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for he was a Georgia poet.

little poems

you write little poems
with your fingers,
 your mouth gently inscribes
 moist blood-glyphs
 on my pale belly.

blank walls
 are as nothing to you
 yours is the patience
 that etches time in crumbling sandstone,
 and love in a grafitti of yellow flowers.

his pirate lover

His pirate lover comes in the dusk
 at the time of the chiming of bells.
 Up from the sweet curling dark where the windjammers rest
 through streets cobbled with shadows.

In his house he waits
 in the slow vanilla dusk he watches
 two bitter sickle-legged cats haunting the alley
 prowling a tangled carrion of shadows, mewing.

With a sound of shadows his lover comes,
 prying open the latch with his gold-ringed fingers,
 to smile his smile of blithe sea-dying
 to tell his tales of dolphins in gold water.

And if the tale does not stir him,
 nor the smile break him
 his pirate lover bends above him
 (in the last smoldering amber light
 of the fire dying in the grate)
 he breathes slow salt kisses into his mouth
 takes his hands, grinds them
 to his loins

And the dark sea thunder
and the ancient ocean rhyming

last until dawn.

Ute Mountain Bear Dance

i

The pickup jolted along the dusty road into Towaoc.
I was watching the fusion of barbed-wire sunlight
 and red-gold earth;
 it was nearly noon.
You beside me, battling the steering wheel, singing:
 bittersweet country song
 beneath your breath.

The day ripened in my mouth.

ii

In the parking lot, bumper sticker
 (I'm Ute Indian and Proud)
shouted at us, from the tailgates of dusty pickup trucks.
We wandered, unsure, into the ragged ends of the crowd
and they, remarking our whiteness
 (one long unwavering stare)
turned away, guarding their eyes.

The ritual enclosure: an arena of tawny dust
 within a circle of twisted juniper trees.
Old women pondered the silence.

iii

The singing:
 like a fever of blood
 drumming in the ears
 it began,
 and the dancers woke from darkness
 to weave a web
 of sunlight
 shadow
 song.

iv

We watched old men eat mutton stew with plastic spoons
 fry bread dripping on the stubble of greasy chins.
Their mouths mumbled the words, even as they ate.

And the pounding cleansing music
And the weaving stamping dancers
 summoned gods,
 and praised mountains.

v

Something stirred within me
 some chanting presence making itself known
 pricking my white skin with tiny claws.

Around us
 the tarnished music sung
 in shining voices.
Old women with gnarled faces
 (their shawls of huge malignant flowers
 embroidered in purple and gold)
 taunted young men

who came, keen-voiced
 spider-crouch
 and answered
with songs of the wisdom
 the dark ponderous wisdom
 of bears.

vi

In the fading sunlight
 a man came, who counted out his prayers
 like gold coins, tossing them
 into the air
watching them fall,
 and spin into silence in the dust.

vii

In the dusk
 it was finished.
Women wrapped their shawls about them
 and gathered their children.

In the pickup going home
 you cradled me against your shoulder, for warmth.
 I slept, and dreamed
 of a great shaggy bear

 halting in a clearing on the side of a mountain
pawing to listen,
 bemused by sunlight and a distant music.

—Betsy Tallent

OCTOBER

Park Avenue tutor
stands before the moon-stabbed mirror
in a curtainless/bedframeless room,
rubbing his smoke-filmed eyes,
then urges three steps towards a
low, quilt-scattered mattress.

She wakes,
reaching whitelit arms
to encircle his tension-strung neck
with pulsing fingers,
and he,
tracing her embrace,
rolls his head long and hard.

ON BRIGHTON SEAFRONT

Pretty young women in bathing costumes
Pretty young men swallowing their every
 controlled rotisserie turn
to taste
only
the salt.

FIRST POEM

And you sat
 legs cocked
 arms bracketed
on glass-green Highway 66 grazeland:
your eyes, keys;
mine, boxes.

And I sit

six months later
muscles ragged
mouth dry
in sour-smelling Vienna *Sudbahnhof* Station:
your memory, battering;
mine, numbed.

—Lisa Clare Kombrink

ON A MEMORY PRESERVED IN FORMALDEHYDE

Silence, cold as death,
Blank faces in silence staring,
Strange faces, once familiar,
With strained smiles, staring
At me, through me, past me, unseeing.
Old familiar faces from a land of memory
All lost, I am a stranger among them—
I who will forbid them to fade away.
For their eyes may see one day,
May realize that I am here,
I, who will wander otherwise forever
In Silence, cold as death.

SIMPLE PROPHETIC GARBAGE

Estimated, interest-rated, pre-postdated CASH
Extralegal, tension-calming, mind-embalming STASH
State- inspected, choice selected, flu-infected MEAT
Table-tested, worm-infested, half-digested TREAT
Accelerate, asphyxiating, rusty metal ZOOM
Patent-pending, well-intending, murder-minded BOOM
Catatonic, half-demonic, black bubonic PLAGUE
Explanations, intonations, venerably VAGUE
Inter-racial, tropic, glacial, opting elbow ROOM
Megatonnage activated, detonated DOOM
Annihilated, devastated, armor-plated TOMB.

—Victor Wiley

tap on my window



i fly to take you down to fields of song
wild berries stars and moon

you can't keep it up
so we wait watch
the changes in the sky
and i feel so good i run and
run hair down the grassy hill
slipping on the night dew
let you chase me
make love

when I see that you are serious
I am afraid

talk and
you talking
in your lonely songs like it was
just for me

in an armchair in my summerhouse
you smile greet friends
but there are stories in your blues
I'll never know and always long for

sweet musician
better tuned to the seasons
you saw one I didn't think would ever change

now I'm in a northern bar song
you in poems in the silent cornfields of Illinois

—Susan Kohl

WINTER

And the rain poured, and the wind wailed hard.
Lonely leaf, feeling winter come, fell
And joined the deads already in hell;
And long sobs of violin cried in my heart.

Cold gale invaded scattered homes,
Violent, hard wind shook feeble trees

Which bare branches quivered fiercely.
The snow flowed and covered stones.

Triste skies, gray shades floated over,
The Earth's wearing its white gala
While murmurs of penultimate cicada
Resounded quietly in the winter
- - -still colder
- - -still colder.

—Pham, Hou Ng

I

Hey Greg,
can you dig it?
sitting together
in a bar, drinking,
and you reminding me of an old son of mine.
Do you remember all that wierd shit?
all our unfashion—
greasy long hair—too late
greasy old sport coats
first me then you
and vests first you
then me.
Can you dig two kids reading philosophy?
making up existentialism to fit us,
shaking Nirvana 'til its God damn teeth rattled,
throwing Oneness and Being and Nothingness
around like beachballs.
You always played with the East
I always played with the West
You'd read Watts and Krishna murti
I read Locke.
Do you remember the Krishna cheer?
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna
Rama, Rama, Rama.
Greg, can you dig High School poets
writing the worst of what's bad
about dues and blues

all that manufactured pain.
 I remember your toilet paper period.
 You played Eliot, then Pound, then Ginsberg,
 i tried cummings, then Yeats, then Wordsworth,
 then Keats.
 but i can remember writing identical poems—
 and i remember we decided that most important
 thing was expression.
 then we were clever with words,
 owing each other poems
 spending all day in the library editing—
 we even got blue pencils.
 you started to write the Ching
 and i wrote Villinelles and Rondels and
 Sonnets,
 both were stilted.
 you know i dropped my best poem in the
 toilet and watched it turn yellow.
 Hey, Greg,
 Can you dig high school hallway hugs?
 walking arm in arm,
 two greasy boys,
 you know they thought we were queers
 you *know* we dug it,
 God we were cool then
 different—
 you wore the bells in the family then,
 i wore the workshoes.
 Walking downtown like ghetto rats,
 hanging out in The Grove,
 drinking coffee for that caffeine buzz. . .
 and the coffeehouse—
 Man we must have killed em smoking cigars
 and discussing the importance of being earnest
 and how we'd both starve in a basement somewhere,
 then i'd drive you home to your clutching
 middle-class mother
 and i'd go home to my father's four bed
 room house.
 Cause 16-year-old street cats still gotta be in by 12.
 Man we paid our dues.

That night we played Carmen,
 i held the rose in my teeth—
 the blood ran down my chin

Bears at the Met

Backstage at the Met—
 stage struck stars hurry aimlessly,
 demanding prayers and sympathy
 and applause and water.

Backstage at the Met—
 a half dozen cigarette butts
 sit bored in an ashtray;
 a deck of cards lies sprawled on
 the floor—a forgotten game of
 Solitaire.

Backstage at the Met—
 a bear sits, smoking cigarettes,
 and chuckles, self-satisfied.

a footprint on
 the sea's edge

a dew drop on
 the pampas grass

a seed balanced on
 the heron's bill

—J.C. Hruschka

GENESIS

Enter the sun. It rises, a single eye gazing westward and diffuses
 through the window past glass and morning air onto the floor where
 it collects in a growing pool which swims from the center outward to
 alight on the bed of a child.

He turns, blinks once, rubs his eyes, and: Blinks again: The glow
 on the wall divides the room into puddles of dark and dawn. His weak
 eyes confuse the curves of the colors: Yellow, brown; Gold, gray.
 Then, sitting, the circles disappear, fading to a toneless light. Another

day born.

—Jason, time to get up. Breakfast's ready and if you don't hurry your hungry bunch of brothers will have it all.

Jason answers:

—Yes mother.

Morning. A new day. And mother says breakfast. Jason rises, escapes the fingers of the sheets and stands. Breakfast? A fast is when you decide to take Holy Communion and don't eat after midnight Saturday. Holy Communion is God and God is Light and Light is beauty. That's what they say in catechism class. Jesus went into the desert and the sand. Fasted forty days. Break is when you smash something. Once mother wouldn't let me go on vacation but let Maria and Sissy go. I got mad and twirled my shoe on its string and let it go flying into my bedroom window. But a fast can't break like a window can break. You can't see a fast. Mother spanked me for breaking the window and father had to board it up until the window man could come and fix it and until he came no light went in and it was dark and cool inside and nice.

— Jason, your plate is ready and it's goin' to be gone if -

— Coming mother, he calls as he runs in his over-long pajamas down the quietly carpeted hall.

The kitchen is bright: The eastward facing window portrays the orb of the autumn sun. Amid the bustle of the table he slides in among his brothers and begins eating. The spice of sliced oranges scents the air.

— Eat now Jason, then get ready for school, says his mother, looming over him, smiling. She wears a gayly colored housecoat.

Eat now, then school. School? That is a place to learn. That is where Miss St Germane is. She calls me Jason Disori and puts me in the last reading group because I can't read. Read means to paint scribbles and then when people see the scribbles they make sense and remind people to talk or think.

— My serious little man, here, have some of these oranges.

His mother hands Jason a sliced quarter of an orange. He sees it: The color of the sun.

— Yes, mother, he says, taking it. As he chews he hears the television in the recreation room adjacent to the kitchen. The words "politics" and "election" are repeated often. Politics. A queer word. It

means polite? When we were at grandmother's house and grandmother knocked over a glass of milk I whispered to mother, she did it because she is old and old people have eyes like burned out lightbulbs. Mother scolded me and said that wasn't a polite thing to say. So polite means nice. But the two men they show on tv aren't nice and they talk about politics. The dark faced man with the stuffed cheeks and the younger man with all his hair who talks funny. They argue and get angry. Angry is getting mad. When father comes home from the beer taverns he is happy but then gets mad and starts using those naughty words I'll never say. Sometimes father hits mother and then John and Carlo get up and yell at father:

— You drunken son of a bitch!

which is a very naughty word. Father chases them and they run down in the basement and unscrew the lightbulbs and yell some more: — Ha you drunken bastard, come down and break your fucking neck on the stairs!

In my room I'll be in bed under the blankets and it is dark. I'm glad it's dark then. Mother cries, and father curses and my brothers curse father. They forget that if they don't repent it means Hell. God is everywhere and inside us too and He hears them curse and that makes Him sad. In the morning after there's been a fight father gets up early to go to work and he says why can't they be good and John and Carlo say they're sorry but they all still have black spots on their souls. So the two men on tv talking politics aren't polite so maybe politics means something else.

— Jason, if you're done bring me your dishes and go wash and dress for school. She smiles at him: - The bus will be here at seven thirty so you better hurry.

Yes mother, here. He brings her the dishes wordlessly and steps away down the hall. It leads to the bathroom where Jason runs water and washes carefully, watching himself in the mirror. Carlo, waiting outside the door, says:

— Hurry, you butthead. The bus will be here any minute now.

They say hurry but if I do I won't be able to wash the sink out. Mother won't like that. She said if I be good maybe I'll get a nice birthday present next Tuesday. Tuesday is my birthday and today is Friday. Father will come home with a big paycheck today. All week there's been a Big Pour. Lots of cement and men working and father telling

them what to do. And Tuesday those two men on tv will be through arguing because Tuesday is, mother said the word was, election.

—— You damn butthead, get outta there. I gotta piss.

—— Okay, Carlo.

Jason opens the door and, admitting Carlo, goes to his bedroom. Scattered about in his closet are his clothes which he tracks down and dons. Except his shoes: those he cannot find. Where are they? Where did I put them? Let's see. Last night I was playing Wagon Train. I was wagon master. Going to California and then the Indians attacked. So I had to jump around the wagon fighting them off but the wagon was also the bed and my shoes might scratch the finish. Took them off and threw them? Under the bed. Yes, and fought the Indians barefooted. So my shoes are under the bed and. There they are.

—— The bus is pulling up Jason and you'd better get on it or I'll call the kidnappers to come and cart you off to Kokomo.

Mother again. But Kokomo. . . I wonder if she means it. I bet the kidnappers are black, like niggers. But nigger is a bad word and Father James said Jesus loves everyone so He must love the black people too.

—— Jason -

Yes Hurry and down the hall here I am. Mother, books, lunch, jacket: Kiss:

—— I love you, mother, he says touching her cheek with his dry lips before rushing out the door across the ivory specked frosted lawn to the sunyellow bus. Entering, he hears the brakes release: AaWwHoosh.

AaWwHoosh,

the bus breathes again, stopping at the school. The modest building has ivy vines climbing its red brick walls, and above the pillared porch is carved: Saint Therese's Catholic Grade School. Under this and through the double doors the boys run to their lockers. 14: that is the number of my locker, and Ernie Banks has it on his uniform. He hits home runs for the Chicago Cubs and is an MVP. Is MVP a word or a sound? The bell rings now. That is a sound.

The bell ripples across the stillness of the halls, running closer then fading to footfalls along the walls. Clang! Clang! Must hurry, catechism class.

The demure teacher settles the children, announcing:

—— Today we will start with our lessons from the Bible. From

Genesis.

She reads to them, stopping intermittently to discuss and explain. These are holy words. Holy means sinless. Jason sits, leaning his head forward, nodding. Holy words, yes. His overlarge head nods often that hour, and, when it is done, the class divides into reading groups. Jason goes to group three, the slowest group. The dummies: I know that is what we are called. Jason stares up at the clock. So I can't read. So? The long slender hand jumps ahead three minutes: Click! Keep going, keep going. Stopped?

—— Jason Disori.

—— Yes, Miss St. Germane.

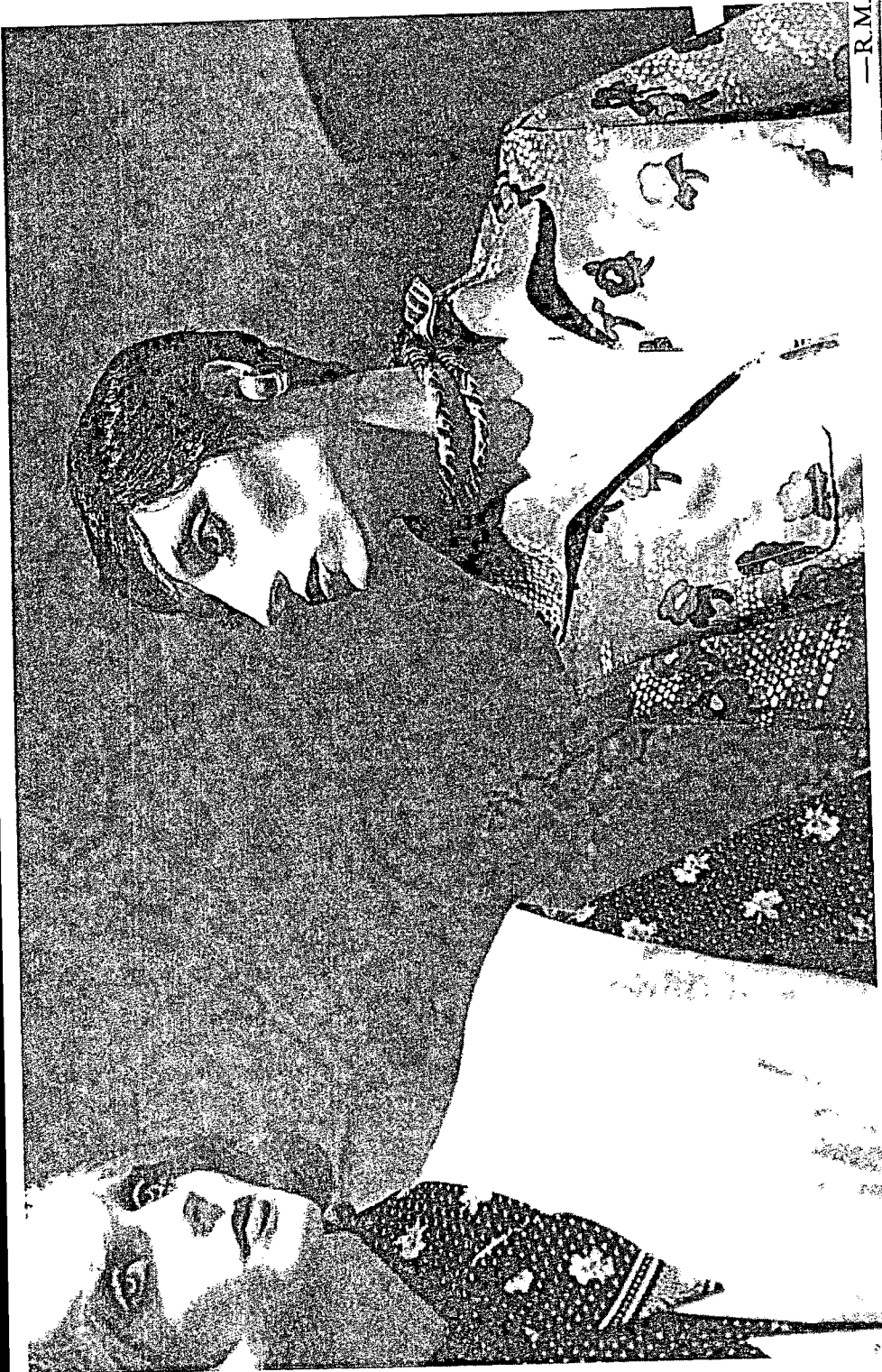
—— Begin reading.

He forces his eyes to fall upon his reader. Little worms, what do you mean? Black little worms on white sand. Senseless.

—— Jason, sit down please. I'll talk to you later. Jack Christian-son, page eight.

Again, again. Maybe I am a butthead. He glances around the room. The wall long bank of lights steadily illuminate the room. Jason shields his eyes with the book and imagines wagon trains rolling west.

Art class is announced next. The cabinets are opened, exposing dusty shelves and stacked construction paper and cigar boxes colored with quilts of bright crayoned patterns and full of shiny bluntnosed scissors. Art class is fun. Cutting this outline is easy. Miss St Germane drew this outline. She is nice and Catholic. This outline shapes the manger. Careful. The manger displays the Christ Child. And Christmas is only a month and a half away. Slow. How long is a month? Month sounds like moth which is an ugly butterfly. And mouth which is what we eat with and what older people use to kiss with and if you're married and kiss your wife on the mouth she will have a baby if God wills it. Okay, now the legs. Those dumb boys who say the priests kiss the nuns must not know anything because the nuns never get fat bellies and go to the hospitals and come home with babies. The Christ Child was a Baby but His mother was the Blessed Virgin so she had never been kissed. Around the corner, follow the lines. My cutting out this shape of the manger is meant to be my way of paying my respects to that wise nearly blind man who opened the gates of Paradise for me. But even though the gates are open doesn't mean I'm good enough to enter. Only a few are chosen. Mother told me Paradise is a



place where you drink sweet milk and hear enchanted songs. Enchanted means magic and Jack Brickhouse says Ernie Banks has a magical swing. I want to hear enchanted songs. I want to drink the sweet milk of Paradise. And I want to take magic swings.

The bell scintillates, reflecting off the long bare walls in quavering slopes: Lunch : an apple, a sandwich, some cake and a milk. The recess after is brief, running and shouting games and flights on the swing up into the November air. The sundistilled lightness cleanses over the white rangs of clouds and together they wash the skies.

Later, on the rugs in the classroom, the children sleep. The lights are off, the shades drawn. In the cool shadows Jason slumbers. The pools of his unconsciousness are hushed, deep, and shaded. Figures form phantasm: A lithe Black, Ernie Banks, flashes a white bat in a silver arc and the ball curves gracefully over the ivycovered fense. His brother John swims in the blue swirls of a river, the swirls like the cumulus whorls in the sky. His brother swims to save him, for Jason is drowning in the gray depths of the cold water. Then the beach, sun-drenched sand and air. Safety. A darkfaced man snarls. The younger man, his voice lilting pronounces: "Promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep." Then a misty moving darkness covers the pools in a mild tide as Time modulates the curves of memory.

TWO

In the east a pink glow engulfs the gray leaden sky. Rising, it appears spherical. A procession of light spinning as the colors merge into an orange dawn.

The silent room uncovers corners and shoulders. Jason Disori watches behind a barrier of somnolent unconcern. Gold, the sun is gold. The night is black. Rich and secret and black. He sinks underneath the blankets, pulling them above his head. A film forms between. This is like being underwater but water is lighter, as light as air, as light as fire. Fire, Fire. . .

Jumping free of the blankets he stands, suddenly awake, smiling. My birthday! Six years old! As old as everybody else in the first grade. Old enough at last to light the candles.

Miss St Germane stands unsmiling at the head of the class, holding between her thin hands a thick black book. Jason, peering up, sees a steady nimbus of light arching over her shoulders. Holy, Holy echoes in his brain. She begins, her words distinct, yet each as soft as a separate feather.

— Class, so far we have studied the first two chapters of the first book of the Bible. It is called Genesis. What have we learned?

Several boys whip their hands up: waving flags in a breeze.

— Jack Christianson, what have we learned?

— We have learned, he answers, standing, - that God made all the heavens and all the earth. And he made all the grass and leaves and flowers and, uh, and all the spices -.

— No Jack. Herbs.

The sound: errbs: falls spinning slowly. Errbs. Jason repeats it to himself.

— And God made all the animals too. Cows and goats and stuff. But, uh, then God got lonely.

— Thank you, Jack, the teacher forms the words tersely on her lips. Jason follows their movements. Lips, kiss, lips. No. That is a sin.

— Tina Frazier, what can you add?

The girl stands shyly, and speaks softly:

— God made next, Miss St Germane, the first man, Adam. But God knew, because God knows everything, that Adam might not like being alone.

Here she pauses delicately, her short silence somehow accusing. Jack Christianson had made a mistake. Gods do not get lonely.

— So to make sure *Adam* would not be lonely, God made Eve, the first woman, from Adams rib. And Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden.

— You may sit now, Tina. Thank you. Very well done.

A nun knocks suddenly on the door, her robes flowing sepulchre, ominous.

— Oh, come in, please do, Sister Consetta.

She enters, her heels knocking flatly on the buffed oaken floor. The class rises in unison and choruses:

— Good morning Sister Consetta.

— Good morning, children.

She confers in whispers with the teacher, then, her robes

brushing in swirls, she vanishes out the door. Back to the convent, that dark house with all the nuns and the bathroom doors all opened. All holy. Shaved heads and they're saints.

— Well, as I was—oh, where were we?

Jason looks up, his fingers combing through his sparse, crew cut hair. Saints with shaved heads and all sinless.

— So Adam and Eve lived in the bounteous garden of Eden, Miss St Germane says, assured of her place after a glance at her neatly arranged lesson plan. —And they lived without toil or hardship. But one morning the Devil, in the guise of a serpent, came to Eve when Adam was away. The serpent asked Eve if she was happy and if she could eat of any tree in the garden. They could eat of them all, except, she said—.

The teacher carefully opens the Bible, runs her finger down, and quotes:

— But of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

— And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, as ye shall be as the gods, knowing good and evil.

Jason squirms in his hard wooden seat as he stares ahead at the chalk-sooted blackboard. God's Word, Holy Words. Why don't I see though? His eyes roll. The clock, the teacher, God.

— And when the woman saw the tree was good for food and a tree desired to make on wise, she took of the tree thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Trees and snakes seem strange, strange things. Raymond once climbed a tree because John and Carlo called him a cabbagehead because he bought cabbage instead of lettuce for mother to make salads. The firemen in red hats came and got him down. Raymond is a funny brother, Jason elevates his eyes; the teacher has allowed a pause to descend on the class. A silent sound. But how could a tree make one wise? It didn't make Raymond wise. And why did they get in trouble for eating fruit? And why can't I read? The Devil probably. He is why I broke my window once. But Eve sinned just by eating fruit don't make sense to me.

— Tomorrow, class, we will discuss why God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden by sending the Archangel Gabriel, armed with a

fiery sword, after them. But now, children, break up into your reading groups, please, and bring along and open your reader to the assignment page.

Jason holds a book in his hands as he follows the other students to the corner of the room. He takes his seat with a frown, his brown eyes unstill. There is no hope for me now. I cannot read and she'll say later again. Maybe God is punishing me. Jack Christianson can read and he is nicknamed Rubber Bones for running queer during lunch recess. I wonder what the clock says.

— Jason Sisor, are you ready?

— Oh, yes, Miss St Germane.

He stands, his large head bobbing awkwardly. S. That's szz. Cooking sounds. ee, ABCDee. SZZ.EE. See.

— Jason, sit down. You are not ready, I see—

— See.

Ma: Do it fast. Fast, R. MaRR. Y. We. See Mary. R. Run.

— See Mary run. See—

Jason stands, his head enveloped by the reader, his eyes unnoticed of the light. They concentrate on the shape of the lines, and slowly, reaching outward, aesthetic connections form. The teacher lays the unpainted nail of her forefinger upon her thin red lip. It lingers.

— See Dick run. Run Dick run. Run run run.

He stops, and allows a silence. I've done it! It was easy. Just follow the lines, those little worms.

— Jason, well done. Very well.

Miss St Germane drops her finger and unwetted, it turns the page of the reader with a crisp finality.

— Very good. We'll be expecting more progress now, Mr Disori. But I am pleased. You may sit now. Andrew, continue on page 11.

Andrew, well-dressed and well-barbared, draws himself to full heights and begins reading, laying the words lined in the air like lined apples serried on a counter:

— Mary and Dick run and run. They run fast and far. Run, Mary and Dick, run run run.

With a probing finger Jason follows the ridge of his nose and flirts with the underside of the wing. Pick. So now I can read. It is easy. Ha! But what to do now that I'm not a dummy no more. I'll be a hero

now. Which hero? Baseball star. I can be a priest too. If there were still cowboys I could be a wagon master and fight Indians. But the Indians and cowboys are all dead. Maybe a movie actor and pretend to be a cowboy. Lots of heroes around. I could be a drunkard. No. I guess they all seem silly. Picking again, his nail discovers a suet of dried snot. Mother has a bookcase, a red bookcase, full of magazines and bills and books. An alarm clock on top. In mother's and father's bedroom. I bet if I tried to read them I could know what they mean. Think of all the time I play being a wagon master or Daniel Boone looking for squirrels and bears near the river. That's fun to do. But the bookcase is neat, all red and polished.

His finger descends from his nose to the bottom side of the desktop. Next to the hardened bumps of gum he deposits the picking: There. A plumb short nun and a tall thin nun walk together past the door and away down the hall, murmuring. Do angels look like nuns? I have a guardian angel who stays on my shoulder like a parrot. Angels have wings but nuns don't. My guardian angel is happy today. Why? My birthday! Yes, cake and presents and candles tonight. And what else? Oh, the manger. It is ready to put up now then they'll display the cardboard Jesus on it. I may get a star. Stars are where heaven is and today is something else too.

Miss St Germane clears her throat and says shortly:

— All right, third reading group, study your lessons silently while I listen to the second reading group read aloud.

She steps away, her straight back stiff, shoulders drawn, a lady. Jason watches her go then wheels his eyes windowward, gazing through the glass at the distant spot of the cloud curtained sun. My birthday and something else? The election? That's it. Election means mark on a piece of paper then send it to the tv station so they can count and tell you who wins. So tonight probably mother and father and Maria and Sissy and John and Carlo and Raymond and the baby will be in the recreation room watching tv and I'll go to my room where the quiet is and practice reading. Wagon masters know how to read I bet

His stomach gurgles, loosens: Lunch soon. The milk there in the cooler is either white or chocolate. Mother says when she sees me gulp my milk, Jason don't gulp your milk. My father's son, she says. She means though that that is how father drinks beer at the beer taverns

but men, men, mother says, respect father because he works so hard and is so good at it. Respect is when you pass a church's middle door you cross yourself out of respect to the Holy Trinity. The Holy Trinity is God and His Word is in the Bible and—oh no! I've done it, I've sinned terribly! Against God and Man.

The reading class recites on, attentive to the teacher, unaware. Jason searches the room for danger, his eyes darting. He closes them and prays, silently. Oh God, I am a sinner and I have sinned. I beg You don't send me to Hell. I am sorry. I know Adam and Eve sinned when they ate the forbidden fruit. They sinned because they let themselves be tempted by the Devil. I hate the Devil, Lord. In catechism class I didn't know they sinned because of him. He is my arch-enemy and lives in Hell. But now I know because I'm smarter now. So please, Dear Lord, don't let the nigger kidnappers come to take me to Kokomo and kill me and make me die and go to Hell forever. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, amen.

His eyes open. Safety. Tom Wynoski, the Polack, is reading. He needs a hair-cut, poor. Nobody knows. Thank you, Lord.

Outside the window again his vision wanders. The sun ascends: higher: high: above the clouds. Yellow grace colors the waving trees and black-topped playground. No kidnappers. God wouldn't do that. Safe, and hunger is in my stomach.

The bell's beat arches in the air. Lunch.

Slowly his teeth come together and close, chewing. It was a nice birthday party. A capgun, and a cowboy hat. And clothes. This cake is good. Mother? In the recreation room watching the election with the others.

His fork balances a fluff of frosted cake. He chews, savoring the taste and texture. A row of six wax candles, unlit, with frosting adhering to their sides, are lined alongside the remnants of cake. Wrapping paper is torn in swaths and lies skeletonless on the floor. Another bite. Then bed.

Raymond, his face dark and thin, solemnly enters the kitchen, scowls at him, and says seriously:

— A capgun, toys, huh. Here.

Jason notices in the hand of his advancing brother a wrapped gift, round. Handing it to him Raymond holds his hand lightly on

Jason's shoulder and says:

— A hard ball. Don't let mother know. She says you'll throw it through a window.

— Thanks, Raymond, Jason says quietly to his brother's back as it retreats out of the kitchen. Gone. Raymond? Well, bedtime now. Before mother finds out.

Jason walks down the darkened hall, both his hands burdened with presents. The long dark hall and no lights and the quiet. He burps abruptly. Everyone is away, watching the election. The door closed and hands holding. Must pee.

The urge to eliminate fills his abdomen. The closed door, both hands held, stopped. He drops the presents on the plush carpet and steps lightly to the bathroom, his fingers working. Tug. There.

Into the clear water of the white bowl he micturates, sighing. Done, he washes his hands, the soap slipping out into the sink. He plugs it and draws water. H: hot. C: cold. Mother taught me and look, the sink has suds like Santa's beard. Clean the ears, mother says. Open and close the flaps and listen: AH: HA: HA. Rinse everything and dry with the towel and today I am six years old. After stowing away his gifts carefully, Jason exchanges his clothes for soft cotton pajamas which caress his skin. He kneels at the side of the bed, his eyes closed, his neck bent.

Dear God: Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray my soul for You to keep and if I die before I wake I pray my soul for You to take. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, amen.

Jason turns the lamp knob a full circle and the room fills with clouds of darkness. Today has been a long day, my birthday, the election, and? And I learned to read. I was going to get a book from mother's bookcase. No, later.

Turning he tries to sleep, staring at the shapeless wall. Ah well. Guess I'll go get one anyway.

He rises and walks to his mother's room and enters. Quiet and quick, in the corner. Choose one. Anyone. Back to bed now.

Washed, pajamed, presented, he lies covered in the dark bedabbed room and sleep steals him. The book waits unopened.

THREE

—— Yes that weak-kneed whisky selling Democrat won. By my god damn yes he won. The streets, come next winter. Snowballs hittin' you in the ass.

Jason awakens. The sun slapped room glows evengold. Father. Jason tumbles nimbly out of bed and listens.

—— Kennedy won, the streets then. The poorhouse. War, he mutters, his half comic voice heavy with a certain tragedy.

—— Shush, Mr Disori, you aren't the only Republican this morning. Shush now.

—— Why is the sink always full of dishes? And Nixon lost. A good man there. No General but a good man.

The sun rises above the orange horizon. It illumines, falling through the window and fully on the door. Jason spies the book on his bed. Oh, yes. Silly to take it to bed with you. Like a teddy bear.

Bending, he takes it and pulls back the cover. On the page, in stark bold relief, is lettered one word. Jason stares at it mystified. Never seen that word before. D. Like the first letter of my last name. Dub, he says to himself. Dub? Nevermind. He replaces the book, still parted open, on his desk and turns to face the window. A beautiful day. See the beautiful sun. Far away. Far. Must go. Wait.

He looks at the page again. The print falls into connecting order. Dubliners. Funny. Well, must go.

He opens the sunspecked door, the glow golden over the hued brown wood, and begins through it, running.

—Domenico Surprenant

THE DREAM

Like a child who has run away from home
it keeps coming back to me
this dream of mine
This dream
where I am lost amidst a maze of empty highways
until I see
stretched before me
a shallow lake of mud
wide and flat as black sky
tucked between the legs of concrete



I walk slowly to its middle
and lie face down
eyes and mouth very open
very exposed to a restless rage
of purple, black, red talons
that take my skin into their teeth
and rake me like a leaf
into their burning mass
I half want to go
half want to become red ash
yet
always wake up screaming

VISITOR

He came again last night
spread his fatty dough over me
choking my body breath
breaking my skin cells with his weight
He laid heavy hands on my breasts
and squeezed
until they burst apart like
water balloons on hot concrete
I bit back tight sobs
when he licked me red-raw
when he thrust
 thrust
 thrust himself into me
until I bled like a virgin
bled like the virgin I am
each night he comes to my bed

IMAGES

I.
Flames roll their tongues on my skin
as I stand
hands folded neatly at the waist
There is no pain
no pain at all
just the sensation
of flame tinting my skin red
and the smell of broiled flesh

II.
The knife is bright—newly sharpened
Sweetly
Solidly
it glides into my chest
rests a while there
than draws back
I smile
watching blood dry on clean metal
with detached fascination

III.
I could well be blind
it is so black in this deep hunter's pit
I've fallen into
I place my cheek against the ground
curl into a round, limp hill
and wait
whimpering faintly
when I hear the sharp click
of a rifle cocking

YOU CRIED OUT

You cried out
when father entered you
a short sharp cry
that he mistook for pleasure
But months later
as you felt me within you
like dust in the eye of your womb
that irritated
scratched you
until blood ran down your inner thighs
as you felt this
you cried again
And this
this he did not mistake the meaning of

When I became too big for you
You pushed and grunted me down
that dark canal
expelling me
like a giant piece of feces

that had blocked you for nine months
 You cried then too
 tossing side to side
 swearing
 tearing at the nurse's gown
 Afterward
 turning your head from the doctor
 when he assured you I was
 perfect

As I grew
 you never let on
 pretending I was your favorite
 dressing
 feeding
 kissing me
 chore after chore until
 you could pretend no more
 and when I was eleven
 explained to me
 about the mistake you made
 Too many children too soon
 Too many toilets that were cried into
 as you washed my dirty diapers

No mother
 if you will cry just one more time
 and let me lick
 the salty water from your cheek
 I will free you
 will undo myself
 from adult to child
 child to fetus
 fetus to ovum
 and ovum to empty womb
 that you can fill with pills
 so there will be
 no more
 mistakes

—Phyllis Gardocki

IV

Graced egrets know

waves meet with warm embraces
 death sings in silence.

—Ray H.

WAITING

Streaming Codeine-eyed housewife laments
 mingle in static stagnating air
 while businessmen belch
 the Wall Street Journal blues and
 day-care spittle drools
 from basement basins.

Angle-seeking wrung-climbers
 intrude—
 on enforced solitude like mold spreading on
 spoiled food.
 and waiting and sitting on
 ant-travelled front steps
 as breeze tossed evergreens
 menace—
 with waving warning branches

Sun-blinded in the shade I
 continue—
 but remain trapped, tripped up on
 trivialities.
 in indecision sitting waiting
 for vicissitudinal rivers
 to bathe my seaweed hung brow.

Lying on slivered, paint cracked bleachers
 talking, to someone I once knew
 and—
 interrupted by screaming basketballers
 who spit obscenities and
 spew ominous threats at
 fleeing cheating fleeting adversaries. . .
 finally, ludicrous.

Finally torn from my doorstep perch
 driven discouraged by the onslaught
 of newspaperboy tosses
 and door to door charity collectors,

finally retreating in uncertain steps
to crumple
into writhing heaps on backyard
grass.

Finally ripping hair in disgust at
complacency, at episodic apathy
and flailing arms and legs in
frenzied anticipation of imagined
wasp swarm stings.

Sitting up, sweat steaming streaming
Down inflamed face
Biting ripping nails and flesh from
Twitching fingers as
Birds tweet and sh-t from leafless
Branches.

My fenceless domain is penetrated by
Jehovah's witness watchtower hustler
And schizoid cocaine snorter
Trampling me underfoot
Hoping each to inflict their separate
Realities
On my burning head—
Ultimately. . . Ridiculous.

Swimming crawling through endless
Grass blade wilderness
To collapse on front steps
Now empty
Licking sticker weed wounds
And finally watching
Unable to erase dandelion stains from
Battered knees.
And waiting. . .

Spied from across the street by
Perpetual windowseat sitter who
Peels my skin with unfailing
Gaze. . .
I laugh-cry
Waiting watching longing
For someone I once

Knew,
Stepping on ants.

perseus

hold me she said
with a dead sea sigh
i held: a shrunken
death head a skim
milk body

she giggled like
dice rattling

my numb fingers
tangled in her black
hairspray sticky snakes
as i came
with dead sea moans

jones craps out

i give up i give up
jones says like
blood trickling
unnoticed.
the dice
click in his hand
like a hundred
knuckles cracking
the bones roll
jones muttering again
i give up
even before they
slide to a stop

jones

caught up in years
i could say
not enough time

to think ponder protest

but only to regret
the fiction of past

what i see now
through the yellow eye
the white snow
of oriental winter

is nothing

the telephones
that ring like
itchy piles

are nothing

but the ringing
the ringing the ringing

garbage scow (jones in the mirror)

when jones
sweeps the streets
at daybreak
the scratching
wakes me
like a cat at
the door

pulling back the shades
i see the two garbage cans
& grey dawn colors

a dog sniffs
at rusty holes
in the cans

plug

we always brought him
red handkerchiefs,
white railroad socks,

& three plugs of
horseshoe tobacco.

at the home
grandpa sat on the bed
face & hands
blue-veined beeswax
the skin stretched
right over brittle bones
& silver-stubbed
hollow cheeks
like fine slate on
delicate shingles.

the hare-lip
on the chair
haltingly groaned in
a parody of speech.
grandpas wicked irish wit
flew at him like
an amber stream
of tobacco juice into
the red folgers can,
and the hare-lip
still mumbling.

at the wake
i knelt & studied
his black-suited body,
wax museum face,
& lips' cynical line
flawlessly salmon pink
missing the brown plug
tobacco stain

—rick

HOME

He woke in the bleak old wooden farmhouse. The day was

in red again: the sun strained its weary way upward, casting bloodshot rays over rusted fields and faded barns; a smooth cobblestone trail led down the barren hill to a red-roofed village below.

Yes, that was right. A farmhouse backdrop of shallow gray planks, the lofty red barns, the cobblestone path. This was it.

He rather wished he might shower or bathe in crystal pure water, chirping and gushing through the heavy old pipes. It would have been jolly, to rinse the years away, the years between his childhood and the childhood of his grandfather. But of course the pipes were dry now.

Ah well. He walked to his ship in the broad backyard, and within it, stripped. He stood in one corner of the vehicle and passed his hand over a green bulb. There was a slight hum, and he was clean. Efficient, there was no doubt, still, a bath would have been more appropriate.

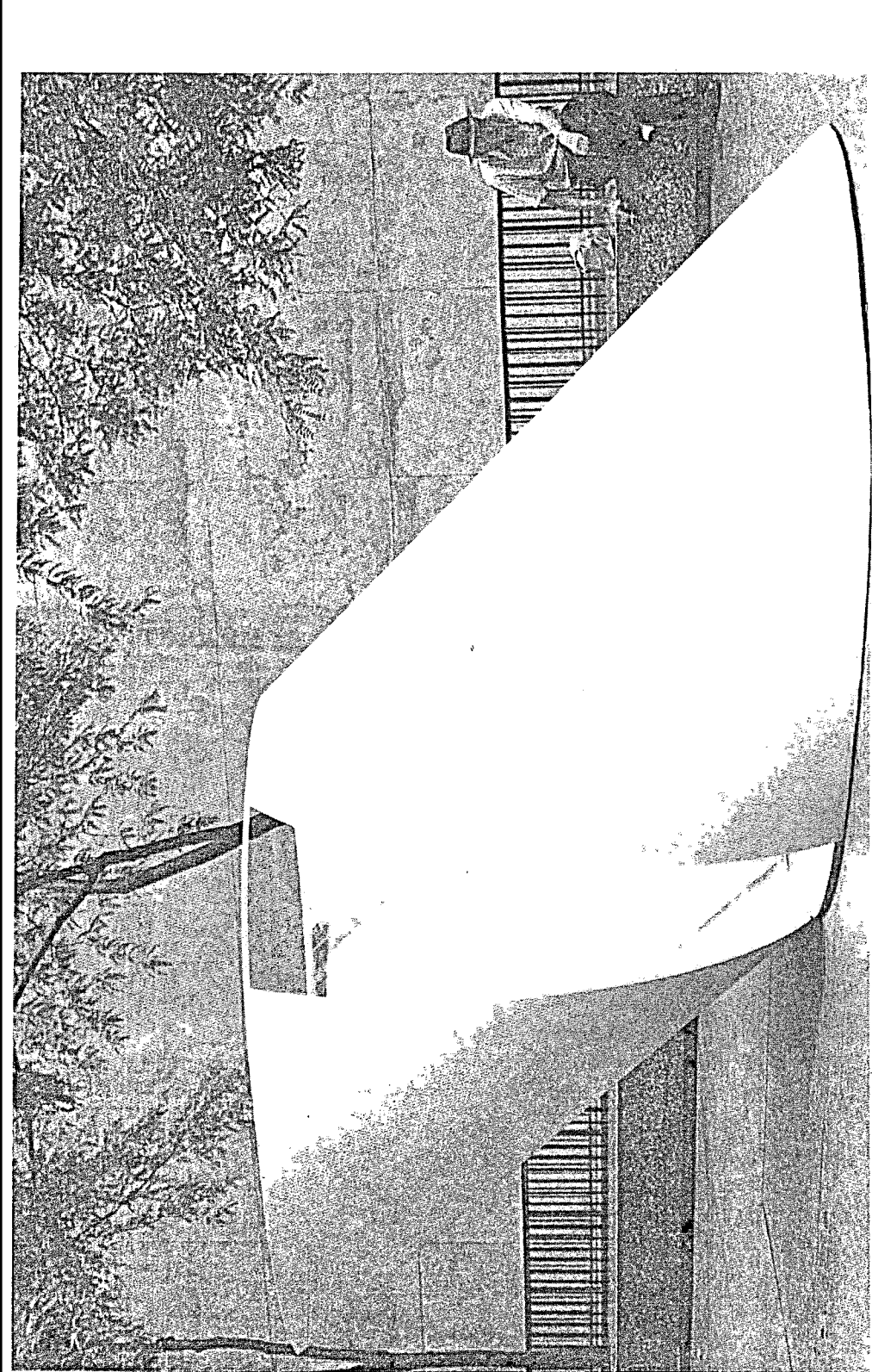
He dressed again quickly, thinking: only five miles more to great aunt Hazel's house. He walked to the back of his ship and with great care extracted a custom made bicycle from a little hangar.

It was not greatly changed from a top-quality twentieth century ten-speed—save that the frame was practically weightless, the tires indestructible, and no grease was required (a frictionless veneer coated all those parts which used to require lubrication).

It was just the right way, the perfect way, to enter the town. Under his own effort, mostly, slowly enough to savor the trip, but quickly enough to satisfy his eagerness. He rolled it lovingly out to the worn brick path.

He mounted the silvery frame cautiously, then pushed off down the hill. Coasting, the cool wind blowing hollow against gaunt face and form, he felt freer, more at ease than he had felt in many years. The cobblestone jiggled his muscles comfortably—like a fine loose current of electricity running through him. He felt good.

He could imagine what it was like—long before, when grass still grew between the cracked bricks, when people would often slip down the hill, when cozy fire-smoke would lazy rise from the village chimneys. He tilted his head back farther, trying to take in the whole scene as it had been, nestled between green foothills (there was no color in them now)—imagine the past all laid out before him. He could almost capture it, but the red-brown haze, like the heavy smoke of a dying fire, obscured his sense of oneness with the scene, so he gazed instead at the mosaic stones blurring beneath his wheels.



At the outskirts of the village there stood a great gray ramshackle building. He gave a little cry of recognition and nodded his head at it. His grandfather's schoolhouse—where he'd received his first whipping for—oh, yes, cutting the rope that rang the bell. The reasoning behind it had been sound enough—school didn't begin until the bell was rung.

Noble sentiment! Polchak applauded.

The schoolhouse: it sagged a bit, and the faded paint had cracked and peeled, like . . . like yellowed newsprint, or withered book pages. Yes, like the dry, rustling pages of the old picture books. . .

When Polchak was a child, he'd pored and pored over the carefully preserved picture books of Old Home Earth.

"I used to read Bible stories, just that way," Granddad had said. He had been a rabid atheist for many years, but something in him approved of myths, much as he approved of Polchak.

There was an unspoken contract between them. In return for being the careful listener that every man desires, Polchak was permitted to follow the old man about his duties. Granddad was a building inspector, on one long tour of the World City. He knew everyone, it seemed, and introduced Polchak to all of them. He would say—"Mr. Johnson, Mr. Polchak," and nod wise lion nods as his grandson solemnly and firmly shook hands with the various City officials.

And just for Polchak, when they were alone, Granddad would remember Earth.

"Well, the fact of the matter is," he would begin (everything was either a fact, or not worthy of mention at all), "It wasn't a very nice place. There was filth, and I mean real filth all over just about everything. But I was raised in a little farming town, you see, name of Everhurst, and people there—well, they weren't so bad. Somehow we always had time to talk—every single one of us had exact opinions on just how things ought to be run. If we got a little heated every now and then, that was alright too." Here he had fixed his fiercely inset eyes on Polchak's child-soft face—"No matter how little respect you have for someone's opinion, you have to have respect to their opinions."

He continued thoughtfully, "But we all agreed on two things, finally. The Earth was just about dead, and there were no two ways about it." Granddad stopped here, holding the chipped china cup of

his youth to his lips and sipping of his years.

"What was the other thing, Granddad?" Polchak had piped.

"Even though they had to go—there was no future there—nobody wanted to leave Everhurst. But then the Great Move began, and in the frenzy of leaving, no one had the time to say goodbye."

He paused a moment, then rumbled abstractedly, "When the great ships lifted, like the Ark at Inundation, no one wept, eyes to the stars, no one honoured the dirty speck we'd left behind."

"How old were you then?" Polchak queried, though he knew it.

"Well, the fact of the matter is," Granddad boomed, smiling, "I was six years old, just as old as you are now."

It was at Granddad's house he had found the books; Granddad had brought him up to the attic (clackety-back! he would go up the last four steps), and there, wedged between the music box and a scratched headboard, were the 3-D color-plated tomes.

Twentieth Century History Series was written on their covers.

I bought them for the children," Granddad said. "You can have them if you like."

"Yes," said Polchak thoughtfully. "But I think I'll keep them here." And he'd started reading them right that minute, on the plastic-coated floor by a slanting second storey window. He had read them till he knew them by heart, page after page of picture and prose. . .

The bright, shining spokes blurred beneath him—the wheels turned, turned. Wait, was that it? Jersey St., yes! No, it runs east-west, that isn't right, he thought. Very carefully he doubled back. The second time past the post, he saw that the sign had been twisted ninety degrees. He swerved to his right.

The boarded building at the corner here, pink plastic sides now splotted and unappetizing, must have been the donut shop. And the alley—there!—was where Granddad had found the dying cat. The delapidated frame on his right must have been the Kilkenney's house; and then, in succession, the Washer's, the DuBois', the Webster's. And here the cracked wedge of pavement, jutting up from some obscure mishap, where at five-and-a-half Granddad had fallen and skinned his knee!

His heart pumped wildly, even as his legs on the pedals pushed harder and he was there. A sharp VVV! claimed the still atmosphere:

the sound of his brakes.

He dismounted the bicycle, too quickly perhaps, for his knees began to jackhammer up and down and he thought he would fall. But he grabbed for the bike and reasoned his trembling away.

All right, you're an old man now, he told himself, but you've made it this far. He laid the bicycle down carefully and walked toward the front porch. The steps were rotted and he was afraid that they might collapse, but he took them slowly and they gave him no trouble.

It was musty on the porch, like a damp, unswept basement. That scent had always made his head spin, so he waited for the sensation to cease. When it did, he reached into a pouch at his side and withdrew one scratched and battered key: from greatgrandfather to grandfather to him. After a brief struggle, the lock gave way and the door sprang open. He had to wait for a moment again inside, the scent was stronger here. So, while he waited his eyes sought through the thick layers of dust the vivid outlines of his dream. The Kimball piano, key cover down, sat still and stern in the corner. The chandelier above, shrouded its extinguished lights with dusty panes of glass.

He felt he knew every piece of furniture here, every knickknack and knot in the paneling.

He was breathing very deeply. Unimpaired health to one hundred twenty years—his society had delivered him that. But they had told him now it would not be long—a matter of days before that health would fragile tear like damp tissue. He could feel it coming.

But before it came, before even the first stage of his decline, he would make it all the way back. So he ascended the varnish-dark stairway at his side, and in even steps passed the room on the right (great aunt Agatha's), the room on the left (great uncle Terrence, whom he'd never known), and at last, straight before him, the nursery that had become the room of his grandfather. The door was wide open, wide open.

He stood there for a long while, head spinning for a third time. Then he stepped hesitantly across the threshold. He looked about him with a kind of suppressed eagerness. In the corner, frozen, faded blue clowns waved from the wallpaper. Of course. Tiny fold-out arms at the corner desk. Yes, that was right too. In the middle of the floor was a red sponge rubber ball. Near it, lying on its side, was a little stuffed koala bear.

Tedward Edward, Granddad had called it. So that's what had happened to him. An unexpected friend to greet him.

Curious how little mattered at the end. Polchak'd been an architect—the busiest and most exacting in all the City. He and men like him had built a cleaner, stronger planet to live on. Yet now, oddly, for the first time, he felt no real pride in it. Leave it for the future, he felt. It is no concern of mine any longer, was his counsel.

Then he knew that he was very old indeed.

"I have come to claim my heritage," Polchak said aloud. There was a faint settling sound in the wall, like a nail driven into loose plaster. To his suddenly weary brain, it sounded like Granddad's dying voice. A taping of those last words—words for Polchak alone.

"Someone should have stayed!"

"Yes," Polchak had agreed.

Outside, the sun drooped lower and lower away. An angry, hazy bloodclot, pricked upon the horizon, now it shone full force into the dusty room. It illuminated Polchak on the floor, one hand bouncing the faded rubber ball, another clasping the battered Teddy to his chest.

But the still house, kindly, cradled him—as warm as a grandfather's smile.

—James H. LaRue

Catatonic Tom

With broad chest
thin waist
and supple muscles
Tom lies
still as a gray-barked log in the mud
when the orderlies come into his room,
heft him from bed
and clump him onto the floor.
"This retard's not aware of nothing no more.
Can't even get up to take a leak,"
one laughs
pulling off the piss-soaked sheets.
And soon Tom's heaved
back into a clean, white bed.

But when he hears and sees
them leave the room,
Tom giggles, gets up
stands on the bed,
bounces up and down
like a gymnast on a trampoline
as he looses a yellow flood
from between his legs.

The Magician's Assistant

Pressed against the wall
like glittering dust
to a giant magnet,
she slowly shifts her stare:
trapeze artist flipping through the air
 (a knife thuds
 at her foot),
red balloon bobbing on a string
 (a knife thuds
 at her knee),
clown shoving a rabbit
into his hat
 (a knife thuds
 at her waist),
fist crushing
a paper cub
 (a knife thuds
 at her breast).

From seat to seat
row to row
of gaping "O's"
her glances begin to dart
throughout the jam-packed big-top
like a wasp buzzing inside a jar
stinging the glass in a thousand places

Stage Stripper Babe

Yer jus passin through town
stage stripper babe do
do do yer stuff
I dont wanna think

bout nobody but beautiful you.

Yer rainbow hair an them orange
green blue ribbons hanging from yer ass
make ya look like a peacock
as ya strut an stagger
through clouds a cigarette smoke.
Ya dance an a unbutton yer bird spangled blouse
uncagin two white hens
flappin their brains out
an ya prod yer black painted nails
all over yer body like crows
peckin a dry cob a corn.

Inbetween acts I'll buy ya a drink
an downa nother barrel a beer.

—David Hensor

Sailors of the night,
we rode the sea within ourselves
like dolphins skipping and
teasing the waves,
laughing in the shadow-water,
tossing faces back and forth,
and catching their reflection
in the still of the ocean
between.

Oh, how they seemed to know me.
They are great professors,
those eyes of yours.

How did you train them to
burn so
 and laugh
(no time wasted on amateur twinkles
 no
you're some pro, all right
a regular Renoir of the Proper Reaction)

You had them telling stories
 apart from what you said.
 And since the myth was never voiced
 there was no cause for denial.
 (a good bit—keep it in.)

And now—

all I will remember
 are echoes
 of my own stories
 off those well-trained eyes.

inspired by Time magazine

red eyed	taught lipped	yellow skinned
dull eyed	mothers hold	
	limp lipped	bloodied skinned
	babes	
swollen bellied	bow legged	dirty skinned
	babes wonder why	
shrapnel bellied	stiffened legged	clammy skinned
	mothers won't wake	

—Marilyn Stone

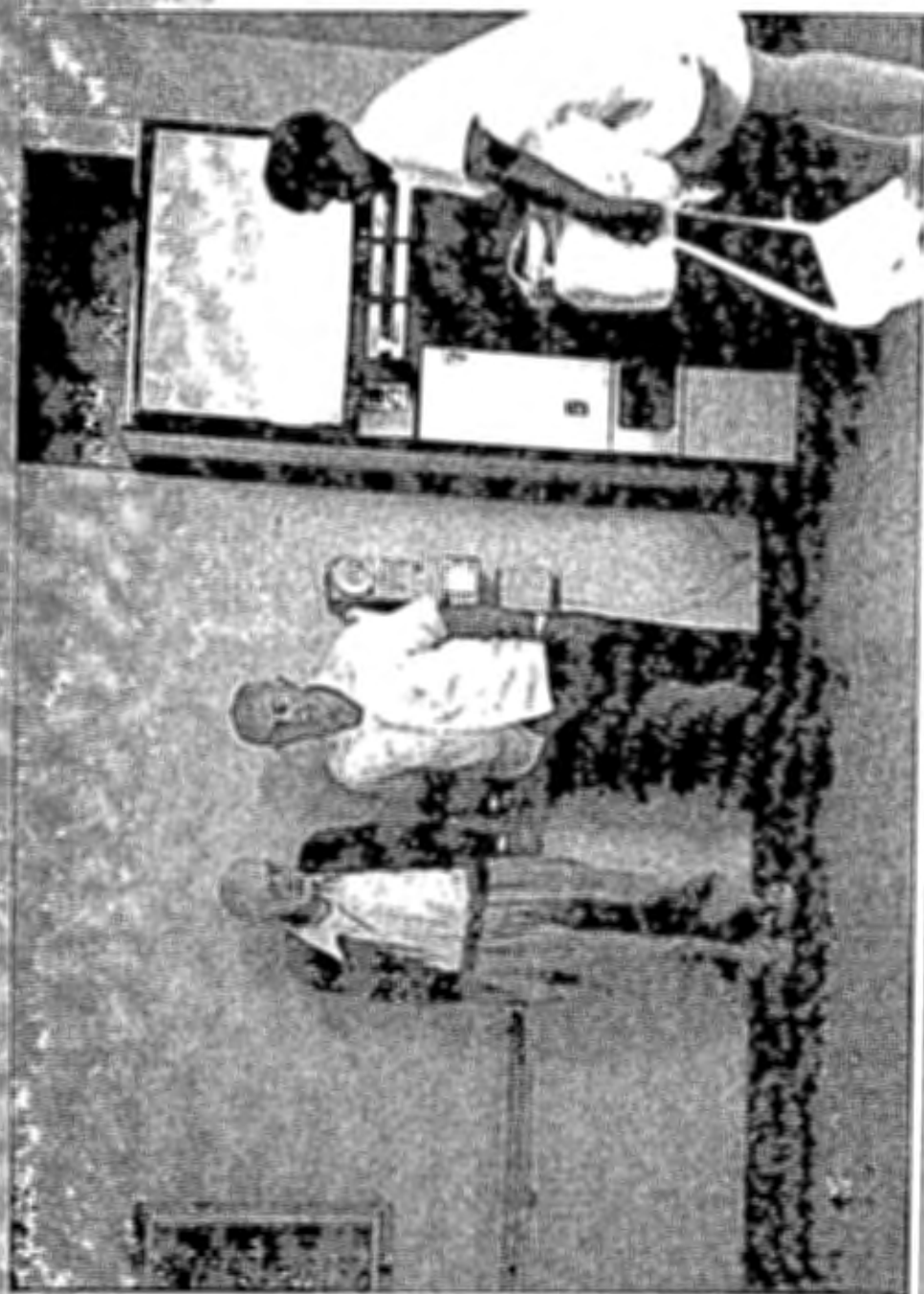
CRYSTALIZED NIGGAS

Crystalized Niggas.Crystalized Niggas everywhere I turn.
 Niggas who are so busy trying to get over, they've forgotten
 "from whence I came". Niggas. . . .

Niggas who are so busy trying to REACH,
 They've lost their ability to. . . .FEEL.
 Niggas who are so busy trying to achieve "professionalism"
 They've forgotten all about humanism. . . .realism. . . .

Niggas, not black people, for a BLACK person eats, sleeps, dreams, and
 BLACK. Niggas. . . .

—Susan



Where have all my BLACK brothers and sisters gone? I see BLACK skin and afros.
but it's PROCESSED heads and WHITE voices I hear.

Come back down to Earth my brothers, Come back to realism my sisters.
For were you sown here, you'd see that to the white man as well as your
ex-people youre just a CRYSTALIZED NIGGA.

—Perline Redd

morning

1. the blade is poised
 above shaded cheeks—
 down drawn down, straight down and even.
 then
 REVERSE/
 the razor *up*scrapes.
2. now you are onesidesmooth
 as soft as a woman.
 and meeting your deepdark eyes in the glass
 you lift stangely stark eyebrows/
 you see her
3. seducer/seductress
 she/he meet
 like lovers rejoined on the street

 and they lie to each other,
 as lovers do.
 They say they do not need each other,
 as lovers do.
4. and now—
 two to rouse from sleep,
 two behind the lather
 and glass.
 morning.

Shelley: 4 Oct 75

one yo-yo-ing leg light
reaches the crest of the residential hill
and plummets from the well-paved top
 like rainpelt pours down a bald man's head.

pedaling hard, I gain it,
wiggle spermtail down behind you
to the streetlamp whiteglow
 where the road

quits.

lady, the mountain we scaled in such a hurry
 did not tire me.
 I upshifted just for the exercise—
but I drew in my breath For You,
panted like a child over too hot soup,
 or—perhaps like me over Twinings tea—

your red hairhalo
a flawless beacon I held
 past the long rows of houses
 which dropped back like letters
 in a smooth stream of type.

FREEDOM: A SCIENCE FICTION POEM

a.
the New Leader, a brave man
 on posters hung from balustrades—
his faded eyes sickly familiar
 to all—
asks of his slaves:
"how does our Enemy do it?
how can we kill him
 and keep him dead?"

b.
every time they find the Rebel,
each time they splinter his bolted door,
 each time they come to lock him away,
he holds a pistol to his head
 (pearl derringer strapped to his wide wrist)
Squeezes it,
explodes like a penis
for his fourth-of-july friends.
 It's fired just so.
 He is always quite dead.

—and, here a piece of blonde hair,
there a lock of red beard.
green eyes like marbles bounce
 on playroom floors—
2 decades later, he reappears.
unchanged, tho of new parents born,
the same.
He fights the cold, stangling hand of
 "Governmentation"
with each sired brood
 He is never *quite* dead.

c.
one of the Leader's bright men,

he hearkens to his leash,
suggests, "If we could freeze him alive,
we'd have him."

They try.

Outside his home with a Cryogenic Ray (confidential)

(top secret)—

but they stutterstop.

The Bright Pistol Barks.

someone told him, then, perhaps.

He knew everyone's father.

He could be anyone's son.

d.

in the clean wards

stapled-hat nurses wonder———was he the one?———

A child was born

who did not cry

who stretched his infant limbs

from their sleep

who looked about him brightly

and smiled—

—James H. LaRue

THE LAST ONE LEFT

I'm not sure when they first brought me here. I guess maybe they found out that I was different the first time they left me and Tom alone. I couldn't help myself, and if someone hadn't come by just in time, it would have been all over. But it didn't occur to anyone to wonder whether the Pre-natal Genetic Alteration process was infallible after all until the second incident. Then they realized that this phenomenon was no fluke.

That second time I was in my Ancient Civics class at the Multiversity watching the assigned films. We all laughed at the antiquated methods of presenting audio-visual material. But then it all became very boring. We were astounded when the professor told us that many years ago people had been imprisoned for showing these films. . . or even for merely viewing them.

All of a sudden something strange began happening to me. I was hot and cold all over simultaneously. The action on the screen was so beautiful that I wanted to be a part of it. I had never dreamed that there could be anything so fantastic! The last thing I remember was

trying to jump through the screen. I heard later that I settled for jumping on my professor.

I've been here ever since. I don't mind the people staring at me, but I can't stand it when they get so close that it seems I can touch them. . . and then I can't. Sometimes I think they actually do it on purpose. They must! They've been warned. After all, that sign in front of my cage clearly explains the danger involved in getting too close to me. But don't they realize how much their teasing tortures me? When I can't stand it any more I try to crack the bars in two. I beat my head against the walls. That makes them go away fast enough. Finally I get so exhausted that I fall into a heap in the corner.

I've only been outside this cage once. But they blindfolded me while they transported me so I have no idea where they took me. Finally we stopped. They took the blindfold off me. But they bound my hands and feet and propped me up so that my feet were underneath me.

We must have been in the Last Wilderness! I couldn't see anything but space everywhere I looked. . . there was even a little grass.

I couldn't understand why they had brought me there. Was I going to be used as some sort of sacrifice?

Suddenly an animal raced toward me. You can't blame me for being frightened. I'd never seen an animal before except in a cage. And I'd never even heard of one like this one. He was pure white, with silver hoofs, and he had the most curious horn in the center of his head. The horn was made of pearl. He almost flew through the grass but it wasn't even ruffled. His white mane streamed behind him. All the fear went out of me as soon as I saw his eyes. They were blue-green, and they cast the most lovely shadow alongside his nose.

He stopped in front of me and nuzzled me. And I couldn't even touch him! I was amazed to see how tiny he was. In the distance he had looked huge, but now he stood only a little taller than me. I tried to nuzzle him back. In spite of all the bonds he walked behind me and we began rubbing against each other the best that we could. Then he came back and we began nuzzling each other again. I tried to gather as much of that silky creature inside my mouth as possible. I wanted him inside me so much I could hardly bear it!

When neither of us could stand it anymore he paused a moment, and we caught our breath. Finally he carefully knelt and placed his

head in my lap.

I didn't know that the man was there until I saw the ax he was carrying. Just as it was about to descent on the creature's neck his companion grabbed his arm.

"No!" he warned. "As far as we know this is the only unicorn in existence. And anyway, unless something like this happens again, we'll have no bait to trap another one. Take it alive. It'll be more valuable that way."

I don't recall what happened after that. The next thing I knew I was back here. Oh, how I miss him! I ache all over.

I can almost feel that warm pulsating flesh pounding against me!

Sssh. I hear a noise. Something's moving. Why it sounds like. . . no, it can't be. But it is. . . yes, it's in that cage next to mine. It's him. It's him! Yes, it is. I see the pearl horn in between the bars. Oh, my. The space is big enough for his head. . . his neck. . . his whole body. Move quietly, my beauty. You're as smooth as I remember. Oh, yes, yes, yes. I should hurry. Somebody might come. But it's delicious to move so slowly over his body. He's straddling me. . . he's got my leg between his. . . oh, yes, yes. We'll help each other. We'll help each other. It's agony to move this slowly over you. It won't be long now. Oh. . . oh. . . oh. What? Where is it? It must be there. It doesn't make sense. There's a hole in me, like that hole in the game we had in Pre-Indoctrination. . . there must be a peg. . . you must have the peg. . . they told us. . . there's a peg to fit every hole. But there's nothing! I've been over every inch of you and there's nothing. . . nothing.

Oh no. You'd better go back: People are coming in. They'll see you. They'll tell the authorities. Wait a minute. Oh, my beauty. it's all right. It's all right. That's it. Your tears are so cool. And I'm so hot, so hot. Drown me with them, please. Drown me! Don't worry. I know people are watching. They won't tell on us. They wouldn't dare. See how frightened they are? I've never seen them so terrified. But why shouldn't they be? This is the first time they've ever seen the Last Virgin in America cry.

—Megan Sebastian

from Remember That The Sound Of Time Is Flesh

1: Faces

Faces
become unfocused
in dreams.
Two dimensional specters
grinning

toothless, like old women
with sagging breasts
pencilthin brittle legs
who smell of dust
and stagnant days.

You wake then
in the dark.
Slowly, carefully
so as not to wake your lover
you touch your skin
calming a bit
when you find your body
still young.

2: Indian Summer. . . Late Warmth

The books on the shelves are silent
patient as a cat
slowly licking itself clean;
careful, complacent.

At night
while we layed in bed
cats howled in the alley
scratching, spitting
their fur taut with fear
their cries curling through the dark
painful spirals ascending to the window
above our heads.

The sunlight burst
from the October sky
falling on the carpet
in front of the bookcase

all the next afternoon.
Smoking a pipe
I thought of you
just as your cat
rubbed itself against my leg,
purring.

3: Quentin

At my back I hear the sun rise
A long thin shadow falls in front of me

The sun ascends
and my shadow sinks
shorter, thicker
mimicing me.

At noon
I have lunch
indoors

Clouds are silent
and like marshmallows over a fire
turn brown at their edges
when they obscure the sun

Rainy days, close, colorless
opaque
as the frosted glass on the shower door
in my apartment
where I say

On the river
as the evening begins
the dying sun glistens off the water
Vague shadows surround me
and vanish
as I swim

5: DeJa Vu

It's happened again
the breeze ruffled the curtain
and fingered the plants

before breathing
over the bed
where we lay

—Domenico Surprenant

*The general title was suggested by a poem from Norman Mailer's collection of verse; *Death For The Ladies, and other disasters*

CHIRON IN SEPTEMBER

I see a breath ahead of me
The first time this season.

And I call, and I call
to the great trees stripping.

And the bottle is opened
and life falls around me
like so many faded leaves
dancing to their death.

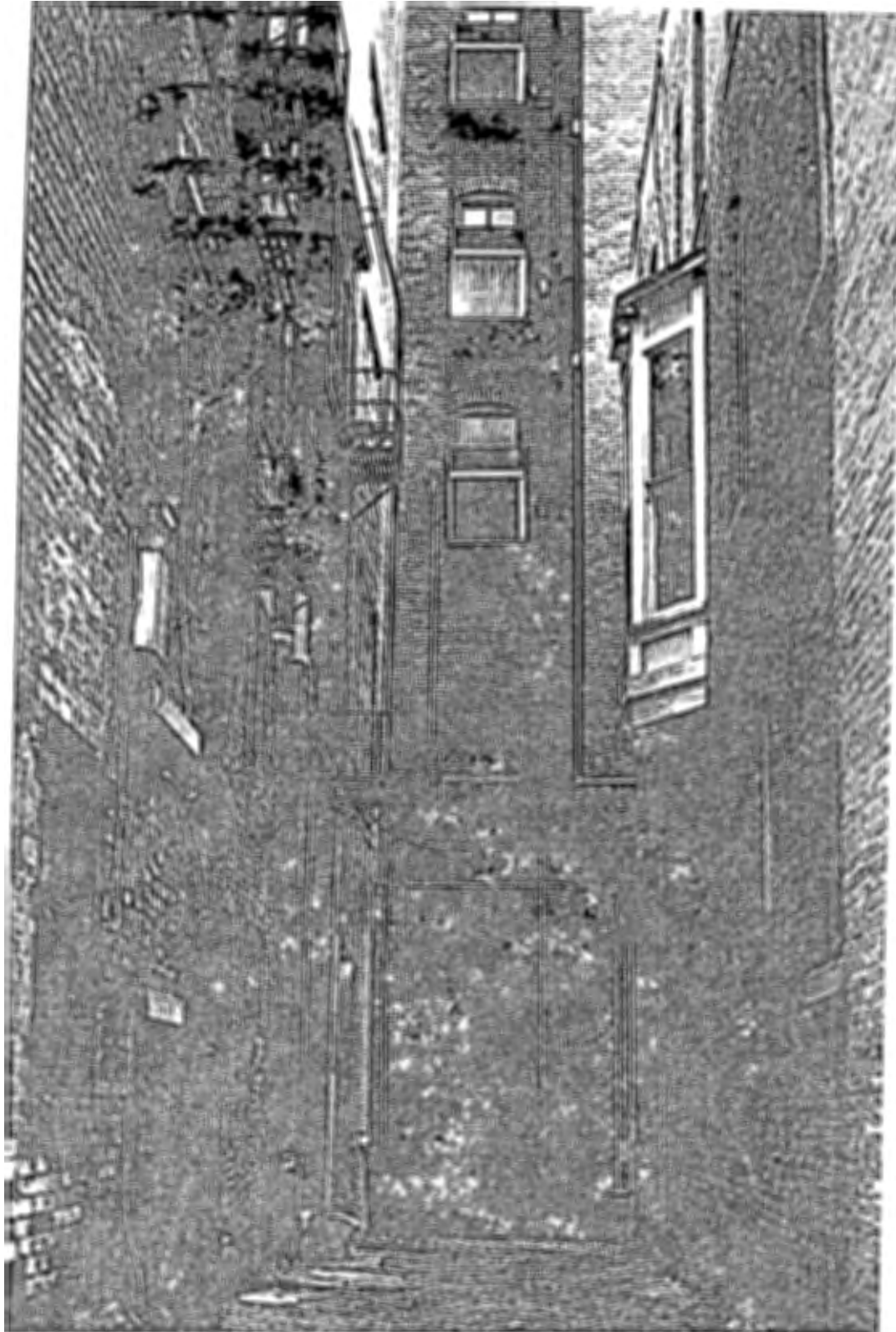
NIGHT WANE

The wall here is pock-marked.

The Juke here gives the only light,
misty yellow light through sweat and smoke
and sour sighs of the two-o'clock babes
who keep stroking their stenchy hair
as if that would do them good.

The business man smiles appropriate
and exits out the back for a talk with the alley.
And here sits the lady—
fat and whole and trying so hard
to be skinny and confused—
barring dollar sign eyes
at the trim-coated boys.

In an hour it will be over
and the floor will be cleaned
and readied for another night
full with eight-o'clock hope



and empty again with three-o'clock despair.

But there is a sweetness
in this last lunge for life
that can never be caught.

It is sweet like chianti is sweet
before the sun turns it to vinegar.

—Jacob C

Parallels: Chris/Nothorn Highlands

blue eyes/Wisconsin uplands
I am seek
seeing you here—
indeterminate twilight
night light/night life.

you are here
blue-blond
lover,
lovely as the Green County Manu.

Fear fires burns/fire burns,
like we burn
like silver night light.

Night life Shiva
slays the flame
while I slay blame
w/ the acceptance
of our parting,
of ugly inevitability.

Desh Desh
Raga Desh
Desh Desh
Raga breath breathes
sound like you breathe
star dances.

Sounds of night winds

touch trees, bleed droplets of star light/lit bed white
sheets breezing
'cross you
'cross you
'cross you
to cool the star-burst budding
of birch.

Oh antic
frantic
fantasia,
the dance is life
life is dance.

Dungareed dung farmer
dances,
Christine crystalline woman
dances

like Cassisopia
'cross
unique universe pool
in dance,
in procession,
as I fire fly watch,
random fire fly
beat out
lightful rhythms upon my
white wood smoke face.

To Gertrude Stein

Be devine
be 'Bee Time Vine'
this time
for all
to see
&
seek you
in 1930 poetic tomb.
Tomb oh
tomb
to whom
do you sing
your tune?

tune of white
white room
of lesbian
Stein
and
Alice
grooming each.
other
bed-
rooming each other
keeping time
w/poetic tune:
'Bee Time Vine
Bee Time Vine'
as boston ivy grows
so
slow
creeping to crypt
to
thieve you rhythmical
ashes
away
in night
in night
softly cooing
tomb ashes
away
in night
white
night
w/severely
sexual
contrast
of yester-year/today.
may I lay
beside
your wollen-white
wet-warm
well
may I lay me
tired
art white
weary bones
beside

between

you
2

and coo
& coo

ash
away

and coo
ash tomb ash

away?

Hart

Time tears
tear

me like seconal.

3yrs. dear lover,

three years ago

we moved mechanical like

tonight,

and I cry like autom.

I am the

cut stag

crawling in corners,

lying in corners,

crying in a corner of your room.

I'm the howl beneath your bed baby.

I'm

of your memory—

the aborted

& bottled fetus

feeding you dead pressed red petaled

roses.

And oh lady

you're in me too:

sitting here

anonymous

w/the last drag

of my

last smoke,

hearing you like an

old bell

ringing—

"Oh Greg

They're going to kill you

Them critics,

they're going to

tear you like celophane."

And oh lady

remember

how you taught me to dance

in your bedroom

to slow and bad jazz,

how I'd step on your feet,

you'd laugh lovely

and brush my crotch.

w/your hip.

Remember our

first screw,

lying in bed

like two facists

blood stained

sheet

bloody w/our discovery,

and how

I rolled and tied the

sheet tourniquet tight,

walking home through

it to main street

gutter hole

watching rain water wash

it

like a tampon.

And oh lady

remember

6 months later

a rat ran 'cross our path.

I plotted to kill

but it had sheet

scraps in it's jaw,

scraps in it's jaw,

red and white

weave
linen scraps
in it's jaw.

Remember
how you the high and holy
schizophrenic
envisioned
eyes in the bushes
eyes in the trees
eyes in the houses
in the basement
in the closet
in me.

And that night
you'd never answer the phone
and locked yourself
in the bathroom
and tried to off it
w/ angular glass.

Remember how I tight jawed
held my stomach down.

And oh lady
remember how
I
the drug shop stock boy
sped for 5 weeks
eating crank like
theater candy,
like a silent movie
20 less lbs. crashed in
your lap

so porous you held me like a cinder,
so porous you blew through
me like March.

Remember
how I mad w/art and men,
cut my fingers
and made
water-color-portrait-profanity
& beat my hand-

fingers five whips 'cross desk
top.
I wrote for weeks.

Remember how
we discovered your orgasm—
sun set light
we danced and
moved
and churned
like wind/like a sea,
and you melted—
hot ice.
remember
I tight legged frigid would
not
cum.
I dreamt of boys
blue and red velvet boys,
I layed in bed lover,
nude and
white bleach bone naked
like a spectator,
naked
like white crystal.

I tried mama,
I tried.
I kicked like a mule.

you weren't enough.

—Gregory H. Brosofske

Do ya feel like
dancing with me
Sunrise
I need a partner
and the moon
just bowed out
Do ya feel like
dancing with me

Dawning
Yawn
Yawn
Just awoke from the moon
Tango
It felt alright
Do you feel like dancing with me
Sun
I'll be your partner
all day long
Into the wee Hours
of Sunset
and I'll grab the
Moon
For a Waltz

—William

Maggie

maggie of my motherhood dreams is awakening somehow
and i feel a new century of loveless living winging somehow
somehow in this room of golden madonnas
and ancient ebony souls that will not leave
or love
or love.
oh my lover,
maggie is the child that i conceived one night
while you stayed at your desk in the other room;
and as i felt her moving in my ovaries
and rolling to my womb like it was no miracle
for a child to be alive inside of me,
you came into our bedroom and asked me how to spell some word
and whether or not i had any change for cigarettes.
i turned out the lights,
cried softly for this child of mine
and i slept warmly as in all my dreams,
tightly wrapped in maggie's womb.

now i live alone
and all the wombs and warm places have turned black and cold like this room
and all the madonnas look away somehow,
dreaming private dreams now and somehow,



somehow i don't believe that even they know grace
or love
or love.

there is a picture of a child that i keep by my bed,
a darkly painted child with eyes like maggie's that haunt me
as i stare at them in my barren nights like a bitter woman,
before i turn softly away to cry barren tears
and wonder how it is
that my womb is the bitter cavern of a madonna's cinders.

—Nancy Anne Spreng