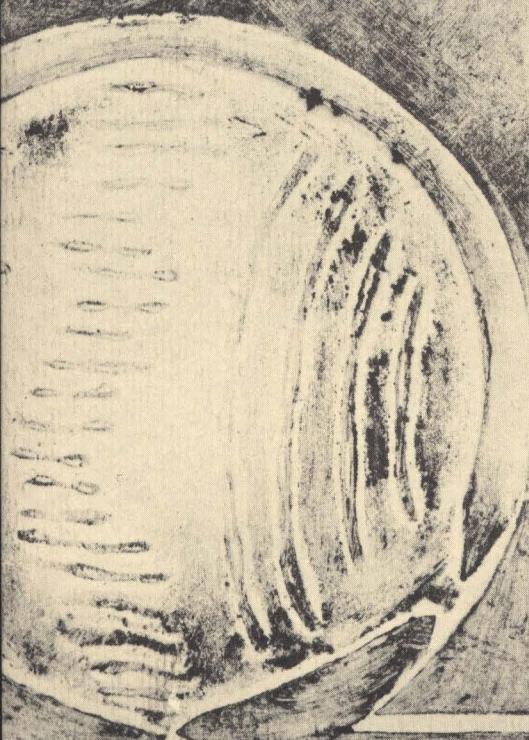
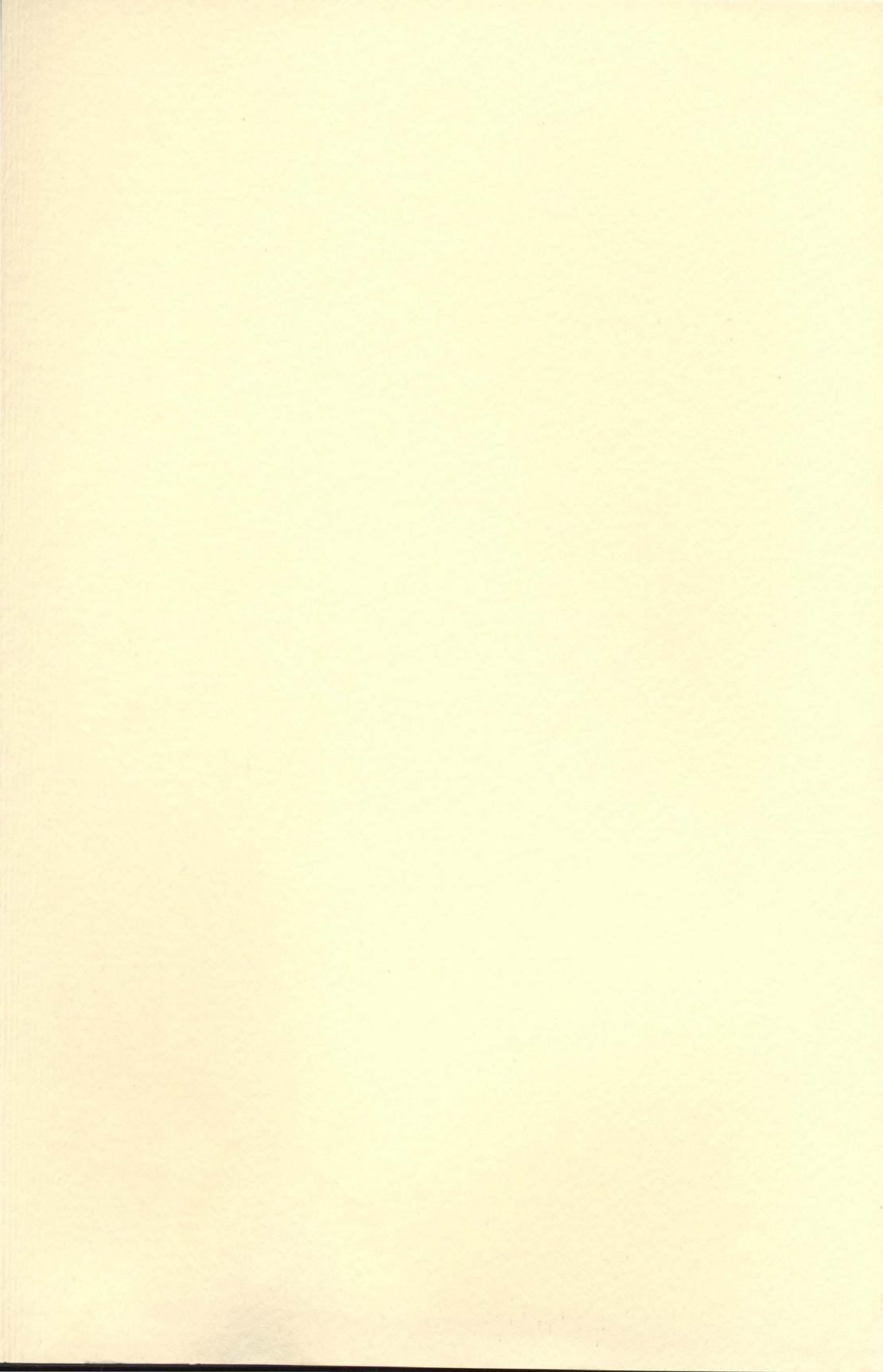


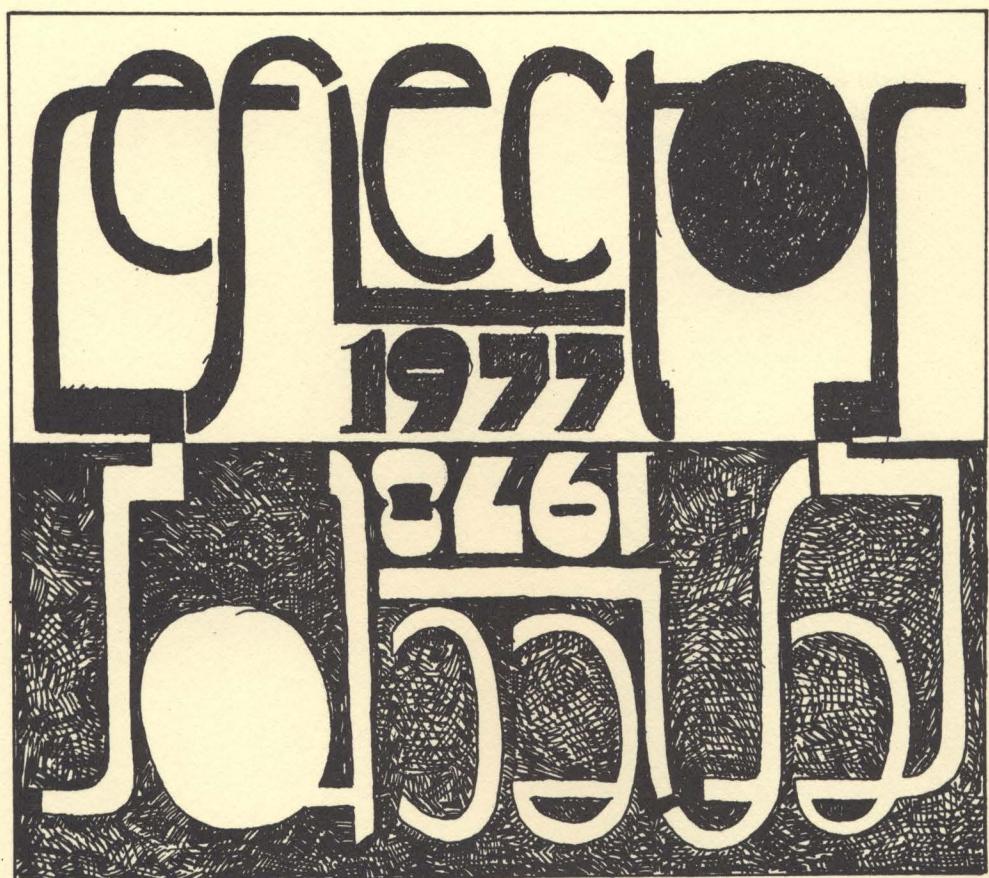
DODGE



REFLECTOR

1977





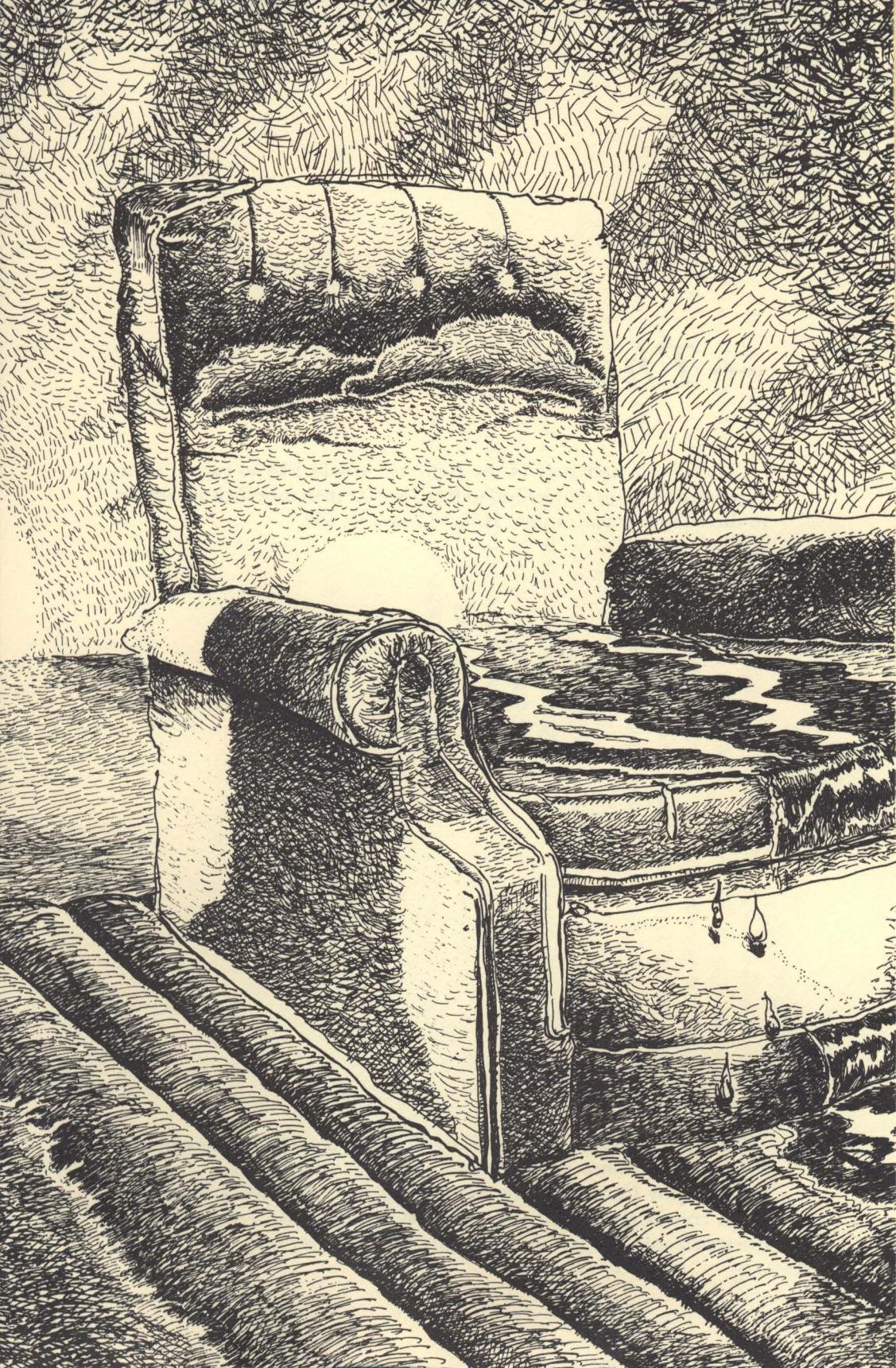
COVER: "DODGE" by ART MURPHY

Due to mishandling by the printers, there are a number of errata in this year's Reflector. They are: the 3x2 Duets frontispiece coming after Margaret Ogurcak's "Farms in the country" poem should precede the entire set of three graphic/literary duets. In the first section of the "Another Rose" poem by Brad Westbrook, the third line should read "From rain-gorged clouds." In the third section of the same poem, the third stanza beginning "Petal on petal" should be completely deleted. The sixth and final section of the poem mistakenly appears after a short story "To Swallow A Rose" by John Mowery; it should follow the fifth section. In Donna Smith's short story "The Carousel," the first sentence should begin with "After that incident...". We sincerely regret these errors which are not the responsibility of the writers nor of the Reflector staff.

— *Thank you*

The editors and staff of the *Reflector* would like to extend their appreciation to the editors and staff of *Slate* for their unselfish assistance in directing our use of the "HAL" Comp/set 500.

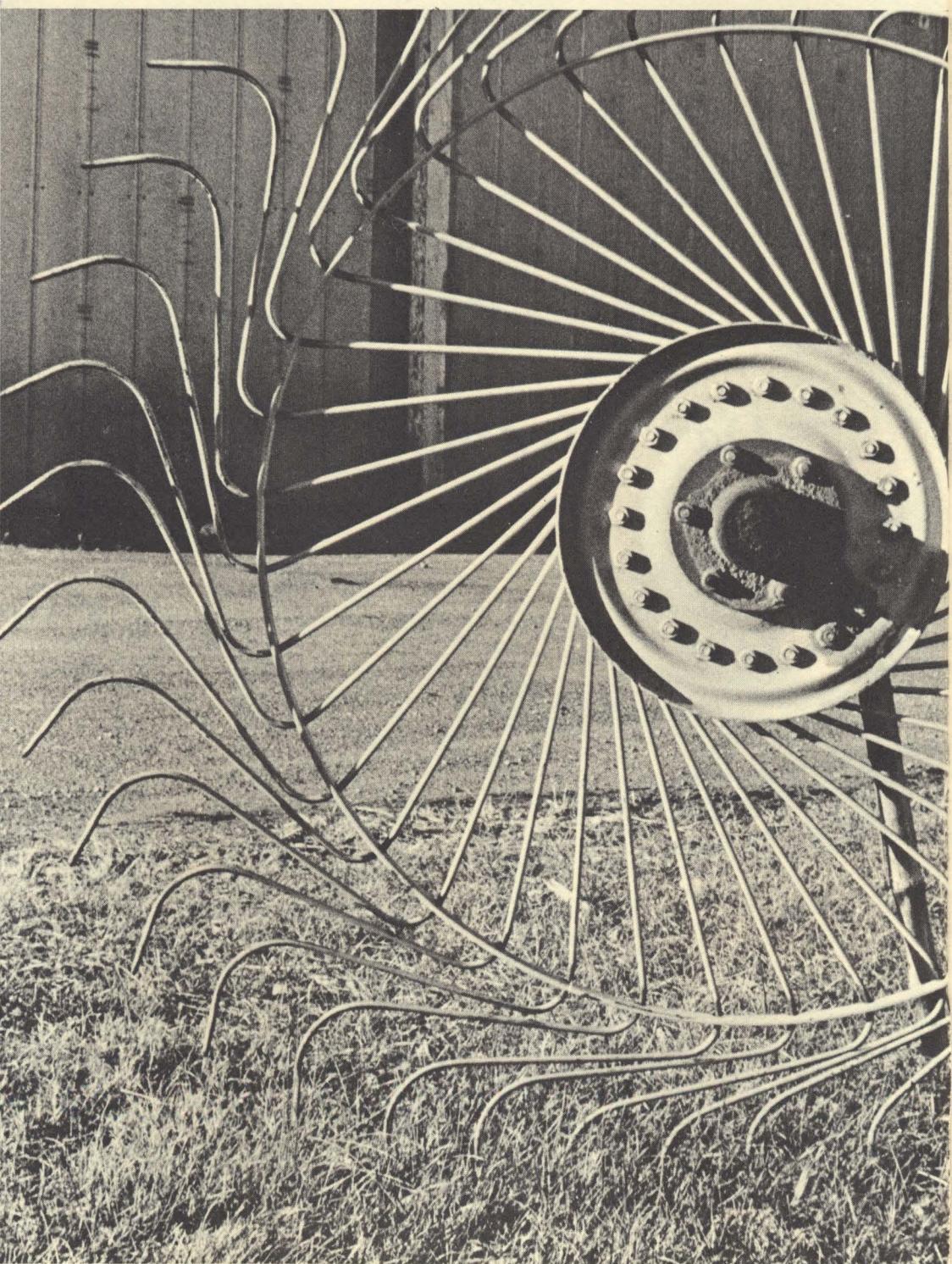
The *Reflector* is a student magazine funded by the Student Association. *Reflector* welcomes submissions of poetry, short fiction, art, and photography from any Shippensburg student. All work will receive equal consideration and should be sent to *Reflector*, c/o the CUB. Interested students are invited to join the staff next year.



Day Dreamer

Sometimes
he would sit
and forget
the walls,
or at least
forgive them
for what
they had done
to his life.

—*Doug Ellmore*



Farms in the country are neverending :
surrounded by fence they roll, waves on the crest
till another fence breaks the waves
and brings them crashing to the road.

Ebb and flow.

Ebb, flow upward and ebb back down
along the ripening crops plots of farms
make a checkerboard
symetrically crossing lines continuing
dividing the crops of corn and wheat

Southerners
even Californians
notice the farms along the road
ebb and flow.
In Pennsylvania
if the trip is boring
you yell out the window to grazing cows.

If the billboards are frequent
you keep on reading them.
Here is 1 farmer plowing grain
through unending rows upon rows
driving a thresher

There are 3 children
in a roadside stand
where we don't stop to buy

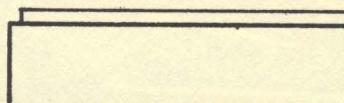
There are magnolias adorning
in the proud farmerwife's garden
and in each window box
they decorate.

There is a rusty hoe
leaning against the barn;
from the past
never for future.

There is always something
to pick or buy or smell or wonder about, you
never notice the different farms.

—Margaret Ogurcak

3 x 2



DOUG ELLMORE



STACEY ZECHMAN



MARGARET OGURCAK

MARGARET OGURCAK
POEM:
"Farms in the country....."

STACEY ZECHMAN
ILLUSTRATION:
CURRENT EVENTS

DOUG ELLMORE
POEM:
DAY DREAMER

Duets



RAY GOUKER

RAY GOUKER
PHOTOGRAPH:
WHEEL

CHERYL RINEER



BRAD WESTBROOK

CHERYL RINEER
PHOTOGRAPH:
ROSE/SKY MONTAGE

BRAD WESTBROOK
POEM:
ANOTHER ROSE



Another Rose

I

Stale wizened rose, the
Medicant pleads re-creation
From rain-gorged.

II

“The rose is obsolete.”

A symbol it was once—
For lovers shared between each other—
Of the tenuous design of chance.

A dazzle-eyed boy gave roses.
Many flaming petals, mimes of storming passion,
Told her his story;
And aging,
Drawn shales drawn tight faded to nothing;
Breathless petals proved his real strength.

A symbol was the rose
but now it's obsolete.

Today we make our symbols;
Drafted visions created by man's hands,
Measured technique to produce solid design—
Flimsy stem held stiff by wire,
Dull plastic petals that never wither—

A constant cloud
Passion is.

III

In the face of a rose is
knowledge of our sphere.

The rose is one song;
Native rhythm
Resonates the galaxy's pulse,
Stones' intricate matrix, undulation of water.

Petal on petal through petal
Silently weave

Petal on petal by petal through petal
Silently weave
A soft concentric music,
Expand into a pure blue air
Of delicate harmony.

The harmony is four voices:
At first morning where
The rose is sung
One can see that
Beneath the stamen shivering rays,
Haloed in misty air
Secluding the leeching soil
Near a rapid running stream
The voices are untied;
(Nearby sparrow, another
song, sound its weight
against weight of silver maple):
Each voice itself
Dependent
With-in an infinite commerce:
A fugue is
One song is the rose.

Petal on petal by petal through petal
Harmonic music wave motion
Each wave itself
Subordinate
In heart's heart, springing rhythm
Springing life's pattern.

To extinguish a fugue
Abstract but one voice,
One breeze-danced petal.

IV

In earth's belly
It begins
And journeys to
Air's end

A stubborn green stem
Defended
Thorn by thorn
Breaks soil.
Willful ascension persistent
Firmly through parching heat,
Percussive rain batter
To perhaps God, then
Explodes silently
Petal by petal.

Soft petals
Stem-chained
Fall short;
Quiver for release
In the wind.

V

Finding its withering face
In a cloud-mirroring puddle
The last rose wonders
Why the old woman never came.

VI

Rose music
Maps
Life's pattern

Stem
by
Thorn
by Petal

To Swallow A Rose

The antique key fit the lock snugly, as she said it would. Friction caused rust inside the lock chamber to flake off against the key, forming a gritty lubricant, which, matched with a little persuasive jiggling of the key, acted to slide the inner crossbar back into its housing, producing the tell-tale click, also as she said it would.

Although the lock conceded, the door itself refused to yield. Rotation of the brass doorknob only served to exercise the once dormant latches within the mechanism, latches that had not moved since they were last meshed fourteen years ago, right after the accident. The door determinedly refused to allow passage, like a guard commanded by the contents of the room to prohibit entrance.

He felt frustrated. His journey now seemed over at the point he least expected. But eventually, slowly, taking its cue from the interior, the door opened, as if his perseverance had helped him calculate the reverse constant for the rate of wood expansion due to age and moisture. The door did not burst open, nor did it budge slightly ajar, but gracefully swung open like a slow yawn.

Like a convict taking his first steps as a free man, he entered the room. Immediately he was crushed by the weight of the stagnant air. A choking sensation formed deep within his throat. Swallowing helped little.

He walked across the room to the large mirror on top of the dresser. An irregular crack ran horizontally across the mirror, dividing his image into two unsymmetrical sections. He looked at himself, laying the key in the virgin dust on the dresser. He examined the course of the break in the glass. A thin layer of dust rested on the crack, where the lower section of glass jutted sharply forward.

A thought struck. The erratic slope of the crack reminded him of the lines he had noticed when stealing glances at the charts those stupid nurses left lying around his room. Those nurses, with their short skirts, intentionally bending over, tempting him to look down their dresses, or up their dresses, or somewhere he didn't want to. But things were different now; they had to be; she said they would be.

He surveyed the rest of the room. Things were exactly as he remembered. Posters on the wall, now faded, torn, baseball bat propped in the corner, magazine stacks by the bed, dust in the corners and under the boards.

He moved to a cluttered table under the paned window. The ancient table, supporting a grey shoebox with a rock collection, a book of stamps, and a brown bag of bottlecaps, was literally on its last legs. On the shelf by the window was his trophy collection, the items he prized

most. Some of the awards were earned, but most were ones he'd bought secretly with money stolen from the coffee can in the teacher's lounge, where he swept after school. The trophies looked impressive, and no one knew which were earned and which were not. Hell, she never knew. However, now the silver and gold plated surfaces were covered with thick patches of dust. The shiny reflections in the metal had long ago tarnished and the inscriptions blended with dust.

On the desk by the bed, propped on three corners against a small wooden box stood a warped photograph. He picked it up, gazing at the frail young girl in the picture. In her hands, she clutched a bouquet of yellow roses. The choking tightness again swelled in his throat. He wiped the dust off of the yellow photo onto the sleeve of his sweater.

He held the picture in front of the window. By wiping away all of the dust with his fingers, he thought he would distinguish the scar on her forehead. He knew it was there. A childhood accident had caused the facial disfigurement. Surgery had helped, but she was always self-conscious about her appearance.

He turned the photo over. The faded message on back read "To my golden rose in a life of thorns.

Love Caroline"

The tightness increased. He nervously picked at the peeling paint on the window frame, exposing a bare, wooden surface. As the brittle flakes of old paint fell to the floor, he ground them with his foot, creating a fine powder.

His attention was drawn out the window by a pair of swallows flitting about in the grass, collecting twigs to rebuild nests, which were probably destroyed by the storm the night before.

After some time, one of the birds perched on a rosebud in the yard, while the other took flight and headed toward a group of trees in the distance.

He followed the path of the latter in his eyes. It was headed right for the treehouse he used as an escape spot as a youth. He lost sight of the swallow, but remembered clearly the treehouse. The memories clung like cobwebs in his mind. He had gone, run away, to the treehouse. He forgot her, forgot Caroline, forgot them all. He knew she would be angry when he returned, but it would serve her right to wonder where he was. Instead though, upon returning he was interrogated by the police, barred entrance to his room, and most painful of all, inhibited from inquiring about Caroline's health or whereabouts. Everyone believed he was dead. If he had never returned, who knows what could have occurred?

The next day they'd taken him to the place with the nurses and clean sheets. He told them all where he had been those four days, but no one believed him, especially the nurses.

His thoughts returned to the present. The bird on the rosebush was gone. In its place was a small peach colored rosebud, which looked as if it had burgeoned to replace its lost guest.

The dry swelling moved into his mouth and nostrils, creating a strong gagging response in his throat, overwhelming his control of breath. He dropped the picture on the table, turned to the dresser to find the key, intent on leaving this collection of memories. As he did, he was stopped still in his dusty tracks. On the bed, in a small depression below the pillow, lay a scattered handful of crinkled yellow rose petals, faded with age, but preserved by time. They had not been in the room when he entered. He knew where they had come from. Picking up the key from the dust, he fled the room and its memories. He shut the door, locked it, dropping the key, which he kicked back under the door it unlocked. Doing so, he knew that in the room teardrops were forming on the dresser and amber rose petals were being scattered in the dust. Such a shame, because now the obscure trips to the treehouse could never be the same.

—John Mowery

VI

Rose music
Maps
Life's pattern

Stem
by
Thorn
by
Petal

I

Would

Give a rose

To you.

—Brad Westbrook

The Carousel

I never quite knew why I didn't like it when Mrs. Dreisbach used to ride me. I had always been happy on the farm until that started. The Dreisbach farm had been my home, where I had been cared for and accepted without consequence. But then the rides started, much before I was prepared for them.

Mrs. Dreisbach loved me—I knew that. She was gentle with me and stroked my back and offered me sugar lumps and said I was the most beautiful horse she'd ever seen. Things might have gone differently, had I not grown stronger and Mrs. Dreisbach not taken advantage of my strength with her demands for more and more of those long, frequent rides.

That was when my visions first turned toward the Carnival. As much as I loved Mrs. Dreisbach, I began to ignore or avoid her; I stopped at nothing for my ambitions. She wanted me as her plaything—for entertainment—and I knew that if her attachments grew toward me, Mr. Dreisbach would never dream of sending me to the Carnival.

Not long after I had become unapproachable, Mrs. Dreisbach's visits stopped. Her husband would come to the stable every now and then, and when I'd look to see if she was with him, he'd turn away. One day he even forgot to feed me, but I entertained the notion that he really hadn't forgotten at all. Whatever the case, I knew he didn't understand, or even try to.

at incident, he brought me to the Carnival. On the first night, an attendant brushed and curled my mane, adorning me with a rhinestone saddle. The musical gala began as I mounted the wooden platform and assumed position. Then the crowds came.

They gathered around the platform, admiring each beautiful Carousel horse, deciding which one to ride first. I posed confidently, waiting to see which of them I would attract. My first rider was a little boy. Feeling his legs wrap around me, I knew that he was enjoying the ride as much as I was. His thighs tightened around me as the platform accelerated. Then it slowed down and he hopped off. It gave me a bizarre sense of control.

As each new rider hopped onto my back, rode me, and hopped off, I became increasingly convinced that the Carousel was what I had been searching for. The weeks and months that followed that first night were a collage of sensations, anticipation, excitement....and sometimes, doubts.

Sometimes, late at night, after the music had ceased and the Carnival had been abandoned, I wondered about the Dreisbachs; I thought about the times when days ended lazily, without sweat and some little boy's

stickiness clinging to me. On the farm, even the most demanding days ended restfully. Mrs. Dreisbach would finally tire of riding before sunset, and washed me gently, combing my mane, and stroking me a few last times before returning to the house and Mr. Dreisbach.

At the Carousel, it's not like that. By closing hours, it's so late that we can't be washed until daylight. It used to bother me, late at night, to sleep engulfed in my own filth. Sometimes I even wondered if the attendant would ever be able to primp me the next morning.

Then I quickly dismissed such notions, at least temporarily, concentrating rather on more immediate concerns, such as leg position. Stance is one of the main anxieties of a Carousal horse. One split-second mistake in the morning, one miscalculation of weight distribution, can leave cramped leg muscles for an entire working day. When I first joined the Carnival, muscle control was a major problem. After the ease of the farm life, discipline was not one of my assets. In time, however, it develop, so that now it doesn't take as overbearing amount of concentration to remain frigidly in formation.

It's the last ride of the night! A young boy hops onto me and then quickly dismounts in favor of a dark brown horse ahead of me that pumps up and down to the music. I never quite understood the big attraction for bobbing horses. They look totall ridiculous. The brown horse's reins are studded with multicolored jewels that glitter under the Carousel lights, especially as she pumps up and down. The effect is gaudy, but the crowds don't seem to notice— it's almost as if they are memorized by the showy, entrancing glare. They always seem eager to ride the brown horse, who complies with their desires, performing her duty with an almost blatant contentedness.

The platform is slowly accelerating, while the music lulls us around and around and around. I relax, with no weight on my saddle. I'm dizzy tonight, unaffected by the crowd of spectators surrounding the Carousel. Their faces have become a blur of smiles, smiles, and more smiles. I look away to avoid the whirl, so that my balance isn't disturbed. What fools the crowds are! They close in on the platform, wanting more, never being satisfied. Some of the riders reach frantically for the golden ring beside the platform; their fingers strain to seize the token that offers them another ride, another opportunity. Some of them do manage to grasp it, but most can't...sometimes they even fall off their horses while trying. I smile in spite of myself at their weakness.

The platform is slowing to a stop. The fickle little boy on the brown horse is crying and refuses to get off. He is throwing a temper tantrum, clutching the reins, and jumping up and down. An older woman, probably his mother, pulls him abruptly from the saddle. She stroms away from the platform, unable to hide her embarrassment, dragging

the little boy after her. He tearfully watches as the lights begin to dim.

The Carousel music has ceased, and the lights are darkening around me. The roar of automobiles and shrill laughter drone to a hum, which slowly fades into the distance. The echo of music haunts me. It's solemn now—all that remains is a void, so large that it engulfs each person filing toward the trailers, escaping the vacant fairgrounds.

The attendant is leading the Carousel horses toward the makeshift stable. As the dark brown horse steps from the platform, he pulls her reins sharply. His shoulder muscles flinch as he pushes her sharply into the stable. She makes no sound, so I pause before following her.

As if understanding my hesitation, he reaches to my reins, pulling me toward him. I knew this was coming! But why this attendant? He always used to comb and curl my mane, taking much more time than he did with the other horses. It wasn't long before he discontinued the practice—I never understood why. His transformation had been abrupt, and I haven't been the only one to notice. Especially lately, he's been avoiding his responsibilities, at least that's what I heard anotndant yell to him the other day.

I shudder, preparing myself for the blow to follow, but instead of chastizing me, he strokes my back, just like he used to. For the first time, he addresses me. "You've always been my favorite. Let's go for a ride."

He mounts me skillfully, tugging slightly on my reins. I begin with a steady trot, aiming away from the Carnival site, toward the woods. Entering the brush, my sides are scraped by sharp branches. Apparently noticing my irritation, he directs me toward a wider path. He tightens his grip on my reins, forcing me to a full gallop. He reaches down from the saddle to stroke my side.

"It's ok, girl," he reassures me. "I won't hurt you..." He keeps speaking to me, but his voice softens, so I am unable to comprehend his words. I don't care, though, because the sound is a soft, soothing coo that relaxes me and makes me feel content.

Suddenly I understand! He's deserting! He's leaving the Carnival and taking me with him! This is what I've only fantasized about—the opportunity to leave the Carnival world, to try again with what I once had. Why don't I trust this attendant, or his intentions for me? He goads me on, oblivious to my hesitancy, digging his heels into my sides.

A fence stretches across the path in the distance. I slow my pace, but the attendant urges me on. "Girl, we're almost there! Don't stop now!" he cries in desperation. I know I can make it. I've cleared gates twice that high before, riding with Mrs. Dreisbach. When she rode me, we practiced all kinds of jumps. I think she had hopes of entering competitions—I grimace to think of her dragging me with her

throughout the state, performing with her in pursuit of a mass-produced metallic trophy. When she rode me, she even used to give me extra sugar lumps when we had perfected a new routine.

I approach the fence, calculating its dimensions, preparing myself for the hurtle. But I don't jump. Instead, I stop, throwing the attendant from my back. His thighs lose their grip on me as he flies over my head, landing against the fence and slumping over at its base. What have I done? Blood is spurting from his head, dripping down his face and neck, oozing across his cheek, and he doesn't stir. But, of course, head wounds often seem worse than they really are. They usually look severe only until the blood is washed away. Why should the case be any different with my attendant? He'll probably gain consciousness soon, I reason. Convinced that he'll recover—and that he's probably been thrown before—I turn to the direction from which we came, moving toward the Carnival at a full gallop. I don't look back. It's approaching dawn, and I can make it back before I'm missed if I hurry.

Despite my indecision, my legs defy me, carry me with determination toward the Carnival. I consider challenging them, but surrender instead to my instincts. I move steadily toward the Carnival—the music, the rides. I can almost hear that music now, beckoning me. In a sense, that tune, and everything it represents, repels me. I remember the disillusion and the impotence embedded within its melody. But I follow the Pied Piper's song, as if blindly, preparing to enter the sea at last. The music mirage draws me, and there's no escaping its tune. In the end, I reason, you always follow the music, do the trick, and get your trophy.

Faster and faster, I move toward my destination. Sweat is pouring down my back and my legs are stiffening. But I've got to move, because it's light now, and if I don't hurry, I'll be late. There it is! I see it in the distance! I'll get there in time! The other horses are just about to mount the platform as I approach them.

The music begins, breaking the morning quietness, and I step onto the platform and freeze into position behind the dark brown horse, ready to start another day. The platform is slowly accelerating, going around and around and around, as if to mock me and the whirlpool that I have allowed my life to become.

—*Donna Smith*

A Twist Of The Moon

The moon tunnels in through the open
window, portraying her silhouette against the wall.

She rocks in a constant rhythm
never changing—
never stopping.

Light twists its way through her delicate
curls and dances across the unsmiling face.

Her memory reaches for the past, but
falls short and drifts back to now.

She tries to think of the time lost and the
words spoken.
irretrievable—
unimportant.

But of what use is it to recall
the things left undone?

—*Patricia Foster*

Eating Yogurt With A Breadstick

perched on rock like
cool snake warming
in spring sun (low on
horizon)

affluent sister pines
dripping shadows at
my feet snowmelt
falls on crisp brown
oak leaf (scrub) which
will soon be soggy
decompose
feed dirt for later
generations

much like sucking on
a long erect nipple
only flavored with
coffee (all natural)

traded even. day for
soggy breadstick

—Lee Gilpatrick

Double looped bowline
backed up

overhand knot
against belly snug.
Know that if peeled
space will

gag when
umbilical snaps taut
fear drained by
3/8" nylon.

Logic returns
Entice into anti-
gravity stream.

—Lee Gilpatrick

Exposure
Tense, balancing;
mind.
the
with
Ascending
Waiting, thinking;
Moving
against
time.

The music
is the motion,
Punctuated
by holds.
Flowing
and clinging,
Cheating gravity
the goal.

—Lee Gilpatrick

After Sun City...What?

Young ones of Jerome,
Children once again,

Wrinkles hiding thoughts,
Misleading us all.

Tell us what to do
To make you content.

We fill in strip-mines
And hide trash in bags.

We put good old dogs
To sleep, painlessly.

We snip off womb-life;
Unplug life supports.

Young ones of Jerome,
Tell us what to do.

—John Swope

DAN BLOCKER DEAD

Four weeks, no news.
Kisses from home
And best wishes,
But, no real news.

“Now, gentlemen,
Bad news for you.
We have declared
War on Russia!”

A sudden hush.
And quiet, “Aw, shit!”
And the sergeant,
Expressionless.

“Orders have come,
You’re now Marines.
Prepared to pack
Up and move out!”

We filed outside
In discipline,
No one talking,
Stood and waited.
Unprepared.

Then the sergeant
Strolled outside,
A newspaper
Under his arm.

“Now, gentlemen,
You have learned
Of rumors and
Propaganda.”

Unfolded, the
Newspaper read,
In bold headlines,
DAN BLOCKER DEAD.

—John Swope

Illusion

Perhaps you have seen Seurat's painting, "Dimanche dans l'ile de la Grande Jatte"? I know a curious story concerning that painting and a man who loved it deeply. From the moment he first saw the canvas on its wall in a small, dim room in the museum, he felt that only there, among the strollers through that lovely park, could he be truly happy. He began to visit the room regularly, in fact, daily, and he would sit for hours on a small wooden bench and gaze with the eyes of one who is leaving at the scene which held him even as it took him away. The custodians of the surrounding galleries soon became aware of this man who loved a painting (for such they termed his attraction), and, sometimes they would gather at the door of the small, dim room and look at him, and then at the painting, and then, again, at the man. "It is a lovely and most pleasant painting," they agreed among themselves, but they could discern nothing to explain its hold upon the silent figure on the small wooden bench. Shaking their heads and shrugging their shoulders, they would slowly return to the galleries in their charge, and, indeed, often spend their hours in puzzled contemplation of the small room and its strange occupant. What drew the man to the painting? The scene itself is a sunlit park, a bank of the Isle of the Grande Jatte, crowded with people on a Sunday afternoon. Some people sit or recline on the grass in the shade of the stately trees that line the shore, while others stroll leisurely about. A small dog darts across the shaded foreground, and a young girl of perhaps ten races through the sunlight in a bright orange dress. On the clear, smooth surface of the water, boats move by steam or sail or the muscles of rowers. In the distance, on another bank, a white horse pulls a black carriage. All of this motion, this suggested activity—and yet, the singlemost arresting impression is one of serenity, silence, timelessness. Everything moves and nothing stirs...surely the man on the small wooden bench saw this. As the eyes passed over the details for the ten thousandth time, did he seek, or even find, the point at which everything stopped, heart stayed in mid-beat, and the wind filled the distant sails only to cease and become calm once more, leaving the boats gliding, motionless, forever? If his eyes sought such secrets, if his mind turned these notions over or held them up to the light of his own particular reason, his countenance and posture never betrayed the depth or demands of such a pursuit. He was like a sculpture, a statue...he sat on the small wooden bench like a piece of stone. And, as the time passed, if the truth—the somehow sad and

sublime truth—be known, the gallery custodians came to think of him as such. They no longer came to the door to look at him and wonder, and some claimed to have passed through the small, dim room without having seen him at all. Was it possible that the room was empty? They would hurry to the door, and glancing, almost fearfully, inside, find his familiar form on the bench before the painting. Then, as if his presence in the room assured them of some peculiar stability, they would sigh, collectively, their relief, and return to their duties, wondering anew at what his purpose might be. More often than not, however, they went about their business as oblivious to his presence, because it was so familiar, as they were, for the same reason, oblivious to the works of art that they watched over with unseeing eyes. Thus, when they one day found the small, dim room empty, no one knew for certain when he had stopped coming.

When he left the museum, finally, late on a cold autumn afternoon, his life was changed forever. Only a man of his wealth could have seriously entertained the notion which he intended should one day be realized. From his seat on the small, wooden bench, that last day in the small, dim room, he felt the spell of the painting grasp his mind as surely as a great yet gentle hand, and, rising, he crossed the short space between the bench and the canvas. He had never approached the painting before, always remaining, statue-like, humble, on the bench. Now he passed his trembling fingers over the surface of the canvas, and, as he did so, as he took each subtle, telling patch of texture into his soul, he felt a dawning as bright as the eternal sunshine flooding the Isle of the Grande Jatte. Turning abruptly, he left the small dim room without a backward glance. Not until he had reached his office of business was he fully aware of his surroundings. Once there, however, telephone in hand, he became again the man of power. The men in companies he contracted that afternoon, and during the days that followed, thought, at first, that this important man was joking with them. But they soon realized that he was serious, and they set their minds to the demands of the tremendous task he placed before them. And, quite aside from their fees, which were enormous, they responded to the challenge which his commission made upon their various crafts and trades. "Yes," they replied to his questions, "if you are willing, as you say you are, to spare no expense, this project can be completed by next summer. Yes. The means exist to do what you ask." Thus assured, the man put the subject from his mind, as best he could, and attempted to concentrate on the ordinary matters of his living.

While he stayed in the city and made money, they took his fantasy and made it a reality. They built a dam, which became a lake, and, after months of hard work, the banks were landscaped to as near a replica of those in the painting as human ingenuity would allow. For, you see, the

man meant to walk among the strollers on the sunny bank; to watch, with them, the sails drifting over the cool blue water: to become, as he envisioned it, one of them, idling, happily, in the perfection of that timeless afternoon.

When he received word, one fine day in mid-July, that the work was done and all was ready, he waited until dark and drove to the site. He slept that evening in a small cottage which opened onto the very scene that lived in his mind. Once, he started from his sleep and sat up in his bed, his eyes wide at the strangeness of his most familiar dream...the grass and the trees...the sunshine...the people...even the monkey on its leash...the old man under his parasol, beside the stone...everything where it should be...and when he rose in the morning, early, from excitement as well as habit, he could not, try as he may, arrive at a satisfactory explanation for the strangeness of the dream. He prepared and ate a large breakfast, and proceeded to pass the morning hours reading a newspaper he had brought with him the night before. All of the curtains in the cottage remained closed, throughout the morning and into the afternoon. The man, very relaxed now, sat in a soft chair and read, with the aid of a lamp, first the newspaper, and then a book of verse. Outside, in the park, people gathered to enjoy the sun or to wait for a breeze from the water. The mood was a compliment to so lovely a scene. Greetings were exchanged, hearts mellowed in the warm atmosphere, and the laughter of children rose above all. No one seemed to notice our friend stepped from the cottage door and into the sunlight. By then it was late afternoon, and the shadows were just beginning to stretch themselves to the east. He took two steps and realized that he knew these people before him. At this recognition he hesitated, but then, with a rising excitement, he walked into the midst of his fellow idlers. He strolled the length of the bank, smiling, nodding to those he passed, and found himself, at length, quite near the spot where the horse and the carriage are to be seen in the painting. Turning, he retraced his path through the tall, strong trees. As he neared the cottage, the beginning and the end of this wonderous place, he recognized the figure of a young woman standing by the water's edge. She balanced a parasol on her shoulder, and as he drew abreast of her, he thought of the hours he had pondered her presence and purport. As he stood behind her, his back against the hard bark of an elm, she turned, the pink lavender of her dress a swirl of soft, hazy color, and looked at him with startling frankness. He felt himself pulled to her, and as he walked slowly, surely in her direction, he sensed that the inhabitants of the park were leaving. And indeed they were. Singly, or in pairs or groups, they disappeared into the trees. The man stopped a few feet short of the young woman. Then, turning around, he blinked at the empty park.

"Where have they gone?" he asked, as if to no one.

The young woman smiled and looked at him, as if from a great

distance.

"Why, they have gone home, of course. You don't expect them to stay in the park all night, do you?"

Perhaps he would have replied, but here she threw back her head and laughed, a high, mirthless laugh that penetrated the silence. Twirling her parasol, she walked quickly and gracefully into the gathering twilight.

—Ron Brown

A Dada Porno

I study the New York Dada: the maze of
Navel, arms reaching toward cold directions,
Armpits-in-breasts, knees, full-curved hiplines,
Thighs tethered by long limp subterranean legs.
A myriad
Of organic tresses
Like spastic wires,
Their currents fusing the cold sutures,
Helplessly obstinate,
Inspiring revolt.

—*Donna Smith*

In a white sea, dark and misty,
beneath the willow's weeping crown,
a nebulous deity frowns
like the hour of destiny.

This realm in which man's sons consent
to truth in life's diversity
is transcendent reality
soaring on swift wings of present.

long on a wave's white crest,
man knows his moment with a sigh
like the wolf's melodious cry,
for life denies rest, all rest.

Man's abode, misty with white lies,
is the domain of mystery
that hides the key of mastery
decernable by dying eyes.

To each this being will appear,
and night will transcend light of day,
for mystery he must betray
rending the night of woven fear.

—*Bill Stine*

What Have I Created

“What have I created?”
said the painter
who had been stroking all night,
(gazing into his canvas of many colors
and textures).

—You paint a picture
You try your best
and it doesn’t always
come out pretty.

Gazing into a stream
he continued his observations.
“Strange, it fits in my pocket,
and it continually jumps out.
Maybe I should let it go,
because sometimes it seems not
to want to come back.”

—*Don Falcone*

Ghosts

I believe in ghosts
the kind that you could touch
like the first girl that you kissed
who's been gone for seven years.
 the salty
fragrance of the ghost
like the smell within her hair
amidst the runny nose and concord trees
we laid to rest in lead.

I believe in ghosts
the kind that you could love
like the virgin who was ripe
for your ethos and your fear.
 the silent
sound of the ghost
the footsteps in the rain
they're really spicket-drops and puddle-spots
that come as tears,
children playing like adults.

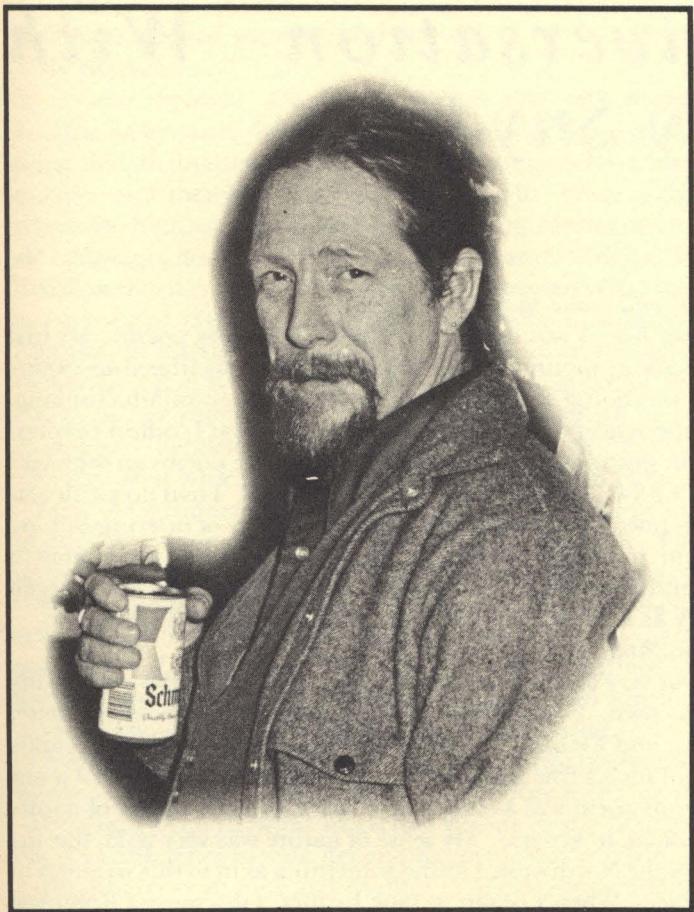
we all laugh at the ghosts
pretend they don't exist
so
draw your curtains, draw your blinds
but still
your picture
is alone
inside.
is it the herbal life that watch
every movement
that you
create
and whose trembling makes your body shake
and eyelids rip, rip from their seams.

I believe in ghosts
like the sun believes in night
like the dog with a short tail
where both ends never meet.
the soul of the ghost
like the menu at a jail
like the first-grade spelling test
when it's thrown before your face.

we all run from the ghosts
when we feel their breath, hear them breathe.

I believe in ghosts
because I want to see what happens
when I'm fifty miles ashore
when I'm forty years of age.
I want to see how everyone's made out.
I want to see
the light that flickers
when the thoughts are unholy and unclean,
the gods that rule, the gods that damn
the very thought of fruitful love,
I want to see
the failures drunken in the street
with their parking tickets and pickup trucks,
the western young men playing baseball
in their mines and fields for cheap pay,
I want to see
Goody Two-Shoes who's a witch
who's retired and gone to bed,
and the Very Reverend who suddenly died
over the coffin of the ghost.

—*Don Falcone*



In a sense, Gary Snyder and his poems are very much alike: both are compact, apparently serene, but suffused with an incredible energy. Both are deeply concerned with nature, both show an awareness and appreciation of the "Voice of Place" which, in Snyder's case, is the high Sierra country, with all of its complex moods and rhythms. On March 1st, Gary Snyder brought to Shippensburg a sampling of that Voice, which he offered to a full Assembly Theater in the Cumberland Union Building. The Voice was soft but rich, mild but full—well adapted for poetry readings of depth and feeling. It was often, quite literally, a song.

The following morning, Reflector was privileged to interview Mr. Snyder and to ask him about his Voice. The interview was conducted in our own Seaver's Apartments, with people barging in and out quite frequently throughout the duration of our talk. By the time we were ready to leave, a group of a dozen or so had gathered around the sofa where Snyder was seated, and the questions continued of their own momentum.

Conversation With Gary Snyder

R: How did you come to write poetry?

S: I guess ever since I was very young I've been writing poems. My first poems were about mountain climbing. When I was fifteen-to-twenty years old, I was doing lots of skiing, hiking, and mountain climbing, and these experiences were so intense and specific that I couldn't express them without putting things down that looked like poems on the page: I guess that's how I became interested in the form. I had no particular education in poetry—the sense of a compressed way of uttering things. When I went to college, I learned more specifics and read modern American authors to get the feel for the music of the language. I began to see poetry as a vehicle for complex ideas and complex feelings.

R: Which authors influenced you the most?

*S: Well, I was very focused on nature. I did biology studies and botany studies on my own. When I discovered D.H. Lawrence's book of poetry, *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers*, it really hit me because he was so accurate and clear, had such a fine sensibility....I remember in high school it was said that Wordsworth was a nature poet, but I found his sense of nature too domesticated, in general. My sense of nature was very wild, like the mountains of the Northwest. I found something akin to this wildness in D.H. Lawrence. When I began to look further, I discovered Robinson Jeffers' really intense poem about the California coast. The politics of Jeffers' poems was interesting because it was an anti-civilization politics, which took us back to ground level and said maybe no political situation was going to save us, and maybe the whole thing—all this form we call civilization—was a mistake from the start.*

Then I read Pound and became fascinated with his ear for the music of the language and his intricate ways of using ideas from both Europe and China. He was a great technician of language—quite a teacher. I studied him closely. Eventually I branched out into Elizabethan poetry; I studied Chaucer in Middle English, Blake, and the Chinese poets. I learned to read both Chinese and Japanese, studied other traditions to get a planetary sense of what poetry is doing in society and what it's done for the past fifty thousand years.

R: You've been quoted as saying that the various occupations you've held have affected your poetic Voice—

S: My rhythms.

R: —your rhythms. Could you explain what you meant?

S: That's a tentative thing to say, but there must be some truth in it. One thing that distinguishes poetry from normal speech is a sort of rhythmic quality, and therefore one must ask oneself: What are rhythms and where do rhythms come from? English naturally has certain rhythms—all languages do, and they're not all the same. English has a rhythm based on the play between stressed and unstressed syllables. There have to be stressed syllables, and there have to be unstressed syllables in English. In Japanese there are no stressed or unstressed syllables: it's all spoken in a flat, syllabic tone. You can speak Japanese in a monotone and it will be intelligible. You can't speak English in a flat tone—a monotone—because it won't be intelligible. So that's one kind of rhythm: that which is an intrinsic part of a given language.

Even more fundamentally, there's a rhythm of your heartbeat and the rhythm of your breathing, a rhythm made by your body. The way you're living at a certain time, the work you're doing, gives you a different body rhythm. Somebody driving a tractor all day will have a different rhythm, say, than someone working behind a desk. Everybody's got some kind of rhythm in their lives, and I really believe this manifests itself in our speech, the language, and in certain kinds of poetry we write—I know it does in the poems I write. For instance, I was doing lots of work with stone and rock one year, rebuilding trails and dynamiting in the High Sierras, and the handling of those rocks we were working with affected the rhythms in certain poems in my first book. There's always a difference in tone, depending on the way you live, just as there's a real difference in tone and rhythm in White music and speech versus Black music and speech. After all these years of listening to jazz, for instance, there's still a basic difference in White and Black rhythms. There's a reason for all that.

R: What, then, is Voice? How do you find it?

S: Voice is the place you speak from...literally the way you use your voice. I'll give you an example: in my own case, I wrote quite a few poems—maybe several hundred—between the ages of twenty and twenty-five. They were reflective in various ways of other things I'd read, quite deliberate undertakings in the modes of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound...the Chinese mode.... They were intellectual exercises, though I didn't recognize this at the time—I was very serious about it.

Then when I left college, I got into other work and really put poetry out of my mind. We were doing trail work in the High Sierras, and one night as I was just getting ready to crawl into my sleeping bag, a poem came into my mind, and I wrote it down on a scrap of paper. Later I rewrote it and said "My God, where did that come from? That doesn't look like anything I've ever read. It must be me!" And since then I've

written lots of poems that weren't copies of anyone else. That's what's meant by finding your own Voice: suddenly you realize you've got a position, and you've got something to say. That's where the work begins. What came before is just practice.

R: How did going to Japan and studying Zen change or add to that Voice?

S: Well, I think it must have helped to deepen and clarify it, because what Zen really does is make it clearer just who you are—it doesn't really add anything to you, but it uncovers what is already there. The mind is like an ocean: there's no end to the discovery of creatures and depths in it. Zen deepened my senses of things, and it deepened my breath, too. And it made me appreciate silence. It helps you to realize the basic poetic caution, which is to remember that poems aren't really written with words; they're written with something that comes before words. The silence is more important than the part that makes noise. What lies behind poetry is imagery and great blocks of perception and feeling, much of which never come into language. When I think poetry gets interesting is when things come out in language that don't quite sound as if they belong there. It gets a little bit magical....

R: Is that the same thing as unveiling Jung's collective unconscious?

S: Yes, but the collective unconscious expresses itself in somewhat specific ways from place to place. And there's something I would say that Jung wouldn't say because he probably wouldn't believe it anyway, and that's that there is an unconscious sense of place. The flavor of North America is different from the flavor of Europe or China, just as plants and animals are slightly different. You get tuned in to this; you learn that each place has its own special voice. So no one who wants to be a poet should be an exotic 'Zen-sounding' poet or 'Chinese sounding' poet; you have ultimately got to be a North American sounding poet. You've got to figure out what the hell an American poet is—that's the exercise.

R: And what have you figured out about that?

S: I can't say too well. If I figured anything out, I guess it's in my poetry.

It's an understanding that is still evolving.... I'm trying to figure it out.

R: Do you think North America has a collective voice, or is it a group of localized voices?

S: It's many things, when you come right down to it. It's many different areas, many different climatic zones, many plant zones, and people have to live in different ways in different parts. If I was farming, I'd have to learn a whole lot of different things about gardening to farm in Shippensburg than I would for where I'm living now. So there are specifics that naturally affect people.

But that doesn't mean we can't talk across all those things. I just think we have to recognize the diversities.

R: Do themes vary from place to place—or do only rhythms vary?

S: If there was a song that expressed the essence of living in a place, it

would have all that in it. It would have the smell of the dust, the sense of the cycle of that climate, the smell of certain plants—it would be different from someplace else. But then you cut through all that with some very fundamental human emotions, which won't change from place to place. And this is, again, what poetry does. You pick up ancient Greek poetry and find something really Greek and something really universal about it. Ditto for China. I think it's really fascinating.... And more than that, I think it's instructive, too, because part of what we have to do is learn how to be specific, learn how to be diverse, and learn how to be different without losing a sense of universality. What we have in contemporary North America is a kind of mono-culture, where they serve exactly the same kind of food from coast to coast in every roadside restaurant. Everyone watches the same television shows. It generates a sense of uniformity, which is false. You realize how false it is, say, when the fossil fuel system falls apart and suddenly you cannot import food from long distances, and you have to grow the vegetables that will grow in your own climate. Then you have to look at yourself and say "What will work here?" The play between diversity and universality is a biological theme as well as a poetic one.

R: Looking at modern American poetry, do you see this at work?

S: I can say a few things about that. One thing is that when I started writing everyone wanted to be a poet with a national reputation, and the idea of publishing was to get a national publication. What they really meant was that everyone who wrote sounded like they went to an East coast Ivy League college, and the guys in the East coast Ivy League colleges, in turn, were writing as if they'd gone to Cambridge or Oxford. Very focused toward England, and very literary, very elite.

Now, twenty-five years later, we've got a lot of people who don't care for that. They can write from where they are from pride and dignity; poetry really doesn't have to reflect any elite, academic kind of language. People are trying to tune in to the language of the farmers, the working people—their tone of voice and the language of Place, wherever they are. At one time Robinson Jeffers was scorned by the East coast literary establishment for being "an excessive Californian." Of course, all Californians are excessive in a way, but until recently provincial poetry wasn't accorded the same status as official, "literary" poetry. Now most of these barriers have broken down, and there's fine poetry coming out of all corners of the country, and fine magazines coming out everywhere, so that people are relating to each other what their local and community life is like much better than they used to. And that's really what it's all about: getting away from that mono-culture dream.

R: Does the term "Beat poetry" bother you then, in the sense that it seems—almost condescendingly—to provincialize your poetry?

S: Well, it's a historical term for the poetry of a certain time written in a certain place. No one's writing Beat poetry now. I have the honor of being a founder of that movement, although I wouldn't have picked

that name for it myself. We were around San Francisco in the '50's, and we got together to hold some really interesting sessions—in fact, what we did was make poetry interesting. We actually thought about an audience; we thought it would be good to get what we had to say out there in a way that people would want to come back for more. We broke out of the self-contained circle of avant-gardism. And we did really good poetry readings; we could hardly help doing good poetry readings with Ginsberg reading from his first volume of *Howl*....

R: How do you discipline both your writing and your writing time?

S: For the poetry? Writing poetry doesn't take much time. Poems are short. I can type a poem in five minutes.

R: What about revision?

S: I do that in my head—and that only takes two minutes more. So it isn't that you need discipline to set aside time. Now for prose, it's different: for prose you do have to discipline yourself. In poetry, you must discipline yourself to keep your mind open and pay attention to what you hear inside your ear. Then you stop every once in awhile and write something down, keeping track of what you've done and what you're thinking. It's not a cut and dried discipline where you can get by by saying you've put aside an hour—or even two hours—a day.

R: Not even when you're starting out, working with language?

S: Well, when you're younger, you tend to do more. You tend to do more writing and more exercises. I think that when you get more tuned in to it, you don't have to do that; you can just look at what you really want to do. I don't write a poem down until I've let it ripen in my mind. But it may work differently for different people.

Among the important titles of Gary Snyder's works available in paperback from New Directions are: The Back Country, Earth House Hold, and Turtle Island (1975 Pulitzer Prize Winner).

Roses

The roses
In the window box
Have tilted
To one side
Everything about this house.
There is the sense

That love has crept
Beneath the earth. One
Sees it in each green
Leaf, each curve
Of stem....

I remember, once,
You spoke of roses,
Of beauty guarded
By thorns. But no one
Guarded you

And in this light
I tremble, recalling
How your touch sent
Thirsty armies through
My skin.

This rose, at dawn,
Its petals cast aflame
By a light beyond
The glass

Curves away
And I curve with it.
We press each
Other's memory
In the pages of old books.

— *Thomas Townsley*

Anima

Asleep, unwondering,
curled up inside this darkness
you lie beside me,

sister-twin,
our lives entwined, the self-
same spark engendering two,
two, your quiet blood

in tune with mine.
Where shall I look for future lovers?
Out there in the light,
grown separate, we will carry

in the darkness of our minds
a flickering image that moves past memory,
bright mirrors of this night, each other
soft, warm, primal—

out there in the light.
Out there where love is clumsy,
lovers rattle out of tune.

—*Thomas Townsley*

On Hearing Coltrane Play "Ascension"

Coltrane,
your tongue

a chisel
picking notes apart

breaking down
the walls of form

to yield energy.

It is fission.
It is an act of liberation

just as a saw through wood
makes heat

or the death of a loved one
leaves a hole

we fill with grief.

"This is my body
which is broken...."

for all of us.

Nails sing deftly
through the wounds.

—Thomas Townsley

Crossroads

It was night, in a little room of moonpatches,
reflecting from his cold steel voice
in summertime.

Spoken by some other gun, in a fit of youth,
she talked of Robert Johnson with
her trigger pulled.

The warm breeze eased the situation, promising
that nothing would ever change
between us.

And the air, with its nigger ghost wandering
from mind to mind, floated within our
conversation.

I was smiling out an open window, in a
flawless still life, when she spoke
of going.

The room turned stone still in my head. Her words were some
faraway movie.... 'I believe I'm
sinking down.'

—*Doug Ellmore*

Separate worlds. Twins born in a technology
of clones. A metal uterus
removed from
the pure water form. Pining for themselves as sons.
Rising from the womb, the sea.
Eternal life.

I am twins. I am lovers. Siblings of draught.
It is from my blood comes the dawn.
Drawn together
from the layers of an onion, a bag of skin.
A few billion soul gears bow
in reverence.

Unknowing. The unnamable namer has fled
and forsaken. The machine
bears witness,
and the separation continues, the wire
a seed, and the diode
a prayer.

—*Doug Ellmore*

Comfortable boy. Lost without his head,
taken outright; ripped with precision;
scraped the boned blur.

They poked holes in his soul with blunt sticks. "Don't be dead!"
(they pleaded laughing harder) "anyone
can do that. Suffer."

Joyous boy. They made him remember
his birthdays as a child, and fed him cake
till he threw up good.

They rubbed his hands over his body. "amateur"
(they coaxed) "rub us; rub us till it aches
to be you." Understood.

Immaculate boy. Then filled his eyes with chalk
and lobotamizing his future, taking
pride in his husk.

They cut his tongue from his throat. (Made him talk)
They drew the curtains of his bed. (No peeking)
They fucked him into dust.

—*Doug Ellmore*

The Fraud In Your Mind

The brief rest supplied by the night was over and the rays of the star stretched across the sky, as its life-giving energy consumed everything beneath its path.

The Kid spoke.

"Things have really changed. I remember the good old days, when life was free and easy, and a person wasn't afraid to do what he wanted to do."

Suphero disagreed, saying that the Kid had gotten away with too much in times long past, and still did.

"Yeah, the old days," said the Kid, his voice trailing off into another forest of his mind.

The two lay in their respective beds, like oysters in a shell, but in a limbo-like stance, as the third member of the group tugged at the layers of sheeting around him, thus freeing himself to begin the morning ritual.

He first walked into the bathroom, like a martyr bearing the weight of a decade of sinners. He washed his face, but the starry-eyed expression failed to depart. He next ran his hands through a cold stream; they didn't seem to respond. Neither did the pits of his arms, which almost seemed deathly and immune to life.

Before proceeding to other alleys of his mind, he stooped down to the toilet. "A throne," he thought, "whose crown was heavy indeed, but not hollow."

Eghead, as he was called, let his thoughts first scatter for a moment, then come together like vultures on their prey.

The three had been together for a long time and they knew each other's attitudes, feelings, and behaviors well. And for all the bickering they did, and all the differences they had, it seemed that when the time would come to go, they would go together, or not at all.

"Quite a queer thought," was the next message relayed from the abyss deep within him up to the pedestal where he now stood. Thoughts once again rushed in.

The Kid was known as the instigator and dreamer of the group. He was also the oldest, though birth records for them all had been lost and, unfortunately, no one could remember the date.

Egghead had taken control, making decisions when the group were faced with problems. He was largely responsible for where they were, and where they were going. He was, overall, a realist, quite unlike the Kid, who was naive and realistic.

The youngest of the three, and the one who had developed the most from the early days, was Suphero. As a lad, he had been plagued with misfortune, but through luck, and perhaps someone's sense of justice he'd survived. He had matured and now contributed heavily in decision-making.

Egghead coughed, and listened to the other two stirring, simmering like a warm gravy about to be served.

He was the ruler, he thought, the intellectual. Yet, somehow he knew he didn't always talk and act in the best manner. He wondered if he had grown impatient with these two, if maybe they were the cause of his inner hostilities.

He could see today would be like yesterday and yesterday would be like tomorrow.

His senses began to surge. He was no longer alone.

All three worked in the same building: a massive structure, perched like an eagle, and shining brightly before the sun's rain. The building was equipped with all the modern gadgets needed for a successful business operation; and the heads, the thinkers behind the organization, were the best, the best that loney could buy, the best that any man could want.

Egghead was the highest paid and held the highest job.

"Hey Kid! Wake up! You shouldn't be sleeping on the job."

"And what do you know, brother Suphero? Go see what old Egghead thinks."

"That's what you always say," answered Suphero.

The Kid retorted, "Someday I'm gonna be top-dog, just you wait and see. I could kill that slimy bitch right—"

"If you lay one shred of hatred on the man, I'll personally show you what justice is all about."

"Cut out the chattering," said Egghead, swinging around the corner like a caboose looking for some poor maiden who's already been hit. He paused to collect his thoughts, then continued. "We've got work to do."

Egghead knew what was going on. He had heard it all before, and nothing ever came out of such talk. He had learned at least that much long ago. Today would be no different. Suphero and the Kid would continue to argue for the rest of the day, and then they'd sleep it off, only to begin again tomorrow. In all the years Egghead had known them, it had always been this way. Nothing had changed. Today would be no different.

The Kid was daydreaming more than usual, at least he thought so. But it didn't matter.

"he was a mighty prince
on a winged horse,
going to rescue the daughter
of a king.
in his left hand
was a broad silver sword,
glistening in the sunlight.
while his right hand,
tightly gripped the reins."

He looked down at his watch; the moment he had waited for had come. With work over, they would go home and relax. It was moments like these that the three really appreciated, second only to sleep.

"she had
long
dangling
beautiful
golden hair.
her body was tall,
her figure slender."

Supper would be ready soon and consuming the food would be almost as much labor as work was. It felt good resting on the bed. Real good.

"her breasts were full,
they were mature.
and their movement was cool,
like a shy bluebird
humming its parents to sleep."

The lights were out, but he couldn't remember how they had gotten that way.

"a dragon,
for the hero to slay
appears from the smokey mist,
which dimly lights
the archaic darkness."

The lights were still out when the being came through the bedroom door. It had been a long day for the three, and finished with their evening meal, they had gone to sleep.

As he opened his eyes he saw the creature. He was awake; his bed was real, his arms were real, the world was real. To make sure the thing before him was an illusion, and not a reality, he reached out to touch....

But the room began to churn like butter, and he felt the warm, slimy, scaly skin against his body. He said prayers, prayers that he had never

voiced in his entire life, praying to the walls for help, but the walls only closed in.

He turned to his right; Suphero was nowhere to be seen. Only the Kid, who had created it, could stop it now. He quickly turned to his left. There was only blackness.

Egghead knew he was alone, and if truth existed, this was its supreme moment of glory. For the man with all the answers no longer knew what to do; to obey his senses or to renounce them. Could he disbelieve that which he had always believed in, and maybe the only thing he had ever really trusted?

His senses told him everything was above: the odors, the sounds, the footsteps, the laughter, the metal, the plastic, the food, and the woman.

His head slowly lifted and his eyes gazed upward to face the reaper of this nightmare. And the intellectual, for a second, saw death, or perhaps, life. Then Egghead jettisoned into the clouds.

He was gone.

The room was empty.

The three were gone.

It was finished.

The man was now alone, maybe for the first time in his life. But he was content, and ready to die.

—Don Falcone

Preludes

I

When evening quickens over the land
And teases and tickles want of living
In some, you are the actors who have
Toured long and the lines have become
Your lines and the actions you're actions
But you have forgotten just why you ever
Picked this play, or at least so you say.

II

In the small hours of the night, you awoke
And layed on your back, rolling coal black
Balls of old dirt from your palms and
Thought of the darkness.
Darkness that fondles your withering soul
And darkness that kindly hugs your roly-poly
Wife and darkness the home of the thousand
Grubby visions of what is your world.

Soon it will be time to go into the mines
And slash and cut at the bowels.

III

Light jumps on your awareness to smells
Of sour-sick urine from the floor
And gin-dry cotton wads packing your mouth
Making you want to spit but knowing it
Will not amount to any good.
Instead you silently curse when you think
Of what the light has brought and what the light
Is and what the light reveals and what the
Light might have brought.

But now the damn cows are bawling and it's
Time to hack and abrade the flesh.

IV

You awoke to the clanging of bells and smells
Of weak coffee and putrid strips
Of animal flesh burning in their own fat.
You saw the morning paper and read of
Farm and mine strikes and that
Crazy Spic who raped three women before
Slashing their pretty little throats
And were happy with yourself
For being a regimented grey and pinstriped WASP
Or an almost white black businessman with
Two sons at Rice.
You forgot though as you joined the herd on
The concrete tomb and pressed to hi rises

The concrete tomb and pressed to high rises
And fast-food stores and grabbed cabs & buses.

V

You finished loading the Dodge pickup,
Your Ambergrombi flannel shirt stiff with
Old sweat, your pre-faded jeans ragged beyond
Fashion, the floppy hat gone and the pages
Of *Walden* now ashes in the fireplace.

VI

The pickup races along US 1.
The driver taps a Camel on the dash,
Far enough away that he is unable to
Hear the growing cries of the raped.

As the coal car fills with laughing men
Who roll careless cigarettes between
Blackened and broken fingers, they do
Not hear the rumbling from the bowels.

The farmer hitches a rusting five-gang
To his rusting tractor and cuts a plug
Of too-sweat tobacco with a pearl handled
Razor, unaware of the smoldering land.

The city was crying and laughing and screaming
Acting as only a city can.
How could they hear the whispers of vacant
Lots gone wild?

VII

Their essence was crucified against the purple
Sky.
But the city could not see the spirit for the
City and the farm couldn't see them for the
Trees.
Had they known or cared they might have said
How sad and maybe then dreamed a dream or two
And sent a \$5 check to the Preservation
Of Wildlife Council, then free to forget.

VIII

But I will not forget and I know of others who
Cannot forget.
For we have ears and we listen and we hear and
We know.
We cannot stay though there once was a time for
Staying.
They can not trust.

—*Thomas Osenbach*

Love

Four hundred postage stamps.
Seven coins
in a fountain.
Eons of mirages
more vivid than real.

Scores of words
perfumed on pages
as old as Sol himself.

A hundred miles of sandless beaches.
A hundred volcanoes that didn't erupt.

Ashes.
Bones.

Charred
as the end of a fire.

Believe me when I say
it was eternal.

—*Cheryl Rineer*

Gifts For All

It was on the night William Durer died in the bed of Antoina Corsicca Eberhart, his lover and mistress, that the moths descended on Womelsdorf. At that time it was a very small town that could only be reached through an intricate series of turns after leaving the main road, several miles away, and passing freshly planted oat fields where the land rose and fell like waves that never gained enough momentum to break. The town consisted of two streets that crossed in the center; one passed through the village and continued on to regions unknown; the other came to a dead end in both directions. It was along the latter where Antoina Corsicca Eberhart lived, receiving nightly visits from William Durer, a pale, insecure man with the eyes of a nervous sparrow. Their nocturnal meetings were secret to no one except Mabel Durer, William's wife who, had she known about them, probably wouldn't have cared; she had long since given up having sex with the man who'd taken her from her wealthy parents in Virginia and brought her here to a town that wasn't sure of its own existence. He had married her for her money but could not outlive her parents, for it was on the first day of Spring, when warm breezes swept up from the South and circulated in the streets, that he died without a whimper in the bed of his mistress, leaving the seeds of inheritance buried behind him. And it was on that night the moths descended.

They fell silently and in great numbers. The townspeople were awakened by the sound of their dogs, first howling, then whining as the fluttering cloud dropped onto the street. Like the toothless yawn of a dying leper, they blocked out the moon and stars, smothered the streetlights in a mass of wings and furry abdomens, flitted toward the lighted windows: flakes of dead epidermis, lusting for an intangible essence in the muted glow.

Each moth was small and had dark wings with green circles on them. Contained within the circles were black dots of various sizes and shapes, making the insects look like a coded message from God. They swooped along the street, thousands of them, seeking cracks and crevices through which they could squeeze, a silent flotilla with collective power and purpose.

Teenagers making love in their cars were caught completely off guard. *Those with their windows open suffered most, being aroused from their passions by the unpleasant sensation of a hundred powdered wings brushing against their naked bodies.* The girls let out muffled screams;

there were awkward moments of withdrawal, banging knees and elbows; there was a repulsion that rose like gastric acid from stomach to throat as moths were crushed against the skin, against the vinyl seats. Like sporadic coughs, the sound of starting engines filled the night.

The townspeople learned quickly to turn off their lights. Even Jacob Schaltz, who slept in his columned, brownstone mansion with each lamp burning to ward away thieves, found it necessary to extinguish every light save one in his drawing room, which had no windows, but where several moths managed to find their way, nevertheless. Jacob considered the moths a purge against his soul. He was the owner and manager of the Schaltz Cigar Company, the last of the cigar companies that had provided the major source of livelihood in Womelsdorf for eighty years. At one time there had been no less than eleven cigar manufacturers in the town, and nearly everyone had been involved in the industry in some way. Then came the Great Depression, when nearly all the factories were forced to close. Jacob Schaltz managed to keep his company alive through an inheritance he'd earned from his father, originator of the firm and a man well respected in the community. Jacob never earned this distinction, however, for when his competitors folded, he bought their trade blends and usurped their sales areas until his company had gained a total monopoly on local business. He hired few of the jobless—and only those who performed small favors for him—at fees that would have been insulting any other time. Many others, the unprideful, had begged at his door that winter, for jobs, for money, even for food. He had turned them all away with the reminder that these were trying times and everyone had to fend for himself. Because of his affluence, he'd led a comfortable life and outlived most of those he'd rejected. This did not ease the weight of his conscience, however, and as the years circled past, he felt his spiritual burden was increasing in proportion to time. Now, sitting in his drawing room, an old man of eighty-two, with pale blue eyes that watered constantly due to a lifetime of exposure to smoke, an old man who would carry the odor of his cigars with him to the grave, Jacob Schaltz believed his day of judgement was at hand. He saw in the flitting forms the same lust and need he'd seen in the eyes of the poor and jobless who'd knocked at his door many years ago. And just as the moths were drawn to the light, the others had been drawn to his wealth, his power. Involuntary tears running down his face, Jacob Schaltz reached into the engraved silver box on the table beside him and removed a cigar. Let the thieves come, he thought.

Across the street, the Reverend Calvin Wartluft of the German Congregational Church was afraid the moths would attack and devour his clerical garb. He had been one of the last to turn off his lights because the thought of being alone in the darkness with thousands of creatures spawned by the devil frightened and appalled him. He did not consider himself ready for a test of faith.

Those who knew him were not aware of his self-doubt. A rotund man

with a red face, thinning hair, and round wire spectacles, Reverend Wartluft bore himself with a weighty dignity. Even the wheeze in his voice was interpreted by others as a tone of indignant wrath, rather than a bad case of asthma he'd suffered since childhood. He was a fiery orator with a stout Dutch accent that clubbed his parishioners into a state of perpetual fear. He spoke of hell and damnation with a familiarity considered by some to be an inspired warning from the Almighty.

But when hundreds of moths surged through his open window on the night of William Durer's death, the Reverend Calvin Wartluft could not pray for fear and consternation. He could only slam the window shut and stare, mouth quivering, at the spectacle beyond the glass. Moths dashed against the invisible barrier, red eyes lusting, frenzied wings pulsating for the light. There were so many that they appeared as a living whole, pressing toward the glow that was to them both inexplicable and necessary for survival. Several had managed to squeeze through cracks in the window frame and were fluttering toward their goal; others were crushed against the glass as moths behind them surged forward, like lemmings in a final rush to the sea. Finally, unable to recognize a viable alternative, Reverend Wartluft resigned himself to his fate and turned out the light. Huddled in the darkness, clerical gown balled tightly in his lap, he tried to recall the story of the locusts....

The moths plundered the town until dawn, when suddenly, without explanation, they began to die. As the sun crept over the mountains in the east, they fell to the street in clusters, wings turning pale gray when struck by beams of light. The green spots with black centers began to fade and blend into a nauseous hue, like slime. It was as if the very light the moths had sought was now transforming them into something repulsive. The townspeople were not aware of this, however; they had known only the terrifying connotations of the moths at night and were now beginning to contemplate the unpleasant task of removing this film of death from the street. Front doors were opened and moths were swept onto the walkways. Murmuring voices filled the morning air:

“We left the windows open...they’re scattered all through the house.”

“It’s terrible, simply terrible.”

“At least they didn’t eat anything. Did you notice that? They had no mouths.”

“They’re a curse from God, that’s what they are. There can be no other explanation. We must repent for our sins.”

“Yes, did you hear? William Durer died last night. In Antonya Eberhart’s bed!”

“No! Who told you?”

“Edna Stauffer. She heard it directly from Mabel. The coroner was there at six this morning, as soon as the moths began to fall. Said he died of ‘natural causes.’”

“There’s nothing natural about that woman. How did Mabel take it?”

“She was a bit shaken, as you might expect, but you know she and William haven’t done much more than talk for the past few months. It’s

more of an embarrassment to her than a tragedy."

"Well, I can't say that I blame her. I never liked that man."

"And did you hear the strangest thing? There were no moths around Antonya's house."

"What?"

"It's true. I saw it for myself. There's not a single moth in her yard."

"She's been marked by the devil. We're all cursed because of her!"

The rumors about Antonya spread quickly among the people. William Durer's body, covered by a sheet, was removed from her house at eight o'clock. Those who watched the solemn procession caught sight of Antonya Corsicca Eberhart standing in the shadow of her front doorway, wearing a black gauze dress with fluttering sleeves, face expressionless, eyes unblinking. Her dark hair was fashioned into a beehive, her nails were long and painted.

"Who would dress like that on such a day?" the people whispered, aware of an icy void in their souls as the tall silhouetted figure closed the door. She had not so much as acknowledged their presence. They felt certain, too, that she was responsible for William Durer's death, and the fact that there was no proof of their contentions served only to aggravate their fear and hatred. The image of Antonya The Moth Lady hovered like a threatening raincloud in their hearts, waiting to release a shower of winged curses upon them.

That afternoon, the Mayor organized a clean-up force of seven men. They worked their way down High Street, sweeping the dead moths into plastic garbage bags. Already a familiar and nauseating odor like glue and dead minnows had begun to drift with the breeze, forcing the men to wear handkerchiefs over their mouths, like surgeons. The moths had to be scraped off the street, for as the hours had passed, their bodies had assumed the consistency of thick paste. When the repulsive task was completed, the bags were taken to the park and burned in a metal barrel. Several townspeople turned out to witness and celebrate this event, the end of a frightening ordeal. They watched as the smoke rose into the same sky from which the moths had descended. The billowing black cloud seemed to flutter and expand in the wind, as if the spirit of the dead insects had manifested itself within its fumes.

Jacob Schaltz watched with upturned face as the flames lapped over the edge of the barrel. Smoke from his cigar rose parallel to the cloud. He was deep in thought. The rumors concerning Antonya Corsicca Eberhart had reached him that morning, filling him with a mixture of doubt and relief. If what the people say is true, he thought, then I am not responsible for the moths. This possibility filled him with the greatest respite he'd experienced in years, as if the weight of his past sins had suddenly been lifted and transposed into the soul of another whose evil was all-encompassing, filling not only the present, but the past as well.

Even the tears in his burning eyes were forgotten in the face of this ultimate alliegiation.

Several yards away, the Reverend Calvin Wartluft was speaking to Mabel Durer about her husband's funeral arrangements. He had recovered his usual bearing and spoke words of consolation as if by memory. Since Mabel had failed to attend church regularly in the past few years, he added that she would do well to turn to the Lord for help in these trying times, for God knew what lay in each man's heart and promised everlasting life to those who believed and worshipped Him. She should offer tithes in His name. She should pray, too, that her husband's spirit be accepted in the kingdom of heaven.

"The kingdom of heaven wants no men who betray their wives," Mabel Durer said in a tone that chilled even Reverend Wartluft. "He's going to burn in hell forever. The devil sent the moths as a sign of this."

"One cannot always interpret the signs of the Almighty," Reverend Wartluft warned. He was thinking of his fear the past night, and how he'd thought the moths were a test of his soul. "For now we see in a mirror dimly...."

"My mirror says seven years bad luck," Mabel answered. "Does one o'clock suit for the service to begin?"

Antonya Corsicca Eberhart began a self-imposed period of confinement following the night of the moths. Part of the reason for this could be found in the constant derision she suffered at the hands of children, who stood outside her house and shouted: "This is the home of Antonya The Moth Lady!" She was not hurt or offended by their remarks; rather, she considered them unwanted gainers of attention. Had the children cried "This is the home of Antonya, the most beautiful woman in the world!" her reaction would have been the same.

She was a striking woman, especially when viewed from a distance of seven or eight feet. From this vantage point, one could see her green eyes, hollow cheeks, pale complexion, and the graceful curve of her neck, without being aware of the lines and shadows that had worn into her face. She was tall and wore dark gowns with bright trim. No one knew where she got her money; one rumor held that she had several men out of town who supported her, another claimed that she had been married once and received monthly alimony checks, still another proposed that the money came from her father, who had raped her when she was twelve. But no one knew for sure, and Antonya's seclusion served only to whet the people's appetite for gossip. It got so that nobody could agree when she came to Womelsdorf: some said just a few years ago, some spoke in terms of decades, and several of the older people claimed she had been there for as long as they could remember. There grew around her an aura of mystery which, after the descent of the moths, became tinged with fear and suspicion. People spoke her name in whispers, casting nervous glances over their shoulders as if fearing

some form of supernatural recrimination.

Antonya Corsicca Eberhart remained in her house for nine weeks after William Durer's funeral. Much speculation arose over how she managed to stay alive for all this time, but in the end it was reasonably assumed that she had a large stock of food stored in her basement. Gradually the rumors about her began to lose fervor in the face of her absence, and wild explanations for her survival—such as the one that she had built a cocoon for herself—were forgotten.

Then one warm, crystal morning, she emerged from behind her double mahogany doors, descended the stairs, and walked down the street to Stoltzfus's market, wearing a night-blue gown with green gauze sleeves. Housewives watched from their windows as she passed, head held erect, her entire carriage poised but fluid, oblivious to the hundreds of greedy eyes that bore down on her like a collective conscience. They were amazed to see the lines of age gone from her face, replaced by a vibrancy and glow that seemed centered in her green eyes. Her hair now flowed down over her shoulders. By the time she reached the market, word of her arrival had preceded her on a chain of whispers.

Roger Stoltzfus stood behind the cash register in his white apron, wearing the forced, placid look of a priest at confession. Antonya walked past him, took a shopping cart, and began to push it up the first aisle. She walked behind Jacob Schaltz, who had come to buy a head of lettuce. The old man stared after her, a cigar tucked between his lips, blowing ponderous clouds of smoke into the air, clouds that hung about him like a funeral veil. He watched as she rounded the corner, then returned his attention to the lettuce bin, picking up various heads and squeezing them between his tobacco-stained fingers, testing them for freshness. Bitch, he thought, how could you do this to our town?

Also watching Antonya from the back of the store was nineteen year old Ulrich Levetzow, a dark complexioned youth who worked for Roger Stoltzfus as a stockboy. Ulrich's father, now dead, had been German, but his mother, from whom he inherited his crow-black hair and slender build, was Italian. From her he had also acquired his quiet, shy personality, which veiled the turbulent broodings of his soul. This mixture of race and blood, which was also apparent in Antonya Corsicca Eberhart, destined him to be a loser, more content with his own thoughts than with the senseless gibber of friends. He felt he had outgrown them years ago, and in a sense he was right. Now he watched with keen eyes as Antonya The Moth Lady passed in front of him. He, like everyone else, had heard the rumors concerning the death of William Durer, but as his eyes lingered on her receding form, he felt within him less a sensation of fear than a slow, gradual burning like he had never felt before. As he caught the vague scent of her perfume and saw the youthfulness of her eyes, Ulrich experienced a puzzling need to cry. Standing awkwardly by the produce aisle, he fought back tears he could not explain or understand and watched as she retreated before

him, filling her cart with fresh mushrooms, a bottle of goat's milk, and several small glass spice containers. When she rounded the corner to the next aisle, Ulrich moved along the display case with her, infatuated with her every move.

Several minutes later Antoina finished shopping and took her loaded cart over to the cash register. Roger Stoltzfus rang up each item without looking at the woman beside him, punching the keys as if they were the source of all his trouble in life. As the food began to accumulate on the counter, he flashed a look to young Ulrich, who was still standing at the back of the store.

"Ulrich, come here and pack this order, please."

The youth was startled at this sudden burst of attention, having become so engrossed in the strange force overwhelming his soul that he had forgotten his physical presence. Nervously, he walked to the counter and opened a grocery bag. Glancing up, he met with the gaze of Antoina Corsicca Eberhart: her eyes flashed through him like talons while her mouth was curved into what could only be a smile. Ulrich quickly averted his gaze so she would not see the color rushing to his cheeks. He felt certain she could hear the pounding of his heart.

"That will be thirty-two, eighty," Roger Stoltzfus said, wiping his large, red hands on his apron.

Antoina opened her purse, counted out the exact change, and gave him the money. "I'd like it if the boy would help me with the bags," she said. "I walked here and can't handle three at one time."

Roger Stoltzfus blinked at her for a moment, then turned to Ulrich, who had stopped packing and was looking up, wide-eyed, unaware of the expression on his face.

"Is that all right with you, Ulrich?" Roger Stoltzfus asked seriously.

The youth opened his mouth but found it too dry to speak. He nodded his head, frightened at what he was consenting to do. Antoina Corsicca Eberhart smiled at him. "Which bag is the lightest?" she asked.

Minutes later Ulrich found himself carrying two grocery bags up the steps of Antoina Corsicca Eberhart's house. During the short walk, he had sensed the weight of the townspeople's eyes on his back, but now, standing on her front porch, waiting for her to unlock the door, he felt as though he'd passed through an invisible barrier that eliminated all imposed guilt. He became acutely aware of himself: of his breathing, of his heartbeat, of every strand of his hair that seemed out of place. The weight of the bags felt good in his arms.

Antoina unlocked the door and bid Ulrich to follow her. Inside, it was cool and dark. Ulrich stood inside the foyer and stared up at the crystal chandelier, which made a sound like running water as the door was opened and closed. For a moment Antoina looked at him, and everything was silent. When she did speak, her voice was magnified; the entire house echoed with it.

"You can bring the bags into the kitchen."

Ulrich felt a touch of the old fear returning. He followed her into the kitchen and set the bags on the table, then turned to go. Antonya called after him.

"Would you like to stay and have something to drink? Some tea?"

The youth stopped. For the second time that day, Ulrich Levetzow stared into the Moth Lady's deep, green eyes. A wave of burning rose and fell in his chest, and this time he did not look away.

"Yes," he said. "I'll stay."

Roger Stoltzfus looked at his watch. A half hour had passed since Ulrich left with Antonya's bags. He felt a vague sense of apprehension. What should he do if the boy did not come back? How long should he wait? That woman is capable of anything, he thought to himself. Who knows what could be happening this very minute?

More time passed. Roger busied himself recirculating the groceries on the shelf, pulling the older products forward so they would be purchased first. As he was putting the last jar in its place, Ulrich came through the door. Roger Stoltzfus didn't know whether to be angry or relieved, but when he saw that no harm had come to the boy, he chose the former.

"Where the hell were you?" he cried. "Just what did you think you were doing?"

"Miss Eberhart asked me to have some tea."

"Some tea? Who the hell are you that you can take forty-five minutes of my payng time to drink tea with a witch? I didn't know what had happened to you!"

"What could have happened to me?" Ulrich asked calmly, but the look in his eyes showed that he already knew.

Roger Stoltzfus did not know what to think. He stared at Ulrich for a moment, then, out of some understanding lodged in his heart like an inexplicable myth, he realized he had to let the boy go.

"I'm going to dock forty-five minutes off your paycheck," he said. "Try not to let it happen again."

That night Ulrich worried his mother by going to bed early. He didn't answer the anxious questions put to him from behind the bolted bedroom door, and when they persisted, he had to shout:

"I'm all right. Please go away."

There followed a moment of hurt silence, then he heard her footsteps fading in the hall. Sighing, he folded his arms behind his head and sank into the pillow, thinking over all that had transpired that day between himself and Antonya. The smell of her perfume circled slowly, like a vulture in his brain; it circulated in his blood until he was sure the smell rose from his body, too, from his very pores—it seemed so strong. Green

spots danced before him; the waves of burning in his chest rose without falling, one atop the other, with unbearable intensity. All the sensory images he'd culled of Antoina Corsicca Eberhart floated, detached, through his mind, leaving him breathless and dizzy: he felt the cool touch of her hand, saw the glow of her hair, the way it contrasted with her skin, heard the rush of wind that was her voice, saw her breasts rising as she breathed.

Am I in love? he wondered.

They had done little but talk for over half an hour, and while he could still hear the sound of her voice, he could remember only her final words before they parted. Her face had taken on a look of urgent seriousness; her hand had reached across the table toward his, and she said:

"You are Hope, my young one, and not only mine. The door will be unlocked tonight." He had walked back to the store in a daze, unable to think.

Now all he could think of were her eyes, her long nails, the way she moved her hands when she talked. He saw the gentle movement of her green gauze sleeves and wanted to cry again.

"God damn it," he whispered, surprised to find his fists clenched like mussels. "God damn it." He didn't know why he said it.

Ulrich had never felt this way before, and he was slightly ashamed. Still a virgin at an age when other boys were wearing out the springs of their father's cars, he felt as if something inside him was being stretched on a rack until ready to tear. There flashed through his mind all the coarse images he'd assumed only his old friends could savor, but now he saw that there was something right about them, at least for him—something that separated them from the raw lust he'd seen in the others, something beyond the crude absurdity that relegated their experiences to little more than dirty jokes. For the first time in many years, Ulrich's soul and body were one. He wanted to bury himself in her gown, feel her hands caress the back of his neck; he wanted the alkaline smell of her perfume and the pain in her eyes to be with him for eternity. The seeming impossibility of the situation created a chasm within him; his desire increased until it threatened to push him over the edge. He imagined her body beneath his, felt weak, pictured himself falling, his flesh melting away to blend with hers, fading away till there was nothing but blackness, a primieval blackness filled with their unity. A far-off painful stirring told him he had to have her, even if it was impossible.

He could not force himself to rise from his burning bed for some time, but when he did, it was with such resolution that turning back had ceased to be a possibility. He got dressed by feel, listening in the darkness to the quiet hum of the sleeping street and the throbbing of his own heart. Silently, he raised the window and eased himself through it, into the night. Creeping through the back yards, he was startled once by the sudden barking of the neighbor's dog. It snarled and crashed into

the wire fence surrounding its house and, filled with rage at this barrier hidden by darkness, roared at the boy several feet away. Ulrich heard the sound of its chain dragging over the ground as it ran nervously back and forth.

"Quiet, Yukon. Quiet, old boy."

But the dog would not be placated, so Ulrich hurried on.

When he reached her house, it occurred to him that she could have forgotten to leave the door unlocked. This thought filled him with a mixture of hope and despair but, as he ascended the front steps he saw that far from being locked, the door was standing slightly ajar. He pushed it with his fingertips and the hinges yielded with a living screech that filled his soul with ice. From the moment he slithered through the opening, sideways, he caught the scent of her perfume. The chandelier tinkled overhead, but he could not see it in the darkness.

Silently, he crept up the steps. Groping in the pitch black, he suddenly realized that he didn't know where the bedroom was. He became disoriented, feeling his way along the wall with his hands, shuffling his feet to avoid crashing into the furniture. Only now did Ulrich consider the audacity of what he was doing, the wrongness of it. He had broken into a strange woman's house in order to make love, having known her for only half an hour. He had come here in a trance, but there was still time to go back.

Ulrich quickly retraced his steps, abandoning all caution, trying to find the head of the stairs. This time he encountered an end table which had miraculously evaded his path before. He toppled onto it, and crashed in the darkness. Something fell beside him. Recovering from the initial shock, his groping fingers came across a small, metal box, which felt as though it had something engraved on it. Ulrich felt that the lid was open and groped about inside to see if there was anything there. It was empty, a vacant tomb. He swept his hand across the carpet to make sure nothing had spilled and, finding nothing, quietly placed the box back on the table. His heart nearly stopped when he saw two green eyes staring at him in the darkness.

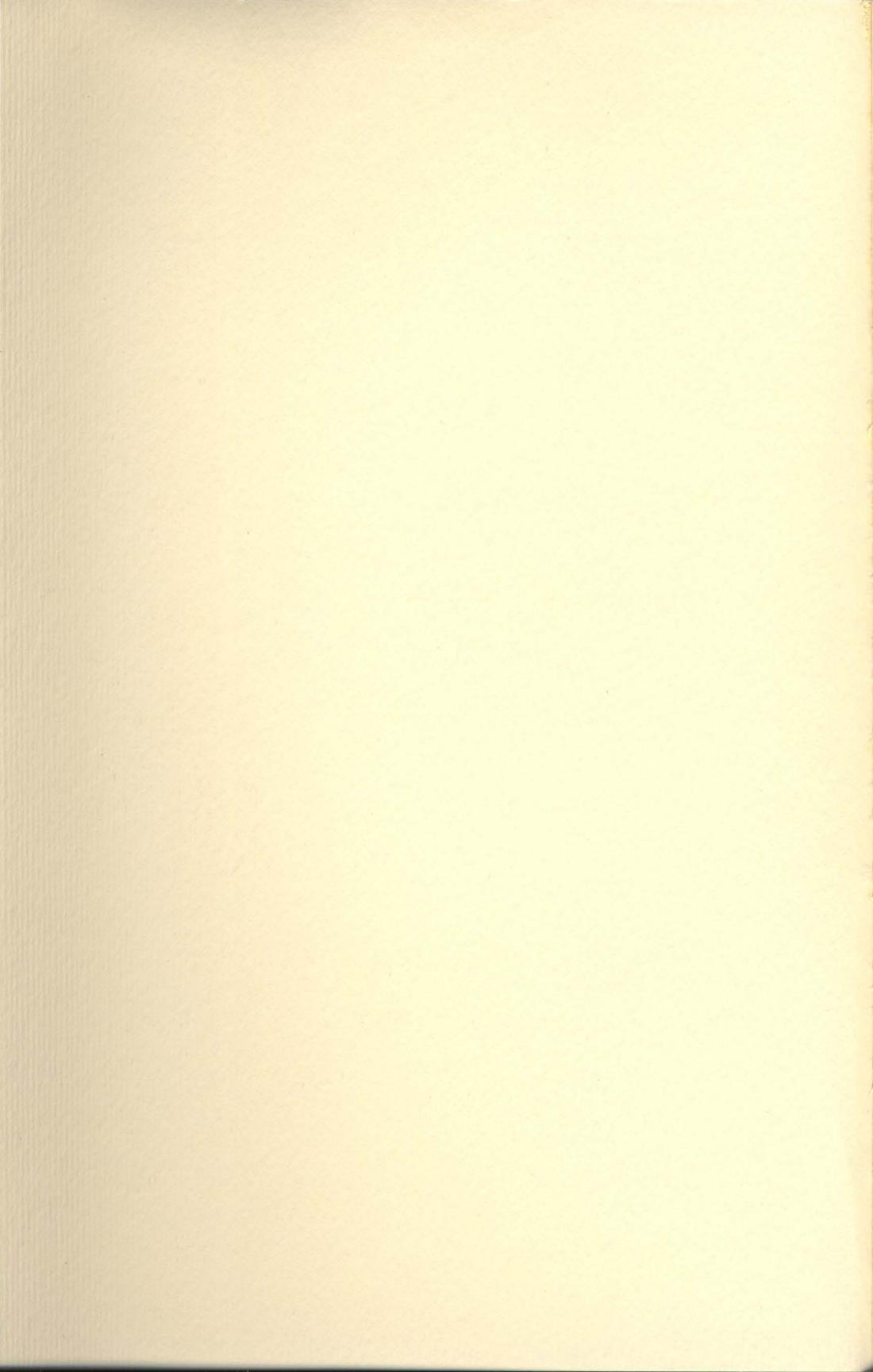
"Ulrich, I was waiting for you."

He felt a cool, dry hand take his and guide him, lightheaded, through the blackness to a place where the smell was overwhelming. He felt his clothes being removed; he felt his body turn to lead as it was met by a breeze from a nearby window. There was an awkward moment when no hand touched him, when he felt not two but two thousand soulless eyes piercing him with their lust; then he felt himself drawn down into something warm and knew he was doing what he'd always wanted to do but never thought he could, not knowing even now how he was doing what he did, feeling only the complete disorientation and million flutterings that aren't expected but which converge in the soul and shoot forth, leaving nothing—

—Thomas Townsley

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