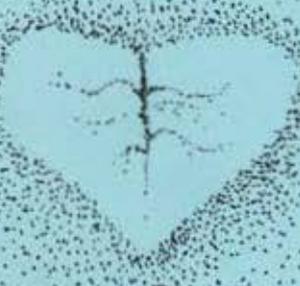




# Au Verso

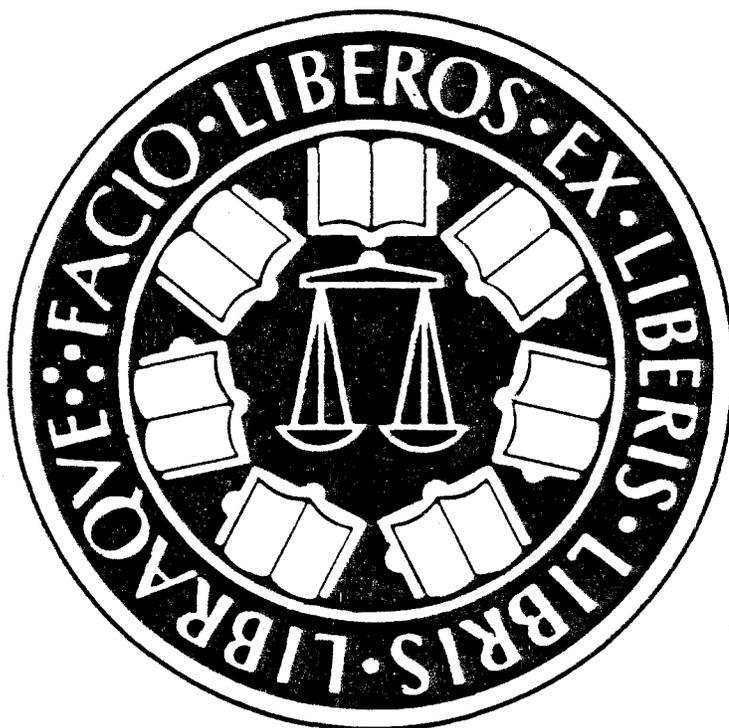
Fall Issue - 1979



Au Verso

Fall Issue

1979



Photographs reproduced by 'La Imprinta'

This page left intentionally blank.  
(If you decide to print this document  
double-sided, then the odd pages will  
all fall on the right hand side.)

Note to computer users: This is an interactive Index.

# Table of Contents

Clicking on the title will take you directly to the piece.  
Clicking on "Return to Index" in the lower left hand corner  
of any page will bring you back to this Table of Contents.

## Prose

Beginning Hebrew: An Introduction to Intentional Grammar (Robert Sacks)	2
Untitled (Thomas Goetz)	7
The Silver Dragon (Charles Reuben)	10
An Incident on San Francisco Street (Joel LaPinta)	17
Black Storm and Grey Rainbow (Douglas Venable)	18
A Conversation Between Friends of Galileo (Joshua Berlow)	26
The Romantic Sea (Charles Bell)	31
The Grey Town (Pat Bryant)	39
These Boots (Laura McKey)	42
Fate of a Harsh Day (Susan Jacobowitz)	56
Room (Armando Guadiana)	67

## Poetry

Family Album (Susu Knight)	1
Untitled (Owen Goldin)	6
The Gentle Kneeling Song (George Graham)	6
S&M (Julie Powers)	17
The Land of Cockaigne (Susu Knight)	30
The Card of Partial Loss (Susu Knight)	30
"Diffugere Nives"--Horace (trans. Lisa Lashley)	34
Untitled (Lee Bush)	35
Birds (Ronnie Wathen)	36
On Silence (Rebecca Davis)	36
Two Thousand Rooms (Katrina Crater)	40
Mirror (Julie Powers)	41
Untitled (David Larom)	41
My Lady's Scarf (Michael Sloper)	52
Ocean Eden (Joel Block)	52
"Exege Monumentum"--Horace (trans. Lisa Lashley)	55
Untitled (Leeza Bierschenk)	55
Perchance to Traipsing Dreamers (Elizabeth Pollard)	64

## Art

Elizabeth Pollard	1, 5, 6, 28
Ann McClard	cover, 9, 29
Catherine Graves	17, 34
Sheri Anderson	25, 42
George Graham	35, 51
John Swett	40
Scott Morozoff	66
Laura Maclay	70

## Photography

Howard Passell	37
Cynta De Narvaez	38
James Hennessy	53
Zelda Zinn	54

**Au Verso is the literary and graphic magazine of St. John's College, Santa Fe, New Mexico. It is published twice during the school year. It contains material selected from students, tutors and alumni of St. John's College.**

**Au Verso also sponsors frequent poetry and prose readings at the college.**

## **The Staff**

**Editor: Charles Reuben**

**Anne McClard  
Laura McKey  
Pat Bryant  
Howard Passell**

**Pryor Logan  
Joshua Berlow  
Howard Menaker  
Cynta de Narvaez  
Alison Carper**

**With a special thanks to Shirley (in duplicating) whose help went above and beyond the call of duty.**

## Family Album

Susu Knight

Today I caught pale handed  
The age of apprentices winking at itself  
Eye of a tearless camera  
Ogled the fat clean babies  
Took in all those fists curled and sucked  
Captured trees, swings, basement doors  
Cars on asphalt streets grayed  
And shadowless in all those noons  
Aperture widest in meridian  
It caught a scrupulous ingenue  
Moonstruck by a flat coin  
Newly minted in an insomniac sky  
Everything as it ought to be  
Rolling in place, each picture  
Sleeping alone on a separate page  
Yet locked, glossy side stuck to glossy side  
In a book difficult to open



Elizabeth Pollard

# Beginning Hebrew: An Introduction to Intentional Grammar

Robert Sacks

**S**ome books begin at the beginning. Euclid, for instance, begins with the definitions, postulates, and axioms of his science, and even the Bible begins with the book of Genesis. But where is the beginning of language? If we do not know where language begins in us, how shall we know where we should begin in it? Modern writers on the subject tend to define language as an arbitrary set of symbols commonly agreed upon for the purpose of communication. But any definition of that sort would seem to be almost self-contradictory, since any such agreement obviously presupposes some prior communication, leaving us with an infinite regress. The first users of language then must have had some reasons, no matter how vague, for believing that their words reflected some facet of the objects of their discourse, at least to the extent that their primitive speech would be intelligible to their addressee.

When, on the other hand, one looks at the myriad of languages spoken throughout the world and the depths of their differences, not only in vocabulary, but in their deep structure as well, any hint of the naturalness of language would seem to be no more than seventeenth-century poppycock. Still, the problem of the beginnings continues to gnaw and to taunt. To study a language, then, is to enter that strange and forboding land which lies somewhere between mathematical necessity and the totally arbitrary. It is that unknown land of grayness in which most of us live our daily lives.

One way of beginning would be to look at more ancient languages which are cognate to Hebrew, such as Babylonian and Assyrian, and indeed we will have to do so. But prior to that it is necessary to see what kind of assistance we thereby might hope to gain.

Consider the teacher of a hypothetical dialect of the English language spoken some 2,000 years hence in which the words "wouldn't," "shouldn't," "didn't" and "couldn't" still exist, as well as the words "would," "should," "did" and "could." Let us further suppose that the word "not" had fallen into disuse several centuries earlier and was no longer in the memories of the speakers of that language. The teacher, then, would have two possible ways of explaining the language. He could, for example, give his students a rule according to which certain words may be negated by the symbols "n't." Such a method would not differ in any way from the rules that we learn today, according to which the plural of most words is formed by the addition of the letter "s." The other method would be to point to the ancient word "not" and allow the students to see that "couldn't" is a mere contraction of the words "could" and "not." In other words, what first appeared to be a formal aspect of language was, in fact, an intentional factor.

The importance of such considerations can be seen more clearly by considering a word such as "slowly." It originally was a mere contraction of the words "slow" and "like," but in time, men became more at home with

the abstract, and the very sophisticated notion of an adverb came to be. The question then arises as to whether our sophistication is not somewhat false if we do not see the actual abstraction taking place before our eyes. One could imagine a child born into a world in which abstract art had so taken over the field that the child would no longer be aware of the possibility of representational art. He would be like those primitives of whom we are told, cannot recognize a picture as a picture. Rembrandt's self-portrait would be a beautiful combination of colors, no more and no less. Since the child no longer thinks of the possibility of representing the world by means of pictures, he would no longer understand abstract art as touching the heart of that world; for him it would become a meaningless form.

Intentional grammar is not and cannot become a subject matter. For that reason, it cannot be taught. A book can do no more than invite the reader to participate in the activity. Intentional grammar is most at home spreading out like a plain in the low valleys between the great peaks of historical grammar and linguistics. It has no interest in the dead past, but it finds itself unable to distinguish the living present from the dead past. Too often it finds formal grammar to be a realm of ghosts wearing the clothes of men. The forms have been well-defined, but they prove themselves to be no more than mantles draped over thoughts which have and have not been thought for thousands of years. These ancestral thoughts, which we inherit not through a collective unconsciousness but through words and turns of phrase, must be re-thought in order to become our own. Often, to see them born means to see them naked, devoid of their formalistic clothing.

For this reason, we shall need some overall picture of what is known as the Semitic languages. The most important fact to bear in mind is that the Semitic languages form a much more closely interrelated group than do the Indo-European languages. It would be far more appropriate to think of the Semitic languages as a counterpart of the Romance languages. The Semitic languages can, however, be broken down into two major groups: Eastern Semitic and Western Semitic, which is further subdivided into Northwestern and Southwestern.

The speakers of each of these major language groups would know that the other language was related to his own, and they would catch many of the words, but would not be able to understand the other's language. In this sense, their relationship would be rather like the relationship of a Frenchman to an Italian. The Eastern Semitic language called the Akkadian, was written in cuneiform, a method of writing developed by the non-Semitic Sumerians and taken over by the Akkadians around 2000 BCE. It was spoken by two different peoples and evolved into two readily distinguishable dialects: Babylonian in the South and Assyrian in the North. Each dialect went through certain periods of change as follows:

Old Babylonian	2000 - 1800	Old Assyrian	2000 - 1500
Middle Babylonian	1500 - 1000	Middle Assyrian	1500 - 1000
Literary Babylonian	1400 - 500	Late Assyrian	1000 - 600
Late Babylonian	600 - 1		

The Western Semitic languages, on the other hand, break down into two major groups: The Northwest and the Southwest. The Northwest, which had been all of a piece, called Ugaritic, split into two branches in the eighteenth century BCE. The relationship between these languages is more like the relationship between Spanish and Italian, in that with sufficient care and goodwill the speakers of each of these languages can understand the other.

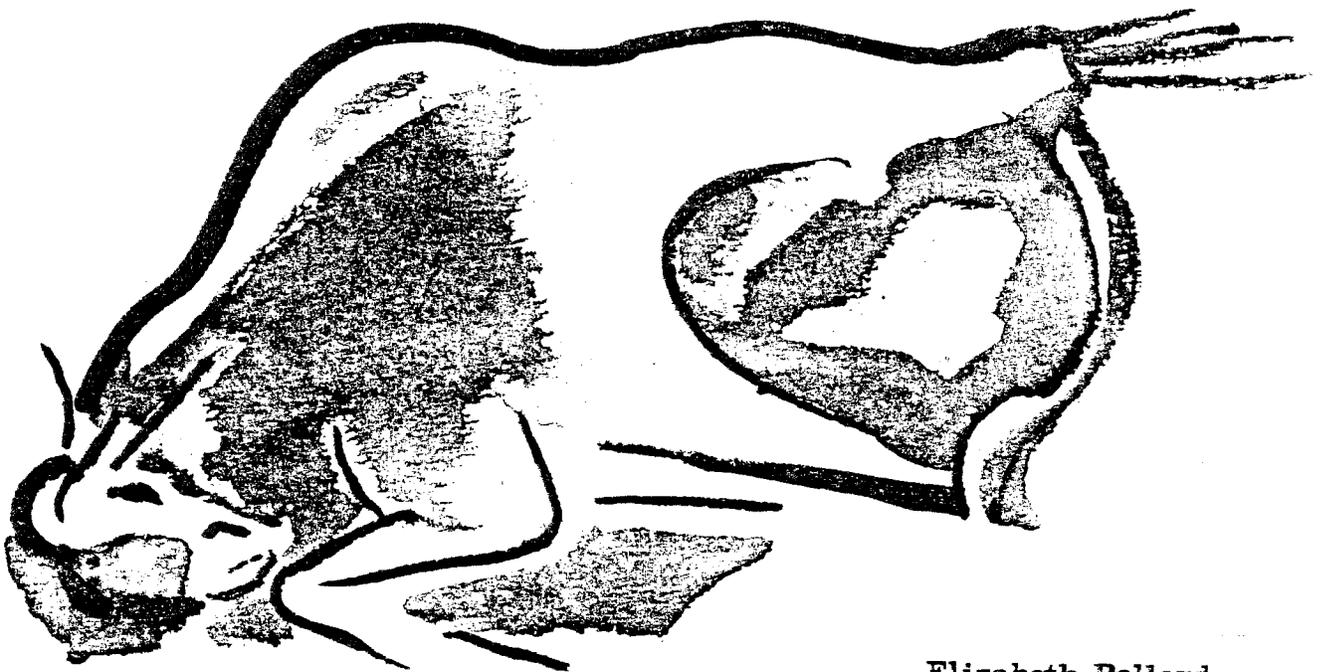
Canaanite Hebrew, along with Phoenician and Moabite, which are all nearly identical, together form one of these branches. The other branch of Ugaritic came to be called Aramaic. It was spoken in Damascus and in the surrounding countryside known today as Syria and Lebanon. The Southwestern Semitic language consists primarily of Arabic and Ethiopic.

Languages change in strange ways and often the most corrupt language can preserve the most ancient form, but, in general, our work will lead us to consider Babylonian and Northern Arabic, since they tend to preserve the more ancient way of speaking. They are a strange pair since Babylonian was one of the first of the Semitic languages to be committed to writing, whereas Arabic was one of the last. In the one case, antiquity was preserved for us under a pile of rubble and brush; in the other, by a nomadic people without a written tongue. In our own language matters seem to have fallen the other way. Shakespeare and King James' Bible have considerably slowed down linguistic change, but among the Semitic languages the opposite seems to have been the case. The Akkadian language, soon after having been committed to writing, began to change and lose its form.

Language primarily means spoken language, and our ultimate task is to understand the Hebrew language. We shall, however, begin with an easier task. Somewhat more is known about the beginning of writing, though even there the path is by no means clear. The Ancients said that the Greeks received the art of writing from the East, and that it had been brought to them by a man named Cadmus.... For the moment it is sufficient to note that the name Cadmus in the Semitic languages has the double meaning of "ancient" and "east." The Ancients also agreed that Cadmus did not invent the art of writing, but received it from another. According to Plato, he received it from the Egyptians, but according to Plutarch he received it from the Syrians. Ours is a century of modern science, rather than a century of myths, but the argument continues and, as we shall see in the next chapter, some modern scholars derive the Phoenician alphabet from the Egyptian hieroglyphs, whereas others favor the Assyrian cuneiforms. Although the precise generation of the Phoenician alphabet is still unknown, modern scholars have indeed discovered an incredible amount concerning the kind of thing that must have taken place.

Writing was conceived along with art and science in a dark cave when the first person realized that it was possible for a little thing to look like a big thing. It might sound contradictory to say that thought has its beginnings in a lie, and yet animals are never deceived by pictures and hence are not capable of symbolic thought.

Some of these men became fascinated by the fact that less than a gram of charcoal and a bit of sienna could have all the power and force of a wild buffalo charging over the plains. Others became fascinated with the fact that little things could be made to look precisely like big things. Eventually they went on to draw plans for buildings and finally to become intently interested in the purely abstract relationship between their precise lines. These men, then, went on to become geometricians. We shall be interested, however, in those men who realized that by means of their simple scratchings, a tale could be told.



**Elizabeth Pollard**

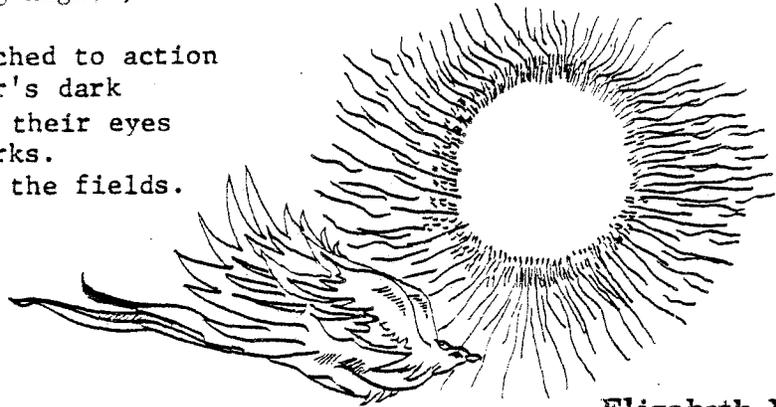
## Untitled

Owen Goldin

Fight, the pheasants, wings uplifted,  
Homeward bound,  
Over hills, the hedges green,  
A broken sound  
Beneath the blistering clouds . . .

(So they sing, forever and on,  
The banding together of fist and clue  
And, never you mind us of food and food,  
Blood in the rippling night.)

Fight, the claws are clenched to action  
Groping in the cellar's dark  
When phantoms call, above their eyes  
Glowing like hot sparks.  
The pheasants are leaving the fields.



Elizabeth Pollard

## The Gentle Kneeling Song

George Graham

And for a moment we gathered warmth  
Huddled there together flanking the storm  
Satin shoes against the ruins, children's rules

Mist upon the eternal green hills of Earth  
The darkness cold of the Autumnal forest primeval  
Suspended crystalline image in the water-ice & light

Rounded, rough and heavily sewn leather mittens, children voicing  
Immense distances across the perfect crystal bible ice  
The rolling of the clouds that grey-dimly hide all  
The voices and visions, the very perception of time.

We shared a song, a rhyme of dreaming  
Huddled there gentle kneeling  
And for a moment there we gathered warmth

---

# Untitled

Thomas Goetz

I grew up in a small town, not unlike a hundred thousand other towns that dot the rolling grasslands west of the Appalachians, its two room school, clapboard house and tree lined streets, several miles from a medium-sized factory town either in the process of being born or dying depending on the rails and the river, intersecting roads going out in all directions from the center, passing by the fenced fields, plots of corn or wheat, hay or soybean, every so often passing by a lane cut through a grove of trees, and rising up in the distance, the pillars across the face of a wide-windowed manse.

But I did not live in that mansion, and would travel a long road before ever setting foot across such a threshold, only left to stand at the foot of the porch steps, a lanky pre-adolescent in dusty overalls having just spent eight or ten hours pulling sweet corn or baling hay, the aproned matron of the house running inside to fetch lemonade and a handful of quarters, standing by to tell me not to drink so fast I'd git cramps, and git on home so's my mama wouldn't worry about me.

And she would, calling out to me from where she lay as I came through the creaky gate and up the lane to the shanty house perched absurdly alone atop the highest hill in the county, the only house for a mile in any direction.

She was a city woman didn't take too well to the country, left inside all day while my daddy went out to work at the mill, her medicines and mail-order catalogues and fears of me getting swallowed up by a thresher, or him getting slashed into by one of those machines as high as a house spewing sheets of hot steel as fast as a man could grab them. She worried too about me not getting educated since she'd took sick and couldn't tend to me much in that way, had nothing but contempt for the teachers (she called them all hillbillies) and kids who got me to forget about book reading in favor of roughhouse games, running through thicket and creek, tumbling over fallen trunk and bluff, screaming hellions shooting our guns made of sticks, still fighting the battle for supremacy of the North over the South.

My father, on the other hand, worrying as fathers will that their sons become sissy, felt this to be a major victory over his wife's domination, won through hard fought battle, begun with late night discussion hissed through teeth (thinking me to be asleep and not wanting to wake me), over the months and years growing into curses and threats from Father (of which he had many at instant command), cries from my mother (mostly over having spoken obscenity in the house), and ending finally one night with a resounding slap, delivered by her to my father's astonishment, followed by a long silence. Soon after this night, she took to her bed, and did not often rise.

Father had not expected, though, that in taking control over me away from my mother, that he would lose it as well. For, as he found later when I had grown far enough to heave a bale and became attracted to the prospect of pocket money for labor as a farm hand, I had developed through some sort of osmosis not only my mother's iron will, but his gift of the rhetoric of argument as well, though not yet quite as salty as his. He was a union man, had taken his blows at the hands of management thugs and ignorant constabulary, had sweated out long hours at the bargaining table, and, as he put it, would not have his own boy scabbing a summer job for pennies while some poor migrant went cold and hungry, and he could sure as hell keep clothes on my back and food on the table so's I wouldn't have to.

But he had made the mistake long ago of taking me along with him, amidst the cries and stares of hatred from his wife, carrying me out the door and down in the shiny new used Chevrolet, his pride and joy (both myself and the car), to the Wednesday night meetings at the Chatterbox Bar. Here he met his cronies to talk of plans for a wildcat strike, or about getting even with a new young supervisor on the make, cutting his teeth and making points with the management by leaning too hard on one of the men (a lesson I'm sure he'd not soon forget, accomplished late at night in the parking lot with axe handles and tire chains).

After the meeting, the talk invariably turned to drunken bellowings, the topics being always the same, those of money (more was paid the faster one worked, so there was always bragging and argument over who had made the most), sex (poontang, as it was called by them), and speculation over the activities of the "Okies," and the people of color (in shades from "high yaller" to black, and specifically "wetbacks and niggers"). Little mind was paid to me by this time, as many shot glasses of beer had been pressed upon me, and by this time my head would be nodding peacefully on my father's shoulder.

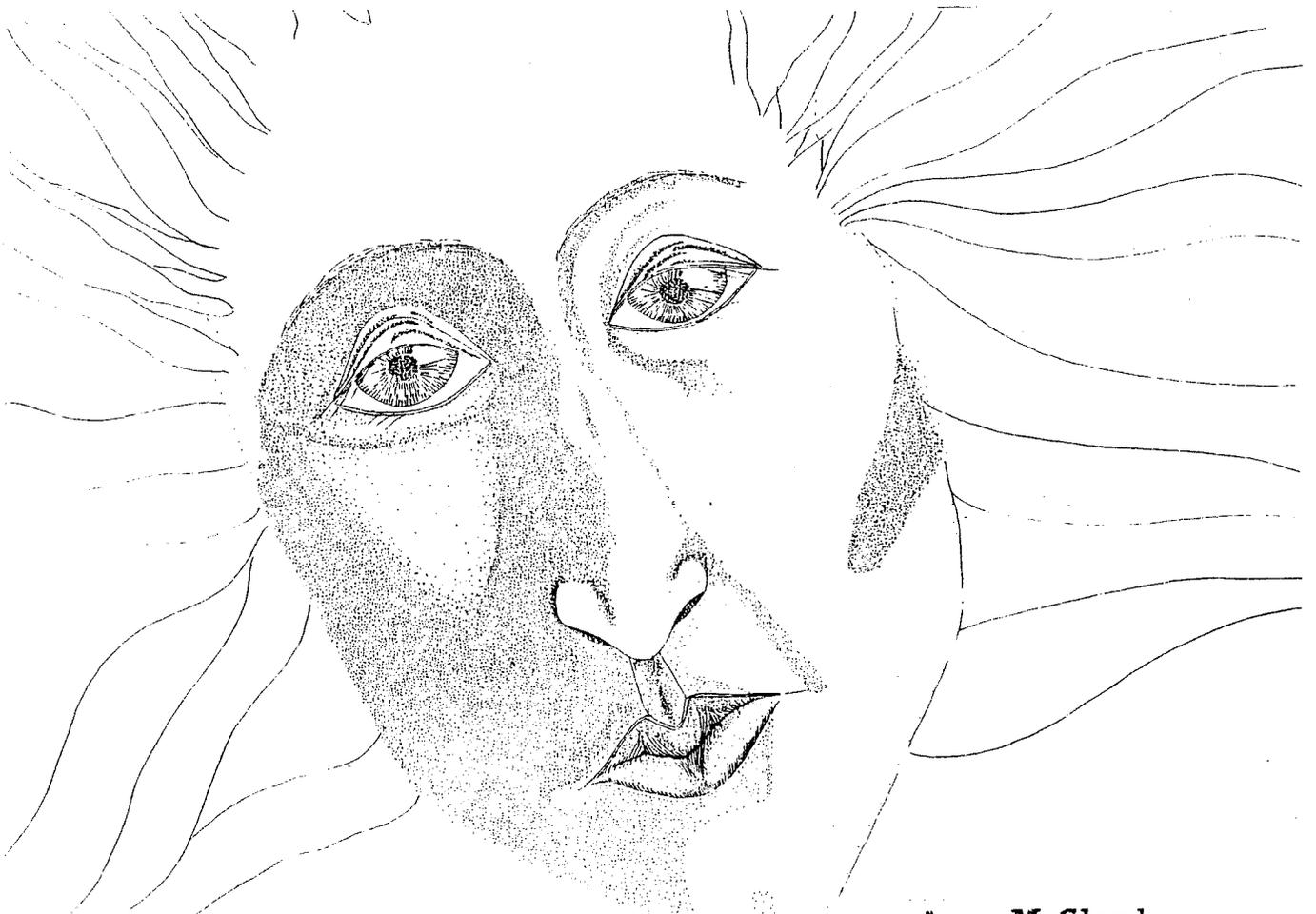
I had not been too drowsy, though, that the memory hadn't stuck with me strong enough to say shucks to Pa when he started getting all dewey-eyed over the plight of the farm workers, so that when the confrontation between us finally came, the tension rising with each new word or phrase, like the last hand of an all-night poker game, everyone else having had to drop out from lack of funds or exhaustion, one player seeing the other until between them lay the collected and collective fortunes of a half dozen men and their families, neither of the two willing to back down until fate had decided, motionless except for two eyes burning cold into two eyes holding their own, Mama crying and pulling at Pa's arm until he casts her off, he walks slowly over to me to deliver an openhanded round-house right to the jaw.

This was the first time my father had ever laid hands on me, having heretofore left such matters as discipline to my mother, but it was not to be the last, always coming when least expected, the same lightning-fast open hand swinging in a wide arc to make stinging contact just below and back of my jaw, sending my ears ringing off my feet and sprawling noisily into the wood stove or whatever article of

furniture happened to be in the way; or, if near a wall, as I would be when, a few years later, coming home drunk and needing its support, knocking me spread-eagle against it. During this event, after having put me unconscious (myself being nearly so anyway from the drink), he left me hung by the collar on a coat hook Christ-like with sleeves nailed to the wall, and me waking up the next morning, blood-caked puffy lips and hungover, cussing and spitting and flailing my legs until my mama come and let me down.

But that first time, surprised as I was from the jarring shock through to the base of my spine, seconds later feeling too for the first time humiliation and rage, I looked up from where I lay across the floor, to see, even in his fierce anger, that over my daddy's countenance crept the slightest trace of concern, or perhaps it was only a wince or a trembling at the corner of his mouth, and only for an instant, but long enough for me to seize my wits, rise up straight and firm, look him in the eye a good long moment, give him a dry crackling laugh, and walk out the door.

From then on I knew, just as my father had known when, having wrenched from my mother my right to behave like the rest of the young savages roaming the forests and hills surrounding our home, she shortly thereafter taking to her bed from which she did not often rise, knew that I had won a final victory, the fact of which not a hundred such battles, always ending in the inevitable slap, could erase.



Anne McClard

## The Silver Dragon

Charles Reuben

**D**ouglas Rhodes awoke from his slumber as the brilliant rays of the early morning sun made their way through the zig-zaged wooden slats over his bedroom window. Alonzo, the ancient wino who lived next door could be heard crunching across the gravel driveway outside, singing an old Spanish song. The air inside was warm and dry and Doug's mouth felt uncomfortably parched. He arose from the foam rubber mattress bed and slipped a terricloth bathrobe over his naked body, but then carelessly abandoned it on the floor when he recalled that he was all alone in the house. He stumbled into the living room and placed a Stanley Clark recording on the stereo. He turned the volume up so that it could be heard all over the house and then proceeded to the washroom where he mechanically went through the morning ritual of washing up.

Doug turned on the water and waited for the icy stream to become hot. A couple of minutes passed but it was still freezing and he reasoned that the water heater must have gone out that night. He angrily splashed cold water on his face, gargled a half of a glass of water, spit it out, and drank the remaining contents.

He looked at himself in the mirror. His brown hair was hopelessly tangled and his face appeared to be clearing up. He flexed his biceps and made an attempt to admire his failing physique. He didn't eat like he ought to.

Whin had left for Vermont the other day and his roommate had split the night before. It was the beginning of the Christmas break and the entire household had chosen to return home for the holidays, except for Doug. He had decided to stay in Santa Fe even though his parents had mailed him a plane ticket home. He could no longer bear to go back to Annapolis and see those people, and have to deal with their various trips. Every letter and every phone call from home confirmed his unflagging belief that he would be better off staying where he was.

He needed time to think...about St. John's; about Whin; and about completing his delinquent first semester Junior Essay on Euclid's fifth postulate.

He sat down at his desk and tried to focus his attention on the essay. His essay had set out to prove Euclid's parallel postulate...

If a straight line falling on two straight lines makes the interior angles on the same side less than two right angles, the two straight lines, if produced indefinitely, meet on that side on which are the angles less than two right angles.

He felt that he was on the verge of a great discovery for

a while. But Whin had devastated the proof by detecting a subtle flaw in his reasoning. Now, as he sat naked at his desk, starting once again from the very beginning,

A point is that which has no part,  
he realized the futility of his venture.

He had, like Jason, undergone awesome labors in order to discover his golden fleece, but was prepared to turn away from the task with broken mast and torn sail. He felt depressed because there was nobody to comfort him, in the big, empty adobe house. He walked into the sunny living room and smoked a bowl of hash, but that only served to depress him all the more. He lay down on the couch, reached for a pack of Marlboros and lazily began smoking a cigarette. The intense sunlight illuminated the smoke as it slowly rose into the air.

A man is delivered to knowledge through questioning, but unfortunately Doug's questions were only answered with an empty silence.

Who am I? Where am I and what am I doing here? Where did I come from and where am I going? Who are these beings that surround me at every turn, and on whom do I have influence and who has influence on me? Whose friendship shall I court in my loneliness, and who do I have cause to fear?

Doug felt himself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, submerged in the deepest depression. Delirious thoughts began to enter his mind and his head felt like it was going to split. He knew, at this point, that he had to do something. Anything to keep his mind distracted from potentially destructive thoughts.

He stood up, turned off the music and went back into his bedroom and dressed. He donned his long underwear, wool sox, blue jeans, flanel shirt and sheepskin vest. He laced up his hiking boots and clomped into the kitchen. There he blended himself a concoction which he called a "Protein Shake." He threw about a half-quart of yogurt into the glass pitcher, a frozen banana, some honey, wheat germ, an apple, an egg, and agitated the mixture for a couple minutes. Then he filled Shanta's saucer with the shake, which she eagerly lapped clean. The boy consumed the remainder, smacked his lips and turned to the dog.

"Hey, little coyote, wanna go for a walk?"

The dog sat attentively before her master, her tail wagging with excitement. Doug smiled.

"Go for a walk? Go for a walk? Let's go for a walk, Shanta!"

The dog ran wildly around in circles, barked cheerfully and danced on her hind legs.

• • •

It was 2 o'clock in the afternoon when Doug and Shanta reached the horse stables at St. John's. He wore a back pack containing some cheese, bread, fruit, wine, water, gym shoes, warm clothes and a down sleeping bag. This was the very threshold of the mountains. Here one could blow off mankind's pretentious ways and realize a peace which contained the promise of fulfilling every transcendental aspiration.

The sky was clear blue and the sun shone radiantly upon the red earth. Doug stripped off most of his heavy clothing and stuffed them in the backpack. He wore only a pair of blue jean cutoffs, boots, the wool sox and a blue bandana tied around his forehead. The sun shone heavily upon his body and illuminated his golden hair. His cheeks reddened and he began breathing heavily as his pace increased. He made a beeline to the saddle between Monte Sol and Monte Luna. His head began to clear as he started climbing up the rocks. He ascended onto the ridge of the saddle and there found his favorite place to be alone. An enormous, jagged red rock marked the place. The sun had melted all the snow from the rock's coarse face displaying intensely green, florescent lichen, shiny metallic slivers of mica and snowy white fragments of quartz crystal. This rock was a veritable altar to the boy and he would periodically go there to perch himself high on its pinnacle, and being a Pantheist in the classical sense, prayed to all his household gods. This was all a very personal affair to Doug, one he took dead seriously.

He meditated while the intense, blinding, hot rays of the sun shone upon his body, now rosy with health and purity. He meditated and became detached from the sensory world. The blackness of his inner thoughts were suddenly pierced by the brilliance of a silver dragon descending upon his soul. When it got very close it opened its great mouth and consumed the boy. Ultimately, the two became as one.

After twenty minutes of meditation he climbed off the rock and put his heavy clothing back on since it was getting cooler.

He climbed down to the arroyo and picked up the footpath leading to the great ridge of Atalaya. He ran up and down the trail, at times skiing down the edge of a hill in his boots as Shanta happily chased after him. Just when the boy felt he had escaped civilization he stumbled across a road which cut its way through the valley. He had never seen the road before. It slashed its way through the hills, effectively dividing the wilderness into two distinct parts. It rent the land like the clean slice of a scalpel through human flesh. Doug's heart collapsed when he thought back to the way things used to be, not so very long ago.

What right did those developers and realtors have to destroy the land so heartlessly? Didn't they realize that the valley, with its numerous Indian burial mounds and strange rock formations, was holy?

Perhaps, thought the boy, all virgin land was sacred until man scarred it surface with barbed wire fences, roads, power lines and private dwellings.

---

Every time Doug saw another parcel of land subdivided in the Cartesian manner, he felt for the developers and realtors the same kind of loathing and disgust a man feels when he is forced to watch his beloved raped by people who can only see as far as their own, personal comfort.

The mountains must be left untouched...the building of houses and roads must immediately cease, so that there can be a sanctuary for man to escape to when he begins to lose his mind. Far better for man to confront nature with his frustration and dissipate it in a harmless way than to be so crowded together that they would invariably take their anxieties out on each other. Every year the valley fills up with more and more houses, fulfilling perhaps a natural economic progression. Doug however saw the growth as an uncontrollable cancer, slowly but surely consuming what was left of its natural beauty.

Doug had spent his freshman year at St. John's College in Annapolis and saw how economic growth had covered the land with sprawling suburbs and the waters of the Chesapeake Bay with filth. He had almost lost it there, because there never seemed to be a place to escape to when reality became too oppressive. Santa Fe had given him the freedom he needed, but it saddened him to see the hills literally going to seed.

Doug crossed the road and was about to ascend deeper into the hills when he came across a little green rectangular metal box jutting out of the rocky earth. It stood menacingly atop a concrete pedestal. On top of the box was the place where the meter would eventually be, however now it was only sealed with a flimsy piece of cardboard. In a state of fury he removed the cardboard and began to stuff the box full of snow. Perhaps, the boy reasoned, by destroying the box, he could alter the inevitable course of events which would lead to the building of a new house. Silly boy.

A couple people suddenly appeared around the bend in the road and began to wildy gesticulate and talk excitedly. The box began to make funny noises.

Doug panicked and swiftly ran into the hills. Imagining that he was being chased by people who were out to do him harm, he raced up and down the terrain like a madman, Shanta following close at his heels. He finally stopped when he was so out of breath that he could run no longer, but by this time he was far away from the road. He raised his voice to the sky and let out a scream which echoed through the hills.

After a couple hours of steady climbing the boy and his dog arrived at the top of a hill just before Atalaya. He knew that this was the place he was going to stay for the night. The summit of the hill was covered with tiny, broken, red rock fragments and very little vegetation. Camping at the top would give him an unimpeded view of the constellations as well as the twinkling lights of the city far away.

It was about four in the afternoon and the temperature was dropping steadily. He took the backpack off and placed it on the frozen ground. Now that he had stopped walking he was acutely aware of the cold. He immediately began looking for wood.

There was plenty of dead, dry firewood lying around. Grey trees lay lifeless along the sides of the hill. Completely dehydrated and brittle to the touch, it was not long before the boy, in his persevering state of mind, had at least a cord of wood collected.

It was getting late. The sun appeared to be sinking fast. It was time to build a fire. He looked into his pack but could find no matches. His face broke out in a cold sweat. It was not possible that he had forgotten to bring matches!

He impatiently tore off his gloves and a blast of cold wind numbed his fingers. He dug into his pockets and pulled out a match book containing only two matches. Relieved to a certain extent, Doug proceeded to try and build a fire. But the numbness in his fingers would not allow him to construct the usual teepee arrangement of tinder without dumbly knocking it down.

To hell with pride, the old scout thought..."I need some paper." He dug into the pack and once again came up empty handed. He could not believe that he had forgotten to bring a scrap of paper along with him. He checked the pockets of the pack and discovered an old paperback collection of poems by Thomas Macaulay. He always carried this book in his pack because it contained the poem "Horatius at the Bridge," a poem which had been recited to him as a child.

The tips of his fingers were beginning to turn blue, so he did not deliberate for long about whether or not he ought to sacrifice a few pages of the proud book. He indiscriminantly ripped a page out, crumpled it and placed a bunch of tiny twigs over its surface. He took out the matchbook and lit one of the matches, whose head immediately flew off the cardboard stem like a meteor and imbedded itself into the flesh of his right hand. Doug hardly felt the pain, his hand being by this time too numb to notice. He cursed his luck, got down on his hands and knees and offered a prayer to Prometheus.

He cupped his hands around the match and shielded the wind with his body. He struck the match once against the worn striking surface of the book, but it did not ignite. His fingers were now so cold he could barely hold the match.

He struck the match once again, and this time it caught fire and stayed lit. Doug brought the tiny flame into contact with the edge of the yellowed paper which instantly caught fire. He held the match close to the paper until it began to burn the ends of his fingers and then dropped it into the smoldering kindling. As the paper caught fire it began to uncrumple until it lay almost flat beneath the tiny twigs. The paper burned brightly at the edges and then glowed a hellish color in its middle, illuminating a stanza from "Horatius at the Bridge..."

Then out spake brave Horatius,      The Captain of the Gate:  
"To every man upon this earth      Death cometh soon or late.  
And how can man die better      Than facing fearful odds,  
For the ashes of his fathers,      And the temples of his Gods..."

Shanta began to whine and her master sharply told her to be quiet.

The paper finally exploded into a brilliant flash of yellow flame which in turn caught on to the smaller twigs and ultimately, to the kindling itself. The boy guarded the fire against the winds which threatened to extinguish it. He gently blew on the coals when the flames got low and greatly increased its intensity with love and patience.

Soon the flames began to rise fairly high so he started to add branches and logs to the fire. The danger of frostbite was over. The boy closed his eyelids and offered thanks to the gods. He sat down on the ensolite pad and warmed and rubbed his hands until the feeling came back. Shanta sat down close to her master and the two watched as the sun sank below the mountains to the west.

The flames leapt high into the crystal clear night sky and the sparks flirted with the twinkling stars. Doug sat by the fireside, absorbed in the spectrum of fantastic colors that came out at him. Confident that he had collected enough wood to last through the night, the boy heaped logs and branches onto the fire. When the flames climbed to about five feet he figured it was time to stop, relax and think about things. Shanta cowered close to the boy, afraid of being scorched by the intense heat.

Doug thought about his family and friends. Then he made an effort to establish psychic contact with Whin. And had he been at his house in town he would have received a phone call from her. Instead, he focused his mind on his beloved and realized several hours of comfort, absorbed in her reflection.

When he could no longer sustain the psychic connection he began to think hard about Euclid's fifth postulate. But this time, instead of wallowing in the midst of his old abysmal despair, the ship of Doug's reason, with new mast and fresh, white sails took a new tack into the winds.

Euclid employed the fifth postulate in order to attain certain premeditated ends. But since the postulate evidently could not be proven to his satisfaction, what harm would there be in abandoning it altogether. It became clear to the boy that if the postulate was to be forsaken then everything after proposition 28 would all have to be rewritten. The boy's heart beat with an excitement which he had not felt in ages. My god, he whispered: Think of the possibilities!

"In the uncertainty whether there exists more than one line parallel to a given straight line," he slowly deliberated, "I will assume that it may be possible that there are still other lines which will not intersect the given line, how far soever they may be prolonged."

In this way Doug freed his mind from the constraining borders of classical Euclidian logic and entered the mind-boggling universe of Imaginary Geometry...

The morning sun gradually crept over Atalaya's ridge and washed away the star-studded blackness of night. Doug awoke with a start. He found himself buried in a tight ball at the bottom of his sleeping bag. His clothes felt cold and damp on his body. Shanta, who noticed the waking of her master, wormed her way out of the bag, wildly shook her matted fur, stretched her front paws, yawned, and then dropped her rump onto the ground and watched the sun rise.

Doug quickly got out of the bag, straightened his clothes and threw on the down jacket which he had used as a pillow. He kneeled down by the fire, uncovered some hot embers and gently blew on them until they ignited. He patiently added kindling until the brilliant flames rose a few feet into the air. Then he sat next to it and warmed his body. He looked around for his hiking boots but could only find one. The other boot lay charred and spoiled at the edge of the fire. Doug cursed his luck but then remembered that he had a pair of gym shoes in his pack. A fitting and proper burnt offering, thought the boy with a sigh.

He reached over to the canteen to catch a swig of water but discovered that it had frozen solid. He reached for his food, but the cheese had frozen, and so had the bread, fruit and wine. The air began to warm slightly. Doug slowly began to carelessly stuff his sleeping bag into the backpack. The nylon crackled. He proceeded to put back all the things he had used that night.

When the fire was extinguished, the boy looked back at his campsite with a bit of sadness, as though he were taking leave of an old friend.

The trek back home was slow and hard on him. The foot wearing the gym shoe got numb, but not wet, as he wore a plastic bag around his foot.

After a steady two hours of hiking through the snow the two reached the College but did not stop there to rest. They walked straight home, back into the soft, warm, adobe confines of his house on Pino road.

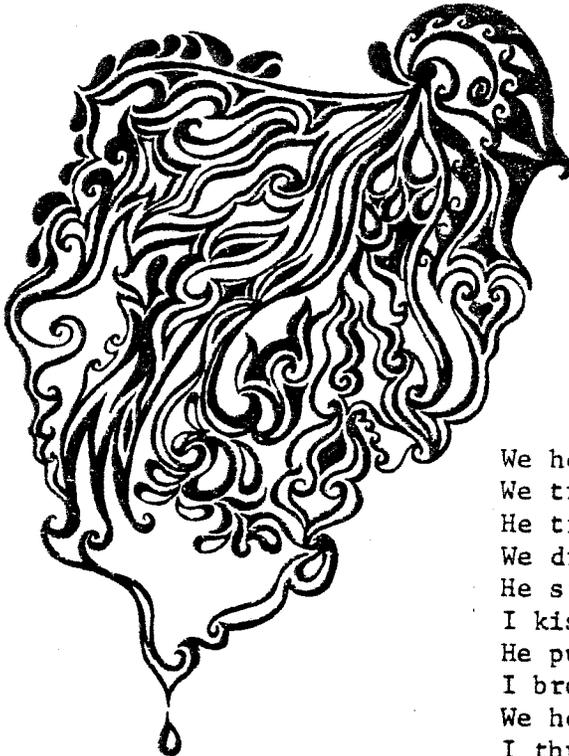
He spent two hours lying in a hot bath and the rest of the day in bed, under a couple warm comforters. When he awoke it was evening and he walked down to Kaune's and bought a couple of roasted chickens for a dollar each, the management being in the Christmas spirit. Then he walked up to Cliff's and bought a bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon and went back home, built a small fire in the fireplace, kicked back on his roommate's water bed and watched an old Bogart flick late into the night.

The dark clouds of the previous day had vanished. Doug felt happy about being alive. He felt confident that he would be able to write his long-awaited Junior essay the next day. In the meantime he had a good night's sleep to look forward to.

## An Incident on San Francisco Street

Joel LaPinta

**I** first noticed his great height and his large afro. He was standing on the corner under the balcony of the Ore House. His eyes were focused just above the pavement as if he were watching something hovering there. Then, an Oldsmobile, yielding to the traffic on San Francisco Street, stopped near him. His head, like a great black globe, disappeared beneath the car's rear bumper. His chest swelled. He was hyperventilating the exhaust. Holding the last inhalation, he reared back, and his arms swung over his shoulders in wide circles. They carried him with them and, stumbling over the curb, he fell through a group of tourists and landed against a wooden post. He turned and embraced the post. For a moment he held himself there, then fell to his knees. His chest swelled again, and he vomited.



Catherine Graves

S&M

Julie Powers

We helped each other load the guns  
 We traded blades and slit our own  
 He tied knots, I kicked out chairs  
 We dragged each other down the stairs  
 He stabbed me in familiar scars  
 I kissed the knife and begged for more  
 He pulled the cork and smiled at skull  
 I broke the bottle with my fall  
 We held each other's glasses high  
 I threw red acid in his eyes  
 Mirror slivers sliced my back  
 My spike-heeled war shoes cut and hacked  
 He hooked his shirt with clasps of steel  
 We gorged on shattered needles; glass-  
 I used a shard to comb my hair,  
 And when we left the room was bare.

## Black Storm and Grey Rainbow

I

Douglas Venable

**A** storm rose around St. Christopher's Hill. It flurried and fretted as it lifted its frowning peaks and whirled about in its nightshade cloak.

"This hill was known to travelers as a haven from foul weather. A side road led from the highway to this hill which turned into a path as it wound its way up mysterious ridges that lay covered by shadowy and deep woods. After an ascending two-mile journey, one would come to a fork in the path. There one could observe the top of the hill appearing as the left fork disappeared over it; and, at the end of the right, descending fork, one could espy a tall cliff which overhung a gloomy cave. It was in this cave that many had sought shelter for years on end; that is, ever since the highway had been cut and the hill discovered . . ."

He stopped writing and threw down his pen in disgust. "No! No! This isn't what I want! How drab! Why can't I . . .? Pfa!" He got up and paced about his bedroom, his hard shoes bringing a rapping, low sound from the oaken floor. For months he had tried to write--to no avail. His pen was full of dusty, slow ink and his paper was made of wax; both resisted his mind, fighting against the very words he wished to set down. There was no doubt about it, the Muse was in flight and it was flying square miles away from him.

He opened his "ornate" French windows and stepped out onto the balcony. The moon was half-obliterated by clouds which hovered in a languid state. He wanted to shout at them, to wake them and make them fly from about the moon, but still they stayed, hanging sullen and irritable. "Maybe I can write out here!" he thought, and instantly had chair, table, light, and writing utensils sitting under the sour sky. But no Muse came to bless him, no words flowed from his pen.

He had raved and ranted for days on end, almost in a suicidal despair. His Muse was gone, gone away somewhere; "Sicher vor dir," as he said, for he had perhaps frightened away that giver of golden song with his coarse and brutal tales: his "Pathways", with its lurking psychotic; "Demongarth," with its awful torture chambers ("But those things really happened!" he had said to the awed and sickened publishers who had refused it); "The Manners of Bentley," with its foul vampiric child; and last, and worst, "The Battle of Wesling-Town", which contained scenes which even he admitted were "grotesque, grotesque. . . really quite bad!"

Now he was being paid back for it, as he was unable to write anything but dull and awkward tales. It was not lack of money that drove him to despair, for he had an allowance more than sufficient from his rich old uncle in Annandale, but was rather his poor writing itself. He could not understand why he could not write. He had done everything short of

praying, and then he had done that, but still he could not write. Suddenly the moon was freed from its fetters of vapor. "The moon!" he cried, as the triumphantly beaming orb rode out from under a cavalcade of clouds and bathed the earth in light. The young man stroked his smooth beard as he gazed searchingly over the balcony at the deep, rustling woods beneath. "Ah! Would that some Diana come out to meet me. But no, not Diana, for she is much too like a tomboy with a dangerous weapon; no I'd rather meet a Persephone or a Botticellian Venus." And no sooner had he spoken than a sound of breaking limbs informed him of something in the woods. "It can't be! Marvelous! I must go see!" But still he stayed, fearing to scare away his magical beauty. A little more movement in the woods occurred, and then out from beneath a holly bush crawled a small Airedale. It gaily took off down the road onto which it had emerged, shaking the bells on its collar as it ran. "Blast! But what a fool I am!" said the young man. He started writing again and, without his knowing it, slowly sagged forward asleep on his desk.

A wind arose around St. Christopher's Hill; it howled hellishly and seemed to bear great teeth. Where the road ran up to the hill he found himself walking, careless and yet expectant. Just as he was about to reach the top of the hill a black cloud rolled over his head and completely covered the sky. A reckless shaft of lightning soared down from the reaches of heaven and sliced a fifty-foot pine in half with a noise like the sea crashing against a hurricane-swept reef, and with a flash of black smoke. It toppled awesomely fast to the earth on the left of him with a deafening rattle, killing many lesser trees in its fall. Now again and again the thunderbolts rocketed about and filled the air with a sound impossible to describe. It had the tone of an explosion, and yet . . . shrieked, yes it shrieked with terrifying loudness. He looked over his shoulder and again heard the pealing shriek and the weather-mad wind which drove and bellowed. Suddenly he felt that he was in the presence of some other being, and he turned around. Two thunderbolts crashed behind the shrieking, wreathing thing before him. It was as if the air had tried to make a scarecrow of itself out of clouds, mists, rain, and wind. It was vaguely shaped after a human form, but was much too changing to conform to any rule of that type. It threatened, stood aloft, drew back, and crouched for a spring all at one instant. He woke with a howl in his ear.

"Meowww!" "Shuddup you damned fiend!" he shouted at his purring and caressing feline, Alexander. He lifted his aching bones from his writing table, all wet with morning dew, and looked attentively at Alexander. Alexander blinked and gave another meow. "Okay, let's get some food," the tousled youth replied, catching the dauntless Alexander up under his arm and proceeding to market.

## II

The day was hot and unpleasant. The young man wiped his sweating forehead with his handkerchief often and shook his fists at the sun even more. Flies came out to greet him when he entered the market-place, where peasants were selling their goodly wares.

One old man came up to him and said, "Son, do you wish to buy some veg-a-tables? I've lots of veg-a-tables," pronouncing distinctly every syllable of that word "vegetables". a thing which never failed to irritate our hero. "Damn it! Why can't you speak right!?" he exclaimed, striding away from the astonished vendor.

He approached another stall and asked an old peasant woman for a bag of cherries. Then he walked about the market-place looking at everything he wanted while eating the cherries, with Alexander still under his arm--patient old Alexander! Then, after finishing the cherries, he purchased all the items he had made a mental list of, put them all in a bag, and stuck Alexander in the top of it. A leg of mutton, cabbage, a fresh loaf of bread, two dew-melons, snap beans, okra, an onion, five potatoes, a cut of low-priced meat for Alexander, a half-round of Gruyere, and black Alexander himself all bobbed back to the young man's lair.

On the way he looked into shop windows and other windows until the windows had run out of sight from the road and the countryside became more apparent. He scrambled down the hot stone steps of his house and juggled with his groceries until he could afford an entry.

He got out Alexander's provisions and dealt him out a day's share. Then he made himself a cheese sandwich and drew cool water from the well. Afterwards he went to work, fitfully starting and stopping and revising until the day had dragged through, the red sun leaving his work in an unwieldy mess.

Night absorbed the weary poet as that aria of Offenbach's, "Belle nuit, oh nuit d'amour . . .", absorbs a listener. It entranced and enchanted him. He imagined flocks of golden angels driving through the moonlit sky, all begirdled with silver clouds. He saw the proud heads of warriors in those clouds and their arms were mountains, trees, or streams. The wind blew past his balcony and he drifted into a reverie.

At first he was struggling with some strange, unidentifiable creature (that is, he could not associate a name with it), but then it changed into a love-making scene, where the odd being caressed and aroused him. Suddenly he seemed to come to his senses. He had been doing these things with a huge cat. He walked away from the prodigy, which was looking at him now with a maleficient gleam in its eye which seemed to say, "Here now, I tricked you, didn't I?", and left the house he was in through a glass door. Then he found himself sitting at a long table with a score or so of adults seated about it. He was a child of about seven. At first he bantered and joked with a few of the adults closest to him, but then they started mocking him, making fun of his name and his face. "The little Jaezlarat, isn't he queer?" said one, an old plump lady with yellow teeth. Another old lady gave a horse-laugh, while yet another said, "But he's cute though! Look at his pug nose!" and the whole of the table started into a mad state of hilarity--the gentlemen leading the group with deep and echoing laughs and the ladies pitching in with varied giggles, gawks, honks, guffaws, and animal laughs. All at once he stood

upon the table wielding a fork and a table knife. "Down! Down, dogs!" he shrilled, like a frightened warbler. The company looked astonished and then went after him. He was shocked to see how hideously savage they all looked, the fat or frail old ladies and the stiff and/or out of breath old gentlemen as they climbed upon the table, stretching the table-cloth and upsetting all the dishes. Damn them, the stupid old fools! They soon had hold of his legs, and though he felt a fury and a strength within himself, he could not resist them. Indeed, they terrified him, those panting and angry adults. "Oh," he said, "don't touch me!" They pulled him down roughly and raised high in the air their steak knives and forks.

"Yaah!" he screamed as he jumped up in bed. Alexander too jumped when he did, for he never suspected that his master would awaken when he sank his claws into his ribs. The youthful writer chucked Alexander out of doors on the instant, crying, "Aroynt thee!", and slammed the door.

### III

That day he stayed indoors, too lazy to go and exercise in the hot day outside. "Why should I exercise?" he thought. "It only makes one sick." He could not write at all for some reason. He took a volume at random from his shelf and sat down with it. It was The Legends of King Arthur. "Pah! I've read enough of this lately. I'll read some of Balzac's droll tales," he said to himself, taking down the desired volume and sprawling across his green mohair sofa.

At first he was very amused, but then lost interest in the book. He couldn't understand why he felt so apathetic these days.

"O-ho!" he cried suddenly. "Why I can paint! Why didn't I think about that?" He rushed to a deep wooden chest standing in a corner, covered with dust and cobwebs. "Donnez-moi!" he eagerly chuckled as he threw open the lid and grasped his tools. "Easel, yes; paints, yes; paper--paper? Where's the paper? Oh, here 'tis. Ah, tres bon!" he exclaimed, slamming the lid down. He carried the whole of it over to his French windows, but decided after a moment not to go outside. "Too hot," he reflected. "How about here?" He sat down his easel where the light could shine upon it. "That's good! Now, a bit of this over the old canvas . . ." He was thus occupied for some time, preparing canvas, palette, and, after a while, an omelette--the eggs for which he procured from a kindly and inquisitive old woman living across the lane; a Mrs. Jorkens, whose husband looked like he was wanted by the law for mugging toads, such a brutish face he had.

"Yes, yes, that's it!" he said with fervor as he attacked the canvas now with his magic colors. He felt inspiration come upon him and laughed as he realized he no longer controlled his hands. He knew not what it was that he was creating; it at first looked like a storm, with black puffs like clouds covering and dominating the scene. "The thunderstorm of my dream!" he thought; but then the picture took on a more familiar aspect, oddly enough, and he grew more astonished and curious. Suddenly he gave a startled gasp--Alexander faced him with wrath in his eyes!

He stood up and clutched his aching head. "Why, how strange," he thought. "I feel as if something awful has happened." It was only now that he noticed that it had turned into night outside. The young man burst into loud and hilarious laughter. "Ha! I've been working all day on this stupid picture!" And he threw down the paintbrush he had been holding and struck down the offensive picture with his fist, his face flushing dark red as he did so. "I'll work no more!" he yelled at the top of his lungs.

A click sounded softly behind him, and as he turned sharply around, Alexander, dressed in a full tuxedo and as tall as the young man himself, entered, tossing his elegant top hat on the sofa and loosening his tie as he did so.

"Why," said Alexander in a sonorous and calm voice, "have you destroyed my portrait and made a mess of my room, Bartholomew?"

The young man stammered and stuttered, but could not bring himself to speak, so amazed was he. Alexander continued, darting his eyes about the room with the air of the master of a house who feels he has left it in the keeping of an untrustworthy servant. "And what have you been doing this evening, Bartholomew, besides knocking the house around--since you refuse to answer me? Ah!" he said, upon catching sight of an omelette which the young man had not eaten that lay upon the table. He licked his chops with his great red tongue, revealing his long white canines as he did so, and the young man felt chills striding up and down his back. "Fetch me that, will you, while I untie my shoes?" said Alexander, dropping his eyes and stooping down to his black shoes. The young man went to the table in a shivering state of shock. He picked up the plate with the cold omelette on it and started back to Alexander. Just then Alexander slipped his other shoe off and looked up at him. Their eyes met and the young man saw his bewildered face reflected in Alexander's huge glassy eyes. A tremor seized him and the omelette slipped from the plate he held in shaking hands and fell to the floor. Alexander's eyes widened and fixed on the omelette with eagerness and he dropped on all fours to the floor, lapping up the omelette in an instant and chewing it with a purring noise in his throat. The young man tottered in horror and he gave an anguished, terrified shriek as he kicked Alexander in the ribs in a convulsive motion. Alexander winced angrily and sprang from the floor with a hellish yowl. The young man fled in terror, but sprawled backwards over the table in his flight. Alexander put a great paw on his chest and he raised his hands instinctively in front of his face. Translucent claws shot out from both of Alexander's paws, and as he swung his right paw down to strike him, the young man passed out.

Darkness all around met him when he awoke. He groaned as he rose from the floor where he had fallen and felt the long scratches that ran along his cheeks and near his eyes. Something stirred in the blackness and he started shaking all over uncontrollably, his teeth chattering as tears started from his burning eyes. "Mumph," said a

---

sleepy voice in the night, sighing deeply afterwards. The young man controlled himself forcibly and collected his wits. The voice had come from Alexander's bed. He thought of what to do, and found himself tiptoeing towards the drawer where he kept his kitchen implements. As he opened the drawer, the metal things clashed together with a harsh rattle. He sucked in his breath with a hiss as Alexander complained in his sleep and rolled over, sighing again loudly in the still room. The young man fumbled around in the drawer and then drew out a long, razor-keen steak knife.

He stealthily crept to Alexander's bedside and bent over him upon his knees. He raised the knife up quickly and plunged it into the form in the wicker basket. Alexander gave a piercing, drawn-out cat scream and was silent. He drew out the knife and ran to a lamp, lighting a match quickly and attempting to set it to the wick. But there was no wick, only a plastic knob and a glass bulb, so he directed his puzzled eyes over to Alexander's bed. In it lay the handsome, black-coated cat that he loved so much, its neck drooling blood and its side mangled, as from a heavy blow. The match fell from his fingers and he sobbed and crashed to the floor.

When he woke again, first light was showing outside. He walked like one dead to the cheap French windows that opened onto an iron balcony with peeling white paint. He stared from the balcony out upon a gray, massive concrete wall in front of him and looked down at the tiny park out on the median between two asphalt streets. A bus roared by and honked at a man who had stepped from the sidewalk to cross in front of it. The man cursed something and shook his bony fist after the vehicle, which trailed smoke in his face. The young man leaped off the balcony and moaned until he hit a parked car thirty stories down from his condominium.

Mrs. Jorkens had often complained to her husband about that "creep" who raved to the moon out on his balcony at night. Mr. Jorkens just spat.

## As the Night, Perhaps an Angel

George Graham

In the contemplation of death a living entity is confronted with its own most profound sense of existence. In the instant that even a single creature may be said to be fully alive we all recognize aspects of mortality and as well that portion of fate allotted to each creature, especially that portion of fate allotted to oneself.

We are a society as profoundly ignorant of death as any that has perhaps ever existed. Turn on your faucet at 2 AM in the morning; perhaps again an inkling of why we are so captured by the illusion of life may become apparent. Perhaps not. There is a young person lying on the floor of the bathroom in her own vomit, lucky perhaps to still be breathing.

The eyes are extremely dilated. This young lady's face registers nothing resembling recognition in the slightest way. This is a monstrous thing to live. We have neglected our children.

As the wet cloths, as the night, as her eyes, as the love of God, as the errors made with hearts, we stand there sometimes right at the edge of an abyss. Tend to the ways of your people. Slight return . . . perhaps we have made the parlor game far more serious than many of us realize by the light of day. As the wind, as the night, as my fear of death.



---

## A Conversation Between Friends of Galileo

Joshua Berlow

Foppiano: All you have said thus far, Salviatti, about the properties of wooden beams and metal rods, balls rolling down inclined planes or dropped from towers . . . it is all quite nice and sometimes interesting, but I am not quite sure of the point. I stand and listen silently as you and Sagredo and Simplicio converse about these things, but meanwhile, as you talk, the artisans of the arsenal are watching their machines. They are always around their machines, constantly making observations. Their fathers, artisans themselves, hand down observations that were made in the past. As a result of this training, as you said earlier they "are truly expert and (their) reasoning is of the finest." Suppose you were to ask these artisans, as I have done, if they have ever heard of or use the principles of Euclid. They usually have never heard of him, and if they have they don't use his principles consciously when aiming a projectile. No, they would much rather rely on the experience of the previous shot. So, I ask you what need they have of Mathematics or Geometry? They know how their machines work.

Salviati: These artisans that you speak of certainly have a fine intuitive grasp of these principles, but the science the Academician proposes does not rely on intuition. We may know intuitively how an experiment may come out before we perform it, but we perform it anyway so that we can get precise information as to how specific forces act on certain bodies. We then abstract from all the particular cases to find the general laws that govern such phenomena. We do not propose abandoning intuitive knowledge, but rather that it be fortified by a structure built on deductive reasoning.

Fop: But whenever we try to apply the principles that your judicious Author has so carefully discovered, we find we encounter all sorts of problems. This is because of the well-known disparity between the world of Mathematics and the world of physical things. When Euclid drew his triangles in the sand, it wasn't the sand he was concerned with. Your Author seemingly wants us to consider the sand. Have not the philosophers taught us that the difference between Man and the animals is his mind? As seekers of absolute and true knowledge, why do we concern ourselves with the changing, uncertain world of physical things?

Sal: You are saying then that Euclid removed himself from the physical world in order to find truths immortal, unchanging? Expressions of Divine Order?

Fop: Right.

Sal: Well, what the Academician is trying to do is find the order that exists in change. And do not think that Euclid's Elements is merely a collection of static propositions that simply prove facts. In book five he treats of ratios, and it is these principles concerning ratios that our Author applies to movement. Ratios are intimately connected with change and movement--as one magnitude grows or diminishes, so another diminishes or grows. To grow larger or smaller is to change, and it is this flexibility in ratios that our Author uses to express the order to be found in change.

Fop: There is yet another objection that I have with your science of motion. How do you understand the word "motion"? From what you have just said I see you realize that motion refers to things changing state . . . Aristotle fully treated of the science of motion in all of its various aspects, in a way I feel your author has avoided. Aristotle's definition of motion is as follows: "The fulfillment of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially, is motion." Under this definition there were four categories, all being parts of the same whole, these parts being alteration, increase or decrease, coming to be and passing away, and locomotion. Your Author treats only of locomotion, seeming to forget that the other kinds exist. How can we say then that he is deducing general principles? For if he were really deducing general principles, he would give us principles that apply to all kinds of motion, as Aristotle does.

Sal: Aristotle certainly was a very wise man, but when I studied him in school I wondered if perhaps he didn't try to spread himself a little too thin. Why was it always necessary to investigate everything, and relate everything to everything else? I admire the Academician because he was humble enough to realize that we can't be experts at everything, given our short lives. We have to limit the scope of any investigation in order to know any one thing perfectly. These seemingly unrelated observations about wooden beams and falling metal balls and reflected light . . . these observations are merely peering through a gate at territory that lies ahead. The only way one can become familiar with such territory is to experience it through the kind of experiments that Sagredo and I have done.

Fop: There is one more thing that I have to say about this science before I leave. It has been troubling me ever since I first picked up a copy of the book that your Author wrote. Would you agree with me that such knowledge as is contained in his book is knowledge that, if fallen into the wrong hands, could wreak terrible destruction? We have all seen the destruction wrought by missiles of war.

Sal: I don't think there can be any denying that this knowledge is of a powerful kind, power that could be used to a destructive, rather than constructive, end.

Fop: If you agree with me, then why is it that anyone can buy a copy of this book, and turn the knowledge contained therein to the aquisition of power? I see people coming from all over the world to suck up the knowledge that you and your peers have spent your lives to discover. Shouldn't you and I, as citizens, be concerned with all these people coming from all over and taking from us what is the basis of power?

Sal: I'm a scientist, not a politician or general. If some seeker of knowledge wants to honor me by coming from far away to see me, fine. The history of man has been to war, and probably will be for some time. I don't know what to do about it.

Fop: Well, take it easy Salviati, I have to go. See you later, Sagredo.

Sal: OK, Foppiano. Well, Sagredo, he finally left. He interrupted quite an interesting conversation we were having. Where were we?

Sagredo: I was wondering if we could speculate about those lands that may be discovered on the other side of that fence, through which a gate has been opened by our Academician. I was most intrigued by the discussion about particles. Do you think that the particles that we were talking about earlier--the particles that fit together in different ways to make up the universe--do you think that the nature of these tiny particles can ever be known?

Sal: Sure, why not? I think this line of inquiry can go far. . . .



Elizabeth Pollard

Euclid as a young man



## The Land of Cockaigne

Susu Knight

The trouble was just that  
 The land of cockaigne arrived  
 Before my anger dulled  
 Enough to take up chewing  
 As a habit. The loaf,  
 Standing like a wading crane  
 On the clothless table,  
 Was good eating if you  
 Could catch it. But I didn't  
 Even try, not knowing the  
 Difference between bread and bread.  
 Miranda might have called  
 To the man with mayonnaise  
 On his shoe, might have lauded  
 The grace of eyes  
 Welling with canned gravy.  
 But I was afraid of this new  
 Claim of kinship with these new brave  
 Creatures who did not worry  
 About what was happening  
 Between sixes and sevens  
 As long as they were edible,  
 Whose flesh was basted into  
 Buttery smothness in a fire  
 that no-one tended.  
 I did not mistake the sound  
 Of wineglasses splintering  
 As they wandered over the  
 Edge of anything available  
 For the water's whimsical wash  
 Over ancestral stone.  
 I was without mercy.  
 I fed on what I could  
 Tear from familiar bones,  
 Bit on what I would,  
 Mourned the passing of menus  
 And hid my eyes from the fat  
 Naked waiters who made  
 Me serve myself.

## The Card of Partial Loss

Susu Knight

Dregs of the lost days  
 Drying in a cup  
 Days spilled, flooding  
 The vines from which  
 I pick my dreams

The chance of silence  
 In the frozen city  
 Where the walls bend away  
 Like a scream

Mechanical gulls treading the wind  
 The accident of air  
 Of you and me

The myth of having chosen  
 Of always choosing

On a path which does not branch

## The Romantic Sea

Charles Bell

**T**he first time he had bought a mask and fins and come to this beach with its crescent of white sand enclosed by coconut groves and hedged with seagrape--and beyond in the calm blue green of the transparent reef-sheltered bay, purple patches showing where coral from the bottom thrust in curves and ridges on which, if storm waves reached these stillnesses, a slight surf broke in foam and milky stirrings of a water otherwise clear--he had hardly known where to begin, to enter the mysteries at their nearest, and with least exposure to the rumored dangers of the open sea.

He had walked to the south horn of the beach, where the reefs joined the sand, had stumbled out in his flippered feet over the coral which was first dry rock, then living substance, grown with seaweed and washed an inch or so deep by the slow pulses of the swell. There were urchins, but only the small red ones, not too sharp, mostly tucked in the rock, and besides he could watch his step. A little way, and the pools and alleys began, a foot deep at first, but winding out and down to the ultramarine.

It seemed strange for a grown man and something of a swimmer to wade like a child, stranger still for him to go down, as he did at the first suspicion of colored small darters, onto his knees, then belly, flat in the bathtub water, his head barely under, the glass mask bringing him with the suddenness of hallucination into the still diminutive realm of coral, anemone, waving weed, bronze and russet in the blue, that crystalline blue, through which now bright small fish darted, turned and delayed. There was one of blue and gold, one red on silver, and one brightest and darkest of all, blue-black sparkled like a starry night.

So he became a worshipper, neglecting his business and his family to be prying under that luminous interface, drawn always farther out, deeper, more afield.

Even that first time he had not stayed in the knee-deep tide aquarium. Flat, under the surface that glistened like a reflecting wall, making emergence a fable and all other worlds unreal, he had seen the alleys between coral rocks, winding out and down to always deeper pools. He had pursued them, drawing forward with his hands, then kicking with those rubber fins. He scraped a bank of flame-fingered horns, scraped his belly and it burned like fire, seared red streaks which later blistered and peeled. So as always with strange beauty it was hostile too--which could only heighten what lured and compelled.

Here the big urchins began, the black ones like radiating long needles, shifting their spines as they crawled over indentations of coral ledges and the rocky floor. He put out a finger and touched one, feather-light; he could hardly have affirmed the touch; the affirmation was an innoculating small pain, and as he drew back, the thinnest thread of

blood, spreading in the blue until it disappeared.

Yellow striped grunts slipped by him, from a side rift toward the open. He followed, past brain coral, spheres wider than tables, and rising into the waterways, the slow-swinging spread of lavender fans. With a suddenness that caught his breath, from an open cave behind him, parrot fish, up to a foot long, purple, blue and green, with their horny blunt mouths for crunching coral, swept by him in a school.

It was over six feet deep in the hollows, though the sides of the coral gorge still rose almost to the gleaming surface. Then the formation broke, the ridges withdrew, there was the open water shelving down to deeper and darker blue, and in that blue, staring at him as he stared, a barracuda, its lean body drooped like a bow, pike-mouth crowded with teeth, lounged lazy; it must have been five feet long.

The man began to move back into the sheltering alley. The fish followed slowly, only the pectoral fins working, curious, like a sniffing hound. One had grown up on tales of this tiger of the seas. Panic seized him. He flung out paddling hands to back faster toward the reef. As if the man had threatened, the barracuda became the timid one. That restless first sign of retreat changed the balance of power. Scissoring with his legs the man leapt through the water at where the fish had been. It had vanished, like an imagined fear.

So he learned the lesson of the hunter: when threatened, charge. But he had not yet tangled with a shark.

. . .

The first time, lucklily, he was on the shore. He had a speargun now. They had driven the other way from town, north, past the cinder-block slum clearance on a clay flat, over the first rain-caving hills, shadowed with mango and mamei, across the sugar cane valley, the refinery spilling smoke into the air by the liver-fluke river silting into the sea, up again over the dry sierra, where waves carved the serpentine, into the canyon of royal palms, trunks like white cement and fronds of metallic green, off on the side road, rock-gullied as a stream, around the point, to park under the pungent tamarind--and there was the other cove, the reef-diminished waves hissing up the sand. She fired the charcoal, the children played; he swam, past the chalky surf to the last and deepest reef, fish of all kinds lurking among coral caves and fans. As deep as he could dive he got a thigh-long grouper, swam it back bleeding, cleaned it on a board by the water, left the guts and head, took the fish to the palm tree to help with the broiling.

One of the boys began to yell: "Shark." The man scanned the lagoon for the dorsal cutting fin. It was not out there. They were pointing at the beach. It must have followed the blood; and there, like an amphibian, it was wallowing, half out of water, snapping for the guts on the board.

He grabbed the speargun and started for the beach, cocking it as he went. It was an arbolette he had fitted, stronger than the rubbers, with laboratory hose. He had to stop twice, put his foot on the cross bar,

setting them in the notch at his chin, first one and then the other; he could hardly manage on land.

On a shell-littered crest he stood over the leathery gray shape floundering, instinctive for blood. It was a big shark. As he pulled the trigger he assessed the enormity of what the blue sea had spawned.

Point blank in the air, the gun would have pierced a whale. The shark was on his side. The steel shaft went through him below the dorsal fin. Just the place for a death blow. The shark heaved into the air, freeing the spear from the sand, churned into the water, foaming it with his tail. The man braced for the battle, to be tugged out by seven feet of fish.

As wire and cord went taut, the cable broke from the clip at the end of the gun. A twang. Harpoon, line, farewell. But it was not the end. The black fin cut the surface: a hundred yards out, almost to the reefs, deep water. The gray torpedo rose from ocean to air. The earth-watchers felt the tortion of that shake. The spear was flung out, as it had been fired before from the gun, but twisted; it plunged down--where the fish also plunged.

The man stood in the surf, looking. "He's coming back," they screamed. The black fin had circled, was heading for the shore like the strut of an aeroplane. Was it Melville's Moby Dick that took bearings wavered, straightened, toward the spot where the man had stood? The hunter did not attack this time. Before it reached the beach, he had put certain yards of man-assuring earth between him and the sea. The shark did not pause. Like a volplaning boat it rose from water to the air, and from air fell to the strand with the impact of weight and rage. How could it see outside the water, much less smell? It didn't stride on hind flippers to avenge, on the man-thing, that passage of barbed steel through cartilaginous guts. But what obscure and perhaps dying urge had driven him back to tear the thing that had struck him? In any case, he reared, flounced, cavorted, the double rows of intermeshed razor- and saw-edged teeth dovetailing time and again like the blades of a mowing machine. Until, by chance or design, he lurched back to his element. Wounded or whole, alive or dead, they never knew -- he disappeared.

All the man knew was that as he came back to the shore, looking over the lagoon for that swerving devil's sign, he saw, stamped and scratched into the sand like the warning hieroglyphics on Belshazzar's wall, the criss-crossed imprint of the great threshing body and snapping jaws. He saw in amazement that the footprints where he had stood to fire the gun were smeared and almost obliterated from the recording sand.

Yet he went on spear fishing, even off the slaughter house past Cabo Rojo.

## "Diffugere Nives" (Horace)

Lisa Lashley

ode IV.7

The snows have fled, now the grasses return to the fields  
and the foliage to the trees;  
The earth changes her seasons and the subsiding  
rivers flow by the banks;  
Grace, with the Nymphs and her twin sisters, dares  
to lead the chorus bare.  
Do not hope for immortality, the revolving year  
and the hour which steals the nourishing  
day warns.  
The cold grows mild by the west winds, summer  
tramples on spring, it too will perish,  
Fruitful autumn will have poured forth  
Crops, and soon lifeless winter returns.  
Nevertheless the moons swiftly repair the losses  
in the skies: when we fall  
To where father Aeneas is, to where rich Tullus  
and Ancus are, we are dust and shadows.  
Who knows whether the gods above would add tomorrow  
tomorrow's time to today's sum?  
All will escape the greedy grip of the heir,  
those things which you have given up to your soul.  
When you have died and Minos has made  
stately judgments about you,  
Your family, Torquatus, will not be able to restore you,  
your eloquence, nor your uprightness.  
For neither Diane can free Hippolytus from the  
infernal darkness,  
Nor Theseus has power to break the  
Lethaeian chains for his beloved Perithous.



Catherine Graves



George Graham

## Untitled

With age, fresh concrete cracks and crumbles into dust. Holes become hollow from the puddles that fill and go. They overflow into ribbons, join together in the gutter, and shove our clean pebbles into slimy homes.

With time, the sun will disrobe to dry the sweet-smelling mat that has gathered on the drainage grille. The light will send shafts down into the darkness and perhaps glimmer off of foresaken dimes.

But before this night is through, a shape of a different kind will unfold from his huddle upon the asphalt. When he then steps up to the sidewalk, he will walk until he reaches his bed.

Even now, he startles the moon with shadows as he passes through the door. Even now, sleep arrives to turn thought into those dreams that must greet the morning alone

Lee Bush

## Birds

Ronnie Wathen

Welcome once again, fellow epileptics  
to the explosions in my private world  
my tropisms, my sudden snatched insights  
which are, I imagine  
much of the same sort as yours are -  
they seize us like sneezes in hot summer  
or we break out sweating in a snowstorm.  
Nothing is normal here - yet all is plain.  
We don't even have to try.  
We only need to keep awake.

I had quite a surprise recently beside a lake,  
a wagtail zoomed out of the bushes, out of the rushes  
straight for inert me - I sat completely still  
as she squatted on my lap and let me  
finger her glossy feathers and her glassy nose.  
But when I moved a bit, she flew off  
and as she flew, she flicked some shit on my shirt  
as a keepsake - I saw her flying  
I let her be, it was no use trying.  
Now when I sing, I sing her song.

And that's what poetry is about my friend  
it's something we cannot program, it happens  
on the roads we don't hold in ambush,  
it's independent of toothache, poverty or dope.  
Birds know more than we do, about singing.  
What we can hope for is  
if we stay quiet long enough  
a flock of them will mistake us watchers  
for particularly warm trees  
and shock us into poetry.

*Recited at the October 21st  
Au Verso Poetry Reading.  
Mr. Wathen is an Irish poet  
and piper.*

## On Silence

Rebecca Davis

I try to hush  
and pad my mouth  
with cotton air  
and mold my lips  
to empty words  
but the thoughts  
seep,  
pull at the edges  
and the blotchy pieces  
of mind stretches  
tumble about and  
cartwheel down and  
generally collapse  
when finally said.





## the grey town

Pat Bryant

it has grown very quickly from a silent muffled village to a town. like furred mounds of mold, it has spread across this barren plateau, pausing and clustering at the edge, thickening in size and shape; and oddly, it has preserved its heavy quiet.

the people of this town still shuffle hunchbacked along their paths-- abstracted ships through private fogs. all light is muted, filtered, yet veiled with silt. nothing Glitters here. it is a town that was old at its birth, a worn, soft town, a grey town.

this town has a name, but none of the people who live here ever use it. visitors, in order to find it out, must locate the town's one sign; the six unimpressive letters of its name are engraved above the doorway of the empty courthouse. this sign seems to be offered reluctantly, as though the residents feel that the gesture is a waste of time and effort.

this town is not the type of town that attracts those seeking Adventure, just as oatmeal would be lost amid the Color and Splendor of a Thanksgiving table. nevertheless, it has steadily swelled in population as people trying to escape the responsibilities of the Outside world arrive and settle, like dust upon dust.

there is no meaningful pattern of life here. during the day, people drift and wander without Excitement through the town. this trickle of movement ebbs gradually at the unobtrusive coming of night, but otherwise the deepening of the grey changes nothing.

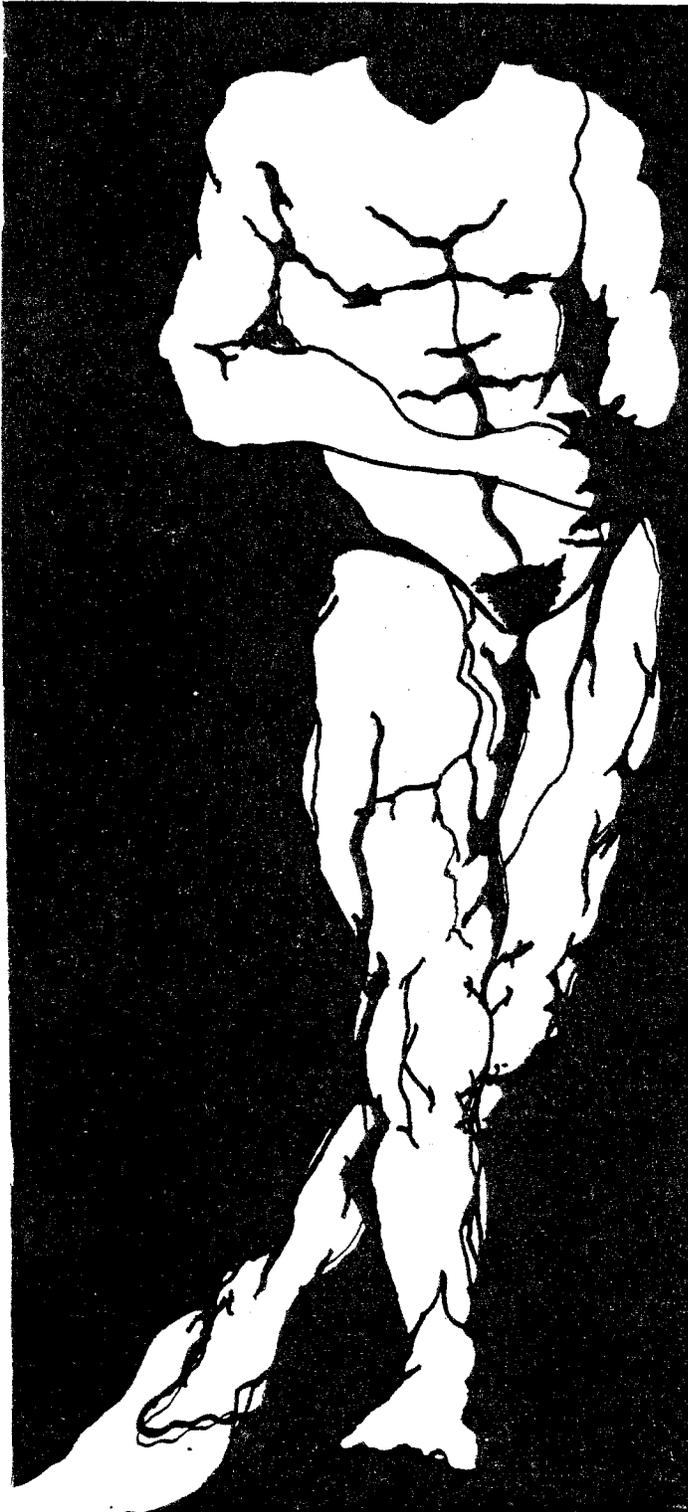
ellen sempel's was an indistinct and unremarkable face. time was blurred and birthdays went by unrealized, but had anyone asked her, ellen would have given her age as about twenty.

ellen never left this town; she seldom left even her home, a building whose grey stone walls held a creeping plant the way a chin holds a beard. the vines eventually reached across the windows until the three rooms within retained only a uniform, mildewed light. ellen never cut away the stems and leaves, so the seemingly tender and benevolent eyelids thickened and deepened as the weeks and years melted together and extended into decades.

when she was seventy years old, ellen sempel died, as unseen as she had been in life. her funeral was unattended. she was buried beneath a dying elm tree, which wept for her in the dropping of its yellow leaves; and each tear was a warning to the residents of the ever growing town called--apathy.

## Two Thousand Rooms

Katrina Crater



An oasis of life  
is hidden among  
desert mountains.  
There a hammock  
swings from the  
misplaced trees  
and there among  
the music laid  
the universe  
whole convenes.  
Outside this circle  
an ancient life  
haunts the dry hills  
where mountain walks  
reveal the scattered  
arrowheads and fossils  
left from pueblos  
and now receded  
waters from over  
the haughty mesa.  
They say two  
thousand rooms  
reign from  
an infinite time,  
and hollow walls  
still echo the peace  
of unconquered life.  
But in the hammock  
all time has stopped:  
a fossil in the  
hammock itself,  
the only movement  
is the twiny pendulum  
perpetuated by the wind.  
The stars can be touched  
through the silver green  
trees which rattle  
like the tails of snakes.  
There intertwined with  
the stars the sun  
lingers motionless  
casting shadows  
which change  
the very shape  
of the earth,  
where the colors  
of the grasses  
illuminate into one  
never imagined by man.  
It is in the hammock  
among the music laid  
the universe  
whole convenes.

John Swett





Sheri Anderson

## These Boots

Laura McKey

**T**he late afternoon sun crowned the roof of the barn. It made Grandma Urstal's eyes burn, and she got up and pulled the shades down. Now the light shot through the opening in the closed double shades; Grandma noticed the vertical plane of sunlit dust particles descending in the dark room, right to her nose. The dust was soaring, dancing, flying.

She looked at her grandson. He was playing in the corner--making a paper fan. She remembered doing the same thing when she was young. That fan is one of those little things he'll remember when the chestnut color in his hair is gone like mine went, she thought.

Gradually the sun disappeared down the roof of the barn. Inside, the room was getting light gray.

And Dennis was finding himself tired of fooling with the paper. Diligently he stacked everything up straight and went to put it in its proper place. He was going to present Grandma a fan, however. Finding her asleep, he put it on her lap. Her unconscious head nodded ever so seriously. Her skin was withered, dry, and chafed.

There was a knock on the door. Grandma immediately woke up, coughed, and got out of her chair. Dennis stumbled and ran into the hall.

"Why don't you have coffee," Grandma was saying.

"Oh, no, I've got to get Dennis home and make supper." Dennis' mother had returned from work in Hallettsville.

Grandma smiled and looked around the darkening room. "Well, it looks like Dennis is hiding from you again. He can spend the night here with me if he wants to, can't he?"

Dennis heard them walk across the room. They were coming to get him, or else they were going to the kitchen table. The feet stopped in the kitchen, and he heard the table chairs creak. His prayer was answered.

Here he stayed while they talked. It was the bathroom. Not much to do in here--but there was the stool Grandma had provided for him. He stood on the wooden stool and looked at himself in the mirror. He did this for quite a long time; then he dug around in the old Avon bottles in the crate beneath the old-fashioned sink.

He didn't know how much time had passed when he heard his mother's steps.

"Dennis, where are you? Time to go home now."

He heard her wandering into the guest bedroom, and he waited.

"Dennis, where are you?" She was to the bathroom door now.

"Time to go home now, Dennis."

He slipped past the bathroom door, which he had left open, and ran directly under his mother's outstretched hands and into the hall and headed straight for his grandmother's green room--there was nowhere else in the hall to run to--and opened the door. He clambered under the bed to hide.

His mother called: "Dennis! That's Grandmother's room. That's not the place for you to go!"

He heard Grandma laugh.

His mother said, "Dennis, I've had a long day at work!"

He didn't like the darkness here under this old bed, and the smell and the damp feeling of these wooden boards. But he wanted to stay here--just here. He didn't want to stray off to his own house, which was so different from this place, and eat broiled fish or something like that, instead of having fried chicken and mashed potatoes and coconut cake here.

His mother tried to drag him out. She pulled gently and failed. There was nothing she could do.

"Grandma, will you help me pull him out?"

Grandma was not afraid to use her arms as a strong man would, and she yanked him out with, "Let's get you out of here in a hurry, son." She was as strong as iron. Now they were both laughing, Grandma and his mother. Grandma saw the bottle he was still holding. She said, "You can take that home with you, it's a present." It was in the shape of an airplane.

"Okay."

He looked downcast as he followed his mother to the front door and then, in the shadowy, weeping, dreary air, to the car. The lingering light was full of the sound of locusts snoring. He pressed the button and his mother swung open the car door for him. He felt himself fall into the car seat. "My, you're tired, Dennis."

He closed the door. Now he watched himself, in the window, wave goodbye to Grandmother as the car rolled back from the house.

Grandma grinned, and for her part stood back, bent her elbows, and flapped both her hands from the wrists. It looked very comical. This was her own special way of waving.

"Next week you're going to be in school, young man," his mother said while she drove, cutting into the early night that was putting a cover on Farm Road 234.

Dennis sat up straight all of a sudden and looked at her, and then looked at a big darkened oak tree all draped with Spanish moss. It whizzed by. He could hear the wild call of the locusts, even now while they were at seventy miles an hour and the door windows were rolled tightly shut.

"I forgot about that."

"Well, it's time," she said.

"Is it kindergarten, or is it first grade?"

"It's first grade."

He didn't say a word for a while; instead he looked at the moving highway. He was excited about school coming up. He didn't know why.

"I can't wait," he said.

His mother murmured, seemingly to herself, "I remember my first day at school. Can you believe it, I can remember that far back? Well, I can, and I really liked my first day."

Soon they were driving up to the garage of their house. Dennis' mother got out and heaved open the garage door. They parked inside in the dark.

It was not quite dark outside. So while Dennis' mother went in, Dennis walked out on the lawn. Leading up to the garage there were flat white stones. Now he played the game he had played yesterday, and the day before, of which the object was to jump on the ground and on the stones in just the right places, and in exactly the right sequence. It was sort of like hopscotch.

Dennis took a breath and looked around him. He made up his mind to win his game today on the first try.

He jumped, and counted the steps. "One--two--three--four--five--" He fell and yelled at himself.

He tried continuously for what seemed like an hour. He thought he must succeed before his mother or father called him inside for the evening meal. Dennis was breathing heavy and jumping with fascination (it was like trying to conquer the world) when he heard,

"Dennis. . . . Dennis! . . . Dennis! Come on and eat." It was his father.

His heart sank. "Just a minute!"

"We're not waiting!"

It was almost night. He jumped with as much determination, kept falling, and finally gave up when he couldn't see the stones anymore. Very disheartened, drooping, and wet with sweat, he started for the supper table.

Once inside, the bright light overhead made him half close his eyes. He first saw Mary Beth's brown hair, lit up into a halo. She eyed him with curiosity. His mother slipped out of her chair and dished him something from the casserole on the stove.

"Here, Dennis. You must be hungry. What have you been doing outside?"

"Oh, just playing a little game." He sat down and began to eat.

Mary Beth said, "Must have been a pretty big game--you look all tired and worn out and sad."

Dennis wasn't prepared for the upstart from his father.

"Now, Dennis--you better be ready for more useful things. Jumping around in the dark like it's life or death--I sure do hope you don't do that in the school year, when you have to be studying."

"Oh, Ray," said his mother, "he was just playing, and that's what little boys like to do."

"That wasn't playing. That was making a mountain out of a molehill and pretending it's a matter of life or death."

"No, it was fun," retorted Dennis. "I only wanted to do it just the right way--that's the point of the game."

Father was usually a little grumpy, he didn't know why. Maybe it was because so often he had to take the graveyard shift at the aluminum plant, and couldn't fish in the river or piddle around in his garden as much as he liked to. Instead he had to work all night and sleep all

day. He had often said on those nights, "Oh, I sure would like to set out a few bait lines in that ol' river tonight."

. . .

His mother came and tried to pull him out of bed. "I've been telling you to get up for the past hour! Now do you want to go see Grandma, or not?"

"Let me go, let me go! I promise I'll get up, Mama. Just let me go."

"All right."

He heard his father call from the hall, "We're not coming back in there to wake you up, now! If you stay asleep we're just going to Grandma's alone! And I'm all dressed and ready to go."

Dennis managed to get out of bed. It was seven-thirty in the morning. He was not accustomed to getting up at this hour. His mother came and helped him put on his clothes, his socks, his shoes.

Now Mary Beth was sitting there on his bed, already dressed, watching his mother and him, and not smiling. He was really too tired to do anything, but he stuck his tongue out at her anyway.

"Dennis, stop!"

"Sissy," he chided.

"Dennis. How could you do that to a sister of yours? And such a nice sister as she is," said his mother.

"What is my sister doing in my room?" he retorted.

"Well, she's your sister. You should like to share with your sister without her asking, just like Grandma likes to share with you without your ever asking."

She was combing his hair meanwhile, and holding his shoulder-- as if he were a puppy, he thought, and she were putting flea powder on him. He couldn't contain himself much longer. He began to squirm. "Are you through?" he asked. She didn't answer, but kept on going, touching him on the neck, then on the shoulder. She kept trying to create little dollops around his ear, or tame his cowlick.

Then she held his shoulder and took a step back to look. That was the last straw. He said, "Oh, please stop, Mama." She said "just a minute" and went on. He moved his head and shoulders from side to side, to elude her motherly light touch.

She went on and he began to move more violently. "Please let me just finish combing your hair," she said in a darker voice and with much tension. He broke away and ran into the hall, Mary Beth after him.

His mother followed him. "Now come on and eat your breakfast. We're going to leave in a minute. Here." She got him cereal flakes and toast, and set it in front of him. He began to eat.

As he ate he got into a better mood, and settled down some. A thought came across him. Slowly he said, "I don't want to go. I want to stay here. I just don't want to go."

"But why?" Mary Beth had sat down by him. Her brown eyes widened sympathetically.

"Come now, don't be long, Dennis. Eat. We have to hurry," his mother said.

"I'm ready, for one!" said Mary Beth. "But why, Dennis? You know what? You remind me of the boy in a story Miss Rogers told us last year in fifth grade. 'John Peter Crumbley.' That was the boy's name and the name of the story.

"This John Peter Crumbley, one morning he had biscuits for breakfast. He decided he'd stay there at the breakfast table eating biscuits a little while longer, and he did. And he ended up staying there eating biscuits for weeks and weeks. He got rounder and rounder, but he never noticed how he was getting because he was only thinking about the round of the biscuit. Finally he got so big that his head popped through the roof. And he kept getting more biscuits because each neighbor gave a dozen to him after his own breakfast. And he kept getting bigger until finally, he broke out of the house like a big chick breaks out of the egg shell. And then he rolled down the very skinny man because he couldn't find any more biscuits in all the strange new towns he came to, as hard as he looked for them. And he had a lot of hills to climb to get where he was going, wherever he was going. That's what happened to John Peter Crumbley."

Dennis thought about it.

"I see Daddy's coming, now let's get into the car."

The morning was bright. First there was the town, the Saturday morning traffic just beginning. Then there were the pastures and the crop fields.

This was Saturday--Saturday morning! He felt so happy whenever he could watch scenery go by his eyes like this. He watched a crop field pass by, and he could see a pair of giant legs--the columns of dirt between the rows--running, running, running over the leafy green crop field until they reached the edge of the crop, where they disappeared or landed or subsided or whatever.

He watched a hawk soar slowly overhead.

Soon they were in Grandma's drive.

"Yes, I'm glad my Ray is off those old graveyards, for the time being, at least. It's for the better," Grandma was saying to his mother and father.

"Grandma, the big news is, Dennis is starting first grade next week."

"Well, well!" Grandma winked. "My big boy--going into first grade all of a sudden." She hugged Dennis once more. "I'm proud of him, I sure am."

Ray Urstal smiled. He remembered the words she had said to him the day he departed for the United States army. They were the same words, mainly.

Those words had suddenly emboldened him, made him want to stand up and be counted.

"Grandma, do you mind if I look around?" Dennis said.

"Why no, son--what do you want to look at this time?" She turned to his mother. "Is that okay, Mother?"

"You must like showing him things, or you wouldn't do all this for him. Go ahead, Dennis. But don't get into anything that Grandma doesn't want to show you."

Dennis was very happy. "Okay! okay! okay!" he said, dancing. "Grandma, come show me." He held her hand.

They went together through the shadows of the hall, Grandma leading him straight to her room. Dennis opened and shut the door like a lid--and mint green walls and ceiling enclosed them, and wooden floor seemed to reach out and into them. Grandma still held Dennis' hand. The white bed stood squarely, separately, remotely, by a window.

"I want to show you something I wouldn't have thought until now of ever showing anybody except myself," said Grandma. She opened the closet door and knelt down. "They're in the back," she said.

"What are they, Grandma?"

"Shoes."

He waited. There was a comical walnut man on the little table by the wall. It had a movable head with a red grin. He touched the head, and it sprang up and down. Its store-made eyes looked back and forth, back and forth.

"Yes, isn't that kind of cute? Now. I have the boots." She plopped them down on the dark floor by the bed. Dust flew from them. "Sit down."

He sat on the bed and she sat by him. They scared him. They were so huge. They were brown with thick gray dust on them. The laces were still there, all rotten. The backs of the heels were worn down, and only on their insides, so that the whole boots leaned over sidewise. The leather was torn in some places.

"Oooohh."

"'Ooohh?' Well, I don't know what to think about your saying 'oooh' about my boots. I should be hurt. These are my working boots that I've worn for years and years and years, you couldn't count the

years. All through the Great Depression I wore these, working in the fields right along with Papa--your daddy's papa--every day whether in heat or cold. That was hard. . . ." She picked up both the boots nonchalantly, grinning. "Now, Papa had some just like these. Just like 'em."

"Are they in that closet, too?"

"Oh no, of course not." Her grin fell just a little.

"What happened to them?"

"We did away with them," she said soberly, but it seemed pretend-soberly to Dennis, because the grin came back to her face.

"How?"

"Burned 'em."

"Why?"

"Well, didn't need them anymore."

"That's sad."

"Oh?" she said. She placed the boots down. Before they reached the floor she let them fall, and dust flew again.

"Gra'mma--"

"Yes?"

"Never mind."

She said she would "go warm up the chicken an' dumplins' and fix a blackberry cobbler." Dennis smiled with anticipation. She excused herself from the room. A bird chirped from the window.

And he was alone now.

It was the first day of school. They were all standing on a big concrete plaza, under a roof. There were crowds and crowds of people. People with all colors of hair. Poorly and tackily dressed people and well-dressed people and people in between. They were all boys and girls.

"Dennis Urstal." He heard his name called and hurried up with his father through the crowd. But a woman came and escorted them to all the tables necessary.

This was exciting.

There was nobody here he knew except his father. His mother had planned to come with him here, but now she was at Grandma's because Grandma was sick. His cousin David had started the year before, and this morning he was supposed to be somewhere in that big white building over there, learning. He did not yet know what a classroom looked like, so David and the rest could be doing anything for all he knew--maybe floating in their desks upside down from the ceiling. Because school was supposed to be a miracle, wasn't it? Something that was wonderful and frightening.

But when he got into the classroom, there was no such thing as chairs floating on the ceiling. In the front row there was someone named Harold who was always dropping his crayolas. Dennis thought he was doing it on purpose, because when they got stepped on Harold

laughed. Sitting next to Dennis was a girl named Susan who stayed fantastically quiet all the time. She wasn't shy; she was simply sticking to her own guns. Dennis loved to watch her use her hands so quietly and busily. There was a wall fan that turned itself around and around, and buzzed. The teacher he didn't notice that much. He didn't notice his father, either, who was sitting there in his "waiting" posture, hands crossed and feet flat on the floor and face looking down with a dreamy expression.

Then there came a time when his father had to leave the room for some reason. He came back with a disturbed look in his eye. He took Dennis out into the hall, and said to him gruffly, "Your grandmother's real sick."

The two calmly walked back to the car, which had been parked in a parking lot with many other cars. Now they left, and went all the way out to David's house. Dennis' father explained that he was going to very hurriedly drop him off with Uncle Ronald there, and he could stay for the morning.

Uncle Ronald was strangely cool and aloof to Dennis, barely saying "hello"--that was not like Uncle Ronald. He and Dennis watched his father drive out of the driveway, the tires grinding the gravel.

. . .

He would see David there, at--what did they call it?--the funeral. They seemed to be on the way to Grandma's house. Maybe the funeral would be held there. He fell asleep on his mother's lap on the front seat of the car.

It turned out that the funeral was in the little white church next to Grandma's house. He and David sat through the funeral together, chewing gum and looking at each other. Several hymns were sung. The preacher spoke, and while this was happening Dennis could hear the metallic ring of silence and death in the small building.

With sweat on your brow  
shall you eat your bread,  
until you return to the soil,  
as you were taken from it.

For dust thou art  
and to dust shalt thou return.

Grandma was really dead! Should he believe it, and should he cry like the rest of them were doing? He was a little confused.

Well, next day, he thought, he could tell his school friends that his grandma had died on the first day of school, of all days.

They all went back to Grandma's house after the funeral. Some

were crying; some were walking around in disbelief. Dennis was dazed--these circumstances were strange. He watched what was going on. He saw, among other things, Aunt Dot crying by the rose lattice under the porch awning, holding one of Grandma's dishes and clinging to the lattice for support.

Back home, his mother smiled at him in her tears and said, "You'll never forget Grandma. Will you? You'll always know--how she looked, at least? Will you?"

His father looked at him with dry, reddened eyes.

"I think I'll remember."

She looked at his father and smiled. "See, I told you so. A grandchild will never forget his grandmother. He might forget many other things, but he will never forget his grandmother--or his grandfather, but he never saw his grandfather."

He nodded and looked at Dennis and rubbed his eyes. "Well, of course he'll never forget."

"Mama--"

"Yes, Dennis?"

"Daddy, Mama--what'd she die of?"

"A heart attack," said his mother.

"What is a heart attack? She looked fine last Saturday!"

"Well, Dennis . . . it came quick."



George Graham

## My Lady's Scarf

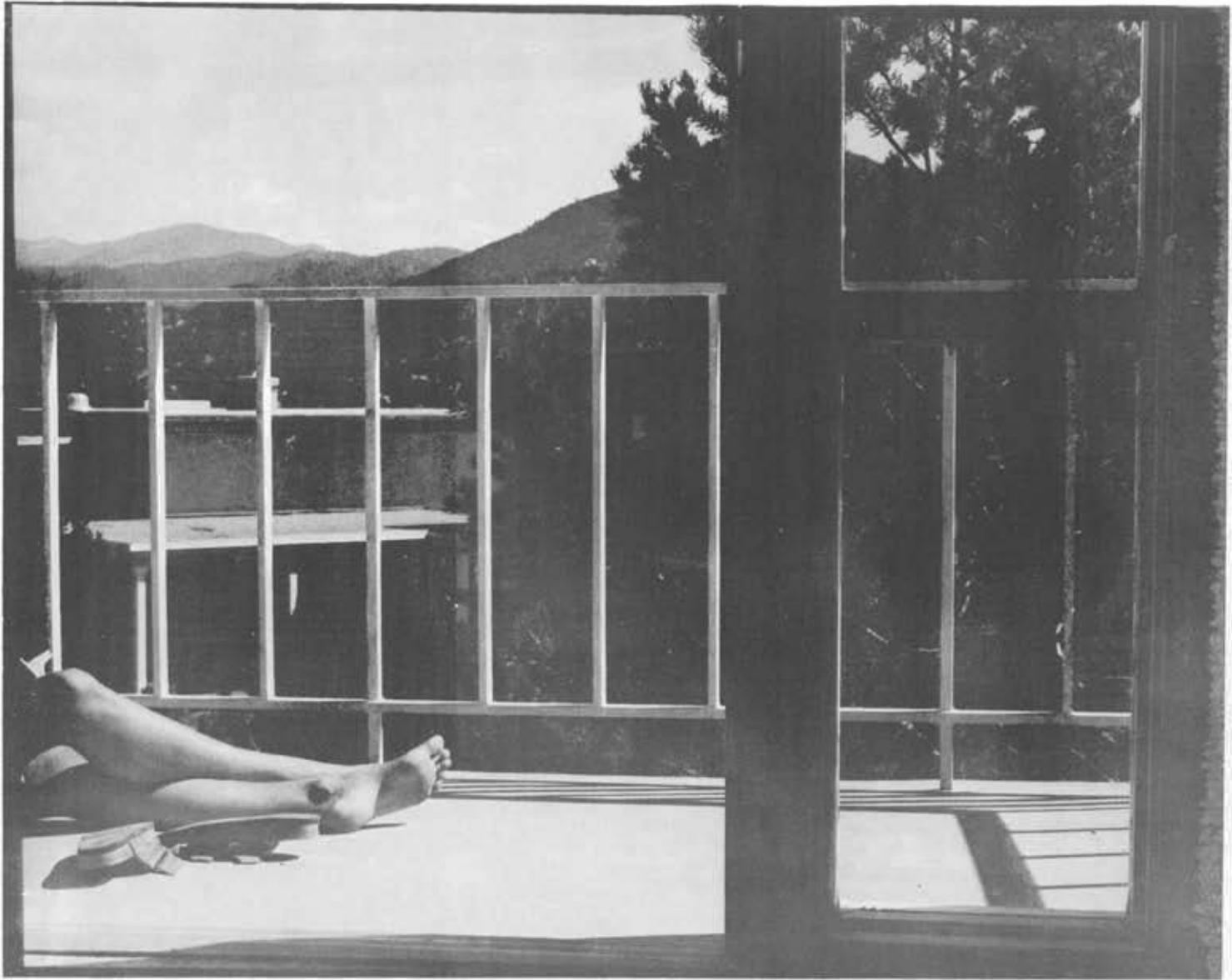
Michael Sloper

That simple, single-colored drapery  
 through which the light of suns does brightly shine  
 is lent an elegance, a look of quality  
 when thus illumined--purely fair.  
 O happy scarf! to be immune to heat  
 so near the source, neither set aflame  
 nor blinded by the golden light; I'd be  
 a happy man were I so safe so near.  
 But eyes of men are not accustomed to stay  
 in sunny clime for chance of great delight  
 while burned by rays intense to melt the heart.  
 Should I remain to perish mothlike in  
 this energy? or shall I turn to flee?

## Ocean Eden

Joel Block

The ocean stretches wide, mother of all  
 and harsh father to many.  
 Still . . . as the sun-stone falls in radiant light  
 swallowed by the father.  
 No human form here, save you  
 on a small raft and another beside  
 Returning the stars' wondrous gaze.  
 Toes tickle the cool current carrying  
 two souls to attend a small shadow of land.  
 Loneliness flies as Earth's breath brings melody in.  
 The gods' glorious fire rises from the mother  
 lending its rhythm to the gentle seed in Heaven's hand.  
 Two beings weave a slender vine  
 that can conquer the silent Eden of each man's mind  
 and mend the bleeding of lonely hearts for a while.  
 They spin Time's thread in golden eternities  
 till the gold is done  
 and the stone drops to silent sleep.





## "Exege Monumentum" (Horace)

Lisa Lashley

ode 111.30

I have completed a monument more lasting than bronze  
 And more lofty than the royal structures of the pyramids,  
 which no corroding rain, no furious Aquilo  
 Is able to destroy, nor a countless chain of years  
 And the flight of time.  
 I shall not all die, for a great part of me  
 will escape Libertina: I shall grow still in posterity  
 fresh with praise. While the pontifex  
 climbs the Capitol with silent maidens  
 I will be spoken of, where the wild Aufidus River  
 Roars and where Daunus, low in water, ruled  
 Over rustic peoples; powerful from humble origins,  
 The first to adopt Aeolian song to Italian measures.  
 Seize the honorable pride gained by merit  
 And graciously surround my hair with a  
 Delphic laurel, Melpomene.

## Untitled

Beware the black widow  
 Bereaved spouse not of Death  
 But of Grief  
 Venomous tarnish  
 From all the bloodstained horrors of war  
 Fought not on the legitimate battlefield  
 of political strife  
 But on the macabre grey ground  
 --the substance of heartbreak  
 Source of all eternal strife.  
 No truce can stall this battle  
 No white flag can halt this torment  
 Only the pale relentless shroud of Death  
 Can still turbulent Pathos.  
 How welcome this swaddling  
 Lay me down for the pallbearers  
 To bear for me the form  
 That can no longer succor the soul.  
 Write for me my epitaph  
 For the light is dimming into incoherence  
 And soon solicitous mortality  
 Will cover me with its final Blessing  
 And alleviate the duty  
 That was so hard to carry.

Leeza Bierschenk

## Fate of a Harsh Day

Susan Jacobwitz

**T**he wind was howling persistently through the cracks in the walls; it blew the trees to tap against the scarred windows with a grating lack of rhythm. The snow that had piled up on branches during the still day blew off in puffs of billowing powder, falling upon the ground to blend with the piles of undulating snow already accumulated there.

A man walked slowly to the window, favoring one leg, to lean there with one arm on the sill, the other stretched along the peeling wall. There was ice forming on the window; through its milky distortion the moon was visible, blurred by passing clouds as it lit the hillside luminously. Had it been so long ago that he had stood at a small window much like this, awaiting the birth of his fifth child? Three small graves of children who had died in infancy had been laid in the ground, one by one, alongside his dead parents. Only one child had lived to see her seventh year; this was his daughter, Rifke.

"Jacob!"

He had turned his head at the sound. His sister, her hair coiled tightly under a faded scarf, had pressed the lamp she carried into his hand. Exhausted and expectant as he was, she had had to form his limp hand into a grip around the lamp's base.

"Come," she said. "Come!"

"Sara?" he asked.

She beamed at him. "Fine, fine . . . she is resting now. Go on, go!"

"And the child?"

"You'll see." She grinned with glee. "Go ahead!"

He had entered the dimly lit room where his wife lay on the bed. She opened her eyes as he sat down beside her, stroking the tassles of thick, long hair off her forehead and onto the pillow. The pillow was covered with a linen case, decorated with embroidery, that had been worked by the fire during long winter nights as she had accumulated linens for her dowry. That was now almost ten years ago. She smiled up at him slowly.

Tanta brought the baby to him, laying the bundle in his arms. The small pink head was resting peacefully and he watched the baby squirm with tiny movements. He could not tell whether it was a boy or a girl.

He looked at his wife on the bed. "Is it . . ." he began to ask. ". . . a boy," she finished triumphantly. "Your first son."

And she lay back on the pillows to sleep.

The darkness of the night brought him back to the present; the moon was almost totally covered. He moved away from the window and fumbled for the kerosene lamp on the table. He lit it tremorously, steadying one hand with the other. He watched the little flame sputter.

He had taken his son to the rabbi to be blessed.

The rabbi, somber in his black apparel, had embraced him enthusiastically. Already preparations had been made for the bris, the ceremony where male children were circumcised and placed in a covenant with God. It always took place eight days after birth.

He invited Jacob in. "Such a fine son you have, Jacob! You must be very happy."

"Indeed, Rabbi," Jacob replied. "Both my wife and I. It is like a miracle, this healthy baby, after such a loss as ours."

The rabbi nodded sympathetically. "It has been very hard for you both, I know. Have you decided on the name?"

"Not yet," Jacob confided. "We thought perhaps to name him for Sara's father."

"A very good man," agreed the Rabbi. "I knew him well, although their home was not near our city. But his name is carried on through Sara's sister, whose younger son is named Moshe."

"Perhaps you have a name in mind?" Jacob asked.

The old man's eyes twinkled. "If it is not presumptuous. . . ."

"Please," Jacob encouraged.

The Rabbi smiled. "Then I should call this eldest son of yours 'Chiam,' the word for 'life.' Of all the children born to you and Sara since little Rifke, he is the only one to lustily embrace life, when the lives of your children were so despaired of."

Jacob looked at his sleeping son. "This is so, Rabbi, and that shall be his name."

The Rabbi placed his hands upon the resting child's head. "May this child be blessed and have a long and worthy walk through his life on this earth."

His wife had appealed to him when Chiam was newly turned seven.

"You have to talk to him," she told him. "These questions! All the time these questions, and to ask them in cheder, with the Rabbi and all the other little boys to hear!" She stirred a heavy pot of soup boiling on the stove vigorously. "Where does he get these questions? This isn't what we teach him here, Jacob. He comes to me, too. 'Momma,' he says to me, 'how do we know God is listening to our prayers?' And if that isn't enough! 'If God understands everything,' he says, 'why do we waste the time to read the Torah in Hebrew?' He says he can put all his time spent in study at cheder to better use!" Sara threw up her hands in despair. "What did I give birth to, Jacob?"

Jacob soothed her. "Now, now, mother, he's only a little boy with questions. He is just as smart and twice as quick as any of the boys in cheder."

Sara shrugged. "This we know, but these questions! They could get him into trouble, Jacob."

"Nonsense. He is always good at services and sits like a little statue, never opening his mouth. I will look out for him; he's always safe with me." He smiled. "Besides, he is only seven years old."

"Seven now," she agreed. "but soon he will be thirteen, and a fine sight he will make, asking these questions at his bar mitzvah!"

Jacob laughed out loud. "He will do you proud at his bar mitzvah, mother." He slipped his arms around her and kissed her warmly on the neck. Despite a family of four children now, she was still young and attractive, having avoided the seemingly inevitable enormity that crept upon middle-aged women.

She whacked him with her wooden spoon. "Go on, you!" she cried. "I have plenty of work and it's the middle of the afternoon! I don't need you around to slobber, I have the baby."

Laughing, Jacob had escaped out of the kitchen.

Jacob rose and walked to the door of the adjoining room; Chiam, his grown son, lay on a mattress sleeping. He watched the boy's even breathing for long moments. Not wanting to wake him, he moved away softly.

Chiam at nine had been a tall and lean little boy, with his mother's dark, wavy hair and high cheekbones. His eyes were a pale green hazel, like his father's. He attended regular school and studied at cheder, besides working in the afternoons with his father and performing chores at home, helping to care for his younger brothers and sisters.

At this time, Jacob had been a small-time merchant with a store stocked with groceries and household goods. He was not a man of means, but was well-respected by the Jewish community for his judgment and good nature; often the store was the sight for many a discussion among elders in the early evening.

On this particular afternoon, he had been alone, concerned that Chiam was late arriving from cheder. He heard a sound in back and went to look; he saw Chiam trying to sneak in. His face was covered with blood. He did not say anything, but took the boy and sat him down, bathing his face with a cloth soaked in warm water. He washed away the dirt and blood, noticing that there were no streaks made by tears until they began to fall as Jacob worked.

"Come," Jacob said gently. "Why the tears now, Chiam?"

The little boy spoke reluctantly. "I am ashamed that you should see me this way, Poppa," he said.

"Because you have been fighting?" Jacob asked.

"Rabbi says it is always wrong . . ."

". . . but I don't believe it could be so all the time. I did not pick the fight!"

Jacob had no doubt of this, as he knew Chiam to be a serious and earnest child, not given to violence even in games. "Why don't you tell me what happened?" he suggested.

"We were coming from cheder. The boys from regular school

followed us and screamed filthy names at us. All the boys began to run when they jumped us, but me." He became indignant. "We didn't start it, Poppa, but they follow us and say we are cowards and women! If we always run, how will they come to think differently?"

Jacob winced inwardly with the special pain of a father who has no advice to pass to his son save that which was passed to him and is subject to doubt. "What is their opinion, Chiam?" he asked. "They are to you as nothing, so their opinions are twice nothing." He shook his head. "It is not a practical solution," he chided gently. He gestured to the cloth that he had used to wipe the blood off Chiam's face. "You could shed much more blood than this, my son, and still not win a victory."

Chiam spoke slowly. "But what are we to do? Rabbi says that we must pray for the fighting to stop between people, but it always has been this way. How can you pray when someone is bringing down a bottle on your head?" He looked at Jacob earnestly. "Doesn't God listen to our prayers?"

"I'm afraid it's not for us to judge God, Chiam," Jacob said. "We must find the best way to deal with these situations within ourselves."

"Then," Chiam asked, "is there more than one right way?"

"Perhaps," Jacob smiled. "But the Rabbi might enjoy the question more. Come, now we will get busy."

It was not many weeks later that a determined son walked up to them as they sat at the table after dinner and presented them with the remains of his earlocks, the hair that young boys wore long and curling over their ears in the Jewish tradition.

Sara stifled a cry and burst into tears at the show of disrespect. "That I should see the day," she lamented. "A son of ours!"

"I'm sorry if it hurts you, Momma," Chiam stated. "But every boy who sees me yells out 'Dirty Jew!' and forces me to run or fight. It is all wrong; it's wrong for them to hate me, it's wrong for me to fight, and it must be wrong to run away like a coward. If God cannot hear my prayers and guide my heart without the hair grown long over my ears, there is nothing to be done about it anyway."

And so Jacob had spent that night comforting his wife as she predicted the bleak future that would await their irreverent son.

Times became hard and money scarce; Jacob and Sara's four children slept in one bed and there was often not enough money to keep them all in warm clothes and with food. Chiam gathered and sold firewood to secure extra money. His years of preparation and study drew to a culmination with the approach of his bar mitzvah, his coming of age into manhood at thirteen.

It was the custom of the time that all the fathers and their sons would bid for space in the synagogue in which to perform the ceremony. Jacob was determined to give his son the best bar mitzvah possible. This was what the boys looked forward to through all their years of

study; Chiam, despite his mother's pessimistic predictions, was both studious and intelligent.

Chiam and Jacob walked to the synagogue on the day of the bidding; Jacob walked beside his son filled with undisguised pride for his strong and well-mannered son.

The bidding began, and the richer patrons forced the price beyond the range of comfort. Chiam grew more and more uncomfortable, but still Jacob would not relent.

"Father," Chiam said.

Jacob looked down at him.

"Father," Chiam continued, "I know it is my bar mitzvah, but couldn't the money be put to better use?"

"The money is for you, Chiam," Jacob replied. "This is the way I promised it would be and so it will be."

"No, no, Poppa," Chiam persisted. "Why should we spend so much hard-earned money for a display?"

"What are you saying, Chiam," Jacob asked rather irritably. "Are all your years of study to go to waste?"

"No, how could they go to waste? But the money would go to waste, Poppa. If what we are taught is true, wouldn't God hear my vows even if I recited them in the basement?" Jacob looked into his son's eyes. "It can't be right to spend so much on such a thing as this. I know the money could be put to much better use."

Thoughts of food and fuel and clothes passed through Jacob's mind. But this was his eldest son and he wanted to give so much to him. "What about the other boys?" he asked. "They will all be having splendid bar mitzvahs. . . . I wanted you up there with the best of them. . . ."

This way is best, Poppa," Chiam reassured his father. "It will mean so much more to me this way, and with the money we can buy shoes for the children. . . ." He took his father's hand. "And think of it this way, Poppa. Anyone can have a splendid bar mitzvah and make promises when things are going well and money is thrown about; perhaps it detracts from the seriousness of the vows themselves. We lead humble lives and my bar mitzvah will mean just as much if taken in modest surroundings."

Jacob squeezed his hand. The money went back in his pocket and father and son left the synagogue.

The wind persisted, and Jacob still could not sleep. His mind went back to that morning, when he had been confronted by Russian soldiers. He had been mending clothing by the light of the lamp when the door flew open. Two Russian soldiers in long coats and with rifles entered the room. One began to search the place disruptively; the other stopped in front of Jacob.

"Papers!" he snapped.

Jacob handed him a bundle of papers.

"Where is your son and the other boy?"

"They are at the hospital," Jacob replied.

"They were assigned and ordered to report to labor battalions. They disregarded their assignments."

Jacob endeavored to explain. "My son was liberated from Dachau less than three weeks ago," he told him. "He is suffering from malnutrition and a skin infection."

The soldier in charge grunted. "We were the ones to liberate them, old man, and this is the thanks we get. Things will go more than badly for your boy if he doesn't report."

He had watched from the door as they departed, leaving behind the ominous sight of heavy boot marks stomped in the soft, deep snow.

Three weeks ago Chiam had been liberated . . . two years ago he had been taken away.

War had come to Europe. Up in the mountains they were isolated, but not immune. They were carted away in cattle cars and shipped with other Jews to Auschwitz. The neighbors watched with curious interest as they were arrested, then entered their house to confiscate what few possessions they could find that might be worth taking.

Sara was with child. She was sent in the selection line to the left, the line leading to Birkenau, the extermination center. The four youngest children were sent with her. Rifke was twenty-one, living in Budapest under false papers. Chiam was fourteen. They appraised the young boy carefully.

The doctor at the selection table turned away. "Left," he ordered.

Jacob cried out in panic, through the numbness that had settled over him as he had watched his wife and children pulled from him. He pulled out Sara's wedding band and a gold pocket watch given to him by his father. He threw them on the table with what little money he had. He spoke in broken German.

"He is a strong boy, raised in the country on a farm. I swear to you, he is easily capable of doing a full day's work. I beg of you to spare him."

Chiam's life was reclaimed by a bit of gold and paper and a doctor's indifferent whim. He followed his father into the compound and the latter never thought at that time he might one day have to ask his son's forgiveness for having saved his life.

Jacob was a strong man in his prime; Chiam was a growing boy. He soon became emaciated and Jacob was giving him most of his food in a desperate effort to protect him and keep him alive. Chiam withdrew into a deep state of shock from the loss of his family and the brutality of life around him; he rarely spoke. At night he would come shudderingly awake in a cold sweat; he would dream he heard the screams of his young brothers from far away. Chiam's head was shaved and his face became gaunt, the skin pulled tightly over his cheeks. He was clad in rags in the dead of winter; on his arm he bore the tattoo that had meant his life: Labor Liberate.

Chiam was selected to go in a large labor battalion on a forced march up to the Warsaw Ghetto. Those who would collapse along the way would be shot where they fell. The intention was announced quickly and Jacob had only a short time in which to bid his son farewell.

He held him in his arms and stroked his head as he had when he was a little boy. "Listen to me, Chiam," he said. "You will come through this. We will meet at the end of all this madness at home. I know you will come through."

Chiam looked at him with glazed eyes. His body was covered with sores.

"Listen to me, I beg of you," Jacob implored. "My son. You must live not only for yourself, but for your brothers and sisters. You are all that is left of them and your mother." He held his face in his hands. "You must go from this and become a man. You have been chosen to survive."

"Have I?" the boy whispered. "Have I, Poppa? I don't want to go on. How can it be?"

Jacob gripped him by the shoulders. "I will be there waiting for you at home. If you are not there, my life will be over. Trust me, Chiam . . . you must come through."

Chiam pulled away and turned his back, walking towards the line where he was to report. He stopped and stood for a moment, tears coursing down his cheeks. He turned around and looked at his father. "I trust you . . . we will meet at home."

Jacob turned sharply as he heard a noise behind him; Chiam was out of bed and standing in the doorway. Jacob wiped his eyes quickly in the darkness, watching this son of his who had been with him such a short time. The hair was grown back but the face was gaunt and the eyes grim; he was almost as tall as Jacob now, at sixteen.

"I've been wanting to talk to you, Father," the boy began.

Jacob nodded. "I know. Perhaps this is as good a time as any. Shall I make us some tea?"

Chiam shook his head. "No, thank you. I've been thinking about the visit from the soldiers today."

"I know it has upset you."

Chiam nodded. "They'll be back again tomorrow. If we don't report for work, they'll just come again, with more soldiers and more guns. We'll be arrested sooner or later, before too long."

Jacob sat silently.

"Father, did we live through the Nazis and Hitler only to be liberated and enslaved again? Is it not enough that we suffered and died by the thousands? Now I hear the Russians say, 'The Jews were willing enough to work for the Germans, why not for us?' What do they think, that we volunteered?"

Jacob looked at his anguished son.

Chiam pulled off his shirt. Jacob could count the ribs through his skin. Chiam gestured. "Look, here on my back. The last blow I received from a German is not healed yet!"

"What are you trying to say, Chiam?" Jacob asked gently.

"I'm coming to it, Father, but it's difficult for me. You are

all I have left. All through the nights and the days and the miles, I thought of you and our vow that we would meet; I felt that if I did not die you would not give in and die, that together we could keep each other strong. I thought about what would happen if I would get out to find that you had died in camp." He looked at his father. "I decided I would kill myself."

Jacob pressed his hands to his head in pain. "It is wrong to take your own life," he said.

"Will you tell me things I saw these past two years were not? You know I have always been skeptical, Father. Most of it I suppressed because of the pain it caused you and Mother." He shook his head. "There's no reason to hide it now. I don't believe there could be a God; if there is and he condoned all this, I want nothing to do with him." He looked at Jacob. "I know what you believe, Father. Have I been a bad son?"

"This is all your affair now, Chiam," Jacob told him quietly. "You've never been a bad son. Far from causing me pain, your questioning nature pleased me when you were a child. I knew you could never be made to believe what was not in your heart." He smiled. "Whatever you come to believe, you will still be the boy who worked beside me, helped your mother, would dress your little brothers and sisters, and read by the fire at night to better your mind. That is the son I raised. That is the son I love."

Chiam shook his head. "That is why I cannot bear to tell you this. I'm going to leave. I must leave." He looked at Jacob. "I want your blessing, Father."

"Where will you go, Chiam?" Jacob asked.

"If I can get past the border, I will put myself into a DP camp and do my best to get from there to Palestine or America. There is no life for us here, Father. We will only be enslaved again. It will mean nothing to have lived. The city is filled with ghosts of the dead; I cannot stand to go home. I would rather spend the rest of my life in this shack than live in that house again. Do you understand?"

Jacob nodded. "Yes. And I knew it would come to this sooner or later."

"Come with me, Father," Chiam urged.

"Jacob shook his head. "I'm an old man now, Chiam. I'm almost fifty. My desires left me when your mother and the children were taken from me. I had but one desire left: to see you come from this and become a man." He smiled. "Shall I tell you a story? When we were first in the camp, I saw you begin to starve. You were a young boy and there was no food for you. I writhed in an agony of helplessness you'll someday understand if you have children of your own. The flesh fell from your body. When I had given up hope, the men in the barracks came to me with their pieces of hoarded potato." He laughed. "Their bits of potato! Can you imagine? You were so young and reminded them so much of their own sons that they wanted to give the potatoes to you. And then I looked at you as you were sleeping and thought, this is what I saved him for." He finished slowly. "God forgive me for thinking it, but at that moment I truly wondered whether I had done you a favor."

Chiam said, "Father . . ."

"Let me finish first." He sat up firmly. "Don't think that you're failing me by leaving, or could be a better son by staying. If you can rise from this, I'll never have to feel that guilt again. I gave you your life once; it is a tribute to us both that now you shall give yourself freedom." He rose and went to Chiam. "I'll live through your triumph, Chiam, and if God is willing, I'll live to see you again."

Chiam threw himself into his father's arms and embraced him in a tight grip. "Poppa . . . poppa . . ."

"You must go in the morning," Jacob whispered. "The sooner the better, for things will only get worse. Tell me nothing more of your plans lest I somehow betray you. I must know nothing when they come looking for you."

"How can I thank you for what you've done?" Chiam asked.

"Shhhhh," Jacob replied. "I'm a lucky man to see the son surpass the father. That is the way it should be. I've always been proud of you. Go with God." He squeezed him once more tightly, filling his arms for one last time, murmuring, "Go with God."

He and Chiam walked to where Chiam slept; Jacob watched him lay down and roll his head on his arms, lying on his stomach. He sat in a chair across from him and watched him. He did not think that the boy was asleep, but he was breathing evenly, lying motionless. He watched for a long time and began to get drowsy.

The brightness of the sun was what woke him; he could tell that it was late morning. He looked at the mattress and saw that Chiam was gone.

He rose and put on the hot water to boil. Outside, it was clear and bright; the wind had slowed to a breeze. It began to snow gently.

## Perchance to Traipsing Dreamers

Elizabeth Pollard

You must be useless;  
 Stride beyond the stars  
 Construing foreplay, strewing  
 The interfacing with names and  
 Time.  
 The recollection of reckless  
 Noises sweep sidestreets  
 Streaked, smeared lips stick and  
 Walking talkies Bogart the Word.

To the tune of flashing yardsticks  
Rose 'tis gently nuzzling  
Dawn's rosy tinged hips.  
Red as high street in the  
Deep South,  
Far deeper than you could fathom  
Taken your imaginary route  
Through San Francisco--  
Far older than weasles . . .

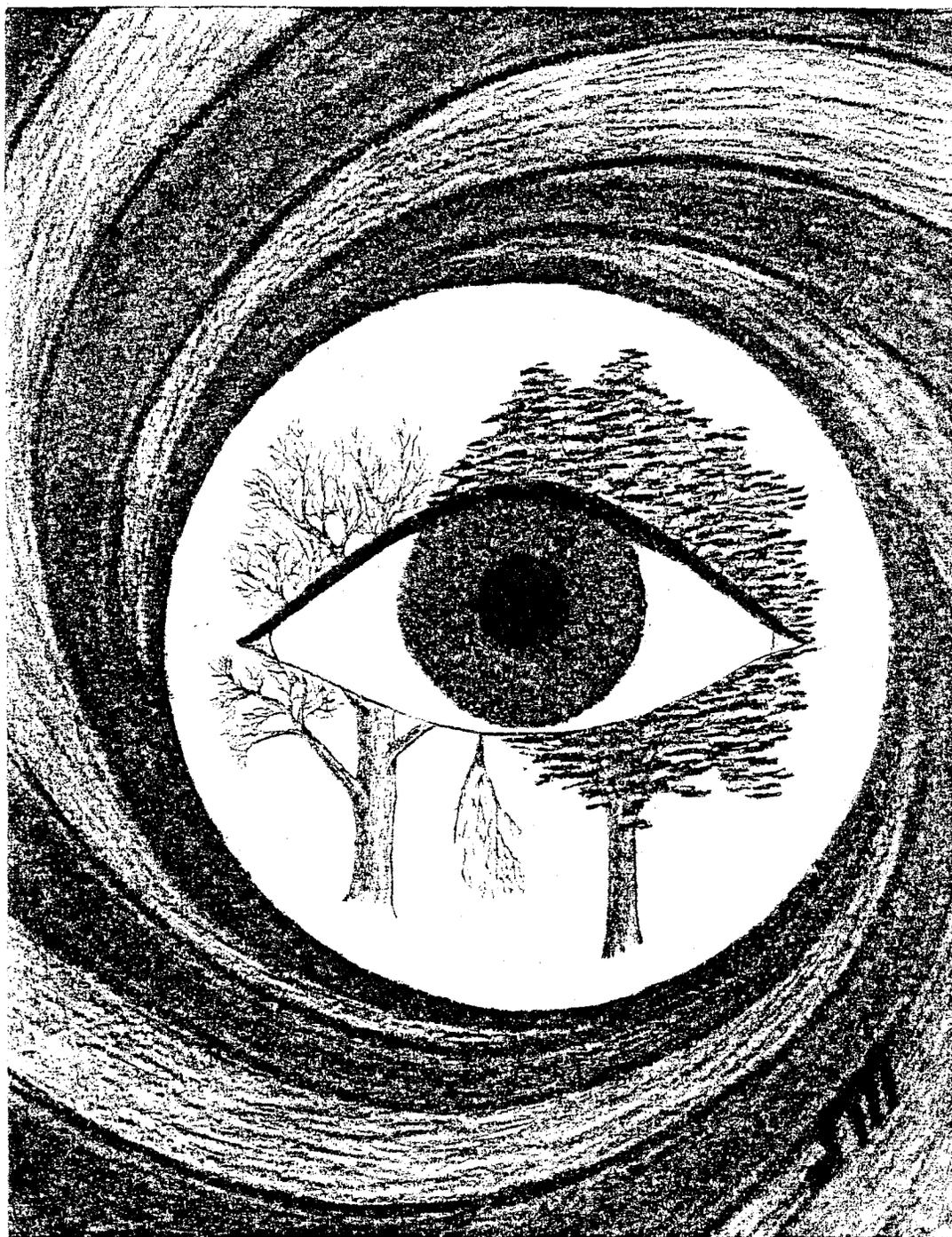
Why? you demand.  
And I insist on going on and on  
And on, until my mind  
Will break  
Caught in a bind, arched like the moon  
Cracked by the straining to know.

The sudden split then  
Appealing as late afternoon on  
a cornchip Tuesday in December  
Claps my belly and corrupts my wind.  
There is the emptying of contents  
Like a silken jewel chest opened at sea  
In the elements, purple, moss and pearls  
Bubbles and more talk of transcendental items

There is the ache for confidences  
And the exchange of spirit  
Given to us by the Master--  
O love, a missive spirit  
Whither takest thou this  
Early warning?  
--Too late remorse has left with an  
Earlier lifetime.

Yet heavenly proportions  
Seem to matter now as  
Careful and watchful  
Ethereal natures lean on  
The edge and look over  
The steel valleys below  
Waiting like lugubrious charities.

Still there are his eyes and his hands  
And his hands and his eyes  
And the moan of moons half man  
Hanging in the middle of day  
With his life at the door.



Scott Morozoff

## Room

Armando Guadiana

**T**he man entered the room slowly, but automatically. He closed the door slowly with signs of exhaustion written on his face. The man reached in his shirt pocket for the last cigarette he always saved for this time of night. Walking over to the small freezer he pulled a beer out and stepped back across the creaky floor, staring face down, noticing the swerves of the floor, he finally landed on the bed. He took a drag from his cigarette and turned the old stained oil lamp on, then turned the electric bulb off. The man went back to the same spot on the bed to continue his thoughtlessness. The lamp flickered as breezes from the hot summer night slid into the room. The man stared senselessly at the floor; covered with dirty socks, paper, books and spilt beer. A strong breeze blew in through the window and the lamp nearly went out. The man didn't notice the breeze, only the distortion of his shadow on the wall. The man thought of the distortion as a reflection of his state that evening. Another breeze, just as strong, stayed in the room for a while, ruffling his papers and teasing his hair. He changed his senseless stare to the wall. He grabbed another swallow and another puff, looked down at the floor, then at the wall, then at his hands: swollen, heavy hands with signs of manual labor; but the long fingers gave them a poet's markings.

The breeze came in one more time; this time he noticed it wheeling around the room, hitting the room's walls, the room's door, the room's window, the room's desk, the room's bed, the room's freezer, papers books, pens, essays, writings, everything. He cocked his head up abruptly, staring with a wild man's blaze in his eyes at the space between his eyes and the door. He stood up. He had realized the problem. Nothing contained within the five walls belonged to him, none of the papers, books, pens, or furniture. They all belonged to the room; the room had enclosed him and everything that belonged in the room. The things belonging in the room were owned by the room. He returned his sight, with the same abruptness as before, back to his hands; staring, closely studying the lines, callouses and dirt on his hands. The man's hands were all that belonged to him. Of all the things in his room he knew that his hands were his. This was all he knew, but it was a cold, dry knowledge for the man. He settled back down on the same spot, put his cigarette out, drank the last swallow of his beer (except for the last dreggs which he always left), and stared at the door. He turned down to the floor; now with his head laid heavily on his hands; he felt strangling numbness on his mind, and a strong, stiff buzz. He rose immediately, knowing he couldn't stay in the room, or the room would swallow him, hands and all.

The man closed the door to the old tenement building, and walked down the empty paved streets of the city. He heard the distant barking of dogs, an unusual reminder that life was somewhere. He turned the

corner towards a larger street, silent, and not very well lighted. He walked, staring at the asphalt with the day's heat rushing up his pant legs. He wasn't thinking now, just trying to escape the room. The man's head was spinning, numb and spinning. His hands searched in his pockets, feeling for something. He found nothing, just spare change, but he continued walking, somber, yet with a sordid smile. The man walked automatically. He had done many things automatically for the past weeks, months, years; he wasn't sure how long. He had been too busy thinking of the loss of himself and others in a gross world, where everyone thought they were important. He finally reached the brilliantly lighted street; cars buzzed by and flashing lights played with his face.

The street failed to phase him; he kept his empty senseless expression. The man walked across the street, tripping over the island and nearly losing his balance. He smiled at his absentmindedness, but the smile was also one of embarrassment at his own clumsiness. He walked along, still trying to force the room out of his head, but the breezes were continual now and they constantly brought back memories of the room. He felt in his pockets with his hands, picked out the change, jiggled it in his hands and automatically walked into the liquor store. He walked in, noticing nothing, mumbled for a pack of Lucky's and walked out again. The man moved, continuing to look for something to hold on to, something concrete, anything to make him forget the room. He felt flashes of sadness; he nearly felt like crying, but they were only flashes and not enough to make him cry.

He walked down an unpaved street now, listening attentively to the barking dogs, and imagined them fighting over a bitch in heat. There was something for a man to fight for now, honor and power, but that was useless, the man thought to himself. Life was not that serious, at least not in that manner. That was mere competition and destruction, fighting for the pleasure of fighting. Man did fight for something, something incompetent; man fought for something unattainable, something that put the world in prospective, maybe God, maybe himself, maybe both. He was still on this thought when he reached his destination, a small wooden frame house, with a rural look to it.

The man whistled towards the door, but there was no shuffle. He whistled again. A figure showed up at the door and from the shadow one could see he was buttoning his shirt. The person walked onto the porch and signaled the man forth. The man walked forward onto the porch and stood waiting for the figure. Soon the person appeared and smiled pleasantly at the man. They stood there long enough so that both of them began to laugh simultaneously, neither with reason. The person walked up to the man and gave him a handshake, sustaining a smile through all these actions. The man reciprocated, feeling uneasy about the smiling but enjoying himself nonetheless. They both began to walk, with their hands in their pockets. The person licked his lips and the man knew where they were going. They walked on, neither saying a word; but they were communicating through signals that they had become accustomed to in

the company of one another.

The person knew the mood the man was in, since he had seen it before; he also knew there was nothing he could do but put on a true mask of understanding. The mask was true because the person was so influenced by the mood that he could feel the pain of the man.

They walked on without saying a word, just keeping hold of the tension in the air. They heard everything now, they heard the cars in the distance, the family arguments down the block, the crying of children, the barking, swearing and crying of humans. They both knew they heard all these things, yet they walked without saying a word; words would not work.

They turned off the dirt road to a badly paved and lonesome road, and walked the same way for a while. Both of them turned into the store and made it to the back where the freezers were, staring at the beers as the beers stared back. The person looked at the man and then proceeded to grab the greatest quantity of cheap beer he could find. The man grinned. They walked to the counter contented, still without saying a word. They laughed as they walked out, now it was only a matter of laughing to keep the man's sanity, to keep the man from dying. The person knew, and so did the man.

They walked back to the person's house, hearing the same strange sounds that came from human life; they smiled as they walked. There was no more reason no matter what anyone said (this thought tossed itself in the man's head as they walked) but it was good to have no reason, he thought. However, this last thought made the man uneasy, and the person knew it. They reached the decaying house and sat on the porch, waiting. They opened their beers and heard the familiar sound of life. They laughed, they sat back and laughed. There was a long strange silence. The person saw the silence and signaled for a cigarette; they laughed again, and were silent as they listened to the beautiful but lonely song of the cicadas.



