springs forward into the pond, the pen shoots into the reeds, and Wendy topples backward, muddying her Calvin Kleins. Virgil Ashby hears her gasp, sees her wonder turn to fear, and feels his stomach freeze and then erupt in briny rage. He charges down the bank toward the muddy water that is his past and future both and from which the frog first appeared and has now disappeared. He knows that the damn thing is long gone but he attacks anyway, plunging his arm through the water and the mud until his hand closes on a rock, hard and heavy and misshapen, a Truth, suddenly palpable in the midst of the muck and murk. He straightens and heaves, and the dusty, unruffled scum on the surface of the pond shatters 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 persona. "Just trying to shake some of you sleepyheads awake 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 quonset hut the track team uses for storage. He feels as if he is suffocating. He 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 Kamakaze following its leader.

Overhead, one small cloud chokes on the sun as Virgil struggles up the ascent to the school. It seems he has forgotten how to breathe on his own. Fright intensifies into agony. Is he having a heart attack? He watches his feet, willing one in front of the other. His left shoe is completely covered in mud and even the cuffs of his blue and white striped slacks are speckled turd-brown. Yet as he focuses on toes squishing inside ruined shoes, he finds he's breathing more easily. By the time he stops at the foot of the cement steps leading to the door by his room, Allan, the last student ahead of him, has just leaned forward to pull the metal door behind him before disappearing like Jack into his box. Virgil is OK. His lungs hurt a little but they are working and the pain is therefore pleasant, a reminder of life. Once again he has over-reacted.

But he sits down on the steps anyway; the class can go on without him. He listens to the music drifting from the shop radio, and looks down upon the leaching pond, the water shimmering in the heat like a distant memory.

Before Virgil was born his father had broken a hole through the cellar wall of their house in order to build some steps to the outside. On a bench just to the right of that entry way 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 his fingernails back and forth along the shiny metal ridges, listening to the rattle and feeling the tingle through his fingertips. Now, the silver ripples of the leaching pond become that washboard. He can smell the cellar's damp granite slab walls, the large, uneven, smoke-colored stones, like those in some ruined Roman temple. He can see his mother feeding dirty clothes to a wringer washing machine as if it were one more hungry child. He watches her duck through the hole in the wall as she takes the laundry to the clothesline, leaving him strumming the washboard, 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 only to start looking forward to leaving almost as soon as he arrives. On one hand, she hasn't 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 wanted 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 by drinking beer at the local pizza parlor. On weekends she travels with a couple of blue-haired friends to tacky resorts. The last time he visited, she was planning to ask some old geezer to the VFW dance. And what is her hair color now? Has she lost weight again?

Virgil rises in recognition that his mother has always been a place, not a person, a place in his perpetually dark and musty cellar next to the washboard, a place where you can't stand up straight for fear of hurting your head. Again the vision: back to him, bent forward, her haunches big and beautiful and heartshaped, his mother slides away from him through the opening in the granite to the clothesline which hangs in the back yard between two apple trees, trees that he knows are in blossom this time of year.

He turns to confront the gray cement steps leading to the gray metal door encased in the brick wall before him. He kicks at the cement and watches mud fall away from his sodden foot, like pieces of egg shell from some emerging dung-colored bird. He leans one arm on the iron rail running up the solid cement, and kicks . . . kicks again . . . kicks harder . . . desperately trying to break open his own stony orifice to freedom.

Rick Wile
Yarmouth

teaches at Brunswick H.S.

Serial Wife

I'm a rag of memory
A bone exhumed 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 music plays beside me at night
And I read and listen
Waiting to become her.

Ellen A. Endter
North Yarmouth
is a freelance writer



Photo,
Martin Nerber

Matreshka

Silly doll with your bright, dead eyes,
The others shut inside you,
Each painted smile, jubilee cheek;
Red dollops—sad masks,
Dead trollops of wood:
How many live inside
Dazed and hollow?

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

Sheri Foley Allen
South Portland
is an English teacher

Until out I crawl,
The last tiny one
Simple and clean,
Gloss red and green,
Black spots for eyes,
A lipless mirth—
No top to pop off

And me at the core,
A thin sheath of wood
Wound round a soul
Limbless and smooth,
The last little doll
small and mute and free,
Changing into me.

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 astringent,
antiseptic quiet that reduces everything

to noiseless white, even leaching pigment
from my lips and fingers. It wears on,
whitening whole days into
vaguely aching absences
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 drifts of anesthesia.

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.

Stephen Paling
Portland

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—dream
of glistening tails and fleshy
combs, the strut of rooster,
fluff of hen.
It's time to invest
in chickens,
in their cluck and hustle,
their fierce preoccupation
with perch and pecking
order—
and their perfect ovals
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**
is 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 peril, who chant strange verbs and finger
rosary after wooden rosary.
"Blessed art thou among women," we pray,
"And blessed be the fruit of thy womb," yet
ours is mere human life, unsanctified
except by epithets and sometimes blows,
bruises, welts and words like bitch, slut 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 loss.
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 others' eyes, or our own.

Anne Britting Oleson
Dixmont
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.

Xavaria, who cannot bear to smile,
whose father read her Lucretius at bedtime,
defends such nothingness as deep inside
the nature of things; and monks,
she notes, sit zazen days on end to grasp:
"Loss and gain make one game."

At this, Sarah, lips royal, skin pale,
breaks 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 Xavaria to say,
"I've bled and wept three weeks.
If loss is an illusion,
then I am; and you are
watching no one
knit the sweater
no one will wear."

Peter Harris
Waterville
teaches at Colby College

To Jen: Turning Sixteen The Exchange

"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
playful fantasy
for which
I do not apologize

Yet celebrating you
on this day—
new 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
trapped in this bittersweet
dance
of you spinning out
the gossamer threads
of a woman becoming
the light
in another man's eyes



to Sandy F

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
to offer me a smile;
the first we've shared
in days.

Doug Rawlings
Mt. Vernon
teaches at UMF

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 scuttling behind a rock. The perimeter line was our turf, carefully cleared and mined and criss-crossed with barbed wire, and if any Victor Charlie was dumb enough to take a shot at us, we'd have his boney little ass in a sling. 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 KARRRUMPED! 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 exhausted, 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 together 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 bleary eyes bloodshot, as usual, was smoking, and I wondered fleetingly if his canteen 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's 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 boulders behind us. I watched it arc high in the air, bounce off a rock, scatter sparks down its side, and then land, still smoking, in the dirt.

"Where's Hank?" I asked. Hank was our Forward Observer. He usually traveled with us wherever we went, especially on a leader's recon.

"Up there," Joel said, pointing to a lone chopper circling overhead. "Registering perimeter fire."

As if to prove the point, another 105 round KARRRUMPED! into the far tree-line, a hundred yards away. I ducked again, involuntarily. We all did. I looked up and saw a thin gray wisp of smoke drifting lazily from the jungle past the wire.

I glanced at Lurch. He was fine. So was the First Sergeant. It's funny how you got used to it—the artillery rounds crashing around you. If you'd been "in country" awhile, you didn't think about it much. Only the new guys were embarrassed when they flinched. After awhile, the got used to it, too. Sometimes, though, when a round went off nearby, you might glance at a friend, and you'd both know, deep inside, that it was getting a little too close, and you'd shake your head, or crack a joke, or say something stupid, just to let the fear out. But you never said anything about it—the fear, that is—especially to a new guy. They were edgy enough as it was, and they'd get used to it without your saying anything. They'd get used to it all, sooner or later—the headaches, the dry mouth, the shakes at night, the wondering when your turn was coming that you stifled every minute of every day, just so you could handle another mission.

"You'd think they could wait for us to get off the Goddamn perimeter," Jack Hibbard said. He wasn't smiling, either.

Suddenly a lone Huey came thundering around the hillcrest to our right, heading in our direction, about a hundred feet off the ground.

"That's our baby," the Captain said.

"Taxi!" Gordo shouted as he scrambled to his feet. Good old Gordo. Always groping for a laugh. God knows, we needed one.

As the Huey roared in and flared its nose for a landing, Joel started jogging towards the ship. I turned, flashed 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-gun pointing downward into the dust.

We scrambled aboard and settled in on the Huey's studded floor—Gordo, Joel, and Espadrille up front, with their backs to the cockpit; Hibbard, me and Lurch in back, facing forward. We'd boarded 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 compatriots, 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 throbbing 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 helipad—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 gaggle 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.

KABOOOM!

Something bounced us high in the air. The chopper veered wildly to the right, then back to the left, and we began shaking and shimmering 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.



Jolly Green Giant, from *The Complete Book of Helicopters*, D.N. Ahnstrom, Cleveland: World Publ. Co., 1968.

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 the sky, with its turbines shrieking, and the ground racing up at us. There was no way in Hell we were going to walk away from this one.

Joel swivelled 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. "Lock arms!" he screamed. "We're going down!"

We tried, but the chopper kept bucking and shaking, with its turbines screeching, and the mainframe groaning as if it were being ripped apart, and Gordo started screaming something I couldn't understand, and I started praying we wouldn't explode on impact, and the ground was rushing up at us so fast you just had to grit 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 untangle 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 out and sprinting as fast as I could to get as far away from it as I could before it blew, and everyone was yelling "Move out!" or "Jesus Christ!" or "Son of a bitch!", but now that I think about it I doubt 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 broiled alive or end up with a back full of burning shrapnel, and then, all of a sudden, through the gagging 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, 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 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 shambles!

My heart was still pounding, but I was beginning to catch my breath. Everyone who had been on the ship suddenly started chattering like a bunch of wild monkeys—talking and swearing, hooting and hollering, shaking each other's hand and asking what had happened. I looked up, and there was the First Sergeant, bless his soul, bounding down the slope like a giant gazelle, heading right towards us, with poor Denny Wilson close behind him, loping along as fast as he could with the radio on his back, its antenna jiggling crazily over his head.

Then I heard the Captain asking if everybody was okay.

Miraculously, we were—all of us—just a little scared—scared shitless, actually—and wondering what had happened.

"Jesus, sir," the First Sergeant said, shaking his head in disbelief. He was puffing like an asthmatic rhinoceros. "I'll be a son-of-a-bitch if a 105 round didn't go off right underneath you. You looked like a ping-pong ball on a gusher. I thought for sure you'd bought it!"

"A 105 round!" Jack Hibbard said, incredulous. "What the Goddamn Hell is the Goddamn fucking artillery registering fire for while we're taking off from the perimeter?"

Good question. And our own Forward Observer was the man calling the shots.

"They figured we'd cleared the zone," Sergeant Espadrille said. He had a wry, almost sheepish grin on his face when he said it. Then he spit a huge wad of tobacco juice on the ground. Where he'd found the chaw, I couldn't say—maybe where he got his vodka—but if anyone could figure out what had happened, Sergeant Espadrille was the man. "We did a U-turn, didn't we?"

He was right. We'd done just that. We'd taken off, flown half a mile, done a big U-turn, and headed right back over the spot we'd just left. And our own FO, a man who should have known better, had called for another round. Once the battery fired it, they couldn't call it back.

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 leaders' 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 Gwin
S. Hamilton MA.
taught at Kents Hill

News from Home, 1991

"Dear Aunt Lois 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 pines 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 sat like a stone for hours. I remember. Anyhow, the children send love; it is bitterly cold today. Much love."

"Dear Cris, Robert is flying over there now, I know. How are you and the children getting along? I got the pictures; 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; he'll come home. Love to all."

"Dear Monica, How is Cris—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 eucalyptus everywhere. How are you, anyhow? How is the new job and what's up with you and Joe? The news is on . . . got 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 thaw! We were happy and giggling in the warm, steamy bathroom with tub 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 tank 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 Pixley
Orono
studies at UMO

Practicing for Eden

there's that fox again robin red
or are the robins fox red
they all seem to like the stirrings
in our thawing yard air weaving
with cruise missile winds from down east

we voted no who live with wild dogs and thrush
no testing over Maine but they worked
so well against Hussein million dollar smart
no feathers fur in their gardens left
only ash blood pain

Patricia Smith Ranzoni
Bucksport
is an 8th generation
Hancock city resident

The Limits of Technology

ON/OFF	The TV remote control 1	bolted to the bedside stand in this I-95 motel room 2	is programmed to perform 3
PLAY	its tasks & no more. 4	Play with it all I like, 5	it will not lead a revolution 6
RECORD	or call back from oblivion 7	the tenderness of a saint.	Its black & white buttons 9
REWIND	rubber-like	line up like dumb little 11	tombstones of obedient soldiers.
FAST FORWARD	If I unscrewed it 13	& bolted for the great outdoors 14	it would open no gates, 15
PAUSE	be the key to nothing but itself. 16	On a cold night in the forest 17	with nothing to eat 18
SLOW	& no fire to warm me 19	it would be as useless as a Roman coin. 20	It cannot hold 21
STOP	or comfort me 22	though I might scream all night long 23	for it to do so. 24
Functions		Channels	

Shape

Photographs
my brother
takes as art
often
hide a face
and if you're
caught
by his feel
for light
and line
you'll often see
afloat
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
too few
or not just right
yet his face
in the ward
from which they will not allow him leave
is sharp/clear
still we could read
no shape
we knew
gentle laughs and smiles
he wreathed in smoke

From my walls
the wash and dance
of grays
that are his prints
are mute

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

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

j. james daly
Springfield
enjoys bees and computers

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
Just a tiny dot of a pin prick
Of light.

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 wraps 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.

Liz Wright
West Buxton
is PhD student at
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

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 Groner Strasse, her rocking motion encouraged by the counterweighing 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, again and again, the imminency of heavy rains. As she passed Herr Kleck's bakery she did no more than shift her eyes. Herr Kleck 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 Kleck's eyebrows took flight, as if anticipating the four rye Brötchen and loaf of white bread that was Frau Spitzweg's regular wont. 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. "Wann es blitzt," she said to herself. When there's lightning. Then they'll notice. "Ja."

Frau Spitzweg turned from the crowded Groner Strasse onto the Kurze Geismar Strasse, where there was more room to maneuver. As soon as she did she spotted 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 fleshy 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 cloudburst 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 concurrence that a storm was indeed about to break upon them gave Frau Spitzweg a sense of vindication. She felt purged, as if a fever had broken.

Frau Huhn fell to her knees and began to gather up the still-wet pieces of the vacuum cleaner in her cleaning apron. 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 Silesia 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 recount water disasters, from the biblical deluge to the time before the war when the little Leine of Göttingen had overflowed its banks, swept over the flood plain, and risen to street level, until children were chasing ducklings 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 close attention to her friend's recollections and nodded aggressively, 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 flickered, 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 then, all of a sudden, it was as if the fabric of the heavens had been rent. The drops fell like dark slugs, bursting 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 seeking 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



Silvia Rike

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 stopped at Herr Kleck'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 swelled above and beyond the border, covering both Germanys, obscuring mere 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 thickset, 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 socialist 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. "Vorbei," pronounced Frau Huhn as she hopped 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. How 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 retraced her steps to Herr Kleck'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 impulse;
having 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 pad across seaweed, our feet all leathered.

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. I see it in her stance. Like any good opponent she preps 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 humped 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 me today. It looks like a tiny sponge budding on her face.

Sting rays, three feet long, cruise just off shore.

"Look. Oh, look." She stoops, reaching right behind my feet, in the first few inches of ocean. That tropical aqua ocean, washing its harvest of perished animals into Marian's hands.

This time it's a perfectly regular, fluffy, clean specimen that will fetch \$25 retail at Captain Nemo's market. We will each get about \$4 for it, if we split today. I think we should always split. Marian will not decide until we are nearly done if we are to sell separately or together. She asks me what we should do, then she decides.

The sponge looks something like I think Marian's brain might, if it were stiffer. And laying on a bed of seaweed.

Miniscule sand flies would light on the brain-sponge. I would poke it with my toe. It would roll over on the incline of the sand.

"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."

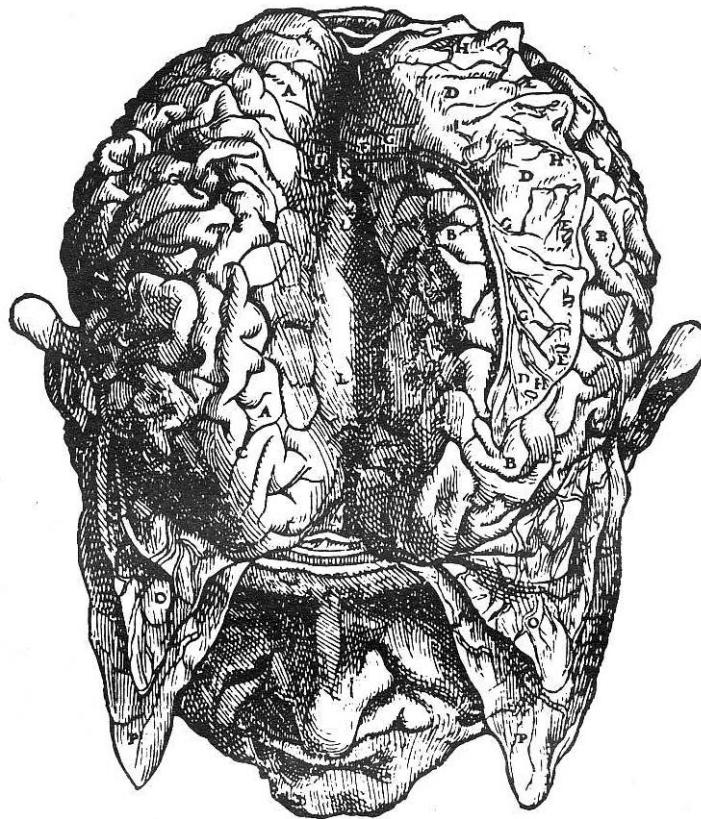
"I'm collecting coral twigs today. I don't like brains."

"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 whizzing 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 Monty 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.



From Andreas Vesalius' *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*
(The Structure of the Human Body), 1543, drawn
either by Titian or his students.

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 coarser on the way back, even to 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 squint 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

is mostly writing now.

Light Verse

Blinking Motel Sign

Pull down the shades
Go to the ice machine in
the hall Try to remember
her name, the girl in
the room When did you
marry her?

Was it 14 years ago
in San Diego or
was it 14 hours ago
in Reno?

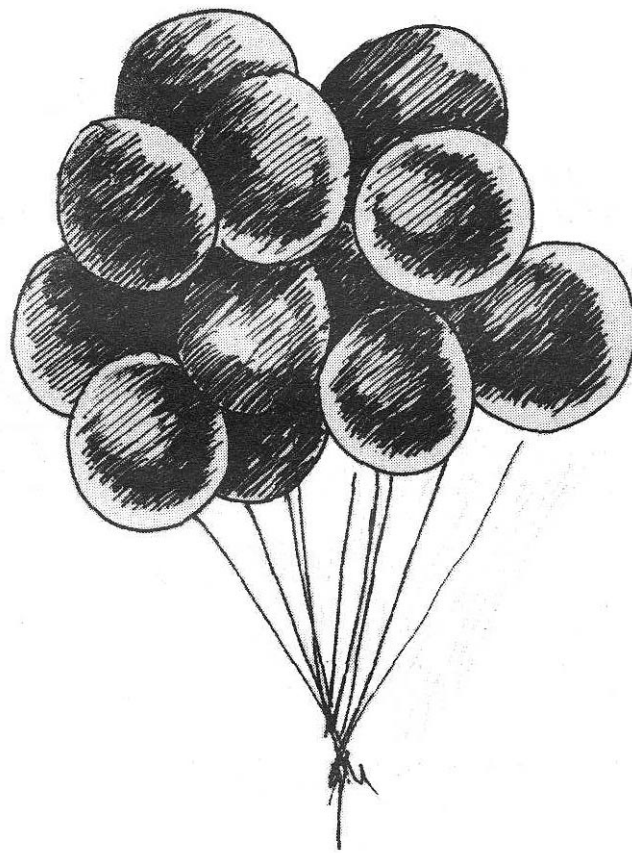
Or was that her,
the one standing alone
there
under the blinking
motel sign?

Pat Murphy
South Portland
runs Yes Books

New Year's Eve, Augusta, ME

My sinuses are stuffed,
and there's a fog in my brain.
Oh, how I wish the aspirin would work,
and my cavities drain.

Josh Nadel
Augusta
teaches at UMA



Balloon Stories

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 grew larger. "You want a new pair of boots?" she sneered.

"But I need them, too," the man said. "These are too hot in the summer, and they hurt my feet when I wear them all day."

The woman sneered again. "And you 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.

Giggling like children, they left the store.

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

A Large Policeman, A Small Boy, And A Very Large Woman

A small boy stood on a streetcorner. A large policeman approached. "You're loitering," said the policeman. "I'm sorry, but you'll have to move along."

"But I'm waiting for my mommy," said the small boy.

"I'm sorry . . ." said the policeman.

The boy gazed up at him. "If I had a daddy," he said, "I wouldn't want him to be like you."

The policeman grew smaller. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"I'd want my daddy to be nice," said the boy.

By this point, the boy and the policeman were approximately the same size. A beautiful woman approached. The policeman gazed up at her.

"I love you," said the policeman to the beautiful woman. "I want to marry you and be a nice father to this little boy."

"Fuck you, kid," said the beautiful woman to the policeman. She was ten feet tall, but skinny. She took the little boy's hand and hauled him away down the street.

By the end of the year, the policeman had grown back to about half his original size. He never saw the little boy or the beautiful woman again.

Hans Krichels
Ellsworth
is ten feet tall but skinny

A man going to sleep
is putting on his fake eye lids
for the night. They are prescription
eyelids for his nightmares.
He can stare into them at night
and have pleasant dreams.
This night they are westerns.
He is a cowboy.
The desert is pavement
and the cacti are made of red jello.
There is a band of Indians surrounding him.
He burps and they scurry away.
He walks next to his horse through this place
because the sky is low.
A mile back he hit his head on a cloud.
There is no sunset.

J.F. Knowles
Kittery
Works in a bookstore
and on a novel

Reformed

My neighbors called me lazy
when I wouldn't cut my grass
but environmental consciousness
put me in vogue, at last.

Richard Peek
Washington
is a truck driver and journalist

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 soured milk. As the nuns patrolled the lunch room, 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.

Everyday it was the same thing. Spam. With margarine. Whenever Janine would complain, her mother would say, "And what's wrong with Spam? It's cheap, it tastes good, and it's meat."

But Janine didn't think it tasted good. To her, it was all salt and gristle.

"Would you rather have Vienna Sausages?" her father would ask. "Or Kipperred Snacks?"

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

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

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

"Dried fish sticks," Janine said later.

"Rubbery carrots," 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 anything Janine had ever seen.

The bread was brown with little dark flecks. There was a slice of creamy, white cheese. "And not American cheese," Janine would say later. "That cheese had holes." And some kind of thin, reddish meat. Janine and Shannon just stared.

"What's the matter?" Linda asked.

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

"Pastrami and cheese on rye. Why?"

"I was just wondering," Janine answered, not having an idea what either pastrami or rye were.

"Want a bite?" Linda smiled, holding out the sandwich. She was not a pretty girl. Her brown hair was too thin and straight and she had too many freckles, but she had blue eyes and a nice smile.

Janine shrugged. "O.K."

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 smiled. "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 going to come over."

Memere Bourque lived just next door, in a grey 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 by 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 mother said. But I bet it 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 it worked out great. Before it was Shannon and Debbie and me and somebody always felt left out."

"Well, three is a crowd."

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

"A casserole."

"What kind?"

"Noodles, Veg-all and hamburg," 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 this 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. "Guess what?" Janine asked.

"What?" 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."

Memere dropped her doughnut and coffee splattered onto the grey Formica table. "Ah, *bah mot dits!*" 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 sniffed. "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 crawled into Memere's small, wide lap. As Memere 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 oil-stained 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 squirmed in bed and her father sat down next to her. "I wonder what it's like to be a Protestant?" Janine said.

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."

"Goodnight," she answered.

Janine's father left, leaving the door open wide enough so that the light from the hall shined 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 pâté. "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 pâté, 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."

"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."

"Oh, Memere!" Janine said and Memere winked at her.

But one thing Janine's mother didn't like about her friendship with Linda Davidson was the way Janine just picked at her food at supper time. Janine had never really liked her mother's cooking, but until she met Linda, she hadn't realized how good food could be. Now, she could hardly stand to look at the slimy, canned spinach sitting in a green mound on her plate, much less eat it. Or the canned asparagus. The main meals were a little better, but somehow the American Chop Suey was always watery and bland and the pork chops tough and dry. All she could think about, as she pushed her food into little piles, was how good Linda's sandwiches were.

"What's the matter with you?" Janine's mother asked one night while they were eating supper.

"I'm just not very hungry," Janine said. "You give me too much."

"Maybe Janine should serve herself," her father said. "Since you insist that she clean her plate."

"Maybe Janine should stop eating Linda Davidson's fancy sandwiches." Her mother lit a cigarette and closed the lighter with a snap. Janine just stared at her. "You didn't think I knew, did you? Well, for one thing you're always going on and on about how much you like Linda's sandwiches. For another, Shannon told her mother that Linda gives you half of her sandwich and you give her half of yours."

That little snitch, Janine thought.

"Anyway, if you don't start eating better at supper, I'll have you take hot lunch. Not even Linda would trade you for what the school serves. And just keep in mind that Linda's father is a College Professor and your father is a mechanic."

Janine could not see what her father's job had to do with food, but her mother's voice was sharp and shrill. Janine felt her eyes sting and she looked down at her plate as a tear slid down her cheek.

"Now, Alphonsine," her father said. "You're making too much of this."

"No, I'm not!" her mother said, stabbing out her cigarette in the ashtray. "I don't care if she plays with a Protestant but I won't have her turning her nose up at my food! I work hard to fix a good meal. It's like a slap in the face when she just pushes it around her plate." She shook her finger at Janine. "No more trading with Linda!"

Janine's head came up with a snap. "But mom!"

"No, buts!"

"Please!"

"No!"

Janine gripped the edge of the table. "Maybe Linda's mother could teach you how to cook." The words burst out before she could stop them and, "Go to your room!" her mother shrieked.

"Thanks a lot," Janine said to Shannon as they walked to school the next day. She almost didn't walk with her but deep down, she knew Shannon didn't mean to get her in trouble, and in the end, decided she would.

"For what?"

"For telling your mom that Linda and I trade sandwiches. Your mom told my mom and now I can't anymore."

Shannon stopped and traffic roared past them. "Janine, I never knew that your mother would do that. Honest!"

"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 Mister Donut, they could see Linda waiting for them on the edge of the play ground. She was jumping up and down and 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?"

"Because she's mad that I like your food better than hers."

"You could ask," Linda said, twining her arms through theirs.

"All right," Janine said. "But I know what she's going to say."

"No." Janine's mother sat at the kitchen table. Janine stood before her and she twisted the skirt of her navy blue uniform. "Absolutely not!"

Memere Bourque sat at the other end of the table. "Why not?" she asked. "As you said, with Pope John things are changing. You don't think they'd serve her meat, do you? They must know she's Catholic."

"It's not the meat I'm worried about," her mother snapped. "I'm afraid that if she goes over there for dinner, she'll never eat what I cook. She's bad enough as it is just on sandwiches. Imagine what she'd be like after a full meal."

"But, Alphonsine," Memere said. "She eats my cooking all the time and she still eats what you cook."

Alphonsine's head was high. "Your cooking," she said, "is not anything like Linda's mother's cooking. Don't forget, Linda's father is a Professor at Colby."

"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?" Linda said, 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?"

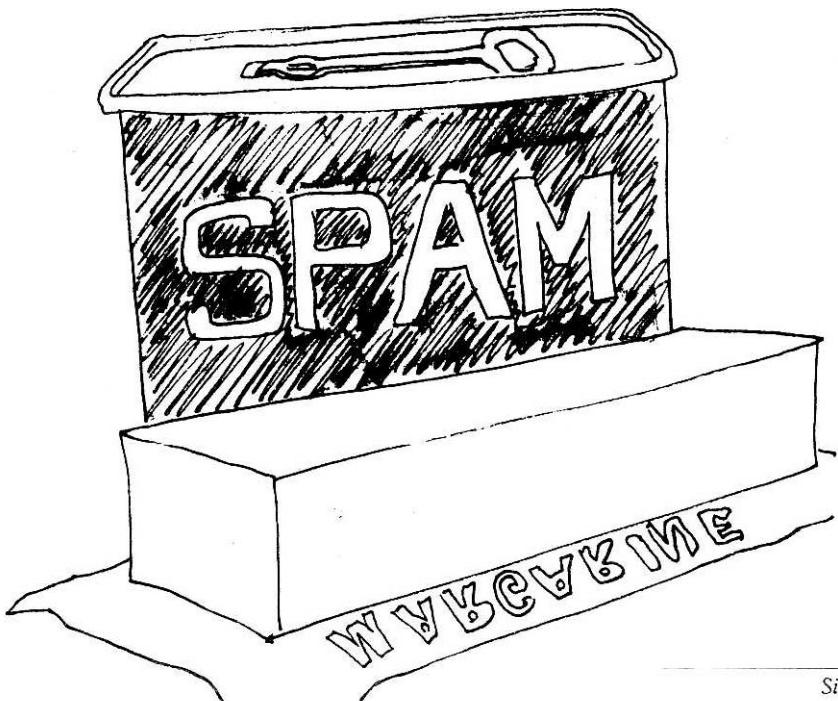
"Oh, around 6:30 or 7:00. But I was hoping you could come over earlier, so we could play."

"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."

-Ugh, 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 sure 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 wasn'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?"

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-you. I'll call you if I can't come. Okay?"

"Sure," Shannon said. "Anything you say."

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 knew it 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 Janine 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?" Janine wondered. "Big sin or small?" And she thought about the black mark on her soul.

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 door bell.

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."

"My parents are out," Janine answered. "I was at my memere's."

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 fit 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 squealed, 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.

"There," Linda's mother said. "The cocoa's done. Would you like a mug too, Linda?"

"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.

Janine blushed. "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 popcorn, 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 never seem to get anything done around the house."

"That's all my mother ever does," Janine said. "Clean. Clean. Clean."

"Speaking of cleaning," Linda's mother said. "I've got to clean up the kitchen. Do you two want to play for a bit before it's time for Janine to go?"

Both girls nodded and Linda said, "Come on, I'll show you my room." Janine would have had fun, if her stomach hadn't felt so full and heavy. Linda's

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 eat 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."

"No," Janine said, swallowing. Her mouth had an odd, sour taste. "Shannon's mother didn't drive me home."

Memere put her hands on her hips. "Well, who did then?"

Janine opened her mouth, but instead of answering, her stomach retched and she was sick, gloriously sick, all over her memere's shining floor.

"*Mon Dieu!*" Memere shrieked as vomit hit the floor and splattered her apron, the cup boards, and the refrigerator.

With a gasp, Janine gripped the table. Her throat burned, her eyes watered, and her nose was running.

In a flash, Memere had her out of the kitchen and into the bathroom. Shannon's mother was forgotten. Memere washed Janine's hands and face and helped her into her pajamas. She tucked Janine into the bed in the spare bedroom and put a bucket by her side.

"Poor babe," Memere said, stroking Janine's clammy forehead. "Call me if you need me."

Janine just nodded. She was too weak to talk. Memere left and Janine lay in the dark room. As Janine fell into a queasy sleep, she could hear the sound of running water and of her memere scrubbing the kitchen. -Poor Memere, Janine thought.

Janine closed her eyes and tried to sleep but couldn't. All she could hear was the sound of Memere scrubbing. She opened her eyes and shivering, climbed out of bed. She tip-toed through the small living room and into the kitchen. Memere was on her hands and knees, washing the floor.

"Memere?" Janine called. Memere didn't hear her. "Memere?" Janine called again, this time louder.

Memere jumped and turned her head. "What are you doing out of bed?"

"I have to tell you something."

"Can't it wait until tomorrow?"

"No," Janine said. "It can't"

"All right. All right." She grunted as she struggled to her feet. "*Mon Dieu!* I'm not getting any younger." 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 against her warm side.

"Memere?" she said. "I've been bad."

"Aside from throwing up all over my kitchen, what have you done?"

"I went to Linda Davidson's for supper."

"Linda Davidson the Protestant? How come? Especially since your mother told you not to."

"I just had to see what they ate for supper. Linda's sandwiches are so good."

"And was supper good?"

"It was wonderful. But I ate too much. That's why I was sick."

"And Linda's mother brought you home afterwards." Janine nodded. "I see. It begins to make sense now. And you tricked me into thinking you were going over to Shannon's house for dinner. That wasn't very nice now, was it?"

Janine shook her head, pressed her face against her memere's soft arm, and began to cry. "There, there. *Beau babe*. Don't cry. Memere's not mad at you. But what you did was not good."

Janine gulped. "I know."

"On the other hand," Memere said. "Your mother, she is not such a good cook. She keeps a clean house. But her cooking! *Mon Dieu!*" Memere shuddered.

"Who can blame you for liking Linda's sandwiches?"

"Are you going to tell Mummy and Daddy?" Janine asked.

Memere shook her head. "No. This one is between you, me and God." By the couch, there was a small table with a drawer. Memere opened the drawer, pulled out a black case and opened it. Janine saw the gleam of crystal as Memere lifted out her best rosary, the one with the sterling silver cross.

"Here," Memere said, handing her the rosary. "You go to bed and say this, all the way through. And no falling asleep until you're done!"

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 function after all,
or that's what she insisted on 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 blameless.
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



Leaping the Bear

Drawing by Robert Shetterly

Leaping the Bear

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

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 splatted 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 scaring up a hiker
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 grandsires
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
edits & teaches at UMO

The Light on the Porch

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

[I]
Was it the black labrador whose eye
bulged from the socket,
that I lifted from the icy 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 leapt, as he always did,
off the embankment to cross the road
as he always did and trot up to the light
on the porch. He heard tires muted
by snow and felt his sure nails
slip on ice and strove to leap, one foot
after another, from the tires.
He had time to leap. We all do. We quick ones
are seen in its high 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 let him run."
In an hour I went out again,
bundled and scarved 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, Ducheon'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 sissy
get up..." Shoved down I would lurch 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 huge frame
toward a fleet back and slammed,
full bodied, into him, straight on,
my helmet crushed into his chest.
He laid immobile, unable to lift his head,
beneath me. I prayed to myself
a prayer of a linebacker

"Do not, God, let him get up."
Ducheon rested his large palm
on my shoulder pad
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 rests him gently
on the ground. His eyes fix 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
drums 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 dug 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.

**Bruce Spang
Readfield**
works in the Gardiner
School system

Mincemeat

One fat deer
hangs by the hoofs
from a beam
in Nana's barn,
its eyes wide open
and dull like marbles.
Dad stands proudly
next to it,
he grins as
Grampy takes 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 drips
near my feet.
Dad laughs and
tells of his stalk,
and Nana plans
her mincemeat pies.

Michael Gregg Michaud
Los Angeles, CA
is an Augusta 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
pressed into what was left of ice crust
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 lust. Patty's Partyline, a pretty
production vamped 900 numbers over eyes
that energize. Another title unreadable.
The third—Group Grope—froze him hard
like envy. "Animals! What do they know?"
But curiosity of the groin gets to the best.
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 jogger/poet

In My Mind

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

Glenn Frankenfield
E. Wilton
teaches at UMF

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 I can go about my 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 steaming 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 Jonathon 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 grouchy 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 that 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 first of several important poetry readings at leading universities!"

I've nothing against people showing off and letting others know that one is getting along reasonably in life, but when a person is just full of himself and shows no real interest in others—unless they write poetry—count me out as convivial Virgil.

"I heard some of that university crap myself when he threw his satchel in the corner," I reminded Betty, "and I wasn't impressed. Not to mention that it also came rolling out in between gasps while gulping down half of that raspberry pie you were planning to have for supper."

"I have a question for you."

"What's that?" I asked.

"How many Harrisons do you know who have spent a weekend with the Robert Creeleys and once shared the same platform reading poems with Robert Duncan?"

"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 Peeleys 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 front.

"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 next 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. I had four estimates to get out for possible contracts, and I 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 hens who meet and read to each other every third Thursday of the month in one of the homes of the twelve 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 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.

I glanced up and saw Betty's puzzled look.

"William Carlos Williams," said the nephew with the patience of a grandparent telling a child how the shoelace is tied.

Not only did our houseguest make the irritating sound of plaster-chomping rats as he gnawed his way through our groceries, but he had another bad habit, in addition to eating, and this got under my skin worse than ringworm.

"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 blond beard 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 Dicks, Joes, Bobs, Vals, and Peters was unpacked.

I don't know if Stompt read 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 quote 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 for 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 Poughkeepsie, New York, are as boring to me as the fine print in a purchase agreement for a cement mixer.

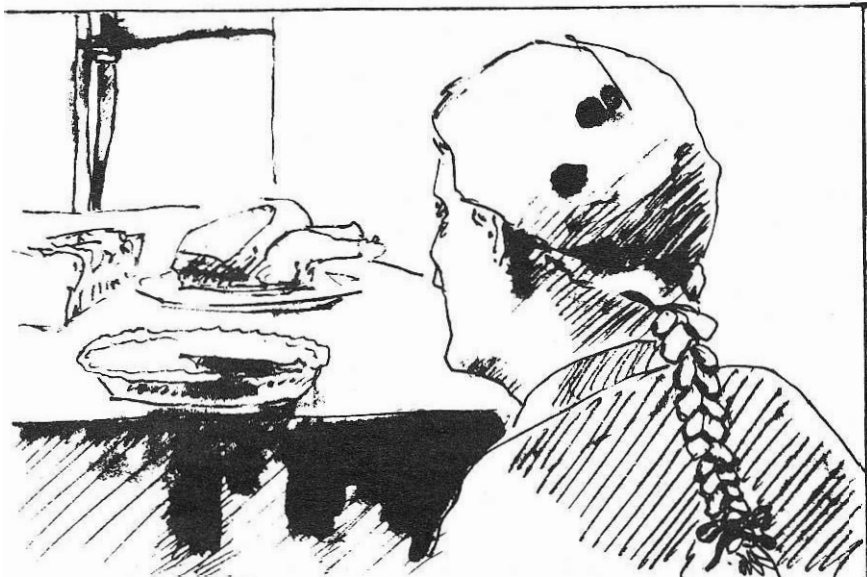
Listening to Stompt read his poems wasn't the ordeal I thought it would be. Of course it was no outing with a loaded picnic hamper, but I was able to keep the adding machine running. Stompt read his poems slowly and he never raised or lowered his voice. They came out in the same monotonous way from beginning 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 *tour de force!*"

Had I a hundred tongues, a hundred lips, a throat of iron and a chest of brass, I could not tell
[of] men's countless sufferings. Virgil (70-19 B.C.), *The Aeneid*



Silvia Rike

Betty is always poking a few French expressions into people's faces when she doesn't understand what is going on or being said.

"Gary was the first to suggest that I develop the sequence."

I had only to wait two or three moments before Betty asked her question.

"Gary?"

"Why Snyder," replied Stompt. "And Allen was terribly thrilled when he heard I had completed them!"

Then for some reason, perhaps out of pity, he spared his aunt from asking.

"Of course," said Stompt, "I meant Ginsburg."

I didn't say much to our American poet that first day, and I was mercifully called away just before supper when one of the generators turned temperamental on our sidewalk job. By the time the machine was repaired and I returned home to view Old Mother Hubbard's refrigerator and the remnants of a meal, Stompt was meditating on the floor of the living room and making a hellish hum that would encourage the howling dogs of any neighborhood.

The two of us didn't get around to exchanging ideas until the next morning at breakfast. I had several early telephone calls to make, and by the time I got to the ransacked table young Stompt was probing his yellow bicuspid with a toothpick and finishing the last of the cocoa and marshmallows.

"Well, Uncle Virgil," said the poet in a tone of voice that suggested it was time I was given a place in the sun, "what's new in the world of sidewalks?"

I ignored the professional dig and grabbed my eggs over and bacon that Betty handed me.

"Don't call me uncle," I told him. "I'm Virgil to you, or V.H. if you prefer. I never did cotton to the idea of unclehood, and I'd rather not begin this morning."

Stompt giggled like I had just told a smutty story to the boys down at Slow Mama's Cafe.

"I hope you are aware of the significance of the name *Virgil*," he said after the fun was over. "It isn't everyone who is so honored."

I don't like it when people get personal. Friends and my Monday night poker pals can tease me all they want and ask questions of a private nature. But to put distance between us, I said the first outrageous thing that entered my head.

"I was named after my mother's brother, Virgil Norris," I told him. "He eventually ran off with a young chambermaid from the local hotel and left Aunt Ida with five kids and a social disease."

"Virgil!" said Betty.

Uncle Virgil and Aunt Ida had only one child, George, and clap and running away was unlikely as my uncle was a stuffy Methodist minister all his poor adult life.

Like most self-centered people, Stompt was no exception—say anything to him and he would believe it from the ground up.

"My yes!" he said shaking his head and swaying the pigtail. "What would we humans be without our dalliances?"

I didn't say anything as I nibbled some bacon.

"Yes Virgil," Stompt began all over, "it might amaze you to know that your name comes from the great Roman poet Publius Vergilius Maro."

I wasn't amazed or interested.

"How can you possibly remember such details?" asked Betty proudly from the direction of the stove.

"70 B.C. to 19 B.C.," said Stompt, knowing he had a good thing going.

"Truly amazing!" said Betty.

"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 buys 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 graduated 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.

Leave it to Betty to spill every bean in the pot. She never did have appreciation for joshing.

"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 gulps of coffee, I left them. They didn't notice me leaving the kitchen, and they probably didn't hear the telephone ringing when 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 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 shirtsleeve. 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 squeaky as the hinges of hell.

"I suppose 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 winning pickle 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 bash 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 would quote a poem; if someone yawned, he might tell a story about some slumber party after a poetry reading; even a toilet swaying into his line of vision would remind him of poets suffering from stomach disorders.

I 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.

"Sweeten 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 dish to dish he traveled, scooping and scraping, and like some instrument keeping time with his gulps and chews was a hum, much lower in tone than the ungodly drone I heard from the living room the night before, but rather like a magneto about to break down.

Sweating and full, we got up and filed back into the living room and collapsed in our chairs. Betty is a good cook, but add an inspired one like Laura, and the *Rollaids* and *Tums* people start dancing in the streets.

"You girls are something else," said Ed.

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

This 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."

From the kitchen came the depressing sound of more rats ruining 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 scampering 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.

Betty opened the door and led them down the walkway to their car. Stompt stood in the doorway blocking my view.

"You folks come back soon," he shouted. "Real soon!"

It was then I decided to be around in the morning and to say farewell to Stompt. I had planned on disappearing before breakfast. But not now. I would smile and look at him and be the perfect host throughout the ordeal of bacon, eggs, toast and coffee. Then I would see Stompt to the door with Betty, and at the last moment, I would reach into my pocket and pull out two twenty dollar bills. I would fold them slowly so Betty could see, and I would say to Stompt:

"Something to help you along, Jonathan." And I would say no more. Betty would have to figure that one out for herself.

**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 trumped 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,
My wife's not here to watch the sheep.*

**Arnold Perrin
Union**
works at the State Prison

Light Verse

Clam Dig Paradox

*With feet splayed-out and set for strength,
With clamhoe held in steady hand,
I place the prongs 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 squirt,
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

*"Cleans like a white tornado."
—Mr. Clean ad*

*Her kitchen was impeccably clean.
The murderer had left the scene.
Wind can drive straw through steel girders.
'Twas the mop handle that skewered her.*

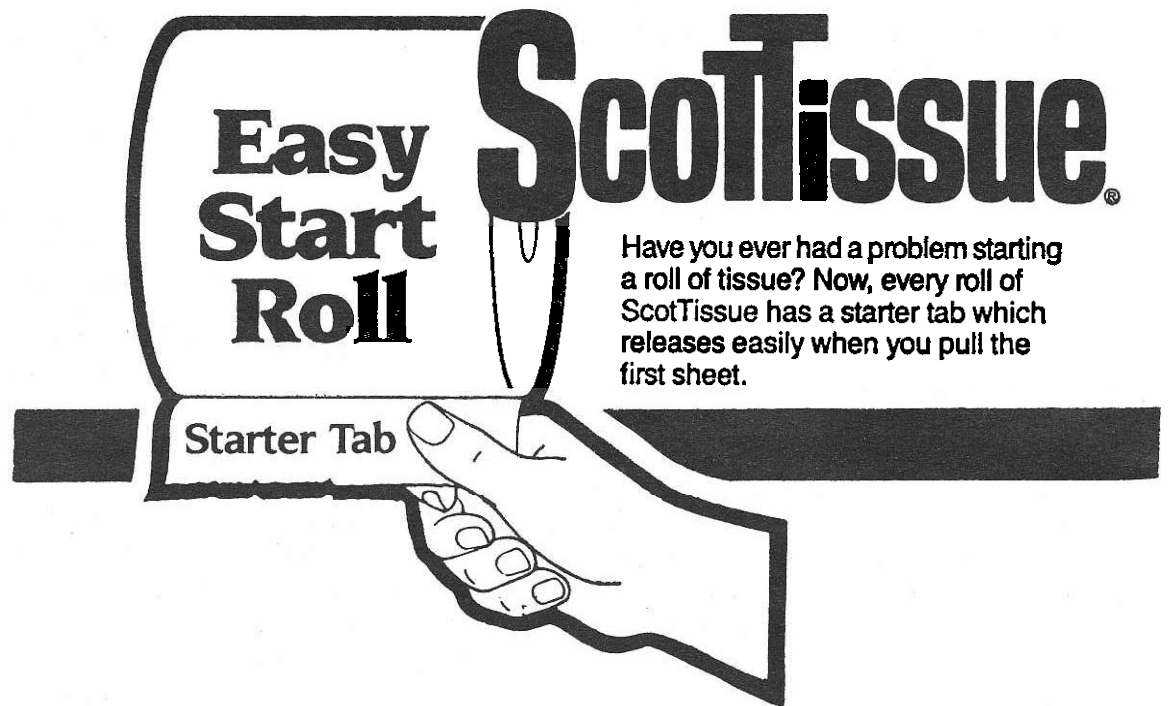
**Douglas Woodsum
Ann Arbor, MI & Cape Elizabeth**
is working on an MFA

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 *with*.
Nouns are loveable things—
a *he*, a *she*, a *thang*.
Think about adjectives,
and how they make us sweaty:
attractive, *intriguing*, *seductive*.
Words like that mean we're lookin' for it
Grammar is the rulemaker, the *dominatrice*.
There's a correct way to use the tongue,
and a colloquial way, and ways that are simply naughty.
Where would we be, if in certain cases,
we couldn't let our modifiers dangle?
Or have an infinitive split and lovely before us?
How loveless, how dull, our lives
if our principal's claws are always subordinate?
Experience in love makes one surer in grammar—
the antecedent would agree.
Pick a subject, choose gender,
give it action, description, and time.
Choose a verb, a copulative one,
many, few are stimulating.
Relax, don't tense.
Certain moments expressed in love
translate well into time.
Think of the future and all it will bring.
The conditional could be frustrating,
for you would if you could if she'd let you,
yet the present progressive is pure enjoyment:
Ooh, what you're doing!, then *I'm coming, where're you going?*
The mood at that moment is indicative of pleasure,
not subjunctive, *perhaps, if it be true, maybe*.
At times, commands become imperative:
Don't stop!, *Turn over!* *Move a little to the right.*
Verbs denote action, motion, feeling.
If it's gotta be in the past, use *used to*. . . .
It's imperfect, but repeated and continuous.
The direct object of your love may complement you indirectly.
You may utter ejaculations: *Alas, alack!* or *Ohmigod!*
In your *Billet-doux*, penmanship will woo.
Punctuation—a dash of rhythm, make parts parallel.
Spelling? (Well, you need to spell yourself.)
An adjective is like a woman—
usually followed by something solid you didn't expect.
Of all the parts of speech,
the most abreast 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 interrogative around my colon.*
You might respond, *You're a semi-colon!*
And she: *You're the half-ass, you fool,*
Let me italicize 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 sez,
in your own ellipses. . . .

Duff Plunkett
Washington, D.C.
graduated from UMO



Man Dies While Trying to Start New Toilet Paper Roll

—tabloid headline

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.

Will science ever catch up
With the mortality rate?
The "easy start" roll was invented,
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 Dundoorveen 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 hitching rides from Rabat the entire morning. He'd been traveling by thumb and foot for months—originally from Tunisia, 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. And 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'd 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 came to North Africa, then in the late 1960s, to loll 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 fellow hitcher—particularly since he spoke English. He was tall and lean, so much so that his bones seemed to protrude at his elbows and knees, nearly popping through the rich material of his fancy jacket and tan, corduroy jeans. As we talked, I observed that his face was pock-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 difficulty 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 those Moroccan police in Tangier did to me because of my hair," he continued without laughing any more but in a voice of utter amazement. "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 say to hell with Morocco and go to Tunisia. 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 rains," said Richard gesturing toward the sky. "Maybe we walk to Tangier, eh? Not too bad. You know, I walked half the way here. Those mountains near the Algerian border—listen, I tell you . . ."

And Richard began to talk rapidly, one word falling after another, rushing as if he might never speak again. His eyes glinted, and he waved his arms. He paced, stood still, paced. At times his voice seemed self-hypnotic, calming him and then 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 daze. I kept falling asleep or thinking I was asleep. But you see, I couldn't sleep. Someone was following me. Ever since I'd stopped in 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 to run. 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 to voices. 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.

"They were getting closer, they were all around. And I was running. Slowly. Jerky, at first. Then faster. But the voices kept telling me to run faster and faster, to fly, to soar. They made fun of me, going on about wings, how some way I might get wings to fly. If I could get wings, they tormented, just for 10 minutes, I could get out of the mountains and into Morocco, into Oujda where I could hide and no one could smell me any more. They kept going back to the wings, insisting that someone had always given me wings to fly away, to escape. Saying that I wasn't moving as quick as I should.

"I kept tripping. Mountains wouldn't leave, their rocks kept biting my shoes, punching my knees. Trees grew in my path. Night poured ink on itself. Wind licked my ears and pulled my hair. Only 20 kilometers to the border and then not much further to Oujda. But I couldn't dump those voices. They were getting louder and louder."

A car pulled up beside us. Where were we going? No good. They were headed for Tetuan. Richard never noticed. He paced back and forth talking to himself, his face contorted into contours of an agony that I knew was beyond my imagination. I stepped back toward him. He suddenly realized that I'd not been there, seemed perplexed for a moment, but then continued his story, at times, in a bizarrely lyrical fashion.

"The mountain cold was falling harder, covering me, deep down grabbing my lungs and pressing them together so they burned back up through my throat, and I fell to the ground coughing—coughing up purple blood until I knew the pack heard me, smelled me better than ever. But I wouldn't move, I couldn't move. I wanted the cold to wrap around me, twist my lungs and parch my face. Then let them come and rip my flesh and tear my eyeballs. I'd never know. How could I? Everything would be gone, and they'd all be mad. No good for them because the blood would not be hot and the screams no more than ideas.

"Still, those blasted voices came right back and told me to try. That I couldn't sit there and wait. They were softer and almost coaxing, explaining that they wanted to help. The boarder is only 10 kilometers now, Richard, they persisted, and since you started it all, you've got to finish it.

"No stars that night, no moon. Darkness blacker for its self-spinning clouds. I knew I'd done something awful at that café in Marnia. Then I was running again.

"Sick, sick, sick. All I could think, all I could feel. Don't know why. Enjoyed it, maybe? Sometimes it fit, sometimes not. I'd been sick in Holland but I'd been sicker since I'd left. They were angry in Marnia, real pissed. I'd forgotten all about Ramadan, the Moslem holy month. Hell, I could get well in Sweden, and that's where I was going.

"But the voices didn't agree, and they came at me screeching that I wasn't sick, just stupid. See, they said, see; look at you, you are running again. If you were so sick, you couldn't run, and your pursuers would have been upon you long ago with their beautiful shredding fury. Please run, Richard, they urged. Don't think about the wings. We should have never mentioned them. Don't think about anything except your legs. Move them, one, then the other. Cut the night with them. Sear the rock with them. Mold the ground with them.

"But the growling loudness was gaining, and the platinum-spiked cold was slicing my lungs, ripping my bowels. Then the voices pushed nearer, were hovering just above and yelling how stupid I was. Stupid, Richard, they carped, you screw up. Just a bowl of soup and a pipe. Thick, brown, cumin-flavored soup and one qif-filled pipe. The first sacred, the other forbidden. And they kept repeating it all over and over so many times that it began to seem that the voices were me pounding my own ears.

"From somewhere the wind blew the sky clear. I saw a star and for some reason made a wish. I felt the border must be near. The voices had faded, yet I could still hear them whispering at me, hissing that my enemies were moving faster than I was and if I had time to turn around, I could see their speckled faces, long snouts and yellow eyes.

"I didn't turn around, not at all, and then I spotted the border sign. Oujda—that way—five kilometers."

And that was all. Richard became silent. Not a sound anywhere except the wind which was blowing even stronger and carrying a light mist from the ocean.

I started to speak, to ask Richard about the voices, but something about him, needless to say, made me uneasy.

He had begun shuffling his feet, shifting his weight from one foot to another. There was a glow to his eyes now, bright and burning like the eyes of a cat on the prowl.

No car had passed since the one offering a ride to Tetuan. We were completely alone as he stood there shuffling, and I began to feel like screaming. But instead I said, "I'm going to start walking, Richard. There's nothing else to do."

"No," he said. "Don't."

"Why?"

"I want to stay here. I want you to stay with me."

"Richard, I have to be in Tangier by this evening."

"Don't go—I'm warning you!"

I began backing away from him. He did not move. The guy had freaked out. That journey through the mountains, plus the qif, had blasted his brain. He needed help, someone to stay with him, to make sure that he didn't harm himself or anyone else. But just then, I was not the helping kind. I was having too many problems with myself, and that came first. Altruism had never been one of my attributes. Yet, in a way, I felt a

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.

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 young man back there? Was he with me? No. Besides, I said, he was bound for Tetuan.

**C. Walker Matson
Troy**
is a free-lance writer

Odds and Ends

Already burnished
a ceremonial bronze,
the tardy oak leaf,
cued by the gale's
ending rattle, abandons
its roots to spiral
one last whimsical
heavenward tack until,
succumbing to gravity,
returns its mite
to the teeming
debris below.

**Farrell Davisson
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.G.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**

Crow

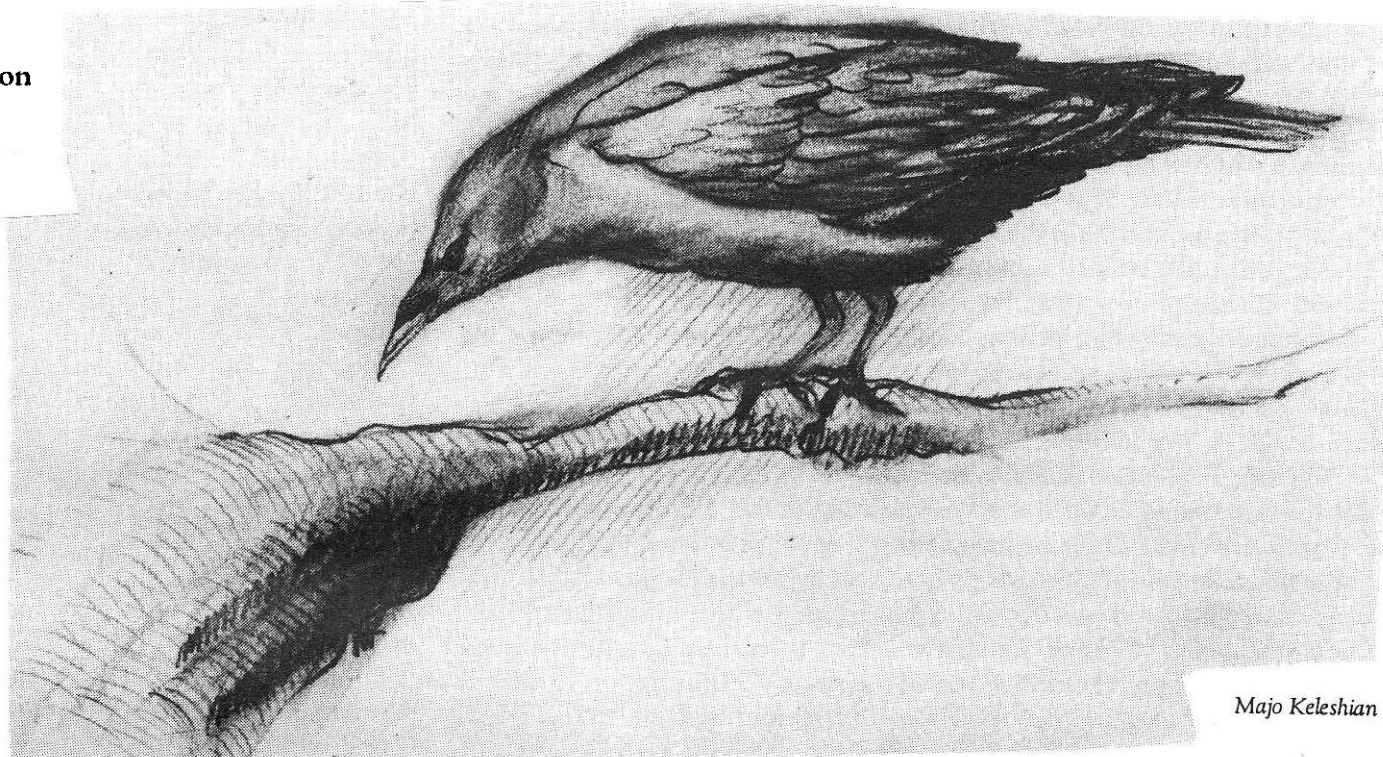
Black wings grasp the air.
The crow descends,
painting his silhouette
on the snow.

His prize:
a soft gray mouse,
discarded by the cat
at the end of the game.

Watching from the top of the food chain,
I ask who are we
that at the end
we flood the veins with formaldehyde,

lock the body in a strongbox,
hide it in the earth,
leaving only a stone marker
for the crow.

**Miles Robinson
Thomaston**
is a retired electronics engineer



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 stowed 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 Philco 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 Pittston, Maine over nineteen years ago, Molly said he couldn't stay but a little while. We was waiting our first baby then, but 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 his bed no more. Just like that. Grandpa told me he was brushing his teeth with baking soda when she said it, and that he just up and left. Grabbed his billfold, jumped into his pickup and drove straight from Caribou to our place in Pittston in his nightshirt. Said he didn't have no place else to go.

Effie'd 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 me and Molly'd bought him years before at L.L. Bean. The twine Effie'd used on the boxes was unraveled and all knotted up. Looked like she'd packed 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.

Anyhow, there was Grandpa in his pickup. Been dead since morning. Molly was the one found him lying there peaceful-like in bed, the gray 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 up his clothes was inside. All the knots'd been smoothed out.

Molly wanted to call Reverend Bush right off, but I wouldn't let her. Wasn't ready to have Grandpa taken from us and buried beside our babies. Molly was riled, but something kept niggling at me. Wanted to make things right for Grandpa. We was sitting at the kitchen table when the thought struck. Didn't know if I could tell Molly what it was, but she wormed it out of me. Always does.

See, I couldn't shake the hurt Grandpa'd felt those nineteen years. About Effie not wanting to share his bed and all. So I thought he deserved one last chance to share that bed before we buried him.

Molly was shook when I told her what we was going to do. Said God and Reverend Bush wouldn't like it. But I told her it couldn't be that bad, not with the feeling in my heart about it being so right.

Molly said she wouldn't go to Caribou with me, but at 11 A.M. she was waiting in the barn beside Grandpa's pickup. She'd packed a wicker basket with fried chicken and homemade coleslaw. Even threw in a couple of beers, though she don't think much of drinking.

"Joe," she said, "I don't agree with what you're doing, but he's your Grandpa, and someone's got to keep you out of trouble now that he's gone."

She climbed into the back of the pickup and gently pulled the gray wool blanket over Grandpa's face. The leaves was falling outside - all yellows, reds and oranges. They made a colorful bed around Grandpa. I pulled out some old wooden packing crates from the back of the barn and piled them around him so's no one could see him if they looked in back. Then we was off.

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 birch 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 right 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 never shut up.

The younger of the two boys sidled 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 stripped 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'd 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 run off fast. 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 limped 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 began to chaw 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. Greeted me at the door at three in the afternoon wearing a dirty bathrobe crawling with embroidered butterflies. Looked like a fat blowfly that'd just had its full.

I asked her how she was. "I could use some money," she whined. "Your Grandpa don't send me enough."

"Grandpa don't have much," I said. Bit 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 snarled, 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 farm below us. I doused the lights and coasted a couple hundred feet till we was overlooking the back. There was a bright spotlight on in front. Shone like a beacon over the leaves heaped high on the lawn. What used to be white paint chipped dingy gray off the house. A couple of flat tires hung from the corner porch rail, and a cracked 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 grandson, 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. Snuck to the side and peeked through a streaked living room window. Hard as it was to see, couldn't miss Effie's butterfly bathrobe. 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 snore after that.

I run back up 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 fetch 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 snuck '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 like she wished it was me she was lugging 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 braid 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 was ajar and opened easy when I pushed it with my knee.

"Who's there?" Effie shouted from downstairs.

Me and Molly stood shock-still. Seemed like a long time 'fore we heard Effie snore again.

We carried Grandpa into the bedroom and placed him on the unrumped 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 bent down, kissed Grandpa and smoothed out his white hair, being careful to pull the spread up over him again.

We snuck out of the bedroom. I looked back and whispered, "This one's for you, Grandpa."

"Thought you didn't talk to the dead," Molly muttered.

We skittered downstairs 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 broke alarm.

The spotlight come on. Effie burst from the house and barreled off the side of the porch. Jumped into an old Chevy that was missing its back bumper. Ground it into first gear and took off. Heard her shrieks all the way down the main road below us.

Me and Molly hustled into the house. Got Grandpa out a lot faster'n we got him in, that's for sure. My heart was pumping so hard I thought it'd bust. And when we carried Grandpa out under the spotlight, I saw that he looked at peace with himself. I glanced quick at Molly to see if she'd noticed, and all she did was smile at me like when we was young and I was courting her.

We put Grandpa back in the pickup, turning around and drove slow down the dirt road without any lights.

Molly was the first to see the headlights below us. Effie's Chevy shimmied and shook. Rocks flew up from under the tires. Behind her was a sheriff's car, its lights ablaze.

I pulled off the road and stopped. Me and Molly got out and run back up the side of the road to the farm and crouched behind some bushes.

Effie run up the porch steps in front of the deputy. I recognized him when he passed under the glare of the spotlight. Orville Marsh. A mean old weasel my Pa'd tangled with when he was growing up in Caribou.

Marsh run huffing and puffing after Effie, carrying his bulk like a sack of Maine potatoes. They dashed into the house. Took the screen door right off'n its hinges. Marsh's gun was drawn. Be a miracle, I thought, if the old coot didn't shoot himself. Heard them tromping up the front stairs.

In a few minutes, Marsh exploded out the front like a cannon ball, Effie right behind him screaming, "But he was there, I tell you! He was in my bed, Marsh, and I'm not going back in. Not till you check out the place."

Marsh made a run for his car and dove in. Effie latched onto his door handle and wouldn't let go for no account. Marsh beat on her hands with his fists. Effie hopped up and down, the butterflies jumping with her.

"Listen here, Effie," Marsh yelled. "There ain't no one in your bed! And don't you bother us no more tonight, you hear?" He made a U-turn and roared off.

Effie hollered after him, "Marsh! Marsh! You ain't heard the last of me yet," till he was out of sight.

Effie waddled over to the Chevy and squeezed in. Me and Molly heard two quick clicks. She'd locked the doors. Looked like she was there for the night.

We run back down the road to Grandpa's pickup. Molly got in the driver's side and I went back and pushed till we was a good distance away so I could start the engine without Effie hearing.

Me and Molly made it back to Pittston at 3:30 in the morning. Waited till 6 A.M. to call Reverend Bush.

He rushed out to see us and didn't much like it when he saw Grandpa.

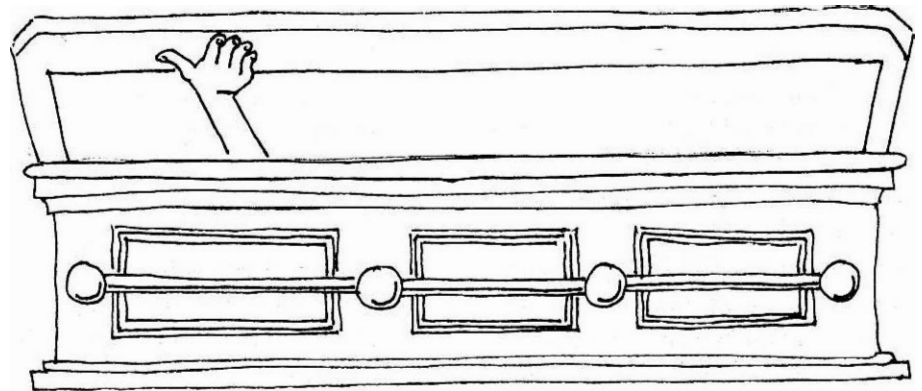
"Why didn't you call me sooner, Joe?" he asked. My mouth opened and closed like a fresh caught fish. Then Molly, who to my knowledge ain't never told a lie or stretched a truth, looked Reverend Bush bold in the face and said, "Well, Reverend, it's like this. We been gone. Joe had to deliver a scarecrow 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 patted his arm, offered him a cup of coffee, and took him into the kitchen.

We was saying our 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

is a secretary in a Portland law firm



Waking

Silvia Rike

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 —
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
clean and shiny like the floor.
It was quiet, nothing moved.
Everything was clean.
Against the back wall was a coffin,
laid across work horses, silver-grey.
I was not thinking of you.
It was no longer quiet, but silent.
When I lifted the lid
and you smoothly rolled out,
smiling with your soft face and large eyes,
I screamed and wet myself.
Your body moved like warm air.
You smiled at me
as though it was natural for me to lift that lid,
as though we prearranged our meeting.

George V. Van Deventer
Washington
hays, & runs a B&B



Delacroix, *Christ on the Cross*, courtesy The Walters Art Gallery

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 bursting forth, the lance stirring
in himself, point searching his short life.

The horses know. They sense the awful
moment that has fallen. They pull, and,
off-canvas, snort and buck against
their riders. Their strong bodies feel
the frailty of muscle and of bone.

That hand bothers me. How at the moment
of identification, as in saying "That man
is dead!" the consequence hits home.
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**

is chmn. of the English Department
at Saint Joseph's College

Two Poses

The distant river flows beneath its bridge,
Making a pretty scene. The camera sees
The vista from a high point on a ridge.
A woman, 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 photograph remade:
Her entire body droops; she's smiling; then,
She cocks her head and is a girl again.

**Thomas Carper
Cornish**
teaches at USM

At the Lake

Everything 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 fanned out like a mermaid's.
Coming back up toward the light
after diving deep
was close to flying.

I swam mostly near shore, slowly
head under, eyes open
in the small stretch of lake
between the shallows where minnows whisked
in and out
dozens at once
and the dropoff this side of the raft.

Musselshells, twigs, lucky stones
on the lake's bottom
glowed
green as Oz 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 waterlogged birch—when had its bark
last been papery?

At least it was firm underfoot.
At the lake's other end you could push an oar
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 feral look
as if accustomed
to being hunted,

a fox's face or rat's,
nose swept back
to narrow lashless eyes
the color of a muddy road.

His dull blonde hair
hung down in clumps
and his mouth pulled
back like a trap,

showing teeth. Undersized
and scrawny as
a chicken wing, he
wore the same plaid shirt

everyday, pulled outside
scuffed up dungarees.
I was new in class;
I didn't know his history

or why the others
and the teacher hated him.
Her name was Miss Thornton;
she was fat but very neat.

Her metal bracelets clanged
as she wrote across
our papers, sharp nose
sniffing everywhere,

black eyes excited
as a terrier's.
Miss Thornton was Superintendent
of the Sunday School

that I attended; one
Sunday that same year,
she gave out 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 Thornton knew
even though we knew

and Miss Thornton knew
He didn't have a handkerchief.
Lester was in the slowest
reading group so I never

heard him read but sometimes
Miss Thornton called on him
in math or social studies,
always so it seemed,

the hardest questions.
"Come on, Lester, think!"
Miss Thornton 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, sniffled
all the time. "Lester,

"blow your nose!"
Miss Thornton 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 Thornton.
Once in class
I raised my hand
when Miss Thornton

called on Lester
even though I didn't
know the answer but she
ignored me and mostly

I just pencilled
endless circles
on the desktop, glad
that those bright eyes

hadn't fixed 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 Rizzo Rizzo
was Lester growing old
but now I think that Lester
grew up tall and thin

and that when he was eighteen,
he touched a little girl
in places that
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
of cuffed steel

twenty-three hours
every day until
the other prisoners
heard what Lester did

and began to call him
skinhead and other names
which echoed down
the corridors

while they beat against
the bars, faces thrust
into the narrow
openings, clamoring,

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 barked out
their instructions
while Lester's cellmate
smashed his head

against the toilet
and raped him
with a toothbrush
and kicked him

in the scrotum 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
each 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

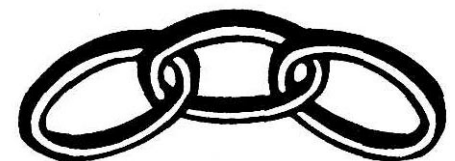
and swelled against the cold
gray walls and grew
and grew until it bulged
along the metal ceiling

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.



Lost Souls

"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 about 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.

"Wssst," Mary answered him and cracked the door. "Yes?" she said to the someone who was not much of a knocker. "What are you after?"

"It's a bit of a story," the young woman said through the cracked door. "Might I come in?"

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 then 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. Holiday," she corrected herself, "for All Soul's Day. It's to ready for the midterm exams really." When Mary said nothing, Ruth added, "I'm at Oxford. It's a college . . . in England."

"Is that so?" Mary said, "A college in England, James, did you hear?" James nodded. The sunlight slanting into the dim room sparkled over Mary's blue eyes.

Ruth turned her glossy, black purse over in her lap and then said, looking down as if addressing the purse, "I suppose you heard about Grampa's—Daniel's—passing on. It was about four years ago now."

"Christ be merciful, we did," said Mary.

"And Martin, and Joseph, and Charles," James said bumping the front legs of his chair down on the floor. Ruth startled at the thump, knocking her clutch to the floor. James rose, and picked it up, dusting it off on his pants leg before handing it back to her. "Might I get you some whisky neat?" he asked. His tufted eyebrows lifted quizzically.

Ruth glanced at her wristwatch, then at Mary who averted her eyes. "Umm, whisky," Ruth said. "Yes, that would be nice."

Mary crossed to the cupboard for glasses, stepping aside so James could get the bottle. She watched Ruth's gaze shift, slinking around the room like a cat in the shadows, green eyes prowling over the fireplace, the damp, whitewashed walls, smudged gray with peat smoke, the heavy work table, the scuffed floors, the laundry line swooping down from the ceiling by the chimney, the picture of the sacred heart above the mantel, the tarnished bucket of kindling, the two chairs, the cupboard. The interior of the house matched that of any other house in Rathpeacon. Nothing else in the room to note except for James and Mary. Mary patted her worn apron down over her skirt. "That's the house, she said to Ruth, "except for the bedroom. Maybe later you'd like to step out and see the old farm?"

Ruth looked up quickly. "That would be very nice," she said.

James dragged the work table over between the two chairs and squinted as he poured two fingers of Jameson's into the juice glasses which Mary lined up for him, one by one. James raised his glass in a silent toast, then swallowed the whisky in a swig.



Irish cottage, photo Clara Schröder

Ruth, with one eye on James, similarly lifted her whisky and in one gulp tossed it off.

Mary studied Ruth through the curved side of her barely tilted glass as she sipped her whisky. "There might be a bit of Fagan in you after all," she said.

James shuffled over to the cupboard and returned to the table with two opened bottles of stout. "So tell me, Ruth Fagan," James asked, "what are you studying at the university?" He plunked the Guinness down on the table next to her.

"Literature," she answered. "English Literature."

"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."

"Wssst," 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 and tugged at the tuft of his right brow. "Just some sunken old stones."

Ruth Fagan followed Mary over the wet, hillocky 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 erased 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 in prayer.

"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 aught 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 thorns," she said, "and watch your feet in this muck, dear. You'd hate 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

opening 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 refilled glass carefully and again tossed the whisky off in a single shot. She smiled at James and then lowered herself into 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 stouts from the cupboard, the one to anesthetize himself to the burn of Mary's glare, the other, to thunk down on the work table next to Ruth Fagan.

Ruth accepted the beer with a smile and fixed James with an intent but slightly unfocused stare. "It's awful, just awful," she said, her eyes wandering from James' eyes to his shoulder and back. "Terrible, the political trouble your people are having."

"Trouble?" James asked.

"Oh, you know, the Protestants bombing the Catholics. The British hating the Irish hating the British . . ." Ruth trailed off, the tears of drunken sincerity brimming in her eyes.

"We don't bother with that down here in Cork," James said. The sharpness of his voice jerked Mary's head up. She regarded him for a moment, then went back to her work arranging tea biscuits on a dinner plate. She put the empty biscuit tin back in the cupboard.

"We're too far south. It's none of our business," James continued

"But surely . . ."

"Now Daniel," James interrupted Ruth, "he was the one. Didn't himself fight in the Easter Rebellion? 1916, about eight years before he went over. He and some of the boys—he was just a boy himself—blew out a bridge so the Brits couldn't ford the river. He's the one you should have talked to." James pulled his pipe from his breast pocket and began stuffing the bowl with tobacco.

Mary extended the plate of biscuits to Ruth. "Won't you have a bite, dear?" she asked. "Or could I get you some nice tea?"

Ruth sipped her Guinness and giggled incongruously, spraying stout. "Imagine me," she said. "Here. Here with the Irish family. I am in Ireland at home with the Fagan family. Imagine. Could I use your ladies' room?" she asked.

"Ladies' room?" James echoed.

"It's out 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 heels. "Will you need a hand, dear?" she asked.

"Oh no. I'm fine. Really I am," Ruth said and teetered 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. I'll be hospitable and give her a bit of Irish." He blew out the match.

Ruth appeared in the doorway, backlit by sunlight and giggling, holding her shoes in her hands. "Look," she said. "I cracked a heel clean off."

"Oh dearie, sure I was afraid of that," Mary fussed. "Maybe we can tack it back on."

Ruth laughed. "Don't bother. Really. It'll make a great souvenir. It'll be easier to walk on now anyway. Maybe I can crack the other one off." And she flexed the shiny pump 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, hot cup of tea."

Ruth slumped into the chair like a rag doll, flopping her legs up in the air. "So," she said.

James studied her from behind his screen of pipe smoke. "You don't much favor Daniel," he observed.

Ruth arranged her purse in her lap and took a tea biscuit from the plate. "No," she said and crunched into the biscuit, sprinkling crumbs on the black purse. She studied the crumbs as if their sudden appearance in her lap were mysterious, a miraculous visitation requiring interpretation. She pushed the crumbs around with her fingertips, rearranging them in random configurations as if they might, by accident, fall into a pattern, spell something out for her.

James watched her. "A bit in your cups, aren't you?" he asked.

Ruth snorted with laughter, dispersing the crumbs she'd been bending over so intently. "I'll say," she said. She brushed some crumbs from the lapel of her suit jacket.

James puffed on his pipe. Mary hopefully offered Ruth the plate of biscuits again, Ruth popped one into her mouth and chewed the biscuit, her jaw working

exaggeratedly up and down. James chewed his pipe stem.

"I was the one who came back," he said and looked at Ruth for a response.

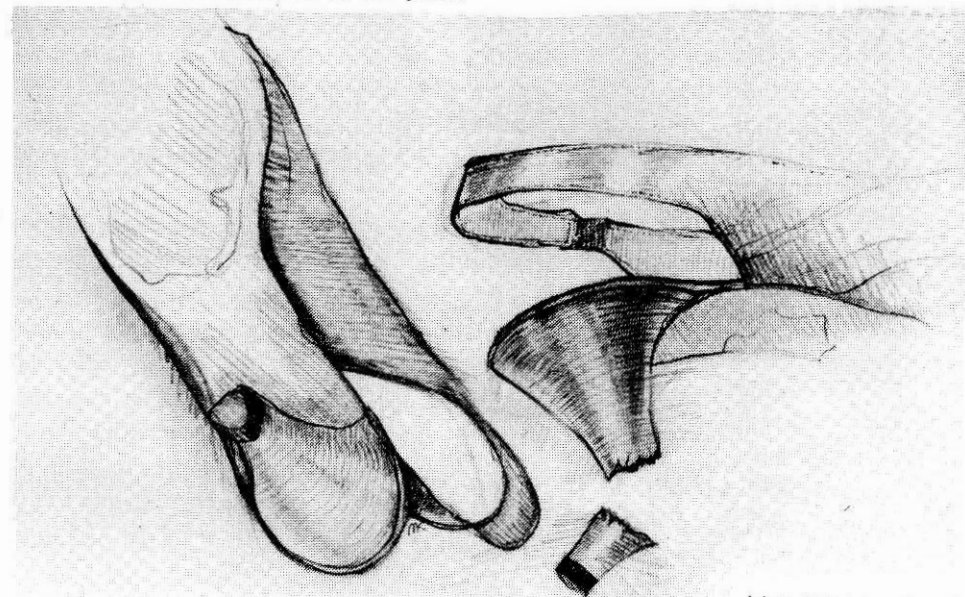
She looked at him blankly, her mouth full of biscuit, her red cap dipping over, almost obscuring, her right eye.

James took a deep breath. "Daniel was the first to go over, and he saved his money, and, one by one, he brought each of us brothers over. Even young Charles stayed on. He worked as a grocery clerk in Holyoke, Massachusetts, at a Stop and Shop, became a manager. Daniel worked his way up to gardener for the college in South Hadley. Joseph went to school and became an electrician. Martin joined the firemen. And I, I came back."

Ruth looked questioningly at Mary, then at James. "I didn't know that," she said, then added, "Grampa didn't talk much about the past, about home, not like Uncle Charles did. Charles always wanted to come back for a visit, you know."

"Well he never did," James snapped. "Not one of them ever did."

"Do have another biscuit," Mary offered. But Ruth just looked at her dark reflection in the surface of her purse.



Majo Keleshian, Pencil

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 I 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 over the way to town on her uneven heels.

"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 grandfathers 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 troweling it on with your 'Oh is Oxford a school now?'" His voice rose in falsetto to the question mark.

Mary laughed and made a brushing 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."

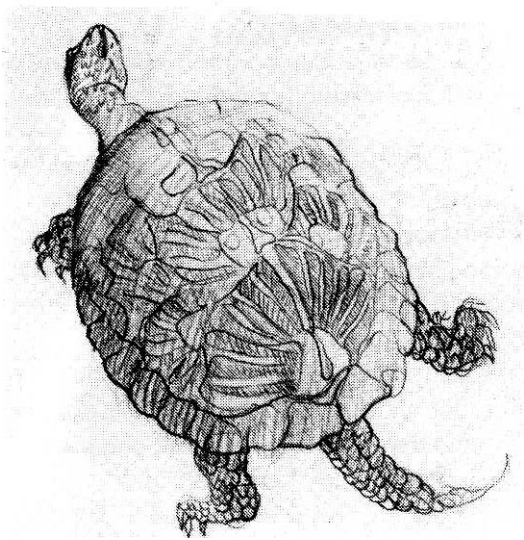
James smiled. "She did favor Daniel a bit; don't you think?"

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." And something in James Fagan's voice drew Mary to his chair 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 whistled to herself as she went tootling down the wrong side of the road.

Joan C. Connor
Chebeague Island
is writing her first novel



Majo Kelesliam, Pencil

turtle god

He rides north on Chases 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 nods

*so that's what He looks like
I thought he'd be taller.*

**Dan Rothermel
York**

teaches at Frisbee Middle School

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, had 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 I do disturbs me.

**Deborah Stiles
Enfield**

is a grad student in history at UMO

Coin

These days,
silver as the shingles of our island cabin,
as the dinghy crevassed in the rocks,
as the back of the herring gull, our own hair —
an entire morning vanishes
pruning bindweed from lupine,
wondering how minerals from broken stone
come to lace this mountain cap
with pink and purple stitches.

A half day to a single faucet.
Releasing its rustings,
we talk to it,
polish its ancient brass,
then marvel at water

sucked up by clouds
to glide down a pipe in the path
so we drink at six,
with a measure of bourbon,
the sea at our door.

Sometimes I wake, the Dipper pressing
against the silvered window.
Not yet, not yet:
we are hoarding.

**Frances Downing Vaughan
North Marshfield, MA**

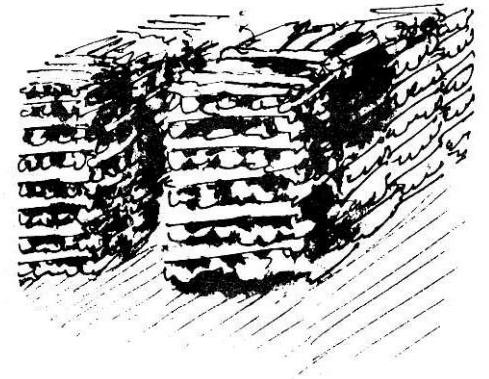
*is a retired textbook editor
who summers on Monhegan*

What He Kept

records though he didn't have
a record player, his daughter's
paintings, his pottery,
the cactus pointing 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
epaulets and belt buckle from
the Civil War, a lump of low-fire
clay—"pure Maine clay," he called it—
that he had fired at stoneware
temperatures until the clay had melted
into an almost perfect hemisphere
and had glazed itself half-brown,
half-green, and fused into the kiln shelf
which he smashed 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 mortared
into the foundation two hundred
years before, worn shoes the rats
had dragged behind the rafters,
homemade bookcases, one for each house
he had lived in, a dead woman's
painted bedroom set, sleigh bells.

**K.J. MacLeod
Bethel**

*recently returned home
after 20 yrs. exile in N.J.*



Stacking Wood

September, and the bite
of autumn. That air, touched
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 dark 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 lichened 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 chunks
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, and no matter
our attachment to it,
we can come down anytime
helpless as the tree
skidding down the cellar stairs in pieces.*

**Allison Childs Wells
Ithaca, NY**

is a Winthrop native, UMF 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 hairdo. 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 warn'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't 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 that, 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 pomes, love pomes."

"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 Gloom" on TV. Eben said he was going to the library.

"How come you started going to the liberry all of a sudden?" Flora asked. "You ain't never read nothing but the *Enquirer* before in your life."

"That ain't so," Eben said. "I read lots of things. I always liked pomes."

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.

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 in Country & Western dialect 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 old issues of *Sing Out!* and naturally her own stuff. A couple thousand she figured, but very very little Country. All night long they'd call out for one country number or another and she'd try to keep them satisfied with City of New Orleans, some Joni Mitchell, some Bonnie Raitt. 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, fencing 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 in 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 and act like jerks and Gallagher wanted their money, so in a way it was his responsibility.

Not that he didn't have any sympathy for Carol; he made it plain to all the bartenders: what Carol says, goes. If she wanted somebody else to play with her, they played; if she didn't they didn't. Gallagher thought Carol could have handled herself a lot better, but he stayed out of her show unless she asked for help. Which she never did. Carol wouldn't tolerate interference . . . especially from him. What he thought was, she didn't have a very good sense of humor. Sometimes humor will help you fend things off before they advance too far. His bartenders mostly knew that. Of course the bartenders had their bulk to rely on—the masculine thing. Also whenever there was a disagreement between a customer and a bartender the other bartenders literally stood behind their friend. They would slouch and look relaxed and repeat anything the first said, which was usually nothing worse than telling somebody they couldn't serve him any more. They rarely had to go further than that. The shooting that time was by somebody he'd never seen before. But some people took the rare occasions at the Lazy G and tried to make it typical. It just wasn't so; Gallagher ran a respectable place.

Gallagher never talked directly to Carol until the afternoon he hired her. She had never been inside the Lazy G and when she came in the door 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 sleeveless 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 as he watched her playing at that other place. He called hello to her and she searched for his face in the inside dimness. She loped down the aisle toward him with long butchy strides, her hair bobbing out behind her with each awkward forward lunge.

If 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 the uniform. Or maybe New Wave. Or maybe Michael Jackson—who cared. It didn't take her five minutes to start telling him everything she disliked about the stage setup and how she wasn't going to be a sex object for loaded rednecks—

"You don't look like too much of a sex object to me," he said.

She drew herself 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 it 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."

"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. This cowboy stuff . . . 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 to a 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 ballads, blues; you're a good musician."

"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 out on Thursdays I'll start giving you some Fridays—and if we get the Friday crowd it's a hundred fifty for those 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 does want to play here*, he thought. "It's not a matter of whether I like you or not, you know; personally I 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, angelic and completely beautiful.

"Now about the drunks—listen I understand your problem. I know that late at night some guys will go after anyone or say anything. I mean," he added quickly, "not that you're not good-looking—you're up there on stage with lights on you and some guys, they have a few drinks, they think any woman looks great—I mean—they'll say things they 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 innocently. "What in particular did you say that you feel you should apologize for?"

"Listen: If you don't want to work here say so. Let's stop the jerking 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, OK. 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.

She started playing the following Thursday. Gallagher spent \$370 for four quarter-page ads in the newspaper, and she started with a big crowd. Some of them were her friends but Gallagher knew she didn't have *that* many friends. She was thirty minutes late to set up, and thirty minutes late the next night. Gallagher spoke sharply to her about it and took something from her pay; she accepted that placidly. The following week she was almost as late, but she started singing less than fifteen minutes behind schedule: Gallagher accepted this with equal calm. They had established a *modus operandi*.

Because people were coming to hear her, Gallagher got along well with her, liked her music and tolerated the way she handled the crowd. He saw men coming on to her and tried to put himself in her boots. It was a crappy feeling. A chick up front there is open game to a lot of guys. It's the Neanderthal part of being a guy, and Gallagher felt sorry and angry for Carol when those things happened. Still, she never left an opening into which he could slip a little advice and warmth.

Every time she walked by 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 eyes, passed awkward flickering smiles.

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 match reality. Living in this unreal world of taxes and timetables every day yet having a much better world, where everything is truer than 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. Late in April she had a crown done on a molar, root 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.

The face in the middle of that new hairdo looked better. Maybe it was just because he looked at her more, but he thought she got less waspy toward the crowd. Maybe she had had a constant toothache when he'd first encountered her, and now she was getting all the teeth fixed. Maybe she was getting a little more rest, now that she didn't have to chase so hard for money. He couldn't tell.

Then in the middle of June she showed up in a skirt that came only down to her knees. She wore a blouse instead of her leotard, pumps instead of leather boots—and the leg that showed looked like . . . leg. He raised his eyebrows and whistled deliberately at her.

She gave him a short smile, but he thought she liked it anyway. She started for the closet where she kept her amps and speakers.

"Have a drink," he said. The bar was sparsely populated and she was early.

"I gotta set up—"

"I'll help; I've helped you before haven't I? It shouldn't take ten minutes."

She considered a second, then sat down.

Gallagher's heart skipped a beat. "What's the occasion?" he said, indicating her attire.

She fingered the top button of her blouse. "After it warms up a little I can unbutton right?" she said with a smile.

"No!"

"Relax, I'm just kidding. You know I'm not going to give em the tit."

He snorted at her humor. "I'm just saying you look nice. I like it."

"Thanks. I went right from work and then I gave a couple kids some music lessons. So I didn't have time to change." She would be playing until two tonight—that would mean she was working what, sixteen hours today spread over eighteen or twenty hours of the day. If she was getting more rest now, Gallagher couldn't see how.

"You mean you always dress like this at work, then get into jeans to play?"

She laughed. "No, but we had visitors coming in today and we try looking a little better for them."

"Did they chase you around the desk?" "Chasing her around the desk"—that was something she'd said once about another job. The Neanderthal part of working in business.

"They didn't have the time—I only got the cute one making eyes at me. He was married naturally."

Gallagher gave her a tight smile and sipped from his drink. Always this bullshit about male harassment. "How'd you know he was married? Ring?"

"Yeah. But you can see them a mile off."

"Do you see me a mile off?"

"Yeah. Sure. You have this bar and it's starting to do good and you're getting all starry-eyed and horny."

He laughed. Horny—well yeah. "Hey I know this isn't going to last," he said. "If it goes on like this I'm going to sell. Bar business comes and goes; people get bored and start going somewhere else. Just for a change. Everybody wants something new." He shifted in his seat. *It's the same way with sex*, he was just about to say when she interrupted.

"Do you really think that? That people are going to stop coming?"

"We're really doing pretty well right now. If it lasts much past Labor Day I'd be really surprised. Of course we're the only country and western place in town—"

"Pat, stop calling me a country and western singer. I'm going to go home and stick my head in the oven if you keep that up. I mean you say that and I start looking for a bag to pull over my face."

"All right but face it. It's paying your rent. It's buttering your bread."

"I don't sing country and western."

"Call it what you want to call it. Call these people in here bozos or whatever you like. Just answer me this: how well did your intellectual friends ever repay you?"

She didn't reply. They finished their drinks as though they were thirsty, drinking them down in straight gulps.

She started to set up then, and he helped. They worked efficiently, Carol staying on stage, telling him what she wanted, where to place the speakers, how to aim them. Gallagher felt discouraged, not by their differences of opinion—they had always been open and blunt with each other, and he thought that was healthy. What bothered him was the distance between them, which he couldn't overcome.

People started to come while Gallagher and Carol were still doing this. The doors opened and seemed not to shut for ten minutes. They came by twos and foursomes and small knots of single young men. Some wore black leather jackets, some wore cowboy hats, some flannel shirts and work shoes, some cleancut shirts with short hair and dress jeans—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 said he was having these Hollywood visions of getting rich. *Hey*, he thought. *Maybe I could get another woman like Carol.*

Right on time, Carol switched on her mike and said hello to the crowd, introduced herself, started to play. Did a good lively number—lively but soft. She always said she didn't want the room getting too loud too soon. That was almost gone already; the people in the Lazy G were out to have a good time. Carol bent before this wind at least, playing something in the background instead of standing with her hand on her hip, saying something like "You can't hear if you're talking." Gallagher licked his lips and guessed that the kitchen would be busy. *If I put the potato salad on some lettuce I bet I could get a dollar more for the sandwiches.*

Gallagher had never seen Carol go with a crowd better. It wasn't natural for her to catch a wave: usually she'd try to hold up her hands and stop it. One table in the back had already requested a country rock number and she'd said OK but then asked for another song and said she'd have to warm up to the country rock number. Proceeded to play the second request first and postpone the first request until at least the next number after that.

After twenty minutes she started to take requests. This consisted of her interrupting conversations at the tables where she could get eye contact—and demanding from them, a request.

What the hell does she have against people talking? Gallagher wondered. *Do what you're good at! People who want to hear will listen!*

"OK Are there any other requests?" Carol said.

Gallagher yelled out one of her own favorites: "Joni Mitchell. 'You Turn Me On!'"

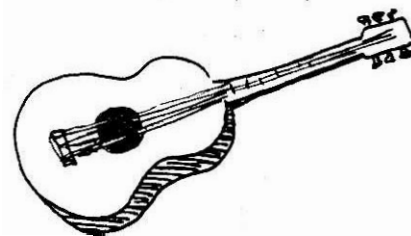
"OK I have a request from the bar," she said as she looked away deadpan. "Any other requests?"

Somebody offered one but she said sorry I just don't know anything by her and went straight into 'You Turn Me On'. A good number for her, singing about being a radio (hence the title), waving for you in the breeze, being a country station a little bit corny.

She'll never get out of here, Gallagher realized. *It could happen for somebody not as good as her, but even if she were twice as good everything else is wrong. It's not going to happen.*

He stood up and pressed his way to the door. Two people had just come in. They were looking over the crowd, but turned away and left before Gallagher could get to them. He was at capacity, and it wasn't nine-thirty yet. It was already hot inside.

Out on the sidewalk he looked for the couple that had turned around and left but they were already out of sight of his short block. He took the cool night air deep into his lungs, loving it. He felt good. He stretched up on his toes. He lifted his head up and saw the huge form of a full moon up there.



Silvia Rike

When he went back inside Carol was there at the mike trying to get people to listen to her. "Hey you there in the checkered shirt—hey somebody could you get the attention of these people at this table here. Yeah there listen 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?*

She looked around the room. "Wow isn't this something, standing around in here tonight. Sweating." Gallagher winced. "But it's fun too." He couldn't tell if she believed that or not. "Um, first I want to say . . . I want to apologize for my appearance—" one catcall, two whistles—but I came right from work so I didn't have time to go home and get filthy. Anyway I'll get straight to what I want to tell you: I was out at a shopping center last week and I left my guitars and my gym baggie out there. Now in that bag I had notebooks stuffed with all the songs I've been collecting for ten years. Two of them were full of my own songs.

"Now I guess I'm still an idealist or something but I left my car unlocked and guess what. Right—when I came back out I'd been ripped off. That I can deal with. But guess what they took? The Martin I'm playing here now? —obviously not. Did these creeps take the \$300 bass guitar that was also in there? —no."

She sighed. "They took the baggie with all the music."

Nobody responded to that directly. A good part of the room was watching—mostly people continued their own lives the way they would no matter what. Small tragedy, volcanic eruption, war—the only way you could

ever be normal or sane or happy was to go on pretending it. Come, what did.

"All right," Carol said. "Call me naive, call me a romantic—say I'm an asshole—"

"You're an asshole!" somebody shot from the middle of the room.

Carol recoiled a fraction of a second. "I asked for that didn't I," she said and carried on.

But Gallagher had seen her take the hit

She stayed at the Lazy G 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'd just agree 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—well 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."

"Yeah," 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, here and now."

"You crud!" 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.

**Tom Yori
Brooks**

*works for the State and is
the grandson of a Tyrolean coal miner*

Licking it Clean

*She likes the slenderness of words
I, the fat—
the endless ways of using them
in rich sauces, fondues, roastings.
She opens them up
looks at their ribs, their organs
knows the 206 bones of a word.
Doctor and dreamer—
we thrust hands into steaming platters.*

**Arnold Perrin
Union**
works at the State Prison

Happiness

*I saw her peeking around my friend's old barn:
Laughing, mocking, shaking her head.
She seemed at home there
And now and then showed her pixie form
Against the weathered boards.
My friend knew her well, he said.*

*I fell asleep one day in the sun
And saw her again.
Or it might have been her sister.
My barn was newer and not so large as my friend's,
But there she stood just the same,
Sporting a baseball cap with the bill to one side.
"She wants to play," I thought,
And I rose to meet her.
She disappeared in a flash,
Without giving her name.*

*I don't know whether to build my barn bigger
Or just tear it down.
Maybe I should move to town.*

Blues Healing

*i spit feelings into you
tarnished brass-reeded soulmate*

*i screech pain into your mouth
as you kiss me patiently in return*

*i shake you like Heinz ketchup
blowing the blues into you
out of you in*

*until you take on my suffering
and pay dearly with your own life*

*and when you are dead and deposited
i do the same thing to your brother*

**Leo Tanguay
Searsport**

*is an assistant teacher
for the Headstart Program
in Belfast*

**Gil Rogers
Easton**

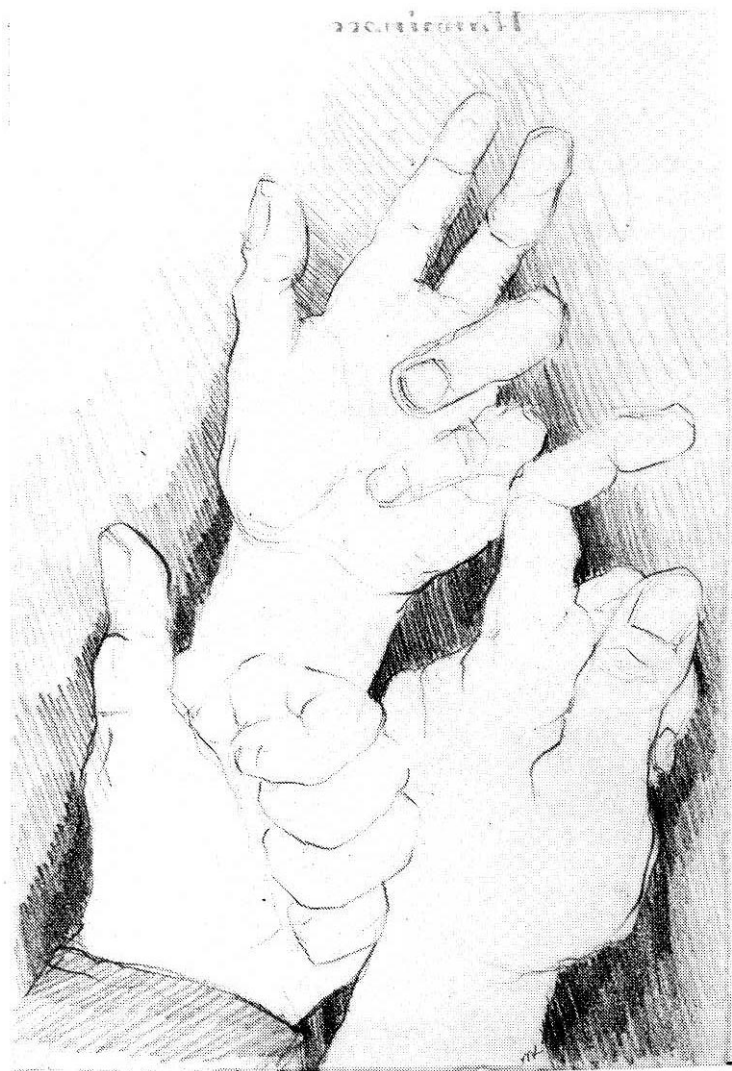
teaches psychology at UMPI.



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
bowing down in front of him
so I stood there like that,
his spittle dripping down my jacket,
and he grinned at me,
a big stupid grin with one tooth missing
it was quite a sight
if I do say so myself.*

**Jennifer Lunden
Portland**
just lives



Majo Keleshian, Pencil

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 peacocks.
Each finger waved, a vibrant feather.

In kindergarten I cast my hands in plaster.
Today I pressed my hand
into that shape of childhood.

Frail 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 far too long,
cramped toes rejoicing
at regained freedom,
compressed flesh expanding
into liberated sponge,

my nest step
the punishment
of treading broken glass

Glen McKee
Waterville
walks, writes, cogitates

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.
Damned if I did; the support lifting me
to unnatural heights
that angled this alien flesh
in the direction of everyone's face.

In school I held my history book
straight up and slumped my shoulders
cupping the saucers that rested
on pages telling me for the first time
about Puritans and Salem Witch Trials.
I stirred Mrs. Blake's passionate wrath
by refusing to sit beside Danny.
The dark hair outlining his upper lip
twitched 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 paraded 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 us
so I couldn't ask
if she hated me.

Annie Cameron
Camden
teaches English

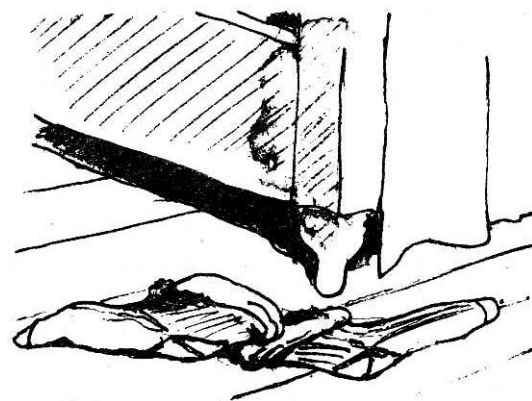
Winter Pearl

This earth, this pearl
in essence glazed around us, ice and snow,
sweep and scour of wind, rattle of brittle twig,
no sign of life, bare polish of moonglow—

In this vast iridescent shell of sky
are we the irritant speck of sand,
something to smooth over, to encase,
to 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



Silvia Rike

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
Calves and a faint, blue vein,
Pure and ethereal,
Like the sky in the eyes
of Fra Angelico's saints,
Rolled down over
Ankles. Then with covers,
Tight, you'd shed
Each sock in a bunch, at
The bottom of the bed.
Somehow, 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

Cross-Country

(excerpt from *North-Country Blues*)

The three of them were silent as the old copper Torino sped south through the murky twilight; they hadn't had much to say since they'd grabbed their gear and said goodbye to Maine.

Emily Hutchence felt as though someone would have to pry her hands from the steering wheel when they finally stopped. Once again, she thought about throwing out the wide wedding band cutting into her finger. 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 jammed another cacophonous tape into the deck. Jalacy's long thin fingers with their black-lacquered nails kept the beat, drumming soundlessly against her fishnetted thighs. 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.

They'd been on the road a night and a day already. Fugitives. 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 ends tied up nice and neat by lawyers. Not this flight down the east coast and across the whole country to Arizona, so far a distance for a country mouse like herself that she wondered if the money would last. Or the car. Or her determination.

They did have a good headstart, although they'd been in Boston before she stopped panicking at every set of headlights looming in the rearview mirror. Was Murray following them? Was he glad they were gone, or was he set on revenge?

Emily tried to focus on the road, but her mind kept wandering. Time to stop, before she fell asleep or began hallucinating, had an accident. The couple hours she'd spent dozing in the picnic area off I-95 somewhere in New York State hadn't helped her all that much, and her speedy adrenaline fight-or-flight energy was fading fast.

The sign they were passing said Virginia Beach was the largest resort area in the world, so why not stop? There should be plenty of June tourists around, enough for them to blend in invisibly, although blending in was certainly not going to be easy for the stunningly punk Jalacy.

Emily dismissed the beach, with its strip of glassy luxury towers. Too expensive. A couple of blocks back from Atlantic Avenue, she found a small, turquoise-shuttered motel with a vacancy sign.

"I saw an all-night deli," said Jalacy. "I'll get some sandwiches."

Emily reached for her purse, then drew her hand back in sudden indecision. Was it safe? "Take Damon with you."

Jalacy smiled, but the smile went down at one corner. "Emily, my father couldn't possibly be here. Stop worrying. He's glad we're gone."

Emily shook her head, counted out a few bills. "Go," she said.

What else could she do? They hadn't eaten since New Jersey, and that was hours and hours ago. She'd already decided she was going to be organized, cool and logical, on this journey. That was easy in the conception, but damned difficult in execution. She'd hardly ever had to make important, deliberate decisions. Only two: To marry Murray. To leave him.

Emily had seen the divorce lawyer for the first secret time the April day she found out about the kids. Murray had been sitting at the kitchen table when she got home, drinking Canadian Club and holding a letter covered with Starr's curlicued handwriting. Starr Hutchence. Painter, potter, sojourner of the world. Murray's ex-wife.

"Kids're coming," said Murray, shifting his muscular shoulders. His half-closed eyes gave no clues whether this was good news or bad. Once, he'd been hot and passionate as any man she'd ever met. Now, most days when he finished his papermaker's shift, he drank a pint of whiskey and switched off.

"For spring vacation, you mean?"

"No," he said. "Starr's going to some kind of Hindu retreat. She can't take them, so she's putting them on a plane Saturday."

Emily hadn't seen Murray's children since her wedding five years before. She had married at thirty not so much because she was in love as because she wanted children, and time was ticking away. And still ticking.

Jalacy had been twelve then, a small slender girl with serious grey eyes and ash-blond hair springing back from a perfect widow's peak. Damon had been ten, rail-thin and lanky, so quiet he barely made a ripple.

Two strangers got off the Delta flight in Bangor that sunny April afternoon. Emily recognized Jalacy's solemn eyes, kohl-rimmed now; the thick hair was

platinum, with two plum-colored streaks arcing back like curved lightning. In her black leather motorcycle jacket, denim mini, and stiletto heels, she had more than enough streetwise swagger for the whole state of Maine.

Damon she recognized only by his proximity to his sister. He was tall for fifteen, taller than Murray, his straight sandy hair below his shoulders. His face was like Jalacy's—like their mother's—but harder, leaner, nose jutting narrowly, chin sharply angular. Now he looked astounded and bereft, like someone pulled into the lifeboat just at the moment he was sure he was going to drown.

Here were her children then, not the beautiful bright babies of her imaginings, not the class valedictorian, not the Eagle Scout. Her instant family, tough and urban; she felt a slight chill at the thought of their arrival in small coastal Perry, where there wasn't even a Main Street.

Three more days put them in Clarksdale, Mississippi, birthplace of the Delta blues. It was Damon's request they make the sidetrip; Jalacy had pretty much read the maps thus far, Emily concentrating only on the forward progression, the pace a little slower now, bad memories receding bit by bit.

In Clarksdale, Emily sold the wide wedding band, not because she needed the money, because she didn't, just yet. When she saw the sign saying, "Gold bought," it just felt like time, in the Birthplace of the Delta Blues, to sell the symbol of a life that was over now.

She came out of the shop to find Damon staring in a window at a rack of electric guitars. She touched his arm lightly, immediately drew her hand away. "Someday."

He shrugged. "I know."

Maybe if there was enough left in their cash stash when they reached Arizona. A goodby gift.

Jalacy reclined in the back seat with her Walkman when they backtracked north to Memphis under a wide white sky. Damon slouched beside Emily and stared at something beyond the horizon that she couldn't see at all.

"Where is this place, anyway?" Emily asked.

"Sedona?" he said after awhile, when she'd given up hope of a response. "Near Flagstaff. Some kind of New Age holy land, I guess."

"Well, I hope you like it there."

"Don't matter. Don't ever get a choice." He stretched a pale, sinewy arm out the side window. "Look at what happened to Jalacy."

Emily thought of the drawings on the walls of Jalacy's room, pen-and-ink with a watercolor wash, edgy architectural cityscapes and tortured portraits. She remembered Jalacy in razor-slashed jeans, curled on the bed, saying, "Emily, it was two months. Just nine weeks. If we'd stayed in Chicago, I woulda won the Art League prize. A fat scholarship. But no. Not Mother. She couldn't wait."

Emily had quickly understood her new children were self-contained, self-sufficient. What silent emotions bubbled beneath the cool surfaces of their lives in rural Maine?

Even when Murray ordered Jalacy to take the part-time waitressing job at his brother's Moose Island diner, she said nothing. If the job was meant to tame her, to quiet the seven earrings jangling at her left ear, to assimilate her into local culture, it failed utterly. She teased her hair a little bigger, and started wearing ripped black hose. While the other two girls snickered at the waitress station, she served her customers with hard-edged efficiency. She hoarded her tips and communicated chiefly by letters to Chicago and Austin, Texas.

With Damon there were battles over cutting school, battles in which Murray became breathtakingly inventive in invective, and Damon grew so pale and quiet it seemed as though he might just fade into invisibility.

Damon spent his time in his room, which was hung with posters of Hendrix and Clapton and Page and a slew of ringleted, spandex-clad young guitarists who looked too pretty to play as mean and hard as their music sounded.

Damon's beatup old Telecaster was his constant companion; Emily imagined sometimes that it spoke for both of them.

"I used to play guitar," she told him one afternoon. "Acoustic. Folk stuff. Not like you play."

He said nothing, just nodded, but after that he'd ask her in to hear the new tunes he was working on, tablature spread out around him and the song endlessly looped on the boombox.

Emily was sitting on the windowsill listening to Damon struggle with "Layla" one evening when Murray burst into the room. "I gotta work a sixteen tonight, and I'm goddamn sick of listening to that squawk all weekend long," he said. "You start paying attention to your schoolwork, or your ass is outta here."

Damon hunched closer to the black guitar and went on picking. Blood rose in Murray's stubbly face, and one workbooted foot swung forward and crashed into the grill of the small Gorilla 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 ruined 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 out of luck, 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 mouse, she was telling herself when Jalacy said, "Take the next exit."

She'd changed lanes automatically by 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 in 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 this grad assistant at the University. An art crowd." He shook his head. "It was good here. Just about the best."

Jalacy returned to the car with a small stocky man in a paint-smeared undershirt, and a tall woman with a silver-tipped brunette pageboy. Before Emily could protest, Jalacy's duffle and her carpetbag and her two big black portfolios had disappeared up the narrow stairs, 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—I like you a lot."

"You'll be okay?"

Jalacy nodded. "Howie used 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 else was 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 outsized likenesses—hers, Jalacy's, and Damon's—leaning 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 crackling 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, taut, her back arched like a bow, her knuckles white as she grasped the razor. "I'll fucking cut it off," she said, and Emily saw that Murray's jeans were undone. "This is the last time."

"Oh," cried Emily. Her voice sliced loud and sudden into the silent room. How many times? she wanted to scream. 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 tight 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 rained down upon them like the Clarksdale blues. He had resurrected the broken guitar from its case in the trunk, and sat holding it in his lap, sharing 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 tired 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, not with her stifling 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 regretfully shook his head. Starr Hutchence 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 had begun to tan over. The past was gone.

She glanced at Damon. Jalacy's words came back to her: "You look after Damon, okay?" Wise Jalacy. Had she guessed—known—all along?

Damon cradled the fractured guitar. His face was tight, cheeks concave beneath the high, narrow cheekbones. Emily was sure he wanted to cry, but that he wouldn't, even when he was alone. He stared through the bugsmear windshield, and nodded his head at the horizon.

"California," he said.

"How far?"

"Dunno. Two, three hundred miles. Not so far, for how far we've come."

"No," she agreed, "Not far. Might as well make it a real cross-country."

He nodded. His silence spoke more plainly than words; she'd never known him to ask for anything.

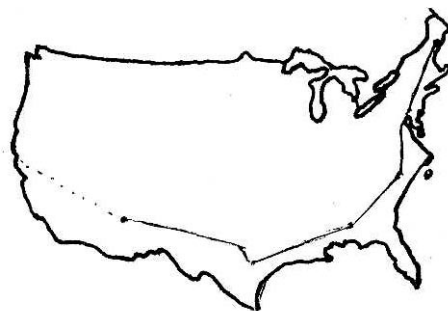
"Carmel's a nice little town," he said after awhile, when the sun had started to dip over California. "You probably like small towns the best."

"I do," she answered, and hesitated. "You found out in Perry it's hard to skip school in a small town."

"Shoot. I'll go to school. If you ask me to."

"That a deal?"

"Sure." Emily was quite certain he said, "Sure, Mom," but she didn't dare ask him to repeat it. It was too new, too fragile. Too close to the heart.



Catherine J.S. Lee
Eastport

is revising her first novel



Haut-Penjab, Mandi, c. 1630-1645, gouache

Buveur d'Océan (Drinker of Ocean)

After an anonymous Indian painting

Whereas the wise Agastya
sits cross-legged on a deerskin,
drinking up the water before him
with his eyes closed
like someone returning to the coast
after a bad winter inland, who
inhales the first lungful
of sea air with no need
to view the watery plain
somewhere beyond a stone wall, a privet hedge;

whereas the wiseman shares his grassy lot
with small deer, quail, a peacock
and a few tall trees that stand out
against the blue evening sky;
whereas there's a second figure, to
Agastya's right, who waits to have a word
with wisdom itself,
who watches the bearded figure
take up the flourishing, linear seas
into his thin body with no
apparent toil or perturbation;

whereas other oceans
remain to be cleansed,
I cling ever tighter to the notion
of discarding calm.
For were I to settle on some promontory
jutting out into the Atlantic,
I couldn't appreciate the wide waters
in the all-encompassing manner
of Agastya, who obliges
student or cousin or creditor
to keep a respectful distance

And even if it were my will to take up
a contemplative position,
to reduce my possessions to a hide,
a string of beads and something
to tie back my long hair—
to turn inward, hauling in nature
after me—. I would not forsake
a tiny daughter dressed in red
breathing a soft whisper
in her sleep, abandon
the wiles and landmarks of my wife,

not leave off my travels now,
today, to become another beacon
on some desolate point,
helpful now and again,
photogenic,
yet no more in the end
than a big eye whose beam
glances off treacherous waters,
doesn't take them in,

and fails entirely before the fog

Carl Little

Mount Desert
writes and edits on the Island

Tenants Harbor

In the sunlight silence
on the quiet sea
only the clank, clack
spondees of the rigging
measures the rocking
irregular lift of waves
on the flat water.

**Richard Lyons
Gardiner**

is a professor emeritus,
No. Dakota State U.

The Logger

He steps into the store—
hair and beard
spotted with white flakes,
wood snow from the
chain saw.
Shirts, layered plaid on green
reveal rips in sleeves,
smell of sharp resin.
Rolled jeans, knees worn
expose brown, sap-glued
bark chips on once
white leggings.

His thick tongue
rolls between tobacco teeth,
voicing in broken
French-English, "cigarettes."
I reach for the
carton of Pall Mall his
dirt-packed fingernail
twitches towards.
From red socks
he draws out Queen Elizabeth,
but I shake my head
and point to the sign,
"American Only."

Brows creased,
he searches breast, jean,
coat pockets, drawing more
crest-stamped bills.
Shaking a storm of white
onto the wooden counter
he turns for the screened door,
I push the carton into
calloused hands;
he nods,
lowers thick lashes.

The logging truck
groans from the soft shoulder,
slatted sides lurch
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 factory.

**Stephanie M. Eleftheriou
Bar Harbor**

is a Senior at Smith
College, Northampton, MA.

The World Above the Sky

Even in death Peter-Paul was mischievous. 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 Berry.

When I died, his ghost told Truman, I peeled off my skin like a corn husk.

"You always were 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 pelt, 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 that 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 comprehend 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, another 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.

To stay warm 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 a piece of brick to scratch a mark for each night of his vigil. Tracy, he was certain, would want proof of his devotion and suffering. After what had happened she would never take his word. He imagined leading her down from her apartment, showing her the scars on the wall and saying, "See—this is what I have done for you." If she refused to come, he would drag her by the hair.

Shoebottom fantasized that some day Tracy would open her window and see his starved eyes glaring upwards. So far, the only person who had seen him was the old lady who lived in the downstairs apartment. From time to time he saw a pale forehead capped with goat's wool watching him. Whenever he looked, she ducked under the sill. He thought she was getting up the courage to call the police until he awoke one morning to find a paper plate near his foot. On it was a fried egg sandwich, still warm, wrapped in wax paper.

He peeled open the sandwich and poked the bread with the tip of his finger. He sniffed it. He tasted the bread with the tip of his tongue. It seemed safe enough: no rat poison. Shoebottom ate the sandwich in three bites.

Every morning for the next week he awoke to a new dish: a ham and mayonnaise sandwich, a greasy chicken leg. Each day the woman seemed to become a little bolder. First she began to watch him eat, then she opened the window. Finally, one morning she blurted out:

"How old are you?"

She had set a plate of something yellowish and lumpy at his foot while he was asleep. Now she was leaning out the window.

"Twenty-five," Shoebottom said. His voice was harsh from disuse.

"I got a son your age." The old woman smiled. "He was a real sweet boy, my Calvin. I wish you could have seen him. He was sweet as pie. And innocent!" her eyes, red at the rims, seemed focused on some faraway point. "That was before he became a homosexual, understand." Shoebottom did not understand, and had no particular wish to, but he said nothing. "Sometimes I wished I never found those boys together. I wished I never had cause to throw him out." Now she was looking straight at Shoebottom. Her eyes were full of tears. The way she was looking at him, it was 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 backs of his eyeballs. "What's this?" he said.

"Potato salad."

"I hate potato salad."

To emphasize the point he flung the plate against the wall and unzipped his pants. The old woman put a fist to her mouth. Fumbling, Shoebottom pissed on the potato salad.

When he glanced over his shoulder, she had disappeared under the sill.

Truman remembered his home, the reservation, as an island of red clay and sugar maples. In the spring, after the thaw, heavy 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 slashing tires. 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 embankment behind St. Anne's Church?

"Yes."

I was out drinking one night and I fell down it 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 less at home in the world of men. His skin no longer fit him; it hung loose on his bones, like an overlarge 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.

"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. He fought back by envisioning Tracy with two black eyes, a fat lip.

On the seventeenth night of his vigil, just after dark, a light appeared in the upstairs window. There were two shadows upon the curtain, a tall one and a small one, and they were embracing. Shoebottom's heart seemed to stop. All at once he was seized by a desire to conceal himself. He wanted nothing better than to burrow under the newspapers and insulation and forever hide himself from human sight.

Instead Shoebottom bolted from the alley.

At Buzzy's 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 strong glasses. In the cold his thoughts became diamonds. He saw the world as if for the first time. It was this way whenever he had a drink.

The wind had begun to blow off the harbor. Shoebottom surrendered to it and let the gusts pass through him.

"You're nothing but an animal," he remembered Tracy screaming. It was the night she flushed his bourbon down the toilet and threw his clothes into the alley. He had gone to retrieve them and when he returned, she had locked the door. The police arrived soon after, and he had awakened the next morning in a drunk tank with a knob on his head where the patrolman had hit him.

"I'm so lonely without my Calvin," Shoebottom said suddenly in the old woman's wheedling voice.

The alcohol had turned him philosophical. What did that old hag know about being alone? She couldn't even suspect what true aloneness was like. To be

without anyone and without God too; to listen in the dark and hear nothing, not even your own heart beat; to watch people embracing and hate them so much it hurt—that was true aloneness. 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. Liquor 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 arose. He began to advance on the dog.

"You hungry, doggy? You hungry, huh? I'll 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 his 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 bruise-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 ravaged eyes and greasy strands of hair pasted across his forehead. He had not shaved in many days and there was a bloody rag knotted around his left hand.

He said: "I'm un a bite you."

Truman had watched the young man confront the bums seated across the room. They had laughed or blown smoke at his slurred speech, and now the stranger had staggered down to Truman's end of the table. There was something, a violence, in his eyes that made Truman giddy. He became aware of the odor of burnt coffee; the rustle and flutter of dead leaves.

Him, said Peter-Paul.

Truman swallowed the pasty mash of chicken; then he wiped his fingers on a paper napkin. He could feel the cricket-itch inside his ear.

Shoebottom listed towards the table again. "She said I was an animal and she was right."

I'm telling you, it's him—

"I don't want to die," Truman said.

In his ear Peter-Paul chirruped. *Quit kidding yourself.*

Truman clapped his hands to his head; he didn't want to listen to Peter-Paul anymore. The missionary, who was dusting the neon cross in the window, saw him react and came over, featherduster still in hand. He was a perfectly bald man, straight as a steeple, who walked as though he were walking on water.

"Is this man bothering you?" he asked Truman.

"I'm un a bite you," Shoebottom said.

The missionary scowled. "What's your name?"

Shoebottom's face broke into a sloppy grin. "Calvin!"

"You can't stay here, Calvin—not if you're intoxicated." He reached out with an open hand. Shoebottom pulled away as if he could not stand to be touched. He bared his teeth and snarled like a dog.

The missionary took a step back. "No one's going to hurt you."

Shoebottom's snarl turned to a grin. He put on his craziest leer for the benefit of the assembled and staggered out of the room. The hush, left by his departure, was broken by a cry from the far table:

"You shor showed him, reverend."

The room exploded with laughter. The missionary, reddening, tightened his grip on the featherduster.

Truman sat staring at the door. After a minute, he gathered his possessions—a bundle made from an old coat, the sleeves tied together to form a shoulder-strap—and limped from the room. Outside the wind watered his eyes. Not far from the door, the young man was trying to light a cigarette he had picked up from

the sidewalk. Truman dragged himself over to his location. The stranger looked at him, his eyes baleful beneath their heavy lids, but did not say a word.

"I got a bottle you can have," Truman said quickly. He had spoken before he could stop himself; the words had come out on a gust of wind.

Shoebottom seemed slow to understand. "Bottle?"

"It's back at my place. You got to follow me. I'll show you where."

"OK."

What did I tell you?

Truman knew better than to trust Peter-Paul. "You understand everything I'm saying?" he asked Shoebottom suspiciously.

"Huh? Yeah." Shoebottom threw down the lifeless cigarette. "Why?"

"No reason."

The bridge spanned a small, grassy hollow. At the bottom was a gutter. Truman's plywood and canvas shelter clung to the slope, and it seemed about ready to fly to pieces. Already a gust had torn one cardboard wall off and sent it spinning lazily down into the ditch. At the bottom it had settled atop an overturned shopping cart. There was no water in the ditch, only a dry stream of trash-paper, plastic and dead leaves.

For the past hour Shoebottom had watched as Truman, seated not more than five yards away, sank into the deepening darkness as if into a pit of tar. First his head vanished, then his chest, then his feet; finally all that was left was his voice, hoarse and strangely accented:

"What happened to your hand?"

"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 Charlottetown for tests."

The earth shivered under Shoebottom's legs as a big truck rumbled over the bridge.

"Send it where?"

"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 seemed 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 track 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 dog-shit," Shoebottom said and laughed. Suddenly, in his mind,

Silvia Rike



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 life for him forever. For a brief period she had fooled him into thinking there was such a thing as love. He had gotten 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 not 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 anything. It didn't give a damn about laws or sin. It just wanted to hurt. He would drag himself up the hill and show her what he was capable of.

A gust scattered dead leaves across his legs.

"I wondered when you'd show up," Truman said.

The remark broke Shoebottom's thought. "What did you say?"

"I'm talking to the dog."

Shoebottom jerked his head one way, then the other, but it was so dark his eyes might just as well have been closed. He climbed to his knees. The skin along his neck was crawling, as though with ants.

"I don't see any dog."

"You can't see him because he's a ghost," Truman said as if speaking to a small child.

There was a pause, full of strange creakings 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.*

"If you don't shut the hell up—" Shoebottom said.

"I don't think he's the one," Truman whispered.

"What?"

"I'm not talking to you."

Shoebottom lunged 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.

Truman said: "Do you mind? This is a private conversation."

Shoebottom clubbed the old man with his bandaged fist. He pummeled him once in the ear, not hard; and with his other hand he grasped the collar of Truman's coat. "Are you going to shut up?" He raised his fist.

Truman returned his glare with a look of astonishment. Then, slowly, his lips drew back from his broken teeth and he began to laugh.

Shoebottom punched him in the jaw. "What are you laughing at?"

Truman made no answer.

"What are you laughing at?" Shoebottom repeated, this time louder.

Truman licked 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!"

Shoebottom closed his hands tight around the other's neck and dug his fingernails into the throat. Still 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?" He banged Truman's head several more times against the ground and pressed hard with his thumbs.

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.

Paul Doiron
Scarborough

is the editor of Maine in Print

The Color of My Language

"Mine alone is the country of my soul."
Marc Chagall



Marc Chagall, *The Fiddler*, 1912-13, oil,
courtesy Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

*Here in this country
where I seek a refuge,
I cannot name the flowers, birds, trees,
although they grow also in my homeland.
Your language is sweet to the tongue,
but I cannot produce even a street name.
I speak to you in my native tongue of color
and memory. And from this full soul,
I tell you of lovers and circuses,
icons and the star of David, roosters and scythes,
white lambs and blue goats, green faces,
and peasants dancing on rooftops.
My color is magic; forms defy gravity, and
some say I have no logic either.
Yes, I defy some laws
as I have seen your dancers do
in their elevations
at the Ballet of Paris. But my color stories
are more than fantasy, they speak
to you of the country of my soul
where anyone can carry
the lamb over the moon.*

Bonny Barry Sanders
Scarborough

*teaches Creative Writing at the
University of New England, Biddeford*

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 safer sex.

There is, you know, an annual award for the college newspaper displaying the largest number and highest quality of typographical errors. It's the coveted Dipso Award, sponsored by an international conglomerate with interests in exhaust systems, baby booties, lawn rakes, test tubes and turkey loaf. No 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 outfit 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 entrants, '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 plexiglass case 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 deploring the "me-tooism" 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 Veritas? a veritable chanterelle of typos or that rare vintage one seeks longingly, thirstily, in the chateaux of Modesto, Bakersfield, Fresno . . .

Junior, 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 inert as well. Let the others have their celebration and raise the trophy high. Junior, Jr., hoped for more estimable accomplishments, journalistic 'beats' and important think pieces. He wanted to be the Woodstein of the Right.

So one understands why, when the VOICE exposé of sexual improprieties in FizzEd came out, Junior, Jr., was not thrilled with the headline, which read, in blazing caps: GAGS RAMPANT IN GYM. The casual reader might have wondered why, after a paragraph or two decrying the domination of Physical Education at Old Goreham by homosexuals and lesbians, there were no one-liners, no thigh-slappers, no anecdotal hilarities. If there are so many gags up there, why aren't there any in the article, why . . . ? Omigod! They meant, they meant . . . GAYS! GAYS RAMPANT. GAYS RAMPANT IN GYM! And then, of course, once the typo was set right, there's room for plenty of guffaws about the header intended, which has charm and stupidity enough to qualify for some other prize, the Dipso being out of reach.

But the article was, for sure, a hard-hitting piece of work, written by Junior, Jr., himself and naming names, you bet, and hinting pretty clearly about the nature, if that's the wrong word, of the activities he had "uncovered" by dint of good old-fashioned journalistic enterprise and ill will. He did not name Philippa Bird, ace investigative reporter. He wanted to. She was to be the very axis of the story. She would yield those wonderfully juicy quotes about general and particular nastiness going on up there in the locker rooms and on the massage tables. (Mercy!) But she nix-ed it. No way, she said. My name does not appear in this article. I don't exist as far as this article is concerned. If you mention Philippa Bird, you are a dead man. I will call you a liar in front of the entire student body.

Philippa did tell Junior, Jr., what took place between herself and Big Ed. Told him most of it. Told him enough of it. Did not tell him how confused her own feelings were in consequence of the feeling of Big Ed's muscular arms around her,

strong hands kneading her shoulders, her hair soft against Philippa's cheek. All Junior, Jr., really needed to hear was that the coach had touched Philippa, had, in gross, disgusting, nauseating fact, turned off the lights and touched her. What does a crusading journalist need, after all? Give the crusader a hint that holy places are in the wrong hands, in jeopardy even, and what does the crusader do? Well, you got your armor and your pikes and your strongbows and your horses and a roadmap and a thermos of coffee and you're OFF, man! not to return without the head of the infidel and a shipload of pepper, establishing beyond dispute that the distinction between crazed zealot and cunning businessman is often negligible.

GAGS RAMPANT IN GYM

THE RIGHT VOICE has learned that the Physical Education Department of Old Goreham is a nest of practicing homosexuals. Through intensive investigative work, RV can now disclose that women's basketball in particular has been taken over by lesbians. The two star forwards, Dan and Don, are known by many on campus to be conducting a depraved and unnatural relationship with one another. Not only are there lesbians among the players but Coach Spitalny herself is a blatant lesbian preying on innocent young women who go out for the team. An RV reporter (whose anonymity will be protected) was a victim of this animalistic behavior. She is reported to be in stable condition and resting comfortably after her ordeal. The nauseating details she recounts, including totally unsolicited touching and even embracing, are enough to make a solid, straight American cry out for punishment, severe punishment for the perpetrators.

It's another example of what can happen in a society as persuasive as ours is. Experts say that most deviates and perverts were raised according to the prescriptions of Dr. Spock, the notorious baby doctor who later became a television actor.

RIGHT VOICE demands that Dean Knoedler conduct an inquiry into the repulsive behavior now documented by this journal. Decency in American society has never been more in danger than it is right now. Evidence of such subversion right on our campus cannot be ignored. As a minimum step, Coach Spitalny, who brought a questionable reputation to campus with her, must go.

We demand also that certain testing techniques be developed so that applicants to Old Goreham who are queer can be identified. Rejection of such applicants as a routine matter should then follow. OLD GOREHAM DOES NOT WANT QUEERS. RIGHT VOICE maintains there must be enough heterosexual high school seniors to fill our enrollment needs. OLD GOREHAM DOES NOT NEED QUEERS.

RIGHT VOICE will continue its vigilance in this wretched affair. Our chief concern is the good of Old Goreham College. Just think what might happen if word of this kind of filthy, disgusting, and degrading behavior should get out to the public. We have our alumni to think of, and potential contributors to the capital fund drive. We'll do our part to keep this in the family. It's family values, after all, that made this country great.

Now, the fact is, the circulation of THE RIGHT VOICE is so low, and the readership within THAT so much lower, the paradoxically published claim to want to keep the whole matter quiet might have had some credibility. One might have assumed that since hardly anybody read the thing, no one would take a fit or an umbrage or any of those things people often take when they have the smallest imaginable amount of information.

The problem for somebody like Frank Loess, Total Dean, however, is that he can't be dead certain for sure that there won't be at least one reader and that one reader right out of the bunch the article talks about: alumni, potential contributors—and then there are trustees, for heaven's sake, there are parents, some of whom read as well as their children, there are foundation and corporate executives, who can't, but never mind, their secretaries can. You don't need squads and battalions of readers. You only need one to put Total Loess in one of your acidic, corrosive, ulcerative states of mind. When comes such another? Pretty damned soon if some Mr. Big sees this poisonous stuff.

Loess, of course, is not the head of the college. We've got us a president for that, and we haven't even met him yet, for a very acceptable reason having nothing to do with the fact that when last encountered on campus—sometime during the Nixon years—he displayed all the personal magnetism of a mango. He's always off somewhere grovelling and swooning and writhing about trying to get people to give money to the college. It's a wonderful line of work, full of honor and undignified behavior. Frank Dean, then, in the perpetual absence of the president, who has taken on the legendary status of an Odysseus in his ten-year journey back from the country clubs of Grosse Point and who has been gone so long people have forgotten his name, his wife has collected on his insurance, and a commemorative portrait has been commissioned, Frank it is who must anticipate, must peer a half hour or so into the future.

Got to make a move before the phone rings so he can say everything's under control, action is being taken, problem, on the way to resolution. Not to worry.

Old Goreham 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, horsedung 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 admitted here. 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.

Mollifying everyone, that's what Frank must plan on. What are the moves he must make so that when called upon to explain the college, he may do it with only a modicum of unalloyed 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 and the peering, what should he behold but . . . penises, yes, penises 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-h-ver the very glans of it so that when they finished patting down the wrapping, the penis, fully sheathed and thereby estopped from careless distribution of the life-giving sperm—impervious, too, to any impertinent microbe, be it friendly or bogey—glistened 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, AHCHOO (Ad Hoc Committee Hoping to Overcome Ovation), not affiliated with Planned Parenthood but hooked up for the current crisis with Gee-PERSS (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 heeled about quickly from this vision. He disbelieved in the existence of the scene now behind 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 want to ask. Why has Total Frank reacted this way? Well, sir, it falls out that practically within arm's length of Our Dean at this very moment is a poster carefully tucked away there in the file cabinet. It had arrived after a particularly acrimonious faculty meeting, Dean Loess presiding, this poster—addressed to Dean Prick and landing without detour on Frank's desk—displaying penises from a dozen different species in their relative proportions, from the whale (*peno humungoloid*) down through *homo sapiens* to the mink, whose little appendage (all things being inescapably relative here) was said and shown to be eternally *in erecto*. Frank had meant to throw away the penis poster. But hadn't done so. We don't know why and we simply won't engage in speculation. There in the dark of his file drawer it remained, however . . . except for those occasions when Frank drew it out and gazed upon the variety and sizes, especially the sizes, of the samples. For Our Dean the irreducible quiddity of that poster, its ineluctable *daness*, the *hic haec hoc* and *ding an sich* of it, has its own proportions, you bet.

Anyhow, here's Dean Frank with this little secret, at least it was a secret the last he knew except that there seem to be a number of students in front of his office erecting what by all odds are the largest replications of anyone's secret anyone's ever seen. Who? Frank hooted. Who could know? Who could have broken into my files and . . . ? He forced himself to go back to the window now, just to the curtain edge of it. He took a peek and then swung back, clutching at his chest. Who? Who? How? How?

He went over to his file cabinet and unlocked it. There in its expected place was the expected poster. What then? He peeked out the window again. The second penis, nothing if not grander than the first, was now adorned with its simulacrum of latex and it shimmered there, a maple leaf pausing on the very tippy-top of it as an autumn breeze caressed the campus and the new structures so solidly established there. Returning to the file cabinet, Loess Dean opened the bottom drawer now and, pushing aside several documents, discovered there a bottle of Grand Marnier and a shot glass. He poured himself a blast and knocked it back, shuddering with the impact and the shock of what was transpiring just thirty yards away from where he stood



The last time he had sought solace in the Grand Marnier was a year ago when students had erected a shack city in just the same place, a half dozen little shed-like affairs hammered together from scrap wood and intended to simulate the conditions of Africans living in slums under the heel of apartheid. To be accurate, he hadn't sprung to the file because of the rising of the shacks. A few days later, however, students with a different turn of mind (if that's not over-stated) demolished the shacks with extreme prejudice, meaning that several of the protestors were asleep in the shacks at the time and became indignant as the contusions mounted. Well, the press had pretty much ignored the shacks intact, but shacks in demolition are another matter, genuinely newsworthy in the best tradition of media thoughtfulness and judgement. Thus it was that with film crews and print types and state police and 'most everybody from college and town and not a few out-of-staters just outside his office window a year ago, Total Loess had taken time out from the jolly hurly-burly and thrown down not one but two snorts of the Grand Marnier.

Only remotely similar, however, the current erection. A year ago, Loess had reached for the phone and called the college lawyer, a sleepy little man in Montpelier whose practice was largely a dummy operation to cover a fairly robust inclination toward drink. His name was Morris, which had occasioned a slapping of the Loess forehead with the Loess palm and the exclamation, while the phone rang endlessly, O' tempora, O' Morris! Finally, the lawyer was of little use, counselling only that when lawsuits started flying around, the college should plead, in effect, *nolo contendere* and let the student groups fight it out among themselves. Not what you'd call your hyperactive jurisprudence, but Morris had an appointment with a case of Guinness and a steak and kidney pie imported from a gourmet take-out in Keene. He had his priorities in hand.

Dean 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 these 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 sublimely 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 hammers? 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 as 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 inutterably 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 sinecure 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 Knoedler's number. Both of these matters seemed appropriately addressed to the Dean of Students. These were students, after all, erecting penises on the quad and writing stories in newspapers about deviates in the locker room (GAGS! 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.

**Richard Flanagan
Fairfield**

teaches in Massachusetts, drives a lot.



Madame Cezanne in the Conservatory, c. 1890

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
 entryway, forever closed. Whatever
 thrush sang there is silent, whatever tone
 of light's too pure. The panic in her eyes,
 the little clutch 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 precarious, a modern woman.
 He is like a surgeon, better than human,
 excising the irrelevant, to bone
 devoted, the precise, perpetual stone.
 He paints her in raptures of dry sunlight,
 sketches her quickly and lingers on the colors—
 stiff as Giotto's figures—memorialized,
 forever waiting, forever to be teased,
 until his father says, "Marry her!"
 He turns to painting Mt. St. Victoire.

P.B. Newman
 Charlotte N.C.
 teaches at Queens College
 Charlotte, N.C.

Recurring Dream

Nearly once a week
 I go at night
 to this red house—
 red like a tail light, a radish, a scar.
 I can walk it eyes closed.
 The chairs never move. Old, black dog
 on a stained sheet never lifts its head.
 Smell of chicken skin
 and my own blood.
 I fear every set of stairs,
 unplug anything that makes noise.
 There's no true time there.
 Sometimes mom is young.
 Sometimes dad isn't dead.
 Sometimes sisters are fat.
 Other times vanishing.
 Always I am barefoot.
 And always I run out the kitchen door into the mud yard, running so that
 everything before doesn't matter, so that everything is gone and there is only
 that place where the trees overhead part, that place where I can stand and see
 eagles overhead, eagles slow circling lower and lower.

I fear waking with dirty feet.
 For it will mean I've tracked my dream life
 over into this life.
 And then I won't really be sleeping
 with you.
 But if I have to lose you
 I'd want it to be to the night.

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 all we do is 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,
 everyone 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 scrawling 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 by Maine standards."

"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, ME to Berkeley, CA. Berkeley—that would be pronounced "Barkly" 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, his family's health, and brief flat answers. The waitress at The Brookside Diner greeted them warmly. The professor frequently stopped here on trips between Brunswick and Portland to satisfy his secret sugar habit. Now she smiled and said, "Enjoy," as she sat down slabs of strawberry-rhubarb pie, the homemade french vanilla ice cream beginning to drizzle over the sides of the warm pie.

"Galen," the grandfather said, a gob of pie halfway to his mouth, "do you believe in an external reality?" Galen stared. "Well, take this table." The grandfather tapped it. "Is it here at night when no one is here to see it?"

The boy looked slightly embarrassed. "Sure it's here—unless—unless someone moved it."

"But how do you know? Can you prove it?"

Galen became serious. "I could tie a long string to it and take the other end of the string with us—then pull on it."

"Good try! But suppose Janice here," he pointed to the waitress, "moved the string, tied it to something else?"

"Come on, Grandfather! I mean, of course it's here. It's real."

"But not so easy to prove. I agree with you, Galen, but I can't prove it. You see, it was Berkeley that got me thinking about this—that you come from Berkeley."

Galen waited, hoping for something more informative. "You know, Galen, the city of Berkeley is named after the Bishop Berkeley—Barkly is how they pronounce it in England—and Berkeley had this theory that things only exist when they are perceived, when someone can see, hear, feel, or smell them. So—when no one was here . . ."

Galen grinned. "Like the tree in the forest thing. I've heard Mike and Millicent talk about that."

"Exactly. Like the tree in the forest. I think there'd been sound waves there even if I wasn't, don't you?" Galen nodded, sucking the last of the pie juice from the edge of his fork. "So, Galen, I believed in you. I'd never seen you, or heard you, but I knew you were there—and I've loved you, and your mother, all these years." He was careful not to look directly at the boy. "The logic is pretty weak, I know, but that's the best I can do, without coffee.

Janice! The usual for me and hot chocolate for my friend."

"Now, enough of this mush: right Galen? Tell me, do you like football? What team do you root for? The Indians or the Trojans?"

"The Indians—but I like baseball better—the Cleveland Indians."

"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 canoe and if we varnish it this afternoon we can have it in the water tomorrow."

Robert M. Chute
Poland Spring
teaches biology at Bates



The Movie of My Life

In the movie made of my life, working title *Born on the 19th of June: A Poet in Maine*, I'm played by Leslie Howard, but he can't be gotten—he's dead—so it'll have to be one of the crop of new sensitive actors, but which ones are they? In truth, there's nary a one could do justice to my powerful story.

Who could possibly capture the way in which I put my children to bed, sing as well as I do "My Little Buckaroo" over the crib railing? Who can portray the tormented writer shutting the cat out in the coyote night and staring for many minutes at the snow falling past his window?

Peter Sellers is dead, so is Cary Grant, but neither would really work in the role. Gary Cooper, may he rest in peace, doesn't have my *savoir faire*, and as much as I admired James Bond as a youth, I'm just too local and peace-loving for the likes of Sean Connery.

The opening scene, showing me as a lad in Carl Schurtz Park, making an extraordinarily long run on my sled, would need to be shot numerous times, from different angles, to truly bring out the exaltation and fear in my eyes. A decent boy actor would fit in just fine here—perhaps the young Jimmy Stewart, but I don't think he started acting till he was well into his 'teens, and he's a bad poet anyway.

My long-haired days call for a method man who knows the ins and outs of hormonal drives, and who wouldn't mind being called "tinsel teeth." Among the highly charged episodes will be my initiation to the opposite sex, played by a youthful Ingrid Bergman, 'natch, but she's gone too, out of my life and into the next.

Casting for my family will be extra difficult. Ideally, Joan Fontaine and Gregory Peck could play my parents (they're both alive). The movie should have a happy ending, with maybe an aerial shot of Mt. Katahdin, which I've never climbed, but plan to.

Music by Ravel, Steppenwolf, Doc Watson and a host of others. Directed by Kubrick, but if he's not available, Kurasawa. Finding backing may not be that easy, but if they care an ounce for me, they'll come up with the dough.

Carl Little
Mt. Desert
writes and edits on the Island



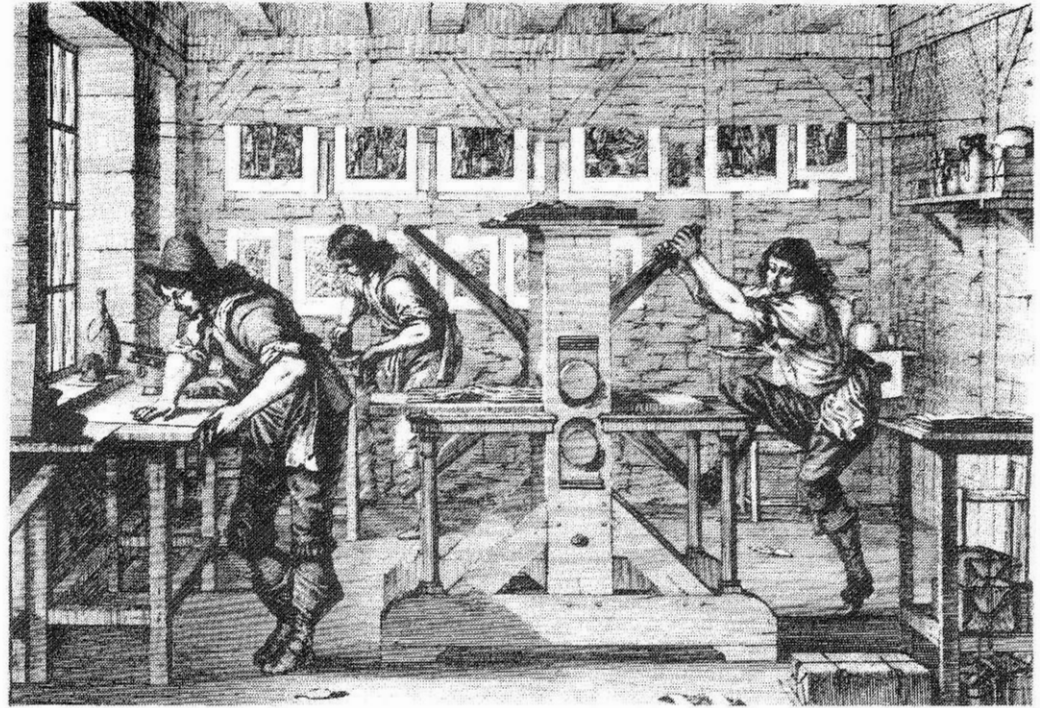
Leslie Howard

Sonata

I have heard the argument for
an early spring. The hummingbird, like
an insect on lucid wings, shimmers its strike
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, burnishing in the sun outside the door.

A swallow bangs 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



Abraham Bosse "Printer's Workshop" (Etching: 1642)

Songs and Sonnets/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, dotted with "sprung rhythm"); anchored in the present; salted with images and portents of the natural world; and thematic—taken together these poems inscribe 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 his distant love: "Tires hum. Your voice, almost caught/ echoes in the vacant space of thought."

It seems no poet has attained the escape velocity to be free of love and its concerns, its relentless gravity. Its echoes are in the wind in traffic, the little streams of an ebbing tide, a simple gull, a song that resurrects the moment it is heard, the same tree lit by different seasons. All these are here to prick the heart's consciousness.

On the level of direct subject this collection is nearly halved between poems on the real object of the poet's love (in this case a woman) and those on the fragile possibility of love itself. In several poems—notably "December: Delivery 1990"—we find ominous images of the Gulf War, a man-made storm in the landscape of love.

*The molten sand sends up a shield that blinds
the soldier's eye, but not the screen that swings
the target splash, or the seeking shell that finds
the blood between the steel . . .*

The love poems here are as indirect as light reflected on a wall. Usually a single image or sound is the key to revealing the woman who is loved and how she is

loved. When it works, the effect can be enchanting, as in "Route 77 North: 9 November, '90"; "Mid-Winter, 1991"; and, especially, "#19 in A Minor: 5 May."

*Within that second of nature we both belong.
The window watched the moon define the trees
below the gray-wash of April, and touched along
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 targets. 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 masques 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:

*waking me at dawn
from the drift of dreaming,
keeping time with me
in the pulse of the shower
as I restructured her face,
standing there before me
on the grey window.*

One thinks of Lorca's *Verde que te quiero 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
teaches at Cornell, taught at Unity,
UMO & UMF

The Horse Painter

Today in the field I saw
the hard, black spots of the appaloosas
and wanted to rope their necks
to capture them forever.
These are not your horses, drawn
with crayons and scraped ardously down
to expose the essence of the beast,
like love long dormant emerging again
through centuries on a cave wall.

I stand apart from history,
from the body of lost correspondence
we inhabit, trying to describe
how you would begin with line
and then fill in the form with color
to reveal the underlying bodies,
like a man who has always known
there are no true lines in nature.

It startles me,
the swiftiness of the horses

**Kathleen Lignell
Bucksport**

Red Horses/ Kathleen Lignell

Northern Lights Press, Orono, ME 04473, 1991, \$7.95.

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 coyote howl, I begin to think I will be/ alone for the rest of my life."

A Californian living in Maine for many years, the writer is bi-coastal—in earlier prose, *The White Buffalo*, as in *Calamity*, she explores the American west, as she does here, evoking the character of John Muir, the founder of the Sierra Club, and Ansel Adams; however, half the volume is set back East—Quebec, Millinocket, Campobello, Grand Manan. The contrast energizes. The west, for her, real or imagined memory (yes, imagined memory) is seen through a softer lens, suggesting dream and archetype; images of the northeast are sharper, brighter, a perilous and sometimes painful present. The west is landscape, the northeast weather. Lignell may be catching the dual source of her own aesthetic power when she says of Jane: "The girl out of reach, gone; / the girl too clear, too close, / she is still coming and going."

The reader spends most of the book out-of-doors, appropriately, as this is no tearoom poet, and the controlling image is *sight*: one of the three sections refers to a painting, the other two are "The Sighting" 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 flake off like a blade of rock." Of Jane, she comments: "She spoke evenly / pulling her 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, molting, "Skins, old projectiles, the brittleness of snakes. / What is most volcanic we value most." The poetry itself is crisp, without being brittle: cool, without being serene; tough, yet terribly tender.

T.P.

Fiddle Lane/Thomas Carper

The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1991, \$10.95

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 five free of rhyme sit 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 Millay. What Thomas Carper is, is a sonneteer. He writes them in all kinds of shapes, 4+4+4+2, seven 2s, but favors the 14-line block ending with a fresh couplet (*odd*: God, for example, or wittily, *amuse*: kazoos). A superb technician, Carper manages the demanding form with an 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 (*spigot*: stick it), but best is his imaginative off-rhyming (*boughs*: house; *hell*: until; *walls*: shelves; *last*: chest). A professor of literature at USM, he has been working on these poems for years, and his dedication shows: he knows when not 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 poem 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 Carper's wife Janet, who in their backyard photographed flowers that appear on the cover, she is also the subject of 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 talks clearly. Less successful are poems on art (Corot, Van Gogh, Barlach bronzes) 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. Coursen, *printed here*), some seize the sonnet, shake it up, and show that the tennis ball's *splat* Frost feared in free verse need not be heard. Feeling *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 slow breathing would become so deep
It seemed that she might slip beyond recall.
Then I would touch her; then she would revive;
Then, when her eyelids opened and a small
Smile would greet me, hope would come alive.
With morning, the ordeal was over. Gone
Was every trace of illness. A soft rain
Had swept across the countryside at dawn,
So even our garden was made fresh again.
Then Janet went among our roses where
She and the roses shone in luminous air.

**Thomas Carper
Cornish**

Midsummer Passion & Other tales of Maine Cussedness/ Erskine Caldwell

Introduction by Upton Birnie Brady
Edited by Charles G. Waugh & Martin Greenberg
Yankee Books, Camden, Maine ©1989, \$11.95

Review

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 crutch and cursed her.

The girl jumped away and ran to the other side of the kitchen.

The room was wet with mid-summer mists. There were little balls of water in the dusty spider-web over the stove and a thin stream of water trickled at intervals down 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 me? You damned little sneak! Bring me a pail of berries before I take this crutch and kill 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 nailed 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 soppy moss grew all over the walls. It dripped on the picture of Grandfather Twilly that hung over the melodeon, making streaks down the dirty glass like sweat on the old man's face. It was a mean face. Grandfather Twilly had been a mean man and had little spots of soup on his coat lapel. All his children were mean and had soup 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 crumbs that she found in the bottom of her reticule. You would have hated her. She hated herself. But most of all she hated Grandfather Twilly.

I returned to "The Lonely Day." Katherine tears off to the pasture for berries, knowing full well the old woman will beat her up if she doesn't hurry. A State Road borders the berry field. As the automobiles speed past, filled with tourists on their way to the Provinces, Katherine hears their voices and laughter. She thinks she hears a car stop. She's curious but must keep on with her berrying. By noon her pail is full. She starts to run towards the house. Crossing the footbridge over a stream she hears men and women shouting and laughing downstream. She cannot resist investigating. She comes upon a group of young people. They are naked, swimming and chasing one another through the underbrush. Katherine becomes excited. She wants to take off her clothes and join the party. But the weight of the berry pail reminds her of the real world.

Back at the house the old woman grabs the berries and starts eating. All Katherine does the rest of the afternoon is think about the fun the young people are having. If she could only join them. She peers out all the windows but the mist is too thick to see far. Finally, after supper (by then the old woman has finished off the blueberries and gone to bed) Katherine, now in her nightgown, steals from the house and returns to the scene of the party. They are gone. She thinks she hears shouting and laughter from the highway and runs to the road. It is now after midnight, the road deserted. She throws off her nightgown. She had so wanted to join the men and women and have them see her. We find her, in the first light of day beside the road "made lifeless by an automobile," - naked but smiling - "the most beautiful woman whom tourists speeding to the Provinces had ever seen."

If such an innocuously titled story could contain all this, I thought, what vistas might be contained in the title story? "Midsummer Passion," Caldwell's first published story, appeared in *transition*, an English language literary magazine printed in France.

The story's first paragraph sets the scene. A thunderstorm has ruined Ben Hackett's first-crop hay. He is so mad "he felt like killing somebody." Then Ben's return along a lane to his farm on his hayrack is blocked by an empty automobile. Ben is really pissed off. He fails in an attempt to move the car. He happens to glance inside the car, opens the door and pulls out a pair of silk stockings, which for some reason excites him. He finds a nearly empty jug of hard cider under the steering wheel. While finishing it off he notices "a garment" on

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, silkish, pretty, and there was very little of it. Ben fingers the drawers, looks inside, smells them. Suddenly he realizes - "It's a female thing all right!"

Getting back on his hayrack 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 out in her garden picking peas for supper. With one hand feeling 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 hayrack, Ben circles Fred's wife, then dives on her. They struggle, tearing up most of the pea patch as Ben attempts to pull the drawers up over her feet, while at the same time worrying that Fred will come home and find the pea patch all 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 going 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 that Elam has gone off to Lewiston without saying a word to him. This has happened before, in fact seems to happen several times a year and Max is furious. "Nobody but a plain fool would go to Lewiston and give a woman five-ten dollars for her bed."

Now they had talked this over before and Max did not approve. There was always the possibility Elam would not return alone. Max knew he could never get over Elam's bringing home somebody with him. It would upset Max's carefully planned living. Max can do nothing when Elam is away. He was used to seeing Elam about almost any time of day. Without Elam at home Max has difficulty continuing his work. He could never get over Elam'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 awry, ill-suited to his characters. It is in his attempt to present Maine characters that Caldwell falters.

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 go as far away as possible in order to gain a revealing perspective of the scene and circumstances of life in the South." Mt. Vernon was chosen because of an offer of free rent, a chance to grow their own food, cut their own wood, in exchange for custodial care.

So, on a Mt. Vernon farm for about five years Erskine Caldwell wrote the tales contained in *Midsummer Passion*. They offer valuable insight into the development of Caldwell's writing because it was during the same 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* writes 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 'nuff 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 tight-fistedness. I find little in these stories to support this. There is the character who lets his house and barn burn flat 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 sex, either overt or ... the sort usually referred to as soft core." I find, counting the stories already described, nine of the twenty are overtly sexual. Take, for example, "The Mating of

Marjorie."

First, note Caldwell's choice of *mating* rather than *courtship* in his title. The opening reveals Marjorie has been corresponding with Nels for some time. Nels has stated he wants a wife. Marjorie has sent him her picture. She is beautiful. Nels has sent his. "... lean muscles stretching over his face to his chin... filling her with passion for the man with whom she would mate... He would do with her as he pleased." Marjorie is twenty four and ready for love. "Her lips were soft and her body firm." Nels is coming all the way from Minnesota to marry her. Marjorie spends hours preparing a room for him.

Nels arrives on the noon train from Boston. Marjorie picks him up at the station and drives him home. They go for a walk. Nels enjoys the evening meal she has prepared. They pass the evening looking at photographs, though Marjorie was hoping for a bit more action. Finally Nels says he'd like to go to bed. Marjorie goes up and turns down his bed. *Suppose she should hide in the bed and Nels found her there - what would happen!* She doesn't.

Next morning after breakfast Nels asks what time the train leaves for Boston. Marjorie is upset but tells herself Nels will return. He's probably going to Boston to get some presents for her. At the station Marjorie, now desperate, invites him to return. Nels replies, "Thank you. I'm going home to Minnesota and I'll not be back again."

We never learn why Nels rejects Marjorie. Marjorie returns home. Eyes blinded by tears she pulls off her clothes and throws herself between the sheets where Nels had lain. Night falls. Marjorie rises, jerks off the bed clothes and tenderly folds them in her cedar chest and lies down on her bed. "Good night, Nels," she whispered softly, her fingers touching the smooth lid of her cedar chest.

Unfortunately in many of these stories Caldwell pays little attention to motivation. Was Nels frightened off by Marjorie's not quite concealed passion? It's too bad that William Faulkner, having written "A Rose for Emily" a few years earlier, was not around to give Caldwell a few pointers. The two never met and Faulkner had doubts about Caldwell's writing. Still, we can imagine a conversation.

F. - Erskine, we've got to know why Nels runs out on Marjorie.

C. - O.K., so she's got the hots for him. So what's wrong with him?

F. - What if he never intends to marry her? Maybe he's into answering lonely hearts letters and traveling around the country having a ball. Show that by having Marjorie jump in Nels bed and wait for him.

C. - O.K., so Nels hangs around a few days and then takes off.

F. - You got it. But you have Nels come back, just as my Yankee friend did with Emily. After all, you've told us Marjorie is beautiful and really stacked.

C. - So, then what? Marjorie wants to get married. Didn't Emily?

F. - You might say that.

C. - Well dammit, tell me how! I been here in Maine now two years, living on rutabagas and potatoes, trying to stay warm burning green birch. I want to get published, make some money and get the hell out of here.

F. - O.K., here's what we do. When Nels returns the first time we don't turn it into an orgy. Just loose enough to make him promise to return again after he goes back to Minnesota and sells his farm. We could work in a bit of humor by having Marjorie overhear Nels at the station asking for a ticket to Macon. She isn't sure where Macon is except it isn't the hell out west. But Nels handles that by telling her about the grain harvester he plans to sell. All the Minnesota farmers buy and sell their grain harvesters in Macon.

C. - And then he comes back to Maine. Right?

F. - Now you're into it. Only this time Nels and Marjorie really get into the swing of things. After a couple of weeks the gossip is really going. But Marjorie doesn't care. She knows Nels is going to marry her. He agrees but tells her he has one last trip to make - to Baltimore. However, while he's gone Marjorie discovers (work this out any way you choose) that Nels is married, has six children and his wife is suing for divorce, claiming non-support. Now, what does Marjorie do?

C. - Caldwell smiles. Now I read you. I've read "A Rose for Emily." You're sure you won't mind?

F. - Two different stories, my friend. Mine's more into Naturalism and the post-bellum South. Just stick with Realism.

So Caldwell goes to his typewriter and a new ending for "The Mating of Marjorie." Nels has returned to Marjorie from Baltimore. The last we see of Marjorie she has fallen asleep in her bed beside the cedar chest where, Nels hand in hers, he smiles up at her, his face fixed forever in the final grimace of death.

It is important to remember that all the stories of *Midsummer Passion* were written in the same few years (1928-1933) that Caldwell was writing *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre*, his finest fictional achievements. Shortly after (1936), James Thurber paid him that classic tribute only the best writers receive—the accolade of parody. In "Bateman Comes Home" Thurber vents his confusion of several Southern novels with *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre*.

He begins—

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 chewing 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 explorations in an unfamiliar 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 to express it. It will be Erskine Caldwell's ironic sense of humor by which he will be remembered.

G.B. Clark
Inverness, Fla.
is a retired professor
& founder of Kennebec



Few realize that Erskine Caldwell wrote *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre* in Mt. Vernon, Maine

Ed. 's Note: Caldwell's autobiography, *With All My Might*, contains much interesting material about his years in Maine in the early 1930s (Peachtree Publishers, LTD, 494 Armour Circle, N.E., Atlanta, 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 the need 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 activity. 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 farm and buildings in Mount Vernon where, for our own use, I would be able to grow potatoes and rutabagas for food and to cut wood for warmth. At the time, being able to live free of rent and grow 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 Bastard* 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)

Repairs: Part II of a Long Poem/

Review

Pick A Card/ Betsy Sholl

David Gordon

National Poetry Foundation, U.M., Orono ME 04469 ©1991, \$9.95

David Porter and His Time Machine

Repairs is the second book of a projected ten-book poems: the reviewer approaches the task with the trepidation of a 17th century explorer setting sail for a circumnavigation or a hopeless search for a northwest passage. In his review to the first book of the series, *Outward*, one reviewer said "David Gordon's modest subject is merely 500 years of local history, inland exploration, sea trade, Indian conflicts... The Revolutionary War..." Text sources for the second book are less limited.

Repairs is framed by the use in the first and last segments of an Abenaki phrase, transliterated and translated as *Netésskénetsbena*, "we sing in response to the song." Then we meet Captain David Porter of the U.S. Frigate Essex, one of several characters carried over from book one. Porter's ship is careened (for repairs) and text is drawn from his journal of a voyage to the South Pacific, published in 1822. I am perversely reminded of the Dave Porter series of boy's books I read in my small town library fifty years ago. The one I recall most clearly, *Dave Porter in the Frozen North*, had a fine impression of a full-rigged ship embossed on the cover.

The next twenty pages present a Rashomon-like treatment of the trial of American seamen accused of killing a British officer while resisting a press-gang. Fourteen pages intervene before we learn the verdict: justifiable homicide. The intervening material contains reference to "nature's primary law" (survival, self-defense, struggle?), "phyletic memory," as well as snippets in various languages, including ideograms. We begin to meet references to organic evolution, embryological development and popular cosmology, blended into the author's current experience.

The 35 pages of section III are an equally discursive excursion. There is an ambiguous episode with Old Linnie, a carry-over from book one, an abortive drive in a Maine snow storm, interspersed with nine treatments of larval development of marine animals, in a presumed evolutionary sequence. There is an episode in the life of a girl, Felicite, time and place uncertain. Then we time-warp back to the age of August and Herod. The fourth and final section finds Carla in the laboratory, apparently learning about the immune system and the functions of white blood cells. Material drawn from popular treatments of animal behavior follow—and we are suddenly with General Gage, Paul Revere, and the Minute Men. The defeat of the British regulars and their route is combined with flashbacks (in bold face below) to the treatments of animal behavior and the immune system: the redcoats representing the invading pathogens/predators and the Minute Men the aroused animals or activated lymphocytes:

Pitcairn's shout opened fire—
saw friends fall—
draws whole clan: fired back.
News reached Worcester,
small lymphocytes,
thirty miles, forenoon,
ride to combat.

What are we to make of this polymath performance with its polyglot inclusion of bits of French, Chinese, Greek, Hindi (?), Arabic (?), this pastiche of poems, prose fragments, literary and historical references and allusions? In his entertaining BBC poetry broadcasts Alan Bennett describes different types of obscurity in poetry. The obscurity in David Gordon's long poem is the type found in Pound's *Cantos* or Eliot's *Wasteland*: you know right away you're not going to understand because you don't have the references. Gordon does provide some notes to sources. Foreign words, he says in the notes, are usually translated in the phrase preceding or following (sense taking precedence over sound?). The reader must come to share the author's specific, diverse, linguistic, cultural and reading experience. The result is, in an odd way, a poem as personal as a confessional lyric.

What theme or themes might bind all this together? Clearly the struggle of humankind (and unkind) for freedom from oppression is a major focus of the poem: opposition to a press-gang, the urge to explore, resistance of Jews in the Polish ghetto, Ghandi's campaign in India, The American Revolution. Apparently Gordon melds this human struggle to the forces of organic evolution and the processes of individual development: phylogeny and ontogeny. This is, for a Biologist, problematical, implying a progressive, purposefully aspect, "nature's primary law" (a 'life force?'), which I can not accept.

Robert Chute
Poland Spring
teaches Biology at Bates

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 a 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 shoves suffering in our faces, but with an ironic smile and a great sense of rhythm and style. She needles us, jars us out of complacency, makes us feel uncomfortable, yet manages to make us want to ask for more.

In an essay in *The Eloquent 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 it "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. She deftly travels from the intensely personal to the political and back. In the opening poem, "Real Faux Pearls," she moves from childhood memory to her grandmother's life, to coal miners, "thin lungless men, never as old as they look," back to her own present despair. In "Thinking of you, Hiroshima," her 40th birthday bash 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 misfirings 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 set in distressingly small type). They will probably agree with Donald Hall, the competition's judge—who sadly did NOT write as had been the custom a short essay elucidating his choice—that this is "a book of adult experience and strong feeling, in which the irony examines and protects 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 soup kitchen
emitting the most beatific smile
waiting to see what ring-strangled hand will lift a spoon
to his face—his face which he'll nuzzle 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 to jail
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 I was this dyslexic kid
filling out forms and misread Dog for God,
I'd wad it up too
and stomp 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

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 I 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 Grownups*." 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 anthologists, 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 *Rosier'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 Tagliabue, Ted Enslin, and Constance Hunting.

Now, 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 fond of poems and stories about pretty scenery and quaint people.

I started by doing some selective pruning. I should probably here explain that if something new were to be included, something old might well have to go: I wanted to include Hawthorne's "Roger Malvin's Burial," for example, but had to eliminate his sketch from *The American Notebooks* first. We knew right from the beginning that the Press couldn't afford a 500-page book, so I was aiming for somewhere around 330 pages. There was some stuff I had no trouble jettisoning: George S. Wasson's story "Rusticators at the Cove," for example, is pretty well unreadable today because of its almost impenetrable dialogue; I'm not a big fan of Arthur R. Macdougall's Dud Dean stories, so "And the Sun Stood Still" went, too. Now, of course, that's the great thing about being an anthologist: within reason, one can indulge her taste unrestrainedly. I didn't like it? It was history. Which is not to say I didn't compromise: some writers are beloved by many, beyond logic or reason, and after all, I do want the book to sell. And, no, I'm not going to tell you which writers I included while gritting my teeth every minute.

So, anyway, back to the first round of cuts. Sixteen poets were represented in the first edition, all by no fewer than three and as many as nine poems. That's a luxury I decided the second edition couldn't afford: instead, I decided to include two or three poems by Maine's most canonical writers, but only one poem by many writers perhaps unknown to some readers. More about 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 saner heads than mine prevailed (as it happens, I left it in, but decided to include "The Hiltons' 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 long, 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 Phippen 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 title 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 Phippen might grant resident status. Most noticeably, of course, Henry David Thoreau. Now if ever Maine has had an out-of-stater, 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 covers to some very exciting literature, notably in the poetry section. With Bill Carpenter's help, I found Wallace Stevens' 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 during 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 Keel of Lake Dickey"), a Princeton writer who spends a good deal of time in Maine and has written about it extensively; 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 because he doesn't pay his taxes here (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: "Gluskabe 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, I 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-written: Joseph Bruchac and Howard Norman.

Several other of Maine's minorities are represented by a story of Denis Ledoux's; A. Poulin, Jr.'s essay "Poetry and the Landscape of Epiphany" and his poem "Figures in a Stranger's Dream"; Willis Johnson's "Sarajevo," about the Maine's Russian emigres; a story about the Finns by Rebecca Cummings; and poetry about the Irish and about the Jews, by Leo Connellan 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, Cathie 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 *Mirabella*.

So anyway, here I am in Special Collections reading, reading, reading. It got so that I'd dread every issue of *Maine in Print*, because it usually meant 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 Shetterly 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 Sharkey, Baron Wormser, and Paul Corrigan. And last but not least your very own "From the Knees Down."

And that's when the fun 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 pennypinching 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 ago; 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 him- or herself 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 anthologizer 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? Casting 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 McPhee'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. So 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"—shipwreck 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 funding would end up shaping my book.

So that brings me to . . . right now. And right now, I'd 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, bureaucratic 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,
Marge

Margery Wilson
Detroit, ME
teaches English at UMO



Rockwell Kent, *Monhegan Headland*, India ink. David Traxel, *An American Saga*, NY: Harper & Row, 1980.

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 tigers to 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 fairylandscape.

This priestly-bald patrician 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 flats 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. No one 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 posterity 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 might 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-thirties, 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 was likeable but amateurish, though such a dangerously 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, snowbathing in the dawn, reflecting: "Out-of-doors to us is like another room."

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?"

N by 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, chockablock with black-and-white woodcuts. Kent was shipwrecked in the williwaw 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 movement of the sunlight. When suddenly that utter silence was shattered by a prolonged, wild, screaming yodel. It filled the valleys, leaped the hills and beat against the mountain faces; its echoes following the 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."

Salamina was his best, and by a pretty margin. This volume about his time in Greenland, beginning with the dear frontispiece of his spinning fjord lover hanging out some wash, was published in New York two years after his return from that palace of wood. "Greenland is different," writes Kent. "It is the world to Greenlanders. We come there as might visitors from Mars, come there, and stay 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, gesticulates, tells stories, colors himself up, colors himself down, like some mad child crayola architect never quite satisfied. Ask him what time it is, Gentle Reader (he vainly addresses his public just a whisker 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 astonishment at novelty. Taking the term *impressionism* literally, we want much deeper insights than the term implies. To call scenes, cultures, peoples, persons, picturesque is to betray our superficiality; to no *insider* is life picturesque."

Greenland Journal, his desultory final book, was about his return in the early summer of 1931 to Unknown Island. Based on his diaries, it seems to be a pasteurized fiduciary project; the sketches are not as fascinating, the prose itself is humdrum. It's obvious that Kent was growing weary of the struggle. "Between art and science," he writes, "science is the liar. . . ."

But sometimes art lost out. Despite Kent's romance with the running seas and towering 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 clear and 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."

Rockwell Kent, *Self-portrait*, India ink, David Traxel, *An American Saga*, NY: Harper & Row, 1980.



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 abstractions appear as the inevitable and perfect expression of a moribund 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 an obituary of 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, this 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 secret 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 . . . at times unutterably sad."

Michelangelo Buonarroti—"Painting in terms of sculpture."

Anthony 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 color in terms of light."

Jean-Francois Millet—"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 lonesomeness. His lovemaking 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 a courtyard and surprises 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 sex late, 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 Cathedral 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 Follies, 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 ages younger, when fairy godmothers sponsored all the babies, when Princesses were beautiful and good. . . ."

Then there was an independent young madcap named Lydia for a while, when

Rockwell Kent, untitled, from *N By E*, NY: Brewer & Warren, 1930



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 whichever of you swims across to meet me 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 foundering, 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 Marya, the luscious young daughter of a friend. 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: FLK. This did the trick; they married in April. That following summer, a friend (Egmont Arens) who noted his maverick ways wrote a letter of caution: "I think of you as we sat and talked one night. . . . You were humbler that night than I had ever known you to be. Humbler and more genuine than you had been for a long time. The real Rockwell is a greater man than the swashbuckling actor who parades under his hat so often. And Frances, so lovely, so warm, so gay and so grave—perhaps she will find a way to bring you to peace with yourself."

No such luck, because Salamina was on the horizon, on Unknown Island. The elegant sea-ice goddess of Greenland, where Kent lived for a couple of years beginning in 1931, was initially his *kifak* (housekeeper). They quickly became entangled: "I had gone to bed and Salamina was out. Coming home, she undressed in the dark. I called her to me. She came under the covers and nestled close. She resisted my advances, yielding when I desisted." He wrote a frisky book titled after her, though he dedicated the volume to Frances.

Anna. Unfaithful to Frances, Kent was also incapable of being true to his mistress. Anna was the demure young wife of an Eskimo friend; while on a hunting trip, he bought her body for a pipe and two cigars, though the actual transaction was not so harsh. But when he returned home to Salamina, he wound up naked on a stool in the kitchen: "I have things on me that bite," he confessed. Salamina pinched away the lice with her fingers, and she told him he had got exactly what he deserved.

Pauline was a "mature young Eskimo woman of twenty," according to Kent. He had moved to an untenanted house on an island off the coast of Greenland, and had written for a native friend a shopping list in sign language and pigeon Eskimo: rice, oatmeal, fish, coffee, canvases, a pretty girl. He was joking. But Pauline, round-cheeked stranger, was faithfully delivered, and they loved beneath the lemon sky.

Cornelia was another young Eskimo woman, in October of 1931. Let Kent tell the story: "Two nights ago the rumor got about that I was to meet Cornelia in the loft of the church at 9 o'clock. There was, it seems, wild excitement, and people rushed to tell the catechist. The catechist was outraged at the proposed desecration of the church. He'd lock the door at once. Thereupon 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 chagrined and crestfallen homecoming. But, while

the catechist and innumerable men, women and children gathered about in every nook and hiding place that the not too dark night afforded, to watch the rendezvous, there sat I quietly at home reading. Nor did I stir to keep my rumored tryst. The whole story of the planned tryst was completely false. The hour for it was 8 o'clock—not 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 I 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 specks 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 embarrassed. 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 laughing face shadowed against the blue zenith. After a time I awoke. I opened my eyes and saw her there, sitting up straight beside me. Her hand rested 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 codified and dressed in blue broadcloth and brass buttons. What we are not apt to realize is that such bedizened 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 secretary, and by the time she finished typing his first autobiography she became his final wife.

One of his 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 joyous illuminated mood, he once wrote: "Isn't it fortunate that no man or woman may ever have lived 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 unshared. It can accurately be said that females were crucial to him, to a fault.

Frank Johnson
Tenants Harbor
is a free-lance writer

Rockwell Kent, untitled, from *It's me O Lord*, NY: Dodd & Mead, 1955.

Rockwell Kent, 1882-1971

- 1882 Born June 21, in a house called *Solitude* in Tarrytown Heights, NY, to Rockwell Kent and Sara Holgate Kent.
- 1887 Father, a lawyer and a mining engineer, dies of typhoid.
- 1893 Attends various boarding schools in the Northeast, "seasonal orphanages" with a military framework and religious overtones. Excels in English, history and calligraphy; noted for illumined Spencerian penmanship.
- 1897 Launches professional art career, selling sets of dinner cards to Tarrytown Woman's Exchange, and produces family heraldry and pastoral china painting.
- 1900-02 Attends 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 or a railway engineer. Studies art under reactionary William Merritt 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.
- 1908 Marries Abbott Thayer's niece, 18-year-old Kathleen Whiting. Five children: Rocky, Kathleen, Clara, Barbara, Gordon.
- 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: "twin Georgian mansions joined by an arcade." In addition, hawks strawberries and vegetables from horse-drawn truck in workingclass neighborhoods.
- 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, Ruin And Eternity, Newfoundland Dirge, The House Of Dread, Man On A Mast*.
- 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 *Puck*.
- 1916-17 Sells painting for \$600, payable in monthly 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 join them, she refuses. Writes *Wilderness: A Journal Of Quiet Adventure 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 Manhasset; 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 Museum, 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.
- 1929 Shipwrecked off coast of Greenland. Lives in Godthaab, gathers material for bluewater adventure, *N By E*.
- 1930 Reaches fame as illustrator: *The Canterbury Tales, Beowulf, Moby Dick*.
- 1931-33 Greenland again: paints with a thumbless mitten in the cold; lives with a young Eskimo widow, Salamina. Titles book after her, although it's dedicated to his wife Frances.
- 1933 Printmaking and advertising: Steinway and Sons, American Car and Foundry Company. Hits the lecture circuit; shows lantern-slide films of Greenland. Publishes *Rockwellkentiana*, a book of prints.
- 1935-36 Revolutionary politics, from Alaska to Puerto Rico to Brazil. Returns to Greenland, with 11-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.
- 1939 Edits coffee-table *World-Famous Paintings*, published by Wise & Company.
- 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 from fashion.
- 1949-52 Attends World Congress For Peace, in Paris. Travels to Russia. Joins Stockholm Appeal, deploring future use of atomic weapons. Early civil rights confrontation in Florida, on behalf of assassinated black friend (Harry Moore, state director of NAACP).
- 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 that 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 Lord*, 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."
- 1962 *Greenland Journal* published by Ivan Obolensky, Inc.
- 1967 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."
- 1971 Stroke in late winter. Dies eleven days afterward, March 13th, in Champlaine Valley, NY.

Vers à Vendre

"Vers à vendre" is the message on hand-printed signs seen fairly often in rural Québec. Although my limited French left me wondering what these little signs meant, I conjectured that verscs were being offered for sale at a lot of unusually poetic farm houses. Finally, I thought to look up the words in my French-English dictionary. "Vers," it turned out, *could* mean "verse." But it more likely is the plural of "ver," which means "worm." 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 yard-sale 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 customary line: "Je ne parle pas très 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 reeling. 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 I was with French, but he understood more quickly than his wife why I had stopped at their home. He led me behind the barn to show me several raised beds of earth, full of worms.

I stared blankly at the worm beds. Finally, working up my courage and guessing at the words, I asked, "Avez vous aussi des vers—les 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 not have understood my question, after all.

But then he returned. Carrying a large three-ring binder, he plunked it down on one of the tables and said, "Vers."

Sure enough. Centered on each loose-leaf page was a complete 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, "Combien?"

"Deux pièces," 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 this is what he wrote:

*Une femme charmante,
Qui en decorant
Chaque pièce avec des fleurs
A pris mon coeur.*

After further puzzling, 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 Douanier Américain,
U.S. Custom Inspector at T6 R19*

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 rod bends;
I've caught a nice one.*

**Jean Pincince
Tenants Harbor**

is a landscape gardener

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He Planted Carefully

*trees for the shape
they would have,
and the birds,
in twenty years,
and then moved away,
leaving a largess
to strangers,
strangers who ripped
out the green
to make room
for cars.*

**Richard Lyons
Gardiner**

*is a professor emeritus,
No. Dakota State U.*